

MEHER BABA'S NEW LIFE



Bhau Kalchuri

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Dedication

Beloved Avatar Meher Baba's New Life is dedicated to the love of all those dear ones of the world who long to live the New Life and find LIFE thereby.

Bhau Kalchuri



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Foreword

The New Life of Meher Baba, which took place from October 16th, 1949 to February 12th, 1952, is perhaps the most enigmatic phase of His life. During this two-and-a-half-year period, Baba seemingly set aside His Divinity to play the role of a seeker or lover of God, a role which He played to perfection. This sojourn of self-imposed helplessness and hopelessness, in which He was accompanied by a few of His disciples, took place during long, arduous and sometimes freezing cold journeys throughout India.

Was He living this life on behalf of all of us, giving us a new and unique paradigm of life devoted to God, one so different from the traditional spiritual path? Was He blazing a new path for us through the seemingly overgrown and impenetrable tangle of the world, which would arrive eventually at the doorstep of the limitless Divine? The New Life, by its mysteriousness, provokes such questions.

The outer events of this life, depicted in the pages that follow, were so severe and devastating on the companions who accompanied Baba, that some of them elected to leave the New Life. In all the other periods of His life, Baba's close ones rarely ever chose to leave His physical presence, so dynamic was His divine attraction. However, in the New Life, the strain on them to control their thoughts and moods in the most trying circumstances, as ordered by Baba, was often overwhelming. Baba spoke of *satyanashi*, the path of utter ruination. Indeed, the culmination of the New Life was the state of *Manonash*, the annihilation of the mind, in which the individual will is ultimately dissolved in the Divine Will. What is the inner state of one who dances only to the tune of the Divine? What was this phase of Baba's work for which He suffered so profoundly to achieve?

The following is the extraordinary and often mystifying story of the New Life, written by Bhau Kalchuri, one of Meher Baba's intimate disciples. Some of the versions vary due to the memories of those who were part of the New Life. This account is the most up-to-date information at the time of this writing. No

doubt, more data will emerge in the future, when recorded recollections are made available.

With glimpses into the day-to-day events of the New Life, the reader will be challenged to fathom its deeper meaning. At the end of the narrative, Bhau offers his thoughts about and interpretations of various aspects of the New Life.

I once asked Aloba, one of the companions who accompanied Baba, to describe the suffering they had to endure in the New Life. He gave this analogy: "Suppose you are on an ocean liner in the icy waters of the north Atlantic and you hit an iceberg. The ship is going down in a matter of minutes. What does it matter what your reputation is, how much money you have in the bank, how beautiful your wife is, how to atone for the sins of your past? In a matter of moments you will be no more. If in the New Life you were willing to become a dead man, the life was easy. But if there was anything in this world you held on to, the New Life was a tremendous suffering." Mehera, Eruch and Mani, in contrast, said that being with Baba in the New Life was the freest time of their lives. Referring to Baba's intimate "camaraderie" during this period, Eruch once said, "All the hardships of the New Life were annulled by His benign presence."

Seekers and lovers of God will no doubt continue to ponder and try to fathom the depth and meaning of the New Life for centuries to come.

*Jeff Wolverton,
Myrtle Beach, S.C.*

Acknowledgements

There are so many people who assisted in countless ways in the production of this book that there would not be room here to name them all, but I would like to offer special thanks to Nan Wicker, Chris Parsons, John Oat, Judy Robertson, Jim Wrobel, Roger Gordy, Sheila Gambill, Mardi McCabe, Charlie Gard'ner, and especially to Susan Herr, who put in many exhausting hours editing and formatting. Without Baba using these people, this book would never have come to completion. My deepest thanks to all of you, including those not mentioned. As in any work done for Baba, the greatest reward is in the privilege of doing it, and for all your loving efforts, I know that Baba is deeply touched.

A Few Words

The New Life of Meher Baba is a powerful means of attaining Life Eternal. Without the annihilation of the mind, the attainment of Eternal Life is impossible, and to annihilate the mind and attain Eternal Life is the Goal of every individual. It is through the medium of the New Life that the annihilation of the mind, *Manonash*, is experienced. Only after Manonash does this New Life merge into the Real Life, which is infinite, immortal and everlasting, and become the Life of God (*Paramatma*).

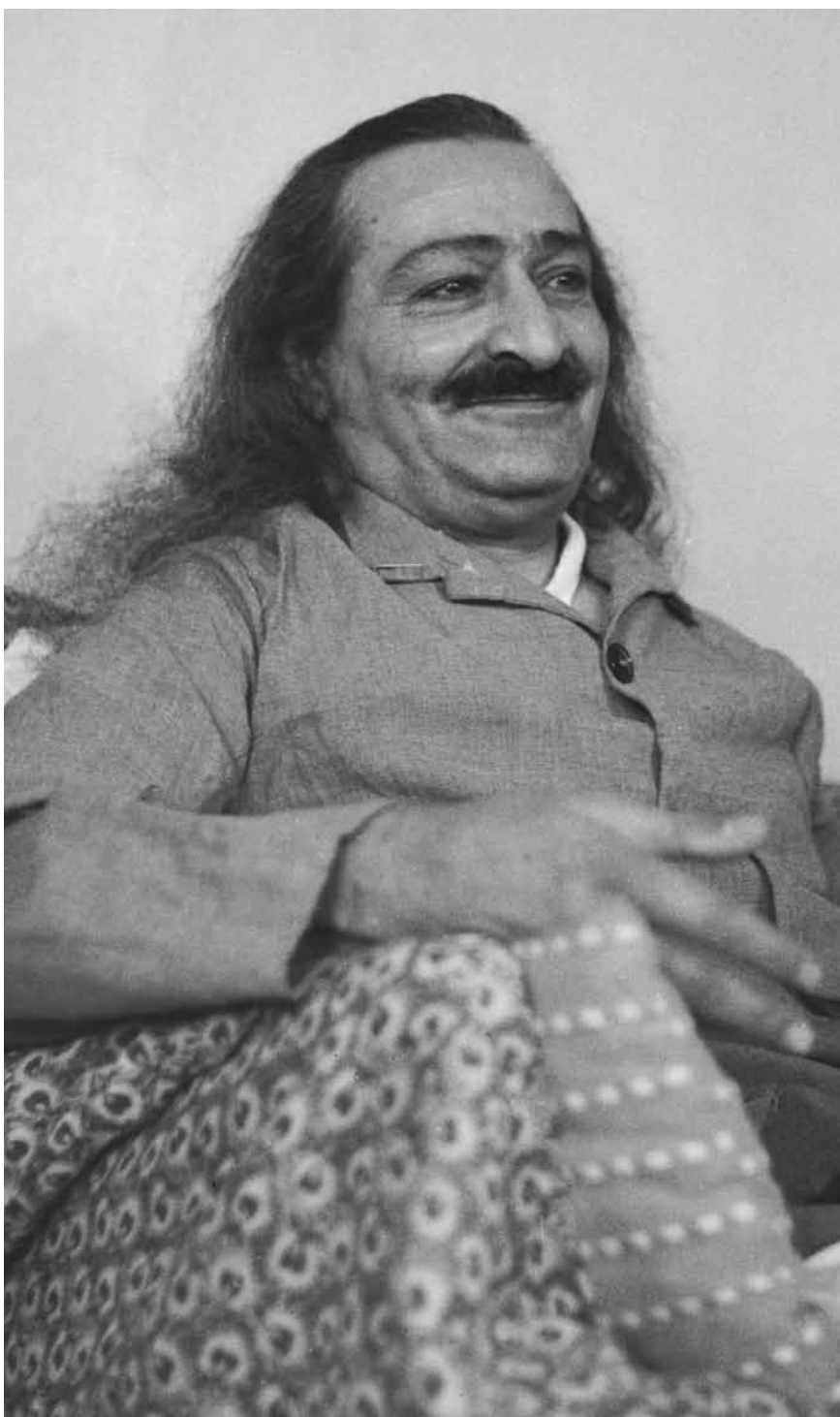
Beloved Meher Baba, by entering into the New Life, has shown to all humanity the way to live this Life. Through the New Life, He has disclosed to the aspirants of this age an excellent and most useful means of attaining Life Eternal. It is essential for aspirants to understand the depth of the New Life and to live it with the same profound measure of understanding.

In the following pages, I tell the story of the New Life and discuss the meaning of its various aspects according to my understanding. I do not claim, however, that what I understand and express about the New Life is the only correct interpretation, for the simple reason that I am neither perfect, nor did I accompany Baba on the New Life. Ultimately, it is up to you, the readers, to find for yourselves the meaning of the New Life in your own hearts.

When the heart is full of love, words have no value, and love itself becomes action in daily life. The fundamental requirement of the New Life is love for and rock-like faith in God. This love and faith give birth to the detachment and the inner renunciation that embody the essence of the New Life.

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!

*Bhau Kalchuri
Meherazad
2 August 1973*



Chapter One

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW LIFE

1921 to 1949

Meher Baba in the Years before the New Life

The historic city of Ahmednagar lies on the semi-arid Deccan plateau in Maharashtra, one of the states on the western coast of India. Located 200 miles from Bombay, Ahmednagar was, in the years from 1921 to 1949, a poor, rambling city of 100,000 people, almost Biblical in appearance, with its low one and two-storied houses and places of business crowded together on narrow, winding streets. Bullock carts, used since ancient times, carried goods along the dusty roads, and people still traveled in horse-drawn *tongas* (carriages).

Outside Ahmednagar, rising above the flat, tree-dotted countryside, were ranges of low barren hills with little vegetation except for slopes of dry grasses and an occasional lone cluster of ancient trees. Some of the hills were crowned with a simple temple or mosque.

Five miles south of Ahmednagar, in a deserted British military camp, Meher Baba, now known around the world as the Avatar of the Age, set up His ashram in the early 1920s, gathering His early disciples and followers around Him.

From very simple beginnings, Meherabad, as His ashram came to be known, gradually flourished. By the mid-1920s, it had become a small bustling colony of 500 people with several schools, a free hospital and dispensary, shelters for the poor and a number of small shops.

On July 10th, 1925, Baba began observing silence, which His followers believed would be of short duration, but which remained unbroken for the rest of His life. On the day before beginning His silence, when asked how He intended to convey His teachings, He replied, "I have come not to teach, but to awaken." As it turned out, His silence did not in the least diminish the intensity of His activities.

Background of the New Life

Meher Baba, who was regarded as a Perfect Master at that time, drew thousands of visitors to Meherabad through the power of His all-embracing love.

By the early 1930s, Baba had discontinued many of His outer activities at Meherabad. While still maintaining His headquarters there, He began an intense period of world travel, visiting Europe and America nearly a dozen times. There, He contacted many who were to become His lifelong Western disciples.

In the late 1930s, Baba brought a number of women from the West to India to join His Eastern women *mandali*, the name He gave to His circle of intimate disciples. For more than ten years, they led a secluded life of spiritual training under His direction on the hill at Meherabad.

During this same period, Baba began a unique work of contacting and serving thousands of God-intoxicated souls, known as *masts*, whom He and His disciples sought in villages and cities throughout India. Masts are rare souls so absorbed in love for God that they have little or no awareness of the outside world and are often found living in squalid conditions, oblivious to extremes of cold and heat. Baba's unique work of contacting masts continued until 1961.

In 1944, while still maintaining the ashram at Meherabad, Baba and a few of His close ones took up residence at a place nine miles to the north of Ahmednagar. The property, which had once been the home and headquarters of the British engineers who had constructed the nearby water reservoir, became known as Meherazad.

From the early 1920s through the 1940s, Baba, in addition to working with masts, was intensely active in various phases of work with children, with His men and women disciples, and with the poor.

He was also in contact with His many followers in India, Persia and Pakistan, as well as in Europe and America. He became their Divine Master, and through His intervention, He led them toward an ever-deepening experience of spiritual love.

In the late 1940s, Baba intimated that there would be a shift in the focus of His activities. The first hint of that shift was evident in remarks He made as early as January 1949, but at that

Background of the New Life

time, none of His mandali comprehended their real meaning. Some of the statements were:

“I do not feel like caring for anything as to what remains and what goes....”

“An immediate reduction of 50 percent must be made on all expenses right now....”

“From July, you will see and hear things for yourself....”

“Ninety percent of the mandali will have to leave me and only ten percent will remain with me....”

“In 1949, I have no trust left in anyone, including myself....”

“All are pardoned by me, and God will pardon me, but henceforth no pardon is possible....”

“You people have been with me for so many years and I am therefore responsible for your continued weaknesses, but I do not want to take advantage of your weaknesses. I am therefore warning you not to succumb to these and avoid everything being washed away during 1949....”

At this time, Baba warned the mandali to keep a distance from the opposite sex, even to the extent of not shaking hands.

Then, on February 15th, 1949, Baba left for Mt. Abu, a hill station in northeastern India. This place in Rajastan became His headquarters for the next three months. From here, Baba and a few of the men mandali went out on numerous trips to various places in the area to contact seekers of God: masts, yogis, advanced souls and saints.

Baba's contact with such souls was usually brief, although in the case of the masts, He sometimes bathed, clothed and sat with them in seclusion for certain periods. In some instances, Baba would travel several hundred miles just to contact a particular mast. He alone knew the real nature and deeper significance of this work; the mandali merely followed His instructions and tried their very best to help Him.

On several occasions, He explained that He enlisted the cooperation of masts in His work of giving a spiritual push to humanity. In exchange for their help, He helped them in their journey to God.

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“The masts,” He explained, “are dead to themselves and to the world. They are totally indifferent to the world, its happenings, sorrows and comforts. They live in God, with God and for God. They are unaffected by climatic conditions, insufficient food and lack of sleep. They keep healthy despite being regularly deprived of the necessities of life.”



Meher Baba resting at the bungalow in Mount Abu, 1949

The journeys in search of masts, yogis and saints during this period were strenuous and undertaken with little food and rest. Those accompanying Baba went for days with little more than a half hour of sleep each night. They traveled mostly in crowded buses and in third-class train compartments. After completing each journey to contact these seekers of God, Baba returned to Mt. Abu, where He would go into seclusion to do what He called His “universal work.”

Although Baba’s universal work would always remain a mystery for the mandali, they could see on an external level that it left Him extremely exhausted and pulled down afterward. It became apparent to the mandali that the demanding schedule during this period was a hint of more hardships and difficulties to come. Indeed, in a telegram to Ramjoo sent from Mt. Abu, Baba dictated:

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The last two strenuous midsummer mast trips done during my illness have told severely on my health, but this is not even the shadow of the 1949 personal disaster. Inform mandali at Nagar, Meherabad and on the Hill.

Baba had previously hinted that He would soon have to face a personal disaster. From His mood during this period, it was evident that some important and drastic change was in the air that was yet to be disclosed.

In June, after a stay of three months at Mt. Abu, Baba called for a gathering of His close men to be held at Meherabad from the 15th to the 20th of August, 1949.

Arrangements for this crucial gathering were made months in advance. At this meeting, Baba said that He planned to disclose a dramatic change in His outer activities and that He intended "to discuss and decide the mandali's future."



The God-conscious mast Chacha of Ajmer

*Background of the New Life***The Great Seclusion - June 22 to July 31, 1949**

Prior to the August meetings, Baba revealed His intention to go into a strict seclusion for 40 days, from June 22nd to July 31st. "The Great Seclusion," as it was later called, was to take place in Meherazad in the Blue Bus that He told Padri to have converted while He was in Mount Abu. (It was in this bus that Baba and His Eastern and Western women mandali had traveled extensively throughout India in the late 1930s and early 1940s.)

When Baba returned to Meherazad on May 30th, He found the bus transformed into an attractive, newly painted little cabin raised up on a brick foundation. The seats had been removed, creating a small room, ideal for His seclusion.

It was situated in a small, 20 by 30 foot enclosure surrounded on three sides by the walls of nearby buildings. The fourth side was enclosed with bamboo matting. A shed was constructed overhead to protect the bus from sun and rain, and near its back door was a small bathroom with a commode for Baba's use. Next to the bus was a neem tree whose spreading branches provided additional protection from the hot sun.

In January, a circular had been issued by Baba instructing His followers throughout the world to observe a fast and silence for one month, beginning on July 1st and ending on the last day of His seclusion.

The day before He began the seclusion, He invited 150 of His men disciples and followers from Ahmednagar and Meherabad to Meherazad to be with Him.

Meherazad was and still is a garden oasis in a semi-arid countryside, with tall spreading trees casting shade on the few cottages and buildings on the property. There are landscaped gardens with flowers and flowering shrubs and vines, designed and lovingly tended by the women mandali.

It was in this peaceful setting that Baba and His close men gathered at 7:00 a.m. on June 21st for a special program. The area around the Blue Bus was decorated with colorful bunting, and a colored photograph of Baba was hung on the bamboo wall. His flag, designed in stripes of seven colors, was flown beside it. Also on the wall, in large golden letters, was the word "MEHERAZAD." The program took place in Mandali Hall, a long, narrow room that had once been used as a horse stable.

Background of the New Life

Close-up of Baba seated in His secluded compound beside the Blue Bus at the Meherazad meeting on June 21, 1949

Baba began by saying, "I have called you all here to take part in the purification ceremony to cleanse the atmosphere of malevolent spirits and evil influences."

He then gestured for passages from the scriptures of various religions to be read aloud.

Kalemama, one of the old mandali of Meherabad, read Lord Krishna's discourse from the Bhagavad Gita, "*The Yoga of the Kingly Science and the Kingly Secret*." Khaksaheb from Poona followed with a recitation from the Qur'an of the first twenty *aayat* of the Second Sura, entitled "*Baqara*."

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Baba remarked that the teachings of Muhammad and Krishna were essentially the same, but were adapted to meet the needs of different times.

Dr. Donkin, the only male mandali from the West, then read Jesus' "*Sermon on the Mount*" and another passage from the New Testament. After he read the line, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," Baba indicated that in this way, Jesus indirectly asserted that God-realization is the goal of everyone and that few people of Jesus' time were ready to hear such truths directly.

When Donkin completed the "*Sermon on the Mount*," Baba spelled out on the alphabet board, "This is my favorite section in the Bible."

Kaikobad, who lived at Upper Meherabad for many years, then recited the *Harmaj Yest*, representing the Zoroastrian faith.

After the readings, Baba stated,

These are all different approaches to the same one Truth – God; therefore, the real purport of each book is just the same. These approaches can be broadly divided into two kinds, indirect and direct, that is, impersonal and personal. In spite of such distinctions, equal 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 percent" reasons of my own to retire from tomorrow for 40 days. This should not be looked upon as either *tap* [penance], *chilla-narsi* [austerities], or meditation. I am free in every way, but I am going to get myself bound voluntarily. I will also intensify my silence and will not let even the least sound escape my lips.

Later, after a short break, Dr. Deshmukh, a professor from Nagpur, performed a special *kirtan*, a narration including songs and poems on a divine theme. The subject of the *kirtan* was the life of Shankaracharya, a Perfect Master during the eighth century in India. As Dr. Deshmukh gave the narration, Baba filled the atmosphere with His dynamic presence as He

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glanced at each of the men gathered in the hall. Soon after the kirtan, Baba's *arti*, a song in praise of God sung from the heart, was performed. Baba then distributed *prasad*, a sweet blessed by Him, containing a seed of His love in tangible form. The gathering ended, and Baba bade the men farewell.

The next day, June 22nd, Baba made a last inspection of the bus and gave specific instructions to those staying at Meherazad. Then, at 5:30 p.m., He entered the Blue Bus with the curtains closed to begin His 40-day seclusion.



Baba in front of the Blue Bus during a reading of the Bhagavad Gita by Kalemama before the Great Seclusion

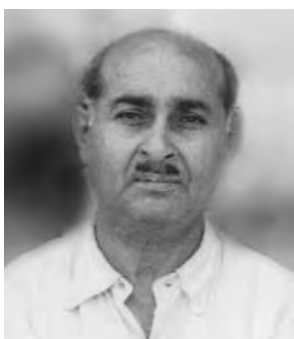
As was His habit, Baba made a detailed schedule of the seclusion in advance.

Only four of the men mandali were allowed to stay near Him at Meherazad: Kaka Baria, Meherjee Karkaria, Nariman Dadachanji and Jal Kerawala. Baba instructed them to observe silence, and they were also given strict duties around the clock. In addition, three servants were allowed to help, but only Kaka, who acted as Baba's personal attendant, was allowed to enter the seclusion compound.

Jal Kerawala was instructed to keep a diary.

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The women mandali, as well as Elizabeth Patterson and Norina Matchabelli, who were visiting from the West, were to remain on their side at Meherazad in the main house and the small cottage.



Kaka Baria

During the seclusion, Kaka was kept extremely busy day and night, almost to the point of exhaustion. At fixed times, he brought Baba water for bathing and provided Him with tea and a little bread, according to His schedule of fasting. In carrying out these duties, Kaka had to knock at the cabin door and wait for Baba's clap before entering.

Four days into the seclusion, in connection with His inner work, Baba called for twenty-one poor people to be brought to Meherazad. This order was carried out by Baidul, Sarosh Irani and Adi Sr., with the help of two of Baba's old followers, Pandoba and Babadas.

Selected from the local area, the poor people were led one at a time into the cabin enclosure where Kaka had warm water, soap and towels ready in advance. Baba lovingly washed and laid His head on the feet of each one and gave each ten rupees with His own hand as prasad. This work took about an hour.

The next day, June 28th, Baba called for Ali Shah, one of His favorite masts, to be brought from Meherabad. This God-intoxicated soul was on the fifth plane of consciousness and, unlike many of the masts who are fiery-tempered, Ali Shah possessed a very mild nature. He had a sweet smile and a pleasing voice, although his words were usually repetitious and his thoughts were often disjointed. In the cabin enclosure, Baba, assisted by Kaka, gave him a bath and then worked with him in private for about 40 minutes.

Late in the evening, Baba complained twice about the noise made by the small neem berries falling on the roof of the Blue Bus. Kaka climbed the neem tree, and, with a long pole, managed to knock down the remaining berries.

The following day, seven men, five mad persons and two who were God-intoxicated, were brought into the enclosure to Baba. He cut their hair, bathed and dressed them in a new set of clothes, and gave each a packet of sweetmeats. One of the

Background of the New Life

men turned out to be an ordinary beggar, and Baba was greatly upset with Baidul, who had been responsible for selecting the men. Baba had wanted mad persons or masts only.

Through Kaka, Baba sent the message to Baidul, "I am surprised at the way you have done the work of selecting the mad and masts for me this time. This has brought adverse thoughts in my mind about you, and may God forgive me for it. I forgive you for your mistakes and want you not to feel upset about it, but remain cheerful."

On June 30th, a little more than one week into the seclusion, Nariman and Meherjee were given the job of repairing Baba's cot. They spent several hours trying to tighten the cloth bands that criss-crossed the bed frame, but with little success. Jal Kerawala was then called in to lend a hand, but some of the bands were too old and snapped under the pressure.

At one point, as the three men struggled with the bands, Baba sent the message, "The real pleasure lies in making strong what is really weak."



Baba in bamboo enclosure during Meherazad meeting, June 21, 1949

Background of the New Life

*Program at Meherazad on June 21st, 1949,
before the Great Seclusion*

**Nine Days of Intense Suffering
July 1 to 9, 1949**

Beginning on July 1st, when His close ones throughout the world began their month-long fast and silence, Baba intensified His seclusion. He scarcely slept, sometimes not even for a moment during an entire night. He had originally planned to fast for twenty-one days, but He decided to intensify the fasting by decreasing it to nine days according to the following strict schedule:

July 1st:	Only weak tea without milk for the rest of the day.
2nd to 4th:	Only water and nothing else.
5th to 9th:	Weak tea with milk and honey.
From the 10th:	For the remaining 21 days, partial fast as observed by the rest of His people up to the 31st.

Early in the morning of July 1st, before beginning this fast, Baba drank some coffee and ate several slices of bread. On the 5th, when He started taking honey, Baba complained of nausea.

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The next evening, the honey induced a burning sensation in His stomach and caused Him to vomit.

One night, Meherjee, who was on watch during this period, heard the sound of heavy breathing coming from the bathroom near the cabin enclosure. He immediately went and opened the door but found no one inside. Nevertheless, the sound of breathing continued to emanate from the vacant room. When it suddenly stopped, he heard Baba's own heavy breathing coming from the Blue Bus. Such unusual happenings were also experienced by the other watchmen.

Baba called Kaka in at any time. Some of those times were to dictate messages about His experiences during the seclusion. Kaka, who was also keeping silence, wrote them down on a slate and circulated them among those staying at Meherazad.

Just before noon on July 7th, Kaka received the following communication from Baba, which he shared with the others. Originally in *Gujarati*, a language used in Maharashtra State, the message when translated reads:

The flow of my 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 days none...

In a very concentrated way, it seemed that Baba was preoccupied with the diverse thought-currents coming to Him from the world in general and from His followers in particular.

The next day, in a message taken down by Kaka, Baba complained of tremendous burning:

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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.

About an hour later, Baba told Kaka to add, “Do not give these knocks on the head against the low ceiling of the cabin any supernatural interpretation as our dear old blessed Chanji [Baba’s early secretary] would have done out of his deep undying love for me. These hard knocks on the skull show how brave the real yogis must be who live in dark, low-roofed caves in remote wild jungles.”

At one point, Baba did receive a nasty bump when He hit His head against the corner of the overhead rack just inside the door of the Blue Bus. Later, the corner was padded with cotton and cloth, which can still be seen today.

At another time, when Kaka was pressed by the four other men to share his experience of Baba’s seclusion, he replied, “I am not really fit to be even a particle of dust under the Master’s feet, and it is due to His infinite kindness and love only that He gives me the opportunity to serve Him a little.”

On one occasion, Baba composed several couplets in Gujarati, which He conveyed to Kaka. One of the stanzas, translated into English, reads:

*People feel blessed to have a dip in the holy Ganges,
But the Ganges itself is sanctified by “bathing” in the tears*

*Shed by the lovers of God who love Him for the sake of love.
Such lovers become the objects of meditation even for God!*

Later, describing the period of fasting, Baba said,

Although infinite restlessness is my constant companion, I have never been so restless as from July 1st to 9th in my present seclusion. No one except myself and God knows what I went through during those nine days.

Background of the New Life*The gathering in Meherabad, June 21st, 1949***Baba Takes a Partial Rest**

On July 10th, Baba ended His intense fast with a little rice and chutney, and He now began taking some relaxation. Mehera, His closest woman disciple, and His sister Mani were permitted to visit Him for half an hour in the room next to the Blue Bus. They both felt the tremendous strain He was under.

Later, Baba requested that Ali Shah again be brought from Meherabad. This lovable old mast was always agreeable when Baba called him. From the 10th on, Baba began sitting alone with Ali Shah for certain periods each day, which continued until the end of the seclusion.

From July 11th through the 13th, Meherjee, Nariman and Jal Kerawala were allowed to break their silence temporarily to read aloud from various spiritual books. They sat and read by the door of the Blue Bus, while Baba listened from inside out of view. For several hours, they read passages from the book of Friar Juniper, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, *The Classics of the Inner Life* and *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

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The following day, Meherjee read from the *Dasatir*, a holy book of the Zoroastrians, on the causes of suffering and on the need for compassion toward all. Jal Kerawala read from Shankaracharya's commentaries on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The final reading was Baba's own discourse, entitled *The Divine Theme of Creation*.

The first weeks of the seclusion were exhausting for Baba. Acknowledging Kaka's invaluable service, He sent the message to those at Meherazad, "During my seclusion, Kaka has worked hard and wholeheartedly from morning to night, seeing to every detail of countless duties for me, also managing the household affairs of the mandali, and seeing to the marketing of the women mandali through Goher."

Baba then said He wanted a change of pace and setting, and chose to go to Poona for nine days where His seclusion would be continued. Eruch Jessawala, who usually served as His personal attendant, was sent ahead to find a suitable bungalow at short notice in a secluded area, with open fields where Baba could take walks without being seen by others.

In Poona, Eruch, along with other local followers, made a desperate search using bicycles. At last, Eruch spotted a bungalow situated on Parvati Hill overlooking the city, located on Poona-Mahabaleshwar Road. He cycled up the hill and found the bungalow vacant. After making inquiries, he learned that it belonged to a Poona businessman by the name of Thube who gladly gave permission for Baba to use it.

On July 15th, it rained the whole night at Meherazad. The next morning, Adi Sr. arrived in his Buick to drive Baba, along with Kaka, Gustadji and Ali Shah, to Poona. The other mandali at Meherazad, honoring Baba's wish not to be seen, stayed in their rooms until His departure. As Adi drove across the small bridge over the drainage ditch just outside the Meherazad gate, Baba gestured for Adi Sr. to honk the horn as a farewell.

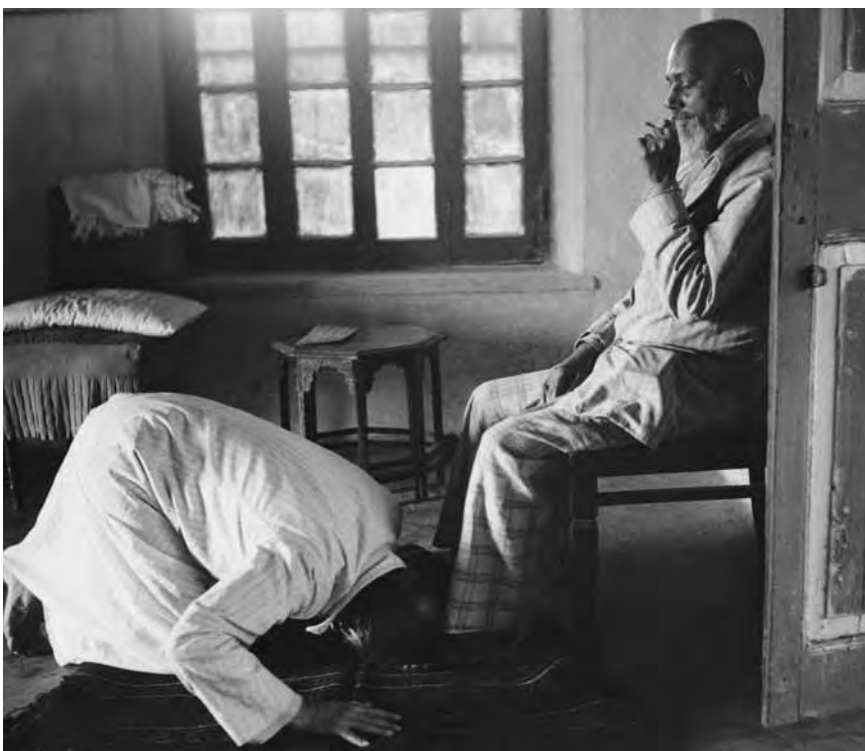
Several hours later, they arrived in Poona where Dr. Ghani, Baba's childhood schoolmate, His brother Jal and Eruch had been invited to join Him at Thube Bungalow.

As a break from His intense seclusion, Baba now wanted entertainment and relaxation. He explained to the men:

Background of the New Life

After my arduous work for nineteen days at Meherazad, I wanted to relax and yet continue the work begun. With that end in view, I chose new surroundings, new companions and a change in the type of work I was doing.

At Meherazad, there was no rain as long as I was in seclusion, and now that I have come out, it has begun to rain there. Poona, likewise, is suffering from squally weather, which will continue for some time, and this hill-top seems particularly noisy and windy. As is always the case, you can see how Maya [illusion] tries to thwart and obstruct my working. If this weather continues, I shall either have to go into seclusion in a room upstairs in this bungalow, or go back to Meherazad.



Baba bowing down to Ali Shah during one period of His seclusion work

Setting up a tentative daily schedule, Baba planned to devote two hours for His spiritual work, two hours for working with Ali Shah and local masts, two hours for taking walks and two hours for recreation. Games, humor and light conversation were at the top of the list.

Background of the New Life

Dr. Ghani and Baba's brother Jal were excellent at keeping Baba entertained with jokes and engaging stories, so Baba allowed them to break their silence for this.

On that first evening in Thube Bungalow, Baba and Dr. Ghani discussed the world situation.

The following day, July 17th, Eruch and Jal went out in a jeep in search of a mast for Baba. They returned hours later with Keshav, a very advanced mast with lustrous eyes and an innocent smile. This gem of a soul was known to spend his time in a public urinal near the Poona railway station. Due to his exalted state of consciousness, he remained immune to disease, in spite of the filthy environment he frequented. When Keshav was brought to the bungalow, Baba wanted to give him a bath immediately, but he refused. He would not even allow Baba to touch his feet. He kept repeating, "Baba, I am like your son. How can I bear for You to touch my feet?"

Later, when Keshav asked to be taken home, Baba gestured for Eruch to lead him back to the jeep. While the mast sat in the jeep, the men pleaded with him for almost an hour to allow Baba to bathe him. Finally, he relented a little and permitted Baba to pour water over his feet. At this point, he stopped resisting completely, and Baba was able to bathe him and serve him tea and bread. Baba then worked with him alone. When the session was over, Keshav was in bliss, and before being returned to his locality, he asked Baba for a warm coat and one rupee, which he was given. (In 1949, one rupee had the buying power in India similar to what a dollar had in the U.S.).

Afterwards Baba said:

If I really like anything, it is two things: masts and children. I like masts for their strength and children for their helplessness. The fire of love is very, very painful, and the masts present a challenge to God, the Beloved. It is a perpetual tug-of-war between the lover and the Beloved.

Baba revealed further:

It is not given to everyone to be a lover of God. Such lovers are so consumed in the fire of love that they are

Background of the New Life

not conscious of their stage of spiritual progress, and they do not have any thought of union with God. They simply “enjoy” the pain and torture of love and long for more and more of it. These lovers don’t have any thoughts about their separation from the Beloved.... They are perfectly resigned to the state in which they find themselves, and when their resignation reaches its climax, it is the Beloved who seeks union with them.

Hafiz has said:

*“Separation and Union are none of your business.
Seek only to resign yourself utterly
to the will of the Beloved.”*

When Dr. Ghani asked how the masts remained healthy despite living in the most unsanitary surroundings, Baba explained:

The masts, as I have said, present a challenge to the Beloved, and this challenge, that the Beloved should manifest Himself, is always accompanied by heroic efforts to achieve total self-elimination or egolessness, efforts that may take many forms. To live in dirty surroundings, such as in or near a latrine or a urinal or a dustbin, is one way of utterly forgetting the bodily existence. And the beauty of it is that, when the body is utterly neglected or forgotten, due to being steeped in love for the Divine Beloved, the body does not deteriorate but takes care of itself automatically. The minds of ordinary people are constantly busy looking after their bodies, but they find that, in spite of taking every kind of precaution and care, deterioration can never be avoided altogether.

Kabir has said:

*“Discard the body, it remains.
Preserve the body, it goes.
And so the astonishing fact emerges –
that the corpse eats up death.”*

Background of the New Life

Baba then turned to Ghani and gestured, “What is more difficult – to give up one’s life or to lose one’s life?”

Ghani replied that losing one’s life was more difficult.

Baba agreed with him, saying that many people can “give up their lives on a sudden impulse, noble or otherwise, but to be resigned continuously to the Divine Will is the rare attainment of very few such as Keshav.” Baba ended by saying, “...to lose one’s life is to die by inches. Every second, one suffers the poignant pain of ego elimination, culminating in utter resignation to the Divine Will.”

The next morning, Baba, accompanied by the men, took a walk to a nearby temple. While there, He indicated that this would be a suitable place to go into seclusion.

In the afternoon, Baba returned and sequestered Himself in the inner chamber of the temple. During the two hours He remained inside, He told the men to keep all outsiders away.

After completing His inner work, Baba returned to the bungalow where He played cards with the men for relaxation.

On the morning of July 19th, Baba was out of sorts and complained to Kaka, Eruch and Ghani, “Last night I could not sleep

Background of the New Life

at all. Kaka kept his window open, thereby allowing gusts of wind to make all sorts of noise which disturbed me. Kaka has become careless and unmindful, knowing full well how I never like strong breezes, particularly when it is wet and cold outside. But he does not care and has given me no end of trouble.”

He also took Eruch to task for choosing such a “lousy” bungalow. Throughout the stay, it had rained, and as Thube Bungalow was situated on the top of a high hill, it was exposed to fierce and noisy monsoon winds that continually disturbed Baba, who required quiet for His seclusion.

Later in the day, Baba confessed, “It is my weakness not to control my anger at times, and anger in particular should be controlled during my fast and seclusion. The best and the worst part of it is that it is usually directed at those who serve and love me 100 percent.”

Afterward, Baba asked Eruch and Jal to go out again in search of a good mast. Their initial effort was unsuccessful, but later they returned with a God-mad Muslim named Allahbakhsh, to whom Baba gave a bath, food and a clean set of clothes. Although he was not advanced, he was in the state of *hawa*, which Baba explained is the inner stage of one who is approaching the spiritual path.

Later that day, Eruch and Jal were again sent out, and they returned around 4:30 p.m. with a man named Nannubhai. He also was not on the spiritual path, Baba said, but he was not far from it. Extremely talkative, Nannubhai had the extraordinary ability to quote *Urdu* (similar to Hindi) couplets almost non-stop. This was all the more entertaining because he interspersed these mystical couplets with lines from ordinary Urdu songs. Ghani egged him on by reciting Urdu verses on various subjects, and off Nannubhai went with his recitation in a loud, singsong voice. This amused Baba thoroughly. He laughed delightedly.

At one point, Baba had Eruch ask Nannubhai, “Who is greater, Allah or Muhammad?”



Baba's brother Jal

Background of the New Life

“Muhammad, of course,” Nannubhai replied, “for God goes begging to Muhammad with outstretched hands, and by remembering Muhammad you will have a daughter by day and a son by night.”

It was obvious that both the sublime and the ridiculous competed for expression in Nannubhai’s mind.

In the late afternoon, Baba said that He wanted to spend three days alone on the upstairs floor of the bungalow. Before He went into seclusion there, the men persuaded Him to take a drive to Poona to visit the large spreading mango tree in Bund Gardens, where Babajan, one of His own Masters, had sat for long periods decades before. Baba agreed, and the men drove Him in the jeep to the sacred place under the mango tree.

Later, while driving in that same locality of Poona, Baba pointed to an old man in an ocher robe along the road. The car was stopped, and Eruch stepped out and approached him. In



Eruch Jessawala

the exchange that followed, Eruch learned that the old man had been observing silence for seven years. Kaka recognized him as a man named Mauni Baba whom Baba had contacted years earlier in north India. Upon hearing this, Baba wanted a private session with him, so a small room was found in a Hindu cremation ground some distance away, where He sat alone with Mauni Baba for His work.

On July 20th, Baba secluded Himself for three days on the upstairs floor of Thube Bungalow. He explained that He was undertaking this seclusion “for the very many disappointing features of this trip, and the consequent failure to relax.” The men were instructed to maintain a strict silence during the next three days.

Just before noon on the first day, a mast was brought upstairs to Baba from one of the temples in Poona devoted to Ram. This mast resided in the temple, repeating Ram’s name, and was revered by the local people as Ram Maharaj or Ram Mast. His manner was very relaxed, and he had a perpetual smile on his face.

Background of the New Life

Baba bathed and fed him, and when He gave Ram Maharaj some sweets, the mast did a rare thing – he offered half of the sweets back to Baba. Baba was extremely hungry, yet during a fast He would not ordinarily accept food from anyone. However, since it was offered by a mast for whom He had the highest regard, He could not refuse.

Baba had Eruch ask him, “Where is Ram?

“Ram is here and in everyone.”

“Have you seen God?”

“I see God before my eyes this very moment, and He is everywhere.”

For the next two days, Baba maintained a strict seclusion and fast, seeing the men only after midday. He also continued to work with Ali Shah during this period. When not engaged in work, Baba played games, such as ping-pong, draughts (checkers) and cards with the mandali in the late afternoon and evenings.

On the 22nd, plans were made to see a cricket match between Ferguson College and Deccan Gymkhana that was scheduled for the next day. In regard to this, Baba said, “...I will feel entirely satisfied and happy if it does not rain tomorrow so that I can witness the cricket match undisturbed.”

A while later, as they were taking a short drive in the jeep, Baba turned to Kaka and said, “You pray that it does not rain and spoil the match.”

Although there had been heavy showers during the night and early morning and the sky was overcast during the day of the match, it did not rain.

The cricket match lasted for five hours and provided a time of light recreation for Baba and the men.

Background of the New Life

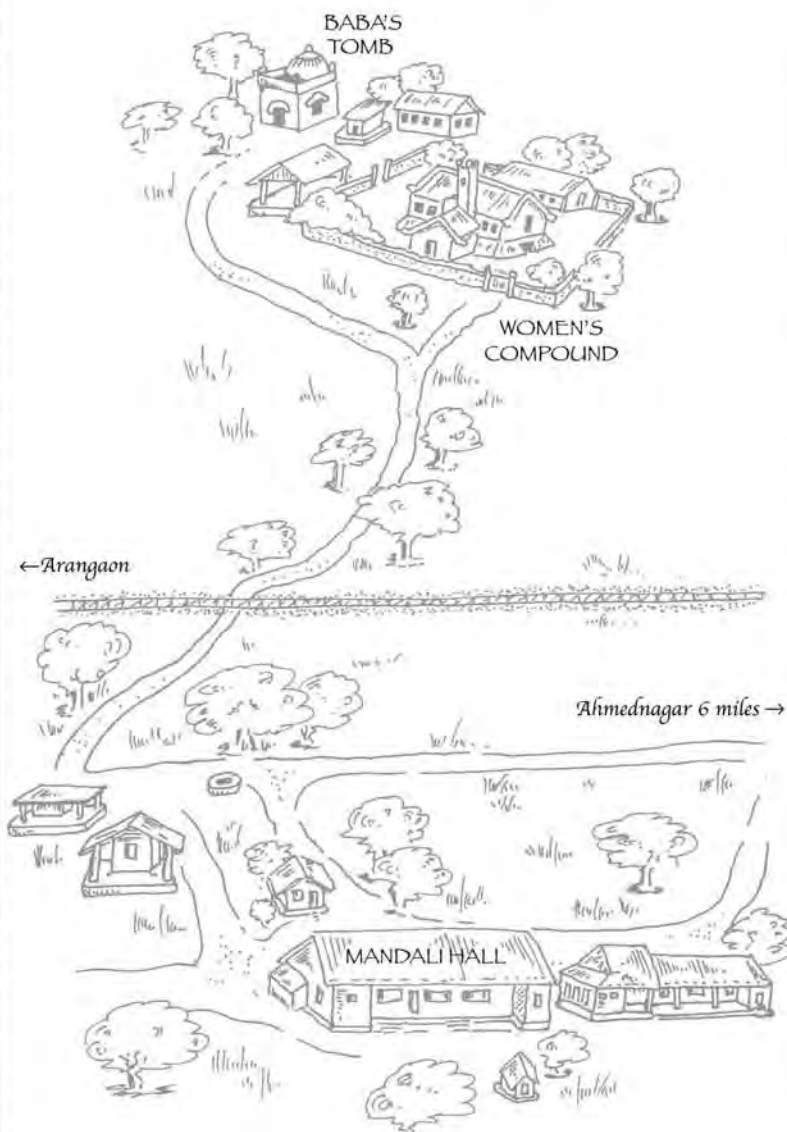


Baba with Ali Shah and some of His mandali before the New Life



*Baba just
before the
Great
Seclusion*

UPPER & LOWER MEHERABAD



Chapter Two

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW LIFE

The End of the Great Seclusion

On July 24th, Baba was driven from Poona back to Meherazad where He went directly into the Blue Bus without seeing anyone.

During the last days of His seclusion, He spent most of His time in the bus continuing His fast on only liquids. Only Kaka was occasionally called to attend Him.

On July 31st, during the last ten hours of the seclusion, Baba even asked the servants at Meherazad to observe silence.

His disciples and followers from Ahmednagar and Meherabad, who had observed both fast and silence for the month, were invited to be present the following morning, August 1st, when He stepped out of His seclusion.

Instructed to arrive before 7:00 a.m., these followers were told not to eat or have tea before coming, and they were strictly forbidden to express any reverence to Baba.

Precisely on time, His disciples and followers gathered at Meherazad, eagerly awaiting Him. Baba then stepped out of the cabin enclosure, radiant and energetic. Jal Kerawala described Baba looking as though He had just returned from a holiday trip.

Baba took His seat on a colorfully decorated dais and began by spelling out on the alphabet board a serious request with a little humor: "Now prayers will be offered, and everyone should be still and quiet. If anyone makes the slightest noise, a ghost will haunt him." A message that Baba had dictated earlier was then read out in various languages: English, *Marathi* (the local language), Gujarati and Urdu. The English version was read first by Donkin:

*May God, whom the Muslims call Allah,
whom the Zoroastrians call Aburamazd,
whom the Hindus call Ishwar Paramatma and whom
many others call by many other names,*

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*May He whose union 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 next year,
 to speak the one and the last Word
 of all-embracing Divinity.*

Meher Baba*Baba during the Great Seclusion meeting, June 21, 1949*

Announcement of the New Life

Those gathered concluded the reading by saying “Amen,” “Amin” or “Tathastu” (so be it), thereby breaking their month-long silence.

After the last translation was read out, a *ghazal* (a song of longing and complaint to God), dictated earlier by Baba, was sung. In English, it reads:

*People feel pleased to bathe
in the water of the holy Ganges,
But the Ganges itself bathes
in the blood of one
who has spilled it in love.*

*God always takes care of the one
who resides in the city of love.
Tell those, who follow shariat (external religious rites)
and read the Qur'an, to renounce
their own self before preaching to others.*

*Let Maya commit suicide,
and let the world become its grave!
Let this happen by the end of the year
and let all difficulties end
and only God remain.*

*Let God Almighty and companion Baba
allow this desire to be fulfilled,
And at the beginning of the new year
he should manifest and break his silence!*

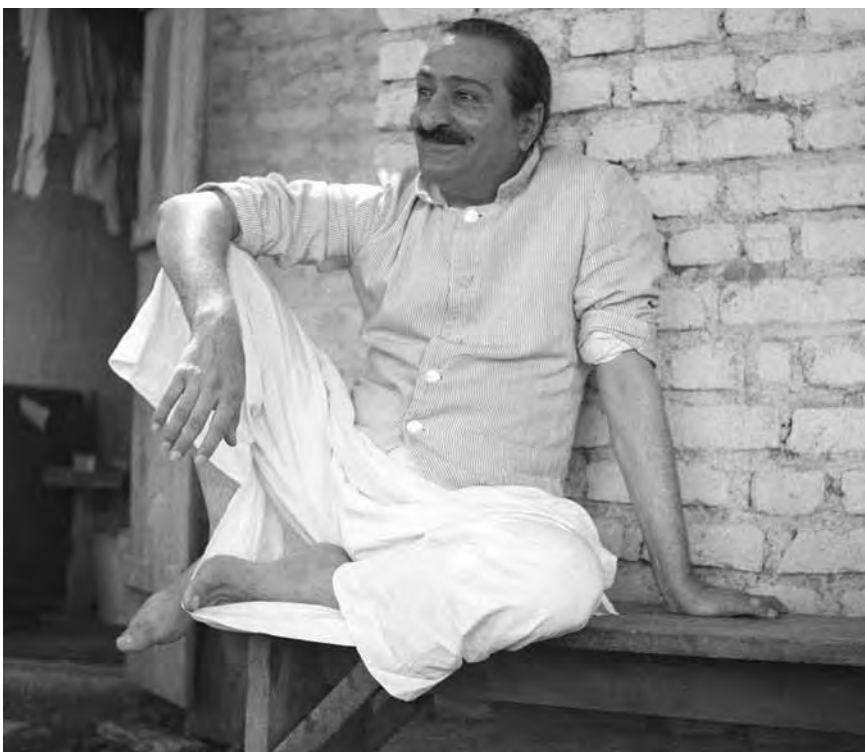
Then, with His own hands, Baba distributed *rava*, a sweet dish, which ended everyone's fast. The atmosphere was deeply charged with Baba's loving presence.

About the seclusion, He said, “The work I have done here in Meherazad, I have not done in any part of the globe.”

The women mandali, who had been told to maintain their silence until Baba joined them after the gathering with the men, were anxiously awaiting Him. As soon as He arrived, He signaled for them to break their silence. Baba then joined them for

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tea and a special rava. Later, He met with Norina Matchabelli and Elizabeth Patterson, to give them final instructions regarding His visit to America and the Center they had developed for Him in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Before they left for America, Baba promised that He would soon come to the West.



Baba at Meherazad, June 1949

Knowing that Baba would appreciate some diversion from the strain of His 40-day seclusion, Mani, who was very imaginative, put on a puppet show with puppets that she had fashioned. Since all the other women had been observing silence, rehearsals were impossible, so Mani ended up playing all the parts herself using a cast of very colorful puppets, including an Italian count and a flamenco dancer. Baba thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment.

Later, in contrast to the lighthearted spirit earlier that day, Baba disclosed the wholly unexpected and earthshaking news that He intended to close down both ashrams, Meherazad and Meherabad, and give up all properties in His name. In addition,

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He said that most of those living with Him could expect to be sent back to the world to earn their livelihood and that only a few would go with Him in the next phase of His work. He referred to this next phase as the “New Life,” which was to begin on October 16th, 1949.

This news was a painful blow to the few close men in Meherazad, a “bombshell,” as some described it. After twenty-five years of ashram life, the idea of being sent back into the world without being in Baba’s presence was devastating.

In the meantime, for a change of scenery, Baba wished to take a short trip to Panchgani, a forested hill station about 60 miles south of Poona. Arrangements were made immediately.

A cottage known as “Silver Oaks” was lovingly prepared for Him by Dr. Alu Khambatta, along with Nargis Dadachanji and Dina Talati, three of His close ones from Bombay. Baba had told Dr. Alu that only she should be there when He arrived at the cottage. On August 9th, when Baba and the women mandali arrived one day earlier than expected, Nargis and Dina, who were helping to prepare the cottage, were thrown into a panic. To avoid breaking Baba’s order and displeasing Him, they quickly ran and hid in the bathroom.

After greeting Dr. Alu, Baba asked mischievously, “Who is cleaning the place?”

When Dr. Alu told Him it was Nargis and Dina, He asked, “But where are they?”

“They’re hiding in the bathroom,” she confessed.

Baba was greatly amused. He called Nargis and Dina and said, “I am very pleased with you. Now both of you start for Bombay this moment!”

When they prepared to leave, He smiled and told them, “Stay on here, finish cleaning and have breakfast with us tomorrow when we return. But finish up the cleaning soon! Go on! Why are you staring at me? Didn’t you hear what I said? Come on now, start to work. And don’t go off and hide in the bathroom!”

After Baba left, the women cleaned the cottage from top to bottom and decorated the doors, windows and glassed-in veranda with garlands of sweet-scented flowers. It required hard work, because the cottage had been vacant for many years.

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When Baba and the women mandali returned the next day from Satara, they were deeply touched by all the work that had transformed the cottage into a warm, cozy place.

Baba rewarded Dina and Nargis by asking them to stay on. Later, Arnavaz and Kharmanmasi, two close ones from Bombay, were also invited to join the party.

Over the next few days, Baba was in a holiday mood. He sometimes went for long walks and for excursions by car. Though it was monsoon season, the rains were intermittent, with dampness in the air, but it was still quite pleasant.

On these walks, local people recognized Baba from His many visits over the years and were very happy to see Him again. Baba also enjoyed these spontaneous encounters as He strolled along the many wooded paths in Panchgani.

At the cottage, Baba and the women played charades and shared humorous stories and jokes. When Baba asked for a ping-pong table, Dr. Alu quickly went out and borrowed one from a neighbor. Baba hit a few balls back and forth with Alu, and then asked her to play with Mehera.

Occasionally, during this visit, Baba referred to certain poems composed by several Perfect Masters of the past, including two of His favorites, Tukaram and Kabir. He quoted a few lines of Kabir, which translated into English, are:

Worry eats everyone.
Worry is the master of all.
But those who swallow worry,
They are the ones
who become *fakirs* [true ascetics].

While in Panchgani, Meheru had a longing to see the cave overlooking Tiger Valley where Baba had stayed in seclusion in the 1930s. Mehera also wanted to see it again and asked Baba if He would take them there. Baba agreed, and since it was a short distance from "Silver Oaks," they went on foot. Baba walked there hand-in-hand with Alu on one side and Mehera on the other. However, after they arrived, Baba was unhappy and wished He had not come. The seclusion work He had done in

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the cave reminded Him of the strain and stress of His recent seclusion, from which He had wanted to take a complete break. His reaction caused Meheru to deeply regret having expressed a desire to see the cave.



*View from Panchgani looking down on a nearby village
and Tiger Valley*

One day, while Dina Talati and Kharmanmasi from Bombay were there, Baba asked them to stage a wrestling match. Dina, who usually wore loose-fitting clothes to disguise just how very thin she was, took on Kharmanmasi, who was short and very plump. They both changed into vests and shorts and came into the room before Baba and the women mandali. Since one was as skinny as a rail and the other was three times larger, just the sight of them in their outfits was hilarious. The wrestling match was an entertaining show for Baba, with skinny Dina finally getting the better of her much stouter, but very jolly, opponent. Baba was very amused, and both ladies were thrilled to have an opportunity, no matter how small, to lighten a little of Baba's burden.

Announcement of the New Life

After His brief holiday in Panchgani, Baba returned to Meherazad on August 12th, where, from morning till night, He dictated several important messages and instructions. They were to be read out at the meetings scheduled to begin in three days, in which He would “decide the mandali’s future.”

During this period, Baba spontaneously decided to take one of the DeSoto cars that Elizabeth had given Him for an outing. He asked Eruch to drive and had the women pile in back. They drove all the way to Belgaum, where they visited for a while, and then they began the long trip back. On the way, they stopped at Bindra house in Poona, Eruch’s family home, where Baba lingered while He sent the women to shop for things to make Meherazad, their new home, more comfortable. He encouraged them to spend whatever they wanted, so they proceeded to stuff the car with various materials and utensils. Mani was particularly proud of a watering can she had bought. When they were ready to leave, Baba insisted that Manu, Eruch’s sister, come with them. Eruch’s father, Papa, protested, saying the



Cave at Tiger Valley where Baba stayed in seclusion in the 1930s

car was too full and that Manu could come with him later by taxi. Baba did not relent. He said He still wanted Manu to ride in the packed car so she could attend a special meeting that He had planned. Manu was crammed into the DeSoto with all the packages and the women, having no idea what this meeting was about. (This was the one and only time that this brand-new DeSoto was ever used by Baba.)

*Announcement of the New Life***Decisive Meetings at Meherabad****August 15 to 20, 1949**

On August 15th, 1949, the important meetings at Lower Meherabad were to begin.

Meherabad, located in a rural area about a quarter of a mile from the small village of Arangaon, was surrounded by barren and flat countryside, dotted with stands of acacia, neem trees and sparse, low vegetation. Here and there were a few farm plots or a solitary mud hut. Very little traffic passed along the main road, except for the occasional lorry or bullock cart.

Lower Meherabad consisted of a few simple whitewashed buildings, the newly constructed Mandali Hall, the old mess quarters built by the British during World War I and a small stone *jhopdi* (hut), where Meher Baba began His silence in 1925.



Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad at the time of the New Life

The barren hill across from Lower Meherabad, on the other side of the railroad tracks, was called Upper Meherabad. It consisted of a large compound enclosed by a high stone wall with

Announcement of the New Life

a water tank that had been converted into a two-storied dormitory still being used by a few of the women mandali. In the same enclosure were a kitchen and several other small buildings. Just outside the compound were a number of other important structures, including Baba's future tomb and a small tin cabin that He frequently used for seclusion work in the 1930s and 1940s.

On August 14th, the day before the gathering, most of the 35 men whom Baba had invited from out of town began arriving at Lower Meherabad, either alone or in small groups. They were instructed to remain at Meherabad for the five full days of meetings. Only Sarosh, one of Baba's oldest disciples and the mayor of Ahmednagar, was given permission to miss the first day in order to attend a city-wide celebration of the anniversary of Indian independence.

The purpose of the meetings was twofold: first, to discuss the requirements of the New Life and to determine who was prepared to set out with Baba on October 16th; and second, to discuss and map out a plan for attending to the countless details and arrangements required in disbanding the ashrams at Meherabad and Meherazad.

Baba warned everyone, "However busy you may be, do not fail to be present all the time. I will not be available afterwards. There will be no more chances like these. I will need no further work to be done by anyone. Take all that I say with the utmost seriousness."

To Feram Workingboxwala, who was to take extensive notes during the meetings, Baba remarked, "Stick to me like a leech and try not to miss anything that I say to anyone during these days."

On August 15th, the first day of the meetings, Baba set off by car from Meherazad. He arrived at Lower Meherabad at 7:15 a.m. where the large group of men stood on the veranda of Mandali Hall, eagerly awaiting His arrival. As Baba stepped out of the car, He embraced Kaikobad and Gustadji, two of His long-time disciples, and then went into the hall where He sat on a chair that had been prepared for Him.

When the men were seated on the floor before Him, it was discovered that some men were missing. Displeased with their

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tardiness, Baba was not inclined to start the meeting. Only when it was explained to Him that the time written on the notice board for the meeting had been 7:30 a.m. would He begin. He then gave the warning, "Be present in the hall even if you find that I have not arrived by seven o'clock."

Using His alphabet board, from which Adi Sr. and a few others read aloud, Baba dictated most of what He had to say in Gujarati. For the benefit of some of the men in the room, His words were translated into English by Ramjoo and into Marathi by Vishnu. He began:

Listen and pay attention to all that I am going to tell you. Whatever is going to be discussed here during these days and the decisions taken will be made known to all, plainly, exactly and truthfully. Today we shall have a general discussion, which will be the basis for making the ultimate arrangements and adjustments before making our final decisions. There are three points that I have already decided upon most definitely about myself. What I want from you is to help me to help all to adjust themselves as best they can to fall in line with my own decisions in one way or the other. These three points are:

1. I will be absolutely helpless in the true and literal sense of the word on account of some personal disaster to me, and before that happens after October 1st, I wish to make whatever arrangements are possible for the mandali within the limited means at our disposal. Thereafter, I will have to stop, and I shall stop attending to the material affairs of anyone.
2. I will allow only those persons to remain with and near me who are in every respect ready on their own responsibility to fulfill and carry out the conditions I lay down during these few days. I will be beyond the reach of all others.

Announcement of the New Life

3. Meherabad and Pimpalgaon (Meherazad) ashrams will be disbanded, as I am going to wipe these off my map!

I thank God that the time for which I have been waiting so long has at last arrived. The whole world will know how and to what extent I become helpless, and I will come to know how far the mandali will go with me. In brief, this is the gist of all we will discuss and have to decide upon.



Meeting in Mandali Hall in Lower Meherabad

Announcement of the New Life

Normally, everyone was allowed to address Baba in his own language. In this meeting, however, to make everything clear and not to keep anything secret, Baba asked each one to speak in a language known to all. Thus, when Aloha (Ali Akbar) asked Him something about his personal affairs in Persian, Baba at once stopped him and said, "No, you try to tell me everything as best as you can in Hindi, as I want everyone, whether actually present or not, to know what transpires here during these days."

On another occasion, Papa Jessawala, Eruch's father, tried to convey something privately in writing about his household affairs, but Baba made him read the letter in front of everyone, remarking, "Nothing is to be kept secret."

When one of the men asked Baba's advice about attending to his affairs, He said, "Dispose of all that you can. Provide whatever you can for your dependents. Arrange matters along these lines, and wait and see for yourself what is finally decided in the meetings. Then decide for yourself whether you can or cannot remain with me in the future. There is absolutely no question of spiritual relations and spiritual benefits. No one will be left out spiritually if I am spiritually perfect myself."

Baba appeared to be as concerned with those staying behind as those going with Him, especially His close ones at Lower Meherabad and on the Hill, who had been dependent upon Him materially for many years.

From the very first day of the meetings, Baba was extremely decisive about the disposal of all properties and in making provision for His dependents. He said, "Now how to adjust? I have no cash excepting a certain amount, which is kept aside for a certain work. Everything that I own and possess, including ashram buildings, fields and houses, etc., both here [at Ahmednagar, Arangaon and Pimpalgaon] and elsewhere, and all furniture, fixtures, cars, generators, cattle, chattels and in fact each and everything that belongs to me, is to be disposed of. Nothing is to remain as my property and in my name excepting the Meherabad Hill premises on which the tomb for my bodily remains has already been built by me, and you all should always remember that when I leave my body, it is to be buried here."

The small domed building, His future tomb, was constructed in 1938. At this site in 1927, He had once stayed in seclusion for

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five-and-a-half months in a small pit inside. The simple structure and the little plot of land on which it stands are, symbolically, owned by the hearts of all His present lovers and those in centuries to come. For this reason, Baba wished that this most special place be kept in His name.



The tomb at Upper Meherabad during the New Life

After the above points had been conveyed, Dr. Ghani, according to Baba's direction, offered the following brief prayer: "O God! May Baba not give up His body soon!" Everyone present responded by saying, "Amen!" Baba continued:

All the proceeds from the sale of all my properties are to be used in paying off promised sums and to provide for the immediate needs of those whom I have myself made dependent on me. Nothing is required for me and for those who go with me. We have therefore to see what can best be done for those who will not be able to accompany and remain with me after October 15th. I do

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not want anyone depending on me to be suddenly left in the lurch materially. The question about spiritual benefits does not arise at all. That in turn depends on the question of whether I am or I am not perfect. As it is, we have, so to say, one rupee in hand against ten rupees to be spent in order to provide at least for the immediate and minimum requirements of all concerned. Be absolutely honest in giving your opinions, answers and suggestions. Keep sentiments apart. Don't be vague. Say exactly what you think and how you feel. You should not say, "Baba, Your will."

Only a few of us are here to arrive at the decisions that concern many of us. The women mandali are also going to be disbanded. Whatever we decide here is therefore also going to be followed by the women and will affect everyone who is connected with me in some way or another. I am going to decide everything within these ten days.

Do not get misled on account of my apparently eccentric habits and customs up to now. For example, I have definitely decided to give up Meherazad (Pimpalgaon) in October, and yet I have given instructions to Padri to fix the electric fittings as soon as he can. This is due to my old habit of maintaining an old order of things right up to the moment when I actually start upon anything new. It may be madness, it may be method, but that has been my habit. Now I am going to put an end to my habits and customs. Therefore, when I say the "end" now, it will mean nothing but an end. Do not remain any more under the impression that it will be otherwise. I want to be absolutely free from everything and everyone. There will be no compromise now about anything.

I am becoming
ghutt - hardened,
naffat - callous,
 and naked - penniless.

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Remember the proverb:

Nange-se-Khuda-bhi darta hai!

“Even God is afraid of the naked!”

Baba set a deadline of October 15th for the disposal of everything and the completion of all arrangements. His Last Will, which had been made in favor of the mandali since 1940, and the mandali's own wills made in favor of Him, were all canceled.

In the presence of everyone, Baba tore up all the wills, one by one, except those of the Westerners, and gave the pieces to the individuals concerned as souvenirs. The firm of Meher Publications was also dissolved, and the copyrights of the books were now given to the authors themselves.

Nariman, Meherjee and Sarosh, three of Baba's longtime disciples, who had always rendered Him invaluable service over the years, were deeply affected by His bold decisions regarding the New Life. Sarosh was the first to offer to undertake indefinitely the sole financial support for all the men and women going with Baba.

Smiling in appreciation for Sarosh's thoughtful gesture, Baba told him, “You have missed the whole point! Don't you see that the expected sale proceeds of all my properties are earmarked for those not coming with me? The question of the maintenance of those who will remain with me after October 15th is neither provided for, nor is it to be provided for. I and those going with me have to suffer. We are now going to start without any protection and will have to go begging.”

Earlier, Nariman and Meherjee had expressed their desire to maintain the Meherazad and Meherabad ashrams, including the lands and buildings. In view of the great sanctity of these places, this represented a great sacrifice on their part and the assumption of an enormous responsibility as well.

Baba gave His consent, and afterward, when He told them not to hesitate to resell the properties if they received a good offer, Nariman said, “If it were a question of selling them off, we would not have involved ourselves!”

Baba replied, “Now these properties are yours, not mine; and I have no objection to your keeping or selling them.”

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The Meherabad property had originally belonged to Adi K. Irani's parents, who gave it over to Baba in the early 1920s for His work. Meherjee now became the owner of Lower Meherabad, Sarosh of Meherabad Hill and Nariman of Meherazad. These men accepted their ownership of the properties only for the sake of Baba's work and never considered them as their own.

On this first day of the meetings, several of the men were granted interviews and then were sent home. One was a seeker named Mauni Bua, who for some years had observed silence and traveled on pilgrimages to sacred places throughout India.

In the interview, Baba asked him, "Would you follow my orders?"

"I am ready to obey you 100 percent," Mauni spelled out on his slate.

Baba dictated on His board, "Then do this: drink two bottles of wine every day, eat meat and go to movies. Will you do it?"

Mauni, who was accustomed to following spiritual practices, was shocked by the orders and could not respond.

Seeing that Mauni could not obey, Baba smiled and instructed him, "All right, go about your pilgrimages and continue to beg for your food."

Mauni was greatly relieved, as these injunctions coincided with his ideas of the spiritual life.

Ironically, years later, latent tendencies toward drink and meat surfaced in Mauni. Perhaps, if Mauni had said "yes" to Baba's first orders, Baba would have canceled them and at the same time taken upon Himself the latent tendencies in Mauni, thereby saving him from much future suffering, but only Baba knew what was buried in Mauni's psyche.



*Announcement of the New Life***Baba with the Women Mandali**

The next day, August 16th, Baba arrived by car from Meherazad and started up the hill to Upper Meherabad to meet with the women mandali, including Manu, who He had insisted attend. When the women saw Him coming up the hill, a bell was rung as a signal for everyone to gather.



A 1948 photograph of the women mandali in front of the East Room

Looking radiant and smiling, Baba entered the compound and walked to the East Room of the large converted water tank. Once inside, He sat down on Mehera's bed, a simple iron cot. The women, twenty-one altogether, gathered around Him, sitting on small stools and nearby beds. They included Mehera, Mani, Dr. Goher, Meheru, Naja and Valu, who had come from Meherazad. Those living at Meherabad included: Khorshed, Soonamasi, Rano, Kitty, Mansari, Kaku, Katie and Manu Jessawala. In addition, there were Kaikobad's wife Jerbai and his daughters, Meheru, Jalu and Gulu. Baidul's wife Soltoon also

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came with her daughters Dowla and Sarwar.

Mehera sat on a low stool beside Baba while Mani read out what Baba dictated on the alphabet board. Baba asked that the door be locked, something unheard of before at a meeting. Although Baba had been smiling as He entered the room, now His mood was so profoundly serious that most of the women actually felt frightened, even though most had heard nothing about the New Life.

Baba began, "Promise me that you will do as I say." He said this without explaining what might be expected of them. He then held out His hand, and each of the women came before Baba and put her hand in His to confirm the promise.

Only Khorshed, one of the very earliest women mandali, refused to come forward.



The entrance to the East Room of the converted water tank

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With utmost seriousness, Baba looked at her and she looked at Him, but her resolve was firm. The other women were shocked and urged Khorshed to give Him her promise.

Then Baba began persuading her, saying that it is the duty of the disciple to do whatever the Master says.

“But Baba,” she confessed finally, “I feel You are going to separate Yourself from me!”

He persisted in trying to change her mind, but she responded, saying, “I am convinced that You are separating from me, so what is the use of a promise?”

Baba replied, “Those who are bound by my instructions can never be separate from me. To keep you near me, I am seeking your promise.”

There was a great tension in the room. Suddenly, from deep within her, Khorshed felt a profound compassion for Baba that moved her to finally come forward. Baba was very pleased and gave her a long, warm embrace.

Khorshed spontaneously began weeping, but Baba told her, “Don’t cry, laugh! Even if you feel you are being cut to pieces, show a smile outside on your face. In love, this is the meaning of bravery.” Khorshed made an effort to smile.

Baba then looked at all the women, telling them what gems they were to remain devoted to Him for so many years and how fortunate they were to have lived in His ashram and to have enjoyed His physical presence for so long. “Now you will all have to help me in my work,” and He then dealt them an unexpected blow: “I am going, and I am not coming back. You won’t see my face for the rest of your life!”

He went on to disclose that He intended to disband both ashrams, and they would have to be willing to obey Him and to go wherever He decided, which could mean returning to the world. For most of the women, this came as a devastating shock; they were all speechless. Only Khorshed had suspected this was coming.

Turning to Mehera, Baba said that in this New Life she might be asked to wash the clothes of the men mandali. Although for years she had no contact with men, Mehera replied that she would carry out His wishes.

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Baba also said that He might ask any one of them to get married, even to an old sweeper man if He ordered them to. Almost all the women were unmarried, and although this prospect was not appealing to them in the least, they nodded in assent. He concluded by saying that He planned to take a walking tour of north India with a small number of the men mandali and that He might leave all of the women behind, or maybe take a few with Him.

When the meeting was over and Baba had left, most of the women were plunged into grief. After so many years of ashram life, they felt the earth was giving way beneath them.

The next day, when Baba came to Upper Meherabad, He was in a very serious mood. Again, sitting on Mehera's cot in the East Room with the women gathered around Him, He began by telling them that He had decided to take four women with Him, but He did not reveal who they would be. He then asked everyone to choose one of four options:

1. If any of you has some member of your family who can provide for you financially, you can stay on in Meherabad Hill quarters, but there will not be any member of the men mandali down the Hill to give you help in any way.
2. You can work for your living, giving whatever you can spare to the families that so far have been depending on me.
3. You can do what you like and have nothing more to do with me.
4. You can leave everything to me and do exactly as I say, accepting with full faith whatever decision I make for you.

The women were unanimous in choosing the fourth option. Baba was happy with this. When the meeting was over, He went down the hill to meet with the men in Mandali Hall. While there, Baba made it clear that the concession He had given to the

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women, of His making their decision for them, did not extend to the men. Each of the men would have to make the final decision for himself whether or not to join the New Life. He added, "But in either case, each person, man or woman, will have to affirm sole responsibility in an oath before God in my presence



Dr. Goher

for their respective decisions, whether arrived at directly or through me."

Regarding the families of Baidul and Kaikobad, Baba said, "When I suggested to Kaikobad's family members to consult with me first, each one said that she belonged to me and would do what I told her myself. Similarly, when I inquired of Baidul's family, whether I should ask them or ask Baidul about them, they went so far as to say that Baidul had no concern with their future and they would fully accept my decision for them."

"Every one of the women has promised me to accept the fourth condition, which says that they would accept what I decide. As a token of

their sincerity and promise, I asked them to kiss my hand. I then asked them to be careful lest the kiss proved the *kiss of Judas*, but to maintain it as the seal of obedience."

Baba then gave the men mandali three options to choose from:

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First: Those who will find themselves able to fulfill the conditions that I have laid down and accept the same, will go with me.

Second: Those who cannot accompany me will have to earn their living, and if they can spare anything out of their earnings, they should give the savings to the dependent families and continue to carry out the orders already given to them by me, or any orders that I may give to them later.

Third: Those who can neither go with me, nor support others and carry out my orders, will have to go their own way.

Ghani then read out the following prayer as requested by Baba:

May God give good *buddhi* [sense] to the mandali
and full *suddhi* [discrimination] to Baba!

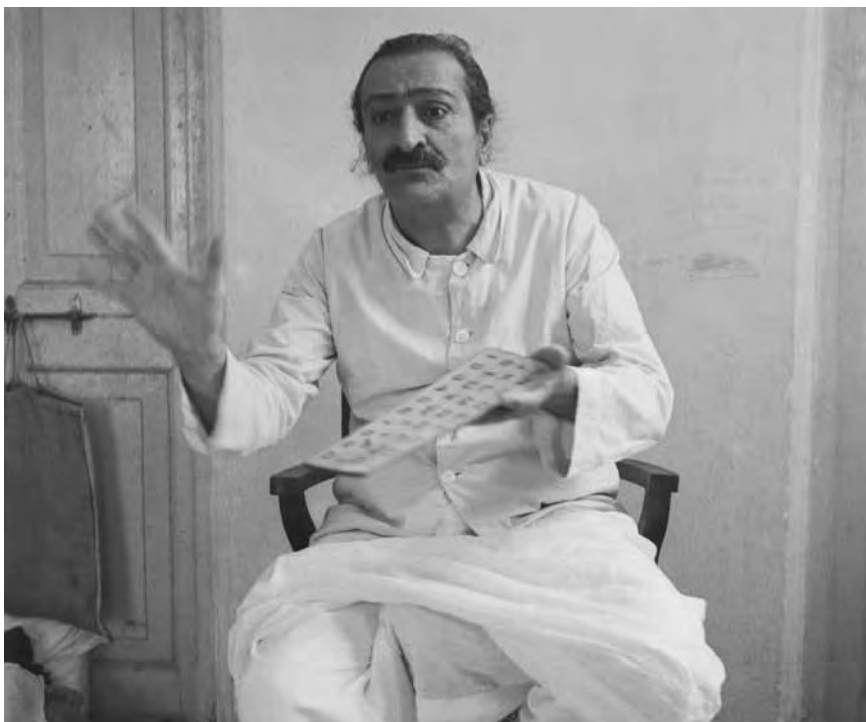
Clarifying the above three points, Baba observed, “Even if Ramjoo [one of the mandali] does not come with me and remains in Ahmednagar, going on doing the duties entrusted to him and following my orders, his spiritual connection with me will remain as it is today. Similarly, suppose Padri does not come with me. In that case, I will ask him to find a job, maintain himself on his earnings and give the remainder to the families. If Padri carries out my orders, his spiritual connection with me will be the same as it is today. Likewise, if Baidul accompanies me, well and good; if not, he will have to serve in Kaikhushru’s restaurant in Bombay.”

Having presented the men with the three options, Baba ended the meeting. With a few of the women mandali, He then returned by car to Meherazad. The gathering had been filled with great tension and anxiety for the men as each contemplated an uncertain future.

The impact of Baba’s announcement that He intended to disband both ashrams and set out on a New Life was devastating to everyone, and Dr. Goher, for one, felt deeply depressed. As she was busy working in the garden at Meherazad that same

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afternoon, her heart was in utter tumult. Since she had only been with the women mandali for two years and so many had been with Him for so much longer, she was certain she would not be one of the four chosen. She said to herself, "How can I live without Baba? I can't go back to the world. There is no reason to live anymore." She even contemplated suicide. This, unquestionably, was the lowest point in her life.



Goher's agonizing thoughts were suddenly interrupted by Baba's clap coming from the main house. Turning around, she saw Him standing on the veranda with Mehera beside Him. At that moment, Mehera called Goher over, and as she approached Baba, He asked her, "What are you thinking? Tell me."

"Baba," she replied through tears, "I know I am not going with You on the New Life. I was feeling dejected. I can't live without You. I don't want to go back to the world."

Baba then gestured to Mehera, "Tell her she is mad."

With a smile, Mehera assured her, "You will be the fourth woman in the New Life."

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Goher felt speechless, but she managed to say, “Baba, I am so grateful to You. I never expected You’d take me.” (Years later, Goher said that this was the happiest moment of her life.)

On August 18th, the third day of meetings in the East Room with the women mandali, Baba disclosed the four women He intended to take on the New Life: Mehera, Mani, Goher and Meheru.



Baba then went over the conditions they could expect in this next phase of their life with Him.

The pain and grief experienced by those women not going with Him can only be imagined. Although weeping uncontrollably, they knew deep down that their only recourse was to resign themselves to Baba’s wish, as impossible as that seemed.

Baba then told Rano and Kitty that, due to the continuing turmoil following the partition of India, it would be best not to travel with two Western women in India.

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He said, "If you wish, you may go back to your countries or remain in India. My love will always be with you, but I will not see your faces!"

Both women chose to remain in India, and Baba accordingly arranged for them to live with Meherjee and his wife Homi in Bombay. He instructed them to look for work there.

Continuing with the women, Baba asked His two very early disciples, Soonamasi and her daughter Khorshed, where they would like to stay. When they left the decision in His hands, Baba arranged for both of them to also stay at Meherjee and Homi's place and to be of help in their home. (This was a propitious consideration, because Soonamasi was suffering from cataracts in both eyes and would eventually require surgery from a specialist in Bombay.)

During the first day of His meetings with the women, Baba had said, "None should suggest to me anything; none should ask me anything. My decision is final, and no one is to stay here any longer!"

Mansari, one of the women who lived on Meherabad Hill, had thought deeply about Baba's decision for several days. In the meeting on the third day when Baba asked her what was on her mind, she replied, "If you permit me, I will tell you."

Baba agreed, and she replied, "Baba, if my promise is kept and You allow me, can I stay in Meherabad? You can go anywhere. I'll stay in Meherabad."

This pleased Baba very much, and when He embraced her, there was a knowing look in His eyes, which prompted Mansari to remember an incident three years earlier when she had begged Baba to leave Meherazad and move to Meherabad again. At that time, Baba had replied, "Instead of that, if you say, 'Baba, You go anywhere You like, I will stay in Meherabad,' I will be pleased." Mansari was greatly consoled by this memory.

Finally, along with Mansari, Kaikobad, as well as his wife and three daughters, were allowed to remain on Meherabad Hill during the New Life. Janglemaster, a longtime disciple, was appointed to look after them and do their marketing since he lived down the hill in his family quarters near Arangaon village.

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Valu and Baidul's wife and two daughters were then instructed by Baba to stay in Poona at Bindra House, the home of Eruch's family. Two of the other women mandali, Naja and Katie, were asked to stay with Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji in Bombay. Naja, Baba's cousin, was too ill at the time to join the New Life.

While discussing the subject of a job for Katie, Baba pressed His thumb to His nose, which she interpreted to mean that she would be working with Chinese people. She was horrified, as the Chinese at this time were the enemies of India. Moreover, since she had been one of the cooks in the ashram, she thought that Baba might be her to work in one of the many Chinese restaurants in Bombay, the last thing she wanted to do.

Baba then made a typing gesture, indicating that she would get a position as a secretary. Although Katie had never done office work, months later, through a "coincidental" friendship, she obtained an excellent job as secretary to the Japanese consulate. It was then that she understood Baba's gesture of pressing His thumb to His nose.

Baba made detailed arrangements for each of the women not going with Him and gave them special orders to follow in His absence. They were to remember that, although they were physically separated from Him, they would share in the New Life by carrying out His orders of "not possessing money or buying or accepting new things, or going to cinemas, and only accepting food, shelter and toilet necessities" from those with whom they would be staying. They also had to give up any hope of seeing Him again.

"All trouble is due to hoping," He told them. "Where there is no hope, there can be no disappointment."

Baba made it clear that whatever might happen to them after October 15th – ill health, personal problems, or even disaster – was no longer His responsibility. Each would have to take full responsibility for whatever might happen and declare this before God.

He then told the women to wash their faces and hands and to take an oath before the Impersonal God in His presence.

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He ended the simple ceremony, saying, "All this is a very serious matter and not one to be taken or treated lightly. But, while taking it seriously, if you can still laugh, it would be nice indeed."

The Meetings Continue

On August 18th, Baba arrived from Meherazad by car a little before 7:00 a.m. and entered Mandali Hall, followed by all the men, who seated themselves on the floor. Baba immediately told Dr. Donkin, Khaksaheb, Kaikobad and Kalemama to be ready to act as priests for a prayer session with the *Bible*, the *Qur'an*, the *Avesta* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

After a talk with Nariman and Meherjee, He called the four mandali "priests" to step forward and gestured for them to stand on His right. He first asked Kaikobad, representing a *dastur* (a Zoroastrian priest), to perform the *kusti* (a sacred thread ceremony) and then to read aloud a traditional prayer for five minutes. When this prayer was completed, Donkin followed in the role of a Christian priest and read from the Bible: "The Crucifixion of Jesus" from the *Gospel of St. Matthew*. Then came Khaksaheb, who, as an Islamic mullah, offered *Namaz* (the repetition of God's name) and silently performed two *Raqats of Nafil* (Muslim prayers). Kalemama, in the role of a pandit, com-

pleted the short prayer service by the recitation of seven *shlokas* of the tenth *Adyaya* from the *Bhagavad Gita*.



*Dr. Ghani
putting his
hands on
the holy books*

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There was a profound quiet in the hall as the prayers were offered. As each recitation was completed, Baba was given the respective book of scriptures, which He kept on His lap, resting His hand on each book. After the last prayer, He took the four books and spread them out on a table by His side.

Dr. Ghani was then asked to put his hands on the four scriptures and to solemnly offer a prayer, which Baba dictated:

May God help Baba to definitely take this step which he is taking, to give up everything and go away irrevocably, so that from October 16th when he enters the New Life, there will be no turning back.

This was the first time during their 28 years of association with Him that the mandali had ever heard Baba ask God for “help.” They were so shocked and confused that no one could even utter “Amen!”

For many years, Baba had not allowed any of the mandali members or His lovers to touch His feet or offer salutations with folded hands. This was the rule, and everyone followed His wish. On this day, however, as Baba was sitting in His chair, Aloba, who was near Him, very unobtrusively touched His feet. This was a spontaneous response of gratitude to an earlier remark by Baba complimenting Aloba’s readiness to obey Him. None of the men even noticed Aloba’s simple gesture. However, in response, Baba suddenly became solemn and the whole atmosphere grew profoundly serious. Then, without showing any displeasure, Baba told Aloba to stand before Him and not move.

Baba got up from His chair, walked toward Aloba and bent down to touch his feet. Unable to receive this unprecedented gesture by Baba, Aloba shrieked loudly, leaped backwards in the air and had to be caught by Baba and some of the nearby men in order to keep him from striking his head against the stone flooring.

From the way Baba carried His arm afterwards, it was apparent that He had been physically injured by Aloba’s sudden movement. Without drawing attention to this, Baba again asked Aloba to stand erect, and this time Baba succeeded in touching his feet. Aloba was sobbing.

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Later, it was discovered that the whole weight of Aloba's fall had come down on the fingers of Baba's right hand. Although first aid was administered on the spot by Dr. Nilu and Donkin, Baba had to wear His hand in a sling for several days. His fingers were swollen, and He experienced throbbing pain that lasted for the next few nights.

One week later, it was with great effort that He put His signature to the legal document that canceled His Last Will.

During the meeting, when the excitement of this incident had subsided, Baba pardoned Aloba, telling him not to dwell any further on what had happened, nor to blame himself in any way. Then He said, "Obedience to my orders is the most important thing, and compared to that there was no importance at all in my touching your feet." Baba asked Aloba, "How will it be possible for you to accompany me if you are not prepared to fully comply with my conditions? Possibly, one of the conditions may be to the effect that the first thing done every morning by the mandali would be to spit in my face, or that every morning I will be touching your feet! Will you accept these conditions?"

Aloba replied, "It would be a question of going to pieces!"

"No," Baba said, "it is not that. It is only a question of carrying out the conditions." Suddenly, Baba asked Aloba to twist His ears. With a smile, Aloba promptly carried out the order.

Meanwhile, one of the early mandali, Anna Jakkal, also known as Anna 104, raised his hand, saying he was prepared to twist His ears also!

"I only asked Aloba to do that," Baba smilingly replied, "and no one else. But if any of you feels like giving vent to your pent-up feelings to settle old scores with me, I will not mind at all having my ears twisted this day by any of you without fear of my displeasure."

Amid the roar of laughter this remark evoked, Baba added, "Twisting my ears is easy, but following my orders is difficult. Those who come with me should consider themselves *already dead*. Just as a corpse has no material connections or concern with anyone or anything and asks no questions and needs no provisions, even so, those accompanying me will have to be with me as corpses! I am going to see who is out to die for no particular reason by going with me!" Baba then invited the man-

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dali's "wholehearted, honest and sincere cooperation and opinions" in arriving at a number of decisions relating to all. They were also warned to give up "all fads, fancies, notions and vagueness" regarding spiritual leanings and beliefs, and those going with Him were not to have the least expectation of reward. Explaining further, Baba said,

It is not merely a question of hardships and privations like those experienced in the past trips. The most difficult thing now is the need to control emotions and feelings and an absolute readiness for split-second and on-the-spot obedience to whatever I ask you to do, or not to do. I do not expect you to be free from your reactions of good and bad impulses like that of anger, displeasure, likes and dislikes, but what I would expect of you is not to make the least show or give direct or indirect expression to your feelings and reactions.

I will be free in every way, and you will be bound in every respect. I will live amongst you as one of you, like a brother. I may even fall at your feet or ask you to spit on me. That is why I have been saying that the conditions will be such that very few will remain with me to the end. But at all times and under all circumstances, you must continue to look upon me as your Master and obey me implicitly.

Scrupulous care shall have to be taken all the time by those going with me, so as to avoid creating any occasion or situation by word or deed, whether directly or indirectly, that might invite or encourage homage or reverence to be paid by anyone to me or to any of you. If by chance, any respect or homage happens to be paid unsolicited to anyone, that action of respect or homage must be instantly met with an identical action on the spot by the mandali concerned, except when I happen to touch the mandali's feet or fall at their feet or salute them.

Above all, I will not take care of anyone's health or have any concern with anyone's moods and likes and dislikes, as I have been doing so far. So, considering all this, those remaining with me till the end will really be worthy of my

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worship. I would be glad to have as many mandali go with me as possible, but in view of the difficulties lying ahead and the conditions I am going to lay down to meet all likely situations and circumstances, I have my doubts whether even five would be able to make it to the end, even if 500 were to accompany me!



On the points given to them by Baba, Dr. Ghani and Dr. Donkin drew up a provisional draft of the conditions to be followed during the New Life.

Three days later, during the August 21st meeting, before the reading of the conditions, Baba asked Ghani to offer this prayer:

May it please God to give His absolute strength to Baba to adhere to everything that is in His conditions to the very end!

After the prayer, further interpretations on the New Life conditions were given by the men.

Baba then asked Ghani and Donkin to make a new draft based on the discussion. He stressed the seriousness and finality of these conditions, which were to be adopted on August

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31st, 1949, asserting, "No change is possible in the conditions, according to the decision I have taken. I am not going to come back to Meherabad or Meherazad. The fact has been made permanent by the oath-taking ceremony performed through the four mandali members the other day. I was very glad to receive injury to my hand which I had placed on the religious books. That ought to be an eye-opener to the mandali who accompany me, that they will have to face great suffering."

At the end of the meeting, Nilu interrupted Baba, saying, "Everything will be easy."

Baba countered unexpectedly, "There is no difficulty at all. There will be difficulty if at 2:00 p.m. tomorrow, if Ramjoo does not complete the work entrusted to him."

Baba continued to voice doubts that any more than a few would be able to stick with Him to the last, saying, "It is all the more surprising that those of you who should know and understand best, keep on asking questions that betray a poor appreciation of the full implications and nature of the New Life and its conditions. The other day, Chhagan asked if he should accompany me or adopt the alternative! Ghani also could not help asking whether I will be able to help him stick to me! The fact is that I will not be responsible at all for anything or anyone. I will bear no responsibility even for Gustadji, although he will be the only one whom I shall try to keep with me, because Upasni Maharaj had sent him to me. But that too will depend upon whether Gustadji will continue listening to me; otherwise, it will be good-bye even for him!"

(In the case of His old schoolmate Ghani, Baba had asked Eruch to hint to the doctor that He wanted him to join the New Life.)

In the course of His talk, Baba pointed to His injured fingers and remarked, "This, plus my complete silence and the things I have to do, can better be left to your imagination. If later on, the other arm is paralyzed, it would mean that I will be almost helpless physically. In that case, those who remain with me may have to subsist on water only, because, according to one of the conditions, when food is received or obtained by anyone through begging, it is to be brought to me and cannot be eaten unless I distribute it myself."

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Initially, it was intended that a circular detailing the conditions be sent to all the mandali members as well as to others connected with Baba's work.

Later, Baba said that no one under the age of 25 or over 60 could join the New Life.

As the five days of meetings continued, the number of possible companions going on the New Life with Baba was narrowed down considerably. Out of a list of 1200 followers who had vowed in the past to adhere to Baba's instructions at the cost of their lives, He selected only 32 men to be invited to Meherabad for a meeting on August 31st, when the list of conditions would be personally handed to them.

The initial draft of the conditions, which Ghani and Donkin had drawn up after the earlier August 21st meeting, is as follows:

The Conditions of the New Life

1. Not to touch any women (women not to touch men).
2. Not to touch money.
3. Not to have any connection with anyone.
4. Not to correspond.
5. Not to read newspapers.
6. To eat food only obtained by begging.
7. Not to eat anything before it was brought to Baba and He with His own hands had distributed it.
8. To speak truth always.
9. Not to hurt the feelings of others, even if insulted.
10. To obey Baba's orders in every way.
11. In case of disobedience, Baba should send away any offender, and his spiritual connection will also snap.

The above conditions are the ingredients for acquiring physical and mental renunciation (*satyanashi*), in which all hope and expectation of reward and benefits have been annihilated. For this state to be attained, one must renounce oneself, and in the end, renounce renunciation itself.

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Baba reiterated that those accompanying Him should consider themselves dead to everything, like corpses which remain unaffected by the world and its affairs, neither questioning nor wanting anything.

At the end of this meeting on August 21st, as Baba was being driven by Adi back to Meherazad, they passed a group of young men on the outskirts of town standing on the roadside under a tree. Baba asked who they were, and Adi informed Him they were from Poona and had been waiting for five hours hoping to catch a glimpse of Him as the car drove by. Although Baba was not giving *darshan* (the physical presence of a Master) at this time, He told Adi to stop the car and the young men immediately raced to Him.

One of those gathered was Rangole, age 26, who had recently undergone surgery. Although forbidden by his doctor even to walk, his intense longing to be with Baba had impelled him to make the trip to Ahmednagar anyway. In spite of being in great physical pain, his excitement at seeing Baba had him racing past the others to Baba's car just for a glimpse of Him. At this rare opportunity, any pain he felt was dissolved in the glorious sight of Baba.

The night before, Madhusudan Pund, another young man, who had not previously had Baba's physical darshan, had a vivid dream in which he asked a woman, "Do you know where God is?"

"Do you want to see Him?" she asked. "Do you want to see Him in human form?"

"Is it possible?"

"Yes," replied the woman, "but there's a condition. Once you visit Him, you won't be able to go back. So go and take permission of your mother and father, and then come."

Later in the dream, Madhusudan saw Baba enveloped in a tremendous light. Now, as soon as he saw Baba in the car, he witnessed the same light surrounding Him as in the dream, which caused him to faint.

When Madhusudan was revived by his friends, Baba stepped out of the car and put His hand on his head and said, "I know you love me. Continue to love me and remain happy. My *nazar* [divine glance] is on you."

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Baba and Adi then drove off.

After this experience, Madhusudan's heart was set on fire, and over the years that followed, he composed and sang many deeply moving devotional songs for Baba.



Pendu, Baba's cousin

Further Preparations

The cooperation of the women mandali in support of Baba's New Life was complete. Whatever belongings they could offer to help Him were laid out on their beds. One morning, when Baba came up Meherabad Hill, He was touched by the women's willingness to give away their most precious possessions. Everyone, including Mehera, whose seldom-used belongings were stored there, offered costly silk saris, gold ornaments and jewelry as their contribution to those who Baba had helped materially over the years.

Glassware, brass pots and pans, cutlery, tea sets, carpets and tapestries were brought out of the tin storeroom in the compound and packed for sending by truck to Bombay to be sold. Naja, who did much of the cooking, complained, "You'll not be able to get another kettle like this one... or knives like that," but she was quieted by the others. The irony of all this was that just a few days before, Baba had the women cramming a DeSoto full of housewares for Meherazad, which were now up for sale.

Tables, beds and cupboards, which the women had used for years, were carted away. A brand new refrigerator and two De Soto cars that Elizabeth had given Baba, and another small car from Arnavaz and Nariman, also went into the "jackpot." Practically nothing from Meherazad and Meherabad was spared.

Meherjee's home in Bombay became, for several weeks, a sort of marketplace for disposing of truckloads of these items.

Because of the frantic pace of disposing of everything, the women mandali not going with Baba had little time to dwell on their grief.

As a contribution to the New Life, a collection of almost 10,000 rupees was sent to Baba by a number of His poorer

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women followers from Bombay. Some were said to have given away everything they possessed. Baba accepted their offering and then sent everything back to the respective donors as His prasad.



Praising two of the women from Bombay, Baba remarked, “Dina Talati has not only given up all that she possessed and all that she has been able to save all these years, but has insisted that I make some use of the entire proceeds. And Kharmanmasi, I know that it is with the greatest difficulty that she can make ends meet. In fact, she is half-starving, and yet the wonder is that somehow she has managed to slip in 400 rupees in a cover which has been sent to me on her behalf.”

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Pendu, during the months of September and October, felt as if a mountain had fallen on his shoulders. As the manager of Lower Meherabad, he had to dispose of a wide range of things, including lands, cows, buffaloes, bullocks, utensils and furniture in a brief period. At such short notice, it was extremely difficult for him to sell all the property, even at a very low price. Yet all these proceeds were needed to ensure that those families and individuals who had lived under Baba's wing for so many years would not be left without financial support.

On the evening of August 29th, four men, Keshav Nigam, Shripat Sahai, Babu Ramprasad and Vandran, arrived from Hamirpur with Babadas, one of the mandali, to see Baba. During this period, great preparations were underway for Baba's darshan in Hamirpur, a very poor district in central India, and these four men had made the long journey to personally make sure He would come, since He had earlier promised Babadas that He would pay a visit to this district.

Such is Baba's Divine Game! Speedy preparations were being made by Baba for setting out on the New Life, while at

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the same time the district of Hamirpur was ablaze with preparations for His darshan!

The next day, Baba went to Meherabad by car, arriving at 7:00 a.m., and immediately called the four “pillars” of Hamirpur to His cabin near Mandali Hall. He began by spelling out on His alphabet board:

People call me the Lord of the universe, but I am the Servant of the universe! I am the washerman come to clean the dirty laundry of humanity! You are very fortunate indeed to have come here on this occasion, when I am about to enter the New Life. I am now giving all of you three orders to follow for one year from the 15th of October, 1949. Think them over seriously, and on returning to your homes, let me know what you decide. I will not be the least displeased if one or all three instructions are unacceptable to you. But if you once give your promise to follow any of them, then there should be no breach of it. So, before promising, think it over deeply.

These are the three orders: *first*, do not touch money; *second*, do not touch women; and *third*, fast for twenty-four hours one day a week, taking only water and tea.

Regarding the darshan program planned in Hamirpur, Baba told them, “I can agree to give darshan on one condition. If you take upon yourselves the responsibility of seeing that no one who comes for my darshan either touches my feet or makes obeisance to me....”

Because the poor people of Hamirpur are by nature very devotional, the men felt that this would be virtually impossible. Nevertheless, they assured Baba that they would try their best to discourage any expression of obeisance.

Baba was adamant, “I want your firm promise!”

As the men could not honestly make such a promise, Baba advised them, “You may now return to Hamirpur and prepare the people to receive me. When they are fully ready, inform me and I will come.” He concluded the interview by asking them to have the New Life conditions printed in Hindi. When the meet-

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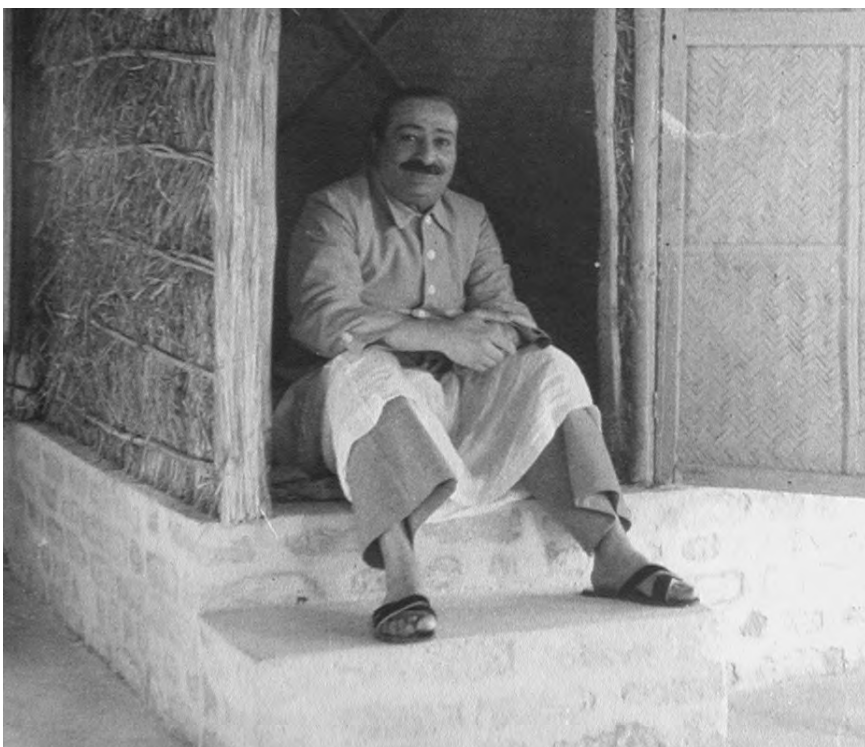
ing was over, the men were so deeply moved that they felt no inclination to speak.

Their return to Hamirpur was the initial spark that eventually led to a massive fire of love for Baba that swept through this poor district in central India.

A similar fire of devotion to Baba also spread through the state of Andhra in south India around the same time. Dr. Dhanapathy Rao played a special role in this phenomenon when he returned from seeing Baba in 1947.

Keshav Nigam wrote later of this first meeting with Baba: “August 30th, 1949, was not only the most blessed moment of my present life, but it marked the culmination of all the blessed moments of all my previous lives and the long vista of my evolutionary sojourn, for on that day I saw God Himself on the earth in the form of Avatar Meher Baba....”

“The flame of Baba’s love was intensely kindled with me, and before it, all the world and its mundane activities appeared absolutely petty and unreal.”



*Announcement of the New Life***The Final Meeting****August 31**

For the final meeting in preparation for the New Life, Baba instructed all of the 35 men to be in Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad at 8 a.m. on August 31st. It was this meeting that was to decide who would join Baba in the New Life. Everyone was told to bathe beforehand and to put on fresh clothes.

Turning to Dr. Ghani, Baba warned him to pay heed to this order. Everyone knew that Ghani was so lazy that he took a bath only on Fridays, and he was known to sleep in his clothes to avoid having to dress in the morning.

Early the next morning, the hall was swept and washed clean by Padri, one of the early mandali, and no one was allowed to enter before the appointed time.

Special arrangements were made for those coming from outside Meherabad to complete their bath in time. As Raosaheb Afseri's train passed Meherabad from Bombay, a car was immediately sent to the railway station to pick him up, because there was little time to spare before the meeting. When he arrived at Meherabad, he was surprised to be hastily escorted to the bathroom to take a bath before the meeting.

The men were waiting outside Mandali Hall at Meherabad when Baba's car arrived from Meherazad. Earlier, He had said that no one was to enter the hall before 8:00 a.m. Therefore, He also remained sitting on a bench on the veranda until the appointed time.

The men gathered around Him informally. At one point, He gestured for Gadekar and Babadas to come forward. Pointing to them, He said teasingly, "Babadas has more *chelas* [disciples] than I have, and Gadekar more gurus!"

Babadas had long hair and a beard and wore a long robe so he was often taken by simple people to be a guru. Gadekar, on the other hand, was so innocent that he would look on every *sadhu* (seeker of God) as an advanced soul to revere.

In a playful mood, Baba joked with the men.

At exactly 8:00 a.m., Baba stood up and entered the hall, followed by His close ones. For a few minutes, He stood in a corner behind His chair. Then He asked Padri to walk from one

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side of the hall to the other seven times, humorously remarking, "Suppose a cat has crossed my path! Padri's pacing will ward off any evil spirit."

Baba took His seat while the men sat around Him on a green carpet spread out on the stone floor. Padri was asked to see that all the windows and doors were closed. After noting that all, except His brother Beheram, were present and that there would be no intrusion by anyone, Baba briefly explained the purpose of the gathering. His demeanor was serious.

First, he reminded those who had come from outside Ahmednagar that they were selected from a list of 1200 men. (When Baba's brother Beheram came late, he had to remain outside the hall listening on the veranda during the entire meeting.)

Baba continued, "From amongst the many, I have specially called a few of you to attend this important meeting. Be very attentive. Think over thoroughly what you hear. You will soon get a circular, which you should carefully go through and arrive at an honest conclusion."

Then, Kaikobad, Donkin, Khaksaheb and Kalemama were asked to read out certain passages from the *Avesta*, the *Bible*, the *Qur'an* and the *Gita*, respectively. Before they began, Baba conveyed, "First of all, I want to invoke God's forgiveness for myself, for the mandali and for everyone, through all four approaches – Zoroastrian, Christian, Muslim and Hindu – to God."

At the conclusion of the four recitations, referring to Khaksaheb's melodious reading, Baba remarked, "If God cannot be moved by such a beautiful performance, then God must be either deaf or dead!"

Baba then rose from His chair, and everyone stood up. The following prayer was read aloud on His behalf:

I forgive each and every disciple, devotee and follower, all his weaknesses to date, and any disobedience on his part until now.

And on behalf of myself, I forgive myself for any pain, injustice or wrong that I may have done to any of them.

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Then He added, "This is the last ceremony, and hereafter there will be no further ceremonies and, likewise, no prayers will be offered."

The meeting began. For everyone's benefit, Baba directed Ramjoo to narrate in brief all that had taken place during the previous meetings. Donkin then read out in English the text of the New Life circular and conditions.

Baba interrupted him a few times to clarify and to stress the significance and implication of some of the conditions. At one point, He warned, "I want you all to go through this circular word by word most carefully before you decide. It would be best if you accompany me and abide completely by all orders and conditions 100 percent. Although your faith, love and service for me have been greater than mine would have been for my own Master, these conditions might prove your undoing. So unless you are ready to live the life of complete *satyanashi* [utter ruination] and absolute obedience, it would be better to stay behind and obey instructions that will be given to you."

The entire text of the New Life circular and conditions are as follows:

This communication is addressed only to certain of Baba's intimate men mandali now in India, who may wish to share in His New Life by being physically near Him. The New Life will begin on October 16th, 1949, and the conditions and orders that will be binding on all those who accompany Baba, and the responsibility of any consequences that may follow, are explained in the various clauses that follow:

I. Who must make the Decision?

The responsibility of deciding whether to accompany Baba or not does not rest with Baba, but wholly and solely with each and every person who receives this communication. Everyone receiving it must therefore make his decision and inform Baba of this decision with a clear and simple "YES" or "NO."

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II. If your answer is "NO," what will the consequences be?

If you decide not to accompany Baba, and if you inform Him of this decision clearly and without prevarication, you will definitely not be considered as having broken off your spiritual connection with Baba, provided He is a *Sadguru* (Perfect Master). All who thus clearly and unequivocally inform Baba that they will not accompany Him, will receive from Him before October 16th, 1949, definite orders as to what they will do. Those orders may be of any kind and must be obeyed.

III. If you cannot make a decision, what will the consequences be?

If you fail to decide one way or the other, or if you fail to inform Baba of your decision clearly and unequivocally one way or the other, all your connections with Baba, spiritual and otherwise, will automatically be broken off forever.

IV. If your answer is "YES," who is responsible for the consequences?

The responsibility before God for anything that may happen to those who decide to accompany Baba rests wholly and solely with them, and not with Baba. In order to make this paramount condition of individual responsibility absolutely clear, Baba wants each one to consider the following points:

1. In this New Life of complete renunciation, you will be utterly at the mercy of all kinds of good or bad treatment that may be meted out to you by others. Whatever happens, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.
2. If, by accompanying Baba, your dependents or your business or private affairs suffer in any way, you and you alone will be held responsible before God. In

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considering this responsibility, you must take it for granted that you will have no opportunities of keeping in touch with your dependents and others by visits, letters, telegrams, etc.

3. If, due to physical or mental exhaustion, exposure to the extremes of weather, lack of food, bad food, lack of water, bad water, infection of any kind, etc., etc., you fall ill or die, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.
4. If Baba should give you any order that may result in your being sent to prison, or in your being assaulted or even killed, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.
5. If you should disobey Baba and He should send you away from Him, you will not hold Baba responsible before God for your future, whatever that future may bring. If also, without any fault on your part, Baba should send you away from Him, you will not hold Him responsible before God for this. In this latter case, however, your spiritual connection with Baba remains, and He will give you definite instructions, which you will have to obey.
6. The decision that you give to Baba will be considered by Him as irrevocable, and He will not accept any change of decision from anyone, once it has been given to Him. Thus, should you fail at any time to abide by your decision (whether "YES" or "NO") and also should you be sent away from Him for having broken any of His orders after joining Him, you may go where you like and do what you like, and your spiritual connection with Baba is automatically broken off forever. Your future then rests in your own hands, and you alone will be held responsible for it before God.
7. If, as a result of your having been sent away by Baba, you should take any misguided step, such as becoming addicted to alcohol or drugs, if you should commit any desperate act such as suicide, or do anything that

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may lead you sooner or later to death, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.

V. Solemn declaration for those who decide to accompany Baba.

If you decide to accompany Baba, you must, on August 31st, 1949, solemnly and in absolute and undivided sincerity declare before God the Impersonal, the Absolute, in the presence of Baba, that you have made this decision of your own free will and that, whatever the result of that may be, you alone will be responsible.

VI. Final Oath by Baba.

On August 31st, 1949, in the presence of the mandali, Baba will for the last time take an oath concerning His own decision about the New Life that will begin on October 16th, 1949.

VII. Conditions for all who accompany Baba.

The conditions that will be binding on all those who accompany Baba are these:

1. First and foremost, all those who accompany Baba must take it as an absolute and unqualified certainty that they will not receive even the slightest spiritual or material benefit, or indeed any benefit whatever. On the contrary, they must be prepared for every kind of disappointment and adversity.
2. If you are physically handicapped in any way, or if you have frail health, you should not accompany Baba unless you are resolved to die. Medical, nursing and special care of any kind - mental or physical - should not be expected. On the contrary, Baba will expect you to take care of Him.
3. You must be ready to join Baba on October 16th, 1949.

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4. Baba might go from place to place on foot or stay indefinitely at any place. Wherever He goes or wherever He stays, you must be with Him.
5. There will be no physical amenities except the following, when or if they are available: food, clothing and a minimum provision of bedding; a minimum provision of toilet necessities; a plate, mug and spoon.
6. In this New Life, you should not expect Baba to humor you or make any concessions to your weaknesses. On the contrary, Baba will expect you to humor Him.
7. You should not expect that Baba will have His *nazar* (divine glance) on you or that He will perform miracles, or use His spiritual “key” to protect or save you from illness, danger, imprisonment, death, or from difficulties and disasters of any kind. Indeed, Baba may become so utterly defenseless that He may be unable to help even Himself.
8. You may believe Baba to be Avatar, God, devil, or anything or anyone you please, but if you accompany Him, you must understand that, although He may live among you as if He were a brother or friend, He will, in fact, be your Master, whom you must obey absolutely.

IX. Extra orders.

The above eight orders are standing orders that will apply to all accompanying Baba. If, unconsciously or without meaning to do so, you break any of these eight standing orders or any other order of His, Baba will forgive you and He will not consider thoughts of lust, anger, greed, etc., as mistakes.

Over and above these eight standing orders, Baba may give any order at any time, which you must obey. Such orders, however, will not be of a spiritual kind (for example, meditation or japa), and you must not expect to receive so-called spiritual instructions from Him. You will have to obey

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any order Baba gives you, and you must understand that He might order you to do anything, good or bad.

He might order you, for example, to do anything to His own person, such as to spit on Him, to kick Him, to abuse Him, etc., and you will have to obey such orders without hesitation. Baba might also place His head on your feet or might wash your feet, and you must not object or hesitate or show any emotion should He do things of this kind. Should you show the slightest objection, hesitation or emotion in any of these contingencies, He might send you away from Him.

X. Conclusion.

It must be clearly understood that, although every condition and standing order listed in this communication is absolutely binding on all who decide to accompany Baba, Baba Himself is not only not bound by any order or condition, but is also absolutely free for all time to give any order to anyone, and that such orders might change or even nullify any or all of the standing orders and conditions.

The one and only thing, however, in which Baba not only is not free, but deliberately binds Himself, is regarding the first condition listed in this communication – to the effect that all who accompany Baba must take it as an absolute certainty that they will not receive the slightest benefit of any kind whatsoever, and that they must be prepared for every kind of disappointment and adversity. This condition will stand for all time and will never be changed or nullified by Baba.

It must, in addition, be absolutely clear that Baba will also never give any order that will absolve any of those who accompany Him of their individual responsibility before God for any consequences that may follow. Thus, if you decide to accompany Baba, you must do it as an absolute certainty that the responsibility before God for each and every consequence rests for all time wholly and solely with you and you

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alone, and that Baba will never give an order that will change or nullify this responsibility.



It is possible that you may interpret this absolute freedom of Baba as an indirect indication that you may ask Him at any time to change or nullify some condition or order. Let it therefore be clear that if, once you have given your decision to Baba that you will accompany Him, you take any unfair advantage of His freedom and ask Him to change or nullify any condition or order, this will be tantamount to changing your mind concerning your decision to accompany Him.

You should read this communication very carefully, applying it point by point to your own circumstances, and arrive at an honest, clear and unequivocal decision, which should take the form of a plain “YES” or “NO” – and nothing else.

When the reading was completed, a profound silence pervaded the hall. The magnitude and solemn import of the New Life

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could be felt. Baba then declared, "After taking the oath before God, a copy of the circular and conditions will be given to everyone, and after studying them carefully and giving full thought, you should give a simple 'yes' or 'no' by way of answer, and return the copies within four hours."



Baba drawing a letter of a word on the palm of His hand, 1949

During this period, no one was to discuss anything with anyone. Each was to arrive at his decision entirely on his own. The men were then given only a matter of hours to decide whether to join Baba in the New Life, and no further questions could be asked of Him. Those not knowing English were provided with a Marathi translation.

The last oath of Baba's, which had been prepared in advance, was then read out by Dr. Donkin. In it, Baba announced the end of the Old and the beginning of a New Order of life for Himself and His followers.

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Baba stood up from His chair and faced the wall in front of the scriptures with His back to the men. He remained standing while Donkin read the oath:

Before God the Absolute, whom those who have realized know as their own Self, and whom believers believe to be All-pervading, All-knowing, All-powerful, All-loving and All-merciful,

Before this Infinite Existence,

Baba, on behalf of himself and his followers, asks forgiveness for all mental, physical and moral weaknesses called sins, and for all lies and false dealings, and for all impure and selfish actions.

Before this Infinite God,

Who ever was, ever is and ever will be, Baba decides today on the New Life that he and those who accompany him will enter from October 16th, 1949, and lead until the end.

The New Life will be based absolutely on all that has been dictated by Baba in the Circular of Conditions, and Baba invokes God to make him stand by it firmly and steadfastly as his companions in his New Life are required to do.

BABA

After the oath was read, Baba again emphasized that His decision and the decisions that they would arrive at that day would be irrevocable and binding for all time.

Three of the mandali were not given the conditions, yet they were asked to take an oath to carry out certain duties given to them by Baba: Sidhu was put in charge of looking after Baba's two favorite masts, Ali Shah (Bapji) and Mohammed. Jangle was to attend to the requirements of the families living on Meherabad Hill, and Jamadar was to be their night watchman.

Krishna Nair, Baba's former night watchman, had longed to go on the New Life. Instead, Baba gave him special instructions to make a pilgrimage to famous temples, shrines and sacred places in India that were associated with the major religions. At

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each place, he was told to bow down and utter the name “Meher Baba.” Vishnu was instructed to give Krishna 2000 rupees for his expenses. Baba ended the meeting by asking the men to go for lunch, but He said that He would not eat until all their signed decisions were in His hands.

Within two hours, all of the decisions were handed to Baba, and there were a few surprises. Jal Kerawala, whom Baba had appointed as one of the arrangementwalas (*wala* meaning “one who does”), accidentally received a copy of the conditions, which he signed in the affirmative. In an instant, he was prepared to give up his high-ranking government position and join the New Life.

Baba had the mistake rectified by later offering a prayer. Jal was then exempted from going with Baba, but as one of the arrangementwalas, he was instructed to remain behind and be ready to carry out any requests made by Baba in the New Life.

Baba was also apparently surprised at Padri’s decision of “no,” remarking, “I wished him to accompany me, and his negative reply has pained me. But at the same time, I am glad, as Padri is one of the four pillars of Meherabad, and seeing that the other three pillars – Pendu, Vishnu and Adi Sr. – are going with me, in case they fall, at least one will be left standing.”

Actually, some days before, Baba had seen Padri privately to tell him to remain behind and look after the Meherabad property. Padri, who possessed an explosive temperament, felt that he would have been unable to fulfill the condition of controlling his temper, and therefore he would have had to say “no” anyway.

In response to Gadekar and Dr. Deshmukh, who had both written “no,” Baba remarked, “May God always keep Gadekar in my heart!” About the professor, He said, “Deshmukh will always be near and dear to me.”

After all of the replies were gone through, Baba asked the men to sit in three groups, which came to be known as the “yeswalas,” the “nowalas” and the “arrangementwalas.”

To the nowalas, who would soon be departing, Baba’s general instruction was that they should continue to follow His orders as they had been doing. An exception was made in the case of Manek Mehta, who was permitted to join Baba later if

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he could wind up the affairs of his Meher Japa Mandal, the large Baba center in Bombay, before January 1st, 1951.

By now, there were twenty-four yeswalas. Later, several men had to drop out, so in the end, there were only sixteen men who were prepared to accompany Baba into the New Life.

These men were required to be at Meherabad between the 1st and 5th of October, 1949.

Baba said, "Be thoroughly prepared. If there are any difficulties, try to overcome them, but do not inform me or ask me anything about them.... Be at Meherabad by the morning of October 1st. When you step into the premises of Meherabad, don't have any money with you. Be here in the dress that you generally wear, no extra clothes. You may, however, bring one *kambal* [coarse woolen blanket]. That's all!"

As Baba was leaving the hall to return to Meherazad, an incident occurred which gave a hint of the strictness expected in the New Life. Dr. Ghani and Dr. Daulat Singh were standing together outside on the veranda. Both had signed "yes" on the forms. Ghani was smoking a cigarette, and Baba walked over to him, took the cigarette from his mouth and put it between Daulat Singh's lips. Daulat Singh was a Sikh, for whom smoking is absolutely forbidden by the tenets of his faith, yet he cheerfully accepted the cigarette and was prepared to smoke it.

"You have passed," Baba said to Daulat Singh, and taking the cigarette out of his mouth, He gave it back to Ghani.

The Itinerary of the New Life Slowly Takes Shape

During the Meherabad meetings in August, Baba admitted several times that He did not know where they would go in the New Life! But after September 1st, as the meetings continued in Mandali Hall, He began to chalk out a plan. The first thing He mentioned was His intention to acquire a plot of land in north India near the holy cities of Rishikesh and Hardwar.

Keki Desai, a longtime follower from Delhi, was entrusted with the responsibility of finding a suitable place, which Baba intended to make the pivotal location of His future life of "helplessness and hopelessness."

Ramjoo and Dhakephalker, two of Baba's early mandali, were asked to look into a way of purchasing the land in the

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name of one or two of the yeswalas for a certain period, after which the ownership was to be surrendered entirely.

Baba said that He and those going with Him would travel on foot to this place in north India, arriving there no later than November, 1949. Initially, Baba intended to leave from Meherazad on October 16th and walk to Aurangabad, about 75 miles north of Ahmednagar. There, He and the companions were to remain for two and a half months at Paithan and at Khuldabad, the place where one of His own Masters, Sai Baba, began his spiritual life.

Later, for practical reasons, Baba decided that instead of Aurangabad, they would go on foot from Ahmednagar to the town of Sirur (also known as Ghodnadi), which is on the road to Poona. From there they would proceed by bus to Belgaum, about 250 miles directly south, near the west coast of India in Karnataka State.

He said, "There is a small house in Belgaum where the women can stay, and the men can remain in the open with the sky above them! There is also a well with good drinking water. Belgaum will allow time for those going with me to get used to the future life of service, begging, helplessness and so on, involved under the conditions."

Relatives of Vishnu, one of the mandali, owned the property in Belgaum and had given it over for Baba's use, so Vishnu went ahead of the party to prepare it for Baba and the New Life companions.

In order to avoid the intrusion of having police investigate His activities once He reached Belgaum, Baba asked Sarosh, who was the mayor of Ahmednagar and influential, to contact the superintendent of police there and inform them of His forthcoming stay.

Baba then instructed Padri to have a caravan constructed, equipped with four automobile tires, but designed to be drawn by two bullocks. It was to be used by the women for shelter at night on the planned foot journey to north India. Padri was to see that the caravan and bullocks were delivered to Belgaum by the 15th of December.

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About the forthcoming New Life, Baba warned the mandali to be vigilant in following the conditions. He said:

The literal carrying out of the conditions will start after October 15th. I am trying to help you as much as I can, so that all may be able to stick to me till the end. There is absolutely no question of any tests and trials. What is there left to test after all these years that you have been with me? It is true that the New Life is going to be very difficult, hard, exacting, and in certain respects disastrous. It is foolishness for anyone to think that I may purposely create situations that will compel anyone to leave me! Why should I do that? For instance, I could easily have asked Donkin to go to the West to do a particular duty there for me, and he would have no reason to be dissatisfied in doing that!

Once we start on the New Life, everyone will have to bear the consequences of his weaknesses if they are not checked and controlled according to the conditions. Although I have made it already completely clear that I will bear no responsibility of any kind for anyone, still I wish that those who have said “yes” remain with me to the end, and by way of helping them concretely (on a practical level), I have decided to keep the first period of two-and-a-half months at Belgaum for the purpose of preliminary training of the companions for the ultimate way of life of complete renunciation.

When the matter of Kaka Baria carrying money in the New Life was brought up, Baba explained, “We will have to provide something for the dumb animals in the party and so, after January 1st, 1950, no one should expect a single *pie* [cent] to be spent on anyone under any circumstances by Kaka. Money can only be spent on fodder for the animals and absolutely unavoidable repairs to the caravan.”

During the serious meetings and intense activity connected with disbanding His ashrams, Baba occasionally lightened the atmosphere by calling for jokes or by playing games such as *longorcha* (seven tiles).

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About the humor and lively spirit of such times, He remarked one day, "Thank God we can still laugh!"

The Final Weeks Before Setting Out

During the month of September, Baba went frequently to Meherabad to take part in discussions about the New Life and the final arrangements involved in winding up the Old Life. On September 26th, Baba met with a magistrate and officially turned over Meherazad to Nariman, Lower Meherabad to Meherjee, and Upper Meherabad to Sarosh.

Two days later, Adi Sr. drove Baba, along with Eruch and Baidul, to Poona, where they stopped at Bindra house, the home of Papa and Gaimai Jessawala, Eruch's parents.

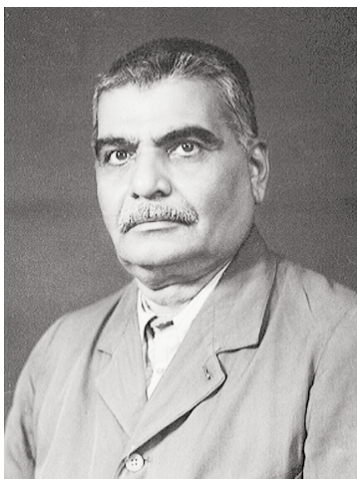
To this devoted couple, Baba said, "Keep Soltoon [Baidul's wife] and her daughters with you as members of your own family. Keep Valu Pawar also in this same manner. I am giving you this responsibility, and you will be serving me by carrying it out."

The Jessawala family readily agreed to take care of these women mandali who had been living for years at Meherabad.

Before leaving, Baba said to Eruch's brother Meherwan, "I am taking Eruch with me. His duty is to look after me, and your duty is to look after the family."



Gaimai and Manu



Papa Jessawala

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Eruch, being Baba's close companion, knew of His intention of going on the New Life, but his own family had no inkling in advance of Baba's drastic move. Although they put on a brave front, the entire Jessawala family was in profound shock at the prospect of never seeing Baba again. He was the center and focus of their entire lives!

To make matters worse, they were having to say a final farewell to their dear Eruch as well.

Papa Jessawala attended the meetings at Meherabad at the end of August. In Baba's presence, he said he felt resigned to Baba's decision to leave on the New Life, but when he returned home to Poona, the full impact of what was happening hit him with overpowering intensity.

One day, while at lunch with his family, he became very upset with Manu, one of his daughters, and suddenly lost his temper and gave her a slap in the face. The whole household was shocked.

Then he immediately pushed aside his plate and went off to another room where he sat on the floor and wept.

Meherwan, Eruch's brother, approached him. In his pained state, Papa asked him, "What is happening to me? I'm so confused. I have never lifted my hand to my children before!"

This is one example of how Baba's impending departure devastated the hearts of His close ones. Fortunately, Manu did not take the slap personally. She understood what her father was going through, because she, too, was suffering terribly over Baba's departure.

While in Poona, Baba also visited His childhood home, where He comforted His brother Beheram and his family, and His brother Jal. Baba was not only their elder brother, but was also their Beloved Master and He was going away, leaving them



Eruch Jessawala

Announcement of the New Life*Bal Natu*

behind to deal with the sorrow in their hearts. Although the going away of a brother can be painful, it is impossible to describe the grief over the departure of one's Beloved. Only real lovers have the fortune to shed tears of longing. As Beheram, Perin and Jal wept, their tears had the power to cleanse them of innumerable weaknesses.

Since Dr. Ghani was going on the New Life, Baba also visited his family and consoled his wife, giving her support and encouragement. He then left

Poona and went to Bombay where He stayed at "Ashiana," the home of Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji. While there, He gave Nariman and Arnavaz the silver lock and key to Meherazad.

Although this property was now legally theirs, this close and dear couple always regarded it as Baba's own home and accepted the obligation of looking after it as a privilege.

While in Bombay, Baba also saw a number of His close ones, including Dina Talati and her children. In talking with her about love, Baba said, "One should love the Beloved in such a way that, even though burning in love's fire, one never utters a word of complaint."

October 5th was the day set for the yeswalas to arrive at Meherabad. The experience of Bal Natu, one of the selected men, gives a glimpse of what was involved in preparing to set out on the New Life.

After the August 31st meeting, Bal returned home to Kurduwadi and contacted the headmaster of the school where he worked and submitted his resignation. His employer was surprised and asked Bal to reconsider, but Bal was determined to leave everything. He felt very carefree during this period, a

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mood uncharacteristic of him. In fact, over the next few weeks, he felt dead to the world, yet more alive than ever.

The yeswalas were only allowed to reveal their intention of joining Baba permanently to one family member. Bal chose his younger brother and turned all his properties and accounts over to him. When Bal saw his friends and relatives, he suspected that they thought he had lost his good sense. In his heart, he said good-bye to them, in case he might never see them again.

Bal also had other things to do before leaving, because Baba had changed His mind about what needed to be brought on the New Life. Originally, Baba had said that those joining Him were only allowed to bring a woolen blanket. Later, He sent a letter with a long list of articles the men would be required to bring.

As for clothing, three *kafnis* (long robes) were now stipulated and a pair of shoes. This meant that Bal had to go to a tailor for fittings. Besides his sandals, he also had to purchase shoes, which he had not been accustomed to wearing in years. A trunk with certain dimensions was required as well, which Bal purchased and packed with his few New Life belongings.

Right before leaving Kurduwadi, Bal received a final instruction from Baba to obtain an identity card with his photograph, signed by a government officer. Baba had said that if anyone were to fall ill in the New Life, he was not to expect someone to look after him. And if one were to die somewhere on the road, it was only practical that an identity card would be needed to identify the body. Bal took this dire prospect with a sense of humor.

Baba instructed the yeswalas to arrive at Meherabad penniless. On October 5th, Bal came by *tonga* (a horse-drawn carriage) from the railway station. Getting down from the tonga, he gave the driver all the money he had left to his name, which was double the cost of the fare. The tongawala was overjoyed with the windfall and Bal had also fulfilled Baba's orders. The other fifteen yeswalas began arriving also and each was assigned a place to sleep on the floor of Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad.

Baba was there to meet with them in the hall, greeting each one. Various points were discussed during this first meeting, and Baba made it clear to the men that after He dropped His body,

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He was to be buried in His tomb on Meherabad Hill, and that Mehera was to be laid to rest in a grave beside the tomb.

The next morning, after Baba arrived from Meherazad, He listened to several ghazals written by Khaksaheb. Baba particularly enjoyed one metaphor of Khaksaheb's where he said that the "scars" of his heart's longing were imbued with a splendor "brighter than the brilliance of the heavenly bodies."

After the poetry, Baba went to His interview cabin near the hall and began calling the men individually to give them instructions and assign them duties.

In the afternoon, Baba played a game of "French" tennis with the men in the area behind the Rahuri Cabin. In this unique game of Baba's, there is a batter who holds a tennis racket at his feet. The other players form a circle around him. With a ball, they try to throw and hit the batter below the knees. At the same time, the batter, without changing the position of his feet, tries to defend himself with the tennis racket. The game was a source of great animated fun. It helped everyone forget, if only for a few moments, the Old Life they were leaving behind.

After the game was over, when Bal was returning to the hall, he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned and there was Baba, who said, "You played well today. Do you play cricket?"

Bal replied that he used to play, but during his college days he had suffered from tuberculosis, which resulted in a severe lung hemorrhage.

"Will you be able to walk 15 to 20 kilometers a day in the New Life?" Baba asked with serious concern.

"I will try my best, Baba," Bal replied.

Baba went on to say, "Come to Meherazad on October 8th in the morning. There is a program of distributing food-grain and cloth to the poor and other deserving people. Whatever duty shall be given you, do it with your heart. Then I may give you 'something!'" These words were conveyed with such compassion, Bal wondered what this "something" might be.

On October 8th, the poor people from the nearby villages gathered in the open space at Meherazad. The mandali separated the men and women in rows and then led them one by one to a room where Baba washed the feet of each one and offered each a bundle of prasad wrapped in cloth. Bal helped in this

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work, and for a brief period was allowed to witness Baba's compassion and love for the poor. When the program was over, Baba called him near and asked Dr. Donkin and Dr. Nilu to examine Bal's frail body to see whether they thought he would be able to endure the rigors of the New Life. They gave a technical medical report, which Bal did not understand in the least. Baba then asked him to be at Adi's office the next morning.

The following day, Bal was driven from Meherabad to Adi's office. Baba was already there in one of the rooms, discussing some points with Ramjoo. When Bal was called inside, Baba greeted him, gesturing, "I am pleased with you and your love for me."

Baba then indicated for Ramjoo to take out Bal's circular of the New Life conditions signed on August 31st and said, "Bal will be with me in my New Life to the very end."

Afterwards, turning to Bal with a tender expression on His face, Baba spelled out on the alphabet board, "Without any fault of yours, of my own Will, I free you from joining me physically in my New Life. Go back to your place. Continue the type of life that you were leading before. You have left your service, I know; so if you need some money, I will arrange for that."

This instruction came as a total surprise to Bal.

Baba also added, "There is one order for you. Don't touch women with an intention of lust."

Bal was especially happy to receive this order, because for him it meant that he was assured of Baba's inner and outer help in carrying this out. Baba also instructed him to deliver a message to a friend of Bal's named Mauni Baba, which gave Bal an activity to perform in the New Life, since it would entail Bal traveling to the Hardwar-Rishikesh area in north India.

Before Bal left, Baba showered him with love and gestured, "Don't worry about anything." Bal felt a profound assurance in this moment. (Later in his life, he said that he took Baba's words "as a promise of guidance for the rest of my life....")

Baba then asked that Bal be given ten rupees with these instructions: "Take a tonga to Meherabad. Have your lunch and leave immediately for the railway station to catch the train."

In early October, as the preparations for the New Life accelerated, Baba continued to visit Meherabad every day.

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On the 9th, Baba met with Keki Desai from Delhi about the Hardwar property, which He intended to purchase.

The next day, Baba had a circular issued through His secretary, Adi Sr., that proved to be a shock to most of His followers throughout the world. Most of them had heard little or nothing about the coming New Life, so they were surprised to read the following circular:

Meher Baba ends His Old Life of multifarious activities, and with a few companions, begins His New Life of complete renunciation and absolute helplessness from October 16th, 1949. Although Baba's and His companions' New Life will be known to everyone, and their whereabouts will be no secret, no one should try to see Baba or His companions for any reason whatsoever, as Baba will not see any of them, nor allow His companions to do so. No one should try to communicate with Baba or His companions under any circumstances or for any reason whatsoever.

His followers were not even allowed to see Him for a last farewell! Only Elizabeth Patterson and Norina Matchabelli were permitted to cable Baba during the New Life about His promise to visit the West sometime in the future.

On October 12th, Baba said, "This one month's continuous working day and night, personally seeing to every detail of winding up the Old Life and arranging for the endless New Life, and the continual sleepless nights, have left me literally dead exhausted, both mentally and physically, and has brought me to the verge of a nervous collapse. Therefore, on the morning of the 16th, when I am free from everything, the reaction will definitely be very severe, and I might, in the beginning, be unable to put all my mind and energy into the New Life."

About His plan for the first week, after setting out from Meherabad, He said, "...I will be in a relaxed mood, tired, and go easy on my companions in order to be free from physical and mental strain."

He wanted those accompanying Him to "laugh, talk and be cheerful without jeopardizing the conditions."

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He also said that His instructions “boil down to one little thing which can be of great help to me in my New Life, and you, being my companions, can easily do that – keep the company lively.”

Eruch, Pendu and Kaka were then sent to Sirur, midway on the Poona-Ahmednagar road, which was to be one of the first major halting places during the foot journey in the New Life. There they were to make arrangements in advance for food and tea for Baba and the companions. They were also to reserve the *dak bungalow* (a government rest house) at Supa, which was to be the first overnight stop.

That same day, Padri completed the work of installing electrical fittings with an engine and dynamo at Meherazad.

As Baba had said, it was His habit to continue with the old order of things right up to the moment when He would begin something new. The electrical inspector was summoned, and after testing the equipment and finding it satisfactory, he permitted its use.

That evening, Meherazad was lit up for the first time. Baba, however, found the noise of the generator disturbing, so after that first evening, the lights were not used.

On October 13th, Baba went to Meherabad and began the meeting by explaining the duties of each one going with Him. During the discussion, He disclosed that the New Life from the very start would be “literally a life of helplessness.” Explaining this, Baba told the men:

I will help all of you not only to prepare yourselves to abide by the conditions of the New Life, but I will also help you prepare for the fulfillment of the pre-planned End. All this help terminates by January 1st, 1950.

There will be many occasions after this date in your New Life which will make you feel *nonplused*, be at a loss as to what to think, say or do. You should not misunderstand such occasions as helplessness; the whole of your New Life, from its very start to the End, is nothing but literally a life of helplessness. There is a profound difference between a state of regular helplessness and when one becomes nonplused. One can easily live and lead a

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sane life of regular and utter helplessness, but to survive sanely a single moment when one is nonplused under the strain of helplessness and in fulfillment of responsibilities is unimaginable.

Take a simple example: I have said that when I am dead it will be the responsibility of my companions in the New Life to bring my body to the tomb at Meherabad. It seems so very easy and quite simple. Now, let's say when I drop my body we are in Tibet, and to fulfill this responsibility with sheer helplessness as your only asset in favor of your credit balance, will it not be impossible to bring the body to Meherabad? You cannot charter a plane to bring my body; you cannot preserve my body for days together; you cannot contact Sarosh to help as usual for a ready conveyance since there is no telegraph office in Tibet, and also your conditions forbid you to contact him.

This will be the case when you will be nonplused – you will be put at a loss as to what to think, say or do.

There will be many such occasions when, amidst your utter helplessness and with the full burden of fulfillment of responsibilities, you will have to face the New Life and the End.

At this time, Baba frequently changed His mind and went against His previous instructions. For instance, originally no money was to be set aside, yet He gave Meherjee Karkaria 10,000 rupees to be used for any “New Life emergency.” Meherjee and the other arrangementwalas were then responsible for attending to all legal, financial and other practical arrangements while Baba was away on the New Life, including unexpected occurrences, such as Baba's death or that of any of the companions.

There were a number of longtime followers who Baba asked to remain in Ahmednagar and to carry out duties assigned by Him. Dattu Mehendarge, who had been in the Prem Ashram, was put in charge of the Meher Publications office in place of Adi Sr. Another young man, Vaman Padale, was assigned to work in Adi's office. Nariman, as caretaker of Meherazad,

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engaged Madhu, a longtime disciple of Baba's since the early days in Poona, to look after its maintenance.

A number of Baba's close ones remained at Meherabad, including Sidhu and his wife Radha, Kalemama, Kakubai (Vishnu's mother), Bala Tambat, Savak Kotwal and Jangle and their families. Jamadar, the night watchman on Meherabad Hill, and his wife remained in the family quarters near Arangaon village. Tara, who had served the women on the Hill, returned to Arangaon village to stay with her father.

In the afternoon of October 13th, Baba served tea and sweets to the whole group in celebration of Eruch and Meherjee's birthdays. A cricket match was then played among the men, with Baba playing on both sides.

Amidst the hurry and bustle of preparations, Baba asked Ghani to compose a *ghazal* (song of complaint), instructing him to "vent his spleen" to Him in a loving way!

During this period, Dr. Ghani was troubled about how to provide for his wife and children when he left on the New Life. In response, Baba casually remarked that He would look after them, using the proceeds from some property in Lonavla that Ghani had dedicated to Him. However, in the weeks leading up to the start of the New Life, Baba made no further mention of Ghani's situation. Disturbed by Baba's apparent disinterest, Ghani wrote a ghazal in Urdu full of complaints, entitled *A Jeremiad to Saki* (a mournful complaint), and read it out to Him with his characteristic passion. In it, Ghani gave a flavor of his early days with Baba all the way up to the present.



Dr. Ghani

*Tonight, the members of the Tavern are meeting in a session.
Tonight, the Master of the Tavern also is gracing
the occasion by his presence.
Tonight, if permitted, I wish to unburden my heart.*

Announcement of the New Life

*Hereafter, the love and the lover and this divine night
will only be a dream!*

*O Saki! Where is that promised brew that shatters
the most inveterate ego?*

O Promise-breaker! Excuse my impertinence tonight!

How long should I play the hypocrite, and play the fool?

How long should I put up an apologetic attitude?

How long should I listen to the taunts of people?

O Saki! I am not a stone to be unsusceptible!

*My craving for Light and Knowledge has emboldened me,
and my heart-burning is the cause of today's outburst!*

I am notorious in the world as a free thinker.

I am compelled to shake up the dregs of my heart for You to see.

*The instrument of my heart is hopelessly out of tune
and full of discordant notes.*

Excuse me if the wailing tune is not sweet to the ears!

O Saki! Hear for once the groans of the faithful ones!

This bemoaning is, nevertheless, tinged with love.

We know your Tavern existed eternally.

Every atom therefrom is surcharged with divine music!

*Anticipating Your wish, I too became bold and daring in
carrying to others the intoxicating flavor of the wine
from the Tavern!*

*I began to broadcast the glad tidings of the advent of Saki,
thereby, making known to all and sundry the secret
of the Tavern!*

No sooner the lamp was lit, the moths gathered around!

The eyesight of their reason God blinded.

These daredevils are neither mad, nor in their senses;

Shocking stories are current about them in the world.

In truth, these love-stricken souls are neither living nor dead.

On this point, it is more expedient to keep mum!

O Saki! Do you recall to mind the plethora of promises?

*These, the uninvited gestures of kindness and favors
shattered our reasoning and vanquished our resistance!*

We were caught just on the threshold of our lives.

Your advent confronted us with a new world altogether!

Announcement of the New Life

*The tempting was so unearthly that we began to
swear by God!*

*O Saki! Do you remember our early enthusiasm and fervor?
That we became indifferent to the world and its demands!
Beyond all heights of greatness we began to see the falls –
the emptiness!
The reason was that we were promised the blessedness
of Realization,
And, as a result, our mind kept floating in the heavens –
that too so cheap!
And this floating never allowed us to feel the solid earth!*

*O Saki! Do you remember the opening session of the Tavern
– in Manzil-e-Meem
When the mysteries of the Tavern began to leak out?
Making all concerned feel dazed and intoxicated!
And also the disclosures regarding the circle
and its members!
As a result, the bread and butter of the times made
the inmates forget biryani (a rich rice dish, literally,
comfortable living) outside!
And the mosquito curtains held for them the comforts
of the palace of Jamshed!*

*O Saki! Do you remember the postponement of your
promises to June and September?
We often recall such incidents for amusement!
You began to evolve subterfuges and excuses.
There is no one to beat You at this game!
When the stock of the name of God began to have a cold
reception in the market of love,
You at once warmed us up by dangling maya in one form
or another before our eyes!*

*You even created occasions for travel and entertainment,
Incidentally providing them with opportunities for
selfless service.
Giving occupation to each one according to capacities,
You remained, nevertheless, enamored of some, circumspect
about some, and indifferent toward some!*

Announcement of the New Life

*In short, Your individual pulse-reading is the envy of Plato!
And the soothing balm of Your breath (words) would easily
surpass in effect the breath of Jesus!*

*Years rolled on, days followed night, and we lost all bearings
of life, worldly and religious!
When the undertone of subtle, but definite change in your
attitude dawned on us,
We felt once again drawn to the allurements of our
unfinished worldly life!
But it was too late; the will to do was gone!
There was not time even to recall the past years.*

*Everyone of the Tavern claimed to have a special place
in Your eyes.
Everyone now realizes the mischievous twinkle in Your eyes!
The favorites, or otherwise, all feel disillusioned.
Your eyes have gone to the length of fooling
even the whole world.
Who could imagine the all-sweeping range of Your eyes
which could never stay put anywhere, but eluded all!
Realizing the ever-growing scope of mystery and intrigue
in your working,
We somehow felt that resurrection itself has been
requisitioned for your service.
Intellect is befuddled, and consciousness is in a whirl!
The sanguine panorama of Your innocent eyes would even
try the patience of Job!
And would put to shame my claim of being a diehard!*

*Often you have played the game of construction
and destruction.
No sooner we felt settled, there was unsettlement!
The breeze of destruction, however, was never so strong
as on this occasion.
It seems the present game implies perfect destruction.
My anxious mind is perturbed with this thought alone.
Let this end prove to be the beginning of the end, if
there is any!*

Announcement of the New Life

*The school of Love for years underwent a routine course.
 What seized You to change so suddenly the curriculum
 so drastically?
 Mere words can never remove the age-long rust
 of temperament and nature
 When it is a problem even for advanced souls!
 Our life as a whole was too full of examinations.
 Would it be too much to wish if You had ordered exemption
 and an eternal vacation?
 For years, we were praying for the safety of the Tavern (God).
 In the Tavern we prayed for the long life of the Saki (Master).
 The latest decree, however, enjoins upon us
 to forget both the Tavern and the Saki!
 Now there is no go for us but to pray for the safety
 of the wineglass (individual Self).
 The ship (God) and the captain (Master) have both
 become strangers!
 Come to your senses, O Traveler!
 Who remains now to care for you?*

*Finish up this rigmarole, O Munsiff!
 Your sorry tale is the tale of every one of us!
 We, nevertheless, give you credit for plain-speaking;
 All the same, we congratulate your correct decision.
 If the Beloved is determined to ride the clouds
 of self-glorification,
 The lover also should reply by riding the sure steed
 of surrender and resignation!*

Baba then asked Khaksaheb to compose a ghazal as if He Himself were giving the reply to Ghani.

The next day Khaksaheb read out his strong rejoinder, which pleased Baba very much. This English translation is reproduced here in its entirety.



Khaksaheb

Announcement of the New Life

Inmates of the Tavern!

Do you know whose is the wailing note today?

The voice evidently is of one of our chronic beneficiaries!

*Let him know that the Tavern is open eternally on one
condition alone:*

That the secret of the Tavern must not go out of the Tavern!

How dare he complain about the tyranny of the Saki!

*Can you truly say that the wine eternal has not
benefited him at all?*

How senseless and meaningless is his jeremiad!

What mocking and hypocrisy this bewailing and moaning!

Let Munsiff say, Is not this outburst out of tune?

And if at all, was there any occasion for it today?

*Heed ye all! The grace of the Saki is universal, and today no
hand will hold an empty cup!*

It is for you to remember the particular day of your life,

When the grace of Saki made you realize your depression.

You were one of the nonentities of the world;

worldly and divine knowledge you had none.

By the grace of the Saki you became fit to be called a man!

Ignorant atom became enlightened with Knowledge!

Just recall to mind the standard of your morals!

Was there any preparedness in you for any selfless service?

Were you ready to share the pains of others?

Had you the will to undergo sacrifices and self-denials?

Through Saki's contact you are raised to the status of a human.

*And it is Saki's grace that kept you away from
uncommitted sins!*

You are a hypocrite and senseless too.

Do not be a bravado!

I know you through and through.

You are only alive to your own selfish needs;

And yet, you claim to be wide awake!

Your apparent daring is nothing but defeatism!

It ill-becomes you, this unhappy jeremiad!

Do not disgrace the name of free thinking!

A free-thinker never caters for name and fame.

The Tavern can never be advertised in this manner.

Announcement of the New Life

*This is not the way to proclaim the advent of the Saki.
The faithful ones are ashamed of your tactics.
What a hodgepodge of love and complaints you present!*

*The Saki has not forgotten his promises,
And his uncalled-for gestures of kindness and favors.
The thought of biryani was inseparable from your life!
Just recall to mind your animality!
The gestures of Saki were in a view to hearten you.
The Saki's unfulfilled promises had an ulterior motive for
your benefit.
The Saki evolved various pastimes for you – travels, picnics
and games.
These were like sweets to beguile children.
These subterfuges were intended to help you discover
your potentialities
In the matter of treading the Path of Surrender
and Resignation!
This so-called captivity by Saki was a blessing in disguise.
Can't you see the Mastermind behind all this game?*

*It would be near the mark if I were to call you shortsighted.
Whatever I did was just the right thing in your case.
The so-called freedom of your dreams, like death, would have
dragged you down to the depths of ignominy and shame.
My apparent hard-heartedness was an act of mercy in disguise.
It's sheer ignorance that makes you bewail and cry!*

*In recounting the sorry tale in the Tavern,
You have cast a slur on your name and fortune!
Look within yourself, and try to face the Truth.
Don't you realize within yourself a world of difference
between your past and your present?
If there is the slightest tinge of right-mindedness in you,
you will admit it unhesitatingly,
That the Saki has made an insignificant atom like you
the rival to the sun!*

*The lessons in Gnosis given by me brought about
your awakening.*

Announcement of the New Life

*It even enabled you to assess the true status of the
Messenger of God.*

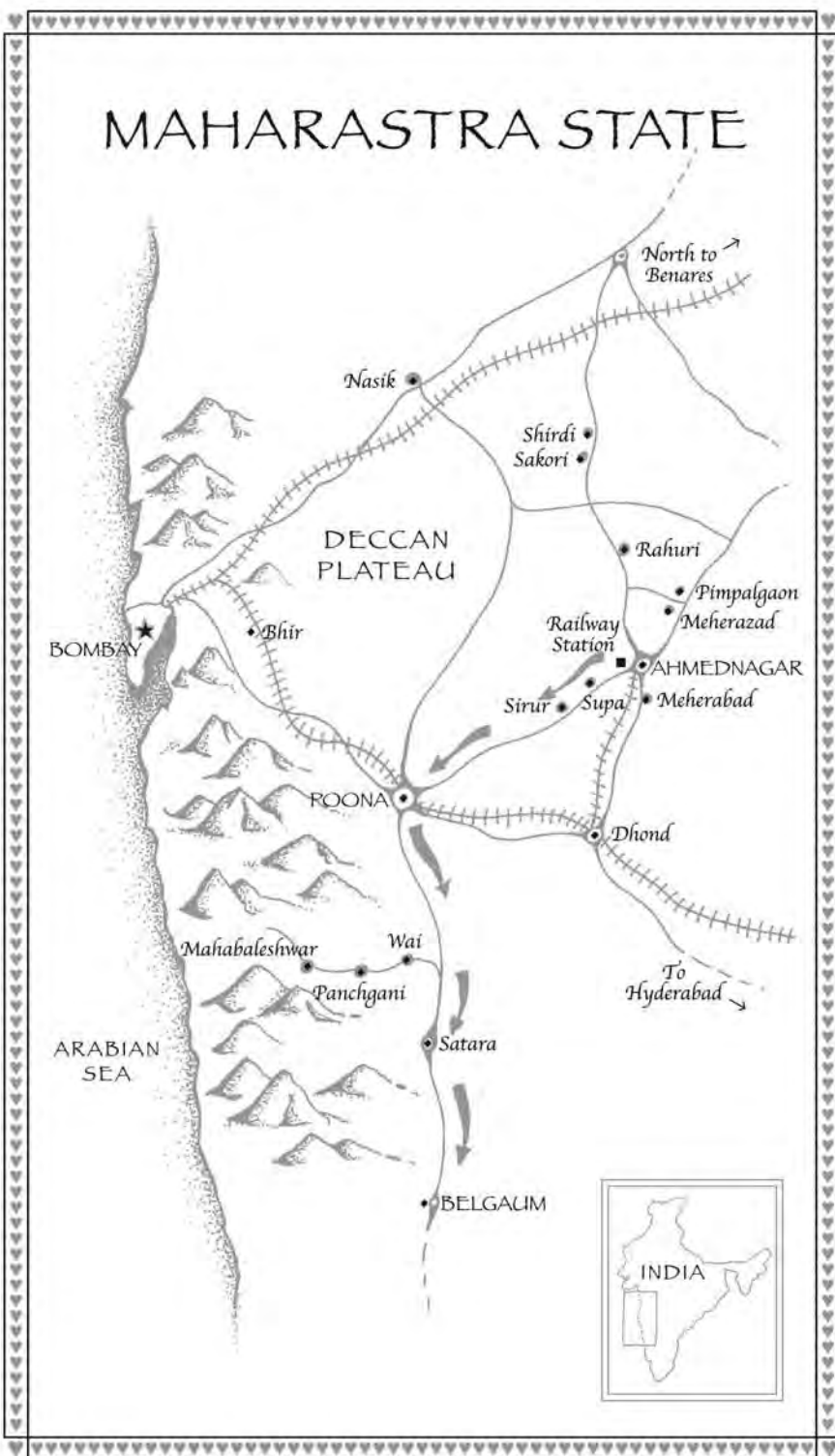
*A kafir of your caliber was transformed into a true Muslim!
In short, an animal like you was made human!
The world recognizes you because of my teachings!
Because of me you are listened to and respected!*

*In the world, for one beautiful there is one better;
In intellect and learning, there are hundreds superior to you!
Just explain what particular qualification you possess
That amongst others you became select in my eyes.
It was the result of that eternal link of Blessedness
Which entitled you to be the recipient of my Gnosis!
The point is, where could you have stored this unique Blessedness,
Since your heart and mind were overfull of worldly trash?
The process of purifying the heart is not a child's game!
The ordeal of Surrender and Resignation is long and tedious.
Your hasty temperament has blurred your vision.
In this Path there is tardiness, but not niggardliness!*

*Listen to the Saki! Don't lose heart.
Success depends on the will to do or die.
Give up all considerations of profit and loss.
Be prepared to lose life if you wish to have it!
The All-merciful Master of the Tavern will, no doubt,
make you drink one day the Wine of Immortal Life!*

THE JOURNEY BEGINS





Chapter Three

THE NEW LIFE BEGINS

October 16, 1949

Those Who Joined Baba

Meher Baba was 55 years old at the beginning of the New Life. Of the many followers who were contacted for consideration as His companions, only twenty were selected by Him. Of these twenty, four were women. Mehera, His closest woman disciple, was 42 and had been with Him since the early days at Meherabad. Mani, His sister, was 31. She joined Him permanently in the mid-1930s while she was still in high school. Dr. Goher, age 34, was from a family deeply devoted to Baba since the 1920s and had recently joined the women mandali. Meheru, age 22, was Mehera's niece and had been with Baba since childhood. The women were from a Zoroastrian religious background and were unmarried.



The four women companions, Meheru, Mehera, Mani and Dr. Goher

The New Life Begins

The majority of the men who joined Baba ranged in age from 30 to 60. Some were married, but most were single and for the most part in robust health, though a few were unaccustomed to much physical activity. They came from a variety of religious backgrounds: Hindu, Muslim, Zoroastrian, Sikh and Christian.

Of the sixteen men joining Baba, a number were early disciples whom He had gathered around Him in Bombay in 1922 at Manzil-e-Meem, His first ashram: Adi K. Irani, His secretary, was 45. He was from a prominent family in Ahmednagar. His mother and sister were also long-time followers of Meher Baba. Pendu, Baba's cousin, also 45, had been devoted to Him since his childhood. Dr. Ghani, 58, had been a favorite childhood schoolmate of His. Gustadji, 59, sent to Him by Baba's Master Upasni Maharaj, was one of His first disciples and had been observing silence by Baba's order since 1927.

Baidul was 56. Originally from Iran, he was caught in Baba's net in Poona in the early 1920s. Vishnu Deorukhar was 45 and Sadashiv Patel was 60. Though not in Manzil-e-Meem, they both were from the original group that had gathered around Baba in Poona. Vishnu remained with Baba as one of the resident mandali, while Sadashiv lived in Poona, but visited Baba often.

Several of the other men joined Baba later when He moved to Meherabad from Manzil-e-Meem in Bombay: Dr. Nilu, 45, was a college friend of Vishnu and had served as one of the physicians at Meherabad since the mid-20s. Anna Jakkal, 60, was one of the early Meherabad mandali, whom Baba nicknamed Anna 104 because of a high fever he once suffered. Kaka Baria, 58, joined Baba in the mid-20s and served during various periods as His personal attendant. Ali Akbar, 33, who was later given the name Aloha by Baba, had been a student in the Meher Ashram, a special school at Upper Meherabad personally supervised by Baba in the late 1920s. Murli Kale, 30, was also a student in the same school and was the son of Kalemama, one of the early Meherabad mandali.

The remaining men came to Baba later. Eruch, 33, was from a family that was long devoted to Him. He joined Baba in 1938 and became His chief interpreter and personal attendant. Dr.

The New Life Begins

Donkin, 37, was the only Westerner in the group. He first met Baba in London in 1932 and later served as one of the physicians at Meherabad. Babadas, in his 40s, was described as a wandering *sadhu* (ascetic); he dressed like a monk and traveled around India talking about Baba and had frequent contact with Him since the 30s.

Completing the group of New Life companions was Dr. Daulat Singh, 49, who became deeply devoted to Baba during the 1940s, though he had never lived in any of Baba's ashrams.

In addition to the twenty companions, there were five others who were given an integral role in the New Life: Sarosh Irani, Meherjee Irani, Ramjoo Abdullah, Jal Kerawala and Nariman Dadachanji. They became known as the arrangement-walas; they stayed behind and were responsible for any financial and legal matters and arrangements that might arise in Baba's absence. They were also to be available to carry out any of Baba's requests made during the New Life.



Arrangementwalas: Nariman, Sarosh and Meherjee



Jal Kerawala and Ramjoo Abdullah

*The New Life Begins***A Swami Seeks God-Realization**

The days leading up to the start of the New Life were filled with great activity and intensity, as well as countless last minute business matters and details that needed attention. Baba came to Meherabad almost every day from Meherazad while the mandali were feverishly disposing of everything in His name. Sometimes the mandali stayed up all night to take care of these painstaking details.

In the midst of all this activity, a swami with long hair and beard, wearing a robe, showed up at Meherabad and approached Baba. Although Baba was not seeing anyone at the time, He made an exception in this case.

Baba began by asking him, "What do you want?"

"I want God-realization," the swami replied.

"This is the only thing I have to give," Baba said. "To give God-realization is my business."

The swami seemed very happy to hear this.

Baba then asked, "If you want God-realization, you will have to obey me 100 percent. Are you prepared to obey me?"

"I will obey your instructions if you will give me God-realization," the swami said, confidently.

"I am very busy now, and I'm not seeing anyone, but I have permitted you to see me. Now, if you want God-realization, stay here with the mandali for seven days. Eat with them and feel at home. Even forget God-realization for seven days and relax. After seven days, I will give you instructions. And if you follow these instructions 100 percent, I will give you God-realization. Will you do this?"

"Yes," the swami proclaimed with a great deal of enthusiasm.

At this time, the men slept in rows on the floor of Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad. The swami was given a place in one corner and he turned in promptly at 9:00 p.m.

After a pleasant night's sleep, he arose precisely at 4:00 a.m. Soon after, hot water was brought to him and he took his bath. At 5:00 a.m., although Baba had told him to forget about God-realization, he continued his habit of meditating by sitting cross-legged in his corner and chanting, "Oooooooooooooommm," loudly for an hour.

The New Life Begins

Meanwhile, the mandali, who had been up most of the night taking care of arrangements for the New Life, were awakened by his chanting after having only a few hours of sleep.

For two days, out of love for Baba, they did not complain, while the swami continued his chanting.

However, on the third morning, when the swami droned out his "Oooooooooooooommm," Ramjoo, wrapped in a blanket, sat up at his end of the hall and chanted "Mar-boooooooooooooom," which means "shout at the top of your voice."

At this, the swami got very annoyed. He glared at Ramjoo, but Ramjoo kept his eyes closed. The swami continued his "Oooooooooooooommm," only to have Ramjoo again follow with "Mar-boooooooooooooommm."

This was the last straw for the swami. He angrily packed his bag and left. One of the mandali heard the swami muttering under his breath, "These people are with Meher Baba for the last twenty-five years and Meher Baba has not even taught them any manners! How could He possibly give me God-realization?"

When Baba arrived at Meherabad at 7:00 a.m., he immediately asked Vishnu to call the swami, saying, "I have made a promise to him and therefore I want to give him God-realization today. Call him immediately!"

Vishnu and the other mandali were silent.

"Why are you standing there? I am asking you to call the swami," said Baba.

Pendu finally replied, "Baba, the swami has left."

"The swami has left? What has happened? Today, I have come to give him God-realization. Why did he leave?"

Pendu then related the whole business about "Om" and "Mar-bom."

Turning to Ramjoo, Baba asked sharply, "Why did you do this? Have you no sense? Get out of here! I don't want to see your face!"

Ramjoo stepped out of the hall, but after a few minutes, Baba called him back in, saying, "Whatever you did to the swami was not proper, but when the swami could not put up with your Mar-bom, he was not worthy of God-realization."

The New Life Begins

Discussions went on daily with Baba about what would be expected of those accompanying Him, and a provisional itinerary of the journey was mapped out, detailing places for special training and activities.

In the midst of this period of intense activity, when Baba was at Upper Meherabad, He sometimes lightened the mood by asking the women to play charades in the evening during which song and book titles were enacted.

On one occasion, Baba Himself took part and asked Mehera and Katie to join Him in portraying a book title. There was much waving of arms by all three of them, but try as they may, the other women mandali could not guess the title being enacted. In the end, Baba told them that the book title was *Gone with the Wind*, which was apropos of their predicament.

On October 14th, the men mandali were called from Meherabad to Meherazad to witness the “symbolic end” of Baba’s mast work. He bathed, shaved and gave a new set of clothes to two of His favorite masts, Ali Shah and Mohammed. Baba also shaved five poor men and later took a bath Himself.



The masts Mohammed and Ali Shah

The New Life Begins

For those not accompanying Baba on the New Life, the pain of having to say good-bye was excruciating. Earlier in the day, Minoo Kharas, who like Bal Natu had been exempted from going, was so distressed that he requested a private interview with Baba at Meherazad. While meeting alone with Baba in His room, Minoo suddenly began sobbing at the thought of Baba leaving. Baba put Minoo's head on His lap and patted him. Baba then lifted Minoo up and embraced him.

However, when Minoo continued to sob, Baba clapped and Eruch came in to interpret, "...why cry and worry? On the contrary, you are the most lucky of all the yeswalas. You have no risk of disobeying my orders while in the New Life. Your physical and spiritual connections are established firmly with me."

Minoo eventually calmed down. Baba took his cheeks in His hands, looked straight in his eyes and kissed him. After that, Minoo returned to Meherabad greatly consoled.

On October 15, all of the men gathered in Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad. As a change of pace from the serious and intense mood before the departure on the New Life, Dr. Ghani, Khaksaheb and Ramjoo proposed that a special parting meal be served.

They humorously used Jesus' Last Supper as their excuse. Being Muslims, they went so far as to request that non-vegetarian food (meat dishes) be included on the menu, which had never been done at Meherabad. Baba consented, so another of the men cleverly suggested that wine should also be served just as Jesus had done.

"A little quantity of wine," Baba condescended, "also will be supplied with the feast."

Later, when the food was ready to be served, Baba asked the mandali where it should be eaten. Each man was asked to express his opinion freely, and everyone chose Mandali Hall, except Dhake, who was an orthodox Brahmin. Baba singled him out and asked, "What's your opinion?"

"This hall is the sacred seat of the Avatar, and never till now has a non-vegetarian meal been served near the seat! Your Hindu followers take the place where You sit as sacred. They would never tolerate non-vegetarian food served here. Their

The New Life Begins

sentiments will be hurt. So I disapprove of taking food here!" Dhake replied vehemently.

Dr. Ghani spoke up, "Baba, we are forty-nine and Dhake is only one."

"To me, the opinion of even one man counts. You are all on one side, and he is on another. So I side with him and say, let's not take food here!" Baba ended by saying, "...there is no rule of democracy in spiritual thinking."

Dr. Nilu and Nariman, trying to change Baba's mind, suggested that no one tell the servants about the meat dishes.

Baba objected, "No hypocrisy. Do things openly."

In the end, it was decided that the *biryani* (a highly seasoned rice and meat dish) would be served at the hut of Kakubai (Vishnu's mother), and Dhake and Kalemama (both Brahmins) would eat their vegetarian lunch in Mandali Hall.

During the meal, Baba ate only rice and dal, and at one point, He gave some of His food as prasad to a few of the men.

This was one of Baba's typical methods. He would have a nice meal set before them with special dishes, beverages and desserts, and at the same time create a situation where few would find enjoyment. Even their last meal could not be held in a harmonious spirit, which left the men feeling weary.

Later, Dhake read out a speech entitled "Farewell to Baba and Companions." Baba not only served the promised wine, but also whiskey and brandy, which He had allowed Sarosh to bring

for anyone wanting a glass. Some of the men, including Adi Sr. and Ramjoo, imbibed freely. Wine was also allowed to some who had previous orders from Baba to refrain from alcohol, but afterward, He warned them not to drink alcohol in the future.



Dhake reading farewell to Baba and the companions

*The New Life Begins***The Eve of the New Life**

On the morning of October 15th, Baba paid a final visit to Meherabad to oversee the preparations being made for the journey the next day. While there, He agreed to pose for a group photograph with the men at Lower Meherabad.

Later, He made comments about three men who would not be going with Him.

The first was Minoo Kharas about whom He conveyed, "The work I had given to Minoo he has done satisfactorily. So, by remaining at his home, he can be in the class of yeswalas. In spite of his staying at home [in Pakistan] and carrying on his business and other duties as before, I have asked him to implicitly obey certain of the conditions."

The conditions for Minoo were: not to touch women, including his wife; to distribute any surplus from his income to the poor; and every year in October to put on a robe and loincloth and go on pilgrimage to some holy place, spending only one rupee a day on food.

The second man was Pandoba about whom Baba said, "It is not possible for his feeble body to undergo the New Life privations. So he is in the nowalas."

The third was Bal Natu whose health was also not good. Baba said, "He should follow his old life. But considering his past history, he is in the category of yeswalas."

As Sadashiv Patel had to attend to some affair in court, Baba permitted him to go to Poona and clear up the matter and then join Him and the companions in Belgaum on October 20th.

A problem then arose over Ghani's property in Lonavla, but Baba had it temporarily settled so he was free to go with Him.

That same day, Rano, Kitty, Khorshed and Soonamasi said a final farewell to Baba before being driven to Bombay. As their car drove away, through their tears, they looked back as long as they could until Baba, who continued to wave at them, was finally out of sight.

The other women, who had also lived at Meherabad for so many years, said a sad farewell to Baba, too.

The New Life Begins

Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad, October 15, 1949

Top: Anna 104, Murli Kale, Baidul, Eruch, Chhagan, Minoo Khavas, Adi Sr. Middle: Feram Workingboxwala, Dr. Nilu, brother Jal, Kaka Baria, Adi Jr., Gustadji, MEHER BABA. On the ground: Sidhu, Ramjoo Abdulla, Savak Kotwal, Babadas. (Those in bold print went with Baba on the New Life.)

The atmosphere at Meherabad was tense with excitement as those going with Baba made last minute preparations for the journey. A tailor in Ahmednagar, under the supervision of Eruch's sister, Meheru Damania, had been working day and night to finish the clothing to be worn by the women and some of the men. When everyone was packed, Baba made a final inspection of their small baggage and trunks. The following is a list of things that could be taken on the New Life:

1. Two big cotton kafnis (long robes), one white and one blue
2. One brown woolen kafni
3. One blanket
4. One woolen suit
5. Two shirts, one woolen and another cotton or silk
6. One cotton suit
7. Two pajamas
8. Two cotton T-shirts
9. Three pairs of socks - one woolen, two cotton
10. Two pairs of *langoti* (loin cloth) or underwear
11. Four handkerchiefs

The New Life Begins

Top: **Pendu**, Sailor (*Khodu*), **Dr. Donkin**, Padri, Kalemama. Dattu Mehenderge.
 Middle: **Dr. Gbani**, Nariman, Sarosh, Meherjee, Khaksaheb, Savak Damania.
 On the ground: Dhake Phalkar, **Ali Akbar**, (**Aloba**), Bal Tambat, **Vishnu**.
 (New Life companions not shown here are **Sadashiv Patel** and **Daulat Singh**)

12. One bath towel
13. One face towel
14. One tin trunk (2 by 1.5 ft. by 9 in.)
15. One cloth bag which can be hung from the shoulders
16. One *lota* (mug)
17. One *thali* (platter)
18. Two spoons
19. One toothpaste tube, one toothbrush
20. One comb and one brush
21. One small hand mirror, one shaving kit (with blades)
22. Two bars of soap
23. One pair of shoes and a pair of *chappals* (sandals)
24. One toothpick and one watch
25. One waterpot for drinking and one plate
26. One good durable walking stick
27. One new hat, cap or turban, whichever preferred
28. Those using neckties may take two
29. Those in the habit of using wristwatches, spectacles and false teeth may take these with them only if they are still using them.

The New Life Begins

Each companion was instructed to have the above necessities with him the next morning. (As the New Life progressed, much of the clothing was discarded.)

Minoo Kharas, distraught and in tears about not going on the New Life, wondered what he might send of his own on the journey. Suddenly, through his sadness, he remembered his walking stick and asked his friend Dr. Ghani if he would take it on the New Life for him, and the doctor happily agreed.

Minoo raced to his room, retrieved his walking stick, kissed it several times, held it in his arms, and then brought it to Ghani. In this way, he felt that a part of him was going on the journey. (The stick accompanied the companions all the way to the end of the New Life.)

Baba gave final instructions to the arrangementwalas: Nariman, Meherjee, Ramjoo and Sarosh.

Pendu, with the help of the other mandali, had managed to dispose of the 700 acres of land and all the animals connected with the two ashrams by the deadline Baba had set, but due to overwork he was suffering from fever and a sore throat. As a result, he missed the last supper.

Those accompanying Baba were given these orders:

1. To retire at 7 p.m. on 15th evening for rest.
2. To deliver their trunks to be placed in the truck on the evening of the 15th.
3. To get up at 2 a.m. (October 16th).
4. To take a bath and put on additional dress which will have to be removed on reaching Belgaum.
5. To take only tea at 3 a.m. on 16th October.
6. To start on foot from Meherabad.

The plan was that Baba, accompanied by Kaka, Eruch and the four women companions, would meet the men at the railway crossing near the Ahmednagar station very early in the morning. The foot journey would then begin from the station, with Baba and the women walking ahead and the men following at a distance of about 200 yards. Everyone was instructed to

The New Life Begins

wear ordinary clothes, rather than their *kafnis* (long robes), in order not to draw attention from local people. Baidul, Kaka, Pendu and Nilu were instructed to go in advance in a luggage truck to the first stop and to await the party.

The distance of 32 miles from Ahmednagar to Sirur was to be covered on foot with four stops made along the way. From Sirur, the party would then to proceed south by rented bus the 270 miles to Belgaum.

By Baba's order, those not going on the New Life were to leave Meherabad in the evening for their respective homes. That afternoon, as He bade a loving farewell to each one, the sky was overcast. Reflecting the weather, there was anguish and sorrow in the hearts of His close ones who could scarcely endure the prospect of facing physical separation from Baba for all time.

Baba's parting words to them were, "All of you, don't worry about anything. So long as you love me so much, you are the very, very lucky few of the present generation. Love me always and be assured of me and eternal happiness."

Baba and the Companions Set Out

At last, after a torrential rain during the night, the morning of the long-awaited day arrived – Sunday, October 16th, 1949.

The men awoke in Meherabad at 2:00 a.m. to prepare for the journey. By now, it was cool outside with only a light drizzle. The men bathed and then had a cup of hot tea at 3:00 a.m. Due to the wet weather, the foot journey to the railway crossing in Ahmednagar was canceled. Instead, Baba told Sarosh to send a bus to Meherabad for the men.

Bidding a sad farewell to life at Meherabad, the men boarded the bus to the railway crossing, arriving a little after 4:00 a.m. It was drizzling when they got there.

Meanwhile, at Meherabad the women woke in the dark, and when the new electric generator was turned on, they used the light to wash themselves. Then they had breakfast and a hot cup of tea before finishing any last minute packing. As Mani said later, "It was always a mad dash around Baba." This time was no exception.

The New Life Begins

Eruch drove the Buick around to the front of the main house near Baba's room and loaded bedrolls and traveling gear into the car. Baba soon came out, dressed in a coat and *sadra* (a thin cotton robe), and climbed into the front seat beside Eruch and Kaka. Mani, Dr. Goher and Meheru stepped out onto the veranda, and for some time paced back and forth without making a move for the car.



The main house at Meherazad in the 1950s when Baba stayed in an upstairs room and Mehera, Mani and Dr. Goher lived downstairs

Finally, one of the women came over to the car and whispered something in Baba's ear. He then conveyed to Eruch that after so many years of living in seclusion, Mehera was shy about getting into a car that had no curtains.

Eruch quickly improvised a curtain, and then Mehera, Mani and Meheru took their places in the back seat of the car. Goher was nowhere to be seen. After some time, Baba asked Eruch to honk the horn and immediately Goher ran out, saying she could not close the door to His room; dampness due to the recent monsoon rains had caused the wooden door to swell. Baba then sent Eruch to close the door, which he accomplished with a forceful push and kick.

The New Life Begins

A wave of nostalgia swept over the women as they drove off at 3:30 a.m., leaving behind their life of quiet intimacy in Meherazad and the colorful gardens in full bloom.

Meanwhile, the rest of the men waited in the dark at the level railway crossing near the station. To protect themselves from the rain, they had put gunny sacks over their heads.

After some time, the headlights of Baba's car were seen in the distance. When the car pulled up, Baba and the four women stepped out while Eruch and Kaka went to join the men. Adi Sr. soon arrived by car from Ahmednagar with Sarosh, and Adi Jr. came in his car. Aside from them, Padri had brought a number of Meherabad lovers who secretly hoped that their tears would prevent Baba from leaving, but Baba, upon seeing them, immediately said, "No tears," so they were forced to compose themselves as they waited for Baba to signal the beginning of the New Life!

As Baba was about to start walking with His companions, the rain suddenly picked up, so Sarosh asked Baba if he could follow them by car to the first stop in case the rain necessitated transport. Adi Jr. also offered his car, and to their surprise, Baba consented for them both to follow. In that moment, the companions learned that there was nothing rigid about Baba's plans in this phase of His work. Later, they would find that change was an integral part of the New Life.

Long before the city had awakened, Baba and the companions walked a short distance beyond the level railway crossing, and Baba gestured for them to stand behind Him and observe silence. He knelt down and solemnly touched the earth with His hands and then His forehead. The companions followed suit. While remaining kneeling, Baba took a silent oath, and after almost a minute, He raised His hands and signaled for the companions to recite the following prayer:

*O God! Make this New Life for all of us
a success and joy eternal!*

The journey on foot resumed with Baba and the four women walking in front, followed by the sixteen men 200 yards behind. Sarosh's car moved along slowly behind them.

The New Life Begins



Ahmednagar Railway Station



The level crossing (foreground) where Baba began the New Life

The New Life Begins*The level crossing at Arangaon*

Suddenly, the rain let up, which allowed Baba to walk hand in hand with Mehera while everyone else followed. Mehera wore slacks, while the other women wore punjabi outfits. Baba had a scarf tied around His head to hide His long hair.

At one point, Baba stopped and asked, "Can anyone tell me what oath I took during the minute of silence?"

Several conjectures were offered, but none was correct.

Baba told them, "It is a secret and cannot be divulged."

The wind picked up and the heavy rain returned. In the absence of rain gear, the men again took out gunny sacks and put them over their heads.

Baba was happy with the rainy weather and gestured, "A good sign!" He said that it portended the success of the ultimate end of the New Life, *satyanashi*, the utter ruination that He had been speaking about for so long.

The companions walked on for about one mile. When the downpour persisted, Baba decided, at Sarosh's urging, to go in the Buick with the women directly to Chas, a small village of ramshackle huts and buildings along the road to Poona. Baba did not want the companions catching colds at the outset. The luggage truck with Pendu, Kaka and Nilu followed behind.

Because there were so many of them, too many to fit in the car at once, Adi Jr. and the rest of the men decided to go in two trips, but no one thought to ask for Baba's permission.

The New Life Begins

By the time everyone had gone the seven miles to Chas, they found the shelter in which they were supposed to stay surrounded by water and mud, with no sign of the keeper.

As a consequence of these adverse conditions, they stopped there only briefly, and Baba then decided that they would push on to the town of Supa, another eight miles ahead.

The road to Supa wound its way through low, barren hills and level countryside, which were relieved here and there by groves of trees and garden plots that had turned a lush green due to the monsoon.

By 6:00 a.m., everyone was in Supa, and Baba sent Sarosh and Adi Jr. back to Ahmednagar.

Supa was quiet and pleasant, and the main dak bungalow (government rest house*) where Baba and the women were to stay was near a temple on the outskirts of town.

Baba had His own room, which the women quickly arranged for His comfort. In the compound adjoining the rest house was an unfurnished garage and a little room next to the kitchen, which the men occupied.

After settling in, everyone enjoyed a slice of bread and butter and a cup of hot tea prepared by Kaka and served in aluminum cups that Elizabeth had purchased years earlier, which had never been used.

Baba said, "The start of the New Life is excellent, and I am happy!"

He then joined the men in the garage, who were sitting on the stone flooring. He spelled out on His alphabet board the four stages of the New Life:

First, an interval of relaxation for ten days.

Second, an interval of training in Belgaum.

Third, a vacuum period of 10 days preparatory to entering the New Life of hopelessness and helplessness on January 1st, 1950.

Fourth, from January 1st, 1950, the New Life of hopelessness and helplessness will show in its true colors 100 percent, so much so, that even the gods will envy it!

*During their many travels, Baba and His companions often stayed in dak bungalows (also known as dharamshalas) located on the outskirts of towns in secluded, scenic places. The bungalows usually had a few sparsely furnished rooms, flagstone floors, tiled roofs and stone walls, a veranda, a kitchen and a bath in the rear. The rates were usually very reasonable.

The New Life Begins



The dak bungalow (government resthouse) at Supa



*Baba's room on the right where He slept on a kitchen table;
the women's room on left*

The New Life Begins*The unfurnished garage where the men stayed at Supa*

Baba again stressed that His orders must be followed implicitly. He cited the recent instance where the men, without asking His permission, had decided to come by Adi Jr.'s car to Supa in two trips rather than one. He immediately forgave them.

In a further discussion, Baba described the spirit He wished the companions to cultivate in the New Life. Eruch, Adi, or sometimes one of the other companions, spoke out Baba's words as He dictated them on the alphabet board. Mani usually performed the same role when Baba was with the women. He dictated the following:

From now on, everything must be open, clear and truthful. Nothing is secret and nothing should be hidden. All are equal, and all should treat and accommodate each other equally. Everyone should try to be 100 percent honest, and whatever the circumstances or consequences, all should speak the truth.

The most important thing to remember in all circumstances is to remain cheerful and happy. Occasionally, disappointment, disgust or discontent might assail you, but you should try not to show it on your face. Anger may overpower one, but it should not be expressed.

The New Life Begins

Baba then assigned duties to the companions. Kaka and Baidul were to attend to the cooking; Adi Sr., Dr. Donkin, Dr. Ghani and others were to draw and carry water in buckets from a well several hundred yards away. Each one was to draw water for his own bath.

Ghani, being older and accustomed to a sedentary life, became short of breath while drawing water, so Baba out of compassion drew it for him.

The men brought the buckets of water halfway to the women's quarters, and Dr. Goher went and picked them up.

Ghani, who was very lazy, entertained the companions with exaggerated grunts and grimaces at each of his physical exertions. "O God!" He exclaimed, more than once. "This well is so deep! Allah, please help me!"



The well at Supa

Others were given duties such as washing pots and cooking utensils, or peeling and cutting up vegetables.

Baba, aside from attending to His own needs, helped the companions in many ways with their duties. He lived the life of a devotee and servant of God to perfection, and He was also the perfect companion to His companions.

Earlier Dr. Nilu, while stepping down from the luggage truck, had missed his foothold and fell, landing on his haunches, laughing. Fortunately, he had not been injured.

The New Life Begins

Baba, to celebrate the narrow escape, allotted ten rupees for *jilebi*, an Indian sweetmeat, for everyone. Murli and Nilu (whose sweet tooth was well known) were sent into town, but as *jilebi* was not available at such short notice, the special treat was postponed until the next halt.

Because the companions did not stop in Chas as planned due to the rains, Baba decided that they should remain in Supa an extra day, thereby keeping to His original timetable.

On this first day, Baba was in an excellent mood, mingling with the companions and occasionally distributing chocolates or dried fruits to lift their spirits.

A Near Accident in Supa

The next day, the companions arose very early. After everyone had their morning tea, Baba appeared in the men's quarters and inquired how each had spent the night.

After hearing that each had slept well, Baba declared, "I slept better than I've ever slept before!"

Everyone was greatly surprised, because Baba had always been a light sleeper and the least noise would disturb Him!

He then recounted an unusual episode from the previous night. In His room in the dak bungalow, a bed had been improvised for Him on top of the dining table, where Mehera and Mani had unrolled His bedding. Eruch slept at His side. Sometime after midnight, someone began violently knocking on the door to the room. Baba, who was asleep at the time, was awakened by the loud noise and, being used to a bed of standard height, He misjudged the distance to the floor and fell heavily sideways when He attempted to get up. Luckily, He broke His fall with His arm and the palm of His hand, avoiding injury and experiencing only a sudden jolt.

After searching fruitlessly with Eruch for the cause of the disturbance, Baba went back to bed and fell into a deep sleep and awoke feeling very refreshed.

(Later, while talking the whole incident over, Eruch and Baidul surmised that the source of the noise was probably a homeless person seeking shelter for the night.)

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After Baba related this episode, Dr. Ghani said, “When to celebrate Nilu’s escape from injury, Baba was willing to spend ten rupees on sweetmeat, so why should Baba’s escape from harm not be celebrated in a like manner?”

Appreciating Ghani’s boyish humor, Baba promised twenty-one rupees worth of *laddoos*, sweetmeat balls, to be given to the companions at the next stop, Sirur (also called Ghodnadi), located halfway between Ahmednagar and Poona.

Baba then reiterated the importance of complete obedience and remarked that the period of preliminary training would be a success only if everyone followed His orders unquestioningly.

As an example, He referred to an episode with Daulat Singh: “I had given him a cigarette to smoke in Meherabad. He immediately, without hesitation, put it in his mouth and was on the point of smoking it, but I snatched it away and was much pleased with his obedience. Had Daulat Singh shown the slightest hesitation on the grounds of religion, he would have failed, but I would have forgiven him in this primary stage of the New Life. However, from January 1st, 1950, no such lapses will be condoned. The defaulter will immediately be ordered to leave, and his spiritual connection with me will also be broken.”

In the afternoon, Baba sat on the floor in the garage with the men gathered around Him. He dictated:

We are all on an equal footing from now on in the New Life. For us all, henceforth, there is no spirituality, no Master, no disciple, no miracles, no key-turning business, no hopes and no thoughts of benefit or privation. Look upon Baba as a friend who will help and advise you till the end of December.

By word and deed, you should in all faith avoid sincerely and seriously giving the impression that Baba is God, Master, Sadguru or the Avatar. I will be Master in one respect only – in demanding implicit obedience. In all other respects, treat Baba as a friend. You should be quite free in your behavior toward me. But the treatment should not smack of rudeness or impudence. Barring

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this, practice humor, be joyful, and crack jokes. You are free to do this, nothing will please me more.

To carry you safely through with me, the most important thing is not to be moody. Always try to be happy and cheerful. If at times your mood is spoiled or you become angry, try never to express it, directly or indirectly. All this is the play of the mind, and with a little conscientious effort, the mind can be made to adapt itself.



A Hindu temple where Baba stayed briefly in seclusion while in Supa



A fort across the stream at Supa near the dak bungalow

The New Life Begins*The village of Narayangaon*

Baba instructed the men to carry out their respective duties and to not leave the immediate area except for calls of nature. When there was free time, anyone could go for a walk, but not for more than half a mile. Dr. Donkin was the only one who took advantage of this privilege.

Overnight Stay in an Empty Cinema

It had rained on and off during the day. For this reason, Baba decided not to stop the next day in Narayangaon, where they had originally planned to stay overnight in open fields. Instead, He chose to walk the sixteen miles to Sirur in a single trek where they could sleep under a roofed shelter.

At 2:00 a.m., October 18th, Baba and the companions were up. Because there was no electricity, they all quickly washed and then packed their bedrolls by the light of kerosene lanterns.

After tea and *chapatis* (a flat wheat bread), they started walking at 4:00 a.m. in pitch dark. The air was cool and damp. Since it had rained heavily earlier in the night, the roads were slick and muddy underfoot and the sky was still thick with clouds.

“Rains or no rains,” Baba said, looking more relaxed than He had for weeks, “the march on foot is to continue this time, regardless of the risks.”

The New Life Begins

Countryside along the Poona-Nagar road where the companions walked

This time the men walked in front, and Baba and the four women were a few hundred yards behind with Eruch nearby.

After a while, a bright moon appeared through the clouds, casting its silvery light on the road ahead and the surrounding countryside. Although there was a cool morning breeze, the walking was very tiring, especially for the older men.

At one point, Baba rushed ahead and caught up with Dr. Ghani to ask how he was doing. When Ghani replied that he was feeling hungry, Baba walked back to the women who carried food supplies and took some pieces of sugar candy, which He handed out to everyone.

Adi sang familiar *qawaali* songs (intimate love songs to the Divine Beloved) as they trudged along the dirt road.

After hiking seven miles, they came to a place by the roadside near Narayangaon where there were a few farm huts, garden plots and a grove of shade trees with a stream nearby. Baba suggested that they stop there for tea. Kaka, the only one allowed to carry money, had already gone ahead to Sirur in the luggage truck and none of the other companions had money. However, Eruch remembered that when they had originally planned to stay overnight in Narayangaon, one of the villagers had been paid four rupees in advance to make arrangements for

The New Life Begins

the party, so Baba sent Eruch and Donkin ahead to find the man and ask if he would provide tea for the party.

Before long, they brought a large pot of tea. Spiced with a little ginger, it tasted delicious.

By now, the sun was fully up, lighting the vast countryside.

After this brief halt, they continued walking mile after mile on the unpaved road that was full of potholes, making their way through a brief rain and then into the scorching sun. Only rarely did a car or truck pass them by.

Although Ghani had started the foot journey walking “jauntily” with his stick, he soon began to thrust it in the ground behind him in an attempt to propel himself forward, much to Baba’s amusement.

Ghani complained to the other men, “Dr. Donkin and Dr. Nilu totally led me astray. They were saying that Baba’s health was such that He would not be able to walk more than four or five miles.” He was humorously suggesting that he wanted another rest, but Baba just smiled and they all pushed on.



*The roadside where the companions rested and enjoyed hot tea
from Narayangaon village*

The New Life Begins

Some time later, the men, who had been instructed not to look back at Baba and the women, had unintentionally walked far ahead of them. Wanting to speak with the men, Baba clapped several times, but could not get their attention since they were too far away.



*As they drank tea, the companions watched the fields
being irrigated from this well*

To stop them, Baba sent Goher ahead with a whistle to get their attention. She blew and blew, but the men still did not stop.

Baba continued to clap and Mani shouted to them, all to no avail. Then they saw Goher just ahead of them, bending down and frantically striking the whistle on the ground.

“What’s come over Goher? Is she angry with the whistle for not blowing or what?” the women asked, laughing.

When they caught up with her, she complained, “The ball is stuck and it won’t blow anymore.”

Finally, Baba and the women succeeded in getting the attention of the men, but He was displeased and said that it should not happen again.

From that point on, Baba decided to walk with the men while the women followed a short distance behind. When He wished to talk with the women, He would either walk back to

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them or wait until they caught up with Him. Baba had laid down the restriction in the New Life that “the men were not only to avoid looking at the women or talking to them, but also their voices should not be heard by the women.”

During the first days of walking, the companions averaged about two-and-a-half miles an hour with considerable discomfort. Halfway to Sirur, Baba’s feet became very sore due to the pair of new sandals He was wearing. To alleviate His pain, Mehera immediately offered her sandals, which were loose and already broken in. They fit Baba comfortably.

Dr. Donkin applied gauze and adhesive tape to Baba’s blistered feet and to Ghani’s. Goher’s shoes were also bothering her, so she began to walk barefoot. This worried the other women who were concerned that she might get thorns in her feet, so they persuaded her to put her sandals back on.

As Baba and the companions continued to walk along in the oppressive heat of the sun, some passing villagers asked, “Why are you walking? There’s a perfectly good bus service. Why don’t you take the bus?”

The companions, who were not allowed to reveal Baba’s name, could only think to say, “We want to go on a walking tour. We’d like to walk today.”

In spite of all the walking, Baba showed no signs of fatigue, but just as the party was within sight of Sirur, Dr. Ghani became extremely exhausted and could barely prod himself along.

Baba came to the aid of His old schoolmate by taking one end of his walking stick and towing him along. It was a comic sight. When they neared the outskirts of the town, Ghani was close to collapse. He was having a minor heart attack and asked for water to relieve his parched throat.

Baba gestured for him to sit under a roadside tree in the shade for fifteen minutes. He was then given water to sip and one of the companions splashed water over his face. Due to this help, Ghani was able to cool down and miraculously recuperate. Nilu, Donkin and Goher were on hand, and they administered first-aid to Ghani.

The other companions, worried about their friend, sat by a grove of tall trees, watching while Ghani was being treated.

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Not far ahead was the bridge over the river leading into Sirur. As soon as Ghani had recovered sufficiently, the companions approached the bridge where Baba expressed the wish to be the first to set foot in the little town.

When the group assembled, it was discovered that Anna 104 had already crossed the bridge, Baba sent Eruch and Donkin ahead to catch him before he entered the town, but they arrived too late.

(Later, Baba took Anna 104 to task for breaking His order by walking too far ahead of the party, but then forgave him.)

Entering the town, the companions had to pass through streets crowded with men, women and children who gazed at them with open curiosity. The women, who for many years had been accustomed to a very secluded life, were uncomfortable being the object of so much attention. They walked with their eyes lowered and were relieved when they finally left the crowds behind and arrived at their place of lodging.

Originally, the party was to stay at the government rest house, but it was already occupied by military officers who were given priority. Therefore, Nilu, Kaka, Baidul and Pendu, who had arrived earlier in the luggage truck, went out in search of other accommodations. They approached a merchant who was devoted to Baba, and he offered the party the use of his movie theater, Sri Mahadur Touring Cinema, which was closed down and vacant. It was located just opposite the bus station in a busy section in the heart of town.

Baba and the companions reached the cinema theater around noon. After they refreshed themselves with a wash and a cool drink of water, lunch was ordered from a nearby hotel.

After eating, the party rested for the remainder of the day.

At afternoon tea, everyone enjoyed the treat of *jilebis*, which were purchased in celebration of Nilu's escape from injury.

Baba and the women used the stage behind the cinema screen as their quarters, while the men spread out in the auditorium. Everyone was so stiff from walking that they found bending difficult when they tried to unroll their bedding. Adding to this misery, their feet were also swollen and blistered, and from time to time, sudden moans and groans from muscle soreness could be heard by everyone in the theater.

The New Life Begins

Inside the cinema, there was a light on and Mani could not resist using her hands to make shadow figures on the movie screen, providing some entertainment to the weary companions.

Later, with the men, although Baba was hidden from view, the women overheard Eruch speak while Baba spelled out on the alphabet board, “You have to be lords and masters of your faces during the New Life, no matter what happens.”

This injunction meant not allowing one’s face to betray any negative or “unhappy” emotion; however, the companions soon found that “masking” one’s face did not always work, because Baba had a way of bringing out every nuance of mood or emotion that one tried to hide.

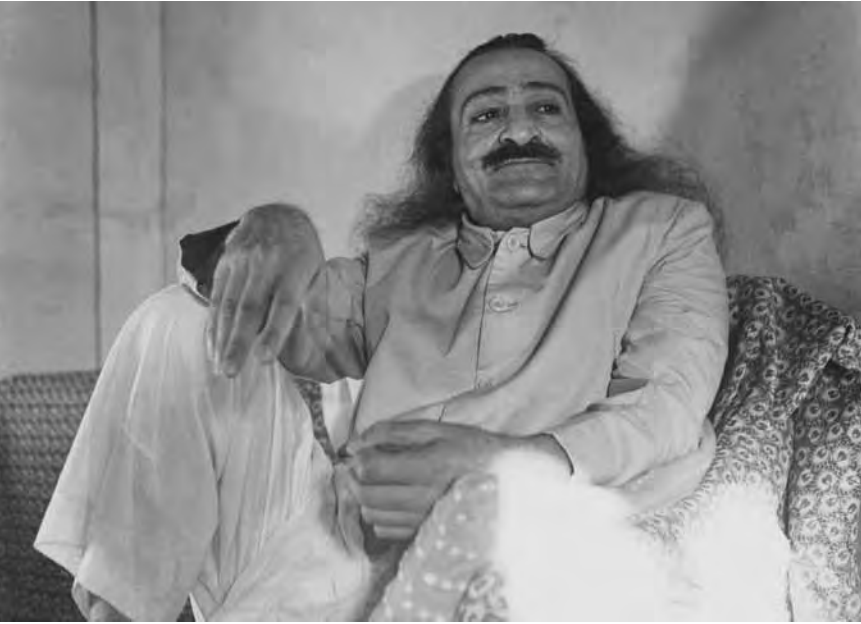
After an evening snack, Baba and the companions retired early, but they were abruptly disturbed by the sound of firecrackers. It was the night before *Divali*, the Festival of Lights, which is celebrated with oil lamps, sparklers and fireworks.

Due to the physical exhaustion from miles of walking, some of the companions were able to sleep anyway, but others found sleeping on the sloping floor and all the noise intolerable.

After morning tea on the 19th, Baba sat with the companions in the auditorium, where the conditions and rules of the New Life were repeated. This repetition was meant to help them, Baba said, because from January 1st, the companions should not depend on Him for any further explanations or expect their weaknesses to be accommodated.

From January on, He warned, life would be “at the mercy of the world – a life of complete helplessness and hopelessness.”

Explaining the difference between big and small mistakes, Baba stated, “Small mistakes relate to a breach of individual duties and personal orders; big mistakes to a breach of rules and conditions of the New Life, such as not touching money, not touching women purposely, not expecting to revert to the Old Life, etc. Small mistakes made consciously or unconsciously will be forgiven until the end of December 1949. Big mistakes, unconsciously committed, will likewise be forgiven until the end of December. But big mistakes consciously committed will never be forgiven.”

The New Life Begins

The afternoon tea was highlighted by the sweet ladoos promised by Baba for His own escape from injury at Supa.

Later, Baba ordered the companions to take baths. Because there were no bath stalls in the movie theater, the open-air urinals were thoroughly cleaned and then used.

In the evening, Pendu and Kaka set out in advance in the luggage truck for Belgaum, a distance of 250 miles, where the training period was to begin. The rest of the party was to go by a rented bus the next day.

About the walk from Supa, Baba teased the men, saying "The women completed the sixteen miles with ease. In fact, they were complaining that they were handicapped by being unable to increase their pace, because you all were so slow!"

Dinner was ordered from a nearby restaurant. That night, although Baba and the companions retired early, the noise of the exploding fireworks was deafening. They had hoped that the Divali celebration would end by 11:00 p.m., but it continued with no sign of stopping. Right before midnight, Baba clapped and said, "What is this? I can't rest. This is very disturbing."

At this, some of the men went into the streets to try to stop the noisy fireworks, but they came back and told Baba that the celebration was already too widespread.

The New Life Begins

Finally, at midnight, Baba said, "Now all get up and pack."

The companions gathered their bedding and bags, slipped out quietly in the dark and went to the state transport bus that had been hired for the journey to Belgaum. Fortunately, it was waiting in advance for them, even though the driver had been told that they would not be leaving until morning.

Even at this late hour, news had somehow spread of Baba's sudden departure, and a crowd of people were gathered in the lane to catch sight of Him. When the companions were unable to disperse the crowd, Baba allowed them to remain as long as they did not bow down or try to take His darshan.

The people stood by quietly while Baba's party filed past them to board the bus.

Soon, the bus was on the road, and the noise of the Divali celebrations was far behind.

Baba and the women sat in the front behind the driver, while the men occupied the back, separated by a makeshift curtain. The seats were simple wooden benches without backs, which made traveling and resting extremely uncomfortable.

The companions soon found themselves nodding and swaying with the motion of the bus. Goher, who was seated directly behind the driver, was so sleepy that the driver's cap began to look like a comfortable round cushion to her in the dim light. In a teasing mood, Baba warned her not to lean forward or she might be tempted to use that rather questionable pillow.



I.D. cards used by Mehera and Goher

Chapter Four

TRAINING IN BELGAUM THE LABOR PHASE

October 20 to November 12, 1949

Baba Assigns Duties

At 4:00 a.m., the bus reached the railway station in Poona. The city was still asleep. Baba called for tea, and a few of the men, finding nearby hotels and restaurants closed, finally managed to purchase tea in the railway station.

At dawn, the companions continued directly south to Satara, where they stopped the bus for a half hour rest. They washed their faces and hands, and Baba passed out chapatis, *bhajyas* (spiced vegetables deep-fried in dough) and a treat of ladoos.

At one point, Dr. Nilu asked Adi, "When will we ever be back in Meherabad?"

Baba overheard the remark and sternly rebuked Nilu, saying, "Such thoughts are against the spirit and conditions of the New Life. Remember, I will forgive such mistakes only up to the end of December. From January 1st, 1950, he who commits a blunder will have to pack his bag and luggage."

Nipani was reached at 3:00 p.m. Baba again passed out chapatis and ladoos to the companions and tea was served. At 4:30 p.m., the group finally arrived in Thalakwadi, a rural suburb of Belgaum, where the countryside was a lush green due to recent rains.

The city, dating back to the 12th century, was spread out on a bald semi-arid plateau, with low flat hills visible in the distance. This is where the training period of hard labor was to begin.

The monsoon weather was cold and windy. Rain was falling steadily as they rode in the bus along the muddy road leading to the farm property, which was located in open fields on the outskirts of the city. It took an hour to find the place, and when they finally did, they were disappointed to find the laborers still trying to finish the work on the buildings, delayed by the heavy rain in the area.

Training in Belgaum

Because of the rain, Baba had the bus and luggage truck parked close to the men's quarters and only allowed the companions to unload things of immediate necessity. The men's quarters, located near the road, measured 20 by 30 feet, with a tiled roof and walls of bamboo matting. The floor was still wet.

Baba's quarters, the size of a small hut, were newly built, with cement flooring and walls also made of bamboo matting. Its floor was damp.

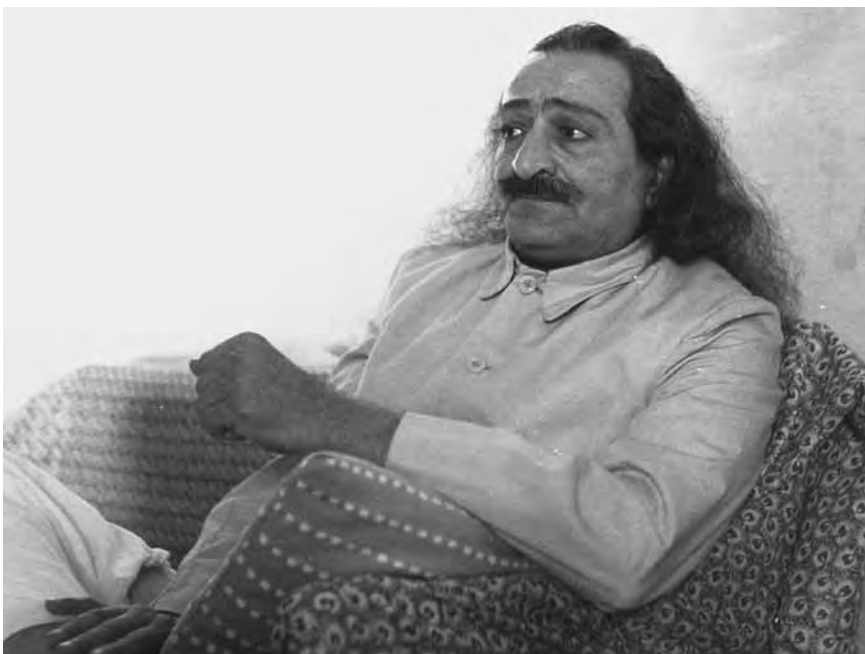
The women were accommodated in a small brick house nearby, located in a recently plowed field on the farm property. It was surrounded by a wall of matting that formed a small compound for privacy. Just outside was a deep well. To reach the house, Baba and the women had to trudge some distance through muddy furrows. Fortunately, Goher had thought to bring two pairs of rubber boots, which the women now used in turns to transport their luggage across the flooded fields.

The brick house was completely unfurnished. It had a tile roof, but no indoor ceiling, and the interior was divided by brick partitions into three tiny narrow rooms. Goher and Meheru stayed in the front room, while Mehera and Mani were in the middle room. The back room was used for storing their trunks and Baba's belongings and for eating their meals.

Because Baba and the companions arrived two hours earlier than expected, Vishnu, who had been sent ahead from Sirur to make the arrangements, returned from marketing in town, very surprised. He was visibly uncomfortable as Baba shot a barrage of questions at him about the unfinished state of things.

When unloading was complete, Baba met the men in their quarters and said, "These discomforts are the first step toward *satyanashi*, which we have to pass through." He asked Nilu to serve the companions chapatis and chutney, which was a meager offering to the hungry companions.

Baba, in an excellent mood, then retired to His room which had been made as warm and comfortable as possible by Mehera and Meheru. To shield Him from the damp floor, they had found a wooden plank for Baba to sleep on, and they hung an improvised curtain around this makeshift bed to keep out any draft.

Training in Belgaum

The living quarters and the twenty-four acres of land had recently been put in Baba's name, but He promptly had ownership transferred to the original landlord.

The next morning, October 21st, Baba walked across the muddy fields to the men's quarters and inquired, as was His habit, how everyone had slept. Most said they had rested well after the long bus ride and lack of sleep the night before.

Baba then told them how the monsoon rains had caused the floors of the women's quarters to become flooded ankle-deep in places due to the faulty shutters on the windows and doors. However, despite the dampness and cold they experienced in having to sleep on a soaked floor, Baba reported that the women had remained happy and cheerful.

The companions spent most of the day unloading the luggage truck and arranging their quarters. Since this was the period of training for the labor phase of the New Life, everyone lent a hand.

Sadashiv Patel, after attending to business matters in Poona, arrived around 8:00 a.m. to join the men.

Meals were brought in from a hotel restaurant, because the rain had made cooking impossible.

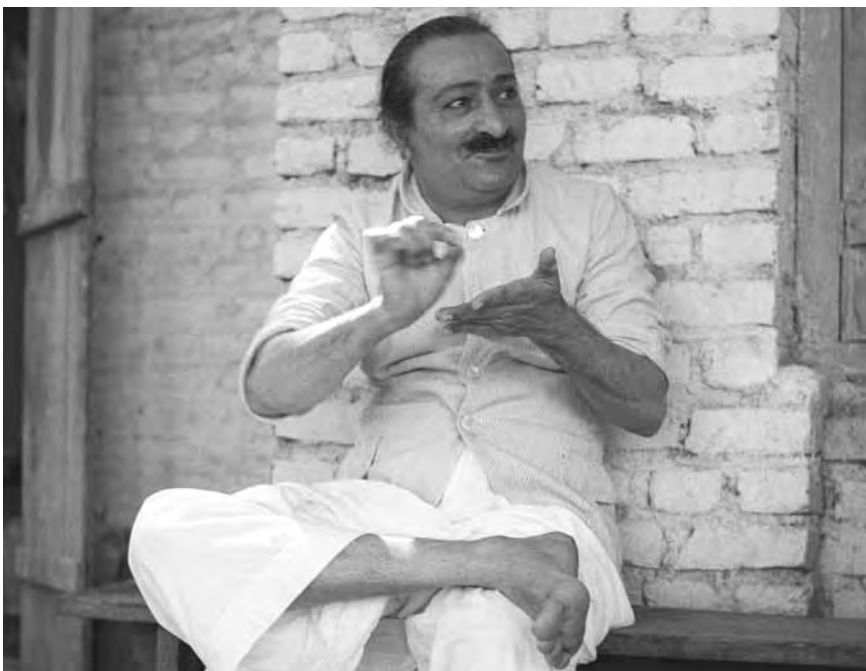
Training in Belgaum

While speaking with the companions in the afternoon, Baba remarked, "If the training period proves successful, our life of hopelessness will be the envy of the gods." He explained:

Up to now, it can be said that the life is one of hardship and suffering, which none can be said to enjoy. The life will be still more miserable in 1950, but you will enjoy this misery. This enjoyment of misery will in itself constitute a challenge to God. I cannot say anything more now, and truly speaking, nothing is clear and definite. I have only a hazy picture of the life to come. Think what you may.

When asked by Adi to clarify what He meant by enjoyment of suffering, Baba gave an analogy: "It is similar to when one suffering from an itch feels pain while scratching, yet this painful scratching gives a pleasurable sensation as well."

The next day, October 22nd, Baba assigned tentative duties, which included: drawing water from the well, washing clothes, cleaning pots and utensils, and taking baths. He allowed only one bucket of water for bathing and one for washing clothes.



Training in Belgaum

Referring to the women, Baba said, “These four women, by working cooperatively like menials in doing work they have never done before, are faithfully living the New Life. Even Mehera is working like a servant – sweeping floors, washing, dusting – doing things I have never before permitted her to do.”

In the afternoon, Baba met with the men. A lengthy discussion took place on the pros and cons of completing the training period in Belgaum. Everyone took part in making suggestions and counter-suggestions.

Later, Baba dictated a letter that was sent to the arrangement-walas, which covered the following points: The labor phase of the training period would be carried out in Belgaum. This would be followed by a second phase of begging and life in *langoti* (loincloth) from November 25th to December 10th in the sacred city of Benares (now called Varanasi). A third training phase, the gypsy life of wandering on foot, from December 10th to the 31st, would take place on the way to Hardwar, which was a distance of more than 1200 miles in north India, located in the foothills of the Himalayas. From January 1st, 1950 onward, whether on the way to Hardwar or wherever God would take them, Baba and the companions were to begin the endless New Life of hopelessness in what Baba described as “real earnest.”

The above itinerary was sent in a circular to the arrangement-walas to be conveyed to the mandali staying at Meherabad and Ahmednagar. In this way, a few of Baba’s close ones received some news from the New Life.

Earlier in Meherabad, Baba had told Padri to construct a caravan with wheels to be drawn by bullocks for the women to sleep in at night during the period of foot travel north. In addition, a cart drawn by oxen was to be purchased for conveying the group’s baggage.

In the evening, Baba personally handed out sweets to inaugurate the training period. To those who smoked, He gave packs of cigarettes, telling them that they had to finish them by the end of the year. The next morning, when Baba inquired how the companions had slept, most of them complained of being disturbed by swarms of mosquitoes.

Baba reported that the women had also suffered from mosquitoes, especially Mani, who reacted with a rash all over her

Training in Belgaum

arms and face. She looked as though she had come down with measles. To add to this discomfort, it had been very cold and damp during the night.

Over the next few weeks, due to the cold, Adi and some of the other men got up at 2:00 a.m. and ran around outside the men's quarters just to warm themselves.

Donkin improvised a kitchen and had hearths built out of mud for cooking. Kaka and Baidul were put in charge of preparing the meals, assisted by Murli. Baba assigned duties to the other companions: Eruch was to do odd jobs with Him and also to do errands in town. Nilu, Adi, Pendu, Aloha and Sadashiv were to supply water for everyone.

The well near the women's quarters several hundred yards away was very deep, which made drawing the water difficult. Transporting full buckets such a distance over uneven ground was also a strain on the men. When the water was brought, it was stored in a large metal bathtub with a cock at the bottom for drawing the water.

Daulat Singh and Babadas were given the duty of cleaning the cooking vessels and utensils. Vishnu was to do the marketing without the help of servants. Gustadji was put in charge of cleaning the men's quarters, while Anna 104 was to do night watch for Baba from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. Ghani's only duty was to keep a day-to-day diary of the New Life; otherwise, Baba allowed him to do what he liked.

The companions were deeply affected by seeing Baba take part in menial chores, such as sweeping floors and cleaning pots and pans.

He told them, "Whatever may be your feelings in your heart, that is your personal look-out, but outwardly you must take me as your companion and follow my orders." Everyone kept their devotion to Baba to themselves.

Reacting to the men who kept tracking in mud after he had swept, Gustadji, who was usually mild-tempered, disturbed an otherwise peaceful atmosphere by refusing to carry out his duty of sweeping the men's quarters.



Anna 104

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By way of warning, Baba told everyone, “The least hesitation in carrying out orders will be tantamount to a violation of the oath and breach of conditions which govern the New Life.” He again stressed, “However impractical and meaningless an order may appear, none should say ‘no.’ Complete and implicit obedience is expected from everyone. In other matters, all are equal like brothers and are quite free.”

In the afternoon, Baba discussed the plans for a three-week stay in Benares where, as usual, separate accommodations were to be found for the women and the men. After much discussion, Sadashiv Patel and Babadas were chosen to go in advance to make arrangements.

Baba’s Strict Training Begins

The next morning, October 24th, Baba appeared in the men’s quarters and was in the mood to hear music. A harmonium, a small keyboard instrument, was brought out, and Adi accompanied himself as he sang a number of *ghazals*. This unique form of intimate love song is written in couplets, in which the lover pours out his or her praises and complaints to the Divine Beloved. It was a special favorite of Baba’s, and He played along with the ghazals on a *dholak*, a drum with leather stretched over both ends.

Seeing Baba’s graceful and slender fingers tapping in beautiful rhythm, a feeling of nostalgia came over some of the companions, who remembered the days in the early 1920s before His silence, when Baba sang ghazals to them in His rich, melodious voice while accompanying Himself on the drum. At this time, however, no verbal reference could be made about this or any other period in the Old Life.

In the afternoon, Baba asked Dr. Ghani to compose a poem on the New Life, incorporating its principles and particularly stressing the control of lust, greed and anger, while remaining happy and cheerful under all circumstances. Baba said that this poem would be read out every day as a prayer before starting the daily activity, and when it was set to music, it would be the first song to be sung during music sessions.

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By way of help and encouragement, Baba dictated the chorus to Ghani in Urdu. Translated into English, it reads:

*Listen to the silent words of Meher Baba,
The life story of all lovers (of God)
is based on the practice of these words.*

Baba humorously remarked that if Ghani, who scrupulously avoided physical exertion, failed to complete the song by the next morning, he would have to do 100 sit-ups!

In the evening, Anna 104 asked Baba for a raincoat to use during his duty as night watchman. Baba gave it to him with the admonishing remark, "Nothing should be asked of me directly or indirectly. I forgive all such mistakes now because until the end of December, I have promised to help you, but I won't be so charitable after December."

With the introduction of music sessions with the men, Baba also began playing the drum for the women in their quarters in the evenings. The women sat in rapt attention listening to the lovely rhythm and sound, moved by the intense expression of His eyes, as though He were one with the music.

Later, when *The Song of the New Life* was completed, Mani often sang it before Baba while He accompanied her on the drum.

On October 25th, five days after arriving in Belgaum, the training period officially began.

Meeting with the men in their quarters in the morning, Baba opened a discussion by saying, "If you have any personal difficulty, tell it to me today. On my own, I am giving you the opportunity to let me know your troubles. After this, I will not hear of such things or try to explain and satisfy you. I am doing this with the object of helping you as I promised, and this help will automatically stop on January 1st, 1950. After that, there will remain only two things – either to go on facing all discomforts, or to leave me on your own responsibility."

In the course of the conversation, Adi, who had a strong personality, created a crisis. He lost his temper and declared that he had his doubts about Baba's motives and intentions in the New Life. Baba added fuel to this fire by saying:

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I again give you a chance to reconsider whether you wish to accompany me or not. In such a mood as this, you cannot progress in this life, because however it looks at present, it will be a million times more severe and unbearable in the future. Today, I give you the option whether you would like to come with me or go back. By this evening, inform me of your decision. From tomorrow, there will be no such opportunity. I tell you this not because of Adi's behavior just now. God alone knows I tell you the truth, because greater difficulties lie ahead. Today, I am again giving you the chance either to continue with me or leave me.

God knows, I even told Mehera that she, of all people, should keep happy and cheerful under the most extreme and trying circumstances.

Your only difficulty is the mind. Moods and irritability, etc., will compel me to give up my best friends and most intimate companions. I will not blame them, but it is quite certain that I will have to discard them. I know how difficult it is to control the mind. So, according to conditions, and your oath and my oath, I must keep all this in mind. I will help you first by asking about your difficulties before finally deciding.

Understanding your troubles, I will first try to satisfy you, after which, you may decide for yourselves. Then there will be no business of satisfying you. Trust me, as I am speaking the truth.

I want to make one more thing clear: I will inquire of everyone in the presence of all the others so that none may doubt that I am trying to accommodate anyone. I will try to solve individual difficulties, but without any concession to anyone. So today, I will ask one and all about their individual troubles, but there will be no question of any concession which will be against the spirit of the conditions.

Suddenly, Baba ordered Daulat Singh, who was very kind-hearted, to come forward and slap Him in the face.

Without hesitation, the doctor complied and Baba was pleased. He then asked all of the men to stand before Him. He

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knelt down and touched the feet of each one with His hands. Baba's uncharacteristic behavior profoundly affected the mood of the companions.

After a long silence, Baba resumed inquiry into the individual difficulties of the companions. The majority favored private interviews to unburden their minds and hearts freely.

Baba agreed to this and began the meetings.

The interviews did not take long, as most of the men had few problems to bring up.

However, after meeting with Adi, Baba called everyone together and said, "Adi had a misunderstanding which I have removed. Now, may God help him to control his mind and mood until the very end. He feels satisfied and will try 100 percent to keep cheerful. I have promised him nothing."

Thereafter, Baba began tackling the individual difficulties regarding duties: Nilu complained that four people were not enough to carry all the water from the well, so new arrangements were made.

Dr. Daulat Singh asked Baba for two months leave to return home to arrange his family matters which had been left in some disarray. Baba pitied him that he had not properly understood the conditions of the New Life, but forgave him and allowed him another chance to decide by that evening whether to remain. Daulat Singh, though deeply worried and confused, could only say that he would like to continue to stay.

Baba told him, "Forget your worries, remain cheerful and do your duty wholeheartedly."

Baba then remedied other difficulties that had been discussed: Dr. Donkin was given a mosquito curtain; each of the men and women was given a *ghongdi* (a very coarse woolen blanket used by shepherds) in addition to the conventional one they already had; and white bed sheets were given to seven of the companions for protection from mosquitoes.

Some of the companions complained of having insufficient clothing, so Baba ordered them to put on the clothes used during their journey from Ahmednagar to Belgaum. Originally, this clothing was supposed to be returned to Baba.

That evening, Baba remarked that He was not happy giving bed sheets to only seven of the companions. He said, "It

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smacked of favoritism, even though it was not. In the New Life, every man is to be treated equally. No thought of small or great is to be entertained.”



Baba then had money given to Vishnu to buy enough bed sheets for the remaining companions. Referring to Donkin, the only Westerner, Baba commented, “In his case, the little consideration in giving him a mosquito net was not a concession or favoritism. Compared to the other men, he has suffered most and yet he does not grumble. On the contrary, I find him keeping a very good and cheerful mood. His tastes in food, his habits of sitting, sleeping, toilet and bathing are altogether different. But without mulling over them, he keeps himself cheerful. Not to make a hard life harder, he has been shown some consideration, which in truth is neither a concession nor a partiality.”

Afterward, Baba joined the companions and decided upon a daily schedule for work, duties and meals:

Schedule

5:30 a.m.	Companions get up
6 a.m.	Morning tea
11:30 a.m.	Lunch

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2:15 p.m.	Afternoon tea
6 p.m.	Evening meal
8 p.m. and after	Sleeping hours

Duties

Vishnu and Murli: attend to marketing.

Kaka and Baidul: cooking, assisted by Murli, if free.

Eruch and Daulat Singh: cleaning utensils.

Nilu, Adi, Pendu, Ali Akbar (Aloba) and Donkin: supplying water.

Donkin: bringing mail from the railway station in the morning, and cutting grass in the compound. If he wishes, he can also take a three-mile walk.

The women attended to Baba's quarters, washed His clothes and saw to His needs, while carrying out their own domestic duties. Time was devoted by them to building mud stoves, because Baba had told them that they were to do the cooking for the whole party starting on November 1st.

Baba's meals had always been prepared separately, but now all of the food was to be cooked in the same pot.

Poignant Departure of Daulat Singh

On October 26th, Sadashiv and Babadas were to leave Belgaum by night train. Baba told them to find living accommodations for the companions in a secluded area of Benares, which was 1100 miles to the north. He also told them to approach a friend or acquaintance of Babadas' who would be willing to feed the whole group for the twenty days. In exchange, they would receive 500 rupees.

Baba stipulated that the person "should render this service without any obligation. No question of darshan or *seva* (service) should arise in his mind. Such service should be treated purely as a business proposition." He made it clear that the person should not under any circumstance make an attempt to contact Baba or the companions. Baba also instructed Sadashiv and Babadas to find two cows and two she-donkeys available for purchase in

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Benares. Sadashiv had been to Benares twice on pilgrimage, and Babadas knew the city well and had acquaintances there.

Right before they left, knowing they both had strong wills, Baba warned, "Remain friendly with each other and behave properly. Like the other companions, do not read newspapers or discuss politics, even between yourselves. Eat good, clean food. Maintain your health, and help and cooperate with each other. In the event of illness, look after and care for each other." He also told them to remain in that ancient city, which is sacred to both Hindus and Buddhists, until Baba and the other companions arrived on November 25th, when they all were to begin three weeks of begging as part of the training period.

*Babadas*

After Babadas and Sadashiv left, Baba said to those remaining, "If I am angry at any time, you should tactfully remind me that I am getting angry. This mutual help is needed till December 1949. After January 1st, in this New Life, we will be caring for the voice of the heart; we will be deaf to the promptings of the mind, and the body will take care of itself. That will be Real Life – infinitely different from what it is now."

That night, Baba woke Eruch, who was sleeping near Him, and said, "Come on, let's go for a round of the camp."

Baba set out across the field in the darkness with Eruch following. In the men's quarters, they went from bed to bed where

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the men were sleeping and then stepped outside where they discovered Daulat Singh sitting on the ground, sobbing.

Baba tapped him on the back and said, "Well, doctor, what are you doing?"

Completely forgetting the New Life condition of controlling one's moods, Daulat Singh began to sob even more profusely.

Baba told him that He would have to send him back, but that He would give him a special order. "You shouldn't worry about the order I will give. You will like it." Baba was very loving. He told Daulat Singh to forget about the whole incident and have a good night's sleep, and the next day He would decide on a course of action for him.

Eruch later said that Baba was very firm about the necessity of following the New Life conditions, but at the same time His compassion was unfailingly there to comfort.

When Baba left the men's quarters with Eruch, the expression on His face indicated that the situation was not good for the old doctor who was always full of love for Baba.

This behavior had been unexpected, because Daulat Singh was used to adversity. During the Indian partition, he endured the loss of his long-standing medical practice and everything he owned. He had also shown great strength in leaving his family, whom he loved dearly, to join Baba in the New Life.

The next morning, when Daulat Singh was brought before Baba, He asked him why he had broken His order the night before.

The doctor answered with tears in his eyes, "Baba, it was not in my hands. It was the mind that troubled me. It has nothing to do with the New Life. I am very happy here...."

"So what is the trouble?" Baba asked. "What is the worry? What made you weep and sob like that?"

"You had called all your disciples to Meherabad to say yes or no, and I was one of them. But in between the time we said yes and the 16th of October when we set out, my daughter became engaged to marry.

"She wanted me to stay back because the wedding was to take place on the 19th of October. I was helpless. I had given my word to follow You. So I left all the family behind and nothing worried me... but all of a sudden I remembered the last

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words my daughter spoke to me. She told me that knowing her wedding was fixed for a certain date, I could have stayed back for three days and then joined You... She said I was not her father. At that time, I didn't mind what she said... but tonight it suddenly came to mind. It pinched me and hurt my heart. My crying was just the reaction."

After hearing his poignant story, Baba said, "Listen carefully, my friend. I have now decided for you to go back to your old life. Tell your people that you have returned because your daughter wanted you, but you must still continue this New Life – continue to be one of the companions. I will take you to be my companion. You will lead the New Life away from me."



Dr. Daulat Singh

Life 100 percent."

In addition to these three orders, Baba gave Daulat Singh two conditions to which he was bound for life: "First, the responsibility of anything that happens to you will lie with you and you alone before God. Second, no material or spiritual benefit should be expected of me. But, as I am sending you away of my own free will, your spiritual connection with me remains as before, if I am what you take me to be."

Soon after, the lovable old doctor, carrying the little luggage he had on his head, bade farewell to the companions with tears streaming down his face.

(Unknown to the doctor, since he had left on the New Life, his daughter had fallen seriously ill and was taken to the hospital on the brink of death. His whole family was alarmed and

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tried desperately to reach Daulat Singh, but Baba and the companions had turned their backs on the Old Life and were out of contact.)

When Daulat Singh returned home, he understood why Baba sent him there; he arrived just in time to help nurse his daughter back to life.

Although he was the first to leave the group of companions, Baba allowed him to continue in the New Life while living with his family in the world.

In this way, Baba gave a hint to the world that one can live the New Life while in the midst of one's worldly responsibilities. Though such a life is very difficult, it is not impossible. With pure love for and faith in God, it can be achieved. Baba has said that one should live in the world, but not be of the world.

More Training in Uncomfortable Conditions

The rains had persisted on and off since the party had arrived in Belgaum. Each time it rained, the main room in the women's quarters flooded. The rain also leaked in along the floor in the area where Goher slept, so that each morning she had to take up her bedding and hang it out to dry in the afternoon sun. It took several tries by the men to finally repair all the leaks in the roof.

Added to this inconvenience, every night, mice and rats scurried around and gnawed at the walls. As a result, in the morning before Baba came to have tea, the women had to sweep up all the debris.

One night, Mani was disturbed in her sleep by a mouse that bit her finger. Apparently, her hand had slipped out of the mosquito net during the night. She called out to the other women. Mehera, Goher and Meheru came instantly. Mani's finger was bleeding and Goher administered first aid immediately. This episode put Goher on edge so when Meheru, the youngest of the women, was not feeling well, Goher was open to letting her imagination take over. During that night, she was certain that she heard Meheru calling out for help, so she got up and went to her.

Meheru, who had been sound asleep, opened her eyes and asked Goher what she wanted. Goher told her that she had been calling out, "Help, help, help!"

Training in Belgaum*Meheru*

Meheru replied, "If I needed help, I would have called your name."

Just then, they heard the "hoot, hoot, hoot" of an owl on the roof, so distinct that it could be mistaken for a human voice calling, "help, help help," thus solving the mystery.

In the early morning of October 28th, while making His usual inquiries about the sleep and health of the companions, Baba consulted Dr. Donkin about Vishnu's rheumatic knee that was troubling him. Dr. Donkin said that Vishnu required medicine and the knee needed a warm, woolen knee bandage. Baba allotted money to purchase the prescription.

During a general discussion that followed, Baba gave further hints about what the companions might expect in the New Life.

He said, "I might do anything and ask you to do anything; in this, you must obey my orders instantaneously. Extraordinary and abnormal things will be done by me and carried out by you, too, should the picture of the New Life I have visualized come true.... What exactly I mean by extraordinary and abnormal things, I cannot tell you now, because I myself do not know.... Such happenings will go to make the New Life, and the suffering therein, enjoyable. I assure you, the New Life, in spite of its acute sufferings, will be wet [joyful] inside and outside."

Baba went on to give a few examples of ordinary happenings, such as contacting God-intoxicated souls, spiritual seekers and saints. "I might ask any one of you to go to a yogi's hut and pass the night with him... or bathe a *majzoob* [God-absorbed soul]."

Baba continued to assist in the work of the group, sweeping the men's quarters, cleaning the cooking vessels and utensils, and helping in the kitchen. Until the women took over the cooking on November 1st, He often looked on while Kaka did the cooking. If the main dish lacked flavor, Baba would suggest just the right ingredient to spice it up.

Almost every day, there were music sessions. Adi sang and played the harmonium, accompanied by Baba on the drum and Dr. Nilu on the *tal* (finger cymbals), which he was learning.

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Baba joined the women in their quarters for tea in the early mornings and for a while in the evenings for relaxation. They all sat on the floor in the small back room, which served as a dining room and storage area.

Sometimes, Baba would ask, "Have you got any songs to sing, any stories to tell, or anything amusing for me to hear?"



Mehera and Mani

Mani usually had a story or joke to share. Since the women were not allowed to read anything, they could not entertain Baba as they used to in the Old Life with a detective yarn or a humorous story by P.G. Wodehouse, who was one of His favorite writers.

To honor Baba's prohibition against reading, Vishnu, when marketing, had the vegetables wrapped in foreign newspapers so the women would not inadvertently read anything by mistake. He also went to the extent of going to junk shops to find paper material printed in foreign languages to be used by the women in making fires.

One day, Mehera came up with an idea to entertain Baba. As a surprise, she asked Dr. Goher, who was very shy, to sing for Him. Goher had never sung to Him before, so it took a tremendous amount of persuasion on the part of Mehera and Mani until she finally agreed. They taught her a popular song, which translated into English:

*Patience, patience, patience, be patient.
Your patience will be rewarded by God.
Patience is a divine attribute of God,
Be devoted and dedicated to patience.
Through patience your trials
and tribulations will be dissolved!*

Baba thoroughly enjoyed the unexpected performance, and afterward teased Goher by deliberately distorting the words of the song to change its meaning into something altogether different. By mispronouncing one word, the song suggested that God had head lice!

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"Is this what you sang?" Baba asked, innocently.

"No, no, Baba," Goher exclaimed, "I didn't sing that!"

Baba's humorous distortions of the meaning of the song gave the women a good laugh. Though embarrassed at first, Goher ended up happy to be a source of fun for Baba.

On the morning of October 29th, Baba sat down with the companions to discuss the "Hardwar Property" at the foot of the Himalayas, the next place of training after their stay in Benares. The property was actually located four miles outside of Dehra Dun, in a village called Manjri Mafi.

"The name of the village means 'cats are forgiven.' So perhaps this implies that rats are not there!" Baba quipped, referring to the mice and rats that continued to bother the companions in Belgaum.

On the land in Manjri Mafi was a cottage with two rooms, a veranda, kitchen, bathroom and courtyard.

The property was to be in the name of two of the men companions and Keki Desai of Delhi. A discussion ensued over who would own the property in the event of the death of any or all three of the men. Baba said that it would be made over to the arrangementwalas.

When someone asked who the property would go to if all of the arrangementwalas were to pass on, Baba interjected a note of humor, remarking, "This is like the Agatha Christie novel *And Then There Were None!* What is the sense in bothering about things when all die? Let anything happen; who cares?"

In this murder mystery referred to by Baba, all the suspects are seemingly eliminated, one by one, until there are none left; the surprise ending is a stroke of genius by Agatha Christie, one of Baba's favorite detective writers.

Baba made it clear that during the New Life, He did not want any property in His name. During the lengthy discussion over the property, He became angry at some of the trivial and insinuating questions put to Him by the companions, and as a reminder to Himself not to become upset, He asked Nilu and Dr. Ghani to pinch His ears, which they did immediately.

In the afternoon, Baba sent for the men and told them that from January 1st, there would not be any money, so they would

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have to beg for their food or earn it, and no food would be saved for the next day as they moved from one place to another. He said, "Every day will be a new day for us in this New Life."

The discussions during the next two days centered on the upcoming stay in Benares and the foot journey from there to Hardwar. Baba asked Dr. Donkin to send the following cable to Sadashiv and Babadas already in Benares:

We leave Belgaum on 12th November arriving Moghulsarai 15th early morning and will stay in Benares bungalow from 15th November for 25 days. Arrange food for 25 days for 600 rupees. Wire reply immediately.

Baba also asked Donkin to study a map to determine the most convenient road for the journey on foot from Benares to Hardwar. He said that He expected the New Life to become so difficult that "not a single one from amongst you will remain with me.... I am expecting of you in this New Life something which is superhuman in some aspects. I, too, am in the soup along with you. To keep cheerful under all circumstances is superhuman! Let us, therefore, do our best to help each other. I help you – you help me – in order to uphold each other's oath."

About the women companions, He said, "The four women have nothing to do with the conditions. I decide everything for them. But since they are to be with us to the end, I keep on explaining the conditions to them."

During the discussion, Baba suddenly gestured for Nilu to come forward and kick Him. Nilu promptly complied without hesitation.

Later, an incident occurred which showed how strict Baba was on the matter of literal obedience. Baba happened to see Aloba assisting Gustadji in whisking the carpet in the men's quarters. Aloba had not received instructions to do anything besides carrying water and cleaning the cooking pots and utensils. When asked to explain himself, Aloba replied, "Gustadji is old and asked for my help...."

"You were not helping him," Baba admonished, "but you were throwing him into the ditch! Don't I know that Gustadji is old? I have given him this work, and he must do it! You do not

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help him, but on the contrary, you harm him. Don't be misguided by him and feel sorry for him."

On October 31st, while discussing the question of begging, Baba told the companions:

We should beg for food only, and not for anything else. Food consists of different things – cooked and raw, liquid and solid food – anything and everything. We should not ask for anything special when begging. Dr. Ghani should not say, "Give me mutton!" Nilu should not ask for milk or *barfi* [a sweetmeat]. You should say only, "Please give *bhiksba* [alms]."

If people give you clothing, accept it, but on your own, don't ask. Under no circumstances should you accept money. But according to conditions, you can accept food and clothes. But you should beg for food only, and not clothes. Food and clothing when given should be brought and placed before me first.

Cigarettes, shoes, hats, caps, pens, pencils, paper, brass or copper pots should not be accepted. Ready-made and unstitched clothing such as coarse blankets, socks, rugs and shawls may be accepted. Bed sheets, bedspreads and things pertaining to bedding should not be accepted. Detailed instructions will be given in Benares.

In the afternoon, Baba went over with Eruch, Vishnu and others a list of articles required for the journey to Hardwar. During the travel on foot, Baba and the men would be required to sleep in the open under the stars. Because this journey would take place during the winter, warmer clothing was needed. However, due to the shortage of funds, the companions were only given enough money to purchase lightweight cotton-wool jackets rather than goat-skin or leather jackets, which would have been more suitable in cold weather.

*Training in Belgaum***The Song of the New Life**

With a few corrections from Baba, Dr. Ghani put the finishing touches to *The Song of the New Life*, composed in Hindi, and prepared its translation into English. Baba was pleased with the poetic lines and approved the melody. He had it mailed to the arrangementwalas in Ahmednagar for printing. The following letter was sent:

Subject: *Song of the New Life* of Meher Baba
and His companions

Print 1000 copies of leaflets on a foolscap sheet. Print in Hindi on one side and the English translation on the other. The Hindi should be reproduced word for word from the attached Urdu manuscript. The English translation is also attached herewith.

Distribute 800 copies to the interested ones everywhere in India, Ceylon and Pakistan – but not in the West – and send 200 copies to William Donkin, c/o Postmaster, Benares Cantonment, to reach there after November 14th and before December 18th.

Dictated by Baba

After the letter was mailed, Baba suddenly appeared with Eruch in the men's quarters after everyone had retired for the night. Gathering the companions around Him, Baba expressed His concern about the song: "The composition of Dr. Ghani's song is excellent. Not only does it contain the New Life conditions and requirements, but it is full of poetic beauty. But somehow I feel that the song is likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted by the world outside as encouraging atheism and communism."

A lengthy discussion followed, and all agreed that something more should be added to avoid any wrong impression. Baba then asked Ghani to write a last quatrain based on the idea given by Him. "If Ghani fails to do a good job of it," Baba joked, "he will have to do 100 sit-ups tomorrow morning."

The following is the final text of *The Song of the New Life*, translated from Hindi into English:

SONG OF THE NEW LIFE

*Listen to the silent words of Meher Baba;
The life story of all lovers of God
is based on the practice of these words.
If you are serious about living the New Life,
Then wholeheartedly renounce this ephemeral existence.*

*We have taken to this life,
in which we rely only upon God;
In this, our will (to do or die) is strengthened
by the oath taken.
We merrily sing the song of hopelessness;
We invite all calamities and difficulties.*

*We neither wail over lost hopes,
nor complain about broken promises.
We neither covet honor, nor shun disgrace;
Backbiting we know not, nor do we fear anyone.
This is now the tenor of our New Life.*

*No confusion in the mind now, neither are any ties left;
Pride, anger, lust and greed are sloughed off.
No religion for any of us, nor care for physical or mental aims.
The Sbeikh and the Brahmin (typifying all castes and creeds)
are now sailing in the same boat.*

*There is no small or great for us now;
The questions of disciple, Master,
nor Godhood no longer arise.
Brotherliness or fellow-feeling is the link that exists,
And this contributes to our present enjoyment of suffering.*

*This world or the next, hell or heaven,
we are no longer concerned with.
Shaktis and siddhis (psychic powers) occultism and miracles,
we are no longer plagued with.
All these false impressions have been purged from the mind;
What has value and importance for us now
is to live in the active present.*

*Dear ones, take seriously the words of Baba when He says:
 “Although now I am on the same level with you all,
 Yet all orders from me, good, bad, or extraordinary,
 You should carry out immediately,
 leaving the result to God.*

*“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.*

*“Even though your heart be cut to bits,
 let there be a smile on your lips.
 Here I divulge to you a truth:
 Hidden in your penniless hands is treasure untold;
 Your beggarly life will be the envy of kings!*

*“God exists indeed, and true are the Prophets,
 Every cycle has an Avatar, and every moment a wali (saint),
 For us, however, it is only hopelessness and helplessness,
 How else can I describe to you what our New Life is?”*

Further Training

On November 1st, when the women began doing the cooking for the whole group, Baba taught them how to make a special kind of potato patty. While Mehera and Mani prepared the patties, Dr. Goher fried them over the stove, assisted by Meheru. Because the hot sun shone into the kitchen through the roof, Goher had to wear a hat while cooking, which Baba and the others found very amusing!

Mani was put in charge of the cooking and worked under Mehera, who was an experienced cook. They started at 7:00 a.m. Because of the large number in the party, it was difficult to estimate the proper quantity of food to be cooked. When the women prepared supper the first evening, it was found that they had used an insufficient quantity of tomatoes to serve all of the companions. Baba used the incident to demonstrate a type of “lie” during the discussion the next morning. He told the com-

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panions, "I had the impression that the shortage of the tomato side-dish was due to an insufficient quantity of tomatoes. On investigation, it was found that there were enough tomatoes in stock. This being the first day of cooking by the ladies, who were not used to preparing bulk meals, the amount needed was underestimated. I had said that the tomatoes were in short supply, and that was a lie on my part. But it was an unconscious lie and can be condoned.

"As for jokes and humor, if while indulging in them, you happen to exaggerate or give some twist or make untrue observations with a view to entertain, it is no lie. It was a joke on my part when I said that Nilu would have to beg for food and Ghani would have to write letters near a post office to earn food. It was not a lie. But statements deliberately made and false insinuations consciously done constitute what may be called black, brown, red or white lies."

The meals were usually vegetarian, and Baba continued to take interest in the preparations. On one occasion, Mani was not happy with the flavor of the vegetable stew prepared for supper. Nothing she added improved the flavor. After tasting it, Baba suggested mashing up all the spiced potato patties left over from the afternoon meal and adding them to the concoction. This addition provided just the right flavor, and the delicious fare was humorously named "*Bhagwan's* (God's) *Stew*" after a famous dish served in Poona.

During the morning discussion on November 1st, Dr. Donkin brought a telegram from the railway station in which Sadashiv reported that he was in the process of arranging for a bungalow in Benares beginning on November 12th.

Later that day, Baba asked Adi to teach the other men, some of whom had difficulty carrying a tune, to sing the chorus of *The Song of the New Life*. From then on, this song was sung every morning by the companions in the presence of Baba. Occasionally, during these sessions, Baba would spontaneously dictate a few couplets, which they wrote down.

In the evening, when Baba came to the men's quarters, He reported that the women were having difficulties in the narrow

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kitchen without an outlet for smoke, and although they enjoyed the cooking, they found it impossible under the circumstances. Some days later, Baba asked Kaka and Baidul to again take over that responsibility.



On the morning of November 2nd, after making His usual inquiries about sleep and health, Baba revealed, "In this New Life, you must be prepared to witness and see me being humiliated by you, outsiders, masts, saints or yogis. You must help by not interfering unless I order you to do so."

Baba then said that He planned to go for a six-mile walk with them sometime during the next week. Donkin was to choose the destination. The morning session ended with Adi singing *The Song of the New Life*, accompanying himself on the harmonium, while Baba played the drum.

In the afternoon, Baba went over the final conditions for begging in Benares. In the evening, a group of local Theosophists, hearing that Baba was staying in Belgaum, came for His darshan. One of them knew Dr. Ghani, but when the group arrived, the doctor was taking his bath.

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One of the companions explained to the visitors that Baba was not giving darshan, and they left. Baba took advantage of this incident to explain that, besides not giving darshan, He did not even want the companions to meet anyone known previously unless ordered.

The next morning, Baba happened to see Kaka wearing a woolen sweater while grinding *masala* (spices).

As the day was beginning to turn hot, Baba asked him to take it off. Kaka replied that he would do so after he finished the grinding.

Baba instantly called all the companions and pointed out Kaka's disobedience, saying, "So many times I have told you, trying to drill it into your heads, to carry out my wishes immediately, and always remember to do so. I will help you till December 31st, and thus my promise, without a doubt, will earn you my forgiveness. But from January 1st onwards, such things will only invite disaster for you. So take seriously all things small and great, so that you may not be caught napping."

At this point, Baba was becoming angry, and He told Kaka to pinch His ear with force. After Kaka obeyed Him, Baba remarked, "When I ask you to pinch my ears or to kick me, you should not take it that any fault on your part is responsible for such orders. It is not so. It is for my own reasons that I tell you to pinch my ears or kick me. Thereby, I wish to get rid of my habit of becoming angry. You will therefore be helping me to curb my anger. Remind me when I am unwittingly making any promise or am getting excited or angry."

In ordering the companions to punish Him physically, Baba was teaching them in His role as a devotee of God how to create an aversion to disobedience. By "becoming" a devotee 100 percent, He actually became subject to the weaknesses and shortcomings confronting an ordinary devotee and made efforts to rise above them. This was His unique sport (*Leela*) in which Baba personally participated on behalf of each future devotee in the world.

Throughout the day, the companions were kept busy with their individual duties, except when Baba called them for general discussions. On the morning of November 4th, when Baba

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met with them, He again urged them to help and encourage each other to follow the conditions literally: "The companions must faithfully, honestly and truthfully understand once and for all that, although they might differ in helpfulness, utility and 'likeableness,' they do not differ in the least in obedience to the conditions."

On November 5th, a telegram arrived from Sadashiv with the news that he and Babadas had succeeded in securing two excellent bungalows in the cantonment area of Benares.

To celebrate this good news, a generous lunch was served, and dinner was to be highlighted by a dessert of *shrikhand* (a sweet, thick, milky dish), which Ghani described as "love semi-solidified for Nilu," because it was a favorite treat of Nilu's. Everyone's spirits were lifted.

In the afternoon, Baba remarked, "Eat as much as you can and whatever you can till December 31st. After January 1st, 1950, who can tell what life will be like? You may get one meal a day, two meals a day, even plentiful amounts or you may not get anything to eat for days together.... Just as you all find yourselves in a happy and cheerful mood after the satisfactory lunch and the prospect of *shrikhand* in the evening, in the same manner, you ought to keep happy and cheerful even without meals in the New Life after January 1st."

Baba Answers Some Pointed Questions

Finding Baba in a communicative mood, Eruch, Adi, Nilu and Ghani tried to persuade Him to expound more on the New Life. One of them asked, "Our will is to fulfill the New Life conditions, and no one can deny this. But we would like to be enlightened on the meaning of 100 percent fulfillment in Your eyes."

"There are four chief points in the conditions to be followed," Baba replied, "not to touch money, not to touch women, to carry out all my orders – good, bad, unusual – instantaneously, without the least hesitation, and to remain cheerful under the most trying circumstances. The first two conditions of not touching money or women, you need not worry about, as I will be with you most of the time. The other two conditions, of carrying out orders immediately and of keeping happy in the most exacting

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situations, are truly important from the viewpoint of the New Life. If you follow these conditions 100 percent, then no power, *not even God*, can make you leave me.”

Another asked, “We are ready to observe the conditions 100 percent, but what will happen to us if Your orders are impossible to fulfill?”



Baba answered, “If an order is physically impossible of fulfillment, you should be prepared to tackle it immediately. If you fail, you need not worry. Example: If I order you to tie a camel, leg and foot, and place it on the roof of a building, you should immediately set about to do it, without having a thought of its possibility or impossibility. The nature of such an order is just to find out your preparedness to obey it instantaneously.

“Do not take the explanation literally. Don’t be silly. I don’t promise, but while giving orders, I will not give impossible orders. If anyone of you is struck with paralysis, do you think I will ask that one to dance? I can tell him to hold his breath, which he can physically do, though disabled. I do not promise, but remember my orders will not be such as to be beyond the capacity of anyone to carry out. If you try faithfully to obey me, then nothing is impossible.”

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One of the men then interposed, "What you say comes to this: that all good, bad, and extraordinary orders should be followed without the least hesitation!"

"Yes, this is my meaning, and something more – the orders should be obeyed, not only unhesitatingly, but willingly and cheerfully!"

"If we carry out orders 100 percent, then there is no question of anyone being sent away?"

"My dear friends, if you succeed 100 percent in carrying out my orders as I wish them to be carried out, you will be my Master and I shall be your Slave! Banish the thought that I would like to send anyone away, though I have complete freedom in that respect."

"In Meherabad, You had said that whatever might happen – such as illness or an accident on the way – You would not look back or wait for anyone."

Baba responded, "You should remember that I am as weak and feeble in health as any one of you. Who knows? I might fall ill and you might have to attend to me! But, in case of illness or accident, we will help the sufferer to recover and recoup. We cannot leave such a one to the mercy of fate and the elements. But an illness like typhoid fever or paralysis is long and unlikely to be cured soon, in which case we will go on, leaving the patient behind after making proper arrangements."

"Can you give us a tangible idea of the meaning of this New Life, and what form it will really take?"

"I have a very hazy picture of the New Life before my mind's eye. I do not know the details myself. However, imagine you are going to meet a beautiful woman, and if the meeting you are so eager about materializes, it will be your first experience. It will be impossible to ascertain or define beforehand what shape things will take and how all matters will work out. This is the New Life I see before you and me."

To the question whether the New Life was ever adopted by anyone else in the past, Baba replied, "I do not know, and I cannot say more than this: 'This is it, whatever it is.' I want all of you to accompany me and be with me till the end. If none of you comes along, I will go alone – there is no turning back."

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“What does ‘till the end’ mean? It implies there is an end to this New Life!”

Baba said, “By ‘end’ I mean *aimlessness*. This New Life as I picture it, if it turns out to be true, then it is proper to say it has no end worth being called so.”

Baba then asked Ghani to read a few lines which He had directed him to write about the New Life. Freely translated, they read:

*This will be the ultimate end of the New Life –
wherein no one will depend on anyone for anything!*

*There will be no food, no sleep, no comfort –
It will be either our oath, ourselves or God!*

*Though stone [suffering] in the liver,
there will be wine between the lips.
And Abdul Ghani [a Muslim] will turn into Sakbaram –
a friend of Ram!*

Baba explained: “This bit of poetry reveals in a nutshell the New Life and its end, if there be an end! The fourth line makes it clear that if we keep the oath 100 percent, we remain together. Otherwise, we will break up and only God remains! The fifth line indicates what I mean by enjoyment of suffering, and the sixth line you may understand as you like!”

Another question was asked, “You say if none remained, You would go on alone. We want to know where and for what You will go alone? There is nothing for You to achieve! Your going with the companions imparts some meaning to the New Life.”

“I cannot say more,” Baba declared. “Only this much I know, that I have to go on and on, either with you or alone. You will gain nothing more by trying to understand me as regards this New Life. On the contrary, you will become more perplexed, if not dismayed. We are all sailing in the same boat. Either we sail together or we sink together. Why worry?”

“Once in Nagpur, Banubai was learning to swim with Papa Jessawala’s help. Suddenly, she was floundering. Papa rushed to her aid. She clung to him desperately, dragging him down until

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both finally had to be rescued! So, dear friends, don't get panicky or else you will drag me down deeper and deeper! Do as I say and don't ask questions. Without questioning, follow my orders 100 percent and that will save you from all sorts of difficulties and circumstances. For years on end, I have been looking forward to this New Life, and if we live through it, it will mean life without end. The life which the world indulges in and talks about is not life, but *death*."

To the question, "Why have you taken to this New Life, and what was the need for it?" Baba replied, "There is no explanation for it."

"What is the last oath You have taken, and for what is it?"

"It concerns certain things which I cannot tell you," Baba said, concluding the session.

In the evening, the word *satyanashi*, which Baba would often use in reference to the New Life, provoked a discussion. The companions did not like the word. The use of alternative words was suggested by Dr. Ghani and others, such as renunciation, *khana-kharabi* (complete ruination), *barbadi* (destruction), *fakra* (asceticism) and *fakiri* (the poverty of dervishes).

Baba did not accept any of them: "These terms carry a spiritual meaning, and our life has *nothing to do with spirituality*. There is a world of difference between renunciation and *satyanashi*. Renunciation can be practiced by anyone and progress can be made, but it has a distinct quality and degree relating to various types of renunciators. But *satyanashi* cannot be practiced. It is not of anybody's desiring. It comes and cannot be resisted."

Baba Gives Further Clarification

News of Baba's presence in the area with His companions appeared in the Belgaum newspapers on November 6th, which prompted a large number of people to come for His darshan. In one newspaper, He was referred to as the "great saint Shri Meher Baba" who was beginning "a world tour." The editor came for Baba's darshan, and despite Adi's best efforts to dissuade him, he continued to insist on seeing Baba. Eventually, Baba, who was in the midst of sweeping the men's quarters, laid the broom aside and came forward and touched the man's feet.

Training in Belgaum*Baba in the midst of a discussion*

It was quite a task for the companions to explain their experience of the New Life without portraying Baba as their Master and themselves as His disciples; nor could they speak of spiritual topics in the New Life. Some of the visitors asked questions about the New Life, but no satisfactory reply could be given due to its restrictive conditions.

Finally, Baba sent a message that people could see Him for one minute, but they were forbidden to ask any questions, fold their hands in homage or touch His feet. On the contrary, they were to allow Baba to touch their feet without raising any objection. Under those stipulations, only two people came forward and allowed Baba to touch their feet.

That afternoon, Baba told the companions the following to help them deal with visitors:

Hopelessness means renunciation of all hopes.

Aimlessness means renunciation of all aims.

Helplessness means renunciation of all help.

No Master, no disciples,
means renunciation of spirituality.
And the New Life I have in mind eventually
means *absolute renunciation*.

Therefore, if anyone asks what this New Life is, say it is “absolute and complete renunciation.”

If they ask renunciation of what, then say, “of everything – aims, hopes, help and even life itself.”

Now remember, there will be occasions when people will ask all sorts of questions and such occasions will often arise. Donkin should be the one to go and meet the Westerners, and either Ghani, Adi, Nilu, Eruch, Pendu or Vishnu should explain matters to Indian questioners. The rest of the companions, if asked, should refer the questions to the above-named companions. If someone asks why Meher Baba still observes silence, you should say it is His personal and individual wish.

If asked why you companions do certain things, say, although we are Meher Baba’s companions on equal footing, we have to obey Him fully, by virtue of our arrangement with Him. Baba is not only our friend and companion, but He is like our elder brother also.

If asked about the New Life, list general but important things such as: no darshan, no blessing, no grace among the negative things, and begging, langoti life and labor among the positive things.

If asked what Baba does, say He works and begs like any of us. If other details are asked, tell them to read the New Phase booklet available from the Ahmednagar office.

You should treat the questioners with all kindness and humility. Under no circumstances should you get upset over the questions and become angry, whatever the questions – proper, improper or irritating.

Baba then dictated to Ghani the following couplets in Urdu, which freely translated are:

*We don't bother in the least with what others think of us.
Our preoccupation and business is suffering and
suffering alone.
It is Allah for the Muslims; and Ram for the Hindus.
Night is the same as day, and morning the same as evening.
And the only cash found in Abdul Ghani's pockets is poverty!*

The next day, He told the companions:

The New Life has three stages:

The first stage is from October 16th to December 31st, 1949.

The second stage commences January 1st, 1950, and may last for four, six or even 15 months.

The third stage starts from the time when the last stone of the foundation of a building is laid.

To explain the New Life with the analogy of building: The first stage, which is of help and training, is like determining the different types of materials like bricks, mortar, lime, stone, etc., to be used for the building. This stage is mostly devoted to labor.

The second stage has two parts: one of training and another of practice. Here the training will be for begging, langoti life and labor; and the practice will consist of putting on the kafni and going out for begging, of leading the langoti life and of engaging in labor. The langoti life, labor and begging are like collecting materials – bricks, mortar and wood – for the building and the laying of the foundation. When the last stone of the foundation is laid, it will correspond to complete and perfect renunciation.

The third stage will be the construction of the superstructure, which will be the Real Life of the building. That life has a beginning, but no end.

It has already been explained that the training and practice period will be characterized by ordinary and normal situations. Therefore, the langoti, labor and begging period will be for our purposes like placing the last foundation stone, which will mean complete and perfect renunciation; this period will be of an ordinary and normal type – let the world think what it likes.

The third stage of actually living in the building after complete renunciation is achieved, will consist of abnormal

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and extraordinary situations and circumstances, and they will make you enjoy the suffering. Ordinary and normal situations and circumstances will also be there. I cannot say anything more. The life in this stage will bring in the endless end!

Following afternoon tea, Baba touched upon the topic of individual needs and requirements before the period of “pennilessness,” which was to begin in January.

At the time, north India was suffering from a severe cold spell, and the companions lacked proper protection, such as blankets and clothing. Baba permitted an additional purchase of two blankets for each one, plus extra clothing and personal items, such as soap, toothpaste, etc. The blankets were coarse lamb’s wool used by shepherds and villagers.

Baba concluded by saying, “Whatever we have now should last till the end of the New Life, and nothing can be added after January 1st. There will be no money for it. Whatever is given is the limit for all times and circumstances. I now feel my conscience is clear. I have done what I could under the limited means at our disposal.”



*Training in Belgaum***Lessons in Obedience**

On the morning of November 8th, Baba happened to see Gustadji drawing lines of demarcation around his small bedding area, an old familiar habit of his.

“Why don’t you give up your old habits?” Baba insisted.

Gustadji replied, “I don’t see any harm in it.”

But when Baba objected, Gustadji said, “If you see harm in it, I won’t do it again.”

Baba then called for Kaka, who took some time in coming. “Why did you delay?” Baba asked.

“I was frying onions,” Kaka explained. “Had I left them on the stove, they would have burned.”

After this second incident, Baba called all of the companions and gave this warning:

Although I have been helping you in every way to correct your Old Life habits, I have been observing very carefully that you all have become lax. It seems that you do not take my orders seriously. Yesterday morning when I asked Ghani to put on his hat, he replied that the sun was not very hot. I asked Adi to play and sing the chorus of the New Life song, and he forgot all about it. In these two cases, it was not a direct order, but to obey completely, even such an implicit order, will help you to give up your old habits. This training will ultimately help you face the New Life with some confidence.

Gustadji and Kaka, however, broke my direct orders, being unable, maybe unconsciously, to shake off their old habits. I request them earnestly and with folded hands to abandon their old ways...

Baba made it clear that “In the matter of obeying conditions and orders... all are equal, irrespective of previous services and long association. Suppose while climbing a mountain, Ghani falls through exhaustion and Donkin is going strong, I ask the former to sing and the latter to stop. If Ghani makes an effort to sing, but Donkin does not stop immediately, then Ghani succeeds and Donkin fails.”

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Baba again assured them that such obedience would help them break away from old habits.

An illustration of instantaneous obedience occurred the next morning. When Baba arrived at the men's quarters, He asked for Ghani, who at the time was in the toilet. When he heard his name being called, Ghani went immediately to Baba, leaving his business unfinished, and came running with his pants down!

Baba was pleased with his obedience and asked all the companions to greet Ghani with applause. Baba then permitted Ghani to return to the toilet.

After making His usual morning inquiries of the men, Baba shared with them that in recent days He and the women had slept well, because Anna 104, the nightwatchman, had finally been successful in driving away the owls and bats that had been keeping them up at night.

Vishnu returned from Poona where he had been sent on an errand. When asked whether he had heard any news, he replied that, according to the New Life conditions, he was forbidden to read newspapers or discuss politics. However, he did say that in Poona he had overheard the newsboys shouting out the headlines that Godse and Apte, who were responsible for the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, were to be hanged on November 15th. This date would coincide with the companions' arrival in Benares. Learning this, some of the companions felt that it would be necessary to keep up with the news, especially if Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code, which banned public gatherings and barred outsiders, were to be enforced on that day. If unrest spread to Benares, it could result in the companions being prevented from entering the city.

In the Old Life, some of the companions were very attached to reading the newspaper every day, and Baba knew their concern about possible riots had mixed motives. After a lengthy discussion, Baba decided to allow Donkin to read the daily paper and cut out items that would be relevant to their travels in the New Life, such as news of curfews, riots, strikes and epidemics. Only those news items chosen by him and approved by Baba could be passed around among the the companions. However, Donkin was not allowed to speak about political matters or any

Training in Belgaum*Vishnu*

other news items. Instead, Baba told him to forget everything after he had read it.

Baba concluded by saying, "I want him to keep 75 rupees with him, which will suffice for about two years of purchasing a daily newspaper wherever available."

On November 10th, as previously arranged, the meals were brought in from the city. This gave the companions more time to begin packing and organizing

things for the move to Benares.

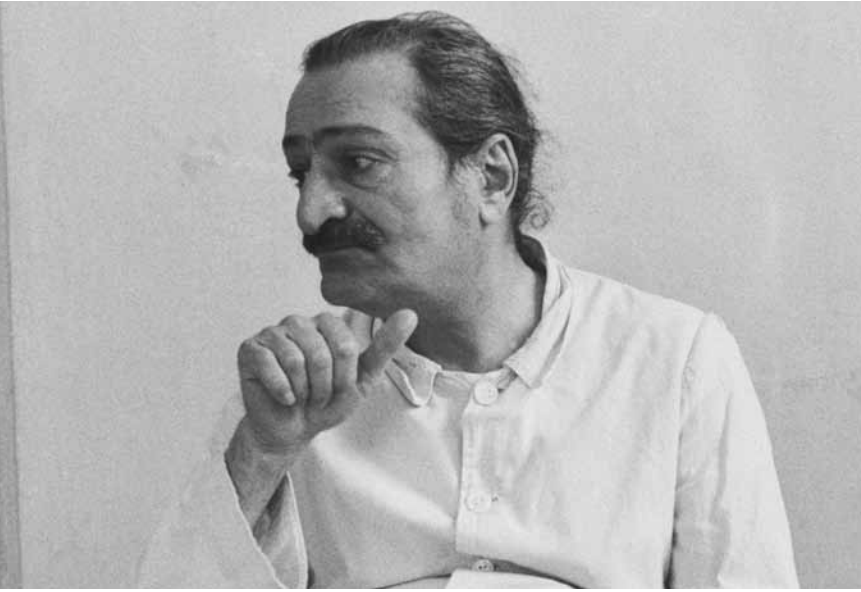
That morning, Nilu failed, although unconsciously, to carry out one of Baba's orders, which prompted Baba to say, "If you are right and yet you are reprimanded, then why worry? If you are wrong, then correct yourself. Right or wrong, never try to argue with me or defend yourself."

That afternoon, Vishwanath Haldankar, one of Baba's followers from the Old Life, arrived unexpectedly from Kolhapur to discuss the purchase of the property in Belgaum with Vishnu.

Although he was supposed to wait at his sister's house for Vishnu, instead, he went to the companions' quarters and offered reverence to Baba with folded hands. This angered Baba because Haldankar was not supposed to contact Him or the companions without permission; Baba immediately touched Haldankar's feet and sent him home before he was able to accomplish his mission.

Jal Rusi, Dr. Goher's younger brother, on the other hand, made no attempt to see Baba or the companions. Although he was staying in Belgaum and Donkin had seen him several times on the road, both immediately turned their faces away.

For the rest of their stay in Belgaum, Baba continued to join the companions in every type of work, such as cooking, cleaning pots and utensils, sweeping and drawing well water.

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At one point, Baba even walked from the women's residence to the men's quarters carrying a basket of onions and tomatoes on his head. Seeing Baba do menial work evoked deep emotions in all the companions, but they could not show it.

Author's note: Work carried out under trying circumstances, plus the discipline of mind and mood, provided the companions with an excellent training for inner renunciation. The gradual result was a spontaneous giving up of desires, hopes and expectations, which ultimately leads to a perfect dependence upon God. This state comes at the moment when the mind and heart are united and are attuned to the conviction that nothing is possible without God's Will. In every situation, good or bad, there is a poise which circumstances cannot affect.

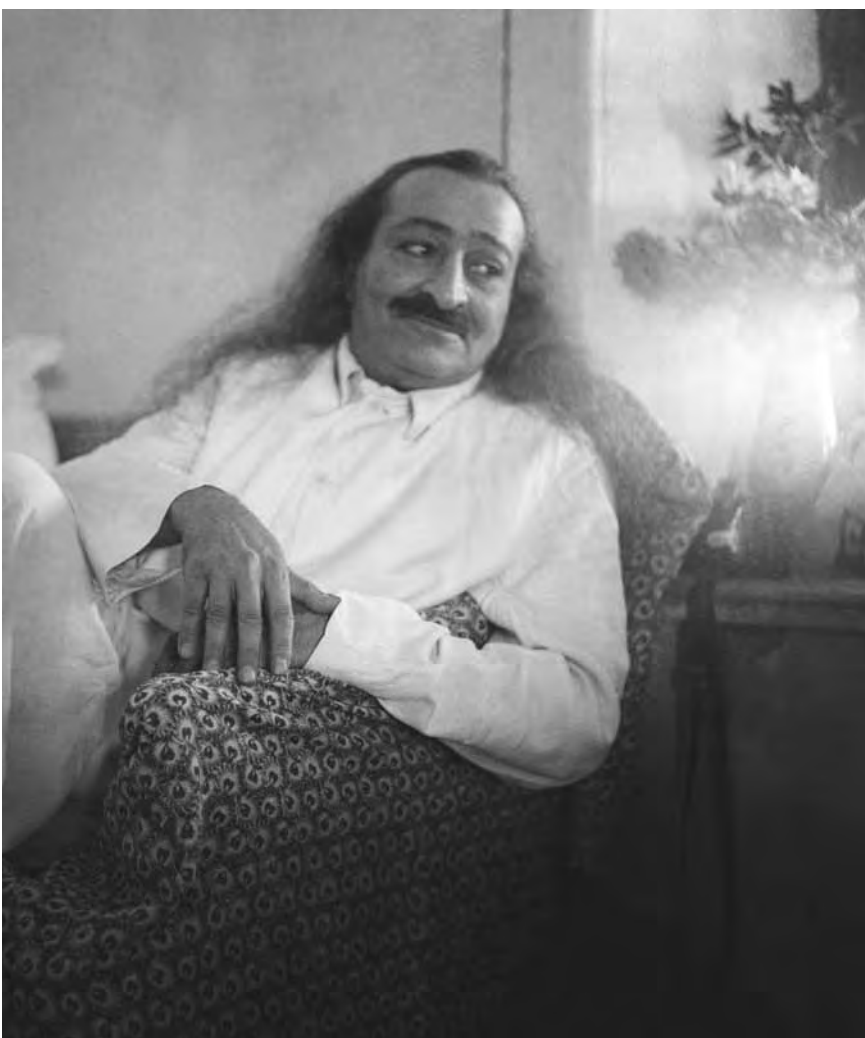
Baba had rejected the word "renunciation" to describe this state, because the use of this term implies the attainment of something great. On the other hand, in the state of *satyanashi* (utter ruination) that Baba described, when complete, one remains happy in God's Will, and one never hopes for anything from God and continues to be cheerful whether in favorable circumstances or in conditions of total destruction. This is utter renunciation. This state brings about a condition of undisturbed

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poise in all situations, because there is the unshakable conviction that everything happens according to the Will of God.

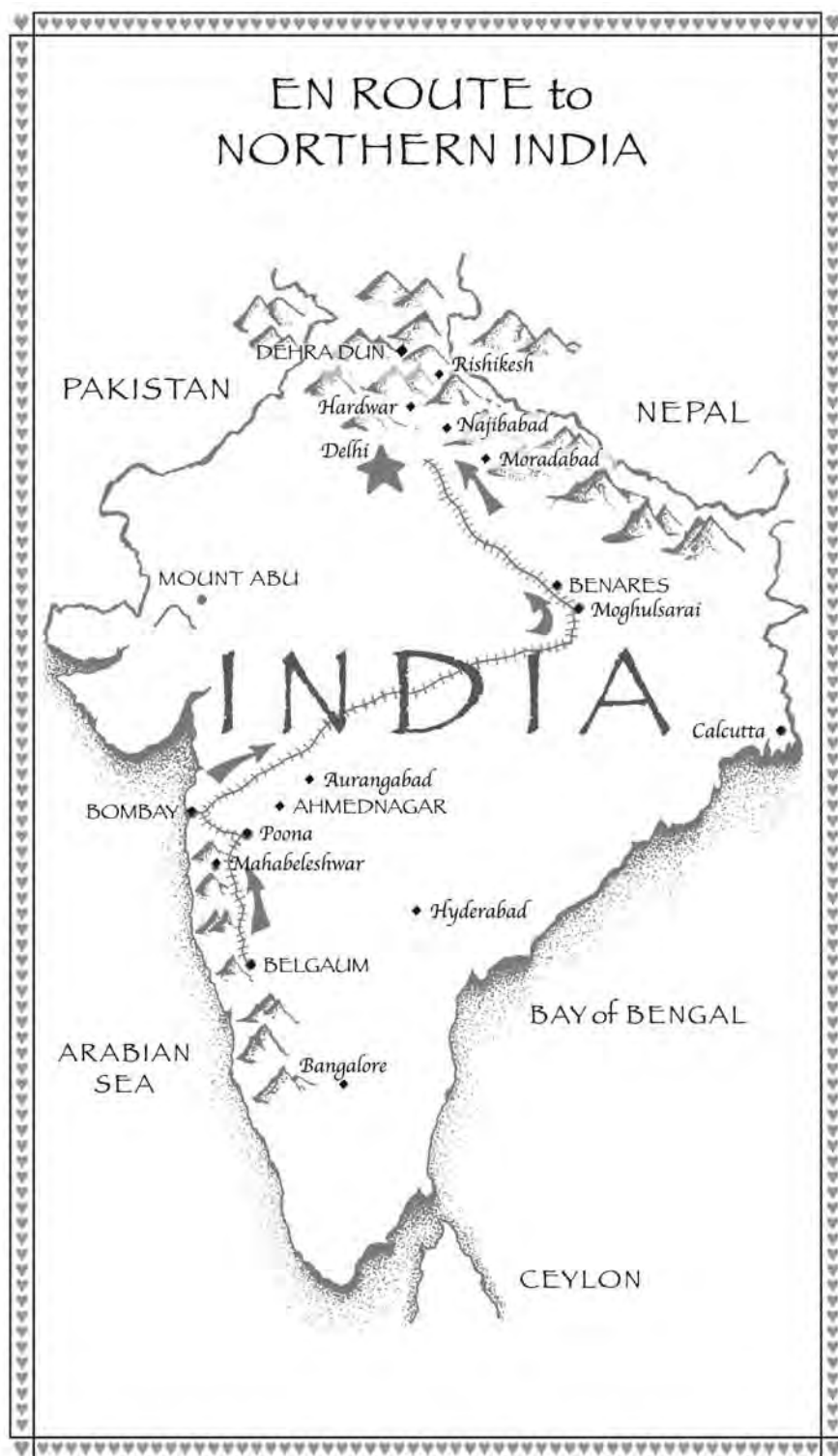
The period of training in the New Life during the companions' stay in Belgaum – with its labor phase – was coming to a close. Among other things, Baba had been working on the feelings of false shame and embarrassment that the companions may have had in performing tasks and chores for which servants were usually employed.

With trust in God, they gradually learned the lesson of self-reliance and living for God, and not for themselves.





Baba enjoying a discussion



Chapter Five

BEGGING AND LANGOTI – LIFE IN BENARES

November 15 to 31, 1949

A Long Train Journey

November 11th, 1949, was spent packing for the journey to Benares. It was also the last day the companions could take a bath and do laundry. The next day, all trunks and bedding were to be loaded on the truck for transport to the Belgaum railway station.

Around 4:30 a.m., November 12th, the party set off in the pitch dark for the station. The men were on foot, and Baba and the women went by rented car. Unlike in Sirur, no one knew of their departure, so there was no crowd waiting at the station seeking Baba's darshan. Only one elderly gentleman on the railway platform recognized Him, but before he could bow down to Him, Baba quickly knelt down and touched his feet.

Shortly after 5 a.m., the party boarded the train. The plan was to travel directly to Benares by way of Poona, Bombay and Moghulsarai, a journey of more than 1100 miles.

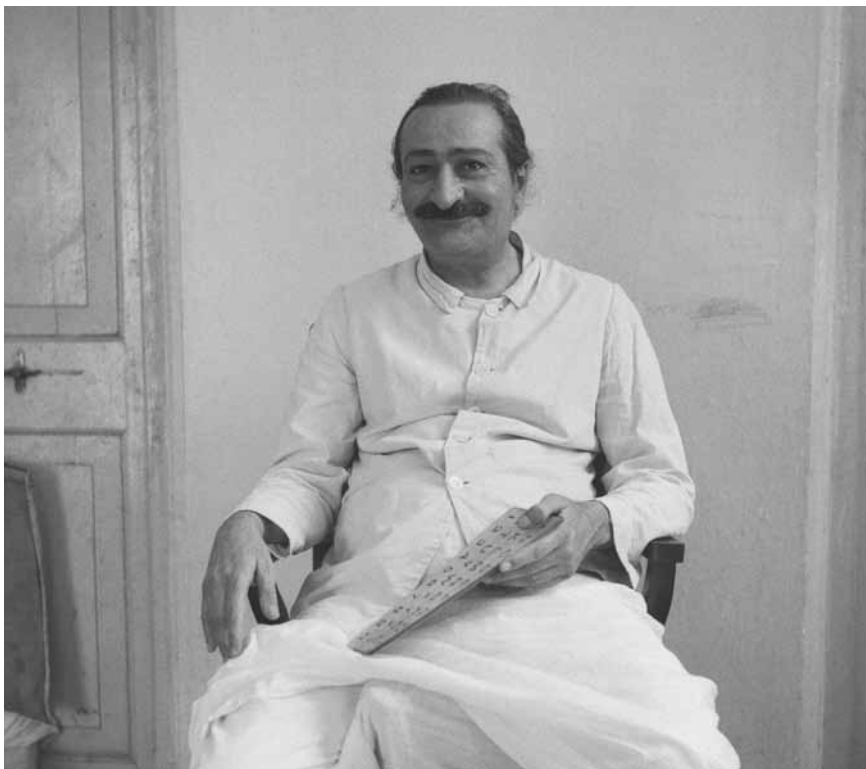
For the purpose of keeping the women secluded, they were booked in a first-class compartment. At the other extreme, Baba and the men traveled third-class in a compartment so crowded with their luggage that there was no room to stretch out.

At dawn, after traveling two hours, they arrived in Poona, where Baba sent Baidul and Pendu ahead to Bombay with most of the luggage. He also instructed them to purchase tickets to Benares for the whole party on the Calcutta Mail. Baba decided that He and the remaining companions would go by a later train to Bombay. Since the train was not due to leave until 12:30 p.m., they began to pass the time at the railway station. Gadekar and Professor Hakim, two of Baba's close ones from the Old Life, happened to be at the station bookstall and spotted Baba and

Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares

the others. True to the conditions of the New Life, they left immediately without trying to contact Baba's party. The companions who spotted them also looked away.

Bal Natu happened to be at the station and was surprised to see Dr. Donkin, but following Baba's instructions, he made no attempt to approach him. It never occurred to Bal that Baba was nearby. In fact, Baba was taking a stroll at the end of the platform not far away. Only later, when Bal visited Gadekar, did he learn that Baba had been at the station.



While Baba and the other companions continued to wait for the train, Dr. Nilu stepped into a car in the Lonavla Local to answer a call of nature. Scarcely had he settled down to relieve himself when the train suddenly began to move. Hurriedly gathering up his trousers, he ran for the door and jumped out of the train onto the platform. Half-dressed, he landed heavily on his rear end with his coat and hat flying in different directions.

This incident was a welcome comic relief to the companions.

Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares

Baba sent for tea and passed out chapatis to the companions and then He assigned duties. Adi and Vishnu were to buy bread, butter, cheese and plantains for the remaining journey. Eruch was to see to the needs of the women who were in the first-class waiting room. The rest of the men were to look after the luggage on the platform.

*Dr. Nilu*

After these arrangements, there was still plenty of time, so Baba, accompanied by Nilu and Ghani, went for a walk to Bund Gardens that took them over the Sangam bridge where they sat for about an hour near the landing and watched the ferry cross the river. From there, they walked toward the Engineering College, passing the Simla office tower, the Shivaji Military School and the courthouse, before returning to the railway station where lunch had been arranged for the party at Divadkar's Refreshment Rooms.

The train left Poona on schedule and arrived in Bombay at 6:30 p.m. The party was met by Pendu and Baidul, and this time there were no encounters with anyone from the Old Life.

The women were accommodated in the retiring room at Victoria Station.

After making arrangements for the luggage, Baba left the station with Ghani and Adi Sr. They soon found a secluded place behind a taxi and car stand to sit and wait for the Calcutta Mail to come, which was scheduled to depart at 9:00 p.m.

When the train arrived on time, it was extremely overcrowded, and it took a frantic effort for Baba and seven of the men to cram themselves into a servants' compartment. The rest of the men somehow managed to get into a third-class carriage that was to be detached at Kalyan. Fortunately, a private compartment for the women had been secured.

The scene was one of pandemonium. People looking for any available space fought to break into Baba's overcrowded compartment. Some who held tickets to the servants' compartment were insistent and had to be argued with and cajoled to leave.

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Finally, the train lurched into motion and slowly pulled out of Bombay. Since one of the compartment benches was used for Baba's bedding, there was no room for the men to stretch out and sleep, so Baba said they would all have to spend the long train ride sitting up.

After many hours had passed, He allowed them to take turns sleeping on the upper luggage shelf for an hour at a time. This meant that all the luggage had to be brought down and wedged beneath the seats or stacked on either side of the compartment door. Adding to this inconvenience, at each stop, the constant pounding at the door by people wanting to get in made resting that much more difficult.

The long tiring journey was interspersed by talks with Baba about the New Life and its meaning. During these sessions, they had tea, a simple lunch and later a sumptuous dinner.

At 2:30 a.m., November 15th, after traveling all night and throughout the day of November 14th, twenty hours in all, Baba and the companions arrived at Moghulsarai station. Sadashiv was waiting there to escort them to another platform, some distance away, to catch the train for Benares. The weather was extremely bitter, causing everyone to shiver. Making matters worse, in their hurry to transport the luggage to the waiting train, the men inadvertently left Baba alone with the remaining luggage. This neglect of one of His standing orders caused Baba to flare up at the men when they returned, and then for losing His temper, He asked each of the companions to pinch His ears and slap Him.

Later, to lighten the mood, Baba sent Sadashiv to purchase cups of hot tea, which provided some relief from the cold.

The train for Benares left at 3:30 a.m.

It was still freezing when Baba and the companions arrived an hour later in Benares.

Babadas met them at the railway station, which was located in the cantonment area, some distance from the Ganges River.

While standing on the platform, Baba quickly scanned the huge, crowded railway station and spotted a couple on an overhead bridge a long distance away. He turned to Eruch and gestured, "We are seen. Somebody's there."

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Since the overhead bridge was in the far distance, Eruch said, “Baba, they are just people who come and watch. Probably they are passengers or people who are here for a send-off or something.”

“No! Go and inquire who they are.”

Eruch hurriedly walked the long distance, climbed the bridge and approached the couple. “Are you expecting someone?” he asked hesitantly.

“We are expecting a party to arrive, and we have made arrangements for their stay,” they replied.

“Is this any special party?” Eruch asked.

“They are heading on a pilgrimage. That’s what we’ve heard.”

Eruch was amazed at how Baba knew that these people were not just passersby, but Dr. Siddeshwar Nath and his wife, the ones who had offered to take care of all the housing and food arrangements for Baba and the companions during their stay in Benares.

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When Eruch returned and told Baba who the people were, Baba snapped His fingers and said, “Come on, pack your luggage now! We can’t stay in this place – the host has not followed the instructions.”

Baba immediately called Sadashiv and Babadas over and asked them, “What is this? Why haven’t you made the point very clear with the hosts that they were not to come to see the party or me?”

Not knowing that Eruch had just spoken with the Naths, Babadas replied, “But they haven’t come, Baba.”

“How can you be sure?” Baba questioned.

Sadashiv and Babadas again assured Him, saying, “How can they come at such an early hour in the morning? We made it very clear to them that they should not approach the party.”

“This annoyance on my initial entry into Benares,” Baba remarked, “does not auger well for the future.”

He pointed to the overhead bridge and said, “Can you see that couple there? They are Dr. and Mrs. Nath.”

Baba then sent Eruch back to the couple with the message, “The head of our party is happy with the arrangements you have made, but we won’t be staying here. He is displeased. Why have you ventured to meet us and gone against the condition to not contact the party?”

Hearing this, the couple was deeply pained, even frightened. Despite having no idea who Baba was, they reacted as though they had committed a great sin, even though all the arrangements for the companions’ stay had been generously made by them.

Eruch was very embarrassed by the situation.

The couple begged him to tell the head of the party (Eruch was not allowed to reveal Baba’s identity) that they had come not to see the party; that is why they were keeping at a distance. They had come to offer conveyance to the “four delicate women” who they had heard were in the group. They felt that the distance to the bungalow they had rented was so far that it would be impossible for the women to make it on foot after such a long train ride. Therefore, they had come to offer their own vehicle.

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While this exchange was going on, Baba and the companions were left standing in the cold without proper clothing.

When Eruch finally returned, he repeated the conversation, assuring Baba of the couple's sincere intentions.

Immediately, he felt inwardly that Baba was pleased.

Baba replied, "Go and tell them that your Companion is extremely satisfied with this, but he would not want to accept their conveyance free of charge. He will offer one rupee...as a token payment."

Turning to Kaka, who carried all the money for the party, He asked for a rupee coin and gave it to Eruch.

Eruch returned again to the Naths, who, after hearing Baba's condition, were greatly relieved, and it was arranged for their driver to escort Baba and the women the distance to Nichi Bagh (garden) near the Bharat Milap section of Benares, where the party was to stay.

The men left on foot, transporting some of their baggage in handcarts and leaving Vishnu behind to deal with the rest of the luggage. When Vishnu approached the railway clerk, he found out that one bag was missing and as a result, the clerk refused to release the other luggage without taking a complete inventory of everything. As a consequence, Vishnu had to leave empty-handed.

At 5:00 a.m. it was still very cold when Baba and the women companions finally left the railway station and went in the Nath's car to Nichi Bagh, which was in the quiet cantonment area of Benares.

Before Baba and the party were to arrive, Sadashiv and Babadas tried desperately for almost three weeks to find someone willing to put up and provide meals in *bhiksha* (as a gift) for Baba and the companions during the long stay in Benares. Neither one of them could speak Hindi or English well, which made the search even more difficult. On top of that, they had to make their way on foot, as they were not allowed to use any money for transportation.

When they were at the point of giving up the search, Babadas awoke one morning with a severe pain in his eye and sought out an eye doctor. He found a specialist named Dr.

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Khare, and after his treatment, Babadas, to make conversation, asked the doctor, “Are you a native of Benares?”

“No,” the doctor replied. “I’m originally from Rath.”

“Do you know Gaya Prasad Khare of Rath?”

“He’s my father!” the doctor answered.

Babadas thought to himself, what a small world it is that he knew the doctor’s father. And then suddenly he realized that this must be the “friend or acquaintance” Baba had told him to contact after his arrival in Benares.

Babadas told Dr. Khare that a party of twenty was soon to arrive and a place of lodging and meals for three weeks were needed, but they must be offered in *bhiksha*. Dr. Khare readily agreed to the request. He even contacted his friend Dr. Siddheshwar Nath, one of the most famous physicians and eye specialists in India, who also offered to help the party in every way without knowing a single person in the group.

Only Dr. Khare had heard of Baba from a recent letter his father had sent him, in which his father mentioned that Meher Baba and a group of companions would be setting out on a pilgrimage from Ahmednagar. Dr. Khare had no way of knowing if this was the same party, as it was common for many groups of people to come to Benares on pilgrimage. Having heard from his father that Meher Baba observed silence, he asked Babadas whether any one in the party was silent.

Babadas did not let on.

Gaya Prasad Khare, the doctor’s father, had heard about Baba several times from Babadas years earlier, when Babadas had traveled to Rath in the Hamirpur district in northern India to spread Baba’s message.

Gaya Prasad was not drawn to Baba at that time. However, on August 13, 1949, he felt a sudden inspiration to have the darshan of a Perfect Being. He thought of traveling to Pondicherry in south India to see Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, but he soon found out that this great saint only gave darshan to the public on the 14th of August every year, which made it impossible to reach Pondicherry in time.

While Gaya Prasad was absorbed in his longing to meet a Perfect Being, Babadas again happened to visit him and inquire why he seemed so troubled.

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Gaya Prasad explained about his longing to have Shri Aurobindo's darshan and how he could not get there in time.

"You come along with me to Ahmednagar. I will have you take Meher Baba's darshan," Babadas offered.

Gaya Prasad had little interest in Baba, but to be polite, he replied, "Baba would not permit darshan."

Babadas was not put off and assured him, "I will arrange for darshan – you accompany me."

Gaya Prasad reluctantly agreed, and on August 16th, he traveled to Meherabad with Babadas.

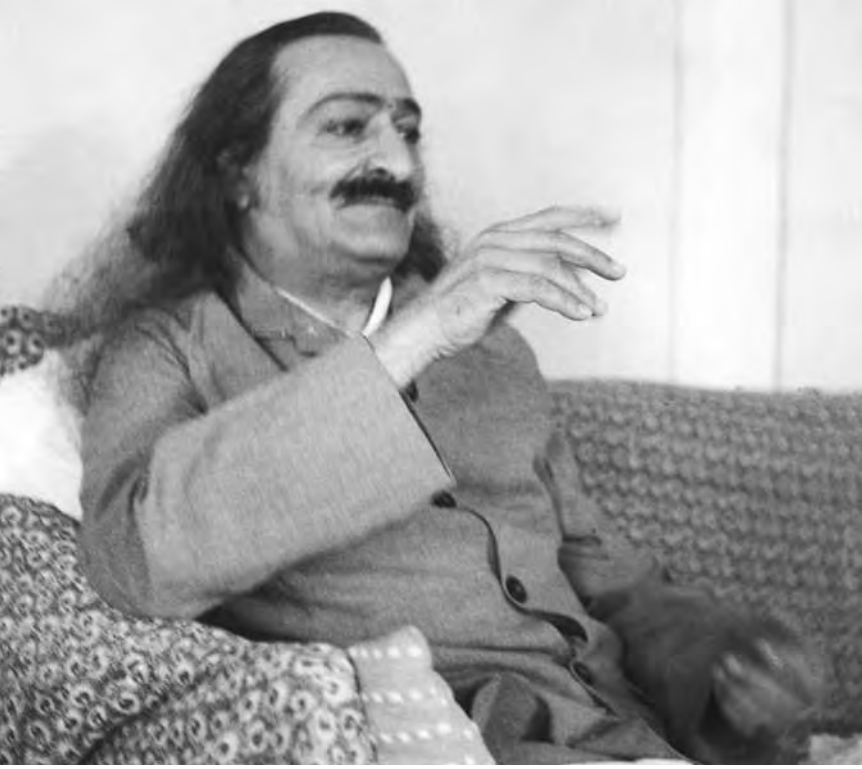
Since it was the first day of meetings in Lower Meherabad's Mandali Hall for only those interested in joining Baba in the New Life, Gaya Prasad was told to wait outside along the road under a tree.

Later, at Babadas' request, Baba allowed Gaya Prasad darshan for half a minute, permitting him to stand outside the door of Mandali Hall and look in.

On seeing Baba's radiant face, Gaya Prasad was overwhelmed with intense feeling. He had not expected to be moved at all, and when the brief darshan was over, he returned to the roadside and wept profusely.

Later, when Baba stepped out on the veranda of Mandali Hall for a few moments, Gaya Prasad was able to gaze at Him briefly from a distance, and again he was overwhelmed with profound emotion.

Before leaving for Meherazad, Baba made sure that Gaya Prasad was served a meal before beginning his long journey back to the district of Hamirpur. As they ate with him, none of Baba's companions had any idea how Gaya Prasad's glimpse of Him was a link with their future stay in Benares. It was after this encounter with Baba that Gaya Prasad wrote his son that Meher Baba, with a group of companions, would soon be setting out on a pilgrimage from the city of Ahmednagar.

Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares**Settling in at Nati Imli**

The property where they were to stay was located on a hill above the ancient city and was known as Nati Imli. Before entering the secluded compound of the estate, Baba and the women saw in the dark, through the wrought-iron entrance gate, two sentinels standing half-asleep beside the staircase of the main house. The women wondered, what kind of place have we come to? Why are there guards? It was only when they walked through the gate and drew nearer to the bungalow that they discovered that those two imposing sentinels were really statues.

The men arrived about an hour later.

Nati Imli was a rectangular compound enclosed by a high stone wall. Inside the main gate of the compound and to the right was a two-storied bungalow in a run-down condition, but with some signs of its former grandeur. Extending out from the left side of the building was an open veranda with a side room. There was also a guesthouse situated at right angles to the bungalow. The grounds included servants' quarters, fountains, fruit

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trees and a large flower garden that had also fallen into neglect. The house commanded a beautiful view of the historic city, and there were two welcome conveniences: electricity and running water that was available from a nearby well by means of an electric pump.

In the darkness, the men began to bring in the luggage from the handcarts and car into the courtyard. Meanwhile, Baba and the women had entered the main house, using flashlights. They climbed a flight of stairs to the top floor. After passing through one room, they entered a large lecture hall with a high ceiling. It was filled with stacked chairs, tables and sofas. Exhausted from the long journey, Goher, without thinking, sat on one of the sofas.

Baba immediately reprimanded her, reminding the women, “In the New Life, using chairs, sofas and beds is prohibited. Although every comfort is here, do not use any of it.”

The lecture hall did not seem like a suitable place to stay, so Baba had the women move on to the adjoining room which was devoid of furniture except for a large silk bolster cushion lying on the carpeted floor.

After Baba left them, the four very tired women spread themselves out on the floor in the dark, using the large cushion for a pillow. Nestling against it for warmth, they quickly fell asleep.

When they awoke in the late morning, they discovered that the cushion, now seen in daylight, was filthy and full of dust. They could scarcely bring themselves to touch it.

Although it was cold, the women briskly washed and waited for breakfast, longing for bread and butter with hot tea.

Soon, Baba came to their room and asked if they were ready for tea. “Yes, Baba,” they eagerly responded, quickly setting out their cups and saucers.

“It won’t take long, you know, just fifteen minutes,” He promised.

The breakfast arrived, lovingly prepared and sent over by the Nath family from their house, which consisted of chapatis and hot spinach with pepper and spices.

“What kind of breakfast is this?” Mehera asked.

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“Probably, this is the kind of breakfast they have here – that’s why they’ve sent it. We’d better eat it and be grateful for it.” Goher replied.

Mehera did not care for spinach, but on this day, due to her extreme hunger, she thoroughly enjoyed each morsel. The same was true for the other women.

The men, who ate in their quarters, also found the meal especially delicious.

The small room where the women had slept was now set up for Baba’s stay. Off this room was an outside terrace that extended around the house and overlooked the garden below. The larger room that was stacked high in one area with chairs, sofas and tables was now to be made suitable for the women. Baba again reminded them, “Nobody must sit on the chairs and sofas.”

“But the room is full of furniture. What should we do?”

Baba said that He would have the furniture removed, so while the women stayed in the back room, the men came and moved the furniture onto the veranda. The expensive carpets were also removed, leaving the place simple and bare, appropriate for the training phase of the New Life.

As one of the women described it, “We lived like beggars in a palace.” Only one chair was left, which the women used as a clothes-horse.

At one point, while Meheru and Mehera were talking to each other, Meheru found herself marveling at how comfortable Mehera looked. Then it suddenly dawned on her that Mehera was sitting in a chair and she quickly pointed this out. Mehera, realizing that she had broken Baba’s order, leapt up so fast, she practically flew. Afterwards, when she told Baba what had happened, to her relief, He said, “Never mind. It was a mistake.”

Later, Baba went outside to the guest house, which contained several rooms, plus a kitchen and a bathroom. There, He assigned sleeping places for the men by arranging spaces in a row on the veranda. Dr. Donkin was given the small side room attached to the main house.

Although the bungalow and guest house were large and spacious, the men, too, lived like homeless refugees.

As Sadashiv and Babadas had failed to prepare the buildings in advance, Baba and several of the men cleaned and swept out

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the main house. Like the garden, it had also been neglected for a long time.

That first morning, Baba sent Eruch to the Naths with 600 rupees as payment for twenty-five days of food. The doctors were reluctant to accept any money for the meals. They only agreed, because it was the wish of the head of the group, and they were concerned that if another condition was violated, they might lose the privilege of serving the party.

It was arranged that the doctors would supply meals, sufficient for twenty people, twice a day, at 10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

According to Baba's instructions, the meals were to be simple, and Baba made it clear that the doctors and their families were not allowed to step inside the compound. The meals were to be brought by servants who were to wait outside the front gate until one of the companions approached them. The owner, from whom they rented the place, was also not permitted to visit the property.

The next morning, November 16th, Baba arrived at the guest house and inquired how the men had slept. All of them replied that they had slept well due to the exhausting journey and the lack of rest during the previous day.

Knowing that the men did not have their luggage, Baba ordered them to take baths and then wear the same clothes they had worn on the journey. However, news was soon received that the missing bag was found, so Baba sent Vishnu and Eruch to get the remaining luggage, and the companions were able to change into clean clothes after all.

An Impossible Request

While in Benares, Baba took the women for visits into the heart of this sacred Hindu place of pilgrimage on the Ganges. They saw its *ghats*, the broad stone steps leading down to the river, where multitudes take ritual baths every day and consider it most auspicious to be cremated there. The women were impressed with the city's spiritual atmosphere.

As usual, they had a difficult time keeping up with Baba as they gazed at the ornate temples and observed the many sadhus with the traditional sandalwood paste on their foreheads, as well

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as the pilgrims meditating on the river banks. About them, Baba said that they looked like real renunciates, but it was doubtful if even five out of 100 were genuine.

On one occasion, Baba hired two *tongas* (horse-drawn carriages). He and Mehera climbed into one of them and Mani, Goher and Meheru went into the other. After everyone was settled in, Baba told the drivers to race each other. It was a lot of fun, and to no one's surprise, Baba's driver won the race.

Back at Nati Imli, the women enjoyed a relaxed privacy behind the high walls of the compound. However, they soon discovered that camel drivers with their elevated seats were able to look over the high compound wall as they passed by. This was disturbing to the women until Mani observed that the camel drivers were too tired from traveling to notice anything.

While in Benares, the women suffered from the cold in the mornings and evenings. Since they were used to a much warmer climate in Ahmednagar, where the temperature rarely drops below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, it was difficult to adapt to the dramatic temperature change.

One early morning, when they were looking down toward the city of Benares from their balcony, they saw a young boy in the distance drawing water from a well and bathing himself. The mere sight caused them to feel the chill even more.

No matter how cold they were, they loved attending to Baba's personal needs, such as cleaning His room, preparing His bed and serving His meals. In every task, they were fastidious, whether it was dusting His room or washing His clothes and hanging them on the back veranda.

Everyone appreciated the Nath and Khare families, who proved to be invaluable in their extraordinary service and generosity to Baba and the companions.

In recognition, Baba asked Eruch to convey a message to Dr. Nath, telling of His appreciation to the Nath family for their loving efforts in making the party's stay comfortable. After making this point, Eruch was to tell them about a few additional requests that Baba wanted to have fulfilled.

Eruch left and began the long walk along Kabir Road to Dr. Nath's house, which adjoined the hospital.

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Sheetla and Dashashwamesh Ghats in Benares



Earlier photo of Meher Baba in Benares

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When he arrived, he found no one home so he started to leave, but one of the doctor's servants suddenly appeared and asked if he could be of help.

"I have a very important message from my Elder Brother, and I want this to be communicated to Dr. Nath, but he's not to be found. Has he gone out?"

"No, he is busy with an operation. Today is operation day," the servant replied.

Eruch returned to Nati Imli where Baba instructed him to make the trip again. This time, He told Eruch that He had an additional request for Dr. Nath that was to take precedence over the previous requests. He wanted Dr. Nath to first agree to accept the dirty clothing of the entire party!

When Eruch went a second time, the doctor was still engaged in surgery. However, the servant had told him of Eruch's earlier visit so when the doctor's assistant saw Eruch, he immediately informed the doctor, who came out to greet him. The doctor was still wearing his surgical gloves, as he had left a patient on the operating table.

"Is there anything that I can do?" he asked.

"Yes, there is one thing, and my Elder Brother has enjoined me to inform you that this is a very important message and that your one-pointed attention is necessary for it. You must be relaxed and not preoccupied with anything."

Although Dr. Nath had said, "Yes, I'm ready. Go ahead," Eruch indicated that he should finish with his patient first. The doctor agreed and they arranged to meet later on.

After the doctor's operation was completed, Eruch returned and the doctor took him to his sitting room where Eruch began with the first request: He said that his Elder Brother wanted a white horse to be given in bhiksha within fifteen days. It had to be docile, mature in age and pure white – even the eyelashes and tail were not to have a trace of color.

Replying to this, the doctor said, "Well, it will be very difficult for us to find this white horse. It's not difficult to give it in bhiksha, but it's very difficult to spot one within the time limit of fifteen days that your Elder Brother has set. I'll have to send out messengers, and if we can find one we will get it."

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Eruch continued: In addition to the white horse, his Elder Brother would like a camel and a cow.

Dr. Nath readily agreed to acquire them, saying that they could be purchased in a day.

Since Eruch was already embarrassed in the face of Dr. Nath's patience and generosity, the next request was more difficult: "Now there is another thing that you are to offer in bhiksha. As you know, all these things are necessary for us to use on our way to the north on our pilgrimage. My Elder Brother also wants two asses."

"What!" exclaimed the doctor, "Asses for a pilgrimage? That's unheard of!" (To Hindus, it is sacrilegious, even inauspicious, to take a donkey on a pilgrimage.) The doctor was visibly shaken.

By this time, Eruch suspected that Dr. Nath was entertaining doubts about the good sense of his Elder Brother, but he still managed to say, "But my companion wants it. And this is not the only thing. All this you should do on one condition."

"And what is that?" the doctor asked, laughing by now.

"The condition is that, in return for all this, you will have to accept the dirty linen from all of the companions. We have been wearing these clothes since we set out from our native place, but when we leave here, we will cast off our clothes and put on woolen kafnis."

"Tell your Elder Brother that everything is accepted, including all the gifts to be exchanged, on one condition of my own – that His dirty linen be included."

Eruch told him that he was not sure that this could be done, but he would speak to his Elder Brother. They shook hands and parted with a feeling of great love between them.

Eruch returned to Baba and gave a report on the whole exchange, including the doctor's request for Baba to add His own clothes.

Hearing this request, Baba raised His eyebrows, "Hmm, the doctor is very clever. Tell him my clothes will be included, but they won't be separated from the others."

Baba was very happy with the doctor and told Eruch to inform him that all the linen would be sent to Dr. Nath's home on the day the party was to leave Benares.

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On the morning of November 17th, when the companions had gathered, Baba sent them to wash their feet. On their return, without giving an explanation, He touched their feet with His hands. Later, a delicious lunch was sent by both doctors' families, moving Baba to remark, "They are exceeding the limit in their love and devotion."

That afternoon, Baba distributed money to the companions that had been set aside in Belgaum for purchasing clothes, explaining, "Fourteen rupees will be given to each of you for shoes and other necessities, and five rupees for gloves. Cotton jackets and scarves will be supplied from the amount with Kaka Baria." He again told them, "The companions can touch money only for the purpose of spending this amount, from which nothing should be saved. If one cent remains, it should be given away to beggars...."

On November 18th, the fourth day after arriving in Benares, Baba sent the men companions out to see the city and to visit the famous ghats. They went in groups of four over the next three days, with Sadashiv acting as their guide. At the ghats, the companions were repulsed by the burning corpses disposed of according to Hindu rites and by the city's sewage emptying into the river. They were glad to return to Nati Imli where Baba had begun to exercise with Dr. Ghani during the day. Out of His love for humor, He ordered His old schoolmate to greet Him every morning with *Sthadaymashy*, *Khawrdemashy*, *Joday*, *Tagday*, *Khushhalay*, *Kalemashay*, *Salamay*, a Pathan salutation in the Pushtu language spoken in north India. Since no one spoke Pushtu, the words sounded like rhymed gibberish and amused everyone.

In the evenings, before the companions went to bed, Baba ordered Ghani to repeat a few Urdu lines in a singsong voice, which made the lines sound humorous. Translated into English, they are:

*The Old Life has passed in different ways.
Today also has passed somehow.
Tomorrow be damned – who cares?*

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Surprisingly, these lines gave the the companions a great sense of freedom and release.



Later on the 18th, the owner of the property came around with his gardener to see how the party was doing. He walked into the compound and began circling the grounds. When word of this visit was brought to Baba's notice, He ordered the owner to leave. The landlord complied and promised not to disturb the party again. Baba sent Adi Sr. to remind Dr. Nath about the conditions of privacy that were required.

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At Nati Imli, the health of some of the companions began to break down. Pendu suffered from a mild case of the flu, which necessitated Baba calling in Dr. Donkin to treat him. Baba also had a slight cold and Mani was in bed with a fever and a cold, which was diagnosed as a severe case of the flu.

When Pendu recovered, he and Eruch brought up the subject of the planned foot journey to Hardwar and the problem of transporting the luggage and personal articles.

Although a special caravan was being brought by Padri from Meherabad and a bullock cart would be available, Pendu and Eruch felt that several more carts were needed to convey all their paraphernalia.

In response, Baba said, “As we go onwards, by the end of December, nearly 50 percent of the luggage will have melted away. The stock of dry provisions is meant for the training period of begging, ending on the 31st. After January 1st, we will live on what we get by begging. There won’t be any money. As per the conditions of the New Life, there won’t even be anything to fall back on in case of an emergency.”

Adi suggested that since they would already have a camel with them, why not purchase a cart for it?

After thinking it over, Baba agreed. He consulted Baidul and Donkin, who were familiar with camels; Baidul had owned camels when he lived in Iran, and years earlier Donkin had experience with them when traveling in the Sahara Desert.

Satisfied from the discussion that it would be practical, Baba sent one of the companions to Dr. Nath to ask whether he would be willing to purchase a camel cart. The doctor happily agreed, but he was not willing to accept any money for it. This generous offer was especially timely, because there was little money left in Kaka’s budget.

Baba then gave instructions to Baidul and Babadas to collect information about masts, sadhus and saints.

Adi pointed out to Baba, “You had said in Meherabad that Your mast work was over! What is this new mast phase now?”

Baba replied, “You people have short memories.... The mast activity of the Old Life had exclusive importance for me, but hereafter this work will have importance for all of you. I may ask Ghani to massage the limbs of a mast or ask Vishnu to feed

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him. The work with the masts, saints and sadhus will be absolutely different from what it has been in the past. I might make you serve them, or I shall serve them myself in your presence, which was never the case before. I might even humiliate myself in your presence or in the presence of others, in a manner that would be shocking to you all. So I need masts, sadhus and saints for a different kind of work altogether.

“In this New Life, I am on an equal footing with you all. If you are ordinary, I am ordinary with you. If you are in any way great or extraordinary, I, too, am great and extraordinary. If you are something, I, too, am something. Therefore, now, in relation to masts, sadhus, yogis and saints, I am on the same footing as all of you.”

Carrying out Baba’s order, Babadas began gathering information about masts, but Baidul, the chief mast-hunter in the Old Life, started correcting him in his habitual way about old and new masts.

Baba stopped him, saying, “If Baidul doesn’t understand this, he will land me in a mess. For God’s sake, do what you’re told and give up your old habits!”

On the morning of November 20th, when Baba joined the men on the veranda of the main house, He was in excellent spirits and dictated in Gujarati the following couplet to Ghani, which translated into English reads:

*Our helplessness has indeed done a great favor
by bestowing upon us
all the heroic courage for which we were thirsting
for so many years.*

Baba then added, “The day must dawn soon when we can with pride and justification say this about ourselves.”

In keeping with the spirit of helplessness, Baba gave instructions about begging, which was to be the second phase of the training period. He enumerated the prerequisites for begging: “1. bare feet; 2. *kafni* (a long robe extending below the knees); 3. bowl (the brass pot provided); 4. *jholi* (a cloth bag with compartments to receive different kinds of grains or anything that is dry and uncooked)....

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“In begging, do not touch women, but you may ask and accept alms from women as well as men.... While begging, you have to say to women, ‘*Mai, bhiksha diji*’ (Mother, give alms); and to men... ‘*Bhai, bhiksha diji*’ (Brother, give alms).”



Baba disagrees with a point being made

The companions were to go out in pairs at 10:00 a.m., and as soon as bhiksha was received, they were to return directly to Baba, regardless of “quantity or quality.” If refused at one house, they were to move on to the next. If by 7:00 p.m., nothing had been received, they must return to Nati Imli anyway.

Baba stipulated that Nilu, a Brahmin, was to beg in Muslim localities, whereas Ghani, a Muslim, was to beg in Hindu localities. The companions were to approach private dwellings and houses only. Then, with a twinkle in His eye, Baba forbade the companions to beg at sweetmeat shops. Turning serious again, He said that if the companions were shown homage in any way,

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they were to return it action for action, and they were not to provoke anyone or be provoked.

He explained, “If Nilu is insulted by a Muslim, he should not express anger, but go to another house.”

After receiving bhiksha, the companions were to salute the giver with folded hands and depart. Baba said that the begging would begin in four days, on November 24th.

Baba then changed the subject, saying that He wanted to go to Hardwar in north India for the *Kumbha Mela*, a religious celebration held once every twelve years, which millions of Hindus and Muslims attend. In connection with His work, Baba wanted to contact a large number of those participating in the celebration. Therefore, in the afternoon, He asked Vishnu and Sadashiv to study the Hindu almanac to determine the dates on which the Mela would be held.

They found that it was scheduled to take place on the 2nd, 13th and 17th of April, 1950, which corresponded to certain phases of the moon.

Later that day on November 20th, Donkin was sent to Sarnath, a few miles away, to look at two bungalows for the party's next stay. This quiet city with its many shrines and temples was the place Lord Buddha chose to begin His ministry 2,500 years before and is very sacred to the Buddhists.

Meanwhile, at Nati Imli, aside from their usual duties, the women were kept busy fulfilling a request from Baba: “You will make puppets, because after you leave here and take to the road, you will have to begin to earn. You can do that by giving puppet shows. Whenever we halt, people can come around and see the show. They will like it and be pleased to pay their mite for the show. That, too, will be a form of bhiksha.”

Mani, the one most familiar with making puppets, fashioned the faces and hands out of paper and glue. One was a beautiful figure of Lord Krishna and another of a mean-looking butcher with a black mustache, holding a knife in his hand. Mehera designed the clothes and made the jewelry for the Krishna puppet, while Goher and Meheru sewed the clothes.

(Unexpectedly, Baba had them drop the whole project, and Mani later described His decision as: “God proposes and God disposes.”)

*Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares***A Sign of the Second Coming**

Baba wished to inaugurate the beginning of the begging phase Himself by going to the home of the Nath. The Nath family was informed that a few of the companions would be coming to their home to beg for food. The family looked forward to receiving them, hoping to find out something more about the party they were serving.

Before starting out, Baba ordered the companions to wash their feet. He then touched the feet of each one and followed by putting His hands to His forehead. Afterwards, He asked Dr. Ghani to recite the following prayer:

Today, the 24th of November, is a very significant day for me in the New Life. I ask the most merciful God to forgive me and my companions for any shortcomings and any conscious or unconscious mistakes done singly or wholly or towards each other, or personally or impersonally, relating to the conditions or otherwise, and also for any lustful, angry, greedy or Old Life thoughts or desires.

I pray to God to grant us full strength on my own and my companions' behalf to put into effect 100 percent the oaths and conditions, because the All-knowing God knows that from the 1st of January 1950, there is to be no compromise whatsoever between me and my companions in relation to our oaths and conditions.

My companions, I forgive you and I seek forgiveness of you, and I pray to God to forgive us all, not merely by way of ceremony, but as a heartfelt entreaty.

While the prayer was being read aloud, Baba's face radiated authority. One of the companions who witnessed this scene said later, "In a moment in eternity, He looked the judge, the accused and the accuser."

After speaking the prayer in English, Ghani recited it in Hindi, and at a signal from Baba, he repeated it several more times in English. Baba was in rapt attention during the recitations, and then, gesturing to end the prayers, He made a sign of forgiveness.

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Dr. Nath's bungalow in Benares where Baba and several of the companions received bhiksha

Afterward, Baba decided that Eruch, Dr. Donkin and Babadas would accompany Him to Dr. Nath's home. They set out barefooted to cover the distance of nearly one mile. Baba wore the New Life attire, a long white kafni and a green turban. He carried a brass pot in His right hand, and a cloth satchel, lovingly stitched by Mehera, was slung over His left shoulder. On it, Mehera had embroidered the words, "*Premsay bhiksha dijye*," meaning "Give this offering with love."

Donkin and Babadas remained at a distance as Baba and Eruch approached the Nath's front door where the entire family was waiting to greet them.

Eruch said, "*Premsay bhiksha dijye*," while Baba held out His satchel and brass pot to the doctor and his wife. Eruch spoke in such a way that the Naths thought it was Baba speaking.

The couple brought out the food they had prepared and offered it to Baba, generously filling His satchel and brass pot.

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Baba thanked them by His expression, and immediately turned and walked away. Eruch's cloth bag and pot were then filled. Before the Nath's had time to fully take in what had happened, Baba and Eruch were gone, but they were left greatly moved by Baba's beauty and grace.

When Baba returned to Nati Imli, the delicious food was distributed among the companions.

The next day, November 25th, a message came from the Nath's, asking whether the Khare family could also share the privilege of offering bhiksha to the party. In addition, they asked permission to take a photograph of those coming, to which Baba, to the surprise of His companions, consented. The Nath's contacted a local photographer to be on hand.

This time, Baba went with Adi, Gustadji, Ghani and Babadas. Only Adi walked with Baba toward the door of the Nath home, while the other three stayed a distance away.

As Baba and Adi came through the gate, a photograph of them was taken.

At the front door, both families eagerly greeted them. Both Adi and Baba were barefoot, but this time Baba was not wearing His turban and His hair was flowing.

As Baba's brass pot and cloth satchel were being filled, some of the food fell to the ground. Baba knelt down, picked it up and put it into His brass pot, an unheard of gesture for a beggar to do in India.

Witnessing this act, one family member instantly remembered a Hindu scripture that foretold that if one day a beggar comes to your door and picks up some of the food being offered that has fallen on the ground, know that He is the Expected One – the Avatar. A while later, the gentleman shared this ancient prophecy with the rest of the family, and its significance did not escape them.

After the photograph was developed, Dr. Khare sent it to his parents to determine whether one of the beggars was, in fact, Meher Baba.

Gaya Prasad, Dr. Khare's father, confirmed Baba's identity, but even before this proof, Dr. Khare had been sufficiently convinced and had sent for his parents to come from Hamirpur to be on hand to help with cooking for the party.

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Now, although both doctors knew Baba's identity, they did not let on for fear of somehow breaking one of the conditions and thereby losing the opportunity of serving Him.



Baba begging at Dr. Nath's house in Benares with Adi K. Irani, followed by Babadas (behind gate)

The Mystery Cooks

For most of the remainder of Baba's stay at Nati Imli, Dr. Khare's parents took over preparation of the meals for Baba and the companions. In order to provide meals that were hot, Gaya Prasad was allowed the services of a cook and was given a place in the compound to do the cooking, but as soon as the cooking began, Baba sent word, "Are you cooking or spreading smoke here? Do you have any sense?"

In response, Gaya Prasad moved the cooking operation to another location and, during the next week, though he changed places several times, Baba still complained about the smoke.

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Except for Babadas, none of the companions knew Gaya Prasad and his wife. Thinking they were just two elderly cooks working for the Nath family, some companions complained about the cooking and even started ordering the couple around in an effort to please Baba.

Throughout that harassment, Gaya Prasad, the wealthy owner of a transport company, took the responsibility of cooking seriously and the complaints that came with it as a privilege.

Meanwhile, Baba continued to test their love by sending various messages: “All these days you have been supplying plain rice and dal. Why can’t you give us a good curry one day? Why don’t you change the diet?”

Frustrated at being unable to please Baba, Gaya Prasad, after cooking one day, spoke to his wife Janaki about it.

She said, “You have been put to a great deal of trouble to cook. It would be better if Baba calls for meals from here. I will prepare them and send them over on time and to His liking.” He appreciated his wife’s suggestion, but he was resigned to continuing the cooking, determined to do it better without creating so much smoke.



Dr. Khare's parents, Gaya Prasad and Janaki

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The next day, when Gaya Prasad entered Nati Imli, Vishnu approached him, complaining, “Yesterday’s meals were not good. What sort of food do you prepare?”

Gaya Prasad replied, “Yesterday I made a mistake. Today I will cook good food.”

Vishnu then asked, “Why did you create so much smoke?”

Gaya Prasad merely said, “I am sorry. I will try to not make smoke tomorrow.” He then went about his duties, this time thinking that his wife was right. It would be better if she and Mrs. Nath were cooking their wonderful dishes instead of his feeble attempts at being a chef.

That evening, when Baba sent word for him to come, Gaya Prasad was very nervous. He was sure Baba would again scold him about his cooking.

Instead, Baba said, “You may go to Dr. Nath’s house with your wife, and let her and Dr. Nath’s wife prepare the food and send it here.”

Hearing this, Gaya Prasad was thoroughly relieved and more devoted to Baba than ever. The wives were also very pleased. They had wanted all along to serve the party by cooking.

Weeks later, when the companions came to know that their meals were being provided by the parents of Dr. Khare, they were deeply ashamed of their insensitive behavior. However, Gaya Prasad and his wife, despite the insults they received, still felt that being able to serve Baba in some small way was the highest privilege.

From the 26th to the 30th of November, the companions began the begging phase of the New Life. Every morning, the men went out barefoot into the cold. They traveled in pairs, wearing white kafnis and green turbans, with ocher satchels over their shoulders and brass begging bowls in hand. They ventured into the streets to try their luck at private homes, since they were not allowed to go to shops, ashrams or places where alms were distributed to the poor on a regular basis.

The people of Benares were used to sadhus and beggars, but when they saw the peculiar dress of these companions, some

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asked, “What religion do you believe in? What sect do you belong to? Who is your Master?”

The companions took these questions with a grain of salt and did not try to explain, because under the conditions of the New Life, it was difficult to really say why they were begging.

Kaka and Nilu were both stocky, and due to the cold weather, they had put their kafnis on over their coats, making them appear even heavier.

On one occasion, when they went to beg at a Muslim’s house, the owner reprimanded them, saying, “You look like Punjabi athletes! So why are you begging? Why don’t you get jobs and earn your own livelihood? Have a wrestling bout and earn money!”

Dr. Donkin, who was especially tall and robust, was also chastised by a housewife who accused him of being lazy.

In some Hindu localities, when Nilu was refused food, he became very upset. Being a high Brahmin, it was difficult enough for him to beg for food, but to be turned away by a fellow Hindu – whose religion enjoins them to feed anyone who comes to the door because it could be Lord Ram himself – was almost too much for him to take.

When Baba sent Aloba to one of the slums of Benares to beg among its low-caste inhabitants, Aloba looked very distinguished in his white kafni and green turban. Obeying Baba, he knocked on the door of a poorly constructed cottage and a woman in a faded sari appeared. He said to her, “Mother, please give bhiksha.”

Clearly taken aback by his appearance, she asked, “Do you really mean what you say?” Aloba politely assured her that he did indeed mean it.

Taking him at his word, she immediately took Aloba’s bowl inside where she had just prepared the midday meal and generously filled it to the brim. Aloba then returned to Nati Imli where Baba mixed the offering with some of the food at hand and passed it out to all the companions.

Just as the companions were sometimes met with criticism and given opportunities to learn how to overcome anger, they also had many experiences like Aloba’s when they received food from loving hearts.

*Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares***Further Lessons in Obedience**

Baba repeatedly warned the companions to remain faithful to the oaths and conditions of the New Life.

One night, in the men's quarters before going to sleep, Dr. Ghani remarked to the others, "The New Life means this much – to do routine things at odd times, to create difficulties where none exist, and to disturb an otherwise smooth situation. All these things make up what we call the New Life!"

Baba overheard Ghani and asked him what he meant. Ghani replied with a smile, "Look at the unearthly time for our morning tea – at 5 a.m.! We have no religious devotions to perform so early in the morning, like *arti*, *sandhya*, *puja* or *namaz*, and still at 4:30 a.m., we are required to crawl out of bed, shivering and coughing in this God-awful bitter cold, and all that for the cold pleasure of a cup of tea, if available, and a chapati at 5 a.m. Really speaking, it should be called *mourning* tea!"

Everyone had a hearty laugh, even Baba, but on His way to His room, He told Baidul, "Tomorrow morning, the tea should be at a quarter to five, fifteen minutes earlier."

The next morning, referring to Ghani's remarks from the night before, Baba said, "I did not sleep at all the whole night. The spontaneous laughter at Ghani's remarks made me think... whether Dr. Ghani's remarks were to be taken humorously or seriously, considering the laughter they evoked. If Ghani was joking, then I was at fault in not appreciating the humor. If he was serious, and if you thought that the order for the morning tea was unnecessary and meaningless, then it meant not only a criticism, but a flagrant violation of the New Life conditions."

The companions were shocked to hear this, but Baba allowed them a chance to share their feelings about the previous night's incident. They all expressed that it was not easy to understand all of Baba's orders, but none of them regarded any of His orders as unnecessary or meaningless. This declaration immediately eased the situation, and Baba ended the matter by treating it as a joke. He ordered the companions to pinch His ears for doubting their intentions and said, "I am satisfied with the clarification of your mind and feelings. It was worth losing a night's sleep."

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Baba making a firm gesture, meaning, “I am ordering you.”

It was very difficult during the New Life for the companions to forego any kind of early morning traditional devotions, artis, and other set routines and just sit on their bedrolls with no talking permitted as they struggled to wake up. And no matter how tired the companions were, Baba did not allow any yawning in His presence.

Never a day passed without someone receiving a rebuke for some mistake, though they were generally made unconsciously. Baba continually told the companions that their observing strict discipline during the training period would be of great help after the first of the year. From then on, Baba said that literal obedience to orders and a good mood would be the only support that would save them from dark and desolate conditions. He made it clear that He was doing His best to free Himself from old habits, anger being the chief one. If He failed to control His anger, then He had a “master remedy,” which no one else knew.

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Day by day, life for the companions grew increasingly more difficult due to additional restrictions given by Baba. Among them were:

1. Not to discuss spiritual matters in Baba's presence.
2. Not to discuss politics, national or international.
3. Not to read newspapers.
4. Not to speak about immodest things.
5. Not to talk of the Old Life in Baba's presence.

Baba said, "Today the conditions are painful and disgusting, but after January 1st, the New Life will be still tougher. At the same time, it will be interesting and enjoyable. With the passage of time, it will become engaging. In Sufi terminology, the word for it is *rindi* [free of ties]. The happenings and conditions of today are undoubtedly natural and commonplace. But, from January 1st, 1950, besides ordinary happenings, extraordinary things will take place daily. If any of you succeeds in obeying the conditions 100 percent, I will be his servant and he my master."

On November 30th, Padri arrived in Benares by train from Meherabad with the specially constructed caravan, two carts and two bullocks. The caravan had been constructed at Sarosh Motor Works, near the present Trust compound.

Resembling a gypsy wagon, it was a small 6 x 7 foot wooden cabin on automobile tires, with a driver's seat at the front. Its metal exterior was painted bright blue.

Padri was instructed to leave everything at the railway station and return to Ahmednagar, without trying to see Baba or to converse with Eruch and Pendu, who were waiting at the platform. One of the bullocks Padri brought was an English bull named *Raja* (king), which Baba and Mehera had fed from a bottle many years earlier in Meherabad when it was a calf. When it grew up, Raja was used to plow the fields at Lower Meherabad and later in Meherazad. There had been another bullock in



Padri

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Meherabad named *Vizier* (minister) that died just before the New Life, but a second one, an Indian bull, had been purchased and given the same name by Baba, so the “king” and the “minister” were to draw the caravan on the journey north.



Baba and Mehera with the black English bull Raja as a calf

Brief Stay in Sarnath – December 1 to 12

During the New Life, Baba did not want to be recognized by anyone with whom He came in contact, particularly those who provided food and accommodation, so in part because Gaya Prasad and the doctors were aware of His identity, Baba decided to go to Sarnath, six miles north, on December 1st. In order to avoid hurting the feelings of these men and their families, Baba made this move as though it had been planned in advance.

Prior to the foot journey to Sarnath, the group informed Baba that there was no money left to buy essential commodities within the conditions already laid down. Even a bare minimum allowance for food during the month of December could not be afforded. Since it would require between 600 or 700 rupees for this purpose, Baba put the matter before the companions.

After much discussion and still no remedy from anyone else, Baba made the recommendation, “We’d better sell off all our personal belongings, such as our clothes, trunks, et cetera.”

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The companions protested. They did not think the sale would bring in more than 400 rupees, and considering the bitter cold of the approaching winter in the north, the trunks and clothes were necessary.

However, since food provisions were the most essential, Baba said, “The trunks and clothes of the Old Life should be handed over to the doctors who may make use of them in any manner they like, or they might keep them as mementos of our visit in the New Life. They may give us, in exchange, 1000 rupees for buying foodstuffs to last through December.”

All this was to be in addition to the dirty laundry previously promised to Dr. Khare and Dr. Nath.

Baba’s wish was then communicated to both doctors and to Gaya Prasad, who readily accepted the proposal. They paid the amount immediately and in return were given fourteen small trunks of cotton and woolen clothing, which included a coat and sadra of Baba’s. These items were brought to the Naths in a pushcart. Instead of mixing His clothes with those of the companions as He had originally planned, Baba changed His mind and had Eruch carry His clothes in a separate bundle slung over his shoulder, knowing how much the families would appreciate this gesture.

“Here are all the bundles,” Eruch told them. “You can do what you like with them, but see that they are not returned.”

The families were overjoyed to receive the clothing.

Days later, contrary to what Eruch had told them about not returning any of the items, they sent word to Baba that since they owned the trunks and clothes, they could give them to anyone they wished and, therefore, they chose to return them, cleaned and washed, to the companions in bhiksha.

When Baba received this message, He informed them, “I am happy to hear this. Side by side, my clothes, too, you may give in bhiksha!”

The three men had not anticipated this condition and were unwilling to give up Baba’s coat and sadra on any account, so their well-meaning offer backfired and, in the end, they kept all the trunks and clothes.

Baba wanted the companions to go without any help in the New Life and to put their full trust in God. For this reason, He

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created the conditions and circumstances in which they willingly parted with their essential belongings, even in the face of severe winter weather.

With the problem of provisions for food now resolved, Baba said, “When we left Meherabad on October 16th, we were, comparatively speaking, *lightweight*. By disposing of the trunks and Old Life clothes in Benares, we have become *featherweight*; after January 1st, who knows? I don’t promise. We may become *air-weight*!”

Eruch, along with several other men, were later sent to purchase enough food to last until the end of December, as well as fodder for the animals.

On December 1st, Baba and the companions set out on foot to Sarnath. The men walked ahead, while Baba and the women followed several hundred yards behind.

En route, Baba spotted a mast on the road and embraced him, and then invited him to join the group as they made their way north to Sarnath. The mast readily agreed and walked along beside the men.

As they traveled, they passed by several orange groves. Overall, their journey was pleasant and hours later they arrived in Sarnath.

It was in the ancient city of Sarnath around 500 B.C. that Gautama the Buddha gave his first sermon to a circle of his close disciples.

Dr. Nath, through the influence of his brother, had arranged the use of two bungalows there for a stay of twelve days. The Nath and Khare families generously agreed to send meals by car from Benares each day.

Built of stone, the house where Baba and the women stayed was in a large compound with a back entrance that led to the men’s bungalow a few hundred yards away.

When the men needed to communicate with Baba, they rang a hand-bell at this back entrance, and Goher would come out to receive the messages.

The property contained a large, rambling garden with many fruit trees, including an orchard of ripe tangerines, which was looked after by an old gardener and his young assistant.

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The New Life caravan built by Padri that the women companions used at night during the Gypsy Life



The New Life caravan which was driven by the companions, being pulled by the two bullocks, Raja and Vizier

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On the first day, right after the companions arrived, the gardeners were brought to meet Baba, who offered them the extra food that was left over from their previous day in Benares. The assistant, who was from a poor family, was very happy to receive this gift of food, but the old gardener declined the offer.

When Goher managed to talk with the old gardener, she learned that his wife had died, and since then, he lived the life of a sadhu. Therefore, his needs were simple and he ate very little, usually just boiled rice that he cooked himself.

When she told Baba about the old man, Baba said, “This old man is thoroughly content with what little he has. He is one-pointed in his devotion. Though he does not wear the other robes, he is a real sadhu.”

The old gardener, who was extremely thin, slept outside in the garden under the stars on a rickety cot with little bedding, even in the cold season. When he awoke at 4:00 a.m., he began chanting, “Ram-Ram-Sita-Ram.”

In response to the gardener’s chanting each day, Baba woke the women to hear it. Although they were still sleepy, they loved being roused by the Avatar to the singing of the Avatar’s name!

During the day, the gardener faithfully carried out his duty with Ram’s name always on his lips. To the companions, his behavior exemplified someone naturally living the langoti life and they appreciated witnessing it.

Later in the morning, the old man took his bath near the well, pouring bucket after bucket of cold water over himself in the freezing weather, while only wearing something light around his waist and a cotton cloth over his shoulders. Watching him made the women companions, who were very cold in spite of warm clothes, shiver all the more.

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After asking a question, Baba is listening to someone's answer.

A Sainly Gardener is Rewarded

During the stay in Sarnath, the old gardener brought fresh tangerines, radishes, mint and coriander every day. The companions ate the tangerines with gusto at every meal, peel and all. The gardener's offerings were particularly welcome since fresh vegetables had been scarce during their travels.

Baba took a special interest in this old man and nicknamed him Sant Mali, which means saintly gardener.

One day, Baba sent Goher to find out whether the gardener needed anything. She returned shortly with the answer that he required nothing.

Baba sent her again to inquire further and she pressed the gardener, "Do you need clothes or anything else?"

The old gardener replied, "Thakurji gives me clothes."

Goher persisted, "But you must be needing firewood or something?"

"Oh no, even that Thakurji gives me," he replied.

Goher finally concluded that Thakurji was the owner of the bungalow who provided for all of the gardener's needs. When Goher related the story to the women, she indicated that the owner was generous to the gardener.

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Mehera said, “How can his landlord be generous? Look how little the old man has, how little he eats and how he has to sleep out in the open.”

Goher admitted that Mehera was right about his austere lifestyle, and then in the course of the discussion she happened to mention the name Thakurji, which Mehera suddenly remembered was one of the many names given to Lord Krishna in northern India. Everything became instantly clear: the old man was saying that it was Krishna who provided for all his needs.

That night was extremely cold. While the companions shivered under blankets, the gardener slept outside on his cot with only a cotton sheet covering him.

In the morning, Baba said to Goher, “Now you must go and tell the old gardener that a friend wants to give him something, and ask what he needs most.”

Goher related Baba’s message to which the old man replied, “What should I ask for?”

“Ask for something, anything!”

Eventually, the gardener said, “I want a box of matches.”

Goher told Baba, who said, “All right, we must call him. I want to give him a blanket.”

Goher went outside and summoned the gardener to come with her to see Baba. As they approached, Mehera, Mani and Meheru watched from the veranda.

As soon as they reached Baba, Goher held out a folded new blanket as He told the old man that He wished to give him a present. He then asked, “Why only a matchbox? You must ask for something more.”

“But Sahib, I don’t need anything more. Thakurji gives me everything.”

Baba persisted, “I want to give you prasad, a gift from me. Take this blanket.” He also handed him a box of matches.

The old man was deeply touched that Baba had personally given him these gifts. He said, “I am blessed. This is a gift from Bhagwan [God].”

During the whole exchange, the old man gazed at Baba without looking down at his presents even once. The women watching this felt that the deep respect the old man showed to Baba was his unconscious acknowledgment of Baba’s divinity.

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They were also amazed that he wanted so little when Baba had been prepared to give him the world.

The gardener then bowed reverently and left.

Baba and His companions continued to receive their meals from the Nath and Khare families, which usually consisted of rice and dal for lunch, and potatoes and *puris* (small unleavened wheat cakes) for dinner. Any leftover *puris* were saved for breakfast the next morning.

One day during the stay in Sarnath, Aloha was in the midst of washing the cooking utensils and vessels when the wife of the assistant gardener, distressed that a man was doing women's work, approached him, asking, "Why are you doing that work? I will do the cleaning."

Because it was Baba's order at that time not to speak to women, Aloha anxiously held up his hands for her to stop, indicating that he did not want any help. Luckily, she did not persist, but Aloha worried that he had offended her, so he later sought out her husband and explained that he was not allowed to talk with women and that it was his duty from his Elder Brother to clean the vessels and utensils.

Baba Pays Respects to the Buddha

While in Sarnath, Baba took the women companions for a tour of the caves used by Buddha's disciples for meditation, as well as to the main temple nearby. The temple had a very high ceiling, and on the walls were beautifully colored murals painted by a Japanese artist, depicting scenes from the life of Buddha. Baba walked slowly with the women as they viewed the murals, stopping occasionally to explain one of the scenes.

At the end of the temple room was an altar with a large impressive statue of the Buddha, surrounded by masses of flowers. Baba asked the women to bow down before it and not to look back while leaving the room. After they left, Baba stood before the statue for several minutes, and then bowed down. His reverence for this past form of the God-man moved the women. They felt it had a profound significance.

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Mulghand Kuti Vihar, the main Buddhist temple in Sarnath, which contains the Buddha's ashes

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On the bitter cold morning of December 7th, Baba asked Mani to write down all the names of the known Avatars: Zoroaster, Ram, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and Meher Baba. He then put the list in His coat pocket.

A while later, Baba went with the women to one of the ancient structures, now in ruins, associated with the early ministry of Buddha. He led them down a stone staircase and along a passage to an underground cellar, where there were a number of cavern-like rooms. It was here that the disciples of the Buddha had once meditated and where it is said He gave his first sermon to a few of His disciples. The women remained there with Baba for a short while, but He never revealed the significance of the piece of paper with the list of Avatars' names that He kept in His pocket.

A few days later, Baba brought the men to the same ruins, and in a dilapidated hall, He had the men take off their clothes and put a *langoti* (loincloth) around their waist, which was more like a diaper and was symbolic of renunciation, of nakedness before God. Although they realized they were taking part in something very significant, the men could not help shivering uncontrollably from the cold.

Baba then decided to seclude Himself alone in this hall while the men remained outside with instructions to recite silently for fifteen minutes the following prayer that had been written earlier on slips of paper:

God, give me the strength to follow the conditions 100 percent.

God, help me to speak the truth, and not tell a lie under any circumstances.

God, help me to control anger, and to keep away from lustful and greedy desires.

God, help me to be just, fair, honest and kind towards my companions and towards those who come in contact with me.

Peace and stillness pervaded these sacred surroundings where the Buddha once sat with his disciples.

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One of the murals seen by Baba and the women during their visit to the main Buddhist temple in Sarnath



The golden Buddha before which Baba paid His respects

Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares

After fifteen minutes elapsed, Baba came out of the hall and gestured for the companions to put on their clothes and stand in a line. He then stood at one end of the passageway and called the companions one at a time. He looked majestic as He collected the prayer slips and clasped each one's hand.

As they left the underground passage and ascended the stairs, Baba asked Dr. Ghani to say loudly seven times, "*Ho gaya!*" which means, "finished!"

While Ghani shouted out these two words, Baba raised His right hand each time, indicating that in the Buddhist ruins a phase of His work had been fulfilled. Baba then took the men on a walk to some of the historic places of interest in Sarnath. On the way back to the bungalow, He directed that the langoti worn by each of them that morning be distinctly marked and kept separate and not be used again unless instructed by Him. He then led them to the simple hut of the old gardener who greeted them with joined hands.

After they left the gardener's hut, Baba praised him to the companions, saying, "He desires nothing because he is a saint. His only desire is for his Thakurji, and for that his Thakurji has come to visit him today."



Baba gesturing, "That is enough, finished!" during 1950

Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares



*Entrance to a passage leading to the subterranean hall where
Baba sat in seclusion*



Another view of the same entrance showing the surrounding area

*Begging and Langoti – Life in Benares***The Party Leaves Sarnath**

Toward the end of their stay in Sarnath, Baba began preparations for their foot journey to Hardwar, 500 miles to the north.

Meanwhile, Dr. Nath and Dr. Khare had succeeded in purchasing a camel and cart, two cows and two she-donkeys, and had them brought to Sarnath.

With an assortment of carts and a collection of animals tethered in the compound, the property in Sarnath resembled a circus grounds. The only thing missing was a white horse, which Gaya Prasad had volunteered to help Dr. Nath find.

After two horses were found, the first was brought to Sarnath for Baba's inspection. Due to Mehera's great love of horses since childhood, Baba took her to the stable at the back entrance of the property to look at the horse.

Mehera examined it closely, patting its neck and flanks, and then she picked up its foreleg and hindleg.

"Baba, he is a very nice, quiet horse," she said

"All right, we'll see, but tomorrow there will be another horse to inspect and then you can choose between them," He replied.

The next day, the second horse was brought for inspection, but compared to the first horse, which was cream colored, this one was larger and snowy white.

Mehera examined it carefully, and after the horse was taken away by its owner, Mehera said, "Baba, I think the first horse is better. He's smaller in size, so one can control him if he's mischievous. But the second horse is rather big, and the mandali don't know how to handle horses, and it's quite a problem if a horse is spirited like this one... But it's up to you – whichever you like."

Baba replied, "No, the men like the second horse which is snow white and handsome."

"Yes, Baba," she said, "I liked it also, but it's a bit spirited, that's all." Despite Mehera's misgivings, Baba acquiesced to the men's preference, saying, "The English barber [Donkin] can handle him. The horse seemed quiet enough. He allowed you to touch and handle him, so he will be all right." Baba would jokingly refer to doctors as barbers.

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When the horse arrived, Donkin took charge of him and initially managed very well.

A few days later, the white horse was brought again and tied to a tree outside the stable, and Baba told Mehera that she must feed the horse for a day or so before they started for Hardwar. He even gave her the proportion of oats and bran for its feed-bag, which was to be put around the horse's head.

The horse, at first, was quite happy eating it, and when he was finished, he let Mehera remove the feedbag easily. After that, she gave him some water and told Mani that she would put him in the stable early. Mani helped her with that task and the horse seemed content, and they both felt quite at home with the gentle animal, enough to sit down and keep him company.

After a while, Mehera got up and told Mani that more hay and green grass were needed for the horse overnight. Mani went outside and handed the fodder to Mehera in front of the horse. As soon as Mehera put the load down, the horse began to eat again. The second time Mani handed Mehera a load, the horse started to act unfriendly by putting his ears back and baring his teeth. Mehera became very concerned, but since she did not have the strength of a man and the horse was becoming unruly, she decided that they should leave and just let the horse be.

When Baba came to the women's side later, He asked, "How is everything? Is it all right?"

"Yes, Baba," Mehera replied, "he behaved very well at first, but he is not friendly now."

Mani said, "Baba, we won't be safe. He's rather a mischievous horse."

"No, he's nice. He let you touch him this morning." At that, Baba started walking toward the stable, and when he got close to the horse, Mehera quickly stepped in between in case the horse became unruly again and endangered Him. Suddenly, the horse started to turn its back legs as if it intended to kick.

Mehera shouted, "Stop, stop, Baba! Don't go near him! See his ears? We'd better move quickly."

She grabbed Baba's hand and immediately pulled Him away, and they ran out of the stable.

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After that, Mehera suggested that one of the gardeners take care of the horse until Donkin returned, because she suspected the horse did not like women.

During their time in Sarnath, the question of whether an outsider would be permitted to join the New Life came up and some of the companions were in favor of it, while others were not. Responding to this question, Baba said, "The present companions were selected from 1200 yeswalas who agreed to carry out the conditions.... I definitely agreed with Ghani when he said his understanding made him proud of being one of the very few companions selected. But I definitely disagreed with him that inclusion of any outsider who is 100 percent fit for the New Life would lessen the importance of the New Life. The importance is not from us, but from those who keep it alive. If we failed in the conditions, we would put the New Life into disrepute, but if an outsider were to obey the conditions 100 percent, he would uphold the honor of the New Life."

Baba, however, made it clear that those among the companions "who obey the conditions 100 percent have more importance than any outsiders who might also follow the conditions 100 percent. The reason is that you are my pupils of the Old Life, and companions of the New."

As a result of the discussion, Baba decided to allow Kaikobad Dastur, who had been staying at Upper Meherabad, to join the New Life. He sent instructions for Kaikobad to meet the companions in Dehra Dun, near Hardwar. Anyone else who Baba felt was fit to obey the conditions and who received a majority vote of the companions could also join the New Life.

Before departing from Sarnath, it was also decided that a large portion of the luggage be sent to Keki Desai in Delhi by rail at a cost of 300 to 400 rupees. The 1000 rupees realized from the sale of the trunks and clothing had already been spent for other essentials. To meet the additional expense, Baba hit upon a novel idea. He collected the wristwatches of the companions, eleven from the men and one from the women, and asked Eruch to wire Keki to come to Benares with 500 rupees and pick up the watches. Keki was also to be instructed to sell them in order

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to recover his money. Only Donkin, Pendu and Adi were permitted to keep their watches since they frequently had outside work to do.

As the time drew near for leaving Sarnath, Baba allowed Dr. Nath and his family, as well as Dr. Khare and his parents, to see Him one last time from a distance. They deeply appreciated this final meeting and brought all of the companions' personal possessions and laundry, all washed and ironed, but Baba again did not accept it.

As a token of appreciation, Baba said that He would accept a wristwatch from the ones that were to be sold. Dr. Nath quickly picked one out and purchased it for Baba. Baba then gave it to one of the companions.

Baba said that the love and care of these two families was exemplary and that they were the "link" between the Old and New Life. He also said that their spontaneous service was due to a past connection with Him.



*Dr. Goher's watch that was
bought by Keki Desai and saved
for posterity*

On December 8th, Keki Desai arrived with the money and left two days later by train for Dehra Dun with a large portion of the companions' luggage (thirteen packages), including three steel trunks belonging to Baba, which were to be treated with the utmost care. Rather than Delhi as originally planned, Baba said for the luggage was to be taken to Dehra Dun, their final destination.

On the morning of December 12th, 1949, the day of their departure from Sarnath, Baba and the companions were up long before dawn. As usual with Baba, setting out was, as Mani put it, "a mad rush and hurry as ever." The weather was icy cold, and it was pitch black under a sky filled with thousands of stars.

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Breakfast consisted of a piece of leftover bread without butter or tea.

The women carried out all the morning duties and did their packing with the aid of only a small hurricane lantern. It was Mehera and Meheru's responsibility to roll up Baba's bedding, while the men completed the packing and got the carts and animals ready.

Before starting out, Baba reiterated, "We should be truthful in the New Life, and when we lead the *fakiri* (wanderings on foot), we may encounter both esteem and insult, but we should remain unaffected by them."



Mani, Baba and Mehera before the New Life

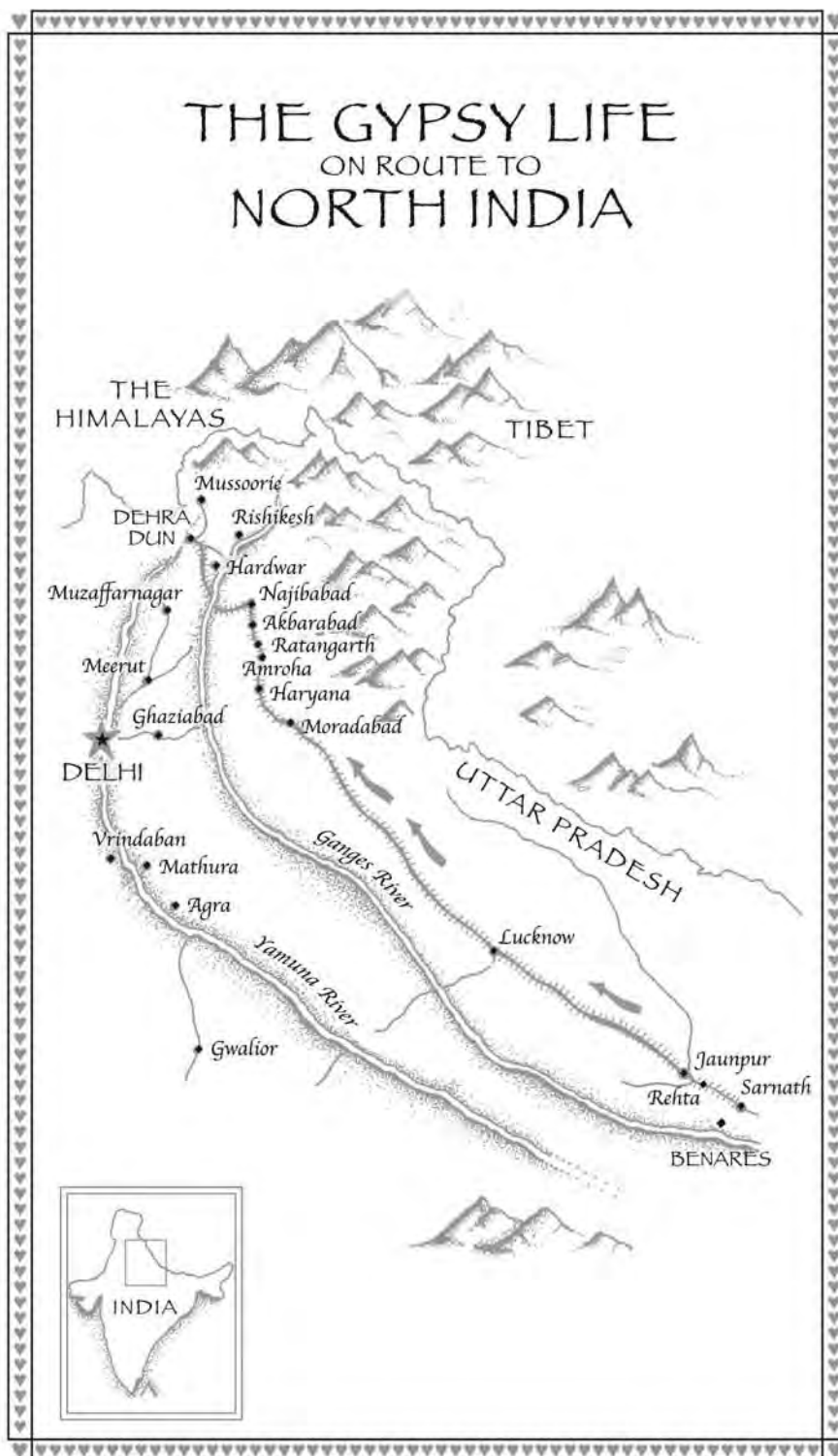


*Baba and Mehera with Mani's dog Cracker before the New Life.
He joined the ashram in 1946 and was so black that once Mani
went to look for him in a dark room and couldn't see that he was
right under her feet, not making a peep.**

*Quoted from Mehera-Mehera



Baba with Mehera



Chapter Six

THE JOURNEY NORTH TO MANJRI MAFI

December 12, 1949 to January 12, 1950

The Gypsy Life Begins

Since most of their clothing had been sold and knowing they would be entering the severe cold of winter, the companions put their firm trust in God as they started the journey north to begin what Baba called “The Gypsy Life,” the life of wandering.

At first, Baba wanted the women to wear the blue kafnis and gray turbans they had sewn themselves. To show how a turban is tied, He wound a length of gray cotton cloth skillfully around Mani’s head as the other women looked on. However, just before leaving, Baba abandoned the idea of kafnis and turbans. Instead, He instructed the women to wear light blue saris, while He and the men wore their white kafnis and green turbans.

By 7:00 a.m. on December 12th, 1949, Baba left with Eruch and the women from Sarnath on foot, instructing the other companions to leave two hours later with the carts and animals, and meet them in Benares at 11:30 a.m. The Baba’s first stop would be in a mango orchard about ten miles away.

Just outside of town, as Eruch and Baba were walking along the road with the women 200 yards behind, a jeep passed them. They gave it no thought. Baba then asked Eruch to find a secluded spot for Him to answer the call of nature. Eruch quickly found a place and waited for Him by the road. The jeep reappeared, and two men stepped out and approached Eruch, asking arrogantly, “Where is that person who was with you?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“We passed you a couple of minutes ago and there were two of you here on the road. Where is the other one?”

“What business do you have asking such questions?”

“It is our business. We are the police.”

“Oh, that’s different. He has gone to the toilet.”

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"We would like to see him," they insisted.

"Well, see Him when He comes back."

By this time, the women had caught up and were waiting under a tree while Eruch was being questioned.

Baba returned and Eruch introduced Him as his Elder Brother.

"He doesn't speak?" the officers asked.

"What do you want to ask? He'll answer you," Eruch said.

"What's your name?"

Eruch interpreted as Baba gestured, "M.S. Irani."

In answer to further questioning, Eruch explained that they were part of a group traveling on pilgrimage to the Kumbha Mela in north India.

The officers did not believe him and said they suspected them of being part of a group of communists, because of their green turbans.

Due to the seriousness of the situation, Eruch asked Baba for permission to tell them that He was Meher Baba. Baba reluctantly consented.

When Baba's name was disclosed, the policemen apologized and asked for His forgiveness.

Before driving off, they promised to allow the rest of the men, who were more than an hour behind, to proceed without any hindrance.

Meanwhile, the men, with their colorful procession of carts and animals, were having troubles of their own. The white horse was so spirited, it could not be used to carry baggage. Instead, it went bare-back, but it was bridled so Donkin, wearing an Arab headdress, could have it lead. Nonetheless, the men arrived in Benares on time. One after another came the camel cart driven by Baidul, the bullock cart driven by Vishnu, a white cow looked after by Sadashiv, and two calves attended by Nilu. These were followed by Pendu, who drove the blue caravan drawn by the bulls, Raja and Vizier. Completing the entourage of animals, Gustadji and Dr. Ghani came with the two donkeys as the remaining companions followed on foot.

The camel, christened *Bhola Ram* (Lord of the Innocent), had a Persian bell made of silver around its neck, which

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announced the start of the journey. Its melodious sound accompanied the party, ringing in cadence with the camel's stride. (This is the very bell that is still rung at Meherabad to signal the end of the pilgrim day.) The ring of the camel bell signified alertness, and the camel was a mark of forbearance.

The white horse symbolized purity and courage in the life of begging. It was also a symbol of the Avatar's advent. The cows were a symbol of selflessness and benefit to others (providing milk), and the donkeys carried the burden of others, leaving them in peace.

Padri, who had brought the caravan some days earlier from Meherabad, was allowed by Baba to witness this remarkable procession, which he observed from a small corner cafe on the roadside. Although he had brought his camera, Baba had not permitted him to take any photographs. Padri said later, "Never have my fingers itched so much to take a picture."

Padri told the men later that the picture of them setting out was forever imprinted in his mind. "You could not have known it, because you were in it, but it was really out of this world, a most wondrous sight that greeted my eyes, as I silently watched that long procession passing by while the dawn was still young."

Because Baba had set out with the women two hours before the procession, Padri had no chance to see Him, but Baba had instructed two of the companions to share with him the events of the first three months of the New Life. Padri was then told to relate those events to the Old Life followers, and this became the first news anyone received about the New Life.

As the cavalcade of animals and carts proceeded, people passing by on the road were intensely curious. They inquired about the caste and sect of the companions and their destination. When told that the party was going on pilgrimage to Hardwar, they were very respectful.

Baba, Eruch and the women waited until the men and the animals finally caught up with them, and then the whole party walked for some miles until Baba halted to talk with the men. Then walking back to the women, He asked, "Are you hungry?"

"Yes, Baba," they replied. Actually, they were famished, having eaten very little breakfast.

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“All right, let us see,” Baba said, looking around. He spotted some huts in the distance with smoke rising above them and gestured to Eruch, “See that hut? Go and ask there for bhiksha.”

Eruch crossed an open field and approached one of a group of mud huts where a woman was cooking and asked if she had any food that she would give in bhiksha.

“Oh yes, I’ve one *bhakri* [a millet cake] ready, and one is on the fire. I’ll quickly make it. I want to give you two bhakri.” The food she was offering was probably just enough for her family’s morning meal, as it was the custom in poor villages to cook what they had on hand and not cook again until evening.

As the bhakri was cooking, she also prepared fresh spinach, which she eventually spread over the bhakri.

When Eruch returned with the piping hot bhakri and spinach, Baba was very touched and pleased. He divided it, giving a piece to each as prasad, while saying, “Isn’t it delicious? Isn’t it delicious?”

For all the companions on this day, that simple rural fare was like a lunch fit for a king.

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The journey continued. The first halt was a mango orchard on the outskirts of Shivapur where Baba and the women arrived first. Baba waited under a mango tree for the rest of the party while the women busied themselves by gathering firewood.

Although it was a large orchard, few twigs could be found until Mani discovered a number of short sticks of uniform size on the ground. She started back with them, thinking they would be of help, when a passing stranger begged her to throw them away. It turned out that the sticks were discarded toothbrushes. They learned later that sticks of wood were commonly used to clean teeth in that area. They all had a good laugh over that.

A while later, the men and the animals were seen in the distance, and as they came closer, Baba and the women marveled at the colorful spectacle. One of the women later described the scene as a “beautiful pageant being enacted before us with all of the men dressed in white robes and dark-green turbans.”

A Taste of the Gypsy Life en Route to Dehra Dun

The party continued that first day until they reached Shivapur, where Baba and the companions stayed in a school compound. Immediately upon arrival, everyone became busy. Pendu, with the help of Baidul, Aloba, Sadashiv and Nilu, began seeing that the animals were fed and given water, and Kaka started preparing the evening meal.

Baba then spoke with the men and discovered what great difficulties they had experienced with the animals, especially with the she-donkeys, who would only walk for a few minutes at a time. To make matters worse, Gustadji, being on silence, was unable to shout at the donkeys to keep them moving, so he and Ghani ended up completely exhausted from having to pull them. Eventually, they had to tie the donkeys to the back of the caravan and drag them along.

As compensation, Baba gave these two older men permission to sit beside Pendu in the caravan the following day, but to make up for this concession, they were ordered to beg in the nearby villages or towns at each stop.

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*A mango orchard, typical of where the companions would rest
at night during the Gypsy Life*

In Sarnath, Baba had said that because Nilu was so fond of milk, he would have to look after the milch cow and its young calf. However, the calf had been unable to keep up with its mother and began to stagger and fall to the ground after a short distance, so Nilu was forced to carry it on his shoulders for the last five miles. For this reason, he had fallen far behind the rest of the companions. Even though Nilu was quite strong, when

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he arrived at the outskirts of Shivapur after carrying the calf, he was physically exhausted.

Sadashiv was also greatly inconvenienced by the cow in his charge and arrived in Shivapur at the same time as Nilu. To make matters worse, as the two of them were entering the town, they were stopped by the collector at the *octroi* (tax station) and asked to pay an animal tax. The collector was convinced they were going into town to sell them. Although the fee was nominal, eight annas (five cents), Nilu and Sadashiv, in accordance with the New Life conditions, had absolutely no money on them. They were also extremely tired and annoyed, but controlling themselves, they tried to convince the tax collector they were not planning to sell the animals. They explained they were taking them on pilgrimage to north India, but their efforts fell on deaf ears and it looked grim for them until they had a lucky break. A passing stranger came to their rescue and paid the taxes so the bedraggled pair could finally leave with their charges and join the others.

After the evening meal, the companions prepared for sleep. Eruch arranged Baba's things and set up His two-flap tent that had once belonged to Norina and Elizabeth. The tent was so small that, once inside, Baba had to sleep diagonally, and Eruch had to zip the flap from the outside. Although the tent allowed Baba some privacy, it provided little shelter from the cold. There was a place for ventilation at the top. Fortunately, Padri had equipped the caravan with two horizontal rods that could be swung out and connected to a vertical pole in the ground to form a small triangular enclosure. Eruch attached a tarpaulin roof and sides to this structure, which gave Baba some added protection from the cold. Earlier that day, the women made a warm sleeping bag for Him, which also helped.

That evening, Baba's watchman was Anna 104, who stayed nearby throughout the night.

The men slept outside in blankets they had sewn together to make into improvised sleeping bags, but due to the severe cold, they had little sleep.

That same night, the women crowded into the caravan with its small six by seven foot interior. Mehera, Mani and Meheru

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slept on narrow benches along three sides of the interior, while Goher spread her bedding on the only available floor space. Due to the cold, they drew the curtains and closed the windows, leaving just a tiny crack to let in fresh air.



School in Shivapur where Baba and the companions spent the night

The caravan, when it was not used as the women's bedroom, provided storage for Baba's and the women's belongings and the household utensils.

In pitch dark, at 3:30 a.m., December 13th, Baba knocked at the door of the women's caravan. Mani and Mehera stayed in their warm blankets while Goher quickly rolled up her bedding, and she and Meheru, wearing their warmest clothes, which they had slept in, opened the door to greet Baba. He climbed into the caravan and asked how they all had slept. They told Him they had managed despite the cold. He urged them to dress warmly in the future. From then on, rather than wearing saris that were difficult to walk in, they wore sweaters and slacks.

The women then stepped outside to wash themselves and to prepare hot water for Baba's wash and shave. To accomplish this task, they set a vessel of water on three large stones, and with wood gathered the previous day, they built a fire and huddled around it for warmth while waiting for the water to heat.

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The men were in the distance, feeding and tending the animals by the light of a few kerosene lanterns. Pendu, Baidul, Sadashiv, Aloha and Nilu were in charge of the animals and of getting the carts ready for each day's trek. They had to pack the companions' belongings, cooking pots, utensils, hurricane lanterns, and fodder and grain for the animals.

As the carts were being packed, Kaka, with the help of Murli Kale, cooked breakfast and prepared tea.

Baba ate with the women and Mehera poured His tea. When they were finished eating, the women struggled to pack with their fingers stiff from the cold.

Later, Baba checked in with the men to see if everything was ready. He did not want to buy anything along the way except grass for the animals.

At 8:00 a.m., the whole cavalcade slowly moved out of Shivapur. This time, Baba put the women in charge of the donkeys. They also carried the drinking water and a large brass vessel that Baba intended to use for collecting food gathered from begging along the way.

A number of times that day (as well as in days to come), Baba gave bhiksha to some of the passersby along the way. During this period, Baba was not in the serious mood He had been in just before the New Life. As Mehera later described, "He was natural, happy and energetic, the embodiment of cheerfulness," and as they traveled further north, He continued to be light-spirited.

After a cold morning, the heat of the day set in, and the women took off some of their layers of clothes and piled them on the backs of the donkeys. On one occasion, some village women, seeing the loaded donkeys, thought that the women were cloth merchants and asked if the clothes were for sale. They had to be persuaded that this was not the case.

The donkeys, which the women named Sakoo and Thakoo, continued to slow down after five or six miles as they had under Gustadji's and Dr. Ghani's charge. To induce them to keep moving, Mehera and Mani fed them often, and if they lagged behind anyway, Baba stopped the procession and waited for them to catch up. Eventually, Mehera and Mani found that the donkeys

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did not like to be led like horses, but needed to be prodded from behind to keep them moving.

After walking nine miles, the party reached Babatpur around noon, where they stopped in a grove of shade trees.

Ghani, who had ridden in the caravan, was sent with Babadas into the town to beg. Although the companions brought with them sufficient food to last for the remainder of the month, they were still required to go out begging.

When Ghani and Babadas returned with food they had received in bhiksha, Kaka cooked it for the main meal of the day. Murli, the youngest of the companions, was so tired from all the walking that he peeled and cut the onions for supper while lying down. Although Kaka was annoyed with him, under the conditions of the New Life, he could not criticize him.

That evening, Baba instructed Adi and Babadas to go by bus to the town of Jaunpur the following morning. He said, "If in Jaunpur a proper place is available, we will stay for four or five days. A plan will be worked out within the 'four walls' of the oath and conditions to provide good food, because we have learned that good mood depends on good food."

The next morning, after Adi and Babadas left, everyone else departed on foot at 7:30 a.m.

Baba spotted smoke on the horizon coming from a village, and sent Eruch to beg for food while He and the others continued walking. Eruch ran to the village and went from door to door until he had sufficient food for the whole party. He then raced to catch up with Baba and the others, who had continued walking further along the road. When Eruch finally reached them, Baba stopped and sat on a milestone where He divided the food, giving "two morsels" to each of the companions, who found that these morsels, because they were given from Baba's own hand, were as filling as a whole meal.

As the party proceeded north, similar scenes took place.

In begging, Eruch had taken a hint from one of Baba's own Masters, Upasni Maharaj, who used to approach the back doors of simple huts, because that is where women were, and they were more soft-hearted than men and more likely to give food.

Sometimes, the village women gave Eruch two or three loaves of coarse bread and asked him to wait while they

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prepared fresh vegetables, little knowing how fortunate they were to be able to serve Baba in this way.

In one village, Eruch went to the door of an old woman's hut to beg for food. She immediately began going through all the boxes in her hut, but she was so poor she had nothing to offer.

"Wait, wait, my son! I will give you something," she insisted. She then stepped out of her hut and made the rounds of her neighbors. When she had begged a sufficient quantity of food, she came back and offered freshly cooked bread with vegetables and chutney to Eruch. He was very touched by the tenacity and generous spirit of this wonderful woman.



A village scene in Babatpur

Life in those rural villages was little changed since ancient times. Farming was carried out with the aid of oxen and water buffalo, and there was no electricity or running water. Kerosene lanterns were the source of light at night, and water had to be carried by hand into the homes from local wells. The homes were usually made of mud with roofs of thatched straw. Between the huts ran narrow dirt lanes where small children

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often played. Yet the poor people in these villages showed unfailing generosity to Baba and the companions.

As they proceeded north, they passed through forests and green fields of wheat and sugarcane, often brightened by broad expanses of yellow mustard flowers. Rarely did they see a bus or a car pass by.

Not far from Rehata, the camel cart, which carried hay and fodder for the animals, broke down near a small village.

While Baidul was busy repairing it, a crowd of excited children gathered around the camel, and very soon their noisy playfulness panicked the camel and caused him to break away from the cart.



The environs near Rehata

Baidul ran after it, shouting, while the children raced behind him, but he was unable to catch up with the terrified animal who was running at a mad pace, its bell clanging wildly. Then the townspeople, as soon as they found out what the excitement was about, joined in the pursuit. Donkin finally managed to catch up with the camel, and he used his experience to restrain it and bring it back.

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At around 2:00 p.m., Baba and the companions reached Rehata, also known as Jalalgant, which was twelve miles from Shivapur. They stopped in another grove of mango trees where Baba suggested they rest for the remainder of the day.

Kaka began to prepare the main meal from food obtained from begging, while another crowd of curious people gathered, but respecting the companions' need for privacy, they finally left. It turned out that some of the village women had come especially to pay respect to the women companions.

Usually, meals on the journey were meager. Breakfast consisted of a hot cup of tea, one or two chapatis and anything received from begging the previous day. The cow provided milk for the tea. However, sometimes, due to tending to the animals in the early morning and hitching them to the carts, some of the men did not have time to enjoy their coveted cup of hot tea.



A scene in the village of Rehata

The main meal was also simple. In addition to the plain rice and dal that Baidul cooked, it consisted of whatever ingredients were received in bhiksha all mixed together into one dish.

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At almost every halt, because of the unusual appearance of the procession and the loud clanging of the camel bell, the companions drew attention from the villagers.

Even when they camped a long distance from any village, somehow news spread, and as many as 40 people gathered around asking questions. Their endless curiosity centered on the unusual collection of animals. Most of these villagers had never seen camels before.

The women usually allowed the village men to inspect the caravan for a few minutes. Since the bullocks had been taken away, the men taxed their brains trying to figure out how it was propelled. After a few minutes, Dr. Goher would say, "Namaste, now you must go. Our men companions are over there. All the men must go to the men. The women can stay."

The village women then gathered around Mehera, Mani, Goher and Meheru, who were tired from the day's journey and much preferred to unpack and just rest. Instead, the New Life dictated that they patiently respond to any questions directed toward them.

"To what religion, caste or sect do you belong? What guru do you believe in? Where are you going?" Some of the villagers thought that the companions might be refugees traveling to Pakistan, because this was still the aftermath of the India-Pakistan partition.

When told that the companions were on a pilgrimage to Hardwar, a place sacred to Hindus, the villagers were deeply respectful. On one occasion, the villagers were so moved that they ran to their homes, gathered their clothes and returned with the intention of joining the companions on their pilgrimage. It was difficult to talk them out of it.

When Kaka prepared and sent over tea for the women, they had to drink it while the villagers stood and watched. This lack of privacy extended to every action, even when they had to attend to nature's calls, because Baba did not want the villagers' feelings hurt in any way.

Each day, as the companions trudged along, mile after mile, passing by towns and villages, as well as through open countryside, people on the road would first be attracted to the cavalcade. However, when they saw Baba, they would stop and gaze

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at Him as He passed by and then follow Him with their eyes until He was out of sight.

On the morning of December 15th, the companions were up at 3:00 a.m. to begin the last leg of their foot journey to Jaunpur. After breakfast, they left Rehata and when they had traveled four exhausting miles, they rested in a grove of trees where they were entertained by a group of school children who had gathered around Baba to show Him a special drill of physical exercises they had learned.

Amused and rested, the companions left in the early afternoon. Hours later, they stopped on the roadside under a few shade trees by a gently flowing river. Here, the white horse was startled and again became unruly, but Donkin eventually managed to restrain him so the cavalcade could continue.

At 4:00 p.m., they reached the outskirts of Jaunpur, a dusty, bustling city known for its mosques, located 40 miles northwest of Benares.



The city of Jaunpur along the Gomti River

Adi and Babadas, who had been sent ahead, were nowhere to be seen. Baba complained, "This should not have happened.

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It has upset my mood.” He then asked the women to get into the caravan. He climbed in also in order not be seen as the party entered the city.

While the women were with Baba in the caravan, Eruch took charge of the donkeys and walked behind them with two sticks poised in the air. Every now and then, Baba pointed out the window toward Eruch, saying to the women, “See how well he is keeping up.”



Shahi Bridge crossing Gomti River at Jaunpur

Only One Left on Strike

Baba and the companions proceeded into Jaunpur as the sun was just setting. This time, the unusual collection of animals and carts were thought to be part of a circus troupe by the townspeople. Small children came running out from their houses and joined the procession.

Adding to the excitement, the schools had just been let out, so groups of students followed along as well, asking where the companions were heading. When they were told that the cavalcade was on a pilgrimage, the students jeered and made fun of them, saying, “What type of people take donkeys on pilgrimage? They’re just a troupe of actors and actresses going out for some shooting!”

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The companions ignored the students and kept moving. Finally, Babadas appeared. He breathlessly explained that he and Adi had undergone much difficulty in arranging for a place to stay. He proceeded to lead the way to the place of lodging, but due to a wrong turn, the whole group had to retrace their steps, which meant an additional several miles of walking.

By now, it was dark and the street lights were being lit when, at last, they arrived at the run-down garden estate, Kai Bagh, where they were to stay for the next five days. It was two miles outside the city with an extensive garden and a bungalow with a porch, as well as a few dilapidated buildings.

The party, including the animals and carts, made its way through the gates and into a courtyard situated among some empty stables. It was so cold they could see their breath.

The journey from Sarnath had been very tiring and tempers were flaring, not only from exhaustion, but also from the unequal distribution of duties, which meant that some of the companions had to work hard while others got off much easier. Nonetheless, the men proceeded to spread themselves out in the *maidan* (open grounds) to rest.

Since the bungalow had not been properly swept or cleaned, Baba told the women to sleep in the caravan. Eruch tied Baba's tent to the side of the caravan to form an awning under which He slept.

Everyone, including the women, went to bed without food and spent the night shivering in the bitter cold.

Early the next morning, when Baba arrived in the area where the men were staying, He sent Eruch to gather the men while He remained at a distance. When Eruch arrived, he found that Gustadji was unable to get up because his body was so stiff from the terrible cold and that Dr. Ghani, too, was having difficulty.

One of the companions complained to Eruch, "Well, you have a fine time with the head of the group. All you do is just follow Him.... Do you know what work we have to do?"

Eruch kept quiet, because Baba was waiting and there was no time to respond.

Still, one by one, the companions lodged their grievances with him. Dr. Nilu, because he had suffered greatly carrying the calf on his shoulders mile after mile, vented his irritation, "You

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and Baba and the women have a good time, and here we are, left behind with this zoo. You have no idea of our hardships!”

Sadashiv, too, aired his complaints, “Do you know what has to be done when you get tea in the morning? For that, I have to get up early in the morning and milk the cow. It takes time, sir. How do you think you get milk?”

Dr. Ghani chimed in, “What do you think, Eruch? Being a sportsman, do you think it’s fair for our Companion to allow these old people to be dragged about like this? He says that He is our Companion, and if He is, shouldn’t He make allowances for old people? Shouldn’t we walk shorter distances? Should He not allow us to sit in carts and tongas? This camel cart is going about empty, and the caravan is absolutely unused except to give the women a nice salon to rest in at night. And there’s a tonga there that carries nothing but cooking utensils. So, a camel cart, another cart, a tonga, and all these just going to waste. Can’t He allow us to sit in these carts and tongas? It would be so easy then for us all.”

Several other men grumbled about the bother of drawing water from the wells in the pitch dark for the whole party, as well as for all of the animals. And then there was the problem of searching for fodder every evening.

Suddenly, Donkin broke in, “Do you know how to handle this horse? He’s not a horse, he’s a devil!”

After hearing all these complaints, Eruch suddenly stopped everyone and said, “All right, now let’s go to Baba. It’s time, so keep a cheerful face and let’s go.”

When they finally gathered around Baba, His presence cheered them up and they forgot their grievances.

Baba told them that they would stay a few days in Jaunpur, which would be a break from the strenuous foot journey. Afterward, He went over to where the women were staying.

When Baba was with the women, Dr. Ghani, aware of the mixed sentiments among the men, started lecturing them, “We find all sorts of political parties giving lectures in *maidan*. Why can’t our group express our feelings? Baba says He is no longer the God-man for us, no more the Master; He is just a companion and cannot a companion express his difficulties to his fellow companions? Why not?”

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The others said, "Of course, why can't we do that? If the New Life means a life of companionship, why can't we express our difficulties?"

Eruch added that this seemed entirely acceptable within the New Life conditions as long as none of them "put on a long face" in Baba's presence.

Ghani continued, "Without breaking an order, I know one way out, to go on strike. The next morning, when our Boss comes, we will go on strike.... From tomorrow, none of us should do any work. We must sit in protest. If we have to die, why not die here? What's the use of going further? No one will survive this cold."

Many of the other companions agreed, so the next day, the men chose not to approach Baba, even if He clapped for them. They were fed up with the New Life, but when they asked Eruch to join them, he declined, because he had no internal conflict with the life they were leading.

As a consequence, they immediately accused him of being a hypocrite. Eruch did not take it personally. He knew that these outbursts were meant "in good faith," without ill will, a way to vent pent-up feelings.

When Baba came to the men's area, He sat at a distance in the shade of a tree. His expression gave no hint that He knew anything was brewing. Instead, He was in a lighthearted mood as He asked Eruch to call the companions over for a meeting.

Eruch went to the men and said, "Look here, Baba wants you all to come, because there is going to be a very important conference."

The men said nothing and remained aloof from Eruch, who persisted, "This is not good.... This is not the proper thing for us to do. Dr. Ghani can afford to do this because he is not only a companion of Baba's, but a schoolmate as well, and you know what latitude Baba gives him. But not to others."



Dr. Ghani

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It was evident from the men's expressions that they were conflicted. When Eruch went back to Baba, He asked, "What's the matter? Aren't they coming?"

Eruch assured Him that they were on their way.

"Why are they standing there? Haven't you given them the order?"

Eruch again said, "Yes."

Baba waited patiently. Soon, one by one, the companions came, all but Dr. Ghani, who remained true to his principles.

Baba sent Eruch to ask Ghani, "What is in your mind? If you have the daring, you should come and face the situation and open out your heart to your companion."

Ironically, Ghani had said the same thing the night before to persuade the companions to go on strike. He answered, "What! I haven't got the daring? Of course, I have the daring to come and speak these things to My companion."

In that moment, Ghani decided to return with Eruch, and when he was before Baba, Baba asked, "What's the matter?"

Ghani pointed to the other men and said, "All these companions of ours are nothing but hypocrites, Baba."

"Why do you unilaterally describe them as hypocrites? What have they done?"

"What have they done? They promised me that they would not approach You today, and they promised to abide by our decision that we would..."

Baba cut him short, "But who are you to be promised anything by anybody?"

Ghani now became emotional. He went on a tirade and began to expound on some of the grievances: the men felt too much time was spent feeding the animals while the companions had to subsist on a meager diet, and also there was too much physical strain on the older men from having to walk such long distances when there was room in the carts to allow them necessary rest. He held nothing back as he explained that the companions had even considered going on strike to show Baba how difficult the experience of the New Life had become.

As Ghani exploded, Baba was calm, and when Ghani finally ran out of steam, Baba took the opportunity to respond, "Do

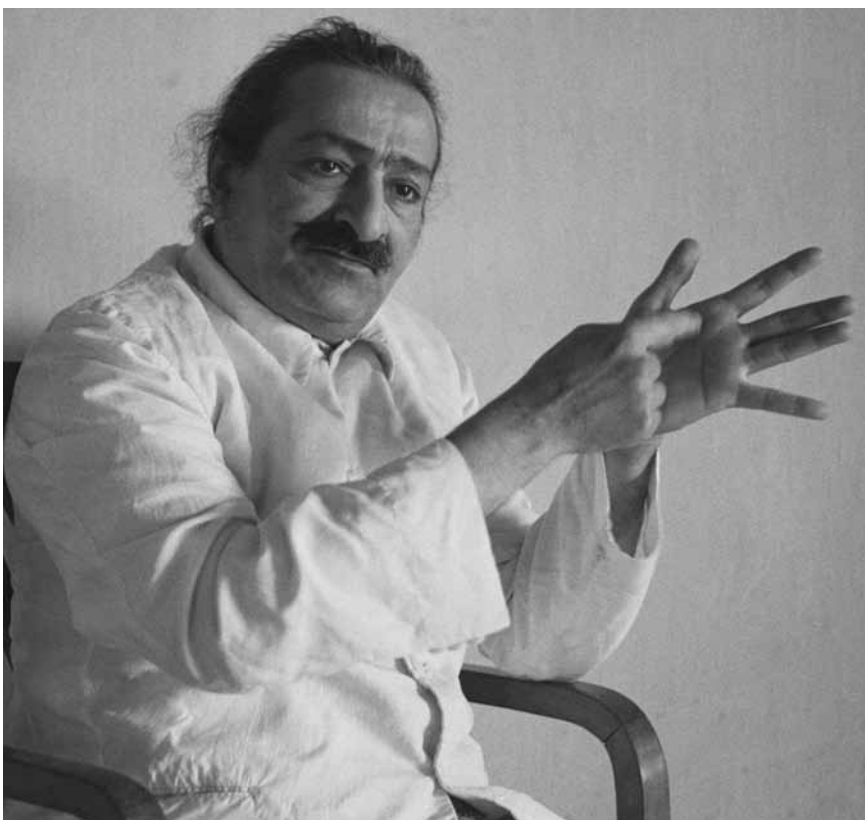
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you know that I am not only your companion, but I am also your schoolmate? Do you remember how we used to wrestle together? Would you want to wrestle now and settle the issue?"

At the thought of them wrestling again, Ghani burst out laughing, and the whole conflict was cleared up in an instant, and as a result of this crisis, Baba set out to remedy a number of the grievances.

Responding to the complaint about a meager diet during their brief stay in Jaunpur, He had meals sent to them from a restaurant, which were more substantial and gave the companions a break from cooking.

Baba also allowed the older men to rest in the carts when they were traveling. From that day on, no one harbored any ill feelings or grudges of any kind.



Baba spelling out a word on the palm of His hand

*The Journey North to Manjri Mafi***A Financial Dilemma Solved**

Later that day, Baba unexpectedly announced: "Let the camel, camel cart, two cows and calf be sold." This was, He explained, in part for humanitarian reasons. So much traveling was hard on them, but they also caused the companions grief when they had to continually prod them along. This was particularly true with the cow and her calf, because the cow would not move without her calf and the calf could not walk long distances, so at first it was carried and then it was put on top of the caravan for its mother to see as she walked along. All in all, the eccentricities of the animals slowed the journey for everyone.

Within a short time, the animals were sold off at half price, although Baba decided to keep the bullocks and cart, the caravan, and the two donkeys, which to the companions' great surprise, turned out to be no trouble as long as they had a load to carry. The white horse was also kept, since it had been given in bhiksha. Baba told Eruch, Pendu and Donkin to make inquiries at the railway station to see if the animals could be transported by rail. During those years, due to the chaos in India after partition, it was almost impossible to send goods this way. Train schedules were very disorganized, and any private request for sending goods was usually overridden by the government. Therefore, when the companions approached the stationmaster in Jaunpur with a request for several freight cars to Dehra Dun, it was a shot in the dark.

The stationmaster asked, "For what purpose do you want freight cars? Do you want a whole wagon, or do you just have some freight you want to be sent by a goods train?"

"No, we would like some wagons."

"Wagons? For what purpose?"

"We have some tongas to be hauled and some bullocks and carts, two donkeys and a horse...." The whole list was given.

The stationmaster inquired of his clerks if this were possible, but no one seemed eager to help.

To make their case stronger, they pleaded, "We are on a pilgrimage, and these things must accompany us. We cannot go further on foot with the animals, so we would like to haul them by train, and we need your help."

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Their plea still did not elicit a promise from the stationmaster, but he did tell them to come back the next morning, which they did, and they were amazed to see three wagons placed at their disposal. Such instances of unexpected help were common throughout the New Life.

On the morning of the 17th, Baba called the companions, and said:

Listen to me carefully – considering the circumstances we have faced up to now, I am going to finalize a plan, which once adopted must not be changed or compromised until the endless end.... I went through the conditions-circular this morning with Eruch and Ghani. I must inform you of one point before finally deciding upon the plan.... You all know that I have kept with Meherjee 1000 rupees for each one of you, in case I send you away without any fault on your part. Also, there is an extra amount of 10,000 rupees, out of which 100 rupees can be given for traveling purposes, if any of you is sent away without fault. Anyone going away with fault is neither to get the 1000 rupees, nor the 100 rupees for traveling expenses.

The nowallas and those who were not asked to say “yes” or “no” have been given certain amounts with a view to relieve myself to some extent from the promises given to them by me. Naturally, therefore, if I send any of you back, I must do something for you. I have done my utmost by keeping aside 1000 rupees for each of you as a contingency. It was the best I could do under the circumstances.

It means that each one of you now owns 1000 rupees in the event of being sent back without fault. Now to finalize this plan and to keep the conditions and my oath intact 100 percent and also make us all to face this New Life of helplessness boldly and strongly, we need better food to keep our mood. If we are to pass through the jaws of a lion, then we should do it with courage and cheer, and not like sheep, bleating and terrified.

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Now, I want to know who among you will pay me his 1000 rupees willingly, which already belongs to you. As you are still “faultlesswalas” to me, I can, without jeopardizing the conditions and my oath, accept the money belonging to the companions for the fulfillment of this plan. Only this money that belongs to the companions can be used for the furtherance of the New Life. It means that if I send back any one of you without fault, then you will consider yourself to have received the amount of 1000 rupees that I wanted to give you, as similar amounts have been given more or less to the nowalas and others. The 100 rupees is there for traveling expenses for one going away without fault. All this will mean that the one, after giving away 1000 rupees for the New Life of the companions, should not in the least feel let down for having been left to face the worldly life without a cent in his pocket.

Now I ask you to decide and abide by one of the following three categories:

First: One who wishes to contribute 1000 rupees towards the New Life.

Second: One who thinks he cannot contribute.

Third: One who wants to safeguard this amount can go away today without fault.

One who chooses the second category should not feel the least diminution of status among the companions. There will be no discrimination of treatment. Even if one decides to give away the amount, I may send him away without fault for reasons of health, accidents and mishaps. I am planning that the New Life should not prove a torture to you, but the suffering therein should be and will be enjoyable.

This plan, if realized, will make me truly happy. I see that you are laboring and exerting your utmost to keep up your mood, which is the first essential of the New Life. I appreciate this. Yet, these hardships are nothing

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compared to what I see in the very picture of the New Life after January 1st, 1950. I am still not feeling myself free, although I am 100 percent free. I also feel that lack of food (if there was a shortage of money) would make us faint-hearted. The period of help which ends on December 31st, 1949, has allowed changes so far without affecting the conditions and my oath. After January 1st, I shall be perfectly free.

After Baba conveyed this message, He asked the companions to choose one of the three categories, and without exception, they all wholeheartedly chose to give their 1000 rupees to Baba to use in the New Life.

In doing this, they became completely penniless. Their unanimous agreement made Baba extremely happy. He then told them to first wash their hands and feet and to approach Him one by one. With a mug of water, He washed His own hands, and then He poured a little water onto the hands of each companion, signifying the acceptance of the agreement.

Baba then had them stand before Him, while Ghani recited the following prayer:

In the presence of God and having God as our witness, we have offered 1000 rupees, which amount was our property, for the use of the companions in the New Life willingly and wholeheartedly, and may God make our New Life a success.

After the prayer, Baba initiated a discussion concerning a plan for the rest of their stay in Jaunpur and the subsequent journey north, which would be within the restrictions of the New Life conditions. He spelled out on the alphabet board:

Now that we have money, we can buy food along the way as well as beg. The uncooked grains received in bhiksha may be carried over for use after January 1st. For myself, I wish to be completely free to think over and arrange the problem of the New Life after January 1st,

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including singing, begging, langoti, etc. For this reason, I would be happy if you people would take up and manage the food question and the manner of travel – either on foot, by rail or in any way you like.

I assure you that I will not interfere in your management. I shall give only general instructions; the details you have to see to for yourselves. I allow you full freedom to make food arrangements in the way you deem best. This amount of 15,000 rupees will, I think, keep us going for about six months at least. I feel I should not be bothered to see to this part of the New Life, although the promised period of help is still there up to December 31st.

This proposal for the arrangement of food came as a complete surprise to the companions. No one felt equal to the task of managing the food situation in a way that would please all the companions' different temperaments, or assure their cooperation. Moreover, most felt that Baba had something up His sleeve, so the proposal was all the more intriguing.

Baba continued, "Believe me when I say I am very serious in making this proposal. I shall feel relieved as if a load had been taken off my shoulders. I shall be very happy if you take the management in your own hands. So manage things as you like, even in the matter of the time for meals, the time for the journey and whether on foot or by rail. I leave everything to you. Why do you now hesitate?"

When He questioned Adi, Eruch, Donkin, Pendu and Sadashiv, they all refused the responsibility. They thought that Baba should continue the management Himself. Also, they knew that, in some situations, Baba was prone to stir things up and make everything more difficult.

Looking at Ghani, Baba asked, "Why do you hesitate? You and Adi have chronic difficulties regarding food! This is your chance. Why don't you take it?"

"If I have the cooperation of all, I am willing and ready to take the management in my hands."

This reaction caused Eruch to reconsider. He said that if it would make Baba happy, he would cooperate fully, but he did not wish to be the manager.

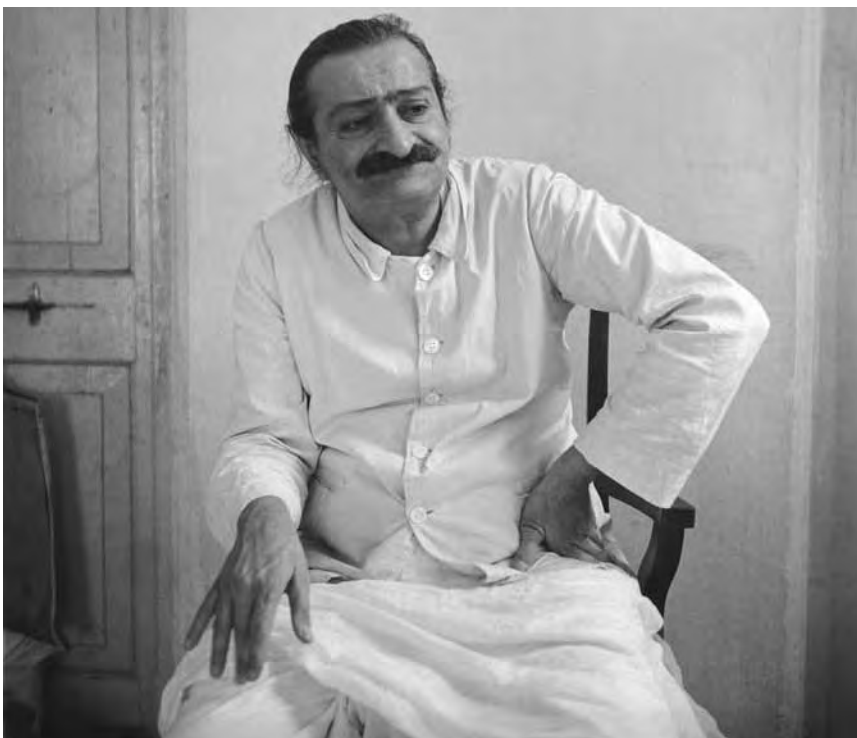
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Since no one was inclined to take on that responsibility, several of the companions said that if Dr. Ghani became the manager, they would cooperate with him. A vote was taken. Baba counted nine for and seven against the proposal. Baba cast His vote in Ghani's favor, but He was displeased that the vote was not unanimous.

Donkin suggested a plan of management by a committee consisting of Pendu, Eruch, Ghani, Vishnu and Adi, but again there was not a unanimous agreement.

Baba ended the matter by maintaining the *status quo*, stating, "You people failed to appreciate the fact that I wanted to be free to attend to the other details of the New Life. You did not believe me when I told you to take up the management of food in your hands and that I would be pleased with whatever arrangement was arrived at. My conscience is clear. Now in the New Life, your grumbling, dissatisfaction and complaints have no place."

In not agreeing to manage the food situation among themselves, the companions were now obliged to willingly accept whatever Baba put before them.



*The Journey North to Manjri Mafi***The Begging Phase**

On the morning of December 18th, Baba put the finishing touches to the conditions for begging and presented them to the companions:

Conditions for the Begging Phase

1. We have to beg for food only from individuals and for the party of twenty members, and not for anything else.
2. In begging for food, we have to accept anything and everything offered – solid, liquid, cooked, raw, vegetarian and non-vegetarian.
3. We should not ask for a particular or special kind of food.
4. In begging for food, we can persuade, request, and if necessary, impress by spiritual and moral talks.
5. We should, however, declare emphatically that we are not perfect spiritually, nor have we any spiritual experience, but that what we say about spiritual and moral things is what we understand to be right.
6. We should not speak of Baba as Master, Sadguru or the Avatar nor of us as His disciples, but only refer to Baba and ourselves as companions.
7. We should not lie or do anything that goes against the conditions.
8. If required, we may talk to women and girls, but only while begging or buying.
9. We cannot steal or kill animals to satisfy our hunger.
10. Without pre-arrangement, we may take advantage of friends, acquaintances and relations whom we happen to meet on our route and even by suggestions according to Baba's instructions, if and when such occasions arise.
11. If offered without asking, we can accept ready-made and unstitched clothes of all kinds, cotton and woolen.

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12. When offered, we cannot accept money, shoes, hats, pens, utensils, toilet accessories, watches, jewels, belts, glasses, dentures and medicines.
13. Food and clothing and any of the above-mentioned acceptable things, when received, should first be brought to Baba.
14. You as the takers and they as the donors must definitely understand it as bhiksha.
15. Fodder, ropes, iron shoes for bullocks and everything else relating to animals and carts may be requested and accepted as bhiksha.
16. We cannot accept any animals if offered.
17. Fuel in any form may be asked for and accepted as bhiksha.
18. Without restrictions as before, begging now can be done at shops, private houses, ashrams and *sadavarts* (charitable organizations that provide food to pilgrims).
19. Tobacco in any form can be accepted if offered without asking.
20. We can beg for living accommodation and conveyance.

After the last condition was read out, Baba instructed Adi to go by train to Delhi, where he was to contact Harjiwan Lal, a close follower, to help in securing accommodations for the party when it arrived in Moradabad, a city 90 miles northeast of Delhi and 350 miles north of Jaunpur.

While in Jaunpur, some people, hearing of Baba's presence, came to Kai Bagh to see Him and were surprised when Baba said, "I am pleased to have your darshan."

In the cold of early morning during the Jaunpur stay, Baba sat under His small tent with the companions seated on the ground around Him with only a single hurricane lantern. In this half-light, Baba's fingers raced across the alphabet board, and in those moments, the companions felt that the Lord of the Universe, who had become a seeker, was revealing a new model of spiritual life to them, which would eventually help the whole world to realize the Truth.

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The morning of December 19th found Baba in a very pleasant, carefree mood as He gave the following discourse comparing the Old with the New Life:

We have left the Old Life behind us, and now there is no going back. It is practically dead. I have heard it said that when a person dies, his spirit retains connection with the world for three to four days. And before the spirit enters the new sphere, there is just a fraction of a moment which might be said to be a sort of vacuum between the old and new life after death. Similarly, our Old Life has been dead since October 16th, 1949. From that date up to December 21st, our New Life has had a kind of connection with the Old Life.

Now, just see how things adjust themselves automatically. A short while ago in Belgaum, I told you that before plunging completely into the New Life from January 1st, 1950, there would be a period of “vacuum” for ten days between the Old Life and the New Life. Only this morning I remembered it, and you, too, forgot to remind me of it.

I have therefore decided that during the “vacuum” period, from December 22nd to the 31st, there will be a complete suspension of the training period as follows:

1. There will be no begging.
2. No wearing of the kafni.
3. No physical labor of any sort; if necessary, hired labor to be engaged.
4. Complete relaxation with good food to be purchased from the money with us.

A break from the training period was welcomed enthusiastically. Everyone needed a respite from the hardships and internal struggles that they had experienced.

Baba then suddenly remembered Adi and spelled out, “Adi is in Delhi, unaware of the ‘vacuum’ period, and he may be telling things about us that people might not find us practicing.”

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To rectify the situation, Baba sent him a telegram:

“Adi care stationmaster, Moradabad. During the vacuum period from 22nd to 31st December, no begging, no kafni, but buying food with our money, and starting New Life in earnest from 1st January. Inform Harjiwan, Keki and others concerned. We arrive 22nd early morning three o’clock Dun Express – Baba.”

On December 20th, the day before leaving Jaunpur, Baba, Eruch, Pendu and Baidul contacted an advanced mast several miles outside the city.

Later on in the day, Mehera shampooed Baba’s hair. As the other women watched her brushing His hair out, for a brief moment, nostalgia for the Old Life swept over them.

Since the caravan had been sent ahead to Moradabad by train, the four women spent their last night in Jaunpur squeezed inside a small tent designed for one or two people. Unlike the insulated caravan, the tent offered little protection from the cold, and the women got a taste of the freezing conditions that plagued the men at night.



*The Journey North to Manjri Mafi***An Unexpected Windfall in Moradabad
December 22 to January 3, 1950**

Mahatma Gandhi's assassination almost two years earlier was still creating great unrest throughout India, producing an ever-present fear of riots between Hindus and Muslims. Moradabad was a hotbed of those kinds of hostilities.

Because they were Muslims, Baba decided to give Ali Akbar the name "Aloba" and Dr. Ghani the name "Ghanoba" – both Hindu names. This was a practical move, because non-Hindus, Muslims or lower castes were forbidden to come near the wells of most Hindus. According to their orthodox view, the wells would then be considered defiled, which would sometimes cause communal riots.

At 1:00 p.m. on December 21st, Baba, with the women and most of the men, left Jaunpur for Moradabad by the Dun Express. Baba had decided to travel by train since Mani was suffering from menstrual cramps and was unable to walk.

Pendu, Donkin and Sadashiv were to follow by freight train with the animals and carts.

Meanwhile, Adi was still in Moradabad, where he and Keki Desai were searching for suitable accommodations.

Although they had tried their utmost, the pair had had no success and were about to wire Baba with the bad news, when Harjiwan Lal, who had joined them from Delhi, happened to go into a local barber shop to get a shave.

Since barber shops were a good source of information, Harjiwan inquired, "What sort of place is your town? There are no accommodations for pilgrims to stay here. Some twenty to twenty-five of our people are walking to Hardwar. They are tired and wish to rest awhile, but in spite of Moradabad's being well-known, there are no arrangements for pilgrims."

The barber replied, proudly, "Our Moradabad is progressive in every respect. Arrangements for pilgrims are first made here. You can see that in Ram Leela Maidan [a public garden] there are very good arrangements."

Harjiwan eagerly took down the details of the place and pressed a few extra rupee notes into the barber's hand.

"So much, sir?" the barber asked.

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“To me, it is too little,” Harjiwan assured him. “You have not only removed my beard, but a great headache as well.”

Obtaining directions, Harjiwan, Keki Desai and Adi went immediately by horse tonga to Ram Leela Maidan, which was near the railway station, quite a distance from the town itself. On the large grounds was a *dharamshala*, a guesthouse, which they felt would be suitable for the whole party. They contacted the proper authorities for permission, which was promptly granted, and proceeded to clean the place and make it ready.

After a thirteen hour train ride, Baba and the companions arrived at the railway station in the middle of the night. It was bitter cold when Adi met them.

Honoring Baba’s wish not to be contacted in the New Life, Keki Desai remained in town.

In the dark, traveling by an open tonga, Baba and the women began a seemingly “endless” ride to Ram Leela Maidan, arriving there around 3:00 a.m.

Mani was still unwell and when the women entered the *dharamshala*, they discovered that, besides having no lights, there were no chairs, beds or bedding to make Mani comfortable. To make matters worse, since their luggage had not yet arrived, they had no extra clothes to give her to keep warm.

Mani sat huddled on the floor, shivering, as the women quickly shut all the doors, twelve in all, to keep out the cold, but even after all of them were closed, the doors still let in a cold draft. Moreover, because the room had been recently washed, there were still puddles of water on the floor, which the men now quickly mopped up.

Finally, the luggage arrived from the station and the women wrapped Mani in warm bedding.

The men slept shivering in their *kafnis* outside in the open. Their fingernails even turned blue. Since there was no money to buy fuel for a fire to warm them, the companions worried that old Gustadji would not be able to move in the morning, in spite of being awake.

Conditions like these caused the companions to seriously wonder how they would survive the severe cold.

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Money would be available only when Padri arrived with the 15,000 rupees. Kaka kept a reserve fund to be used only for daily fodder for the animals and for emergency repairs.

After a night of little sleep, the men helped Gustadji to stand up. As they had feared, his body was numb and stiff from the cold. The men then began unpacking and arranging things for the stay.

The women gathered a few large stones for making a fire to heat water for Baba. In the midst of this activity, a pompous Brahmin gentleman approached the women and demanded, "Who are you? Why are you all here?"



A photograph taken in 2002 of Ram Leela Maidan at Moradabad, where Baba and the companions stayed for nine days. In 1949, this was an undeveloped area of open fields.

The women replied, "We have permission to be here."

"No, you can't stay here. You will all have to get out!" The man then proceeded to tell them that the dharmshala was for Hindu pilgrims, who came there once a year for a religious fair.

Mehera told Goher to quickly go to Baba and ask Him to send one of the men who could show the gentleman their pass that had been signed by the authorities.

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After being shown the pass, the gentleman confessed that he had suspected the companions of being squatters, but seeing their pass, he was satisfied and left.

Later that morning, the companions saw a boy walking toward their camp. As he came closer, they recognized Harjiwan Lal's son from Delhi, whose name was Indersain. The men immediately questioned why he had come. The boy replied that he was carrying out his father's instructions to bring cartloads of food and clothing from his father to Baba and the companions.

Baba, who had been nearby and overheard the conversation, came, and before the companions could fill Baba in, He immediately asked the boy why he had broken His order and approached the party. Even though it had been Babadas who had insisted that the Indersain come, the boy said nothing in his own defense. Instead, he was apparently so affected by Baba's light reproach that he fell into a faint and hit his head on the ground, causing the men to fear that he had fractured his skull. They immediately tried to revive him.

When the boy finally did regain consciousness, it turned out that he was not injured in any way. (Later, Indersain said that when he looked at Baba, he saw the light of a thousand suns. Overwhelmed, he fainted, and it was several months before he recovered from the shock of so stupendous a sight!)

Indersain then told his story. His father had followed the party's journey from Benares to their arrival in Moradabad and upon hearing that the companions had little suitable clothing for the approaching cold weather and that they had to beg for their food, he sent a large quantity of essential items with his son to Ram Leela Maidan.

Unknown to the companions, Harjiwan, Kisan Singh and Was Deo Kain, who were helping with arrangements for the party in this area of India, had talked with Adi when he was in Delhi. They had become deeply concerned about the health of the companions after Adi told them about the conditions under which they were traveling. As a consequence, they contacted Baba about sending food and clothing and were grateful when He had agreed, as long as everything was given in bhiksha and that it arrived before the first of the year. Baba had told Harjiwan that everything was to be sent with only his typist, Anand Gopal.

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Instead, he also came with Indersain, and now the typist waited with the cartloads of goods.

With such short notice, there was no time for Harjiwan to contact Kisan Singh or Kain, so he purchased the food items and clothing himself, and along with his typist, he sent his son.

It was for this reason that Baba had reprimanded his son, but the clothing and food supplies, worth about 2000 rupees, were received as a godsend. For protection from the cold, Harjiwan had sent an ample supply of woolen clothes, blankets, gloves, socks, sweaters, jerseys, mufflers and a type of woolen hat called a "monkey cap," which in India was worn tightly on the head, making the wearer resemble a monkey. Among the food supplies sent in two trunks were dried fruits, grains, almonds, sweetmeats and tea.

All of these things, given in bhiksha, raised the spirits of the companions and allayed most of their fears about surviving in severe cold. Baba said that He was happy to receive all these generous gifts, but to the companions, who knew Him well, He appeared quite indifferent. Nevertheless, He sent Anand Gopal and Indersain back to Harjiwan in Delhi with a note that He accepted the gifts with love, but that he should not make any further attempt to contact the party on their journey.

Afterward, Baba distributed the clothes among the companions, allowing Mehera first choice, and He remarked how fortunate they were to receive such generous help at this critical time, but He again reminded the companions, "After January 1st, not a single *pie* (cent) will be spent for food and clothing."

Eruch later said, "This is how we were saved in Moradabad by a windfall from someone inspired to send the necessary things to us just at the right moment."

With nice, new warm things, the women were happy as they settled in and arranged their belongings in the dharamshala. Baba's tent was put up outside at one end of the wide veranda with an open terrace. The men stayed separately in a house nearby. The location of the dharamshala was not ideal. Although Ram Leela was located in broad fields of mustard in an area where there were no other houses, dirt roads leading into the city ran close to the building on two sides, and people passed by throughout the day, allowing the companions little privacy.

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In the afternoon, Baba liked to take a rest in His tent, so He told the the women to be very quiet.

However, one afternoon while He was resting, a tall, plump, fair-skinned sadhu in ocher robe and shaved head came to the door where the women were staying and in a loud voice demanded, "Give me bhiksha."

Goher immediately came to the door.

"Bhiksha! Flour!" he bellowed.

Because the food supplies were with the men, Goher said, "Please forgive me, but we don't have anything. And please speak quietly, someone is resting!"

"What? No flour?" he said, in an even louder tone.

"Please inquire from the men," she implored.

"Men? Why would the men have flour?"

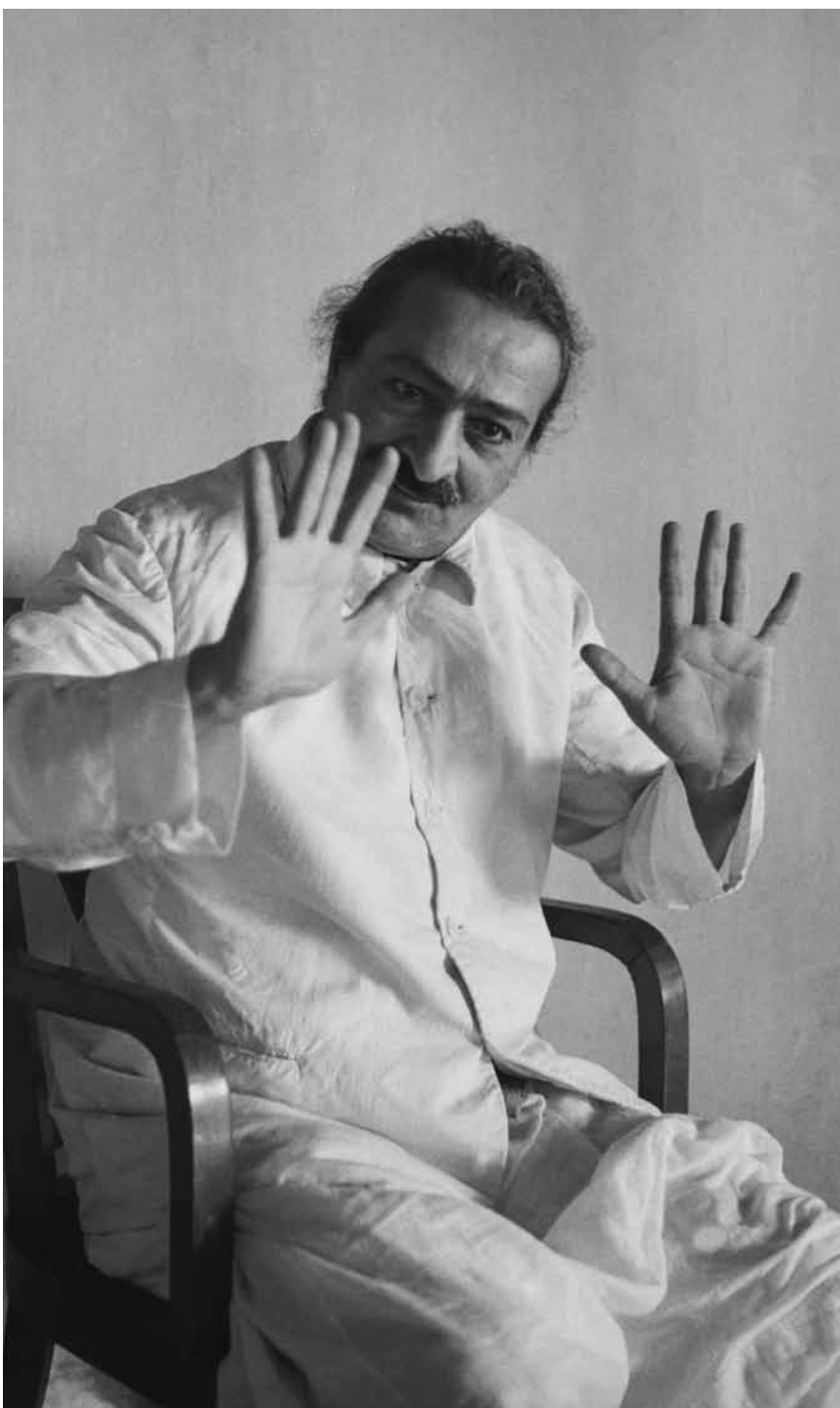
"Shhhh!" Goher insisted, concerned that Baba would surely be disturbed by the loud talking. Finally, after much cajoling, she got him to go to the men's quarters, where he was more likely to get the flour he so urgently requested. Meanwhile, the other women inside were laughing as Goher struggled to deal with this situation.

Later that day, Baba went to the men's quarters to meet with the sadhu, and when he saw the women that evening, He told them that the loud sadhu had been a genuine seeker.

A few evenings later, Mani, inspired by the incident, dressed up as a male beggar and approached the women's quarters from the road. When Goher came to the door, she was completely taken in by Mani's excellent disguise and her accent, and she tried vehemently to discourage the "beggar" from approaching. However, this beggar was not so easily put off – he just came closer and closer.

Concerned for the safety of Mehera and Meheru, Goher anxiously told them to go indoors, but since they were in on the joke, they insisted on staying outside to watch Goher fend off the beggar who persisted in calling out for bhiksha in a louder and louder tone. Only when it looked as though Goher would come to blows with "him" did Mani remove the disguise. Goher was completely taken aback as everyone, including herself, enjoyed Mani's convincing performance with a hearty laugh.

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*The Journey North to Manjri Mafi***A Vacuum Period of Rest
December 22 to 31**

On December 22nd, Baba said, "It's Mehera's birthday, so we'll take a week off from our tours and hazards and hardships."

That day, Padri arrived from Meherabad with the 15,000 rupees received from Meherjee. Baba set aside some of it for purchasing separate tents for the companions and for building huts on the Hardwar property, and then He called Keki Desai from town. When Keki arrived, Baba showed him His own tent and asked if he would purchase twelve additional tents for the companions when he returned to Delhi. Baba also set aside a certain amount of money for renting a temporary bungalow in Dehra Dun if the huts being constructed there were not ready by the time the companions arrived. From the remaining amount, He set 1000 rupees aside to pay for pilgrim taxes, ferry charges and bridge tolls. Any balance was to be spent on animal fodder.

Baba extended the rest period from one week to ten days, which was to be the "vacuum period" He spoke about earlier. He then arranged to have vegetarian meals brought in from a hotel in the city, a considerable distance away. To transport the food, two tongas and another horse, costing 1500 rupees altogether, were purchased. They would also be needed for the next stage of the journey.

The men tried to hitch the white horse to one of the tongas, but it kicked itself free. It had gotten too used to going bareback and not carrying any load, so a Muslim horse trainer was hired to teach him to draw the tonga.

Mani described the trainer as a "tiny little fellow, so ordinary looking that if you saw him in a bus or passed him on the road, you wouldn't give him a second glance, yet he was a master of horses!"

Baba told him, "That horse has got to be harnessed to a tonga."

The horse trainer tried all manner of tricks as Mehera and Mani watched his methods from the veranda of the guest house in the mornings.

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At one point, the trainer told them, “You wouldn’t believe it, but I tell you this horse has once been harnessed to a tonga, and he knows all the tricks, but he’s such a clever fellow that he’s trying to pretend he doesn’t know what I mean.” The trainer eventually proved his point by leading the horse around in a circle, and when it was preoccupied with this routine, he suddenly called out a command that tonga drivers give their horses, and for a brief moment, he tricked the horse into responding, thereby revealing his past history. However, the horse was stubborn, and it took the trainer another five days of relentless work to finally succeed in getting the horse to draw the tonga with a few of the men in it.

Without any physical work to do, or the exertion of having to walk or go out begging, the companions spent their time fighting off the cold, so the rest period was not very restful.

On December 25th, Christmas and Mehera’s 42nd birthday were celebrated over a delicious meal. With Baba’s permission, Keki brought a special birthday cake from Delhi, and Baba allowed the women to place a beautiful garland of flowers around Him.

One day, Dr. Ghani, being a Muslim who relished meat dishes, complained in his usual humorous way of the tiresome “grassitarian” diet. He asked, “In this vacuum period, why can’t we enjoy non-vegetarian dishes?”

Baba answered, “Today I permit you to visit any good hotel you like. You can satisfy your palate to your heart’s content, with as many dishes of any non-vegetarian food as you want.” Ghani was overjoyed.

Baba asked Dr. Nilu to accompany Ghani and to eat the same dishes that Ghani ordered for himself. This was a difficult instruction, since Nilu, a high Brahmin, had been a strict vegetarian his entire life!

The pair went into town, located an expensive hotel, and Ghani took his time perusing the menu before ordering a lavish assortment of dishes. Likewise, when they were served, he savored each one. Only Ghani had the audacity to take such liberties in the New Life. Meanwhile, poor Nilu forced himself to eat the meat dishes, which he greatly disliked. Only out of obedience to Baba did Nilu manage to get through this repast.

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When the meal was finished, Ghani called for a cigar and smoked it leisurely as the crowning touch to a wonderful meal. He then paid the bill, leaving a very generous tip, which made quite an impression on the manager and the waiters.

The next day, Ghani, who was still delighted from his evening of extravagance, was called by Baba and asked how he had enjoyed the dinner in town.

With gusto, Ghani described every dish, and he made a special point of embellishing how much he enjoyed smoking a cigar at the end of the meal.



Greatly entertained, Baba got into the spirit of Ghani's descriptions of mutton, chops, chicken, fish, and finally, the cigar. He gestured, "Fine!" after each item of the feast, and when Ghani was finished, He gave His approval again and then added, "I am happy you obeyed me. Today, here is another order from me for you. Put on your kafni and visit the same hotel and beg for food!"

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Ghani, with his characteristic good humor, went back into town. When he came to the hotel, the manager and waiters were shocked to find their distinguished customer of the previous evening at their door with a begging bowl. Nonetheless, they gave him food.

This was how Ghani carried out Baba's seemingly humiliating order, and as a bonus, he managed to entertain the other companions, who enjoyed the unfailing dynamic of humor between Ghani and Baba, even in the most difficult times. It made life more bearable for everyone.

Although Baidul and Aloba had not complained about the vegetarian diet, Baba also allowed them to go out to a hotel for a meal of meat and fish, but they escaped the embarrassment of having to return and beg at the same establishment.

Hearing that a group of pilgrims was staying at Ram Leela, an older couple in Moradabad appeared at the edge of the grounds. Baba told the women, "Look at them!"

"Who are they?" they asked.

Baba said, "Just wait." He sent Eruch to the couple, who gave him huge aluminum kettles full of sugarcane juice.

When Eruch returned, Baba immediately took the kettles and poured out juice for each of the companions while the elderly couple stood in the distance, grateful that their sugarcane juice had been accepted. When everyone had been served, Baba sent the empty kettles back to the couple, who left immediately.

Before leaving Moradabad, Baba told the women that He would show them the city. At 10:00 a.m., it was sunny, crisp and breezy as they walked along the dirt road leading into Moradabad, with Baba and Baidul in front and the women behind. The foothills of the Himalayas were visible in the distance, and as Baba was unknown in this area, He was able to walk freely through the beautiful residential areas, the lovely gardens and the business section with its many small shops. At one point, Baba told the women to go on ahead while He contacted a mast who sat in the corner of an old bungalow.

Hours passed, and because it was getting late, Baba suggested they ride back to Ram Leela in cycle rickshaws, three-wheeled cycles with double seats and canopies.

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With Baba and Mehera in one rickshaw, Mani and Meheru in a second one and Baidul and Goher in another, they pulled out onto the road, and Baba's rickshaw immediately took the lead, which caused the other drivers to challenge His driver to a race. Off they went down the road, the three drivers pedaling frantically, but again, Baba won the race as He had when He initiated a race in Benares.



Baba in a cycle rickshaw with Baidul standing beside him

The "vacuum" period was coming to a close. On December 31st, Baba gathered the companions together and asked them to wash their hands and feet, and after He washed His own hands, Ghani read out the following prayer:

Today is the last day of the two and a half months' period of promised help.

I ask the Most Merciful God for forgiveness for myself and my companions for any conscious or unconscious mistakes, large or small, committed by me or my companions toward each other or toward the spirit of the conditions of the New Life and the oath pertaining thereto during these two and a half months.

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I forgive my companions wholeheartedly for any misbehavior toward me and ask my companions to wholeheartedly pardon me for any ill-treatment I might have given them.

I ask the All-powerful God to give us strength to live the New Life 100 percent according to the conditions and the oaths of the New Life which begins from tomorrow, the 1st of January, 1950.

At the conclusion of the prayer, Baba said,

After full consideration, and keeping well in sight the conditions of the New Life and our oaths, I have decided that without promising anything, I will try to overlook unconscious mistakes, large or small. But I will never condone any small or large mistakes consciously committed.

I will not forgive any mistake that goes radically against the spirit of the conditions, and under no circumstances will there be any compromise. I will be brother and friend in every respect except in absolute obedience to my orders. We, who stick to the conditions 100 percent, sink or swim together.

Author's commentary: Up to January 1st, the training that the companions had received from Baba was devoted to the first two aspects of the New Life – helplessness and hopelessness. From the first of the year onward would begin the internal work of integrating these two aspects into the very tenor of life with full trust in God.

The training in inner renunciation was now to have its practical application. Through the medium of the companions, Baba demonstrated to the world how the New Life is meant to be led. The meaning of the New Life is the renunciation of all longings and all desires, toward which all efforts should be directed. It is a life where continuous effort is made to honor truth, love and faith, the very breath of life, and to gain freedom from lust, greed, anger, selfishness, envy and hypocrisy. This is the life of helplessness and hopelessness.

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Helplessness means to become impervious to the above-mentioned undesirable traits. For instance, it is natural to become angry when abused, but in following Baba's conditions, we have to become so "helplessly" dedicated to showing love that anger cannot prevail in us. The life of helplessness is really a life of strength, because in true helplessness, we become so completely insensitive to all of our undesirable traits that there is no place for them in us. When there is no place for these traits, we become strong – incomparably strong. Ordinary helplessness, in contrast, which occurs when what we want and desire is frustrated in some way, is a form of weakness.

The life of hopelessness requires us to remain free from all hopes and desires. Hopes and desires are extremely limiting because they enmesh us even more in the morass of Illusion, and where there is hope, there is also disillusionment. One who is devoid of all hopes and desires has no master. The life of hopelessness is truly a pure life, wherein one's only desire is to embrace life without bondage.

To gain this life of inner hopelessness, there must be the desire to be one with God, and this desire must be so strong that all other desires are dissolved in it! To live the life of helplessness and hopelessness is not possible without love for God, because love for God uproots all undesirable traits, as well as all hopes. In reality, the New Life is the life of the seeker totally dependent on God's Wish, in which Illusion is recognized as Illusion, and the seeker makes every effort to achieve union with God. The New Life is truly endless and shall remain endless, because to embrace Truth is the goal of everyone. The aim of the New Life is to experience Illusion as Illusion, which is fulfilled when the state of complete helplessness and hopelessness is achieved so naturally that there is not even the thought of its achievement!

Inner renunciation is acquired naturally by living the New Life, in which attachment to God and detachment from the world are grounded in love for God. The New Life is the life of freedom from illusory bondage, where unfailing effort is made to be united with God – and through this determined life there is the possibility of arriving at the threshold of Truth.

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It was with the aim of achieving this inner renunciation naturally through practical experience that Baba had the companions embark upon the next stage of the New Life.

Departure from Moradabad**January 1, 1950**

Early on New Year's morning, Baba's face beamed as He greeted the companions and spelled out, "May your New Life be happy!" He then distributed a slice of Christmas cake to each one, first to Mehera and then to the other companions. In this simple manner, He inaugurated the next phase of the New Life.

After everyone had their cake, Baba asked that prayers from the Zoroastrian, Hindu, Christian and Muslim religions be recited. As they traveled north, He said that these same prayers would be recited every morning.

The Ram Leela grounds then stirred into the intense activity of breaking up camp, packing and loading carts and completing any other preparations for the journey to Dehra Dun. Most of their money had been spent in Moradabad, so this next leg of the journey had to be undertaken with very few rupees.

The elderly couple who had brought the kettles of sugarcane juice several days before approached one of the companions and expressed the wish to see the head of the party. Although they had never seen Baba and did not know anything about Him, they were profoundly drawn to Him.

Their request was conveyed to Baba and He surprised everyone when He said, "All right, they can see me once." The couple was then brought to Baba, who saw them briefly.

It was a bright sunny afternoon when the cavalcade set out. It consisted of the caravan drawn by bullocks, the two donkeys, a bullock cart, two horse-drawn tongas, and Baba and the companions wearing their white robes and green turbans.

The elderly couple stood at a distance and gazed at Baba until He and the companions disappeared from sight.

The first stop was to be the village of Amrai, four miles away, where Adi had been sent ahead in a horse-drawn rickshaw to find accommodations for the night.

Because of the poor road conditions, the cavalcade made slow progress and did not arrive in Amrai until evening.

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Although Adi had arranged their stay in a garden, its entrance was too narrow for the caravan and carts to pass through so they halted along the side of the road. It was too late to find another place, and by now everyone was extremely cold.

Kaka, with the help of Murli Kale, cooked the evening meal. Several other men fed and watered the animals. Baba's tent was set up and minor repairs were made to the vehicles.

The women slept in the loft of a vacant house in the village, while the men spread themselves out under a tree. Again, the unusual appearance of the party attracted a crowd of villagers, who entertained the companions with songs. It was difficult to get them to disperse.

During the night, there was a brief, sudden downpour. The rain leaked through a hole in Baba's tent and His bedding was soaked. The men, who were sleeping out in the open, were also drenched. Picking up their soggy bedding in the dark, they ran and crawled under the bullock carts and tongas for shelter. While carrying his bedding, Aloba stumbled over a cord tethering one of the animals and fell. Annoyed, he began complaining. Overhearing, Sadashiv scolded him, "What's the use of grumbling? Why did you say 'yes' to joining the New Life? Now learn to bear it patiently!"

It was a miserable night for Baba and the companions. No one slept. Instead, they shivered all night. This was another taste of the gypsy life, always on the move and at the mercy of the elements. At 8:00 a.m., they gladly left the garden at Amrai.

The Journey North Continues

During their journeys in the New Life, Baba sent Baidul and sometimes Kaka ahead of the party to have the meals ready when the companions arrived. They found resting places for the party and prepared rice and dal for the main meal.

This time, Baidul drove the tonga drawn by the white horse, while Kaka stayed in the back seat with the cooking supplies. However, the white horse was a problem again and refused to move if there was any weight in the tonga.

This meant that Baidul had to start off in the tonga without a load and then Kaka had to run after it, load on the provisions

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little by little and then jump into the moving carriage himself. Though it was an amusing sight, this effort was a great strain on Kaka's heart.

Meanwhile, Mani and Meheru were again put in charge of the donkeys. As they walked, the women gathered firewood from along the roadside and then loaded it onto the backs of the donkeys to keep them docile.



A scene from the village of Haryana

After walking about five miles, the party stopped to rest under a few trees. Eruch was sent to beg for food. When he returned with bread cakes, Baba distributed them.

They started out again and walked another five miles, this time stopping in a mango grove near the village of Haryana. Here again, they begged for food before settling down for the night. It was so cold that no one relished the idea of bathing. Only when they halted at a place for more than a day did they work up the nerve to take the plunge.

On January 3rd, the whole cavalcade started out at 8:00 a.m. The women were at the rear of the procession, a short distance behind the caravan. Because Mani's knee had been giving her trouble, she was limping along.

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Very soon, a man in a bullock cart drove by them on the road and asked Mani, "Mother, where are you going?"

"We are going to Hardwar," she replied.

"Sit in my cart," the man offered, "I will take you for a long distance."

Mani answered, with a little pride, "Oh no, thank you very much, but we cannot accept the lift. You see, we're on a walking pilgrimage to Hardwar, so we can't take a bullock cart or anything. We have to go on foot." The driver bowed reverently to the women. They returned his gesture and watched the man move on ahead in his bullock cart for a while, and then they saw him make a stop.



Mani

After about two minutes, the women heard Baba's clap, instructing them to get into the caravan. This was a surprise, as the caravan had only been used for sleeping.

Glad to have this chance to get off their feet, Meheru and Mani sat inside on the bench, drew aside the curtains and looked out at the surrounding countryside. They were thoroughly enjoying the ride, when their caravan passed a bullock cart. Looking out the window, Meheru and Mani saw the driver they had seen earlier. He had a hurt look on his face.

They felt terribly ashamed and withdrew their heads from the window. Then, just as Mani and Meheru concluded that Baba had created this situation to work on their pride, word came from Him to get out of the caravan and continue walking.

All along the way, Baba suffered from blisters on His feet, yet He continued to walk at a brisk pace. To keep in touch with everyone, He moved back and forth between the men and women, sometimes a distance of 100 yards or more. Due to this extra movement, Baba walked considerably more than the rest of the companions.

After covering a distance of around nine miles, the cavalcade reached Chaniya *Bagh* (garden) in Amroha, where Baba sent several of the companions in tongas to beg for food in the town. He then sat under a nearby tree with the rest of the men.

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi*On the road near Haryana*

While waiting, Baba dictated a whimsical rhyme to Donkin, which translated into English is: “Kaka’s headache is Gustadji, who is always near the fire. Kaka feeds his children every day, though we know he is minus a wife. You will find our Dr. Munsiff (Ghani) under blankets and gunny sacks. Vishnu and Nilu are loading and unloading the carts. Murli is peeling onions with a knife. Pendu and Sadashiv drive the bullock carts. Baidul and Adi are tongawalas. Anna 104 always raises some dispute. Donkin generally looks after the animals. Babadas keeps moaning and groaning. Aloba cleans pots and pans and brings in the water. Eruch is the life of the cavalcade.” Baba did not elaborate on His meaning.

A while later, the companions began setting up camp for the night. During this time, Kaka, Pendu and Baidul, three of the strongest men, were not allowed to lift any weight. They were having back trouble, so at each halt the other companions had to do the packing and unpacking.

After an hour, a large amount of food received from begging was brought from town. In addition, Eruch had approached the

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owner of a sugarcane crusher and returned a little later carrying a heavy earthen pot of sugarcane juice on his head.

Seeing beggars in tongas outside their door apparently did not discourage the townspeople from making generous offerings. Dr. Ghani, who had an especially engaging way, always managed to get bhiksha. Listening to him, people felt inspired and sometimes asked to join the party. Ghani would then have to tactfully dissuade them.

After dinner, the companions spent the night under some trees by the roadside.



The center of town in Amroha

On January 4th, at 8:00 a.m., they left Amroha and walked for nearly fifteen miles, arriving in Ratangarh at tea time. They took shelter in a mango orchard that Adi, who had gone ahead of the party, had selected. He made sure there was an available well nearby.

Usually, Eruch did most of the begging, but this time Adi and Baba went out with begging bowls and satchels to get food in bhiksha. When they returned with the offerings, Baba distributed the food among the companions. That evening, Baba decided the party should rest for an extra day in Ratangarh, which was greeted as a welcome change.

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The next day, to their dismay, the companions found that they were the center of attention of the people from the village. Group after group of villagers, according to their castes, came to see them. Although they did not know who Baba was, they instinctively joined hands and bowed to Him reverently. As a consequence of all this attention, the coveted day of rest proved to be just the opposite.

*The Journey North to Manjri Mafi***A Trial for Aloba**

While in Ratangarh, in order to get some protection from the cold, Dr. Nilu and Aloba slept beside a temple a short distance from where the others camped.

In the night, Anna 104, who was doing watch near Baba, suddenly blew the whistle to signal an emergency. It was Baba's order that when the whistle was sounded, everyone was to gather immediately at His tent.

When the companions were assembled, they discovered it was a false alarm. Anna 104 had been frightened by something he thought he had seen in the dark. This was yet another interruption in this supposed day of rest.

In the morning, Baba joked with the companions about the false alarm and then casually asked whether they had all gathered at the call. Nilu and Aloba confessed that they had slept so soundly, they failed to hear the whistle.

Baba spelled out on the board, "If you can't be alert enough to follow my standing orders, why should you accompany me? You are good for nothing!"

Though this mistake had been unintentional, Aloba, being very emotional, took Baba's rebuke to heart. The thought that he had displeased Baba was unbearable to him and he was plunged into a deep depression, completely discounting the fact that Baba sometimes reprimanded His close companions quite severely over seemingly minor incidents.

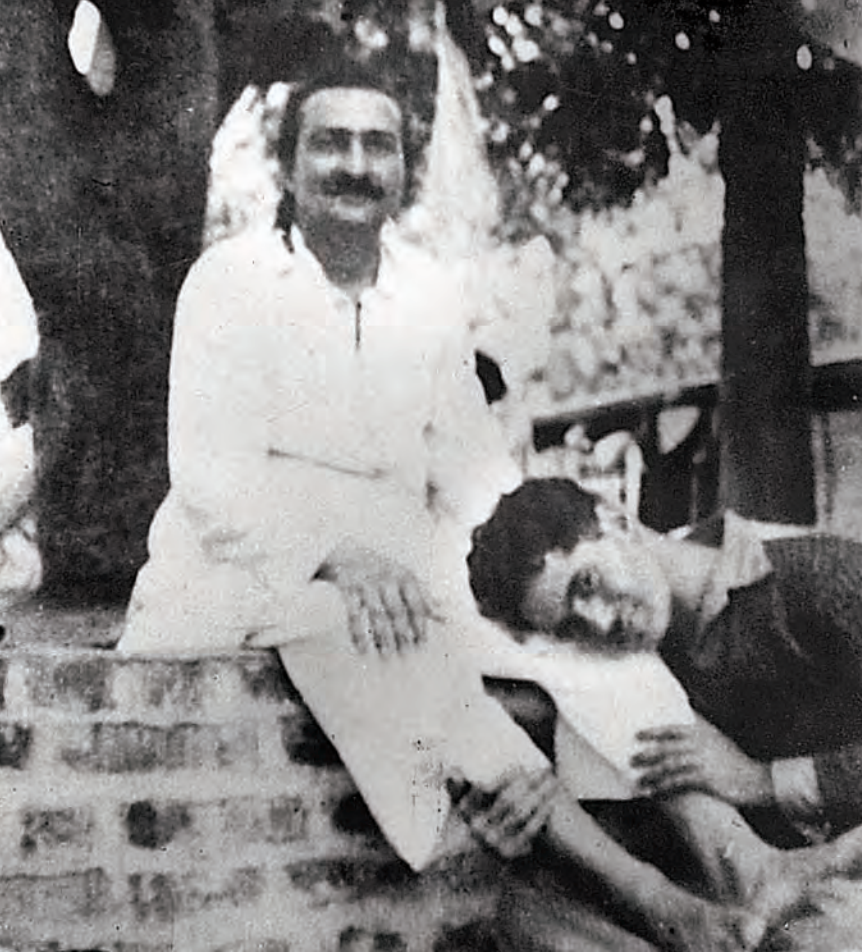
Without letting anyone know, Aloba brooded over the episode the whole day, and then in the middle of the night, he slipped away to a nearby well where he contemplated suicide. However, at the edge of the well, he began thinking, "Will ending my life lighten Baba's burden or make things worse? Perhaps there will be a police inquiry.... all this will be a great nuisance to Baba in leading the New Life." After considering how Baba would be affected, he gave up the idea.

Not knowing what else to do, he decided to slap himself harshly on each cheek 50 times as a form of penance. Then, in an agitated state, he went back to bed, but was unable to sleep.

In the morning, with the companions gathered around Him, Baba again emphasized the importance of following His standing orders. He looked at Nilu and Aloba, and calling them to

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Him, He embraced both of them and forgave them for their unintentional lapse in obedience. (It was often Baba's way, after giving someone a scolding or a rebuke, to follow it with some gesture or expression of compassion.)



1935 photograph of Baba and Aloha

He then asked, "Who didn't sleep last night?" Aloha raised his hand. Baba did not inquire further, but said, "Try to have a good sleep tonight."

Even though Baba had ordered him to sleep, Aloha still suffered from a state of inner commotion, which kept him awake, so now worry over breaking Baba's order to have a good night's sleep plagued him.

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi

The following morning, when Baba made His usual inquiries about how the night had gone, Aloba admitted that he had not slept well. Without questioning him further, Baba again ordered him to get a good night's sleep, which only added to Aloba's agitated condition.



The old gate at the entrance to Ratangarh

That same morning of January 6th, the party resumed the journey, and after traveling five miles, the tonga drawn by the white horse broke down when Baidul tried to pass the other tonga while crossing a damaged bridge.

With great difficulty, he managed to cover the remaining distance of about a mile to the mango grove where the party had halted. As soon as he jumped down, he could see that one of the tonga wheels was broken, which he reported to Baba.

Baba replied that He did not want to be held up in this place. Instead, He insisted that the party get an early start the next morning. Therefore, the wheel had to be repaired by evening.

Learning that there was a wheelwright in a nearby village, Baidul, Adi, Donkin and Pendu left with the damaged wheel in another tonga that afternoon, thinking the repair would not take

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi

more than an hour. Because it was warm at that time of day, Donkin wore only a short-sleeved shirt, although the others brought their woolen coats.

The wheelwright began replacing some of the wooden spokes and repairing the iron plate that went around the wheel, but the work went much slower than the group had hoped. It was growing dark. Cold was setting in, so the wheelwright offered them hot tea, but the companions said they could only accept it if it were given in bhiksha. The wheelwright thought this request strange coming from such healthy looking men who obviously had money to pay for the repairs.

He told them he thought they must be joking, but the companions assured him they were serious. Still confused, but being hospitable, the wheelwright said, "Sirs, whatever it be, please accept tea at my house!"

It was now very cold, so the companions gratefully followed the wheelwright into his house, looking forward to a hot cup of tea, but when it was served, they were unpleasantly surprised. Aside from putting sugar in tea, it turned out that it was customary in that part of India to add salt to it as well.

Only politeness obliged the companions to drink the briny concoction.

Meanwhile, the wheelwright continued the repair. The men watched as he put the wheel into a fire to attach the iron plate, and then secure the rubber tire. Finally, the wheel was fixed and a friend of the wheelwright guided the companions through the dark back roads onto the main road.

By the time they reached Baba and the others, it was after midnight and Dr. Donkin was chilled to the bone. Out of serious concern for his health, the others quickly made a roaring fire, heated several blankets and wrapped them around him. It was the perfect remedy.

The four companions then discovered that the bundle of their cloth sacks used for begging had been stolen while they were waiting outside for the repair.

To make things worse, they learned that earlier that evening a group of wild monkeys had sneaked into the camp and absconded with all the food that had been begged during the day, so the entire party had gone without their evening meal.

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi

Sleepy and exhausted, the four men still had to secure the wheel to the tonga before they could go to bed. Finally, Dr. Donkin fell asleep by the fireside, too tired to even open his bedding roll.

That night, Aloha again had a restless night. In an effort not to disobey Baba's order, he had tied a scarf over his eyes to shut out the brilliant light of the thousands of stars overhead, and this time, he did manage to doze off some time during the night.

Since he had tried his best, Baba was evidently pleased, because He did not question Aloha further after that, but it took Aloha nearly two weeks to be able to sleep normally again.

Bending the Rules

The party was up again before daybreak on January 7th. By 7:30 a.m., after saying the four prayers given to them in Moradabad, the companions were on the road. About nine miles out, they met a man in a cart who was impressed by the colorful caravan and spontaneously offered the whole party stalks of fresh sugarcane. His generosity was accepted and the group stopped in a mango grove to enjoy the special treat and to stay for the remainder of the day.

Later, some of the companions went into the local village in search of bhiksha.

On January 8th, after covering thirteen miles, they stopped around 3:00 p.m. in another mango orchard near Akbarabad, where a large crowd gathered to see them. They were polite enough to disperse quickly after making the usual inquiries.

The women always carried a flask of water for Baba, but as it was winter, He rarely called for it. However, before leaving for Akbarabad, they had neglected to fill the flask, so of course, this was the morning Baba asked for a cup of water.

They felt terrible and apologized, but as chance would have it, a farmer was just drawing water from his well nearby, so Baba sent Eruch with a flask to ask him for water.

When Eruch returned with the water, Baba touched his forehead to Eruch's feet and told him to return and bow in the same way to the farmer. In this way, Baba used Eruch as His proxy, something He would occasionally do to give help to others through His disciples and close followers.

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi

In another incident, when Baba sent him to beg in one of the villages, Eruch was heartened to see that it appeared quite prosperous. The companions were very hungry, and he hoped to obtain a large amount of rice and dal. As he moved hurriedly through one of the narrow lanes, he was stopped by an old man, who stepped forward, embraced Eruch and then kissed him on the cheek.

“Young man, where are you going in such haste?” he asked.

“I have to go and beg for food for my party.”

“Son, why do you want to leave the world and go out like this?”

“It’s the pleasure of my Elder Brother and my pleasure, too.”

“Do you know how fortunate you are to have such an inclination at this age? How blessed you are!”

“Well, I know this much, that I am really blessed to be with the company I have right now.”

“Don’t be in a hurry,” the old man said as he led Eruch along the village lane to his house where he gave him enough oil, condiments, salt, sugar, rice and dal for a feast. Along with these items, he also provided Eruch with faggots of good firewood. Then the old man said, “But may I suggest one thing to you? After you have finished your pilgrimage or whatever work you have in mind, will you come back to me and live in my house as my son?” The old man again embraced Eruch.

Eruch, though very moved, politely explained that he could not make such a promise, but he thanked the old man profusely, and then carried the large quantity of food and wood to where Baba and the companions were waiting by the roadside.

That food was enough for the whole day.

On January 9th, during the companions’ stay in the mango orchard at Akbarabad, Baba sent Adi, Dr. Ghani and Babadas ahead to the city of Najibabad to find accommodations with three conditions. First, they were to find a place to stay for three days and, if possible, to arrange for hot baths for the whole party. Second, they should try to find someone who would provide three meals a day and afternoon tea in bhiksha for their stay. And third, they were to find someone who would be willing to pay for railway tickets for the entire party from Najibabad to Dehra Dun.

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi

This was an extraordinary challenge for the three men to accomplish in one day in an unfamiliar city. To guide them, they took the lead from something Baba had told them earlier, “You will be inspired. Just go. You’ll know whom to approach. Just ask them, but don’t disclose my name or anything about me.”

The men left for the train station in Akbarabad with the money Baba had supplied them for railway tickets to Najibabad and for transportation while there. They were also given some food and were told that when they ran out, they were to beg.

On the train ride, the men were so hungry that before they reached Najibabad they had finished off their day’s ration.

When they arrived, they immediately went in search of a dharamshala. After locating the rest house, Adi began to arrange for a room in bhiksha. With some reluctance, the attendant gave them a very small room with three cots wedged inside.

Ghani, who was suffering from a heart condition, was very weak and had to rest for the day and Babadas’ sciatic pain suddenly flared up, forcing him to also remain bedridden. As a consequence, the responsibility for making all the arrangements fell on Adi’s shoulders. To make matters worse, Baba and the other companions were to arrive the next morning.

Adi quickly hired a tonga and asked the driver to take him to the homes of well-to-do families in the city, where he hoped to find individuals who might be willing to fulfill Baba’s conditions. They traveled from place to place, but no one was willing to help Adi.

Finally, the tonga driver asked him what he was trying to do. When Adi explained, the driver said, “Why didn’t you tell me about this in the beginning?” The tongawala immediately proceeded to take Adi to a cloth merchant named Makhan Lal, who was known for his generosity. Immediately upon meeting him, Adi explained the three conditions.

“Don’t depend on me for any residential arrangements,” the merchant replied. “As for the meals and tea.... I can manage it not only for three days but even for three weeks.”

Adi thanked him and said he would return later with directions to the place where the party would be staying.

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The tonga driver then took Adi to a wholesale dealer who also possessed a generous nature. To this man, Adi quickly explained that he was traveling with a large party on its way to the Kumbha Mela near Hardwar and that they needed railway tickets from Najibabad to Dehra Dun. When asked how many, Adi said that they would need twenty third-class tickets.

Without even meeting the group or making further inquiries, the merchant called his clerk and asked him to calculate how much money would be needed, and when he had the figures, he ordered the clerk to hand Adi the money.

"But sir, we can't accept money," Adi said.

"How will you go? How will you buy your tickets?" the merchant asked.

"We will be camping at a certain spot on the outskirts of town. The head of the party has given us certain instructions. If you can follow them, He will be very pleased. The instructions are that we should not take any money that you might give us. On the contrary, you should instruct your own men to purchase the tickets to be delivered to us at the time we are to board the train," Adi explained.

"What time is the train? What time have you fixed?"

"The train leaves three days from now at four o'clock in the morning," Adi replied.

As extraordinary as this request was, the merchant agreed, and he immediately instructed his clerk to be at the railway station at 3:00 a.m. on the appointed day.

These arrangements took hours and Adi still needed to find lodging for three days, so he again set off in the tonga. While passing near the railway station, he happened to see near a river bed a deserted garden that, although in a neglected state, might be suitable. They stopped, and through the gate, Adi saw a large circular platform where the companions could spread out for the night. He also noted that there was an ample supply of water available.

Just then, a man happened to pass by who asked him what he was doing there.

After Adi explained, the man said, "If you think that the open space in the garden would serve your purpose, you can occupy

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it during your stay. The garden belongs to me. Just open the gate and walk in."

Fulfilling this last condition was a great relief. Adi returned to the dharamshala to find Ghani and Babadas still unwell, but by now, they were hungry. Since Baba had said that no money could be spent on food and he was too exhausted to go out begging, Adi hit upon an idea. The tonga driver was still outside, waiting to be paid so Adi went to him and asked, "How much money should I give you?"

The man replied, "Ten rupees, sir."

"You have been of great help to me." Adi then added, "I will be happy to pay you twenty rupees for your services."

"That is too much, sir. I am very thankful to you. What more can I do for you?"

"If you really mean what you say, you may offer food to the three of us, in bhiksha."

"Sahib, what are you saying? I can arrange to pay for your meals at any hotel. Why do you talk of bhiksha? Are you joking?"

Adi assured him that he was not.

The tongawala, though confused, did not wish for the three men to go hungry, so he rode off. A short while later, he returned with three plates of freshly prepared food, but the men just sat in silence without touching the plates. The perplexed driver looked at them for a few moments until he remembered, "I give you this food in bhiksha. Please accept it." As soon as these words were spoken, Ghani, Babadas and Adi began eating with relish as this very helpful driver looked on, none the wiser when he left.

A few hours after the three companions went to sleep, Ghani sat up in bed and began groaning with pain and his fingers began to spasm.



Adi Sr.

He was having a mild heart attack, although it was not as severe as the one he had months earlier. He was quite fright-

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ened by the intense pain in his chest. Because it was the middle of the night, Adi despaired of finding any medical help for him. In desperation, he urged Ghani to remember Baba wholeheartedly, and gradually, as though by a miracle, the pain diminished, and before long Ghani drifted off to sleep, snoring loudly.

By morning, Ghani's condition was much improved. The night of rest had also eased the pain in Babadas' sciatic nerve, and he too was feeling himself again, so the three were able to leave the dharamshala and walk to the outskirts of the city to await the arrival of Baba and the companions.

Brief Stay at Najibabad

Baba and the party had set out early from Akbarabad and reached Najibabad by late morning.

During the long marches, Donkin tended to get very shaky after long periods without eating, but he never complained. Since the women always carried fruit and sweets, which Baba often took from them to give in bhiksha to passersby, one day when Donkin became so shaky he almost fainted, Baba went to the women and took an orange. He then walked all the way back to Donkin and gave it to him. Donkin immediately consumed it. Later, he said that it was a lifesaver. About that incident, Mani said that this was just another small example of Baba's all-knowing compassion.

By this time, 76 miles had been covered on foot since leaving Moradabad.

They were met by Adi, Babadas and Ghani, and Baba immediately asked Adi about their accommodations.

Adi described the garden and the flagstone platform where they could sleep in the open. Baba remarked that he had wanted better accommodations and reproached Adi for not making more of an effort. Adi took the criticism quietly and later, when he told about the food arrangements and the railway tickets, Baba was pleased.

The party proceeded to the property, drove the caravan and carts into the extensive garden, and began to set up camp. Pendu, with the help of others, attended to the animals while the women rested on the platform, surrounded by their belongings.

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After a while, a young boy came by and muttered something in Hindi. At first, the women could not understand what the shy boy was saying, but eventually they made out his words: "The corpses are put here."

The platform, it turned out, was used for cleaning corpses before cremation and for performing last rites. The women, though exhausted, immediately began sweeping and soon discovered human hair.

In the midst of this most unpleasant task, a woman from town came by and asked the women why they were doing such work when a sweeper woman was available. The women explained that this was their duty.

Adi then went to see about the lunch provided by Makhan Lal, the cloth merchant, whose wife was in the midst of preparing the meal when he got there.

Two hours later, the sweet, elderly couple arrived with the meal still hot, and they were immediately taken by Adi to see his Elder Brother.

Baba looked radiant, His long hair flowing, when Makhan Lal and his wife first saw Him. Makhan Lal immediately bowed at His feet, and Adi could see that Baba was unhappy with this devotional gesture. Adi quietly explained to Him in Gujarati that he had not revealed Baba's identity to the man, but that Makhan Lal's response was purely spontaneous.

Baba was satisfied with the explanation and lovingly accepted the food the merchant and his wife had brought. Moreover, He allowed them to come the next day with their whole family. From then on, the merchant and his wife provided delicious hot meals twice a day, and the wife entertained the women with amusing stories.

Baba ordered the morning and afternoon teas from the railway station.

One day, while Makhan Lal's wife was visiting with Baba and the women, she began regaling them with colorful tales and Hindi songs, and at the end of one of the songs, she stopped and turned her wrinkled face to Baba and said, "If I were a few years younger, Baba, I would have gotten up and danced! But now, Baba, aching, aching."

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She had used the word “Baba” only as a respectful term, still not knowing anything about His true identity.

Baba asked her through Mani, who interpreted His gestures, “How do you feel physically?”

“My whole body is in pain!”

“Is the pain in your legs specifically?”

“Oh, they pain the most!” was her reply, but it turned out that her entire body caused her pain. Even her fingers ached.

Baba called for homeopathic medicine from Baidul, who returned and handed the pills to Baba.

Looking at the tiny pills, she laughed, “I have so much pain. How could those small things help me?”

Baba gave her a few to swallow from His own hand. The old woman was so touched to receive this special attention from Baba that after consuming the pills, she resumed singing, and at one point without realizing it, she got so carried away that she stood up and began dancing.

Everyone was amazed. The pills given by Baba were so effective that almost instantaneously all of the pain that she had experienced for years was gone!

On another occasion, in a private meeting, Makhan Lal began weeping uncontrollably before Baba with so much love, without even knowing His name.

The spontaneous generosity of this loving couple pleased Baba very much.

While in Najibabad, Baba decided to sell the two donkeys. They had given so much trouble to Gustadji in the beginning and later to Mani and Meheru, because they were unsuitable for traveling such long distances.

Baba sent Sadashiv with the donkeys to sell them at the market, but on the first day, Sadashiv was offered so little, he came back with his two wards.

The following day, Baba settled on a fixed price and told him to only sell the donkeys to someone who on his own offered that exact amount, so Sadashiv again went to the market, but no such offer was made.

However, on the third day, a customer approached him, and on his own offered the exact amount fixed by Baba. Apparently,

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Baba wanted this particular man to be the owner of Sakoo and Thakoo.

On another day in Najibabad, as Adi was standing near the gate to the garden, a gentleman approached him and demanded, "Who are you people?"

Adi tried to put him off, but the man persisted in making pointed inquiries.

Finally, Adi responded with some annoyance, and the man remarked, "Do you know that the garden where you are staying belongs to me? And you are trespassers?"

Adi went immediately to Baba and explained the situation, reiterating that two days earlier another gentleman had given permission for the entire party to stay in the garden.

Baba gestured that it would be best to appease the man and move to another place.

Adi returned to the gentleman and apologized for occupying the garden, saying that the party would leave the place right away.

At this, the man felt ashamed and immediately invited them to stay until they left for Hardwar. He explained that there was a legal dispute over the ownership of the property.

The companions now had obtained the permission of both would-be owners.

The physical rigors and hardships of the New Life continued to take their toll on the companions. Dr. Ghani had already had two heart attacks, and recently in Najibabad, Kaka, due to extreme exhaustion, also suffered a severe heart attack. The travel on foot and the cold weather had been very hard on him, as had also been the constant struggle of loading the food supplies on the moving tonga drawn by the temperamental white horse.

Responding to Kaka's weakened condition, Baba invited him to stay in the makeshift enclosure with Him while he was recovering from the heart attack, and Baba took over his personal care.

While Kaka was recovering, the companions missed his wonderful cooking.



Dr. Goher

The Journey North to Manjri Mafi*Mehera*

The uncertain health of both Kaka and Ghani confirmed the advisability of traveling the 60 miles to Dehru Dun by train, and it was now clear why Baba had instructed Adi to arrange for train tickets.

January 12th was the day of departure from Najibabad.

While the rest of the companions were to go by train, Baba instructed Pendu, Donkin, Aloba, Sadashiv and Baidul to travel overland with the caravan, the bullock and the horse. He specifically advised them to go by the main road and to meet up with the rest of the group within a week.

At the unearthly hour of 3:00 a.m., when Baba and the rest of the group arrived on foot at the railway station to depart from Najibabad, the merchant's clerk was already there.

Everyone, including the clerk, stood on the open platform, shivering in the freezing cold with numb feet, waiting for the Dun Express to arrive.

At one point, Mehera spotted an elegantly dressed butler, who was carrying a tray of hot tea and toast along the platform. The sight was enticing. She could not resist the urge to nudge Goher, who was half asleep and always gullible, to tell her that their tea was being brought.

Goher looked up groggily and saw the butler who was about to pass them by, so she quickly got up and blocked his way, saying, "Where are you going? That tea is meant for us!"

The butler assured her it was not.

"Yes, yes!" Goher insisted, "It was sent for us, you idiot!"

Finally, Mehera had to break in, "Goher, don't.... I was just fooling. It was a joke. It isn't for us."

The women laughed, understanding all too well how easily, in such cold, miserable conditions, one could believe almost anything that might bring some relief.

A while later, Baba came by and promised them a breakfast of tea and toast at the next major halt.

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When the train pulled in, the third-class compartments were so overcrowded that Baba requested Adi to ask the clerk whether he could buy, at the last minute, four first-class tickets in bhiksha for the women.

Amazingly, the clerk agreed to pay the extra money without consulting his employer. Since there was little time – the stop in Najibabad was very brief – the clerk contacted the ticket collector and purchased the four first-class tickets with a large denominated rupee note, as he had not brought any small change.

*Railway Station at Najibabad*

The train had already started when the collector quickly handed the four tickets to Adi and gave him the leftover change.

Seeing this, Baba was very displeased and remarked, “I told you to arrange for the tickets in bhiksha. Why did you accept the money?”

Adi explained, “I did not take the money. The clerk paid the ticket collector, but because the train had started, the collector gave me the balance. Because the clerk had no change, he paid with a large currency note.”

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Hearing this, Baba was even more displeased. "This is not honest," He said, "We could have received the tickets in bhiksha, but not money. This happening is outside the conditions."

Baba continued to rebuke Adi, and in the end, He ordered him to return the balance by money order to the merchant with an expression of thanks, which Adi was to carry out when the party arrived in Dehra Dun.

When the companions finally settled in the train, they were disheartened to find that the compartments were unheated. The other passengers who were warmly dressed and wrapped in blankets elicited their envy.

As the train stopped at station after station, the companions' hopes for that promised cup of hot tea and refreshments were ignited, but Baba said they would still have to wait.

Finally, a major station was reached, and after some time, Baba came near the women's window and said, "Now, wait. Nice hot tea will come, and bread and butter, too. Eat well."

Very soon, a waiter carrying a tray of food and a pot of hot tea came by. Goher opened the window, grabbed the tray and quickly shut the window to keep out the cold. Mehera said later, "We were like hungry hunters. We devoured the breakfast like famine-stricken people."

After they were finished, Baba came again and asked if they wanted more. They said, yes, they would like another pot of tea, which Baba had sent in short order. After feeling half-frozen for most of the trip, they now felt as though they were in heaven. Mani later said, "Our life with Baba was both a fast and a feast. When we traveled first-class, we didn't have a penny in our pockets to spend. At other times, even a cup of tea was something wonderful, so delicious." Mani also said that she had never felt such a great sense of freedom as she did in the New Life with Baba as their constant companion.

After providing for the women, Baba had refreshments sent to the men, who also felt infinitely better having something warm in their stomachs.

“In this New Life, we will be caring for the voice of the heart and be deaf to the promptings of the mind. The body will take care of itself. That will be Real Life – infinitely different from what it is now.”

Meher Baba

Chapter Seven

STAY IN MANJRI MAFI

January 12, to June 14, 1950

Acquiring the Manjri Mafi Property

On September 7th, 1949, right before the start of the New Life, Keki Desai received a telegram from Baba which read, “Come here immediately for one day.” Keki immediately boarded a train from Delhi, and two days later, Adi took him to Meherabad where Baba told him of His plan to embark on the New Life. Baba asked Keki to purchase some property near the foothills of the Himalayas in the vicinity of Hardwar and Dehra Dun, which would be the headquarters for His New Life activities.

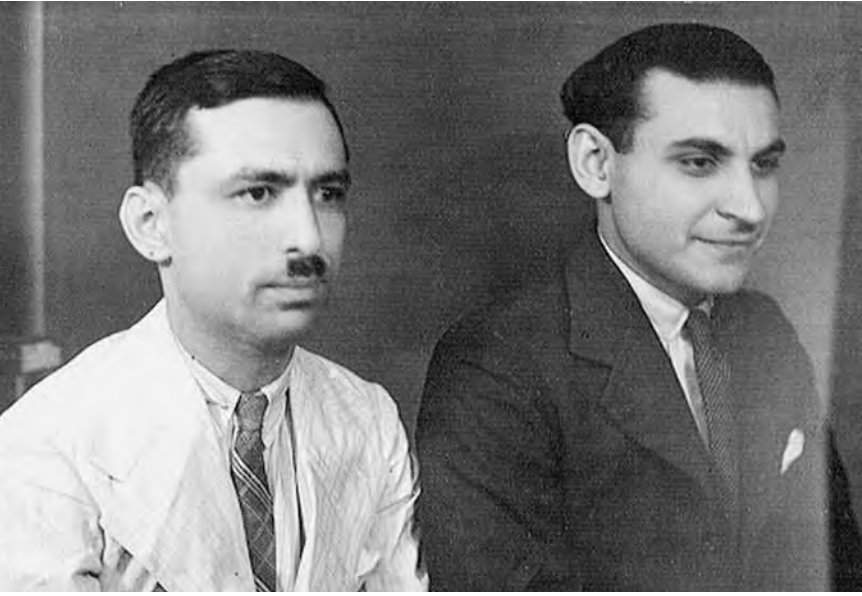
On that property, Keki was to have a house built and a well dug nearby. After these requests were made, Keki asked Baba if he could enlist the help of Keki Nalavala, who Baba had nicknamed “Keka” to distinguish him from Keki Desai.

Baba agreed, with the stipulation that the two devoted followers were not to mention a word about the work they were doing for Him to anyone, not even their own families.

After two months, Keki still had not succeeded in finding a suitable place. In desperation, Keki informed Baba, who replied with a detailed three-page telegram, stating that if a place was not found within twenty-four hours of receiving the cable, Baba would abandon the plan of going to Dehra Dun altogether. Keki despaired at that thought, as he was counting on seeing Baba.

At the end of the telegram, Baba offered a ray of hope, telling Keki to try looking for a place around four miles outside of Dehra Dun in the direction of Hardwar, along a route other than the main road. Baba instructed Keki to speak with the first man he encountered.

When Keki returned to Dehra Dun, he contacted his friend Balakram who knew the rural area that Baba had hinted at, and along with Keka, they began searching the countryside.

Stay in Manjri Mafi

Keki (Keka) Nalavala and Keki Desai , who helped Baba and the companions in Dehra Dun and Delhi during the New Life

When they came to the small village of Manjri Mafi, Balakram immediately remembered a friend, Shatrughna Kumar Ghildial, who might be able to help.

As they approached this friend's house, they found him on his porch, smoking a cigar while reading.

After introductions were made, they asked, "Could you by any chance help us in buying a five-acre plot?"

"Yes, I think so," Shatrughna Kumar Ghildial said casually.

"It has to have a small house on it."

"All right."

"And a well ... "

"Okay."

"We need it immediately!"

"How soon?"

"Within twenty-four hours!"

"I can get such a plot in two hours!"

From this brief conversation, Keki was convinced that this was the man Baba had in mind.

Kumar (as Baba later called him), showed them several plots of land, and Keki finally decided on one plot near Kumar's own

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property that belonged to a lawyer in Lucknow who wanted to sell. On the land was a small cottage with two rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom and a veranda from which there was a beautiful view of the Himalayas in the distance. Keki took several photographs and mailed them to Baba.

After receiving them, Baba sent a cable in reply: "Contents of your telegram and descriptive letter made me very happy. Prefer selection and purchase of site to be done by you. Therefore, your presence in Ahmednagar absolutely necessary for one day. Come when convenient before first October for money and instructions. Wire arrival."

Keki again set off immediately, and upon arriving in Meherabad two days later, Baba asked him about the property in detail. After finding Keki's answers satisfactory, Baba gave him 28,000 rupees with the instruction to return to Dehra Dun right away. A sum of 9000 rupees was required to purchase the land and the remaining amount was for digging a well, making repairs to the cottage and constructing huts for the companions.

When Keki went to pay for the property, he did so from a suitcase full of rupee notes that Baba had given him.

Because it was unusual for anyone to carry that much cash, Keki thought the owner might mistake him for a Hindu refugee from Pakistan, who had just fled to India. Instead, the owner was impressed that Keki did not bargain for a lower price, and the purchase was completed just before the start of the New Life in mid-October. The deed was finalized in the names of Ardeshir S. Baria (Kaka), Eruch B. Jessawala and Keki Desai. Only a few mandali knew of the transaction.

Considerable preparation was necessary to make the place ready for Baba's visit. Kumar was entrusted with constructing the huts for the men, making certain repairs to the cottage and digging a new well.

Kaikobad Dastur, one of the mandali staying at Upper Meherabad who had chosen to join Baba in the New Life, was too old to go on the foot journey. Instead, he received word from Baba telling him to go and stay in the small cottage on the Manjri Mafi property and await Him and the companions.

Years earlier, Baba gave Kaikobad the special order to repeat His name inwardly one *lakh* (100,000) times every day. While in

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Manjri Mafi, Baba instructed him to continue the repetitions, but instead of repeating Baba's name, He told Kaikobad to repeat *Aburamazda*, the Zoroastrian name for God.

Baba also instructed Keka Nalavala to see to Kaikobad's living arrangements, for which 500 rupees were provided.

Keka went to Manjri Mafi and told Kumar, "A gentleman who is in seclusion is to occupy the cottage for five months. The amenities for his stay, food, water for drinking and bathing will need to be provided."

Kumar agreed to help, but when Keka was about to hand the 500 rupees to him, Kumar said, "Don't worry. I will take care of all the arrangements for the gentleman."

Keka explained that he was told to pay the amount. "It is Baba's order! Food cannot be accepted without payment."

"Which Baba?" Kumar asked.

"Meher Baba, our Master."

Kumar had never heard of Baba, but nevertheless he replied, "All right, if it's your Baba's wish, I'll accept the money."

Later, Kumar asked, "Who is your Meher Baba?"

"He is a great personality, but He neither meets nor gives darshan to anyone. According to His wish, we cannot allow you to meet Him. He will come with His companions, but He will not see anyone."

Kumar was unable to question him further that day, because Keka was in a hurry to leave.

During their work for Baba in the New Life, Keki Desai and Keka Nalavala had been told not to reveal His name to anyone. However, Kumar, who was of immense help with the arrangements at Manjri Mafi, was the only one for whom an exception was made, and he was told very little.

Kaikobad stayed in Delhi with Keki Desai and his family for a month before moving to the cottage in Manjri Mafi. When he finally did arrive at the cottage, Kumar, true to his word, saw to the old man's meals and living arrangements, though Kumar still had no idea why he was so impelled to help.

*Stay in Manjri Mafi***From Unbeliever to Believer**

Kumar, as a young man in the 1930s, was an ardent revolutionary involved in fighting for India's independence from the British. Because of his terrorist activities, he was thrown in prison twice and suffered ill-treatment for over ten years. His second prison term was served during World War II at Bareilly Detention Camp in Uttar Pradesh.

There, he witnessed some other political prisoners offering prayers to God, but being a professed agnostic, he laughed at them. However, the years in prison began to take a toll on him, and he became extremely depressed.

Since the prison authorities regarded him as a regular agitator among the prisoners, they forced him to sit in isolation up near the prison roof that was made of corrugated tin, where the heat from the sun was intolerable. At one point, as an even more unjust punishment, he was put in an underground cellar, from which he knew very few prisoners were ever released. His depression now turned to despair.

Thoughts began assailing his mind over the injustice he was experiencing, and the prospect of never again seeing his wife and widowed mother became unbearable.

One day, from this cell, he suddenly sat up with a jerk and exclaimed, "God, only God, if He exists, can help me!"

Although raised in a religious family, it had been years since he had offered any prayers. Now, unable to remember how to address God properly, he just said in English, "Mr. God, if there is any God, I request You, please get me released from this jail."

Just then, he recalled some Hindu scriptures, which reminded him that all suffering in this life is due to one's actions in past lives, so he asked himself, why should God intervene and release me from jail?

Though filled with such doubts, it occurred to him that he had to make a promise to God, so he said, "Mr. God, please get me released from this jail, and in exchange I promise to abide by and obey any binding whatsoever You impose on me outside this jail."

Kumar's prayer did not end there. He thought to himself, "How will I know that God has accepted my bargain? If I am

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released, how will I know it is God's doing?" So he added, "Please God, if you have accepted my promise and bargain, then get me released early tomorrow morning, as soon as the gates are opened. If I am released at any other time – the following day, tomorrow evening, or even a few hours after the gates open tomorrow morning – I will take it that my release was all by chance and not Your doing."

Kumar deliberately chose to be released before dawn, long before 10 a.m. when the prison superintendent, who would have to sign his release, arrived at his office. Only then would he be convinced that his release was an act of God and not a coincidence. Although he had been an agnostic for such a long time, after offering the prayer, Kumar felt that somehow God would respond. He even collected his belongings in readiness to leave prison.

That night, though he tried to get some rest, he was unable to sleep.

In the early morning, long before dawn, he heard the rattling of keys outside his cell, and a jail officer suddenly opened the door and handed him a note on which was written, "Mr. Kumar, get yourself ready with your bag and baggage."

As if in a dream, he was escorted to the prison office where he saw the prison superintendent seated behind his desk, though it was unheard of for the head of that prison to be in his office at such an early hour!

The superintendent proceeded to go through some papers, then looked up and told Kumar that he was officially released from prison and was to wait outside the gates to receive his railway pass. The interview ended with no further explanation.



*Shatrughna Kumar
with Baba*

Thus, Kumar found himself, before 5:00 a.m., on the prison road with railway pass in hand and the overwhelming feeling that a whole new life was opening up before him.

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“What a humorist God must be!” he thought.

His release took place in 1945, four years before Baba began the New Life.

Kumar, as he made his way back to his family in Manjri Mafi, was now a believer, though his sense of God was still very vague and undefined.

Todi Singh

Another person who played a special part in Baba’s stay at Manjri Mafi was a gentleman named Todi Singh. Earlier, in August 1949, just before the start of the New Life, Todi Singh traveled from his home in Aligarh, near Delhi, to Ahmednagar, hoping to have Meher Baba’s darshan. This was at the time of the New Life meetings when Baba was not seeing any outsiders, but to his good fortune, Todi Singh, from a distance, was able to catch a brief glimpse of Baba who was sitting in a car parked in front of Adi’s office at Khushru Quarters in Ahmednagar. That glimpse so overpowered him that when he returned home to Aligarh, he became almost like a mast in his absorption in Baba.

Months later, Todi saw Baba in a dream. In this dream, Baba and the companions were on their way north to Dehra Dun. Baba looked radiant in a white sadra with His hair flowing, and Todi Singh instantly fell prostrate before Him and touched His feet. Lifting him up, Baba said, “At present, I am in Dehra Dun. Come there. Serve me. Feed me.”

When he awoke from the dream, Todi Singh had to face the unhappy fact that Baba was in the New Life and out of contact with His followers, but he could not let the dream go that easily.

A while later, Todi had to take the night train to Dehra Dun on business where he ran into Kishan Singh, who was a long-time Baba follower.

Seeing how troubled Todi Singh appeared, Kishan Singh asked, “Why do you look so worried?”

Instead of answering, Todi Singh asked another question, “Do you know Baba’s whereabouts?”

“I know, but Baba is inaccessible to everyone in the New Life.” Kishan reminded him.

Todi Singh then blurted out, “Baba has called me.”

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Although he did not reveal where Baba was, Kishan Singh felt that Todi Singh was sincere and told him that he could take two large fifteen seer tins of clarified butter (ghee) to Keka Nalavala's address in Dehra Dun.

Upon arriving in Dehra Dun, Todi Singh went straight to Keka's home with the tins of ghee and asked about Baba.

Keka replied, "I am not aware of Baba's whereabouts. He does not see anyone in the New Life. Kindly, therefore, go back with the ghee tins."

When Todi Singh urged him to take the tins, he refused, saying, "Baba is to arrive tomorrow, but He is not seeing anyone, and in the New Life, He is not accepting anything from anyone either! Kindly leave so as not to disturb Him."

Todi Singh persisted and eventually told Keka about his dream, adding, "Baba has called me here to serve Him!"

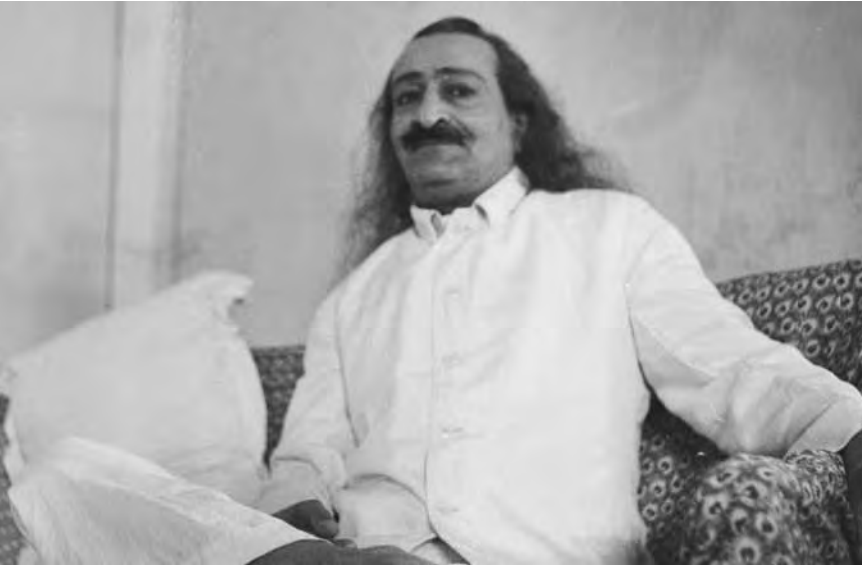
Keka was still adamant and again told him to leave.

Todi Singh made one final appeal, "Keep these tins of butter and send them to Baba."

"I cannot interfere with His conditions on anyone's behalf. I don't even know if Baba will see me!"

"All right," Todi Singh relented, "I am staying in a nearby dharamshala. If Baba meets you, kindly tell Him about the tins, and also that I am eager to feed Him!"

Todi Singh then left, and Keka dismissed the whole episode.



*Stay in Manjri Mafi***Arrival in Dehra Dun**

Around 10:00 a.m. on January 12th, 1950, Baba and the companions arrived in Dehra Dun. As soon as they stepped off the train, Baba immediately sent the women to the ladies' waiting room, where they began shutting the windows and doors to conserve heat. Outside, there was an icy wintry rain.

Keka Nalavala, Keki Desai, and Kumar quickly found Baba and the men companions among the crowds at the station. Though it was cold and rainy, Keka's wife Freiny, Elcha Mistry, Burjor Chacha and his wife Shiroo, honoring Baba's wish not to be contacted in the New Life, waited outside, but as soon as Baba and the men gathered in the first class waiting room, He called them to join Him.

Keka said to Baba, who was reclining on a bench, "Here is Mr. Kumar. He is the person who arranged for the plot of land that we have purchased for the New Life stay."

Baba greeted Kumar, who later said how impressed he was with Baba's radiance. Baba then called for lunch to be served, and it was soon discovered that no arrangements had been made in advance for food, so Kumar offered to bring it, saying, "If it will be your pleasure, Baba, I can arrange it."

"You will have to give the food in bhiksha," Baba said. "Can you bring it within an hour?"

Making some quick calculations in his mind, Kumar replied, "I can prepare vegetable pulao in an hour and bring it."

Baba approved, and Kumar sped off on his motorcycle. Upon reaching Manjri Mafi, he told his wife, Subhadra, to prepare pulao for ten people within an hour (Pendur, Aloba, Donkin, Baidul and Sadashiv were still traveling overland from Najibabad).

Subhadra immediately began cooking while Kumar, having heard how particular Baba was about time, made her nervous by staying in the kitchen and counting the minutes, adding, "Hurry up, for God's sake," in frequent intervals.

"Be patient, otherwise, the rice will be spoiled," Subhadra said, as she cooked the rice at an even temperature in order not to burn it, while putting up with Kumar's nagging, "Turn up the stove, there's no time to wait!"

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Finally, the pulao was ready and Kumar raced to the railway station, arriving within the hour, which pleased Baba. However, when he looked around the waiting room, Kumar discovered that where previously there had been just ten people to feed, now there were more than twenty-five. He had not known about the women companions who were in the ladies' waiting room.

Kumar anxiously watched as the pot of pulao was set on the table along with plates that had come from one of the companions' trunks.

Baba then began serving each person, giving out very generous portions. "Take as much as you want," He urged. "Eat your fill. You may not get anything later."

After the men were served, Baba ordered that the remaining pulao be sent to the women companions. Before the pot was taken, Kumar rushed to it, certain there was nothing left, but to his astonishment, he discovered that the pot was almost full. Breathless, he was convinced he had just witnessed a miracle.

The meal was finished and Baba inquired, "What is to be done about food during our stay in Manjri Mafi? We are only accepting food given in bhiksha."

Keka suddenly remembered Todi Singh, but since he was not allowed to mention anyone from the Old Life, he kept quiet.

Baba suddenly turned to him and asked, "What are you thinking? Why don't you speak out?"

"Were I to tell you, it would be against Your orders."

"When I ask you on my own, you must tell me."

Keka then told Baba about Todi Singh, who had earlier expressed the wish to give Him food in bhiksha.

Baba immediately sent Keka to get Todi Singh.

When Todi Singh was brought before Baba, he fell prostrate at Baba's feet, shedding tears of joy. Then, with folded hands, he implored Baba to accept the tins of butter he had brought. Baba gestured for him to sit beside Him and patted him on the back. He accepted the tins and teased him, asking, "You have brought the tins, but who will cook the edibles in clarified butter?"

"Baba *jane*" (pronounced ja-nee), Todi Singh replied, meaning "Baba knows."

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“Are you ready to give food in bhiksha for ten days?”

“Baba *jane*,” was Todi Singh’s only answer to every question asked of him, so he was nicknamed “Baba jane.”

Baba invited him to come and cook for the party, beginning on January 15th.

Todi Singh was ecstatic. Though he was the sole supplier of cream to Keventer’s, the butter and cheese manufacturing company famous in the time of the British, this wealthy man began jumping up and down and dancing, declaring what a great blessing he had received.

Temporary Lodging

Meanwhile, the women were taken by car past temples, parks and the business section of Dehra Dun to a quiet residential area. At Number 4 New Cantonment Road was a bungalow named after its former owner, a now deceased wealthy English widow, Mrs. Pratt.

It was rented by Harjiwan Lal for the women’s stay, which was to be temporary until the cottage on the Manjri Mafi property was ready. The men stayed in nearby cottages.

As the car passed through the wrought-iron gate to the property, the women were excited by the prospect of staying in such a lovely bungalow, surrounded by green lawns with a lovely garden filled with rose bushes and a host of other colorful flowers. As they looked further, they saw a small orchard with a magnificent view of the snow-capped Mussoorie Hills.

After months of privation, the women were like children in this idyllic setting, where they found a proper kitchen with an electric stove that could easily heat water.

Here, they thought, Baba would have a much-needed rest, and they could wash His clothes and serve Him a glass of water that was not ice cold.

The women were shown three comfortable bedrooms, furnished with soft beds, dressing tables and carpets. Knowing that Baba would be sleeping on the floor, the women chose not to use the beds.

A small room was reserved for Baba, and Mehera immediately unpacked and arranged His few belongings. Later, while

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she, Mani and Meheru were unpacking their own things and settling in, Goher came in with word from Baba that they would be leaving the next day. Mehera found that unacceptable and pleaded with Baba to allow them to stay for a few more days to wash their accumulated laundry and take much-needed baths.

Baba gave in.

In another portion of Mrs. Pratt's bungalow was an impoverished, elderly British couple, the Angelos. Mr. Angelo was a retired military officer, suffering from depression due to the loss of his two sons in World War II. In addition, he was gradually losing his sight. Though the couple had been promised a stipend and a home by Mrs. Pratt before she died, she went back on the promise over a trifle. Thus, the couple, unable to afford to return to England where they had relatives, was stranded in India and needed to vacate their rooms, as the bungalow was going to be sold very soon.

Baba sent one of the companions to meet this couple, and after he learned of their difficult circumstances, he reported back to Baba, who listened intently and then sent for Donkin. When Donkin arrived, Baba asked if he had any ideas about how to help the Angelos. Donkin said he would contact his brother in England and ask him to arrange passage for the Angelos to return to their relatives.

Because Baba and the companions might leave the bungalow before the money arrived for the Angelos, the couple did not want to depart from India without thanking Baba. They beseeched Keki Desai to ask Baba if they might see Him, and Keki was surprised when Baba consented.

To receive the couple, Baba put on a new white kafni and His long auburn hair was flowing over His shoulders.

He asked Keki, "How do I look?"

Keki replied, "Exactly like Christ!" Keki surmised that Baba wished to appear Christlike for the Angelos.

As soon as the couple saw Baba, they bowed to Him and kissed His hand, thanking him profusely for saving them from a life of humiliating poverty.

Later, Mani said that their week's stay at Mrs. Pratt's bungalow may have been solely to help this elderly couple at a very low point in their lives.

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As previously arranged, Kumar was to bring the midday and evening meals prepared by his wife Subhadra, his mother Mataji, and several other women from the village. When told by Baba to deliver the meals by 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Kumar confidently replied that he would be on time.

However, at 10:45 a.m. on the very first day, his motorcycle broke down at the "Survey of India Gate" near the clock tower, the main intersection in Dehra Dun. His servant, who was riding with him, quickly unloaded the tiffin containers as Kumar concentrated on re-starting the vehicle, but with no success until at the stroke of eleven, the motor started up.

They reached Baba's quarters at five past eleven, and Baba immediately asked the reason for the delay. Kumar explained and Baba smiled.

After that, Kumar's motorcycle broke down every day at the same time and place, so he was always five minutes late with the lunch. Kumar did not chalk this up to coincidence. He knew that his breakdowns were Baba's doing.

Meanwhile, Kumar continued the work of digging a well on the property and putting up a single large hut for the men, rather than the original request for several small huts.

When Keki Desai came from Delhi to view the progress on the well, Baba told him to pick up the evening meal from Subhadra so Kumar could continue to devote his time to completing the well.

When Keki arrived with the food, somehow Baba's food was missing. Since He took only rice and dal without spices, separate cooking was required, but Subhadra had been in such a hurry that she forgot to put His food in the basket.

Baba told the companions, "Now I will have to remain hungry while you all are nicely eating your dinner."

Keki felt responsible and was so upset at Baba's displeasure, he could hardly eat until Nilu eventually persuaded him to have his food and not worry.

After dinner, Baba told Keki to go to Kumar's house early the next morning. "Tell him that in their haste they forgot to pack my food, but it is all right. Tell him, 'Don't worry, I have pardoned you'."

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The clock tower near the “Survey of India Gate” where Kumar’s motorcycle would break down each day

Unbeknownst to Keki, when Kumar arrived home after staying late to work on the well, he found Subhadra very anxious about having forgotten to send Baba’s food.

Since Baba’s dinnertime was long over, Kumar felt that he could never rectify the mistake and he was frantic, which resulted in his losing his temper and slapping his wife.

After that outburst, he wept, which was uncharacteristic for him, but he still could not get over feeling miserable over Subhadra’s oversight. With great difficulty, he managed to sleep a little, and in a dream he saw Baba, who told him, “Don’t worry, I have pardoned you!”

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The dream gave Kumar some peace of mind for a while, but then he dismissed it, telling himself that a dream is, after all, just a dream, and he went back to worrying and praying for Baba's forgiveness.

In the early morning after his dream, Kumar found Keki on his doorstep, saying, "Baba says, 'Don't worry, I have pardoned you!'" Kumar's heart began pounding with the knowledge that Baba truly loved him. Now any doubts about whether or not Baba was a Great Soul were diminished forever.

When Kumar delivered lunch to Baba that day, he began to apologize for Subhadra's mistake, but Baba quickly interrupted him, saying, "Don't worry, I have pardoned you."

"This is the third time I have heard this!" Kumar said, overwhelmed.

As was Baba's habit, while the food was being dished out, He made inquiries, this time about the oversight, "Tell me, were you angry when your wife didn't send my food?"

"Yes, Baba."

"Did you slap her?"

"One slap," Kumar said, annoyed that Baba was prying into private family affairs.

"What? You slapped a woman, your own wife? A man raising his hand to a woman?" Baba then pushed his plate of rice and dal aside. "I can't take this food!"

Kumar was shocked and pleaded for Baba not to refuse the food. Eventually, Baba relented, saying, "Are you sure you won't do it again? Can you give me your promise that you will never hit your wife again, never in your lifetime?"

Although Kumar had never slapped his wife before this incident, it was not his nature to willingly make such a promise to anyone, yet he felt he had to give Baba his word. Baba put out His hand, and Kumar slapped it with his own, which is an Indian gesture for confirming a promise. Then Baba told Kumar to apologize to Subhadra. Later, Baba also summoned her and asked for her forgiveness for having been the cause of her having suffered.

Satisfied with the exchange, Baba then reached for His plate and began eating. Kumar was now very happy, and throughout

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his life he remained true to his promise. Although during his days as a revolutionary, he had been very temperamental and much feared, in Baba's presence he was as gentle as a lamb.

Years later, in 1954, Kumar was called to be with Baba for almost a year. At that time, many restrictions and bindings were imposed upon him by Baba and after several months it occurred to Kumar that his life with Baba was similar to being in prison. He became harassed by thoughts of leaving, until one day, while Kumar was with Baba searching for masts, Baba asked him, completely out of the blue, "How long were you in prison?"

Kumar said that he had been in for more than ten years.

"How did you get released then?" Baba gestured.

"I requested God to release me," he said, suddenly remembering that period of his life and his bargain with God.

"Only requested," Baba gestured, smiling, "Didn't you say something more to God? In what manner did you request God, and what was your promise to Him?"

Kumar replied that he had not known how to address God properly, so he had said, "Mr. God, if there is any God, I request you, please get me released from this jail, and in return for this, I promise to abide by any binding and restrictions whatsoever imposed on me outside of jail."

Suddenly, Baba became serious and asked Kumar to repeat that promise three times. Afterwards, Baba said, "Don't break this promise. I am God. I am that Mr. God to whom you made the promise. I have kept my side of the bargain, now you keep yours."

Kumar felt as though an electric shock had passed through his body, and he now knew that he had to accept all the bindings and restrictions that were involved in living with Baba.

Baba caressed him very lovingly. Up to this point in his life, Kumar thought that Baba was a Great Soul, but now he knew Him to be God Himself, the Highest of the High!

For a few days, Baba remained in a room near the women at Mrs. Pratt's bungalow, but soon afterwards, He moved to the spacious villa of Jamnadas, a close friend of Kumar, who was the *Mahant* (head priest) of Manjri Mafi. There He stayed in one of

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the upstairs rooms, which was empty of any furniture or carpets. This was another temporary move until the construction of the large hut near Kumar's home could be completed.

Located a short distance outside of the village, the large villa was old-fashioned in design and very sturdily built, but since it was in need of repair, there were cracks in the rafters, which let in cold air. Although the house was spacious, it was damp and uncomfortable, and the windows were situated high up, which left the rooms dark.

There was a tall hedge surrounding it, and on top of the house there was an open terrace from which the companions enjoyed an exquisite view of the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas.

Some of the men were accommodated in a room adjoining the main house, while others stayed in a nearby shed.

After staying a week in Mrs. Pratt's bungalow, the women also moved to the Mahant's house, where they stayed on the ground floor.

While at Mrs. Pratt's, Baba and the women had enjoyed a much healthier diet than they had on the road. Baba ate breakfast with them, and every day He gave them lavish amounts of butter to go on their bread.

Mehera remembered, "Two big containers of fresh butter were brought over by the head of the government dairy in Aligarh. It was humbly offered to Baba with so much love that Baba accepted it in bhiksha. What a treat it was! What a god-send! When Baba opened the metal tins, we couldn't believe our eyes. So many packets of lovely butter. It made our mouths water. We had not seen butter in so long. For days, we had walked on [dry] chapatis for breakfast."

At Mrs. Pratt's, the women were thrilled to be able to heat water to do the huge pile of laundry they had accumulated. Unfortunately, they were so busy catching up on domestic tasks that they scarcely took time to explore the picturesque surroundings in which they had found themselves.

Stay in Manjri Mafi*The Mahant's bungalow just outside the village of Manjri Mafi***Todi Singh Brings His Family**

On January 16th, Todi Singh returned to Manjri Mafi with his entire family: his mother, wife, daughter and sister with her little son. With them was a huge amount of luggage filled with vessels and utensils for cooking, a wide assortment of spices and all manner of other paraphernalia to be used to prepare meals. They each brought just one small bag for themselves, which contained only a change of clothing.

Overjoyed to see Baba, they immediately offered to begin cooking. However, Baba told them, "No, tomorrow. You cook from tomorrow."

Baba then inquired of the companions, "But where are we to house them?" After some discussion, it was decided that the family would also move into the Mahant's bungalow.

When they were brought for a quick tour, they said, "We want to see the kitchen first, not the bedroom." They were then taken directly to the large room, which had a fireplace, a tap and a sink.

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“This is wonderful. This is where we will live,” the family said and then brought in all their cooking equipment and personal gear. Very soon, they had made the kitchen into their living quarters, where they would roll out their bedding at night and bathe when they awoke.

The family began cooking the very first day. After the sparse diet the companions had experienced on their journey north, they were now treated to meals fit for royalty. The food cooked in clarified butter was so rich that they could scarcely finish the carefully and lovingly prepared fare.

(Mani said later that the food was very rich and tasted so much like incense that she and the other women began longing for more simple food.)

Every morning, while his family started the cooking, Todi Singh headed off in a tonga to the market and returned hours later with the carriage filled with vegetables, sparing no expense in providing the very best food available.

Dehra Dun was and still is noted for producing large and delicious vegetables, especially snow peas, lettuce and cauliflower. Since the companions had very little in the way of fresh green vegetables since their stay in Sarnath, these were particularly welcome.

As the days passed, Todi Singh became more and more intoxicated with love for Baba. He was not interested in Baba's earlier life. He just wanted to see Baba and inwardly repeat His name, which made him blissfully happy. He rarely conversed with the companions, and when asked about his business and his family life, he would invariably say “Baba jane.”

For the next week, the family stayed in the kitchen most of the time, but came out in the evenings to sit with the women.

On January 21st, one week after they had come, Baba sent the family back to Aligarh, and He instructed Todi Singh to resume his work as a cream distributor.

Before leaving, Todi Singh bowed reverently to everything Baba had touched and could not restrain his tears.

*Stay in Manjri Mafi***The Three Plans of the Labor Phase
January 1950**

On January 20th, eight days after leaving Benares, Pendu, Donkin, Aloba, Baidul and Sadashiv arrived in Manjri Mafi with the carts and animals and found that Baba and the companions were at the Mahant's bungalow. They went directly to Him and began to describe the ordeal they went through to finally reach Baba in Manjri Mafi.

First, they confessed that they were so late in arriving due to what they described as "not thinking".

Then they went into detail. Everything had been fine when they set out from Najibabad in the early morning. The vehicles were led by Donkin in the tonga, while Pendu, who was in charge, brought up the rear in the caravan. The other carts were in-between, driven by Baidul, Sadashiv and Aloba.

Their troubles began several miles out when they decided to ask the local people the best way to get to Dehra Dun and were told about a short-cut off the main road. After some discussion, they decided to take the local people's word that this alternate route would save considerable time, but several hours later, the caravan became stuck in the mud while crossing a rivulet in a wild and secluded place. Exasperated, they tried to pull it out by hitching up the bullocks, but were unsuccessful, so they went a nearby village to enlist the help of several men.

Then, following Donkin's advice, they laid branches in front of the wheels to give the tires some traction and the caravan was eventually eased onto the road again, but by now it was late evening.

Due to the loss of time, they decided to push on through a forest inhabited by wild animals. Traveling in pitch dark, they eventually came to a hut used by forest officers. They woke a watchman who readily gave them permission to camp a short distance away, where they spread their bedding under the caravan, tonga and carts.

Lighting a lamp to keep wild animals away, they tethered the horses and bullocks in a circle nearby and tried to sleep, but the roar of tigers in the distance made dozing off difficult. Making matters worse, it began to drizzle, so the kind watchman

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allowed them to finally settle on the veranda of the hut, where they slept a few hours in spite of the bitter cold.

Sometime during that terrible night, they remembered Baba telling them to stay on the main road. They could not get over how they had all agreed to take a “short-cut” without thinking.

At first light, the continued through the wilderness, with the delay causing them to ration their food supply, so that for the rest of the journey they only had one meal a day.

Baba was greatly amused and entertained by the vivid details of their story.

That same day, with all of the companions now gathered around Him, Baba disclosed something new that would bear serious consideration: the three plans of the New Life. These plans had emerged after many intimate discussions during Baba’s stay at Mrs. Pratt’s bungalow.

Up to this point in the New Life, the companions had gone through the training period with its phases of begging, langoti and gypsy life, where the condition of controlling moods and remaining cheerful had been very difficult to carry out. Baba was now ready to disclose the final draft of the New Life plans and conditions, but before having it read out, He offered a few explanations:

During these three months, you have seen my New Life *reet* (way), and you all have shown how fit you are to be in the New Life. So, I and you all, keeping in sight these three months, should now decide about the three plans that I place before you. You all should honestly and wholeheartedly consider these three plans in their entirety. They are of my own making, of my own free will and accord, and you must accept one of them as being my wish and order. By accepting one of these plans, collectively or individually, you will still remain 100 percent my companions in the New Life. These plans make me free to live the New Life in my own way, and yet keep you all 100 percent in the New Life.

By accepting one of these three plans you will make me happy and free, and yet be my companions in the New Life. Point A in Plan I, if workable, would be ideal.

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If A is not possible, then points B and C would also be as good. Plan II, although all right from the viewpoints explained above, would not be as ideal as points A, B and C in Plan I.

These three plans are based on the labor phase. The other three phases of begging, gypsy and langoti life will be personally carried out by me alone or with the companions staying with me as the New Life companions.

Therefore, the companions, by accepting one of these plans (particularly point A in the first plan), will be said to have gone through all the four phases of the New Life; and as they will do the labor phase for me, I will be said to have gone through the labor phase also.

If the first plan is adopted, you can all either stay near me, or away from me, without my interfering with your phase or letting you interfere with my phases. I will take 100 percent interest and guide and help you, without in any way being bound.

In these three plans, the two points of “responsibility before God” and “no spiritual benefit” stand good forever. The three plans are as follows:

PLAN I-A (COLLECTIVE)

1. In this collective plan, all of you must cooperate with each other, help each other, and adjust things suitably to the ability, capacity and *tabiyat* (health) of each of you – each of you doing his best to keep this plan going.
2. I will place at your disposal 10,000 rupees, two tongas, horses, carts and bullocks, for your use – to belong to this new plan, making it the basis of developing the new plan.
3. You can either do farming, or take jobs, or do any business in Dehra Dun or nearby surrounding places.
4. You can put up at the property or in Dehra Dun, and at any place convenient for the carrying out of the

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plan.

5. The earnings from jobs, farming or business should belong collectively to this new plan. Out of this collective money, you can all eat what you like, dress as you like, but personally own nothing.
6. No begging, or gypsy or *langoti* (loincloth) life for you all in this Plan No. I-A.
7. I will live on the property when in Dehra Dun and Hardwar, and do begging, etc., but you can, if you can afford, give me and the women food from your earnings and also pay toward incidental expenses.
8. You can sleep when you like, get up when you like and work as you like, and I will not interfere with your life, nor will I allow you to interfere with my life. There will be no orders from me except the fixed conditions. Drawing the main essence from the original conditions, I will finally fix the conditions to suit these three plans and my own plan.
9. I will have absolutely nothing to do with money or accounts.
10. None should bring complaints to me about anything.
11. Everything to be managed by the companions in any way they like, by committee, majority or appointing a manager.
12. I will fix the conditions for you finally, and then leave it to you to carry them out or not.
13. I will trust you with the conditions, and whether you follow them or not is your own responsibility, for which I will neither do *insaf* (judge) or blame or inquire. He who does not follow the conditions will not be in the New Life even though he stays with the companions.
14. In the companions' spare time, they may gather for light talks with me, or ask me to take part in any entertainment like music programs, etc.
15. The companions will be free to live and work as they like within the limits of the fixed conditions, and can even stay on at the place in my absence, as I am free to

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do as I like and go where I like for my three phases.

16. I will send Circulars to all, and have points included in the Circular to help the companions in many ways, except in the way of money, bhiksha or presents. For although amongst my companions are such who in the Old Life have dedicated everything to me and in the New Life would not dream of taking any advantage of others, I want all my Old Life disciples and devotees to know that they should not under any circumstances help any one of the New Life companions with money, clothing, food, etc.
17. If the companions think it necessary, I will help them (except monetarily) in the beginning to make the start by asking others to help them, etc.
18. This plan will continue the New Life, will keep the companions together, have my interest, give full freedom to me and freedom to the companions.
19. If a companion is found to be deliberately disobeying the conditions or deliberately not carrying out the duties entrusted to him or is found not to be fitting into the general management because of his temperament or obstinacy, he can be asked to leave the group-companionship by a majority of votes.

PLAN I-B (COLLECTIVE OR INDIVIDUAL)

If all do not collectively agree to point A in this first plan, as many as agreeing to it can together accept and follow it. In this case, I will place only 5,000 rupees, two tongas, horses, carts and bullocks for your use. Those who do not agree to A or B in Plan I can either choose C in Plan I or choose Plan II.

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PLAN I-C (INDIVIDUAL)

1. To lead the New Life at the individual's own original place, with all freedom to earn either by job or business, etc. He must not, however, stay either at Meherabad or Pimpalgaon (Meherazad).
2. To follow the fixed conditions and *iman* (faith) with them.
3. To do the duties allotted by Baba, while staying at one's own residence like Sarosh, etc., does.
4. No physical *saath* (contact) or proximity of Baba.
5. I will be free 100 percent and the companions will be free to do anything within the fixed conditions.
6. Each one will be given 500 rupees. As in the case of "nowallas," you will have neither spiritual nor material connection, but you will still be the companions of the New Life, and will have 100 percent *Sambandh* or connection with the New Life.
7. You can associate with the Old Life members also.
8. Out of his earnings, each one will take away the necessary money (earned by himself personally) for himself and family, and send the remaining to me, for me and those with me.
9. The money sent to me by the companions must strictly be money earned by himself personally, and not money that is borrowed or begged (nor is the companion to receive money as a gift or help from anyone).
10. The companion should never contact me or correspond with me, unless I later order him to do so; but must be sending me money from his earnings, according to instructions I will give him before he leaves.
11. He should not try to disturb the arrangements already made before the 16th of October, nor try to interfere with the duties of the "arrangementwalas," nor try to disturb the orders given to the arrangementwalas regarding money, etc.

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PLAN II

1. Anyone can go to any place other than the Old Life place.
2. He can do at any place any business or take up any job he likes.
3. No physical *saath* or proximity of Baba.
4. Lead the New Life with fixed conditions and *iman* (faith) with them.
5. I will be free 100 percent and the companions will be free to do anything within the fixed conditions.
6. Same as in No. 6, point C of Plan I.
7. No duties will be allotted to you by me as in C of Plan I, and you can lead an absolutely independent life within the conditions.
8. Same as in No.8, point C of Plan I.
9. Same as in No.9, point C of Plan I.
10. Same as in No.10, point C of Plan I.
11. Same as in No.11, point C of Plan I.

Note: In these two plans, there will not be the three phases of begging, gypsy and langoti life. I alone will do all these on behalf of the companions.

PLAN III

This plan is for those who are 100 percent prepared to follow all the original conditions.

OATH FOR PLANS NO. I AND II

I, a companion of the New Life, take the following oath before God:

I will abide 100 percent by the conditions given today to me by Baba. These conditions are based on the original conditions to which I signed "Yes." I will consider

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Baba as my friend and brother and expect no spiritual or material reward. I will see to the material needs of myself till the very end, and if nothing is spiritually or materially gained, I will not hold Baba responsible. Anything that happens to me will be solely my own responsibility before God. There will not be any spiritual or material connection with Baba, but I shall remain 100 percent a companion of Baba's New Life, if I follow the conditions 100 percent.

CONDITIONS

Fixed conditions for those who accept Plan I–A, B, C and Plan II:

1. First and foremost, you must take it as an absolute and unqualified certainty that you will not receive even the slightest spiritual or material benefit, or indeed any benefit whatsoever. On the contrary, you must be prepared for every kind of disappointment and adversity.
2. You should not expect that Baba will have His *nazar* (spiritual glance) on you or that He will perform miracles or use His spiritual "key" to protect or save you from illness, danger, imprisonment, death, or difficulties and disasters of any kind.
3. You will not touch women, except when necessary your mother, wife, sister and daughter; or professionally when you are doing a doctor's profession.
4. You will not enter politics.
5. You will not express anger, by word or deed to anyone, whatever the provocation, and you will not criticize anyone unfairly, either to his face or behind his back. Although you may at times feel anger in your mind, you must never express it by word or deed.
6. You will tell no lies under any circumstances.
7. Neither Baba nor you will accept homage from anyone nor will you deliberately create circumstances that might invite homage to Baba or to you. If, how-

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ever, without your having invited it, homage is given to Baba or to you, it must be repaid action for action to the giver.

8. It must be clearly understood that although the conditions are absolutely binding on you all, Baba Himself is not bound by any order or conditions, and is absolutely free for all time.
9. The one and only thing, however, in which Baba not only is not free, but deliberately binds Himself, is regarding the condition that you will not receive the slightest benefit of any kind whatsoever, and that you must be prepared for every kind of disappointment and adversity. It must, in addition, be absolutely clear that Baba will also never give any order that will absolve any of you of your individual responsibility before God for any consequences that may follow. You must take it as an absolute certainty that the responsibility before God for each and every consequence rests for all time wholly and solely with you and you alone, and that Baba will never give an order that will change or nullify this responsibility.
10. You will not commit any lustful action with anyone, male or female, young or old.



*Stay in Manjri Mafi***The Companions Choose among the Plans**

On January 21st, mimeographed copies of the above plans and conditions were read out and distributed among the sixteen men. Baba then called a meeting in His upstairs room in the Mahant's bungalow on the afternoon of the 23rd. Serious and lengthy discussions took place between Baba and the men, continuing almost non-stop over the next two days. Many explanations and clarifications were given, and each companion pondered his own nature and abilities to determine which plan would be suitable.

In the end, Plan I-A, which Baba preferred, was dropped, as there was not the required unanimous approval. In the case of Plan I-B, the companions tried, after much discussion and with hints and suggestions from Baba, to come to a consensus of acceptance, taking into account individual and collective viewpoints. When this plan was on the verge of being given up, Donkin, with Baba's encouragement, came forward and offered to carry it out. To help with this plan, 5,000 rupees and the animals were placed at his disposal. He was to stay in Dehra Dun and set up a medical practice. Since Kaka was ill at the time and Gustadji was too old to work, they were allowed of their own free choice to join Donkin under this plan, and he would look after them.

Much to the surprise of the other companions, Ghani, Anna 104, Babadas and Adi Sr. decided on Plan I-C. In this plan, they would return to their homes to lead the New Life, independent of the companions remaining with Baba. They could earn money by taking up a job or starting a business. Their earnings, left over after personal expenses, were to be taken out and sent to the remaining companions. They had to give up hope of ever seeing Baba again or even of keeping in touch with Him through correspondence. Baba promised each of them 500 rupees to start the plan, and later He sent the following note to Keki who had returned to Delhi, saying, "Hand over to Adi the amount of rupees 2,000 that is with you. M.S. Irani." Keki had been keeping this amount for Baba who signed the note with His own signature, which Keki kept as a special memento.

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Rarely, in other phases of Baba's life, had a disciple ever left His physical company, unless sent away by Baba Himself for work or some other purpose. The fact that these four companions chose to return home shows how difficult the physical and mental conditions were during the New Life. Adi, for one, found it impossible to understand what Baba's purpose was in leading the New Life. Years later, he described this period as "the most difficult, crushing time of my life with Meher Baba."

No one among the companions wanted to join Plan II, as it meant no longer being under Baba's guidance.

The remaining eight companions – Nilu, Pendu, Baidul, Eruch, Murli, Vishnu, Sadashiv and Aloba – chose Plan III. This plan was for those who were prepared to follow all of the original conditions stated in the first New Life meeting at Meherabad on August 15th, 1949. Mehera, Mani, Goher and Meheru were to stay with Baba in Manjri Mafi and continue following His instructions and the original conditions.

On the 24th, Baba reiterated the conditions which were to govern all of the companions regardless of the plan chosen by each one. An oath was taken by those in Plan I-B and I-C in Baba's presence, and the oath originally taken on August 31st, 1949, was re-affirmed by the remaining companions who would be in Plan III. For all of the companions, the different injunctions of the plan chosen by each had to be carried out sincerely and wholeheartedly.

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The entrance to the Mahant's bungalow, where Ghani, Babadas, Adi and Anna 104 said goodbye to Baba and the other companions

A New Phase of the New Life

On the morning of January 25th, 1950, at the gate to the Mahant's palatial bungalow, Baba embraced Ghani, Adi Sr., Anna 104 and Babadas before they left for their respective homes to carry out Plan I-C. Adi had tears in his eyes as he accepted Baba's embrace. He knew that according to the conditions, he and the others might never see Baba and the companions again. As Ghani turned to leave, Baba snatched away his walking stick, the one Minoo Kharas had given the doctor at the start of the New Life. (Minoo was deeply touched when he later learned that his stick made it through the New Life).

A half hour after Adi, Ghani, Babadas and Anna 104 had left, Baba called the remaining men to His upstairs room to discuss Plan III:

You should put your heart and soul into this plan and work it out without doubts, without suspicions and without hesitation. I will be very strict with you from the 1st of March and will send away those who are careless about the conditions and those who disobey my orders.

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Baba appointed Vishnu as manager of the household and set aside money to meet the expenses of the companions' food and other necessities until the end of February.

He said, "Once the allotted sum is spent, I will send out all the companions under Plan III to beg and eat cooked food according to the new conditions of begging, except Gustadji and Kaka, who are in Plan I-B. Dr. Donkin will provide food and other necessities for Kaka and Gustadji till the endless end, as he is the responsible head under Plan I-B."

Baba gave the job of selling the animals, tongas and some of the carts to Pendu and Sadashiv, who attempted to do this work on behalf of Donkin. Only the bullock cart, the caravan and Raja were to be kept.

Aloba, Murli and Baidul were given the duty of cooking; Eruch was to do the women's marketing, and Nilu was to look after Kaka's health and continue the New Life diary, which had been Ghani's job.

Kaikobad, who had been in Manjri Mafi for some time, continued to repeat God's name 100,000 times a day.

Kaka was bedridden for a few days in Manjri Mafi after his heart attack, but one day, in a depressed mood, he decided to leave the New Life and end his life elsewhere.

Without a cent in his pocket and without informing anyone, he began walking in the direction of Rishikesh, intending to go to Kali Kamaliwala Ashram, where food was provided. Setting out, he asked directions from a man who was kind enough to walk with him in order to show the way.



Kaka Baria and Baba, 1935

After going some distance, they passed a restaurant where the man invited Kaka to join him for tea, but Kaka, being without money, had to decline, and so he walked on by himself. After covering at least six miles, he stopped at a stream for a drink. He was exhausted, so he sat down on the ground and

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pondered the New Life conditions and his oath and he began to have second thoughts. He suddenly felt that he must return to Manjri Mafi right away. He stood up and looked around to get his bearing, and to his amazement, he realized that he was on the exact spot from where he had started that morning.

It was evening when he returned, having been away for hours, which was unprecedented in the New Life. He immediately went to see Baba and told Him about his attempted escape.

"Where will you go?" Baba asked, "You cannot go anywhere. You cannot even die. You fool, you still have a long time to live!"

Despite how difficult the New Life had become for him to endure, Baba's response gave Kaka the strength to go on.

Daily Life in Manjri Mafi

Kumar and his family had become close to Baba during this period. Baba even had Donkin and Nilu administer to the health of their son when the boy had fallen ill. Kumar, who was helpful to Baba in every way he could, wanted to join the New Life, but Baba told him to wait because he still had much work to do on the property.

After Todi Singh and his family left, Subhadra and some of the village women again took over the task of providing meals. One day, though Subhadra knew little about Baba, she revealed to the women that she felt "as if I am cooking for God." (Later, the women companions were given the duty of cooking for everyone.)

In the evening of the 25th, Baba instructed Nilu, Vishnu, Murli, Sadashiv, Pendu, Aloba and Baidul to keep watch in one hour shifts throughout the night near the women's quarters.

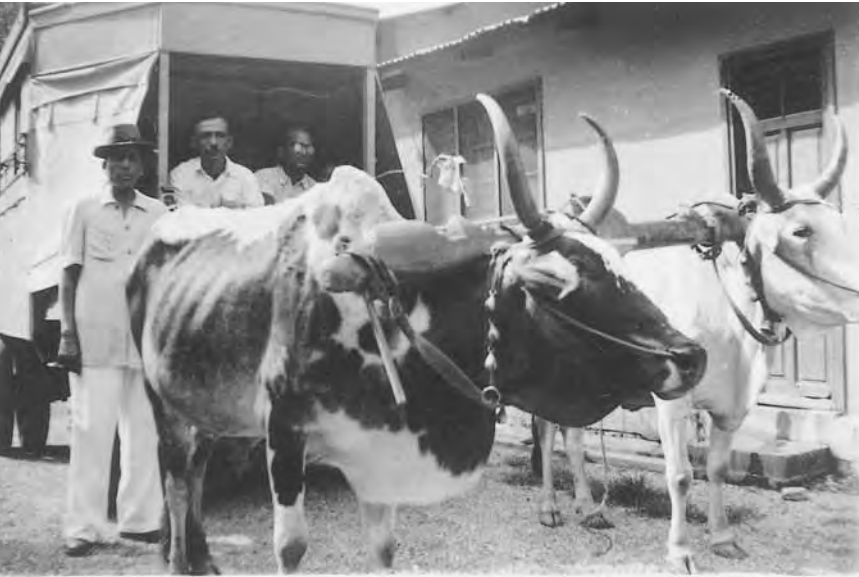
Later that evening, Elcha Mistry, Keka Nalavala and Burjor Chacha, who were close friends, arrived from Dehra Dun to see Baba. Baba would refer to Elcha, who had a great wit, as His "court jester." Keka and Burjor were business partners, and their families lived together in the same house.

Baba pointed out to these close ones that He would no longer accept food in bhiksha in large quantities as He had done over the previous months. This sort of begging, He said, "looked like a compromise between the Old and New Life."

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He also told them that they were free to come and see Him when convenient, but they should not bring anyone else with them, because He was not seeing any outsiders.

Baba was referring to an incident the previous evening when Homi, Minoo Kharas' brother, brought a friend with him to have Baba's darshan. Baba had asked Homi at this time to read *The Song of the New Life* carefully, and Homi told Baba afterwards that he had no more need to read the song as he was already having His darshan in his dreams. Baba's immediate reply was that He had no concern with such experiences, nor was He responsible for them.



*Elcha Mistry, Keki Nalavala and Shatrugna Kumar in the New Life caravan
driven by the two bullocks, Raja and Vizier*

Baba also made it clear to Keka that He was not responsible for an earlier incident where Keka had a miraculous escape from death. (When Keka was returning home from the hill station at Chakravta, he suddenly lost control of his car; the tie rod of his steering mechanism broke at a dangerous curve in the hills. Hitting the brakes, he came to a stop within inches of a steep precipice, saving the whole party of people with him from a fall of hundreds of feet to the valley below. He attributed his good fortune to Baba's intervention).

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Before Keka, Elcha and Burjor left, Baba asked them to search for a bungalow in Dehra Dun where Donkin could set up a medical practice according to the conditions set down in Plan I-B. Baba then told Donkin to go to Bombay in a few days to purchase surgical instruments, a typewriter for Mani, and sewing supplies for the women.

Throughout the night of the 25th, it rained heavily. The next morning it was cold and overcast when Vishnu, Pendu, Baidul and Sadashiv left early for town to try to find a buyer for the animals and carts.

Around 10:00 a.m. on the 26th, Baba called the remaining men to His room and asked Eruch to read them a telegram sent from Dattu Mehendarge at the office in Ahmednagar. In it, Dattu reported he had not received any word from Elizabeth and Norina in three months regarding His promised visit to the West. At this meeting, Baba also reiterated His intention to contact sadhus and religious seekers at the Kumbha Mela, but had not yet decided who would accompany Him.

Around noon, Baba had a detailed talk with Donkin about Plan I-B after He learned that Keka Nalavala and Elcha Mistry found a bungalow to rent that would be suitable for use as Donkin's dispensary.

The bungalow was located opposite Keka's own residence on Lytton Road, where Gustadji and Kaka, both in poor health, were eventually to stay with Donkin under his care. For the time being, however, they were at Manjri Mafi, and it was arranged that Donkin would pay 150 rupees a month for their food and lodging there.

In this way, a provision was made in this Plan to care for those who are elderly, ill, disabled or destitute.

This has special relevance for future seekers. For this reason, Baba encouraged Donkin's acceptance of Plan I-B and also suggested the inclusion of Kaka and Gustadji. Similarly, Plans I-A and I-C are also significant for the future, because they provide models for individual and collective life.

In the late afternoon of the 26th, Baba, Eruch, Donkin, Nilu and Vishnu went up to the open terrace on the roof of the

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Mahant's bungalow to witness the magnificent view of the snow-covered peaks of the Mussorie Hills, lit by sunlight against a clear blue sky.



The home of Keka and Freiny Nalavala on Lytton Road

After supper, Baba joined the companions for half an hour. Gustadji, being on silence, usually entertained Baba and the others with his unique hand gestures and humorous facial expressions, but this time he had a different message. He was irritated and dismayed due to the loss of his few possessions. It turned out that when Anna 104 left the day before to return home, he mistakenly carried off Gustadji's baggage instead of his own, and it contained all of Gustadji's warm clothing and many essential belongings.

Gustadji vented all this with agitated gestures that greatly amused Baba and the other men, although they did sympathize with his situation. Fortunately, the problem was rectified a few days later when his belongings were returned.

According to the conditions set down in Plan I-B, Baba allowed for individual freedom. This now enabled Gustadji to resume his old eccentric habit of collecting bits of odds and ends, such as waste paper, matchsticks, discarded razor blades,

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brushes and cigarette butts, for which he would find some unique use. Being on silence with no specific duty, he found it very difficult to pass the time.

January 27th, after breakfast, Baba told the men that Donkin was leaving for Bombay that evening to pick up necessary supplies.



Gustadji

During this period, Mani and Meheru, who were in charge of cooking for the women, had become ill, so Baba also instructed Donkin to bring His cousin Naja back with him from Bombay to help the women. At that time, Naja was staying with Nariman and Arnavaz. She had been Baba's cook for many years and was expert in preparing delicious meals under trying conditions, with limited facilities and the

most meager provisions.

Baba made it clear that Naja had to promise to say nothing regarding the Old Life companions and be willing to return to Bombay whenever He asked.

Before stepping onto the Delhi Express, Donkin was instructed by Baba to carry out various other errands, which included going to Meherabad and Meherazad.

Baba followed a similar routine each day He was in Manjri Mafi. He arose between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. and then went downstairs and knocked on the door of the women's room. They came out immediately and met with Him before quickly washing up. Since there were no bathrooms, the women bathed in an enclosure on the veranda where it was very cold. There was no central heating inside the bungalow, even though temperatures could drop below freezing.

It was Meheru's duty to make a fire to heat water for Baba. After bathing and shaving, He joined the women for breakfast, which usually consisted of chapatis. Hot tea was sent over from the men's side.

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Then, around 5:00 a.m., Baba, sometimes carrying a umbrella, would walk over to join the men in the storeroom while they had their breakfast. He always asked how each was doing and invariably stressed the importance of obedience. Occasionally, He had Dr. Nilu recite a Sanskrit couplet praising past Avatars while He and the men stood during the recitations.

Sometimes Baba was in a light-hearted mood, but at other times He could be quite serious. Gustadji often kept the atmosphere light by entertaining Baba and the companions with humorous stories told in his inimitable way. These animated stories, usually about imaginary and preposterous happenings, always elicited laughter on those freezing mornings.

In one of the meetings, Baba said, "You may believe that I am the Avatar, God, the devil or anything or anyone you please, but you must understand that although I may live among you, as if I were your brother or friend, I will in fact be your master whom you must obey absolutely."

Meanwhile, the women cooked the main meal of the day in the large kitchen, located quite a distance from their room. Because it often rained during this time of year, the women would sometimes have to use umbrellas to get to the kitchen.

Mani was not used to cooking, so Mehera helped by showing her how to make curry with all the spices. Mehera tried to grind the spices on the stone as finely as possible for Baba's curry, but on especially cold mornings, this was extremely difficult. On those days, though Mehera washed the stone with hot water, by the time she put the spices on it to grind, they would be frozen. Grinding coconut was almost impossible, because more often than not it stuck to the stone.

At around 8:00 a.m., Baba routinely went by the kitchen to inquire, "Is the food ready?"

"Oh no, Baba, another hour yet. The rice is not ready."

"All right, I'll come back later." But He always returned after after only a few minutes.

On one very cold morning, Baba arrived at the kitchen with a sliver of ice in His hand.

"Oh Baba, you've brought ice! We are already feeling cold and frozen, and looking at the ice makes us feel even colder," Mehera chided.

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“By this you can see how very cold it is – freezing! A pail of water was forgotten outside, and this ice had formed on the surface of it.” Then, with an expert toss, Baba threw the sliver of ice across the room and out the open door.

The women were always struggling to get their hands and feet warm, especially in the mornings when their fingernails turned blue. The one doing the cooking enjoyed the privileged spot near the fire, and sometimes there would be dissension when the others wanted to crowd around.

In spite of the cold and difficulty, the curry always tasted delicious as everyone was quite hungry and eager for something hot to warm them up.

One day, Mehera persuaded Baba to allow them to buy snuff, considered to be an antiseptic against sinus colds, from which Mani frequently suffered. Baba agreed to this and the women began using it in the evenings.

Once Mehera, complaining about the cold, asked Baba, “Why did we come here in January?”

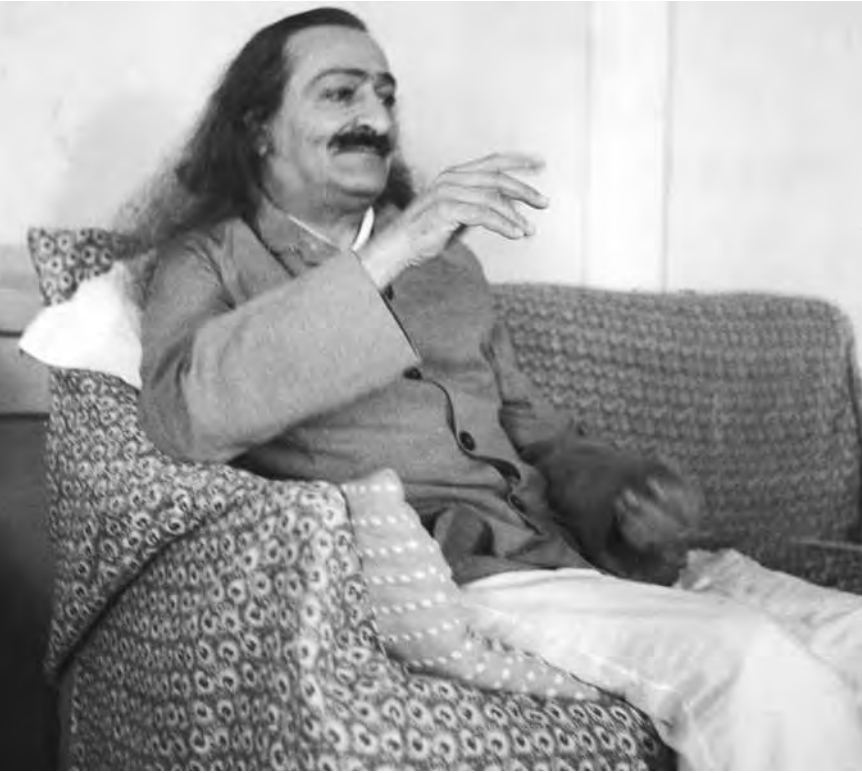
Baba did not answer her directly, but all of a sudden, Mehera, remembering the extremely dry and sweltering summers in Meherazad, promised, “Baba, however hot it now becomes in Ahmednagar, I’ll never ever complain or grumble about it again!”

Baba laughed.

During the day, Baba kept busy with various chores: Cables had to be written, finances adjusted, preparations for the work at the Khumba Mela, the setting up of Donkin’s medical practice in Dehra Dun, discussions on various aspects of the New Life, as well as all the many details of managing a household.

On a few occasions, Baba took the women to the terrace on the roof to also view the snow-capped mountains in the distance.

After evening meals, Baba visited the men, and joined them in light conversation for about half an hour before He retired for the night.

Stay in Manjri Mafi**The Rigors of Life at Manjri Mafi**

In a week's time, Baba intended to begin a special work at the Kumbha Mela. In the meantime, Pendu, with the help of Baidul, persisted in trying to sell the vehicles and animals, including the white horse. They felt so much pressure, as the cost of feeding the animals was using up the party's savings.

Prospective buyers came and went at the Mahant's bungalow, but Baba eventually objected to this, because the residence was becoming like a marketplace.

At the same time, Kaka, who was under Nilu's care with Baba taking an active part, sat out on the roof terrace in the afternoon sun everyday as part of his recuperation.

Most evenings, Baba went to the Manjri Mafi property to visit Kaikobad, who had been there for almost two months.

On the 30th of January, Baba complained of aching all over and of pain while swallowing food and water. For days, His health had been troubling Him and everyone was concerned, but He carried on in spite of health problems.

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In the late afternoon, while Baba was with the companions, He suddenly asked Sadashiv whether he wanted the money back that he had given to Baba before the start of the New Life. Sadashiv was taken aback and assured Him that he had no further interest in the money. Baba was very happy with Sadashiv's response.

On the morning of January 31st, after a heavy downpour during the night, the sun was out, warming the spirits of the companions. After breakfast, however, Baba rebuked Baidul for not responding immediately when he was summoned. Later, Nilu was taken to task when he facetiously said that Baba did not know what He was talking about. Unfortunately for him, Baba overheard and although Nilu had not meant to offend, Baba said that after March 1st such remarks would result in being sent away.

Throughout that day, Baba continued in a critical mood and lost His temper with several other companions. He was particularly upset with Eruch, Vishnu and Baidul, and later instructed Nilu to remind Him on the following day to have the companions pinch His ears four times for becoming angry with them.

The morning of February 1st was cold and overcast with dark, low-hanging clouds. Baba joined the men after breakfast and began by praising Nilu for remaining firm in his decision to stick with Baba under Plan III. Many of the other companions had changed their minds several times, and this was particularly true of Pendu, who came in for Baba's criticism.

Later, Nilu reminded Baba about losing His temper on the previous day, so Baba asked each companion to come forward and pinch His ears.

On February 3rd, Kumar arrived with Professor Lekh Raj "Ulfat," the founder of a children's school for deaf and dumb children, known as *Nanhi Duniya* (Little World). It was to this institution that Baba decided to give the four bullocks, worth 2,500 rupees, and the professor had come to pick them up.

Baba remarked on the school's effort to foster and nurture good qualities, saying, "Your work done for innocent children is worthy of praise in the eyes of God. Carry on bravely and leave the results to God."

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Pendu and Baidul, who had left early in the morning for town, finally succeeded in selling the tongas and the white horse for 1200 rupees, an amount fixed by Baba considerably below their real value. At first, Baba did not want to sell the white horse, because it had been given in bhiksha and was Donkin's choice whether or not to keep it, but it had become necessary, because the other men could not take care of it properly. In the end, the money from the sale was given to Donkin for carrying out Plan 1-B.

All that remained now was Raja, the English bull, the caravan and the cart, which belonged to the women.

On February 4th, in reference to the cold weather that was reflected in the men's moods, Baba called them to His upstairs room at the Mahant's and spoke on the subject of moods, doubts and suspicions in relation to Plan III. "It is but natural and no one can deny," He explained, "that physical illness, lack of sleep, hunger, thirst, etc., produce mental despondency and a depressive state, which at times upsets the mood and makes one moody. This condition will not be considered as a fault, but if it arises out of anger and irritation, because of putting up with hardships, deprivations, etc., then it will be deemed a fault. Such a fault will not be tolerated.

"I have complete freedom to send those under Plan III anywhere, or order them to go under any of the other plans at any time in the future, or I might take with me a few companions wherever I go, in the East or West, leaving the rest behind somewhere. If doubts and suspicions as to these moves and orders arise in your minds due to your selfish, faulty and ill-conceived ideas and notions, then you will be considered as 'disobedients.' In the New Life under Plan III, physical stay with me has no importance and value, compared with the implicit obedience to my day-to-day orders and the 100 percent following of the original conditions."

Baba then asked the men companions to think again whether they wished to remain with Him, and all were unanimous in their determination to stay.

Turning to another subject, Baba said, "I had entered into an agreement with Elizabeth for some help which she had agreed to

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give. On this basis, I have promised her to pay a visit to the West, provided she agreed to two conditions – firstly, to see that the course of the New Life is not interfered with, and secondly, to bear the expenses for me and the companions going with me and their maintenance abroad. I have entered the New Life from October 16th, 1949, and it will continue endlessly whether I stay in the East or the West.”

(Prior to this, Elizabeth donated a large amount of money for Baba’s work, and He had promised to visit the center in America that He instructed her to develop for Him.)

Baba consulted Jamnadas, the Mahant, about finding a suitable bungalow in the area of Hardwar, where He and a few companions could stay during March and April, while attending the Kumbha Mela festival in Hardwar. Jamnadas suggested the small village of Motichur, about five miles from Hardwar.

On Sunday, February 5th, Virendra Pandey, Dehra Dun’s District Information Officer, drove Eruch 35 miles south to Motichur to a house belonging to a friend. Because it was an old vacant bungalow in a run-down condition, the owner did not want to charge rent. However, when this was conveyed to Baba, He insisted on paying 400 rupees for repairs to the house, remarking, “I do not want to take on any *boja* [financial burden] in the New Life.”

This same day, Baba sent Baidul to Rishikesh and Hardwar to make inquiries about masts and saints in the area and to visit the camps of sadhus and mahatmas.

During the time Baba and the companions were at the Mahant’s bungalow, Kumar, along with other members of his family, became very sick. Kumar developed bronchial pneumonia and was given injections of penicillin and told to remain in bed. The diagnosis was that overwork had caused his illness. Still, he was restless about the unfinished construction work and could not relax even after Baba told him not to worry. Fortunately, after a week, he recovered from the illness and was back at work.

On February 10th, Donkin arrived with Naja from Bombay. Though Donkin was not supposed to refer to anything from the Old Life, with Baba’s permission he said that he had learned

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from Nariman and Meherjee that Sadashiv's signature was required before his property could be sold and the deed transferred to the new owner. Because the money from the sale of that property was to go toward the expenses of the New Life, Baba sent Sadashiv to Poona to settle the matter and return within two months.

*Baba's cousin, Naja*

Over the next several days, it was extremely cold. Ice formed in the water buckets, and the rotating night watchmen outside the women's quarters heavily bundled themselves against the frigid conditions.

The day for the men usually began between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. during this period and despite their warm clothing, they were so cold that they got up several times in the middle of the night and stomped their feet in an effort to keep from freezing.

Baba's Fifty-Sixth Birthday

On February 12th, Baba joined the men for an early breakfast at 5:00 a.m. in the storeroom on the Mahant's property, which was used for meetings. When Baba was making His usual inquiries about how each had spent the night, Nilu said he could not sleep, because, "It is cold, cold, cold!"

Baba responded with this little rhyme:

*We are neither young nor old,
Our everything is sold,
Neither we have silver nor gold,
There is the New Life all told!*

Donkin chimed in:

From 1st March, it will unfold.

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And Baba ended with:

*For those who are real bold,
Conditions hundred percent to hold.*

According to the Zoroastrian calendar, this was the date of Baba's 56th birthday, and He wanted to have an intimate gathering. To celebrate, He invited about twenty local followers who lived nearby. Among them were Elcha Mistry, Burjor Chacha and his wife Shiroom, the Kumars and the Nalavalas, including their children.

For the occasion, Naja and the other women companions prepared *rava*, a special sweet dish, and bhajyas.

Baba served the rava and prasad to each one. Because of His happy mood, an atmosphere of deep peace prevailed in spite of the cold, and the families who had been invited were most honored and grateful to have this rare opportunity to be with Baba. Baba's face was radiant that day, and His eyes were "dancing with joy".

Two days later, Baba sent Baidul and Satyapal Gangaram, Kumar's servant boy, to Rishikesh with the container of water that Sadashiv had brought earlier from Hardwar. They were instructed to pour the water into the Ganges and return with two large containers of fresh Ganges water, which Baba intended to use for bathing. He did not give any explanation for this instruction, but it was assumed to be linked to His work with the many hordes of pilgrims going to both Hardwar and Rishikesh during the Kumbha Mela to dip their bodies in the Ganges. Baba also instructed them to pick up two young goats.

This same day, Donkin departed for Dehra Dun to set up his medical practice. Everyone wished him success, and Baba came out to shake hands with him before he left.

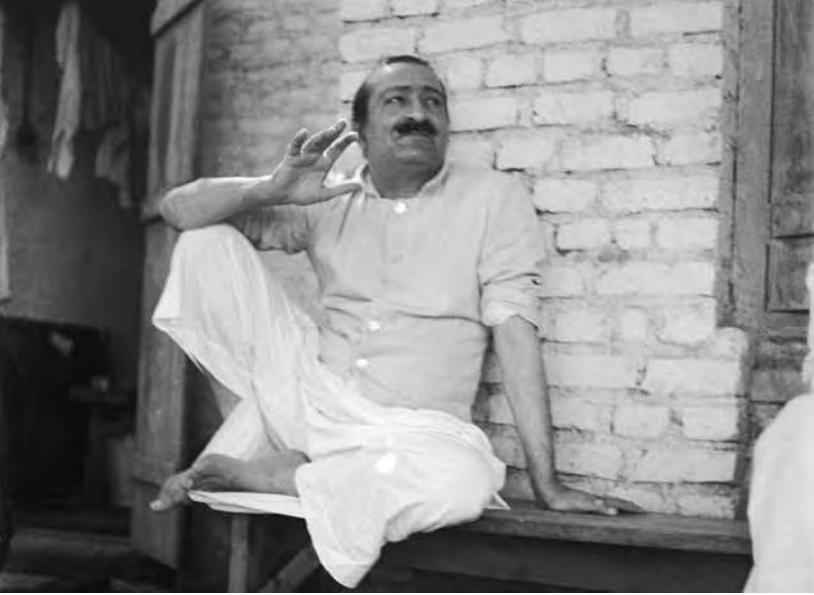
Baba continued to inspect the construction work, each time causing Kumar to feel more and more pressured, as Baba wanted it completed by the end of the month so everyone could move in by the first week of March.

During this period, the local villagers heard of Baba's presence in the area and came to Him in large numbers for medical

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treatment. He instructed Murli, who was a qualified homeopathic doctor, to dispense medicine to them so that He would not be disturbed.

The sun shone brilliantly on the morning of the 15th when Baidul and Satyapal returned from Rishikesh with the large containers of water from the Ganges. Though they had been able to bring the water, they had not found any goats.



Around noon, Baba took a bath with the water from the Ganges from one of the cans and set the other aside to be used on March 1st. Baba again did not offer any explanation about the significance of bathing with this water, nor did He mention why He had wanted goats.

On February 16th, after breakfast, Baba asked each of the companions to slap Him for becoming angry with Meheru the previous day. The companions complied, but as always it was a painful order to carry out, yet the slightest hesitation on their part would have meant a serious failure to obey Baba's orders implicitly.

Later that day, while returning along the road with Dr. Nilu from a visit to the Manjri Mafi property, a woman approached Baba. With tears in her eyes, she begged Him to help her son who was very ill from a serious bout of dysentery during the

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night and had vomited nearly twenty times. Hearing this, Baba immediately sent Nilu to examine him.

Nilu was shocked by the poverty in the house and in the rest of the village, but despite his depressed feelings, he was able to treat the boy who recovered in a few days.

Some time later, this boy came to the Mahant's house to thank Nilu, but Nilu insisted that his rapid recovery was all due to Baba's kindness.

Later, the mother and son had the fortunate opportunity to express their gratitude to Baba in person when they happened to run into Him along the same road where the mother had first begged for His help for her son.



Dr. Nilu

On the 18th of February, Virendra Patel drove Baba, Eruch, Kumar and Keka to see the property at Motichur village. After inspecting the bungalow's repairs, He gave instructions for a hut to be built, and then Baba asked to be driven to Hardwar, four miles away, to meet the owner, Sansarchand Gohal.

Two days later, Baba had a morning meeting with the men to go over the implications and importance of the New Life conditions. The

meeting turned out to be an entire day spent in discussion. The upshot was a list of 34 conditions that were later typed up by Mani to be distributed as a circular in India, Pakistan and Ceylon. Referring to the spirit expected of anyone wishing to follow the New Life, Baba dictated:

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Although the New Life has emerged from me, I am not at all bound by it. Plans I, II and III of the New Life, with their four phases of labor, begging, gypsy and lan-goti life, will function as long as I am physically alive.

But this New Life is endless. Even after my physical death, it will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust; and who, to accomplish all this, do no lustful actions, do no harm to anyone, do no backbiting, do not seek material possessions or power, who accept no homage, neither covet honor nor shun disgrace, and fear no one and nothing; by those who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of loving, who believe in the lovers of God and in the reality of Manifestation, and yet do not expect any spiritual or material reward, who do not let go the hand of Truth, and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and wholeheartedly face all hardships with 100 percent cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed, and religious ceremonies.

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.

Author's note: The New Life is the life of the seeker – the life of emancipation, or of knowing Illusion (*Maya*) as Illusion. The creation of the universes in Illusion is the eternal sport (*leela*) of God; everything progresses toward God, at first unconsciously, and then in the last stages, consciously. For the one who, with full faith and love, and at any cost, belongs consciously to God and lives the New Life until its culmination in *Manonash* (the annihilation of the mind), this New Life is eternal.

For the world also, the New Life is eternal. So long as there are universes, creation and the New Life are endless. Thus, even if no one in the world lives the New Life, it is still there because it is the means of getting free from Illusion, and to become free from Illusion is the goal of all life.

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Continuing about the plans, Baba said:

My New Life companions in Plan III will have to abide by the following:

1. In this New Life of complete renunciation, you will be utterly at the mercy of all kinds of good and bad treatment that may be meted out to you by others. Whatever happens, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.

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2. If your dependents or your business or private affairs of the Old Life suffer in any way, you and you alone will be held responsible before God. In considering this responsibility, you must take it for granted that you will have no opportunity to keep in touch with your dependents or others by visits, letters, telegrams, etc.
3. If due to physical or mental exhaustion, exposure to extremes of weather, lack of food, bad food, lack of water, infection of any kind, etc., you fall ill or die, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.
4. If you should disobey me, and I send you away from me, you will not hold me responsible before God for your future, whatever that future may bring. If also, without any fault on your part, I should send you away from me, you will not hold me responsible before God. In this latter case, however, your spiritual connection with me will remain, and I will give you definite instructions which you will have to obey. I may even send you into the New Life Plan I-B or I-C or Plan II without giving you any capital that is required for these plans, and you should carry it out with wholehearted honesty.
5. If, as a result of your having been sent away by me, you should take any misguided step, such as becoming addicted to alcohol or other drugs, or if you should commit any desperate act such as suicide, or anything that may lead sooner or later to your death, you and you alone will be held responsible before God.
6. You must take it as an absolute and unqualified certainty that you will not receive even the slightest spiritual or material benefit, or indeed any benefit whatsoever. On the contrary, you must be prepared for every kind of disappointment and adversity.
7. I might go from place to place on foot, or stay indefinitely at any place. Wherever I go or wherever I stay, you should be with me, unless otherwise ordered.
8. In this New Life, you must not expect me to humor you or make any concessions to your weaknesses. On the contrary, you are expected to humor me.

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9. You should not expect me to have my *nazar* (spiritual eye) on you or that I will perform “miracles” or use my “spiritual key” to protect and save you from illness, danger, imprisonment, death or from difficulties and disasters of any kind. Indeed, I may become so defenseless that I may be unable even to help myself.
10. You may believe me to be the Avatar, God, the devil or anything or anyone you please, but you must understand that although I live among you as if I were your brother or friend, I will, in fact, be your Master, whom you must obey absolutely.
11. I may give you an order at any time, which you must obey. Such order, however, will not be of a “spiritual nature” (for example, meditation, etc.), and you must not expect so-called spiritual instructions from me. You will have to obey any order I give you, and you must understand that I might order you to do anything to my own person, such as spit on me, kick me, abuse me, etc., and you will have to obey such orders without hesitation. I might also place my head on your feet, or might wash your feet, and you must not object or hesitate or show any emotion should I do anything of this kind. Should you show the slightest objection, hesitation or emotion in any of these contingencies, I might send you away from me.
12. You will have to obey instantly and implicitly any order, whether ordinary or extraordinary, given by me.
13. Any instructions given by me should be immediately carried out, if genuinely, honestly and sincerely thought to be my serious order, giving greater importance to the work entrusted than to the time given; and you can draw my attention if the entrusted work is liable to delay.
14. You can also draw my attention, when absolutely necessary, in the interest of Plan III.
15. If more than one order is given by me at one and the same time, the order that you think to be more important should be carried out first.

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16. You should not, under any circumstances, argue with me, but can explain the situation when asked by me.
17. You should not suggest anything unless I tell you to do so.
18. You must always try to keep cheerful.
19. You will not touch women, and you will not commit any lustful action with anyone, male or female, young or old; but you may talk to women when necessary.
20. You will not touch money, and you will not accept money from anyone, nor give it to anyone, even to me. But when I give money to you for some work, you can deal with it amongst those Plan III-wallas who are given permission to touch money.
21. You will not discuss politics.
22. You will not express anger to anyone by word or deed, whatever the provocation may be.
23. You will not criticize anyone unfairly, either to his face or behind his back. Although you may at times feel anger in your mind, you must never express it by word or deed.
24. You will tell no lies. Everything will be frank, clear and open. There will, for example, be no evasion of the truth if you are asked who you are or who Baba is.
25. You will not accept homage from anyone nor create circumstances that might invite homage to you. If, however, without having invited it, homage is given to you, it must be repaid action for action to the giver. Should I place my head on your feet or wash your feet, etc., this will be an order, and you should not consider it as homage.
26. You must not create circumstances that might invite homage to me.
27. Your inheritance, if any, should be given to me for the companions in Plan III.
28. I desire not to accept anything, except money, for the companions in Plan III from the companions in I-B, I-C and Plan II.

Stay in Manjri Mafi

29. The New Life is endless and limitless, and can be led in both Eastern and Western hemispheres. The New Life consists of four phases: labor, begging, gypsy and life in langoti. The companions of Plan III will not go through the labor phase (which will be carried out by the companions in Plan I-B and I-C and Plan II). By labor is meant working for and earning one's own livelihood. The Plan III-wallas, therefore, will see to their maintenance either by begging or on what is given to them by the companions in Plan I-B, I-C and Plan II.
30. As any time factor has no concern with the New Life, begging, gypsy life and life in langoti can be done at any time, either individually or collectively, or not done at all, according to my instructions.
31. You will beg only for your own food when ordered by me. This food must be such that it is already cooked, or does not need to be cooked before eating.
32. You will neither beg for nor accept in bhiksha anything but your own food. Also, you must not accept anything that is offered without your begging.
33. You can accept tea and tobacco in any form only from the companions in the New Life.
34. If, unconsciously or without meaning to do so, you break any of these orders or any other order, I will forgive you, and will not consider thoughts of lust, anger, greed, et cetera, as mistakes.

It must be clearly understood that, although every order listed here is absolutely binding on you, I am not only not bound by any order or condition, but I am also absolutely free for all time to give any order to you, and that such orders might change or even nullify any or all of these orders and conditions.

The one and only thing, however, in which I am not only not free, but deliberately bind myself, is regarding the conditions to the effect that you must take it as an absolute certainty that you will not receive the slightest benefit of any kind whatsoever, and that you must be

Stay in Manjri Mafi

prepared for every kind of disappointment or adversity. This condition will stand for all time and will never be changed or nullified by me.

It must, in addition, be absolutely clear that I will also never give any order that will absolve you of your individual responsibility before God for any consequences that may follow. Thus, you must take it as an absolute certainty that the responsibility before God for each and every consequence rests for all time wholly and solely with you and you alone, and that I will never give an order that will change or nullify this responsibility.

Author's commentary: The above conditions give a clear blueprint of a life of total hopelessness. To be without hope is to enter the spiritual path, whereas to have hope for progress on the path is a subtle form of binding. He who follows orders with the hope of progress binds himself with hope, for he does not obey purely out of love, but is motivated by hope of gaining something. The carrying out of orders should be without hope of any material or spiritual benefit, and then only emerges the state of hopelessness, which is a high state.

However, besides being hopeless, there should also be no thought or consciousness about being in that state. The seeker should dedicate the result of any work to God, and when this is done, he must not be affected by the result, good or bad. If he is moved or affected by the result, it indicates that he has not fully dedicated the result to God.

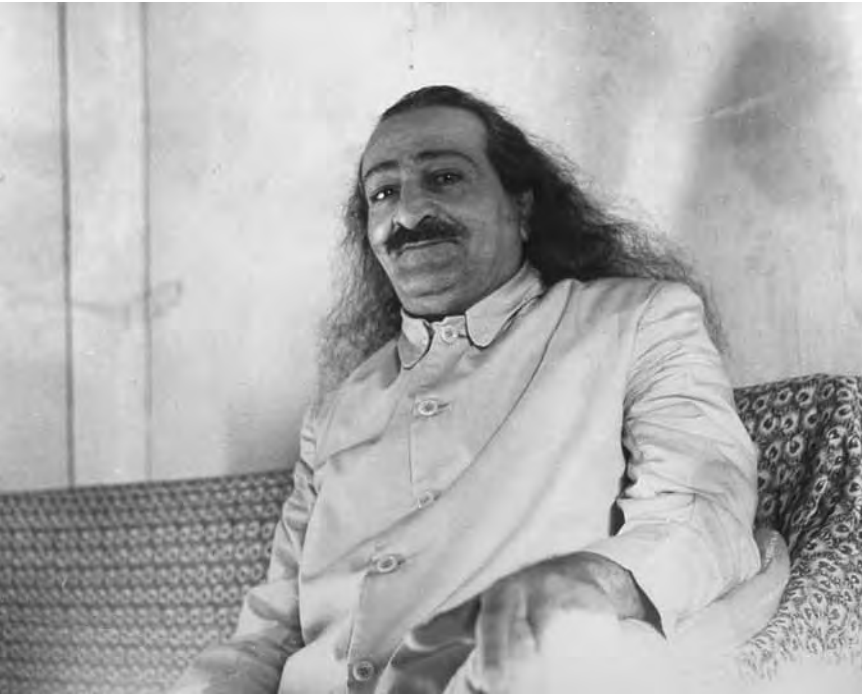
The companions took an oath to follow the conditions and orders before God the Impersonal, and these conditions were about individual responsibility. The purpose of requiring individual responsibility is because a person is inclined to throw all responsibility on the Master and thereby never acquire the virtue of hopelessness. But the seeker who leaves the result of everything to God remains unmoved by favorable and unfavorable circumstances and therefore is unaffected, in which case there is no question of responsibility. He does not hold Baba responsible for anything. If he were to do so, then he could not be said to remain unaffected, and he would not be dedicating the result to God.

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Everything happens according to Baba's will, and He is responsible for that in every way. If the seeker has full trust in His will, then he will cheerfully accept anything that happens and will not throw the burden on Baba, since that would mean that he does not follow and accept the will of God.

There is no question of the seeker's responsibility when he leaves his responsibility to Baba and becomes a plaything in His hands, dancing to His tune (complete obedience). But he who is influenced and affected by circumstances and results of action takes upon himself the responsibility and binding.

Therefore, Baba taught the companions a lesson in not hoping for anything by making them individually responsible. And he who lives without hope develops detachment from any responsibility, and in this way, his responsibility is not binding on him.



The New Life is a life of helplessness and hopelessness. The seeker has to become so immune to helplessness that all the vices – lust, anger, greed, selfishness, jealousy, egoism, etc. – have no hold on one's consciousness. This state can be achieved

Stay in Manjri Mafi

by being without hope, combined with love for the Master. Only a hero can achieve the state of complete helplessness and hopelessness, and out of millions of seekers, only one succeeds.

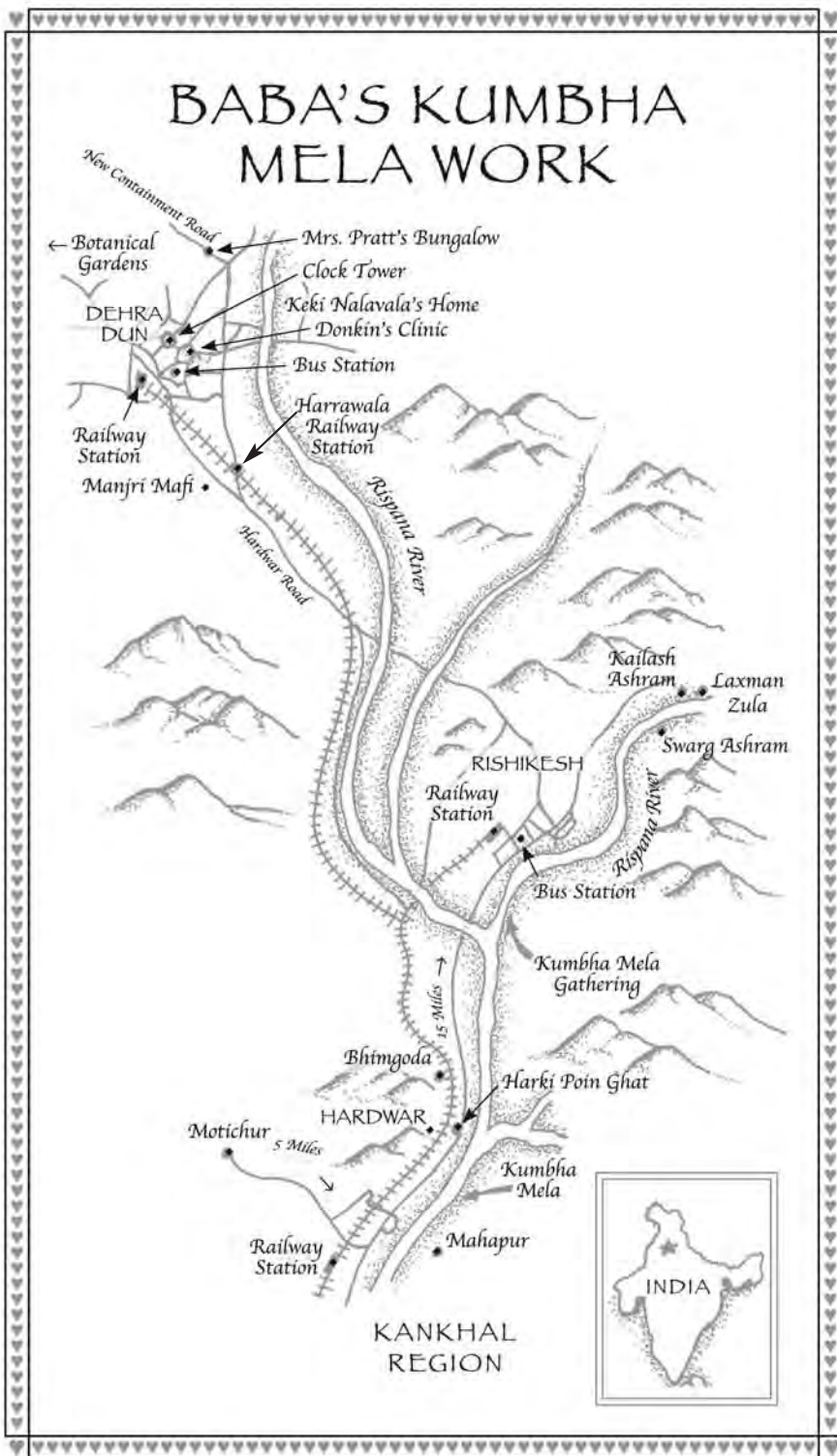
All of the companions had been with Baba for years in the Old Life, and they were mistaken if they thought they had achieved helplessness and hopelessness during that time. All the way from Benares to Dehra Dun, they faced their lack of preparedness for this, over and over again. From their experiences of great difficulty and hardship emerged the three plans.

Baba had to show the world how to live the New Life, and He used the companions as His medium. For this reason, He categorized them by placing them in the different plans.

In the New Life, Baba Himself became a seeker, and therefore He required the companions to be responsible before God (the Absolute). It was His divine sport (Leela) that, being God in human form, He chose to play the role of the perfect seeker.



Sadashiv Patel and Baba



Chapter Eight

BABA'S KUMBHA MELA WORK

March and April, 1950

Move to Motichur

In the middle of February, the heavy cover of fog in the mornings was replaced by bright, sunny skies and on some days, the melodious songs of sparrows and parrots filled the air, but it was still quite cold.

When Kumar came to see Baba on February 17th, he told Him that he had run into Babadas by chance near the Dehra Dun railway station, and Babadas asked him to urgently request that Baba permit him to meet with Eruch at Keka Nalavala's house. Baba agreed, but He sent Vishnu instead of Eruch. After the meeting, Vishnu reported back to Baba that Babadas wished to enter into a business contract worth 200,000 rupees and wanted Baba's permission to approach some of His Old Life followers. Baba replied by messenger that Babadas was to faithfully carry out Plan I-C and stand on his own feet, either by starting a business or taking a job.

Several days later, Adi sent Baba 1,000 rupees that he had acquired in an insurance business. This contribution was in accordance with Plan I-C, which stated that any money over and above necessary personal expenses was to be sent to Baba and the companions. Adi's contribution was happily received, as the New Life finances were very low. Baba sent a special cable to Adi, expressing His appreciation. A quarter of that contribution went to the women and the remainder to the men. Another offering in bhiksha came from Was Deo Kain in Delhi. Due to a misunderstanding, Kain had not heard that Baba was no longer accepting bhiksha after January 25th. When he heard, he wrote a pleading letter to Keki Desai to ask Baba to allow Kain to send items in bhiksha after the deadline. Baba permitted it, and on the 23rd of February, Keki brought Kain's offering of cotton shirts, soap, combs and pajamas, which Baba promptly distributed to

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

the companions. Afterward, in a lighthearted gesture, Baba lit up a cigarette, took a puff and handed it to Eruch, who was a smoker. Baba told Keki not to tell Keka Nalavala that He had smoked, because Keka, an orthodox Parsi, objected to smoking on religious grounds.

February 25th was Baba's birthday according to the Christian calendar. For the occasion, Baba served dinner to the companions with His own hands.

Regarding other future plans, Baba sent a letter through Dr. Donkin to Elizabeth Patterson in which He promised to come to America whenever she invited Him. She was to let Him know as soon as possible the month and year that would be most convenient. He indicated that July 1950 would be the earliest possible time for the visit, because of His Kumbha Mela work. He also said that when He was in America, she was to see that His New Life was uninterrupted, which meant: "No Master, no disciples, no blessings, no grace, no receptions and no interviews."

Through the tireless efforts of Kumar, the construction work on the Manjri Mafi property was completed, and the women were moved there on February 26th. This property, which now became the headquarters of the New Life, was situated in beautiful rural surroundings with a view of a long range of heavily forested mountains in the distance.

The women's cottage and the men's large hut were located 100 yards away from each other and were surrounded by farms and sugarcane fields that were being prepared for spring planting. A narrow road ran through the fields and past the cottage as it wound its way down to the village of Manjri Mafi, which had a population of about 600 people.

The women's cottage was so small that there was only space for two cots in the room where Mehera and Mani stayed. The adjoining room scarcely had space for Goher, Meheru and Naja to spread out. Due to the continuing cold weather, Baba allowed the women to sleep on cots, and sometime later, Baba moved from the Mahant's bungalow to join the women. There, He chose a walled-off space on the veranda where there was so little room that Mehera and Mani could hardly make His bed.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

In the kitchen, there was really only space for Naja and one helper, but the five women and Baba often huddled together inside to catch the warmth of the fire and eat their breakfast.

The day the caravan was brought by the men to the property, the women asked for it to serve as a screen from the men's quarters and provide them some privacy when they were outside during the day. The men agreed, and Goher proceeded to direct the caravan's placement. As the men were backing up, they came too close to the overhanging branches of a papaya tree, causing a number of heavy, unripe papayas to be knocked down. Suddenly, the women heard Goher yell out in pain. They ran out and realized that several of the papayas had landed on her head, but instead of stopping to attend to her injury, Goher was gathering the fallen melons, calling out to Naja, "Look what I've got! Couldn't you cook them?"

The women immediately took the papayas into the kitchen, knowing that when cooked, they would provide a delicious change from their usual plain fare. Every penny saved counted. The bruises on Goher's head, however, gave her pain for months afterwards.



The cottage in Manjri Mafi where Baba and the women stayed

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

A close-up of the cottage. The small window to the left belongs to the room where Baba stayed

The women remained in Manjri Mafi for more than two months. During that time, Baba often stayed in seclusion in His room while strict quiet was maintained. Not the slightest sound could be made, not even the usual noises involved in cooking meals. At other times, Baba took the women for long walks in the lush countryside.

In the first week of March, Vishnu, Kaka and Nilu moved to the men's quarters in Manjri Mafi, even though the cement floor still had not dried. Baba suggested that they spread hay on the floor as protection against the dampness.

It took nearly a month for the floor to dry completely, and the grass had to be replaced again and again when it became too damp.

Baba also asked Kaikobad to move to the hut, and He appointed Kumar to provide his meals and hot tea until the end of March. Kaikobad still had to keep repeating God's name.

While in Manjri Mafi, Baba instructed Vishnu to do the marketing for the women and Dr. Nilu to see to their other needs, as well as to Kaka's health.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work



The interior of Baba's room



The well at Manjri Mafi

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work*The hut where the men stayed*

Since it was Baba's intention to move to Motichur to be near the Kumbha Mela, He visited the property there several times to inspect the repairs to the cottage and see to the building of a small thatched hut that He planned to use for some special work. Baba intended for the men to stay in tents. He said that He planned to move on March 3rd with the remaining companions – Eruch, Gustadji, Baidul, Murli, Pendu and Aloha – and to stay for two months.

On February 28th, at 2:30 p.m., the opening ceremony of Donkin's consulting clinic in Dehra Dun took place. Its interior looked like an English sitting room. Baba and the men and women companions attended the ceremony, along with a number of His close ones from the area.

In the presence of everyone, Baba gave a short talk in which He explained that Dr. Donkin would be starting his practice as a consulting physician in fulfillment of Plan I-B of the New Life. Afterward, Baba personally served cakes, pastry, rava and hot tea to everyone.

Freiny Nalavala and Shiroo Chacha had prepared the rava and also helped to decorate the clinic for the occasion. At their

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

fervent request, Baba consented to visit their homes on His way back to Manjri Mafi. At the Nalavalas' house, Baba, accompanied by the women companions, played with their two children, Naosherwan, age four, and Mahroakh, age nine. When Freiny complained about Keka's continual habit of worrying, Baba smiled and spelled out for Keka, "If you worry about yourself, God doesn't worry about you. And why should He? If you stop worrying, God has to begin to worry for you! Remember Him wholeheartedly; leave your troubles to Him. Then you will be free to remain cheerful!"



Baba begging at the home of Keka Nalavala, March 1, 1950. Eruch is holding the umbrella, while Elcha Mistry looks on (first photo taken that day).

In the early afternoon of March 1st, Baba cut a lock of hair from each of the companions with a pair of scissors, and then He took a second bath with the water from the Ganges.

Later, Baba and the companions were invited to Kumar's home for a dinner that had been prepared by Freiny Nalavala and given in bhiksha. *Dhansak*, a Parsi dish, was served.

To this dinner, Baba and the men wore their white kafnis, green turbans and white canvas shoes. Burjor Chacha, who was also invited, secretly took two photographs of the occasion.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work*Second photo taken that day*

Back at the cottage, Baba attended to correspondence relating to Sadashiv Patel and to Manek Mehta, who was supposed to have joined the New Life. Then, over some matter, Baba became angry with Nilu, Vishnu, Eruch, Murli and Aloba, and He ordered all the companions to slap Him.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

The next day, Baba settled household problems with the women and made arrangements for them before He set off to Motichur for His Kumbha Mela work.

At one point in the afternoon, Baba became annoyed with Vishnu for breaking His order when he showed up five minutes late. He asked Vishnu to slap Him in the face in the presence of Kumar and Goher, who happened to be there. Vishnu carried out the order without the least hesitation.

Before leaving, Baba had Goher inoculate Him and the men against typhoid and cholera, which was required by the government for anyone visiting the Kumbha Mela.

Although the women remained secluded, Goher was allowed to interact with the men as a doctor and as a liaison.

During this period, the women were very busy. Preparing meals was particularly time-consuming because of the primitive conditions at Manjri Mafi. Water had to be carried from the well, firewood for the improvised stove had to be collected from the fields, and spices had to be ground by hand. In addition, the women were also responsible for washing Baba's clothes. They used their little spare time to embroider and fashion toys, which they hoped to sell as a contribution to the the New Life.

In Manjri Mafi, Baba had tea with the women in the afternoons around 2:00 p.m., and Subhadra, Kumar's wife, often joined them.

One night during this period, while the women were in bed, Goher suddenly screamed and the others rushed to her, only to find that she was upset by a cockroach on her cot.

A little while later, playing on Goher's sensitivity to vermin, Mani fashioned a lizard out of flour and water. Since the droppings of lizards in India are poisonous, she figured this would unravel Goher. She spent hours shaping the dough, letting it dry and then painting it. She was such a skillful artist that the lizard looked completely real. When she had finished it, she let the other women in on her planned practical joke.

She then placed the lizard on Goher's cot. Later, when Goher spotted it, she yelled out in fright and then hurriedly removed the lizard and disinfected her sleeping area.

The women witnessed her response, and telling Goher it was just joke, everyone had a great laugh.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

Later, Mani put the lizard into a little box, and when Baba came around, she showed it to Him. So impressed with how real it looked, He took it to show the men who, like Goher, were convinced it was real.

March 3rd, the day set for the move to the village of Motichur, Baba ordered all of the men to come to Him after they had washed their feet. He then bowed down to each one and asked their forgiveness for any hurt feelings He may have caused them and in turn He forgave them for any mistakes they may have committed.

He then told them, "During the period between October 16th, 1949, and March 1st, 1950, I have committed consciously and deliberately one big mistake, and I want the companions to kick me so that God forgives me." From each of the companions in turn, Baba received a stout kick, but He did not disclose the nature of the big mistake.

Baba ended by warning the companions to try their best, sincerely and honestly, to follow the conditions of Plan III 100 percent. This would require them to be *sawadb* (alert) around the clock.

"If I find you committing mistakes consciously," He explained, "I will not check or correct you. For the next two or three months, I will not even draw your attention to them, as I and you will go on a furlough of two months. After this period, I will, according to the efforts of individual companions, either send you away as a defaulter or make you lead either Plans I-B, C or II. This decision will help me make sure that I have not compromised my oath and conditions during the furlough period, which will not have any concern with the conditions that are to be followed 100 percent. It will only be concerned with the individual efforts, alertness and sincerity of those of you under Plan III."

Before leaving Manjri Mafi that day, Baba gave last minute instructions to the companions not going with Him. The women were told to cook for the men staying behind, Vishnu was told to do the marketing, and Nilu was to oversee everyone's health.

A little after noon, Baba, Gustadji, Eruch, Keka Nalavala and Keki Desai left Manjri Mafi on foot for Harawala railway station, which was two miles away.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

Baba asked Keki to hold an umbrella over His head while walking. Aloba and Baidul followed the others in a bullock cart with some of the luggage. The remaining luggage was being brought by Pendu and Murli, who Baba instructed to go by bullock cart the 35 miles to Motichur.

At the train station, Baba and the men rested in a small waiting room. Baba sat in a chair, while the men occupied a wooden bench. Since there was ample time before the train arrived from Dehra Dun, Baba ordered tea for the whole party, which Eruch and Keki bought at a nearby tea shop. At one point, Baba drew the companions' attention to a wooden plank hanging precariously from the roof of the waiting room, remarking how it reminded Him of the sword of Damocles. He was referring to an ancient legend where a Greek king, to demonstrate the perils of a ruler's life, had a courtier at a royal feast sit under a sword hanging by a single hair right above his head.

Similarly, the companions enjoyed the feast of Baba's company, with the exacting conditions of the New Life perpetually hanging above their heads!



The Harawala railway platform near Manjri Mafi

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

Baba sent Keka Nalavala to book two berths in a third-class compartment on the Amritsar passenger train. Since Harawala station was very small, it did not have a proper platform for boarding. Therefore, when the train finally arrived, it stopped for only two minutes. The whole party quickly climbed aboard, but there was only time to load half of the luggage, so Baba ordered Baidul to wait for the next train in order to bring the rest of the luggage.

After Baba and the men were situated in their compartment, two beggars came by asking for bhiksha. One was an old man who was singing a line from a Hindi song, "*Ram chale van vas Ayodhya royae*," which means, "When Ram went into exile for fourteen years, the people of Ayodhya wept."

Hearing these words, Keki compared the song to Baba's wanderings in the New Life, but Baba gestured for him to keep quiet and give the beggars a few coins.

When they reached Raiwala Junction station an hour later, the men rented a truck and driver, loaded the luggage and then climbed on the back where they rode standing up. Baba sat in front with the driver. They arrived at the cottage at Motichur around 5 p.m., and Baba paid the driver twenty rupees for the short ride.

Since the Motichur cottage was to be their headquarters for more than a month, Baba was pleased to see that the repairs were completed and that a tent was pitched and the grass hut had been erected. He immediately began sweeping out the one-room cottage and arranging His belongings.

That first evening, He personally served the men a meal of chapatis and potato vegetable patties, which had been prepared earlier by the women at Manjri Mafi. Afterward, Baba indicated that He wanted to wash His hands, so Keki immediately broke open his new bar of soap and offered it to Him. (After using it, Baba returned the soap to Keki, who later kept it as a souvenir.)

Tea was served, accompanied by singing, laughter and revelry from the nearby village, where the local people were celebrating *Holi*, a Hindu holiday. Baba then retired to the cottage while the companions slept out on the open veranda, where there was no furniture, not even a bed.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

On the morning of March 4th, the companions arranged their belongings and took care of preparations for their stay.

Baba took a bath and then sat alone in seclusion in the grass hut for about half an hour while Keki Desai and Keka Nalavala stood watch outside. He told the men later that He had re-confirmed His oath and the conditions of the New Life during that time in the hut.

Baba gave instructions that from then on they would have only one meal a day of dal and chapatis, but tea with milk would be served in the morning, along with chapatis if there were any left from the previous night.

After giving those instructions, afternoon tea was served without milk, and the two Kekis prepared to return home the next day.

While in Motichur, Baba lived like the other companions. He washed His clothes, cleaned His utensils and pots, swept out His room and cleaned His commode.

On March 5th, Pendu and Murli arrived after a strenuous journey by bullock cart.

The next day, necessary provisions such as fuel, charcoal and food were purchased nearby in Hardwar.

The time of the Kumbha Mela was quickly approaching. Already many thousands of *sadhus* (seekers), saints and mahatmas were pouring onto the banks of the Ganges near Hardwar and Rishikesh. The majority had traveled on foot, but a few came on elephants. Only here and there could be found a genuine acetic, who had meditated for years on God while undergoing great austerities and prolonged fasts.

The Kumbha Mela, attended by millions, occurs every twelve years. It is an ancient festival and has its origin in Hindu mythology. The legend says that when the ocean was stirred up by the gods and demons, fourteen mysterious things emerged. One of the very last things was the *Kumbha of Amrit*, a pitcher of nectar, which was said to bestow immortality. A struggle then ensued between the gods and demons for its possession. In the end, as the pitcher was being carried up to heaven by the victorious gods, a few drops of nectar were spilled, falling into the rivers at Nasik, Ujjain, Allahabad and Hardwar. For this reason,

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

these places are sacred to millions of Hindus in their search for immortality.

On March 7th, Baba set out with Eruch, Gustadji and Pendu in the direction of the ancient town of Hardwar, which is built on the bank of the Ganges where the river emerges in its final rapids from the mountains.

It was in this picturesque region, full of ashrams, bathing ghats and temples, that Baba intended to carry out His work at the Kumbha Mela.



Ancient temples along the Ganges at Hardwar

En route to Hardwar on foot, Baba sent some of the companions off in different directions to inquire about the names and locations of sadhus, saints and mahatmas expected to be at

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

the Mela. (He initially planned to begin His work of contacting them around the middle of March.)

*Bridge at Hardwar*

That evening, Pendu told Baba that he saw a fine sadhu by the side of the spring where the companions had filled their water jugs.

Baba went there immediately and approached the sadhu, bowing down at his feet. He then invited the sadhu to come to the cottage for rest and food. At first the sadhu refused, but after an hour he relented, and Baba had a long talk with him using His alphabet board.

Kumbha Mela Work

On the afternoon of March 9th, Baba, accompanied by Eruch, Gustadji, Pendu and Baidul, went by bus to Rishikesh dressed incognito, which He always did when searching for sadhus, saints and mahatmas. (See map on page 356.)

In Rishikesh, He found large numbers of these souls in the Kailash (Hindu) and Mangal (Buddhist) Ashrams. Baba contacted each one, touched their feet with His hands and sometimes

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

He placed His head on their feet or bowed His head in salutation to them.

In the Old Life, He asked His disciples to keep at a distance when He made these contacts, but in the New Life everything was done in the presence of the companions.

Baba and the men then made a long trek to Swarg Ashram, the village of Laxman Zula and the Bhagirathi River to make further contacts.

On the way back to Rishikesh, they witnessed a yogi prostrating himself at every step as he inched his way toward a nearby shrine. Although his naked body was filthy and covered with bleeding sores, Baba approached him and placed His head at the yogi's feet.

On this first day, Baba made 91 contacts in five hours. Pendu was in charge of recording how many contacts Baba made.

From Rishikesh, Baba and the companions took a bus back to Motichur, arriving there around 6:30 p.m. Their hunger was so great that the dinner of rice and dal tasted like ambrosia.

Later, referring to His work at the Mela, Baba explained that He was "contacting each holy man only once, not twice, and with this one physical contact, I will bestow such a gift unto them, which they would not have gained after centuries of penance and austerities."

At 7:00 a.m. the next day, Baba and the four men again took the bus to Rishikesh. From there, they went on foot for miles through the mountainous region, where Baba, over the next five hours, contacted 135 saints, sadhus and mahatmas. By early that afternoon, the companions were back in Motichur.

On March 11th, after a week's stay in Motichur, Baba decided to make a two-day visit to Manjri Mafi in order to see those who were staying there. He left with Pendu and arrived a little after midday to find that everyone had been eagerly awaiting Him since early that morning.

Donkin had come especially from Dehra Dun to see Him. When Baba inquired about his practice, it became obvious that Donkin was anxious because he had very few patients.

In response to Donkin's concerns, Baba said, "Don't worry in the least about earning money. If patients come, well and

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

good; if they do not, don't be anxious about it. Don't economize regarding your food; eat well, and keep healthy and fit."



Laxman Zula near Rishikesh, where the Ganges emerges from the Himalayas. Water was taken from here for Baba's bath.



Laxman Zula bridge over the Ganges

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

Keka Nalavala had been given the job of bringing patients to Donkin's clinic, and although Donkin had succeeded in curing several supposedly incurable patients, most of the treatments in his practice were done at his own expense.

Just the day before seeing Baba at Manjri Mafi, Donkin wrote a revealing letter to Elizabeth Patterson at Baba's Center in Myrtle Beach. In an excerpt from his communication, he said,

As far as Baba's New Life goes, not one of us can make head or tail of it. Even the "3rd plan" people, now with Baba, do not expect to be there long and Baba has openly told them that He does not want them with Him. It is all a mystery, a mystery and again a mystery, and very difficult both for those who are with Baba and for those away from Him.

I went into Plan B (taking a temporary job), since that is what I felt Baba wanted me to do, but whether it is a frightful waste of money I really don't know. Also, I don't know, as you can realize, how long Baba will let me keep at it (practicing medicine in Dehra Dun), whether for a month, a year or a lifetime.... As far as Baba Himself goes, He is as adorable as ever....

Baba made further inquiries concerning the other companions in Manjri Mafi. He was especially happy to hear that Kaka's health under Dr. Nilu's treatment had greatly improved and that he had completely recovered from his heart trouble and was taking an eight-mile walk every day without feeling tired.

Vishnu was reprimanded by Baba for doing the women's marketing himself rather than having Kumar take care of it. He explained to Baba that he had misunderstood the order, so Baba pardoned him.

Baba also attended to various other matters that had cropped up while He was away. Sadashiv had cabled from Poona with regard to the transfer of his property there, and Baba sent him a reply. Manek Mehta asked Baba for more time to decide about joining the New Life. Baba gave him until the end of April. Ghani, against Baba's instructions, had written about his financial situation, concerning which Baba had previously agreed to

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

help by paying him 35,000 rupees for his wife's land by the end of 1950. There were also additional matters brought to Baba's attention during the visit to Manjri Mafi.

Donkin had received a letter from Adi detailing a plan to buy a hotel just opposite his residence, which would require an investment of 10,000 rupees. If Adi could obtain that amount and if Pendu were available to help, together they could manage the hotel and use the earnings to support Baba and the companions in the New Life.



Dr. Donkin in front of his clinic

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

In response to this letter, Baba asked Donkin to convey to Adi that it was not right for him to suggest having Pendu as a partner; the fate of those in Plan III was to be decided by Him alone. However, Adi could borrow the money on his own responsibility. Baba ended by pardoning him because of his 100 percent sincerity, honesty and faithfulness to Plan I-C.

Later, Vishnu and Dr. Nilu came in for Baba's rebuke when He heard that they had been using water from outside and not from the well situated on the property. They claimed that the well water was foul-smelling due to the rains.

"Since the women use this water," Baba said, "why can't you drink it? This is disobedience to my orders, and both of you should rub your noses on the ground as punishment!"

In the presence of Kumar and Goher, they rubbed their noses on the ground. They had to do so immediately, without offering a word in defense or giving an explanation to justify their action, unless asked by Baba. It later became known that the well water was, in fact, not safe to drink.

On the morning of March 13th, after two days in Manjri Mafi, Baba left for Motichur in a rented station wagon, bringing the woman companions with Him. The sky was cloudy and the air chilly and damp. This was the women's first visit to Motichur. When they arrived, Baba gave them a tour of the grounds, His cottage, the grass hut where He went into seclusion and the men's quarters. Then He joined the women for a lunch they had prepared and had some of their delicious food sent to the men.

After lunch, Baba took the women to see the ancient city of Hardwar. They passed ashrams and ghats that were built on rocky wooded terrain and returned exhilarated after an hour. They then enjoyed an afternoon tea the men had prepared.

A little later, Naja, who had been with the women companions for several weeks, accidentally said that Rano and Kitty had teaching jobs in Bombay. Immediately realizing her mistake, she apologized, yet Baba ordered her to leave at once for having mentioned news about the Old Life, but He soon forgave her.

While Baba was with the women, Eruch and Baidul were searching for other ashrams and sadhu camps in the area at Baba's instruction.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

The women left in the early afternoon, and soon after, Baba received Eruch's and Baidul's report.

On March 15th at 5:00 a.m., despite the incessant rain, lightning and thunder, Baba decided to walk to the places detailed in the report. For the next eight hours without break, trudging along muddy roads, Baba and the companions combed every hut, ashram and secluded spot in the mountainous areas of Kankhal and Hardwar in search of sadhus, saints and mahatmas.

When they arrived back in Motichur in the late afternoon, they were exhausted and hungry. They had not eaten nor had anything to drink except for a cup of tea before they set out.

At 10:00 a.m. the next day, Baba, Eruch, Pendu, Baidul and Gustadji went to *Saat Sarovar* (Seven Lakes). In this region, the river passed through a heavily forested area, and along its banks were many huts and hermitages inhabited by sadhus, saints and mahatmas of the Dandi and Viraki sects.

Baba contacted 160 of these souls, laying His head at their feet. One acetic, who was observing silence, offered Baba and the men a special drink made with sherbet syrup. At one hermitage, while waiting for another acetic to finish meditating in his hut, Baba sat under a tree and shared the following:

During the Old Life, I used to contact masts, saints, walis and sadhus for two reasons: The first was to take their darshan, and the second was in regard to my special work with them – and that I do not want to reveal, for it is a mystery. I was very particular then to keep an accurate record of my contacts with big important masts, saints and walis, and I would contact them again and again to the full extent until I was completely satisfied with the work done.

But now, in the New Life, there will be no distinction between big or small masts, saints, walis and sadhus, nor is there any special work left to be done with them. I go to them only for their darshan, and keep records for my personal satisfaction. Nevertheless, I must emphasize that this work is not just a pastime; it has definite significance for me and a reason behind it.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

Baba and the men returned to Motichur at 4:00 p.m. Baba was especially hungry and became angry with Satyapal, the servant boy, for not having the rice ready on time. Satyapal had been doing the cooking while Alopa was sick. For losing His temper, Baba asked each of the companions to come forward and twist His ear.

The next day, March 17th, Baba, Eruch, Pendu, Baidul and Gustadji returned to Saat Sarovar, where Baba completed His work there by bowing down to 400 anchorites. This brought the total to 794 contacts in eight days.

As Baba and the men were walking back to Motichur that afternoon, Eruch and Pendu saw two crows mating. Eruch remarked jokingly, "Both of us will die now, for it is said that those who see crows mating die!"

"Is that so?" Baba retorted. "Then what to do? My Kumbha Mela work is pending, and if you both cross over, what will happen? Is there no remedy to save you?"

"There is a way out. If any of our relatives or acquaintances are informed of our death, we will be saved!" Eruch answered, quoting the prevailing superstition.

Baba then told Eruch and Pendu to send a wire announcing their deaths to Keki Desai in Delhi.

Eruch had no idea that his lighthearted remark would rebound on him like this. Now, despite his exhaustion, he had to walk four miles back to Hardwar to send off a wire that he knew would create a great shock to his and Pendu's families.

The day after dispatching that horrendous news, Baba told Eruch to retrace his steps and dispatch another telegram to Keki, this time stating that he and Pendu were still alive.

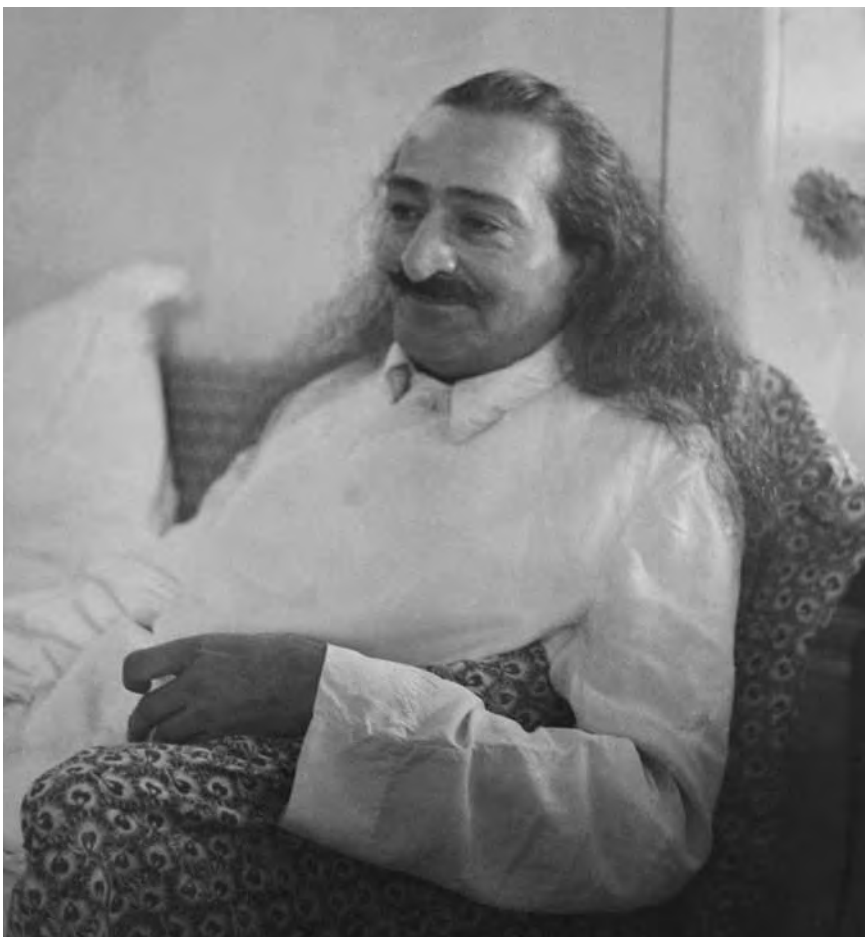
Ironically, due to some delay, the second cable arrived before the first one, so Keki realized the absurdity of the whole situation and the joke stopped in Delhi, with no harm done and Keki laughing.

The next day, Baba and the four companions went to Kankhal to contact the mahants of the Chaitanya Deva Ashram, and outside the village of Marghat, they visited a sect of mahatmas known as the Udasi.

Altogether, Baba made 418 contacts on this day.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

Returning to Motichur late in the evening, Baba explained to the companions, "My work at the Kumbha Mela is, in a way, related to spirituality, although in the New Life we have nothing to do with spirituality. In the past, such holy places as we visited today were once permeated with spirituality, but anyone going on a pilgrimage to them these days will find a complete absence of any so-called spiritual atmosphere."



In bowing down so frequently, Baba developed a severe strain in His back and neck. Still, He went on with the work. His eyes also were aggravated by an infection, conjunctivitis, which He picked up during the thousands of contacts made at the Mela. The conjunctivitis created such serious problems for Baba

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

that Goher finally took Him to an eye specialist, who prescribed a penicillin ointment. However, Baba had a very severe allergic reaction to the medication, which only made His eyes worse.

Baba also lived with another eye condition, a strange gritty sensation, which was to plague Him for months. Sometimes, His eyes were so red with inflammation that the mere sight of them brought the women to tears.

In addition, the long walks on an empty stomach, along with the constant bowing down, weakened Baba considerably. Yet when engaged in His work, He was agile and as quick as lightning. With each contact, after bowing down, He did not linger for even a moment, but at the end of those exhausting days, Baba's feet were often dragging.

One day, after Baba had bowed down to the head of one of the ashrams, He quickly turned and left, neglecting to receive the prasad being offered.

At the end of the day, realizing His mistake, He said to the companions, "I feel I should have accepted the prasad, then and there, that was offered by the Mahant."

Eruch said, "What you think is right, Baba. I personally feel that in the spirit of the New Life, it should have been accepted."

Thereupon, Baba asked Eruch to return to the ashram and apologize to the Mahant on behalf of his Elder Brother. Eruch met the Mahant who was happy to offer the prasad again, and later, with His own hand, Baba distributed it to the men.

On Sunday, March 19th, Baba and the four men made their way to Kankhal in the area near the Kharkhadi River, which was about a mile from the village of Bhimgoda. There, He bowed to sadhus and mahatmas who were members of the Udasi and Nirmali sects, bringing the total contacts to 1,325.

During this period, the companions were increasingly concerned about Baba's exhausted state and sought to relieve Him of some of the travel on foot. They argued that Raja, the English bull, was not getting proper exercise and could easily be hitched to the bullock cart and used for transporting Baba to and from Hardwar.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

To their great dismay, Baba saw through their ploy, but He agreed that Raja needed exercise, so he assigned Murli the duty of taking the cart every day to Hardwar to purchase fodder.

One day, as Murli was returning from Hardwar to Motichur with the cart full of fodder, Raja suddenly stopped in the middle of the road and refused to move.

At that precise moment, a car pulled up behind them on the narrow road. Murli turned and saw that it was driven by a British officer who was with his family and apparently in quite a hurry to pass, because he kept honking his horn again and again, but in spite of Murli's best efforts, Raja still refused to leave the middle of the road.

Finally, the officer drove his car around the cart along the shoulder of the road and then deliberately stopped in front of the cart, shouting, "Didn't you understand that there was a car behind you? Don't you understand there is other traffic on the road other than you? Why don't you take your cart to the shoulder of the road and give passage to cars?"

In response to the officer's sarcasm, Murli jumped down from the cart, walked over to the car and replied in the little English he knew, "Sir, I am an Indian, and the



Murli Kale

bull is an English bull. Somehow or other, he does not seem to understand my language. Will you please explain your instructions to him so he will bear it in mind for the future?"

With that, the whole family, including the officer, broke into laughter and the episode ended happily.

That evening, Baba and the other companions took great delight in hearing Murli's rendition of the episode.

Later, Baba suddenly decided that Raja should be given away as a donation to some worthy institution.

*Baba's Kumbha Mela Work***Another Brief Visit to Manjri Mafi**

On March 20th, Baba took a break from the Mela work and visited Manjri Mafi for a second time. Again, traveling with Pendu, He arrived at about 1:00 p.m. and went to the women's cottage for lunch while Pendu went to eat with the men.

In the afternoon, Baba left the women to join the men, and when He entered their quarters, Dr. Nilu instantly noticed the heavy strain that the Kumbha Mela work was having on Baba's health. Yet, as Nilu wrote later, "Although He looked thin in the face, His whole personality was surcharged with energy and vitality, with radiant face and shining eyes, stirring the whole atmosphere vibrating with various feelings and emotions."

Sitting on Nilu's bed, Baba inquired about the health of each one. He was especially happy with Kaka's continuing recovery. He then gave instructions to Vishnu, Nilu, Kumar and others in regard to their daily work. He also said that although He was physically run down due to the exhausting work of contacting thousands of sadhus, mahatmas and saints, He felt "internally a hundred percent happy."

Describing to the men the conditions He was working under during this period, Baba said, "At Motichur, all natural elements and other forces are against me. Strong winds blow continuously with cloudy skies frequently bringing sharp showers of rain. The water arrangement at our place is very inconvenient, and there is no shade for protection against the elements. The tent pitched for the companions, and the hut for me, afford poor accommodation and shelter, and our daily diet, consisting of one meal a day of only dal and chapatis and tea twice, morning and afternoon – all these add up to difficulties for me. But I do not care about such inconveniences and hardships where my work is concerned."

The rest of the day, Baba spent doing correspondence and giving instructions about certain repairs to be done to the women's cottage. The printed copies of the *Three Plans* arrived, sent by Adi Sr. Through such publications and the New Life Circulars, Baba kept in touch with His followers around the world, even though He had said at the start of the New Life that all communication from Him would be discontinued.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

The next morning at 4:00 a.m., the men were up. It was *Jamshedi Naoroz*, the Zoroastrian New Year's Day. Being up that early had not been difficult, because a strong gale had raged through the night, shaking the trees, which, coupled with the bitter cold, had prevented them from getting much sleep.

When Baba came to the men's quarters at 6:00 a.m., they wished Him a happy "*Naoroz Mubarak*."

For the holiday, Mehera and Meheru spent hours making *falooda*, a Zoroastrian sweet drink, which is traditionally served on New Year's. It is made from the water of soaked wheat, to which is added a little milk and rosewater syrup. This was a special and unexpected treat for the companions. Later, while sitting with the men in their quarters, Baba complained about the persistent gritty sensation in His eyes. Dr. Goher was called, and she and Nilu examined Him and recommended a course of treatment, but it did little to help.

By mid-morning, Donkin, Keka Nalavala, Elcha Mistry and Kumar arrived on bicycles from Dehra Dun, despite the winds, thunder and lightning filling the sky. Baba embraced each one, and Donkin offered Him fruits for the occasion of "*Jamshedi Naoroz*."

Baba joked with Kumar about the peculiar weather of his region. Kumar quipped that his area had not been singled out, because the whole world was seeing strange weather conditions.

In a light mood, Baba continued to make humorous comments about each one. In the evening, He played draughts with Kumar, who won the first game, but Baba squared with him in the second. Baba then joined the women for supper.

Also on this day, Baba saw the Nalavala, Chacha and Kumar families, as well as Elcha Mistry, Hellan, Virendra Pandey and Lekh Raj, and they were all drawn closer in His love. He was especially affectionate toward the children.

The next day, Baba became upset with Adi Sr. for not including the history of Ghani's 35,000 rupees in the text of the New Life Circular No.4. The portion of Ghani's diary where he wrote about his financial situation and of Baba's guarantee of help, dictated to Vishnu, had been omitted.

On March 23rd, in a letter sent out through the arrangement-walas to 350 of His Old Life followers, Baba stated:

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According to the New Life conditions, I can neither accept money from anyone, nor give money to anyone, nor beg anything but food according to Plan III. But taking this (Ghani's 35,000 rupees) exclusively as an "Old Life" burden to be removed in the New Life, I have decided to act as follows:

I beg of my 350 Old Life friends to help me as a friend in need by each of them contributing 100 rupees toward this fund, thus making a total of Rs. 35,000.

I want everyone to understand that this is a special case concerning a New Life companion and the first and the last of its kind for me in this New Life; and also, these 350 friends are not helping Ghani, but are helping me, without the least expectation of any spiritual reward, because in this New Life the question of my being a spiritual Master does not arise. And also this does not in any way affect Dr. Ghani being my New Life companion.

The money was collected, and in this way Ghani's debt was settled, which at the same time enabled him to remain in the New Life and to support his family.

The Darshan of Lord Krishna

At 6:00 a.m., March 24th, Keka Nalavala and Elcha Mistry came in a rented taxi and took Baba and Pendu to Dehra Dun. Baba, Pendu and some of the other men continued by train to Motichur, where Baba resumed His Kumbha Mela work.

Ignoring His poor health and a heavy rain storm, Baba managed to contact 225 sadhus, saints and mahatmas by evening.

During this period, a number of people heard of Baba's stay in Motichur and came for His darshan, but Baba would rarely see anyone. However, after He returned from His work on this day, He was approached by a woman holding a baby.

Her name was Prakashwati, and she was originally from the area of the Punjab, where she had been devoted to Krishna and longed to see him. In the 1930s, her longing led her to a young girl, who people said could see and speak to Krishna. During their meeting, the girl told her, "Lord Krishna tells me that your time for His darshan has not yet come."

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Deeply disappointed by that, Prakashwati asked the girl to tell her when she would have His darshan. The girl replied, "You have to wait for years. Then, at the right time, He will give you His darshan. It will be in a thatched hut near the Ganges."

Since she lived in the Punjab, which was a great distance from the Ganges, Prakashwati could not see how she would ever be near that great river.

However, in the late 1940s, due to the partition of India and Pakistan, Prakashwati was forced to move to India, where she eventually settled in Delhi and became acquainted with Meher Baba through Kishan Singh, who brought her to meetings.

One day, Kishan Singh told her that Baba was staying near Hardwar, but it was His order that none of His followers should try to see Him in the New Life.

Since Prakashwati did not consider herself a Baba follower, she did not feel bound to obey Him, so she decided to go and see Him on her own and find out, by being in His presence, just how she felt about Him.

Without telling a soul, she left for Hardwar with her two-month-old baby, and it was late afternoon when she arrived by hired cab at the bungalow where Baba was staying in Motichur.

As she stepped out of the cab, she was filled with excitement on one hand, and on the other, she feared that Baba might not allow her to see Him.

As she approached the cottage, her first sight of Baba was of Him with His back to her as He communicated with Eruch on the alphabet board.

As she came nearer, Baba suddenly turned His full gaze on her and she felt His love go straight into her heart. Suddenly, the sight of the thatched hut and knowing that Motichur was near the Ganges brought back the words spoken to her in the 1930s by the young girl. She was overwhelmed. Here was her Lord Krishna standing before her!

Gesturing for her to come near, Baba asked where she had come from.

"Baba, I have come from the place where you have kept me," she replied, not wishing to involve Kishan Singh.

He then asked her whether anyone had informed her not to contact Him.

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"The gates of the Father's house are always open to His daughter," she answered, again evading the question.

Baba smiled, and then touching His hand to His forehead, He indicated that she was very fortunate.

When she asked Him for His blessings, Baba conveyed, "In the New Life, I give only love – not blessings – to others. And I expect love from others in return."

After a few seconds, Baba raised His hand in farewell and said, "Now, go back immediately to the place from where you have come and remember one thing: If you find anyone coming to Motichur or Dehra Dun for my darshan, stop him."

"I assure You, I will obey Your instruction, even at the cost of my life."

Baba smiled again and she turned to leave.

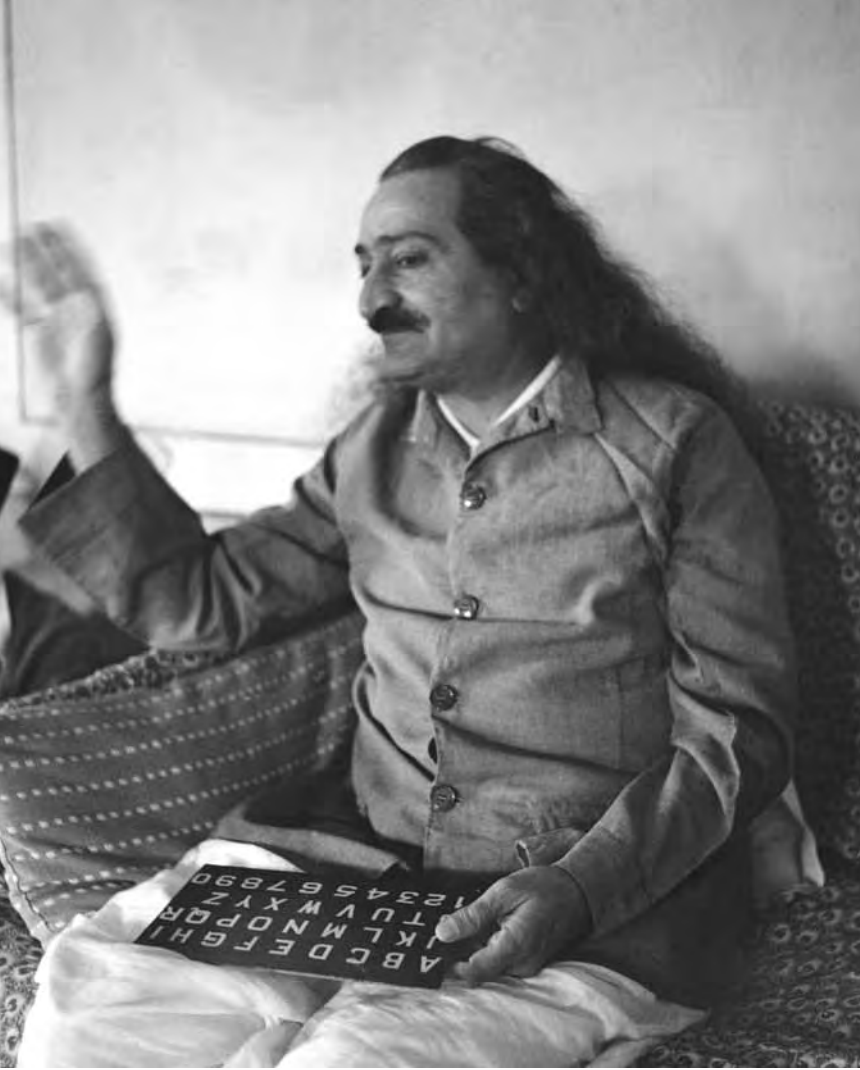
As she was stepping into the cab, Eruch came running toward her, shouting for her to stop. When he reached her, he asked, "Baba wants to know whether you know Kishan Singh and Prakashwati of Delhi?"

She was surprised and ashamed that Baba knew her identity. She shrugged as she confessed that she was Prakashwati and that she lived at Kishan Singh's residence.

At that, Eruch told her to wait while he informed Baba of this latest information.

After a few minutes, Eruch returned saying that Baba wanted to again stress to her how important it was that she dissuade anyone from coming to see Him.

When she returned to Delhi, two of Kishan Singh's relatives were just about to leave for Baba's darshan, and Prakashwati got into a heated argument as she carried out Baba's order to prevent them from going.

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work**Baba's Kumbha Mela Work Resumed**

As mentioned, during this period, Aloba was very sick. He had great difficulty digesting food and had even tried fasting, which not only made him weaker, but on one occasion, caused him to faint near the bathroom.

For this reason, Baba called for the boy, Satyapal, to help out in Aloba's place. He was a simple and sincere boy from the hill country. His duties were to guard the cottage, and, although he knew nothing about cooking, he was put in charge of preparing

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

the evening meal. With these new responsibilities, the “cook” became troubled by how emaciated the companions were looking and how tasteless their meals were, so he asked Baba if he could add ghee to the food.

Baba agreed to have a tin of ghee purchased and that evening, the men enjoyed the flavor and nourishment the ghee added to their meal.

Baba casually warned Satyapal to take care of the tin.

The next evening, when the companions returned from the Mela, they were disappointed to find that plain *dal* (lentils) and rice was on the menu again, but without ghee.

Satyapal explained sadly that during the day a dog, attracted by the smell of the clarified butter, had managed to drag the tin out of the cottage. Then, when the dog was trying to open the lid with its paws, the tin tipped over and the ghee spilled onto the ground. That attracted other dogs, and soon they all joined in and finished off the ghee in no time.

On another occasion, Satyapal again attempted to add some flavor to the meal, this time by soaking the dal in a sweet oil before cooking it, and the companions found that dal especially delicious. However, during the night they all came down with a sudden bout of diarrhea, because the sweet oil turned out to be an effective purgative. In Eruch's case, within fifteen minutes, he experienced, in his own words, “the biggest purge of my life!” After that, the companions were resigned to having plain food for dinner.

Although a terrible cook, Satyapal had other qualities that did not go unnoticed. For instance, while they were at Motichur, Eruch and Pendu, who were both smokers, ran out of cigarettes every now and then. Since they were not allowed to have any money, they could not replenish their supply, but Satyapal, who was not under New Life restrictions, saw those hapless occasions as opportunities to toss cigarettes in their direction. As Eruch and Pendu quickly picked them up, they were impressed with Satyapal's uncanny ability to provide bhiksha when needed and how that talent made up for his other shortcomings.

On the morning of March 25th, Baba and the four men again went on foot to Kankhal, where 568 contacts were made. The

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following day, 165 holy men were contacted, thus bringing the total count to 2,961. Sometimes, after returning to the cottage in the evenings, Baba, despite His exhaustion, played marbles, gilli danda or cards, which was a welcome diversion for everyone.

On Sunday, March 26th, the area known as Mayapur was visited, and Baba approached the ashrams and gathering places of a sect called the *Unstained*, contacting 937 mahatmas and sadhus there. Afterward, He was asked by a few of the chiefs in charge of the ashrams to visit their temples and take darshan of their gods and goddesses. Baba readily agreed.

After Kankhal, Baba and the men, while trudging in the forests around that area, spotted an old mahatma perched on the top limb of a tall tree. He was on the opposite bank of the Ganges, but Baba signaled for him to climb down so that He could take his darshan.

That evening, after returning to Motichur, Baba said, "My work has no real connection either with the Kumbha or its Mela. I only want to contact as many saints, sadhus and mahatmas as possible, and take their darshan. The Kumbha Mela has afforded me this opportunity, and I am taking advantage of it."

Eruch later said, in his opinion, that Baba's bowing down to these souls was His way of honoring their efforts in renouncing the world.

March 27th was considered to be one of the most auspicious days of the Kumbha Mela. Although it attracted thousands upon thousands of saints, sadhus and mahatmas to a procession down to the Ganges, Baba chose to remain at Motichur, where He washed His clothes by hand and cleaned His grass hut. He had no interest in the chanting, prayers and repetitions of mantras in which the massive crowds were involved as they immersed themselves in the water of that great river.

Early on the morning of March 28th, Baba, with Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul set out for Hardwar, where He contacted 612 sadhus and mahatmas of the Nathpanthi and Nirmali sects. At one of the camps, an old mahatma was giving a sermon on the spiritual benefit of taking darshan of saints and sadhus. Baba stood for an hour and listened to his sermon.

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Later, Baba bowed at the feet of 70 women sadhus who belonged to a sect known as the *Matajis* (Mothers). This brought Baba's total number of contacts to 4,510.

When Baba and the men returned to Motichur, Vishnu and Kumar were waiting for them. Vishnu had brought with him a telegram from Elizabeth Patterson, which Baba had read aloud to everyone.

Baba then attended to some correspondence and had Eruch write the following to Keki Desai in Delhi:

Motichur dated 28.3.50

As per last letter from Baba, Baba wants you to come to Motichur not on 2nd April, but if possible and if 100% convenient then do come to Motichur cottage on the morning of 31st March. You must see that your work does not suffer in the least by your coming here on 31st March.

Eruch
by Baba's order

That evening, Baba was in an especially playful mood and cracked jokes with the companions.

Later on, Vishnu and Kumar returned to Manjri Mafi.

March 29th was the birthday of Lord Ram, and its celebration brought more waves of holy men to Saat Sarovar. This time, Baba joined the crowds and sometimes stopped along the congested road to bow down to a sadhu or to contact some others while they were bathing in the Ganges. Altogether, 472 sadhus and mahatmas received Baba's physical touch that day.

Although Baba was becoming increasingly exhausted, He persevered in His work, remarking that He "derived a great joy from it."

On the following morning, March 30th, freezing winds blew down from the Himalayas, and because of a heavy dew, the countryside was extremely damp. This made walking more treacherous as the party set out for Hardwar at early dawn.

Though the roads were thronged with vehicles and pilgrims, Baba made one contact after another, dodging buses, cars, tongas and masses of pilgrims. He then left the road and began to

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search for holy men in obscure places and in various ashrams. Altogether, He made 921 contacts in spite of the bad conditions that day, and when Baba and the companions returned to Motichur, they could hardly walk.

Even so, they returned to Hardwar the next day despite the great exhaustion and a terrible backache that plagued Baba as He bowed down to 532 sadhus and anchorites.

Early the next morning, Keki arrived by train from Delhi and caught Baba and the companions right before they headed out to Hardwar again.

Baba halted the journey and inquired about a bag that Keki was carrying.

Keki explained that it contained fifteen kilos of rice. Since, at that time, India had a scarcity of rice and none was available in Dehra Dun, Baba graciously accepted the gift and told Keki to deposit his luggage in the cottage and then join them on that day's walk to Hardwar.



The next day, April 1st, Keki again joined Baba and the four companions as they set out at 3:00 a.m.

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As they waited at one of the sadhu and mahatma camps, an intense dispute arose between Baba and Baidul. They had a difference of opinion, which was troubling to Baba for the next two weeks. Baba was disturbed by Baidul's failure to implicitly obey His word and also to leave his Old Life habits behind. Baidul felt that since Baba was his companion as well as his Master, he could openly express his opinion, even if it was in direct opposition to Baba's.*

At dawn, Baba resumed His work of going from one camp to another, and after several hours, He had bowed down to 262 sadhus and mahatmas.

After thousands of contacts, Baba was almost at the point of physical collapse, and yet the companions were helpless to slow Him down.

April 2nd, 1950, was the date of a lunar eclipse as well as a full moon, making it an auspicious day of the Kumbha Mela. (Baba had once said that sincere prayers offered at solar and lunar eclipses do result in "spiritual benefit.")

Again, countless throngs of sadhus, mahatmas, ascetics and hermits streamed in a mad procession to the Ganges to bathe in its waters and, again, though chanting, prayers and the repetition of mantras were rampant, Baba remained at Motichur for the day. At one point, He took a bath with the water that Baidul had brought earlier from the Ganges at Hardwar.

Baba did have one unexpected contact that day when a man from Ahmedabad showed up, seeking His darshan. Although the man had been told that Baba was seeing no one, he persisted until Baba finally came out of His hut and put His head on the man's feet.

Hours before dawn on April 3rd, Keki Desai left for Delhi, and Baba began walking again to Hardwar with Eruch, Pendu, Baidul and Gustadji.

In the area near Nildhara, He contacted a number of recluses and hermits immediately after their morning baths and just before they left for their secluded meditation hideouts.

Baba then went to Kankhal, and over the next eleven hours, He walked up and down both sides of the Ganges for miles, bowing at the feet of the most austere ascetics and hermits.

*See page 397 for details of this disagreement.

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Baba was so tired by evening that He could barely stand, so He sent the men out to find some conveyance to take them back to Motichur, but not a bus or truck could be found. As a result, Baba and the men were forced to return by walking, and along the way, Baba admitted, "My whole body is aching terribly...."

The constant bowing down had put a tremendous strain on His back and neck, and He had also developed a chronic cough.

That day, He had contacted 2,965 souls, by far the most contacts He ever made in a single day.

The next morning, April 4th, ignoring His weakened physical condition, Baba set out for the area of Balwala where a number of anchorites from other areas had gathered. Accompanied by the four companions, He contacted 338 individuals, bringing His total number of contacts to 10,000.



When Pendu informed Baba of this total, He was greatly pleased, and on the walk back, Baba said that out of the thousands of sadhus, saints, and mahatmas He had contacted, only a very few possessed a real longing for God.

After Baba and the men returned to Motichur, ate a meal of rice and dal, and had a little rest, Baba started packing.

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He said, "My work at the Kumbha Mela is over. I will leave for Manjri Mafi tomorrow. You three men [Eruch, Baidul and Gustadji] will come with the baggage on April 7th, and Pendu and Murli will follow in the bullock cart."

Return to Manjri Mafi

Very early in the morning of April 5th, Baba and Pendu left Motichur and began walking the twenty miles to Harawala railway station. They arrived hours later to find Vishnu waiting with a tonga.

Pendu helped Baba into the tonga and left to return to Motichur, while Vishnu accompanied Baba to Manjri Mafi.

In the surrounding countryside, there was new foliage on the trees, fresh greenery on the ground and drifts of wildflowers of many different colors, all evidence that spring was in the air.

Baba arrived in Manjri Mafi around noon. Looking very tired, weak and unwell, He went directly to the women's cottage after sending Vishnu to the men's quarters with the message that He would join them later.

All of the companions were very happy that Baba was back, and they were also much relieved that His strenuous Kumbha Mela work was over, and that He was pleased with the result.

After lunch, Baba went to the men's quarters around 4:30 p.m., where Kaikobad, Kaka, Vishnu and Nilu were eagerly awaiting Him, but when they saw how utterly exhausted He was, they became concerned. Baba appeared completely drained, and when He walked His feet dragged. More worrisome was how much he coughed during His inquiries about the well-being of each one.

However, despite His poor health, Nilu wrote, "His face was lustrous and His eyes were brilliant. His face looked so beautiful and charming that our eyes refused to look anywhere else. The whole atmosphere was vibrating and pulsating with different emotions and feelings in our hearts."

Although Baba continued to be active, participating in discussions over the next few days and giving instructions to the companions, His health deteriorated even more. He ran a fever

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of over 100 degrees, and the cough persisted while His body continued to ache. He could hardly sleep, and the lack of rest made matters worse. Not only had the physical strain of the Kumbha Mela work taken its toll on Baba, but also the load of *sanskaras* (impressions due to past actions) He took on Himself in bowing down to so many souls greatly contributed to His deep state of exhaustion.

Goher, Nilu and Donkin consulted each other frequently about various types of medical treatment until Mehera recommended that they give Baba a gentle massage and have Him rest in bed for an hour afterward, and then follow that with a very hot bath. This was tried, and Baba did experience some relief.

During this time, Baba expressed to Kumar His concern about remaining in Manjri Mafi during the approaching monsoon season. The first rain showers had already come and they had formed large puddles of water in the surrounding countryside.

After nearly six months in the New Life, with poor diet, inadequate clothing and little sleep, the general health of all the companions had gone downhill. Each suffered with some serious discomfort: Pendu with pleurisy and pain in his chest, Eruch with lumbago and a chronic sprain in his foot, Murli with a broken wrist joint, Vishnu with a rheumatic knee, Nilu with sciatica and pain in his left knee, Aloba with weakness from fever, Kaka with heart trouble, Baidul with various bodily ailments, and Gustadji with old age and increasing weakness.

Mani suffered something similar to what Baba was experiencing, and the other women had also seen their share of ailments, including the flu, which each of them caught due to living in such close quarters. Yet through it all, Baba required them to remain cheerful!

In one of the New Life circulars, Nilu wrote, "Individual suffering and ill health may not mean much, but the collective result of the whole party's illness is not very cheerful and bright.... This weariness is due to natural and unnatural circumstances. In spite of all this, one could easily observe the genuine attempt the companions were making to maintain a cheerful face with jokes and humor amongst themselves. It is true that the companions have their innocent and harmless faults and weak-

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nesses, and why? Because they are simple human beings, and beyond that they do not claim anything.”

In the Old Life, Baba had been very solicitous of the health of the mandali, but in the New Life, for the most part, He showed little concern for His companions.

By April 10th, five days later, the move from Motichur was completed, and the remaining companions who helped Baba in His Kumbha Mela work – Gustadji, Eruch, Baidul, Pendu, Murli and Aloba – arrived in Manjri Mafi with Raja and the bullock cart.

By this time, Baba's health had also improved, and He decided to go with the women and Eruch to Hardwar on the 12th to watch the *Purna Kumbha*, a massive procession down to the holy Ganges, where the participants enter the river for the ritual bath. The rest of the companions were to follow a day later.

Since Baba had decided to give Raja away, Kumar suggested that the bull be offered to Miss Mirabehn (Madeline Slade), Mahatma Gandhi's disciple, who was in charge of *Pashu Lok* Institution, an animal farm located near Rishikesh.

Baba followed up on the suggestion and sent Pendu to see whether she could use the bullock.

Upon meeting her, Pendu was impressed with Mirabehn's aura of calm and serenity. As for Raja, Mirabehn gratefully accepted him, even though her institution had stopped using English bulls for breeding purposes. However, she insisted on paying for Raja and said she would send her servant to Manjri Mafi on April 10th to pick him up.

When Pendu returned and told Baba of his meeting with Mirabehn, Baba told him that if her servant did not arrive by the 12th, then Kumar should take the bull and give it as a donation to any institute in the name of the four women companions.

Baba Broaches a New Plan

Baba announced unexpectedly that He was going to hold an important meeting on April 11th, and He had Donkin called from Dehra Dun to attend.

All the men companions were told to be in their quarters at 7 a.m. sharp. Baba did not disclose the nature of the meeting,

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but the companions sensed that it was serious, and they stayed up late the night before to speculate about its purpose.

A tense atmosphere filled with uneasy expectation awaited Baba when He arrived at the appointed time. With His men companions seated around Him, Baba opened the meeting solemnly and then spoke at great length about the difficulties of leading the New Life.

The companions hung on His every word. Some of what He said was in criticism of Himself as well as of the companions:

I feel that every one of you in Plan III is trying his best to carry out the conditions 100 percent. I am also definitely confident that 60 percent of my Old Life habits are permanently gone, but I feel that 40 percent of them are still persisting. Therefore, naturally, I cannot send any one of you or all of you away from me, unasked or with fault or to any of the Plans I or II.

To carry out Plan III seems impossible under the circumstances due to the gulf that exists between you and me in the matter of understanding while executing the conditions of Plan III. For example, the incident that took place between Baidul and myself on the 1st of April will throw light on what I am trying to point out.

Baba then asked Eruch to read out the report of the incident at Motichur and Hardwar:

On 1st April morning, Baba and the companions left the cottage at Motichur unusually early, and Keki Desai accompanied them. Baba's work was concentrated in a few ashrams and *akhadas* that were left out purposely, allowing them time to gather the full strength of inmates who were expected to arrive before 2nd April. Baidul, who was given charge of taking Baba to every ashram and akhada for sadhus' contact, took Him into one of these akhadas; and seeing that the sadhus there were not in large numbers, tried to leave the akhada with the intention to revisit it later on. But Baba, hearing from one

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of the sadhus there, searched different tents of the sadhus, mahatmas and saints, all the while asking Baidul why He adopted the new method of hastening through the work as was his habit during the Old Life. When Baba repeated this, Baidul told Pendu that Baba had started teasing him since morning. On overhearing him, Baba asked Baidul if that was not criticizing Him. Baidul said that he was informing Pendu that Baba had lost His mood that morning. Baba then asked Eruch whether Baidul was criticizing or not, and Eruch said that he thought that Baidul was conveying some information to Pendu about Baba's state of mood that morning. It could be termed as information, rather than criticism.

Baba, hearing this, was very much annoyed and completely lost His mood. He remarked that when Baidul was criticizing His mood to Pendu, he was wrong, and Baba was not upset then. But later, He was 100 percent irritated and completely lost His mood because it had disappointed Him to know that even at this stage, all who were in Plan III had not understood the conditions that were laid down. Baba further observed that if that remark of Baidul's could be termed as a piece of information, then why were Ghani, Adi, Nilu and Donkin blamed for criticizing Him? This could only be termed as a difference in understanding, and as such could not be tolerated, as He wanted a complete "cut-off" from Old Life habits. This attitude and such statements in the New Life reminded Him of the Old Life which He detested!

Baba further said that He might be wrong and the companions' view might be right, but where there was a difference of opinion, there would always be a clash and cause for His excitement. And if He got excited, He would either keep mum and quiet over it, which would compromise His oath, or would give vent to His feelings of anger, which would not agree with the New Life conditions. In short, Baba remarked that there was no other alternative but to cancel Plan III companionship so that there would be no day-to-day orders and no interference from His side. Those under Plan III might be trying 100

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work

percent, and yet, due to a difference of understanding of Baba on the one side and of the companions on the other, there would always be a risk of Baba compromising for the companions, or getting annoyed or upset. Also, according to the understanding given to the Plan III companions at Manjri Mafi from March 1st, He ought not to have asked nor corrected Baidul whether he criticized Him or not; much less He ought not to have lost His mood and temper. From all this, it seemed impossible to continue with Plan III if His oath was to be kept 100 percent. Therefore, He decided to discontinue with Plan III without dissolving it. In future, if He liked to take anyone [outside the Old and New Life] in Plan III, He could do so.

After hearing this account of the incident that took place on April 1st, Baba resumed by saying:

I repeat that if I find any mistake on your part (which from your point of view may not be a mistake), I must either be indifferent to it, which would be against my oath, or I must send you away, which would be doubly wrong because I myself have not yet overcome my Old Life habits 100 percent. Therefore, up to March 1st, I had to take a middle course of correcting mistakes. This used to make me annoyed and so jeopardize my oath.

I am firm to my oath, even if all the companions leave me.

I, therefore, decide today definitely that from May 1st, 1950, none of you remains in Plan III. I shall remain alone to carry out the three phases of the New Life Plan III, and I order all the companions of Plan III and of Plan I-B to join a New Plan which will enable you to earn your livelihood and yet make you stay in one group near me. I shall provide this group with a capital on loan for starting this New Plan and business for maintenance. This New Plan is a 'Temporarily Restricted B Group Plan' and

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will revert to the original Plan I-B when you repay me the loan of 16,000 rupees.

My help, in the form of guidance and influence, I shall give as far as possible to make this new plan a success. I shall also help, if necessary, in securing business and residence for you, and jobs for some of the companions of this New Plan.

What ensued was a discussion lasting four hours, and in the end a decision was made that would determine the "fate and future" of the companions. Baba said that by the end of the month, He would formulate a "New Plan," and each of the companions would decide for himself whether to join it.

Naturally, this announcement created a profound stir in the minds of the companions, yet they were ready to accept the New Plan, which pleased Baba. Dr. Donkin offered to open a new clinic if Dr. Nilu, Pendu and Murli were allowed to help him, and together they would finance the entire party. Baba appreciated the idea, but He felt that the funds were lacking and that it was no longer practical to stay in Manjri Mafi with the approaching monsoons.

This is when Baba revealed His intention to shift their headquarters to Delhi, and the following instructions were sent to Keki Desai:

Call Kishan Singh, Harjiwan Lal, Was Deo Kain and Todi Singh and tell them that Baba wants a place of residence in Delhi, and that they should help you in securing it. And while doing so, they should not have the idea of service done for Baba as their Guru or Sadguru, but only with the intention of helping someone who loves them, and in return for that love, a sort of help is given. Also, they should not expect that owing to this help rendered in finding bungalows, there would be any chance for them to see Baba, come in His contact or have correspondence with Him.

If any one of them is the owner of the bungalow selected, then Baba will pay a reasonable rent, which the

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owner must accept, so that there may not be a chance of any sort of *boja* [financial indebtedness] on Baba in this New Life. No sooner this work of securing bungalows at Delhi is completed, they should not involve themselves any further in helping Baba, unless otherwise ordered by Baba to do so.

In short, no seeing Baba, no connections with Him and no correspondence when He resides at Delhi. They can, however, see or communicate with the companions staying with Him.

When the meeting was over, Baba turned to Murli and gave him the highest praise for his exemplary efforts in living up to the conditions of the New Life.

Over the previous six months, Murli had been consistently cheerful and showed unfailing determination through all the ups and downs of the New Life. He had also provided inspiration and support to the other companions.

In the presence of everyone, Baba folded His hands to Murli in recognition of his contribution. With this gesture, Baba concluded the meeting and left the men's quarters at 11 a.m.

An example of Murli's spirit of obedience is illustrated by an incident that took place at the very beginning of the New Life: Baba had been traveling to Belgaum by bus with the companions when He instructed Murli to get down at a town called Wai, and then take the next available bus and join the group later. Murli immediately followed Baba's order, nervously, because this was the place where his elder sister, who was ill, resided. He feared running into her in that small town and then having to avoid her.

While waiting at the bus stand, his worst fear came true when he suddenly saw her coming his way.

Honoring Baba's instructions, they both averted each other's eyes, but in that brief moment, Murli saw how pale and sickly she had become, yet he immediately turned his back to her and she continued on her way.

A short time later, after rejoining Baba and the men, Murli received the news that his sister had passed away. Owing to

Baba's Kumbha Mela Work*Murli*

Baba's New Life directive, he remained calm and cheerful, grateful for Baba's compassion that had provided him the opportunity to see his elder sister that one last time.

Baba returned to the men's quarters in the afternoon in a playful mood, which was in sharp contrast to the deep seriousness of the morning's meeting.

One of the greatest challenges in the New Life was to keep up a good mood in the face of Baba's sharp criticism and scolding. In spite of Eruch's alertness, enthusiasm and conscientiousness in carrying out Baba's day-to-day orders, not a single day passed without some unavoidable problem involved in running the household, and he would come in for Baba's severe rebuke.

When reprimanded, Eruch calmly admitted his faults.

One day, Baba warned him, "I will throw up my hands over everything if you don't stop mechanically saying it was your fault and asking for forgiveness!" What was Eruch to do?

A Visit to the Holy City of Hardwar April 12 and 13, 1950

On April 12th, Baba, Eruch, Kumar and the women, including Naja, Freiny Nalavala, Shiroo Chacha, Subhadra and baby girl Amrit, left Manjri Mafi at 6:30 a.m. They traveled by station wagon to Dehra Dun, where they caught the train, which was packed with pilgrims. Upon boarding, they had to force their way into the ladies' compartment and while on the train, Amrit, only five months old, despite the crowds, did not utter a peep.

They arrived in Hardwar and were met by a sea of bustling humanity on the railway platform. Baba warned them to stay close together as they made their way to Sansarchand Gohal's mansion, where rooms had been booked.

The hotel was in an ideal location on the bank of the Ganges. The proprietor gave the party use of the terrace, which

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had an excellent view of the millions of people gathered along both banks of the river.

In the afternoon, tea was served, and as a treat, Baba gave each of the women two biscuits and then spent much of the day with them on the terrace, watching the large festive panorama through a pair of binoculars, while Kumar and Eruch were on watch throughout the day.



Gohal Mansion in Hardwar, where Baba and the women stayed

A din of chanting, singing, bell-ringing and drumming filled the air. Tiny boats made of leaves floated colorfully down the

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river, carrying flowers and oil lamps. Like Baba and the women, there were people crammed everywhere, in windows, doorways, verandas and on rooftops, straining for a view. All along the banks of the Ganges were men, women and children bathing in its cold waters. Garlands and festoons of flowers were hung everywhere, and a procession of sadhus, pilgrims, elephants and carts was moving along not far away, but the dust raised by so many people made visibility very poor.

The women were disappointed at not being able to see more, and Baba was displeased with Gohal, the proprietor, for not making better arrangements for viewing the procession as he had promised. Baba said that His work at the Kumbha Mela had been compromised.

At one point, Baba asked Subhadra if she would like to also take a dip in the Ganges as prescribed in Hindu scriptures.

Although she had not been told of Baba's status, Subhadra replied that it was enough for her to be with Him.

The next day, April 13th, was the most significant day of the Kumbha Mela, when countless thousands of sadhus and mahatmas went in a massive procession to bathe in the Ganges. Since none of the men or women had ever witnessed this event, held every 36 years in that area, naturally they were excited, but they were also tired. They had spent a disturbing night about which, Baba said, "I and the women had absolutely no sleep last night as there was such a bedlam and noise going on outside the whole night at the sadhus' camps."

Meanwhile, after an early breakfast, some of the men set out from Manjri Mafi on foot for the railway station in Dehra Dun, a distance of five miles, where Keka Nalavala, Chacha, Elcha Mistry and Dr. Donkin were waiting, and together they took the train to Hardwar. Eruch and Kumar met them there and brought them to Gohal's mansion. Mehera was heating the water that Eruch had brought from the Ganges for Baba's bath. After bathing, Baba had the leftover water poured back into the river.

Now that all the men had arrived, Baba asked them to stand in front of Him while Donkin read out:

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May God forgive us all companions in the New Life for any mistakes committed consciously or unconsciously toward Him or toward each other.

I forgive you companions wholeheartedly for any mistake done to me; and ask forgiveness of you companions if I have in any way hurt your feelings.

On behalf of myself and you companions of the New Life, I ask God to forgive us if conditions of the New Life have been consciously or unconsciously broken. For myself, I ask God to give me strength to stick to my oath to the very end, and fulfill all conditions of the New Life 100 percent with His help,

BABA



Baba bowing down to Vishnu, with Pendu next in line

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When Donkin completed the invocation, Baba knelt down and touched the feet of each of the companions with His hands. The whole atmosphere became charged with a deep solemnity, and Baba's eyes were later described as "twinkling like two brilliant stars."

Baba then led the companions out on the terrace overlooking the Ganges. The snow-capped mountains were in the distance, and a sea of teeming humanity was spread out before them. At that time, no one knew why Baba had suddenly taken them out on the terrace, but they learned later that Keshav Nigam, one of the four men from Hamirpur who had visited Baba just before the New Life, had been among the crowds below.

Having traveled all the way to Hardwar in hopes of seeing Baba, Keshav was now rewarded with the chance to gaze at Him to his heart's content every time Baba came out on the balcony to view the crowds through binoculars. After a while, Baba told the men that they could go out and visit some of the places and view the Kumbha Mela procession if they wished, but they must stay together so that no one would get lost in the masses of people.

While Baba stayed back with the women, the men tried to make their way through the crowds to the main road where the procession was expected to pass, but moving was difficult and the heat was oppressive. The clouds of dust stirred up by millions of tramping feet made things worse.

At last, the procession arrived with naked sadhus at the front, and mahatmas and those in ocher robes going by car in the rear. All the ashrams with their followers, accompanied sometimes by horses, elephants and palanquins, were represented, with banners waving and bands playing bagpipe music.

The experience exhausted the men. Eventually, they went back to the railway station, and to their surprise, they found Baba and the women already on the platform. He had decided to leave a day earlier, due to being unable to see the procession.

Before leaving, He again told Sansarchand Gohal and his brother how displeased He was over the unsuitable arrangements. He then asked their forgiveness for being annoyed with them and touched their feet with His hands. The two men felt deeply

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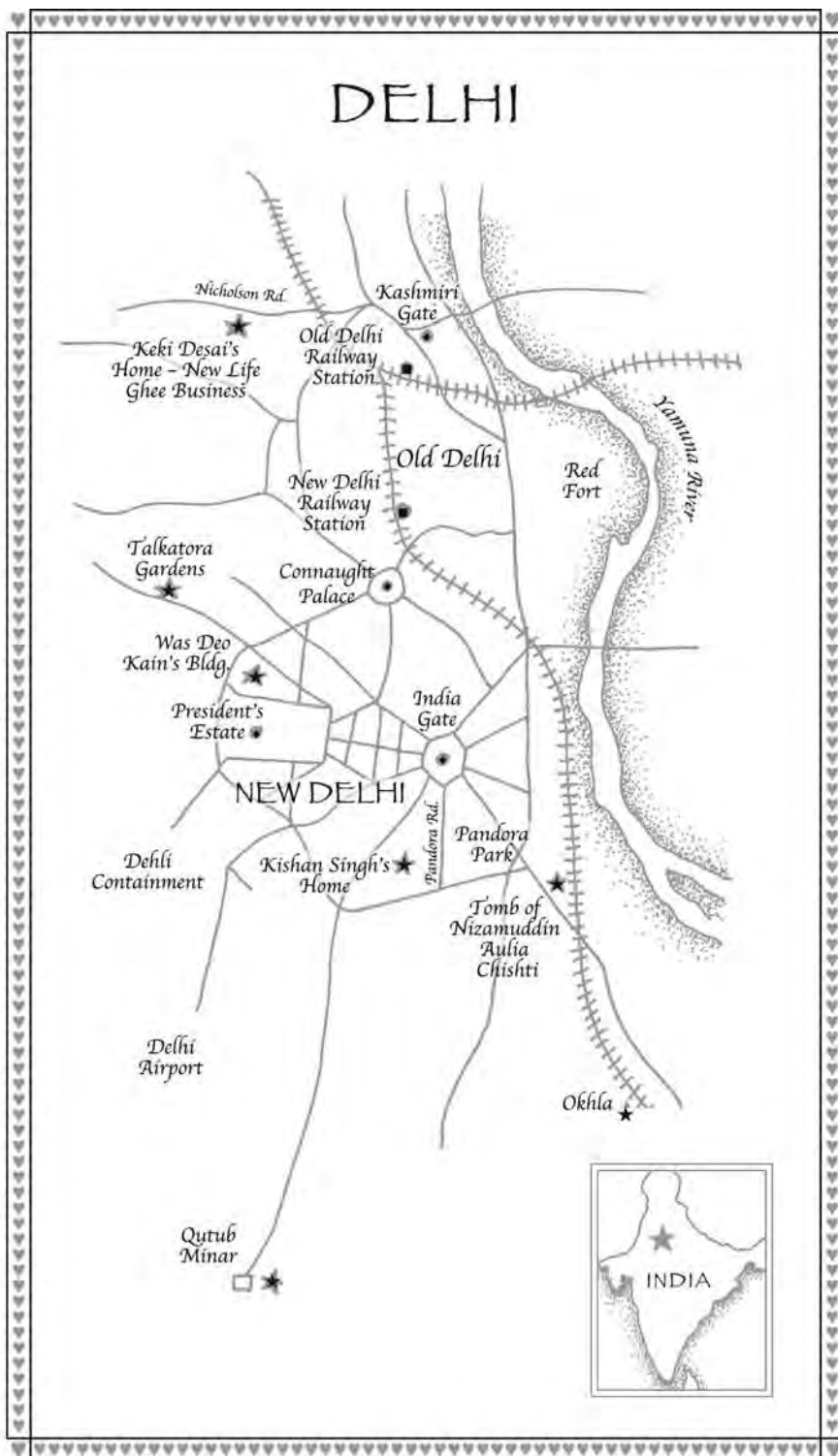
ashamed that their behavior had been the cause for Baba to ask for their forgiveness.

On the way to Manjri Mafi, the women had to stand the whole way, because the servants' compartment was overcrowded. To make things worse, a child lying in the upper berth urinated on them, which they jokingly referred to as their substitute for a bath with water from the holy Ganges.

While on the train, Nilu, instead of joining the other men in their compartment, slipped into an empty one nearby and fell asleep. When the others got off at Harawala station, Nilu slept through the stop. He then had to get off at Dehra Dun, which meant he had to walk five miles through a dark jungle at midnight to reach Manjri Mafi. When asked later about his walk back, he said that he was not afraid of being attacked by wild animals, but was terrified of encountering ghosts. Baba and the other men found this hilarious.



Baba bowing down to a companion



Chapter Nine

FINAL MONTHS IN NORTH INDIA

April 14 to Early June, 1950

Stay in Manjri Mafi Resumed April 14 to Early May

On the morning of April 14th, Baba walked with Eruch to the men's quarters. It was a cool, refreshing morning; the sun was out, and a gentle breeze carried the scent of wildflowers.

With the companions gathered around Him, Baba began by saying, "Everyone should remain cheerful under all conditions and circumstances, and should never lose their tempers or get annoyed." He then turned to Eruch and asked him whether he would feel upset if he heard in the New Life that his mother had died. Eruch replied that according to the conditions of Plan III, he should remain unaffected, and he would do so.

Baba inquired of Murli, "If your father passes away, how would you feel?"

"I wouldn't feel anything – let him go!" Murli replied.

Baba then asked Vishnu whether he would be disturbed if he heard that his mother had died. Vishnu answered, "No."

He again asked Vishnu, "Are you telling the truth? Remember, to tell a lie or give vague replies is forbidden in the New Life."

When Vishnu again said "No," Baba gently told him that the day before, Donkin received a wire from Adi with the news that Vishnu's mother, Kakubai, had passed away in Meherabad.

Vishnu remained unaffected by the news, and when he spoke to Baba, his voice showed no trace of sorrow or grief, and his face was calm and serene. The other companions were moved by his composure, because everyone knew that he had a very deep love for his mother, but he was able to put the conditions of the New Life above all other concerns.

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Baba then said, “Donkin should not have told me news concerning the people in the Old Life I left behind.” Embracing Vishnu, He added, “Vishnu is courageous, and though his mother was quite old and ill at the time, he did not think of staying with her, but he said ‘yes’ and came away with me.”

Throughout the rest of the day, Vishnu did not show any sadness, and Baba later compared Vishnu with Adi, who also loved his mother dearly, but Baba said there was a world of difference between their love in relation



Vishnu

to staying with Him, because Vishnu made the sacrifice to stay with Him, whereas Adi adopted Plan I-C, which had allowed him to return home and care for his aging mother.

(Kakubai, Vishnu’s mother, had been with Baba since 1918 during the Kasba Peth days in Poona, when He visited her house often, coming at odd hours and asking her for rice and dal, so she was in the habit of always keeping some ready. In this way, she constantly remembered Baba. In 1925, she moved to Meherabad and lived there in devoted service to Him as one of the women mandali for the rest of her life.)

In the afternoon, Baba sent for Kumar to see whether Raja the bull had been given to Mirabehn’s *Pashu Lok* Institution. He informed Baba that because the bull was of English breed, it could not be accepted according to the rules of the institution. Following Baba’s instructions, Kumar found an animal institution in Dehra Dun known as *Goshala* (house of cows and calves) and gave Raja away in the name of the four women companions. The bullock cart was then sold for 200 rupees, which Baba kept aside for the women’s expenses.

The morning of April 15th was heavily overcast, and the air was chilly as the sun struggled to break through the clouds. Baba arrived at the men’s hut at 7:00 a.m. Donkin was also there, having just arrived from Dehra Dun.

Baba resumed the discussion about His promised visit to the West, which He had brought up days earlier, saying:

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I expect any day a cable from Elizabeth inviting me to the West this year. At the same time, there is also a probability that Elizabeth may desire me to come by July 1951 instead of 1950. In case I go to the West this year, I will have to take some of you. Those who accompany me, on their return from the West will rejoin the companions of the New Plan who stayed back in India.

When I take some of you to the West, I will do so with your consent, as I have determined not to interfere with your decision, nor give you any orders; but with your consent, I shall take a promise from you that you will obey me in every respect during your stay with me in the West.

In short, if I decide to go to the West in July 1950, or in May, then I shall ask some of the companions to accompany me, depending upon whether they agree to promise to obey me there. I shall also help those who stay behind in India in securing residences and jobs.

Baba asked Eruch and Keki to go the next day by bus to Delhi, the capital of India. With the help of Baba's close ones living there, they were instructed to find suitable accommodations for the men and the women companions at a reasonable rate, consistent with the purposes of the New Plan. Baba then said that in the "New Plan" the companions would have to work to earn their livelihood, and He invited suggestions from the companions. Eruch mentioned opening a hair salon, and Baidul considered providing a laundry service.

Baba rejected these suggestions, but suddenly remembered Todi Singh, saying, "*Aye-tore-karse*," which in Gujarati means, "He will find the solution."

Thus, while in Delhi, Eruch was instructed to speak with Todi Singh, Harjiwan Lal and Kishan Singh about setting up a business. After further discussion between Baba and the companions on the various aspects and implications of the New Plan, the meeting ended.

During the remainder of the day, everyone stayed busy with his duties, and in the evening the men gathered to discuss the

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implications of all that Baba had said in the recent meetings. Various arguments and counter-arguments were put forward regarding the future of the companions and the meaning of the New Life. Everyone took part in the heated discussions.

During the period from the middle of April to the beginning of May, many things had to be attended to. The weather was cold, with icy winds and persistent rains. Baba's health had again taken a turn for the worse, and a number of the companions were also sick; still, almost everyone was kept busy. Baba suffered pain in His back and neck, inflammation of His mucous membranes and a chronic cold. At one point, all the women except Mehera came down with the flu.

There were countless details involved in the proposed shift to Delhi. Discussions continued. Each of the companions was invited to freely share his opinion about the New Plan.

Sometimes, Baba called meetings twice a day to discuss the new developments scheduled to begin after the first of the month. Frequently, the companions came away from these deliberations deeply agitated.

A portion of one day was devoted to Gustadji's nephew, Rustom Hansotia, who showed up unexpectedly at Manjri Mafi. He had resigned from his job without the permission of his parents, and having learned by heart the conditions of the New Life and the different plans, he was prepared to join Baba and the companions. It was Pendu who spoke with him and conveyed his request to Baba.

Baba was not seeing any visitors, but He sent His instructions that Rustom should return home, and that He would consider his request at the meeting to be held at the end of the month.

After Pendu conveyed these instructions, Rustom was not satisfied and insisted on seeing Baba. Pendu urged him to obey Baba's order and return home immediately, but Rustom stayed for four or five hours, hoping to see Baba. In the end, Baba allowed him to have a brief glimpse of Him at a long distance from the other side of the road. Tears filled Rustom's eyes and then he left. Baba remained affected for hours afterward by Rustom's intrusion in the New Life.

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On April 20th, when Kumar came with the Jamnadas, the village Mahant, to see Baba, He told them, "For you both I feel a sort of responsibility of love...." Turning to Jamnadas, He asked, "Would you carry out two instructions I give you, sincerely and faithfully?"

"Surely," replied the Mahant. He had been convicted and sentenced for shooting two villagers during a dispute, but he was out on parole because he was suffering from tuberculosis.

"Then don't worry in the least about your permanent release from prison," Baba added, "until the very last minute of your going back to jail on June 17th. And every night before going to bed, offer this heartfelt prayer to God: 'I leave my fate in Your hands!'" Baba then assured him, "God will not fail you."

Later, just before leaving Dehra Dun, Baba received the news of Jamnadas' imminent and permanent release from prison, which He personally conveyed to the Mahant. Even though Baba had told him that God would help him, the Mahant attributed his release to Baba's intervention.

During this period, a great deal of Baba's attention was taken up with problems involved in the sale of Ghani's and Sadashiv's properties. This involved much correspondence back and forth between Baba and the arrangementwalas.

The situation with Sadashiv became particularly sticky. Although he had given up his houses to join Baba, he now reneged and wanted them back. He was so agitated that he asked to sever his connection with Baba.

Baba sent a letter to Adi, instructing him to go to Poona to talk with Sadashiv to try to clear up the whole situation. Baba wrote, "I forgive Sadashiv all his shortcomings in the New Life and ask his forgiveness if I have hurt his feelings in any way. I accept his request for severing his connection from my Old and New Life." This shocking occurrence in the New Life left the companions hoping for a positive resolution in the future.

Throughout this period in Manjri Mafi leading up to the commencement of the New Plan on May 1st, aside from serious problems, there were times devoted to recreation and diversion.

On some mornings, when Baba arrived at the men's quarters, He would be in a lively, jovial mood and call for a game of either badminton or *gilli-danda* (an outdoor game).

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On two occasions, the men played cricket with Him. The ground was deeply furrowed, which made playing difficult. One morning, Baba, who had been an expert player during His youth, opened up with batting and delighted the companions by hitting around the wicket with superb skill.

On several occasions, Baba went for long walks with the women in the surrounding fields, and they all enjoyed the view of the snow-capped Mussoorie Hills in the distance.

At times, when He rested in His room in the cottage at Manjri Mafi, He wanted complete silence, which required the women to prepare the meals as quietly as possible.

One afternoon, He asked Kumar to arrange a sugarcane party, to which He invited Keka Nalavala, Elcha Mistry and Burjor Chacha, in addition to the men companions. Although the state of Uttar Pradesh produced large amounts of sugarcane, it was only for export and was not available to the public, yet Kumar had somehow managed to obtain some. Baba was in great spirits, beaming with joy, and He personally served the sugarcane juice to each one. His mood was contagious, and all forgot themselves in laughter and light talk.

Baba Formulates the New Plan

On the morning of April 26th, Baba called a meeting and discussed all the various aspects involved in starting a business in Delhi. Afterward, He assisted the companions in formulating the conditions of the New Plan. The following 40 points were decided upon:

1. On May 1st, 1950, I and all of the companions of Plan III will go for begging for the last time in Dehra Dun from Manjri Mafi before dissolving Plan III companionship.
2. By the evening of May 1st, I shall order the companions of Plan III and of Plan I-B to join the New Plan in one group. Consequently, Don (Donkin) will close his clinic on May 1st.
3. All the companions of the New Plan group will strictly abide, for all times, by all the fixed conditions of Plans I and II. There will be no day-to-day orders nor any interference from my side other than the fixed restrictions.

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4. On behalf of the "Temporarily Restricted B Group" and original Plan I-B and Plans I-C and II companions, I will do the three phases of begging, langoti and gypsy life; and on my behalf, all of the New Life companions will do the labor phase.
5. Kaikobad Dastur is in the New Life and, remaining as such, he will stay and eat with the New Plan group; he will also get the [same] pocket expenses as the New Plan group will be getting. He will not be asked by the companions to do any work. He will do his own usual work.
6. Sadashiv Patel will be in the New Plan group, but I permit him to stay at his own residence in Poona without taking any maintenance and pocket expenses for the New Plan group; he can, however, join the New Plan group any time he desires. As long as he stays away from the companions of the New Plan group, he will strictly abide by the original fixed conditions of Plan I-B only.
7. There will be the following eleven members in the New Plan group: Kaka, Gustadji, Eruch, Pendu, Baidul, Nilkanth (Nilu), Vishnu, Murli, Donkin, Ali (Aloba) and Sadashiv Patel.
8. Keki Desai will take part in the New Plan business, and for his services, he will be paid 300 rupees per month from June 1st, 1950. His stay with the group is left to his option.
9. On May 1st, 1950, I shall place at the disposal of the New Plan group 16,000 rupees as a loan which should be repaid as soon as possible.
10. This amount of 16,000 rupees will be spared from the balance of the New Life amount that was with Meherjee and Nariman and from the amount of the sale proceeds of the Manjri Mafi property.
11. The New Plan group will maintain themselves from this loan of 16,000 rupees and also manage in arranging business and livelihood according to the definite instructions given by me under points mentioned hereunder. These instructions and restrictions will become null and void as

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soon as the loan of 16,000 rupees is repaid in full. Thereafter, the companions will have complete freedom to do any business, maintain themselves and rearrange their household affairs, etc., by the vote of the majority.

12. Kaka to keep all the money, including the earnings, etc., and keep the accounts. Also, he will be the household manager.
13. Ali [Aloba] to assist Kaka by taking charge of the kitchen.
14. Gustadji will never have any work.
15. Eruch and Baidul will be considered as engaged by the ladies for doing Baba's personal work; and each will be paid 50 rupees per month by the ladies. When either of them has no work, he will help in the management of business by assisting Pendu, Nilu, Don and Murli.
16. Vishnu's services will be engaged by the ladies for 50 rupees per month.
17. Out of the loan of 16,000 rupees, only 5,000 to be exclusively for business.
18. Out of the net profit of the New Plan group business, 25 percent will be given to the ladies, and the remaining 75 percent to be kept aside and not to be utilized for any purpose except for repaying the loan of 16,000 rupees. As soon as the loan is repaid, 25 percent of the net profit from the business will not be paid to the ladies. The whole profit then will be the cash on hand for the companions of the original Plan I-B group.
19. Out of the amounts sent to me by the companions of Plans I-C and II, I will give 25 percent to the ladies and 75 percent will be added to the net profit deposit of the New Plan group business until such time that the loan is repaid. As soon as the loan is repaid, the total of 75 percent thus deposited will not be paid to you by me, because automatically the "Temporarily Restricted B Group Plan" will become the original Plan I-B group.
20. Eruch, Vishnu and Baidul's salaries and the sale proceeds of Don's clinic furniture to be added to the net profit

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deposit of the New Plan group business until such time as the loan is repaid.

21. Whenever I need money, I will take either from the ladies or from the New Plan group according to who could afford it best.
22. You must not communicate with, nor meet, nor keep in touch, directly or indirectly, with any "Old Lifewallas" or New Life companions of Plan I-C or Plan II without my permission until this New Plan group automatically becomes the original Plan I-B group after repaying the loan of 16,000 rupees. Delhi and Dehra Dun residents and Mr. Todi Singh of Aligarh are exceptions to this order.
23. The companions of the New Plan group to leave Manjri Mafi for good for Delhi on May 10th, and at Delhi to start a business by investing 5,000 rupees for a ghee business with the help of Todi Singh and the Delhi group. In addition to this business, you all can also do any side business which does not need any investment and keeps to the spirit of the New Life.
24. For the first three months from May 10th, the New Plan group will accommodate themselves at Keki Desai's flat.
25. For the first three months, I and the ladies will stay at Dehra Dun from May 10th in the bungalow where Donkin's clinic was operating.
26. Donkin to take away all his belongings together with the clinical equipment to Delhi on May 10th.
27. Vishnu and Baidul will stay with me at Dehra Dun for work of the ladies and mine, respectively. After a month, Baidul will go to Delhi and Eruch will come from Delhi to stay with me for my work.
28. From August 1st, 1950, the ladies, I and the companions will stay at Delhi in the Rohtak Road building, which is expected to be completed by that time. The rent for the accommodation of all will be paid by the New Plan group companions. The ladies will pay 100 rupees per month as their share.

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29. Any item of business done, like ghee, butter, etc., if required by the household management of either the ladies or the male companions, must be fully paid for without considerations.
30. For the companions' personal petty expenses, each companion should be paid ten rupees per month from May onward.
31. The diary is to be stopped from May 1st, 1950.
32. Padri will be asked to bring all the necessary personal belongings of the New Plan group companions to Delhi by May 15th.
33. Your inheritance, if any, coming directly or indirectly through your relatives or friends with the sole intention of making you the heir, without the remotest thought of transferring the same to me through your medium, should be given to me.
34. In order that it may go easy for the New Plan group to repay the loan of 16,000 rupees, I fix the following initial and recurring expenditures for the first six months, commencing from May 1st, 1950. The loan of 16,000 rupees handed over to Kaka on May 1st, 1950, to be utilized as follows:

1. Food amount from May 1st to October 1950 end
2,585 Rs.
2. Already paid to ladies for food of Vishnu and Baidul (or Eruch) for May, June and July 300 Rs.
3. Servants' salary for six months 150 Rs.
4. Pocket money Rs.10 each for six months 660 Rs.
5. House rent with light and water bills for six months
300 Rs.
6. Shop rent with light and water bills for six months
510 Rs.
7. Rohtak building rent, bills and *dalali* (commission to agents) for six months from the date of occupation
4,340 Rs.

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8. Business investment	5,000 Rs.
9. Shifting from Manjri Mafi to Delhi	1,000 Rs.
10. To bring belongings of companions to Delhi from Meherabad	1,000 Rs.
11. Emergency	155 Rs.

Total 16,000 Rs.

35. Kaka to keep aside for six months the following amounts which will help early repayment of the loan of 16,000 rupees.
- a. Rs.150 per month paid by the ladies as salary for Eruch, Vishnu and Baidul.
 - b. Rs.100 per month as rent paid by the ladies from August 1950.
 - c. 75 percent net profit from the New Plan group earnings.
 - d. 75 percent of amount sent by companions of Plan I-C and Plan II.
 - e. Whatever is saved from the allotted amounts of rent, shiftings, luggage expenses, savings and Donkin's furniture sale.
36. As long as the "Temporarily Restricted B Group Plan" will be functioning, the group companions of this New Life Plan will be left on their "*imam*" (faith) to abide by the original Plan I-B fixed conditions; but if any New Plan group companion deliberately and consistently insists on not abiding by the fixed restrictions that I have formulated, and if this breach in carrying out the restrictions is brought to my notice, then I shall order that companion to leave the group, and he will be considered as having discontinued himself from both the New and the Old Life.
37. Messrs. Harjiwan Lal, Kain, Kishan Singh and Todi Singh are allowed by me to have association with the New Plan group to help them on one condition only, that they cannot keep contact with, nor have correspondence with, nor meet the companions of Plan I-C or Plan II of the New Life.

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38. The companions of the New Plan group to take the help of Messrs. Harjiwan Lal, Kain, Kishan Singh and Todi Singh only if these four keep no contact with, have no correspondence with, nor meet the companions of Plan I-C or Plan II of the New Life.
39. Although companions of Plan I-C and Plan II cannot communicate with me, they should only send their spared amounts and New Life Circulars to me addressed:
Meher Baba
c/o Narawalla (Nalavala)
36 Lytton Road
Dehra Dun
 unless otherwise instructed by me.
40. If necessary, Donkin, on behalf of the New Plan group companions, can stay at Dehra Dun as a doctor.

After giving out the above points, Baba dictated the following cable to Keki Desai in Delhi:

Inform Harjiwan party that Rohtak Building will be decided on 1st May definitely therefore arrange accordingly with agent Sardarji. Inform Harjiwan Kain Todi Singh Kishan Singh to be here on Sunday 30th morning to return Delhi same evening. After informing them you come here immediately for seven days.

BABA.

Baba then closed the meeting, saying that they would meet twice a day until the end of the month. A final meeting would be held on April 30th, when definite word would be received by cable from Elizabeth Patterson, and when Harjiwan, Kishan Singh, Kain and Todi Singh would also be present. Kumar was instructed to sell the Manjri Mafi property, and a message was sent to Rustom Hansotia, who had asked to join Baba, telling him to lead the New Life at his home in Ratlam.

*Final Months in North India***Four Men Join the New Life Temporarily**

The next day, April 27th, Baba received a cable from Elizabeth Patterson inviting Him to the West. In response, He decided not to make the trip in July 1950, but to definitely go by the end of July 1951.

By noon, the four men from Delhi arrived in Manjri Mafi. Before they met with Baba, Eruch explained the New Plan in detail, and Harjiwan, Kishan Singh, Kain and Todi Singh promised to help out in every way possible. Baba had laid down the condition that they were not to offer money, clothes or food. Not a single *pie* (cent) out of their own pockets was to be spent on the companions.

Eruch also explained that the Manjri Mafi property would be sold to the Delhi-wallas for 10,000 rupees.

At this point, Baba entered the room and expounded further on the New Plan and the Manjri Mafi property. He said, "You ought to purchase this property today for 7,000 rupees. I know Kishan Singh and Kain have no money, and to them, Harjiwan and Todi Singh should pay 5,000 rupees."

Hearing this, Harjiwan requested Baba's permission to talk over the matter with Todi Singh privately. It was granted. As they were about to leave, Baba told them, "I want your answer only as yes or no."

When they returned, Baba asked, "Do you wish to buy the property?"

Harjiwan replied, "I do not want to be the owner of the property."

Todi Singh added, "I am short of funds and unable to buy it."

Baba was visibly disappointed by these answers. He asked, spelling out on the alphabet board, "Can't you afford 7,000 rupees to purchase this property? This was a test, which you have failed! Someone had said that for putting up a Baba ashram in Delhi, Harjiwan would buy the land and, similarly, Todi Singh would build his house on the Manjri Mafi property. Todi Singh has a habit of saying, 'Baba knows,' and does he think I don't know he has 5,000 rupees ready? He has told a lie. Now our going to Delhi is canceled. The plans are dissolved and we will now live our life under the New Plan. Now you may depart.

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Leave off all thought of the property and do not brood in a corner of your mind!"

Baba then asked Baidul to call a tonga for the four men, and He instructed Aloba to send for Kumar, who was a magistrate. Kumar appeared on the scene, carrying a stick in his hand, and his head covered by a large brown-colored cap that reached down to his ears.

Baba told him, "You buy the property for 7,000 rupees and pay the sum by the end of July 1950. You may re-sell the property, and whatever profit you may derive from the sale, you may keep and pay me the net 7,000 rupees."

This last statement brought tears to Kishan Singh, who thought that Baba gave Kain and him no chance to buy the land.

Baba consoled him by saying, "Do not worry."

Kishan Singh replied, "Permit me to say something."

But Baba said, "Everything is over now."

Baba then called for Harjiwan and Todi Singh, who were just about to board a tonga. They were repentant and felt even worse when Baba said to them, "You should not have displeased me."

Harjiwan replied, "To spare 10,000 rupees for the property, I had no hesitation. But I did not wish to be the owner, and it would not be practical to re-sell it from Delhi. I wanted that it be re-sold after its purchase, and my mistake was that I did not tell You. I beg Your forgiveness."

Baba instantly forgave them and also asked their pardon for losing His temper in the New Life.

He then told Harjiwan, "Pay 7,000 rupees tomorrow, which will be repaid to you by the end of July after the property is sold by Kumar." Harjiwan agreed to do this.

Next, Baba explained, "For the companions, this is the labor phase, and I wish that some plan for their doing business be thought of."

A discussion followed about the prospect of setting up a ghee business, and afterward Baba told Harjiwan, "Of the 7,000 rupees, you have to pay 5,000 rupees to Todi Singh to start the ghee business." Again Harjiwan agreed.

Later, the Rohtak Road building in Delhi was discussed. Baba paid Harjiwan the rent for six months, but Kishan Singh insisted that

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the owner would want the rent in advance for one year. Harjiwan said that he would make up the total, while Kishan Singh and Kain offered to also share the expense. Baba finalized the arrangement, saying, "From today, all four of you have been taken on in the New Life." And everyone breathed a sigh of relief!

He reiterated, "As long as there is a possibility of your helping the New Plan group, you have entered in my New Life. But do not try to contact or see me so long as I do not call you myself. You are free to meet with any of the companions of the New Plan group as and when you like."

The four men were very happy with the outcome of the morning's meeting and left for Delhi at 3:00 p.m.

When Eruch returned from Delhi, plans to shift the whole party there and establish a ghee business were set in motion. Those who were part of the New Plan were to abide by the conditions, which Baba had drawn up in January 1950 under Plan I-B. In Delhi, Keki Desai's home was to be the temporary headquarters for the new business. Meanwhile, Harjiwan Lal was responsible for finding other suitable accommodations for the companions. Todi Singh was to find a supplier of cream for the men from his business contacts and to help them in the production of ghee.

The men decided to distribute the labor among themselves. Until a suitable place was found in Delhi, Baba and the women would stay on temporarily at Dehra Dun in the bungalow that Donkin had rented for his clinic at 29 Lytton Road.

Donkin brought a sewing machine from Bombay, and Baba instructed the women to spend their spare time designing and sewing, which included dresses and beautiful bedspreads. They cut out cloth into appliques and sewed them onto dresses for artistic effect. As a result of their efforts at sewing, they were able to earn close to 300 rupees, a large sum in those days and a substantial help. While they were in Dehra Dun, the women lived very frugally and kept their diet simple.

Once during their stay in Manjri Mafi, the women were greatly amused by Dr. Nilu, who was very curious about how food was prepared and what ingredients were used in it. For weeks, when the women sent over meals for the men, Nilu was intrigued by the "spinach" dishes cooked by Naja. He was aware

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that no spinach was being purchased at the market, so he asked, "Where is Naja getting the spinach?" When he was finally told that the spinach dishes were in fact made from the outer leaves of cabbages and cauliflower, which are usually thrown away, he was greatly impressed.

Naja was very inventive in creating tasty meals from the simplest and most unusual ingredients. However, in Manjri Mafi, due to the primitive cooking conditions and the need to economize, the meals were usually plain and unvaried, which the men would complain about. They waited longingly for the times Baba joined them for dinner, because that was when Naja would cook something especially delicious!

Baba intended that May 1st would be the last time the companions would go out begging. Thereafter, He would do the three phases of begging, gypsy and langoti life for them, and they would carry out the labor phase for Him.

On the morning of this day, the companions were up as usual at 4 a.m. in Manjri Mafi. The weather was cold but pleasant. Thousands of bright stars shone in the sky, and a cool gentle breeze came from the north. After the morning chores were over, the men donned their white kafnis and green turbans, and Baba, dressed in His kafni, walked over from the women's cottage. Nilu and Kaka were then given the privilege of helping Baba put on His turban.

A little after sunrise, Baba and the companions left on foot for a pre-arranged spot, the dry bed of the river Rispana. Throughout their walk, not a word was spoken. Baba looked radiant and strikingly handsome as He led the way.

After walking for two miles, they came to the river where, as previously arranged, the Nalavala, Chacha and Kumar families were waiting on the bank under a neem tree. Freiny Nalavala, Shiroo Chacha and Kumar's mother, Mataji, came forward one by one and lovingly offered cooked food in bhiksha to Baba.

He graciously accepted their offering, smiling sweetly at each one, and then almost immediately, the companions, with the food containers on their heads, retraced their steps to Manjri Mafi, while still maintaining the complete silence from before.

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Along the way, there were people on the road who spontaneously bowed to Baba, and He in turn bowed to them.

On returning to the men's quarters, Baba distributed the food among the companions, announcing again that this was the last time they would beg under Plan III.

Freiny Nalavala had not had time in the early morning to finish cooking her portion of the food, the rice pulao, and in the excitement of offering it had neglected to tell Baba. Yet when, days later, she apologized for the under-cooked rice, the companions did not know what she was talking about – the food had been perfectly cooked. She and her husband, Keka, had debated whether to finish cooking the rice pulao and arrive late to see Baba or to be on time with the rice only partly cooked. Their intuition to be punctual had proven correct, since the rice had apparently finished cooking in the pot.



The dry bed of the Rispana River

At 5:00 p.m., Baba declared that all the companions would be officially in the New Plan, including Kaka, Gustadji and Donkin from Plan I-B. Since Manek Mehta had not sent word about joining the group, he was automatically ordered to join Plan I-C, beginning January 1951.

*Final Months in North India***The Hardships of the Ghee Business in Delhi****May 1950**

On May 10th, 1950, the companions left Dehra Dun for Delhi, a distance of about 200 miles.

While Keki Desai's wife was away visiting relatives, the men companions stayed at his home at No. 4 Hussain Building on Nicholson Road (near Kashmiri Gate). This address was in a quiet, tree-lined residential area in the old city. Due to its lack of space, the companions slept on the floor and on the front and back verandas. This small place became the headquarters of the ghee business.

Harjiwan had tried to rent a building, but the owner backed out at the last moment. He could easily have found bungalows rent-free for the companions through his business clients, but Baba would not allow anything free of charge.

On this same day, Baba and the women moved from Manjri Mafi to Donkin's vacated clinic in Dehra Dun. The clinic was in a bungalow that was set back from the road in a small compound. Baba and the women had separate rooms. All the furniture had been removed so they all slept on the floor.

During the day, the women sat on the veranda and did embroidery work and fashioned other household articles. The veranda was hidden by a wooden grill, which enabled the women to watch people passing by on the road without being seen.

Baidul and Vishnu were lodged nearby in Burjor Chacha's home at No. 19 Lytton Road. For their service to Baba and the women, they were each to be paid 50 rupees per month.

The sale of the Manjri Mafi property helped to finance the ghee business. One of the first undertakings was the painting of the business sign: "Navjeevan Ghee Company," which was lettered in Hindi, and "New Life Ghee Company" in English. Large tins were purchased for the sale of the ghee and labels were printed. Todi Singh brought all the required materials from Aligarh: pots, utensils, a machine for churning cream, etc. Being a cream contractor, he was able to collect cream using his business contacts. On May 12th, at an opening ceremony, Kaka, the eldest of the companions, was given the honor of being the first to turn the handle of the churning drum.

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All the duties connected with the business were defined and shared among the companions. They were not allowed to recruit any outside help. Todi Singh was on hand to supervise the whole ghee operation from beginning to end, since the companions had no previous experience.

The various duties were allocated: picking up the cans of cream at the railway station, continuously churning the cream in the machine, tending the fire where butter was heated to boiling to obtain ghee, filling the tins, applying the labels, cleaning the pots and utensils and, finally, selling the finished product.



The inner courtyard at Keki Desai's residence, where the companions set up the ghee business

Sometimes when the butter came to them adulterated, the companions would have to make it into a type of sweet cheese. One of the companions would then try to peddle the cheese out on the road like a common street hawker.

Because of their advanced age, Gustadji and Kaikobad were exempted from work. In a separate room, Kaikobad continued his repetition of God's name 100,000 times a day. Aloha and Nilu were responsible for preparing the companions' meals.

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Outside, the weather in Delhi was extremely hot, well above 110 degrees. In the building, due to the open fire, it was so suffocatingly hot that the men worked in shorts and T-shirts, sweating profusely, and they found the smell of the heated cream nauseating. These conditions were an extreme contrast to the months of bitter cold in Manjri Mafi!

During this period, a flare-up among the men occurred in the midst of the intensity of the ghee production. Some of the men got off with lighter duties, while others had more difficult and messier jobs, such as standing in front of the hot fire and handling the steaming cauldrons filled with cream. The distribution of the work

was not equitable, but it was eventually settled peacefully among themselves by sharing the work load and at the same time making allowances for the older men.

The first batch of ghee (ghee is considered to be the best cooking oil in India) was ready for sale in tins on May 16th, six days after arriving in Delhi, but the companions were in for a shock. Due to the high cost of production, their ghee had to be sold at a price much higher than the going market rate. Consequently, merchants would not buy it. Moreover, it was



Tentative label design by one of the companions

found that the cheaper ghee sold on the market was not pure but adulterated, making it virtually impossible for the companions, who were required to be honest according to the New Life conditions, to compete with other companies. Since most of the merchants who purchased the ghee were only interested in profit and not concerned whether the ghee was adulterated, the men sold very little of their high-grade product.

The companions had not anticipated this situation. As a result, the stock of unsold tins piled up and their exhausting efforts went virtually unrewarded.

Meanwhile, Baba was staying with the women in Dehra Dun, where He had Baidul engaged in bringing Him masts.

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The women were very concerned about Baba's health. At one point, another specialist, Dr. Baldev Singh Rathke, was called in to examine Baba's eyes, which were discharging fluid and were inflamed due to a strange gritty sensation. Silver nitrate drops were prescribed, but this treatment gave only temporary relief.

During this period, Baba managed to find time to take the women to a local circus. They were especially amused by the antics of the clowns; Baba laughed so much that He had to cover His cheeks with the palms of His hands. On another day, they went on an excursion to the botanical gardens in the city.

On May 22rd, Baba left Dehra Dun with Baidul and Keki Desai by Roadways Bus en route to Delhi to see the business in operation. In the countryside, several miles outside of Dehra Dun, Baba pointed out the window to where Raja the English bull could be seen in the distance grazing at the edge of the forest with the other cattle of the Goshala farm. This was their last sight of Raja, whom Baba and Mehera had lovingly tended as a young calf at Meherabad.

It was an exceptionally hot afternoon when Baba, accompanied by Baidul and Keki, arrived hours later at the bus terminal in Delhi. Burjor Chacha was there to meet them in Harjiwan's car.

Somehow news of Baba's visit had gotten out, and a few of His Old Life followers were also there. Among them was Prakashwati with Vimla, who had brought her car for Baba's use. A number of others had also joined her in the hope of having His darshan, if only from a distance.

Baba hastily took His seat in the car with Burjor. When Prakashwati and her group came toward the car, Baba smiled, but He was not happy and indicated to Burjor to drive off quickly. On the way to Keki Desai's house, He reprimanded him.

*Ghee tin*

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Burjor explained that he had no idea how the others happened to be there, so Baba forgave him.



The view of the street from the balcony of Keki Desai's home

They reached Keki's home, where Harjiwan, Kishan Singh, Todi Singh and Kain soon arrived. It then became clear that Kishan Singh was responsible for Vimla's car being at the bus



Was Deo Kain

terminal. When Baba rebuked him, he explained, "Harjiwan's car was out of order so I asked Vimla to bring her car."

Baba retorted, "If Harjiwan's car was stalled, I could either have come in a tonga or walked the distance. Why did you break the order?" In the end, Baba forgave him, too.

Because Keki's home was in disarray due to the ghee business, Baba decided to spend the night at Was Deo Kain's house. He also told the companions and the four men from Delhi to meet with Him at Keki's the next morning to discuss the state of the business.

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Baba and two of the companions, including Eruch, drove to Was Deo Kain's home in the afternoon. For the evening meal, Prabha had cooked rice and dal for Baba, but she had also prepared "malai", a creamy delicacy, for dessert. Baba ate the rice and dal, but He did not partake of the "malai".

Upon finishing the dinner, He gave Kain and Prabha a two anna coin (a small denomination) as payment for the meal.

When they pressed Baba to try some of the special "malai," He explained that He liked the dish very much, but did not have any money to pay for it.

The devoted couple was humbled and also deeply moved that the one they took to be the King of Kings should find Himself "so helpless and penniless."

*The view of Old Delhi, which
Baba liked, seen from the
balcony at Keki's house.
Later, in the New Life, the
women slept on this balcony.*

*Delhi is an ancient city
dating back to 1000 BC,
the time of the Great
Pandavas of
the Mahabharata.*

*Beginning in the 12th
century, it became the
center of Muslim culture
(Old Delhi) and later, at the
turn of the 20th century, it
became the imperial city
of the British (New Delhi).*



After midnight, May 23rd, Baba suddenly asked to be driven to the tomb of Nizam-ud-din Aulia Chishti, the Muslim Sufi Perfect Master, who lived during the 14th century.

Kain's car was almost out of gas and the petrol station nearby was closed. However, trusting Baba, Kain set out at 2 a.m.

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and, as chance would have it, the station owner was sleeping in front of his house along the roadside. Since Kain knew him well, he woke him up, and the man quickly filled the car with petrol.



The tomb of Nizam-ud-din Aulia Chishti



The tomb of Amir Khusru

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Later, when Kain, Baba and the companions reached the tomb of Nizam-ud-din Aulia Chishti, instead of entering the shrine, Baba went straight to the nearby tomb of Amir Khusru, a renowned Urdu poet. It was Amir Khusru who created the *qawaali* form of Sufi music, which Baba particularly liked.



The interior of Amir Khusru's tomb

From inside the tomb, someone in prayer called out, "Ya Allah!" Gesturing for the others to remain outside, Baba entered the shrine alone. What He did inside none of the others witnessed. Some time later, when Baba stepped out, He looked pleased and said, "My work is done, and we can go back to the President's Estate." Kain then drove Baba to his house.

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In the early morning of the 23rd, Kain drove Baba and the other men to Keki Desai's house. Before the 8:00 a.m. meeting there, Baba went with Todi Singh to a nearby fruit market to purchase a watermelon. After returning to Keki's, Baba sat cross-legged on the floor of the main room with the men gathered around Him in a semi-circle. He began cutting the melon with a knife, asking each of the men to guess how many slices He would get out of it. Most of the men guessed between 20 and 25 slices. Todi Singh estimated 27, which proved to be the correct number, and Baba awarded him an extra slice.

The meeting began with the men reporting on the ghee business. They explained to Baba the difficulty of selling their high quality ghee.

Donkin suggested that they adulterate their ghee so they could compete with other companies, but Baba's response was, "No, no, no!" Dishonesty would not be allowed. He told them that He would decide later about the business.

In the afternoon, the problems facing the ghee business were again described to Baba. It was also explained to Him that it would take considerable time for the Rohtak Road building to be made ready for Him and the women. In the meantime, no suitable apartment could be found for them in Delhi, in spite of much effort on Harjiwan's part.

These two issues were discussed by all the companions at some length. Baba closed the discussion by saying, much to the surprise of everyone, that He would prefer to leave north India and find a place in one of His favorite areas, the hills of Satara district, about 60 miles south of Poona. Since the companions were not to be "far" away from Him according to the New Life conditions, this move would necessitate closing the ghee business, which was less than two weeks old.

Baba made a fist with His left hand and slapped His right palm on top, indicating that He was putting a seal on the decision to end the ghee business. He ordered Kain to pay 10,000 rupees for the entire stock of ghee, which was actually worth considerably more.

(Keki Desai later purchased three tins. He kept one for himself and gave the others as presents to Nariman and Meherjee when he visited them in Bombay.)

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Conferring with Harjiwan, Kain, Kishan Singh and Todi Singh, Baba concluded, "My companions are not suitable for the ghee business.... Instead, they will accompany me to some hill station. The ghee business will be given over to one of you who wishes it."

After hours of discussion, Baba took a break to enjoy a meal prepared by Aloha, giving some of His food to Keki as prasad. He then set off with Eruch for Was Deo and Prabha Kain's home around 8:30 p.m. to rest. Arriving at the house, which is part of the President's Estate in New Delhi, Baba asked that all the lights be turned off, and stepping out of the car in the dark, He went straight to the room prepared for Him, so that neither Prabha nor anyone else could see Him.

Early the next morning, May 24th, Baba returned to Keki Desai's home, where talk about the ghee business was resumed. After much discussion, during which only the companions were present, the details of closing the business were finalized. The "Temporarily Restricted B Group" would pay 16,000 rupees to Baba (a loan from the women and given for any contingency), whereby they all would automatically become companions under the original Plan I-B.

Delhi: The Two Methods of the Labor Phase

May 24, 1950

Under the original Plan I-B, the companions were required to do the labor phase. Baba set out two methods of carrying out this phase, and He ordered the men to choose one of them:

Method 1: To render lifelong service to Baba through the four women (Mehera, Mani, Meheru and Goher, who have been and will be with Baba throughout the New Life) and to obey Baba as a servant obeys his master or employer. Baba can and will give orders of any kind, and all companions who accept this method are Baba's servants, and they must therefore obey Him as their master or employer.

Since a master may sometimes forgive the shortcomings of his servants, Baba may also forgive the shortcomings of those companions who accept this method of

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lifelong service to Him, and according to Baba, this will not compromise His oath.

Baba as master or employer can and will give all kinds of orders to those companions who become his lifelong servants, and He may order them to do farm work, to take up jobs, to work as coolies: in short, to do anything. The servant companions can expect nothing in return from Baba; there will be no reward and no hope of reward. Whatever happens, every companion who accepts this method of carrying out the labor phase will be personally responsible for the consequences, whatever they might turn out to be.

The companions may get food from Baba through the four women's money, and this food may or may not be enough, and it may be regularly or irregularly given.

This method of carrying out the labor phase will leave room for many hardships, such as lack of food, little sleep, and work of any and every kind; at the same time, however, circumstances may automatically arise in which there will be little or no work and plenty of food and rest.

In short, the companions will serve Baba through the four women, and Baba may arrange to feed them by using the funds which are at the disposal of these four women.

Those companions who decide to carry out the labor phase as lifelong servants of Baba must be prepared to withstand all kinds of hardships. Not only must they obey Baba as servants obey their master, but they must also abide by the fixed conditions of Plan I-B.

If Baba should at any time feel dissatisfied with the work and behavior of any servant companion, He may dismiss him. Any servant companion who is dismissed will still be in the New Life and also in Plan I-B, but he will become independent and will be free to do what he likes and go where he likes, although he must always abide by the fixed conditions of Plan I-B. He must then earn his own living and Baba will NOT help him by giving him money to make a start with.

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Method 2: The alternative method of carrying out the labor phase is to remain individually and independently in Plan I-B, abiding by its fixed conditions. Any companion who chooses this plan will be given a certain amount of money by Baba to start with so that he will be able to work out his independent labor phase in the best way possible.

The first method of carrying out the labor phase, as Baba's lifelong servants, was unanimously accepted by all ten of the companions. They were Eruch, Pendu, Kaka, Baidul, Donkin, Nilu, Vishnu, Murli, Gustadji and Aloba. Kaikobad, who was in the New Life but not previously in any of the plans, also elected to be Baba's lifelong servant.

Thus, on May 24th, having made this unanimous decision, the companions of the "Temporarily Restricted Group B Plan" terminated the ghee business and repaid the loan of 16,000 rupees to Baba with their cash balance of 14,570 rupees and an additional 1,430 rupees supplied by the women.

Baba earmarked this amount for the following expenses: for maintaining the servant companions for the present month, for shifting the whole group from Delhi and Dehra Dun south to Satara, and for the rental of houses in Satara and Mahabaleshwar for one year.

Since the New Life Ghee Company was brought to a close, the empty tins, the sign board and all the other paraphernalia were given to Todi Singh. He was ordered by Baba to return to Aligarh and re-establish his business as a cream contractor.

Author's commentary: All the companions had been with Baba in the Old Life, and now Baba wanted them to be near Him to live the New Life under Plan I-B.

Method 1 was workable only in His physical presence, whereas Plans I-A, I-B (Method 2), I-C, and II did not require Baba's physical presence, although they contained the fixed conditions, which had to be followed.

In Plan III, His physical presence was necessary, since it contained His day-to-day orders, but there was not the requirement of earning a livelihood.

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However, for the present age, for those currently following Meher Baba in the twenty-first century and beyond, carrying out the labor phase (farming, business or a job) is essential.

By canceling Plan III, Baba ordered the companions to enter the ghee business. He did this to demonstrate to the world, through the medium of the companions, that the labor phase can be carried out without His physical presence. Thus, Baba made provision for a plan to carry out the labor phase for future seekers who would not have Baba's physical presence.

On May 24th, by adopting Method 1 of Plan I-B, the companions remained in the labor phase since, for service rendered, their livelihood was assured in one way or another. However, to become a lifelong servant of Baba was not easy. Only by the dedication of the self (ego) to the Avatar or Sadguru can this service be performed.

Baba said that until a place could be found in Satara district south of Poona, He wished the companions to remain at Keki Desai's house in Delhi. He planned to move with the women to Kishan Singh's place at No. 45 Pandara Road. The men were only to go to Him when called.

Touching on the topic of worry, He said, "We all worry over everything, which has no value at all. In the world, everything is nothing, so why worry over that nothing?"

The next morning, May 25th, Baba was taken by Kain for a walk around the beautiful Talkatora gardens near his home. This was during the blazing heat of midsummer and there were virtually no flowers in bloom. However, as Baba entered the main gate, a large acacia tree showered a few scented petals on His shoulders.

Kain, who frequently went for walks in the gardens, later wrote that it was unheard of for the acacia to be in bloom at this time of year.

Baba and the others walked to the end of the garden, where they ascended the uppermost terrace and climbed one of the towers. From there, they could see at a distance the Kutub Minar, the world famous Muslim minaret. Baba expressed His wish to visit it and also a place called Okhala.

Later in the day, accompanied by Eruch, Harjiwan, Todi Singh, Kishan Singh and Kain, Baba set out for these two places

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by car. On the way, while passing a particular street in Delhi, Kain said that a certain mast could often be seen there.

Baba immediately had the car stopped and the men went out in search of the mast, but in spite of their best efforts, he could not be found.

The party arrived in the early afternoon at the famous Kutub Minar, the Muslim tower of victory, dating back to the 13th century and located in an area of crumbling mosques and ramparts in southwest Delhi.

After viewing the ornate, red sandstone minaret, which is more than 200 feet high, Baba and the men went around to the Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid behind it. This was the first mosque ever built in India. There, the keeper was saying his prayers on his knees with his hands raised to the sky.

Seeing Baba and the companions, he mistook them for tourists and became more attentive to them than to the recitation of his prayer. Baba had a good laughed, and then made a hasty retreat.

Shortly after, the companions left for Okhala. They arrived there at 5:30 p.m. Stepping out of the car, Baba went for a stroll with the men along the canal for a while and then suddenly walked toward a nearby tree and sat under it.

After some time, Baba got up and walked a short distance to the bank of the Yamuna River. He was in a delightful mood and in an atmosphere of lightheartedness, the men passed the time relating humorous stories.

In the river below, some fishermen were setting out their nets. Watching them, Baba spelled out on His alphabet board, "The early disciples of Jesus were all fishermen whom He afterwards caught in His net!"

Kishan Singh replied, "But here we have a Master who does not reel us in, but is throwing us out!" By this, he meant that in the New Life, Baba was excluding His followers.

Baba answered, "I am not Jesus."

Returning from the day's excursion, Baba's party enjoyed a delicious supper at Keki's home. Later, He left for Kishan Singh's house to spend the night.

Entering the house, He found all those who had been at the bus stand several days before, but He went straight to His room, which was kept private for Him. After a while, He left the room

Final Months in North India

and went outside in the compound, where He sat on a broken cot belonging to the sweeper and spent time talking with everyone who had come to see Him.

Seeing Baba on the broken cot, Kishan Singh went inside and brought out a chair, but Baba declined it, saying, "I am quite comfortable on the cot." He sat there with everyone gathered around Him for about an hour.

Before retiring, He made Kishan Singh happy by sitting for a while on the chair he had lovingly provided.

Kishan Singh had put a bedstead in Baba's room, but Baba chose to rest on the floor. As was often His habit, Baba closed all the doors and windows to prevent air from entering the room. Kishan Singh was greatly surprised to see Baba resting this way in the extreme summer heat of Delhi. Because Baba usually kept His room airtight, there were times when the watchman staying in the room with Him would nearly pass out from the heat.

At 4:00 a.m. on May 26th, Baba left Kishan Singh's home and went to Keki's place. Among the various activities of the day, Baba discussed in detail the coming move to the south of India with the servant companions.

In the evening, He went to Kain's home for rest. According to His wish, all the lights had been turned off so that Prabha and any others would not see Him as He went to His room.

Prakashwati had telephoned Prabha earlier about the gathering with Baba the previous night at her house, so Prabha was very disappointed not to be able to see Baba, who was resting in her own home! As she was lamenting to her husband in their bedroom, Baba came out of His room and called her to Him.

A little later, Baba suddenly decided to go to Keki's house, where the companions were staying. He spent the night there, and on the morning of May 26th, He made preparations to return with Keki and Keka to Dehra Dun.

Before leaving, He told Harjiwan, Kain and Kishan Singh, "In everyone's house, two persons love me. In Harjiwan's house, he and Inder; in Kain's house, he and Prabha, and in Kishan Singh's house, he and Prakashwati. So let there not be the slightest hitch in your love for me and keep me always with you."

Final Months in North India*Bathing stalls and window of Baba's room at Keki Desai's home*

During the stay in Delhi, Baba relaxed some of the restrictions on the men companions. He gave them a certain allowance of money, and they were permitted to take an occasional trip around the city. One day, Aloba decided to do a little sightseeing by himself. He had only four annas, which was a very small amount.

Boarding a bus, he requested that the driver take him as far as he could for two annas.

For Aloba, the excursion around the city was a special treat after the very restrictive movements for most of the New Life.

The two annas took Aloba to the end of the bus line. He got off and nearby was a large stadium where a big hockey match between India and Pakistan was in progress. Large flags and

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banners representing the two countries decorated the stadium. Aloba walked to the main entrance, hoping he might see someone he knew who would offer him a ticket; he needed the remaining two annas for the return trip. He stood among the crowd outside the entrance, but he did not see anyone he knew.

Hearing the excitement of the crowd inside the stadium, he could not contain himself. Spontaneously, he prayed to Baba for help. Within two minutes, a voice came over the loudspeakers, announcing, "All those outside the stadium may come in free of charge and see the match, but you must remain standing."

Aloba was overjoyed and went right in and watched the rest of the match. After it was over, he boarded the bus, and his two annas brought him back to Keki Desai's house.



*The bed at Keki
Desai's home
where Baba slept*

During the short stay in Delhi, Baba continued with His mast work. On the morning of May 27th, Baba, along with Baidul, Kaka and Keka, set out by car for Ghaziabad, twenty miles east of Delhi, where a mast was contacted near a mosque. (See map on page 408).

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From there, they drove on to Meerat, 50 miles further north, where they parked the car in the compound of Dufferin Hospital near the clock tower.

Baidul was sent out to find Meherban Baba, a high mast of the fifth plane and spiritual chargeman of the city, who usually stayed at a cremation ground. Unable to locate him there, Baidul made some inquiries and was told that the mast could be found at a certain burning ghat. Despite searching that whole area, the companions were not able to find him.

A shop was visited where the mast was known to go every day to eat snacks. When he did not turn up there after half an hour, the companions heard that someone had seen him at the District Court. They quickly went there, but the mast had just left. After all the searching, it became apparent that the mast knew inwardly that Baba was looking for him and was avoiding contact. At this point, the search was given up.

From Meerat, Baba and the companions drove to Muzaffarnagar, another 50 miles directly north, where they planned to spend the night at a dak bungalow. Along the way, the car had a punctured tire at Khatauli and was taken in for repair.

In the meantime, Baba needed to relieve Himself, so Keki took Him to the railway waiting room, but rather than going in, Baba decided to use a nearby sugarcane field.

After the tire was changed, they went on to Muzaffarnagar. They arrived that evening and stayed in the dak bungalow near the railway station, where a room had been reserved in advance.

The caretaker of the rest house prepared rice curry and vegetable patties for their dinner.

After dining, Baba wished to continue the search for masts. Baidul led them to a village about ten miles outside of town, where a mast was contacted who lived in a sugarcane field on a *machan*, a platform in a tree used by hunters to stalk tigers.

Baba climbed a ladder to the machan and sat for a while with the mast.

On the way back to Muzaffarnagar, Baba contacted a very old woman named Allahdi, the spiritual chargewoman of this city. She had recently broken her leg in an accident and had been taken to the house of one of her followers, where she was looked after.

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Baba met with her at this house, where He found her lying on a cot. He was very pleased with the contact.

Another mast known as Kuttevala Baba was contacted in the city. Unlike most masts, he stayed in a pleasant house, where he kept four or five dogs of good breed. He was well-dressed and he traveled by car.

Returning to the dak bungalow, Baba, at the request of Keki, gave darshan to the caretaker and his family. That night, Baba stayed in a room in the bungalow, while the three companions remained outside the door. Keki, knowing there were a lot of mosquitoes in Muzaffarnagar, had brought a net for Baba's bed.

The next morning after tea, Baba and the men went to the tomb of a famous Muslim saint, Hazrat Makhdoom Ali Ahmed Sabir, located near Roorkee on the Hardwar Road. They circled the tomb several times before entering.

When they came out, a number of fakirs were sitting outside begging for alms. One of them told Baba to give alms to the fakirs, but Baba pointed to His empty pockets and gestured to Keki to say that they, too, were fakirs and that their pockets were empty.

From Roorkee, they left for Pathri, a small village near a canal along the Ganges. Baba cut open a watermelon that had been purchased earlier and gave each one a slice. He and Baidul then went out on foot in search of a mast, and Baba contacted one lying in the sand on the bank of the canal.

Returning to the car a while later, Baba and the men proceeded to Hardwar, where they stopped at the restaurant in the railway station. Baba wanted to shave. He asked Keki to inquire whether He would be allowed to do so in the restaurant. The manager, who was a friend of Keki, had no objection.

Later, Baba and the men ate lunch at that restaurant. As they left, Baba immediately spotted a mast just outside the main gate of the station. He approached the mast, who wanted to go for a ride in the car, so he was driven around for a while. Baba gave the mast an orange, but the mast insisted that Baba eat some of it first.

Baba refused, saying that it was for him. The mast did not pursue the matter and was eventually taken back to the railway station. Baba and the men then left in a hurry for Rishikesh.

Final Months in North India

*The restaurant
sink where
Baba shaved*

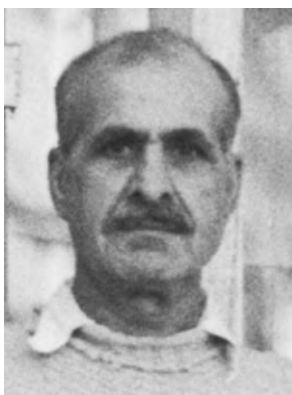


Upon reaching Rishikesh, the car was parked close to the banks of the Ganges. While Kaka remained with the car, Baba and Keki, guided by Baidul, set out to contact Mauni Baba, also known as Nilkanthwara Baba. This mast was the spiritual chargeman of the whole of northern India. To reach his place, the men had to cross the Ganges and then pass through a forest in the dark.

Although Baba and Keki could not see Baidul making his way ahead of them, they were able to follow his voice. At one place, without any explanation, Baba picked up three pebbles and threw them in different directions.

Later, he warned Keki about the danger of wild elephants. Baidul's phenomenal memory guided them to a small cave on top of a hill known as Nilkanth Pahad, where they found the mast lying naked on a small cot. The cave was bare except for an earthen waterpot.

Two old women were at the mast's side, pressing his legs. When Baba, Baidul and Keki entered the cave, the women stepped aside. Baba sat down in the dust and began massaging the mast's feet. Keki was struck by the power of this scene,

Final Months in North India*Baidul*

where the mast was lying on the cot like a king, while the King of Kings was pressing his feet like a slave.

After a while, Baba stood up, but the mast would not allow Him to leave. It was only after several appeals that the mast clapped his hands and willingly gave his permission.

Before leaving, Baba asked Baidul and Keki to take the mast's darshan, which they did. Baba was very pleased with this meeting.

Later, the men made their way back in the dark. They found a boatman who ferried them across the Ganges. When they arrived on the other side, Baba told Keki to give the boatman two annas. They then returned to the car.

The party reached Dehra Dun in the evening, where Baba rejoined the women companions at the bungalow on Lytton Road, just opposite the home of Keka and Freiny Nalavala. The men had their dinner at Baba's bungalow, and Keki then spent the night with the Nalavalas.

That same evening, Baba called Freiny and paid her a rupee and four annas to make breakfast for Keki the next morning.

The following day, she prepared an omelette and toast for Keki, which was sent over to Baba's bungalow. Keki waited until Baba appeared before beginning his breakfast. Baba took a small piece of the omelette and then gestured for Keki to eat.

Before leaving on the mast trip, Baba had asked Keka Nalavala to prepare two earthen stoves in his house, something Keka had never done before.

Later, when Baba went to visit the family, He remarked jokingly, "Have you got stoves here or old-fashioned (tin) latrines?" (The Indian stove in those days had mud at its base and, since Keka had never constructed one, his attempts ended up looking like two latrines with small iron bars.)

One day, during this period, Keka and Freiny left their young daughter Mahroakh alone in the house while they went to the market. The child began crying, and Baba could hear her from

Final Months in North India

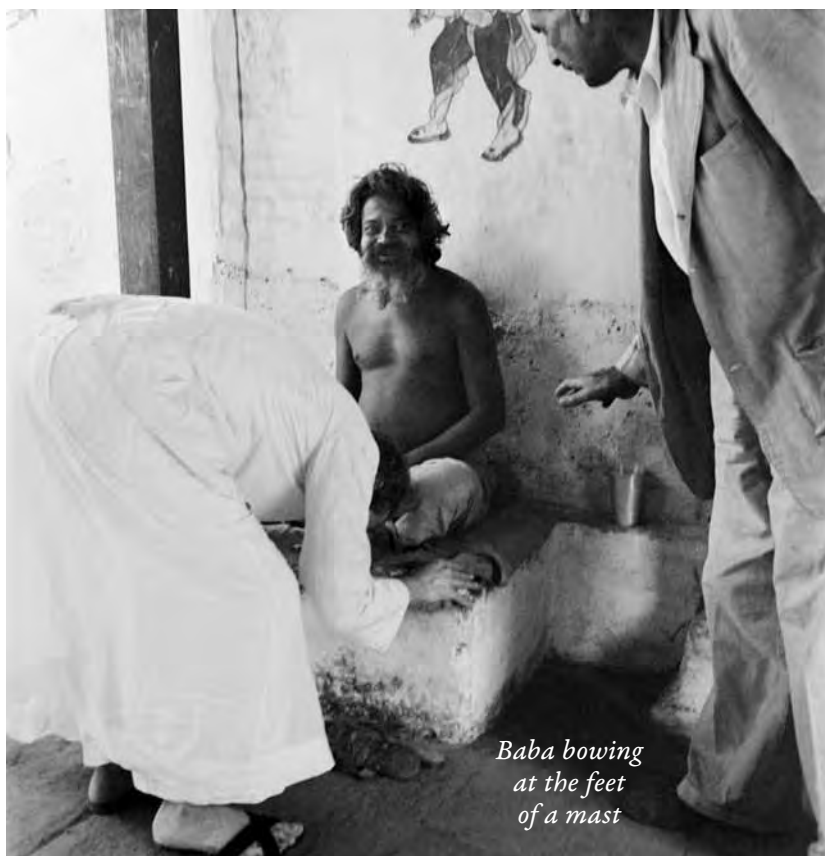
across the street. He sent Goher over to bring Mahroakh, and He spent time playing with her.

When Keka and Freiny returned, He called for them, remarking, "I have not seen parents like you in the whole world! Leaving a child behind, you just went out! Are you worthy of being her parents?" Through this incident, He gave them a firm lesson on bringing up their children.

Baba sometimes visited their house, and while sitting in a corner, He witnessed their family squabbles and gently admonished them to be more loving and tolerant toward each other.

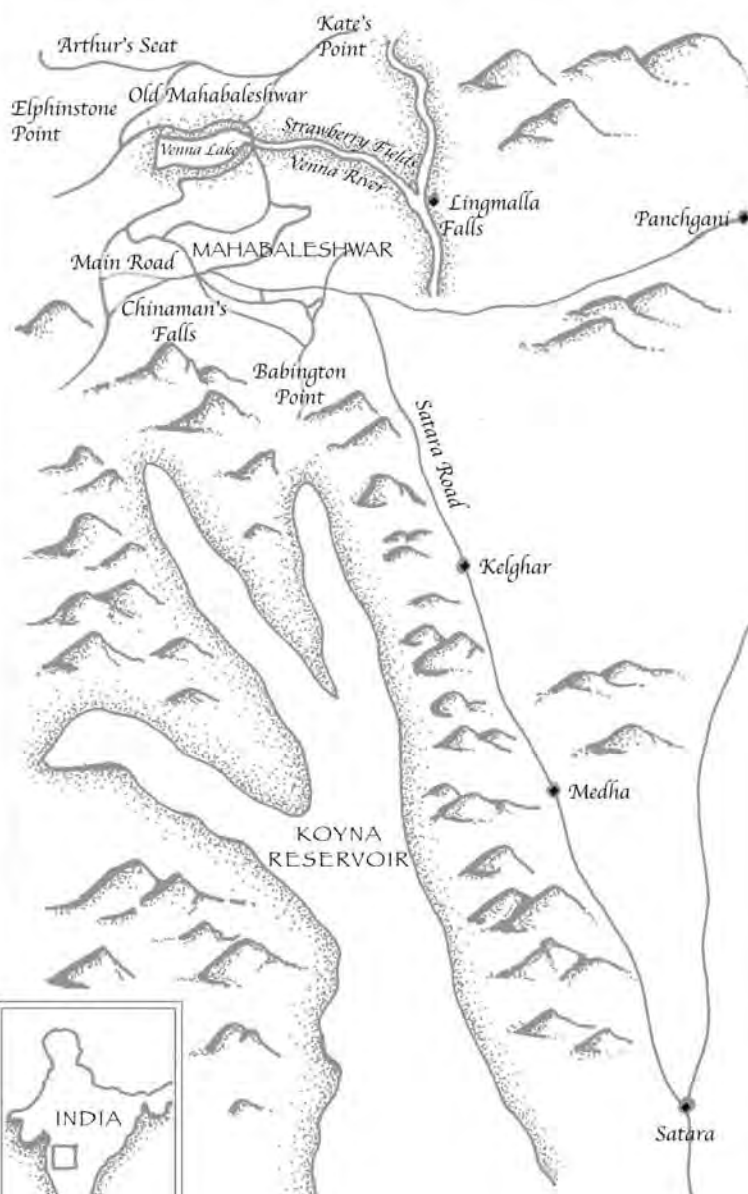
Mahroakh and her younger brother, Naosherwan, freely wandered over and visited Baba and the women in their bungalow. To this day, they cherish the intimate moments they had with Baba and the women.

The families of Kumar and Burjor Chacha were also drawn closer to Baba during this period, and Elcha Mistry delighted Him with his jokes, wisecracks and spontaneous humor.



*Baba bowing
at the feet
of a mast*

SATARA & MAHABALESHWAR



Chapter Ten

SHIFT TO THE SOUTH OF INDIA

June 14, 1950 to October 16, 1951

Stay in Satara

The seven months from November 1949 to June of 1950 spent in north India was a period of great hardship for everyone. During the strenuous work of bowing down to thousands of sadhus, saints and mahatmas during the Kumbha Mela, Baba particularly underwent much physical suffering that later caused His chronic neck and back pain. He also contracted an eye infection that plagued Him throughout much of this period. Most of the companions were ailing, too. The extreme cold and scant provisions made recovery that much more difficult, as did the mental stress of trying to carry out the New Life conditions. To the companions, this period in north India was one of great “helplessness” and “hopelessness.”

Before Eruch left on May 27th to find suitable accommodation for the companions in the area around Satara, Baba sent a letter to Jal Kerawala, one of the arrangementwalas, telling him to assist Eruch. Baba also detailed a number of specifications He required for the forthcoming stay. He wanted to be in a medium-sized city with a moderate climate, neither too hot in summer nor too cold in winter, nor too rainy, with a mountain and a river in the vicinity. He requested two bungalows located near each other with running water and electricity, if possible. He also listed a number of localities in the district according to priority. If they failed in Satara, Baba said that they should try Hyderabad or Aurangabad.

When Jal met with Eruch, they immediately began to investigate various places and reported back to Baba about each one.

Finally, in Satara, Eruch managed to find two bungalows to rent in a quiet locality in the cantonment (military) area. Baba was pleased. He and the companions were familiar with this quiet town from visits in the past and He liked its atmosphere.

Shift to the South of India

Baba chose to stay in Satara until the monsoon season was over and then move to Mahabaleshwar. Both Satara and Mahabaleshwar are located between Poona and Belgaum in the western part of India along the Sahyadri mountain range.

Shortly before the group was to leave Dehra Dun for Satara, Baba came down with a severe case of the mumps. Nilu and Donkin had to be summoned from Delhi to treat Him.

At this same time, Mani suffered a terrible bout of food poisoning and nearly passed out. When her severe vomiting and diarrhea persisted, Baba spoon-fed her orange juice and then some drops of ice cold water. Goher followed with injections and saline to prevent dehydration, which caused Goher and the others, out of concern, to stay up all night with Mani. None of the treatments helped much until Freiny Nalavala showed up the next day and prescribed a home remedy that improved Mani's condition. It took a few days for Baba and Mani to recover sufficiently to travel.

Baba, the women, Eruch, Baidul, Gustaji and Vishnu boarded a train for Satara on June 14th, a journey of over 900 miles.

To see them off at the Dehra Dun railway platform were the Nalavala, Chacha and Kumar families, as well as Elcha Mistry. Everyone, including the stalwart Kumar, shed silent tears. Baba's stay in Dehra Dun had been the highlight of their lives.

After an exhausting two-day trip, Baba's party arrived at Kalyan station, a major railway junction between Bombay and Poona. From there, they went by public bus to Satara.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the companions were just leaving Delhi.

In Satara, Baba's plan was to continue His three phases of the New Life and to leave the servant companions to carry out the labor phase as servant companions. Baba intended to begin His begging, gypsy and langoti phases while still working with the masts, the mad and the poor.

Carrying out any plan was difficult for Baba, because the infection in his eyes had flared up again, and He was in continual pain from the gritty sensation and sticky discharge.

Baba and the women moved into one of the bungalows Eruch had found. It was a large two-story wooden house known

Shift to the South of India

as Mutha's Villa, where they had stayed in 1947. Clean and recently renovated, the bungalow was in a spacious, attractively landscaped compound enclosed by a six-foot wall, which provided privacy from people and traffic passing by.

The bungalow was located in a residential area far from the busy center of town. Its shade trees and groves of toddy palms added to the peaceful setting. However, unlike their earlier stay in the villa, Baba allowed very little furniture in the rooms.

The women were on the ground floor, which was so spacious, they felt lost in it. Baba stayed in a large hall upstairs, where there was ample room for meeting with the men.



On a steep hill overlooking Satara is Ajinkya Tara Fort (The Unconquerable Star) in the distance. It is one of the most famous forts used by Shivaji and his warriors.

The rest of the men arrived in Satara on June 18th, exhausted after the two-day journey, but they were unable to rest. Their unconventional appearance raised objections from the local residents, who thought they were a military group, and they succeeded in forcing the men to vacate their bungalow.

This development sent Eruch out searching in the middle of the night for another place to rent. Finally, at 2:00 a.m., he found a place known as Bhurke's Bungalow, which was a half mile

Shift to the South of India

from where Baba and the women were staying. By then, the companions were completely exhausted.

During this time, Aloba's health had deteriorated considerably, and he asked Baba if he could go to Bombay to live in Plan I-B as an individual and independent worker.



Mutha's Villa where Baba and the women stayed

Not long after Baba gave His approval, Aloba secured a job as a cashier in an Iranian restaurant in Bombay. The timing could not have been better, because two weeks later, Aloba's niece arrived from Iran with her fanatical Muslim husband, and if her husband had not found Aloba in Bombay, living what appeared to be a conventional life, he would have eventually traced Aloba to Baba and no doubt would have created a great disturbance in the New Life.

(A while later, Aloba secured his own teashop, which prospered under his management. During the Fiery Free Life, beginning in November 1952, Baba recalled him.)

Because it was the start of the monsoon season in Satara, there were occasional heavy rain showers, which suddenly

Shift to the South of India

stirred the countryside into a profusion of new greenery and wildflowers. This renewal of nature lifted everyone's spirits.

Baba gradually began recuperating from the exhausting work He had done in north India, and He even found time to take leisurely walks with the women. On one such day, they passed by three small horses grazing by the side of the road. One was a mare with her little colt next to her.



The upstairs room where Baba slept and met with the men companions

Mehera said, "Baba, look at that darling baby horse!"

Baba admired the tiny foal and asked, "Do you like her?"

"Oh yes, Baba. I love her!"

Baba immediately gestured for Goher to inquire whether the owners would sell it. They agreed, and the pony was purchased on the spot. Goher was then asked to lead it back to the bungalow. Baba named her Begum, which means "Lady," and He asked Mehera to feed it half a seer (about one pint) of milk every morning and evening.

Because the filly was so young, Mehera felt it would be too frightened to stay alone in the nearby stable, so she had the gardener bring several goats to stay along with her.

Although Begum was a plain-looking country pony, she had an extraordinarily good nature and was very loving. On the occasions when Baba and the women would go for walks, she

Shift to the South of India

scampered along with them just like a pet dog. Because she was so small, the women let Begum come indoors, where she always made herself at home. When Baba was there, she ran to Him first, and He would pat her and feed her carrots.



In Satara, the women continued to carry out their own household chores, and they took care of Baba's room. They also washed His clothes and bedding and cooked all of His meals.

Baba's routine was to wake very early, have breakfast with the women, and then go with Goher to the men's quarters at 7:30 a.m. When He returned to the women later, either from the men's quarters or from mast work, the women had everything ready for Him. If Baba was in the mood, they were always prepared to entertain Him with skits. No matter where they were, the women always made a comfortable home for Baba.

During this period, Nariman Dadachanji, one of the arrangementwalas, was in contact with Baba regarding the Meherazad property. Many things there needed attention. Madho, the caretaker of Meherazad during the New Life, was called away on some urgent business, so Baba sent word for Padri to move

Shift to the South of India

there and take over his duties. Meheru Damania, Eruch's sister, continued to go from Ahmednagar to Meherazad once a week to do the house cleaning.

On June 23rd, Baba sent a message to Adi Sr. to publish the following circular and mail it to a few close ones:

From the 16th of October, 1949, until now, the New Life developments have been many; but the New Life has not been led by me and by those with me as I wanted, although the conditions were tried 100 percent to be followed. Now, a stage has arrived when I can absolutely, freely and satisfactorily start the New Life as I want; and those of the lifelong servant companions who will be able to stay with me will enjoy and suffer the New Life according to my picture. This is my honest feeling. Although I do not, and cannot, promise anything, I feel for all concerned. As for the lifelong servant companions, to be able to stay with me, they will have to obey me 100 percent, blindly, without any argument.

Until July 16th, 1950, I will keep myself free from all conditions. To think that after some time I shall return to the Old Life will be a vain thought for anyone. I have decided and am firm in my decision that nothing can take me back to my Old Life. I will, until the very end, be leading my New Life, and those who have any *dhakara* (impression) that I shall return to the Old Life must absolutely dismiss that dhakara.

After being away from Baba since October 1949, Kitty and Rano were called by Him to come to Satara on July 7th for a month. At the start of the New Life, Kitty and Rano had been sent to Meherjee's house in Bombay, where, under Baba's instructions, they were to be in readiness should He call them. For this reason, they kept their suitcases packed, ready to leave at a moment's notice. They also took long walks in the city in order to be in shape if they were asked to travel on foot with Baba. While in Bombay, they both obtained jobs at the Queen Mary High School, which Meherjee's daughter attended. Kitty

Shift to the South of India

was hired as an English teacher, and Rano as an art instructor. They were much loved by the children. The principal thought very highly of them as well, and when they came to her in the middle of the term to ask for a month's leave to join Baba, they were very nervous about what the headmistress would say. Much to their great relief, the headmistress was accommodating and said, "I know you wouldn't ask if it wasn't important."

Rano felt that this response was nothing short of a miracle.

Baba also called Khorshed and her mother, Soonamasi, from Bombay.

They arrived in Satara late in the evening. The women companions were very excited to see the new arrivals, and it took some time for them to settle in. Mani was especially descriptive in relating their adventures so far in the New Life.

Due to the hour and all the activity, there had been no time to introduce Begum, since the filly had already been put in her room for the night.

In the early hours of the morning, Kitty's sleep was interrupted by the sound of "someone" munching in the pantry next



Kitty Davy

door. She found this curious and wondered who was sneaking food at this hour. Quietly, she entered the kitchen and was very surprised to find a pony making itself perfectly at home chewing on various vegetables and fruits! Kitty removed the source of food, and then quickly tied Begum up in another room. The next morning, after everyone had a good laugh, they thanked Kitty for saving most of the food.

Later that morning, when these four women first saw Baba after an interval of nine months, they found Him, in their words, "happy and lovely" in His pink coat.

The next day, Kitty and Naja prepared a delicious meal and served it to Baba and all the women.

Over the next month, Baba often went into the kitchen to observe Naja and Kitty doing the cooking.

Shift to the South of India

Back on June 25th, Baba had Adi Sr. bring the mast Ali Shah, while Baidul brought several masts and mad persons (unlike the mad, the masts are unmindful of the world and its comforts).

They were all accommodated in the compound of the men's bungalow in separate rooms. Under Baba's guidance, Baidul, Eruch, Gustaji, Pendu and Murli were in charge of their living arrangements, while Dr. Nilu attended to their health.

From July 18th, Baba began special work with these unique souls during most of each day.

Also, during this period, Baba fasted, taking only a little water.

His eye condition persisted, causing him much suffering, despite the specialists in northern India, who had tried treating him with various remedies, to no avail.



Rano Gayley

Always hoping to find something to alleviate Baba's pain, Eruch, while out marketing one day, happened to pass the business sign of a local eye doctor. Ready to grasp at anything, Eruch hoped that this doctor might be able to give Baba at least some temporary relief until Eruch and the other men could get Baba to a top specialist in either Poona or Bombay. Baba agreed to allow the local eye doctor to pay a visit. This small town doctor began his examination by pulling back Baba's eyelids, and immediately, he noticed a number of small granules underneath each of them. With a pair of tweezers, he removed them in no time, and as extraordinary as it might seem, this simple procedure completely corrected Baba's eye problem and it never returned.

During the first few days in Satara, Baba had Kitty read Him the newspapers. He was particularly concerned about the possibility of war in the world, and within a week, the Korean War broke out. On that subject, Baba mentioned that in the event of a third world war, an atomic bomb would be dropped on India.

July 25th, 1950, was one of the most important days of Baba's New Life. Complying with His wish, all the men companions were up at 4:00 a.m., and after bathing, they awaited Baba to begin a special meeting.

Shift to the South of India

No one outside the New Life was allowed to attend except Baba's brother Jal, who was permitted to view the meeting through one of the windows.

In the chilly wet weather, Baba arrived at 6:45 a.m. and went straight to the hall of the men's bungalow, which had been washed and cleaned the previous night by Pendu and Eruch. He sat down in a chair, and the companions, after rising at His entrance, seated themselves on the floor. All the doors and windows were closed according to Baba's instructions.

Baba looked very serious but radiant, and His powerful eyes danced in every direction. "So long as I have not completely controlled my anger and annoyance," He warned, "do not provoke me in any manner and thus become the indirect cause of my loss of mood. I will try to keep my mood and also try to forgive as much as possible all your delinquencies, faults and weaknesses by disregarding them. But if there is the slightest cause for irritation, I will not tolerate it. So do as I say to avoid such a situation, making everything run smoothly, and all will be well."

Afterward, as instructed by Baba, Donkin read out the following message, which was later sent to the Old Life followers:

On this the most eventful day of my New Life, I send salutations to all my Old Life men and women disciples and devotees, including the Nowalas and Arrangementwalas, and to all my New Life companions. I ask the Most Merciful God to forgive us all our shortcomings, failures and weaknesses, to help the Old Life disciples and devotees to remain strong in their faith and love and their understanding of God and His Divine Manifestations, to give courage to the Arrangementwalas to fulfill their responsibilities 100 percent, and to give strength to the New Life companions to abide by Truth and the following of the New Life conditions honestly and faithfully.

BABA

After this was read out, Baba asked the companions to leave the hall and wait outside for ten minutes, with the instruction to not even peek in through the crack in the door.

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When the ten minutes were up, He clapped His hands, signaling the companions to re-enter the hall one at a time, and then He laid His head at each one's feet.

Baba later told the companions that when He had been alone, He re-confirmed the original oath, known only to Him, that He had taken at the beginning of the New Life.

There followed a simple prayer observance: a recitation of *Dashavatar Stotra* (Ten Avatars) by Nilu and Vishnu; a Zoroastrian prayer by Kaikobad, Eruch, Pendu and Kaka; a Muslim prayer by Baidul; and a Christian prayer by Dr. Donkin. The last three prayers had been composed by Baba. In the Christian prayer, Baba had written, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, O Lord! ... I offer Thee all my thoughts, words and actions, my sufferings and my joys, because Thou art the only Beloved.... have mercy on me according to Thy unbounded Mercy and let my cry come unto Thee...."

Baba then asked Nilu and Donkin to read aloud *The Song Celestial* from the Bhagavad Gita, translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, which lasted for nearly an hour. Afterward, *The Song of the New Life* and the New Life prayer were sung by a young Bombay *qawaal* (singer), a Muslim, who was accompanied on the harmonium. He had stayed several days in Satara for this purpose.

At 10:00 a.m., Baba personally served lunch, first to the masts and then to the companions. Afterward, Baba began working with the masts and a number of mad and poor people who had been gathered from the area around Satara. Baba clipped their hair, and then scrubbed each one with soap and water. A few companions helped Him, and when He was finished, He personally distributed one shirt, one pajama, a rug, two coarse blankets and a mat to each.

That day, Baba fasted on only a little syrup.

The next morning, He walked into Satara and begged from the poor caretaker of the town's dak bungalow, who was a Muslim *khansama* (butler) named Hussain. With this humble man's offering, Baba broke His fast.

During this period, another difficulty arose over Sadashiv Patel's two houses in Poona, which he had agreed to sell and pay Baba 34,000 rupees from the proceeds. So far, he had failed

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to fulfill this agreement, which put Baba in a bind, because on Sadashiv's promise, Baba had borrowed the same amount from Nariman and Meherjee. In order to clear up this debt, Baba decided to send Donkin to collect that amount from His Western followers, plus another 10,000 rupees for traveling expenses to the West.

On July 26th, Donkin left Satara. Ten days later, he flew from Bombay to London.

(Earlier, Ghani's debt was paid in a similar way by Baba's Eastern followers.)

Baba also sent a message to His followers in the West in which He said, "My coming to the West in July 1951 is definite, and Elizabeth and Norina have undertaken to arrange this."

At this time, Elizabeth, Norina, Darwin Shaw and a few others were busy preparing the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach for His visit.



Dr. Donkin

Also, on July 26th, from their quarters, the women saw Baba, Eruch and Kaka, wearing long, white kafnis with jholis slung over their shoulders, leave the bungalow and walk on the road toward the center of town. A little later, Baba and the men stopped at two houses along the way to beg.

After supper that evening, when Baba was with the women, the book *Captain Sparrow's Ireland* was read aloud. He moved His fingers throughout the reading, which was an outer sign that He was engaging in some internal work.

Kitty later said that this period in Satara was one of great physical and mental suffering for Baba and that she had never seen Him so helpless. His face, she wrote, "often wore a faraway look, tinged with suffering."

Around this time, Baba began a 40-hour fast, taking only water, while He continued doing His mast work. Baba also gave the men companions specific orders to follow as part of their labor phase.

Shift to the South of India

He had relaxed some of the restrictions of the New Life, and the women were allowed to go for walks and to check out books from the local library.

On July 27th, Baba went on foot to beg for bhiksha, first at the home of a Hindu and then at the home of a Mohammedan.

(On July 28th, the New Life caravan arrived by train in Ahmednagar and was taken to Meherazad to be stored.)

Although Baba's health was poor over the next weeks, He continued to go out begging. His chronic sinus trouble, which caused giddiness, and His painful gastritis took a toll on the companions, too, who found witnessing His suffering extremely difficult to bear.

As part of the routine at this time, the men gathered with Baba in the mornings at the women's quarters, where passages from the *Zend Avesta*, the *Qur'an*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bible* were read aloud. These sessions lasted for about half an hour in an especially peaceful and intimate atmosphere.

During these readings, the women were permitted to listen from behind a curtained doorway, out of sight. Occasionally, Baba commented about a passage, which Eruch read aloud from the alphabet board.

On August 8th, Kitty and Rano were sent back to Bombay to resume their work as teachers.

From August 4th to the 15th, 1950, the servant companions gathered each day on the upstairs floor of Mutha's Villa and recited prayers before Baba, and afterward a local qawaal performed the New Life song to the accompaniment of the harmonium and *tablas* (drums).

Although not traveling with Baba on the New Life, another of the women mandali, Mansari, who had stayed behind at Upper Meherabad, faced an adventure during this same period that is reminiscent of those faced by the companions with Baba.

One night after Baba left on the New Life, He appeared to Mansari in her room in a vision. He asked her, "What would you do if a cobra came into your room?"

Mansari replied, "I would kill it."

"Yes, do not be afraid. Kill it. I am with you," He said and then disappeared.

Shift to the South of India

Several months later, in August 1950, when she was sleeping alone in her room, a cobra entered, crawled up on her bed and coiled itself on her chest. Suddenly awake and panicked, she swept the snake away with her arm. It landed on the floor and then spread its hood and hissed at her. She thought of calling for help, but the night watchman Jamadar was too far away to hear her. Jumbled thoughts raced through her head, but still she managed to grab a long pole and with gathered courage, she administered several strokes and killed the snake.

What Mansari did not know is that cobras often come in pairs, and when its mate appeared outside her door every day for the next several days, she would stare at it until it went away. Still, those encounters left her in a state of increasing anxiety.

Finally, one night when she was praying to Baba to free her from this terrifying experience, the cobra appeared outside her door. This time, she reached for the pole, struck it forcefully, and ended its life.



Mansari Desai

After that last encounter, Baba appeared in her dream, saying, "I am very pleased with your courage. Now no snake will bother you."

(For the rest of her life, Baba's words proved to be true.)

During this period, Baba, with a few of the companions, sometimes ventured out of Satara to nearby cities and towns in search of God-intoxicated souls. One day in Poona, when Meherwan Jessawala was near the Empire Cinema on his way by bicycle to college, he received a great shock when he saw a rickshaw pass by with his brother Eruch inside.

On seeing each other, both men were startled and instantly looked away in order not to break Baba's order.

To Meherwan, this meant that Baba must be residing somewhere in the area. He was astounded. He had not expected to ever see his brother or Baba again in this life. The Old Life followers had received very little information about Baba in the

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New Life. As a consequence, they had no idea that He and the companions had shifted from north India to Satara.

On another occasion, Meherwan had gone shopping in the marketplace, and as he was leaving by a narrow back lane, he saw Baba walking with His back to him about 50 yards in the distance. Several of the companions were also there. Meherwan quickly turned away, actually frightened that his having seen Baba might disturb Him in His New Life. Meherwan had seen a mast ahead of Baba on the ground, surrounding by an assortment of bags, and suspected Baba was going to contact him.

After two months in Satara, Baba suddenly said He wanted to change locations again. Because He was advised to take a short rest due to His continuing poor health, He decided to stay in Poona for a month.

Making it clear that no visitors would be allowed, He sent a telegram to Eruch's family at Bindra House, requesting them to find a quiet place to stay. Aside from Meherwan's accidental encounters, this was the family's first official communication from Baba during the New Life, and they were thrilled to hear from Him and to be of service.

After searching far and wide, Meherwan and Papa Jessawala, Eruch's father, found a suitable bungalow on Prabhat Road near the Deccan *gymkhana* (a Parsi community) in southwest Poona.

Known as Sugandhi's Bungalow, it was newly built and nicely furnished. As soon as the papers were signed, Meherwan, Gaimai and Manu set about getting the place ready, and on the morning of August 21st, as they were just tying a mosquito net onto Baba's bed, they heard Baba's horn honk.

Realizing that Baba and the women had arrived earlier than expected, they ran out the back and raced through a far gate of the compound.

(Baba had spotted them anyway and gestured for one of the companions to call out to them, but by then they were out of earshot.)

Eruch, Pendu and Baidul arrived by bus and joined Baba and the women later that day. That afternoon, Baba gave instructions to Meherjee and Nariman to arrange for a suitable place for Him

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in Bombay, where He planned to go next. Afterward, Baba shortened his stay in Poona to a week instead of the month originally planned.

During this week, Baba primarily worked with a mast brought to Him by Baidul, and meals were sent to Him and the women from Bindra House. Although Baba was busy, He did take some time to spend with the women.

One day, He took them to Sambhaji Park, where they went for a pleasant walk and later visited the aquarium to view the marine life and also birds in cages. On another day, He took them outside of Poona to a small hillock, where He contacted a mast.

During that week in Poona, Baba allowed Eruch to stay with his family, but Eruch had to pay them one rupee for his food and lodging, and he was not to mention anything about the Old Life. However, that restriction did not apply to the New Life, so Eruch spoke at length to his enraptured family about all the adventures with Baba so far in the New Life.

On the 28th, Baba and the companions left Poona for the Mahim locality of Bombay, a quiet tree-lined residential area near a fishing community.

With Dr. Alu's help, a spacious bungalow had been found in that locality for Baba's party. It was owned by seven brothers and sisters, who were embroiled in a fight over it. In order to secure it, Dr. Alu had to contact each member of the family to obtain permission for her "grandfather" to use the empty estate for a month in order to convalesce from an illness. This task she happily did, and she succeeded after several days.

The bungalow proved to be an excellent choice. Baba and the companions enjoyed staying there.

For the mast contacts in Bombay, Baba was initially driven around by Homa Dadachanji, who was instructed not to look at Him. Later, in the Dadar area of Bombay, Homa came down with a sudden migraine and could no longer drive. Nariman immediately suggested that they stop at Jimmy and Rhoda Mistry's home nearby.

Jimmy, who was in the midst of shaving when they came to the door, responded immediately. He climbed into Baba's car half-shaven with lather still on his face. Baba was amused. He

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appreciated Jimmy's spontaneous willingness to serve. As a result of this turn of events, Jimmy and Rhoda, Homa's sister, had the rare privilege of seeing Baba in the New Life.

With Jimmy driving, Baba searched for an advanced pilgrim, Mungsaji Maharaj, who lived on the second floor of an apartment building. He was finally found, and Baba's contact with this Hindu saint was successful. As Baba was descending Mungsaji Maharaj's dimly lit staircase, Sam Kerawala, Eruch's cousin, happened to be on his way up. Shocked to see Baba so unexpectedly, Sam instantly averted his eyes. Baba's expression had been very serious.

Naja had been sent to Naoroji Dadachanji's place in Bombay to help cook the meals for Baba and those accompanying Him. While there, she caught a cold and was advised to take 1000 milligrams of vitamin C; however, she was inadvertently given a bottle containing aspirin, from which she took a dangerous amount and had a severe reaction. As a result, she passed out and the family became alarmed.

No one could determine what was wrong with her, so Baba was informed. He immediately sent Dr. Goher to examine her, and the mistake was discovered in time to save Naja's life. The mystery was solved when they found out that a servant had earlier dropped a bottle of aspirin on the floor and, unable to read, she quickly put the pills from the broken bottle into an empty vitamin C bottle and placed it back in the medicine cabinet.

In Bombay, as a respite from His mast work, Baba took the women for early morning walks. They once went to Versova and walked on the beach. Along the way, Baba said, "Pick up shells while I walk some more." He then took a brisk walk on the sand, while the four women hunted for seashells. Baba also picked up a few.

On another occasion, they went to the suburb of Bandra and took a leisurely stroll among palatial estates with their lovely gardens and coconut palms. There they saw a procession making its way to Mount Mary Church. It was September 8th, the anniversary of the Virgin Mary's birth, and Baba suggested they join the procession. When they reached the church, Baba told the women to go inside, where they found a peaceful atmos-

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phere, and Mehera placed a large candle near the altar while Baba watched from outside through an open door.

During this time, Gabriel Pascal, the famous English film director who was deeply devoted to Baba, was in India intending to make a movie about the life of Mahatma Gandhi. He contacted Adi first, who arranged for Gabriel to later meet with Baba at Ashiana, the home of Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji.

During that meeting, Baba said endearingly, "You are my phoenix! You have been with me for several incarnations. I will help you to fulfill my mission in the West. Your career will soar higher than ever before."

About this meeting, Pascal remarked afterward, "Merely being with Baba has given me back my vitality."

Also during that stay in Bombay, Baba sent Eruch and Pendu to visit Aloba, who was still working as a cashier in an Iranian restaurant.

An Unexpected Beggar

Baba ended his sojourn in Bombay and returned to Bhurke's Bungalow in Satara on September 14th.

One day, while Baba was outside with the servant companions, He spotted a man in the far distance, sitting by the roadside in a culvert.

Since they could see only his back, Baba sent Eruch to go and inquire who it was.

Eruch approached the old and haggard looking man and was surprised to see Daulat Singh dressed in his New Life kafni. Both were overwhelmed by this unexpected reunion and they fell into each other's arms.

Daulat Singh immediately asked, "Is Baba here? Can I beg at His door?"

"I can't say," Eruch replied, "but remember, Baba spotted you and sent me out to find you. Wait here till I return."

Eruch raced back to Baba, who told him to bring Daulat Singh to the bungalow where He would give him bhiksha.

Eruch immediately conveyed this request to Daulat Singh, who grabbed his satchel and bowl and ran to Baba. When He saw Him, he was so overcome by his emotions that he wept.

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Baba lovingly filled Daulat Singh's begging bowl to the brim and then invited him into the bungalow and asked him to narrate everything that had happened to him since he had left the companions in the New Life. Baba explained that He wanted the companions to know what it was like to be away from Him in the New Life.

Before telling his story, Daulat Singh still could not keep tears from streaming down his cheeks.

Baba gestured, "Why are you weeping, Daulat Singh?"

"Excuse me, Baba. Please believe me – I am not crying for anything. I am just feeling overjoyed."

After several attempts to control his overwhelming emotions, he finally succeeded and was able to tell his story:

After arriving home to Bangalore from Belgaum, his family was very happy at first to see him. But later, when he began to carry out Baba's order to don a kafni and go begging for one month in the city, his family was very displeased and felt humiliated. They did not think it proper for a prominent doctor and a respected member of the Sikh community to go begging in the streets, since he certainly had no need to beg. The community did not think it was proper either and they began to harass him. As time went on, their harassment became more like persecution; people began throwing shoes and stones at him, and eventually even his own wife and children gave him a thrashing!

After this humiliation dealt to him by his family and the Sikh elders, he decided to leave Bangalore to carry out Baba's orders elsewhere. On this particular occasion, he was in Satara to do his begging, completely unaware that Baba was also there. He was beside himself at his good fortune to have unwittingly wandered to Baba's very door.

At the end of his narration, everyone was touched at how he had suffered greatly at the hands of his own family and community, and yet he had remained true to Baba's instructions.

Baba said, "I am extremely pleased with your obedience, Daulat Singh. You are truly leading the New Life and are an example to others. Now I order you to discontinue this wandering on foot wearing a kafni and begging. Return home and lead the normal life of a practicing physician as you had previously been doing. Go."

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Baba's eyes shone with a special radiance as he looked at the grand old doctor.

(Daulat Singh thus remained in the New Life and was included under Plan I-B.)

Before he left, Baba told him, "I am really pleased with your love for me. As you have come most unexpectedly to my door, one day you shall find me also visiting your home. This is my promise."

Daulat Singh gave Baba a last embrace, full of all his love. This precious and unexpected meeting with Baba scarcely lasted 30 minutes. (True to His promise, Baba visited Daulat Singh's home years later, shortly before the old doctor passed on.)



A Ray of Hope for His Old Life Followers

On September 11th, 1950, Baba issued New Life Circular No. 17, which was distributed to His Old Life disciples and followers. In the circular, in addition to touching on His activities

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planned for the near future, Baba revealed that He would meet with His Old Life men disciples and followers for four hours on October 16th, 1950, one full year after the start of the New Life.

This news came as a total surprise. His close ones never expected to see Him again. Now they were filled with excitement and anticipation over being in His physical presence once more. The circular read:

The recent earthquakes, floods, tragedies in Assam, constant Bengal and Bihar famines, the overwhelming refugee problem all over India and other various widespread disasters all over the world have at present become a cause of general distrust in nature, untold miseries, utter disappointment and a feeling of unexpected helplessness and frustration all over the world.

Baba expressed His opinion that all this has contributed to some extent as a pointer toward the work of His New Life picture, which He had formed when He set out from Ahmednagar on October 16th, 1949, to live His New Life of helplessness and hopelessness.

Baba adopted His New Life on October 16th, 1949. He tried to live the New Life till October 16th, 1950, but the New Life could not be lived as He wanted.

With the experience of twelve months of the New Life, Baba has definitely decided now not to adjust in the future for individual requirements and tolerate individual weaknesses and laxity in obeying His orders and the conditions of the New Life. Baba also admits His own weaknesses in not fulfilling the conditions of the New Life in the right spirit. His personal weakness in succumbing to temptation such as anger, etc., and general weakness in surrendering to His feelings for the companions, has resulted in compromising His original oath taken at Meherabad and the evolvment of Plans I, II and III – much contrary to His original oath. Also, Old Life *bojas* (financial burdens) like Dr. Ghani's and Sadashiv Patel's cropped up in the meanwhile and had to be adjusted and settled accordingly. "God willing, nothing of

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this kind will be repeated from October 16th, 1950," so says Baba.

Because of this experience, Baba has resolved even to free His present lifelong servant companions on October 16th, 1950, in order to give them another chance to revise their decision whether to continue the New Life with Baba or become again disciples of the Old Life. So, the lifelong servant companions must take stock of their personal weaknesses and the various experiences they have had of the New Life of twelve months with Baba into consideration before arriving at any fresh decision. After taking a very careful and complete retrospective view of their personal weaknesses and some pleasant but too many other painful experiences of the New Life with Baba, if they still choose to continue to stay with Baba in the New Life, then Baba will take some of them with Him for three months from November 1st, 1950 to January end 1951 to help Him in His work amongst masts and poor when He goes out for this special work; and the rest of the companions He will leave behind at Mahabaleshwar to look after the women.

Baba intends to leave Mahabaleshwar in the first week of November for places like Kolhapur, Miraj, Hubli, Hyderabad, Bombay, Assay, Bengal, Orissa and Bihar for His mast and poor work, as well as for His three phases of begging, langoti and gypsy life.

From October 16th, 1950 onwards, Baba says that there will be plenty of journeying on foot, by railway and by bus for those who will accompany Him on these travels.

On October 16th, 1950, Baba has decided to abolish the existence of Plans I, II and the term Nowalas. So, from October 16th, 1950, Baba will not accept money from those who are in Plan I-B and I-C, as these Plans will not exist anymore after October 16th, 1950.

Baba says that He and His companions have not led the New Life in the right spirit all these months. So, on October 16th, 1950, He has decided to step into the Old Life for a short period of four hours, and as soon as the

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period is over, He will immediately step into the New Life again. So, all the companions of the New Life, including those of the Plan I-B and I-C and the lifelong servant companions, will again become Old Life disciples of Baba on October 16th, 1950. On this date only, all the companions of the New Life will be given another choice to stay with Baba in His New Life, which will begin in right earnest and spirit from October 16th, 1950. The essence of the same conditions to which they had previously signed “Yes” last year will be binding on those who prefer staying with Baba in His New Life. Then there will remain only on and from October 16th, 1950, Old Life disciples, Arrangementwalas and servant companions of Baba.

Only the present New Life companions will have the choice to stay with Baba in His New Life on October 16th, 1950, and no one else. Those from the present New Life companions who prefer to stay with Baba in His New Life after October 16th, 1950, will try to serve Baba as best as they can with all sincerity, will try to obey Him 100%, will try to do whatever He says and wants, even if His orders will make them break the essence of originally “Yes” signed conditions, as per the attached list, which they will have to try to follow 100% under normal circumstances during their stay with and service of Baba.

Baba’s New Life is eternal. Those, other than servants of Baba in His New Life, who desire to live that life are free to do so in spirit independently.

This New Life is endless, and even after my physical death it will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust; and who, to accomplish all this, do no lustful actions, do no harm to anyone, do no backbiting, do not seek material possessions or power, who accept no homage, neither covet honor nor shun disgrace, and fear no one and nothing; by those who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of loving, who

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believe in the lovers of God and in the reality of Manifestation, and yet do not expect any spiritual and material reward, who do not let go the hand of Truth, and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and wholeheartedly face all hardships with 100 percent cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed and religious ceremonies.

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.

BABA

For Old Life disciples, Arrangementwalas and old Ashram women, all instructions and responsibilities previously given to them stand good for all time.

Baba invites all Old Life men disciples (not women disciples) and all Arrangementwalas to Mahabaleshwar to attend the program between 7 and 11 a.m. sharp on October 16th, 1950. Those who can conveniently come, may come. Those who cannot come should not worry, but they will be sent a copy of Baba's message and program of October 16th, 1950. Nevertheless, all the companions of the New Life, including those in the Plans I-B and I-C, and all the Arrangementwalas, must attend the program on October 16th, 1950, in the morning between 7 and 11 a.m. sharp.

Those who will accept the invitation must make their own arrangements regarding boarding, lodging and conveyances. They will go back to their own places as soon as the program is over.

Those who will accept the invitation are warned that they should not under any circumstances talk to Baba and His companions about their Old Life affairs.

Baba in the New Life will not accept from or give money to anyone, but He will receive inheritance money and gifts only from Old Life ashram women as per previous circular, and the inheritance of those who prefer to continue their stay with Baba in His New Life from October 16th, 1950. All this money and any amount, in

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accordance with previous instructions, coming to the emergency fund will be put into the mast account.

The four women have their separate account for their maintenance.

Money that is now with Kaka for the lifelong servant companions' maintenance up to the end of June 1951 will be taken over on 16th October 1950 and will be credited to the mast account. So from October 16th, 1950, there will be only two accounts, one ladies' account and the other the mast account. From this mast account, Baba will use money for mast and poor work and might use it for His servants' maintenance. For personal purposes, Baba will be free to spend money from both accounts.

Baba feels that from October 16th, 1950, God will give Him courage and strength to live His New Life as He wants.

Program of 16th October 1950

All New Life companions must be ready by 7 a.m. with washed face, hands and feet, and having had a bath, if possible. Anyone who has had a night pollution must have a bath.

7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

1. Baba to ask God's forgiveness.
2. Baba forgives all New Life companions, and Baba asks all New Life companions to forgive Baba.
3. Baba's message (including declaration of His and His companions' reverting for four hours to the Old Life on October 16th, 1950) to be read.
4. Baba's salutations to all Old Life disciples, and Baba affirms responsibilities of Arrangementwalas.
5. Baba enters New Life by taking oath.
6. Baba asks decisions of the companions as to who has decided to serve Him in His New Life by trying 100 percent to obey Him and trying to follow 100 percent the conditions of the New Life.

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7. Baba to ask God to give Him strength.
8. Prayers: a) Hindu, b) Zoroastrian, c) Muslim and d) Christian.
9. *Song of the New Life* and the New Life Prayer by a qawaal.
10. Baba shaves and bathes one mast and His salutation to the mast.
11. All depart except those who decide to stay and serve Baba in the New Life.

The Essence of Originally "Yes" Signed Conditions for all those who decide to serve Baba from October 16th, 1950.

1. Must not hold Baba responsible for anything that may happen to them.
2. Must not even expect Baba to perform miracles, or use his spiritual key or have His nazar upon them.
3. Must not even expect to receive any spiritual or material benefit whatever in return from Baba.
4. Must not do any lustful actions with anyone.
5. Must not accept money from anyone for anyone, not even for Baba.
6. Must not have any concern with politics.
7. Must not express anger by word or deed.
8. Must not criticize unfairly.
9. Must not tell lies under any circumstances.
10. Must not accept homage nor deliberately create circumstances to invite homage to Baba or to themselves.
11. Must be prepared for every kind of disappointment and adversity.

Those who decide to serve Baba from October 16th, 1950, must solemnly declare before God, in the presence of Baba, that they have made this decision of their own free will and that whatever the result of it may be, they alone are responsible.

Shift to the South of India

The extensive circular with its invitation to be with Baba was sent out to a large number of His Old Life followers throughout India, and letters poured in over the next few weeks to Adi Sr.'s office with acknowledgments. They came from excited Old Life followers who were ecstatic over the idea of seeing Him again, if only for four hours.

In a Supplement to this circular, Baba also invited the men, if they wished, to donate money for His work with the masts and the poor, which He intended to begin one week after the October 16th meeting. The condition was that all money would have to be given during the four hours in which He would step out of the New Life. The circular further stated, "Anyone who genuinely desires to give Him money during that period should do so from Rs. 50 (minimum) to Rs. 500 (maximum)."



Author's Commentary on the New Life

Baba Himself has shown the world the way to lead the New Life individually and independently following its essence, which is eternal. As God is eternal, so also is this Illusion of creation.

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The purpose of the New Life is to experience this Illusion as Illusion in order to become free of its bondage.

To become hopeless, the seeker should try to forget everything, and banishing all thought of the past and the future, should live always in the present. However, because of the mind, to forget is impossible. To remain unaffected by suitable and unsuitable conditions is forgetting, and this is detachment.

By remaining detached, one is unaffected by any situation or circumstance. There is no joy in receiving homage, for example, and no pain in receiving insult.

Baba made it clear that the New Life plans are a compromise of His oath, which means that by adopting any of the plans, one cannot attain perfection. But with love and faith, progress can definitely be made on the spiritual path.

To be perfect, the grace of the Avatar or a Sadguru (Perfect Master) is necessary. Grace descends only by becoming His true servant and the dust beneath His feet. With this objective, Baba has declared that these plans are a compromise of His oath, since according to His oath the companions have to turn into dust – the false ego must disappear. There can be no compromise by allowing any accommodation to weaknesses on the part of the companions.

Therefore, in the end, Baba put the companions in the category of servants so that by truly adopting this servant companion status, they might obey Him and dance to His tune. The New Life is the means whereby this life can be lived and can ultimately lead one to Manonash (annihilation of the mind).

Plans I-A, I-B, I-C and Plan II are compromise plans according to Baba's oath. Although they are imperfect, they are still invaluable for seekers who wish to follow them 100 percent with full faith and love. It is with this objective in mind that Baba has kept these plans before the eyes of the world. They are nothing without love and faith. For those who carry them out with 100 percent love and faith, darkness is dispelled and light is seen.

Baba's ending the plans perhaps shows inherent defects in them. This is to make the seeker always conscious that without becoming dust under the Master's feet, perfection is not possible. By following any of the plans, the seeker should try to

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humble his ego. One should strive 100 percent to be in the role of a servant and become dust. Only then can one become a Master.

The model imparted by the New Life is to be a true servant of the Master. The life of a servant is not one's own, nor is it at one's own pleasure. It is devoid of hope and desire and requires surrender to the Master's will. Our pleasure is our Master's pleasure, His wish and desire are our wish and desire, and our lives are an act of complete submission.

This state is not gained by merely thinking about it; owing to one's faith and love, when one is not aware of it, it naturally comes about. Summing up, one becomes a true servant of the Master when His will becomes one's very life.

Thus, all of the plans created by Baba constitute the first stage, and by adopting one of them, the seeker can put into practice with love and faith both inner and outer renunciation and become like a true servant. These plans are the preparation for reaching the state of the servant of God.

Baba declared that the plans should last until His physical death. This means that at the time He carried them out with the companions, He gave them to the present age to be activated and lived so that the plans may take the seekers to the final aim of being true servants.

Although Baba said that the plans would last until His death, He canceled them immediately. He had only to show them to the world, and after fulfilling this objective, He annulled them in the interest of His companions only for the time being.

Baba made the companions His medium for demonstrating to the world the essentials of the New Life. They were enlisted as characters, so to speak, in the drama of the New Life for the benefit of the world. Really speaking, the companions had been living the New Life in their day-to-day life with Baba from the beginning, long before the New Life even began!

Through the New Life, Baba demonstrated a "new" way of life for the world for all time, and it will have countless future seekers as its followers.

*Shift to the South of India***Baba Steps Back into the Old Life for Four Hours**

On October 1st, Baba, the women and Begum moved to Mahabaleshwar, where they stayed at the Aga Khan's bungalow, also known as Florence Hall. The men moved into a nearby bungalow. Not long after, Rano and Kitty were again called to join the women companions.

On October 15th, the day before the meeting, several hundred men, including a few who knew very little about Baba, began pouring into hotels in Mahabaleshwar. They were to be present at the large hall the next morning at 6:45 a.m. for this momentous gathering. In keeping with the spirit of the New Life, Baba had given the strict instruction that no one was to bow down or to express devotion to Him. He also sent word to them, stating, "If any of you has experienced any difficulties in carrying out my orders and instructions to you, put them down in writing and give me the list tomorrow."



*Panoramic view
of Mahabaleshwar
near Arthur's Seat*

Early on October 16th, the hotels were a scene of bustling activity, with men washing and dressing hurriedly. They then made their way along the peaceful mountain road to meet Baba, who was already waiting for them. He stood on the veranda in front of the men's quarters, looking radiant and serene in His pink coat.

Shift to the South of India*Baba on the veranda of the men's quarters*

The men gathered in an open yard in front of the men's bungalow, and after a short while, at an indication from Baba, they came forward one by one to be introduced by Adi Sr. This introduction was done regardless of how many years each one had been following Him. Baba gave each a loving embrace.

Among those attending were: Sidhu, Jangle, Savak Kotwal, Kalemama and Bala Tambat from Meherabad and Padri from Meherazad. Keshev Nigam, Gaya Prasad Khare, Babu Ramprasad, Parmeshwari Nigam (Pukar), Raisaheb Ramashankar and Laxmichand came from Hamirpur. Dr. Ghani and Gadekar brought several new people from the Poona group. Among them were Madhusudan, V.R. Bade, Krishna Bundellu, Thade, Rangole and a young boy named Pratap Ahir. The others came from a wide range of places, such as Bombay, Nagpur, Saoner, Delhi, Dehra Dun, Nasik and Karachi.

Shift to the South of India



Entrance to the Aga Khan Estate



The interior of the stable where the meeting took place

Shift to the South of India



The men's bungalow where Baba greeted His Old Life followers



The converted Aga Khan stable where Baba stepped out of the New Life for four hours and delivered His Sermon on the Mount

Shift to the South of India

After Baba greeted the entire group of nearly 200 men, He indicated for everyone to walk to the large nearby hall, which had formerly been the stable for racehorses belonging to the Aga Khan. The old stable, made of stone with a corrugated iron roof, formed the outside of the structure, roughly 40 by 80 feet, leaving a 15 by 40 foot space in the interior, which was an open-air courtyard. (Years earlier, this same structure had been used by Baba as a mast ashram.)

They entered the hall through a large, wide door made of weathered teak, which creaked on its hinges. A wooden chair was placed in one of the interior wings for Baba. He took this seat, and the New Life companions gathered around Him. Dr. Ghani was asked to sit on His right, and the rest of the group quietly spread out on the ground. Baba asked everyone to relax and to make themselves comfortable.

Just before beginning the meeting, Baba gestured for Vishnu to close the wide door of the stable. As he was shutting the door, Vishnu noticed Gustadji slowly making his way toward the door after having relieved himself. In consideration for his age and long connection with Baba, Vishnu paused to let him in, and in that slight delay, two uninvited men slipped in.

Baba's presence filled the hall, and all eyes followed His every movement. Some men were in tears over this joyous reunion after one year of separation from their Beloved.

Suddenly, the two men who had slipped in came forward and bowed down at Baba's feet. In response, Baba immediately bowed down to each of them. They were taken aback and again bowed down to Him. Clearly displeased, Baba again bowed to them until Eruch spoke up and told them about Baba's instruction not to show Him any devotion. The men immediately understood their mistake and quietly left.

Baba then asked Vishnu how the men could have gotten in. Vishnu explained that he had waited for Gustadji. Baba abruptly replied, "Who is Gustadji against my word? Even if you had seen God approaching to enter, you should have closed the doors! How many times have I emphasized obedience, and yet you do not realize it!"

Vishnu stood quietly and admitted his mistake, but the mood of the meeting was now unexpectedly tense.

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Then, suddenly, Baba asked those in the gathering whether it was proper for Him to lose His temper.

Before anyone could reply, He told one of the men from the gathering to come up and slap Him. The man was so nervous that He only gave Baba a light tap on the cheek. Baba was not impressed. "Is this the way you slap when you punish someone?" He asked.

He called Minoo Kharas, a long-time follower from Karachi, to show how it was done. An ex-policeman, Minoo came forward and gave Baba such a resounding slap that Baba's face instantly turned bright red.

Baba beamed with pleasure, but the episode created quite a stir. Some said later that, ironically, Baba's divinity shone through all the more after that.

Unknown to anyone in the hall, this whole scene impacted one man in the group even more profoundly. He had come with the others from Hamirpur not to love Baba as they did, but to scrutinize Him with the intention of exposing Him as a fraud. He had even hinted that he might shoot Baba.

His name was Parmeshwari Nigam. He was a large and impressive-looking man, who in recent years had been a staunch revolutionary conspiring against British rule in India. He had seen many instances of hypocritical leaders who asked others to risk their lives for political freedom while they always avoided danger, and he had counted Baba among them. However, he had just witnessed a leader who, in order to bring home the importance of obedience, had allowed Himself to be openly humiliated by being slapped in the face by one of His own disciples, and that act had deeply moved him.

This incident, as well as the love that emanated from Baba as He embraced so many men of different castes and religions, awakened in Parmeshwari Nigam the conviction of Baba's Avatarhood, and later in the meeting, when Baba asked for donations for His work with the masts and the poor, he suddenly stood up in the midst of the gathering, and as a token of surrender, he took off all his clothes down to his underwear and placed them in a bundle at his own feet. He then wrote a quick note dedicating his body and mind to Baba and inserted it,

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along with all his money, into the shirt pocket that was lying on the floor. Then, sobbing uncontrollably, he prostrated himself from a distance in Baba's direction.

Seeing this expression of surrender, Baba gestured for him to come forward with his bundle of clothes.

Baba looked lovingly at the clothes, then held the bundle, kissed it, and handed it back to Parmeshwari Nigam, saying, "Put your clothes back on. When this meeting is over, go back to Hamirpur. Continue the work that you have been doing. But remember one thing, that where formerly you were doing it for yourself, now think that you will be doing it for Baba."

At that time, Parmeshwari Nigam was the editor of a Hindi revolutionary magazine called *Pukar*.

Baba told him, "It is the inner attitude that counts and not its outer expression."

(Later, Baba renamed Parmeshwari Nigam after his magazine *Pukar*, and he became one of Baba's close and dear followers.)

Baba, in a spirit of openness, entreated God to forgive Him for not being able to live the New Life as He had wished, and He asked forgiveness for His companions and Himself for all faults and weaknesses committed thus far in the New Life.

Bal Natu, one of the men attending the gathering, described Baba's expression as one of deep humility through which His divinity shown.

Baba then gestured for Donkin to read aloud His Sermon written for this occasion:

Being just now in the "Old Life" for these few hours, I will tell you what I feel to be the established Divine facts:

Essentially we are all One. The feeling of our being otherwise is due to ignorance. Soul desires consciousness to know itself, but in its progress toward this Goal, which it cannot realize independently of creation, it must undergo the experience which it gathers as the individualized ego and which is all imagination. Thus it is faced at the outset with ignorance instead of Knowledge.

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Dual forms and illusionary creations are the outcome of ignorance: birth and death, happiness and misery, virtue and sin, good and bad – all are equally the manifestation of this same ignorance. You were never born and will never die; you never suffered and will never suffer; you ever were and ever will be, as separateness exists only in imagination.

The Soul becomes free of the binding of impressions through various paths. And Love is the most important of these paths leading to the realization of God. Through this Love, the Soul becomes entirely absorbed in God, ultimately forgetting itself completely. It is then that all of a sudden, Knowledge comes as swiftly as the lightning bolt, which burns to ashes all that it falls upon.

This Knowledge uproots illusions, doubts and worries, and apparent sufferings are instantaneously replaced by everlasting peace and eternal bliss, which is the Goal of all existence. Soul, now free from its illusions, realizes its Original Unity of Being.

Let us not hope, because this Knowledge is beyond hoping and wanting. Let us not reason, because this Knowledge cannot be comprehended or thought of. Let us not doubt, because this Knowledge is the certainty of certainties. Let us not live the life of the senses, because the lusty, greedy, false and impure mind cannot reach this Knowledge. Let us love God as the Soul of our souls, and in the height of this Love lies this Knowledge.

The divinely Perfect Ones can bestow this Knowledge on anyone they like and whenever they like. May we all gain this Knowledge soon.

Immediately afterward, Dr. Deshmukh read out a Hindi translation of the Sermon. Baba then handed out mimeographed copies of the text, and told each one to read it carefully. A little later, Baba accepted contributions from the men toward His upcoming work with the masts and the poor. Altogether, 23,566.75 rupees were received.

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On the wall behind Baba's seat was a large cardboard placard with His photograph in the center. On one side was printed in bold letters, OLD LIFE – Perfect Divinity, Divine Man. On the other side was printed, NEW LIFE – Perfect Humility, Ordinary Man. As a clarification of the meaning of this sign, Baba gestured for Donkin to read a specially prepared message:

Today, I have stepped back into my Old Life for a few hours. I am very happy to see you all – you who are my Old Life disciples and devotees, and I feel deeply the love you have for me. I want you all, and also those who are absent today, to know that my love for my Old Life disciples and devotees is *unbounded*.

On the 16th of October, 1949, I adopted my New Life. Today, exactly one year after I set out with my companions, I have to say that the principles of my New Life could not be lived up to in the spirit that I desired. My companions have not been able to comply with the conditions of the New Life in the strictest sense that I had expected them to do, although in fairness to them I want to say that each has tried his best according to his own capabilities and understanding. I feel, therefore, that this year has not been a failure, but an eye-opener. I also admit my own mistakes in succumbing to anger and other temptations, and my inability to carry out with a firmness of purpose the New Life conditions on the whole. My giving in to my feelings for the companions has resulted in a modification of the original oath taken by me at Meherabad, and the evolvement of Plans I, II, and III – all contrary to the original conditions.

I now give my companions another chance to reconsider their original decisions that they would join me in my New Life, and a free choice to rejoin me in the New Life as my servants, or to go away and become my Old Life disciples, or to be entirely free and lead independent lives in the world. With the experiences of twelve months of the New Life behind us, I warn them that I have now made a definite resolve never in the future to compromise my New Life conditions to suit individual require-

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ments, nor shall I tolerate any weakness or laxity on their part in carrying out my orders and the conditions of my New Life.

Keeping all this in mind, therefore, and making a sincere calculation of their own weaknesses and past experiences (some pleasant, but many otherwise), I want them to decide today. I repeat that they should not decide before they have made an unflinching survey of their experiences of one year, and of their individual capacities for carrying out their resolutions.

If, in spite of all this, they decide to join me as servants of the New Life, they must know that they will have to try and obey me 100 percent, and must do wholeheartedly whatever I want them to do.

The servants' obedience to my orders must be spontaneous and devoid of any feeling of slavery or compulsion. They must carry out my wishes with a cheerful willingness, without in any way feeling it an encroachment on their freedom. Naturally, those who feel that carrying out my wishes would be an encroachment on their right of freedom, will decide not to join me in the New Life, but will choose to become Old Life disciples again or to live independent lives. In either case, I not only urge them to make one of these two choices, but will also try my best to help them make a good start.

Just as those joining me in my New Life today are expected to serve me with 100 percent willingness, so I hope to be able to serve my servants with impartial love and an unbiased attitude.

With the reshuffling of decisions today, all the Plans, viz. I, II, and III, as well as the term *no-walas*, will cease to exist. Now, only the Old Life disciples, the Arrangementwalas (who are also Old Life disciples), and the Servants of the New Life will remain.

If I am the One my Old Life disciples take me to be, I would wish them to endeavor wholeheartedly to stick to their faith and love, to carry out my Old Life instructions without any feeling of enforced bondage on their

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part, and to live a life worthy of real life; and, irrespective of what I am, the Most Compassionate God will surely reward them spiritually, even if they do not seek reward. As to the Arrangementwalas, I ask God to give them the courage to carry out their responsibilities to the very end. As for the Old Life disciples, Arrangementwalas and Old Life women ashramites, all instructions and responsibilities previously given to them stand good for all time. Also, my instructions regarding their not contacting me in any way and not having correspondence with me and those who are with me, stand good for always, unless otherwise ordered by me.



*Baba at the meeting at Mahabaleshwar on October 16, 1950.
(left to right) Murli Kale, Baidul, Dr. Donkin, Kaka Baria, Adi Sr.,
Gustadji, MEHER BABA, Pendu, Eruch, Dr. Nilu and Papa Jessawala*

My Old Life places me on the altar of Absolute Godhood and Divine Perfection. My New Life makes me take the stand of a humble servant of God and His people. In my New Life, Perfect Divinity is replaced by Perfect Humility. In my New Life, I am the seeker, the devotee, the brother and the friend. Both these aspects –

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Perfect Divinity and Perfect Humility – have been by God's Will, and both are everlastingly linked with God's Eternal Life. Anyone may believe me to be whatever he likes, but none may ask for blessings, miracles, or rewards of any kind. My New Life is eternal. Those other than my servants in the New Life, wherever and whatever they may be, who desire to live that life, are free to do so in the spirit of it, independently.

I shall leave Mahabaleshwar on October 21st on my intended tour of two to three months. Among the places I shall go to shall be Kolhapur, Miraj, Hubli, Hyderabad, Madras, Bombay, Assay, Bengal, Orissa and Bihar, where I shall do my work with the masts and the poor, as well as my New Life phases of begging, langoti and gypsy life.

Copies of this second message were then distributed to everyone, and Baba called for a half hour recess. Hot tea was served, and Baba handed to each a *ladoo* (a sweet) as prasad.

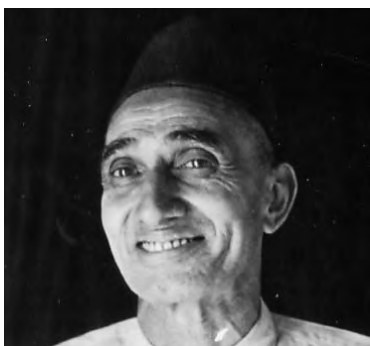
When the men returned, Baba dealt with a few problems facing some of His Old Life followers that were written on various notes as per His instruction from the previous night.

One of the notes was from a young man named Pankhraj, whose particular problem needed an immediate solution. Before the New Life, Pankhraj had become engaged, with Baba's permission, to a young Baba lover named Tarabai. At the time, Baba had said

that He wanted their wedding to take place in His presence, but since He was away in the New Life, the young man was afraid



The bride, Gustadji



Kalemama, the priest

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that the wedding might never happen. To solve this dilemma, Baba called old Gustadji to stand in for Pankhraj's fiancée. He then called for Kalemama to chant some special Hindu mantras, while Baba asked Pankhraj and Gustadji, the "bride," to garland and embrace each other.

In this way, Baba blessed their wedding, saying to Pankhraj, "I have wedded you to Tarabai. You are now married. There is nothing more to be done by me. When you return home, you may get married in any way you like."

Everyone witnessed this unique ceremony and were both touched and amused.

(Later, in a simple ceremony, Pankhraj and Tarabai were legally wed and their marriage has been a union in Baba's love.)

Another note was from Keshav Nigam, to whom Baba gave three orders just before the start of the New Life: 1) not to touch money; 2) not to touch any woman; 3) to fast one day a week for twenty-four hours. He confessed that he had abided by the second order for six months, but was unable to continue. Baba appreciated his honesty and gave him an orange as His prasad. He then instructed Keshav to follow the third order only.

Suddenly, Minoo Kharas and his brother, who were sitting next to Baba, spontaneously touched His feet. Baba became very upset, but immediately stopped Himself and confessed, "I got angry suddenly, which isn't good." He ordered Minoo to slap Him, which he again did without the least hesitation.

It was still Vishnu's responsibility not to allow anyone from outside to enter the hall, but Habibullah Baig from Kashmir managed to slip in and sit down quietly.

Baba singled him out and asked why he had come.

"I've come for your blessing," Habibullah answered. "I am out of work and practically penniless."

Because Baba was not giving blessings in the New Life, He asked Dr. Ghani to bless him. Ghani obeyed and Baba then said to Habibullah, "You will be my neighbor."

Not long afterward, Habibullah got a substantial job at the Kashmiri shop in Poona, which was located not far from Baba's childhood home. (That shop later became a thriving business.)

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Before resuming the general meeting, Baba responded to the problems of several other men.

When the gathering reconvened, Baba stood up from His chair and walked to a side room to take the Oath of the New Life. When He came back, He was wearing His white kafni, and His cotton satchel was slung over His shoulder. Taking His seat again, He announced that He was now back in the New Life, and He asked the original *yes-wallas* to decide whether they wished to join Him in the next phase.

Adi Sr., Anna 104, Aloha, Minoo Kharas, Babadas, Pandoba, Kishan Singh, Bal Natu and Dr. Ghani elected to leave and go back to the Old Life.

Gustadji, Pendu, Eruch, Vishnu, Nilu, Donkin, Kaka, Baidul, Murli, Daulat Singh and Kaikobad chose to continue as Baba's servant companions.

Baba then offered a simple prayer to God: "Give me strength to live the New Life fully and completely."

Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Zoroastrian prayers were then recited by the men, followed by the qawaal from Satara, who sang *The Song of the New Life* to the accompaniment of a harmonium and drum.

When the singing program ended, Baba went outside to bathe the mast Ali Shah. While the men watched this rare scene, Baba poured cup after cup of water over the mast. Baba then asked all to disperse and return directly to their homes.

The men slowly left, some in tears, others in high spirits. Altogether, nearly 24,000 rupees had been contributed by His Old Life followers to be used in the next phase of the New Life.

About the money, Baba had said earlier, "I will use these gifts toward my work with the masts and poor, which will start from October 21st." He also said that He would go on a tour lasting six weeks, which would take him to many places throughout India.

*Shift to the South of India***The Author's Reflections on the Mahabaleshwar Meeting**

Baba's Old Life of Conscious Divinity is eternal and indivisible. He adopted the life of a seeker and devotee in the New Life, but at the same time, His state remained of Conscious Divinity, and this state is always unchangeable.

The life of people in the world is of Unconscious Divinity, and it is illusory. They are unconscious of the Goal of life, and they live the life in Illusion.

Those who were followers in the Old Life were to be attentive to the Aim of Life, while simultaneously living life in the world. They were to try to achieve the Aim of Life and remain conscious – some more, some less – of the Path, and they were to be inclined toward the Truth.

Those who remained dedicated to Baba in His Old Life and lived their lives in accordance with His orders were from that time onward leading the New Life. But Baba made them His medium to demonstrate to the world the New Life, thereby uncovering the Old and New Life. The New Life was not for the members of the mandali, but for the people in the world; the mandali had all along lived a life of dedicated service to Baba. The New Life companions who attended the meeting at Mahabaleshwar and who reverted to the Old Life did not do so with a view of leading the worldly life; they intended to remain submissive to every wish of Baba.

On this path, it is natural that some seekers make rapid progress; some progress at a medium pace and some proceed very slowly. All cannot go fast, and all are not equal. In the end, Baba kept before the eyes of the world these two aspects of the Old Life and the New Life. There was also the dedicated role of the arrangementwalas, who managed affairs according to Baba's orders.

Thus, according to Baba's guidance, we should keep in mind two things, the Old and the New Life. We say that the Old Life consists of people who, while loving God, are at the same time laden with family responsibilities and obligations, and thus they are not totally detached from the world. Yet, they try to love God. This is the middle path toward Truth, and it takes a long time to traverse.

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However, from this, no one is to think that family and the world should be renounced. There is nothing to be achieved through outer renunciation. The aim is inner (mental) renunciation, which ultimately results in a state whereby the seeker, although remaining in the world, is not of it – he or she remains unaffected by anything worldly and is quite detached.

Thus, the Old Life is an effort to achieve detachment while remaining in the world, which means one must view the world as nothing, the family as nothing, and to remain uninfluenced by anything worldly.

The Old Life of the mandali was different, because it was a life of dedication. By following Baba's orders, they were breathing in His atmosphere. In fact, their Old Life was their New Life, since from the beginning they were following the life of a seeker according to Baba's wishes.

The New Life is for those who live for their relationship with God and for nothing else.

In the New Life, Baba placed the companions in different plans, but all the plans, although necessary for a time, were ultimately unsuccessful. The plans were not the medium for complete fulfillment of the Goal (Manonash), but they were invaluable up to a certain stage. For the ultimate stage, Baba had to make the companions into His lifelong servants. One must become a true servant before one can become dust under the Master's feet. When the mind is annihilated (Manonash), the individual life ends. One who does his or her utmost to eradicate all weaknesses lives the New Life.

For those in the world, the New Life is endless, because Illusion is also endless. Thus, efforts to annihilate the mind will also necessarily be endless.

The New Life is a life of spiritual practice where at every step we aspirants must try to efface ourselves. This life is for those who never make a compromise with the Truth and who, although living, are dead to themselves. This life is meant for seekers and is Baba's gift to them for this age. It is the medium for realizing Life Eternal and a guideline on the Path for seekers who breathe only to inundate their lives with Truth, Love and Faith.

Among the New Life phases, that of the servant is the greatest challenge, and it was this phase that Baba now embarked upon.

Shift to the South of India**A Tour for Work with Masts and the Poor**

While planning for His extensive tour of India, Baba gave final instructions to the women companions, which included Naja, and to Nilu, Vishnu, Donkin, Kaka, Murli and Anna 104, who would be remaining behind in Mahabaleshwar.

Kitty and Rano, who had joined the women a second time on October 16th, stayed for several more days and then Baba told them, "Now you have to go back."

Rano complained, "Baba, how many times are you going to send us back like this? Why can't we be with You?"

"No, you have to go back. For me you have to go back."

"Oh Baba, why?" Rano said, starting to cry.

"Don't cry," He said, comforting her. "You've got to go back."

Kitty and Rano always remembered Baba's words, which He said just before the New Life: "Treat your conditions like a life buoy and stick to it, and I will not let you sink!"

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On October 21, 1950, Baba departed from Mahabaleshwar on a six-week tour of India. Right before leaving, He told His companions, "Now I have to bestow God's gift on the poor. This is more difficult than the mast work. We will have to travel a great deal to distant places, as I will distribute a large sum [of money] among the poor."

Accompanying Baba were Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul. Chhagan, one of the Old Life mandali, was to join them two weeks later in Calcutta.

Traveling day and night on crowded trains, they visited many places throughout India at a rigorous pace, resting for no more than three hours a night.

The first aspect of Baba's work, to find masts, frequently brought them to out-of-the-way places and was exhausting. No sooner was a contact made than Baba rushed to the next place without a break.

Baidul usually went out in advance, searching among the mad-appearing inhabitants of various towns and villages, hoping to find genuine masts. When he succeeded, he went back to get Baba and brought Him to the masts he had found.

Unlike in the Old Life, during these contacts, the companions were allowed to be present and to see Baba put His head on the mast's feet while Eruch or Baidul spoke out, "Pray that His spiritual work may be successful!"

Most of the masts nodded and said, "It will be so."

Baba only left after the mast had offered his blessing and had been given one or more rupees in return.

The companions noticed that after Baba's contact, the masts were filled with peace and bliss, and sometimes even ecstasy and rapture.

On the subject of His mast work in the New Life, Baba said, "My mast work as such is over. In the Old Life only I, God and the mast knew what my work was. In the New Life, I have become a seeker. I place my head on their feet, and for the fulfillment of my spiritual objective, I seek their blessing."

The second aspect of Baba's work during this tour was contacting the poor, but not just any poor. Baba primarily wanted to

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give money to the heads of families who had once been well-to-do, but through unfortunate circumstances were now reduced to poverty or had lost their prominent position in society.

Since families in this predicament were often too proud to ask for help and were adverse to anyone knowing their plight, it was very difficult for the servant companions to find them.

Extensive inquiries had to be made to assess the intimate needs of each family, which was done with remarkable accuracy by the companions, considering the limited time that Baba had allowed. When they finally succeeded in finding worthy recipients, Baba was taken to their homes, where He laid His head at the feet of the family members. Then, as money was offered, Eruch recited the following lines:

My Elder Brother says this money has been given by loving hearts to deserving and needy persons. The receiver should not feel it as charity, or feel himself to be under any obligation whatsoever. He should consider it as a gift of love.

On these occasions, Eruch referred to Baba as his Elder Brother to avoid encouraging any reverence.

This work was especially trying, because the families, more often than not, disliked being bowed down to, and sometimes they only gave in after much persuasion.

(Thirty-three downtrodden families were contacted in the states of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra.)

After the meeting in Mahabaleshwar, one of the places Baba traveled to was Bihar in eastern India to give relief to flood victims. Due to a high flood in the Kosi River, many inhabitants in that area lost their lives and others suffered extensive damage to their property.

Following Baba's instructions, the companions contacted the chairman of the District Board, Janaki Nandan Singh, who offered them the services of a co-worker, Baijnath Mishra, to assist in the effort of contacting flood victims. With his help, Baba and the companions went from town to town and village

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to village in the area, contacting the helpless and the poor to give them financial assistance. Some families were given as much as 500 rupees. In addition, because many in the area had lost their homes, Baba made arrangements to give them a large feast. After the feast, He said to the companions, "All this is just a trifle and most insignificant from all outward appearances."

From Bihar, Baba and the men traveled by train into the Himalayas to Nepal in the very north of India. In Jaynagar and Janakpur, Baba contacted many sadhus and a few saints. With scarcely one hour's sleep a night and with little food, He and the companions crossed fields and rice paddies, sometimes in the middle of the night using kerosene lanterns, in search of seekers of God.

A Short Stay in Calcutta

From Nepal, Baba and the companions took a train south to Calcutta on the northeast coast of India, where they rested for a few days. Chhagan, an Old Life disciple from Ahmednagar, joined them on November 4th.

The whole area was suffering from famine, and Baba expressed the wish to go several miles outside the city to Dakshineshwar (Kali Ghat), a place of pilgrimage made famous by the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Dressed in kafnis and green turbans, Baba and the companions arrived in the morning at Dakshineshwar, situated on the banks of the Ganges.

Of the many white and terra cotta domed buildings and temples on the grounds, and the Kali Temple towering above them, Baba chose for His place of work the dining hall in Dakshineshwar temple. The hall was a simple room devoid of furniture, and its floor was spread with a layer of cow dung, a common practice in India. This all was where Ramakrishna is said to have attained God-realization in the mid-1880s. Here, his present-day followers still sat on the floor and had their meals on large banana leaves used as plates.

In order for Baba to use this hall for two hours, with the condition of not being disturbed, the companions asked a number of people for permission, without success. After a frustrating

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time, they found the swami in charge, who finally agreed to let Baba interrupt the routine of the hall.

At the fixed time, Baba arrived, entered the hall and immediately removed His clothes, except for His langoti (loincloth). He then sat on the floor and asked the companions to remain outside with the door closed.

When 30 minutes had passed, Baba clapped, and the companions joined Him in the dining hall.

Baba put on His clothes again and explained that He had done very important work there in the langoti life.

Then, completely unexpected by the companions, He said He wanted to beg in the famine area of Calcutta, with Eruch at His side, Pendu right behind Him with a bag full of coins and the others following behind Pendu.

Immediately upon leaving the dining hall, they exited the temple courtyard and started out in the direction of the main road, passing peddlers selling all the items that are associated with places of pilgrimage: incense sticks, idols of Kali, and photographs of Ramakrishna and his foremost disciple, Vivekananda. Baba stopped at some of these stalls to beg, but He received nothing.



Ramakrishna

When they reached the main road, Baba halted and said, "Now we all start begging." He looked up and down the road before deciding which direction to take.

Once they were going in the direction Baba chose, Eruch began to beg at several houses along a side street with Baba in their midst holding out His cloth satchel and brass begging pot. For his efforts, Eruch, too, received either no response or some-

one telling him to move on and try a neighbor.

Meanwhile, right behind Baba, Pendu, according to His instructions, was giving out coins in five to ten rupee denominations to anyone who asked.

To onlookers, begging as well as the distribution of money carried out by the same group of men was a novel sight, but such were Baba's unconventional ways.

Shift to the South of India

House after house was tried until the companions came to a small home with a latticed veranda, where a young Bengali girl appeared at the front door in response to Eruch's loud call. She acknowledged him and then immediately ran inside and brought out several elderly ladies, who insisted, "Please stay here. Don't leave this place without taking some food. Please."

*Chhagan*

Baba nudged Eruch to tell them that they should prepare food for seven people and have it ready in five minutes.

"Don't worry," they said. "We will prepare food for all of you, just please stay."

After five minutes, Baba expressed impatience and asked Eruch to call out again, and the women came out, pleading with the companions not to go.

"We are preparing it!" they said, as their whole family, including their men and children, pitched in.

Soon the companions' satchels and brass pots were filled to the brim. The family said that they had wanted to prepare some special dishes for them, but since Baba was in such a hurry, they only had time to offer fresh spinach and rice, which was what they had been preparing for their own dinner.

Baba expressed wholehearted gratitude to the family for their spontaneous love and generosity, and then He led the companions a long distance away from the house.

Sitting under a large tree, He distributed the delicious food to each of the companions who gathered around Him.

Baba later took off His kafni and put on His sadra, trousers and coat. In this very unceremonious way, Baba told the men that He had now concluded His begging phase in the New Life.

*Shift to the South of India***A Prayer to Krishna is Heard**

After Kali Ghat, Baba and the men traveled to Cuttack in Orissa to contact a few masts and to give one poor family 500 rupees. Then they traveled to south India, and in Madras, Baba suddenly felt thirsty, so He sent Eruch in search of water.

Unable to find any potable water for Baba, Eruch went into a shop to purchase some fresh coconut milk.

Meanwhile, Baba and the other men had followed Eruch to the shop, and they waited outside while Eruch bartered for a coconut. As this negotiation was underway, they overheard another customer in the shop talking loudly to someone about a gentleman who was once rich, but who had lost all his wealth and was now living in poverty with his wife and daughter.

Eruch quickly made the purchase and returned to Baba, who drank the coconut milk and then suddenly told Eruch, "Go back and inquire about the family who is now destitute."

Eruch returned to the shop and asked the owner if he could tell him about the family that had been discussed by the other customers.

"Why? What have you to do with them?" the owner asked.

"I'd just like to know," Eruch persisted.

Eventually, the owner gave him the name and address of the gentleman who had lost his wealth, but who was once a prosperous merchant, living in a palatial house.

When Eruch reported back, Baba said they must catch a train right away and contact the unfortunate gentleman whose address was in Guddur, around three hours away by train.

They left immediately, and by the time they arrived at the outskirts of Guddur, it was dusk. It was also *Divali*, the Festival of Lights, so every street, home and shop was lit up with lamps or candles.

Baba and the men rested at the railway station while Eruch went to a suburb called Old Mambalam to the address given. When he found it, instead of the run-down hovel he had expected, he found a mansion.

He knocked at the door. A well-dressed man appeared.

Eruch, sensing he was in the wrong place, asked, "I am looking for a man by the name of Subranamian."

Shift to the South of India

"That is my name. I'm Subranamian."

Since this man was so nicely dressed with diamond rings on his fingers, it was obvious to Eruch that he was not in need of financial help.

"This is my home," the gentleman added.

Eruch was completely confused.

"What can I do for you?" the man asked.

"Excuse me, sir," Eruch finally replied. "The fact is that there is somebody by this name who is in great need of help."

"No," the man quickly answered. "I am the Subranamian. There's nobody else here. You see, by God's grace, I have everything I want, and my needs are looked after by Him. There is nothing wrong. There must be some mistake on your part."

It seemed to Eruch that his only recourse was to return to Baba and admit that the whole journey had been a mistake.

Just as Eruch was turning to leave, a child came out from the drawing room, and in clear English, called out, "I know the man. I know the house where he lives." The child came out and stood by Eruch, although the father tried to stop him.

Because many people share the same last name in India, the child knew that Eruch was referring to the Subranamian who formerly owned the house.

It turned out that the boy's father was a contractor who had been in the process of building the mansion for the gentleman, but had somehow contrived a way to cheat him out of his entire wealth and then have him evicted.

Continuing to defy his father's wishes, the boy led Eruch down streets and by-lanes to a very poor district some distance away. Despite the apparent poverty in that area, Eruch noticed that all the huts, but one, were lit with Divali lights. The child pointed to the only dark hut and left.

Eruch approached the hut. Through the open door, he saw a single room where a tiny lamp burned faintly. The hut had no furniture or adornment except for a life-size statue of Lord Krishna. A young woman in a tattered sari knelt in front of it. The family may have lost all of their belongings, but it was clear that the one thing they would not part with was their statue of Krishna.

Shift to the South of India

Though Eruch did not want to interrupt the young woman's worship, the Lord Himself was waiting on the railway platform, so he waited ten minutes and then knocked. The young woman turned toward the door. "What do you want?" she asked in excellent English.

"I am sent by my Elder Brother who has come from Bombay. He is waiting at the station, and He would like to meet with a gentleman named Subranamian. Is he here?"

"Yes, he is here," she said, inviting him in.

It was then that Eruch saw, in the dim light, a low cot in the corner with an old man laying across it. On the other side of the room, a woman lay on another cot.

"They are my parents," the young woman said apologetically. "They are both ill." She then asked the purpose of his visit.

"My Elder Brother," Eruch explained, "has some work to do with your father, and He has in mind to render some help."

"But how is it that he knows my father?"

"You look frightened," Eruch said. "Don't be. I assure you that there is nothing to fear. Just please give me one promise. Do not leave this house. Within an hour's time, I will bring my Elder Brother here, and everything will be made very clear to you. You should not worry about anything. We are not strangers. We know your people."

She gave her promise.

Before leaving, Eruch asked her to have some warm water ready for when he returned with his Elder Brother.

As Eruch rode with Baba and Pendu in a bullock-drawn tonga, he told them the whole story. Baba was very happy. When they arrived at the hut, Eruch introduced his Elder Brother, while Pendu was behind them holding a bucket, a basin and a towel so Baba could wash the old man's feet.

The old people were too ill to register their visitor's presence, so without further ado, Pendu filled the bucket with warm water and Baba knelt down and began washing the old man's feet as he lay on the cot. After Baba dried them with the towel, He placed His forehead at the man's feet and then put an envelope that contained a large sum of money on his chest. Since the old man was unable to move, he witnessed all this without uttering a single word.

Shift to the South of India

Eruch was the first to break this silence: "My Brother says that this money, given by loving hearts for deserving and needy people, is now offered to you. You should not take it as charity or feel yourself under any obligation whatsoever. Please consider it as a gift of love." He asked the daughter to take care of the money.

Upon hearing this, the old man's filled with tears.

Baba, Eruch and Pendu were now ready to leave, but before they could step outside, the daughter fell at the feet of the statue of Lord Krishna, weeping, "Oh Lord, I never knew that You were so compassionate, so kind and merciful. No sooner do I implore You to help than within minutes You send me help!"

After Baba, Eruch and Pendu had gone some distance in the tonga, they discovered that Baba's scarf had been left behind.

"Forget about it!" Baba insisted. "Let my scarf stay with them. I am extremely happy with this work that has been done."

(While in Madras, two other destitute families were also found and given 500 rupees each.)

Baba Helps a Former Prince

Baba and the companions then traveled from Guddur to Hyderabad in central India for a stay of nine days.

Baba's first stop was in an *Idgah*, a Muslim place of worship, where He went into seclusion, while the companions stood guard. There, He took off His clothes and sat in His loincloth for half an hour, thus adding another chapter to His life in langoti.

Afterward, Baba gave three Muslim and five Hindu families 500 rupees each, and gave three other families smaller amounts.

Then, in one particular locality in Hyderabad, the group heard about a former *nawab* (Muslim prince) who had lost all his wealth. Even those who he had once helped with money had deserted him.

When the companions asked some local residents where this nawab might be found, they were told, "The man is here. He was once so wealthy that he had a special carriage for himself, and elephants were tied at his gate." (To own an elephant was a sign of great wealth in former days in India.) They were then told that the prince was now reduced to earning his livelihood

Shift to the South of India

by sitting along the roadside on a soap box, selling matchboxes and *beedis*, a very cheap Indian cigarette made of a single folded tobacco leaf.

Since the prince had no fixed place to live or work, the companions searched everywhere until they finally located him in the Mud Fort locality. They went to get Baba and returned to find the former prince, who was lying on the veranda of a government rest house, sick, alone and very old. His sole possessions were on a wooden crate next to him. They consisted of a few boxes of matches and some packets of beedis.

Eruch said to him in Baba's presence, "My Elder Brother has come to help you, and He will give you a love gift of a good sum, which we will be grateful if you accept."

"From where have you come, and why do you wish to help me? With what motive?"

"Kindly do not ask anything. Accept the gift which comes to you by God's grace."

The former prince hesitated, but after much persuasion from Eruch, he agreed to accept the offer of money.

By this time, Baba and the companions had become an object of curiosity to people from the neighborhood, who had begun to gather around.

As the crowd grew, Baba wanted to leave immediately, even though he had not washed the man's feet, but Eruch said, "Baba, many people are here now, and it is likely that the money we give him will be pinched in no time."

"Money is such a thing that a person in this man's condition would not be so careless with it," Baba replied.

Baba, Eruch and Pendu helped the old gentleman sit up on the veranda with his feet dangling over the side. As usual, a bucket of water, a basin and a towel had been brought, and in spite of wanting to leave, Baba washed the old man's feet and dried them with a towel. Then, after bowing down to him, Baba handed him a love gift of 500 rupees. At the sight of so much money, the former prince fainted.

Seeing the prince faint, the crowd became convinced that Baba and the companions had come to kill the old man.

Shift to the South of India

The commotion frightened Eruch and Pendu, but Baba remained calm and asked His companions to find someone to take care of the money.

"Is there anybody related to this man, any acquaintance?" they inquired.

"Yes, his wife has gone to the hospital for medicine for him, and if she were to know that he is dead, she would take your life, because they are a very devoted couple."

At this point, someone shouted, "They've poisoned the old prince!"

Since so many were convinced that the old man was dead, someone went to notify the police.

Eruch and Pendu tried to explain the situation, but they were only cursed at and abused for their efforts.

The disturbance escalated. Amid shouting from all sides, Baba and the companions lifted the old man and carried him to a cot with a dirty bed sheet that was located in a nearby room. There, Baba held the old man's head on His lap and began fanning him while the companions sprinkled water over his face as the crowd tried to push its way into the room.

The wife returned at last, and finding her husband collapsed on a cot, she broke down and wept.

"Everything has been taken from us!" she cried. "I had only my husband left, whom you also want to snatch away from me!"

Eruch explained to her that her husband had only fainted due to the shock of receiving a large sum of money.

"Strangers, why are you harassing a sick person?" she persisted, unconsolated.

At this point, the old man became conscious. Tears streamed from his eyes as he told his wife, "They are not strangers, but God-sent angels."

Now, understanding the situation, the wife began thanking Baba and the men profusely for their great kindness, and when she was just about to ask them something, Baba cut her off by giving the signal to leave.

While departing, Eruch said to the old couple, "This is God's grace, and you may thank Him for that."

Shift to the South of India

The crowds now experienced a complete turnaround and began to praise God for His great compassion in coming to the aid of the former prince and his wife in their time of dire need.

(Altogether, during the six-week tour of India, Baba contacted and financially assisted 33 such families in need, and 250 other poor people were given various sums of money. In addition, 119 masts, 23 saints and 21 sadhus were contacted during the whirlwind tour.)



*Shift to the South of India***Baba's Work with the Masts and the Poor in Bombay
November 25 to December 6, 1950**

Baba started the last phase of His tour on November 25th, 1950, in Bombay, where He and the companions stayed at Ashiana, the comfortable two-story flat, which Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji had vacated for His use. Located on Warden Road, a quiet residential area in Breach Candy locality, it was set back from the street, with trees and flowers on the property.

During that twelve-day stay, Baba spent the day time at Ashiana and rested at Meherjee's home in the evenings, where Rano, Kitty, Khorshed and Soomamasi were staying, although Baba did not allow the women to see Him.

Each evening, when Baba arrived at Meherjee's house, Meherjee called out, "Baba is here!" and the women immediately retreated to their rooms. Only Khorshed, who also was not allowed to see Him, was at least given the privilege of looking after His room and washing His clothes.



*The sitting room at Ashiana where Baba would sit and
meet with the companions*

Since Baba had completed His work in Nepal in the north, Bengal in the east, Hyderabad and Madras in the south, He now concentrated on Bombay in the west.

Shift to the South of India*The dining room at Ashiana where Baba took His meals*

To help contact masts in Bombay, He called Ramjoo and Adi Sr. from Ahmednagar, while Meherjee and Nariman were on hand to make necessary arrangements.

Ramjoo, who had seen Baba only briefly since the start of the New Life, described Him in Bombay as being "His old lively self, but surrounded by a rigid frame of His New Life restrictions.... We were able to live with Baba as intimately as we were accustomed to living with Him from time to time in the Old Life" except that "in the New Life, He refused point blank to take any notice of the past or make any blueprints for the future." In playing His role as a seeker, Baba, as observed by Ramjoo, "is definitely trying to cold-storage the Mastery almost completely and to act in all matters as M.S. Irani" – an ordinary man.

Shift to the South of India

On the morning of November 26th, Baba invited to Ashiana four of His Old Life followers, who had expressed their financial difficulties to Him during the meeting in Mahabaleshwar on October 16th

To them, He said, "While I was doing my work with the poor during my travels, I remembered you also. And so, I have called you here



Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji

today to extend the same service to you." The four men, Abdulla Jaffer, Dattu Mehendarge, Rustom Dinyar and Baba's brother Beheram, were requested to stand barefoot in a line. After washing their feet with His own hands, Baba bowed down to them and then had this message read out:

This is neither charity nor favor done by me. The money is also not mine. It is part of the amount, given to me by loving hearts, to be used for helping the needy. I consider you to be in need of help; and I give this without any obligation upon you of any kind.

Baba gave each one 1,000 rupees, and the four could hardly contain their tears as they left. Usually in His work with the poor, Baba gave assistance to those He had not met previously, but in this case, He wanted to extend help to those in His Old Life family.

Later that afternoon, Baba and the companions went to a cricket match at Brabourne Stadium near Nariman Point.

The next ten days found Baba intensely contacting masts, going by car to out-of-the-way places to find them.

The first mast He found was spotted lying on a footpath on the bare ground in the blazing sun near Mahim locality. Baba

Shift to the South of India

immediately had the car stopped, but not wishing to disturb his sleep, Baba said, "We shall take another chance, another time."

In the Bandra locality nearby, they found a mast who stayed in a simple hut overlooking the sea. Baba was able to approach this one. He laid His head at the feet of the mast while Ramjoo recited the words, "Please pray that His spiritual work may be a success."

The mast replied, "It will be so," and then repeated several times, "Come occasionally."

Since Baba always catered to the whims of masts, He and the men stayed with this mast until he stopped his request.

Another saint-like mast they encountered heard Baba's request for His spiritual work to succeed and countered, "How can I interfere in God's will and the work of the Sadgurus?"

Baba gestured to Ramjoo to reply, "You have not to say anything. You have only to bless Him."

At this point, the mast went into ecstasy and hit Baba sharply on the back three or four times, while declaring, "It shall be so!"

In a more humorous incident, a mast contacted by Baba asked for three rupees and four annas before giving his blessing, and the money was given to him. However, a one anna coin slipped unseen from his hands and came to rest underneath his wooden seat.

The mast counted the money, and finding one anna short, he refused to give his blessing. Finally, one companion found the coin and Ramjoo said, "This mast is careful about his feet!" Baba smiled at Ramjoo's quick wit.

From morning till evening, Baba went from one place to another searching for masts.

When He approached a short, bearded Arab mast named Patiwala, there were so many people collected around him that he was difficult to contact during the day, so Baba came back again late at night accompanied only by Ramjoo.

As they approached this mast, Ramjoo used his most persuasive tone to implore Patiwala to allow Baba to place His head on his feet.

Patiwala replied, "It is likely He is God! It is likely He is Mohammed! Why doesn't He leave me alone!"

Shift to the South of India

Baba motioned to Patiwala's feet from a distance and said, "He is a very good mast." They then left without any further pursuit.

One day, a discussion arose about a Muslim saint of Bombay, who had said before the New Life began that Baba was the "acme of Divine Perfection."

Suddenly, when this statement was repeated, Baba told Eruch to twist His ear for allowing the discussion of anything referring to His Old Life state of Mastery.

After Baba had contacted nearly twenty masts, He said that He felt satisfied with His work so far and that He wanted to relax for a few days.

One of the men suggested going to the cricket match between India and the Commonwealth teams that was to be played on November 30th.

Baba agreed, and when the day arrived, He was taken to Bradbourne Stadium, where Meherjee and Nariman had arranged seats for Him and the companions in the northern wing of the public stand.

Those seats turned out to be in the glaring afternoon sun, and although that was a strain on Baba's sensitive eye condition, He loved cricket so much that He followed each competitive move completely absorbed until the game was over.

Over the next four days, though still contacting masts, Baba returned to watch the cricket matches from the public stands, thoroughly appreciating the crowd's excitement when an excellent play was made and their raucous remarks over errors.

On December 5th, although everything had been arranged to see another match, Baba called the companions and arrangementwalas into His room to tell them, "I will rest all day today and we will not be going to any more cricket matches either."

The men were disappointed. They were looking forward to seeing the match, but now they just wanted to hear the score on the radio. However, Baba looked ill and His mood was serious, so the men kept a distance and did not express their thoughts.



Ramjoo

Shift to the South of India

Chhagan, who had been on duty the previous night, reported that Baba had been in a bad temper even then, so this was a continuation of His earlier state.

The companions moved about quietly, and when they joined Baba for lunch, He suddenly requested that they turn on the radio. Thinking they would hear the cricket score, they were shocked by the news that Shri Aurobindo Ghosh of Pondicherry had passed away during the night. Only then did they understand the reason for Baba's mood.



Baidul (left) helping Baba bathe a mast

While in the Old Life, Baba declared that Aurobindo was on the sixth plane of consciousness, and He had referred to him as one of the greatest living saints of India.

In the New Life, although Baba never broached the subject of spiritual status, this day He called for Aurobindo's photograph and placed it before Him as He listened to Aurobindo's biography being recounted on the radio.

Shift to the South of India

Later that day, Baba revealed that this was to be the last day of his six-week tour of India. He then hinted that He would be going into a long seclusion in the near future. For this purpose, He contacted Padri and told him to build a small hut on the Aga Khan estate in Mahabaleshwar.

The rest of that day was spent listing the expenses that had been incurred during the six-week tour down to the last rupee and paisa. That account was then sent to the arrangementwalas to be circulated among Baba's Old Life disciples and followers.

Life for the Women at Mahabaleshwar

After the exhausting tour of 45 days, Baba returned to Mahabaleshwar on December 6th, 1950, and immediately met with the women. Later that day, He recounted to them some of the many touching scenes experienced during His whirlwind trip throughout India.

Before Baba went on tours or into seclusion, He encouraged the women companions "to get out of the house" every morning and to go for walks along the beautiful forested trails around Mahabaleshwar. They took Baba up on this suggestion and were often followed by Begum, who had turned out to be a delightful companion. As the women walked along, Begum stopped from time to time to graze on the mountain paths, but she always kept one eye on the women. If they got some distance ahead of her, she always trotted or galloped to catch up with them. Sometimes, in her zealousness, she even raced past them.

When Baba was away and the women went to market, they took Begum with them. On these occasions, she followed so obediently that she did not even require a halter. Because she was so well behaved, the townspeople began to call the group *ghorawallis*, ladies with the horse. Baba was amused to hear about that when He returned.

Now that Baba was back with them, He went on scenic walks with the women, which occasionally included a picnic under the trees. On one of these excursions, Baba took them on a long walk to Lingmala waterfall. The view of the waterfall, the steep cliffs and the valley below were even more magnificent for the women, because Baba was with them.

Shift to the South of India

Once, as Baba and Mehera descended a narrow rocky path, side by side, Begum suddenly ran to them and nudged her head between them, unwilling to be traversing that dense forest alone. Apparently, she was frightened to walk where wild animals might abound. Only when they came to an open area on the edge of the mountain did she calm down.

Seeing how distressed Begum had been, and since the stables were far from Florence Hall, Mehera asked Baba if Begum could stay in the house with the women from then on.

Baba consented, so in one of the large bath stalls, a little stable was made, where the women spread gunnysacks and grass on the floor.

As in Satara, Baba fed Begum carrots whenever He had the chance and then He patted her lovingly. She was a regular member of the household and often came inside on her own, climbing up the high veranda stairs and walking right into the drawing room if Baba happened to be there. There, she always stood quietly and waited until He stroked her. Only then was the little pony consoled enough to trot merrily off.



The stairs to the drawing room of Florence Hall

While in Mahabaleshwar, Goher noticed vendors passing by along the road on Tuesdays, carrying vegetables, eggs, butter and honey to sell at the market. She thought it over and decid-

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ed to approach them to ask, "Why don't you sell them here? We can buy them."

The merchants were more than happy to sell their goods on the spot as it meant less to carry to market, so the women began purchasing from them instead of always having to go to market. The butter from these vendors was superior, and remembering the men and the ghee business in Delhi, they had an idea: "We could buy enough butter to produce ghee and make a business of it to help Baba in the New Life." They figured that whatever they managed to produce, they could be sold to Baba's lovers in Poona and Bombay.

To carry this brainstorm to fruition, the women made a wood fireplace on the back veranda, and along with the rice they cooked everyday, they began making ghee, which does not require refrigeration. Their enterprise went further. When honey was in season, they purchased large combs, strained the honey and then poured it into jars to sell. They even began to sell eggs. Since there was no refrigerator in the women's quarters, they stored the eggs in powdered limewater, which kept them fresh.



A view of the waterfalls between Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar

Shift to the South of India

When their homemade products were taken to Bombay, their labors paid off, because the goods were sold in no time. In this way, they felt they were making a small contribution to the New Life.

For the Christmas holidays, Kitty and Rano were again invited to join the party in Mahalabeshwar, and Kitty was immediately given the duty of cooking meals for Baba and the women three days a week.

The kitchen had been set up at the rear of the bungalow, and about fifteen feet out from the back veranda was a stone wall that separated the main bungalow from the servants' quarters behind.

One day, Meheru spotted a snake near the outside tap, and she was able to pin it down with a stick as it was escaping down a nearby hole. She called Goher, who ran out and together they only managed to sever its tail, but the snake got away. When the servant women saw the severed tail, they warned them that the snake was extremely poisonous.

After that episode, the snake sometimes appeared when Kitty was using the tap while cooking. Although deathly afraid of snakes, when this happened Kitty always ran and grabbed a long stick to kill it, but by the time she returned, the snake was always gone. From then on, as Kitty cooked, she kept a close eye out the window for any sign of the snake.

This same scene was repeated several times over the next few days. The other women companions found Kitty and her long stick very amusing, so much so that Mani got the idea to make a fake snake and put it out near the wall to see what Kitty would do.

Mani told Baba, so He could be in on the practical joke, too.

Mehera and Mani then made up a batch of chapati dough and carefully rolled it out into the shape of a snake. When that was done, they realized that it needed to be painted, but the paint did not stick on the wet dough.

Afraid that Kitty would see it before it was dry and they could paint it, Mehera suggested that they set it out on their own veranda, where Kitty was unlikely to go and where it could dry enough to hold paint. Their plan succeeded, and they eventually used turmeric, dust and charcoal to paint it. However, before

Shift to the South of India

they had a chance to put the snake where Kitty could see it, Goher, who was not in on the joke, happened to come by their veranda and spot their handiwork. Thinking it was a real snake, she grabbed a stick and beat it to pieces. When she inspected the damage afterward, she felt very foolish.

Later, when Mehera and Mani came to get the snake for the joke on Kitty, they were shocked to find it in pieces. Goher told them that she was the culprit. Mani and Mehera quickly made another one and filled Goher in on the joke so there would not be a repeat performance.

On the next day that Kitty was cooking, she was busy all afternoon in the kitchen, which made it easy for Mehera and Mani to place the snake near the back wall.

Later, Baba, along with Mehera, Mani, Goher, Meheru and Rano, quietly slipped upstairs to the veranda of His room and eagerly waited to see what would happen. They waited. And waited.

Kitty was too absorbed in cooking that day to bother looking for the snake.

Growing more and more impatient, the women began to throw little twigs onto the tin roof just above the kitchen, but still Kitty's attention was absorbed in food preparation.

Finally, Meheru took a large limb and dropped it on the roof. It made such a loud noise that Mehera remarked, "That was not very subtle of you. She'll only suspect something!"

However, the loud noise worked. Kitty ran out immediately, and seeing the snake, she grabbed the stick, ran over to it and began striking the snake forcefully.

Pieces flew everywhere while Baba and the women tried their best to contain their laughter, but they failed. Eventually Kitty looked up and realized that she had been the brunt of a practical joke.

She said later that she thought it was strange for a snake to break up so easily. (As a side note, from that day on, Kitty lost her fear of snakes, which was propitious, because a year later, when Baba sent her to stay at His Center in Myrtle Beach, she was able to confidently demonstrate to others how to kill the poisonous snakes sometimes found there.)

*Shift to the South of India***Singing Programs at Mahabaleshwar**

In 1950, Mehera's birthday, according to the Zoroastrian calendar, fell on Christmas Day.

Baba agreed to celebrate it with a special music program performed by a group calling themselves the New Bhajan Mandali from Poona. The group came about after Dr. Ghani left the New Life companions in Dehra Dun in January 1950 and returned home. There he often visited Laxmi Narayan Thade at the government hostel where Laxmi worked as a superintendent. During those visits, Ghani shared stories about Baba and discoursed on spiritual themes.

Those stories produced an audience of some boarders in the hostel who were in their teens, including Pratap Ahir, Madhusudan Pund, Rangole, the Thade brothers, and Subhadra Bundellu, a young woman. Often, those gatherings continued into the night, with the boys freely asking questions about Baba and the spiritual life, which Ghani answered with his innate wit and insight.

Sometimes a number of Baba's long-time disciples in Poona dropped by to share their experiences of being with Baba. Among them were Gadekar, Khaksaheb, Suley and Baily Irani. After the stories, bhajans and arti were sung, and it turned out that Madhusudan was especially gifted in composing songs to Baba, and Subhadra was an excellent singer.

As time went on, the bhajan group was formed. The youngsters were enthusiastic singers, and some of Baba's close ones joined in the bhajans, including Gadekar and his family, Laxmikant, Babusaheb Shinde, Laxman Kamble, Rangole, Bade, Narayan Bundellu, Pratap Ahir and the Thade family.

Eventually, Baba heard about the singing sessions and invited the New Bhajan Mandali to Mahabaleshwar to perform for Him and the women. Baba asked Gadekar to send passport-sized photos of each group member.

Dr. Ghani made the group aware of what a rare privilege it was to see Baba in the New Life, let alone to perform for Him.

Before the youngsters left for Mahabaleshwar, one of the very early mandali, Khaksaheb, an excellent poet, wrote a special *ghazal*, a song of love and complaint to God. He requested

Shift to the South of India

the group to sing it before Baba, but he died unexpectedly on December 23rd, the day before the group left for Mahabaleshwar.

Gadekar, also a long-time disciple, who was traveling with the bhajan group, was anxious to tell Baba of Khaksaheb's death, but he knew he had to resist the urge to refer to anyone from the Old Life.

Despite their dear friend's death, the bhajan group maintained their enthusiasm to see Baba. They arrived on December 24th according to plan and were initially lodged in the men's bungalow with arrangements for this part of their stay made by Vishnu.

On the first evening, Baba asked to hear each of the boys sing solo. He told them, "I am happy you all have come. Sing freely and wholeheartedly, but remember you are not to refer to anything concerning the Old Life."

*Mehera*

The young men spread themselves out on the spacious drawing room floor of Florence Hall. Since they were used to singing bhajans glorifying Baba, they worried that their songs might not be acceptable to Him in the New Life, when He was playing the role of an ordinary seeker and devotee of God. Nonetheless, they set all their fears aside and sang from their hearts.

One of the first songs they sang was *The Song of the New Life*, taught to them by Dr. Ghani.

Afterward, Baba told them, "To live up to the New Life song is a success I am seeking in the role of the humblest and lowest of beings, full of weaknesses and shortcomings. Whatever you sing now will be addressed to the Old Life Meher Baba, not to me, as I cannot accept it in this New Life. However, you can sing before me with all your heart, full of love and faith."

Since almost all of the bhajans were written to Baba, He had them sing the songs to a photograph of Himself from the Old Life. Bhajan after bhajan rang out, as the women listened from behind a curtain in the dining room nearby.

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Since Begum was in the room with the women during the singing, Mehera suddenly thought, "Let's see what happens if she walks into the hall."

She sent the pony marching right into the middle of the music program. Begum, who was not in the least bit shy about being in a room full of strangers, went straight over to Baba, who beamed and then fed her some carrots.

Everyone watching was charmed, and Padri, who had already taken several photographs of Baba listening intently to the music, seized the opportunity to capture the precious moment of Baba with Begum.

The music resumed with Madhusudan singing the ghazal Khaksaheb wrote right before he died. Baba suddenly stopped him. Everyone became profoundly still as Baba's mood changed to one that seemed pensive and faraway.

Baba moved His hands over His face and gestured, "He has come to me." From this gesture, everyone knew that Baba was referring to Khaksaheb.

Baba then gestured for the singing to continue.

Khaksaheb had been very dear to Baba since the Manzil-e-Meem days in Bombay during the early 1920s. He had also lived at Meherabad, Toka and Bangalore with Baba for long periods. By the time of the New Life, he was too old to join Baba as one of the companions; otherwise, he would have gladly come. This ghazal, filled with his longing, turned out to be Khaksaheb's last message to his Beloved, and Baba was deeply moved.

After a few more songs, a ghazal composed by Ghani was sung. In it, he unburdened in a humorous yet pointed style, the pain he experienced being physically cut off from Baba in the New Life:

*What a sunny day it was!
What a dread night it is now!
(I hope) God's hand is on the wheel of (my) fate!*

After the group sang a few lines of the ghazal, Baba told them to stop.

Laughing, He gestured, "*Mota Doka*," meaning "big head," which was His nickname for Dr. Ghani.

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When the singing was resumed, Baba listened with delight, and soon afterward, He brought the evening music program to a close.

(A month later, in response to Ghani's longing in the ghazal, Baba composed a short poem in which He invited the doctor to come and see Him. In this way, Ghani's deep wish to be physically with Baba was fulfilled.)



Florence Hall, also known as the Aga Khan Bungalow

Very early on December 25th, Christmas was celebrated with Baba in a special way by the women companions, which included Naja, Rano and Kitty.

A small evergreen tree had been dug up from the nearby forest and was placed on the living room table. On it were colorful paper decorations that Mehera, Mani and Meheru had made for the branches. On top was an angel that Kitty had fashioned, and, as an additional finishing touch, Rano and Naja had created a delightful little cottage made of cookies, sugar and icing. It was lit from the inside and had a face peeking out from one of the windows.

The women had placed the little cottage next to the tree, and the scene was very realistic, down to the tiny deer that trotted up its snowy lane.

After these lovely preparations were completed, Baba was brought in to see the beautiful handiwork, all done out of love

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for Him. There was a sweet smile on His face when He looked at the brightly decorated Christmas tree and warmly lit cottage nestled in the snow.

However, He could not stay long, because He had arranged to hear the bhajan singers again.

He arrived in the drawing room wearing a silk coat over His white sadra, looking majestic and relaxed. The bhajan group arrived moments later at 7:00 a.m., and the music program began as it had the day before with bhajan after bhajan.

At one point, after hearing many bhajans, Baba gestured, "I like you all," and because it was Mehera's birthday, He added, "You have sung some songs of Krishna. Do you know any songs about Radha?"

The group conferred among themselves and then decided on a particular song that pleased Baba so much that He took a *dbolak* (drum) on His lap and accompanied them. Padri seized this rare opportunity to take several photographs of this scene showing Baba playing the drum.

Several hours passed until Baba signaled that the program was finished, and then in an atmosphere of complete silence, Baba conveyed His love to each one. The group left immediately after that for Poona, all except a young boy named Pratap. He had obtained permission from his school principal to stay for several days after the program, and Baba was very happy to have him there. Once, during the boy's stay, Baba took him to His room, where He conveyed, "You are most lucky because of your old connection with me. You have come to me now at such an early age!" Pratap was just fourteen at that time.

Then every few minutes, Baba kissed him as a mother kisses her favorite child, until He stopped and spelled out on His alphabet board, which Pratap could read with ease, "Would you do as I say?"

"Surely," replied the boy.

Smiling, Baba said, "Strip yourself naked."

Although a bit hesitant at first, Pratap undressed and then Baba immediately told him to put his clothes back on, "I wanted to have my *nazar* [spiritual glance] on your naked body."

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Afterward, He advised him, “Never touch any girl or liquor, and never smoke! Would you obey these instructions?”

“I will,” replied the boy.

(Later, Pratap said that this time with Baba was the greatest highlight of his life, and he has remained a staunch Baba lover, who gives talks about Baba throughout India and the U.S.)



*Baba playing the drum during the bhajan program in Mahabaleshwar,
December 25, 1950*

Shift to the South of India



*Baba feeding a carrot to Begum in Mahabaleshwar
(photo taken by Padri)*

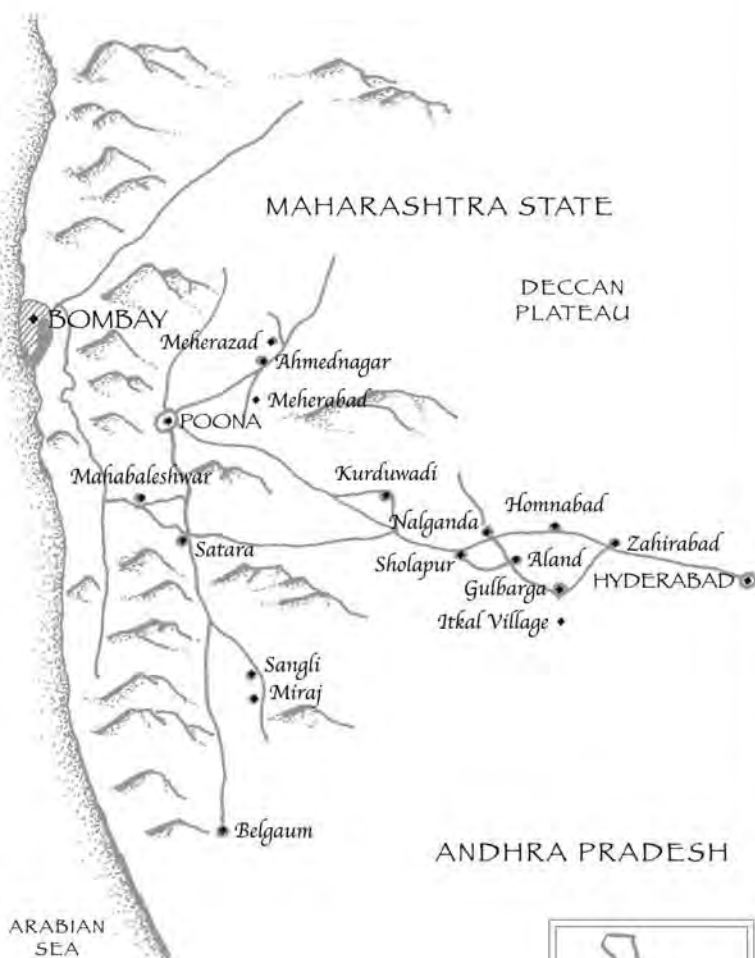
Shift to the South of India



On the veranda of Florence Hall, December 25, 1950

HYDERABAD MEETINGS

JUNE 1951



Chapter Eleven

FROM MAHABALESHWAR TO HYDERABAD

December 28, 1950 to June 30, 1951

Brief Trip to Hyderabad

On December 28th, 1950, Baba sent out New Life Circular No. 20 from Mahabaleshwar, announcing His intention to go into seclusion for 100 days beginning on February 13th, 1951. The purpose of the seclusion, He said, was the achievement of His New Life oath. He proposed to use the nearby Florence Hall compound, and unlike His seclusions in the Old Life, He did not wish to remain confined to one small room for the entire time.

In the circular, Baba also stated that His birthday on February 12th (according to the Zoroastrian calendar) would not be celebrated. However, on the first day of the seclusion, He wanted Bawla Qawaal to perform a special singing program.

The lease on Florence Hall was good until the end of May, 1951, after which the monsoon season would start in the Mahabaleshwar area and the rains could drop as much as 300 inches. Therefore, Baba intended to move at the end of the lease to Hyderabad, 400 miles directly east, where the climate is more moderate.

Accordingly, Adi Sr. was contacted, and he arrived at Mahabaleshwar on January 15th in his Chevrolet to take Baba, Pendu, Eruch and Baidul on a tour of Hyderabad to find two suitable bungalows to lease for June.

The trip had a two-fold purpose, because Baba also wanted to resume His work with the masts and the poor.

They left on January 16th. In the afternoon, they stopped at Sholapur to search for masts. Although there was a local religious fair in progress and the roads were overcrowded, Baba was in the best spirits the companions had seen Him in for quite a while. It took them a long time to locate the first mast, a yogi

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

of the fifth plane named Ghuliappa, who referred to himself as a woman. He had very striking eyes, and unlike most masts, he lived in an apartment that he kept very clean.

In contrast to this mast, later that day they contacted Mulla Baba, who lived in filthy surroundings near an Indian gymnasium. His fingernails were long and dirty, and he had a fiery temper, yet he was highly respected by the local people.

After Sholapur, they proceeded to Zahirabad and stayed at a dak bungalow for the night.

The next afternoon, they reached Hyderabad and spent the rest of that day looking for places to rent that would be available starting in June.

Very soon into their search, two bungalows were found in the Jubilee Hills area. After contacting the owners and quickly signing leases, they left Hyderabad proper and went to stay for three days outside of the city at the Usman Sagar Guest House.

The next morning, January 17th, Baba and the companions set out again to search for masts in the Hyderabad area. The contacts went unusually well, and within a few hours, as if by pre-arrangement, they found a large number of masts, some of whom Baba said were very excellent souls. At each place where contacts were made, crowds of men, women and children gathered, and they were given a gift of money by the men.

The final mast that day was contacted in the nearby city of Secunderabad. At first, he was not cooperative, and when Baba bowed His head at his feet, the mast refused to give his blessing for the success of His work. Baba did not give up; He kept his head at the mast's feet while Baidul, Eruch and Pendu beseeched the mast repeatedly, until he finally gave in and offered his blessings.

On January 18th, Baba and the companions had great difficulty finding masts during the day, but that evening, they spotted Shastri, one of the chief masts of Hyderabad, who readily agreed to meet with Baba.

Later that evening, two other important masts that had been seen by Baba in the past were contacted: Sayyed Moynuddin Lakdawala Bawa, a great sixth plane mast-saint, and Chaous, a ghous-type mast.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Baba was very pleased, remarking, “Although compared to yesterday the number of contacts today is less, the result is far better. Today is in a way a better day, because the contacts are so much more far-reaching.”

In a day and a half, 31 masts had been contacted.

The next day, the party drove to Gulbarga, where a search was made for a particular mast. Although they could not find him, they took advantage of being there to visit the *durgab* (tomb) of a Muslim saint, Kwaja Saheb.

In the Old Life, Baba said He visited shrines and tombs of great saints and masters in order to re-charge their spiritual atmosphere, which diminishes over time due to masses of people laying down their *sanskaras* (impressions), while seeking blessings or self-purification. Baba’s presence at such places dissipated these impressions and cleansed the atmosphere. Why He visited holy places in the New Life, He never disclosed.

From Gulbarga, the party started on a twelve-mile journey to Itkal village to contact Swami Mast, a very important soul. The country road was rough going, and they had to stop short of the village and walk for more than a mile to get there. The difficulty was worth it, because Swami Mast graciously met with Baba and then accepted His offering of sweets and clothing. Afterwards, Baba expressed “great satisfaction” with this contact.

It was 8:00 p.m. by the time the companions returned to Gulbarga, and after only a brief halt, they went to the village of Alandi, arriving at 9:30 p.m. There, they contacted a great maj-zoob mast in a hotel restaurant who was in an agreeable mood, making the trip worthwhile and satisfying to Baba.

The party set off again, and after having to take a long detour, they reached Nalgunda (Naldurg) at 2:00 a.m. Because Adi had been driving all day, Baba told him to rest for two and a half hours. However, Pendu, Eruch and Baidul were to remain awake while Baba retired, although He did not sleep.

At 4:30 a.m., they left Nalgunda and arrived at Sholapur at 6:00 a.m., where they took some quick refreshment and set off for Poona, arriving there at noon. Again, they halted briefly and then began the trip to Mahabaleshwar, arriving that evening.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

The entire five-day journey by car covered 1400 miles, during which Adi had driven 33 hours on January 19th and 20th. The total mast contacts came to 38. Throughout that entire journey, Baba also conducted His work with the poor, giving every needy man, woman and child He encountered a coin of small denomination. According to the companions who accompanied Him, the success of His work during the entire journey contributed to making it, in Adi's words, "Baba's most happy time in the New Life."

A Reunion of Two Old Schoolmates

Baba spent eight days in Mahabaleshwar, during which He called Dr. Ghani to be with Him. It had been just a month since the New Bhajan Mandali had sung Ghani's ghazal, in which he complained about how much he had suffered being physically separated from Baba in the New Life. Baba replied:

*If you are well
If you feel swell
If you have not gone mad
Or don't say you are sad,*

*Have no material loss
From servant or boss,
Or talk of Old Life
Or child or wife,*

*But entertain me
With jokes and poetry,
Will pay both fares
But won't listen to your cares.*

*Then come for eight days,
So Meher Baba says.
Don't give me Pain
By asking for material gain.*

*Talk of spiritual benefit,
Will give you gober [cow dung] and shit.
In New Life no responsibility,
Of reward no possibility.*

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Ghani's reply to this invitation was read out to Baba soon after He arrived back in Mahabaleshwar. The doctor wrote spontaneously:

*Received Your loving letter
I feel awfully better,
Is India getting dry?
It never looked to me wetter!*

*A thousand thoughts and what not,
It looked almost a boycott!
Twelve months no ink, no ink pot,
I could not get the upshot.*

*And Jal with dates noting,
Gadekar drowned in doting
With Papa seemingly bloating
And Ramjoo meaningly gloating.*

*This atmosphere was pretty sure
Could not very long endure,
De facto verdict for a cure.
Could not ignore my stand de jure.*

*Accepting all Your orders
Will come for dates and numbers,
On mind no madness, murder! (suicide)
Be damned the cares and "thunders!"
Hoping there are no blunders,
Forever I remain Yours,*

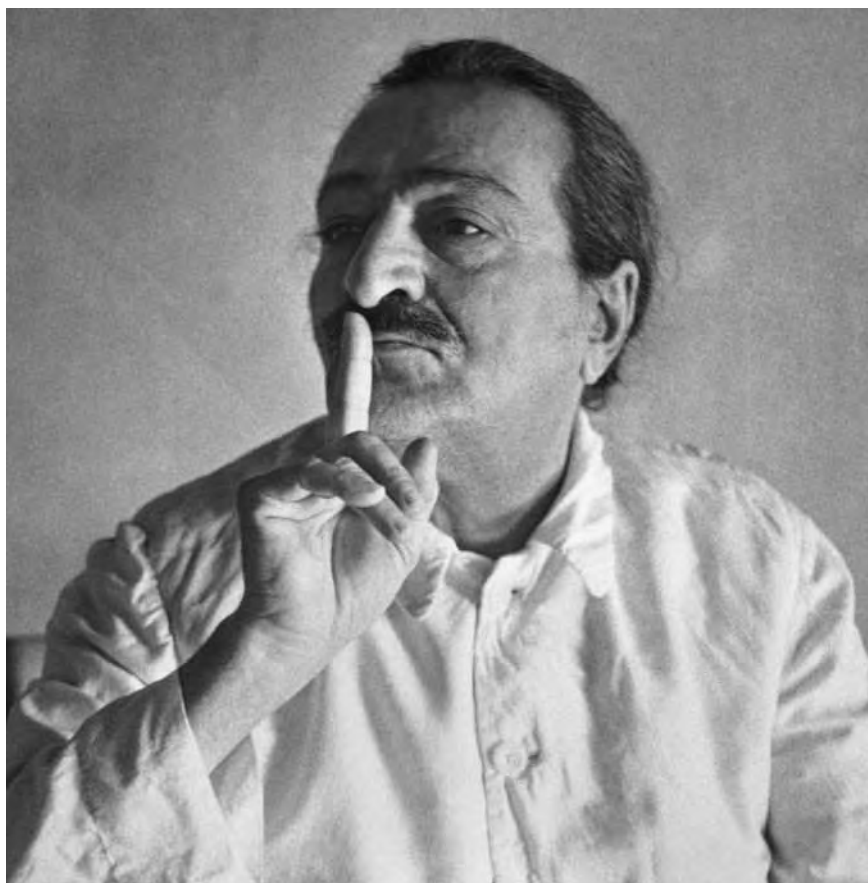
Abdul Ghani

As a confirmation to Ghani, Baba wrote:

*After carefully your letter noting,
I feel like going boating;
If any of my orders you break,
Your body on the Ganges be floating!*

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Ghani soon arrived in Mahabaleshwar, and the period of Baba's rest and relaxation was made most enjoyable by Ghani's witty, endearing personality. Baba then made plans to resume His mast and poor work in Bombay, but before going, He washed and bowed down to the feet of two needy Parsi families, and gave them each a gift of 722 rupees.



How Can I Reveal to Him the Secret of My Success?

Earlier, when they had been in Satara, Murli Kale enrolled in a correspondence course in an attempt to improve his English. The course used the Christian Bible as its text, and each lesson he received contained questions about the Four Gospels. Answering them correctly determined how well he understood the Scriptures and the English language.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

However, he felt inadequate in English and the scriptures, so he decided to seek out Eruch's help; Eruch had once studied the Bible extensively at the Catholic high school in Nagpur, when he experienced a deep love for Jesus.

With each lesson, Murli enlisted Eruch's help. Eruch rose to the occasion, and his answers greatly impressed those in charge of the English Bible study course.

One day, after the course was over and everyone was now in Mahabaleshwar, a thin middle-aged Roman Catholic priest came asking for Murli Kale, explaining that he was there to present a special award to Murli. He knew nothing about Baba.

Upon hearing this, Murli, who had not really mastered English in spite of the course, immediately ran to Eruch, who was busy heating water for Baba's bath.

"You helped me in submitting the answers during the Bible course," Murli pleaded, "and now I request you for the last time to relieve me of the subsequent predicament.... A priest has come to offer me a present for the distinction I obtained in the scriptures course. But how can I reveal to him the secret of my success?"

Though Eruch was busy, he went with Murli to see the priest, and in the ensuing conversation, Eruch did the talking and the priest was so impressed that he asked Eruch, "What are you doing here, my son?"

"I am serving the Lord," Eruch replied and then told him briefly about Baba. In response, the priest told Eruch to beware of impostors.

Unperturbed, Eruch said, "I am speaking from my personal experience, not from words stated in any book or books.... How can you prove to me that the One I am serving is not the Lord?" Eruch had been terse because he had to get back to work, but he could see that the priest was moved by his words.

In the meantime, Murli had managed to slip away while Eruch and the priest were conversing, but he returned in time



Murli Kale

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

to receive the prize and get away with only having to say, "Thank you, sir."

This episode, when related to Baba, greatly amused Him.

Baba Resumes Work with Masts and Poor

On January 29th, 1951, Adi drove Baba, Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul from Mahabaleshwar to Bombay so Baba could continue working with the masts and the poor.

On the way, Baba had Adi stop near the Swargate bus station in the south of Poona. He then walked to a spot at the bottom of a hill near Aruneshwar Temple and Fule's bungalow. There, by previous arrangement, He met several of His disciples from the Old Life: Sidhu from Meherabad; Vaman Padale and Bhagirnath from Ahmednagar; and Bhau Cheema, Shankar and Chhabu from Arangaon village.

As they formed a line along a low parapet before Baba, He washed their feet, bowed down to them and gave each a large sum of money.



Baba handing out a sum of money to several of His Old Life disciples, on the road between Poona and Mahabaleshwar, January 29, 1951 (left to right) Chhabu, Shankar, Bhagirath Tiwari and Vaman Padale

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

In tribute to Bhimbai and Talya from Arangaon, who were sick, Baba bowed down to Sidhu on their behalf. They took care of Mohammed, one of Baba's favorite masts, who was living permanently at Meherabad. He also gave Sidhu remuneration for their services. In giving the money, Baba quoted the well-known proverb, "Charity begins at home." The money for this offering had originally been set aside by Baba for Pilamai from Karachi for her maintenance during the New Life, but she had requested that Baba use it for His work. She was one of His earliest disciples, whom Baba referred to as His spiritual sister.



*Baba bowing down to the feet of Sidhu, assisted by Eruch,
who is holding the money*

The group continued to Bombay, where Baba again stayed at Arnavaz and Nariman's apartment. This time, for His mast work in Bombay, in addition to Nariman and Meherjee's help, Baba was assisted by Sarosh, Ramjoo, Padri, Savak Kotwal and His brothers, Jal and Adi Jr.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

About this time in Bombay, Baba told Ramjoo, “My work that I have just finished in Hyderabad was most successful and absolutely to my complete satisfaction. That work there and the mast work I have to now carry out in Bombay have 100 percent connection with the 100-day seclusion that I plan to enter shortly. If the Bombay mast work also proves to be as good as that done in Hyderabad, no power can then thwart the success that I desire to achieve through the 100-day seclusion. If all that is fulfilled, I feel that there will be an end to all the problems.” Baba did not elaborate further.



Baba giving Sidhu a sum of rupees

Over the next six days, Baba contacted 55 masts, beginning with those of long standing whom He had worked with in the past. Some of them He returned to see several times. Occasionally, when bowing down, He offered them various sums of money. In the case of one mast, who He had visited several times before, he offered 40 rupees.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

While He was contacting a *jalali* (fiery-tempered) mast in the Mahim locality of Bombay, the mast struck Ramjoo with two hard blows to the face, which required his being taken to the hospital for stitches.

On January 30th, Minoo Kharas from Pakistan happened to be in Bombay and was overjoyed at receiving an unexpected note asking him to come to Ashiana for a brief meeting with Baba. When he arrived at the appointed time, Baidul told him to be careful not to speak of anything about the Old Life or his personal problems, no matter how urgent.

As Minoo entered, Baba was smiling and told him that during the New Life, He was not meeting anyone, so it was Minoo's good fortune that he alone had been called to come. Baba then embraced and kissed Minoo twice. In less than a minute their meeting was over!

Three days later, on February 2nd, Baba sent Meherjee with another message to Minoo, this time to tell him to come to Ashiana at 5:30 p.m. and join Baba and the group for an excursion to a Chinese circus on Marine Drive.

When Minoo arrived at the apartment, Baba was in another room changing into Western clothes so He could move around the city incognito.

When Baba came out, He smiled and told Minoo that if he talked about the Old Life, he would be trampled upon by the elephants at the circus.

As Baba's group entered the circus building, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, with his own party, was just leaving the building and they walked right past Baba.

Baba stayed for the entire circus performance instead of leaving halfway through, which was His usual habit.

While still in Bombay, a telegram arrived from Elizabeth Patterson in the United States, in which she stated that there were some difficulties involved in Baba's proposed visit to the Myrtle Beach Center in 1951. Baba asked Donkin to cable back:

Baba's plans are changed. Instead of leaving in July 1951, He will leave in February 1952. Do not worry and rest assured that Baba wants to come and stay for one year.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Baba again discussed with the companions His plan of leaving Mahabaleshwar in June before the heavy monsoons set in and shifting to Hyderabad in the south of India.



A picnic lunch on January 29, 1951

Baba Begins His 100-Day Seclusion

Just as Baba had entered into the Great Seclusion immediately prior to the training phases of the New Life, He now began His 100-day seclusion, February 13th to May 24th, as a prelude to the final period of the New Life: *Manonash* (annihilation of the mind).

A straw hut with thatched roof erected by Padri at Florence Hall in Mahabaleshwar was where Baba intended to remain in seclusion from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The hut was enclosed on all sides by a wall of bamboo matting that had a special entrance.

During this seclusion, Baba also planned to use a small cottage near the women's bungalow with a view of the valley and its lovely trees.

On February 12th, Baba called a meeting to reveal certain decisions He had taken for Himself and the servant companions:

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

1. All to continue to stay with Baba as His servants till June 10th, 1951.
2. From February 12th, 1951 onwards, all the servants are made free from the bindings of all the conditions of the New Life except that they must obey the following standing orders:
 - a. Not to do lustful actions.
 - b. Not to create circumstances so that they invite homage to Baba.
 - c. Not to have any sort of contact or correspondence with Old Life disciples of Baba.
 - d. Not to exchange clothes between themselves (servants).
 - e. Not to accept money or food from anyone, but may accept tea, cigarettes or *pan* (a mixture of digestive spices wrapped in a betel leaf) from anyone.
 - f. To remind Baba when He promises anything to anyone; speaks ill of anyone; takes any false step; shows His greatness; gets excited or doubts His servants.
 - g. To obey day-to-day orders 100 percent.
 - h. To try their utmost to act so as to make Baba feel satisfied.

On the day the seclusion was to begin, February 13th, 1951, Baba invited the singer Bawla Qawaal to again perform for Him. Later in the day, Baba remarked, "I want to do very hard work for forty days. From March 7th, according to circumstances, I may work either in total darkness or in complete light, for which two petromax lanterns have been purchased."

While Baba gave this explanation, Kaikobad did his usual repetitions, prompting Baba's rebuke: "Have I called you here to go on and on with your repetition of my name, or to listen to what I am saying? Servants should discard their inclinations and pleasure; then alone can they be true servants."

At 7:00 p.m., just before entering His seclusion hut, the following prayer was read out on behalf of Baba:

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

O God Most High! Grant guidance to Baba, and lift up his heart with Your love, O Christ the everlasting Truth, that he may live the New Life with faithfulness to the end!

May the work of these hundred days of seclusion be fulfilled to Baba's entire satisfaction, and may the desire of his heart come to pass and the aim of the New Life be achieved.

Grant that his body be sound and healthy during this seclusion and give strength to him to bear whatever suffering may befall him!

Grant, O Most Merciful God, that these desires of Baba be fulfilled, through the grace of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord!



Baba and Eruch, the night before the 100-Day Seclusion

From January 15th to February 5th, a total of 93 masts had been contacted in Hyderabad, Bombay and places in between. About them, Baba said, "About a fifth of the masts were of the highest caliber; two-fifths were of high caliber; and another two-fifths were God-mad."

The first phase of the 100-day seclusion, from February 13th to March 24th, left Baba physically and mentally exhausted. He also suffered great pain, which was evident to those around Him. At one point when Dr. Goher saw Him, she could not hold back her tears.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

When Baba asked the reason for her tears, she replied, "Because we have done all we can and that has not helped."

Baba responded by saying that He did not like to see her upset, that what He was passing through was ordained and that the companions should remain happy.

At another point during the seclusion, Dr. Nilu, in an effort to treat Baba's poor health, was carefully giving Him an injection. To his horror, the needle did not go in properly, causing Baba to writhe in pain, and yet Baba did not make a sound. In the extremity of pain, He looked at Nilu with great compassion, knowing he was trying his best.

Every evening, the servant companions would join Baba in prayers. The women, including Rano, Kitty and Naja, could see Baba silhouetted through a glass-paneled door, wearing His long white sadra and standing up, His hands folded in prayer, facing a bare wall. Kitty commented on how simple yet sublime the prayer sessions were.

Kitty later wrote, "I can recall Baba's weak physical condition and supreme state of helplessness during the 100-days' seclusion, yet every evening during that period the companions were called to Baba for recitation of evening prayers in Marathi, Urdu and English. This period was my first experience of seeing Baba so helpless and in such great physical pain.... In this New Life phase when Baba emphasized His purely human aspect with all its limitations, it was difficult at times to remember that Baba was also 'Eternal Bliss.' Perhaps as someone suggested, this unlimited Bliss forsakes a Christ when He deliberately, out of His compassion and mercy for man, takes on the sufferings and the limitations of man and this, though appearing to limit the unlimited, is really fuller proof of the true perfection of a Christ, for it expresses the self-giving love which accepts suffering for struggling humanity."

During the first nineteen days from February 15th to March 5th, Baba worked with Bapji Mast (Ali Shah) daily from 11:30 a.m. to noon.

During this period, Donkin, who had always left cables and correspondence unopened according to the New Life conditions, felt compelled to suddenly open a cable that had arrived,

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

and in it, he received the news that his mother was seriously ill. Feeling anxious about breaking Baba's order, he decided not to tell Baba about it.

However, later that day, Baba called him and, in the course of their conversation, asked, "Is there any news from home?"

At this point, Donkin knew that he had better tell Him about his mother's condition, and Baba immediately instructed him to pack his suitcase and fly to London and care for his mother.



Baba with Ali Shah

After the crucial first period of 40 days of seclusion was completed, New Life Circular No. 24 was sent out to Baba's followers, giving a detailed picture of His outer activity and the program He had set for Himself during this time. What Baba was doing internally, only He knew. The circular, quoted in its entirety follows:

Main work accomplished during the first period of 40 days.

Begun on February 13th, 1951, and termed as unique and partial, Baba's seclusion is in progress and will continue to

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

progress uninterrupted and unhindered till its very end on May 23rd, 1951.

For the matter of bringing about the “desired achievement” 100 percent without question of physical and mental strain coming in the way of different phases of activities all contributing to the same end, the pre-determined limits of seclusion – the cabin, the hut and the compound at Mahabaleshwar – had to be extended for a change of place and environment and addition of activities performed – all in the following manner:

1. Fasting for seven days, and for 33 days taking one meal a day.
2. Mast work at Mahabaleshwar bungalow compound.
3. Visit to Poona.
4. Sittings at seven different places at Poona, including hills.
5. Mast contact in Poona.
6. Daily evening prayers.
7. Further change of place and activity if necessary.

13th to 28th February: Baba spent days in the cabin, the hut and the compound at Mahabaleshwar to adjust seclusion activities.

1st to 5th March: The most intensive phase of seclusion, when Baba worked most in the hut till very late hours of nights, alone and in complete darkness for hours together, and then working in sudden glare of bright light for that many more hours. [Baba did not explain the significance of this unique method of work.]

6th to 9th March: It culminated in Baba fasting entirely on water – confining Himself all the time in the cabin and hut.

10th to 12th March: Baba fasted on liquid food – confining Himself all the time in the cabin and hut.

13th to 24th March: Baba resumed His routine of seclusion, taking one meal a day and only one hour's work during the nights in the hut – half an hour in light and half an hour in darkness.

From 25th March to 23rd May: The 60 days' second period of the seclusion – Baba will adjust, alter and add different activities according to His convenience and from His own understanding of the seclusion work.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Twenty days later, on May 5th, 1951, Baba issued an important *Statement* in New Life Circular No. 25:

Mahabaleshwar Statement

I am trying to think, to feel and to act truthfully and honestly the New Life which I have adopted. As I have to be honest to my New Life, I am totally indifferent as to what the servants, the Arrangementwalas and the Old Life disciples and devotees and all those directly and indirectly connected with me – even those not connected with me – think and feel about it. I am not concerned whether they or others have rightly understood it or not.

Out of the 100-days' seclusion that began on February 13th, 1951, the main work was achieved during the first 40 days, which were very crucial and important. Without the help of God, I could not have gone through this ordeal successfully, considering my usual changing temperament and the physical and mental strain that I suffered during this period. It was as if God wanted to prove His help to me by giving me suffering as well as the strength to endure it. I also feel that the prayers and the invocations dictated by me and offered on my behalf by the servants have been accepted by God.

The remaining 60 days are not very difficult for me to live through. With God's help, I can adjust the activities and the place of work according to my convenience. I consider it my good fortune that the servants, the Arrangementwalas, the Old Life disciples and devotees and all those directly and indirectly connected with me, have stood by me in my New Life, regardless of whether they like it or not.

In view of the fact that they have stood by me and in view of the fact that my 100-days' seclusion is likely to be accomplished to my entire satisfaction and that I feel God also will be entirely satisfied with it, I have, God knows, the honest conviction that during the period between June 10th and June 30th, 1951, God will, out of His infinite wisdom and grace, make me take a step

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

which will bring about an extraordinary revolutionary change in my life and in the lives of the servants, the Arrangementwalas and the Old Life disciples and devotees and all those directly and indirectly connected with me. This change will take place in accordance with what and how God wills it. I feel I will not be able in any way to avoid the step that God has ordained for me and the life that God will make me live. I also feel that I do not know how, what and how much the effect of it all will be on me and on others.

BABA

In His *Elucidation*, twenty days later, Baba again alluded to the “irrevocable step” that “God has ordained for me.” “This step,” He said, “might plunge me into a life older than the Old Life or newer than the New Life, or into a life below both these lives; or into a life above both these lives.”

“The extraordinary that has to happen must happen by God’s will,” He also declared. This “irrevocable step” would be “put into execution” in a little more than six months on October 16th, 1951, and its ultimate fulfillment would be achieved by February 16th, 1952.

Baba frankly admitted to the companions, “With all the conviction that I have about it, I clearly want you all to know that I am still totally unaware about the nature of the step that I shall be made to take. To put it more plainly, I want you all to understand that today I cannot guess what step God has ordained for me.” Baba said that the nature of this “irrevocable step” would be revealed by the last week of June 1951.

The Second Phase of the Seclusion

To begin the last 60 days of His seclusion, Baba expressed the wish to shift to Poona to complete His mast work. To help in finding a suitable bungalow there, where the weather was milder at that time of year, Baba contacted Gadekar, a long-time follower, Meherwan Jessawala and Adi Sr.

After coming from Ahmednagar, Adi Sr. made an extensive search, and through a childhood friend, he found an excellent

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

bungalow in Salsbury Park, one of Poona's best residential areas. Afterwards, Gadekar and Meherwan went to see the place and found it ideal, but Meherwan felt uneasy about it, even though it was located in a secluded area, was newly furnished and was available for the length of time requested by Baba.



*Baba shading
Himself from
the sun in
Mahabaleshwar*

Despite Meherwan's nagging inner voice, information about the bungalow was sent to Baba by telegram, and He gave His approval to rent it. Everything was then settled with the real estate broker.

At the eleventh hour, however, the real estate broker backed out, because his father heard that the bungalow was being rented to Meher Baba. Being part of an Irani community that was fiercely opposed to Baba, he threatened to disown his son if the latter went through with the rental.

Upon hearing this, Adi was so furious that he suggested the son disown his own father! His venting did not save the deal. The ideal bungalow was lost.

Baba was immediately cabled.

He answered, "Your failure to get that bungalow is your concern. I am coming on the day specified, and see that a bungalow

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

is ready.” On receiving this news, Gadekar, Meherwan and Adi Sr. set out frantically to find another place. Even Sarosh, one of the arrangementwalas, came from Ahmednagar to help.

Hastily, they rented a huge, rambling, unfurnished bungalow in the Wanowri locality of Poona that was near a rawhide tannery. Two others were also located, in case Baba objected to this one.

Sarosh, Papa Jessawala, Gadekar and His other followers in Poona began cleaning and furnishing the bungalow, which needed a great deal of work to meet Baba’s standards.

Because there was still a little time, Meherwan continued searching, hoping a better place could be found. One afternoon, while walking along Bund Garden Road near the river, he noticed a palatial bungalow set in a beautiful garden, which seemed to be unoccupied. He looked through the front gate that was locked and called out to anyone who might be able to tell him whether the estate was for lease.

No one answered, so he decided to climb the low garden wall to get a better look. Still, it seemed deserted, so he walked up the long driveway to a large portico at the front entrance and called out again. This time, a guard, dressed in an elegant, old-style uniform, came running out from a side entrance and shouted for Meherwan to leave the premises immediately: “Who are you? How have you come here? If you don’t get out of here, I’ll call the police and have you put behind bars!”

Between the guard’s repeated threats, Meherwan managed to inquire about the property.

“Sir,” the guard sneered, “this estate is not for rent. It is the summer home of Shantadevi, the Maharani [Queen] of Baroda!” He then continued to shoo Meherwan off the property as though he were a common thief.

At the same time Meherwan was driven from Shantadevi’s summer home by the guard, Gadekar, who was also desperate to find a better place for Baba’s stay, approached an influential and prominent person in Poona, Sardar Rasti, who was devoted to Baba, to see if he could be of help. In response, Sardar suggested contacting Chimmabai Shantadevi, the Maharani of Baroda, who was a personal friend of his (he said that

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Shantadevi used to play on his lap when she was a little girl), to see if she might offer her home in Poona for Baba's use. Gadekar immediately sent her a telegram, and Shantadevi answered right away, giving permission for Baba to use her summer palace.

The very next day, Sardar Rasti, Gadekar, Meherwan and Adi Sr. drove to the estate on 24 Bund Garden Road, which was known as Guruprasad.

When Sardar Rasti stepped out of the car, the guard immediately recognized him and bowed obsequiously, and then greeted Gadekar and Adi Sr. in the same manner. However, when Meherwan emerged from the car, the guard drew back, looking as though he was ready to pounce, but Meherwan stayed with the group, holding his head high as he gleefully strutted right past the guard.

The men made a thorough tour of the premises. The bungalow had spacious, elegantly furnished rooms with large chandeliers and deep carpets over marble floors. There was also a large guest house located at the back of the compound.

On March 27th, Baba and the women left Mahabaleshwar by car for Poona. Upon arriving that evening, they first visited Ganeshkhind Gardens west of Poona, where Dadi Kerawala, Eruch's and Meherwan's cousin, worked as the agricultural officer. It was near closing time, and Dadi had just stepped out of his office to take a short break. When he looked out at the garden, he was shocked to see the women companions and Baba, who had His back to him.

Dadi had not been told that Baba was coming to the Poona area, and since he was not supposed to have any contact with Him, he immediately turned away and ran toward the nearby horticultural museum. As he ran, he heard footsteps and knew that Baba and the women were coming in his direction. He hurriedly entered the museum and went to a corner wall, where he stood with his back to the room.

A little while later, he heard footsteps entering. His heart beat wildly as he faced the wall for what seemed like an eternity until he heard them leave and could heave a sigh of relief.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

After visiting the beautiful gardens, Baba and the women went to the bungalow that had been rented in Wanowri. They found the interior very nice, but when Baba stepped out on the veranda, the odor from the nearby tannery was extremely offensive. Shortly after stepping back inside, Baba received a telegram informing Him about the availability of Shantadevi's bungalow on Bund Garden Road.



Ganeshkind Gardens near Poona, where Dadi Kerawala worked

Since Baba was more than happy to move away from the tannery, He was taken to Guruprasad the very next morning and immediately approved of staying there.

Later that day, as Baba and the women were being driven to Guruprasad, the women were given no information about the new place; Baba had decided to surprise them. As a consequence, the women were simply glad that they were heading toward the quiet residential vicinity adjacent to Bund Gardens, near the Mula River.

"My," Mehera said, "we are coming toward a very posh locality. The house must be nice."

When the car finally turned through the huge wrought iron gates of Guruprasad and made its way up the long driveway flanked by shrubbery, the women were impressed by

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Guruprasad's elegance. They "oohed" and "ahhed" over its spacious gardens that were in full bloom and its beautiful water fountain in front. They could not be happier.

That feeling continued as their car pulled up under the large portico that extended out from the front entrance, where the women marveled at the elegant Italian statuary and the broad veranda. "Are we going to stay here?" they asked Baba.

"Go inside quickly and get unpacked and settle down.... I've sent for tea." The women were ecstatic.

Guruprasad's central hall, with its dining and drawing rooms right off it, were immediately explored by the women, who were again impressed, this time with all the beautiful furnishings and decorated glass windows.

There were a number of bedrooms with adjoining bathrooms containing bathtubs. The women immediately selected the best room for Baba, which faced the garden and the front gate. They immediately prepared His room and chose the best mattress and a dressing table for His few belongings.

Baba instructed Eruch, Baidul, Pendu and Adi to stay in the guest quarters at the side of Guruprasad.

That first night, the women were kept awake by drums outside the rear of the compound, which continued until 5:00 a.m. Despite the noise, the women wanted desperately to stay, but they were fearful that Baba would want to leave due to the excessive noise.

When they saw Baba later that morning, they nervously asked, "Baba, did you rest well?"

"Very well, indeed," He answered, to their relief and surprise. They realized that His room, being at the front side of the large bungalow, had been shielded from the drumming.

For the first few days, Baba took the women for walks to Bund Gardens, a park nearby, which was deserted in the early mornings. They also went for excursions in the Koregaon Park area and to Deccan College, where Baba had been a student.

During this period when Baba went away for His work, He told the women to continue going for walks. One day, Mehera took the women to her childhood home on Todiwalla Road, but the area, which had once been forested, was so barren that she scarcely recognized it.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad*Guruprasad*

Beginning on March 30th, Baba, Eruch and Baidul went to various places in Poona for His work. As soon as they arrived at each site, Eruch and Baidul spread out a white sheet on which Baba sat briefly in seclusion while they stood guard nearby. These places included: Pateleswar Cave, where Baba went right after He was God-realized, another cave near Jangle Maharaj's *Samadhi* (tomb), a place near Chatursinghji Temple, a Christian church and a Parsi Tower of Silence.

On April 1st, Baba paid a visit to His childhood home, and while His brother Beheram's family remained in another part of the house, He was absorbed in His work in the small L-shaped room. It was here that Baba had stayed as a boy and had experienced untold agony in the 1920s, when Upasni Maharaj was helping to bring Him from His state of Infinite Existence down to the ordinary consciousness of the world. During that time, the agony was so great that, to relieve Himself of such acute suffering, Baba repeatedly hit His head against the stone floor in the L-shaped room.

The significance of Baba's having chosen to work in His old room during His 100-day seclusion can only be imagined.

After a few days at Guruprasad, Baba called those who had worked so hard to find a place for Him to stay in Poona: Adi, Sarosh, Papa, Meherwan, Gadekar, Meherjee and some others, most of

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

whom had not seen Him since October 16th when He stepped out of the New Life for four hours. In the case of Meherwan, he had not met with Baba for more than a year.



The entrance to the room where Baba stayed as a boy and where He was in agony after returning from Upasni Maharaj

When the men arrived, they were instructed not to mention anything about the Old Life and not to greet Baba with folded hands. They were directed to meet Baba in the guesthouse by the side of Guruprasad, where the men companions were staying.

The visitors were overjoyed at the prospect of seeing Baba, but they were unprepared for the emaciated state He was in. To them, He looked like a skeleton, and His neck seemed to stick out. As Meherwan later described, He looked “like a plucked chicken,” and His face was terribly sunken.

Never having seen Baba so frail that He had to be supported, some of the men were in tears. However, in spite of His deteriorated condition, Baba smiled and then embraced each of the men and expressed His appreciation for all the work that they had done in securing a place for Him to stay in Poona.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

After greeting them, Baba turned everyone's attention away from His feeble condition to Dr. Nilu, who He teased about having a sweet tooth, saying, "See Nilu, everyday he is getting more and more fat, and here I am getting thinner and thinner. Something's the matter with him. He keeps putting on weight. He'll meet the same fate as that man in the story."



Interior view showing the floor where Baba banged His head to relieve the acute agony He experienced in His superconscious state

At this point, Baba asked Nilu to tell the story of the eccentric Hindu king, Chaupat Raja, in whose kingdom everything had to be sold at the same price. Baba teased Nilu by pointing out how a bunch of vegetables would cost the same as the costliest sweets.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Nilu began the story, as Meherwan recollected later, by relating that there was a Master and his disciples who had gone for a long journey, begging and wandering on foot just like Baba and His companions in the New Life. Sometimes the Master and his disciples suffered great discomfort, even to the point of living on the edge of starvation.

One day, they came to the kingdom where Chaupat Raja ruled. He was a cruel despot as well as an eccentric. Besides his requirement that everything had to be offered at the same low price, his system of justice dictated that all crimes, whether petty or terrible, receive the same punishment – a hanging by a rope.

As the Master and his disciples entered the kingdom, the Master told his men to eat the best of food and as much as they wanted. After the deprivations they had suffered, this was a joyous respite, particularly when the disciples soon found that a small coin could buy a great deal of food. Consequently, they treated themselves to a feast containing every succulent dish they could find, and after leaving the table, they were bloated.

After several days of the disciples living the life of complete indulgence, the Master suddenly announced, “Now, let’s leave this place.”

All but one of the disciples immediately ceased their hedonistic ways. The exception implored, “Master, please excuse me from following you. I’ve found my place here.”

At this point, Baba stopped the narrative to illustrate that the disciple who did not want to leave was extremely fond of sweets, just like Nilu.

After a good laugh by all, Nilu continued the story:

The Master said, “Beware, this is no place for you. Just look at the population. Everyone is emaciated. Something must be seriously wrong here.”

However, the disciple would not budge.

Seeing that this disciple was not going to listen to him, the Master said, “Be happy here where you are. But if a difficulty comes up, call out to me. I’ll be there to help you.”

In due time, the Master and the others left, and the one who chose to stay resumed his life of indulgence and soon became very fat.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Months passed, and one day a wall at a construction site in the kingdom collapsed, crushing a donkey, which caused its owner to complain to the king. The despotic king, who also dispensed justice, was outraged and needed to pin the blame on someone. First, he called the builder of the wall and threatened to have him hanged, but the builder claimed that it was the fault of the mason who did not apply enough water to the mortar. The mason was then called, but he blamed the man who supplied the water for not bringing enough. That man was then called, and he, too, claimed innocence.

In this way, blame went from one person to another until it fell on one extremely thin, emaciated man who the king had brought to the gallows for execution. However, when the rope was put around the man's neck, he was so emaciated that his neck would slip through even the tiniest of knots. The king was outraged. Someone had to hang, so he looked around for someone else, but everyone was too emaciated, except for one person. He suddenly remembered that he had recently seen a fat constituent, and he had him summoned.

When the disciple was brought, he had no idea what was happening.

"You are fat," the king said with satisfaction and then gave the order for the disciple to be hanged, though the disciple pleaded his innocence over and over again.

Suddenly, the disciple remembered what his Master had said and called out to him inwardly. In an instant his Master appeared and whispered to his fat disciple that he must insist on being hanged and then to leave the rest to him.

Just as his disciple was about to be strung up, the Master came forward and said to the king, "Hang me. I want to be hanged."

The disciple instantly chimed in, "No, sire, please hang me."

Immediately, the Master and the disciple broke out in argument in which they both demanded to be hanged.

The puzzled king stopped them, asking, "Why are you both insisting on being hanged?"

The Master replied, "Today is a very propitious day to be hanged."

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

The king asked the reason, and the Master revealed, "Whoever is hanged on this day goes directly to heaven!"

"But it is the prerogative of the king who is to be hanged. I insist on being the one who is hanged today," the king immediately responded.

To carry out the command of the king, his citizens pounced on him and hanged him then and there. That is how their kingdom was finally rid of the despotic and cruel ruler who had terrorized the whole population for many years.

Nilu told the story with great humor, and everyone enjoyed it. Pointing to Nilu, Baba, who had remained standing during the entire story by bracing Himself against the door, concluded, "See, this man is getting fat and should be hanged!"

Although Baba's humor and spirit were the same as always, the visitors were still shaken over His physical condition. They later found that the hemorrhoids (piles) from which Baba suffered were so painful that He had no choice but to remain standing during the entire meeting.

In short order, this brief sojourn came to an end, and the men who had been invited left quietly, very grateful for the rare privilege of seeing Baba in the New Life.

On April 5th, Baba and the women went in Adi's car to Alandi, a small Hindu community 30 miles outside Poona, where He sat in seclusion for some time in the tomb and temple of Dnyaneshwar Maharaj, one of the most famous Perfect Masters of Maharashtra. Born in the 13th century, Dnyaneshwar became realized at the age of nine, and his translation of the Bhagavad Gita into Marathi, which had never been done before, is one of the great works of spiritual literature.

While Baba was in Poona, the three Thade brothers, who lived there and had met Baba in the Old life, wanted their mother and sister to at least see Him, but they felt there was no chance since Baba was out of contact in the New Life.

However, one day, while walking along Bund Road, the family passed by Guruprasad, and at that very moment, Baba uncharacteristically came out on the front veranda, and the whole family was able to see Him from a distance.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

As for Baba's health problems, they were not new. Even before the 100-Day Seclusion, He suffered severely from hemorrhoids and ulcers and was unable to sit without extreme pain. Even so, he remained seated for hours during the seclusion work and later passed much blood in His stools.

Due to His physical ailments, He appointed a group of His lovers to investigate various treatments, which He humorously called "The Piles Committee." Meherjee, Sadashiv Patel and Dr. Ghani were some of its members.

Baba had a report of His health given to them regularly, and in return they suggested a number of remedies for his hemorrhoids, including the powdered bark from a certain tree. None seemed to work, so when the piles became unbearable, various doctors were called to examine Him. Although the qualified physicians offered elaborate treatments, they, too, did not help. Baidul, who had once suffered from piles, claimed he had been cured by a local doctor that others considered to be a quack and recommended him to Baba. After seeing Baidul's doctor, however, Baba's condition got worse. Finally, a Dr. Kataria was called in, who prescribed a wheat-poultice to be applied over a six-day period, and the piles eventually subsided. During this time, Goher and Nilu nursed Baba day and night, taking special care that the rest of His body did not become infected.

After doing some mast work in Poona, Baba and the companions returned to Mahabaleshwar after a stay of eleven days.

Though Baba suffered many sleepless nights when the various treatments were tried, He was much better by April 29th.

With His health somewhat restored, He decided to hold a large gathering of His close ones in Hyderabad, a city in Andhra Pradesh, at the end of June. At that meeting, He would discuss the "God-determined Step" He planned to take in October 1951.

On May 1st, Baba had letters sent to many of His followers throughout India, inviting them to the meeting, and then He resumed His seclusion as the servant companions helped Him around the clock.

One day, while Nilu was keeping watch outside Baba's seclusion hut, Baba came out and complained about having been disturbed by the sound of a crow and took Nilu severely to task for not having driven it away.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

Since Nilu had not heard a thing, he just stood quietly, thinking how glorious Baba looked in His anger. Apparently, Padri thought the same thing, because he ran to get his camera, and without asking Baba's permission, he took a number of shots to capture His unusual expression.

Later, after Padri had the film developed, the pictures showing Baba's powerful expression disappeared, while those taken before and after were clear as a bell. Padri kept the negatives to remind himself that nothing happens without God's will.

Author's note: The New Life work that began after October 16th, 1950, resulted in new orders being given to the companions every day – they were servants dancing to Baba's tune. It is important to emphasize that this servant phase of the New Life is impossible to carry out without the physical presence and help of the Avatar or Sadguru (Perfect Master). The New Life plans I-A, I-B, I-C and Plan II are a necessary help before entering the servant phase. If any one of the plans is carried out 100 percent with faith and love, it prepares the way for entering the servant state, in which the Master's pleasure is unconditionally one's own.

On May 5th, 1951, Adi drove Baba and the women to Bombay, where Ashiana was again put at their disposal.

While in the city, Baba met with Soonamasi and Khorshed, who had not seen Him in almost eight months. During the course of the meeting, they asked Baba if they could move from Meherjee's house into their own apartment. Since Homa, Meherjee's wife, resented having them stay in her home, they felt very uncomfortable there and were overjoyed when Baba consented to their request.

Rano and Kitty were also in the house during Baba's visit, but they were not allowed to see Him.

One morning, while they were in Bombay, Adi drove Baba to the place where Aloha was staying. While Baba remained in the car, Adi went upstairs where Aloha, now the manager of the Blue Diamond Restaurant in north Bombay, was still asleep.

As soon as Adi woke him and said that Baba was waiting in the car, Aloha practically jumped down the stairs and ran to have a wonderful reunion with his Beloved.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

On May 9th, Baba returned to Mahabaleshwar, and for the next two weeks, He continued His seclusion in the grass hut. He told Kitty and Rano they could join the women companions permanently when everyone moved to Hyderabad in June. Kitty and Rano were thrilled at their change in fortune and were glad they had stayed in good physical condition from their long walks around Bombay. Kitty was now over 60 years old.

Near the end of His long seclusion, Adi took Baba on one more day trip to Poona, with Nilu, Padri and Baidul accompanying them. On that day, seven masts were contacted whose blessings were sought for His work.

On May 23rd, the last day of the seclusion, Baba said, "By the grace of God, it has been completed to my satisfaction." With the completion of His seclusion, He said that the foundation was laid for the final stage of the New Life: "The Step of Manonash."

The next day, Baba formally ended His seclusion by agreeing to see a large number of people who had previously expressed a wish to meet Him. Among them were the maharajas (kings) of Sangli and Miraj, but rather than allowing them to take His darshan, Baba took theirs. With joined hands and bowed head, He saluted everyone in the manner of an ordinary seeker. He also made a special effort to seek the blessings of several elderly people who were among those gathered.

Before Baba and the companions shifted to Hyderabad, an owner was found for Begum (the pony), who everyone felt would take good care of her.

Author's note: During the period of seclusion, Baba expressed the roles of the seeker and the sought at one and the same time. His work with the masts and work in seclusion were works sought after, which He would accomplish for the universe in general, and for the servants and those connected with Him in particular. Also, He would take upon Himself the weaknesses of everyone, with the view of removing them in His role as the seeker.

By starting the New Life, Baba laid the foundation for the seekers of the world, who are destined to lead the New Life in the future, trying their best to ultimately become true servants of the Master, Meher Baba.

*From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad***A Period of Rest in Hyderabad**

On May 25th, 1951, after a long stay of nearly seven-and-a-half months in Satara and Mahabaleshwar, Baba and the servant companions began the 400 mile journey to Hyderabad. Adi again drove Baba and the women, while a few of the men traveled by train, and the others climbed aboard a freight truck with the luggage.

On the way, Baba's party stopped for lunch in Poona at Bindra House, where Gaimai and Manu Jessawala saw Baba for the first time since the start of the New Life. Responding to their deepest heart longing, He enfolded them in His loving embrace.

After leaving Poona, the party passed through Kurduwadi, Sholapur and Naldurg. On May 27th, they arrived in Hyderabad, where, in the center of the city, narrow lanes wind through ancient buildings of Hindu and Islamic architecture.

About this large city, Baba said, "It is a very great place both spiritually and materially. Its spiritual importance stems from ages past." He said that He particularly loved Hyderabad because of the many masts who could be found there.

In Hyderabad, Baba and the companions went to the locality of Jubilee Hills – an area of stately residences, monuments and villas – to the bungalows they had leased earlier in the year.

Baba and the women moved into the large bungalow, and the men stayed in the smaller one nearby.

Pendu was put in charge of the arrangements for the gathering to be held at the end of June, which included seeing to meals and bathing and sleeping facilities for nearly 75 men. To accommodate that large number, a bungalow was rented on 6-2-591 Kohinoor Jubilee Road, which had been built by the late Nawab Ali Nawab Jung, a well-known architect and Muslim prince. Built on top of a hillock, the place was like a miniature palace, with landscaped grounds and colorful flowers. It had a large dining room, a terrace, and a staircase that wound around an indoor fountain. From the upstairs balcony, there was a view of a nearby lake.

The reason the palatial bungalows in this area were so expensive was due to the partitioning of India when many wealthy Muslims, who once lived in this pleasant locality, were forced to

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

leave their homes and move to Pakistan. If they had not left, they risked being put in prison for suspected political activity.

A while later, Baba and the women shifted from the place that was originally leased to another more spacious house nearby, known as Kohinoor Bungalow, which had a lawn, a flower garden and shady almond trees.

Although it was large and had many well-furnished rooms, the women stayed on the ground floor and spread their belongings in only one small area. Upstairs, there were six luxurious bedrooms, each painted a different color. Baba first chose one of those rooms, because it had a private outer staircase the men could use to visit Him. However, over the next several days, Baba tried each bedroom, but was not happy with any of them, because of a strange noise. The women suspected it came from the water tank on the roof. In the end, He chose to stay downstairs in the sitting room.

The arrangements in Kohinoor Bungalow were primitive, with no running water or bath, but Baba preferred it to more comfortable surroundings. In the evenings, Baba and the women sat in the comfortable drawing room on sofas and listened to radio serials. If it had not been midsummer and so hot that it was difficult to sleep, the women would have found being in that bungalow with Baba to be very close to perfection.

One day in Hyderabad, Baba received a letter from a woman in Australia named Clarice Adams. She wrote that had been an active member of a political party, but now had joined a Sufi group and was learning meditation. She asked how she should love Baba without having met Him, and for this reason, she requested to come to India. Baba answered,

My dear Mrs. Adams,

Your open-hearted and loving letter was a great joy to me. I do not want you to come to India just now, and although I do not promise, I may one day visit Australia in order to meet all the loving ones there. You should return to all your previous activities; but you should do them all from the New Life viewpoint, dedicating every activity to God.

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(This was the first hint by Baba that He might one day visit Australia, which He did five years later.)

A Large Gathering of Old and New June 20th to 30th, 1951

Baba sent invitations to a selected number of men from the Old Life to attend a meeting in Hyderabad in late June. When the invitations were received, the men were all greatly surprised, because Baba had indicated at Mahabaleshwar in October that His Old Life followers would never see Him again.

On June 8th, to clarify the particulars of the meeting, Adi Sr. sent the invitees another message from Baba:

Baba wants you to know that the severe physical and mental strain incurred during His 100-days' seclusion has told heavily upon His already impaired state of health. If during the seven days of meetings He feels physically fit, He will carry out His meeting work about the God-determined step in a cheerful mood. He will nevertheless carry on His meeting work even if His health does not stand up to it, but in that case you must be prepared to cheerfully face a heavy and depressed atmosphere.

Before the meeting, Baba fasted for twelve hours on June 10th, and in the days following, He devoted much of His time to the preparations for the gathering and the arrangements made by Pendu.

Some of the men, including Ramjoo, Dr. Ghani, Babadas and Adi Sr., were invited to arrive earlier, on June 20th.

Nariman, Meherjee, Dr. Deshmukh and Dhakephalker were asked to come on the 23rd.

The rest were invited to come for three days from the 28th to the 31st.

Among this latter group were some of Baba's newer followers, including Keshav Nigam and Pukar from Hamirpur District, and Dr. Dhanapathy Rao and A.C.S. Chari from Andhra State. As a result of their work for Baba, thousands in their districts had been drawn to Him.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

*Baba with a
mast on
May 23, 1951*

The group of men invited to arrive on the 20th came precisely on time. When they saw Baba, He was slowly climbing the staircase that wound around the indoor fountain. He looked radiant, yet the first thing they noticed was that His body showed the unmistakable signs of tremendous strain due to His seclusion work.

When they approached Him, He asked, "How do I look?"

The men frankly replied that He appeared very weak and frail. Baba then revealed,

It is true. I feel very weak. The trouble with piles is more or less still there. At times, I have a slashing pain near my diaphragm. I cannot sleep well. I feel no appetite. Once in twenty-four hours, I have necessarily to take a little food, and seeing the food, I feel a sort of aversion. So for many days I tried my best to follow the doctor's instructions. I was very eager to remain free of all these troubles when you were here so that I might

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enjoy your company, as well as finish my work by the first of July as cheerfully as possible.

I have not yet regained my health that had declined during the 100-day seclusion. Let us hope it does not deteriorate further. In any case, I am firmly resolved to complete what I have to complete under any circumstances. You all have to help me in one way or another. You should be careful about your own health. Whatever we have to do, we should do it with as much pleasure as we can. Do not worry and be happy, taking care to stay in good health and pay great attention to the work before us.

For the first seven days beginning on the 20th, Baba mainly discussed the arrangements and a number of adjustments that had to be completed before putting His God-determined step into execution on October 16th, 1951. Speaking of His connection with those associated with His New Life, He said,

I shall have to make certain adjustments to wipe out the traces of interference that I have experienced during the last two years of my New Life. I am under no obligation of any kind to anyone. When I say I feel *boja* (burden), I mean by it that I feel I have not done enough for the ones who associated themselves with my New Life through the mutual bond of love. And unless and until I become conscious of a satisfaction that comes up to my expectations, I must do my best to remove that *boja* in one way or another.

Referring to the coming meetings on the 28th to the 31st, Baba said, "Now let's talk business. I have got to do many, many things. I may for that reason call anyone of you individually or in particular groups, at any time for any period, and as many times as I find it necessary for my work."

Baba added that He intended to meet with the large group of men every day from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. and from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. "... None should have the *tavakh* [right to expect] individual interviews with me.... But when called by me on my own

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initiative, you should talk to me freely on the points initiated by me, even if they happen to be connected with the Old Life.”



On June 21st, during a session with the men, Baba allowed Ramjoo, in connection with His proposed work, to make reference to certain events in the Old Life. However, at one point, he unwittingly brought up a personal matter, which Dr. Ghani immediately saw as a breach of Baba's orders. Baba smiled broadly and said,

He has committed a mistake in good faith. The particular sequence was inevitable and as such was difficult to avoid. All of you are no doubt tired now of such things, but you have no idea how sick I myself am about things like my silence, manifestation, etc. I am billions of times more fed up with everything than you all are! If you feel very keen to see me, then believe me that I am

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all the more eager to let you see me once and for all. *If and when that happens, it will happen quite unawares and all of a sudden, and yet it will be at the moment exactly fixed for that to happen. In the New Life, I have got to, and I do, stick to the principle of my New Life.*

On June 23rd, after the second group of early invitees had arrived, the subject of sacrificing one's life in the service of the Master was discussed. Baba said, "Compared with the day-to-day carrying out of the Master's instructions, through the thick and thin of one's life, the giving up of life on the emotion of the moment is very cheap. Sometimes, soldiers of very ordinary caliber can also perform acts of sacrifice and heroism under particular circumstances and impulses of the moment."

Babadas then drew Baba's attention to the subject of giving a public darshan and receive the following reply: "Darshan is worth giving when it is really the Darshan for those for whom it is meant and to those when it is meant. The God-determined step is with that end in view. Whether or not there will be the Darshan rests upon the will of God."

Someone then brought up their personal difficulties, about which Baba later remarked to Ramjoo, "I feel pleased with his individual helplessness, which has immense possibilities, but you can have no idea of my present infinite helplessness."

On the 26th, Baba declared:

I am going to see *the old Meher Baba* or go blind. That is the only remedy for all my *bimaries* (illnesses), and the result of that remedy will prove to be the remedy for all the *bimaries* of you all.

You all here have helped me in carrying out so many important things. But you have no idea of the real importance of all the work that I am doing these days. That can only be known as the result of the God-determined step that I am going to take on October 16th. According to what I feel at the moment, these seven days that you have passed with me are as good as having passed 700 years of your lives with me!

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In the course of an earlier discussion, Baba clearly stated that if His work is done according to the God-determined Step, “there will be nothing left to be done by anyone for me... The result depends upon the Will of God.”

Unique Meetings

On June 27th, most of the remaining 75 men arrived in the morning, in time to have an early meeting with Baba.

They gathered in a large hall on the first floor where, upon seeing Him, all the men were immediately struck by His weakened physical condition even though He appeared radiant.



Baba meeting with His Old Life followers

He began the meeting by telling them that during the period from October 16th, 1951, to February 16th, 1952, when He proposed to take His God-determined step, that “the zenith of

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strength” would be required of Him at a time when He found Himself at “the zenith of weakness.”

He explained:

Formerly, when I wanted to have certain things carried out, I took into consideration certain factors about people. Now, if in accordance with the God-determined Step, my work is done, there will be no need at all for me to take into consideration such matters, for the simple reason that there will be nothing left to be done by anyone for me. Similarly, I need not take into consideration the prestige and position of any individual, even if that work remains undone, because the result depends upon the will of God, and when once that is manifested one way or the other, there will again remain nothing else to be done by me or for me.

For me now, *Jaana per bani hai* – “It is a question of life or death.” But this expression does not even remotely express what is really at stake for me under the God-determined Step.

Suppose that someone who has leprosy from head to foot is declared incurable, and thus believes himself to be fast approaching an inevitable death. What else would he care for except the end itself, be it one way or the other? But then death is no end to anything, although people commit suicide and give up their lives because of frustration, out of despair and for other reasons.

The following words of Hafiz give some idea of what I am trying to convey to you:

“Ya jan rasad ba janana, ya jan zetan barayad!”

“The soul either reaches God, or must leave this body!”

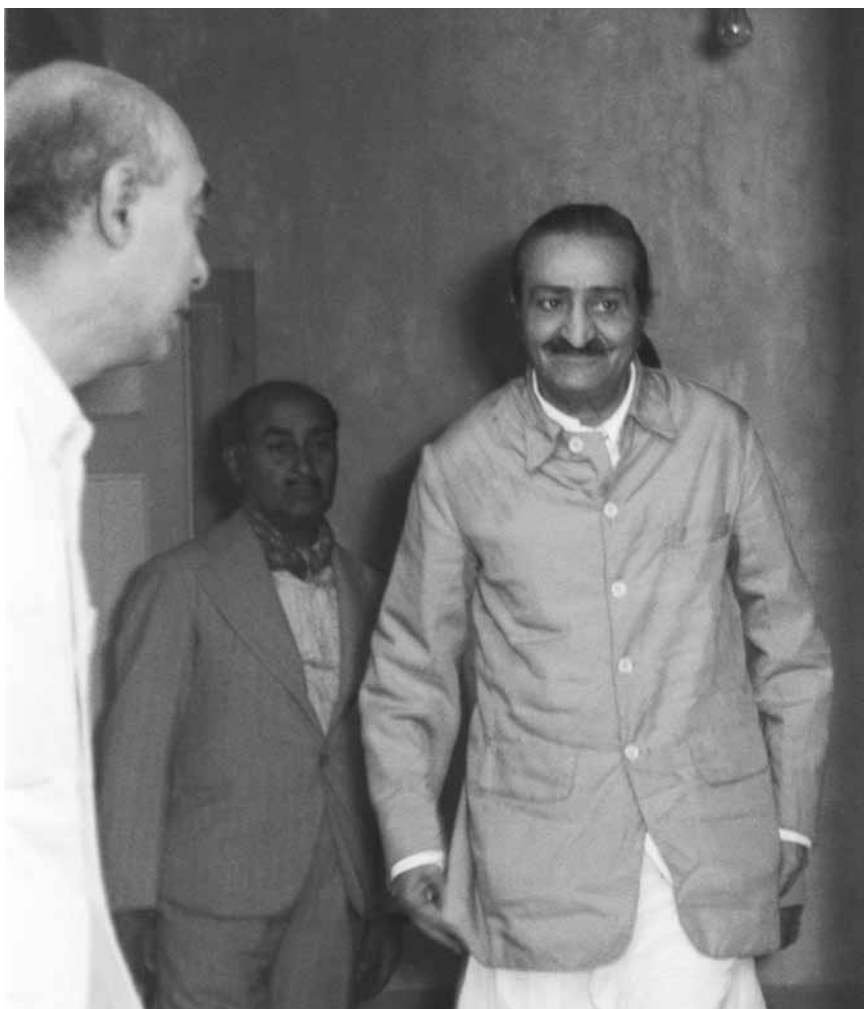
These words of Hafiz may also be translated as:

*“Either the soul has got to reach the Over-Soul,
or the soul has got to get out of the body.”*

Still, this is not quite what I have to say. To take another example: Suppose I am suffering from physical

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disabilities and afflictions of a type that allow me to move very little, and yet I have decided to climb Mount Everest.



Baba with Pendu and Kaka

Baba then received each one individually in His room. Although no questions were to be asked, sometimes Baba Himself would inquire about one's health and personal life. Typical of one of the interviews, Bal Natu writes:

Within a few minutes I was called in, and there was Baba, as beautiful and radiant as ever, His entire form beaming with love.... He, of His own, lovingly gestured

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if I had to ask Him anything! I kept silent. He continued, "How is your health? Any worry?"

"Nothing special, Baba. Sometimes physical weakness wearies me," I replied.

With a sympathetic smile, He gestured, "Don't worry about it, about anything! Again, as long as you are here, remain happy and cheerful, do good justice to lunch and supper."

And with a twinkle in His eyes, He gestured, "Forget about school and family members, but do not forget to be punctual at the meetings!"

The interview ended with my intimacy with Baba not just renewed, but invigorated as well. A fresh wave of love refreshed me. I felt my body and mind geared to a new energy to face life, come what may.

Later on the 27th, when all 75 had arrived and gathered in the hall located on the first floor, Baba said:

Circulars were sent out to all those connected with me, but only a few of you have been invited to be present here. The rest were asked not to come. You have been called here to bear witness to the Declaration that I will make tomorrow before God. This does not mean that you will be required to sign some documents as witnesses or seal it. This is to let God know that I make this announcement before you all as witnesses.

There will be no individual interviews tomorrow. You should all be present in this hall at eight o'clock in the morning. Before that, all should wash their hands and feet. Those who have nocturnal emissions in their dreams should take a bath before coming here.

Before I make the Declaration, I will also call out in my heart to all the past, present and future Perfect Masters to bear witness to the Declaration.

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In late afternoon, Baba told the men that He would see them the next morning, and then He returned to His residence a short drive away.

According to the careful arrangements made by Pendu, the men were shown their sleeping quarters, consisting of luxurious bedrooms with servants in attendance. For many of the men, this was the first time they had been in such splendid surroundings. They unpacked and then were served a delicious dinner.

After eating, they nourished each other further by sharing Baba stories. The group from Hamirpur district then performed *bhajans* (devotional songs) in praise of Baba, which were very moving. (Baba was later to refer to Hamirpur as His “heart.”)

By 4:00 a.m. on the 28th, most of the men were up. After bathing and eating breakfast, they were outside the hall before 7:00 a.m., awaiting Baba’s arrival.

Baba came at 7:15 a.m. and went into the hall, where He met first with His servant companions on matters relating to the three days of meetings. Baba wore a white sadra, and His long hair was flowing as He sat on a wooden chair at one end of the hall. After speaking with His companions, He called certain individuals from the crowd outside to meet with Him.



Baba with Kumar

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At 7:50 a.m., Baba finally clapped, which was the signal for all to enter. Bal Natu described Baba as looking supremely happy, yet at the same time there was an air of seriousness about Him.

Most of the men who entered had followed Baba's orders to wash their hands and faces before meeting with Him, and now they came in and spread themselves out on the carpeted floor.

However, Minoo Kharas and Dr. Ghani had slept in and neither had taken a morning bath. The first thing Baba did was to call them forward and ask why they thought it was okay to ignore His orders.

Ghani's wit was ready. He answered, "Baba, after having Your darshan yesterday, the dust of our bodies was so precious to us, we did not bathe. We prefer to be covered with the dust of Your presence!"

Baba smiled at this quick rejoinder, but warned them that in the future they should follow His instructions. Then, taking up His alphabet board, He spelled out:

One thing I can definitely say with all emphasis is that for me, for you all and for those connected with me, by February 16th, 1952, things won't be as they are now, whether for good or bad, and I feel confident it will be for the best.... To be honest, in the New Life I never felt so happy as I feel now. And this happiness makes me feel that God wants me to make the Declaration.

Baba spoke of His 100-day seclusion and the tremendous helplessness and anxiety He felt during that period. Referring to His present state, He said, "Last night I hardly slept. All of a sudden at about three-thirty in the morning, it was clearly revealed that God wants me to take the irrevocable Step.

"Since then, I am happy and do not feel nervous at all. I feel deep down in my heart that God will definitely help me to regain my Old Life Meher Baba state by February 16th, 1952."

Baba then gestured, "In this hall, everyone should be present with all his heart when you listen to the Declaration."

He stood up and walked over and washed His hands and feet at a basin in the corner of the hall. Sitting down again, He

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signaled for Dr. Ghani to read out the Declaration, first in English and Hindi. Dr. Deshmukh then read it in Marathi:

*Terms of the Declaration**What God Has Determined**28th June 1951*

1. God has determined in my mind the irrevocable step that I am going to take on October 16th. The period required for the execution of this inevitable step will be from October 16th, 1951, to February 16th, 1952. During these past seven days, therefore, I have been talking to you all collectively and individually whenever necessary, regarding the arrangements to be made for the carrying out of this step. From July 1st to October 16th, I will see to the actual arrangements in detail.
2. The step God wants me to take is one of complete and absolute annihilation. I am at this moment solely and entirely in the New Life, and it is purely from this New Life stand of an ordinary human being that I tell you about this annihilation. This step compels me to take on complete mental annihilation during the process between October 16th and February 16th. That means that during this period of mental annihilation, I will, in the natural course of events, be facing physical annihilation as well, without my actually seeking it. By February 12th the result, as I see it, will be:
 - a. I will gain complete mental annihilation and yet be alive physically, and this will mean that I will not only attain the Old Life Meher Baba state, but will also manifest it universally. It will also mean a super-revolutionizing in the lives of all connected with me, and even those not connected with me, as fundamentally I will then be connected with each and every one; except that its effect will vary in accordance with the strength of their connection with me; or
 - b. With mental annihilation my physical body might fall, and that would mean the end of everything and the beginning of everything. Then, for those connected with me the same super-change will occur, but without my personal individual manifestation; or
 - c. Before mental annihilation is gained, my physical body might fall, and that would mean we would all be where we were. In that case, every one of you will

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be benefited according to your connection with and your love and faith in me; or

- d. By the end of February, mental annihilation might not be gained and physically I might be alive, and that would mean the end of all. Then I would free everyone from having any direct connection with me, leaving it to them to lead any kind of life they choose.
3. In any case, those directly and indirectly connected with me will not have loved me and served me all along in vain. Irrespective of what I was, am and will be, God in His Infinite Justice will see to everything. My strongest and only advice to each one of you is to hold fast to your faith and love – at least in the same proportion as now, if not in greater.
4. God wants me to take this step, and I am absolutely certain that He will help me gain this mental annihilation by February 12th. With this inner conviction, I will plunge deeply into this act of annihilation from October 16th.
5. I ask God in all humility to help me achieve this desired end by February 15th.
6. In the event of my physical death, the Arrangementwalas have to carry out the typed instructions I have given them; and Vishnu will carry out my instructions regarding the same.
7. I will be away from Hyderabad from October 16th to February 12th. The women who are now with me will stay on in Hyderabad during my absence. Vishnu has been given his duty in connection with them from July 1st to February 12th.
8. During this period (from October 16th to February 12th), I want to be absolutely free from any kind of hindrance, free to die and free to live without any *boja* (burden) of any kind. Anyone who wants to go through this dying process with me can join me; but I want every one of you to fully understand the magnitude of your mental preparation needed to stand by such a decision. I want you to bear in mind the difficulties accosted at the start of the New Life in 1949, the obstacles in your way and the hindrances in mine – and I want no repetition of that. If you choose to accompany me from mere emotional impulse on your part, it will be disastrous. If you come with me, it will actually be to face all kinds of untold difficulties and inconceivable hardships; hardships that might include starvation, going with-

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

out sleep, sickness, disability, and complete hopelessness and helplessness at their extreme heights. It might mean experiencing 400 deaths in four months. I will have absolutely no responsibility and might have no concern whatever for anyone accompanying me.

9. I order the Servants who are with me to choose between two things: to join me in this hopeless task, or to stay at Hyderabad doing whatever duty I allot to them. In the latter case, they will be well provided for as regards food, clothing and pocket money for four months. None of the Arrangementwalas should offer to accompany me, as they have to carry out their responsibilities till the very end. Any one of my Old Life disciples may join me. If by the grace of God I gain my objective by February 12th, everything spiritual and material (or only spiritual as the case may be) will be for my Servants and Old Life disciples and devotees.
10. And yet, before I take this step on October 16th, I want to try and help materially certain of my Old Life disciples and to adjust certain matters of some of them, in order to be free from every kind of *boja*. From July 1st to February 12th, I might be available either to all, to a few or to none. Occasions might also arise when I might be available to the masses. I will be free to decide about all these points as and when I like.
11. Even if there is only one of you accompanying me, I shall be quite pleased and satisfied, and even if many choose to come with me, I will not mind. But those accompanying me must be prepared to be able to stand everything and anything under all and every circumstance, implicitly obeying my every order, without hoping for any kind of reward, spiritual or material. They must expect no help of any kind from me, but on the contrary will be expected to help me.
12. Also, from amongst those offering to come with me, I will finally decide who is to accompany me and who is to stay.
13. During this period of annihilation (from October 16th to February 12th), my actions and mode of living will be free from any kind of binding conditions. I might wander about from place to place or settle down in one place, when and where I will decide between July and October. I might beg for anything, demand anything, accept anything or reject anything; or perhaps I might do none of these things. I will

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do anything ordinary or extraordinary, good or bad, as the occasion may demand of me, based on the Will of God for this great Annihilation.

BABA

After the readings were completed in the three languages, Baba rose from His chair and gestured for all to stand. He folded His hands and closed His eyes as Dr. Donkin read the following declaration in English, followed by Ghani in Urdu and Dr. Deshmukh in Marathi:

In the presence of God, and bearing in my heart all the Perfect Ones of all times as witness, I declare that by the help and will of God, I will definitely take this step of Annihilation on October 16th of this year.

God helped me to do the seclusion work of 100 days to my entire satisfaction, and I feel absolutely confident that God will help me to attain to the Old Life Meher Baba state by 16th February 1952, and to manifest universally.



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Afterward, Baba added, "I want every one of you who is present here as witness to this declaration, to fast for twenty-four hours on tea and water on October 16th, beginning from eight o'clock in the morning of that day."

At the end of the reading, a profound silence pervaded the hall. Baba took His seat again and then indicated for all to disperse and take a break of fifteen minutes to relax.

When the men returned, Baba looked rested and was in lighthearted spirits, but He soon shifted to a more serious mood, telling the gathering that the months of the Manonash period would be extremely difficult, and again reminding them that anyone going with Him should expect to "be facing 400 deaths in four months!" He also said that the original conditions of the New Life would hold, that He would not be responsible for what happened and that no material or spiritual benefit should be expected. Instead, one should expect physical deprivation.

The men in the gathering were then told they would have to decide whether or not they were prepared to join Baba during the Manonash phase. He said, "I know, God knows, and you must also know about mental annihilation or Manonash. I will explain it as an ordinary philosopher, and you should all try to follow what I say. If you understand it properly, you will be benefited, even if I do not remain alive after February 15th, 1952." Baba then began dictating on the alphabet board a discourse, in English, on the annihilation of the mind:

Mind changes according to the *sanskaras* (impressions), but it is not transformed. Mind is of the false, and it remains false. Being false, it can be annihilated. Today you think, "I am a man."

If tomorrow your body falls and you get a new body of a woman, you will think, "I am a woman." This "I" of being a man or a woman is false, and it continues to think so until there is real transformation.

Mind is never transformed; Ego is transformed only once. Ego is of the Real, and it shall ever remain Real. By Ego, I mean your very Being as *Astitva* [the real "I"]. Ego by itself is not false; mind makes one think so. Mind creates worlds, delusions and illusions, yet it is never One

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in itself. Ego (as witness consciousness) is always One in itself.

The Real Ego that each of us has is apparently bound up by the mind, which makes the Real Ego think of itself as false. Mind makes you think birth and death, happiness and misery, are real; and nothing can be more false than this.

You are never born, but mind gives the impression: "I am this." "I am that." "This is my wife." "This is my child," etc. Mind always keeps you in a tap dance. If you know that you and your wife and your children and all are One, and that you never die, never suffer, what else would there be to know?

So mind, which is made up of false impressions, makes the Real "I" think itself false. Mind may make you say, "I am God," but not make you feel, "I am God." So as long as mind is there, Ego cannot be transformed from its false assumption of its Real State. You are really Infinite and Eternal. But you do not feel it. To experience this Original State, mind must go. But who is to destroy mind? The very act of destroying creates impressions and mind gets bound. The magical spell (*jadu*) of sanskaras has bound you so tight and skillfully that the more you try to come out, the more you get bound.

The only recourse is that mind has to annihilate itself by itself. So Hafiz says, "*Tu khud hijabe khudi, Hafiz, uz miyan burkeez*" ("Hafiz, remove yourself, for you yourself are the veil").

But how to remove yourself? The very process of removing creates impressions.

So the Perfect Masters laid down different paths that subsequently direct one towards destroying mind, while retaining consciousness. These paths are based mainly on action, meditation and love. The Masters knew that actions which have false ego and mind full of impressions as its background, instead of destroying mind, feed it. And there is no escape from action. So some Masters demonstrated the path of "actionless action." The secret lies in performing action in a way [as

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if] it had not been done at all. Then what happens – past impressions of actions done get spent up and no new impressions are formed.

Baba stopped the discourse at this point to tell everyone that it was time for lunch. He added that there was no point in discoursing further if their stomachs were competing for attention.



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Right before leaving for lunch, Baba said, "The fact remains that for good or bad, I am definitely going to take this God-determined Step. It will be for the best because at three-thirty this morning God revealed to me that I was going to regain the state of Meher Baba in the Old Life."

Baba further observed, "When we meet in the afternoon, all may decide to go with me. But after hearing your decision, I shall finally decide for myself who will go with me and who will not. Arrangementwalas should not offer to go with me, because they have to carry out the arrangements to the end."

Then, after surveying the grave faces before Him, Baba added, "For God's sake, don't all of you decide to join me on the assumption that I will say 'no' to all of you!"

Everyone laughed. The meeting broke up, and the men went to the dining hall for another delicious meal.

After a Short Recess

When everyone returned to the hall at 2:00 p.m., Baba immediately made it clear that each one must now give his decision whether or not he would accompany Him in His Manonash phase.

He warned, "This period of four months concerns me. Those who might be thinking of accompanying me should not consider it a matter of merely going with me for so many months, or just accompanying me on a tour."

Baba asked the servant companions first about their decisions, reminding them that any servant companion who stayed behind would be provided for financially.

Donkin spoke up first, "Baba, my heart will go with You, but my body shall stay at Hyderabad." Murli also chose to remain behind, and Nilu was sick. The remaining six servant companions, Pendu, Baidul, Gustadji, Eruch, Kaka and Kaikobad, elected to go with Him. Baba then asked Vishnu to remain behind to attend to the women, who would be staying on in Hyderabad.

Baba turned to the rest of the men and asked who among the remaining 70 was willing to go with Him.

Only fifteen responded: Minoo Kharas, Nana Kher, Pankhraj, Goma Ganesh, Sailor Mama, Todi Singh, Kishan Singh, Daulat

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Singh, Pritam Singh, Gadekar, Babadas, Suripat Sahai, Was Deo Kain, Pukar and A.C. Chari. Baba then spent the next two hours interviewing each of the men about their family situation and household affairs.

Afterward, Baba said,

Today, you have decided for yourself; tomorrow, I will decide for each of you. As for me, whatever I have already declared is final. In fact, the New Life is only for me. I began it on October 16th, 1949. Until now, although I am leading the New Life, I have not been able to live it as I wanted to. In the coming period of four months, I want to live the whole of the New Life and end it for me.

It is a fact that each one of you who has offered to join me means it seriously, and I feel very happy at the readiness with which you have decided to go with me. I want everyone to feel equally happy at my own decision about each one of you, whatever that decision may be. God knows how infinitely serious the matter is for me, and there must not be the least possibility of any hindrance to me in carrying out this God-determined Step.

Last night, I even felt that it would be best to set out all by myself. I then remembered all my limitations such as my silence, my failing health, etc., that forced me to admit that I must not fool myself and that it is really not possible for me to go alone. I, therefore, consider your offers very carefully, and I shall let you know my decisions later on.

Baba said that He would continue the discourse the next day, and to change the mood of the gathering, He suggested, "Now, let us not be serious. Tell me some good jokes or humorous stories. Make me laugh and laugh yourself."

So the rest of the afternoon was spent in lighthearted humor, and everyone, including Baba, had a good laugh. He then retired, and the first day's session ended.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad**The Second Session**

The next morning, June 29th, the meeting began at 8:00 a.m. with Baba saying He had not slept well during the night, as He was struggling to decide who would accompany Him during the Manonash period. He added, "I find the servants, Pendu, Eruch, Gustadji and Baidul, okay, but God knows, I have not yet finally decided about them.... Now, till I decide, I cannot sleep!"

Then, as Baba was about to continue discoursing about Manonash, Dr. Ghani interrupted by asking about the belief in one birth and one death espoused by Christians and Muslims. He said that this belief seemed to contradict the Hindu theory of reincarnation, to which Baba replied:

The real Goal of life is not the death of the ego but the death of the mind. When Mohammed or Jesus or Zoroaster talked of being born once and of dying once, it was of the mind. When mind dies totally, the false ego becomes Real I. In reality, ego is not born and as such it does not die. Ego [as the witness] is always Real. It is only due to the mind that ego acts and feels limited and false.

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Mind takes the body according to its good and bad impressions. Taking up and giving up of bodies is not the mind or the ego taking birth or dying. Every time when the body is discarded, mind survives, impressions remain. These impressions press on mind to spend them by taking another body. So mind takes another body according to the impressions: ego witnesses. And another body and another. When you are in sound sleep, ego, mind and sanskaras are there. Sanskaras wake up mind. They say, "Go on, spend us." Waking up from the sound sleep is, in a way, an everyday birth for the body. When one body is left, another body comes up though there is a time lag between the giving up of one body and taking up another. Mind exists even when a new body is not given to the ego; it is the mind-state of heaven or hell. But mind has to die while it is in a human body, retaining full consciousness. This is the Goal.



After completing the answer to Ghani's question, Baba continued the discourse on Manonash from where He left off the previous day. The dictation on His alphabet board took more than an hour. All eyes were captivated by the intense concentration on His face.

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Baba began by discussing the various paths that have been chalked out by the Masters to get rid of past impressions, which cover the Truth and prevent annihilation of the mind.

Continuing the discourse, He said:

When the Masters saw that there was no escape from the vicious circle of the sanskaras (impressions) feeding the mind and leading it to gather fresh sanskaras, they thought over the problem of the impressions from very many angles, and chalked out various ways and means to help others to break through the magic.

The main paths can be broadly divided into three kinds, namely, those that are based on action, meditation and love. More or less, sooner or later, according to individual attitudes of mind and aptitudes, all paths lead towards the achievement of the One and the same Goal, i.e., final annihilation, *naash* (ruin) or *fana* (effacement) of mind, in order for the ego to realize its eternal existence, its immortality – *bacquaa*, *advait sakshatkar*. Thus, the different ways and means do eventually prove helpful towards the ultimate achievement of manonash.

Let us commence with the path of action, because the main activity of mind through body is of actions. As long as mind is there, body is there, and actions, too, are there. Actions leave impressions and impressions feed the mind. So, for the false ego to be transformed into Real, there is no other remedy than manonash. Therefore, the Masters wanted actions to be done in a way so that the effect of the impressions becomes impotent, hence, no result, no binding.

For example, a scorpion generally wags its tail and stings. It is natural for it to sting someone. What is the result? The person suffers. Even if the scorpion's stinger is cut off, its act of wagging and stinging continues. But when the "thorn" is removed, the person concerned does not suffer. So, the Masters thought of the following remedy for actions: to act in a way so that results do not bind, and no impressions are created. But for this, the action has to be rendered impotent in the matter of its

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dangerous results, and this is not easy. Why? I will explain.

There are three ways by which actions performed do not bind. One is to act, but absolutely without having any self-interest. To act without the thought of performing the act, such as doing selfless service – there can be no doubt that leads to actions without restrictions as intended by the Masters. But the practical difficulty is in doing such acts continuously; that is, always like that or in that way.

However determined a mind may be to continue to do selfless service indefinitely, the ego would not allow it to do such a service 100 percent, even for a moment. One is bound to be more or less aware of, “I am serving, I am helping, I am uplifting,” and there you are caught.

Similarly, a 100 percent unflinching faith cannot be there if there is even a momentary flash of doubt...

If, with the best of motives and without any self-interest, when the leaders ask others to make sacrifices, the reactions of the actions of the others fall on the leaders.

While serving others, even the sense of feeling pity should not be there.

In short, on the line of “actions to kill actions,” the weakening of a mind does take place by the ego abstaining from other actions. But it is impossible to carry out the process continuously, and therefore it is also impossible to achieve completion of manonash that way.

The second way is to dedicate whatever you do to God or a Perfect Master. This dedication must be constant and continual, without a moment’s break. If you are able to do this, then actions do not create any impressions. But this is very difficult.

The third way is to act on the orders of the One whose mind is annihilated and so is free from impressions. If you do whatever He tells you to do, you are not bound. This, too, is not simple, for you must have 100 percent unflinching faith in the Perfect Master.

Some Masters have chalked out the way of defeating the mind through the mind itself, through meditation, concentration, etc.

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When the mind is methodically concentrated, for the time being its functions do get weakened and its impressions are led to “eat” themselves, like certain kinds of earthworms which eat one another. But the achievement of complete annihilation of the mind is again impossible, because it is the habit of the mind to go on collecting impressions, and so it is apt to soon feel frustrated and become desperate, and one of three things is then bound to happen, i.e., you feel fed up and can no longer concentrate, you become sleepy or drowsy, or you are assailed by more and more bad thoughts.

Even gaining and experiencing the state of *baal* (trance meditation) or *samadhi* (temporary union with God) cannot by itself achieve complete manonash, because the effects of a trance, etc. are in a sense like the effects of dope or drinking. As long as *baal* or *samadhi* lasts, the mind is slowed down and is temporarily incapacitated from catching fresh serious impressions.

The moment the ecstasy of concentration or meditation ends, the mind is ready to re-assert its nature, as it had before the ego went into a trance, got into *baal* or entered into *samadhi*. In fact, the last thought uppermost in the mind before one enters into *samadhi* turns up as the first thought the moment one comes down to normal consciousness. For example, if money was the last predominant thought in mind at the time of going into a trance, money will be the first thought to enter the mind as soon as one comes out of the trance.

The method of diversion, like diverting the mind from many to the One, is something like a tug-of-war between two extreme ideas. It is hypocritical for a man not actually feeling himself to be God, to say that he is God and not man.

As such, actionless actions are equally impossible to be continued and carried out this way. On the contrary, the diversion and the resulting tug-of-war in a mind leads to a drying up of one's love for the Truth.

The third path is of *bhakti* (devotion). When one is totally devoted to God or the Perfect Master, he forgets

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himself and his mind gets no chance to form new, binding impressions. The Eternal Beloved is ever present, but unless you step out of your old habits, how can you aspire to meet Him?

So Hafiz says:

*Hazoori gar hami khabi
az uoo ghayeb mashow Hafiz
O Hafiz, if you want the Beloved's presence,
do not absent yourself from Him.*

But even through the path of devotion, complete and continual self-forgetfulness is practically impossible. So, no manonash.

Devotion and love, which are the very essence of all the religions, constitute a power that has the greatest force to help a mind to forget and to bring about the forgetfulness of everything which is false.

A mind can forget itself in this way only if there is 100 percent love and devotion. But this is impossible, and as such it is also impossible for the ego to eschew the mind for good, which, in fact, means the annihilation of the mind. Like other things, love and devotion have also got to be firmly established in continuous practice.

Mere mechanical actions without real love and devotion only lead to the formation of marks and scars at one point of the body or another, according to the different practices or prayers of a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Zoroastrian. It is, therefore, perfectly true that to be in the presence of the Friends of God (Masters, Perfect Ones), even for a moment, is better than 100 years of honest piety.

The denial of bodily actions for the mere satisfaction of desires, if carried out with 100 percent sincerity, might lead the ego to actually see God and to enjoy a serene peace of mind. But even that does not mean the annihilation of the mind. Even the prophets and Avatars had to have the help and grace of the Perfect Ones in order to achieve the annihilation of their minds!

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The mind's part is to make ego think in terms of the body, feel the false and experience the sanskaras. But when mind sees that the ego is not ready to accept its dictatorship, then submissive, loose and weak impressions are formed which eventually lead one towards the Goal. Thus either through selfless service or meditation or devotion, though not perfected but if persisted with 100 percent faithfulness, a stage comes when mind is permanently at rest or becomes totally quiet and sees God everywhere.

Only the Perfect One, who is free, can uproot [annihilate] the minds of others, even of the masses.

All paths are meant for manonash, to make you feel, "You are God, the Infinite, the Eternal."

We are all the same One God, but we are misled by the shameless mind. With the death of mind, ego feels, "I am God. I have no connection with the body." It is something like having been caught in a mire. The deeper you sink, the more you try to come out. Have you any idea in your mind how you were actually born? No! That is because you were never born. With the death of the mind, the ego realizes its Reality. If the shock of this Knowledge is too strong, the body drops; otherwise, the momentum [of the impressions] keeps the body going for some time, and then it is shed. This is the state of a Perfect *Majzoob*; mind is not there but Real "I" and body remain.

Few after manonash keep their bodies and get minds, too, but these minds have "impressionless impressions"; then Real I, Real Mind and Real Body remain. Such a one is a Perfect Master.

When mind dies, ego realizes Reality. With Manonash dawns the Knowledge. By Knowledge, I mean the experience of the "I am God State." Then God's Knowledge is yours. God is All-knowing. So in a flash you know Everything; you KNOW that there was and is nothing to know.

Call it Impressionless Mind, call it Real "I," call it Transformed Ego or call it Real Mind, it is one and the

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same Infinite Truth, beginningless and endless. You are all in all. All that you need is emancipation from all that is false and that which has fallen to your lot.

I am absolutely full of weaknesses in my New Life. And in spite of my present helplessness, I have got four months in hand to achieve the annihilation of the mind. It is like a lame person wanting to reach the top of Everest in four months. But I feel 100 percent confident that God will help me achieve this.

Ask God from the bottom of your hearts to help me in achieving this annihilation as I want it to be achieved. I feel 100 percent confident that God will help me in this.

When the discourse was finished, Babadas asked Baba, “Can those who are not present here also fast for twenty-four hours on October 16th?”



Baba with Gustadji

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Baba replied, "Those who wish to can do so. During the fast, they should pray to God, at least once, that according to my desire, He may help me achieve the fulfillment of the God-determined Step."

At the beginning of the discourse, Baba forbade all questions, but Ramjoo asked a question anyway.

Baba replied, "Had you any sense, you would not have asked me." This exchange provoked Baba into giving further clarification of manonash:

It is as an ordinary man that I have tried to explain the manonash to be achieved by an ordinary man. All are free to and should hold on in their faith in me and to their convictions and beliefs about me. One may interpret my words as one likes. When an earthquake takes place, it is possible for many other things to happen, like fires, floods, destruction, etc.

And it is equally possible for one interpretation or another to prove correct. Ghani asked me why and how I could achieve manonash because, as believed by him, I have already achieved it in the Old Life. But being my childhood chum, I have pardoned him for putting that question to me.

Again, after so much seriousness, Baba called for indoor games to be played in the afternoon.

"This will be," He said, "a sort of relaxation for me and will help me to decide about the persons who should be with me during the Manonash period."

Various games were suggested. Baba joined in the discussion and even joked about some of the suggestions, and He then suddenly called for a half hour recess.

During that interval, He interviewed the twenty-one men who had volunteered to accompany Him, inquiring about their responsibilities and commitments at home, since many were married. Of the twenty-one men, only six were chosen. Of the six remaining, Baba made a definite decision to take Pendu, Eruch, Baidul and Gustadji. Whether to take Minoo Kharas and Daulat

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Singh, He kept pending until September 7th, when He said He would finally decide.

Baba then announced that during the Manonash phase of four months, no one was to write or see Him and that a circular would be sent out by Adi Sr. to that effect.



Full view of Baba and those who attended the Hyderabad meetings

Pausing from dictation on the alphabet board, Baba got up and stood in the doorway with the surrounding hills and beautiful sky behind Him. He was in a deep, thoughtful mood. After some time, He returned to His seat with a bright smile on His face, declaring that, in spite of His poor health, the Manonash gathering had been a great success, and all were very fortunate to witness and be a part of it.

“As I am tired, I want to have some recreation, humorous in nature, within an hour,” He added, and He then returned to the discussion of games and entertainment and suggested a fancy dress parade. He even selected the ones to be in the program

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and said a medal and ten rupees would be awarded to the best performances. He appointed Papa Jessawala to be the judge of the talent show.

Pendu immediately set up an improvised stage, and at 3:00 p.m., the program began.

For the opener, Dr. Ghani strode out on stage dressed as a Pathan (a warrior of north India), to resounding applause.

Next, Savak Kotwal, one of Baba's night watchmen from the Old Life, gave a superb dance performance, amazing everyone.



Savak Kotwal

Although in his 40s, he was extremely agile.

In another entertainment, Keshav Nigam dressed in a woman's sari and hid his face shyly behind one end of it, as he looked flirtatiously at Baba, trying to catch His attention. Baba was very amused and gave him one of His lockets.

Rustom Kaka from Ahmednagar then did an imitation of Adi's father, Khan Saheb, and his first experience of using a telephone when it was installed in his office. Adi's father, who was a man of self-importance and very impatient, was captured remarkably by Rustom, who, simulating an incoming call, picked up the phone and immediately put the wrong end to his ear. When he couldn't hear anything from the caller, he shouted and cursed at the "blasted phone."

Then simulating a long distance call from Bombay, he picked up the receiver, but suddenly he decided to have a pinch of snuff, so he put the receiver back in its cradle. When he picked the phone up again, he heard, "I'm sorry, sir, your connection is broken. There's no one to talk with you!" Rustom then imitated Khan Saheb by yelling, "No one to talk with me? I've paid for this damned phone, and if it's not for conversation, what the hell is it for...?" Baba was greatly amused at Rustom's impersonation, as was everyone else.

Then followed Dhakephalkar, playing the part of a tailor. He stepped onto the stage and set up shop. His materials consisted of a pair of scissors, a measuring tape and a length of string with a sandal tied to the end of it.

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His first customer entered, asking to be fitted for a *sherwani* (a long coat that extends to the knees). Immediately, the tailor insisted that the man stand up straight. Using the string and sandal dangling from the gentleman's head as a plumb line, the tailor whacked the customer in the back with the other sandal when the customer's posture proved to be less than absolutely erect.

A series of preposterous measurements followed, including one from the tip of the nose to the left and right thighs. At one point, the customer was asked to bend over so his head was between his legs. The tailor then measured the distance from his private parts to the tip of his chin. When the measurements were completed, the tailor announced, "It will take considerable time."

He suggested that the customer's grandson should pick up the finished *sherwani*, implying that two generation's time might be required before the coat was ready.

Amid wild and enthusiastic applause, Papa Jessawala awarded Dhakephalkar with a special medal and a rupee note for the best performance.

Baba thoroughly enjoyed the lively atmosphere and all the impromptu entertainment.

The program ended with a song by Saint Mira to Lord Ram sung by Rustom Kaka to the accompaniment of the harmonium.

The refrain of the song, translated into English, is:

*Verily have I found the most precious pearl –
The Divine Name of the God-man, Ram.*

Baba listened in a solemn mood and gazed for a time out the window. When Rustom finished the song, Baba revealed, "I have heard this song and similar songs many times. But today it is something different! The song has evoked 'something' in me,



Dhakephalkar

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad

and in the presence of God, I felt that the work I have undertaken will be done successfully. So let us thank God wholeheartedly.” He gestured for all to stand, and each one thanked God from the bottom of his heart.

Baba then presented a locket with His picture on it to those who had entertained Him in the program. For everyone else, He sent for some roses and handed each a petal. He concluded the meeting by saying, “The main program for which I have called you is over. Tomorrow we go out for sightseeing to Osmansagar [a lake].”

Before the men dispersed, a group photo was taken on the steps of the palatial bungalow, with Baba in their midst.

Afterward, Baba met privately with a few of His followers.

Nana Kher, who was from Nagpur, told Him, “I wish to stay with You.”

“Would you do as I tell you?”

“Assuredly!”

“From tomorrow, start drinking two bottles of wine and eat two seers of mutton.”

Being a high Brahmin, Nana had never touched wine or meat in his life, but he agreed to obey.

To Nana’s unhesitating response, Baba said, “I am very pleased with you, but continue to stay at your house and never touch wine or mutton!”

Pankhraj made a similar appeal to Baba, to which Baba replied, “If you stay with me, your wife Tarabai will nab me.”

“She will agree,” Pankhraj assured Him. “She won’t create trouble. She loves You, Baba.”

“All right, do this: Go back to Nagpur and visit a prostitute daily for two months; also drink a full bottle of wine every day. Could you do this? If you do it, I will keep you with me.”

“I will think it over and then reply.”

“He who thinks, never accomplishes anything! Just go on staying with your wife, and never have anything to do with either prostitutes or wine.”

At 7:00 a.m., June 30th, everyone gathered in the hall. Baba wore a pale yellow silk coat, and though radiant, He was very thin from His recent fast.

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To everyone, He spelled out, "These two days have been of extreme happiness for me. I hope you, too, have shared this happiness. Having made the Declaration in the presence of God and the Perfect Masters of the past, present and future, and you to witness it, I feel extremely happy. Honestly, I feel happy."

After this disclosure, Baba indicated for the men to leave the hall and board two buses waiting outside, and the group was driven to Osmansagar.

The day was pleasantly cool. With Baba in their midst, the group walked over a bridge to a lovely garden, where they lingered for a while.

From there, they were driven into the heart of the old walled city to Charminar to see its famous triumphal arch and its four 175 foot high stone minarets, built in the 16th century. From this place, Baba led the men to the one of the largest granite mosques in the world, the Medina Mosque, with its colonnades, arched doorways, interior frescoes and minarets.

After visiting these famous places, Baba took the men to a fine hotel for tea and refreshments.

Their next stop was a public garden, Bagh-e-Aam, where Baba said, "I like Hyderabad for its spiritual atmosphere, especially for its Hindu-Muslim unity in spiritual matters."

Then, spontaneously, Baba disclosed to the men that He had not washed His hair in two months, but after the gathering He intended to rectify that. No one knew why Baba chose to disclose such an intimate detail.

By 10:30 a.m., the buses returned to Ali Nawab's bungalow, and another group photograph was taken on the outside steps.

Afterward, Baba called everyone to the second floor, where He passed out packets of sweets as prasad. He told them not to open the packets until reaching home, where they could share the prasad with their families.

Baba then left for lunch at His residence nearby, saying that He would return at 2:00 p.m.

The men had eaten lunch, packed their belongings, and were relaxing as Baba's car turned into the driveway.

As soon as He joined them, He insisted that they immediately share jokes and humorous stories.

From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad*Baba handing out prasad*

As the three days of meetings came to a close, Baba mentioned the prasad He had previously given them. "Don't waste a single particle from this stuff," He warned.

Then Baba waved to everyone and gestured, "Don't worry. Be happy."

On this lighthearted note, the gathering, during which Baba made the momentous public declaration of His irrevocable Step of Manonash, came to a close.

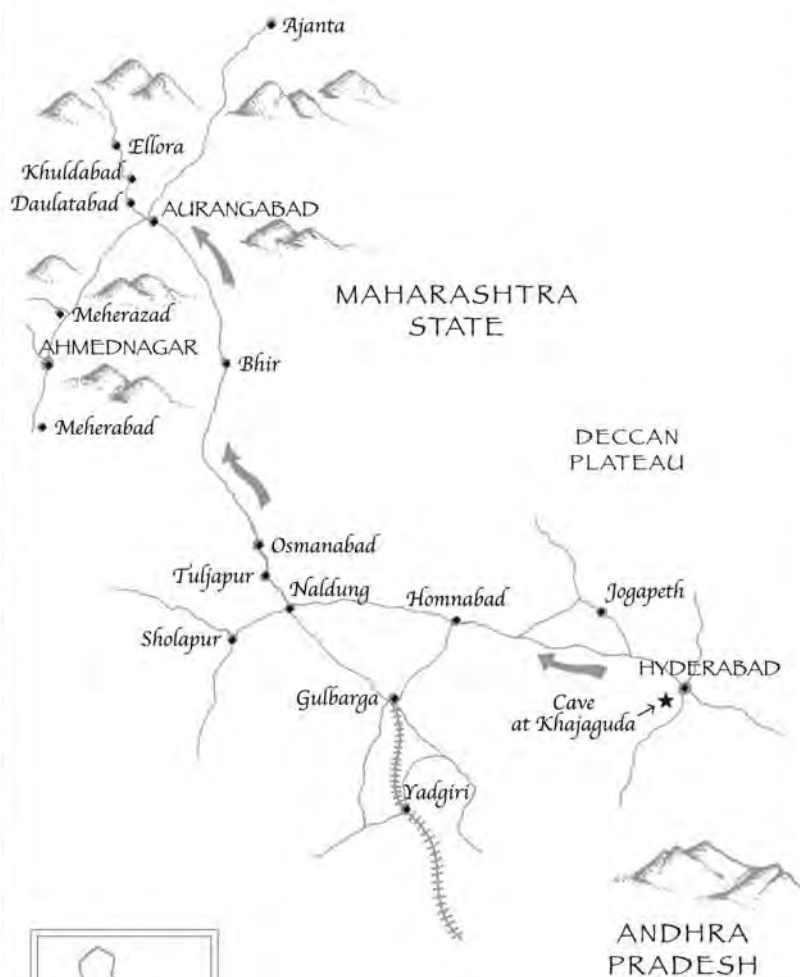
From Mahabaleshwar to Hyderabad



Baba with the group. Standing directly behind Baba is Dr. Ghani. Seated to Baba's far right is Bal Natu. Seated in front (l to r): Pankhraj, Was Deo Kain, Daulat Singh and Dhakephalkar. Minoo Kharas is behind Daulat Singh; Kaka is above Minoo.

MANONASH PERIOD

HYDERABAD TO MEHERAZAD



Chapter Twelve

MANONASH BEGINS

June 30, 1951 to November 7, 1951

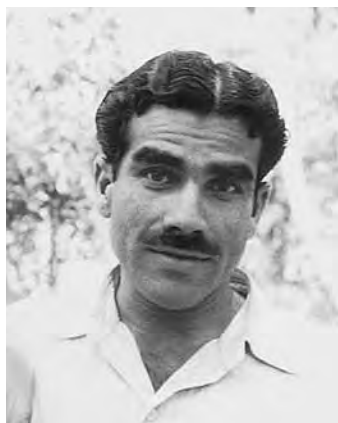
Baba Reveals the Blueprint of His Manonash Phase

After the special meetings at the end of June 1951, Baba and the servant companions remained in Hyderabad until the start of the Manonash phase in October. During this period, Murli, the youngest of the companions, who had been an inspiration to the others, asked Baba's permission to continue his studies to become a homeopathic doctor.

Over the years, Nirmala, the wife of Murli's elder brother, had been in contact with Baba, requesting Him to allow Murli to come to Jabalpur, because she was old and living alone. Considering her situation and Murli's desire to practice homeopathy, Baba, in His compassion, granted Murli's request and released him from the New Life. Murli had been with Baba since the Meher Ashram in 1927.

Also, Krishna Nair moved to Hyderabad to join Baba in the New Life after resigning from his job in Bangalore. He first joined Baba as one of the mandali in 1939 and had served as His night watchman for many years, but just before the New Life, Baba told him to go on a pilgrimage to various spiritual places throughout India. When he completed the pilgrimage, he went home to Bangalore and joined the police force. One day, in connection with his work, Krishna was told to deliver a parcel to Hyderabad, and he used the opportunity to attend Baba's Hyderabad meetings in 1951. While there, Baba asked him what he had been doing over the past two years, and Krishna quickly summarized the pilgrimage and his job. In response, Baba asked, "Are you willing to come and stay with me again?" and Krishna enthusiastically said, "Yes."

Around the same time that Krishna rejoined Him, Baba and the companions enjoyed some lighthearted times. On one occasion, Kaka discovered a cobra in the men's bungalow. After it

Manonash Begins*Krishna Nair*

was killed, Nilu jokingly began striking it with a stick as though it were still alive. In the process, the cord of his pants snapped and his trousers fell around his feet!

Everyone laughed and Baba teased him, "If your trousers fall down when you strike a dead cobra, what would happen if you were faced with having to kill a live one?"

Since Baba was hardly known in this part of India, He could go for walks in the city without being recognized. On a number of occasions, He took the women to the Tivoli and Dreamland theaters to see current movies, among them, *Father of the Bride*, *All About Eve* and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Because Mehera loved horses, Baba also took the women to the horse races and to a polo match, which they viewed from the car.

While in Hyderabad, Baba sent the women to the passport office to get photographed in preparation for their trip to the West.

On July 10th, 1951, to commemorate the 26th anniversary of Baba's silence, He ordered all the servant companions, including the women, to observe a twenty-four hour fast. At that same time, Baba's followers throughout the world were to keep silence beginning at 6 a.m. on July 10th until the same time the next morning.

*Mehera's
passport*

Manonash Begins

Rano and Kitty were again called from Bombay, this time to stay on permanently. At first, Baba said that Rano and Kitty would have to get jobs, so they contacted a gentleman from the Cabinet about obtaining work as teachers. Though the gentleman was unable to help them, he asked for Baba's darshan. Baba granted it, and after dictating a few words on the board, He dismissed him. Baba never mentioned jobs to Kitty and Rano again, but they were kept very busy with household chores.

During this stay, both Mani and Meheru had to have operations in a Hyderabad hospital. Mani had a hysterectomy, and Meheru had her appendix removed. While they were hospitalized, Dr. Goher attended them day and night, and Rano took over Meheru's duty of preparing breakfast and washing Baba's clothes. Naja and Kitty cooked the meals for the others, while Mehera attended to Baba's personal needs.

When Mani's condition became critical, Baba stayed in touch with her through Rano, who kept in close contact with the hospital by phone. Finally, through the loving care of the doctors in the hospital, Dr. Goher and the other women mandali, Mani and Meheru gradually recovered.

On August 9th, after a period of more than two months in Hyderabad, Meherjee, Adi Sr. and Adi Jr. were called to discuss some of the practical arrangements for the Manonash period. A tentative blueprint of the four-month period was drawn up:

1. In the first phase, Baba wishes to spend 30-40 days on a hill with a spiritual history, somewhere near Hyderabad. A village must be nearby, although He should be able to move freely on the hill without interference from anyone.
2. The second phase will be a foot journey from Hyderabad north to Aurangabad, a distance of 350 miles, which might take from 30-40 days.
3. The third phase will take place on a hill near Ahmednagar where He intends to finish His Manonash work. In the days leading up to February 16th, 1952, He wishes to stay on

Manonash Begins

Meherazad Hill due to its association with His Old Life. Sarosh, Adi and Padri will repair the existing structure on the top of Seclusion Hill and set up a tent. A second alternative place will be a hill somewhere near Poona or another place near Ahmednagar. The final 30-40 days of the 4-month period are to be completed on Seclusion Hill.

Baba made it clear that this blueprint was subject to change at any moment, because His sensitive physical condition might dictate the need to alter the plan.

"I cannot say now how I will live and how I will behave during this period," Baba explained. "I might be near-naked in a langoti or dressed in my usual attire; I might eat four times a day or fast for days on end. I will not be doing any of these deliberately, but as God directs me to do."

Baba had earlier chosen Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul to accompany Him during His manonash phase. The decision whether to take Minoo Kharas or Daulat Singh was still pending, but after some time Baba included Daulat Singh in the party.

On August 16th, another circular was issued to His followers, in which Baba clearly stated three instructions: He did not want His name associated with any political work; His Old Life followers should resist the temptation to pursue selfish ends; and He desired that "all His Old Life friends, brothers, sisters and servants kindle in their hearts the light of love for God."

A Lucky Coincidence

One of the frustrations experienced by the companions in the New Life was intermittent police interrogations. Going for weeks with unshaven beards, unkempt hair and dirty clothes gave them the appearance of thieves or ruffians.

Though Jal Kerawala, one of the arrangementwalas and a high commissioner, had supplied Baba and the companions with special identity cards for north India to protect them from police harassment, those cards were not recognized in Hyderabad, where there was political and communal unrest. Ironically, this was where Baba chose to do the next phase of Manonash, which would require a great deal of walking.

Manonash Begins

Therefore, Eruch decided that something had to be done in advance about the police. He asked Baba's permission to contact the commissioner of police in Hyderabad and tell him about His proposed activities. Eruch explained that he wanted all the police departments to know of Baba's movements from Hyderabad to Aurangabad to prevent future harassment.

Baba granted permission.

At the commissioner's office, Eruch said he had come on urgent business. He knew that anything less than urgent would not get him an audience with the commissioner.

Although he had to wait, Eruch was finally ushered in to see the commissioner, Mr. Reddy, who asked curtly, "Well, what do you want?"

"We are travelers in this state, sir," Eruch explained. "We want help from you. You see, I have my Elder Brother traveling with me who is going from place to place, helping the poor and needy. He has His own way of doing things, and the police here suspect us for nothing. We have been harassed a lot by them in the last few days. Nobody takes into account what we say, so I thought it best to approach you and inform you about our difficulty and then to seek your protection."

"What do you think I can do?"

"Would you issue an order to all the police stations, saying that so-and-so will pass through the state? And, sir, if you could give us a letter of introduction, we shall be grateful to you."

Without speaking further to Eruch, Mr. Reddy told one of his assistants, "Look here, I am going to my home. I am taking this man there, and I'll be back."

Eruch had no idea what was going on as he followed the man into his car and was then driven to the commissioner's home and invited to take a seat in the sitting room where the commissioner left him alone in a state of puzzlement. A few minutes later, a servant brought him refreshments and tea, and after Eruch had partaken, the commissioner finally returned.

He looked pleased as he held out an old glass picture frame for Eruch to examine. Eruch scanned the photograph of a high school cricket team in Poona with the year 1907 printed underneath it.

Manonash Begins

As Eruch studied the picture, he was still puzzled until the commissioner pointed to one of the youngsters on the team and asked, "Is M.S. Irani your Elder Brother?"

Eruch now realized that the team member the commissioner had pointed out was Baba when He was on His school's cricket team. With such obvious proof before him, he knew it was impossible to conceal Baba's identity, so he nodded.

"He was my schoolmate," the commissioner explained. "We attended St. Vincent's High School together." He pointed to a likeness of himself in the photo.

He proceeded to tell Eruch that since he was the commissioner of police, he already knew of Baba's presence in Hyderabad and had surmised that He was the Elder Brother about whom Eruch had referred.

"Tell Him that I always remember Him from our school days," the commissioner added, looking very happy. "Come back to my office and don't worry. Tell Baba that no police officer in this state will harass Him or hinder His work."



The picture the commissioner showed Eruch

Later, true to his word, the commissioner sent a circular to all the police stations along the Hyderabad-Aurangabad highway, granting Baba and His party free passage.

Manonash Begins

Later, when Eruch related his encounter with the commissioner, Baba was very pleased at the outcome of the meeting and to hear about His old school chum.

Not long after this heart-warming story, Baba received news that His dear schoolmate and long-time disciple, Dr. Ghani, had died of a heart attack in Poona at the age of 60.

About Ghani's death, Baba said, "Although Ghani has physically passed away, he will not let me live in peace until he sees me as I am!"

Baba issued a special circular:

Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff passed away at about 7 o'clock in the evening of August 20, 1951, in Poona.

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

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

To me, more than to any of you, Ghani was unique, and of all the work that still remains to be done for me by others, there is much that could have been done for me by Ghani and no one else. That big head of his was truly a treasure house in which wisdom and wit were blended to perfection. We were intimate friends since our earliest years, and no one knows better than I how courageous and how loyal and loving was his heart. To me, therefore, Ghani is irreplaceable, both as a friend and as a tool for my work.

Many of Baba's disciples and followers attended the funeral in Poona, and Baba instructed Sarosh, Ramjoo and Adi Sr. to help Dr. Ghani's wife in settling the family affairs.

Manonash Begins*The hill at Khojaguda where Baba began His Manonash***Search for a Cave**

In the weeks before October, Baba asked Baidul, Eruch and Pendu to find a cave in the locality of Hyderabad where He could carry out the first stage of His Manonash work, which would begin on October 16th.

Since caves were plentiful in that part of India, the three servant companions thought that the area's locals would be more apt to know of a suitable cave, so they decided to ask a man in the city market who manufactured bamboo mats, if he knew of a nearby cave where a small party could stay for a few days.

Their hunch paid off. Not only did the merchant have a place in mind, but he offered to accompany them there. Baba was quickly informed, and Eruch and Pendu went with the gentleman to inspect the cave the very next day.

Manonash Begins

He took them to a barren hill near a small village in an area known as Khojaguda, some ten miles southwest of Hyderabad. Khojaguda was known for its summer palace, located in a beautiful palm grove, which was once used by Moghuls centuries before, and where their harems, who were served by groups of eunuchs, also stayed.

At the summit of the hill formed by huge boulders was the *durgah* (shrine) of Hazrat Baba Fakruddin, a Muslim saint from the 14th century, who was still revered by thousands of Mohammedans who live in the area. The *durgah* was unusual, because it had no roof and was therefore exposed to the elements. Though attempts were made at various times to construct a shelter over the shrine, it was always blown off by winds.



The entrance to the second cave

Adjoining the *durgah* was a large cave, 15 by 20 feet in size. Eruch and Pendu later partitioned this cave into a resting place and a bath for Baba. Just below, about halfway down the hill, was another natural cave in excellent condition. In preparation for Baba, a door was put at its entrance. This second cave, which faced away from the village, was reserved for His seclusion work. Below the

Manonash Begins

two caves was an ancient temple containing a statue of Vishnu reclining on a coiled cobra.

The hill of huge boulders, bare of all vegetation, without even a blade of grass, was in a secluded spot, with the village some distance below. At the foot of the hill were paddy fields and palm trees. In the surrounding area were numerous hills also scattered with massive boulders, as if some huge giant had flung them about.

Eruch and Pendu were concerned about its apparent lack of a water source; the only water available was a stagnant pool left over from monsoon rains. When they related this problem to Baba, who was in Hyderabad, He said that the stagnant water could be boiled and filtered for use.



The interior of the second cave

While Eruch and Pendu made arrangements for the seclusion, Baba continued contacting and working with masts. When Baba was eventually brought to the hill, He approved of the site and gave instructions for two separate rooms to be improvised in the *durgah*.

As He viewed the Hindu temple lower down the hill, Baba said, "On the top of the hill is the *durgah* of a Muslim saint, underneath is a Hindu temple, and in between is the cave in

Manonash Begins

which my great work will either be unfulfilled or fulfilled completely.” He said that He planned to stay on the hill in seclusion for approximately two weeks, and He put Pendu in charge of completing the preparations.



Pool of water near the shrine of Hazrat Baba Fakruddin, used by the companions for drinking and bathing

The Incident of the Runaway Car

On October 2nd, 1951, Baba sent a cable from Hyderabad to Elizabeth and Norina concerning His future visit to the West: “Absolutely happy Elinora successful having Baba definitely come to America about end of March, God willing. Deepest Love.” He followed the cable with a letter in which He concluded, “So now, you beloved lovers of Baba, be happy that at last you have made it possible for me to come to the West!”

Well in advance of the proposed seclusion, Baba had asked Eruch to contact Was Deo Kain in Delhi to have five small models constructed representing the major religions of the world: a Hindu temple, a Muslim mosque, a Christian church, a Buddhist stupa and a Zoroastrian fire urn. The models, approximately seven inches high, were completed in Agra. Carved out of alabaster, they were built according to Baba’s detailed specifications. Letters passed back and forth between Eruch and Was Deo

Manonash Begins

Kain, and a sketch was sent of a Zoroastrian fire urn. After months of delay, the models finally arrived just in time for Baba's Manonash work.

On October 13th, 1951, Baba instructed Eruch, Baidul, Gustadji and Pendu to drive in advance to the hill where His seclusion was to take place, and to bring the necessary luggage and a trunk containing the religious models.

On arriving there, Eruch parked the car partway up the hill at a safe place and turned off the engine, while the other companions started up the slope to inspect the site before hauling up the luggage. Eruch then closed the windows, put on the emergency brake, got out of the car and made sure to lock the doors, because a number of children had begun to gather around the car.

He started after the companions, who were by now halfway up the hill, and had only gotten about ten yards when he heard sounds coming from the car. He looked back, and to his horror, he saw the car rolling down the hill. He raced after the car, but it had gathered speed, and since the doors were locked and the windows shut, all he hoped to do was to cling to the side of the car in an attempt to slow it down. That was impossible since the car was moving around fifteen miles an hour and gathering speed as it went. Somehow, Eruch managed to race alongside as the car jumped over tall, toddy palms and huge rocks as though it were a horse leaping over hurdles.

Eruch was certain that a supernatural force was at work to cause the car to bound into the air. Moreover, several times when the car was just about to roll off the side of the road and down a steep slope, it miraculously reversed itself, all this with its emergency brake on.

For the first time in his life, he was terrified. Baba had told him to be extremely careful with the religious models, but now Eruch was certain that they were broken into pieces.

As Eruch was running after the car, the other companions witnessed the incredible leaping car and quickly began running down the hill, too.

Finally, after the car rolled and bounded for half a mile, it came to rest in the mud of a paddy field, where the companions

Manonash Begins

raced to it while Eruch, feeling sick and bewildered, unlocked the door. He slowly got in and tried to start the ignition, but it immediately made a dreadful noise.

"It's all broken," he lamented, knowing that this was not the worst of it. They were supposed to pick up Baba in the car the next morning, which was obviously impossible now.

After a while, the auto truck they had ordered to bring firewood for their stay arrived. When the driver stepped out of the truck, he asked, "What's the matter with the car? How is it you have parked in a paddy field?"

"Don't ask me that," Eruch replied. "You should have been here a few minutes earlier and seen for yourself."

With help from the truck driver, the companions managed to pull the car out of the paddy.

They opened the hood, and to their surprise, they discovered that some straw from the paddy had gotten lodged under the motor. When they removed it, the car started up with no problem, and they drove it up to the base of the hill.

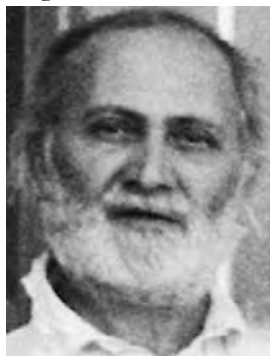
The dreaded moments were now imminent. They opened the trunk and removed the container with the models and carried it up the hill. At the summit, hesitantly, they opened it, fearing the worst, but to everyone's amazement, the models were all intact, as though nothing had ever happened.

It was late evening by the time Eruch returned to Baba, while Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul spent the night on the hill.

When Baba asked Eruch why he was so late, Eruch related the whole story.

Baba laughed heartily and then said, "A good sign for my Manonash work."

Several days later, Gustadji, who was on silence, entertained Baba further by narrating and miming the episode from different points of view, sometimes enacting the role of the curious children, sometimes the part of the car bounding down the slope, and sometimes Eruch's frantic attempts to stop the car. Baba thoroughly enjoyed the dramatic rendition.



Gustadji

*Manonash Begins***The First Phase of Manonash**

Just before beginning the seclusion, Baba took the women on an excursion to Khojaguda, where they were very impressed by “the lovely atmosphere.”

About Manonash, Baba explained that the four months would be divided into four phases: the first, lasting 30 to 40 days, was to be spent on the hill at Khojaguda; the second, from 30 to 40 days, on a foot journey from Hyderabad to Aurangabad; the third phase at Khuldabad, contacting masts; and the fourth and final phase would be spent at Meherazad.



*The ancient Hindu temple at the base of the hill
housing a statue of Vishnu*

Early on October 15th, Baba and the men companions were unsettled by the news that the Prime Minister of Pakistan had been assassinated.

At 2:30 p.m. that same day, Baba bade farewell to the women, left Hyderabad and set out to the hill at Khojaguda in a car driven by Dr. Donkin that was colorfully decorated with flowers. They were accompanied by Vishnu, Nilu and a Mohammedan priest. The other companions, including Daulat

Manonash Begins

Singh, were already on the hill, but Minoo Kharas' health had not permitted him to come.

At 3:00 p.m, it was raining lightly as Baba's party arrived and climbed to the summit, where Baba inspected the arrangements and was very pleased.

With the companions assembled and in the presence of Baba, the priest offered a prayer. When that simple ceremony was over, those who had driven with Baba returned to Hyderabad with special instructions to offer prayers at various places of worship that evening. Vishnu and Dr. Nilu were to pray at a Hindu temple, Donkin at a Catholic church, Kaikobad at a fire temple, and the Mohammedan priest at a mosque.

In the evening, the rain of the afternoon turned into a heavy downpour on the hill.

The next day, October 16th, was the second anniversary of the start of the New Life. Honoring the occasion, Baba met in the *durgah* with Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji, Baidul and Daulat Singh and instructed them to fast until 8:00 a.m. the next day. Then prayers, dictated earlier by Baba, were offered to Infinite God in remembrance of six of His previous Avataric advents. The companions stood while Baba gestured for Eruch to read the following prayer aloud five times:

O Aburamazda! In the name of your Infinite Greatness and in the name of your beloved Self, Zoroaster, and in the name of all Prophets and your lovers:

O Allah! In the name of Your Infinite Greatness and in the name of your beloved Self Mohammed Mastafa, and in the name of all Perfect Ones and your lovers:

O Parabrahma! In the name of Your Infinite Greatness and in the name of your beloved Self Avatar Ram, Avatar Krishna, Avatar Buddha and in the name of all Avatars and your lovers:

O God Almighty! In the name of Your Infinite Greatness and in the name of your beloved Son Jesus, and in the name of all Saints and your lovers:

Manonash Begins

Meher Baba beseeches you to help Him carry out successfully His four months' work beginning from today, the 16th of October, 1951, and asks you in all humility to have His desire fulfilled and the ultimate object achieved by 16th February, 1952.

On the same day these prayers were offered, Baba had instructed five close ones from the Old Life to be present in centers of worship in India associated with the five major religions: Meherjee was sent to the fire temple in Udwarda in Gujarat, sacred to Zoroastrians; Was Deo Kain was sent to the Krishna temple in Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, sacred to Hindus; Gaya Prasad Khare was sent to a Buddhist temple at Sarnath in Bihar; Vishwanath Haldankar was sent to the St. Francis Xavier cathedral in Goa; and Keki Desai was sent to Mu'innuddin Chishti's tomb in Ajmer, Rajasthan, sacred to Muslims.

In addition to attending the temples on the 16th, Baba also told the five men to go one day in advance and find one poor person representing the religion of the particular temple, who would agree to fast on October 16th, and after bathing, visit his customary place of worship and offer a prayer that Baba had written for him. After the poor person agreed, the men were to tell him that he would receive a gift of 101 rupees on behalf of Baba. This sum would then be given to each poor individual by the hand of Baba's Old Life follower.

Also, on the 16th, all the men who attended the special meeting in Hyderabad at the end of June were told to participate in the commencement of Baba's Manonash phase by observing a fast of only tea and water for twenty-four hours.

That rainy evening, Baba went into seclusion in the *durgah*, while the companions stood watch outside in shifts. Baba kept only the five alabaster models of places of worship with Him during the seven hours that He was alone in the shrine. In this way, Baba inaugurated the phase of Manonash.

He continued His seclusion on the top of the hill until the morning of the 17th. On October 18th, after a period of rest, He climbed down to the large cave on the side of the hill where He had instructed that the models be set on a ledge. He stayed in

Manonash Begins

seclusion there for seven hours. On the morning of the 19th, He sat in seclusion for three more hours in the Hindu temple at the base of the hill.

In the afternoon of the 22nd, He worked with a mast named Gulaam Hussain, who had been brought up the hill by Baidul.

Baba ended His seclusion on the hill at Khojaguda on October 24th, when He announced that His work there was completed after only nine days, instead of the two weeks He had originally planned.



*The interior of
Hazrat Baba
Fakruddin's shrine,
where Baba sat in
seclusion*

Baba then said that He intended to walk to Aurangabad, and He expected that this part of the journey, through barren countryside, would take nearly a month.

Manonash Begins

Foot Journey to Aurangabad

October 24 to November 15, 1951

Early on October 24th, from the hill at Khojaguda, Baba had the following message sent to the women and the other companions with them: "I am well. My work in the cave succeeded 100 percent and today I will start for Meherazad on foot via Aurangabad."

He also said that He wanted them to be at Meherazad during His stay on Seclusion Hill, but they should not assume that He intended to settle down again in Meherazad.

At this time, He also sent a message to Padri, telling him to make alterations to the cabin on Tembi Hill near Meherazad. This was the first inkling Padri had that Baba intended to return to Meherazad. In the cable, Baba also instructed him to erect two tents on the lower slope of the hill for the servant companions who would be accompanying Him.

On the afternoon of October 24th, Baba, the four servant companions and Daulat Singh departed from the hill at Khojaguda and began the 350-mile foot journey.

From Hyderabad, they headed in a northwesterly direction across the barren, scrubby expanse of the high Deccan Plateau along rough, unpaved roads full of dust and numerous potholes.



Pendu

A bullock cart was hired by Pendu to transport the luggage and a heavy bag of money, which he kept handy by hanging it over the side of the cart. At a sign from Baba, Pendu handed out coins from the bag to poor people along the way.

When the road suddenly faced a stream of knee-deep water, Pendu, unlike the others who had gone ahead, did not want to get wet, so he chose an alternate route, trusting that the bullocks could ford the stream on their own and that he would easily catch up with the cart when it reached the opposite bank.

The short-cut went well, but when he arrived at the place where the cart carrying all the money should have been, it was

Manonash Begins

nowhere to be found. Desperate, he made his way through the surrounding tall grass where he came upon a large snake, which had him doubling his speed to get out of the viper's way until it finally left him alone.

He ran for more than a mile without locating the cart, until he eventually caught up with Baba and the other companions.

Baba immediately asked where the bullock cart was. Pendu replied that he was frantically searching for it and then rushed off in another direction.

When he finally found the cart, he was overwrought with fear and all the running, but to his great relief, the money bag was intact and he could finally relax. He realized once again that short-cuts and Baba did not go well together.



The bus station in Jogipeth

Baba and the companions traveled seven miles that first day and arrived in Lingampalli at night, where they stayed in a dak bungalow. At 6:00 a.m. the next day, the party walked five miles to Patanchery and ate breakfast at the dak bungalow there.

Here, Baba disposed of the bullock cart, so now the companions had to carry the luggage.

After hearing about a mast in Jogipeth, they took a bus to that area and searched extensively for him without success, although several other masts were contacted during the search.

Manonash Begins

From Jogipeth, they walked to Sangareddy and spent the night. Early the next morning, they went by motor bus to Sadashivpeth, where Baba made the contact of a good mast.



The countryside near Homnabad

At 8:30 a.m. on October 27th, the companions took a bus to Homnabad, where Baba contacted a sadhu in the dak bungalow there. The reason Baba occasionally allowed the use of transport was because Gustadji was very weak and tired, although he had not complained. Out of special concern for him, Baba sometimes stopped a truck to hitch a ride, and then He and the companions climbed aboard and spread themselves out on top of whatever load happened to be in the bed of the truck.

Sometimes, after they had walked for a while, Baba had a bullock cart hired to carry the luggage for a short distance.

About twelve miles outside Homnabad, in the Goliwada locality, Baba worked with a mast of a very high order.

After contacting two other masts in the area, the party returned to Homnabad, where, beginning at noon, Baba sat for some time at the tomb of a saint known as Manik Prabhu, whose son, Manohar, after completing his work in the world, had his followers bury him alive near his father's tomb.

At 6:00 a.m. on October 29th, the group went to the dusty city of Gulbarga, where Baba contacted a lovable mast He had seen in the past.

Manonash Begins

The next day, Baba secluded Himself for half an hour in the durgah of Khwaja Bande Nawaz. Afterward, He contacted both a saint and a mast. He was greatly helped in these contacts by

Baidul, whose phenomenal memory kept detailed information about all of Baba's previous visits to the area.



Exterior view of Manik Prabhu's tomb in Homnabad



Interior of the tomb, where Baba sat in seclusion

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The durgawaja Bande Nawas in Gulbarga, where Baba sat in seclusion

*Manonash Begins***Feeding the Poor****October 30, 1951**

Outside the city of Warangal, there was a village where Baba wanted to give a love-gift to 101 people who had once been middle-class, but who had suffered unexpected misfortune. Eruch was sent to that village in advance in order to arrange a way to distribute the money.

From inquiries, Eruch learned that the headman of the village owned a small store, so he set out to see him, but on the way, he passed another small shop, whose owner called out, "What do you want here?"

Eruch stopped to explain how he wanted to enlist the help of the village headman to aid in distributing money to people who had recently suffered loss.

"I will arrange everything in this respect, and it is not necessary for you to see the headman," this shop owner said. He immediately began to prepare a list of poor farm people known as Jagirdars. These people, he explained, had once been holders of rent-free land granted by the government as a reward for past services, but the government had recently taken the lands back. In compensation, the Jagirdars were given a meager pension, barely enough for anyone to live on.

The shop owner offered Eruch the services of one of his men to help in contacting the Jagadirs and to assist in distributing tickets for the program.

As the families were contacted, they were told to be present at the shop at an appointed time and that only ticket holders would receive Baba's love-gift.

Unbeknownst to Eruch, the headman came to know of the poor program and informed the police. As a consequence, two constables showed up where Eruch was handing out tickets. Because Eruch's clothes were soiled from traveling and he had not shaved in several days, the constables thought he looked suspicious, and one of them asked in an insolent tone, "Come over here! What are you doing there?"

"Be civil. I am not a thief. You are a public servant, and why this arrogance?"

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“Come to the police station. Our superior wants to speak to you.”

“I have no time,” Eruch said. “Send your superior here. If he is unable to come, I will go to him after my work is over.”

The constables left, but Eruch was sure he had not seen the last of them.

He was right. When he returned to the shop with the 101 patriarchs from the Jagadir community, the headman, a police inspector and the constables were there.

Pointing to Eruch, the headman said, “He is that ruffian!”

Eruch turned to the shopkeeper who had helped him and asked, “What’s going on here? Is there some enmity between you and the headman?”

“It is true,” the shopkeeper said, looking ashamed, “but it is not my fault. Though I do not do anything to provoke him, the headman is jealous of me.”

Eruch, realizing something had to be done if the program were to succeed, said, “Suppose this program is carried out at the headman’s house. How will you be affected? My Elder Brother will first visit your shop, and then He will distribute the love-gifts at the headman’s house.”

“I wouldn’t mind at all. I only wish that your work should be done,” the shopkeeper answered.

Eruch thanked him for his cooperation and help, and just then the police officer asked, “What is all this?”

Eruch did not answer. Instead, he turned to the headman and asked for permission to use his house for the poor program. The headman acquiesced and designated a room for Baba to carry out His work.

Later, when Baba came from Gulbarga with the other servant companions, Eruch, as he had promised, took Him first to visit the shopkeeper and then to the headman’s house, where all the poor families were gathered.

Baba promptly bowed at the feet of each family head and then handed each one 50 rupees. Witnessing this scene, the headman confessed that he felt guilty over his initial opposition and the trouble he had caused.

After the program was over, Eruch asked the police inspector, “Have you anything further to ask?”

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“No, and I apologize. All these complications arose because of the rivalry between the two shopkeepers,” he confessed.

“Have you had any special circulars from your commissioner regarding the movements of Meher Baba in the area?” Eruch asked him.

“As a matter of fact, yes, we have received one.”

“It was Meher Baba who distributed the love-gifts, but please do not tell anyone,” Eruch disclosed.

The inspector replied humbly that he felt very fortunate to have seen Baba, even though it had been from a distance.

Later, when Baba and the companions returned to Gulbarga, the district superintendent of police there heard of Baba’s presence in the city and requested to see Him. In a rare concession during the New Life, Baba allowed the superintendent and also his family to see Him.



Portrait of Tilgur Swami that is hanging in his tomb. No actual photograph of the time he met Baba is available.

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On October 31st, Baba and the companions left Gulbarga by train for Yadgiri. From there, they walked several miles to Tumkar, where a very rare mast Baba had visited twice before, Tilgur Swami, was contacted. This great being was a *Jivanmukta*, a God-realized soul. He was tall in stature, with a regal face that emanated immense peace, and he was revered throughout the area.



The government resthouse in Yadgiri where the companions stayed briefly

When Baba and Tilgur Swami met, the two gazed deeply into each other's eyes. Spontaneously, the swami began to bow down to Him, but Baba stopped him. The significance of this profound meeting only Baba knew, but it was evident to the companions that He was extremely pleased with the contact.

It was evening by the time Baba and the companions had walked back to Yadgiri, but they did not rest. Instead, they took a train to Gulbarga, arriving there after midnight.

As they approached the city, they were greeted by the welcoming sight of thousands of small earthen lamps that had been lit and set out on every doorstep and in every courtyard along the way.

It was the second day of *Divali*, the festival of lights.

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Countryside near Yadgiri though which the companions traveled



Near the town of Yadgiri

*Manonash Begins***En Route to Aurangabad
November 1 to 7, 1951**

After working with the poor in the area of Gulbarga, Baba and the men left by bus on November 1st, where it became evident that one of the passengers, an impoverished girl, was very ill. Baba quickly provided her with enough money to pay for medical treatment when she arrived at her destination.

After a brief stop in Homnabad, the companions continued by bus to Tuljapur, renowned for its temple dedicated to the goddess, Bhavani Devi, who gave the Maratha warrior, Shivaji, the charmed sword he used against the fierce Moghul rulers.

They stayed in a dak bungalow in Tuljapur, where a saint and several masts were contacted.

From Tuljapur, Baba and the companions walked fourteen miles to Osmanabad. They arrived at 11:00 p.m. on November 4th and rested in a travelers' bungalow. Having walked for six straight hours, they were extremely tired; fortunately, Baba had a bullock cart hired to carry their luggage, so they did not have to bear that burden as well.



The dak bungalow in Tuljapur where Baba stayed

Manonash Begins*Temple dedicated to Bhavani Devi in Tuljapur*

At 5:00 a.m the next day, they set out on foot for the town of Bhir (Bid), where they again stayed at a travelers' bungalow. It was here that Baba succeeded in contacting three good masts and a sadhu. He found these meetings very satisfactory.

Bhir was their last stop before arriving in the state of Maharashtra, where Baba intended to complete the last phase of His Manonash work.

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The travelers' bungalow in Osmanabad where the companions rested overnight



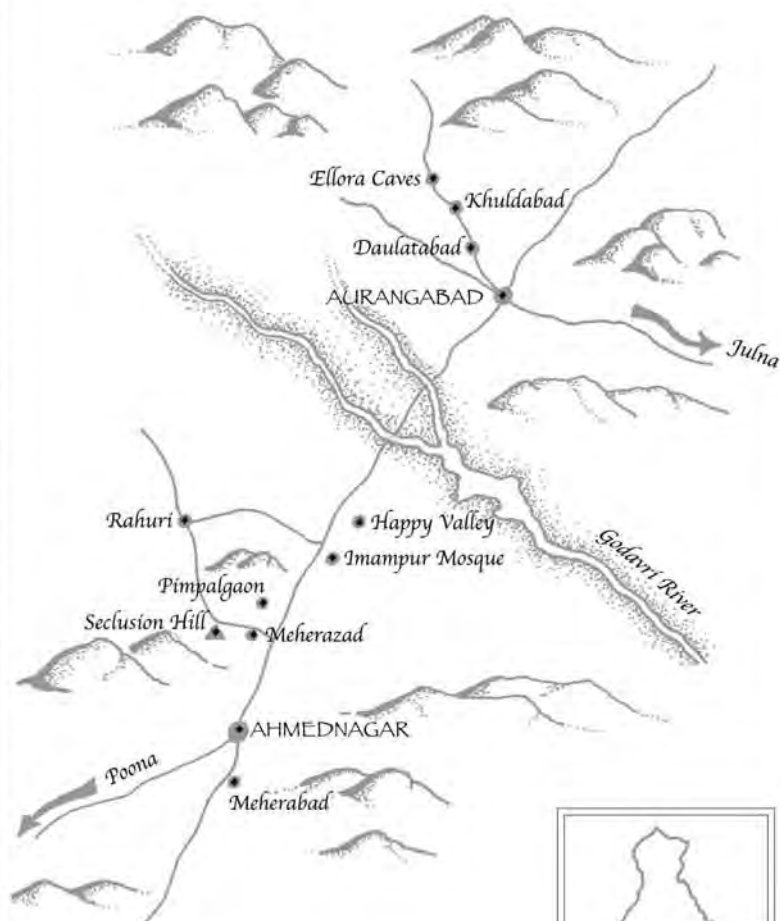
The travelers' bungalow in Bhir where Baba contacted several masts

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Seclusion Hill, the final destination of Manonash

THE END OF THE NEW LIFE



Chapter Thirteen

THE FINAL DAYS OF MANONASH

November 8, 1951, to February 12, 1952

Stay at Khuldabad and Aurangabad

November 8 to 21, 1951

The party stayed briefly in Bhir, and early on November 8th, they were in Maharashtra State, just fifteen miles from Aurangabad. They stopped at the small, walled village of Khuldabad, a holy place for Deccan Muslims, situated in a low valley surrounded by steep rock escarpments. Baba and the companions welcomed the change of terrain. The flat and mostly barren countryside they had passed through since leaving Hyderabad had grown monotonous.

The companions climbed to the top of one of the long stone ridges and admired the magnificent view. As they traversed the ridge, they found the luxurious guesthouse where Baba had once stayed with His Eastern and Western disciples. From there, they could also see higher up the Awalia Mosque.

Adjoining the mosque were a few simple rooms right below it. Baba chose to use these rooms as their headquarters until November 15th, because He liked the quiet atmosphere.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, Khuldabad and the area around it was a thriving center of Sufi culture. It later became known as the Valley of the Saints, which contains more than 1400 tombs and mausoleums of saintly personages, who had once come from distant places, including Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Persia. A sacred robe of the Prophet Mohammed is preserved in one of its shrines.

Among the most renowned masters buried there is Zarzarizar Bakhsh, a Sufi Perfect Master from the 13th century, in whose domed tomb Baba had stayed in seclusion in the past. This time in the valley, after Baba and the companions visited various tombs of spiritual masters, He chose to seclude Himself in a small cave located in the brow of a rocky hill overlooking Khuldabad.

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The Awalia Mosque on the ridge overlooking Khuldabad



The rooms below the Awalia Mosque where Baba and the men stayed

This cave, which is little known, is located at the highest point along the stone ridge above the famous Ellora Caves and the Valley of the Saints. Its entrance was once entirely enclosed by stone and mortar, except for a small opening.

Baba told the companions that Sai Baba, one of His own Masters, had entered this same cave at age sixteen and had remained in this tiny enclosure (its interior is 15 feet deep, 8 feet

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wide and 4 feet high) for two and a half years in a God-absorbed state. When he emerged, weak and emaciated, he had become God-realized and went on to become the head of the spiritual hierarchy, before giving the charge over to Meher Baba.



The Valley of the Saints as seen from Sai Baba's cave

Baba also said that Sai Baba, in a previous incarnation, had been a disciple of Zarzarizar Bakhsh. Due to his perfect discipleship, Zarzarizar Bakhsh had blessed him and the result of this blessing was that he became perfect in this lifetime. The cave's association with Sai Baba has made it the crowning jewel of the Ellora Caves just below it.

While the companions stood watch, Baba climbed through the small opening of the cave, where He stayed in seclusion for some time.

When He completed His work, He came out and returned to the mosque, where He bathed a mast from that area and gave him a new set of clothes. Afterward, Baba and the men went to nearby Daulatabad to a famous Moghul fortress, crowning a tall hill. Overlooking the old walled city and its historic minarets and palaces, the fortress was now virtually sunk in ruin. Still, Baba chose several of its shrines in which to sit in seclusion.

When Baba was finished working in the old Moghul fortress, the group returned to Khuldabad in the evening.

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On November 12th, they left Khuldabad early and took a winding footpath down the steep lava slopes dotted with neem trees, cactus plants and thorn bushes. Within half an hour, they reached the Ellora caves, located below a huge volcanic escarpment that extended for well over a mile.

The immense caves and elaborate temples were carved into the massive rock by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains from the 5th to the 14th centuries, following the artistic style of their particular religion and historical period.



View of Sai Baba's cave from the ridge above the Valley of the Saints

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*The entrance to
Sai Baba's cave
where Baba
sat in seclusion*



Baba chose Cave 32, known as Indra Sabha, with its enormous two-storied interior and ornate upper level. Its ground floor, however, is bare, except for stone pillars and a large statue of the Master Mahavir, the founder of Jainism. His life was spent in utter renunciation, reminiscent of the New Life.

Baba sat alone in seclusion near the statue depicting Mahavir sitting naked on a lion throne.

Later, the party set out for Khuldabad and stopped at Virod village to contact two masts, Pralhad and Keshav Maharaj, at a bus stand. Keshav Maharaj, who lived in the village of Kashyap some distance away, rarely came to this area, but Baba's presence there drew him inwardly.

The group arrived in Khuldabad at 11:00 p.m., and the next day, November 14th, Baba requested that the Muslim caretaker of Zarzarizar Bakhsh's tomb collect 74 local Muslims and have them wait for Him there.

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After this task was finished, Baba requested that the caretaker come to the Awalia Mosque to see Him. When the caretaker arrived, Baba washed his feet, bowed down to him and gave him a love-gift of 21 rupees.



Jain Cave 32 at Ellora where Baba sat in seclusion



The statue of Mahavir in Jain Cave 32

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The interior of Zarzarizar Bakhsh's tomb. Just outside, Baba bathed the feet of 74 local Muslims.

Baba then went with the caretaker to Zarzarizar Bakhsh's tomb, where He washed and dried the feet of the 74 Muslims awaiting Him and gave each a gift of ten rupees.

The caretaker then offered *fatihah*, which Mohammed called "the greatest *sura* in the Qur'an."

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The following are the opening lines of the *fatihah*:

*Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds!
The Compassionate, the Merciful!
King of the Day of Judgment!
Thee do we worship,
and to Thee do we cry for help!
Guide Thou us on the right path!
The path of those with whom Thou art gracious!
Not of those with whom Thou art angered,
nor of those who go astray.*

This recitation was followed by a short prayer recited aloud in unison by the servant companions: "May His spiritual work, whatever it be, be fulfilled. Amen!"

Later, Baba, accompanied by a local Hindu man, begged at the homes of five Hindu families in the village, accepting whatever was offered. Assisted by one poor family, He then inaugurated a program for the poor among the villagers by bowing to the heads of twenty-four Hindu families and giving each ten rupees. On this day, Baba distributed 1000 rupees to needy families in the village.

During Baba's stay in Khuldabad, He dictated the "Prayer of Repentance," invoking the Perfect Masters of the past, present and future. He later recited the prayer silently before God. From then on, the companions recited it every day in His presence:

*We repent, O God most merciful, for all our sins;
for every thought that was false or unjust or unclean;
for every word spoken that ought not to have been spoken;
and for every deed done that ought not to have been done;
We repent for every deed and word and thought inspired by
selfishness,
and for every deed and word and thought inspired by hatred.
We repent most specially for every lustful thought
and every lustful action;
for every lie, for all hypocrisy;
for every promise given but not fulfilled,
and for all slander and backbiting.
Most especially also, we repent for every action*

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*that has brought ruin to others,
 for every word and deed that has given others pain,
 and for every wish that pain should befall others.
 In Your unbounded mercy, we ask you to forgive us, O God,
 for all these sin committed by us,
 and to forgive us for our constant failures
 to think and speak and act according to Your will.*

(Later, when the prayer were printed, Baba approved the last word, “will,” which is used in this instance to mean God’s wish.)



The Delhi Gate in Aurangabad

Search for a Venerable Old Priest

On November 15th, Baba and the companions rented station wagon and left Khuldabad for Aurangabad, fifteen miles southwest, which had once been a center of Muslim culture and the former capital of the Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb.

Arriving at the outskirts of the populated, yet quiet city, Baba made a very unusual request. He wanted to find a venerable and elderly Catholic Father to bless Him, and He asked Eruch to accompany Him on the search. “You will know who he is when you meet him,” Baba told him.

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They hired a horse-drawn tonga, and Baba and Eruch set off into the dilapidated remnants of the historic city, passing minarets, domes and fortifications of Moghul architecture. They found some neighborhoods with Christian churches, and in those particular localities, Eruch met a number of priests, but he did not feel that any of them was the right one.

The visits to so many places stirred the curiosity of the tonga driver who eventually asked, "Saheb, who are you looking for?"

Eruch explained.

"Had you told me earlier," the driver said, "you would have easily saved much of your time and trouble. I know the place where old clergymen, priests and ministers live in retirement." He then took off in that direction without further discussion.

It took a short time to arrive at the gate of a retirement home. While Baba remained in the tonga, Eruch approached the home, where he saw a priest dressed in a white robe, standing on the veranda. Seeing Eruch, the old priest came toward him and inquired, "My son, what do you want?"

His warmth and loving demeanor told Eruch that this was the priest Baba was seeking. He spoke without hesitation, "Will you please give blessings to my Elder Brother? He is waiting outside. Should I call Him?"

"Of course," the priest answered.

As Eruch turned to get Baba, he saw that He had already stepped out of the tonga and was walking towards the priest.

"Here is my Brother," Eruch said.

When Baba reached the priest, He knelt down, reverently touched the priest's feet and then kissed his hand.

The old priest spoke solemnly, "I bless you in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost."

Baba then turned to leave and Eruch thanked the priest.

"Son, don't you want me also to bless you?"

"No, thank you," Eruch said as he quickly followed Baba back to their tonga.

Eruch said later that Baba never explained why He had wanted to contact that particular priest.

*The Final Days of Manonash***A Humorous Grave Situation**

Later in the day, Baba and the men went to a Tower of Silence in Aurangabad, where He put the *kusti*, the sacred thread of the Parsis, around His waist and asked the companions to offer the customary Zoroastrian prayers in His presence. While there, Baba sat for sometime in a *sagbdi*, a special prayer room where the dead, according to Parsi custom, are brought just before disposal.

They left at noon. Their next stop was a Roman Catholic cemetery located in a quiet, remote area along the road to the Ellora caves.

After entering the front gate of the low, white stone wall enclosure, they walked until they reached the section that contained, aside from Catholic gravestones, the shrine of a Muslim saint. Baba chose a private place under a neem tree next to the low wall surrounding the shrine to do His work.



The Roman Catholic cemetery with the Muslim saint's shrine

The men cleared the area and spread out a carpet for Baba. That done, Baba posted them at the four corners of the cemetery to make sure that no one disturbed Him.

Eruch was stationed at the front gate, where, in this remote place, it seemed that interruptions would be unlikely. However,

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a few minutes later, Eruch saw a long funeral procession in the distance making its way toward the cemetery in the direction of his gate. As it came closer, Eruch saw the coffin in front of the procession carried by pallbearers, followed by a multitude of relatives and friends of the deceased.

*The neem tree
next to the
Muslim shrine
where Baba
sat in
seclusion*



In a panic, when the procession was almost near enough to disturb Baba, Eruch quickly ran to head it off. Thinking fast, he expressed the customary sympathies to the party, asking how the person had died and who the family members were, anything to stall the procession. After the customary inquiries, he rattled on, repeating condolences, knowing that the mourners must be thinking that only a madman would stop a funeral of someone he did not know.

Still, sentence after sentence flowed out of him, which kept the procession at a complete standstill. Finally, when he was just

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about to run out of “inspiration,” he heard Baba’s clap, which was his signal to instantly turn and run to attend Him. As he made his way, Eruch chuckled at the thought of what the mourners must now be thinking about his erratic behavior.

Baba was ready to go, so Eruch rolled up the carpet, and the companions started to leave the cemetery. On their way out, the funeral procession with the coffin in front was just entering. Gesturing toward the coffin, Baba said, “A fortunate soul to be blessed with my physical presence just before the gross body is being laid to rest!”

They left the cemetery with Baba in a lighthearted mood.



The rest house in Aurangabad where Baba and the men stayed

From the 16th to the 23rd of November, Baba and the men remained in Aurangabad in a dak bungalow, where He continued to contact masts.

On the morning of the 17th, Baba and the men boarded a bus for Paithan, about 30 miles to the south. There, He offered prayers at the tomb of Eknath Maharaj, a 16th century Hindu Perfect Master, whose tomb is a place of pilgrimage to thousands each year.

While in Paithan, Baba contacted three masts, one of whom was a small naked boy. Baba asked for his blessings and then fed him some food by hand.

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Later that day, Baba and the men went to the town of Jalna, where He contacted a mast named Chhallelwala Baba. He was called the Ring Saint, because he wore dozens of rings on all his fingers, including his thumbs. When he met Baba, he insisted that Baba bring him to Meherazad someday. He was told that arrangements had to be made with Adi Sr. in Ahmednagar. Eruch wrote down Adi's address for the mast, and to assure Adi that Baba condoned the proposed visit, Baba signed the note, a very rare occurrence in the New Life.

At midnight on November 18th, Baba and the men left Aurangabad for Nander (Nanded), 150 miles southeast, and arrived the next morning.

There, Baba visited Guruwara, an important shrine for the Sikhs, where Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, is buried. He was the author of *Guru Granthsabeb* (The Guide to God), one of the most revered books of the Sikh tradition.

Baba and the companions entered the shrine, where Daulat Singh offered a traditional prayer spoken in Gurumukhi, the language of the Sikhs. The men then left, and Baba remained alone in Guruwara for some time.

Also in Nander, Baba contacted eight masts and received their blessings.

The party returned to Aurangabad by train, arriving at 10:00 p.m. From there, Baba had a telegram sent to the women and men companions who were still in Hyderabad, instructing them to leave there on November 21st and return to Meherazad. Earlier, He had cabled Adi Sr., ordering him to arrange for transport of the men and women and to tell them in no uncertain terms that they were not to assume that Baba would be settling down again in Meherazad.

On November 20th, Baba spent the day contacting masts in Aurangabad accompanied by Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul, while Eruch stayed behind in the dak bungalow to look after Daulat Singh who was suffering from a high fever. On the 21st, Baba sent Daulat Singh back to Bangalore, where he could be properly looked after by his family. Unlike in Belgaum, this time when he left, Daulat Singh maintained a cheerful spirit.

On November 20th, Adi Sr. left Ahmednagar with his assistant, Vaman Padale, in two cars and drove to Hyderabad.

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The exterior of Eknath Maharaj's tomb in Paithan



Interior view of Eknath Maharaj's tomb

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As soon as Adi arrived in Hyderabad, the process of packing and loading the cars ensued, and when completed, Kaka, Vishnu, Nilu, Kaikobad, Krishna Nair and Donkin crowded into one car, while the women occupied the other.

On their way, the party spent one night in Sholapur and arrived the next day at Meherazad, where Padri was waiting to receive them. It was an unexpected homecoming. When the companions had set out on the New Life in October 1949, they were told to give up all thought of seeing Meherazad again.

As soon as Donkin was settled in, Padri enlisted him to clear a path for Baba and the companions up Tembi Hill (later called Seclusion Hill), which was full of stones. Padri swept away the debris at the summit, where Baba planned to stay.

A Tense Night at Imampur

On the morning of November 21st, the same day Adi brought the companions back to Meherazad, Baba, Pendu, Eruch, Gustadji and Baidul left Aurangabad by bus.

Their first stop was Toka, a place on the Godavari River, where in 1928, Baba, the Prem Ashram boys and the mandali had stayed for six months.

After a brief refreshment, they arrived in Ghodegaon at 2:00 p.m. where they had a two-hour rest in the public works department storehouse. As they were leaving Ghodegaon, they saw a truck belonging to Sarosh, one of the arrangementwalas. The driver, who knew Baba and the companions well, offered them a lift, telling them that he would be leaving after he finished his deliveries. Baba accepted the offer for Pendu and Baidul only, instructing them to take the luggage to the next stop, a deserted mosque known as Imampur.

After the truck left, Baba, Gustadji and Eruch started out on foot and had walked for nearly an hour when the truck with Pendu and Baidul caught up with them. Baba gave them permission to climb aboard, and they all reached the mosque at Imampur at 9:00 p.m. They found it completely deserted.

For years, the mosque had been used by the British as a government rest house for their army officers. After Indian independence, the Muslim community reclaimed it, but they never made use of it, and now it was run-down, with weed-grass

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grown up all around. Still, despite its poor condition, the stone structure, crowned by a large dome, was impressive. The inside of the mosque consisted of a wide open space, about 20 by 60 feet, that was separated into three sections by large decorative pillars. There were the crumbling remains of an outdoor bath and toilet stalls once attached at both ends.



Imampur mosque where Baba and the men spent the night

The companions immediately made preparations to spend the night. Eruch prepared Baba's evening meal without the aid of a lamp or flashlight. After taking food, Baba chose to sleep in the southeast corner of the mosque, so Eruch began feeling around the room for any scorpions or snakes that might be inside. When he was assured that the room was safe, he used a blanket to sweep the floor, and then he spread out a coarse blanket, like those shepherds used, on which Baba could sleep.

After Baba retired, the companions took turns as watchman throughout the night. Eruch had first watch outside the room where Baba slept, while the other men rested outside below the mosque's parapet.

After some time had passed, Baba clapped. Eruch entered the room immediately. Because it was pitch black inside, Eruch knelt down where Baba was resting and lit a match in order to read His gestures.

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“What’s the snoring going on?” Baba inquired. “Are the mandali nearby?”

“Yes.”

Baba was displeased. He told Eruch to wake the men up and tell them to move farther away.

Although exhausted from traveling, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul immediately got up and moved about 100 yards away to a place near the front gate and the main road, where they bedded down under a neem tree.

Eruch went back and resumed his watch, but after another hour, Baba clapped again. Eruch went inside and lit another match so he could see Baba, who gestured that there was a disturbing noise in the room.

As far as Eruch could tell, the room was bare, but Baba told him to stay and listen. A few minutes passed until he heard a sudden fluttering sound from somewhere in the room.

Eruch went in the direction of the sound, and when he felt that he was near, he lit a match and started feeling around in a niche in the upper right corner of the wall. “There is a bird nesting,” he said, loud enough for Baba to hear. “It seems to be a mother dove and her chicks.”

Eruch returned to Baba, who gestured for him to catch the birds and throw them out.

Eruch quickly went back to the nest and was just about to reach for the birds when Baba again began clapping insistently. He stopped what he was doing and went back to Baba.

“Did you throw the bird out?” Baba gestured.

“No, Baba.”

“Leave the bird as it is. We committed a great mistake. To have instructed you to have the birds thrown out in the middle of the night was an act of great cruelty, for which I repent.”

Baba then said that it had been against the very conditions of the New Life to express anger and cruelty, and that it was Eruch’s duty to remind Him if He ever went against any of the conditions.

Eruch realized his serious oversight. “Baba, I completely forgot,” he said and then apologized.

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“Well, anyway, it’s good that you didn’t throw the bird out or it would have poured water over [spoiled] the whole New Life. Go and sit outside and remind me about it tomorrow.”

The next morning, the companions were up at 5:00 a.m. It seemed to Eruch that he had hardly slept before he was up again. After completing their morning routine, which included bathing with cold water, the men waited for Baba’s signal.

When Baba finally clapped, Eruch went inside for instructions and then came out again to get water from a nearby well to help Baba wash up in an outside bath stall near His room.

*The room in
the mosque where
Baba slept*



Eruch poured the water over Baba’s hands and supplied Him with soap and towel. Although Baba could have easily washed Himself, he allowed opportunities for service such as this to benefit the companions.

When He finished washing, Baba told Eruch to call Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul to the bath stall.

When the men gathered, Baba asked Eruch to narrate the whole incident from the previous night.

The Final Days of Manonash*The niche where the mother dove and her chicks were nesting*

To emphasize His mistake, Baba reiterated what happened and how Eruch should have immediately pointed out that His order to remove the birds was a serious violation of the New Life. To have thrown out the bird and its babies would have been a cruel act toward God's creatures, the worst thing that could have happened in the New Life.

"Luckily," Baba went on, "I reminded Eruch in time about it. Now the only way to rectify such a mistake is to punish myself. Now the only way for me to have the satisfaction of a clear conscience for what happened last night is for you to remove your sandals – all four of you – and beat me with them [in India, this is a great insult], because of my having expressed cruelty to an innocent mother bird that was nesting!"

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Baba then pinched His own ears and said, "We should be kind toward all creatures."

He removed His sadra and stood in the middle of the bath stall, while each man struck Baba's bare skin with his sandals two or three times. None held back in the least, because they knew Baba would have been greatly displeased.

Afterward, Baba looked at them, rubbed His hand over His heart, and said, "I am satisfied." However, a moment later, He added, "I am pleased, but to crown the whole event, the last thing you all have to do is to spit on me."

The companions, although pained, instantly complied.

Baba concluded the episode by saying, "This is a lesson to me for my cruelty. Henceforth, I will never be cruel."

Eruch later said that as an ordinary man in the New Life, Baba, in order to atone for His arrogance, had to suffer humiliation at the hands of His intimate companions.

After the incident was over, Baidul cooked a meal of rice and dal, and Pendu arranged for a bullock cart to carry their luggage.

At 9:00 a.m., Baba and His companions, dressed in robes and turbans, started on the long walk to Meherazad along the Ahmednagar Road, which was unpaved, dusty and full of pot-holes, with very little traffic.



The bath stall outside the mosque where Baba ordered the companions to beat Him with their sandals

*The Final Days of Manonash***Baba's Work on Seclusion Hill**

By early afternoon, Baba and the servant companions had managed to reach the countryside near Meherazad.

From a point along the road, Baba looked toward Seclusion Hill and said, "Oh, the cabins are still there.... Come on, let's rest there now for the day."

Rather than stopping at Meherazad first, they crossed several fields and farm plots to reach the side of the hill furthest from Meherazad. At this point, Baba told the servant companions to remain out of sight so He could meet with Mehera and Mani alone, as previously arranged. They were the only women companions who had arrived from Hyderabad who were allowed to see Him at this time.

Mehera and Mani were waiting for Him at the foot of the hill while the other men waited on the other side. Baba came forward and embraced each one. To them, Baba looked beautiful. It had been more than a month since they had seen Him and they were overjoyed. As Mehera remembered, "He was all alone, and He looked like Jesus in His white robe. His hair hung loose over His shoulders."

Using His alphabet board, Baba asked about their health and welfare and then said, "Despite enduring innumerable difficulties, my health was good during the travels. The wanderings in and around Hyderabad came to about 200 miles on foot, and the rest was done in motor buses. We crossed the confluence of the Pravara River in Toka and stayed in a mosque in Imampur. Once we walked 20 miles without a break." Baba then told Mehera and Mani that He would be fasting, and that every morning they should send up the hill a thermos of weak tea without milk, and warm water for shaving. He also told them that after He was on the hill, they were not to look in the direction of Seclusion Hill, even if their view was blocked. He added that the order was meant for the other women as well.

After this exchange, Baba turned toward the hill, and Mehera and Mani watched Him slowly climb the steep, rocky slope alone. Halfway up, He turned and waved one last time to them before they walked back across the fields to Meherazad.

The Final Days of Manonash

The men rejoined Baba at the summit, which was a narrow stone ridge about 75 yards long and ten feet wide. The two small cabins on the hill were recently repaired by Padri. One was at the summit of the narrow ridge, and the other was on a flat open area at the western end, approximately 30 feet below. The cabins were made of large, corrugated, asbestos-cement sheets fitted together. Each contained a window and a door. On the lower level, near the second cabin, Padri had set up a small, improvised shed for the servant companions that he had fenced in with bamboo matting.

During His seclusion on the hill, Baba spent the day in the lower cabin, which became known as the “Manonash Cabin.” Inside on a ledge, He had the five religious models, which had been carried from Hyderabad. While He occupied the cabin, the companions stood watch in turns.

After sunset, Baba retired to the upper cabin.



*Tembi Hill,
also known
as Seclusion
Hill, where Baba
continued His
Manonash work*

The Final Days of Manonash

On the morning of the second day, November 24th, Baba had Mehera and Mani called from Meherazad for a brief visit. While at the top of the hill, He conveyed to them, "I have complete satisfaction with my work, but Maya is creating hindrances."

The hindrances were noise and weather. Baba soon found that He did not like the companions' shed's location. It was too close to the lower cabin and any sound they made disturbed His work, so the men were told not to use the shed during the day.

This was winter, and during the whole time, it was overcast, cold and extremely windy on the hill. As a consequence, making a fire to heat water was difficult, forcing the servant companions to go down to the western tip of the hill where they found enough shelter from the winds to make a fire.

One night it rained so heavily that water leaked into Baba's cabin and also completely drenched the companions' shed.

Padri was summoned from Meherabad to make alterations to the shed and to repair the two cabins. While Padri worked, Baba went down to Meherazad for two days and stayed in the room adjacent to the Blue Bus on the men's side, leaving the servant companions to remain on the hill "to maintain the link with His work," Baba said. During this period, the men had no shelter and had to rough it in the elements.

Baba did not remain in seclusion the whole time during the two days at Meherazad. He sometimes walked over to the women's side and met with them. Occasionally, He sat on the porch looking serious. Then, suddenly, He would come out of His absorption and either talk with the women or ask for music to be played on the gramophone. Those were intimate times with Baba, when He took interest in the smallest details of day-to-day life that had now resumed at Meherazad.

Among the routines, the women tended the garden again, which had been neglected for two years. They also gave loving attention to the dog, Bhooty, who had not been properly cared for in their absence.

During this time at Meherazad, Baba told Mehera, "On October 16th, 1951, my 40 days of work was finished to my complete satisfaction, and the balance of the work of 80 days is now of utmost importance."

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On November 27th, Baba returned up the hill and stayed in strict seclusion.

While there, the servant companions offered prayers in His presence every day.



Baba beside the cabin at the summit of Seclusion Hill

Padri was called from time to time for work, and on one occasion, he took a black-and-white movie of Baba standing alone on the side of the hill; he later said that it was superb in quality, and yet somehow that footage has vanished.

Of the footage, Padri later remarked, "There was one close-up shot of Baba brushing away His hair from His forehead as the wind blew it, which was really breathtaking."

On December 1st, Baba began a fast on water only for four days, which was followed by three days of taking only sweet lime juice.

At one point during these fasts, He said, "I feel that I am dying every moment. I die and die badly!"

The Final Days of Manonash



Baba standing atop Seclusion Hill with the Manonash cabin below

The Final Days of Manonash



*The cabin at
the top of the hill
where Baba slept*

*The Manonash
cabin with
the improvised
quarters for
the companions*



The Final Days of Manonash**Sudden Shift to Meherazad****December 6, 1951, to February 16, 1952**

While Baba remained on the hill, Baidul was sent to outlying places to search for masts to bring for His work.

Meanwhile, the weather was a constant flurry of heavy winds and bitter cold.

Noise from the wind made hearing Baba's clap very difficult for the men despite being in close proximity. On December 6th, due to the bad weather, Baba said that His work was being impeded, and He would have to leave the hill and move back to Meherazad. He gave orders for Padri to "immediately" dismantle the two asbestos-sheet cabins and to make them into one structure at a site next to the Blue Bus and the present-day Mandali Hall. (This cabin became Eruch's room later on.)

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Baba also said that He wanted a partition of bamboo matting put up to form an enclosure around the cabin so He could remain in strict seclusion. Baba gave the work a deadline of December 14th, because He wanted to begin the final phase of the New Life on the 16th.

While Padri worked, Baba went to stay in the room near the Blue Bus, known as the engine room.

Also on December 6th, as Baba was arranging to move to Meherazad, Baidul arrived with Pathan Baba, an exceptional mast from Thana. Baba immediately began working with him intensely for a portion of each day over the next two weeks, while Baidul looked after the mast's needs.

Eruch, Baidul, Gustadji and Pendu, when not summoned for work, continued to remain on the hill without shelter, where they suffered from cold, windy weather at night and blazing sun during the day. Their activities were kept entirely separate from the women and the other men companions



Pathan Baba

staying at Meherazad. Even the food for the men did not come from Meherazad. Baba asked Meheru Damania, one of Eruch's sisters, to supply food for these companions. Although quite ill, she lovingly sent meals every day from her home in what later became the Trust Office in Ahmednagar. In His compassion, Baba gave her this last service to Him before she passed away soon after.

By December 13th, Padri completed the construction of a single cabin from the two brought down from the hill. The two windows were installed and only one of the doors.

Baba had a curtain put up to divide the interior of the cabin. One side was His own private space for relaxing and taking food, the other was "His office."

On two shelves on the office side, the models of the five places of worship were placed, which no one was allowed to

The Final Days of Manonash*Padri in action*

touch. Also, pictures of past Avatars and Masters were hung: Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Hazrat Babajan. In place of a picture of Mohammed, there was a framed paper on which these names had been written: Allah, Mohammed, Fatima, Hasan and Husain.

Baba slept in the room just opposite, where Pendu stayed in later years.

At one point during this period, Baba wanted to have a very “pure” soul brought to Him for work. Several masts were requested by Baba, including Tilgur Swami, but as much as Baidul and

a few Old Life disciples tried, they could not induce any of the God-intoxicated souls to come to Meherazad.

Beginning early on December 14th, Baba sat in a chair facing the religious models and pictures in the “office” side of the new cabin to do His Manonash work. He was all alone. No one was allowed inside while He was working.

That same morning, He called the companions to come down from the hill, and from then on, they remained in the bamboo enclosure near Him. Later that same day, to inaugurate the final phase of Manonash, a Muslim priest was brought from Ahmednagar, and in the presence of Baba and the servant companions, the priest read a portion of the Qur’an for 30 minutes.

Baba told Nilu, Kaka, Vishnu, Krishna, Donkin and Kaikobad to stay outside the enclosure. The women were to remain on the other side of Meherazad, occupying the small cottage and the main house.

Baba ordered everyone to be very quiet as they attended to their everyday duties. He included the servants in this order. When trucks, cars or other vehicles arrived with the mail or items from the market, someone had to stop them at the beginning of the approach road, an eighth of a mile away. Everything

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was then carried by hand to Meherazad as quietly as possible. Even turning on water taps had to be done quietly.

Though no one had been ordered to keep silence, a deep stillness spread throughout Meherazad, and in this stillness, the companions shared Baba's seclusion twenty-four hours a day.

Kitty's experience gives some idea of this period. Every morning before dawn, she took a walk along the path at the back of the property. One of those mornings, as she reflected on Baba's Manonash work and how He referred to it as His crucifixion, suddenly the scene of Jesus with His disciples on Mount Olive flashed before her mind. She saw that Jesus had walked ahead to pray, leaving Peter and the other disciples to watch from a distance, and when Jesus returned, the disciples were asleep. He woke them and said, "What, could you not wait with me an hour?" Instantly, Kitty was back in the present with the following prayer filling her being: "O God, all love, all goodness, all truth, all beauty, pour down upon Baba at this time Thy heavenly blessing. Strengthen Him with Thy love and Thy grace, Thy power and Thy glory, that He may finish the work which Thou gavest Him to do, and that Thy Will may be fulfilled as Thou desirest, and may Thy Kingdom come, and may Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven."



The Manonash cabin after Padri brought it down from Seclusion Hill

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Kitty heard this prayer continuously during the period of Baba's seclusion, and it brought her a profound peace.



The interior of the Manonash Cabin. On the back shelves, Baba placed the models of the different places of worship

Photo taken in 2000, when Eruch lived in this cabin.

The next day at 9:00 a.m., prayers from five representative religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Islam – were read out before their respective pictures and representations, and the five alabaster models were placed on a table in front of Baba.

All the men companions at Meherazad, as well as Padri, Ramjoo and Adi Sr., were present for the simple ceremony. Baba advised them, "You all should take part in the prayers wholeheartedly. If you do not do so, you are likely to misunderstand and have bad thoughts, which will adversely affect my work."

With the completion of each prayer, Baba bowed first to the one reciting the prayer, and then to the Avatar's picture or representation and finally to the respective house of worship. A photograph of a Sikh temple was included. During the Muslim prayer, Babajan's photograph was kept beside the revered names associated with Mohammed.

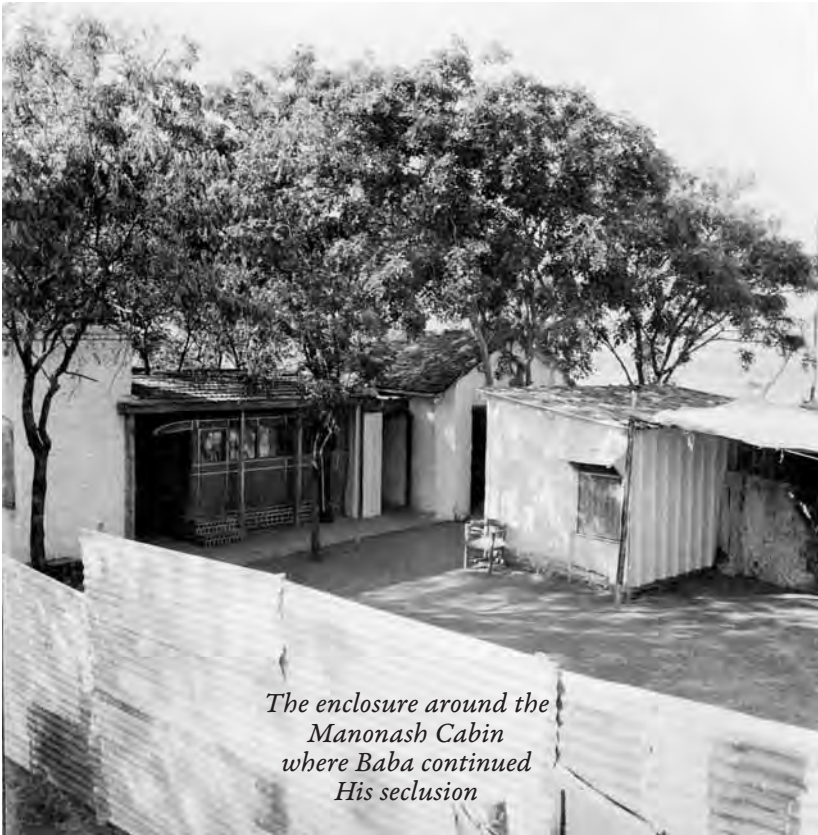
The Final Days of Manonash

For the successful completion of His work, Baba ended the ceremony by asking Baidul to invoke God's blessings, which he recited in Persian.

The prayer session lasted two hours. At the end, Baba expressed His satisfaction and gave out a prasad of sweets by His own hand to each of the men before returning to His cabin.

For the next nine days, Baba instructed Kaikobad and Gustadji to offer prayers for the success of His Manonash work, in which He was intensely absorbed, remaining in the enclosure for the entire time. Although participating in the external activity of this final phase of Manonash, the companions were not able to understand Baba's internal working. To them, it was a mystery and remained one, but they were trained not to understand, but to carry out His orders and keep Him pleased.

As part of the work, Baba had Baidul continue to bring Him masts, with whom He worked in a nearby room.



*The enclosure around the
Manonash Cabin
where Baba continued
His seclusion*

*The Final Days of Manonash***Baba Pays Respect to His Departed Ones**

On December 24th, Baba intended to hold a ceremony honoring His “departed ones.” Three days prior to this date, He sent a note to Adi Sr., telling him to make up a list of 124 of His departed followers according to their intensity of love and service rendered to Him. The arrangement was left entirely to Adi.

Adi’s list of men began with Baba’s father, followed with some of Baba’s early disciples and ended with a relative of Mansari. The women’s list began with Baba’s mother, followed with some early Eastern and Western women Mandali, and ended with some of His faithful servants.

On the 24th, Baba began the program at 9:00 a.m. in His Manonash cabin, with only Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul present. To begin, Eruch read out a prayer Baba had dictated three days earlier:

Today, December 24th, 1951, in this New Life, knowing how unworthy I have been of the devotion, love and service of so many departed ones, I appeal in all humility to the Most Merciful and Gracious God, that He should bestow His grace upon each of these departed ones according to their merits.

I make the appeal more to myself than to God, so that I may remind myself of the physical absence of these dear ones. For I know that God, who is Infinite and All-knowing, performs all things without our asking and bestows His grace without our intercession.

Since the spirit is immortal, so those whose bodies have returned to the earth are still living in the spirit. And yet today I feel constrained to offer homage to the flame of sacred love, which is so dear to God, that burns in every loving heart; the same flame that burnt with different intensities in the hearts of all these departed ones.

As an expression of this homage, and in memory of these dear ones and of many others, now departed, who graced my life by their love and service, I shall today make an offering of 124 rupees to a poor man of worthy character and shall bow down before him.

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A poor man, who had been previously contacted, was then brought into the Manonash cabin, and Eruch read the following invocation on Baba's behalf:

*O God, by bowing down to this man,
I bow down to the departed ones.*

The list of 124 names was then read aloud. It included 87 men and 37 women.* As each name was read, Baba bowed down at the man's feet and gave him one rupee for each name as a love-gift. When all 124 names had been read, which took quite a while, the man was escorted away.

Eruch then read out a second invocation Baba had dictated, which was dedicated to His living disciples and followers:

Today, December 24th, 1951, in this New Life, Baba is experiencing an utter hopelessness of spirit, mind and body. He is full of weaknesses and feels Himself utterly unworthy of the love, service and devotion of all those both in the East and West who have placed their loving faith in him.

He knows that the All-Knowing, All-Understanding and All-Just God will bestow His divine gift of Self Knowledge on all of them, in proportion to their worthiness, and yet Baba desires to pay homage to their love, service and devotion by making an offering of 51 rupees to a poor man of worthy character, by bowing down before him.

A second poor man was then brought into the room. Baba laid His head on the man's feet and handed him 51 rupees as a love-gift while Eruch recited the following lines:

*O God, by bowing down to this man,
I bow down to these living ones.*

After the second man was led out, a third dictation was read out, which was to be sent out to all Baba's lovers:

*A list of all the names is in the appendix.

The Final Days of Manonash

Meher Baba invokes the help of God for His work of Manonash, and those who wish to join Him in this invocation may do so by wholeheartedly and lovingly repeating any one of the following names of God for half an hour each day from December 29th, 1951, to February 16th, 1952:

Parsis to repeat *Aburamazda*

Iranis to repeat *Yazdan*

Muslims to repeat *Allah Hu*

Hindus to repeat *Parabrahma*

Christians to repeat *God the Father, God the Son,
God the Holy Ghost*

All others repeat the names of God as commonly used in their religion

By way of explanation, Baba later gave the following invocation in the presence of the companions:

The One Indivisible, Infinite and Eternal God, who is in everything and in everyone, because He is the *Soul of all souls*, and yet is beyond everything and everyone, Who knows everything because He is the *Mind of all minds*, is being invoked by me through His various names to help me through the instrument of His Infinite Power, Love and Mercy.

Later that afternoon, Baba remembered eleven more names that He wanted to include in the list of departed ones. For their remembrance, He had a Meherazad servant brought in, and He bowed at his feet eleven times and then gave him eleven rupees.

A short while later, Baba remembered three others, so He sent for a sweeper boy. He bowed to him three times and then gave him three rupees.

After the ceremonies were performed, Baba came out of His Manonash cabin for three days and took up residence in His old upstairs room in Meherazad's main house. The women were thrilled to have him back there. Baba then asked that preparations be made to celebrate Mehera's birthday on December 26th.

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All four mandali on Seclusion Hill during Manonash

The Final Month of Manonash

On December 25th, Baba spoke with the men, warning them that over the next period of seclusion they should avoid making any noise. To Padri, He said, "Suppose you are a soldier on a battlefield trying to kill the enemy. You are in a battle, and around you are all sorts of armaments: tanks, machine guns firing, and planes dropping bombs. You are ready with gun in hand, ready to shoot down your enemy. But just then, a bumblebee buzzes near your ear and distracts your attention. Then what happens? Your attention is drawn away from the enemy and towards this bumblebee, and at that instant the enemy gets the better of you and kills you. So, if you make noise while I'm working for Manonash, my attention is drawn away from the work and this hinders the progress. So try to keep silent as much as possible."

Baba then gave each man a name of God to intone in a whisper every day for certain periods.

In the afternoon, as a way of relieving Baba of some of the strain of His seclusion work, the women put on a little skit for

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Him. It was performed in the main house, and everyone had a part, except Baba and Mehera, who were the audience.

The skit depicted a train compartment occupied by couples of different castes, dressed in their traditional clothing. Goher and Meheru played an Irani couple, Mani and Naja were a Muslim husband and wife, and Kitty and Rano played a Parsi couple from Bombay.

As usual, the unexpected mistakes, humorous mispronunciation of Indian lines and a few other unplanned incidents entertained Baba all the more. He laughed so hard that at one point He exclaimed, "Stop! My cheeks hurt!"

The next day, Mehera's birthday was celebrated, and Baba had the skit performed again for the men. In addition to the companions staying at Meherazad, Dr. Donkin and Adi Sr. had also been invited to see the performance.

That same day, Baba made a cryptic remark to Kaikobad: "I am seeing a very beautiful girl in my dreams, so pray to God that I may not dream of her!"

Kaikobad prayed that day, but Baba made the same complaint the next morning.

Hearing Baba's appeal for prayer, Padri said to Him, "God is omnipresent and omniscient, so why pray for His blessing?"

"God is omnipresent," Baba replied, "but He plays with closed eyes! He is inattentive, so He needs to be awakened by prayer!"

Padri persisted, "Why do You need blessings, and why should You dream?"

"You are a complete idiot!" Baba answered. "I am full of weaknesses. I am still in the state of a seeker, and so all things are possible!"

On December 27th, before retiring again to His cabin, Baba stated, "Now the remaining forty days' work in seclusion will be very important."

Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul kept watch by turns and attended to Baba's needs. His meals and tea were now prepared by the women companions and brought to the men's side on a tray by Dr. Goher.

Over the next month, until the end of January 1952, Baba spent from 7 to 11 p.m. secluded in daily sittings doing His

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Manonash work. Occasionally, He sat alone in the Blue Bus. At certain times, He stepped out of the Manonash cabin and engaged in conversations with the companions, which were enlivened by His great sense of humor. At other times, He called the servant companions inside the cabin and asked Eruch to read aloud a few passages from various spiritual writings.

Also, during this period, He called for masts to be brought to Meherazad, and He worked with them for short intervals. Afterward, He bathed and provided them with a new set of clothes before sending them away. Most of the masts were brought by Baidul, but several of Baba's men from the Old Life also helped in this work, including Pankhraj and Slamson, Gustadji's brother.

On one occasion, as Baba stepped out of His cabin, He casually asked the age of the companions. Each one answered with just his age, but when Pendu said how old he was, he added that he had only four years to live.

Baba found this humorous and asked, "Why?"

Pendu then reminded Baba of an incident in 1926, when they were both next to a deep well that was being dug in Meherabad. The proximity to the well had prompted Pendu to tell Baba about a tremendous fear he had of falling in and dying. He explained that he felt an overwhelming gravitational force wanting to pull him into the pit when he had leaned over the edge and lifted up buckets of rocks by rope from the bottom of the well. In response, Baba had replied, casually, "Don't fear, Pendu, you won't die for another 30 years!"

Since it was now 1952, four years away from the 30-year deadline, Baba smiled at Pendu and said, "Pendu, you won't die in December 1956!"

While saying this, Baba was suddenly serious and made a sweeping movement over His left side. Pendu took this gesture to mean that his death would be averted, but he might suffer something like a paralysis to his left side.

(In December 1956, Pendu was with Baba during His second automobile accident, and he suffered tremendous injury to his left side. That injury plagued him the rest of his life. About Pendu's pain, Baba said that he shared in His suffering.)

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Pendu was one of four men who made it to the end of the New Life. Years later, he revealed that he had a secret mantra that enabled him to endure the tremendous hardships. Throughout the New Life, he inwardly repeated: *"Hold onto Him! Hold onto Him! Hold onto Him!"*

On January 4th, 1952, at around 7:00 p.m., Baba instructed the servant companions to dig a small pit behind the seclusion cabin for a *dhuni* (a ceremonial fire). After the pit was dug and wood was collected, Baba lit the dhuni and instructed that it be kept burning throughout the night. In the morning, He had it extinguished, and from then on, He had the dhuni lit every evening until the end of the Manonash period.

Baba asked that Ali Shah be brought from Meherabad to Meherazad. When he arrived, Baba began working with him in seclusion. Later, Baba sent a message to Dr. Nilu through Padri: "If you stay awake the whole night and repeat God's name, then I will give you all the good, sweet things that have been brought for the masts and serve you as I do them."

Nilu replied, "God forbid that I should ever be a mast! I only wish to be a doctor."

During the month of January, when Baba was not engaged in His seclusion, He asked Eruch to read passages from the Gita, the Bible, and Buddhist and Sufi literature. Once in a while, He had phonograph records played in the cabin, and along with the four servant companions, He sometimes invited the other men staying at Meherazad to hear the music.



Vishandas Maharaj

One day, when no masts had been brought, Baba sent a message to Nilu, "If a mast does not come, every hair of your head will be plucked out!"

Fortunately, Baidul arrived some time later with Pathan Baba of Bombay, and Baba sat with him privately in the enclosure. Slamson managed to bring a mast-saint named Vishandas Maharaj

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from Indore, but because he recognized Baba's divinity, it interfered with His work, so the mast was sent back after only five days. On January 18th, Baidul brought a mast from Poona named Ramji. Baba sat with him for a while and then he was escorted back to his locality. Two days later, Mohammed mast, along with a poor man, was brought from Meherabad. Baba bathed and fed them before sending them back.



Mohammed, one of Baba's favorite masts

During this period, the tremendous toll the New Life was taking on Baba had become evident again. His face showed signs of extreme exhaustion, which greatly concerned the men.

Before the dhuni was lit on January 23rd, Dr. Nilu, with his stethoscope, intended to examine Baba's heart and take His pulse, but Baba remarked cryptically, "I appreciate your feelings for me, but it is not necessary. Come what may, after this period of seven days I may live or die – or the blood may rush to my head and crack my skull!"

At 7:00 p.m., Gustadji lit the dhuni in Baba's presence. Baba asked Kaikobad to repeat *The 101 Names of God*, an ancient Zoroastrian prayer. Then, according to Baba's instructions, Kaka and Kaikobad shouted *Ahuramazda* seven times. This was followed by Pendu and Padri, who shouted *Om Parabrahma*

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Paramatma. Eruch recited *O God Almighty, Father in Heaven*, and Baidul shouted *La Ilaha Ilallah*. Baba had each invocation repeated seven times.

After these recitations, Baba bowed His head to the dhuni and then to each of the men. Afterward, He sent the men away and sat alone beside the dhuni for some time. A while later, the men were again called, and one after the other, they were instructed to repeat their invocations of God's names.

After the dhuni, Baba sat in seclusion in His cabin and then asked Eruch to come in and feel His head. Eruch found it especially hot, but Baba assured him, "Whatever is to happen will happen; do not worry about that as long as my work is successful."

From January 23rd to the 30th, Baba sat alone in the Manonash cabin and the Blue Bus, alternating between the two places. This work exacerbated the exhaustion and fatigue that were evident in His appearance.

On January 31st, 1952, near the end of the Manonash period, Baba took a bath in the early morning and then sat in seclusion from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. He then called Kaka and Kaikobad to His cabin.

As they sat on either side of Him, He instructed them to say loudly *Aburamazda* for 30 minutes. When they completed these recitations, Baba sat alone for another half hour, and then He had Nilu and Vishnu called in to repeat *Parabrahma*, *Paramatma* for another 30 minutes. After another break, Baba called for Padri to shout *Ya Yazdan* for the prescribed time.

Baba then dictated a sentence, which Eruch wrote down on a slip of paper. After reading over what Eruch had written, Baba put the slip of paper into His pocket. He said it was to be read aloud later that evening and instructed Eruch to have the pit behind His seclusion cabin ready with wood for a fire.

After lunch, Baba asked Eruch to read aloud passages from Sufi literature. Baba then resumed the same schedule as He had in the morning. This time, He had Adi say *Parvardigar!* aloud for half an hour, while Gustadji carried out the repetition in silence. Ramjoo and Baidul repeated *La Ilaha Ilallah*, and finally Eruch and Donkin recited *O God Almighty Who art in Heaven*. Afterward, Baba sat alone for an hour.

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At 7:00 p.m., as the sun was setting, Baba came out of His cabin and led the companions to the nearby pit that had been prepared for a dhuni.

In a mood of profound solemnity, Baba knelt down and with a match, lit the fire. The companions sat on the ground around the pit. The fire started slowly. When the flames were leaping high, Baba stood up, folded His arms and gestured for the men to do the same. He then took the slip of paper out of His pocket and asked Eruch to read the words, "loudly and forcefully."

Baba's words, written in the form of a command, were: *"The ceremonies, rites and rituals of all the religions of the world are hereby consumed in flames!"*

When Eruch was finished, Baba took the slip of paper, tore it into pieces and threw it into the fire, and He and the companions again sat down.

A while later, Baba asked the men to stand, and then He directed Eruch to read a message that He had prepared earlier for the occasion. By firelight, Eruch read out the following:

Oh Source of Infinite Knowledge, Almighty God!

You know that I did all that was humanly possible for me, in this ordinary state, and I leave the result entirely to Your will and sanction.

For its fulfillment, may the moment, the hour, the day, the month, the year, the age (*yuga*) be as You have decreed and destined.

From this moment, You must guide me to declare in all truth by 16th of February 1952, what You have decided.

From now on, I free myself from external religious ceremonies that I observed during the New Life and the Manonash period.

BABA

After this message was read out, everyone was silent. Baba and the men sat down again, and the companions remained around the fire until all the wood was consumed and the fire had died down. Baba then directed that the pit be covered over and that no one touch the ashes.

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Baba distributed prasad by His own hand, and He gave the pictures of the Avatars used earlier in His work to Adi Sr. to return to their owners.



At 8:00 a.m., February 1st, 1952, Baba stepped out of the Manonash cabin, ending His 40-day period of intense seclusion.

Nilu, as instructed by Baba, immediately shouted *Om Parabrahma, Paramatma*, and the other companions followed suit in unison.

Later, Baba gathered up the dhuni ashes with His own hands and packed them into two large tins for safekeeping. About them, He said, "This ash should not be used by anyone for any purpose whatsoever."

(Years later, the two tins were sent to Upper Meherabad and kept in the East Room of the converted water tank. Although the tins were filled with ashes, which are usually light in weight, they felt as heavy as stones.)

The Final Days of Manonash*Baba at the end of the Manonash period, February, 1952*

After the 40-day seclusion, Baba began a period of semi-seclusion. He also began discussing plans for His forthcoming trip to America. Rano, who was detail-oriented, was asked by Baba to attend to passports, visas and airline tickets for those going with Him.

On the morning of February 6th, Baba asked that Ali Shah be called from Meherabad. Baba bathed this dear old mast, and after working alone with him, he was sent back.

A few hours later, Baba declared that this day marked the end of Manonash and the New Life itself.

He then issued a formal declaration of its conclusion, which was announced in the *"Life Circular."* The text of that circular follows here:

*The Final Days of Manonash***MANONASH***Meherazad (Pimpalgaon)**February 6th, 1952**God is everywhere and does everything.**God is within us and knows everything.**God is without us and sees everything.**God is beyond us and IS everything.*

The One All-pervading, All-comprehending, All-powerful God, who is the Self of our selves, and besides Whom nothing is real, has helped me and guided me during the Manonash period of my work, and now makes me dictate to you the following:

To try to understand with the mind that which the mind can never understand is futile; and to try to express by sounds of language and in the form of words the transcendental state of the Soul, is even more futile. All that can be said and has been said and will be said by those who live and experience that State is that when the false self is lost, the Real Self is found; that the birth of the Real can only follow the death of the false; and that dying to ourselves – the true death which ends all dying – is the only way to Perpetual Life.

This means that when the mind with its satellites – desires, cravings, longings – is completely consumed by the fire of Divine Love, then the infinite, indestructible, indivisible, eternal Self is manifested. This is Manonash, the annihilation of the false, limited, miserable, ignorant, destructible “I”, to be replaced by the Real “I”, the eternal possessor of Infinite Knowledge, Love, Power, Peace, Bliss and Glory, in its unchangeable existence.

Manonash results in this glorious state in which plurality goes and Unity comes, ignorance goes and Knowledge comes, binding goes and Freedom comes. We are all permanently lodged in this shoreless Ocean of Infinite Knowledge, and yet are infinitely ignorant of it,

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until the mind – which is the source of this ignorance – vanishes forever; for ignorance ceases to exist when the mind ceases to exist!

Unless and until ignorance is removed and Knowledge is gained – the Knowledge whereby the Divine Life is experienced and lived – everything pertaining to the spiritual seems paradoxical.

God, whom we do not see, we say is real; and the world that we do see, we say is false.

In experience, what exists for us does not really exist; and what does not exist for us, really exists.

*We must lose ourselves in order to find ourselves.
Thus loss itself is gain.*

*We must die to self to live in God.
Thus death means Life.*

We must become completely void inside to be completely possessed by God. Thus complete emptiness means absolute Fullness.

We must become naked of selfhood by possessing nothing, so as to be absorbed in the infinity of God. Thus nothing means Everything.

For these last four months, according to ordinary human standards and by ways and means known to me, I have tried my utmost for the achievement of Manonash, and I can say in all truth that I feel satisfied with the work done. This satisfaction is due to the feeling I have of having regained my Old Life Meher Baba State, yet retaining my New Life ordinary state. I have regained the Knowledge, Strength and Greatness that I had in the Old Life, and retain the ignorance, weaknesses and humility of the New Life. This union of the Old and the New Life states has given birth to LIFE – Life that is eternally old and new.

The Final Days of Manonash

Life for me now means:

1. Free and obligationless life.
2. Life of a Master in giving orders, and that of a Servant in all humility.
3. The feeling of absolute conviction that we are all eternally One, Indivisible and Infinite in essence; and with it a feeling of separateness from the Real Omnipresent Self, through ignorance.
4. Life of God in essence; and that of man in actions.
5. Life of Strength born of inherent Knowledge of Oneness; and of weakness born of binding desires.

My efforts for Manonash have been positive, and the result of Manonash will be positive. But the actual and concrete manifestation of this result, I leave entirely to the Divine Sanction. Where, how and when the result will be, I leave entirely to the Divine Decree. It may be at any moment, hour, month, year or age. It may be in any part of the world – either in the East or in the West, in the North or in the South – yet, in effect, it will embrace all four. It may be under any and all circumstances.

I feel that it will be a sudden coming, and a becoming, of the essence of all Love, Unity, Realization, Revelation and Illumination in its varying degrees, for me and for all those connected with me.

During my work of Manonash, the four companions who were with me and also others who were near or away from me, have helped me to their utmost limit. All during my Manonash period, I have been absolutely helpless and full of weaknesses in my ordinary human state; and it can truly be said that God in His manifestation, and that the Saints and the prayers of all those who love me, have accomplished for me the internal work of Manonash, while the four companions have seen to its external aspect.

The Final Days of Manonash

I intend to go in the beginning of April of this year to the West for some months.

I expect to lead a “complicated free life” from March 21st; a “full free life” from July 10th and a “fiery free life” from November 15th.

From February 16th, I make myself free to accept gifts, and as free to refuse them. From March 21st, anyone who wishes to come to me, to see me and contact me, may do so; but he or she must make his or her own arrangements as regards lodging, food, etc. I might give mass darshan when I feel it necessary, or have the inclination to do so. Any reference to my Old Life state (which I have now regained) may be expressed verbally in my presence by anyone who wishes to do so. But I will not, in accordance with my New Life standards, accept any external homage, such as bowing or touching of the feet.

Although the Manonash work is done fully and completely, and the result must and will definitely come 100 percent to my satisfaction, I now give freedom to each and all who are connected with me to choose what manner of life they henceforth wish to live. They are free either to live with me and, of course, obey my orders, or to live away from me and obey my orders. They are free either to lead the life I tell them to lead, or to lead their own lives in any way they please – i.e., completely free from orders of any kind from me. This includes the Arrangementwalas, but in their case, the only kind of freedom I cannot give them is freedom from the responsibility that they have shouldered to the end.

No matter what choice he or she makes – everyone shall share when the Real Freedom comes at any moment, by the Grace of God.

To sum up my Manonash work in short:

1. I feel in all truth that the four months’ Manonash work has been done by me, by the help of God, to my entire satisfaction.

The Final Days of Manonash

2. The result of this work must bear fruit, sooner or later; either in the immediate present, or some time later, or in the distant future.
3. The result will bring Freedom to us all in proportion to our merits of Love, Faith and Service.
4. This Freedom will be freedom from ignorance, and will be the Knowledge that we always were, are and will be One with God.
5. This Knowledge will make us realize and experience Infinite Love, Power, Bliss and Peace, which we always possessed and knew not of.

BABA

This message was printed and sent out to Baba's lovers throughout the world. It was called *Life Circular No.1*.

On February 6th, 1952, Meher Baba's New Life, which had lasted two and a half years, was officially over.



The final days of the New Life, February 1952. Baba with the companions who made it to the end – Gustadji, Baidul, Pendu and Eruch.

*The Final Days of Manonash***Postscript**

On February 8th, two days after the New Life ended, as a change of setting and activity, Baba went for a picnic to Happy Valley with the women – Mehera, Mani, Goher, Meheru, Rano and Kitty. They left in the morning and walked the four miles to this enchanted place, with its quiet stream and tall spreading shade trees.

Lord Ram and Sita are said to have stopped there during their thirteen years of exile, many centuries before.

Baba and the women remained in this oasis until 2:00 p.m. and then returned to Meherazad by car.

Four days later, on February 12th, it was Baba's 58th birthday, according to the Zoroastrian calendar. Early in the morning, Baba came over to the women's quarters and was greeted by the sound of bells, gongs, drums and even guns.

A little later, the men companions repeated aloud the different names of God, and a lively celebration took place at Meherazad. As part of the celebration, a dhuni had been lit the day before and was kept going throughout the day.

On this day, the start of the period known as "LIFE," Baba sent the following cable to His lovers throughout the world:

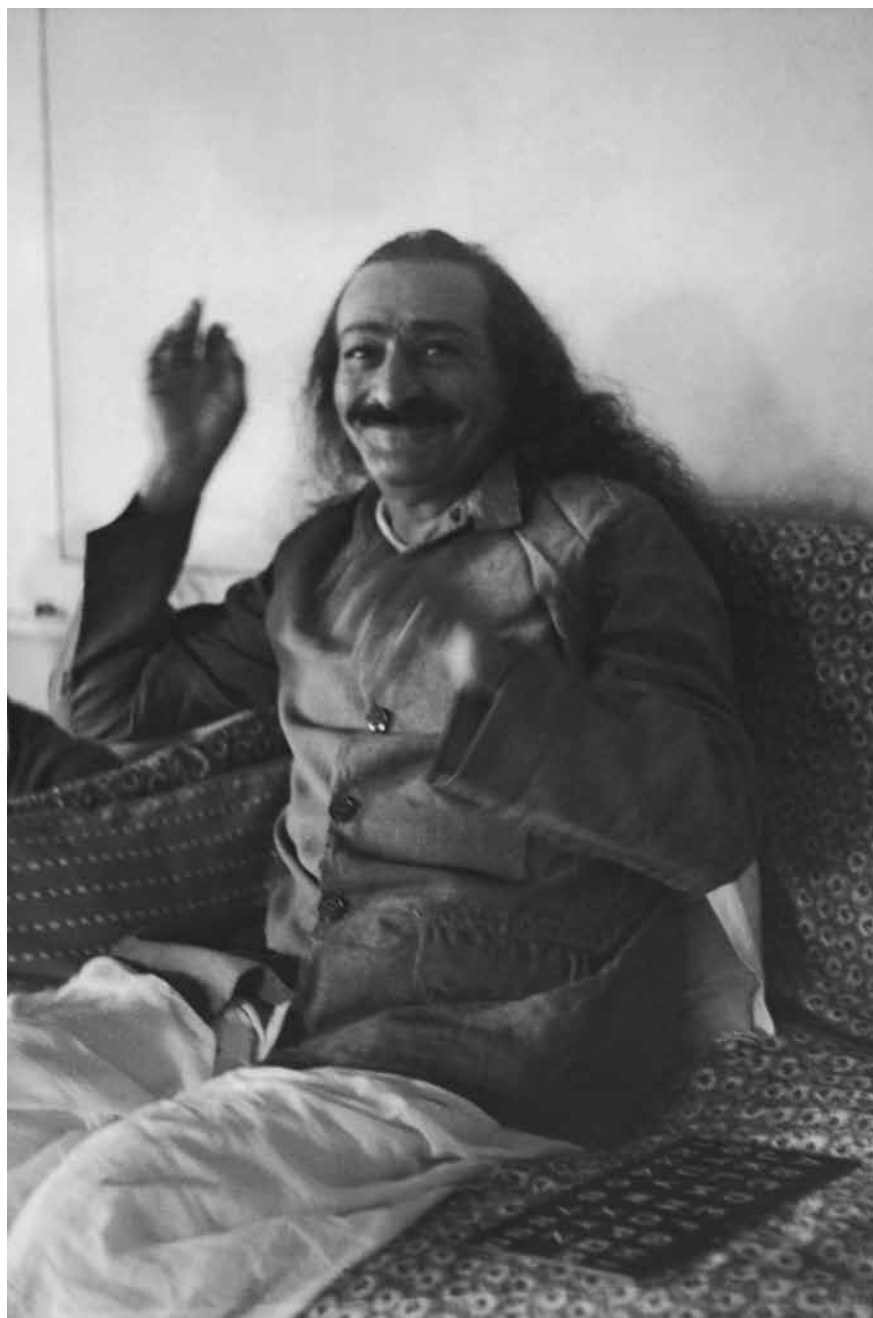
GOD'S BLESSINGS AND MY LOVE TO YOU ALL
ON THIS, MY FIRST REAL BIRTHDAY!

As a final invocation, Baba had the following message read out by the companions:

O God! Today being my first real birthday, my heart expresses that the declaration of the LIFE by me was entirely Yours and by Your Will; because nothing happens save by Your Will.

All my knowledge and my ignorance, all my strength and my weakness, all my freedom and my bondage are as You have desired and decreed.

This Life Eternal will be lived by me in conformity with Your Will and every word of the declaration of the LIFE will come to pass by Your Grace.



Author's Epilogue

Baba's role in the New Life was that of an ordinary seeker and devotee of God, which He played to perfection. This role does not mean that He ceased to experience His Conscious Infinite Eternal Existence. That experience always remains present with Him.

In Baba's Universal Mind are contained the limited minds of every individual. It is possible that in His role as a seeker and devotee, He adopted (took upon Himself) the limited mind of a particular individual as His own, and through leading the New Life, He eventually annihilated that mind during the period of Manonash.

By assuming the limitation of the finite mind, He worked through it on the innumerable individual minds contained in His Universal Mind, thereby waging war in the mind-world on behalf of all individuals.

Therefore, all individual minds will have received the effect, according to the degree of receptivity, of Baba's Manonash work. During the New Life, the limited minds of the companions, for example, may have been thrown into the cauldron of annihilation, with the resulting mental torment, in order to prepare them for complete Manonash, which is God-realization.

Mental torment results in a weakening of the mind and a strengthening of the heart. While the mind experiences pain and suffering, the heart develops a "taste" for the wine of Divine Love. Although Baba concentrated on His Manonash work in seclusion at the end of the New Life, it seemed to manifest later during the Fiery Free Life (beginning on November 15, 1952) in the states of Andhra and Hamirpur, when thousands upon thousands of people, in unprecedented numbers, were drawn to the Wine of His presence.

When the Avatar descends to the gross plane, He becomes everyone and everything, and He works for everyone and everything. For Him, nothing is impossible. Therefore, to play the part of a seeker and devotee by assuming a limited individual mind as His own is not beyond His omniscience and omnipresence. It goes without saying that in the mind-world, Baba has worked

for the partial Manonash of individual minds according to their preparedness. Therefore, after the period of Manonash, He declared, “The result [of the work] may be at any moment, hour, month, year or age. It may be in any part of the world – either in the East or in the West, in the North or in the South – yet in effect, it will embrace all four [directions].”

After completing His Manonash phase, Baba observed, “I have retained the ignorance, weakness and humility of the New Life.”

This statement shows that in Baba’s Universal Mind are contained all conscious and unconscious minds of the world; and during His mission on earth, He has to work for every individual mind, which He does by becoming everyone and everything. And for this reason, He cannot give up the ordinary human tendencies, because He takes human form for the sole purpose of redeeming humanity.

By retaining the characteristics of the New Life, three aspects of life came into being, which were a blending of the Old and the New Life:

1. Complicated Free Life
2. Full Free Life
3. Fiery Free Life

Concerning the first phase following the New Life, which He undertook, Baba said, “I feel that bindings will dominate freedom in my Complicated Free Life.”

This means that in this phase, Baba took upon Himself to a greater extent the “burden” of those closely connected with Him. Ordinarily, He bears the burden of the whole universe and accordingly does His Universal Work, but He bears the burden of His close ones to a very great extent and works accordingly for one and all of them.

For those minds that were greatly affected during His Manonash period, their burden He has borne to a greater extent. Thereby, His life became the Complicated Free Life (from March 21 to July 10, 1952), during which bindings of the “burden” dominated His freedom.

Concerning the second phase, Baba said, “Freedom will dominate bindings in my Full Free Life (November 21, 1952 to July 10, 1953).” Thus, in the Full Free Life, Baba emphasized freedom over binding, thereby suppressing the bindings.

Concerning the third phase, Baba said, “In my Fiery Free Life, by the Grace of God, both the freedom and bindings will merge into the Life Divine.” This means that the burden of both bindings and freedom that Baba had taken upon Himself were consumed in the Life Divine, leaving the Divine Life alone in its eternity, indivisibility and infinity.

During His Fiery Free Life, Baba gave darshan to masses of people at various places, and hundreds of thousands were drawn to Him like moths toward the light. This was the outer result of His Manonash work and the blending of His Old and New Life, a work that only the Avatar or a Perfect Master can do. After annihilation, the New Life of the seeker comes to an end, and limitless and perpetual existence is born. On March 21st, 1952, right after the New Life and one year before making a public declaration of His Avatarhood, Baba said:

My message today to those who love Me and believe in My Life is, that in order to escape the cosmic Illusion, and realize and attain the Supreme Reality, we must abide by the following:

First and foremost is our complete surrender to the God-man in whom God reveals Himself in His full Glory, His infinite Power, His unfathomable Knowledge, His inexpressible Bliss and His eternal Existence.

Should this complete surrender not be possible, then one or some of the following, if faithfully carried out, can win the grace of God:

1. Wholehearted love for God, thirst for seeing Him, longing for knowing Him and a burning desire for Union with Him, constitute this All-consuming Love for which the lover forsakes everything, including himself.
2. Keeping constant company of saints and lovers of God, and rendering them wholehearted service.

3. Guarding of mind against temptations of lust, greed, anger, hatred, power, fame and fault-finding.
4. Absolute and complete external renunciation whereby one leaves everyone and everything, and in solitude devotes himself to prayer, fasting and meditation.
5. Living in the world and yet practicing complete internal renunciation. This means attending to all worldly duties without attachment, knowing all to be an illusion and only God is real, carrying out one's worldly affairs with a pure heart and clean mind, and living the life of a recluse in the midst of intense activity.
6. Selfless service. One who practices this thinks not of himself, but of the happiness of others, serves others with no thought of gain or reward, never allows the mind to be upset or disappointed; and facing all odds and difficulties, cheerfully sacrifices his welfare for the good of others.

How should we put into practice the New Life which Baba has shown to the seekers of the world?

Before starting out on the New Life, Baba disposed of everything. Meherazad was transferred to Nariman, Lower Meherabad to Meherjee and Meherabad Hill to Sarosh – everything was sold or given away, even the women mandali's dresses and things of necessity. From the sale proceeds, provision was made for the maintenance of those lovers who had been dependent on Baba over the years and could not join the New Life.

Baba kept only the place of His Tomb (*Samadhi*) in His name, because His name is for everyone to know, and the treasure in the Tomb is for all the people of the world for whom Baba worked tirelessly in seclusion. Therefore, this holy place could not be given to anyone. Who, except Baba, could be the owner of this sacred place?

After the New Life, when Baba resumed living in Meherazad, He stayed there as the tenant of Nariman, and He actually paid rent for use of the property during the Manonash period.

By His acts and practices, Baba has demonstrated to the seekers of the world that no one should depend upon material things. When we dedicate everything to Him, He becomes the owner of all that is ours, and we should, by becoming His faithful servants, be the *caretakers* of what was formerly ours. For example, suppose a farmer owns land and a house. The farmer would give the land and house to the Master, and by becoming His servant, manage the property as a caretaker. The produce of the land is then accepted as Baba's *prasad* and is used for the maintenance of himself and his family. If there is anything left over, it is used in Baba's work.

In such a practice, when introduced in one's business or service, everything is done for Baba, and the fruit of the deed and the doer is offered to Him.

The individual's New Life ends in Manonash. Annihilation of the mind cannot be attained without the help of the Avatar or a Perfect Master. It is for us to try to make ourselves worthy of Manonash. Through Plans I-A, I-B and I-C, if put into practice with full faith and love, the seeker progresses to such a point where he or she invites the grace of the Avatar or Perfect Master. Certain things in these plans are not possible without Baba's physical presence, but following the conditions of the New Life is possible.

During the New Life, Baba said that He would do the begging, gypsy and langoti phases for us, while we are to carry out the labor phase for Him. The main requirement of the labor phase, whatever the work (a job, business or farming, etc.), is that it is done for Him, not for oneself or others. The conditions that pertain to the labor plans have great significance.

For the sake of Baba and His love, these plans should be put into practice, which will invite His grace, for Baba is not man but God.

If it is not possible for someone to join the New Life and to live it according to the conditions, then that person can carry it out privately by living the truth of Baba's message:

This New Life is endless, and even after my physical death it will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust, and who, to accomplish all this, do no lustful actions, do no harm to anyone, do no back-biting, do not seek material possessions or power, who accept no homage, neither covet honor nor shun disgrace, and fear no one and nothing; by those who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of loving, who believe in the lovers of God and in the reality of Manifestation, and yet do not expect any spiritual or material reward; who do not let go the hand of Truth and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and wholeheartedly face all hardships with 100 percent cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed and religious ceremonies.

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.



New Life Supplement

Interpretations of Various Aspects of the New Life by Bhau Kalchuri

What is the New Life? When the search for God begins, we leave our old life behind and seek a new life. But the search for God is not an easy matter. Therefore, each time the Avatar comes, He reveals to searching humanity what it is seeking – the New Life. He determines how this New Life is to be lived according to the needs of mankind at that time. The New Life that He establishes each time is the easiest way to follow Him, to live for Him and to love Him.

No longer is it necessary to withdraw from the world to find God. God can be found in your daily surroundings as long as your actions are dedicated to Him, no matter what work you are doing or where you are doing it.

True and honest service to God entails the wholehearted discharging of one's responsibilities in the world. Now, there are two types of responsibility. The first is paramount and lays the foundation for the second. Unless one tries to fulfill one's responsibility toward God, he or she cannot discharge the second responsibility, which is our duty in the world. God is the Reality, and if we do not love the Reality, worldly responsibility will only add to our bondage. But if we fulfill our worldly duties out of our desire to please Him, those duties become our road to Him.

Our responsibility toward God is to lead honest lives and to love God wholeheartedly, even in the midst of worldly affairs. One who attends to this higher responsibility can handle the responsibilities the world imposes without becoming entangled in the meshes of illusory life. The following story of a seeker of God, who became a lover of Beloved Avatar Meher Baba, provides a particularly illuminating example of the spirit in which one's worldly responsibilities ought to be discharged.

In the summer of 1953, Baba was residing in Dehra Dun. One afternoon, when He was conversing with the mandali in

the bungalow where He was staying, there was a sudden shower of rain. Baba turned to Aloba and told him to go and find out whether anyone in the street outside the bungalow had been drenched in the downpour.

Aloba obeyed, and he found a young man standing in the rain, out in the open and shelterless, at some distance from the house.

When Aloba returned and informed Baba of this young man, Baba said, "He may catch a cold. Call him and give him dry clothes to change into."

Aloba called the young man and brought him into the bathroom, where Dr. Nilu gave him a set of dry clothes. While he was dressing, Baba called for Aloba and told him to ask the young man how it was that he had been caught in the rain without shelter.

Aloba relayed this question, and the young man told him, "I am on the way to Rishikesh." (The city of Rishikesh, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas near Dehra Dun, is famous for its ashrams.) "When you found me, I was waiting for the rain to stop so that I could continue on my journey."

Obviously, their young guest knew nothing about Baba and had no idea who was staying at this bungalow.

When Aloba told Baba about this, Baba sent him back with another question: "What is your purpose in going to Rishikesh?"

"I have renounced the world," the young man answered. "I am traveling to Rishikesh in order to join an ashram there."

When Baba heard this, he told Aloba, "Call him here."

At this time Baba was still using the alphabet board. His personality was glorious, and when the young man entered the room, although he had no idea who Baba was, he was immediately attracted to Him.

Spelling out His question on the board, Baba asked, "Why do you want to join an ashram?"

"I want God-realization," the young man answered.

"Did you ever hear of anyone getting God-realization at an ashram?" Baba inquired.

"No," the young man said. "I've never heard of this happening, but people do join ashrams for that purpose."

"So you really want God-realization?"

"Absolutely. I want God-realization and nothing else."

"What have you renounced?" Baba asked.

“My wife, children, house, job – everything. I have renounced everything. The world is dead to me.” The young man spoke with real sincerity, and it seemed clear to the mandali that, among the many so-called seekers who had presented themselves to Beloved Baba, this one was genuine. Though his intention had been to join an ashram, his good fortune had brought him to the home of the Lord Himself.

At this juncture, Baba, apparently satisfied with the young man’s answers, conveyed to him, “If God-realization is really your longing, I can give it to you, but the renunciation that I will ask of you will be difficult.”

“I will do anything you ask of me,” the young man rejoined enthusiastically. “For God-realization, I will follow any instruction you give me.”

“Think it over,” Baba cautioned him. “I tell you, it will not be easy.”

“I have already decided,” the young man said. “There is nothing I won’t do for the sake of God-realization. So please, tell me what you want me to do.”

“You will obey my instructions?” Baba said again, eyeing him closely.

“I will obey, even at the cost of my life.”

Baba seemed to be pleased with his young visitor’s determination. “Now listen carefully,” He spelled out. “I give you these instructions, and it is for you to follow them. My first instruction: be here tonight, eat well, sleep well, and in the morning set out for Rishikesh. Remain there for a week, visiting the ashrams and bowing down to the swamis, mahatmas and sadhus to your heart’s content. Will you do this?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Good. Now where do you come from?”

“Delhi.”

“Then, my second instruction is this: After a week in Rishikesh, and after paying your respects to the swamis, mahatmas and sadhus there, return to Delhi and stay with your family again. Lead a normal life, take up your job again, but remember one thing: as soon as I send you a telegram instructing you to leave everything and come to me, you must obey immediately. Will you be able to do this?”

“Certainly,” said the young man. “What you ask is very easy.”

“No,” Baba warned. “It is not easy at all; it is very difficult, I tell you. It is easy for a man to renounce his wife, children, home and the world externally, but to renounce them while living with them – this is another matter entirely. But that renunciation is the real renunciation.”

Although at the time the young man could not grasp the full import of what Baba was telling him, nonetheless, he remained fully resolved to obey His instructions to the letter. And so the next day, he traveled to Rishikesh, lingered there for a week, bowed down to the swamis, mahatmas and sadhus, returned to Delhi, and resumed his normal family life, as Baba had instructed him.

After fifteen days had passed, Baba sent him a telegram saying, “Remember, when I order you to leave everything and come to me, you must do it immediately, without any hesitation.”

Out of his obedience to Baba and in fulfillment of the responsibility that his Master had assigned to him, the young man continued to live with his family, keeping Baba’s injunctions in mind, and every day he waited for the telegram that would release him from his worldly bondage and allow him to come to his Beloved. Because he was awaiting Baba’s telegram, and because he had to keep himself free to answer His call at a moment’s notice, he remained detached in the midst of his worldly affairs.

Three years passed in this way when at length he received Baba’s telegram instructing him to leave everything and come to Him. Overjoyed, the young man left his home in Delhi and came to Baba at once.

When he came into his Beloved’s presence, Baba seemed pleased. “I am very happy that you followed my instructions,” He said. “But tell me, are you thinking about your family?”

“No, Baba. I have come to be with You.”

“Good. Now relax for three days, and don’t worry about anything. After three days, I will give you fresh instructions.”

The young man stayed with the mandali for three days. And on the fourth day, Baba said to him, “Are you willing to obey me 100 percent?”

“Baba, this is why I have come to You. I have no other thought except to be with You and do Your bidding.”

“It pleases me to hear this, and now I give you new instructions, knowing full well that you will obey them 100 percent. I want you to go back to Delhi, stay with your family and resume your job. But remember, I will call you another time, and when that happens, I will not send you away from me again.”

Naturally, the young man was crestfallen, but he did as he had been told, and every day he would wait for the telegram from Baba. He was in the world, but he belonged to Baba, and he lived in the hope of receiving His telegram that would release him from his worldly burdens.

Two more years slipped by, and then the telegram came: “Leave all and come to me.”

At once, the young man left his home and went straight to Baba.

“This time, I won’t send you back,” Baba reassured him. “Now you should stay here with me. Forget your wife, forget your children, forget your house, forget your job, forget everything and just relax for three days. And then I will give you instructions.”

After three days, Baba called him and said, “Your wife is dead. Your children are dead. You have no house, you have no job.” After a meaningful pause, Baba went on to say, “But even though your wife and children are dead for you, they are alive for me, for I have accepted you, and your responsibility toward them has come to rest with me. And therefore, I appoint you as caretaker. It is your job now to take care of these people – your wife and children – on my behalf, knowing that they belong to me and not you. And I know that you will discharge this responsibility well, as I would want you to. And all the while, keep it in the back of your mind that, whenever I send you a telegram ordering you to leave all and come to me, you should be prepared to drop even this new responsibility of caretaker and come at once.”

The young man accepted Baba’s instructions willingly and cheerfully, and he returned to his home in Delhi. Many more years passed by, and gradually he came to realize what true renunciation is.

Real renunciation means to be in the world but not of it, to renounce the self and its desires, even in the midst of worldly life.

Through Baba's love, this detachment is achieved naturally and without coercion. If we try to live according to His wish, the day will come when we will be able at last to understand, as this young man came to know, the deeper meaning of our responsibility to Him.

Baba has said, "Attend faithfully to your worldly duties, but keep always in the back of your mind that all this is Baba's."

In the New Life, Meher Baba laid a new spiritual foundation for humanity – a new path to God that can be followed while living in the world. It was Baba's greatest gift to the world.

Those who desire freedom from attachment to the world and who long to love and serve God may be said to have entered upon the New Life.

The Old Life represents a life of unconscious divinity. In the New Life, the seeker or lover of God acquires a steadily growing awareness of the path leading to Divinity (union with the Beloved).

Baba did not undertake the New Life for the benefit of the mandali (His companions) who went with Him. Although they joined the New Life with Baba in 1949, in essence they had been living it since the beginning of their life with Him. In accompanying Baba, they each played a necessary role in this drama of the New Life.

There were four phases of the New Life:

1. Begging
2. Langoti (loin cloth) – meditation phase
3. Gypsy life – wandering phase
4. Labor – work phase

All actions the Avatar performs have universal significance and are done on behalf of all humanity. It is for this reason that Baba went through the New Life. He had to personally undertake the first three phases in order to take them on for humanity. And He said that if the companions undertook the labor phase for Him – earning one's livelihood – He would do the

other three phases for them. In fact, Baba gave the companions the assurance that for all time, He would be responsible for the first three phases, leaving the labor phase for them.

This assurance can be extended to the seeker or lover of God today. Baba and the mandali demonstrated how the New Life is to be lived.

Even those close to Baba who were not physically with him on the New Life were told that they would be living the New Life by following the instructions given by Him, in the form of three plans of the labor phase. They were told that they would be leading the New Life by following one of these plans. Those who followed one of the plans during the New Life demonstrated its practical application in the world.

The plans of the labor phase are models for future lovers and seekers of God, showing how to totally dedicate one's life to the Beloved. This phase can be carried out collectively or individually, depending on which plan is followed.

When the companions started out with Baba on the New Life, they were ordered to abide by a number of conditions. Two of the most difficult to follow were implicit obedience to Baba's day-to-day orders and the injunction to remain cheerful under all circumstances.

After three months of the New Life, Baba said that despite their sincere and wholehearted efforts, it was impossible for the companions to carry out the conditions without compromising His oath. Therefore, rather than give in to His feelings for the companions and allow them to carry on despite their inability to live up to the original conditions, Baba created the three plans from which they were to choose. Although each of the plans has its own unique characteristics, they are essentially all ways of serving Baba. In each plan, all work and earnings were to be dedicated to Him and to His work.

The Conditions of the New Life

The following are a number of conditions that were common to all three plans. In carrying out any of the plans, no one was to expect any material or spiritual benefit; that is, the plans should be carried out with love for the Beloved, free from

desires or expectations for oneself. Whatever happens, whether favorable or otherwise, should be accepted as the Will of the Beloved. All contact with the opposite sex should be free of lust. One should stay out of politics. One should refrain from indulging in anger and in criticizing anyone unfairly. One should tell no lies; that is, one should not deceive others for selfish ends. One should not expect respect or invite homage; on the contrary, one should regard oneself as a humble servant and not as someone special. Lastly, one should consider oneself as responsible for all that happens, and not blame the Beloved or hold Him responsible.

The Plans of the New Life

The sole purpose of the plans of the New Life is to serve the Beloved. For the lover or seeker in the world, the plans represent a practical means of putting his or her love for the Beloved into action. In this sense, they might be looked upon as their “meditation in action.” The Beloved is at the very foundation and heart of the plans – the responsibilities of the various plans carried out by the lover or seeker are dedicated to Him.

The plans are designed especially for those who, while loving God and striving to serve Him, are nevertheless bound by responsibilities and obligations in the world (such as family and jobs), and therefore are not detached from it. Thus, the plans enable the lover or seeker to live in the world while remaining always dedicated to the Beloved. They represent a middle path – the lover or seeker does not have to outwardly renounce his or her family and other commitments in the world, but rather to strive to be inwardly detached from them. Everything that from the worldly point of view might be called one’s own – family, savings, earnings and property, etc. – does not belong to oneself but to the Beloved. Even one’s very life is not one’s own. This is the spirit underlying each of the New Life plans.

When followed sincerely, honestly, and above all, with love for the Beloved, the plans will eventually lead the seeker or lover to the stage of being a perfect servant of the Beloved. The seeker or lover may choose any of the plans according to his or her temperament and mental tendencies. There is an individual

plan and a collective plan, as well as one that combines both approaches. These plans are discussed later in detail.

The plans are to be lived according to a number of conditions laid down by Baba. Even though the seeker or lover will have to exert effort at first in order to live up to these conditions, the stage of being a servant of the Beloved will come naturally if any one of the plans is carried out faithfully. At this stage, one's whole life then will have been given over to the service of the Beloved. The lover will seek nothing for himself. This experience, which is the culmination of the New Life plans, comes only as a gift from the Beloved through His grace.

The state of being a servant of the Beloved is the necessary preparation before entering into the final phase of Manonash, in which the lover attains union with the Beloved. Whereas the plans do not require the physical presence of the Beloved to be carried out, this final stage of Manonash requires His presence in order for Him to bestow His grace upon the lover. Manonash cannot be attained through one's own efforts.

The first stage of entering the New Life through the labor phase is one's personal decision. But the second stage of becoming God's servant comes about because one's dedicated action has deepened one's love to the point that one lives for Him in a state of 100 percent cheerful obedience to His Wish. If one becomes His servant, He will be very pleased. And as His servant, one has not the slightest concern with the third stage of the New Life, which is Manonash. The moment that Manonash occurs is entirely at Baba's pleasure and timing.

Description of the Plans

In each plan, out of one's earnings acquired through whatever work is undertaken – whether business, farming or taking a job, etc. – the lover or seeker of God uses what is needed for the maintenance of himself and his dependents. Whatever is left over after this may be used to serve the Beloved and His work.

Plan 1-A or the Collective Plan

Baba offered three plans with various subdivisions. In the first plan, there were three parts.

In Plan 1-A, the collective plan, there were no day-to-day orders from Baba. All were to live according to a number of specific conditions upon which the plan was based. Only those conditions that pertain to carrying out this plan in the present day will be mentioned here.

According to the collective plan, the companions would work as a cooperative with each other. Roles would be assigned according to ability, capacity and health. Since this was part of the labor phase, they were to engage themselves in work of some kind dedicated to Baba, and their earnings were to belong collectively to all members of this plan. Livelihood for all was to be provided from the collective earnings. Personally, no one was allowed to own anything. Everything was to be seen as belonging to Baba.

The companions would be free to style their collective life as they wished. That is, everything should be managed by them in the way agreed upon by either committee, majority or appointing a manager.

During the New Life itself, the companions could gather in their spare time for talks with Baba or ask Him to take part in entertainment, such as music programs, etc.

For today, since Baba is not physically present, this can be taken to mean talks, programs and performances devoted to Him.

If a companion was found to be deliberately shirking his duties, or if he had become unmanageable due to his temperament or obstinacy, he could be asked to leave the group-companionship by a majority of votes.

As it turned out, this plan was not actually adopted in the New Life, because it did not get the unanimous approval of the companions that was required by Baba. Nevertheless, this plan has its practical application today. Let us suppose, for instance, that those in this plan decide to start a business as a means of earning their livelihood. In keeping with the spirit of the New Life, the business would differ from the usual method of running a business in the world. There would be no division between employer and employee, and no hierarchy of importance between positions. Since there would be no personal

ownership, no one could claim to have special rights and privileges over others.

The method of governing the business and setting policy would be decided by members of the plan. A single manager might be appointed, for example, with the approval of the other companions. Unlike businesses in the world, which are run for personal or selfish ends, this enterprise would be undertaken for Baba as a means of carrying out the labor phase for Him. Even the material maintenance of those in the group, provided for out of the business profit, would be of secondary importance. In such a business, there would be no shareholders, of course, since none of the members would own anything personally. Everything would be seen as belonging to Baba. All earnings would be received as “prasad” (a gift of love) from Him.

The business naturally would be carried out to suit the times and circumstances. The details of Plan 1-A are not to be taken literally. With regard to finances, money may be taken as a loan in order to begin a business, but it must be paid back. However, money can be accepted when it is given voluntarily without one’s asking and when the donor insists on not being repaid. As far as conducting the business, the group may take assistance or advice from others outside the plan.

Whatever is left over, after providing for the members of this plan, may be used in some way to serve the Beloved. The business, for instance, might decide to support a film project that is dedicated to making Baba known to others, to publish and distribute books by and about Baba or to set up a medical clinic to give aid to the helpless and the disabled.

One of the advantages of a collective plan is the opportunity to learn invaluable lessons of mutual adjustment, which require self-sacrifice, love, and the sublimation of jealousy, intolerance and other emotions.

Plan 1-B – Individual or Collective

Plan 1-B can be carried out individually or collectively. When carried out collectively, it is essentially the same as Plan 1-A, and when carried out individually, it is basically the same as Plan 1-C, which will be discussed later. The only feature

distinguishing Plan 1-B from 1-A and 1-C is in being duty-bound to serve the Beloved by caring for others. Dr. Donkin, for example, at Baba's urging, joined this plan along with Gustadji and Kaka, both of whom were in poor health at the time.

Baba appointed Dr. Donkin as head of the plan, and he became responsible for providing for them. To fulfill this role, he set up a medical clinic in Dehra Dun, and with the earnings, he maintained the three of them.

This plan contains the model for an individual or a collective mode of life, which, as a way of serving the Beloved, provides care for the needy, the disabled and the helpless. Its spirit is of selfless service to others.

It becomes the duty of those in this plan to strive to serve the "Beloved in others," which is different from the service that one finds in the world, where others are served as individuals. Although those in this plan are free to undertake other activities in their service to Baba, they are first duty-bound to care for others in some way, as in the case of Dr. Donkin, who took care of Kaka and Gustadji.

This plan is quite flexible. It can be adapted, for example, to a household situation, in which several people may wish to join together collectively, whereas others may wish to carry out the plan individually.

Both approaches can be accommodated simultaneously, each person concentrating on his or her own duties. For instance, although one person choosing the individual approach may work separately, he may decide to pool his earnings with those who are working together collectively in order to support a special project devoted to Baba.

Plan 1-C – The Individual Plan

Plan 1-C was the individual plan and could be carried out by a companion at his own home. It was for those who wished to continue in the New Life, yet not remain physically with Baba. Thus, they would not be able to carry out Baba's day-to-day orders. Although this plan is dedicated to Baba, the individual is not part of a collective group; therefore, he has no responsibilities to any group plan or collective life. He is free to live as he wishes, provided he remains faithful to the New Life conditions.

As in the other plans, those living according to Plan 1-C today would engage themselves in work of some kind for the Beloved, and with their earnings, they would provide for themselves and their dependents. Again, whatever is left over could be used in the cause of the Beloved.

Plans II and III

Plan II was similar to Plan 1-C, except that the individual was free to live in any place other than his previous residence. One was free to live an absolutely independent life, but within the framework of the New Life conditions.

Plan III was for those who were 100 percent prepared to follow all the original conditions. It was not considered part of the labor phase, which was carried out only by those in Plans I-B and I-C.

Plan III meant implicit obedience to Baba while living in His physical presence. It should be mentioned that Plan I-A and Plan II also did not require Baba's physical presence, but neither of these plans was followed in the New Life.

The companions who joined Plan III helped Baba in His work at the Kumbha Mela, as well as in taking care of the women companions.

Later, however, this plan was dissolved because the companions were not living up to its conditions. Baba said that this was due to fundamental misconceptions the companions had about the conditions. So again, rather than being forced to compromise the conditions, Baba discontinued this plan and created a new one in which all of the companions were to earn their livelihood and yet remain near Baba. Also, those who at this time were in Plan I-B – Donkin, Kaka and Gustadji – joined this new plan. It became known as the "Temporary Restricted B Group Plan." As in Plan I-B, the companions were not under Baba's direct orders.

The companions, in joining this new plan, again came under the labor phase of the New Life. To fulfill this duty, a *ghee* (clarified butter) business was started. In addition to this responsibility, they were free to do any business on the side, as long as it did not require an investment.

In carrying out the ghee business, the companions were to maintain themselves on a loan from Baba, and until the loan was paid off, they were to manage the business and to arrange for their livelihood according to Baba's instructions.

After paying back the loan, they were free to do any business to maintain themselves and arrange their household affairs by a majority vote. The profits earned through the business were to go to the companions as a whole, which, of course, meant that they were dedicated to Baba and His work.

Method I

Plans I-A, B, C and the "Temporary Restricted Group B Plan" are all part of the labor phase. If carried out sincerely and with love, the seeker or lover of God will be gradually led to the stage of being a servant of the Beloved. However, this state is not an easy attainment. The servant's obedience to orders must be spontaneous and devoid of any feeling of slavery or compulsion. As mentioned before, this stage is a preparation for the final phase of Manonash, where the physical presence of the Beloved is required.

If one follows the direct orders of the Beloved 100 percent in all circumstances, one becomes a true servant.

After the companions finished the work with the ghee business, Baba created, for those who still remained with Him, the final stage of Plan I-B. This stage, still part of the labor phase, consisted of two methods.

In Method I, the companions were to render lifelong service to Baba in the same way a servant obeys his master or employer. Since a master may sometimes forgive the shortcomings of his servants, Baba could forgive the companions' shortcomings without compromising His oath.

As servants, they had to do whatever Baba ordered. He might require them to do any type of work – such as coolies or farmers – and the servant companions were not to expect anything in return from Baba. Their livelihood would be looked after by Baba, which might mean great hardships, or perhaps even comfort. The companions were to expect nothing. Also, if Baba was dissatisfied with the work or behavior of any of the companions, He could dismiss him. In this case, the servant

would still have to remain faithful to the conditions of Plan I-B, and he would also be required to earn his own livelihood.

The alternative method, Method II, was to return to the world and to live independently and individually in Plan I-B, abiding by the fixed conditions.

The companions with Baba were unanimously in favor of Method I, and thus they became the lifelong servant companions of Baba.

Again, this final stage of the New Life is workable only in Baba's presence. What follows is the final phase of Manonash, which can only be bestowed upon the seeker or lover of God – in this case, the servant – through the Grace of the Avatar or Perfect Master.

Only by becoming a perfect servant does one become deserving of becoming a Master. In this stage, the servant's ego is effaced, and his life is no longer his own; rather, it belongs to the Beloved. One must accept slavery or servitude with all willingness, considering oneself as fortunate. In this final stage, one is devoid of self-seeking, but is resigned, through love, to the Will of the Beloved.

Thus, when the seeker or lover becomes a true servant, the Beloved comes and leads him or her to the final state of Manonash. In summary, the plans of the New Life represent a middle path, and through a wholehearted dedication to any one of them, the lover or seeker will progress on the path. Then, when the lover or servant becomes a true servant of God, the Master or Avatar Himself comes and bestows the gift of Union with God, which is the culmination of all life.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that it is possible to live the New Life without joining any of the plans, but by faithfully adhering to the spirit of the New Life message (see page 688).

The Meaning of Helplessness and Hopelessness

Two of the ideals that Meher Baba stressed in the New Life were “helplessness” and “hopelessness.”

The ideal of helplessness has to do with the relationship of the lover to his Divine Beloved. The lover is helplessly in love, but in a very unique sense: he is utterly dependent upon his Beloved, in much the same way as a small child is dependent upon its

mother. A child's love for its mother is so complete that even if the mother, in a fit of anger, were to put the child out of the house a hundred times, the young child would return again and again. The child cannot help itself. It is lost without its mother. Its only shelter is its mother, even when she scolds it or pushes it away.

In a similar way, the lover is utterly and helplessly dependent upon his Beloved. If the Beloved treats him harshly, pushes him away or shows indifference, he is defenseless. He will not leave his Beloved whatever treatment he receives, because there is no place for him to go. His whole world is his Beloved. No other shelter can give any comfort to him. Even the discomfort the lover feels when his Beloved pushes him away gives more comfort to him than any worldly comfort. And just as the small child is unaware of its complete attachment to its mother, the lover is also unconscious of his utter dependence upon his Beloved.

The lover's state of helplessness, even in the face of harsh treatment, is really a precious gift from the Beloved. It is a sign of the deepest love the Beloved has for him. It means that the Beloved is entirely free to be not only kind and gentle toward him, but also apparently harsh and even cruel when it is necessary, because the Beloved knows He will never lose him. He is no longer forced to cater to the likes and dislikes of his lover. In this sense, their relationship is similar to that of two very intimate friends. Whatever one friend does, even if he is abusive or cruel, is withstood by the other, because the bond of love is so strong. No behavior of one toward the other can ever really endanger their friendship. Each can speak his mind and reveal his heart freely without fear.

The helplessness of the lover is an invaluable quality. It enables the Beloved to carry on His work with him in the world without interference. The lover, in fact, becomes an instrument in the hands of the Beloved, because he is ready to accept His will, whether it be gentle or harsh. Therefore, paradoxically, when the lover becomes completely helpless, he becomes most helpful in carrying out the wish and work of the Beloved. It is a known fact in spiritual history that the disciples who were able to withstand the abuse and harsh treatment from their Masters without complaint were usually their favorites.

How is the ideal of helplessness attained? Helplessness is not acquired through effort, nor is it sought after, but it comes as helplessness comes to a small child, as a natural condition of its life and without asking. Helplessness comes as a gift from the Beloved when the lover is ready.

Love is at the heart of helplessness. Without it, helplessness cannot come. It is love that enables the lover to accept all behavior of his Beloved, good or so-called bad. Again, it is like the love of a child for its mother – the child is not aware of the good or bad qualities of its mother – it simply loves. The child does not have to strive to remain unaffected by the good or bad qualities of its mother – it is unaware that these qualities exist in her. Similarly, the lover simply loves his Beloved, without making any distinctions about His behavior. Being helpless, he accepts any attitude his Beloved takes toward him. With this state of helplessness comes real detachment from the world, in which the lover is unmoved by its opposites. Paradoxically, by being completely attached to the Beloved, the lover becomes utterly detached from the desires connected with the world. This is the priceless detachment born of love for the Beloved!

What is the meaning of hopelessness in the New Life? The lover who experiences the state of hopelessness finds no hope in the world or in anyone. If he might be holding out for anything, it is the hope to please his Beloved.

Being concerned only with pleasing his Beloved, he entertains no hopes for himself. His own self is left completely out of the picture. If, for instance, he were to please the Beloved with the hope of acquiring anything for himself, whether material or spiritual, it would amount to devotion to his hopes and not to his Beloved.

When the lover harbors any kind of hope, his faith cannot be called complete. It means he is not confident that the Beloved knows what is best for him and what his needs are.

Where is there room for hope when the lover has complete faith that the Beloved knows everything? For the lover who experiences the ideal of hopelessness, everything is seen as coming from the Beloved; all his needs are taken care of by Him, and the lover enters a state in which, in every situation, favorable or

otherwise, he is unaffected and remains resigned to all experiences as an expression of the Will of His Beloved. He has no desires for anything. He knows that satisfaction of desires will not bring happiness. He is like a stone, remaining unaffected by the circumstances of his life. A stone, whether used as a grinding wheel or in a wedding ring, whether used in a latrine or worshiped as a statue of a deity, remains a stone.

In the ideal of hopelessness, as in the ideal of helplessness, the lover is not aware of his experience. If the lover were to think, "I am unaffected, I am detached from all hopes," it would not be real detachment, since there is still the lingering reference to self. In real detachment, one is unaware of uncomfortable surroundings, such as a materially poor environment, just as a child can often be oblivious of its circumstances and surroundings.

One of the important conditions during the New Life, which related to the state of hopelessness, concerned responsibility. The companions were not to hold Baba responsible for any hardships that occurred, or to have any expectations of Him.

All things come from the Beloved, yet if the lover is not happy with his circumstances, he must not hold the Beloved responsible. Complaining against the Beloved would mean to have expectations. It implies that the Beloved does not look after His lover completely with perfect Love.

The ideal of hopelessness is attained by very, very few. Even on the sixth plane, there is longing, although it is longing for the Beloved. Even in this exalted state, the lover cannot be said to have achieved the ideal of hopelessness. In love, there are no expectations, only sacrifice, surrender and dedication. There is no satisfaction. The lover wants to give more and more to his Beloved! Yet, at the same time, he asks for nothing in return. This is the spirit underlying the ideal of hopelessness.

Living in the World

How is the lover or seeker to live in the world? In the New Life, Meher Baba demonstrated how the lover or seeker is to live in the world. Even though He is the Lord of the Universe, Baba gave up ownership of all property, except for his tomb, before beginning this phase of His life.

After the New Life, when Baba returned to Meherazad and Meherabad, the properties no longer belonged to Him, and so for the rest of His physical life, until 1969, He lived as a guest in these two places.

What this example symbolizes to seekers today is that whatever belongs to us in the worldly sense – our spouse, children, business, property, etc. – is not to be regarded as our own. We are merely the caretakers of these things, and we must accept this responsibility as coming from the Divine Beloved. We take care of these responsibilities for Him, because everything we “own” belongs to Him. This attitude actually inspires greater care, for we are sometimes neglectful and careless with things we regard as our own.

According to the spirit of the New Life, the seeker would use as much of his earnings as is needed for the maintenance of his life and those dependent upon him, and the rest would be used in the cause of the Beloved.

The manner in which the seeker carries out his responsibilities might be compared to the function of a cashier in a bank. During the course of the day, the cashier is responsible for large sums of money and must be very meticulous in keeping his accounts in order. Yet, even though he is in charge of this money, none of it belongs to him. Similarly, the seeker takes care to carry out his worldly responsibilities faithfully, yet he knows that he owns nothing and all that he does is done for the Beloved. He shows the utmost care toward his spouse, his children, his business, etc., because they belong to God.

The State of the Perfect Servant

The progression of the seeker or lover to the state of the perfect servant is naturally a very gradual process. It is the intention of the plans in the labor phase to lead one toward this state. It is by no means an easy attainment.

The seeker or lover must have a deep understanding of what is meant by real service. In service of the highest type, the lover serves only the Beloved, and in serving Him, he is serving everyone, because the Beloved is in everyone. When this service is directed toward others, the lover does not serve them as individuals, but he is really serving the Beloved in them. That is, his

only desire in serving others is to please his Beloved. If he were to serve others as individuals (as is usually the case of service seen in the world), this service would bring bindings upon himself. The true servant has nothing to do with anything unless it relates in some way to his Beloved.

If service accentuates the lover's sense of self, it has not fulfilled its purpose. In true service, the self should be effaced. The lover must eventually forget his or her own existence in the existence of the Beloved. Service should be done cheerfully and willingly without any expectations for oneself, without creating any obligations and without any selfish motive behind it. For the true servant, it is really a sacred privilege and duty to serve the Beloved!

When serving the Beloved in others, there is no question of the lover being taken advantage of by someone. If he or she were to be taken advantage of, it would mean that he or she had been serving this person only and not the Beloved in this person. The true servant is the slave of the Beloved, but not the slave of any particular person.

Suppose someone were to say to the lover, "Please help me! Serve me! You are a servant of God, so it is your duty to serve!" Suppose, for example, the lover responds to the cries of a beggar by giving him money. If the beggar uses the money for some selfish motive, such as purchasing alcohol, then the lover has rendered him a disservice. However, if the Beloved in another is suffering, then the lover must spare no pains to help the person. When the lover does not feel that serving another would please his Beloved, he or she must refuse.

In serving others, the lover may sometimes be called upon to be harsh and even apparently cruel. The lover should not spoil others, flatter them and cater to their desires, but serve them in a way that would please the Beloved. The heart should go out spontaneously to others in service. It should be a natural response, without a sense of pity in it. To feel pity for others implies that the Beloved does not look after His children. How could God be unerring in His judgment of what each person needs? Many social institutions perform so-called services, yet most often these services lack the spontaneity and self-forgetfulness of service done out of love for the Beloved. Frequently it is a mechanical sense of duty that prompts the service.

One should not feel one is free to serve or not to serve. Real service is a natural and spontaneous undertaking. A parent, for example, does not consider raising children as a service. It is a naturally accepted duty. Nor is the parent puffed up about its duty of parenthood.

The following stories are examples of the qualities and attitudes of the lover or seeker, which will lead him or her to the state of being a perfect servant of the Beloved.

Examples of Service to the Beloved

A Family of Baba Lovers

The following incident occurred in the lives of one family devoted to Meher Baba. It illustrates what is meant by serving the Beloved in others.

This particular family went one day to see Baba to have His darshan. After returning home, the mother locked herself in her room and began devoting all her time to thinking of Baba.

At first, her husband was very happy with her devotion, yet as time went on the children were neglected. When the husband would return home from work in the evening, he would find that the children had not eaten and had no clean clothes to wear, so after his full day's work, he would have to attend to the household chores.

It went on like this for some time. Then, one day, the whole family again went to see Baba.

During the course of their visit, Baba asked the mother whether she was happy.

She replied that she was very happy.

Baba said that He was pleased with her devotion. He then asked her husband how he was feeling.

The husband broke down. He explained the appalling situation at home.

Baba then turned to the mother and said, "I am very happy in you and this makes me very pleased, but, in them (pointing to her husband and children), I am unhappy. In them, I feel hungry and neglected. So, if you want to make me happy, also make me happy in others."

The Free Kitchen – a Story of the Author's Experience

This incident occurred in my life with Baba, and it shows the difference between true service and service in the worldly sense.

During the 1960s, there was a great famine in northern India, and many people were dying of starvation. I felt very concerned about the situation when I read about it in the newspapers.

One day, an article appeared in the paper about a wealthy man who had opened a free kitchen in the famine area, donating thousands and thousands of rupees to this project. In reading about this man, I felt what a great service he was doing during this emergency crisis.

One evening, while doing night duty with Baba, I mentioned this to Him. "What a selfless service this man is doing," I told Him. "God has given him great wealth, but he knows how to use it for the good of others."

I was shocked by Baba's response, "This man is doing a most selfish service, though he is doing good work."

Baba went on to say that the man was really serving for his own name and fame, and worse than that, to avoid paying taxes! "He feels pleased when his name appears in the newspapers. He has become popular. Even if this man were to give away all of his wealth to the needy with a good motive, he would not be able to help many people and would himself be bound because of self-satisfaction. But you serve me with love, without having any selfish motive. You do not expect anything in return. And by serving me, you are serving the whole universe, because the whole universe is in me! The wealthy man is bound by his work, while you are free."

This statement of Baba's may also be extended to mean that if in serving anyone, one has the conviction that one is serving the Beloved and not that particular person, then one is serving the whole universe.

Therefore, instead of reaching only a few people, as in the case of services rendered in the world, one's service, through the Beloved, reaches all. Moreover, in worldly service, although a person may have many good works to his credit, he may nevertheless be bound by them, whereas one who serves the Beloved gradually frees oneself of bindings.

A Box of Chocolates - a Recollection by the Author

The following story, which took place at Meherazad in 1959, is another example of what it means to serve the Beloved. It also shows the importance of the lover in the eyes of the Beloved.

While in His room at night, Baba would sometimes call for some small thing to eat. One evening, while I was on night duty with Him, He asked for some chocolates.

I immediately went and got a box of chocolates and brought it to Baba, who was sitting on His bed. I opened the box – it was made of tin – and laid it next to Baba on the bed, putting the lid down next to the box. It was dark in the room, and so Baba motioned for me to open the wooden window shutters to let in some light.

Just outside the window was a kerosene lamp. While I was opening the shutters, Baba reached into the box to take one of the candies. He did this without looking. In doing so, He accidentally knocked His hand against the lid, which fell off the bed and hit His leg. Immediately, Baba reacted with great pain. He became very upset, saying that the pain was excruciating. He gestured to me, “You are useless! How can you be so careless! Now I’m suffering this pain and won’t be able to rest.”

Baba went on scolding me for half an hour, complaining all the time of the pain. Finally, He lay down to sleep, but He was unable to rest at all.

Again, He began complaining, saying He couldn’t bear the pain. I, by this time, had realized my mistake of carelessly leaving the lid beside Baba on the bed, instead of putting it somewhere out of the way.

After another half hour, Baba again started up, “Have you come to serve me or kill me? What a great burden you are on me! Why are you so careless?”

Eventually I began thinking, “How can such a little tin lid cause Him so much pain? The lid is such a small thing! How can Baba bear the burden of the whole universe when He can’t even bear a tin lid hitting His leg?”

As these thoughts were passing through my mind, Baba motioned for me to come and sit near Him. He then gestured, “What do you take me for?”

“My Master,” I replied.

“Who are you?” persisted Baba.

“Your servant, your slave.”

“What is the duty of the slave?” Baba went on.

“To please the Master and obey His commands.”

Baba then asked, “Do you try to please me?”

“Yes,” I said. “I try my best to obey and serve You.”

“You obey,” Baba said, “but you are careless. Had you been careful, you wouldn’t have put the lid here. Now listen to me. As you have accepted me as your Master, you are bound to obey me and please me. And as I have accepted you as my slave, I am also duty-bound to see that my slave serves me properly in all ways. But I find you careless. So, as I am duty-bound as your Master, I must correct you. If the whole of the Himalayas fall down on me, it is nothing to me. Yet, because I have accepted you as my slave, I cannot bear the weight of your carelessness. It brings me more suffering, your carelessness – I tell you, it is more than my infinite suffering! Your slightest neglect and carelessness cause me great suffering!”

This story shows how extraordinarily difficult it is to be a servant of the Beloved. The servant must at all times give the Beloved his fullest attention, so as not to cause Him the slightest neglect or cause Him to suffer in the least due to carelessness. To be so completely attentive is almost super-human, because it requires that the servant live not for himself, but completely for the Beloved!

With regard to following the plans of the labor phase of the New Life today, if the conditions are looked upon as Baba’s direct orders and if they are not followed implicitly by His lovers, it shows neglect and carelessness. This failure would cause Him suffering.

Correspondence - the Author’s Experience

This story shows the importance of putting obedience to the Master above one’s feelings for others.

In carrying out the conditions of the New Life, which one might take as Baba’s direct orders, the lover or seeker will sometimes have to go against the generally accepted values most

people cling to in the world. He or she must not compromise the conditions in serving the Beloved.

In 1957, when this incident took place, Baba was in strict seclusion. Numerous letters would be sent to Him from His lovers everywhere asking Him to give darshan.

It was my responsibility to answer all the Hindi correspondence. According to Baba's order at this particular time, I was to inform each one that it was not possible to see Him and have His darshan.

One day, after having answered many letters containing such heartfelt pleas to see Baba, I said to Him, "When are you going to give darshan? Many of these lovers are new and they long to see You. If I write them again and again that they cannot see you, their feelings will be hurt."

Baba replied, "You care for their feelings, but what about my heart? You disobey me by pressing me to give darshan to spare their feelings, but you don't care for my feelings. If you spare their feelings by disobeying my order, then my heart will be broken. Even complaining about my order hurts my feelings. Do you think that I don't care for my children and their feelings? How can you say that I don't look after them?"

The above incident does not imply that we should ever hurt the feelings of others, but where the Beloved's orders are concerned, the feelings of others may have to be set aside. And likewise, the lover or seeker should not compromise or go against the conditions of the New Life plan that he or she has accepted, in order to avoid hurting someone's feelings. This decision would amount to hurting Baba's feelings.

The wish of the Beloved must always come first. When carrying out the New Life conditions for Baba, the lover should not be swayed by the opinions of the world.

For example, one of the conditions is to commit no lustful action (outside marriage). Now, if a man or a woman is being pursued by someone with lustful intentions, he or she must not hesitate, for the sake of remaining true to the New Life conditions, to resist such advances, even if it means hurting another's feelings.

In another case, suppose a lover is approached by someone who desires to pay homage to him or her. If the lover were to give in to this desire in order not to hurt another's feelings, it

would be compromising the conditions. Frequently, behind our desire not to hurt someone is the motive of wishing to appear “good” in their eyes. The opinion of others and the world exert a powerful influence, pulling the lover away from complete dedication to the Beloved.

The lover must not be concerned with how others see him, but how he appears in the eyes of the Beloved! The lover should not look to the world for guidance, but instead should see his world in the Beloved. If a man in a wineshop were drinking a glass of milk, the ordinary man on the street would likely assume that he is getting intoxicated. For him, who only judges by appearances, obedience to the orders of the Beloved will rarely be seen in its true light.

The Poor Village Boy and the Author

Once, while in Satara, as Baba and the mandali were walking along the road, they came upon a poor boy who was collecting fresh cow dung and molding it into cakes to be later sold as fuel.

Baba called the boy to Him and asked if he would like to go to school.

The moment he heard Baba’s question, he began weeping.

Baba told him to go home, wash his hands and come back.

When the boy returned, Baba asked Pendu, one of the mandali, to give him one rupee, which the boy accepted and went home again.

However, he came back immediately, saying that his mother did not want him accepting money unless he worked for it.

The mandali were very impressed by this.

Baba then told the boy that He would make arrangements for him to go to school, but the boy said that he did not want to leave his village.

It was then decided that I would be given the duty of teaching him.

Baba said that the boy was just the one He wanted for His work. I was to prepare him to take the eleventh standard examination (the higher secondary examination) within two years. The boy had already completed the seventh standard.

I was asked to purchase the necessary books and not to worry about expenses.

The instruction began, and after a few days, Baba told me that the boy should be made very happy; otherwise, he would not be able to put his heart into his studies.

Therefore, Baba asked me to buy some nice clothes for the boy. After several more days passed, Baba made another request: "Now you must see that he's well fed. The family is very poor, so you must make some arrangements for food. The boy's health must be very good. I'm helping you in this so that you may succeed in teaching him his lessons."

More time passed. Baba again asked me to make sure that the boy had some sweets, which I began to bring to him.

Later, Baba went to the extent of ordering me to hold an umbrella over the boy's head to shield him from the sunlight whenever I brought him from his hut in the village. It was peculiar enough for such a poor boy to have fine clothes, but to have his own teacher escort him to his lessons holding an umbrella over him was unheard of in the village!

Moreover, as I walked along with the umbrella, the villagers just laughed at me and made me feel humiliated. Nevertheless, to please Baba, I carried out these orders.

During this whole time, Baba insisted that I should not hurt the boy's feelings. Baba said the boy had a very soft heart, and I was not to scold him.

As time went by, the boy began to feel that he was quite special. For example, when I would give him his lesson, he would sit back on his bed with an air of importance and say to me, "Now carry on, carry on."

Eventually, I seemed more like the pupil, while the boy became my master.

Every day, Baba inquired about the boy's progress in his studies. Day by day, the boy became more and more mischievous and slack in his lessons. Moreover, Baba would continually send me to the boy's hut on one errand or another, which was almost always a humiliating experience.

In the evenings, when the boy was brought to Baba, he would sit on a special couch, while I would stand beside him

like his butler, ready to attend to his every wish. This situation, believe it or not, went on for more than a year!

This story shows how painstaking it can be to serve the Beloved. The boy's mischief and air of superiority put my tolerance and patience to an extreme test. I had to endure so much humiliation, not only from the boy, but also from the villagers. Yet, what was most important was that in carrying out Baba's orders, I was pleasing my Beloved. Although I appeared to be serving the village boy, I was in fact serving Baba.

As long as this conviction was there, it was possible for me to put up with all kinds of treatment from others. In concentrating on the Beloved's orders, the lover becomes unaffected by his surroundings and the behavior of others toward him. This is the spirit in which the conditions of the New Life should be carried out.

Massaging Baba – the Author's Story

The following story is another illustration of the spirit in which the lover is to serve the Beloved. Such a degree of self-denial, sometimes expected of the servant, is attainable by very few lovers.

For several months in 1959, when I was staying at Meherazad, I suffered from an acute case of fistula. I was given frequent injections, and despite excellent medical care, I continued to experience a constant throbbing pain.

During this period, I would be on duty with Baba from six in the evening until four in the morning. One night, when I was in extreme pain, Baba asked me to press His body, which meant massaging His feet, arms, legs, etc.

To do this, I sat on a stool next to the bed and leaned over to massage Him. As I was massaging Him, Baba would slowly, almost imperceptibly, roll over to the other side of the bed, causing me to have to lean way over to reach Him.

This awkward position greatly accentuated the acute pain I was already feeling. And then, when I would move the stool around to the other side of the bed, Baba would again roll over, very, very gradually, and again I would suffer terribly.

It went on like this for hours! All the time, I knew that Baba was doing this deliberately, and I became very annoyed. I

thought to myself, "People say God is All-Merciful. They don't know He's all-cruel! Here He's deliberately rolling over in bed. He doesn't even know the excruciating pain I'm experiencing."

Suddenly, Baba asked me what I was thinking. I was so annoyed I did not want to answer. I just said, "Nothing, Baba."

Baba persisted, "So you think you are obliging me by serving me like this? On the contrary, I am obliging you by giving you the opportunity of serving me. The service of the slave is such that if I were to cut you to pieces, you should not utter a word! When you are rendering real service, you don't grumble or complain – you don't even feel any pain, but you feel happy to serve the Beloved. You willingly bear any amount of pain without complaint in order to please the Beloved. Remember this, in order to become infinitely merciful, I have to become infinitely cruel. This is just the beginning of real service, and yet you are grumbling."

This story illustrates the spirit of love with which one should serve the Beloved. The lover should have this attitude of self-denial and self-sacrifice in mind when he or she adopts any of the plans of the New Life. If the lover suffers for the Beloved, he will free himself of bondage, but when he suffers for himself or the world due to selfish desires, he invites further binding.

Arjun

Arjun, an early mandali member who died in 1926, was assigned by Baba to be the director of education at the Hazrat Babajan School in Meherabad. Even though he was illiterate, all the qualified teachers were required to work under his direction.

Baba expressed much love for him, sometimes even putting His own food on Arjun's plate as they ate.

The other mandali members were jealous, knowing that although Arjun was illiterate, Baba had made him the director of education, and they had to work under him, in spite of being more qualified. In addition, they felt that they all loved Baba, yet He did not express the love for them that He showed for Arjun.

One day in 1925, Baba went to inspect the school and found some mistake committed by Vishnu, who was one of the teachers. Baba became very angry with him. Some time later, Baba

said to him, “Vishnu, I got angry, which isn’t good. Take this stick and beat me thrice on my hand!” Baba extended His arm.

However, Vishnu could not bring himself to hit Baba. Feeling it would be a great sin to strike His own Master, Vishnu exclaimed, “You are My Master, and I am your disciple. If You ask me to do such things, I will not do it. I will commit suicide!”

Baba then called Rustom, who was the manager of Meherabad, and asked him to beat Him. But he felt as Vishnu did and could not do it, saying, “If I am your disciple, then how can I do this? It would be a sin. I would prefer to leave Meherabad than to strike You.”

Baba then called for Arjun, who was away doing work. When Arjun arrived, Baba gave him the order to beat Him on the hand three times.

Without a second thought, Arjun at once picked up the stick and struck Baba!

Baba then told the mandali around Him, “Do you know why I love Arjun so much? Because he pleases me. Whatever I say, he does. You people just think about your own orthodox ideas. Of course, it does not mean that you should beat me. But when I say such an action is my order, you must do it. This is called obedience, and obedience always pleases the Beloved. There is no question of sin or virtue. It is a matter of pleasing me.”

This story of Arjun’s unquestioning obedience exemplifies Meher Baba’s final message to His followers, which He had read out shortly before He dropped His body. The three couplets are from the great Persian mystic Hafiz, Baba’s favorite poet:

*Befitting a fortunate slave, carry out every command
of the Master without question of why or what.*

*About what you hear from the Master, never say it is
wrong, because, my dear, the fault lies in your own
incapacity to understand Him.*

*I am the slave of the Master who has released me from
ignorance. Whatever my Master does is of the highest
benefit to all concerned.*

Appendix

List of Baba's Departed Ones

(from page 665)

The Men

1. Sheriar Moondeggar Irani (Baba's father -"Bobo")
2. Beheram F. Irani (first disciple, Behramji-Buasaheb)
3. Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff (from Lonavla)
4. Feramroz H. Dadachanji (Chanji)
5. Rustom Irani (Masaji – Pendu's and Naja's father)
6. Munshisaheb Rahim (from Poona and Manzil-e-Meem)
7. Naval C. Talati (from Bombay)
8. Khaksaheb (from Manzil-e-Meem)
9. Jamshed S. Irani (Baba's older brother)
10. Walter Mertens (from Switzerland)
11. Khodadad Irani ("Nervous," from Manzil-e-Meem)
12. Sampath Aiyangar (from Madras)
13. Swamiji (from Bangalore)
14. Arjun Supekar (from Manzil-e-Meem)
15. Kondiram (from Manzil-e-Meem)
16. Sayyed Jamadar (from Manzil-e-Meem)
17. Kaikhushru Keki Irani ("Lattoos," boyhood friend from Poona)
18. Faredoon Masa (Baba's uncle)
19. Khan Saheb Bahadur K. Irani (Gulmai's husband)
20. Biharilal
21. Kaikhushru Masa (Soonamasi's husband, from Bombay)
22. Kunjbihari Choubey (from Raipur)
23. Manek Ranji
24. Sadhu Christian Leik (British)
25. Nadirshaw
26. Chowdhari
27. Abdur Rehman ("Barsoap," from Manzil-e-Meem)
28. Dowlath Padir
29. Lewis Charles Nelhams (first British disciple)
30. Garrett Fort (American)
31. Jamboo Mama (Buasaheb's maternal uncle, from Poona)
32. Quentin Tod (from London)
33. Sohrabji M. Desai (Mansari's uncle, from Navsari)
34. Ajoba (from Manzil-e-Meem)
35. Ahmed Khan Gavai

36. Tehemtān (youngest son of Naoroji Dadachānji family)
37. Khodādād Moondegar Irāni (Sheriār's brother – from Irān)
38. Shāh Khodādād (Bābā's cousin, son of Khodādād)
39. Pulād Khodādād (Bābā's cousin, son of Khodādād)
40. Bhabhānand Swāmī
41. Nusserwān Kerawālā (Bānumāsī's husband)
42. Dr. Karkāl
43. Genu Chāmbhar
44. John (Meher Ashram, Christian boy)
45. Rām Nāth
46. Bālā Supēkar
47. Alī Akbar Jr.
48. Sohrābjī Vakil (from Surat)
49. Faredoon Irāni (Baidul's son)
50. Beherām Irāni (Baidul's son)
51. Hormazdiār Irāni (Baidul's son)
52. Bāpū Ghāntē (a Brahmin)
53. Kashināth (Kāshiyā, the laundryman at Manzil-e-Meem)
54. Lālā Pathān (watchman at Ranchi, Nasik and Meherābād)
55. Chintāman Rāo
56. Solī Kotwāl (brother of Savak Kotwāl)
57. Beherām M. Desai (Mansari's father)
58. Ardeshir N. Desai (Keki Desai's father)
59. Manekji Confectioner
60. N. Nāmdār Dastūr
61. Rustom Dinyār
62. Bhausāheb (Dattu Mehendarge's father)
63. Rashid Khusrōo Irāni (from Jaffrābād, Irān)
64. Jamshēd Beherām Sheermard (Baidul's father-in-law)
65. Sheermard Khorband Irāni (Prem Ashram boy, from Irān)
66. Sohrāb Jehāngir Irāni
67. Khān Bahādūr Padumji
68. Palānji Motiwālā (Parsi, from Jabālpur)
69. Motābāvā Khājotiā (Adi Khājotiā's grandfather, from Nagpur)
70. Naoroji R. Sāthā (Eruch Jessawālā's grandfather)
71. Merwān Kaikhushrū Irāni
72. Golvādwalā (Sohrābjī Irāni's "the Old Man," Masāji's cousin)
73. Golvādwalā's son
74. Dhunjibhoy Kerawālā (Jāl Kerawālā's father)
75. Sakkur (servant in Prem Ashram)
76. Beherān Rustom Salēngi (Bābā's personal servant)
77. Ardeshir Khodārām Irāni

78. Rustom B. Irani (Bomanji's brother)
79. Kaikhusroo (owner of ice cream shop)
80. Hormuzd Boman Irani (Pilamai's husband, from Karachi) 8 1 .
- Kasam (Ramjoo Abdulla's son)
82. Faredoon Irani (Dowla Mondli's son, from Poona)
83. Otto Billo (Irene's father, from Switzerland)
84. Rustom Jehangir Irani (Baily's brother, from Poona)
85. Sohrab Rustom Irani (Sailor's brother, from Poona)
86. Bejanji Ramji (close friend of Soma Desai, from Navsari)
87. Meherwan Kaikhushru Irani

The Women

1. Shireenmai Sheriar Irani (Baba's mother, "Memo")
2. Nonny Gayley (American)
3. Nadine Tolstoy (Russian)
4. Mabel Ryan (British, friend of Margaret Craske)
5. Dowlamasi F. Irani (Baba's aunt from Lonavla)
6. Pilamasi R. Irani (Pendul's and Naja's mother)
7. Kakubai Deorukhkar (Vishnu's mother, from Poona)
8. Naja Irani (Sailor's first wife, from Poona)
9. Bachamai (Naoraji Dadachanji's wife, from Bombay)
10. Jibboo Irshad (Ramjoo Abdulla's daughter)
11. Freny Masi N. Driver (Padri's mother)
12. Yeshoda Gadekar (Gadekar's mother)
13. Kamlabai Dhakephalkar (Dhake's first wife)
14. Mrs. Kalemama (wife of Kalemama)
15. Christine McNaughton (British)
16. Shanti (daughter of Kaka Shahane)
17. Gita S. Patel (Sadashiv's wife, from Poona)
18. Banubai M. Confectioner
19. Banubai Lakdavalala
20. Gulu A. Irani
21. Khorshed Pastakia (a Parsi, from Karachi)
22. Banu Irani (Baidul's daughter)
23. Zohra Pirzade (Sayyed Saheb's wife, from Nasik)
24. Daughter of Sayyed Saheb
25. Mrs. Dahiwalala (neighbor at Manzil-e-Meem, from Dadar)
26. Dhakubai (willed her property to Baba, from Arangaon)
27. Khodadad Circlewala's daughter (Dairywala's wife, from Bombay)
28. Mehera Khodaram Irani (wife of cinema owner in Nasik)
29. C. D. Deshmukh's mother (from Nagpur)
30. Shirinbai Sohrab Irani (Padri's maternal grandmother)

31. Bhikaiji N. Hansotia (Gustadji's mother)
32. Dhondibai (Baba's nanny when He was an infant)
33. Sita (cook at Meherabad, from Arangaon)
34. Helena Davy (Kitty's mother, from London)
35. Dinabai Satha (relative of Gaimai Jessawala)
36. Shanta (Meherabad servant, wife of Kashiya)
37. Sunder Bhagaji (servant at Meherabad)

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407 MSI	(bottom)	582 MSI
Chapter Nine	494 Lawrence Reiter	583 MSI
408 John Oat & Charlie Gard'ner	499 Lawrence Reiter	589 MSI
410 MSI	506 MSI	591 Lawrence Reiter
425 Bif Soper	507 Arnavaz	592 Lawrence Reiter
427 Bif Soper	Dadachanji	593 Lawrence Reiter
428 Bif Soper	508 Arnavaz	596 MSI
429 Bif Soper	Dadachanji	597 Lawrence Reiter
430 Bif Soper (top)	509 Meher Nazar	Chapter Twelve
Lawrence Reiter	Publications	598 John Oat & Charlie Gard'ner
(bottom)	511 Lawrence Reiter	600 MSI (top)
431 Bif Soper	512 MSI	Meher Nazar
432 Bif Soper	514 Bif Soper	Publications
433 Bif Soper	515 Bif Soper	(bottom)
441 Bif Soper	519 MSI	604 MSI
442 Bif Soper	523 MSI	606 Bif soper
445 Bif Soper	524 MSI	607 Bif Soper
446 Lawrence Reiter	525 MSI	608 Bif Soper
447 MSI	Chapter Eleven	609 Bif Soper
Chapter Ten	526 John Oat & Charlie Gard'ner	611 MSI
448 John Oat and Charlie Gard'ner	532 MSI	612 Bif Soper
451 Bif Soper	533 Niket Kale	615 Bif Soper
452 Bif Soper	534 MSI	616 Lawrence Reiter
453 Bif Soper	535 MSI	617 Bif Soper
454 MSI	536 MSI	618 Bif Soper
456 MSI	538 MSI	619 Bif Soper
457 MSI	540 MSI	620 Bif Soper
460 Lawrence Reiter	542 MSI	623 Bif Soper
462 MSI	546 MSI	624 Bif Soper
468 MSI	549 Bif Soper	625 Bif Soper
475 MSI	551 MSI	626 Bif Soper
478 Bif Soper	552 Bif Soper	627 Bif Soper
479 MSI	553 MSI	628 Bif Soper
480 Bif Soper	563 MSI	629 MSI
481 Bif Soper	565 MSI	
488 MSI	567 MSI	
	569 MSI	
	571 MSI	

Chapter Thirteen

630 John Oat &	643 Bif Soper	661 MSI
Charlie Gard'ner	645 Bif Soper	662 Bif Soper
632 Bif Soper	647 Bif Soper	663 MSI
633 Bif Soper	649 Bif Soper	667 MSI
634 Bif Soper	650 Bif Soper	670 MSI
635 Bif Soper	651 Bif Soper	671 MSI
636 Bif Soper (top)	653 MSI	674 MSI
Bernard Bruford	655 MSI	675 MSI
(bottom)	656 MSI	680 MSI
637 Bif Soper	657 MSI	
639 Bif Soper	658 MSI	
641 Bif Soper	659 MSI	
642 Bif Soper	660 MSI	