

SPIRITUAL HIERARCHY & THE CIRCLES OF THE AVATAR

In Avatar's Museum on Meherabad Hill, India, the Ten Circles Chart painting by America born artist Rano Gayley is an imposing sight and imprints itself lastingly in the memory of the visitors. Ten Circles Chart painting is a huge one measuring 5 feet by 8 feet. Meher Baba asked Rano to do it in oils under His guidance. Baba had said that he wanted a huge chart of the ten circles of one hundred and twenty persons who surround the Avatar in each advent. The ten circles themselves comprised of 120 persons, were to have 12 men in the first circle; 8 men and 4 women in the second circle; 4 men and 8 women in the third; 8 men and 4 women in the fourth; 4 men and 8 women in the fifth; 8 men and 4 women in the sixth; 6 men and 6 women in the seventh; 8 men and 4 women in the eighth; 8 men and 4 women in the ninth; 10 men and 2 women in the tenth circle. Above the Ten Circles was to be a figure of Meher Baba seated on a platform. In the words of Rano Gayley: "I began by making a small pencil sketch of the ten circles to scale. In the margin, Baba put a variety of symbols which at first made no sense to me but I later found that they correspond to the locations he wanted for the various animals, birds, plants and modes of transport which were to surround the central focus of the ten circles. When I made this connection, I realized that Baba was letting me know, in silence, that the chart was already planned by Him and He was now simply having me put it all on canvas. (Because of Love by Rano Gayley p. 63)." This painting work started in Nasik, an Indian town, in the year 1936. Meher Baba was observing Silence that began from 10 July 1925.

Among the many spiritual secrets, as revealed by Meher Baba, the knowledge about the Spiritual Hierarchy and the circles of a Perfect Master (*Sadguru*) and the Avatar rank supreme.

Spiritual Hierarchy

There are fifty-six (56) God realized souls in the world at all times. They are always one in consciousness. They are always different in function. For the most part, they live and work apart from and unknown to the general public; but five (5), who act in a sense as a directing body, always work in public and attain public prominence and importance. These are known as *Sadgurus* or Perfect Masters. In Avatavic periods the Avatar, as the Supreme *Sadguru*, takes his place as the head of this body and of the Spiritual Hierarchy as a whole.

Every *Sadguru* has an intimate Circle of twelve (12) disciples who at the point of God Realization, are made equal to *Sadguru* himself, though they may differ from him in function and authority. In Avataric periods the Avatar has a Circle of 120 + 2 disciples, all of whom experience Realization and work for the liberation of others. In all there are 120 persons in the Ten Circles of the Avatar, plus the two women of the inner Circle who are but appendages to that particular Circle – 122 in all.

The unfoldment of life and consciousness for the whole Avataric Cycle (700 or 1400 years), which had been mapped out in the creative world before the Avatar took form, is endorsed and fixed in the formative and material worlds during the Avatars life on earth. When the Avatar takes an incarnation, He has before Him a clear cut mission that proceeds according to a plan; and this plan is always carefully adjusted to the flow of time. Before taking on a physical body and descending into the world of duality, He gives to Himself and members of His Circles special type of *sanskaras* which are known as *vidnyani sanskaras*. For all intents and purposes, *vidnyani sanskaras* are like ordinary *sanskaras* of duality, though they are essentially different in nature. These *sanskaras* prompt activities and invite experiences that are similar to those caused by ordinary *sanskaras*. But while the activities and experiences caused by ordinary *sanskaras* have a general tendency to strengthen the grip of illusory duality, those caused by *vidnyani sanskaras* systematically work toward the loosening of the grip of duality.

One is taken by surprise in not finding ochre or green or white robes, sectarian vermillion or sandal marks on their bodies or rosary around their neck or in their hands. These Circle members lived their lives of complete unconditional surrender to Meher Baba with unbelievable simplicity and without even a discreetly suggestive self-promotional visibility. Meher Baba dropped His body on 31 January 1969. On that very day at 10 A.M. Aloba, one of His Circles, on the order of Meher Baba brought the painted board of Hafiz's couplets: "Befitting a fortunate slave, carry out every command of the Master without any question of why and what. About what you hear from the Master never say it is wrong, because my dear, the fault lies in your own capacity to understand him. I am the slave of the Master who has released me from ignorance. Whatever my Master does is of the highest benefit." And they all served Him as the fortunate slaves. Mastery in Servitude became their motto.

This section links to some video snippets of selected members of the Circles of Avatar Meher Baba.