



INsights

Community Newsletter

“Real healing is spiritual healing, whereby the soul, becoming free from desires, doubts and hallucinations, enjoys the eternal bliss of God.

Untimely physical healing might retard the spiritual healing.

If borne willingly, physical and mental suffering can make one worthy of receiving spiritual healing.

Consider mental and physical suffering as gifts from God, which, if accepted gracefully, lead to everlasting happiness.”

The Path of Love by Meher Baba,
ed. Filis Frederick, page 31, circa 1952

May, 2010

Vol 3, Issue 3

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Dear Reader

In the mid 1990s Ann Speirs was living in Japan working in mental health counseling when she met a Baba lover and soon came into Meher Baba's orbit of love. She recognized Baba almost immediately, though she was well into her middle years, and felt miffed that she had not learned of him sooner. Soon she traveled to India, met the Mandali, and felt a need to live closer. She transferred to a position in India with an agency that provided HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention services to women. After two or three years living in southern India, she transferred to Ahmednagar. Her work ended and she stayed on living near Meherabad for the following six years, living in India in all from 1999 to 2008. She offered counseling services to pilgrims for over six years, and was fortunate to have the support and supervision of Arnavaz in this effort. She has been living in Berkeley since she arrived back in the U.S. almost two years ago. Recently her efforts have helped to spark the interest in the Sunday afternoon discussion meetings now taking place. I interviewed Ann back in September of 2009. This is the first part of the interview, the second portion will arrive in your e-mail boxes in the coming weeks. Ben



We also have a review of Ron Greenstein's newly released music CD, *The Lion's Share*.

This newsletter (and past issues) will eventually be available in pdf form on the www.MeherBabaMeherBaba.org website.

Newsletterwallas: Ben Leet, Lisa Greenstein Cherri Nelson



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part One

By Ben Leet

Ben Leet. Let's talk about Arnavaz. Did you feel you had a close relationship with Arnavaz?



Anne Speirs. I did. I knew her for several years before I moved to India. And then when I moved to India I saw much more of her. But when I decided to move to Meherabad, I had been agonizing because what I wanted to do was to move there and set up a psychotherapy practice. I had a lot of opposition from people who thought it was wrong because I wanted to charge fees. I didn't want to offer it free because people don't value what's given to them at that level. It needed to be put into some kind of terms that was valued. And also I needed to make at least enough living to survive there. So I wanted to charge for it. Arnavaz was the one really supportive of it. I agonized for days over going to talk with her, and I finally went and said, "Look this is what I'm thinking of doing," and she said "Fantastic, we really need someone here who is doing that. I see so many people who need some help that you could offer, and there is nothing here at the moment, so by all means come and do

it." She was the person who actually gave me permission. By that time Mani was not around anymore. It would have been Mani I would have gone to. And then once I was there, I spent a lot of time with her. She supervised me, essentially, to put it in western terms. I spent a lot of time with her talking about what she saw happening in the world, and how she related that to Baba. That was really my education in therapy in a lot of ways.

B. What do you mean "she saw what was happening in the world"?

A. She kept talking, for instance, about how incredibly difficult it was for couples in these days, and how dark the times were. She paid a lot of attention to the three-quarters of the world that will be destroyed -- piece of Baba's talk. And what came to her were people really suffering. They would come and throw their hearts at her. And this happened with Mani, it happened with all the mandali. Eruch. Everyone would come to them seeking their own personal salvation. She talked about how hard the struggle, and the black clouds that seemed to be looming and drawing ever closer—the agony she saw people going through.



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part One (cont.)

By Ben Leet

B. Was this because their marriages were not fulfilling or they had to live up to expectations that were not realistic, or bad decisions about marriage choices?

A. It goes deeper than that. In terms of... when we think we're making a decision we're following the energetic tides of the times. For instance, when I got divorced was when the first wave when people were getting divorced, and I thought I made a decision based on my situation, but I look back now, and I was just riding a wave that was sweeping the country that I caught a hold of. I really didn't make a choice. I saw things in a certain way that reinforced what was already happening in the country to lots of other women in particular, and chose to interpret it that way. But it wasn't a choice.

B. So you think if there were counseling services at Meherabad or among Baba groups, these are the problems that would come up?

A. Most of what I saw—because I did open a counseling service and I was there for six or seven years—were people struggling with their own blocks to God. And then I acted as a mirror, where they could come in and take a look and examine them—as I used to say, I had the perfect co-worker because I'd send them up the hill after working with me, and they'd sit at the tomb, and they'd really get to where they needed to be. So I was a jump start on that process. Not with giving—Yea, you should be doing this, or this is the way it is—nothing like but more—Sit and talk, put it out, look at it yourself, think about what you're saying, go up the hill, talk to him, and find your path through whatever this is.

B. I recall that Dorothy Hopkins, who was married to the author of, was it *Much Silence*, I forget the man's first name. When they were first married she was going through something and her therapy was to write. Her therapist kept her writing, expressing it, getting it down. And it was very helpful for her to get it out so she wasn't inundated with inarticulate feelings. She was seeing her feelings come out on paper. Just the fact that you are trying to put the feeling into words, is that a good part of the therapy itself?

A. That's the beginning of it, yes. Because, my personal philosophy is that each of us is a speck of God, and the gift he has given us is that we get to create our own reality—within boundaries—and that we get to play God in a personal minor way, because whatever we believe is what we are going to create. And if we go back to my marriage, because

I saw it as bad, therefore that's what I created. If I had known of Baba, and at that time I didn't, and his saying if you marry you stay married come what may. I would have looked at it very differently. My beliefs would have been extremely different than what I did do at the time...

B. He didn't say "Marry and stay married." He didn't say that.

A. He came close to it.

B. I do recall he said where the love is not there, why stay married?

(Continued on next page.)



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part One (cont.)

By Ben Leet

A. Not in the Discourses. Discourses is what I work from with people. OK, this is what he said, and how do you relate to this? Where do you go with this? . . . So I think, when given the opportunity to create our own reality, and what my job as a therapist then, is to help you see what you are creating. So then you can chose to change it if you want to. And begin to work with it in a way that says, OK, this is my creation, rather than "Oh God, I'm the victim of . . . life, and this is unfair." And Arnava was very supportive of that. And she kept tabs on what I was doing because people would come and talk to her after talking to me. So she knew what was coming through, and what I was doing.

B. You're opening up the door to creative experimentation with whatever the problems are within your life, with Baba's help. Obviously, you're assuming that Baba is right there, and that he'll help with your intuitive understanding while working through the problems.

A. And, of course, at Meherabad he was actually right there in the most physical sense possible. It's harder here.

B. It's burning at Meherabad. And that's why you come, you come with your heart open and pouring out.

A. You come with your problems. Most of us go there and think, "Oh God this is so painful, I need to find a solution to whatever it is." And the mandali end up with all of that—which will no longer be the case. There won't be the human person to put it on. There will of course be Baba still.

B. Most people are spending a month when visiting India. Would that be enough to have a relationship with a therapist.

A. Oh, yes. Things move quickly. Some people I saw once or twice. Meherabad is magic. Whatever needs to happen happens. If you're there a day or six months, you're going to get what you need for that trip.

B. I never came to India with problems. But I had a problem with employment. I got back and my first job interview came out of the blue. I didn't get anything from that interview, except the principal of the school looked at me very seriously and decided he would lay it on me straight. He looked at me straight in the eye and said that I had to get a specialty so that I really qualified for work I wanted. And it just hit me like a hammer. And I tied it right into Meherabad. It had been a big question while I'd been at Meherabad. I was talking to Mansari . . . what she was doing, is that what you would be doing?

A. Mansari was somewhere in Baba's circle. So she was working from a more direct link than I was. And that was fine, but I don't have those skills. When you do that you take on the other person's sanskaras. It was walking a line that allows people... I read a long time ago, what has been my guiding principal, from a wonderful set of books by Susan Howatch, and the priest in this book says "My job is to stand at the foot of the cross. There is nothing I can do except to be a



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part One (cont.)

By Ben Leet

witness." And that the hardest thing for a human being in the world is to stand there and to totally be there and to be present to what the other person is going through, without bringing your stuff or running away or hiding from it or trying to change it, but to be present and to be a witness. So that's been my guiding principle. Yes, I can be a witness.

B. A quality of a good therapist is that (he's) in the now in God's presence.

A. And they respect the struggle that the person is undergoing. And they don't think they have magic to save them or to change it.

B. It must be a fairly frustrating with the accumulated problems that people manifest when they come and lay open all their wounds. Happiness is such a long, difficult road, for some people who are tied up with bad karma, bad injuries, bad luck, bad attitudes... it's a very difficult thing to work with.

A. But I think that Baba was very clear that there are no victims, to try to accept your karma, work with it instead of to fight it. Or label it.

B. Did any people keep in touch with you afterwards?

A. Oh, I'd see people periodically, they came back. I'm in touch with a fair number.

B. And they would say, "Thank you, I'm glad I had the opportunity to talk with you," and all that?

A. Yes.

B. People bring to India so much stuff.

A. Yes. And the poor mandali really struggled with that a lot. Because Baba didn't train them how to handle that. He didn't tell them that that was coming. When he was alive, of course, it all went to him. Nobody asked them at that point. As soon as he was gone they were put in this terrible position. People were coming with these impossible conditions. And they (the mandali) didn't know. So each one had to develop their own way and style to deal with it. But they felt very frightened... or this should be going to Baba, this isn't to me. So they began to learn to be a channel through which it could pass, and not take it personally.

B. I remember Aloba's ministry, you might say, where he would flip a coin, and slap it down and say "We're done!" I was there at Amartithi one year at the tomb doing line management duty. These two women dressed in bangles and looking gaudy, they looked like prostitutes, and they had children with them. And I was shaking my head thinking, these are strange people. And as soon as they got inside the door of the tomb, they flew on their faces and started praying. I could hear them pouring out their hearts, and it was touching. I felt that somehow I was standing on the floor of a big factory, and all this rumbing was going on, and the earth was moving underneath my feet. That was my constant feeling while I was



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part One (cont.)

By Ben Leet

doing this duty for two hours. There is something big turning its turbines here. Stuff is happening.

A. So the mandali stood in that position. And Arnavaz, because she had been married, got a great deal of people coming with couples issues. She was the one they turned to. She felt that very keenly.

B. Was she constantly speaking to people? She must have heard a lot of stories.

A. She was an excellent listener, and she was an excellent mirror for God.

B. Arnavaz was available. If you went to Meherabad you'd hang around for a while and ask her if you could have a few minutes.

A. At one point I was spending several hours a week, I'd go out after the pilgrims had left and I'd spend the afternoon with her, because she was in pretty good health at that point. I'd bring what I was seeing with people that had come to me, and she'd talk about how she thought Baba's will was working through some of that. And she'd say how hard it was to be a couple in this time, and how off balance people were and the things they grabbed on to as truths that were destroying their relationships with each other. And a lot of people, if they were married they felt that they should be single, that the real path to Baba was celibacy not marriage—which is an excuse if you're in a relationship.

B. Do you think there will be, in 50 years from now, will there be psychological services at Meherabad, and will they be free-lance or will they be under the administration of a Baba group?

A. I hope and pray they will be free-lance, because if they're under the Trust, the Trust is going to take an interest in it and the Trust has no business in taking an interest in it. And it would be all too easy to subvert it.

B. But don't you think there will be some weird characters there selling their goods?

A. Yep. I think we're going to get a lot of that too. Any spiritual, religious organization gathers a lot of crack-pots. And that's part of why I want it set up very carefully and why I did talk to Arnavaz before I started. I talked to all the mandali but it was her who took it on and understood the dimensions of what I was proposing. And that's why I wanted to do it separate from the Trust. I did not want to be a part of the Trust because no Trust worker could come to me safely if I was part of the Trust. Because supposing I knew that this person was quite mentally ill, the Trust has a vested interest in that issue. They'll put pressure on me to try to find out what's going on, and that will mean the person is going to feel unsafe talking. And in a small community like that confidentiality is the most important virtue, and there have been several therapists who have gone thru there who have let slip things that people have said, and they've done tremendous damage within the community. So I knew I could keep that confidentiality. It was a serious concern for both of us.



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part One (cont.)

By Ben Leet

B. Were there others who would offer therapy and counseling who also talked with Arnavaz?

A. To my knowledge, no. But I could be wrong. A few people came and went, but there had been a several people before—one reason it took me a while to get established was that those people had not kept confidence. It's a difficult situation. On one hand you want to relax into the community, but at the same time you're holding peoples' secrets. You have to have a large wall around you to make sure that their secrets don't become part of the public domain.

B. But you won't be tempted to talk about those people because they have moved on back to where they live.

A. But you might drop something to somebody without thinking that you're betraying someone's confidence. It's a constant tight-rope.

B. Did she talk about how . . . Baba made a blueprint for spiritual centers, which included seven houses, I think, which included the poor, the sick, education, and included therapy and advanced souls. I can't remember them all.

A. It's in the Trust Charter. And the other place it would be is the center in south India, Byrangmala.

B. But Arnavaz was not looking down the road that far?

A. No, she wasn't. What she was dedicated to was keeping the fire of Baba's love alive. One of the most profound afternoons I spent with her was saying, "Look at this place. Every single step here God has walked. God has sat in the chair you're sitting in. God has been every place on this property. And when he was here he was our sole focus, and he took himself away we all thought we could never recover from this tremendous loss. But somehow we managed to recover, and we grouped around Mehera, and he took Mehera away from us. He strips away and he strips away until all that is left is him. I had asked her what would become of Meherazad. So this will be, with us out of the way, it will be all the fire of Baba and there will be nothing between you and him, nothing but him to pin your hopes on.

B. Even now, talks still go on with Eruch's brother Meherwan.

A. And Bhau goes in there now.

B. Pilgrims only get an hour a couple of times a week, which is not much of an experience.

A. Compared to what you all got in the 80s.



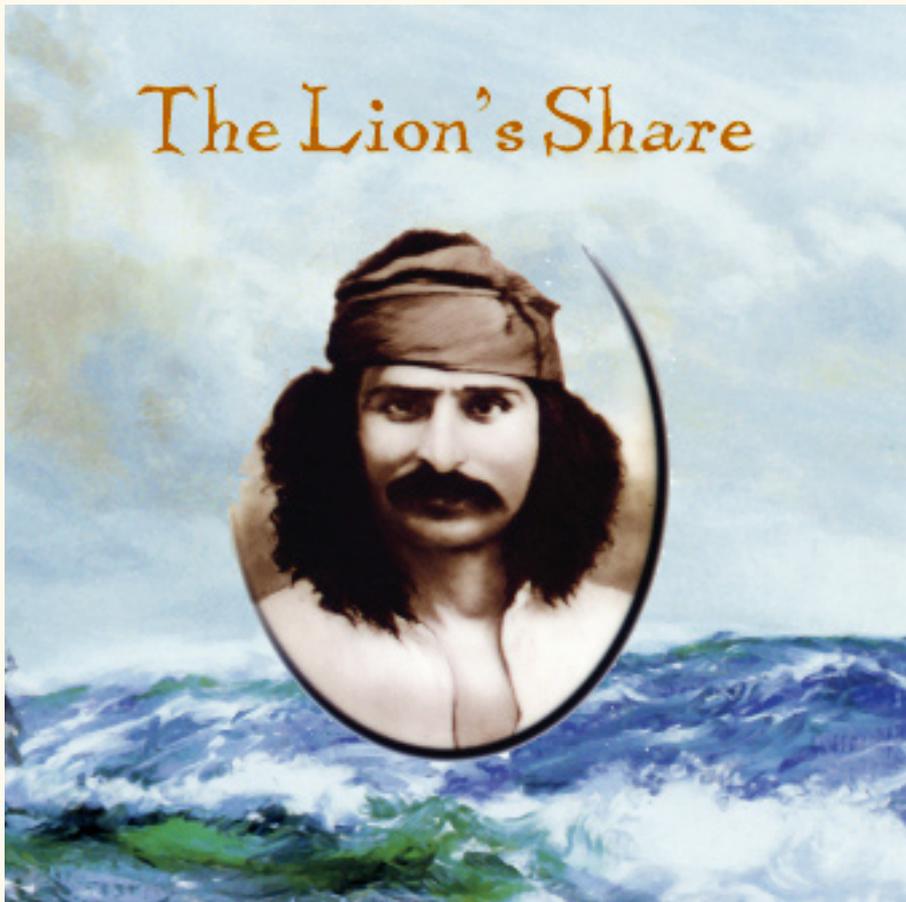
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The Lion's Share CD

reviewed by Karen Drygas



The Lion's Share is an irresistible musical collage just released by Ron Greenstein. Meher Baba stated that Creation is God's Lila (Divine Sport) and that it is sustained by His sense of humor. God's sense of humor is so pervasive that there is not a person who is totally devoid of it. I would venture to say there are those of us for whom an especially large dose of humor is so bestowed by the grace of the Master. Ron Greenstein weaves wit and wisdom in such a gentle and honest way there is not a person who could be totally devoid of the smile that listening to this CD brings.

Ron has collected an especially personal quilt of spiritual seeking, contemplation, distillation, and musical joy; over 30 years worth! The melodies are crafted in a flavorful array of genres: they are a fresh blend of bluesy and folk notes as well as rhythms. The clean instrumentation includes thoughtful sparkling additions (ukulele, accordion, piano, bass and guitars). Two of the acapella selections offer a melodic beckoning from the soul to the Master.

I am a long time fan of Ron Greenstein because his songs capture my heart and imagination. I believe you will find that Ron's music brightly reminds us to never take ourselves too seriously and to embrace God's Lila, always.

[Listen to the Lions Share track on youtube](#)

The Lion's Share cd is available through:

Love Street Bookstore

Sheriar Books

or

email Ron: performs@mindspring.com



You shot an arrow at my heart

Oh Meher, You shot an arrow at my heart

and Your aim was true and sure.

My heart started bleeding and singing

all at the same time.

Oh Beloved, you have set fire to my house,

but I have no wish to escape.

I stay there to be consumed

so that nothing will be left

to separate me from You.

Oh friends, You call it madness

when a man falls to the ground and screams

because all of a sudden he sees God everywhere.

I long for this madness, but the Beloved

will not give it to me.

He keeps me firmly in this world because, He says,

He has use for me there.

Oh Namō, you are the handmaid of the Lord,

so you must see to His pleasure

at the cost of your own desires.



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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.

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 info@MeherBabaInformation.org or write to:

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Berkeley, CA 94701

<http://MeherBabaInformation.org>

Meher Baba Center of Northern California

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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)

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 (first stop light), turn right on Stockton. About two blocks onward, the Center is located on the left side of the street. Address on previous page.

More Local Meetings (Continued on next page)



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Announcements (cont.)

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 Marilyn Buehler (916) 812-9496 info@premsay.com

Los Gatos – Sunday Evenings

At the home of Clint Snyder

Call (408) 395-6865

Sonoma County - Arti happens once a month,

Usually the first Sunday. Locations vary.

Call Ellen Van Allen at (707) 528-0357 for specific information.

See more information on the website.

Contact for messages to newsletterwalla: meherbabacenter@gmail.com

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