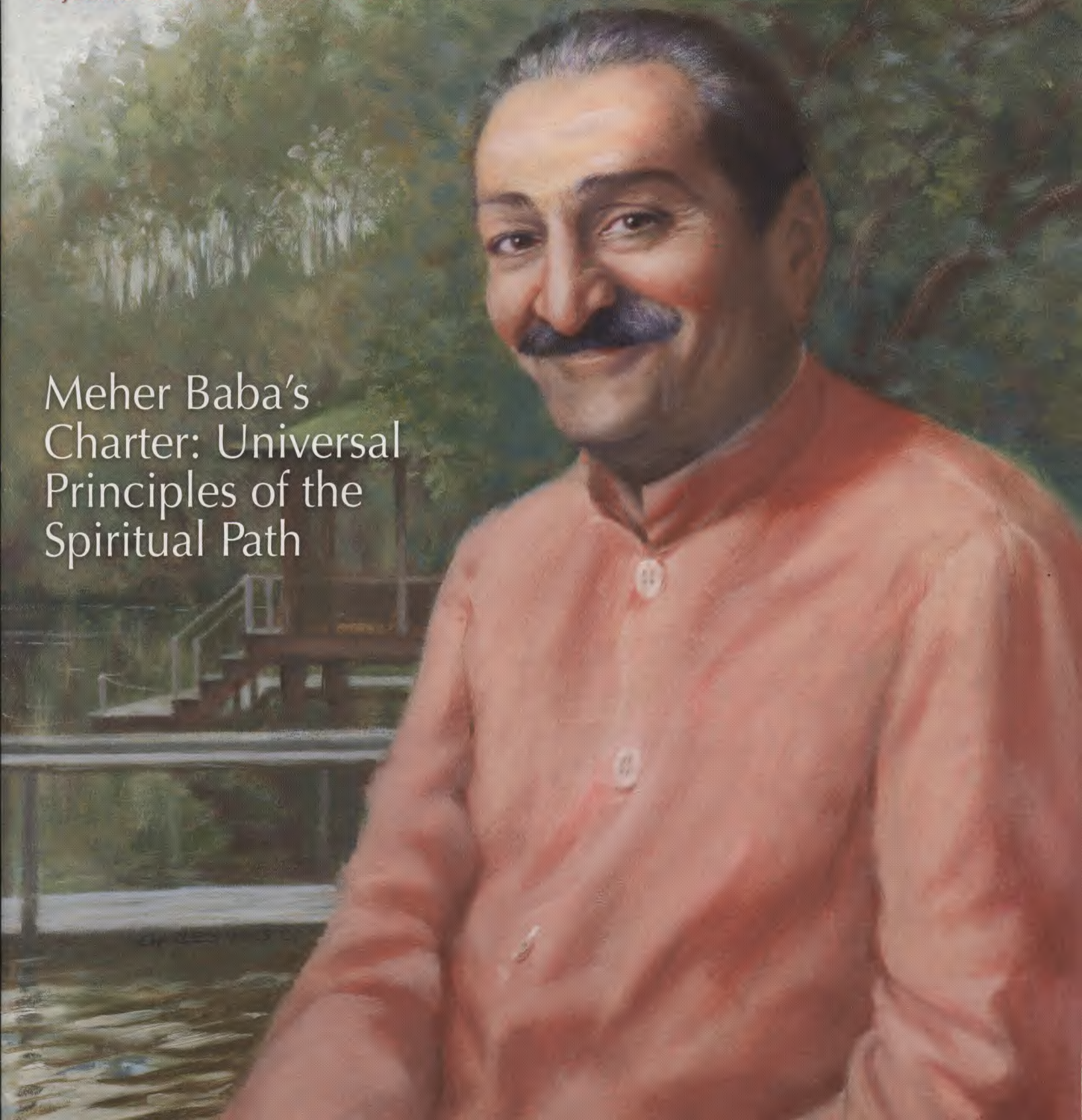


GLOW INTERNATIONAL

A Journal Devoted to Meher Baba

Winter 2009

Meher Baba's
Charter: Universal
Principles of the
Spiritual Path



Meher Baba's Charter: Universal Principles of the Spiritual Path

A Blueprint for Meher Baba's New Humanity

By Ira G. Deitrick and Henry S. Mindlin

**And an exclusive question-and-answer segment with
Murshida Carol Weyland Conner on the Charter**

*"Sufism is eternal, but just as it gathered force through
Mohammed, so God will reinforce it through me." –*

Meher Baba, 1952

In 1952, Meher Baba spent many months, both in America and in India, writing and editing a Charter for the spiritual school he had established in America called "Sufism Reoriented". How and why did this come about? Why did Baba put so much time into crafting this document? What is its place in the broader pattern of Baba's universal work? This article tells the full story for the first time.

Drawing from original documents preserved in the archives of Sufism Reoriented, including never-before-published letters from Meher Baba and his disciples Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, Adi K. Irani and others, transcripts of Baba's interviews and meetings with

Murshida Ivy Duce, Francis Brabazon and Don Stevens and the personal journals of Murshida Duce, this three-part series, prepared specially for **Glow International**, traces the origin and history of Meher Baba's Sufi Charter.

Parts I and II, published in Summer and Fall 2009 issues, reviewed Baba's work with Sufism in America from its beginnings in 1942 to his creation of "Sufism Reoriented" in 1952, and detailed his many months of work in crafting a Charter that would be universally applicable in the East and the West, in the present and the future.

In Part III, authors Ira Deitrick, President of Sufism Reoriented, and research associate Henry Mindlin, explore the principles of Meher Baba's new Sufism as expressed in the final document and Baba's accompanying letters and notes. In addition, we publish the entire text of the Charter. The Sufi Charter in its final form, the authors say, exemplifies Meher Baba's design for renewing not just Sufism in America, but universal Sufism and all the major highways to God in the future.



Meher Baba in conversation with Murshida Ivy Duce in 1956 at the Hotel Delmonico in New York.

A Fresh Start

When Meher Baba said he intended to "overhaul" Sufism in 1952, he had a clear plan in mind. He swept aside nearly all of the practices of traditional Sufi schools, even the simplified design Inayat Khan had devised when he brought Sufism to the West from India in the early 20th century. Inayat Khan noted, "Most of my life in the Western world has been spent to prepare those who were attracted to the inner teachings, to grasp the idea of ... the relationship between the spiritual teacher and the pupil. And I found that where an Eastern teacher begins, that was the end that I was to arrive at in the training of my pupils."¹ The Sufi Order Murshida Duce had inherited from Inayat Khan's successor, Murshida Rabia Martin, included much that had been adapted from traditional Eastern practice, such as grades of membership; initiations of different types that were often denoted by a title (*Shaikh*, *Khalif*, etc.) and a robe of office; specialized forms of meditation, concentration and mental discipline; exercises similar to yoga, associated with physical culture and control of the breath; and programmes of spiritual study, such as the "graded lesson papers" Inayat Khan had prepared for his students, which had been the subject of much of Murshida Duce's correspondence with Baba through Dr. Ghani in 1948 (discussed in Pat I of this series). These practices, appropriate for spiritual students in the past, were not necessary on the new path Meher Baba had in view for the new spiritual cycle. And, as Baba's responses in Dr. Ghani's letters to Murshida Duce had suggested, a student's attachment to a particular outward discipline, form of meditation or study could even become a hindrance to progress.

Baba replaced these with simple statements such as,

- "Sufism is based on love and longing for God and the eventual union with God in actual experience."
- "Sufism is mainly based on a definite acceptance of a God-realized Master and complete adherence to His guidance."

"Emanating From Me"

All was to now be done, as Baba had emphasized at each of his meetings with Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon at Myrtle Beach in May 1952, "under my aegis, under the shelter of my name and my blessings."² Over the next several months, as Baba worked with Murshida and her associates to refine the Charter, he underlined some of the significance of this statement. On July 9, 1952, he wrote her:

"Do you not realize that the very assertion that I am connected with all 'isms' and yet detached and above all 'isms' lays bare the Truth that Sufism Reoriented, emanating from me to be conceived and practised [*sic*], will forge out into one of the few pure channels leading to one God? As a

P. B. 487
Myrtle Beach
South Carolina
July 9, 1952.

My dear Ivy,

I received your letter of July 7. I am glad you are thinking over the Constitution in its details. The points raised by you are worth considering and in co-operating - the most important is this -

Sufism Re-oriented is fundamentally based on enlargening the concept of Sufism and making it all embracing for the matter of its knowledge and practice - yet maintaining the original value of Sufism. That is why the symbol of 'the star and the crescent' is to be transplanted into 'heart & figure one' with the wings perched on the top, as suggested by you later.

I am going thru the Constitution as I find it convenient, with an eye to make it non-dogmatically universal, by changes, deletions & additions whenever necessary.

Do you not realize that the very assertion that I am connected with all 'isms' and yet detached and above all 'isms' lays bare the truth that Sufism Re-oriented, emanating from me to be conceived & practised, will forge out into one of the few pure channels leading to one God?

As a result, all who will follow any one of the 'isms' Re-oriented by me, will come eventually to ~~the~~ love and realize me rather than the 'isms'. My love.

Dictated by Baba.

P.S. Thus dear Ivy, I want you to be certain that Sufism Re-oriented will be bereft of the Mohammedan aspect to become universal instead & yet keep in tact the original Sufism. My love to you & BABA.

July 9, 1952 letter from Meher Baba in Myrtle Beach to Murshida Duce in New York about the reorientation of Sufism.

result, all who will follow any one of the 'isms' Re-oriented by me, will come eventually to love and realize me rather than the 'isms'.³

By specifically directing their devotion toward him, Baba ensured that members of his new Sufism Reoriented would not become caught up in the limiting forms and practices of an 'ism':

- The only two "spiritual practices" he prescribed in the Charter were that members were "to necessarily repeat verbally one name of God" (which, for most, is Baba's name) faithfully for a half hour every day, and "to meditate on the Master [Meher Baba] daily for fifteen minutes".
- Members were also required "to necessarily read and study vigorously" *Baba's Discourses* and *God Speaks*, as well as Sufi literature of the past.

- And those who took formal initiation as Sufis were simply to make a “grave, sacred declaration and promise”, invoking God’s presence to bind themselves “to the faithful adherence of the guidance laid down by Meher Baba, and to faith and trust in the Murshid.”

Emanating from him, Sufism Reoriented was to be fully focused on Meher Baba as the ideal of Love Personified, the Divine Beloved.

Love and Devotion

Back in 1940, Baba had explained to his close ones in India that the central virtue of universal Sufism was not meditation or spiritual disciplines, but intensity of love for God, and the spontaneous, joyful surrender to the God-Man that flowed from love. He said:

“...meditation has never yet made a person one with God! Hafiz said to the Sufis, ‘If you have the whim to achieve union with God, become as the dust at the feet of One who has become united with Him!’

“Aurobindo [Ghose] is on the sixth plane...by meditation. Chatti Baba never meditated, yet he sees God all day and night. And, though both are on the sixth plane, there is a great difference between them. Love gives permanence, meditation gives *samadhi*...Aurobindo writes beautifully about the ‘deep valley’ between seeing God and God Himself. He says, ‘We cry out on this side: “O God, we see You but cannot come to you! So, at least you come to us!”’ And God replies, ‘I always come as Ram, Krishna, Buddha, and others...’”

Meher Baba’s new design for Sufism Reoriented directed that love to the Source of Love itself – Meher Baba! In so doing, he affirmed what he had told Dr. Ghani to convey to Murshida Duce in their 1948 correspondence:

“The most prominent characteristic of the Sufi way of spiritual progress is its emphasis on LOVE, which overshadows all spiritual practices known to man. The best manner of developing this Love is to identify oneself with the living Perfect Master and his mission in life. In the affairs of the world today, Baba is assuredly Love-Incarnate for all true and sincere aspirants to live for and die for.”⁴

Universalizing Sufism

Meher Baba also underlined the *universality* of Sufi principles that had become narrowly identified with Islam. The traditional Sufism that Inayat Khan brought to America had flowered in the tenth to fourteenth centuries in the Near East and India. It had adopted Muslim terminology (Arabic and Persian) and practices to such an extent that Sufism now seemed inextricably associated with Islam in the public mind. Though traditional Sufi literature, such as Ibn Arabi, Hafiz and Rumi, offers the most comprehensive exposition of the spiritual path (as exemplified by its use in *God Speaks*), this literature is so filled with references to the *Quran* and sayings of the Prophet that many people today believe that, as only a Muslim can understand it properly, only a Muslim can be a “true Sufi”. On July 7, 1952, as Murshida worked on the draft of the Charter, she wrote to Baba:

“For 30 years we’ve been insisting that Sufism simply meant Wisdom and was the essence of all the religions and insist-

ing on the unity of all religious ideals. We have taught the Gita, Koran, Bible, &c. I personally was trying to put together an article for the Encyclopedia Britannica objecting to their treatise [*sic*] that Sufism was just Mohammedanism, [and to explain to them] that it was the same thing that Zoroaster, Krishna and all the Messengers taught. My last letter to Dr. Ghani was on this subject. My heart is not drawn to just the Mohammedan approach to God. [My student Hal] Stewart is more interested in Christian Mysticism. I. Khan’s whole life was spent in trying to broaden Sufism. I believe that all my mureeds are more attuned to the WHOLE which is Baba than to the SEGMENT which is Mohammedan Sufism. We have never emphasized Sufi saints more than the saints from Vedanta and Christianity, Buddhism, &c. *Quo vadamus* [Latin: “where are we going”], Baba?”

Two days later (July 9), Baba responded:

“The points raised by you are worth considering and incorporating — the most important is this:

“Sufism Re-oriented is fundamentally based on enlarging the concept of Sufism and making it all-embracing for the matter of its knowledge and practice -- yet maintaining the original value of Sufism. That is why the symbol of ‘the star and the crescent’ [*used by Inayat Khan as discussed below*] is to be transplanted into ‘heart and figure one’ with the wings perched on the top, as suggested by you...

“...P.S.: Thus dear Ivy, I want you to be certain that Sufism Re-oriented will be bereft of the Mohammedan aspect to become universal instead and yet keep intact the original Sufism.

“My love to you,

“BABA”

Baba included a similar statement in the final version of the Charter, expanding on it by saying:

“With an eye to make it *non-dogmatically universal*, [*italics added*] the reorientation is fundamentally based on the one hand, on enlarging the concept of Sufism in order to make it all-embracing for the matter of its knowledge and practice. On the other hand, the original value of Sufism, which lies in the *Tariquat* (Divine Path), its *Marefat* (Divine Knowledge) and its *Haquiquat* (Divine Realization of Truth) is maintained intact.”⁵

Preserving Its Essence

The “original” aspect of universal Sufism is the timeless path of love and longing for God as the Beloved. Baba “maintains intact” the matchless understanding of the intricacies of the Path, the states and stages of divine love, the levels of gnosis, certainty and realization as developed and refined in Sufi literature, for it can be found nowhere else. As Baba wrote to Murshida (Sept. 29, 1952), “Many Sufi terms though seemingly peculiar, when put in their equivalent English terms are nevertheless absolutely appropriate; e.g. One with the one, Highest of the High, Beyond the Beyond, Perfect, Most Perfect and Supremely Perfect etc.” For its understanding of the path of love, the subtleties of the relationship between lover and Beloved and the stages of separation and union, he said, “Sufism has a distinct value of its own just as Vedantism

etc. have theirs and therefore Sufism universalized should not on that account cease to be Sufism and as such it should not be mixed up with generalities so as not to lose sight of its original value." ⁶ Nonetheless, Baba encouraged Murshida to use English terminology wherever possible. For example, he did not use the term "mureed" for student, choosing instead to say "member" of Sufism throughout the Charter. But he did retain the title of Murshid, perhaps because in the Charter he had defined it as denoting a particular level of illumination that the word "Teacher" would not convey.⁷

The Winged Heart

To represent the universalization of Sufism, Baba made an important change in the symbol Inayat Khan had chosen for his original Sufi Order in 1910 – the familiar winged heart. Inayat Khan had placed within the heart a star and crescent, an ancient symbol used by the Greeks, the Persians and the Ottomans among others, explaining that the star represented divine light and the crescent, responsiveness to light:



Although Inayat Khan sought to make his Sufi message all-inclusive, the star and crescent was inevitably seen as an Islamic symbol. The association is so strong that it is even found as the symbol for Islam on Baba's "Mastery in Servitude" emblem. So, in the same letter in which Baba spoke of "enlarging the concept of Sufism", he told Murshida that the star and crescent would be "transplanted" into the number ONE. In later correspondence he added, "I have approved of the addition of wings to the symbol of the heart as a sign of freedom which is also the goal of Sufism and have fixed the figure of a plain one (1) to be embedded in the heart." He refined this wording slightly in the final draft of the Charter, saying:

"This reorientation is symbolized by the numerical figure of one (1) embedded in a diagram of the human heart with wings of freedom on both its left and right sides."



Meher Baba chose the winged heart with the number "1" as the emblem for the reoriented Sufism.

(2)

all of the above 'isms'.

Sufism as reoriented by Meher Baba is based on love and longing for God and the eventual union with God in actual experience. With an eye to make it non-dogmatically universal, on the one hand, the reorientation is fundamentally based on enlarging the concept of Sufism in order to make it all embracing for the matter of its knowledge and practice. On the other hand, the original value of Sufism, which lies in its *Tarikat* (Divine Path), its *Ma'arifat* (Divine Knowledge), and its *Haqikat* (Divine Realization of Truth) is maintained intact.

This reorientation is symbolized by the numerical figure of one as embedded in a diagram of the human heart with wings of freedom on both ~~the~~ ^{its} left and right sides –



To sum up in Baba's own words, "The fact that I am connected with all 'isms' and yet detached and above all 'isms', lays bare the ~~fact~~ ^{truth} that Sufism Reoriented, emanating from me, to be conceived and practised, will forge out into one of the few pure channels leading to One God. As a result, all who will follow anyone of the 'isms' reoriented by me, will come eventually to love me and realize ^{God} ~~me~~ rather than the 'isms'."

I Active Faith.

The ideal of the Order is meant to be put into vigorous practice –

The winged heart with the number "1" as drawn in the handwritten draft of the proposed Charter that Baba sent to Murshida Duce in the fall of 1952.

Meher Baba had thus replaced the star and crescent with a symbol suitable for the coming spiritual age, the figure "1", for the unity of life and the One residing in every heart, and ascendant wings, for freedom from the bondage of limitation.

Baba's mention of "both left and right sides" has significance. "Left" and "right" embody the opposites of duality. In this context, the symbol of the winged heart illustrates that the opposites can be balanced and transformed through love for God, the One in every heart. This transformation is the "heart" of true Sufism.



Weekend work teams keep the Meher School gardens flourishing as part of the atmosphere of loving care.

For a New Age

Still, questions arose about the relationship between Baba's new Sufism and what had gone before. In July 1952, Don Stevens asked Baba by letter, "Is Sufism actually, and is it intended, as a direct line development of Mohammed's mystic teaching, and in the lifetime of Meher Baba and following his lifetime is it intended to stem from him as the source of strength and light?" Baba responded in a letter to Don:

"Sufism is eternal, but just as it gathered force through Mohammed, so God will reinforce it through me."

As far back as the Prem Ashram period in the late 1920s, Baba had spoken about the ancient lines of Sufism and their association with the Avatar. He said:

"Zarathustra was the greatest Sufi. He was the Father of Sufism, and its very foundation owes its creation to him. Sufism began with Zarathustra and ended with Muhammad."⁸

In other words, the previous cycle of Sufism, extending through the last cycle of seven Avatars, had completed its work with the cycle's end – the advent of Meher Baba.⁹ But now, to paraphrase

Baba's statement, Meher Baba was declaring *himself* the Father of a new Sufism for his new cycle, and its very foundation owes its creation to him. This new reoriented Sufism begins with Meher Baba, who affirmed, "I am the greatest Sufi of the past, present and future."¹⁰

You may recall that Murshida Martin had grasped Baba's intent to reorient universal Sufism as early as in 1945 when she had written to Ivy Duce, as quoted in Part I of this series of articles:

"Baba says 'Sufism is the ... purest spiritual teaching on earth to-day — but we are now in a New Age — and methods and striving for attainment must have a new adaptation to our great spiritual needs' — and that is what he is doing now so that we may advance more quickly and leave some past methods behind — but do not leave behind the pure essential teachings the great Sufis of all ages contributed from their spiritual experiences. When he states he comes to Awaken, it means exactly what he says — (experience the Truth and no longer concepts, theories, intellectual beliefs etc.) — this age is to be ushered into Love (Praise be to our Creator)."¹¹

The Sufi Charter was Meher Baba's blueprint for the new organization of universal Sufism for the next cycle, everywhere in the world. In his talk to Murshida Duce's small Sufi group at her Manhattan apartment on the afternoon of July 20, 1952, Baba told them:

"I intend to make one unique Charter regarding this reoriented Sufism and send it to Ivy Duce from India in November, with my signature, and entrust the American Sufism work to her. This Charter will have an entirely new aspect but not lose its originality.

"In the same way I intend to reorient the different 'isms' and entrust the work to responsible workers and worthy persons.

"Now when I send the Charter and the Constitution, and the instructions, it will be applicable to the whole Sufi world — and will, by God's grace, be lasting in its effect and influence."¹²



A Guided Tour of the Sufi Charter

With this background, we can turn to the Charter itself in its final form (the text of the Charter is included at the end of this article.) In reviewing this document, it is important to bear in mind the many months of work Meher Baba spent on it and his insistence that it be done perfectly. He carefully considered and chose or approved every word.

The Charter is remarkable for its brevity. The Principles of the Order of Sufism Reoriented are presented in just seven sections. Its full title, "Chartered Guidance from Meher Baba for the Reorientation of Sufism as the Highway to the Ultimate Universalized", underlines the approach Baba has taken to clear and open the "highway", freeing it from any narrow exclusive or sectarian influence. This "universalized" Sufism is intended for the East and the West, for people of any race, sex, nationality or creed. It is a path all-embracing in its simplicity and clarity.



For 35 years, Sufism Reoriented has operated the Meher Schools, serving nearly 400 local children, pre-school to grade five, with a fully-accredited academic programme in an atmosphere of Meher Baba's love.

Introduction

The Introduction outlines this understanding, and Meher Baba's relationship to Sufism, in six short paragraphs that draw chiefly from Baba's discussions with Murshida at Myrtle Beach and his subsequent letters to her. As noted in Part I of this series, Baba put his work with Sufism in the context of his work with the five "highways to God" at his first meeting with Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon in Myrtle Beach on May 9, 1952. At that time he drew a version of the circle chart he includes here in the Charter. The first and second paragraphs of the Introduction derive from the circular Baba issued on June 17, 1952, during his convalescence at Youpon Dunes, presenting the essential points that Baba is both connected to and detached from all the 'isms', and has to awaken their followers to their true spirit by reorienting the 'isms'. Much of the fourth paragraph comes from Baba's July 9 letter to Murshida, which has been quoted in part in earlier sections of this essay. Here, Baba clarifies the "universal" nature of his new school. He speaks of "enlarging the concept of Sufism and making it all-embracing... yet maintaining the original value of Sufism." He replaces the "star and crescent" in the winged heart with the figure "one". And he emphasizes that "emanating from me", Sufism Reoriented will forge into one of the few pure channels leading to one God", resulting in followers coming to him, rather than to the 'ism'.

The next six sections describe the principles of the Order.

Section I – Active Faith

Meher Baba says, "The ideal of the Order is meant to be put into vigorous practice", and lists briefly seven ways this is to be done (see "Section I").

The first three present a framework of understanding for the aspirant to accept and adopt. Since Baba was deliberate in his choice of words, it is helpful to note that one is to actively *believe* in the unity of Truth, actively *accept* spiritual experience and divine knowledge of the path and actively *cherish* Baba's guidance.

The next three points are goals for the individual aspirant to

pursue (and put into "vigorous practice"). They encapsulate the central aims of nearly all the spiritual practices and disciplines of the past associated with the three traditional pathways of meditation, love and selfless service, which Baba describes more fully in his *Discourses* (e.g., "The Removal of Sanskaras, II" and "The Deeper Aspects of Sadhana".)

Finally, a seventh point underlies all the others. Members are to actively long for the ultimate goal of life "by hoping to be one with God through actual experience."

In these seven points, Meher Baba has expressed the essential qualities of any path of spiritual training. They are the heart of all paths.

Section II – States and Stages of Experience and Knowledge

In this section, Baba defines the primary levels of spiritual illumination on the inner path in a way that is somewhat different from *God Speaks*, which had not yet been completed (see "Section II"). So that there can be no "vagueness" or confusion about spiritual experience and authority, he identifies what he calls the three stages of illumination: Divine Intuition, Divine Inspiration and Divine Vision. According to Ludwig Dimpfl (1920-88), one of Murshida Duce's preceptors who worked with her and Don Stevens on the original draft of the Charter, Divine Intuition refers to the first through fourth planes, Divine Inspiration, the fifth plane, and Divine Vision the sixth plane.¹³ At their meeting in Scarsdale (described in Part II of this series) Baba told Murshida Duce and Don Stevens that Divine Vision, when "one is face to face with God", was the sixth plane of consciousness, and in this section he states that a Murshid "should necessarily have Divine Vision – the highest state of illumination." The culmination of the states and stages is union with God, of which there are two types, *Majzoob* (merged with divinity) or *Salik* (merged with God but conscious of Creation). And beyond this is the *Qutub* (Perfect Master), the "highest of the highest". In these five points, Baba states and defines the levels of divine experience and knowledge that are to be recognized in Sufism Reoriented.

Section III – Personnel

Inayat Khan and Murshida Martin had included numerous levels and grades of participation in their organization of Sufism. Murshida Duce asked Baba whether any of these structures needed to be retained in Sufism Reoriented; she explained to Baba that there had been two ways to participate in the past (letter dated July 7, 1952):

"Heretofore, the Sufi Order was the group of initiates and the Sufi Movement was composed of people interested in our ideals, the Universal Worship [a non-sectarian worship service devised by Inayat Khan for the general public] was the brotherhood work... There seems to be no room for the latter any more. In America every organization has members and associate members."

In this section, Baba simplified the membership of Sufism Reoriented to include only three categories: "seeker", "worker", "preceptor" (see "Section III").

- "Seeker" (replacing the term "*mureed*") simply means "member" or "student".

- “Worker” is intended to cover those who support Sufism Reoriented in various ways and wish to associate themselves with the goals of the school, but are not students. This was intended to replace the notion of an “associate member”, as Baba explained in his letter of instructions accompanying the handwritten proposed draft of the Charter:

“...membership by association can not be allowed if thereby an associate member is supposed to be absolved from the obligation of following my guidance. It will be worse still if such a member is expected to partly accept and partly reject the guidance from me. Therefore, although it is good to ‘do in Rome as Romans do’, that should not be at the cost of a principle. You will either have to drop the question of associated members or to explain to me further than the fact that that is a general practice over there.”

- “Preceptor” is an “associate teacher” designated by and working under the Murshid. It is Baba’s rendering of the Eastern term “*haadi*”. In the letter of instructions accompanying the handwritten proposed final draft of the Charter, Baba explained, “*Haadi* carries the meaning of preceptor, leader and guide...”¹⁴ A “preceptor”, as defined in the Charter, is one “who can and does inspire others with exposition and by example.”

Also in this section, Baba clearly and definitively *abolished* the use of esoteric titles to designate a member’s level of spiritual advancement. Interestingly, he lists here the principal levels of advancement and their equivalent titles, “Pilgrim on the Path”, “Advanced Soul on the Path” and “Perfect One”. He associates each of these three titles with the three degrees of certainty or conviction (*yaqin*) that he had discussed at length with Murshida Duce both in Myrtle Beach on May 9 and in the Scarsdale meeting on July 20 (and later in *God Speaks*). In those meetings, he had said that “certainty is the basis of Sufism”, and he had given Murshida and Francis Brabazon a special meditation practice to help them achieve it. Here, in the Charter, he takes the opportunity to define these three levels of certainty as the levels or grades of advancement. But he confirmed in a letter to Murshida (October 26, 1952) that such “designations [are] *never* to be applied” to members. In Sufism Reoriented, levels of advancement are recognized in natural ways by actual *experience*.¹⁵

Also under “Personnel”, Baba asserts his authority, as the founder and patron of Sufism Reoriented, to appoint anyone as a Murshid or Murshida, holding himself “responsible for the spiritual welfare of all” who follow such a Murshid. It was under this provision that he appointed Ivy Duce as the first Murshida of Sufism Reoriented in America.¹⁶

It is interesting to note that in this section, Baba includes the Eastern equivalents for the Western terms he uses, ensuring that the Charter can be applicable both in the East and the West.

Section IV – Qualifications for Membership

As with “Section I, Active Faith”, discussed earlier, these “qualifications” are given in just seven concise points, which one “must be ready to aspire for and willing to work toward” (see “Section IV”). Again, these points are not unusual or specific to Sufism, they are universally applicable to any spiritual path, since

all of them are associated with dissolving the lower nature. It is striking to compare them with the well-known conditions Meher Baba outlined for participants in the New Life. Baba said:

“This New Life is endless and, even after my physical death, will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust; and who, to accomplish all this do no lustful actions, do no harm to anyone, do no backbiting, do not seek material possession or power, who accept no homage, neither covet honour nor shun disgrace, and fear no one and nothing; by those who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of loving, who believe in the lovers of God and in the reality of Manifestation, and yet do not expect any spiritual or material reward, who do not let go the hand of Truth, and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and wholeheartedly face all hardships with 100% cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed and religious ceremonies. This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.”¹⁷

These are the conditions that allow higher or divine love to infuse and transform one’s lower nature. As he lists these goals, Baba tenderly acknowledges that members of his school are *aspirants* to mastery; he asks members to aspire “to be able” or “to be prepared” to work toward these goals on this path of transformation. Ludwig Dimpfl recalled:

“This is a place where Baba agreed to change from the original draft of the charter. In the original version, this section began, ‘In order to qualify as an eligible member of the order, one *must*...’ When we read the list that followed, we all said [*i.e. wrote*] to Baba, ‘Well, that leaves me out!’ None of us met, or to this day meet, these requirements. But we do continually and sincerely strive to meet them. So the section now reads [as it does].”¹⁸

Section V – Duties and Obligations

Meher Baba lists only four duties that every member of Sufism Reoriented must fulfill. The first two involve reading and study, the last two are devotional meditations. All four engage the mind and heart to focus on the Master and his higher principles (see “Section V”).

The first requires members “to become conversant with the principles of Sufism by reading and studying the literature of Sufi saints, poets and authors”. As Baba listed only Islamic saints here, Murshida Duce wondered if Baba intended to *limit* her students to studying only traditional Eastern Sufism. Both Murshida Martin and Murshida Duce had drawn from the *Bhagavad Gita*, Aurobindo, the Buddha, St. Teresa of Avila and many more in their teaching. Murshida Duce asked Baba (letter dated October 20, 1952):

“Under V, Duties and Obligations, 1., i. Does this limit us so that we cannot study the Vedantic and Christian saints like Ramakrishna, Milarepa, St. Augustine, &c. We have always included all acknowledged great saints (not man-made like Catholic Church sets up).”

Baba replied (October 26, 1952):

“Definitely study all spiritual books, and books of and on Saints and Masters.”

He thus confirmed that the “principles of Sufism” he wanted

his Sufis to study are universal principles of spiritual unfolding that find expression in many traditions, and in the lives and writings of figures of advanced consciousness who may or may not be associated with a spiritual tradition.

The second of these duties is to "necessarily read and study vigorously" Baba's *Discourses* and *God Speaks*, which Baba describes here as "his last and final book on this subject." This is the definitive "Sufi literature" of the new spiritual age.

As mentioned earlier, Baba discontinued the meditations, concentrations, *mantras* and *wazifas* [repetitions of divine names or sacred formulas], and other spiritual practices from the past. Instead, he instituted two daily practices: repeating God's name for a half-hour, ideally consecutively, and meditating on the Master in solitude for fifteen minutes. In correspondence with Murshida Duce, Baba emphasized that such practices were not to be done mechanically, but "with feelings of tender emotion" and the recognition that "the name of God is the highest prayer." In 1951, Baba had written to Murshida Duce (through Dr. William Donkin) regarding all such practices:

"Baba's reply is that you, as a Sufi teacher, can give...any Sufi practice you think advisable to those mentioned in your letter, and to anyone else you think ready for this and other Sufi practices. But you must tell them to do it (and all Sufi practices) from the *heart* and not only through the mind."¹⁹

Though not included in the Charter, Baba wrote Murshida Duce that she and her students could, if so inclined, continue a breathing practice called *fikr*, in which the thought of Meher Baba was "put on the breath", provided that:

SUFISM REORIENTED.

Principles of the Order.

Contents.

	Introduction	Page 1
I.	Active Faith	" 2
II.	States & Stages of Experience & Knowledge	" 3
III.	Personnel	" 4
IV.	Qualification for Membership	" 5
V.	Duties & Obligations	" 6
VI.	Initiation or Bayat	" 8
VII.	Organization	" 9

Page numbers to change according to length of the typed matter. Preferable to start each section on a fresh page.

"Principles of the Order" as given in the handwritten draft of the proposed Charter Meher Baba sent to Murshida Duce.

"a. It should not be like any of the yogic practices amounting to mere drilling or of holding the breath, etc.

"b. It should be as conveyor of God's name or [the] Master's name with feelings of tender emotions."²⁰

"Special Duties"

Meher Baba also included a sub-section he called "Special Duties", which outlined four basic patterns of life that members of Sufism Reoriented might follow, broadly conceived, so as to apply in both the East and the West (see "Section III, 2."). Although a few members of present-day Sufism Reoriented in America have indeed found themselves able to "renounce all attachments and live for the cause of the Order and live at its Center", and some might be drawn for periods of time to devote themselves wholly to prayer and meditation, many more are "inclined towards an active life" of service to His Creation and also find ways to regularly volunteer their services for Sufi work. By far, the majority of members of Sufism Reoriented in America at present are

fully engaged in living responsible lives in the world, and "attend periodical classes at fixed hours."

Anticipating this, Baba outlined a detailed curriculum for Sufi classes in the Charter (see "Section III, 3"). In further correspondence with Murshida Duce over the years, Baba indicated that the curriculum was to be flexible and varied, encompassing the spiritual traditions of the East and the West, presenting inspiring examples of divine principles as they are lived by the Masters, saints and lovers of God in every time and place. Baba's purpose for these

classes was to refresh the mind and heart with divine love.

As a reminder of that goal, Baba directed that every class or programme begin with a five-minute prayer:

“God alone is real and the goal of life is to be united with Him through love”

chanted or sung (see “Section III, 3). It appears that Baba dictated this particular apothegm expressly for the Sufi Charter; this exact wording is found nowhere else in his major works. Even before the Charter had been completed, Murshida Duce wrote to Baba about this little prayer (letter dated Sept. 29, 1952):

“One of my mureeds, Gena Branscombe,²¹ set to music the words you asked us to chant at each Sufi meeting. She made it into a little four-part round and it is very sweet. I am enclosing a copy. I do not suppose it would be suited to Indian or Asian singing.”

Baba liked the little round very much, and it is still in use more than half a century later. Murshida Duce called this the “*zikr*”, a term from Eastern Sufism meaning “invocation” or “remembrance” [of God’s name] that is chanted or sung.

Section VI – Initiation or “Bayat”

The old Sufi Order had as many as twelve different “initiations” corresponding to stages of advancement. Meher Baba said these “are to be retained no longer” and specified a single initiation for membership in Sufism Reoriented, which could be administered by the Murshid or a designated Preceptor (see “Section IV). It is to be conducted in a simple, open manner, beginning with a short invocation to God, with the vow of initiation as the response. Baba included in the Charter an invocation by Inayat Khan, which he called “most suitable” for this purpose. Baba stated clearly, “No other form of initiation or *bayat* than the one laid down under Article VII (wherein preference is given to Inayat Khan’s invocation to be the most suitable) of my guidance, is to be followed or recognized.”²²

In the original draft, the student pledged to “solemnly bind myself to the faithful adherence of the guidance laid down by Meher Baba.” Murshida Duce wrote to Baba for clarification. She wondered if the vow of initiation should also include allegiance to the Murshid, since Baba had affirmed that the relationship between Murshid and student is the central principle of Sufism. She wrote to Baba (October 20, 1952):

“There is nothing in the charter to indicate that the Murshid (under Baba’s patronage, and after Baba leaves the body, alone) is the head of an order. Nothing in the *bayat* [vow of initiation] requires a statement of trust in, or allegiance to the Murshid. If there is no expression of faith in a Murshid then there would be no obligation on the *mureed* to do things the Murshid (especially long after Baba leaves the world) commands for the *mureed*’s progress.”

Baba replied (October 26, 1952) that the “*Mureed*’s faith in Murshid should be absolute and complete.” He had the words “and to faith and trust in the Murshid” added to the vow of initiation. Faith and trust are, of course, attributes of love, and in Sufism Reoriented, the love between Murshid and student is the most cherished bond in life.

Section VII – Organization

The final section of the Charter deals with the principles of its temporal organization, incorporating the many discussions and notes on what had earlier been called the “constitution”. In his letter of instructions accompanying the handwritten “finalized Guidance” sent from India, Baba explained “most of the difficulties...arose on account of mixing non-organizational matters with questions solely relating to a constitution of a formal structure.” So in the “finalized Guidance”, Meher Baba distinguished between what he called the “esoteric side” and the “organizational side” of Sufism Reoriented. The “esoteric side” is the spiritual school, represented by the illumined Murshid. The “organizational side” for Sufism Reoriented in America is a non-profit corporation, represented by a temporal head (president), a board of directors and officers. Baba expanded on the distinction between the two this way:

“...the esoteric side is best left to the care of individual ‘hearts’. There need not be any constitutional or organizational safeguards for the esoterics of the individualized heart. Collective effort is all the same necessary to bring together as many ‘heads’ as possible under one body with one Head for the implementation of Sufism Reoriented. That collective effort has got to be based on pure democracy which does not aim at grabbing power by manipulating the mechanism of voting. You make a start with things as they stand at the moment and leave alone both the past and the future to be taken care of by God and the *Qutub* to the endless end as has been the case since the beginningless beginning.

“With my love,

“Dictated by BABA”²³

Baba indicated that the “organizational side” could be formed in any manner consistent with law and custom “and the wish of the people concerned”, and would probably differ in different countries. In order to ensure “a uniformity in substance” among different organizations of “Sufism Reoriented”, and to be sure that no “unintentional act or thing” associated with the temporal organization would “prove derogatory to the very spirit of Sufism Reoriented”, Baba includes in this section of his Guidance seven principles the “organizational side” is to follow wherever it is established (see “Section VII).

Paramount among these seven points are the first two, that clearly separate temporal from esoteric authority. The first point assures that the temporal organization cannot regulate the spiritual work of the illumined Murshid, nor can it grant or confer spiritual authority of any kind. The second affirms that the temporal organization should never exist for its own sake, its only purpose is to support the esoteric work of Sufism Reoriented. According to Ira Deitrick, President of Sufism Reoriented,

“...in order to fulfill its purpose as stated in the Charter, the organization must defer to the guidance of the Murshid and offer the organization as his or her hands and feet. Such a relation depends upon voluntary surrender by members of the Order who are the Murshid’s students. This bond of love and trust provides the living union between the Order and [the] corporation.”²⁴

The third point reinforces the second, by stating that the organization “should not be established on a commercial basis for making money or gaining profits.”

The Temporal Head and the Murshid

There are important differences between the temporal head of the “organizational side” of Sufism Reoriented and the illumined Murshid who heads the esoteric school of Sufism Reoriented. The president, and all officers of the organization are *elected* by majority vote of the membership for a term not longer than three years. Their authority flows from the members of the organization. The Murshid, on the other hand, is not elected; he or she can only be *appointed* by Meher Baba, by the previous Murshid, or by the *Qutub*. The Murshid’s authority is *spiritual* authority that flows from God. Baba wrote to Murshida Duce:

“A Murshid is *always* a Murshid, organization or no organization; and the Head of an organization, is *for the time being* the Head, illumination or no illumination. The point of cardinal difference is that once (one is) illumined fully (one) always remains illumined fully as against a constitutional Head of an organization, who remains so (i.e. the Head of the organization), only as long as the people concerned desire that in accordance with the constitution.”²⁵ [*italics added*]

Baba pointed out that if the Murshid were elected as the head (president) of the organizational side by the membership, “your authority as Head of Sufism Reoriented [the organization] is expected to flow at all times from the democratic constitution of the organization itself as distinct from the authority that I intend to give you to act as a Murshida.”²⁶

Democratic Principles

Don Stevens was particularly concerned with the application of democratic principles in the new organization and submitted a number of questions to Baba along this line, which Baba answered. Among Don’s questions were these:

“Is it possible to arrive at a formal structure for a religious organization which will embody a considerable democratic element which is so dear to the Western heart?

“Where is the authoritarian element best embodied, and where may it blend with the democratic element?”²⁷

Baba replied to each question:

“It is difficult yet possible to arrive at a formal structure for a religious organization which will embody the true spirit of democracy.

“The authoritarian element is best embodied in the heart and it should blend with the democratic element in the head.”^{28,29}

Such a blend is a hallmark of the new spiritual age and the New Humanity, in which the authority of the heart will inform the rational mind. In his discourses and messages, Baba has often spoken of the balance of head and heart. In his Message to America in 1932, for example, Baba said:

“I shall bring about a happy blending of the head and heart. ...Materialism and spirituality must go hand in hand. The balance of head and heart must be maintained; the head for discrimination, the heart for feeling, whereby it is possible to realize infinite consciousness in art, science, nature and in every phase of life.”³⁰



Sufi physician Tighe O’Hanrahan established a community hospice to serve the terminally ill and their families.

Don also asked:

“Can a line of esoteric teaching and a formal structure be developed which is consistent with the western idiom of an active life in the world and a democratic structure, or must these be ruled out in large part by the necessary mechanism of the teacher-student relationship?”³¹

Baba replied:

“Consistent with the western idiom for an active life in the world and a democratic structure, it is possible for me to develop a line of esoteric teaching through a formal structure, and Sufism Reoriented is a true answer in the affirmative.”³²

Baba added that “otherwise” – without his guidance – it would be “equally true to reply in the negative” because the “necessary mechanism of the teacher-student relationship” is based on implicit obedience.³³ Baba encouraged the adoption of democratic principles in the formation of the temporal organization, writing to Murshida Duce:

“Yes, you may arrange with a lawyer for the incorporation and by-laws, laying stress upon the desired dual factors about everything to be fixed

i) within the four walls of my guidance;

ii) according to the best elements of democracy.

So much so that there should be no provision of any kind for the permanent or hereditary leadership of any particular individual including your own lovable self.”³⁴

Only Temporal Officers Are Elected

Point number six in Section VII originally said that “all office-bearers should be elected by majority of votes...” Murshida Duce saw a loophole in this wording and wrote for clarification (October 20, 1952):

“Article VII, organization, item 6. This is the one that puzzles me the most. Does this mean that a group of undeveloped mureeds can *elect* the Murshid? We who worked with Rabia were taught that only a Murshid can discern how much light or illumination another person has and so only he can appoint his successor, just like the Hindu ‘chargeman’. The elections pulled off by the European group in defiance of

this principle as laid down by I. Khan who named Rabia as his successor, is what destroyed the order. If this means only the temporal or administrative president, then it seems to me it should be clarified. We have to keep thinking of the future, when people will again resort to literal and verbatim following of words in directives."

Baba replied (October 26, 1952):

"We who worked with Rabia were taught that only a Murshid can discern how much light or illumination another person has and so only he can appoint a successor.' Yes. That is why [the] Murshid has to be appointed by Baba during his lifetime or to be necessarily illumined for all time in the future.

"If this means only the temporal or administrative president, then it seems to me it should be clarified.' Temporal, so clarify."

In the final draft, point six reads, "All office-bearers, including the temporal head of the organization, should be elected by majority of votes..." This does not apply to the appointed office of Murshid.

If the Murshid and the Board Disagree

Some of these issues were raised at the Scarsdale meeting on July 20. Murshida Duce recalls:

"During this conference Don mentioned that our constitution should be based on a democratic-autocratic concept. Baba agreed, and as the questions were being read out by Don, I began wondering how this could function. If the Murshid were illumined, surely he/she would know what was best for everyone concerned and the Board of Directors should find ways and means to implement such plans. I expressed my concern to Baba, 'Suppose the Board refuses to go along with my ideas?' Baba waved his free arm airily as if dismissing any such possibility and then spelled on the alphabet board, 'Why, you just move your seat!'"

Location of the Sufism Reoriented Centers

Murshida continued:

"It corroborated Baba's answer to a young man in Myrtle Beach who asked if my Center would be part of the Myrtle Beach layout and upon receiving a reply in the negative, asked where it would be. Baba pointed at me and said, 'Wherever she is.' The weight of my responsibility became a staggering burden.³⁵

On July 5, 1952, Baba had sent Murshida Duce a letter from Myrtle Beach, transcribed by Adi, clarifying the relationship between Sufism Reoriented and the Universal Center at Myrtle Beach:

"[Baba] wants you to note that:

'Sufism Reoriented American center has no direct connection with the Meher Center on the Lakes, Myrtle Beach.'

"Meher Center on the Lakes Myrtle Beach is not a Sufi, Vedantic, Buddhist, Christian or Zoroastrian center. It is the Baba Center based on universality. This Baba Center will have within it four different centers of devotion, service, renunciation and knowledge.



Sufis created "God Speaks — The Musical" as a joyful way to study Meher Baba's book as directed in the Charter. Singers perform from the musical about the "insatiable" creation of desires that can only be unwound through "insatiable" devotion to Meher Baba.

"Sufism Reoriented American Center is to be in any one part of America where Ivy Duce and her co-workers can establish it... This Sufism Reoriented American Center of which Baba is the Patron will naturally and automatically have indirect connection with the Baba Center on the Lakes at Myrtle Beach. It will thus be independent in itself and yet have the full support of Baba Center in every way."

In the letter of instructions that accompanied Baba's handwritten proposed final draft of the Charter, he told Murshida Duce, "Your 'Sufism Reoriented' should be domiciled in San Francisco or New York for the area of North and South America." When Murshida Duce later moved to Washington, D.C., the East Coast center of Sufism Reoriented moved there with her. Sufism Reoriented in America has continued to maintain its principal centers in the San Francisco area and Washington, D.C. since the mid-1950s.

Financial Support

Point number four deals with membership dues. Murshida Duce recalled:

"In 1952 when Baba was reorienting our Sufi Order, he explicitly forbade any membership dues. Under Murshida Martin members were asked to give a mere twelve dollars per year in order to cover the cost of replacing our many study papers. We had a difficult time for the first years to meet the rent and office expenses, but as soon as we had more members, we always seemed to have enough for our current needs. The mureeds make many sacrifices for the Order and its work for the Master."³⁶

Sufism Reoriented has always been supported financially by voluntary contributions from its membership and others who wish to support its work. From time to time, members may be advised of the costs of maintaining the work of the school but donations are never required for participation. Members seek to conduct all activities associated with the organization of Sufism Reoriented in "the spirit of service and sacrifice" as recommended in point number seven.



Chartered Guidance From Meher Baba for the Reorientation Of Sufism as the Highway To The Ultimate Universalized

PRINCIPLES OF THE ORDER

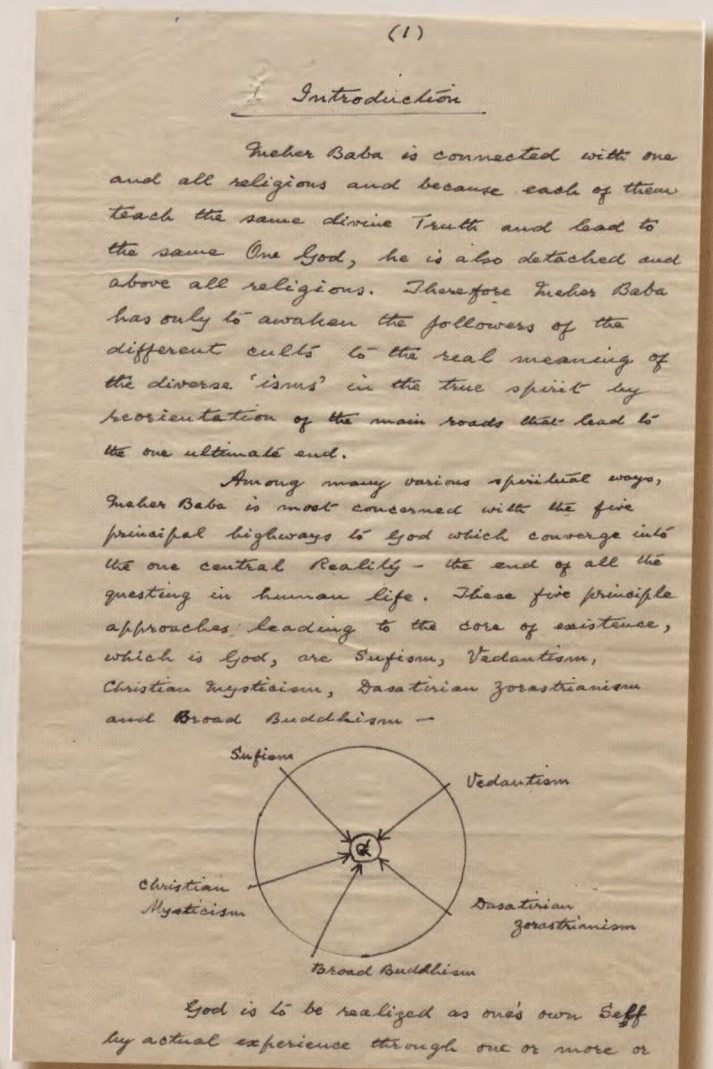
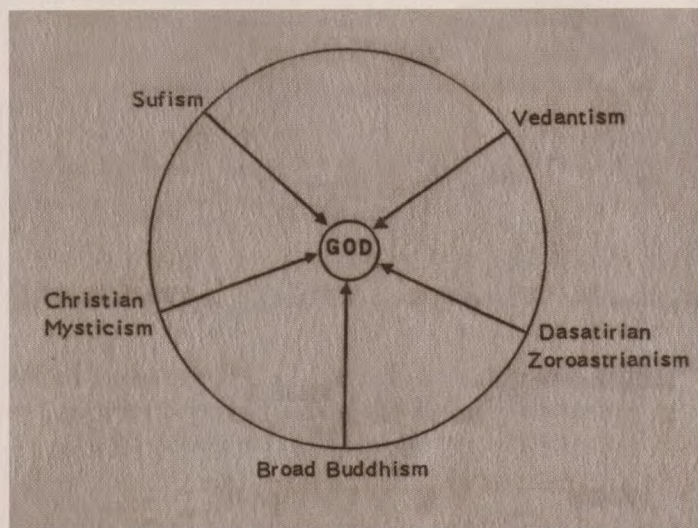
- Introduction
- I. Active Faith
- II. States and Stages of Experience and Knowledge
- III. Personnel
- IV. Qualifications for Membership
- V. Duties and Obligations
- VI. Form of Initiation or Bayat
- VII. Organization



INTRODUCTION

Meher Baba is connected with one and all religions and because each of them teaches the same divine Truth and leads to the same One God, he is also detached and above all religions. Therefore Meher Baba has only to awaken the followers of the different cults to the real meaning of the diverse "isms" in their true spirit by reorientation of the main roads that lead to the one ultimate end.

Among many various spiritual ways, Meher Baba is most concerned with the five principal highways to God which converge into the one central reality--the end of all the questing in human life. These five principal approaches leading to the core of existence, which is God, are Sufism, Vedantism, Christian Mysticism, Dasitirian Zoroastrianism and Broad Buddhism.



God is to be realized as one's own Self by actual experience through one or more or all of the above "isms".

Sufism as reoriented by Meher Baba is based on love and longing for God and the eventual union with God in actual experience. With an eye to make it non-dogmatically universal, the reorientation is fundamentally based on the one hand, on enlarging the concept of Sufism in order to make it all-embracing for the matter of its knowledge and practice. On the other hand, the original value of Sufism, which lies in its Tariqat (Divine Path), its Marefat (Divine Knowledge) and its Haqiqat (Divine Realization of Truth) is maintained intact.

This reorientation is symbolized by the numerical figure of one (1) embedded in a diagram of the human heart with wings of freedom on both its left and right sides -



To sum up in Baba's own words: "The fact that I am connected with all 'isms' and yet detached and above all 'isms' lays bare the truth that Sufism Reoriented, emanating from me, to be conceived and practiced, will forge out into one of the few pure channels leading to One God. As a result, all who will follow any one of the isms reoriented by me, will come eventually to love Me and realize God rather than the 'isms'."



SECTION I.

ACTIVE FAITH

The ideal of the Order is meant to be put into vigorous practice:

1. by believing that Sufism recognizes Oneness of truth and is complimentary to and does not contradict any honest and sincere efforts to attain the Spiritual Freedom of Man.
2. by accepting that Sufism is an approach to spiritual experience (as distinct from spiritualism) and to divine knowledge that ultimately leads to Truth;
3. by cherishing the fact that Sufism is mainly based on a definite acceptance of a God-realized Master and complete adherence to His guidance;
4. by trying to attain more and more individual freedom through greater and greater control over the mind;
5. by aspiring to achieve deeper and deeper contentment, joy and love;
6. by serving and striving for human brotherhood, universal fellow-feeling and world peace through spiritual enlightenment;
7. by hoping to be one with God through actual experience.



SECTION II.

STATES AND STAGES OF EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

1. The state of illumination has three stages:
 - a) *Divine Intuition*: When one has divine intuition, one sees colors, circles, lights (other than those ordinarily visible to the human eye), and also at the same time experiences feelings of nearness to God.
 - b) *Divine Inspiration*: When one has divine inspiration, one experiences flashes of knowledge directly linked with Divine Knowledge, and here, to a small extent, the intellect is transcended.
 - c) *Divine Vision*: In divine vision, one is face to face with God, and with the inner eye one sees God everywhere and in everything. This also means that to see God is to cease to see everything except God.
2. A Murshid or Murshida, one whom others can follow, should necessarily have Divine Vision--the highest state of illumination.
3. After the highest illumination, comes union with God; if one remains merged in this union one is Majzoob but if one returns to sobriety, then one is the Perfect Salik - Qutub, Ghaus, Qalander, etc., according to one's range of duty.

4. Your "Sufism Reoriented" ⁽²⁾ should be domiciled in San Francisco or New York for the areas of North and South America. The exoteric charge of North and South America is a question to be dealt with as between you and me. Organizationally, the area is obviously yours but as of "Sufism Reoriented" (the first organization) and strictly according to the honest element of democracy as insisted upon under the guidance. In other words, your authority as the Head of "Sufism Reoriented" is expected to flow at all times from the democratic constitution of the organization itself as distinct from the authority that I intend to give you to act as a Murshida. To make the point still clearer: A Murshid is always a Murshid, organization or no organization; and the Head of an organization, is for the time being the Head, illumination or no illumination. The point of cardinal difference is that once illumined fully, always remains illumined fully as against a constitutional Head of an organization, who remains so, only as long as the people concerned desire that in accordance with the constitution.
5. Yes, you may arrange with a lawyer for the incorporation and the bye-laws, laying stress upon the desired dual factors about everything to be fixed:
i) Within the four walls of my guidance;
ii) According to the best elements of democracy.
So much so that there should be no provision of any kind for the permanent or hereditary leadership of any particular individual including your own lovable self.
6. Sufism Reoriented not only recognizes but also encourages the study of and research in Sufism as a whole. Therefore, there can never be any question of antagonism for any individual or organization which does not subscribe to Sufism Reoriented. On the other hand, members of Sufism Reoriented can and should cooperate with one and all, irrespective of organizations and 'isms' for the general welfare of all beings; but "member-

1. By believing that Sufism recognizes Oneness of Truth and is complimentary to and does not contradict any honest and sincere efforts to attain the Spiritual Freedom of man;
2. By accepting that Sufism is an approach to spiritual experiences (as distinct from spiritualism) and to divine knowledge that ultimately leads to Truth;
3. By cherishing the fact that Sufism is mainly based on a definite acceptance of a God-realized Master and complete adherence to his guidance;
4. By trying to attain more and more individual freedom through greater and greater control over the mind;
5. By aspiring to achieve deeper and deeper contentment, joy and love;
6. By serving and striving for human brotherhood, universal fellow feeling and world peace through spiritual enlightenment;
7. By hoping to be one with God by actual experience.

II. States & Stages of Experience & Knowledge

1. The state of illumination has three stages-
 - i) Divine Intuition: When one has divine intuition, one sees Colours, Circles, Lights (other than those ordinarily visible to the human eye) and also at the same time experiences feelings of nearness to God.
 - ii) Divine Inspiration: When one has divine inspiration, one experiences flashes of knowledge directly linked with divine knowledge and here, to a small extent,



SECTION III.

PERSONNEL

1. Any of those belonging to the Order can be considered as:
 - a) Seeker or Talib: One who becomes a member.
 - b) Worker or Khadim: One who gives monetary assistance or free physical labor in any shape or form for the cause.
 - c) Preceptor or Haadi: One who can and does inspire others with exposition and by examples.

the intellect is transcended.

- iii) Divine Vision. In divine vision, one is face to face with God and with the inner eye sees God everywhere and in everything. That also means that to see God is to ~~become~~ to cease to see everything except God.
2. A Murshid or Murshida, one whom others can follow, should necessarily have Divine Vision - the highest state of illumination.
3. After the highest illumination, comes union with God; whereas if one remains merged, the one is Majzoob but if the one returns to sobriety, then that one is the Perfect Salik - Qutub, Lyons, Qalandar etc according to one's range of duty.
4. The Qutub stage or state is the highest of all - highest of the highest.
5. The Qutub (the very source of illumination) can play the part of a Murshid (the fully illumined); of a Majzoob (merged in union); of a Kamil (Perfect One); of an Akmal (most Perfect One); of a Mukammil (a supremely Perfect One).

III. Personnel.

1. Any of those belonging to the Order can be considered as -
 - i) Seeker or Talib: One who becomes a member.
 - ii) Worker or Khadim: One who gives monetary assistance or free physical labour for the cause in any shape or form
 - iii) Preceptor or Haadi: One who can and does inspire others with expositions and by examples.
2. Unless otherwise expressly allowed by Meher
 - a) Pilgrim on the Path: One who gets intellectual conviction, i.e. Ilmul Yaqin, which is not mere understanding but a feelingful certainty gained through intellect, which certainty remains unassailable and cannot be shaken or dislodged.
 - b) Advanced Soul on the Path: One who gains conviction through actual vision of god, i.e. A'inul Yaqin;
 - c) Perfect One: One whose conviction is the certainty of having realized God by being united with him, i.e., Haqqul Yaqin.
3. Meher Baba may allow anyone to be called and considered as a Murshid or Murshida without necessarily disclosing whether such a one is illumined, not illumined, or about to be illumined. In all such cases Meher Baba will hold himself responsible for the spiritual welfare of all those who may be prepared to and do follow a Murshid or Murshida so declared by him.

Baba no esoteric titles to be assumed by or given to anyone, by way of recognition and designation of individual advancement as -

- a) Pilgrim on the Path: One who gets intellectual conviction or *Ilm-ul-Yaqeen*, which is not mere understanding but a feelingful certainty gained through intellect and which certainly remains unassailable and can not be shaken or dislodged;
 - b) Advanced Soul on the Path: One who gains the conviction through actual vision of God i.e. *Ayem-ul-Yaqeen*;
 - c) Perfect One: One whose conviction is the certainty of having realized God by being united with Him i.e. *Haque-ul-Yaqeen*.
3. Meher Baba may allow anyone to be called and considered as a *Murshid* or a *Murshida* without necessarily disclosing whether such a one is illumined, not illumined or about to be illumined. In all such cases Meher Baba will hold himself responsible for the spiritual welfare of all those who may be prepared to and do follow a *Murshid* or *Murshida* so declared by him.

IV Qualification for Membership

In order to qualify as an eligible member of the Order, one must be ready to aspire and willing to work towards the following achievements:-

1. To be able to long for one and only one thing; Truth;
2. To be able to cherish no material ambitions;
3. To be prepared for any kind of sacrifice small or great;
4. To be prepared for complete abstinence from lustful actions in any form or manner except legitimate marriage relations based on mutual love and duty.
5. To be able to avoid greedy longings of any kind.
6. To be able to avoid every type of falsehood.
7. To be able to cope with one's feelings of anger, fear and hate, in a spirit of generosity, resignation and forbearance.

SECTION IV.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

In order to qualify as an eligible member of the Order, one must be ready to aspire for and willing to work towards the following achievements:-

1. To be able to long for one and only one thing; Truth;
2. To be able to cherish no material ambitions;
3. To be prepared for any kind of sacrifice small or great;
4. To be prepared for complete abstinence from lustful actions in any form or manner except legitimate marriage relations based on mutual love and duty.
5. To be able to avoid greedy longings of any kind.
6. To be able to avoid every type of falsehood.
7. To be able to cope with one's feelings of anger, fear and hate, in a spirit of generosity, resignation and forbearance.

1. To be able to long for one and only one thing; Truth;
2. To be able to cherish no material ambitions;
3. To be prepared for any kind of sacrifice small or great;
4. To be prepared for complete abstinence from lustful actions in any form or manner except legitimate marriage relations based on mutual love and duty;
5. To be able to avoid greedy longings of any kind.
6. To be able to avoid every type of falsehood;
7. To be able to cope with one's feelings of anger, fear and hate with generosity, resignation and forbearance.

V Duties & Obligations.

1. It shall be the duty of every member -
 - i) To become conversant with the principles of Sufism by reading and studying the literature of Sufi saints, poets and authors like Hafiz, Jalaluddin, Shams, Inayat Khan, Ibn Arabi, Shibli, Hujwiri and others.
 - ii) To necessarily read and study vigorously the Discourses by Meher Baba and the forthcoming book by Meher Baba called "God Speaks" which depicts the ten states of God and other important truths.
 - iii) To necessarily repeat verbally daily one name of God for half an hour at any time of the day or night; this to be done consecutively if possible, but may be accomplished in smaller portions if necessary.
 - iv) To meditate on the Master daily for

SECTION VI.

DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

1. It shall be the duty of every member:

- a) To become conversant with the principles of Sufism by reading and studying the literature of Sufi saints, poets and authors such as Hafiz, Jalaluddin, Shams, Inayat Khan, Ibn Arabi, Shibli, Hujwiri and others.
- b) To necessarily read and study vigorously the Discourses by Meher Baba and the book by Meher Baba called "God Speaks" which depicts the ten states of God and other important truths, and which is his last and final book on this subject.
- c) To necessarily repeat verbally daily one name of God for half an hour at any time of the day or night; this is to be done consecutively if possible but may be accomplished in smaller portions if necessary.
- d) To meditate on the Master daily for fifteen minutes in any secluded spot.

NOTES

- 1 *Biography of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan* (London: East-West Publications, 1979), p. 187.
- 2 Baba, quoted by Adi K. Irani, unpublished interview transcript, 1977; Appendix I, *Murshida Duce's Life and Role as a Sufi Teacher*, Binder D-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 3 Unless otherwise cited, all letters quoted are from *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952, Binder C-2, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 4 Letter from Dr. Ghani to Murshida Duce, June 7, 1948, *Communications with Meher Baba Relevant to the Formation of Sufism Reoriented, 1945-1951*, Binder H-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 5 [sic]. In preparing the second edition of *God Speaks* in the 1960s, Baba approved a standardized transliteration of mystic terms compiled by Ludwig Dimpfl for the Glossary, in which these terms are more properly spelled *tariqat* and *haqiqat*.
- 6 Letter of instructions accompanying handwritten proposed final draft of Sufi Charter, undated (Fall 1952).
- 7 Murshida Duce told her student Ira Deitrick that she had asked Baba why he couldn't just do away with her title, too, but that Baba overruled her and insisted on retaining the traditional Eastern term for teacher, "*Murshid*". Ira G. Deitrick, personal communication, April 2, 2009, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 8 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 4, p. 1193.
- 9 i.e., the cycle of traditional Sufism ended with the *end* of Muhammad's Avataric work and the Advent of Meher Baba. According to Eruch Jessawala, "Baba once told the mandali that 'all you find and see of my Work while I am Meher Baba was planned and chalked out at the time when I was Mohammed.'" *Letters From The Mandali*, ed. Jim Mistry, p. 76. (In other words, Muhammad's Avataric work, including his influence on Sufism, extended through the physical lifetime of Meher Baba.)
- 10 In Myrtle Beach, 1956. *Lord Meher*, Vol. 14, p. 5036.
- 11 Quoted in "Murshida Martin and Meher Baba", unpublished manuscript (1986), Binder B-3, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 12 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3873.
- 13 Ludwig Dimpfl, "The Sufi Charter and the Role of Murshida", unpublished transcript of introductory class talk, undated (early 1970s), *Candidates' Classes*, binder D-4, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 14 Baba distinguishes *haadi* from *alim* or *ulema*, the Arabic for "teachers connected with 'church'", i.e., clerics.
- 15 In the letter of instructions accompanying the handwritten proposed final draft, Meher Baba did add, "When and where necessary, worldwide, countrywide or communitywide recognition and designation of the states and stages of individuals will either come and be sustained automatically or that can also expressly happen through me." Letter of instructions, *op. cit.*
- 16 In the same letter of instructions, Baba noted: "As Meher Baba and not necessarily as a Patron of any organization, I can and I may give an express authority to any individual, not necessarily connected with any organization, in some such manner and to some such effect as follows: 'For the time being _____ is hereby expressly authorized by me to let himself/herself to be called and considered as a Murshid/Murshida and to lead any individual or group of individuals who may be willing to follow his/her instructions in all esoteric matters and the esoteric welfare of such followers will in all such cases be my spiritual responsibility.'"
- 17 Meher Baba, Circular NL. 5, March 10, 1950, quoted in Ivy O. Duce, *How a Master Works*, p. 73.
- 18 Ludwig Dimpfl, *op. cit.*
- 19 Letter from Dr. William Donkin to Murshida Duce, May 24, 1951, *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 1, 1922-1952, Binder C-1.
- 20 Letter of instructions, *op. cit.*
- 21 Gena Branscombe (1881-1977) was a composer, choral director, pianist and teacher who studied composition with Engelbert Humperdinck in Germany. Her 60-voice women's chorus, the Branscombe Chorale, was well-known from the 1930s through the 1950s. As a composer, she wrote more than 150 art songs, choral works and chamber music in a "richly melodic...20th century American/Victorian musical voice". Kathleen Shimeta "The Gena Branscombe Project", <http://www.kathleenshimeta.com/branscombe.html>.
- 22 Letter of instructions, *op. cit.*
- 23 Cover letter from Meher Baba accompanying handwritten proposed final draft of Sufi Charter, undated (Fall 1952).
- 24 Ira G. Deitrick, *Meher Baba's Reorientation of Sufism and Charter for Sufism Reoriented*, unpublished manuscript (undated), Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 25 Letter of instructions, *op. cit.*
- 26 *ibid.*
- 27 Don Stevens, "Questions to Baba on Organization", July 12, 1952.
- 28 One could say that the head recognizes "the many in the One" in its pursuit of democratic equality, while the heart recognizes "the One in the many" in its surrender to the authority of divine love.
- 29 Meher Baba, letter to Don Stevens, undated (Fall 1952).
- 30 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 5, pp. 1616-1618.
- 31 Don Stevens, "Questions to Baba on Organization", *op. cit.*
- 32 Meher Baba letter to Don Stevens, undated (Fall 1952, *op. cit.*
- 33 Baba often quoted the Sufi poet Hafiz to underscore this point: "Befitting a fortunate slave, carry out every command of the Master without any question of 'why' or 'what'."
- 34 Letter of instructions, *op. cit.*
- 35 *How a Master Works*, p. 124.
- 36 *How a Master Works*, p. 272.

All images are reproduced here courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.

Understanding Meher Baba's Charter

Murshida Carol Weyland Conner answers a few questions

Soon after *Glow International* published the first two segments of Meher Baba's Charter, we received questions from our readers.

We requested Murshida Carol Weyland Conner of Sufism Reoriented to answer some of these questions and at the same time clarify some general ideas about "sufism" and "Sufism Reoriented"

Why in your opinion did Meher Baba give the Charter to Sufism Reoriented and not to the world?

Of course, Meher Baba *did* give it to the world, and the results will manifest in time. Meher Baba's Charter for Sufism Reoriented suggests a set of principles, along with a plan of organization, for a *universal sufis* for the coming spiritual age, to be applicable throughout the world and under his aegis. Baba's reorientation of universal sufism is an integral part of his universal work to reorient or redirect all Creation back toward its divine source.

"Universal sufism" refers to the inner path of love for God that has always existed in Creation; you'll recall that Baba said, "Sufism is eternal." The word "sufism" is a *generic* term which has roots in common with "wisdom" ("sophia" in Greek), "purity" ("safa" in Arabic) and "wool", referring to the garment of the pilgrim ("suf" or "suppa" in Arabic and Aramaic). In my understanding, sufism is intrinsically associated with the office of the Avatar. Sufis are mystics who, in each Avataric age, are drawn irresistibly to the flame of the new Avatar, wish to surrender their lives wholly in service to him and dedicate themselves to living his new dispensation. They may gather in anticipation of his advent, while he is incarnate, and for some time after. Their task is to put his message

into daily practice in his own time. In this way, they further his Avataric work and are indispensable to anchoring his manifestation. They realize in advance of the mass of humanity the new energy and new forms he brings, and in doing so, they silently, mostly through internal channels, help spread his manifestation. We might say, for example, that the Jewish mystics known as the Essenes were sufis who gathered around the Avatar Jesus. They anticipated the coming of the Christ, surrendered completely to his new light and lived his principles wholeheartedly in his lifetime and in the centuries directly following. And so each Avatar in every age must gather *his* sufis, as they aid his work.

With this background, we may find it easier to understand why Meher Baba told Murshida Duce at their first face-to-face meeting in 1948 that *he had drawn her to him, as it was her destiny to lead his sufism in this lifetime and the time had come*. Murshida Duce believed that she had sought Baba out on her own initiative to ask him to "take over" her very small and fragile American sufi order, a group with roots in a Mohammedan sufi lineage of the last age descended from the Indian Perfect Master Moinuddin Chishti. Instead, Baba informed her that *he had all the while been drawing her to him* (since at least the early 1940s when Baba, through Norina

Matchabelli and Elizabeth Patterson, first contacted Murshida Duce's predecessor, Rabia Martin). He told her she was closely connected with him "since ages" and later revealed that she was a member of his circle. He made it clear that she was to do this work *for him*, to lay the foundations for his revitalized universal sufism, which he needed for the success of his Avataric work in this age.

Do you feel that Meher Baba's Charter given to Sufism Reoriented is to give a spiritual push to the western world or is it for all humanity?

Though Meher Baba clearly indicates in the Sufi Charter that it is applicable throughout the world, in this Avataric age, the rebirth of sufism was destined to take place in the West, specifically in America. The North American continent has been prepared through the millennia to play a central role in the work of the great Kalki Avatar to reorient all Creation, to prepare it for a more advanced spiritual age lived by a new man, collectively called "The New Humanity". For this to occur, it was necessary to unify the qualities of the two hemispheres, East and West. For thousands of years, the East and the West defined distinctly different experiences of life: briefly, internal and spiritual, on the one hand, and outward-oriented and material, on the other. With Meher



Murshida Carol Weyland Conner in front of a painting of Meher Baba as the Kalki Avatar. Photo by Stan Barouh

Baba's advent, the qualities of the hemispheres were to begin to come together to form a single global sphere, and the formerly separate achievements of the East and the West were to be blended in a new, *more advanced integration of life* that would provide the proper foundation for a new humanity in a new spiritual age. Baba took the extraordinary step of creating a new lineage of sufism in America as part of this broader work to anchor these goals on earth.

As though to demonstrate that America was where this was now to be achieved, Meher Baba first gave a prototype of what became the Sufi Charter to a small sufi group in Pune led by Dr. Ghani in 1948, but it quickly died out. In 1952, he also gave a copy of the completed Charter to Francis Brabazon, who led the small sufi group in Australia and had participated in Baba's meetings with Murshida Duce on the Charter at Myrtle Beach. Francis was to apply the Charter in Australia according to Baba's instructions, but it failed to take root there, and Francis later left to join Baba at his ashram in India. Only in America, under Murshida Duce's guidance, was there sufficient energy and enthusiasm for the new sufism to take root during Baba's lifetime and to grow and flower in the decades after his passing.

Why did the new universal sufism thrive on American soil? I suppose the simplest answer is that the very land mass of America was pre-ordained from time immemorial to play a special role at this divine hour, the "turning point" of Creation, as part of a very broad plan for the benefit of all. Meher Baba referred on many occasions

to the important role America was to play in the world and in his work. He noted that Americans had a deep longing for spiritual truth. He spoke of America's abundant energy for growth, which he said he would redirect or reorient from material to spiritual purposes. He established his only "universal center" outside of India in America, at Myrtle Beach. He shed his blood on American soil in the divinely ordained auto "accident" in Oklahoma in 1952 (which he predicted long before), for the spiritual benefit of this continent, and, he said, for the benefit of the entire world. Hence it should not surprise us that he would establish his new sufi lineage here as well, and that he would arrange for the destined leader of that lineage to be an American member of his circle: Ivy Oneita Duce.

Do you as the Murshida of Sufism Reoriented believe that the Charter Meher Baba gave in the 1950s is the blueprint for the New Humanity? Do you believe that this document encapsulates the essence of Meher Baba's teachings and what should the true seeker take away from it?

When one reads the Sufi Charter, one sees immediately that the principles Meher Baba has outlined in it are the eternal principles of the Avatar: God alone is real and life's purpose is to join His perfection through loving Him and living a life of selfless service to His world. The path Baba outlined for his reoriented sufis to follow is the same "path of return" that most true seekers in this age will follow. Similarly there can be no essential difference between the principles of Baba's Sufi Charter and the principles of his New Life, as they both flow from a single Truth. Nor is there anything here applicable solely to America or the Western world, as the principles central to Sufism Reoriented are universal and "belong" to everyone. To state this practically, there is nothing in the Sufi Charter that you will not find in the *Discourses* or *God Speaks* or Baba's messages, or in the supreme example of Baba's divine life. All of these could be called the "blueprints for the New Humanity", understood as life informed by Baba's principles of love and selfless service.

Does this mean, then, that all seekers and those who love Meher Baba should become Sufis? Ofcourse not. Acknowledging the astonishing diversity

of the Creation, there is an old saying known in many traditions that there are as many ways to God as there are human beings. Meher Baba told Murshida Duce that our path is laid out for us at the moment of Creation. Though each soul follows a unique path on its journey, we are all destined to reach the Goal! Some are destined to make the last stage of the journey, the return to God, as sufis. Those who are will recognize their own internal need for the kind of organization of life Meher Baba has outlined in the Charter.

How do the Sufis apply this sacred document to their spiritual lives?

Sufi Charter sets out not only universal principles of the spiritual path that most seekers would follow in this age, but also a specific plan for a "spiritual order", a community whose members pledge to observe specific patterns of life, with duties and obligations of membership that Meher Baba clearly and carefully defined. These obligations are few:

- Sufis are asked by Baba to spend 45 minutes every day in meditation by verbally repeating one name of God for a half hour and contemplating any of His divine forms for fifteen minutes. Through this practice, given by the Avatar, Sufis renew and strengthen their own bond with their Beloved every day.
- Sufis are also asked to study Meher Baba's life, his teachings and principles according to a curriculum that Baba outlined. As we are Westerners, our devotion often finds active expression through the arts, through theater, choral and vocal music, poetry, architecture, painting and sculpture centering on the adoration and worship of Meher Baba.
- While spiritual schools in past ages often separated themselves from the world, Meher Baba's principles begin with the new and deepened understanding that *all life is divine*. Baba encouraged his Sufis to develop their talents and abilities as fully as possible, to work consistently to the highest standards they can achieve, and to use their talents to joyfully participate in and serve Creation. Like the New Life companions, Sufi students are thus actively engaged in the world around them. With our surplus energy, we run

a preschool and elementary school, the Meher Schools, serving about 380 children from surrounding communities. Here, children receive an excellent academic education in an atmosphere of Meher Baba's love.

To summarize, Sufis aid Meher Baba's manifestation by carrying his light into the world as they strive to give living expression to his highest principles; at the same time, they are aided in moving closer to him by a programme of meditation, study and community or ashram life under the guidance of a spiritual teacher.

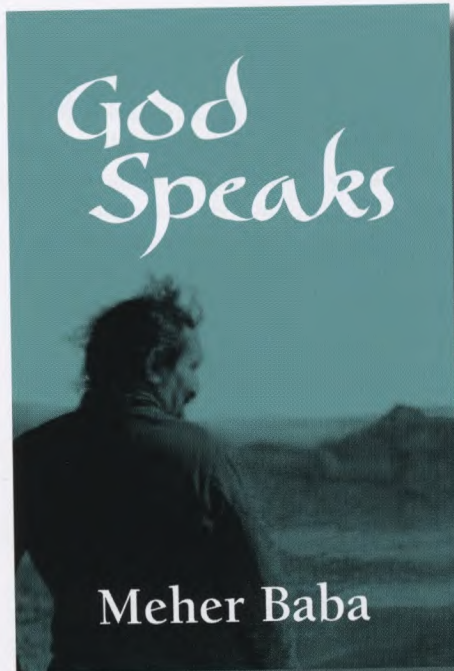
Meher Baba gave the Charter to the Sufis. Are the tenets expressed in the Charter applicable to the entire world of Baba lovers as well?

It should be clear by now that the tenets of what Meher Baba calls "active faith" as enumerated in the Charter are universal principles of spirituality for this age. But at the heart of the life of the student of Sufism Reoriented is the living teacher who steadily offers guidance, sometimes through counsel, usually at the student's request, but more often indirectly by example and by sharing the life of the student and supporting their efforts to overcome the lower nature while recognizing, silently appreciating and reinforcing their successes. The relationship with the teacher is central to the Sufi Charter and to the Sufi student. As the teacher is the friend of the student's *soul*, the student understands this as a rare privilege and sacred trust and most often responds with deep, mostly unspoken love. For most, it is the most intimate and treasured association in their life. Such an important and deeply felt bond of love develops over many lifetimes. Not everyone will have it. Not everyone will need it or want it in a given lifetime. It has been my experience that Meher Baba directs this process, and he does so with great precision. He chooses the members of Sufism Reoriented according to his own criteria, which few can know and none can question.

Questions edited and written by
Naosherwan Anzar
based on e-mails from readers.



An Awakening to Reality



The Architecture of Creation in God Speaks

The Third Triad: Sound Sleep, Dream, and Wakefulness

The triad of sound sleep-dream-wakefulness is the first of the triads so far involving states of consciousness. *God Speaks* discusses it extensively, especially in part 8, pp. 86–109; yet by far the fullest exploration within the corpus of Meher Baba's writings occur in *Infinite Intelligence*, where Baba draws many lines of correlation between these three states and the three spheres (that is, the gross, subtle, and fine — in the distinctive senses that these terms carry in that book¹). The commentaries of the great Adi Shankaracharya² similarly accord centrality and importance to the same three states; this common emphasis marks one of the important connections and convergences between Baba's philosophy and Advaita Vedanta.

The cycle of sleep-dream-wakefulness manifests in many modes and on many scales. Each jivatma passes through this cycle in the course of daily experience; as we described in the previous section, Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh directly involve themselves in the individual's daily

process of waking up and going back to sleep. Yet the journey of the soul in its broader outlines can be described in these same terms. Originally, in the Beyond-Beyond state, God slept. After the surging of the primal Whim, the soul, through the course of the evolution of form, gradually gains consciousness; in an extended analogy (pp. 99–106), Baba compares this evolutionary progress to that of an ordinary man passing through seven stages of waking up from sound sleep and opening his eyes. Several times in the course of this discussion Baba characterizes the soul's experience of evolution as a "divine dream." With the termination of evolution and the achievement of human form, however, the jivatma has gained full wakeful consciousness. From here, the soul passes on through the planes of consciousness, which Baba characterizes in Chart III of *God Speaks* (facing p. 95) as the "Atma's Divine Dream State" (and in *Infinite Intelligence* in similar terms). The journey concludes in the Realization of God, which Baba has often described as wakefulness in sound sleep. In overview, then, stages of the journey are these: God as the jivatma experiences —

An Analysis by Ward Parks

This second part of the two-part article studies four crucial principles, four triads, that play a major role in determining the shape and architecture of creation, as described in Meher Baba's *God Speaks*. Part one, which appeared in the Fall issue of *Glow International*, examined the first two triads, that is, God's trio-nature as Knowledge-Power-Bliss, and His triune attributes as Creator-Preserver-Destroyer.

↓ ↓ ↓	sound sleep abiding in the Beyond-Beyond state;	when
	subconscious dream passing through in evolution;	↓ when
	ordinary wakefulness reincarnating as man;	when
	divine dream advancing through the planes;	when
	wakefulness in sound sleep realizing God.	when

¹ The index to *Infinite Intelligence* contains several entries under the heading "wakefulness, dream, and sound sleep" that will guide readers to relevant discussion in the primary text. On the matter of the three spheres, *Infinite Intelligence* defines the "subtle" as encompassing the first six planes of consciousness—that is to say, the subtle and mental spheres combined, as these are conceived in *God Speaks*. The "fine" sphere, in *Infinite Intelligence*, is the state of latency; *God Speaks* provides no equivalent term.

² Shankara is generally regarded as the greatest exponent of Advaita Vedanta. Bal Natu recalled Baba himself having said, "I was Shankara."

In this way the triad of sound sleep, dream, and wakefulness defines the key terms and makes possible the key stages in the global organizing framework for the Divine Theme.

While this central *muthos* — that is, the journey from sleep to wakefulness to wakeful sound sleep — stands at the core of Baba's cosmology (in its dynamic aspect), curiously enough, at the very same time, Baba uses the same underlying triad of sleep-dream-wakefulness in a completely different way. On page 29 of his handwritten exposition published under the title *In God's Hand*,³ Baba drew a chart outlining a movement from ordinary wakefulness through ordinary dream to sound sleep, and from there, on through the divine dream of the planes to "Divine Awakening." This same chart in various multiforms recurs in *Infinite Intelligence*;⁴ and Chart III in *God Speaks* is a further elaboration on the same core idea. One infers that Baba is characterizing the jivatma's progress from the stage of reincarnation through involution to God-realization as a process of falling asleep to (and thus forgetting) ordinary gross human consciousness and subsequently reawakening in God. Though Baba himself does not explicitly make the connection, probably his handwritten chart in *In God's Hand* (and other presentations of the same concept) are related to the Sufi notions of *fana* and *baqa*, which Baba discussed many times from the 1920s onwards and especially in pp. 125–39 and following of *God Speaks*. *Fana*, a passing away or perishing, could be thought of as a "falling asleep" to the stage of the path which one is leaving, while *baqa*, remaining or abiding, as a becoming aware or "wakening" to the new state that one has attained. Thus the beginning and end terms in the triad of



Meher Baba's Table cabin, probably photographed during the first three months of 1926. It is presumed that the material published in *Infinite Intelligence* was written in late 1925.

sleep-dream-wakefulness bear on Baba's description of *fana* and *baqa* on the spiritual path — as well as on his characterization of Nirvana (a falling sleep to illusion) and Nirvikalp Samadhi (an awakening to Reality) when one achieves the Goal.

This triad and the whole topic of consciousness have many times led me to puzzle on a central conundrum (as I see it) in Baba's metaphysics. If Baba were to order me to ask him a single philosophical question, it would be this: "Baba, you consistently say that God is One. Yet it seems to me that your metaphysics posits two irreducible primal elements: Reality (which is to say, Sat or Being), and Consciousness. For your Divine Theme narrates a movement from God Unconscious to God Conscious. Yet God's Reality ("God Is") remains the same throughout. I conclude that Reality and Consciousness are different from each other. Therefore, God is not One, but Two."

Now I understand full well that, confronted with this philosophical quibble, some might retort, "Reality and Consciousness are one and the same."

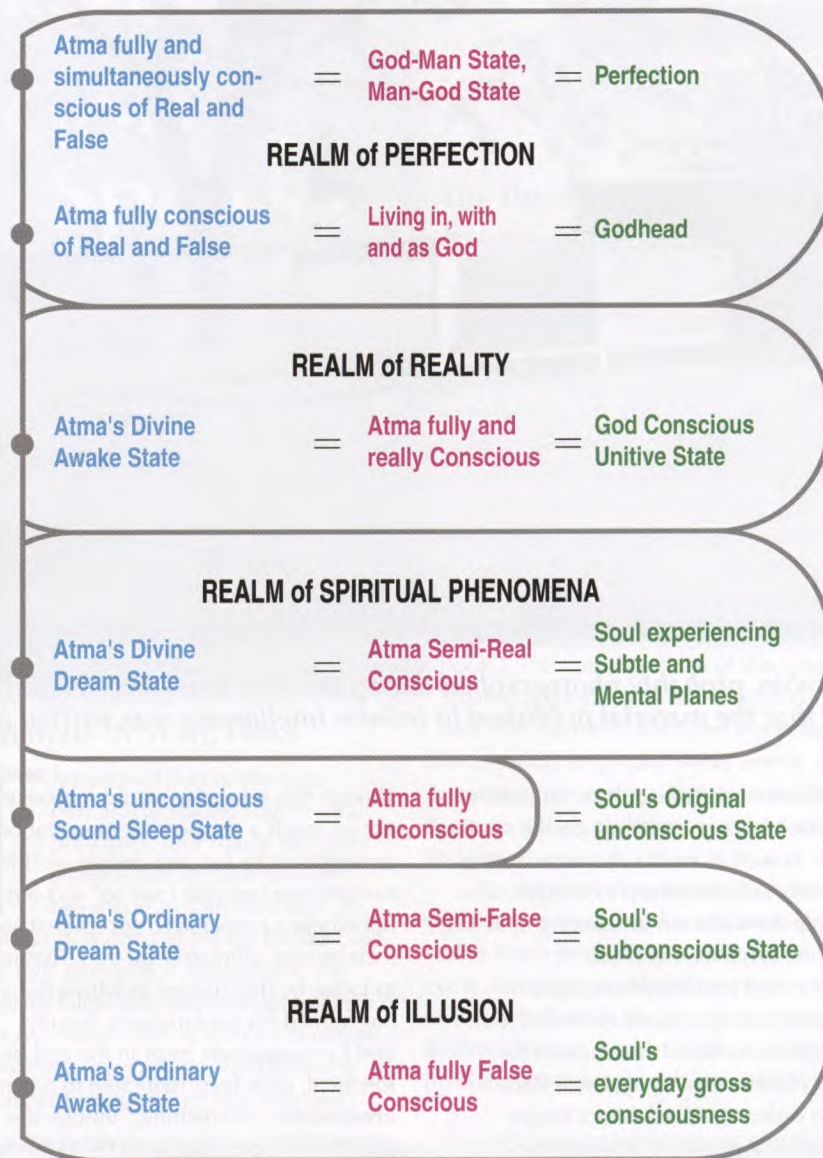
Though this rejoinder would represent not so much a reasoned demonstration as argument by fiat and decree — "these two are one because I say so" — I am nonetheless prepared to accept that such a claim may ultimately be true. That is, to judge by the manner in which Baba has framed his explanations, Reality and Consciousness must in the end be identical, or at least reducible to a common unnameable "Something," though the specifics of how this could be so are not intelligible to me. Perhaps the resolution lies in the original Beyond-Beyond state of God (state one, pp. 160–61), which, in his most rigorous accounts, Baba describes as being neither conscious nor unconscious. Yet even if Meher Baba's philosophy and metaphysics were, in the last analysis, based on a contradiction, this does not bother me. Rather, it points to the impossibility of understanding God through the intellect. Any explanation, however profound or brilliant, must at some point arrive at irreducible paradox, since thought and language cannot finally conceive what is beyond thought and language. In the course

3 Meher Baba, *In God's Hand: Explanations of Spirituality in Meher Baba's Own Hand* (Princeton, New Jersey: Beloved Archives, 2000).

4 For fuller discussion and commentary, see *Infinite Intelligence*, pp. 637–40 and 648–50.

REAL AWAKENING

CHART III



The so many deaths during the one whole life, from the beginning of evolution of consciousness to the end of involution of consciousness, are like so many sleeps during one lifetime.

* * *

One who lives for himself is truly dead and one who dies for God is truly alive.
— Meher Baba

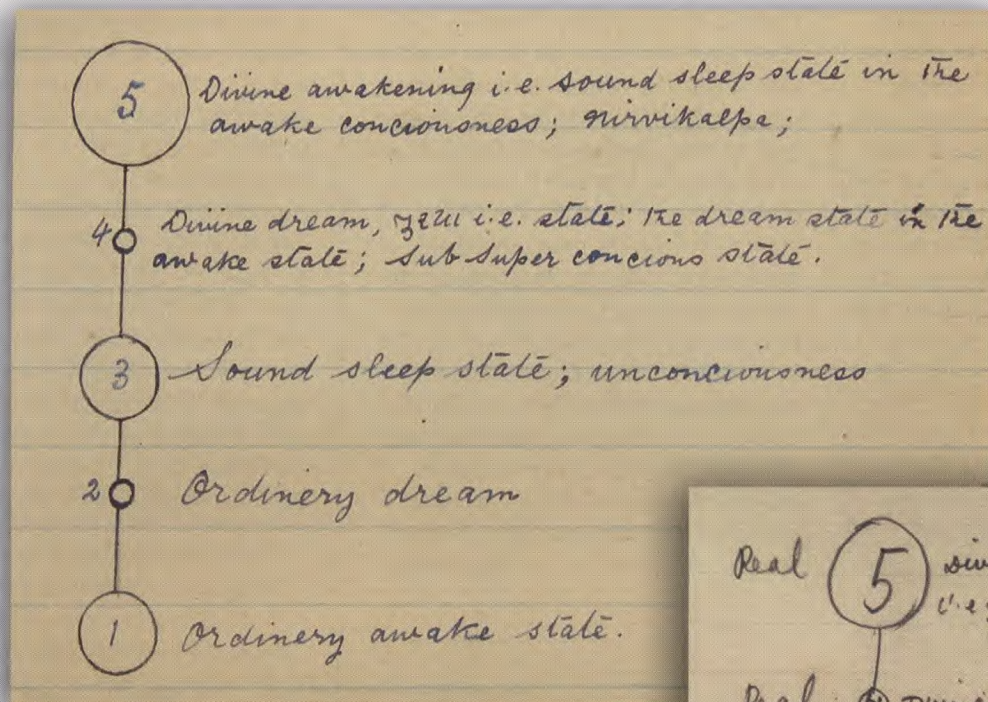
of a meditation like the one we are engaged in at present, such paradoxes challenge the honest intellectual seeker to undertake that leap of intuition wherein one consigns intellectual rationalization to the flames and aspires for a deeper awakening of true vision and gnosis.

The Fourth Triad: Beyond Sub-states A, B, and C

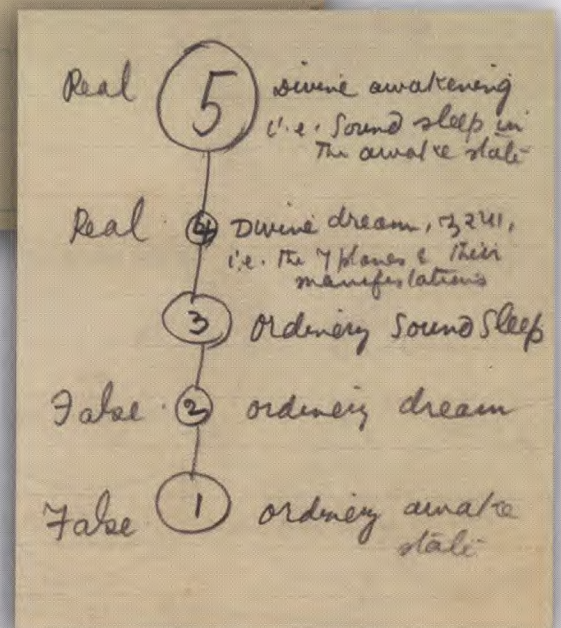
We now come to the fourth of our triads, consisting of the three sub-states — A, B, and C — of the Beyond state, which is the second state of God as described in the ninth part of *God Speaks* (see especially pp. 161–67). This triad differs fundamentally from the earlier three, whose major treatments, as we saw, emerged from the exposition in part eight of the book. For each of those earlier triads derives from a single root principle. Knowledge, Power, and Bliss represent the fundamental natures of God; Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer are attributes of God relating to change in the created universe; sound sleep, dream, and wakefulness are conscious states. Sub-states A, B, and C, by contrast, cannot be reduced analytically to a single principle in the same way. My use of the phrase “four triads” in the rhetoric of this article, then, may have been misleading. It might be better to characterize the three sub-states of the Beyond state of God as the overarching triad, the master trope (as it were), under whose governance the other three triads emerge from latency into manifestation. That is to say, the triads of Knowledge-Power-Bliss, Creator-Preserver-Destroyer, and sleep-dream-wakefulness come into actualization and expression in the universe only as a result of the interplay of Beyond sub-states A, B, and C in the course of the unfolding of the divine drama. The three sub-states do not, for their own part, express or derive from any root principle or latency unless it were the Whim of God Itself. And beyond that Whim is only God in the original Beyond-Beyond state, which, as we know, defies any kind of characterization or description or conceptualization whatsoever.

Meher Baba explains the God-Is state wherein God experiences the creator state (refer *God Speaks* for details).

- It is true that Baba gives a different account of the trinity in *Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama* (San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, 1958), pp. 14–15; for those using other editions, this passage occurs in the middle of the essay entitled “The Fabric of the Universe.” But as we will see below, Baba offered a completely different interpretation in one of his lectures to the mandali recorded in “Tiffin Lectures.” It is quite possible that Baba interpreted the Christian trinity at different times in different ways, to suit the point that he wished to make at the moment. One sees this same willingness on Baba’s part to interpret a single piece of material in various ways at different times in the diverse interpretations that he gave to a quatrain of Kabir, as detailed in *Infinite Intelligence*, pp. 569–71.
- Bhau Kalchuri provided a similar interpretation in his *The Nothing and the Everything* (1981; rpt. with no named publisher, 2009), pp. 139–43.



Detail of Meher Baba's handwriting in *In God's Hand*. This diagram shows the movement from ordinary wakefulness to the divine Wakefulness of God-realization (refer to *Infinite Intelligence* for details).



Profound and subtle, Baba's discussion of God's Beyond state and its three sub-states will undoubtedly baffle, bemuse, and intrigue philosophers for the next seven hundred years. It will suffice for present purposes to describe and differentiate the three sub-states in broad terms. In sub-state A, God as infinite unconsciousness "remains not only unconscious of His own eternal, infinite existence, as in the most-original Beyond-Beyond state of Infinity-Absolute, but He also remains eternally unconscious of His own begotten infinite original Beyond state, shown in the chart as 'II'" (p. 165). In sub-state B, which emerges simultaneously with sub-state A, God is infinitely conscious of His own states I and II (that is, the Beyond-Beyond and the Beyond states). But in sub-state C, God is infinitely conscious of Himself as God and of the universe as well.

These three sub-states A, B, and C can

be further distinguished in their relation to each of the three triads we have discussed earlier in this article. To begin with the triad of Knowledge, Power, and Bliss: in sub-state A God remains unconscious of His own trio-nature; in sub-state B He is infinitely conscious of it but does not use it; and in sub-state C He has consciousness of it and uses it as well. The three sub-states can also be distinguished with respect to forms and attributes—including, of course, God's three attributes as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. In sub-state A, though God remains unconscious of forms and attributes, they abide in Him latently; and so, with the insurge of the Whim, it is only natural for the three attributes (i.e., Creator-Preserver-Destroyer) and the worlds of form to emerge out of sub-state A (through the creation point). In sub-state B, God is simply without forms and attributes—*nirakar* and *nirgun*. But in sub-state C, God has

attributes and forms again: He is *sagun* and *sakar*. With regard to the third triad of sleep-dream-wakefulness, we could say that God in sub-state A is "asleep" to Himself, God in sub-state B is "awake" to Himself, and God in sub-state C is awake to both Himself and His illusory creation — His dream, as it were. In short, all three triads—Knowledge-Power-Bliss, Creator-Preserver-Destroyer, and sound sleep-dream-wakefulness — become activated through the interplay of Beyond sub-states A, B, and C.

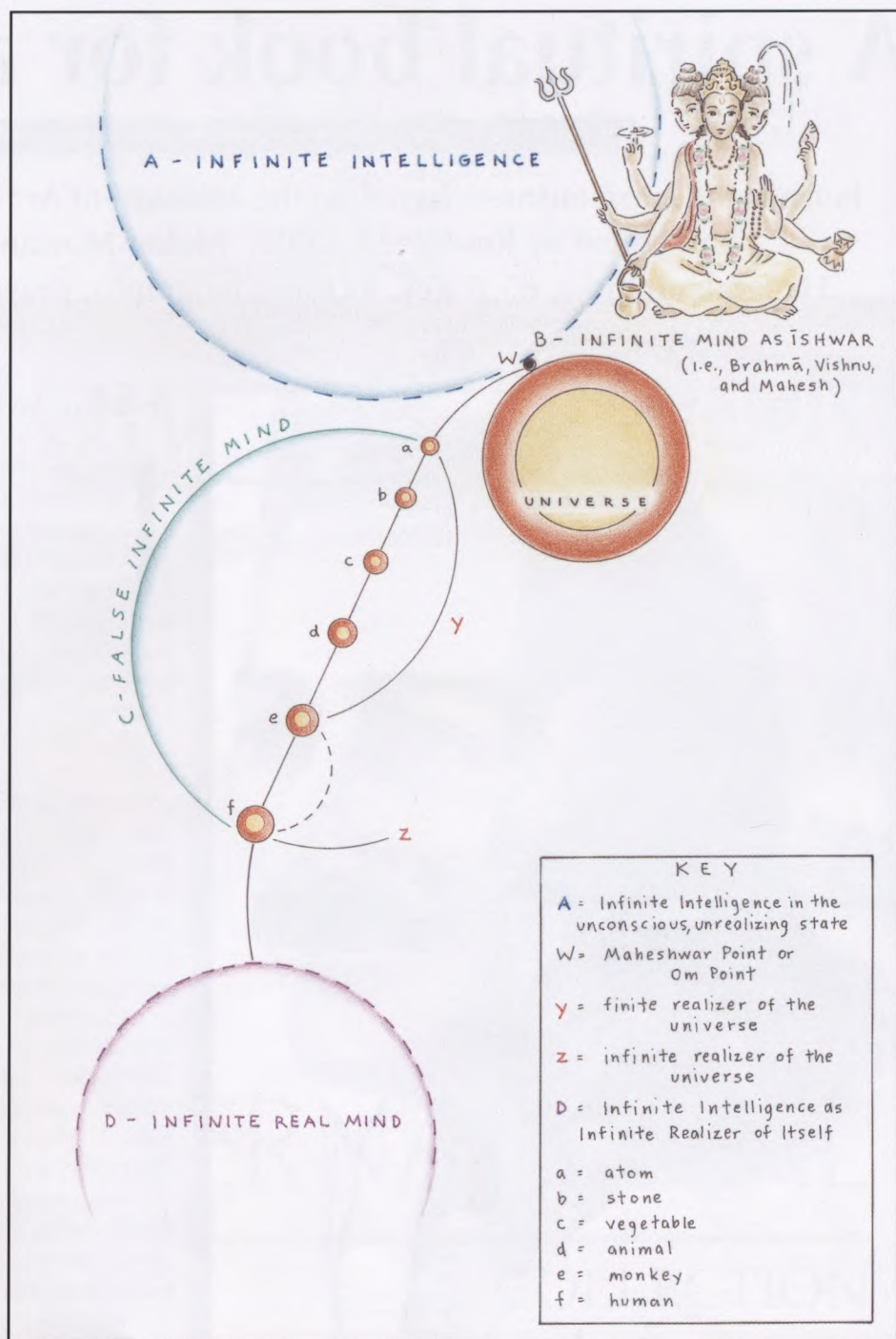
What gives rise to the three sub-states in the first place is what Baba calls the "prospectiveness" of the Whim — God's "Who am I?" Because the Whim emerges out of God's unconsciousness, sub-state A "eternally aspires to attain the eternal conscious state of Paramatma, marked 'B'" (p. 168). Sub-state A, one might say, represents the Question, and sub-state B, the Answer; while sub-state C brings

God as Creator-Preserver-Destroyer

While this article has examined *God Speaks*, particularly parts 8 and 9, for the light it sheds on the design of creation, in no way do I pretend that the four triads discussed in these pages provide anything approaching a complete or adequate account. Nothing in what Baba has set forth about Knowledge-Power-Bliss and the other triads, for example, explains why there are seven kingdoms of evolution and seven planes of involution, or why the Avatar descends every 700 to 1400 years, or why *sulukiya*t and *majzubiyat* constitute the two major alternate routes in the ascent to God. While Meher Baba has provided us with many details and described many isolated features in what we could call creation's architecture, he has never, so far as I know, treated the subject in a systematic way. Rather, His "philosophical" and "metaphysical" explanations usually focus on the drop-soul — the jivatma — and the phases of its journey from the original unconsciousness to the Realization of God. The main archetype that the Avatar gave for the understanding of this age, in other words, is the Divine Theme.

Nonetheless, the four triads carry a real importance and occupy a central position in Baba's greater scheme of things. To my mind, much of their significance lies in their capacity for creating (a seeming but ultimately unreal) multiplicity in God's oceanic Oneness. If God is One without a second, how can a creation arise? God's three natures as Knowledge-Power-Bliss create the possibility of different spheres; God's three aspects as Creator-Preserver-Destroyer create the possibility of time and change; God's sound sleep, dream, and wakefulness create the possibility of differentiation into states. In the end the ordinary human intellect can never really understand how One can (apparently) become Two. Yet Baba's explanations of the triads cast powerful searchlights, enabling us to recognize some of the root principles on which creation inevitably depends and which the very fact of creation presupposes.

How do these root principles, which make for the possibility of differentiation within God's unfathomable, inviolable, serene unity, produce an actual architecture of creation? Though Baba never addresses this question, my best guess would be: **Ishwar**. The third state of God, God as



Infinite Intelligence as Ishwar, Universe-realizer, and Self-realizer (refer to Infinite Intelligence for details).

Creator-Preserver-Destroyer, also functions, as *Infinite Intelligence* explains to us, as the Lord of creation, the Bestower of boons. It is Ishwar (as I venture to speculate) who activates and uses the root principles that give rise to the triads; it is He who produces those transformations that make creation's architecture visible to our eyes. And as *Infinite Intelligence* further explains to us, it is Ishwar who stands perennially at the left

hand of the Sadguru, serving and fulfilling His purpose in the world.

All illustrations from Infinite Intelligence by Meher Baba are reproduced here courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust. All illustrations from God Speaks by Meher Baba are reproduced here courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.



Union with God through actual experience

The Story of the Sufi Charter Part II

By Ira G. Deitrick and Henry S. Mindlin

*"The accompanying draft represents my completed guidance for the reorientation of Sufism all over the world."
– Meher Baba, 1952*

In 1952, Meher Baba spent many months, both in America and in India, writing and editing a Charter for the spiritual school he had established in America called "Sufism Reoriented". How and why did this come about? Why did Baba put so much time into crafting this document? What is its place in the broader pattern of Baba's universal work?

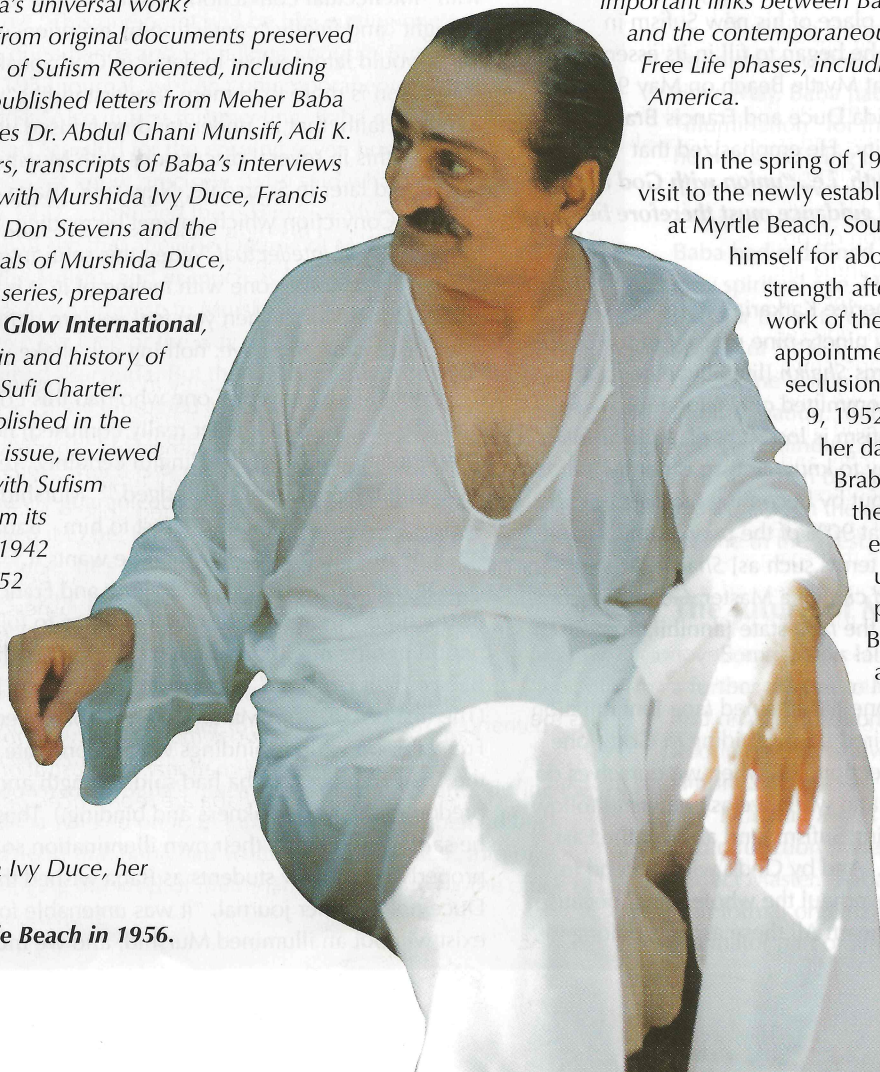
Drawing from original documents preserved in the archives of Sufism Reoriented, including never-before-published letters from Meher Baba and his disciples Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, Adi K. Irani and others, transcripts of Baba's interviews and meetings with Murshida Ivy Duce, Francis Brabazon and Don Stevens and the personal journals of Murshida Duce, this three-part series, prepared exclusively for **Glow International**, traces the origin and history of Meher Baba's Sufi Charter.

Part I, published in the Summer 2009 issue, reviewed Baba's work with Sufism in America from its beginnings in 1942 to the May 1952 sahasvas at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina when Baba held a series of meetings with Murshida Ivy Duce, her

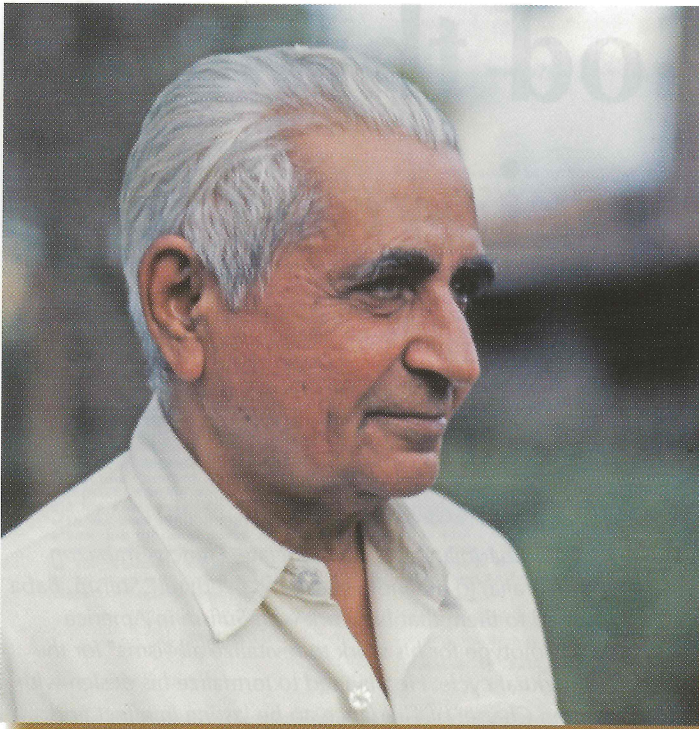
daughter, Charmian, and her associate, Francis Brabazon from Australia, to outline his plan to "overhaul" Sufism. Baba explained to them that his work with Sufism in America was a prototype for his work to revitalize all "isms" for the new spiritual cycle. He planned to formalize his design with a written Charter of Guidance, to be lasting in effect and influence all over the world.

In Part II, authors Ira Deitrick, President of Sufism Reoriented, and research associate Henry Mindlin explore Baba's work in crafting this document between May and November of 1952. They interview the current Murshida of Sufism Reoriented, Dr. Carol Weyland Conner, to discover important links between Baba's work on the Sufi Charter and the contemporaneous work of his New Life and Free Life phases, including his automobile accident in America.

In the spring of 1952, Meher Baba made his first visit to the newly established Universal Spiritual Center at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He secluded himself for about two weeks to regain his strength after the debilitating Manonash work of the previous months. His first appointment when he came out of seclusion, at eight in the morning on May 9, 1952, was with Murshida Duce, her daughter, Charmian, and Francis Brabazon. The central topic was the renewal of Sufism, which he explained was integral to his universal work to revitalize the principal "highways to God". Baba met with Murshida and her associates nearly every day for a full week, often for three hours at a time, usually in the early morning, discussing his plan for his new Sufism and the proposed charter.



Meher Baba at Myrtle Beach in 1956.



Adi K. Irani (shown here in the 1970s) conceived the name “Sufism Reoriented” in 1952.

The Essential Basis of Sufism: Truth and an Illumined Murshid

Even as Baba elucidated the place of his new Sufism in the context of his universal plan, he began to fill in its essential principles. In their first meeting at Myrtle Beach on May 9, Baba began to outline these for Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon with stunning clarity and simplicity. He emphasized that

Sufism must be based on Truth, i.e., “union with God through actual experience.” Spiritual guidance must therefore be based on Illumination.

Baba said (according to Meherjee Karkaria’s notes¹):

“Sufism, as understood by ninety-nine percent of the people, is not real Sufism. The terms *Shaikh* [literally ‘elder’], *Murshid* [‘guide’], *Mureed* [‘committed one’ (student)] are so lightly treated that real Sufism is lost sight of. As Jalaluddin [Rumi] says, ‘The only way to know Sufism is not by words or practice or discipline, but by becoming the dust of the feet of the Master.’ ...What 90% of the people understand of Sufism, [with regard to terms such as] *Shaikh*, *Mureed*, [or whether or not] a *Murshid* can be a Master, Guide, Teacher even before experiencing the *fana* state [annihilation of self] is absolutely vague.

“Truth is hidden. Unless one has attained *fana* [annihilation of the false self] and acquired *baqa* [abiding in God], one cannot lead others to Perfection. So, when we ourselves do not experience that state, and when we ask others to follow us, it means we are insulting Sufism, and all over the East and West it is being done. And by God’s will, I intend to change the whole affair, overhaul the whole thing, because I love Sufism with all my heart. All these aspects belong to

me, but Sufism is most dear to me. Therefore, I want to overhaul it, and for that you must do as I tell you to do...”

In later conversations Baba emphasized that “the very concept of Sufism is that [the] Murshid has to be illumined or the teacher cannot guide the student.”² Murshida Duce noted, “Baba said that unless a Sufi organization had an illumined Master, it was just a farce.”³ Yet Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon were not consciously illumined. Even so, Baba said he was entrusting the work of his new Sufism to them. He told Murshida, “You and Francis will have to wear the wool robe. I wore mine until it was nothing but patches.”⁴ One of the many etymological meanings of the word “Sufi” is “wool”, and Baba told them why a woolen robe was symbolically associated with mastery:

“No robes are required until you become real Murshids. Then you can put on robes. The very basis of Sufism is a woolen garment, because it absorbs the dark sanskaras of others. When you have Light and you wear the robe, the wool will absorb sanskaras. Muhammad wore one; Krishna too; and now Baba wears a woolen garment.”⁵

“True” Certainty

Meher Baba instructed Murshida and Francis that he would prepare them to assume their roles as authentic Sufi teachers. He said, “You are instruments for my work, until you get Light. Then you will know what to do automatically.”⁶ They were to begin by developing a firm intellectual conviction of divinity, called “ilm-ul-yaqin” in traditional Sufi terminology. He explained that “yaqin” means “certainty” and certainty is the basis of Sufism. One begins with “intellectual conviction”, which in time evolves to “conviction by sight” and finally “conviction by experience”, all of which Baba would later review in detail in *God Speaks*.⁷ True intellectual conviction is more than mere “understanding”; it is derived from rock-like faith, that is, understanding infused with feeling. Baba clarified this in several discussions with Murshida, both in Myrtle Beach and later in Scarsdale, New York. Baba explained:

“Conviction which you get by reading, hearing, describing, is *semi-intellectual*. When this semi-intellectual understanding becomes one with feeling of it, it is full intellectual conviction. When you feel you are right, through the understanding you have, nothing can shake you.”⁸

Meher Baba said that one who had this conviction was never upset by anything and never really confused, no matter what happened in life. Such “feelingful certainty...remains unassailable and cannot be shaken or dislodged.”⁹ Murshida and Francis were to develop that, and leave the rest to him. Baba said the rest “could be done in a flash by Baba when he wants it.”

Meher Baba also gave Murshida and Francis special instructions for meditation that they were to follow daily for a period of nine months, beginning on July 10, the beginning of Baba’s “Full Free Life”, the second of the three Free Life phases. (The first phase, from March to July, Baba called the “Complicated Free Life,” in which “bindings would dominate freedom.” During the “Full Free Life”, Baba had said, strength and freedom would predominate over weakness and binding.) These instructions, he said, would aid in their own illumination so that they could properly guide their students as Baba wished them to. Murshida Duce noted in her journal, “it was untenable for a Sufi Order to exist without an illumined Murshid, and we must be illumined.”



Murshida Duce and her daughter Charmian were given many responsibilities by Baba during his 1952 stay in America.

Obedience and Honesty

Meher Baba enumerated other qualities necessary to a true spiritual teacher. One was **100% obedience** to his orders and instructions. He said:

"...you have to do for Sufism my work as I want it done, — Sufism in its real way and its real work by my guidance. That is why I asked you, 'Are you prepared to do it 100%?' And you promised. Because for God, Baba and the Universe, the work to be done is to be 100% with body, mind, heart and soul. That means, if I say you cut my head [off], you have to do it. [True] Sufism [is] as Hafiz says, 'For Muslims to touch wine is forbidden, so much [so] that if a drop of wine falls on the body, that part must be mutilated, but Hafiz says that if your Master orders you to offer prayers on a carpet drenched with wine, do it willingly.' So, if I say and ask you anything to do, you have to do it."

Meher Baba also emphasized **100% honesty**, saying:

"Listen to what I say carefully. Foremost point to remember is that God loves truth and honesty and if we are to work for God and Baba, we must be honest to God, to Baba, to others and to ourselves. That means unless we experience what we preach and teach, we are not honest, not only of Sufism but of life itself. To be an atheist, not to believe in God, to be bad even, is better than to be a hypocrite. So we must work on that basis. Is it clear?"

In a later session, he added:

"There are three things that always hinder Truth. First is temptation. Very, very few persons can overcome temptation — temptation of money, fame, power, lust and leadership are disastrous, very binding, and very few escape it. Second, vagueness about things, and [third,] dishonesty. So we must be very honest and not vague about this newly explained Sufism."

In reviewing these conversations almost forty years later in

1991, Murshida Duce's successor, Murshid James MacKie pointed out that these spiritual principles of obedience and honesty, rightly understood, are simply attributes of love:

"Honesty is an attitude of natural openness and trust that is receptive to and reflective of Truth. Thoughts, words and deeds are viewed as 'honest' when they are born of love and spring naturally from one's highest understanding of life, with no tinge of egoism."

"Meher Baba used examples from the Sufi poets Hafiz and Rumi to describe what he meant by obedience [quoted above]. Meher Baba was referring to external obedience to his own direct orders and the guidance he would lay down for Sufism. As a principle of Sufism, he was also referring to the need for spiritual students to consistently obey their highest understanding of Truth, whatever the cost. This might be called 'internal obedience.' Like honesty, it is also an attribute of love."¹⁰

"He Expects Us To Become Sufis"

Francis Brabazon, when he returned to Australia in July 1952, called a meeting of his small Sufi group there to explain what Baba had done:

"He [Meher Baba] said he would take over Sufism [the Sufi Order] personally, and we — Murshida in America and myself here — would be directly under him ... It is not different, inasmuch as there is no radical change — and yet there is every difference."

"[Sufi teachings and practices] are not of any value unless one is directly under a Murshid. This is a thing that people generally have no conception of at all — that the spirit of Sufism is dependent upon the grace of a Murshid. But he [the Murshid] does not do the thing for one, but makes it possible for that one to do it. It is like a person making a track through the jungle and the others following him..."

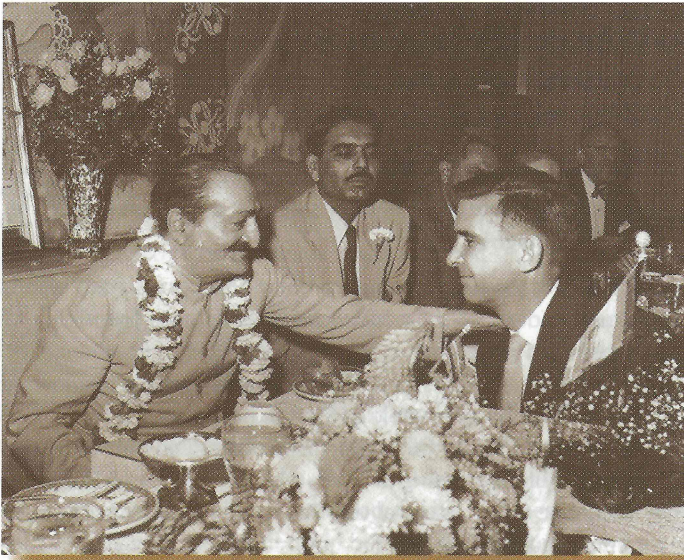
"...He [Meher Baba] expects us to become Sufis, strange as it may seem — *he expects us to become Sufis.*"¹¹ [italics added]



Naming Sufism Reoriented

Meher Baba made nearly all of these crucial points to Murshida Duce and Francis at their very first meeting in Myrtle Beach on May 9. After some three and a half hours of discussion, Murshida, Charmian and Francis Brabazon left the Lagoon Cabin. Baba's secretary, Adi K. Irani, had been interpreting the alphabet board during the meeting. Baba called Adi over and said that his new Sufism needed a new name, one that would indicate the new direction he had outlined. It could no longer be called "the Sufi Movement" or "the Sufi Order" as it had in the past. How was this name chosen? Baba gave the task to Adi! In a 1977 interview, Adi recalled this moment in the Lagoon Cabin in 1952:

"...I was interpreting Baba's alphabet board and he asked me to go and sit quiet for a few minutes and think about a new title [for the new Sufism]. And no sooner I went to [the]



Don E. Stevens, with Meher Baba in 1956, first met Meher Baba in New York in 1952.

other cabin over there and sat there; within a few minutes it struck me and I came out with the title 'Sufism Reoriented'. I remember Malcolm Schloss was there, there were others there. And when I went and showed this title to Baba he was highly pleased and he accepted it and he liked it... The title was the first thing that would strike anybody to find whether a change in the old order has taken place, and that's why the name Sufism Reoriented was given."¹²

The term "Reoriented" was indeed apt and precise. It implies the fundamental change or reorientation in the direction of life energies at the end of the vast "Cycle of Cycles" that will bring about the new cycle and Meher Baba's New Humanity. It also signals that this school of Sufism follows a fresh new pattern for inner spiritual growth and development, emanating from the new Avatar.

Charter for a new Sufi School

Meher Baba shared the new name with Murshida Duce, Charmian and Francis Brabazon when they met in the Lagoon Cabin the next morning, May 10, for their second session. The talk then turned to the task of creating a formal charter. Murshida Duce recalls:

"...we foregathered in the little cabin again. ...Francis and I talked with Baba for nearly an hour on his proposed new charter for our Sufi Order, which I was asked to complete as a model charter for the world. Adi had read it on the day before in the presence of Malcolm Schloss. I was disconcerted at such a large responsibility, having had no experience with such things. Baba acted as if I could dash it off overnight. It was my suggestion to take it west and let my men *mureeds* [students] there help me with it, to which Baba assented, but he wanted quick progress on it. Francis was quite satisfied with the charter as Baba had framed it, but my girlhood legal training got the better of me, so I began to raise questions."¹³

A temporal organization is needed

At their first meeting on May 9, Baba had said, "We should not be vague on any point. We must be precise." Now, in response to Murshida's questions, Baba again told her, "All these points must be noted down; make them precise and practical so that they may be published. All of it should be collected so I can go through it, correct it and have it published before I leave in July."¹⁴

Murshida could not imagine how she could create, in two months, a document that would anticipate every situation that might be encountered in the next seven hundred years. She was mindful not only of the need to fully define the principles and practices of the spiritual school, but also to design a temporal organization to implement the work of the school and deal with the school's property, finances and legal issues. She felt certain that such an organization could function effectively as a non-profit corporation, but needed expert advice from those of her students with a firm grounding in business and corporate law in order to set it up properly. She felt that the final charter document would have to clearly define the relationship between the spiritual school and the temporal organization. She was extremely conscious of Baba's emphasis on precision and that he had said the design for this document was to apply universally to Sufism around the world and far into the future. Baba would later write her, (July 5, 1952) "...this has to be a real thing to last. Any flaw would mean defective construction of the whole."¹⁵

Baba agreed that she could consult with her students in California. He told her to leave Myrtle Beach on May 18, return to her home in New York, but be sure to be in San Francisco in early June, for he planned to drive across the United States to California and meet with her and her students there from June 6 through the 9th. Then Baba planned to return to Myrtle Beach in mid-June for work there; he would meet with Murshida again later in July in New York.

It is interesting to note that according to this plan, work on the Charter for Baba's American Sufi school would be carried out at several points across the United States: in Myrtle Beach in May, in San Francisco in June (with Murshida's students who had a business background), and in New York in July.



The Accident and the Free Life

This plan was abruptly suspended by the shocking news of Meher Baba's automobile accident in Oklahoma, in the heartland of America, on May 24. Baba had long predicted such a "personal disaster" as integral to his Avataric work. His left arm and left leg were broken, and he sustained serious facial injuries. His beloved Mehera was also gravely injured, suffering a severe skull fracture and lacerations to the forehead. Elizabeth Patterson had been pinned behind the wheel and had broken her collarbone, both arms and several ribs. Baba dictated a statement that said, "It was necessary that it should happen in America. God willed it so."¹⁶ He explained that the accident was the culmination of the first phase of his Free Life, the "Complicated Free Life", in which weakness and binding (associated with the accumulated, limiting sanskaras of the past) would predominate. He told Murshida Duce directly, "You

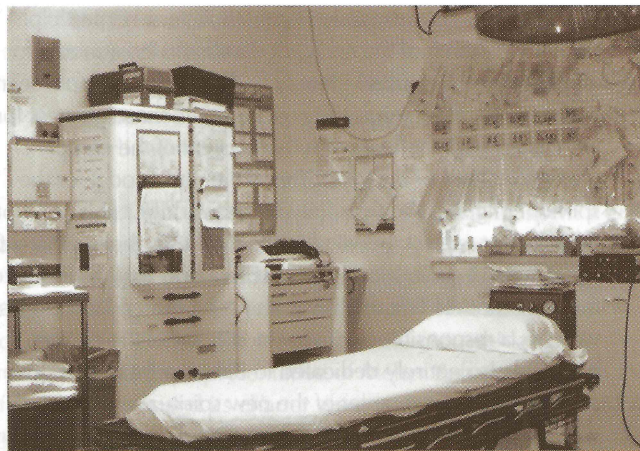
must understand that this was God's will, and it will result in benefit to the whole world."¹⁷ Of all the events of the Free Life designed to anchor Baba's New Life and Manonash work in America, none was more forceful than this.

Much has been written about the archetypal and deeply symbolic nature of this accident, its relationship to the spiritual destiny of America and the Western world, the role of women in the future¹⁸, and the release of energy for new patterns of spiritual growth represented by Baba's sacrifice. Murshida Conner has summarized some of these understandings this way:

"Although Baba was thrown from the car on the right side, he landed and sustained injuries on his left side. In the spiritual anatomy of man, sanskaric fibers pertaining to worldly life – to illusory, material life in the gross world – are wound in the tissues on the left side of the body and anchored within the bones there. In order to release them fully, the bones themselves must be broken. And so, by injuring the left side of his body in the accident, Baba worked out in his body the *release* of the sanskaras that strengthen materiality and Illusion so strongly associated with the West.¹⁹ In doing this he fulfilled his promise to America to free its energy, which was locked in lower aims and pursuits, to flow into higher channels of love and truth.

"The nature of Baba's facial injuries caused especially copious bleeding, resulting in his losing blood freely in the soil at the scene of the accident. The Avatar's blood, the blood of the Christ, symbolizes the divine energy and life of God. The accident allowed Baba to offer his blood freely as his covenant with America, mingling his divine life and energy with its very soil to renew and transform it spiritually as he had promised.

"The accident thus galvanized Baba's universal work to give a general spiritual boost to mankind, the work that would eventuate in the New Humanity. In effect, the accident brought the whole scope of Baba's work in the New Life and *Manonash* to America and anchored it in the West. Simultaneously, he was also able to lay hold of the unique potentials of America,²⁰ often referred to by Baba, which he intended to use to carry through the promised general spiritual transformation that would affect all of mankind. Through



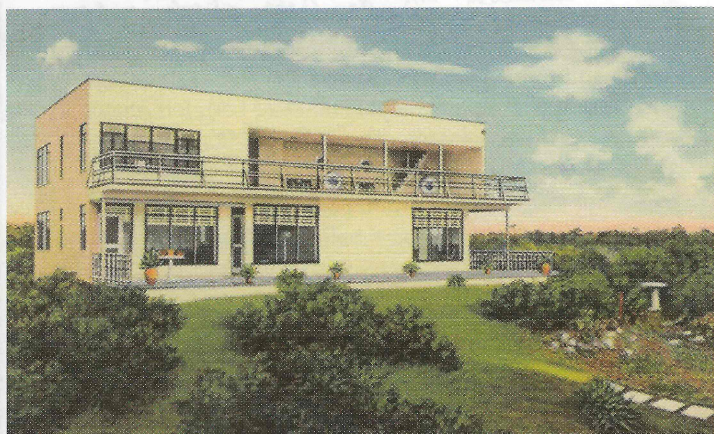
The room at the clinic in Prague where Meher Baba was treated.

the accident, America was boosted and through America, the whole world.

"The injuries Mehera sustained were of a different nature," Murshida Conner continued. "Mehera received a deep gash in the centre of her forehead and a severe skull fracture. The clinic doctor, Dr. Burleson, described it as the worst he had ever seen. According to Mani, 'The doctors were amazed at Mehera having escaped any internal head injuries; and the specialist said that it was a miracle.'²¹ Mehera's forehead injury, sustained in America, was foretold by Baba twenty years before when, according to Khorshed, Baba said that one day Mehera would bear a scar on her forehead that would match his own."²²

"In human spiritual anatomy, Mehera's forehead injury was sustained at the site of what is called the third eye, or the 'eye' associated with divine vision. In *God Speaks*, Baba refers to the centre of the forehead as the entranceway to divinity. Thus we might say that through her injury, Mehera enacted the tearing of the 'sevenfold veil' of illusion that frees the infinite sight of the third eye, whereby the pilgrim is able to see God face to face, everywhere and in everything."²³

"Mehera's injuries symbolize the entrance to the sixth plane of consciousness and beyond. Through the passion of Mehera, the accident thus established a blueprint in America, and presumably the West, for higher illumination at the level of Divine Vision or beyond. This represents a spiritual advance for the West, as historically, with just a few exceptions that 'prove the rule', advanced souls of these highest planes have incarnated only in the East. *Owing to Baba's work, the North American continent would soon be capable of supporting levels of higher consciousness in ways that, until now, had only been possible in the East.* That is why Baba could tell Murshida Duce that the West was now ready for an authentic school of Sufism, with its own spiritual lineage of illumined Murshids. Baba's work to establish his Sufi school in America was intrinsic to his larger design of spiritualizing the world. Through the accident, Baba was establishing patterns in the 'formative' realm²⁴ for his 'new world culture' that will create an entirely new synthesis of the qualities of East and West."²⁵



Youpon (or "Yaupon") Dunes, Elizabeth Patterson's Myrtle Beach home, where Baba recuperated from his accident in June and July 1952.

"In the context of this work, Elizabeth Patterson's participation in the drama of the accident demonstrated a model for an entirely new spiritual identity and role, never before seen in the world, that blends the high spiritual consciousness long associated with the East, with the mastery of the complex material culture of the West. This is the new model for the spiritual pilgrim who lives fully in the world but in a spirit of detachment and total dedication to God. Elizabeth, who suffered major injuries along with Mehera and Baba, epitomized this new model. Elizabeth was an astute, American businesswoman, a responsible and respected pillar of the community, and also entirely dedicated to Baba's principles of love and service, the exemplar of the new spiritualized Western woman as conceived by Baba, blending a complex worldly life with an inner life totally dedicated to God."

Much the same could be said of the first person Baba summoned to Oklahoma for aid after the accident – Murshida Duce.

Murshida Duce's participation

In light of Meher Baba's design for Sufism in the West as a channel for a fresh new pattern of spiritual development, the important and pivotal ways in which Baba associated Murshida Duce, the representative of his Sufism, with the events of the accident become more significant.

- **Murshida financed the trip:** When Baba said he had no money for travel and could not ask for any, Murshida freely offered him all the resources of her Sufi treasury for the purpose, if he wished it, and he accepted.
- **Murshida and her husband helped plan the trip:** Baba also involved Murshida, her husband Terry and her daughter Charmian in planning out the itinerary for Baba's party. Mr. Duce had planned out a direct route for the men mandali and a more scenic route for Baba and the women. At the last minute, however, Baba himself switched the routes, knowing what was destined.
- **Murshida facilitated the group's needs in Prague:** As mentioned, Murshida and Charmian were the first of Baba's disciples called to Oklahoma to assist him. Baba wanted them to come "at once". As with their 1948 trip to India, it was their destiny to be there. Their help was invaluable in handling every kind of practical need, from doing the laundry to paying the bills.²⁶
- **Murshida later facilitated Baba's medical care in New York:** When Baba returned to Myrtle Beach in June, he was in almost constant touch with Murshida Duce, who had returned to her home in New York, asking her to make appointments with specialists there for himself and Mehera.

P.B. 487
Myrtle Beach,
South Carolina
July 5, 1952.

My dear Inez,

I am writing you this by Baba's orders. In spite of the present state of health Baba makes me read to him every day for half an hour. The Charter etc. that you sent him. He is going thru it thoroughly, because this has to be a real thing to last. Any flaw would mean defective construction of the whole. He finds many points perfect and many points needing correction. Also to have it internationally established, he would like to complete it in India after seeing conditions in London Egypt and Asia. So he thinks, the best for him would be, to complete the Charter with his signature in November and send it to you.

Meanwhile from July 10. to November you will have accomplished what Baba has ordered you to do personally. He has discussed all points with you and Don Stevens on 19th morning. He wants you not to worry about it at all but leave it to him.

Meanwhile he wants you to note that:-

"Sufism Re-oriental American Center has no direct connection with the Meher Center 'on the Lakes' Myrtle Beach"

2) "Meher Center 'on the Lakes' Myrtle Beach is not a Sufi, Vedantic, Buddhist, Christian or Zoroastrian Center. It is the Baba Center based on universality. This Baba Center will have within it four different ~~degrees~~ of devotion, service, remuneration and knowledge.

Sufism Re-oriental American Center is to be in any one part of America where Inez Duce and her co-workers can establish it - beginning with the small amount - the proceeds of the sale of the present Sufi Center property. This Sufism Re-oriental American Center of which Baba is the Patron will naturally and automatically have indirect connection with the Baba Center 'on the Lakes' at Myrtle Beach. It will thus be independent in itself and yet have full support of Baba Center in every way."

Baba wants you to know that he loves you and trusts you because he knows how deeply your faith in him is.

Yours brotherly
Adi
Senior

P.S. Baba cannot see to the Book of his Ten States of God. In his present condition. Therefore he would finish it by November and send it to you to have it printed & published at our expense.

Adi

If Baba's accident is recognized as an archetypal template for sweeping changes in spiritual consciousness in America and the world, the role Baba arranged for Murshida Duce to play (representing Sufism) suggests that his new Sufi school is meant to invite, support and assist in these processes in many central and flexible ways. Even before he had formally chartered Sufism Reoriented, he was calling on its resources to help anchor and facilitate his broader work in America.

Meher Baba Expands Murshida's Responsibilities

In the same way, Meher Baba continued to expand Murshida Duce's responsibilities significantly during the rest of his stay in America. For example:

- **Meher Baba asked her to be his messenger:** When it became clear that Baba would not be able to proceed from Oklahoma to the West Coast as planned, he directed Murshida Duce to go to California on his behalf, and then return to New York. Murshida was to see Baba's devotees in both places and personally give them his message about the accident, that it was "purely God's and Baba's will", that it was part of the work of the "Complicated Free Life", in which bindings and weakness predominated, and "that the result, by God's will, will be good for the world." So, in early June, Murshida and Charmian journeyed from Prague to Los Angeles, to Ojai and to San Francisco where they spoke to dozens of people, individually and in groups, then returned to New York and met with devotees there.
- **Meher Baba asked her to be his host:** Later, after recuperating enough in Myrtle Beach to plan his visit to New York for the last two weeks of July, Baba told Murshida he wished to stay at her Manhattan duplex apartment, along with his Eastern women mandali. The apartment was too small to accommodate them all, so Baba made other housing arrangements, but used Murshida's apartment for three days of interviews, *darshan* and group meetings, and scheduled his interview appointments through her. The interviews began at 7 a.m. and lasted till 6 p.m., with a break for luncheon and tea.²⁷ Murshida called it "a three-day love feast."
- **Meher Baba placed her at his side:** During the programmes at Murshida's apartment, Baba met with both the Sufis and the "Monday group" of devotees, who were not associated with Sufism. Murshida naturally excused herself when the Monday group assembled, but Baba summoned her and, in her words, "commanded, 'I want you to sit with me while I address the Monday group.'"²⁸ She offered to sit in the back of the room, but Baba placed her and Charmian right

next to him. Murshida felt initially that this was awkward, as several members of this group had been her students but had left Sufism after meeting Baba and decided to follow the Master directly. By placing her at his side, Baba silently underlined the role he had given her.

Murshida Duce notes in her journal that Baba, "spent a great deal of time and effort in making clear to everyone involved that he was in back of my work, that I was fulfilling his commands, that we should all do our best to harmonize and love each other."²⁹

Such examples gain added resonance when Murshida Duce is recognized as the representative of Meher Baba's work with Sufism, for Sufism and its charter were very much on Baba's mind throughout his stay in America.

Renewed work on the Charter

Returning to the period after the accident, in early June of 1952, Murshida and Charmian traveled to California to deliver Meher Baba's message to his devotees there. This gave her the opportunity to meet with her Sufi associates in San Francisco whom she had hoped to consult with about the new charter. Chief among these was Don Stevens, then Murshida's principal helper on the

West Coast. Don was an oil company executive in his early thirties who had joined the Sufi Order under Murshida Duce's predecessor, Murshida Rabia Martin. His experience in the corporate world proved valuable in framing important issues of structure and organization, and he would become Murshida Duce's main collaborator in drafting the new Charter. Another who assisted was Ludwig Dimpfl, a business associate of Don's who had joined Murshida Duce's Sufi Order in 1949. Murshida notes in her journal, "Between-times, the men and I thrashed out problems on the new charter and constitution far into the night. I felt it would necessitate us staying [longer] but I began intuiting that Baba wanted



Meher Baba stayed in this house at 14 Cohawney Road, Scarsdale, New York in July 1952.

us to get on with the job, so I ordered plane tickets...and sure enough, two polite telegrams came from Baba asking, 'What is your programme?'"³⁰ They returned to New York the next day.

While in California, Murshida, with the help of Don Stevens and a few others, had finished a rough draft of the Charter for the new school and what Murshida called a "national constitution", a framework to govern the temporal organization of Sufism Reoriented according to the legal requirements for American non-profit corporations. "But", she added in her journal, "our ignorance produced so many questions that I finally in despair sent the whole sheaf to Baba."

Meher Baba's Daily Work on the Charter

In early June, Baba returned to Myrtle Beach to recuperate at Elizabeth's home, Youpon Dunes, for about a month before making the trip to New York he had originally intended. Between mid-June

and mid-July, letters and telegrams flew back and forth between Murshida in New York and Baba in Myrtle Beach on a wide range of pressing topics. Correspondence about Baba's constantly changing plans for his accommodations in New York were most often handled through Delia De Leon and Mani; information about medical appointments through Dr. Goher; schedules of Baba's interviews in New York, which Murshida was to arrange, were handled through Ruano Bogislav; and letters about the Charter came from Baba through Adi. K. Irani.

Meher Baba made a point of working on the Charter every day during his convalescence at Youpon Dunes. On July 5, Adi wrote Murshida:

"My dear Ivy,

"I am writing this by Baba's orders. In spite of the present state of health Baba makes me read to him every day for half an hour the Charter, etc. that you sent him. He is going thru it thoroughly because this has to be a real thing to last. Any flaw would mean defective construction of the whole. He finds many points perfect and many points needing correction. Also to have it internationally established he would like to complete it in India after seeing conditions in London, Egypt and Asia. So he thinks, the best for him would be to complete the Charter with his signature in November and send it to you.... He will discuss all points with you and Don Stevens [in New York] on 19th morning. [This meeting was later moved to July 20th.] He wants you not to worry about it at all but leave it to him.

"...Baba wants you to know that he loves you and trusts you because he knows how deep your faith in him is."

The Constitution

Murshida replied on July 7th with another extensive list of questions, some from her and more from Don Stevens; here is a brief sample to illustrate the level of detail they – and Baba – were concerned with:

"Dearest Baba,

"I have Adi's letter about the charter and constitution. I am delighted that it does not have to be settled as fast as we thought, for questions keep coming up in my mind. I have nothing further to say about the charter, but the following might be attached to our poor constitution and considered by you, as time goes on.

"The geographic area for which the constitution is intended should be included in it...

"The non-profit nature of the organization must be stated. It must be specified that it can own property and engage in various activities also..."

On July 9, 1952, Baba, in responding to a number of questions, reassured Murshida:

"My dear Ivy,

"I received your letter of July 7. I am glad you are thinking over the Constitution in its details. ...I am going thru the Constitution as I find it convenient with an eye to make it non-dogmatically universal, by changes, deletions and additions wherever necessary..."

(3)
Ship by association "can not be allowed if thereby an associate member is supposed to be absolved from the obligation of following my guidance. It will be worse still if such a member is expected to partly accept and partly reject the guidance from me.
Therefore, although it is good to "do in Rome as Romans do" that should not be at the cost of a principle. You will either have to drop the question of associated members or to explain to me further than the fact that, that is a general practice over there.
Now let us turn to the esoteric questions:
I. The preservation and purity for all times of the Order of Supreme Reorientation must necessarily be left to God and the Guides.
II. When and where necessary, worldwide, country-wide or community wide recognition and designation of the states and stages of individuals will either come and be sustained automatically or that can also expressly happen through me.
III. As Meher Baba and not necessarily as a Patron of any organization, I can and I may give an express authority to any individual, not necessarily connected with any organization, in some such manner and to some such effect as follows:—
"For the time being _____ is hereby expressly authorized by me to let himself/herself to be called and considered as a Murshid / Murshida and to lead any individual or group of individuals who may be willing to follow his/her instructions in all esoteric matters and the esoteric welfare of such followers will in all such cases be my spiritual responsibility."
If you think you can, you may suggest to me a better text for the authority in question.

Page from Baba's detailed letter of instructions which accompanied the handwritten draft of the proposed Sufi Charter that Baba sent to Murshida Duce in the fall of 1952.

By the term "non-dogmatic", Baba meant that the organization was to be based on flexible principles, adaptable to a wide range of changing circumstances, rather than an ironclad set of rules to be rigidly adhered to, that might be implied by the term "constitution". The final document lists only seven principles of organization, the last of which says:

"As far as possible and practicable, reliance is to be placed on conventions and practice based on the spirit of service and sacrifice rather than upon the rigidity of a written constitution."

In that spirit, what had been called the "constitution" in earlier drafts and discussions was incorporated into Baba's final draft of the Charter under the simple heading of "Organization".

Another Question

Murshida had included in her letter to Baba several questions from Don Stevens regarding the first draft of the organizational plan.

Among other things, Don was concerned about the relationship between the ongoing temporal organization and the Murshid. One of his observations particularly pleased Meher Baba. Don wrote that in the first draft, "the rights of the Pir-O-Murshid are too defined. If he is a Pir [sixth plane master] they need not be, and if he isn't, he should not have such absolute powers." In a later reply to Don (undated), Baba told him "I was delighted with your remarks on the constitution as quoted by Ivy in her letter to me of July 7th. In fact one of your remarks has been made the basis of sub-article 1 of article VII [of the final draft]." Baba formalized it this way in the Charter:

"Privileges and prerogatives born of Divine Illumination and of Realization of Truth could never be subject to statutory provision of any kind. Where there is neither Divine Illumination nor Realization of God, there should never be any constitutional or organizational authority for the sustenance of any such privileges and prerogatives."

Don continued to be concerned about clarifying the relationship between the Murshid and the temporal organization. On July 12th, he sent Baba ten more wide-ranging questions, many of which related to the future guidance of the new Sufism after Baba's passing. Baba had made it emphatically clear in his discussions with Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon at Myrtle Beach that the entire basis of Sufism was guidance by an authentic, illumined Murshid, or, as in her case, by a Murshid appointed

and guided by a Perfect Master or the Avatar. However, Don had pointed out to Murshida, as she relayed to Baba (letter of July 7, 1952), that "...even though we did not have illumined murshids, the work of Rabia Martin as set up by I. Khan was full of wonderfully good training and [Don] and I so benefited by it that it brought us to You. Therefore, the Sufi order should not be dissolved for lack of a highly illumined Murshid."

Still, for both Murshida and Don, that premise seemed to contradict the very basis of Baba's Charter. So among his questions, Don now asked:

"If there are not God-realized souls to steer a major part of the Sufi organization's activities at some time in the future, then how is the formal organization best set up to take care of this?"

Baba would answer this question in person in New York a few days later.

The Scarsdale Meeting

Meher Baba spent the last two weeks of July in New York before leaving America for Europe and India. He met with Murshida Duce, Don Stevens and Charmian at the home he was using in the New York City suburb of Scarsdale, at nine a.m. on Sunday, July 20, 1952, for two hours. This was the first formal meeting about Sufism in Baba's "Full Free Life" phase, which had begun on July 10. In this phase, strength and freedom were to predominate over weakness and binding as the forces released by Baba's New Life and Manonash work rose to the surface. Issues that had been clouded could now come into clearer focus and approach a resolution. Murshida recalled, "We sat in a room which led out into the garden. Adi stood close to the doorway while Baba was seated in a corner, probably seven or eight feet away from him. He was adept at reading Baba's board even when it faced him upside down."³¹ Baba's left leg was in a cast, his left arm in a sling, but he was vibrant and forceful in his gestures.

This also appears to have been the last formal meeting Baba had with Murshida and her associates about the Sufi Charter (though he met with Murshida privately before he left and continued to answer questions by mail from both Murshida and Don until the Charter was completed). Both Don Stevens and Murshida took notes at the meeting. Murshida incorporated all of Don's notes into her 1952 journal. Her account of the meeting in *How a Master Works* draws substantially from this journal but omits some points and includes additional information not found elsewhere. Charmian and Adi also discussed this meeting briefly in separate recorded interviews many years later.

It was a very full two hours of "explanations and instructions" from Baba. Murshida notes in her journal, "Except for about five minutes on his personal affairs, we spent the two hours along with Adi Sr. on Sufi matters, the new charter and constitution." Charmian mentions a number of examples:

"I remember sitting in the room, Baba talking carefully and in detail with Murshida about the Sufi charter, which he drafted. They went over every single bit of it, how this was to be handled, what kinds of things could be done. We had, for instance, a universal worship service [for the general public]. And Baba said, 'No. There's no such thing.' And so that was wiped out. In the old days they had lots of Sufi practices which were done and observed. [Baba] got rid



After leaving America and stopping briefly in England, Meher Baba rested and recuperated in Switzerland in August 1952 before returning to India.

of all of those. [He specified] only two practices: one was the repetition of Baba's name, and the other, a meditation, which we were expected to do each day. He [covered] all sorts of things in the most minute detail." ³²

Meher Baba explained that he had carefully reviewed the draft of the Charter they had sent him from San Francisco, working every day on it at Youpon Dunes. He told them that half of it was perfect and half needed to be modified. Murshida notes, "He decided it all had to be perfect and since he lacked time, he was going to take it to India and return it to me in October." It had to be completed before he entered his Fiery Free Life on November 15, when, he said, "there will be a great mess as never before" and he might drop his body. He promised that he would send the completed Charter to them before November 15, "with my signature. It must be applicable to all other sects, and equally throughout the world."

Don asked Baba if he could read out his ten questions, which dealt largely with the relationship between the "esoteric" and the "temporal" aspects of the new Sufi school, and the balance between "authoritarian" and "democratic" elements of organization. Baba listened to the whole list, then said he would discuss numbers four, nine and ten with them now. Murshida notes that she was "startled at [Baba's] ability to listen to a long sequence of questions and without hesitation remember the exact number of the particular question he was willing to discuss." Baba said he had already thought about the other questions and would send the answers later from India.

The future Sufi Hierarchy

Don's "question number four", asking what would happen to the new Sufism in the future "if there are not God-Realized souls" to lead it, was the most significant. Murshida Duce explained, "...we were anxious that no such schism should again occur as had happened after the death of Hazrat Inayat Khan...", who had brought Sufism from India to the West in 1910. After his passing in 1927, his followers in Europe refused to acknowledge Rabia Martin, the American woman he had chosen as his successor. They formed their own organization and chose their own leaders from among Inayat Khan's relatives, assuming thereby that spiritual illumination was hereditary.

Baba's answer made it clear that he, too, had been focused on this issue, since he now intended to establish an authentic school of Sufism in America that would require an illumined teacher. Don noted down Baba's reply: ³³

"This question concerning the future Sufi hierarchy has all the time been going on within me. [italics added]

"Do you know what this really means? I must see to the far off future to see who will be the head every hour, month, year so there is no gap, no stop. I am talking of the head of all the affairs. Now as far as workable every time the Murshid has to be illumined because the very concept of Sufism is that Murshid has to be illumined or the Teacher cannot guide the student. But what I intend doing in Sufism Reoriented is that if at any time [the] Murshid is not illumined but has charge of the total organization, the organization should not stop, and it is for this that I have to think of the head.

"I will make it all appear in the charter. There has not to be any compromise, any loophole, and yet the organization is

(Copy of letter to Don)

29 Sept 1952

Dear Don,

I am sending this hand-written material on Sufi Charter for you and Don Stevens to read, discuss and prepare a fair typed copy of the same to be sent to me for my final approval and signature.

You and Don should correct only the grammatical mistakes and the general English of it, keeping the subject and sense the same without change. You may add any point, if absolutely necessary, informing me about it.

Regarding the sub-clause mentioning "...the forthcoming book 'God Speaks'"; clarification is necessary that the book will be the last and final book by me on the subject. You may if necessary alter the word 'forthcoming' or add a sentence to make the sense clear and precise because the Charter signed by me will be for all time and therefore the word 'forthcoming' would have no meaning.

Many Sufi terms though seemingly peculiar, when put in their equivalent English terms are nevertheless absolutely appropriate, eg: One without the one; Highest of the High; Beyond the Beyond; Perfect, Most Perfect, and Supremely Perfect... etc..

Love to you Don and Charmie,
BABA

Portion of a September 29, 1952 letter from Baba in India to Murshida Duce in New York.

not to stop, so it has to be worked out, and both from a practical and a spiritual point of view. It is not easy. It has to be applicable both in the West and the East and also acceptable by different creeds, as Sufism is to be universal, to embrace all other isms and yet to remain Sufism.

"Only one point is infinitely difficult; that is about the future hierarchy. [italics added] These other democratic businesses [questions about the democratic structure of the organization] are easy and they are in My mind. This one point [i.e., ensuring a succession of illumined Murshids] will be like cutting one's own head off and holding it in one's hands and yet talking about it. See, I have intact head and life. But we will do it." [italics added]

Meher Baba then addressed Don's other two questions. One was whether the new school should advertise and the other about the use of funds from the sale of property. Baba said:

"What I will do is prepare the charter completely, constitution and all, but in a separate letter I will send you special instructions. These are to be carried out by Ivy and Don separately. But when I send the charter and this special letter of instructions you two have to meet each other and go through it thoroughly. It is of universal importance and you must not be one percent vague about it.

"[On use of money from the possible sale of property] Keep it until you receive the charter and instructions because one of the instructions will include this point and also how to establish the American center and how to get additional money, because [for] what I have in view, this amount won't be sufficient." ³⁴

Don't worry, all this will work out and is easy except one thing. That is My own affair. I and God will fight it out between ourselves." [italics added]

The Office of Murshid

In *How a Master Works* (pp. 124-5), Murshida Duce presents these comments by Baba almost word for word, but in a different order and responding to different questions. She writes: "Don Stevens asked Baba, 'When Murshida does have to give up the body, can't you see to it that we have an illumined Murshid?' Baba replied, 'You don't know what you are asking — you are asking me to hold my head in my hands; it means that every minute of every day for the next 700 years I shall have to be mindful of the Sufi hierarchy, that it has to have an illumined Murshid — but God and I will fight it out, and I promise you that you *will* have an illumined Murshid for the next 700 years until I come again.'"

Charmian paraphrases the conversation slightly differently from her mother. She says: "Murshida said to him, 'But Baba, you know the order needs an illumined Murshid. What are we to do? While you are alive here, you tend to these things for me. But we must have an illumined Murshid to lead our order, if you expect it to last for five hundred to seven hundred years' (which is what Baba said it must last, until he came again). And Baba at that time said, 'You don't know what you're asking of me. But I will do it. I will see to it that you have an illumined Murshid.' And so, he insured the future of the order." (Charmian Duce Knowles, *My Life with Meher Baba*, videotaped interview, 1984.)

It is not possible to determine which account of this conversation is most accurate. Murshida, in *How a Master Works*, published in 1975, says unequivocally that Don asked Baba to guarantee the succession of illumined Murshids and Baba gave his promise. Charmian says the question came from Murshida, but agrees with the substance of Baba's answer as Murshida gave it. While Don's notes do not mention anyone asking this specific question, his transcript makes it very clear that Baba said he would tend to the issue of the future hierarchy: "This one point will be like cutting one's own head off and holding it in one's hands and yet talking about it. *But we will do it.*" Murshida's original 1952 journal, written contemporaneously, presents Don's notes and simply adds: "Also during this meeting, Baba confirmed that there would be an illumined Murshid for the ensuing seven hundred years."

Although we may not know precisely "who said what, when", Adi K. Irani, interviewed in 1977, confirmed the essence of Murshida's statement: "Baba said that he shall see that after the lifetime of Murshida, somebody takes the charge of the Sufism, and as much as he has to be an illumined master and Baba did give a promise to Murshida that he shall see. Now, he did not exactly give the time or the way in which he would introduce or bring in the illumined Murshida. But the fact yet remains that in his own time and in his own way, the illumined Murshid has got to come and take charge. Now, Murshida [Duce] is there and she had the great blessings of the Avatar during her lifetime which is very, very unique and was exceptional. So, Murshida was absolutely guaranteed by Baba to run the Sufism Reoriented in the way that he liked it to be. But what about the future after her lifetime? Then Baba said, of course, he's going to give the illumined Murshid. You do not know, it may take some time and there may be difficulties which all the Sufis may have to encounter. Yet Baba's blessings and all the efforts put in by Murshida all these years will answer." (Adi K. Irani, "Baba's Promise of an Illumined Murshid", unpublished interview transcript, 1977, Appendix J, *Murshida Duce's Role as a Sufi Teacher*, Binder D-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek CA.)

Adi, who took down all of Baba's notes about the Sufi Charter during the many long months Baba worked on it, in India, America, Europe and back again in India, understood that Baba had written his "guarantee" into the Charter itself by specifying the level of illumination necessary for the office of Murshid in Sufism Reoriented.

The Murshid's level of illumination

The next question Baba answered at the Scarsdale meeting was related. According to Don's notes:

"Ivy Duce then asked what plane the illumination of the Murshid should correspond to. Baba replied:

"Now the Murshid has not necessarily to be one with God but necessarily must have the highest illumination: vision of God. All this will be in the charter. The sixth plane is the plane of illumination when one sees God everywhere within and without.' (Adi Irani read from the proposed charter to illustrate how the matter was being handled)." ³⁵

In her book, Murshida explained, "Baba insisted that a Murshid had to be illumined or the teacher could not guide the students. Since we had never seen God Speaks as yet, I asked Baba what plane the Murshid should correspond to..." She knew that Inayat Khan, the Murshid who had founded the Sufi lineage in America, had been a saint of the fifth plane. Yet in the new Charter, Baba was now saying that a Sufi Murshid must have sixth plane consciousness. Perhaps she had misunderstood about Inayat Khan's illumination. She asked Baba about it, and he swiftly replied, "Inayat Khan was a great soul, a great Sufi and for the West a great starter." He would not elaborate further.

Murshida Duce was thoughtful. This was quite astonishing to her. Throughout their discussions since May, Baba had referred to the need for "illumination" for the Murshid or Murshida. Now he was specifying that only the highest level of illumination would serve — something he had not revealed before. She realized that in doing this, Baba had redefined what a Murshid was to be in his new spiritual age. He had, so to speak, "raised the bar" for those to come. Henceforth, in Baba's new school of Sufism, a Murshid must "necessarily" have the Divine Vision of the sixth plane, the highest state of illumination. Baba emphasized how rare this was by reminding Murshida that there were then only five such beings, five "real Murshids" of the sixth plane, in the entire world. Now there would be one in the West.

The future of Meher Baba's Sufism

Some weeks later, from India, Baba sent Don a further answer to his "question number four" and related questions about the future of Sufism Reoriented.³⁶ As always, Baba's answers were simple and precise.

Don had asked how the "formal organization" could function if there was no illumined teacher or Perfect Master. Baba wrote:

"No formal organization can ever be made to steer the major part of any esoteric activities for all times,

My dear Ivy and my dear Don,

The accompanying Draft represents as my completed guidance for the reorientation of Sufism all over the world and for the formation of independent organizations for its implementation in different parts of the world.

The main purpose of the necessary preliminaries has thus been well served. So now after studying my separate letters and the completed draft guidance from me, I want you all to adopt a fresh line of thought towards the whole of the matter. Get going with the organization and you two draw up the formal Charter in the best possible form for me to sign and return a copy to you for the "Americas". The form of the Charter is also expected to have a blank column to fill in the geographical area of an organization.

You are at liberty to make necessary literary modifications in order to make the guidance all the more readable and appealing to the West. As it stands, the guidance should serve well in the East and so long as its sum and substance remains unchanged, it would continue to be equally useful here. The point is that the Charter should be uniform both for the East and for the West.

In short, the esoteric side is best left to the care of individual "hearts". There need not be any constitutional or organisational safeguards for the esoterica of the individualized heart. Collective effort is all the same necessary to bring together as many "heads" as possible under one body with one Head for the implementation of Sufism Reoriented. That collective effort has got to be based on pure democracy which does not aim at grabbing power, by manipulating the mechanism of voting. You make a start with things as they stand at the moment and leave alone both the past and the future to be taken care of by God and the Qutub to the endless end as has been the case since the beginningless beginning.

With my love,

Dictated by BABA

The typed cover letter from Baba was enclosed with the handwritten draft of the proposed Charter.

but God and [the] Qutub [Perfect Master] are always there to take care of that."

Don asked how the "mainstream" of Sufism should be preserved in the future. Baba replied:

"The mainstream will be *automatically* preserved as it is one of the aspects of Qutubiyat [Perfect Masterhood], the Qutub's divine life." [italics added]

Don asked, "Are the Sufis to develop the final authorities [i.e. illumined teachers] in their own organization from their own membership for their activities, or are they to look in each generation to the greatest spiritual leader of their time as the source of their light, regardless of his background?" Baba responded:

"The question of final authority always gets adjusted *automatically* and is one which *can not be asked, cannot be answered and cannot be explained.*" [italics added]

In another letter (October 20, 1952), Murshida Duce had asked, "We who worked with Rabia were taught that only a Murshid can discern how much light or illumination another person has and so only he can appoint a successor." Baba replied:

"Yes. That is why [the] Murshid has to be appointed by Baba during his lifetime or to be *necessarily illumined for all time in the future.*"³⁷ [italics added]

Meher Baba repeated many times and in many ways that Sufism is not Sufism without an illumined Murshid. In the Charter, he himself specified the level of illumination a Murshid of Sufism Reoriented must have. As Baba gave unusual time, energy and centrality to his work to create a new Sufi Order under his wing, as an integral part of his universal work for mankind, answering the question of assuring an unbroken succession of illumined Murshids in the affirmative was as crucial to him as it was to Murshida and

Don. As the authors understand this, it is both true that there is to be an illumined Murshid of the sixth plane for 700 years, as Murshida Duce believed and as Baba required, and that, because of the nature of divinity itself and its intimate interconnectedness with universal Sufism within Creation, it is not possible for God to "promise" it. Hence Baba and God will "have to fight it out!" To make such a promise would be to treat as an objectivized "fact" that which is a living principle, subject to all of the evolutionary and expansive forces of life in this divine Creation. Or, as Baba put it, akin to removing from one's own body for purposes of objectification a vital, living member, such as one's head, and to still go on living. Ultimately, however, these things are seen to automatically, in the unfoldment of time, by the unfathomable, spontaneous and natural working of the Qutub and the spiritual hierarchy.

In his letter of instructions accompanying the final draft of the Charter, Baba, addressed the topic of "the future" of Sufism Reoriented conclusively and definitively in just twenty-two words:

"The preservation and purity for all times of the Order of Sufism Reoriented must necessarily be left to God and the Qutub."



Sufism Reoriented and God Speaks

At the same July 20th meeting in Scarsdale, Meher Baba told Murshida Duce that he would be sending her a manuscript from India in December, "500 typed pages and \$1000 for the publication of my book. How you publish it is up to Ivy and Don."³⁸ The book was **God Speaks**. By Baba's design, the story of its publication is closely interwoven with this story of the creation of Sufism Reoriented and the anchoring work of the Free Life.

Meher Baba had told Murshida Duce about this book at their first meeting in Myrtle Beach on May 9, 1952, when he showed her and Francis Brabazon a chart called "The Ten States of God."³⁹ Baba had just told them that Sufism had to be based on the experience of divine consciousness, that "what 90% of the people understand of Sufism...is absolutely vague..." The chart was a map of the primary stages of the evolution and involution of consciousness in Creation, a visualization of the essential understanding of divinity at the core of every mystical tradition. With such a map, there could be no more "vagueness" about levels and degrees of illumination. Baba went on to tell Murshida Duce and Francis:

"I dictated all the points [explaining the chart] to Dr. Ghani. He worked on it, and now I find half of it is just as I wanted and half has not been included. I have brought the manuscript here [from India], and when I am free, I will go through the whole thing and make necessary changes. This book will be the first and last of its kind. Today I will show you just the chart on which it [the book] is based, and when it is ready, I *might* hand it over to you to publish. ... This book will be the *Quran*, Bible, Avesta of Baba. It will be unique."⁴⁰

Murshida later learned that Baba and Dr. Ghani had been working on this manuscript when she first met them at Meherazad

in 1948. In bringing the manuscript to America and offering it to Murshida Duce to publish, Baba was placing the book in the orbit of his Free Life work to integrate and manifest the results of his New Life and Manonash work. Written in English, published in America, *God Speaks* is another channel through which Baba anchored in the Western world the highest spiritual principles, which had previously been known only in the East.

Meher Baba's work on the book dovetailed with his work on the Sufi Charter. As he recuperated at Youpon Dunes after the accident, he worked on both manuscripts. He brought them both to Scarsdale, where he told Murshida Duce, "I can't understand what [Ghani] did with all the material I gave him. Now I shall take this home and I shall have to write the whole book over again."⁴¹ Interestingly, he said that half of it was correct and half of it had to be completely redone; he had said the same about the draft of the Sufi Charter. Baba brought both documents back to India and finished them there. The Charter was completed by November; *God Speaks*, three years later. By then, Sufism Reoriented had become well enough established to be able to publish the book as Baba wished.⁴² As with the Charter, Baba asked Murshida Duce and Don Stevens to collaborate on aspects of the editing process, saying later, "I had them in mind from the beginning."⁴³

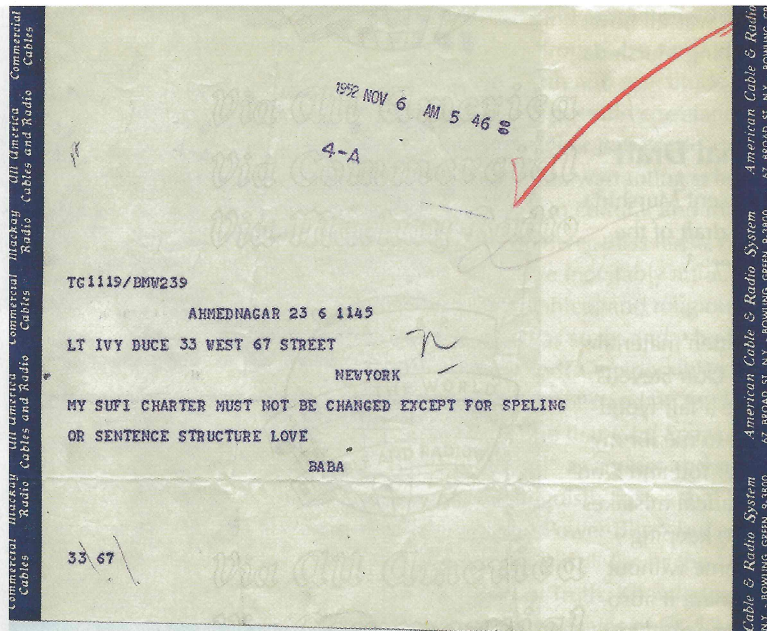
In the Charter, Baba directed his Sufis to study *God Speaks* "vigorously" as part of his curriculum for the new spiritual age. As the Quran was the guide and inspiration for the Sufism of Hafiz and Rumi, so *God Speaks* is for Meher Baba's Sufism Reoriented. He also assigned the copyright of *God Speaks* to Sufism Reoriented, entrusting its stewardship and preservation to the spiritual school he founded.



Plans for Fiery Free Life

Meher Baba left New York on July 30, 1952, after spending more than three months in America. He spent the next three weeks in England and Switzerland, then returned to Meherazad. On August 28, Rano wrote to Murshida on Baba's behalf, saying that his work on the Charter would be delayed:

"Baba says he will rest for about one month before undertaking anything. He says that at the moment he is not in the mood to see about the Sufi Charter – or the new book which is now being written. He will see to both later – so inform Don Stevens accordingly."



Telegram from Meher Baba, November 6, 1952.

Murshida found herself utterly drained and exhausted after Baba's visit. On Sept. 2, she replied: "Dearest, dearest, dearest Baba,

"...Rano's kind letter from you arrived this morning and she says you are 'not in the mood' for the charter or book. Neither am I, dearest Master, in the mood for anything. Having had no rest whatever since 1946, it has all been too much for me... It has been the hardest thing to try to do my [meditation] practice [that Baba had assigned her], much as my heart longs for it... I feel it is only a nervous exhaustion and that I will be well and strong next year as you

promised, but there is still a year to go and I want to carry on the work I have started and help people... I have such a lack of will to drive myself any further, I hardly know what to make of it. Nothing seems of any importance whatever. My efforts to help people seem pretty ridiculous in light of my own weakness and when I see you transmute them with a glance of your beautiful eyes, I feel like a charlatan to even open my mouth. Please forgive me for writing all this but I feel like I need a word from you to sort of set me straight."

Meher Baba replied quickly through Rano, reassuring Murshida that her depleted condition was a natural result of the momentous spiritual work that had been accomplished over the past months (letter dated September 9, 1952):

"Baba received your letter and I am writing the following at his dictation. ...You are quite well excepting for over-fatigue and nerves due to a long period of strenuous work. You are to rest as much as possible, take your duties lightly, and carry on your Sufi work at an easy, leisurely pace. You will be quite fit next year if now you take things easy, relax and above all, don't worry. Baba says he is absolutely satisfied with you and with what you did for him during his stay in America. Baba is resting and daily doing his exercises. He is at present making plans for the 'fiery life.' When he has time and is in the mood, he will see to the Sufi charter and the book. You are to inform Don Stevens of all this. Baba's love is always with you."

Meher Baba was gathering strength and laying plans for his "Fiery Free Life", which was to begin on November 15 with a series of mass darshan tours where he would contact tens of thousands of people. Baba had made it clear that the nature of his Fiery Life work would make it impossible for him to attend to projects like the Sufi Charter. It had to be completed before November 15 – yet since Baba had left America, August and much of September had gone

by and very little had been done. It was all now in Baba's hands, and there was nothing Murshida Duce could do to hasten the process.

Handwritten proposed Final Draft

Then, on September 29, Baba sent Murshida and Don a completed handwritten draft of the Charter with an accompanying letter:

"Dear Ivy,

"I am sending this hand-written material on Sufi Charter for you and Don Stevens to read, discuss and prepare a fair typed copy of the same to be sent to me for my final approval and signature. You and Don should correct only grammatical mistakes and the general English of it, keeping the subject and sense the same without change. You may add any point, if absolutely necessary, informing me about it.

"Regarding the sub-clause mentioning [that Sufis were to necessarily study] '... the forthcoming book *God Speaks*', clarification is necessary that the book will be the last and final book by me on the subject. You may if necessary alter the word 'forthcoming' or add a sentence to make the sense clear and precise because the Charter signed by me will be for all time and therefore the word 'forthcoming' would have no meaning.

"Love to you, Don and Charmie,

"BABA"

Baba added an important post-script to this letter that underlined the spirit in which he wanted his new Sufism to take root, a spirit of self-giving love, cooperation and service. He said:

"P.S. Inayat Khan has sown the seed of Sufism in the west, and in Sufism reoriented by me (which is to be lasting in its effect and influence) his adherents must be made to co-operate and they must be won over towards this end thru love and not through coercion, through generosity and not through criticism. Also as you and Don have to be the main bulwarks of my Sufi work in America, I advise you both to be most charitable towards those who directly follow me, or thru the various paths; and have a feeling of oneness with my [other] lovers...; and the most important point of all is to be loving and tolerant toward those who may unjustly criticize you. Show this letter and charter to Don.

"My love,

"Baba"

The handwritten proposed final draft of the Charter came with a second cover letter from Baba giving further instructions:

"My dear Ivy and my dear Don,



Meher Baba in Ahmednagar in November 1952.

"The accompanying draft represents my completed guidance for the reorientation of Sufism all over the world and for the formation of independent organizations for its implementation in different parts of the world.

"The main purpose of the necessary preliminaries has thus been well served. So now after my separate letters and the completed draft guidance from me, I want you all to adopt a fresh line of thought towards the whole of the matter. Get going with the organization and you two draw up the formal Charter in the best possible form for me to sign and return a copy to you for the "Americas." The form of the Charter is also expected to have a blank column to fill in the geographical area of an organization.⁴⁴

Sufism as reoriented by Meher Baba is based on love and longing for God and the eventual union with God in actual experience. With an eye to make it ^{NON}~~now~~ dogmatically universal, the reorientation is fundamentally based, on the one hand, on enlarging the concept of Sufism in order to make it all-embracing for the matter of its knowledge and practice. On the other hand, the original value of Sufism, which lies in its Tariquat (Divine Path), its Marefat (Divine Knowledge), and its Haqiqat (Divine Realization of Truth) is maintained intact. *MS Khan*

This reorientation is symbolized by the numerical figure of one (1) embedded in a diagram of the human heart with wings of freedom on both its left and right sides—



To sum up in Baba's own words, "The fact that I am connected with all 'isms and yet detached and above all 'isms, lays bare the truth that Sufism Reoriented, emanating from me, to be conceived and practiced, will forge out into one of the few pure channels leading to One God. As a result, all who will follow any one of the 'isms reoriented by me, will come eventually to love Me and realize God rather than the 'isms."

7.- As far as possible and practicable, reliance is to be placed on conventions and practice based on the spirit of service and sacrifice rather than upon the rigidity of a written constitution.

The Order of Sufism Reoriented is intended to be conducted in any country or continent according to the wish and will of the people concerned.

If Meher Baba is satisfied with the sincerity and bona fides of a petitioner, or a group of petitioners, from any national or geographical area, and with their good intentions and capacities to undertake the responsibility of faithfully carrying out his guidance fully, then Meher Baba will on his part grant his Charter of Guidance and thereafter remain to be the Patron of the body as long as it continues to fulfil the purpose of Sufism Reoriented. *MS Khan*

Meher Baba signed three typed copies of the final Sufi charter in two places: he approved a typographical correction on page two, and signed the document at the end on page 15.

"You are at liberty to make necessary literary modifications in order to make the guidance all the more readable and appealing to the West. As it stands the guidance should serve well in the East and so long as its sum and substance remain unchanged, it would continue to be equally useful here. The point is that the Charter should be uniform both for the East and for the West.

"...You make a start with things as they stand at the moment and leave alone both the past and the future to be taken care of by God and the *Qutub* to the endless end as has been the case since the beginningless beginning.

"With my love,

"Dictated by BABA"

Last-Minute Questions

Even at this late stage, more questions emerged. At Baba's direction, Murshida, in New York, was trying to coordinate her editing work with Don Stevens in San Francisco. In the age before email and fax machines, they had to rely on the postal service and expensive long-distance telephone calls for their cross-country collaboration. On October 12, Rano sent word from Baba that he

would not accept any correspondence after November 1, because of his accelerating Fiery Life preparations; he was planning to hold a series of important meetings at Meherabad in early November that would require his full attention.⁴⁵ As quickly as she could, Murshida assembled her questions and sent them off to Baba on October 20, saying:

"Dearest Baba.

"As I have still heard nothing from Don and your time limit for letters is drawing close, I want to ask a little clarification of the charter before its final typing. It is a wonderful charter and as always, I am full of admiration for your "to the point" expressions. But since this is for 700 years it must be clear to dumb-bells like us, as well as to you and Adi. When we all leave the body there will be no one to ask."

Her questions dealt mostly with specific wording and clarifications of possible ambiguities of meaning, and Baba responded quickly and briefly to each point within a week. Murshida and Don worked quickly to incorporate Baba's answers into the final document. On November 6, Baba sent her a telegram:

"MY SUFI CHARTER MUST NOT BE CHANGED EXCEPT FOR SPELLING OR SENTENCE STRUCTURE. LOVE BABA"⁴⁶

Shortly after receiving this telegram, Murshida and Don completed their revisions on the draft Baba had sent, and she airmailed three typewritten copies of the final Charter to India. On November 13, two days before the Fiery Free Life was to begin. Rano replied:

"Dear Ivy,

"Baba received your air letter containing the Charter copies and your note just in time as he leaves Pimpalgaon tomorrow.

"Baba approves of your corrections and has made only one change and that is now has been changed to non-dogmatically. [Baba had caught a typographical error.]

"Your two copies are being returned to you signed by ordinary mail. The third is being sent to Francis Brabazon.⁴⁷

"Until the end of April Baba will have no time to see about anything more concerning the Charter or the writing of the book *God Speaks*.

"Altho writing has been stopped, Baba has allowed me because of the Charter to write this one last letter.

"Baba's love to you.

"As always,

"Rano"

On the threshold of the Fiery Life

Meher Baba carried the three typewritten copies of the completed and corrected Charter with him from his residential centre of Meherazad to his universal centre of Meherabad the



Rano Gayley, the only American among the resident mandali in India, handled the final correspondence between Baba and Murshida Duce regarding the Sufi Charter.

next day, November 14, 1952, arriving in the early afternoon. He was scheduled to leave for his Fiery Life tour by 4:30 p.m., so that he could reach Upasni Maharaj's ashram at Sakori by sundown; his itinerary called for him to pay homage to his three principal masters, Upasni Maharaj at Sakori, Sai Baba at nearby Shirdi, and Hazrat Babajan at Pune, all before sunrise on the 15th, the first day of the Fiery Free Life. Shortly before leaving Meherabad, Baba took out the three copies of the Sufi Charter and carefully signed his name, "M.S. IRANI", in two places: next to the typographical change he had made near the beginning of the document, and again at the end. He repeated this on all three copies of the Charter, two for Murshida Duce, one for Francis Brabazon, and handed them to Rano to mail. Shortly after this, he was in his car and on the road to his Fiery Free Life.

Signing the Charter was perhaps the last bit of work Baba completed before the Fiery Free Life deadline. If the document had arrived one day later, the conditions of the Fiery Free Life would not have allowed Baba to sign it for many months. Yet one can see a design in the weeks of delay, for the result was that, by Baba's timing, his Sufism Reoriented was born on the very threshold of the Fiery Free Life, a life in which "strength and weakness, bindings and freedom are consumed in the fire of divine love." Explaining his Fiery Life, Baba said:

"My message to the world, which has been the same throughout eternity, is love. This love has two aspects, and both aspects are real. Any other attachment which we, through ignorance, call love, is nothing but Maya.

"Love for God, Personal or Impersonal, with intense longing for realizing oneness with the Beloved, is one aspect of real love. Such a lover forgets everything, forsakes everyone, and annihilates himself in the fire of Divine Love.

"In the second aspect, a person loves humanity at large as being part and parcel of God. Here, the lover forgets his own interest, forsakes his own happiness, and tries to make others happy or uplifted. If this love reaches its height, here also, like the divine lover, the lover of humanity forgets himself completely, and is lost in love and love alone.

"My Fiery Life ... is based on this love by which the lover is lost in the Beloved, after being consumed in the fire of Divine Love."⁴⁸

"...[T]he result of the fiery Free Life will make the world understand that Baba and everyone are one with God."⁴⁹

Sufism has eternally and universally been a path of love. In Sufism Reoriented, Meher Baba has focused that path for the new spiritual age, emanating from him, under his guidance, in his service. The Sufi Charter, conceived during the Complicated Free Life amid the patterns of the past and taking definite form during the Full Free Life when the bright new energies of Meher Baba's New Life and Manonash work had begun to emerge, was released to the world in the Fiery Free Life as a new model for spiritual training for those anywhere who need it, and a new channel for Meher Baba's work in the Western world.



In Part III of this article, the authors examine the final document Meher Baba signed to focus on the guiding principles of the Avatar's new design for universal Sufism.

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise cited, quotes of the Myrtle Beach meetings with Baba come from Meherjee Karkaria, "Notes on the Interview of Mrs. Duce, Miss Duce and Mr. Brabazon with Baba at Myrtle Beach", manuscript included in *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952, Binder C-2, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 2 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952, p. 75, Binder C-2, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 3 Unpublished interview transcript, 1977; Appendix I, *Murshida Duce's Life and Role as a Sufi Teacher*, Binder D-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 4 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit., p. 43.
- 5 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3808.
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 3806.
- 7 *God Speaks*, 2nd ed. (1997 printing), p. 72-3, 234-36.
- 8 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit., p. 76.
- 9 Section III, 2a, *Chartered Guidance from Meher Baba for the Reorientation of Sufism*.
- 10 Murshid James MacKie, "The Sufi Charter, part 1", *History of Meher Baba's Sufism in America*, Class #12, unpublished transcript, 1991. Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 11 Ross Keating, *Francis Brabazon, Poet of the Silent Word*, p. 93.
- 12 Adi K. Irani, unpublished interview transcript, 1977; Appendix I, *Murshida Duce's Life and Role as a Sufi Teacher*, Binder D-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 13 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit., p. 39.
- 14 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 10, p. 3806.
- 15 Unless otherwise cited, all letters quoted are from *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952.
- 16 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3856.
- 17 op. cit., p. 3848.
- 18 Baba had brought with him the four Eastern women who had accompanied him on the New Life journeys (Mehera, Mani, Meheru and Goher), and four Western women, two Americans, Elizabeth and Rano, and two Europeans, Kitty and Delia. In Prague, he called Murshida Duce, Charmian and Margaret Craske to assist.
- 19 Baba's injuries would eventually be treated in four countries, America, England, Switzerland and India.
- 20 For example, in many statements in the 1930s and '50s, Baba spoke of 1) America's abundance of energy that could be used for spiritual purposes, 2) America's mastery of the material world through science and technology, which can be used for the benefit of all, 3) the positive qualities that typify the American character, such as generosity, optimism, pragmatism and cheer, and 4) a spontaneous, deep longing (Baba called it a "hunger") for Truth in America.
- 21 *Mehera-Meher*, Vol. 3, p. 68.
- 22 *ibid.*, pp. 104-5, Baba told Khorshed, "For my work, I need to have some mark on Mehera's forehead. There needs to be a scar there."
- 23 "The Sevenfold Veil", *God Speaks*, 2nd ed. (1997 printing), p. 67 et. seq.
- 24 "The unfoldment of life and consciousness for the whole Avataric cycle, which had been mapped out in the creative world before the Avatar took form, is endorsed and fixed in the formative and material worlds during the Avatar's life on earth." "The Avatar", *Discourses* (6th ed.) Vol. 3, p. 18.
- 25 "The New World Culture", *Listen, Humanity* (1967 printing), p. 142 et. seq.
- 26 Both Murshida Duce and her daughter, Charmian Duce Knowles, have described their experiences in Prague in their memoirs, *How a Master Works* and *Spread My Love*. See also *Glow International*, May 2002, for more information about Baba's accident.
- 27 "[Baba] called me into the library and said, 'I am very happy about everything. You did a wonderful job of organizing, the food was delicious, but best of all you have never pushed yourself or the Sufis in any way – you have let everyone take part and introduce their own friends and your modesty makes me happiest of all.' I replied, 'Baba, my life's training has been to handle hundreds of people and I have always tried to be tactful, so that is why I have been puzzled over some of my failures in the past two years.' He said, 'If you are thinking of and (naming five people) you should never let it trouble you for an instant. If they leave, let them. Sometimes they will respect you more if you do. Never defend yourself! You have only one thing to keep in mind and that is whether or not I am satisfied with you and that is all that should matter, so do not give them a thought. The fact that I have chosen your home for these three days is proof of what I think of you.' Baba added that I must expect much criticism in years ahead as he needed opposition to form his spiritual bow which would enable him to shoot his spiritual arrows further and with greater strength. He enjoyed coping with and conquering resistance." Ivy O. Duce, *How a Master Works*, p. 127.
- 28 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit., p. 80.
- 29 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 3, 1953, Binder C-3, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 30 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952, p. 60, 61.
- 31 Ivy O. Duce, *How a Master Works*, p. 121.
- 32 Charmian Duce Knowles, *My Life with Meher Baba*, videotaped interview, 1984, transcript of Program 2, p. 22, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 33 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit., p. 74-76.
- 34 The money from the sale of the property (about \$9000) was eventually used to finance the publication of *God Speaks* in 1955.
- 35 See *Chartered Guidance from Meher Baba*, Section II, 1c, 2.
- 36 Quotations below from "Copy of Letter from Meher Baba to Don Stevens", Ahmednagar (undated) 1952, in response to Letter from Don Stevens, "Questions to Baba on Organization", July 12, 1952, *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit.
- 37 Letter from Meher Baba to Murshida Duce, October 26, 1952, *ibid.*
- 38 Ivy O. Duce, *How a Master Works*, p. 122.
- 39 Published in *God Speaks*, 2nd ed. (1997 printing) as Chart VIII, facing page 158.
- 40 Meherjee Karkaria, "Notes", op. cit.
- 41 Ivy O. Duce, *How A Master Works*, p. 111.
- 42 *God Speaks* was financed largely by the sale of the property Murshida Martin had used as a centre for the Sufi Order in northern California (the land Don had asked Baba about in the Scarsdale meeting). After trying unsuccessfully to dispose of it for several years, it was sold for \$9,000 just as *God Speaks* was ready for printing. Just as funds associated with this property had paid for Baba's fateful journey to Oklahoma, so the liquidation of this property paid for the publication of his singular book. It would have delighted Rabia Martin to see the resources she had gathered in the past used in this way for the future spiritual age.
- 43 *How a Master Works*, p. 203. The full history of *God Speaks* is explored in the August 2005 issue of *Glow International*.
- 44 In another letter, Baba had envisioned separate "Sufism Reoriented" groups in different countries: "Yes, you will be the first in America to incorporate as 'Sufism Reoriented' and others like Brabazon would follow as 'Sufism Reoriented (Australia, Ltd.)' and so on.... Every organization of Sufism Reoriented, as constituted according to the laws of the land and the wish of the people concerned, is expected to be a completely independent unit; only linked with each other by my guidance and through me as the common patron of each of them. All Sufism Reoriented units, both inside and outside the Americas, will be naturally also independent of the Meher Baba Center at Myrtle Beach..." Letter of instructions accompanying the handwritten proposed final draft of the Sufi Charter, *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, op. cit.
- 45 These meetings are described in *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, pp. 3912 et. seq.
- 46 Telegram from Baba to Murshida Duce, November 6, 1952, *ibid.*
- 47 Baba's plan at that time was to have Francis adopt the Charter to his work with Sufism in Australia. When Francis did not move forward with it, Sufism in Australia was put on hold. Francis later joined Baba's mandali in India.
- 48 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3952.
- 49 *Mehera-Meher*, Vol. 3, p. 106.

GLOW INTERNATIONAL

A Journal Devoted to Meher Baba

Summer 2009



Meher Baba's
Blueprint for the
Highways to God
The Story of the Sufi Charter

Meher Baba's Blueprint for the Highways to God

The Story of the Sufi Charter

By Ira G. Deitrick and Henry S. Mindlin

"Listen very carefully, because for the first time I am taking personal interest in Sufism. I am very serious about the reoriented Sufism, and we must be so honest as to have its result appearing all over the world." – Meher Baba, 1952

In 1952, Meher Baba spent many months, both in America and in India, writing and editing a Charter for the spiritual school he had established in America called "Sufism Reoriented". How and why did this come about? Why did Baba put so much time into crafting this document? What is its place in the broader pattern of Baba's universal work? The full

story is featured here for the first time.

Drawing from original documents preserved in the archives of Sufism Reoriented, including never-before-published letters from Meher Baba and his disciples Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, Adi K. Irani and others, transcripts of Baba's interviews and meetings with Murshida Ivy Duce, Francis Brabazon and Don Stevens

Murshida Conner continued, "Baba also emphasized that the guidance embodied in the Charter he wrote for Sufism Reoriented in America was a model or blueprint that he would gradually apply all over the world. The 'when' and 'how' of that will manifest in the future along lines Baba worked out during his lifetime. But when he wrote the Charter, he clearly had in mind far more than just a new form of sufism for America. Baba's plan for a revitalized worldwide sufism, suitable in both East and West in the coming spiritual age, should be considered in the context of the arc of his broader work during this period, the mid-1940s through the early 1950s, and his design for the New Humanity."

From this perspective, the story of Meher Baba's work with Sufism in America has two important phases. In the first, beginning in 1942, Baba drew the American Sufi Order and its key figures to him. The second, beginning in 1952, is the reorientation itself, in which Baba created a strikingly fresh model of spiritual training for his New Age.

Note: In keeping with the spirit of Murshida Conner's discussion, and to impress it upon the reader's mind, the term "sufism" is presented in her comments without capitalization, emphasizing its universal nature, just as one would not capitalize "love", "heart", or "wisdom". At the end of Murshida Conner's discussion, the editors have reverted to the customary capitalization, with the understanding that the referent is "Sufism", primordial and universal as love itself.



Murshida Carol Weyland Conner

and the personal journals of Murshida Duce, this three-part series of articles, prepared exclusively for **Glow International**, traces the origin and history of Meher Baba's Sufi Charter, from the beginning of Baba's work with Sufism in America in 1942 through the completion of the Charter in 1952. Along the way, authors Ira Deitrick, President of Sufism Reoriented, and research associate Henry Mindlin interview the current Murshida of Sufism Reoriented, Dr. Carol Weyland Conner, to discover important links between Baba's work on the Sufi Charter and the contemporaneous work of his *New Life* and *Free Life* phases, including his automobile accident in America. The Sufi Charter in its final form, the authors say, exemplifies Meher Baba's design for renewing not just Sufism in America, but universal Sufism and all the major highways to God in the future.

This feature has three broad sections. The first two sections review these two phases in the creation of Sufism Reoriented in some detail, placing Baba's design for Sufism Reoriented within the context of what is known about his broader work at the time. The third section considers the Charter itself and its central principles as Meher Baba explained them to Murshida Duce and her associates in conversations and letters preserved in the archives of Sufism Reoriented in Walnut Creek, California. **This is the first of a three-part series.**



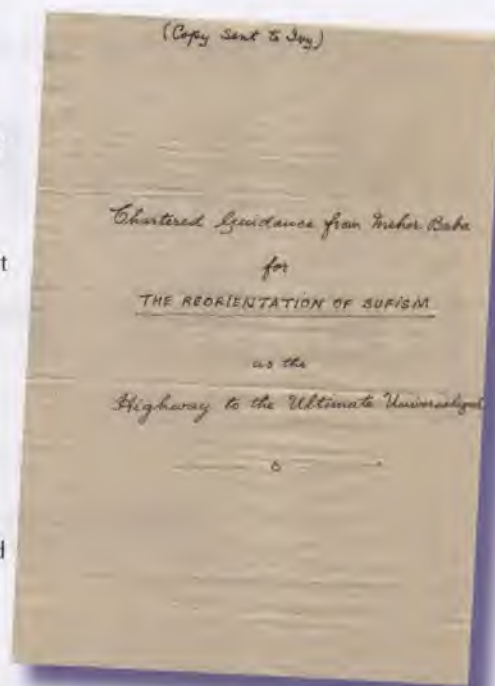
On November 14, 1952, the day before he began his Fiery Free Life, Meher Baba put his signature on a document. This in itself was rare. Baba had stopped writing twenty-five years earlier, shortly after he began his silence. Except for the few cases where his signature was a legal requirement, Baba only signed documents or letters he considered very important. This document was one he had been preparing for many months. He had carried a first draft to America in April and had worked on it in Myrtle Beach in May, June and early July, and later that summer in New York. The document had accompanied him to England and Switzerland in August, and he completed it back in India in November.

This document was the Charter of Guidance for Sufism Reoriented, a school of spiritual training in America that Meher

Title page of the handwritten draft of the proposed Sufi Charter Meher Baba sent to Murshida Ivy Duce in the fall of 1952.

Baba had redesigned and renamed to reflect the principles and energies associated with his advent and the coming spiritual age. The Charter was originally written for America, but Baba said it would be "applicable to the whole Sufi world", and even to other spiritual traditions. Baba affirmed that the new reoriented Sufism, under his guidance, was to be an enduring institution that would last for seven hundred years, until his next advent as the Avatar.

In every age, the Avatar works to refresh the major spiritual traditions, to revitalize the esoteric schools of spiritual



Meher Baba with Murshida Ivy Duce in 1952.

Meher Baba at Myrtle Beach in 1952.

training and to inspire a succession of illumined teachers, who always trace their lineage back to him. In the past, this work has mostly been done “behind the scenes”, its results manifesting decades or centuries later. In creating and chartering Sufism Reoriented however, Meher Baba acted openly, in public and in writing, in ways that Baba’s long-time secretary, Adi K. Irani, believed to be unprecedented. In a 1977 interview,¹ Adi noted that to his knowledge, this is the first time in recorded history that the Avatar has ever personally formed a spiritual school under his direct guidance.

It is also the first time the Avatar has issued a formal written charter for such a school over his signature. It is the first time the Avatar has specified a course of training for such a school. Setting aside traditional Sufi practices that had largely evolved within Islam, Baba outlined a fresh approach to the spiritual path based on his own principles of inner growth, the principles of the New Humanity, and specifically designed to harmonize with the active “life in the world” of contemporary America and the West, rather than the secluded life of a monastery or an ashram.

This is also the first time the Avatar has announced that a spiritual school will continue under his guidance until his next advent, in this case in 700 years – ensuring its continuity with an equally unprecedented promise to provide the school an uninterrupted line of teachers (called “Murshids” in traditional Sufism; “Murshid” [feminine, “Murshida”] is Arabic for teacher or guide) until his return. In doing this, Baba in effect created a spiritual lineage for the Western hemisphere. An authentic spiritual school of this kind has never before existed on the North American continent – not in recorded history, and certainly never in public view.

PREPARATION (1942-51)

The arc of Meher Baba’s Work: the 1940s.

In the 1940s, Meher Baba told Delia DeLeon “he had worked seven years with boys, seven years with men and seven years with women and now he was concentrating on his universal work.”² His work in the 1940s was markedly different from his work in previous decades, when he had gathered and trained his close circle of Eastern and Western disciples, created schools and



Meher Baba bowing down to a mast (God-intoxicated soul) during his intense work with these advanced souls in the 1940s.

hospitals, and traveled in Europe and America, "laying cables" throughout the world. During and after World War II, he remained in India and focused intensely on contacting masts, adepts and spiritually advanced pilgrims. Baba characterized these God-intoxicated and God-absorbed souls as the true seekers and lovers of God. In this phase of his work, the Beloved sought out his lovers. In contacting them, bowing down to them, bathing them and giving them food, clothing or comfort, Baba acknowledged and honoured their devotion to God even as he forged new links with them.

In a sense, they represented the spiritual path in its current form, the many levels and degrees of inner unfolding that human beings have been able to realize on earth in this cycle of time. By fully honouring the achievements of the past, as Baba did during this period, he gained the right to change or "reorient" the spiritual path, which he intended to do in the future. At the same time, in paying homage to these advanced souls, he renewed and strengthened their love and longing for God and amplified it with his own radiance. It has also been suggested that as they, in turn, acknowledged his divinity, they offered their tremendous energy of love to his work, creating an immense reservoir of divine force he could use to bring one vast cycle of learning to a close, initiate a brand new cycle, equally vast, and so move all Creation closer to Divinity.

Why Sufism?

It should not surprise us that Meher Baba would turn his attention to Sufism during this period of his work. Of all the roads to God, Sufism is best known as the path of ecstatic love. The great poets of traditional Eastern Sufism, like Rumi and Hafiz, Baba's favourites, sing of nothing else. Sufis developed the refined technical vocabulary of the spiritual path that Baba uses in *God Speaks* and *The Wayfarers*;¹ it is the terminology of the states and stages of



Adi K. Irani in conversation with Murshida Duce at the Center at Myrtle Beach.

divine love. Though we are most familiar with its expression after Muhammad, when it took on the colour of Islam, Baba said, "Sufism is eternal", and traced it back as far as the first Avatar of this cycle, Zarathustra (Zoroaster).⁴ Though its names and forms change with the times, its essence is always joyful surrender to the living flame of the Avatar and pure devotion to the God-Man, and, its goal is always to "live" his message. If Baba intended to revitalize the spiritual path and re-energize the qualities of higher love expressed in Creation, he would naturally renew universal Sufism. That a small Sufi school already existed in America was an added bonus.

Baba once told his mandali as early as the mid-1920s that his work would take him to America. His reasons are summed up in a remarkable statement made by Baba much later at Myrtle Beach, in 1952: "America is destined to lead the world spiritually."⁵ When all Baba's travels are added up, we find that he spent more time in America than in any other country outside of India.

For more than a century, Eastern spiritual teachers have been drawn to America establishing temples, centres, ashrams and communities representing nearly every ancient tradition. In so doing, they have probably helped prepare the way for the larger work of the Avatar on this continent, for Baba said often that one of his goals was "to spiritualize America."⁶ Baba told Gandhi in 1931, "In America, the spiritual

hunger is intense. ... There is everything there materially. There is wealth; there are brains; there is heart. In other words, there is sufficient preparedness for spiritual growth and development." A few months later, he told a gathering in New York, "America...forms the best foundation for the spiritual upheaval I will bring about in the near future. America has tremendous energy, but most of this energy is misdirected. I intend to divert it into spiritual and creative channels." Twenty years later, at Myrtle Beach, he said, "America now leads the material side of the

universe and has such infinite possibilities that she can lead the world spiritually if awakened." Much of Baba's work in America was designed to lay a foundation for this awakening that would unify head and heart, matter and spirit, and East and West, in a New Humanity.

Meher Baba draws the Sufis to him: Rabia Martin.

In the early 1940s, during this intensely charged period of mast work in India, Meher Baba began to draw the American Sufi Order into his net, first through Murshida Rabia Martin and then through her successor, Murshida Ivy Duce.

Ada "Rabia" Martin (1871-1947) was the first American-born Sufi Murshid. She had been the first American student of Hazrat Inayat Khan, who brought the universal message of Sufism from India to America in 1910.⁷ He had given her the spiritual name Rabia, after the eighth-century Sufi saint Rabia of Basra, and before his passing in 1927, he had named her as his successor. (A full account of Murshida Martin's life and her relationship with Meher Baba is featured in the November 2004 issue of *Glow International*.) Murshida Martin learned of Meher Baba in 1942 when she attended a lecture by Princess Norina Matchabelli in San Francisco, where Murshida Martin lived.

How did Norina come to be giving a lecture in San Francisco in 1942? After



Inayat Khan (1882-1927) brought Sufism from India to America.

more than four years of training in India, Baba had sent her and Elizabeth Patterson back to America in 1941 with special instructions: they were to locate and prepare a permanent centre for his future work in America, and they were to "spread his message" through individual contacts and through Norina's public talks. Late in 1941, Norina received an inward call "to move from the eastern coast to the western coast of the U.S.A."⁸, and a few months later they drove cross-country to California. They continued their search for a suitable property (they would eventually find it in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina) and Norina gave lectures wherever they went. Thus, it was by following Baba's directive that they came in contact with Murshida Martin in San Francisco.

Sufism is based on the light of a living Master, and ever since Inayat Khan's passing, Murshida Martin had been searching for the Qutub, the traditional Sufi name for the Perfect Master who leads

the spiritual hierarchy. When she learned of Meher Baba from Norina and Elizabeth in 1942, she immediately felt that Baba could be the Master she had been seeking to guide her and her Sufi students. Over the next three years, she gathered as much information as she could about Meher Baba. Elizabeth and Norina returned to San Francisco in 1943 and met with Murshida Martin again. Elizabeth wrote Baba in India about her:

"When we went to her home in San Francisco for luncheon, she had a place laid at the table for You and everything was served to You first, showing she had an understanding and reverence. Afterwards she took us into her meditation room and asked Norina to speak on Your behalf, which was very rare she said, but she added, the real Sufis recognize all Masters."⁹

In 1945, Murshida Martin spent several months with Elizabeth and Norina, both in New York and at the newly established



*by Grace Bishop de Witt
New York N.Y.*

Rabia Martin, the first American-born Murshida, learned of Meher Baba in 1942.

centre at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. On May 9, 1945, at Elizabeth's Myrtle Beach home, Youpon Dunes, in the company of Norina and several others, Murshida Martin had an overwhelming internal experience of Meher Baba's presence and love, which she describes in her journal as "the most Holy and momentous hour in my whole life". She writes:

"...all was granted with such blessing I could scarcely support myself and I held Norina's hands on each side of my face to steady me — as I was in a half-kneeling position on the couch on which she sat cross-legged as usual — and I was greatly affected but in the truest and holiest manner (from my heart). ...and a great and Divine feeling of holiness pervaded my whole being and enveloped us all... I have had very great and holy hours in my life but this I record as the greatest and most blessed promise of my further journey Godward."¹⁰

Rabia Martin committed herself and her Sufi group to Meher Baba's guidance. Her contact with Meher Baba, both inwardly and outwardly, had given her a glimpse of Baba's intention to revitalize Sufism. As early as August 1945, she wrote to her most gifted student, Ivy Duce:

*"Baba says 'Sufism is the ... purest spiritual teaching on earth to-day — but we are now in a New Age — and methods and striving for attainment must have a new adaptation to our great spiritual needs' — and that is what he is doing now so that we may advance more quickly and leave some past methods behind — but do not leave behind the pure essential teachings the great Sufis of all ages contributed from their spiritual experiences. When he states he comes to Awaken, it means exactly what he says — (experience the Truth and no longer concepts, theories, intellectual beliefs etc.) — this age is to be ushered into Love (Praise be to our Creator)."*¹¹

Murshida Martin planned to travel to India to meet with Meher Baba and begin the process of reorienting her Sufi Order, but she contracted cancer of the throat and died in mid-1947, at the age of 76, after naming Ivy Oneita Duce to succeed her. Murshida Duce described these events in an interview in the late 1970s:

*"Murshida [Martin] sent for me and I went in to see her, and to my utter astonishment she was weeping. Tears flowed down her face and she kept saying, 'At last, a Murshida, at last, a Murshida!' She initiated me as Murshida and then she told me that she knew from the first day I ever met her that I was to be the next Murshida. Of course, she hadn't told me a thing about it and I was really quite astonished."*¹²

Inayat Khan had used the title "Murshida" quite differently from Meher Baba's later definition of the office. Inayat Khan's school of Sufism followed a traditional Eastern pattern that included graded initiations with titles representing degrees of attainment. "Murshida" was one such grade, and often simply designated an associate teacher. So when Ivy Duce was named a Murshida, she said,

*"I didn't think too much about it. [As] a Murshida, I could teach. But then [Murshida Martin] went further, later on in 1947 and [informed me] that I was to be her successor and the head of the Order. That really paralyzed me. I was so astonished. It wasn't anything I wanted at all. I had not ever dreamed of such a thing. I had gone into the Sufi Order to find peace of mind and heart myself. To find out that I was to be responsible for carrying on her work was really quite a shock to me."*¹³



Ivy O. Duce as Murshida.

Meher Baba draws the Sufis to him: Ivy Duce.

Ivy Duce (1895-1981) felt she did not yet have the spiritual illumination necessary to serve as a true Murshida. She believed she had been "promoted too soon." Not wanting to be a "spiritual poseur", she decided that she had to see Meher Baba herself, lay the future of Sufism in America at his feet, and ask him to appoint a suitably illumined teacher from the East to guide the group.

But how could she possibly get to India? It was a long and arduous journey in those days, by sea or by propeller plane. Murshida Duce was in her early fifties, the wife of a prominent executive in the Arabian-American Oil Company with international responsibilities and obligations. And India had been plunged into violence following the August 1947 partition into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan — no place for American women to be traveling for any reason. Then, seemingly "out of the blue", her husband invited her and their daughter, Charmian, to join him on a field trip to Arabia. Wives and families were rarely invited, so this was unusual. Once there, Mr. Duce was abruptly called back to New York, leaving Ivy and Charmian to wait in Arabia for the next company plane to take them home, a month later. This gave them a month's "window" when it was possible for them to make the relatively short trip from

CLASS OF SERVICE		WESTERN UNION		SYMBOLS	
This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.		1201 (54)		DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LC = Deferred Cable RLT = Cable Night Letter Rtg Radiogram	
The time shown in the time line on telegram and cable is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.					
N15 20 COLLECT 5 EXTRA 42-11=SAN FRANCISCO CALIF 30 VIA					
MRS T DUCE= 53 JUL 31 AM 7 581					
HOTEL DORSET 30 WEST 54 ST=					
IVY DEAR TODAY I HAVE NAMED YOU MY SUCCESSOR WITH ALL MY BLESSINGS DEVOTEDLY=					
-RABIA=					
THIS COMPANY WILL ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE					

One month before her passing, Rabia Martin named Ivy Duce to succeed her as Murshida.



The Duce family (from left, daughter Charmian, James Terry Duce, Ivy O. Duce) in Arabia in late 1947.

Arabia to India and see Baba for five days at Meherazad, which they did, January 7-12, 1948. When they arrived, Baba told Murshida Duce that she was there because he had drawn her to him for his work. The way had been cleared for her because it was her destiny in this incarnation to serve as a Sufi Murshida under his guidance. In later years, she joked about this, saying with a laugh, "I really believed I thought up that trip!"¹⁴

A New Cycle of Cycles.

During this 1948 visit, Baba indicated in several ways that Murshida Duce was seeing him during an important phase of his universal work. On the day they arrived, "Baba graciously permitted Charmian to photograph us standing together on the grass, but warned me under no circumstances to touch his feet, as he was highly charged for the mast work he had interrupted for five days in order to see us."¹⁵ In their conversations, he underlined the fact that "he had seen very, very few new people in the last several years"¹⁶ and had made an exception to see her. He told her that his work with masts was now reaching a climax: "...he is at present finishing his work with the masts. He said he must contact them all before his manifestation, and he had contacted ninety percent before I came and started in on the

12th [the day Murshida's visit ended] with the rest."¹⁷ And he told her, "the ending of a vast cycle of cycles is taking place."¹⁸

Murshida Conner notes that by telling her this, Baba was, in effect, explaining why he had drawn her to him at this time.

"Spiritual figures from many traditions have recognized the present age as a unique 'turning point' in the vast history of Creation. 'Turning point' is the right phrase, for the notion is that the fundamental direction of life currents is now beginning to reverse, from an arc of outward movement into crystallized material form to a new course inward, back toward the Source. The work of Baba's advent was to lay the foundations for this universal change of direction in all the forces of Creation. Increasingly in the future, higher principles will begin to express themselves in the social, cultural, artistic and even political life of mankind. As Meher Baba said, there will be a gradual transition from rational processes of thought to intuitive processes of knowing, from the reasoned understanding of the head to the silent, intuitive knowing of the heart. This is, of course, the great transition that is the foundation for the long-awaited age of the New Humanity. And this change of direction is what Baba means by the term 'reorientation'. He imparted this understanding to Murshida Duce during their very first meeting, though he would amplify and expand on it in later years."

Against this background, in January 1948, Baba outlined his plan for the future of Sufism to Murshida Duce, a plan that he would implement over the next two



Meher Baba with Murshida Duce and his Eastern and Western mandali at Meherazad in January, 1948.

decades. As she summarized it:

*"[Baba said] he had drawn me to him because he wanted me to go ahead and work for him in the world by building up Sufism; that all the forms of religion would be swept away and only the essence remain, and he wanted Sufism spread; that it would converge under my leadership and he would help it to be so..."*¹⁹

*"Though I wasn't illumined, he said he would do the work **through** me. He said, 'I will see to it that you don't make any mistakes with your mureeds [students], and I will protect you from taking on any of their karma as long as you remain 100% honest.' He said my job would be to make our Sufi order safe and sane and stable, to last 700 years until he came again..."*²⁰

*"...Baba told me that he confirmed my appointment as head of the Sufi Order for the Western world; that he wished me to be the leader and that that was why I had had to come to him – he had drawn me there, so that I could work whole-heartedly for him in the Western world..."*²¹

Meher Baba firmly outlines the first principles.

During her visit to Meherazad, Meher Baba had arranged for Murshida Duce to meet his close disciple, Dr. Abdul Ghani (also known as Abdul Ghani Munsiff; a "munsiff" is a magistrate). Dr. Ghani was a Sufi and had known Inayat Khan. Over the next three years, Dr. Ghani became the intermediary between Murshida Duce in America and Baba in India as she worked to consolidate and reorganize the small, fractious group of Sufi students she had inherited from Murshida Martin. Some questioned her authority and judgment; others, strongly attached to Inayat Khan and his traditional methods and practices, objected to "replacing" Inayat Khan with Meher Baba. Through this extensive correspondence,²² Baba firmly outlined his principles and Murshida's responsibilities. Responding to her frustration at the difficulties she was facing, Baba had Dr. Ghani reply:

"Baba wishes me to emphasize that you should go on without hesitation and demur in furthering the cause of Sufism in the best manner you can... The only thing expected of you is to uphold the highest traditions of spirituality, that is,



Meher Baba dictating to Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff in 1936 in Nasik. Ghani was designated as the intermediary between Murshida Duce in America and Meher Baba in India. Photo: From Beloved Archives

Sufism pure and simple. You are not to compromise yourself with individual and local interests at any cost. Baba will be helping you internally and even your failures, on occasions beyond your control, will raise your stature, not only in your eyes but even with those for whom you are working." (March 28, 1948)

Extended selections from several of Dr. Ghani's long letters are given below to indicate the uncompromising forcefulness and clarity of Baba's advice, through Dr. Ghani, at this time. For example, Murshida raised the question of coordinating her efforts with other groups claiming descent from Inayat Khan, for the sake of harmony and unity. Baba, through Ghani, replied:

"You are right when you say, 'Sufism preaches unity,' but unity of what? Sufism preaches unity of God (Tauhid),²³ unity of all life, unity of spirit, and unity of One Goal for humanity. It could never mean unity with ignorance, egos, self-interest and self-aggrandisement. [sic] How can the blind lead the blind? The founder of the Sufi movement in the West (Europe and America) [Inayat

Khan] did have spiritual worth and merit; but those after him who claim to have succeeded him cannot be said to have qualified themselves esoterically for the responsibility. Their gnosis of the Path will give them away if you try to probe it sufficiently long. Mere certification or investiture is not enough. It is Knowledge-Experience that wells up from within that entitles one to play the Teacher; and even with this empiricism to their credit, only a few shoulder the responsibility of playing the Teacher for mankind.

"You needn't worry for the factions and divisions of the Sufi world out there in Europe and America. As the ocean receives and incorporates within itself all the rivers and rivulets, the drains and sewers, so is Baba today — the Ocean of Spirituality — which will receive and revitalize all the existing cults and religions the world knows of.

"...Since you need clarification, Sufism pure and simple is nothing less than what has been described above. It is universal in outlook and practice. The unnoticeable and lurking danger in

the situation is when half-baked Sufis of the Muslim world finding themselves in charge of it, unwittingly crib or narrow it down as a matter of tradition. They give it a sectarian stamp to the exclusion of everything else and thereby Sufism in the hands of such people suffers in its universality.

"Meher Baba is the Sufi of Sufis, but Sufism with Him and in Him is of a very transcendent, sublime and universal character. He accepts all and denies none. In short, Sufism pure and simple is that which recognizes and acclaims Truth whatever the guise or garb it may assume for the time being. Sufism eschews rigidity and gives no importance to stereotype [sic] methods. It believes in individualistic attention towards aspirants. For instance, to some it may enforce exercises in meditation, and to some it may deny all such ordeals as being not conducive to spiritual growth. In the hands of unauthorized and unqualified Sufis, Sufism tends to degenerate into routinism, and assumes [a] rigidity which ultimately stultifies growth, life and originality. This was what was meant when you were asked 'Not to compromise yourself with individual and local interests at any cost.'"

"By all means, try to contact Sufis around you, and move amongst them with a view to weaning them away tactfully for a higher and truer life which Baba is today. But do not compromise Truth by encouraging or identifying yourself with any fads, fetishism or sectarianism. Be kind and tolerant towards all, individuals and institutions, as they represent different stages of spiritual unfoldment ..."

"You and your protégés need no graded papers and abstract exercises... for those who, as you say, are "sold on Baba", the best and simplest form of meditation is to meditate on Baba. Just think of him and say his name. They will notice remarkable results in a very short time. To love or to meditate on Baba – the living Perfect Master of the age – is to achieve simultaneously the fruits of all stages of Sufi progress..."

"Baba desires me to convey to you that your meeting Him in India is not a chance affair. Your past preparedness, your sincerity of purpose, your unsought for responsibility to guide Sufis in that part of the world and your emphatic

repugnance to play the hypocrite involved in the consciousness of your short-comings — all together have not gone unnoticed by Divinity; and thus has come about your memorable meeting with Baba. Hereafter all your fears and anxieties should cease. Baba is the Life and you are the expression thereof." (May 7, 1948)

The following month, Ghani wrote:

"Baba is gratified to note the splendid work you are doing... You are perfectly right in the assessment of the situation that [those students] relying solely on papers for spiritual progress are dry as dust and have no tinge of Divine Love about them. Even advanced yogis of the Himalayas know not what Love is. The seed of Love is sown in the heart of an aspirant solely by the grace of a Perfect Master. Once it takes root, rapid progress is assured for the disciple."

"The most prominent characteristic of the Sufi way of spiritual progress is its emphasis on LOVE, which overshadows all spiritual practices known to man. The best manner of developing this Love is to identify oneself with the living Perfect Master and his mission in life. In the affairs of the world today, Baba is assuredly Love-Incarnate for all true and sincere aspirants to live for and die for." (June 7, 1948)

In another letter, he explained why the Sufi approach was best suited for the active, materially-focused life of America:

"Inayat Khan — I.K. was a great soul — a Pir [master] of the fifth plane...I.K. indeed has done great service to the western world by inaugurating the Sufi movement over there; and to him undoubtedly goes the credit of preparing the way for the unique blessedness to come in the person of the greatest Sufi of the time: Meher Baba. As fates have decreed, you have now to continue the work with full vim and vigour, facing all misconstructions and misunderstandings. You will, by Baba's Grace, emerge from the present confusion much stronger and greater eventually."

"...Baba's predilection to [sic] the Sufi manner of elucidating spiritual truths is well-known, and the Persian Mystic, Hafiz, is his favourite Sufi poet. But having been born in India, and having

one of his Gurus a Hindu in the person of Upasni Maharaj, Baba very often utters his Gnosis in Vedantic terminology also. In fact, Sufism of Islam, Vedantism of the Hindu world and Christian Mysticism are one and [the] same. The difference is in terminology only. Christian Mysticism, too, would come up to Sufism and Vedanta in the inculcation of spiritual truths and the probing of divine mysteries; but unfortunately, it has not been encouraged by the church and the overwhelming wave of materialism in the West gave it no chance to flourish or thrive. All efforts in this direction by enlightened minds ended in a tame and lukewarm exhibition of what is known to the world as Theosophy, Spirit Communion and the cult of Christian Scientists."

"As things stand today, the two most potent, active and living philosophies of life, in theory and practice, are Sufism and Vedanta, and India may be said to have specialized therein. ... Living and important religions that the world knows of fall into two categories: the Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.) and Aryan religions (Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Hinduism, etc.). It can thus be seen that all those who have a semitic background of culture and religion (in the absence of a highly-systematized form of Christian mysticism) must of necessity have recourse to Sufism as the philosophy of life that can be lived and practiced successfully. Sufism as a science of life and spirit is suited to the genius of the West. And Baba is seriously thinking of putting the Sufi movement in the West on a much sounder basis and you are the one chosen to accomplish the task out there. Shortly you will be supplied with a concrete plan of work designed by Baba, for you to work on. [italics added]

"Baba has evolved a method of his own for upholding the Sufi cause and for purging the Sufi movement as it is today in the West of all fetishism and ritualistic tendencies. Under Baba's guidance and spiritual patronage, the tone and fibre [sic] of I.K.'s Sufism would be heightened and strengthened beyond imagination. Those who come under Baba's spiritual protection, Sufism for them will be saved (as is the trend today) from degenerating into a ritual; and beside giving the

greatest scope to individual potentialities and capabilities, it will satisfy the spiritual needs of all and sundry in different stages of their evolutionary progress.” (Sept. 10, 1948)

And in another letter, he notes that new students who join her group would be prompted to do so by Baba:

“There is a world of difference between religion and Sufism.... Sufism is the attitude of mind governing the goal of life and comprises the ways and means for attaining the same, here and now. The basic structure of Sufism is the idea of a living Master Who must be sought for and surrendered to.

“There is a saying of the Arabian Prophet to the effect, ‘One who has failed to discover and contact the Imam (Qutub) [Perfect Master] of the time, verily, he dies the death of ignorance.’ You are undoubtedly doing just the right thing in drawing people’s attention to the presence of Meher Baba on this mundane plane. Continue doing it with courage and perseverance, and do not care to measure the result. It is more of a preparation for you. The Master knows whom to draw closer and whom to keep away. You are one hundred per cent right in affirming that without a living Master, Sufism and its perpetuation is unthinkable.

“You go on teaching and preaching the highest Sufism, which embraces all and denies none and leave the result to Baba. When a living Master like Baba is available, an aspirant for God-realization should stake all for the unique blessedness that His presence embodies...” (October 21, 1948)

Dr. Ghani and Murshida Duce enjoyed a lively correspondence through the fall of 1949. Then Baba entered his New Life phase, and nearly all correspondence ceased. Ghani was able to write only one or two letters to Murshida in the next two years. He passed away suddenly in August 1951. Of this event, Baba said:

“Of the many things I have had to renounce and to suffer in this New Life, the passing of Ghani is among the greatest ...To me, more than to any of you, Ghani was unique; and of all the work that still remains to be done for me by others, there is much that could have been done

for me by Ghani and no one else.”²⁴

In Dr. Ghani’s September 10, 1948 letter, cited earlier, Baba had indicated to Murshida Duce that he would develop a “concrete plan” for the implementation of his new Sufism. Baba brought his notes for this plan to their next meeting, which took place in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, in May of 1952. It was the outline of the Sufi Charter.



REORIENTATION (1952)

Meher Baba’s extensive and detailed work on the Sufi Charter took place between May and November of 1952 against the dramatic background of a phase of his universal work known as “The Free Life” (1952-53). There is a close and deep relation between the development of the Sufi Charter and the stages of Baba’s Free Life work – indeed, Baba made it clear that his entire 1952 visit to America was associated with the Free Life. What were the goals of this crucial phase of work, and how did they affect Baba’s work with Sufism? The answer requires a brief review of the arc of Baba’s universal work from 1949 to 1952.

The New Life and ‘Manonash’ or Mental Annihilation.

Meher Baba explained that the “Free Life” was intended to integrate and anchor in Creation the work of his previous phases, the “New Life” (1949-51) and “Manonash” or “mental annihilation” (1951-52). There are many interpretations of this most difficult and enigmatic period of Baba’s life. Baba himself defined his “Old Life” as that of “Perfect Divinity, Divine Man” and his New Life as “Perfect Humility, Ordinary Man”,²⁵ suggesting that in this period he laid aside his Divinity and enacted the role of an aspirant with normal human consciousness. He dissolved his ashrams and activities and set out to wander India with a small group of companions (no longer “disciples”) on a journey of “exile, renunciation and ruin” which, as he warned them, proved to be physically arduous, emotionally draining and mentally exhausting.

Murshida Duce viewed the work of the New Life as archetypal and symbolic, during which Baba established new patterns of inner life through his actions in the outer

world. In her book, *How a Master Works*, she explained, that the Avatar enacts and lives out these patterns through his physical body during his advent, and suggested that the patterns of life Baba adopted for his New Life can be understood as templates for the worldwide advance in spiritual consciousness he had promised. From this perspective, the work of the New Life and Manonash could be said to have “cleared the path” for the manifestation of higher consciousness on earth by creating new patterns of life to dissolve and uproot the primary structures that create the illusion of separateness: the lower nature and the limited individual mind.

Meher Baba emerged from this arduous and exhausting period in February of 1952 to celebrate what he called his “first real birthday”. He announced in the first of his Life Circulars that he had succeeded in blending his Old Life of divinity with his New Life of humanity to create what he now simply called “Life” – a “life of God in essence, and of man in actions” – a new model of life for the coming spiritual age. After seeing Baba in 1952, Murshida Duce wrote:

“He was God when I met him in India, now he seemed a human man, and when we saw him in later years he appeared the perfect blend of the two. So he was the perfect exemplar of what he had patterned out for future humanity!”²⁶

Following the spiritual paths of the past, advanced souls ascended to merge with the higher planes, to escape the illusion of duality and eventually dissolve into divinity. On Baba’s new path, divinity was invited to descend into duality and infuse our human natures, in order to be lived here on earth. The first is a path of transcendence, the second, of transformation. Baba’s goal for his new age required the spiritual “boosting” or transformation of large portions of humanity, who were to be the denizens of a spiritualized Creation. An important aspect of this transformation would be the revitalization of the “principal highways to God”, represented at this time by his work with Sufism.

The “Tripartite” Free Life.

To “give the world the results of his [New Life and Manonash] work” so it would be “fully manifested in the Western world”, Baba announced that he would soon fly to America, spend several months there, and

then go to Europe before returning to India. At the same time, he would be balancing, integrating and consolidating the work of these phases just completed through a period of the "Life" phase that would become known as "the Free Life". It had three stages:

- The first stage, the "Complicated Free Life", would be one in which the weaknesses and bindings associated with Illusion and the limited patterns of the past would rise to the surface and predominate.
- The second stage, the "Full Free Life", would be one in which new spiritual strength and freedom released by the work of the New Life and Manonash, would predominate.
- In the third stage, the "Fiery Free Life, Baba said, "both strength and weakness, freedom and binding would be consumed in the fire of Divine Love"²⁷ as a higher integration of life and consciousness in Creation is achieved.

The "Complicated Free Life" began on March 21, 1952, before Baba left India for America.

The "Full Free Life" would begin on July 10, while Baba was in America.

The "Fiery Free Life" would begin on November 15, when Baba had returned to India, not quite nine months later.

One might think of these nine months as the "gestation period" of Baba's Fiery Life, and it was during this gestation period that he came to America. At Myrtle Beach, he underlined his broader goals:

*"Many Westerners are very advanced in loving God. Now the time has come when they need a push. The climax is nearing. November 15, my Fiery Life begins. So, God willing, this climax will bring about the unification of East and West in a spiritual world. It is going to end. God is doing it all, and Baba has to play the greatest part. This, with the help of Eastern and Western lovers like you."*²⁸

Meher Baba's Spiritual Work in America.

The events of this visit to America were indeed momentous. They included:

- the opening of the Universal Spiritual Center at Myrtle Beach, Baba's "home in the West";
- Baba's May 24 automobile accident in Oklahoma – when he shed his blood on American soil as he had long predicted;
- the initial arrangements for the



Meher Baba's women mandali in January 1948, from left, Meheru, Mehera, Mani and Goher.

publication of his major book *God Speaks*, written in English and published in America, which he described as "the Quran, Bible, Avesta of Baba"; and

- the creation of Sufism Reoriented and its Charter.

Also, for the first and only time, Baba brought a group of Eastern women mandali with him to America. The Eastern women had lived most of their lives in seclusion in India; they had only traveled to the West once before, when Baba went to France in 1937. For Baba to bring them to America was extraordinary. Significantly, the four Eastern women who accompanied him were the same four who had participated with him in the journeys of the New Life: Mehera, Mani, Meheru and Goher. Their participation in this visit to America can be seen as another aspect of Baba's plan to anchor the results of that work in the West. This became dramatically clear when his beloved Mehera was gravely injured along with him in the automobile accident in Oklahoma. All these events and activities occurred during Baba's Free Life, and it is helpful to view them in its context.

Two enduring institutions that Meher Baba inaugurated.

In mid-April 1952, Meher Baba traveled

to America by airplane for the first time. He took the most direct route possible from his home in India to his new "home in the West" at Myrtle Beach, in effect "laying a cable" between the two centres. Anyone who has visited the Meher Spiritual Center knows that it holds an extraordinary atmosphere of divine radiance not found anywhere else in the Western hemisphere. Baba said it was to be a "Universal Center" for his work. All the projects he set in motion during this important visit to America were initiated there.

The Myrtle Beach center was one of two enduring institutions Baba inaugurated that year to anchor his spiritual work in America. The other was Sufism Reoriented. Though each was a separate and independent project, there are many parallels between them:

- The Myrtle Beach center was to be Baba's "home in the West". Sufism Reoriented was to be his "school in the West", an institution for spiritual training.
- Both are unique; nothing like them has ever existed before in the Western world.
- Both were designed by Meher Baba and developed from his specifications by Western women from his close circle: Elizabeth Patterson and Norina

Matchabelli for Myrtle Beach, Murshida Ivy Duce for Sufism Reoriented — extraordinary women, each with a broad range of executive experience, chosen for their tasks by Baba himself. (Baba had said, "My work in the West will be done by women."²⁹ He had explained in the Discourses that in the East, men tended to respond more fully to spiritual energy, while in the West, women did. According to many Eastern systems, the feminine principle takes the leadership role during periods of new spiritual growth and transformation.)

- Both of these projects were closely supervised by Baba, down to the last detail, involving him in many hours of meetings and correspondence, both in India and in America, from the mid-1940s to his passing in 1969.
- Baba indicated that both were of great importance in his universal work and were to last for hundreds of years.
- And both of them were formally inaugurated by Baba during his Free Life phase.

Understanding Sufism in its broader context.

On arrival in Myrtle Beach, Baba spent a little more than two weeks in seclusion to regain his strength after the debilitating Manonash work of the previous months. His first appointment when he came out of seclusion was with Murshida Duce. He met with her in the Lagoon Cabin at eight in the morning on May 9, 1952 — seven years to

the day after Rabia Martin had experienced Meher Baba's presence so forcefully a few miles away at Youpon Dunes. Their first meeting lasted nearly four hours. With Murshida were her daughter, Charmian, and Francis Brabazon, the Australian poet, who was meeting Baba for the first time. Francis, too, was a Sufi; he had joined the Australian branch of Murshida Martin's Order in the 1940s and was now its leader, working under Murshida Duce.

Meher Baba continued to meet with Murshida Duce and her associates nearly every day for a full week, often for three hours at a time, usually in the early morning, discussing his plan for his new

Sufism and the proposed charter. At these meetings, Baba's alphabet board was read by his long-time secretary, Adi K. Irani. Adi was well-versed in Sufi literature and mystical principles, and had the requisite background to participate in these conversations. After Dr. Ghani's passing, Baba had given much of the work involving Sufism to Adi, and he served as primary intermediary and correspondent between Murshida Duce and Baba throughout their work on the Charter. Also in the cabin was Meherjee Karkaria, another long-time disciple who had hosted Murshida Duce in India in 1948. Meherjee took notes, as did Murshida. The excerpts below are from



Australian poet Francis Brabazon met Meher Baba for the first time at the Meher Spiritual Center on May 9, 1952.

A page from the typescript of Meherjee's notes of Meher Baba's meeting with Murshida Duce, Francis Brabazon and Charmian on May 9, 1952.

Meherjee's original notes.³⁰

Right from the beginning, Baba placed his plan for Sufism into the context of his broader, universal work. Baba said:

"...Now, the time has arrived when there will be universal chaos and I have to work soon... From November, my Fiery Life will begin... I want work done. What I am planning is five different aspects of my work. This morning I drew this figure myself. In India and America, Australia and Europe, I want this work done, and it is being prepared."

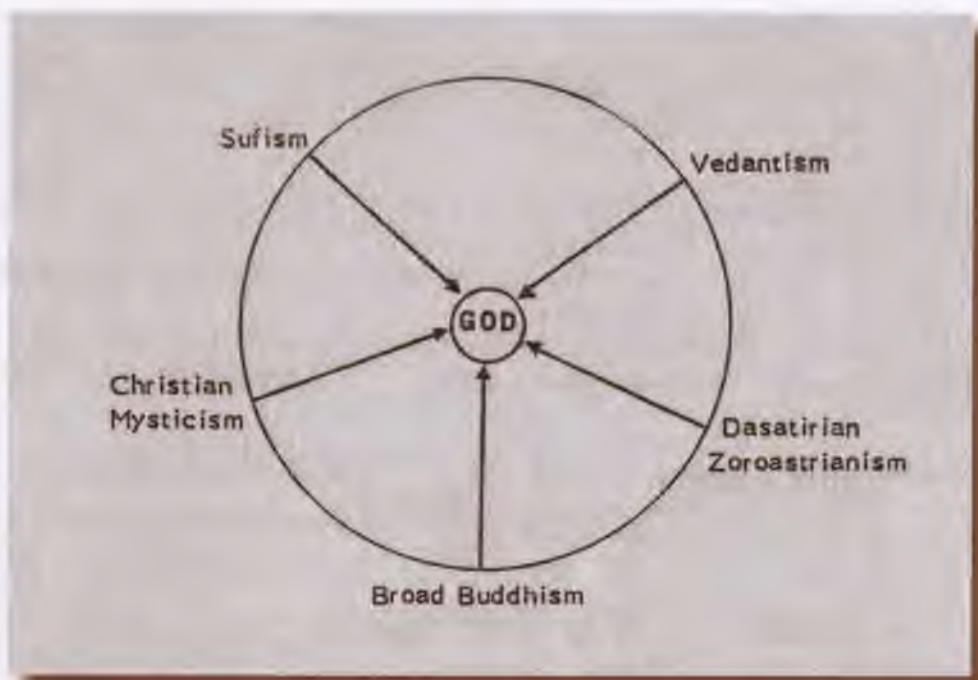
The five principal highways to God.

Meher Baba later included a version of this diagram in the Sufi Charter to represent "the five principal highways to God..." Sufism, Vedantism, Christian Mysticism, Dasitirian Zoroastrianism and Broad Buddhism." These are the primary spiritual paths developed in this Avataric cycle, going back to Zarathustra, some 7000 years ago. These were the paths that Baba, the last Avatar of the cycle, intended to revitalize and reorient according to the principles of the new cycle to come. The symbols of the religions associated with these five mystical paths had long been on his "Mastery in Servitude" emblem: the Zoroastrian flame, the Hindu character for "Om", the Buddhist wheel of life, the Christian cross and the Muslim star and crescent. (In the late 1960s, the six-pointed star of Judaism was added to the emblem.)

And Baba had placed special focus and energy on these five paths during the New Life in many ways:

- by offering prayers from the five traditions as he commenced each new phase of work;³¹
- by having his followers invoke and repeat the names of God from each of the traditions at particular times and places;
- by bowing down to pictures of the Avatars from each tradition;
- and most dramatically during the Manonash period, by secluding himself with specially built alabaster models of "a Buddhist temple; a Hindu temple; a Christian church; a Mohammedan mosque; and a Zoroastrian fire-urn (representing the fire temple)" and keeping them with him during his intense work in seclusion.

Now Baba was moving to manifest the results of his New Life and Manonash work concretely both in the East and the West,



Meher Baba's diagram of "the five principal highways to God" described in the Sufi charter.

and he let Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon know that his work with them and Sufism was part of this larger picture. He continued (again, the text is from Meherjee's original notes):

"But now with you, I want to decide about Sufism. Baba is in the center, these [referring to the diagram] are bypaths; but the work you have to do for Sufism must be done as I want it done – Sufism in its real way and its real work by my guidance..."

"In India, [my disciples] Deshmukh, Eruch, Pendu, Gadekar, are working on a plan. When I go in November I will work on these aspects of Sufism, Vedanta, broad Buddhism, Christian mysticism and Zoroastrian Dasatirism [sic] – but for you people, I want you to chalk out a plan on the lines I give you about Sufism and work on those lines. We should not be vague on any points. We must be precise."

"What I want is: 1) Sufism in East and West should be under my guidance. 2) Workers should do what I tell them exactly to do. 3) Workers first of all, themselves should carry out, for nine months, instructions that I will give them to get Light themselves, and through Sufism to be able to lead others to Light, and not just lead them through ignorance. That is why Baba is going

to Europe, and also staying at Algiers to contact two, three persons whom physically I have not seen, but I know them. But in Europe, Baba is going to see Sufis and overhaul what they work [sic]. In Egypt, Baba will stay awhile. In India, Pakistan, all Sufis will be brought together to me."

Meher Baba had told Murshida Duce that there were only five genuine illumined Sufi Murshids in the world at that time, one in Iran, one in Egypt, one in Algiers, and two in India.³² As the Free Life unfolded, he did not physically travel to Algiers or Egypt in 1952, but he may have contacted or influenced the Murshids there inwardly at that time or later – or he will do so in the future. Clearly he had all of Sufism in mind as he worked with Murshida Duce and Francis Brabazon. In a later conversation, he continued:

"Now you both listen very carefully, because for the first time I am taking personal interest in Sufism. I am very serious about the reoriented Sufism, and we must be so honest as to have its result appearing all over the world... What I have chalked out you must so arrange so as to make it a document which Baba will sign, and get copies printed, and it will be common for all Sufi Centers all over the world. Is it clear?"

The scope of Meher Baba's plan.

Murshida Duce was overwhelmed by the scope of Meher Baba's plan. She noted in her journal, "He told me to turn over my branch of the order in Australia to Francis.... He wanted me to take care of Sufism in North and South America and Canada, and he would find someone in Europe to whom to entrust the work..." The proposed new Charter was to be "a model for the world."

Baba was in no way secretive about his plan for Sufism. He shared its outline with many people at Myrtle Beach. For example, on May 10 and 11, Baba met with Fred and Ella Winterfeldt from New York, both of whom were then Sufi students of Murshida Duce. Baba told them how he was changing Sufism:

"Now, what I wish you to understand is that I am not only concerned with Sufism, but also with Vedanta, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity. So, whether you follow Sufism or not, it all eventually comes to me. But, if you are interested in Sufism, do continue to have interest, follow it, but on the basis of my plan for it.

"I do not think you need any 'ism,' and as a matter of fact, Mrs. Duce, Brabazon and other leaders in India do not need Sufism, because they have me. But, since I want different men to work differently for me for these five aspects of reality, I now, personally and directly, entrust the Sufi work to Mrs. Duce and Brabazon. Therefore, this work of Sufism will not be for themselves, but for me." [italics added]

To Toni Roothbert, a Myrtle Beach neighbour who was not a Sufi, he explained:

"...the only thing God wants is not ceremonies, not yogas, not prayers; he wants love – the love that makes you forget yourself in Him. All 'isms' are the same. Love and become God, not by practice of ceremonies, but by dying for God. Baba has no creed at all. Societies, groups, mean nothing. Baba is above all these creeds, ceremonies and 'isms.' Everyone in India knows that I have no 'ism' at all and am not attached to any. I have reoriented Sufism, Vedanta, Buddhism, so that Truth in them is kept alive. The marrow should be taken in, the bones thrown off."³³

Again and again in conversations, messages and correspondence during his long stay in America, Baba described

his work with Sufism as a blueprint for revitalizing the five main highways to God. In June, he issued a formal circular that said:

"Meher Baba is equally connected with Islam and its Sufism, Christianity and its Mysticism, the Orient and its Vedantism, broad Buddhism, practical Zoroastrianism, Jainism and many other such 'isms' which all speak the same divine Truth and lead to the same divine goal. Meher Baba is also detached and above all these divine paths. He has to awaken the followers of these paths to the real meaning of these 'isms' in their true spirit by reorienting these 'isms', and in this capacity he has reoriented Sufism in the charter to be universally adopted."

An accompanying letter from Baba, dictated to Delia DeLeon, instructed Murshida Duce to place the foregoing statement at the beginning of the new Sufi Charter. Delia wrote:

"My dear Ivy,

"Baba has asked me to enclose a copy of the Circular which he is instructing Ella Winterfeldt to have

printed and circulate in the same manner as the first one – you will therefore get 500 copies, 50 to be sent to Mr. Brabazon,

"Baba wants that your Charter of re-oriented Sufism which he is to sign should be headed by this circular, only changing 'in the Charter' to 'in this charter' (that is the word changes to this).

"Baba particularly wants this because:

1. His universality [will be] preserved intellectually.

2. No misunderstanding [will occur] by anyone anywhere.

3. [There will be] no interference in your work of Sufism entrusted to you by Baba.

"If there is anything not clear please let me know as it is important."

The text of the circular, with modifications in wording, became the opening paragraph of the final Sufi Charter.

Late in July, Baba met with members of Murshida Duce's Sufi group at her Manhattan apartment and told them:

"If you take Baba to be perfect and one with God, Baba is then the Ocean – and these different paths, Sufism, Vedantism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity are as rivers to the ocean. But now the time has arrived...when these rivers have more or less become dry... and so the Ocean itself has to go out and flood these rivers. So it is now time for me to reorient these different 'isms' which end in One God."³⁴

Again in this message he emphasized that the plan he had devised for Sufism in America "will be applicable to the whole Sufi world — and will, by God's grace, be lasting in its effect and influence."

The creation of the Charter itself would involve Meher Baba, Murshida Duce and many others in America and India for many months through the unfolding phases of Baba's Free Life during this crucial year of 1952, as we will see in the next chapter of this story.

All photographs are courtesy of the Photo Archives of Sufism Reoriented.



NOTES

- 1 "Baba's Promise of an Illumined Murshid", unpublished interview transcript, 1977, Appendix J, *Murshida Duce's Role as A Sufi Teacher*, Binder D-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 2 Delia De Leon, "Notes on My Trip to India in 1948", *Awakener*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1983.
- 3 Both *The Wayfarers* and the initial work on *God Speaks* (then called "The Ten States of God") were written during this phase of Baba's work in the late 1940s.
- 4 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 4, p. 1196. (all *Lord Meher* references are from the online edition, www.lordmeher.org, accessed March 2009.)
- 5 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3823.
- 6 The quotes on America in this paragraph come from: *Lord Meher*, Vol. 4, p. 1511, p. 1515; Vol. 5, p. 1627; Vol. 11, p. 3823.
- 7 Inayat Khan's message was broad and inclusive, presenting the Sufi message of "love, harmony and beauty" as the unifying essence at the core of all religions. Though he often used the Islamic terminology of traditional Persian Sufism (because he knew no Western equivalents), his teachings were in no way limited or sectarian; he also used many Vedantic, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Christian terms and taught that all paths led to the One Divine Beloved.
- 8 Adi. K. Irani, "Foreword" in Norina Matchabelli, *Fragments from a Spiritual Diary*, (New York: Circle Productions, 1949), p. 6.
- 9 Quoted in "Murshida Martin and Meher Baba", unpublished manuscript (1986), Binder B-3, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 Quoted in Appendix D, "The Appointing", unpublished interview, *Murshida Duce's Life and Role as a Sufi Teacher*, Binder D-1, Sufism Reoriented Archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 Murshida Duce's lengthy account of this 1948 meeting has been published in *Lord Meher* (Vol. 9, p. 3214, *et seq.*) and her own *How a Master Works*; her daughter Charmian (1929-2003), who accompanied Murshida to India, tells her story in the May 2003 issue of *Glow International*, and also in her memoir, *Spread My Love*.
- 15 *How a Master Works*, p. 24.
- 16 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 9, p. 3219.
- 17 This special work with *masts* was completed before Baba entered his New Life in 1949. Though he continued to contact masts for many more years, he said during the New Life, "My *mast* work as such is over. In the Old Life, only I, God and the *mast* knew what my work was. In the New Life, I have now become a seeker. [When I contact *masts* now,] I place my head on their feet and for the fulfillment of my spiritual objective, I seek their blessings." *Lord Meher*, Vol. 10, p. 3643.
- 18 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 9, p. 3230.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 3219
- 20 Transcript of documentary film *Murshida*, 1980, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA
- 21 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 9, p. 3228.
- 22 Letters quoted from Dr. Ghani to Murshida Duce, 1948, from *Communications with Meher Baba Relevant to the Formation of Sufism Reoriented, 1945-1951*, Binder H-1, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 23 For an explanation of the term "*tauhid*", see *God Speaks*, 2nd ed. (1997 printing), p. 258 *et. seq.*
- 24 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 10, p. 3728.
- 25 *ibid.*, p. 3635.
- 26 *How a Master Works*, p. 84.
- 27 *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3856
- 28 Said to the Winterfeldts, May 11, 1952, *ibid.*, p. 3805.
- 29 Filis Frederick, "Memories of '52", *Awakener*, Vol.14, No. 2, 1972, p. 13. *Discourses*, 6th ed., Vol. 3, p. 80.
- 30 Meherjee Karkaria, "Notes on the Interview of Mrs. Duce, Miss Duce and Mr. Brabazon with Baba at Myrtle Beach", manuscript included in *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952, Binder C-2, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 31 To give just one example, when Baba entered his *Manonash* seclusion on October 16, 1951, he arranged for a special prayer to be said at five of the holiest places in India: a Parsi fire-temple in Udwađa, the Sufi Perfect Master Chishti's tomb in Ajmer, Krishna's temple in Mathura, the Buddha's temple in Sarnath, and Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Goa, and simultaneously in Hyderabad at a Buddhist temple, a Hindu temple, a Parsi fire-temple, a Catholic church, and an Islamic mosque, as Baba began his seclusion, see *Lord Meher*, Vol. 10, p. 3730. See also p. 3752, p. 3746, p. 3726.
- 32 *The Journals of Murshida Ivy O. Duce*, Vol. 2, 1952, p. 31, Binder C-2, Sufism Reoriented archives, Walnut Creek, CA.
- 33 Winterfeldts, *Lord Meher*, Vol. 11, p. 3804; Roothbert, p. 3822.
- 34 *ibid.*, p. 3873.