



On Meditation

“Meditation --- some love it, some don’t like it. I hate it. But I like being meditated upon, because then I help directly. Love is meditation in its highest form, but only that love which does not forget the beloved for a single moment. Then meditation is not necessary, it is superfluous.”

1937, *Love Alone Prevails*, page 178

“Love and direct relatedness with the Avatar is the high road of all roads of inner development. And while I am in the body, and for some time after I drop my body, the potential for love and direct relation is there and should be used. But one day, as the truth and presence of the Avatar begins to diminish, humanity will have to use lesser, secondary techniques, and I must provide for that time. And so I have given out these extensive discourses on meditation. But do not mistake me, because meanwhile it is a distraction of your time and energy to use meditation.”

1960s, to Don Stevens, *Glow International*, February, 1994, page 19, referring to the chapters on meditation in *Discourses*.

“Meditation should not be approached with a heavy heart, as if one were taking castor oil. One has to be serious about meditation but not grave or melancholy. Humor and cheerfulness not only do not interfere with the progress of meditation but actually contribute to it. Meditation should not be turned into a distasteful and tiresome thing. The aspirant should freely allow himself the natural joy that is attendant upon successful meditation, without getting addicted to it. Meditation should be something like a picnic on the higher planes. Like excursions into new and beautiful natural surrounding, meditation brings with it a sense of enthusiasm, adventure, peace, and exhilaration. All thoughts of depression, fear, or worry have to be cut out completely if there is to be really successful meditation.”

The Types of Meditation, *Discourses of Meher Baba Part I*, page 205



INsights

Community Newsletter

In This Issue

- Adah Anecdote
- God is Not Dead
- Poets Corner
- Announcements

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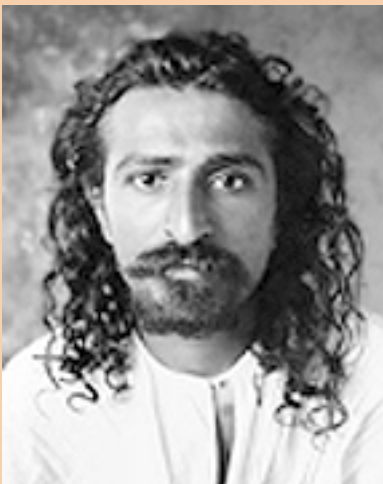
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Dear Reader

We present two articles this issue. Many years ago on a Sunday morning Ron Greenstein showed this photo to me and told me the story. Now he gets to share it with a wider audience. I hope the internet reproduction does it justice. It is somewhat incredible, if you can see it well. Bill Gannett wrote an essay about Nature. Bill has studied Vedic astrology, the poetry of Hafiz in the original language, numerology, ayurvedic medicine and the teachings of Meher Baba. He approaches nature with a fresh and unique viewpoint.

In December we remember friends and family with seasonal gifts. I would like to remind readers that new Meher Baba books, music and videos are available from Sheriar Press and bookstore, and also from Love Street Lamp Post bookstore. These are available at our bookstore as well. You can come by during open hours on Saturday, during meetings (see under quick links), or order through Ron Greenstein (performs@mindspring.com) and save on shipping in the Bay area. Also, Hugh MacDonald offers for sale videos of the Meherabad birthday plays and an interesting sampler DVD that would make a nice gift. Don't forget to get a new calendar.

We would like to hear from readers who wish to review some of the newly published Baba books, music and videos. If you were captured by the charm, affection and power of Najoo Kotwal's memoir and autobiography, He Gives the Ocean, you naturally feel a desire to let the world and us know about it. Other books could easily fill the bill that we would enjoy hearing about, especially the newly released ones, including Bill LePage's third volume of The Divine Humanity of Meher Baba, or The Real Treasure, volume two, by Rustom Falahati, or ... go to the Sheriar web site and see what's new.

P.S. Its best to copy and paste the text of your written contributions into the body of your email (rather than attaching text files) and send to meherbabacenter@gmail.com

In Baba's Love, Ben Leet

Ben Leet, Editor-In-Chief, Lisa Greenstein, Graphics-Noodge
Cherri Nelson, Photoshop genie and pdf conversion

This photograph (by Prashanth Vishwanathan) appeared in the N.Y.Times last week. It is the back of a van parked near Leopold's in Mumbai after the terrorist attack. Our hearts go out to all those who suffered in this terrible event.





A Memory of Adah Shifrin

photo by Adah's son-in-law

by Ron Greenstein



On my trip back to Miami, Florida, in 1978, a couple of years after I had moved to the Bay Area in 1976, I paid a visit to the home of Adah Shifrin accompanied by Ann Forbes. Adah and Ann were two of the Miami Group Baba-lovers who had come to Baba before 1969 when Baba dropped His body.

Ann had met Baba in NY in 1956, and He had asked her to serve as the group leader in Miami. Adah, my recollection is, came to Baba some time soon after 1958, His last visit to the U.S. Adah was enthusiastically looking forward to her opportunity to meet Baba physically at The

East-West Gathering in 1962. But circumstances challenged that desire, and it was decided by Baba, Himself, that she should not attend. But He promised Adah that He would make it up to her.

Adah related many instances to us when Baba had appeared to her or given her various experiences of His Divine Love and Presence.

As I stood in her small living room, my gaze fell upon a framed 8x10 inch photo on the TV. I could not tell at once what the photo was of, but Baba's image was shining forth. I mentioned this to Adah, and she related the following anecdote: She had recently been in northern California visiting her daughter and son-in-law. This photo was of Adah sitting among the giant redwood trees in Muir Woods, a place that Baba visited in 1956. As her son-in-law was preparing to shoot this photo, Adah told him that she felt that Baba was looking down on them. The feeling was confirmed upon seeing the photo.

After returning home to California, I wrote to Adah requesting a copy of this precious photo. About a year later the photo and a card arrived. I was intending to scan the card as well as the photo, but the card has decided to go missing. In the card Adah had written that soon after she had dropped off the photo to have a copy made for me, she had suffered a severe injury to her foot. After the long healing process, she made it back to the studio to collect the photo and copy. The fellow who had made the copy was there, and he made a point to say that he had not seen a photo like this since he had done aerial photography during WW2. "What kind is that?" asked Adah. "The kind where an image of Christ appears," he said.



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INsights

Community Newsletter

God is Not Dead, and Neither is Nature

photo by Raine Eastman/Gannett

by Bill Gannett



Bill supervised the installation of this tile-wall at Meherabad Pilgrim Retreat in 2006. Dot Lesnick was the artistic visionary and director for this project.

God Is Not Dead, and Neither Is Nature (Watch out!)

What creationism and scientific rationalism have in common is a distrust and devaluation of Nature. In fact, this shared attitude is the very fulcrum of the pointless debate between these two camps. Neither believes that Nature represents intelligent creativity as the expression of the will of God.

This problem is the result of neither camp taking a sufficient interest in traditional cosmology and metaphysics. What passes for these subjects today by fundamentalists, both religious and scientific, is a quantification of sensory data. Thus the world was created in 7 days, on the one hand, or 7 billion years ago (more or less), on the other. And although in each case the number is regarded as a fact, they are actually symbolic. The problem here is that “quantity” is understood without reference to “quality”, the principle that defines form.

The ancients believed that all of Nature, i.e., everything that exists, and which in the cosmological system of Samkya is known as Prakirti, is composed of the five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. In this view mind, energy and body are all derived from the elements which are symbolic of a gradation of vibratory rates,

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God is Not Dead, and Neither is Nature (cont.)

densities, functions, etc., much of which is far too subtle to scientifically investigate. The elements create “impressions”, known as *sanskara(s)* in Sanskrit, which is the constituent basis of *karma* (the modification of identity through experience over time).

Here is the vital point: Nature is nothing but consciousness in different stages of development based on *sanskaras*.

According to Samkya, *Prakriti* is not self-existent. It is dependent on *Purusha/ God*. *Purusha* is unconscious God seeking to become conscious through *Prakriti/ Nature*. God can only know itself through Nature and this is accomplished through the medium of three (in this characterization) bodies: the gross, subtle and mental bodies, which allow for the evolution and reproduction of form through the interplay of form, energy and mind. The gross body is the physical body, the subtle body is the energy that animates the gross body and the mental body is the “seat” of consciousness. The mental body contains and projects the subtle body which in turn contains and projects the gross body. When someone or something “dies”, this refers to the disassociation of the gross body from the subtle and mental bodies. Birth is the re- association of the mental and subtle bodies with a new gross body so as to exhaust past, old *karma* and simultaneously accrue fresh, new *karma*. These bodies are nothing but *sanskaras*: gross, subtle and mental *sanskaras* which give rise to gross, subtle and mental consciousness!

It is important to emphasize that the incremental evolution of form- the gross body in its innumerable, ascending forms, is a result of unconscious God desiring to know itself consciously as God, in the human form, the last and perfect form.

It is only possible to realize God in the difficult to obtain human form. Some eight million, four hundred thousand sub human gross forms are necessary for consciousness to evolve in order to arrive at the human form with complete consciousness. Even though consciousness is now complete, it is burdened by the evolutionary impressions (*sanskaras*) accrued during this interminable process.

All of this may sound a bit complicated, but it's not. If you are self-identified as a stone- you are stone conscious, a rudimentary form of gross consciousness. If you are self-identified as a bird- you are bird conscious, a higher form of gross consciousness. If you are self-identified as a human body- you are (finally) fully gross conscious. The evolution of consciousness is now complete.

But just as it took millions of forms to evolve complete consciousness, it takes millions of lives as a human to sublimate that gross consciousness first into subtle consciousness and then into mental consciousness. There are seven planes of consciousness beyond gross consciousness. The astral body connects the gross body with the first subtle plane of *Pran*. There are four planes of increasing refinement of *Pran*. This is the domain of yogis. The higher two planes of consciousness pertain to the mental world. This is the world of pure thought- the fifth plane, and the world of pure feeling- the sixth plane. This is the domain of saints.

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Meher Baba Center of Northern California

INsights

Community Newsletter

God is Not Dead, and Neither is Nature (cont.)

But the goal is to realize God as Infinite Knowledge (Mind), Infinite Power (Energy) and Infinite Bliss (Body), the seventh plane of consciousness. This is received as a Gift from a Perfect One, and is earned only after many, many lives of exalted service to yogis, saints, Perfect Masters (man/ woman become God) and Avatars (God become man).

All of Nature is unconscious God. The stone is as much God as a Perfect Master, but is not aware of the fact, because of sanskaras. The stone is stone conscious (a low form of gross consciousness), but the Perfect One is God conscious! Creation exists for the sole purpose of first evolving, and then refining, consciousness, so as to finally know oneself consciously as God, i.e., Infinite Consciousness.

Indian tradition says we are in the Kali Yuga, the most debased of ages, because it represents the cult of the machine which is the height of collective ignorance and self destructive tendencies. Scientists and technocrats are the sages of our time because they possess the knowledge and power to exploit Nature for our comfort and pleasure; She has been dethroned as a Goddess, and defiled as Shakti- the creative and transformative power of God by which He awakens to who He Is. The modern rationalist sensibility, religious and scientific alike, maintains that Nature is without a purposeful and organizing intelligence, that She has no more than face value and doesn't bear a grudge about being manipulated. But, as we have seen, Nature is God's beloved without whom He has no idea who He is!

So don't worry, we are about to find out, like never before, that Nature always has the last word!

This article is largely based on the works of Meher Baba, especially *God Speaks*, published by Sufism Reoriented. ISBN 0-915828-02-2

Bill Gannett is a student of traditional cosmology and metaphysics, especially as restated in the contemporary works of Meher Baba.



I'll let you in on a secret
about how one should pray the sunset prayer.
It's a juicy bit of praying,
like strolling on grass,
nobody's chasing you, nobody hurries you.
You walk toward your Creator
with gifts in pure, empty hands.
The words are golden
their meaning is transparent,
it's as though you're saying them
for the first time.

If you don't catch on
that you should feel a little elevated,
you're not praying the sunset prayer.
The tune is sheer simplicity,
you're just lending a helping hand
to the sinking day.
It's a heavy responsibility.
You take a created day
and you slip it
into the archive of life
where all our lived-out days are lying together.

The day is departing with a quiet kiss.
It lies open at your feet
while you stand saying the blessings.
You can't create anything yourself, but you
can lead the day to its end and see
clearly the smile of its going down.

See how whole it all is,
not diminished for a second,
how you age with the days
that keep dawning,
how you bring your lived-out day
as a gift to eternity.



Meher Baba Center of Northern California

INsights

Community Newsletter

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:

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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)



Meher Baba Center of Northern California

INsights

Community Newsletter

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 newsletterwalla: meherbabacenter@gmail.com

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