

An Interview with Don Stevens about Baba's Words

Dan Tyler and Deborah (Sweetie) Tyler interview Don Stevens in Paris (February 5-7, 2005)

February 5, 2005

DON: Here we are in Gay Paree. I think I even remember the date. Fourth of February is it?

Dan: Fifth.

SWEETA: 2005

DON: Sitting in Claude Longuette's sunny apartment. Beautiful blue sky, as it often was in India so much of the time. And this is I think, let's say, the first pillar of my relationship with Meher Baba's *Discourses*. And that is, how he got them started. I think you're both quite familiar with the story of his suggestion to Ivy Duce about editing this new work, the new book [*God Speaks*] that he had underway, and had thought that a great deal of the early base work was being done by Dr. Ghani. And when Dr. Ghani died unexpectedly of a heart attack, Baba was nonplussed, and said I was counting on him to do so much work for me. And he had one of the mandali go to Ghani's room and take out the notes that Baba had been giving Ghani for quite some time for Baba's new book. Don't confuse this with the book, which goes way back to the late twenties? Early *thirties*? I'm never sure of the dates. But at any rate, when the mandali brought out Ghani's notes and read some to Baba, he told Ivy Duce and myself in New York in '52, he was astonished at what was read out to him. He said, "Almost nothing of what Ghani has written here is what I was giving him and intended for my new book. I'm just going to have to start over."

Eventually of course, the word came through Eruch and he asked Ivy Duce if she would be willing to see the manuscript and edit it. And then as he asked her that, because I was present as this was being discussed, he said, "This is a big job. Of course you and Don have done a lot of work together, perhaps you might want Don to help you with the editing work that might be involved." And Ivy Duce immediately said, "Oh yes. That would be a very good arrangement. I would enjoy it that way." So it was planned in that manner, in that fashion, and eventually the manuscript came back with Lud Dimpfl from, when they had what was it, the three glorious weeks?

SWEETA: Incredible.

DON: Three incredible weeks. And he left it with Murshida Duce, although he left it on the west coast, where I was. And after she had looked it over and she also gave some messages from Baba. I think the most important thing that struck me was that he would give us six weeks to do the necessary editing. So that was a little bit of a blow for a work of that sort, to be expected to do it in that time. But the thing that really struck me, it was quite unexpected and stuck in my mind, was that he said to Lud, "Explain to Murshida that I am including in this manuscript I am sending to her, Ghani's original notes of what he wrote out. But which does not correspond, as you know, to what I had been giving him and wanted to be the base of the new book. But nevertheless, he's a very, very highly erudite, experienced, scholarly Sufi expert. And because you're now the head of the Sufi order in America, which Murshida

Martin gave you charge of on her death, you may be interested in some of this material. But it does not correspond to what I wanted to have in my work, my new book.”

And he gave three choices. I remember this so clearly. She told me this over the phone, because I could see she was startled by it too. She said, “Baba has given me permission if I want to use all of it, none of it, or some of it. He leaves the decision entirely to me. And although because I had to read rapidly, Ghani I knew, not well, but enough to know he was a highly experienced Sufi scholar, and what he had written was absolutely invaluable to the Sufis. So I have chosen, and I hope you will agree with my choice, Don,” — why I should be included in the choice I couldn’t figure at the moment, but she was very kind-hearted and very fond of me. She said, “If you agree with me, I would like to include all of it.”

So I said, “Why not, Murshida? You’re the judge of that, and Baba’s given you that free decision.” And she said, “In skimming through I have seen that the long part, the substantial part, which is Baba’s own direct work given through Eruch, is quite clear, very logical, very polished work. And editing that shouldn’t be too difficult, but the Ghani material, on the other hand, is still in a somewhat unfinished state. And in the short time we have to do all this work, I would like to suggest that you edit the ten chapters that Baba and Eruch have worked out directly, and I’ll edit, let’s say, this additional work which we can include as some sort of an appendix or a supplement or I don’t know what one will call it.”

So it was arranged that that would be done. That went on through . . . Actually, Dodd Mead postponed the publication of the book from the spring months, which Baba and everyone thought they would want, to publish it. I’d been negotiating with them to use some of their publishing ideas and schedule. But they said, no, this is a terribly important work and we want to give it absolutely top notch treatment and public presentation sales possibilities, and the fall printings and catalog are much more important, people pay more attention, so we will put it out in the fall. Baba, incidentally, when he found this out did not extend the six weeks period that he gave Murshida and me, but we got it done in that period of time. And after that was done, then it was oh, what? late 1954, ’55, when Baba had the four sahas for the four language groups, for especially the younger people in India, to which he invited Francis Brabazon and myself. Because when he invited the westerners to the three incredible weeks, I had a kidney infection and was in the hospital. Baba said, “I’ll make it up to you.” And so he invited Francis Brabazon and myself as the only two westerners to come to that particular activity.

SWEETA: Had Francis been sick also?

DON: No, Francis very, very rapidly just became one of those automatically pets, excuse me, he’s not a dog, but it was just obvious that he and Kenmore, I saw immediately, as spiny as Dr. Kenmore could be, still he loved Baba with a total passion and Baba loved him very deeply. So they were two people, that I was often impressed, as soon as they and Baba met face to face it was obvious they just had a terribly favored position in Baba’s love.

DAN: During the six-week period of time when you and Ivy were doing the actual editing, were you there in Meherabad?

DON: She was back in New York and I theoretically was based in San Francisco, near Standard of California’s

research laboratories.

DAN: So were you mailing things back and forth, sending telegrams?

DON: Mailing, telephones. Whatever communications we could work out. But the strange thing is that Lud brought this back when the bombshell of timing hit, just after my immediate boss — I was working in San Francisco for a subsidiary of Standard California — my boss had broken the news to me that various of our district offices scattered around the United States were having very difficult problems here and there. And because I had come up through the research department and knew the technical background of our products, he said, “Don, I want you to make a long — you don’t have a family to worry about — I’ve talked with our president and we would like you to make a two-month field trip to our important district offices to work with the district manager and his sales staff, and to go to individual important clients and help them out on various technical problems.”

So of the six weeks, all of the six weeks were going to fall within that two months of a field trip all over the United States. So, this introduced me to Baba’s work habits. All of my editing of *God Speaks*, the ten chapters, was done in 1592strange hotels, on airplanes, sitting in airport waiting rooms, late at night to catch a train to another strange place. If you can imagine a better working background than that I defy you to describe it. So, improbably, it was all during that particular field trip that I had to take. The introduction, especially, which I’ve always thought was probably my one crowning small masterpiece of writing, the introduction to *God Speaks* was written on the choo-choo train from Chattanooga to New York City. There we are. So it just showed me, you know, that when something wants to get born for Baba you can be in the most impossible sort of a situation and by golly the birthing takes place. And you’re so absorbed in it that nothing else matters, you’re just totally wrapped up in what’s going on.

Baba commands and he provides that sort of attention and concentration. It’s incredible. I think I’ve always been reasonably knit together, but certainly those six weeks that we had were the most intense and also vital which I think I ever spent in my life. And all in that improbable environment. So that was an absolute revelation to me. So, anyway, that all got done and when I went with Francis Brabazon to the four language groups, at the end of the first week I had, as I remember, a week of holiday specially given to me. So Baba invited me for the first week. And at the end of it, I was back at the, you know the sort of two-story thing they constructed on the old water tank near Baba’s tomb at upper Meherabad.

Francis Brabazon and I had one of the two rooms constructed up there and I was unpacking my bags and somebody said, “Baba wants to talk to you, Don.” And so I look out the window and there’s Baba sitting down in a chair under a tree out in front of the front gates to the compound there. So I rushed down and there was another little chair for me to sit in, and Baba said, “Well how did you enjoy yourself?” You know, he asked the typical sort of polite and friendly questions that, you know, anybody would ask. Baba never insisted on an angelic chorus blasting out paeans of praise as you came in the door or things of that sort. It was all just very homespun and completely natural. So I said, “It’s been a wonderful, wonderful experience, Baba.” And so he said something about how I had reacted to the people there, and you know, asked typical sorts of questions about my involvement, how people had impressed me, and so on.

Then after he had spent maybe ten minutes, nothing special in the conversation, just polite talk, and when I had to catch my plane and when I'd be back home, and he looked over, and I hadn't noticed before but there was a little table, sort of like a nightstand table next to his seat. And on it, I looked and saw for the first time as he put his hand over there, there were a little pile of almost nondescript papers. They looked like they could have been cuttings or something torn out of this and that piled up there. So he said, "Don, I have here a collection of various addresses, which I have given out at various times to important group gatherings. Public addresses. And they're something like the discourse material that you have been interested in. And if you would like to take them and work on them, well I'll be very happy if you could do something like making of them some discourses." And I thought to myself, good heavens, well it's a long jump going from something as intelligent a person as Eruch has worked on with Baba, with a wonderful command of English and logic and so on, and here he's got these nondescript little chunks of addresses that he's given out and he's asking me to arrange those logically into a sort of discourse order.

And so I said, "Baba, I don't know. Really I would love to do it but I don't know if I have the capability to do it." And that was the first time that I ever saw just sort of, you know, wave his hand like that and sort of give a glance out the heavens to see if they were all in place. He said, "Don I will help you." And I said, "Well thank you Baba. Well yes, thank you Baba. Yes I would love to do it and I hope I'm able to do it with your help." So he gave me those and took them back and arranged them. That's whole another story in itself.

DAN: Is that what became the second part of *Listen Humanity*?

DON: That was the second part of *Listen Humanity*. And as I was agreeing to arrange that, suddenly Baba looked a little thoughtful and he said, "You know, Don, it suddenly occurs to me, that would be a rather small volume. If you wanted to do something more important and lengthy, and it might be wise to do it this way. You've attended this first week, you could write up the story of what you have seen in this first week, of the typical Baba sahavas with devotees. And there are two secretaries who are taking down the transcript of everything that I've been saying and am saying, and will be all during this time. If you would like copies of that transcript and included that and quote it in a background where you include the background sort of like a story Baba will be happy to do this and that will be quite an important second body of material. And then he said, "And of course, your own personal thoughts and reactions. That's important. So be sure to include that. So the transcript and the background description of what was going on is Part I. And then Don Stevens' personal reactions, thoughts, caveats, blunderings, rebellions, and whatever not, are Part III, which is just highly personal.

Some of Baba's mandali thought maybe I had been a little bit too honest in what I wrote up. But nevertheless they never drew blood with me because of my feeling that I should be completely straightforward. So that was *Listen Humanity*. And Baba rather early in the proceedings had a little side conversation, we were sitting in Mandali Hall in Meherazad, Baba was talking in sign language and he was replying in Gujarati. And finally Eruch turned towards me and said, "Don, Baba wants you to know that as you are doing quite a great deal of traveling as you're doing all these things for Baba at his request, whenever you are within easy, let us say, overnight range by air, from where Baba is staying at the time, just come and pay a visit for as much as you can to Baba, even if it's only two or three hours. Baba would love to see you and talk with you about what you are doing and what's happening to you. So you

don't even need to write to Baba or send a telegram or anything. Just come. Baba will receive you.

So, I thought well, that's a little unusual but nevertheless I made very, very liberal use of that. I always did warn him that I was to going on such and such a date to be in so and so, and unless I received word to the contrary I would take a connecting flight or whatever not and plan to be in Bombay and get up to see him as soon as I could on approximately such and such a date. Once it was only for three or four hours, and when I arrived, Baba had a meeting with some distinguished personalities from the government somewhere or another and Baba was talking about his background and some of the Americans and Europeans who would come quite some distances. And he said, "Here's Don Stevens. He works for one of the world's major oil companies in San Francisco, and see, just for three hours he took a plane to Bombay, a taxi all the way from Bombay to here, and after three hours he will go back the same and start his negotiations in Tokyo again. He would jump over the cliff for me, wouldn't you Don?" And I thought, careful. In absolute honesty was I going to be ready to jump over a cliff? How do I feel about that? So I can't remember how I got out of that jam. But I think Baba saw that he sort of had, how to reconcile all these conflicting things all the time.

So I was forgiven by Baba and off I went. But eventually the work on *Listen Humanity* was completed. I had nothing particular at that point — just imagine, I think it was three years I'd been working in all my spare time on all of these trips on *God Speaks* and *Listen Humanity*. I hadn't had any vacation, you know. There was no such thing as a vacation, not even a weekend, not even a spare night in my life, for months and months and months. So when *Listen Humanity* went to Dodd Mead and they accepted it, I just thought to myself, good heavens, I'm going to enjoy traveling and the good life. I worked for an important company as you know and I had a fabulous expense account because all the people I was calling on were top petroleum people in their countries and you had to stay in the best hotels, you had to entertain them in the best restaurants. I'm not a particularly luxurious person but I must admit it wasn't bad living at all. So here I was. I said I've got to enjoy life and relax. And instead of spending weekends working on manuscripts I'm going to get in a train or a taxi or an airplane and go up the country and see some of these countries I've always wanted to see.

So this had been going on for about a month before I was near Baba and had a chance to see him. First time I had seen Baba since I had finished off the manuscript for Dodd Mead. And Stevens enjoying the luxury of relaxation and the good life. And so I sat down and Baba said, what about this, and Dodd Mead are happy and so on, and how is your work going Don, and does your president always allow you to be honest with your clients? Yes, Baba. He'd ask me about this business of honesty every single time because in two different ways he had extracted in perfectly normal procedures an absolute direct vow of absolute honesty. The vow taken to Baba himself. I take something like that terribly seriously.

So this has been one of the greatest, greatest incredible gifts from Baba in my life. All of the adventures that's led me through, and a lot of things going on inside of me that I hadn't even realized were going on until, you know, rather late in life even. So to see how he used things of that sort, tough but, you know, not supernatural, then see what mountains the Avatar moved with these things is just incredible to behold. So here's Baba checking on this and that and the other thing and I'm replying with my usual glib businesslike replies. Have you ever been around any of

my writings where I've described Baba's ritual of questions he would ask every morning? I would wake up and he would see me for the first time?

SWEETA: I think so. I think I have.

DON: Good, Well, I won't go too far but you know it was, "How did you sleep? Did you have a nice breakfast? Did you have a good toilet?" And if I didn't, well then out came the orange stuff, you know. The most prompt laxative I've ever taken in my life. So, but this would all soon get through to how is Dodd Mead and how soon would the book come out. Then he suddenly looks me square in the eye and said, "And Don, what are you doing about Baba's words?" Well, I spent three years working on Baba's words. What's he asking me something like that about? He sounds like he's accusing me of being lazy and a nincompoop and not getting work done. I was a little upset and I said, "What do you mean, Baba, what am I doing about Baba's words? I just finished off *Listen Humanity* for you." And he looked pleased, but he said, "But really Don, you finished that several weeks ago. What are you doing about Baba's words now?" Well, you know, I'm not a stupid person so I knew almost certainly that he had another project up his sleeve and this was his way of breaking it to me.

SWEETA: When you think about the way Meher Baba used you to do editing, to work on his words, when you look back on your own life, were there any premonitions, does that make sense now, in hindsight, why he chose you?

DON: Oh, well I've asked myself that an awful lot of times. I don't think I'm a particularly proud person, but I also do recognize that I have certain gifts. Well, I do right terribly early, just after 1952 August when I met him face-face for the first time, and he went back through Switzerland to India. Charmain Duce and two or three other people went along as far as Switzerland and I got back two or three hand-written letters from people, you know, old friends. And one of them said — and this answers directly what you just asked me, Sweeta — one of them, one of my very, very closest and down-to-earth friends wrote back and said, you know Don, we were at Heidi Merton's and Baba was with several of us and talking about what had gone on in America, and suddenly he said — and remember the time that he had broken his nose and all the lacerations in the Oklahoma accident? Baba had predicted that he would spill his blood in America. And so this was terribly, terribly still important in our minds, Baba spilling his blood. And Baba said that it was worth the trip and the spilling of his blood to meet someone as honest as Don Stevens. Well, you know, I was not about to argue with the Avatar about his judgments of things like this.

But when Murshida Duce introduced him to me in her library and said, "This is my boy Don," Baba drew himself up very augustly and said, "Your boy Don? He's my boy Don. We've been together since the dawn of time." So, I don't know that I have any particular craving for praise, I hate like hell, honestly, to be criticized, particularly when it's unjust or dishonest criticism. But I have no great, I've done well in school, I've done well in things I've taken, it's just all seemed normal to me, so I have no great craving in those areas. But Baba did certainly set two or three or four things, just to impinge in my mind, that I had certain particular traits were valuable to him, which underlay the very deep love that he had for me. Once he broke off — I think you have read this because this had at one point to go into the record and I didn't hold it back — twice sitting in Mandali Hall, just Eruch, Baba, and Don, Baba would interrupt the conversation, look at me, look at Eruch and say, "Eruch, you know, I think Don is one of the mandali. What do you think?" And Eruch would nod his head the first time he did it and the second time too, and said, "Oh

yes, I agree Baba.” And Baba said, “But Eruch, I don’t mean one of the mandali, I mean one of the close mandali.”

And so Baba, to Don, for whatever reason, and later as life went along I could see why he had stated this so clearly to me, because I sometimes doubt my own qualities or capabilities. And apparently Baba wanted me to know that I had the capabilities which were necessary to do a number of the things he asked me to do for him. And remember, Don, this is not you with your maybe dubious ideas of estimations and evaluations, but this is Baba’s. So these two or three things were important. And so, I must say when life would get terribly tough and some of the crises that would come along in Baba activities, I’ve had to go back and remember those and say, “Baba sat you down to tell you indelibly why he gave you these things to get done. That’s because he knows your qualities and what you’re capable of doing. So get on with the thing and don’t cringe around and mope and cry in your own private handkerchief.”

So, there we were. Baba saying, “Well, what are you doing about my words now? You’ve been finished with *Listen Humanity* for several weeks now.” So, I decided, because by that time I knew Baba could read me like a book, but he was terribly tender-hearted at the same time. I had a suspicion on the plane coming there that maybe even those several weeks I had sort of used my leave rather excessively. So I said to Baba, “You know Baba, actually I was thinking about some of the people who are in one of the groups that I handle, and for whom the *Discourses* have become almost like a personal Bible to them. These people who they call hippies.” And Baba said, “Yes I know all about them, Don. How they use drugs and so on.” So he says, “So, the *Discourses*, they feel it’s like their Bible. So what do you think?” And I said, “Baba, I haven’t read those *Discourses* for six, eight years now. I really think I should pick them up and reread them.” Baba smiles and beams, you know. And so I leave a few hours later, and this time I don’t think it was even a month until I was back again, and sitting with Baba and Eruch in Mandali Hall again. And had almost gotten through the whole roster — did you sleep well, did you have a good toilet, and so on — when he said, “What did you think about the *Discourses*?” I had forgotten totally about the promise I had made to Baba! And of course, Baba puts on his good act of being surprised and horrified. A promise to the Avatar, and Don Stevens with his bear-trap memory forgets that? Baba didn’t say these words but I could just feel the incriminations leaping out. I said, “Baba, I just cannot imagine how I could have forgotten my promise to you. As soon as I get back to my books, Baba, I’ll pick up the *Discourses* and get to them again.” This was the old Deshmukh five-volume set.

So, a little more time, maybe it was two, maybe even three months, before I got to Baba the next time. Well, Sweeta, you’re going to declare an end of any sort of feeling of friendliness to Don Stevens.

SWEETA: Oh, you have to have more confidence in me.

DON: Exactly the same thing. Baba! My God! Two times I had forgotten this! You see how Baba can stage manage these things? Boy when he sensitizes you to something, he sure finds the ways and means of doing it. So I was just crushed by my own slovenly, sloppy manner of handling the promise, twice, to Baba. So that time I really got it and started dipping into them and it was just absolutely marvelous. So, the next time that I came back to see Baba, he said, “Well, Don, what do you think?” And I said, “Baba, I just cannot believe the difference. When I read them originally shortly after Murshida Martin brought us to you, after I read some of them, tried to do a good consistent

job on them, I thought they were very fine, beautiful, and very clearly written. But nevertheless, as fine a scholar as Deshmukh is, he uses Indian-style sentence structure. And in order to be absolutely certain of what Deshmukh is driving at with his structure, every once in a while I have to, before I can go reading a certain section, in my mind re-transpose around into American English style structure in order to be sure what he is saying. So here I was explaining to Baba the one particular problem. So, Baba doesn't seem to feel that I'm criticizing Deshmukh or setting Don Stevens up as the great literary authority of the age. And he said, "What should be done?" And I said, "Baba, I really do think these *Discourses* will become the Bible of the young people, especially of the New Humanity and the new age." Baba nods his head very, very interestedly, and said, "Well, alright. What do you feel needs to be done? Is something necessary to do to make this Bible available to the New Humanity?" And I said, "Well, Baba, I have noticed this peculiarity, Indian peculiarity of sentence structure, that Deshmukh, as wonderful a scholar as he is, still uses . . . and I think it would not be a very difficult editing job. You have all sorts of people in England and America who could handle this extremely easily and well. So Baba looks me in the eye, points his finger at me, and gestures to Eruch, "You do it."

So that was the way I got yukered into doing it.

DAN: What year was that?

DON: That was very soon after *Listen Humanity* was published in '55, so that had to be either late '55 or '56. So then, again, I set out on my work. But it's interesting because at that time, as that broke, I had been, you might say I had been traveling out of a suitcase, living out of a suitcase, about 60 to 80% of the time in western Europe. I could get a chance to get to Baba every once in a while. Then I was taken back from there into a special position and spent almost 100% of my time stationed in San Francisco, but working on special projects, of which the most special one of all was one with the Japanese steel mills and Riudosi iron ore mines in Brazil, to try to work out a triangular haul relationship, iron ore in one direction and crude oil in the other direction. So I had to be a great deal of the time in Tokyo, and it was no great trick to catch an overnight plane down to Bombay from Tokyo and go up and get to see Baba. It was also at that time I had the responsibility for negotiating a very important crude oil contract for the Indian government, for the Karelina petroleum refinery. And so then, on those occasions, I would have to be in New Delhi. And I got to know the head of the petroleum activity for the government very well, a wonderful man. So there were all sorts of opportunities. You see how Baba arranged employment and itinerary and so on. So everything just fit perfectly together. But it was done, the things I was doing for Baba under this assignment were all done in spare time on weekends, planes, waiting for this and that and the other thing. So typical.

DAN: So that's why the sixth edition was printed in Tokyo.

DON: Yeah. I had an associate in this special project out of the San Francisco office who was a great, great friend of one of the principle Japanese trade leaders in California, who had top-notch relationships with all of the important, great manufactures in Japan. Excuse me, I don't say this to say what a great guy I was and how important I was. But here again I was dealing with top industrial people in Japan, had to go there frequently, and it was just the manner in which Baba arranged it. You know, the Karelina refinery coming along generally at about the same time, and of course the top notch Japanese trader from California, who introduced me these people, had top notch connections in

the printing trade also. So he introduced me to one of the top Japanese printers and we did the negotiations through his San Francisco office. And then eventually — this was remarkable — I don't know if you've ever got into the name of Marvin and Jeanie Campen, C-A-M-P-E-N? Well Marvin worked in the research laboratories, the laboratory right next to where I was in Richmond, California. And also Lud Dimpfl was in the same laboratory. So Marvin Campen went into petrochemical sand and was assigned to the Tokyo office for quite some time. Can you imagine? So he completed the negotiations for the printing of the first three-volume edition. It all came together neat as could be.

Well, that was the starting of the whole thing for the *Discourses*. I got to know — this is terribly important to me also. During this period of time, one of the things that I was very nervous about at the time was how would Dr. Deshmukh take this? Don dipping in, under Baba's direction, under Baba's orders, changing what Deshmukh has done. And I felt that was terribly, terribly important and very delicate.

DAN: What kind of contact did you have with Dr. Deshmukh during this whole thing, if any? Were you showing him your markups and editing changes throughout?

DON: Baba never — and this is an interesting point — Deshmukh's handling of it was one of the things that just showed me the quality of that man and why Baba loved him so much and why he loved Baba so much. He had that quality of having no sense of ego aggrandizement in relation the work he did for Baba. He was in and out a great deal of the time that I was around any number of occasions and he never, never gave the slightest indication of the slightest hurt. He never in any fashion treated me in any way that would give me any indication or feeling of being pushed out of the picture. I admired him enormously for it. But I have to tell you the secret, I think, of the whole thing. You know each time that I went, particularly in later years, I would get to see Baba, when nobody, not even the close mandali would have seen him for weeks at a time. So, I mean, I had the blanket OK to come, and that was it.

So on various occasions when I would go I would take a motion picture camera with me and take shots of Baba, and then show them to the groups in Europe when I would go through and the United States also. In these motion pictures every once in a while Baba would arrange things just to amuse himself. Just sort of a relaxation. And on a number of occasions when Baba was relaxing, Deshmukh would be somewhere in the situation. And I began to find out that Baba and Deshmukh had a personal sort of Laurel and Hardy relationship. Have you seen the Laurel and Hardy films? You know, there's one of them who is very serious and very proper and the other hams it up and does crazy things. Well of course, Baba was the big stuffy guy with bowler hat and so on, and the little pipsqueak guy was skinny old Deshmukh who does the crazy hamming it up part of the thing. And it would just be hilarious. And I remember — and this one I got recorded on film — when Baba had the kids from the cook shack and several off the mandali all around to play seven tiles. Have you seen that film? Oh, you've got two or three treats left in life. Anyway, on that one I don't know how Baba let us get that one, but that is the perfect recording of Baba and Deshmukh.

Baba is sitting in his chair and he throws the ball out to start the game. And then finally it's Deshmukh's turn to throw the ball at the seven tiles. And so Baba is saying how is your arm, how are your legs? You know you should

swing your arm around to get a little bit loosened up. So Deshmukh does a crazy act, you know and a few of those things. But really, the crowning touch of it all is when Deshmukh throws the ball sort of like a little old lady tossing a biscuit into a teacup, or something like that. Of course, instead of getting anywhere near the seven tiles it goes way over to — I don't know how under the sun he, even if he had tried — it goes way over to the right and under a shed. And Baba looks at all of this — he had to have done it purposely — and Baba looks at this and says, “Deshmukh, what under the sun? The tiles are there!” And so Baba says, “Give him another try. Bring the ball back.” Then Baba has a bright idea. He says, “Deshmukh, for you we're going to cut the distance in one half. So you go halfway to the tiles and throw it from there.” Almost as bad as the first one. How he could have thrown it so far away he had to be doing his act. And so Baba looks absolutely horrified and says, “Half it again.” And so when he halved it again, Baba said, “No, no. Stand right over it.” And he missed it again! But to see, you know, this play between the Avatar and this distinguished scholar of a university and the editor of the *Discourses*, I almost couldn't believe it.

It was wonderful. I loved Deshmukh because, you know, this to me shows the terribly human side of the man and his simplicity and his total love for Baba. It was all packed into that one little scene with the seven tiles and the ball. But I would see him with Baba, when Baba wanted to have fun. And Deshmukh would play up, and he would be the counterpart.

SWEETA: You know when you mentioned about the Bible of the future — we know you're a wonderful editor — but do you ever form your own ideas about how that's going to happen? Do you think that's at hand. Do you think it's going to be another hundred years? How do you think that's going to happen?

DON: That's going to come out in story number two. Specifically, not when are you going to manifest, but Baba brought his manifestation into one of the most important things he ever said to anybody. So we'll do that one tomorrow.

February 6, 2005

SWEETA: We've been waiting consciously for him to give us a piece of literature to do, and trying to wait, trying not to second-guess what he wants us to do but to wait. And when your work brought to our attention the harm that was done to the *Discourses*, because I had carried the *Discourses* for about fifteen years, from about 1973 to about 1988. And then the *Discourses* moved away from my conscious mind.

DON: Sure. They have a certain basic purpose Baba made them for. And when you've gotten that purpose well, then they automatically go on the shelf.

SWEETA: And then they went on the shelf, and I had not paid attention until we read *Three Bridges* and became really consciously aware of the changes that had been made.

DON: By the way, incidentally, this is an important point. In reading over your notes last evening, I see that both of you are laboring under the illusion that Ivy Duce had her hand in the *Discourses* re-editing for Baba, because she is

of course listed in the introduction, she cosigned with me. And I must tell you right now, because this is terribly important, when Baba gave us the editing job for *God Speaks*, and he said to Ivy, “Now of course you’re going to have to arrange for an introduction to be written, and probably some sort of a preface.” And so Ivy said, “Well Don, you’re much better at words than I am, so will you take in the responsibility for this, and I’ll cosign with you? And so I tried one introduction and it was too formal and too stuffy and stilted. So one of my closest friends in New York said, “Don, you’ve been with Baba. Why don’t you write something that’s purely personal and knock them silly with telling what impact it had on you?” So I wrote the current introduction to number one, with all this business about the perfect circles, you know, which people loved. But it was so terribly personal, and Ivy said, “Don, this is wonderful writing, I love it, but of course it is so personal I can’t sign it with you.” So she was left out then.

And then the same thing, when Baba gave me *Listen Humanity* and didn’t even invite her to stick her nose anywhere into it, she was hurt. So then when along came the *Discourses*, she said, “Don, you know we had agreed that we would cosign the introduction to *God Speaks*, but because of the very personal nature of it I couldn’t, would you mind if I cosigned the introduction to the *Discourses* that you’ve done now for Baba?” And because we — you know I thought her point was well taken, and I felt sad about her feeling she was sort sidelined. So I said, “No, absolutely not.”

So she did not do zilch on any of the editing on the *Discourses*. This is an important point. I’ve never mentioned this particular story.

DAN: If that’s the case, there might be something misleading in her *How a Master Works*, because there’s a paragraph —

DON: *How a Master Works* is so filled with errors, we’re going to have to take that up as a special project.

DAN: This is a particularly important point because she writes explicitly, Don and I worked together on the editing.

DON: By the time she got into her eighties, her lawyering sense of fitting facts together to please herself had really run out of control. She had no ethical control over it anymore. This was corroborated by both Mani and Mehera to several people. And so it’s not just Don Stevens saying that *How a Master Works* is filled with errors. Even David Fenster and people who had worked on Ivy’s and on Charmain’s works, noted that that’s a fact. That’s an important fact.

Well, I have never said this to anybody else. It wasn’t because I was trying to hide it. But then when I saw it in your notes two times, I said, “Oh my God, I’ve never leveled with anybody on what the true story was in back of it.”

SWEETA: I had thought, I always called that the sixth edition, but I thought maybe it should be called the ‘Stevens-Duce edition’.

DON: As you know from the story I told you of how Baba wrote me into it, Ivy did not figure at all. And she was never brought in. I guess this was an important building block in the structure, and it had to be put in now. I don’t know what the Sufis are going to do one day when a few of the things Murshida put down as if they were sacrosanct, straight from Baba, when she wrote *How a Master Works*, when they find they didn’t work that way at

all. This is tough. This is a very tough thing to handle.

SWEETA: It must be very tough for you to have this knowledge and to walk that path of tact and understanding for other people and yet honesty for Baba's cause. I'm glad it's a walk I don't have to walk.

DAN: Well, we had to make something of that walk when we were writing the article, the exposé of what happened to the *Discourses*. The first time I wrote it I included J. Flagg Chris's name, and then I realized no, that's not right.

DON: He feels terribly sensitive about this.

DAN: And in writing the article I felt as if I were attacking him, which was not the point of it.

DON: He takes each one of those as a personal attack, which is unfortunate.

SWEETA: It would be a superhuman person who could do that much work, and then have others say that their work was harmful, and not be hurt by that. I couldn't take it.

DON: I've seen this happen two, three times with people whose professional training was in English grammar, literature, and so on, with results I could only call knee-jerk correction. In other words, the absolute form which the person is suggesting is grammatically and literally completely correct, and it's the preferred, but by the time you get around to re-stuffing the sentence that way, a lot of the original flavor is lost. It's incredible. I felt very, very sad because when I was doing the biography of Baba, *The Awakener of the Age*, for the Spanish publisher who wanted to do the Spanish *God Speaks*, I went to India after I had finally done what he asked to do a year and a half before, write a short biography, part philosophy and part history. I asked Bhau and the Trust if I could come for a month and work with preferably Merwan Jessawalla and Heather Nadel. I said there're so many things in this which I cite as being factual, but I wasn't around and they needed checking. So we went over carefully, then Heather said, "Don, you know Ward's away on his summer vacation still but will you promise me when he comes back you'll give him the privilege of going over this carefully because he's terribly good at correcting sentences and so on?"

So I said — because I like Ward, I've always liked him — "That's great." So he worked hard on it. I guess it must have been nights. He sent me two, three chapters, and I was almost heartsick when I read what he suggested be changed in the first chapter. Almost nothing that he suggested could I accept because it just took the heart out of the feeling of what was originally written. He wasn't correcting mistakes but what he simply felt was literary styling. And finally he caught on to the fact that I was not accepting them, then he stopped. Our relationship was never the same after that.

This what I call technical, knee-jerk correcting. And it's death. Absolute death. This is what Chris Flagg did. Are you familiar with the fact that most of what he did after he left Bal Natu and Eruch and went off on that job of librarian in Kuwait?

DAN: No.

DON: And he continued to do it after he was there. And this is what was driving Sheriar absolutely up the wall. And he kept sending these things from Kuwait.

DAN: Why did Sheriar accept them? If he was doing this and sending unauthorized corrections to Sheriar, why did they accept them?

DON: When he left Eruch and Bal Natu, he said we haven't completely finished the final polishing. And so he said I can do that, and I promise you I can do it in Kuwait. And so that was what he was doing. They knew what his feelings technically were, and he had authorization from the other two members of the team. I got into the middle of it because I was supervising a Spanish translation of the *Discourses* at that point. And so, because I had met him and chatted and he was a great friend of an Italian lady I admired tremendously, I got to know him quite well. I like him tremendously. So he then started sending me further corrections from Kuwait for the Spanish translation so it would correspond to his latest. And so as I began to get some of his corrections, I took alarm and I wrote to him, and I said you've gone pretty far. And he said, well these things have got to be done. And that was that. So we didn't get into a battle, but I realized I was not going to correct his sense. So I wrote a letter, a long letter, to Eruch and said, Eruch, something very alarming is going on here. And the only way I can describe it is he's a terribly good technician with formal English structure, and he is making corrections which don't need to be made, and which are destroying a lot of the flavor. And Eruch wrote me back a letter, a very soulful letter, and said Don, I have complete confidence and I just feel he is working under Baba's guidance.

Well by that time, even Eruch who I adored next to Baba, on a rare occasion Eruch would be capable of making a terribly, terribly bad judgment himself. It would happen. But rarely. But it would happen. And that was one of them.

SWEETA: May I say my Eruch as Peter theory? Or is it too early on Sunday morning for my Eruch as Peter theory? I have a very fertile imagination so if it gets tiresome you can enough imagining. We know that Eruch is Peter because Baba told us. I cannot understand, as we were saying yesterday, how anyone would change those words, *God Speaks* and the *Discourses*, how it could even occur to anyone to change those words. It's very hard to understand. And being a psychologist and being fascinated by questions like that, what I came up with is far-fetched a little bit controversial. Eruch is Peter.

DON: Everybody I know assumes that.

SWEETA: Well, Baba said that.

DON: Most people know that Baba said so. Most people always assumed before they heard that that he had to be Peter because he has all the earmarks of it.

SWEETA: We know that in the role of Peter there was a denial. It's a scary word to say.

DON: That's right. Before the cock crows he will deny me twice.

SWEETA: So it occurred to since Eruch was the perfect sidekick and perfect servant, and never denied anything, that in order for that role to be fulfilled after 1969 there was this idea — and apparently not only Eruch but other mandali had the same idea — to change those. That's just a theory that came to mind about Peter because I cannot for the life of understand it.

DON: The Peter role had to carry on. That was his denial. Well, to me, I just have to say Eruch was so perfect in

every way. He was not an angelic person but to me, he was the ideal human being, humanly. I can't imagine anybody doing better. But also I certainly do know that everything I know says Baba took new drop souls to fulfill the same role that had been filled classically in previous incarnations. But I believe, I'm absolutely dead convinced, that Baba did not, let's say, impose those roles except in very small detail on people. After all, he knew every human being who was alive on the planet. And he knew their characteristics. And he simply chose the ones who were by nature best suited for the job, the best suited for the Peter, and so on and so on. And then gave them sort of fill-in — Baba talks about them — nonbinding sanskaras.

At any rate, most people interpret that when they read it in one of the discourses, everybody assumes that these are the major supply of sanskaras. And they aren't. It's a sprinkling. He chose people who have the basic characteristics from people who were available in creation So he was not, let's say, stamping something on them that was foreign. But alright, now here's a place where there's got to be a fill-in, so we've got to put one of those special sanskaras there.

I've got to ask you people. Did you read the copy of the *Glow* in which Naosherwan published his interview with Bhau about the "real" story of how Baba gave his words out? I got a copy just about a month ago. I've got it right here. And I've also got the *Neti Neti* — have you ever heard about that? Well, as soon as I read that, I hadn't even gotten the *Glow* yet but one of my friends in America said Don, this is just incredible what Naosherwan and Bhau have put together. So Naosherwan sent me at my request what he had put into the *Glow*. I was just sick at heart. Really sick at heart. If anything has ever been put into print that just messes so many things up so unnecessarily incorrectly. So at any rate I did a two-page, not rebuttal, but recognition of what had been put into the *Glow*, and went as far as I thought I could go. I would like both of you to read it because this is going to have to be one of the principal things we're dealing with, for better or worse. I'm sorry to interrupt our morning's activity, but this is such a monumental, landslide foul-up, since you don't know about it, you've got to read it. It's germane to what we're doing. Several people called me in a state of shock when they read the thing.

SWEETA: We don't get *Glow* anymore. Several years ago Baba took us out. I mean he just separated us and put us out in a little one-room cabin, and he ended our formal careers. So we don't read *Glow*. We haven't read it since the '90s. But it is very upsetting, but on the other hand you make the record for posterity. That's what you must do and that's what you are doing.

DON: Well, I apologize for decreeing that our first order of business this morning is to get through this thing that created quite a landslide in peoples' minds.

DAN: I can see why. If there's all this confusion about what Baba wrote and how he wrote it within a handful of years after he discarded his body, it's amazing that after two-thousand years we have anything even remotely approaching a consensus on any other sacred document.

SWEETA: There isn't any consensus on the Bible. There never has been.

DAN: Well, there's a fundamental consensus.

SWEETA: Only in American Protestant Christians. Among the people that we are around everyday, but that's just

one little tiny bit.

DON: Well, if you have documents that are contrary to your own knowledge, you can't just sit there. You have a responsibility when you accept an assignment. It's professional. Even if I didn't believe Baba was the Avatar, even if I didn't believe he was the greatest thing that ever came into my life, I would still feel that professional responsibility. It's the way I've been trained all of my of life. Goes back to oil days, goes back to university days, goes back to childhood even. If I cleaned up the leaves from my neighbor's lawn, I accepted the responsibility that it looked neat. So it doesn't end at that particular point. You've got to support things you've been involved in.

So at any rate, when I was in touch with Naosherwan when he gave me the copy of the *Glow*, he gave me the statement, "Don, I assume you will want to reply to the interview." He implied that he was saving space in an early *Glow* to print whatever I wanted to say. So at any rate, before we went to press with the Neti article I wrote, we sent him a copy of it by email. And no indication the email was rejected or anything of the sort. But some days later, I guess I thought it's rather odd that Naosherwan didn't make some sort of comment on it, even that I'd received it and I'm not completely in agreement, but we'll go further, etc. And I sent him another one and said, Naosherwan I'm beginning to get concerned as to whether you read what we printed in Neti before it actually hit the press and went out through the mails. And if not, let me know and I'll get it right back to you. And he said, "No, I don't even know what you're talking about, Don."

So I sent it to him, and then in his reply to my — I was setting up an itinerary and I said, "I don't know whether you want me to write an article formally for the *Glow*, or maybe you would choose to do an interview with me as you did with Bhau. I could do that as I come through in the end of April, early May for a meeting on the west coast USA." He replied to that and said, "Don, the public record has now become so acrimonious I do not want to publish anything more."

But let me tell you one other fact and then I'll finish the history. So he said no more publishing. I wrote him a fairly sassy letter and said Naosherwan I just can't believe what's going on here, and that even if I were not an old friend, to deny the right of someone who's so obviously being attacked in this manner any sort of a reply, that has really shocked me right to the teeth. I think Baba would be very sad to see where our personal friendship and cooperation lies at this point. And I said, "However, I don't want to close off the possibility that I would maintain my itinerary as I was originally planning it, to stop off in New York, and we discuss personally where we find our relationship has now landed." No reply. Absolutely nothing. That really shocked me.

DAN: A few moments ago when you used the word acrimony, I found that surprising. I thought that what was going on was a private thing between me and Ward. I wasn't aware of any controversy, not just about the *Discourses*, but about Baba's words, how they were given, how they should be preserved, and so on. I'm surprised the word acrimony even came into it, because it's simply a matter of historical facts.

DON: Is anything I wrote there acrimonious?

DAN: No. That was gentlemanlike.

SWEETA: There are very, very sharp disagreements, but I think that people have really tried to keep acrimony out

of it.

DON: Yeah. Well, that was the word he used to me. I'm afraid Naosherwan has put himself in a professional position, I just can't understand how he's done it.

DAN: I would think that just simply as a magazine editor, this is hot stuff, it's going to sell copy. I should think he would be very interested just from that point of view. It's not a fight, it's a discussion about different recollections about how things worked.

SWEETA: One thing. He gives a hint in the interview style. What he says in his *Glow* magazine interview of Bhau is going to be the last word. I think he says that even in the title, let's set to rest forever these questions.

DON: This is the undeniable truth. Unchallengeable.

SWEETA: And we can't do that. We have these disagreements. Baba may be unifying all religions but he's apparently not removing all difference of opinion. We have these differences. I think what Baba is doing is heightening our awareness of these differences. He's sensitizing each of us to really think and use critical reasoning. I know that's what's he's doing for me, to really think and use your critical reasoning about my words. Naosherwan, for good reason and good inspiration, may wish to set these things to rest forever and ever, but he's not going to be able to do that.

DON: Well, actually the interview took a modest bonfire somewhat under control, poured kerosene on it. And I've had people who are rarely in communication with say, Don, how under the sun could anything like this have come about? The printing of an article in the *Glow*, in this tenor, with such obvious attack intended,. We can't understand how the *Glow* has put itself in this position. Anyway, I wanted you to know this is pretty intense bonfire that's burning.

DAN: Well, you did *Meher Baba's Word and His Three Bridges* and started the workshops. The only reason we're here is because of that book.

DON: I felt the workshops had to be done because there so many erroneous things running around and being put into the record by really prominent people. I just felt before I died I had to give the straight story, being involved directly in the three most important things that Baba put out.

SWEETA: Is there anything this morning on your mind and heart right now that you would like to say?

DON: No. I wanted you to know about this as the background for our continuing on, because especially in your questions there are several things that are very, very touchy and delicate. Remember I said I had three sort of pillar stories I wanted to be sure, while we were together, that I got to you people, even though I suspect you either read or know about the general outlines. The first one was how Baba got me involved in the *Discourses* and secondly, something that came up. This is the shorter of two stories, so why don't we do that now, get it out of the way.

DAN: Pillar two?

DON: Yeah, this is pillar two. When I began working on the *Discourses* I was quite rapidly impressed by the fact

that really, the major, major subjects that Baba spent the most number of discourses on were sanskaras and meditation. And I really, I hadn't realized, since I had read the Deshmukh edition, I just barely knew Baba's name. At the time when I started reading the Deshmukh edition, and so Murshida Martin had started giving me and other members of the group — me because I was one of the newest comers — some simple Sufi exercises in meditation and concentration. And I was just getting deeply into those, and rather enjoying what was going on. Quite frankly, I never particularly like the word meditation. I hope this doesn't upset you in any way, because for most people it's almost a shrine that you bow down to.

SWEETA: It doesn't upset me because I've never been able to do it.

DON: Well, but I had so many friends, little schoolmates who had parents who belonged to this ism or that mysticism or whatever not, and meditation was one of those hallowed words. And for me it was the birds. I just automatically had a negative connotation to the word. I didn't know anything about it but I didn't like the word. So at any rate, when Murshida Martin gave me a meditation that started in very simply, you know, I did it because I had sworn allegiance and that I would obey what she told me to do. And I began to think, well this is not bad at all. I probably tossed something into the ashcan that I should have a great deal more careful about. But then, when I go back into editing work and find sanskaras, yes quite a bit of material, but I think there is one more discourse on meditation than there is on sanskaras even. And that rather shocked me.

And so, the first time I was in India after this came to clear to me, I just suddenly brought this up with Baba. And because I hadn't planned the conversation, hadn't even, you might say, examined my own motives and what was going on inside of me, it just sort of came splat: "Baba, you know there's one thing, you've got so many discourses here on meditation and yet I was just getting into meditations with Murshida Martin when she passed on and you took over, and one of the first things that you did was to send Murshida Duce orders to leave aside all of Inayat Khan's graded papers." I don't whether you knew anything about that. And the second thing was —

SWEETA: I don't recognize the term. Graded papers?

DON: Graded papers. I'll tell you a little bit about them, because it's part of a very interesting problem that arose in Murshida Duce's handling of this matter of going about reorienting Sufism. At any rate, the graded papers of Inayat Khan were not to be used anymore and secondly, that he wanted all meditations and concentrations stopped. And I said, "Baba, I knew that you had done discourses on meditation, but to see here that you spend more discourses than on any other subject, and yet you took us off of it and you have never, in all the time that I've been around you, given me any mediation, and I can't put the two things together logically." And as I said this, as I say, it was an unplanned conversation with Baba and an unplanned exposure to him of my reaction. And I felt immediately that I ought to be ashamed of myself. I sound like I'm complaining that Baba didn't take proper care of me or that he's inconsistent and now I'll have to sit through a great big explosion of anger from Baba. I went through one of those in my life and that was enough.

So, if we get time I'll tell you about that one because that was quite an epic. So Baba, instead of even looking the slightest bit annoyed, said, "Don, that's an extremely interesting point and I want to explain it to you." He said, "I

recall to you, I want you to know that during the time of the Avatar's manifestation, note the word —

DAN: It's a word, by the way, that confuses me to this day.

DON: Yeah well, we've got to, we'll add to your confusion this day some more. During the time of the Avatar's manifestation, and for some time after, he did not specify how long some time after, the gate of love to the path of realization is fully open to all of humanity. And because love has the greatest capability to marshal and direct and utilize the spiritual forces that are necessary to make progress on the path, it is the best of the pathways to realization that can be utilized. And during the time that the gate of love is fully opened, it is therefore a waste of time to use any other method of following the path. But, the gate of love will not remain fully open indefinitely. As I have said, it would remain open for some time after my manifestation. But gradually it will narrow and become accessible to only a very few aspirants. Now for some reason I don't think he used the term, but I immediately associated that with a phrase that exists in my mind, heroes on the path.

And I've always thought since he told in the barn that day about St. Francis, that St. Francis was one of the heroes on the path. So I just said to myself, he's saying that only a real hero of the path will get through the path, the gateway of love. And he said, "Because I am responsible for my devotees for some hundreds of years before I come back again, I knew of course that I had to provide a secondary pathway in some detail. And because the best of the secondary routes that will be available is meditation, I have given all these discourses on meditation. But for the present it is virtually a waste of time to use any meditation." Now I thought that was one of the most important things that had ever been said to me, quite frankly.

DAN: It's a relief to me.

SWEETA: It's a tremendous relief.

DON: Yeah, well I immediately said, I quoted that story to two or three of the mandali. I don't think I did it to Eruch because Eruch had been translating Baba's gestures, Eruch knew everything Baba said. But the first couple of the mandali, because I was staying right at Meherazad in the Blue Bus at he time, the first couple of them I told it to said, but Don that's contrary to what Baba assured us again and again and again and again, that love is the great pathway and it'll always be available. I said that isn't what he said. And they got very upset with me. Isn't it interesting? This was probably the first time I ever found out that when I was quoting Baba back to Baba's own mandali, that they could get upset with me for telling them something that Baba had told me.

SWEETA: Well if I understand though, let me just ask, it's not that the pathway of love will close, it's that right now it's wide open and that's the one to use.

DON: He was very careful to say that that would gradually narrow.

SWEETA: Right. Narrow. It won't absolutely close.

DON: He did not say that it would end, but become accessible to only a very few people. This he was very careful about. And so that's why meditation even for my direct devotees, meditation will have to be the path they will have to take after a while. But for now, don't.

DAN: Three-hundred years from now? One-hundred years from now?

DON: These crazy figures that people keep quoting about how long the manifestation will last and so on. Baba absolutely steered clear — always — of giving specific numbers to any of these things. So when I hear people, including Bhau, giving very glibly and flatly and surely the number of years of these things it makes my hair curl. Necessarily. I feel that's taking terrible liberties with the way Baba went about things. But let me go on to one other point which is terribly — did you hear me say that now the path of love is fully open? He had stared the conversation off by saying that during my manifestation, during the time of my manifestation, the path of love is fully open. This is why I haven't given you meditation. This means that the manifestation had already occurred. And this was in the mid-1950s. So I said to a couple more of the mandali, Baba just told me, he didn't say I have manifested and therefore so and so, but he linked two things. He didn't give me any because I could go through on the path of love. And that, Don, is why I haven't given you any, because all the time during my manifestation it's fully open. So I said all this brouhaha about saying the word and manifesting and so on, you know all happening together, it's already happened.

But you know nobody, nobody was going to get, even everybody wants Baba when he says the word and manifests. To see these millions of people flocking in, you see, and knocking on the door of Pilgrim Center and everything else, you know. That's part of, what shall I say, the Bible as far as they're concerned.

DAN: What is his manifestation? I've been reading Bhau's books and hearing things for years and years, and I don't know what it is. A sort of vague sense of Baba becoming available to humanity or something. But what does Baba's manifestation mean, anyway, in specific terms?

DON: Well, certainly one thing he said that has always stuck in my mind very clearly, and that would be that at that time he would give a push to all of creation which would be felt by the simplest ants or whatever not, you know. It wasn't just a manifestation a push, on the spiritual path just to humanity, but something that pushed the whole universe ahead, right down to the stone and gas stages. And so I began looking in my own bag of tricks. And the first that I did was to look through my recollection of the many years in my adolescence and twenties, before I knew anything about Sufis or Baba or anything of the sort. And I had all sorts of kid friends whose parents belonged to this group and that group and that meditation group, and so on, and when I looked over the amount of progress those people had made in all the time I had been around those families, it just seemed to me if they had made any progress, they were just barely inching along.

And then I thought that, then, as I looked back, starting in the early fifties, all of a sudden something started happening, particularly to young people. And I saw young people changing with a speed and with a sincerity and inner push that was certainly not true of their parents. And it seemed almost, this was when all of the flower children and the hippies and the experiments with drugs and so on and wandering and trying to find gurus around the world were all happening, you know. I was right in the middle of it there in San Francisco in the Haight-Ashbury district. So I had concrete observations to make. So that was one thing. I said, I am sure — and that started happening probably somewhere around the middle of the 1950s — so I put a dateline to it.

Then the other thing was, I remembered Baba said this push will go to everywhere in creation. The lowliest ants and whatnot. So I began thinking, well I've always loved dogs. And my old Scotch collie dog I was born with, I got him when I was one year old for my birthday present. I can remember to this day my father coming through the kitchen door and thinking, what's he doing with his hands behind his back? He never comes through the kitchen door that way. He's usually holding his arms out or something like that. Then all of a sudden, he took his arms from behind his back and in one hand was something that looked like a wool mitten, or something like that. And the wool mitten jumped out of his hand, ran across the floor, jumped up on me and pushed me back. And I screamed because I didn't know what it was. And that was my dog. And so I remembered my dog. He was a wonderful animal. But then in the forties and fifties and sixties, I had a succession. And the change in the, what shall I say, the mentality, the awareness of these dogs that I've got, even as marvelous as my old Scotch collie dog was, they almost became human beings. They could understand so many things.

And then I inherited a canary when I moved to London in the sixties. And that, once we were having a — this was even before I moved from San Francisco — I carried Fred, the canary. But Fred, I was talking to a young Baba devotee in one of the hippie groups, and suddenly he stopped and said, "Don, do you hear what I hear?" And I stopped and said, "No. Fred's warbling but that all I hear." He said, "But do you hear what your canary is singing?" And I listened, and he was singing the theme from a Sanson violin concerto that I love. Can you imagine? Fred, my canary! He was hipped on it. He sang it for the rest of his life. And I inherited a couple of cats from the old Sufi school when they closed it, and my gracious, one of those cats was like a human being. He did incredible things. So I said, well I've seen Baba's manifestation. I've been around animals all of my life. And there, the years to the fifties to the sixties something tremendously important did happen. The only thing I could say is, that had to be the Avataric push as part of his manifestation.

And certainly it was during that part of the fifties that Baba's name ran around through young people like wildfire. So, to me, manifestation made sense. And it was open. But you can't tell that to one of the mandali. And I got really in Dutch for telling that story to two or three of my friends, that Baba has already manifested. Don, it can't be. I don't hear people running around saying Baba's name all the time as he said they would. I said, well maybe it's a little bit different, but I've seen the real, real markers that are important to me. So for me, he's manifested. And so all of this business, well he manifests a hundred years after he drops the body, or sixty years, or God knows the figures I've seen — ridiculous! This crap, excuse me for putting that term, but I get fed up with that sort of crap all of the time. People pretending to know things that they obviously don't have a tinker's damn notion about.

So that's my second pillar story, that Baba has manifested and meditations will be increasingly the manner — people who say it's love, it's love, it's love, it's love, end of story — it's not that simple.

DAN: With that in mind, there are a couple of things. The introduction Margaret Craske wrote to *God to Man and Man to God*, and then also there is a recent online column by Ann Conlon. Both of those pieces say essentially that the exact words of the *Discourses* don't matter very much because the only thing that matters is the love behind the words.

DON: And I have directly from Baba's lips, and that will be the third story we'll do tomorrow morning. That is not

true. It is not true. It is part of the story, but it is a terribly balanced story. And it just made Baba heartsick when I brought up the subject of what people think of even Baba's own words, that there's no particular reason to worry about them, that they don't matter. So I just can't agree. I love Margaret Craske, always have. But I just don't agree with that. Ann Conlon, I have not had the same respect for, but I just think that Ann was very much off base in that announcement. But many, many people are nowadays.

SWEETA: It is just so hard for me to understand that view, when someone says his words are going to be changed, it's inevitable. It's just like saying, you know, there's going to be filth in the samadhi and it doesn't matter. I just do not understand it.

DON: It just sickens me. [Don picks up several sheets of questions prepared by the Tylers.] As a matter of fact, what we might possibly do, just as a first beginning brush, is to take up a few that I put IMP, which means I consider this a very important thing that we need to cover a high priority. And the first one of those is, 'Did Baba ever tell you why he chose you and Ivy Duce to edit the *Discourses* and *God Speaks*?' And so I put NO!, an exclamation point around Ivy Duce. He didn't. And that I went over with you this morning. But that's a terribly important basic point. Here's another one in the same general vein. Sweeta: 'What were the criteria for making changes to Deshmukh's five-volume edition. Did Baba tell you or Ivy specifically what to change?' And of course you know he didn't say anything to Ivy, so she's crossed out now. But the entire base of what was changed in my statement to you yesterday that when Baba pushed my nose to the grindstone and got me started rereading them, then I came back and said, "Baba, you know this is India style sentence structure. And even as wonderful a scholar as Deshmukh uses in style, you need to have the sentences rearranged." So that was the specific discussion. What needed changing? And then I just have to go on from there and say however, Baba did not say don't change anything else. And I knew he wanted me to do a workmanlike job of reading through and seeing if there were things as being obvious errors somewhere or another. So the other two simply had to do with simply the usage, the grammatical structure, and Deshmukh knew English grammar completely properly. I don't think I uncovered one grammatical mistake in all of the things that I went over.

There were a few in which — a very few — in which he had misunderstood the meaning of a word and had chosen the wrong word. And it was obvious from the context what the correct English word was. I changed a few of those. But in general, it was simply sentence structure. I don't think that I even cut any long sentences into shorter sentences. I had to do quite a bit of that in *God Speaks* with Eruch's very long sentences. But in Deshmukh's, not. So really I stuck to what Baba and I talked about specifically, which was sentence structure. Is that quite clear?

So maybe then you say to yourself, well Don, what under the sun did you discuss with Baba all those times that you got to see him while you were working on the *Discourses*? And it was not particularly about material from the *Discourses*. The most important two I told you about, the comments about meditation and secondly that I could not, as I got to latter part of my editing work, reconcile some of the things that I had in *Listen Humanity*, Part 2. There's some important sanskaric material in there and also in *God Speaks*. I said to Baba, "I cannot make a logical, non-contradictory structure with what I've got from these three sources that I've been through again and again and again. And Baba saying, "I will give it out." And he didn't and Eruch says, "He didn't say which incarnation he would do

it.” And Eruch was not trying to be funny. He was just stating a literal fact. He’ll explain it, but humanity has got to get to a certain particular level of culture and sophistication.

DAN: When I read the *Discourses* sections on sanskaras, I’m full of engineering questions about how the actual exchanges work, whether they have mass that might be measurable ten thousand years from now, the difference between the kinds of sanskaras and the intensity of sanskaras, and how they relate to gross, subtle, and mental. There are all kinds of — he’s given us this structure — but there are so many particulars to be filled in.

DON: Yeah. Well, one of the most meaningful things in relation to sanskaras that I ever ran into was in one of the last little pamphlet collections of the *Discourses* that Deskmukh did and put out, not under the title *Discourses*. He did one collection of maybe twenty or so which he called *Sparks*, which is extremely good and which is a little hint in a couple of the end ones in there that it is not just wiping out sanskaras totally that is going on, but rather that sanskaras have to do with both a form structure and an energy component. And it is the energy which is related to desires and compulsion. But the form content, and I gradually related form, began to realize how many times in *God Speaks* Baba links two words together: individualized consciousness of God. And when I finally — this has only been four or five years ago that I began to really say, my God, why didn’t I ever focus long, long ago on how frequently Baba uses the word individualized consciousness. And that had never struck. And I said, my God, that’s where you and I come in. It’s the individualization. And boy that goes right down, if you take a look at let’s say, the drop soul, when it gets to the seventh plane, then it is still infinite individualized ego, or something of that sort. Ego, even — and the French people almost flipped when they saw, called their attention to the fact that this never, never taboo word ego, Baba uses it right at the end in the God-realized stage.

DAN: That’s always been one of the great mysteries. The idea of an individualized experience of an infinite experience. It’s something I can’t make heads or tails of.

DON: How under the sun can infinite unity, indivisible, get individualized? That takes some doing.

SWEETA: But it had to, to have experience. If the purpose is for God to have experience —

DON: And that’s what creation is all about. And the dream. So the dream turns out to be a pretty important dream. But that’s where I began to think, what under the sun could have happened to the whim after it set it all on route. Because it just didn’t fold up shop and get out of reality. It couldn’t have. Well, to go on down here. So what Baba was actually trying to rationalize with you even a little bit, why did Baba let me come so many times when I was going on the *Discourses* if he was not instructing me on as to what to change and how to change? Not at all. But there were so many, many, many things that he planted from so many directions. I led a full life with Baba every time that I was there. It was not focused and devoted solely to the book that I was editing at the time when I would be visiting him.

There would be questions. We would go back and forth over certain things that seemed puzzling to me and get things straightened out. But it was not like, let’s say, going to a university, and that being the text book and that’s what the class was all about. I mean the class was about all of life and Don Stevens’ involvement in petroleum and things that were going on with various different Baba devotees hither and yon. And even so, very often he suddenly

would just break off in the middle of a conversation that Eruch would be translating his gestures for, and he would suddenly change the subject to something that seemed to have nothing to do with nothing. And after he had said it to me — it would always be interesting what but he told me at the time — but he wouldn't go into what he told me that, why he broke into the conversation. And many of these things, thirty, forty, fifty years later, suddenly in experience in my own daily life, I'd say, my God!

I'll give you an interesting example of this. A terribly interesting example. This relates back to the time when he gave me the papers that became Part II of *Listen Humanity*. As soon as I arrived at lower Meherabad and he had the car take me and my bags up the hill and put me in one of the rooms in the old water tank and came down, he said, "Don, I have something very important I must tell you about." And this was the beginning, just before the first day of the first language group. So here were these people coming and wanting to see Baba who they hadn't seen for months, or even years. And suddenly Baba breaks off right in the middle of it and says, "I've got to talk to you about something." So he takes me over to what is now Ted and Janet Judson's living shack, unless they've moved into their new house. And that was used by him to be quiet during these meetings, nobody was living in it. And he said, "Don, I have to tell you about the planning for this sahasas."

And I thought, planning? What have I got to do with how he planned it? You know, if he wants to tell me about planning, well, OK. So he says, "You know, I had named a sum of rupees." (Let's say it was 10,000 rupees in the bank.) He said, "I had no particular thing that it needed to be spent for. So I thought there are so many, many of these younger people who are coming along, who never had much chance to be with Baba, and I've been in seclusion for quite some time, unavailable to them, so I will send out invitations to the group heads for the four important languages. And I will invite people. This will be by invitation only because I have a limited amount of money." So he said, "I consulted with Adi, Sr. and with several group heads and told them what I was going to do. Because I had this fixed amount of money I got in Padre to take care of the physical arrangements when I have a public gathering." Now later on, when this went into print somewhere else — I'll tell you about that — it was said that Pendu made the arrangements. But at any rate, you see how authoritative these things can get.

So he said, "I got in Padre and I told him how much money I had and we divided it by four, and I told him how many people I was going to invite in each group. And when I told Padre the amount of money per person that that would mean, and could he provide the necessary sleeping beds, food, and so on per person," he said, "Padre almost blew up. I had such difficulty with Padre."

You know, we think of Baba just laying down the law and telling him what to do. This was my first inkle of the way things went on behind the scene. Padre was a pretty opinionated guy and had his own opinions, and so he blew his top. Baba said, "You can not imagine how much trouble I had convincing Padre that he could do a fairly good job on that amount of money. So finally, Padre said, 'Alright Baba, I'll do my best.' But Don, what I really want you to know is as soon as I sent out these invitations to the group heads, and they told the people who were to be invited, of course they talked to other people in the group about it and other people heard about it and they wanted to come to. So poor old Adi, Sr. gets all of these letters and telegrams. They sent then to me and they sent them to the group heads. You cannot imagine all of the communication and all of the upset people," he said.

“So finally I had to sit down and I talked with Adi, Sr. again. We knew the people who had already been invited and we knew many of these people who were just asking if they just couldn’t some way come to one of the sessions. Finally, we boiled it down to, and I remembered how many he invited in each group and how many more. And how many more he wanted to invite was a 10% overrun.” Now as a good oil company employee and having to put budgets together, I knew that if I went 10% over on budget in my expenditures, nobody was going to kill me for it. That was a sacred figure. Under 10% was alright, but if I went to 12 or 15, oh my God, all holy hell would break loose. So I said to myself, Baba comes to the same sort of overrun figure that my bosses always have at Standard of California. So he was apparently on the right side with heaven’s creation here. Observing the magic figure. I’m sorry that these points you bring up raise up so many memories.

So he said, “Of course I had to have Padre in again and tell him what I wanted to do. To invite so many further ones in each group. So I got Padre in and, you simply can not imagine the troubles and the arguments and so on we went through.”

DAN: It’s hard to imagine anyone arguing with Baba. You know, saying, ‘No Baba, you’re wrong.’ Or, ‘I won’t do it.’

DON: Well, even Eruch would give Baba some pretty hard and tough arguments. Particularly if it involved Baba’s health. Eruch could be cussed on that. So here is Baba, and all of this time that he’s telling me about budgets and overruns, I’m saying to myself, what’s he telling all of this to me for? I just couldn’t explain. But still, it was a fascinating story and it gave me an insight into the details of how Baba would work these things out. The nuts and the bolts, how the Avatar worked. I didn’t know he consulted Padre on things like that, or argued with him, and so on.

So I was fascinated by the story but wondered, but why the hell is he telling me all of this? When all of these people are dying to see Baba and looking in windows to see if he’s about ready to come out and so on, you know. So at any rate, he said, “Finally Don, I had to tell Padre that if he would cut a little bit on the quality of food, I would tell people such fascinating stories about mysticism they wouldn’t particularly know what they were eating anyway. Now I didn’t tell him to give them bad food, or anything like that.”

DAN: Just cut out the caviar.

DON: Yeah. The unnecessary stuff. So he said, “Finally, Padre, when I told him that I would tell them such stories, Padre sort of laughed and said, ‘OK, Baba. I’ll do it.’” And Baba said, “There we were. I finally got Padre to agree.” Well, so out he goes. Baba goes and I follow along behind and I’m still scratching my head. What under the sun is he telling me all this about? So a few minutes later, why it’s the beginning of the first session of the morning, and we settle down and Baba says, how did everybody sleep, all of this stuff and so on. This is about, let’s say ten minutes into the thing, and he’s getting into some of the original material he wanted to present. All of a sudden I heard something like tires slipping on gravel outside. I thought, by golly, somebody has driven up in a terrible haste, and jamming on their brakes. I could hear a couple of excited voices outside of the door of Mandali Hall. And Baba sort of looks around like this, looks over at Eruch, and Eruch wields his hands back over at Eruch, and Baba looks out.

And finally somebody comes in and whispers a message to Baba. And Baba looks like this, and he said something like that, and it goes on. At lunchtime that day, when I get done with my lunch, Baba's waiting for me when I come down the hill. He says, "Don, I've gotta tell you another part of the financial arrangements." Me! What have I got to do with the financial arrangement? He said, "You heard that noise?" I said, "Yes, I figured somebody arrived late." And he said, "No. It was five boys who were not invited. They told me quite honestly what it was. They had been talking together and they were only a couple of hundred kilometers away, and one of them said, 'You know what let's do? Let's just go, let's just arrive, and just hope that by some grace Baba will allow us to stay. The worst he can do is send us back home. And we haven't lost anything. We will at last have gotten to see Baba with our eyes.' So they came," he says. "Now, what do I do with them" I can't tell them to stay because I have an agreement that I made twice with Padre. And so I had to spend all of my lunchtime arguing with Padre again" He said, "Don, you can not imagine, to get five more boys into this."

So that ran his overrun up to 15% I figured, you see. So I said, well, he's in Dutch with heaven itself with an overrun like that. And he said, "Padre finally agreed to do it. But this was the toughest argument I ever had with Padre. I had to get his acceptance before I could tell them they could stay. So now they're here, going to be here with us."

And do you know what? There was an issue of the bulletin that they put out once a year about all of the things that are going on in the building program. And one of the very first ones of those that was issued had this story of how Baba handled the financing of the four language groups. And we are using Baba's own demonstration of his magnanimity and his great spirit to greet and to provide the best for them. Because this is why we're making all of these facilities available now. Baba gave us the example in the manner in which he conducted, the generosity with which, he conducted the four language groups.

I was horrified because they presented it that Baba just cheerily invited in everybody and provided the best of beds and food and everything. And this is the example the Avatar himself has set down. So I finally saw. My God, Baba that long ago saw what was going to be made and misrepresented as a consequence.

DAN: And that's why he was giving you all that information.

DON: Yeah. So I raised hell. But not one person would listen to what I said. But can you imagine the manner in which the Avatar knows, and knows that certain things are going to happen. And certain things are so important they've got to be challenged. And you do your best to challenge it. And you don't get much of anywhere because people have got their own ideas of who the Avatar is and how he works.

SWEETA: When you were telling this story of Baba in a sense haggling, you know, what I'm always struck with is that with his mandali and with the people who were with him when he was in the body, he was constantly concealing his Godhood. He had that work of concealing his Godhood. And for myself, who never saw him in the body (at least not that I recall), I have so much less of a sense of him as a human being, and so much clear and entirely a sense of him as God. And the issue that we keep talking about, which is changing his words, that's another one of my theories. You know, I have all of these theories about things. That those who were with him when he was in a human body and when he was concealing Godhood, in a sense seem to have an easier time with changing his

words, because they saw him as a human being. So somebody like myself who never saw him, and has always seen him as God, with a capital G, can not imagine changing his words.

DON: Yeah. That's an interesting one.

SWEETA: You like that one? You like that one better than the Peter one.

DON: Yeah. Yeah, I've got my reservations about Peter.

SWEETA: Everybody does.

DON: I think Eruch was chosen as Eruch because he most closely resembled Peter in his natural characteristics at the point when Baba needed him.

February 7, 2005

DAN: In the second edition to *God Speaks* throughout, world (subtle world, gross world, and so on) was changed to sphere. How and why did that happen?

DON: Well, let's see. What one was that in? Is that in *God Speaks*?

DAN: That's in the second edition to *God Speaks*. In the first edition the term world was used throughout and in the second edition it got changed to sphere.

DON: I don't remember the circumstances of it, but it had to be it was brought up with Baba, and some way or another Baba felt that sphere was better. Maybe Eruch brought up the point originally. It sounds like an Eruch clarification. But it was certainly cleared through Baba that it was the better term. Because Baba talks about spheres in a rather technical way at some point. And I think Eruch did not realize that so many of the words of the text just running along, used worlds instead of spheres. Please don't feel that I consider myself any authority on worlds and spheres and planes. I'm afraid it has never interested me at all. And so I've just been a good obedient servant to do what I was told to do on things like that.

DAN: That question was actually from my brother, Ben. He was very interested and I'm glad you could clarify it.

DON: Well, I'd be happy to sit at Ben's feet and get educated because although my natural interest doesn't go in that area, in that direction, I know that I just have to be open to improve my background knowledge. It's never too late.

DAN: This question has to do with *God to Man and Man to God*. We all agree that's it's not the optimum version, but Laurent told me a story that Ivy Duce once offered to buy all of the books off of the pallet, back in the seventies perhaps, from Sheriar Press because she was so alarmed at that edition.

DON: I have absolutely no idea if it is a true story. I never got in on it. Murshida Duce never told me about it, but that could well have been after, you know, I had to pull a bit away from Murshida, quite a bit away. So if it happened, I think the first time I ever heard it is from Laurent, and it was one of the things I heard from Laurent

when we were doing other things that I thought were more important. And I just pricked up my ears and said, my God, well Murshida was perfectly capable when she made a decision. Usually, as she was pretty adamant about her decisions and she usually acted on them. So she could well have done it.

DAN: Let me get just one further clarification. Why do you think *God to Man and Man to God*, that Baba did sanction and approve, why is it not satisfactory?

DON: Oh, it isn't, let's say, an objection to it, it just seems to me it's a terrific waste of time and investment of money and reader's time to read a condensed version of Baba's own words when he's got Baba's own words and Baba never gave any sense at all — here's the principal problem — he never gave any evidence that any kind of edited or expurgated or condensed version had the atom bombs of spiritual energy attached to them. So to me it's a double waste of time. I'm just sad. And what I did read of it — I loved Purdom and I thought he was a marvelous man from styling standpoint, too. But for me, it just took the guts out of *God Speaks*.

DAN: When I first read it I was enchanted with the language. I really thought it was beautiful, beautifully done.

DON: He was a master.

DAN: But I came to the same conclusion. It's like a Reader's Digest condensed version. Very beautifully done, but still a Reader's Digest condensed version.

DON: And absolutely no atom bombs. It obeyed none of the specifications that Baba said in his technique of handling words where he tied on the atom bombs.

SWEETA: Do you have a clear sense of the atom bombs? I mean Don stresses atom bombs a great deal and I don't know whether in the document you want to produce if you want to explain that concept.

DON: Can I say something? You're talking about what I warned you would be the three pillars that I wanted to be sure I got to you people to record, and that I considered fundamental to my operations with Baba on his words, and particularly in relation to your interest in the *Discourses*. So that is going to come. It's probably going to be a good solid hour session. It's one of the principal priorities for today as far as I'm concerned. If nothing else gets done, that's going to get done.

SWEETA: No time like the present. Another aspect for us is, you seem to have had a separation from Bhau.

DON: Well, let me just spend three minutes to give you the guts of that. I did not know Bhau. All of those visits I made to India, Bhau was almost never present at anything. He was almost never present at any of the sessions that Eruch and Baba and I had on the editorial work. And the only thing that ever happened was that on several occasions as I was leaving, Baba took me around to say goodbye to the different mandali, and on several occasions he knocked on a door, which I didn't know what the hell it was, and Bhau opened it and said hello. And Baba indicated Don was saying goodbye.

So my contact with Bhau all during the editorial period, concentratedly, with Bhau the only time I ever met him he was sitting on bench when I was walking somewhere. And he said, "Oh Don, I understand that you are deeply interested in the New Life and there's something I want to tell you about it." And thought well, that was a very good

contribution he made and that was kind of him. Other than that, I had no connection. He had no activity, no feed-in nor out, of any of the things I was editing for Baba or writing for Baba. Never. So, that's number one. So my contact with him was zero until he became Treasurer of the Trust. And when he became the Treasurer, Claude had gotten a bug about the necessity for an endowment for the hospital that Goher wanted built and which was being built, and I gave a big chunk of money.

SWEETA: Since we're creating an historical record, why don't you mention the year we are talking about.

DON: Well, these were the seventies, as I remember.

SWEETA: OK, close enough.

DON: So Bhau was an unknown quantity until pretty late in my life. And then, because of the fact that Claude said it's going to have to have an endowment, and he got back immediately to our lawyer, who is a Baba sympathizer but not a devotee by any means, said this is a wonderful project. I'll get some of my friends behind it. And we started communicating with Mani and the Trust formally. And almost immediately Bhau got involved in it and said no, it's just never going to work because Baba always said when you give money, you forget about it. And you're talking about setting this up on an international basis where governments have to be guaranteed the large sums of money, if they want to ask for how is it spent. And ask even for things . . . this is so contrary to anything that Baba ever . . . And Bhau got really stinky. And sometimes he can write things that are just really incredibly negative. So Claude got upset, I got upset, our lawyer said, "I can't handle anything to do with something like this." And he was even threatening to resign as our lawyer he got so upset we were working for something that took such adamant attitude and would express it in such vulgar terms.

And so, I got upset with Bhau too, even though I practically didn't know him, tried to discuss it a couple of times when I was in India. And I have never in my life had an aural browbeating of the sort he administered to me on two occasions. I couldn't believe that any human being, particularly any human being who pretended to have been quite a bit of time, quite close to Baba, would indulge in anything of this sort. And the second time, when I came out of Bhau's office Mani saw me coming out and saw what I looked like, and said, "Don, I have to apologize but there's nothing we can do about how he does treat people on occasions." And I said, "Mani, I'm never again in my life going to allow myself to be subjected to words of that sort delivered in that manner." And she said, "I understand. I'll do my best to protect you."

So at any rate, I just said no and I kept that up until Bhau went into the hospital for his first big operation. I don't think I sent a get well or anything of the sort. I just said that wretched slob, excuse the words, doesn't even deserve a word of sympathy. I was mortally insulted. I couldn't, you know, in Baba terms, I just said to myself this man is a savage. Nothing — he's not lived through those basic sanskaras. This is terrible. And so I just crossed him off my books. But then the second one, the second time he was in, and I was going to go, I was going through Puna, and had no idea of calling on Bhau to wish him well or anything. And as I was practically ready to hire the taxi to go over to Ahmednagar, something inside me said, Don, you know even after what you've been through with that guy, go over and wish him well because he's been through hell on wheels.

So I went over to the hospital, found out where he was staying, unannounced. I knocked on the door, went in. He was sitting cross-legged on the bed and, what's this Serbian girl who does his nursing when he's in the hospital. She's a wonderful gal, I've known her for donkey's years. Anyway, he was on his bed and she was over by the door and they were talking between each other. And as I saw Bhau cross-legged on his bed, I saw some sort of a tremendous, tremendous love surrounding the man. I'm not psychic, but it was so strong and so real, I said, my golly, boy, this is something. And I suddenly realized this is an interplay of love from Baba to Bhau because of what he has been through, and Bhau's love, which is terribly real and terribly strong for Baba. And it was one of the strongest human experiences I've ever had. And so I said to myself, if he loves Baba with that intensity and Baba returns that love that intensely, this is a terribly important fact. And I immediately forgave Bhau for everything he had ever said to me and had ever done that I thought was practically, let's say, savage Africa, such as I had never experienced from a human being.

So, I said, well — but you asked and I'm telling you what the story is because this is important. So when he came out of the hospital I said to myself, Don, you owe Bhau an apology for these years of absolute black relationship to him. And I wrote to him and said that I had been terribly upset by his handling of the hospital and me, but his love for Baba was so real and so important I apologized for my attitude, and said Bhau, I don't necessarily agree with a lot of things you do or say, but to me the most important thing of all is you love for Baba and his love for you. And I want you accept my apology if you will and let's go on and do the things that have to get done. But that is the baseline, your love for Baba and his for you.

So when he would do something that would upset me I would write him a letter or talk to him about it. And sometimes he can take it so terribly I have to say, "Look, Bhau, let's go back to the fundamental baseline, your love for Baba and his love for you." And when I remind him of that, then he becomes a human being again and we can make progress.

SWEETA: The reason why I mention Bhau and our conscious purpose with respect to reprinting the sixth edition, and our moving in the dark and wanting to figure out Baba's wish with respect to the sixth edition, is that Bhau is the chairman of the Trust by Baba's wish —

DON: I'm not sure that's true but go ahead.

SWEETA: I know you're not sure but I'm sure in terms of the —

DON: It's necessary.

SWEETA: Yeah, the fact of the matter is it's Meher Baba's Trust and Bhau is the chairman, and I respect that. I respect Bhau just as I respect Don Stevens. When I approach Don Stevens and I approach Bhauji, I don't, I approach them and their position in life in their role that they have played and are playing. And for me, the reality of what Bhau has to say about the *Discourses*, I respect what he has to say. I don't understand it.

DON: It's un-understandable because it doesn't correspond to what Baba said. It's just that simple.

SWEETA: But I still respect it and I still respect his position because I think Baba put him in that position, and I

certainly have never had anything like a breach with Bhau. In fact, Bhau has always treated me with kindness, and every time I've contacted Bhau he has written back to me at great length. As mentioned he has given me my nickname, Sweeta. And he's always been very kind to me.

DON: Sure. He has that side to his nature and it's great.

SWEETA: I just want get on tape that part of my caution in proceeding is that I . . . just that, that I don't want to . . . that each person seems to be doing the best they can. That's the basis of my caution. My love for Bhau, my respect for the Trust, my appreciation that each person is doing what they think is best. I just wanted to get that on the historical record. Is that OK? Are you getting to your third pillar?

DON: No, I've got another thing that's just got to get in even before the third pillar. I'm sorry. The thing has come up in my mind two or three times. You were talking about diplomacy and that you're not very diplomatic, and I might be able to give you a couple of pointers that could be of value to you. I take this very seriously and it wouldn't have come up in my mind if I didn't feel it was an important subject. And actually it does tie into your interest in the *Discourses*, so I just wanted to try to weave the things together.

It goes back to the fundamentals of the thing of Baba sitting us down in '52 on Sunday afternoon in New York to do what he had promised the Sufis he would do: explain what Baba means by absolute honesty in life. Has this subject ever come to your attention, that Baba did give such a talk to six or eight of us in Ivy's New York apartment?

DAN: No.

DON: Well, have you ever read, I put it on paper a couple of times, the guts of what Baba said? This is fundamental to what we've got to talk about, diplomacy. He gave the example of an individual, let's say, who is approached by a friend, who asks him about a subject that the friend knows that he knows intimately and well is pretty authoritative, or else has a lot of background experience, the friend is either curious or else he really feels that this can be answers from this guy who can really help me in my life. So he asks him, and Baba said no. OK, you're the person who has all this knowledge and you're the person being asked to pass on the knowledge. Baba has asked you to give a vow of honesty because you're a member of Sufism reoriented and this is one of five or six things Baba said you had to agree to aspire to put into practice in your life. Absolute honesty in your life.

And incidentally, of all of the things, even though sex was included as one the things, the strange thing is that the one that everybody tripped over when he sent the original draft to us was absolute honesty. Because the housewife would say, if I tell my kids some of the things I know and feel, they'll kill me. I'll be tossed out of the family. And the husband would say, if I tell my boss what I really think of him, you know, I won't have any job and we won't have any food on the table. So, you know, there is an American expression which I don't dare use, but that happened just about all the Sufis at that time. Baba and Adi and Murshida Duce were peppered with letters, golly, how am I ever going to put this into practice? I love Baba and I love you but what can I do about it? So Baba said it is a very tough subject and when I come to America finally to meet my spiritual charges, I will sit down and explain to them what I mean by absolute honesty.

So here he is saying, somebody comes up and knows you know something and asks you, will you tell me about so

and so, what you know? So, when this person asks you this, first of all you must understand you have the decision to make whether you say something that you know, all of what you know. Or maybe you feel for some reason that it's part of what you know. And if you choose to tell him nothing at all, Baba does not say this contradicts your vow to Baba to be absolutely honest in life. There's nothing which compels you to tell that person what you know in this situation. You may decide that he can't profit by it or he will misuse it in a fashion maybe to justify it for something for his own ego and you feel concerned about it. You just feel it's an unhealthy situation. So if you decide nothing, OK. If you decide to tell him everything, alright then tell him everything.

If you tell him a part of what you know, this is where it gets complicated. And this is where I learned something that I've never forgotten. It's been the biggest challenge in my life. He said, perhaps you decide you can tell him part of what you know. But you know the person well enough to know if you tell him too much, either that he will be overwhelmed by it or misuse it in some fashion or another. So maybe you decide to tell him — and these are on Stevens' figures — 60% of what you know. Oh, he said, always in a human situation there are positive things and there are negative things. There are pleasing things and there are painful things. And so in the material that you know on this subject, you will have to choose a great many — I don't tell him this painful thing. I don't even tell him maybe some of that positive thing there. But Baba wants you to know that when you decide to tell him the 60% (Don Steven's figure) portion of what you know, then of the things that you tell him you must not overweigh him by telling him too many positive things to make him feel happy and to butter him up and please his ego and so on. On the other hand, you must not for whatever reason, overload it with the negative things to discourage him or to make him unhappy because secretly you don't like the fellow very well and you would love to see him hurt.

So you must give a proportionate amount of each of the positive — alright, it's 60% positive and 40% negative and you must stick to that. So 60% of 60%, 36% of what you know will be positive and 40% of 40 is 16% of negative things you must — well, mathematically it sounds possible, but if somebody's asking you something and you meet this challenge, boy you have got a tremendous challenge. And usually you've got to make your judgments and put the answers out pretty fast. It's a rare situation when you can say, "Let me mull over this for a day and I'll come back to you, or a week or something like that." Usually you've got to put what you have inside of you on the line very rapidly. But nevertheless, this is the challenge. Baba says this is what Baba means by absolute honesty. The proper proportions.

SWEETA: Right. Being consciously aware of the proper proportions.

DON: Right. So, I found this was one of the greatest challenges I'd ever run into. I just knew instinctively that Baba's description of absolute honesty was correct. There is a moral thing which you've got to meet immediately — does this guy have the right to know and will he use properly the things that I'm going to tell him. And boy that calls for some quick astute judgment. You have to do it intuitively. And then when you start putting the percentages together —

Claude (in background): I've got to ask you something.

DON: Oh my God, it's a good thing you did because I've got to put the oven on.

DAN: We're down to one minute of tape anyway, so it's a natural convergence of breaks.

February 7, 2005

SWEETA: These guys were just talking about being upset about Chris Flagg's changes, but that's what fascinates me. That's what I tried to put on this tape about Bhauji. It is so clear to me that Bhau believes that he's doing Baba's work —

DON: Oh, absolutely!

SWEETA: — that Chris thinks he is when he made all those changes, and so that's why I proceed cautiously because I believe, I'm convinced in my own mind and heart, that the words of the approved *Discourses* should not have been changed. But I understand that other people feel a different thing so I don't just go up to that person and say, "You're wrong and I'm right." And that's what so fascinating about all this, how we can all be looking at the same one, Meher Baba, we can all be trying our best to please Him, and yet go about it in such different ways.

DON: Sure. Well, when we do get around — I hope we will soon — to the third pillar that I wanted to be sure . . . well I've got to get through honesty first and diplomacy.

SWEETA: There's more honesty?

DON: I'm afraid there is.

SWEETA: I'm not afraid of it. I recognize that story. I have read that and it's a delightful story, it's a wonderful summation.

DON: But what I wanted to carry on from there is how, let's say, as far as I was concerned, God ended things that had to do with Baba's words. The whole question then, first of all, diplomacy becomes inevitably entangled in the subjects of what is honesty and am I honest, and is my effort to be diplomatic in this situation or is my failure to be diplomatic due to something that has to do with my conviction of what honesty is and the principles of honesty? So that's why I wanted to go back to Baba's definition of honesty and where it seems to carry on. So I certainly found out myself this is a lifetime challenge. Learning how to make quick, rapid judgments on any sort of a sound base is a frightful challenge. Especially about human nature and what it is capable to do. That guy over there, even if it's somebody you know pretty well, you know you just suddenly realize I'm up against Baba's definition of honesty and I've taken a vow of honesty, and I find more and more this is just not a little namby-pamby thing, and I'll be a nice little boy if I manage to do it. It's pretty central to the spiritual path. I found out to my complete satisfaction that that is one of the most spiritually significant challenges that Baba puts to us. And that's why he put it in the Sufi charter, and that's why he put it to me in my professional life and kept checking on it. It's only been in recent times that I have realized what an enormous role, unexpected role, that it has taken, has been, in my life.

So at any rate, you find — I certainly found rapidly — that as soon as I'd tried to do something that I thought I had done as best as I could, my mind would go back and say, 'I wonder whether I really did a good job there? Did I honestly feel inside of myself enough about the characteristics of this person, what they'd be able to do with what I was getting to them?' And also, if one is convinced of the fact that the word diplomacy in human relationship has an important role, then diplomacy inevitably gets entangled in this subject of honesty very quickly. Lots of times, let's say, you find that your ability to be diplomatic is because you have a deep instinct or a necessity, a gut necessity, to splay out everything you know on a subject that you think the other person is neglecting. And so really, you're out to cut the other person's throat or do damage to them. Your own anger or resentment and impatience come in. So all of these things, these personal characteristics, get involved in the judgment about honesty and how far to go. But certainly there is one thing very shortly after Baba gave us that talk in New York City that came to my mind, and I've tried a number of times to think back to my memory of words that Baba used. I'm afraid, these two things that became almost cardinal rules to me, I can find no trace of Baba having put those into words in August 1952 in Murshida Duce's apartment. The two words are, the two keys are, the words you choose are your choice and you have to be careful about them. And your timing on giving an answer also. There will frequently be situations which let's say especially involve family members. The same situation will come up again and again with that member of the family, and you find it's a continuing honesty and developmental problem. And so, the second rule that I almost immediately made to myself is Don, you've also in fact got the choice of the timing when you give your answer. Very frequently when you're called or challenged on something there's some heated moments or some tense or so some crisis moments, and it's very, very frequently unwise to put out what you honestly know in a situation and even feel the other person can be when the atmosphere is loaded emotionally.

So this is tactical. You can use words which have a great tendency to wound automatically or you can use words which are much more neutral. So the choice of words and the choice of the timing for a thorough response and a careful talking out is part of let's say one's judgment, human judgment, of the situation.

Now when all of that is said and done, then one of the greatest lessons in honesty that I ever had in my life had to do with, let's say, with dealing with Baba's words and the presentation of them. As soon as I was stationed in London, we opened up a discourse study for the younger people who had come and knocked on the old peoples' door of the association. And I inherited them through Delia. So, Delia did not, let's say, give up rights to them, but that's another big story. So, at any rate, we had once a week a discourse session together and I felt that it was my responsibility to lead the discussion. So I would carefully review the discourse that was to be done. Sometimes it would take two or three sessions for one discourse. And I would pick — we couldn't read the whole thing, it was just impractical, it would have taken a century to get through if we tried to read the whole thing and discuss the whole thing. So I tried honestly to do a workmanlike job of picking out the sections that I felt were important and should be discussed. One of the most difficult discourses was certainly from my standpoint to discuss in a group or to read, is the discourse on occultism. I have had — I can't go into all this now — some very very unfortunate personal experiences with people who were deeply, deeply into occult phenomena and experiments and bringing it to bear in their personal lives and inflicting it on their friends' lives, and so on. So even Baba's words on occultism are nervous to me, but I did what I thought was a workmanlike job. And because I've seen occult forces so misused, my tendency is to have a very,

very negative attitude.

Now you may remember if you have read that anywhere near recent times, that Baba says a rather startling thing, there are occult forces and even the perfect ones and even the Avatar on occasion utilize an occult experience in an extremely important situation with a devotee. To buttress, to buoy up their determination to go through a tough experience, or to give them let's say the élan to put out the energy to go through a whole line of things where they've got to put out a lot of energy. Not, let's say necessarily meaning negative situations but just, you know, they've got an awful lot they have to meet and meet well in a fairly short period of time.

So there are situations where even the perfect ones will use an occult situation. However, a real master rarely uses occult forces. They far prefer to lead the devotee through their spiritual progress through natural methods and through the daily life as the teacher. Baba is terribly clear on that. And I like that. But nevertheless he insists on it. So at any rate we came to occultism and because all of these young people have been into things that involve occultism hither and yon. And so a lot of them get deeply interested and here we go. So I threaded through that and felt I did a pretty good job. And years later, when several of the people from that original discourse group — that original discourse group is still going on today — and the people twenty, thirty years are sticking. We don't do the discourses necessarily anymore, but we went all through them. So we still call it the discourse group. So one of the really wonderful and charming and intelligent and really human guys moved up the middle of England a university there to be on a staff, and I saw him rarely.

Two or three years after he moved up there we ran into each other in London. We were walking down the street and he was reminiscing back to the old discourse study days together, and he said, "You know, Don, there have been many times I wondered whether I ought to tell you this because we're close together and I wouldn't want to do anything to hurt your feelings, but I came to the conclusion I should tell you about it." He said, "You know, after I went up to the college here I started reading the *Discourses* again and when I got to the discourse on occultism, I was surprised because I found things in that were very important that you didn't take up with us. And so I wanted to tell you about it. That, at least I felt, that your choice was a pretty slanted personal choice."

This really hit me right square between the eyes. I mean he was saying something I would consider about the worst thing I could possibly have done with the responsibility to choose material and choose it to slant according to my own prejudices and ideas. So I said, "Gee, I'm sorry to hear that. I think I may still have that set of discourses with my carat marks and so on. So I promise you I'm going to try and find that set and go back and see what I picked out as the sentences we should be sure to discuss in group."

And you know what I found? I had done exactly what he said. I had suppressed all of the positive things Baba said about occult experience and I'd only put in the negative ones. Because my own personal experience was so highly negative, I had no idea. So I wanted to tell you that here's something straight from the *Discourses*, because the *Discourses* are important, but even there one has choice and one's subconscious can easily, easily, unless you're almost a master yourself, slant it to your own way.

That was one of the deepest learning lessons I ever learned in my life. How you can think that you're an honest,

loving person for Baba, and being honest and fair in your life and with other people, and your own subconscious is still around there and slanting even Baba's words by your choices in what you say to other people. And this taught me an awful lot about Bhau, too. So, I just wanted to get off my chest that business that diplomacy is terribly tied into this whole subject as well. But many people simply say, well of course Baba said that in being honest you should never hurt the other person's feelings. Baba did not say that. Sometimes feelings are going to get hurt. Certainly the choice of words is designed to let's say hurt as little as possible, but there are unpleasant things and honestly that have got to be faced.

SWEETA: That's an interesting point.

DON: Yeah, it's very key.

SWEETA: We both keyed off that notion that somehow Baba said you should never hurt another person —

DON: But it's not the truth. It is not true.

SWEETA: Where did that idea that Baba said you should never hurt come from?

DON: All I can say is I have heard two or three Baba lovers whom I love and respect totally say that. And I would be shocked when they would say it. But you know I was there. Nothing that Baba said had anything directly to do with hurting or not hurting people's feelings. But obviously, I mean if you read in context this whole question of being honest with another person and deciding how they can use it, what are their capabilities of using, if you simply let's say choose words that knowingly or unknowingly wound them terribly, this is a great big barrier to their using what you know fruitfully. And Baba made a point. You got to make the judgment are they equipped to use properly and well what you're going to tell them amongst others. Or will they distort it?

DAN: During this talk he was giving you, how was he communicating this? Was he gesturing with Eruch translating?

DON: Eruch was not there on that occasion. I think that it was Adi Sr. or it would have been Sarosh.

DAN: When Baba gave his gestures or Eruch, or in this case somebody else translated, did Baba assent somehow yes, you've done it right?

DON: Oh, if there was any hint of something being incorrect or slanted Baba would gently let's say rephrase it and the person would retranslate.

SWEETA: The line. From living in the world I have learned this much: never hurt the feelings of another person. Do you recognize that line?

DON: I don't believe that myself. I think this is let's say one of the greatest psychological superficialities which people have invented. I know nothing from Baba which says this.

DAN: This is very interesting. Baba certainly didn't tell us to go around hurting other people.

DON: No. But he didn't say never hurt their feelings, don't risk hurting them.

SWEETA: Didn't Baba caution us to be careful of other people's feelings?

DON: Oh, all you had to do was be around Baba to see the manner in which he avoided as much as possible anything that would get the person upset emotionally from something he himself said. Frequently, he had to apply soothing syrup words to them to get them in a frame of mind so that they could even listen to what he was saying to them. So Baba was usually in the position of calming people's already hurt feelings than otherwise. So he would use one of his most frequent things, which was, "Don't worry, I'm going to help you with your problems. I will help you."

SWEETA: It's very interesting your bringing up this issue, challenging that notion — and it has seeped through, I certainly carry that notion. I've read it in *Lord Meher*, although I don't think it is . . .

DON: Attributed to Baba?

SWEETA: I don't think it is.

DON: I hope it isn't. But *Lord Meher* attributes a lot of things to Baba that I know are not Baba. This comes into the judgment, how much to you give honestly. If you, let's say, judge that what you know is going to cause the person to put up a barrier, this is the first point Baba said you've got to judge how much to pass on to this person, positively, constructively.

SWEETA: It's a different idea, that Baba didn't say never hurt somebody else's feeling.

DON: Never. He doesn't even imply it anywhere in that Sunday description he gave us. Nowhere.

SWEETA: What about if we place ourselves in situation where we know our feelings are likely to be hurt? What if we have a lot of knowledge of another person and we know that person has some kind of a motive to hurt our feelings? What did Baba say about a situation like that?

DON: Don't ask them a question where they can unload on you. Don't open the door. You don't have to. It doesn't help them to unload untruthful or hurtful material which doesn't happen to correspond to what you really are. So don't open the door and subject yourself to it. If that friend comes to you and says, "Oh I just had a terrible run-in with Susie Q and I just have to tell you what went on," and it's obvious to you that the person that unloaded on Susie Q, just tossing a lot of garbage on her, then some way or another you have a responsibility to reply honestly to her. Some way giving a hint, at least, she may be at fault in the manner she handled Susie Q.

DAN: In the last fifty years there's been a tremendous psychoanalytic, psychological —

SWEETA: Sensitizing. Everybody has been encouraged to be terribly sensitive to each other.

DAN: It's not even so much sensitizing as the elevation of feelings as one of the most sacrosanct individual experiences that's been promoted by psychology. Maybe what we're seeing, since we're talking about honesty, this may be a societal influence. We're just predisposed to think of feelings as enormously paramount and important in our psychic experience.

DON: Well, I have seen however the drawback in being overly sensitive to another person's feelings. That came out

very concentratedly in two years of teaching in a private school that I graduated from. Here are all these kids that come from wealthy and highly educated families and most of the parents, you know, ah we want our kids to have the best. We don't ever want them to have any traumas they have to go through in life because of our mistreating them, and so on. So you had these absolutely adorable kids. One or two of them could be real hellions, but by and large they were the product of very sensitive caring parents. And I thought, gee these are great kids. But when I began to see what would happen to them when they would be put, for one reason or another, through a crisis and how they dealt with crisis, they didn't know how to handle it. They didn't know how to handle a negative, barbed situation, and handle it effectively.

So I said, this has created a weakness rather than a strength. So, there's so many things to think out here. But I certainly did want to respond to your words about diplomacy and I've often been accused of, let's say, having a personal weakness because I tend to be so diplomatic with people. They say, Don you must be afraid of people because you always treat them so tender-heartedly. And I say Look, with every person I have enough of a relation to be this or that or the other thing, we also have our tough ones I bring up when I think it's the right time, it's the moment. OK, I've chosen the time and the words and I have out some tough things with them. But by and large, I think that when one allows a situation to get to tremendous emotional upset, the situation has been badly handled.

Because it's very rarely that in an emotionally upset situation progress is made. And to me the thing to do above all is to get progress. Usually it can't be made until you've got things calmed down and can deal with a fairly equilibrated person again, and then choose the words carefully. How you go about it. So this is why I think timing and words are such a tremendously important part of the whole process of honesty. You've got to judge those and how you handle your own honest delivery. And that is what I would call diplomacy. But to have it out and lay the thing on the line, that's got to be done. That's moral responsibility.

Well, enough of my little bag of tricks on diplomacy. Shall we go on to Baba's words? That's the third big pillar.

DON: We go back to the latter part of the editing of the *Discourses*. So many things go back to the *Discourses*. And this certainly was one of the two or three most important things Baba ever said to me. I think I'd been working for at least a year on editing the *Discourses*, and Baba, it was getting obvious, was starting to get just a little bit impatient as to whether I'd ever get done with it. And so he said, "Don, aren't you getting to a point where it might be wise to try to find an editor and publisher for the works and start having conversations with them so that doesn't have to be done afterwards?" He didn't put it that bluntly but it was easy to see what Baba had in mind.

So finally, I put up with these a couple of times and I decided that I would start talking to people in Japan about being the printer and I'd already talked to Murshida [Duce] about the Sufis being the publishers of it. So it was really the printers that had to be put in line. So when Baba, I think the third time, brought up the subject, well what about conversations with somebody who's actually going to get them into print, I said, "Yes Baba I can satisfy your feeling. We have, through my friends in Tokyo, started talking to some Japanese printers and we think we will soon have a very practical thing for the Sufis to work out a contract with them." Baba looked very, very pleased when I said that.

And this is one of those occasions in my life when I said something, and it was so obvious that I had done something terribly unwise and had exercised absolutely no personal control on it. I was just crushed as I heard what I said. I said to Baba, “But I don’t know what good it’s all going to do.” Can you imagine saying that to the Avatar on a project he’s been pushing you on for about two years? And you say well, I don’t know what good it’s all going to do.

So well, as soon as I said it I just had this horrible, horrible sick feeling inside of myself. Baba really looked crushed. You know, if there can be something that shows that either the Avatar was the most perfect actor that was ever invented or that even the Avatar can be unaware of something that is going to have an emotional repercussion on him, that was the occasion. I really saw that in Baba. And I can’t erase from my mind, even these days, to see the look on Baba’s face. This is terribly important. He looked sad, old, and crushed. I’ve never seen anything like that on Baba. And that told me this was a pretty important thing that I had brought out. I didn’t know how I was going to get through it. But to see this look on Baba’s face. It broke my heart.

So, he almost immediately gestured to Eruch and Eruch says, “What do you mean by that?” And so I knew that I had to answer honestly. And I’d been living around, by that point, so many people who had the idea that everything is heart feeling and that anything to do with logic or philosophy or the mind was counterproductive to the spiritual path. And I was shocked even in those days, the late fifties, how many people felt this. And how deeply they felt it and how deeply they acted on it in their own lives. I mean, this was a cardinal principle to many people that I respected and admired their relation to the spiritual path. I didn’t agree with them at all, of course. I don’t think I’m total intellect but I think I’ve got a damn good intellect amongst other things. I’m sure this is one of the reasons Baba put me in the kind of work he asked me to do for him. If I couldn’t put two and two together logically and on end Baba certainly would never have asked me to work on *God Speaks*. For God’s sakes.

So at any rate, I knew I had to level. And I knew the background what made me heartsick, even listening to some of his best devotees talking about their relationship to things Baba had done by that time. And especially *God Speaks*. People always tried to be polite about it, but they would just say, well I tried two or three paragraphs and I just had to put it aside. I just couldn’t stand it. And I’d say it was from Baba, and they would say, well you know, Baba never said I had to read *God Speaks* to make progress on the spiritual path. It’s far more important my love for Baba and Baba’s love for me. And I would say I just can’t agree with you. I know that’s terribly important and central, but Baba hasn’t sat around and wasted all of his time giving out *God Speaks* for nothing. Its spiritual importance is terribly important.

So, *God Speaks*, I’d heard all of these comments even about it, and about trying to crack Purdom’s *Discourses*, that even they are a sort of waste of time. The only thing that I like to do is be in Baba’s presence and have Baba’s hug, Baba’s caress. So, this was all Stevens’ background, already in the mid to late fifties when I was working on these. So I knew some way or another I had to level with Baba, so I started giving him the background of these conversations that would make me heartsick whenever they would come up — that actually even words from a master could be an intellectual barrier which had to be removed. So instead of helping one on the spiritual path, intellect, thought, even very good words, could simply be another part of the barrier that had to be gotten rid of. And as I spun on the story I tried not to make it too long. I tried, let’s say, not to spin it out and rub poor Baba’s nose in

the middle of the mud. But I had to give him the essential guts of it, what people were saying.

And so, then really as I was saying this to Baba, this look of personal distress and pain deepened. You know, I was sick when I saw Baba's look just after I said that I don't know what good it will do. And then, as I explained the guts of the things that caused me to say it, and saw this increase of suffering — real, real suffering on Baba's face. So when I got done saying some of the chapter and verse of what people were saying in spiritual circles I ran through, Baba gestured again to Eruch, very slowly and rather tiredly. Eruch translated: "And do they say this about Baba's words?"

Boy, that's really asking the crusher. And of course I had to answer. So I thought, well the only way I can soften it is to put in context that is true but takes some of the sharp edge off of it anyway. Here I was, being diplomatic to Baba, you see, on the spot, by my choice of word and example. I said, "Yes, Baba. I have to say even some of your closest followers say it about your own words. But I know some of the people from my knowledge, who love you so completely and so dearly, even some of them will say that." And it didn't seem to take any of the crushing effect off of Baba. So, actually when I said that, some of your closest people who love you deeply, totally.

And so then he began talking to Eruch. I think it was probably only the second time they ever did this to me. Baba would gesture and Eruch would reply in Gujarati. Usually when they had conversation between them, Eruch would reply in English so I could follow what they were saying. But this was completely hidden from me. And so then finally, Eruch comes back and says, "Don, what Baba has been trying to explain to me, even though I know so many of Baba's thoughts so deeply, this is the first time Baba has tried to explain this to me." He said, "Baba wants you to know, Don, that when he is giving out words for his lovers in the manner that Baba has had me describe twice to you" (the manner he gave me the eight chapters of *God Speaks*, even then when Baba gives it out in this careful manner, and Eruch always came back the next morning and Baba went over it word by word) when Baba gives out his words to his devotees for their use he does something that, and now here I have to admit that Baba is trying to get over to me what he does to those words — I can't quite get to the proper words to express it. But the closest I can get to it — Baba is listening to Eruch — "is that he ties something like an atom bomb of spiritual energy onto each word that he gives out." And Baba looked pleased with all of that. Then Baba does some more gesturing and Eruch then goes on and says, "Baba wants you to understand, Don, that if someone devoted to Baba and looking to Baba for guidance, will work with these words, these special words of Baba, work with these words, even if they do not intellectually understand two words they have read, still by their close association with the words and their working with them, they will absorb automatically by that association and their work an important part of that spiritual energy. And that spiritual energy will be of key importance in their spiritual ongoing."

Baba looked very satisfied at that and I thought, my God! So Baba told me why he did all those discourses on meditation, preparing for when he would not be there in the body. And this is the most extraordinary preparation for his devotees that now he has told me about the importance of the words. It is not an intellectual standpoint but association with them and honestly working with them. And you get something that will be key for your spiritual ongoing. So this is, let's say, the ultimate resource when Baba's not around anymore physically. And he's telling me.

DAN: Do you think that even with what appear to be superficial changes in grammar and sentence structure, the sort

of thing that happened in the seventh edition, does that decrease the power of the atom bombs?

DON: Well, all I can do is tell you what I what thought when I got up from that session with Baba and Eruch. I said to myself, “Thank God that the first major rule of handling *God Speaks* that we laid down to each other, and both of us accepted as being cardinal, that only in a rare case of extreme necessity would we do any changing of words, or cutting out or anything of that sort, but limit it to simplifying sentence structure. Making them less long. And if there was obviously a word which had been misused, OK, we would do it. I think I found only three or four of those in all of the work I did on *God Speaks*. So almost everything I did on *God Speaks* was chopping out capital letters, where I felt I was not doing anything monstrous. And secondly, cutting Eruch’s terribly lengthy sentences into two or three or four or five sentences, but being awfully careful if I were chopping and maybe rearranging a bit. OK, I used all of his words. I didn’t want to chop a single word out unless it was wrong.

I wanted it to be left, and used. So I said to myself, “Thank God.” Because I was really playing with fire. I realized it. I knew it was important, what was going on. But I felt doubly thankful that we had laid down that rule to ourselves. So then, you know, one gets into what happens when you translate.

I just had to say to myself Baba obviously knew when he gave them out that part of their fate had to be translation. And I am sure that Baba checked the mechanics of how they would be translated. Remember he said to me, “Don, I do not want you to feel you’ve got to do the translation but I want you to supervise.” So I would go over a translation word by word, and by that time I knew *God Speaks* so well and the sense that Baba was conveying, so if it did not convey the sense I went back and we would search for sometimes hours to find the word that satisfied me. So all I can say is Baba apparently made me responsible for being sure the charge was kept in the translations that were made. End of story.

But this is the importance of Baba’s words. And so this said to me anything that threatens the structure and choice of Baba’s words is the top priority in life. And I don’t care who does it or how they think they’re going to do it, if they do when I’m around there’s going to be hell to pay.

DAN: With that in mind I have something that has puzzled me since our communications last fall. That is, you expressed support for including the second discourse on Baba’s circle even though that was not in any of the earlier editions, and certainly not in the sixth edition you worked on. So that seems to me to be irreconcilable with what you’ve been saying.

DON: Well here, I just have to get into an issue I had to face with myself. Nothing that I know about the manner in which Baba gave out the *Discourses*, nor the timing of it, says to me that the *Discourses* were subjected by Baba himself to the same technique such as *God Speaks*, Part II of *Listen Humanity*, and the other third example that I know absolutely, which is The Song of the New Life. Adi Sr. told me the history of that, how Baba handled it during the New Life. So these I know indelibly, and when I say these are the ones I always try to say I do not know whether they may be other words Baba has given out that he subjected to the same word-by-word correction and care that he specified in his story on *God Speaks*. And these are obviously his example of where the atom bombs are. But nothing about the *Discourses* says to me that they were subjected that same one. So I just have to say to myself,

“OK why do you feel the *Discourses* are on a par with *God Speaks* and so on?”

All I can say is this is to me Baba’s Bible to people. How to conduct themselves in life. And it is not intended for their spiritual ongoing but, let’s say, for the conduct of their life in the world. So to me it’s Baba’s Bible. I can’t say anything else about it. But I cannot pretend that I know anything from Baba or Eruch that says that the words were subjected to the procedure that Baba told me that day had these spiritual atoms bombs tied to them for their spiritual progress.

But you know, living daily life in this world is where the whole damn thing starts. And if that’s not on the proper basis you don’t get on into the spiritual life.

SWEETA: Are you clear enough on the difference in the procedure in the creation of the *Discourses*, which Don doesn’t know if it has atom bombs?

DAN: I think so. To begin with, the actual transmission of the discourses from Meher Baba’s alphabet board to the printed page doesn’t have nearly the clarity in history that there is with *God Speaks* —

DON: And Part II of *Listen Humanity*.

DAN: And the Song of the New Life. I’ve made an effort to try to learn what the procedure was when Baba pointed to a letter. What was the next step, and then what was the next step, and how did it get into print the first time, then from the first printing into the next printing, and so on. And I’m having a hard time. There’s not much written down. So I think that’s what you’re talking about. There’s not a clear history.

DON: I do not know of the second necessary integral checking step where Baba then takes back the words and goes over them word by word and makes any changes where there’s any misunderstanding or things that have been left out, or that are not what Baba actually thinks. I do not know of that second step for the *Discourses*. But I do know that the *Discourses* were with Baba and with Baba people intimately for decades. But always, I feel of them as being, let’s say, the Bible of living daily life in creation.

SWEETA: And you also know from the 1960s that the final edition that he personally authorized, he authorized every word. I was thinking about that yesterday when you said Ivy Duce didn’t do any editing work. And I was thinking that may be your perception and it may be an historical fact, but Meher Baba put her name in that book for posterity.

DON: He did not put her name there. Don Stevens put her name there.

SWEETA: Yeah, but what I’m saying is —

DON: I didn’t even show him what I was writing, personally.

SWEETA: So prior to 1969 did Baba personally authorize . . . Why don’t you explain this history again. Are you saying that you showed the final edition to the *Discourses* —

DON: Oh, I’m sure I brought a copy that the Japanese people had turned out, showed Baba what now was turned out with all of this work.

SWEETA: But I mean before you went to press, what did Baba finally authorize you to take to the printers?

DON: Well I had, what I personally corrected of the Deshmukh edition.

SWEETA: That's what I thought. And at that point did it have your name and Ivy's name on it?

DON: Well, as far as I know, well, I don't think that I certainly must have sent the introduction that I wrote, I must have sent that to Mani, because you know I wouldn't write a word to go into anything of Baba's that didn't go to Mani to have Baba's knowing what I was up to. And that was particularly lucky in the case of the preface and introduction to *God Speaks*. Because when I found out that Murshida Duce had decided to keep all of Ghani's material for the supplement, I thought he should have proper recognition as, let's say, not a co-author but of having contributed importantly. And that's what I said especially in the draft preface. And Baba took exception to it. This showed the extent of Baba's disgust with his old schoolmate. This surprised me. That he took that as a mortal lack of faith on Ghani's part not to have taken down what Baba was giving him and to be writing down what Ghani wanted to write. Baba dwelled on that. So he said I do not want Ghani, preferably, even mentioned in the preface as having contributed.

Can you imagine? This is not very much known. But that is in writing in the records, so I'm not revealing anything that is sacrosanct secret. Well, two chapters are credited to Eruch, nine and ten. That's in the preface. But I think I abided by Baba's statement, which horrified me at the time really. I didn't know any part of Baba functioned that way. But Baba is just everything. And vindictiveness apparently can be part of, let's say, God's nature. So be careful not to cross him up, I said to myself.

But to get back to Ivy. You know I was really rather surprised when I was telling you, in relation to your two points in your questions where her name appeared related to the *Discourses*. I said, "My God, I have really never told anybody how her name got there, and it was at her request because she was feeling slighted in both the introduction to *God Speaks*, that had to be that way — that was her decision — and then not to have even a toe in the door on *Listen Humanity*. So I said, well, she deserves it. She made the request and I did it. I don't think I even told Mani. And so how that escaped Baba's eye — I don't think it escaped Baba's eye because I certainly sent the draft of that introduction. He let it go through.

SWEETA: He let it go through? He approved it?

DON: Yeah. But I will tell you another thing which is paramount here. When Baba officially took over the reigns and sent the charter guidance to the Sufis, he also sent a long, long letter of supplemental instructions to Ivy Duce with copy to Don Stevens. Ivy do this, be sure you don't do that, and so on. And one of the things in the supplemental instructions was do not to any longer use Inayat Khan's graded papers for Sufi students to carry them up the spiritual line little by little. There were three different gradations. And very, very lengthy. I used them under Murshida Martin's instructions and Ivy used them and thought the world of them. So one of the first things that she said to me when I got to go back to and see Baba, after he sent us all of that, she said "Don, I don't think Baba realizes what he is doing when he tells me not to use the graded papers." She said, "Especially the young people need something ordered like that and Inayat Khan did a beautiful job of it." So she said, "I have written to him about

it but he has not replied. So will you ask him?"

Somewhere or another I realized from the story she was telling me that she apparently had twice opened up the subject with Baba and been turned down, so she wanted me to make a personal appeal and try to tell how important they were to the sort of students we had. So I told Baba about it the third time. You know what he did? He threw up his hands like that and said, "Tell her to use them."

SWEETA: So he gave a different order?

DON: Yes, he changed. Alright, with love she persisted. And I have seen him do that at least two or three other important times.

SWEETA: Baba seemed to give way.

DON: Alright, yes. It is more important to keep the strength of the relationship than to do what he knows is spiritually more efficient. That was the rule I learned from the two or three situations that I witnessed. That above all, the personal inner strength of the personal inner link with the devotee was the top priority. And if something could be admitted without doing fundamental damage to that, so that that remained in tact, OK. If that's not going to throw the person completely off the track, if it's going to slow up his rate of progress 30%. OK, but I'm not going to run any risk of damaging the inner link. That was just dead right. I always regretted that Murshida persisted three times to get her way.

DAN: You weren't reluctant to bring it up to Baba, knowing that he had already said no twice, or at least not responded to her?

DON: I was marching under orders.

DAN: She was your Murshida?

DON: She was not my Murshida. But on two occasions Baba had said to me, "Don, I have given Ivy a very, very important spiritual charge. And I would appreciate if you would help her where you are able to, if you would help her." And so always whenever she asked me to do something, even if it was very difficult for me to stomach it or do it, I did my best to be a loyal soldier.

DAN: Well, we're almost out tape.

DON: You know what? I've got to put the chicken in the oven. You know, Baba's a good cook, so he says Don's got to get out there and put that chicken in the oven. Baba appreciated good food.

End of Tapes