

Booklet

October - December, 1996



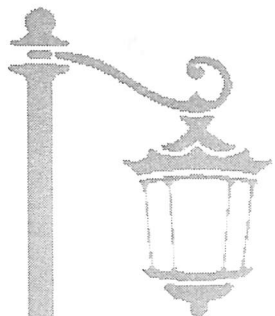
Love Street Lamp Post



Mani Sheriar Irani

December 15, 1918 – August 19, 1996





A publication of the Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California

Love Street LampPost

welcome

The *Love Street LampPost* is dedicated with love to Avatar Meher Baba. Its primary purpose is to contribute to a sense of community among all His lovers by providing a place for sharing His remembrance. All the members of the Baba family are invited to contribute to this feast of Love.

Your stories, photos, art work, poetry, letters, articles, and humor are all actively solicited. We seek expressions of Baba's message of Love & Truth.

Please submit your text on computer disks if possible (in any software format); typewritten copy on white paper is also acceptable. Be sure to clearly identify all submissions and credit every quote or reference.

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Mani S. Irani

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Editors' Page

From Dina Snow:

Welcome to this issue of the *Love Street LampPost*, devoted to God's beloved little sister, best friend to all who knew her, Mani S. Irani. Thanks mostly to the power of the Internet, we were able to put out worldwide our intention to dedicate this issue to her. We asked you to send in your stories, your memories, and your photos, (and your money!), and you responded magnificently. The results you see before you. The beauty of this issue comes from Mani and the inspiration she gives to us all. The *technical* beauty comes from the new co-editor, David McNeely. The design and layout are all his, and his input has been invaluable in assembling this sweetest of October issues. From the bottom of my heart, David, welcome aboard!

To lessen any confusion that may arise, David insists that I should inform you of my decision to drop the Franklin in my name and return to my maiden name of Snow. (Not to be confused with my well-known mother, Diana Snow.)

Another McNeely nugget was the new name for our bookstore. It had always been casually called the Baba Bookstore, but Mani has told us that for official names, especially in print, we should always write Avatar Meher Baba, not just the personal "Baba." Since we will soon be on the World Wide Web, we felt a more eye-catching title for the general public—and one that has special meaning for us—would be The Love Street Bookstore. Our publishing arm will likewise be called The Love Street Press.

We had many ideas on how to improve your magazine, and this issue had just about been put together when we received word of Mani's passing. In order to make

Letter to the LampPost

In response to the feature on Prayers in our last issue, we received the following:

We hear wonderful stories about the Prayers these days, like the one of the priest in a dirt-poor parish in Kingstown, Jamaica whose parishioners recite the *Master's Prayer* in Mass everyday! Or of the people in a drug and alcohol abuse program in Chicago who, writes a Baba lover who works with them, are very drawn to His *Prayer of Repentance* and have asked for copies. Another letter from an elderly lady in England tells of her sending both prayers (The *Master's Prayer* and the *Prayer of Repentance*) to a vicar whose Christmas Eve sermon she had enjoyed on the radio. The vicar wrote her he was so impressed by these Prayers that, besides sharing them with his congregation, he had sent them on to his Bishop, who was also very moved by them.

Guess it's the season for prayers!

From Mani,
by hand of Heather Nadel

room for many of the expressions of love that we have received, we have moved several items forward to the January '97 issue.

Baba and Mani have worked their magic on many people. There are so many people to thank for making this issue possible, but there are a few to whom I would like to give special

mention.

When I asked Seda, a printer, how much she would charge to do the color pages, the price she quoted was half what another printer would have done. When I told her she would lose money on the job, she said firmly, "If what you tell me is true [about Baba], then I will not lose!" Can't argue with that.

Soledad and Teresa, the girls who work Seda's computers, scanners, color separators etc., both worked many long hours, completely free of charge. To these three ladies, we say a very big Thank You!

To Vesta Clinton of Santa Barbara, who told us "Yes we could!" do a color issue, "We will get donations"—and then proceeded to raise almost \$1000 from many hours on the phone, we say a big Thank You!

To all of you who have contributed, *Jai Baba* to your love for the Godman and his dearest little sister.

From David McNeely:

What a blessing it has been to be able to offer my efforts in the service of honouring Mani. I have only thanks to give, and I know I speak for Dina here as well:

To Heather Nadel and Meheru: we are a family because you make us feel like one, sharing the big news and the little details which are so important to us, and most especially for revealing to us the depth of your love for Mani.

To all of you who have been so generous in your sharing. The pages herein are a hot bonfire of love for Mani and Meher Baba, and it is



Announcements

because you have contributed kindling and firewood from the hearths of your truest homes. Let the reader come in, shed overcoat and sweater, and be exposed to a glow which penetrates the soul!

To all who have contributed photographs. Look at these closely. I have discovered in working with them, in magnifying them, nudging them one pica at a time...they afford a very direct link to Love. A special thanks to John Page, who provided with gracious enthusiasm many of the color photos.

To Vesta Clinton, and all of you who have contributed the dollars which made it possible to have color pages in special honor of Mani. The excitement with which you shared your vision inspired us to lift our own sights of what this issue might be.

To Diana Goodheart, for reading everything carefully, word by word—for embracing the labor of it; also for your council in defining the role of *editor* in a Baba community.

To Dina Snow, for welcoming me as a comrade in marching with Baba banner held high! Also for your incredible energy, which initiated the momentum for this grand endeavor. You have done this so well for so long—I had no clue how many hours you devote to it.

Gratitude most of all to Beloved Baba, for allowing me to act in this role. Being mailbox and scribe for all that has been offered for this issue has felt like sitting on the threshold of Your samadhi, and being greeted by each pilgrim after they have just taken Your darshan. It has been no less than a Sahavas with You, my Beloved.

Pilgrim Office Announces New E-mail Address

Ahmednagar, India

Last year we initiated the use of e-mail for requesting Pilgrim Centre reservations. This service has been very successful and we invite Baba pilgrims to use this quick mode of communication with us.

Sprintmail (our e-mail service) recently announced a change of format; please use the following address to contact us (type without breaks or return):

pimco.office@ambppct.sprintrpg.ems.vsnl.net.in

When e-mailing us, please remember the following:

1. We incur long-distance phone charges as well as service fees for both incoming and outgoing messages. We will ask you to reimburse the Pilgrim Reservation Office for these costs.
2. This service is for Pilgrim Reservations business. Please do not use it for personal messages to Baba lovers here. And please don't expect to use it for personal business when you come to India; we just don't have the time or facilities to provide this service.
3. Because of occasional delays within the sprintmail system, messages sometimes take a few days both coming and going. Also, due to time constraints or power/phone outages, we may not be able to immediately answer your e-mail, but will do so just as soon as possible. So, do not expect to receive a reply as quickly as you are used to in your other e-mail communications.

4. Please include your snail-mail address as part of the initial communication, so we may update our records, as well as communicate that way if necessary. Also, please put the date of sending in the text portion of the message.

Thank you. Jai Baba!

In His Love and Service,
Pat, Irene, and Meredith at PIMCO

About the cover

This photo was taken in August of 1990 by Georgeann Erskine, of Malibu California. When she returned home and saw how beautifully the photo had turned out, she sent it to Heather Nadel. Heather immediately wrote back, saying Mani took one look at the photo, commandeered it, and asked for ten more for her family! Mani later wrote to Georgeann, saying, "This photo is a 'rare species', as your camera has caught me 'on the wing' as it were..."

We have learned since printing the cover that Mani herself would use two forms of her name: Manija Sheriar Irani, or Mani S. Irani. She would not have referred to herself as Mani Sheriar Irani. This experience reminds us of Mani's comment to one of the editors that every Baba book contains some flaw, however small, but the purpose of that work still prevails. We believe Mani would feel that what prevails in this issue is our love for her.



Bombay name changed

Where will your plane land if the ticket says Bombay? We have been advised that if you address an envelope to a friend in Bombay they will never get it. You must, instead, write *Mumbai*.

Holiday Inn arrives in Pune

David Fenster of Meherabad tells us that Holiday Inn now has a brand new five-star hotel in Pune. Their brochure features beautiful rooms and grounds and says on the cover "Now in Pune: International Hospitality that is truly State-of-the-Heart!" Inside, it continues "Wonderful climate, sprawling greens, great people, seat of the arts, exciting business opportunities, yet a touch of Old World charm. There is no dearth of reasons why you should be in Pune." They only missed one thing: birthplace of the Avatar!

A Favorite Alternative

For those of you who are happy with less luxury and *much* less damage to your wallet, you will be very warmly received by the extremely gracious and loving Ramakrishnan—the soft-spoken person whom Baba asked to start and run the Avatar Meher Baba Center in Pune. You will be awakened each morning by the sounds of arti being sung in the Main Hall, immediately adjacent to the sleeping quarters. Accommodation is spartan, but fresh clean linen and hot showers are available. The cost is a donation to the Center, whatever your heart moves you to give.

The address is 441/1 Somwar Peth
Pune 411 011 Phone 011 91 212-7846

Art

Debra Ashé's art exhibit, *Love*

Warrior, can be seen through October at Tommy Tangs restaurant, 7313 Melrose Ave. This exhibit is well worth the visit, featuring some 30-odd pieces illustrating Debra's wonderful creative artistry. Treat yourself to an outing. Feed your eyes and your stomach too.

Charlie Morton Weds!

Beyond imagination and conception? That's what some thought when



Charlie and Ana Maria

they heard that Charlie Morton had married Ana Maria Donahue on August 7, 1996 in a private ceremony, but some of us figured it was inevitable after watching Anna ride in Charlie's VW bus without embarrassment and tirelessly assist Charlie in video-taping the Sahavas. It was only a matter of time and we couldn't be happier for them. Congratulations!

Welcome to the married life

Congratulations to the two daughters of John Page and Judy Stephens

on their summer marriages—Mehera on May 31st in Claremont, California, and Rabia on June 16th on Long Island, New York.

Meherana Update

Meherana has been granted its zoning permit and is now working toward a conditional use permit. If you are going to Yosemite or Mariposa, you might attend a dhuni (on the 12th of every month) or a Saturday night meeting. All are welcome.

Live on top of the world!

Walk where Meher Baba has walked, high above beautiful Ojai. If you like to make people feel welcome and you also possess handy-person or gardening skills, the position of caretaker for Meher Mount, a universal center dedicated to Meher Baba, may be for you! Couples are also invited to apply. If interested, please send a letter with a description of your background to Gigi Driessen, 6230 Poppy Peak Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90042.

God Speaks in Farsi

The collection of donations for the publishing of *God Speaks* in the Farsi language continues apace. We are almost at the projected cost of \$8000. It is such an expensive venture because of all the color enclosures the original book has. We want the quality of this book to be every bit as good as the original published by Sufism Reoriented. Los Angeles has the largest population of Farsi/Iranian people in the country, and our Farsi language meetings are very well attended. Many of these people can't speak English, and the need for Baba literature in their native tongue is quite urgent. All donations can be sent to the Center, earmarked for the *God Speaks Farsi Project*.



News from Around the World

Note: the following article was intended for the last issue. We apologize to Eric for the delay in publishing this lovely birthday story! —ed.

Eric Solibakke
Oslo, Norway

Meher Baba's Birthday Celebration in Oslo

The children arrived early. Their eyes stretched to take in the huge spread of birthday goodies laid out on the dining room table expanded to include all its leaves. Everything from sprouted chick peas to potato chips and plenty of cakes and sweets could be seen there. The rules were *no* rules, so they got right to work on the celebration.

The PAL format version of *Eternal Beloved* had become available in England just in time to reach us for the Beloved's birthday gathering, and for 40 minutes the twelve adults sat immobilized on chairs in higgledy-piggledy rows in front of the TV monitor while Baba baby-sat the children all over the house. We were aware of a few mysterious thumps and bumps, and every now and then one or another child checked in to see if we were okay. At those moments, we'd hear a giggly "There's Baba..." from Julian-Sheriar (2 years 3 months) as he pointed with delight at the screen.

After the video we basked in the atmosphere the Beloved had created for us. Nobody wanted to puncture that beautiful balloon of bliss surrounding us. I said a few words in appreciation of the video, and Hilary

Michiels took up the thread with lively praise. She is the only one here who has actually embraced the Beloved in His physical form, and she has a special aura and place among us because of that. Of the many videos we have shown here, this is the first to catch the Beloved's spirit as she knows it. Speaking with great conviction and love, she spoke of the supreme importance of *God Speaks* and treated us to a vigorous elucidation of several points which she considers essential to an appreciation of Meher Baba's advent as the Avatar.

Ose Melsom then pulled from her pocket a newly-arrived letter from Bal Natu, which I read aloud. He encouraged us to accept the Beloved's will in the matter of publishing the Norwegian translation of his *Conversations*. Four publishers have turned it down so far and we begin to wonder if He wants it to come out at this time. Bal Natu repeated again one of the Beloved's sweetest lines: "Do your best and leave to Me the rest!"

A few minutes later the core of this group gravitated upstairs to the Baba room where we gathered quietly to view the great treasure sent by Mani last year, a sadra worn by the Beloved. The atmosphere became rarefied and purified as I unwrapped it. All fell into deep stillness and time ended for a period as the room filled with an aroma which eventually everybody noticed. Having just seen the video where Mani and Dr. Goher describe how they would bury their faces in the Beloved's sadra, the desire to do exactly that was strongly present. And in fact one person did do it!

Then the necessities of life—sleepy children to put to bed and

long, icy roads to travel—began to whittle away the group. Only Hilary and Johannes Solberg remained. Johannes' parents had been disciples of Hazrat Inayat Khan before Baba reoriented the Sufis in the U.S. When he and his twin brother were born several weeks premature on Hazrat Inayat Khan's birthday, they were blessed and given names by the Sufi leader: Jemal and Jelal. Johannes has indeed lived a blessed and charmed life. He is like the East—full of stories. We rounded out this evening in honor of the Beloved's birth with a lively exchange of stories between these two veterans until at last we arrived at a fullness of silence, and they departed warmheartedly into the Beloved's larger presence.

News from Europe

Don Stevens reports on several translation projects. *God Speaks*, for example, nears completion in French. The book has already been beautifully rendered into Spanish by a professional translator for one of Argentina's best publishers, and it is in its second edition in Serbo-Croat. The *Discourses* have been translated into Italian, leaving only details of its publication to be worked through. *The Everything and the Nothing* has been translated into Czech, and numerous other projects, completed or in process, occupy hearts and hands as Baba's message of Love and Truth comes to the world.



Silence Day at Meherabad

by Marjorie Sucoff

Roseville, Minnesota

I would have thought that keeping Baba's Silence on Silence Day in Meherabad was a breeze. After all, everyone around was silent. And to be where Baba is so present, rather than at home in Minnesota, I would have thought it easier to obey Him. Well, I was in for a surprise.

The day before July 10, the train stopped at the Samadhi crossing and people tossed out suitcases and jumped to the railroad bed. Others came by bus and private car. There were 600 to 800 pilgrims arriving, and the hubbub was exciting.

At evening arti Baba gifted us with an incredible sky. Above a dark cloud rose a plume of colors resembling Baba's flag. Then His face appeared in the cloud, and this was followed by a descending thread of gold as if an electric current was suspended above Samadhi, the *real* Generator of the world.

On Silence Day there were no artis to be said, but the Tomb was open to all, as were the Rahuri Cabin and the Jopdhi. Pilgrims moved quietly about, and often there would be a glance, a nod, a smile, or a bringing together of hands in a silent *Jai Baba*. Throughout the day they stood in a queue at Baba's tomb. Large baskets of roses

were there, so many many roses, so lovingly placed for Baba. Their scent wafted in all directions, carrying my thoughts to the Beloved's beloved, Mehera, and to their Perfect Union. My thoughts of Mani were particularly poignant; while reading the quote of Hafiz in the tin shed and then bowing down, I was struck with

Mani coming to life. But on Silence Day the Hum emanating from their faces overwhelmed me. I blurted out, "Oh! It's coming along so wonderfully!" Diana looked up, her eyes wide, index finger at her lips. I had broken the Silence! Then, just as the self-flagellation began for having failed to obey Baba, there was

suddenly the Hum again—the Hum of Baba—in the room, in the portrait, in Diana and, amazingly, in me.

The day drew to a close with films in Hostel D at 9:00 P.M. Hundreds of

Befitting a fortunate slave, carry out every command of the Master without any question of why or what.

About what you hear from the Master, never say it is wrong, because, my dear, the fault lies in your own incapacity to understand Him.

I am the slave of the Master who has released me from ignorance. Whatever my Master does is of the highest benefit to all concerned.

—Hafiz

a sense of her suffering on this Silence Day.

What image can best describe that day for me? *Baba's Hum*. In the beginning the Hum was within, as if between Baba and me alone. Then it was within and without simultaneously, everywhere, in everything, in everyone, engulfing, permeating. The Hum was in the scrabble game that afternoon when Clea, Sandra and I played in silence. It was in the caroms game with Murthy. The Hum was in the women's dormitory, where over the days Diana LePage was painting a portrait of Baba and Mani, Brother and sister side by side.

Each day I watched Baba and

us, keeping silence, sat on metal chairs in a steamy auditorium. Occasionally a child would shout in a sing-song way, "Meher Baba, Meher Baba, Meher Baba." And during the films the Indians would clap whenever Baba appeared. The last film was Pete Townshend's *O Parvardigar*, shown without sound.

When the program ended we became a mass of shuffling feet, moving slowly, steadily, through the exit door. No one spoke of our carrying Baba within our hearts. But when the flashlights cut the darkness I felt the Hum all around. The Baba Hum. His Hum of Divine love. ✽



Keep Me With You

(theme of the L.A. Sahavas)

by Harry Thomas

Los Angeles, California

The 22nd Los Angeles Sahavas was a work of art. Held once again at Pilgrim Pines, a camp ground in the San Bernardino Mountains, it featured Hoshang and Havovi Dadachanji, Irwin and Janet Luck, and Debbie Nordeen. It was a perfect combination of intimate stories, meaningful insights, divine entertainment, and interactive fun.

Our guests shared deeply from their experience with Meher Baba. Hoshang began by crediting his father's brother, Chanji (Baba's secretary) as the one responsible for bringing the Dadachanji family to Baba. Hoshang met Baba for the first time in 1942 during the engagement of Arnavaz and his brother, Nariman, and again in 1944 in Meherabad at their wedding, but at that time he had no concept of who Meher Baba was. Back at home, Hoshang was still aligned to the Zoroastrian community and was ashamed to profess an affiliation with Meher Baba. Baba visited Bombay often, staying in Arnavaz and Nariman's home, and during these times Hoshang had the opportunity of being in Baba's company and of driving Baba around Bombay to visit masts. Hoshang was impressed by the amount of love Baba showered on everyone and by the devotional love reciprocated by His mandali. He attended "the three incredible weeks" in 1954 and recalls Baba's practicality and endearing human qualities, His



Havovi and Hoshang Dadachanji
Pilgrim Pines, July of 1996

mingling with people and His sense of humor. Of all the discourses they received from the Godman, Hoshang remembers two messages which were constantly repeated by Baba: "Remember that I am God in human form" and "Always hold onto My damaan."

Havovi, who was raised as a Zoroastrian and carries the name of the prophet's wife, entered the Baba fold as a skeptic. After meeting Baba

and being embraced by Him, she wasn't the least bit impressed. Baba had given the perfection sign at their meeting, and Havovi thought, "I don't think he's all this" [referring to the sign]. Of the early days, she says, "I really went to all these Baba gatherings to protect Hoshang." She was cautious in those days and didn't want her husband falling under the spell of Meher Baba. Eventually her heart thawed and embraced her Beloved. In fact, during one of the Guruprasad Darshans in the late '50s, Baba said, "Freny [Havovi's sister-in-law] and Havovi didn't love me—but now they love me this much" [He opened His arms wide]. On one occasion, Baba, knowing that Havovi and Freny were anemic, told them to come near Him and to pull down the lids beneath their eyes. Baba stared into their eyes and in turn pronounced them anemic. "Oh, but how deeply I was able to look into Baba's eyes," Havovi said.

Irwin, while living in Miami with his father, who was quite the antagonist in Irwin's search, saw *The Ten Commandments* and was inspired to know what God wanted him to do. He was inwardly drawn to read the works of the great religions until he received a copy of *Listen, Humanity* sent to him by his brother, Edward, which



created a longing in him to meet Meher Baba personally. Irwin met Baba in Guruprasad in May of 1960. When he drew into Baba's presence, he was embraced and kissed on both cheeks. Baba asked him, "How did you come?" "By Your will," was the reply. Later Baba informed him, "You were sent to me by another master." At one point in their meeting Baba asked, "If I gave you Knowledge, what would you do?" Irwin's sincere response was, "If you give me Knowledge, I'll *know* what to do." On a later visit, this time with his brother

Historical Footnote:

Havovi and Hoshang's son Raiyomand, at age ten with a small camera, took the last photograph of Baba (at Dara and Amrit's wedding).

Edward, Baba said to them as they exited His company, "One day I will give you the Highest Experience." Baba repeated this, and Irwin thought, "Today's a good time too." Irwin's first visit with Baba was to last for one hour. However, grace descended and he enjoyed the repeated company of the Godman and was able to accompany Baba and His entourage to many places in Poona, staying with Him for two weeks.

The Sahavas entertainment was glorious! Both Janet and Debbie were marvelous. Their performances and selection of material was different, yet equally spirited and involving of the audience (especially Havovi, who joined each one for a song). Janet showcased songs she had written over the years. She also included a poem, written by Mani in Satara in 1956, which she had set to music [see box]. She serenaded us with *Meherazad Gardens* and *The Grand Fisherman*, which was featured in Irwin's film, *Meher Baba, The Human Side of God*. Janet's voice was vibrant yet sweet, and she thanked Baba, as did all who were there, for providing the strength for her to make the trip to the

Sahavas and to perform.

Debbie, in the full spirit of a '30s or '40s torch singer, in a crushed black velvet dress and glittering jewelry, sang love songs from that era in her concert. The music—songs to a worldly lover—easily embraced the Avatar and were sung, in fact, as love songs to Him. Backed by a competent band, Debbie treated the audience to *Begin the Beguine*, *The Very Thought of You*, *Unforgettable*, and other favorite compositions. Her concert was entitled *A Stroll Down Lovers' Lane*, and the music put all listeners hand in hand with Meher Baba. Joy reigned supreme.

Many of the expected features of the L.A. Sahavas were here this year too. For example, Bobby Manonash led a game of Higher Trivial Pursuit where contestants (the Sahavas guests) slowly made their way up the evolutionary and involutory continuum towards God Realization at game's end. The teenagers and other young ones found companionship in one another. People made new friends and reestablished old relations. The toddy shop was as refreshing and happening as ever, and a bear wandered down the dry creek to visit the camp. The food was great, the bookstore—graciously stocked with materials—was well-frequented and appreciated, and the workshops were informative and interactive. Irwin's film, *Meher Baba, The Human Side of God*, was shown in its entirety, and the dhuni on the last night closed the gathering in a hallowed embrace. And Baba's presence, most would agree, was strongly in evidence.

As always, a special thanks to the Sahavas committee and all the other workers who made this event possible. Most of all, a hearty thanks to Meher Baba for being the perfect Host and for sharing His company, allowing us the opportunity to drink in His love. After all, that's what a Sahavas is most essentially about.

Jai Baba.

Janet Luck said the following to introduce her concert at the Sahavas:

"As a beginning, I thought that I would start off by singing a poem that Mani had written in 1956 in Satara. I had found this in the *Awakener* actually, a long time ago, and wrote it down. And I just found it again and I sang it for Mani when I was there in Pune. This is just about a week ago. And she said, 'Are you singing that at the Sahavas?' So I said, 'Yes I am. Now I am.'"

Baba, You Found Me

When I was a rose
pining
in my static pose,

You came to me
shining
a dew drop on my lips
I held you close to me.

When I was a thrush
pouring
my yearning from a bush,

I was in song
adoring
You in wondrous praise
all day long.

When I was a grain of sand
sleeping
in parched desert land,
weeping
for a breath of love
You kissed me as caressing
raindrops from above.

I was once a gurgling brook
stealing
o'er arid paths forsook;

in all my ups and downs
feeling
You in every stone and nook.

And now I am a human
wondering
where to find the loved one,
wondering.
But once again You found me,
dear beloved one.

Mani Irani
Satara, 1956



The Youth Sahavas

by Victor Andersen

Walnut Creek, California

The Youth Sahavas is a yearly gathering of Meher Baba's followers who happen to be unfortunate enough to be in high school. The Sahavas is held at the Myrtle Beach Center and is coordinated by three wonderful people—Buz Conner, Linda Hansen, and Lois (LoLo) Jones—they deserve much applause for pulling this off year after year along with many other helpers.

The sixth annual Youth Sahavas began as attendees arrived from all over the world (we had people from England, Australia and Puerto Rico). After unloading their baggage, some people headed out to the playground for a rousing game of volleyball while others met in the Meeting Place to discuss volunteer work for the Sahavas. A few people glided out on Long Lake in the gondola and some, delighted at seeing old friends again, simply hung out and talked. We did an art project that night in which 10 sketches of Baba were cut up into 10 pieces each and distributed to 10 groups of 10 people each. Each person colored in one piece of Baba and then the pieces were put back together and hung up on the wall in the Meeting Place for the remainder of the Sahavas.

On the first morning at seven sharp, Lela Stephens and Angie West discovered exactly how to make the whole camp hate them—they woke everybody up! Once the early morning groggies had been shaken off, the few of us who were actually coherent at 7:30 A.M. walked down to the Meeting Place for morning arti. Discussion groups began at 10:30. Discussion groups were held throughout the Sahavas and focused on topics ranging from the *Discourses* to gender issues to what Baba had to say

about drugs. Workshops were held every afternoon. There was a wide variety of workshops to choose from, including theater, music improvisation, digeridoos, creative writing, video/film-making/editing, drum circle, photography. Art tent activities included making tiles for the Peace Wall, sculpting clay, and painting murals. Evening arti was at six (similar to morning arti except that people were actually awake this time).

We had dancing after dinner on several nights—even square dances. William Files deserves special thanks here, as he devoted much of his Sahavas time to organizing the dances and setting up and operating all the sound and lighting equipment.

Thursday evening, we had two Baba films, followed by a slide show organized by Prem Makeig. It consisted of art that Sahavas attendees had submitted earlier in the year. On Friday the evening program was the Celebration (a.k.a. Talent Show) where people played piano, drums, guitar, digeridoo, and sang, danced, and rapped. The hosts for the evening were Mehera Blum and Erich Morton dressed up as Erich Morton and Mehera Blum respectively. The Celebration ended as usual with the Men's Play. The Men's Play—which is written, organized, and performed only by the men—is traditionally the last thing that happens on Celebration night.

Saturday was the last full day of the Sahavas. The Barn Ceremony—until now the last major event on the last night of the Sahavas—was held in the evening. Each person lines up in the barn, takes a flower from a basket, and places it on Baba's chair,

and receives a gift from Mani. This year, Mani gave each Sahavas attendee a piece of bark from the umar tree in Meherazad which had borne the image of Baba's face. The Barn Ceremony is generally the part of the Sahavas where all the attendees feel closest to each other, and there is much crying and hugging going on. It is about this time when the reality of leaving the next day really begins to set in. This year we were delighted to hear that, thanks to a wonderful suggestion by Ben Hay, we would all be a part of the first EVER dhuni at Meher Center. It was an honor to be a part of such a wonderful event. After the Barn Ceremony, everybody made the one-third mile trek down to a patch of beach set behind some sand dunes, where we held the dhuni.

On Sunday, the last day, we headed out to Baba's House—walking in silence and holding hands in a long chain of over 100 people—for the closing ceremony. At Baba's House, still holding hands, we all walked past a video camera, said a quick message to Mani, and then gathered around the camera to sing Mani's song. The video was then sent off to India as a get-well gift to her. Then we went inside Baba's House to absorb the love that was flowing and to say goodbye to all the people we had grown to love so much during the Sahavas. It was kind of a shock knowing that we wouldn't see most of these people for another year, especially since we all had grown so close to each other during the Sahavas. But in reality we are always with each other, deep in our hearts, as is Baba.

Jai Baba!



Avataric Display:

The 38th Anniversary of Avatar's Abode

Ray Kerkhove
Queensland, Australia

As our anniversary of Meher Baba's visit falls during the Queensland winter, we always hope for bright, fine weather. This allows us to have a true picnic in Baba's love, scattering over the lawns, enjoying meals and ball games in the sun.

Happily, Baba allowed us unusually mild weather. As if on cue, several days of mud and drizzle cleared into sunshine just as the flag-raising commenced. Perfect weather persisted until the precise moment Baba's flag was lowered (when Anniversary traditionally ends).

The weather epitomised the Anniversary mood: mild, well-timed and on display. Chief amongst the "well-timed exhibits" were our special guests. Baba's nephews, Rustom and Sohrab Irani, returned (henceforth to be known as *Baba's budgies* after their marvellous skit with Peter Davies and Peter Rowan). They discussed their exceptional upbringing, played intoxicating bhajans, and coached us in Indian games. Leatrice Johnston flew in from New Mexico. She brought an air of gentle sweetness, touching hearts with tale after tale of Meher Baba's thoughtfulness. From Sydney, Jehangir Daver arrived to share fascinating segments of his translations of the diary of an early disciple, one of Baba's school friends, Baily.

Much else was subtly "on display:" a new cassette (*Silently Singing*, by Lorraine Brown), a new t-shirt (a Robert Rouse design of Baba's face



Very active octogenarian Diana Snow (one of the builders of Avatar's Abode) charging up the hill to Baba's House.

among leaves), a new introductory book on Baba, and a glossy new booklet about Avatar's Abode. Moreover, there were walls and walls of Baba to be seen—paintings, sculpture, posters, pamphlets and ancient programme guides, all set up for public viewing.

The centerpiece of all this showiness was the freshly built Reception Centre—the first addition to Avatar's Abode in about fifteen years. On Sunday it was formally dedicated to the Avatar. Sam Saunders piped a group of children down the Abode's grassy slope to the building. There they garlanded a bronze bust of Baba to cheers of Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai. Sym Simons and John Borthwick then detailed the building's purpose and related Mani's comments on the project. Mani sent scrapings from the walls of Baba's bedroom in Meherazad for the occasion. These were incorpo-

rated into a special alcove in the Reception Centre's back wall.

But the show which most touched me was the growing sophistication of our local talent. Examples of this were almost too numerous to recount: a wonderful sing-along children's picnic organized by Janice Rice and Kaye Lindsay; subtle harmonies by the Wineshop Singers; a hilarious 1940s-style detective skit, *The Search for God*, by the Brisbane group; Arab dancing featuring Sky Ladner; and the ever-popular Rowan brothers, Eruch and Merwan, who performed Rap songs about following Baba.

The healing balm of Baba's dazzling Presence—and a good dose of His playfulness and humour—was obviously being carried forward, once again. May it continue forever.



Behold

today the gates of Paradise
are open wide



victory unto Thee!



Notice from India

Mani Sheriar Irani, dearest sister of Avatar Meher Baba, soared triumphantly into her God-brother's open arms on 19 August, 1996 at 7:01 A.M. to be reunited with Him whom she adored with all her heart and served with joyous dedication.

The time had come for her darling God-brother and Lord to free His beautiful nightingale sister to be with Him evermore. As Mani wrote to the Baba-family recently, the bird was singing sweetly, but the cage was in need of repair. Now the Eternal Beloved has released His little sister from the cage of illusion to fly freely in His eternal domain and presence.

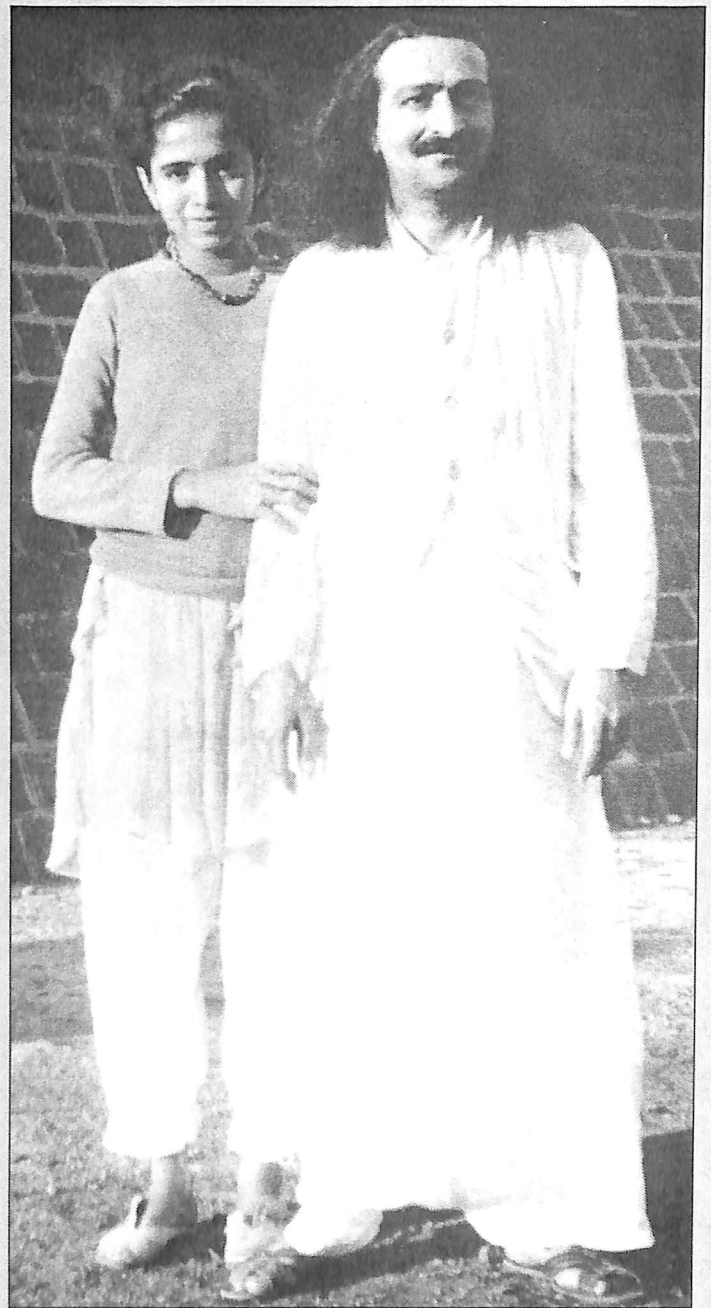
The Ancient One, whom Mani served faithfully and tirelessly till the end, called Mani His true sister in service. Whatever the duty Baba entrusted to her, whether it be as close companion to His beloved Mehera, scribe to the west, or Chairman of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Mani ceaselessly endeavored to please her Beloved Lord. Her exemplary life shall be a guiding star to all Baba's lovers.

Mani not only leaves behind generations of Baba-lovers whose hearts have been deeply touched by Baba's Love through personal contact with her, but an invaluable legacy to the generations to come of a life lived in His company, shared through stories, songs and wisdom, which will continue to light the way for all His lovers until He comes again.

We shall miss our dearest Mani whose lively presence and loving company, sparkling vivacity, warmth, unique wit and humour shall ever remain alive in our memories. We, Mani's lifelong companions, join our worldwide Baba family in saluting her unparalleled life of supreme love and total dedication as sister to the Lord of the Universe, Beloved Avatar Meher Baba.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!!!

*Eruch, Goher, and all Meherazad
men and women mandali.*



"On December 15, 1918, when Merwan was 24 years old, a sister named Manija was born. While his mother was in the Sassoon Hospital he would often visit, bringing her gifts. Merwan was the first to see Manija as soon as she was born; he picked her up and kissed her even before the nurses could give her a bath. At this time, Merwan would sleep at different places, and when Shireen returned home with Manija, he would come to the house to see his baby sister. He would often sit rocking her cradle, singing to her. He said, 'She is so fortunate. She is mine'."

Bhau Kalchuri
Lord Meher, vol. 1, page 262



Mani's Reunion

As Beloved Baba's family around the world now knows, His darling sister Mani rejoined Him on 19th August 1996, in Meherazad after a prolonged illness. This account is to share with you some of the events of her final days of love and service to Him.

— Heather Nadel

A few years ago, Mani related that she had heard a voice, clear and distinct, saying within her:

"I am the bird,
I am not the cage."

Perhaps that is why, when her health first began to fail in March 1995, she often would remark, "The bird is singing away, but the cage is in need of repair!" Despite her ensuing struggle against "NPH" (Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus) that involved two surgeries (in November '95 and February '96) Mani remained a radiant singing "bird"—meeting Baba-lovers in Meherazad whenever she could, scooting around Mehera's garden in her *Begum* (motorized scooter) as her walking became more and more difficult, and finally greeting people for a few moments from the confines of her chair inside the house in Meherazad. At the end of February 1996, having returned to Meherazad from her second surgery, she appeared on Mehera's porch just before Meherazad closed for the season. She was eager to spend time with her Baba family, and she loved the hour that followed as she "held forth" to a porch full of people as they performed for her, a wonderful giving and receiving of His love. Afterwards many remarked that it was like a darshan, and Mani was more joyous and radiant than they had ever seen her.

That memorable day in February

turned out to be her last "love-feast" with pilgrims at Meherazad. When pilgrim season opened again in July 1996, Mani was in the hospital in Poona, having been diagnosed with an inoperable malignant tumor. How touching in retrospect was the vision of Mehera that Mani had just before leaving Meherazad to go to Poona for what we thought at the time would be a simple investigation! In the middle of the night, Mani sat up for a moment, and gazing over towards Mehera's bed, was amazed to see her darling Mehera lying there. "Oh!" she thought happily, "Mehera's come back to her old place!" and then she saw that Mehera was looking at her with an expression of great compassion and sadness. Mani was deeply touched, and soon afterwards in the hospital, when her diagnosis became known, she was heartened by this evidence of Mehera's loving presence and care.

After three weeks in the hospital, how happy and grateful Mani was to return home to Meherazad in early July! There she was often joyful in spite of her growing pain, and more than anything else in her last weeks, except gazing at pictures and slides of her beloveds, Baba and Mehera, Mani would love to sing. The bird indeed was singing, despite the condition of the cage, and Mani often entertained us with wonderful renditions of all kinds of songs: Baba's artis, her own songs, Baba-songs by others, hymns,

traditional Indian songs, Mirabai songs, bhajans, village songs, lines from ghazals. She'd sing alone, or with Khorshed, Katie, Manu or Roda, or with a chorus of us, always very happily.

One day, as Mani was being helped to the dining room, she said, "So this is what Baba wants me to do now." And she turned to this new, most difficult task, with the wholehearted concentration and discipline that always characterized her work for Him. She participated in her care with 100% focus, carefully taking the pills and alternative medicines prescribed for her with such great love and concern by Dr. Goher and Shelley, resting when she was tired (something it had always been hard to get her to do), and, in spite of the pain, almost never complaining. In fact, her sweetness and at times genuine cheerfulness often cheered up her caregivers! And we felt she was doing all this for Baba, not for herself. As always, she was striving to live as He wished, moment to moment, wholeheartedly accepting whatever He ordained.

As the weeks went by, Mani seemed to become less and less attached to the world and more and more immersed in thoughts of Baba and Mehera. She would recall old days and reminisce with the women about their happy times with Baba. Or sometimes she'd tell jokes, complete of course with fantastic facial



expressions, perfect mimicry, and a myriad of funny voices that would leave everyone in stitches. On Silence Day, she gestured as eloquently as she used to speak—and of all of us, she was the one who managed to maintain total silence! At tea when we inquired through signs as to whether she had finished her nutritional drink, she scribbled on the chalkboard, “Fait accompli”!

“Thank God for a sense of humour,” she had remarked during her earlier illness, and her humour lightened many moments as she became weaker and weaker and more and more confined to bed. In the

*“I do not know when or how I go
But this I know to where I go—
It is to a place of
indescribable beauty,
Where God’s Love
enfolds completely.”*

beginning she was able to sit up in her chair in the sitting room or on the porch for short periods, and enjoyed hearing get-well cards and heart-messages from Baba-lovers, and especially attending to last-minute details about her new manuscript *Dreaming of The Beloved* that she had dictated in May with such interest and meticulous attention. Something else she really enjoyed was hearing stories read aloud from her book *God-Brother*. She would become so childlike and excited reliving her childhood times with Baba, and amused and impressed with her own remarkable story-telling!

Gradually, the sessions at the dining table and in her chair became shorter and more infrequent as she became too weak to sit for long. Eventually she could no longer walk to Baba’s Room for her morning darshan which had meant so much.

It was so hard to see her weak and in pain, but true to what she had

*“You have no idea
how much He loves me.*

*You have no idea
how much I love Him.*

*You have no idea
how happy I am.”*

written in her article “On the Topic of Suffering,” Baba was upholding her from within as He dealt her blows of pain and weakness from without. This we knew from things she would say. Once we remarked to her how strongly we felt Baba’s and Mehera’s presence in her room, and Mani said that she felt as if Baba was there with her always, and even more so Mehera whom she often felt was moving around in their room “doing this and that.” One day after hearing from Arnavaz of a beautiful Baba dream had by one of the men mandali, she said so happily, “Baba keeps sending me messages!”

On one of the last days she was able to sit up, Mani sat for a little while on her bed, facing Mehera’s bed. All the windows of her room were open and from outside the room, Baba’s image tree seemed to lean in to lend her support and strength. As she sat there, our tapewalli played a tape of Mani’s song written for Mehera, “To the Glory of Love,” and Mani swayed back and forth in time to the music, singing along with closed eyes and a gentle smile, lost in the beauty of the song. Baba and Mehera seemed specially present then, in the atmosphere of the pink room and in the joy of her glowing face.

It was to be our last such session. Despite an IV drip and all possible treatment, a few days later Mani slipped into a semi-conscious state. This was hardest to bear for Goher and the other women, her close companions of so many years. In their distress and concern for Mani, they would often wake at night, and one night around this time, waking

from sleep and thinking of Mani, these comforting words came to Meheru as if from her:

*“I do not know when or how I go
But this I know to where I go—
It is to a place of
indescribable beauty.
Where God’s Love
enfolds completely.”*

Yet despite Mani’s condition and our sorrow, there remained an atmosphere of overflowing love, sweetness, purity and innocence radiating from her that seemed to grow as the days went by.

Mohammed Mast had said on 9th August, Friday, that “Baba’s sister will go tomorrow. Her pain will be over.” Mani lived on past that Saturday. But looking back later, we all felt that her state changed that day and, as Mohammed had “predicted,” she did indeed “go,” turning further and further away from this world and closer than ever to Baba. Soon after she was in a coma, and her niece Gulnar, visiting a few days later, upon entering the room perceived the difference immediately, remarking, “She’s with Baba now.”

*“I will go at the moment
Baba has chosen for me—
not one second before or
one second after.”*

It was at this time that one of her caregivers dreamt of Mani saying to her “You have no idea how much He loves me. You have no idea how much I love Him. You have no idea how happy I am.”

Many dreams about this time heralded her reunion with Baba: dreams of Mani lying weak and sick then suddenly turning into Baba, of Mani skipping and dancing full of joy, of a great celebration soon to take place, of Mani walking down the front



steps of her childhood home Baba-House on the arms of her brothers Beheram and Adi and touching each step with reverence as they stepped down and walked away, of Mani entering Baba's Room and inviting everyone outside to come in and meet her. Earlier Mani had been touched by a letter from a Baba lover who wrote that while watching the video of Mani gesturing to *Welcome to My World*, she saw Mani's face turn into Baba's face. And someone close to the family saw Baba's brothers Beheram, Jal and Adi, plus Pendu and Padri, standing on Meherabad Hill awaiting Mani, proud of all she had done for her Brother.

Mani had always told her family, "I will go at the moment Baba has chosen for me—not one second before or one second after." His chosen moment for their Reunion was early morning, 7:01 a.m., Monday, the 19th of August, when Mani opened her eyes with a look full of love and wonder, and after a few quiet breaths, slipped softly and gently into her Beloved's welcoming arms. It was as she had wished, in her room in Meherazad, facing her beloved Mehera's bed with the women mandali and a few others around her holding Baba's picture and saying His Name.

From the moment she went, her face assumed an expression of joy and triumph, and as the moments went by her luminous smile seemed to deepen until you could not look at her without feeling her happiness. Once years ago, seeing a picture of herself in which she appeared com-

posed, self-contained, almost regal, Mani had said, "That is me as I was with Baba" and it was that same Mani that I saw now in her.

How could we not rejoice to see

favorite "dress up" outfits of pink, mauve and beige, with a chiffon pink scarf framing her lovely face and a tiny "diamond" tilak on her forehead, Mani was gently placed on the same stretcher used for Mehera, and taken

by Mehera's bed where Arti was sung. Then she was carried into Beloved Baba's Room and as she rested at His feet, the prayers were recited, the *Seven Names of God* sung, and rose petals and flowers that had been offered to Baba were showered over her form.

From there, across Mehera's garden past her favorite flowering china-box bush, she was carried into Mandali Hall.

As she lay in her last repose before Baba's chair in the Hall, her face shining, her form covered with flowers, surrounded by singing, Baba-lovers from Meherabad, Ahmednagar, Poona and Bombay streamed in to pay

homage. Bhau was first to come, and DaraAmrit, followed soon by Khorshed. What a tribute to her loving personality to see the variety of people who came to honor her: the trustees of His Trust, all of the devoted Trust Office staff from the head clerk and chief accountant to the peons, government officials, Pimpalgaon villagers young and old, the tailor and many other local people who had been touched by her kindness. Late morning, her family from Poona arrived, and despite their grief, RustomSohrab and the "Irani gang" from Baba-House entertained Mani with zest as they had so often before, singing ghazals, songs she had



Mani with Heather Nadel

the end of all her suffering written so clearly on her beautiful face? We said the prayers around her, and then Eruch—her dear partner in His

"I dreamt we were all dressed up and going to a great celebration."

service these past 27 years—and the rest of the men mandali filed in for their own farewells.

They departed, and after being dressed by the women in one of her



written for them, and comic songs that used to make her laugh.

At 3:15 P.M. it was time for a final Arti, and the Meherazad women mandali, with great love and grief, tenderly kissed their precious sister for the last time in Meherazad, the home she loved so dearly. It was moving to hear even the Meherazad pet dogs calling out a farewell. Then Mani's form was carried on the stretcher into the Swanee, and with Goher, Meheru, Katie, Gulnar and a few other women, she began her last journey to Meherabad. Reaching there, as they turned into the road going up the Hill, some of the women saw her face flush, as if she was exulting in the approach of her final goal.

On the Hill, a group of Baba-lovers carried the stretcher into Baba's Samadhi, where Mani was placed on Baba's right-hand side as the prayers were said. From there, she was taken to Mehera's shrine, and lying in the space between her beloveds, she seemed to grow pinker with happiness.

Mani's form was then placed on the Sabha Mandap, the large platform near the Samadhi. It is hard to describe the amazing atmosphere of this gathering, the heightened sense of Baba's presence, of Mani's joy, of the immensity of the event of her Reunion with Him, all against a background of flowers garlanding her form, songs in English, Marathi and Hindi, an outpouring of reverence and respect from the villagers, the intimate moments of farewell from her dear old friends Mansari and Gulu, and others who had just arrived from Bombay, and the combined focus of the huge crowd on her glowing form.

At about 5:30 P.M., once again Mani was carried into the Swanee, and a caravan of cars, motorcycles and people on foot wound down the Hill to the Meherabad cremation ground at the southernmost end of the

property. Mani had always loved the atmosphere of freedom and renunciation surrounding cremations, and especially those that took place at evening time.

As her form rested on the pyre,

Open Up the Door

Lyrics by Mani Irani

There's someone at the door Lord
Knocking at your door
Open up the door Lord
Open up the door

Chorus:

Open up the door Lord
Open up the door
I can't stand any more Lord
Open up the door

Your face I adore Lord
A glance I implore Lord
I don't ask for more Lord
Open up the door

Chorus

I don't seek to soar Lord
To planes above the shore Lord
Just drown me in the core Lord
Open up the door

Chorus

To your kingly store Lord
Tears of pearls I bore Lord
My rosary has more Lord
Open up the door

Chorus

I kneel upon the floor Lord
Your grace upon me pour Lord
To be with you for evermore Lord
Open up the door

Chorus

she looked sublime and serene, like the Princess she truly is. Poignant farewells from her dearest ones, heartbroken with grief. And then all stepped back for the final covering of her form with sandalwood, and the finishing of the pyre. Sometime after

6 P.M., at twilight, a time of day she loved, the men of her devoted family, Jangu, Rustom, Sohrab, Dara, Arvind, Meherdil and Jamshed lit her pyre to resounding calls of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!"

If legends are to grow from this farewell to Mani, surely there will be one about her pyre. For those who have seen many cremations it was extraordinary in many ways. Extraordinarily beautiful, as the flames whipped by a west wind leapt up, dancing, intense, and bright against the deep blue evening sky. Extraordinarily meaningful, as Meheru, dazed by sadness, suddenly saw forms among the flames dancing and bowing to Mani, and then Baba's face and Zoroaster's face alternating in the center. Extraordinarily rare, for as Eruch was standing silently nearby, two sadhus approached him, asking whose pyre was this? They had been passing by, and observed the smoke—but it was not the black smoke of the pyre of an ordinary person, it was the gray-blue smoke of the pyre of a saint. And so they had come to ask about this great soul and to pay their respects. The sister of Meher Baba? Ah, that explained it.

And the pyre was extraordinarily long-lasting, for when all was done and the mandali had returned to Meherazad and others to their homes and resting places, it went on burning and burning and burning. Normally a pyre will burn for twenty-four hours. A very large one, for thirty-six. The fire of Mani's love must have ignited the very air around her, for her pyre burned for three days. Even thereafter the place where she had lain was warm. Those three days were another kind of darshan for the Baba-lovers who kept round-the-clock vigil at the site, passing the time with songs and stories, energized by the atmosphere of great peace and sweetness that came from the fire. How delighted Mani would have been to see among them young people from the Youth Sahavas recently held at Baba's



Center in Myrtle Beach (USA). One of them remarked that Mani's song to Baba, *Open Up the Door*, which had been sung so often at the Youth Sahavas, for the first time really meant something to him because of this experience.

Even the flora paid her tribute that night. Years ago, Mehera had given a cutting from a "Christ's Cradle" plant at Meherazad to grow in the Pilgrim Centre. The Christ's Cradle flower, which Mehera had shown to Baba, is a beautiful white fragrant flower that blooms only at night, and then rarely. On the night of Mani's reunion, all the Christ Cradles in the Pilgrim Centre bloomed. Only the next morning did anyone notice there was one more plant outside, stuck away in the corner of the nursery, that had given seven blooms in the night—in direct view of the distant pyre.

Mani's ashes, now collected and in Meherazad, will be interred on Meherabad Hill on September 8th, 1996 at 11 A.M. As per Meher Baba's wish, she is to be interred on His left (at the left side of the Samadhi), just as His beloved Mehera is on His right.

Such touching tributes to Mani have come from Baba-lovers around the world that it is fitting I share some words from them:

"For a while she shone for all of us and lightened our burden with her joy of living, her singing, her laughter, her words of wisdom, her childlike manner—all of her a unique reflection of Baba's diamond that we will always cherish in our hearts. . . . For truly she was teaching us how to love Him. Now when we remember Mani, we will be truly remembering Him, because she was 100% Baba's."

"It is difficult to imagine that our dearest Mani will no longer be at Meherazad to greet us and cheer us with her incomparable personality. For me, she was the one person,

besides Kitty Davy, who never seemed to grow old—who always projected such a magnificent, child-like zest for life and fun, and whose unquestioned faith and surrender to Baba was such that it permeated everything she did. She was, indeed, Beloved Baba's sister, but she was also, in a very real sense, everybody's sister. She was, and is, a beacon of Baba's Light, reflecting not only His Love and Compassion, but also drawing us all closer to Him by her shining example."

"Surely the heavens and the heavens beyond the heavens are reverberating with Beloved Baba's divine satisfaction at His glorious handiwork in the form of His little sister Mani!"

"Mani, we always think of you as the one person who helped us the most through our most difficult time. Your compassion and understanding lifted our hearts. We miss your effervescent presence and heartwarming stories."

"So thanks! For the jokes, the toys, the scoldings, the hints, the pictures in words and mime, advice, your own good example, and the precious encouragement you gave us to try to love and please Him."

"The world has lost a luminous star of love and dedication."

"How we will miss your most special presence uniquely energized with such a keen focus upon your divinely human Brother, enlivened with the very intensity and humor and spirit of the Beloved Himself! . . . How much difference you have made—and your memory will continue to make—in the lives of all who have known you! How beautiful and uplifting have been your words and your actions in a life lived solely for your Beloved Meher Baba!"

Mani had a dream towards the very end of her life that she related to us. She woke up from sleep, and looking around, asked, weren't we going? When we said, no, we weren't going anywhere, she said, "Oh, it must have been a dream. I dreamt we were all dressed up and going to a great celebration."

So now we can imagine that celebration in His highest Court, with Beloved Baba at the head of the table, Mehera on His right and Mani on His left, as in the celestial company of Perfect Ones, saints and angels, He welcomes her to His World! As one of Mani's close ones wrote: "Surely the heavens and the heavens beyond the heavens are reverberating with Beloved Baba's divine satisfaction at His glorious handiwork in the form of His little sister Mani!"

To end this account, I turn to Mani. Some years ago, while writing her book *God-Brother*, Mani laughingly said, "This is what I want for my epitaph!" She was pointing to a line written by Shireenmai, her mother, in a letter to Baba, describing Mani who was then seven years old. What Shireenmai wrote to her Son about His little sister was simply:

**"Mani remembers You
night and day."**

There can be no higher tribute than that.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

—Heather Nadel
Meherabad, India
24 August 1996





Special
Memories
of Precious Times
With Dearest Mani
In Her Last Weeks
With Us

by Meheru

These memories were shared at a remembrance gathering for Mani in Mandali Hall, Meherazad on 22 August, 1996.

Baba's dear ones gathered here today, we greet you with

Jai Meher Baba!

Our Beloved One, the Highest of the High, the Omnipotent and Omnipresent is the One who brought us all here. He is the One who will ever be our friend and our guide all the way on our journey Home to Him.

For His beloved sister Mani as it was for His beloved Mehera, the journey has been completed and they are in blissful reunion with their Beloved Lord. For the moment in all our hearts there is a bottomless grief for our loss that only His Love sustains and helps us to bear.

I have known them both all my life, and was fortunate that all my adult life with Baba I was permitted to be so close to Mehera and Mani. It was a privilege and honor for me to be with Mani and help care for her in her time of need. They were not always painful times for us in the hospital. Baba's and Mehera's love was around us, and those precious times when we talked of them and remembered them or sang to them—especially since Mani initiated the singing—are for me truly beautiful memories imprinted on my heart for always.

And we have felt all the love and good wishes and prayers of our Baba family the world over pouring in on her behalf in oceanic waves. He holds the key and it was so easy for Him to turn it on her behalf. But Baba's ways are unfathomable, and He who is all Merciful and Eternally Benevolent sees so much beyond our limited vision into far infinity. No matter how much we pleaded and prayed for His Mani's recovery, His is always the last say—the only say as it has always been. And this Mani wholly accepted.



Mani was so courageous and cheerful, yet at one point in the hospital when her spirits were very low, she said in a small voice while sitting on her bed, "If this is what He wants of me, I must have Baba on one side of me and Mehera on the other," pointing to either side.

I immediately came to her and looking into her eyes said in Gujarati, "Of course they will be. They are both here with you now, encircling you in their loving care." And I know she felt comforted.

In the last week at Inlak's Hospital, there was an urgency in Mani—yearning to return to Meherazad to Baba's Home, so filled with precious memories of her times with Baba and Mehera. How could we know the time was to be so short?

Beloved Baba in His tender caring for her had gathered around His dear Mani really wonderful dedicated helpers to care for her every need under Goher's supervision—especially Shelley who was with her night and day. This great responsibility of caring for His sister was a privilege, an honor that touched each heart to its very core.

Such an atmosphere of His presence and love coming through Mani permeated all around. It was a gift of His Sahavas, which even in her frailest state she was giving to us each and all.

At night time we would all gather around her in her room whether she was conscious of us or not, and we would sing together Baba songs or talk of our times in Baba together—it was with reluctance that we left her presence.

Lord of the Dance

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
And I danced on the moon and the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Chorus: Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said He,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said He.

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
But they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me;
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John
They came with me and the dance went on.

Chorus

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;
The holy people said it was a shame;
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,
And they left me there on a cross to die.

Chorus

I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone.
But I am the dance and I still go on.

Chorus

They cut me down and I leap up high—
I am the life that'll never, ever die;
I'll live in you if you'll live in me—
I am the Lord of the Dance, said He.

Chorus

their presence around very tangibly.

Even when we were not with her, we felt Mani with us all the time. Every night I always fell asleep remembering her, and often woke up several times in the dark thinking of Mani and how she was doing. In the early hours of August 2, around 3:00 A.M., I was lying awake thinking of her, when around 3:30 A.M. I heard these words:

"I do not know when or how I go

But this I know to where I go:

It is to a place of indescribable beauty,
Where God's Love enfolds completely."

And I know it was from Mani. Knowing if I fell asleep I would forget the message, I got out of bed and scribbled it down on an old envelope I found.

Well you all know that in spite of all our heartfelt prayers Mani went to Baba, but in

the gentlest way.

Seeing her face and form relax beyond the bounds of pain is what sustained us all. She was now completely in her Beloved's loving care where her heart had yearned to be these many years, especially after Mehera's passing from our midst. Our pain and grief for her suffering, and our loss, are beyond words. The two roses of Baba's garden are now hidden from our eyes, entirely in His care in blissful reunion with their Beloved.

Every morning as long as she was able to walk Mani would come to Baba's room for Darshan. One day after bowing down to the cast of Baba's lotus feet, she mentioned Mehera's name. Not wishing to interrupt her Darshan, I did not remember till next day to ask her about it. Quite matter-of-factly she replied "Yes I see Mehera continually—she is here all the time." And I knew that Baba was there too. She once tried to point Him out to us and describe His radiant beauty. We felt



Looking back beyond these days into the past where Baba was so vital and present in our midst—the memory of those times with Him are a treasure beyond measure. There were difficult times, not always comfortable times, but also beautiful and happy times, lighthearted and filled with joy.

Even the times when we—Mehera, Mani, Goher and I—were with Baba

*“Yes I see Mehera continually
—she is here all the time.”*

in the New Life could be described as such. For in spite of the hardships, Baba was with us and we could laugh easily with carefree hearts.

Once Mehera and Mani wanted to entertain Baba to amuse Him when we were in Belgau, and they felt Goher was their star performer. Poor Goher, so self conscious, who took herself seriously, was persuaded much against her inclination to sing for Baba. The learning of the song took no time, but getting Goher to accept the idea of singing to Baba needed all Mehera and Mani's persuasive powers. At last the day came and Goher gave her performance. Baba listened with a very grave face and said, “What is this song you are singing to Me?” And He repeated some of the words with a slight difference which completely changed their meaning, and in mock surprise, looked askance at Goher. Poor Goher was so overwhelmed with bashfulness she almost disappeared into the ground, protesting that Baba was teasing her.

There are innumerable memories of such precious times with our three most Beloved Ones.

The last journey with Mani to Meherabad was spent by all who accompanied her just gazing at her

beautiful face and delicate form, savoring those last moments of the time she was to be with us. And for me, in remembering her lifetime of service for her Beloved Lord. What work she had done, what responsibility she had shouldered with love and grace and cheerfulness, and what joy and caring she had given to all around. This was reflected in the loving homage given to her by all who came to bow down to this perfect life lived in and for her God Brother.

During the cremation, as with dazed and saddened heart I looked on not really seeing, I suddenly realized that the flames were dancing with a joyful gladness, and I realized how happy Mani would have been watching them trying to spring higher and

*That night we all felt a lightness
in our hearts, for we all felt that
Mani had been freed from pain
and was in indescribable bliss.*

ever higher in the wind. And I asked Janet that Ted sing *The Lord of the Dance*.

Observing the fire with more attentive eyes I saw a host of forms bowing towards Mani in humble adoration. And in the center I kept seeing Baba's face one moment and Zoroaster's face the next. It was deeply comforting.

Naturally our tears also flowed freely for the loss of our sister. In Meherabad, quite wiped out with emotion, I heard Goher softly giving way to grief in her bed as I was entering Baba's room. I tried to console her as best I could and repeated Mani's words spoken to Heather in a dream:

“You have no idea
how much He loves me.
You have no idea

how much I love Him.

You have no idea
how happy I am.”

Then going into Baba's room, I heard Baba say in Gujarati, “She is mad to weep because Mani has come to Me.” And He repeated it again, “Because Mani has come to me, she's weeping. She's crazy.”

That night we all felt a lightness in our hearts, for we all felt that Mani had been freed from pain and was in indescribable bliss.

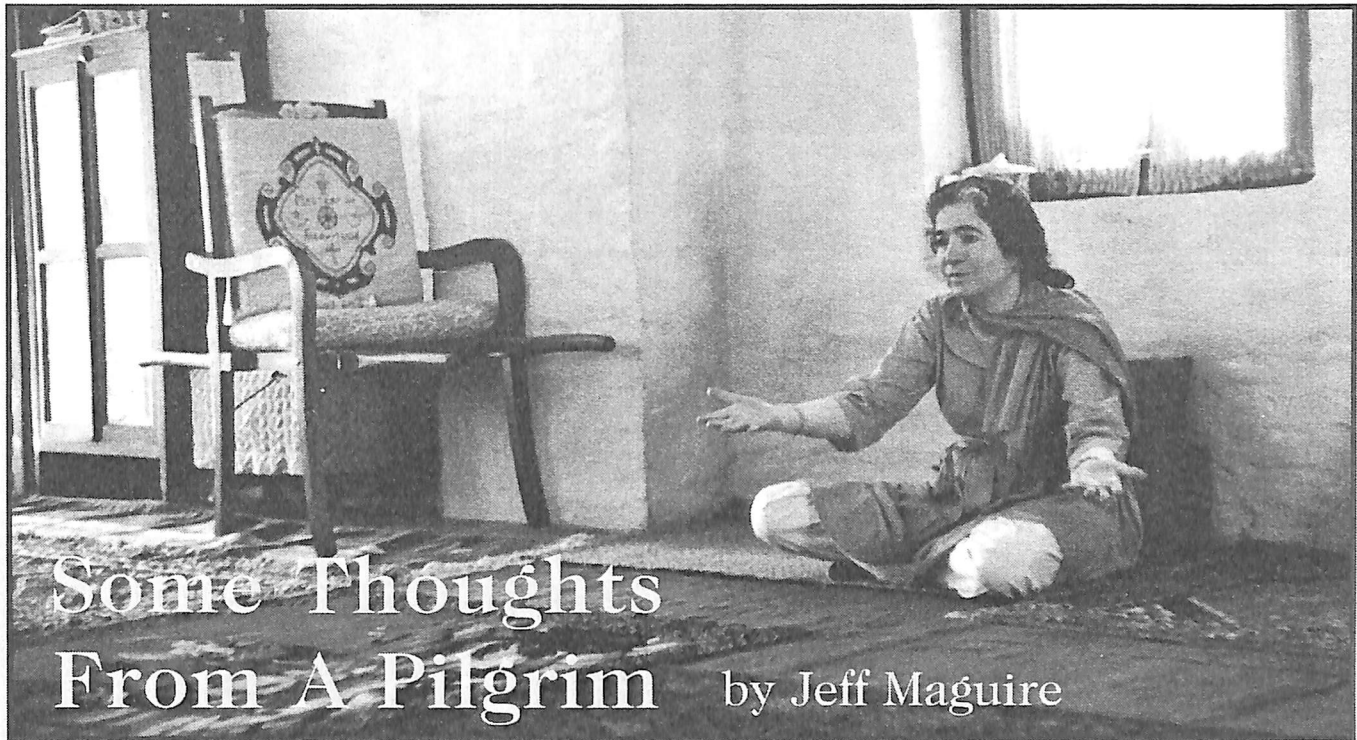
May these two whom Baba loved the best ever be watching over us and guiding us, with Beloved Baba, to help us to always please and obey Him as He should be pleased and obeyed.

One of Mani's frequent requests to Ted when we visited Baba's Samadhi was for him to sing *Have Thine Own Way Lord*, but she would always say—“Have it Your Way.” And that was the way it was for her with Baba all her life—that it should be His Way.

Jai Baba!

...Baba knew how deeply we were suffering, but He spoke of His own pain, asking, “Why do you feel for Chanji? Who is he to you? It is I who should feel for him. You have no idea what a loss he is to Me.” Baba's sadness over Chanji's death emphasized to us as that as Avatar He experienced everything on the human level as well as from His God state. As God, Baba felt the loss of no one, but as man, He was affected in the same ways we were.

Arnavaaz Dadachanji
Gift of God, page 86



Some Thoughts From A Pilgrim by Jeff Maguire

Arriving in Ahmednagar on August 9th, we were met by Bhau who had visited Mani that morning. "She no longer exists for the world," Bhau told us. "She exists only for Baba."

For the next nine days, pilgrims and mandali waited helplessly, wondering how long Baba would have her linger. During visits to Meherazad we would gather on the veranda not far from where she lay unconscious and inquire about her in hushed tones.

There was sadness and concern to be sure, but there was also humor, which of course is how the Lord's ebullient sister would have wanted it. Reminiscences about her inevitably result in smiles and often hearty laughter. As Ted Judson remarked, "She was the life of the party."

The seven women who served as her care-givers were referred to as the seven dwarfs, guarding over Snow White asleep in her glass case while she awaited her Prince.

"She was not in a coma," Bhau would later say. "She was with Baba. Baba was coming closer and closer in order to bestow His final kiss."

On the day of His final kiss, events happened quickly. At the Samadhi, Ted had just sung the last song of morning arti when Alan Wagner arrived to announce Mani's passing. Appropriately, the last song had been *Happy Trails*.

There was a unique atmosphere at breakfast, a mingling of sadness over our loss and joy for Mani's moment of triumph and reunion with her Beloved Brother.

At 10 A.M. the buses took us to Meherazad where we filed past Mani who lay on a stretcher in front of Baba's chair in Mandali Hall. She was covered by garlands, wrapped in a yellow and pink flowered cloth, with a deep rose-pink chiffon scarf about her head. She looked radiant, her face luminous and white like marble. There was no trace of the illness

which had caused so much discomfort to her in recent months. Some noted the hint of a smile. I half-expected her to sit up and laugh, eyes twinkling, as one by one we knelt and bowed our heads at her feet while Ward Parks and others offered songs.

After an hour, Aloba herded the pilgrims back onto the buses. (Yes, even for an occasion like this, Aloba was loudly adamant!)

The events of the afternoon and the lighting of Mani's pyre are described beautifully in Heather's account, *Mani's Reunion*. Many of us stayed up late that night to sit by the fire. It had been a long and extraordinary day and we could only wonder about its significance.

In the days that followed, a trench was dug on the east side of the Samadhi (the opposite side from where Mehera is buried). Alongside Mani's place beside Baba, the ground has been prepared for the eventual interment of Goher, Meheru, Katie,



Korshed and Mansari, the work being done now so as not to disturb the area in the future.

Throughout this time, I kept thinking of a story Mani told us on the veranda at Meherazad three years ago. She was remembering her 1952 flight to the U.S. Baba had told her that this one time she could drink whatever she liked on the airplane. She knew the names of two drinks: a bloody mary and a martini. Since the former sounded rather crude, she ordered a martini (which she knew of from the Nero Wolfe books she'd read to Baba).

"It came in the most beautiful glass," she sighed, raising the imagined vessel in her hand and describing it so vividly that we all saw it clearly. "Like a stork standing on one leg..." But her delight turned to revulsion when "I noticed there was this strange green thing in it. I thought it was a bug! I called the stewardess over: 'Excuse me, but what's this in my martini?'"

"Why, that's an olive," the stewardess replied.

"Yes, of course," Mani responded with as much savoir faire as she could muster. At this point, we were all in hysterics, for Mani's gift of narrative had brought each detail of the scene to wonderful life and now we all laughed along with her.

"Did you like the martini?" a pilgrim asked.

"I loved it," she said. "It was delicious."

"Did you have another one?"

"No. Just that one," she smiled contentedly. "But I've tucked the memory of it under my pillow where I'll keep it always."

What memories of Mani there are tucked beneath pillows all over the world. How lucky we are to have drunk from that glass.

Experiences the Soul Must Go Through

by Mani S. Irani



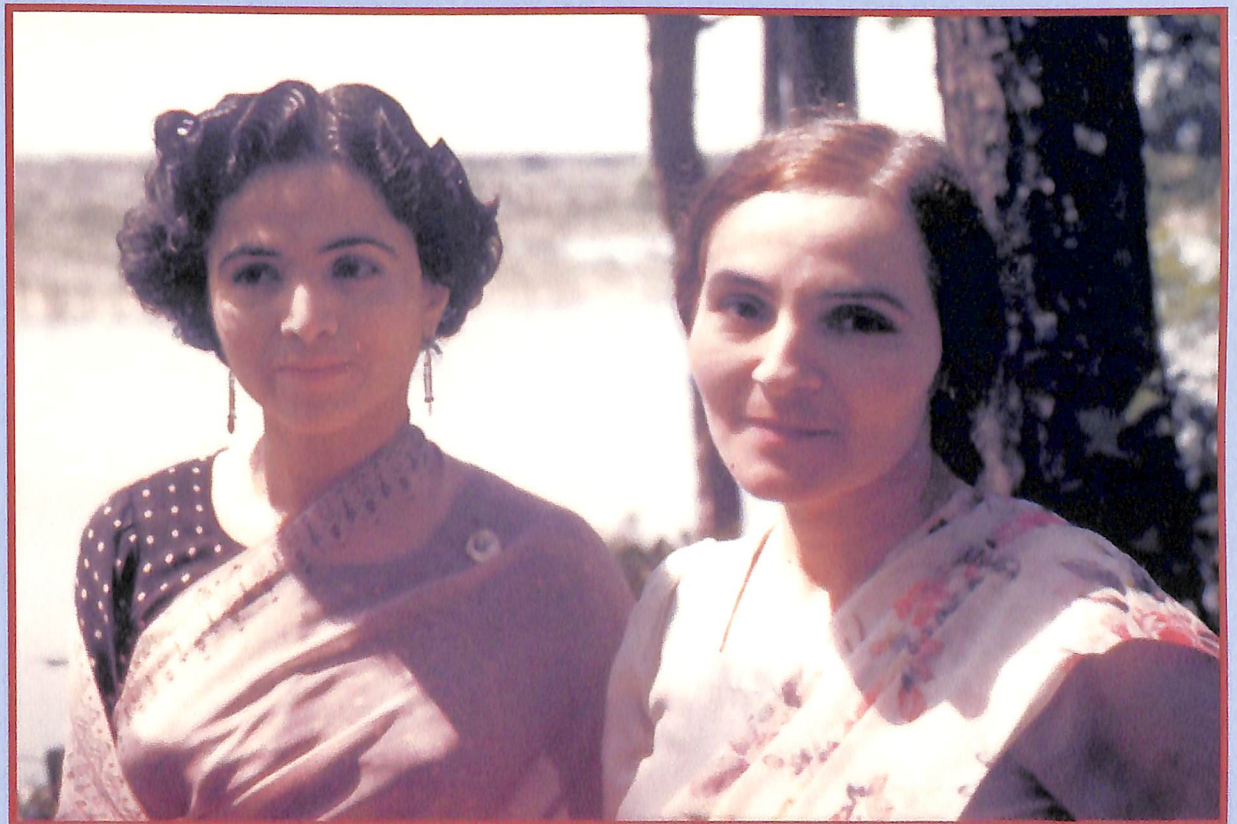
Your point about cancer and illness interested me—it is of course the old point of our lack of understanding that the enlightened ones have. We always see it from the *material* point of view, and they (experiencing creation as illusion) must act for the *spiritual* good. It's far from the Divine Plan to have no illness of the body—after all it is one of the main mediums of experiencing pain which is the opposite of pleasure. Duality (however illusory) expresses itself in dual experiences, and misery is as much in the Divine Plan as is so-called happiness. They are both *experiences* the soul must go through some time or another.

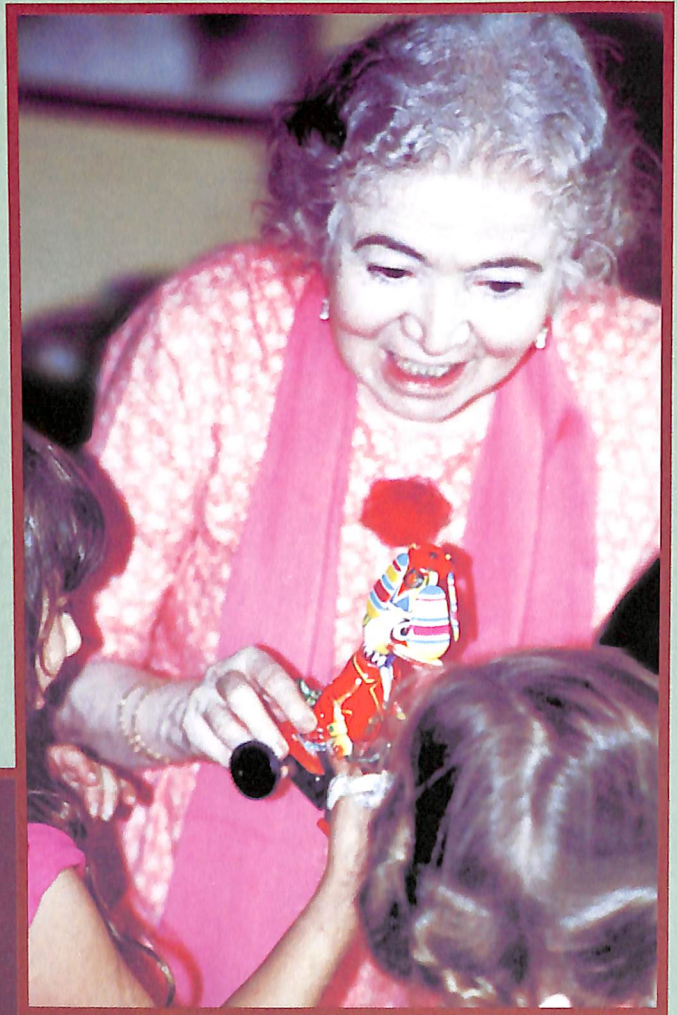
Another way I look at it is this: even with all the misery there is, it is so difficult to 'turn away' from the world—well-nigh impossible to be disgusted sufficiently to turn to God alone. Just imagine if everything were fine and serene, no illness, no

misery, we'd stick to our ignorance like leaches, and such a stagnant way would hardly serve the development of the ever-awakening soul! I remember

someone remarking, "Why if there are spiritual masters in India don't they do something about the backwardness and disease of the country?" Just as though they were a crowd of missionaries, or a society for the prevention of disease and dirt! I replied that although they did a sweeping job it was not on germs, but on our ignorance, and even if they do not completely wipe it out, at least they jolt us enough from our self-satiated complacency of accepting our illusory existence as the only and all.

Letters From the Mandali
ed. Jim Mistry, p. 37
excepted from letter dated
27 December 1955











19 August, 1996 Meherabad, India

by Billy Goodrum

I woke up right at seven that morning. I pulled myself out of bed and instead of going up to Baba's tomb I went into the reading room and began reading *God-Brother*. Mehrnoush Lorkalantari came in and was singing *Open Up the Door*. At this point neither one of us knew that only minutes before Baba's dear sister Mani had rejoined her Eternal Beloved. I heard the news, which had been announced at the tomb, a short while later when I walked into the dining hall for breakfast.

Although I had resigned myself to the fact that Mani was not going to regain her health and wanted her to be with Baba, it was hard to accept that Mani, in all her love, joy and complete and utter devotion to Baba, was no longer going to be there shining like the sun and lighting up Meherazad. By Baba's grace, the day was to proceed in such a rapid manner that any self-indulgent feelings were to be swept away and overwhelmed by the moving and powerful events that were to follow.

We boarded the bus and went to Meherazad at 11:00 that morning. Mani was lying on a stretcher on the floor in front of Baba's chair in Mandali Hall, her head toward the window and feet towards the door. She looked very beautiful and peaceful. We entered from the rear of the Hall and one by one we had an opportunity to bow down in love and respect to the one who had freely given so much joy to us all. Before departing Meherazad that morning we performed Baba's arti.

Mani's body was brought up Meherabad Hill that afternoon. The air felt electric, really almost a wild

quality, as people rushed to get close to the Samadhi when Mani's body was taken in. After being laid beside Baba and Mehera, Mani was moved to the Mandap where her body was profusely garlanded by all. Throughout all this there were many shouts of Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai, and the energy and intensity began to build. I looked

I looked for a long time at the truly staggering beauty of Mani's face. It was glorious. There was a feeling of Baba's tremendous power and energy present...

for a long time at the truly staggering beauty of Mani's face. It was glorious. There was a feeling of Baba's tremendous power and energy present while at the same time a certain underlying peace permeated the whole atmosphere.

Everyone came down the hill as Mani's body was taken to the cremation grounds at lower Meherabad. It was here that the intensity built to its height as many people attempted to get as close as possible for one last look at dear Mani's physical form. The women mandali each put flowers on Mani's body. Then a long line formed as everyone was given the final opportunity to put more roses on the growing mountain of flowers and garlands.

Finally, the area immediately surrounding the foot-high brick platform on which Mani's body rested was cleared and large logs were arranged around her body in a manner resembling a log cabin, concealing her body. The energy continued to

rise as, amidst shouts of Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai, the male members of Mani's family, led by Rustom and Sorab, lit the funeral pyre. I cannot even begin to elaborate on the feelings that were visible on the faces of those present, particularly the women mandali and the men mandali and those who had cared for Mani throughout her illness.

Strains of songs to our Beloved rose to the sky with the white smoke from the pyre. The crowd remained for quite some time, the songs continued on into the night, and the intensity in the air gave way to a deep peacefulness. By eleven or so almost everyone had left except for several young men from the youth Sahavas, a couple of the residents, and myself. I couldn't leave. I couldn't pull myself away. And so I stayed throughout the night as the fire slowly burned.

As the first rays of the sun began to fill the sky, the few of us who had kept the night-long vigil rose from the fire and turned to go up the hill for morning arti. We all looked at each other. We knew that even if we didn't see each other for years after this that we now shared a closeness that could be rekindled with a mere mention of this incredible night under the stars with Mani. The experience had made us friends for life—a sweet gift from Baba's dear sister Mani, a gift from a beautiful soul who had spent her entire life giving and giving more and more of Baba's Love to all who knew her. We are all blessed indeed to have had the wonderful experience of knowing, loving and being loved by our Lord's dear sister, Mani Irani.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!



More From Pilgrims...

Ron Greenstein
El Cerrito, California

Prayer to Baba

Beloved Baba help us to be stronger, for one of Your great towers of strength is no longer here with us to uphold You.

Beloved Baba, help us to be more responsible, for one You could always count on has left us in order to heed Your call for her to come home.

Beloved Baba, help us to better bring You into focus, for Your shining, sparkling lens is no longer here to bring us closer to You and clarify Your love for us.

Beloved Baba, help us to be more loving to all we meet, for now our sweet sister in God has left us with this enormous treasure, grown so large as a result of a life spent in giving it away freely, creatively, unreservedly.

Beloved Baba we will help You as we help one another in remembering Your lover, Your disciple, Your servant, Your sister, for through our remembering Your Mani we will be pleasing You, because remembering her is to remember You.



Mani, during one of her last appearances on Mehera's porch

Wendy Ward
Long Beach, California

Last year after Mani had been ill and had had the shunt inserted, I found myself with a strong urge to go to India, expressly to visit her. I felt that I would probably never get the opportunity to see Mani again if I didn't go quickly. Of course, I found out after I got there that the main reason for visiting was for Baba's darshan.

When Mani greeted me in Meherazad, I inquired about her health and told her that I had been concerned. With a look of great patience, she put both hands on my shoulders and faced me squarely. Her gaze was so intense I felt she was looking into my soul. She radiated such light and beauty and joy that I was mesmerized. She said, "I am perfectly fine. You can see that, can't you, Wendy?" All I could answer was, "Yes, Mani, you are absolutely fine." I believe that Mani did not want me to worry over her illusory form. She really was absolutely radiant. This gift from her helped to ease the pain I feel from her physical loss.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

Michael Shepard
Southington, Connecticut

Mani,

Keeper of most-precious mani-fold letters of family,

Truly you were Baba's instrument, getting right to a visitor's core within the first minute,

as lightly and casually as an aside.

Picking up the end of a strand woven into Baba's Family Tapestry, like the thread of a conversation after one of those inevitable five-minute interruptions,

though it really might have been years,

You reminded anyone that Home is there.

And still you are

And still you do

in Baba

in Love



Steven Barrie-Anthony

El Cerrito, California

Dear Mani,

When I was eight years old, in the year 1990, I first stepped foot on Indian soil. I was surprised at the differences in the two cultures, and was interested in the many different customs and ways. My mother, my father and I all settled into the Pilgrim Center, and I quickly joined a group of kids around my own age, and began to play with them. I remember going up to Baba's Tomb, and listening as many different voices sang songs to their Beloved Baba. I sometimes joined in with the melodic tones of the singing voices, and sometimes I just sat there, listening and watching and thinking, breathing in the heavy Indian air.

One day, my father took me to bathe Mohammed. At that time, I did not realize how lucky I was to be able to bathe a mast. I am very happy that Baba gave me that special opportunity. There are many memories that I have of India during that visit, and I could go on much longer talking about them, but one of my most special memories from that time is a memory of you. You were so kind and caring to me and the other children; you even took some toys for us to play with, and then you smiled and played with us.

One day, you and the other women Mandali were coming to visit Baba's Samadhi, and my mother and father and I rushed to be there with you. We saw you and the other women Mandali striding toward us, and I rushed to your side. We have a picture of that moment: I am standing next to you, my baggy shirt pushed by the wind, and you with the largest smile adorning your face, striding across the land toward our Beloved's Samadhi. You were carrying a beautifully beaded purse that day, with many colors adorning it. It held

my attention, and it was then that I asked you, "What have you got in that purse, Mani?"

You responded with grace to my flat-out question, stopping completely to give me my answer. You even took



Steven Barrie-Anthony with Mani
1990

out the contents of your purse, showing it to me with loving care. It was so gracious of you to stop for this little boy on your way to Baba's tomb. With all the people around you, in front and behind, you took the time to satisfy my young curiosity completely, without any rush or annoyance. I have always remembered that, and I think I always will. When you had finished explaining and showing me the contents of your purse, I exclaimed, "I really like that

purse, Mani!"

We then walked a few paces, but after just that few I once again exclaimed, "I really like that purse, Mani!" You responded in a caring manner, and then told my parents that since I liked that purse so much, they might want to think about buying me one; there was one left at the Trust Office, and you told them how much you thought it cost. Then the day went on, and after a while we took our leave.

After we left the Samadhi, we went into town shortly, and then returned to the Trust Office so that we could catch a rickshaw. Just as we were pulling out of the compound, we saw your head sticking into the rickshaw! You were running alongside of the rickshaw as it was pulling out of the compound! You said, "Oh, the purse! The purse! You want to get that purse for Steven!" The rickshaw was quickly stopped, and we hopped out. My mother, my father and I all followed you into the Trust Office store where you showed us the purse for sale. It was more expensive than you had previously thought, so you graciously offered to pay the extra! You handed me the purse and said, "When I use my purse, I'll think of you. When you use yours, you think of Baba. You can keep your Baba treasures in it."

I had a wonderful trip that summer, and I have many memories from that time, but I think that I will always remember how kind you were to me, and how loving and playful you were. When I picture you in my mind, the image that comes is you with your radiant smile, walking toward the tomb, to visit your Beloved.

Thank you for your kindness,

With love,
In Meher Baba's infinite love.



Nancy Wall Tucson, Arizona



Baba's Jewel

Of the many photographs I have of Mani, taken over the past seventeen years, one I particularly treasure is a simple shot of the two of us standing together, smiling at one another. I have many better pictures of her; this one is dark, a bit grainy. But it's the first one, and it always reminds me of how quickly dear Mani's irrepressible playfulness and humor overcame my initial discomfort in Meherazad.

I was in India the summer of 1979 at the insistence of a friend whose certainty of my connection to Baba was far stronger than mine. The previous two years had been filled with loss—and I had agreed to make the trip mostly out of curiosity. On the July day the photograph was taken, I had ridden the bus to Meherazad, thousands of miles away from home and friends, filled with apprehension. When we arrived, I stood around feeling as though I ought to be somewhere else. Almost anywhere else. Mani, of course, immediately tuned into my uneasiness, and she came over and took my hand. Like a little girl, she looked up at me with that now familiar twinkle in her eyes and asked, "Would you like to see my tortoise? My nephews gave him to me."

I was instantly charmed. How did Mani know I loved animals? All my insecurity disappeared as we played, like two children, with the tortoise. Mani was so easy to be with—she reminded me of one of my aunts. (This aunt, I later learned, knew all about Meher Baba and was delighted to hear that I'd been in India with His followers.) Despite my insistence that I was not a Baba lover, Mani, from the very beginning, felt like family.

Just over two years later I returned to India, due in part to Mani's willingness to take a risk. My persistent Baba friend had convinced me to apply for a sabbatical from the college where I was teaching so that I could again go to India with him in the fall of 1981. I needed a project to qualify for the sabbatical, and Mani, to my surprise, agreed to let me direct the play for Mehera's birthday. Even though I was still certain I was not a Baba lover, I was overjoyed by the prospect of the play, and I very much looked forward to seeing friends from my first trip, particularly Mani.

Working on Mehera's birthday play was a powerful experience, never easy, but the process broke the last threads of my resistance to Baba. When, at the end of my two-month stay, I admitted to Mani that He had won me over at last, she didn't seem particularly surprised. "Oh, I knew you'd be back," she said with great conviction.

Over the years I watched again and again as Mani greeted newcomers, welcoming them to Baba's home. She always seemed to know instinctively just the right way to relate to each one. Mani means "jewel" in Sanskrit. And like a jewel, Baba's little sister caught the light of His love and reflected it to all who came in contact with her.



Sue Jamison:

El Cerrito, California

There was a delightful time in the early '70s when you were in Mandali Hall at just the right time of day for hand shadows. You proceeded to delight the spellbound pilgrims with an impromptu performance of all kinds of animals, birds, and fish—complete with dialogue—that you magically made appear on the wall. All of this, using only your hands, fingers, and voice! At that time there were no children in the room, but every adult there was captivated by this wonderful, spontaneous concert. To this day, I have tried to duplicate what you did, and have never been able to get my fingers and hands to work together the way yours did. Another gift from the God Man to His baby sister.

Betty Lowman:

Palo Alto, California

When our family went to India in 1987, we descended noisily on the Pilgrim Center. There were five of us in all and our three kids happily joined with all the other kids there in August. Because we couldn't tear ourselves away, we extended our three-week stay to six weeks. All the Mandali were wonderful to us. We loved it when you called our daughter Shireen "Mummy" whenever you saw her. Gary, our 11 year-old, was just under the wire age-wise and got to go to tea with Mehera. It was a wonderful visit.

When the day to leave finally



came, we went to Meherazad with the other pilgrims, said all our heartfelt good-byes and then, just as we were to leave, I peeked into Mandali Hall for one last quick wave. You were sitting with your back to me, but turned around and said "Oh!" and got up. Then everybody else in Mandali Hall got up too, and they all followed us out to the bluebird, sending us off with much love and a hearty chorus

of Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai! Our hearts were full to overflowing as the little bus bounced down the dirt road to town.

Sarah Dwyer:

Menlo Park, California

For me, a memorable experience with you involves a walk in Meherazad garden and a pair of earrings. One day I was blessed with the good fortune to walk with you through the garden. As I looked at you it occurred to me that here, indeed, was the most beautiful woman I had ever laid eyes on. You appeared to be a queen, an angel and also my "big sister," all rolled into one. How can I describe the aura of purity and joy that surrounded you, like a fine mist of invisible light.

I then noticed your earrings—a pair of deep red ruby pendants. They looked like something right out of the Italian Renaissance. I commented on the charming ruby earrings. You responded by telling me, in a light-hearted tone of voice, that the earrings were only cheap plastic ones found in the bazaar. "Baba," you said, "would never allow us to wear real jewelry." After I recovered from this surprise, I wondered what it was that could make those cheap fakes look so rich, so brilliant. Your regal demeanor is such that ordinary mundane objects become like precious jewels through coming into contact with you.

I feel myself to be like those plastic bazaar earrings. I thank Beloved Baba from the bottom of my heart for transforming me, for purifying me by the vision of His exquisite beauty that shines so brightly in His dear, dear Mani. I thank the Divine Alchemist for turning our dross into gold.

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!



Steven Slemenda

Silverton, Oregon

Among the family of Baba lovers worldwide, only a relative few were blessed to know Mani on any kind of intimate level, but surely all who met her were touched in some way by her exuberance, her charm, her wit. Much more significantly, in her presence one so strongly felt the love for Baba and the love from Baba that she exuded.

To me, Mani epitomized the essence of spiritual poise. Her life was so completely harmonized in love and service to Baba as a beautiful instrument of His glory—an Aeolian harp through which (in the words of “Adi’s Prayer”) His “breath of joy, breeze of compassion and wind of strength” played a continuous serenade.

That sweet essence of poise is preserved in the memory of the last time I saw Mani, the summer of 1994, at Samadhi. The women mandali had come for their monthly arti and were seated in the portico as various lovers sang and played. One family, a father, mother and two girls, launched into a song that had several verses. Early into the song, the older girl was stricken with a case of hic-coughs that she could not suppress. In her love for Baba she continued to sing, and every several seconds through the song a very conspicuous “Hic!” punctuated the tender words and beautiful melody. I felt so embarrassed for her, as I’m sure did others. But after a brief pause when the song concluded, Mani said to her so gently, with a glimmer in her eye, “You are drunk with Baba’s love!” Everyone laughed, all the tension immediately evaporated, and Mani had turned an awkward moment into a gesture of praise to the Master. That’s poise, I thought. That was Mani.

David McNeely

Los Angeles, California

Years ago, I visited Meherabad as a favor for a friend. Knowing just about nothing of this Avatar Meher Baba, I bowed down at His samadhi rather with an attitude of “What the hell?” Two days later, on the morning of His birthday, I got clubbed over the head and pierced through the heart by His love.

God because I wanted to, in any natural moment. That it wasn’t something I had to *aspire* to do, it was something I was already doing! Learning sometimes seems easy and magical when the teacher has authority. From that day my concept of spirituality changed: what had been discipline became joy, and will became volition. Mani had authority.

Ursula Van Buskirk

Walnut Creek, California

When we first brought Eric to India he was three years old. You, Mani, sweetly offered him M&Ms. Eric, who never ate anything unfamiliar to him, refused to take them. I assumed that you thought that he was a Berkeley health-food kid, and told him that the candies were vitamins. Of course, you then succeeded in introducing him to M&Ms and Eric loves them to this day.

On a stopover in Paris on the way to India, a man near the Eiffel tower was selling paper birds based on a design by Leonardo da Vinci. We bought one for you and you invited us to come out early the next morning to witness its flight. All the Mandali were assembled in front of the clinic when we arrived. The bird’s rubber band was wound up and off it went right on top of the clinic roof. A servant boy had to climb up and get it down. We played with the bird until the bus came. We were so happy to share in this entertainment with you and bring you this toy.

We remember the many charming Origami things you made. One that stands out was a whole group of nuns you made one day and put in front of Baba’s picture. When I told Alexandra this story, it made her think of your childhood story of knowing that you would be a *real* nun, a nun for Baba.



Some days later, still entirely bewildered about what it all might mean, I asked Mani privately just what I was supposed to *do* now. She said, “Just remember Baba, and say His Name two, maybe three times every day.” Well that was easy; I was already doing more than that whether I wanted to or not! But in this moment I spent with her, she gave me a lifetime lesson on loving Baba.

I was a stranger without stature of any kind; yet Mani, the sister of God, allowed herself to be so wonderfully simple and available to very little me. She taught me that I could approach



Louise Barrie

El Cerrito, California

On our last visit to India, in 1991, I had a bit of an obsession about what seemed to be the pilgrims taking too much, wanting too much from the mandali. I had the feeling that people should back off and give you all a little more peace.

Then, on our last day at Meherazad, when saying good-bye to you, you hugged me and as I looked at you, your face became Baba's. I just stood there in this embrace, looking into Baba's face, Baba's eyes. And I realized that it's His love that all of us pilgrims are clamoring for from those of you who spent so much time with Him. And I also realized that He had given you all so much love that it was right for you to pass it along to us, that, in a sense, you owed it to us, that it's what Baba wants.

And also, I remembered that when we return from a pilgrimage there, that so many people here are clamoring to get together with us right away. They all want that fresh scent of love. And, by the same token, we don't have the right to say, "No, I'm too tired to get together with you." We owe it to them to get together and tell our stories of the trip. And then they pass it on.

Just the other evening at the Discourse meeting someone was there who had just recently spoken to a pilgrim upon her return from India. He told us some of what she had said and we all clung to every word. There was such a strong feeling of Baba's love and presence filling the room. And, of course, Mani, you were much in our hearts that night, as you are always these days. Thank you for passing on so much of what He gave you.

All His Love.



Cindy Lowe

Oakland, California

One day at Meherazad I was sitting in the caravan playing classical guitar. Just as I began to play a particularly lively piece by Ruis Pipo, you appeared outside the door, listened for a moment and began dancing to the music. It was the most beautiful dance I've ever seen. When I finished the piece, I told you it was called *Danza*. You said, "You see! I

knew that!" and went on your way. I will always remember how you looked, perfectly framed by the doorway, dancing and smiling at me while I played.

I also remember a time when you played sitar and sang in Mandali Hall for another western musician and me, when no one else was there. It was the most musical and magical singing and playing that I have ever heard. I wanted the time to go on forever.



Hughie Macdonald

Menlo Park, California

I Gave Mani the Power

Did you know that Baba gave Mani the POWER? Yes, she was given the power to read minds and divine thoughts by Baba Himself. I've forgotten the precise details, but one day He gave some answers to Mani which she was to memorize and speak out, one at a time, upon getting the proper secret signal from Baba. Later Baba announced to the group that he had given the POWER to Mani. Baba then tested Mani's powers by having her give answers to various questions asked by the group. The question would be posed, Baba would give a secret signal, and Mani would give the signed-for answer. The group was impressed and became fully convinced that Mani had the POWER. Many in the group became jealous and were sad that Baba hadn't given them the power also. I don't remember if Baba let them in on the joke or not, but Mani later realized that the trick was more magical than she had at first thought. For Baba had to know the questions in advance in order to give answers for her to memorize! Real magic disguised as a trick? And lots of fun too!

Not to be outdone and forever addicted to fun, I, the Great Humble Hughdini the third, aka Hubris Hudibras Hughdini, wondered if I, too, could give Mani the POWER. I was at quite a disadvantage, not being God and all, but I persevered and came up with a secret method to allow Mani to read the minds and thoughts of pilgrims during a Sunday show-and-tell. While a good magician never tells his secrets, I can tell you that the mind-reading did require

sharp eyesight on Mani's part. Mani is an incredible actress and her every move gave me lessons in presentation,



so I was feeling quite confident that our rather unrehearsed trick would succeed.

The trick went just fine for the first part, and then Mani began having some difficulty when the next phase required that I hold some objects rather close to her. Making some natural excuse it seems she now had to put on her glasses in order to fully read the thoughts! Not yet 40, I had not anticipated that the ability to see close up diminishes as presbyopia sets in. I felt that the trick was exposed and became nervous and began to rush things, which made it even harder for Mani to have the POWER.

We finished fine and, to my surprise, I discovered from the many comments that no one had noticed that Mani

needed her glasses in order to read minds. We were all having too much fun—Mani made it fun—but it sure gave me a test. And a fond memory, to boot.

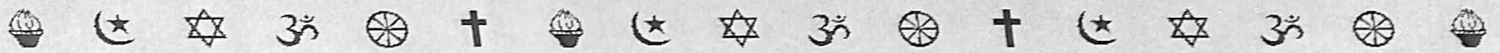
Mary Marino

Portland, Oregon

In 1993, Mani described looking closely at Baba's face on the tree outside of Mehera's window, not all that long after its appearance. She discovered that the bit of bark forming Baba's nose appeared to be loosening. She grew concerned over what to do. Dare she interfere with this image of Baba that He created? Dare she risk the loss of His nose? How would Mehera feel were that to happen? Of course, Mani brought the

problem to Baba.

The next day, still very concerned, she went outdoors to look at the tree. And there, [can't you just hear Mani's voice saying "and there, before my eyes"] she saw that Baba's nose was as if glued in place by a spider that makes a thick, sticky web. She had "knitted" her way under the bark, successfully gluing it to the tree. Baba had taken care of the situation fully: Mani's dilemma was resolved and Baba's image on the tree was preserved for Mehera's continued upliftment and enjoyment.



Michael Campagna

South Pasadena,
California

I felt very blessed to have met Mani. When Deborah and I performed for her she said she was reminded of quwalli music. She got out her sitar and tapes and taught us songs, and even gave me her sitar and had me keep it in my room for three days. She would wink at me and say, "Are you sure you never played this before?" The best thing was one day she sat in the garden and sang in my ear. I have no idea how long because time had stopped.

One day we were all sitting on Mehera's porch. It was very hot and she was not pleased with the entertainment—Jamie Newell was singing his beautiful song about how Mehera loves Baba and Mehera began weeping.

Mani slugs me in the arm and says, "Can't you see what's happening? Do something silly." I don't know why but I began singing *Every time I go to town the boy's keep kickin' my dog around* in a silly Appalachian voice. So Mani holds her nose and starts singing along and all the women mandali and Mehera hold their noses and sing along. Now Mehera is happy and laughing. Then Mani turned it into a medley and began singing *Old McDonald*. When she did her first animal imitation—a dog—I actually looked around for the dog. Every animal she imitated was stunningly accurate.



Alexandra Cons

Kensington, California

I have many memories of your bright, sparkling humor and your ability to charm and entertain us. One of my own sweet memories of your loving concern is from my visit in 1987. At that time, my dear friend Kay, who was only in her 40s and had two young children, was dying of lung cancer. I was shocked and saddened by this and had brought her photograph to Baba's samadhi to pray about her. I was very focused on wishing for Kay to feel that Beloved Baba was with her. Although I felt shy about asking to meet with you and taking your time away from your busy Trust work, I also felt that I should tell you about Kay's illness. Your response was so loving, instantly putting me at ease and assuring me that you *did* want to know what was happening in Baba's American family. I also felt especially blessed in your telling me

that the following day, when you and the other women mandali were going for Baba's arti at the samadhi, you would tell Mehera and that you and she, too, would pray to Baba on Kay's behalf. When I later spoke to Kay's husband, he told me how inspiring Kay's passing had been and how radiant she was in Baba's love. I knew that Baba had been with her and that you had helped Kay in her journey home to Him. This experience, and your Baba-filled love, touched me deeply.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!



Cynthia Barrientos

Seattle, Washington

In November, 1994, I made my first pilgrimage to Meherabad. As a new Baba lover, I felt pretty special since I had experienced a number of vivid visions of Him. Without much humility, I shared the dreams with anyone who asked about my coming to Baba. As each person oooed and ahhhhed, my ego grew and GREW, and GREW! In this boasting, I began to separate myself from others and ultimately lose my sweet connection with Baba.

When I arrived at Meherazad, Mani approached me and said with a twinkle in her eye, "So, here is our dream girl!" I felt pleased that she had heard about my visions. Knowing that she, too, had seen Baba many times since He dropped His body, I believed that the two of us were part of an exclusive circle. She moved in, close to my face and whispered, "I want to hear about your dreams. Come see me on Tuesday and we can share." Now my ego was getting REALLY huge, knowing that Baba's sister was wanting to hear my stories.

When Tuesday rolled around, I imagined a private meeting, sitting quietly with Mani on the porch and secretly telling her about seeing, hearing, smelling and touching Baba. As I sat on the veranda steps waiting, a woman came rushing across Mehera's garden, spotted me, ran over and said with urgency, "Mani is WAITING for you! She wants you in Mandali Hall right away!"

Yikes! Mandali Hall? Realizing her mischief, I hurried over to a VERY crowded room and saw that she had reserved that space on the floor, just to her right, for me. She grinned with that familiar twinkle in her eye, motioned for me to come and sit, then said, "Now, about those visions..."

Thud! My heart raced and I felt an embarrassing glow fill my cheeks. "What happened to our exclusive

meeting?" I thought with momentary disappointment. As soon as I sat down next to her, I completely understood the concept of "the One in the many". I realized that I AM a part of a very special circle that includes ALL of humanity! I silently asked Baba to help me share His visions as gifts I have received and to communicate in a way that allows HIM to let us know how we all get to "wake up" in a variety of ways. For me, it took vivid sensations to know that He is the God in us all, who I long to see and be with forever. Thank you Baba, for placing Mani in my life at that moment.

Ron Greenstein

El Cerrito, California

Jai Baba! One day in Meherazad in the fall of '73, the pilgrim population reached a new high (in numbers). This was before Pilgrim Center busses; and, as the day ended, Meherazad was thick with cars, rickshaws and bicyclists. The routine was to embrace and say "Jai Baba" to each of the mandali members. It was very hectic as I made the rounds to each one. I approached you twice and both times found crowds around you, waiting to say their good-byes. Instead of waiting patiently with the others, I went off to say good-bye to some other mandali. On my third approach I found still yet another batch of pilgrims before you, patiently waiting their turn.

I thought to myself that during this day I had greeted you with a wonderful embrace when I had arrived, and had an opportunity to embrace you another time as well. This, I thought, was quite sufficient, and maybe I should be satisfied; give the others their chance, and just get into my rickshaw to drive away. While sitting there waiting, what do I hear above the din and commotion but my name being called out by Mani in search of me. What could be the problem? You were searching for me because

we had not embraced and said our "Jai Baba's." "Come here," you said to me with open arms, "you're special!"

To be remembered in this manner was truly a glimpse of a love so beyond anything I had ever come in contact with, and it will remain with me forever as a gauge of what Meher Baba has come to give us all.

Greg Dunn

Pleasanton, California

When in India in 1987 I heard from several different people that Baba had said Mani would return for one more lifetime, as a Perfect Master. To this day I have no idea about the reliability of this story, but it matters not: I found myself entertaining the idea while there.

Then one day I happened to be standing outside the Trust office when Mani emerged. She was decidedly businesslike as she did so, and was headed directly for a car which was to take her to some other appointment of an importance I can hardly imagine. Nevertheless, on impulse, I took up stride with her, and with astonishing impertinence related what I had heard about her forthcoming incarnation, then asked: "What I want to know is—can I be part of your circle?"

She stopped and looked straight at me, at which point I knew my entire career as a Baba lover and even Marginally Acceptable Person was on the line. Even now, when I think of that moment, I imagine a laser beam about an inch in diameter emerging from the area of her third eye and melting me into a pool of butter. But all she said (in a queenly British accent and with a tone somehow both gentle and stinging) was: "Ask me then!" She then disappeared into the waiting car. This was the last time I saw Mani alive.



Stephanie Ervin

age 13
Long Beach, California

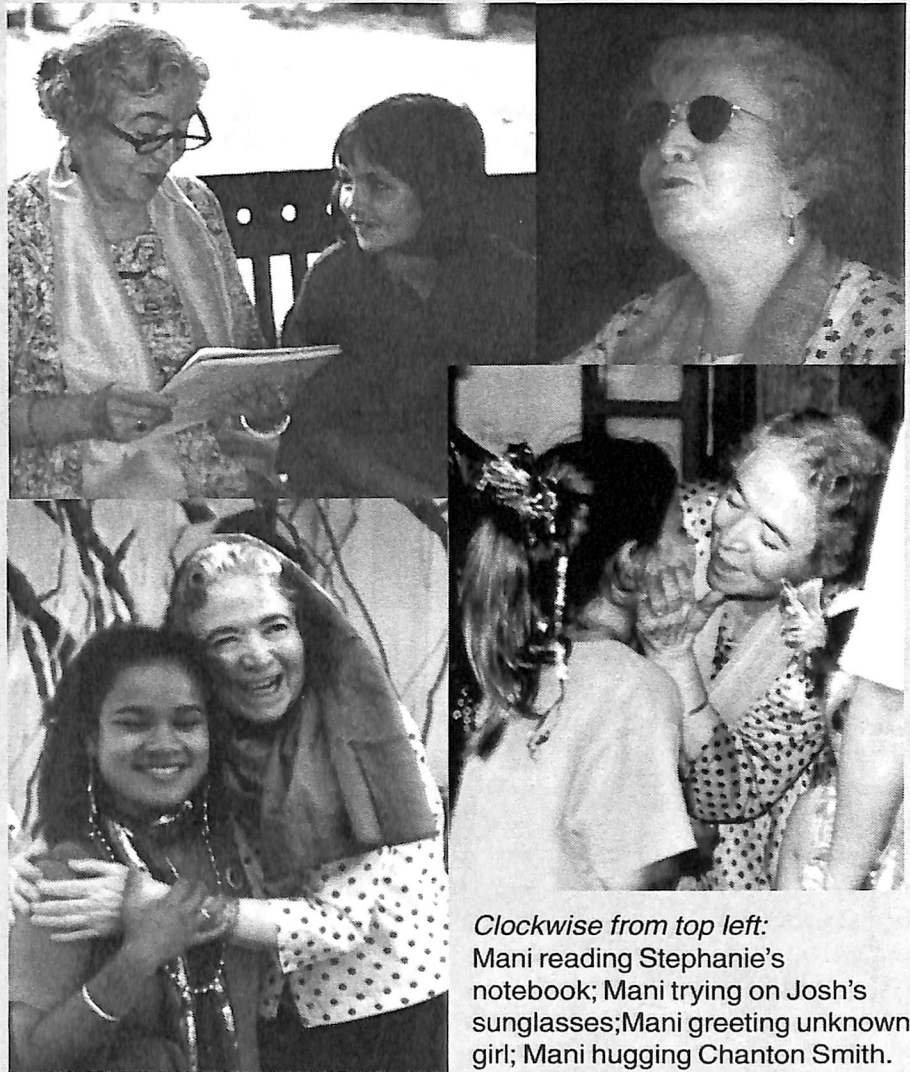
One time when I was in India, I took Mani the notebook where I had written all my dreams about Baba. I remember Mani taking her reading glasses out and reading every word loudly and clearly. I felt special as some people nearby listened to my dreams. It was a feeling I will never forget.

Sometimes when I was on Mehera's porch, Mani would show me the toys there. They were so neat. Mani had a flower with sunglasses that danced. She had wooden tops that she was a master with, spinning them onto my hands. I remember laughing at how much it tickled.

Mani was always a child inside. One time I asked her, "Mani, how old are you?" "Seven hundred years old," she answered my questioning face. "Sometimes I feel as if I'm seven, and sometimes I feel like I am a hundred." She would usually say that I was her walking stick, to help her walk. I remember she used to go with the children and wear a paper hat.

One time when I was there, a friend and I got into an argument. Before I knew it, Mani took us together. She brought us over to a cabinet and said, "Princess... Princes... Oh, yes, it's Baba's children... well, they're here to see you... can we come in?" She opened the cupboard. It was full of toys. She took out the wind-up toys and played with them. Soon more children came, too. Mani told my friend and me that we should be happy.

Mani will always touch my heart. I have these memories of her to keep forever. And her spirit will not die.



Clockwise from top left:
Mani reading Stephanie's notebook; Mani trying on Josh's sunglasses; Mani greeting unknown girl; Mani hugging Chanton Smith.

The following letters were read out to Mani shortly before she left us for Baba. They were much appreciated by the other women mandali.

Josh Lee

age 10
South Pasadena, California

Dear Mani,

It's Josh. I heard about what happened to you. And even though I'll miss you, I feel very happy for you because you are going to Baba. Even though I only met you once, I feel like I've known you and Baba forever, and that is why I'll miss you. When you meet Baba, tell Him about us. Well actually, I guess you don't have

to because Baba already knows. Mani, don't feel scared or worried, and know that we will always remember you and know that you are in the beautiful warm and safe hands of Baba.

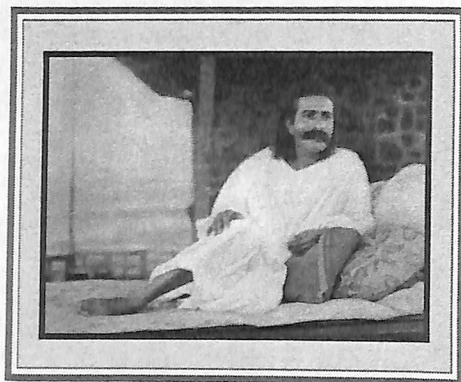
Janani Lee

age 8

Dear Sweet Mani,

I remember India and the wonderful time I spent on the porch with you. I heard that you are not feeling good. I love you very much and I think about you when I pray to Baba. I know that you are not dying, but going to Baba.

I love you! Jai Baba!

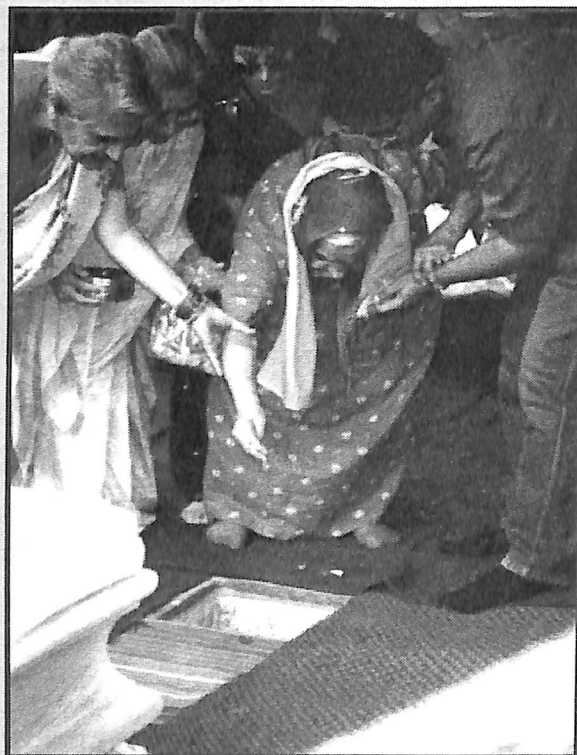


James Wilson
Scotts Mills, Oregon

During our last trip to India in January of '94 I was one of the pilgrims present at Baba's tomb when the Meherazad family came for their regular Samadhi visit. After arti and songs of love to Baba, Mani stopped for a visit at the gadi across from Mansari's kitchen, and a group of us gathered around as she told how, as a young girl, she would be with Baba and Mehera in the beautiful and tranquil atmosphere of the courtyard. Baba would be reclining on the gadi, birds chirping, the breeze fanning Baba, and she described the setting with such tenderness and poetry. One day Baba told them that the time would come when thousands of people would come there from all over the world. Mani's eyes opened wide, so filled with amazement, as she recalled her child-like thoughts wondering how that could ever happen. There she was, some 60 years later, eyes fixed on the gadi, undoubtedly seeing her Beloved resting there, and telling us of that sublime time in their life. Naturally we were all aware that thousands of pilgrims would be arriving soon for the Beloved's Amartithi. Mani folded her hands across her chest, closed her eyes, and bowed to her Beloved.

Program for Mani's Interment

Meherabad, India



Khorshed placing rose petals

7 September 1996, Saturday

Morning

Meherazad open for pilgrims a half day—Buses leave at 12:30 pm.

Evening

Janet & Heather take Mani's Urn in the car to Meherabad. At Meherabad Urn is given to Dolly up the Hill to place in the Samadhi immediately.

Urn is placed in Samadhi at Baba's right-hand side on upper pharsi platform so that pilgrims may offer their respects to Mani after taking Baba's darshan. An attendant is to be on duty to keep watch during the darshan period until Samadhi is

closed.

Urn is to be kept locked inside the Samadhi overnight.

8 September 1996, Sunday

Morning

During the morning cleaning of the Samadhi, Urn is to be placed on Baba's right-hand side window sill. After cleaning, Urn to be kept again on upper platform until 11 A.M. so that pilgrims may pay their respects. (No sitting in Samadhi during this period.) Once again an attendant is to be on duty at all times until the mandali arrive at 11 A.M.



10:50 A.M.

Darshan queue is stopped, and area immediately in front of Samadhi door is cleared of people. Men volunteers to form a line across the portico by Samadhi entrance up to the entrance of the interment site enclosure.

age and physical frailty of some of the mandali members, there is an enclosure around the interment site. As the enclosure is small, only the men and women mandali and Mani's immediate family are to be inside during the interment. Those include: Goher, Meheru, Arnavaz, Katie, Manu,

come forward and drop a few pinches of sacred earth from Baba's and Mehera's resting places into the chamber, along with flower petals and a small garland. *Hari Paramatma* is sung. Ted slides a pharsi lid over the chamber as Baba's JAI is said. Flowers are put on the pharsi lid.



Interment Ceremony

11:00 A.M.

Please do not embrace mandali on this occasion. Women and men mandali arrive from Meherazad. Women mandali go into the Samadhi, for arti and *Beloved God* prayer. After their darshan, women mandali go to Mehera's Shrine, while men mandali go into Samadhi for darshan. After men mandali come out from Samadhi, Jangu brings Mani's Urn from the Samadhi into the enclosure around Mani's interment site, accompanied by the women and men mandali and Mani's family members.

Please Note:

Due to the large crowd, and the

Gulu, Khorshed, Mansari, Roda, Eruch, Bhau, Aloba, Bal, Meherwan, Falu, Jangu, Gulnar, Dara, Amrit, Mehernaz, Meheriar, Arvind, Meherdil, Meherose, Dilruba, Shireen, and Jamshed, only. Ted will be present to position the Urn.

Interment Ceremony

As Jangu holds the Urn, mandali say a few words about Mani. Then Jangu hands the Urn to Ted who places it into the chamber as all call out "AVATAR MEHER BABA ki JAI!"

The Master's Prayer is said.

Each of the mandali and family

Then mandali garland Mani's marble calling out "AVATAR MEHER BABA ki JAI!!!"

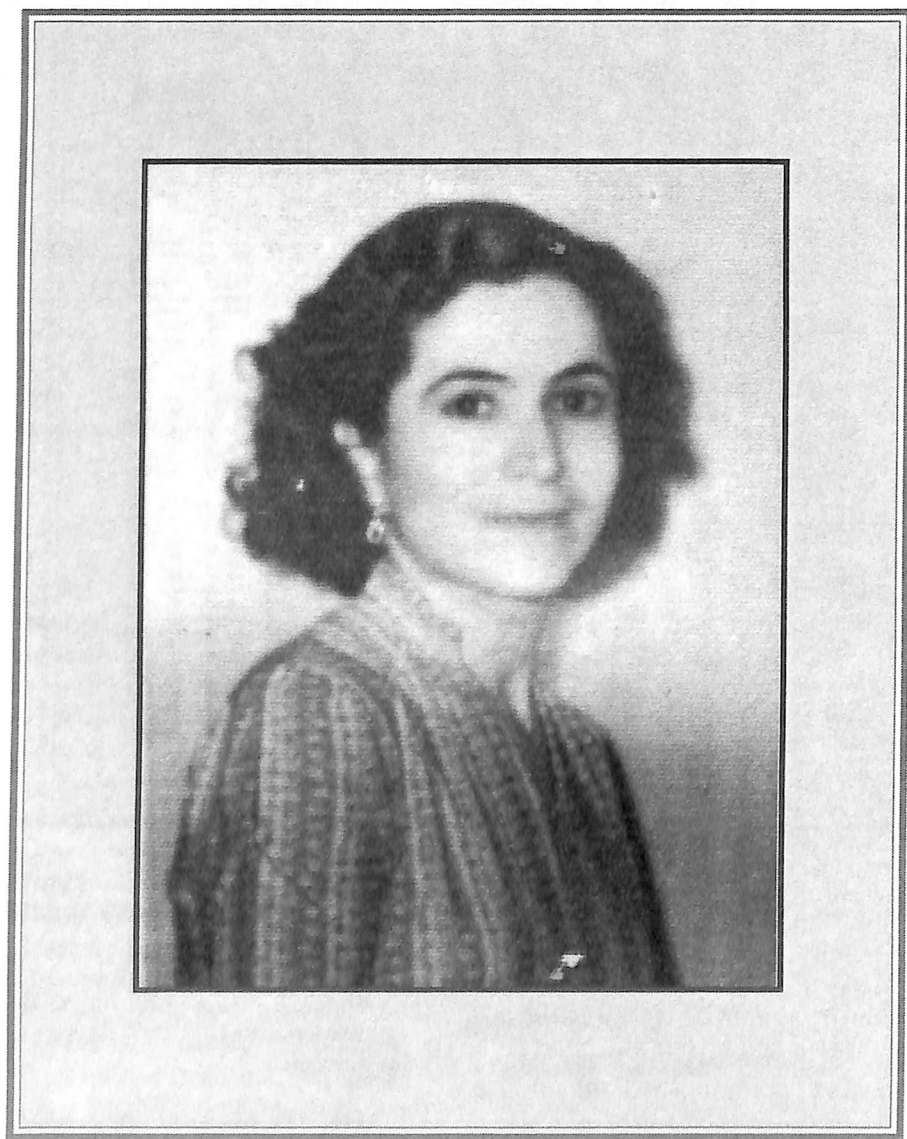
Mandali and family leave the enclosure and mandali depart for Meherazad.

The enclosure is opened so that Baba-lovers may pay their respects to Mani at her resting place. An attendant is to be on duty at the interment site at all times thereafter until Ted can move the permanent stone pieces onto it.

Jai Baba!



I Want to be With You Always



In Toka we were to stay in little huts of "tatta" (bamboo matting). Workers were at it night and day in order to complete them within the deadline given by Baba. Even so, our huts weren't quite ready when we reached Toka. After we got down from the bus, we had to wait outside for a while until the cow-dung flooring had dried. As some last-minute touches were also being given to the roof, there was a bamboo ladder leaning against one of the huts.

The women's quarters always had a closed-in courtyard in the front. Made of tatta, it served to give privacy to the cloistered women mandali. Here in the courtyard the women could step out from their huts without seeing men or being seen by them. Here they would sit to clean the vegetables and grains, and here is where they would keep their rolled-up beddings during the day. Excitement was when it would start to rain and everyone ran out to gather up their things. I loved joining in the squeals and the scamper.

As soon as we could enter the huts, Mehera, Naja, and the other women began setting up things which would be needed for Baba's care and comfort when He came over from the men's side.



by Mani S. Irani

Being children, Myna and I ran out to play in the courtyard. In one corner of the courtyard was a large tamarind tree. Tamarind is a very sour and tart fruit that grown-ups forbid children to eat because it is "bad for the throat." So children are always stealing tamarind from other people's trees, just as my school friends and I did many a time.

Of course, if Baba ever ordered me not to eat tamarind, I would be bound forever by His order. Therefore, Baba must not see me picking up or eating a tamarind. Which is why, as we stood in the courtyard looking at the tempting tamarinds lying under the tree, I looked around carefully to see if Baba was in sight. He was not there. Nobody was there. We were free to gather up the fruit.

But just as I bent down to pick up a tamarind, Myna and I were startled by a clap, loud and clear, coming from behind us!

We turned around sharply and couldn't believe our eyes! There was Baba, sitting on the bamboo ladder which the workmen had left standing against the hut. Baba was sitting on an upper rung of the ladder as naturally and gracefully as though He were in the most comfortable chair.

Not an easy thing to do, I know, I have tried it.

We stared. Baba looked very beautiful with His flowing hair and long sadra. He held out both hands and gestured to us, "Come to Me." We ran over and stood on either side of him.

Baba looked at us lovingly, and turning to Myna His hands gestured, "Ask, ask for anything you want. Ask right now, and I will give it to you."

I stood transfixed. This was truly like a fairy tale where the good fairy waves her wand and says: "Make a wish, I will grant it."

"But here is no fairy," I said to myself. "Here is God Himself saying 'Ask Me for anything you want, and I will give it to you!'"

There was no time to think it over. Myna was taken totally by surprise and was unprepared for making a wish. She said what any Hindu girl of her age might say, especially a girl whose marriage was soon to be arranged by her family. She said, "Baba, I want a very handsome husband and a very grand wedding."

Baba smiled at her and gestured. "Granted." Then He turned to me and

His fingers moved swiftly, saying, "Ask. What is it you want? Ask quick!" It was like Baba was saying, "Right now I'm in the mood to give. Ask, and I'll give you whatever you want."

I looked at Baba and said, "I want to be with You, always."

Baba looked very happy with my reply. "Granted!" He said and hugged me.

This "Make a Wish" game was forgotten after a while. Some years later Myna got married to the most handsome man you can imagine. Wedding guests would ask in wonder, "Where did Patel find such a handsome son-in-law?"

And my wish was granted too. I shall be for ever and ever thankful that I added the word "always" at the end of my wish, "I want to be with you—ALWAYS."

As you can see, you have to be a bit of a lawyer when asking God for a boon. You have to make sure that you don't leave out any clause in your favour.

God-Brother, pages 97-102



Welcome to the Love Street Bookstore

by Dina Snow

Step right in.....

The name has changed, but not the interior!

The most exciting thing to tell you about is that Avatar Meher Baba will soon have a page on the World Wide Web! We are working toward having our catalogue—complete with photos of every book cover—out there in cyberspace where anyone and everyone may encounter it. Since the biggest selling item on the Internet is books, we may have many visits from curious net surfers. It will also afford us the opportunity to provide better service to you because we can add new items as they come to us and keep everything else up-to-date.

Our current paper catalogue is nigh on two years old. We are adding a page of new items to it and will be sending it out to people not currently on our list. When the supply is gone, we will have a new one printed. Look for that some time in the new year.

But for now, the best (and only) way to keep current with the new releases is to read this column... which I know you do.

The first book to tell you about is a paperback from Australia. Ray Kerkhove, who lives on Avatar's Abode in Queensland, conceived the idea, did the research, and wrote it. You may feel that there are ample introduction-to-Baba books around, but there are none quite like this one. It fills a niche that has hitherto been empty. Titled *Avatar Meher Baba, His Life, His Message and His Followers*, it measures roughly 6" X 8", is 60 pages in length, is published by Peter Milne, and sells for \$6.00. Its title is

such a mouthful that it is affectionately known at the Bookstore as the *OZ Book* (OZ being the unofficial abbreviation for Australia.) This new book stands apart from many that have come before it. It contains the events of Baba's life from start to finish, two sections on the status of Meher Baba and the concept of Avatar, His message, key concepts, charts from *God Speaks*, many quotes from Baba, and a section on Baba's methods. Baba's words are used copiously throughout, so a newcomer is not left wondering what He said. The final section is the one that is a radical departure from any other introduction. Ray talks about us! The section on His followers discusses their behavior, their rites and ceremonies ("They don't have any"), how to tell them from other people ("You can't... except perhaps a Baba lover will have photos and books about Meher Baba in his home"). He talks about the trusts and foundations, special days (e.g. Amartithi, etc.), the absence of a hierarchy, and the four main Baba centers. A few reviews from people in high places: "...It's a very very good addition to the Baba literature..." Eruch Jessawala; "...I liked every page..." Bal Natu. I certainly can't top that!

I have just spoken to Elaine Cox, producer of the very long awaited *Song of Huma, part 2*. This fabulous tape is finally available! Five years in the producing, the tape will sell for \$12 even though it's worth much more than that. In case you are not lucky enough to have heard or, better yet, bought part 1 (now completely unavailable), this is the story: In the 1920s Baba wrote many profound

(how could they not be?!) ghazals that were published under the pen name of Huma. The women mandali used to sing these ghazals a cappella, and they sounded very beautiful. In 1991 Elaine took some top quality recording equipment to India and recorded Katie, Mani, and Rhoda Mistry singing many of these ghazals. Elaine then brought the recordings back to the States and started the search for the best of musicians to accompany the women's exquisite voices. This she has done with some unobtrusive yet enhancing flute, tabla, synthesizer, tamboura, and sitar. Elaine reads a translation of each ghazal before the singing starts. The result is beautiful, moving, soulful music. *Song of Huma, part 2* \$12.

Now is the time to be thinking about how many of the Baba calendars you will be wanting for 1997. We should have them in by late October. Christina Arazmo, the very talented graphic artist who designs and produces them, tells us they will be a little larger this year. They are full of wonderful photos of the Beloved with many of His most inspiring messages at the top of the page. All the dates of the important happenings in the life of the Avatar are written in small print at the top of the square for the date, leaving you room to write in your own notes. Try to get your orders in as early as possible. Often, people order one for themselves and then write back to request many more after realizing what great Christmas gifts they make. Operating on a very limited budget, Christina only prints up the quantity she gets prepaid orders for, and I had to put the order in for 300 in Septem-



ber. So please do realize there is a limited quantity. There were so many disappointed people last year! Calendars sell for \$7 each.

From Australia we have beautiful silver Baba medallions made of solid sterling silver—92.5% They have a profile of Baba on one side and Mastery in Servitude, some Indian writing, the date, and the five religious symbols on the back. They were originally cast as gifts for those who had contributed 5,000 rupees or more to the construction of Meher Puri Center in Hamirpur in 1975. One was presented to Mehera who eventually passed it on to Dhun, the sister of Roshan Kerawala. Roshan received it from her and asked John Borthwick of White Cloud Trading Company to have the coin reproduced. This he did, adding the very nice touch of a small loop at the top through which a silver chain can pass. This silver Hamirpur medallion is one pendant that you can keep on permanently, through showers and all. It sells for \$35.

Chris and Pris Haffenden, known locally as *The Still Yet More Chamber Players*, have been getting lots of work lately playing at coffee houses, weddings, bar mitzvahs, etc. Chris plays a very sweet-sounding oboe, and wife Pris plays acoustic guitar, and transcribes and arranges their music. Together they have assembled a very extensive and eclectic repertoire. Whenever they play for us at the Center (when they are not off on a commercial gig somewhere!) it's a delightful addition to the program. In response to our constant requests, they have finally released a tape. It is entitled *Sum-*

meritme Serenade and has some of the most beautiful compositions of Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and others. It runs for 45 minutes and costs \$10.

I hope nobody ever forms a Love Street Bookstore Anonymous for those fortunate souls who are addicted to buying Babaphenalia and Baba books! I received two letters which gave me a such a giggle that I have to share them with you. The first is from Flagg Kris of California,

who writes, "Jai Baba, Dina. I'm writing you from Mexico on vacation, but have had an uncontrollable urge to order another book!"...and proceeded to order yet another copy of *Gift of God* for a friend. This book, the autobiography of Arnavaz Dadachanji, is one of the most compelling books we have ever had the privilege of selling. Arnavaz shares such intimate details of her life with Baba, it takes our breath away. There are things written here that have never been in print before and



Mani with Friend, and two adoring admirers Dina and Diana Snow



give us greater depth and insight into the life of Meher Baba. I have noticed that about 80% of the people who buy a copy for themselves ask me for more to give to their friends. As Nancy Wall just said, "Please send me two more. I can't seem to hang on to them!"

The second funny letter comes from a doctor in North Carolina who was staying at the Pilgrim Center on Avatar's Abode the last time I was home in Australia. (He has been to the Abode seven times. He feels it is that special.) He says in his letter, "When I read your words in the *LampPost*, I hear your voice in my head—loud, bright, and clear as a bell. I listen, and therefore, I buy!" I love it!

Jim Meyer—artist, singer, songwriter, and musician extraordinaire—has shown his Renaissance talent in yet another direction: he has invented *The God Realization Game*. Yes, you too can achieve God realization—and for only \$10!! Be the first on your block! It took Jim about six months to design and produce the game. To check its accuracy, Jim sent the game to Bhauji, who was delighted with it and gave it a great review. Bhau said, "...the board game is really nice, and it does not require any addition, deletion, or alteration. It is quite perfect..."

The game is based upon the explanation of creation and its meaning by Avatar Meher Baba. The goal of *The God Realization Game* is exactly the same as the goal of life—to become God-realized as fast as humanly possible. In this game you achieve God-realization by moving your game piece (which represents your individualized ego-mind or Jeevatma) from the beginning of its apparent creation (or OM point) through its ever-expanding gross consciousness via the evolutionary process (or winding of impressions—sanskaras) until it perceives itself as a human form. Then you move through

the involutory process (or unwinding of impressions) until your soul consciously realizes its true existence as God—Infinite Power, Knowledge and Bliss. The apparent difficulties and adventures within this dream are what makes *The God Realization Game* interesting (and maddening)!

How to play? An infinite number of people can and do play this game more or less continuously, but 2-6 players are suggested with this game board. Players become soul mates, and even though you are trying to beat each other, you will find that the game often goes better if you feel a sense of kinship (and even sympathy) with your fellow players. There are many dangers on the path, so for Heaven's sake, be careful!

We have a new supply of Raphael Rudd's double CD, *The Awakening*. For those of you who didn't catch the last two issues of the *LampPost*, *The Awakening* includes the previous CD and tape from Raphael, the incredibly popular *Skydancer*. This features Raphael on piano and harp, with a vocal by Annie Haslam, *Seasons*, and the most wonderful version of the *Gujerati Arti* I have yet heard, by Jane Brown. The other CD in *The Awakening* is a series of recordings, both vocal and instrumental, that Raphael made in London in 1975 with Pete Townshend and Phil Collins. The set sells for the very low price of \$20.

With our intense focus on Baba's darling sister at the moment, I would be remiss in my duties if I did not point out that we have two books written by Mani. *God-Brother* was written just a few years ago and tells us what life was like with her God-Brother when Mani was a child. These are positively delightful stories with whimsical illustrations by Wodin. Paperback, \$12.

Starting in the 1950s and continuing until Baba dropped His body, Mani, at Baba's order, wrote *The Family Letters*. These beautifully

written, chatty, informative letters were sent out to group heads around the world and kept Baba lovers updated on the latest happenings with Baba. Also \$12.

We have two videos featuring Mani alone. The longer one is called *Welcome To My World*. In this video, Mani shows us in great detail Baba's hand gestures, and with her powerful sense of mimicry, you can almost believe it is Baba. She also tells us about one of Baba's favorite western songs, *Welcome To My World*, sung by Jim Reeves. Then, to the music, she does the hand gestures that Baba would use to 'sing' it to His mandali, making sure they listened to it over and over again. One hour, \$20

The second one, *Mani in Meherazad Garden*, is a delightful retelling of her life with Baba, from her childhood up to fully fledged mandali. There are many amusing incidents along the way, told in her inimitable style. This is a 35 minute video recorded in 1982. \$30

Finally, if you would like your own 9" X 12" photo of Mehera and Mani in the intimate moment Win Coates so beautifully captured on our back page, it's yours for only \$20.

If you have misplaced or given away your catalog, drop me a line or call me evenings at (310) 837-6419 and ask for another copy. Don't wait for the new one! We have to go through a lot before that comes out. Center group heads, I will be happy to send you a pack of catalogs and Love Street LampPosts to have at meetings if you would like. Just in case, that is, that there are actually Baba lovers who do not yet receive this magazine!!

I will be in India for the last three weeks of this month (October), so hope to see a number of you there. For those who can't make it there, *I'll see you in the Bookstore*.



Center Report

by
Michael Ramsden

How can any year be normal in which God's sister leaves us to join her Beloved? We strive to honor her by proceeding with our business, remembering her as an example of a consummate server and worker for her Beloved.

In this last quarter the board of directors has focused on the usual center activities. Currently, we are working to:

- Fund Center activity for the final four months of 1996 and the first four months of 1997. We will have a pledge drive in the immediate future, followed by a yard sale,

Remember the Trust

Avatar Meher Baba has given us an extraordinary privilege to allow us to participate in His very special Trust work. Meher Baba tells us that He is the Personage by whom serving we serve the whole universe! Baba Himself established the Trust to carry out His wishes once He dropped the body. The Trust supports beneficiaries named by Baba, as well as funding the many charitable operations at Meherabad. If you wish to contribute to this most worthy of causes—Baba's Trust—please make your checks payable to "Friends of the Meher Baba Trust," and forward to Lynne Berry, 267 Hanover Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626; her phone number is (714) 966-1262.

dinner auction, and the Fly-to-India sweepstakes.

- Revisit options for raising capital for our move to a new site.
- Nominate candidates to four board positions for 1997-1998. The nominations will be made by the Nominating Committee.
- Mail updated bookstore catalogues and the Love Street LampPost to over one thousand potential subscribers. Our loving thanks to Meherana and the Oregon group for their cooperation, their support, and the use of their mailing lists.
- Fund the publishing of Filis Frederick's book of poetry, *Light on Running Water*. A big loving thank you to Mary Lloyd Dugan for her production efforts over the last few years. The book is being printed now and will be ready for distribution in November.
- In accordance with the recommendations of the Long-range Planning Committee, revise the by-laws concerning the terms and responsibilities of the Nominating Committee, the structure of the board of directors, and the directors' responsibilities.
- Finalize our accounting and budget planning and reporting system.
- Make the Center as comfortable as possible for all, until our move to a new site.

Unfortunately, this report will not be complete until I advise all our members that funding for Center activities and operating expenses is at an all-time low. Your support is

urgently needed. May I remind you that you need not wait for the pledge drive to make a donation!

Our loving thanks to our Sahavas guests, Hoshang and Havovi Dadachanji, Irwin and Janet Luck, and Debbie Nordeen.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

Fundraisers

November 16

Dinner Auction!

Our annual event promises to be as elegant as ever. We will return this year to the home of Pat Griffin. The *Still Yet More Chamber Players* will contribute to the ambience. Fred will liven things up as auctioneer.

Expect your invitations in the mail soon. If you do not receive one, or you would like to donate something, please contact Wendy Ward by leaving your name and number at the Center.

Mehermas Sweepstakes

The drawing this year will take place at the Center on December 21st. Watch for your tickets in the mail. Don't miss this year's opportunity to win a flight home to Baba's samadhi.



The Subject Tonight Is Love

60 Wild and Sweet
Poems of Hafiz

Versions by Daniel Ladinsky

reviewed by John Page

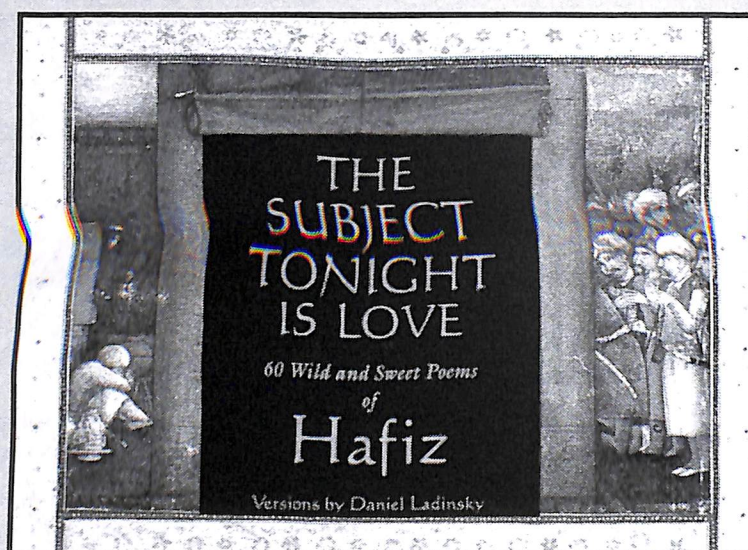
This is Dan's second volume of his renderings of Hafiz's poetry. Hafiz, who lived in Persia some six hundred years ago, was Meher Baba's favorite poet. Hafiz's poetry, which Beloved Baba termed "matchless," describes the Path of Love wherein human love is transformed into divine love and the lover unites with the Beloved. His poetry reveals the intricacies of the relationship between the lover and the Beloved and imbues the entire divine relationship with lightness, humor and joy! Baba also revealed that Hafiz became a Perfect Master after having broken his head at his master, Fariduddin Attar's, feet for decades.

This new book of Hafiz's poetry is full of many intimate and sweet poems of Hafiz. Dan's gift is to take the often stilted translations of the original Persian poems and render them into simple, joyous and ecstatic verses for all to understand. Hafiz shows the ironies, as well as the joys of the return-path to the Creator.

Hafiz's poetry is God speaking—as a man, companion, commiserator, Master, and friend. This second volume of Dan's renderings of Hafiz's poetry brings many new delicious morsels for us to savor; such as the sample to the right.

This book offers you 60 fresh new meals—but they are meals that don't disappear after they've been eaten. Instead they reappear, more delectable and filling each time they are consumed!

Paperback, 67 pages. Published by Pumpkin House Press. \$10.



This Place Where You Are Right Now

This place where you are right now
God circled on a map for you.

Wherever your eyes and arms and heart can move
Against the earth and sky,
The Beloved has bowed there –

The Beloved has bowed there knowing
You were coming.

I could tell you a priceless secret about
Your real worth, dear pilgrim,

But any unkindness to yourself,
Any confusion about others,

Will keep one
From accepting the grace, the love,

The sublime freedom
Divine knowledge always offers to you.

Never mind, Hafiz, about
The great requirements this path demands
Of the wayfarers,

For your soul is too full of wine tonight
To withhold the wondrous Truth from this world.

But because I am so happy and generous,
I have already clearly woven a resplendent lock
Of His tresses

As a remarkable truth and gift
In this poem for you.





Calendar

October

October 5

Hafiz

Readings and discussion of one of Baba's favorites, the 14th century Persian poet. Hosted by Mahoo Ghorbani.

October 12

Baba World News (BWN)

Discussion of news from Baba communities around the world. Coordinated by our own reporter, Marc Brutus.

October 19

Arti

An evening of prayers, songs of devotion, and other expressions of love for Meher Baba. Bring music and poetry to share.

October 26

Film Night

Press Meher Baba's image into your heart. Coordinated by Charlie Morton.

November

November 2

Bill & Diana LePage Visit

Join us for an evening with members of our Australian Baba family. Stories, news and informal visiting are always on the schedule when these two residents of Avatars Abode are in town.

November 9th

Gutta Night

Freddy & GiGi, hosts par excellence, preside over what always proves to be a wonderful evening of sharing in the spirit of the divine Beloved. Refreshments will be served.

November 16

Special Event!

Fund raiser dinner and auction. Contribute to the fun at this annual event which helps keep our Center dancing to Baba's tune. Please call Wendy Ward immediately with your auction contributions.

...November continued

November 23

Annual General Meeting

Tonight we elect 5 new members to the Board of Directors for 1997 and 1998. Reports on all Center activities for 1996 will be presented. All are welcome to attend, but only members may vote.

November 30

Film Night

Treasure gems from our collection of films and videos. Gaze at Meher Baba's beautiful form. Coordinated by Charlie Morton.

December

December 7

A Night of Dance

Come dance to the strains of Eastern & Western music. Musicians wanted. Call Richard Stermer.

December 14

"Life is a mighty joke"

—Meher Baba

Bring a story that reflects Baba's divine sense of humor at work in our lives. Let's laugh at ourselves with the Godman!

December 21

Mehera's Birthday Celebration

"She is closer to me than my own breath," said Baba of Mehera. Come to an evening devoted to remembering the Beloved's beloved.

December 23

Monday at 7:00P.M.

Monday Night!

Christmas celebration

Come and celebrate the birth of the Godman as Jesus in a traditional Christmas celebration with food, song and gift exchange (bring a small gift if you like). You may also bring canned food and used clothing for distribution to the poor.

December 28

Film Night

This evening features the greatest star in movies—Avatar Meher Baba. Coordinated by Charlie Morton.

Saturday Meetings

All events, unless otherwise noted, are held at the Center: 10808 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, (310) 474-9454. Meetings are free and open to the public. Refreshments and flowers are always welcome.

If you have ideas or requests for future programs, contact Richard Stermer at (310) 208-4764. If you wish to present music or art, contact the host listed for the meeting that interests you, or Richard. All are invited to share.

Farsi Meetings

Saturday evening discussions in Farsi about Meher Baba. All are welcome. Prayers and arti at the end of the meeting.

Coordinated by Dr. Mahmoud Ajang.

These meetings begin at 6:00P.M.

Oct. 5	Nov. 2	Dec. 14
19	16	28
	30	

Wednesday Meetings

Drop in to drink the nectar of Meher Baba's divine love. Reading and discussion of *Lord Meher*, by Bhau Kalchuri.

These meetings begin at 7:30P.M.

There will be no meeting on Christmas or New Year's Day.

Baba on Television

The Toddy Shop

Presented and produced by our own incomparable Fred "St. Francis" Stankus.

Thursday, Oct. 3, 9:00P.M.
Century Cable TV



A Final Note

Invitation to Participate

This issue is a choir's song to Baba. All the voices heard and all the financial support given are expressions of love to the Beloved. Let's do it again!

Contribute

Baba touches us in ways that are deeply personal, and sharing the love we are given is important. Retelling a story is one more way to remember Him. Also, listening to the unity of

love for Baba within the diversity of our experiences strengthens our family bonds.

No matter where you live in the world, your voice can join this choir's song to Baba. Share your art, anecdotes and stories of how Meher Baba is active in your life, or how you are active in remembering Baba. These can be life-changing events or simple ones, stories as long as a page or as short as a paragraph. For our forthcoming issue, we especially welcome contributions related to the topic of prayer.

We ask that all submissions be about Meher Baba or your relationship with Him. We are looking for personal experiences. As in most publications, submissions may be edited. Please read the frontispiece on the table of contents page for details.

Support

To produce the Love Street Lamp-Post requires paper, printing and postage. At this writing, we have no funds to cover these costs for the next issue. Please consider the value of this magazine to yourself and to others when you weigh how to spend the earnings from your everyday life. We have spent everything in our account; without donations there will be no next issue.

Thanks again to all who have contributed to this special issue. Contributions of words and dollars—it could not have been done without all of you.

Let's continue to join hands and sing to Avatar Meher Baba!

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

Photograph Credits

Page	Photographer or Owner	Location & Date
cover	Georgeann Erskine	August, 1990
inside cover	AMBC of SC	(please see description on page 3)
back cover – above	Win Coates	Amartithi, 1973
below	Win Coates	Mehera's Birthday, 1987
inside back cover	Dina Snow	Baba's Birthday, 1982
page 11	Hermes Reiter	Meherazad, circa 1993
12	Hermes Reiter	Meherazad, 1944
15	John Page	Meherabad, 1934
18	Hermes Reiter	in front of East Room Meherabad, 1993
21	Bruce Ecker	Mandali Hall
22	Dave Lowman	1978
Center pages:		Mandali Hall, 1987
A – above	Dina Snow	Meherazad Garden, 1976
below	Peter Ravazza	Myrtle Beach, 1952
B – all	John Page	circa 1993
C – all	John Page	circa 1993
D – all	John Page	Meherabad, circa 1994
page 24	Pamela Wolfe	Mehera's porch, 1996
25	Louise Barrie	Meherabad, 1990
26	Nancy Wall	1979
27	Dina Snow	Meherazad, circa 1970
27	detail of above photo	
28	Dina Snow	circa 1950
29	Michael Ivey	December, 1994
30	Bevan Eaton	
31	AMBC of SC	Guruprasad, Great Darshan, 1969
33 – top left	Margaret Magnus	1992
top right	Ray Lee	summer, 1995
bottom right	John Page	1993
bottom left	Betty Lowman	1987
34 – left	Hermes Reiter	1927
right	Mahoo Ghorbani	1996
35	Mahoo Ghorbani	1996
36	Peter Ravazza	circa 1950
39	Dina Snow	Mehera's Porch, 1994



