

SHOWERS OF GRACE

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SHOWERS OF GRACE

Compiled by Bal Natu

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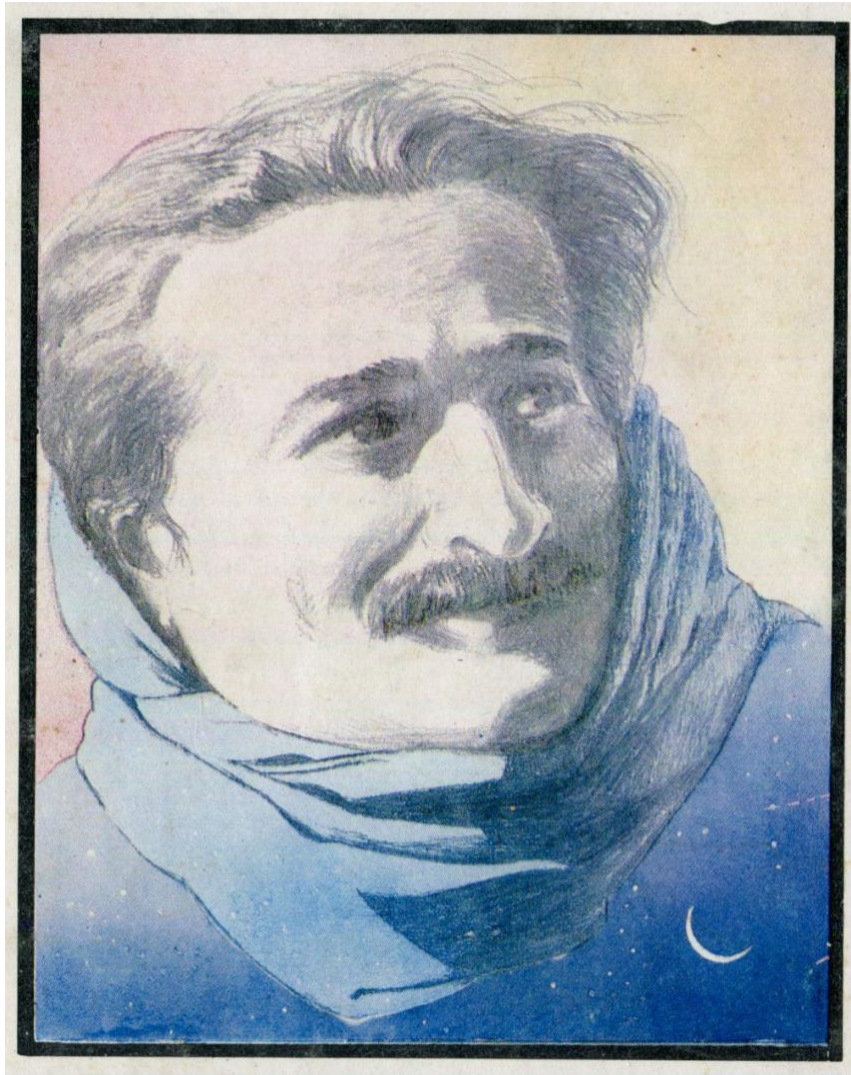
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Showers of Grace



AVATAR MEHER BABA

Compiled by Bal Natu

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BAL NATU

MEHER NAZAR BOOKS
Ahmednagar

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Our Constant Companion
(Avatar Meher Baba)

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 have willingly shared incidents of Beloved Baba's omnipresence and love in their lives with the readers through *Showers Of Grace*. I am also indebted to my close friends, including the publisher, Meher Nazar Books, Ahmednagar, whose loving cooperation has made it possible to sell this book at cost.

A special note of thanks to Steve and Daphne Klein whose help from beginning to end in typing, editing and every other work connected with this book, has, in a very real sense, made its publication possible. I am very happy that Diana Le Page graciously allowed me to reproduce her beautiful painting of Beloved Baba for the front cover. And, of course, my wholehearted appreciation for all the help of the *mandali* at Meherazad which has sustained me in my efforts.

But most of all, I am deeply grateful to Beloved Baba whose loving help was apparent at every stage of this compilation - an attempt to share His love, in His love, with His lovers. Beloved Baba be praised!

Meherazad
September 7, 1984

Bal Natu

PREFACE

With a sparkle in His eyes, Meher Baba once remarked, "The humour of the divine love-game is that the One who is sought is Himself the seeker." But, if that is the humor, the glory of the game is in the way the One who is sought gives hints to those who are seeking. As they start to lose interest in this divine love-game, when they are just about to turn away and abandon their search, He calls out through simple or profound occurrences in their lives, "Here I am! Come and get me!"

Meher Baba, as the Avatar, descends to the level of each individual and has a unique relationship with every one. To seekers, He is the Goal; to some He is the Divine Mother; to some the Father; while to others He is the Friend, the Companion; and to His lovers, He is the Eternal Beloved. But invariably, He uses the language of the individual's heart to call each one to Him.

Thus, He appears in dreams to those who are responsive to them. To those enchanted by the beauty of nature, He fills that beauty with His presence, while to some He reveals Himself in perfect coincidences - that incredible weaving together of the warps and woofs of their lives into a pattern which is unmistakably His. And to a few He even appears in divine visions.

This book, a miscellaneous collection of Meher-stories, recounts some of the ways in which the One who is being sought, lovingly, sometimes even mischievously, summons those seeking Him. Each story is different and yet all are fundamentally the same. They are all different because we are all different, yet they are all the same because Meher Baba is always the same - eternal perfection.

Because it is He who is beckoning to us, because it is He who is guiding our search, because it is He who is awakening Himself in our hearts - these hints He gives carry with them the perfume, the very presence, of the One who is hiding.

As the One who is eternally sought, Avatar Meher Baba

has assured all, "Don't lose heart for I am in your heart. Call on Me and I will help you." Those who accept this invitation soon find themselves drenched in His "showers of grace."

Bal Natu

Meherazad
25th August 1984

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HE IS ZOROASTER TOO!

I came from an orthodox and devout Zoroastrian family and consequently was devoted only to Lord Zoroaster. When, in 1941, I joined a community kitchen in Bombay run by the Dadar Welfare Centre, I found that all the supervisors were Baba lovers. They had His photo on a table and used to talk about Him. Someone told me, "He is God in human form," but I couldn't believe it - this seemed like blasphemy to me. Looking at His photo I did not feel anything in my heart and thought, "He can't be Zoroaster," and so did not think much about Him.

Some time in the following year, Baba called His lovers from Bombay for a one-day *darshan* program. One of the supervisors, I think it was Dina Talati, persuaded me to go with them. I replied, "I may come, but don't ask me to bow down to Baba."

My father had impressed upon me that all *sadhus* and gurus of the day were charlatans, using the same trick. When someone goes to see them, they send one of their followers to politely talk to the person. The information obtained is then secretly passed on to the guru who uses it to appear omniscient when he receives the visitor. And the next thing you know the visitor is being swindled.

So, while in the train coming to Ahmednagar, I started mentally preparing a list of questions to test Baba's authority. When we arrived, one of Baba's *mandali* met us. Seeing me he asked politely who I was and why I had come. Remembering my father's warning, I blurted out rudely, "That's none of your business and I'm not going to tell you anything." Poor fellow, he left immediately, thinking perhaps I was crazy.

At Meherabad, Dr. Aloo led me into a cabin and said, "Baba, this is Mehroo Billimoria from Bombay," and then left. Baba was standing before me in His white *sadra*, with His board in His hands and Adi K. Irani was by His side.

I can never, never describe what I saw; I saw God in human form. In a split second I was convinced beyond doubt that

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Meher Baba is Zoroaster. He lovingly embraced me and my heart melted the way butter melts near the fire. I started crying, hiding my face in my hands.

Baba made me sit on a stool and let me cry for a while. Then, taking out a rose petal from His garland He put it in my mouth. At the same time He, the Beloved, put His right hand on my head and spelt out on His board, "I know what you are thinking."

This made me cry even more, knowing that He knew all about me, but Baba added, "Don't cry. Remember me and I will always help you."

My interview ended then, although my crying didn't end until I returned to Bombay. But Baba has kept His promise to Me - He has never let me down. I have had to experience many trials, but whenever I remembered Baba, He has always been at my side, giving me the strength to bear whatever crisis I have had to pass through. Jai Baba!

Mehroo Billimoria

A BOUQUET AT BABA'S FEET

In Srinagar, the capital city of Kashmir, known as "heaven on earth," I first heard of Meher Baba in 1943 from my uncle. I was instantly prejudiced against Him as I was told that He had written articles in English on spirituality and I jumped to the conclusion that He was in the pay of the British - trying to distract the masses from the "Quit India" movement which Gandhi had launched in August 1942. A few days later I saw Meher Baba's picture and He looked so healthy, so unascetic, that it only convinced me that He must have been eating and drinking a lot and that my suspicions had been right.

Until India won her independence from the British on

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August 15, 1947, many people regarded seeking spiritual salvation, or following a guru or saint, as a selfish, even antinational pursuit. They felt that as long as the honor of the motherland, India, was at stake, the foremost duty of each was to work to make her free; that was also my feeling.

But two months later I had an extraordinary dream. In the dream I saw a huge gathering. On enquiring, I was told that Meher Baba was coming at noon. By my watch it was a quarter to twelve. I was not prepared to waste fifteen minutes hanging around just to meet a fraud. I was about to leave when the thought struck me that I should stay and cross-examine Meher Baba - stump Him with direct questions. He would not know how to answer them, He would fumble and thus He would be exposed to the crowd as an imposter. So I waited.

But Meher Baba did not come at noon. He did not even come by 12:15. I waited a few more minutes and then began telling people in the crowd that Meher Baba was a cheat, a charlatan. Apart from His spiritual claims, He couldn't even pretend to be a gentleman, or otherwise He would not have kept us all waiting.

A little later, however, the crowd began to break into two to make way for Meher Baba. I had no intention of going to see Him but He came to me. Even so, I was not ready to bow to Him but, when He was about six feet away from me, some unknown power laid me flat on the ground. I never tried to bend - I never did bend, I just suddenly found myself prostrated full length on the ground, with my head on Baba's feet. And instantly I realized that I had reached the Source of bliss.

After this dream I became restless. When I woke, it was 4:00 a.m. but I rushed to my uncle's house, and asked him to tell me everything he knew about Baba. However, he didn't know any more than he had already told me. But he did take me to see Dr. Daulat Singh. Daulat Singh had only met Baba for one minute in Dehra Dun, but that was time enough for him to have surrendered completely to Beloved Baba. Yet his surrender to, and acceptance of, Baba was so complete

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that he had never felt it necessary to learn anything more about Baba. To him Baba was God and that was enough. But, on my entreaties, he at last told me his personal experience of meeting Baba and this only made me more anxious to see Baba for myself.

I wrote to Baba that I wanted to go to Ahmednagar to have His *darshan*. I received a reply that when the time was right, I would have Baba's *darshan* but He forbade me to go to Him until then.

A year later, in 1944, one night, Beloved Baba came incognito to Srinagar and went to stay at the Majestic Hotel. Although I had not known ahead of time of Baba's visit, through a series of coincidences a friend and I not only heard of it, but the very next day we even came to the Majestic Hotel in search of Him.

No one in the hotel had heard of Meher Baba. He was not registered in that name, nor did any of the bearers in the hotel know Him. One of them, a twelve year old boy, had just told me that there was no Meher Baba staying in the hotel. On the spur of the moment, I asked the boy if he had ever watched the sun rise (the sunrise in the mountains is very beautiful). Then I asked him if there was a man in the hotel with a mustache and long hair who resembled the rising sun. Instantly the boy said, "Yes. There is a deaf and dumb *Maharajah* staying on the top floor."

I decided to ask the main office who was staying on the top floor. As we were walking to the office, we happened to look up and just at that moment, only for a second, Beloved Baba peeped out of the upstairs window. What a luminous face!

Without further ado, we began climbing the stairs to Baba's floor. Before we reached there, however, we were stopped by a man in his seventies who was nonetheless very strong. This was Masaji, Pendu's father, although we did not know it at the time. He demanded to know whom we wanted to see. I said, "Meher Baba." He replied that there was no Meher Baba there, that he had booked the entire floor himself so we should leave.

When we insisted that we knew Baba was there because we had seen Him, he said we had merely seen his cook who resembled Baba. So I said, "Can you call your cook, we would like to see him." At this, Masaji abruptly changed the subject and informed us that he had five ailing ladies in his party and they were on the verge of death! Any disturbance, even if we whispered, might finish them off, as they were all in very, very serious condition - suffering from cancer, tuberculosis and so on.

Of course, we didn't believe what he was saying but, finally, unwilling to argue with us any further, he simply grabbed us and escorted us back down the stairs. The noise of our discussion, however, had reached Baba and, as we arrived at the bottom stair, a message came from Baba that we could have His *darshan* for one minute, provided we did not disclose His identity to anyone and that we did not bow to Him or touch His feet.

. We were delighted and eagerly reascended the stairs and stood at attention on the small balcony. Baba came with His alphabet board in hand. He touched His forehead, and the interpreter said, "Baba says you are very fortunate. I arrived here yesterday, in the night, and you are here today!" Baba went on to assure us that not only we, but our friends and relatives would also be able to have His *darshan* before He left Kashmir, but that would not be for some time.

I returned home but, after seeing Baba, I was in such a state of mind that I did not feel like eating anything the rest of that day or night. The next day I left home early in the morning and walked to the Majestic Hotel in the hopes that I might be able to catch a glimpse of Baba if He went out for a walk.

Halfway there, I felt sorry that I did not have any flowers with me. Just then I saw a man with a big bouquet of flowers, elegant enough for a Viceroy's table! I knew such a bouquet could not be had even for a very high price but on my asking for it, the man readily handed it to me. I was astonished and I gave him some paltry sum which he accepted without a murmur and then, still without saying a word, he went away. In

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His own miraculous way, Baba had provided me with what I had wished for.

But now my problem was that I knew I should not go to the hotel itself. I consoled myself by thinking that I wouldn't go see Baba Himself, I would simply hand the flowers over to one of Baba's disciples or a bearer and they could pass them on to Him.

I took courage, and the bouquet of roses too, in both hands, entered the hotel and looked about for a disciple or bearer. But no one was in sight. I climbed the stairs and what a surprise there was - Beloved Baba standing alone as if He were waiting to receive the flowers! He silently gestured that I simply place the flowers at His feet. I did so and then retreated with a mixed feeling of guilt and bliss. Baba was smiling and His face was even more radiant than the sun rising over the Himalayas!

T.N. Dhar

A SECRET GIFT BLENDED WITH HUMOR

In mid July, 1948 I learned that on the 23rd of that month, Meher Baba was going to have a small *darshan* program at Meherabad for some of His devotees from Solapur. At that time I was living in Kurduwadi, Solapur district, working as a teacher. I wrote to Adi K. Irani asking if I could avail myself of this glorious opportunity to be in Baba's divine physical presence, and Adi wrote back that I could, but that I should inform Shri Jaju, who was the head of the Solapur group, of my visit.

I immediately mailed a letter to Jaju, informing him of my intention to join the group at Kurduwadi when their train stopped there and, the same day, I put in my application for a

day's leave from school. The headmaster, however, did not sanction my leave because the educational authorities were expected to visit the school soon for the yearly inspection. This refusal made me feel dejected and I prayed, "Baba, please help me. Do not deprive me of this chance of seeing you." I also approached my headmaster each day for the next two days asking him to reconsider my request, but he remained adamant in his decision.

So, on the night of July 22, I was in an unhappy mood when I reached the railway station to greet the Solapur group and to tell them that I would not be able to accompany them after all. The train pulled in around midnight, and with low spirits, I bid my friends welcome and farewell. They sympathized with my ill luck in missing this rare opportunity to have Baba's *darshan*, and I asked one of them to convey in silence my salutations to Beloved Baba.

When the train was about to leave, an elderly member of the group asked me, "Aren't you coming with us?" I said, "No." He asked why and I explained that my headmaster had not sanctioned my leave. With a surprised look he remarked, "Has the 'Head Master' any right to deprive you of the *darshan* of a Perfect Master?" He continued, "What's important, a day's work at school or seeing the Perfect Master?" And then, spontaneously, he ordered, "Get in the train, our Beloved Master will see to your 'Head Master!'"

Just then the train whistled and impulsively I jumped into the compartment. As the train was pulling out of the station I happened to see my next door neighbor, a railway employee on night duty. I shouted at him to tell my dear brother that I was going to Ahmednagar and not to worry about me. Having given this message, I felt greatly relieved. Although I had no ticket, no money, nor any extra clothes, I was not worried. Beloved Baba had become my refuge.

Early the next morning, from one of the stations, I cabled my headmaster that I would not be coming to school that day. And a few hours later, the train stopped in front of the Meherabad ashram even though there was no station nor

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even a manned level crossing there. With cheers of "Meher Baba Ki Jai," we alighted and some Baba people came out to meet us and asked us to wash our hands and faces and be ready in the hall by 9 a.m.

Baba had already arrived from Meherazad and was at Upper Meherabad. Exactly on time, He entered the hall and all silently took their seats facing their Beloved Master. Baba looked very gentle and radiantly graceful. His eyes sparkled with a heavenly light which was piercing, but soothing also. His presence vibrated His love which warmed the hearts of His devotees. When all had settled down, Baba allowed the visitors from Poona and Solapur to pay their individual respects to Him.

Some had brought beautiful garlands for Baba and others nicely wrapped boxes of sweets. Whatever was given to Him, Baba accepted with great love. I had nothing tangible to give, so, without going closer to His seat, I stood up and folded my hands to Baba and lowered my head. Just at that time, Baba turned His head to someone and remained busy conversing with him. For a moment I felt hurt at being so ignored, but quickly resigned myself to His will.

After these personal meetings and greetings, all started singing the divine names of God: "Hari, Paramatma, Allah, Ahuramazda, God, Yezdan, Hu." In the '20s Baba had told His close ones to repeat these names for a certain length of time every day. The chanting seemed to heighten the heartwarming atmosphere and some could not restrain the tears streaming down their cheeks.

After a while, Baba permitted Jaju of Solapur to give a brief talk. Jaju expressed his gratitude to Baba for His compassion in granting this *darshan*. His eyes periodically flashed with his love for Baba and there was jubilation in his voice. As this was only an hour's *darshan*, at about 10 a.m. Baba got up from His seat, blessed all with a smile, and left for Ahmednagar.

We had our lunch and then left for the Ahmednagar Railway Station to catch the afternoon train. I was back at Kurdu-

wadi that night and the next day, as usual, went to school. I felt duty bound to see the headmaster first and explain my absence. As he had specifically denied me leave on three separate occasions, I assumed that he would be quite angry with me. But I gathered my courage and entered his office.

He was busy reading some official letters and, to my surprise, before I could open my mouth, he said, "I received your telegram yesterday. In spite of my explicit refusal, you took leave." After a brief pause, he opened his snuff box, inhaled a pinch and continued, "But now, as I look back, I think you must have had a really strong reason to leave because otherwise you would not have gone."

I could not believe my ears. My spirits rose even higher when he concluded, "So, I have sanctioned your leave officially. Now, go and attend to your work."

The headmaster did not know anything about Meher Baba, nor was he in the least interested in saints or masters. Yet even when I again took leave to be with Baba later that year, he never asked me why I wanted to go to Ahmednagar.

At Meherabad, Baba had not outwardly acknowledged me. But now, as I came out of the headmaster's room, I felt that his willing condonation of my unsanctioned leave was Baba's secret gift to me in response to my loving salutations to Him. Over the years I have noticed that Baba seems to delight in humorously using those who do not know Him as channels for His grace to flow to those who try to love Him.

Bal Natu

COMPASSION THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING

I first came into close contact of Meher Baba in 1954. Baba was then staying at Satara and I was allowed to see Him many times. Baba, for some reason, decided to teach me how to recite a prayer from the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian scripture. Being perfection Himself, Baba was not content with my merely memorizing the words, but had the *mandali* correct my pronunciation whenever I made a mistake. The whole process took a long time, but finally I was able to say the prayer from beginning to end to Baba's satisfaction.

In August 1955, Baba held a one day *darshan* program at Ashiana (Nariman and Arnavaz's flat) in Bombay. He told me that I should come to this program and recite the prayer as many Parsi families from Navsari, and elsewhere, were going to be present. Baba also told me that if I came, He would give me a ride back to Satara in His car.

I would have gone to the program anyway, merely because Baba asked me to, but naturally the prospect of a long car ride with Baba was very appealing. However, at the time I was very short of money, so even traveling to Bombay presented difficulties. But Baba, in a very casual way, arranged for me to do some typing work for Ramjoo and I was paid twenty-five rupees which enabled me to take the train to Bombay to attend the *darshan* program.

In Ashiana, Baba was pleased with my recitation and I was rewarded with an embrace and a kiss! How can I describe my happiness at this. And then, Baba dropped a bombshell on me! He told me that although He had planned to take me to Satara in His car, He now had to give an additional person a ride to Poona so there wouldn't be room for me. Baba also added that I should travel from Bombay to Poona with Aloba by train and we should meet Him at the station there and then He would take us the rest of the way in His car.

I was terribly disappointed but there was nothing I could do but obey, so the next morning Aloba and I, with the usual difficulty of passengers traveling third class in India without

reservations, managed to scramble onto a train which was scheduled to arrive in Poona at 11 am.

As the train chugged along I was feeling depressed that I missed the chance to travel with Baba and I found myself thinking, "Baba is God. I know He is God, *but* why did He change His plan? If Baba is really God this train should stop immediately." My accepting Baba as God, and then challenging Him to prove it in the same breath was utter foolishness but that's the way my mind worked.

Almost as soon as I issued this mental challenge, the train stopped unexpectedly, miles from any station. It turned out that the electrical connection on top of the engine car had broken and the train was therefore without power. We had to wait for hours before a relief train came to take us.

All I could think about was the fact that we were supposed to meet Baba at 11. Meanwhile, Baba was anxious about our non-appearance. He kept asking the *mandali* what had happened to the train, and repeatedly sent Eruch to inquire from the station master when it would be arriving. Baba did not like reaching Satara after dark. So, after waiting for about five hours for us, at around 4 p.m. Baba left in the car for Satara. Tired and hungry, we arrived in Poona around six, to discover that we had missed our ride and only just managed to squeeze onto the last bus leaving for Satara that day. We arrived around 10 and Aloba went to the men *mandali*'s quarters at Rosewood while I returned to my own home and went to bed, exhausted and upset.

By nature I am not an early riser, and this, combined with the journey of the day before, left me unprepared for Aloba's arriving early the next morning to tell me that I should come immediately; Baba wanted me. To put Aloba off, I told him I had to get dressed, shave, have a bath, but that I would come after that. Aloba went back to Baba alone, only to return a little later with the message, "Come immediately. Baba is unhappy at this delay." Still I dawdled and it was some time before I accompanied Aloba to Rosewood where Baba was waiting for me.

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Baba looked very displeased and there was anger in His eyes. He asked me through Eruch, "Do you know how very annoying your behavior has been! What do you take my orders to be? A joke?" I could see fire in Baba's eyes as He continued. "Ramjoo, haven't you told him how he should obey my orders? I sent Aloba this morning to fetch him, and this man comes leisurely strolling along even after I sent Aloba a second time to get him. When I send for someone they should rush to me at once, and not give excuses about having to bathe or dress. Even if you were in the middle of your bath, you should have rushed here, not even bothering to dry yourself!"

After a while Baba's mood changed and, with a twinkle in His eye, He asked me what had happened to our train yesterday.

I didn't want to confess the thoughts I had and so merely said something about the electrical connection having broken. Baba wasn't satisfied with this and kept asking me more questions, finally gesturing, "You can not hide anything from me. I know everything, but I want all of them (meaning the *mandali*) to hear about it."

So I reluctantly told the full story. Baba looked very stern and began scolding. "What put such a crazy idea in your head? Do you have any idea how much trouble you have caused? Hundreds of people were inconvenienced by you and I also was given much anxiety. I made Eruch go several times to ask about you. We were late returning to Satara and everyone here was upset and anxious. Poor Aloba had to suffer and then on top of that he had to go twice this morning to fetch you.

"By your mischievous and senseless thoughts, you gained nothing except thousands of bad *sanskaras* from all the people on the train who indirectly were cursing you because their train was late. Think of all the disruption you caused, there were businessmen rushing to Poona for important work, someone was trying to get there in time to visit a sick father, another was rushing his wife to a nursing home so she

could deliver. All the train schedules were upset and there is a long long list of people who were affected. All because you had such a silly idea to test me! Do you realize you have gathered so many bad *sanskaras* that it would be practically impossible for you to wipe them out. From now on you must be very careful with your thoughts, especially those connected with me."

Baba then ordered me to immediately bow down to Him. After I did so, He conveyed, "Now you have laid all those *sanskaras* at my feet, so do not worry."

I was thunderstruck at Baba's compassion - how infinite it is! That He should respond to a passing thought in my mind, by actually stopping the train, was a touching example of the lengths He will go to strengthen His lovers' conviction in Him. But that He should do this when it entailed so much extra suffering for Himself was even more convincing proof of His Divinity than His stopping the train in the first place! Truly His is the compassion that passes understanding!

Kohiyar Satarawalla

CONCERN, FORGIVENESS AND COMPASSION

In the early '40s, Waman started working for Adi K. Irani as an errand boy. Adi took to him quickly because of the boy's intelligence and good-heartedness. Adi helped him with his education and, later, when in his teens, Waman would accompany Adi on his Baba-work.

Meher Baba seemed to appreciate Waman's love for Him and He used to let Waman come with Adi whenever Adi would drive out to Meherazad.

In the early '50s Baba was informed that Waman would

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start attending college in Ahmednagar. Baba lovingly gave Waman some parting advice. He told him that he would soon be entering a new world and that he should be careful - that living at a college would be quite different from living in Adi's compound. Baba told him that he should not associate (run around) with girls and he should not smoke.

Waman went to Ahmednagar College and did well. But one day, in 1955, while at a canteen with some friends, he was urged to smoke. He refused and pleaded, "Please, do not force me," but his friends persisted to such an extent that finally he gave in and smoked a cigarette. From that moment on he couldn't concentrate on his studies. All he could think about was that he had broken Baba's order.

He kept wondering, "What will Baba say?" He knew that he could not pretend it hadn't happened, and lying about it was out of the question. His torment went on for about a week when he received a message from Adi that Baba had instructed Adi to tell him that he would have to miss college for two days so he could drive Baba from Satara to Poona and back in Adi's blue Chevrolet.

Waman dutifully arrived at Satara that same evening. As it was late, he had to go to bed without seeing Baba. The next morning he got up early and Baba seemed pleased to see him. Baba and a few of the *mandali* were in the car and the drive seemed uneventful when, after going a little way, Baba turned to Eruch and unexpectedly said, "Ask this rascal to tell you what he's done!" Waman was completely taken aback.

Eruch turned to him and demanded to know what he had done. Tearfully Waman confessed his disobedience. Baba then had someone light a cigarette and He gave it to Waman and told him to smoke it. Waman shook his head, "No, Baba, please." "But I'm telling you to smoke now," Baba replied and ordered Waman to take two puffs. Waman did so and Baba then declared, "Now you don't have to worry. Your disobedience has been wiped clean!" Still driving the car, Waman bowed his head to Baba to express his deep grateful-

ness.

Strange are the ways of the Master. By making Waman smoke at His command, Baba canceled out the impressions formed by Waman's disobedience of His earlier command not to smoke. Nor does the story end there. For, in His compassion, Baba told Waman, "From now on, you may smoke, but no more than two cigarettes a day." Yet the lesson Waman had learned was so strong that from that day he has never had any desire to smoke again.

Eventually Waman came to hold a high governmental post in Maharashtra. Due to his position he has to attend many official functions, and quite often he is offered a cigarette. Each time, as he politely refuses, the car ride with Baba is vividly revived in his memory, and once more he experiences, as he did that day, Baba's loving concern, forgiveness and compassion.

Bal Natu

BABA'S GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK

In 1958, Meher Baba held a Sahavas program at Meherabad. My brother Mehernath, sister Jayanthi, and I were fortunate to be able to attend. My whole family would have loved to have participated but financial constraints necessitated that only a few go, and all the others graciously let us three have the Divine treat.

But they wanted to send a memento of their love, so a special garland was woven from pure white soft silky cotton yarn interspersed with roses made of silken cloth (deep red or pink, I forget). The garland was specially woven with great love and devotion under my Aunty Lakshmi's supervision by the girls of Stree Sadana - Home for Women. This was a

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home established for the Mary Magdalenes of society - usually more sinned against than sinning. Mrs. Lakshmi headed this institution in Madras and, with great sympathy and understanding, helped the women acquire skills to become economically self sufficient so they could take their rightful place in society.

Beloved Baba had visited this home in April 1947 and showered His Love and blessings on His unfortunate children there. On that occasion they had also woven a special white cotton yarn garland for Baba which he wore happily. Later He instructed Dr. Donkin to send that garland to the Backetts in England. This garland now is in Baba House at Myrtle Beach, S.C.

My mother, Mrs. Janaky, carefully and lovingly packed this new garland for us, and my brother, sister and I set off for Ahmednagar. We were thrilled to be able to have Beloved Baba's *darshan* again after so many years. To me, Baba was best remembered as one who played hide and seek with my brother Kasthuri and me during His visits to our homes in Saidapet (Madras) and Sankarapuram (Bangalore) during the thirties. We were kids and, I daresay, pests, but Beloved Baba never ignored us. On the contrary, He set apart time specially to play hide and seek with us on several occasions.

Bursting with joyous memories and eager anticipation of some special recognition from Baba of an old playmate, I inched forward in the *darshan* queue towards Him. Since Baba granted only one chance to go near Him and pay our obeisance during the Sahavas program, we were torn between our impatience to go see Him right away, and our desire to save it till the end. We compromised, and on the second day we stood in the queue, savoring every second of the excitement - in anticipation of coming face to face with Beloved Baba.

The queue was long and Baba was gracious and generous in the individual attention He gave to most. He joked with some, stroked the cheek of some, patted some and so on and so forth. "Lucky people," I thought. Of course, I felt my turn

would come too. And it did come - and almost before I realized it, it had gone and I was out of the queue!

In a kind of dazed, stupefied way, I realized that I had garlanded Baba with the special garland, prostrated, looked at Him, seen Him smiling and then His attention had turned to the next in the queue. He had very effectively pricked the bubble of my ego. No special "Hello" to His old playmate.

In fact, sitting in the *darshan* hall with a heavy heart, choked sobs and unshed tears, I told myself, "Baba has forgotten me. So where is the question of any special token of the good old hide and seek days?" I gazed and gazed at Baba, unbelievably. "Can He be that heartless?" I dared to ask myself.

At this point I saw Eruch go through the routine of removing the pile of garlands around Beloved Baba's neck, keep them aside and, with great tenderness, wipe the perspiration off His face to prepare Him to receive a new load of loving garlands from the hundreds still waiting in the queue to greet Him.

With the removal of the lot set aside - the white garland was also removed - I thought in anguish that even that slender link with Baba was now snapped. As I was going through a private hell of my own making, a most wonderful thing happened.

Baba turned to the recently removed pile of garlands and gestured to Eruch to take one out. Eruch took out one or two but Baba gestured, "Not that one," and kept pointing to the white garland which Eruch finally removed. Baba then indicated that He wanted to wear it and also added, "Let it stay." And to show that indeed one's link with Baba is never snapped, He wore that garland throughout the Sahavas program. In the movie taken of that program which ends with Beloved Baba waving goodbye to those leaving on the train, you can see Him wearing it.

I cannot find words to express how very very deeply this incident affected me; it seemed that Baba had again played a game of hide and seek - subtle and adult style - right in the

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thick of the *darshan* program. And what I found was a treasure beyond words - a glimpse of His Omniscience and His Compassionate Love!

A. K. Vasumathi

THE ALL-KNOWING AND ALL-PERVADING ANCIENT ONE

In the summer of 1959 Avatar Meher Baba gave *darshan* to His lovers in Guru Prasad, Poona. One day, after having His *darshan*, Dr. Moorthy and I came out of Guru Prasad and went to a nearby restaurant to have a cup of tea before returning to Guru Prasad for the second session.

On the way we both were talking, of course, only about Beloved Baba's glory and divinity. During the course of our talk I happened to say that Beloved Meher Baba is not only the Avatar of the Age but, being the Ancient One, He was also Rama, Krishna, Christ and Buddha. Dr. Moorthy agreed that Baba is the Avatar but insisted that Baba had never claimed to be Rama, Krishna, or Christ. He added that in all of his extensive reading of Baba literature, he had never come across such a claim. I repeated my position and he repeated his and we were still caught up in this discussion when we arrived back at Guru Prasad. But to our surprise the *darshan* had ended early and everyone was walking towards the gate. The day's *darshan* program was over.

At this point, brother Eruch came out from Meher Baba's room and announced that Meher Baba wanted everyone to come back and assemble near the porch of Guru Prasad. When we heard this, we, along with the others, rushed forward and stood anxiously waiting. Beloved Meher Baba came out and gave a message to the effect that He was Rama,

He was Krishna, He was Christ and now He was Meher Baba, the Avatar of the Age. As soon as this message was given, Baba told us all to disperse.

Dr. Moorthy and I were amazed. Although the message had been for one and all, it was especially significant to the two of us. It brought home to us that Meher Baba is not only the Ancient One, but He is indeed the All-knowing and All-pervading One.

That August, Baba returned to Meherazad. Every year, according to the Hindu calendar, in the month of *Shravana*, Lord Krishna's birthday is celebrated. In 1959 this occurred in August. Sadhu T.L. Vaswani had his personal secretary, his nephew Jashan, mail Baba a song he had written on Lord Krishna, whom he loved dearly.

Sadhu Vaswani was a great scholar who, in his love for God, had renounced his position as principal of a college to serve the Lord. In 1933, he founded the "Mira Movement" which was based on the premise that education is a thing of the Spirit and that the end of all knowledge is service of the poor, the lowly, the sick and the afflicted. He established a school in Poona named after the legendary Indian saint, Mira.

Out of love and reverence, his followers called him Dadaji. Baba also liked him and had even visited his residence two years earlier in 1957. In response to Dada Vaswani's song of love for Krishna, Baba had Eruch write Jashan on August 28:

"Give My LOVE to My dear Dada and to..... all dear ones of The Saint Mira, who remember Me and love Me.

I was Rama, I was Krishna, I was this and I was that, I am Meher Baba - the very same Ancient One, in flesh and blood - I am the very same One, eternally worshipped and neglected, always remembered and forgotten. I am that Eternal One, whose Past is worshipped and remembered; whose Present is neglected and forgotten; whose Future is always much desired and longed for."

This message suggests that more important than knowing

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that Baba was Krishna, is to understand that He, even when not in a physical form, is eternally the All-knowing, All-pervading Ancient One. We have only to open our hearts to Him to receive His love.

A. V. Raghavulu

TWO CABLES AND A SILENT MESSAGE

Meher Baba, who observed silence for 44 years, speaks to our hearts in many different ways. In December 1962 Will Backett, who was then 83, came to live with me at Oxfordshire. Will was very sad because his beloved wife, Mary, had passed away that September. Will and Mary were two of Baba's early English disciples. They had met Him in London in 1932. In 1937 they went to stay with Baba at His Nasik ashram. Throughout the tempestuous Nasik days, Will and Mary were notable for their unruffled good humor and willingness to accommodate themselves to whatever Baba wished. Baba used to refer to them as His "archangels."

Will was also sad because that November many of his friends had gone to Poona for the East-West Gathering, but he had been too frail to make the journey. But when Will came to stay with me the next month, he showed me a cable Baba had sent him during the Gathering. It read:

While your love is with me here, my love is with you there.
My love and blessings to you.

-Meher Baba

Will was so happy when he showed the cable to me.

I experienced the love which Baba could send via a cable myself four years later. After having completed *The Unstruck Music of Meher Baba*, a compilation of quotes from Baba, I had sent three copies to Adi K. Irani, Baba's secre-

tary. I was vaguely expecting an air letter from Adi acknowledging receipt of the books, but none came and after a while I forgot all about it.

Then, one day when the Post Office was shut, I heard a motorbike stop outside and the next moment an envelope was dropped in through my door. It was a cable from India with these words:

I am happy with your love for me that sings to the chords of *The Unstruck Music of Meher Baba*. I send my love and blessings to you."

--Meher Baba

I can't express the love I felt on reading this. Later I learnt that Baba does not need even the medium of a telegram to communicate with us.

One day in the sixties I received a beautiful photograph of Meher Baba from India. My address had been written in Mani's familiar writing. There was no letter or comment included but I felt great joy - I felt sure Baba must have touched the photo.

It was a picture of Baba, looking young and strong, with His hair tied back, sitting on a stone bench in a garden. He had a summer jacket on over a white *sadra*. One leg was on the bench and one was down; on one foot He had a sandal. His face was absolutely serene and relaxed.

I kept this picture in my bedroom where I saw it every day for at least ten years. Then one day I suddenly looked at the photo with a new understanding. It was telling me something. Baba seemed to be saying, "Relax in my peace and love." I thought, "Yes, that is a message for me from Baba."

Then it dawned on me to look more closely. "Yes," the picture seemed to be saying, "there is something else you have to learn from it. You have no need to sit outdoors, getting rheumatism in your back while painting from nature - why not stay indoors and paint flowers?"

I looked at the photo and saw Baba's beautiful hand resting in a relaxed position on the stone bench. And this hand was

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pointing directly at a little rose that was lying beside Him on the seat.

Now the truth is that I had always despised people who just paint flowers because I believed it was too easy. Now, I felt differently. Flowers, too, are a manifestation of God's love and His beauty and, therefore, should be treated with reverence. I now saw that they were a proper subject for study, and so that is how I began to paint flowers.

Later some of these paintings were made into postcards with a little picture of Baba and a quote from Him printed on the back.

Maud Kennedy

"HAPPY-GO-LUCKY" IN BABA'S LOVE

I was a happy-go-lucky person from my boyhood. My early life was not smooth and rosy, yet I never felt disheartened at my adversities. I saw many deaths in our family. When I lost my mother quite early in my life, I depended upon my auntie who brought me up with great love and affection. Later my father died, and I depended upon my uncle.

I could not finish college due to lack of money. I sought a job but they were scarce during the thirties, a decade of economic depression. At last I got a steno-typist job which didn't pay me for the first six months. After half a year I got five rupees a month and so could eat monkey-nuts (peanuts) as my tiffin (snack) instead of just drinking water. Two years later I passed an exam for the job of a telegraph operator. After a year's training I was transferred to Chittagong, now in Bangladesh. This was during World War II and many friends advised me to give the job up as Chittagong at that time was being bombed by the Japanese, but being

adventurous I did not listen to them. In spite of the daily bombing of the aerodrome, life flowed smoothly. I gradually advanced in my career and in 1949 I got married.

Some time later we learned that my wife was suffering from mitral stenosis and would not be able to have children. Within a few years, my uncle, auntie and many cousins all died, leaving me alone in the world and I came to depend entirely on my wife - the center of all my joys and sorrows.

Over the years my wife's health deteriorated. The more she suffered, the more I loved her. Never did I hesitate to sacrifice my comforts and pleasures to make her happy and smile. She also loved me more than anything in this world. In her company I was a millionaire but I became penniless overnight, for on June 1, 1961, my wife had a paralytic attack and she died the next day. This was the greatest and rudest shock in my life as I loved her so much. There was nothing left to live for.

I gave up all games and sports; I gave up the company of all friends and became completely self-centered. I did not even consider marrying again, as friends urged, so that I could at least have someone to keep me company. In my love for my departed wife, I had pledged myself to her once and for all and could not, therefore, accept another in her place.

Mechanically I went to work and came home. I would eat at a nearby hotel but didn't care what I ate. I didn't care about my health at all; I wanted to die soon so I could meet my wife in the next world. Keeping myself shut up within my room I would weep bitterly for her. But no amount of weeping made her return, nor did I die to rejoin her. What a predicament.

One night, when my cup of sorrow was overflowing, I prayed to God from the core of my heart: "Oh God, I have never prayed to you. I do not know whether you even exist, but people say you do and that you are the only dependable One for those who have no one else in this world. I seem to have reached this stage; please help me and guide me for the rest of my life and reset my upset life."

At that very moment there was a knock on my door. I

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didn't know who it could be since I had deliberately turned my back on all my old friends. It turned out to be a very slight acquaintance who was looking for the son of one of my colleagues at work who used to live there. On finding me, he made some consoling remark about my wife's death and on seeing how lonely and miserable I looked, he said he would lend me two books that might help me find peace and solace.

When I asked about these two books, he said one was a booklet on the miracles of Sai Baba of Shirdi and the other was *God Speaks* by Meher Baba. He said that he himself was a devotee of Sai Baba, but that he knew nothing about Meher Baba. He added that he had not been able to finish *God Speaks* himself, because it was very difficult to understand, but he promised to send the two books to me the next day.

And he did give the books to a fellow worker the next day to hand over to me, but as fate would have it, that fellow completely forgot about the books. As time passed I kept thinking about the promised books and became more and more eager to see them. Finally, after three weeks, my colleague suddenly remembered and gave me the books.

When I opened *God Speaks* and saw the picture of Avatar Meher Baba reclining on a tiger skin, I fell in love at first sight. I thought to myself that if I were to have a Master, I would want Baba, as He looked most divine with a compassionate smile on His face.

Slowly I started going through the book, although I didn't understand much. I continued to read it, however, and after a few months I finished it. I still did not understand it very well, but the reading had a healing effect on my mind, and it increased my hunger for reading and knowing more about Avatar Meher Baba. But I didn't know anyone in Jabalpur, where I was then living, who could tell me anything about Baba.

Some months later an old student friend came to town in connection with his sister's marriage. He came to visit me and as soon as he saw *God Speaks* on my table he teased, "Oh, you have also become a follower of Meher Baba." He then invited me to come to his place that evening so I could meet

his brother-in-law, Ram Pankharaj, who happened to be the local secretary of the Avatar Meher Baba Jabalpur Center.

This chance meeting with Pankharaj (one of Baba's dear lovers) opened a corridor to the world of Avatar Meher Baba. His library of books on Baba was flung open to me and I gradually enriched myself with all external knowledge about Him and ultimately installed Him on the throne of my heart with the firm conviction that He could be none other than *Antaryami* (the Indweller of the heart) who immediately answered the sincere prayer of my heart by providing me with *God Speaks* and then guiding me to dear Pankharaj. Thus my revered Master entered my life in 1962 graciously but unceremoniously without my having to do any sort of *sadhana*.

In May 1963 I went to Guru Prasad in Poona to have Baba's physical *darshan* for the first time. Baba sat on the only chair and we sat on the carpets spread on the floor. He appeared to me just like the rising sun - crimsoned, radiant and resplendent. When our turn came for *darshan*, Pankharaj stood near Baba and introduced the Jabalpur group to Him. Shri Upadhyaya, a poet, was standing in front of me in the line and when he reached Baba, Baba asked him if he had composed any new song and to sing it if he had. So Shri Upadhyaya started singing and the *darshan* line stopped.

At that moment a chance thought came to me to look intently at Baba's lotus feet, which were so nearby, to see if I could see the emblems of conch, flag, etc. which I understood Krishna possessed in His incarnation. Beloved Baba was sitting with His left leg over His right thigh with the sole away from me. But the moment I had this thought, Baba shifted His position so I could see His sole. Immediately I realized that Beloved Baba had caught my thought. I admonished myself for such foolishness and I just gazed intently at His beautiful divine form. Next to the infinite Reality of the Beloved's loving presence one loses all interest in the finite predictions of palmistry, astrology and the like. And, as one's love for the Beloved grows, this interest gradually fades away.

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When my turn came for *darshan*, I put my forehead on the hallowed lotus feet of the Beloved without any knowledge of His instruction not to do so. But Beloved Baba did not object. Out of great compassion, He touched both the cheeks of my face with His palms and lifted me up, like a grandfather his grandson, and looked intently into my eyes. I felt so happy with His divine touch on my face which is beyond me to express in words. I felt like a weightless man walking on air, like a bird delightfully care-free, dancing from tree to tree.

After three days of *darshan* programs, I returned to Jabalpur with my outlook of mind completely changed. I became my old self again, a happy-go-lucky person. The prison of self-centeredness was broken open and I rushed to my friends from door to door to announce, "I am the happiest man in the world!" I had made this claim earlier in my life too, but there was a difference now. Before, the claim was based on ignorance but now it was based on the certainty that I was connected to the Source of all happiness - Meher Baba.

I lost the temporal companion of this life in the form of my dear wife, but I gained the Everpresent Companion in the form of Avatar Meher Baba, not only for this life, but for all lives to come until final Union.

P.G. Nsнди

"COME WHAT MAY..."

Beloved Meher Baba often exhorted His lovers not to approach Him with desires for material gains or even spiritual progress. Time and again He asked His near and dear ones to resign themselves to His Will, to simply give their love to Him and receive His Love in return.

But this is not easy and, as is human nature, during periods

of unbearable sufferings, periods of mental agony, Baba lovers conveyed their difficulties and troubles to Him. And Baba, being the Compassionate One, helped His dear ones in their time of need in His own inimitable ways.

In 1960, due to certain unfortunate circumstances I lost my railway job, and was sent to jail at Bilaspur in Madhya Pradesh. I inwardly cried for help and sent a SOS letter to Baba. In His infinite compassion, for the entire two years I was in jail, Baba maintained my entire family - widowed mother, wife and four children. Nor did Baba overlook me in the prison. Due to His grace, I found that the jailor was kind to me and did not give me any hard labor to do. He asked me to work as a clerk in his office which gave me a lot of freedom to move about. I was not treated as a prisoner.

By the end of 1961 after being released from jail, I found it very difficult to find a new job. Although there were many people I had befriended while in the Railways, when I approached them for a job I found they had only lip sympathy for me. None of them would hire me as I was now an "ex-convict." When I was released from prison, the financial support given to my family according to Baba's instructions was naturally stopped and, as the months went by without my finding work, it was getting difficult to make ends meet. Ever since I had first had Beloved Baba's *darshan* at Eluru in 1953, my work to spread His message of love had been concentrated in the Bilaspur area; I wanted to stay there, but I decided that if I couldn't find a job by March 15, 1962 I would leave.

In the meantime I continued searching for employment and telling people about Baba. At the beginning of March, I mailed a letter to Baba explaining my problems and seeking His guidance. I wrote Him that if I moved to a place where people didn't know me, I might be able to avoid the stigma of being an ex-convict. At the close of my note I requested Baba to guide me, and to allow me to leave Bilaspur by the fifteenth.

In reply, Adi K. Irani, Meher Baba's secretary, promptly

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cabled, "Come what may... stay at Bilaspur. Letter posted." This telegram was indeed followed by a letter from brother Adi confirming the cable and informing me that, "Baba definitely wants you not to be heart-broken, but to be bold and courageous. He wants you to make sincere efforts to get a job *there only* and try to forget your past, erase the feelings that you are an ex-convict. But Baba has no objection to your leaving Bilaspur after 15th of March '62 if you don't get a job." Adi went on to say that I should keep him informed of any and all developments so he could bring the matter to Baba's attention if need be.

I redoubled my efforts to find employment but still I was unsuccessful. The 7th of March passed, then the 8th, the 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and finally the 14th and still no job. The 15th of March, the day of reckoning dawned. That morning, early, as usual, I left my home for a long walk. As I was returning I met a retired military Colonel who knew me slightly from my efforts to spread Baba's message. He had been somewhat curious about Baba, but only in an idle sort of way.

Still, we fell to talking and discussed many things. Just as we were parting he happened to say, "Ramarao bhai, you know, I and my son, a civil construction engineer and the chairman of the concern, are on the lookout for a good honest worker. We want to employ him as a public relations liaison official at a good salary. If you know of anyone, do recommend that person to us and we will give him the job."

It was hard to believe! After months of futile searching, I had decided to leave town if I couldn't get a job by the 15th and here, on the 15th itself, Baba was indirectly giving me this opportunity to find work without my having even looked for it! So I quietly told this gentleman that I myself was unemployed and would be happy to serve in their concern.

At first he did not believe me. He thought I was joking with him. During all of my visits to his house after being released from jail, I had talked only of Beloved Baba and His love; I had not mentioned that I needed a job. But I seriously and sincerely told him that I did in fact need to find work and told

him frankly about my dismissal from the railway job and my prison experience. I also told him how Baba had helped me and had maintained my family while I was in jail.

Again he said, "I don't believe this. You are joking. You always visited us with a smile and told us only of your Baba. I never noticed any sign of any trouble on your face."

I assured him that I urgently needed to find work. During all of this we had continued walking back home. His bungalow was on the way so he invited me to stop there first and have breakfast. He introduced me to his son, explained about my "qualifications" - that I was an ex-convict - and, in spite of this, he instructed his son to employ me from that *very day*, March 15th!

Nor does the story end there. Later on Baba revealed to me that not only had He gotten me the job, but He had also saved me from possibly becoming involved in a criminal activity! While in prison I had met a businessman there awaiting trial. He had promised me a job whenever I was released, but as I did not like the man's way of life, I had not wanted to work for him. Still, as a last desperate resort, I had resolved that if nothing else turned up, before leaving town, I would go see this man and ask for a job.

As it turned out, I never went to see this man, and I learned later that the soap factory in which he had promised me work was, in fact, only a front for a large scale illicit distillery. Thus, Baba saw to every detail so that I got the right job by 15th March.

Come what may, one should not waver from total trust in Baba. As He sees to our needs, we feel the flow of His love and His deep concern for our personal lives through which He awakens our hearts, more and more, to His infinite love and omniscience.

V. Rama Rao

WHEN YOUR HEART TRULY YEARNS

In the early '60s, Beloved Meher Baba used to spend the summers (mid-March to June) at Guru Prasad in Poona. Guru Prasad was the magnificent residence of the Maharani of Baroda. It had a grand entrance drive through beautiful gardens; a portico leading up to wide verandas with marble floors. The front doors were tall and their glass work was etched with artistic designs. This palatial bungalow was a fit setting for the King of kings, Beloved Avatar Meher Baba. It was also very practical as it not only provided Him with a suitable site for His seclusion work, but it also was graced with a hall that was large enough for Baba to use for His *darshan* programs. It was at Guru Prasad that, in my case, Beloved Meher Baba's compassion allowed "the improbable to become possible."

Two blocks away from Guru Prasad is Mobo's Hotel. During the early '60s when Baba used to give *darshan*, the Dadachanjis and the Mistrys used to rent rooms at Mobo's for the time Baba would be in Poona. On some mornings Baba would go for a drive or would visit one of His lovers and we used to stand at the gates of the hotel (which were on the road itself) just in case Beloved Baba drove by. When he did, in His love, He would stop the car and give us a smile or a hand to kiss. After some days, Baba asked that we remain on the terrace of the hotel and simply wave to Him as His car slowed down and then drove on.

After this extra and special glimpse of the Beloved, we would quickly get ready and go to Guru Prasad to await Beloved Baba's return. We would all stand lining the sides of the grand curved portico, waiting for Baba 's car to slowly roll in and stop at the wide flight of stairs. Baba's door would open and one of the *mandali*. or sometimes, a strong Baba lover who was visiting, would put out his arm for Baba.

Baba would take the support and climb the few steps and then enter the hall of Guru Prasad where He would seat Himself on the sofa. We would gather around, enjoying Beloved

Baba's *sahavas*. Sometimes there would be a singing program, but it made little difference to us; we just used to gaze in adoration at Beloved Baba until He lovingly dismissed us.

As the days went by, my heart started yearning, thinking, "How wonderful it would be if I could, once, help Beloved Baba up the steps. What joy it would be to touch Him!" My heart knew how improbable, in fact impossible, this dream, this longing was! With so many physically strong lovers around, and with Baba needing a really strong support, how could I even be noticed?

One fine morning, as we lined up, Beloved Baba's car rolled in, stopped, the door opened and Baba looked straight at me and beckoned. But I did not respond, thinking Baba wanted someone standing behind me. In my wildest imagination the thought did not come that Baba was fulfilling my heart's desire.

He beckoned again and this time I turned around to see whom Baba wanted. But I saw no one and, with a question on my face, I looked at Baba. The third time Baba beckoned and I dared to mouth, "Baba, I?" He nodded and I ran down the steps thinking, "Baba wants to tell me something."

When Baba gestured, "Take me up the steps," glorious joy filled my heart. I extended my arm and tensed, knowing I must not falter in taking His weight. Baba placed His lovely hand on my arm and I braced myself as Baba stepped out of the car. I took a step and, to my surprise, we seemed to glide up the steps light as a feather.

Throughout those precious moments my experience and feeling was, "How soft, like a baby, a cotton puff and the clouds, all rolled into one is Beloved Baba!" Baba sat down on the sofa and gave my arm a distinct "Thank you" squeeze. Baba's love-compassion - His caring and giving - is beyond words. His silence is so eloquent: one hears Him distinctly in one's heart. His so loving, tender and knowing eyes smiled at me and I returned to sit with the other Baba lovers - in my

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heart a glorious, treasured glow which even today burns brightly.

Freny R. Dadachanji

"MUST BE MAD"

Early in 1965, at the age of 19, I set sail on the final voyage of the "Roma" (the ship on which Baba once sailed from Europe) for Singapore to continue my search for the Truth and to avoid the draft.

This period was post-beatnik and pre-hippie. The only book I carried in my rucksack was the *I Ching*, the Chinese "Book of Changes" which served as an oracle when consulted. "Mr. Tambourine Man" by Bob Dylan was my favorite song, and I made ample use of "pot" or the "green weed."

Since I had first walked, I had the desire to find out what life was all about. I was brought up as a Roman Catholic, but although Jesus appealed to me, the church didn't - and I had a chip on my shoulder towards Jesus because He had only come once. I often thought, "What was so special about the people back then? If He was so compassionate, why didn't He come back again and again? What about *me*?" If one wish had been granted to me, it would have been to meet Him in the physical form, to find out what He was really like.

After a few harrowing and debilitating months in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Nepal, I arrived in Bombay in October of 1965. I had had dengue fever, amoebic dysentery and was now broke, begging for my food in the streets of Bombay. One day I woke up in the hovel where I was sleeping and accidentally glanced in a mirror. I nearly frightened myself to death - I did not recognize myself! I thought it must

be someone else's reflection. I was down to a mere 112 pounds, thin faced with cold and lifeless eyes. I realized that I had "lost" myself. I stopped smoking hashish and had terrible nightmares for many weeks afterwards.

In early November some money came from my dear mother and I booked passage on a ship for Italy. The boat was full of refugees from the Pakistan-India war and dope-smoking travelers from the West. The sea was rough and there was six inches of water in my below decks, much-shared cabin.

About two days out, I noticed a young man, a Westerner, standing on deck looking out to sea. He turned and looked at me. His smile was beautiful and there was a certain feeling of happiness which seemed to emanate from him. I was fascinated and wondered if a new kind of drug had been discovered which he was using.

Because of the degradation and despair I had recently experienced due to heavy hashish smoking, I was afraid to try any drug again so I began to avoid this man, although the temptation to meet and talk with him was very great. Every time I happened to see him, I felt a wave of happiness come over me.

Finally, he approached me and introduced himself as Robert Dreyfuss. He said he had noticed me looking at him and asked what I wanted. Suddenly, without thinking, I blurted out, "I want the Truth." Without hesitation he gestured towards his cabin and said, "Come inside and I'll show It to you." I thought, "Maybe he's crazy. Perhaps that's why he's so happy."

In his cabin he showed me a book called *The God-Man*, and pointed to a photograph of an amazing looking man and said, "Here It is! He is the Truth, and His name is Meher Baba. He is God in human form, the Messiah." He then said that he had just recently met Him.

As I looked at Baba's face in that book it reminded me of someone I knew. Was it William Saroyan, the writer? And that name, Meher Baba, so familiar, yet like a name from another planet, so strange. Then suddenly into my mind

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came the thought, "He is the greatest Mime of all! I had been interested in mime for some years, and one of my plans was to go to Israel to study under a great mime artist who lived there. I did not know, and Robert did not tell me, that Meher Baba was silent.

After talking to Robert for some time, I became frightened. I thought, "This man claims to be God - he must be mad too, a crazy egomaniac. I, don't want anything to do with this - it's madness." I excused myself from Robert's cabin and avoided him as much as possible for the rest of the voyage.

I finally arrived in France and after some time and many problems I flew to England, only to be sent back to Paris as I did not have enough money to enter the country. In Paris, I became destitute, had no warm clothing in what was a severe winter, slept in railway stations and school yards where I almost froze to death and began to starve. I went at last, out of desperation, to the Australian Embassy to be repatriated. After a few weeks, they agreed.

Often during those cold, hungry, lonely nights and days the name; "Meher Baba" would come into my mind and I'd push it out, saying, "That's the name of that crazy egomaniac. It's beginning to haunt me and drive me mad!" After a long, boring passage back to Australia I went to live with my mother. I began to suffer from severe depression because of the greyness of my recent experiences. I contemplated suicide and was on the point of doing it when I thought I'd visit a close friend who lived nearby, to see him for one last time.

I found him lying on the floor with a rope around his neck, laughing. Only a few minutes earlier, he had tried to kill himself but the rope had broken due to his being overweight, and he was lying on the floor laughing at how ridiculous life was. The irony of the situation made me laugh too, and I quickly gave up the idea.

I went to work in a mental hospital, but resigned a few months later because I refused to give shock treatment to people who I felt were not really mad. Out of work, I began to

wander the streets of Melbourne in search of employment. One day I noticed a bookshop I had never seen before. I went in and immediately felt at home. I had the overwhelming feeling that I would work there. The manager refused me employment; I went away, but still the feeling stayed. I went back three times in three weeks and finally, out of desperation, he said, "I'll make you an appointment with the general manager of all our stores and publishing, and when he says, 'No' will you accept it?" "Fair enough," I replied.

The appointment was for a week later. During that week I caught a terrible flu and became somewhat delirious. When I was ushered into the general manager's office, I was unsteady on my feet and unable to think straight. After a time, he asked me, "And where were you working before applying for a position here?" I replied, "I was in a mental hospital." His expression changed from detachment to concern.

"Are you okay now?" he asked. Confused by this question I answered, "I have a flu." "Don't worry," he said, "You can have a job in the bookstore; they're all a little crazy in there, mad artists and the like - you should fit in very well." Stunned, I thanked him and left. Only later did I realize that he thought I was a patient in the hospital and not a nurse. The general manager was a kind soul who loved to help mad, starving artists I later discovered.

The bookstore manager was flabbergasted that I'd gotten the job, but swallowed it and designated a section of the large shop as mine to dust, arrange, and get to know. The section was labeled, "Religion." I found a duster and walked over to "my" section. I picked up the first book on the top shelf and almost dropped it, such a shock did I receive. It was *The God-Man!* I opened it and looked at the photograph of Meher Baba. Yes, it was the same man all right.

Now I was frightened. I put it down and tried to take my mind off the "coincidence." Every day for about six weeks I dusted that book and every day I became more worried about it. "How dare he call himself God?" I'd think while dusting it. "He must be mad!"

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Yet His name would come into my mind when I least expected it. I resolved that I'd have to do something about it. I'd take the book home, read it, and once and for all disprove his claim and then at last I'd have peace of mind. For a month it sat on my shelf at home, untouched. One night I couldn't sleep. I looked at my bookshelf and the only book I hadn't read was *The God-Man*.

Without thinking I took it down and began reading it. All through the night and the next day I read it - it never occurred to me to go to work - I forgot all else. Everything that had ever happened to me had clearly led up to this moment. By the end of the book, I knew with my heart and mind that I'd found the Truth I'd been searching for. Jesus *had* come again, and He *was* compassionate. He hadn't forgotten me or any of us.

My mother had once told me that if ever I discovered the Truth to immediately let her know, as she could not go in search of it. I rang her immediately and told her. She accepted it instantly, saying, "I know you have found it. I can tell from the feeling in your voice."

Next day, I hurried to the bookstore. My heart was bursting with Baba, with happiness. "Where were you yesterday?" asked the manager, furious. "Yesterday I found God, or God found me. I'll tell you about it. His name is Meher Baba and He is in India!" I exclaimed, expecting him to thank me for changing his life.

"Get back to work," he shouted. "You must be mad!" He walked back into his office shaking his head. I headed for my section, which was now "His" section - laughing, crying, praising, thanking Baba for this madness He had blessed me with.

Paul Smith

1965 DARSHAN REMINISCENCES

The first six days of May 1965 witnessed the last big public *darshan* Meher Baba gave at Guru Prasad in Poona. Thousands from all parts of India flocked for this God-given opportunity.

Mani, Meher Baba's sister, beautifully portrayed this *darshan* program in her letter, dated 15th June 1965, specially written for Baba lovers in the West as follows:

Seated in His chair on the dais, wearing His white robe and garland of flowers, Baba looked radiant through the long hours of darshan-time each day, His God-smile shining on the sea of lovers before Him....

"There is but one threshold of the Beloved, and there are thousands of heads to bow down on it in obeisance" - this line from an Urdu ghazal... might have been penned for this May-Darshan!

All through the darshan-hours, men and women in alternate queues were seen endlessly passing by... inching their way to the feet of the Beloved.... One by one they approached Him, and with upturned faces animated with the glow of His presence, stood before Him for a moment that embraced eternity.

As each placed his or her head on His feet, along with the garlands and babies they had brought with them, some bathing His feet with tears and kisses, He acknowledged their love with folded hands held to His breast or touched to His forehead. It was a profound gesture that brought to life the symbol: Mastery in Servitude.

On the third day of *darshan*, Baba permitted His lovers who were acting as volunteers to kiss Him. Thus, Jagannath, Rama Rao and I were standing in queue to avail ourselves of this blessed opportunity. Suddenly a thought entered my mind, "Babajan kissed Baba on His forehead and gave Him

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Divine Bliss; I will kiss Him at the same spot and see what happens."

As I approached Baba, He gave me a naughty smile as if to say, "Nice thought!" And when I bowed to kiss Baba on His forehead, He turned His face to the side so I ended up kissing Him on the cheek. I suddenly felt ashamed and sorry for my foolish thought. Instead of sealing my intent to become dust at His feet with a kiss, I had entertained such foolish thoughts.

I was moving slowly away from Baba when there was a commotion in the *pandal*. My friend, Jagannath, after having Baba's *darshan* had gone to resume his post as a volunteer by stepping over a small rope across the *pandal*. He had fallen and broken his leg. Fortunately Dr. Bharucha was there and, at Baba's instructions, we put Jagannath in Baba's car and took him to a nursing home.

Jagannath felt very bad at losing his chance to spend time in Baba's service as a volunteer and expressed the desire to have Baba's *darshan* again. This request was conveyed to Baba who lovingly acceded to it. The next morning we brought the "patient" into Baba's room on a stretcher. Baba was sitting on a chair and we placed the stretcher before Him. Mrs. Jagannath was crying heavily and Baba, with a look of compassion, gestured, "Don't worry." Then He turned towards Jagannath.

As I watched, I wondered how Jagannath would be able to have Baba's *darshan*. Because of the intense pain in His hip joint, Baba could not rise from His chair and Jagannath certainly could not get up off the stretcher. Suddenly Baba very gracefully stretched His lotus feet out in front of Jagannath who tenderly held them in his hands as tears of gratitude rolled down his cheeks. How truly compassionate and loving Beloved Baba is!

M. Satyanarayana

HEARTS THAT ARE BROKEN

In 1955 my wife, Kecha, and I read the book *God Speaks* by Meher Baba. It was a gift to us from a friend, but the conviction that Meher Baba is God in human form was Baba's gift to us. Since then Baba has made it very clear to me that my work is to make my conviction about Him visible in my daily life. He has helped me in endless ways to understand that the more I try to obey Him, the more I will experience His presence. Two dreams, in particular, have given me that priceless experience of His intimate presence.

For a long time, after coming to Baba, I had wanted to have a ring made which would have the highest meaning for me. So when I lost my college ring, I had a gold ring made, beautifully engraved with the "Mastery in Servitude - Avatar Meher Baba" emblem, surrounded by the symbols of the world's six great religions.

The ring was beautifully made and I cherished it because of its meaning. Seldom was I unaware of it. But one day, not long after acquiring it, I was swimming in the ocean at Virginia Beach. When I came out of the water to resume reading the legal material I had brought with me, I was suddenly shocked to realize that the ring was gone. It had slipped off my finger into the ocean. I was very upset at this loss because of the significance the ring held for me.

Several nights later, Baba appeared in my dream and with anguish I asked, "Baba, why did I lose my ring?" Baba looked into my eyes with great tenderness and said, "Henry, you need me - not my symbols!"

I was no longer concerned about the loss of my ring. On the contrary, I was deeply grateful to Baba for giving me this valuable experience.

In 1969 I lost something even more important to me than my ring - I lost the physical form of the God-Man. Although Baba had constantly emphasized to us the importance of finding Him within, His form was so beautiful that I had become dependent upon His physical contact and external guidance.

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When Baba dropped His body, the emptiness I experienced was so vast and painful that I felt as if the light had gone out of the world. Creation had lost its meaning.

Shortly after this staggering event, Baba appeared in my dream and I asked, "Are the hearts of your close ones broken?" Baba replied, "Hearts that are filled with love, when broken, only pour out more love."

Henry Kashouty

"SOMETIME, SOMEWHERE, SOMEHOW!"

In June of 1968, I moved from New York City, where I first heard of Meher Baba, to Seattle on the northwest coast of the United States. For over half a year there, I didn't meet a single Baba lover, although I spoke quite openly about Baba. Seattle, it seemed to me then, was on the remote frontier of the Baba world.

Sometime around the latter part of December, however, by Baba's grace I ran into someone devoted to Baba, a girl named Marion. Through her I heard about the *darshan* in India to which Baba was inviting His lovers in the spring in March and April. During this period, I didn't have a job or any savings, and so the prospect of earning money for the fare to India in such a short time seemed hopeless.

Marion was very poor, she lived in an extremely run-down apartment, and because she was not well enough to hold a full time job, we were both in the same boat - it looked like going to see Baba would be impossible. However, we didn't give up hope. Whenever we ran into each other, invariably the subject would turn to discussing possible ways to get to India, from borrowing money to working our way over on a ship. We usually ended up feeling discouraged.

A month later, on the 31st of January, we received the news that Baba had dropped His body. We were profoundly affected by this and hoped somehow we could make it to the "*Last Darshan*"

There was a small cafe in the university district I used to go to in those days called the Hasty Tasty. It was a greasy sort of place, open all night, where all manner of people congregated - students, bums, hippies, drug-users, even heavy drinkers who would come in to sober up. Most, like myself, were practically broke and were lured in by a special feature offered at the Hasty Tasty. For only ten cents, one could drink all the coffee one wanted. Often my friends and I would sit and talk for hours, sometimes consuming ten cups apiece in the course of an evening!

One afternoon, three or four days after Baba had dropped His body, three of us stopped by the Hasty Tasty and were sitting at a small table having our usual coffees: Marion, myself, and a fellow named Rusty who had heard of Baba from us and seemed open to Him. A few other people were seated at nearby tables in the very cramped dining area. For about half an hour, the three of us had been talking about this and that, nothing in particular. Marion was sitting at the end of our table, Rusty was across from me. Suddenly, Marion, with a look of utter astonishment on her face, stared awestruck at the empty chair next to me and exclaimed, "Baba is sitting in that chair!"

I started to turn my head toward the chair but there was such an overwhelming brilliance that my eyes could only bear to see the outer fringes of this great brilliance! Baba was like the light of a thousand suns put together! Tears poured from my eyes. Streams of golden light flowed out from the fringes of the great sun of Baba's effulgence. Try as I might, I was not able to look directly - into the light itself.

An eternity of time seemed to pass, though it was probably no more than a few minutes. Suddenly Baba vanished as quickly as He had appeared. The three of us were utterly speechless. Instinctively we reached out and held hands, and

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remained like this for a long time, in silence. Then, as if by an unspoken consent, we stood up, paid for our coffees and left the cafe. Outside there was a great roof of grey clouds overhead which made everything seem deeply quiet and subdued. We walked up University Avenue, still without speaking a word, and then one by one each of us turned down our own street along the avenue and headed home.

How deeply touched the three of us were, beyond words! Baba, in His infinite compassion, remembered us in this remote corner of the world. There was no way, as it turned out, that Marion and I could have gone to the "Last *Darshan*," but Baba so lovingly came to us, fulfilling our deepest longing - to have His living *darshan*!

It was much later that I read that Baba had said He would give His lovers His *darshan* again, "Sometime, somewhere, somehow!" and that moment had unexpectedly and overwhelmingly come for us!

Jeff Wolverton

BABA CONSOLED ME THROUGH A VISION

In 1969 I was living at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, but that January I had been traveling up north. From Benares, I went to Calcutta where A.C.S. Chari told me that Baba had passed away on the 31st of January and showed me a telegram to that effect sent to him by Adi K. Irani. This was completely unexpected news and I could not bear the shock. I left Calcutta immediately for my home.

When I reached Visakhapatnam, I learnt that earlier about 15 Baba lovers had hired three taxis and left for Meherabad to have Baba's *darshan* before His body was interred. As soon as I realized that I had missed my chance to go to

Meherabad I became very upset. I couldn't help brooding over my lost opportunity, and I was restless and weeping all the time.

On the afternoon of the 13th of February I was sitting in a chair outside my home when I heard the sound of a car approaching. My house was situated in a garden of about two and a half acres, surrounded by shrubs, bushes and trees and isolated from the town itself. It was not common for cars to come this way and, as it was late afternoon, it was past the time when most people would visit. I assumed that it must be a relative of mine, who had a car, coming to invite me to some festive occasion. But it was not my relative's car which came up to my gate and stopped. To my astonishment, I saw Baba open the door and walk quickly to the verandah where I was sitting.

There was a vacant chair beside me and Baba sat on it and looked at me. Being the Silent Master, Baba did not say a word or gesture to me. I was so amazed to see Baba that I could not speak a word myself. I was dumbfounded and I think I must have been in a sort of trance at the time. After a couple of minutes, Baba walked back to His car and drove away.

Soon after, I came to myself and began to weep that I had missed this opportunity to embrace Baba, to speak to Him or to express my happiness at His visiting me. Still weeping, I went to my bedroom and, like a child, threw myself down on my cot, sobbing out my heart.

My crying must have been truly from my heart for after ten minutes or so, Baba appeared again. He came inside my house and lifted my grandson who was around six or seven months old and blessed him. Then He came to my cot and sat by my side while I was still lying there.

This time I didn't want to miss the opportunity to offer my respects. I called out to my wife that Baba had come and she should bring the camphor and other necessities to perform *arti* to Baba. Baba gestured to me not to worry about such things and then instructed me that I should go to Poona for

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the *darshan* program He had scheduled there on May 13, 1969. Baba told me that all would go well for me and then left, before my wife arrived.

When she did come, we performed *arti* to Baba's photo. After that I recovered my composure, and was no longer so depressed. I am of the opinion that Beloved Baba was kind enough to give me His *darshan* in order to console me and to relieve me of the agony which His passing away caused me. Since then my heart and soul are entirely dedicated to Him the Eternal One.

S. Suryanarayana

IN HIS UNSEEN HANDS

I first heard Beloved Baba's Name in 1969, when I was in college in California. One evening, I had gone with a few pals to visit some friends on the coast range. Their home was a favorite haunt for us college kids - a lovely old house in a redwood forest that seemed miles and miles away from our mundane lives at the university in the plains below. We were spending a nice evening together when suddenly a person (a stranger to me) came into the house with a book shouting, "I found it! A book by Meher Baba!" This caused tremendous excitement among the householders and, as I was curious to know what it was all about, someone showed me the book.

My first thought on seeing Baba's face (on the cover) was, "I know this man!" But then I couldn't figure out how I knew him. Was it in Italy (he looked Italian)? New York? No... Then I overheard, "He says he's God," so I started wondering how God could write a book (and if God was the author, who could be the publisher!) The concept of the God-Man, God in human form, was totally beyond my grasp. I finally

decided that I could not say for sure whether Meher Baba was God or not, because only God could say that and I wasn't God as far as I knew! Perhaps he was what he claimed - he had such an honest face I felt he couldn't tell a lie. Then I gave it no more thought. That was how I first heard of Meher Baba.

It was late when my friends and I got up to go home that evening; the fog had rolled in thickly from the ocean making it hard to find our way to our car. Having found it in the fog, we settled in for the long drive back. As it was my car, I was driving, and from the first turn down the long driveway I realized that our return drive was going to be difficult - the fog was so thick I couldn't see more than a few feet ahead, and the road down the mountain was full of hairpin turns and hard to drive even in daylight. I leaned over the wheel and tried my best.

As the minutes crept by, it seemed harder and harder to negotiate the steep turns in the dark and fog. I was tired and began to be nervous - would this road never end? As I really began to feel the strain of the drive and the eeriness of the enshrouding fog, I suddenly felt two hands on the steering wheel beside mine; they seemed to be steering the car! I could almost see them, the feeling was so strong. I asked my friend seated next to me if she noticed anything about the wheel. She didn't and I told her about my feeling of the two hands. It didn't seem frightening to us at the time, only strange and inexplicable and we lapsed into puzzled silence.

The bottom of the mountain finally came into sight, and we were weary and dizzy from the endless twistings and turnings of the road. At the first crossroads, just at the foot of the mountain, the car suddenly would not go into first gear. The shift kept jamming - so I put the car in neutral and we coasted into a gas station, fortunately just a few yards away. We left the car there to be repaired and called a friend who kindly came and drove us home.

The next morning I returned to the gas station to pick up my car. The attendant greeted me with a chuckle, "Now, just

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tell me where you drove that car in from, miss!" I smiled, a little puzzled at his manner, and said, "We came from La Honda," (the town at the top of the mountain). At this he laughed, "That's a good joke! Now really, where'd you come from - I'm surprised you could get that car to move!" I was even more puzzled, "Why do you say that?" He chuckled, "Well lady, one turn around the station and the right wheel flew off! You couldn't have driven her in that condition for more than 200 yards, so don't kid me about coming from La Honda! Just not possible!" And still chuckling, he went off to get me my re-wheeled car.

Two years later in 1971 when I came to Baba at His beautiful Center in Myrtle Beach, the episode of the two guiding hands became transformed in my mind into a sign from Beloved Baba - that He had had me in His hands from the very first evening I heard His Name, and probably for ages before.

Heather Nadel

JESUS' PRESENCE RECAPTURED

Some time in the late '60s, my father called me into his room and said, quite seriously, "I have something to tell you that is very important." He then gave me a book, *God to Man and Man to God* and told me that the author, Meher Baba, was a Master in India and he felt Baba was my Master. What made him say this I don't know. I wasn't the least interested in God or Masters or anything like that. So, I said, "Yeah, thanks," and put the book away and forgot about it. My father was interested in spiritual things but I wasn't.

This was during the psychedelic era in California and I got involved in drug smuggling. I was caught and sent to a federal

penitentiary for six years. I felt very alienated in prison. I had smuggled but I had never been a druggie myself, never hurt anyone, robbed anyone or anything like that. I felt very different from the rest of the prisoners and found that I couldn't really talk to them.

I became very frustrated at being so lonely and I thought, "If there is a God, now is the time for me to find Him." I didn't believe in God, I didn't care two hoots about church or anything like that, but I was so lonely I wanted to find something to fill me up so I felt if God did exist, now was the time for God to come to me!

Around this time another young guy was put in prison and I became friends with him. He had done some reading and knew about Yogananda and some other masters and I used to talk to him about God and he would tell me about these masters.

Now for some reason, the job I was given at the prison was a very simple one. I had to mop the hallways three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and evening. The rest of the time I had to myself. I used to go outside to the big yard where I had a nice view of the mountains and fields and flowers and spend a lot of time there by myself thinking.

One day, while sitting in the yard, I saw a person approaching from a great distance. As he started to get closer, I began to feel his powerful presence. It seemed very odd but I started feeling something I had never felt before. As the man got closer the feeling got stronger.

I noticed then that the man was naked except for a little loincloth but even more amazing was the fact that when he got close to me everything stopped. There was absolutely no sound anywhere; the birds stopped chirping, the wind stopped blowing - it was as if the earth's atmosphere had disappeared and there was only the presence of this being.

He came to within a few yards of me and I suddenly realized that this person was Jesus Christ and His presence became completely overwhelming. He walked up to me until He was about ten feet away and then He stood there for a

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while. The next thing I knew He was up on the cross looking down at me. Even so I couldn't help but notice His beauty and the presence He had. I remember that His body was trembling, especially His abdominal region, as if He were having convulsions there and it was clear that His body was suffering tremendously. But it didn't register on His face. He was looking at me and His face was so calm, so serene and there was so much love coming from Him that you wouldn't have known unless you looked at His body that He was suffering. .

And then, suddenly, He was again standing on the ground looking at me. And then again He was up on the cross. This happened two times and then, after looking at me, He just turned and started walking back the way He had come.

As He left I began to feel a pain I had never felt - it was the pain of separation. It seemed incredible to me that He would just leave me like that. And as He went, His presence also faded and soon everything was normal again. Except that I could not forget the look He had given me. From that moment on, I became a person that loved Jesus as God.

Fortunately my prison term was reduced and I was let out after only a year. When I was released, all I wanted to do was recapture that feeling I had when Jesus looked at me, but I never could. I would go to all the churches around and look at their statues of Jesus. If anyone wanted to find me anywhere in the afternoon after school or work, that's where I'd be, just gazing at Jesus and hoping that some day I would get that feeling back.

Meanwhile I was trying to lead a normal life. I was going to college and also trying to get a job. I applied at an optical company where, as it turned out, Ralph Brown was working. Ralph had his ideas about spirituality and I had mine but they were completely different.

I think he mentioned Meher Baba once or twice and I remember being impressed because Ralph would always say, "Baba says..." Most people I'd heard talk about other masters would only talk about what they knew themselves but

Ralph would always refer to what Baba said. It made an impression.

After I had been working at the optical company for three or four months, Ralph came to me and told me that the coming Wednesday was Meher Baba's birthday and I should come to the celebration being held at a bookstore in Venice, Ca. I didn't really know who Meher Baba was and I wasn't interested. I said, "I can't go because I have an exam that night at school." In an off-hand manner Ralph said, "Never mind. Come to the celebration and then don't worry - you'll pass the exam."

It was a bit of a challenge, but I wasn't interested in Meher Baba so I decided not to go. But what happened next was really unique because I began to hear Baba's name inside me all day long. I would hear, "Meher Baba, Meher Baba," and I thought, "What am I hearing?" I would go to lunch and all I could hear was, "Meher Baba." For two days all I heard was, "Meher Baba." Just like a bell, every so often, "Meher Baba."

So I said to myself, "Wow, this has got to be something unusual." I was paranoid about Masters - Ralph had told me Baba was a spiritual Master from India and I didn't want any "master" tampering with my life - but after hearing Meher Baba's name sound inside my head for two days I was very curious about who He could be. Finally I decided to call my prison friend since I knew he was interested in Masters and I felt he could act as a buffer for me.

I called him and told him, "Some people are celebrating Meher Baba's birthday. I think you should come with me. There's going to be festivities and everything and you'll like this Meher Baba guy." So my friend, his father and his sister all went with me to the bookstore in Venice the night of the celebration, and immediately I was a little freaked out.

I mean there was one person (later I learned that he had met Baba) sitting by the door with tape over his mouth observing silence. Another guy comes to greet me with a suit and tie on while someone else was wearing shoes with big

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heels with stars on them. There was a conglomeration of people and they all seemed very odd to me.

I felt, "No. This isn't for me. These people are really weird." But out of courtesy I stayed. Several times I had enough - what with all the hugging and Baba's pictures everywhere - but each time I tried to leave, something would happen and I would end up staying.

Finally they showed a film of Meher Baba's visit to Andhra in February 1954. And that's when I started to become interested in Baba, because I saw him walking and thousands of people following him around. I said to myself, "This Meher Baba must be a very, very special person for these people to follow him around like that. It's almost as if He's the Christ." And with that thought I started really paying attention to the film.

Baba was sitting in a chair giving *darshan* when suddenly His face came out of the film and looked at me. He showered me with a big ray of love and I suddenly recognized Baba's eyes as the eyes of Jesus. Internally I exclaimed, "I've seen those eyes before. That's God!" I knew that instantly. I knew that Baba was God the very second He gave me that glance. And simultaneously the Presence came back! The Presence that Jesus had taken with Him came from Meher Baba's eyes and this time it stayed with me. And continues to stay!

Tony Griss

CENTER OF THE AVATAR'S WEB

The web of the Avatar is so fine, so subtle, that it can take a long time before we realize that fortunately we have been caught. It is only after traveling from one strand to another until we reach the center where all the strands converge that

we suddenly realize how vast His web is and how purposeful our haphazard journey really was.

In October 1971, my wife Sonja and I were leaving Greece in our VW van for Istanbul, en route to India. We picked up a hitchhiker whose name was Richard. He was also on his way to India, hoping to be in Poona by January to attend a Meher Baba festival. My ears picked up at Meher Baba. My main motive in going to India was to find a guru or master who could help me in my spiritual search so I eagerly pumped Richard for more details.

As it turned out, Richard didn't know much and what he did know wasn't completely accurate as the "festival" he thought was held in Poona was Amartithi which is held in Ahmednagar. But we did learn from him that Meher Baba had passed away, Meher Baba is Love and that Richard was going to Poona to "feel the vibes."

Richard never made it to Poona, however, as war between Pakistan and India broke out in December and he got frightened and took the first available plane to the U.S. But he had left us with the priceless treasure of Baba's name.

In those hippie days, large groups of young Westerners would congregate at certain places: the beaches in Goa, Benares, Rishikesh, etc. Good company could be found there and, most importantly to us, the various merits of this guru, that yogi, this meditative technique could be discussed, analyzed, accepted or rejected. Whenever we arrived at such a place, we would ask, "Who knows of Meher Baba?" But no one ever did.

In this way we traveled all around India imbibing the country's spirituality, but never finding its source. By March 1972 we had arrived in Kathmandu in Nepal. In addition to the usual tourists, hundreds of young Western hippies had poured up into the mountains to escape the heat of the Indian summer. A great opportunity to ask our standard question about Meher Baba, but we continued to draw a blank each and every time and were beginning to think that Meher Baba was a figment of Richard's imagination.

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While in Nepal we decided to trek 150 miles to the base of Everest. Of all the wonderful sights of nature, nothing I have seen can compare with the awesome grandeur of the Himalayan mountains. After rounding a bend in the hillside and being confronted with a particularly magnificent panorama, I spontaneously exclaimed, "God must live up here!" On the 11th day of our trek, we walked into the tiny hamlet of Tengboche. The majestic peaks of Nuptse, Lhotse, Ama Dablam and Everest peered down at us puny interlopers.

We stopped for tea in this secluded spot and noticed another young Western couple sitting there wearing buttons on their jackets. The buttons had the face of a smiling man. "Who is that man?" I asked. "Meher Baba," came the reply.

"What, who, when...!" the questions came fast and furious but Stu and Georgeanne Erskine were returning from their trek and were too tired to talk and said we should contact them in Kathmandu when we returned.

We did, but once again they were about to leave, this time for Japan, so we said, "See you in Japan," as Sonja and I were also planning to go there. We thought maybe there we would finally find out from them about Meher Baba, but it seemed a pretty hopeless expectation as we weren't traveling with the Erskines and none of us knew anything about the country or had any idea where we would be staying.

Sonja and I arrived in Yokohama in June, soon went to Tokyo, but we never bumped into Stu or Georgeanne in either place. After a month we moved to Kobe where Sonja got a job and I found work in nearby Osaka.

One weekend we both went to Osaka and signed up with an ad agency, leaving our photos and address in case they wanted to use us as models in some ad campaign. We returned to Kobe and, as the weeks passed by, forgot all about it. We were earning and saving quite a bit of money but the hustle and bustle of the Japanese industrial cities was becoming a little oppressive and our thoughts often returned to the comparative tranquility of India.

One morning, out of the blue, we received a letter: "Saw your photos at the agency. We're living in Kyoto. Come and visit. Stu and Georgeanne." Within a week we had moved to Kyoto. And this time, at last, they began to tell us about Meher Baba and lend us books from their substantial collection.

My mind drank in the profundity of Meher Baba's *Discourses* and my heart basked in the glow of His life story. By November of that year, 1972, about a year after we had first heard Meher Baba's name, and seemingly having chased it half way round the world, we were back in India, this time in Meherabad. The outer search was over and the inner journey in Baba's love had begun, for we had arrived at the center of the Avatar's web!

Peter Davies

RECOGNITION IGNORED

Shortly after I was drawn into Meher Baba's orbit of love in the early '70s and accepted Him as the Avatar, a friend of my older brother who had become aware of my relationship with Baba related the following incident to me.

He said, "It was Him, it was Meher Baba who was with me. I didn't know who He was until I saw this picture of Him." The photo he mentioned was in the front of a book I had lent him, it was taken in the mid 1940s. As he related this to me he added that he had forgotten Him long ago but was instantly reminded when he saw that picture of Baba.

About seven years earlier, in 1966, a tragedy had befallen his family in the form of a fraudulent lawsuit brought against his father by a business competitor. The father was a bio-chemist by training and had become wealthy operating a

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blood bank. A competitor of the father had planted some old blood in the bank and then reported it to the authorities as a violation. This ultimately led to the family losing the business and the father going to jail.

After the sentence was passed in New York, my friend came to Miami Beach and rented a hotel room and secluded himself there. He was in a state of deep despair having just seen his father put in jail and their house taken from them and he wanted to be alone and forget all of it. One night, he was awakened from his sleep and found a man (Baba) in a long robe standing by his bed. Rather than being alarmed at this unexpected occurrence, he felt at ease and comforted by the man's presence.

Taking hold of the man's hand, he was helped out of bed and led across the room to a low table with chairs where they sat facing each other. After a time he asked the man, "Who are you?" and the reply came back through thought transference, "I am Everything." And then before he could ask any more questions, he was told, "Don't worry, I will help you." These statements were accepted without question as he felt that Baba knew everything about him and he didn't feel the need to ask any more questions but found that all his problems and depression had evaporated in Baba's presence.

After some time, Baba took his hand and led him back to bed. As he drifted off to sleep, Baba seemed to recede deeper into the room as if the room itself had expanded to accommodate Him. The depression and worry that had plagued him had been lifted and for some time afterward the atmosphere of Baba's presence stayed with him. Gradually as life went on, he put the experience out of his mind and eventually forgot about it. Only when he saw Baba's picture did he remember and feel prompted to share his experience with me.

After this he read some more of Baba's books until finally he returned them and told me that he would like to forget the whole thing. This was surprising to me since it was evident that the contact he had had with Baba was beneficial and at a pivotal time in his life. I couldn't understand his wish to

simply turn his back on the whole experience.

Upon questioning he replied that the feelings stirred by Meher Baba then and now were so deep that he felt pursuing it any further would lead to fundamental changes in his life. And, since he didn't want to change his life, the only recourse was to totally put Baba out of it.

I haven't seen this friend for over ten years now and have lost touch with him. But I marvel at how unconditional the Avatar's compassion is and how patiently He waits for those that are His.

Scott O'Neil

"AVATAR" IN LETTERS OF GOLD

One night in 1972 I had a dream that I was in a bookstore and I was looking for a book for my soul. I couldn't find anything; it seemed as if I had read it all, or I'd seen it before, or it wasn't right. I just wasn't attracted to anything in the bookstore. Every thing I saw made me feel, "Oh, that again."

In the dream, a friend came up to me and asked me what I was looking for. I said, "I'm looking for a book for my soul." He said, "I have something that I think you'll like." He brought out a blue book that had a gold heart on the cover and in golden letters at the top was written "AVATAR." I took the book and said, "Okay, I'll read this," and then I woke up.

Well, I had never even heard of the word Avatar before and I wondered if there was such a word as that. I looked it up in the dictionary and it said something like, "human incarnation of God." First of all, I was surprised that there really was such a word, and then I wondered if there was such a book.

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A few days later I was in a delicatessen and the person who had given me the book in the dream walked in. I said, "I had a dream about you the other night. I dreamt that you gave me a book that had a golden heart on the cover with the word AVATAR written in gold, with light coming from it." He said, "Someone just gave me that book a few days ago, but there's no light coming out!" He immediately left the deli to get the book for me. It was Jean Adriel's book, *Avatar: the life story of the Perfect Master, Meher Baba*. The first edition, printed in 1947, had, under its jacket, a blue hard cover with the title, AVATAR in golden letters over a stylized heart with rays of light extending from it.

When I started reading it, it brought back to me my memories as a child, a small child being loved by Christ. It's not that I particularly loved Christ, but I remember the feeling that He loved me. I think the first time I ever really felt loved was by Christ, because I never felt that same kind of experience from anyone else.

In Sunday School we would sing songs, "Jesus loves me, this I know... Little ones to Him belong, I am weak, but He is strong." I took these songs to heart and I would think, "Oh it would be so nice to be with Jesus because He loves children so much. He loves little girls." This book revived that feeling of being loved by God.

I finished reading it in a couple of days and that night, Baba came to me in a dream. He looked at me as if He loved me so much, and understood me, that He just understood me. He was so beautiful, so much light, so much love. It was breathtaking. I couldn't breathe in His presence - everything just stopped except His look. I couldn't catch my breath. I felt truly understood by Baba through and through.

When I woke up I was very happy from this experience and the funny thing is I wasn't really searching for anything at that time. I wasn't happy and I wasn't unhappy. I was just sort of plodding along. I guess my soul knew it was searching, but my personality was oblivious to the whole thing.

The next night I had another dream of some middle-aged

women sitting on benches with a lot of trees around and I knew, when I woke up, that that dream had had something to do with Meher Baba, but I didn't know how. So that was the end of it. I put the book on a shelf and forgot completely about it. I never thought of Meher Baba again at all for another year. Baba had planted a seed and it was now underground.

About a year later, in 1973, I was walking down the street and, for no particular reason - I wasn't doing my laundry or anything - I walked into a laundromat. There was a bulletin board inside and on a little 3x5 index card was written, "Films of Meher Baba." And they were being shown that very night! I thought, "Meher Baba! I had those dreams about Him! I'm going to go see those films."

I went to the films and in one of them was a scene of some of Baba's women disciples sitting on a bench under the trees - just exactly as I had seen it in my dream! I was stunned and didn't know what to make of this. I met some of the people there and although they were nice, they all thought Meher Baba was God. Even though I had had these unusual dream experiences, I wasn't ready to accept Baba as God. Still I bought a picture of Baba, but then put it in a drawer and forgot about the whole thing once again. Fortunately, Baba doesn't forget about us, however.

A year later I was going through a really hard time in my life. I was feeling very depressed and unloved and unable to love. I just generally had the blues about almost everything. Just at this time, I happened to meet someone in a grocery store. Instantly we struck up a friendship and went out for a cup of tea. This was Rich Goldman and the first thing he asked me was, "Have you heard about Meher Baba?" To make a long story short, Baba thus introduced Himself once more into my life.

At the time, I was out of work and Richie gave me a job at his company. I started seeing some of the other Baba people in Chicago and with the money I saved from work I went to Meher Baba's "Home" in the West - the Myrtle Beach

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Center, for the first time around Valentine's Day in 1975. During this visit, Baba's presence profoundly touched my heart. Since then I have never hesitated to accept Meher Baba as God in human form, the Avatar.

Judy Gregory

MY CARELESSNESS, HIS KINDNESS

When I left for India from Myrtle Beach in 1973, I was scared stiff of traveling all that distance by myself. Being aware of my scatter-brained nature, I had planned for every eventuality and had filled several little notebooks with detailed instructions to myself on what to do at each and every stage of the journey. And I was careful to keep all my money and documents safely - attaching them to the inside of my jacket with a huge safety pin. Although I was determined to visit Meher Baba's home in India, I had faint confidence in myself that I would actually be able to get myself there. Now I wish I had put my confidence in Baba, as Baba is all the time at the back of everything we do, taking care of us even though we don't know it.

The trip went well, almost as if Baba rolled out the red carpet for me, with people to aid and assist me at every step. Finally I reached Bombay and, with the help of an Air India lady whose sister was a Baba lover, I was in a taxi heading through Bombay in the middle of the night for Nargis's house. When I reached there I was proud of myself for executing the journey so well. I didn't think to give Baba the credit for His care for me on the journey.

He soon gave me the opportunity to remember Him, however, because the next morning I had a surprise: I discovered that in spite of my precautions I had managed to leave my bag

containing my passport as well as my traveler's checks and one thousand rupees in cash, in the taxi!

After the obligatory visits to the police and the bank, I traveled on to Ahmednagar, trying to forget the whole thing. I was terribly embarrassed and ashamed of myself. When I arrived in Ahmednagar, everyone there knew me as the girl who had left her money and passport on the taxi seat!

But then, hard to believe what happened: two weeks later, Adi K. Irani received a telephone call from Nargis. The taxi driver had come to her house, apologizing for the delay (he hadn't been able to find her house). He returned the passport, the traveler's checks, and the one thousand rupees intact! Everyone was amazed, especially me. I was so touched to see the lengths to which Beloved Baba goes to care for His foolish lovers. I felt as if the whole drama had been arranged by Him to express His love for me.

A few years later, in 1975, through a similar incident, Baba showed me once more that He is always there, taking care of us even when we are careless ourselves. I had planned a trip to Hamirpur for the *mela* (gathering) with two friends. We left from our house in a rickshaw at night to catch the train to the north of India.

As we were all jammed into the small rickshaw with many bags, I put one of my bags in the front with the driver. When we got down at the station, I forgot my bag in front and the driver drove off. It wasn't until the last minute, when the train was ready to leave that I discovered I was missing the bag with my passport and all my money for the journey!

My friends left on the train and I returned alone to Adi's office to confess my foolishness and to see what could be done, although I hadn't much hope of recovering anything. At length, after several days, the rickshaw driver was found but he denied any knowledge of a bag and said it must have fallen out on the road. But still Baba was there, taking care of me.

Amazingly, after a few more days, the driver showed up with my bag with passport and money, not a rupee missing!

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Again Baba had saved me even though I had not learned my lesson to be more alert and careful.

After this incident had died down, Eruch put it to me, "Why do you give Baba so much trouble?" Then I began to become more determined to not give Him so many headaches with losing my passports and money. But, on the other hand, my carelessness provided me with the opportunity to experience Baba's loving kindness.

Lindsay Reiter

ONE DREAM AND TWO SHOES

Evening was approaching. Cotton clouds were beginning to display their ephemeral multi-colored garments. The hot, burning tropical sun was tired of shining over San Juan, Puerto Rico on that early day of February 1969.

My brother-in-law and I were giving my mother a ride to her place after an afternoon visit of coffee and idle talk about many things.

The car moved with difficulty through the heavy traffic of San Juan's rush hour and once in a while we would talk about how things were deteriorating. My mother has always been a devout Catholic and ever since I can remember she has been carrying on an almost constant dialogue with Jesus in the form of an image of the Sacred Heart which she has in her living room. To Him she told her problems and from Him she sought comfort.

My mother always had dreams, beautiful dreams which she used to narrate to me and, taking advantage of a momentary silence in the car, she said to us: "A couple of nights ago (January 31, 1969) I had a very strange dream."

I thought, "Oh no! Here she goes again." But mothers

have a way of saying what they want to say, so I listened to her story. It went as follows. "In this dream, I was being taken to a foreign land. It was the Far East or so I gathered from the clothes people were wearing. I was being guided by a brown skinned man on a motorcycle. He took me to a place where a procession of all sorts of people was taking place, and leading it was a strikingly beautiful woman who had tied a blue scarf around her head.

"Her palms were held together as if in prayer and she was looking heavenward where an enormous vision of a powerful knight riding a white horse could be seen rising above the clouds. The blue-scarfed woman looked at me straight in the eyes and, bowing her head a little, gave me the most serene and beautiful smile. Then I woke up."

I listened politely, not knowing what to reply when my mother asked, "Well, what do you think this dream could mean?" "It sounds like a biblical dream," I replied, trying to please her and drawing from memories of when I used to believe in that sort of thing. As a young boy I enjoyed her dreams; they had been delightful stories of far-away fairy-tale lands to me. But now I was twenty-six and my life was different.

My personal outlook was cynical and negative. My strategy was to find some easy escape through long conversations about how to save the world while blaming "them" for the sad conditions which I saw all around me. My prevalent mood in those early days of 1969 was one of nostalgia about some unknown missing factor.

I had read many books and was very proud of my loosely held information on the scientific thoughts of the day. Everything seemed to be under the control of my "powerful" logic. I had no time for the fairy-tale dreams of an elderly woman, even if she was my mother. Dreams are dreams and, as such, are easily forgotten.

Later, as life unfolded, I found myself in a deeper state of confusion while at the same time I was continuing my "learning" processes pursuing an advanced degree in science.

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Oscillating between contradictory impulses, searching desperately and unconsciously for something, I stumbled one day across Meher Baba and, after some struggle, recognized Him and accepted Him as the one Beloved I had been looking and yearning for, but that is another story.

My mother was happy about my new found love, for it brought me closer to God, "although not to Jesus," she secretly thought. But time passed and she came to love Meher Baba, regarding Him as a prophet, a saint, a lovable being, but never as the Christ.

Towards the end of 1974, seven of us from Puerto Rico had the opportunity to travel to India to meet the companions of Avatar Meher Baba, the Eternal Beloved, and pay homage at His Tomb (Samadhi) at Meherabad which houses the "House" in which Reality was confined for almost 75 years. My mother was invited to come along and, at the ripe age of 66, she accepted the challenge of such a long journey.

Twenty-four hours of jet technology and airport labyrinths transported our bodies to Bombay. A flying carpet wouldn't have been more exciting, but exhaustion was oozing from all of us. We hired two taxis and headed for the sleeping metropolis.

My brother-in-law, my mother and I were sharing one of the taxis. Due to the many evasive actions on the part of our skillful driver, we managed to survive and found ourselves in a central part of the city where someone shouted, "Jai Baba!" We saw a well tanned man on a green motorcycle approaching the taxis and exchanging "*Jais*" with the members of the group; he was Jal Dastoor, whom Norberto had phoned from the airport. Amidst the tiredness, the excitement, the joy and the confusion, my mother's voice was heard saying excitedly, "It's him, it's him."

"Who?" we asked. "That man, that is the man who guided me in my dream." We were too tired to figure out what she was talking about, what dream she was referring to. "Remember," she said to us, "the dream about the foreign country, the procession, the leading lady, the vision? There is the

man who was guiding me through it on his motorcycle. I recognize him. It is him!"

And eventually her certainty and persistence inspired our tired minds to yield a memory of that car ride five years ago, almost five centuries ago! But the story did not end there. For when we got to Ahmednagar, we visited Meherazad. As we approached the porch of Baba's house for the first time, my mother suddenly stopped and pointed at Mehera, who was sitting there, and exclaimed, "She is the one who headed the procession!" While inside the living room, there was a painting of Baba on a white horse which was just like the vision my mother had had of the great knight riding in the heavens on his white horse.

We stayed in India for two weeks, and the evening before we were to leave, my mother and I went to Meherabad to attend evening *arti*. At the top of the hill, twinkling stars smiled their nightly smile at the pilgrims below, indicating the end of evening *arti*. Quietude pervaded Meherabad hill, pierced only by the far away music of the guitar and our hearts' songs of love.

We descended slowly following the faint circle of light provided by our flashlight. My mother was holding on to me, nervous that scorpions and cobras might spring out of the surrounding darkness. It was then that she said to me, "You know, in my heart I know He is the One, the same as Christ, but my mind fails to understand and to accept. After all, for so many years I was told, and believed, that Jesus was the sole manifestation of God." I told her not to worry. I thought I understood her dilemma but didn't know that the real answer was quietly sounding from her feet!

We returned to Viloo Villa where we had been staying and started packing for an early start the next day. My mother carefully took off her shoes and, in her philosophical style, said that they should go to a museum, for they had traveled so far, across so many holy places. As she placed them in her suitcase with the soles pointing upward, she noticed part of a figure on one of the shoes. Her failing eyesight prevented her

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from distinguishing it, but she knew that there was a figure on the sole of her right shoe.

She brought this to our attention and one of the group looked and remarked that it was Meher Baba's face! And sure enough, etched in the eroded sole, in tan and brown tones, was a very clear profile of Baba's face. Curiosity made us look at the other shoe, whereupon we found an almost perfect sketch of Christ, similar to El Greco's depiction of Jesus on the cross. Everybody who was present admired the images and was astonished at the "miraculous" way they had appeared. But only my mother understood.

She said, "The miraculous thing is not that the faces appeared on the soles of my shoes, that's incidental. The real miracle is His compassion: His answer came so swiftly. 'Don't worry,' He said, 'I am in both Jesus and Baba, love me as either, for I will always be with you.' These were the words silently spoken and recorded by the soles of my shoes." Words that were etched by the dust that some time ago had kissed His blessed feet.

Arsenio Rodriguez

BABA SLIPPED IN THROUGH THE CRACK

I first heard of Meher Baba in 1971. I was very much attracted to Him but I felt something was missing to enable me to really accept Him as the Divine Beloved. Yet I also felt sure that what was missing would come eventually. It did a few years later.

It happened that I had my first love affair with a woman in the summer of 1974; by December it was at an end. My heart was broken, but fortunately Baba slipped in through the crack.

I was then spending a few days with my parents in Oklahoma City. One night I lay in an unusual state, my body asleep but my mind extraordinarily aware and alert. I had been effortlessly thinking of Baba for days and this night He came to me from "behind" or beyond my mind, bringing to me a most peaceful and enjoyable feeling. Baba and I carried on a dialogue that lasted most of the night and He answered all sorts of questions I had.

It's strange, but I can only remember one question, though I am sure the effect of His having answered all my questions has caused a great change in my attitude and approach to Him. The question I remember is, "May I think of you as the Avatar?" Baba's reply was, "You can think of me as the Avatar if you want to, but know that the concept or idea of Avatar does not even begin to touch what I really am."

Dan Sparks

LOST LOCKET, RICHLY REWARDED

Amartithi morning, 1976, proved to be a most bitter-sweet occasion for me. I had been privileged to participate in the carrying of the torch from Meherazad to Meherabad with six other runners. Every year, beginning from 1975, a torch is lit in Baba's bedroom at Meherazad at 5:00 a.m. on the 31st of January. It is then carried in relays by both Eastern and Western runners the fifteen miles to Meherabad where, on the stroke of seven, it is used to light the *dhuni*.

Shortly after this run, I sat down on Meherabad Hill to relax a little and reflect on this wonderful experience. When I reached into my jacket pocket to retrieve my Baba locket that I had removed from around my neck just before the running, I discovered it was missing! This locket contained Baba's hair

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that I had received from Mehera on a previous visit to India. It was my most prized possession and I felt sick when I realized I had lost it.

My mind raced frantically to recall where I could have lost it, when I remembered that I had stored my jacket in the jeep that carried the runners. However, a thorough search of the jeep proved futile. My only other hope was to return to Meherazad where I had originally taken off the locket. I did so and looked all over, asked the servants and the *mandali* if they had found it, but no locket was discovered. This incident dampened my spirits for the remainder of my visit.

On my last day in India, I was sitting with Pendu at tea time. He noticed that I had been rather troubled lately and asked me what the matter was. When I related this story he suggested I ask Mehera for more of Baba's hair. However, on second thought we concluded that Mehera would probably be saddened to learn I had so carelessly lost Baba's hair. Besides, the supply of His hair is limited and should be given to new pilgrims, not to knuckleheads like me who lose this most precious treasure.

We both sat in silence for several minutes contemplating my folly; then Pendu gave me a deep look of compassion, smiled, and slowly removed his own Baba locket and placed it around my neck. I was surprised by this spontaneous act of kindness and immediately attempted to return the locket. However, he steadfastly refused, saying, "Once a gift is given, it should not be taken back."

When I asked where this locket had come from, he informed me that Dr. Goher's aunt, Pilamai, had given it to him on one of his birthdays in the 1930s. It was a small heart-shaped locket that contained Baba's hair and signature and had been worn by Pendu for years. I was overcome with joy at receiving this gift of love, given in Baba's love, by one of the intimate *mandali*.

But this is not the end of the story. Several months later I met Alan Wagner at the Meher Center in Myrtle Beach. Having just arrived from India, he asked if I had lost a locket

while there. After hearing my description of it, he reached into his pocket and produced my locket.

"Where did you find it?" I exclaimed. He informed me that a servant had discovered it buried in the dirt next to a well at Meherazad near Baba's room. Instantly I remembered that I had wandered over to the well to say a prayer to Baba just before the torch was lit in His bedroom. It was at that time that I had removed the locket and put it in my jacket. The locket must have fallen out of my pocket just then and in my excitement to begin the run I hadn't noticed.

I had lost my locket while thinking of Baba and preparing to run in His name. Perhaps that is why Baba returned the locket to me. But Pendu's loving concern was an added treasure Baba gave me which I fondly remember to this day.

Dennis McCabe

I FOUND A NEW LIFE IN BABA

By the grace of God, I was born into a well educated, cultured family with loving parents. My two brothers had done well in school and found good jobs abroad; one in Canada and the other in the States. I was also doing well in school, but it seems that God, in His mercy, wished to divert my attention from my happy dreams of worldly success. For in 1975, when I was sixteen, I began to suffer from epilepsy.

Two or three times a month, I would have a seizure and go into convulsions. During these fits, I would bite my tongue and fall down unconscious and injure myself. Not only that, but the tension of studying seemed to precipitate the attacks and I finally had to leave school.

My parents tried everything to cure me of this condition. I took ayurvedic medicine, homeopathic treatments and

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allopathic drugs. I even tried acupuncture and attended various Christian healing missions. I also went to many different temples and holy shrines in an attempt to rid myself of this dreadful disease, but all to no avail.

In May or June of 1979, my mother planned a big trip to Shirdi, to Sai Baba's Samadhi, as many people are reputed to have been cured there. Before going, my late uncle - who was an ardent lover of Meher Baba, urged my mother to take me to visit Meherabad, especially as it is so close to Shirdi.

My mother, grandmother and I then left. We went to Shirdi and Sakori (where Upasni Maharaj had his ashram) and my mother then proposed following my uncle's suggestion of going to Meherabad. I didn't want to go. I didn't believe in Meher Baba and I was tired of going to so many different *samadhis* when none of them gave me any relief. To me Meher Baba was just another Baba and I saw no point in prolonging the trip by bowing down at His Samadhi too.

Somehow, however, my mother persuaded me to go and so we went to Meherabad. The moment I entered Meher Baba's Samadhi I experienced a splitting headache and heard a loud vibrating noise, like that of an electric motor whining. As soon as I stepped out of the Samadhi the headache and noise disappeared. I went into the Samadhi again, and again the same thing happened - I heard the noise and experienced the same kind of splitting headache. And again, as soon as I stepped out of the Samadhi, they completely vanished. I was astonished at this. I was immediately convinced that Meher Baba must have been a great saint as I had never felt such power or had such an experience in any of the holy temples or shrines I had visited before.

We returned to Hyderabad and fifteen days later I saw Meher Baba in a dream. He was sitting in a small cabin, seated near the window and giving *darshan* to about fifteen people who were sitting on the ground. I was one of those people and I saw Meher Baba smiling and looking at me. I was amazed as Baba's face was so gracious, so glowing in radiance, with His beautiful hair resting on His shoulders.

Baba was so beautiful that even in my dream I wondered if I was dreaming it or it was real.

Just then I suddenly woke up and found myself in bed and I was immediately disappointed that I had awakened from such a wonderful dream. From that time on, I began to believe that Meher Baba was not just a great saint, but my Master. And from that day on, my health started to improve and the frequency of the epileptic seizures was greatly reduced and I experienced a tremendous relief.

But I was still very young in Baba's love, and I began to feel distressed that I had given up my schooling. I felt that without education I would not be able to secure a decent job and would have to rely on my parents for support instead of earning on my own. My parents were also concerned about my future and I used to feel even more desperate whenever they would discuss my plight. One day, in a state of despondency, I decided to commit suicide.

I purchased a new bottle of 70 mg. epilan tablets, which I had been taking twice a day as instructed by my doctor. That night I went to the back of our house and, sitting comfortably in the darkness, I swallowed 49 of the 50 tablets in the bottle. I took them one by one with water, repeating Meher Baba's name with each pill. The last tablet I left in the bottle so my parents would know how I died. Then I went to my room and fell asleep, quite happy in the knowledge that I would soon be dead.

I used to get up in the morning before six each day, so when I was still in bed after 7 a.m., my father came to see what was wrong. He tried to wake me but discovered that I was unconscious. I was immediately rushed to a hospital where I was given emergency treatment, but for two days I remained in a coma and the doctors held out little hope for my survival.

On the third day, while still in a coma, I had a wonderful dream. I was walking along a road to the left of which there was a ditch, and to the right of which there was a graveyard. As I was walking, I suddenly saw a herd of huge black water buffaloes with abnormally long horns running towards me.

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Meher Baba was driving the buffaloes towards me with a stick which He held in His hand.

Terrified that the buffaloes were going to trample me, I jumped to the left and fell into the ditch. Simultaneously, I cried out and actually jumped in the hospital bed, moving my arms so violently that I pulled the glucose drip bottle (one of over sixteen I had been given since admission) from its rack and it shattered on the ground into pieces. At the same time, I woke up and was conscious once more. I felt, with a deep certainty, that Baba had saved my life.

Not long after this I was well enough to be discharged from the hospital. A few months later I went to Meherabad in January 1980 to attend Avatar Meher Baba's eleventh Amartithi. During my first visit to Meherabad, I had only been to the Samadhi and had not visited lower Meherabad at all. I was utterly amazed, therefore, to discover that the Rahuri Cabin there was the same little room I had seen in my first dream of Baba, where He had given me *darshan!*

I became convinced that Baba is who he says He is - the Avatar. All the hopelessness and desperation I had felt in my life was replaced by contentment and optimism. Although I hadn't been to school in five years, I began studying on my own and in December 1981, I appeared for my B.A. degree and took all the exams in one sitting and came out with flying colors. Baba's grace made this possible. Baba has literally given me a new life, in both the worldly and spiritual sense of the word. Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!

Anantha Sayana Reddy

THE ICON IN BABA'S ROOM

I first heard of Meher Baba in 1972 while traveling through Iran with my girl friend. We happened to meet two Baba lovers there and, as we were all headed for India, we spent ten days together. I was not interested in Baba at that time, but I was impressed by and attracted to this couple who seemed exceptionally loving.

On reaching India in 1973, we split up, they to Meherabad and we to Delhi, but a little while later my girl friend and I found ourselves in Aurangabad and decided to visit Meherabad to see what could have enticed this couple to go to the "non-ashram" of a deceased man who hadn't spoken for 44 years.

We came as tourists and were interested in seeing everything there was to see. When we heard that the women *mandali* (disciples) of Meher Baba would be coming to visit the Samadhi in another day or two, we decided to stay until then, so we wouldn't have missed anything before continuing our travels.

I didn't have any idea who the women *mandali* were but I went inside the Samadhi with them to see what was happening. For some reason I could not take my eyes off one of the women. It was not just that she was beautiful; there was something else that attracted me. It was her deep love for Meher Baba that radiated from her face. Like a bolt of electricity, it went through me from the top of my head down to my toes. Suddenly I was crying uncontrollably.

After that brief yet timeless visit to the Samadhi, I've never doubted that Meher Baba is the Avatar of the age. I found out later that the woman was Mehera, whose love for Him, Baba once conveyed, was the purest and most profound in the world.

A few days later, I wrote to my French boyfriend and told him he should come to India immediately. He flew over, accepted Baba at once and, in Beloved Baba's Samadhi, we exchanged our "wedding vows," getting married soon after

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in March 1973.

Our marriage was not without its difficulties and after five and a half years we felt that we should go back to the Samadhi for our seventh anniversary - the number seven having spiritual significance or so I thought - and, in a way, renew our relationship in His love.

At the time we were living in Greece, a country where 95% of the population is Greek Orthodox. In this branch of Christianity, the saints are very important. There are many icons made, not just of Christ, but of all the various patron saints. Almost every house has at least one such icon and there is usually a place nearby to burn incense and light a votive candle. I felt that we should have an icon made of Baba and take it to India with us.

But by the time our seventh anniversary approached, we were no longer living in Greece but on Cyprus. Although the people there are also Greek Orthodox, they don't generally keep icons in their homes. Icons are mostly found only in the churches and monasteries and consequently, icon painters are a rare breed. If we were to bring an icon of Baba to India, we had first of all to find an icon painter.

One day in January 1980, we were visiting some friends when I noticed an icon on the wall. I asked my friend if he knew of any icon painters and his cousin who was visiting said, "Yes, my uncle in Limassol makes icons. I'll take you there some time if you want." As Limassol was only one and a half hour's journey from Nicosia where we were living, this seemed ideal, and I didn't bother to make any arrangement on the spot. I didn't realize that my friend's cousin had only just moved to Nicosia and that no one knew his address.

Time seemed to pass very swiftly and now there were only four weeks until our departure time for India and I had no idea how I was going to have the icon made. I was worrying about this as I was biking through town one day when there, standing on a street corner, was the answer to my problems - my friend's cousin himself. Not only that, but he told me, "I'm going to Limassol tomorrow. Come with me to my

uncle's house."

This seemed so propitious that I was sure that from then on things would be easy. Imagine my dismay upon entering the uncle's studio to discover that the man had absolutely no painting skill or talent whatsoever! His portraits of famous people were unrecognizable; his still-lives were more like "still-deaths"; his icons were flat and uninspiring. What could I do? I thought of abandoning the project altogether even if it meant embarrassing my friend's cousin and his uncle.

But I knew that if Baba wanted the icon, He would see to everything. So I said internally, "It's all in your hands now, Baba," and decided to go ahead and face the next problem - the subject matter. Icons cannot be made of just anybody. They must be of Jesus, Mary, or one of the saints recognized by the Greek Orthodox Church. To make an icon of anyone else is heresy and it was quite possible the painter would refuse to make such an icon.

Yet I boldly took out six photos of Baba and showed them to the painter. "Who is He?" he wanted to know. "A saint," I said nonchalantly, very aware of the thin ice I was walking on. "Oh yes," the painter agreed after looking carefully at the photos, "I can tell he's a very good man!" And he not only agreed to paint the icon in the three weeks time that was left before our departure, but he also agreed to use a pure gold background, to put a halo around Baba's head and to do the special scrollwork that I have never seen in any other icon anywhere.

Three weeks later our friend's cousin brought the finished icon to our house and we were overwhelmed by its power and beauty - the life and aliveness it expressed - the way the eyes seemed to look right at you. Remembering the painter's other icons, I knew that Baba must have been holding the paintbrush at all times Himself.

I never saw the painter again. I knew he would have liked to have known more about the "saint," but he had been too polite to ask at the time. He did mention, however, how

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impressed he was with Baba's gesture for "perfect" - the thumb and forefinger touching, forming a circle - for this is the way Jesus is portrayed in many icons as a gesture of blessing.

True to our original plan, a week later my husband and I were at Baba's Samadhi, pledging our love to each other and to Him. When we later visited Meherazad, we presented the icon to Mehera. She was very pleased with it and her spontaneous reaction was, "This is Baba as Jesus Christ!" This surprised me, but then I realized that the painter's love for Jesus must have been given true expression in his painting of Meher Baba. Mehera decided to display the icon on the wall of Baba's room at Meherazad.

I often think of the icon painter and how blessed he is to have been able to look so intently upon God's face for three weeks. I'm sure he knew that the icon he made for us was the best piece of work he had ever done. How fitting that his masterpiece should now be in the room of Beloved Baba - the Creator of all masterpieces.

Donna Bayet

SECLUSION HILL AT RISHIKESH!

I first came to know about Meher Baba some time in the year 1959. I was 24 then and had joined the Government Hamidia College, Bhopal, as a lecturer. Having a passion for understanding and realizing spiritual Truth, I used to spend most of my time among the various spiritual groups devoted to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Theosophy and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Eventually I came across a remarkably simple and humble man, Bhauji Nafde, who was running an Avatar Meher Baba Centre at his residence at the time.

This was the period when my consciousness was dominated by two great influences: Advaita and J. Krishnamurty. I read whatever Nafde gave me to read, frequently attended the weekend programmes conducted at the Baba Centre and even wrote a biographical and interpretive article on Meher Baba at Nafde's request. But in that state of mind - overflowing with intellectual arrogance, pride and caught up in the euphoric whirlwind of Hindu Vedantism - I was a closed shell.

The soil of my consciousness was full of obstinate and deep rooted weeds and the Meher-seeds sown through Nafde remained dormant and neglected for, oh my dear Meher!, a full twenty years.

My indifference to Baba during this period was practically total. In 1961 when my wife, Lata, and I were in Poona, even though I knew Baba was at Guru Prasad, I did not have any desire to meet Him. J. Krishnamurty treats organized religion and spiritual gurus as obstacles to "choiceless" awareness, and the concept of the Avatar was quite unpalatable to me as an Advaitist. Meher Baba, therefore, was not my cup of tea.

In 1980, when I, my wife and our younger son, Pranaya, were at "Paramarth Niketan," Rishikesh, I had a most vivid and colorful vision of a hill while meditating on the banks of the Ganges. In the vision I flew high like the monkey-god, Hanuman, bringing *sanjeevani* (an incident from the *Ramayana*) and below me passed scenes, one after another, till I hovered right above a hill which had a characteristic triangular top and was surrounded by endless green fields which were barren of trees. I told my wife and son about this thrilling experience.

That same day, in the evening, my wife had an interesting encounter with one *mast*-like saint known as Phool Baba. She touched his feet out of reverence but the saint did not like this and wanted to touch my wife's feet in return. He took hold of her hands and pulled her towards him. She resisted, thinking the saint was angry and was going to harm her. The episode

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left her quite shaken and somewhat frightened.

I consoled her by pointing out that the seemingly aggressive actions of advanced souls, at times, prove to be blessings in disguise. I cited the example of Meher Baba and told her that Babajan, a spiritual Master, had hurled a stone at Meher Baba which struck him between the eyebrows. This violent act, however, proved to be a blessing and gave Meher Baba God-realization then and there! This narration relieved my wife's tension and we returned most happily to our room.

On the way back to Rewa, I realized that I had made a mistake, that it was Babajan's kiss that gave Meher Baba God-realization and Upasni Maharaj who threw the stone which began to awaken Baba to His Avataric role. Suddenly there grew in me an intense desire to find out more about Meher Baba and, on my return, I requested a colleague of mine whom I knew to be a Baba lover to lend me some biographical literature. This he did rather generously and included, on his own, a few copies of *Glow* magazine. My wife and I started reading and talking about Meher Baba day in and day out. Then, while glancing through one issue of the *Glow*, I suddenly came across a photograph of Seclusion Hill which almost looked like an aerial view of it. I was amazed to realize that *this* was the hill I had seen in my vision! This small incident convinced me of my deep connection with Meher Baba.

The events at Rishikesh and the reading of the literature at Rewa, as far as we're concerned, were unique and yet interconnected. I could have never discovered the identity of the hill I had seen in my vision had I not narrated that stone hurling incident in Baba's life incorrectly. At the same time, I could never have talked about Baba in the absence of my wife's encounter with that saint. We all, saint included, were made to enact scenes of a drama which revealed its true meaning only at the divinely ordained moment. Mani, Baba's sister, sometimes says, "It is Baba who makes the stories; we only tell them."

Meher Baba, whose consciousness fills the air around us, enters through any trivial opening and establishes Himself in

the hearts of His lovers. After that He opens a flood gate of inner experiences and outer happenings which ultimately establish the fact of His divine continued presence. This is how He transforms our mediocre, dull and pompous old lives into a "new life" of adventure filled with the beauty and glory of His love. 1980 marks the beginning of this "new life" for me and my family.

J.S. Rathore

DIVINE BABYSITTER

In June 1982 my family and I wanted to stay at Meherabad for a few days. But as the *dharamshala* was then under construction, there appeared to be no place for us. We were told we could stay at "*Krishi Bhavan*" (Farmers' Educational Center) but that it had no toilets and no water facilities; it was just a big hall, around 50 feet by 30 feet. As our only wish was to be near Meher Baba's Samadhi, we were delighted with this offer. We wanted to bathe in Baba's presence and for this we were quite willing to do without all conveniences.

So my family, including my daughter with her two children - her four year old son, Meher, and one year old daughter, Manija - came to Meherabad. Every morning we would attend morning *arti* and prayers at 7:00 at the Tomb. We would all walk up the hill in the early morning but one day my daughter didn't come with us as Meher was still sleeping. She waited until 6:30 but when he still didn't awake, she came up the hill with Manija.

After the prayers and *arti*, I asked my daughter where Meher was, and she said that she had left him all alone in the hall. She had bolted and locked the door from the outside and, leaving him in a deep sleep, she had come up the hill.

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As it was now nearing 7:30 and a train had already rumbled by the hall, I felt it quite likely that Meher would have awakened by now. I was upset because Meher tends to cry if he wakes up and doesn't find anybody near him. I envisioned him, scared and lonely, in the big empty hall and I scolded my daughter for leaving him like that and told her to go down right away and see if Meher was all right.

She rushed down the hill, but as she neared, she was astonished to see through the window that Meher seemed to be in an extraordinarily jubilant mood.

When Meher saw her, he started dancing and called out as if he were talking to someone else in the room, "My mother has come! My mother has come!"

No sooner did she unbolt the door than Meher rushed to her and told her in great excitement that he had been playing with Baba. He pointed to the photo of Meher Baba which was displayed there and said, "This Meher Baba came (out of the photo) and played with me."

When the rest of us heard this story we asked him why he wasn't afraid of being alone in such a big hall and he replied, "Baba was with me, playing all the while. I was very happy and did not cry."

And indeed he was in an especially happy and excited mood for the rest of the day. In the afternoon we went to Meherazad and Meher asked us to tell his story of playing with Baba to the *mandali*.

Because my daughter could only think of attending Baba's *arti* that morning, Baba Himself came to babysit the child she left behind.

M.B. Khandale

PAPA JACK - A WELDER OF HEARTS

During a visit to Meherazad with my mother in November 1980, I happened to casually mention to Eruch that my father, Jack, was a welder. "Is he a welder of hearts?" Eruch asked.

A year later I had a dream where a girlfriend and I were climbing some mountains and, as we looked down to where we had been, I saw Meher Baba and Eruch standing there! We waved to them and Eruch said, "Baba has something to tell you," and then read this message from Baba's board:

"Have you written to your father about Me yet?" I felt care-free in Baba's loving presence and responded lightheartedly, "Not yet, but I plan to though." Baba looked at me patiently, seriously, and conveyed, "If you don't write to him about Me now, I will have to arrange an appointment to meet with him personally in 700 years."

When I woke I felt wonderful about the warm personal interest Baba was taking in my father, but I was also surprised since I had never given much thought to my father and Baba having a special relationship with each other. My father was not a "seeker," but he did have a nice attitude towards Baba and I was comfortable with that.

Another year passed and, in November 1982, my father was diagnosed as having terminal lung cancer (mesothelioma) caused by exposure to asbestos. (My father had done a lot of work with boilers which use asbestos as insulation.) The doctors said he had three to five months left to live.

An operation was performed to drain the fluid build-up in my father's lungs. The night before my father became restless and uncharacteristically began going through my mother's purse. He discovered a pink envelope with Baba's name on it and asked if it was used for donations to Baba. Mother explained that it contained a strand of Beloved Baba's hair. He seemed pleased and content to hold it and only gave it back because he was afraid of losing it.

After the operation, my mother asked if he wanted to hold

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a necklace containing Baba's photo. Jack said yes, but soon drifted off to sleep and dropped the necklace. Mother picked it up and put it back in his hand. Again he faded out and the necklace fell. This time he muttered, "Oh no, I've dropped Baba again." When mother heard this she felt that Baba was taking care of everything.

News of Jack's terminal illness reached the *mandali* and an unexpected and most beautiful letter from Mehera was sent to Jack; he cried reading it, spontaneously exclaiming, "It's so beautiful, it is so beautiful."

On a trip to the Myrtle Beach Center, I was given some of Baba's hair for my father to keep. Two days after receiving it, he had to go back to the hospital. His wallet with the hair in it was stolen. Jack was very upset and a week later some more hair was lovingly sent by Jane Haynes. When it was presented to him, he burst into tears. From then on, he kept the necklace with Baba's photo and the precious packet with Baba's hair in it in his pajama top pocket.

This pocket of love resting near his heart was carefully guarded. Jack made sure that every time his top was changed, the precious contents were removed and then put in the fresh shirt. They had to be securely pinned in, too, or he would worry.

In such a pure and natural way, Baba kept Jack's mind and heart focused on Him. A week before he died he saw his first film of Baba which was projected on the walls of his hospital room. Shortly before his death he spontaneously offered this prayer, "Dear Baba, I am one of your flock. Please prolong my life or take me to be your own."

With mother by his side lovingly reassuring him that Baba was with him, Jack died on August 7, 1983 to live ever more in the divine presence of the Eternal Beloved.

In the funeral service, a young Catholic priest who used to often stop in my father's welding shop and talk with him, said my father's shop was like a chapel where all were welcome. He said my father's life ministered to people by its honest, cheerful nature and then he concluded, "Jack is a welder of

hearts."

And I like to think that having had the rare good fortune to have his heart awakened by Baba's love, Jack's heart was welded by Baba to Him.

Ginny Hudnall

THE BELOVED'S HUMOR AND WINE

On December 14, 1983, the day before my birthday, I arrived home late in the evening and, before retiring, happened to glance at a volume of songs for voice and piano written by Johannes Brahms. I discovered three Hafiz *ghazals* translated into German by the poet Daumer and set to music by Brahms in 1864. I knew of two other *ghazals* that Brahms had set to music in 1868 but these three came as a wonderful surprise.

The gist of one of them was, "O Beloved! You think you are saying bitter things, but you can never give pain. Your attempts to speak harshly are wrecked on a coral reef. They all become pure acts of grace, because before they can do harm, they must sail past lips that are sweetness itself."

I tried to hear the compositions in my head and I found them to be very moving - lyrically, musically, and especially in their relationship to the Beloved, Meher Baba. A tear of joy ran down my cheek in thanks for what I felt was a most beautiful birthday present.

I went to bed with this feeling inside and Baba's Name on my lips. Then, shortly before rising the next morning, I dreamt of a large dog who was standing over me as I lay on the ground somewhere in the countryside. I was playfully tussling with it when the dog said to me, "Give me your glove!"

First I thought, "Hmm, a talking dog! That's funny." Then I looked at my right hand and, sure enough, I was wearing a

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glove. So, I let the dog have it. Next I remember being in a restaurant with a man and a woman. The woman began to sing a wonderful song which caused all three of us to smile and shed a tear of happiness over its great beauty.

Shortly thereafter I woke up and went about my morning routine. Then, with the dream fresh in my memory, I wrote this *ghazal*:

Graciousness in every breath from the Breather.
Inhaling and exhaling the gift of Wine's pure ether.

A present came late last night in the discovery
Of three more Brahms-Hafiz songs, Love's recovery.

Love's message, Love's description of acceptance and
surrender
And the taking of any and all pain as a gift from the Beauty
most tender.

A tear fell from each eye as the lover sang of the state
Where the Beloved's words only appeared to be percussive
with hate,

When in fact they were Wine drops, having to pass through
Love's lips,
Turning the orbs of the slave into wave battered ships.

"Progress" selling "appearance" in moving, changing
modes,
The Beloved knelling cobweb clearance, behooving
winging odes.

In dream's dream, after a playful *wrestle* with a talking
canine
Even the dreamers cried in ecstasy over this serving of the
Beloved's Wine.

After writing this *ghazal* I went over to the music stand upon which stood an opened copy of *Love Personified*. I turned

one page and what should I see but Baba wrestling with Chum at Meherabad in 1934. In writing my ghazal the word with which I had to "wrestle" the most was, "wrestle." I had tried to remember what I had been doing with that dog who indeed closely resembled Baba's Chum. Was I fighting with it? Was I just playing with it? No I was wrestling with it.

I stood silently gazing at the picture for a short while. As Mehera wrote in her Preface to the book, "Beloved Baba's photographs are a ray of the Sun of His Being, and gazing at them, we feel the warmth, the light, and comfort of His presence." Baba's presence, coupled with the coincidence of my wrestling with a dog just as Baba was depicted doing, reduced me to silently thanking Him for allowing me the pleasure of dedicating my life to Him - The Beloved - Humor itself, Wine itself, Love itself.

David Miotke

MYSTERY OF HIS COMPANIONSHIP

What has become most meaningful to me in the years since Meher Baba has taken me "home" is the mystery of His companionship - at the supermarket, in the classroom, in the kitchen! What was once "outside" has become a much more constant inner touching - indescribably both sweet and demanding. In the day to day tasks of functioning and fulfilling responsibilities, He is with me. What a miracle! How rich beyond words my life has become. Just remembering Him has become all I want; nothing compares to the quiet certainty of His presence!

One incident I remember with amusement, took place in the fall of '83. I had just said my prayers and was preparing to leave for my college campus when I was pierced with the

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knowing that absolutely everything is in Beloved Baba's hands and that absolutely everything is His gift to us. I was moved to tears by the suddenness, the totally unanticipated joy of His mystery and thought, "What is there ever to worry about? How wonderful it all is!" I was ecstatic in the simpleness of that moment.

Walking on clouds, I went to my car, got in, turned on the motor, switched on the rear window defroster and, just as I was about to leave the parking lot, a shattering explosion enveloped me. I shot out of my seat in reflexive alarm and, turning behind me towards the source of the noise, I was stunned to discover that the entire rear window had shattered into a thousand fragments!

I uttered a gross Anglo-Saxon four letter word - all smiles and clouds now gone. And then I began to giggle. "Really, Baba," I thought, "after that powerful experience of everything being your gift, you couldn't even wait a day to test me. It had to be five minutes later!" I had to smile and laugh.

But it was still a struggle to accept the fact that my shattered window was His gift - a gift which would cost me \$300 I could hardly afford. I finally gave my worry and distress to Baba and arrived on campus just as one of my students was walking by. He asked me what had happened and volunteered the information that he had worked for several years at an auto glass repair shop. He told me that my insurance probably covered the damage and that he could lead me over to the repair shop after class and could take me back to campus while my car was being fixed.

As it turned out, not only did the insurance cover it, but the costs were assigned directly to the insurance company so I didn't even have to write a check. Not only that, but my car was ready that same day! -

This little incident means a lot to me because it makes me aware of how drastically Meher Baba has altered my life. What is a broken window? Nothing, but it is these simple things which often make a hurricane of our emotions. Even though we can't always accept that everything is His gift, yet

Beloved Baba lovingly helps us to keep our focus on Him - this is the "miracle" of His unconditional grace.

Bruce Hoffman

BABA ON A WHITE MULE

In December of '83, my short visit to India was coming to a close. On my last day I was at the Meher Pilgrim Centre thinking to myself what a glorious trip it had been, how wonderful, and how I wanted to come back as soon as possible.

During my visit I had bought a lot of pictures of Beloved Baba, but I suddenly remembered that I had forgotten to purchase one particular picture which I had very much wanted to get. It was a photo of Baba on a white mule and - it was special to me. Now there wasn't time as a taxi was coming to pick me up at Meherabad and take me straight to Poona.

Compared to all that I had received on my trip, this one small unfulfilled desire did not seem all that important so I didn't mention it to anyone. But on that last day, one of the residents, Theus Malmberg, stopped by to say goodbye and he gave me a going away present. It was the very photo I had wanted to buy but had forgotten to!

I thanked Theus for the picture and inwardly I thanked Beloved Baba for thus reassuring me that He knows our innermost minds and hearts and loves us better than we can love ourselves.

Tim Hurley

WHEN THEY BEGIN THE BEGUINE . . .

Although "Begin the Beguine" was not played for Meher Baba very often, nonetheless it had a unique significance for Him. As early as the '50s, Baba began instructing His *mandali* that when He dropped His body, "Begin the Beguine" should be played. And, if it was not possible to play the record, it should be sung, and if no one was there to sing it, the words should be read out.

So it was that on January 31, 1969 when Meher Baba laid His body aside in His room at Meherazad, the record "Begin the Beguine" was played on a little record player which His women disciples brought into His room. The song was also played in Mandali hall when Baba's body was taken there, in Baba's cabin on Meherabad Hill as the crypt in the Samadhi was being prepared and, later, in the Samadhi itself. Altogether it was played seven times. Since then, it has always had special meaning for those who follow Baba.

It's simply amazing the number of times it pops up on the radio these days, but what gets me is the perfect timing of its occurrences. For example, in February 1983 I started working inside the post office and found myself in an area where "rock and roll" was being played over the radio eight hours a day.

After I'd gone through about three days of this ear battering experience, I groaned and said, "I'll never hear any decent songs in this awful place." Not long after that, I was sitting in the lunchroom when someone switched on a soft music station. Sure enough, "Begin the Beguine" came on right in the middle of my cheese sandwich and had anyone been watching, they would have thought I had had a sudden attack of lockjaw.

Then there's the story of a Baba lover returning from his pilgrimage to Meherabad/Meherazad. Although he was happy to be carrying in a large black leather case the new sitar he had purchased in India, he was a little depressed to be at the New York airport, 10,000 miles from where his heart lay.

As he was making his way to a taxi, he was accosted by a typical New Yorker and the following conversation ensued:

"Hey buddy, what's in dat case?"

"A sitar."

"What's that?"

"It's a musical instrument from India."

"Can it play 'Begin the Beguine?'"

This unexpected question bridged the distance between New York and Meherabad. In a humorous way Baba had thus reassured His lover that He was with him in America just as much as in India.

My favorite story concerning "Begin the Beguine," however, took place in early 1983. It was Sunday, the 30th of January and a group of ten of us had gathered at a local restaurant in Schenectady, New York to have lunch with Jeanne and Darwin Shaw. As is occasionally wont to happen during these get-togethers, the conversation started drifting far afield. One group at one end of the table was talking about jobs and careers, another at the other end was having a lively discussion about the movie industry and in the middle were Jeanne and Darwin, sitting quietly.

Suddenly we heard a soft, "Shh, shh, listen!" and turned to see Darwin with his right hand cupped to his ear. Sure enough, "Begin the Beguine" was being played over the restaurant radio. The group quickly fell into a silent reverie.

As it turned out, we were the only people seated in the small dining room and at one point I looked up and noticed two of the staff staring at us and shaking their heads in disbelief. Just two minutes previously, we had been so animated and lively and now we were sitting like statues. What could they possibly have thought?

As the song ended, I glanced at my watch. It was 1:30 in the afternoon in New York but exactly twelve midnight of January 31st in India. At that moment, on Meherabad Hill, Amartithi had begun. This is an event we like to keep track of in our minds and hearts. And so, despite the fact that the sheep of our mind had wandered off, Baba brought us all

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back "home" and ushered in that most holy of days in a beautiful, poignant way. Such is His compassion for us!

For me, Baba's Avataric greatness lies not only in His work for the creation but also in these little things, the little personal touches that each of us who tries to love and hold on to Him, experiences. Any song or incident associated with Baba reminds us of Him and brings with that remembrance, some of His sweet love and enlivening presence. And each time I hear of one of these incidents or experience one myself, it is another answer in an endless chain of His loving answers to a question once posed in a song: "Are you listening?"

Bill Cliff

HIS BIRTHDAY GIFT

From March 15th to June 15th each year the Pilgrim Centre at Meherabad closes and pilgrims are encouraged not to visit Meherabad. But these three months are not a vacation for those at Meherabad and the Western residents who remain in India. Four days a week, some of the *mandali* – Mani, Rano, Eruch and I - continue to attend the Trust Office, while the rest occupy themselves with their duties and all the odd jobs that have piled up over the course of the year.

The temperature soars, in May often reaching 106°F, and the heat makes even the simplest task quite tiresome. Many of the Western residents leave Nagar for a brief vacation to cooler climes, while those who stay seek different ways to beat the heat!

In the summer of 1984, during a trip to Poona, Steve and Daphne Klein were given an old ice-cream churn by the Jessawala family at Bindra House. As they were both working that summer at the Trust Office, they decided one day to take

the churn there and make some mango ice cream for everyone. The churning was done in the morning and the mixture then packed in ice.

By lunch time, whether the ice cream was properly hardened or not, all were eager to sample the results. Generous portions were scooped out for all and Daphne took a large dish to Khorshed, one of Baba's women *mandali*, who stays in the Trust compound.

When Khorshed received the ice cream she seemed very touched. It was only later that we learned that not only was that very day Khorshed's birthday, but also that Baba often used to give her ice cream on her birthday. And whenever He did, He always gave her mango ice cream! For us at the Office, it was simply a refreshing treat, but for Khorshed it was a clear indication that Baba's loving remembrance of her birthday continued; that although Baba was no longer in a physical body, He had, nevertheless, arranged this birthday gift.

God's most delightful "birthday gift" to humanity is His coming amongst us as Man - the Avatar. In His unconditional compassion, Meher Baba's grace continuously flows to His lovers. But when it comes in the form of a birthday present, it is especially heartwarming and even more refreshing than ice cream! Beloved Avatar Meher, our bountiful Baba, be praised!

Bal Natu

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, Upasni 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. Just before this, one of His disciples said, "But if you keep silent, how will you teach us?" and Meher Baba answered, "I have come not to teach, but to awaken."

In spite of His silence, Meher Baba continued to serve the needs of humanity on a material as well as a spiritual level. He established schools, hospitals and personally cared for lepers, the mad, and the *masts* (those whose minds have become overpowered by the love of God).

Meher Baba 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 Mcherazad on January 31, 1969. Yet His silent awakening of hearts to God's love continues to this day.

Messages
of
AVATAR MEHER BABA

I belong to no religion. Every religion belongs to Me. My own personal religion is of My being the Ancient Infinite One and the religion I teach to all is of love for God.

This love can be practised by any one, high, low, rich, poor, and every one of every caste and creed can love God.

* * *

It is possible through Love for man to become God and when God becomes man, it is due to His love for His beings.

If people were to ask Me, "Have you seen God?" I would reply, "What else is there to see?" If they were to ask Me, "Are you God?" I would reply, "Who else could I be?" If they were to ask Me, "Are you the Avatar?" I would reply, "Why else have I taken this human form?"

So the only message I could give, and have ever been giving is, "Love God," and you will find that your own self is nothing but God.

* * *

God is not to be lured but is to be loved. God is not to be preached but is to be lived. Only those who live the life of love, honesty and self-sacrifice, can know Me as the Ancient One.

I can say with Divine authority that I experience eternally, consciously and continually, being one with you all, and one in you all. Any worship or obeisance done to any deity - animate or inanimate - to any saint, master, advanced soul or yogi, eventually comes to Me. By offering pure unadulterated love to anyone and to anything, you will be loving Me, as I am in everyone and everything and beyond everything.

* * *

Age after age, when the wick of righteousness burns low, the Avatar comes yet once again to rekindle the torch of Love and Truth. Age after age, amidst the clamour of disruptions,

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wars, fear and chaos, rings the Avatar's Call: "Come all unto Me."

Although, because of the veil of illusion, this Call of the Ancient One may appear as a voice in the wilderness, its echo and re-echo nevertheless pervades through time and space, to rouse at first a few, and eventually millions, from their deep slumber of ignorance. And in the midst of illusion, as the Voice behind all voices, it awakens humanity to bear witness to the manifestation of God amidst mankind.

The time is come. I repeat the Call, and bid all come unto Me.

* * *

I am the Divine Beloved who loves you
more than you can ever love yourself.

Don't worry; be happy.
Remember Me; I will help you.

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For a complete list of books by or about Meher Baba write:

Meher Nazar Books
King's Rd.
Ahmednagar, M.S. 414 001
India.

or

Sheriar Press
1414 Madison St.
N. Myrtle Beach, S.C. 29582
U.S.A.

I was Rama, I was Krishna,
I was this One, I was that One,
and now I am Meher Baba.

I am that Ancient One
whose past is
worshipped and remembered,
whose present is
ignored and forgotten and
whose future (Advent) is
anticipated with great fervour
and longing.

~ Meher Baba ~

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 15, para 5, line 1, momento changed to memento
Page 22, para 5, line 8, transfered changed to transferred
Page 32, para 5, line 5, accidently changed to accidentally
Page 34, para 5, line 6, "the the" changed to "the"
Page 56, para 4, line 7, through changed to through
Page 70, para 3, line 5, It changed to I
Page 84, para 4, line 4, "one" changed to "one of"