
NETI NETI

Dearest Companions,

Good bye, Adieu, Auf Wiedersehen, Adios!

This will be the last issue of Neti Neti. There are many reasons that have brought the team to this decision; increasing complexity of life, new challenges, new commitments, changing circumstances. All create a new environment in which to focus. So, all things come to an end and ‘this too must pass’, as inscribed on the inside of the Emperor’s ring, in an old Sufi tale.

It is an important challenge to know when is the right time is to say good bye; to allow something to reach its completion gracefully. This completing of the Neti-Neti project also seems to reflect many principles within the dynamics of spiritual unfoldment. Life brings opportunities that invite and allow participation and work - to be given an opportunity to open oneself to the daily, practical tasks at hand, to join together in the spirit of mystery within a community of shared values and dreams, to make a pilgrimage together in spiritual companionship with the Beloved at the helm.

It has been a privilege to be part of an editorial team that has lovingly worked for so long, so many years, to collate and put together, what we hoped, was a unique publication for the worldwide Baba community. A history of Neti-Neti was written in a previous newsletter and hopefully all issues will at some point be scanned to read and use as a reference that will capture the history of a time.

Neti Neti began many years ago as a project between Nina Balief and Hillary Stabler. They both lived in London. Hillary was moving to Ahmednagar and she and Nina thought that a regular letter telling of activities in Meherabad and Meherazad would be an interesting focus for a monthly newsletter. Each month, Hillary would write a letter called ‘Nagar News’ and Nina worked tirelessly to surround this feature article with other interesting stories and quotes, mainly connected with Meher Baba’s life and work.

I knew Nina at the time and would often visit and find her working on an issue. John and Carol Pullen helped out with printing arrangements, so there developed a working schedule for a small group to bring Neti together. Nina did much of the work for this. After some time Hillary returned from India and would participate in helping put together a publication. The responsibility for writing the regular ‘Nagar News’ correspondence was taken on by various people over the years who continued to live in India.

At some point Nina came to the decision, as we have, that she no longer had the energy or time to continue. John, Carol and I took the project to our study group for discussion. This was a study group in which we met with Don Stevens. A decision was made to keep the Newsletter going, so some of us within the group decided to try to continue the project. This group included John and Carol, myself, Cheryl Starkie, Renate Moritz and Maxine Summers. We were also joined by a young woman from Los Angeles, living in London, who had been in a group with Filis Frederick. We would all meet at John and Carol's flat, cut articles to size, putting the pieces on the floor and with 'pritt-stick' glue in hand, paste the issues on to larger paper and then send these off to the printers. Posting these issues, keeping a list of subscribers, locating articles, writing articles became another part of the larger tasks within the project. We were also assisted by several French Baba Lovers, primarily Jean Gousieff, who would translate articles for our large French subscribers. All tasks reflected the many stages involved in putting together a newsletter. These tasks involved procedures that had to be kept in mind over the many months and years. In doing this, we also created a space in which to remember Baba and as well as our responsibilities to each other.

Don Stevens was involved, behind the scenes, from the beginning of this transition. After about a year we all moved the location of the Neti work to Don's flat at 228 Hammersmith Grove. At this time we were joined by Bruce Milburn and his mother Elspeth. I still remember the time Don told us that he had purchased a 'computer', something very new on the scene. We struggled to learn new techniques and eventually saw the last of the 'pritt-stick' activities, being on our knees pasting issues around the sitting room floor. Every month we gathered, planned, put together ideas, articles and other such interests, i.e. recipes and cartoons, to go into the next issue. After the long afternoon's work, a meal was prepared or brought earlier from someone's home, then together we celebrated our companionship and endeavour, to bring something different to the worldwide Baba community. In time, other members joined the team; Rob Ryder, Jane Hoskin and Wayne Smith.

The important aspect of Neti that I remember with great fondness and warmth is the sense of companionship it allowed to develop amongst a lovely group of people. Through our work Baba helped bring a unique experience into the development and workings of inner links, companionship, and creative endeavour. This also, hopefully, helped to work through several complex sanskaric energy knots!

We grew as human beings and deepened our experiences of commitment and fun within a spiritual project. This reflected the atmosphere which always surrounded activities, groups and projects with Don Stevens. Here there were focused discussions combined with warmth and joy, sharing meals together, eating delicious cheeses he brought over from Paris, whilst also providing opportunities to discover many delicious wines and interesting recipes were prepared, it truly created a balance between head and heart. Baba made a feast for us and we enjoyed every bite!!!

David Lee

We are again including news from The Beads Foundation. They have recently sponsored a Workshop in Arkansas, USA, to bring together 9 invited guests, Cherokee, African-American and Meher Baba devotees. This workshop was a direct follow on from the two previous Heartland Pilgrimages reported in past issues, to make connections, generate ideas and plans for a large Gathering/Pilgrimage for 2015. The Beads section is found at the end of the newsletter, for more reports from this workshop and other Beads information and news please go to- <http://www.beadsononestring.org/>.

'DIALOGUES WITH DIVINITY, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CREATIVITY, IN THE HINDU TRADITION' should have been attributed to Krishna Shukla.....

Transitions and Connections

David Lee

Every day and every month the sense of where we are in the history of our lives becomes as if living with a guest from the beyond. In the past, the future was some far away place that now feels like a large and ever present ocean where time has covered itself in a mysterious dreamscape, a reflection in reality, that was in the past, as if only an intellectual idea. I have become the song that I sang, yet don't easily recognize the words and story being lived. I am a late developer and so what I am saying may of course seem so apparent to many, but to me, I am shocked by the very late middle age I am living in and the world I inhabit. The past is a structure not easily found and the present slips through the days like a swift stream through a sand clock.

Baba talked about the ending of cycles and the beginning of cycles. Cycles within even greater cycles, of an opening of great change. His advent was a manifestation of particular power and energy to assist our journey through an eternal returning, emerging and dismantling. This is a living poem of incredible beauty with Shakespearean dimensions.

His life was an inspiration, mirroring for us a setting up and tearing down - perhaps not so much a destructive tearing down, but rather with a dynamics of wrenching qualities, like dying and being born at the same time. Stories that give examples of this tell of the Prem Ashram. Baba built a structure, invested love and energy, only to dismantle, when the job creating a living and burning desire for God was opened within the hearts of the young students. The work was done. He then walked steadily ahead with focus into the next phase. There was also the letting go of his physical voice, wrenching his lovers away from the form of his sound into an internal connection of the heart. There is the work with Masts, locating, connecting, releasing an energy back into the world from a place of enchantment. The New Life period presented a phase where everything that everyone knew was put in a boat and pushed out into an awesome and unknown connection of uncertainty.

He forged and ploughed the inner life of the spirit into a vast chamber with structures giving shapes that live eternally.

So where am I in this little story? I am thinking of the unsettling transitions at play in our globalized and technologically driven, shrinking world. I am thinking about the bewildering conflicts all around as cultures meet each other and want history to retreat backwards to old and unresolved boundary markers. How are we at the same time in closer proximity to our neighbours than ever before, yet with a distance between us that is vast and terribly palpable? How are we giving birth to a new order when moving blindly with such frightening speed? The reassuring structures of the past are empty shells and movie sets. The culture of fame locates tinsel gods covered in arrogance and wealth.

When times of changing occur as in the present, recovering a renewed sense of identity

within the upheaval and strangeness of life can, in a simple formulation, go one of two ways; either towards separateness or towards union. Often we recover confidence through identifying what we are not, with an 'us and them' mentality that is all too often reinforced with strict and judgmental boundary lines between the familiar and the strange. We claim our territory and defend it with contemptuous fear, hate and a pious self-esteem. Our egos become attached to the forms we make in order to lift our mindsets away from imagined fear and thereby separating us from so much in life!

The direction towards union, to locate and be curious towards the common links in all, the transcended aspects that reach into a sphere of life that connects, is light and fluid. We long for connections that bring meaning to the space between us. Baba brought the energy to do this path with his advent. To simply remember him, to find the silence within, to connect with the words and stories given, is to connect with a power source that energizes and helps dismantle the sanskaric attachments of separateness, that then takes us down the road to find a unity within all things. It is a very narrow road, vast in dimension and yet, passes through the eye of a needle.

Afternoon's reflection

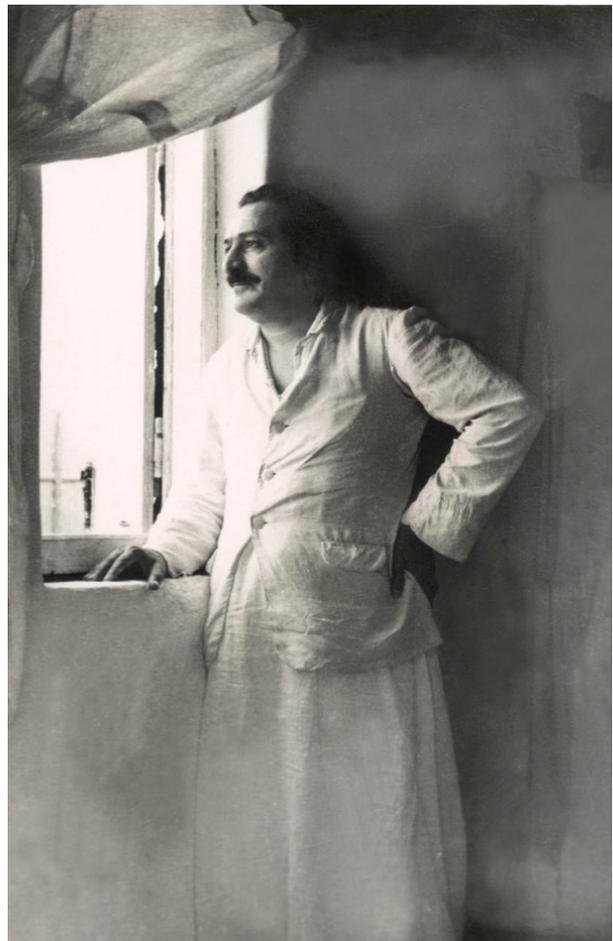
looking out the window
 a sky sits majestically
 above the world holding memories
 of all dreams
 watching
 calming
 inviting peace

Into the mystic

Round conical shapes
 cyclically trail a wondering sea life
 holding the mysterious and primitive
 thoughts of a shell space in motion.

My struggle longs for comfort when
 making the havoc of spinning earth's clearing
 a dance to the mystic.

David Lee



I bathed in the Sanctified Betva

Marc Molinari

After receiving an e-mail in November 2013 which contained an extract from a book entitled “History of Prem Teerth Ichhaura” written by R.S. Singh Baghel, a lawyer from Orai, India, (*see extract below*) I decided to visit this region which includes the Betva River and the village named Ichhaura. The historic facts taken from this book are intended to give you, the reader, a better feeling of the importance of these sights. I felt intuitively that it was very important for me to make this journey and hence totally altered my plans for January 2014. I invited Ken Stermer to accompany me and organized our voyage in India. After a grand journey from New Delhi, Mathura, Varanasi, Sarnath, back to New Delhi and then on to Udvada, Mumbai and Pune we arrived in Meherabad on 1 February.

At 8:30pm on 6 February 2014, Manisha, Debjani, Ken and I took the train from Ahmednagar to Hamirpur to visit the region that MEHER BABA designated as “His heart”.

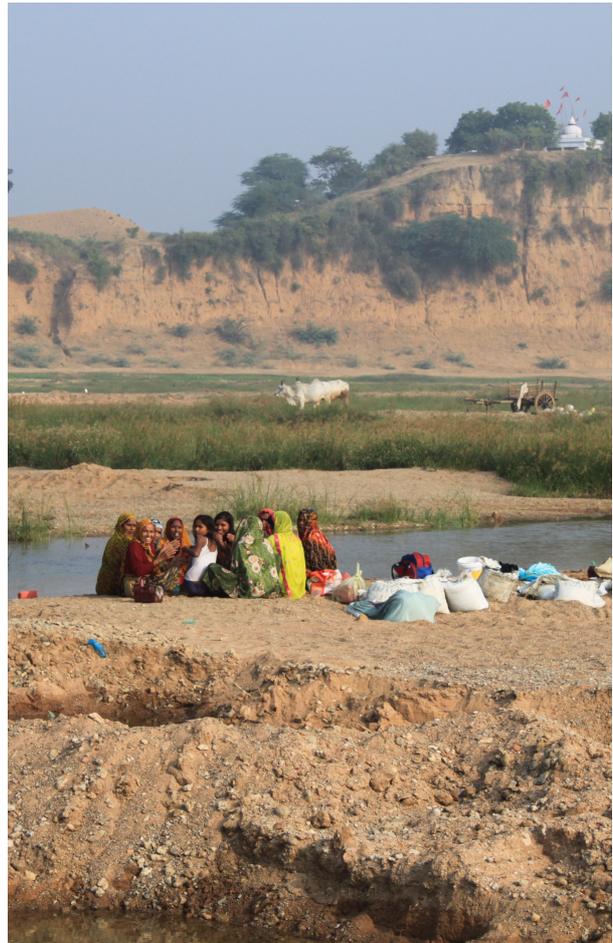
The following day, after a voyage of seventeen hours and more than 1000 kilometres we arrived in Jhansi. Rajou, our guide met us at the station and took us to a Baba lover’s home for tea. In the living room resplendent with many photos of Meher Baba we did Arti. The matron of the house prepared our meal which we shared with other guests whom I believe were of the same family.

Then we left Jhansi for Orai, reaching our destination in three hours. From house to house everyone welcomed us, introduced their families, and invited us for prayer followed by Prasad. I had never seen such a welcome.

The next day we visited the hostel MITTHU LAL TEKCHANDRA DHARMSHALA where BABA stayed with his group before going to ICHHAURA. We had breakfast and left ORAI at around 11a.m.

We arrived at the banks of the Betva after a two hour drive on very bumpy roads and bathed, at last, in the river that MEHER BABA sanctified as Pure and Holy, in the same way that RAM had done with the Ganges in a previous Avataric age.

On 3 February 1954, MEHER BABA and his group crossed the BETVA at a spot that has become too deep to cross. This precise area is now called “MEHER GHAT”.



On the banks of the BETVA, rebaptized by MEHER BABA “PREM TEERTH”, we recited the PARVARDIGAR and “The New Life” prayers. We repeated the latter five times as BABA had done with his Mandali for His work during the Manonash period in Hyderabad.

Next, we headed for the village of ICHHAURA, where on the night from 3 to 4 February 1954 from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m., Meher Baba presided over a conference attended by all the spiritual authorities of creation; the Angels, the God and the spiritual agents. This conference dealt with all the questions of the present and the future for all of creation. It was imperative that this conference take place at this location and that all the spiritual hierarchy attend as GOD was on earth.

The village of ICHHAURA was built by the Emperor IKSHWAKU an ancestor of Avatar Ram. The Emperor gave the village the name Ikshwak Pur which was later called Ichhaura. Meher Baba also said that the atmosphere of this village was so charged with spiritual and divine love that it was difficult for Him to leave. After visiting this village and lunching together we headed to Hamirpur, where, upon our arrival, as we had been accustomed we said ARTI in the Baba centre. We dined together before going to bed.

The next day, after ARTI and prayers devoted to Baba we visited the sites that Meher Baba had visited in Hamirpur. One noteworthy spot was a platform overlooking the convergence of La YAMOUNA and BETVA rivers.

On our way from Hamirpur we visited two junior high schools in the villages of INGOHATA and MAUDAHA where Baba gave two great Darshans. Then we went to MAHEBA, which Baba named MEHERASTANA (Baba’s home). It was here, in 1954, at 12:50a.m., that Meher Baba declared his Avatarhood. After a meal together the festivities celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of Baba’s declaration began on 9 February at 9p.m. ending the following day at 5:30a.m. At exactly 12:50a.m. the music stopped and silence was observed. In unison we all hailed “Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai three times, as Baba had shown on his alphabet board when he announced for the first time that he was the Avatar of his age and that after leaving his body he would return in seven hundred years.

As soon as I knew the evening’s program I felt a very strong urge to establish a link with the Baba lovers in Marseille and France. So I called Marie and asked her to organize the Baba group and my two sisters so as to recite the seven names of God seven times at precisely 8:20p.m. to connect with the Avatar in Meherastana. The whole night we heard Arti, ghazals and bhajans sung by different groups. I was able to measure the great reigning fervour and now understand why Meher Baba designated this region as being “His Heart”.

It was very cold and the police, in charge of security, who were no doubt surprised to find two Europeans in this far flung village, controlled our passports, graciously explain that they were simply doing their jobs.

The following day we visited the village. KESHAVA NARAYAN NIGAN's son, PRATAP CHANDRA, who accompanied us from house to house where we performed Arti and received Prasad and tea. I realized that everyone was from the same family; descendants of KESHAVA NARAYAN.

Meher Baba asked Keshava Narayan Nigan to translate and circulate the messages from His darshans in Hindi, His Cosmic Meher Family and Meher Gitavali as stated in Eruch's letter of 23 March 1953, sent by Baba's order to all the Baba lovers of the district of Hamirpur. Keshava Narayan also wrote a poem to the Glory of Meher Baba entitled "Meher Chalisa" which is still sung to this day.

We stayed two days in Meherastana, close to those who live their love for Meher Baba with great devotion.

Our last stop was Nauranga. Class was in session as we visited the high school where Baba gave darshan under a Neem tree situated in the school grounds. We also visited a temple dedicated to Baba, resplendent with His statue. After ARTI, prayers and Prasad we had lunch in the courtyard with the Baba lovers from the village who sang and played music.



On 11 February 2014 we returned to Jhansi for the overnight train to Ahmednagar. I went to this region to bathe in the highly spiritually charged atmosphere, to fill myself with this energy, and bring it home to share with everyone here in Marseille and France. For me, this swim was purification and a way of receiving Baba's benediction.

We were the only two occidentals amongst sixty Indians who celebrated this anniversary. The manifestation of the Avatar's work will be achieved by coming together as a group to recite the prayers, not by occasional visitors. This is why we should include Hamirpur and the Betva in our pilgrimages to India.

Marc Molinari.

30 March 2014. Marseille. FRANCE.

English Translation Kenneth Sturmer

SANCTIFIED BY DIVINE LOVE

R.S. Singh Baghel

As it was forecasted in old Puranas that during the ages of kalyug period, river Betva would be given an importance of the pious river Ganga and would be sanctified by divine love.

While Avatar of the age Beloved Meher Baba was crossing the river He dipped His toe of right leg in the water of Betva and took some water of the river with His hands to keep in His mouth and threw the same back in the flowing stream of Betva. That divine action of Avatar of the age sanctified and made river Betva pious and holy as Ganga had been made holy by Ram, the Avatar in that period.

And thus Baba fulfilled the forecast made in Puran, "Kalyugey Betravati Ganga" and gave it the same importance and reverence to river Betva and made it modern Ganga.

After that the group along with Beloved Meher Baba crossed the Betva river and proceeded to village Ichhaura...

Baba said- "Today, I am giving one of the most important days to Ichhaura; this has become a sanctified place in My love. In the future thousands will gather here to bathe in Betva."

Baba renamed the village and the area down to the banks of river Betva as "Prem Teerth" (Prem means Love and Teerth literally means 'Anything sanctified by God')

In India, any place of spiritual importance, especially if it is situated by a river, is known as Teerth Kshetra (Kshetra means place).

By naming this particular site "Prem Teerth" Baba was, perhaps, emphasizing that those who would be visiting the place will reap the blessings of His love.

From; HISTORY OF PREM TEERTH ICHHAURA; Pp 28- 30

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Je me suis baigné dans La Betva Sanctifiée.

Marc Molinari

C'est suite à un mail que j'ai reçu en novembre 2013, extrait d'un livre écrit par R.S. SINGH BAGHEL avocat à ORAÏ en INDE, « History of Prem Teerth Ichhaura » au sujet de la rivière BETVA et du village d'ICHHAURA, que je décidais alors de me rendre dans cette région. Certains faits historiques sont extraits de ce livre, afin de mieux faire ressentir aux lecteurs l'importance de ces lieux. J'ai senti intuitivement que c'était très important de me rendre là bas, et je bouleversais complètement mon programme pour janvier 2014. Je proposais à KEN STERMER de m'accompagner et j'organisais donc notre voyage en INDE. Après un grand périple dans le pays : NEW DELHI, MATHURA, VARANASI, SARNATH, retour à NEW DELHI, UDVADA, MUMBAY et PUNA ; nous arrivions à MEHERABAD pour notre départ.



A 20h30, le 6 février 2014, MANISHA, DEBJANI, KEN et moi prenions le train à HAMEDNAGAR, pour nous rendre dans la région du district d'HAMIRPUR afin de visiter cette région que MEHER BABA a désignée comme étant « Son cœur ». Après 17 heures de voyage et plus de 1000 km, nous arrivions le lendemain à JHANSI. Nous avons été pris en charge par RAJOU qui nous amena dans la maison d'un BABA Lover's afin de nous détendre et boire un thé. Puis nous entamions Arti et les prières dans le salon où il y avait de nombreuses photos de MEHER BABA. La maîtresse de maison préparait le repas que nous avons partagés avec d'autres invités, qui je pense, étaient de la même famille. Ensuite, nous avons quitté JHANSI pour ORAÏ et, après 3 heures de route, nous nous y sommes installés. De maison en maison, tout le monde voulait nous recevoir, nous présenter sa famille, prier et nous donner Prasad ; je n'avais jamais vu un tel accueil. Le lendemain, nous visitons l'auberge MITTHU LAL TEKCHANDRA DHARMSHALA où BABA s'était installé avec son groupe avant de se diriger vers ICHHAURA, et après le petit déjeuner, nous quitions ORAÏ vers les 11 heures.

Après 2h de trajet sur des chemins de terre; nous arrivions au bord de la BETVA pour enfin nous baigner dans cette rivière que MEHER BABA a sanctifiée comme étant Pure et Sainte, de la même façon que RAM l'avait fait pour le Gange, dans une époque Avatarique antérieure.

Le 3 février 1954, MEHER BABA a traversée la BETVA avec Son groupe à un endroit qui est devenu aujourd'hui inaccessible en raison de sa profondeur. Ce lieu précis est appelé maintenant « MEHER GHAT ».

Puis sur les berges de la BETVA, rebaptisées par MEHER BABA « PREM TEERTH », nous avons lu PARVARDIGAR et dit 5 fois la prière pour « la Vie Nouvelle », tout comme MEHER BABA l'avait fait avec Ses Mandalis pour Son travail du MANONASH à HYDERABAD.

Ensuite, nous nous sommes dirigés vers le village d'ICHHAURA, où, dans la nuit du 3 au 4 février 1954, de 22 heures à 4 heures du matin, MEHER BABA avait présidé une conférence avec toutes les autorités spirituelles de la création : les Anges, les Divinités et les Agents Spirituels. Cette conférence traitait de toutes les questions du présent et du futur, pour toute la création. Il était donc primordial que cette conférence se déroulât en ces lieux et que toute la hiérarchie spirituelle s'y déplaçât puisque DIEU était présent sur terre.

Three Snapshots of Reality

Don E. Stevens with Wayne Smith and Laurent Weichberger

Here is a publication of biography, reflections, and visions that re-capture some of the essential Don Stevens as if he were still right here with us.

It is a marvellous small handbook of the passing on of key principles from a close companion to those who were his friends, and an important contribution to the lore of mystical insight and some practical life lessons for any who care to read it.

Don Stevens was born in 1919 in a small town in Nevada into a homesteading ranching family. Laurent Weichberger begins *Three Snapshots* with a twenty four page biography that starts with Don's early life and takes us through the varied academic and musical education, adventures, and Spiritual leanings of his early development, and on to his career as an oil company executive, all leading to, most notably, his life-long discipleship and role as editor of principal works of Meher Baba. Wayne Smith continues into the body of the book with an extended conversational style type interview - a mode of personal exchange of communication where Don Stevens seemed to always thrive. Smith also includes, as a front piece, a short biography of Meher Baba.

The Three Snapshots in the title refer to a late in life vision of Don's that he narrates in response to Wayne Smith's questions. The subject matter here is the Beyond-Beyond state of God and God in Creation, normally tough material to wrap one's arms around, but Mr. Stevens' frank conveyance of his inner experience is both accessible, and, simultaneously, plausible.

This first snapshot is a descriptive experience of an infinite rolling landscape: "I was walking, and suddenly, I was not in the city, but I was on --- I can't even describe the landscape ---- I would say [it was] low, undulating, and there was a sense of complexity about that landscape which was not apparent at all.....I just knew I was right in the middle of the infinitude of God's consciousness, latent and manifest. That was it. It was just staggering."

In the second snapshot, we get through the "Om Point", and, "the landscape becomes cluttered up.....en route to manifestation and perfection but not yet fused back into the infinite reality of God And, of course, this is a terribly important state. It's where most of what we are familiar with as Creation exists, in this sort of tangled up, messed-up state. And of course we are not aware of how tangled and messed up these things



are, because, as far as the human being is concerned, all of these tangled masses and knotted masses are stored in the mental body. So they are not even susceptible to being consciously looked at and handled. (this is) a fairly advanced stage of evolution....fairly advanced human-form sanskaras.....the complexity and the differences of complexities were just sheerly incredible." Don states that snapshot two was preparatory to snapshot three.

The surprise in Snapshot three was that it featured familiar human forms that Don knew to be Baba's Mandali. He could see that "they housed within them sanskaric forms and patterns.....quite a great mass of sanskaras had been straightened out- properly coiled, put into good order." However, "some sanskaric knotting--- a coiling and twisting--- which had defied lifetimes and lifetimes of repeated effort" begged the Divine intervention of the Avatar. ("He is the source of last resource.....I let you help me-to help you.") Don goes on to describe that when the ego is distracted from what it is doing, "the presence of the Avatar and the bewitchment of working for the Avatar (with all of this love and bliss that you feel when you're in a fling with the Avatar) has swept your ego into a state of total mismanagement of ego desires. You see what's going on, this is a clever ploy: using the Avatar's own work as the ultimate distraction. It's incredible."

After the snapshots, the remainder of the conversation is focused on a handful of points and subjects. These were either favourites of Don that he placed great importance upon such as his vow of honesty, the importance Baba placed on the balance of head and heart, and Meher Baba treatment of finances; or subjects and people that he wanted to straighten the record on his feelings toward, such as Ivy Duce and Sufism Reoriented, and his appreciation of Bhau Kalchuri. We also get a story of Don's take on Meher Baba's manifestation as conveyed to Don by Meher Baba. Although this is a short read, the visions and the points raised are rich with insights that bear repeated reflection, and that offer opportunities for meaningful integration into the life of the aspirant.

Richard and Cynthia Griffin

'Three Snapshots of Reality'

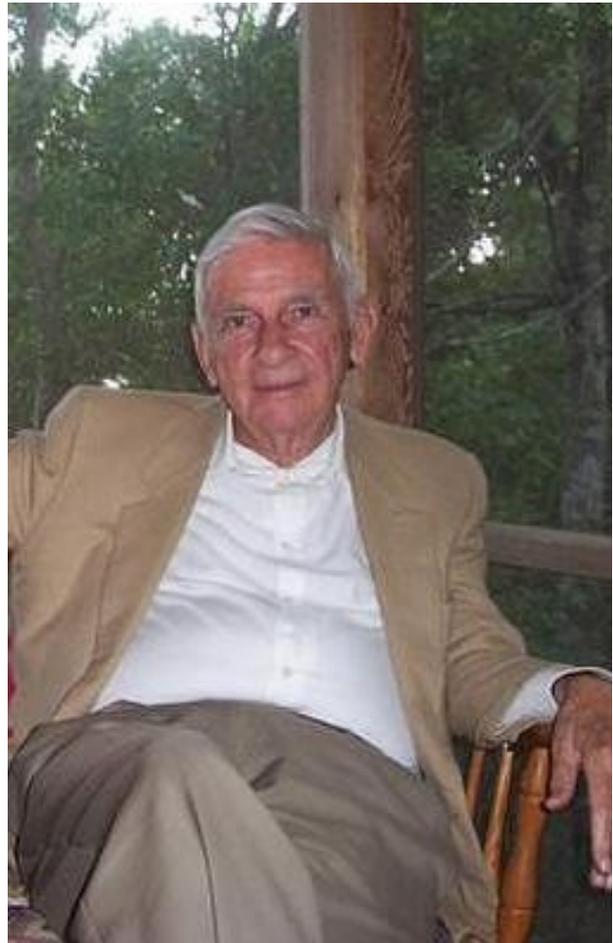
An introduction by Wayne Smith

Somewhere in the early summer of 2009 I had just completed the recording of an interview with Don Stevens, when he mentioned an idea that he was keen to discuss. It concerned the placing in the public domain of a book, one that would present some of those issues that had concerned Don over the years and which he, having just turned ninety, would be able to respond to while he was still with us. At that point I had already been interviewing Don for several years in relation to his biography, a project that was overseen by Laurent Weichberger (a companion of Don's from the US), and which involved several other people working on different themes and areas of Don's life.

I don't think when any of us started this undertaking that we realised just how vast the project would be and how long it would take, for Don's life had been so long and eventful; one in which he had known and made lasting friendships with countless people, both through his life in the oil business and in his spiritual endeavours as a practising Sufi and follower of Meher Baba. In 2009 the project had already been in process for the better part of a decade and it seemed likely that the better part of another would still be needed. It was for this reason, and the fact that Don was not becoming any younger, that he decided an initial volume of the biography should be put into the public domain as soon as possible. It was agreed that we would start the process later in the year, after the summer break.

The format and procedure for these interviews followed the same pattern that we had established over the several years I had been interviewing and recording Don for the biography. That is, they would take place at the 228 Hammersmith Grove flat where he stayed while he was in London and where I would meet him after travelling down from my home in the Welsh Marches the previous evening. Usually I would arrive at the flat on the morning of the Saturday, around 9 - 9.30 am, and spend anywhere between an hour and an hour-and-a-half interviewing Don, before other companions started to arrive for the meeting of the 'Saturday Group' to which we both belonged.

This always felt like a special, sacred kind of time for me: the two of us together; myself witnessing this ninety year old man opening up and moving back into a past and a life lived as richly and as deeply as perhaps any life could be. Don's ability to recount in exact detail moments and experiences was extraordinary, and on more than one occasion, whilst remembering people and places that had been especially dear to him,



he would be so moved that the recording had to be halted. You see Don had such a warm affection for so many people, both living and departed, that he was frequently overwhelmed by his memories and recollections of them.

When it came to the material for this new book (whose initial working title was ‘Volume 1’... ‘Volume 2’ being the Biography proper) the interviews felt more structured and formal than those I had previously been involved in, as if Don had a strict agenda and was perhaps aware that time was more pressing than it had been before. This surmise was confirmed for me after his death when Sevn McCauley (a close friend and travelling companion of Don’s in his later years) passed on to me a hand-written note on which Don had indeed scribbled down a list of the topics that he had wished to broach.

The first of these interviews took place on December 19th, 2009, and the last on September 25th, 2010, a month before Don suffered the fall in his Paris flat that would subsequently lead to his diminishing health and demise the following April. At the end of this final session Don hinted that one more might be necessary, but alas it was never to be and its subject matter remains a persistent mystery to this day. For when I tried to arrange another interview with Don on his return to London in January of 2011, he firmly but politely declined, his reason being that his limited energies could stretch only as far as being able to present and discuss some “recent intuitions” that he’d had while convalescing in France. Sadly this meeting would turn out to be the last occasion on which I would see Don alive in the body.

Back in 2009 arriving on that autumn morn, I already had preconceptions about some of the ‘sensitive issues’ that Don mentioned he might want to cover, for it was the case that he had alluded to several over the years that I had been working on his biography, and in my role as chairman of *Companion Books* (a publishing company that Don had founded). We also discussed some within the aforementioned ‘Saturday Group’ and during the editorial meetings for the *Neti Neti* Meher Baba newsletter in which we were both involved (alongside Renate Moritz, Jane Hoskin, Carol Pullen, Bruce Milburn and David Lee).

However I wasn’t expecting or had been prepared for what Don launched into straight away at that first interview: his account of some ‘visions’ he’d had which he eventually entitled ‘*the three snapshots of reality*’. I found this completely new territory. I had been used to Don in the past talking about people and places relating to the biography, but now I had to feel my way into responding and asking questions in a quite different manner, as Don painstakingly tried to put on record these very subjective experiences which quite clearly from the outset were of vital importance to him.

I must admit that at first I was quite guarded, for Don had always played down the role and importance of the visionary experiences that can occur on the spiritual path, especially those of the occult variety. He had also emphasised to us how important ‘truing’ intuitions within a trusted companion group should be, especially if they were to be placed in the public domain. However, as far as I know this process doesn’t seem to have been the case for what he labelled his ‘visions’. Saying that, there can be no doubt both the importance of these experiences for Don and how keen he was to have

them expressed and understood as correctly as possible - shown by the fact that he felt it necessary to keep coming back to in the three subsequent interviews that took place. It was as if the process of re-telling them was for Don a 'truing process' in itself.

The main reason for this, I think, is that it ultimately helped him to understand one of the main conundrums that had perplexed him almost from the very beginning of his spiritual life with Meher Baba: how some of those closest to the Avatar could have acted at times in ways that to Don seemed so un-spiritual. In short, it was the realisation that they too not only had sansakras (impressions) still left to work through, but knots of such perplexity that only the Avatar (the 'Master Mechanic' as he referred to him here) could deal with. However, that's not to say that these close ones were completely mired in a sanskaric-mess, for Don considered them only a gossamer veil or two away from Realisation itself and often he referred to them in ways that showed how spiritually aware they must have been. Also we shouldn't misunderstand Don's relationship with them: it was only because he loved and felt so close to these people, more than virtually anybody else he had known in his life that this issue hurt and perplexed him so much, right up till even his experience of the visions themselves.

Furthermore, my understanding from what Don gave, both in this interview and elsewhere, is that he also included himself as a person who had started this lifetime with such deep sanskaric knots that only the personal touch of the Avatar himself could loosen them. He had already mentioned on several public occasions the 'worry sanskara' that seems to have afflicted him greatly prior to his coming into Meher Baba's orbit. And mid-way down, on page four of these transcriptions, he alludes to past 'impulsions' and his own experience of the Avatar becoming involved in them.

On another note, I find it interesting that when I questioned Don about his description of the vision in 'snap one', he referred to the endlessly rolling landscape of the mid-Western prairies as being the "closest thing I ever saw to that." These images from his past may also feature to some degree or other in other of Don's writings, for example in his 'later intuitions' where he refers to, among other things, the "black skillet".

The rest of the interviews are taken up with themes and issues that Don has made many of us familiar with over the years, both in his writings and in the group meetings and seminars he participated in and led. Themes such as those relating to matters of honesty; the karma of finance; how we relate to our own bodies on the spiritual path; the relationship between head and heart; Don's experience of western Sufism and his thoughts on Meher Baba's 'manifestation'. The final interview concerns Don's relationship with a close follower of Baba's - Bhau Kalchuri - and its inclusion here will hopefully lay to rest any abiding questions about what Don calls the "so-called differences of opinion between Bhau and Don, which are apparently pretty notorious among Baba lovers."

The presentation of the interviews here in a transcription format is as Don suggested. I had asked him at some stage how he foresaw the book and about the process of writing them up and he said he thought that, with a little 'tidying-up', they could be presented "just as they are." Fortunately Don's conversational style lends to this: that is an ability, honed over a lifetime of seminars and meetings, to express

himself logically in a prose-like manner; quite often using fully formed sentences that are so well structured and grammatically correct that they require little or no editing to have them make sense on the printed page. It may also be that Don, being aware that this material was ultimately for the public record, answered my questions with this in mind right from the outset. This wouldn't surprise me; and in retrospect now I feel this probably to be the case.

In this process of tidying-up I have tried to remain as faithful as possible to what I feel Don would have wanted, while also appreciating that one of the original intentions of this publication was to create the opportunity for him to respond to any questions that the subject matter might have raised. I have also tried to retain and, hopefully, give a flavour of the actual interviews themselves. Where Don has paraphrased himself or others, I have used inverted commas for clarity of presentation. However, the reader needs to be reminded, particularly in respect of Meher Baba's words, that these are paraphrases and are not meant to represent the exact words of the person themselves. Where edits occur I have shown this by a series of five dots (.....). Furthermore, I have left in many of the breaks and interruptions which were an unavoidable aspect of interviewing Don at this time of day. For with the arrival of others, one-by-one, for the aforementioned group meeting, Don would politely ask them to wait in the adjoining bedroom if he had something important that he needed to finish. Or, if we had arrived at a natural conclusion and it was approaching the meeting time anyway, he would decide to break off for that session and expect things to be resumed on the next occasion, even if it was some months away. And on the occasions when Claude Longuet (a close friend of Don's) was also present in the flat, it wasn't uncommon for there to be a halt in proceedings whilst Claude raised some important question - usually of a culinary nature in relation to lunch - and typically with a distinct volume from one of the adjacent rooms.

And finally, although a lot of the material covered important and quite serious matters, there was always the opportunity for the lighter side to emerge when conversing with or interviewing Don. This sometimes arose from the least likely of topics and those who knew him well will have witnessed how his particular sense of humour could express itself at any time and from anywhere, within a range that extended from a wry smile and a witty aside, to a long drawn-out anecdote resulting in the slap of a knee and copious tears of laughter.

Mock Mango Chutney

From Jan Baker

The recipe comes from a very old cook book my grandmother gave me as a child.

Cook on top of the stove in a substantial, thick based pan - i.e. preserving pan.

Ingredients and method

1 1/2 pounds of sugar

3 pints of vinegar (*I just used common malt*)

Make into a syrup

Then add:

5 pounds of peeled, cored and sliced cooking apples

1 pound of chopped dates

2 ounces of raisins

2 ounces of currants

2 ounces of crushed garlic cloves



Boil the above until tender and then leave to become cold.

Then add:

2 ounces of chillies

½ pound of dried ground ginger

2 ounces of mustard seed

1 dessert spoon of ground cinnamon

3 bay leaves

4 ounces of salt

Slowly bring to the boil and simmer, stirring all the time, for 1/2 an hour.

Add more salt if required.

Allow to become cold before bottling.

Store for 6 months before eating. This is most important.

Then enjoy!!

In His love, Jan x

HEARTLAND WORKSHOP/ PILGRIMAGE

Arkansas-June 9-13,
2014

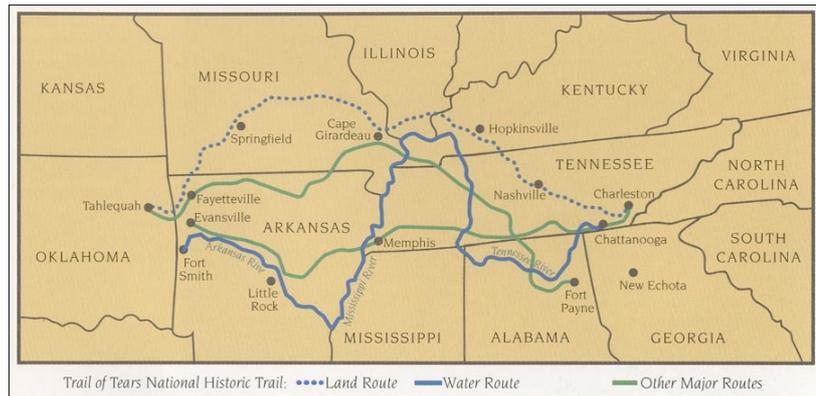
After the second Heartland Pilgrimage, led by Jill English and Kathryn Harris, the question arose as to whether this journey, covering the route taken by Meher Baba in 1952 resulting in his car accident in Prague, Oklahoma, the Native American Trail of Tears and the Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights movement in the early 60's, had a political element or intention. This question involved lengthy in-depth discussion between Jill, Kathy and the Beads Foundation, who had helped sponsor this journey, and if this was then an acceptable element that would resonate with the ethos of Beads, which although embraces all spiritual paths still wishes to remain true to the wishes of Meher Baba. For a more complete story of these pilgrimages it is worth looking on the Beads website. A beautiful book has also been put together by the 2013 Heartland Pilgrimage participants.*

Some notes below also give references to Baba's involvement with these two groups, Native and African Americans, whilst visiting the USA.

A workshop was proposed to delve deeper into these questions and to see how this pilgrimage could develop. Inviting representatives from the Cherokee Nation, African-American Freedom Riders, Meher Baba devotees and The Beads on One String Foundation to further explore these issues and look at ways forward toward connections, our common humanity and spiritual destiny. The workshop was an intense experience, beyond expectations.

Workshop participants at Trail of Tears Site, Little Rock

From left to right; Anisa, Jo Etta Person, Jill English, Jane Hoskin, Carol Bradley-Long, Lianna Costantino-Cardo, Cyndi Adreozzi, Lianna Costantino-Cardo, Charles Person. Photo-Marnie Frank (which is why she is not in the photo!)



Monday-Little Rock

We drive to the hotel in Little Rock to meet with our guests, locating everyone congregated in Charles and Jo Etta Person's room, warm greetings and an animated discussion is already in full flow, the workshop had begun.

Sitting on beds and floor, listening to Carol and Lianna telling how up until the 1970's Cherokee children were forced from their families, often by police arriving unannounced, to take the children to state boarding schools. The distress this caused is so painful, particularly poignant that the children were not allowed to speak their own language and did not understand what was being said as their hair was cut short, for the Cherokee this only happens when a close one dies, their obvious conclusion being not only have they been snatched away but everyone close to them is now dead!

This and other atrocities has left the Native Americans with devastating generational trauma which continues and is still apparent in their communities, with, amongst other things, serious social, addiction and health issue's unknown before these events. Carol now works with the Cherokee Healing and Wellness Coalition, involved in care for those with addiction problems and teaching of Cherokee traditions. Charles is telling his story too but I have to leave to find Marnie, luckily she has just arrived in time for dinner.

The meal is not great but we are all hungry and the company so good. Lianna and Carol let us each choose from an array of bead necklaces they made, Charles looks very fine in his of black and red, Jo Etta lovely in hers of white, blue and gold. There is happiness and warmth, I like these people.

Tuesday-Pilgrimage and Mt Ida

Rise and leave early, a long day ahead, the three cars pull out to make our way to the first pilgrimage site, Little Central Rock High School. A palpable energising of the atmosphere now familiar for those on Pilgrimage, the work had begun. The School is a rather magnificent and imposing building, surrounded by sloping lawns, a small lake and sweeping stairway.

Little Rock High School

We walk down with Charles, who now uses a walking frame because of injuries sustained from his involvement in the Civil Rights movement and also exposure to Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. We cluster round as he tells us the story of Daisy Bates, an early civil rights activist at the forefront of the ground breaking Little Rock Integration Crisis that took place here.

It was Daisy Bates who supported and enabled the very brave nine African-American students denied entrance to the school despite the High Court ruling, that segregation in schools was now unconstitutional.

On the morning of September 23, 1957 the students faced an angry mob of over 1,000 White Americans protesting integration in front of the school. As the students were escorted inside by the Little Rock Police, violence ensued and the children were at first removed. After several days of escalating protest and intimidation, President Eisenhower ordered the Federal Troops to escort the nine students into the school.



Charles spoke of the courage of these children, who although continually harassed and abused, went on to successfully complete their education here, true American heroes.

The Little Rock Nine with Daisy Bates -1957

It was immensely moving as Jill took Charles's hands to apologise for the long history of atrocities that had been committed against the African-Americans. Together we offered the Prayer of Repentance and Don's Prayer of Forgiveness; Charles knew the words by heart, Jo Etta spoke and prayed for the suffering, not only of the students but also of the perpetrators; 'They know not what they do'. Everyone is visibly very moved by this, tears from Charles and then us as a tidal wave of past hurt and guilt are released.

Lianna now tells us of a Hopi tradition of the four gifts and tasks given by the Creator to the four human races, which we have so far failed to fulfil, yet now have another chance. We faced the East, then South, West and North, each representing each race and its colour, to remember our responsibilities to each other and God, to honour these gifts and try again.

We all felt honoured and blessed to be here, somehow forgiven but now knowing God expects us to be determined to do better!

Is this what Don Stevens meant in his last intuitions, that 'God is fed up with temporary introduction periods...and look what it's led to – no way of getting out....' And time for a 'new discipline' of: 'Absolute Unity, Absolute Honesty, and Absolutely Unconditional'?

God and Don often feel present at this pilgrimage/workshop and I am struck by the thought that this school is not just a place of trauma but a very important and positive turning point in American history, where the spiritualization that Baba spoke of for America has and is taking place, it feels that a new point of spiritual power has been inaugurated and blessed.

We journey on to the north bank of the Arkansas River which runs through the city, here in the 1830's thousands of Native Americans died from starvation, exposure and cholera while waiting to cross this river in winter, during the forced relocation and

ethnic cleansing of the long and devastating 'Trail of Tears'.

There is a small park by the river with markers to remember these atrocities; they are sadly in a terrible condition, dirty and unkempt. We try to clean them with the bottles of spring water and tissues we have with us, this is very distressing and a sign that these people are still not receiving the recognition and atonement they deserve.



Marker for the Trail of Tears

Altogether a chilling place, walking along this wide red-brown river, following their path with our Cherokee friends, it rains again, and a wind is blowing. We stop, the sun has reappeared, we form a circle as Lianna offers prayers for her ancestors, burns sage, smudge us all to cleanse and heal this place. We leave as the rain comes down again, sobered by our experience; closeness is emerging for the group. Driving back through forest we finally arrive at Lake Ouichita, the sun is out again; all looks sparkling now, our lunch prepared.

The afternoon is spent around a large table; we share poems, stories and songs from our own traditions; Bob Marley's 'Redemption Song', wise and amusing Cherokee tales, Baba on 'Forgiving and Forgetting', 'A Celtic Blessing of Light', a Rumi poem.....

Wednesday-Freedom Riders Day; "Building Themes through Connection" Personal Stories

It is the Freedom Riders Day and Charles tells his story; whilst a student at college in Atlanta he joined the Human and Civil Rights movement, to challenge the non-enforcement of the Supreme Court decision that had banned racial discrimination in public places, the continuation of this, particularly in the South, even though deemed unconstitutional continued to be enforced by Jim Crow laws.

Charles became one of the first and youngest of the Freedom Riders, which also included white activists, and was trained in non-violent action to challenge this unlawful discrimination. Initially they took part in the sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, here they were met with insults, cigarette butts and threatened with meat cleavers. He spoke of his jail sentence, solitary confinement, then of the courageous but terrible experiences when riding segregated buses. Sitting in the front seats reserved only for whites to be viciously attacked by Ku Klux Klan members, unchallenged by police, resulting in serious head injuries from a metal bar that no hospital, not even black doctors, would treat. The result of this only finally removed quite recently. Charles has no bitterness, says this is now all in the past; it is time to move on. His mission now is to inspire young African American youths to take education opportunities seriously. He is distressed by their attitude of understandable but negative reaction to white privilege, by choosing to reject these opportunities and create counter cultures, often of crime and addiction.

This is a shocking story, although what is most apparent is Charles's calm dignity and resolve to still carry on working to help others who are still caught in the aftermath of this countries often cruel history. We take a silent break to reflect and process this and then continue with others now telling their own personal stories, all of these intimate accounts often remembering personal trauma, how each has worked through these painful experiences to forgive, not only the perpetrators, but also and importantly themselves. As trauma can be internalised as hurt, guilt, anger, a whole range of painful emotions that need to be processed. These experiences of suffering have led each toward a need for inner-work and reflection, to ask questions of human nature and

circumstance that can sometimes provoke us humans to inflict unkindness, cruelty and suffering on each other. We begin to realise that we all have this capacity, given the right/wrong circumstances-we all have a shadow side. With in this journey toward forgiveness, honesty, compassion, empathy and an awareness of human vulnerability is essential to keep both heart and mind open, to be able to use these experiences to move forward both creatively and spiritually.

Thursday-Cherokee day-“Developing Emerging Themes and Continuing Work Towards a 2015 Gathering”

We meet at the gazebo overlooking the lake; Lianna leads us in a Cherokee Healing ceremony. Now clear connections have been made, ideas shared, a common ground between us is forming. Humanity is at the heart of this endeavour, politics is not the focus here. Different groups, once divided, are exploring ways of working together toward a new way of being, is this possibly part of the spiritualization of America that Baba deemed essential for the emerging New Humanity?

We each offer five words that we feel are integral and essential as defining themes and intentions to shape this project, toward a much larger gathering being planned for next year that will bring more of us together to explore new ways toward this goal.

Over 45 words are written and put up on the walls, each one becoming essential to our emerging themes of forgiveness, connections, inclusivity and many more that will inspire and inform this gathering. From this emerges an ambitious but inspiring direction

The workshop appears to have been a resounding success, all feel an amazing sense of relief, curiously exhausted but energized, all at the same time.

Our last evening together is marked with a closing celebration and ceremony. We gather again at the gazebo as the sun begins to set over the lake, the full moon glowing as it rises in the East, the light sublime.

Lianna lights a sacred fire with all the different woods of the Cherokee clans, she tells us the tradition of this fire, lit only for important occasions, the ease or difficulty in the lighting will determine how the path will go. She struggles to get the tinder to light and has to work so hard striking and blowing.

Meanwhile Charles sings to us a traditional African-American Freedom Song, we sing with him, putting our hearts into this the fire briefly flickers, but as we then falter so does the fire. Lianna is not daunted, says she will not be defeated and nor must we. After many minutes she decides to use the matches, this is not failure but she feels could reflect the determination, ingenuity, resourcefulness that this project will need. It now flames wonderfully and becomes a dhuni for us all, one by one, to cast the small pieces of wood dipped in sandal wood oil into the fire with our inner prayers and thoughts for the coming year together.

After our last dinner we go out again into the dark to form a circle and pass a handful of salt from one to the other, trying not to spill a drop, telling the person next to us why they are worth their salt! Around the circle again we all shake hands, say thank you for our time together, embrace, dance and laugh, this is delightful; we are now a group of friends.

Friday morning we all leave for our own homes, this has been a remarkable few days; I am reluctant to leave these people in this beautiful place. The intimacy and warmth I will carry with me, the sadness is tempered by our commitments to each other and the project which unfolds.

Foot notes;

Baba always made a particular point, when meeting with African-Americans, by rising to embrace them.

At a dinner party in Greenwich Village, 1932, given in Baba's honour several black people came, and one woman asked Baba- 'if he would help the people of her race, to which he replied "I will" (Lord Meher p.1416)

Another passage that also has particular relevance to the Heartland pilgrimages and workshop;

"A few months before Baba arrived in America, 1956, the United States Supreme Court held the segregation laws invalid. Legislation protecting the Negro's right to vote was also passed and, in general, the struggle for African American rights began gathering force. Baba seemed keenly interested in the subject. Darwin described to him how Blacks were showing a new militancy in their battle for civil rights and social justice. The year before they had begun boycotting public buses because the bus lines were segregated.

It was also on this particular visit that when just after landing in Wilmington, North Carolina, Baba asked to use the 'men's room'; 'These were the days of segregated facilities in the South,and Otto went to the one with a sign which read WHITE. Baba went in but soon came out, saw the bathroom labelled COLORED, and went in there to urinate.' (LM p1956)

This happened on a number of occasions when Baba was in America.

Baba had a significant meeting with a Native American when his train stopped at Albuquerque in 1934, of this encounter Baba remarked;

"He is one of my agents. He is the direct agent in charge of America.' Baba later explained that he was an agent of the fourth plane-one of four in the world with subtle powers." (LM p-1656)

*Beads-On-One-String Heartland Pilgrimage 2013- Paperback- ISBN-10: 0692024867; ISBN-13: 978-0692024867 is available from Amazon

Heartland Workshop-A Personal Experience

Jill English

My personal experience of the Heartland mini pilgrimage and workshop is really a strength and resolve that stems from a culmination of past kaleidoscopic feelings and intuitions, sometimes terribly dark and sad, and sometimes breathtakingly blissful, which now spans over three years of work on two other Heartland pilgrimages. In the beginning I experienced Don's spirit prodding me to do certain things, especially to pay attention to my own intuitions without second guessing. Much of the time I could tangibly feel his presence over my right shoulder. I came to take great comfort in his presence and to really depend on it. But it disappeared somewhere along the way..... I don't know when.....darn it. But I'm pretty sure it is because I'm supposed to stand on my own two feet now. I've been through the boot camp.

Since 2011 I have had very intimate interactions with practicalities, tiny details, 'the big picture', justifications, being understood and supported, not being understood or particularly supported, and other great frustrations, some of which were my own doing; all of them adding up to uncountable agonies and ecstasies. Often times the work of the in depth research of Baba's own 1952 path on The Trail of Tears and Freedom Riders routes took me into long periods of deep grief, anger, depression and shame to be a white American, due to the unending physical and psychological cruelties our ancestors and relatives imposed upon our indigenous and forced stolen labour cultures. Baba's Prayer of Repentance & Don's Prayer of Forgiveness were included in my response. I just thought you might enjoy this little excerpt from my response since it went more or less public anyway. It may give you just a taste of the kind of success that we had.

We visited the Civil Rights site first. I handed out the prayers to each participant. Charles Person, the youngest Freedom Rider who is now 71 was the Freedom Rider present and the one whom I directly offered an apology to before beginning the prayers. Together the group said both prayers to him. And do you know what he did? This is so deeply touching to me. When I looked up to him from my paper he was looking directly into my eyes with tears in his saying both of those prayers back to me FROM MEMORY!! He had memorized both of those prayers! He shamed us (the Baba lovers) really. At least that is how I felt. None of us had these memorized. But be that as it may, the impact of those prayers on him was life changing. AND, without proselytizing, because that was an unspoken rule within the Baba lovers present (not that we couldn't talk about Baba appropriately by now), Charles and his wife and the Cherokee present became interested in Baba. Charles and Jo Etta even willingly took home one volume of the Discourses and all took the pamphlet with Baba's Universal Message, The Seven Realities, How to Love God and the blurb about Avatar Meher Baba on it too! Anyway Don's prayer certainly has its very own place in history now. It is so heartfelt and still so close to his actual presence that it seems to carry its own real charge.....like attaching the hose to the spiritual fire hydrant from Don's intuition.

However, through it all I also had a profound knowing that Baba was showing me this was my work and my purpose, my own edification through service. It sought me. The foundation for what we, the chosen crew, will build upon was hard won. And there are miles to go. But that's Baba for ya. The dhuni fire didn't light easily either. Now that we did it we must steward its fuel with thoughtful love and tenderness. How lucky are we?!

For me this workshop and gathering was the validation of my efforts. Not that I'm claiming to have done it all alone in totality.....not at all. But I do feel a kind of motherly ownership because of the connection with the history of its creation. However, I am also clear that I am just a wand being flung around in the Hand of the Conductor of this orchestra. But seeing this really incredible core group of believers, facilitators, idealists and true workers of unity, that hold a united vision with each other, the sacred other, is beyond my ability with words. The Creator's finger did this, put US together at this time and place. There is a reason.....there's always a reason.

Heartland Gathering

Carol Bradley-Long

It is a great honor for me to be a part of the Heartland Gathering at Mt. Ida, Arkansas. The location was perfect for a working and healing gathering such as the one we had. The make up of the group was a work of art with carefully chosen representatives from different groups.

It was great to have the opportunity for each person to share their stories in a safe place where our feelings are so respected. It is a tool for us all to get to really know each other and do some healing work of our own.

Future work is quite evident from our discussions on where to focus. My question would be can we focus on present situations where education could possibly prevent future acts of racism, or do we keep on the path of honouring past efforts and praying that the same mistakes will not be made. What ever the group decides to do is ok with me.

In reflection to everything, the only change that I would have liked to see, would be that we be more aware of the physical limitations of our brother and bring meals to the meeting room or even the gazebo.

From Charles Person;

The opportunity to network with a wonderful group of people was an enlightened experience. I was amazed at all we accomplished.

The pilgrimage to Little Rock Central High School and the stops along the river and points along the Trail of Tears are milestones in my career.

The impromptu gathering before dinner and during dinner was wonderful and started the bonding process. The trip to Mount Ida was long but refreshing. The facilities were rustic and adequate. The meals were excellent and the food was wonderfully prepared.

The meetings were conducted and facilitated fairly and efficiently. The group is talented and knowledgeable. It was a pleasure to dialogue and discuss a demanding agenda.

The Centre for Civil and Human Rights had its grand opening on the twenty-third of this month and I was able to share some of what we discussed with the Atlanta Freedom Riders. Most are interested in learning more about our group and are willing to participate.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay on Mount Ida; I only wish we could have more down time.

An amazing turn of forgiveness.

Renate Moritz

Jill's report of the Heartland workshop tells, amongst various details, the happening of her asking for forgiveness for the dysfunctional white American ancestors, who piled such pain and injury on the black Americans and the Cherokee tribes.

The Beads group considered and had mulled over the implication of this workshop and decided that the whole emphasis of the workshop should not be based on the issues of injury and perpetrator, meaning division, but on togetherness and exchange of cultural creativity, poetry, music, dance.

Jill however knew and felt, that the inherent reason, why these two groups agreed to meet with her, was not a cultural exchange, but about facing a moment and place, where traumatic memories, carried from one generation to the next, could be somehow met and the possibility of finding access to the forgiving would happen, to ease the burden and might of these imprints.

This was a total experiment for all participants. The journey to the places of actual historic incidents regarding the Freedom Rider and Cherokee group was well prepared; the program envisaged an address by Jill at a school, a place filled with injustices towards the black community, followed by two prayers. Namely Baba's prayer of repentance and Don's prayer of forgiveness. Both prayers had been printed out and been given to all participants sometime before the event.

Jill made her address and then prepared to read first Baba's prayer and then Don's prayer. Doing this she noticed Charles, the 71 year old Freedom Rider, who had survived the head injuries caused by the beatings with a metal pipe by the Ku Klux Klan, whom the police had given ample time to act, when he was eighteen, looking at her straight into the eye. And then he prayed with Jill, tears in his eyes, the repentance prayer and then the forgiveness prayer - by heart.

I was overcome when I first heard this. How could that happen? I had never thought of such a response. And what did actually happen???

Could it be that Charles' response lifted the entire process out of the context of cause and effect, which always preserves and upholds sanskaric repetition??

By entering into the two prayers, I feel, he placed the memories within and at that moment the figure of 'the perpetrator and the victim' falls indeed away....

WOW - may be we never knew this, nor expected it, but were intuitive enough to allow for it.....

More reports and responses to the Heartland Workshop and other Beads information and news can be found on The Beads on One String Website <http://www.beadsononestring.org/>

Meher Baba and Beryl Williams

Whilst researching Meher Baba's involvement with African-Americans for the Heartland Workshop, I came across this letter Beryl Williams wrote on May 12, 1956 inviting the Dr Martin Luther King for Meher Baba's darshan, first published in Glow magazine. It is not known if Reverend King responded.

Beryl met Baba on several occasions, first in New York in 1952 and later in 1956 with her sister

Bernice and her son Carlton. Beryl and Bernice became devoted to Baba. -JH



Letter from Beryl to Dr. Martin Luther King

Dear Rev. & Mrs. King,

This brings to both of you, your able associates and each member of the congregations of souls in Montgomery, deep Love and Blessings from Meher Baba.

The accompanying biographical sketch and photos will tell you more about Him than I can include in the brevity of this letter; but, He is widely recognized in the East (India being His birthplace), and by an increasingly large number of people all over the world as the Avatar (Saviour) of the Age. The one who emanates the rare quality of Divine Love and who by his Presence and Spiritual working in the world, enables the Humanity of the present day to imbibe It and progress more rapidly in the awareness of itself as soul and realize the Spiritual Emancipation and Freedom, which is and ever has been the birth-right of every soul born on Earth into a human body (regardless of the sex, shape, color or size of that body).

It is out of a profound respect for your inherent wisdom and sensitivity to the human plight and your determined efforts to serve the cause of Truth with spiritual weapons that I and many others take our hats off to you. Yet, I can never be content merely to cheer you (even though sincerely). Only one who loves God deeply, can have the courage to declare in the face of such tremendous odds and before God and the whole world that His Truth is worth living for and worth dying for — this Truth that we are all One — and for you there is no other way but to live it. For me, your work derives spiritual significance from the fact that many other God-lovers like yourselves, are cooperating today in living and serving (each in his/her own way) their various roles in the larger task of which yours seems to be part and parcel, in order that human consciousness may be prepared to receive a fresh Dispensation of Light from above and reshape the conditions of human life

into a more perfect harmony for the furtherance of the Divine Plan for the Earth. Perhaps we may not ever meet personally in this life; still, I bow in recognition of yourselves and your associates as kindred souls who are making their own contributions to this glorious venture. In the spirit of sharing the treasures of lasting value I send this priceless contribution to your cause, and by the Grace of God it then will abide in your own and many other deeply receptive hearts. It is in this faith, I greet you all.

Dear Rev. and you Mrs. King, Because I simply cannot regard you and the many dear ones of whom you are leaders as merely a group of Negro People engaged in a struggle only for social and economic equality in a society dedicated to the denial of it and determinedly opposed to it, I've felt you would welcome the information enclosed with this letter. It is intended to be a very brief introduction to a very vast subject as well as an invitation to a feast of Love — which will take place in America, in July of this year. In the course of a life-time comparatively few have the good fortune to attend it personally, not being aware of it for the most part and because it is only those who in the secret of their own souls can recognize its worth, who feel impelled to simply make the most of it.

I've also sent this same information to Rev. Abernathy and having had a card with your address, I want to send you this personal invitation.

Meher Baba will once again make one of His infrequent trips to the West, arriving in New York about July 20, where he will spend 4 days then go onto Myrtle Beach, S.C. for 5 days and lastly fly over to Calif. 17 days for the whole visit. In the course of this itinerary, He will see all those who have been in one way or another drawn to Him, including some who have been waiting very patiently for many years for this personal contact and all who want to meet Him. It is in full confidence of its truth that I say to you, "He understands completely the complex significance of all our human struggles and endeavours, our aspirations and our aims — including the immediate and ultimate meaning of the struggle in which you and all are presently engaged — and is fully capable of rendering undreamed of Spiritual help towards its successful completion. True, it follows naturally, the recipient if such help needs on his part a willingness to receive it, if it is to have the intended result. In Meher Baba one finds a true friend, a constant companion who by the stimulating power of His Presence, enables the individual so aware of Him to untangle all the knotty problems of his/her life, and in so doing, progressively uncover and discover for him or herself the real meaning of existence and the hidden purpose of human life in a physical body. In knowing Him, one also knows truly that the Divine guidance does surmount every limitation imposed by time and space.

Of course, it is possible to only indicate to another what a personal meeting and interview with this Being — whom we affectionately call "Baba" —

could mean to any one — the actual occurrence is the only way of knowing each for him/her self; since it is a spiritual experience and much more than a mere belief. Many acknowledge it as the most precious Gift, of all Life's precious gifts and the heart can embrace it as its full compensation for the sorry state of affairs in our world of today, which on all sides would appear to make a mockery of and contradict Man's age-old awareness of himself as Soul (an eternal portion of Divinity) also that human birth entitles and enables this soul to realize its noble aspiration of finding and experiencing Itself through the various conditions of Life. But, God (truth) is not mocked! To meet One to whom and in whom that is not merely an inarticulate aspiration, but, an accomplished fact; a Self-evident Truth, is to add significance to one's own life and gives meaning to one's Religion. Baba, His life and work with the various types of Humanity makes us know our own latent possibilities and even though we become more keenly aware of the numerous obstacles to their fulfilment in the individual as well as in the collectivity, He, out of Infinite Mercy and Compassion does provide the means of our transcending every barrier that hides the Truth (Reality) from our conscious experience.

As you are a Christian minister I'm happy that it is not necessary for me to go into lengthy discussion of Christ's beautiful invitation to all who would know that Soul is Eternal Existence, to ". . . take up the cross and follow me. . ." as you and so many others are actually doing and because it was the living God (Christ in human form) who of necessity had to become the "Way, the Truth and the Light", it follows that the human being of the present day has the same need of a Divine Guide in human form, if he is to come into his inheritance of the Kingdom Within. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the Supreme Intelligence makes the provision in every Age throughout the long history of human life on Earth and the Supreme Soul (God) becomes man in every Age for the redemption of humanity; eternally groping and struggling to experience Light and Truth, yet, how few make it a point to discover the deeper secrets of Life by their own personal and conscious experience — while they can.

When we once have tasted of this Pure Love of God, we begin to see and understand more clearly what motivates all human endeavour and aspiration in the various spheres of our existence on Earth and ascertain that the heart of mankind can never be satisfied with anything less than its own perfect fulfilment which Divine Love alone can satisfy. To know that the thing really exists not only in the glowing descriptions of spiritual writings in which in we may or may not have faith, but, which our own hearts can verify and come into communication and Divine communion with, is to see the justification of all the great religions of the world. You ministers of the Gospel who have contributed so much towards keeping the lamp of faith and love burning in the human heart (amidst the attitude of cynicism and cold, stark indifference to the finer aspects of man's spiritual nature and the primary need of his being

to experience and express the soul that he is) do have great cause for rejoicing today with utmost confidence in yourselves and your work; for, no one can serve God in vain. His Law is that by such service we can ever move closer to the realization of our Oneness with Him. I could not refrain then from yielding to this deep urge to share with you dear ones in Montgomery this guarded secret of many lives and hearts — "We are not alone!" Because you have every right to know that he is in incarnation in our lifetime, just as surely as He has been in the past, it would be betraying a sacred trust not to share the information with you lovers and worshippers of Truth.

Christ in His incarnation as Jesus declared, "Lo, I am with you always; even unto the end of the world:" Certainly, our faith in His Word has to become knowledge by experience of its eternal Truth. We are learning today that the concrete experience of the "Word made Flesh" was never intended by Him to be an event in the lives of a certain few of His children who happened to lived at a particular time in human history, while the rest of us could only have the dubious consolation of yearning for His Love to embrace us from the cradle to the grave. It is in the nature of love to respond to love, even in our everyday human experience; so, Rev. and Mrs. King, who would deny to the Supreme Being who is Perfect Love Itself, the power of a recurrent Advent and manifestation of Divine Love in His own Universe, in response to the ceaseless cry of the human soul in spiritual bondage and which after all is His own self? If Divine Love could clothe Itself in human form once, in order to lead man out of the impasse of false consciousness, it is not a preposterous assumption on man's part to ascribe to All-Power and All-Mercy, the power to assume human form for the sake of all His human selves of every Age.

I don't know what your personal views on this aspect of Truth are, or how deeply you have delved into the recorded Spiritual Lore of Human history, but, somehow I feel you are well aware of all this and so I do not hesitate to speak frankly; your wisdom and the strength of character expressed in handling this task assigned to you, is not the way in which someone insensitive to spiritual Truth would handle it. So, since we are indeed members of one vast family, living for a supremely noble purpose, your work is no less than a part of the Great Drama that is (silently) being enacted on the wider stage of the world today; all who work for the betterment of mankind and the eradication of the human ignorance concerning each human soul as an eternal portion of the Supreme Soul (God), are working for the highest good — and in the nature of things — the love you're all employing is the very thing which will draw to your aid Divine Love. When we through love form an alliance with the Power that created and sustains the Universe, we can rest assured that we can never have loved in vain; for it is the means by which mankind is won back to the God Of Love.

This then is not an invitation for you to join a new organization or accept a foreign creed, nor abandon your Religion of love in Christ, certainly it is not

everyone's good fortune to meet a Being of Meher Baba's Spiritual Greatness in person: One who just by His Presence is able to impart to those who come to Him as much of the sublime awareness of the Soul as each is capable of absorbing, so that the soul knows once and for all its own worth in the sight of God. To Him it is unimportant what we take Him to be, it is quite sufficient if we have love through the interplay of love with Divine Love working through the fabric of our lives, our humanity is gradually transformed into Divinity. Then God is known to be our Self and the Real Self of all. All this becomes quite intelligible if we study the lives of the Avatars (Saviours) of the past i.e. Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed etc; not to mention all that has been written about and saints and Perfect Masters of our own day: No, our Age is no exception in God's Plan for His Creation!

Perhaps you would want to give all this adequate reflection and consideration, though I'm well aware that many people on hearing about Meher Baba are able to perceive as most natural, the fact that Christ walks the Earth a man among mankind today just as He did in Ages past: Their hearts have always known it intuitively, so, to them it is but a final confirmation. I wouldn't be surprised if you are among these enlightened men and women, or potentially so. If you should feel this to be of value to you and yours and wish to have further information as to time and places for the interviews, then, do write that I may send you all the particulars. Then you and all who are able to can make full use of a golden opportunity.

You will find in this sacred assembly, true brothers in God — of every race, nationality and religion — who out of a profound love for God, have offered their lives in their entirety on the altar of His selfless service. They have no time to waste in superficial considerations of sect, class and the racial distinctions between one member of the human race and another since the object of their lives is to love and serve the One God who resides in us all. They understand humanity to be the living flower garden of Divinity, each by his very being contributing in a unique way to the perfect blending of the whole, so, every one has his place and his importance equally in the eyes of God. These noble souls, by the life they lead confirm man's dreams of brotherhood as a living breathing truth, which all can and will experience: In spite of all that those misguided by appearances may say or do in the desperate struggle to maintain the edifice of self-created horror in which they attempt to engage their own soul. Eternal Truth has again decreed a New Dawn and is making all the necessary preparations for what will be. Therefore, the gate is open to all who are ready to be not only witnesses, but intimate participants in the era of light, Love and Truth, that is rolling back the clouds of darkness of a dying Age. Those like yourselves who have found that darkness intolerable and are playing an active role in its dissipation should be able to take the Name of our Beloved Jesus with a new fervour:

The certainty that God does answer prayer, in Person should bring to your steadfast hearts a new treasure to foster and cherish.

It won't be long, dear ones before each one finds himself/herself a conscious part of this Mighty, Infinite Ocean of Love, that is once again spreading Itself over the face of the Earth, easing the hearts of men in order to erase completely from his memory, eventually, the lie of separateness, difference, hatred and fear including all that is based upon it. Love will restore to each soul its own forgotten Unity of Being, ones only credentials for admittance into its ever widening embrace is his or her love for God. In that love lies our guarantee of participation in the New Dispensation of Divine Love.

Yours in His Love and service,
Beryl Williams