



Effort & Grace
Open Secrets In Meher Baba's Discourses

by
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CHAPTER 1

THE DIVINE BELOVED

The perennial spring of imperishable sweetness is within everyone.

Meher Baba

We have the door to the Unlimited within us – and the opportunity for infinite exploration within. The spiritual path is wide open for those who are ready to pursue spiritual values. We have to dare to plunge into the Ocean of God's Being.

It is fascinating to discover the spiritual potential we could be enjoying. It can happen to us! And now is the most propitious time, of priceless value, due to the strong Avataric influence of Meher Baba's advent.

PRECIOUS BEYOND WORDS

Avatar Meher Baba has been called the Awakener. He says, "I have come not to teach but to awaken." I experience him as the Divine Beloved, who has come as Savior, Messiah, Christ, to awaken us from the dream of creation. He awakens us to the spiritual quest and removes the barriers to further progress in that quest toward reality.

The wonder of who Meher Baba, the Divine Beloved, really is, and the sweetness of his love for us, is precious beyond words. The pure sweetness and heavenly beauty of our Beloved can never be described adequately in words, because there are no words capable of revealing the glorious love that he really is. He is the source of divine love, which is constantly pouring out into all of creation. Meher Baba's divine love is infinitely powerful yet unimaginably sweet, tender, and personal. Divine love is penetrating, clear, and beautiful. It is also light, cheerful, and infinitely free. It is awakening, transforming, and liberating.

Divine love conveys illumination, a penetrating knowingness. When one is exposed to this love, one experiences a great expansion of consciousness, and the sanskaric hoard of impressions that normally keeps us captive is put aside. One feels liberated and finds oneself swimming in the Ocean of light, love, and beauty.

Divine love opens the heart center, which becomes the main means of communication with the Beloved, releasing the spirit and arousing an intense love for him. When through his grace some of the veils fall away, one beholds him with the eyes of the heart. The indescribable beauty of his love irresistibly summons the soul to adoration and union. It unites one with him, the Divine Beloved, in the spirit.

Divine love is total significance. It is total significance because it embodies reality, truth. Divine love is the entire significance of creation. Divine love is the purpose of life, the meaning of life, and it is our destiny.

CHAPTER 2

MEHER BABA'S WORK PROJECT

We all have the same destiny: to realize our own divinity, our own Godhood, and be free of the ego. The problem is to raise the consciousness and at the same time abolish the ego.

Darwin Shaw

My belief is that we can get closer to the goal of life by consciously striving for it, with the Master's help. All the explanations that Meher Baba has given through the *Discourses* and other books are for the purpose of leading us toward divine love, toward actual merging with God. We are Baba's "work project," and this is his work with us.

Meher Baba asserts that in truth everyone is God, but that we are unconscious of our Godhood. The truth is latent within us, but it must be awakened; we must become conscious of it. To realize consciously what we already are unconsciously, we have to become free of the false self, the ego; and I believe that this is accomplished through our own efforts and through the intervention of the Master's divine grace.

Meher Baba is working to raise our consciousness from the dual realm, which means that he is opening doorways to increasing inner freedom. He redirects our consciousness toward the truth and urges us to take our stand upon the truth within and work toward it ourselves, instead of lingering unnecessarily long in the dream of illusion. He works on our behalf to destroy the veils that cloud our consciousness from the truth, and this brings us salvation of the spirit, freedom that is experienced at the level of the spirit.

He has come to take us beyond the opposites and to help us get free of them as we go through life. He has come to release us from the bondage of time-bound illusion. Then we are no longer subject to the world and its opposites. We find lasting inner freedom and true happiness within, far beyond the dual realm. That is what Baba means when he refers to the inner happiness of God-realization.

I feel that Meher Baba's work of freeing us from our false self and the illusory creation is still going on and will continue to go on as a part of the work of the Avatar. I believe that knowingly or unknowingly we are all participants in a divine design unfolding toward our spiritual potential, our own Godhood – and a small thing it is to ask of us that we should help in getting ourselves free.

LAYERS OF THE CAKE

Meher Baba refers to the gradual effacement of the false self as "the progressive conquest of the unconscious by the conscious." This means that the goal of life, simply stated, is to make our unconscious minds conscious. However, between the unconscious and the conscious resides the subconscious – and this is where our central problem lies. The unconscious, subconscious, and conscious are layers of consciousness, layers of the same cake.

The obstacle we have to contend with is the residue of *sanskaras* – deposits of impressions accumulated from past experiences – embedded mostly in our subconscious minds. These *sanskaras* create veils over our consciousness, blocking us from the awareness of who we really are. Each one of us has amassed a unique set of *sanskaras* due to our own particular experiences.

In the *Discourses*, Meher Baba explains the evolution of consciousness in great detail. Here I will only say that the whole purpose of it – during which consciousness was chiseled, hammered, and brought into being through suffering, pleasure, and all of the opposites – was to evolve consciousness. Once we have achieved creation-consciousness as human beings, our consciousness is complete and we

are equipped to experience the unconscious – the Oversoul – consciously.

However, because of our sanskaric veils, we are conscious only of creation, and of ourselves as being limited. We have the means of being aware of who we really are, but we go on using our fully evolved consciousness to experience the illusory creation, the gross world, which was merely the means to the end, when the end – full consciousness – has already been achieved! That is our predicament: We have become addicted to the creation.

We perpetuate our own bondage by continuously accepting what our sanskaras impel us to think, feel, and do. Sanskaras give rise to false thinking, which in turn creates the passing illusory drama we take to be “reality,” causing us to remain ignorant of the one reality, our true identity. That is why Meher Baba says, “The problem of deconditioning the mind through the removal of sanskaras is therefore extremely important.”

Instead of using our consciousness to express our sanskaras by pursuing more pleasures, excitement, and experiences in the gross world, Baba says that we should turn our consciousness inward toward the reality and begin to explore in that direction.

THE LOGIC OF EXPERIENCE

For ages we have been addicts to illusion but have not realized it, in prison but have not known it. We have been dwelling in semidarkness when, by a little effort, we could be dwelling in the light.

Fortunately, there are mechanisms that are built into this whole creation process that will eventually impel us to conclude that the only important goal is realizing the truth and that everything else is a hallucinatory nightmare. These mechanisms include periodic revelations, or awakenings, given by the Master. But the primary mechanism is the natural maturing process – our many lifetimes of experience whereby we naturally turn to the spiritual path – and this process involves disillusionment.

We are like the mule a fellow is negotiating to buy. “Does he obey?” the buyer asks the owner. “Sure,” the owner replies. “Show me,” the buyer demands. The owner then picks up a big stick and starts beating the mule over the head. “Hey, what are you doing?” cries the buyer. “You said this mule obeys!” “He does,” says the owner. “But first you have to get his attention!”

Meher Baba tells us that the logic of experience gathered through many lives drives everyone sooner or later to the spiritual path. (Actually, he says “several lives,” but I think that for the vast majority of us it has taken many lives.) This inner logic drives everyone to the spiritual path because we learn after a while that by continuing in the realm of desires and gross thoughts and gross actions all the time, we ourselves are creating the conditions that will cause us to reincarnate again and again.

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

Our lives may seem to be long and meaningful, but truly life is very short. We all have to drop our physical bodies someday. Then what happens? We go through a transitional period, and after a while we come back into another body and do the same thing all over again.

Meher Baba has told us many times that we are addicted to a mere dream within a dream within a dream. We argue with that, because this life seems so real to us. He then explains that when we are asleep and dreaming, we have that same feeling of realness; but when we wake up, we realize that it was a dream after all and that our feelings in the dream were just transitory and of no consequence. And that is the way our lives are.

After ages and ages, the dream of illusion eventually becomes a nightmare for the soul. We finally experience so much disillusionment that we get fed up with being enslaved at the gross level, and all those temporary things are no longer a lure, an attraction, for us. Then we turn to the heavens, we turn within, we turn to God, we turn to the Beloved and cry out, “What am I doing here? Isn’t there something more? What is it all about? What is real?”

Eventually, after numerous incarnations, we become mature enough so that we can start to

withdraw our consciousness from its attraction to the world and begin the involutory path toward inner freedom. This is the spiritual path toward reality, toward God. It is an unfolding process, a natural process of growth, of maturity, of refinement. In other words, we are growing.

HEALTHY SUFFERING

Meher Baba does not put pressure on people to grow; he lets them grow at their own speed. However, I feel that Baba permits disillusionment as a part of the growth experience, because it leads to detachment without our becoming callous or unfeeling. So we have growing pains, which lead to disenchantment, and this will involve a certain amount of healthy suffering.

Initially, we are going along not contesting the flow of sanskaric determination within us. The more we begin to contest this flow with our thoughts, feelings, and actions, the more we may experience a struggle. We are striking out for truth, taking our stand on the truth within.

My experiences with Baba have helped me understand and become so familiar with impelling forces such as anger, lust, and greed that when confronted with them, I would find the antidote (which would vary for each person) appearing within my consciousness, and I could switch gears and transform them right away.

We do not want to wait until these forces arise and become so impelling that we are helpless to control them. We need to plan ahead. Before these forces take hold of us and overpower us, we need to think them through to their end results and decide for ourselves that this is not the way we want to go.

We have to consider ways to counteract these impelling forces. Redirecting them into less binding channels is one way. As spiritual aspirants, we also have to keep a sense of Baba's presence with us in these situations. My secret strategy is to become aware of Baba himself – his presence – in all circumstances. He is the master of every situation.

THE GREAT FAVOR OF DISILLUSIONMENT

We have to want inner freedom more than any illusory thing. But we are dealing with our strongest addiction, our addiction to the creation. It is my understanding that we do not make spiritual progress if we are trying to create and maintain happy conditions in duality while still maintaining unconscious bindings such as desires. The underlying purpose of life provides for gradual growth toward reality, but if we persist in trying to maintain a gross situation, it goes against this purpose. That is when the mechanism of disillusionment becomes activated.

Disillusionment – and that would apply in our individual cases to the things that we are especially attracted to and bound by – can thus be a great favor to us. Tragedies, such as great losses and terrible pain, give us temporary detachment. If one firmly holds on to the rock of faith, temporary detachment gradually becomes permanent inner detachment – which is based on understanding – combined with intense longing for God. Then we will seek the reality, and we begin to enter the spiritual path and work within toward truth. We look to the Master within for security and support.

As we go through different stages, our attitudes change. For example, in the beginning of the disillusionment process, when we are less mature, we feel thwarted and frustrated. As we become more mature, we learn how to become more detached in ways that are harmonious. Events in our lives are no longer seen as “infections,” but as blessings.

In other words, as we progress, we do not always have the same reactions. The more mature we are, the more mature will be our reactions. Eventually, we are able to experience causeless happiness, an inner state of being that is not dependent upon the gross level at all.

A SUBTRACTION PROBLEM

Baba gives us clues about the spiritual path. Just the phrase “withdrawal of consciousness” in his discourse “Arriving at Self Knowledge” is a big clue, because the whole process of the spiritual

path involves withdrawing our consciousness from the lures of the attractions in the gross world and beginning to work within.

Inner withdrawal is precipitated by disillusionment, or simply common horse sense. We reach the point where we consciously withdraw our attention from the exterior world and begin to focus it more within, at inner levels. In other words, as we become tired of the sense of bondage that we ordinarily experience after so much disillusionment and considerable inner striving, we turn away from the gross and toward God and reality within.

In essence, inner work is a process of using our consciousness to separate the false from the real – because the real cannot be added to the false. The false must go. What we have to do is counteract our own ignorance. I recall that Meher Baba once said that the truth (the real) cannot be known unless ignorance (the false) is known to be ignorance. This is all part of the conquest of the unconscious that Baba discusses.

INDIVIDUAL PATHS

Despite periods where we may not seem to be getting anywhere, Meher Baba says that we are continuously growing and making progress. The journey involves sporadic growth and apparent ups and downs until we reach the path of fortunate nonreturn.

Each of us has to work with the sanskaras, the limitations, and the illusion of our own environment, of our own being. There are as many perspectives as there are individuals, because of our different sanskaric backgrounds, so we are not identical in how we do this inner working. We have to forge our own ways of working and follow our own inner path. Also, we go through phases, so the ways in which we work change. It is not a matter of doctrines, and Meher Baba purposely avoided establishing systems or doctrines. And we are not following “followers of Baba.” We are following the Master himself within our own being.

CHAPTER 3

OUR MASTER'S LOVING HELP

Ideally, we will realize that we can remove our own false self from the scene enough so that Baba can work. We become onlookers observing what is happening. In other words, we are not trying to direct Baba; we are getting out of his way and allowing him to work on us.

Darwin Shaw

Cleaning out the Augean stables of the subconscious mind requires our close attention and earnest effort. It is not something that is easily done, because we are locked into our misconceptions and imprisoned by our perception of who we are, what we are, and what creation is. We have to unlock all these things that keep us bound to a sense of helplessness, limitation, and ignorance.

It really is a Herculean task, much more than we, by ourselves, can handle. We need the Master's intervention. Meher Baba, the Avatar, being one with universal consciousness and present in every individual mind, is aware that each one of us is really God but that we are veiled by illusory impressions.

Therefore, Baba is not aloof from the individual. He is the embodiment of God's love, and his love is for each one of us. It is not just an overshadowing blanket of love for masses of people. It is a very personal and intimate love for each individual as an individual. He knows everything about us – all our weaknesses and strengths, as well as our potential. And he loves us unconditionally. He holds us to his heart very dearly, and he draws us into his Being. And this, I feel, is the great blessing of our relationship with him.

INDIVIDUAL FLOWERS

Like waiting for a flower to grow, Meher Baba is waiting for each one of us to withdraw from illusion. He is always watchful for those who are fed up and ready to turn away from the gross level to something more refined. The ego, anxious to preserve its illusory self, relies upon desires for those things that keep our attention riveted to the things of the gross world. It is not very easy to draw our attention away from all of the desires and the things of this world. But sooner or later this must be accomplished, and Baba knows when we are ready to do that kind of work.

The Master's work by and large is to dissolve our superficial outer shell, to awaken our dormant spiritual consciousness, and to lift our consciousness out of the level of duality, which is all the opposites: gain and loss, beginning and end, pleasure and pain. In other words, he takes us away from the illusory food of the "Garden of Eden" and gives us the food of the truth. He weans us away from the false, and diffuses the energies of our sanskaras so that they no longer have power over us, eventually wiping them out.

But his main task is to turn our attention toward God, toward reality, deepening and expanding our love, so that we will long for God, long for reality, for the light, or truth, even at the expense of denying ourselves completely.

As the Master within, he goes out of his way to push all of us closer and closer toward our own inner freedom until finally we are ready to let go of body-consciousness altogether and live the life of the spirit. He knows exactly what each person needs, and rather than work with people in a general way, he works with each one of us in a unique manner designed to free our consciousness from bindings in the most efficient way. He understands all of our karma and our sanskaric accumulation, and he knows what can be done to help us along. So it is not that we are doing this work on our own,

struggling in the dark.

Some of our sanskaras are tenacious, and they can take years to wear our and see through so that we are actually free, inwardly free, of all these bindings. We have to trust in Baba's ability to work with us in bringing about solutions for becoming more selfless and letting go of veils that are no longer necessary.

OPTING OUT OF THE DUALITY GAME

Ultimately, Meher Baba is helping us "reconstitute" ourselves "in the light of the highest Truth." As issues or matters that require reconstitution come up in our lives, he helps us see through them and gradually understand ourselves.

These experiences force us to be flexible and not identify with the personality self, the false self. We gradually learn to be detached and say, "Oh, so that's what is happening now." We have to continuously adjust to inner and outer situations. They are constructions of maya (illusion), anyway. But I find that Baba facilitates our ability to cope with whatever is happening. I feel that this work of reconstituting is always going on, and that he is working with each of us, whether we realize it or not.

The Avatar is completely unlimited and all-powerful. His work within us is unlimited, and all barriers can be resolved through his infinite power, which is an attribute of reality. His power is the power of truth, the sword of truth, slaying the falseness that makes us victims bound at subjective levels to material things. In fact, most of his work with us is at subjective levels, because, as Meher Baba said, "All finiteness and limitations are subjective and self-created." The only limitations we have are those we have imposed on ourselves.

For ages we have been taking duality as our reality, and the Master is trying to raise us out of that level. We have allowed all sorts of self-created conditions to make us happy or unhappy. When our only "income" comes from the Master, we no longer participate in the duality game. He gives us – and we are able to receive – continuous light, continuous freedom, continuous reality. His love sustains us and becomes the primary force working through us.

THE MASTER'S CONSTANT PRESENCE

One of the major inner stances we need to adopt is that of letting love flow while not getting caught up in our current scenario. It is all a passing show; love is the only real thing that is happening. Our "constant" becomes the connection with the Master at the center of our being. Then, at a lower level, the illusory world is passing by. I feel that we must make efforts to withdraw our attention from all of the illusory happenings more and more so that we can remain steadfast in a constant relationship with the Master within.

When he was in his physical form, Baba assured us that with his infinite consciousness he would be with us always wherever we were, whatever we were doing, so that our actions would not have a binding effect on us. Naturally we are not going to purposely do things that would be wrong. This assurance was to give us an inner sense of detachment from illusion, replacing it with his love and presence.

Beloved Baba's living presence is something we can have with us all the time, by thinking of him, focusing on him with love, and trying to love him more and more. Ultimately, we will be doing this anyway. We will be funneled into that position where we will love God completely with all our heart, and the sooner we can get to that point, the sooner we will be free from the unnecessary suffering of all the opposites.

INTEGRITY OF PURPOSE

But Meher Baba does not expect that we are suddenly going to relinquish everything. It is a matter of growth. Baba is not talking about dilettante discipleship, but one hundred percent dedicated

discipleship and complete devotion.

What is important is integrity of purpose. This means being true to the ideal one is trying to attain. In other words, not to have integrity of purpose would mean being willing to set aside one's ideal to pursue things having a lesser value. Once we know the ideal that Baba lays out for us, it becomes our ideal, and we try to be true to it. We discover where we can be more faithful in following our ideal as Baba shows us how it should be done.

This one hundred percent dedication comes about not through simply deciding that tomorrow or every Tuesday we are going to work on getting God-realization. It comes about when we have matured in consciousness to such an extent that pursuing our beloved ideal becomes a necessity for us.

FREEDOM THROUGH LOVE AND LOVE THROUGH FREEDOM

Love is the medium of exchange between the Master and the disciple, so we have to develop our love: love of God Incarnate, love of the Christ. As we make efforts to love him, he helps us in his own way, in ways we cannot imagine. His love – a river of truth, power, light, and strength – inundates us, and, far more powerful than any illusion, it erodes away our addiction to the creation. We need to develop one-pointed focus on him through love and self-surrender.

As we love the Master more and love God more, a latent sense within us opens up, and through our own intuition and insight we can see that we need not be limited. Meher Baba says that we are not the limited ego, the finite little creature we think we are. In reality we are the soul – we are spirit. The soul is always free, always eternal. What Baba is saying is that we are timeless, and we can experience the fact of our being spirit here and now. We do not have to wait until we drop the body.

As spirit, we are above reincarnations and personalities, gain and loss, and good and evil. We are meant to discover this now – to live at the level of the spirit, not at the level of the body, which is merely the storefront for our business, an instrument for being conscious at the gross level.

We are a part of God – every one of us! It is toward this consciousness that the Master is leading us so that we will get free of the wheel of reincarnation. The Master wants to share his consciousness with us; that is his gift to us. In 1956, Meher Baba said to us, “Love Baba with all your heart.” When we are free from being dominated and buffeted by our sanskaras, we can love him with all our heart.

CHAPTER 4

OUR VEIL-MAKING MACHINE

Limitation comes into existence owing to ego-centered desires and self-will. Possessiveness in all its forms leads to a life of limitation.

Meher Baba

We are always surrounded by a luminous Sea, a Sea of light, of love, of bliss. The unity underlying all personalities and all things in the universe is God. God is in everything, and everything is God.

No matter what we think we are seeking, or what our sanskaras – our conditioned impressions – impel us to seek, we are really seeking to merge with this luminous, all-pervading Sea of God and to experience eternal, abiding fulfillment. In other words, what we are really seeking is the happiness of union with God.

TOTAL LOSS IS GAIN

Our illusory life is a vacant dream, and Meher Baba has explained that drawing closer to God is the only endeavor that has real value. The general consensus, however, is that happiness lies in fulfilling our desires and in accentuating the self through possessions and achievements, regardless of the fact that this only creates more desires, more entanglements, and more bondage.

On the involutionary path, the spiritual path, we undergo a refining, awakening process in which we discard elements of the self and sublimate all of our energies so that they can be used to fuel our love for God and propel the self toward Him. Therefore, spiritual advancement is not further development of consciousness, a process of acquiring something, or an achievement for the ego. Spiritual advancement is emancipation from the bondage of sanskaras; it involves disentangling oneself from the false and, importantly, inviting the real into our being – opening to the truth within. This is in contrast to the psychological work of trying to get rid of our painful sanskaric patterns in order to create a pleasant existence in illusion – in other words, trying perhaps unwittingly to harmonize with our sanskaras.

I believe that as spiritual aspirants our concentration should be on loving God and merging with Him, and the predominant process we are engaged in is not self-realization but complete self effacement, which is both total annihilation and complete merging of the personality self into God.

CLOUDY WEATHER WITHIN

Until we wake up to the awareness that we must make some efforts to get free of our sanskaric bindings, we remain very busy continuously making veils over our consciousness, and then we wonder where the cloudiness we experience comes from and why we do not have insight.

As Meher Baba has explained so clearly, sanskaras are weaknesses or bindings, and sanskaric veils are obstacles on the path to our spiritual unfoldment. They cloud our consciousness so that we are unable to see clearly at inner levels, and they keep us from experiencing God within.

Of course, one can only vaguely generalize about sanskaric veils. They would differ in detail with each individual and be peculiar to one's own distorted, ignorant inner consciousness. Most of the veils, or impressions, that we have absorbed and woven into sanskaric patterns are created by the "wanting machine" of our desire-nature, which is expressed mainly in the form of lust, greed, anger,

selfishness, jealousy, a sense of aloofness, pride, and egoism in any form. Other veils are created by our many misconceptions and our false sense of limitation.

EXCUSES

Dispelling the veils over our consciousness is subjective work, and my understanding from Meher Baba is that the path for each of us lies through our own sanskaric veils and requires personal efforts. To hold to the belief that the clearing out of those veils will occur on its own over time, without our making efforts, is to postpone our freedom.

We find all kinds of excuses for preserving our own little desire-nature and ego. Most people want to play in illusion and have their inner freedom, too. We want a sense of spiritual protection and guidance, but we develop a philosophy of life that includes and accommodates our weaknesses. Further, we do not realize that those are weaknesses; we think they are simply attributes of gross consciousness. So when it comes to giving up all these veils, people tend to rationalize. Is it really time for us to do that? Is it really necessary? Does Baba mean for all of us to do that, or just his closest Eastern disciples?

DESIRES

More than anything else, our veils result from our attraction to objects and sensations at exterior and interior levels that captivate and preoccupy our consciousness. Such preoccupation amounts to a wasting of our lifetime. Meher Baba says that in our state of ignorance we are “continually in the grip of wanting.” Wanting becomes a habit, and we look for reasons to keep it functioning.

Our ego is made up of fat strands of desires consisting of psychic tentacles continuously reaching out for things, and it is reluctant to give up its life. It is very clever at deceiving our minds in order to retain its existence, and even at finding ways to expand its scope.

We are like the lean, hungry rabbit who comes upon a farmer’s fenced-in garden. After he finds a way to squeeze under the fence, the rabbit eats and enjoys. Then he decides to head for home, but he cannot get back under the fence because he is too fat! We fatten ourselves in the Garden of Eden, the illusory creation, and then one day wake up to the fact that we are captives. We begin to long for freedom. We realize that we have to cease going after everything that comes along. We see that we must slim down by getting rid of these sanskaric veils – our desires and attachments at the gross level.

Fundamentally, desires are a repudiation of our innate completeness – not a separate completeness, but completeness within the aura of the Master’s divine love and grace. The wanting machine is the only thing keeping us from our completeness. We discover that when we make an effort and manage to stop the wanting machine even for a short time, we can experience our inherent completeness to some degree.

LIMITATIONS

One time in 1954, when eighteen of us Western men were gathered in the big room in the Retreat Building in Meherabad as Baba’s guests for three weeks, Baba said, “When we go outside this room, we see the hills, etc. Why? Because we have projected it out of us. It is all we. Being in God, we are the sole producers of all phenomena, and we get entangled in that. It is very difficult to come out of that entanglement.” This means that we make veils by taking as real those conditions that we ourselves have created in the first place. We impose restrictions on our own consciousness.

Through complacency, we tend to accept spiritual limitations without being conscious that we are doing so. We think in terms of separation, multiplicity, and eventuality. Spiritual limitations include being bound by time, which Baba has said is the invention of maya (illusion). Our sense of time needs to undergo a change; we have allowed it to condition our thinking. We must repudiate “the future.” For example, Baba tells us how many lifetimes it takes before we reach the goal of God-realization or

liberation. Many people feel discouraged and think it will be ages before they reach the goal. However, I take the attitude that most of those lifetimes are behind us.

Spiritual limitations are deeply engrained within our consciousness. We are comfortable with them, and to be unlimited seems strange to us. But we can easily experience great spiritual freedom and salvation by accepting the immediacy of the Master's love and grace. To do this, however, we have to stop limiting God! Sometimes we judge His omnipotence and imagine Him to be lacking. We affirm that He is omnipotent, that He can do anything, but we feel and act to the contrary.

We may also discover that we are placing limits upon the Master. We have a tendency to unconsciously form beliefs that keep us bound to limitations and actually prevent us from drawing closer to the Master, to Baba. Thinking that we must purify ourselves before surrendering to him is an example of a limitation based on the misconception that his love for us is conditioned by our so-called goodness or worthiness. By thinking this, we are limiting the possibility of experiencing his unlimited, unconditional love. Or we may think of Baba as of the past and believe that closeness to him is no longer possible. This misconception is the result of thinking of him as his physical body. In fact, Baba is of the present and is more accessible than ever.

Harboring spiritual limitations has the effect of limiting within our minds and hearts the scope of our possibilities. Baba says that what we have to do is reverse the process of creation and perception "without obliterating consciousness." Becoming aware that *we* are the ones programming our limitations is one aspect of the conquering of the unconscious that Baba refers to.

MISCONCEPTIONS

Perhaps most of our lives as spiritual seekers is spent consciously or unconsciously trying to correct the latent misconceptions that have been plaguing us from the subconscious level of our minds. When we probe each of our own particular misconceptions to its foundation, we discover that we have been coping with wrong answers for most of our lives. We have accepted as facts things that are simply not true.

We have been brought up with the fundamental misconceptions that the creation is real and that we are individual, limited creatures. And so, right from the beginning we take it all for granted. There are many misconceptions that we take to be a part of our ordinary lives, not realizing that they are misconceptions and that they are distorting our inner awareness. As seekers of truth, we have to see through the misconceptions and what they cause, and replace all that with what is the nearest we can come to the truth itself; we cannot add truth to the misconceptions.

Misconceptions can include the tendency to imagine things and to follow trains of thought. Sometimes, before we even get out of bed, a certain train of thought has already left the station, and we are not even aware that this has happened. When we first wake up in the morning, the mind gets activated, and we present it with a train of thought, which leads us into other trains of thought, and they produce what becomes the content of our day. So we get involved in following these trains of thought instead of taking control and initiating a wisely chosen train of thought.

Misconceptions also can involve low self-esteem based on an incorrect assessment of who and what we really are. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he" is a very profound and philosophically revealing statement. Our everyday thinking, our beliefs, and the limitations that we accept are all part of the bondage that we experience. We start with a conclusion from our subconscious and our observations, then look for signs confirming our conclusion, which in turn solidify that conclusion.

MISPROJECTION

Maintaining misconceptions applies not only to ourselves. It is interesting to observe that we may be unconsciously accentuating things we have observed in other people, instead of inwardly asserting and affirming the truth about their being. We make a mistake if we stereotype people. If we

engage in projecting their material side back to them, it will tend to grow in them.

This kind of projection embraces the limiting idea that we are all separate individuals, instead of the more comprehensive truth that, as Baba says, at the soul level we are one. So, if we would look for the soul, the ideal self, in others, that would become accentuated in them. Emphasizing the soul quality of others can become part of our inner work.

On the practical level, we take into account the illusory sanskaric aspect of people, but at the same time regard them in the light of their true, ideal self – emphasizing that, rather than any other side of them. By doing this, we are helping them to remove veils. This means looking upon people as, in the last analysis, spiritual beings really seeking God. To get to this perception, affirm: “Baba is doing everything”; “Baba is the doer.”

I know that for most of us it takes an effort to project the basic truth about people, but if one can develop this more flexible attitude, this benefits not only their consciousness but our own, because what we visualize affects our own being. If we visualize weaknesses in others, that reflects on our own consciousness. If we visualize the ideal self of others, we are calling forth the same in ourselves: the truth in our own being. It is not always easy to see the higher side of people, but it is worth trying to do.

Around Baba, we would experience this kind of projection from him in a very powerful way. The radiation of Baba’s presence has the effect of completely enveloping one’s lower nature and calling forth one’s higher self. It is not as though he is in a closed box and you are in a closed box, and you do not really affect each other. He is truth and reality, and he is radiating truth and reality and light and divine love, and you are radiating falsehoods and illusion. Something has to give! So when the illusions begin to give way, light begins to dawn, and one begins to experience a deep inner integration and spiritual upliftment.

COLORING OF OUR THOUGHTS

I have gathered from Meher Baba that we have to deal with our sanskaras at all levels. We are more conscious of the sanskaras at our surface consciousness, whereas in the subconscious we may be aware of them only as feelings or impelling forces. The relationship between conscious and subconscious sanskaras is that there is some “coloring” of our conscious thought because of our subconscious sanskaras.

In other words, when we allow sanskaras at the subconscious level to impel us into actions or cause us to draw conclusions about things, the effects we experience by doing so tend to confirm and solidify our misconceptions in the subconscious mind. For example, sanskaras come out into the conscious mind in the form of certain desires, which have already been formed by certain misconceptions in our subconscious. When we put those desires into action, we experience certain effects that are of the same nature and that concord with the original misconception, thus “confirming” that misconception.

We may not be able to understand where all these impelling forces and feelings come from and what they involve, but as time goes on, we can become more aware of the mechanics of them as feelings or impelling forces. Then we can have some intelligent control over them and not respond to them, rather than be impelled to put them into action. It is like defusing a bomb by understanding and intelligently regulating its mechanism.

SEEING THROUGH MISCONCEPTIONS

This is all rather esoteric and difficult to communicate at the level of reason. As we rise above the realm of duality to levels of intuition and insight, we get more and more mental clarity and inner awareness about these things. This is all part of one’s individual experience.

My best experiences of working with the subconscious were under Baba’s guidance, where I would find myself plunged into the subconscious and able to work at that level. There I was able to

clean house, so to speak, and remove the swarm of sanskaric mosquitoes, instead of being bitten by them. We can learn how to shoo them out of our consciousness so that they no longer affect our conscious life.

All this is why it is so important for us to evaluate our thoughts, our desires, our feelings – everything we are exposed to. Little by little along the spiritual path, we work to correct the misconceptions in our subconscious and to intercept the whole mechanism of sanskaric pattern formation. We learn different facts, those based on truth, to counteract our misconceptions. We will see through them and understand where they lead. And then we have to make a choice of whether we want to continue making sanskaric veils or go in a clearer direction.

My own impression is that many of us allow ourselves to become inert in our habits of living. We believe in doubts, we believe in our limitations, we believe in all sorts of things that everyone else seems to believe in, too, when actually they are not what they seem to be. And we remain at a level where there are doubts and fears and anxieties and opposites and things of that sort, instead of concentrating on God or Baba and staking our lives on him.

SUBTLE VEILS

Often self-interest and secret desires that are lurking in the subconscious have a surreptitious way of veiling our consciousness. Operating in a very subtle way, these desires emerge in our consciousness and want to find fulfillment. And this works its way even into our devotion and love for God. These subtle veils discolor our inner vision, and this causes doubts about the Master to arise in our minds, resulting in a lack of full faith.

Although the operation of these subtle veils is something we may not even be aware of, we can do a great deal toward unveiling our deepest faith. This is important, because, as Baba says, “Faith reaches its natural climax and goal when it comes to rest in one’s own Master.”

Inner transformation through faith in the Master is required on the spiritual path, and everything can become completely transformed if we love and trust him. When this happens, new revelations are disclosed to us. If we do have confidence in him and believe him to be who he really is, then we will have this kind of faith. The heart opens up and we become strong and courageous. We dare to launch forth into the unknown of spiritual values, and we dare to let go of the false and to assert the truth within.

And because of our faith, we trust what he is doing with us in our lives, even if we do not like what is happening. He is always giving us so much love, unfailingly supporting us no matter what we are going through.

CHAPTER 5

DISSOLVING OUR VEILS

Into the cause of causes shalt thou penetrate, and lifting, one after another, every veil of illusion, shalt reach at last the inmost Heart of Being.

James Allen

When we become true seekers and put our inner focus on the Master within, we become increasingly aware of all the veils – in the form of sanskaric thought-patterns – that darken our awareness of reality. We find that we *maintain* these veils, and we realize that we must tear them down in order to see more deeply within. By this I mean shedding the false self – all the desires, misconceptions, and limitations that hold us back and keep us tied to this false idea of who we are.

Stepping out of the false self requires effort, and getting rid of our veils is our work. Like going up in a hot-air balloon basket, we must let go of the rope and dump out the sandbags in order to rise. So we have to throw out the veils, discard them. This means letting go of limitations and finiteness, doubts and fears, our misconceptions, and attachments to emotional and physical experiences – all these subjective things – and realizing more and more, with the Master’s grace, who we really are.

A NATURAL PROCESS

By “efforts” I do not mean imposing upon the mind a strained, artificial discipline motivated by negative self-judgment. Rather, I mean a natural response based on understanding that inspires us to clear out the false veils, exchanging them for something more true, as we awaken to an increasing awareness of the infinite possibilities open to us. This growing understanding is based on love for God rather than on reason, on intuition rather than on intellect.

This is mostly a matter of maturity, which develops through “the logic of experience” that Meher Baba describes, bringing about readiness to grow out of the gross realm. In other words, we make a gradual adjustment to the spiritual reality and by degrees work in a harmonious and natural way toward our ideal, as opposed to coercing the mind. Otherwise, if we attempt to coerce the unprepared mind, we run the risk of engaging in repression and creating complexes.

My own experience is that we attract the Master’s attention with our sincerity and integrity of purpose. He seems to awaken one’s insight so that one begins to see better where the problems are and how they can be approached and dissolved through right understanding, rather than through coercion. I find it tremendously helpful to know that he is the force behind our awakening.

DISPELLING VEILS

Harboring our own thoughts, feelings, and desires, and thinking that they do not hurt anyone because they are just something that we keep to ourselves – this is how we maintain veils, and it is hurting us within. So we have to work on our false selves at interior levels and clear away anything that is maintaining or creating veils. Dispelling veils involves altering our thinking and feeling in favor of truth. This is a part of taking our stand upon the truth, as Baba advocates.

If we are unsure as to how to get under way in dispelling veils, we can follow the simple criterion Baba has given us to work from. It goes something like, “Do anything that you would not mind doing in front of Baba. Say anything you would not mind saying in front of Baba, and think anything that you would not mind thinking in front of Baba.” I feel that we must try to work toward

purity and openness of heart, as well as toward such qualities as self-confidence and self-esteem.

It is a matter of choice, and we are making choices every minute of our lives. Of course, I am referring to sincere spiritual seekers who are willing and who realize they must make an effort to get spiritual enlightenment. Some of these choices are seemingly unimportant, but they are perhaps really critical, because a thin sanskaric thread can become a string and then a rope, and before we know it, we are hog-tied by it! Eventually we will learn how to head off binding thoughts and feelings at their finest, most subtle indication, even before they can become threads.

As we work to tear down the veils, we begin to enjoy the spiritual life within, because the heart gets free of turbulence and darkness, and we become increasingly aware of the divine presence. Eventually, we will come to the final closing down of the veil-making machine, because we will realize that we are already complete. With that completeness comes fulfillment and bliss. This comes about through a gradual withdrawing of the consciousness from the gross level of duality.

THE LIGHT OF GRACE

A great many ambient factors are involved in the withdrawal of consciousness from the dual realm, and it would be impossible to mention all of them. However, one of the most important factors is the grace of the Master. Divine grace is a power or force of light that can dispel and even altogether eliminate ignorance or falsehood. It can dissolve darkness, erroneous thoughts, and complexes within one's consciousness.

Sometimes we have to direct the light of grace into various areas within our own hearts – in other words, at the subjective level. By this I mean that instead of assuming that grace will take care of everything, we are actively accepting the intervention of divine grace as a great light that will dispel the darkness within us.

If one is conscious of the heart center, then one hopefully has enough inner vision to realize where one needs help. And one can oversee, to a certain extent, the working of grace in helping one's own heart center by shining the light of truth on it. It is like directing a light onto a particular dark spot, which then makes it light.

However, it is difficult to generalize, because as individuals we have our own individual dark and light spots, and they are not all the same. The Master reveals to us as individuals where we can clean out our Augean stables, a little here, a little there. In his own way, he reveals where our mistaken analysis and judgment have led us to wrong conclusions. At least, that has been my experience. I find that when I feel a surging force – the energy of divine grace – I am able to direct it where it is needed the most. It is like a continuous gift, but it needs direction in order to counteract specific limitations and bindings.

LOVE THROUGH GRACE

It is the Master's inestimable great gift of grace, when we are aware of it, that inspires our own love for him more and more. And this awakens more insight, intuition, and inner-level awareness – and even awakens us to the prospect of actually merging, by degrees, with his consciousness. But our love for him should be without wanting and without bargaining. We love him just because he is most loveable.

His loving force of grace is an essential part of our inner awareness, and we are being sustained by grace. As individuals we will find salvation through grace – not through our merits – and thereby, as we clear out the veils, we can rest in a deep inner state of peace and harmony, because we will see that we already have security and sanctuary in the Master's love and grace. For that, of course, we are very grateful.

STOPPING THE VEIL-MAKING MACHINE

In Meher Baba's omnipotence and care for humanity, his purpose is to raise the consciousness of everyone and everything in creation, and in particular of those who love him. So we have to be prepared to grow within his love.

There is a biblical saying that roughly paraphrased says, "Unto whom much is given, much shall also be required." If we wish to draw closer to God, we must be prepared for further effacement and heart purification – an emptying of the heart of all our sanskaric veils. This can be very extensive, because it challenges the general paradigm that is accepted by everyone: the fundamental misconceptions that the illusory creation is based upon and the spiritual limitations we are brought up with.

So, stopping the veil-making machine is not a matter of armchair theorizing; it is work that is up to us to do. Growing pains are involved as we work our way toward God, but if we finally get fed up with running around the reincarnation wheel time and again, we are going to expedite the process. Otherwise, if we just wait for freedom from the need to reincarnate to happen automatically, it could take ages. Even if we still want to come back to serve the Avatar, we want to be able to provide a clear consciousness for his use. But we have to cease limiting ourselves. We have to stop thinking, "Oh, this can't happen. I won't have liberation for many, many lives."

With God all things are possible; He can actually do anything. Meher Baba as the Avatar is the incarnation of divine love, and he is above all laws. Nothing can confine or limit divine love, and no law, no set pattern or precedent, can restrict him. He is our best friend – and not only our best friend but also our ally, working with each one of us. He has consummate understanding and insight into the sanskaras of each individual, and he really does work within us to expedite our freedom of consciousness. I feel that this is what is going on full strength now that he has dropped his physical body.

So, as we work to sort out all this sanskaric determination that is impelling us to reincarnate and we open ourselves to the Master's grace, he is right there with us, "confirming and consolidating" our "previously acquired intuitions and perceptions" and "precipitating" our consciousness to higher and freer levels.

These levels, or layers, of consciousness unfold in an orderly progression of seven steps: from instinct to reason, then inspiration, intuition, insight, illumination, and finally realization of God. In other words, these levels comprise the steps Baba takes us through as he "confirms and consolidates" the fruits of our efforts.

Meher Baba means to liberate us, so let us not inhibit his work by saying, "I can't do that now. I'm bound with all these things, and it's going to take ages to grow out of them." Let us not wait for a thousand years more. It could happen at any time. I feel that we have to accept and believe in the highest possibility in this incarnation. We should not procrastinate, not put it off for another incarnation.

The primary point is that we are spirit, and we need to become conscious of it. To do this, we have to stop the veil-making machine and dare to forge ahead to form a friendship with the Master within. This is something we can constantly work on. Otherwise we prolong our suffering, which is what I believe incarnation really is.

CHAPTER 6

PURIFYING OUR HEARTS

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matt. 5:8

Through a refining process, we each are being fashioned into a temple on earth, and this process begins with identifying ourselves as timeless spirit and knowing that the truth of this can manifest in our lives.

The inner path consists of stepping-stones toward truth, and we move at the level of the spirit. We move toward God, toward Meher Baba, toward reality within by discarding the false, for we have to discard the false in order to experience the truth. As we move in the spirit and more light comes in, we experience upliftment, timelessness, and bliss. Instead of struggling with negative things, we accentuate the positive, love God more and more, and long for pure love, pure truth.

The path also involves trying to find God within, trying to feel the presence of God, to feel the divine love, divine grace, and divine beauty within. The way is open to each one of us, and eventually everyone of us, Baba says, will take that path.

THE DIVINE CHESS GAME

It takes a while to realize how close we are to the spiritual path and how easy it is for us to get under way on this inner path. I feel that it is not a question of following a doctrine or merely accepting a belief, but a matter of working through our own special cloud of sanskaric veils consisting of our thoughts, feelings, and desires. In other words, it is not working with something “out there,” but working inwardly to disentangle our consciousness.

It involves an awareness of where our attention is placed, or where our longing is. Fortunately, we do not have to go into the coliseum with the lions as the early Christians did. However, we are facing something far worse – our own desire-nature! Minimizing the desire-ridden ego requires paying attention to countless trivialities, noticing small efforts we can be making constantly.

I like to think in terms of a divine chess game. This is not a doctrine or a system, but rather the idea of devising ways to counteract the false claims of the ego. This divine chess game is “the game of ourselves,” and the object of the game is the checkmating of our false self. This involves trying to change our sanskaric impressions and eventually eliminating them altogether.

Just as figures move about a chessboard to counteract a tricky opponent, we are making moves to counteract the sanskaric tendencies that have held us back all along the way. In adapting ourselves to each new inner situation that comes up, we have to strategize and plan several moves ahead. After all, in the midst of battle is not a good time for one to start planning a strategy!

Each of us learns to predict what sets off strong reactions in ourselves and develops strategies that best counteract the energy tied up in our own sanskaras. We have to be on our toes to know what to do in each situation. For example, “wanting” embodies a lot of energy, and we can redirect, or sublimate, the energy tied up in our desire-sanskaras by turning it into spiritual longing, perhaps simply by reading something inspirational. That would be an example of a chess move. Another counteracting chess move we can make is keeping in mind the fact that the world is merely illusion. Another one is thinking of self-effacement as something positive. Seemingly small inner moves like these mount up, and after a while they add up to a dramatic redirection of our inner forces. The whole thing amounts to the clearing, or purifying, of the heart center.

LOCATION OF THE HEART

It is from the heart that all good and all evil come. Jesus spoke about the evils that come from the heart, and about the pure in heart. In 1954 in India, one of the Western men who were Meher Baba's pests asked Baba to speak a bit about what Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." So one afternoon Baba gave us a wonderful discourse on purifying the heart. Baba explained what the heart is, where it is located, and its connection with the thinking function of our minds. Here are Baba's words as I recorded them in my notepad at that time:

Mind has dual functions. The impressions that lie dormant have to be worked out, so they appear as thought. This thinking function of mind is known by Vedantists as Man [pronounced "mun"]. The second function of the mind is of feelings, of emotion. This is called Antah Karana. That means the heart. So what is known as heart is actually this second function of the mind itself.

The impressions that are called "sanskaras" are spent both through thinking and feeling. To the first functioning of mind belong just thoughts. Any kind of thoughts. To the second functioning of mind – the heart – belong feelings and desires. All feelings of joy, pain, disappointment, happiness, shock, etc., belong to this Antah Karana. What happens is, in sound sleep – when you sleep – the impressions lie in a latent dormant state....

Now, what wakes you up from sound sleep? Impressions. They wake you up. Impressions of actions done. And these impressions are spent first by thoughts, then desires, then by actions. So Krishna in his Gita said once, "Let impressions be spent only through thoughts." Then no new impressions will be formed. If you cannot do this, let impressions be spent through desires, longings, feelings – but not through actions. Then new impressions will be formed, but not so deep.

But if impressions are put into action, then new impressions are bound to form. This means that the first function of mind is not important. It is natural. But the second functioning of mind [i.e., heart] is important, because it is the seat of desires, and unless the heart – which I have just explained to be the second functioning of the mind – unless the heart is devoid of all desires – all feelings – that means, unless the heart is pure and naked, then God, who is your innermost Self, cannot reveal Himself.

The heart, then, is the feeling level of our mind, and both the thought and the feeling levels of our consciousness are parts of our mind – the mind that exists even when we are not incarnate. Our sanskaras, lying dormant in our subconscious as unexpressed tendencies, assert themselves first as thoughts, then (if not checked) as feelings (in the heart), and then (if not checked), eventually as actions. Baba explained that we are goaded by sanskaras of all kinds, and he emphasized the difference between thinking about something and doing it physically, and about the difference in the resultant sanskaras.

Baba said not to worry about feelings and thoughts of taking action. They do bring about sanskaras, but these will be minimal compared with their expression at the physical level. Therefore, when we are besieged by desires or strong emotions, we should curtail them at the inner level of feelings without giving them physical expression. But if we do express them physically, we are doing the worst thing we could do, because we are only sowing the seeds for more sanskaras of a like nature.

OPENING THE HEART CENTER

Meher Baba has said that the book he will give us to read is the book of the heart, which holds the key to the mystery of life. That is how important the heart is. So, much of our work needs to be centered on freeing the heart from sanskaric impulses. We do this work through what I call the heart center, which is a feeling center connected to our subjective, subconscious level, as opposed to the reasoning function of the intellect. It is through the heart center faculty that we can become aware of the spirit level of our being.

Baba especially emphasized the importance of keeping the heart center open. This is where the

spiritual path begins in a conscious way, because it is through the heart that we become conscious of sanskaras at the level of feelings and desires. And it is at this level that we can experience the fullness of divine love, beauty, freedom, and bliss, coupled with self-effacement, which is the letting go of the idea of a separate self.

Baba says, “The ego is the affirmation of being separate from the other, while love is the affirmation of being one with the other. Hence the ego can be dissolved only through real love.” So we must learn how to keep the flow of love in our consciousness, uncontaminated by the “I.” This involves purifying the heart and keeping love flowing through the heart center. As love flows through the purified heart, we radiate the divine qualities of truth, love, beauty, and purity itself. This is our goal.

Letting love flow, instead of thinking of selfish things, helps to remove veils in our consciousness by dissolving the selfishness, which is based on misconceptions and what Baba calls ignorance of the truth. It is not a matter of arbitrarily forcing the mind or the feelings along certain lines, but entails becoming subtle enough to be aware of how our selfish thoughts are formed from desires, where those desires come from, and what all of that leads to.

As we work inwardly, we notice that our consciousness settles more at the subjective level and our responses to the world flow from that level. Our values are more clearly defined. We see what sanskaric impulse is coming through and can make intelligent choices as to how to counteract it.

Our real work, then, is not developing some intellectual practice leading to special knowledge, but learning how to keep the heart center open, which means rising above the level of sanskaric impulses and letting love flow freely.

GOD’S PURITY

During Meher Baba’s last moments while in America in 1958, he communicated to us, “I am in you all. But I only can enter your heart when you have driven out everything else.” He added, “I am God. I am in you all. But I feel shy; I do not enter your heart if I find there the slightest impurity.” He was not conveying the idea that we had to go from being “bad” to being “good,” but instead that our minds had to be cleansed of impurities, which means thoughts and desires.

Purity of heart means God’s purity. Once we have love and inner freedom, purity of heart follows as a byproduct. So we do not focus on purity per se; that could easily lead to egoism.

THE KNIGHT AND THE DAMSEL

It is wonderful to discover that we have a great reservoir of love within us that can pour forth once we learn how to open the heart center. Many of us around Meher Baba would be aware of the heart center opening and love beginning to flow. His love was like a siphon bringing forth our love for him. We could not help but love him. The result was that our perception was greatly intensified, and we would find ourselves at much deeper levels of consciousness. We would be able to discern values at inner levels more clearly than ever before.

We found ourselves supported by new strength, because new energies were released, and together with the energies and insight, we found we had more control over our thoughts and desires and feelings within. Our world became not something being imposed upon us, but something that we could control more and more. All this is a function of the heart, so it is very important to keep the heart open and soft.

In fairy tales, the knight in shining armor defends, protects, and shields the fair damsel. This is an allegory about the mind and the heart. One’s mind can be very helpful in defending the equanimity of one’s heart center, which is closest to the spiritual realm and should be predominant. The knight (the mind) helps maintain the flow of love through the heart center while at the same time providing an essential control on the sanskaric impulses that may try to come through.

What we are seeking is peace of mind, which is really peace of heart. This means more

harmony, upliftment, more light within, deeper and deeper values. We must ask ourselves what we value the most. If we value peace of mind, peace of heart, we will make the effort to defend the heart, through which we are capable of seeing God. Eventually, we experience a high degree of integration of the heart and the mind. Then, as Meher Baba has said, “the false self becomes the lover of the true Self.”

SANSKARIC POTHOLES

It is a delicate undertaking to gain control of one’s thoughts and feelings without any coercion at all – effort, yes, but not coercion. It becomes a matter of seeing through the sanskaric complexes, which are based on erroneous knowledge, beliefs, and limitations, and being resourceful enough to take evasive action. All this is in relation to one’s own specific sanskaras.

It is like going for a walk on a known route. We come to know the wet, slippery areas, the potholes, and where the route leads. The first few times, we might make a mistake and fall into a pothole, but we soon get enough sense to walk on the other side of the road or choose a different place to step.

When we have learned from experience where our sanskaras lead, we come to know that we have to redirect them early. After a while, we can see the beginning of sanskaric pressures and start to counteract them at their earliest manifestation. It is like a railroad worker observing a train peacefully chugging along. Suddenly he notices a rogue train barreling down the same track from the opposite direction. He quickly throws a switch in order to divert the rogue train to a side track. Then he smiles as the first train, now out of danger, whizzes by. The first train represents truth, and the rogue train represents ignorance due to our sanskaras. We can learn to take subliminal evasive action: to switch our “train” of thoughts and feelings at the first sign of impending trouble.

We have to learn how to maneuver the mind so that we have more control – not willful repression, but a redirection of our energy so that we experience more inner freedom. Eventually, the thought patterns are no longer able to control us; instead, they come under our control. This is not blind control, because it is backed by understanding and subservience to truth itself. Gradually we become aware that everything really is illusion, and we become a channel of love, a river of love, an ocean of love.

CHAPTER 7

CHANGING OUR VALUES

If we take even one step – and we all know one step we could be taking right now – we begin to experience a little light and a little more of reality. After we take two or three steps, and then more steps, we see more and more light, and we begin to realize that we have been in a dream all along.

Darwin Shaw

It takes a lot of deep inner working to weed out desires, give up our misconceptions, and overcome our false sense of limitation – to ferret these things out and boldly and daringly kick them out of our consciousness. However, it is not that we let go of all these impediments and get nothing in return. There is no permanent void created when we let go. Rather, a process of exchange takes place, or should take place. Meher Baba speaks throughout the *Discourses* and elsewhere about letting go of the limitations of our ego-life in favor of the Master's unlimitedness. It is not that we merely let go of the limitations, but that we receive and fully accept the unlimitedness of the truth.

Therefore, we find that it is not a feeling of loss that we experience, but a sense of gaining some measure of inner freedom and fulfillment. Meher Baba is willing – even eager – to share his unlimited life with us. When we were with him physically, this was one of the most glorious things that we experienced: sharing in his infinite beauty and sweetness and indescribable freedom.

AN EXCHANGE PROCESS

Letting go of limitations requires not only paying attention to our thoughts and feelings and the illusory forces we allow ourselves to be swayed by. It also requires examining our values, especially at subjective levels, and exchanging relative or false values for more real values. We are working toward truth from a position of ignorance and falsehood, so it becomes a matter of a gradual exchange – exchanging one little aspect of falsehood for some aspect of truth.

At each step along the way, the play of imagination lessens. We exchange something that is grossly ignorant for something that is less ignorant, less gross, and a little more real – and sometimes, with Baba's grace, we may even catch glimpses of reality itself.

We have to go through this process because our values are mixed up with our desires, and the desires create a sort of delusive coloring over our values, which distorts them. In other words, we have a tendency to try to add truth to our desire-nature, thus preserving our false self. So we have to sort out the truth, or real values, from the distorted values of the desire-nature.

The desires, of course, have to be outgrown or cast aside – but not repressed. In lieu of repression of desires, we can make good use of their energy by transforming and sublimating it into longing for God, longing for reality. For the aspirant, this is a natural and most desirable way of proceeding, sublimating energies from desires that are seen to lead only into illusion and bondage, the bondage of the soul.

Thus, little by little, our mental consciousness undergoes a change. This is the gradual “reconstitution” process that Meher Baba refers to in the *Discourses*. Since, as Baba says, all finiteness and limitation is subjective and self-created, it is in our own hands to work at subjective levels, especially the heart level, to correct what is false and replace it with the real.

INNER BAROMETER

The individual has to determine what makes or fortifies veils over his or her own consciousness. At least we know from Baba's explanations what the goal is. And we can do a great deal toward helping our spiritual unfoldment, since we know where we are heading and what we must do and not do in order to make progress.

We are conscious of what is going on within us – or we can be. We all have an inner barometer that tells us what darkens or lightens the heart and lifts or dissolves the veils, and we can check the barometer while things are happening within us. If whatever we are doing gives us a feeling of light, so that we can see more deeply within and have more spiritual insight, we know we are on the right track. But if our thoughts, words, or deeds make things more cloudy, more obscure and limited, we can see that something is trying to keep us bound to the gross level of consciousness, and that this is not to our advantage spiritually.

So it is not a matter of reading books and going by certain exterior morals or formulas, but what we actually experience within our own self, our own consciousness. In other words, we can read our own experiences. We make choices as to what we will think, say, and do. And our insight gained from the good or bad consequences of those choices guides us. We can discover the right course to take all the time.

We need to value the insight and inner strength that come to us through clearing away the veils. Meher Baba says that more inner wisdom will be revealed to us in accordance with our fidelity to the insight we have. In other words, by respecting whatever insight we have and living by it, putting it into practice instead of ignoring it for pleasures or whatever else would preoccupy our consciousness, we will gain more insight. But if we continuously make bad choices, we make it harder for higher insights to be revealed to us. All these things vary with the individual, and we have to experiment with the concepts we have.

GROPING TOWARD THE LIGHT

Working through our unique sanskaras to dissolve veils and substitute real values requires one-pointed focus. By working within and concentrating our focus more upon God or Baba within, we draw the added assistance of the Master's divine love and grace to help us see the differences between values at inner levels.

Knowing all of our weaknesses, our karma, and our sanskaras, Baba guides us through experiences that will help us understand and see through the things that allure and trap us into more mayavic activities. Therefore, instead of reacting to maya, we are able to let go of maya through understanding. We make our choices, and through the experience of the light within – compared to the darkness we experience otherwise – those choices are not hard to make.

Fortunately, we are not groping in the dark, but groping toward the light. It is difficult to penetrate the sanskaric barriers and see that divine light is constantly flowing within. For years we are just going on faith and do not seem to be getting anywhere. Then suddenly, like someone digging a long tunnel, we begin to break through to the light.

We must try to live in the light and get used to it now. We have to want to change our inner environment to one where we no longer need to take incarnation. This means less attachment to the dark and more to the light. We must now set the furniture in the room in which we want to live in the future.

As we grow in strength and begin to experience more of truth than of falsehood, we become more daring to proceed toward the light. Then, as we continue working, tearing the veils, clearing out the dirt, our consciousness can become lighter and clearer, less vague, less cloudy, less filled with cobwebs. We can be more and more aware of reality – not just to see it in the distance but to realize ourselves as that reality.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

We all want to be free, and once we have tasted some measure of freedom, we become rebellious and no longer want to submit to the tyranny of vacant dreams, illusions, and false imaginings. We become willing to work toward greater freedom and to fight in order to remain free. That is what we are doing in our lives: working to feel and retain that experience of freedom.

We have to exercise control, not be loose cannons. We can easily have control over our thoughts by asserting love, the pure love in the heart. Our inner vision clears when we do this. But we have to want to do this, be willing to do this. The main object is to change what kind of music is being played by the heart: materialistic buzzing or the music of the spirit.

When we learn to exercise control, and especially as we begin to live our lives in the context of the truth rather than through our sanskaras, unused centers such as the heart center begin to be activated within us. When the heart center becomes activated, love begins to flow more and more, and we are able to assert freedom, the freedom of the spirit.

CHAPTER 8

CHANGING OUR FOCUS

Normal consciousness is like hypnotic sleep. Once you get a glimpse of reality behind the scenes, you wake up, never again settling for the death of ordinary life.

Darwin Shaw

Meher Baba is trying and suffering to help us reach the level of the spirit. We must fight the battles of our addictions, keeping our focus on him. This gives us the focus we need so that desires can drop away. We may not be sure that what we are doing is right, but if we have good intentions, integrity of purpose, Baba comes to our aid within and works with us. He supports us and walks with us, and when we fall he picks us up and helps us to get going again. I find it amazing that Baba works with us on the most minute things. He is actually more interested in our progress than we are.

Baba is most definitely working with all who wish to have him do so. This is the main part of our relationship with him; he is constantly working with us. It is not that he works with us a little bit now and then, but I feel that he is willing to work with us constantly, as long as we are willing to be truly dedicated to the spiritual path.

This is his work: to help us see what we can do. He says that although we have to work – work along the path ourselves – his part of it (as I have mentioned earlier) is to confirm and consolidate our highest intuitions and perceptions and to precipitate our consciousness to the next plane of consciousness.

But work we must. We must make an effort. And in addition to our one hundred percent effort, we have to accept one hundred percent grace. This seems like a paradox, but Meher Baba said in his Universal Message that he came to release that divine grace. His work for us is our salvation.

COME TO THE MASTER FIRST

Someone once asked Meher Baba, “Should one first get rid of desires and then come to the Master?” In other words, should we purify the heart and then put our energies into trying to love the Master? Baba said, “No, come to me first.” When we put all of our energies into trying to love the Master, that in itself will help us overcome our weaknesses and purify the heart. Doing so creates a centrifugal force, throwing out the false and preventing more of the false from coming in. Our vibrations step up a great deal; our inner vision is greater, and we dare to plunge ahead.

I think a lot of people unfortunately make their weaknesses an obstacle. This is one of the big pitfalls. They say, “I am not deserving of Baba’s love.” Feeling unworthy, they make that a barrier between themselves and the Master. But you cannot wait until you become pure of heart and have no weaknesses. Baba cautioned us not to make that mistake. In his discourse “True Discipleship,” Baba says that the disciple should “love in spite of his weaknesses and not tarry till he can purify his own heart.” In other words, do not inhibit your love because of your failures or your weaknesses. He knows all of our weaknesses and our faults, and his love for us is unconditional. Unbound by orthodoxy or any limitation, he accepts us without judgment.

In Meher Baba we find sanctuary, safety, and security. Try to be aware of his love for you as an individual. His disposition toward us is that of unbroken sweet, loving care all the time. His true nature is not subject to anger or vindictiveness. The apparent cycle of push-pull that we experience with him as he operates on our sanskaras is necessary. Try to get closer to him each time.

DOORWAY TO THE INFINITE

Love Baba in any way you can. He is the doorway to the Infinite. Baba says, “If you love me at your level, I will take you to mine.” This is the whole secret. By loving him personally, we come to love him in an unlimited sense.

I think that everyone who has come close to Baba spiritually also experiences him in the most personal sense with regard to his physical form. His form itself becomes a doorway to the infinite. But incidentally, en route, we experience the beauty of his form because he is, after all, the personalized Divine Beloved, the one we can really love, really adore.

So just love him. Feel that he is part of your consciousness. Make him your spiritual path, your discipline or way, instead of some mechanical exercise or program. Meher Baba says of himself, “I know the Way and its labyrinths, for I am the Way. I am the Goal.” Thus we are able to enjoy the company of the Divine Beloved and participate in the goal to some extent if we tune in to him with love.

When we were around Baba, sometimes this actually happened with us temporarily. His consciousness was so dominant, both in the presence of individuals and among throngs of people, that at times one would be swept into his state of consciousness and would experience some of the unlimited freedom and beauty and sweetness of God.

CULTIVATE COMPANIONSHIP

Inwardly, we have to believe in the highest possibilities. Negative thoughts mean that we are being hoodwinked by maya. It all boils down to working with Baba within, developing a sense of his companionship, and drawing closer and closer to him. This changes the tendencies of one’s mind and heart.

Drawing closer to Baba at the level of the heart by awakening inner feelings for him is what our effort is all about. We can do many things to help cultivate companionship with him. I think as we come to learn more about how he lived his physical life, which involved almost constant suffering for humanity, and how he has paid the price, so to speak, for our spiritual liberation, we will perhaps develop more feelings about him and a way of loving him. We can also comply with his inner instructions, tune in to his presence, and try to control what we think and believe as ways of drawing closer to him.

Even writing letters to him that will never reach him in the physical can be helpful. I recall once receiving from Baba a reply to a letter I had written to him. He said in this reply, “Your letter brought you closer to me.” In writing, we are pouring out our hearts. We are thinking of him, trying to reach him inwardly, trying to make that contact within, and trying to fathom his significance.

Our thought has to be used in the process. It sounds like an impossible thing, but my experience is that we can be aware of him the more we think of him; we can learn to feel his presence. When I was at my job, I had to try to keep my heart going: keep my feelings, my heart center, awake and active, feeling Baba’s presence, even though my mind had to be occupied elsewhere.

Of course I was not always successful in remembering Baba through the heart center, but it is not something that you blame yourself for if you cannot do it. You just work at it. When you are taking up any kind of sport or skill, you are not likely to be top rate to begin with – you have to work at it. If you begin to experience Baba’s presence, you will discover that it is not painful and unhappy work; it is a pleasant, happy, and blissful experience. In fact, you can experience happiness all the time by doing this work.

THE MASTER’S HELP

Meher Baba loves us and wants to sustain us and share his consciousness with us. He wants to share the Kingdom of God with us. It is always open. He wants to be our constant companion, and he

will, if we allow him. I feel that he is even more accessible now that he is without his physical body. The more we can stay in his company inwardly, the more we are exposed to that divinely pure consciousness, and the more we will become free of the attractions that are really our weaknesses.

To counteract our addiction to maya, the Master imparts truth – and dissolves the false – by revealing himself inwardly. His truth supersedes any other value we are holding on to. As we make inward efforts to love him, he helps in his own way.

A growing acceptance of the Master's intervention leads to increasing intimacy with him, and we feel impelled to want to clean up, to clear up, the heart. Through this intimacy with the Master, we become in some measure a part of his consciousness. In other words, he takes us to his level when we identify ourselves with the infinite, the soul-level of our being, which the Master represents. This is not something that we can imagine. The Master's love, which is given freely and internally, dissolves all sanskaras and cancels out our addiction to maya.

Therefore, we must learn not to identify with our lower self. We must maintain the attitude and visualization of the goal, or reality, as already achieved. We must remain established in the freedom and positive attitude of truth realized.

THE GATE OF THE HEART

We are meant to see with the eyes of the heart and know with the eyes of our consciousness. Seeing with the eyes of the heart is a mystical seeing, through which we perceive the inner path, the inner love of God. We see with the glow of love at the heart level. We must assert the supremacy of this glow of love by loving the Master, loving Baba.

Love is not maudlin sentimentality, affection, or an emotion, but something much more refined and pure. It is a sense of oneness, illumination, unlimited freedom, and knowledge – a knowing wisdom and insight. It is the beam of reality, of truth. Love is reality. Reality is perhaps the best word, because love causes the veils of falseness, of unreality, to fall away.

Meher Baba says that as we put our focus on him, he opens the gate of the heart and releases the glow of love, which changes our consciousness at the thought level. When we assert the glow of love in the heart, light is revealed. The heart then no longer accepts such misconceptions as low self-esteem. We do not try to love people per se, but instead make efforts to achieve the glow of love in the heart. This glow results in a radiating love and leads to a natural giving out of love.

SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT

Meher Baba's discourses provide explanations about love and how we narrow down our consciousness when we really ought to do the opposite: expand our consciousness toward this kind of love. This brings us a new understanding of what fulfillment is. True fulfillment is spiritual fulfillment, which lies in spiritual expression, rather than in obtaining objects or personal achievements. This is one of the lessons that we learn the hard way, more or less, because we do like to get things.

So it is in giving – in allowing love to flow – rather than in getting that we experience fulfillment. When we love, we do not need to have our love reciprocated, because we are already experiencing fulfillment. Love is its own fulfillment, and to give is to be fulfilled. This ultimately becomes what Baba calls divine love, in which there is no thought of self at all. We experience complete dependence upon the grace of God within.

CHAPTER 9

GIVING OUR ALL

The whole creation is a play of thoughts: the outcome of the mind. It is your mind that binds you; it is also the mind that is the means of your freedom. You are eternally free. You are not bound at all.

Meher Baba

The soul is never contaminated; it is eternal, sovereign, free, pure, untrammled, and untarnished – and we are that soul. This is our great consolation: that we are the soul. We are free – so let us be free! Give everything to the Master and be free. Enjoy freedom of the heart, freedom of consciousness. It is a great privilege to be incarnated now. Become free in this lifetime!

The ultimate reality is not an object apart from us, apart from everything. It is all-inclusive, timeless, and already here among us. Jesus said the Kingdom of God is within you. It is within each one of us. It is not something that is in outer space somewhere, nor is it in the future any more than it is in the past. It is not an object in the future, but is always in the present, and it is always here with us. Only one person here and there becomes aware of it, but sooner or later it is everyone's destiny to realize the ultimate reality and be free.

Jesus gave us the key to realizing the truth with his words, "Leave all and follow me." Leave all your attachments and impressions, those numberless things that bind you so firmly to your limited self, and follow the Perfect Master or the Avatar, who is, Baba says, the only one "beyond the bondage of sanskaras." He leads us to our infinite self, that which is always within.

Accept the Master's infinite Being as part of your nature. Accept and be sustained by his grace. Grace is not something we achieve but something we receive. It is not something we add to what we are, but is what happens when we learn to let go of our backlog of burdens. It comes as a pure gift and is an expression of the Master's love for us.

TENTACLES

As the soul, we are beyond maya and nothing can bind us. However, we must withdraw our consciousness from the realm of ego desires and develop love for God, love for the Master. I liken the withdrawal of consciousness from the gross realm to withdrawing invisible tentacles. Like those sea creatures whose tentacles constantly float out trolling for food, we extend unseen tentacles into the gross world, seeking experiences.

Spreading out our tentacles only binds us all the more. In other words, to express our desires is to multiply them. So why do we reach out for things in the world? We are seeking distraction. We feel that something is missing, that we will be happier if we have this or that. Really we are looking for truth. But we get distracted by maya and then seem to forget that God is what we really want.

Baba says, "Most of man's suffering is self-created through his ungoverned desires and impossible demands. All this is unnecessary for self-fulfillment. If man becomes desireless and contented, he will be free from his self-inflicted suffering. His imagination will not be constantly harassed by feverish reaching out toward things that really do not matter, and he will be established in unassailable peace."

Thankfully, we are constant learners, and one day we will learn to direct our forces within. It is a matter of maturing. True spiritual progress is best made by the mature person, one who is ready to turn away from the gross realm. As I have said before, I feel that part of Meher Baba's Manifestation is

to drive everyone to the spiritual life. But even when people are following a spiritual path, many are not aware that they still have tentacles groping for things in the gross and subtle worlds.

So at the outset, we have to learn how to withdraw those tentacles and direct them inwardly. Not that we are going to become introverts per se, but we become explorers within. We are going to explore who we are and what we have inside of us, such as our sanskaras. We need to become aware that we already have unlimitedness and inner freedom, and make use of them in our consciousness.

PRODIGAL SONS

We think of the Avatar or Messiah as the one with the divine power and authority to remove all of our burdens and give us salvation with a sweep of his eyelashes. Well, Meher Baba could do that, and he would give us brief experiences like that now and then. But he has also pointed out, especially in his discourses, that while he is with us all the time, helping us, and his grace is always with us, we do have to do some work in the Augean stables of our subconscious, where our sanskaras sit waiting for expression.

Around Baba, the problem of dealing with sanskaras was given immediate attention. The heart center would open almost imperceptibly, and without any outward sign, Baba would remove a whole host of inner barriers. Waves of love that were coming from Baba all the time would break down the ego, melt the heart, and dissolve massive amounts of one's sanskaric rubbish.

And Baba's precious love-glances, which remain indelibly imprinted on my consciousness, would convey the beauty and sweetness of the Divine Beloved. Soon I would find myself swimming in the Ocean of light and love. I would experience an instantaneous lifting of veils so that I could see more clearly within. Inner realms of his Being would be revealed to my consciousness, and I would have the experience of seeing God everywhere.

These experiences were the means Baba used to inspire me to continue making efforts to "decondition" my mind of sanskaras, as Baba says we must do. This meant that I had to discover what I was thinking, feeling, and doing that I would have to discontinue, and what other thoughts, feelings, and actions I would have to adopt.

So we have to keep working in order to retain that inner freedom; we have to discover what we need to do. It is a refining process. In this way, we gradually get spiritual understanding and will sustain these experiences of inner freedom. As Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Through asserting the truth we banish the false. Our ideal – the one to which we aspire – becomes a fact.

All of this is done not just through self-effort but also through enlisting the aid of the Master himself, so we have to accept his grace and interior help. As our friend, he is continuously working for our liberation. And because of his confidence in us, we can have confidence in ourselves, but without egoism. If we lack faith in ourselves, we are in danger of allowing our weaknesses to block our give-and-take relationship with him.

So, continuously sustaining those experiences of inner freedom means continuous inner work: keeping out of the level of illusory conditions (which we ourselves have been continuously creating) and staying focused on the Master within – with full confidence and joy. His grace is always there, and he is more anxious than we are that we make this transition from the false to the real self. To him, we are the prodigal sons returning home.

"GIVE EVERYTHING TO BABA"

There are many ways of deconditioning the subconscious, where most of our impressions are stored, and different methods work for different people, or at different times in our lives. There is no one formula or doctrine to say, "Do this and you'll get there." In discussions about the ways of the Master, generalizing makes for more accessible explanations, but part of the Master's role is to make us

let go of generalizations! At the same time, he does give us many hints about things we can be doing to cooperate with his help.

This reminds me of a time in New York City in 1956 at the Delmonico Hotel. There were quite a few people there, and Baba would have various people – families, groups, and individuals – come to his suite of rooms to spend quiet time and sometimes to hear messages or explanations.

On one of these occasions, Baba said to my family and me (a theme he was to repeat several times while in America), “One must give everything to Baba if you really love him. He is in everything and everyone. You belong to him, so keep nothing to yourself. Give it all to Baba, and be free. Give your whole self to Baba. Your pain and pleasure is Baba’s pleasure. Give it all to Baba. What you feel, Baba feels. It is Baba in you doing through you and feeling in you. Baba is the whole universe. Love Baba with all your heart.” Moreover, as I recall, Baba added, “This will please Baba.” For me, this was icing on the cake!

So thinking that over throughout the years and putting it into practice, I have found this message from Baba to be ever more and more practical. I concluded that Baba meant everything: our moods, problems, and complexes, our worry syndrome, our sense of gain and loss – and more and more of the ego, of course. I discovered that we really can give everything to him and be free inwardly.

KNOW WHAT YOU ARE GIVING

We cannot give Baba everything consciously, however, until we first become conscious of what we are trying to give him. We can give only to the extent that we are aware – so we must become deeply aware of those specific, particular sanskaric knots lodged in our subconscious minds.

Many of us are closed to what is going on at the subconscious level and hence are unaware of the sanskaras stored there. Thus, some work on our part is required, work that is done primarily through the heart center, where we become aware of the sanskaras as desires and impulses. This work of becoming aware of our sanskaras and giving them to Baba is an action of the heart, not the mind.

Sometimes it helps to visualize and itemize things to give to him. This changes our mood and redirects the current of our energies. We should keep giving all these things to him and become intimate with him, in the sense of consciously being a companion with him. When we begin to give everything to Baba with sincerity and integrity of purpose, we gradually become more and more conscious of what we are giving him.

We usually have no problem becoming aware of our positive sanskaras and giving those to Baba, but we often tend to anesthetize ourselves against the awareness of the negative sanskaras rooted in our subconscious, which hold us back and keep us tied to illusion. These sanskaras include negative tendencies, weaknesses, blocks, desires, complexes, and faults, and they take such forms as condemnation, anger, greed, and lust.

This is not to say that we always have to know the precise name of each sanskara we give to Baba. For example, an internal block we simply cannot understand may come to the surface and we might experience it as vague, troubling energy. In that case, we consciously acknowledge the energy of the unnamed block and then give it to Baba, expressing willingness to have it removed. When we feel Baba’s grace move the block away, we need to let it go and be wiped out completely. He will do this – it is part of his working with us.

THE VALUE OF PURGING

When sanskaras come to the surface, giving them to Baba instead of expressing them becomes a purging process: We become consciously aware of them and then release them. It is a natural thing for the soul to want to purge itself, to clear out the interior of the false self. This is how we become free.

As we become aware of tendencies we would rather not face or allow our Beloved to see, it may be helpful to realize that for Baba all of our experiences in the domain of time are part of maya

and do not really exist. Meher Baba said, “Nothing is ever written on you – but on your mind. You, the soul, remain untarnished. Good and bad, everything is written on your mind. When the impressions go, then all is wiped out.” While this is work that may involve suffering when sanskaric blockages come up and we work to dissolve them, it is a pleasant suffering, because along with it comes inner freedom.

The practice of giving everything to Baba supersedes thinking. The main functioning center is not the reasoning center but the heart center. We experience a deep refining and enlarging of the heart center. The heart-pain that may be experienced during this purging process is transformed into heart-longing. The purging releases energy from the subconscious, and this desire-energy becomes jet fuel for longing – longing for God, rather than desire for gross objects or attainments.

THE VALUE OF REPENTANCE

Meher Baba has given us the Prayer of Repentance as an important tool for our purging and refining process. We can recite it as part of our nightly introspective review and wipe our slates clean. This involves recalling our weaknesses, repenting and correcting them, and then letting them go. But once we sincerely repent, we have to let the mistakes or underlying psychological complexes be wiped out, and not “re-create” them by dwelling on them.

We might discover, however, that behind a particular tendency there are more layers of that same tendency. I believe that this is one of the reasons Baba indicated that the Prayer of Repentance should be repeated day after day. We are involved in an ongoing counteracting process, and reciting the prayer with integrity is like cleaning with a stiff brush over and over until the stain is finally gone. If we cannot dig out each sanskaric tendency by its roots and give the whole thing to Baba, we must simply go on experiencing and giving each layer to him until it is finally gone.

Deep and sincere repentance is a beautiful way of giving to Baba whatever we find we cannot simply release. If we are truly contrite – not just using the Prayer of Repentance as a formula – we can eventually accept Baba’s forgiveness, grace, and the abolishing of the whole troubling complex we are grappling with.

Baba’s forgiveness is his intervention of grace, and to accept his forgiveness is to accept his intervention to wipe out the blemishes on our heart. His grace is not a merit badge that we earn, but a gift with no strings attached. Through this gift of his grace, we become free of our burdens and we experience salvation.

Meher Baba is the gateway to the Infinite, and a contrite spirit is the key that opens wide the gates of forgiveness. A contrite spirit is thus a vital part of this dynamic. We cannot accept forgiveness without repentance. This, then, is the loophole in the otherwise ironclad law of karma: If we sincerely repent, accept forgiveness through grace, and successfully let our sanskaric complexes go, they are gone! This is both our victory and the Beloved’s.

CHAPTER 10

EXPRESSING OUR SELVES

In essence, we must let everything pass through and become satisfied to dwell within the grace of the Master and be supported and sustained by his love and grace. This is much better than preserving the ego.

Darwin Shaw

It is immeasurable what can be accomplished through giving everything to Meher Baba. But we must counteract the tendency to hold on to things inwardly. Baba said to give everything to him, so give it all to him. Do not hold on to anything. This is part of the love exchange – to give him not only the roses (our love), but also the thorns (our weaknesses).

This is a marvelous revelation: Baba wants us to hand over everything to him. When we do that, we are freeing our heart of the things we are giving to him. Instead of harboring all those things or trying to bury them, we are giving them to him, and thus getting free of them. Giving everything to him creates a suction for the heart and thus makes possible a flow of our own heart's love-energy to him. We are beginning to learn a new way of expressing ourselves.

THE WORK OF ACCEPTING

Constantly give all your impressions to the Master so that you do not build up a residue. But this is not enough. You must also receive and experience his sustaining, transforming grace as a constant atmosphere that permeates your inner being – and be free! Accept the freedom that comes from this love-exchange. Let the Master spiral you out of the usual merry-go-round of illusion and propel you to a freer realm.

The Master's love-grace fills the void left by the sanskaras we have given him. We experience a deep recognition that he loves and accepts us as we are. Nothing has any strength compared with his love. It is sovereign and invincible, and nothing can resist it. And he has this love for every one of us. Our part is to accept that love, to know that we are safe and secure in that love, to know that he is our best friend and ally, and that he is working with us.

By giving everything to the Master, we learn to trust him. Then we discover that he is our security. Our giving should be done with loving appreciation, humility, and gratitude, as his love, mercy, and grace free us from not only the burden of sins per se, but from all binding impressions. This is his most loving gift to us.

But we have to let go of everything we give to him and not feed the ego by keeping anything to belabor ourselves if we have done something wrong – for even guilt feeds the ego – or to glorify ourselves if we have done something great.

Becoming a mere witness to everything helps us to stop accumulating and harboring sanskaras. Meher Baba says, "It is Baba doing everything through you." When our ego asserts itself, we lose consciousness of this fact. Try to rise above the level of conditions and become aware of Baba's effulgence. Then everything that is false, including good and bad, fades away.

SHUFFLE OFF THE RESIDUE

I feel that this practice of "giving everything to Baba" is one of our most valuable assets. We develop a habit of quickly giving everything to him and accepting his grace. Have no concern, yet at

the same time deep concern. By having deep concern I mean becoming aware at the first subtle sign of tiny fibers of sanskaric veils that we have unwittingly accepted, and giving them to Baba.

Our giving can become quite subtle. If we find that we badger ourselves for having committed a misdeed, we can give that badgering to Baba. If we find ourselves trying to justify our behavior, we can give that justifying to Baba. We can even give to Baba our resistance to giving him our sanskaric patterns! And if we give even the giving itself to Baba, it becomes a loving act of sweet release of one's whole self to the Beloved; and in return, one experiences infusions of Baba's love.

It is very helpful if we try to open our feelings to Baba. That way, no matter what thoughts or feelings come up, we can shuffle off the sanskaric residue of these thoughts and feelings to him and accept the gift of his cleansing. He has opened up for us the doorway to freedom. He has already paid the price through his vicarious suffering for us. We are accepting his sacrifice when we continuously give everything to him and accept his grace. We then experience salvation from turmoil and conflicting emotions.

We must realize that the Master is really omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. We depend upon his love flowing through us to release us from the false. He draws us into his level, which is universal and complete. He reveals to us our completeness. He saves us from ourselves. We experience the lifting of burdens from the heart. We see that we can let go of our fears. We become free from worry.

THE PATH OF LOVE

The idea is that we begin to focus on Meher Baba – our real self, our ideal, God, or reality – instead of illusory things; and giving everything to Baba is a way of doing that. Actually, loving the Master is the most direct and effective way of dissolving our sanskaras. Strange as it may seem, by focusing solely on him, concentrating on loving him purely, the other things that we are struggling with begin to get worn out from neglect. Instead of wrestling with our sanskaric complexes, we can use our efforts and energy to find the Beloved within and love him with all our hearts.

In contrast to the path of purging, where we are likely to feel that the Master is painfully stripping us of elements we take to be “who we are” or “what we want,” the refining path of love for God involves willingly giving to Him everything we have to offer because we value His truth and love, rather than illusory things.

Give everything to Baba. Let all desires and impulses flow through. Take no action. Focus on Baba in the heart, not on the desires and impulses. If we ignore or sublimate our sanskaric impulses, they fall away. Try to let them go, rather than engage them in combat; let them fade away from neglect. Struggling with these impulses merely intensifies the “I.” Even during the few moments or hours you are suffering as they still try to cling to you, try to maintain the attitude of letting go.

A temporary void is created when we release something to the Master, and we see that it is an easy step to begin to turn the “flashlight of consciousness” from some thing to the real thing. When we let go of all other things, bliss is there. We recognize what we had never realized before: that we do not have to go anywhere to find it.

So, focus on the Master with love, give everything to him, and concentrate on accepting his bliss. This brings about – albeit slowly – transformation within the whole of consciousness, and makes it possible for us to participate in his consciousness – to merge with him – in a limited way at first, but more and more as time goes on.

EFFORTLESS EFFORT

As we gain a deeper understanding of how we create sanskaric veils, and as the activity of Baba's love-grace works within us, we rise to successively higher and freer levels of consciousness and correspondingly can focus more and more one-pointedly on the Master or God. This constant one-

pointed inner focusing, or “meditation,” eventually becomes effortless. This is not meditation that is a “glossing over,” but a rooting-out form of working.

But to attain “effortless effort,” we must be able to control the sanskara-driven thoughts and feelings that influence us to focus on and value lesser things. At the fifth plane of consciousness we gain complete control of thoughts, and on the sixth plane we can completely control feelings. But we must try to get control of our thoughts and feelings at the level we are now.

This is how we get that higher control, by working with our thoughts and feelings where we are now.

Putting our full attention on Baba or God within keeps the inner doors open and creates a “funnel” that narrows our focus from the vast many-ness of gross objects to the Oneness that is reality. And this opens up our consciousness to the Presence of God – the Divine Calm.

CHAPTER 11

CHANGING OUR PARADIGM

Why strive to become something in the dual realm when you have to let the whole realm go?

Darwin Shaw

We are so much more than our dual nature. Meher Baba comes to free our consciousness from the realm of duality and take us to a much higher level. But we have to dare to leave behind the paradigm of the personality: to plow through the forest of self, part the underbrush, and accept the bliss, light, and truth that is our real identity. We have to dare to dare all for God. Through faith in Him we are enabled and encouraged to do this.

THE DUAL REALM

What is this realm of duality that we are transcending? It is the level of all the opposites: gain and loss, beginning and ending, past and future, pleasant and unpleasant, happy and miserable. The opposites are tied in with the ego and a sense of the personal, as in: I am happy, I am unhappy, I have suffered loss, I have made great gains, I have done something wonderful, I have done something terrible. The “I” is predominant through all these vacillations between the opposites, and it governs our moods and our sense of who and what we are.

In the dual realm we are also involved in desires nearly all day long, even simple desires: What shall I eat? What shall I wear? What do I do now? What shall I do next? Will the car start? Our consciousness is caught at that level, and Baba wants to disentangle us from all of that and show us that we are not the personality self at all, that we are the soul, we are spirit: eternal, sovereign, and free from all of the illusory functions of the dual realm.

THE HABITUAL PARADIGM

The whole construction of what we take to be factual is illusion – not real at all – but we are accustomed to it and have accommodated ourselves to it because it conforms to reasoning. Therefore, at the outset, as spiritual aspirants we have to let go of the mind and rise to the level of the spirit. In other words, we have to consciously begin letting go of the habitual paradigm that has a hold on our consciousness and is locked in with reason.

This habitual paradigm is a prototype or basic pattern of thinking we have that consists of limitations that seem to constitute reality because these limitations are corroborated by reason. It is a whole system we each have developed in our consciousness, and we do not even know that we have this system. It is a system where we work at the level of conditions, and it consists mostly of limitations and dependence upon contingencies. We postulate that certain conditions cannot come about unless other conditions are in place; and we think that one condition is counteracted by another condition, which, we believe, depends on certain contingencies. This is the level of conditions. Really, this is the level of confusion.

Our life is a spiraling process toward truth. Changing the paradigm of who we think we are and what we value is part of the spiraling process of consciousness propelling us from one level to a higher level. Instead of letting our consciousness and our lives go along randomly, we need to take control.

However, letting go of the mind and rising to the level of spirit does not mean that we do not have an intellect and cannot think, but that the center of our identity moves from the mind to the spirit

level. The intellect is available for use, but we do not make it our headquarters anymore.

FAITH AND DARING

Changing our paradigm comes down to putting our faith and trust in something other than the mind. And that would be God, or the Master. Faith and trust in God or the Master go beyond the control of reason and the expectations based on reasoning. At the mind level, the logical level, we tend to think that problems are solvable only based on certain contingencies. But instead of thinking that we have to figure out everything on an intellectual basis when we are contending with doubts, fears, and anxieties, we have to build our faith so that our center of trust is in God or the Master.

By faith, I mean spiritual faith, which can become a transcendent and triumphant faith, where all doubts are dispelled, former obstacles disappear, and we have clarity within through the eyes of the heart. Such faith requires courage, because it is a matter of removing all doubts, all fears, and daring to trust God. If we trust Him completely and implicitly, we dare to go out on a limb of faith, even though we cannot see where it leads.

Meher Baba says to trust God completely and leave everything to Him – to let Him take care of all of our problems. It is my experience that He does do this. But we need to have faith that he is capable of doing this and be strong in our belief; we have to root out all our doubts and the reservations that we hold in our consciousness.

Increasing faith ultimately involves a growing intimacy with the Master and a growing acceptance of his intervention. This is not a head process, but a heart process, wherein one dares to open the heart completely to the Master and accept his loving, purifying, sustaining grace. We experience his grace in proportion to our trust and faith in him, so we must dare to go out on the limb of full faith. Then things really begin to happen.

DARE TO TAKE A STAND

Changing our paradigm means taking our stand on the truth within – the highest truth we know within ourselves – as Baba exhorts us to do. We have to assert our infinite nature, our higher nature, which means to identify and cooperate with the spirit level of our being. This calls for great daring.

Instead of taking our stand on the shifting sands of sanskaras, we take our stand on the truth within. We do this by asserting the truth within and denying the false, and this is the skill of right thinking. We must dare to engage in right thinking in order to get breakthroughs toward the truth, rather than hope that the truth is going to magically drop in on us sometime. This means that instead of asserting all the false values we have been in the habit of maintaining all of our lives, we have to be courageous and assert the truth within our consciousness – especially in our hearts, which is where we experience illusory restrictions and conditions and do the work of replacing them with higher values.

This is a refining process that we undergo. Working with a variety of means and methods that we are conscious of, we see where we can exchange weakness for strength in our hearts, and illusion for more and more of the truth.

We pull back our tentacles of sanskaric fulfillment and instead work to “uncreate” sanskaric veils and ego-definitions. The truth within can become our criterion for sorting and exchanging values: We measure those values against the truth and make choices along the way. Thus, taking our stand on the truth within is a shortcut for dissolving our “subjective and self-created” false world.

We become true seekers: We see the falseness of the false and detach ourselves from it. We cling to truth, and when we put it into practice, more truth will be revealed. If we stop this progress, we fall back into the original paradigm.

All of this is a part of inner discipleship: discovering more and more what can be accomplished through faith and daring. This means opening up the heart more – and even the act of asserting faith opens up the heart. We dare to go out into the unknown at the inner level, dare to draw closer to Baba

inwardly, and dare to draw away from the limited self. Through faith and daring, we open up the heart center and take our stand on the truth within, and this leads us out of the dual realm and into the inner path of love.

Meher Baba says, “Learn the art of taking your stand on the Truth within. When you live in this Truth, the result is the fusion of the mind and the heart and the end of all fears and sorrow. It is not a dry attainment of mere power or intellectual knowledge. A love which is illumined by the intuitive wisdom of the spirit will bless your life with ever-renewing fulfillment and never-ending sweetness.”

As always, this is not a work that we are doing by ourselves; we are doing it under the guidance and with the inner help of Meher Baba, the Divine Beloved. He is constantly supporting us and helping us. Through him and his divine love-grace, everything becomes possible.

COMBINING THE OPPOSITES

The spiritual path is strewn with paradoxes, and truth itself combines the opposites. For example, it is simple yet complex, fluidic yet stable. To transcend the opposites, Meher Baba emphasizes the combining of certain opposites, like the two poles of a battery.

Combining the opposites is more an attitude than an action: for example, humility and boldness; self-effacement while maintaining self-esteem; total detachment and yet love for everything; infinite patience and infinite longing. The ultimate paradox is our being everything and yet nothing.

Naturally we do not try to combine all of the opposites, only those necessary for effacing the “I.” By combining certain of the opposites, we are working toward integration of our forces – and also, paradoxically, striving to give up everything.

The combination creates a balance of the opposites; the tension of the paradox creates a current, releasing the locked energy, creating momentum, and canceling out both of the opposites. The effect is that we are bringing together two forces, a positive and a negative, which ignite and create energy, and, together with the self-denial that is part of the spiritual path, precipitate the consciousness to a higher level. However, if you act on one of them, the current is diffused.

PATIENCE AND LONGING

In the *Discourses*, Meher Baba gives the example of intense longing plus perfect patience. Baba says that after we discover the falsity of the creation, we must have such intense longing for the truth that it overcomes and burns up all these baser desires and inclinations. But at the same time, we have to have infinite patience. Our intense longing is to see God, to long for the presence of the Beloved; but on the other hand, we must have complete detachment and be so patient that we could quietly stand back and wait for a million years. It is hard to imagine having both of these elements in our consciousness at the same time, but that is what Baba is saying. Combining these opposites creates a positive and negative dynamic in the consciousness, which engenders the emergence of energy. This changes our voltage, raising our consciousness out of the inertia of the gross level to the subtle realm, which is the realm of energy.

It is as if we have a helicopter within us, but we must first start the motor. We already have within us the means to rise out of gross consciousness, but we need to dare to ignite the engine. Combining the opposites activates the ignition: By putting positive and negative together, energy is created and we rise.

It is a natural growth, not something that can be artificially imposed upon anyone, and a tremendous amount of grace is involved. Meher Baba says, “It is only when there is a balance between infinite longing and infinite patience that the aspirant can ever hope to pierce through the veil of the limited mind; and this combination of extremes can only come through the grace of a Perfect Master.”

At the higher level, we are willing to relinquish our lives and be “born again” at the level of the spirit, that is, born into our subtle and mental spiritual bodies. We discover the fact that we are not the

gross body, but that we are spirit, and as spirit we are already infinite.

As this happens, the heart and spirit become free, and we begin to see light and experience expansion of consciousness and know that we are timeless, that we are immortal. As all this unfolds within, we begin to share in the consciousness of the Beloved and realize that we are part of his Being.

CHAPTER 12

MAINTAINING OUR SPIRITUAL FLOW

You make the effort and I will give you the victory. It is a divine struggle with purpose behind it.
Meher Baba

Removing veils and moving to higher levels of consciousness is the spiritual path, and it is a slow process, requiring sharp attention. Meher Baba likens it to walking “on the sharp edge of a sword.” It is a natural tendency for us to settle into a state of inertia, but when we do, we get crystallized in that state. As spiritual aspirants, we must climb out of that state and keep up the momentum of our inner working and spiritual longing.

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

Meher Baba is continuously working with each individual and our sanskaras to liberate us from our falseness within, to liberate our consciousness, to awaken us for good. For us, this means inner work and inner discipline and paying attention to everything. There must be no slack moments where we can fall off the edge of the sword.

Baba would keep us on our spiritual toes to keep our momentum going with him by making promises to break his silence, assigning fasts, or telling us he was coming to visit. This would increase our enthusiasm, raise our vibrations, and create spiritual longing, which would produce a higher voltage in us. Sometimes he would even say things like, “I’m going to die in a few months.” Baba was trying to deepen our feelings and bring us closer, trying to make us one-pointed in our focus on him. He did not mind that those things would not happen; he had achieved his purpose, which was to keep us awake so that we would not fall back into the dream of illusion.

Baba says that when the river flows at a strong pace, it carries the silt. In other words, when we keep up a positive momentum, our sanskaras are held in abeyance. When the momentum slackens, our sanskaras attack us. When our spiritual momentum is at low ebb, our sanskaras become obstructions, and we are at risk for “spiritual viruses.” But if we have steady spiritual momentum, then when our sanskaras assert themselves, we can more easily counteract them without putting them into action.

We must dare to live at a higher level of consciousness and maintain the momentum of working on ourselves in order to experience those higher levels. We must work at inner levels to diminish egoism and at the same time be aware of light, aware of God working with us.

As in chess, we learn which piece counteracts a blocking piece. We can even use the desire-nature to get inspired. The desire for happiness can be enough to get things moving. Even being fed up with feeling negative or “stuck” can give us the momentum we need to get under way, to get moving inwardly.

Like driving a car, we must keep our foot pushing on the pedal to keep our spiritual energy going and dare to shift out of first gear and into second gear, and then go on to higher gears. At first, we tend to fall back and lose the experience. Eventually, we learn antidotes to everything that besieges us and pulls us back to lower levels of consciousness.

Even after we see through the sanskaric veils, there is a period where the sanskaras still clamor, due to the momentum of habit. We are changing our habitual paradigm, and this requires continuous renewing of our thoughts and feelings, continuous assertion of the truth, deep renunciation, and lightness of spirit at the heart level.

“SOMETHING IS HAPPENING”

Great concentration is needed to let go of our paradigm: to drop our habitual ego-definitions and pierce our sanskaric veils. In letting go, strong bindings are loosened at the heart level, and powerful energies are released. We break through to the level of energy (the subtle realm), which produces inner vision. We perceive true values and light.

As more energy begins to pour into our consciousness, a centrifugal force becomes established within, which repels the invasion of unwanted sanskaras and old habit patterns and precipitates our consciousness into the realm of energy. We sustain a higher voltage, a higher vibration and velocity of consciousness, and we experience buoyancy and some degree of inner freedom. This is meant to be permanent, and it will gradually happen after we uproot the habitual paradigm. We also experience an awareness of the need for “controlled progress,” in other words, the need to place ourselves under the guidance of the Master, who can take us safely past the pitfalls of the higher realms.

So keep the spiritual flow going, like running water through the pipes in winter so they do not freeze. Put the external on automatic; let it take care of itself. Inwardly, we must not relax on our oars and start drifting. To stand still is to go back. There is no resting point.

Meher Baba says, “Without consciously knowing it, the aspirant is gradually arriving at Self-knowledge by traversing the inner path – through his joys and sorrows, his happiness and suffering, his successes and failures, his efforts and rest, and through his moments of clear perception and harmonized will as well as the moments of confusion and conflict.” So, even if we do not think we are making any progress in the midst of experiencing all these opposites, something is happening. We are moving forward.

THE SPIRITUAL BYPASS

At a certain point, if we have enough spiritual maturity, we realize that the conditioned level is brought forth because of imagination and therefore is not as substantial as it appears to be. We become aware that we can bypass that whole level – and all our previous methods for deconditioning our minds – and start to burn through the walls of the spiral that is propelling us toward the truth, instead of continuing around via the longer process. This is what I call the spiritual bypass.

Taking this bypass, we go directly to First Cause, to the Absolute, to the truth itself, which is experienced at the level of the unconscious. This is a major step in the conquest of the unconscious that Meher Baba describes. This is what the activity of grace is; this is what direct effort is.

But we have not attained absolute truth itself; we have made an effort in that direction. It is the nearest we can get to the truth through our continuing process of refinement. It is like being asleep and having a dream in which we are very much engrossed, and then partially waking up and realizing, “I don’t have to go through all this: I can wake up!” And it all dissolves.

The heart gets cleared up, cleansed, so that pure light can flow through the heart center, and pure truth can be asserted. One then enters fully into the love-realm. At this level one is aware of the soul loving Baba, and one gives everything to him as one would give a bouquet of roses to one’s beloved. To avail ourselves of this extraordinary bypass, tremendous self-awareness is required, but this can be the work, the effort.

We are still existing in time-bound illusion, however, and may not be able to dwell at this level all the time; but we can still fall back on our chosen method of dealing with our sanskaras. With your car, you shift from lower to second gear, then into high gear; we do not just start out in high gear. Spiritually you go gradually until you become aware that you can take the spiritual bypass and go straight to God, or the truth.

A NEW PARADIGM

When we take the spiritual bypass, we are standing upon the truth within. We create a new

paradigm of “who I am,” a paradigm based on one’s ideal, the Beloved, and we resolve to stick to it through thick and thin. We resolve to counteract the inertia of the false self and refuse to be victimized by our old, limiting paradigm of who we thought we were.

We live a kind of double life: While dwelling consciously in the unconscious, we have to be rational and function normally in the world. We have to live and assert the truth and yet at the same time live in the world in right adjustment to it. Baba himself is there to help us do this. He said in 1936 to the Westerners he had called to India, “I will teach you how to move in the world, yet be at all times in inward communion with me as the Infinite Being.” I feel that this applies to each one of us in accordance with our capability and interest in taking the spiritual bypass.

We can learn to live at the inner level all the time. It is restful – like getting beyond the choppy waves to the deep, calm sea. Dwelling in the unconscious consciously, we experience stillness, peace, and fulfillment. But the main thing we experience is divine love. Continuous oceans of pure love flow through our hearts. We leave the “I” far behind.

However, we must remain vigilant and be aware of surreptitious sanskaras slipping in from all directions. If they do intrude, bring them into the stillness, where they will dissolve into nothing, like salt dissolving in water.

If we make these efforts, with the Master’s grace, our ideal will manifest and become our reality. Someday, when we get through with all of this, we will discover that all along we have been dwelling in the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 13

EFFACING OUR FALSENESS

The way of my work is the way of effacement, which is the way of strength, not of weakness; and through it you become mature in my love.

Meher Baba

Meher Baba is really all-powerful, like a divine Magician. He can do anything, if we completely open up to him and do not limit him by holding onto limiting beliefs. And we must not limit ourselves, either; nor should we condemn ourselves. Baba works on our self-esteem – our sense of self-worth and self-confidence – because low self-esteem pushes our consciousness in the wrong direction, toward negativism. We need high self-esteem, but without egoism.

Self-esteem equates with lifting one's spirits, not lifting the false self. Self-esteem of the spirit, rather than of the ego, is important to retain. Self-esteem is more like a sense of integration, the bringing together of the scattered self – not like the man who got on his horse and “rode off in all directions!” When one is on the path, self-integration occurs as the false self is gradually shed.

THE PATH OF SELF-EFFACEMENT

Our illusory existence is maintained by our belief that we are the body or the personality, but in reality we are nothing. Meher Baba once gave a discourse called “On ‘To Be Nothing’,” in which he said, “To be nothing means Truth. When your ‘being’ is not, you are God.” But the ego still asserts itself, and that is why self-effacement is so important. We combine the opposites of self-effacement and self-esteem in order to move toward nothingness. It seems paradoxical, and in a way it is. One is “nothing,” yet beyond the opposites one is “Everything.”

Too many people think of effacement as something negative. The fact that we are nothing is a positive strong point, and self-effacement should be practiced in a positive light: keeping the self out of our thoughts and allowing the spirit of Baba to come through. Of course, we must start with integrity of purpose as spiritual aspirants, and this requires taking a different road than that traveled by a worldly person.

Following the path of effacement while maintaining self-esteem involves a lot of work. In 1962 at the East-West Gathering in India, Meher Baba had me read out a message from him called, “My Dear Workers,” in which he said, “The way of my work is the way of effacement, which is the way of strength, not of weakness; and through it you become mature in my love.” So this path involves developing a more selfless attitude.

The hallmark of spiritual progress is through self-effacement, rather than worthiness. With our awareness that we are really nothing comes the realization that we do not have to try to be anything anymore. We finally decide to give up the futile pursuit of trying to become something.

The situations that come up in our lives give us ideal opportunities to see where we are still claiming something. As we give up those claims, giving everything to Baba and letting go, we then begin to see everything as mayavic and not serious. In other words, we come to realize that life itself is not to be taken seriously; it is no longer seen as reality. We turn off the wanting machine and remain calm and undisturbed within. All this is part of the path of self-effacement.

The path of self-effacement also involves self-denial. Self-denial does not mean pushing away a second piece of pie. It means taking our stand on the truth within and denying the ego-self. This level of self-denial is more subjective than objective – and it is certainly not something that can be displayed,

nor can there be any “measuring.”

The path of self-effacement leads to deeper mysticism and deeper faith in God, in truth, in reality. This path includes peering into the Kingdom of God while here on earth, and especially experiencing some of the bliss and insight that comes with it.

ANNIHILATED YET SUPPORTED

It is the ego that Meher Baba wants us to minimize. When Baba speaks of the gradual annihilation of the ego, many people react negatively; one tends to become negative when feeling one’s ego being diminished. However, curiously enough, during the ego-annihilating process one can still have supreme self-confidence.

Our self-confidence comes from knowing that we are approved of by Baba, strengthened by Baba, and loved by Baba. Baba is not judgmental in any way, nor does he hold our weaknesses against us. Instead, he urges us to love him, love God, love the truth, and work toward the truth.

As we mature, we develop insight, and we will be able to see when sanskaras are surreptitiously sapping our spiritual energies. Then we will have something tangible to work on. We can process the past negative programming that has created low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and other sanskaric complexes. We will be able to see that they are illusory and need no longer affect us. The degree and type of sanskaric activity varies with each individual. Some things are minor, some things are major, some things take years to work out and get free of. And as we work along these lines, our weaknesses will fall away.

We are not adept from the beginning; we are learning as we go along. Like learning to play tennis, we do not stop when we fail the first time; we keep trying. Of course, all this is part of individual mysticism, not based on a doctrine or dogma. We are combining deep spiritual mysticism with practical psychology to create versatile methods we can use for our inner efforts. Our efforts are based on our wanting to take our stand on the truth within and on loving and trusting God more and more. Our efforts also include self-forgetfulness, and loving the Master is the best way to forget the self.

When the ego is diminished, we experience more inner freedom and poise. And we can become somewhat conscious of merging with reality, merging with God. By merging with the Divine Beloved, we begin to experience ourselves as nothing, and we also become aware, to some degree, of the Everything, because we experience glimpses of unlimitedness and timelessness.

Around Baba this would happen to a certain extent as he would draw us into his own Being. And even now, although Baba is not in his physical body, it can and should happen that we merge in God, merge in the Master. He allows us to share some of his own consciousness so that we will come to identify ourselves, however humbly, with that consciousness and disentangle from the limited “I,” and all other limitations.

Self-effacement equates with self-surrender to the highest degree, and it allows us, through grace, finally to merge with the Beloved. Merging with him is not something one adds to one’s self; it becomes possible only when one is completely effaced.

THE GOOD-BAD SCALE

We have been basing our value, our sense of self, on a scale of good and bad, but we must discard that scale as we rise above the dual level. Casting aside the good-bad scale does not mean that we discard responsibility or the values of good and bad in our actions. We must develop the good before we break free of it. Therefore, as we advance spiritually, we continue trying to do good while at the same time setting aside the burden of the good-bad scale.

However, goodness is not meant to be a goal in itself. Baba says, “Goodness is the means by which the soul annihilates its own ignorance.” It is a byproduct of raising the consciousness, and is a

necessary step toward selflessness. As such, it is not meant to be focused on, but more or less ignored.

Setting aside the good-bad scale is a gradual process. We may start out feeling, “I did this,” or “I was good,” or “I was bad,” but eventually we say, “I did the best I could.” We neither seek recognition nor beat ourselves up about anything. We rest in the knowledge that Baba has an image of us in which we are free of the gross level.

We find that we are happier when we pursue this course of setting aside the good-bad scale and identifying with Baba’s image of us. We experience upliftment of the spirit (rather than of the ego), and we gradually move into freer levels of consciousness. In other words, we are expanding our consciousness and at the same time trying not to expand the “I.” It becomes a matter of personal unfoldment.

“I AM NOT GOOD”

The pendulum swings back and forth between “I am good” and “I am bad” until we see that we are neither good nor bad. Baba discusses the difficulty we often have of realizing that our goodness is a limitation. It is not that we dismantle our “good,” but that we dismantle our “abode of identification” with good by perceiving that it is yet another limitation that we must shed. Our identity is the problem. Before we realize the truth that we are neither good nor bad, we think we have to be one or the other.

We tend to try to make a good ego, rather than simply let the ego dissolve. It is a psychological secret that if we are willing to drop the assertion of “good,” we can slough off the “bad.” For example, if you have done something that makes you feel, “I am bad,” you cannot just say, “I renounce that I am bad,” because it implies that instead, “I am good.” This is what is meant by the pendulum swinging back and forth. However, you can say, “I renounce that I am either good or bad. As spirit, I am free.”

A radical way to rise above good and bad is to counteract the false judgment “I am bad” by recognizing and asserting “I am not good.” This is not another way of saying “I am bad”; it is a way of stopping the pendulum altogether by denying the ego stance of “I am good.” Only when the pendulum is stopped can we rise above the dual level.

Applying the analogy of a chess game, we are using our reasoning minds to make certain moves to counteract those of the limited ego. To make this rather surprising chess move from “I am bad” to “I am not good,” we have to be willing to let go of the idea that “I am good.” In this way, we nullify both of those self-judgments and open the way to the truth, which is beyond good and bad. This is a big blow to the limited ego. It is all part of the chess game of what Baba calls “the conquest of the unconscious.”

SUSTAINED BY GRACE

When we realize that the ego is clinging to a particular stance, we can make these kinds of counteracting chess moves. For example, instead of trying to protect and preserve our ego stance, we can assert “I am nothing.” If we are not prepared to take the bold step of asserting our nothingness, we can say, “I am sustained by Baba’s grace, and therefore I (as the ego-self) am nothing.”

And in fact, we are sustained not by our goodness or badness, but by the Master’s grace. Grace deals with “sin” (weaknesses) by raising our consciousness and dispelling our notions of being subject to the causes of so-called sin, because grace has within its context omnipotence, for grace is synonymous with truth and divine love. We must eventually stop basing our sense of who we are on the illusory values of good and bad, and accept being sustained by grace.

SELF-FORGIVENESS

Self-effacement does not mean self-persecution. If God loves us – which He does – then we can also love ourselves. But we must also forgive ourselves. It is important that we do so, because we are not guilty! We are not the body or the personality, but the untarnished soul. If we must have an ego-

stance, why not identify with the statement “I am purity” instead of “I am guilty?”

We approach the Beloved as nothing: no position, no merit, and no stance. We are open books to him, and we have made countless errors, but he is the Lord of Mercy who continuously forgives us for the misdeeds of our false selves. He does not measure us. We are the limitless soul, and that is how he sees us. Our refuge is in his love for us.

CHAPTER 14

REPROGRAMMING OUR EXPERIENCE

I am whatever anyone takes me to be.

Meher Baba

Divine grace supersedes all laws. It is not conditioned or dependent upon any precedent. This is what Meher Baba really is: divine grace. But we are in the habit of building limitations and finiteness into our consciousness. Through unconscious programming – stocking our subconscious with limiting beliefs – we have schooled our minds in limitations, and our minds have become tyrannical.

Because of this, we put conditions on Baba's ability to bring about changes within us, and we also place limits on our own ability. All these limitations that we believe to be real are entirely self-programmed. We do well to keep in mind Meher Baba's words, "All finiteness and limitations are subjective and self-created."

We are engaging in such programming all the time but for the most part are unconscious of it. Instead of being victimized by everything that comes along, we have to begin to understand what we are programming in our own minds, in our own consciousness, and discover where we can exercise the valuable use of faith and confidence. As Jesus said, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Meher Baba has said essentially the same thing on various occasions, basically that whatever one thinks of deeply, one becomes that. And he has indicated that if you want to be free, you will become free – and if you really want God, you will become God-realized.

That is why it is important to be aware of how we are programming things, how we are imposing limiting paradigms on our consciousness. Meher Baba says, "A new line in the divine picture is sketched only when some individual takes life forcefully in his hands, breaks up the old patterns, and insists on creating something new by his own inner vision."

As spiritual aspirants, the new paradigm we need to create includes the supreme qualities of purity, self-effacement, and love. To counteract the old paradigm, we need to assert those qualities as our prototype so that this new paradigm can emerge.

PROGRAMMED SUFFERING

In some ways, we are our own worst enemies. We tend to unconsciously program negative suggestions, thus dissipating our forces without realizing it. The consequence is that we suffer. But Meher Baba says that ninety-nine percent of human suffering is unnecessary. He goes on to say, "Through obstinate ignorance people inflict suffering upon themselves and their fellow beings; and then, strangely enough, they ask, 'Why should we suffer?'" I believe that the one percent "necessary" suffering is the poignant suffering of the surgery necessary to become free, to let go of limitation.

Our self-imposed suffering persists because we do not trust God and turn everything over to Him. In Meher Baba's "My Wish," where Baba says, "When you suffer, think: 'Baba wants me to suffer,'" I believe that he is telling us to turn away from our self-programming and be open to God's plan for us – His programming. It is not that Baba wants us to suffer, but that he wants us to put our focus on him as a way of stopping the cycle of unconscious programming.

PROGRAMMING IN THE UNSEEN

We are constantly working with causes and programming at the archetypal level. We create a

prototype in the Unseen based on a belief or thought. Then it is manifested, and the result we experience reinforces our original belief or thought and keeps it alive.

In psychological terms, our subconscious is open to “suggestions” and will respond. In archetypal programming, the response is that the Universal Mind, working through our subconscious, goes ahead and manifests the suggestion, as if it were a command. It does so without questioning whether it is accurate, or wise, or whether or not it can even be done.

The Universal Mind and our subconscious are not conditioned or bound by precedent or by gross obstacles. Of course, this can work in our favor. The truth is that we are unlimited spirit and are one with God, so if we take our stand on the truth, this will manifest and become our experience.

The Universal Mind is creative, not destructive. It does not have discriminatory faculties; it responds to suggestions automatically. It has no personality, no opinion, and no ax to grind. Yet, as an aspect of God, it has a sense of the personal and is completely benign, which is why we can feel the personal presence of God, or the Infinite, and why we can have companionship with Him and feel His guidance.

“I AM . . .”

Meher Baba has said that the God-Man, the Avatar, is more powerful than God the Infinite. Being consciously one with the Universal Mind, he can and does respond to people with all the infallible, invincible, absolutely dependable attributes of the Universal Mind – but with full personal consciousness of us and the creation.

His purpose with us and for us is to make us happy, but also to free us from the illusions and delusions of the creation. However, we limit him. In 1954, during a darshan program when thousands of people from all classes were passing before Baba to have his darshan, he turned to us Western men and said, “I love them all, big and small, high and low, rich and poor – all. I am whatever anyone takes me to be.” When he said this, I felt that he was speaking from the state of the infinite Being behind his form, as the Universal Mind, or God the Infinite.

There were many other occasions when he said similar things, such as, “To each one, I appear to be what he thinks I am,” and “I am in you, and the Universal Mind can give anything, to anyone, at any time. Just follow these instructions: love me; do not deceive; do not commit misdeeds. I will be with you.” These statements have tremendous implications. If we even begin to understand, we realize how important our relationship with the Master is.

By thinking of Baba as God the Infinite (or Universal Mind), we are plugging into both the personal and impersonal avenues of power, energy, truth, and reality. This is what the Avatar and the Perfect Masters are. Being conscious of us and our sanskaric dilemmas, they are “transformers” who are able to transform at our personal level.

As conscious Universal Mind, Baba responds to our every whim. He also responds to what we think and feel about him. This is because he is a reflection of our image of him. If we project a limited view on him, then we are limiting him in how he can work with us.

For example, if we think of him as a judge, then our subjective, self-created experience will be that of being judged by him. In other words, if we take him to be a judge, he becomes that for us. If we take him to be our Master and friend, that is who he is for us. Our relationship with him will be in accordance with whatever we attribute to him and however we relate to him.

Whether we program with regard to God the Infinite or Meher Baba, it comes out the same. But I feel that there is a definite advantage if we go through Baba. I think it helps us to experience the personal aspect of God more, particularly since this is why Baba took incarnation.

FIRST CAUSE

It is up to us what the Master can and will do for us. Therefore, we would be wise to take charge

of our programming and switch our focus from the level of outer conditions to the Master himself, the source of everything. We dote so much on our self-created environment and spend a lot of time reacting to it, not realizing that the world – even the world of thought and feeling – is an effect, not “First Cause.”

Meher Baba says that we are the producers of all phenomena; we have projected everything out of us. What Baba is telling us is that we are creating our own world – our emotional world as well as the physical world and our mental world – and that we can design it and make it any way we would like. In 1954, in India, Baba quoted one of his disciples, Baidul, as saying, “We produce everything and, like fools, we become the slave of what we are the masters of.”

If we regard the illusory world – instead of God or the Master – as First Cause and base our reactions on this false premise, we have created a second degree of falseness. We get caught up in a continuous chain reaction, where an event (a “cause”) results in a reaction (an “effect”), which becomes the cause of the next reaction – and so on. As this chain of cause and effect continues, we go further and further into the falseness. We find that we are continually dealing with contingencies all the time; we are constantly postulating that certain conditions cannot come about unless certain other conditions are met.

GOD'S PROGRAMMING

But there are no contingencies or limitations with God. So, instead of continuing to struggle with conditions, we need to back up and go straight to the Divine Beloved as First Cause: the omnipotent one who is our friend, our Beloved, who wants our freedom for us even more than we do. This means that we focus on the Master or God as First Cause – the cause of everything that happens to us. Then we respond to the consequences of his programming as First Cause, meaning the effects that result from all the qualities that he is: his omnipotence, his omniscience, and his omnipresence. Doing this changes our own thoughts, our consciousness, our subconscious – and our environment.

You have to understand that as First Cause, Meher Baba, the God-man, is completely unlimited and “undefined,” in the sense that no one can circumscribe him. Because he is not bound by any contingency, all the seemingly solid barriers are nothing to him. We need to put our full attention on Baba and not bother with circumstances – all the lesser things. By living at the level of cause and effect, the level of conditions, we are subject to worries and all kinds of illusions, and we experience doubts and fears. Do not bother about that level. Go to Baba or God as First Cause.

REST IN FIRST CAUSE

We have to see through the illusions we have been prey to. This is easily accomplished by rising from the level of conditions to First Cause and realizing that all these conditions are simply machinations of the mind. Remaining at the level of First Cause, we come to realize that these illusions are only creations of the imagination. And while abiding at the level of First Cause, we may experience clarity of consciousness, peace of mind, and even bliss.

So we have to learn to rest in the Master or God as First Cause, rest in that point of view. Resting in First Cause is the most practical thing we can do. Call on Baba himself, instead of depending on little contingencies. He is the solution to all our problems. Really consider him as that.

Resting in First Cause requires full faith, and faith supersedes the intellect. Faith the size of a mustard seed can produce the miraculous. That really is true. Because all the circumstances of our lives are imaginary, they are subject to change quickly. We discover that nothing is crystallized; everything can change instantly, despite the surrounding circumstances. So, situations that seem to be set in concrete can change instantaneously.

THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

Making our unconscious programming conscious involves drawing upon the supervening orders of the universe, which are not miracles, but simply a different – a higher – set of laws. Operating from these higher laws is not performing magic in the ordinarily understood sense of the term, but it is using our intelligence to comply with the impelling force of the universe, which is completely benevolent and wishes well-being for everyone and everything.

Perhaps the greatest value of knowing all this is the revelation of how unerringly we can depend on God, Baba, the Universal Mind. Our faith can be transformed into conviction. And when you see the truth of this, then you can rest assured that you really can rely on God in every situation. And then you can work from that angle – work toward trusting God more and more, trusting truth to supersede maya. Then you know that you do not have to struggle with this or that worry, or this or that problem.

We should place all our faith and trust in the Master or God. We must know that he can do anything. When we trust in the Master's guidance, he can and does guide us. This is what is meant by surrendering our will for the Will of God. This means that we are willing to set aside our choices for the Will of God. This does not mean that we ignore the conditions of life. However, we do not worry and we trust God as best we can. When we trust Him completely, we are putting that responsibility on Him. He can take care of all the problems. Resting in First Cause is really giving everything to Baba and being free.

CHAPTER 15

ERADICATING OUR WORRIES

Love will control the future, so why worry? Do not think; feel my love.

Meher Baba

It might be a little bit disconcerting when we are confronted with all the things we have to let go of – all our self-created limitations and weaknesses. But cheer up! What the mind can do, it can undo. While continuously making progress on the spiritual path, we can also improve our exterior situation a great deal, whatever it is currently, and we can change our whole outlook on life.

Because our subconscious is amenable to hypnotic suggestions, it accepts and supplies whatever conditions we are programming through the Universal Mind, which is capable of responding to all our wishes and wants – our bad ones as well as our good ones. That is why, instead of giving us a long and complicated lecture on programming, Meher Baba gave us, in very, very simple terms, the formula, “Do your best, then don’t worry, be happy in my love.” Program that and all your conditions will change.

A GREAT OBSTACLE

Baba says that worry is one of the greatest obstacles on the spiritual path. It connotes fear, anxiety, and lack of faith. It gnaws at the heart and interferes with our direct line to God. Worry is a form of fear. It creates turbulence in the consciousness that prevents tranquility and bliss. It is only when the lake of consciousness becomes calm that it reflects the glory of reality, of God.

Meher Baba says, “Worry is the product of feverish imagination working under the stimulus of desires. It is the living through of sufferings that are mostly of one’s own creation. Worry has never done anyone any good; and it is very much worse than mere dissipation of energy, for it substantially curtails the joy and fullness of life.”

When Baba said, “Don’t worry,” he was indicating that it is possible not to worry. He says that through a Herculean effort we can overcome worry and be free of it – that our hearts can become free and we will become more courageous in our spiritual endeavors. It is a battle along the spiritual path. It is a major project and great accomplishment when we overcome worry.

ANTIDOTE TO THE WORRY SYNDROME

We must keep our minds clear about what we are programming. Our subconscious mind is like a giant, all-powerful genie that complies with our general thought patterns. If we worry, the genie says, “Yes, Master,” and magically produces something for us to worry about. We therefore think, “My worry was justified, because the very thing I worried about happened.” It creates a syndrome, where we continue to worry and something worrisome appears.

The antidote to worry is trust and faith in God. Therefore, in order to overcome worry, we have to conjure up more faith, more trust; our hearts have to become stronger in faith, instead of quivering in worry and fear. Counteracting worry through building our faith and trust opens up a vast new area of possibilities for self-improvement within and also in our outer life. But mainly it opens up the way for spiritual unfoldment, for growing closer to God, to reality.

Meher Baba says, “Live more and more in the Present which is ever beautiful and stretches away beyond the limits of the past and the future. If at all you must worry, let it be how to remember

me constantly. This is worthwhile worry because it will bring about the end of worry. Think of me more and more, and all your worries will disappear into the nothing they really are. My will works out to awaken you to this.”

If we really believe that Baba is our dearest friend, that he is omnipotent, and that he is on our side and working for us, we will stop worrying and will trust him. As he said to us in 1962, “What is there to worry about? Nothing. So, don’t worry. Let Baba do the worrying. He enjoys working things out. There is no need for both you and Baba worrying. If you are going to worry, then Baba won’t worry. So stop worrying and leave everything to Baba to take care of. When you do not worry, it becomes Baba’s responsibility.” By putting our full trust in Baba, we are placing our lives completely in his hands and daring to not worry. This is something we can learn to do. This can be a part of our programming work.

“BE OF GOOD CHEER . . .”

Meher Baba says, “Among the many things the aspirant needs to cultivate, there are few that are as important as cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and equipoise.” Just as when we worry we are supplied with worrisome and unhappy circumstances, so too if we are cheerful and do not choose to worry, we are programming things for us to be cheerful about. When we program good cheer, the causes for it will be supplied. It changes our inner and outer environment, because it raises our consciousness and does not let worry, which is fear, into our consciousness.

Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” This means that if we are of good cheer, we too will overcome the world. Be of good cheer, and you will overcome everything. People do not take this literally – they take their worries literally!

Being of good cheer is a magical thing, because one can immediately bypass all obstacles. Baba within us is helping us in our efforts to disentangle from the world, and we must accept the divinely magical effect of his overcoming of the world in us, which is his grace.

“KEEP YOUR SPIRITS UP”

Initially, we are bogged down with worry. We must strive to be cheerful. Start with a cheerful face, a light heart. It is up to us to make the choice to be cheerful. Allowing cynical and negative thoughts to enter our consciousness lowers our spirits and contributes to low self-esteem; and getting involved in the petty things of life leads to depression. In a certain sense, we must ignore the petty things in life that keep getting thrown at us. We do what we must: such as carry out our duties and continue to pay our karmic debts, but we choose to have an attitude of cheerfulness while doing them.

The formula “Don’t worry, be happy” is the key to happiness. In other words, you trust the Master to provide everything. By following such a simple formula, great changes are brought about. It puts us on a spiral to a higher level of freedom. Simply by keeping cheerful, a centrifugal force is created, which repels negative forces. It changes our focus from the conditional level of all the opposites and everything being dependent on one condition or another – and we become free, free of worry.

I recall in 1952 witnessing Baba’s parting with Kitty Davy, one of his close Western disciples, when he suddenly informed her that he wanted her to remain at the newly established Meher Spiritual Center and help its director, Elizabeth Patterson, instead of going back to India with him. He made a simple hand gesture, fingers joined, hand and arm moving straight up, meaning, “Keep your spirits up.”

We must do all we can to keep our spirits up, our self-esteem high, and allow Baba to work through us. So, accentuate the positive, no matter what. Refuse to allow worry to dominate your thoughts and feelings. Instead, allow happiness to predominate so that you are programming happiness.

CAUSELESS CHEERFULNESS

Aim toward causeless cheerfulness, which is bliss. It is our real state, and it is our destiny! Baba says that bliss exists everywhere; everything is bliss. If you want causeless cheerfulness, allow it to predominate within yourself by lifting your spirits and being cheerful. This is a step in the right direction.

I once knew a middle-aged man who had a humble job at a supermarket. He would often say, "I'm always cheerful, even when I'm miserable!" Detachment such as this man had is an essential part of attaining causeless cheerfulness, but it is something that happens automatically, and we should not concentrate on it. Instead, get attached to real bliss.

Keeping our spirits up – being of good cheer – elevates our consciousness. It changes the illusory environment of our minds. It lifts our spirits up to our heart and illuminates the heart center. And if it is carried out seriously, it brings us into the Kingdom of God. We begin to think in terms of timelessness, rather than existing on a timeline. We experience a sense of fulfillment and completeness. We come to realize that we are spirit.

CHAPTER 16

DRESSING OUR SOUL

Meher Baba is the Imperishable Sweetness of divine love. We are surrounded by the immeasurable sweetness of his Being of divine love, which is the true nature of all space, which permeates us completely, through and through, which is indeed our own true nature and being.

Darwin Shaw

As we grow little by little in spirit, we find that we can no longer tolerate some actions, thoughts, and feelings in ourselves anymore. We also become more aware of actions, thoughts, and feelings that are compatible with our inner being. More and more we want peace of mind, which means more harmony, upliftment, more light within, and deeper and deeper values. We see that it is not so much accepting a doctrine as weeding out things we had not known were affecting us.

We are working toward divinity – divine reality, divine love, divine truth – and that is above all laws; it cannot be dominated or superseded by anything. This is what Baba has and gives, and what sustains him. And when we come to him, his divinity also sustains us. He lifts us out of the lesser laws that govern lower levels of consciousness and brings us under the law of divine love, the “lawless Law,” which means that we would be entirely free. Of course, we have integrity of purpose and do not use this as a loophole for indulging in things that are wrong; rather it lifts us out of the wish to do anything that is other than the purest.

Loving, trusting, and feeling intimate with the Master gradually raises our consciousness and creates an open channel. It is slow to happen, but it is real work that is going on to raise our consciousness. This is why we are spending our lifetime making efforts to decondition our subconscious. It is so that we can stop limiting the Master or God by our false ideas about him and ourselves. He helps us see through these false notions. This knowledge deepens into insight. We can see how our impressions ensnare us and how our sanskaric patterns have become a drag on our consciousness.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, once we have tuned in to the Master, we are receiving help from him. With his help, the impressions dissolve, the heart center opens, and love flows. The crowning jewel is the flow of divine love. Everyone should feel equally close to him; no one should feel left out. A relationship with him is equally available to all. He does not play favorites; all are meant to be intimate with God.

DRESS YOUR SOUL

In 1954 in India, Meher Baba had hinted for days that he was going to give us a special practice that would allow us to experience his presence with us all the time: while working, at leisure, or whatever we were doing. He called the practice sahaj dhyan. When he said that, I thought, “Wow, this must be some very profound Eastern practice, something very mystical.”

And so the day came when someone brought up the question, “What is this method you were going to tell us about?” He proceeded to explain. Sahaj dhyan, he said, means “natural meditation.” The first thing you do when you get up in the morning is “dress your soul with Baba.” And then at noon, do the same thing again: Dress your soul with Baba. And then at five p.m. or thereabouts, do the same thing again. And finally, just as you retire at night, dress your soul with Baba. It only takes a few seconds, Baba said, like adjusting your tie. Giving him those few seconds a few times a day has the potential of markedly raising the consciousness of those who do.

Ordinarily upon awakening, a person, especially a working person, has to figure out what the program is for the day; but you can still take a few seconds, as Baba said, to dress your soul with Baba. This sets the tone for the day and prepares you to deal with maya. Then, when it gets to the middle of the morning, you begin to look at your watch. “Not yet twelve.” But you are thinking of Baba at 11:30, 11:45, until it is finally noon. And you do the same as you approach 5:00 p.m., so that after a while, you develop a habit of thinking of Baba most of the time.

But also it throws you into the problem of trying to understand what Baba means by “dress your soul with Baba.” Where is your soul, and who is Baba? So it involves your feelings and your identity. It involves everything, so it really tunes you in to Baba.

I think Baba wants us to think about what he meant by “Dress your soul with Baba.” He is already divinely free, so instead of falling back into bodily habits and personality paradigms, we dress our soul with Baba’s consciousness instead of our lower consciousness. It counteracts other trains of thought that clamor to come in, and leaves them off on a sidetrack somewhere.

For me, “Dress your soul with Baba” means assert your soul’s true identity, your true nature. In dressing our soul with Baba, we are accepting the Lord of Mercy and all that he is as our reality. This includes eternal salvation, security, continuous grace, divine love, purity, truth, and beauty. It is more or less capturing the composite presence of Baba, the presence of God, and allowing that presence to flood one’s heart, one’s inner being, rather than doting on all kinds of sanskaric interests just to keep the mind busy.

In other words, we are stepping into the picture and making our own choices, instead of being victimized and drifting along with what our sanskaras present to us. It is up to us, as we grow spiritually, to make better and better choices. We choose to control our reactivity and keep our focus one-pointedly on God or the Master within, to dress our soul with Baba right away. We put our trust in him, accepting whatever he wants to provide.

BE FLUIDIC

As we dress our soul with Baba, letting go of limitations, such as the personality, we move to higher levels of consciousness. When we reach and enjoy a high state of consciousness, we have an unconscious tendency to try to hold on to the experience and crystallize it. However, in spite of ourselves, it slips away and we wonder what we have to do to regain that experience.

One of the secrets in the spiritual life is to be fluidic on a sustained basis. We learn to counteract our tendency to want to hold on to spiritual experiences. We no longer try to stockpile the residue of those experiences. By becoming fluidic, we establish a new rhythm; we let everything flow.

When we have trust in the Master, then we place all our confidence in him so that we do not have to hold on to some object, even if it be a spiritual experience. We let the temporary experiences come and go, knowing that more will follow. But the real things, the real and abiding happiness, will become part of the regular flow. There arises a new rhythm of love – a new rhythm of what we do with our thoughts, feelings, desires, and the residue of our experience, which are our sanskaras.

We are meant to be fluidic. We have a flowing current of energy, which in spiritual literature is sometimes represented by the figure 8. We usually have it flow into us to improve our ego, to give us more possessions, more importance, all sorts of things that are selfish. And we mistakenly presume that to experience happiness we have to do this. But Meher Baba points out that this is a misconception. It works the other way around. As Baba says, “Real happiness lies in making others happy.”

Baba came to redirect the current toward the spiritual as part of the conquest of the unconscious. When we link our consciousness with his, our current goes out to him, is washed free, and flows back in to us, where it can be expressed in the world of forms as a “giving” energy. So, we must cooperate with him by working to change the direction of our current and to keep it flowing, especially when our reactions cause it to slow down or stop. Part of this is learning how to give everything to

Baba, letting everything go, and doing this on a continuous basis.

DESIRE TO HAVE LONGING

Meher Baba emphasized the importance of longing for truth, longing for God, as a way of redirecting our energies and transmuting our lower desires to a higher purpose. We slow down the wanting machine and turn off the motor by diverting the imagination to more constructive ends. This is sublimation.

The energy that is tied up in desires does not just get thrown out. Instead of trying to block out or repress the desires, we redirect the energy of the desires into something higher. Otherwise, we are just fueling a wildfire. From the spiritual point of view, we sublimate it into longing for God, love, or liberation. This is not easy; it is a matter of growth. We each have to discover ways that are easy for us to use.

I believe that sublimation is the new mysticism. In sublimation, we go to the Divine Beloved or God the Infinite as First Cause with love and longing, and leave all the conditions.

We have a tendency to unconsciously identify with things we do not really want but that our desire-nature causes us to hold on to. That is why they are still there; we do not let them go. Someday we have to go to First Cause to dissolve the whole illusion anyway. That is perfect sublimation.

THE GIFT OF LONGING

Longing is essential on the spiritual path. It wears out the wanting of low desires. When I saw Meher Baba for the first time for three days in New York in 1934, he filled me with so much love and tremendous longing for the spiritual life. The more satiated with Baba's love I became, the more longing I felt. At that time, I did not realize that this was a great gift – that he inflicted this longing upon me, and that this is what we all need.

Longing for God is like gasoline for the automobile. It provides fuel for the spirit; it provides energy that reaches toward reality. The energy of longing is like a drilling machine that bores through many obstacles at the inner level, burning up sanskaras that bind us. It especially counteracts our desire-nature and redirects our energies toward discovering the truth within.

I have come to understand that it is extremely important to do what we can to foster and encourage this longing. For example, we can read the works of saints and Baba's writings, especially the parts that inspire love. I think that once we have a glimpse of the inner life, we will realize that this is what we really want, and we will not want to be sidetracked, even though we do get sidetracked again and again. When that happens, we simply try to get back on track and go for the real goal. When we mature, we will naturally turn to God with longing for our home in God.

CHAPTER 17

CHANGING OUR ADDRESS

God is the only source of abiding joy, yet we fondly cling to the concept of our own separateness. The very last craving we have to relinquish is the desire for separate existence.

Darwin Shaw

We have to go through many different lives, and at the end of each lifetime, we have to lay everything down – all we seem to have gained, and all we seem to own. We have to let the whole thing go and start all over again – until after a while we have the good fortune to meet a Perfect Master or the Avatar, who helps us to surrender the false self and become born of the spirit. Then we discover that we were not a physical body after all; we were spirit all along.

When I met Meher Baba physically in 1934, one of the things he conveyed to me was, “I have always been helping you.” And he would say that to each one of us, because, whether we realize it or not, he is the one helping within. So when we surrender to him, we are not a ship without a rudder. We have given the Master the tiller to steer us.

A WORKING STANCE

Meher Baba knows that surrender is not easy for us to do. He says, “Complete self-surrender is most difficult to achieve, and yet the most essential condition of spiritual advancement is the decreasing of egoism to its minimum.” That is a very powerful statement. Somehow, while continually decreasing our egoism, we have to walk the sharp edge of the sword of “inaction on the one hand and pride of action on the other.” What a dilemma!

However, Baba provides a simple, practical way to deal with this dilemma: the creation of a new ego called a “provisional ego” to take the place of the ego that we build up and then dote upon. This new ego, Baba says, becomes the source of our “confidence, feeling, enthusiasm, and ‘go’ that true action must express.”

This provisional ego allows a “working stance” for consciousness that will be completely subservient to the Master. Wholehearted allegiance to the Master is vitally important. It means not holding anything back or keeping a secret life of your own still going on the side.

Operating from the provisional ego, we shift our focus from thinking that it is we who are doing anything to thinking it is the Master who is doing everything through us. There is that paradox again. It is a matter of taking responsibility for our actions and feelings, yet bypassing the ego and attributing everything to the Master, to his doing. Our purpose is to minimize the sense that we are doing anything.

This provisional ego, surrendered to the Master, helps us toward emancipation. We can use it throughout our journey on the spiritual path. Then, as Meher Baba says, “When the time comes, it can be thrown away like a garment.”

The provisional ego is a means for drawing closer to the Master within. Having a provisional ego is like having a close friend who happens to be a Master, who is so close that you know or can get an inspiration as to what he wants or does not want. It is the assumption of an attitude of leaning toward the Will of God. It is a matter of motive, meaning: Are we interested in sanskaric fulfillment or the Will of God? After we die to the false self, our motive becomes serving God’s Will. We give up interest in the false self.

LEAVE THE ROOM YOU ARE IN

One of the main requisites of the spiritual path is that as spiritual aspirants we are willing to give our lives for the Master, for God. Meher Baba says, “To be willing to die for the happiness of the Beloved is true love.” To die before you die – to die to the self, to die for the Beloved – this can be a means of precipitating our consciousness to a freer level of experience. Dying to oneself is not a temporary letting go of imagination, but a willingness to surrender the egoic life and be born of the spirit.

Dying to ourselves and being born in the spirit is like going from the room we are in to the room next door, where the furnishings are entirely different. This we understand; it is clear to us. We have to leave this room in order to go into that room. We cannot take this room with us.

Our consciousness is the vehicle stationed in the room we are in currently. And when our consciousness is in this room but we want it to be in that room, we have to be willing to leave the room we are in. It is as simple as that, although seemingly difficult for us to do.

REAL EFFORT

We have to work at surrendering. We try to surrender, and then we have the help of the Master. Meher Baba says, “The Master helps the aspirant in his own invincible ways, which have no parallel in the ways of the world. If the aspirant is to be the recipient of this help, he must make a real effort to surrender himself to the divine will of the Master.” This should be in bold print: real effort!

Surrenderance of the false self is not something that is done just once; it is repeatedly done, over and over. And as we surrender, we move in the spirit, experiencing more and more of the unlimited consciousness of the Master, of God. This is what it means to be born of the spirit. We surrender the false self to the Master and live through the provisional ego, which is subservient to the Master, our higher self, or God.

As we begin to surrender to the Master, laying down our sanskaras, our burdens, at the Master’s feet, putting our trust completely in him, and accepting his grace, we are taking a major step: letting go of the world. From our point of view, we are doing it to unburden ourselves, to be freer, because we are fed up with all the reincarnations, one after the other, and all the complications that go with them. But it is really spiritual progress: We have moved in the spirit. We have taken a step away from the illusory world and the limited self, and made a step toward the reality of God and the unlimited consciousness of God.

To be born of the spirit is a wonderful experience, but that is not enough. We still have to work and become free of inner subjective things that create veils over our consciousness so that we do not perceive the truth as it really is. We have to continue to surrender our self-will in favor of the Will of God, which means putting desires and lesser values aside for the real value.

THE WILL OF GOD

When we surrender to the Master, to God, we become more intuitive. The culmination of listening to the intuitions that come with self-effacement and complete surrender equates with the sixth plane of consciousness. Love expresses itself on the sixth plane as complete and happy surrenderance to the Will of the Beloved; one is completely reconciled to the Will of God. All selfish desires, including longing for the presence of the Beloved, have disappeared. At that stage, one is aware of the How of the Divine Will within. The Kingdom of Heaven opens up for us while we are here on earth.

Even a child can experience God’s Will, perhaps even more so than an adult who has a monstrous mind and an even bigger ego. This is why Jesus spoke of becoming like children – not childish, but childlike. We learn that we can trust in God, that God is trustworthy and dependable, more than we are. But to dare to go out on the limb of complete faith in God and depend upon His Will for us, day by day, in every circumstance, requires a real effort, a real daring. I have had some experience

with that. Even from my early life when I was working on cattle ranches in the West, I was aware that I was doing things under the Will of God. I felt that God was guiding me.

This is something that is worth trying to experiment with, trying to see how we would deal with surrendering ourselves completely to God's Will without having a whole side issue of things that we can draw upon to please ourselves. And when His Will goes contrary to what we want to do, if we are willing to do His Will rather than go with our will, we will make progress toward experiencing His unlimitedness, especially if we do it in the spirit of love.

The sense of God's Will coming through can become a steady, substantial, and reliable flow. Moreover, it is not so much like a message coming over a wire – it is an access to the presence of God. It is not something apart from God – it is an access to God. And this is where our consciousness begins to merge in God.

“I DON'T LIVE THERE ANYMORE”

Meher Baba says, “Progress from one surrender to greater surrender is a progression from a minor conquest to a major one.” Now, this juxtaposition of “surrender” and “conquest” has always amused and startled me, because we ordinarily think of surrender as a negative thing, as a giving up, a letting go. We do not usually think of it as being a conquest. But Baba puts these two together. Surrendering the false self to the Master is the first part of a major conquest over the ego. It is not a loss, but a victory!

All this is part of the work that is the spiritual path. And grace is of paramount importance. I feel that my greatest strength comes from ceasing to struggle with things in the illusory realm and surrendering to the Master: lining up with his Will and accepting his help, his grace. In doing this, I experience security and stability – and I know I have at least one foot in the door. His divine love and grace dissolve any remaining veils.

Through what Meher Baba calls “gradual stages of ego-transformation,” our old egoism “is replaced by humility” – which is based on the knowledge that the Master is really doing everything – our “surging desires are replaced by steadily growing contentment, and selfishness is replaced by selfless love.”

When we are at long last ready to turn toward home, toward our real home, we can heave a great sigh of relief as we surrender the self to the Master. We die to the false and are born of the spirit. We realize that we are timeless and were never really enslaved by anything. We change our address. We say, “I don't live there anymore.” There is an actual sense of salvation that goes with this: spiritual security and sanctuary, all due to the grace of God.

CHAPTER 18

OUR REAL WORK

If you meet life squarely, accepting its opposites with equanimity while carrying on your duties in a spirit of selfless love and service, you will not only come in tune with the Infinite, but you yourself will become the Infinite which you seek.

Meher Baba

Meher Baba said, “From the spiritual point of view, the only important thing is to realize Divine Life and to help others realize it by manifesting it in everyday happenings. To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others – by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity, and beauty – this is the sole game that has intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents, and attainments in themselves can have no lasting importance.”

I take this statement – which has become known as “The Game” – as an instruction from Baba to concentrate on the divine qualities of truth, love, purity, and beauty, and to express them – radiate them – in maya, instead of expressing from our egoic sanskaric patterns. Doing this helps us to keep our focus one-pointed and our spiritual current flowing.

In electricity, the current flows and the wire is only incidental. Likewise, we are conduits. However, we tend to express sanskaras from the veil-creating subconscious. But we are meant to be mediums of truth. So why not let go of the debris in the mind and become nothing but a wire for the divine current, so that the divine qualities can flow through? We then radiate those qualities instead of mayavic thoughts. This is our real work.

Baba purposely uses the term “penetrate” in “The Game.” This suggests effort, that of “probing.” As we penetrate more deeply into the spiritual realities, we begin to experience an inner life that brings us nearer to truth and also removes veils from the inner states of consciousness. As this happens, we can perceive deeper values within and experience fulfillment at the level of the spirit, rather than at the material level. Ultimately, we have to find complete fulfillment at the level of the spirit.

ATTRACTING THE DIVINE QUALITIES

The divine qualities of truth, love, purity, and beauty are our own potential. We are capable of becoming conduits of these qualities, and we can and should attempt to be aware of them continuously. In order to do that, however, we have to purify our hearts, because the heart is the instrument of our probing, or penetrating.

As we purify the heart, we create a vacuum that attracts the divine qualities. They are there already, resident in the heart. But they do not automatically flow through; one has to clear the way to them. And, even more significant, as we do this, we are creating conditions that please God, and He invites us to merge with Him.

If our highest value is to penetrate to reality, then we will seek effective ways to deal with the veils that keep us from it. We will explore why we have certain thoughts, concepts, misconceptions, and unexamined conclusions. It is a matter of getting behind the thoughts to see what they are founded on, seeing through them, and thus becoming free of compulsions at the root level.

We open up to the Master within and invite his divine impressions to filter in through the heart center. Doing this contributes to a pure-in-heart state. We have to do this if we want to put an end to the

impelling forces that make us incarnate again and again. That is why the Master encourages us to direct our energies toward loving him, loving God. This has a purifying effect on the heart, on our consciousness.

MEHER BABA'S DIVINE OUTPOURING

In Meher Baba's presence, one could always sense the tremendous dynamic power of the Infinite radiating from him. Meher Baba's work includes the outpouring of this divine radiation, which is automatic in helping everyone in creation. It is the flow of divine grace, and as it flows, it works out all our problems.

When we Western men went to India in 1954, I thought at first that Meher Baba would give us wonderful discourses, which he did. But it was not long before I discovered that what was most significant was simply being in his presence. Baba's stupendous love radiation was effortlessly working on everyone, affecting us in many, many ways within – affecting our feelings, our thoughts, our light-heartedness, and our insight. His divine love especially made an incomparable impact because divine love awakens the heart and permits love to flow.

Through intuition and insight, we can perceive Baba's grace as a very powerful radiating light that banishes our veils of ignorance and replaces them with truth. In his infinite, oceanic divine-love radiation, we lose track of the little streams of our sanskaric currents. In their place, we experience a steady, sustained flow of truth, love, purity, and beauty. We are meant to experience this coming from him within us, not in a sporadic or passing way, but continuously.

“THE HARVEST IS HEAVY . . .”

We are heading toward a life of service, and on the spiritual path, each person has a duty to perform. Everyone who comes to Meher Baba is put to work. The same with Jesus, who said, “The harvest is heavy but the workers are few.”

Now, we may not know how to serve the Master. We may wonder, “How do I go about it?” “How will I know what to do?” I think that having the attitude of willingness to rally to his cause and serve him – which is the cause for all humanity, the salvation of all humanity – is the starting point. The Master will then lead us into ways and means of serving him.

In many cases, Baba would use a psychological ploy to bring out the willingness of the disciple or those who wanted to come to him. He would even ask them to do such strange and unusual things as take off their clothes and walk through the center of the town. Many of them would say, “Oh, I couldn't do that!” and they would fail the test. Others would start to take their clothes off, and Baba would say, “It's okay, you don't have to do it.” They were willing to do what he asked, you see. It is the willingness that is key.

BRINGING HIS ATMOSPHERE

Your golden opportunities for service to Meher Baba will come up. Even just loving Baba is a great service, because that love is going out, affecting the environment and counteracting at least some of the negative forces that are out there. Some may serve by talking to others about Baba.

Radiating Baba's atmosphere can be part of one's work for Baba's Cause. Baba would often have people around as useful tools – avenues, or channels – for his work. They did not necessarily know what was happening; they were just being themselves.

I recall, in India in 1954, a private talk with Baba in Upper Meherabad, where we had spent most of our three weeks with him. This was shortly before the big two-day meeting for about a thousand Eastern men in Lower Meherabad. He said to me, “Try to bring the atmosphere of this place down there.” Now, I could not bring it in my hands, so what did he mean? I understood that he wanted me to try to continue to hold the feeling of his atmosphere in upper Meherabad, because he knew how

it would spread out among the crowd at the meeting.

In other words, to bring his atmosphere means to maintain in oneself the refined feeling of his inner atmosphere. I do not know if Baba told others the same thing, but I know that he told me explicitly, and this was confirmation to me that I was capable of having that control. It is vitally important to know that our thoughts and feelings do influence others, even if they are not outwardly expressed.

THE JOY OF SERVING

Meher Baba says, “Serving the Master is a joy for the disciple, even when it means an ordeal that tries his body or mind. Service offered under conditions of discomfort or inconvenience is a test of the disciple’s devotion. The more trying such service becomes, the more welcome it is for the disciple. And as he voluntarily accepts physical and mental suffering in his devoted service to the Master, he experiences the bliss of spiritual fulfillment.” This is because this is the way of effacing the self, getting rid of the self. We are forgetting ourselves as we serve him.

The hardships associated with such service are not suffering but joy because of our love for the Master. In true love we function at the level of the spirit. And at the level of the spirit we experience only fulfillment, because love is a giving, and fulfillment comes from this giving. Through love and service, we are penetrating to the level of the spirit. The hard shell of the ego begins to give way, and the divine qualities the Master represents begin to flow through.

CHAPTER 19

THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR

In nonduality there is freedom from limitation as well as the knowledge and appreciation of things as they are.

Meher Baba

When we can stand back and see life as a pack of gross-level earth-games, we will decide to rise above it into a “state of perception,” rather than continue to play those games. We realize that we can remain free instead of dwelling on gross-level games.

Withdraw your need for input from maya and put all your focus on Meher Baba. He is more eager for this than we are. Surrender the limited in favor of the unlimited, as Baba says. Give the false to him and upgrade to the truth. Intensify your faith and conviction. Sow the seeds of liberation.

THE PREREQUISITE FOR LASTING HAPPINESS

Hope and disappointment are two sides of the same coin. Baba stresses the importance of detachment based on understanding, rather than detachment that is merely a reaction to experiences of the opposites. He says, “The steadiness and equanimity that remain unaffected by any opposites is possible only through complete detachment, which is an essential condition of lasting and true happiness. The individual who has complete detachment is not at the mercy of the opposites of experience; and being free from the thralldom of all desires, he no longer creates his own suffering.”

This means that a lasting internal detachment is a prerequisite for lasting happiness. Your consciousness can become free to turn away from the gross level and turn toward the spiritual, toward the reality within. Become a detached witness; do not make the ego-self out to be an obstacle.

THE VIEW FROM THE LEVEL OF SPIRIT

To try to apprehend the spirit with the mind is futile, because it is much too fine. But if one has enough inner detachment from the world, one can become aware of the spirit and become aware that one is living at the level of the spirit.

Meher Baba made it possible for us to be conscious of different levels of the spirit when we were with him. For example, when I was with Baba on a daily basis in 1952 in Scarsdale, New York, he put me into a state of inner detached perception. I found myself floating free, sort of detached from the physical and not encumbered by anything gross, yet aware of everything going on and able to function very adequately and helpfully.

I was experiencing a sense of complete inner detachment. It was as if an instrument that was unnecessary had been taken out of a mechanism. This is one of the problems with our spiritual unfoldment. We think we need our minds. We think we need our desires. We think we need all these things. As we gradually let go of them, we find that there is a clearing that takes place within our consciousness, and we can go to the level of detached perception. The heart quality keeps it from becoming mental transcendentalism.

The degree of our awareness of the spirit when we were with Baba would vary from time to time. On several occasions I have been with Baba when it seemed as though everyone around him were magically transported to a different realm. We would find ourselves swimming in a sea of love, of light, and indescribable beauty. And to some extent we would experience what Meher Baba calls “objectless

awareness.”

Apparently, from what Baba says, we are so attached to objects that we identify ourselves with these objects. But the ultimate realization is when we get free of objects and experience objectless awareness. This apparent loss of everything we had previously taken to be meaningful is compensated by divine bliss.

REPUDIATING OUR COMPLETENESS

We have become deeply habituated to wanting things in both the outer and inner worlds because of a deep inner sense of incompleteness. Wanting is an unconscious statement that says, “I want because I do not have.” As it turns out, this is a refutation of the truth of our own eternal being.

We are, indeed, already complete, but we are not aware of this all-important fact. Through his grace, Meher Baba restores our wholeness. He does this by taking away our delusive sense of incompleteness by occasionally lifting the many-layered veil within, so that we experience our own completeness. In order to augment this lifting of the veil within, he asks us to stop wanting, knowing that when we consciously stop wanting, it becomes possible for us to discern what we already have.

Sometimes, out of compassion for us in our struggles, purely out of his own sweet grace, he reveals to us that he is, indeed, our divine Shepherd, and that we are completely in his most loving care, forever safe within the timeless security of his eternal Being. One time, Baba gave me an experience of this.

THE “COMPLETE” STORY

It happened when I was one of the eighteen fortunate men who were Meher Baba’s guests in India for three weeks in 1954. This was later described as the “Three Incredible Weeks.” I had been following Baba since 1932 and had met him in 1934. In 1952 I spent quite a bit of time with him in America and had drawn very close to him inwardly. So this trip to India was the fulfillment of an almost impossible dream – to be with the Divine Beloved in his heartland on an intimate basis.

I had always experienced him as the Christ, and sometimes, in India especially, seeing him as the Christ was so startling and astounding that I could never find the words to describe how tremendous it was. One day, I was standing on Meherabad Hill thinking of how wonderful it was that I happened to be one of the few men who were there as Baba’s guests. I knew there must be thousands throughout the world who deserved to be there more than I did, but I decided to respond by doing what I could to work inwardly with Baba and whatever he was doing within me.

I found myself plunged into a much deeper level of consciousness – a more subjective level – and found I was able to work within and consciously single out various sanskaric patterns and complexes that were impeding my spiritual progress, like debris littering the path within. I started to understand them more and more and thereby was able to cast them off completely.

It was like walking through a forest, pushing aside the undergrowth. I could see where I had misjudged some things and drawn the wrong conclusions about other things – all those things that create a sense of bondage in our consciousness. I was able to work with them: to see through them, discard them, and work toward Baba within, closer to divine love and toward truth.

And I was able to work quite well. Through clearing out the sanskaras, my consciousness was able to enter more expansive, freer levels of seeing and being within. Curiously enough, I did not realize that Baba was precipitating this whole experience within me, which he did without any ceremony or outward sign, just through inward working. (He was not physically with me; he was in Meherabad.)

This went on for two or three days, and I made what I thought was very good progress, when suddenly I came to an unceremonious halt. I encountered a subtle blockage within – at the physical level I experienced it in the solar plexus area – and I could not do anything with it. I was unable to go

any further. But I thought, “Well, I’m happy that I’ve gone as far as I have. That is a blessing in itself” It never occurred to me that Baba would do something about it.

Then one day I was with Baba on Meherabad Hill along with several other people – Baba was about ten or fifteen feet away from me – when suddenly a great wave of divine fire, power, light, grace, beauty, and love from Baba swept right through me. It swept that blockage away – and a lot more besides! It all happened in a flash – a flash from the eternal. And this was not something outside of Baba, but was within the aura of his love-Being. It was so powerful that I was stunned. I realized that nothing could stand in the way of Baba’s irresistible force when he released it.

I just stood there for a few seconds thinking, “What happened?” Sometimes when something astounding occurred around Baba, words from the Bible would come to my mind, and in this case what came to my mind was a passage from the 23rd Psalm: “He restoreth my soul.” This is what I felt. I became aware of my soul, and I experienced a sense of fulfillment and a sense of being complete within Baba’s loving Being!

I felt I had instantly been restored to wholeness, to completeness. I experienced complete bliss, complete freedom, unlimitedness, and timelessness. I was totally blissful and utterly free – nothing could be added. I had no need for anything else: no desires of any sort at all. This was truly a revelation. It was not that Baba made me complete: He just lifted some veils and revealed the fact that not only am I already complete, but we all are already complete! Simply by being with him, in his radiation, in his atmosphere of spiritual freedom, we are sustained by his grace and we experience our completeness.

After a few moments, Baba and the group started walking down toward Lower Meherabad, where Baba was going to light the dhuni fire. I kept saying to myself, “Baba is the dhuni fire – the fire of divine love!” This is one of the greatest experiences I ever had with Baba, and it is still functioning within.

THE CONTINUOUS WORKING OF GRACE

This was just a little glimpse of Meher Baba’s omnipotence and how his grace works at times. There was never any outward sign between us, but he knew that I knew what was going on, and I knew that he had done all of this. I find that even though he is out of the physical body, he still works in this mysterious way to sweep away one’s sanskaras and to give one a sense of merging with him in total bliss. So I know these things can still happen.

There is no need for the “wanting machine” to keep running. As long as the wanting machine is going, we cannot experience our completeness. It is only when we stop the wanting machine that we stop repudiating the fact that we are already complete. This completeness was revealed to me that day, along with the realization that nothing can be added, because one experiences total bliss. So there is no need to desire to be anything or to have anything. And there is no room left to think of oneself as being advanced, or not advanced, or anything of that sort, because everyone is complete.

“SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT”

As a result of Meher Baba’s love-gift of restoring my soul to completeness, wherein I was, through his divine grace, blissfully relieved of the burdens of wanting or desiring anything at all, having everything in his love, I came to see that the concept of “spiritual advancement” is really a misnomer that keeps one’s consciousness involved in the illusion of egoic acquisition, however refined.

This concept is predicated on and supported by our sense of incompleteness, which fosters our inclination to gain or achieve something that we think we do not already have. It binds our consciousness to a sense of future fulfillment, thus making us feel dependent on time, which is itself a creation of maya. There is a difference between “spiritual advancement” and liberation from the mayavic illusions that bind us to wanting or desiring, even wanting or desiring spiritual states of

consciousness in order to experience fulfillment.

Eventually, we will have to face and be blissfully satisfied with our completeness. If we can stop the wanting machine and work in the forest of our sanskaras – shedding the light of truth on them, trying to understand and then dispose of them – with Baba’s help we will gain momentum and move closer toward God, toward Baba within, toward truth. And we will begin to experience our own completeness.

CHAPTER 20

SPIRITUALIZING OUR LIVES

We have to feel in our heart of hearts that only God is real. He alone exists. He is in us all. He alone is to be loved: God and God alone.

Meher Baba

Meher Baba is spiritualizing the world, and as time passes, more and more people will “sing the tune” of the spiritualized life. Baba’s work, not only with his disciples but with all of humanity, is to raise our consciousness from the bondage of the material realm, where we are caught in the conflict of the opposites, and to change our focus from the exterior creation to him, to God, so that instead of being dictated to by the opposites, our impulses will be dictated by him. The new task for humanity is to learn how to begin relinquishing the false self.

A TEMPLE ON EARTH

Meher Baba explains quite a bit about the life of the spirit, not only in the discourse so named but also in various other discourses. He says, “The life of the spirit is the expression of Infinity and, as such, knows no artificial limits.” He also says, “When once true adjustment between spirit and matter is secured, there is no phase of life that cannot be utilized for the expression of divinity.”

Spirit is our true identity. We really are spirit having a physical experience, whereas most people mistakenly believe that we are a body and that we might have a spirit. Spirit is that part of us that goes on after we drop the physical body, and it is our real life. But when it is tied in with the mind and the ego and misconceptions about values, it can develop cravings and identify with those cravings.

However, Baba makes it clear that the physical body is important in the spiritual life; it plays a vital part in the dynamic of spiritual unfoldment. In fact, realization – merging with the Divine Beloved – has to take place while one is in the physical body.

What Baba says about the body is really to be taken literally: “If the body yields to the claims of the spirit as it should, it is instrumental in bringing down the kingdom of heaven on earth. It becomes a vehicle for the release of divine life; and when it subserves this purpose, it might aptly be called the temple of God on earth.”

DENIZENS OF THE DEEP

Life is all-comprehensive. Meher Baba explains that in right relationship to life and spirituality, we bring “a certain enlightened attitude” to everything in life. In other words, we can deal with every facet of life with spiritual insight rather than think of everything as only material.

Most of us are living on the surface of the ocean, when we are really denizens of the deep. We have a deeper inner nature where real values are sorted out, and we can become aware of this – we are meant to become aware of this.

Our approach to almost all situations has to undergo a change. Our desire-nature – our wanting machine – discolors our values. Throughout our lives we look for excitement, experiences of adventure, all kinds of varied experiences. We tend to think, “What am I going to get out of it? What pleasure is in it for me?” So to do something without any thought of getting anything out of it for ourselves is a radical change. When we finally do this, however, we discover that we get real value out of it, real fulfillment.

We undergo a change in our psychological understanding and in our process of overcoming our weaknesses. This is all part of our journey through life. True, we can get much help from God or the Master through divine love and grace, but at the same time we have to learn right valuation. We must learn to see through many of the things that attract and even enslave our minds and our desire-nature so that our heart – our spirit – will be free and our insight will be clear.

It takes us a long time to funnel through a process of elimination into the real values, to become awake to the life within. But it is possible for everyone. Eventually, worldly things no longer attract us and we get free of those entanglements.

WORK IN THE WORLD

Meher Baba's discourses show us how to diminish ego-consciousness and develop detachment. These are skills allowing us to be busy and efficient outwardly, yet free inwardly, retaining our spiritual consciousness and identity.

We can be very active outwardly and very active inwardly at the same time. We put our thought level on our work in the world yet keep our feelings on God within. I found, especially through the years when I was working, that I could keep my mind on my job, but my heart could still be free, and I could still be in contact with Baba within; I could feel close to him through the heart center. So I would think of him by feeling him.

Just as we can learn how to juggle three oranges, so can we learn how to keep our heart open while putting our mind on our work. It is like being in love with someone: While working in the world, one's heart remains focused on one's beloved.

THE EXERCISE OF MEDITATION

Before meeting Meher Baba, I used to meditate a great deal, mostly through inner seeking and dying to my self within. Many people approach meditation as a means of attaining something. For others, meditation itself can lead to a blissful state – but not union with God, because they empty the mind of everything, even an awareness of God. When we still the mind, we get bliss but not God. So we have to keep our minds just active enough to keep our minds on God.

One of the meditations Meher Baba suggested was that we try to wake up Baba within and make him conscious of who he is and what he is within us. It is a curious thing that just thinking about him and tuning in to him brings great light to one's inner consciousness, and with this comes a sense of inner security.

Strive to realize the significance of Baba's omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. If he really has all these qualities, what does that mean in relation to our spiritual unfoldment? Contemplating this can open up a great realm within each one of us, because if he is all these things, he is able to do miraculous things within us.

“TAKE ME WITH YOU”

Meher Baba says, “Things that are real are given and received in silence.” It is important to go within and keep company with God. His love-power dissolves all sanskaras.

One time in 1956, when we were with Baba at Meher Mount, in Ojai, California, Baba told us that we should go out, walk around, see the views, and try to love Baba through nature. He said, “This is all due to my love – this whole creation, this nature, all the beauty you see, all came out of me.” Then, as we were leaving, he added, “And take me with you.” “Take me with you” does not mean just thinking about Baba, but loving him and feeling that he is a part of our consciousness. We can do this even while in the midst of our worldly duties.

MEDITATION OF THE HEART

In this materialistic modern age, people seldom take time to sit quietly and withdraw their attention from the world and try to love God and experience their completeness with great patience and inner bliss. Jesus said, "In your patience possess ye your souls." That is the patience of letting go of the false in order to experience the real, which is within all of us.

It is only when we stop wanting and begin to sit back and experience contentment that we will begin to experience fulfillment. So we have to start with contentment. If we focus on experiencing contentment, then we are turning off the motor of wanting. How will we ever experience unshakable inner peace and bliss if we do not stop the wanting motor, even for a few moments now and then? To get ready for it, be content with what you have and are. Feel quietude within. Sit quietly for a few minutes and feel the Beloved's companionship. Be satisfied with his companionship.

Of course this could easily go into spiritual intoxication, which is subtle – not of the body and emotions. Stilling the mind and the emotions is essential for experiencing Baba's sweet love, which is subtle. For those who love Baba, meditation as an exercise is not necessary; meditation of the heart becomes one's effortless effort.

EFFORTLESS LIFE

We are much happier not chasing after wants. Through surrender of our desires, fancies, wild imagination, and ambition, we experience real fulfillment and contentment. Meher Baba says, "When an individual is thus contented, he does not require any solutions to problems, because the problems that confront worldly persons have disappeared. He has no problems; therefore he does not have to worry about their solution. For him the complexities of life do not exist because his life becomes utterly simple in the state of desirelessness."

We breathe all day, inhaling and exhaling, but we do not have to tell ourselves, "Now it's time to inhale, now it's time to exhale." Breathing happens automatically; we do not have to think about it. Eventually, life itself becomes like that. We do not have to consciously decide to do this or that. Life just unfolds automatically.

Consciousness then is freed up. It does not have to be caught up at the level of the outer life and confined to that level. Get free of the opposites. Do not go outside to fulfill desires. Work toward achieving a steady state of equanimity in your relationship with Baba: harmonious and attuned. He sustains us, and as we experience this through an inner state of companionship with him, we then experience some of his consciousness.

When consciousness rises to the level of the spirit, it goes out to the far corners of the universe, and we live in and through everyone and everything. We live, move, and have our being in God's Being, while also keeping in mind that it is all part of God's imaginary creation. Underlying creation is Oneness; all are one in spirit. Selflessness merges into Selfness for all.

CHAPTER 21

THE TREASURE IN OUR HANDS

I bring the greatest treasure it is possible for man to receive – a treasure that includes all other treasures, that will endure forever, that increases when shared with others. Be ready to receive it.

Meher Baba

Meher Baba as Messiah, or Avatar, is the divine catalyst that becomes the gateway to the goal, to God. When people want to know what are the special features of God appearing as the Messiah, as Christ, as Meher Baba, I have to say that it is more than the superb explanations that Baba gave. The real value of contacting him is the beatific vision, if one has the good fortune to receive that. It is a matter of the degree to which one apprehends who he really is. One day in 1954, I suddenly perceived Baba as being very strongly the Christ. He then shot me the most penetrating look I think I ever received from him. It was as though he was surprised that someone saw so deeply past his “masquerade.”

Meher Baba could and sometimes did most lovingly lift some of his veils, giving us glimpses of his measureless, luminous love and allowing us to merge with him in the spirit. He showed us more effectively than any teaching could ever convey that divine love dissolves separation and unites, that divine love is indeed the way to union with our Divine Beloved.

So the greatest teaching Meher Baba ever gave us was actually not a teaching at all. The greatest teaching he gave us was on those special occasions when, through his great love for us, he would let us see into the very essence of his Being and actually draw us into the divine sweetness and soul-enlivening beauty that he is.

EFFORT AND GRACE

Avatar Meher Baba did not come to move us only a little bit – he came to move us completely, to liberation! So we must have his intervention and grace, and his inner working and manipulation with us at inner levels, in order to bring what is buried in the subconscious to the surface, where it can be dealt with by the conscious mind and intelligently disposed of or dissolved.

Baba’s Will for us is that we be free, no longer victimized by the opposites of the dual realm. He has come to the prison; he has opened the door, and he is asking us to come out. Through the activity of his grace, veils are torn away and light is revealed. What he brings about is not dependent upon any conditions, so it is important that we believe in him and what he can do for us. If we are sincere strivers, he gives us help with everything.

This is one of the great works of Meher Baba with us as individuals. It is not simply a matter of our accumulating more virtue on the surface, but of digging out all the roots of the problems of ignorance that create lust, greed, anger, and selfishness in the individual. Our objective is to live free of ego-consciousness. We have to work at it.

It is important to understand that our efforts are for the purpose of becoming subservient to and sustained by Baba’s ever-flowing love-grace, instead of remaining subservient to and sustained by our own sanskaras, our conditioning.

THE DILIGENT STUDENT

It is always an effort to filter out illusion and tune in to Meher Baba’s love and inner help.

However, it has been my experience that Baba himself is always lovingly inspiring us to make these efforts to work within. We tend to procrastinate, thinking we will reach the goal without our doing anything, but we must make efforts. We must rise up and rebel against everything that keeps us complacent. We must grow into more mature states of consciousness and rise to the level of the real. We are all capable of heroic efforts.

By making such efforts, we attract more of Meher Baba's grace, just as diligent students who are willing to apply themselves attract more attention and help from the teacher than do uninterested, complacent students. We can awaken and evoke more of Baba's attention and help by complying with what he is trying to do with us. He works with us continuously, if we have integrity of purpose and are willing to bring to the surface everything that needs to be dealt with.

Meher Baba is constantly offering his grace, but we must accept it. By inviting his intervention, we open our psyche to inner changes, to the release from sanskaric blockages. By accepting his grace, we are also giving everything to him; we release our hold on the sanskaras and let them go. We make a decision to die to the gross level. This entails a deep psychic revolution.

We begin to understand our sanskaras and our addiction to them. We come to see how we continuously create veils over our consciousness. When through our own subjective inner efforts and Baba's grace the sanskaric veils become transparent, they no longer tyrannize us.

THE INNER PATH

By clawing our way through, step by step, we get more light, more inspiration, and more insight as we go along. The veils fall away, and our inner vision becomes clearer and clearer. Our faith turns into conviction; inner sight becomes illumination. We experience a glorious expansion of consciousness. We become aware of the fact that we are indeed spirit. This is the inner path.

As we can see, this inner work is partly our job and partly the Master's. His part is to remove our veils of illusion so that we become more and more aware of truth, and our part is to cooperate with his help and to cease creating more veils that bind us to illusion and keep us from seeing the truth of our own being.

But in the last analysis, the wiping out of our inner impediments is an act of the Master's grace. Even our own efforts are precipitated by him. In fact, he is doing it all himself. We think that we are the doer, but he is really the doer. It is he himself who is awakening himself in us.

THE DIVINE TREASURE

The poet and Perfect Master Rumi said, "On the spiritual path, effort is required. But grace is a thousand times greater than effort. When the Sun rises, the candle of self-effort can be blown out." To love Meher Baba intensely is our effort but essentially his gift. It involves full acceptance of the reality of his divine but personal love for us, and this includes his divine grace.

Meher Baba's divine love for us is intimately personal and continuous. It is divinely precious and unendingly sustaining. His love includes and reveals the treasure of divine grace, which is his gift to us. Baba's divine love-grace is infinite. It cannot be measured. His love-grace is not something that is given only briefly. It is eternal. His love-grace easily supersedes the otherwise rigid laws of causation that ordinarily determine the state of our consciousness. Through the continuous and never-diminished gift of his love-grace, we are liberated from maya's bindings and made aware of our own completeness.

To be enabled through Beloved Baba's loving grace to recognize our own completeness, even now, is to be liberated instantaneously from addiction to any sense of lack, need, or want. In completeness nothing can be added. It is the nature of our soul to be complete. The attributes of realizing this are a sense of blissful release and abiding fulfillment in the sweet reality of Meher Baba's freely and continuously given divine love-grace.

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

Meher Baba used to say to us, “You belong to me.” We all belong to him. He is our friend, no matter what, and he is offering us the Kingdom of Heaven on a silver platter! Gold and silver are mere grains of sand compared to what he wants to share with us.

So look for Beloved Baba in the heart and focus on him, instead of on desires and all the other lesser things. The love of God can supersede the flow of desires and change our focus to the flow of love in the heart. This puts us in a different realm, a realm of transcendent consciousness. The ego begins to diminish, the eyes of the heart open, and the heart becomes more and more pure. It is like the beginning of dawn; it is our spiritual awakening.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DARWIN C. SHAW (1908-2005)

Darwin Shaw, who departed this realm on October 2, 2005, was extraordinarily focused on that which is most essential in life and unfailingly remained centered in it. His mental clarity, inner awareness, intuition and insight combined with his tireless efforts to do God's Will resulted in a long and rich lifetime of spiritual work at all levels.

From his earliest years, Darwin was keenly aware that God was in charge of his life. Remarkably, he remembered his own baptism in the Lutheran church in Lake Luzerne, New York, his birthplace. As he recounts it, "As the minister patted the baptismal water on my head I remember being surrounded by light and a strong sense of the Spiritual Presence." At age 17, in 1925, Darwin made his way to Wyoming where he began to work on cattle ranches throughout the West. There, too, he felt the presence of God guiding and protecting him. He said that he experienced a great expansion of inner consciousness enhanced by the wide open vistas of the land.

Back in Schenectady, New York in the late 1920s, Darwin married Jeanne Kitler, who was to be his precious life companion and fellow disciple of Meher Baba. Darwin had always had a deep devotion to Christ and he lived with the absolute inner certainty that the Divine Beloved would appear on earth again during his own lifetime and that he was destined to meet him. When an article appeared in the local newspaper in 1932 saying that Meher Baba, an Indian spiritual teacher, had left Bombay for America and England, Darwin immediately knew inwardly that this was the One he was destined to meet. Circumstances prevented Darwin and Jeanne from a physical meeting with Meher Baba until 1934, yet a strong inner rapport was established before that time, and as Darwin recounted his lifetime with Baba, he would often begin, "My first meetings with Meher Baba were on the inner planes." When he finally did meet Meher Baba in person in 1934, Baba held out his hand to Darwin who later said that Baba's hand reached out to him "across two thousand years." He was again in the presence of the Christ.

Darwin and Jeanne began to host meetings in their home in Schenectady in 1932 and these continued with few interruptions until they moved to Myrtle Beach in 1989. These meetings – which were explicitly sanctioned and blessed by Baba – were the longest continuously running Baba meetings held in America. Darwin's life with Baba is richly detailed in his eloquent autobiography, *As Only God Can Love*. For Darwin, the experience of being with Baba "was like re-living the pages of the New Testament." Throughout his lifetime, Darwin assisted Baba outwardly at every opportunity, and he ceaselessly shared his knowledge of the spiritual path with those who came to him for guidance, always pointing to Meher Baba as the Source of that wisdom.

Darwin was a master of the subtle ways of the spirit. Both his wisdom and the example he gave of a life of the spirit well-lived had a profound effect upon the many seekers who came to him to hear of his experiences of Meher Baba and the spiritual path. He often said, "We are always surrounded by a luminous Sea, a Sea of light, of love, of bliss." For many, Darwin's elucidations of the path have caused us to glimpse that love and luminosity and have given us hope that we too can traverse the perilous, exhilarating path to the goal. We are blessed that he has left us more lessons on the Way, in the form of this present book of essays that he completed just before his death, in which he once again generously shares his love and knowledge with us all.

*Dance for joy in the meaningless array,
For all is void in the sight of God.
Cease thy struggles with the coils of illusion;
Let it go on unchallenged, unclaimed,
And smile with God.
For all is a trick, a joke which never was.
Be not deceived by the enchantment of a distant freedom,
Oh ye who were never bound;
Laugh at the trammels of Maya.*

Darwin Shaw