

OM ॐ POINT

INTERNATIONAL CIRCULAR • ISSUE 26 • SUMMER 2020



PROTESTS AND COVID-19 ISSUE



OM 33 P O I N T

INTERNATIONAL CIRCULAR • ISSUE 26 • SUMMER 2020

contents

issue #26

"What I want from my Lovers is real unadulterated love, and from my genuine workers I expect real work done." - Meher Baba

Letter from the Editor

Protest in Seattle : Lee Barrientos Interview and Article

Tornado at Meher Center - report and photos by Ray Lee

The Dream - anonymous

COVID-19 with Meher Baba: commentary I - V by Karl Moeller

Poem by Jim Courson

Hua Hu Ching 52 contributed by Geoffrey Wight

Being a Mother in Challenging Times : article by Cynthia Barrientos

Poem by Cynthia Barrientos

Transmission by Alexandra King

Poem by Marla Faith

Poem by Laurent Weichberger

Submission by Daniel Sumi

God is like the ocean .. graphic/poem contributed by Michael Ivey

Poem by Anne Weichberger

Poem by Irma Sheppard

Meher Baba Quote

An exchange with Eruch Jessawala by Daniel Ladinsky

Meher Baba Quote from Life At its Best

Graphic by Cyprus Weichberger

Surrender with Meher Baba - forthcoming book by Laurent Weichberger

Briefly Noted - available books

The Archangel by Jill Davis

Period Travel Poster - Visit Meherabad

Meher Archive Collective, Asheville NC - Diane Tower-Jones

EDITOR -
Laurent Weichberger
ompoint@gmail.com

LAYOUT-WALLA-
Karl Moeller
karl.moeller@me.com

COVER: Lee Barrientos, Saturday June 6, 2020 in Seattle, Washington. His explanation about what he is wearing, "anti-teargas kit, P100 respirator, leaf blower, camera, backpack with medical supplies and water, and hand sanitizer. The scarf on my head was one that I got on a trip to India, it has been in the Samadhi and was my spiritual protection."

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Letter from the OmPoint International Editor

During 2004 I created my own company OmPoint Innovations with Don Stevens, in London. I had been living and working in England, primarily to spend time with Don in researching his life as a preeminent disciple of Avatar Meher Baba, and to write Don's biography. That's another story. Upon returning to the USA in the Fall of 2004, I realized I wanted to blend the work of my head, IT consulting, with the work of my heart, finding a way to be of service to Avatar Meher Baba. Over fifteen years later, I would not have imagined a version of America like the one I am experiencing during 2020. To be completely honest, over the years since coming to Baba in 1986, I did have many dreams of the future, which portended doom and gloom, similar to what we see now, but there was always a part of me asking - Is that really how it will be?

The two obvious factors of what we have been dealing with as a country, and globally, are the Coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19")[1] and the protests, which I am going to say started with George Floyd's untimely death at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department in May.[2] Both of these combined have made for one helluva start to 2020. So why would a spiritual magazine like OmPoint, dedicated to Avatar Meher Baba and spreading his message of love and truth, care about a virus and a protest? Good question.

The virus is called a pandemic, meaning an epidemic which spans multiple countries around the world, like an epidemic on steroids. We have seen this with the statistics of infection and death in COVID-19 cases. Meher Baba has said:

"There is nothing which does not admit of direct or indirect control by the Masters of wisdom. Large social phenomena such as wars, revolutions and epidemics, as well as cosmic phenomena such as earthquakes, floods and other changes, are equally amenable to their control and direction through the release of the forces of the exalted planes on which the Masters are consciously stationed. The Masters can also use the occult forces and possibilities for securing co-operative and co-ordinated spiritual work. They frequently hold meetings and conferences on the higher planes for securing the advancement of humanity."[3]

What I take from this passage is that Meher Baba, as the Avatar, and the Perfect Masters and the Spiritual Hierarchy are driving, and I can surrender and trust that all will be well. It is not easy to do so, and still I trust. That is my effort.

Regarding the protests, there have been protests since the dawn of time, and I am sure they will continue ever after. So what makes this different? A few things come to mind:

1. Prior to seeing the American protests I had been aware of quite a bit of protesting in Hong Kong. This had to do with freedom in Hong Kong from rule by mainland China. It is a complicated story, but it was inspiring to watch a few stand up to the largest nation in the world (matched only by India in population).[4]
2. Race has been an issue in America since slave trading was already thriving here in the 1600s. Never in my lifetime (I was born in 1968) have I ever seen such a polarization around race as I have in the last few months. While I was not conscious and present during the 1960s race riots, I believe that what is happening now is worse. Why? On the one hand, I supposed I believe America should have learned from the '60s, and grown. In some ways we have. In other ways, it seems that the racism here and vile hatred has grown more entrenched, even into the uppermost reaches of our government.
3. The role that "White Supremacy," and Neo-Nazism[5] has played in America since January 20, 2017, is astonishing. My father grew up in post-war Germany, and he was German immigrant in New York, where I was born. I distinctly remember his paranoia that Neo-Nazis in America would rise to power. As a kid in Manhattan, I didn't believe him or that this was even possible. With the events of the last few

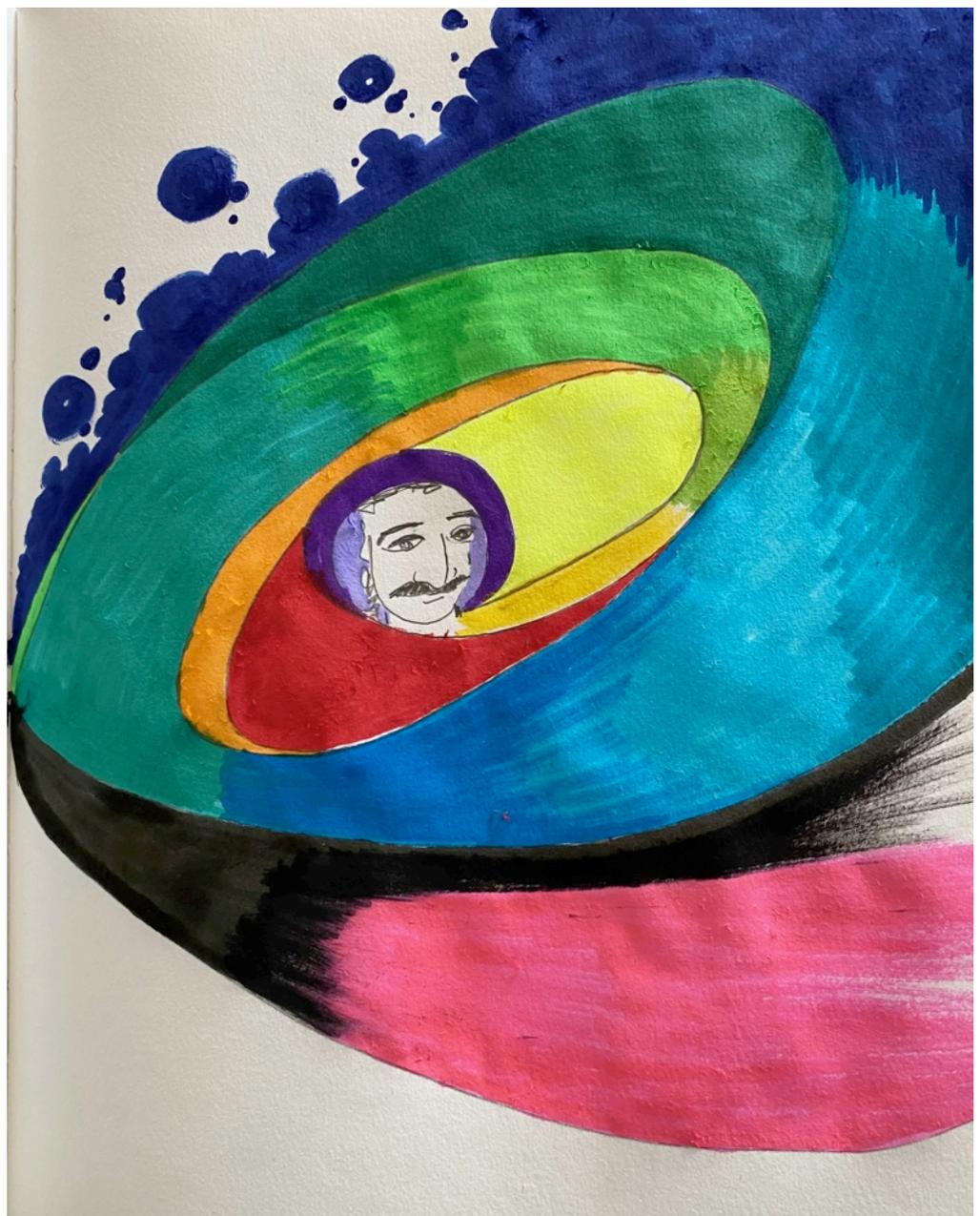
years, not only do I believe that, I have witnessed it. From the intentional violence against protestors in Charlottesville, where a car driven into a crowd by James Alex Fields Jr. (age 20 at the time) which left a protestor, Heather Heyer (age 32) dead[6], to many other obvious acts of violence by White Supremacists, it is clear to me that our country is more divided than ever in its history.

Meher Baba discouraged political discussions, as they invariably end in division. Us and them, right and wrong, left and right. I am not going to do that here. What I am going to say is that he also guided Mahatma Gandhi regarding the right way to protest and win independence for India from rule by Great Britain. He also said that there are times when you have to kill a tiger to save the sheep. And he admonished us to protect women as a form of selfless service, when he said:

“Defending the weak is an important form of selfless service and it is a part of Karmayoga. Use of force, when necessary for this purpose, is completely justified as an indispensable instrument for securing the desired objective. But any fighting undertaken to defend the weak must be without any selfish motives or hatred if it is to have unalloyed spiritual importance. It resembles the case of a man who defends a woman being attacked by another man for vile purposes, thus saving the woman’s honour and life and correcting the attacking man by punishing him and making him repent.”[7]

Based on what I have seen in the last few months, there is much to be concerned about. No doubt, there will be times when each of us will be tested. Our faith and trust will be tested, our desire to step in or step up and protect will be tested. Our desire to speak up and speak out will be tested. I am here sharing this as doing my part in spreading the message of love and truth of Meher Baba. He reminded us to remind others that in reality all is one, there is not two, there is no other. I believe Him. Beloved Baba, please help us all to hold fast to your damaan, until the very end. Amen. Om. Shalom. Salaam. Peace. Shanti. Jai Baba.

Laurent Weichberger
Weaverville NC
(July 4, 2020)



Watercolor by Laurent Weichberger

Endnotes:

1. According to the article, the first symptoms were found in December 2019, and a study of the first 41 cases of confirmed COVID-19, published in January 2020. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus_disease_2019
2. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Floyd
3. See: Discourses, by Meher Baba, (6th Ed., "The Place of Occultism in Spiritual Life: II," Volume II, p. 99) on-line here: <https://discoursesbymeherbaba.org/v2-99.php>
4. Hong Kong was colonized by Great Britain, and officially turned back over to Chinese rule in 1997.
5. See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Nazism>
6. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlottesville_car_attack
7. See: Ibid, Discourse, "Violence and Non-Violence," (Volume I, p. 105).

I was inspired to place five full-page Covid commentaries or memes in this issue. One of them, a story by Somerset Maugham called 'Appointment in Samarra,' is not a Baba story per se, although in 1993 painter Roger Essley published it as a picture book with paintings obviously featuring Meher Baba as the wealthy merchant.

After reading this, and the various statements and promises from Meher Baba, it made me desperately sad to compare and contrast our individual and group behaviors to what He has told us.

Where is our obedience and where is our trust?

Karl Moeller
Layoutwalla
July 2020

Protest Update from Portland Oregon
by Marnie Frank (July 22, 2020)

Dear Laurent,

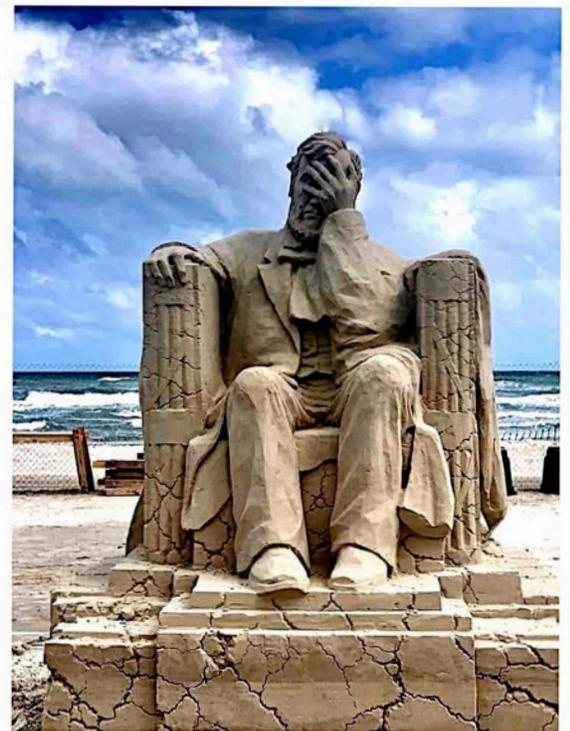
I am afraid that the media is conveying a crisis that we do not experience here at our home. The protests are mostly confined to the downtown area and are peaceful during the day. The violence is primarily after dark. Most of the city is very calm although there is grave concern among many citizens about the presence of the federal troops who were not invited by the local government. It is my understanding from our local paper that the presence of these troops has escalated tensions and invigorated the protesters and the mayor and city council want them to leave.

Our local government has been caught between the legitimate concerns of the protests and the violence wrought by a few, mostly at night; between the demands for social justice and police accountability and the violence and property destruction by a few. There have been allegations that the violence, or some of it, is by members of the far right posing as members of the far left to help support the fed's aggressive actions.

It is gravely concerning to me that federal troops are being sent uninvited to cities throughout the country to quell problems that are local concerns. That is all that I know.

Love in Beloved Baba,
Marnie

Texas Sand Castle Contest Winner, 2020



Black Lives Matter, the Seattle, Washington Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ), and Avatar Meher Baba

Lee Barrientos Interview by Laurent Weichberger
(June 14, 2020, and with a follow up on June 22, 2020)

During an arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020, the suspect George Floyd[1], a forty-six year old African American man, was subdued by a police officer for approximately nine minutes in a type of choke hold position, with the officer's knee pressing down on the suspect's neck. An ambulance was summoned to take the suspect to the nearest hospital where he died in the emergency room. New of his death created protests which subsequently tipped the scale, first in American and then worldwide. Protests commenced based on initial outrage, first in cities around the USA (Philadelphia, Seattle WA, New York City, Hollywood CA, Washington DC, and many others), and ultimately spread internationally, including but not limited to London, Paris, Berlin, and many other locations.

As a result of the protests, Seattle in particular has gained special attention when the local protestors managed to take control of an area of the Capitol Hill section of Seattle, and have turned it into a police and government free zone, known as "Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone," or simply "CHAZ." All of this activity is in conjunction with a human rights movement named Black Lives Matter, or "BLM" for short.[2] It is the combination of the BLM movement, the wider protests about police brutality, and the involvement of one of our young adult Meher Baba community members, Lee Barrientos, who has been an active participant in Seattle, his home, in these protests which has inspired me to write this article. We know from our study of Avatar Meher Baba's life that while he encouraged us to remain out of the political discourse, he did guide Mahatma Gandhi personally regarding the non-violent resistance movement which Gandhi successfully led to attain India's freedom from

rule by Great Britain. It is interesting to note that Martin Luther King, Jr. explained that Gandhi inspired his own non-violent civil rights work, and protests. Personally, I have been saying for quite a while that America is a step away from civil war, and now I say it is just half a step.

Avatar Meher Baba said, "How do you know God does not work through these different leaders? Gandhi is weak, but honest. Hitler is strong, but dishonest. God works through both. Who leads them? Only God! The One who leads them knows! But they don't; they just go on. Gandhi is out of tune. He is groping in darkness, but he is honest. Churchill is the right man for his place. The Congressmen will be put in jail, as they are embarrassing the government. Although they say they don't embarrass, they do. Gandhi too will be jailed. India is in such a mess. If things get out of control, there will be a civil war and Gandhi will die of shock for having caused it all. Only one thing is true and matters — love! All this mess is just a mess!"[4]

There are many things we could share here about Meher Baba's behind the scenes political encouragement, however we prefer to focus this article on Lee's direct experience at the front line of the protest which is currently affecting millions of Americans, and millions more internationally. I reached out to Lee asking if I can interview him for OmPoint, to which he agreed. Here is his initial statement: "I've been actively participating in the protests here in Seattle since May 30th. I'm not responsible for the existence of CHAZ and don't mind using my name to describe my experiences there." What follows are my questions to Lee, and his responses:

Laurent Weichberger (LW): How did you first get involved in the protest?

Lee Barrientos (LB): I got involved in the protest a couple weeks ago when I learned that a march was being organized in downtown Seattle in response to the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The march was organized on Twitter and Facebook by a number of Individuals who all wanted to get out and show that we as American citizens will no longer tolerate the injustice and brutality of our own police departments. Our march in Seattle was set up in solidarity with the march in Minneapolis from the days prior. Seattle is home to a number of civil rights activist groups including black lives matter king county, the Seattle black panthers, and the People's party of Seattle. I've personally become compelled to participate in the March on May 30 to show up for my community in solidarity with the protests against police brutality as a person of

color. I marched that day for a few hours from noon until about 4pm. By the time I got home from that particular March, I saw on Twitter and a couple other news outlets that some looting and rioting had begun downtown. Despite the property damage, the only injuries reported in the crowd were caused by the police who began tear gassing and pepper spraying the crowd when things escalated that evening. In particular, there was a video circulating of a seven-year-old girl who was downtown with her family, that happened to be indigenous protesters that were attempting to conduct a drum circle in the street. This little girl ended up get-

ting pepper sprayed/maced by a bicycle cop. The irony of this incident further cemented my determination to continue to document, show up and participate in these marches, and demonstrations.

I decided to wait to return to the streets after that Saturday, May 30, because the escalation tactics used by the police at that time were particularly violent and the crowd was engaged in more destructive forms of demonstration that I knew I didn't want to be a part of. I returned to marching on June 1 in the afternoon, where a march was organized to meet at our Municipal Courthouse, as well as at City Hall (a couple blocks away). That gathering of people marched from those buildings to Westlake Center, held a "moment of silence" for eight minutes and forty-six seconds to honor the death of George Floyd, and then that group marched up Pine Street into the east precinct on 12th and Pine. Once the march arrived on Capitol Hill, we were met with a

barricade and police in full riot gear with shields a block away from the precinct. This group proceeded to march around the precinct with a smaller group staying behind to keep pressure on the western entrance to the east precinct.

This became the front line for the protest on 11th and Pine which is now the epicenter of CHAZ. This is also the place and time on June 1 around 9:15 pm where I was gassed and subjected to the effects of flash-bangs and other unknown chemical agents.



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This didn't deter me from returning the next day with more protection and more willingness to subject myself to the risk of injury and discomfort for the movement. We spent the next week showing up to this location on Capitol Hill with gas masks, umbrellas, medical supplies, leaf blowers, and any other non-violent defense mechanisms that could further support the front lines of the protest. It took a whole week of resistance and peaceful assembly to get the police to vacate their precinct, and this came after many more tear gas canisters, pepper sprays, rubber bullets and other forms of 'crowd control'.

On the last day before the establishment of Chaz, June 7th, the police used an ungodly amount of teargas on the protests and then retreated by the next morning after calls from some of our city council members to have the mayor recalled. By June 8th, The barricades that the police had set up on 11th and Pine were dismantled and redistributed around the neighborhood to keep the streets open to the protesters. The first sign I saw that gave a name to this place was free Capitol Hill, which then became the autonomous zone, and subsequently somebody made a CHAZ sign which has seemingly stuck. Another name that is being thrown around is CHOP, which stands for Capitol Hill Occupy Protest.

LW: What is the current atmosphere at CHAZ?

LB: The current atmosphere in the CHAZ is quite eclectic in this moment. There are an incredible amount of opportunities for folks to engage with the movement from planting a garden in the park, to meeting up at a number of tents designated to discussion around organizing to creating safe space for folks who need emotional support, to free mutual aid tents full of food and medical supplies, and so much more. The zone is absolutely covered in different forms of

Street art including murals, posters, sculptures, and a designated memorial space to commemorate the dead.

The attendance and general vibes in the CHAZ from day one until now has grown from grassroots organizers defending the right of the people to occupy and protest in the space to an amalgam of social Empowerment opportunities. When I was there yesterday, June 12, the feeling of the gathering was very reminiscent of the many different street festivals that occur in the summer here in Seattle, which have all been subsequently canceled due to coronavirus. The irony of this is not lost on many of the participants in this movement because the Chaz is an act of resistance and is meant to be a protest, not a festival. I believe that the more relaxed and playful energy is appropriate to a point, but many also recognize that we can't celebrate yet, until all the demands of



the protests are met.

LW: Is there any leadership at CHAZ or more anarchy or some other form?

LB: I personally have not seen any destructive forms of anarchy in the city since the riots on May 30th and 31st. The CHAZ has been host to a number of organizers and there are folks on the ground attempting to lead the movement. But there is no one figurehead in the Seattle movement that is calling the shots in the autonomous zone. The anarchy on display in the zone is quite constructive in the sense that everyone brings what they can for the movement and the opportunities that protesters can engage in are organically and spontaneously presented.

LW: Do you have any personal goal?

LB: My personal goal in relationship to this movement is to continue to document and engage with folks on the ground so that I can share what I find with the people who cannot participate in person right now. I need people to know that the policing in America is corrupt and unjust. The funding in my city for police compared to social services is disproportionate considering the major issues our society face is in regards to homelessness, chemical dependency, and mental health. There is also a murder problem in America's police, where in many cases officers are not held accountable for their violence towards minority communities throughout the country. Qualified immunity as it stands in regards to policing needs to be held to a much higher standard, police are undertrained and overpaid to brutalize citizens that are innocent until proven guilty. Police brutality is the ugly face of a criminal justice system that is failing all of us.

LW: Does the group at CHAZ have any personal goal?

LB: These are the demands put forward by BLM KC-S[3] but the less spoken reason for the protest in the CHAZ is to support the community at large, from feeding the homeless and poor as well as provide counseling/interfaith services. To create a free arts space, as well as a safe space for activists to engage directly with one another.

LW: There are threats of the military coming to take back CHAZ if the local government in WA doesn't step forward to reclaim CHAZ, do you or others there fear that?

LB: In regards to interventions by city or state agencies, I doubt there will be further actions taken to disband the group because the area is an occupied protest that is protected by the first amendment. There are more worries that the opinion based rhetoric on display by the media and our disgrace of a President will incite violence and/or retaliation from far right groups such as the "Proud Boys" or the "KKK." There have been organized efforts by the Puget Sound John

Brown Gun Club to keep armed members of their group around the CHAZ, in order to protect the peaceful protesters from outside agitators and other threats of violence. This seems like it could be seen as problematic to many more liberally minded seatt lites, but they are also in their rights to open carry in the city, and their presence has not created further violence in the zone. PSJBGC has done a great job of allowing free movement for the unarmed and I believe the irony or right wing media portraying them as agitators/warlords is pretty stupid, when not a month or so ago there were armed protesters out trying to reopen their states against the advice of medical professionals in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Also, using the military to police the citizens is inciting a civil war, and would present a constitutional crisis of epic proportions. I would do everything in my power to resist even the military from trying to end this primarily peaceful occupied protest.

LW: If you could say something to the President of the United States, and you knew he would listen to you, what would you say?

LB: I have no faith in our president, I know that anything positive worth saying about this movement would be lost on that man. He has demonstrated more times than I can count that the rich and wealthy whites of this country deserve more respect and rights than the disenfranchised poorer citizens of the US. Donald Trump is a disgrace and should be held accountable for all the lies and suffering he has caused in this country. The thing he needs to understand and may not accept is there is an undercurrent of resistance in this country that will overthrow him and his people. We are not swayed by threats of violence, and when confronted with violence we will defend ourselves and resist until we get our needs and demands met. Black Lives Matter. The police will be held accountable, the poor and disenfranchised will be fed and housed, America's wealth will be redistributed, and our society will become more engaged in the process!

LW: Do you feel or see Baba at work in all of this?

LB: Yesterday [June 12, 2020], a March was held in Seattle with an estimated 60,000 people that walked in silence from Judkins Park to Jefferson Park. This silent protest was meant to be a reprieve from all the noise and actions of the two weeks prior. The power of that march rested on the fact that it was conducted in silence with so many people in attendance, the weight of all this could finally be held in our minds and hearts.

Baba's gift to humanity was his ability to hold that weight in silence as well, and in these moments of uncertainty and fear, this act of holding ourselves and being present has sustained this movement for many decades. I feel and see the fruits of Baba's work every time I show up for these demonstrations. He is there in the compassion and empathy we show each other on the ground. I make a conscious effort to listen and learn from all the folks I engage with and do my best to share the knowledge and skills I have to further support my brothers and sisters who show up. The act of protest is akin to my meditation practice, where everyday I am confronted with new opportunities and information about the day and like identifying feelings and thoughts, I can recognize the good and the bad are all part of greater truths, that once uncovered, can be reconstructed to serve us rather than be subservient. The best way to protest is to keep showing up and to give what you can to recover the power for the people. The best way to find God is to be present with yourself and work every day to open your mind and heart the endless ocean of love we all come from. If Meher Baba is the "King of Hearts," the Lord of Lords and the Highest of the High, then surely he is present in a movement aimed at ending systematic injustice and violence in our communities.

LW: Thank you Lee. Are there any further feelings or thoughts that you wish to share with our OmPoint readers?

LB: I encourage anyone who feels motivated to support the cause to research the protests and civil rights organizations in their areas. Black Lives Matter is well

organized, and has been very inclusive in their efforts to mobilize and educate the public. In light of COVID-19, you may have reservations about getting out in public, in which case, you should take the time to sign some online petitions, talk to your friends and neighbors, participate in a social justice book club or financially support organizations working to end systematic racism and police brutality. Find ways to also work on yourself, including understanding how stereotyping and implicit bias negatively impacts people of color and various other minority groups. Protest is a tool that can be implemented in so many ways, and there is no wrong way to do it.

Educate, Agitate, Organize, and Resist!

Show up everyday and present ideas for a better future for the next generation.

Laurent Weichberger: Since the initial interview with Lee, the region known as CHAZ was renamed the Capitol Hill Occupied (or "Organized") Protest ("CHOP"). On June 22, 2020 I saw a headline in online news that there had been shootings over the weekend within the CHAZ/CHOP.[5] There were two shootings, one on June 20, and on June 21, in the CHOP zone, and one shooting victim is now dead, with the others in the hospital. Concerned for Lee's safety and well being, I reached back out to him, and here is what transpired...

LW: I just wanted to be sure you're safe. I'm sure you've heard about shootings at CHAZ/CHOP?

LB: Yeah, I've been distancing from the CHOP for the last week plus. The space became a bit too much of a tourist destination than the progressive occupied protest I had hoped. The shootings in the past few days are very disappointing, and I imagine the feeling in the CHOP is somber with that being a part of its recent memory. I also am traveling and wanted to be sure I didn't get sick prior to doing so. I got a COVID test last Tuesday and am still negative which is good I guess.

On July 1, 2020 the Seattle police department cleared the entire Seattle CHOP/CHAZ settlement, and reclaimed the area for the city, according to multiple news outlets, and videos posted to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) which showed this police work. The protest in the form it had taken in that area of Seattle is now over. [6]

Lee's Post Script Update July 5 2020

In the time since I conducted my interview with OmPoint, there have been many ups and downs in the operations of the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP). On June 29, 16 year old Antonio Mays Jr. and another 14 year old young man were gunned down in their car, resulting in the death of Antonio. As a result of this violent incident, a new wave of resentment against the CHOP appeared in social and news media. This shooting came nearly ten days after a separate incident in the vicinity of the CHOP, where another young man, 19-year-old Lorenzo Anderson, was shot in a similar incident.

The CHOP was raided in the early morning hours of Tuesday, June 30. An emergency dispersal order was issued by Seattle's Mayor, Jenny Durkan, in response to these two fatal gun violence incidents. Every time these shootings happened, the first responders were medics and volunteers for the movement. When attempting to coordinate with 911 emergency services, the medics on the ground were met with hesitation from both police and Fire/EMT, due to the "unsecured area", posing a threat to the city's first responder services. The Mayor and our Chief of Police decided that these incidents warranted a reoccupation of the space. Ultimately, the protesters were subjected to arrests, of about 40 people in total. The area that was formerly known as CHOP became a barricaded area for only police and residents. During the sweep on June 30th all people, media included, were banned from entering the area for 10 days.

Today, July 5th, Seattle is waking up to the News of another fatality. This incident has hit much closer to home for me. Summer Taylor and Diaz Love were participating in a March for Black Women. This march was from Capitol Hill into the downtown center. The organizers

Endnotes:

1. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_George_Floyd
2. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Lives_Matter
3. Black Lives Matter King-County Seattle: <https://blacklivesseattle.org/>
4. Avatar Meher Baba on October 17, 1940, speaking to his women disciples, in Lord Meher, p. 2162, on-line at: <http://www.lordmeher.org/rev/index.jsp?pageBase=page.jsp&nextPage=2162>
5. Interestingly, The Guardian news from London, UK, had better coverage of this than CNN: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/22/seattle-shooting-cha-z-protest-capitol-hill-autonomous-zone> & The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/20/us/seattle-chop-shooting.html>
6. See: New York Time article, "Police Clear Seattle's Protest 'Autonomous Zone'," by Rachel Abrams (July 1, 2020): <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/us/seattle-protest-zone-CHOP-CHAZ-unrest.html>

for this march had gotten approval from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to shut down the interstate to cross into downtown. Interstate 5 was shut down in the section where the protesters were marching, but the exit ramps were left opened. Because of this, a car was able to get onto the freeway and at a very high rate of speed, drove into the gathering, hitting Summer and Diaz. Both protesters were taken to the ICU and by the end of the day on July 4th, Summer had succumbed to their injuries.

I knew Summer Taylor through the Baba community here in Seattle. Our families have attended meetings as well as participated in the Oregon Sahavas in years past. Summer Taylor, at the time of their passing was a 24 year old non-binary activist. Someone who is non-binary does not conform to either male or female gender norms and uses the pronouns they/them to self-identify. Summer was a member of our spiritual community and their name is being shared around the world today to shine a light on the appalling and brutal nature of their passing. I have not been able to contact Summer's family directly at the time of my writing this, but there is currently a GoFundMe page that has raised thousands already to support them during this time. But if you want to really support Summer, please take some time to educate yourselves about what Summer was demonstrating. Black Lives Matter organizations welcome protesters and support from people of all backgrounds. Anything you can do to support this movement will help cement the legacy of Summer's life.

-Lee Barrientos



"THOSE who try to understand God through the intellect alone, arrive at some cold and dry concept which misses the very essence of the nature of God. It is true that God is infinite knowledge, infinite existence, infinite power and infinite bliss, but God is not understood in His essence until He is also understood as *infinite love*."

- Meher Baba

From Discourses, "God as Infinite Love" (6th edition, Volume III, p. 175)

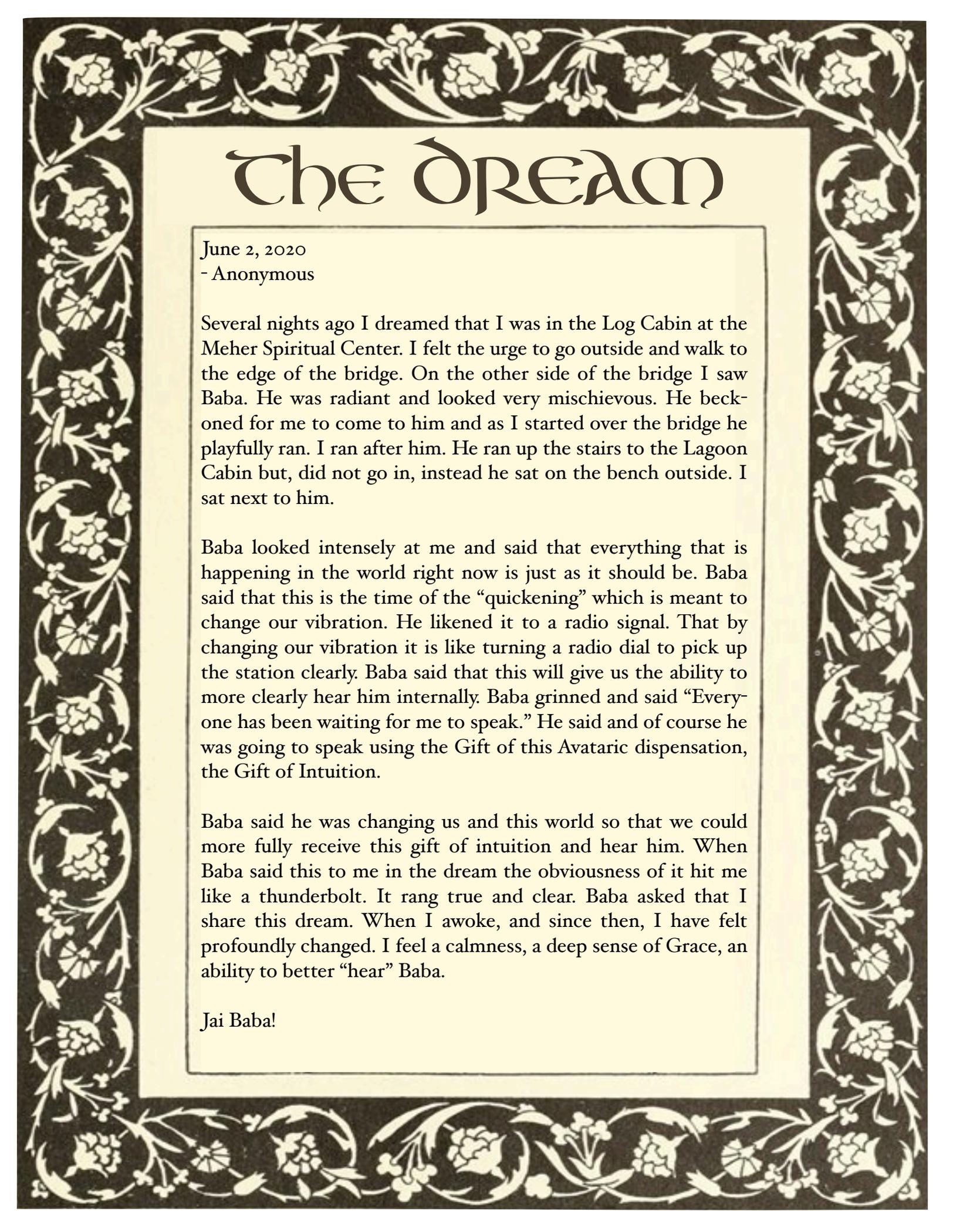
On Feb. 7, 2020 a small tornado at Meher Spiritual Center touched down doing minor damage to The Guest House, The Original Kitchen and some trees.

MEHER CENTER REPORT

In addition to the lake cabin and the breezeway between the original kitchen and the newer one being grazed by falling branches, many trees got blown down by Friday night's storm. Some large pines and oaks were snapped off 12 to 15 feet up their trunks. Other large trees were pulled out by the roots and toppled. At the Hermitage, where I am staying, there's a large oak tree with a fork at about the 15 foot mark that had split in the wind storm and fell, missing the cabin by 6 inches. Paula Baran's car was missed by about the same distance by an even larger oak. The oak that came down where I was would definitely would have crushed the roof and come through into the cabin. As luck would have it, I was sound asleep through the entire ordeal! We figure it must have been a mini-tornado that skirted the inland side of Long Lake. Still here by God's will,

Ray Lee, Asheville



A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine motif in white on a dark background, framing the central text.

THE DREAM

June 2, 2020

- Anonymous

Several nights ago I dreamed that I was in the Log Cabin at the Meher Spiritual Center. I felt the urge to go outside and walk to the edge of the bridge. On the other side of the bridge I saw Baba. He was radiant and looked very mischievous. He beckoned for me to come to him and as I started over the bridge he playfully ran. I ran after him. He ran up the stairs to the Lagoon Cabin but, did not go in, instead he sat on the bench outside. I sat next to him.

Baba looked intensely at me and said that everything that is happening in the world right now is just as it should be. Baba said that this is the time of the “quickenings” which is meant to change our vibration. He likened it to a radio signal. That by changing our vibration it is like turning a radio dial to pick up the station clearly. Baba said that this will give us the ability to more clearly hear him internally. Baba grinned and said “Everyone has been waiting for me to speak.” He said and of course he was going to speak using the Gift of this Avataric dispensation, the Gift of Intuition.

Baba said he was changing us and this world so that we could more fully receive this gift of intuition and hear him. When Baba said this to me in the dream the obviousness of it hit me like a thunderbolt. It rang true and clear. Baba asked that I share this dream. When I awoke, and since then, I have felt profoundly changed. I feel a calmness, a deep sense of Grace, an ability to better “hear” Baba.

Jai Baba!

COVID I

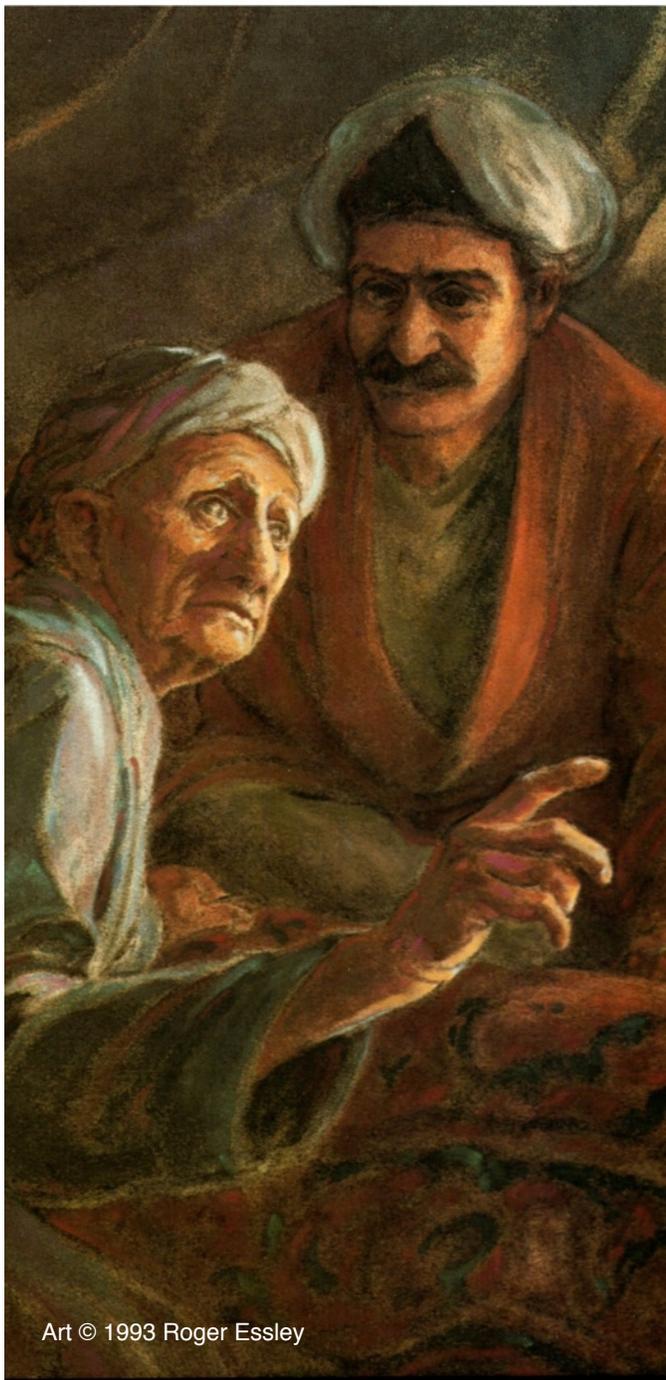


MEHER BABA SAID TO ERUCH,

"YOU ARE SAFE NOWHERE AND SAFE EVERYWHERE. IF YOU HAVE ME YOU ARE SAFE, IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ME YOU ARE NOT SAFE AT ALL."

APPOINTMENT

by Somerset Maugham



Centuries ago, in the city of Baghdad, lived a wealthy merchant and his old servant, Abdullah. One day as usual, the merchant sent Abdullah to the market to buy provisions.

While he was haggling with the wine-seller, Abdullah noticed an old crone staring at him. She approached him with her hands up, and Abdullah saw that it was Death, disguised as an old woman. Frightened, he hurried back to his master's house, white and trembling, and said, "Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I saw Death coming for me. Please, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me."

The merchant loved this man well, helped him mount the horse, and as fast as the horse could gallop, he raced away from Baghdad.

Afraid for Abdullah, the merchant went down to the marketplace to seek the old woman. He saw her and asked, "Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?"

"That was not a threatening gesture," she said, "It was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

COVID III

From Kittelsen's "Black Death" series, showing a peasant rowing the Plague across a lake, as she checks in her books if he is to die or not



Madam,” said Wolfe, “I can evade folly without backing into fear.”

-Nero Wolfe in Rex Stout’s “The Doorbell Rang.”

**EVOLVE
OR
REPEAT**

COVID IV

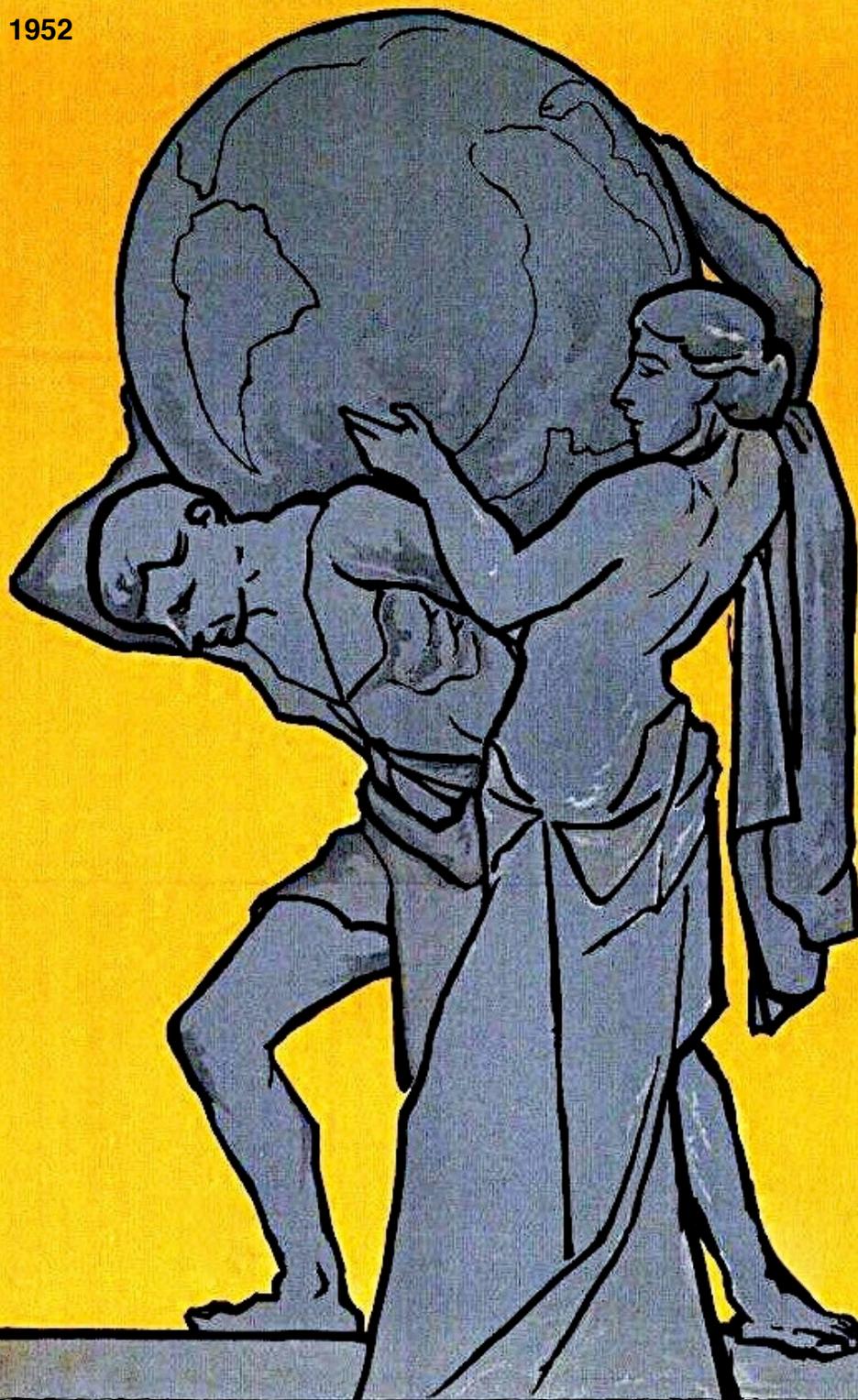
BABA'S PROMISE

“... if you find yourselves in a perilous, desperate situation, cry out my name loudly.

I will then save you.

... during any serious mishap or accident, such as a car crash or train wreck – you will be saved by remembering me with full faith from the bottom of your heart.”

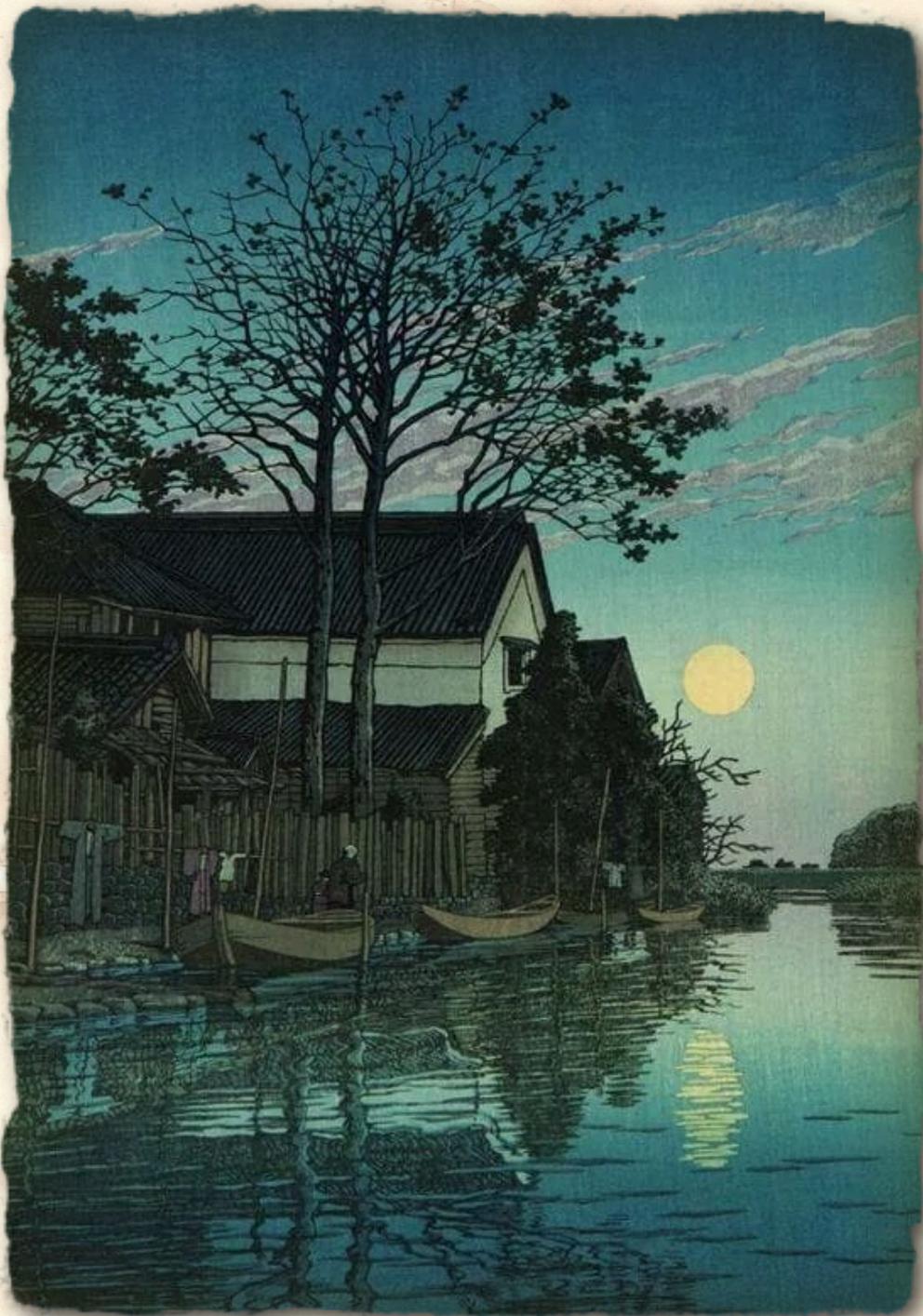
COVID V
New York - 1952



LITHOGR. GOO
LENGVÉLUPÓT
BUDAPEST, VÖRÖSHELY

Baba revealed to his lovers an upcoming catastrophe in which many would die. Fred mentioned someone who, to protect his family and himself from the destruction Baba had foretold, wanted to establish a home high in the mountains and stock it with provisions. Baba interrupted, stating,

**"NO PLACE WILL BE SAFE,
NOT EVEN THE TOP OF THE HIMALAYAS!
ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD CAN ONE BE SAVED."**



A cool breeze follows pale
clouds, gently dropping tears from heaven onto our healing earth.
Geese honk their awkward song that I'm certain is beautiful to its mate.
I sit on a hard wooden chair.
A soft blanket, pink with rainbows, warms my healing soul.

Jim Courson

Hua Hu Ching

52

化胡經

Do you think
you can clear your mind by
sitting constantly in silent meditation?
This makes your mind narrow,
not clear. Integral awareness
is fluid and adaptable,
present in all places
and at all times.
That is true
meditation.

Who can
attain clarity and simplicity
by avoiding the world? The Tao is
clear and simple, and it
doesn't avoid the
world.

Why
not simply
honor your parents,
love your children, help
your brothers and sisters,
be faithful to your friends,
care for your mate with devotion,
complete your work cooperatively
and joyfully, assume responsibility
for problems, practice virtue without
first demanding it of others,
understand the highest
truths yet retain
an ordinary
manner?

That would be true clarity,
true simplicity, true mastery.

Being a Mother in Challenging Times

by Cynthia Barrientos

When invited to write about being a mother during the current world events of the recent Covid-19 pandemic combined with the ongoing pandemic of Racism, my first thought was to set aside my natural maternal emotional response and turn to Meher Baba for a loving and hopeful spiritual perspective.

Prior to establishing my relationship with Baba in 1992, my reaction to challenging situations was riddled with worry, anxiety and fear. I suffered from severe panic attacks and my thoughts often created worse case scenarios.

One temporary solution I found to this emotional distress was my lifelong comfort in music. Hearing Bobby McFerrin's lighthearted song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy" in 1989, was my first glimpse of awakening to Meher Baba. This became my theme song that I'd turn to when I needed a different perspective. In leadership positions, I would play this song to my staff to ease the sting of situations beyond our control.

Another solution was prayer to the God of my understanding. This simple one came to me in the midst of juggling my life as a new mother, managing a team of 15 consultants, 8 systems engineers and being responsible for the installation and implementation of technology and curriculum integration in 120 K-12 public and private schools in 5 western states, with extensive travel, including flights in bush planes to villages in Alaska. Needless to say, I was more than ready for a breakthrough to a spiritual awakening. The prayer is:

Dear God,
I love You,
I trust You,
And I know
You know
What You are doing.

Today, we are faced with intense global tension that I want to be sure to acknowledge as extremely difficult for many of us in physical, emotional, financial and spiritual ways. In turning to Baba for perspective, I was reminded of this passage.

Do As I Say

"Suppose I say, 'Don't Worry About Your Children!' You must take my word. My word, as it comes from God, because I am that. What does the word of God mean? God must know everyone, do everything. Therefore, when He says, 'Don't Worry About Your Children!', it means you do not have to worry. Suppose I turn My key and there is an earthquake tomorrow and within five minutes, you all vanish. Then what about your worries, about your family and children? Therefore, I say, 'Stick to My word'- whatever instructions I may give you. That is all that is necessary. Do as I say and the rest you leave to Me. But do as I say.

I am unmindful of all the qualifications you have. The only qualification I want you to have is love. Love me and I am pleased with you." *

So, as a mother, I lean into my faith in Meher Baba to ease the natural maternal tendency to worry about my adult son's health during a pandemic and his safety while he actively participates as a person of color in Seattle's Black Lives Matter protests. As the father of his own son, he is doing his part to bring our world to a place of safety for us now, this next generation and the generations to come.

In addition to Baba's loving guidance, I offer this passage to all mothers and fathers of the world:

* Meher Baba Calling p.70 © 1964 Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust

Kahlil Gibran on Children

“Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backwards nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.”

The Prophet © Public Domain

As beloved Meher Baba has awakened my heart and mind to His love, I fall asleep each night without worry, anxiety or fear for my son or his son, sleep through the night and greet each new day, remembering Him.

Beloved Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jail

Meher Baba Ki Jail

By Alexandra King

Transmission June 12, 2020

“It’s the end of the world as we know it. It’s the end of the world as we know it... and I feel fine la la la.”

This REM tune has been playing in my mind for several weeks. As I’ve checked in with myself there are fluctuations of feelings and emotions. Mixed emotions about the state of the world? Yes, of course. Though my true self, my soul self, is steeped in truth and does feel fine.

Spirit often uses music to send significant messages my way. A recent drive to Georgia for a funeral opened lines of transmission though the radio. I flipped through the stations and settled on “Closing Time” by Semisonic. This tune had no specific meaning to me. No emotional connection to a memory or youth. Though within a few lines I felt my eyes swelling and overwhelming vibrations in my heart.

Confused. I waited for more. Were these tears happy or sad? In the moment I finished the thought the transmission played in my mind.

“Celebrate what is happening in the world right now. This will lead to a great spiritual awakening of your time.

The people will be free. They will be free to choose a path, and it makes no difference which way they go.”

I understood this to mean they could walk in the light or not. It’s their choice, and neither choice is good or bad. It’s more about where people want to be or end up.

In the same moment the transmission was delivered a vision came through. I saw band-aids ripped off and falling from the sky. Much like the Tower card of the Tarot.

Still more. “The veil will be lifted and people will finally see and know the truth. It will be incredibly difficult for those in denial. You must be there for them. Hold space for their healing and understanding. It will take time.”

This was incredible. Though in my mind I questioned “celebrate?” They answered by filling my heart with amplified vibrations of love and joy. More tears. Complete truth.

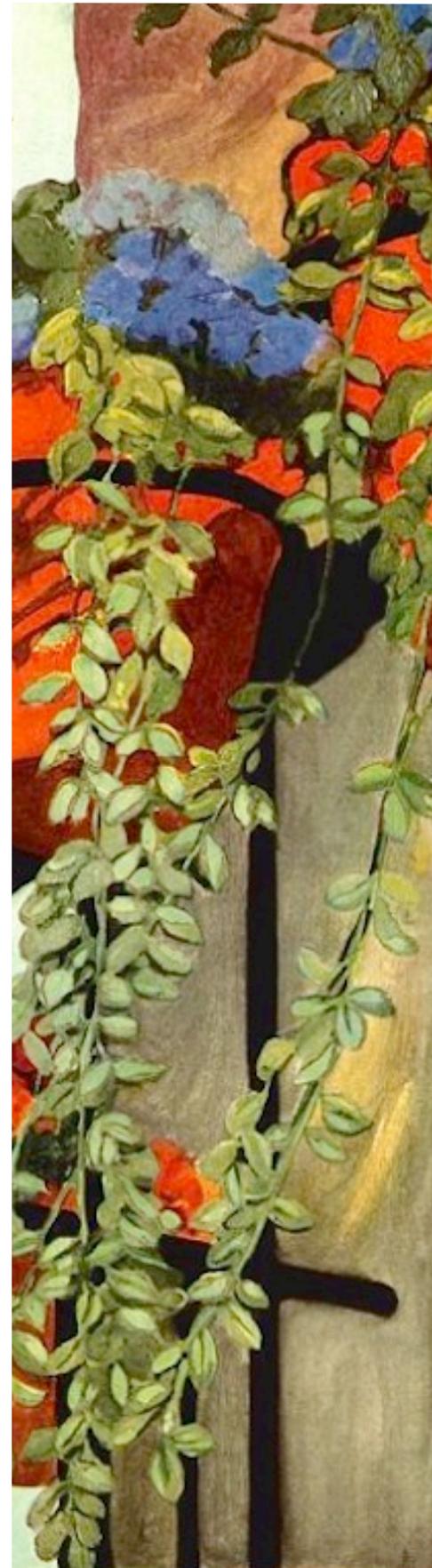
I am excited for what is happening and what is to come. This message has resonated with sisters and brothers of love and light. It may or may not resonate with you. Please take from it what speaks to your soul.

Namasté

Today

Marla Faith

With catastrophe comes healing
it brings us back to our truer self
a remembering
while what's not important falls away
Illnesses, death, national and natural upheavals
are earthquakes of the Spirit
that return us to our Self
that bright shiny light of our innermost being
where we see clearer and become peace
become love become gratitude
This preciousness never ends
We go about our daily lives
until an accident awakens us
or until a policeman steps upon a brother's throat
and it becomes the last straw
the straw that breaks the camel's back
just one too many tears
before the floodgates open
and collectively we set sail
for freedom and shores unknown
a shangra-la where trust is sacred
Can it ever be right here in our own land
beyond our secret selves?
Invisible ones hold nets of light around us
even as we tumble in riotous waves
drowning for air and integrity
Care will not come from 'the white house'
so stained with blood
Maybe it's Meher Baba breaking his Silence
with so many erupting "Enough!"
We are born into the ebb and flow of humanity
eons of discord and disappearance
and grace like a silken cord through it all
which we hold for survival



Today cont'd



to remember who we are
why we came
to reside on Gaia
to embrace her lovingly
Yet helmeted beings like pesky mosquitoes
bite us with boots, batons, and bullets
brainless robots of our time stomp the ground
Where are their moccasins to feel the earth?
Pity those who do not think or feel
and are only machines of anger
Kuan Yin cries tears upon them too
her children living at the edge of humanity
stuck in tar that's blinded their eyes
She reaches for them too
the same way that Jesus pleaded
'they know not what they do'
Here's to hoping that more of us have
swallowed the awake pill than those
whose lips are sealed against partaking
Eventually the light will break through the dark
but the two exist together, are brother and sister
in this eternal dance
Shiva, lord of destruction, raises his foot
Is it to give the dwarf of ignorance beneath it
freedom for a crazed escape to run wild in the world
or to release him from his own prison of ignorance
or to hold him underfoot while the cosmic dance continues?
The dwarves of ignorance run rampant now
The safe haven is your own pristine Self
keep it clear and clean
for soon you will be sheltering others
in your wide embrace
We are all of us now, called to be Kuan Yin
and stretch out our many arms
and open our many eyes
to see in all directions
and gather up the suffering
in the boat of our Being
Can you be a rescue boat for others?
Is this not why you stepped foot
upon this holy ground?

Let's be the same age, she said

And bring that gap between us a little closer

Let that bridge which keeps the cliff walls from meeting collapse

And the walls crumble down to the river below

Let's be same gender too while we are at it, so that souls sit
together on that glorious throne we call love

Without tension

Oh and let's be the same race, and the same religion too

Let's call it Oneness

Let's be the same soul.

Let's be.



Laurent Weichberger

V R M E S A Y G O U S F I D I N S

V R M E S A Y G O U S F I D I N S

From Daniel Sumi, Los Angeles

Hi Laurent. I just wanted to say something Baba showed me, which is something I've been avoiding. Maybe I saw it on a superficial level, but anyway...

Its amazing yet hard to accept that Baba is telling us that "I" and "YOU" and "ALL" are but one, and are all Baba. He said it so many times during his life, and while we love his discourses it is extremely hard to honestly internalize what he is saying without that bit of hesitation and fear."

If you want to put the last sentence, go ahead, if you don't want to its ok too because I added it now, but I thought it went together.

"Maybe it is because of the personal and individual attachment the mind has to Him and all His such amazing qualities when he walked this earth. The mind has a barrier, a sanskara, blocking our perception from this truth. However, what this is leading to is what made me send the message to you in the first place. It is that, through this searching, this internal groping at emptiness, Baba reversed the direction of my internal looking and made me look inward, which from the beginning is what Baba tells us to do. When i did this, His shining face instantly

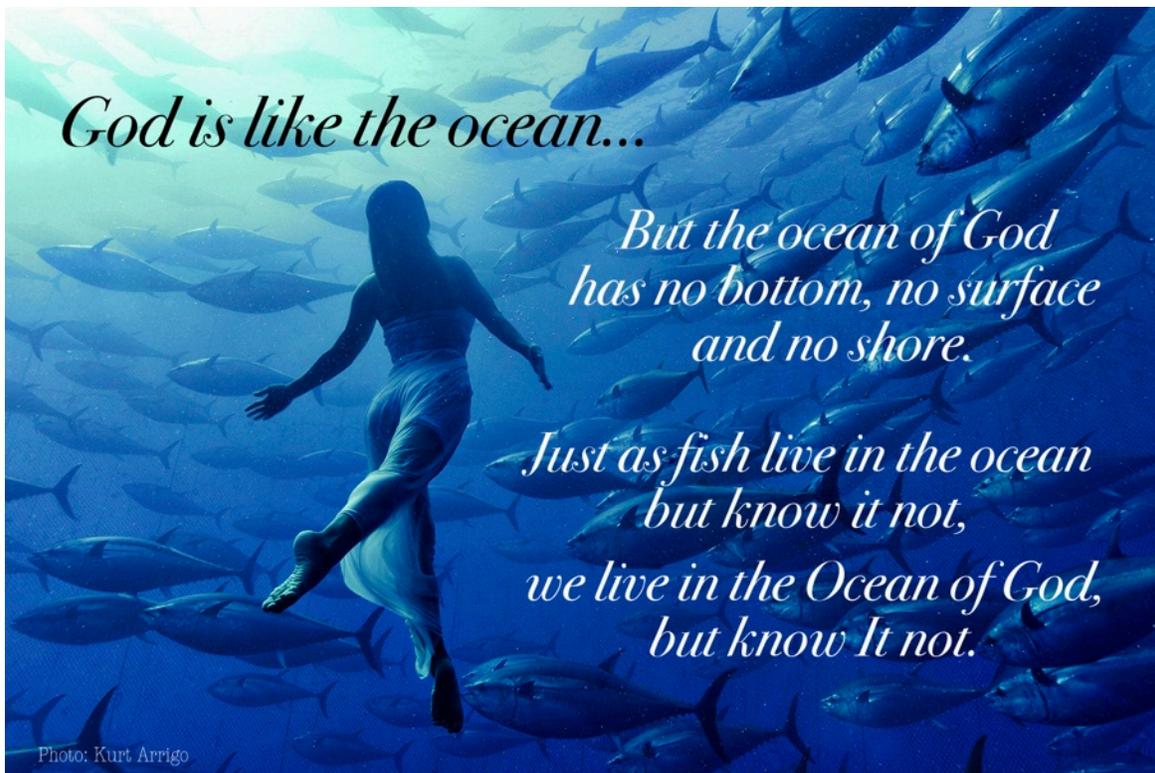
came up! I think this was just a mental sanskara that Baba put there. It must be if it is anything other than the beyond beyond. This is what Baba tells us to do in the search for God anyway, and it is what all the Avatars tell us as well. It is just so interesting how our minds are capable of preventing what will provide it peace. If you have been following and pondering Baba for so long, you must be a pro at this!"

Also, I saw this quote today that was really great by Carl Jung.

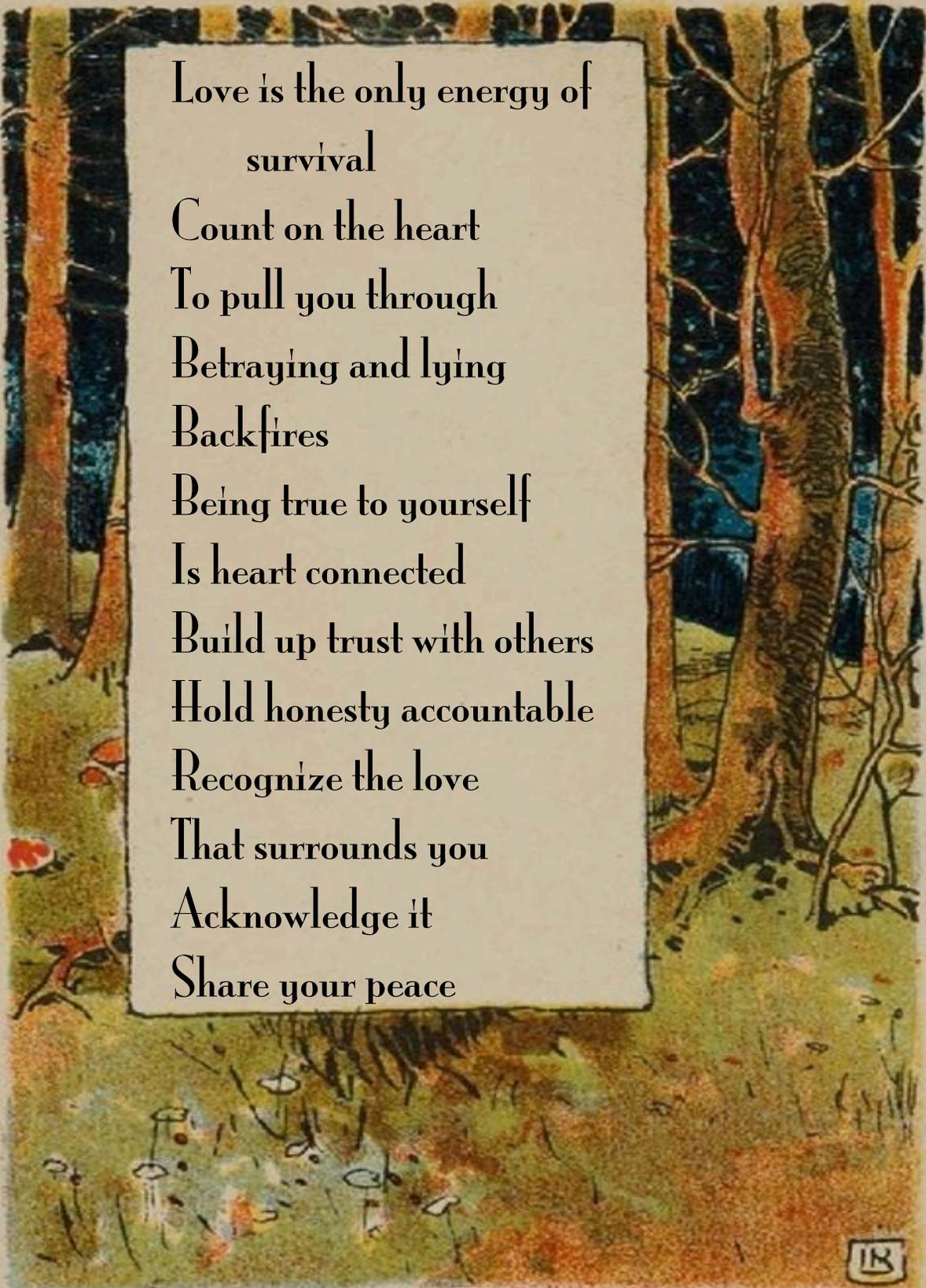
"That which you most need will be found where you least want to look."

If you can include it somehow i think it would be good and beneficial to this whole thing.. The point of this is to help others right? For Baba.

Jai Baba,
Daniel



Contributed by Michael Ivey

A watercolor illustration of a forest scene. The background features tall, slender trees with brown trunks and dark blue foliage. The foreground is a field of green grass with scattered white and orange flowers. The entire scene is framed by a dark border.

Love is the only energy of
survival

Count on the heart
To pull you through
Betraying and lying
Backfires
Being true to yourself
Is heart connected
Build up trust with others
Hold honesty accountable
Recognize the love
That surrounds you
Acknowledge it
Share your peace

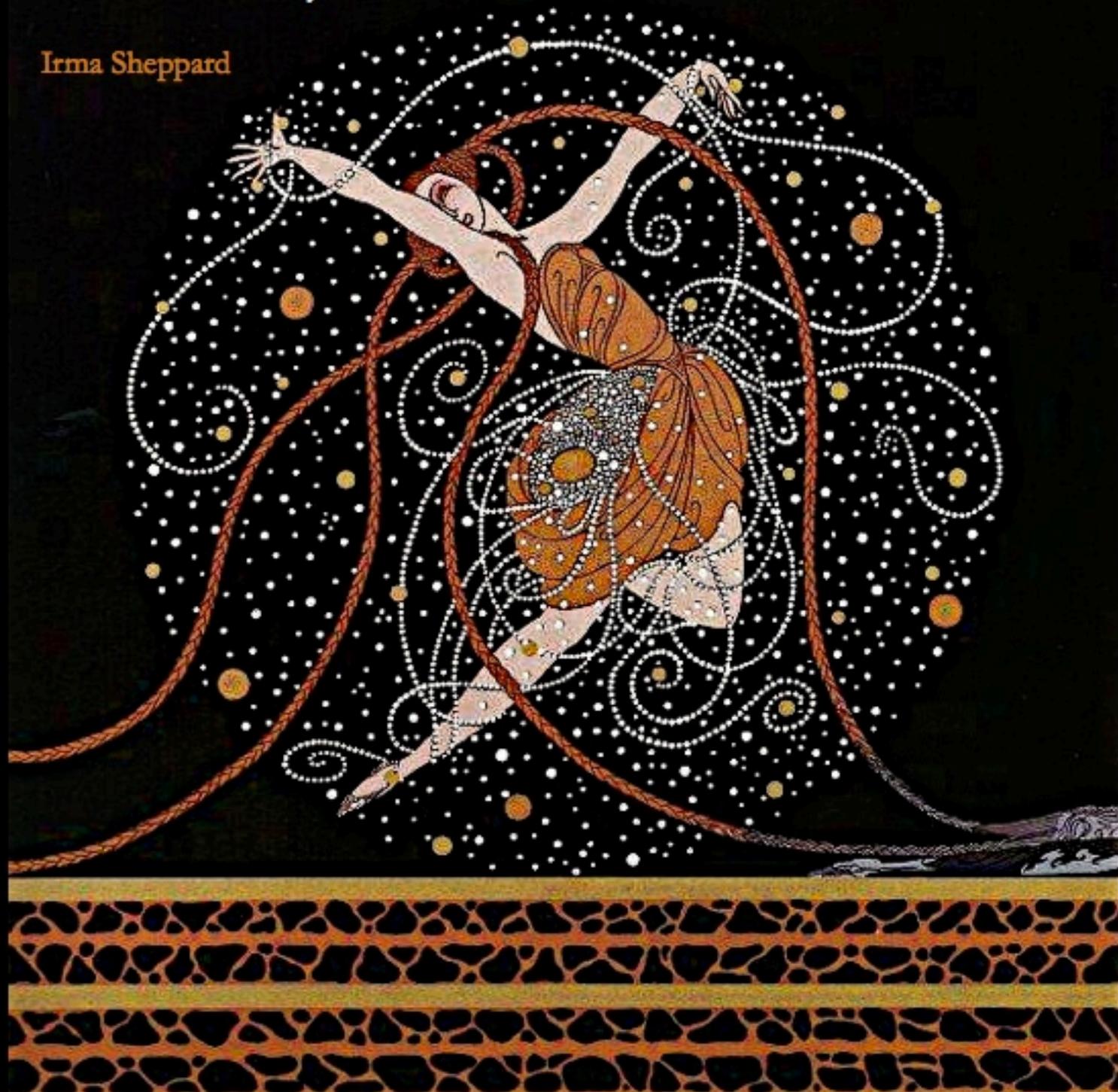
Anne Weichberger



The New Humanity

Cocooned like caterpillars
we abide in semi-seclusion with Him—
He's naturally having His way within us and
in His time, He will spring us loose—
awakening to His Love,
ready to fly!
The new humanity.

Irma Sheppard



'The infinite God is within me, and I am part of the infinite.'



True spirituality can be attained not by the intellect, but by heart and feeling - by inner experience. I might explain for hours, but that would be as nothing compared to one second of my internal help. Do one thing. Every night, just before retiring, think for a moment: 'The infinite God is within me, and I am part of the infinite.' This will strengthen your inner contact with me.

Meher Baba



Daniel Ladinsky wrote:

Once when with Eruch he said something that reminded me of some of my very favorite words of Rilke. A slight rendering of those words of Rilke go:

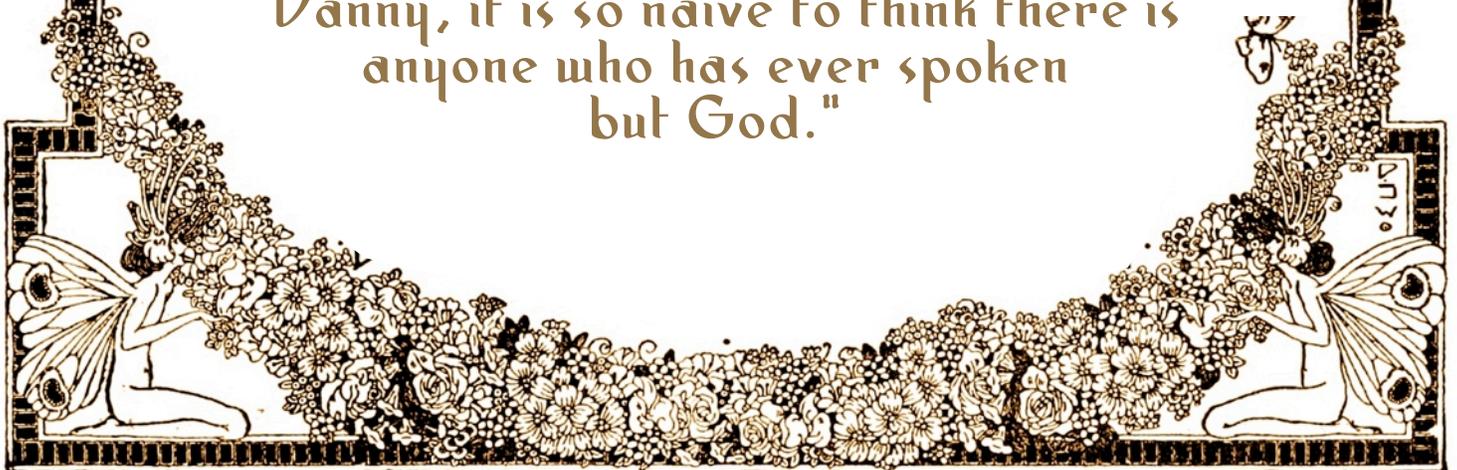
All beginnings needed us.
Our looking ripens things.

When I said to Eruch,

"Your words remind me of something
I so like of Rilke."

Eruch responded,

"Danny, it is so naive to think there is
anyone who has ever spoken
but God."



"The Eternal Truth has three aspects: Dnyana or knowledge, Shakti or power and Ananda or bliss. The Sakshatkara or realization of this three-fold Divinity or Truth is the target of the seeker. Those who take the path of Prem or love bask in eternal joy. Those who are on the path of action take refuge in eternal power. Persons who seek wisdom rely on eternal knowledge.

But at the end of the Path, all have to come to the indivisible completeness of the Truth, in all its aspects, however different their paths may have been. One who arrives at the Goal is the Truth-realized individual, and he becomes the very Source of infinite knowledge, infinite power and infinite bliss."





Contributed by Cyprus Weichberger

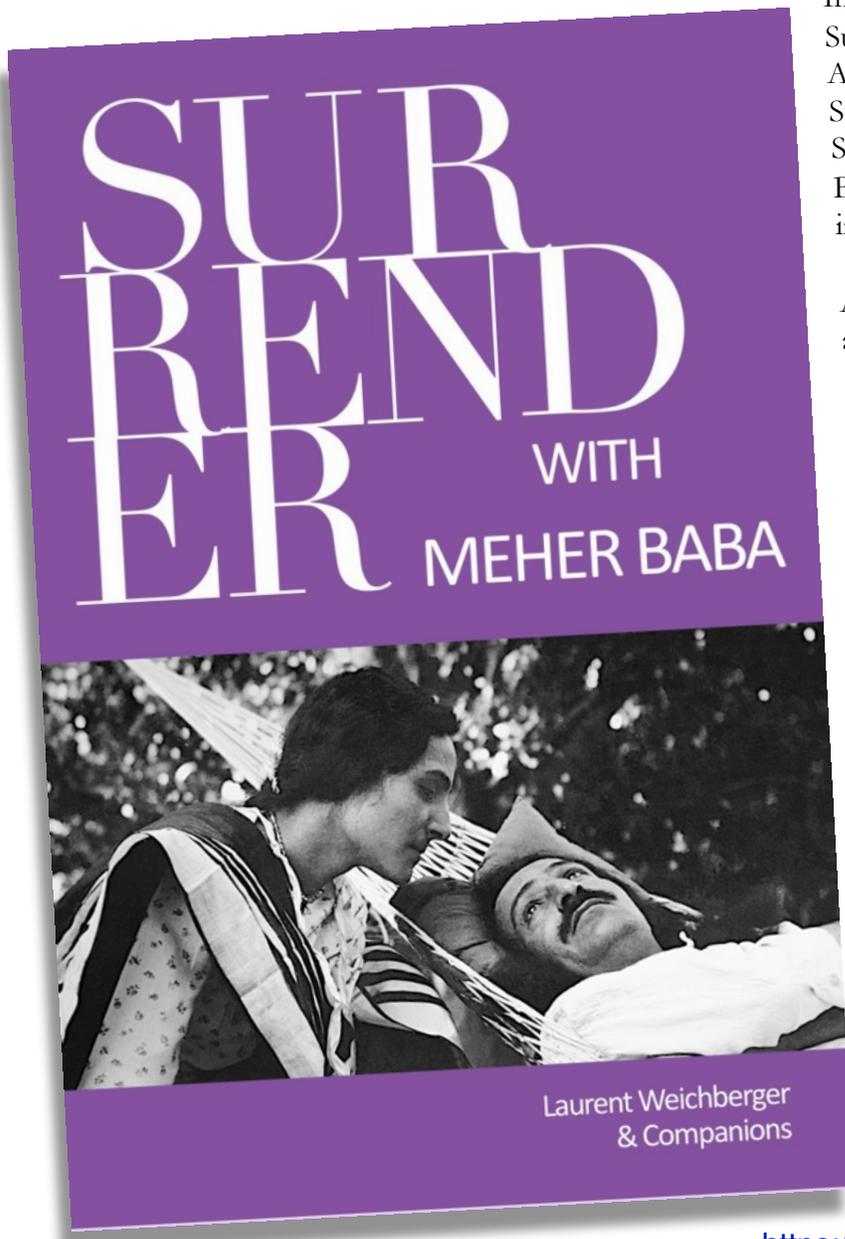
S H I F T H A P P E N S

submitted by Irma Sheppard

Surrender with Meher Baba

by Laurent Weichberger & Companions (Wilmington: OmPoint Press, July 2020)

“Basic questions, such as how, when, why, and who will embark on the process of surrender are explored in the first half of this book by Laurent, with generous quotes from Meher Baba. Laurent’s love for Meher Baba shines through each page, as he explains his understanding of the path Baba has laid out for us. Laurent also invites us to consider what the obstacles to surrender are, how surrender must be an active rather than a passive process, and why surrender must be sincerely executed. The gap between Meher Baba’s words and how we interpret them and integrate them into our daily lives is explored by Laurent in Part I of the book as well as by additional spiritual writing companions through personal stories and poetry in Part II of the book.” - Evie Lindemann, from the Foreword



Including chapters from Laurent: The Meaning of Surrender ~ Divine Right Timing ~ Passive Versus Active Surrender ~ Healthy, Deficient, and Toxic Surrender ~ Evolutionary Resistance to Surrender ~ Surrender and Separation ~ Surrender with Meher Baba ~ Surrender in Song ~ Surrender and Wellbeing ~ and some hands on “Surrender Exercises.”

And with additional chapters from contributing authors:

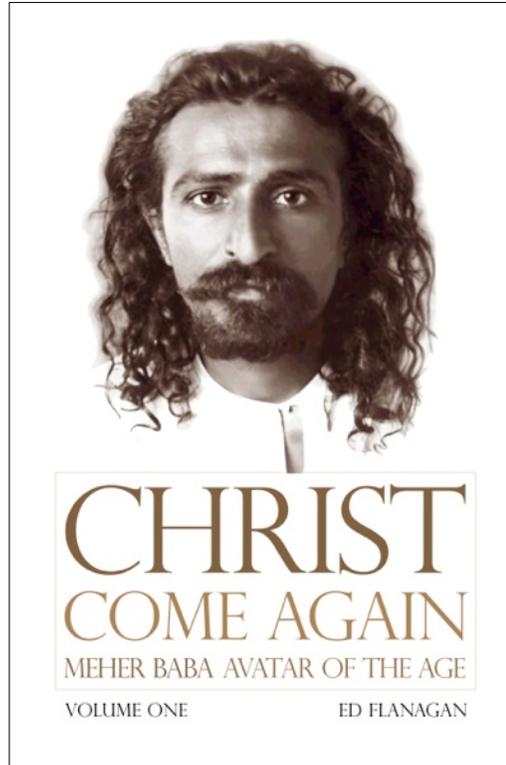
- Surrender, by Dale Draeger
- Baba, by Cyprus Weichberger
- Unworthy, by Evie Lindemann
- Salt and Pepper, by Geoffrey Wight
- How Long, a poem by Tracey Schmidt
- Gently Down the Stream, by Cynthia Barrientos
- Surrender and Inter-Faith Verbal Unity in Meher Baba’s Message: “The Highest of the High,” by Thomas Wolfe
- We are All in the Same Boat: Obedience Then and Now, by Daniel J. Stone
- What Does Surrender Mean to You? by Alan Manoukian
- Epilogue by Vanessa Weichberger

Available online August 1, 2020 from:

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/057873804X>

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/surrender-with-meher-baba-laurent-c-weichberger/1137425347>

BRIEFLY NOTED

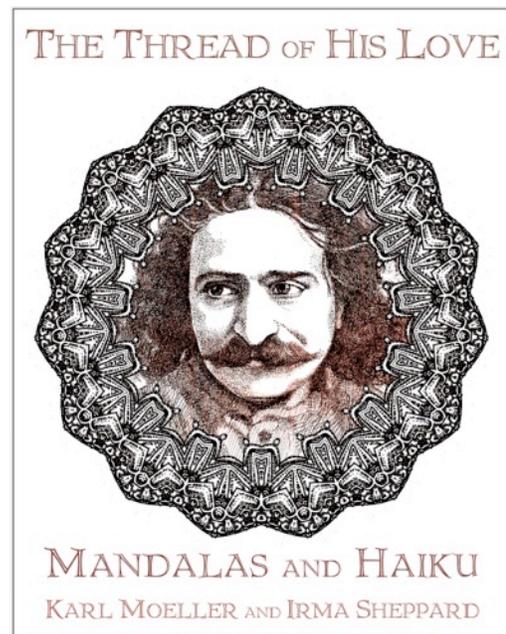


Christ Come Again, by Ed Flanagan

A monumental biography of Meher Baba seen through the eyes of a former Catholic priest. The first of multiple volumes.

“Ed Flanagan was my long time friend of 38 years. His devotion to Meher Baba always astounded me as it consumed him in the most positive way. He researched this book endlessly, as he wanted a shorter biography of Meher Baba for those who couldn’t make it through all the volumes of Lord Meher. Take it in with the love he put in it.” -- Wayne Galler

Proceeds from sale of this book will go to the “A Touch of Love Foundation” and its work supporting disadvantaged children around the world. \$14.00



The Thread of His Love - Mandalas and Haiku, by Karl Moeller and Irma Sheppard

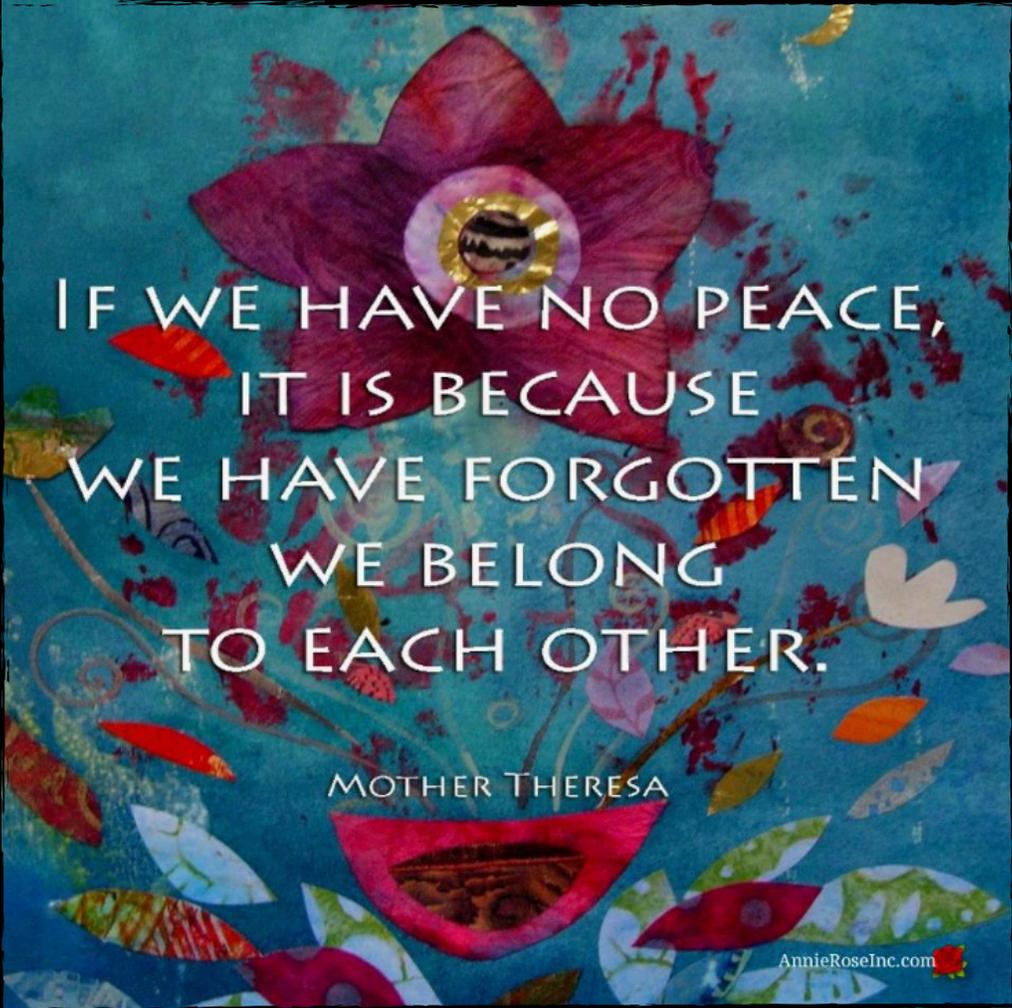
This husband and wife team, creators of the “101 Tales of Finding Love” trilogy and others, have created an absorbing short book featuring thoughtful, Baba-focused haiku with pen and ink mandalas ranging from simple to extremely complex, one per page.

“This book of haiku is dedicated to Avatar Meher Baba, the Source of all love and inspiration.” - Irma Sheppard

“These mandalas are created from original, usually abstract, pen and ink pieces. It was a fascinating process pairing mandala with haiku. I hope you enjoy this nearly as much as we did making it.” - Karl Moeller

**Titles available on Amazon.com
and BarnesandNoble.com**

\$10.00 retail



IF WE HAVE NO PEACE,
IT IS BECAUSE
WE HAVE FORGOTTEN
WE BELONG
TO EACH OTHER.

MOTHER THERESA

AnnieRoseInc.com 

The Archangel

by Jill Davis

The archangel stands in a rose flame robe, wings shattering gold as he holds the diamond sword high. When the sword falls, a rope guarding earth will be cut.

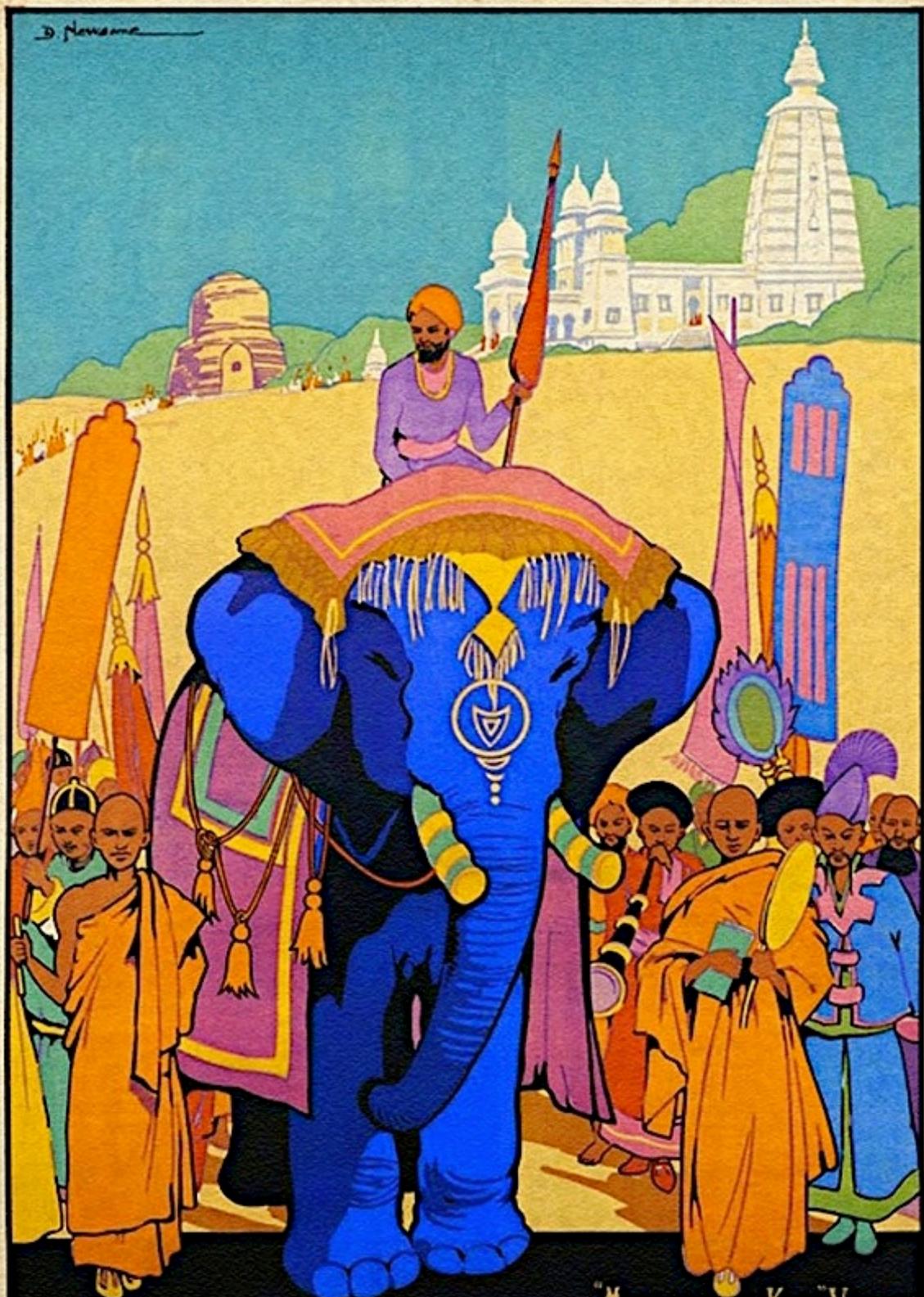
Don't ask to see more. Ask an angel to hold you. Or wrap yourself in a corner of the King's purple cape, and do not lose your grip for even a moment as He rides.

His purple cape is made from mountains beyond the black and gold of space; lined with silk and silence; bordered with moons and stars; and falling in folds from the ocean of nothing. And in forgetfulness valley pocket, there's wine and food, chai and flowers.

Who knows what He must do. Just wrap yourself in a corner of His soft thick cloak and hold on.

June 1990, at the Meher Center, I was alone for a week in the Guest House. Images kept arising, some of angels, and I recorded them. July 2020, conflict raging through the U.S., I recalled those records put away thirty years ago. Some seem for these times.

D. Newame



"MULAGANDHA KUTI" VIHARA

VISIT

MEHERABAD

The Meher Archive Collective (MAC) and their newly acquired home, Meher New Life Center (at 53 Red Oak School Rd. about 15 miles north of Asheville NC) is a massive project in the Meher Baba community. I personally visited this new center, which is undergoing some destruction in preparation for much new construction. I also took photos, and asked questions of the Board of Directors, all of which resulted in the following article. I have joked that the scale of the project is so large, I call it Noah's Ark, and that when Baba returns in 700 years the MAC Board will invite Him to cut the ribbon on the opening ceremony, because there is so much to accomplish. And yet, in all seriousness this is a community, and a Baba center to which I want to belong. Their hearts are on-fire with love for our Beloved Lord Meher, and I am certain He is well pleased with their efforts. Enough, let's read what they have to share in their own words. -- Laurent Weichberger



MEHER ARCHIVE COLLECTIVE



Meher Archive Collective; Past, Present and Future

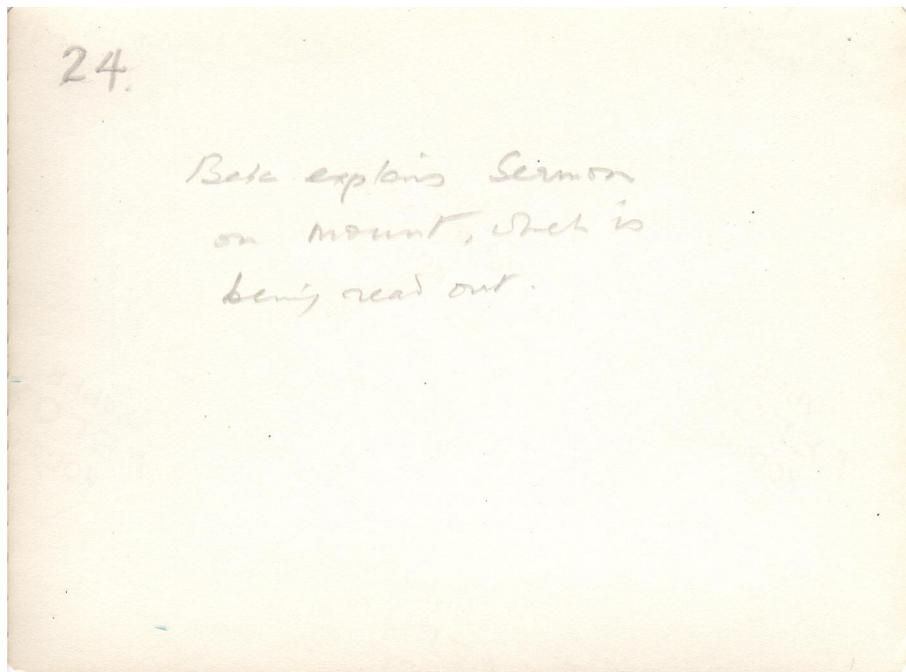
By Diane Tower-Jones

With Contributions from the MAC Team (Asheville, NC - 2020)

*“Although it is true that my real center is the heart of the individual, it is helpful for my lovers to come together and think and talk about me, to discuss my teachings and messages, compare notes with each other and cooperatively try to come close to me in understanding and spirit.” **

Avatar Meher Baba





Front and back of photo of Baba explaining The Sermon on the Mount, which is being read out.
From Jean Adriel's collection

Meher Archive Collective (**MAC**) began in the Summer of 2016 with a mission statement: ***to collect, preserve, and share Meher Baba's Divine Legacy of materials, artifacts and words with integrity, love and transparency for the benefit of humanity.***

A lot has happened since then - non-profit status in North Carolina has been established; a 1920s school building has been purchased and refurbishment is well under way; an expanding team of volunteers is engaged in various activities, from archiving to construction, event planning to communications; and a growing influx of archival material is wending its way towards preservation.

MAC's Board of Directors comprises the Chair and President, Scott Tower; Vice President, Ken Blackman; Secretary, Renee Bussanich; Treasurer, Arthur Trupp; and Directors, Hugh Huntington, Jean Brunet Ludwig, Anne Barker and Evie Lindemann. Eruch Adams is the Archive Director.



Ken Blackman and Scott Tower
Vice President and Chair/President of MAC
Photo by Laurent Weichberger

Our ongoing purpose is to gather as many Baba treasures as possible (whether physical or informational) and to preserve, organize and share actual and digital material for researchers, centers, and future generations. We continue to embrace the growing need for Baba's words, ways, original publications, and profound messages to be made accessible to everyone - locally, nationally and globally. In addition, we seek to interface with other archives, our long term goal being to co-create a global, searchable database.

Initially, **MAC** began with an ad hoc committee who came together for the purpose of archiving Baba artifacts. Operations began out of donated office space in Asheville; gradually however, it became clear that more space would be needed, both for the process of preservation, and for storage. While the search for property began, meetings were held within the growing Asheville Baba community and with others further afield. Many people expressed both a need and a desire to collect, preserve and make accessible items and information relating to The Avatar of the Age; in short we were met

with a heartwarming expression of interest and excitement in support of our collective vision.

In the search for a larger facility with plentiful, secure storage space, a decommissioned school, 20 minutes North of Asheville, came to our attention. The 25,000 sq.ft. brick structure, built on six relatively flat acres with far-reaching views, is easily accessible and includes its own well. In addition, it is naturally protected from geological and weather-related challenges such as earthquakes and hurricanes. Acknowledging that the scope of **MAC** has gained momentum way beyond our original vision, the building was ultimately purchased. In addition to providing excellent and ample space for archiving, the property encompasses significant income potential from rental revenue which serves to support **MAC** indefinitely. We are forever grateful for the generous support of many Baba lovers, both locally and nationally, who together are making this expansion possible.



Meher New Life Center

Photo by Chris Barker

Our achievements so far have included more than a year of physical labor, tirelessly and meticulously overseen by Peter Nordeen. We have demolished outdated bathrooms and begun replumbing; stripped out the auditorium; cleared endless piles of debris and rubble; completely replaced the roof over the classroom wing; and extensively refurbished the caretakers cottage which is happily inhabited by our caretakers, the Homan family.

Perhaps due to the perfect mix of divine inspiration and organic evolution, **MAC's** vision has clearly expanded beyond our original conception. We are now in the process of transforming the old school building into a dynamic hub devoted to Meher Baba, namely **Meher New Life Center**.

Phase One, namely the complete renovation of the second floor, is well under way. When completed, MAC will take up residence on this floor where archive processing and storage will take place, and the New Life Library along with a Baba room for contemplation and reflection, meeting room/s, offices and a children's space will all be housed.

Phase Two will include the renovation of the first floor where ultimately rooms will be available for rent by small businesses, until such time as MAC needs significant additional space.

Phase Three will include executing plans for the auditorium - namely the creation of a performance space along with professional lighting and sound and an enlarged stage. As well as hosting large Baba gatherings and events, this space will be available to rent out for weddings, musical performances and stage shows.



The Auditorium - View from the Stage

Photo by Chris Barker



View towards the Stage

Photo by Laurent Weichberger

In the long term, we anticipate that **Meher New Life Center** will attract visitors from near and far for research and study, classes and workshops, recreation, fellowship, and celebration. Our ambition is for the New Life Library to become a world-class spiritual library and media center. We see the potential for spiritual seekers previously unaware of Meher Baba and His teachings, to be drawn to the library as a resource for spiritual exploration; consequently many more people will have the opportunity to *discover* Baba. As an extension of the educational aspect of **MAC's** long-term plans, we are envisioning an interactive museum devoted to Meher Baba; research facilities along with short term accommodation for researchers; and a bookstore. In the event of increased activity and a growing number of visitors, our envisioning also includes space for a professional kitchen and cafeteria, and a childcare facility with indoor and outdoor play areas. Additional possibilities down the road include a community service center, the construction of a number of small homes, and converting the soccer field into an organic garden.

Meanwhile, as the volume of archival material continues to grow, so too does the depth and breadth of available information. Over the last year we have received a number of personal collections, for example Jean Adriel's, and Fred and Ella Winterfeldt's. The latter is particularly diverse, including stacks of photo prints and slides as well as numerous Baba-era letters, documents and manuscripts. We have also received various mini-collections, notably one from the recently departed Ove Wittstock containing photos and documents covering Baba's many trips to Switzerland and introducing his Swiss lovers. In addition we have been given extensive collections of audio tapes; we are currently exploring ways to prioritize, digitize and share such valuable content. Last, but not least, we are in collaboration regarding specific film projects, the results of which will be shared when available.

Archiving at Home.

If you are in possession of precious items, photos, and letters that need caretaking, here are some steps you can consider.

- Come up with a plan. Have you considered who you would like to inherit your Baba treasures? Consider leaving instructions with your caregivers, estate manager or in your will as to where you would like your valuable possessions to end up; if you have the means, consider leaving a sum in your will for the ongoing expense of archiving.
- It is worth noting that in the case of letters and photos, they can be preserved through professional scanning (a service which MAC is equipped to offer) without permanently handing them over.
- Organize and label your items. One of our most time-consuming challenges is being given a big box of mixed items without documentation. If you can provide provenance, such as who gave what to whom, and when and where - this is extremely helpful for immediate archiving purposes and the benefits will be felt by generations to come.
- If you are not in a position to organize and label items, but you know you want them preserved, consider donating them to us or another Baba archive while you are still able to answer questions about your collection.
- Keep your treasures in a safe, dry place. Buy archival, acid-free paper, files, boxes, and plastic, to slow down the aging process of materials.
- If you are considering donating your treasures and have the financial means to provide for their preservation and upkeep, this would be most helpful. Materials, as well as storage systems and facilities are costly; all contributions are gratefully received as funds to support the long term preservation of Meher Baba's legacy will always be required.
- In July 2020 we launched Part 1 of our *Archiving from Home* tutorial on our website. Please go to <https://www.meherarchive.org/archiving-from-home.html> if

you would like to learn how to begin cleaning, preserving and rehousing your Baba treasures at home.

What Does MAC Need?

We are often asked this question and we are always happy to discuss our needs. Should you wish to initiate this discussion, please email us at **MAC-**
office@meherarchive.org

Meanwhile, funding continues to be a primary need, whether in support of the archiving process and operational costs, or for construction and renovation. Please consider becoming a Sustaining Donor by contributing \$25 or more per month to help offset these costs. <http://www.meherarchive.org/donations.html>

In addition, we need help spreading the word! We want people to know that **MAC** is available to offer help and support in the care, preservation and documentation of their Baba treasures at home. Alternatively, **MAC** is fully up and running to receive personal collections of Baba artefacts in the event of relocation, infirmity or as a last will and testament.

Our need for volunteers for a wide variety of roles is ongoing. Many people have already given generously of their time and expertise to the tune of thousands of volunteer hours, specifically with regard to archiving and building renovations. The need for help with rehousing, scanning and cataloging our increasing number of collections continues to grow.

Until such time as the renovation of **Meher New Life Center** is complete, we need both skilled and unskilled volunteers to help with various tasks such as cleaning, painting and construction. In addition, we have a number of specialized committees, namely the Library Committee; Communications, Marketing and PR Committee; Social and Outreach Committee; Fundraising Committee; Archive Committee, Technology Committee and Volunteer Services Committee. Donating your time and/or offering discounts with regard to professional services over time, is always welcome; for example: legal, accounting, fundraising, event management, landscaping, communications and artistic input. If you are interested in finding a way to support **MAC**, we would love to hear from you. Whether you live locally or far away, there are, and will continue to be ample opportunities to be involved in this exciting project.

For more information about **MAC** and **Meher New Life Center**, please go to our [website](http://www.meherarchive.org/). <http://www.meherarchive.org/>

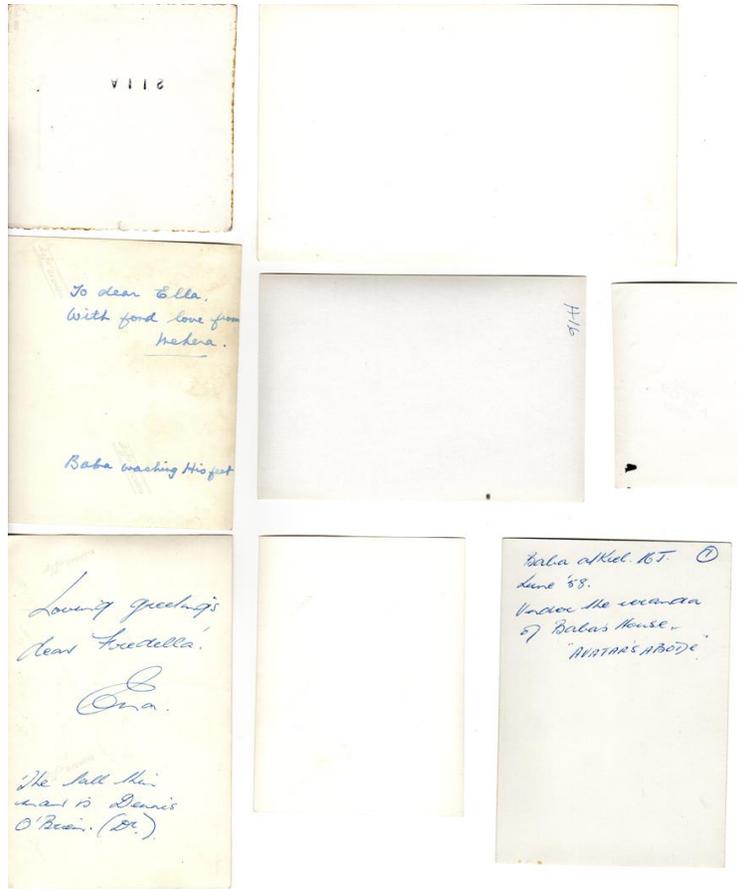
If you'd like to contact us or subscribe to our mailing list, please click [here](http://www.meherarchive.org/contact.html).
<http://www.meherarchive.org/contact.html>

Our bi-monthly newsletter as well as details of various events (from open house to picnics; musical evenings to fundraisers) will automatically be sent to you once you're on our [mailing list](http://www.meherarchive.org/contact.html). <http://www.meherarchive.org/contact.html>

If you're interested in supporting MAC financially, please click [here](http://www.meherarchive.org/donations.html).
<http://www.meherarchive.org/donations.html>

MAC's Board of Directors is grateful for the opportunity to serve Baba in His wish to spread His Love far and wide, and we thank you for supporting this vision in whatever way you can.





A collection of photos from the Fred and Ella Winterfeld collection, front and back

*Meher Archive Collective is committed to honoring Meher Baba through a culture of **Integrity, Transparency and Trust**; we take this **Responsibility** seriously, as we continue to build **Expertise**, and pledge to be of **Service** to all those invested in protecting Baba's legacy.*

* [From a message Baba gave to Ahmednagar lovers gathered for the opening ceremony of the Ahmednagar center, June 6, 1959. Lord Meher Online Edition, pg. 4553]