

# Meher Baba Australia

December 2020 – February 2021



'Moment in time' by Jim Frisino.

# The original carpet in Baba's Room at Avatar's Abode

*Jeanette (Isaacs) Young*

In many places around the world 2020 has offered some special opportunities for work to happen. Here at Avatar's Abode the archive projects have been both enhanced and held back in different ways. The delivery of the archival cabinets was described in the last edition of the MBA, and we have had uninterrupted time for some organising of spaces – and some people have had more time to attend to tasks. The lack of visitors has reduced our pool of volunteers, but the resulting empty buildings have also enabled certain works to be carried out with relative ease.

Now that restrictions have been eased for visiting Baba's House visitors may notice that one precious item from Meher Baba's 1958 visit is now on display in a different way from before. Here we offer the story so far.

When Beloved Meher Baba visited



Meher Baba's room showing the original carpet, bed and commode chair as seen from the hall in Baba's House at Avatar's Abode in the 1960s. Photograph by Bernard Bruford. © Avatar's Abode.



The original carpet in Baba's House circa 1993. Photograph by Reg Love. © Reg Love.

the property which He named Avatar's Abode in 1958, the room in which He stayed was simply furnished. There was a bed and table made by Reg Paffle, from the same timber used for fabrication of the walls of the room: it was what was available. The chairs made for Baba's commode and as a sedan chair (with removable poles) for carrying Him safely on the property were also made of this same turpentine\* timber, which is milled so the planks fit together with tongue and groove joints. Turpentine is also known for its durability, pest resistance, and long-lasting qualities – at least 700 years, Francis hoped.

Since the wood was what was around and easily found, it was only late in the preparations that it was realised that there wasn't anything suitable for table legs, and hence rough-hewn

wooden pineapple crates were hastily put into service for holding the table top and these remain in Baba's Room to this day.

On the floor was a simple, unremarkable plain blue-grey woollen carpet about two and a half by three metres in size. This carpet became infested and damaged with a carpet moth and so before the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1988 it was replaced by a plain dusky-pink synthetic carpet.

The original carpet was then placed in the main hall of Baba's House, where it remained for many years. In 2006, laid out on the floor, it was covered by a beautiful Persian carpet, one of two gifted to Avatar's Abode at that time. All who spent time in Baba's House were still walking over

it, even though it remained largely hidden from view. Each year, when major cleaning was done prior to the June Anniversary, the extent of shedding of the woollen fibres was noticeably increasing and the overall condition of the carpet deteriorating.

The Meherabad conservation teams, who have been advised by state-of-the-art consultants from around the world, were asked about the practices in Meherabad and Meherazad and for any advice and for explanations of the processes of care and storage and conservation of carpets there. During the 2020 COVID-closed period a thorough inspection here at Avatar's Abode led to the decision to do what had been inevitable, and to remove the carpet from the floor in the interest of long-term preservation.

When the carpet had been rolled onto a purpose fabricated roller for display and storage in Baba's House there was almost a cup of fibre swept up from the floor where it had rested for just a few days, without visitors. This fibre has been kept.

There is always a tension between allowing natural access and preservation/conservation principles. Bill Le Page said he would be keen for the carpet to continue to be walked on and reminds us that eventually everything turns to dust. This is a valid point of view, and one which would be shared by others. The Avatar's Abode Trust has not been hasty in implementing various recommendations for care and

*Continued on next page*



The original carpet where it rests today on a roll suspended along an inside wall in Baba's House at Avatar's Abode.

Photo by Jeanette (Isaacs) Young.

preservation. Some advice from 1993 has only recently been acted upon. In some cases the advice from 20 to 30 years ago has been superseded by new and different advice based on either more research, or better technology for detecting the impact of various environmental factors. So a conservative, cautious approach has been taken: trusting in Baba's Divine timing. A careful compromise is sought overall.

Visitors to Baba's House will now be able to view, through a small window, a portion of the original carpet where it now rests on a roll suspended along an inside wall. The carpet is covered for UV, dust, and some humidity protection. This is one interim solution to preserving and yet sharing a precious item from Baba's visit.



Since this article was submitted, on Friday October 30<sup>th</sup> 2020 some members of the Avatar's Abode Archive Committee hosted a visit by the Southeast Queensland Museum Development Officer, Josh Tarrant, to our archive collection at Avatar's Abode, at his request. He later commented to the committee:

*"Thanks for having me last week. It was a genuine pleasure to see your collection and site, and to see the level of dedication to collection care employed there. I can sincerely say that yours is one of the best cared for and documented collections I have come across in the regions. Well done!"*

He was most interested in our facility, having heard some things

about our situation during Sunshine Coast Council funded Cultural Heritage Workshops which our archiving team have had the privilege to attend in recent years.

He was respectful and understanding of many of the challenges and concerns which we mentioned as we showed him around the site and the buildings and the archival storage areas. He resolved to arrange a future visit to explore more of the detail of our work. He noted the extreme care our team seem to have demonstrated. We explained that it is only "because of love" that our work might seem to shine.

[\\*https://www.mq.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/211006/Plant-of-the-Week-Turpentine-Syncarpia-glomulifera.pdf](https://www.mq.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/211006/Plant-of-the-Week-Turpentine-Syncarpia-glomulifera.pdf)

## Three stories from Cynthia Borg

One day many years ago, I was idly chatting to Mehera at Meherazad. Suddenly Mehera asked me if I could remember the time when Jesus announced that he was leaving but would see us in the future. I was very upset and asked Mehera how we would recognise him in a future life. Mehera reassured me by saying that I would know him. "You did, didn't you?" asked Mehera. I said yes, because even though I was a very young 12 years of age, I had recognised him immediately and knew I belonged to him. He was the Beloved, Meher Baba. At this time, (early 1956) I did not even know that I was a Baba lover.

When I was young, eight or nine years of age, I had a particularly

vivid dream. (I usually did not even remember my dreams.) In this dream, I saw a group of men approaching me. The leader of the group was Meher Baba. I rushed up to him in great distress. There was a particularly beautiful house nearby which I'd hoped to enter but it had seven huge locks preventing entry. I pointed this out to Beloved Baba but he told me not to worry as he had the keys for all seven locks!

\*In another dream a few weeks ago, I was standing on the foreshore of a huge ocean. Suddenly I became aware that the seas would recede a great distance. It was vital to find a safe cave to hide in. I tried one cave but it was very dim, narrow and occupied already by a very odd looking

hedgehog. So I tried another. It was light and airy but unsafe on one side. I decided to risk it as the tidal wave was almost upon us.

Then we were swamped but the cave remained safe. When it was over I looked in the corner and saw Francis Brabazon. He had used the same cave but then went to sleep. He'd just awoken and was looking for a cuppa.

Just then Eruch came into the cave also. Eruch told me that in fact I had been swept by the tidal wave and nearly drowned. But he told me because of my faith in the Beloved, Meher Baba, I had been placed by Baba in a safe position so I would not drown.

*\*Says Cynthia in early November, this dream reminds me of our present Covid struggle. How strange.*

# Spring Sahavas 2020

*Jeanette (Isaacs) Young*

The Spring Sahavas at Avatar's Abode has been attributed to Joanna Bruford, who many years ago suggested an event where the locals were not so involved in setting up and organising as they are for Anniversaries, so that they could actually attend programs.

This year the work of a team of all ages conceived of a global guest list which included distinguished guests Rick Chapman, Charles Haynes and Christopher Wilson, and took the scope of inclusivity to a new level with a program which touched – deeply – the hearts and minds of those who were able to participate. Zoom sessions focused on Meher Baba in relation to topics of youth, women, queer, and then the journey of Rick Chapman to meet Meher Baba.

The 2020 virtual version of the Spring Sahavas had a surprise and welcome face to face component. Close to the October date the COVID-19 restrictions were eased for Queensland and so with short notice about 40 people of all

ages gathered on the Sunday for a picnic lunch. Following this they listened to a reading of Francis Brabazon's "*The Birth of a Nation*" by Eve Plant and watched as local children acted out a story about longing, yearning, and journeys to place across time and space in nature. This had been written in collaboration with them to learn, delight and entertain themselves and audiences as part of a recent holiday program under the superb facilitation and guidance of Jethro Hitchens. Jethro then guided a nature walk around close by natural vegetation features of the Abode, with yet more stories.

It felt as if many threads of generations and lives now past were being woven creatively into a new fabric for future purposes.

**NB From David Hobson:** for those who missed out on Rick Chapman, and Charles Haynes and Christopher Wilson's Spring Sahavas Zoom presentations, they will be uploaded soon to the Spring Sahavas Vimeo Showcase on the Avatar's Abode website.



L-R: Dancing cockatoos, bees and honeyeaters are Francis Hodgkins, Emerson Swan, Ollie Hitchens, Mae Oakhill, Jethro Hitchens, Ena Oakhill and Meherwan Isaacs Young. Photo by Jeanette (Isaacs) Young.

**During our Spring Sahavas, the children enthusiastically performed a poem-dance written, spoken and choreographed by Jethro Hitchens.** He also inadvertently added his own moves while reading his poem. I was very touched by the way he wove together ancient indigenous story and the wild life native to this place – here in 1958 when Baba visited and now, where this generation of children play and explore together.

- Kris Hines.

## Meherwan and Elischa describe being part of Jethro's poem-dance

**Meherwan Isaacs Young:** I've never been in a play before. I found the set quite nice. There was a massive cardboard roll that was cut in half and attached to a table; that was a beehive. There was also a tipi for the Black Cockatoos. I was the leader of the Black Cockatoos. There was also an orange mat spread out for the desert, where the scarlet honeyeaters were. There were also callistemons (red melaleuca or bottle brush shrubs) for the scarlet honeyeaters, native tamarind for the bees and bloodwood for the red tailed black cockatoos. The plants were all flowering and the seed of the bloodwood was on the ground – this all happened in front of the Shed at Avatar's Abode. It was organised by Jethro Hitchens. Before we did the rehearsals, he told us the story. The story was about

the scarlet honeyeaters moving East to the callistemon, the bees coming out of their hives from winter and collecting the native tamarind flower, the red tailed black cockatoos stocking up on seed to go North – but eventually getting blown back. He also told us about the giant spear and the fire spears (the butcher bird and the jumping ants). I loved the play, I found it very interesting. It was repeated several times – the last time I was a scarlet honeyeater.

**Elischa Swan:** When I joined the group sitting on the ground in front of the Shed steps to rehearse Jethro's new play, I suddenly saw the plants around me in a different way: the pretty flowering shrubs not just ornamental, but the Beloved of the scarlet honeyeaters, whose little red breasts wear the banner of their passion (southern hemisphere nightingale and rose?!). Later I got to huddle out in the desert with my little Baba nieces Mira and Sailor, waiting for the call to fly East to Avatar's Abode and drink nectar! Meanwhile little Peter, Archer and Mae were being busy carpenter bees, Ollie and Meherwan and Lilia majestic cockatoos dancing in the wind with long tails striped with red.

I now know so much more about the trees and animals woven in this story – when I see them, they are more like friends. I know more about Avatar's Abode; what's going on with the Natural Kingdom while we are sahavasing; its ancient journeys and cycles. I ponder more deeply now the life of the plants that are chosen to ornament or regenerate this sacred ground.

It was great to see the kids make theatre outdoors where they play, with simple props and a small audience and have great fun even in COVID-times. I look forward to more creations like this, where you can see themes that ripple from the source: the soul's journey of longing described by Baba in *God Speaks*; poeticised in *Stay With God*; now grounded in this land and embodied in dance, music and live storytelling by new generations of Avatar's Abiders in an ancient way.



L-R: Jethro Hitchens, Mae Oakhill, Ollie Hitchens, Ena Oakhill and Peter Meher Rowan (behind). Photo by Nadya Oakhill.

# *Meher Baba's Magnetic Love*

*A play-poem by Jethro Hitchens*

This story is about the travels and relationship of the scarlet honeyeater and the red tailed cockatoo and how it connects with its country and creator: Meher Baba. Celebrating the time that Meher Baba came: always has and always will be, locked in time and space, in the past and the present and it has become part of evolution in Australia.

For thousands of years this country telling its silent story of its love for the wind.

In the southwest country the red dust blows up the southerly wind: timed to perfection, the wind knows He is coming.

The Scarlet honeyeater, its red breast like a desert sunset, waits in the dusty country longing to catch the winds towards its Beloved.

The winds are blowing ever closer, stronger, through the tall woodland forest where the red tailed cockatoo and its baby chicks that have left its hollow: now ready to fly north.

The autumn flower of the bloodwood tree was good this year for the sugar bag and the carpenter bees.

The bloodwood tree gives it the health it needs for the long winter ahead.

Southerlies are blowing; the bees, tucked in with winter stores, no need to go out for the flower was good this year.

The seed of the bloodwood tree strong of strength, to carry the red tail cockatoo through to the North Country, carried up on the southerly winds, only stopping at night; in the morning feeding on the bloodwood seed.

The rhythmic beat of its wings slow and steady, strong, its cry for its Beloved so loud.

The scarlet honeyeater waits; it longs for its Beloved; its sweet song is carried on the winds.

You know its musk scent desire used to be a clear translucent pale yellow tea tree, melaleuca. But it could not be heard so it changed its name, because of love, from the heart.

The scarlet honeyeater waits with its breast facing into the wind and its back warming from the sun: turning time. They know it is time.

The winds call to them; pick them up, so tiny, fragile. So effortlessly carrying them; Steadfast; letting go.

Their songs mixing with the wind like ocean waves that carry them to their Beloved.

The winds are warming now, the sun turning time pulling to the magnetic line. The red tailed cockatoo, with its tail warm fire red, knows that the bloodwood seed falls and its yearning for its Beloved calls.

With the rhythmic beat of its wings it knows that on the coastal line the acacia seed is ripening.

Stopping for a moment on a terrace, ridgeline, ever yearning northward,

Cries out on those winds, flight dancing to its Beloved, of red sweet songs.

The terraces look good this year, the callistemon flowers ripening, waiting for its sweet song.

Red dust from the centre heart spreads across this land.

Opens its heart of sweet musk scent.

For the scarlet honeyeater is blown in on the winds to its Beloved, lingering musk scent.

Takes its stage and sings its sweet song of love to the Beloved. The sun gently warms the land. The sweet song of the honeyeater settles the wind to a warm gentle breeze.

The corduroy tamarind flowers, their rays of soft velvet, bringing bees out of winter's slumber, humming and drumming into life, dancing its story to its sisters. The warm love spreading across the land, like a drum in the heart.

The sun turning time, it's turning on towards the Magnetic Island line.

The sun warms the heart, like it's held its breath for the Beloved's love that lingers.

North winds turn towards the heart: the scarlet honeyeater's short Dreamtime moment with its Beloved is blown back into the heart on those dry northerly winds that carried them steadfast into the heart.

The bloodwood tree flowers giving its goodness.

For the sugar bag bees, long, cool slumber.

The red tailed cockatoo travels ahead, winds north crying his name,

Finally giving in and turning back into the heart; back to the tall woodland forest; back to its hollow nest, its cool breeze from the sun turning time.



Meher Baba, 21 September 1952  
at Bindra House, Poona.  
Photographer: D'Souza.  
© Meher Nazar Publications.



L-R: Jethro tells his tale, enjoyed  
by actors Peter Meher Rowan,  
Lilia Krupke Rowan, Meherwan  
Isaacs Young, Ena Oakhill and  
Ollie Hitchens. Photo by Sue  
Jamison.



# The Provisional Ego

*Robert Ahrens in Georgia*



Kitty, Mehera and Elizabeth. January-February 1975 at Meherazad. Photographer David Fenster.  
© Meher Nazar Publications.

Kitty Davy, at least in my presence, advocated adopting the “provisional ego.” (Maybe she emphasised it with me because my ego needed obvious work.) The “provisional ego” was a technique which Meher Baba instructed His disciples staying at the Nasik ashram in 1937 to use. Apparently there was a lot of disharmony amongst the Westerners.

Kitty narrates, in a talk given at Meher Spiritual Center in 1978:

“Now, the value of this provisional ego, I see now, lay in the fact that it brought the shift of consciousness away from the many objects to that of the One, Baba Himself. And this change of direction brought about immediately an increase in our love for Him, which evidently was lacking. It worked this way: before beginning whatever work Baba gave us to do, we were to say, ‘Baba is doing this or that through me. He is the doer, the speaker, the thinker.’ Therefore, the results of our actions, failure or success, were His, and we had no need to worry.

“Of all the lasting lessons that Baba gave us, helping us along the spiritual path, this emphasis on the provisional ego remains the most constant ...”\*

*\*From ONE FINE THREAD, TALKS ABOUT MEHER BABA  
by Kitty Davy (2014 Meher Spiritual Center, page 114).*

# The Foreshadowing

*Daniel Montague*



This painting titled "Surrender" (2002) is by David Berry. It is an adaptation of Winslow Homer's masterpiece "The Life Line" of 1884. Homer's piece depicts the rescue of an unconscious woman from a stricken ship using a then new rescue technique of a "breeches buoy" that was pulled back and forth from the ship to the shore on a line. In Homer's painting the rescuer's face is hidden by a wind whipped scarf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Life\\_Line\\_\(painting\)#/media/File:Winslow\\_Homer\\_-\\_The\\_Life\\_Line.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Life_Line_(painting)#/media/File:Winslow_Homer_-_The_Life_Line.jpg)

In Berry's painting (above) he reveals the rescuer's face to be that of the Avatar of the Age Meher Baba. Berry also opens the eyes of the young woman thereby making her conscious of the rescue. With these two enhancements, he renames his adaptation "Surrender" explaining that one must be fully conscious when surrendering to the Master.

My wife Carolyn and I bought "Surrender" during an art show that Berry had at the Meher Spiritual Center in South Carolina in November 2002. I was immediately attracted to the painting in that I recognised its origin as being that of my favourite American artist Winslow Homer. It hung over our fireplace mantle for many years while living on the rugged coast of Maine in New England. It spoke to me of my life that has been deeply associated

with the sea and of my daily surrendering to Meher Baba.

Little did I know that 18 years later after surviving a trial of a lifetime, the painting was to take on a whole new spiritual dimension. The following account is of the rescue ordeal in an ocean river which resulted in "Surrender" embodying "Living Faith".

## The Rescue

Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 was a sunny and warm spring day as Carolyn and I walked along the sandy banks of Maroochy River towards its mouth that empties into the Southern Pacific Ocean in the city of Maroochydore, Queensland, Australia. We had been driving down to this

area known as Cotton Tree Beach every two weeks starting back in April to watch the progress of a major seawall being built at the southern headland of the river where a caravan park is located. On this walk we saw that all the big earth-moving equipment was gone but there was a 15 metre sand-dredger barge positioned off the end of the 250 metre sand spit forming the seaward end of Cotton Tree beach.

We decided to walk out on the spit and observe the dredge pumping sand through the large floating pipes onto the spit and over to the seawall. As we crossed over the narrow beach to the base of the sand spit, we saw a couple of camper families and their kids from the caravan park splashing about in the shallows. It was an idyllic sub-tropical river beach scene. [See Diagram 1]

About two thirds of the way out on the spit, I noticed the outgoing tidal current was picking up speed to a couple of knots (one knot = 1.85 kph or 1.15 mph). Then a few steps more I looked up again to gauge the current and saw three children about 30 metres out in the river. One was on a small paddle board and another in the water swimming next to the board. The third child was swimming five metres down current from the other two. I looked around for any parents and immediately remarked to Carolyn that I didn't see any adults. The two families we saw earlier were 150 metres back on the beach. Glancing back at the lone child I could see that he was struggling and getting caught in a stronger current of three knots causing him to separate from the other two who seemed to be maintaining position. We were the only adults nearby.

I knew I had to go in. There was no other option. Carolyn helped me strip off my clothes down to my boxers and T-shirt. I turned and started running into the water. The child was struggling and calling out for help. He was headed for the barge and I calculated my interception course to head him off and meet him at the floating pipes as I dove and started swimming. I can remember asking myself: "Can I do this?" At that point a sense of calm pervaded. Then all my years of maritime experience and deep sea survival and lifesaving training kicked in.

The barge was positioned about 30 metres off from the end of the spit. Its starboard side (right side) was broadside to the ebbing tidal current. The dredge's deafening diesels



DIAGRAM 1: Purple circle is of camper families on beach; The red square is position of dredge; The yellow arrow shows the direction of tidal current.



DIAGRAM 2: Red box is the dredge; Blue #1 is where Daniel jumped in; Green #2 is where Daniel intercepted the boy; Green #3 is the near-drowning and ultimate rescue area; Yellow line denotes floating, flexible pipe and black line is rigid pipe; White arrow line is direction of tidal current.

were running full bore driving the pump that was sucking up sand and discharging it through the floating pipe. The pipe was coming off the stern (back end) and was moored in a large arc that straightened out parallel to and ten metres up current from the starboard side of the barge. It continued leading back towards the shore connecting to a rigid pipe on the beach. There was no one to be seen on deck as I swam towards the child. [See Diagram 2]

I met up with the child just two metres before the floating pipe. I grabbed him and he did not put up any resistance. I had figured that we would let the tidal current take us to the pipe and then work our way along it hand

*Continued on next page*



The sand-dredger barge positioned off the end of the sand spit at Cotton Tree beach.

over hand back to the beach. However as soon as we made contact with the pipe it submerged. I didn't realise that the pipe had neutral buoyancy and that the slightest pressure would cause it to sink below the water's surface. It was like breaching a dam and the rush of the backed up current sent both of us tumbling over the pipe, driving us to the threatening barge. My energy was beginning to ebb but I managed to swim back to the pipe with the boy in tow against a current of three knots and choppy water beating against our faces.

The 60 centimetre (two foot) diameter rubber clad pipe was slimy and difficult to grab a hold of. It had a spiral ribbing encircling it about 60 centimetres apart which allowed somewhat of a finger-hold but not enough to stabilise me. I tried to get the boy up on the pipe to ride it like a raft so that I didn't have to continue to hold him. But the current was becoming too strong. I kept at it and by the third attempt I had him halfway up on the partially submerged pipe. I must have loosened my grip on the boy to find a better handhold and he suddenly tumbled off the pipe, slipped out of my grip and was being carried by the current to the barge. If he hit the barge he would have been dragged under by the force of the current and then lost.

I dared not drop my hold on the pipe and tried to reach out for him but it was too late. I had no other choice but to let go of the pipe and swim to him. I grabbed him two or three metres from the pipe. The current turbulence was increasing as was the water chop. We both went under and I swallowed a mouthful of sea water. I came back up with the boy and looked at the pipe realising I was losing ground. I didn't know how I could make it back and stay

away from the barge. I was just too tired and my body was still in a weakened state of recovery from a recent illness and my right shoulder was trying to heal from old torn rotor cuff injuries. My prime motive was to save the boy even at the cost of my own life. The barge loomed nearer. At that point I blanked out.

And then all of a sudden we were back at the pipe. I have no memory of how it happened. I saw that my left hand had a hold of a torn section of the spiral ribbing that fit perfectly. The boy was on my back holding my shoulders and was unexpectedly calm for an eight year old. I started to assess our situation. I saw that my hands were freely bleeding from cuts I received from the rusty steel cables that moored the pipe. And I was dead tired. I had been in the water for 15 minutes with the boy. I knew that I didn't have the strength to get us back to shore and no one appeared from the barge. I looked back to the sand spit and saw that Carolyn was still there alone and 30 metres away. I realized that she couldn't have known the severity of the situation and how exhausted I was. I called out to her to get help immediately.

She turned and screamed, waving her arms to the adults 200 metres away as only a mother can scream. I continued to hold onto the pipe with the boy on my back. I could feel the utter exhaustion sinking into my body like lead that was weighing me down. I laid my head down on the pipe for some kind of rest but the rushing water made it impossible. Another five minutes crept by and then I saw a man running into the water near Carolyn with a small child's plastic kayak in tow. As he swam out to us a second man followed directly behind. The current and wave chop had increased and it was all they could do just to get out

to us. They ended up within a metre of us, both of them holding onto the pipe with the kayak in-between them. I shifted my hand hold grip to my right hand to get closer to the men. After a minute I was able to transfer the boy to the nearest man. We were both holding onto the boy one arm each. Only when the man assured me he had the boy did I relinquish my grip. They immediately got the boy up on the kayak. He was safe. But the current was too strong for the men to get back to shore. We yelled out to Carolyn to get more help. The boy started screaming. I got him to look at me and I calmly said, "You don't need to do that. Help will come." He quieted down immediately.

## The Rescued

My strength was completely drained and I started to lose my grip on the pipe. I glanced back to the barge. Finally! a crew member was on deck surveying the scene. With no strength to yell out, I waved to him for help. He disappeared to the other side of the barge. Turning my view back to the sand spit I saw a third man with a three metre paddle board enter the water and swiftly paddle out to us. He manoeuvred his board next to me so that I was in-between his board and the pipe. He said to climb on board but I mumbled I was too weak. He took my left arm and pulled it across the board. Then while I gripped the side he pulled up on my legs until I was flat on the board chest down.

Safe. After 25 minutes in the water the rescuer became the rescued. At that moment I heard a motor skiff from the barge come around the outside of the pipe. The two men in the water with the rescued boy shouted, "Take the boy first!" I was able to glance up and see two crewmen lift the boy from the kayak into the boat and they motored off to the beach. Moments later the skiff returned up against the pipe with shouts of, "Climb aboard!" But I was not responsive. Then I was being lifted up under my arms by the two crewmen and I fell into the bottom of the boat. I was motored back to the sand spit about half way down to the beach and helped ashore with Carolyn waiting for me.

With Carolyn's assistance I stumbled towards the two families on the beach, telling her that she almost lost me back there. With each step my chest became more painful and heavy. My breathing became laboured. Someone gave me a water bottle and towel. As I rinsed my mouth out and gargled, they told us that two ambulances were on the way. I plopped down on a bench with the people around

me. Carolyn pointed out the boy I saved who was lying on a towel. I remember him smiling up at me. Carolyn told me that the parents were not there but that she got the name and number of the woman who had been in charge of overseeing the children.

Within a few minutes the paramedics had arrived. I remember very little. I was cold and everything was fading out and turning white. The paramedics said I was pasty white. I was hooked up to the ECG scanner and they immediately knew I was having a heart attack. I was strapped into a stretcher and placed in the ambulance. The boy went in another ambulance and Carolyn was following in another paramedic's car. It was off to the Sunshine Coast University Hospital.

The paramedics were stabilising me and giving medications to relieve the chest pain. They also tried to lighten things up and then said they detected an accent. "Where are you from?" I answered the state of Maine in New England and not wanting them to think I was just a tourist I interjected that I was getting my Australian citizenship on the 23rd. An immediate reply: "Good on ya mate! You just passed your last citizenship test by saving the life of an Aussie kid!"

Both ambulances arrived at the Emergency entrance together. As I was being taken out of the vehicle on the stretcher, I glanced over and saw the boy on his stretcher. A woman was standing near the head of the boy and talking to a paramedic who in turn pointed towards me. The boy got up on his elbow and beamed at me. The woman came over, placed her hand on my shoulder and simply said, "Thank you". Tears flowed down my cheeks.

The emergency cardiac team rolled into action. Raised troponin levels in my blood indicated heart damage. I was immediately sent in for an angiogram with a possible stent procedure depending on what was found. But no heart disease was indicated, and my arteries and valves were strong and clear. Then an ultrasound was conducted which showed mild heart damage. Diagnosis was Takotsubo cardiomyopathy (Heart Stress Attack) brought on by the overwhelming traumatic exertion of the rescue. I was in hospital for two nights, three days. Prognosis: after three to six months of heart medications and rehabilitation, my heart should completely heal. The boy (Mathew) was released after a couple of hours with no complications.

The next day while in hospital I received this email from my sister:

---

*Continued on next page*

*So proud of you. Because you just jumped in and did what was needed, a child now has a chance to do great things. Parents are not mourning an unthinkable loss.*

*Take care of yourself now.  
Love, Martha*

## Retrospective

Early in the evening after Carolyn was assured that I was going to be fine and safe, our dear friends the Brufords came by to drive her home, and they continued transporting her to and from the hospital over the next two days. Even with all the heart and pain meds flowing through my veins, I could not sleep that first night. The day's rescue events started to replay with deep and overwhelming emotions. Having suffered from PTSD in the past, I realised that I not only needed to process the 25 tortuous minutes in the river, but that there was a deeper need to recall the whole sequence and details of the rescue. Something far more than saving the life of Mathew was at play.

I'm a Master Mariner and have been a sailor for most of my 68 years. I had saved two lives many years before but those do not compare to the depth of this particular ordeal. I've also been a follower of Meher Baba of India, the Avatar of the Age, for about as long as I've been a sailor. Baba used my sailing life to bring me to Him, and then wove my consciousness and heart into the voyage upon His Ocean of Love. So He became the Master Mariner and I the crew endeavouring to carry out His every command however large or small.

The re-telling of the rescue started that Saturday morning first with Carolyn and the Brufords, then continuing through the hospital stay and the following week with medical staff, family and friends. With these multiple re-tellings, a "thread" began to be disclosed that wove itself through the narrative. This thread was the revealing of Meher Baba's guiding hand throughout the deliverance. There are five revelations of this thread that went into the canvas of this rescue.

*Shoes:* When I walk on the beach, I never remove my shoes. I wear custom orthotics and find it painful to walk barefoot. But this day I felt an inward direction to take them off before we walked out onto the sand spit. This saved me a whole minute in stripping down; the crucial minute that was needed for me to get out to the boy before he was swept into the barge.

*T-shirt:* Each morning Baba and I internally discuss what clothes I'll wear for that day. On that Friday my hand landed on a T-shirt that I had not worn in over a year. It is black and across the chest in large yellow and white letters it says: "Don't Worry Be Happy. Avatar Meher Baba". This is what I wore during the rescue.

*The Hair:* For decades I have worn a strand of Baba's hair around my neck. It is encapsulated in a small silver tube that is welded to a gold necklace the links of which are a sailor's knot. This chain ended up outside of my T-shirt in view for the entire rescue.

*Jumping in:* My body has been in a weakened state because of a long enduring illness. Additionally, I'm in continuing rehab for severe right shoulder rotor cuff injuries. This is why, as I jumped into the water, I asked myself "Can I do this?" That sense of calm that immediately came over me was Meher Baba. It was neither a physical presence nor a feeling of a companion next to me. Rather, it was the unequivocal awareness of Baba taking over and working through me to save the child.

*Near-drowning:* At the moment when the boy and I were being swept to the barge without any hope of getting back to the pipe, I remember that my last thought before I blanked out was to save the life of the child even at the cost of my own. As I stated I have no memory of what transpired from when I blanked out to all of sudden finding the boy and myself back at the pipe. However, during that first night in hospital as I replayed the events of the rescue, it became undeniably clear that Meher Baba had used the "Hand of God" to lift and sweep us to the safety of the pipe.

So this tracing of the "thread" and its consequential revealing of Baba's ever guiding hand provided much needed solace. But what was it that was begging to be told of the deeper importance of this ordeal? What was it that could possibly go beyond the saving of young Mathew and of me? The answer was provided in two parts.

*Gratitude:* On the Saturday afternoon of my hospital stay I had a session with the staff social worker. It was only the second re-telling of the rescue and it was still very emotional for me as I choked up with tears several times. After I finished, she asked me if I could put a name to the overwhelming feeling that brought on the tears. Was it the fear of drowning or the dread of possible failure? I leaned back in my bed and thought for a bit. I realised that I had never been afraid during the entire rescue. And then without any thought I said "Gratitude".

- Gratitude that the boy Mathew was saved.
- Gratitude that I came back to my lifelong companion Carolyn.
- Gratitude that my Master Meher Baba blessed me with this task and graced me with the strength to carry it out without concern for the result.

A few days later I went to search online about what Baba had said of gratitude. When I opened up my morning emails, there was this quote from the Meher Baba Los Angeles Centre weekly update:

“...gratitude is the art of accepting life, moment by moment, in whatever situation one finds oneself, as being My Will.” *Meher Baba*

*Living Faith*: On Sunday of my third day in hospital, our friends Roy and Ros Hayes visited. After my re-telling the rescue to them, Roy said, “You’ve experienced the Living Faith that Baba has discoursed on.” He emailed me the quote the next day. It is from Baba’s discourse on “The Qualifications of the Aspirant. Part 4: Faith” in the book “*God to Man and Man to God*”, pp. 60-61, ed C.B. Purdom. Italics are mine:

“Living faith has a vital relation with all the deeper forces and purposes of the psyche; it is creatively dynamic. There is not a thought but is enlivened by it; there is not a feeling but is illumined by it; ***there is not a purpose that is not recast by it.***

Living faith in the Master becomes a ***supreme source of inspiration and unassailable self-confidence for the disciple, and expresses itself primarily through active***

***reliance upon the Master***, not merely through the opinion held about him.

Living faith is an ***active attitude of confidence in the Master expressing itself not only through trustful expectation of help***, but through the spirit of self-surrender and dedication. ***Such fruitful and living faith in the Master is always born of some deep experience which the Master imparts to the disciple.*** *Meher Baba*

This was it. The rescue was the “deep experience” that Baba used to instil this *Living Faith* within my consciousness – within my heart. And the *Gratitude* to my Master for this gift is ever brimming in my eyes.

Many people were touched by the ordeal of that day. And it is most comforting to know that Mathew and my lives are ever intertwined though we may never meet again. Baba has done His work as only He can do, and I’m ever thankful to Him for allowing me to share in this work.

*“I am the slave of the Master who has released me from ignorance; whatever my Master does is of the highest benefit for all concerned”.*

*Perfect Master Hafiz as translated by Meher Baba.*

Over 50 years ago at the age of 18, Daniel shipped out as a Boatswain’s Mate with the United States Coast Guard seeing rigorous deep water duty in the North Atlantic for two years. The Guard’s lifesaving motto was “You have to go out, you don’t have to come back.” It was during this duty at sea that Meher Baba first started to weave the Thread of Selfless Service into the sail canvas of Daniel’s life.



Daniel at the helm of the Maine coasting schooner “Isaac H. Evans” 2014.

### The Real Miracle

What a miracle –  
The greatest miracle:-  
This One Who keeps becoming  
To enjoy His ever-Being.  
This One who keeps manifesting  
Infinite unique aspects of Himself  
That He may explore  
His extraordinary creativity.  
The Love play of “Just you and me” –  
Times without number,  
Souls without number.  
And never a ‘copy’.  
Never two the same.  
No two love stories ever the same.  
Truly, it beggars poor mind’s belief!  
What an extraordinary, ordinary  
On-going miracle!

*Lorraine Brown, written at  
Meherabad, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.*

### Following Baba

My sanskaras, O the weight  
And Maya, O the beauty  
Both have leadened my tread to the  
goal  
And my mind, it has betrayed me at  
every step.  
Many have already reached the  
precious goal  
Many, many, many more have yet to  
recognise its existence  
I know, well I have an inclining  
But struggle to negotiate the way  
The guide is close, he is really close  
But my welcome to him is not yet  
properly prepared

*Gregory Coulton*

# New from the Archives Committee

*David Bowling*

## Poster Poems

These three short handwritten poems were found in Francis Brabazon’s papers in a folder with the description “Poster Poems”. Containing over 50 unpublished short poems, these were written by Francis in 1974 and 1975 while living at Avatar’s Abode. They are in the process of being transcribed and some have been published on the Avatar’s Abode Trust Archives Digital Documents website. For a link go to:

[https://www.avatarsabode.com.au/avatars\\_abode\\_trust\\_archives.html](https://www.avatarsabode.com.au/avatars_abode_trust_archives.html)

Love can never be a passing thing.  
It is only we who pass –

Love is eternal.

Each time you smile,  
Another day begins.

Every morning is a hurry to nowhere  
And every evening is a returning to emptiness  
Unless one brings home some message from the Beloved,  
Unless His love-glance is one’s wages for the day.

How many times we have met you for the first time;  
And always your love was a new shining thing.

Your eyes held the stars in their courses,  
And your mouth was honey gathered from celestial flowers.

Always at each first meeting we kissed and wept,  
So strange and shining was love – a new pledge and promise of eternity.

Always you have bid me go on to greater glory;  
Always you have cried, “This is enough. Let us build our house  
here away from the world, by the Waters of forgetfulness.”

Rather we will neither go nor stay, for the Beloved who came to us  
remained with us in the secret places of our hearts for us to discover  
wherever we are, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

And that will be according to His Grace and arrangement.

*More New from the Archives Committee on next page*



## *Stay With God*

Currently the Avatar's Abode Publications Committee is working on a new publication of *Stay With God*. The following letter from the Archives was written by Francis Brabazon in February 1959 just after he arrives in India.

Dear Robert, Lorna, Bill and Dianna [Diana Snow]<sup>1</sup>

The miracle which I hoped for and yet dared not hope for when I was writing *Stay with God* apparently occurred – it is apparently a proper job. BABA says it is second only to *God Speaks* and even gives *God Speaks* life, and that it is unique inasmuch as never before during any of His Incarnations has such a book been written. And He says, "If this is what I, God, feel, what must posterity think and how it will be moved when it reads it!" And He has said, "I am not just humouring you Francis, it is a fact." Although I cannot believe all this, I cannot disbelieve it; and the morning reading-sessions bear out that He means it – they are almost like the qawaali-sessions [qawwali] I have described to you which took place at Meherabad in '55. BABA has passages repeated again and again whilst gesturing approval, and elucidation to the mandali audience.

I am telling you all this because of your belief in it all along and because its successful publication will be in your hands. BABA wants its printing and publishing to be perfect and wants it out in six months. He wants an edition of 5000 copies.

Now, for the details of carrying out His wishes: I want Robert to send the 2nd copy, i.e. carbon copy No. 1, including of course the additional writing for Books III and V (copy of which he sent me at Fremantle) to Dianna; and Dianna to personally take it to Mr Edwards at Edwards and Shaw. I will enclose a letter to Edwards which Dianna will read before giving Edwards the rest. I will leave to Dianna charm and tact in handling Edwards. If Edwards should ask about me and my whereabouts Dianna need not hesitate to tell him that I am in India studying<sup>2</sup> writing, and that I gave a press-interview in Poona, one of the cultural centres of India, lectured there and will be meeting the press at Bombay and speaking in that city towards the end of the month.<sup>3</sup>

I want Robert to send me 3rd copy (i.e. 2nd carbon copy) by air-freight or air-package (or whatever it is called) so that I can check and return when I send Dianna the checked original copy for Edwards.

I would also like to take a copy of letter to Edwards. Finance. Bill. and Robert.<sup>4</sup>

1 Diana Snow's first name has been misspelt throughout the letter.

2 Insect damage in original has removed half of this word.

3 Refers to a talk Francis gave at Bombay Press conference on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1959.

4 Written in the left margin.

### **Love life**

You know when you feel like you  
might love Baba a little bit? ...  
And you know how happy it makes  
you feel? ...

You know how it feels walking up to  
the Tomb? ...  
You've just arrived from the West,  
You can't wait to get there ...  
You know how the air  
just gets thicker & brighter & sweeter  
with His Presence?

You feel so Home-at-last.  
The beauty of it all makes you  
breathless, almost.  
That sense of belonging is Rock Solid.  
And you know things again  
that you almost forgot.

And you get to hang out with Baba  
All the time  
Freely  
No distractions  
That's the best of all.

Well I just got this BIG HIT this  
morning  
thinking of His Mandali.  
We just get these little glimpses —  
But for them, it was their life.

That incredible security & surety they  
enjoyed.  
Of what happiness Mehera must have  
enjoyed,  
Loving Him like that  
every moment of every day,  
her whole life thru.

Wow  
What a way to live

What a Love-Life!!

Jai Baba

*Tricia Migdoll*



L to R: Mansari, Meher Baba, Soonamasi, Khorshed, Mani, Mehera, Kitty, Nadine at Taragarh Fort, Ajmer, February 1939.  
Photographer: Elizabeth Patterson. © Meher Nazar Publications.

## Who is Meher Baba?

Excerpts selected by Kris Hines from *Who Is Meher Baba? Questions and Answers On Meher Baba*.

*Q: Who Is Meher Baba?*

A: He is the essence of your very being which provokes you to ask this question.

He is the Awakener who will awaken humanity from its sleep of ignorance to the knowledge of its true Self.

He is the Arouser who will arouse man to the consciousness of his rightful divine heritage.

He is the Light which will dispel the darkness of our selfishness, and make us aware of our oneness in God.

He is the True Friend, who has come to guide mankind to the path of Truth.

He is God in human form.

He is the Saviour, the Messiah, the Christ, the Rasool, the Avatar, the Buddha.

He is the Answer to all questions.

He is the Avatar, the God-Man.

*Q: When Will He break His Silence?*

A: Two parties cannot talk simultaneously. One has to talk and the other has to listen. Meher Baba will break his silence when the world is ready to listen to his Word.

Meher Baba says, "People have asked me when I will break my silence. I, in turn have asked them, if my silence does not speak, then of what avail would be speeches made by the tongue?"

*Q: How Does He Communicate?*

A: Through his divine Love which reaches into the hearts of all who come in his presence.

Through the language of the heart which is love – pure divine Love.

Through the silent language of the

heart which is more potent than any spoken word.

Through the gestures of his hands, which are more expressive and eloquent than the spoken word.

*Q: Why Has He Been Putting Off The Breaking Of His Silence From Time To Time?*

A: Because of infinite compassion. Although a doctor knows that a patient will take a long time to recover, he comforts him by saying he will get better soon. Every time the doctor sees the patient he assures him that he will soon be feeling quite well and strong, and to help him do so he promises his discharge from hospital in a week – then another week – and yet another week – until finally the day arrives when the patient is fully recovered and obtains release.

The God-Man is the Divine Doctor

or Messiah who has come to heal a very sick humanity. The breaking of his silence will release humanity from its ignorance of the purpose of God's creation.

*Q: What Are His Activities?*

A: He helps the poor and afflicted.

He gives spiritual discourses to his disciples who live with him.

When he is not in seclusion, he gives interviews to his lovers who come from different places and different countries to be with him.

He also gives personal attention to the large amount of correspondence that comes to him from his followers all over the world, and particularly from the hundreds of Meher Centres in India and abroad that spread his Message of Love and Truth.

Sometimes when he is in seclusion he washes the feet of the lepers because he says that he finds them beautiful souls in ugly cages. Because he himself suffers infinitely, those who suffer are dear to him.

*Q: Why Doesn't He Have An Ashram Where Anyone Can Go For His Darshan Freely?*

A: He says that the whole Earth is the Ashram of the God-Man and that his REAL DARSHAN can only be had within oneself by his Grace. However, when he is not in seclusion, he is available to all who seek his darshan, at the times fixed by him – mainly when he is residing in Poona during May and June each year.

*Q: If He Is All-Knowing And All-Powerful Why Has He Allowed Himself And His Disciples To Meet With Accidents And To Have Suffering?*

A: Only when the All-knowing and All-powerful shoulders universal suffering can humanity have hope of deliverance from suffering. To meet with accidents and to have physical injuries are but the outward signs of the inner suffering of the Avatar.

Zoroaster allowed himself to be stabbed in the back, Krishna chose to be shot by an arrow, Rama made himself helpless to prevent Sita's abduction and roamed the forest in search of her, Jesus Christ permitted himself to be crucified, Mohammed was stoned by his adversaries, Buddha died of poison. And yet, the Christ – the Buddha – the Avatar, is All-knowing, All-powerful.

Meher Baba is the Compassionate Father of all, and in his compassion he permits some of his disciples to share in his universal suffering. To the disciples it is a blessing, a divine boon.

*Q: When God Is In Our Midst Why Is There So Much Suffering In The World? How Can We Believe In Such A God?*

A: Only when suffering reaches its height in the world does God manifest Himself as Avatar in our midst, to deliver mankind from suffering. The Avatar does his work with infinite compassion whether one believes or does not believe in such a God.

*Q: Why Is India Suffering More Than Any Other Country Even Though The Avatar Is Born And Lives In India?*

A: It is always when suffering is intense on earth that God manifests as the Avatar, the Christ. And it is but natural for the Redeemer to live among those who suffer most.

*Q: What Has He Done So Far To Help Humanity?*

There is chaos, confusion, and tremendous destructive potential in the world today. His Presence on earth is the very act of Divine intervention that checks the world from headlong catastrophe and saves it from total destruction.

*Q: What Have You Learnt By Following Meher Baba?*

A: That we have to completely unlearn all we have learnt in order to begin to know the Truth.

*Q: What Have You Gained By Following Meher Baba?*

A: The loss of some of the false self.

Unless one completely loses one's false self one cannot gain one's true Self.

*Q: How Can One Get Happiness? What Has He To Say?*

A: He says:

“If man wants the happiness he is striving for, let him be more aggressive towards himself and more tolerant towards others.”

“The cause of misery is the selfishness in man.”

“Happiness and misery are two facets of Illusion.”

WHO IS MEHER BABA?  
 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
 ON MEHER BABA Published by  
 The Avatar Meher Baba Bombay  
 Centre for the MEHER BABA – THE  
 AWAKENER Stall at the International  
 Tourist Fair in Bombay, inaugurated on  
 30th October 1967. Special permission  
 to reprint from “The Awakener”

Copyright Meher Baba, Adi  
 K. Irani, Sole Licensee.

# The Avatar's image in an age of vagueness

Ross Keating

In 1952 in the Lagoon Cabin on the Meher Spiritual Center at Myrtle Beach, Meher Baba told Murshida Ivy Duce and Francis Brabazon: "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 it. Second, vagueness about things, and third, dishonesty." (*Francis Brabazon Poet of the Silent Word*, p. 88).

It is difficult to fully grasp Baba's meaning just from the words that record His messages. For they only tell half the story. They only give a faint impression of the dramatic moment when Baba first conveyed His message. Bal Natu nicely captures these moments: "... Baba's explanations, as written may seem complicated, or dry and abstract, but at the time Baba gave them, they were compellingly vibrant. Somehow, with just a simple gesture, Baba was able to make one visualise the subject under discussion with a clarity that words cannot reproduce. At that same time, in Baba's atmosphere, the authority of His words could not be doubted and the combination made these explanations exciting. It was not so much as if Baba was a teacher giving a lecture, but much more as if Baba was opening a window onto the Truth and letting those present glimpse something they had never seen before, in a way they would never forget." (*Intimate Times with Meher Baba*, p. 166).

So one proceeds with caution trying to sense Baba's meaning just from His words. The words recorded from Baba's Lagoon Cabin message given in 1952 seem straightforward enough but what jumps out is "vagueness about things." What does Baba actually mean by this? It is astonishing to think that He puts it on the same level as temptation and dishonesty as hindrances to Truth. For vagueness is generally seen as a state of mind that is harmless enough in itself; certainly not a hindrance to Truth! I remember as part of my Christian upbringing having the sinfulness of temptation and dishonesty drummed into me but never vagueness: thou shall not be vague was not in my catechism.

Of course, how a person reads Baba's messages will depend to a large extent on what they see in them; or better still, on what they project onto them as part of their own

*sanskritic* needs. But I think there is something to be gained in trying to read Baba's words as best as one can while working within one's limitations. Baba once told Francis: "It's no good just 'accepting' what I say – you must try to understand it. Use your whole mind and try to understand and you will." (*Stay With God* p. 158).

There are various ways to explore the issue of vagueness. One obvious one is through language and the examination of how words can be manipulated; or how terms can mean different things for different people and so create confusion; or even how language can be interpreted to mean the exact opposite of what an author intended. No doubt, in the future there will be great debates on what Baba actually meant in certain of His messages and discourses. This is inevitable due to the plasticity of language.

But Baba specifically states "vagueness *about things*" and so what I think He is pointing to here is not just clarity and exactness in our use of words – although this is part of it – but our overall way of being in the world; in the world of things. This suggests to me that Baba wants us to give our full attention to where we are placed in the world, to the people around us, and to what we are doing.

And so to be vague about things equates, in my mind, with inattention to things. This I think is the core of what Baba is saying. He wants us to wake up; to be fully attentive; to come alive and seek Truth (Baba) in our living. Essentially, Baba wants us to live life at its best.

Even with the *mandali*, Baba seemed to guide them through their own everyday experience of life. And to sense His guidance they naturally had to be very attentive to His voice within them while at the same time to what was happening around them. Baba didn't give them set answers on a platter (for such answers would only be superficial) instead He awakened them to Truth through their individual experiences of life.

I don't think this has changed for us; we too need to be attentive so we can sense His guidance speaking to us in the situations that we find ourselves in; we too need to "watch and pray" as the Bible says (Mt. 26: 41). If we choose not to be attentive we fall into the shadowy world of "vagueness about things," and this, as Baba says, is a "hindrance to Truth."



Meher Baba, 3 March 1954 at Kakinada, Andhra. Photographer: P. Narayana Swamy.  
© Meher Nazar Publications.

Paying attention to one's experience of everyday life puts a person into the present moment where vagueness totally disappears. In a paradoxical way paying attention to what is happening around us helps awaken Baba in us. We never get to see Baba actually working in our lives; He just does it. And when we are fully attentive to something we are doing we are not self-consciously present and so Baba can act through us, so to speak, incognito. And my sense is that Baba enjoys acting in our lives and He does this when we are fully engaged in life.

Within the Zen Buddhist tradition, great emphasis is placed on paying attention to your life experience. It is recorded that Buddha told the following parable to highlight its meaning: Once a man was running through a forest chased by a tiger and while fleeing he fell into a tiger pit that already contained an angry tiger. Luckily the man did not fall to the bottom of the pit but instead grabbed hold of a vine and was dangling half way down. Soon the chasing tiger arrived on the scene and started reaching down with its paw to lift the man out while the tiger in the pit was jumping up trying to drag him down. From the corner of his eye the man noticed that the vine had bunches of his favourite berries hanging from it, fully ripe and ready to be eaten. He reached across and plucked some and put them in

his mouth – “how delicious!” he exclaimed: end of the story.

Like a joke, a parable such as this leaves the listener suspended and lets the punchline explode, so to speak, in the listener in a moment of realisation. One possible way to interpret this narrative is to see the running man as us, the tiger chasing behind as our past regrets, and the tiger in the pit as our anxieties about the future. Yet the man in the parable shows by his savouring of the berries that the only place to really live is in the present. In other words, life is only experienced in the present and so this is where our attention should be fully focussed no matter how horrendous our past may seem or how daunting our future may look.

This fits in nicely with Baba's statement: “Live more and more in the Present which is ever beautiful and stretches away beyond the limits of the past and the future” (*Everything and the Nothing*, p. 62).

## The Power of Images

I think the three hindrances to Truth that Baba has stated, namely, temptations, vagueness about things, and dishonesty have – since about 1952 when Baba first gave

*Continued on next page*

out this message – spread their influence over us in a way that is increasingly unconscious. This is due to the fact that our experience of life is much more conditioned by an ever-growing proliferation of artificial images through which our life is mediated. In other words, we don't experience life directly, although we think we do; we see it through the lens of accumulated images that have impressed themselves upon our minds.

This unnatural distortion makes it much more difficult to find out what Baba is telling us through our experience of life. As a result, our lives are prone to become extra vague. These images also come with their own subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, aura of temptation and a blurring of the edges of honesty. All of this adds hindrance to our perception of Truth. Two social commentators, Andrew Harvey and Carolyn Baker, have aptly called the present times in which we live a “post-truth world” (*Savage Grace: Living Resiliently in the Dark Night of the Globe*, p. xvi).

Let me explain further: by the time we leave our homes and get to work we are inundated by hundreds of images, mostly brands. They have their own seductive power and beguiling enticement: advertisers' paradise. It is as if they coat our mind with a sugary vagueness that ends up becoming addictive. They deceive us into thinking that the world they conjure up – the enticing, out-of-reach world – is the real one and we succumb, mostly unconsciously, to imagining ourselves living in it.

This then exercises a powerful influence on how we see ourselves and what we think. As Madeline Bunting points out, these brand images are far from tame: “We construct our sense of who we are through our association with brands – football teams to jeans to make of car. But brands are no longer simply about the quality of the product or service they sell, they are promoted as a set of values, a philosophy, even an ideology.” (From an article: “*When the meaning of life boils down to a brand name*”). And, of course, our social institutions like political parties, and even churches all use advertising today to best promote their particular wares. Everything is now in the advertising game, which is not about Truth, but about selling something for gain. Much of the fear and hatred in the world today is the result of media images that undiscerning viewers have unknowingly assimilated and fully identified with.

Kenneth Gergen in the nineties coined the term “the saturated self” to indicate that we have now passed the point in our society where we are able to adequately take in any more images; we have reached a saturation point. In

his view, the world of images enters deeply into our psyches and affects our self-identity. And because these images keep changing, like seasonal fashion, so too do people “exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality gives way to reflexive questioning, irony and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold” (*The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*, p. 7). I think Gergen nicely defines the mental state of psychological precariousness that many people today find themselves in. This is a world of unreality, of quintessential vagueness.

One of the most challenging commentaries on the effect of the proliferation of images is that given by Jean Baudrillard. He writes that “if they [modern media images] fascinate us so much it is not because they are sites of the production of meaning and representation – this would not be new – it is on the contrary because they are sites of the *disappearance* [Baudrillard's emphasis] of meaning and representation, sites in which we are caught quite apart from any judgement of reality . . .” (*The Evil Demon of Images*, p. 27).

Here again, this statement speaks directly to the issue of vagueness, of a society becoming increasingly distant from reality; of reality even becoming increasingly unrecognisable and uncontactable, including the reality of ourselves. As many other commentators besides Baudrillard have suggested, life itself has now become mediated and experienced through the images we have created. And as a consequence our lives are now shaped in the likeness of these images which can be reproduced infinitely and sinisterly manipulated infinitely. This is a spiralling down into a condition of ever-deeper vagueness. To live in this world is to live in a fantasy world of hyperreality that ultimately cannot be sustained.

In a similar vein, Christopher Lasch's view is that the psyche, under such conditions, shrinks into what he calls a “minimal self” as a means to survive. In his writing he “shows how the prevailing social conditions, especially the fantastic mass-produced images that shape our perceptions of the world, not only encourage a defensive contraction of the self but blur the boundaries between the self and its surroundings. As the Greek legend reminds us it is this confusion of the self and the not-self – not ‘egoism’ – that distinguishes the plight of Narcissus. The minimal or narcissistic self is, above all, a self uncertain of its own outlines . . .” (*The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in*

*Troubled Times*, p. 19). Lasch's comments give a penetrating insight into how living in an artificial environment, a world of vagueness, can determine the psychological state of those living in it. And they also present an understanding of the sudden contemporary rise in what has been called the "narcissism epidemic."

Within this image-saturated, image-distorting, "post-truth" world that we are presently living in, it is understandable that some people seek respite and escape into a quasi-contemplative mental space which is really just a kind of introverted time-out-from-life state. Sometimes this is promoted as developing one's own inner spiritual life. But a rich inner spiritual life can only develop in response to a full engagement with life itself. Quite often when a person withdraws from life they are actually preparing themselves for a kind of inner spiritual death.

## The Image of Reality and Love

Meher Baba is present with us but not in human form. When Baba left His physical form in January 1969 the message sent from Meherazad stated that Baba "dropped His physical body ... to live eternally in the hearts of all His lovers." This statement could be read as if Baba wished to return to His natural abode "in the hearts of all His Lovers". It certainly did not say that He went to some heavenly state and severed any connection we may have with Him; a state from which He was going to look down and judge us.

The message said the direct opposite, that He now dwells in the most intimate part of our selves; that part which we share with all of His lovers. And that He is there "eternally." Francis's definition of the Avatar as "Truth and Truth's body" works well here. Meher Baba as Truth is eternal while His form, Truth's body, comes and goes.

In 1956, celebrating Baba's first visit to Australia, Francis presented the idea of Meher Baba as the living Image of God. In Francis's view, Meher Baba was God's perfect likeness; a pure, divine expression of God's Image in human form. And in being around this living Image of God a certain process started to take place inside a person. Francis described it as an "imprinting in the heart" with the "Image of Reality and Love." Baba Himself described it in this way:



Meher Baba sitting on the ground in Khushru Quarters, Ahmendagar in September 1954 during the Three Incredible Weeks program. Photographer Panday. Avatar's Abode Collection.

"Being in my company, watching me and being watched by me, you will automatically learn and unlearn a lot which no amount of teaching can convey." (*Listen Humanity*, p. 242).

Francis also wrote of the potential of this "imprinting in the heart" to totally transform our lives. He wrote that "This is the Image which is the constant challenge to our thinking and loving and working. No worker has ever attained that actionless action of work, that purity of loving, or that honesty of thinking which leaves no stain or false image in his own mind or in the mind of others, without the inspiration of this Image and its measurement" (*The Birth of the Nation 1956*, p. 2). For Francis, this was as good as it gets for those stationed on the gross plane: "What we call great art and integral and integrated thinking or real living is simply this Image reflecting in [our] hearts."

But there was a "price" to pay, an "unlearning" to happen, a sacrifice to be made. For Francis, this "real living" could

*Continued on next page*

## Two stories from Jeff Wolverton

Kitty Davy was a truly selfless person, so focused on the happiness and spiritual wellbeing of others. And a delight to be with. During the early 1970s, I found that when I would go in to see her in her office, within 45 seconds we would be talking about me, and my life with Baba and any problems I might have! I would be astounded at how this would happen each time. At one point, I was determined to remedy this. I thought to myself, “I am going to ask how Kitty is doing, ask her about her life with Baba – anything to keep the focus on her in the conversation.”

So, with this plan in mind, I entered her office and began inquiring how she was doing, as well as angling for a Baba story from her. Somehow, without my even realising it, we wound up talking about me! And the Baba story she shared was one that related to me!

How did this come about? I tried several other times to focus on her as deeply as I could, and the same thing would happen! Finally, I realised – I could feel

---

*‘The Avatar’s Image in an Age of Vagueness’  
continued from previous page*

only be achieved once “the rubbish of self-expression has been swept away, from which the non-sense of precious feelings and opinions of separative personality has been eliminated” (*The Birth of the Nation* 1956, p. 3). This all amounts to a clearing away of the hindrances to Truth and it lines up with Baba’s three hindrances to Truth, but from a different angle. But I would also add to Francis’s list the sweeping away of the clutter of vacuous images that have colonised and taken over our minds.

Meher Baba as Truth now resides in our hearts yet His presence is everywhere. But His Truth in us lies buried under the mountains of mental clutter we have already accumulated. And in the continuous proliferation of artificial images that confront us each day it is near impossible to find Him in our day-to-day experiences. One of Baba’s most consistent messages was to remember Him, rest in Him, and repeat His name. This action is the great remover of all our mental clutter and acts as a kind of protective shield against all that may hinder our connection with Truth in our living. This awakens the great “Image of Reality and Love” within us. It arouses the Christ in us to drive out the merchants from the temple of our hearts and clears our eyes to see more clearly.

it energetically – her focus on me was so much more powerful than my focus on her; it was like I was trying to swim upstream against a powerful current and I would be thrown up on the shore, somehow needing attention. It was clear to me that with Baba, His loving focus favours the weakest link, and that was me!

Kitty was truly looking away from her self; she was so naturally selfless in her response, and of course she knew Baba had her in His pocket eternally, so in herself, she was perfectly fine.



I found that I absorbed in a very natural way many profound truths in being with the mandali. Here is one example.

One deep insight came in a way that on the surface wouldn’t be obvious at all, and this happened one day at Meherazad with Baba’s Beloved Mehera. It was back in the early 1970s when I was young and immature in Baba.

Mehera was standing on the porch of the Main House, saying goodbye to a young woman whose pilgrimage had come to an end; she was on her way back to the West. I was there just to say goodbye for the day before going back to Meherabad. Mehera lovingly encouraged the young woman to take Baba with her, not to worry, that Baba would take care of her, and at one point she surprised me, saying, “Sometimes we feel empty and depressed, but we know Baba wants us to be cheerful, so we make efforts to be cheerful.”

This made a profound impression on me. I thought to myself, “She is the beloved of the Beloved, and for decades she has been next to the source of all Love, and yet she doesn’t always experience a joyous heart full of Baba’s love?” I concluded, “Then love must be something different from what I had thought.”

Up to that point, I took the feeling of Baba’s love in my heart as the sign that I was on the right track, Baba was with me, and when I would lose that feeling, I would agonise over what I must have done wrong. I’d struggle to get the feeling back. Desperately. But after this small exchange with Mehera, I rarely ever worried again about how I was feeling. I never felt bad if I experienced emptiness or sunk into a low mood. I was able to see after that, that love was on a different track; it came from a different dimension within me.



I would notice, for example, in times when I felt depressed or sad, my mood never prevented me from responding to a situation with love. Love was not dependent upon my mood or the state of my feelings. Nor did they take away from my love. Love was independent. And after that, I didn't take it personally when I wasn't experiencing Baba's love in my heart. I would leave that up to His timing, and I would be deeply grateful when it happened. Baba once said, "Feelings and emotions are the creation of energy and mind. Love is the creation of the soul."

Over time, I came to experience my consciousness, to use a metaphor, as the earth's atmosphere, and moods and emotional states are like weather systems passing through it. If I identified with a raging storm in the atmosphere, I would be buffeted around by winds, but if I didn't identify with the storm, it would pass through me much more quickly and I would not be pulled in.

Years later, I began to see moods and emotional states like the seasons. It is not possible to stay in the springtime of moods like many spiritual groups advocate. Spring has to give way to summer where things heat up and a listlessness sets in.

Then autumn comes and the natural world begins to shut down, the temperatures cool in a way that's invigorating. But that doesn't last. Winter comes, and everything dies back; there can be a feeling of emptiness and nature appears lifeless. These natural cycles are like the feelings and emotions moving naturally through us. And yet all the time, Baba's love is behind the cycle of these emotional seasons, untouched, independent, ever accessible to us. Like Mehera's expansive, gentle and ever-embracing love, which she radiated so beautifully, even though she herself might be feeling sad and weary.



Meheru (left) and Mehera (centre) at the Last Darshan, 24-28 April 1969, Guruprasad, Poona. Photographer: Darwin Shaw. © Meher Nazar Publications.

How amazing that because of such a seemingly minor incident, with only a few words spoken, such a profound truth about moods and feelings was communicated, which has made such a difference in my life. But I know well, that Baba's close mandali are completely linked to the Divine and so many deep truths naturally just flowed from them, whether they were aware of it or not. Later, I read where Baba had said to Arnavaz Dadachanji, who was complaining to Him that she wasn't feeling Him, "I never said to feel me. I said to love me." So true.

# Review of Ross Keating's *Piling up Boxes*

Steve Klein

Because I found Ross's previous book of poetry, *A First Act*, to be so accessible, enjoyable, and yet moving, it was only with mild trepidation that I agreed to review his new book, *Piling up Boxes*. There is always the risk that you are going to find yourself in the awkward position of trying to be politely positive about something that you don't particularly like. Fortunately, such worries were dispelled the moment I read the first poem.

I place words  
     on a page  
 like a boy  
     piles boxes  
 up against a fence  
  
 so I can climb up  
     to look over  
 and try to see  
 my Beloved  
     walking about  
 in His garden.

My reaction when I read that was, "Darn, I wish I had written that." The simple language and the vivid imagery conveyed emotional depth in a lively and humorous way. What more can you ask for?

Nor was this an outlier. In poem after poem, I was struck by the way Ross, seemingly with ease, goes to the heart of some emotional truth and lays it bare in a way which might seem self evident but for the novelty of expression. For example, in "No One Can Serve Two Masters," the idea is hardly new. But there is undeniable force in the concluding image which makes one realise anew the powerful truth of this ancient theme.

There are so many poems in this small book which I liked that it almost seems churlish to only mention a few, as if the others are not worthy of just as much praise. But look at the way Ross, without ever mentioning Meher Baba's name, makes us aware of the shallowness of our desires in "Coral Shops."

Swept into  
     the stream  
 of ever-flowing  
     desires  
  
 I glide  
     with a school  
 of fish-eyed  
     shoppers  
  
 riding  
     the currents  
 that swirl  
     and twirl  
  
 through  
     coral shops  
 of the deep  
     sea mall.

Or awakens us to the spontaneous spirituality of living in the moment in "Mae's Star" and teaches us the profound significance behind "Cleaning Out a Jam Jar."

No one can really teach you  
 how to clean out a jam jar.  
 It is just one of those things  
 you pick up with practice.  
 More than a knife  
 with the right-shaped blade,  
 more than a flexible wrist  
 and agile fingers,  
 you need unflinching patience  
 and the inner poise of a saint.  
 It's a delicate surgical operation  
 getting under the curve of a jar  
 where it's hard to reach and then  
 lifting sticky bits that won't budge.  
 It's no game for the faint-hearted  
 and weak. It requires strength  
 and understanding just as in  
 the cleaning out of one's own heart.

And I strongly suspect, that with each rereading, different poems will call out to me, waving their hands to catch my attention, and then beguiling me with their smiling aptness. As these lines did from “Voices at Tyalgum:”

Slowly  
the first rays  
    of light appear  
and dip their nibs  
    into the dark ink  
of these ancient voices.

They instantly insinuated themselves into my mind, and I was struck by their flawless blending of language, imagery and meaning.

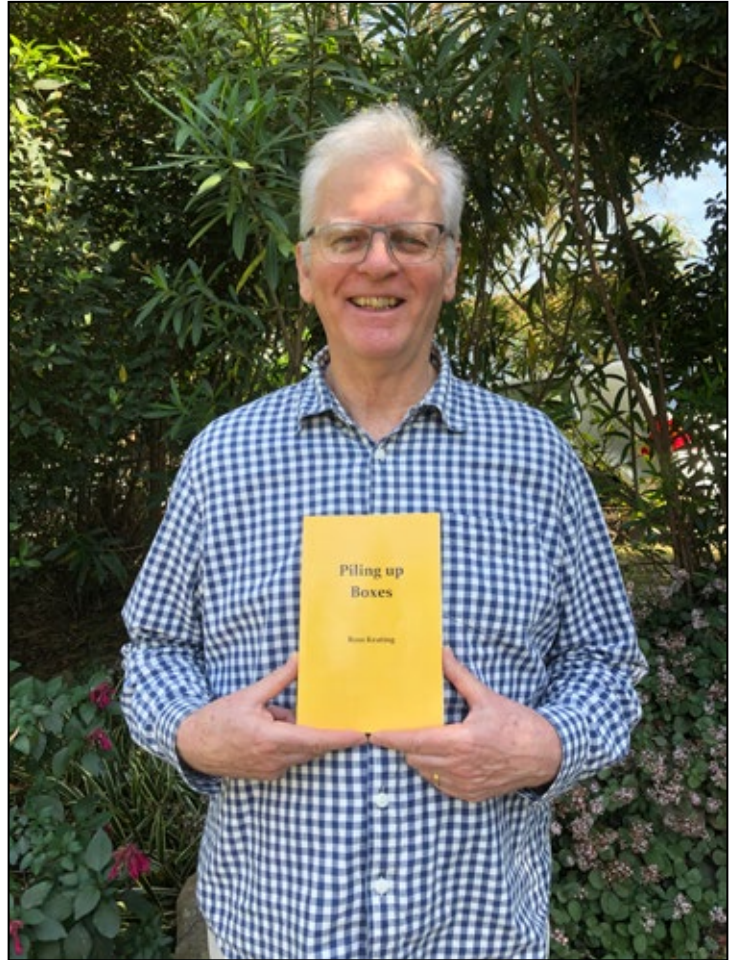
Several of the poems “The Avatar’s Room,” “Meher House Sydney,” “Long Reef Headland,” are rooted in specific locations in Australia, but you don’t have to have ever taken the “Ferry across the Harbour” to appreciate

. . . a meat pie  
in the stainless steel warmer  
sliding like a slow trombone  
as the ferry sways  
from side to side.

As with all good poetry, the specific contexts become metaphors for larger universal truths. A wonderful example of this is “The Rake” in which Ross smoothly transitions from thoughts about a “dime-a-dozen rake” to the only relationship in life that matters.

But just so you know that Ross is not paying me to say any of this, I will confess that “Eternal,” “Infinite” and “I Am,” with their playful typography, did not particularly strike my fancy. However, that’s about as far as I can go in terms of criticism, for even a poem like “The First Shoot of Longing,” whose diction is a little more formal and flowery than what normally appeals to me, moved me.

This is the alchemy that Ross produces. His ability to communicate his faith, insight and devotion directly to the reader disarmed my unfortunate habit of cynical intellectualism and opened my heart. Thus it was that I was able to accept as plain speaking, what I otherwise might have rejected as hyperbolic. And instead of superciliously scoffing at the last lines, I found them touching.



Ross Keating with his new book of poetry *Piling up Boxes*.

I could go on but I think I should stop here. Far better to simply leave it at, “I thought this was a beguiling gem of a book, and urge others to get their hands on a copy and read it for themselves.”

[Steve Klein has helped Bal Natu with his writing and also helped edit three collections of stories Eruch told in Mandali Hall at Meherazad. He is currently hosting a YouTube show “Baba TV”. He has published four books of poetry devoted to Meher Baba: *O Beloved*, *Fire and Smoke*, *Praise in Complaint*, and *Means What?*]

*Piling up Boxes* is available online at Amazon, at the Avatar’s Abode Bookstore, and at the Sheriar Bookshop in Myrtle Beach.

# The creation of *Let Us The People Sing*

Gusi Carpenter

From a recording of Robert Rouse, Bernard Bruford and Gusi Carpenter.

**Robert:** This bloke we shared a house [in Sydney in the early 1950s] with Edgar Waters. He had shown a film to me and to Francis which consisted of American folk tunes. There was Woody Guthrie, his son Arlo, the bloke who played the banjo – a folk singer and also there were shots of negros working on the railways and there was an Appalachian bloke sitting plucking his banjo and singing a folksong. The film was called *The People Sing*. By the time we met Francis in March 1954 he was already talking about how one day we had to have Baba songs. He thought we would have to wait till we had a musician but he'd already decided we needed Baba songs in 1953 because he'd seen people singing folk songs in the movie *The People Sing*.

At Meherazad the men mandali would be woken up at 4 or 6 o'clock in the morning and they would have their breakfast then there would be an hour or so before they were to meet Baba who would come over to Mandali Hall from the main house at Meherazad.

Francis started writing songs at Meherazad. He didn't think of himself as a musician and wrote songs to a tune which he knew I knew – we'd been listening to folk music together for years. He would take a particular song and write words for it. If people wanted to write their own tunes they should go for it but up to that point he hadn't decided to write his own tunes.

So he'd written three songs and he was writing the fourth. This would have been early in February 1961 getting ready for the anniversary [at Avatar's Abode] in June. He finished the final verse and folded it up and put it in his pocket. Then they all went to meet Baba in Mandali Hall and it just so happened that Baba said to Francis, 'And what have you been up to Francis?' Francis said, 'I've written a song.' Baba gestured, 'Sing it.' So he sang it. And that's when Baba said, 'What I want you to do for the next 21 days is write a song a day and sing each one as you write it on the next day.' So Francis did this, he wrote a song a day, then Baba decided that they should all be published. But without the tunes because there are plenty



Robert Rouse at Avatar's Abode in the 1960s playing guitar. Avatar's Abode Archive collection.

of tunes that have been copyrighted. That included the first four songs and then the 21 others. 25 songs all done to folk tunes. It was easy for Francis to choose the title *Let Us The People Sing* because of the inspiration of the film *The People Sing*.

**Bernard:** One little aside, on the ship in 1962 in someone's cabin there would be gatherings on many nights to sing the songs from *Let Us The People Sing* which had only just been published a matter of months beforehand. So that's November '62, and people in adjoining walls would slam the walls!

**Gusi:** So did you perform any of them for Baba?

**Bernard:** Robert and Lorna sang The Cradle Song to God [to Baba] and he asked them to sing it again a second time.

**Robert:** That might have been because I was so stunned singing for Baba the hand wouldn't move off the key of C major! Anyway we made a good fist of it the second time.

# Meher Baba and snakes

*Sue Jamison*

At the time of writing this, here in the Southern Hemisphere, it is Spring. Avatar's Abode is bursting with beauty from the blooming of flowers and shrubs, the aliveness of bird call, and the scurrying and busyness of insects and other crawling creatures – including snakes!

For some people, the sighting and even the idea that a snake is close sends them into an irrational panic and fear. Snakes have been feared by humans for centuries, and according to scientists, this suggests that it is a result of an ancient evolutionary history. Adam and Eve perhaps? I'll leave it you, dear reader, to do further research on this but

for this article, we focus on what Meher Baba has said.

In fact, Baba's last order before He retired for the night of July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1925 was about snakes. Faredoon Driver (Padri) narrates what happened on that night before His Silence began.

“I am now going. From tomorrow, I will not speak for a year. All of you must take care of your health, and remember when any of you go out of the ‘makan’ during the night to attend to your needs, always carry a lantern with you. Beware of snakes, I will do anything to help you in any other difficulties, but I will not help you if you are bitten by a snake.’ This was His final order. Baba left the ‘makan’ for His ‘Jhopdi’ at Meherabad. The Mandali too retired for the night. A few minutes later, I took a lantern, stepped out about five to seven paces to relieve myself. Suddenly, by the light of the lantern I saw a snake in my path about twenty feet ahead and started shouting, “Snake, snake.” The Mandali rushed out with sticks and killed the snake. Baba, hearing the commotion, returned and on being told of what had happened, once again enjoined about carrying a lantern and to be aware of snakes. Finally he said (spoke) “Now I am going”, and went away. When we saw him on the morning of the tenth, He uttered no words.” (Beloved archives.org)

If you have visited the Myrtle Beach Center in South Carolina, you will be told during the orientation that one of Baba's directives for visiting the Center is to make sure you wear covered shoes at all times while outdoors and carry a flashlight (torch) at night. “Baba gave us orders to stay on the footpaths, to carry flashlights at night, and if we saw one of the poisonous snakes – which were plentiful because the land had never been cleared very much except where the cabins stood – we were to repeat His name and the snake would go away.” (Ivy Duce, *How a Master Works* p. 251, Myrtle Beach S.C. 1956)

In 1938, according to Bhau Kalchuri (*Lord Meher* Vol 7 p2269) “A five foot long snake was seen outside the kitchen with a sparrow in its mouth. Baba was called, and He came with a few of the men. One man struck the snake on its back, and it



Drawing by Mae Oakhill aged 5. As you can see, the wiggly snake lives in the brown rocks.

released the sparrow, which flew away. Baba gave the final killing blow, crushing its head. Later in the evening after dinner, he remarked about snakes, "Unless a snake is killed by a human being, it remains a snake. Never leave a snake wounded, it takes so long to die. Once wounded, a snake will remain near you, to be killed outright." On another occasion, the men killed a snake at Lower Meherabad, and Padri brought it to Baba, who crushed its head. To Padri, he explained, "In evolution, the snake is like an entangled rope, which you cannot undo or unwind. However, if it is

killed by a human being, the knot untangles itself, and the soul is free to continue on its way through evolution."

I find these to be extraordinary statements as can only be expressed by the One who knows. As snakes are present in almost every country in the world, it is more than likely one will cross your path some time in your life. Take heed in knowing that if you repeat His name, Baba has said that the snake will not hurt you, and further, if you go ahead and kill that snake, you will be doing it a favour!

---

### The Sun Shines

*Amelie Newcomb's Poem for Baba*

The sun shines bright on the Beloved's feet.  
We are His puppets who He lovingly greets.  
Be kind and be sweet to the ones that we meet,  
and the music he plays sings us sweetly to sleep.

O Meher Beloved the ancient one,  
Who loves and cares for everyone.  
You move us along from stream to stream,  
Till we get to your presence which is at your feet.



# Divine thieftdom

*Jacob Horsey*

There is a rarely touted study wherein it was observed that young children laugh 300 or so times a day compared to the average 18 or so adult chuckles. Some very smart adults took the study a little seriously and did not like the parameters of such a study, nor such a querulous statement against adult-kind. They quickly rectified the facts showing that there is no difference in the amount children and adults laugh. Perhaps you would like to do some of your own observations to fact-check this one.

You might remember the stories of Beloved Krishna's childhood – the butter thief and all-round mischief maker, whose antics have been handed down for millennia. The village mothers did not find it funny having a young boy raid their cupboards though – it is of course theft. How would you respond if your neighbour's child broke into your house and stole your yoghurt, or corn flakes? Was there a hidden message in Krishna's mischief? Was it a cosmic lightening up of things? And what of the modern age wherein roaming the streets is equable to delinquency, have we lost touch with our village-selves that would merit even a visit from the divine prankster?

This mischief maker ended up in the middle of a war wherein He promised He wouldn't take up arms. Satisfied, the enemy amassed soldiers and weaponry. His chief disciple-charioteer Arjuna was content just to have Krishna on his side, and there were those loyal to Krishna that nonetheless due to their fate-share had the duty to oppose Him in the war. They knew that they weren't just opposing a wily fellow that seemed to precipitate trouble wherever He went, He was the divine mischief maker, the Avatar, and in their hearts they knew that His victory was sealed before the



The mischievous little boys stealing ghi (bazaar art, c.1920s)

Source: [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1400\\_1499/krishnabhakti/babyghithief/babyghithief.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1400_1499/krishnabhakti/babyghithief/babyghithief.html).

battle even began. At one point Krishna became fed up with Arjuna's respect for the enemy, many of whom were cherished relatives and teachers, and in a display of divine rebellion picked up bow and arrow and began firing mercilessly on the opponents, despite Arjuna's protests. One opponent so overwhelmed by the beauty of having his Beloved Lord firing upon him with intent to kill, blood drenched and with wounds blooming like roses in the morning light, began weeping ecstatically at the divine sight, even with

*Continued on next page*

his life dangling by a thread. Arjuna picked up the hint and took his weapon up again to continue the great battle.

Is there a better way to go than by the hand of the God-Man? And the Beloved silently whispers, "This is how I love you. Child, how I love you". We are children before our Master, and He is ever guiding, correcting our sight, inching us ever closer to Him, even in our stubborn unwillingness, our childishness. This

time round He has said that He has to play the role of both mother and father. There is evidence of grand Matriarchal societies of our ancient past, predominating with feminine gods and Mother goddesses; techno-cultural shifts saw the rise of great Patriarchal societies, and then this – this gaping liminality of Now, the present unravelling of a materialised modernity and the rebuilding of a spiritual culture, a broadened sense of unity, a kind of growing up en masse of humankind. But what of children? What seeds will we sow for our children to harvest? What does the Beloved expect from us? How to play mother and father as our Master hinted, for is there not sealed in His every action and word a kind of lesson, a story within a story to contemplate, a song to unwind and re-string in one's own life-song?

There was no moment in my childhood where there wasn't a baby in my household. The presence of children was an inevitable given, being born in the middle of nine children. The thin life-thread that connects us is clearest in a mother's love for a baby. Muhammed said that heaven is verily at the feet of the mother. When Muhammed stormed Mecca and destroyed the false idols, in the Hadith by Ibn Abi Najih, Muhammed is said to have placed His hand on an image of Jesus and Mother Mary and said,



Meher Baba at Meher Center, Myrtle Beach, May 1952. Photographer: Charmian Duce.  
© Meher Nazar Publications.

"Erase everything except for what is under my hands".

What is our duty to this child? Buddha said the path to enlightenment is trod by a child, and so too did Jesus when he said, "One must become a child to enter the Kingdom of God". And of course, Baba, well we lost track of all the things He has said and done in His divine innocence. His love of mischief, His infectious silent laughter, His trouble making, His autobiographical story entitled the *Mischievous Chicken*, the pranks He played on His disciples, His quips and unexpected poetry, the way he was sneakily throwing things at the ever earnest Meredith Starr to rouse him from his meditation and attachment to conventionality, the way He enters one's own heart like a divine thief, His requests for humour, His order for cheerfulness, His love of Charlie Chaplin, His "Don't worry, be Happy," His "Even if your heart is cut to bits, let there be a smile ever on your lips". He said that getting crucified was Jesus' sense of humour. His disciples were light and humorous, child-like. They took His example seriously, very seriously. And so then, how do we embody this child: this inner child?

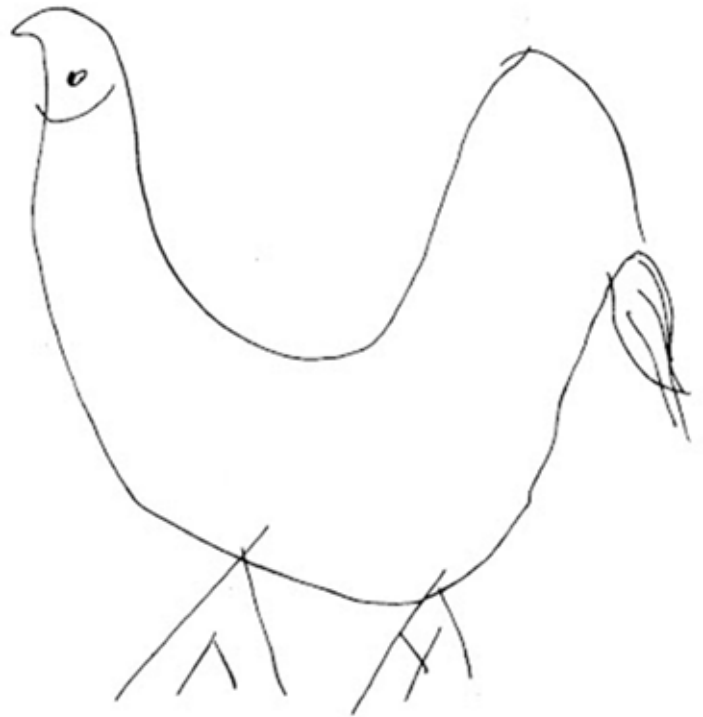
Perhaps asking the question is part of the answer? Curiosity is the heart of the matter. All of our glutinous big-headed ideas served up on a platter. All of our ideology,



our fundamentalism, the morsels of fast food for the brain that we read from iPhone screens, or newspapers, or television, or scientific papers, or billboards, or over a coffee with a friend or colleague, our back biting, our meetings and agendas, our plans, schedules, goals. Parents often comment on how much harder their lives became once they had children, how much they had to give up. Child-rearing was never on the bucket list for some. But there is more to raising children than loss of freedom, there is renewal, reevaluation of what is important, a new kind of curiosity and questioning, a deeper sense of responsibility towards a more fundamental freedom. I remember my Montessori trainer Pat. She was in her 80s or 90s and described going out to lunch with her friends she hadn't seen in decades. As they chatted, she had a curious thought, "Thank god. Thank god. Thank god I chose to work with children". Then looking at her friends talking, gossiping, recounting the innumerable ills of the next generation she thought quietly to herself, "I could have been such a bitch."

It seems to me that in our post-modern debates about freedom, our pursuit of liberation, the conversation about men and women, our future proofing, our conquests for truth, important parts of the puzzle are often left out – children, curiosity, mischief, playfulness, cheerfulness. Meanwhile the Avatar plays mother and father in one and still loves a village – simple mud brick huts, a well to draw water from, a bullock cart will suffice. In a land where the backbone of the women is stronger than anywhere else on Earth. India – some say the cradle of civilisation – the Avatar sows the seeds of future villages. No one has ever successfully conquered India. As Francis said in *Stay With God*, "The curse of the West is its great cities, the glory of India its villages. When 80% of a people live in villages, you can't conquer the country ... you may be sure that the Perfect Masters have picked that place to take birth in."

Yet He who plays marbles with the universe is remembered for His playing marbles on His visit to Australia. The child of the universe, whose unscheduled advent sends a ripple of mischief through creation, and who, as Gandalf says in *Lord of the Rings*, is never late or early, but rather arrives precisely when he means to. The One whose invitation to visit Oz even shook the equipoise



Drawing done by Meher Baba, July 30, 1953, of Himself as a Chicken.  
Source: *The Nothing and the Everything* by Bhau Kalchuri, p. xi.

of Francis, and who was met with His lovers fleeing at His unanticipated suddenness.

It seems that the Ancient One takes His mischief seriously, and if need be will draw His bow from the passenger seat of a chariot to ensure its (His mischief's) survival. His Divine Thieftom enwraps the hearts of the universe for all time. He, whose shattered face shone with glory when Bhau raced to see Him after hearing that He met with a car crash. He who embodied "don't worry, be happy". He is mother and father to the masses that they might nurture their own children, and the child within. And perhaps, God-willing, find Him as He truly is, flute in hand leant against the bough of the knowledge-tree, with a curious look of mischief in His eyes, and the history of crumbled civilisations and perennial villages in His breast.

Recently at the end of the Prayer of Repentance, Tajuddin joked, "Forgive us Baba for all of the sins you made us commit". I am sure the humour of it wasn't lost on Baba, and His forgiveness was sealed in the laughter of the first stars that burst into existence and continues in our very own, ever Mischievous Chicken, brother and friend, the Ancient One, the Son of a Hen: Meher Baba.

# Bill Le Page recalls Eruch talking about children

Sometime during the 1970s Eruch, as gathered from Baba, spoke of bringing up children. As far as I can recall, the gist of what he conveyed was this:

Yes, the parents should control the child's environment with all care. It is absolutely necessary to have a proper environment created for the growth of the child. And the parents can best do that. True parents are those who have the interest of the child foremost at heart, and then their own comfort, their own happiness, their own married life ...

The best way of disciplining children is for them to imbibe from the parents the right way of life. Let them see how the parents behave, if they feel concern for each other, if they are friends to each other, and also if they are tidy, properly dressed, clean. Then the children will in a natural way develop good habits, and will learn the art of loving concern for others, learn the art of charity, of forgiveness, of speaking the truth and so on. If a disciplined life is lived by the parents, then the child imbibes discipline naturally. That's all.

On another occasion, Eruch explained that the way Baba inculcated discipline in them was to do it Himself. What He wanted them to do. He would go out of His way to do it Himself, and do it, and do it. If you tell children anything to do regarding discipline, they will go against you. So you continue to do it yourself, and discipline will be awakened in their hearts, minds, automatically, as it were – but you need patience for it. You will have to carry out the particular type of discipline you would like them to learn. There is no other way out. In regard to these values, Eruch shared with us a story he remembered about Prophet Mohammed.

It so happened that Mohammed was seated one day with his close followers, and a mother came to him with her small son. "My Lord, please tell this child to stop eating fresh ripe dates. I cannot stop him from eating them, and he is spoiling his health. He is my only son. Please advise him."

Now, a person, once he has had a fresh date, cannot resist having another and another and another. But they are very harsh on the stomach, there is no doubt about it. So this mother thought that if she were to take the child to the Prophet, He would say something which would impress him. Mohammed looked at the boy and at the mother and said, "What you say is right. But please come again after a month. It is better if you come then." The mother folded her hands, bowed down, and left with her son.

True to her promise and despite the immense difficulties of journeys through the desert in those days, she came again with the child a month later. The Lord received them and petted them and made them sit down, and asked how they felt and what was the reason for coming to Him again. She repeated the whole thing. And the Prophet then brought home to the child how dangerous it was to eat a lot of dates. "One, two, three a day is all right. But that is enough. No more than that. I am also fond of dates," Mohammed said, "but I don't eat so many. It is not healthy to have a lot. So will you give Me a promise not to eat more than a few a day?" The child promised and everyone was happy, then they left.

After they had gone the companions living with Mohammed were intrigued that He had not advised the child on the first visit, and finally someone asked Mohammed. "It was impossible," He said, "to give advice about dates when My fondness for them was worse even than the child's. Unless and until I desisted from dates, how could I give any advice to him? So I had to call the mother and her son after a month, but for that month I never ate, never touched, a date."

To create an impact, a force must be there behind it. Unless you live the life you are advocating, there will never be an impact on the heart of the person you are advising.

*From THE TURNING OF THE KEY  
by Bill Le Page. Pp 150-153*

# *The Illuminated Hafiz*

*Review by Reg Love*

*The Illuminated Hafiz* is quite possibly the most visually beautiful book that has come into the Avatar's Abode Bookstore in 2020.

148 pages of Hafiz poems, each page with a background that is an amazing illustration.

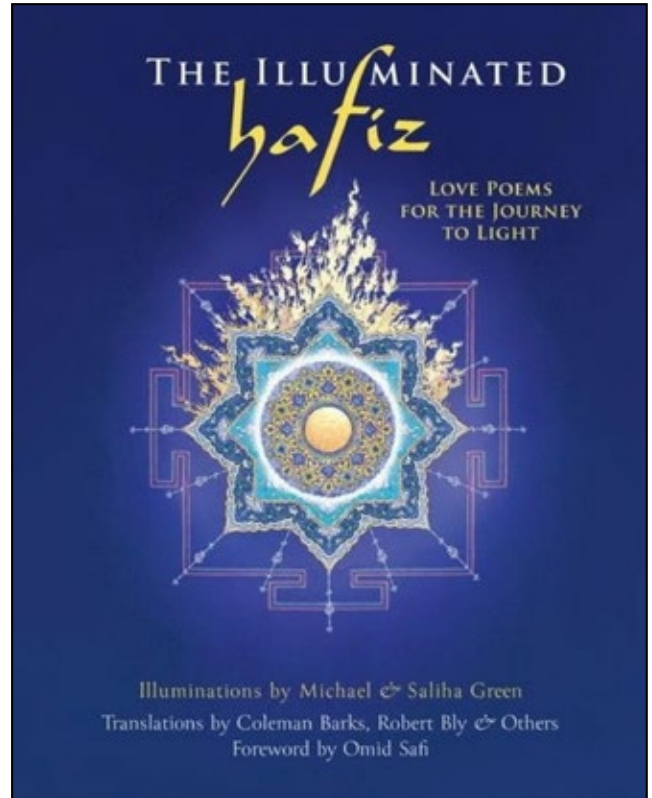
Inspirational and uplifting, this is a book that you can lose yourself into completely.

Contributing translators of Hafiz are Meher Baba, Coleman Barks, Robert Bly, Peter Booth, Omid Safi, and Jonathon Granoff.

The stunning illustrations are by Michael and Salih Green. This book is a visual feast, which invites you on a journey of Love.

Meher Baba also contributes to the book. On one page there is a photo of a young Meher Baba with his translation of a Hafiz poem – the famous “Befitting a fortunate slave”. On another page is an illustration of Meher Baba dipping his hands in water, with an appropriate poem from Hafiz. Plus a couple of pages with discourses by Meher Baba – “Wine and Love” and “The Lover and The Beloved”.

You are invited to come into the Bookstore, sit in a comfy chair, and spend 10 minutes immersing your self in this book. And then pre-order. We will be ordering more



copies soon, but want to gauge interest first. I got in a few copies recently, and sold out on the first day! So there is only one copy now for display only. Come and have a look. This book will not disappoint.

## *Meher Baba Australia*

### **What is 'Meher Baba Australia'?**

It is a volunteer run, non-profit initiative. We publish a newsletter that aims to connect the community of lovers of Beloved Meher Baba.

### **Frequency - four issues a year**

March, June, September, December.

### **Cost?**

There is no charge as such. We do however ask readers to subscribe, to actively choose to receive / keep receiving the journal.

### **How do we cover printing and postage costs?**

We welcome donations. Occasionally, if costs go up and funds run low, we even invite and encourage donations.

### **Actual costs of a hardcopy issue?**

To produce, print and post within Australia, each issue costs us approx \$7.50 AU. For

the 4 issues that's about \$30 AU a year.

International postage costs a bit more.

### **The digital email PDF version?**

We also have the low cost PDF version we distribute by email. Many of our subscribers choose to subscribe to receive both email and hardcopy versions.

### **How do we ask you to renew each year?**

It will be an email request or a coloured slip inside your MBA hardcopy. Your response helps us keep your (confidential) info and address on our mailing list up to date.

### **Editorial policy**

The MBA editorial policy is pretty simple – MBA will not publish any content that is divisive, political, disruptive or disrespectful. The editors reserve the right to accept or decline any submitted articles. Editors also reserve the right to edit any or

all accepted articles for length and content.

### **MBA contact**

For all newsletter enquiries including subscriptions please email [meherbabaaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:meherbabaaustralia@gmail.com)

**Donations can be made via PayPal at**  
[avatarsabode.com.au/donations.html](http://avatarsabode.com.au/donations.html)

### **Or by direct bank deposit or Electronic Funds Transfer to**

Account name: Meher Baba Australia

BSB: 064424

Account number: 10379525

Please include your initial and last name for reference.

### **Suggested annual donation**

\$8 AU Email PDF (Global) – 1 year, 4 issues.

\$30 AU Hardcopy (Australia) – 1 year, 4 issues.

\$40 AU Hardcopy (Overseas) – 1 year, 4 issues.

# Meher Baba Australia

December 2020 – February 2021

**Guest Editor:** Kris Hines.

**Design, Layout & Digital Image Cleanup:** Liz Gaskin.

**Proof Reading:** Gusi Carpenter.

**Mailing List and Subscriptions:** David Bowling.

Email [meherbabaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:meherbabaustralia@gmail.com) for information.

**Next Issue:** Please email submissions for the next *Meher Baba Australia* to [meherbabaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:meherbabaustralia@gmail.com) **Photos**

to be minimum of 1MB, preferably over 2MB.

*NOTE the editor reserves the right to edit all published articles for length and content prior to publication.*

**Deadline Next Issue:**

**NO LATER THAN 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

---

## 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](mailto:truestories@ozemail.com.au).

### Meher House

is open by appointment for visits of 60 minutes.

COVID-19 restrictions apply.

Monthly Meetings resume Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October.

For meeting details contact Jenny and Ross Keating:

[jkeating@tpg.com.au](mailto:jkeating@tpg.com.au)

To arrange to visit Meher House contact Yvan Duerinckx:

[yvand@westnet.com.au](mailto:yvand@westnet.com.au).

Email to subscribe to Meher Baba Sydney Noticeboard:

[jkeating@tpg.com.au](mailto: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](mailto:jillhobbs1954@gmail.com)

## Avatar's Abode Meher Baba Community

We are monitoring the current COVID-19 situation closely and are making plans to restart some of our weekly activities.

We will use similar protocols to those being used for visitors to Baba's House; hand washing & sanitising, cleaning of frequent touch surfaces, record taking for the purpose of contact tracing if required, limiting numbers of visitors and social distancing.

We ask that no one who is feeling unwell visits Avatar's Abode.

For further information please contact:

[info@avatarsabode.com.au](mailto:info@avatarsabode.com.au) or ring Roy Hayes on 07 5442 1544.

– Mehera Moroney, Chairperson, Avatar's Abode Trust

## Mehera's Birthday

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020**

4pm – 5.30pm.

Afternoon tea at the Meeting Hall followed by Songs and Stories. Please bring your favourite Mehera stories and songs and a plate to share. Leigh Rowan 0419 775 893.

## Christmas Day

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

1pm Arti.

Followed by Christmas Lunch in Kitchen. All welcome!

Bring Christmas food to share.

Jethro Hitchens 0407 589 442.

Daniel & Carolyn Montague 0488 455 253.

## Amartithi

**Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021**

*Avatar Meher Baba dropped His physical form on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1969.*

Noon – Silence. 12:15pm – Arti.

George McGahey 0401 108 466.

## Avatar Meher Baba's Birthday

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

*Avatar Meher Baba was born at 5am 25<sup>th</sup> February 1894.*

5am – Arti in Baba's House and singing in Baba's Square/Shed.

5:30am – Tea and Coffee at Kitchen.

Morning co-ordinator Bernard Bruford 5442 1487.

---

## Avatar's Abode June 2020 Anniversary Online Presentations

are still available on the Avatar's Abode website at

[https://avatarsabode.com.au/anniversary\\_at\\_avatars\\_abode.html](https://avatarsabode.com.au/anniversary_at_avatars_abode.html)

---

## WHO IS THIS WOMAN?

Apologies to the Meher E Manzil and the AMBPPCT for not acknowledging them for giving permission to use the photos that accompanied this article in the previous MBA. A guest editor oversight. – Gusi Carpenter

---

**Meher Baba Australia is a non-profit publication independent of the Avatar's Abode Trust. The views expressed in articles in Meher Baba Australia are solely those of the authors.**