



INsights

Community Newsletter

“Unless there is a brotherly feeling in your hearts, all the words that you speak or print in my name are hollow; all the miles that you travel in my cause are zero; all organizations for my work are but an appearance of activity; all buildings to contain me are empty places and all statues that you make to embody me are of someone else.”



“The way of my work is the way of effacement, which is the way of strength, not of weakness; and through it you become mature in my love. “

excerpt from East-West Gathering message – Meher Baba

Sept, 2008

Vol 1, Issue 2

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Dear Reader

The new Newsletter has been quite lucky this month in receiving a lovely article from Sue Jamison chronicling her travel to Avatar's Abode for the fiftieth anniversary of Baba's first visit there.

We are slowly learning about Newsletters at this end of the line. The most peculiar thing is to apply mental and heart energy. The Newsletter does not happen by itself. What a surprise.

Next month it will require a pinch more effort, as we will report about Davana Brown's visit over Labor Day weekend. After that, we shall see. Those readers who have an idea for an article or a desire to set in print a Baba message for us all to read are invited to send a note to the editors by way of the gmail address. Over time we hope to have a steady stream of interesting events, news, observations, photos, recordings, and more.

From Ben Leet and Lisa Greenstein



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The 50th Anniversary At Avatar's Abode

by Sue Jamison

"I am coming to America and Australia solely to give My Sahavas to My lovers, and I want each of you to come with the longing to receive just that. I want this Sahavas to be above all a close companionship between your Beloved and His lovers; and if you wish to maintain this unique relationship, then do not come with the question or the desire to seek discourses and explanations. Come with the preparedness to receive fully whatever I may give you, with the thought of being completely resigned to My Will."

Malabaleshwar, 12th April 1958- excerpt from Baba's message to all those attending the Sahavas at Myrtle Beach, U.S.A. and at Brisbane, Australia. From John Grant's *Practical Spirituality*.

50 years later that "unique relationship" with the Beloved was very apparent as over 200 people from all over the world joined together with the intention to receive fully what the Beloved had to offer — and boy, did He deliver! The 50th Anniversary of Beloved Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode was a week long event from Tuesday June 3rd through Monday June 9th — choc-a-block full (as we Aussies would say) of talks, entertainment, companionship, and sharing in, and of, our Beloved's Love and, oh yes, great food!

Each day had its own theme — a brilliant idea which allowed for focus and purpose — Tuesday, the day the Awakener Arrives, Wednesday was Love and Devotion, Thursday The Most East of the West, Friday the Most West of the East, Saturday The Most Fortunate Companions, Sunday His Divine Sense of Humour and Monday Take My Name with You. Anniversary guests included Jal and Dolly Dastoor, Mehernath and Raj Kalchuri, Dara and Amrit Irani, Avatar Meher Baba Centre Drama Group, Ted Judson and Ward Parks. BUT so many more 'guests' heeded the invitation within from near and far — we were a wonderful mix from so many different parts of the world — Australia, New Zealand, England, USA, India, Mexico, France, and even a surprise guest from Peru.

The weekend before the Anniversary, it rained and rained and... rained!. As this has become rather a tradition just before the Anniversary no one seemed too worried and the general feeling was "She'll be all right. Baba will make it stop just at the right time", although there was some anxious looking up at the sky and checking the weather reports just to second guess the Avatar! But of course, come Tuesday morning, tradition prevailed, or should we say Baba smiled, and the sky seemed to be mainly clear with reluctant sunshine but with the promise of good weather for the rest of the week. The volunteers had been working furiously through the weekend storm to set up the food tent and the makeshift kitchen making sure all the stoves, sinks, etc were working. People scurried here and there taking care of the myriad of details before Tuesday, the first day of the week event. But the rain had only managed to heighten the beauty of the property that Baba Himself named Avatars Abode. Everything was glistening and brilliant in the weak winter sun. Now all was ready to welcome His lovers. Old friends greeted each other, new friends were made, the flag was raised by Bernard Bruford to signal the official start of the Anniversary. Bill Le Page told a lovely story as he planted a commemorative mango tree. The first Silence time of the week between 12-12:15 pm began, and Baba's square was beautiful in the meditative silence.

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The 50th Anniversary At Avatar's Abode (cont.)

Then the Anniversary really began as we all moved to the dining tent for the first meal of the week together as Sahavees. Wow! One word for the food – FABULOUS – all week every meal was lovingly prepared and served by a steady stream of volunteers spearheaded by Amir and Kendra. Somehow food always tastes so much better sharing with friends and this week we all became the truest of friends in Baba and every meal just tasted better and better than the previous one. Who can forget the breakfast prepared by our Indian friends- spicy omelettes, idli dumplings , rava and REAL chai. Or that HUGE fabulous cake to serve 100 and more made by Annette Harloff and decorated by Diana Le Page. Or the capuccino machine with long lines of coffee deprived Baba lovers. Tea, toast and vegemite never tasted this good. A simple thanks is not enough for this selfless service kitchen duty rendered with cheerfulness and good humour. Jai Meher Baba!

Tuesday after lunch Jeanette Isaacs-Young hosted the discussion “How did you get your ‘wake up’ call this life from Baba”. Intimate sharing of the most significant and meaningful thing to have happened to us this life. Always interesting to hear how many different ‘adventures’ Baba schemes up for each one of us before our hearts are cracked open to let Him in. This meeting led right into the first evening Arti of the week. Baba’s room at Avatars Abode is very beautiful and simple. Baba’s bed, chair, sandals, the fragrance of Him mingled with the fragrance of the roses makes this room so very special. Every Arti this week was so divine as all gathered to sing His praise. Those who couldn’t fit inside the room were content to stand just outside the door and join in the praising. How wonderful to sing the Australian Arti in Australia in His room! So many incredible musicians were there to share their songs. Ted Judson, Ward Parks, Raine Eastman-Gannett, Elaine Cox, Cindy Lowe, Scott Makeig, MeherVeena and other Indian singers and musicians, Ross Keating, Sam Saunders, Richard Lockwood, Kris Hines and please forgive me for not mentioning all the other poets and singers that shared themselves. It was so hard to tear one self away from that spot outside Baba’s room feeling the sweetness of His presence. Every Arti was the same experience for me, full to the brim with heart’s longing. Evening programs were held in The Shed . With the donation of a state-of -the-art sound system by John and Helen Meyer of Meyer Sound Systems in California, Avatar’s Abode joined the likes of Meherabad, Meher Center in Myrtle Beach, Meherana in California and other centers around the world in having (almost) perfect sound for the perfect One. With much thanks and gratitude to Raine Eastman-Gannett for her part in initiating this gift. On the first evening, Ross Keating gave a welcome talk and Elischa Isaacs-Young did a lovely job of reading Bhau Kalchuri’s welcome message to all attendees. The Avatar Meher Baba Bombay Centre Singing Group performed a concert with ghazals Baba liked. Translations were read in English so we could appreciate more fully the heartfelt singing and quality of the performance. Having our Indian brothers and sisters with us added to the Sahavas like feeling this week. The film “The Eternal Beloved” was shown and the theme of the day “The Awakener Arrives” came to pass.

Wednesday: Love and Devotion. In the meeting hall to listen to Bill Le Page tell stories of Meher Baba, always a treat. Followed by silence (sublime), and lunch (fantastic).

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The 50th Anniversary At Avatar's Abode (cont.)

Baba's House, in the afternoon, listening to singing by Ted and Ward, followed by Dara and Amrit telling Mast stories and other humorous tales from their life in Baba's intimate family. Meanwhile, throughout the property, there was much action as rehearsals progressed for the various performances yet to come, children were very busy creating one of a kind treasures, food preparations continued, small groups gathered under the trees for sharing of a smoke and/or talk, and Avatar's Abode was humming with activity and energy. This humming of energy and excitement continued through the week and could be palpably felt. The highlight of this evening's program was the songs and poetry of Indian Saints by Dr Krishna Shukla followed by another wonderful film with dear Eruch "To be Natural". Things were heating up!!



By Thursday more people had started to arrive and another wonderful day. Morning —Baba's House: Raine singing songs by Francis and her own compositions followed by a spirited talk about Baba of course, but focus on Eruch, by Gary Kleiner joined by Jal and Dolly. In the meeting hall after lunch, Raine led Singing to the Eternal Beloved by Francis Brabazon. A beautiful tribute to our Beloved.

All there joined in enthusiastically in full voice. Meanwhile in Baba's House a discussion on The Discourses was under-way hosted by Gary Kleiner and Ward Parks. All there also joined in enthusiastically and in full voice! The Most East of the West was the appropriate theme for the day and the evening's entertainment was the drama group from the Bombay Centre who performed the most amazing play – The Only Gracious One - a story of the 1958 Sahavas in Meherabad. What was so amazing was the actor playing Baba was not just playing Baba but becoming Baba. Not only did he look like Baba with some excellent makeup help but he embodied Baba's every gesture perfectly. There was a gasp as he was led onto the stage by "Eruch" who was also excellent in his role. Those in the audience who had met Baba said later that they were very moved as they watched him perform as they remembered vividly how it was meeting Baba in person. The narration and music of the play was prerecorded which allowed us to focus on this actor and his gestures "interpreted" by Eruch. There was not a sound to be heard as the play progressed, but wild clapping and cheering followed at the end of the performance. This was one of the highlights of the week's entertainment and will be remembered for a long time.

Friday, 6th June and all is well. Arti and breakfast over, off to Baba's House to listen to Cyrus Khambatta talk on "How the Formless Ahura Mazda led me to the Avatar of the Age". Cyrus is a wonderful intelligent speaker and all enjoyed his talk very much. Rehearsals continue in the Shed and elsewhere. After lunch Laura Darnell led some Universal Peace Dances, fun for all to join in. A discussion on God Speaks with Ward Parks and Gary Kleiner in Baba's House. Tea, dinner, talking, laughing — Evening program again. Michael Le Page welcomed us. Elischa read Bhau's welcome message again, and the evening started in a very dramatic way as Jedda took the stage with her flamenco dancing accompanied by Murray. Beautifully executed! Angie Imura, Ted Judson, Richard Lockwood also played for the Beloved. Mehernath Kalchuri then shared with us stories of his life with Baba as a child and as the son of one of Baba's

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The 50th Anniversary At Avatar's Abode (cont.)

Mandali. Wonderful glimpses into how it was for a child to be around Baba and get away with a lot of naughty things! To finish the evening in a perfect way, the film "Avatar" was shown. What a great day!



Saturday, theme of the day -The Most Fortunate Companions: A jam packed feast of a day! During a very noisy breakfast in the food tent, the "Poet's breakfast" tried to hold their own in a corner of the food tent . After breakfast, The Wineshop Singers, directed by Sam Saunders, presented ghazals of Francis, with most music composed by Sam, in Baba's House. As always, moving and beautiful. One of the memorable meetings for me was hosted by Michael Le Page in

Baba's House. It was titled "When Baba was with us on Avatar's Abode". Those on the panel were Bernard and Joanna Bruford and Peter Baulch who were teenagers and younger in 1958. It was very moving to hear their reminiscences of Baba's visit. They talked about the preparations, the arrival and what it meant to their families, and to them at the time that Meher Baba was coming to Australia. It was very poignant to hear how each one met Baba and what they gleaned from the meeting and also how it has impacted their lives as adults. Meanwhile, Stuart Rigg gathered with the young adults to chat (about Baba of course) with Jal and Dolly and other guests. After another fabulous lunch, the concert in the Shed - a little skit with Kris and friends, music from Ward, Meherveena, Ross and Jenny, Sage Repeti, Jenny Thompson and others and then that special guest Yma Sumac! Meanwhile, the Volleyball tournament continued outside with some very enthusiastic players. Mehernath Kalchuri related more stories of his childhood and remembering Francis in India. AND then Arti and dinner. The evening program brought the Bombay Centre Drama Group back to the stage for their second play - once again a beautifully moving portrayal of Meher Baba as they told a story from Baba's life with music and prose. Dara and Amrit told us the story of their betrothal and marriage, the last public event that Baba attended before He dropped His body in 1969. We saw the film of their engagement party with Baba and Mehera at Meherazad. If you wanted to stay up late, Chris Gray and many friends played wonderful music and ghazals into the night.

By Sunday, Avatars Abode was overflowing with more visitors happy to be there to join the week's celebration, and there was so much to be a part of; Cyrus relating stories from an unpublished diary of one of Baba's early Mandali, Baily, who was Cyrus's childhood friend, or Rani Didi with the younger people teaching them new songs from her wonderful repertoire, or Dara and Amrit telling more stories. After lunch, another afternoon concert with Chris Gray on guitar and Peter Sumner reading ghazals from "In Dust I Sing", singing from Richard Lockwood, Robert Welsh and so many more. Lots of laughter and tears. Traditional Dhuni after dark with Jal officiating and all throwing in their unwanted desires hoping to burn them up in the flame of the Beloved's fire. More heartfelt singing until, guess what, - DINNER! Sunday's evening program was an absolute feast for the heart. Kris Hines' play "Hide and Seek" was a comic musical about two souls' search for God during many lifetimes. Everyone played

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The 50th Anniversary At Avatar's Abode (cont.)

their parts excellently, and how can an ending with Baba actually appearing be beat! Hurrah! Monsieur Yvan with his hilarious stand up comedy routine — what it would be like if Baba was alive now in the computer age — Eruch would be out of a job, Baba would be texting! Yvan should be making the rounds of all the Baba gatherings around the world with his unique brand of humour. Think about it Yvan! Next the Anniversary choir, comprised of The Wineshop Singers (who knew what they were doing), and forty or so other assorted singers from everywhere else, performed Sam Saunders composition “Missa Meher”. Sam had spent months composing this piece and had sent CDs of the different parts all over the world to singers who would be attending, in the hope that they would learn it before this week. It was thrilling to be part of this and to hear how the parts all fitted together. Catch it on youtube!! Missa Meher—fantastic!

missa meher

As each day unfolded it seemed our hearts could not hold any more love but the waves kept coming and by the last Arti on the Monday morning no one could tear themselves away from Baba's room. It seemed to me that we became one voice singing to His Glory and beauty and the circle of love enfolded us and kept us in the here and now of His Love. After the last meeting in Baba's House on “Baba's wishes for His Lovers ” interpreted in different ways by Cyrus, Mehernath, Jal and Dolly, it was time for the last Silence time and the last lunch together. The flag was lowered by Dara and it was the end of this year's Anniversar... until next time.

It is impossible to choose “the best of show” from the wonderful workshops, presentations, talks and sharing, but, for me, a couple of the more poignant and memorable moments that will stay in my heart are Richard Thompson singing “Oh Sun in Splendour” after Arti, hearing Richard Lockwood's beautiful singing voice again, renewing and cementing old friendships AND the thrill of making lifelong new ones, and always the ever present beauty of Avatars Abode itself, holding the secret of the Avatar's visit for all eternity. Thanks and praise must be given to the Sahavas Committee who had worked tirelessly behind the scenes before, during and no doubt after the Anniversary to ensure that every detail was taken care of for the attendees — from the welcome packages given to all, down to the toilet rolls never running out and the hand towels being changed regularly, thoughtful details that do mean a lot and are noticed. Thanks also to the “locals” on Meher Road and nearby who unselfishly opened their homes and provided true Aussie hospitality to fellow pilgrims. Truly a Sahavas as Baba had intended it to be. Jai Meher!! The Victory is always His.

Sue Jamison

p.s. **Anniversary Photo Gallery**



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The Stockton Avenue Art Stroll

by Lisa Greenstein

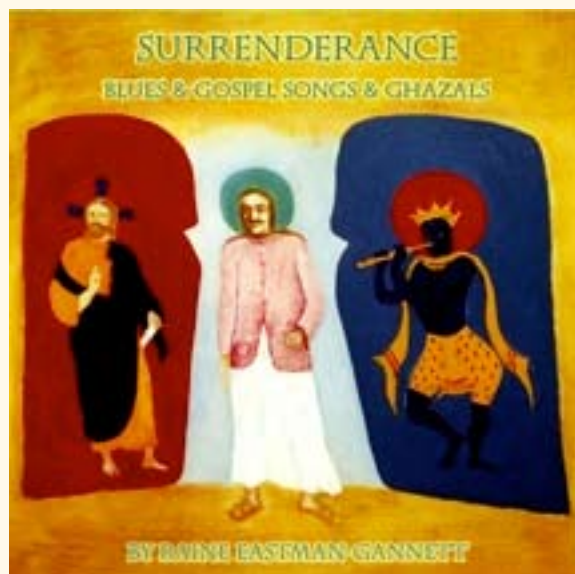
Friday September 12, 7 pm - 9pm

You may not know this, but the little neighborhood El Cerrito Street that our Baba center is located on has gradually become an arts district! Last May, Stockton Avenue shop owners (including our wonderful neighbors Jen Kevin) initiated The Stockton Avenue Art Stroll. The stroll starts with the Glenn framing and art gallery at the top of Stockton Avenue and goes all the way down to San Pablo Avenue and just a block south to the MC Art Gallery, with about ten other venues in between (including the library!) exhibiting talented artists and crafts-people. Last July the crowd was spilling onto the road and lots of people stopped in to the Baba Center. We've heard that the fun jug band that played right outside our door will be back again this time. So, come down and enjoy a late summer evening stroll, and if you stroll on into the center, you may find some bargains at the bookstore! The stroll is held the second Friday of every other month, so there will be one Friday, September 12th and one more November 14th. addendum: The November 14 exhibit at the Baba center will be of the paintings of Lyn Ott, borrowed from our local community. If you have a painting of Lyn Ott hanging on your wall, please consider letting us show it at the Baba center for that weekend. Of course, Lyn's paintings will not be for sale!

We would like to exhibit the work of artists from among the Baba-community for future art strolls. So, if you are an artist and would like to have a show at the Baba center, contact Celia Lopez by email: cloffice@comcast.net

Surrenderance: Blues Gospel Songs Ghazals

by Raine Eastman-Gannett



I have just finished this new CD after working on it, on and off, for seven years.

I felt I had to release Surrenderance now as the first track is called 'Avatar's Abode' and in June myself and my family headed to Avatar's Abode, Woombye, Queensland, Australia, as I do almost every year to the Anniversary Sahavas, this year the 50th Anniversary since Beloved Baba's visit there in June 1958. People came from all over the world as they did also on the 30th and 40th Anniversaries. There are always some 200, at least, Australians on pilgrimage to the Abode each year to be a family in His love and recite Arti together in His glorious room there and

attempt to entertain him in the Shed, the humble name of the wonderful theatre at His Australian home.

So the CD Surrenderance is done! A beautiful John Parry painting graces the cover, a wonderful photograph at Meherabad by my husband Bill Gannett is on the Tray.

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Surrenderance: Blues Gospel Songs Ghazals (cont.)

The music is blues and gospel. One might wonder what on earth an Australian singer and musician might know of such music, especially one who studied classical voice, guitar, raga singing, and harmonium and these days teaches all of these subjects including Hindi bhajans, Sanskrit mantra, Western voice, and coaches others towards their dreams of voice and CD's?

I spent 8 years in a gospel choir, the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, and many of the old traditional spiritual melodies on this CD I sang with Meher Baba ideas running through my musical heart and mind even while on stage and touring with the group. It was through this group I finally got to sing in the Sydney Opera House when we toured Australia. Thus on the CD are 8 gospel songs, and then there are also 8 blues songs; the blues songs are mostly Francis lyrics to traditional blues influenced tunes. One cannot say Francis wrote them, and yet one cannot say someone else did either as most are variations on a traditional blues idea. The lyrics by Francis Brabazon as always are amazing. There are others by myself, and it closes with Blues Ghazal, the original idea for the inspiration of this type of CD for Baba. The last line of which quotes Rumi, "They Say that there is no death worse than expectancy." This is also the mantra that dominated my working on this intense musical project, for all these years and try to keep detached, keep Baba with you at all times, keep going.

One of my compositions is the song 'Rock you Merwan' (Dhondi's Song). It is about Baba's Aiya (Nanny). This song is in the tradition of Islam similar to songs by qawaali singers to Halima who was Mohammed's Nanny and wet nurse. Dhondi was Meher Baba's Nanny. Once when Mani at Baba's request was naming all the people to remember from their lives over the years, Mani forgot to write down Dhondi, and Baba clapped for immediate attention and said, "We forgot Dhondi."

Many wonderful musicians join me, Sam Saunders on guitars, Billy Goodrum on Hammond Organ and piano, Michael DeVries drums, and the great Harmonica player Kevin Connor. Several engineers were involved over the years and the final one my dear friend from choir, Carl Resnikoff, gave his all as usual.

clap and enjoy a "joyful noise" (old testament)

Raine Eastman-Gannett can be asked about Surrenderance at www.NadaOm.com



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Poet's Corner

The Beloved is All in All

by Francis Brabazon

What an eternal Beloved you are!
After much hand-wringing on my part, you blessed
The work of my hands --- only to make me see that success
is a paste jewel on a hag's breast.

I was envisioning the spoils of toil ---
come late, come greater ---
And found myself consigned, 'arse up with care' to
Nowhere on a freighter.

Now when the sun rises with trumpets I weep and say to
him compassionately,
Don't be boastful, Brother --- in a few billion years it will
be your turn for what I have been through lately.

And to the earth-worm I cry, Bravo!
a couple of wriggles more
and you will be arriving at the steps to the Beloved's door.

The mills of God turn slowly and grind small;
The wedding night is destined for us all.

Down tools and sing the night away, if you'll make the
time shorter;
And shut out the bitch Progress --- she turns good wine
into water.

What a Beloved you are! I will shout from the house-tops,
I will advertise
That regarding resourcefulness you are never stumped
to spring a new surprise.



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Announcements

Center Library Note:

Would you like to be a “patron”? We have a library for your reading pleasure and convenience. Our library is housed upstairs in a book case at the MBCNC Center on Stockton Street. We have had 14 borrowers over the past year. You may access a list of the holdings at the web page meherbabameherbaba.org; look for library, and open the book or video pdf files. When you visit the Center remember to check out the library books. We would also like donations. For a list of books we need see the section at the end of the library holdings. Contact the Newsletter about donations.

Fundraising Committee

The Center’s Fundraising Committee needs your help. Bring your creative ideas and work to implement them in a Baba loving team effort! Committee meetings to be arranged as projects dictate. For more information contact Celia: cloffice@comcast.net

Meditation hour:

The center will be open on Tuesday evenings, 7pm – 8pm for silent meditation.

The Trust

All who wish to share in the commitment laid down by Meher Baba through the Trust should contact Jack Mormon, ambkj@aol.com

Meher Baba Information

For introductory information about Avatar Meher Baba, e-mail MeherBabal@aol.com, or write to:

P.O. Box 1101,
Berkeley, CA 94701.

Meher Baba Center of Northern California
6923 Stockton Avenue
El Cerrito, California 94530
(510) 525-4779

Meher Baba Center of Northern CA website

Meeting schedules can be downloaded in pdf form from website (above)

The center is open for drop-in and book store most Saturdays 1 p.m.–4 p.m.
(check website for details)



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Announcements (cont.)

Directions to our Center:

From Highway 80, Interstate 5, going north or south, in El Cerrito, take the Central Avenue exit. Exit east, toward the hills. Cross San Pablo Avenue. Go under the BART train tracks, and less than a block after the tracks, turn left on Richmond Avenue. Head north on Richmond Avenue until Stockton Avenue (the first stop light), turn right on Stockton. About two blocks onward, the Center is located on the left side of the street. Address above.

More Local Meetings

Lafayette – Sunday Afternoons

Monthly meeting at the home of Kirk and Marlene Allen.
Please call to confirm. (925) 284-4066

Sacramento – Several Gatherings Each Month

Times and locations vary.
Contact Mike and Jean Ross, (916) 359-2954 or
Cheryl Johnson (559) 312-3751 for details.
See more information on the [website](#).

Los Gatos – Sunday Evenings

At the home of Clint Snyder
Call (408) 395-6865

Contact for messages to newsletterwallas: meherbabacenter@gmail.com
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