

Our Constant Companion

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Our Constant Companion

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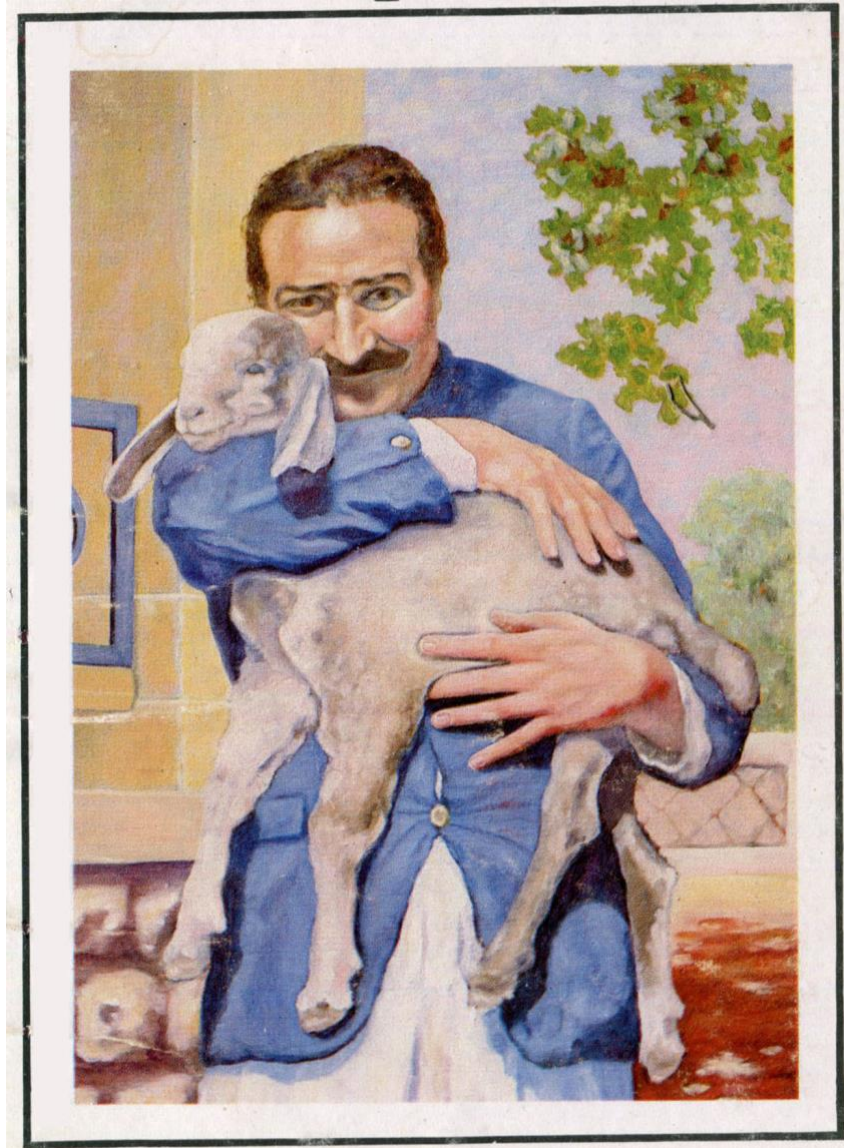
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Our Constant Companion



AVATAR MEHER BABA
Compiled by Bal Natu

OUR CONSTANT COMPANION
(AVATAR MEHER BABA)

Compiled by
BAL NATU

MEHER NAZAR BOOKS/
Ahmednagar

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Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba
Vol. I (1943 - 1948)

Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba
Vol. II (Jan. 1949 - Jan 1952)

Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba
Vol. III (Feb. 1952 - Feb. 1953)

Avatar Meher Baba Bibliography
(1928 to February 1978)

To all who share Avatar Meher Baba's
love, compassion and humor with
His lovers and with others
in their daily lives.

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My most warm and heartfelt thanks to Baba lovers in the East and West who willingly shared their experiences of Beloved Baba's companionship.

I must express my indebtedness to Robert Dreyfuss for his loving assistance in the early phase of compiling the material for this book.

It was not until the beginning of this year, with the kind help of Steve and Daphne Klein that the book began to take its present shape. In addition to all their other help, Steve typed the final manuscript and Daphne meticulously proofread it as well as the galleys. My wholehearted and sincere thanks to them both for their interest and cordial cooperation which has made this publication possible.

My sincere thanks are also due to Bill Le Page for his loving concern in sharing Beloved Baba's love with others, and for his help to Meher Nazar Books, Ahmednagar, the publisher. My loving thanks to Thom Fortson for designing the cover of this book as well as painting the picture of Meher Baba on its front cover.

I would be failing in my duty if I did not express my appreciation for all the help the mandali at Meherazad have given me, which sustained me in my efforts.

With deep trust in Baba, the most loving Companion, this book was made possible only by the loving cooperation of many hands and hearts. It is all done in His love and with His love - in an attempt to share His love. Jai Meher Baba!

Meherazad
September 14, 1983

Bal Natu

PREFACE: THE "REAL NEWS "

Once Avatar Meher Baba was asked, "What is the most difficult thing in spiritual life?" With a disarming smile, He responded, "To be perfectly human." Characteristically, this simple and spontaneous reply is also very profound. Perhaps it holds the key to understanding the life of the *Avatar* Himself. For the *Avatar*, the God-Man, the Christ, while completely God, is also "perfectly" human. Hence His life and statements often puzzle those who have preconceived ideas of spirituality and spiritual life.

For one thing, Avatar Meher Baba had a lively sense of humor. While with a group of His close ones, He once spelled out on His alphabet board, "Before I met my Beloved in Union, I lost everything - ego, mind, lower consciousness - but thank God I did not lose my sense of humour! That is why I appear amongst you, on your level."

Another time, referring to the *Avatar's* life, Baba described it as a "Life of God in *essence* and that of a man in *actions*." The "essence" of Meher Baba's life was His inner work of giving a spiritual push to all humanity. His "actions" included not only His service to the poor, the sick and the afflicted, but also His love of music and games of all types, His enjoyment of jokes, skits, outings, and humorous movies. A master story teller Himself, He always enjoyed listening when anyone had a good story to tell. And sometimes after His spiritual work in seclusion, He would ask one of His disciples to tell Him some jokes or a story.

In the mid '50s, Baba started using as His "office" a long narrow room at Meherazad which had first been used as a garage and later as a stable. Here His resident men disciples, whom He referred to as His *mandali* gathered in the mornings and afternoons. Baba's correspondence - appeals for guidance, reports on work being done to spread Baba's divine message of Love and Truth, and personal letters from His close ones - was read out to Him. Baba would listen attentively, making comments and indicating replies when necessary.

Baba also used this time to give day-to-day instructions to those living with Him. But, as always around Baba, although the work was never taken lightly, the atmosphere was lively. With lightning speed, Baba would shift from one topic to another. With genuine concern He would ask after someone's health, then, with a twinkle in His eye, He would good naturedly tease another, then instantly be completely serious about some aspect of His work, only to begin joking the moment it was taken care of.

Part of the general routine included the reading out of the headlines of an English paper each afternoon. Baba referred to the current events published in the papers as "bogus news," but any information received about His lovers, He called the "real news."

Today, Baba's lovers and resident disciples still gather in that long narrow hall, now known as Mandali Hall. The atmosphere is still lively and the hall often rings with laughter as Eruch or Mani (two of Baba's close resident *mandali*) recall incidents from their lives with Him. Yet, in the hall, there is always an undercurrent of Meher Baba's continuing love and eternal compassion for one and all. Amidst the discussions, stories and jokes, there is a profound silence one can experience, a timeless moment one can spend, in the presence of the Beloved.

With hearts overflowing with His love, individuals often share their own stories - stories which reflect the love and attention they have felt from their Beloved. And thus Meher Baba continues to be entertained with the "real news."

Being privileged to stay at Meherazad over the years, I have been greatly impressed and amazed by the variety and depth of the *Avatar's* ways of awakening hearts to His sweet and sanctifying love. Some of the stories involve astonishing coincidences, dramatic situations, and "miraculous" happenings. Yet the true miracle is that Beloved Baba goes to such lengths to personally touch each one's heart. As Mani sometimes remarks, "It is Baba who makes the stories, we only tell them!"

All these stories reflect something of the warmth of Baba's love, the unconditional nature of His compassion and, very often, the twinkle of His humor - but most of all they reveal His sympathetic companionship. In this unique companionship the God-Man's divinity and His humanity are perfectly blended.

In this book I am presenting a first sampling of these stories in the hope that beneath the surface details, the reader will be able to overhear a whisper of that intimate conversation which occurs between the Constant Companion and His dear ones. I feel the stories will convey to the heart what Meher Baba often told those around Him, "I am not this body. I am the Ancient One. I am in you, I am with you. Remember me and I will help you."

All glory to the Eternal Companion, Meher Baba!

Meherazad
September 7, 1983

Bal Natu

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I want you to make me
your Constant Companion.
Think of me more than you
think of your own self.
The more you think of me,
the more you will realize
my love for you.
Your duty is to keep me
constantly with you
throughout your thoughts,
speech and actions ...
My blessings to you all.

MEHER BABA

BABA KNOWS BEST

In 1940, Meher Baba sent me and my sister Hilla to a very renowned school - St. Ann Convent in Secunderabad. I was one of the top students there. Years later, Baba asked me what I wanted to do after finishing my high school studies. I said, "Baba, I want to become a doctor." Baba responded, "There are already so many doctors here - Goher, Donkin, Nilu - you become a nurse." I made a face and said, "No, Baba. I don't want to become a nurse," because in those days there was no status or position in being a nurse. Baba added "Nursing is a very noble profession," but I was not convinced.

In fact, thinking I was being very shrewd, I decided to plead my case to Mehera. I told Mehera to please tell Baba to send me to college so I could do medicine. I did this because I knew Baba would not want to displease Mehera. And Mehera did tell Baba, "Baba, Najoo is a good student, why not let her go to college and become a doctor?" And, finally Baba consented.

As I was finishing my studies at the Convent, I came down with a 104° fever. I asked Baba if I should appear for my exams and Baba said yes. So, with blankets wrapped around me, I took the exams and, to everyone's surprise, I scored first class in Senior Cambridge.

Baba arranged for me to go to college. Each year I got a scholarship to continue my studies. After two years I appeared for the examination in medical science, but by 1% I failed to gain admission to medical college.

Dejected and sad I returned to be with my parents at Meherabad. I used to sit on the railroad tracks and feel depressed. One day I went to Pendu and asked to see the newspaper to take my mind off my predicament. I returned to the railroad tracks and began reading it. A tiny article caught my eye. Applications were now being accepted for an honors degree in nursing at Delhi University. Without telling my parents, I asked Pendu for an inland letter and applied. And then I promptly forgot all about it. Two months later, however,

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I received a letter in the mail telling me that my application had been accepted and I had been selected for a four year degree course in nursing without even having an interview.

I went and completed the course and later, when I showed Baba my degree certificate, He replied, "Yes, remember when I told you to become a nurse and you did not listen?" Baba made the gesture of grabbing his left ear with his right hand. "I told you to hold your ear this way," and then He reached around behind His head to grab His ear and added, "but you took hold of it this way."

Najoo Kotwal

THE A TO Z OF SPIRITUALITY

Once, in the late '40s, a group from Karachi (Pakistan) had come to Meherabad. One evening Baba had come from Meherazad especially to be with His lovers. They were all assembled in the old Dharamshala building and were chatting and having a good time. I happened to be standing just in front of Baba. All of a sudden Baba asked me what I had learned from His contact of so many years. This unexpected thunder just reeled me and I felt as if I was being swept off my feet!

Luckily someone interrupted and began telling Baba something. I fervently prayed inwardly then that Baba would drop the question. But after a few minutes, Baba looked at me and wanted my answer. I don't know how but the words just tumbled out of my mouth:

"To do as Baba says!"

Hearing this, Baba remarked that I understood spirituality from A to Z and there was nothing left for me to learn!

Feram Workingboxwalla

THE RESPONSE OF LOVE

In November 1952, Meher Baba gave Kumar the chance to join Him while He gave *darshan* to the masses in His Fiery Free Life. After staying in Nagpur briefly, Baba went to Allahabad in January 1953 to contact *sadhus* gathered there for the Khumba Mela. One day, while at Allahabad, Baba asked Kumar whether he was worried about his family who had stayed behind in Dehra Dun.

Kumar replied, "Baba, I am simply enjoying being here with you. Besides, even if I wanted to, there's nothing I can do for any of them when I'm so far away, so there's no point in letting worry mar my enjoyment."

Baba, in what seemed a lighthearted teasing way, replied "Well, you may simply be enjoying being here with me and not worrying at all about your home or anything, but I, at least, am thinking about the welfare of your wife." And with that, Baba called Vishnu and had him send a telegram to Kishan Singh (a Baba lover who also lived in Dehra Dun) to see that Kumar's wife was all right.

Kumar had no way of knowing it, but his wife was all alone in the house at the time. His children were with their grandparents in Dehra Dun itself (Kumar's farm was a few miles out of the town itself) and the farm-worker had quit suddenly without giving notice. Not only that, but his wife had developed serious problems with her back and was unable to get up to get medicine, or to get help for herself.

Nor, quite obviously, had she been able to attend to the farm chores, such as feeding and milking the buffaloes. Now, buffaloes can go without food for some time but not being milked was a real hardship to them. By the end of the second day, they were crying piteously in their suffering. Kumar's wife knew they had to be milked and so, even though it was midnight, she forced herself out of bed to attend to them. She got a milking pot and, on her hands and knees, she started crawling to their farm house on the opposite side of the road where their buffaloes were kept.

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Meanwhile, Baba's telegram to Kishan Singh had been redirected from Dehra Dun to Delhi as he happened to be there. As soon as he got it, he set out for Dehra Dun, but it wasn't until midnight that he returned. Even so, since the order had come from Baba, he immediately got on his bike and cycled out to Kumar's house. Just as he was approaching the house, he saw something in the middle of the road. It was Kumar's wife, crawling across the road to get to the buffaloes.

Kishan Singh immediately rushed to her and helped her back to the house where he requested her to rest in bed while he cycled into town for a doctor. He also arranged for a woman to come out and look after Kumar's wife, and feed and milk the buffaloes as well. Having done all this, he sent a telegram to Baba informing Him of what had happened.

Baba had the telegram read out. Ramioo (who had been with Baba from the very early days) exclaimed, "Why it's a miracle!" And indeed, it did seem miraculous the way Kishan Singh just happened to arrive at such a critical juncture. But Baba gestured, "Do you call this a miracle? I do not perform miracles. All that happened was a response of love. Kumar and his wife love me wholeheartedly, and my own love naturally flows back to those who love me."

And where Baba's love is, His help is there too. Yet this help, although it can come in a variety of ways - through different people, through unexpected circumstances - is not miraculous but a natural gesture of Love responding to love.

Bal Natu

LEAVE YOUR BUFFALOES BEHIND

In 1955 Meher Baba stayed at Satara from January through October. During this period, Baba went on short and long *mast* tours, sometimes keeping some of them near Him for His

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spiritual work. Once He wished to call one of His much liked *masts* Neelkanthwalla (named after a place in the Himalayas) to Satara.

As Neelkanthwalla stayed in the Rishikesh area, Baba had Eruch write Kumar, one of His close ones, to bring him. Kumar was living at his farm, Manjri Mafi, near Dehra Dun which is not far from Rishikesh. Baba told Kumar to personally escort the *mast* only if he himself was absolutely free from any other family commitments. Otherwise, he was asked to send the *mast* with someone else, because Baba emphasized that the one bringing the *mast* must come alone.

Now Kumar was only waiting for a chance to go to Baba, and this seemed a wonderful opportunity, coming as it did directly from Baba; however, Kumar could not honestly say he had no other commitments at that time and thus he knew he couldn't go.

As he was wondering aloud who he could send with the *mast*, his mother, a woman of nearly 80, known to her relatives and to Baba people as Matajee, announced that she would go. She was an indomitable woman and an amazing character. Normally, an escort would be sent to travel with a person of her age for a journey that long (over a thousand miles). But Matajee stood firm, saying, "No, I will go and will take the *mast*."

When Baba learned that Matajee would be the one to accompany the *mast*, He made arrangements for Baidul and Aloba to meet them at the Bombay train station. Kumar was to put them on the Doon-Bombay express and once in Bombay Aloba and Baidul would accompany them to Satara.

As Matajee was preparing to leave, she told Kumar, "Now, remember to take care of the buffaloes. Water them at such-and-such a time, and don't forget to milk them at such-and-such a time, and remember the fodder for the buffaloes is stored...." Kumar shook his head and replied, "Mother, Baba said to come alone and you're taking your buffaloes with you! You'll be all the time worrying about the buffaloes." Matajee said sharply, "No, I'm not taking them

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with me. Before I leave I am telling this to you as my duty. After I leave, do whatever you like with them! I'm going, and I'm going alone."

So things were all set, but meanwhile Kumar had the task of getting the *mast* to agree to go. Neelkanthwalla usually sat at a certain place in Rishikesh completely naked. Kumar went there to talk to him, but the *mast* refused to go to Baba. Kumar returned several times to Rishikesh to try and coax the *mast* but in vain. Suddenly, after days of unsuccessful persuasion, Neelkanthwalla suddenly got up, put on his "suit" (a piece of cloth which he tied around his belly) and said, "I'm ready."

Now, it is no joke to travel with a *mast* but Kumar had taken Neelkanthwalla to Baba before and knew his whims. For instance, he liked talcum powder, and one way to humor him was to sprinkle it all over his body whenever he wished. So, armed with her talcum powder and her son's suggestions, Matajee and the *mast* boarded the train for their eventful journey.

At one station, Neelkanthwalla, who was a very regal *mast* suddenly got up and walked off the train. On the platform was a big water tap for the general use of the public. Neelkanthwalla announced that he wished to bathe. Matajee turned on the tap and he sat down underneath it. Matajee started to scrub his back, and amazingly enough, several other people on the platform came over to help her wash the *mast*! But Matajee was anxious because she was afraid the train would leave without them. She kept saying to herself, "Baba, Baba, Baba. What will I do in this strange place, all alone with a *mast* if the train leaves without us?"

Nor did Neelkanthwalla seem to be in a hurry; as if he had all the time in the world, he unhurriedly enjoyed his bath. All Matajee's attempts to speed up the procedure were ignored. Unconcernedly, he sat under the tap until he felt his bath was complete, and then, with perfect composure and innate dignity, he walked back to the train, with Matajee hurrying along behind him. The moment they climbed on board, the

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train started moving, and they sped on to Bombay.

When they finally arrived there, they got down onto the long platform. There was no one there to meet them and so they began to walk to the exit at the far end of the platform. Neelkanthwalla walked with his graceful and majestic stride and Matajee had to run to keep up with him, periodically calling out to him, "Wait for me, wait for me." Neelkanthwalla would stop then and wait until Matajee had almost caught up and then he would start off again. And again she would fall further and further behind until she had to call out again for him to wait for her. And so, in this way, they walked the length of a platform that seemed almost endless.

But eventually they did reach the end, only to discover that Aloba and Baidul were not there waiting for them. Actually, as they found out later, Baidul and Aloba were there, and were carefully scanning all the disembarking passengers for any sign of them but, despite their best efforts, they somehow missed Matajee and Neelkanthwalla as they walked through the exit and out of the station.

So Matajee and Neelkanthwalla headed outside to the taxi stand. She thought maybe Baidul and Aloba would be waiting for them there, but again there was no sign of them. Matajee didn't know what to do now. Neelkanthwalla, as usual, was regally unperturbed, but she was getting worried. However, she knew that to get to Satara she would have to go through Poona (now officially called Pune) and, thinking that perhaps she had misunderstood, and that Poona and not Bombay was to have been the rendezvous point, she reentered the station and asked someone where she could catch a train to Poona. She was told the train right in front of her was going to Poona and it was just about to leave, so she and the *mast* got on board.

By now, Matajee was getting quite upset. When they reached Poona she found that Baidul and Aloba were not waiting for them there either. There seemed to be nothing left but to try and reach Satara on her own. Someone directed

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her to a train which went to Satara Road and from there she could catch a bus into the city of Satara itself. This she did, but on reaching Satara she was really at a loss as to what to do next since she didn't have Baba's address.

She started walking until they came to an intersection. She had no way of knowing which way to go, so she just decided to continue walking straight and Neelkanthwalla followed along behind her. Soon they reached an intersection, however, where they had to choose between a road leading off to the right and one going to the left. Matajee just stood there, having no idea which road she should take. Neelkanthwalla patiently stood beside her, but when Matajee continued to stand undecided about where to go, he finally raised his arm and with great authority pointed in a certain direction as if to say, "This is the way we have to go."

Matajee followed his advice and they hadn't gone very far before they saw Baba standing outside the bungalow (Rosewood) where He and the *mandali* stayed. Not only that, but it was here that Baba had decided to house the *mast*, so Matajee had not only succeeded in bringing Neelkanthwalla to Baba in Satara, but she had managed to bring him directly to his new home.

Baba was very happy to have His *mast* with him, and Matajee was delighted to have found Baba in this unexpected way! Baba sent her to the women's house, Grafton, which was nearby so she could bathe and refresh herself. She was immensely happy to have completed her journey, with all of its hardships and moments of suspense and uncertainty. But she realized that when one does something for Baba, then help comes any time it is really needed. She could see now how Baba had really been with her the entire journey, and all because she made room for Him by leaving her buffaloes behind her when she left Dehra Dun to come to Baba.

From a talk with Kumar

A GLIMPSE OF OMNISCIENCE

On January 14, 1956 I had the great good fortune to have Meher Baba's *darshan* at Poona. I was sitting some distance from Baba in the middle of the *pandal* behind two different *bhajan* parties, while the *darshan* queue lined the bamboo gangway as it slowly made its way to Baba, filed past and then left the place.

As usual when in Baba's presence, I simply sat and gazed at Him in wonder and contentment. I was dimly aware that the *bhajan* parties were singing for Baba because the group directly in front of me was accompanying itself with little metal cymbals and noise was almost deafening, but all my attention was on Baba's face and the eloquent expressions which animated it in rapid succession.

Perhaps my friend who was sitting next to me had been trying to get my attention for some time, for he suddenly tapped me on the shoulder, leaned over and, nodding towards the *darshan* queue which was fairly short by now, commented that it looked like the program would only last another half hour. In spite of the tumult, which made it impossible for Baba to hear this comment, and in spite of the fact that He was busy greeting all those who filed past, He turned and looked directly at me and gestured very clearly that the program would continue for about two more hours.

Without turning my gaze from Baba, I said to my friend, over my shoulder, "Baba says the program won't end soon." And almost immediately a large group of people entered the compound for Baba's *darshan* and the program continued for another two hours. Baba's attention and observation is divinely marvellous.

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IF ONLY HE HAD KNOWN!

Out of the clear blue Australian skies, for the first time in our known history, came the Avatar of the Age. Meher Baba's plane landed safely at around 3:00 p.m. on August 9, 1956. Baba descended the steps from the plane and began walking towards the terminal. He caught sight of me and a cameraman high atop a nearby building and smilingly He raised His arm overhead and waved gracefully.

During His stay of six days, Baba visited Melbourne for two. The remainder of the time was spent in Meher House in Beacon Hill, a suburb of Sydney.

While in Sydney, one morning Baba suddenly announced that He would take us to the movies. There were Baba, His four disciples and about thirty of us Australian followers. With this announcement there was a flurry of excitement and consternation; what was a good movie to take Baba to? No one had seen any of the current films. Finally someone, on hearsay, suggested a film which, as I recall, was titled "The Man Who Never Was."

Seats were reserved by phone and shortly afterwards Baba appeared from the house in a new pair of trousers and an Indian style jacket of a blue grey colour. He looked so fine and beautiful that one of us exclaimed and Baba turned around happily so that we all could admire the Emperor's new clothes.

We then hustled into various cars and I drove Baba eleven miles into the city center. Baba and the others descended from the car and entered the theatre while I was parking. When I reached there, Baba and the group were in the lobby. They had been watching a cat that had arrived from nowhere as if to greet the Avatar of the Age.

We climbed the stairs to our balcony seats. Baba went to the seat that He was to occupy. From there He stood and directed where all the rest of us were to sit in the reserved block of seats. This procedure took, as one can imagine, quite a long

time. Behind us, someone obviously unhappy with all this moving about remarked, "Who does he think he is – Jesus Christ?"

Ah, if only he had known.

Bill Le Page

A PINCH OF SALT

I was a college student at Jabalpur between 1956 and 1964. In those days a semi military training programme, called N.C.C. (National Cadet Corps) was compulsory for all college students. I was a cadet in the Armored Corps whose national center is located at Ahmednagar. During our short winter vacation, in '58, '59, and '60, we were taken to Ahmednagar for 15 days' training. December 1960 was the last chance for me to visit Ahmednagar as a N.C.C. cadet and I never knew what a drastic change this would make in my life.

One day, during this last visit to Ahmednagar, we were taken to the Pimpalgaon water reservoir for practical training in map reading. No one among the group of over 500 cadets and instructors knew that we had come very close to the residence of God in human form. Since we were there for the whole day, our lunch was brought out to us. Everyone was tired and hungry so they immediately started doing justice to their lot, but I was a little different from the others.

From my childhood I had a habit of putting extra salt on my plate whether or not it was actually required. True to this nature, I asked for extra salt from the men distributing the food after I had gotten mine. When they could not provide me with any, I was extremely upset and could not start eating my food. All the others were enjoying their lot and also laughing at my plight of not being able to start eating just for want of a little pinch of extra salt. At this point I noticed

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a bungalow across the fields and decided to beg for the salt there. My whole attention was focused on getting salt and all other things ceased to exist for me.

So, I crossed the fields and reached the gate of the bungalow in no time and asked a man at the gate to give me a pinch of salt which he gladly did. I was so ungrateful and unconcerned about other things that at that time I never bothered to enquire about the place. I wanted salt and I got it so I was happy. I came back to my group, ate the food and forgot the incident. Within two to three days, our training was over and we went back to Jabalpur by the end of December 1960.

On the 1st of January, 1961, our college reopened and the very first day I happened to meet one of my botany professors, Dr. S. Bhatnagar. I don't know why, but all of a sudden I asked him to permit me to come to his house in order to get some of my Botany difficulties solved. He readily agreed to my request and the same evening I found myself at his gate. He very lovingly took me inside his sitting room which was very simple and had (as I recall) only one large photo hung on one of the walls. No sooner did I notice this photo than I was powerfully drawn towards it just as a piece of iron is attracted towards a magnet.

Now, from my childhood days, I had always had a very strong feeling that something was missing from my life. The photo in my professor's room attracted me so intensely because I felt that it was the missing thing. Yet I asked myself, how can this be the missing thing? It may be just a photo of my professor's father. But the photo was so attractive that I tried to overlook this last thought.

In those days, the teacher-pupil relationship was such that I could not on that very first day ask my professor about the photo. The day passed, and my attraction to the photo grew stronger and stronger. I started to make it a practice to visit my professor's house very often. Every time he would receive me gladly, thinking that at least he had one student who was very interested in his subject.

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He never had the least idea that I was not visiting him solely for study, but my main interest was to have at least a glimpse of that beautiful photograph. Because it would have been impolite for me to simply sit there and stare at the photo I used to occasionally ask my professor for a glass of water, so that when he left the room, I could gaze at the photo undisturbed.

A sort of hide and seek game was going on between my professor and me since he wanted to deliberately avoid telling me about the photo and I was interested only in learning about it. My professor was afraid that if I knew who the photo was of, I would give up my studies, so he decided that he would tell me about the photo only after I had completed my education. But destiny could not wait for such a long time.

One day I noticed a garland on the photo. For the first time I knew that the photo must be my professor's *guru* and not his father as no one worships his father in this way. With this discovery, the beautiful figure in the photo became my *guru* as well. My professor was a very honest and sincere teacher and I felt that these qualities must be due to the grace of the *guru* whose photo was hanging on his wall. I made him my *guru* in the hope that he would inculcate in me the same qualities he had bestowed on my professor.

In spite of all this, I still did not know even the name of my *guru*. In this way, four months passed. Our college closed down for summer vacation and for two months my professor was out of town so I could not visit him. In July 1961 the college reopened and I took the first opportunity to visit him so I could quench my thirst for that mysterious photo which had been preoccupying my heart for the last six months.

That July my professor gave me the sad news that he was being transferred to another city. So I gathered my courage and asked him about the photograph. Straightaway he told me the photo was of Avatar Meher Baba. When he uttered the words, "Avatar Meher Baba," my soul and my heart readily accepted Him as the Avatar.

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I next asked where He lived. When I was told the place was Ahmednagar, I was extremely elated as I had visited that city thrice before knowing about Him. I was naturally curious to know the exact place in Ahmednagar so that I could find out whether I had ever been close to that place during my visits there. When my teacher told me that Baba lived some nine miles away from the town, near a reservoir, I asked my teacher if it was the Pimpalgaon reservoir. He said, "Yes," but in wonderment asked me how I knew its name. I then told how I had visited there with the N.C.C. I further asked whether Baba's bungalow was the only residence in the vicinity of the reservoir. On getting a positive reply, I told him about the incident of my begging salt from that very bungalow.

Soon after knowing about Him, I wrote a letter to Baba which was very lovingly and promptly answered. His letter transformed my life completely and awakened more love in me to accept Him as my Master. Baba asked me to wait for the proper time for His *darshan*, The 1962 East-West Gathering was my first opportunity to have my Beloved Father's *darshan*. Thus a pinch of salt begged at His threshold has brought me into the orbit of His sweet love.

Gokaran Shrivastava

HOW BABA'S NET CLOSED ON VIVIAN

In the month we had spent at the Myrtle Beach Center in 1961, a rumor floated around that Baba might allow His Western lovers to visit Him in India during the following year, 1962. This happily proved to be true and with great anticipation I read this news in the circular, "Attention Western Novemberites!" included in a Family Letter from Mani.

The first thing we had to do was to submit our names to

Meherjee Karkaria, Baba's disciple who lived in Poona which was to be the chosen site for the East-West Gathering. In spite of its large size, Poona did not really have a surfeit of hotels for Westerners and so arrangements for lodging had to be made long in advance of our arrival.

But with my announcement that we should comply forthwith, my sky caved in. "I am not going," my wife Vivian informed me, and my disbelief was compounded by what followed next. "I will never kneel down before any man who calls himself God," she added, continuing with, "You mean to say that you propose spending all that money at the expense of my welfare!" I was stupefied; I could not imagine from what corner of her being those sentiments had been dredged.

It was a delicate moment and I braced myself inwardly. "Well, I am going," I replied, "and please do not try to stop me. I would go to India, no matter what it would cost me afterwards."

The tension between us did not rise perceptibly, but it was there nevertheless, and it lasted until I received an acknowledgement of my reservation from India. Therein was stated that Baba was very pleased to hear that at least one of us was coming and would I please bring for Him a copy of a tape recording I had sent to my father in the West Indies regarding my forthcoming trip to India.

I showed the letter to Vivian and without any prompting on my part and after some time had elapsed, she announced she had changed her mind and would accompany me. "Baba," I thought, "What a lot of attention You are paying to a newcomer!"

Little did I know that His *Leela* (Divine Game) was far from finished. There was more drama to be enacted in the unfinished scenario.

In India, one morning the Western ladies were introduced to Baba followed by the men in the afternoon of the same day. But in the hotel that evening I discerned a change in my wife's composure. On enquiry as to its cause, I learned to my

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staggering surprise that she wanted to go back to New York immediately. "Why?" I pressed to learn, "You have just arrived and the real gathering has not even begun!"

"Well, I have to see my dentist," she replied with finality which I matched with my own answer, "I'll take you to the airport in the morning but you will have to return to America without me!"

Nevertheless, during all this transaction I felt I had not been given the real reason for the change of mind and with some gentle persuasion I eased these words from Vivian, "He did not look at me. I don't know whether He was even aware that I was presented to Him. I feel as if I were treated as nothing!"

With a little more soothing, however, I persuaded her to abandon her intention to leave. "If you think Baba is half as great as the first estimate that formed in our minds on our first visit to the Center at Myrtle Beach, then perhaps He knows what He is doing. Let us wait and see. As for myself, I would be content just to be in the same room with Him for a while, just to see Him, not even to meet Him personally!"

The next day we went to a local dentist and my wife had two small fillings which did not even require anaesthesia.

The first day of the East-West Gathering was now to begin and the Westerners were assembling in the hall at Guru Prasad for a morning session. Baba was now seeing or meeting with no one individually as the time for introductions had already passed. Then suddenly out of the crowd, Rano Gayley, one of Baba's women disciples, appeared calling, "Vivian Agostini, Vivian Agostini. Baba wants to see Vivian Agostini!" My wife was startled with the announcement as she had no idea what business Baba wanted to transact with her.

To use Vivian's own words, she recalls, "I approached Baba and knelt at His feet as His gestures indicated that He wished to give me a special embrace. No mother's hands could have been more gentle as He held my head in His hands and gazed deep within my eyes. All I could say was, 'Baba, I love

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You, I love You so very much.' He nodded His head as if to say, 'I know, I know,' referring perhaps to my genuine anguish of the evening before when I felt so forlorn and abandoned.

"And I had the strange feeling of melting into a vast and endless domain. Then the tears came pouring out as though a dam holding back a large expanse of water had suddenly broken and the uncontrollable torrent poured down my face and over my clothes. If that was the edge of the cyclone of Baba's Love which I had just experienced, what must the very center be like?"

Dazed by the experience, Vivian left and wandered into Baba's room where Mani, Baba's sister, greeted her. But Vivian was still overawed by her experience and instead of returning Mani's greeting, she could only say in wonder, "I never knew I would look into the eyes of a man and know that He is the Christ."

On her return to America, Vivian set about creating two memorials to the above event. She sculptured a bronze medal bearing Baba's portrait on one side with the symbols of the great religions on the other - the first medal minted was presented to Baba. And she wrote a short poem about that fraction of eternity which she spent on her knees before God in the human form of Meher Baba:

What sound is this - from when and where?
Like the soaring of a million wings
 breaking the stillness of the air.
My weeping soul was borne aloft,
 breaking from its fetters free;
Joined the rustling of those wings
 and like a homing bird found Thee.

Louis Agostini

LOVE GARLANDS BABA

From 1958, Meher Baba used to stay at Guru Prasad in Poona for around three months each year - generally from mid-March to mid-June. There, He usually gave *darshan* to His lovers on weekends; the details and times of these programs being announced in circulars.

Nariman, a Bombay businessman who was one of Baba's close disciples, would come to Poona on the weekends. Baba permitted Jim Mistry to accompany him on these visits. They would reach Guru Prasad Friday night and then usually see Baba the following morning.

The first thing Jim would do on meeting Baba was to offer flowers to Him. After several weeks of this, Baba gestured, "Is it necessary to offer me flowers every time you come from Bombay?" And with a smile he added, "I know you love me." Jim replied, "Baba, in fact I bring these only because Roda (Jim's wife) gives them to me. She even gives me detailed instructions on how to take care of the "flower-basket" in the train and at Guru Prasad Friday night so they will be as fresh as possible for you."

Hearing this, Baba looked pleased but asked Jim to tell Roda not to send flowers every single week. Jim agreed to give Roda the message. But on Sunday when he was leaving Guru Prasad to return to Bombay, Baba called him and gestured, "Let Roda continue to send flowers to me; bring them. The love with which she sends them does not permit me to stop you from doing so. She may not feel happy to receive my earlier message. I enjoy accepting whatever is offered with love."

Jim continued to bring flowers and Baba would wear the garlands he brought, in appreciation of Roda's deep love for Him.

On the other hand, Baba's reaction was quite different when Minoos Desai brought Him a garland in 1962. Minoos had met Baba in 1927 and had loved and followed Him ever after. Over the years he had many opportunities to be with Baba, but

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he never used to bring Him a garland as he felt that this was merely a ritual which was superfluous in the intimacy of the love he felt for and from Baba.

He and his family came to Poona in November, 1962 for the East-West Gathering, and one day Minoo was standing in the men's queue waiting to have his moment of *darshan* with his Beloved. Next to him was a man from Andhra who was carrying garlands for himself and his friends. When he was close to Baba's seat on the dais, he found that he had an extra garland so he naturally turned to Minoo and with a smile handed it to him saying, "Give it to Baba yourself."

Now it was Minoo's turn to have his Master's *darshan*. Baba, seeing the garland, expressed surprise and gestured, "What novelty is this? For the last so many years you have been coming to me and you have never garlanded me. There is no need to start doing so now either."

In one case, Baba asked one of His lovers to continue to garland Him, since this was a natural expression of love for that person. But Minoo's natural expression of love was not to offer a garland, and Baba told him to continue to do just that. It is not the presentation of flowers that garlands Baba, it is the love of His lovers.

Bal Natu

YOU WILL NEVER GO HUNGRY

One day in the late 1950s, while I was with Meher Baba, the Beloved Master turned to me and gestured "How is everything with you?" I replied, "Baba I am fine, but sometimes I feel disturbed by the inequality of the world, where the rich have so much and the poor so little."

Baba continued, "Don't you get good milk from your

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buffaloes? And doesn't the best rice in India come from Dehra Dun?" I said, "Yes, Baba." Baba went on, "Have you any debts?" to which I replied, "No." "Then why worry?" Baba told me. "Remember me and remain happy. What more do you want?" I said that the times seemed very uncertain, and though I was not poor, I was not without some worry. To this Baba casually assured me, "Don't worry, take it from me that I will see that you never go hungry." And then the conversation passed on to other topics.

Some years later, in the early '60s, the Kumbha Mela, a great religious festival, was being held at Hardwar which is about 30 miles from where I live. My mother, both elderly and blind, asked me to take her on the first day of the *Mela* to Hardwar so she could bathe in the holy Ganges.

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims attend the Kumbha Mela and there was so much congestion that all public transport was stopped the previous day. So, before sunrise, I took my mother on my motorcycle over the back roads to a spot near Hardwar where my mother could bathe in the Ganges. She did so and was happy.

On our return, however, after going about six miles, a tire burst on my bike and we were stranded in the middle of nowhere. There was no help available and the nearest village was at least a mile away, across the fields. To make matters worse, a terrific dust storm began. But, as it turned out, the storm forced a car which was on its way to Dehra Dun to stop just beside my motorcycle where it waited until visibility was possible. I walked over to the car and prevailed upon the driver to take my mother with him and to drop her off at the Earl Hospital as I had a cousin who worked there. He agreed and I arranged with my mother to have my cousin send a mechanic to me as soon as possible.

The dust storm abated, and I felt relieved to have gotten my mother to safety, but I was still left on the road with my broken motorcycle. Not only that, but I was informed by various people walking by that the nearby village was notor-

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ious as the home of fierce *dacoits* (bandits). The day started to get hotter and hotter and I was getting very thirsty, but I was afraid to go searching for water for fear my motorcycle would be stolen if I left it behind. I asked someone if there were a well nearby, and they said there was, but it turned out to be dry. So I wheeled my motorcycle under what shade I could find and prepared for a long, hot, thirsty wait.

As time went on, I began to get hungry too. Suddenly I remembered Baba's promise to me. In spite of telling me that I would never go hungry, I was doing just that, and I became quite happy thinking of the telegram I would send Baba upon my return to Dehra Dun informing Him that He had broken His promise!

My hunger was entirely forgotten in this loving and mischievous delight, but just at this moment I noticed someone walking across the fields to me. As the person got closer I saw that it was a boy carrying a bundle on his shoulder and a brass bucket in his hand. He came right to me, put down the bucket, which was filled with water, and unwrapped the cloth which contained four thick *chappatis* with potatoes and vegetables heaped on top. He told me this was for me.

I said, "Do you know me?" and he said, "No." "Then how can this be for me?" I asked.

In his turn the boy asked, "Do you have a 'put-put?'" (the local term for motorcycle). I said, "Yes," at which the boy replied, "Then you are the one I am supposed to give this food to."

But still, wanting to make absolutely sure that the food really was meant for me, I pressed the boy to explain more fully and he told me that his mother, who lived in the village, had been taking lunch to her husband working in the fields when she had overheard me asking someone whether there was a well nearby. Knowing from this that I was a stranger, when she got home she told her son that their village had a guest and he was hungry and she gave the son the food and water to take to me.

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Satisfied the food was really meant for me, I had one of the thick *chappatis* with some of the vegetables. I then thanked the boy, but he insisted I have another. "After all," he pointed out, "you don't know how long you will have to wait here and it might be hours before you eat again."

So I ate another *chappati* with vegetables. When I finished the boy urged me to have another. I protested that I was full, but he kept coaxing me until finally I gave in and ate another. At which point he said, "Now, there is only one left, so you might as well eat that and finish it all." But I insisted that while you could put the remaining *chappati* on top of me, you could not find any more room for it inside of me, and finally he wrapped the last *chappati* up in the cloth and took it home with him.

The bucket of water he left for me, and it was such a hot day that I found that every ten minutes or so, I had to take a sip. Finally, that evening, the mechanic arrived, and I was rescued. As I rode back to Dehra Dun I thought, not only had Baba not kept me hungry, but He had my benefactors turn out to be villagers who were feared far and wide for their highway robbery. The joke, which I had meant to tease Baba about, turned out to be on me.

When I told Baba about this, He smiled and gestured, "I am the One who never breaks His promise."

Kumar

"I AM THAT ONE GOD"

During the year 1962, I was residing at Narasaraopet, in Andhra Pradesh. I first came to know about Meher Baba when I was searching for a book in the local library. After searching through about one hundred books, I picked up *Life of Sadguru Meher Baba* in Telugu. Thus, without any apparent

effort from me to know about Him from anybody, He made me to know Him.

At first, while going through this book, I could not accept the assertion of Meher Baba to the effect "I am *Ishwara* (God)." Except for this assertion I found the life of Meher Baba - His works in this world - glorious, humanitarian and divine, having comparison with the lives and works of Buddha, Jesus and Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

This coming into contact with Him happened during November, 1962. Some four or five months passed, but Meher Baba remained in my mind and heart all the while. On one Sunday during the summer months of 1963, while I was walking in the bazaar in Narasaraopet, I saw a banner with the words "Avatar Meher Baba Narasaraopet Centre" written on it. I felt joy and went inside the lane without any hesitation, as by this time I felt that Meher Baba belonged to one and all and is not a stranger or foreigner for anybody.

After entering the Centre, I sat there and participated in the programme though none of the people were known to me. The group head informed me in detail about Avatar Meher Baba, and also informed me that Meher Baba was going to give *darshan* in the months of May/June of that year in Poona. I told him that I would also go for His *darshan*,

My desire in going to see Meher Baba in Poona was due to His statement, "I am God." When I arrived at Guru Prasad, I saw Meher Baba and I felt that He was a Divine Being and was known to me even before my having His physical *darshan*, I had neither before or after seen such a Person. I also experienced that if at all God comes into this world in the form of a man, He will be like this. The following were the thoughts in my mind at this time.

"Am I seeing God-personified?"

"Is it possible for me to see God? Am I blessed?"

"We, born as Hindus believe in Rama, Krishna, Shankar, as God-personified. Is Meher Baba another such One?"

These above questions rose in me not as doubts but due to

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amazement and my heart yearning for the Truth. When these questions cropped up in my mind for fulfillment, Meher Baba looked at me and gestured what I understood as "In the entire universe there is One God. I am that One God." While Baba was gesturing this, I saw, in a flash, my deity, Lord Shankara, in His person. I believed from that moment that Meher Baba is none other than the Lord Himself in human form.

I saw Meher Baba for two days at Poona during June 1963. On the second day of the *darshan* program, a businessman who had come along with us from Narasaraopet for Baba's *darshan* sat by my side (we were about 50 to 60 feet from Baba), and was whispering to another gentleman that he wanted to go to Pandharpur to see Panduranga (Lord Vitthal) by any convenient conveyance. I recall vividly that at this time Eruch interpreted Baba's gestures as follows:

"Foolish fellows think that God is somewhere, whereas He is everywhere, but they cannot find him anywhere."

And pointing to Himself, He added,

"The real form of God has descended *here*."

Seeta Ram Swami

"I AM THERE, TOO"

In 1963, when I was stationed in Poona, I held the post of Research Officer in the Government's Tribal Unit. One day I received notification that I had been promoted and was being posted as Project Officer at Shahada in Dhulia District. It was a Class I post, equivalent to a Deputy Collector of the District.

My first feeling, after being happy that I had been promoted was, "Why should I go there?" I imagined that there would only be half naked natives with bows and arrows there and,

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more importantly, I did not want to be so far away from Meher Baba who used to visit Poona for three months each summer. While living in Poona I had frequent opportunities to see and visit with Baba and I did not want to give them up. So I decided not to go.

Soon after this I was with Baba at Guru Prasad and told Him of my promotion. Before I could tell Baba I didn't want to go, He turned to some Westerners who were present and with a smile remarked, "Look at this boy! He has become an officer. Now he will go to Dhulia among the tribals." I then said to Baba, "But I don't want to go there." "Why not?" Baba asked. "Because I will be away from you," I replied. Baba looked at me and gestured, "I am there, too!" He repeated it twice.

So I went. I thought it would all be jungle, but actually it was quite nice and I was pleasantly surprised. After I had been there for about three weeks, I went to a village in a jeep to visit with the headman there. When I arrived at his house, to my complete surprise I saw a big photo of Baba there! The headman was sitting with some ladies. I asked them who the person in the photo was. They replied in Gujarati, "He is our God. He is Meher Baba."

One of the ladies had happened to see me before and commented that as I was from Ahmednagar I must surely be a Baba-lover. We then had much happy talk about our Beloved Meher Baba. It was at this point that I remembered Baba's saying in Guru Prasad, "I am there, too." When I asked if the villagers knew about Baba, they replied, "Oh yes. He is our God, all the villagers know about Him!" Truly, He is everywhere !

L.B. Thade

LOVE'S CLEAN SWEEP

One day in the summer of 1965, I visited Beloved Baba at Guru Prasad in Poona. He was sitting in the *mandali* room amongst a group of Baba-lovers; there was an atmosphere of warm intimacy. Soon I was basking in the warmth and love that radiated from the Beloved's presence, and joy filled my being.

Someone asked a question and Baba was explaining a certain point when, to my horror, out of the blue, thoughts started assailing me. And what thoughts! Thoughts that I had never dreamt I was capable of thinking! No matter how much I tried to thrust them back, they came again with a vengeance.

"What if Baba asks me," I thought, "what are you thinking?" He often did this and so I made a herculean effort to push my thoughts away, but to no avail. I broke out in a sweat and tried to make myself as small as possible so that Baba would not notice me and ask the inevitable question, "What are you thinking?" I would have left the room, but there was no inconspicuous way I could suddenly stand up and walk out.

So I was sitting there, squirming and sweating when suddenly I heard Eruch's voice addressing the group, "Baba says, 'When you are in my presence all kinds of thoughts may assail you. Do not worry. It is the scum of your past *sanskaras* that I am bringing out. Just concentrate on me. I am the Ocean of divine love. Drown yourself in my Ocean; the Ocean will absorb all the scum and you will come out purified.'"

As the impact of these words reached my consciousness, I started to concentrate wholeheartedly on the Beloved and to drink deep of His presence. Slowly I found myself relaxing and the tension that had built up within me melted away. All of a sudden I realized that the thoughts had vanished completely, just as if someone had swept them away with a broom.

Once more I was basking in the warmth and love that radiated from the Beloved's presence and joy filled my being.

Rhoda Dubash

HITCHHIKING TO GOD

After two and a half months of hitchhiking to India from London, I had Beloved Baba's *darshan* in Mandali Hall at Meherazad for the first time on November 16, 1965. Later that afternoon, Mani came to me and said that Baba wanted to know the route I'd taken in traveling to India. I drew a black line through the countries I had gone through on maps I had with me and gave them to her.

A short while later, she returned to the men's side and handed me a still damp handkerchief that Baba had just used to cool His face, which He had told her to give to me. She said that she had spread the maps out on the floor for Baba and the ladies to see, and had traced with her finger the line representing the journey I'd taken. Baba then gestured her to tell me, "I was with you all the way."

It is heartening to know that just as Baba was with me on my external journey to Him, though I didn't consciously know it at the time, we have His assurance that, even when we are not aware of His abiding Presence, He is always with us.

Robert Dreyfuss

CATCH AS KETCHIKAN

As a wireless operator I have sailed on ships the wide world over. Occasionally a captain will allow one of his officers to have his family accompany him on a voyage. So, in 1967, my wife Roshan and our two daughters travelled with me aboard ship from California to Alaska and back.

After sailing from San Diego, the first town we reached in Alaska was that of Ketchikan. Though the ship was to dock there for five to six days, we decided to remain aboard, as

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Ketchikan at the time consisted of one main street and a pulp factory a few miles away was its one and only tourist "attraction."

On the ship, the captain's and wireless operator's cabins are located on the same deck. After our arrival, the ship's agent for the area came to see me after visiting the Captain. As we were friends, when the ship's agent learned that my family was aboard, he offered to take all of us in his car to see the "sights." We dutifully drove down the main and only street, and stopped to see what the local department store had to offer.

Amongst other items, I purchased a box of 24 chocolates that were sugar-free and which were intended for diabetics. I planned to give the chocolates to Meher Baba who, so I had "unofficially" heard, was having difficulty with sugar products at this time, though of course I didn't announce my intention. The saleslady, who turned out to be the owner's wife, was a pleasant woman. While ringing up the items on the cash register, she engaged us in conversation, asking where we came from, what we were doing in Ketchikan and so forth. When she came to the chocolates, she spontaneously insisted on presenting them to me as a gift!

Needless to say, I was surprised by this unexpected and unasked-for generosity. The woman, whose name was Grace Wilkes, however, insisted. She then proceeded to invite us all to visit her home, and during the next few days, she and my wife grew quite close. I felt that as the chocolates were for Baba and she had given them as a gift, she should know for whom they were intended and so I told her and her husband who Baba is.

Before we left the area, Mrs. Wilkes invited us over for dinner at her home. I gave her a copy of *God Speaks* by Baba as a parting gift, and we had an emotional farewell.

Two months later, I received a letter from Mr. Wilkes, who had read *God Speaks* and was very impressed by it. In fact, though they were not certain about Baba's claims to Divinity, they wanted to come to India and asked for inform-

ation about travel, etc. I immediately sent them a suggested itinerary, inviting them to visit my home, yet I never heard from them again.

After my return to India, I informed Baba of the incident a few days later while visiting with Him at Meherazad. I brought with me various gifts for Baba and the *mandali*, including the chocolates. Baba tasted the chocolate and wondered why I had brought sugarless ones for Him.

Some days later, I received a letter addressed to me at Bindra House from Eruch, saying that Baba wanted to know who had told me He was suffering from diabetic troubles! He also mentioned that Baba had sent the chocolates to Eruch's mother to finish. Thus, after all, the sugarless chocolates proved in the end to be bittersweet! I feel, however, that Mrs. Wilkes was fortunate to have an indirect contact with Baba for whom she unknowingly had sent a gift.

Sam Kerawalla

"HIM'S EVERYBODY'S DADDY"

The following story took place during the summer of 1970. I had been devoted to Meher Baba at this time for a couple of years and was living in Seattle, Washington. There was a woman I knew there named June and she had a little boy, Aaron, who was around three years old. June had recently been divorced and was now working full time to support Aaron and herself. As often happens in broken homes, children undergo a period of emotional turmoil and this was the case with Aaron. With the loss of his father, he had become quite hyperactive and would sometimes clamor desperately for attention.

Moreover, since his mother had only recently moved into a new neighborhood, Aaron had not yet made any friends of

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his own age, and so when I would come over to visit, naturally I became his playmate! We would play all manner of games together, hour after hour. His enthusiasm for play was almost inexhaustible, but for the most part I managed somehow to keep up with him. And this gave his mother a much needed break from time to time.

One day during this period I injured my foot quite badly, and even after several weeks the pain still persisted and had actually become worse. I stopped by their house one morning, and Aaron had just gotten up and was all set to play. Because moving around caused me much pain, I just sat in a chair and tried to invent games which required *him* to do all the running around. No sooner were we finished with one game, than he was ready for the next.

After several hours of this, I was at the end of my rope! I tried and tried to get him to play by himself for a while, but he just kept clinging to me. Lying near me was a photograph of Baba which I always kept with me, and in a moment of extreme exasperation (just as a whim because nothing else had worked) I decided to show him Baba's photograph - on the outside chance that it might somehow quiet him down! I had never mentioned Baba to him before and, as far as I knew, he had never seen a photograph of Baba.

I reached over and picked up the photograph from a nearby table, held it up to him and said, quite spontaneously, "Who's this, Aaron?" He looked at the photograph and then up at me, and I could see from his look he was reproaching me for asking such a silly question. Then immediately he said, in an authoritative tone, "Him's everybody's daddy!" I was absolutely dumbstruck. I had not expected such a response at all. Needless to say, the rest of the day with Aaron went perfectly smoothly!

The next day, just to see his response, I showed Aaron another photograph of Baba from a much earlier period when Baba looked quite different and again Aaron looked at me reproachfully and said, "I told you! Him's everybody's daddy!" What a lovely Baba touch! Although his father

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was no longer with him, he knew he hadn't lost his "*real Daddy!*"

Jeff Wolverton

FINDING THE LORD

I was born and raised in New York City in a Jewish family. We were not at all religious or spiritually inclined. But when I was twelve I started reading philosophy, psychology and religion and was particularly drawn to Zen, Taoism and Vedanta. By the time I was fifteen I had been secretly initiated into Transcendental Meditation. This was in 1968 and my parents were afraid where it might lead me. And indeed, I did begin to identify with the hippie counter culture which was in full bloom at that time. I was also involved in politics as a means for a total change, for a future humanity based on love, harmony and cooperation.

During the summer of 1970, while in college, I traveled across America with five friends, in a van laden with large quantities of rock music tapes and incense. But after a while I began to feel disenchanted with the whole experience. It was at this time that I began reading *Saint Francis* by Kazantzakis. I was moved by Francis's relationship with God, for this was the first time I had been struck by the idea of a personal God.

I slowly began to realize that I wanted to leave my friends. Before I did so, however, we went to a spiritual fair in Colorado where I remember walking past a Meher Baba booth with the "Don't Worry, Be Happy" picture. I didn't stop or ask any questions but in retrospect I remember seeing the photo and I think it was the first picture of Baba I saw.

In California I left my friends and traveled on my own, spending several days in a Zen monastery. Feeling much

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stronger inwardly I returned to New York to visit my parents for a week before starting my second year of college.

During this visit I saw a friend and overheard him talking to a friend of his who had recently had a vision of Meher Baba. As I heard him describe his vision, I was quite jealous and envious, not caring to know about this Meher Baba, but wanting to have an experience of God myself.

Once back in college, many small incidents occurred within a remarkably short period. I walked into a local bookstore and on the wall was the Ancient One poster. I could not help staring into Baba's eyes for a long time. I asked someone working there about Baba but he didn't know much. Nevertheless, I was held by the authority of Baba's statement, "I was Rama, I was Krishna, I was This One, I was That One and now I am Meher Baba. I am the Ancient One." This reminded me of the vision my friend's friend had and I found that for several days I was unconsciously repeating Meher Baba's name internally for lengths of time.

One day I was in the Eastern religions section of the college library, browsing. Suddenly, I felt a force take my hand and guide it to a small book on a lower shelf some feet away. It was an old, worn book of no outstanding color that could have consciously or unconsciously attracted me. I opened it and read the title, *Stay With God* and was immediately repelled. It seemed trite or simplistic to me. I turned the page and read the dedication to Meher Baba, and then I realized that some force connected with Baba was compelling me to have these contacts with Him and, trembling, I took out the book and started reading it.

This was my first direct information about Baba, His life and His significance. It had a tremendous impact on me. I started confiding in a close friend about what was happening to me in connection with Baba, but he was the only one who knew.

One day, soon after, someone knocked on my dormitory door. It was a stranger and he said, "Are you Michael? I've

come to talk about Meher Baba." I was astounded. How did he know? Who was he?

It turned out that he had just come into town for the weekend. It was his habit when coming to a new place to try to meet any Baba people who might be in the area. He had asked the first person he met on the street if there were any people involved with Meher Baba in town. The person he met just happened to be my friend, the one person I had confided in! He told this stranger about me and directed him to my room.

We talked about Baba and he also gave me a copy of Baba's Universal Message. As I read it for the first time, I clearly remember that it was as if I were not reading it at all, but that it was being spoken to me, from within, in a voice like thunder. I was immediately convinced of the Divinity of Meher Baba, and my whole being seemed to receive this Truth.

I gradually started to collect more information about Baba through books and conversations with others, and since this first awakening in Him in the autumn of 1970, I have been trying to love, obey and surrender to Him, the Maker of all life.

Michael Siegell

THRICE TOLD

In March 1970, Meher Baba blessed me to accept Him as the Avatar, God in human form. Several months later I happened to be unwell, my mind seemed to be in some kind of a fog and I found I just couldn't think clearly. In those days I did not eat very wisely and my digestive track was probably full of toxins which resulted in that mental "fog." It was very frustrating and upsetting.

Somewhat unthinkingly, I picked up the Bible and spontaneously opened it at random. I suppose, inwardly and

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outwardly I was asking for Baba's help. But when I looked at the passage in the Old Testament I had turned to, I saw that it was about fasting.

"Fasting?" I thought. "What does that mean? I don't know anything about fasting. This can't be right." I decided to try again.

"But this time," I told myself, "I will use the New Testament. After all, Jesus was the Avatar..." And so, taking the New Testament to be infinitely more valid than the old, I opened it at random - to a passage in which Jesus is talking about fasting!

I thought, "No, no, no. This is still not right. I know!! I'll take out my new copy of *The God-Man*, (the life and work of Meher Baba by C. B. Purdom). After all, Baba IS the Avatar of the Age. I should look to Him directly for guidance if I want that guidance to be completely reliable. And so I opened *The God-Man* at random... to a passage concerning fasting!

I didn't even know how to fast so I looked it up in the index and found that Baba often fasted on weak tea and milk. Although Baba does not expect any of His followers to imitate His ways, on the spur of the moment I felt that I should fast the way He had. I was quite new to Him. So for three days I fasted on weak tea and milk, at the end of which time my mental fog and confusion had completely vanished, and I felt not only healthy, but very happy.

Beloved Baba, with His infinite sense of humor, fulfills our needs in His own way, and in so doing, gives us a glimpse of His compassion.

Tony Paterniti

THE ONE WHO IS ALWAYS LISTENING!

In April of 1971, I fell headlong into Meher Baba's net at His center in Myrtle Beach, S.C.; in June I was in California, full of happiness and joy at starting a "new life" with Him. My home at the time was a converted barn on a hillside overlooking Palo Alto; I shared the upper floor with several friends, and the first floor was home to several horses, and lots of hay and straw.

On one fateful day in mid-June, a month and a half after I had come to Baba, I spent my morning preparing a "Father's Day" card for my dad, who lived a few miles away. This year I wanted the card to be really unusual - I was making a batik and I had just finished it and hung it out to dry, when I suddenly decided it needed one more color. Batik work requires melted wax and in the rush to finish it quickly, I did not reheat the cooled wax over warm water, as one is supposed to, but put the wax vessel directly on high heat and then ran out of the kitchen for a moment.

When I returned, imagine my horror to see that the wax had exploded into flame! In a moment I calculated the immense danger - the pot was on the stove next to a window; if the curtains caught fire, flames would shoot up to the low ceiling, the wooden barn would ignite like a matchstick, and the animals below, the straw, our belongings, the barn, the whole dry hillside would be set on fire! In spite of my panic I remembered that you cannot put out a wax fire with water, so I grabbed the pot handle and swung the pot away from the curtains. The force of the swing propelled the flaming wax out of the pot and straight into my face.

What a moment before had been an emergency was suddenly a nightmare - I was on fire! I ripped off my glasses (covered with cooled wax) and turned to see the flaming pot fall into a heap of newspapers in front of the doorway to the stairs down - the only exit was blocked. I turned and raced across the room to the huge plate glass window opposite. The wax, cooled on my skin, was sealing in intense heat, my hair

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was on fire, and I was in a complete panic - I banged on the window for dear life.

One floor below me, sunbathing in the mild morning sun was a friend of a housemate; I had just met him that morning and we were the only two at home. As I banged on the window I began screaming his name, "Fred! Fred!" It seemed incredible that while I had a full view of Fred leisurely enjoying his sunbath, he could not even hear me. I glanced at the house above our lot - perhaps someone there? - no, too far away - I tried to smash the window so I could jump out and escape the burning barn - the plate glass was too strong.

Suddenly, in the midst of my calling, "Fred! Fred!" a humorous thought flashed across my mind: "I'm going to die with Fred's name on my lips." I stopped calling out and saw myself as if from a great distance in a charred heap in the corner of the ravaged barn. In that moment I realized that nothing in this world could save me - no one heard my cries, no one could hear - every avenue of escape was blocked. At last I turned with all my heart to the only One who might be listening and cried out, "Baba! Baba! Help me!"

In an instant, I felt as though a bucket of shocking cold water had been dumped over me from head to toe. I felt completely cool, strangely, calm, and realized that my hair had suddenly stopped burning. I stood perfectly still, and heard a voice inside my mind commanding, "Turn around and go out the door." This was such an unexpected thought that for a moment I couldn't comprehend it, until the voice repeated, "Turn around and go out the door." I instantly turned and went towards what I thought would be an inferno. What I found was that the pot had landed upright and was flaming away in the middle of the pile of newspapers and books, without having ignited any of them. I rushed past it and out the door.

As I raced down the stairs, I met Fred rushing up, calling, "What's wrong?" He was not surprised to see my burned face and hair, but rushed past me into the upper room. The newspapers must have caught fire the moment I left, for Fred

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found a fire there that was now seriously threatening the house. He was hard pressed, but he put it out with calm and courage and then came out to take me to the hospital. On the way there, he said that while he had been sunning outside, he had been suddenly prompted to get up and rush inside the house - he couldn't understand why, but he just felt that something was very wrong inside!

It was a morning for inner promptings; I had been putting on my contact lenses when I first got up that day, and for some inexplicable reason felt compelled to put on my glasses instead. I tried to ignore the feeling - I always wore contacts in those days so my glasses were buried away in a trunk - but the feeling persisted so I had worn glasses. At the hospital the doctors classified the burns on my forehead, arms and legs as second degree, and said that I would have to have skin grafts on my nose and under my eyes. They went on to say that if I had not been wearing glasses at the time, I would have been permanently blinded as the full force of the wax fell on my eyes. Unfortunately, in addition to the skin grafts, I would also have permanent scars all over my face.

It was, as I said, a morning for inner promptings. At the same time, a thousand miles away in Oklahoma, my closest friend, and husband to be, Erico, intuitively felt that something serious had just happened to me and he flew to California by the first plane. It was he who made me apply Vitamin E to my burns (a then unknown therapy) after my daily treatments at the hospital. Three months later, the doctors, looking at my face, called mine a miracle cure - no skin grafts were required and I do not have a single scar from that accident. I was given strong painkillers for the first week, but I never took one as I never had any pain.

The moral of the story? Well, I suppose one can say Beloved Baba gives us trials by fire. But the rain of His grace and His help is like no other on earth - when in trouble, call on the One who is always listening! He never fails to respond.

Heather Nadel

A UNIQUE CURE FOR HICCUPS

Once, not long after I first heard of Meher Baba, I had a prolonged attack of hiccups. I thought nothing of it at first, but when, after a while, my hiccups showed no signs of abating, I began to try all the various folk remedies I had heard of for curing this irritating affliction. Some of the "cures" were ridiculous, and all of them proved completely futile. Not only did they not rid me of my hiccups, they made me even more aware of them.

Now all along, in the back of my mind was an awareness of Meher Baba. I had heard that when things weren't going as smoothly as one wished, it was helpful to take His name. After hiccing for around twenty minutes, I began to seriously consider doing this, even though I was by no means a "Baba lover" at the time.

My reason, however, told me that it would be pointless to resort to this measure as Baba probably wasn't God so it wouldn't help to repeat his name. On the other hand, if by some chance, He were God, then it didn't seem right to bother Him with something as trivial as my hiccups. And so the internal argument went on while externally I continued to hic. I don't know if it was common sense, pride, consideration for God, or His grace that kept me thinking about Him for another 25 minutes before I finally, in desperation, began to repeat His name. And the next hiccup never came! It was the most amazing coincidence.

Years later, I had another bout of hiccups. But this time my reasoning process was a little different. I told myself Baba definitely IS God, so these hiccups are something He has given me for some purpose. Still, I thought that if they continued for too long I might just quietly mention His name.

After only 25 minutes I had had enough and took His name and once again the hiccups stopped instantly. And perhaps whatever lesson was being taught was learned, for I haven't had a case of prolonged hiccups since.

o o o

WHATEVER YOU TAKE ME TO BE

Perhaps it's because I'm a musician by profession that people often see my Baba button and exclaim, "Frank Zappa," the American rock star who admittedly bears some slight resemblance to Baba. This enables me to tell them who Baba really is. And, of course, there's the rare one who knows Baba and recognizes His picture.

I was unprepared, however, one night when Al Young, an American writer, came close, studied the picture and said disappointedly, "Oh, I thought that was Meher Baba, but it's frank Zappa!"

Tuck Andress

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

While eating dinner in a restaurant in Cambridge, Mass., I noticed that my waiter was wearing a pendant with a picture of someone on it. I asked who it was and for the first time in my life I heard the name Meher Baba. I talked to the waiter for over an hour as my curiosity had been aroused, but after leaving the restaurant I did not pursue the matter. Not long after that, however, my colleague in the psychology department at Harvard, B. F. Skinner, cleared out his office and put all of his "unwanted books" on a table in the seminar room near my office. Included among these discarded books was a set of the *Discourses* by Meher Baba. I recognized Baba's name and picked them up. Through reading the *Discourses*, in fact, I came to Baba.

Years later, while in Myrtle Beach, someone who had heard the story told me the waiter was Scott Simmons and that he was on the Center. Scott told me he had spent a whole year in Cambridge, but it had been a complete waste of time as far

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as he could see. I quickly assured him that as far as I was concerned, his stay in Cambridge had been anything but a waste of time.

One time, while recounting this story at the Center, someone spoke up, "Why, I'm the one who sent the set of *Discourses* to Skinner." My immediate response was, "You sent them to Skinner, but they were meant for me."

And so Baba does His work. Spurning the supernatural, He uses the most ordinary details of everyday life - a pendant around someone's neck, some books sent, some books discarded - to orchestrate His divine drama.

Billy Baum

ONE FAMILY IN HIS LIMITLESS LOVE

January is summer in the Southern Hemisphere, and this particular Friday in the early '70s had been particularly hot. Driving home from work the nine miles from Christchurch, New Zealand to our seaside and hillside perch was accompanied by happy thoughts of being able to jump into the sea to cool off.

When I got home, the sun was on its way to swinging lower over the mountains, 1500 miles beyond which lie the shores of the huge continent of Australia, our nearest link with the rest of the world. Awaiting my return was an unexpected note from my wife, Marianne, saying that she had taken the girls (our three children were then between the ages of 9 and 5) to a place some 90 miles distant, which we liked and had often visited.

I was rather hurt by this brief note because I had not expected or foreseen such a departure. I recall we had some "words" the night before over something trivial, as occurs in

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most marriages, but otherwise I could not explain this mass evacuation. In retrospect it seems to me that Baba cleared the house to facilitate what, unbeknown to me, was about to happen.

Reading the note produced all sorts of hollow feelings inside of me. It merely said they had gone to Hanmer, but to what address and for how long I knew not. It didn't even mention how they had gotten there since I had the car. It all seemed strange and upsetting.

With these feelings rather heavy in the heart I decided to go for that welcome cool-off in the sea. Moments after returning to the house, there was a knock on the back door. Our immediate neighbor was standing there. "Oh, Anthony," she said, "there's a charming American been here looking for you just a while ago, he's an officer in the U.S. Navy attached to the U.S. Antarctic base 'Operation Deep Freeze' at Christchurch Airport. His name is Bart Flick. He is a Baba lover," she said.

She also said that my visitor would come back soon. I felt suddenly so elated that I straight away rang the U.S. Naval Support Force Antarctica Base and asked for Lt. Flick. Hardly was the receiver replaced, having been told that he was out, than there was another knock at our back door, and there was Bart!

I can't explain how or why, but he just felt so familiar, I felt I knew him, yet had neither seen nor heard his name before this day! Such are the connections in a Baba family.

This was to be the start of Bart's eight day stay at 3 Flowers Track, the first few days of which we were alone talking, like old friends, of Baba and related spiritual matters and of our individual stepping stones to Him. It was also a prelude to his return to Antarctica for a final 9 months duty there to complete his Antarctic term of one year.

Bart's particular duty, or one of them, was that of Paymaster to the hundreds of servicemen in the U.S. Base. His was also the responsibility for procuring in New Zealand, the huge

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quantity of cash to pay the men over the months in Antarctica.

It seemed, with his very non-materialistic sensibilities that this was one of the last things for which he would have an aptitude. His heart was just not in it, yet he had been given this particular responsibility and that was that!

An amusing incident occurred when the time came for Bart to pick up some millions of dollars in cash from the Bank of New Zealand in Christchurch to take as his personal charge to Antarctica. He had hired a car to collect all this "green stuff" and having parked it as near as he could get to the bank, he walked the rest of the way on foot. When he emerged with an armed escort to take this huge payroll to the car, he was unable to tell his escort where he had parked it. This no doubt caused his escort to suspect his authenticity. It was embarrassing to say the least, though the car was eventually found.

It was during this stay of Bart's that another overseas Baba lover travelling through New Zealand rang from town and came to stay for two days. For me these days, which had promised to be a bit bleak without the family, turned out to be days of wonderful fullness in Beloved Baba's love, something I could rarely share with my own family, their hearts not being specifically opened in His love.

During Bart's stay, he told me that there was something he wished to do whilst in Christchurch. He had heard that it was a "must" to visit a local scenic place called Hanmer. Springs. I was astounded because that was where Marianne and the three girls had gone!

And very soon thereafter, Marianne called to ask how I was managing. They were having a good time and had rented a small house in Hanmer. She was amazed to hear what had unfolded at my end almost from the moment I had returned to find that "evacuation notice." As Bart wished to see the place, we decided on the phone that the two of us would drive up and bring the family back to Christchurch. This was a highly successful move as Marianne, Anna, Karina and Gabrielle

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immediately took Bart to their hearts and they to his. It really was a happy reunion and on our return home all were warmed by the new friendship and the whole episode had a happy ending.

During Bart's 9 months on the ice, two other servicemen were drawn to Beloved Baba, forming, as he expressed it, a triangle of Baba hearts. As for Bart, we corresponded long after his final departure from New Zealand. He wrote when he left New Zealand, "I feel very close to you all... I know we are eternally together in His greater love... Lord Baba is Truly Limitless Love In Limitless Abundance. To express His love every second of eternity is a noble goal."

Anthony Thorpe

"BABA'S SPELL"

From 1967 to 1969, I studied acting at Carnegie Tech. I finished the training, but developed an aversion to acting and in 1970 was selling shoes in Ohio. One day a letter arrived from a close friend to say that she had become connected with a group of people following Avatar Meher Baba.

There was nothing about Baba in the letter but there was a picture, under which was written, "I am the Ancient One - the One residing in every heart." I found myself replying internally, "Well, I have always felt there may be an Ancient one and You might well be that One... but I don't want anything to do with any groups!"

I was happy that my friend had found something to help her, but I was not interested in such things and did nothing more about it. Then I discovered that a very close friend was a Baba lover; I was furious with Baba. Baba was good for my first friend - she had had a hard time and she needed something like this - but this friend... he was an intelligent person!

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Somehow Baba kept cropping up in my life and I often found myself thinking, "I don't want to think about Him."

One day I felt that I could no longer stand selling shoes; just then the telephone rang. It was a friend from school who had written a rock musical and he offered me a role in its first major production. The name of the show was "Godspell."

And the game between Baba and me continued. Christ was played by a Baba lover named Stephen, and he sometimes wore a Baba button on stage. Part of the rehearsal process was that the actors talked about God and their searching, and Stephen would occasionally mention Baba. However, outside rehearsal, while he would talk to others about Baba he did not talk to me. Baba was also mentioned in the program; "Be it Jesus, Krishna or Meher Baba, the message is the same: life is good, people should love, forgive and accept one another" - but I did not notice it.

Once I found one of the cast reading the *Discourses* and I began to read over her shoulder. My reaction was, "Yes, everything He says is true, but I still want to do it myself."

So here I was, surrounded by Baba in "Godspell" and still determined to do it alone, but my conversation with God continued. Stephen had mentioned Baba's sense of humor and I would find myself internally nudging Baba with my elbow when I saw something that amused me, saying to Him, "What about that!"

Then my intelligent friend came to New York. I had not seen him for two years, and when we met he began to talk about Baba. I did not listen to his words, but I did feel Baba's presence and something clicked and I said, "How could I be so stupid - of course He's the Ancient One!"

It was now February 1972, and February, in the theatre, is a notorious month for illness. I had not missed a show for nearly a year and was exhausted. The thought occurred to me to call in sick and take the day off, but suddenly it grew into the idea of taking all of my allotted sick leave at once - about one week - and going to India for Baba's birthday.

I became incredibly excited, but then my mind said, "Oh no,

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I can't do that." The only remedy for this vacillation was another conversation: "Baba," I said, "If You want me to come, let me know, and if You don't want me to, let me know. I won't like it, but I won't come if You don't want me to."

That night I had a dream about a cheque for \$4950. I forgot about it, but the very next day when I went to the office there was the cheque I had seen in my dream. It was the first cheque for royalties to the actors and we had all forgotten about this arrangement. My share was \$450.00.

I immediately rang Air India to book a seat to Bombay, the fare was exactly \$450.00! Air India later called to say that the Godspell staff were being given a reduction of \$125. Thus I had the fare plus expense money.

Then two days before I was due to leave, Air India again telephoned to say they had made a mistake. The airfare they had quoted was a special excursion fare for a minimum three-week stay only, and the fare for one week was \$1200. I told the producer that I was taking three weeks off, and he agreed.

I left ten days after the thought to go had first occurred to me. On the way to the airport my friend teased me by saying, "I really feel terrible. But remember when I said Baba was the Avatar? I was just kidding." But my immediate internal reaction was, "...I don't care if He's the Avatar or not!" Baba's "spell" had taken hold, and is with me still.

Jeff Mylett

BABA'S CALLING CARD

I first learned of Meher Baba in 1973, and visited India shortly thereafter. Not long after I returned to the United States, I ran into difficulties.

I spent several days in conflict wondering what to do; I finally decided that the reason I was having problems was because I didn't know how to love Baba. I remembered having seen a poster at the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach entitled "How To Love God," with some suggestions by Meher Baba as to how to do so. I felt that if I could get that poster, my problems would be solved.

My first impulse was to go to the Center. I then decided to write to someone there to send me a copy. I became consumed with the desire to obtain this poster; I knew it contained what I most needed to heal the ache within me.

During this period I had for some time been taking a class in *hatha yoga* with some friends. The woman who taught the classes had an affinity for many spiritual masters, including Meher Baba. Placed around her house were booklets and cards concerning these masters.

After each class, she would always serve tea. One particular night I went to the bathroom as soon as the class was over. When I returned, everyone was already gathered, seated in a circle around the tea tray. There was one spot left on the floor, right next to a built-in cabinet and bookshelf.

As I wove my way through the people, I noticed that a card had fallen from the bookshelf onto the floor in the very spot that was open for me. Before sitting down, I picked up the card and turned it over, thinking to replace it on the shelf. To my utter surprise and joy, it was a small reproduction of that poster, "How To Love God." I sat down and wept, overcome with the love and attention I felt from Baba in that beautiful gesture.

Shelley Marrich

HIS PICTURE, WORDS AND FRAGRANCE

I first learned of Meher Baba when I picked up a copy of Meher Baba's *Universal Message* at Expo '67, the World's Fair in Montreal, Canada. I was in love with the Expo and was very respectful of all the pavilions, especially the national exhibitions. India's pavilion had very few displays in comparison with most of the other national pavilions, so that when I saw a mound of *Universal Message* pamphlets, I took one.

I went outside and sat down on the steps to read it. I read it slowly and carefully and though I was not consciously searching at the time I was decidedly intrigued, and remember feeling that the ways of loving God given in "How To Love God" (one of the messages in the pamphlet) were clear, practical and beautiful. And I remember, on reading Baba's brief biography, feeling a little thrill at the prospect of God really having come back to us.

But Baba did not want me to come to Him then, because when I opened the pamphlet to His picture, He looked so unlike what I thought God might actually look like that all I could do was throw back my head and laugh, all by myself on the steps of the Indian Pavilion. I was disappointed because I had wanted to believe this message, but did not at the time because of the photo - but I kept the pamphlet with me.

For years I told myself and my friends that I kept it to show people for fun, still feeling that Baba was not who He said He was. After all, how could a replica of an "Italian barber" be the Ancient One? It was too much for me: my pride could not accept that God in human form is warm and friendly, loving and funny.

Six years later I still had the *Universal Message* in the journal I kept. I also had a few other things that a Baba lover whom I had met in an airlines terminal had sent me. In those six years, I had lost my father, lived through status as a national athlete, had minor involvements with psychedelic drugs - resulting in a bout of mental illness - and indeed had begun searching for three years for a Master.

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By then I knew that Meher Baba had dropped the body and since that was all I knew I did not yet know that He could be, and in fact was, the guidance I was looking for. At this time, in 1973, there were more and more people claiming the spiritual status of a Perfect Master. I was somehow fortunate enough to know that I could not choose a Master, though I very much needed one, of my own free will - because I simply did not know who was for me. I was waiting to have some clear indication of who he could be.

During the previous years I had done a fair amount of reading but I seldom went out looking for a book, since I did not feel that I had any adequate knowledge of what to look for. I would simply read books that came my way, but I felt confident in accepting or rejecting what I read. Baba was good to me and provided many nice books, but it wasn't until January 1973 that He gave me His own *Sparks of the Truth*,

When I saw this other photo of Baba on the cover of that book, I was well able to believe that He could be God. I went home and read it cover to cover, and I found as I read that my deepest questions were being answered, my longing assuaged, my restlessness soothed.

In reading, my questions from one part were being answered in the next. This was happening in a very personal way and I knew that Baba was with me and in fact was the One who had been with me throughout. The use of words in this booklet was especially stupendous to me - speaking of the things He did, in the simple and utterly clear way that He did, I knew that it could not have been written by anyone but God.

All this was more than enough to bring me to Baba, but He gave me more: a sweet smell that reminded me of pink and pale orange was coming from the pages every few minutes, and when I smelled the book it was not on the book. So He used the little extra bait on the hook, and with those three things - His picture, His words, and His fragrance - I was hooked.

Erica Skinger

JUDGE NOT LEST...

I made my first pilgrimage to Meherabad in early 1973 and was deeply moved by the spiritual atmosphere at Meher Baba's Tomb (Samadhi). Only one thing troubled me: several times a day I would find people sitting near the Tomb and singing what I considered to be corny, syrupy songs to Baba - songs which I felt were an insult to His greatness and majesty. I disliked this music so much that I would often avoid the Tomb when people were singing.

After a wonderful three months visit, I returned to America and within a matter of weeks found myself deeply inspired to write and sing songs about Meher Baba. In 1974 I returned to India once again and discovered, much to my chagrin, that I had become what was once the object of my scorn and derision: a singer of songs to Meher Baba at His holy Samadhi.

o o o

A REWARDING PUNISHMENT

One cold, snowy winter evening I had one of "those nights" at work. I slipped and fell hard on the ice while making a delivery (I'm a mailman), I started to come down with a fever and, worst of all, mistaking its white color for a snowdrift, I backed into a parked car with my postal vehicle. After sheepishly reporting this calamity to my supervisor, I was given the usual penalty - one week's suspension without pay.

It just so happened that in three weeks I was scheduled to take a month's vacation and journey to India. By some odd quirk of fate my one week's suspension was accidentally tacked on to my vacation time and thus what I had considered a harsh and unjust penalty was magically transformed into a reward: an additional week spent in Meher Baba's Heartland.

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BABA'S WAY

In early summer of 1982 I had a strong inclination to quit my job at the end of August and return to college in the fall. At the same time, however, two of my close friends, both in their seventies, decided to journey to India in September and began to drop hints that my company would be appreciated on this long trip. Moreover, I sensed that Baba would be pleased if I did accompany them. As I was not really "feeling" the urge to go to India at this time, quite a conflict developed in my mind.

One day, in the midst of this inner turmoil, as I was driving along a busy street, the following thought occurred to me: "Oh Baba, you really do take away all our little props and supports and leave us with nothing left to hold on to except you." At this very instant my gaze struck an old bus parked at a garage. In the space above the windshield where one can usually read the destination of the bus were printed two words in big capital letters: MY WAY.

Bill Cliff

WRESTLING WITH GOD

In the autumn of 1975, I felt drawn to go to India. Although my life was quite happy from a material standpoint, I had become convinced that I must find God and live for Him alone. I read many books and also tried various "spiritual" disciplines, such as chanting, meditation and yoga. But I always found shortcomings in these practices and eventually I grew disenchanted with them.

I didn't completely understand why I felt pulled to go to India, but the urge grew stronger. I had a vague idea of meeting all the spiritual personages I could and asking them

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questions in the hope that in this way I might gain some wisdom which could help me in my own search. Yet I knew I wanted no part of a guru or a master.

I felt that those who followed others were spiritual weaklings, and that they became dependent on others because they didn't have the courage to find God on their own. Besides, although I was willing to concede that someone else might know more than me, I knew no one could know it all, as Perfection, or God, could not exist in human form since the human form itself was illusory.

Those were my feelings as I set out for India. I spent the first week sightseeing, but then my urge to find someone who could answer my questions became so strong that I pulled out my copy of *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Planet Earth* and studied it to see what ashram was closest to where I was at the moment. It turned out to be Meher Baba's Tomb in Ahmednagar.

Now I had heard bits and pieces about Baba since 1970, but I had diligently avoided reading about Him for two reasons. Firstly, I felt His claim to be God was the height of egotism. And secondly, I had heard that he was against drugs (which I used) and I felt personally offended at this attitude.

On the other hand, I had seen two photos of Baba and had been attracted by them. And I was impressed by the fact that He had kept silence for so many years. Also, a friend had told me just before I left for India that he knew someone who had gone to Baba's Tomb and that it was a very special place. So I thought, all in all it might be worth going there for an hour or so before heading off to visit some ashram with a spiritual leader who was still alive.

By the time my bus reached Nagar I had changed my mind, however, and decided to go straight on to Poona (Pune). But the bus seemed to have other ideas, for after pulling into the station for what was supposed to be a ten minute stop it didn't pull out again. It just sat there, with no explanation as to this long delay. Seeing that I wasn't getting to Poona anyway, I changed my mind again and got a rickshaw and told the driver to take me to Baba's Tomb.

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He must have misunderstood for instead of taking me to the Tomb, he took me to Adi K. Irani's compound where he and the Avatar Meher Baba Trust had their offices. I was very upset, even angry, when I discovered that the Tomb was six miles in the other direction and that, as it was getting late, I would have to wait until the next day to visit it.

As long as I was there, though, I peeked into the Trust office and saw Rano Gayley, (one of Babas early American disciples, then in her seventies) and Virginia Small (an American Baba-lover in her sixties) sitting there and I thought, "This is a place for little old ladies in sneakers." I amended this thought a moment later, though, when I saw the many Baba photos on the walls of Adi's office. "These people are fanatics!" was the thought which then occurred to me. And I decided to leave town the next morning without even visiting the Tomb.

But the next morning I was too sick to even get out of bed, much less leave town, and so I ended up spending several days in Nagar. During this time, various Baba people came to visit me and I was struck by their kindness in visiting a stranger, while at the same time I was fascinated by what they were telling me about Baba. Still I had doubts in my heart and my mind was filled with questions, such as "What's a *mandali* and where is it?" for my visitors often remarked, "Wait till you see the *mandali*, "

When I recovered enough to walk about, I went to Meherazad and I met Eruch. He said, "We've heard so much about you Philip, very happy to see you," and he embraced me. And in that embrace I felt so much love that something in my heart seemed to give way, I completely broke down and I knew my travels for the moment were over.

But although my heart felt Baba's love, my mind was still full of questions and I was determined to "prove" that Baba couldn't be God. I had been a wrestling champion in college and I was itching now to do battle with Baba, to find the "catch," but all my questions which I confidently threw out were easily answered by the *mandali*, And despite my

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scepticism I found myself constantly being touched by the stories they told. I was impressed with Baba's sense of humor, His humility and His love.

I was in a state of turmoil, where my heart and my head seemed in conflict. I had the sense that Baba was hitting me with one hand, but simultaneously cradling me with the other. I felt I had to get away. But each time I decided to leave, I would relent and stay for just one or two more days. Then, when I had finally made up my mind to go, I got sick again and was forced to stay. It seemed that I couldn't leave. And in fact, the only way I did eventually get to leave was by promising myself that I would return.

So I finally got away, intending to go to other ashrams around India. But now a curious thing happened; each time I tried to go to another ashram, something would prevent me. Buses never arrived, names and addresses I had been given turned out to be inaccurate, it was too expensive to get to an ashram, and so it went. I travelled throughout India and even Nepal and never once made it to another ashram, while at the same time I kept having experiences which convinced me that Baba was and is God in human form. There is no way I can describe the impact of this on me.

There was nothing to do but return to Ahmednagar. Having planned originally to stay for only one or two hours, I ended up staying in Ahmednagar for three and a half months! I came seeking, filled with questions and doubts; He emptied me of all this and when I left, I left filled with His love. Truly I sought and did, indeed, find.

Philip Creager

DYNAMITE DAN

The key to appreciating Meher Baba's sense of humor is to be able to laugh with Baba, but that is not always easy, especially when you are not sure you believe in Him. For example, take my brother Daniel's case.

In August 1975 I flew from the west coast to Boston to see him before I was leaving for India. When my plane landed, Daniel was not there to meet me. "He must be late," I thought, "yes, he hates to get up early." It was in one of the long exit corridors that I saw him being dragged into a room by two hefty plainclothes policemen. He saw me and feigned a smile and was gone behind a slammed door. What had happened was this.

A set of keys he had on him had triggered the alarm on the metal detector. When the keys were discovered the official at the gate said, "It's okay, you can go now." Dan happily responded, "I can go? DYNAMITE!" He started to leave when suddenly from behind a fat hand grabbed him on the shoulder and asked in an angry voice, "What did you say?"

Daniel turned to see that the fat hand was attached to a fat arm which in turn had on the end of it a fat cop with a matching fat head! Daniel replied, "I said, it's time to go." "No you didn't, you said dynamite!" "Come on," said Daniel, "sure I said it but it's an expression which means great. Terrific. Hooray." "Never mind, you're under arrest."

He was charged with the felony, "trying to cause fear and panic at the airport." It took all of Baba's help and remembrance, all day and \$5,000 to bail Daniel out of the pen.

The whole family flew out three weeks later for the trial. The judge heard the charge, listened to the prosecution and after a few questions, threw the case out. What a relief!

Once more I prepared to fly to India. "Dynamite Daniel" took me to the airport, waved goodbye and said loudly, "Bye Jack, Bye Jack." I thought it sounded like he was saying "hijack!" and I told him, "Look brother, if they haul you

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away now, I'm not going to bail you out." He smiled and I left for India.

As a sequel to all this, some months later I received this letter from Daniel.

Dear Jack,

Happy birthday bro; belated for your receipt but in my heart I'm keeping faith with the event so if Meher Baba is "hot stuff" as is claimed, then you certainly have already received the essential content of this letter... along with our August eventfulness and the subsequent \$730 lawyer bill....

I hope you have had words with Baba regarding his wastefulness of an individual's time and self direction; namely mine! (And that you have informed him as to how it is o.k. with you if he engages you with such pranks because you are a willing soul in the learning of one of life's more difficult lessons: smiling at whatever comes your way... but you chose the game and I didn't!)

So you speak to Baba since he exists for you, and also since I don't believe in him; but just in case I'm wrong, you tell him I'll be a lot more tolerant if he'll just stop bugging me!

Love,

Daniel

Jako Caraco

DEEPEST IN HIS HEART

When my brother visited us here at Meherabad, India in 1976 after a gap of several years, I was surprised to find that he was a Baba-lover. He had signed his letters "Jai Baba" and greeted me and my wife, Heather, with Baba's Jai for many years, but he had also carefully explained that this was out

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of respect for Baba and our feelings and did not mean that he had the same kind of conviction that we had. So I asked him if anything had happened and he laughed and said that yes indeed something had happened and Baba had played a trick on him to show him what was really in his heart.

Several years before, my brother lived in San Francisco and flew often to New York for visits with friends or for his work in the music business. After several flights he joined the "in" crowd of professional travellers and became a recognized old hand on the transcontinental flights.

On this particular journey he was sitting at the back of the plane with an off-duty air hostess, and a broker who made the cross country trip several times a week. The hostess used her good offices to get them all ample food and drinks and they were having a very cozy party at the back of the plane.

Somewhere over the great American Southwest, the hostess happened to glance out the window and she blanched, screamed and clutched frantically at my brother's arm. The business man looked out the window, sputtered and turned purple and sat back in his chair. My brother looked out and saw that the plane was diving straight to the ground through one layer of delicate clouds then another, falling at an accelerating speed towards the desert.

He saw the desert come clearly into view and watched the little lumps turn into mountains and mesas; here and there vegetation became visible, and faint lines turned into 6 lane highways. In another second or two he thought, the cars will be visible and then there will be the crash and the inevitable impact.

My brother sat back to savor his last few moments of life and said out loud, "Well Baba, in another moment I'll be with you at last." Immediately Baba's face appeared in an orb of light before his face. He was smiling and beaming lovingly at my brother, who says that he felt wonderfully composed, happy and calm.

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In the world of love illuminated by the face of his Beloved, there was calm, there was time to try to comfort the desperate hostess, there was time to see if the broker had choked and was the seat belt buckled properly, there was composure in the face of death and there was time to feel and acknowledge the boundless love of the God-Man.

This blissful state was not ended when the pilot wrenched the plane into horizontal flight at 1,500 feet above the ground, and skidded to a rough landing on a small runway in the desert, and fire engines wailed and ambulances raced for the plane.

A few moments of confusion passed by like vapour disappearing in the air, and a crew member stepped forward to explain that a first class passenger had had a severe heart attack which was immediately diagnosed by a fellow passenger physician. The captain was informed at once and he knew from his many trips across the country, that the plane happened to be directly 30,000 feet above an excellent hospital equipped with both radio links and a runway. He sent the crew to inform all the passengers of the situation, which they started to do, but because my brother and his companions were sitting at the very back of the plane, the crew had not quite reached them when the plane began its dive.

The stewardess laughed at her lack of composure off duty; the broker planned to sue the airlines for something; and my brother realized that he knew for certain now what was deepest in his heart, Beloved Baba.

Eric Nadel

"DO ME A FAVOR"

Every year at Meherabad, January 31st is observed as Amartithi - a date with the Eternal One - by lovers of Avatar Meher Baba. It is the date on which the *Avatar* of the Age, Meher Baba, put aside His physical body. Many Baba lovers from all over India assemble for Baba's *darshan* in the Samadhi on this day.

Each year, Meherwan Jessawala, Eruch's brother, would come from Poona, along with his mother, sister, and other close relatives. One year, in the mid seventies, in the rush of making all the necessary arrangements, Meherwan arrived at Meherabad only to discover that he had left his wallet with 300 rupees in it, in Poona. In it was the money which was to pay for everyone's food, the purchasing of garlands, transportation costs, and any and all other expenses.

After taking Baba's *darshan* on the morning of the 31st, Meherwan was sitting on the parapet of Baba's cabin, which is near the Samadhi, wondering how he would manage with no money. He could always borrow money from someone, but he didn't want to bother anyone with his problems, so he implored Baba to help him in this awkward situation.

Just then a close acquaintance, Sarwar - Baidul's daughter - spotted him sitting there and asked politely, "Meherwan, will you do me a favor?" Meherwan felt embarrassed and hoped Sarwar was not about to ask him for money, as he couldn't give her even a rupee. But summoning his courage he said, "Yes, if I can."

Sarwar handed him a purse and said, "This contains 300 rupees. On your return to Poona, could you please give this to my dear mother and in the meantime keep this purse with you?"

Knowing that he had the exact amount for Sarwar's mother at home, he felt he could use this particular money for the time being. His problems had been solved and in a way which inconvenienced none. Meherwan was delighted at this

happy solution and thanked Sarwar for letting him do this favor for her.

He also thanked Baba for doing this favor for him.

Bal Natu

KING OF HEARTS

When Adi K. Irani (Meher Baba's secretary) was touring the USA in the '70s, Baba began to stir up some doubts within me which I hadn't realized were there. These doubts were quite small and in no way shook my deep faith in Baba, but still they were there.

One day, a few days after Adi had spoken, I drove to the hospital where I work to purchase a book on nursing. Why I went up that day, driving 25 miles to pick up the book when I could have done so two days later while at work, I can't explain. And why I parked my car on a street I never park on, I also cannot explain.

But I did so, and as it turned out, I had to pass the place where Adi had talked earlier. As I went by I felt my doubts resurface. Just then I happened to look down on the ground and beheld a playing card lying there. It was the king of hearts.

I took two steps past it, when in a flash, I understood its significance. Baba had placed it there for me, to proclaim that He is the King of Hearts !

To some this occurrence might seem quite by chance, but what are the odds? I can't remember ever having found a playing card lying on the ground during the thousands of days of my life. Of 52 cards it was the king of hearts, not the two of spades, or the jack of diamonds- the King of Hearts. And of all places I might find it, it was right in front of the place where Baba's very close disciple had spoken.

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The odds must have been more than millions to one-and Baba chose the one.

Doug Stalker

BABA, A TRUE SUFI AND REAL FRIEND

In 1977 I was given a scholarship by the government of Iran to study Persian Language and Literature at Ferdowsi University. I soon struck up a friendship with a professor of history there, and when I told him I was interested in Persian poetry, he said enthusiastically that Hafiz was his favorite poet. From that time on he spent a good deal of his time in my company quoting and translating his favorite lines from Hafiz. I wanted to tell him that Hafiz was Meher Baba's favorite poet too, but decided that it was best for the moment if he didn't know I was a Baba-lover.

But we agreed to meet for an hour or so each morning before classes so he could read Hafiz with me and I could help him with his English. He was an unusual tutor; his love of Hafiz and his understanding of the poetry were very deep. At times he would bang his fist on the desk and shout, "I can't believe it, kill me this moment." At first I thought he had found an error in the text, but I came to know that he was overwhelmed by the beauty of the poetry.

Of course, I frequently thought that I should tell him about Baba. There was something about him which made me think he would be receptive. Many times while coming across references to the Prophet in *Divan-e-Hafiz*, I tried to hint that it was possible for Him to come again, but he never seemed to pick up on these hints. So I thought that rather than ruin a good friendship, I wouldn't mention Baba's name.

Four months went on like this, and then I came to India for Amartithi in 1978. Before returning to Iran, Mani and

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Eruch asked me about my work there. I explained that I wished I could share Baba with others but, as Iran is a traditional Islamic country and as part of my contract with the University forbade the discussion of religion, I didn't know quite how to go about it. Mani and Eruch suggested that I just place a small picture of Baba on my desk, as this would allow Baba to draw people to Him in His own way.

When I returned, I was faced with a fantastic amount of work, classes as a student, classes as a teacher, tutorials with my friend, and a lot of this was in a foreign language that I was still learning. On top of this, I had no one with whom I could share my life - my love for Baba. At the height of my questioning why I had ever come to Iran, faced with the amount of work and isolation ahead of me, my friend walked into the office.

Immediately I thought, "Here goes the last straw." It was easy to map out the sequence of events: he would walk over to my desk; he would see the picture of Baba; he would ask me who He is; I would tell him; he would either look at me as if I were, or tell me that I was, an infidel and then he would walk away and my only relationship of any spiritual substance would be out the window.

The way out was simple. All I had to do was quickly grab the photo of Baba and slide it unnoticed into my desk drawer. For a moment this seemed by far the best thing to do, especially since I have always found it difficult to tell others about Baba. For me, it was like revealing the most personal and intimate side of myself.

Anyway, on a whim I thought to leave the picture there. I didn't feel right about hiding Baba like that, and if one more thing went wrong, what was the difference anyway - Baba would certainly see me through.

So there I was at my desk, waiting for him to come over, half hoping that he wouldn't notice me and the picture of Baba but anticipating the worst. Then suddenly I felt a presence come over the room, a very familiar presence - Baba's presence. For a moment it seemed that all activity stopped in

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the room. I looked up and there stood my friend, staring at Baba's picture with a beaming smile on his face. I couldn't understand it. Then, overwhelmed, my friend said with great love, "I know who that is, that's Meher Baba. He's my dearest friend in terms of love."

To my surprise I found that Baba had already touched my friend's heart. He had first heard of Him in Shiraz, fifteen years earlier, had read the *Discourses* and had recognized Baba as the true Sufi (Friend). So our friendship continued, and in this way Baba helped me through seven more difficult months in Iran, until the revolution forced my departure in '78.

Peter Booth

EASY COME, EASY GO

Several years ago in 1978 having just returned to the States from India, I dropped by the bank, to check my savings account and the condition of my finances. I expected to find about 50 dollars there, but when I asked, the teller informed me that I had over two thousand dollars in the account. I was quite surprised and told the teller that I didn't believe it, that the money couldn't have been mine.

Since the teller insisted it was, I called my parents that night to see if they had made an unexpected deposit. They assured me they had not. My roommate told me I ought to keep the money, transfer it to another account. I told him that I could not do anything so dishonest; after all, the money was not mine. "If I took it," I said, "I would only have to pay it back later, in one form or another; besides, what would Baba say?" That ended the discussion. I decided to leave the money where it was, sure that sooner or later the bank would discover to whom it belonged.

Nevertheless, each week as I deposited the money I had

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earned, the teller and I would have a small argument over the money in my account. I would say, "I don't believe it; this money does not belong to me." The teller would insist that it did, thinking me mad, I suppose, not to accept it.

Finally the year drew to a close. I desperately wanted to return to India, but I had not saved enough to make the trip, so I went to the bank and talked to the manager about the extra funds in my account. She called the computer center in Atlanta and, sure enough, the money had been put into my account by mistake. However, as six months had passed since the error, they were bound by law to give the money to me. They could not legally take the money back and so, in fact, she explained, the money now belonged to me and I was able to return to the Beloved's Home.

Theus Malmberg

UNEXPECTED BONUS

In November 1978, my wife and I were experiencing difficulties. She wanted to get away to think things out and I suggested she go to India to visit Meherabad and Meherazad. She had very much wanted to return "home" ever since our first trip in 1971 and so she was delighted with this idea. Even though I suggested it, however, there was still the thought in my mind that she was getting to go to India, and I was the one who had to pay for it. But Baba soon showed me otherwise.

Sometime after my wife left, I got a phone call from the county office which had employed me as a teacher until the previous June. They informed me that there was a paycheck there for me and asked me to please pick it up. I said that there was no money coming to me that I knew of and asked what it was for. The answer was that they didn't know what it was for, only that it had been issued by the accounting department.

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I asked the amount and was told it was \$1700! There was obviously some mistake! I told them to check with the accounting department because no such amount could possibly be owed to me and there must have been an error in the records somewhere.

The next day they called me back. The accounting department had reviewed the check and said it was definitely owed me, but no one could remember or figure out exactly why. They mentioned "accumulated overtime" as a possibility, but I replied, as everyone there must have known, that teachers are not paid for overtime.

Again the accounting department was consulted and again the message came back that no error had been made and that I should please pick up my check as soon as possible.

Still feeling very mystified and slightly apprehensive, I accepted the money. It was only months later that I realized the true explanation for the check. Baba was not only paying me back for my wife's tickets but he was paying for her expenses while in India as well.

Ralph Brown

ONCE UPON A LOG

One chilly day I sat alone near the water's edge on the remote shoreline of Point Reyes, California. I'd found a large driftwood log to sit on and was relaxing in a meditative state of mind. I thought of Baba's words, "I am the Ocean of Love." With that thought in mind, I decided to breathe in deeply to try to inhale as much of that ocean as possible.

No sooner had I done that than a big wave washed up nearby. Its water curved around and approached the log from behind. I spotted it just in time to sit sideways, with my feet up on the log so my shoes wouldn't get wet. My success was

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short-lived, however, as the water tipped my log, and me with it, right into the sea.

It was a rude awakening. I climbed back into the beach on hands and knees, sopping wet and full of sand. I found myself alone, yet laughing heartily at my own plight. Rarely have I felt Baba so close: I imagined Him turning pink and bouncing up and down with delight at my "spiritual" undertaking.

Brian Narelle

LARYNGITIS TO THE RESCUE

A few years ago, while in the Peace Corps in West Africa, I was participating in a group training during July. Silence Day was approaching and I wished to keep silence, but I did not feel comfortable explaining to my co-workers what I was doing or why. I had kept quiet about Baba until then as we were a very mixed bag of philosophies, religions and beliefs. Other than a picture of Baba in my room, I'd displayed nothing outwardly. So, how to keep silence?

But then I got a cold and on the eve of July 9th, it got worse; by bedtime I had a full-blown case of laryngitis! Thus, it was very natural for me to announce that the next day I would be giving my voice a rest. I had Silence Day and Baba had a chuckle.

Barbara Roberts

ELEPHANT WALK TO GOD

An elephant is neither the most common nor the most practical choice when one is looking for a means of transportation. The slow, deliberate steps will, however, eventually take the passenger to a destination - given enough time. Such was my journey to the feet of the Master. Although I first heard of Meher Baba during the summer of 1971 and, despite many subsequent years of exposure - including several years of living in the same house with two Baba-lovers and a trip to Meherabad during the summer of 1979 - I remained unaffected. Or so I thought.

Then, in 1980, prompted by a close friend who is a Baba-lover, I wrote to Meherabad asking if it would be possible for me to direct the play for Mehera's birthday the following year, never realizing the significance of that request. When I received a favorable response, I then applied for and received a professional development leave from the college where I teach.

In October, 1981, my friend and I set out, first for Kashmir and Nepal, then down through India to Meherabad. About a week before we reached our final destination, my friend commented that everything about the trip seemed to be going exactly according to my whim - if I wanted something to happen, it happened. I agreed that the trip had been extraordinary but gave little thought to his words until we reached Jaipur.

On our first afternoon there we took a rickshaw up to the Amber Fort, telling the driver not to wait for us, certain that we would be able to find another rickshaw when we were ready to leave. We spent a pleasant couple of hours exploring the fort, and on our way out I stopped to admire one of the elephants that are brought there daily to give rides to tourists.

My friend asked me if I wanted to ride. Although I did, I told him that I wasn't about to climb on an elephant and ride around like a child in a pony ring. "I'd love to ride an ele-

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phant," I said, " but the only way that will ever happen is if I *have* to ride one in order to get from one place to another, and that's rather unlikely." We walked back to the rickshaw stand in search of transportation, only to find that all the rickshaws were already taken. Our only apparent alternative was to walk to the town of Amber, a short distance, and catch a bus from there.

As we started back up the hill that leads to Amber, the elephant I had admired came lumbering slowly towards us, and again the *malik* (the owner), offered us a ride. I laughed and again said no, but when my friend, who had heard the offer more clearly than I had, convinced me that the man was willing to take us all the way back to Jaipur, we chased after him.

He led the elephant to a wall, which we used as a ladder, and we climbed onto the broad back. As we settled ourselves for the sixteen kilometer trip my friend nudged me and said, "Look, Baba wants you so much that He's even provided you with an elephant." I laughed, but the words kept coming back to me. As we rode slowly down the twisting canyon, arriving at the monumental gate to the fort just as a pink sunset was spreading over the distant pink city, I remembered other moments of the trip that had seemed particularly magical.

A few days later we arrived in Meherabad. What happened over the next two months is another story, but I left India knowing that Baba had stolen my heart. And although my response was to forms of wooing far more subtle than an elephant, the process *was* slow - and perhaps, given my recalcitrance, a beginning as obvious as an elephant was appropriate.

Nancy Wall

THE COMPASSIONATE "FATHER"

Before leaving for a visit to India, in 1980, I sat with my eldest son, Joshua, age seven, and asked, "What can I bring you from India?"

He shrugged, then frowned a bit. He didn't know what to ask for, but at the same time didn't want to lose the chance to make a special request!

"Maybe I'll try to find you a toy the Indian children play with," I suggested.

"Okay..," he said but his heart wasn't in it.

I waited. In a moment his face brightened and he said, "I know! A geode! O Papa, if you could only get me a geode!"

A geode is a peculiar rock formation - ordinary rock outside, round and even, with an inside of jagged quartz crystals. Where could I find one in India?

"Well, we'll see," I said. "I'll look, but don't count on it." Since rocks in general are one of his main interests - he says he will be a geologist when he grows up - I told him I would at least bring him some Indian rocks even if I couldn't find a geode. (In America you can purchase a geode at a rock store, but doubted I would find such a store in India.)

And so I left. One afternoon at Meherazad I decided to climb Seclusion Hill alone. I had completely forgotten about the geode, but I did find several interesting rocks along the path which I was certain would please Joshua.

On descending, instead of following the path, I went straight down the hillside. I noticed a rock glinting in the sunlight and picked it up. It was broken into two sections, both rich with crystals. A geode!

Baba remembered my son's request, and fulfilled it, where I had not.

Tim Garvin

THERE ARE NO COINCIDENCES

In the fall of 1979 I took a trip to Europe. Actually, it had been at the prompting of my parents after a particularly unpleasant summer. A friend had committed suicide and I had been thrown into the most serious and dire inner searching I had yet experienced - so, I went to Europe as a sort of retreat.

After about a week, I ended up in Munich at a particularly dirty and smelly youth hostel. One night there was enough to make me determined to move into a pension no matter what the cost. The next morning I was standing in a line to check-out when I noticed this other American fellow who seemed to be in similar straits. I don't remember the details of the dialogue, but we both complained about the hostel and agreed to get a room together.

After a light breakfast, we set off in pursuit of a pension and began to talk. He was an artist living on a grant from the college he had attended. When he asked what I was doing in Europe, I wasn't sure what to reply. Eventually I disclosed my confusion over my friend's suicide and intimated that I was here perhaps just to think things over.

Now this fellow, whose name, coincidentally, was also Bruce, would periodically make enigmatic comments. When I told him about my plight he said something like, "Well, it's no accident you've come here and we've met. I have experienced a similar thing and things are not quite as bleak as they may seem to be now," It is difficult to capture the feeling I had about Bruce, but somehow I felt he had something to tell me, and that somehow I was meant to hear what he had to say.

We spent the day talking and talking about God, reincarnation, death, suicide and lots of things of this nature. I felt by the end of the day that this single experience might be the most crucial of my entire life. Bruce was saying things which I already knew in my heart were true, but he was putting

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them into words for me for the first time. That night, Bruce turned to me and said, "Do you want to see a photo of God?" For the first time since we'd met, I felt a ray of cynicism shoot into me. It had been a beautiful, important day, and I suddenly felt I was going to be given a sales pitch about some guru or other. With trepidation, I consented to look at the photo.

Bruce showed me the "don't worry, be happy" card photo of Baba. I looked at it. God? No, I didn't think it was God - a sausage salesman, maybe... but I did love looking at that photo. Slowly a smile began to grow on my face, and it got bigger and bigger, and I couldn't get rid of it - I didn't even want to get rid of it. That night I went to sleep looking at Baba's picture with these words going over and over in my head: "Don't worry, be happy. I will help you." I felt perhaps that the Eastern idea of the teacher appearing when the student is ready might actually be true.

We spent a few days more in Munich talking about Baba and also about the Christian church. It was a momentous few days for me and I felt inwardly that I was getting food for the heart for the first time in years and years.

We parted company and over the next few weeks I traveled, and read the New Testament which I had decided to re-read after meeting Bruce. I finished reading it one day while traveling on a train to Venice. I was disappointed for I had, somewhere in my heart, hoped that THE ANSWER would pop out at me, but it hadn't. There was something missing and I found myself thinking, "If only I could talk to Bruce now, I'd really like to hear more about Meher Baba." Just then I looked up and found, to my utter bewilderment, that Bruce was standing just outside my compartment looking at me. A part of me couldn't believe it, but another part of me really wanted to believe it.

We spent the next week or so together talking about Baba. The first three days were spent in Venice with Bruce and his family. Then he and I went on to Portofino and San Frutoso, where Baba had been. By the time that was over, I felt as if I had been bathed in Baba's love and as if something really

great and important in my life had begun. It was also at this time that I began to see that my "coincidental" meetings with Bruce were not coincidences at all - that there are no coincidences, there is only Baba silently directing it all.

Bruce Felknor

TWO FRAMES, TWO PICTURES

In August 1980, some Baba lovers in Southern California, Christian, Paula and Greg, held a yard sale to dispose of some furniture and other things.

Greg decided to put some books out for sale, including an extra copy of *Three Incredible Weeks with Meher Baba*, in the hopes that someone might look at it and become interested in Baba.

All day Saturday the book sat untouched. Again, on Sunday no one looked at it. Finally, in the afternoon, Greg brought the book inside to copy some passages for a talk he was going to give.

While Greg was inside the house, two men came into the yard and began to browse. One man picked up a book of cartoons which had been given to Greg's wife as a present and which had an inscription inside ending with "Jai Baba." The man asked whether this referred to Satya Sai Baba. Paula replied, "No," and after some hesitation revealed that it referred to Meher Baba.

"Meher Baba!" the man exclaimed with obvious excitement. "You've met Him?" Paula asked. The man replied, "I've met Him... here," and gestured to his head. Then this man, who turned out to be a neighbor whom we had never met, told the following story.

Several years ago he had never seen nor heard of Meher Baba. One night he had a dream in which he was in a large

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tent. There was a huge crowd of people, all waiting to see a man who was seated on a chair which was elevated above the level of the crowd. This man had a "large nose and big moustache." In the dream it was understood that this man was a figure of great authority, but yet it was not known who he was.

The man in the chair beckoned and our neighbor went forward and stood before him. The man asked, "Are you willing to give up EVERYTHING?" Here our neighbor paused and said, "I had to think about this. 'Everything' doesn't just mean my house and my car and my possessions... it means EVERYTHING!" He paused (in the dream), then replied, "Yes." Immediately he began weeping with joy, and awoke still weeping. The dream had a profound impact on him and he could remember the Master's face clearly, yet he had no idea who it was.

Several months went by and he chanced to read a book which told about various gurus and masters who have followers in the West. He was amazed to see a picture of the Master of his dream - Meher Baba. Still, though, he knew nothing about Meher Baba and didn't even know where to get any information about Him. And now, finally, he was meeting people for the first time who had heard of Meher Baba.

Our neighbor asked if we could give him some small pictures of Baba. We invited him into the house and he was so obviously touched by Baba's photos that Greg felt moved to give him two very beautiful photos of Baba. At this the man exclaimed "This is fantastic! Just this morning I bought two beautiful gold frames at another yard sale. I took them home and placed them in my living room where I keep some cherished items. I thought to myself, 'This is where these frames belong - now I just need the pictures to go in them.' And these two pictures will fit perfectly!"

Davana Brown

THROUGH THE FLUTE HIS SILENCE CALLS

During my spiritual search, while visiting Aspen, Colorado one day, I happened to go to a fancy bookstore where I found some books that opened a door in my heart to Baba permanently. As this was not the sort of store to carry spiritual books, I was surprised at my discovery. Later I learned that a Baba lover lived in Aspen and I assumed that she must have been responsible for those books being there.

So, in August 1980, when I had the opportunity to return to Aspen for a conference related to my work, I decided at once to try to meet this woman.

Many times I tried to call her, both before I left my Denver home and during the conference as well, but I never got ahold of her. With only one day left in Aspen, I decided to try just one more time - and this time she answered the phone! Coincidentally, Aspen Baba lovers were gathering at her house for a Baba movie and dessert for the first time in about three months, and would I like to come?

Yes! No doubt about it! I got the directions and was lucky to be able to borrow a car. Ann lived in the woods on the other side of town, so off I went. I found the first turn, but wasn't so sure about the second... maybe if I backtrack... it sure is a beautiful night... lots of stars, clear mountain air... I must be getting close by now... what is that sound?... a flute?... playing the Australian *Arti*? Oh, I'm here!

So I jumped out of the car, ran over, embraced the young woman playing the flute and said, "Jai Baba! I'm so glad to find you!" She looked a bit puzzled and said, "But I was only playing because I'm lost! I'm from New York. Do you know where Ann's house is?"

Just then someone came out of the gate behind us, looked surprised to see both of us sitting there, and told us that this was the right house and took us in to meet the Aspen Baba lovers.

Peggy Clover

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"I REMEMBER - I REMEMBER"

My husband, Jeff, and I (Arlene) had heard of Baba from different people in 1975 before we met each other. I was very fascinated when I first heard about Him and purchased *God Speaks: The Theme of Creation and Its Purpose*, by Meher Baba.

In 1980 my husband and I started talking about Baba and contacted Kitty Davy at the Meher Center in Myrtle Beach to order some books. When the box of books came, *The Perfect Master*, a biography of Meher Baba, was at the top of the box face up. As soon as Jeff got the box opened for me, I saw Baba's picture on the cover and experienced His beautiful love. Remembering was so sweet, I cried and cried. After a while I could talk and said to Jeff, "I remember, I remember."

I called my twin sister Eileen and told her I had something to show her. She came over right away and when I handed her the book she too said, "I remember knowing Him." Now a flood of thoughts came pouring in. The memory of the summer of 1937: little seven year old twin sisters standing in their play house; the first visit from their beautiful play companion.

As Eileen recalls, "Our friend was sitting across the room in His white robe and sandals, looking radiant and happy. Our little hearts jumped with joy. And we said, "You will play with us now, you will play with us now." He nodded His head, smiled happily and put His arms out to welcome us. We ran to Him, to receive His warm embrace. It felt like we were melting into Him.

"Such wonderful visits we remember, like the time we put our mother's big hats on His head. And with each hat we put on, He would make a funny face.

"We remember how much He loved to look in our play purses and always seemed surprised at what He found. How we laughed together. Our most cherished remembrance was serving tea."

Reminiscing about the days we had tea with Baba is always

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special. Baba sitting and looking so sweetly with saucer and tea cup in His beautiful hands. A feeling of something very special seemed to come over us. As we lifted our cups to our lips, Baba's eyes seemed to water and shine with a glow that made our little hearts seem to know He was saying, "I love you, my little ones."

On one visit, Baba put His hands out, palms up and we knew to put our hands in His. He closed His hands over ours and held our hands in His as He drew us over to Himself. We stood looking into His beautiful face, for a long time it seemed, enjoying every minute.

He showed us a mischievous side of Himself. We would play a game of slipping our fingers into His. He would pretend He couldn't catch them. Then, just as we thought we were winning, He would close His fingers and catch us every time. How that made us laugh with excitement.

We played hide and seek with Baba. We would put scarves over our heads and He would pull them off, one by one. The expression of joy that would come over His face as He found us hiding under the last one - words cannot describe His beautiful face.

Eileen remembers with delight, "We enjoyed playing that we were actresses on stage. We asked our mother if she would help us fix up a stage setting. She drew a rope across our summer kitchen (that's a small room off the main kitchen). That is where Baba always appeared to us. She hung old drapes over the rope and we took many an extra curtain call there for our playmate, Baba.

"When we came into the summer kitchen one summer morning to play actresses, we saw Baba sitting on the stage. He looked very natural sitting there. As we performed our tap dance and singing and a little play, He would clap and clap. He made us feel so happy and uninhibited. He always made us feel we were pleasing Him. He never spoke but we never noticed or were affected by His silence. His love was so full and everything we did was so pleasing to Him that we only wanted to do more and more. We were never embarrassed

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even though we were very shy.

"There was one thing He would never let us do and that was touch His feet. He insisted on obedience but he was so loving with it. We never questioned Him, never thought of doing so.

"The last time he appeared to us, He was standing and He said, 'You have seen me for a little while and in a little while I will come again and you will know me. Now I must go and you will not remember these times.' Then his body split into two - two of Him, He went away very quickly into both of us at the same time. Right into us and from that moment until 43 years later, when my sister opened the box and saw Baba's picture on *The Perfect Master*, she hadn't remembered that He had appeared to us. Neither had I until my sister called me over to her house and I saw His picture and suddenly recalled that He had been with us so long ago. But in Baba's time, it was only a little while."

This is the end of our story, but a delightful beginning of our lives renewed in His love, the Love of the Eternal Perfect Master, Meher Baba.

Arlene and Eileen

SECOND HAPPIEST DAY

In May 1981, an elderly man, white-haired and wearing a turban in the style of North Indian Muslims, came to Meherabad to go to Meher Baba's Samadhi. He arrived with a group of younger men who were obviously local people. Upon arriving at the Hill, he immediately entered the Samadhi for Baba's *darshan*.

Not long after, loud sobbing could be heard from inside. The man remained inside weeping for a considerable time. No one disturbed him in the outpouring of his emotion. When he

came out, he told Nana Kher, one of the residents of Meherabad who has been staying there since 1969 looking after Baba's Samadhi, the following story.

He said, "Today is the second happiest day of my life!" Nana responded, "That is because you feel like you have met Him again." The man agreed and went on to relate how, as a young man, he lived with his family in Quetta (then the capital of Baluchistan and now in Pakistan). His father was a railway employee and held the post of Station Master, an important position usually reserved for the British.

In 1929 he was traveling in the north and happened to be waiting at a station to return to Quetta. While strolling on the platform he saw a person in the distance walking away from him. This person was slim, had long hair and appeared to be wearing a *sadra*. He was immediately attracted to this person although he had only seen him from the back. In fact, his attention became riveted on him. He noticed someone running to and from this mysterious person so he stopped him and asked, "Who is that person?" He was told, "He is a Master named Shri Meher Baba."

"Can I meet him?" he asked, feeling an imperative need to do so, although until that moment he had never had any interest whatsoever in Masters or in God.

"I'll ask His permission; you wait here," he was told. Soon came the good news that Baba had given His permission and he went forward to where Baba had seated Himself on a bench. Baba smiled at him and asked after his health, his destination, etc. - the usual sort of small talk Baba made with people, but which He was able to invest with His own divine love and concern.

At this point in retelling his story to Nana, the man again began weeping. "I cannot possibly describe what He looked like at that time. I was talking to Him, but all I could do was gaze at Him. His hair was open and flowing out. He had a serene look on His face, and a glow around Him - no, not a glow, there are no words for what He had around Him."

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After composing himself, the man continued his story. He said to Baba, "My parents live in Quetta, please give permission to my family to serve you lunch when the train reaches there. It would be a great blessing for us." Baba agreed and he ran to a station phone and called his father and told him he was bringing a "great man" for lunch and that his mother should prepare a special, delicious meal and bring it to the station in time for their arrival.

The train arrived and Baba allowed him to accompany them in their 3rd class compartment for the journey. He sat diagonally across from Baba while the *mandali* sat at a little distance, giving Baba as much room as possible. Midway through the journey he had a sudden and great desire to touch Baba's feet. A few moments later, Baba casually stretched in such a way as to place His feet on the bench just next to where he was seated. Realizing that Baba had done this in response to his unspoken wish, he gently rested both hands on Baba's feet, feeling immensely happy. At this Baba resumed His earlier position. All this happened in a most natural way.

When they arrived in Quetta, his mother and father were waiting with a large amount of *pulao*, a rice dish made with the finest spices and vegetables. Baba divided it in half, giving one part as *Prasad* to the Station Master who kept some and distributed the rest to *sadhus*, fakirs, and railway staff who happened to be on the platform, thereby sharing Baba's *prasad* with many.

The remaining portion of the *pulao* was eaten by Baba and His party. Afterwards, the family watched Baba's train depart.

From that day in 1929 until this, the man had neither heard of, nor had contact with, Baba again. He had happened to come to Ahmednagar on business and, having a free day, had asked his associates what places of interest Ahmednagar had to offer. When they told him that Meher Baba's Samadhi was nearby, he immediately said, "Quick, we must go there at once!" and they left for Meherabad then and there.

His "happiest day" had been in 1929 upon first meeting Baba. That impression remained vivid for 51 years until he

again had the opportunity of having His *darshan*, yielding his "second happiest day."

Bal Natu

"MAN PROPOSES..."

I came to Baba in 1971. While reading *The God-Man* I had the feeling that it was all true, but I insisted on seeking other experiences through drugs. Baba then brought out the proverbial two-by-four (or perhaps it was a cricket bat), and gave me a whack, just to get my attention. One evening I had an experience which made me know that Meher Baba is God. In fact, those words, "Meher Baba is God," spontaneously erupted from my mouth. My mind was short-circuited and I was hooked.

After ten years I began to think about coming to India, but my purpose was to set up a research project and define a thesis topic for my graduate degree. A pilgrimage to Meherabad was to be an extra benefit of doing work in India. At that time I needed to justify the extravagance of such a trip with a legitimately worldly reason.

My journey from Bombay to Ahmednagar was very simple, Baba was helping me all the way. Having had almost no contact with the Baba community in the USA, I had not made reservations and arrived at the Trust compound with no advance warning. However, all went smoothly and soon I was checking into the Pilgrim Center for a one week stay before continuing to the mountains and my work.

Of course, after a week I did not want to leave, but I made a reservation on the Jhelum Express to New Delhi and felt committed to pursuing my academic objectives. Reluctantly I boarded the train. In fact, I boarded it twice, for each time I

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got on, my ticket was checked and I was told I was in the wrong compartment. So I got down and headed for what I thought was the right car where once again I was sent to a different compartment. I was still in the process of shuffling back and forth between compartments when the train began to pull out with me on the platform. The frantic thought of jumping on the moving train passed through my mind, but all the doors were closed and it was moving too fast. Frustrated I turned away from the tracks and noticed a man at the station grinning at me. I had to smile too.

Instead of trying to get on the train again the next day, I decided to stay at Meherabad and suddenly I realized that this was why I had come to India in the first place. I heard a story once that Baba had told Adele Wolkin that "I am your thesis." So it turned out for me.

Ross Williams

HAPPY VALLEY AND THE HAPPIEST SUMMIT

On August 15, 1981 one of the factories at Ahmednagar held a company picnic to celebrate Independence Day. It was held at "Happy Valley," near Dongargan, about 15 miles from Ahmednagar. The families of the staff were to be taken to Happy Valley by chartered buses.

One of the staff, a mechanical engineer from Simla, a hill station in the Himalayas, spent too much time getting ready and by the time he and his family arrived, the buses had already left. They decided to take a rickshaw instead, as they knew Happy Valley was not too far away, although they didn't know exactly where it was.

But, as their Marathi (the local language) was not very good, when they told the rickshaw driver to take them to Dongargan, he misunderstood and thought they were saying Arangaon and took them to the Pilgrim Center, six miles in

the opposite direction.

On their arrival they thought, what a beautiful place this Happy Valley is! The children asked if they could have their picnic soon; just then the supervisor's wife realized that she had been there for Meher Baba's *darshan* some months before with her religious-minded mother. Though her husband did not know of Baba, the whole family went up the hill to have Meher Baba's *darshan* in the Samadhi before proceeding on their journey to Happy Valley.

They decided to return to the bus station in Ahmednagar and then take the bus to Happy Valley. They got on the correct bus and purchased tickets for Dongargan, from where they would walk to Happy Valley itself. As the bus stopped at Pimpalgaon lake, which at that time was full of water, and they saw a nice grove of trees nearby, they assumed they had arrived. Instead of asking whether this was Dongargan they simply asked if they could get down. The conductor said yes and very happily the whole family got down and began walking towards the trees. They found a fine old building surrounded by a beautiful garden and began looking for the spot their friends had chosen for the picnic.

As it turned out, they had walked to the old pumping station the British had built when Pimpalgaon lake was used as a reservoir. One of the workers there came over to them and mistaking them for lost Baba lovers showed them the way to Meherazad. Once again, language problems played their mischief. They were unable to explain where they really wanted to go, and unable to understand that he wasn't directing them to Happy Valley. So they walked the mile and a half and arrived at the verandah outside Mandali Hall in the midst of a number of pilgrims.

Seeing an Indian family, I walked up to them and said, "*Jai Baba.*" As there wasn't a like response, I simply said, "*Namaste*" (an Indian greeting) and asked them what had brought them to Meherazad.

After hearing their tale and noting the "coincidence" that brought them to both Meherabad and Meherazad in the

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same day, I told them of Baba and who He is. As an exceptional case, I took them to Baba's room, where they bowed down and again had Baba's *darshan*: It was then tea time, and I told them to sit and have Baba's *Prasad* of tea, which they happily did.

Afterwards, they returned to Ahrnednagar. Although they never did get to Happy Valley, they were truly fortunate to have arrived instead at the "Happiest Summit." They have not visited us again, but perhaps through such coincidences, Baba, using this humorous aspect of intimacy and dragging them to His feet through misadventure, is putting them on the "waiting list" of His next Advent!

Bal Natu

SOAP FOR MOHAMMAD

Jamie and I were planning to come to India for Amartithi in 1981. We got the idea to get a cake of soap from the Hotel Vendome, the place in Boston where Baba had stayed, and bring it to Mohammad the *mast* for his collection. (Mohammad, a God-intoxicated person residing at Meherabad, is well known for his predilection for collecting bars of soap. - Ed)

It turned out that, although the building still stands, part of it collapsed some years ago, necessitating extensive renovations and, in fact, it is no longer a hotel, but houses shops and offices and the rather posh Cafe Vendome. We thought there might be a drugstore there, or some shop that sold soap, but there wasn't. So I suggested that we go to the cafe and have something to drink while we explored the possibility of buying or otherwise acquiring a cake of soap from anywhere or anyone on the premises, but all our efforts were in vain.

At last it seemed that the only thing to do was steal some

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soap from the toilet. Jamie was really against that, but I thought that if it were to make one of Baba's favorite *masts* happy, Baba would probably not mind. So we went. We ordered drinks, I went to the toilet - and there was *liquid* soap there!

Finally we bought some soap, took it to the Vendome, walked around the lobby with it and repeated Baba's name. When we came to India, we gave it to Mohammad - who was not at all impressed.

But, on my return to the States, at a recent visit to my parents' home, I began to clear out a chest that was mine from the time I was about seven years old. It was full of broken toys and odd junk I had collected - and in that chest I found a bar of soap, in its original wrapper, from the Hotel Vendome! It had certainly been there for at least fifteen years, perhaps longer.

During our next visit to India in 1982, with great expectation we offered this "special" bar of soap to Mohammad. Although he is well known for hoarding innumerable bars of soap, all carefully wrapped, to our great surprise he handed it back to us with a smile. The significance of this is known only to Baba, but at any rate, I hope He got a good laugh at us circumambulating the lobby of the Cafe Vendome with a bar of Ivory Soap! Incredible is Baba's sense of humor!

Peggy Newell

A PERMANENT MARK

Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to get a tattoo, and from the time I came to Meher Baba, I have wanted it to be of His face. Several years ago, having decided that it would not be offensive if executed properly, I set out to look for the best tattoo artist I could find. After much research I found that the man considered best in the field lived in my home town. I made an appointment and, after many hours and several test drawings, we arrived at a drawing that pleased us both. This was in May 1982. I was very concerned that the tattoo might not look like Baba at all, but after the artist understood the nature of my relationship to Him, he made every effort to see that the image produced was really in His image.

Finally the day of no return came - after all the tattoo would be with me, good or bad, for the rest of my life - so, filled with trepidation, I walked into the shop. All the people there quit what they were doing to come and see the fellow trace the trial drawing on my chest (over the heart, of course). There was much discussion among the bikers, sailor types and employees about Baba and the funny guy in the chair who had come to put His face on his chest. So I launched into a long discourse about what a Master is and the return of the Avatar into our midst. Some found it very strange, but others found the idea intriguing and were very supportive. Nevertheless, I was still quite nervous about the results.

The needle was prepared and as the tattooist approached me, I was praying fervently that this was not a big mistake, that He would be pleased. Suddenly I became aware of the background music, and as I felt the needle inscribe the first line, I heard the radio play "Welcome to My World" (a song Baba enjoyed and made His by pantomiming the words as the song was played). I began to weep, and the tattoo artist asked me if it were really that painful. I assured him that it was not.

He took three times the usual time allotted for a tattoo of

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that size, to be sure it was just right, and after he finished he told *me* to take a look in the mirror. As I looked at Baba's beautiful image etched indelibly over my heart, once again "Welcome to My World" began to play, assuring me that the Divine Beloved was not unhappy with the results.

I was told that since a tattoo is like a wound (to insert the dye one must open up the skin), I should expect the tattoo to scab over, remaining covered by that scab from one to two weeks.

I left the bandage on, as instructed, for the first two days, but when I removed it, I found that Baba's face was perfectly healed, though all around the image (where the tape had been) my skin was covered with scabs. When I returned to the shop a few days later for a check-up, all were quite amazed by this fact except one of the assistants who had listened very carefully when I had spoken about Baba. She said, "Of course there is no scab. Baba wouldn't want His face covered with scabs, so He moved them to where the tape was."

Another fellow, who had not been there that day, exclaimed over the beauty of the tattoo and said, "I hope this 'Baba fellow' appreciates all the effort you have gone to have his face put on your chest; gee, you must love him a lot!" Then the tattoo artist said, "I know he appreciated that tattoo; I felt him here with me the whole time I was doing it. He made me do a good job. Say, I bet that's why you cried when I started it, wasn't it? Because he cares so much? " I said that it was.

John Mijac

BABA'S INCREDIBLE CARE

On January 31st, 1983, during the fourteenth observance of Amartithi (the day the Constant Companion, Meher Baba, put aside His body to live more intensely in the hearts of His lovers) I was sitting at my customary place in a row of chairs under a tree near the Samadhi and facing it. At about eleven o'clock in the morning, I was joined by three older Baba lovers from Pooa. They had all had strokes previously and this made it difficult for them to get around so they purposely chose a spot where they could sit in front of the Samadhi and concentrate completely on their Beloved. As we were sitting there, I noticed a Westerner (whom I knew to be a medical person) motioning me that one of the three, a woman in her 50's, was having some trouble. I turned and saw that she was reeling and then she fainted.

Before I could do anything, a woman who was sitting nearby stepped forward with smelling salts. Then another woman came up with a powder, which is used in India to prevent unconscious people from clenching their mouths shut, and rubbed it on her teeth. How these people happened to be nearby at just that moment with such odd items - smelling salts and the powder - remains for me one of those little "miracles" of Baba's incredible care for His lovers.

As the woman regained consciousness, she said only two words, "*Maza prasad?*" ("Where's my *prasad?*") She had been sitting with her eyes closed, her precious Amartithi *prasad* safely nestled in her hands, and when she swooned, the *prasad* had fallen to the ground. But, despite all the confusion around her, the *prasad* had not been trampled underfoot and someone immediately reached down and put the *prasad* back in her hands, at which point she closed her eyes, contented.

Just then I noticed a Baba lover standing nearby who looked like a wrestler. I asked him if he could carry the woman to the medical tent which had been set up for just such emergencies. He agreed but before he could, two other people

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on their own came forward to help (the Westerner who had first noticed the woman, and an Easterner) and together the three of them easily lifted the woman's chair and carried her to the tent. After a while she felt well enough to walk down the hill and she left for Poona that evening as planned.

From the moment the woman fainted, the way Baba managed to have everything she could need at her side immediately, makes me feel that while we were attending to her outwardly, all the while Baba was with her and she was under His care.

Marveling at Baba's timely help, I continued to sit in my chair facing the Samadhi. I was watching the faces of the Baba-lovers lit with His love and their joy at being at the Beloved's abode on that special day. Nearby, on the Sabha Mandap - a big, open rectangular platform - the Master of Ceremonies was introducing the performers as they came forward to sing or dance for their Beloved.

There was still some time before the beginning of the fifteen minutes' silence. A small group of Baba people were on duty inside the Tomb. They helped pilgrims offer flowers and while giving each *prasad*, politely requested them not to linger in the sanctuary. Before noon they swept the Samadhi clean of all stray petals, dried leaves and pieces of string which had been wrapped around the offerings.

One of these helpers came out, holding a woman's purse. He came straight to me and gave me the purse. He hurriedly asked me to see to it, and before I could ask him anything, he returned to his work.

It was a lovely, costly purse and someone must have put it in the corner before paying respects to Baba. However, it seems that a loving response from the Avatar made the person forget about her worldly "treasures." I opened the purse, hoping that I might get a clue from the contents - papers, letters, etc. - as to whom it belonged. Instead I found some currency notes worth Rs 300/- and some other small items, including a bunch of hair pins. From this I guessed that the purse belonged to an Indian woman.

I quickly wrote a note to be sent with the purse to the M.C.

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I asked him to inform the audience that a purse had been found and the owner should come collect it. But as I was folding the note, I thought that it was inappropriate to make such an announcement in the midst of Baba songs and devotional music. So I tore it up and wrote another note, saying that if anyone approached him to announce that a purse had been lost, he should let the person know it had been found and would be delivered after the Arti, at the end of the noon program.

Just then I saw Najoo Kotwal, and I felt she was the right person to entrust with the task of finding the purse's owner and delivering it to her. I called Najoo and requested her to do me this favour. I opened the purse and showed her the currency notes, joking that she should not pinch any money from it.

Just as I was about to hand the purse to her, I saw a well dressed young woman coming towards me. She said politely, "That's my purse!" I felt a bit amazed and on the spur of the moment said, "Does it contain hair pins?" With a soft smile on her face she said, "Yes." The way she said it convinced me that I needed no more evidence, and I handed the small bag to her. She did not look inside to check the amount, but instead turned to Beloved Baba in the Samadhi, bowed down to Him in gratitude, and left to attend the programs. What perfect timing!

Many such incidents happen during Amartithi days, revealing Avatar Meher Baba's omniscience and omnipresence. The Eternal Beloved not only fills the hearts of His lovers with His sweet love, but when they are overpowered with it, He also takes care of their bodies and their belongings too.

Bal Natu

INNER RELATIONSHIP WITH BABA

Under Meher Baba's directions our family moved down to Myrtle Beach to look after the Meher Center on the Lakes and Elizabeth's house in town while Elizabeth and Norina were in India. We were there for one year, from Sept 12, 1948 to Sept. 12, 1949.

During our stay in Myrtle Beach, I was very busy with many activities at the Center, but nearly every day I would find time to go to the beautiful location where Baba's house was to be built and spend a few moments looking out over the lake and toward the ocean beyond, trying to tune in to Beloved Baba in far off India.

During those precious moments I felt a special rapport with Baba. It seemed as though He was aware of my reaching out to Him, from the heart, and was lovingly responding with His presence. Sometimes, when thinking about those moments with Baba, I would wonder if it was really as it seemed to be, or if it was just my imagination.

About a year and a half later, in 1952, when Baba was at the Center, He gave me the answer. One day He had our family get into the station wagon with Him, near the kitchen, and He then directed Adi to drive us up along the lake to His house. As we got out of the station wagon, Baba pointed to the view and we said, "Yes, Baba, it's a beautiful view."

Then He quickly walked over to the steps at the porch entrance to the house and walked up the steps, turning around as He reached the little platform at the top. He snapped His fingers to catch my attention and as I looked at Him, He raised His right arm, bending it at the elbow, with His index finger extended. Then, as He slowly lowered His arm, He looked at me with an expression which seemed to ask, "Do you get it?" I caught His thought immediately and exclaimed, "Why Baba you are reminding me of how I used to come here and think of you!" He nodded

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affirmatively and motioning us to follow Him, led us into His house.

Thus Baba confirmed that our inner relationship with Him is a valid one and not just our imagination.

Darwin Shaw

GLOSSARY

arti: A traditional Hindu way of worshipping by waving a lighted lamp or joss sticks in a circle in front of the idol, picture or person being worshipped. In the case of Meher Baba, His lovers do not necessarily do this when the *arti* (song of praise and dedication) is recited or sung.

Amartithi: Lit., eternal date. A commemoration of the day January 31, 1969 - when Avatar Meher Baba, the Eternal Beloved, put aside His physical body. On this day each year, Baba's lovers from all over the world gather at Meherabad where His body is interred.

avatar, an: An incarnation manifesting a specific divine quality. *Avatar*, the: The Incarnation of God, the Infinite in human form. The God-Man, Messiah, Christ, *Rasool*, *Saheb-e-Zaman*.

darshan: Formal audience. The appearance of the Master to receive homage and to bestow His blessings. Taking darshan is an act of lovingly offering respect to the Master, or to His picture or shrine.

dhuni: A fire, often fueled with chips of sandalwood and *ghee* - clarified butter - which symbolizes a divine purifying fire. Some saints and Perfect Masters have kept a *dhuni* fire nearby.

mandali; Derived from a sanskrit word *mandala* meaning a circle. Hence mandali are the close and intimate disciples around a Perfect Master or the *Avatar*.

Prasad: Lit. anything that is first offered to God or the Master and then distributed in His name. A gracious gift, usually edible, given by the Master as an expression of His love.

sadhu: A pilgrim, seeker or wanderer; a rare one is an "advanced soul."

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samadhi; As a state: trance induced by meditation, absorption in the object of meditation.

Samadhi: As a place: a Tomb shrine of a saintly person, saint, Perfect Master or the *Avatar*.

sanskaras: Mental impressions which exist as memories from past lives, or the present life, and which determine one's desires and actions.

AVATAR MEHER BABA

A Short Biographical Sketch

Merwan Sheriar Irani was born of Zoroastrian parents on February 25, 1894 in Poona, India. One day in 1913, while on his way to college, Merwan was beckoned by a very old woman sitting under a neem tree. This was Hazrat Babajan, one of the five Perfect Masters of that time. After this first meeting, Merwan used to sit with her regularly and some time in 1914 she blessed him with the experience of the infinite bliss of God-realization. Another Perfect Master, Upasani Maharaj, in 1921 unveiled to Merwan His role and status as the *Avatar* of the Age.

Merwan, now endearingly called Meher Baba by His followers, began a life of intense activity. As part of His *Avataric* work, He began observing silence on July 10, 1925. In spite of this, He continued to serve the needs of humanity on a material as well as a spiritual level.

Meher Baba established schools, hospitals and personally cared for lepers, the mad, and the *masts* (those whose minds have become overpowered by the love of God). He traveled extensively throughout India and Pakistan, made thirteen visits to the West, and gave His personal touch to the hundreds of thousands who flocked to Him during public *darshan* programs.

Meher Baba's silence was still unbroken (except in the hearts of those responsive to His inner call) when He laid aside His physical body at Meherazad on January 31, 1969. Yet His silent awakening of hearts to God's love continues to this day.

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Although Meher Baba observed silence, through the medium of an alphabet board (which He discarded in 1954) and through gestures, He dictated several books and many messages concerning each one's journey to God, God's Advent as man,

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and His eternal relationship with humanity. Some excerpts are given below:

Through endless time God's greatest gift is continuously given in silence. But when mankind becomes deaf to the thunder of His silence, God incarnates as man. The Unlimited assumes the Limited, to shake... humanity to a consciousness of its true destiny and to give a spiritual push to the world by His physical presence on earth.

I am never silent. The voice that is heard deep within the soul is my voice... the voice of inspiration, of guidance. Through those who are receptive to this voice, I speak.

When the Word of my Love breaks out of its Silence and speaks in your hearts, telling you who I really am, you will know that that is the Real Word you have always been longing to hear.

All religions are great, but God is greater. I belong to no religion. My religion is Love. Every heart is my temple.

I am never born, I never die... Although I am present everywhere eternally in my formless Infinite State, from time to time, I take form, and this taking of the form and leaving of it is termed my physical birth and death.

When I drop my body, I will remain in all who love me. I can never die.

I am the Ancient One, the one residing in every heart. I am the Ocean of Love. Love me.

Make me your constant Companion.

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For a complete list of books by or about Meher Baba write: Meher Naaar Books, King's Rd., Ahmednagar, M.S. India 414001 or Sheriar Press, 1414 Madison Street, North Myrtle Beach, S.C. 29582, U.S.A.

I am the Ancient One.
I am in you, I am with you .
Remember me and I will help you.

I want you to make me
your Constant Companion.
Think of me more than you
think of your own self.
The more you think of me,
the more you will realize
my love for you.
Your duty is to keep me
constantly with you throughout
your thoughts, speech and actions.
My blessings to you all.

~ Meher Baba ~

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 21, para 1, line 6, motorcyle changed to motorcycle

Page 42, para 4, line 3, come changed to came

Page 46, para 2, line 3, "to how" changed to "how to"

Page 82, para 4, line 6, "and and" changed to "and"

Page 91, para 6, line 1, offer changed to often

Page 92, para 3, line 1, impression changed to impressions