

# MEHER BABA *Australia*



*"Sing Avatar Jesus! Fragrant Tune  
Whose petals over the world were strewn.*

*"Sing Jesus-Baba: God to Man -  
From Man to God the arching span."*

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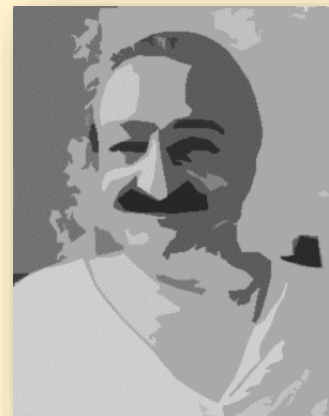
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## **Meher Baba Australia**

**Editorial:** Jacob & Elizabeth Horsey

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Accompanying quote: Francis Brabazon, Christmas Morning (1961)

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# How Baba Drew me to Him (and Glenda) and my 1982 Pilgrimage

David Hobson



Group photo – October 1982 pilgrimage.

*Last October, Jacob Horsey asked me whether I might be able to contribute an article for Meher Baba Australia. I replied that I don't have a flair for writing but that I'd endeavour to contribute something. Thinking about it, I felt that the best thing I could do would be to simply write my Baba story. After all, there is no more significant a tale to tell for those who have been fortunate enough to come within the Godman's orbit. Of course, it's a wonderful ongoing romance, and I wouldn't have it any other way. The grandest of adventures!*

So, Jake, here goes...

Although my childhood relationship with God would have to be considered pretty much a

you-scratch-my-back and I'll-scratch-your-back affair, I always took God fairly seriously. I

particularly enjoyed Psalms and the New Testament and often thought how wonderful it would have been to be born around the time of Jesus.

My brother and I went to Sunday school regularly when we were young and later on to church. My early childhood was a very happy one. I was good at, and enjoyed, sports and was a competent student.

To get really serious about God, disillusionment with life's allurements is unavoidable, and my disillusionment began in the form of my parent's gradual marriage break-up. I desperately wished this not to happen and would pray to God that it not happen. It seemed to me that my prayers weren't being answered, and as I moved into adolescence, I began to wonder whether I could have all the things I was used to and yet not be hobbled by my religious conscience. I decided to leave Christianity and look after number one. However, I also felt that life would not be the same again, and it wasn't. Sporting-wise and academically, life went downhill. I was about fourteen at this time.

I still believed in God even though I might have pretended otherwise. When I was fifteen, I decided to become a Christian again, but this time I wanted to follow the Bible's teachings to the letter. I soon realized though that I could not do this. I did not have the strength and courage. It would have been like trying to lift oneself up by the boot straps. I again left Jesus but this time in my prayers I said to Him, "I am going to leave you now but if you really exist

come back to me in a two- or three-year's time in another form." This I guess was around July/August 1969 when I was in my last year at high school.

In 1970 I dropped out of a mechanical engineering course at the Queensland Institute of Technology through lack of motivation and study. In 1971 I applied to become a mechanical engineering cadet in the Royal Australian Airforce in Melbourne. I thought the discipline of service life would help me succeed. I was accepted and passed my first year – only just – but was not motivated to study. Two thirds of the way through my second year I applied for discharge and while waiting for the discharge, I really started to wonder, "Where to from here, what am I interested in?" The usual allurements of academic, sporting, and social achievements had lost their appeal. I simply had to find out what life was all about.

In the Air Force library, I came across a book- "The Art of Loving" by a well-known psychologist Eric Fromm. It provided a little light. The statement from this book that sticks in my mind is something to the effect, "The only sure-fire solution to the problem of human existence is love." As I said, this book provided a little light, but was dry.

After I was discharged, I returned home to Brisbane and then to Bowen where my mother lived. I remember I used to watch television till about eleven o'clock at night and then go to my room and cogitate about life and its meaning and Jesus. I would do this night after

night and after many hours would evolve certain, what I thought, were “pearls of wisdom”. I thought however that other people, philosophers and religious people and the like, must have done such searching before me. I decided that when I returned to Brisbane I would go to some bookshops and search out books by people who had already done such thinking. I decided I would read their books and take off from where they had got to. I felt that to discover all the truths of life would take lifetimes of searching. The thought that I could find all the answers to my questions in one book never occurred to me. Before I left Bowen I read about transcendental meditation in a newspaper, and the fact that it was not aligned to any particular religion appealed to me. I followed it up when I returned to Brisbane. My brother and I both paid a modest amount of money to be given a mantra. Later on, when I came to Baba I very quickly lost interest in TM.

At this time, I had not been to the bookstores. Very shortly after this I went to a large city bookstore and looked through the religious/philosophy/sociology section. I decided I was only going to buy a book if I figured there was a good chance that I would benefit by reading it. I didn't want to waste my time going down dead ends. Amongst the books were a number of books by and about Meher Baba. The set of three discourses was amongst them, as was “Avatar” by Jean Adriel, “The God Man” by Charles Purdom and “God Speaks”. I remember being impressed with the Baba books and not with any of the others. Discourses in particular appealed me.

After going to another large bookstore and browsing through their religious/philosophy/sociology section, again it was the Baba books that piqued my interest. I decided that I would buy Volume 1 of Discourses if the salesman was prepared to split the 3-volume set. He wasn't, so I returned to the first book shop where the salesman agreed to my request (Volume 1 cost me the exorbitant amount of \$1.50!). I believe that the salesman may have said something to the effect that they were such a slow seller, he may as well sell me Volume 1.

I took Volume 1 of Discourses home and was astounded by what I read. I remember when reading the Bible how different lines and passages simply rang true. Every few lines of Discourses revealed pearls of wisdom. All my questions, and many, many more were answered.

It was clear from the introduction to Volume 1 of Discourses that Meher Baba claimed to be God. This was difficult to accept on first thinking about it, but then I thought how could anyone have all the knowledge available in the Universe at his fingertips, and then tell a lie about being God. So, on this seemingly intellectual level, I accepted Meher Baba was God. I went back to the bookstore the next day and bought volumes 2 and 3 of Discourses, plus Avatar and the God Man. I continued my reading with the same enthusiasm. It was a real honeymoon period.

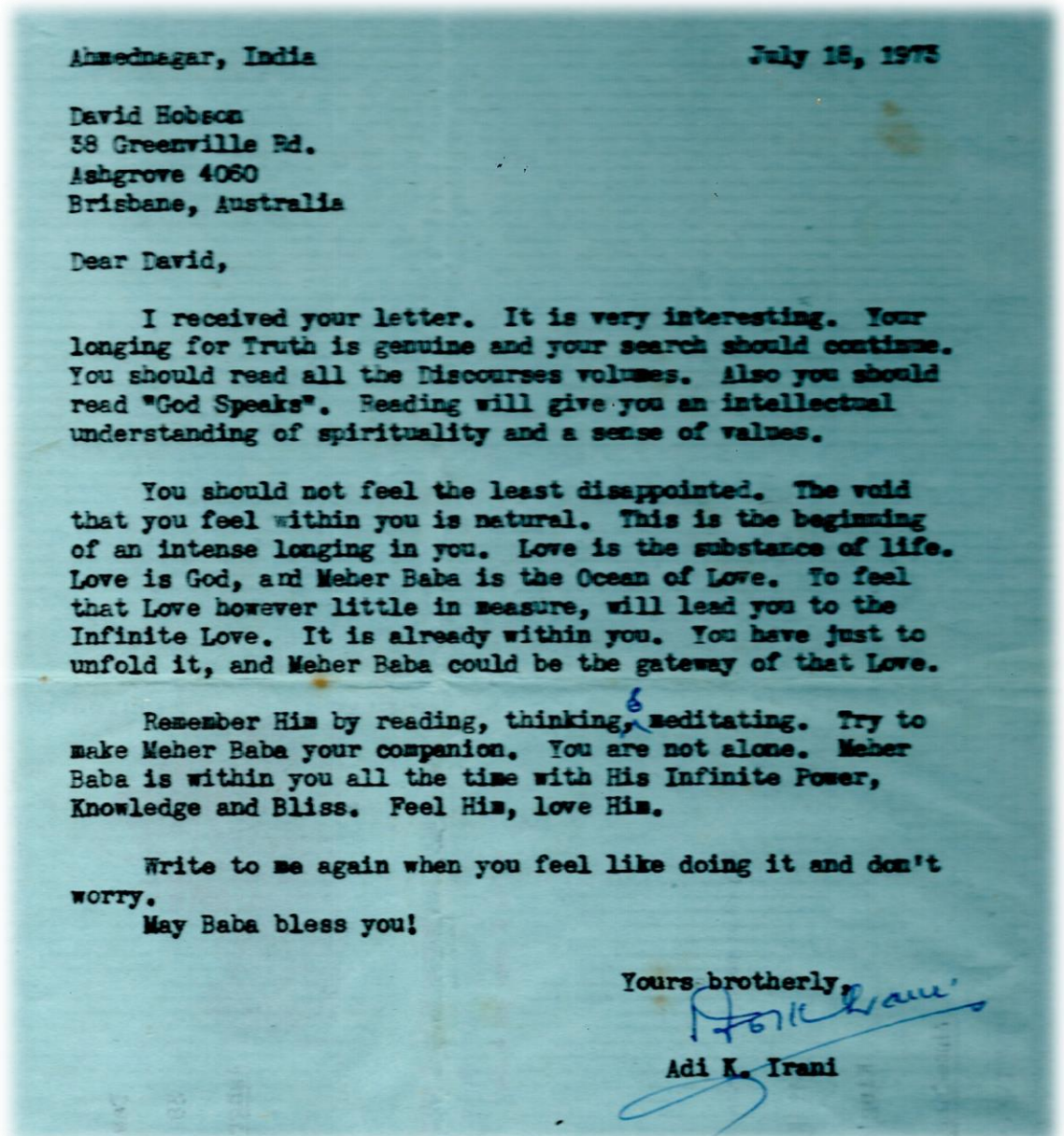
In Discourses I read about the five Perfect Masters, and I wrote to Adi K. Irani, Baba's

secretary in India, and asked Adi of the whereabouts of the five Perfect Masters, believing that my next step would be to contact one of them. It was some months before I received a reply from Adi who said my longing for the truth was genuine and my search should continue. Adi also recommended that I read all the Discourses and said I should also read God speaks. Adi said reading would give me, "an intellectual understanding of spirituality and a sense of values". Adi suggested I make Meher Baba my constant companion and that I should not worry. He made no mention of the Perfect Masters and by this time I knew that my question had been a silly one.

Around the time I wrote to Adi I came across a follower of Guru Maharaji. I met her in a health food store in Brisbane. I went to two of their meetings, thinking that perhaps Maharaji was one of the five Perfect Masters Baba had spoken of. I stopped going to

their meetings when it became apparent that they regarded Maharaji more highly than Baba.

Prior to receiving Adi's reply, I had made contact with a long-time Baba lover in Brisbane, May Lundquist. I got May's address from one of the bookstores I had visited. May was the person who supplied the Baba books to the bookstores. She plied me with tea, kindness and information about Baba and showed me photographs of Baba. She also



told me about Avatar's Abode and gave me a brochure showing how to get there.

May told me of two young Baba lovers who ran a city record bar called Life at Its Best. I went to see them. They were Donald Greenfield and Sam Saunders. Donald gave me a very loving parting embrace. I was starting to feel some warmth in my life.

On the Saturday, I drove the 100 kilometres north of Brisbane to Avatar's Abode. The road onto Avatar's Abode was the original road which went past the Bruford's. Bill Le Page was on the front steps of the Bruford house talking with some people. He came over to the car and took me down to Baba's House. Francis Brabazon was living in Baba's House at the time. Bill introduced me to Francis who embraced me and said, "Jai Baba". I had no idea about this "Jai Baba" business and mumbled incoherently back to Francis (...yes, I'm still mumbling...).

There were quite a few young Baba lovers there and I had dinner with Francis and the other young Baba lovers that night before heading back to Brisbane. For years I had very few close friends and here was a ready-made Baba family. It was truly wonderful! From memory they were practicing a play for the June Anniversary, and I was roped in to do the lights.

It was now late April or early May 1973. In January 1974 I went on pilgrimage to Meherabad and Meherazad for the first time. This 1974 pilgrimage was a real honeymoon

pilgrimage. Amartithi time, everything was perfect.

A little 'gift' from Baba on that pilgrimage occurred when the Avatar Meher Baba New York Society showed a film during the Amartithi programme. There was a scene showing Baba climbing some stairs. It was clearly after Baba's 2<sup>nd</sup> car accident as He was struggling to climb the stairs. For maybe 15 seconds I saw Baba at a much deeper level. The most accurate way I can describe how I saw Baba is that He was "compassion personified".

I don't hanker for Baba 'experiences'; if anything, it's a case of, "Please Baba, no 'experiences'". The only other Baba 'experience' I've had was at the flag lowering at the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Avatar's Abode in 1988. It's the only time I can say that I've ever really felt Baba's Presence. It was palpable. I know that Peter Rowan also felt it.

I returned to India in August of 1978 for my second pilgrimage. Is it Rumi who said, "There is no death worse than expectancy"? Many of us I am sure had 'honeymoon' first pilgrimages and returned in the hope of having the same experience, only to be disappointed. For many the main drawback was to be once again with Baba's mandali. Eruch has sternly reprimanded pilgrims when they've stated this as being their primary reason for returning. Many have also thought that the joy of going on pilgrimage to India would be lost when all Baba's mandali had passed. Perhaps a human enough thought, though demonstrating a severe lack of the understanding of Baba's Reality.



I returned to India in December of 1978, I guess thinking that *that* pilgrimage would be a 'honeymoon' pilgrimage. How foolish we seekers can be! All of my pilgrimages since 1974 have without a doubt been working pilgrimages - Baba working on me. So many times, I would think, "what am I doing here?" Baba was no longer mollycoddling me. I once expressed these feelings to Freeman, Bha'u's right-hand man at the time, and Freeman said something that brought me great comfort. He said, "Baba trusts you." Baba trusts me!

*"I may give you more much more than you expect, or I may give you nothing and that nothing may prove to be everything."*

I think it was during one of my 1978 pilgrimages that Eruch was asked in Mandali Hall about bowing down to Baba, something not really part of our Western culture. I like many others, would think, "Well for us Westerners, isn't this just being a bit of a sheep?" Eruch's wonderful reply was, "One day your knees will give way beneath you." It hasn't happened yet!

It seemed to me that at times the mandali would have particular messages for pilgrims. I think it was on one of my 1978 pilgrimages that Mani handed out little pieces of paper with Baba's quote, "Love burns the Lover; devotion burns the Beloved." A poignant message for those of us in the spiritual kindergarten. Also on one of these 1978 pilgrimages, Michael Le Page asked me at Sarosh Canteen in Ahmednagar whether I wanted to get married. I guess a reasonable

question from one late-twenties male to another....???

My reply was, "If I do, I do; if I don't, I don't". I wasn't hankering to marry, but if I met the right person, then it would be well and good. Because of the breakup of my parents' marriage, which had a big effect on me, I had determined many years before that I had to be very careful not to enter marriage on the basis of shallow considerations. It was essential that it be built on solid ground.

My wife-to-be, Glenda, and I met in December 1981 and from the beginning our relationship was always one where we could both be 'ourselves', without trying to 'impress' one another. We were always comfortable and at ease in each other's company. Whether Glenda accepted Baba as God never concerned me. I never saw this as my business, and I still don't.

If we were to marry, however, what I felt was essential was that Glenda feel comfortable within the Baba family and at Avatar's Abode. Thankfully she felt at home with my Baba friends and at Avatar's Abode. Francis Brabazon was always very kind and gentle towards Glenda. He didn't tolerate fools and if the rest of us deserved a dressing down, Francis was always ready to oblige. When Glenda and I got engaged, I made a point of making Francis the first person in the Baba family we told.

We got married in September 1982 and a couple of weeks later, after spending some time at Avatar’s Abode, we left on our first pilgrimage together to Meherabad and Meherazad. We were in a group of ten or so travelling with Bill, Diana, and Francis. It was Francis’ last visit to Meherabad and Meherazad, where he had spent the last ten years of Baba’s life as one of Baba’s intimate mandali.



The love and respect that all of Baba’s mandali showed for Francis was extremely touching. I remember at the conclusion of the day in Mandali Hall with Eruch, we would all stand up and Eruch would gently guide Francis over to be the first to take darshan at Baba’s chair. Eruch would then take darshan followed by the rest of us.

On this trip I remember Glenda and I sitting alone with Eruch in Mandali Hall, perhaps during lunch. Eruch, being Eruch, and knowing that I was Glenda’s first love, said something to the effect, “Love David as you do but try and reserve a little of your love for Baba. Can you

do that?” Glenda felt comfortable with that. How wonderful that Eruch had this insight and said what he did!

Prior to our meeting, Glenda had been learning ballroom dancing in Brisbane city after work and I joined her at those classes. We diligently rehearsed a dance or two before we left on our pilgrimage to India so as to provide entertainment for Baba’s mandali on the Sunday in Mandali Hall at Meherazad. We danced to a recorded tape, and it was a real

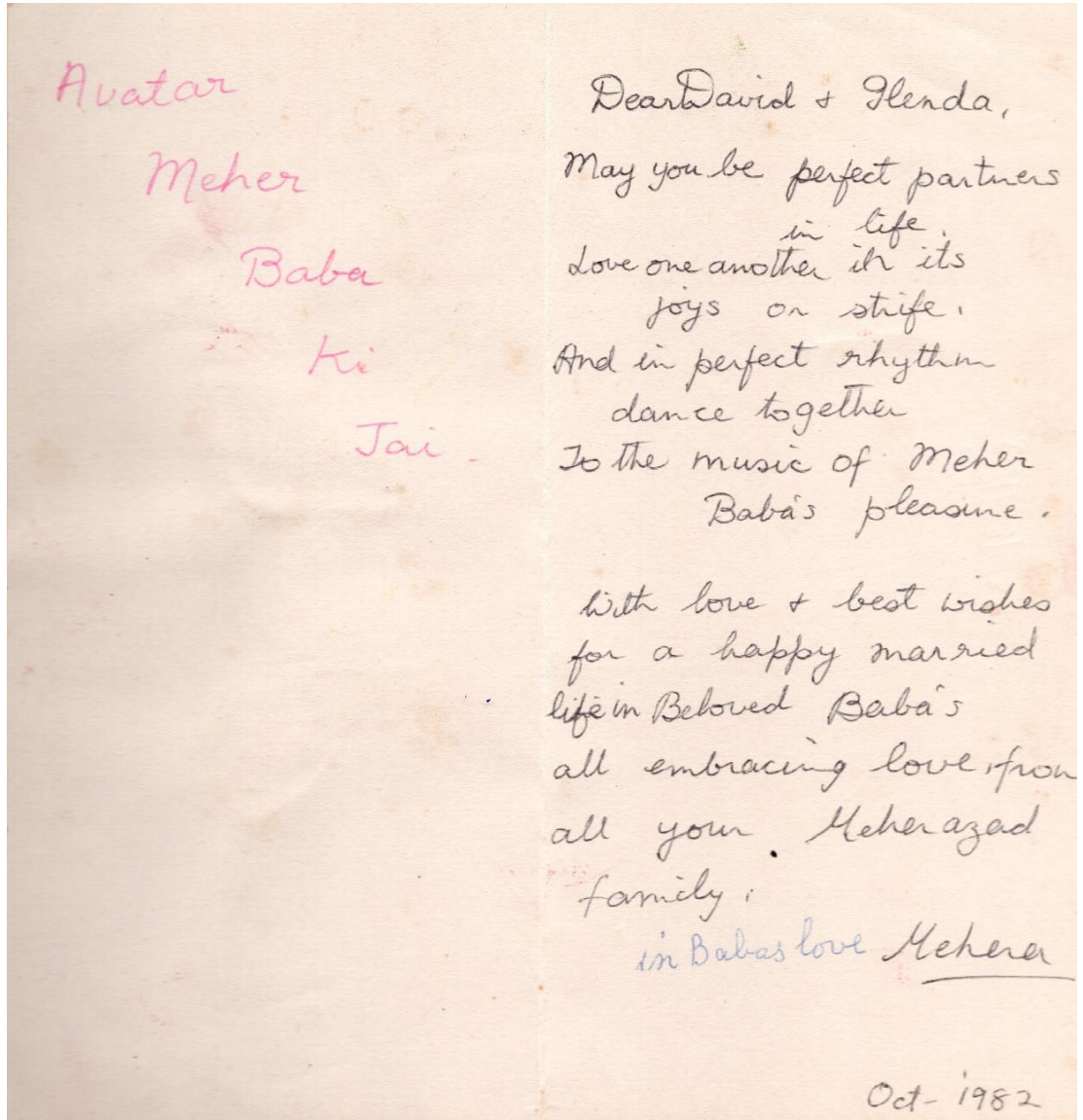
hit. Mehera and the mandali greatly appreciated it.

The women mandali gave us special treatment on our honeymoon trip in 1982. We gave Mehera one of our wedding photos for which in return we were given a small, framed photo of Baba. I think she made the frame herself. Mehera also gave us a card with a message, "May you be perfect partners in life, Love one another in its joys and strife, And in perfect rhythm dance together, To the music of Meher Baba's pleasure."

I like to think that we have each been God's greatest gift to each other. Through me, Glenda came within the Avatar's Orbit, meeting many of Baba's mandali and enjoying the

companionship of so many of Baba's worldwide family. And through Glenda, I like to think that I have learnt some of the lessons of give and take essential for a successful marriage.

Since our 1982 pilgrimage, Glenda and I have been on 10 more pilgrimages to Meherabad and Meherazad.



**The divine romance continues!**  
**Jai Meher Baba**

*David Hobson*

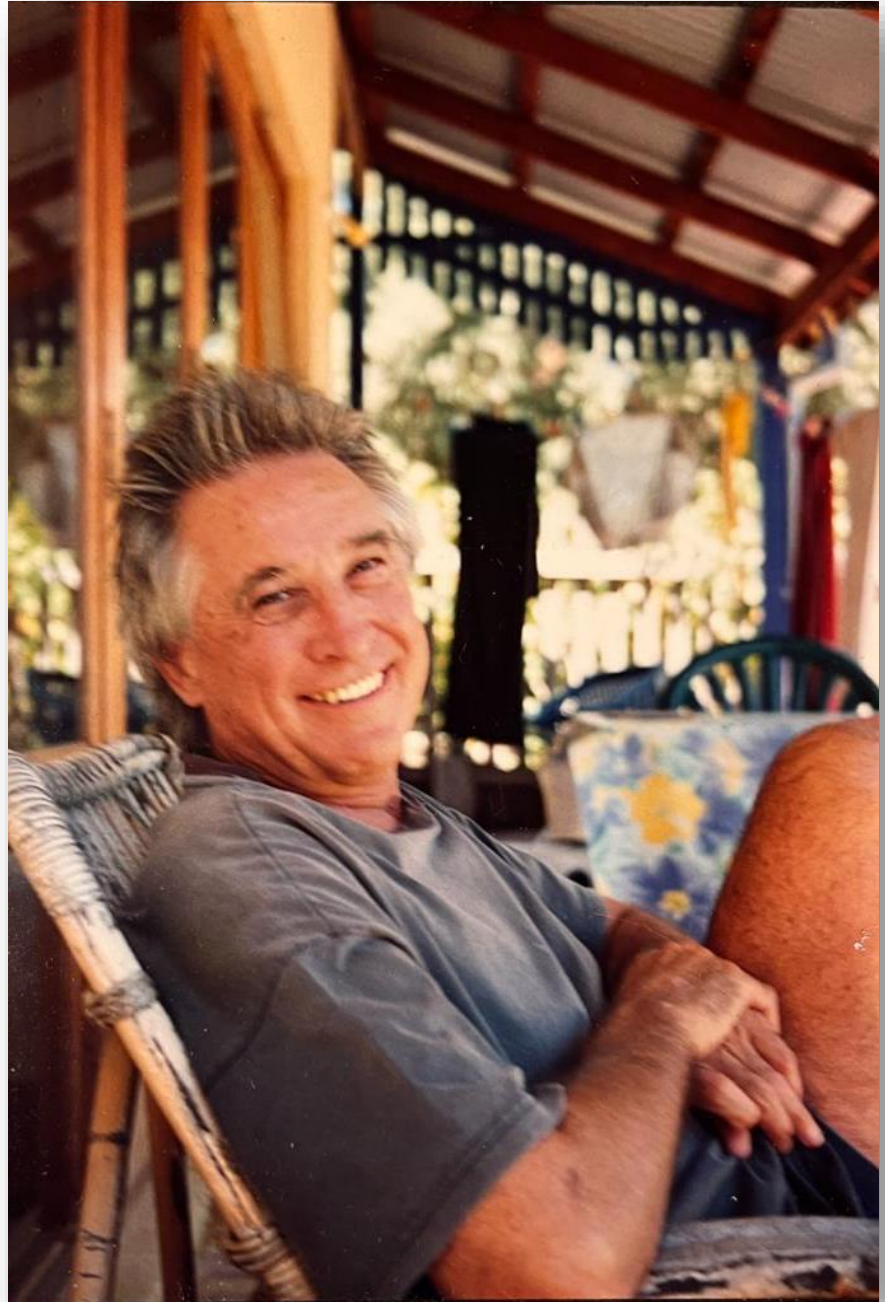
# John Sunderland

## Peta Ireland

John grew up in Melbourne after moving with his family from country Victoria. Although always a gentle soul, he avoided bullying in high school by being very skilful at football and becoming captain. He was also very good at gymnastics and water polo.

After studying architecture at Melbourne University, he worked with a well-respected architecture firm. *"But John was destined for a more unconventional and adventurous life. He veered away from following societal norms and instead pursued community creativity and spiritual meaning. This took him backpacking across Asia and the Middle East in the 60's to live and work in Scotland and Denmark for ten years. When he eventually returned to Australia he lived in communities and ashrams in Perth and Melbourne using his architectural skills to enrich them,"* **quoted from Yana Sunderland.**

I have learned over the years that John has always been well liked and respected by all those around him. He seemed to have an easy talent for the design of spaces that felt good to be in, that uplifted the soul. He had a kind,



gentle confidence and charm about him that was very alluring. People from his past that I met or communicated with always spoke of their fondness for John and the inspiration he was in their lives.

Although John's two previous marriages did not last, he maintained good friendships with his ex- wives and was a wonderful dad to his children, who all express their gratitude for his loving guidance, kindness and generosity. He had two sons, Free and Tiiram, and one daughter, Yana. He was also stepfather to my son Kim, who also appreciates what an enormous positive influence John was in his life as he was growing up. The love and respect they all had for him was always evident, but was shared beautifully when all came together to help me prepare a loving farewell to John in our home. His son, Tiiram expressed his gratitude for John's gift in modelling a loving form of masculinity and a compassionate form of fatherhood.

At our farewell to John, tributes from his close colleagues in Perth described aspects of John

that we were only partially aware of, so I'll share some excerpts from these here.

*"I'm sure everyone knows what a great person John was, but maybe not as aware of how enormously well respected by all his work colleagues in the architectural community-including clients, architects, engineers and students. In fact, everyone he came into contact with John only ever had a good word to say about him.*

*It was truly an honour and privilege to have known and worked with John. He was not only a thoughtful, generous, kind and caring person who was always considerate of others, he was one of the best architects I have ever had the pleasure of working with. And he brought a positive attitude and a sense of calm and peace to the office. He would always have time for others, selflessly sharing his knowledge,*



John Sunderland's architectural design and proposal for the superstructure in Meherabad.

especially when mentoring the younger architects, who respected him greatly.

He was an enormously creative thinker. He had an extraordinary ability to quickly come up with alternative solutions to an architectural problem or challenge.

His dedication to architecture and generosity of spirit was contagious. It was such a delight to have worked together, taught at university together, shared the joy and fulfilment of satisfying an architectural challenge together and had fun together. I will remember him always and be forever grateful for what he taught me, how he contributed significantly to our practice and especially for his friendship. John was truly a wonderful human being and an exceptional architect.” **Dick Donaldson.**

“Such an amazing man---inspiring, insightful, engaging, intelligent, positive, worldly, spiritual, calming, quiet, thoughtful, and above all this---so incredibly generous. John was a superbly talented architect and a natural leader. Everyone liked him. He was magnetic. We worked together, side by side, for countless hours crafting a shared vision for the city, for the university, for new schools, for architecture students, for an independent learning place, for a city precinct, for a landscape. John was a mentor for me, and he still is.” **Geoff Warn.**

“He taught me ‘Presence’ with his laser like capacity to focus, in life, not just in design insight. That capacity to look over your shoulder and just see a

resolution that you were blind to. Delivering that strange combination of irritation and delight. He took over my studio at UWA when I was ill without a moment of hesitation, he was a natural teacher. The students loved him. And so did I.” **Bill Busfield.**

I met John in 1996 at a Hakomi (body-centred psychotherapy) workshop exploring personal boundaries. The attraction was immediate for both of us. John had given up on trying to work out relationships and was going for God. He was a follower of Meher Baba. I had released myself from my previous relationship and had also realised, through my meditation practice, that I needed to go for God.

Baba must have figured we could work through our relationship struggles together. My newfound sense of purpose must have attracted John to me. But I found it difficult to fathom why he would get himself hooked in with someone much younger, quite naive and unworldly, a single mother and unemployed .... doesn't sound like a great catch! And yet the love connection was extremely powerful. We both experienced insights into past life



connections. But most importantly we were ideal partners for our individual quests to come closer to God, closer and closer to Baba.

We found that having a shared spiritual direction and understanding was very fortunate in learning how to be more selfless in our love. We both had some really stubborn traits to work through and we butted heads a lot for quite a while. John told me that when he was in Meherabad in the 70's, thinking he was going to have a nice blissful time sitting in Baba's Samadhi, instead Baba showed what John described as a video screen on the opposite wall of the Samadhi, detailing all times he'd made bad choices in his life, particularly in close relationships. It wasn't the big obvious things that John already had regrets about but rather the little moments when he could have opened his heart to someone rather than turn away or hide behind a mask.

It was a couple of years into my relationship with John that I decided I needed to take my son Kim out of the city. Kim and I took off in a little caravan and John stayed in Perth. We ended up near Albany and found an environmental school that appealed to us both. The following year John decided to leave Perth and come to live with us in Albany. With me he bought his first home, having always lived in shared housing or ashrams in the past. We had eight wonderful,

challenging years there on six acres adjacent to a national park, until the onset of Parkinson's Disease. Following the diagnosis in 2009, Baba guided us to a smaller home near to the centre of Albany.

In the very early stages, the disease gave John the opportunity to focus all his attention on a design for the superstructure that Baba said would one day be built over His Samadhi. What a wonderful final act to complete his career in architecture. And it gave us both a very joyful nine weeks in India, presenting the design to the AMBPPCT, as well as sharing it with the residents of Meherabad and others who were interested.

Baba said, "I have come to sow the seed of Love in your hearts". This quote, written on a poster in a vegetarian restaurant in Melbourne, was the one that drew John to Baba in the '70's. Now I feel that He sprouted and nurtured the growth of that seed in both our hearts through the challenges of Parkinson's disease. It gave us both many opportunities to learn



and grow in patience, forgiveness, tolerance, respect, trust, compassion, gratitude, obedience, love and surrender. John accepted with natural grace, and without complaint, all the restrictions and humiliation that PD brought to his life.

Almost a year before John died, he had a near death experience when he became very ill from a chest infection. As he recovered, although speech was mostly very difficult for him, he said to me, "you wouldn't believe how beautiful it is".

To complete this tribute to John, I want to share an excerpt from my diary, written about two weeks before he died:

*"John is mostly sleeping these days, but very peacefully. In fact, the whole house and garden seems very peaceful. There are two doves quietly nesting right outside the kitchen window, a large frog quietly sitting on the back deck, the garden filled with soft pink flowers and lush spring growth, and I too am feeling very calm.*

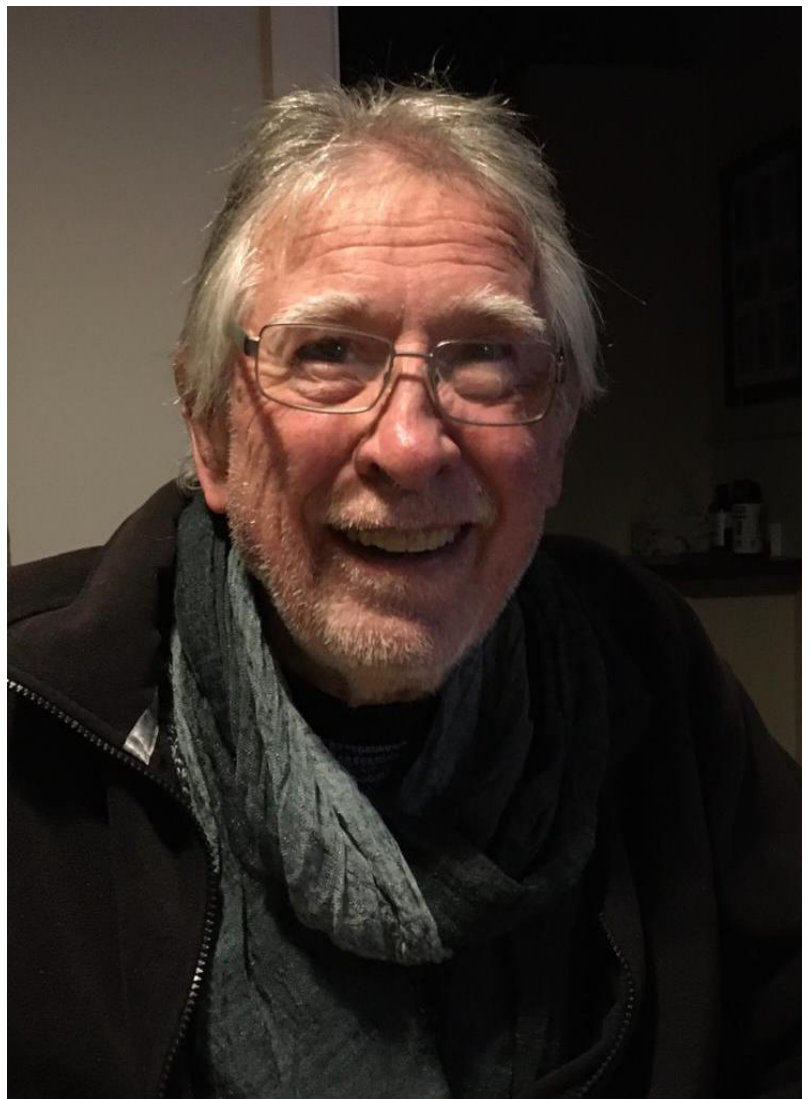
*Tonight, I was trying to give John a little food but he brought his hand out from under the bed cover as if he wanted something. He beckoned for my hand, and he held it for a long time, looking at me with such beautiful love in his eyes. How lucky I am. But I felt that it was not so much that he was expressing his love for me, but that he was experiencing a state of Divine Love and wanted to share that with me because of his love for me."*

John was very quiet about his love for Baba. But the way he lived his life, in service to others in a most natural and

willing way, seems to me now to have been a lifelong expression of his love for his Beloved. It is a beautiful quality that I had not come across before meeting John, but now see it as a familiar trait of many long-time lovers of Baba. And I feel so very fortunate to have been close witness to twenty-six years of a life lived so beautifully right until his last gentle breath was taken.

I deeply believe that all along it was Baba's presence in John's life that attracted people to him. It was John's surrender to Baba that enabled him to serve so graciously, but it was Baba's Love for John that made it possible.

- Peta Ireland





# Being Determined to be His

## Ross Keating

At the beginning of the Foundation of Stay with God, which Meher Baba directed Francis to write, Francis outlines our spiritual predicament. The opening paragraph is a declaration of pure Advaita (non-dual) Vedanta: "Self (Paramatman) is 'One, Indivisible, Infinite and Eternal.' This Self is the innermost self of each one of us. It is the sole Creator of the universe and of the world and beings which inhabit it. This creation is created and exists only in imagination in the mind of Self – it has no real [Francis's emphasis] existence. But Self identifying itself with its imaginary creation deludes itself that it is actor, and experiences the resultant pleasures and pain of action."<sup>1</sup>

How does a reader comprehend such a statement? Intellectually it can't be understood for it is beyond the parameters of the intellect to grasp. But I would suggest that it can be accepted in faith as true (for faith is a form of knowledge) by an intelligence that is awoken by love.<sup>2</sup> Without the catalyst of love, intelligence remains dormant in a person and such a person has recourse only to the ungrounded speculations of their limited intellect to find some kind of meaning for their existence.

Meher Baba even went so far as to say, "Love is real intelligence capable of realizing truth; intellect is best suited to know all about duality, which is born of ignorance and is [Baba's emphasis] entirely ignorance."<sup>3</sup> And when Baba says, "My advent is not to destroy illusion because illusion, as it is, is absolutely nothing. I come to make you aware of the nothingness of illusion," this kind of

awareness, I would argue, is a function of our intelligence, certainly not of the intellect.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, all of what I say is through the lens of my limited viewpoint (through my sanskaric glasses) as I struggle to make sense of what I read. But I think Baba wants us to go in for this kind of struggle. In November 1955, when Francis attended a sahasras program at Meherabad, Baba was making the point that to "spread my love among the people, you have to make them understand me as you understand me. For that you have to bring them to love me as you love me, and that means you have to cause them to feel my love as you feel it."<sup>5</sup> And this, I think, sums up Francis as writer and poet; his writing is his struggle to understand what Baba says and his lyrical expression is how he feels Baba's love – Francis is not a propagandist, but a real writer. Returning to the next paragraph in the Foundation, Francis elaborates upon what this means when the Self, so to speak, gets entangled in an individual person. He describes it in terms of wrong identification: "according to the shape and colour of the physical form it [Self] has assumed, to the degree of energy that activates this form and the quality of mind that informs it, Self identifies itself with a particular race and people and period and culture, as being a man or a woman having strength or weakness, beauty or plain-ness, industry or laziness, success or failure."

And then comes a most striking sentence that ends the paragraph: "It [Self] indulges in psychological subterfuge at all levels in order to augment or diminish its own impressions or its particular identifications and it views all

forms and conditions in the light of these particularized impressions.”<sup>6</sup>

No Vedantic commentator, nor Christian theologian, nor Sufi scholar could ever have written that the Self “indulges in psychological subterfuge.” It is a totally modern and wonderfully insightful description of the action of the Self and a great example of language being recharged at the deepest level.

What Francis seems to be doing is side-stepping the centrality of the ego, and in true non-dualistic fashion, suggesting that the Self is the sole driver behind our psychological persona. The definition of the ego in this schema is now reduced to being a mind-created mirage that occurs when the Self is caught up in a unique set of impressions that makes a person feel separate.

*Become unstuck, God, in your entrancement in this which is called me so that your own love for yourself may be released in a clear stream. Why do you allow yourself to fall into error, attaching yourself to everything you see through these eyes? You are the ever-free blissful One — I am the veil between yourself and you. Tear this veil which is between us — but if you cannot, ask BABA to do it for you.*<sup>8</sup>

This is Francis crying out to God (Self) to break the game of “psychological subterfuge” that He is indulging in through him, and then requesting God – if He is not up to the task – to ask “BABA” as the Avatar to do it for Him. Here we have a play between the impersonal remote Idea of God and the personal closeness of Meher Baba as God in human form. And in

And the use of “indulges” gives the idea that the Self can’t help itself in this game. This reminds me of what Baba says in *God Speaks*, that the Self is propelled by “God’s creative and impulsive [my emphasis] imagination to know Himself as omnipresent, infinite and eternal.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is the Self that is driving “the whole show” and getting itself stuck in the process. I remember once in Mandali Hall, Eruch remarked that Baba Himself “gets the pain” of being stuck or limited in us and so comes as the Avatar to free Himself from His stuck-ness.

Francis beautifully captures this whole situation in a verse from Book II of *Stay with God*, “The Love Song of John Kerry”:

the last line Francis is implying that “BABA” (GOD-MAN) is more powerful than God. He is certainly more accessible.

In many of Meher Baba’s messages you get a sense that He doesn’t really give much credence to longing to be united with God. Take this message for example:

*I am one with you on every level, but you know this only when your ego and intellect do not interfere. Then Baba appears as He is. Pay heed when I say with My Divine Authority that the oneness of Reality is so uncompromisingly unlimited and all-pervading that not only “We are one”, but even this collective term of ‘We’ has no place in the infinite indivisible Oneness. I am ever conscious that I am in you; while you are never conscious that I am in you. Daily I support you and share your consciousness. Now, I want you to uphold Me so that one day you can share My consciousness.*<sup>9</sup>

This seems to imply that longing has no place with Baba for He is already with us. Longing is for the impersonal God who is not accessible to us. From what I have gathered, Baba answers John Kerry's cry – which is the same universal spiritual cry in us all – by awakening Himself in us. And once this occurs, we must play our part by being determined to stay with Him. This, I think, is the meaning of upholding Him or as Baba said in His 1965 Birthday message, "Be true to the Trust I repose in you and remember Me wholeheartedly."<sup>10</sup> For once Baba has awakened Himself in us – and maybe this is what awakening actually means – the Self switches from indulging in psychological subterfuge to the Self providing a psychological backing: "Daily I support and share your consciousness." And it is this that opens the door to companionship.

We are here to live, and the best life is with His companionship otherwise what is the point of being alive when you know of Baba if you are not inwardly with Him. Companionship with Baba is not a static thing; it is the most vital aspect of being alive. It is the pulse of the heart without which we are spiritually dead.

Eruch in a beautiful letter to Mehdi Ghaffari, gives this whole thing a final twist by stressing that our determination to be His, means letting Baba do as He pleases: "It is He who hides and it is He who seeks and is eventually sought and found!!! He as Mehdi is the seeker and the disciple and the lover; and is in search of the

Beloved. He remains hidden 'behind' Mehdi, or in other words, He Himself wears the veil of Mehdi and plays the Divine Game of hide and seek. When He sheds the veil (Mehdi) He reveals Himself to Himself and proclaims Himself as 'I am God!'

"So, my very dear Mehdi, as long as He continues to identify Himself as Mehdi, you, as Mehdi stand no chance [Eruch's emphasis] of experiencing Beloved Baba's Godhood. Hence Beloved Baba has exhorted us saying: 'God is Infinite and Eternal Existence and He is never lost! Therefore God cannot be found. How ridiculous it is to find something or someone that is never lost. Stop trying to find God. He can never be found for He is never lost. What indeed is needed it to lose yourself and God continues to remain imminent.'" <sup>11</sup>

"Once we remain determined to be His and completely depend and rely on His Grace and Compassion He takes over the process of unveiling Himself. So be determined to be His; be childlike and depend upon His Compassion and Grace entirely [Eruch's emphasis] and allow Him to wind up His game of hide and seek within you." <sup>12</sup>

This letter reveals that Baba enjoys His game of hide and seek. Francis even wrote that Baba "loves the play He Himself created; He loves our playing of the roles of this play and He loves playing with us in these roles." <sup>13</sup> This truly is an end point, where life is life at its best.

1 Stay with God p. 9.

2 Francis wrote, "with faith Love's wine is bought." Refer The Golden Book of Praise pp. 47-48.

3 Meher Baba, Listen Humanity, p. 17.

4 Meher Baba, Life at its Best, p. 73.

5 Meher Baba, Listen Humanity, p. 71.

6 Ibid.

7 Meher Baba, God Speaks, on Rano painting opposite p. 202.

8 "The Love Song for John Kerry," was particularly like by Baba. Refer Stay with God, p. 60.

9 Meher Baba Calling message no. 68

10 Ibid.

11 Letters from the Mandali of Avatar Meher Baba, pp. 82-83.

12 Ibid.

13 Francis Brabazon, "The Lord is our Brother," 1959, unpublished talk.

# Notes from the Most Westerly of the Most East of the West

February 25<sup>th</sup>, Queen’s Park, Perth



## Jacob Horsey

When Dr Ward Parks attended the inaugural Southwest Sahavas in Margaret River a few years back, he commented that Western Australians bow down to stones and that Queenslanders bow down to sandals. Western Australians were thereby officially (or facetiously) dubbed **Stone Worshippers!**

A plot was then quickly hatched to sneak off with Baba’s bed from Avatar’s Abode and commandeer it across the Nullarbor safely to westerly shores so that it could imbibe the sweet scent of the Beloved’s perfume that drifts across the Indian Ocean from Mother India. The plot was completed successfully and the bed from the Queensland sanctuary was replaced with a replica. Suffice to say the *sandal worshippers* over there didn’t notice

because they were heavily occupied reading old emails and dusting off archival material, while discussing the best setting to keep the dehumidifier on.

And so, the stone worshippers completed a perilous act of bravery in the very first, in hopefully a long line of stunts involving the theft of relics and sacred objects from Queensland.

Perhaps too small, and demanding the attention of direct physical contact, the stone of preminent importance to Westerly Australians is featured in the photo above. Pillows for knees or foreheads are provided. Adorned by images of the Beloved, hangings, garlands, and spiritually oriented hominids. Each month the stone travels from one Baba lover’s house to another’s, awaiting the

monthly gathering of prayers, music, poetry, scriptures, and Baba lovers bowing. The stone itself- a sacred relic delivered to Australia from Guruprasad by Paul Morris in one of the greatest off record secret thefts of Baba treasures unknown to man (and assisted by Ted Judson). Having come from Baba's room in Guruprasad where Baba was completing His universal work, it bears an uncanny resemblance to the shape of Western Australia on the map. Pure serendipity! One might even be led to believe that it bears the heart-stamp of Beloved Baba's Western Australian work, but such conjecture and conspiracy theory doesn't fit the folk of Australia's westerly quarters. Instead, they honour it in the self-same manner that Upasni Maharaj asserted that anything touched physically by the Master isn't dream-stuff but is of the Real.

Ah! the pure station of stone: an aspiration in the hearts of His lovers. Stone - wherein movement of the mind and desire has been brought to a standstill, the purity of loss baked into its heart and soul, so that the slow grinding to dust can take place, awaiting the swift passing of His sandals and the elevation from Nothingness to the 7<sup>th</sup> station and absorption into His Divine Everythingness. Once we get our hands on those Queensland

sandals who knows what kind of miracles might happen? Maybe the sing-song of His Name will reach such proportions that the Western Australian government would be forced to reinstate its hard border policy to protect the rest of the country from the divine restlessness wreaking havoc on Indian Ocean shores! Maybe a permanent fence up the middle of the country could be funded, but whose to stop the swapping of bare-footed poetry and love-song lyrics over the fence and between boundaries? Who can stem the tide of His Love as it begins lashing the shores and emptying into the heart and soul of an ancient landscape sculpted timelessly for, and by, the Whim of His Word? Some geologists assert that the hills and terrains in Western Australia are the oldest on Earth, being so whittled down to their bare bones that they are mere skeletons of the mountains and ranges they once were. Relics of bygone epochs whose former grandeur has all but worn away with the strong westerly gale that makes its way across the Indian Ocean to the Australian continent. Perhaps one could be forgiven for falling in love with the stone-state in such a place, and for bowing to a stone that was once part of the quarry of the Beloved's universal work.

*"To worship me is no joke. The responsibility of it hangs over both our heads. You can do anything to a stone. You can spit on it, piss on it, defecate on it, even smash it to pieces, as long as you do not use it for worship. But from the moment you apply turmeric, scents, or other such aids- the moment you take the stone to be a form of God and believe with all your heart- you must not misuse it. For if you do, the consequences can be disastrous, and can even lead to utter ruin."*

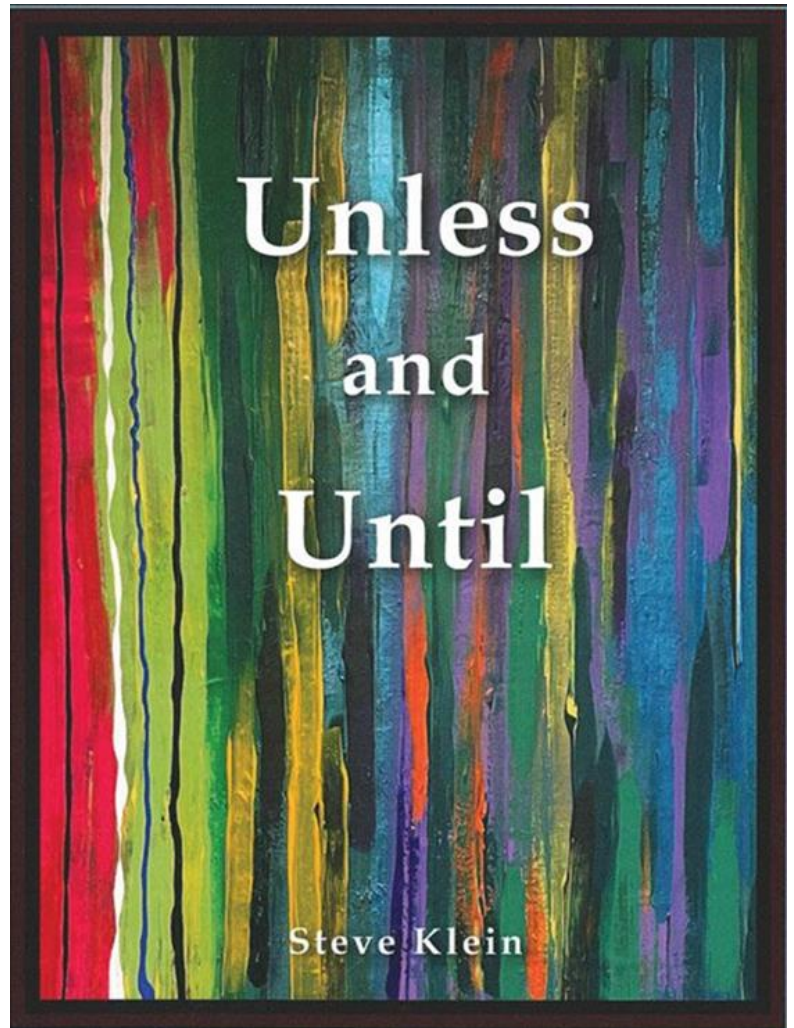
– **Upasni Maharaj**

From: **A Perfect Master of India, pg. 361.**

## Meherazadian Wine: Review of Steve Klein's *Unless and Until*

**Ross Keating**

Good wine comes from well-cared-for vineyards; it wondrously captures the quality of the soil and the climate of the region in which it grows. It also expresses the skilful love of the wine maker. Poets like winemakers do this too; they harvest the grapes from their environment, noticing things, sensing things inwardly, absorbing things unconsciously. And for a poet whose heart and mind are alert to Beloved Baba there is also another kind of listening a kind of intuitive perception: a looking out for a faint glint of His light that bounces off the surface of the heart. Steve Klein is one such Baba poet. Steve does not even like to call himself a poet let alone a Baba poet, but if a poet's work entertains and pleases Baba in one's heart then what the poet is labelled is of no importance. But what they do certainly matters. For it is through poetry of this kind that the preservation and nourishment of a true Baba-centred culture (not just community) is ensured. Here is how Steve partly expresses his poetic process in his new book, *Unless and Until*, and then gives it that Baba-twist or turn in



thought that brings heart-felt delight to the reader (taken from NO. 67, pp. 52-53):

And then there are those days where I wander through the market, looking at possible first lines and nothing seems appealing. I'll pick up a line, smell it, but find no fragrance there so I'll put it back and pick up another. Turn it over in my hand and squeeze it only to find it hard as a rock – it will take far too long to ripen – and I put it back as well.

Eventually, I return home, my shopping bag empty despite the hungry growling of my stomach.

I wonder if all of us are potential first lines in a poem the Godman is writing. Does He wander through the world looking at our hearts, judging which one is ripe? Does He periodically pick one up and squeeze it before deciding, "No, not yet, it needs a little longer."

Instead of poems, Steve calls his “little story things” *prosems*. This is an apt new term for it immediately suggest a balance between the prose of the day and the poetry of the night; a balance of head and heart, which Baba wants us to have in our daily living. The American poet Tony Hoagland said he likes poems to be like potatoes when they are freshly dug up, they should have some soil still clinging to them. By this he means they should not be cleaned too much, so the natural tone of casual speech can be heard for this makes them friendly and gives them a

real voice. Steve’s *prosems* have lots of amicable soil on them; this, I think, is what makes them *prosems*.

In 1978 when Steve’s first collection of poems, *Praise in Complaint*, appeared Francis Brabazon enjoyed one of the poem so much that he had it pinned to the noticeboard in Meher Baba’s House at Avatar’s Abode. One of the qualities he found in Steve’s work, which he himself valued highly, was readability. The poem ends (taken from no. 81, p. 83):

I have bid my friends good-by already.  
Indeed, I have announced my departure so often,  
It is not likely that anyone will come  
To see my off. There is no reason  
To linger, and yet I find myself  
In the empty kitchen  
Making one last cup of tea.  
O my Beloved,  
When will I stop my ceaseless preparation  
And simply close the door  
Behind me?

Steve’s bio states that from the 1970s to the 1990s, he spent a great deal of time in India, and lived there on a near continuous basis as a resident from 1982 to 1986. During his stay, he spent time working on several book projects with Bal Natu, and with Eruch, editing Eruch’s recollections of life with Baba, which was later published as *That’s How It Was*. This is the wine country in which Steve gathers his grapes.

In *Unless and Until*, as in all his poetic style writing, there is the taste of Meherazad; the taste of the heart-beauty of the time when Steve was there. I remember Eruch once said

that we were attracted to Meherazad because Baba temporarily shelved our *sanskaras* when we were there, so we could more fully experience the lightness and joy of His Presence at His home. Steve’s *prosems* never stray too far from this lightness and joy. Most of all you can hear echoes of the voices of the *mandali*. Steve has listened closely to the *mandali*, worked with them, seen how they deal with what life throws at them. Steve has drunk deeply of their wisdom and has transfigured it into his own words in his *prosems*. Open any page and there it is. Here is a passage from one of his gems (taken from no. 25 p. 18):

I suspect Dr Ghani [one of Baba's close *mandali*] was forgiven his lapses not because his Logic was impeccable when he claimed that he was adhering to the letter of Baba's orders, if not their spirit, but because his arguments were so full of wit and loving mischief. The spontaneity of love, with all its mistakes and transgressions is far more agreeable to God than the respectful rigidity of dutiful obedience.

And here is the opening passage from a more structured *prosem* (taken from no. 27 p. 19):

The pilgrim dies to himself.  
 The lover lives for the Beloved.  
 The pilgrim treads a path of thorns to the  
 Beloved's door;  
 Grimacing with every step  
 And learning techniques to overcome the pain.  
 The lover sees the Beloved beckoning  
 And is not even aware of a path  
 As he races to the door.  
 Pilgrims are ever conscious of  
 Trying to deny themselves.  
 Lovers don't even have the time  
 To think of themselves  
 Because they are so busy  
 Attending to the Beloved's whims.

Throughout *Unless and Until* you find detachment, self-effacement, and a glimpse of what it means when Baba says: "True love is no game of the faint-hearted and the weak. It is born of strength and understanding." Here is an example (taken from n0.53 pp. 40-41):

He [Baba] will twist your heart like a damp towel, squeezing every last drop of moisture out. But that would almost be bearable if your mind could get some purchase, if you could cling to a halfway plausible excuse like, "it's my fault, I deserve this," or "it's for my own good." But there is nothing that can withstand the relentless force of His inexplicable behaviour. Like a tornado ripping through your flimsy mental constructs, all is devastation and your only hope of survival is to stop thinking entirely and just focus on your determination to stay with Him.



Also, I remember the *mandali* often saying, to take life seriously but never too seriously. Steve gets this idea just right (taken from no. 101, p. 79):

No doubt there is something to be said for earnest striving. And God knows the lives of saints and masters are filled with accounts of almost super human efforts of self denial.

So who am I to say otherwise? And yet, it sometimes seems, at least for some of us, that the most apt advice is not "try harder," but "lighten up."

Don't take yourself so seriously. God knows what He is doing. Trust that He is pushing you forward at exactly the pace that He has deemed appropriate and don't try to micromanage or second guess His plan.

Just relax and enjoy this moment He has given you. Luxuriate in His presence by delighting in His creation and loving everyone in it.

Steve's *prosems* make us realise that as followers and lovers of Beloved Baba we have something new to exchange at a heart level. That we are on the threshold of a new poetry, a new art, in which the audience knows and

experiences something of what the poet or artist has to say. A shared something about the play of our One Beloved whom we all intimately know for He is equally resident in all our hearts.

Some more links to Steve Klein's stories, biography, and other literary works:

[Steve Klein - meherbabatravels jimdo page!](#)

[Steve Klein - Stories - Meher Spiritual Center \(mehercenter.org\)](#)

["Being allowed to come within an arm's length" - Meher Spiritual Center \(mehercenter.org\)](#)

# Archives at Avatar's Abode

## Remote and Pilgrim Roles

*There have been MBA articles over many years about the work in Archives at Avatar's Abode. Recently we have sadly lost a few of our long-time hard-working team, and numbers can seem a bit thin on the ground at Kiel Mountain. However, there is an unseen web of folk who are part of the team in faraway places. There are also several precedents for working in archives as part of a pilgrimage (as some of us occasionally had the privilege of doing in Meherabad). For this edition of MBA we encouraged Peta Ireland to contribute some stories of her recent experiences.*

### **Peta Ireland writes...**

Since my husband died (December 2022) I've wanted for my new life on my own to be focused ever more on Baba. Living a long way from any Baba centres, I didn't know how I was going to fill my life with Baba, but a few opportunities have already come my way. Opportunities to help with work for Avatar's Abode both there and at home, have been valuable for me.

### What I discovered:

There are a variety of opportunities to become involved in the archives activities, on site and remotely. Following instructions carefully is appreciated and there is also opportunity to research best practice or offer suggestions.

Having moderate sewing skills has opened several unexpected opportunities:

- Inviting others to join me in making bunting to decorate Avatar's Abode for the 60th anniversary.
- Writing and stitching labels onto the Samadhi cloths used on Baba's bed.



- Making a cover for the new storage rack for the Samadhi cloths at Baba's House.

When going to the Abode or to Baba meetings, asking myself, "What can I offer?", rather than going just to receive, and being willing to put myself out of my comfort zone to make that offering has enriched my experience enormously. Having basic computer skills has given me the opportunity

to help with the ongoing process of transcribing the large amount of correspondence, particularly from the Mandali, that is housed in the archives at Avatar's Abode (there are several people around Australia and in other countries who have contributed to this process).

There is also a rather urgent need for folk who were around Avatar's Abode in the 1970s and 1980s to assist with cataloguing documents in the collection. It really helps if they know a few of the characters and were there too. (This can be done from the comfort of your own home if you have basic computer skills).

Living remote from a Baba community does not have to be isolating, particularly as I'm also able to travel to the Abode and to Baba gatherings occasionally. Volunteering to help in the archives has strengthened my connections with the Baba community, helped me to feel more at home there, helped in giving my life purpose after my husband died, helped to keep my focus on Baba.

If I have problems to solve while carrying out a task remotely, there are Baba lovers out there happy to give me all the time I need to work out a solution by phone, video call or text. Working in the archives while on pilgrimage to Avatar's Abode doesn't consume all of one's time there. The pace can be gentle with plenty of time for other activities. It is valuable to witness the level of care and respect given to articles in the Archives that learning continues amongst all the workers and that best practice is sought.

### **Cover for rack of Samadhi cloths**

When taking on a project for Avatar's Abode or Meherabad, I've found an immediate desire to want to do my best and do it with love because it has felt like the closest I could come

to doing something directly for Baba. So, every detail of the project became important. If doing a project for myself, I'm used to thinking, "That will do" or "That's good enough." But if I have that thought with a Baba project, I immediately question myself, "It might be good enough, but is it the best I can do for Baba?"

So, when I took on the job of making a cover for the new storage rack for the Samadhi cloths, the first task was to find the correct way to wash and preshrink the fabric. After asking people involved with archives at Avatar's Abode and Meherabad, I didn't have a single clear answer. My thought was, well I could just wash the fabric in a pure pH neutral detergent free of additives and rinse it well and that's probably going to be okay. But I also knew that there must be a "best practice" technique for preparation of fabric used in archives, so I sent an email to the WA Museum asking for advice. And was delighted to receive a reply from the manager of materials conservation the following day, explaining their approach. It was similar to what I had thought but with some added details. I also contacted the Australian company that made the laundry detergent I was considering using and was surprised when the founder of the company phoned me directly to discuss my questions about his product. He was interested to know more about the archives I mentioned in the email, so I told him about Meher Baba! Now I knew I could proceed with confidence that I was doing the best I could for Baba. And it was fun to listen to the niggling doubt that I had and do a little bit of research.

The design of the cover, and getting the correct measurements was a bit nerve wracking as I was in Albany WA, relying on photos that Jeanette sent to me and a video chat with her and Kay Walker while they took all the measurements for me. Not easy since

phone reception is very poor in Baba's House. Several times I've had to ask Jeanette to check measurements and other details of the rack, so that I can proceed with confidence (sometimes wondering if I was more a hindrance than a help!).

Once, when I was having a particular problem with the design, Kaye Lindsay was a great help by video and audio chat, messages and photos, giving me all the time I needed to help work it out. This was important for me because it emphasised another significant benefit of taking on a project for the archives; that of being more connected with the Baba community.

As I was constructing the cover it became more and more difficult to do it well, as it became heavier and more awkward to work with. And as my machine began having difficulty stitching through all the layers the finish was definitely not what I had hoped for. All the time I was asking myself, is this good enough for Baba, "Should I unpick this bit and try again, or would that just weaken the structure or make it messier?" I guess it might seem to others as being very unimportant in the scheme of things, but for me it was an opportunity to serve Baba, so at that moment was the most important thing for me to do.

As I'm writing this the cover is not quite complete. I'm waiting for dear, patient Jeanette to recheck a measurement for me before I cut holes for the handles, because if I was there, I would be checking and rechecking measurements all the time, just to be sure. So, at this stage I don't know if it's going to fit or if it's going to be good enough for the job. But

Email: [archives@avatarsabode.com.au](mailto:archives@avatarsabode.com.au)

Phone: 0437511362

<https://avatarsabode.com.au/archives/>

<https://avatarsabode.com.au/browse-archives-collections/>



*Peta Ireland working in Baba's House*

I know that I have at least made an effort to please Baba by paying attention to details, as He always seemed to want His Mandali to do.

I now notice that this attention to detail and doing a task with love flows into projects around my house and garden .... sometimes! That really all is for Baba. Everything I do can be an expression of love for Baba. I don't have that level of focus, but at least the feeling is sometimes there that the job I am doing is for Baba.

So, I encourage others to consider if, how, and when they might like to serve Beloved Baba, and the Archives work at Avatar's Abode, either remotely or as part of a pilgrimage.

## Caught in Time

Reflection of star light  
in still rock pools  
like in eyes  
washed of all longing;

lattice of lines  
on rock weathered by surf  
like on the surface  
of an icon painting;

ancient sound  
of a moving swell of waves  
made calm long ago  
by Christ's walking;

like a hidden lover  
the moon prepares herself  
to catch a ray  
from the sun's glancing;

coiled in the earth's womb  
I wait like an embryo  
for the tide of His silent  
waters breaking.

### Ross Keating

## The Sculptor of Praise

From volcanic rock  
she cuts four-sided  
letters of the alphabet  
and lays them  
one on top of each other  
ever rising upwards.

As her tower grows  
she is a climber  
scaling a rock face  
where at the summit  
she hoists another  
letter into place.

Her vision is not lost  
in a Babel-like  
confusion of tongues  
but is of one language  
in which each letter  
speaks of greatness.






Each tower stands  
in a forest of towers  
as an imperishable  
statement praising  
the Eternal Beloved's  
monumental grandeur.

### Ross Keating

# Chart VIII (Vedanta) God Speaks

Created by Avatar Meher Baba using online Word Search Generator



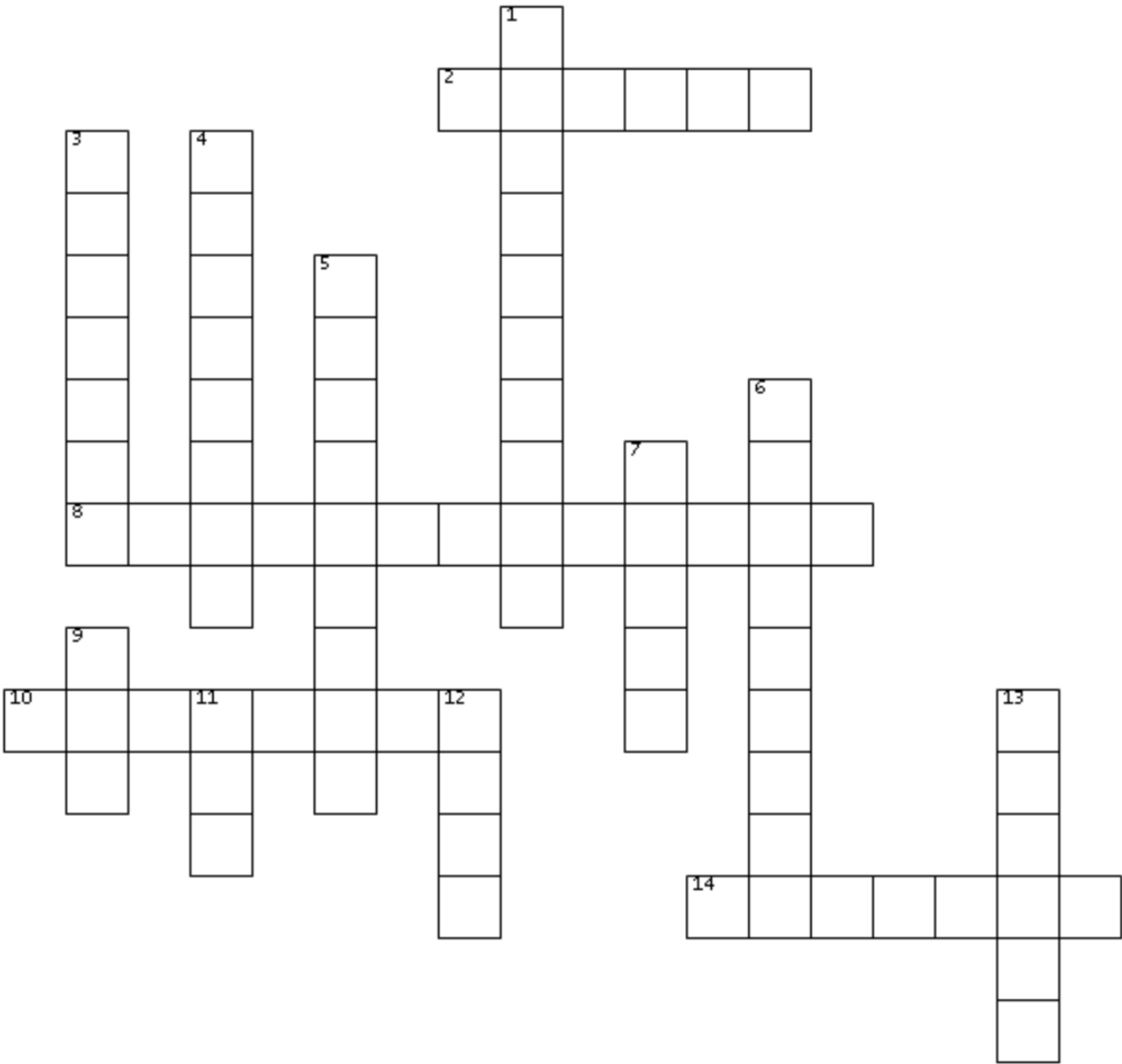
Find the following words in the puzzle.  
 Words are hidden     and  .

ANANT  
 ATMA  
 AVATAR  
 BHUMIKA  
 BRAHMA  
 JIVANMUKTA  
 MAHESH

MANONASH  
 NIRAKAR  
 NIRGUNA  
 PARAMATMA  
 PARAMHANSA  
 SADGURU  
 SAGUNA

SAKAR  
 SATCHITANAND  
 SATPURUSH  
 VIDNYAN  
 VISHNU

# Chart VIII (Vedanta) God Speaks



**ACROSS**

- 2. Preserver
- 8. Nirguna
- 10. Nirakar
- 14. Brahma

**DOWN**

- 1. Liberated Incarnate
- 3. Manonash
- 4. Anant
- 5. Saguna
- 6. Mahesh
- 7. Bhumika
- 9. Man Avatar
- 11. God Sadguru
- 12. Atma
- 13. God Paramatma

# Meher Baba places Australia:

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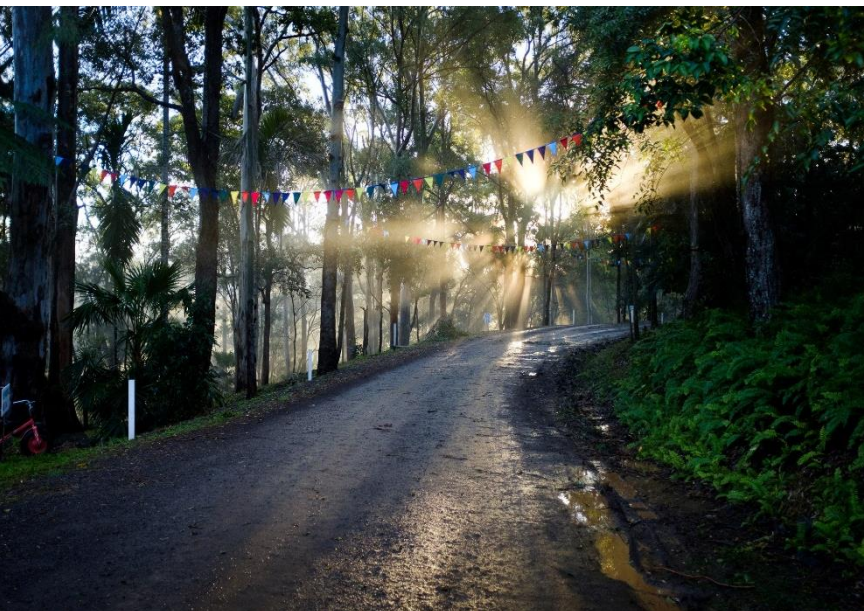
## **Meher House – Beacon Hill**

### Visiting Meher House

Meher Baba spent time at Meher House in 1956 and 1958. He said of Meher House “I love this place; I feel at home here” and later in correspondence: “nothing will destroy My Presence there”.

Individual or group visits to Meher House can be arranged on request. Please email or text on the contact details provided on our Contact page.

[Meher Baba Sydney](#)



## **Avatar's Abode – Sunshine Coast**

### Visiting Avatar's Abode

Meher Baba stayed at Avatar's Abode in 1958. During His stay Meher Baba stated that it would become a place of world pilgrimage. People interested in learning more about Avatar Meher Baba are welcome to visit the property during the hours of 9 am to 6 pm.

Apply to visit or stay at Avatar's Abode – phone (+61) 0437 511 362 or email [pilgrim@avatarsabode.com.au](mailto:pilgrim@avatarsabode.com.au) or via the [Booking Enquiries](#) online form.



