

“Intimate Friend”:  
Dr. Ghani’s Role in Baba’s New Life

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In June of 1951, well into the second year of his New Life, Meher Baba summoned about seventy-five of his followers from all parts of India to join him in Hyderabad for an important three-day meeting. Baba had chosen this select group to “bear witness” to his formal declaration of “the God-determined Step”, the climactic phase of the New Life work that we now know as *manonash*.

A significant role at this gathering was played by Baba’s longtime friend, Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff. Ghani and a few others were invited to come to Hyderabad several days early to help with the arrangements for the program. Baba had prepared a lengthy statement to be given at this meeting, which he had dictated in English. He entrusted an advance copy of this message to Dr. Ghani and asked him to translate it into Hindi. Then he chose Ghani to read the message to the assembly twice, first in English, then in the Hindi translation; this was followed by a Marathi version read by Dr. Deshmukh.

This statement, titled “What God Has Determined”, outlined and explained the terms of the momentous step of “mental annihilation”, the “irrevocable step” that God now “compelled” Baba to take. The message warned that this four-month process might result in Baba’s physical death. When Dr. Ghani and Dr. Deshmukh had finished presenting this message to the group, Baba then rose and made his formal Declaration, hands folded in namaskar to God, as Dr. Donkin recited the

brief text in English, Dr. Ghani in Urdu, and Dr. Deshmukh in Marathi. The Declaration read:

In the presence of God and bearing in my heart all the Perfect Ones of all times as witness, I declare that by the help and will of God, I will definitely take this step of Annihilation on October 16th of this year. God helped me to do the seclusion work of 100 days to my entire satisfaction, and I feel absolutely confident that God will help me to attain to the Old Life Meher Baba state by 16th February 1952, and to manifest universally.

This solemn moment was received by the assembly in deep silence.

Over the following two days, Baba gave the group a detailed discourse on *manonash* and determined which of the companions would accompany him in the months ahead. At the end of the gathering, a spontaneous, light-hearted “talent show” was quickly organized by the guests at Baba’s request. The program began with the grand entrance of a fierce Pathan warrior, who strode majestically onto the stage in full regalia—it was Ghani, of all people, whose surprise appearance in this costume was met with great applause! The next day, after some sightseeing and a *group photo* with Baba, the guests said their farewells and returned to their homes. It was the last day of June, 1951.

### **Baba’s Response to Ghani’s Death**

Just a few weeks later Baba received the startling news that Dr. Ghani had suffered a heart attack and died in Poona. He was only 57, the same age as Baba. Ghani’s sudden and unexpected passing had a noticeable effect on Baba.<sup>1</sup> From Hyderabad, he issued a special circular in which he speaks of the loss of Ghani in a

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<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes said that Baba shed tears when he received this news, though currently available published accounts do not mention it.

surprising way. When one considers that Baba used words with exactitude and never indulged in hyperbole, the message is striking. (I have added *italics* here to emphasize what is unusually forceful.) Baba wrote:

“Of the many things I have had to renounce and to suffer in this New Life, the passing of Ghani is among the *greatest*. I have felt a sense of loss at the passing of all those men and women of India and the West who were my disciples in the Old Life, and my lovers of all time. But this *sudden wrenching away* of Ghani is a *disaster* for me, the *more cruel* because it came at a time when the New Life’s consummation is so near at hand.”

Baba goes on to describe the value of Ghani’s service to him:

“To me, more than to any of you, Ghani was *unique*; and of all the work that still remains to be done for me by others, there is much that could have been done for me *by Ghani and no one else*. That big head of his was truly a treasure-house in which wisdom and wit were blended to perfection. We were intimate friends since our earliest years, and no one knows better than I how courageous and how loyal and loving was his heart. To me, therefore, Ghani is *irreplaceable*, both as a friend and as a tool for my work.”

After reminding his followers of the role he had given Ghani at the *manonash* gathering, Baba then proposes something unusual:

“Those of you who were at the meeting at Hyderabad on June 28, will remember that Ghani read out the explanation to my Declaration and also the Declaration itself. As one of the witnesses to that Declaration he was to fast on October 16, 1951 [when the *manonash* phase begins,] and say a prayer on my behalf.

*“Until February 16th, 1952, I want to feel that Ghani is still in the physical body, and I have therefore asked Ghani’s son-in-law Baggu, who was not present at the meeting of June 28th to act as Ghani’s proxy on October 16th by fasting and saying the prayer for me. . . . In this way, Ghani’s duty as one of the witnesses to my Declaration will be fulfilled.”*<sup>2</sup>

This arrangement is quite remarkable. It is as if Baba is, so to speak, “extending Ghani’s lifespan” by proxy to encompass the full duration of the New Life. This highly unusual provision underlines the uniqueness of the role Ghani played, both as an intimate member of Baba’s closest circle and, in Baba’s words, “as a tool for my work”.

It is especially noteworthy because Ghani’s participation in the New Life was so fraught with difficulties, many of which flowed from Ghani’s own nature, his habits and proclivities. As Baba says above, Ghani was indeed “courageous, loyal, and loving”. But this beloved figure among the mandali was as renowned for incorrigible laziness as for intellectual brilliance. His quick wit was often employed merely to obtain special treatment. His encyclopedic memory conveniently failed him when it came to financial matters or other obligations. Taking inventory of these characteristics, so stubbornly resistant to change over Ghani’s entire lifespan, one wonders how the doctor ever “made the cut” as a member of the Avatar’s circle—and, considering his fragile health, one wonders how he could have even considered attempting the arduous journeys of the New Life. Yet he did! And Baba not only welcomed him but cherished him, assisted him, and allowed him the greatest latitude of any of his close ones.

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<sup>2</sup> “Circular NL 30”, in Satya Prakash Udaseen, ed., *The New Life of Avatar Meher Baba and His Companions*, (Hyderabad: Meher Vihar Trust, 1967), 274.

In this essay, we explore Ghani's special role in Baba's work over three decades, culminating in Ghani's participation in the New Life, which is the focus of this conference. In considering their relationship as a whole, we can see that Ghani served again and again as what Murshida Ivy Duce called a "chess-piece" in Baba's divine game. He seemed to embody all the important attributes of the "Old Life". Having taken the intellect as far along the spiritual path as it could go, he was the archetype of "mental man" at the close of the Kali Yuga, and in this capacity he served his Beloved faithfully.

### **Background**

In the circular quoted above, Baba says of Ghani, "We were intimate friends since our earliest years." In their early letters to one another, Baba sometimes used the term "*langoti friends*", meaning friends since infancy. The two families were neighbors on Butler Moholla in Poona for fifteen years.<sup>3</sup> Merwan and Abdul grew up together, they played together, they attended high school and college together, they were on the same sports teams. Then in 1913, when both were college sophomores, Merwan met Babajan and left school. During Merwan's years of spiritual unfolding, Abdul finished his own schooling and became a homeopathic doctor in Bombay. He also pursued his spiritual interests and became, as his friend Ramjoo Abdulla notes (this is a quote), a "poet, philosopher, thinker, and sufi teacher." Early on, Ghani was nicknamed "Socrates", both for the strikingly large size of his head, reminiscent of the famous bust of the great

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<sup>3</sup> Ghani's father, Munshi Shaikh Muhammad, worked for the government Military Accounts Department in Poona for many years. He was later transferred to Calcutta and to France during World War I. Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, ed. K.K. Ramakrishnan, *Twenty Years with Meher Baba* (Poona: Meher Era Publications, 1975), 1.

Greek philosopher, and also for the breadth of his erudition, especially with regard to mysticism in general and Sufi literature in particular.

### **Manzil-e-Meem: Number Seven**

By the time he was reunited with his old friend Merwan in 1921, Ghani had married. Nonetheless, he accepted Baba's invitation to give up his medical career and join the Manzil-e-meem in 1922 for what proved to be a year of intensive spiritual training, which Ghani seemed to do his utmost to avoid during his residency. At the Manzil he began what became a lifelong game of circumventing Baba's orders so that he could continue to indulge his long-standing habits. For example, he enjoyed smoking, which was not permitted in the ashram. Baba reluctantly made a concession and allowed him to smoke five cigarettes a day. But this was not enough for Ghani. He devised a way to join together four or five cigarettes to make a single large one. Soon he was smoking five of these "super-sized" cigarettes each day. When Baba confronted him, Ghani insisted that he had not disobeyed Baba's order; he was still smoking only five cigarettes a day—the order had said nothing about their *length*! As was so often the case, Baba laughed and allowed Ghani to go back to his old habit. There are dozens of such stories associated with Ghani's persistent habits and preferences, not just in the Manzil but throughout his years with Baba. To Ghani, Baba was the Avatar, but also his childhood friend and beloved playmate. Baba seemed to feel the same.

Baba indicated that Ghani had a special role in his circle. In a discussion recorded in *Ramjoo's Diaries*, Baba tells his "circle-in-training" that each of them has a particular number. He says that Ghani's number is "perhaps the fifth or sixth; but after a little consideration, Baba said

‘Doctor’s’ number is the seventh in the Circle, and hence very important; this number always remains with the Master, even after Realization.”<sup>4</sup> Note that in this way, Baba underscores the importance of the number “seven”, saying, “Ghani is fifth—no, that’s not right; maybe sixth—no, not sixth...ah, he’s the *seventh!* That’s it! And seven always stays with me.”

“Seven” represents the completion of a cycle; it suggests that that Ghani embodies a type of perfection. In this case, it is the mental mastery of the past, of what has been achieved in the closing age. He is not the “new man”. He is the perfection and repository of the old. Thus he does not regard himself as Baba’s “disciple”, but his *friend*, here to love, to play, and to serve. And that seems an accurate way to describe their relationship. For Baba, Ghani represented both the highest attainments and the specific limitations of the *individual* human mind, bounded and directed by the personality or ego. Ghani played this role for Baba to perfection: he criticized Baba’s work and made suggestions; he bent the rules; he did all the things a disciple should never do, because that was his divine assignment. Baba honored and respected this; indeed, it even aided him in his work. Baba often engineered “lessons” in discipleship purportedly for Ghani that were in fact intended for others. Important principles of surrender and obedience were vividly brought home to the group by Ghani’s characteristic lapses and apparent inability to “play by the rules”. Of course, in Ghani’s view, those rules were not meant for him, as he was not a “disciple”.

### **Ghani and Sufism**

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<sup>4</sup> Ramjoo Abdulla, ed. Ira Deitrick, *Ramjoo’s Diaries* (Walnut Creek, CA: Sufism Reoriented, 1979),

Two important examples of Ghani's later work for Baba before the New Life should be mentioned here. One is his relation to Baba's work with sufism. Ghani had a background in traditional sufism, and you may recall that in the late 1940s Baba encouraged him to start a sufi group in Poona; it was called the "Sufi Circle," and it was to be based on some of the principles Baba would later incorporate into the charter for Sufism Reoriented. Ghani tried to make it work in Poona, but after a short time, it was evident that the group would not succeed. People in Poona did not seem to be especially interested in sufism, those who had some interest did not have time to participate because of their family obligations, and so on. Ghani finally had to tell Baba that the project had failed, that there was no spark there for it, no enthusiasm, and no life energy to support it—at least, not then. Baba accepted this, and the project was quietly abandoned.

However, at about this time, in 1948, Murshida Duce made her first journey to India to meet Baba and begin to collaborate with him on reorienting sufism in America. At Meherazad, Baba introduced her to Dr. Ghani, who became her intermediary in communicating with Baba for the next two years. Murshida Duce was delighted. Ghani not only understood the traditions of sufism thoroughly, but through him, Baba was able to explain clearly and concisely to her how sufism was to be transformed by him for the new spiritual cycle.

In this manner, Baba, Ghani, and Murshida Duce carried out an elegantly choreographed divine design. It is a principle of Creation that only by fully respecting the achievements of the past does anyone, even the Avatar himself, gain the authority to make changes. By working with Ghani to try to establish a sufi group in Poona, Baba had paid full reverence to the principles of traditional sufism. Through the failure of this project, he had



demonstrated that they were no longer sufficient; there was a need for something new. Having fully honored the methods of the past, Baba had earned the right to proceed with his *new* design for sufism, which would first flower in the West through Murshida Duce, supported by the immense, untapped spiritual energy of the North American continent. In this instance, one might say that God had granted permission: the door in Poona closed, the door in America opened. And Dr. Ghani was the link between them. He was thus instrumental in laying the groundwork for a reoriented sufism with Murshida Duce. His letters to her, several excerpts of which were published in the *Glow* magazine a few years ago, are marvelous in explaining the new principles of Baba's sufism as they are to be lived in the coming age.<sup>5</sup> Although Ghani himself did not implement the new sufism, his invaluable contribution helped Baba bring it to birth.

### ***God Speaks***

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<sup>5</sup> At the 2019 Avataric Legacy conference, Ellen Evans gave a presentation on Baba's work with Murshida Duce, in which she mentioned some of Dr. Ghani's letters, which are preserved in our archives in California. Here is a sampling from two of them:

22. *June 1948* – “*Baba is assuredly Love-incarnate ....*”

In June 1948, Ghani writes: “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. . . .”

23. *September 1948*:

In September, Dr. Ghani tells Murshida Duce that “sufism as a science of life and spirit is particularly suited to the genius of the West.” He informs her that Baba has designed a concrete plan of work for her to follow, and the reoriented sufism will be entirely new.”

At about the same time, Ghani was involved in another project of great significance that followed a similar pattern of development and would also involve Murshida Duce.

In 1947, Baba began dictating points to Ghani for a book on what he called “The Ten States of God”. Baba indicated that Ghani was the only one among his followers who was capable of writing this for him. But Ghani, true to form, found endless ways to procrastinate, and by February 1948, Baba could not wait any longer. He actually dictated a formal agreement, which he made Ghani sign before witnesses, that pledged him to finish the book by the end of May. Even this did not work, because Ghani still had not finished by November, and Baba continued to dictate points to him. Then time ran out—in 1949 came the New Life, and in 1951, Ghani’s passing. Ghani’s manuscript was set aside until after the New Life had concluded. When Baba came to America in 1952, he brought the manuscript to Myrtle Beach and told Murshida Duce he wanted her to publish it. However, when Baba had the opportunity to review Ghani’s manuscript, he discovered that, while half of it was exactly what he had intended Ghani to do, the other half was not what he had asked for at all. In the manner of “mental man”, Ghani had written about a wide range of spiritual topics, as if to compose a grand summation of all he had gathered from his life with Meher Baba. His original assignment from Baba was only the kernel of a larger work of his own creation.

Baba did not wish to “impose” his own formulations on Creation. Indeed, its principles do not permit it, and the Avatar is the perfect respecter of his own principles. Instead, he had given Dr. Ghani the opportunity to write what would be the Bible, Avesta, and Quran of these times. Ghani, who best had the ability and the knowledge to do so, as the representative, or

“chessman”, embodying the closing age, did his best by his own lights, and Baba, out of his love and compassion, said graciously that “half of it was perfect”. Thus Baba again honored and revered the achievements of the closing age, represented by Ghani’s effort. Though he appeared to have planned for Ghani’s full collaboration on the book, destiny intervened, and so Baba had to rewrite much of the manuscript himself. Still, he incorporated all that was relevant from Ghani’s work into what was carried forward. That is one reason why *God Speaks* has its Supplement. Many of its entries are derived from Ghani’s explication of Baba’s original points, which Ghani had gracefully and appropriately integrated with Hafiz, Rumi, and other masters of the closing age, thus providing a seamless continuity between the old and the new.<sup>6</sup> As with the example of sufism, we see that while Ghani did not see the project of Baba’s book through, his participation proved essential in bringing Baba’s *God Speaks* to birth.

In both of these examples, Baba was not “teaching” Ghani; instead they unfolded as though by an unusual and fruitful collaboration between them. Baba encouraged Ghani to take each project as far as he could, based

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<sup>6</sup> In the draft manuscript of *God Speaks*, held in the Sufi archives in California, one can see how the sections of Dr. Ghani’s original manuscript Baba chose to include in his book were adapted and edited. In the final draft, corrections in red and blue ink were made at Baba’s direction by the mandali. These are primarily corrections of terminology, though sometimes a sentence is rephrased for clarity, and some passages are deleted. It is clear, however, that much of the substance of the original conveyed Baba’s point correctly.

During the editing process in 1954-55, Baba emphasized, and Murshida Duce and Mani confirmed, that every word and punctuation mark in the text of *God Speaks*, from cover to cover, is Baba’s, either dictated directly by him or elaborated from points he gave and reviewed and corrected by Baba himself. As Baba noted, much of the work Ghani did was exactly what Baba had wanted and needed little or no correction. For a review of the history of the *God Speaks* supplement, see “First and Last of Its Kind”, *Glow International*, Summer 2019, pp. 12-23.

on his understanding and ability. Baba then accepted and fully honored his contribution and used it as a base from which he could now move forward—in a new direction, his own.

Baba's work with Ghani essentially modeled the relation between the achievements and understanding of the closing age, embodied by Ghani, and the new Cycle, which brings a new consciousness and energy of life to bear on the knowledge of the past, builds on it, and eventually exceeds its limitations. That can only be done when the work of the past has been fully absorbed, honored, and appreciated. Much of Baba's work with Dr. Ghani was associated with demonstrating this divine principle, which Baba observed scrupulously and with the greatest love and regard.<sup>7</sup>

### **The New Life**

With this background, we can turn to the role Dr. Ghani played in Baba's New Life.

Right from the start, in the initial New Life meetings at Meherabad in August 1949, Baba chose Ghani as his "voice", to offer prayers or make important statements (as he would later do at the *manonash* meeting with which this essay began). For example, on one memorable occasion,<sup>8</sup> Baba had passages read from four holy books, the Zoroastrian Avesta, the Christian Bible, the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, and the Muslim Quran. At the end of each reading, Baba took the book and

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<sup>7</sup> The universality of this important principle of life is illustrated by a well-known story about the former American Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. Long before the end of the Cold War, Kissinger had predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even at the height of their military power, Kissinger said, "Don't worry, they will fail." When it finally happened in the late 1980s, his colleagues asked him how he had been so confident. Kissinger replied, "That's easy; they did not respect their past. Those who do not honor their past have no future."

<sup>8</sup> The third day of meetings, August 18th, 1949

held it on his lap. After the last reading, Baba spread the books on the table next to him. He then had Ghani place his hands on the four books and offer a prayer Baba dictated on his alphabet board. Recall that in Baba's circle, Ghani could be said to represent the entire spiritual heritage of the Old Life of the closing Cycle. Baba dictated, and Ghani said:

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

It was this prayer, spoken for Baba by Ghani, that so surprised the mandali, for it was the first time they had ever heard Baba ask God for help—and he is asking in Ghani's voice.

Ghani had doubts about joining the “Yes-wallas” on the New Life. He did not know if he would be physically up to the hardships and difficulties, and he asked Baba directly, “Will you help me stick to you?” Baba answered that he would not be responsible for anyone. However, according to Bhau Kalchuri's account, Baba had asked Eruch to hint to Ghani that Baba wanted him to join the New Life.<sup>9</sup> When Ghani agreed to go, Baba said he would arrange to provide for his wife and family.

In the weeks before the New Life began, Ghani had at least one opportunity to voice his reservations and anxiety through his favorite idiom, a ghazal—in this case, he composed a characteristically ironic poem of complaint in Urdu addressed to the Saki, the divine Tavern Keeper (Baba). Here are a few excerpts:

*O Saki! Do you remember the opening session of the Tavern  
— in Manzil-e-Meem*

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<sup>9</sup> *Bhau Kalchuri, Meher Baba's New Life*, (Pune: K. Joshi, 2008), 59.

*When the mysteries of the Tavern began to leak out?  
Making all concerned feel dazed and intoxicated!  
And also the disclosures regarding the Circle  
and its members!  
As a result, the bread and butter of the times made  
the inmates forget the biryani outside!<sup>10</sup>  
And the mosquito curtains held for them the comforts  
of the palace of Jamshed!*

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

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

*For years we have prayed for the safety of the Tavern (God).  
In the Tavern we prayed for the long life of the Saki (Master).  
Now we are enjoined to forget both the Tavern and the Saki!  
Now we can only pray for the safety of the wineglass  
(the individual self).  
The ship (God) and the captain (Master) have both  
become strangers!  
Come to your senses, O Traveler!*

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<sup>10</sup> Biryani is a rice dish, the literal meaning of the word is “comfortable living”.

*Who remains now to care for you?*

Though Ghani and Baba were the same age, Ghani had a heart condition and was not in good health, yet Baba accepted him as a “Yes-walla”, at least for the first phase of the New Life. Baba was especially solicitous of Ghani’s needs. For example, when Ghani grew short of breath drawing water from a well, Baba himself assisted him, pulled up the bucket, and carried it for him. On their first long foot-journey, Ghani would start out walking at a jaunty pace, swinging his walking stick. Soon, however, he was thrusting the stick into the ground behind him to help propel himself forward, which brought a smile to Baba’s face. Ghani confided to the others, “Donkin and Nilu have led me astray. They told me Baba’s health would not let him walk more than four or five miles!”

After a very long walk, Baba showed no signs of fatigue, while Ghani was exhausted and could barely take another step. Baba came to his aid by taking one end of his walking stick and pulling him forward. But by the time they reached the outskirts of the town they were headed for, Ghani was about ready to collapse. Baba had him sit under a tree, the companions brought him water, and he managed to recover.

### ***The Song of the New Life***

After about a week, Baba asked Ghani to write a ghazal about the New Life and its principles. He dictated a few points, saying the song should stress “the control of lust, greed, and anger while remaining happy and cheerful under all circumstances.” Baba dictated the first verse in Urdu, giving Ghani an idea about the style and the meter he wanted. In English it reads:

*Listen to the silent words of Meher Baba;  
The life story of all lovers of God  
is based on the practice of these words.  
If you are serious about living the New Life,*

*Then wholeheartedly renounce this ephemeral  
existence.*

Baba added a warning that if Ghani didn't have the song finished by the next morning, he would have to do a hundred sit-ups!

When Ghani finished the song, Baba said, "The composition is excellent. Not only does it contain the New Life conditions and requirements, but it is full of poetic beauty. But somehow I feel that the song is likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted by the world outside as encouraging atheism and communism." This was because the lyrics of the song proclaimed that the companions no longer followed the strictures of religion, nor observed distinctions of caste or creed, embracing instead the "beggarly" life of poverty.

Baba then dictated a suggestion for a final verse for Ghani to write, and again said, "If Ghani doesn't do a good job, he will have to do a hundred sit-ups tomorrow morning." The final verse became:

*"God exists indeed, and true are the Prophets,  
Every cycle has an Avatar, and every moment a wali (saint),  
For us, however, it is only hopelessness and helplessness,  
How else can I describe to you what our New Life is?"*

Baba approved a tune for the song and as the companions sang it he often accompanied them on the drum. Mani explained that for the final version, Baba added some lines, took out others, and made it beautiful, just as he had transformed their stew with "just that little twist, that touch that made the whole difference."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Eruch Jessawala, Mehera Irani, Mani Irani, Meheru Irani, *Tales from the New Life*, (Berkeley: Beguine Library, 1976) 176

The song, written in Urdu, was translated into Hindi and English and hundreds of copies were printed for Baba's lovers in India to have, though he did not send it to the West.



Although Ghani wrote the *Song of the New Life*, he himself could not really *live* the New Life. As with *God Speaks* and Baba's plan for sufism, it was important to Baba's design to have Ghani's full and wholehearted participation in establishing the New Life. But Ghani found that with his heart condition he could not bear up under the many hardships the companions endured, though he tried gamely. After three months, he opted to return home and continue living according to New Life principles under one of the new plans Baba had created (in this case, Plan 1-C). However, Ghani had serious financial problems, and Baba had to come to his rescue, arranging to pay Ghani's substantial debt as an "Old Life burden" that he, Baba, willingly assumed with the help of other Old Life friends. This allowed Ghani to support his family while still trying to follow the New Life at home. When, after completing the first year of the New Life, Baba offered all the companions the opportunity to renew their oath and start again. Ghani was among those who chose to return to the Old Life. In the following months, Baba summoned him for brief visits at Mahabaleshwar and Poona. Whenever they were together, Ghani always managed to lighten Baba's mood.

Although Ghani *understood* the New Life so well that he could write its theme song, it remained a *mental* understanding for him. He could no more put it into practice than he could give up his cigarettes. Nonetheless, Baba cherished his childhood friend and in June of 1951 summoned him to participate in his all-important meeting in Hyderabad—another significant role as a chessman on Baba's universal game-board. Baba chose Ghani to announce his declaration of the "irrevocable step" that would establish a new template to destroy the limited individual mind—the mind that his dear friend Ghani had developed and used so fully.

At that, meeting, Baba gave a long discourse on *manonash*, telling the group, "This is the last thing I wish to explain in my New Life." In response to a

question from Ghani about the Christian and Muslim belief in one birth and one death, Baba said:

“The real Goal of life is not the death of the [false] ego [i.e., the individual self], but the death of the mind. When Mohammed or Jesus or Zoroaster talked of being born once and of dying once, it was [the birth and death] of the mind. When the mind dies totally, the false ego becomes the Real I. . . . In reality, the Ego [the larger Self] is not born, and as such it does not die. The Ego [the larger witness Self] is always Real. It is only due to the mind that [the little individualized] ego acts and feels limited and false. But mind has to die while it is in a human body, retaining full consciousness. This is the Goal.”<sup>12</sup>

This was one of the last things Ghani heard from his beloved divine Friend, giving him a cherished glimpse of the Goal before his passing. In this sense, Ghani’s story evokes that of Moses, who led his people through the desert for forty years to reach the Promised Land. When they finally arrived at their destination, it is said that God led Moses to the top of a high mountain so that he might gaze on the beautiful, verdant country that awaited them. And there he died, “a stone’s throw from [the Promised Land], according to the Quran. Moses was destined to *see* the Promised Land, but not to *enter* it.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bal Natu, *Glimpses of the God-Man*, II, 343. This quote has been shortened for this essay.

<sup>13</sup> After attending a showing of the film, *The Ten Commandments* in 1958, Baba commented, “Moses was on the sixth plane. His seeing the land of Israel but not being able to enter it is symbolic of his experience on the sixth plane of seeing God, but not yet merging in Him. Though when he dropped his body Moses realized God.” *Lord Meher* (online edition), 4239.

So it was with Dr. Ghani, a paragon of the age now ending. Even so, Ghani had done so much for his beloved Friend! Let us recall Baba's eulogy for him:

“To me, more than to [*sic*] any of you, Ghani was *unique*; and of all the work that still remains to be done for me by others, there is much that could have been done for me *by Ghani and no one else*. That big head of his was truly a treasure-house in which wisdom and wit were blended to perfection. We were intimate friends since our earliest years, and no one knows better than I how courageous and how loyal and loving was his heart. To me, therefore, Ghani is *irreplaceable*, both as a friend and as a tool for my work.”

If “Doctor” were with us now, he would no doubt smile and remind us gently that his number was not five, not six, but seven! And his *langoti*-friend Merwan had assured him that this number *always* remains with the Master!”