

Meher Baba Australia

May – July 2021

MEHER BABA AUSTRALIA FEB 83



WE CELEBRATE BABA'S BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR WITH THE BIRTH OF A NEW NEWSLETTER

A warm and loving Jai Baba to all our brothers and sisters in His love - and welcome to MEHER BABA AUSTRALIA, a bright new star in the already glowing Australian newsletter firmament.

Why another newsletter? Well it could be expressed in terms of 'the high road' and 'the low road.' (these 'roads' are being used as convenient symbols only) The AVATARS ABODE NEWSLETTER - for the purpose of this little exercise - we shall call

Meher Baba Australia 1983 – 2021.

The cover of the first edition of the *Meher Baba Australia* newsletter, February 1983. Artwork by Patricia Saunders.

Avatar's Abode Anniversary Retrospective

David Bowling and Sim Symons

Over the years since the commencement of the *Meher Baba Australia* newsletter in 1983 a wonderful pictorial and written record has been published that captures the flavour and feeling of each anniversary. Reading through the talks given at anniversary by our special overseas guests, by the long-time residents at Avatar's Abode, and by our Australian Baba lovers, you cannot help but feel the rich tapestry of our collective history.

For the penultimate edition of the newsletter, we felt a review of the anniversaries over the years would be a fitting theme. From the first mention of anniversary in a letter from Diana Snow written to Francis in India in March 1959 to the wonderful images taken at the 2019 anniversary, we have uncovered for you a rich diversity of material that we hope conveys some of the fragrance of

the Beloved's visit to Avatar's Abode and the many ways in which His lovers gather to remember and celebrate that visit in June 1958.

For anyone wishing to explore the theme of past anniversaries you can search the online database of *Meher Baba Australia* newsletters and other material from the archives. From 1983 to 1999 the anniversary articles appeared in the July edition each year. From 2000 they appear in the September-November edition. Go to the Avatar's Abode Trust Digital Archives through a link found at https://www.avatarsabode.com.au/avatars_abode_trust_archives.html Just browse for Newsletters and type anniversary into the search bar.

We hope you enjoy this window into the first 61 years of anniversaries at Avatar's Abode.

1959

Last 2 paragraphs of a typed aerogram from Diana Snow



19 Mar 1959

Dear Francis

... Almost Easter again ... It would be lovely if we could have a gathering up there for the anniversary of BABA'S visit ... if you are not back by then, perhaps you could select a passage from **Stay With God** which should be out just about that time, which we could read ... or we could have sessions of reading it all the days BABA was there, as He is taking such an interest in it ... or would it be better to just sit in the mandali room like we did, but in silence and try to remember everything BABA said? When you have time will you think about some kind of an anniversary? for us, I mean in case you are happy to be having yours with Him still.

I know it would not be fair to ask you to give Him my love ... but perhaps you could just touch the edge of His coat for me , sort of accidental like, next time you are close enough ????

Love to you dear Francis,

Diana



1960

The following letter was sent to 'Avatar Abiders' – the Bruford and Rouse families and May Lundquist – in 1960 using Francis' unique dating system.

For Avatar Abiders only

Dearest Ones,

The second Anniversary of beloved Baba's Visit to Keil Mtn and His establishment of it as His Abode – the 3rd day, 15th week, Meher Year 66. (4th June, 1960.)

We cannot at this stage grasp how fortunate we are that God-in-Form came to Australia at all, let alone asked us to acquire a Place for Him to permanently dwell in.

This Place will never become a Home for Nice People, a Cosy Colony of Saved Souls, but will always be a place at which to practise service to one another and devotion to the one Truth and God.

We must always remember that we have never yet met Baba: we have seen only a hint of Light, as

one waking in the early morning and seeing a promise of dawn through a chink in the wall or the door ajar; or a Vastness, as one standing on the seashore gazing through a mist at the fringe of ocean. We will only see Baba when ourselves have forever disappeared – and this can only come abt. [about] through love and through service. So it will be that others will come along who didn't have the fortune of meeting Baba physically, but will have the natural blessing of a greater capacity for love and service than we have and so will meet Baba in His Reality before we do.

Our daily work is at once our opportunity to serve one another and at the same time provide a Place where others can practise service and devotion.

We should always remember that our fellowship and sharing is Baba's relief from His burden and that our unkindness and selfishness is His continued crucifixion. One might ask, for what did we come together if not to share in our devotion and enthusiasm and work in and for Him? Surely not because we had merely become tired of city living and wanted to 'go back to the country' and live 'nearer to nature'. We could have done this anywhere and without Baba. And surely we did not come together to live separately.

By working together, by sharing one another's enthusiasm in Baba and hope of pleasing Him, we destroy the ignorance of separation and overcome the inherent loneliness of our ea. [each] Self.

In sharing, what is an opinion worth? One has opinion so long as one is alone in ignorance, but as soon as one feels fellowship of knowledge, opinion has no worth. We have knowledge – the knowledge that Baba is Love and loves us. There is no higher knowledge than that, except the final knowledge that we are, each one, that Lord and that God.

We have a single Beloved and a common purpose in work. What fools we would be if we came together to remain apart. 'Fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death.' John Ball, a 14th century English friar, to the peasants in their bid for freedom from tyranny.

This letter has been read to beloved Baba. He sends you His love in the following words:

'If only you knew how dear Avatar Abiders are to Him, you would try your utmost to live together for Him and die together for Him.'

With my own dearest love to you all,
Francis

Baba tells me to also tell you that from July 1st to end of year the mandali will be with Him at Meherazad and will not be allowed off the Place. I can receive and write letters, but no problem in any letter may be brought to Him. So, He says, you are not to expect me back before end of year.



The second anniversary of Meher Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode in June 1960. From left at the back are May Lundquist sitting on the ground, her friend Mrs Hart, Joan and John Bruford and Grace Swan. Sitting in front of this group from centre left are Ken [Lorna's brother], Joanna Bruford, Judith Humphries, Robert Rouse and Norman Shipway. Sitting front from left are Christine Shipway, Hazel Shipway, Elizabeth Shipway, Lorna Rouse and Julie Shipway.

1960s

Extracts from letters written to Francis by Bernard Bruford after anniversaries in the 1960s

30 June 1961

Dear Uncle Francis

A few weeks ago I sent by sea-mail three photos for you taken at the June Anniversary. Uncle Bill brought up from Sydney the two Baba films which we saw a couple of times on two of the evenings at the Baba House. I had never seen the one taken at the Australian 1956 Sahavas and I had forgotten nearly everything in the film that was taken in India. Most of what I had remembered has now been "edited" out of it. I also liked the poetry you sent.

26 June 1962

Dear Uncle Francis

..... This year the June Sahavas Anniversary differed from previous ones in that we attempted to entertain Baba a little. Each day there were repetitions in the Baba Room for most of the time, and in the evenings we grouped in the Baba House for the evening meal at about 6 P.M. This was followed each night by entertainment. "The Bridge" was performed twice, Joanna and Robert both played their guitars, Norman and Hazel Shipway between them produced some unusual comic acts, and the 4 young girls danced with their ankle bells led by Robert's guitar. Robert and Norman Shipway also presented a comic act. On one night Dad read a little from the chapter "Attitudes for Aspirants" from "Listen Humanity". On the last night we had a first-class party tea. Each night there was singing from your new book and we were helped along by Robert playing his guitar.

23 September 1963

Dear Uncle Francis

.... Mum mentioned that you were looking forward to an account of the June Anniversary. May was unable to be here because it was not in a weekend, so with just the Shipways, Rouses and ourselves it was a smaller gathering than usual, especially as each family was depleted by one from what it was the previous times. Uncle Bill had sent up the script for the "East-West Gathering" which Robert read and sang from on each of the four nights. We gathered in the Baba House before the evening meals which were prepared in the 3 houses. I took no photos this year, in fact I have



This photo of the 1962 Anniversary of Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode was taken by Bernard Bruford. Seated front from left are Jenny Le Page [Keating], Rada Rouse [Radha], Michael Le Page behind, Julie Shipway, Elizabeth Shipway, Maree Le Page [Ruth] and Christine Shipway [Baulch]. Sitting on the ground from left are Grace Swan, Diana Snow, Marjorie Donaldson, Hazel Shipway behind May Lundquist, Joan Le Page behind and Lorna Rouse. Sitting on chairs at the back from left are Robert Rouse, Ken Davis, Norman Shipway, Bill Le Page, Joanna Bruford, Joan Bruford and John Bruford. The girls are wearing ankle bells from India sent by Francis. This was the first time films of Baba were shown at Avatar's Abode, on this occasion was a film of Baba in Australia in 1956.



This photo was taken in June 1962 during the anniversary of Meher Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode. Standing back from left are Christine Shipway, Ruth [Maree] Le Page and Michael Le Page. From left are Jenny Le Page, Rada Rouse, and Julie and Elizabeth Shipway. The girls are wearing ankle bells from India sent by Francis.

not taken any since my return from India. Some of us also had the letters to read to us all which you had kindly sent. We also sang some of your songs and on the last night Robert played his Arati record. I'm sorry if I have forgotten anything but the period is no longer very clear in my mind. With 3 of us working out I remember we ended the evenings earlier than previously.



This photo was taken on 6 June 1964 during the anniversary of Meher Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode. Sitting from left are Ken Davis [Lorna Rouse's brother], Joanna Bruford, Robert Rouse, Christine Shipway behind, Radha Rouse front, Joan Bruford, Norman Shipway standing behind, Lorna Rouse partially hidden behind Julie Shipway, May Lundquist in front of Hazel Shipway, Bernard Bruford standing behind and Elizabeth Shipway front. Copyright Bernard Bruford..

Bill brought 2 films from Sydney together with tapes that were new for most of us. I missed the tapes at the anniversary but the next Friday night I went home again and we went down to the Rouses for the evening when they were played.

June 1968

Dear Uncle Francis

In June last year at the Anniversary those at Avatar's Abode acknowledged a cable from Baba by another cable which started "Your lovely cable turned the key for successful public and family gatherings". I don't know who composed these words but in retrospect the key has certainly turned in a one-way circle which is growing bigger every day. Yes, the anniversary this year was a wonderful success. There might have been fewer people than last year, I don't know, but we did have that one essential

of any Baba gathering that we got a glimpse of at the anniversary last year and which I have before only experienced in Baba's presence. Except by the word "love" I can't describe "that one essential" but I feel it results from the fact that we Baba Lovers, are gradually finding out a bit more about loving God and living together and coming together in His love and living and spreading His Message.

....Because the anniversary fell during the working week Uncle Bill started the proceedings on Saturday June 1st.. Reg had done a lot getting the Baba House ready & he proved a 1st class caterer with all the eats and tea drinking. Lovers from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and the surrounding district gathered. Bill read part of one of his public speeches, films from Bill's growing collection were shown & we were treated to some beautiful singing from Jenny & Ruth and even some fife playing from Rada besides Robert with some of his best & also we had several general "sing songs".

....Dad had on display his latest "uncompleted" Baba Head which to my mind completely overshadows his previous efforts. Flowers were used to decorate the Baba House so in all we had a perfect setting and contrary to last year the weather gave of its best. No doubt I have omitted many points for many people must have done a lot for such a successful anniversary.

10 July 1964

Dear Uncle Francis

Enclosed are the photos I took at the 1964 June Anniversary for you with my love. They are numbered should you want more.

....At the anniversary Dad read your modified "nursery rhymes" some of which I thought very beautiful in their simplicity but completeness but I don't think these words describe what I mean. Dad must have spent many hours preparing to read them because he obviously felt every idea of yours and expressed by the words more than I could assimilate by reading it by myself. Again, I guess I'm not making myself clear but I think every one enjoyed them very much. Judith Garbett's colour slides of the India trip were very keenly watched, especially by Dad. Dad & Robert read & sang from East-West Gathering & all round I think it was a very successful anniversary. May sang some very nice Scandinavian folk songs & we got her to repeat them several times.

26 June 1966 (Written from Brisbane)

Dear Uncle Francis

..... About the June Sahavas. I enjoyed very much your letter to us all and your new songs which Robert sang very well with his guitar. I was only able to stay for 2 nights and I thought it was one of the best anniversaries for a long time. Having visitors puts more impetus into the occasion. Uncle

1969

A Talk given by Francis Brabazon at the 11th Anniversary of beloved Baba's Visit to Avatar's Abode

I have returned to Australia after staying with God for ten years; and I bring you the most astonishing news: God has died, and is most living. I was present when he died. I was one of the disciples who took his body to the tomb he had had prepared thirty years earlier, and placed it there in an open crypt where for seven days thousands of his lovers came to see his beloved face for the last time.

There was hardly any weeping and lamentation: perhaps the grief of his beloved Mehera included all our griefs. There was almost continuous devotional singing by various groups of singers praising the attributes of the Beloved; and the people, after worshipping him with love, sat quietly and listened and remembered alone, or with others exchanged the occasions of joy when God-Man had visited their homes or had called them individually for an hour, or in great companies for a few days and bathed them in the stream of his compassion and made them drunk with the wine of his love.

The tomb is on a barren hillock six miles from Ahmednagar on the Deccan plateau about a quarter mile back from the A'nagar-Dhond road and railway. It was here fortysix years ago that God, having become Man, and knowing that he was God, began his work for humanity by building a school for boys whom he personally served, and a hospital and shelters for the poor and the wanderers seeking God. But these buildings, their purpose being served, have long since been dismantled. God builds nothing to last. That is left for men, who, being mortal seek immortality in the permanence of stone; or, loving what is perishable, try to preserve its form in enduring art.

On the afternoon of the seventh day the crypt was closed with great shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba kee jay", or "Victory to Meher Baba the beloved God-Man." God as Man had died and had been buried; but Man as God lived eternally. The victory was the Beloved's - he who dies and is born every moment in our lives.

But was all the shouting really true? Were all who shouted convinced of the victory?

God is perfection in all things. But his perfection is not as ours - that completion of a work faultlessly done which we aim at, or in a flawless quality worshipped and desired. His perfection includes imperfection, just as his Everythingness includes Nothing. And so, although every heart cried that the victory was his, the minds of some questioned his promise that before he dropped his body he would break his silence and speak the one Word of words and manifest his glory.

These questioners had understood the Beloved's promise according to the feebleness of their intellects and their desire for an All-conqueror under whose banner they would march to heaven - much the same as what the Jews had wanted of Jesus, and various religions expect of a Second Coming.

Beloved Baba had warned us all many times, and especially over the last year, to cling tightly to his daman or dress no matter what happened - as tightly as a child holds to its mother's skirt in a crowd. And it would seem that those who thought they had the firmest grasp of the Beloved's dress and continually exhorted others to hold it firmly, suddenly found their hand empty.

But those who were closest to him had no garment of which to lose hold - except the garment he had woven of their obedience and service. They had nothing to cling to, and lose. The Beloved had slipped away from the moorings of their eyes into the silent ocean of Existence bearing their hearts with him into eternity. What could beloved Baba's speaking even that Word which begat Creation mean to them? What glory could he manifest which was not already reflected in his beautiful person? This person was all they cared about. Their loss was of the thousand shades of expression which passed across his face, of his voluble hands, of the demands of his smile. His Godhood shone in his Manhood. That was sufficient. It was God the Man they served and loved. They had no life other than in him. And he had suddenly slipped away out of their grasp while they were lovingly tending his body which was crushed under the weight of a world whose heart was stone and whose blood was molten lava.

When Mehera, the most beloved of the Beloved, came into the room and cried to him to come back, it was the cry of all distances and hollow places; and the men stared at a familiar horizon receding into infinity. But their beloved Baba was not dead; he had inexplicably withdrawn himself for a moment - and that moment was too long to bear. For fortyseven years he had never been out of sight of one or another twentyfour hours a day; and now he had slipped away - like an eel from one's hand, like the stars at the approach of dawn. He was; and then was not. He no longer was; but he was still there.

By night the news of their Beloved's passing had reached lovers across the world. In the older ones, when the shock passed, there was a great surge of love and joy. In the young who had not yet seen their Beloved's Man-form a new heroism was born to support their love, and

the first line of a new poetry was written: “Now we face the Ocean”.

I would like to give you the words of a little song I have written lately for the Beloved’s amusement.

Rocks the world in sullen anger, tangled in its skeins of blood,
Waiting for the Lovely Stranger to release his cleansing flood.

Heaves the world in helpless anger, struggling in its toils of brains,
Waiting for the Lovely Stranger to erase the horrid stains.

Writhes the world in spasmed anger, praying in sub-sonic tones,
Waiting for the Lovely Stranger to restore its crumbling bones.

Ceases now the world from anger, prostrate lies upon the earth,
Waiting for the Lovely Stranger who will give it a new birth.

The Lovely Stranger had come and had gone away - and the world was still tangled in its skeins of blood, struggling in its toils of brains, praying in sub-sonic tones. It is not yet prostrate.

The Lovely Stranger had not, it would seem, released a cleansing flood, erased any horrid stains or restored society’s crumbling bones before he left us. The world, apparently, is as it was: still with the haves having more and the have-nots having less; private affluence creating public squalor; still increasing its armaments (presumably for export to the planets, since it has more than enough to destroy itself).

Yet the Lovely Stranger was with us for fortyseven years; and he wasn’t just sitting cross-legged in a trance during those years. He was with us, tremendously concerned about us, intensely involved with us. No man ever had less private life: he was literally with people twentyfour hours a day. Even when he retired for the night (when he had a room to retire to) or stretched himself out on a railway platform or in a waiting room when he was travelling, he always had one of the mandali or disciples with him.

You have read about his mass feeding and clothing the poor, how from dawn to evening thousands passed in front of him and received packets of food and cloth from his hands and love from his touch and glance. (But few know about the secret aid which restored hundreds to self-respect - that is a chapter of his life not yet written.)

You have read of his journeys to remote places to find and serve the masts, the real lovers of God, who have left the world far behind on their journey to his feet, but still have bodies which need care.

His commitment was so thorough, so total, that he

allowed his body to be broken twice in car accidents so that humanity’s spirit should be mended. His commitment was so thorough, so total, that he suffered the scalding tears of tens of thousands to bathe his feet so that humanity’s heart should be washed clean; it was so thorough, so total that he allowed himself to become helpless and hopeless on the roads of the world so that we on our journey to ourselves should look beyond ourselves for help, and hope only for that which we truly are.

He, the Lovely Stranger, beloved Baba, told us that his sufferings for humanity would culminate in humiliation, and this would be followed by his glorification. His humiliation I saw - a humiliation as deep as Jesus’ on the cross, as Krishna’s dying from a stray arrow, as the Buddha’s succumbing to the effects of food-poisoning.

Some months before he left his body on the battle-field of illusion, Baba told us that tragedy faced him. We had thought, what sort of tragedy can overtake God? Tragedy is in the lives of men, not in the existence of God. In the last hours when his body was being shaken by great spasms, he said that all the forces of Maya, which is the Principle of Ignorance, were hard pressing him, but he would emerge victorious.

But his victory lay in apparent defeat - as even the great victories of men do: for men are reflections or images of God. And in this moment of apparent defeat eternal Existence asserted itself - and his was the glory of victory.

But none saw his glory. There were incidents such as sometimes follow the death of a saint - the body remained fresh for seven days; he manifested his physical form to some and spoke to them. But such things are too trifling to be considered in connection with the glorification of God-Man.

None saw his glory; and none heard the Word which was to precede it. But that Word had silently entered the hearts of his children who are the seed of the New Humanity, the flower of which will be the glorification of the eternal beloved. It is to these that I now speak.

You are so much wiser than we older ones, for your wisdom is in your hearts, while ours was gotten of labor. Your love is so much purer than ours: it is a multitude of mountain streams that leap and sparkle in the sun, while ours is water drawn from wells with a reduced table - and somewhat brackish at that. Your song is a new song inspired directly by the beloved’s song in your hearts, while ours is made up of dying cadences from the unbridgeable past.

When word came to you that your Beloved, he whose Man-form you had never seen, had dropped his body, you

Continued on next page

never asked, What do we do now? Where do we go from here? You were already going - you just continued going. Your direction was implicit in your faith; and you knew that your destination was the wineshop of the Beloved.

You know that the journey to Self is not to be lightly undertaken, that it is the longest and most arduous one can set out on; that between you and your Goal are oceans to cross in the frail craft of spirit, and deserts where your only drink will be salt tears. Yet your faith is such that you know your Beloved will ride the sea-storms with you and that in the desert tears will also be his drink. You really know all things, everything: you have only to become conscious that you know.

You are the ones for whom the 'Lovely Stranger came; and you recognised him as soon as you heard his voice in your hearts, and you poured out your lives at his beautiful feet without thought of recompense. It is you, not we, who will build the new music and sing the new architecture.

The breath of the Beloved has already stirred the Ocean of Stillness which is his being and his Word is already singing in your hearts and eyes. This singing is the beginning of the manifestation of his glory. How blinding will be that glory when the eyes of everyone in the world shine with the Beloved's Word and the hands of each are his brothers; and the dead grandeurs of yesterday and the futile justifications of today are swept away in the flood of the New Singing.

Brother and sister drop-bubbles on the ocean of the Beloved's beautiful reality, how many times through the ages must your songs have delighted the Lovely One on his Earth-comings; and because of his delight how carefully he must have arranged your births this time - the end of one

cycle and the beginning of another his seed-sowing of the New Humanity.

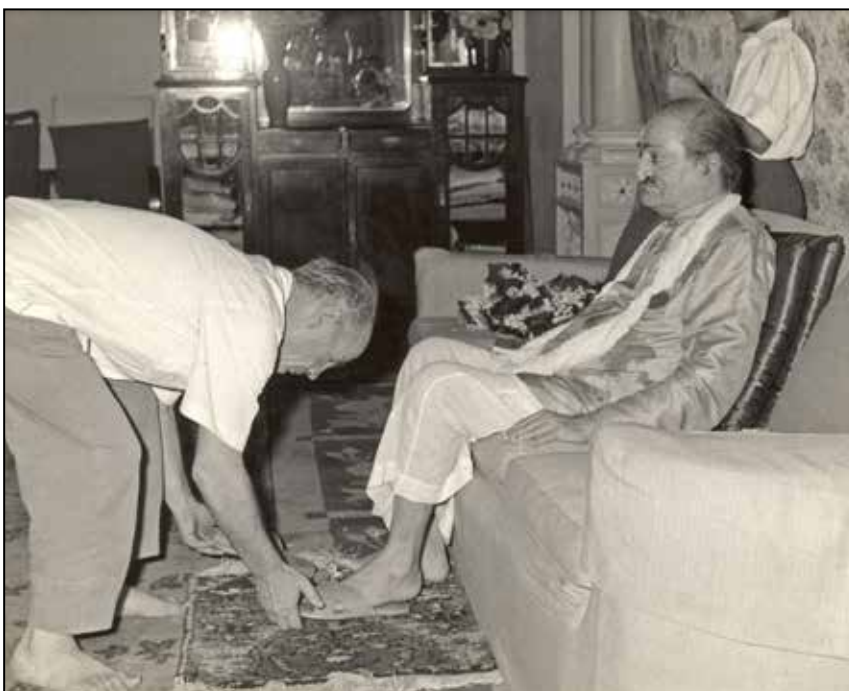
My mind cannot grasp even a hint of the Beloved's infinitudes and my heart cannot bear the wound which a mere reflection of his glance has made in it. On one and the same breath I praise his Silence and his Word - for they are the same thing: his Word is the movement of his Silence and his Silence is the stillness of his Word. His Word is his limitless compassion and his Silence is the ocean of his love-being.

His love is eternal, and this present time is a season of his compassion; and his Silence has broken into the Word which lives in our hearts. He who is always a Stranger in the world is our friend, our new-life companion. We long to be the dust at his feet each time he comes, singing to him when the breath of his mood blows, and to wash the travel stains from his feet with our cool tears.

Now there are only hundreds. Soon there will be thousands, and then millions setting out in their little boats leaving the dead to rule a world which died when the beautiful God-Man spoke his eternal Word in the hearts of his lovers.

What greater Word could God ever speak than that which slays an old world and begets a new one? What greater glory could he manifest than the heart of each lover becoming a sun with a thousand petals?

Maybe these sun-flowers will not blossom for a long time yet. Maybe our children's children's children will be the New Humanity. But what are generations to us? We will also be the children of our children's children - sun-flowers waiting for beloved God-Man's again Earth-coming, waiting to be so many little carpets for his beautiful feet.



Francis bowing down to take Baba's sandals off at Guruprasad on 27 May 1963. From the Avatar's Abode collection.

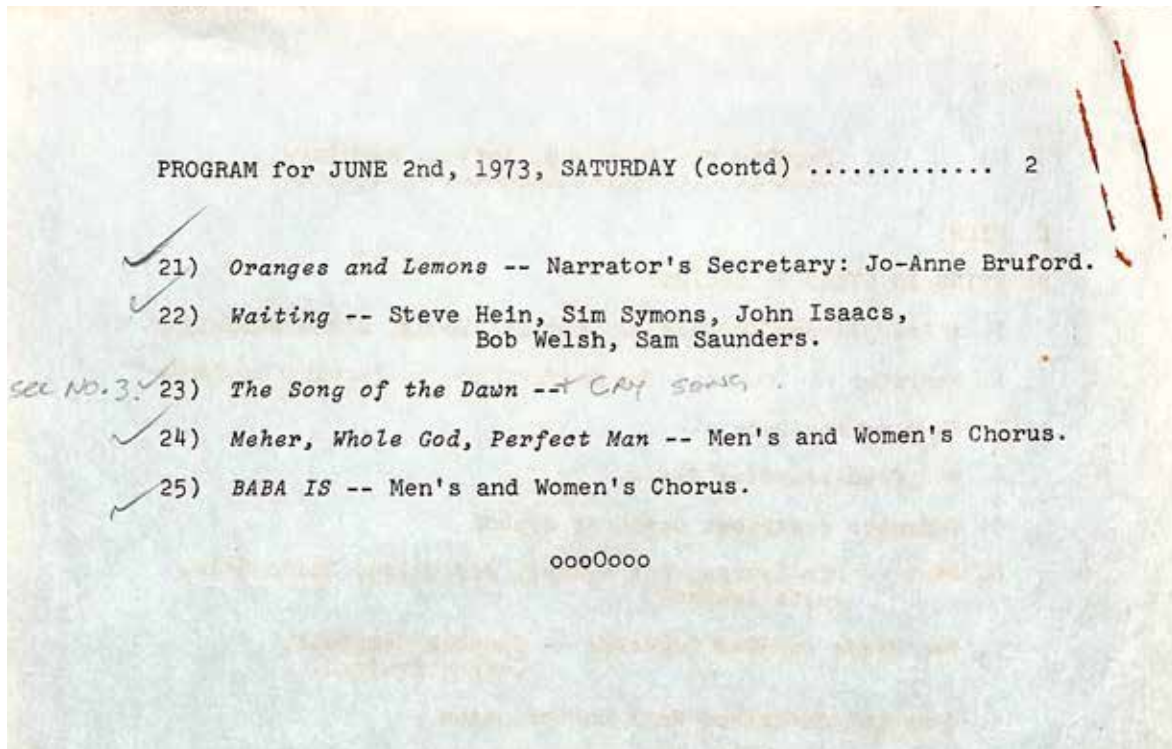
1970s



Robert Rouse on the stage at Baba's house during an anniversary at Avatar's Abode in the early 1970s.



Avatar's Abode Anniversary circa 1974. On stage from left are Ross Keating, Sam Saunders, Peter Milne, John Isaacs, Gary Lindsay behind, Sim Symons, Patricia Saunders, Lorraine Brown, maybe Robert Welsh behind, Joanna Bruford, Pat Sumner, Di Holmes (Symons), Sue Fowler and Raine Mormon Gannet. Francis is sitting left.



1974

Transcript of a card

Meherazad
26th May 1974

Our very dear Francis, and
our dear brothers & sisters
in love of the Eternal Beloved,
your family in Meherazad,
Meherabad and Ahmednagar joins me
in sending you all much love
and three cheers of Avatar Meher
Baba Ki Jai!!! on the occasion
of the celebration of the anniversary
of the visit of the Beloved Lord
to His Abode in the land of the
East. We will be at the Avatar's
Abode in spirit joining you in
the festivities, remembering and
loving Beloved Avatar Meher Baba.
He loved us all in the

perfection of His being the Perfect
Person during the Advent, and
He continues to love us for
He is LOVE! His love teaches
us what love is and purges
our hearts so that we may
remember Him and love Him
all the more for He is the One
to be constantly remembered
and ever loved!
Jai Baba dear Francis!
Jai Baba to all dear ones!

Eruch
Mehera Meheru Mani Rana
Gohar senior Naja Bal Natu
Holi Rano Aloba
Bhau



Meherazad 26th May 1974

Our very dear Francis, and our dear brothers and sisters in love of the Eternal Beloved,
Your family in Meherazad, Meherabad and Ahmednagar joins me in sending you all much love and three cheers of Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!!! on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the visit of the Beloved Lord to His Abode in the land of the East. We will be at the Avatar's Abode in spirit joining you in the festivities, remembering and loving Beloved Avatar Meher Baba. He loved us all in the perfection of His being the Perfect Person during the Advent, and He continues to love us for He is LOVE! His love teaches us what LOVE is and purges our hearts so that we may remember Him and love Him all the more for He is the One to be constantly remembered and ever loved!

Jai Baba dear Francis!
Jai Baba to all dear ones!

Eruch, Mehera, Meheru, Mani, Gohar, Naja, Rano, Pendu, Bal Natu, Aloba, Bhau, Adi Senior

1981

The Avatars Abode Newsletter, June 1981

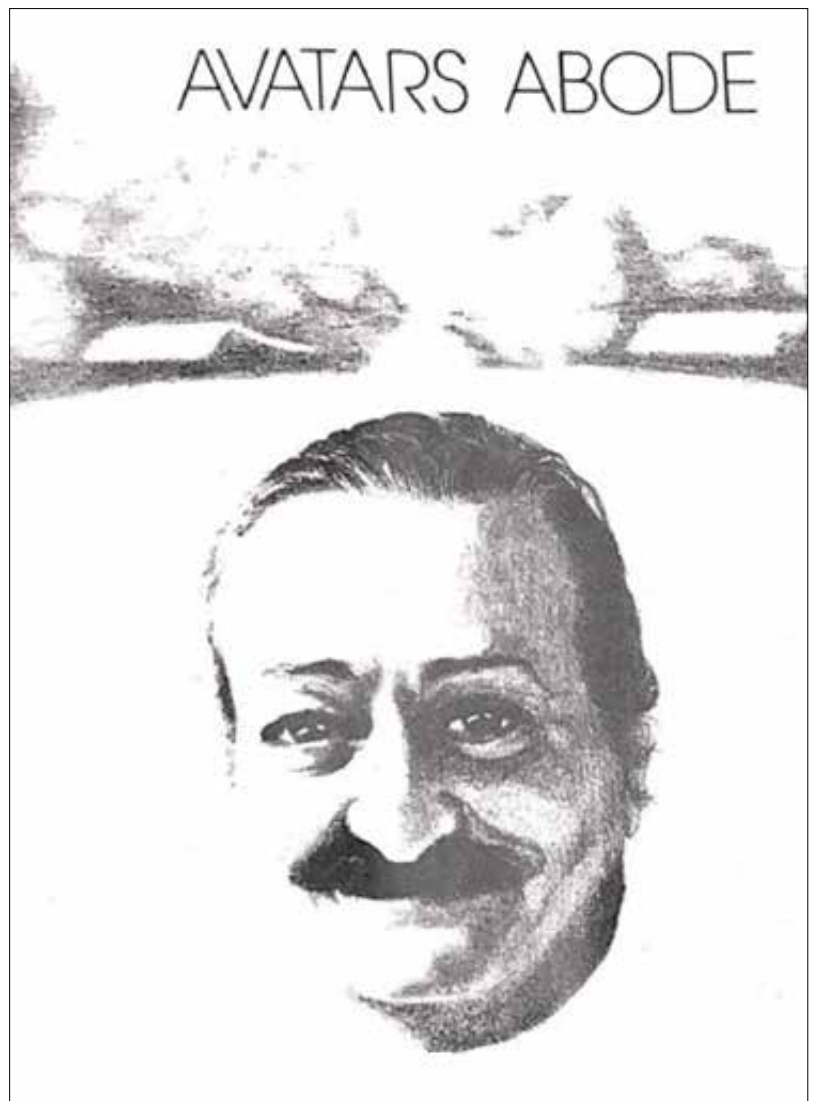
Meher Baba's first visit to Australia in 1956 seemed, in retrospect, a preparation for His second and last visit in 1958. He was, in 1956, more often informal and gently mischievous; He played marbles with the older boys and simple ball games and sleight-of-hand tricks with the younger children; He took us all to the movies (even though we stayed only twenty minutes); and His discourses were punctuated with delightful mime and down-to-earth examples from everyday life. It was as though He took note of our immaturity, and became the gentle, luminous moon to our seeking hearts.

But in 1958 He became the sun to our germinating seed of love and gradually brought home to us that it was time we began to grow into spiritual adulthood and seek to realize in our lives the indivisible Existence which is God.

I have come to remind all people that they should live on earth as the children of the one Father until my Grace awakens them to the realization that they are all one without a second, and that all divisions and conflicts and hatred are but a shadow-play of their own ignorance.'

Avatar Meher Baba and four disciples arrived in Sydney on 1st June 1958, were escorted to Brisbane and from there driven to a property north of Brisbane. This property He named Avatars Abode and said it would become a great place of pilgrimage.

It was late evening when the plane bearing the Avatar landed at Brisbane airport. The still, cool evening seemed like 'the hush before the Master-singer makes his appearance on the stage'; all that had to be done was done, and the audience would receive according to their preparedness. Baba descended and walked slowly across the tarmac, steadied by the ever-near, ever-watchful Eruch Jessawala. Even through the dim light the mind was immediately aware of an immensity of suffering beyond reasoning comprehension. Again and again throughout the following days the mind was thus confronted and momentarily stilled by awareness of Baba's suffering. He once said: 'As your breath ebbs and flows but is always with you, so is my suffering always with me.' The Sufi saying 'When the heart weeps because it has lost, the spirit laughs because it has found' describes the pain and the joy of the lover in this



Drawing by Diana Le Page.

suffering of the Beloved: for has not Baba said that the suffering of Avatar is in order that all beings and things in creation may awaken to the realization of their true state? Baba said,

'This sahasas will be unique in the sense that you will witness and share my present universal suffering by being near me as my fortunate companions - being with the Ancient One who will be at the same time completely on the human level with you.'

We did witness His suffering. We were there and we felt it. But whether His suffering was from the deterioration of His physical veil, or whether it was an expression of His longing to awaken in our hearts, we do not know: we can only testify that His suffering enveloped us; and sometimes, too, He was stern and almost fierce. But His very being is loving-kindness and compassion, and His every gesture, every word, every expression is a shaft of light through the seven planes of consciousness. He knew precisely our capacity for change, and never took us near the limits of our endurance.

1982

The Avatars Abode Newsletter, June 1982

So we witnessed and sensed the quintessence of all suffering, and witnessed and sensed the simultaneous Infinite Bliss of God: Baba in pain, Baba happy; Baba walking slowly, painfully across the tarmac, then the sudden warmth and the sun of His greeting and embrace; Baba sitting withdrawn and drawn in expression under the verandah of Avatars Abode, then a few steps into the sunlight, and looking down towards the farmhouse and the ocean, lovingly stroking a follower and saying he had done well in choosing the property; Baba again walking slowly along the verandah, withdrawn and suffering, and the lovely warmth of His amusement on hearing the Australian word pawpaw for the fruit papaya; Baba sitting in our midst, the lines of suffering on His face being etched deeper by the clicking of inquisitive cameras; and the bright glow of love in His face as He smiled upon the three young women wearing the forehead decorations sent them by Baba's women disciples in India; Baba showing great concern for a young lad weeping, saying to him: 'Baba loves you - you must not be sad,' and as the tears of the lad still fell, adding 'When you cry, see, Baba cries too,' as He pointed to the rain that was gently falling; Baba happy, Baba suffering: Baba's smile as the light of every love we have known or will know, and His assurance to us that each love is but a step towards Him as Love itself; Baba's suffering as the light within our ignorance and selfishness, and His promise of our healing and our release from ignorance.

Meher Baba: absolute beauty suffering that beauty might know itself in all forms and beings: and creation bending low in pain beyond words, and rising in new song and human-ness in and through this suffering of Avatar.

We sought during those days of the sahasas to entertain our Beloved Baba, to ease for a moment the burden of His suffering and universal work. And at each anniversary of His stay with us, we endeavour again to ease His burden for a while. We come each year to strengthen our hands for His work and renew our love for His adornment, and in our joy of His Presence to sing and dance and play for His pleasure. We come to Him to sing the fruits of our singing of the day or of the year; and the Silence of His Presence in this Abode of His answers: go on singing through your voices and your hands, and take the blessing which I continually pour upon you through that singing, and share it with others. I continually bring the greatest treasure which it is possible to receive - a treasure which includes all other treasures, which will endure forever, which increases when shared with others. Be always ready to receive it.

Bill Le Page

CLEAR VINTAGE by Francis Brabazon

This clear wine in the demi-john's throat
Cost a thousand dollars – nay, much more.
What about all the footslogging of the
regular pilgrimages?

Then arrival's end in the dust street,
and the mad search for the shop
and the glance and the huge peal
of laughter as our eyes met.

Yes. Open the treasury of your hearts
if you would have him fill you a
glass of this precious stuff.

WALKING by Francis Brabazon

I wear myself out walking to nowhere.
A few dribbles of tears
Or a whole ocean – my reward. Should not one
(at my age) be more ambitious?
If one stopped at every gate
Admiring each rose garden
There would be no end
To a collection of false images.
No end to public appearances
And the spread of symphonic beatitude.

*These poems were written by Francis
especially for the Anniversary.*



L to R: Joan Bruford, Beryl Giddens, Francis Brabazon and Clarice Adams. *The Avatars Abode Newsletter, July 1982.*

1982

The Avatars Abode Newsletter, July 1982

REMINISCENCES OF GOD-MAN'S STAY AT AVATARS ABODE. by Peter Mi1ne

A journey to Avatars Abode is a journey to Meher Baba. For those of us who come from far away, the journey becomes a pilgrimage - an inward journey of discovery and delight as one nears the place Meher Baba Himself named 'Avatars Abode' and declared would become a great place of spiritual pilgrimage and His spiritual centre in Australia.

After the hours of travel, the first sight of Kiel Mountain makes the heart beat faster. It is, for many, very much the same as approaching Meherabad or Meherazad in India. The same mix of longing, excitement, and relief at finally having arrived. All this seems somehow magnified when the Anniversary of Baba's stay of three short days at His Abode in 1958, is to be celebrated.

Entering Baba's Room, which has been maintained virtually as it was when Baba slept in it and remains as though frozen in a moment of time, charged with His Presence, is the moment of Truth.

"The Anniversary", as it has become known, has taken place each year since 1958 to mark God-Man's visit. It is not a solemn religious gathering but rather a joyous occasion of music, plays, poetry, games, and reminiscences shared in an atmosphere suffused with Baba's Presence.

This year those who were present in 1958 were invited to share their experiences and memories of those days with Baba in a series of sessions aptly called 'Reminiscences'. Informal and friendly, these gatherings bridged the years and gave precious glimpses into life with the Avatar.

At the first session in the Meeting Hall, Bill Le Page remembered the frantic preparation of the property - at that time a pineapple farm - the relocation of the old farmhouse, construction of Baba House and the Meeting Hall with its hessian walls which were scant protection against the cold winds which blew on the first day of Baba's visit. There was so much to do and so little time - Baba's House was completed only on the day before He arrived. In their labour to make the accommodation at least habitable they overlooked something - a source of regret to this day - entertainments and amusements for, and in praise of, the Ancient One to lighten His burden. On the second day when Baba asked for some entertainment the sudden realization of this omission

became apparent. No-one had prepared anything. Thus the accent on song, theatre, and film at the Anniversaries.

At this and subsequent "Reminiscences", Clarice Adams and her daughter Cynthia, Bernard, and Joanna Bruford (whose father, John, drove Baba from Brisbane in his immaculate Peugeot 403), Robert and Lorna Rouse, John Grant, Francis Brabazon, Beryl Giddens, Marj Donaldson and Diana Snow in particular, contributed their personal experiences of the occasion. All seemed to return to that first cathartic day of the Sahavas when Baba gave a discourse on obedience which He had previously given in America. After this discourse had been read, Baba asked if all present could obey Him during the Sahavas and from the 10th of June to the 10th of July. The atmosphere became tense when three people, two boys and a man, refused to obey. Baba at first said they would have to leave, but after a 10-minute break they were allowed to stay. Baba then explained the four kinds of obedience:

1. Literal word-for-word obedience.
2. The 'castor oil' obedience - complete obedience without pleasure.
3. Discriminatory, or the obedience of common sense.
4. The obedience through love, which is the highest kind.

Baba said there could be no compromise: one cannot love the world and love God. The man of the world has to compromise, but to have obedience to Baba one cannot dally with the ways of the world. Baba is God, He is Pure; it is the impurities in us that stop Him from entering our hearts; we keep Him away; yet He is in us too.

One said that although there was a deadly serious atmosphere, Baba's loving tenderness was simultaneously evident - a lightness which somehow remained even at moments of greatest tension, as when Baba asked first one, then another, whether they were prepared to sacrifice loved ones, self-respect, and even life, if He so directed.

That day was unlike anything any of them had ever experienced before and its events remain indelibly etched in the minds of all who experienced it. Baba said He had completed the most important part of His Work that day, and added when He saw one of the boys still in tears, 'Baba loves you must not be sad. When you cry, see, Baba cries too!' as He pointed outside to the rain that was gently falling.

The "Reminiscences" so successfully focused attention on Meher Baba and His Abode that they are sure to become a regular feature of future Anniversaries.

1983

The Avatars Abode Newsletter, July 1983

AVATARS ABODE ANNIVERSARY by Peter Milne

The Anniversary at Avatars Abode is both a deeply involving experience and a weekend of unmatched entertainment.

Baba's chemistry of love is at work – His well-orchestrated experiments creating unexpected highs and lows in the flow of human affairs – His undeniable Presence the catalyst. Perhaps because of the influence of Baba's poet laureate, Francis Brabazon, on a generation of young Baba lovers seeking expression of their love, also perhaps because of the embarrassingly self-conscious attempts to entertain our Beloved when He was physically with us, but mostly because Baba has willed it to be so, the Avatars Abode Anniversary celebration has always been strongly theatrical in accent.

The Parvardigar is praised in song and drama and dance from Friday till Sunday – day and night. In this heightened atmosphere, for me, each Anniversary acquires a 'theme' which comes through in performance on the stage and interpersonal relationships in the mixing of Baba lovers from near and far. It is as though Baba skips a few

pages of His book and tantalises us with a glimpse of a later development in the plot – better things to come. Reluctant figures on the stage of ego are being gradually transformed into willing supplicants at His Feet, and for a few days He lets us enjoy His company.

This year provided a bumper crop of drama. There were six plays including two children's plays. The main three plays – '*The Quest*' – a revival of Francis's play (which was first performed before Baba in 1956 during His stay in Sydney) by the Avatars Abode Players, '*The Early Life of Shivaji*' by the Sydney group, and '*Fish 'n Chips*' a contemporary dramatic comedy by the Brisbane Baba lovers, were performed with vitality and humility – a rare combination in theatre. In each of these plays the audience and the actors became as one – the whole hall became the stage on which we, actors and audience, performed for Baba. The moods of the plays were diverse but the remembrance of the purpose of the performance remained evident – self-consciousness was minimal.

Another year will go by before we again come together for what is the highlight of our year. In that time we will work together to make the 26th Anniversary even better than this one. I thank Baba for these opportunities to be with Him and His dear ones at Avatars Abode – to my mind, the second best Place on earth.



Early 1980s. Back row: Gard Saunders, David Hobson, Unknown male, Sandra Dibbs, Roy Hayes, Peter Davies.
Middle row: Glenda Hobson, Diane Adams, Ros Hayes, Leigh Rowan, Peter Rowan, Sonja Davies, Patricia Saunders.
Front row: Mehera Saunders, Butcher twins, Freni Waidelich, Mehera Rowan, Arwen Hayes, Khadija Davies.



Children's play 1982 Anniversary. Front Row Left to Right: Karim Mellowship, unknown girl, Alicia Mellowship, probably Kadija Davies, Freni Waidelich, Mirabai Oakhill, Theon Oakhill, Unknown with horse mask on, Nathaniel Moroney, Mira Waidleich, Arwen Hayes, Mehera Moroney, Laila Waidelich. Back Row: David Hayes.



Probably 1983 or 1984. Front: On violins are Shakira Hussein and Laila Waidleich. Middle: Mehera Rowan; Jo-Anne Bruford on recorder; David Hayes; unknown; unknown. Back: Coleman Le Page on violin; Arwen Hayes; Mira Waidelich. Standing at back: Leander Bruford. Sam Saunders and Aidan Bruford sitting in front.

1988

Meher Baba Australia, July 1988

30th Anniversary - Avatar's Abode

If I had to choose just one word to describe Beloved Baba's 30th Anniversary celebration at Avatars Abode, it would be "golden". The weather, which had been rainy for months and almost cyclonic the weekend preceding the Anniversary turned out eight perfect, sunny, winter days. Two hundred or so Baba lovers & friends (peak night, Saturday, was attended by over three hundred) were there to enjoy the festivities.

The programme of events had been carefully designed and structured and proceeded without a hitch so far as I could see. At the same time, the pace was relaxed, building up in intensity during the weekend and quietening down again on the final day. The leisurely but ordered progress gave everyone ample time to savour the company of lovers and the property itself, as well as the talks and performances. The mood, to use a rather overworked but in this case most appropriate word, was mellow. The team of workers, no doubt frantically busy, never made one aware of the fact as they toiled away behind the scenes. Children played contentedly in the sand pit and on the swings; groups of teenagers sat around chatting on the grassy slope; the huge green and gold marquee fitted into the setting like some medieval pavilion; Baba's flag fluttered on its pole; Baba's house itself, quiet and serene, rested at the heart of proceedings, a sanctuary to enjoy at will. All was immaculate, colourful, beautiful. It sounds idyllic? Believe me, it was.

What can I tell you to convey some flavour of this marvellous occasion? First and foremost, I have to say – although it is obvious – that a great deal of love energy went into this event. Travel arrangements, accommodation off the property for pilgrims, transportation to and from Avatars Abode each day, cleaning duties, the long preparation period on the parts of those who planned and participated: somehow or other it all came together and worked, but not without a great deal of careful thought and hard yakka. In this regard, I am determined to name no Aussie names lest I leave out- one most beloved of the Beloved although not evident to our eyes. All I can say is salutations to Him who has

given His lovers the love to do what has been done.

Speaking of flavour – the food!! Somehow or other, a group of magicians conjured up a hot midday meal every day; and you could choose veg. or non-veg.; and it was not a basic meal but always included 3 or 4 vegetables plus meat or some vegetarian main dish plus tit bits of various types; and they served it up on time having rushed it up a flight of steps from a tiny makeshift kitchen.

I have been to the past eighteen anniversaries at Avatars Abode, and if I was asked to suggest a formula for making an Anniversary more special, it would be: add an overseas guest. And at this Anniversary there were at least 25 of them. Sam Kerawala enchanted us with his Baba and Sufi stories, particularly those regarding his experiences as a child with Baba in the Jubbulpore ashram: Baba's twin nephews, Sohrab and Rustom sang and clowned for us with great gusto (we even heard "There's a Hole in the Bucket"); Henry Kashouty gave two wonderfully intense and inspirational talks; Phyllis Ott gave us her insight-into the worlds of art and women as related to Baba; Jal Dastoor ladled out meals each day and both he and Dolly recounted some of their Baba experiences; Kusum and Mokham Singh sang and told Baba stories; J. P. Shrivastava dressed up in horrifyingly realistic bandages to perform a Baba medical miracle skit; Mr. Barucha gave a most vivid and concentrated talk of Baba and Baba experiences; Judy Schoek sang for us; Robert Dreyfus enthralled one and all (but notably the teenagers) with his tales of high adventure culminating in his meeting with the God Man in the sixties; Brad Kunin told jokes;

Continued on next page



The huge green and gold marquee at the 30th Anniversary, June 1988.

John Parry, showing slides of his own and wife Maria's Paintings, managed to show us also that modern art is not without a sense of humour; Anthony Thorpe spoke movingly of the East-West Gathering; the Nori family from Hyderabad, Charlie Morton and family members of many of the overseas visitors mentioned, did not perform on stage but gave us the example of their devotion to Beloved Baba and the joy of having them with us. Their presence with us, the pleasure of their company. Really, for me, that is the essence of what the overseas guests bring to us, for with them comes a heightened atmosphere, the usual "domestic" patterns are broken up and there is a subtle yet palpable awareness

of the Baba family as one which crosses all barriers, in which we can all join together and focus on Him and the incredible richness and variety of His Being.

So much happened, so much was unstintingly poured into the preparations. The children's play "Hanuman"; reminiscences of the Great Darshan in '69; "The Quest"; wonderful singing of all types; cricket; juggling and magical tricks; face painting, children decorated with stars and moons; a rich portrayal of poetry and song devoted to Him; a large, outdoor painting of Baba presented Japanese style on bamboo poles; a most gorgeous array of multi coloured saris formed into a pandal against a backdrop of green trees. Impressions to help us remember Him with love.

As I began by saying this was a golden event. I have loved each Anniversary though each has been quite individual and distinct. I have never known one to have a character remotely like this one. ...I have never felt Baba at Avatar's Abode in this relaxed mood. The talk, the performances, the inter-action between people was always very focussed on Him, but somehow effortlessly so. ...at this Anniversary I particularly noted hearing Baba described again and again by guest speakers who had met Him on different occasions as "magnificent". And that was how I felt Him at this celebration – magnificent, lordly, lion like, basking in His sunshine.

Beloved Avatar Meher- Baba Ki Jai!

Wendy Borthwick



Rustom Irani, Bill Le Page, Sohrab Irani and Sam Kerawala at the 30th Anniversary, June 1988.

1997

Meher Baba Australia, Sept – Nov 1997

Anniversary '97: Praise The Lord

*What a time when we all get together
What a time, what a time, what a time
When the folks of God all gather in His name
Oh what a time, My! What a time that will be.*
(black Gospel song)

This Anniversary 1997 of beloved Avatar Meher Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode in June 1958 was truly a wonderful time. Well planned, pretty weather, a mandali, good music, a very funny skit and lots of companionship and good spirits. Having Bhau with us was such a treat, his public talks and radio interviews preceding the June Anniversary took us up gradually to an elevated mood for the weekend. Bhau's Anniversary talks were fabulous — he was so 'on' we all benefited, we were all unified, focussed and grateful. His talks held some new revelations and his relaxed humour, extraordinary memory and love for Beloved Baba made for a mood of joy and wonderment. (Why me? I am so fortunate to be here type stuff.) Jai Baba to you, Bhauji.

Our fave and great musicians Richard, Robert, Chrissy, Sam & the Avatar's Abode

1998

Meher Baba Australia, August 1998

singers, a very spontaneous ghazal group, Raine, Jenny, Ross & Henry, etc etc filled the hearts of one and all and hopefully pleased the Beloved.

Peter Rowan, Peter Davies & John Isaacs-Young were side splitting players in the Bhau Kalchuri surgery drama. We all thought John's deportment Freudianly scary and the mischievous chicken pulled from Bhau's side made the creation of Eve seem easy. Kudos to the players!

Yvan has a skill as a comedian and he gets more hilarious every year, but the hidden talents of Michael as a joke teller emerged on the Sunday night and we didn't have to panda (er) to it in any way.

God gave us all a scare on the Sunday night when he sneered at the mobile phones, European cars and cappuccino machines by continually causing electronic hitches. This, though, caused us to experience the Baba film of the evening in the way of the 'old days' — with Bill narrating, and it was excellent.

The cups of tea & coffee with bickies and friends were great. The meals so lovingly provided are very welcome — simple but warming, and the company at each table of a night just what the doctor ordered, so to speak.

The lowering of the flag on the Monday was emotional: no one really wants to reenter 'the world'. We wanted to stay and be focussed on His life, His love for us, His room, our wonderful, inexplicable family love and loyalty to each other (whether we like or dislike each other, the love is tangible and very real.) But, alas, the flag came down and the '97 Anniversary was over. Baba Hu was sung, arti was said and we left for our various Baba homes to prepare for the August Sydney Anniversary and for next year's 40th at Avatar's Abode.

Raine Eastman-Gannett



(L to R) Meheru Irani, Dolly and Jal Dastur at the 40th Anniversary, June 1998.

40th Anniversary Impressions - 1998

Meheru:

It was a beautiful Anniversary where Baba's Presence and Love prevailed everywhere in the hearts of His lovers and in every place of His Abode. We were truly happy and honoured to participate in this love-feast.

Jal and Dolly:

The Fortieth Anniversary indeed was a repeat of Beloved Baba's '62 East West Gathering, having so many Indians, Americans and other nationalities coming to Avatar's Abode. Maybe it should be called the West East Gathering. This gathering also gave us a glimpse of Amartithi in India when thousands converge in His Eternal Love.

Amrit Irani:

I've never been to any gathering where I saw such harmony between people and of course the Baba feeling there — near Baba's House and in Baba's room. So much care and love went into the Anniversary from everyone. We felt right at home.

Valeria Violati:

I was truly impressed and touched by the cheerfulness, sense of cooperation and harmony by all the people organizing and by Baba's strong presence in the beauty and harmony and love that was palpable — always, through the festivity.

Bushfire at Avatar's Abode

Robert Rouse

When Baba named Avatar's Abode He gave it a name that implied His continuous presence on the property. In the sixties He confirmed this meaning.

One Saturday afternoon about four o'clock I looked out the living room window and saw a fire on the north side of the saddle on which our house stood. I rang the Brufords and the Kiel Mountain Volunteer Fire Brigade, composed of the farmers on Kiel Mountain.

The job we had to do was to burn back along roads and around houses, up along the concrete strips to the road along which Baba had been driven then down below the Bruford house. By that time it was about 6pm - it was going to be a long night. With John Bruford managing the toaster and Joan and Lorna brewing tea all the firefighters had a piece of toast and a cup of tea - the last food stop until tomorrow. Then it was off down Meher Rd turn right into Kiel Mountain Rd and working our way slowly down the mountain defending houses and sheds.

It was about 7am by the time we reached the bottom of the mountain and a long way to go before the fire was contained. Then about 8.30 a truck arrived from Caloundra 20 miles south with about a dozen blokes on board, 'Saw the smoke mate, came to give you a hand.' A

smaller group from Coolum also arrived. So the weary Kiel Mountaineers could go home, have a bath, a bite to eat and drop into bed.

Being the Manager of Avatar's Abode, I naturally sent Francis a full report. Francis read my letter to Baba. Baba immediately dictated a cable to Avatar Abiders:

AM PROUD OF YOU ALL LOVE BABA

About this time Baba had started a game with Francis. One day sitting with the men mandali Baba said that it was time they dropped the bomb on Meherazad! Not a bomb, but THE bomb. And every now and then Baba would ask Francis, when are they going to drop the bomb? Francis would think up a suitable reply such as 'They are working on it right now Baba. It won't be long.' Baba would just nod wearily.

On this occasion, after my letter had been read out and Baba had organized a cable. He said: Francis, how is it that there has been a fire at Avatar's Abode and no bomb here?

Before Francis could think of a suitable answer, Baba answered His own question: Well, of course I am there too.

Robert told this story before raising the flag to mark the opening of the 46th anniversary of Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode.



2004 Anniversary:
The dhuni fire
attracted some
keen children.
Photo by Claire
Mataira.

2005

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2005



Clockwise from Top Left;

- Mike da Costa lowers the flag to celebrate the end of the anniversary watched by Richard Thompson, Gary Lindsay, Bill le Page, Yvan Duerinckx, Dennis Carmody and Diane Adams.
- Owen and Stewart in the coffee shop.
- Diana and Bill le Page watch the evening program with Wendy Connor Haynes.
- Wendy Connor Haynes and Mehera Maroney.

- Amir and Meher cook rice.
- Meher, Lakshmi, Teja and Manisba prepare a delicious Indian breakfast.
- Farewell singing with Buz Connor, Claire Matairea and Ross Keating.
- Ross Keating sings with the children in the art tent

2006

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2006



2006 Anniversary. Clockwise from top left: Angie limura singing the rap. The Meher Baba rap that irresistibly drew Jal from his chair. From left Jim, Ravi, Jenny, Eruch, Gabe, Gus, Francis, and Jal. Circus tableau. Dolly and Jal lower the flag at the end of the 2006 Anniversary watched by Henry Price and North Ladner. Robert Rouse, Jehangir Daver, Jal Dastur and Joanna Bruford light the dhuni at the 2006 anniversary. Circus tableau.

2007

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2007



2007 Anniversary.
Clockwise from Top Left: Bhau Kalchuri and Robert Rouse greet one another.
Bhau talking at the 2007 Avatar's Abode Anniversary.
Yvan doing his "downunder" skit.
Bhau and Joanna Bruford.
Bernard Bruford and Roy Hayes with Bhau.

Welcoming Talk 50th Anniversary of Avatar Meher Baba's Visit to Queensland

Ross Keating

May Beloved Baba welcome us all in His own way and fill our hearts and Avatars Abode with His Presence. Welcome everyone to this historic anniversary.

In Myrtle Beach in 1952, Meher Baba stated, in a meeting with Murshida Ivy Duce and Francis Brabazon, that "There are three things that hinder Truth. First is temptation – very, very few people can overcome temptations; temptations of money, fame, power, lust, leadership are disastrous, very binding and very few escape [them]. Second, vagueness about things, and third, dishonesty". When I first read this statement I thought that "temptations" and "dishonesty" were self-evident obstructions to Truth but "vagueness" seemed like the odd one out. But is it?

During His lifetime Meher Baba was anything but vague. He stated in no uncertain terms who He is: God in human form, the Ancient One returned, the Avatar, the Saviour, the Messiah, the Christ, the Rasool, the Buddha. He spent His time on earth with such extraordinary clear-cut purpose and direction that, for an outsider, the sheer facts of His life could only indicate that here is a person with a divinely ordained existence. Equally, the extent to which He was able to endure continual physical suffering with great equanimity could only rest on the fact that His pronouncements of who He was and His experience of who He was were one and the same thing – the unique reality of being God and Man in One simultaneously.

If vagueness is one of the hindrances to Truth, then obviously our vagueness has to go if we are to fully experience the Truth. This, I think, is relevant as we begin to celebrate the Anniversary of Meher Baba's visit here fifty years ago. For it was fifty years ago to the day that Baba addressed a small number of people gathered together in the Meeting Hall and asked them to decide to either obey Him one hundred percent or leave the property. There was no middle ground, no vagueness permitted, a sharp line had been drawn in the sand. This moment had obviously been planned by Baba and one that He brought crashing in, straight up. From the accounts of those who were there, the atmosphere was highly charged: some people were

visibly shocked, others outraged, all were deeply stirred.

One person who was present compared it to Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. But I'm not so sure that Baba was attempting to test the faith of anyone so much as to make the faith of each person explicit, to bring it out from being something shadowy and vague into the sharp light of consciousness and then to form it into a clear intentional decision of obedience. Following this episode, when the atmosphere had calmed a little, Baba gave a discourse on obedience thus helping the minds of those present to regain some new stability. Baba elaborated that there were four types of obedience:

1. The obedience of the soldier, who obeys out of a sense of duty.
2. The obedience of the servant, paid obedience, the higher the pay the louder the "Yes Sir!"
3. The obedience of the slave, obedience through fear of punishment.
4. The obedience of the lover, obedience through love.

And it was the obedience of the lover that Baba said is what He wanted. Not obedience out of duty, out of the thought of some kind of recompense, nor out of fear. Obedience through love may seem like the most appealing option, but what did it actually entail? At this point Baba introduced one of the great, ancient themes of His Advent. "There can be no compromise; one cannot love the world and love God. The man of the world has to compromise; but to have obedience to Baba one cannot compromise with the ways of the world. Baba is God. He is in us all. He is pure; it is the impurities in us that stop Him entering our hearts. He can only enter our hearts when we have driven out everything else; we keep Him away, yet He is in us too". Finally, Baba said to everyone present, that if they all tried to obey Him one hundred percent then He would help them.

I mention all this, because I was asked to make some welcoming remarks and I thought I could do no better than to recall Meher Baba's opening words and what I have gathered were the circumstances surrounding them, when

He arrived here fifty years ago.

I'd like to conclude by reading some of Francis Brabazon's fine words regarding the significance of coming to Avatars Abode. Francis, as many of us know, was Meher Baba's poet, an Australian disciple who lived with Baba for ten years in India, and who was instrumental in the creation of Avatars Abode:

Avatars Abode is a stopping place on the road to the Beloved for He stopped here on the road to our hearts and took over the lives of those who gave themselves to Him. The place was acquired at His request and He gave the name it bears.

No stopping place can be a destination except that place where mind stops forever and one knows that one is God. Your destination is your own heart in which the Eternal Ancient One eternally lives, but because Avatar Meher Baba, the All-loving One stayed here, the perfume of His Love may refresh and strengthen you on your way to His Feet.

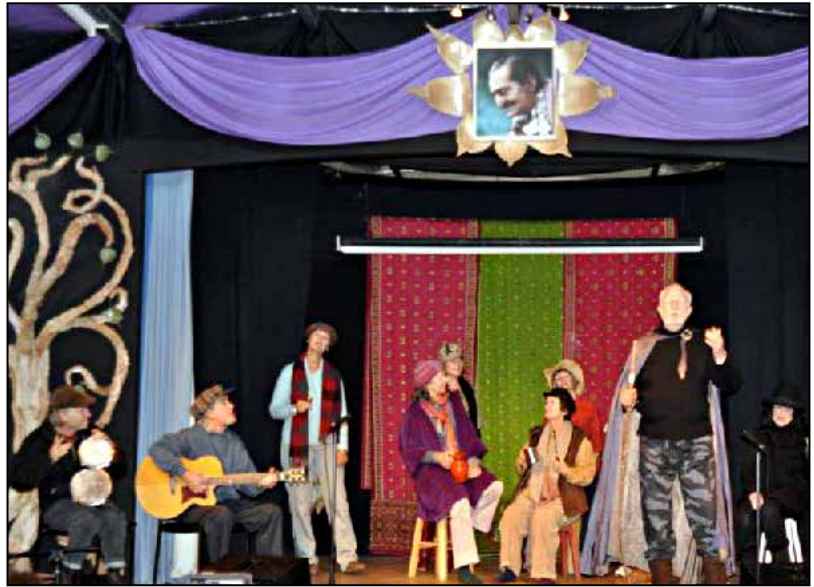
JAI BABA



2008 Anniversary.
 Above from the top: Amrit and Dara making us laugh with their stories.
 The Bombay group. Ted and Ward on stage.
 Left: Jal Dastur lights the dhuni.

2010

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2010

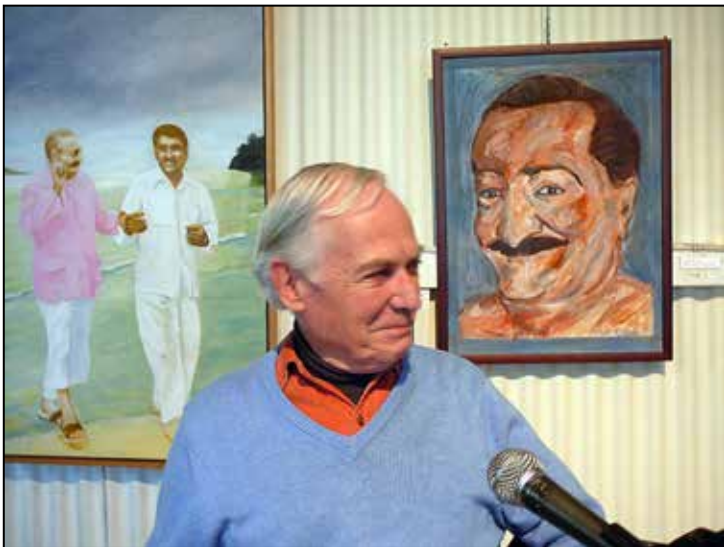


2010 Anniversary.
Clockwise from Top Left: Meher Baba's room.
The Wine Shop Singers perform *All a Hobbit Really Needs is His Pipe and His Armchair*.
Lorraine and the "evolution" singing group.
Ward Parks.
The Dhuni.

2011 Anniversary on next page.
Clockwise from Top Left: Bernard raised the flag at the 2011 Anniversary.
Ange singing after arti.
Special guests Tom and Cathy Riley.
Tom and Cathy lowered the flag.
Cathy worked with some of the children to prepare a song for the evening concert.
Tom Riley.

2011

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2011



2012

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2012



2012 Anniversary.

Clockwise from Top Left: Robert gives the opening talk with a well sung story of the time the Abode was threatened by fire.

Raj Khilnani lowered the flag to close the weekend.

Leigh and Lorraine coordinated a children's play about creation.

Mehernath Kalchuri and Raj reminisce about living in Khushru Quarters.

2013

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2013

The Master's Prayer: A talk at the Avatar's Abode Anniversary

Geoff Gunther

When I first came to Queensland I was inspired by the story someone told me of Peter Milne striding in the morning through the suburbs of Brisbane, saying this prayer out loud. What a wake-up call! And I remember when Hoshang and Havovi Dadachanji were here for the Anniversary saying that Meher Baba had left us with three special gifts: His name, His prayer, and the conviction that He is God!

Saying The Master's Prayer is like opening a window and letting fresh air from space blow in before we turn to our inner world in the Prayer of Repentance and God's intimate presence with "Beloved God".

As we might expect coming from the God-Man the prayer is inexhaustible, inspirational and immediate in its impact.

It is variously called The Master's Prayer, The Universal Prayer, and The Parvardigar Prayer, each emphasizing essential qualities, namely its divine source, its unlimited applicability, and its opening address to God.

The initial words, "O Parvardigar" ring out like a trumpet blast to the Protector and the Preserver. All of us reciting the prayer are in the living instant of the present, made possible by the merciful function of the aspect of God as Preserver in the great flux of creating, preserving and destroying which is the underlying dynamics of the universe.

'Parvardigar' is of course the immense name uttered three times in December 1915 as Sai Baba opened Merwan Sheriar Irani to the Infinite Power of the Divine. It is an Islamic name for Vishnu.

The prayer then addresses God as the Absolute in terms of what cannot be said about Him: no beginning and no end, no duality, no comparison, without colour, expression, form or attributes, immeasurable, beyond imagination and conception. This is God who is always beyond us as we are. Yet as we recite these ringing phrases



2013 Anniversary. Geoff Gunther in Baba's House.

we feel a great affirmation! This is not a god we are addressing but Reality itself.

And the prayer, still uttering God's transcendence – God always, everywhere, beyond any opposites, within and beyond, imperceptible and independent, invisible to ordinary sight, seen only with "eyes divine" – itself swells into a great hymn to the limitless, imperceptible and independent.

This half of the prayer sweeps away our inveterate tendencies to make God into an object, a super god in the sky, object of the idolatry of our own ideas and dogmas. This beseeching of 'beyondness' is of course mere nonsense to the ordinary measuring, judging and controlling mind. But it is the very essence of things for all who acknowledge an intuition of their own spiritual nature.

If it was to stop there we might feel only the remoteness of the Unconditioned with awe and even dread, left without a way to the God-Man and the immanence He incarnates.

Continued on next page

There is a sudden shift in focus and a new note enters the prayer. This we might call God in conscious relationship. This is His relationship to the creation through knowledge, power and love. These almost overwhelming phrases are full of the wonder of the gifts and all-pervading presence of the Beloved. From these gifts come the power-filled names which humanity uses to name the Unnameable. The concluding name “Ezad” is called and defined as “the only one worthy of worship”. That is, it means the same as any and all the proper names of God can mean. Baba uses a name that does not seem to point to any particular current tradition, bringing us back to the reality behind all naming, the silence behind all words.

Don't let our chattering minds be puzzled by seeming contradictions in the prayer. In many spiritual traditions when God the transcendent is being described in words, language plays a particular and unusual role. It creates certain productive tensions, as for example in the prayer when we say, “on all planes and beyond all planes” or “without attributes” and “with infinite attributes”. This type of contradiction pushes us beyond the attempts of the rational mind to think of Divine Reality as yet another example of an object of knowledge. Such language is though making a real statement about the Mystery where God, as Baba reminds us, is both the Nothing and the Everything, He is the Absolute – beyond all qualities, and the Infinite – comprising all qualities. We are taken out of our word-worrying heads to glimpse God as a presence both within our bodies and beyond us. We do not have to anxiously strive to ‘make sense’ of the prayer. Mind can even have a break, to feel part of a wholeness of participation, perhaps even a feeling of Baba saying the prayer in us!

Great inner scientists in various traditions, such as Meister Eckhart, Lonchenpa and Ibn Arabi, have spoken of the divine in this type of language as the only way we can use language to get beyond language, but they are addressing spiritual elites. The Ancient One in his last incarnation as Mohammed gave to be said by all Muslims five times daily the Shahadah, with its seeming inbuilt contradiction, “There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet” bringing this turn of language to all, and Baba's Universal Prayer develops this. We are most fortunate to have in God Speaks, particularly in the “Ten States of God” chapter, an overview that helps pacify the mind in approaching the mystery of the One and the Everything.

The prayer's touching on our participation in God is balanced and checked by the other two prayers of Baba's Arti: in the Repentance Prayer we are accepting our

actuality as imperfect and limited, bearing our load of sins, constantly failing and totally dependent on God's mercy; the Beloved God Prayer stresses our total dependence on His help to achieve Union, the goal of all the inner paths of the great religions.

Baba has said: “Every religion has its ceremonies and rituals. They are like dry bones. Love has no bondage. The prayer of the heart is the greatest thing. The Master's Prayer has substantial force and meaning. That is why I have given it to the world.” (Lord Meher, p 5634)

Baba gives us this gift of “substantial force”, yet He also warns us against entirely substituting the prayer for inner experience.

“The ideal prayer to the Lord is nothing more than spontaneous praise of His being. ... It is futile to attempt a standard prayer and hold it up as an ideal for all people of all times. The Glory of the Almighty transcends all human understanding and defies all verbal descriptions. ... If by ideal prayer to the Lord is meant a set formula, any search for it is a wild goose chase. All prayers ultimately initiate the soul into an ever deepening silence of sweet adoration...” (*Beams*, pp 74-5)

We should remember though that Baba placed great emphasis on the formal prayers. Bal Natu tells us,

“Before reciting them, He would wash His hands and face and straighten His coat or sadra. Then, with great solemnity, Baba would join His palms and listen with closed eyes while the prayers were read aloud by Eruch.” (*The Samadhi Star of Infinity*, p 67)

Even from 1966 on when Baba was tired and drained from His universal work He wanted the prayers said almost daily. From 1967 He needed physical support to stand and say them. On one occasion he motioned Eruch to go faster and faster until Eruch started to laugh. Baba reproved him by saying,

“You have no idea of the physical strain I was going through when I gestured for you to read faster. For you, reading the prayer fast may seem farcical, but for Me to participate in these prayers in My present state of health is no joke. I have given these prayers to humanity to recite. They are for all posterity. Whenever anyone recites these prayers, they will be helped spiritually because of My present personal participation. It has nothing to do with how quickly you read the prayer or how much feeling you recite it with or anything of that sort. All that matters is My having participated in the prayers. Anytime anyone repeats these prayers, I am there with them, and they will be helped spiritually.” (*Ibid* p 68)

This factor more than any meaning makes the Master's Prayer supreme. It is not that the words themselves are

magic. It is recited in various languages, Gujarati, Telugu, Hindi, Urdu and Chinese etc. Originally the prayer was dictated in English by Baba on 13th August 1953 at Dehra Dun. (This was about the time He began to dictate God Speaks, and The Highest of the High message was dictated on 7th September.) The first and authoritative version was released as New Life Circular 15 by Adi K Irani. This is the version said twice daily at Baba's Samadhi and when Arti is held at Avatar's Abode. The women Mandali used to say the Master's Prayer and the Beloved God Prayer every morning and then the Repentance Prayer in the evening. We are left with no regulations as to when and how we should say this beautiful prayer written by God Himself. It is not an obligation or duty.

But Baba does give us some instructions on how, and how not, to approach it. He says:

"It is better not to worship if your heart is not in it. Any prayer made mechanically in a spirit of show or ceremony is all a farce. It results in greater bindings through one's pretence to purity." (Listen Humanity, p 42)

He urges us to "participate with all your heart. God listens to the language of the heart, and is deaf to the dictates of the mind." (Lord Meher, p 4524) and to forget everything else, and concentrate on the words of the prayer and on Him.

He also told people that saying the prayer helps Him in His work!

Some of us have a tendency to fall into a devotional humanism – just loving the person of Baba and trying to please Him. Here we are praying to Parvardigar "the One God who resides equally in all." (Lord Meher, p 5323)

Dare I suggest that it is apt for most of us to make some effort in this direction? Each of us can become a little experimental in saying the Master's Prayer!

We can view the prayer as a part of breaking down our modern tendency of thinking of knowledge as being objective and 'out there'. But truth for the revealed divine paths is immanently grounded in subjectivity, in "Who am I?" Saying the prayer is not the saying of a fact or a belief. It is participation in a revealing, an understanding. We may and can discover that we can share in God-knowing-Himself on each recitation.

In a recent article in "To the Friends of Meher Baba", the worthy Michael Da Costa suggests we can try saying the prayer as addressed to the real Me, the God within. This might even, he suggests, lead to saying it as if it were coming from Baba Himself saying it in Mandali Hall.

Everyone will be unique and different in this and it may not suit everyone at all. But it is worth experimenting by saying each phrase of the prayer slowly, intently, and from

the heart until it seems to come out of Baba's silence itself. Baba's prayer is fathomless and each time it is said it will be different. There is no right or wrong here so long as the words come from real awe of God and gratitude to Baba. We are not trying to achieve some experience, to grasp for something; nor are we trying to achieve self calming or blissful peace. We might feel joy, and sometimes even frustration, but the Master's Prayer, said in love of the Master and as a participation in His love for us is a gift of boundless possibilities.

2013 Special Guests



2013 Anniversary.
Top: Meherwan Mistry during one of his talks.
Above: Zenobia Mistry.

"The 'entertainment' included a series of enlightening talks from Meherwan Mistry. The atmosphere of these talks in Baba's House brought back the intimacy of those days of sitting in Mandali Hall listening to Eruch." - Kelly Malone.

Joanna Bruford's talk at the raising of the flag for the Anniversary on Friday 7th June 2013

Jai Baba! Welcome everyone to the 55th anniversary of Avatar Meher Baba's visit to this property which he named Avatar's Abode.

Just imagine how it was when those people in the early days had been issued an invitation from Baba to partake of his Sahavas if they loved him and were prepared to obey him. Just imagine how it must have felt for the people here, including me, to know that in just a few days God in Human Form was going to be with us. A man who was also God. A man whom I had discovered in 1956 knew everything about each one of us. There was nothing to be hidden from him so it was no use trying to be a better person at this late stage of the game! You had to just put up with how you were and trust that he knew all about it and why you were like you were.

And so Meher Baba came. The anticipation of his coming and the preparations figure largely in peoples' accounts and there's a reason for this. The anticipation of meeting God in Human Form was overwhelming. It overtook you. Francis was here running a really tight ship. The property was a really run down old pineapple farm that needed to be prepared in an incredibly short period of time. Even the farmhouse was moved from the position where Baba's house is now down to the bottom of the hill where Robert now lives. There was an enormous amount of work to be done and not that many people to do it. Everybody who was here worked like Trojans. I wasn't here for most of it but I was here at the end of the preparation and the feeling of anticipation that Baba was coming to give us his Sahavas, his company, was just incredible. What it meant was that, instead of all the difficulties that normally you get with such a big project, well there were some tensions, but overall it all went beautifully. My experience of the teamwork at that time was just fantastic. I ended up doing things like shovelling gravel and painting. I was 17. I hadn't quite finished school and I certainly had never shovelled gravel in my life, or painted for that matter! There were women up here raking gravel who I don't think normally were ever seen without their high heels on! Everybody was chipping in to do things that they may never have done in their life.

One of the things I ended up being given to do was

painting. I was up on top of the roof of the verandah of Baba's house, which is now enclosed, painting up under the eaves because I was small. There was another guy there who was also painting and he wanted to get involved in conversation. I was full up with the anticipation and concentrating on the job as I hadn't painted before. I wanted to do the best job possible for Baba and I didn't want to have an intellectual conversation with this guy and I think I may not have been very kind to him. At any rate somehow I managed to fob him off. But what he kept saying was, "But Joanna, what about the conditions?" And somehow I got out of it.

The conditions of coming here were that we loved him and were prepared to obey him. I, no doubt, had heard this and read it but by the time I got here I'd completely forgotten about it and I didn't want to be reminded about it.

So Baba came and we had the first big session with him in the meeting hall here. The meeting hall hadn't been finished and the corrugated metal had not yet been put on this end and the hessian was put there to shield Baba from the draft. In fact it turned out to be the only meeting we had there because Baba was cold. All subsequent meetings were in Baba's house. At that first big meeting together Baba was up on the platform, Francis was by his side and probably some other mandali and Baba started asking Francis about who had contributed with their labour and in helping to establish this place. Some had contributed finance. Baba indicated he was really happy with the love that those people had brought to the place in preparing it for him.

It was 55 years ago so I don't remember everything, but the next thing I remember was that he got onto the subject of obedience. There were several people present who were not prepared to obey him one hundred percent and they were dealt with individually. And then Baba started talking about people being prepared to do some things which I felt were impossible; really really difficult things and I began to quake and feel very shaky because I put myself in their position and I felt almost positive I wouldn't be able to do that. So after they had been dealt with I stuck up my hand. Francis' eyes nearly popped out of his head and he

said “Joanna?” And I said, “Baba, I want to obey you but I’m not sure that I can having heard these stories.” And Baba said, or rather this is what he conveyed to me, I can’t remember his words now, “Don’t worry. All that I require is that you want to obey me. I will help you.”

And so I was calmed by that but I was left with this shaky feeling of tension for some time because I had realised that following Baba was not all beer and skittles, it was tougher.

After that meeting we had some wonderful meetings in Baba’s house. At one stage Baba said that he would like to see the sleeping places. He was driven down the hill to the Rouse’s house which we call the farmhouse where all the women were sleeping on rough bunks and he went right throughout the house and looked at all the individual bunks. When he came to May Lundquist’s bunk she had, and I think she was the only one who did, a little photo of Baba propped up at the end of her bunk. Baba pointed to the photo and then he pointed to the bed and he gestured in unmistakeable gestures how much May loved him. And again I thought how Baba knows everything about us.

We don’t have to worry. He knows where we are and what we are trying to do and he knew about May’s love for him. I don’t know whether May was actually there at that time but I imagine that she was. All the women were trooping around following Baba. Baba also went up to the tents on the flat bit of grass in front of the Bruford’s house where the men were staying and I’ve no idea to this day what happened up there! All the men went up there, we didn’t get to go. I’ve told you a few things of what happened when Baba was here just to give you a flavour of his presence. We are celebrating his 55th anniversary and he is here, he will be with us and I wish you all, everyone, a very happy anniversary in his love. We need to share his love amongst us. Eruch used to often talk about this – we’ve got to learn to share. Now is the time for a love feast.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

At that point Joanna raised the flag to seven Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai’s and when it was fully at the top she continued:

This is the symbol of Baba’s presence. When this flag is up it means we are celebrating the anniversary of his being here and I tell you he is here again!

Jai Baba!

From: *Meher Baba Australia*, Sept–Nov, 2013 p. 2-4



2013 Anniversary.

From the Top: Roy Hayes helped Joanna Bruford to raise Baba’s flag to open the 55th anniversary of Baba’s visit to Avatar’s Abode. Felix Schmidt and Sim Symons can be seen behind seen behind Joanna. Photograph by Bernard Bruford and used with kind permission.

The children performed ‘The Creation’ play – with much prompting!

John Sunderland and Peta Ireland showed their beautiful slides and talked about ideas for a possible superstructure over Baba’s Samadhi.

2018

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2018



2018 Anniversary.

Clockwise from Top Left: Debbie Nordeen and the 60th Anniversary Choir, Manjusha Bhajans, Peter Nordeen, Sue Jamison and John Isaacs-Young perform Sanskaric Surgery on Kris Hines, Jim Meyer.

2019

Meher Baba Australia, Sept-Nov 2019



2019 Anniversary.
Clockwise from Top Left: Dr Arjit Soni, Raine Eastman-Gannett raises Baba's Flag, Ward Parks, Bob & Ravi Welsh, Angela and Owen Newcomb, Adrienne Shamszad and Alan Manoukian.

The future of the *Meher Baba Australia* newsletter

David Bowling, Guest Editor

After 39 years of continuous publication this newsletter will no longer be published after the next edition as the previous editor Steven Hein has retired and we have been unable to find a replacement editor.

Over the years many people have contributed to making it a successful vehicle for keeping Baba lovers scattered throughout Australia (and in more recent years people around the world) informed of the news. As a guiding editorial policy, it was always envisaged to be a newsletter by Australians and for Australians. It has served a valuable role as a publication where people could read Avatar Meher Baba's words and information about his life, for artistic expression through the visual arts and poems, and as a forum for connecting Baba people around Australia.

Originally published monthly from 1983, it became a bi-monthly publication in 1995 and has been a quarterly newsletter since 2000. Wendy Borthwick was the first editor for 17 years and John Borthwick did the layout. In a pre-computer era and with a young family Wendy managed to produce the newsletter every month. In the first edition in February 1983 John Isaacs was the typist, layout by Leigh Rowan, photography by Tim and Di Waidelich, proof-reading by Felix Schmid and Diana Snow, and artwork was by Patricia Saunders and Donald Greenfield.

Late editors included Meherose Borthwick, Ros Hayes, Gusi Carpenter (2001-2014), and Steven Hein (2014-2020) and Kris Hines. Since 2000 the layout and desktop publishing have been done by Liz Gaskin. Her loving care and professionalism have significantly improved and enriched the newsletter over the past 20 years. Linda Beleski also did several years of layout in 2012-2013. In the first edition in February 1983 Wendy wrote:

A warm and loving Jai Baba to all our brothers and sisters in His love – and welcome to MEHER BABA AUSTRALIA, a bright new star in the already glowing Australian newsletter firmament.

Why another newsletter? Well it could be expressed in terms of 'the high road' and 'the low road.' ... This newsletter, ...we shall designate

'the low road.' Yes. News, views, opinions, doubts and certainties are all welcome here. (indeed, earnestly encouraged.) Unashamedly, we are catering for Australian Baba lovers. We live in a country of vast spaces. It seems that communication does not come easily to us: both by nature (people's: the person-to-person space factor) and because of Nature (Australia's: the Hobart to Cairns space factor.) This newsletter is an attempt to bridge the spaces.

One thing is quite obvious. i.e., we are not perfect, and our opinions are not perfect. Why bother to communicate them at all? It seems to me that we Baba lovers have our own exquisitely wonderful, and painful, set of delights and dilemmas to experience and ponder as we journey together in His love. On this road, we can't choose our companions since He chooses them for us. It's not always easy to know, love and understand one another, yet this, specifically is what He wishes us to do. Perhaps if we can improve our level of communication, we can gradually improve our understanding of one another, and help one another to grow in His love.

We hope we have been successful in bridging the spaces between His lovers in Australia and have helped one another to grow in His love. As we move more fully into the digital age, we are sure the intention that motivated the launch of this newsletter will find expression in new ways that can bridge the spaces.

If you have ideas on how the newsletter might migrate to an online form and wish to help with editing and/or publishing contact me at meherbabaustralia@gmail.com

Destination Brisbane (the Bellevue): Queensland's other 'Baba site'

Ray Kerkhove

Baba's Bellevue stay

Meher Baba stayed at the Bellevue Hotel in the heart of Brisbane for two overnights (entering and leaving Queensland): 2nd June 1958, and 7th June 1958.

Here He endured an uncomfortable time. He was kept awake by the hotel's midnight re-stocking of alcohol, and the winter chill meant He had to often keep his nose covered with a handkerchief, as it was sensitive to colds and other problems from having been broken during His car accident.

Indeed, Baba's Brisbane time was brief, efficient, and businesslike. Time was spent packing, unpacking. Baba asked about travel arrangements. Preparations were made for meals. Bill Le Page remembers it was quite a travail to locate corn flakes anywhere for Baba's breakfast early on the final day. Bill drove with Adi around the city's mostly empty streets until they found a shop open.¹

Memories of Manzil-e-Meem

One highlight was that the Australians were entertained by Adi Irani telling stories of his time with Baba at Mumbai's Manzil-e-Meem (1922-1923)². Adi was possibly prompted to do this by the Bellevue Hotel's appearance. Both Manzil-e-Meem and the Bellevue were multi-storied hotels, graced with latticework balconies.³ They both stood in the middle of tropical cities.

Baba's cottage

The Australians and mandali slept scattered across the Bellevue's hotel rooms (upstairs). Baba and Eruch were lodged at ground level, to avoid paining Baba's hip. Thus Baba occupied a separate L-shaped cottage behind the Bellevue's beer garden. Bill remembers Baba sitting inside at the end of this long, thin little building.⁴

It was a puzzle to pinpoint this 'Baba site'. Three



Bellevue Hotel, Brisbane, 1940. Source: State Library Queensland.



Manzil-e-Meem - Meher Baba's first centre - in Mumbai, 1922.
© Meher Nazar Publications.

years ago, through Tony Foley's assistance, I started communicating with Peter Bonenti, whose family owned and operated *Bellevue Hotel* until the late 1960s. Peter was a boy at the time of Baba's visit but does not remember Him. However, he kindly shared many details, sketches and photographs, which I have included here. Peter recalled the transformation and later uses of Baba's cottage:

The beer garden was located next to The Mansions, and at the end of the beer garden there was a cottage, which may have been used by guests in the early days. I can remember that my Father had the Assistant

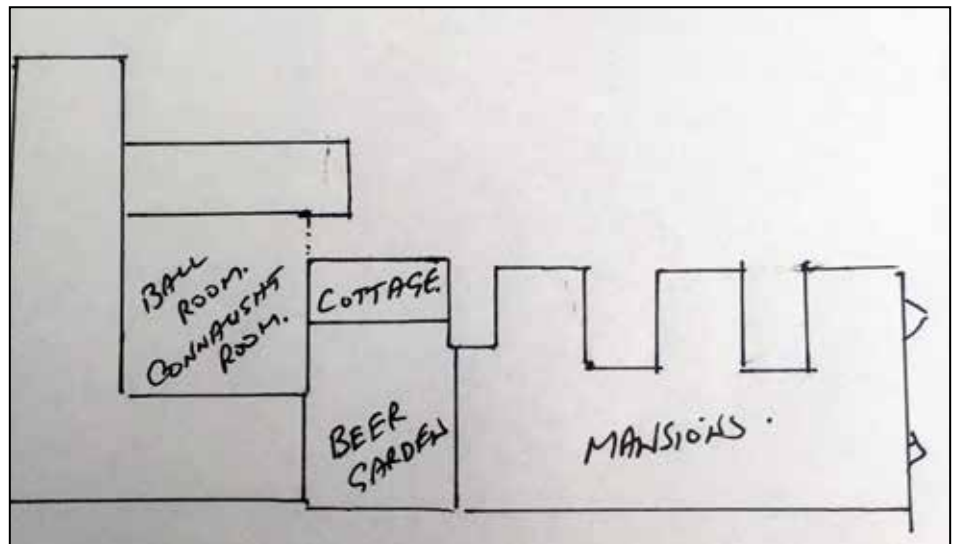
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*Manager lodged there for a time. In about 1960 or '61 Dad converted the beer garden into a function room. This room was open on one side closest to The Mansions and the whole area was roofed. In this transformation the cottage was somewhat modified. The front of it was opened up allowing a stage for the function room and the fire place was left in situ. The toilets were then used for this area. The back of the cottage became a bar like a dispense bar called the Nook Bar. Small and cosy.*⁵

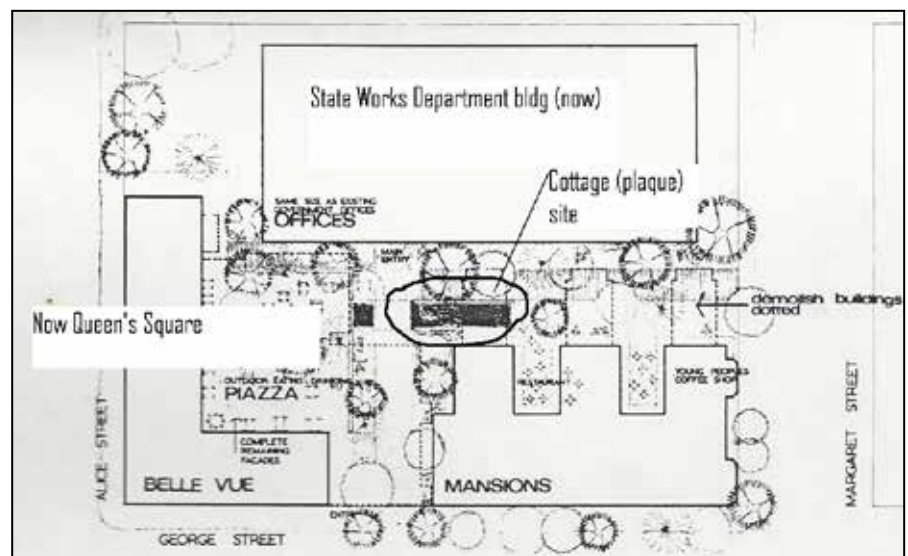
No photo of the original cottage seems to have survived. The Bonentis mostly knew it as 'Palm Lounge,' as its use as accomodation was short lived compared to the latter function, which endured for decades. In its post-1960 form, it extended up to the street. Raine Eastman-Gannett recalls walking past the spot regularly in the early 1970s, to and from Queensland Conservatorium. By then, it was sealed off with corrugated iron.⁶

Bellevue's status in Baba's Time

What is significant is that around the time Baba visited, the Bellevue Hotel was one of the most glamorous spots in Brisbane. The state's government (Parliament House) stood on one side, and the historic Botanic Gardens on the other. By the front of the Botanic Gardens was a small zoo (no longer operative when Baba arrived). The hotel had refined furnishings and hosted many of the city's most lavish dinners, formal dances, conferences and weddings. It was the 'usual' accommodation for visiting celebrities and international guests. Just a few years before and after Baba stayed, Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Johnny O'Keeffe ('king' of Australian rock'n'roll), the English cricket team, and two English bands (The Kinks and The Honeycombs), were lodged here – sometimes repeatedly. American actress Katherine Hepburn, the 'Leading lady' of Hollywood for 60 years, famously stayed for quite a while at the Bellevue in 1955. She cycled just outside the building and painted 'Breakfast in Bed' – a



Peter Bonenti's sketch of the location of Baba's cottage at the Bellevue Hotel.



Bellevue Hotel floor plan showing location of Baba's cottage (Brisbane City Council, with tags by Ray Kerkhove).

self-portrait at the Bellevue that was recently auctioned for \$47,000 (AUS).

Robert Helpmann at the Bellevue

In 1955, three years before Baba's visit, Sir Robert Helpmann – the famous actor and dancer – returned to Australia after decades of living in England. He met with Katherine Hepburn at the Bellevue in 1955. Ever since the 1930s, Helpmann had been familiar with (and apparently somewhat interested in) Meher Baba through Margaret Craske, the British Baba group and the Australian Ballet company, which he co-directed. The latter comprised of many students of Baba's disciple Margaret Craske.⁷ At the time of Baba's 1958 visit, Helpmann was touring Australia as the lead role of Noel Coward's satirical play about modern art: *Nude with Violin*.



Bellevue Palm Lounge including former cottage and beer garden, in early 1960s (photo courtesy Peter Bonenti).



Bellevue Hotel glass-paned area of former beer garden / cottage that Baba used (1960s: photo courtesy Peter Bonenti).

Earlier use of the Bellevue site

Before Baba, the Bellevue site had an interesting past. It was formerly a wooded ridge above the sub-tropic, swampy rainforest flats of what is now the Botanic Gardens. Stone tools indicate that before the 1820s, the ridge was used for occasional Aboriginal camps. This ridge – which ran from Old Government House almost to Roma Street – was where Brisbane’s earliest European settlement began.

In 1857, the site (now a fine home) became Bellevue – an exclusive boarding school for Queensland’s young ladies:

Bellevue House, near Botanic Gardens Brisbane, Mrs. Storey and Miss Lester having fortunately secured a most eligible house in the finest part of Brisbane, wish to receive a few young ladies to board and instruct in the usual branches of literature, and the current accomplishments of the age.⁸

Around 1865, the boarding school became a hotel and then in 1885-1886, Bellevue Hotel was upgraded and enlarged to the appearance it had up into the 1970s. For a whole century (1860s-1960s), it was the ‘rendezvous of Royalty and Premiers.’⁹ Here Queensland’s elite met visiting notables, including its first Chinese Commissioners, and country politicians had a ‘Brisbane base’. The hotel even sported writing and reading rooms where Queensland’s elite pondered and scribbled.

Directly in front of the cottage Baba occupied, lies *The Mansions*. Today, this is the only feature of the precinct still standing. During the 1880s-1890s, The Mansions were residences for the city’s doctors, parliamentarians and other dignitaries – e.g. Australia’s first female surgeon, Dr Lilian Cooper, and Professor Frank Cumbrae-Stewart – one of the core figures in the development of the University of Queensland.

Continued on next page

The site today

Sitting beside Queensland's Parliament House, it was inevitable that the Bellevue Hotel became embroiled in politics. Especially once it was purchased by the state government (1967), its reputation sunk. It fell into ruin, becoming infamous as the unhealthy hive of drunken politicians negotiating shady deals.

Thus in 1977, the building was demolished – ironically by the Deen Brothers, who were part of Queensland's oldest and most influential Muslim family. The demolition sparked widespread protest and condemnation, showing that the building was more iconic than many assumed. It awakened interest in protecting heritage and supporting cultural activities across Queensland. This was the catalyst for Queensland legislation protecting and promoting culture and heritage (enacted in 1992).

The destruction of the Bellevue and erection of Queensland's public service (*State Works Department*) headquarters in its place erased all trace of Baba's cottage. Foundations were excavated deep into the bedrock.

As Baba would have it, this site is nevertheless now the hub of *Destination Brisbane*. This will be the largest, most central complex in Brisbane. It contains a controversial international casino, but also two large towers providing accommodation for international tenants, cafes, and a vast viewing deck open to the public. Thus Brisbane's skyline will shortly be dominated by a megastructure, unwittingly signposting the very spot where Baba stayed.

References

- 1 Bill Le Page, interview with Ray Kerkhove, 2016.
- 2 Bill Le Page, *The Turning of the Key* Sheriar 1993, p. 128.
- 3 Dick Duman, 'Manzil-e-Meem, 1980' in Tony Zois, meherbabatravels.com



Robert Helpmann chatting with Katherine Hepburn at the Bellevue Hotel, 1955. Source: National Library of Australia.



Model of the Destination Brisbane complex. Baba's cottage occupied the triangular area behind the Mansions - the small red-roofed building at the front, whilst the Bellevue occupied the site of the accommodation tower at the left (photo Ray Kerkhove).

- 4 Bill Le Page, interview with Ray Kerkhove, 2016.
- 5 Email of Peter Bonenti to Ray Kerkhove, November 8, 2017.
- 6 Email from Raine Eastman-Gannett to Ray Kerkhove, July 29, 2019.
- 7 Charmaine Foley, email to Ray Kerkhove, April 13, 2015.
- 8 Advertising, *Moreton Bay Courier*, March 14, 1857.
- 9 Bellevue Hotel, *Daily Mercury*, January 6, 1937, p.7.

The Way of Virtue

Ross Keating

In His message “To Students, Artists, Social Workers and Public Institution Servants” Meher Baba states in part: “Illiteracy and ignorance invite exploitation, but literacy can also become a willing tool in the hands of those who exploit. Education devoid of culture is inherently destructive, although on the surface it seems to represent progress” (*Listen Humanity* [first published 1957] 1971, p. 180). And from an educational system “devoid of culture,” we get a society “devoid of culture.” “Fake news” born through the collaboration of politics, journalism, and big-fist businesses is a clear example of social exploitation. “Fake news” is the use of literacy without culture aimed at manipulating and brainwashing people by those in positions of power. I think Timothy Snyder nicely sums up what this leads to: “When we give up on truth, we concede power to those with the wealth and charisma to create spectacle in its place” (quoted in <https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/the-fabric-of-reality-2021-01-14>). And social media which pours out a constant stream of unchecked “fake news” has become a kind of daily non-stop spectacle in the lives of many people.

Later in his same message, Meher Baba also points out how the word, culture, “has become indefinite in the minds of the public.” This is still seen today, for instance, in a fairly recent *ABC Science Report* (August, 2018): “Culture may affect the way our brain processes everything.” This report states that “the term ‘culture’ represents a hugely complex web of

dynamic systems, including beliefs, language and values. Religion, socio-economic status and gender may also be relevant – so it’s not hard to see that culture is difficult to measure scientifically” (taken from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2018-08-17/culture-may-affect-the-way-your-brain-processes-everything/10120068>). This is a sociological approach to culture which gathers what it defines as “research findings” and then attempts to interpret this material. But this is really just collecting information after the scene of the crime. It avoids telling us anything definitive about the meaning of culture other than it is something that affects everyone according to the specific kind of data it has gathered, which, in the end, is no definition at all.

By way of contrast, Meher Baba gives a very clear and focussed definition from the position of his spiritual authority: “True culture is the result of spiritual values assimilated into life.” In using the term, “true culture,” Meher Baba is pointing us to something that we have to strive towards. He is also alerting us to the fact that we have been living within a situation where the central problem is essentially a crises in truth: we have lost our connection with truth in the way we live. True culture, as Meher Baba defines it, provides a way through life for us to re-connect with truth. And this in a sense is what true religion (*re-ligio*: to re-connect with Reality) is supposed to do. To dumb down culture as something that people just passively suffer as a consequence of living in “a hugely

complex web of dynamic systems” is to emasculate the meaning of the word and destroy its potential to provide guidance and happiness in our lives.

The other key term Meher Baba uses is “spiritual values.” Obviously, he is alerting us to the fact that these values are not “worldly” values. By “spiritual values,” I think he means “virtues” – which is a word that has dropped out of usage but “spiritual values” comes close to it. By virtues, I mean something deeper than living the life of a do-gooder or being outwardly directed according to some set of principles that are judged to be morally and ethically sound. This is all ego-driven.

By virtues I mean human yet eternal values, such as patience, kindness, courage etc. Virtues are inherent in people – a person doesn’t need to be educated in virtues; but a toxic environment can stunt their coming into fruition. Virtues are felt, like faith, through a kind of intuitive knowing. You can have your own individual set of worldly values but you can’t have your own set of spiritual values or virtues. Virtues can only be lived and experienced. To my mind, you participate in the living out of virtues – for example, at any moment you can simply consent *to be* courageous. It is always there for a person to participate in. In a sense – and I may be off the mark here – but I don’t think we have our own private stash of virtues; some little pile of “my virtues” with our name on it that we call upon when we so desire. And nor

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do I think that we accumulate virtues and then “cash them in” when we die for some heavenly reward.

In *Stay With God*, Francis Brabazon, the Australian poet, alludes to this higher idea of virtue when he writes: “... and only by the fully and perfect Descent of Himself / as a man can He re-establish the Way of Virtue, / the Way of pupilship and love and delight of human-ness in men” (*Stay With God*, 1977 edition, p. 115).

Interestingly, the word “virtue” comes from the Latin, *vir*, meaning “man” but when incorporated in the word virtue it gives the sense of inner power (non-gender based power) and this is what a virtuous life gives to an individual: access to this inner power in a very natural way.

For instance, to be inwardly poised at all times, which I think is a needed virtue today, a person lives and participates in something of real spiritual power. And this is what other people recognise in the person of poise as *strength* of character. It also leaves an impression in what a virtuous person does like designing bridges or buildings. A bridge can be felt as heroic just as a building majestic. All of this can't be measured; but it also can't be denied by those who experience it as a kind of upliftment in consciousness.

Then in his message, Meher Baba gives us a direction to follow: “Therefore you must keep before you the ideal of that spiritual culture which, once developed, imparts life and beauty to all undertakings – educational, technical, industrial, social, moral, and political – and pierces through their difference to produce unity. This results in the development of the highest character in the life of a nation or individual.” What a grand aspiration this is!

This is the direct opposite to the kind of unity that we see in many violent groups today that can only be described as expressions of tribalism. Their unity is the result of a spiralling down of the human spirit. Invariably these “tribes” are built around a misguided sense of worldly superiority that generates an ideology of hate which can only end in destruction and ugliness. They have no real culture in Meher Baba's sense of the word. Other “tribes” seem to attract members who appear to me to belong to what Tom Wolfe called the “Me Generation” that grew out of the sixties. These members carry with them an overblown sense of entitlement and know nothing of self-effacement nor self-sacrifice. While other “tribes” consist of members who appear to share an anger towards society for not hearing them.

Elaborating further in his message, Meher Baba presents a statement of how to re-gain a sense of unity amongst all society's diverse peoples: “Love for God, love for fellow beings, love of service and love of self-sacrifice – in short love in any shape and form – is the finest ‘give and take’ in existence. Ultimately it is love that will bring about the much-desired equating of human beings all over the world and without necessarily disturbing the inherently diverse traits of mankind.” Any sincere person of good-will must see this as the only practical way forward: to be loving makes a lot of sense. It is a way that is filled with lived virtue. This needs to be placed as the first item on the agenda of every “educational, technical, industrial, social, moral, and political” organisation that presently exists in our society.

Culture based on Virtue

We come into this world with access to the divine power of virtues already latent within us. Through this access and a social sharing of virtues a flourishing human culture grows. But this inner knowing is easily buried under the *sanskritic* debris from worldly experiences that have become increasingly unnatural. To get back on course, we have to return to and stay with God through love, which naturally incorporates a life of virtue. This, no doubt, will take time. But the beginning phase is the recognition of the *sanskritic* debris we carry within us and then choosing to live a life of love and virtue to intelligently deal with it. We are all global citizens and have a responsibility to bring about an inclusive and loving culture.

Carl Jung once wrote: “The great events of world history are, at bottom, profoundly unimportant. In the last analysis, the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately springs as a gigantic summation from the hidden sources in individuals. In our most private and most subjective lives we are not only the passive witnesses of our age, and its sufferers, but also its makers (*C. J. Jung Psychological Reflections*, 1978, pp. 156-157). These “hidden sources,” in Meher Baba's language, are the action-generating *sanskritas* we mentally carry within us. To deal with these is to deal with the hub of the problem.

Mani S Irani, Meher Baba's sister, once said that Meher Baba doesn't want us to *suppress* those feelings in us that are non-loving but to *control*

them. Control is the adult attitude. From reading Baba's *Discourses* I understand that part of this control is made easy through knowing what we are dealing with, namely, the force of our own subjective *sanskaras*. And that these *sanskaras* don't constitute our real Self. The type of control needed to deal with them is self-control, inner control. This is an objective power we can participate in; in other words, it is a virtue at our disposal which supplies us with its own strength.

These *sanskaras* are not bound within the four walls of our minds for they arise from our experience of the world and so they depend on the world for their sustenance. If I suffer from envy, for instance, it is because something in the world keeps activating and nourishing that envy impression in me. My *sanskaras* are then dependent on me living amidst things that arouse my envy. One logical way to deal with this is for me to go somewhere that removes myself from the object of my envy, but Meher Baba doesn't see this as a viable option. I think this is to do with the fact that I will just be replacing my envy *sanskaras* with different *sanskaras* and in so doing nothing really changes; I'm still burdened.

In 1965, Meher Baba told Robert Dreyfuss, a young American spiritual seeker, "Go back to the West, because what you are looking for you will not find wandering around India or sitting in a monastery in the Himalayas ... but you will find it in society with people by trying to be of service to them and loving them (*Inner Travel to Sacred Places*, 2012, p. 42). It is amazing how Meher Baba completely flipped Robert's desire to be a kind of wandering *sadhu* in India seeking God, by ordering him to return to the West, the home of his

sanskaras, and forget about seeking God but rather live a life of service to people. A life of service to others, I think, implies a life of virtue for it is only through the power of virtues that such a life can be sustained. This seems to be the most direct way to rid one's self of *sanskaras*; and once they are gone, only God exists.

And nor is social change through a political system that is not based on virtues an option for Meher Baba. In 1926, He said to a group of *Swaraj* (Indian Independence) Party workers: "What is politics but fraud? Whatever your own, honest, candid option might be you have to act according to the creed of the party, [at times] against the voice of your conscience, and thus be dependent upon others for your actions, which is quite opposed to the fundamental principles of Truth" (*Lord Meher* online p. 720).

In His message "To Students, Artists, Social Workers and Public Institution Servants" Meher Baba is directly addressing everyone who lives in society. It is a message that needs to be re-visited in our troubled times of global unrest. How we choose to live-out this message is up to each individual. However, whatever way we finally choose, it will first spring from what Meher Baba calls "positive forgetfulness." Meher Baba says: "Positive forgetfulness, then, is the cure, and its steady cultivation develops in man that balance of mind which enables him to express such noble traits [virtues] as charity, forgiveness, tolerance, selflessness and service to others" (*God Speaks*, 1973, p. 213).

If I really loved Baba

If I really loved Baba
I would see His shining light
In everyone & every thing
Every day & every night.

I would greet Him every moment
As I go about my day
Doing all the little things
In my work & in my play

He'd be first there on my mind
As I woke up in the morn.
When I rose me from my bed
I would see Him as the dawn.

He'd be there in the toothbrush
And the water & the paste.
He'd be there in the mirror
And the flannel for my face.

There He'd be in the kettle
And the water ... and the tap.
The tea bag & the honey
And the milk & the tea cup.

I would see Him in my dog
Sleepy eyed from her rest
As we walk into the yard,
He'd be there as all the rest

Of the world that I would see
Beyond the yard & the fence...
The trees & hills & valleys,
And the slope down to the sea.

As I walked on the beach
I would greet him in the way
The ocean came to greet us
On the sand as we would play.

He would be there in the ball
As I throw it for my dog,
And the seaweed & the shells
And the rocks & the drift logs.

The smile I give to strangers
And the smile they give to us
Would be His for the taking
And the giving ... He is us.

If I loved my Lord Baba
I would write a poets sigh
that carves His Name forever
Upon earth & sea and sky.

I would never wear a frown
For the things that people do,
I would love them all knowing
My Beloved ... they are You.

I would want for not one thing
Except to hear His Name
Resounding in my heart
Baba, Baba, Love Supreme.

Tricia Migdoll

Meher Baba Australia

May - July 2021

Guest Editors: David Bowling and Sim Symons.

Design, Layout & Digital Image Cleanup: Liz Gaskin.

Proof Reading: Gusi Carpenter.

Mailing List and Subscriptions: David Bowling.

Email: meherbabaustralia@gmail.com for information.

Sydney Meher Baba Community

Sydney meetings are limited while COVID-19 is active:

Monday Night Meetings

continue at the home of Kristine Wyld. 6pm for 6:30 start; potluck meal from 7:30–8:30pm.

COVID-19 restrictions apply. Contact Kristine for address details: truestories@ozemail.com.au.

Meher House

is open by appointment for visits of 60 minutes. COVID-19 restrictions apply.

Monthly Meetings resume Sunday 25th October.

For meeting details contact Jenny and Ross Keating:

jkeating@tpg.com.au

To arrange to visit Meher House contact Yvan Duerinckx:

yvand@westnet.com.au.

Email to subscribe to Meher Baba Sydney Noticeboard:

jkeating@tpg.com.au

Visit the new Meher Baba Sydney website:

<https://www.meherbabasydney.com>

Melbourne Meher Baba Community

All get togethers are on hold due to COVID-19.

Contact people for future meetings are Cynthia on 0409 880 005 or Jasmine on 0438 300 193.

WA Meher Baba Community

No current meetings are planned due to COVID-19.

For information call Paul Morris 0429 310 169 or Julie Lee-Morris on 0428 250 294.

New Zealand

Contact Jill Hobbs on (06) 347 2974, or email

jillhobbs1954@gmail.com

Avatar's Abode Meher Baba Community

Avatar's Abode 2021 Anniversary

Friday June 11, 11.30am - Monday June 14, 2.30 pm

Full details to follow with your invitation.

Also we are very interested to hear of any offerings, either in person, Zoom, or recorded, that you might like to contribute.

Get those creative juices flowing and let's put together a beautiful bouquet of love offerings for our Beloved.

Avatar's Abode Anniversary Planning Committee

Email Us at avatarsabodeanniversary2021@gmail.com

“Keep me close with you –
I am always there.”

Meher Baba

Some of the overseas guests and visitors at Avatar's Abode Anniversaries

- 1981 Filis Frederick.
- 1984 Dr Barucha.
- 1988 Baba's nephews Rustom and Sohrab Irani, Sam Kerawalla, Henry Kashouty, Jal and Dolly Dastur, Phyllis Ott.
- 1989 Bhau Kalchuri.
- 1990 Charles Haynes.
- 1991 Adi and Rhoda Dubash.
- 1992 Bhau.
- 1993 Meheru Irani, Sohrab and Rustom Irani.
- 1994 Jal and Dolly Dastur, Katie Irani.
- 1996 Leatrice Johnston (Darwin Shaw's daughter) Sohrab and Rustom Irani.
- 1997 Bhau Kalchuri.
- 1998 Meheru Irani, Jal and Dolly Dastur, Amrit Irani, Dara Katrak, Kishore Mistry, Valeria Violati.
- 1999 Bhau Kalchuri.
- 2002 Naosherwan Anzar.
- 2003 Davana Brown, Henry Kashouty.
- 2004 Hoshang and Havovi Dadachanji.
- 2005 Wendy and Buz Connor, Mike Da Costa.
- 2006 Jal and Dolly Dastur.
- 2007 Bhau Kalchuri.
- 2008 Bombay Centre group, Ted and Janet Judson, Ward Parks, Amrit and Dara Irani, Mehernath Kalchuri, Elaine Cox.
- 2009 Mehernath and Raj Kalchuri, David and Sheila Fenster.
- 2010 Ward Parks.
- 2011 Tom & Cathy Riley.
- 2012 Raj Khilnani.
- 2013 Meherwan and Zenobia Mistry.
- 2014 Dr Digamber Gadekar, Mehera Bhoir, Jehangir Davir.
- 2016 Shridhar Kelkar.
- 2018 Peter and Debbie Nordeen, Jim Meyer, Swaroop, Shridhar Kelkar.
- 2019 Dr Arjit Soni, Adrienne Shamszad and Alan Manoukian.