# **Still Dancing with Love**

By Margaret Craske

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# Still Dancing with Love

More Stories of Life with Meher Baba



# Still Dancing with LOVE

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### MARGARET CRASKE

Sheriar Press

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darling dancer of the beloved Nataraja, Meher Baba – for her birthday 26 November, 1981

Dancer dancing to His Word, footsteps winging as a bird, abandoned flight of blazing light, whirling in divine romance, dancer dancer dance His dance.

In the bower of His Smile, you may want to rest a while, but keep on dancing, dancer please, for His Dance can never cease.

To the drum of God Man's Heart in which all music has its start, to every move of brow or finger from Creation's soundless Singer, to every gesture, every glance, dance dancer, dance His dance.

In the bower of His Smile you may want to rest a while, but keep on dancing, dancer please, Nataraja's Dance can never cease!



Mani S. Irani (Meher Baba's sister)

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### Introduction

Margaret Craske's presence in the world of ballet spans almost the entire twentieth century. In the 1920s, she danced with Diaghilev's Ballet Russe and subsequently became a noted teacher of the classic Cecchetti method. Over the years, she has taught some of the world's best dancers—at the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company (later the Royal Ballet), American Ballet Theatre, the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School, and the Manhattan School of Dance. This has been her public life.

In the more private part of her life, she is known as one of the earliest and closest Western disciples of Meher Baba. In that less public world, she is known also as a wonderful teller of tales of life lived for and with the Avatar of the Age.

One might gather from that statement that this is "oh, oh, serious stuff." Yes, on one level it is, but these stories are layered as well with humanness and humor, enjoyable and memorable for the personalities they bring to life, for the familiar play and counterplay of egos, the spiritual competition that is—whether one likes to admit it or not part of the spiritual journey.

Still Dancing with Love is Miss Craske's second book. The first, *The Dance of Love*, published ten years ago, concentrates on stories of her early meetings with Meher Baba in Europe, on her stay at his ashram in India during World War II, and on her later meetings

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with him in the United States.

This new collection of stories fills in the picture of sixty years devoted to Meher Baba. Early on, she says, Meher Baba told her to go on teaching dancing. So that's what she did. In the process, many people in that world came to know of Meher Baba. Their stories are here—as the time Lydia Sokolova danced "softly and beautifully" for Baba on the spur of the moment—as are more tales of early ashram life and vignettes of other people who heard of and sometimes came to follow Meher Baba through their contacts with Miss Craske.

But most of all there are stories of Meher Baba's direct and indirect influence of love and obedience, of charm and humor. It is the story of an extraordinary life rooted in the deeper reality of a true spiritual Journey.

As Miss Craske approached her mid-nineties, others thought she might be ready to retire. "Meher Baba told me to teach dancing; he never said anything about retirement," she responded. But the day did come and Miss Craske took up retirement at 94 in a house near Meher Baba's home in the West at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She completed *Still Dancing with Love* during the first year of her retirement.

Meher Baba had frequently told his followers, "Take God seriously and life lightly." Miss Craske has done that and it is evident in these wonderful new stories. It is also evident in herself. Frail now at 97, she has approached old age as a new experience, a part of life that is "no joke," she says, but one that requires certain adjustments. She has done that with a great deal of panache and wit, her love of life and the world still intact and her love for her Meher Baba stronger than ever. Though restricted in movement by her age, she is still—in her own way and with abundant grace—dancing with love.

Ann Conlon Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

January, 1990

Margaret Craske died February 18, 1990 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

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# Before World War II

True love is no game for the faint-hearted and the weak; it is born of strength and understanding

MEHER BABA

The two years leading up to my meeting with Meher Baba were neither happy nor inspiring. Rather the reverse.

During that time many whom I had especially loved or admired had died.

On the personal side my father, my mother, and a man whom I loved; on the career side Diaghilev, Anna Pavlova, and Enrico Cecchetti.

Up to this period in my life I had been convinced that one day I should find a spiritual way of life. A mixture of Theosophy, Annie Besant, Gurdjieff, Rudolph Steiner, and Ouspensky had made my mind a hopeless mish-mash, but until these unhappy events in my life I was convinced I was on the way.

To where I did not know!

But after these emotional shocks, everything was reversed. I became convinced there was nothing. No path, nowhere to go, in fact no spiritual anything.

One day during this difficult time I was at Victoria Station, on the way to Hastings to judge a dance competition, when a most peculiar acquaintance—Dorothea Hyams, a woman of about 45—rushed across the station and accosted me. I think to her the clothes she wore had some special spiritual significance. Veils floated from her head, and everything else she wore seemed to float around.

On hearing my plans for the day she said tragically,

"Hastings! That is where I spent my honeymoon, and I have never been able to afford to go back." I was surprised. She had never seemed to have had a husband. Since there was nothing against it and I was being extremely well paid, I invited her to come with me as my guest, suggesting that while I did my job she might go and romanticize over her honeymoon memories. We could then again meet and return together. She was charmed and off we went, each to do her own thing. Since I had been feeling that I should get away from my friends for a short time, on the journey down I asked if she knew of some quiet place where I could go for the Easter vacation. She at once responded, "Oh yes, you could go to Devonshire to Meredith Starr's place. He has a boarding house on a hill near the sea and right away from everything." I accepted this suggestion, little thinking that it would lead me to the true life of Love, the one for which I had for so long been searching and which because of my troubles I had become convinced did not exist.

On the morning of my departure for Devonshire, I was leaning out of the train window chatting with friends who had come to see me off when there was a sudden stir on the platform, causing heads to pop out of windows and people to turn and stare, and there, running down the platform was Dorothea, with flying veils, clanking steel beads, and a look of great inspiration on her face. Just as the train started to wheeze and clank she reached my carriage and called out encouragingly to me, "Oh, I forgot to tell you, Meredith insists that his guests meditate for four hours every day." The train steamed out of the station. I sank back in my seat, shocked that this was not going to be the escape I had

hoped for.

Margaret Starr met me at Ilfracombe Station with a small bunch of rather dilapidated flowers as a greeting and then told me that we had two miles to walk across country.

After a muddy up-hill and down-dale walk across fields and through woods we finally reached the farmhouse.

The door opened straight away into a large room, and there on the opposite wall was a lovely shining photograph of Baba.

My manners fled.

Without attempting to shake hands with my waiting host I walked straight across the room toward what I thought was the most beautiful face I had ever seen.

During the ten days that I stayed in the farmhouse, Meredith Starr told me many things about Baba, that in five years time Baba was coming to the West, and that if I spent all my holidays at East Challacombe meditating, I might be fit to meet Him. Even though my head ached when trying to meditate on a brass gong, I decided to do what he suggested.

Baba came, however, at the end of five months and was even more beautiful and shining than the photograph.

On the day of His arrival my discipleship started. Years later—some time around 1950—1 was having a holiday at Jean Adriel's place at Meher Mount in California. Nearby was a valley where people lived and practiced all kinds of yoga, and searched in one way or another for the truth. A young man, also staying at Meher Mount, asked if I would allow him to take me to visit a woman by the name of Dorothea Hyams, who

said she had known me in England.

Somehow or the other during the war, Dorothea had managed to get to America, across the country, and had settled down in this valley in a trailer.

She still had a quite odd appearance and welcomed me by gazing right through me and saying, "I see you have been with a very great spiritual teacher." Then a very inspired look came over her face and she added triumphantly, "Melchizadek!" She then beamed complacently. There was really nothing for me to say. The walls of her trailer were literally plastered with every picture of Avatars, saints, or Perfect Masters that she could get hold of. At least 200! She seemed quite mad but somehow this trailer seemed the right place for her.

When she had met Baba, He had passed by her quickly with no special notice, but I shall always feel that He had sent her to the right place to bring to the surface and then dispel her peculiarities so that she would be able to start out closer to Him in another incarnation.

### The Milkman

A Perfect Master had a wonderful disciple whose time for the realization of God seemed to be not far off.

He had, however, one very great difficulty. He would obey his Master implicitly, but some times not exactly enough. Just a little sloppy.

One day the Master gave him an order to knock on the door of the Master's room promptly at six o'clock the next morning.

He was, however, late.

But at six o'clock exactly the milkman knocked on the door, and as the door opened it was he who received the overwhelming flood of realization.

### A Great Obedience

A certain Perfect Master had one disciple whose loving obedience was remarkable. He, without hesitation or questioning, would attempt and fulfill the most difficult orders quite simply and with no fuss.

One day the Master almost casually told this man that he must return to his home, kill his young son, and then return to his Master.

Without argument, hesitation, or any sign of re-

fusal he did exactly that.

Upon his return, he found his Master smiling and happy, and standing beside him, well and unharmed, was the disciple's supposedly dead young son.

### Acceptance

There was once a Perfect Master who was walking along a rough country path which wound its way between and under trees of many varieties. The Master came upon a man seated under one of the trees in the act of meditation.

The man, becoming aware of such a strong spiritual presence, opened his eyes. He immediately reacted to this advanced being with a cry of, "Oh, Master, will you tell me how many more lives I must pass through before realizing God?"

The Master looked at him and replied, "It will be four more lives before you reach your goal." The yogi reacted badly to this, complaining that it was too long; especially as he was working so hard to obtain his freedom.

The Master then continued his walk through the trees. After a time he came across another yogi who also opened his eyes and asked the same question as to the amount of time that must pass before he would receive God-realization.

On being told that he had about 300 more years before this longed-for event, he also grumbled, but was not as aggressive as the first yogi had been.

Again the Master walked on, and again a meditating yogi asked the same question.

The Master looked at the tree under which the man was sitting, and saw that it was covered with thousands of small leaves and then replied, "You will have as many lives as there are leaves on this tree."

The yogi reacted by joyfully saying, "Oh, thank you Master, thank you; it is such a wonderfully short time."

Immediately at such submission to the will of God, this yogi received the longed-for realization.

## The Ladder

At Nasik, Norina's wish to become a kind of abbess and to make rules for the rest of us—a strong-minded lively group under no orders from Baba to obey her—was not gratified.

Baba did, however, give her the position of a kind of glorified housekeeper. She made the best of this, introducing a butler and two table boys!

She did not, however, give up hope and in several ways tried unsuccessfully to mold us to her plan.

One lovely moonlit evening Nadine Tolstoy and I, softened and quieted by the sight of the silver-lit garden, were sitting on the porch when Nadine suddenly shattered this peaceful moment by saying, "Why don't you do as Norina tells you?" I was shocked out of this moment of peace and said, none too politely, "Nadine, why should I?"

She then said, "Well, she is nearly at the top of the spiritual ladder and you have barely got your foot on the first rung."

Well that put me where I belonged. But, undaunted, I came back and said, "I am a direct member of Baba's Circle, and am not worried about ladders." She then to my surprise, since it seemed most unlike her, came back with, "But she is a princess."

This raised my hackles and I said firmly and loudly, "Well, Nadine, if I were a social instead of a spiritual climber I should certainly not have shut

myself up here. That would not be helpful in achieving such an ambition." Nadine, who was really a darling, apologized, and the evening again took on its moonlit charm.

## Deirdre

*O*ne summer in the early 1930s, Baba came to the West for a short visit. In London He stayed in a small apartment lent to the group by Delia DeLeon's brother.

At that particular time the Conservative Party in England was, through various social means, hoping to make a political comeback.

One of their pet projects was that some of the most loved stories in English history such as "King Alfred and the burnt cakes" or favorite stories from English literature should be shown through acting and dancing at the Albert Hall in London. It was possible in this large building to show a small scene in one part of the hall, then lights out, followed by lights up in another part of the building where another short scene would be enacted.

The whole of the large central floor was mostly used for dancing scenes such as "Skating revels on the frozen Thames in the time of King James." Quentin Todd and I had been fortunate enough to get a contract to direct and choreograph all those scenes which were expressed by dancing. The important scene for this story was that of Titania and Oberon dancing on the large floor with a *corp de ballet* of fairies.

Titania was danced by a beautiful Irish girl named Deirdre.

A few days after the opening of this show Baba

arrived in London. Quentin and I naturally were delighted that the arrival should coincide with this event, and we at once begged Him to come and see our work.

With His usual loving charm He indicated pleasure in the idea. We therefore obtained the best box in the house, and one evening joyfully escorted Him and two of the Indian disciples to show what we had created for this performance.

Finally, after the scene in which Titania and Oberon had danced with much charm and grace, He beckoned to Quentin and me and spelled out to us on His alphabet board that He would like to shake hands with Deirdre. We indicated that this would be quite simple. Quentin could easily fetch her from the dressing room and bring her to Baba in the box. This, however, did not appear to be what Baba wanted. "I must shake hands with her but she must not know who I am."

This demand was a poser. For not only did the dancing group know of our connection with Baba but the newspapers had just announced His arrival in London. After an agitated conference Quentin and I managed to concoct a (not very pleasant for Deirdre) plan which worked out as follows.

The dressing rooms in this building ran in a circle completely around the building but below ground level. We got Baba at the end of the show to put on His hat, tuck His hair out of sight, and to accompany us to the dancers' dressing rooms. We then fetched Deirdre outside saying that we must speak to her. Poor Deirdre—who had really danced quite well—was then told that if she danced so carelessly it would be difficult for us to employ her again.

Naturally the tears began to flow and just as the deluge was starting I said, "Oh, by the way, this is a friend of ours, Merwan Irani." She politely shook hands but barely looked at Him. She was far too upset by her unexpected and quite undeserved trouble. Baba immediately turned and walked away. What He had wished for had been successfully accomplished. Next evening Quentin told Deirdre that her performance was again up to standard, and to forget the other performance.

After all, she had—even if she did not know it—shaken hands with Baba and there are many persons in the world who would be willing to accept much suffering in order to have had that touch of Love.

### Two Young Early Disciples

### Christine

In 1932 while Baba was staying at a hotel in Kensington, He one day noticed a young waitress, and struck by her innocence—not stupidity or an undeveloped mind but an unusual quality—He told Kitty to get friendly with her, and draw her toward Him. This she did quite successfully, and soon after that at Baba's request the money was found for passage and Christine found herself on board ship and steaming off to India with us on our first trip. She was a very quiet girl and really one did not know how she was taking all this quite dramatic change in her life. After her return to the West she again took up her waitress work.

Then at the height of the war, a telegram came to Baba in India from Delia to say that Christine had been killed in an air raid. Her life was a short one, her work menial, but she received what many persons in much more satisfactory worldly positions could envy her: a trip to Kashmir with Baba and the outpouring of His Love.

### Audrey

During one of Baba's earliest trips to London He one day called me and told me I was to find a beautiful

young dancer who could be taught to love Him.

My choice fell on Audrey Wilson Williams, a beautiful and gifted young dancer, and after some slightly difficult approaches to the subject I managed to get her to come and see Baba. He did the rest and Audrey found herself invited to come to Portofino with us on our first visit there with Baba.

In the meantime another person stepped in and called on Audrey's mother, who had talked with me and showed no objections to Audrey going to see Baba. This person, however, decided she should help in a matter that up to that time needed no help. Mrs. Williams then became upset. She was told that the Prince of Wales would come to follow Baba and that Audrey's brother, who was not making a great success of his life, would be able to work on a ranch owned by His Royal Highness. The mother was however soothed down and Audrey came to Portofino with us.

At Portofino, this other person again took charge and as a result Baba gave her an order to see that Audrey was never left alone on the beach where we spent wonderful hours with Baba under some shady overhanging rocks listening to Him, swimming, and feeling amazingly joyful moments both spiritually and physically.

One day at luncheon time Baba, followed by nearly all the disciples, returned to the hotel. Audrey, however, was not ready and this other person, regardless of her order, went off with the others. I waited with Audrey for a short time and then, quite wrongly, decided not to do another person's job for her and went back to the hotel leaving Audrey alone on the beach.

At the entrance to the hotel Baba was waiting for

me. Not a word. He had a stern look on His face, His first finger stretched and, pointing to the way I had just come, He indicated that I should return the same way to fetch Audrey. Since my conscience was already working, no words were needed; and I hurriedly ran to the beach again to fulfill Baba's order.

Audrey came also with us on the first trip we had to India and returned to the West with us.

She did not continue to follow Baba, but went abroad with some ballet company and then married, I believe quite happily.

### Chanji's Trial

The first time that Baba came to England His close attendant disciple was Chanji.

He was the one who at the time was looking after Baba's personal needs, and he also did his best to help us understand what it was that Baba required of disciples. This was most necessary, because although we did love Baba as far as we were able at the time, we certainly had no conception of what it meant to become a personal disciple and serve the Master as He should be served. Chanji was quite wonderful with his help and encouragement and told us of many incidents that occurred in his own early days of discipleship.

Before coming to Baba he had been the manager of a cinema in Bombay, and it was soon after leaving that job that he heard about Baba. He was at once seized with a strong desire to see this man and if possible stay with Him in some kind of service.

He therefore packed up, not expecting to return, and took a train to the spot where Baba, busy with the work of shaping His early disciples, was stationed for the time being.

On meeting Baba, Chanji joyfully found that his intuition had not been a false thing. On the contrary it had not been strong enough. Baba was indeed the warm lovable spiritual being of his hopes. Only more so.

On the first day he sat watching Baba as He talked to and dealt with His group of disciples, and finally

overcome by the love that was Baba he got up his courage and told Him that of all things he would like to join His disciples. Baba smiled but conveyed to him that he was not the right type and therefore Baba could not accept him as such. Poor Chanji! With all his dreams destroyed he left the meeting place and, brokenhearted and weeping, started off on a long dark walk to the railway station, from where he would return to a seemingly empty life in the future.

After walking some little distance he suddenly became aware of someone in white coming toward him. Loving arms outstretched, beautiful eyes welcoming, and more important than anything else, with an order to go back to the meeting place. It was Baba who immediately after Chanji's departure had quickly taken a short cut across some fields and then turned onto the road so as to meet this unhappy creature. He returned with Baba to go on to a full life of love and service to Him.

*O*nce, in the very early days in London, Baba called me and said that He would like to come to my studio and meet some dancers.

Since at that time there was much friendly curiosity in the world of dance about Meher Baba, but not necessarily with a wish to follow Him, this was quite easy for me to arrange, and therefore one evening my studio was crowded with dancers of all kinds who wished to meet Him.

Baba was in fine form. Shining with love, He talked to them about the spiritual value of dancing, drawing them into His orbit and, although I think that very few afterward became close followers, a strong link with Him was made.

Among those present on this occasion was Lydia Sokolova, the prima character ballerina of the famous Diaghilev company.

I told Baba a little about her career.

Suddenly Baba pointed to her and indicated that He would like her to dance then and there for Him.

Without a sign of refusal because of the difficulties of doing this without music, without warming up, and wearing ordinary street clothes, she got up from her chair, slipped off her walking shoes, and with nothing helpful to such an effort she danced softly and beautifully for Him.

It was a lovely performance, everyone was
transfixed.

Baba was delighted, embraced her, took her aside and discussed with her a certain major difficulty in her life, which afterward seemed to disappear.

A young American dancer, at that time partner of the famous Anton Dolin, was present at this meeting and was very drawn to Baba.

All the dancers present were drawn by Baba's charm and beauty and although they did not become so-called followers, this was a wonderful occasion for them.

In 1931 when Baba first visited England, although enormous changes had already taken place, the remnants of Victorian ideas that certain things were not publicly discussed still held considerable sway, and certain things were definitely not done.

Those of you who have met Kitty with her lively and loving attitude to life could probably not believe the enormous change that has taken place since her meeting with Baba.

The Davys went to church twice on Sundays and I believe Kitty taught in Sunday school and on Wednesdays there was a prayer meeting; and to crown all, although Kitty was 39 years old, her father did not allow her a latch key. Only Baba could have done such a miracle as to sweep away the results of all this. It took years, of course.

One afternoon right at the beginning of our acquaintanceship, she and I were travelling by bus from Richmond to London, when Kitty solemnly decided to give me a dissertation on the wonderful way life was lived by her family. Just as she was leading up to a triumphant conclusion the bus began to slow down and many people on it became silent, preparing to alight. This Kitty did not notice and therefore her voice, reaching a climax, rang out loud and clear, "and we Davys put sex on a pedestal."

Slowly heads turned to see who was making this remark, which certainly could have had more than one

meaning.

Kitty was so triumphant at having told me this that I do not think she was aware of being overheard; and the head turners I think were more than surprised that such a notvery-acceptable remark should come from a conversation between two women obviously about 39-40 years old, and quite respectable looking.

A house, in which during the 1930s a group of Westerners spent six months at Nasik, was situated a few miles away from the source of the famous Godavari River.

One day Baba announced that He proposed to take us for a day's trip to this interesting spot.

Norina, who was the acting housekeeper, was told to supply enough food for a long day's outing. When the day came, before the crack of dawn, half awake, we got into some cars and drove off on this promised trip.

It was just after sunrise when we arrived at the entrance to a beautiful wood, and began to follow the paths leading through it to some hilly country which in turn led to the source of the Godavari.

Early morning though it was, everyone seemed to be in high spirits ready to enjoy every moment of this trip with our Beloved Master.

Then came a slight damper.

Coming toward us we saw the most dilapidated-looking white dog. He was just hobbling along in misery. Certainly starving. He was lame and could barely hobble toward us looking for help.

We all looked at Baba.

With the greatest love and sweetness He obtained a piece of cloth from someone, turned it into a leash, tied it around the dog's neck, took some of our plentiful supply of food, and led him, accompanied by Ramjoo, out of

sight. We never heard definitely the end of the dog's story, but I think Baba sent him somewhere to be cared for.

Soon after that we sat down and had breakfast. It was still very early, but the heat even in this shady spot was making itself a bit trying. After this we climbed a wooded hillside and finally arrived at the source of the Godavari, which at its beginning was a very small spring. As it flowed off down a hillside it seemed to be joined by more water and we could see it spreading out and travelling much faster at the beginning of its long journey across India. It really touched the imagination.

After a time Baba decided that we should descend to the cars again, but we should not walk down through the shady wooded area, but should walk down by an outside path in the full glare of the sun.

This arrangement was pretty hard on some of the more or less town bred persons and the poor little Backetts, not very young and certainly not adventurous, found this arrangement very difficult. They were, however, willing to try anything that Baba seemed to wish.

Norina, out of some pocket, pulled a scent spray with which to cool herself down and Baba, on spotting it, took it away from her and lavishly sprayed everyone, leaving her not a drop for herself.

However, with no casualties or sunstrokes we reached level ground, and though it was still early morning and we had had one good meal, Baba decided that it would be a good idea to have an unwanted second breakfast! This we had sitting under some trees. I don't think anyone ate very much but Baba's wishes were Baba's wishes.

After this Baba decided that since there was

nothing else to do we should go home. So home we went.

We arrived soon after 10 o'clock.

Our promised day's expedition was over. And even though it had been unexpectedly short, it had been a wonderful and beautiful time with Baba.

# During World War II In India

I am the only Beloved and you are all My loves; I am the only Lover and you are all My beloveds.

MEHER BABA

*I*n the early 1940s during one of our sojourns at Meherabad, Baba gave us a very strong meditation to be done daily. It was tiring and had a very strange effect on the head.

At 5:30 every morning we met in the kitchen, sat in a circle on the floor, and sang over and over the seven names of God.

We were told to keep our minds on those names and mean them. After a time this would cause a mild dizziness and Mani, who accompanied this performance on a small harmonium and therefore was under even more strain than we were, fainted. This discipline lasted for a short time only. Under a month.

Hari, Paramatman, Allah, Ahuramazda, God, Yezdan, and Hu.

This meditation again was done in Meherabad.

At midday, summoned by a bell, we went to one of the ground-floor rooms, sat on the floor in a circle, faced the wall, and on a breath-in and breath-out repeated the names of the Avatar, but not out loud. This we did every day for one hour.

It seems that the names of most of the Avatars had two syllables: Jesus, Krishna, Rama, Buddha, to mention a few.

# Chargeman

Pleader was one of Baba's early disciples who for some reason imagined he was Baba's chargeman and would, if Baba died, carry on Baba's work.

The Avatar, however, the pure descent of Love into a body, has no chargeman; but a Perfect Master who has won his way to union with God does, after death, have someone to continue his work.

When Pleader discovered this fact, the loss of his wonderful dream affected him so forcibly and adversely that he left Baba and was away from Him for a long period of time.

At length he returned. He was riddled with cancer and Baba put him in the care of one of His men disciples who at Lower Meherabad nursed him and looked after his physical needs.

He was put into a dark and gloomy room at Lower Meherabad where snakes could be heard rustling around in the reed ceiling.

One day he suddenly asked his friend to extinguish the lights as he felt he could not take such brightness. A brightness which in this lantern-lit room did not physically exist.

It seemed that he had received some form of illumination, and for a day or two was only aware of the Divine Light.

When he returned to normal consciousness he seemed to be in a state of bliss.

When he died many years later, he left word for Baba that he thanked Him for everything.

Since Baba expected implicit and immediate obedience, difficulties sometimes arose when two orders apparently contradicted each other. During an early sojourn at Meherabad, on the Hill, Baba went into seclusion in one of the rooms at the side of the compound, and we, the women disciples, were at the same time ordered to keep silence.

This arrangement went on successfully for a few days and then a crisis arose.

In Elizabeth's charge was a large beautiful dog named Warrior. He was lovable, friendly, and quite the apple of Elizabeth's eye. Then during this period of silence he was suddenly taken ill. He seemed so bad that Nilkant (Nilu), the doctor in charge of our health, was sent for and after examining him announced definitely that Warrior was dying. No known cause.

Poor Elizabeth—whom I would often tease and say that she loved animals more than she did her fellow disciples was heartbroken. She had the dog placed on her bed and sat miserably, stroking his head and watching the gradual failure of his breathing.

After his death, I went out and to my surprise found Baba, whom no one was supposed to see during the seclusion period, walking across the compound. He signalled to me to stop and then demanded to know what was wrong.

Being in silence, I laboriously started to spell out the tragedy on my fingers in the deaf and dumb alphabet.

This was completely wrong. I had chosen the wrong obedience. Baba stopped me by making furious signals that I was to use my voice to answer Him.

Speed was of the essence.

After hearing about Warrior, He sent for Elizabeth, comforted her, and then arranged for a grave to be dug in the mixed animal and human cemetery on the hillside, had Warrior's body carried there and interred with loving ceremony.

He then returned to His seclusion and we to our silence.

#### Cobra

During the bus tours of India upon arriving at our night's sleeping place—usually a *dak* bungalow—Eruch's first job was to sweep and clean a room for Baba and get everything ready for His night's rest.

One evening Eruch found himself in the chosen room confronted by a large and lively cobra and, naturally, to kill this creature became his priority job. Just as he had planned his mode of attack, a message came from Baba saying that He wished to see Eruch at once. Eruch ignored the message and did not go to Baba until he had killed the cobra and he felt Baba's safety was assured. Then and only then did he go to Baba who showed surprised anger that the well-trained, faithful Eruch should not know that regardless of anything, come meant "come at once". Eruch explained the

situation, and after a short time for consideration Baba announced that Eruch had clearly done this for Baba's safety and therefore what he had done was right.

# Visit to Ceylon

One day in the early 1940s Baba called together all the Meherabad inhabitants and announced that, since He had to take a trip to Ceylon and did not wish us to remain for a long time without Him, He had decided to take us all with Him.

You can imagine how delighted we were. First of all to be with Baba, secondly to go to Ceylon, and thirdly not to be left on the Hill with nothing much to do, and consequently endless arguments and disagreements.

At that time anyone crossing from India to Ceylon had to show recent smallpox vaccination proof. A local woman doctor came up the Hill to vaccinate us.

She did not inject the serum. She scrubbed the top of the arm, removed the skin, and rubbed the serum onto this place. The victim was then rushed outside onto the compound and there was seized by friends who with great vigor scrubbed the serum off again.

In most cases nothing entered the blood stream.

Only one or two had slight reactions.

Baba did not tell us why He seemingly objected to the injections.

The first place in Ceylon in which we stayed was a house situated in a lovely coconut grove, lent to Baba by a man who loved Him. The coconut trees were tall and shapely and waved high above us and the wandering paths were bright pink. It was like being under the sea and somehow made me think of the piece of music "La Cathedrale Engloutie".

The inhabitants of this magic spot were not so enjoyable. Large cobras danced menacingly along the pink paths and some most unpleasant insects about an inch long and shaped like a large domino, which had, I believe, a death-bringing sting, waltzed round the floor at night. Since we slept on bedding rolls on the ground, it was wise to tuck the mosquito nets most firmly round and under the bedding rolls.

Thunderstorms were frequent and close. I remember one day sitting on a mat in front of Baba listening to some instructions He was giving me. There was a terrific storm and suddenly a flash of lightning seemed to pass between us. Baba smiled at me. I did my best to return the smile but I am sure it was just a ghastly contortion. Anyway I made the effort.

After a few days of mixed beauty and horror Baba announced that we were moving to a house in a tea plantation situated on a fairly high hill, the sides of which were covered with tea bushes sloping down to where a sluggish river crawled slowly by.

It was in this beautiful spot that the much-loved *mast* Chatti Baba created quite an uproar. He was staying in a small hut which had a hard mud floor when he suddenly decided to empty pails of water over it and then sit happily in the resulting muddy mess. Poor Baidul, who at that time was looking after him, was terrified that doing this continuously for days and nights on end would make him ill. Chatti Baba simply refused to stop and seemed to find the greatest enjoyment in this weird pastime. Apparently *masts* have some kind of spiritual protection. Certainly Chatti Baba sat for days in the mud—smiling and happy—

with no resulting illness.

The bedroom that I shared with several others every night was filled with fireflies. They made such enchanting colored light patterns that one did not want to sleep and lose sight of these small blobs, whirling and twisting themselves into wonderful patterns of a strange moving beauty.

One of the amusing disagreements between the East and the West had one of its periodic surfacings—and I have heard that this subject still rumbles up at times—i.e., which is superior, water or toilet paper? One day while we were sitting round Baba, a heated argument arose acrimoniously on both sides. Baba said nothing but with a smile sat watching his chosen disciples. Finally Nadine Tolstoy, who was not a quarrelsome person and I think did not care either way, said soothingly that as far as she could see the answer should be, "Use both."

A few days later the bus took us sightseeing to different beauty spots of this enchanting island.

We stopped in a village where in the middle of the village square were two toilets. They looked like telephone booths, and sent forth a smell unimaginably horrid. All went well until Nadine took her turn and for what seemed a very long time did not reappear. Those waiting their turn were fussing and grumbling about this monopoly when along came Baba who listened to our opinion of Nadine's behavior. Baba looked extremely serious and on His board spelled out, "She is using both." Baba's fun broke the tension and no one was nasty to Nadine on her reappearance.

After a few weeks we started back to the mainland.

We crossed by the night boat from Ceylon to India

and since the women's cabin was crowded I was lucky enough to be allowed to remain on deck.

Chatti Baba and his attendant were also outside, and it was wonderful in the moonlight to watch his beaming face, as he stood on the deck just bathed in happiness, guarded and attended by the watchful Baidul.

# My Mistake

Sometimes, during the tours in India in the famous blue bus, instead of sitting hot, squashed, and uncomfortable, one or two of us were told to take certain journeys in a small car usually driven by Baba's brother, Jal.

My turn came for this luxury, and I sat in front with the driver, Jal, who happened to be in a mischievous mood, giving me all kinds of peculiar and certainly not accurate information about things we passed or about any small towns we might pass through. We laughed a great deal and by the time we reached our destination, I had subconsciously registered that one must be careful about accepting Jal's statements.

The bedding rolls were brought down from the top of the bus and placed in certain rooms for unpacking and stretching on the floor for the night.

Just as I was getting near the end of my chores Jal appeared grinning in the doorway saying that Baba wished to see me. He then departed.

I was stupid enough to accept this as the last joke of the day, and went on with my job.

Soon someone else came along demanding to know why, when called, I had not gone at once to Baba.

I then shamefacedly found myself explaining to Baba why I had not come in the first place.

He forgave me, and lovingly explained that however much Jal might tease and talk nonsense he would never dream of giving anyone a fictitious order from Baba.

### I Come Not to Teach But to Awaken

The day after my arrival in India in 1939, Baba sent for me, had me place my chair so that I faced Him exactly almost knee to knee, and then after looking at me for a moment spelled on His alphabet board, "Now you are here, are you going to stay?"

To say the least of it I was much taken aback. I had left my country, crossed the seas of danger, and arrived penniless in India. All this at Baba's direct order.

When Baba said this to me I seemed unable to answer Him. I almost wanted to go back. Friends had not spared me their opinions of my running away from the war, not wanting to help, etc., etc.

Therefore, instead of immediately replying that of course I only wanted to stay with Baba, I protected myself by asking, "Baba, why don't You tell me what to do? You always do."

Baba then helped me by saying, "I want this to be your choice, but 100 percent I should like you to stay." That of course clinched the matter. I saw my stupidity and said that I really wished to stay with Baba.

This, however, was not the last of the matter. Everyone at that time in the ashram seemed contented and happy to be there.

I, however, had the remnants of a wild break with my country, and gradually a kind of pride (I assure you totally unrecognized by myself) arose, making me feel that I must be a good disciple, staying there when I was

not sure that I really wanted to.

One day Baba sent for me and said lovingly, "You are a jewel of a disciple, staying here when you don't really want to." I, however, was not yet ready to see what He was trying to show me and smilingly accepted the comment.

A few months later He again sent for me and again said, "You are a jewel of a disciple, staying here when you don't really want to."

Immediately I remembered that once before He had used exactly the same words to me, but this time I was ready for it and was overwhelmed when I saw the ridiculous pride that had been growing within me.

I burst into tears and said, "Oh, now Baba I understand what You mean."

He sat there smiling, loving, and finally after my outburst and recovery from same we laughed together, but I can assure you that that particular piece of pride did not return. Others did, of course.

If Baba had told me of my growing pride I feel sure it would not have had the same effect as when He used another way of waking me from my self-satisfied slumber.

### Chapattis a la Half Moon

After the daily ration of *chapatti* had been made, Kitty, who at that time was directing the household chores, arranged that the finished products should be placed in tall tins and kept there until they should be used on the following day. One day by accident one of these *chapattis*, which were round and flat in shape, was somehow torn into the shape of a half moon and lay on the top of one of the tins.

Kitty did not like this and spoke firmly about it to anyone who would listen.

The next afternoon I passed through the kitchen. The cans were on the table and the lids were open and there was no one in the room. It was impossible to resist the temptation. I tore the top *chapatti* to the shape of a half moon.

There was quite a rumpus about it, and this time everyone began to take an interest in the affair.

The next day Fate, who like me did not seem to have enough to do, again gave me a chance to do the same thing, and again for this silly prank to be played unseen.

This for Kitty was the end.

With great indignation she straightaway went to Baba and told Him of this dreadful crime. He reacted to her annoyance as she hoped. The group was summoned, the story was told, and the culprit was asked to step forward.

Everyone seemed surprised when I meekly raised

my hand and confessed that I was the sinner.

Baba raised His hands and eyes in mock despair, and then solemnly upbraided me for upsetting the household.

But since He afterward gave me an embrace of forgiveness—and otherwise there would have been no embrace—I do not think my repentance went very deep.

I had at least roused everyone from a kind of heatinduced lethargy in order to disapprove of me.

#### His Choice

In the very early days when we were in Europe with Baba, an English woman wrote to Baba to say she had decided to be one of Baba's close disciples and that she was coming over to join Baba.

She came; Baba didn't say anything. And that was the day we took this lovely drive through the villages. We had a cart, we trimmed it with flowers, and we all sang and Baba sat in it. It was the most delightful morning of my life. The people in the villages cheered us and it was a riot. We got to the hills and we had a happy morning. Then Baba told this woman she had to go back. He told her, "You are not of My circle and I've told you this before and you must go back and you'll go back tonight."

That broke up the whole party and we went back drooping through the villages. At that time, it was simply that Baba wanted with Him only His circle to train.

# Mahabaleshwar

The first house in which we stayed with Baba at Mahabaleshwar was in a lovely spot wonderfully placed on the side of a hill. The hill sloped down to a forest which in turn stretched for some miles across the country, ending at the foot of a mountain range. At its center, the mountain range sloped down to the forest, then again sloped up, leaving a gap. Through this gap from our house every morning could be seen the rising sun. An amazing spectacle.

For a long time Mehera, knowing of a prophecy with regard to the expected Hindu Avatar, that he would appear riding on a white horse, had felt slightly disappointed that Baba up to that time had shown no signs of fulfilling this expectation.

At Mahabaleshwar Baba, not wishing to disappoint Mehera, decided to fulfill the prophecy.

A white horse was brought onto the compound. Mehera, Mani, and one or two others proceeded to decorate the animal with flowing colored saris, scarves, and flowers and lead him to the center of the compound, there to await Baba's arrival.

Dressed in pure white and literally oozing radiance and beauty, Baba appeared, smilingly admired the horse, then mounted, and to everyone's joy rode round and round the compound.

It was a simple and joyous ceremony, and gave Mehera one of her deepest wishes.

It was here that Baba freed me from an order given in 1931—that I should read no books of spiritual teachings. Not even His own.

Since in place of this I had had the pleasure of reading aloud detective stories and books of humor (P. G. Wodehouse) to Baba, and since Baba Himself gave us clear, simple, and wonderful spiritual explanations and talks (worth infinitely more than any books), the intellectually spiritual books were not missed. The time now had apparently come for a change of direction.

Baba sent for me and said that He wished me to read His own *Discourses*. Very seriously. Not just skipping lightly through them but studying them as if I were at a university.

Therefore every morning I found a shady spot, read the *Discourses,* made notes, memorized what I had read, and after some weeks had a good knowledge of their contents.

Baba seemed pleased.

He then freed me from His earlier prohibitive order, and told me that from that time on I might read anything I wished.

Sometimes in the comparative cool of the late afternoon Baba would take us for a walk to a part of the forest especially famous for its beauty. A lovely valley. Irene, who at that time was not at all well and could not manage a long walk, was allowed to ride the famous white horse.

It almost seemed as if this pleasure hastened her final recovery, for it was very soon after this that Baba sent her to a neighborhood hotel, after which her recovery speeded up enormously.

A few weeks there and again we moved on.

During the time we all spent in Bangalore, in 1939, Baba had long close sessions with a group of *masts*, spending time with them rather than with the women's group.

There were several of them. They lived in some huts situated in a yard, which was connected by a gate with the garden of the house in which we were living; and there Baba spent a great deal of time with them.

One day He called us and announced that He was leaving Bangalore for a few days, and that during His absence He wished us to learn by heart the music and words of "Begin the Beguine" and sing it to Him on His return. After His departure we got together every evening to try and work this out. It was not easy. To guide us there was an extremely bad record of the song and an equally bad gramophone which together wailed through the song, parts of which required playing over and over again before we could even guess the words.

Every evening we hovered over this maddening machine writing down words as they became clear to us and learning the tune. Luckily, as with all popular songs, everyone already knew the first verse.

Most of us had strong personal ideas as to how it should be sung—and not a good trained voice or even sweet natural one in the crowd!

Kitty wished someone to act as conductor and with a baton keep everyone together.

This made matters worse. No one was competent and arguments and crises came readily to the surface. It was by and large a hectic and slightly quarrelsome few evenings, made worse by one or two Indian disciples—who had no more real knowledge of Western music than the Westerners had of Indian music—making impossible suggestions as to the way we should sing.

Baba returned. The troublesome squabbles ended, and aided by the world's worst gramophone, some mediocre voices, and many loving hearts, the sound of "Begin the Beguine", at the time Baba's favorite Western song, filled the room with not too musical but certainly loving sounds, hoping to give pleasure to the beloved Master.

He showed loving appreciation and delight. Since it couldn't possibly have been for the musicality of the performance it must have been for the loving effort.

And still after fifty years have passed since this incident the song has a continuing public life. It is played by small orchestras, is sung in restaurants, and still retains its old charm, possibly doing an ordained work of carrying a light wave of His love to many who otherwise might have no other contact with Him.

One of Baba's Western disciples, who had some quite conventional ideas on the subject of the Spiritual Path, conveyed to Baba his mild disappointment that Baba had no meditation cells or any other conventional paraphernalia accompanying that particular manner of spiritual advancement.

Baba, with His own unique way of bringing a mistaken idea up to the surface and then dissolving it, arranged the following plan which brought with it one of Baba's most amusing lessons, i.e., trust your master.

Just inside Mysore State, He acquired some land and announced that it would be used as a center where certain disciples would meditate and live a completely unworldly life, thus bypassing the world and all its wonderful and terrible experiences, and reversing Baba's own statement that the way to Love was through the world, not by leaving and ignoring its experiences.

He announced a grand opening of this place which had acquired two rather shabby-looking meditation huts and one or two other buildings, and invitations were sent out to some quite important persons, both political and social.

Among those who agreed to speak were the Prime Minister of Mysore State and a most important lawyer from Madras. We were all told to make ourselves presentable for this occasion. Norina managed to look quite elegant and, accompanied by Nadine, acted as hostess

and received the guests. Everyone sat at one end of this piece of land while the important guests made speeches regarding the great spiritual need of such a place being under the direct guidance of Meher Baba. They spoke most enthusiastically.

There was, however, one disturbing matter that quite spoiled the afternoon for Baba's close men disciples.

It seemed that some important man in Bombay who, for some personal reason was against Baba and wanted to do Him harm, decided to send a car full of men to this meeting with orders to disrupt and spoil the affair, and to try and put Baba in a bad light with His important speakers and guests. The disciples begged Baba to let them go, meet these people, and somehow prevent their coming to destroy the harmony and peace of the meeting.

Baba, however, simply laughed and refused to let them do anything about the matter.

He simply waved the affair away and went on with the meeting.

As news reached these worried disciples about the approach of the car, they got almost frantic. They were quite convinced that Baba had not understood the unpleasantness that these men intended to cause, arid could not bear that Baba should have such a public insult.

Suddenly there came a complete reversal of this state of mind.

A message came that all was well; there would be no attack by these men. It seemed that the steering gear of their car had at a certain point failed to function, and that the car had gone out of control, dashed into a meadow and overturned, hurting no one but definitely making the rest of the trip impossible.

Baba laughed at and with His devoted disciples, and hinted that it was always as well to leave things to Him.

As far as I know that particular piece of land was never used as a meditation center.

#### Sunny-Bunny

One day during the Bangalore period, at the end of 1939 or beginning of 1940, through the garden gate came two pathetic small black puppies. Breed unknown, one male and one female. Evidently someone—being unable to keep them—had pushed them through the gates and then departed, hoping of course that someone would feed and love them. Their hope was realized.

Baba, upon hearing of their arrival, and knowing that after my arrival from England I had not yet acquired a regular job of my own, put them into my charge to feed, keep clean, and exercise. They were quite darling, and once they had been fed, bathed, and their fleas removed, Sunny and Bunny, Baba's names for them, became part of the ashram animal family, which after a time I had in my care. It consisted of Lily the deer, a beautiful and snobbish creature who never tried to butt anyone but the garden servants; six small monkeys who lovingly tried to rid me of non-existent fleas; a small white dog; and Moti, the proud and gorgeous peacock; a rabbit; and one or two lesser lights.

One extremely hot summer, which we spent on the Hill at Meherabad, was marked strongly by one of those periods of meditation that Baba gave us to do. At noon every day, we sat cross-legged on the floor of the room in which we slept. We sat facing the wall and fairly close to

it, making a circle round the outside of the room, and were thus not disturbed by having to face someone else.

The following is the meditation given us by Baba. The breath was to be drawn in slowly through the nostrils on the syllable "Ba" and let out slowly on the same syllable through the mouth. This was done silently. If possible we were to keep our minds on Baba Himself during one hour of this meditation.

If the mind wandered, we were still to keep on with the breathing with the words. It is interesting to note that most of the Avatars had names in this two-syllable category: Buddha, Jesus, Krishna, Rama are all suited to this form of meditation.

One morning, having had an unusually busy time exercising the dogs and the small monkeys and picking large clinging ticks out of the dogs' ears, I was a little late starting across the compound for the 12 o'clock meditation. I was breathless and mindless, so I flung myself into the required sitting position just as the bell rang for silence. Without time to recover I started off with the breathing, and after a moment or two found that I was in-breathing and out-breathing on the names Sunny and Bunny. Sunny in, Bunny out. I stopped. Horror-stricken I could not go on or even try to put the matter straight. Then another horror. I badly wanted to laugh. The rest of the hour passed, I don't know how, but it seemed impossible to get on a steady course.

I had to go to Baba to confess. With great solemnity, He looked at this careless disciple, and then in silence allowed her to feel the enormity of her sin. Then to my relieved surprise, He laughed with apparent enjoyment at the idiocy of the Sunny-Bunny meditation, embraced me, and sent me away. I cannot imagine trying to go along the spiritual path with a master who had no divine sense of humor. A wave of love comes over me when I remember Baba's loving humor.

### Change of Direction

In 1941 just after a trip to Ceylon, Baba took the group to Ajmer. We stayed just outside of town in a large house, which though in itself was quite roomy and pleasant with one side overlooking a charming lake, was spoiled by large blackish whirling dust storms which at intervals rushed through the district. As soon as these sinister shapes were spotted a rush was made to close the windows and doors, leaving all the occupants dull and miserable and not altogether keeping out the dust which seemed to have a gift of penetration. Luckily, however, they did not last long.

It was from Ajmer that Norina, Nadine, and Elizabeth started their journey back to the States.

They were accompanied by an Englishwoman whose connection with Baba had been strange and difficult.

She was the wife of an Englishman of some importance. During the early part of World War II she was living in England, and there she heard of Baba. Immediately, being an impulsive woman, she was able to obtain through her husband's importance a pass to leave England and journey to India. Foolishly she did not ask Baba's permission. She just cabled her departure time and started off, thus missing Baba's return cable telling her not to come.

Since at that time few boats were able to pass through the Suez Canal she was forced to go round the

Cape of Good Hope, and from Cape Town again cabled Baba. Again He replied telling her not to come. Again His message did not reach her. When she did arrive—I think her first appearance was in Dehra Dun—Baba refused to see her.

She stayed with some people in the town and Baba would send certain disciples to see her and talk about Baba.

She remained, hoping that some time Baba would see her and was still there when the Americans had to return home. Baba then told her to accompany them, charging Elizabeth to look after her for six months and on the day before her departure He did give her the longed-for sight of Him. She broke utterly after the interview and when she came to be with us for a short time she was weeping and sobbing so bitterly that I do not think she knew we were there. The day of departure came and a fleet of small tongas took Elizabeth, Norina, Nadine, and this woman—plus all their baggage—down a short hill, sadly waving goodbye to their loved Master, whom they did not again see until some time after the war was over.

Baba did not wait long to make a change. The very evening of the day of their departure, instead of English being the language of communication as before, a turn was taken toward the East and Gujarati became the staple language used.

This was all very well but Westerners came off badly.

Years before at Nasik we had had lessons in Hindustani. This language had never been much used by the Westerners, and the servants spoke only Marathi.

And now the only ones left of the Western women—
Kitty, Rano, Irene, and I—were certainly not proficient in Gujarati and Baba now conducted everything in that language. After a short time I decided that there was only one thing to do, and that was to learn Gujarati. But how? Here and there I collected a few words and a few quite useless phrases, but the evening sessions grew no more understandable, and I also came to the conclusion that without the script it was impossible to learn much of an Eastern language.

One evening while we were sitting with Baba I caused quite a commotion and a reproving bellow of "Margaret" from Rano by saying, "Baba, would you lend me three rupees?" Even Baba looked surprised, and signalled for me to explain. I then said that I should like a book—such as Indian children might use—containing the script and words and sentences in elementary Gujarati.

Baba did not reply to this, but a few days later presented me with a very good book for this purpose.

Industriously I learned the script, and finally could read easy paragraphs in the newspapers.

I then thought that I should try to use what I knew, and while staying for a short time with Baba and the Indian women in Ahmednagar, I announced to Mehera and Mani that on that day I should speak nothing but Gujarati. They were understanding itself and waited politely for any communication I should try to make. Alas! Not a successful day but there were certainly a few laughs. Now I remember one sentence: "The parrot is hanging up there." Very useful.

It was in Ajmer that Mani learned to drive a car. Elizabeth started the teaching, and after her departure, Dr. Nilkant and I were told to help her. We found a

nice piece of flat ground, and there she practiced turning and stopping, etc., etc.

She passed the official test quite easily, but I do not remember her doing any driving after that time.

For a few weeks we found ourselves living in a large Indian-type house in Wai, a place lying off the main road leading up to Mahabaleshwar.

It was a protected house. High walls surrounded the grounds, and the entrance was rather like the entrance to a fortress. I believe the original owner had had the place built for a harem.

Our only close neighbors were peasants who lived in one or two small villages where the conditions were unimaginably primitive. Otherwise open country and some small tree-covered hills. Just outside the fortress-like gate of the grounds was a large piece of flat land, covered with small huts that seemed to be made by putting down into the ground some tall reeds in a small circle, then pulling them together at the top and tying them firmly at that point. Just shelters, really.

The poverty-stricken men and women who lived in them came from a small village that had been cleared by the authorities because of the danger of an outbreak of bubonic plague.

Wai was one of the few places where Baba allowed the women in groups to go out walking, and with considerably more freedom than was usual, to explore the wild, unkept neighborhood. A privilege that we made the most of.

One day a group of us found ourselves walking into the outskirts of a village. The place seemed strangely

empty. After exploring the place for a time, we found there was no one there at all; and then luckily before we had gone too far into the place, some bright person realized that this must be the village that had been attacked by bubonic plague.

Immediately everyone turned and ran, probably faster than they had ever moved in their lives. That village was cleared in a very few minutes.

We rather feared that after this adventure Baba would put an end to the walks. Happily He did not do so, and we continued to enjoy these rare moments of freedom.

## Snakes

Some graceful but extremely dangerous snakes lived in the trees near Lonavla. They were known as the flying snakes, were largish and quite long. These creatures, in one movement that literally flowed through the whole body, threw themselves into the air from one branch and with a strange wavy movement that passed from head to tail would arrive safely and softly on a neighboring tree. One could with amazement stand at a safe distance and for a long time watch this strange graceful performance. Sometimes several snakes at a time gave a performance and the effect was almost hypnotic.

It was, however, unsafe to go too near to these flying beauties.

As a defense against potential danger they used their tails and struck out sharply, usually at the legs of unwary human beings, causing some kind of disintegration of the bones to set in. In those days—fifty years ago when we saw them—there was no cure and the slow disintegration would in time bring the victim to an unpleasant death.

Quite a few different types of snakes had their homes on the small hills surrounding Meherabad, and it was advisable to be most careful when exercising the dogs.

One day Elizabeth was walking with Warrior—her favorite and much-loved dog at that time—when to her

horror the dog left her and went over to investigate a huge coiled snake.

Warrior, although a well-trained and obedient dog, refused at her call to leave his investigation of this new and unusual creature and gradually circled nearer and nearer to it. Neither Elizabeth's orders nor her screams affected him. This was definitely something he should know about. She did not understand. Elizabeth finally decided on a counter attraction. She lay down on her back, cycled with her arms and legs, at the same time making strange, calling sounds.

She was successful.

Warrior decided that the strange behavior of his usually conventional mistress was more interesting than the unknown object and ran hurriedly to her side. Before he could escape again she had him on his leash going back to the Meherabad gate and away from this interesting creature.

The worst experience we had with snakes was in the coconut plantation where Baba took us in Ceylon. Enormous cobras lurked in unexpected places.

I remember one day turning a corner and coming face to face with a very large, long snake. With no hesitation I turned and ran as I am sure I never had since my younger and more athletic days.

At the end of the run, near the house, I met Baba who took my adventure seriously and sympathetically.

Although the Ceylonese plantation was a place of great and unusual beauty, I think Baba decided that his disciples would be safer elsewhere, away from these creatures, and after a few days, He said farewell to our host and departed, taking us to a less dangerous life in the hills above the river.

#### The Hen

After a dry, hot summer at Meherabad the monsoon suddenly rushed out of hiding and, in a few short hours, had swamped everything. The grass quickly began to grow and a soft green covered the earth, and it seemed as if a weight had been lifted from everything nearby.

Among other things that happened, an oblong dishshaped hollow at the side of the compound—a thing of seemingly no use-became filled with water to a depth of several inches, drowning an undersized, miserable-looking hen. Unfortunately the person to discover this poor little bird was Elizabeth, whose love for animals was intense and her discovery seemed to wipe away anything in the way of common sense about the matter. The creature at the time of discovery obviously was dead and had been for some time. This, however, did not prevent Elizabeth from becoming a one-woman rescue party. She fished the bird out of the water, dried it, massaged it, and did everything she could think of to restore vitality to the bird but with no success. She then carried the small thing to the kitchen where dinner was being prepared, got in every busy person's way in order to put the body near the stoves, feeling assured that the heat would restore it to life. Finally the exasperated cooks, remembering that Baba some time before this had come up the Hill from the men's quarters, sent a message to Him about their predicament. Baba at once

came along to the kitchen and settled the confusion by taking Elizabeth—plus hen—out into the compound and lovingly comforting her by arranging that the corpse should be buried in the hillside cemetery, which already contained some human dust and the remains of some animals. And so in this mixed cemetery at Baba's wish the small hen's body was placed, and Elizabeth regained her equilibrium.

It was wonderful how on these occasions Baba always created a feeling of the unimportance of death.

This is another short story which shows how Baba used very simple means to teach us not to criticize the built-in habits of others which were objectionable to the rest of us.

For a time upon the Hill at Meherabad practically every evening Baba gave us the happiness of gathering around His gadi. We placed our mats on the floor and sat there while He gave us perhaps a short talk, made jokes with us, or told us a story illustrating some aspect of the spiritual path.

Usually these were times of happiness, unless as sometimes happened some poor wretch was getting a reprimand.

There was living with the group an old person by the name of Barnubai.

It is said that if a Master very much wants to take a disciple away from his worldly family duties in order to serve Him closely, He will take into His ashram the members of the family for whom this disciple is responsible to feed or clothe or educate. Baba Himself takes this responsibility.

Barnubai was one such person.

She had an irritating habit at crucial moments during Baba's wonderful evenings with us of taking a large pinch of snuff which brought on a loud and enjoyable-to-her fit of sneezing.

Norina was particularly annoyed by this, and to

show it, gave out shudders of judgmental annoyance. Baba always looked surprised but said nothing to either culprit. One evening, however, with a loving smile He produced a large box of Barnubai's favorite snuff and gave it to her.

This lesson was seen and digested by all of us, just as it had been when in earlier days at Nasik He had lovingly handed Ruano a box of cigars. This action of His was not to show approval of either cigar smoking or snuff taking but to remind us to leave these things to Baba. At the right moment when the time was ripe He easily swept aside these minor things.

One lovely sunny afternoon Baba surprised us by announcing that He would take us for a picnic in a small wood located somewhere close to the foot of Meherabad Hill, and since He had been extremely busy with not much time for us it was all the more pleasurable.

Everyone was happy.

It was not too hot. The sun shone benevolently, not cruelly, coming softly through the trees, enhancing the pleasure of playing simple games with Baba in this enchanting spot.

Then for a time He lay quietly in a hammock. Then someone started to swing the hammock from side to side.

Baba seemed to enjoy this until quite suddenly something happened.

The rope at one end failed to do its duty, broke in two, and Baba's precious body was bumped onto the ground. Luckily He was not injured.

Since I had been the one to tie the supporting knots at the end where the rope broke everyone naturally began to blame me. Myself included.

As you can imagine, I felt dreadful that I had served Baba so badly and nearly injured Him. What an outstanding relief it was when someone went to examine the broken rope and found that there was a weakness in the rope itself some distance away from the

good sailor's knot that I had tied, and that due to the enthusiastic swinging Baba had been given, it had broken across, letting the hammock fall.

Baba saw my horror, and on my innocence being proved, patted my back in a congratulatory manner.

#### Vulture Watch

During the hot weather in this particular place, Baba allowed us to sleep on the roof; even Mehera, who was taken great care of otherwise. Now opposite to this house was a large meadow, and on this meadow peasants would bring their dying cattle; and at the moment of their deaths, the place would be crowded with vultures who had come for a good meal. They never came and touched the animals until the last breath was out of them, and then they pounced at once, these dreadful vultures. I watched them once or twice but that was enough.

Well, one night some unthinking peasant brought a cow which was dying and the vultures didn't go home at dusk. Usually they flew a mile or two away when it got dark. They were caught by this animal dying late in the day. They did not perch around the field where they belonged, but they came over to our house and perched around the roof where we were sleeping.

It was really a horror story and we lay up there not knowing what to do. But we knew they wouldn't touch us unless we died, so we decided not to die. In the end I finished up the night lying there with a parasol over my head. We all came through safely. If I'd had two parasols I'd have put them both up—somehow it made me feel safer.

Norina at one time did a great deal of work among persons of worldly importance in spreading some knowledge of Baba's work.

Among those she called on for this purpose was the great scientist Einstein. She called on him and a happy situation was at once established when he told Norina that during her period of starring in London as the Virgin Mary in "The Miracle", his daughter had had such an intense admiration for her performance that she had spent time hanging around the stage door hoping to meet her. He was therefore happy to meet Norina and because of this she felt easy in talking of Baba.

At that time she was going through a stage of explaining to everyone that Baba's love caused enormous changes of consciousness in those who came in contact with Him and it was from this angle that she approached Einstein.

Finally when she came to depart, Einstein smilingly said, "Princess Matchabelli, if this man can change the consciousness of my cat so that it does not catch birds I will believe in Him."

Norina did see the humor of this remark and told me the story with much enjoyment.

# After World War II

I am the Ancient One, the one residing in every heart. Therefore, love others, make others happy even at discomfort to yourself; this is to love Me.

#### MEHER BABA

## Nipped in the Bud

Some dancers, who loved Baba and had been fortunate enough to perform for Him at Myrtle Beach in 1958, joined by some others, would occasionally get together to talk about Him, their lives in relation to Him, and to enjoy being together.

Not knowing much about psychic or occult matters or of Baba's wish that such things should be avoided, one of them to further the enjoyment of these gatherings brought along a book on the subject of Tarot and also a pack of Tarot cards.

This was a great success and very soon the lure of knowing the unknowable made reading the cards a most popular pastime.

Bunty Kelly was found to have a gift for reading the cards, and although at first no one quite took it seriously a change gradually took place. Perhaps it did mean something?

The news of this escapade came to Baba's ears. He wasted no time explaining the spiritual dangers of this pastime. He simply sent them a cable flatly forbidding any continuance of this alluring occupation. The dancers got the message and the understanding of it in more ways than one.

Ever since then they have not moved in any way toward occult or psychic matters, only toward Baba.

After settling into my living quarters at the Wellington Hotel in New York many years ago, it was natural that the walls of my room became the home of my favorite photos of Baba.

My room maid, without any initial help from me, became interested and asked all kinds of questions about Him and in her own way began to love Him.

I gave her a copy of her favorite photograph which she took home and hung on the wall of her sitting room.

When her boyfriend, who was a sailor, came back from a long sea voyage, he looked in astonishment at the photo on the wall and said, "Why that is Meher Baba, how do you know about Him? I heard a great deal about Him the last time I was in Bombay." With great happiness she told me of this, and although she disappeared from the Wellington, I feel sure she will never forget Meher Baba.

Some years ago I injured my right hip. After that, most expensive but quite necessary, I was forced to take a cab to my daily ballet classes. Impossible to strap-hang while carrying a walking stick, a hand-bag, and perhaps a parcel.

So taxis became the order of the day.

One afternoon on my way to class the heavy traffic rearranged itself and there astonishingly in front of my vehicle was Baba, a little larger than life, facing me and travelling backward.

It was unbelievable.

Hypnotized, ideas such as "psychic at last" or "What is the message?" running through my mind I sat gaping at this phenomenon. Then as the traffic cleared I saw that some "Baba lover" who earned a living with a small delivery truck had covered the whole of the back of his van with an enormous photo of Baba. Soon after this the truck left the main road, but I remained uplifted and delighted.

Some years ago one of Baba's close followers was leaving Spain by plane, and found himself sitting next to a woman with whom he struck up a friendly conversation.

After a time to his amazement she confided in him that while in Spain she had heard of a great spiritual master. His name was Meher Baba! Unhappily she had been unable to find out where He lived or anything about Him, but was determined to do so.

It must have been a great joy for him to give her all the information she needed to put her in touch with Baba.

Soon after the end of World War II Baba told Donkin who was still in India that He wished him to go to America, contact His close disciples, and to meet and talk to persons who had come to love Him or were interested.

This was at the time when I was in London making every effort on Baba's orders to get to America myself. My difficulties, however, did not prevent Baba from sending me an order to get a round trip ticket for Donkin to go to that country.

Travelling after the war was still difficult and I was met by firm refusals, rudeness, and downright snubs by every travel agency to which I applied.

One afternoon, feeling most baffled by a rude refusal, I was turning to leave the counter when a clerk—not the one who had just crushed me—wrote something on a piece of paper, put it under a blotter, pushed the whole thing toward me, signed to me to take the paper and clear out quickly. I took the paper and found on it the address of a small agency located in a nearby unimportant side street. I at once went to the address and at once was given a ticket. No trouble at all.

A short time later Donkin and I met at the corner of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road.

He was full of dry British humor and shook hands

with me saying, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume." After this piece of idiocy—enjoyed by both of us—he seemed delighted to receive his ticket, and to hear about the seeming miracle that had produced it.

## Loss of a Joyful Time with Baba

While at Myrtle Beach in 1956 Baba made a great many persons happy by calling them separately into the Lagoon Cabin, allowing them to ask questions and feel the warmth and sweetness of His Love closely enveloping them.

One afternoon He sent for all the dancers, seated them on the floor around Him, told them to ask no questions but just to be with Him and be happy.

Naturally they felt that this was the height of joy and that no other way of being with Baba could possibly hold more enchantment. But alas! A young woman who was not a dancer somehow managed to squeeze herself into the cabin, and just as everyone was settling into the blissful experience of envelopment in Baba's love, she asked loudly to attract attention to herself, "Baba, when may I come to India?"

Baba's attitude immediately changed. He clapped His hands, frowned, and motioned to everyone to leave the cabin. This they did, but the love in their hearts was replaced by anger against the one who had destroyed their special time of joy.

I believe this young woman heard quite a lot about her behavior from the outraged dancers, and it was a very long time before they could bring themselves to a state of loving forgiveness.

*E*lla was one of the young dancers who was studying at Jacob's Pillow during the first summer that I taught there for Ted Shawn.

She was a beautiful young girl from the deep South and, during that summer, along with Tex Hightower, became very drawn toward Baba.

In 1952 during Baba's first after-the-war visit to the States, she was able to meet Him at Ivy Duce's New York studio.

I was sitting in the room outside the door of the studio in which Baba, with His loving grace, was capturing many hearts in short, vital interviews, when the door opened and Ella came away from her first meeting with Him. For quite a long time, overwhelmed by her first contact with such love, she sat with her hands over her face seemingly unable to move. After some time, without addressing me, she got up and left.

At that time she was engaged to be married to Peter Marks, a young, earnest Episcopalian minister.

Fearful that her acceptance of someone in the place of Christ would affect their marriage, she discussed the matter with Peter. Peter, however, feeling apparently that the love for God was the important matter, was wonderful about it and made no objections.

They married and things went along happily and graciously. Children appeared.

Again Baba came to the States.

This time He gave short interviews at the Hotel Delmonico.

Here Ella joyfully came to see Him, this time bringing Peter. Unfortunately some young and rather tactless young people, who obviously wished everyone to realize how great was their love for Baba, idiotically rushed at Peter, pinning Baba brooches on his coat and practically shouting "Jai Baba" at him.

This unnecessary and foolish interference did untold damage to any real connection with Baba for Peter at the time. On the contrary it turned him right away to a position definitely against Baba, and made things awkward for Ella.

At that time he was in charge of a New York church in a very poor district.

One evening I was invited to dine with Ella and Peter. Four other guests sat down with us. All four were clergymen.

During dinner they brought up the subject of Baba, carefully explaining to me that there had only been one Christ and that there could not possibly be another.

I waited a bit, let them get this attack off their chests, and then asked why they should refuse to accept other avatars such as Buddha, Krishna, and Zoroaster. Why should God who is all Love—our one point of agreement wait until only 2000 years ago—a mere nothing of time in the world's history—to send His Love clearly and purely into a body. Surely other humans of a different type needed expression of Love incarnated.

These four men had really no answer to this and changed the subject quite quickly. I did hear that one rose in his profession to become a bishop.

Peter, not liking his own reaction to all this, decided

to place himself in the hands of a church psychiatrist.

He told the man of his reaction toward Baba. The psychiatrist, before starting Peter's treatment, insisted upon meeting Ella. She was not happy about this but to please Peter went for a meeting with him. He then announced that Ella would have to take a full psychiatric treatment.

Most upset by this she telephoned me to discuss this. I suggested that she could agree to a treatment, but if so should insist on going to a lay psychiatrist.

This Peter agreed to and the chosen psychiatrist, after the initial meeting, announced that Ella was in no need of such a treatment. She seemed well-balanced. Peter was so annoyed with his church psychiatric friend that he turned down his own treatment.

Finally, he became the vicar for a country district, and later turned quite away from religion for a long period.

He then obtained a good job with VISTA and later became the state director for ACTION in Minnesota where he remains as of this writing.

Ella herself, still loving Baba deeply and having finished bringing up four children to college level, devoted herself to trying to help beaten and ill-treated children.

Small children, beaten black and blue or suffering from other intense cruelties committed by their parents, were often sent by the court judges back to these same cruel persons. In most cases the cruelties were repeated, and after two years of this Ella could stand it no longer.

She is now living in Minnesota and works for unfortunate children in quite another way. About six years

ago she and Peter came to New York and we spent a couple of happy hours together. At first I was careful not to bring Baba into the conversation. After a short time Peter, to my surprise, leaned forward on his seat toward me saying, "Please talk about Baba. I am happy to hear about Him."

A few years later, during one of my summers at the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, S.C., I received a letter from Peter announcing that he was coming to see me on such and such a day at 3 o'clock.

He came, sat down, and talked for one hour about Baba and religion in general. He then got out his watch and said he would come the next day at the same time. Again he came and again he made an appointment for a third day and a third hour's talk about Meher Baba.

When he left on the third day no more was said about returning. The next I knew, Peter had gone off to India with Ella to visit Baba's tomb and to meet the mandali. His own view of his relationship with Baba now may best be seen in his comment to another of my dancers during a dinner at his home when he appeared in casual Indian shirt and pants, saying, "Why not? We're all Baba lovers here."

Ella is still beautiful and, after years of difficulties, has come closer and closer to Baba's love.

### Pascal

In the middle of the 1930s Baba used the loving energy of certain Western disciples, who felt strongly that Baba should be presented to the world by means of an elaborate and well directed movie, by encouraging them to collect money for this venture, asking for scripts from important writers and by writing to the important and famous Gabriel Pascal to take over the direction of the film.

At that time Pascal was known as a first class director, and Bernard Shaw would allow no one else to direct movies made from his plays.

The American and English disciples, urged on by Norina and Elizabeth, were asked to buy shares in this project and I believe that right from the beginning some kind of retaining fee was paid to Pascal. He met Baba and was at once closely drawn to Him, and when Baba and some close disciples spent a short time at Walter Merten's home near Zurich, Pascal joined the party.

One afternoon Baba called everyone together and produced an enormous map of evolutionary creation.

He had it hung on the wall and joyfully announced that with the aid of this map He would give an explanation of physical evolution right back to the beginning.

We sat on the floor in a circle facing Him.

Pascal beamed and, looking something like an inspired child, placed himself at Baba's feet almost in a

kind of ecstasy.

Baba then, aided by someone with a long stick who pointed to places on the chart illustrating His remarks, explained to us some of the physical changes in the earlier inhabitants of the globe, and finally He came to the place and time where the missing link theory was coming up for explanation.

Everyone was of course much interested, but no one showed quite the same fervor and excitement as Pascal. He grunted, shook his head, and clasped his hands in excited anticipation.

Baba, after stirring up all this interest, quite suddenly appeared anxious and asked the time, then announced that there was not enough time to explain this difficult matter thoroughly. Since the scientists had gone so far in the wrong direction He, Baba, must have plenty of time to explain and give us a correct understanding of this matter. For this He would call us together at some other time. He then hurried away. Alas! The other time never came!

I remember another occasion. Meher Mount, the estate in California situated on the top of a high hill, was used by Jean Adriel for those who wished to rest and think of Baba. She ran the place successfully for some years. After she left the Mount, Agnes Baron took the work on.

It was during one of the summer sessions that Gabriel decided to join the group—of which I was one—to meditate and generally come closer to Baba. He was most trouble-some.

He expected us to behave toward him as if we were extras on a Hollywood lot. There was not anyone there who had aspirations of this kind but he still behaved as

if we had.

Agnes was not the type to stand for this kind of non-sense.

She went to him and said firmly that no one staying at Meher Mount at that time wanted an acting job from him and it would be better for him to behave as an ordinary human being. Otherwise he should go.

Underneath all his nonsense he was very human. He accepted Agnes' ultimatum, stayed on, and showed himself as a pleasant human being who loved Baba and was at Meher Mount to come closer to his Master. After this small crisis he became one of us, was a pleasant companion, even showing a certain natural sweetness.

For some time after coming to the States certain difficulties hampered me in any business transactions that had to be dealt with. For instance the signing of a new contract, changing my place of work, or in fact anything that required a different approach to my living in America, was very often held up by a feeling that I should ask Baba what He would wish me to do.

This of course had been for seven years in India my only way of life, and when I left India Baba gave me no fresh instructions about the matter.

So backward and forward went cables and letters, and things were held up and sometimes got very messy.

Suddenly, having had no specific orders, I began to wonder if this was really what I was supposed to do. I therefore sent a cable to Baba, "Shall I write or cable to you every time I have to make a change in my work or shall I go where fate leads me, you being Fate?"

Baba wasted no time. An immediate return cable said, "Go where fate leads you." This cable seemed to bring me much nearer to Baba in any business arrangements than when I had cabled or written to Him before embarking on anything new. Fate is wonderful.

#### An Extraordinary Situation

*O*ne afternoon in New York a few years ago, I was passing the Omni Hotel when to my surprise I heard a voice calling out, "Margaret Craske, come and help me, the witches are after me."

I turned to see which of my friends or acquaintances was trying to be funny, to find a small crowd surrounding a young man who was circling his head round and round and at the same time calling out, "Margaret Craske, come and help me, the witches are after me!" Most embarrassed, I recognized a young man who had a few years before come to me with a few other youngsters to talk about Baba.

I bravely stepped forward, took him by the hand, and pushed him into a tea shop which fortunately, at that time before being modernized, was arranged in a series of dark booths.

He seemed to be possessed. I thought I remembered that priests gave persons in this condition some communion bread to eat—I don't know even now if this is true—so I therefore ordered poached eggs, said Baba's name, and then made him eat the eggs. When he stopped every now and then to look fearfully round and repeat his chant about the witches getting him, I made him repeat after me, "There are no witches; there is only Baba."

After we had been through this several times, he became normal enough to tell me that he had been

studying witchcraft in Montreal! Later on, when he seemed quite quieted down, I took him to my room at my hotel, pinned a Baba brooch on him, gave him a small portion of a handkerchief that had once belonged to Baba, and then sent him away, making him promise that as soon as possible he would go to a psychiatrist.

Some time later I ran into him on the street. He told me that he had kept his word, found an understanding psychiatrist and was now back to normal. He seemed rather ashamed of his witch session in Montreal.

He has disappeared out of my life but I do feel that he has kept close to Baba.

## Episcopalian

*It* was wonderful to feel no spiritual narrowness at all in the advice that Baba gave to those who came to visit Him. It was not there anyway.

The following is a story of how He dealt with a friend of mine who was an ardent Episcopalian but who wished to see Baba Himself because of the love her sister and I had for Him.

Baba was in New York in 1956. He gave short interviews to many who did not love Him, but who were interested to see Him because of friends who loved Him and served Him.

Among them was this friend, Elsie.

She was a very honest type of woman and, not wishing in any way to deceive Baba, she came into Baba's beautiful presence and burst out nervously, "I am an Episcopalian."

It was as if she expected to be thrown out for heresy. With great love Baba gave her *prasad*, and through His translating disciple said, "Now your duty is to love Christ more and more." She went out of the room happy that she had come to see Him.

What did happen was that her love for Christ became warmer and stronger and was in the end not directed to Episcopalianism but to Christ Himself.

Quite a different matter.

#### A Niece

A few years ago, while I was staying at Myrtle Beach Center, a most delightful young girl came to visit the place for a few days.

She was Baba's niece, the young daughter of His brother Adi who lived in London.

On being requested to do so she spoke very simply and directly to a group of interested people who were hungry for any personal news of Baba.

She told them of the wonderful and simple relationship that He had established with her when she had been taken from London where she lived to visit with Him in India. He told her that whatever He happened to be doing she might go in to see Him. This she did.

He would greet her playfully and a charming atmosphere of loving playfulness grew up between them.

He told her not to read any spiritual books—His own included—but simply to love Him, without the normal explanations of His Godhead, in fact just to love Baba as she saw Him.

Over the years she had faithfully followed these orders, and the result was a beautiful, non-intellectual understanding and love of Baba.

She is now married and lives in London, and whenever I receive a letter from her, regardless of worldly difficulties, college life, and marriage, this wonderful relationship with Baba has remained and grown stronger.

## Yul Brynner

During the seven years of seclusion in India with Baba you can imagine that just hearing superficial war news from the local newspaper, or through something that Baba chose to tell us, did not leave me a very up-to-date person to arrive in America, and of all things to immediately start touring the country with a ballet company. In conversation there were so many references to famous people or those who had done something of importance during the war. These things simply passed over my head.

One evening, backstage after the performance at the Metropolitan Opera House, Antony Tudor, the choreographer, came walking toward me, accompanied by a baldheaded, personable young man whom he presented as Yul Brynner. Since I had never heard of him, I did not react to the meeting with the great interest usually shown to a famous star, but instead politely shook hands.

His annoyed reaction was immediate.

He said quickly and antagonistically, "Let me tell you that I studied yoga in the islands when I was a child."

He then turned and strode quickly away, leaving me slightly bewildered at his obvious antagonism.

Tudor, with much laughter, explained the situation, and I then also became able to enjoy it.

Viola—one of the dancers who in 1958 was fortunate enough to perform for Baba at Myrtle Beach—was some time after this returning to New York City from Bennington, the famous girls' college in the hills of Vermont, where she had been giving a course of lessons. She was alone, driving a small light car.

The winds in this high hilly country leading from the school can be unbelievably strong and fierce. They were so on this particular evening, making the driving of a small light vehicle hazardous in the extreme.

For a few days before this, without any direct intention of a formal meditation, Viola had been obsessed by a feeling of Baba's presence within, a kind of spontaneous meditation. Therefore when the gale on the top of a high hill rose to a terrific peak, caught the car and rolled it over twice, leaving it lying on one side, she was not, as she should have been, killed by the happening. She was practically uninjured, but remained trapped in the car.

The rescue squad of police, upon pulling her out of the car, was startled to find her alive and uninjured. They of course had no idea of what Baba could do for a spontaneously meditating disciple.

My first job, after following Baba's order to come to America in 1947, was touring round the country while giving lessons to members of the Ballet Theatre.

I can't imagine what stories had been told about my years in India with Baba, but the stage hands and wardrobe ladies evidently kept a strict eye on me in case I practiced some kind of Eastern magic.

As you may know, ballet skirts are made from a kind of gauze, gathered and skillfully arranged on a waistband to give them their well-known appearance.

One night, while supervising the packing for the journey to the next performance theatre, the head wardrobe mistress discovered that one of these ballet skirts could not be found anywhere.

Dancers were questioned, dressing rooms were searched, but no skirt!

Finally one of the searchers remembered hearing that certain yogis took a strip of gauze, swallowed it, retaining the end in one hand, and then pulled the strip up and down to ensure a perfectly clean inside.

Ah! Ha! That woman who had been studying yoga in India must have taken the skirt. Well, unknown to myself, I was carefully watched, until at the next town it was discovered that the missing skirt had been

packed in the wrong basket, and sent off with an early consignment.

Months later one of the wardrobe ladies with great joy told me this story. I was delighted.

## George

Among the dancers who loved Baba was George. In the classroom he was nothing to write poetry about, but once on the stage a transformation took place. He was gifted with that strange thing, personality.

His greatest difficulty was that he gave in to bouts of temperament. For instance, he had been adopted by a firstclass management and was successfully going ahead with small roles when he foolishly gave in to a kind of madness.

One evening during performance he was inspired to pick up the microphone and bellow into it, "Fire, fire!" causing much confusion and trouble.

Well, that was naturally the end of his career. When Baba was at the Delmonico, to at last meet the being whom he really loved, George flew in from Arizona. At the moment of going into Baba's presence he was right at the top of his temperamental ladder. Baba, fortunately for George, threw him right back to the lowest rung and he left Baba's presence looking emotionally empty and bedraggled—and not understanding what had happened. It was one of Baba's wise, loving acts. A little higher, and I am sure madness would have taken over.

He went out of the dancing world and whenever I happen to see him it seems as if Baba is still there. And George is still puzzled by it all.

#### Invitation to South Africa

The first time Baba visited my school in London, one of the pupils from South Africa surprisingly was overcome by the sight of Him, and fell weeping into His arms. Dulcie Howes was a first-class student and returned home to found a school and the South African Ballet Company.

Before Baba's arrival in the West in 1931 I had already taken a trip to South Africa in order to conduct examinations in the Cecchetti method of ballet. Although it was a beautiful country, I had not liked the unpleasant way in which the white people treated either the black or the colored population. It was uncomfortable, and although I had pupils from there, I had no wish to make a second trip.

After Baba's arrival in the West I received an invitation to again go over to South Africa to examine and teach. I showed this to Baba, telling Him I was refusing to go and the reason.

To my amazement, He firmly announced that He wished me to go. He wished for the contact there.

This time, I came into direct contact with trouble.

Early one afternoon, I was leaving the studio where the exams were given, when from an elegant car parked outside, a chauffeur stepped forward and handed me an invitation to return with the chauffeur to the colored university and tell the students something of the art of ballet. The reason given was that they were not allowed

in to ballet performances.

I at once agreed to go to the university. I invited two good students to go with me and demonstrate the early work, got into the car, and was driven to the university building where I was met by a charming woman—a daughter of the Bishop of London—who took me into a roomful of colored young people who seemed delighted to hear and see something of early ballet training. Baba seemed to have crept into the meeting!

On my return, my host and hostess showed me how popular this visit had been. At dinner, they did not address a single word to me! I was thankful to leave the house early the next morning and go to Johannesburg.

It seems that fewer persons in South Africa seemed to respond to the love call of Baba than any other place where His disciples went and talked of Him. I have, however, in my mind the memory of the South African girl who on meeting Baba in London, burst into tears, and for some moments lay with her head on His shoulder, weeping bitterly. Her love went on growing and years later she came to New York and again renewed her love feeling for Him.

## The Links

*I*t is difficult to write about oneself. In fact I cannot imagine why I should write this story. I could be wrong to do so. Yet on the other hand there was Baba's own statement about the matter. So I put this on paper and do it as honestly as I can without elaboration or exaggeration—or the glorification of an ordinary dancer and teacher of ballet. So here it is as I see it.

The first time that Meher Baba with all His spiritual and physical beauty came to the West, he brought with Him a devoted and wonderful disciple, Chanji. Chanji was kind and anxious to give all the help and understanding that he had gained in his years of discipleship with Baba to this batch of spiritually immature people who, although they recognized Baba as the One who was again lighting the spiritual lamp of love in a rather devastated world, did not know what to do. Everyone, however, according to his or her upbringing, had ideas which luckily after a few years faded away, and hopefully they became useful in Baba's ways as He wished.

The first intimation to me of the link affair came from Chanji in 1931 when the Westerners were all at the station to say goodbye to Baba who was for the time being leaving England. There were lots of tears. Suddenly Chanji, out of the blue, said something to the effect that since "she is a link type, Baba must have Margaret."

No one else seemed pleased that, for a minute, attention was focused on me, and hurriedly the conversation changed direction. I did not know what it meant and put it away in a memory box with other ununderstandable things.

But 10 years later, just before I left India in 1946 to return as I thought to England, I was miserably packing my few belongings ready for the trip when another of the Western women came into my room at Meherabad and said, "I wish to say that we disapprove of your being willing to leave Baba." She then sailed away with her head held at a pompous angle. At this I broke and lay down on my bed crying and crying. Just then who should come into the room but Baba Himself. He made signs of "What is the matter?" I explained and told Him I was willing to stay on if He wished. I would forget the ill-health, the boils that regularly every few days came out on my body, the at-that-time lack of an interesting job, and with a little courage start again. Baba was kind and gentle with me.

He told me that He wished me as soon as possible to go to America. I was startled and said that I had heard that leaving England at that time and going to America was almost impossible unless one was going to make money for England's economic recovery after the war. Baba laughed, opened His hands, then spelled out on His alphabet board, "You must go; I have made you my link in America." This made no sense to me and I felt too sick to ask any questions.

Well, I came to America, and during the first two years here my job touring with American Ballet Theatre took me to small towns and large cities in the North, South, East, and West of America. In a great many of

these cities people who had heard of or loved Baba would look me up and ask questions about His doings and life in India. This was my first real experience of linkage.

In the dancing world itself, Baba's name became known to some of the important higher-ups. The first time after World War II that Baba came to America (1952) some young dancers in the Metropolitan Opera Company where I was giving ballet classes found that on the open day that Baba would be at the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, S.C., it would be possible for them to hire a plane, leave the company, go to Myrtle Beach, and return to the company without missing a performance.

At once they tried to get permission for this. But, alas! No one seemed sympathetic. Finally, a courageous one went to Rudolph Bing himself and gained permission for the trip. Bing responded favorably and immediately became aware of Baba. And on the return of the dancers to the company, Bing himself met the battered but happy young dancers at the door of the theatre and asked if the trip was a success. Again, this enlarged the number of people in important positions knowing of Baba, not being against Him, but not becoming followers either.

The Royal Ballet of England had many connections with Baba.

First of all, Ninette de Valois, for many years directress of the company, was a friend of mine and at the time of Baba's appearance in the West, I was teaching for the company. Frederick Ashton, the choreographer, was interested in Baba and asked many questions. Robert Helpman, a great artist and dancer, seemed to

love Him very much. Since my linkage was supposed to be with America, I at first did not think that it was affecting them. However, soon after my engagement as one of the school directors at the Metropolitan Opera House, the Royal Ballet came to New York to give a season of ballet. Old friendships were renewed, questions were asked about Baba, and any small flames there were brightened up again. I then felt the link was working with them.

During my years in America, I also had interesting teaching engagements with Ted Shawn at his summer theatre and school at Jacob's Pillow in Massachusetts. Shawn had no particular interest in Baba but was always helpful and polite about anything to do with Him.

The scholarship students at the school were not allowed to leave the grounds during the weekends. A young lover of Baba who was working for her summer fees at the school came to me in great distress in 1952 (or 1956?), saying that she had heard of Baba's imminent arrival in New York and would I be kind enough to ask Shawn's permission to visit Baba over the weekend. This I refused to do, telling her she must have the courage to do this for herself.

This she did and Shawn said that she could go and that he was glad that she had something worthwhile to enrich her life.

Shawn never became a follower and never met Baba, but he always was on the kind side of feeling toward Him. I taught for many summers at Jacob's Pillow and saw a number of students come to a different love with time, until now they are among those who are mature in their love, doing their worldly work and

carrying Baba with them. Among those early students were Tex Hightower and Ella Marks.

Many of the students from those summers afterward became professional dancers and excellent teachers. But more than this, many students came in contact with Baba's love and afterward became His followers.

The Julliard School of Music and Dance was another place where for some years I taught, and again the results were the same—interest without my mentioning the matter led many persons on the staff, including Martha Graham, to question me about Baba and His work.

Among the contacts made during my time with Ballet Theatre were Alicia Alonzo, then a principal dancer who went on to become head of the National Ballet in Cuba; and Anthony Tudor, the great choreographer, both of whom asked me many questions about Baba.

Baba was in New York in 1956. He gave short interviews to many who did not love Him, but who were interested to see Him because of friends who loved Him and served Him.

Among them was this friend, Elsie.

She was a very honest type of woman and, not wishing in any way to deceive Baba, she came into Baba's beautiful presence and burst out nervously, "I am an Episcopalian."

It was as if she expected to be thrown out for heresy. With great love Baba gave her *prasad*, and through His translating disciple said, "Now your duty is to love Christ more and more." She went out of the room happy that she had come to see Him.

What did happen was that her love for Christ became warmer and stronger and was in the end not directed to Episcopalianism but to Christ Himself.

Quite a different matter.

- from Still Dancing with Love

Still Dancing with Love is Margaret Craske's response to demands for more original stories about Meher Baba, written in the same unique style that characterized her first book, *The Dance of Love*. Insight and intelligence, wit and love combine to present a memorable portrait of this famous dance teacher's sixty years with the Avatar of the Age.