



INsights

Community Newsletter

“No one can realise God except through the grace and help of a God-realised Master, who is Truth incarnate. Only a God-realised Master can awaken this true love in the human heart, by consuming through the fire of his grace all the dross that prevents its release.

Those who have got the courage and the wisdom to surrender themselves to a Perfect Master are the recipients of his grace. The grace of the Master does come to those who deserve it. And when it comes, it kindles in the human heart a love divine, which not only enables the aspirant to become one with God, but also to be of infinite help to others who are also struggling with their own limitations. There is no power greater than love.”

Messages of Meher Baba, East and West, edited by Adi K. Irani, page 73,
14 November 1944, to the Theosophical Society, Nagpur, India

June, 2010

Vol 3, Issue 4

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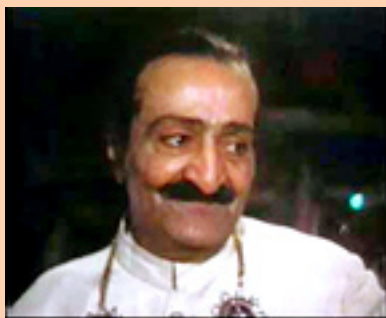
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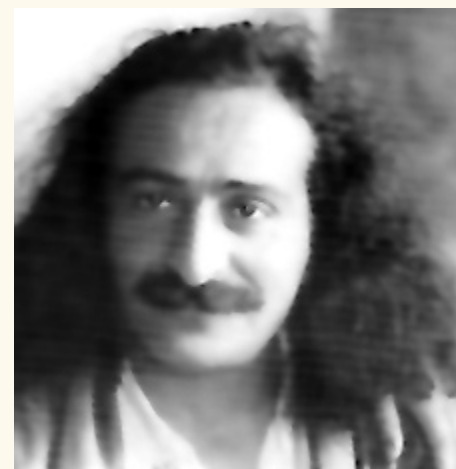
This month we offer a short review of the Annual General Meeting held June 27, 2010 in El Cerrito for the Northern California Meher Baba Center.

And we offer the second part of the interview with Ann Speirs.

- Ben

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





The Annual General Meeting

June 27, 2010



Imagine the best business meeting you've ever attended; interesting, amusing, calm and collected, no recriminations, no pressure, and the business passes quickly. At the end you are not fidgeting to get out, in fact you linger. What's more the pot-luck lunch before the meeting was superb. I'm talking about the yearly Annual General Meeting, which was chaired by Billy Baum and held last Sunday afternoon at the El Cerrito Center.

The notes to the meeting have been distributed, by e-mail, and I suggest you dig into them again after this newsletter. There were three main items we dealt with. The first is that we spent your money. That is, the budget was reviewed from last year, proposed for

the coming year, and an acclaim of thanks goes out to all who have supported the MBCNC, Inc. for another year. The budget is simple to describe: most of the money goes towards the Center. The group was in the black again this past year.

The second item dealt with inviting Dan Stone who holds group motivation and dynamics conferences. He is a Meher Baba lover who has worked with the Meher Spiritual Center board in Myrtle Beach, and comes with ties to certain local members. We will be having a one-day workshop for the board of directors and a one-day for the community- to be announced.

The third item was to create an electronic message network for the group, a google group or chat group, or perhaps a facebook page or a twitter something or other. Computer messages I am well acquainted with, but I don't understand the cell phone. I sense that everyone under 30, and a select few over 30, sleeps with a cell phone under the pillow and never distances him/herself from the "it." The new tools have to do with making communication more fluid, interactions more frequent, unearthing the shared experiences and latent connections that are dormant. We formed a committee to review our electronic communications, to explore using social media for more dynamic interactions. Jeanne Moje volunteered to take over as web-master for our beautiful site which was created by Priscilla Hazelwood and maintained by Christina Ozuna for all these years. Thank you to them. Jeanne will be communicating with one designated board member about any web-issues.

The board for next year consists of Janet White, Ron Greenstein, Billy Baum, Ann Speirs, Ellen Van Allen and Ed Brooks. It may be enlarged with new additions (to be hoped for).

The Sunday meetings go on, alternating every week, A and B groups, as the A group delves into sharing ideas, feelings, experiences around chosen topics. The coming meeting A (July 11) will deal with Humiliation for a second time. The group is open, yet it has maintained a core of participants for about four months



The Annual General Meeting (cont.)

June 27, 2010

now. The B group meetings are spontaneous sharing, get-togethers without a set theme.

We still need someone to take over for Philip Karantzalis, as program co-ordinator. He would like to see that be a two person committee. If you would like to put some creative energy into the center, and/or can keep the calendar of events organized- please contact a board member to volunteer.

Next year in June, put it on your calendar. The pleasure was palpable, the intensity was in the air continuously — the AGM was a great success.

Interview with Anne Speirs, Part Two (cont.)

By Ben Leet



Ann (**A**): I think we're at a major time of change as the Mandali are leaving us. We're going from Baba's life orientation to Baba's message orientation, "How do we live this?" rather than "How did He live this?" And that's great, exciting and a little scary.

Ben (**B**): Yes, it is. I'm wondering if .. How important will the group phenomena be? Whether it will be ancillary or just ... very few people even know there's a group. As far as participating (in the group) there are few people who are a part of it. Even though there are so many now who love Baba, and Baba's made a big influence in their life, they think, "That's fine, I have my own personal Baba and I don't need anything else." There's nothing that's attracting them into a group experience.

A. I liked living there (India). Really having the group around, it's an intense experience. But that could easily move into religion. This way it can't.

B. I guess a religion would be if you felt obligated to do certain social functions, like pray five times a day in public. Or go to mass every week, or ... I'm sure there are other religions that keep you connected to show that you're a dues paying member.



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part Two (cont.)

By Ben Leet

A. I find I need other people around to stimulate thoughts, to stimulate discussion. How did He mean, how did He want us to live this?

B. I agree. In fact Baba says it's better for us if we have to rub elbows and shoulder together because it helps bring up stuff that we don't want brought up, that we hide so well. . . . When did you live in India?

A. Um hum. I was there for nine years. And I left last August, so when did I get there, then?

B. '88. No, '98, no . . .

A. '99.

B. And did you live in Meherabad most of the time?

A. Well, when I first went I lived in south India, and I was training HIV counselors. And then I would go up on long weekends to Meherabad for pilgrimage.

B. Really? Did you fly up there?

A. The trains are wonderful. It was a day and a half train ride. At that point there weren't that many flights. While I was there that changed. But at the beginning it was a train ride. My work was in Karnataka, and Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh, so it was shorter to go from there. I would tack on to the end of my work. I would jump up from there for a time at the Center. It was wonderful. And half way thru my contract ended in south India, so I decided, or Baba decided that I could come up to live at Meherabad. So I did.

B. What agency employed you?

A. An agency called South India AIDS Action Program.

B. Was that sponsored by the U.N.?

A. No, it was an in-country non-governmental organization that was trying to work in the AIDS epidemic.

B. Who pays for it?

A. The Netherlands paid for that particular program. We got a grant from the Netherlands. There was no government money in it.

B. Except the open-heartedness of the people of the Netherlands who sponsor it.

A. They had a very nice program for it.

B. Yea AIDS is very big in India. I mean . . .

A. Millions of people are suffering from it. Yea. India probably has more people than any other where else in the world who are positive (with HIV).

(Continued on next page.)



Interview with Anne Speirs, Part Two (cont.)

By Ben Leet

B. More than Africa?

A. Africa is a continent. Country-wise. South Africa is close. I had known from the first time I stepped into Meherabad that I was going to come there to live. I felt so at home when I first went in the '90s. But I never dreamed it would be that way. I just assumed, like everybody else, I'd come there to live as a resident, but I never was a resident.

B. Somehow, you had experience and training in counseling and you qualified for this position. How many years were you counseling in India?

A. This first one was two and a half year contract, and then I was four years in the second agency, which was based in Arangaon and Poona.

B. So you worked in Arangaon too. You told me that I shouldn't expect to take a birth in Arangaon next time.

A. Well, it isn't the most beautiful place in the world. It's a tough village. They've had a very rough time being around the Baba community.

B. Because why?

A. A lot of ... they've made some of their money as servants, and they haven't been well treated necessarily by the Indians who used them as servants. And they watched all the foreigners come in, and they have not been able to tap into that. They've watched all this money flow thru, but it doesn't flow thru the village. There's a lot of bad feeling about that.

B. And there are more coming. Arangaon is going to be in the middle of this huge metropolitan area some day which will change . . .

A. Right now it's just a small village where people have trouble making a living.

B. Do they still have a Honda plant down the road?

A. The motorcycle plant --- yea, it's still there.

B. The economy in India is on the increase.

A. The middle class is growing. The rural areas are stuck. What is slowly happening is that a plant will move in. It will have slave labor so it will get very cheap workers out of it. They'll milk the situation for what it can. It's a feudal system in the countryside.

B. I picked up this book this afternoon, and Baba said that India will be the spiritual capital of the world, and in order to maintain that status it will have to suffer the greatest.

A. Right now what is happening is that the middle class is growing at the urban level and the (rural) country is being left behind, and you get two countries.



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Interview with Anne Speirs, Part Two (cont.)

By Ben Leet

B. Eighty percent of the country is farmers.

A. Well, rural. They're not all farmers. That end is really struggling and the wages haven't changed much there. In the city you have people who are part of the global village. The advent of television has meant that the country people see what is happening in the rest of India, and they see things they'd like to own. But when you have only a dollar a day, a mobile phone is out of reach. So resentment is increasing there. There is all this technological stuff like motorcycles, phones, televisions and refrigerators that they can't have. They see that everyone else seems to have it.

B. I bet that's really frustrating. So in your work as you traveled from place to place you'd encounter this type of disparity. Dirt poor people looking at the TV shows, soap opera wealth. Mexico has the same thing. In the soap operas all these people --- if not millionaires, they are pretty well clothed and fed and everything. You would not guess that 20 percent of the people are as poor as Haiti, which is dirt poor. I would think they would be resentful.

A. They are. And especially in Arangaon as they watch all the wealthy westerners come in, and to them it looks like we have tons of money. And they don't have access to it.

B. So they can go hungry.

A. When they built the new Pilgrim Center a lot of labor came from elsewhere so the villagers were watching that castle on the hill go up . . . crores of rubies going into it, and very little of it came back into the local economy. They were very resentful. The village is very superstitious. Most of the villages are tied by a web of superstition. So that also is in play.



Sita

Sita squats on the stone floor cutting okra, singing. Her pallu falls from her shoulder down her back, but when I reach for the camera she catches the end and wraps it round her head. Propriety will not allow a photograph until her hair is covered. Stopping her work, her song, she stares into the lens, just as she did last week when I tried to catch her washing clothes, slapping them against the rocks, her strong hands wringing the fabric almost dry. I make cutting motions with my hand, urging her to resume her work, but she nervously creases the pallu, holding it against skin dark and smooth as caramel. The kitchen bakes under September sun, and I have intruded long enough. I take one shot to send to her, put the camera in my bag and leave. Behind me a knife clinks on stone. Sita, bareheaded I am sure, is singing.

Return Journey

Arriving once again in India, I was eager, my journey just beginning. The taxi swept across and out of the quiet pre-dawn city, climbing easily into the ghats. But now, coming down, we creep along, trapped in a line of trucks. I clutch at the seat and gag on exhaust that streams through windows open to the sullen afternoon.

Entering Mumbai, the taxi stalls next to long rows of motley shacks—jumble of corrugated metal, tires, and plastic tarps, the inner walls supporting one another like crooked lines of drunks. In a rusty can one spindly plant droops red. Heat wraps around me like a sticky shroud.

The taxi moves, and stops. Just off the road an old man turns a ferris wheel, hand over hand. Two ragged children in one seat creak toward the ground. They shout, laughing, to a third above them, both point of departure and destination forgotten in the pleasure of their journey. And I, suspended as I am between two welcoming homes, wave to them, smile, and settle back. The wheel turns slowly, bringing the children round and round again, before we move.



Meher Baba Center of Northern California

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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.

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:

P.O. Box 1101,
Berkeley, CA 94701

<http://MeherBabaInformation.org>

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)

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)



Meher Baba Center of Northern California

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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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