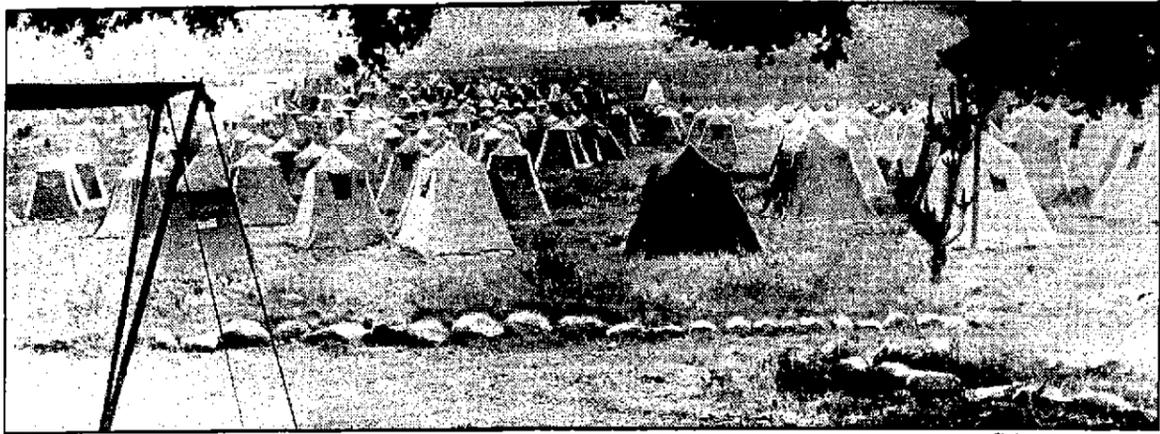


The Troubles of a Modern "Messiah"

One Widely-Acclaimed Holy Man Refuses to Play the Part Any Longer and Another, Who Hasn't Spoken a Word in Eight Years, Still Declines to Give the World His Promised Message



Encampment of a Thousand Disciples of the Young Indian "Messiah," Krishnamurti, in the Hills Near Los Angeles During a Congress of His Followers.

MORE than eight years ago Shri Meher Baba, a holy man of India, announced that he had an inspired message that would straighten out all the world's troubles.

Crowds dropped work and hurried to hear the good news. But the Baba would not tell them and never has to this day. For fear a crumb of wisdom might fall from his lips he has only communicated with his adoring followers by sign language and occasionally, when this was not sufficient, spelling out a sentence by pointing to an alphabet board.

Naturally there was disappointment when the crowd had to go home to its unsolved troubles no wiser than it left. A few irreverent persons called the holy man a practical joker, comparing his promising a message of salvation and then shutting up, to a person who threatens to sneeze but doesn't do it. A sneeze or a message that had been suppressed nearly nine years would have to be pretty good when it did explode, in order to justify such awful suspense.

But that shows how little they know about the traps and problems that beset the path of one of these modern messiahs, such as Jeddu Krishnamurti and Mahatma Gandhi. By simply keeping his mouth shut, the Baba has avoided all these troubles and built up a large following all over the world, including the wealthy Princess Norma Matchabelli, who has given up her worldly life to spend her fortune and time waiting on the silent messiah by inches, in the pious hope that she will be there to take down the message when the "enlightened one" finally decides to let go of it.

Recently Meher Baba toured the United States, visiting, among other places, Chicago and drawing greater crowds than the most learned lecturer, all in the hope that he might be moved to reveal the secret that all the human race is waiting to hear. But the moment was still not quite propitious and he went back to England, with the secret hidden in his swarthy chest.

This messageless messiah who has contributed in return for his keep and worship not a single bit of material, labor or expressed thought, merely sits and thinks. He is an unusually impressive sitter and thinker because he happens to resemble Prof. Einstein, who also sits and thinks. But Prof. Einstein, in order to become a celebrity, had to say something.

The Baba is much better off today than the other messiah, Krishnamurti, who also comes from India, like most messiahs of the present. Why these message bearers, yogis, mahatmas, babas (enlightened ones) should come from the most unenlightened, backward, hungry, poverty-stricken, sickly and generally unhappy large country of the globe is one of those occult things that have not yet been revealed.

Probably no messiah, since the idea first started in Egypt, nearly 4,500 years ago, ever had such a good start as that of Krishnamurti, who was discovered and vouchered for by the late Annie Besant, International President of the Theosophical Society, as the true successor not only of Buddha and other celebrated messiahs but even of the Christian Saviour Himself. He was the son of a native Indian magistrate, young, good-looking, educated, intelligent and of flawless moral behavior. Also he seems to have been perfectly sincere, with no notions that he was a messiah until that famous woman so informed him. Mrs. Besant felt that a messiah was overdue, and, looking around, her occult senses told her that this attractive, modest boy was the vehicle through which the divine message was to come.

When the news was flashed to all countries it created a sensation, but though there was some discussion at



The Princess Matchabelli, Who Gave Up Home and Career to Become a Devoted Follower of Meher Baba.

first among the millions of Theosophists, the tremendous influence of their leader caused the great majority to accept the youth at her own valuation. A great international organization, "The Order of the Star," was formed, with Krishnamurti as its head, to receive and spread the new gospel. The sincerity of the members is proved by the way funds poured in. These allowed the boy to travel around the world in state like a prince, though old-style messiahs had to go it mostly barefoot and begging their way.

In Australia, a huge concrete stadium was built especially to hear and see him. They showered wealth on him in the form of real estate in various parts of the world including the Castle Feerde, in Ommen, Holland. In Paris he attracted a larger and more imposing gathering of wealthy society women than probably would have turned out for any other foreigner except Lindbergh. Col. Lindbergh had to risk his life to become known, but Krishnamurti merely had to travel around in luxury, and while waiting for the message to come, make a few very simple addresses to his followers. It seemed about as easy and success-



Jeddu Krishnamurti, a "Messiah" Appointed by the Late Annie Besant, the Head of the Theosophists of the World.

ful a career as could be imagined but those addresses were finally his undoing.

They were harmless platitudes at first and certainly not inspired. Also he was carefully protected from newspaper interviewers who sometimes have a shameless habit of asking embarrassing questions. But his own followers asked for help in their own simple problems. It seemed to them and to him that this consecrated vessel of wisdom ought to have some ideas of his own.

Being a conscientious young man, Krishnamurti tried to make good, studying the sages of the past and repeating their messages in modern terms. But to his dismay, the criticism was:

"Old stuff! That's no message."

Even such time-honored advice as to make long fasts to aid clear thinking brought criticism. Scientists had experimented with fasts and found that far from aiding clear thought they made it almost impossible. Actual tests have proved that long fasts tend to cause hallucinations, weakening and upsetting the brain as much as the muscles and organs.

Fasting thoughts are half-crazy thoughts. The way to think straight is to have a good night's sleep, a light breakfast and a good cup of coffee. Then if a person has any brains he can use them to advantage. Press and letters told him that it was not only an old idea but a poor idea. One day he had an inspiration, at least the idea was his very own and not copied from any previous messiah. He said: "Live splendidly!"

That is the way ninety-nine out of every hundred people would like to live if they had the money to manage it. But virtually all previous messiahs, in good standing, had preached just the opposite. They exhorted everyone to live as slovenly, shabbily and hungrily as possible, some even considering dirt another indignant storm of protest. Even those who were frank to admit sympathy with the idea said the advice was no good because he did not tell them

how to get the money on which to live splendidly. Had he been able to tell them that he might have been a very popular and successful messiah.

Some were unkind enough to point out that Jeddu was living splendidly on the gifts of others. Being a sincere young man, anxious to be a good sort of messiah, he promptly handed back all his wealth but still persisted in wearing well-cut European clothes, playing tennis and attending afternoon teas. Tea and tennis are not exactly sinful nor is admitting a keen interest in baseball, but somehow they did not seem fitting in a messiah.

His was a thorny path. Though Krishnamurti had been pursued by many of the world's most successful vamps, eager for the notoriety of an affair with the eminent young saint, there had never been a breath of scandal about him. However, even the best young man is expected to fall in love with some nice girl and want to marry her. This happened to the messiah, who fell in love with Miss Helen F. Knothe of Ridgewood, New Jersey. The love was reciprocated but the match was broken off by the indomitable will of Dr. Besant who convinced Krishnamurti that marriages and messages are incompatible.

Devoting himself to strictly spiritual matters again, Krishnamurti strove to increase the membership of his organization in Europe. Among other things he ordered his followers to make the sign of the cross. This was an excellent idea in getting members where Christianity predominates and was approved by his Christian following. But in India the Hindu members opposed it vehemently.

In disgust the messiah disbanded the organization saying that his message was for the whole human race and no society or creed. He was now free from his society, his worldly possessions and soon broke away from his sponsor and discoverer. In 1931 he turned up at Los Angeles, unannounced, and when discovered by the press, stated that his interviews would no longer be "staged." He said that



Shri Meher Baba, a Holy Man of India, Who Says He Can Work Miracles and Has a "Message" for Mankind. He Has Not Spoken a Word for Eight Years and Now and Then Answers a Question by Spelling It Out With His Fingers on an Alphabet Board.

The other day the ex-messiah turned up as the guest of Lady Lutyens in her English country home where he had once before visited, at the height of his splendor, but now he was frankly down and out financially.

"I am just living," he said. "I'm a beggar now. I roam from country to country, living first with one old friend and then another. I have no home, no property nor money in the bank."

"I could have been a rich man. For years people showered money offers on me. Besides a magnificent castle in Holland, with 500 acres of gardens, I was offered \$10,000 a week by Hollywood film interests and they were eager to build a beautiful temple for me. I was maturing then and did not know quite what to think of those things. But when I found women actually worshipping my picture, I knew that it was all wrong."

While shouting evangelists have made themselves rich, this young man has pauperized himself because his conscience would not permit him to accept wealth and worship. Meanwhile Shri Meher Baba, whom the irreverent call "the dumb Einstein," is not so dumb practically. He still sits silently thinking, but he "sits pretty." He has never enjoyed the dizzy heights to which his brother messiah reached, but he has never fallen from them. Nobody bothers him because he won't talk and nobody criticizes his message because nobody knows what it is. He has everything he wants, without work, including the perpetual service and adoration of a wealthy Princess who is herself a remarkable psychological phenomenon.

This beautiful woman was leading a gorgeous, worldly life as the wife of Prince Georges Matchabelli from the same Georgia whence came the Melvinis. The Princess Matchabelli, who had been the Italian actress Maria Carmina, was delighted with her title until she returned to the stage to play the Madonna in Reinhardt's "The Miracle," and "got religion." She never got over it and became a follower of Messiah Meher Baba.

She was divorced from the Prince not long ago, and he was quoted as saying:

"When the Princess thought she would enter into this religion of Baba we decided she should go her way and I should go mine. But we are still good friends."

To some people the Princess's choice seems a wretched and humiliating life. But if by chance the Baba really has an important message and does not procrastinate delivering it until death silences him permanently, the Princess will be forever famous and holy in sacred history, long after the last Georgian princeling is forgotten.



The Late Dr. Annie Besant, Who Picked Out Young Krishnamurti and Started Him on His Career as a "Messiah," Which He Has Now Abandoned.

Dr. Besant had dramatized him and theosophy though probably unconsciously.

Whether consciously or not, it should be said in Dr. Besant's defense that no messiah could be put over with the public unless staged, dramatized and given plenty of "atmosphere and scenery." For instance Mahatma Gandhi, though preaching the simple and inconspicuous life, dramatized himself in the most startling manner possible the last time he went to London. Had he really wished to be simple and inconspicuous he would have worn conventional clothing, instead of that trench coat which made him more conspicuous than would ten brass hands and a troop of cavalry.

Krishnamurti, free to be himself, rapidly destroyed all the glamour that had surrounded him. He said:

"I am no actor. I have refused to wear the robes of a messiah. They called me the Christ. But Christ is potential in all of us." By these plain, honest statements, Krishnamurti stepped down from the divine pedestal on which Dr. Besant had placed him, to the ranks of ordinary people, where he was just a nice, sincere boy, who had traveled a lot. Since the depression, people were less interested in spiritual values than in cash values, less in future enjoyment than in present employment. This boy seemed to have no message on those questions. Men lost interest and now that he had given up both his worldly property and his divinity, so did the women. Mrs. Besant died but before that he had dropped out of sight.