

July 2011 E-News

"Here is the real task of the aspirant: to pierce through his own layers of self-imposed self-sufficiency and insensitivity so that he may expose a layer of vital awareness to the world about him, which would teach him if it could." ~Meher Baba

Listen Humanity, page 176

July, 2011

Vol 4 Issue 5



Meher Baba Center of Northern California

INsights
Community Newsletter

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 - Retreat Review
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Quick Link

www.MeherBabaMeherBaba.org
info@MeherBabaMeherBaba.org

_CerrittoCentercalendar@gmail.com

Check out the newly updated website, thanks to Jeanne Mojé MacDonald (first link above).

Dear Reader

This issue contains information about the upcoming fundraiser with Dr. Michael Ramsden for the Meher Clinic which will be held at the Talbot's home on July 24 and a review of the Community Retreat with Daniel Stone from June 18 & 19.

The Calendar for group events is at
<http://www.meherbabameherbaba.org>.

A thorough listing of Meher Baba web sites made their debut recently. It can be found at:
<https://sites.google.com/site/babawebsites/>

This newsletter (and past issues) will eventually be available in PDF file format on the website at:
www.meherbabameherbaba.org

Newsletter wallas: Ben Leet,
Lisa Greenstein, Cherri Nelson
and Karen Talbot

Meher Free Dispensary Fundraiser

Meher Fund welcomes you to

A Fundraiser to support the Meher Free Dispensary

Sunday, July 24, 2011 - 1:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

721 Crossbrook Drive

Moraga, CA 94556

925-376-4325



Silent and Live Auctions-Silent and Live Auctions -
Bids will be accepted by phone and email (aktalbot@talboito.com)
Additional items are welcome

Indian Food, Chai, and Delicious Desserts

A Talk by Michael Ramsden - the Director of the Dispensary

A DVD of the Dispensary created by Bif Soper

1:30 - 3:00 - Indian Food, Chai, Socializing, and Silent Auction

3:00 - 4:30 - Michael's Talk and Showing of the DVD

4:30 - 5:00 - Live Auction

5:00 - 5:30 - Close of Silent Auction and Checkout

Please save the date - Sunday, July 24, 2011 - for the fundraiser for Meher Free Dispensary.

\$25.00 Suggested Donation

There will be a live and silent auction. See items below.

LIVE AUCTION ITEMS

- 1. DHUNI ASH - Dhuni Ash in which Beloved Baba plunged His entire Hand.** Given by Mani in January 1996 with attached information sheet. Minimum Bid - Not yet determined.
- 2. MANI'S ORIGINAL SIGNED GREETING FROM MEHERAZAD MANDALI HALL WITH PHOTO SERIES OF MANI.** Framed. Minimum Bid - \$100.00
- 3. PHOTOGRAPH OF MEHERA AND MANI AT MEHERAZAD** - An exquisite photograph. 8 x 12". An exact duplicate of the one in Mehera - Mani's room. Minimum Bid- \$50.00
- 4. BROOCH WORN BY DR. GOHER** - Worn many times by Dr. Goher. Returned to Karina Page after Goher's passing. Minimum Bid \$50.00.

SILENT AUCTION ITEMS

ARTWORK

- 1. WATERCOLOR PAINTING OF MEHER BABA**- Painted by Teri Adams at Meherazad in 2007. Framed. Minimum Bid - \$50.00
- 2. FABRIC COLLAGE WITH PHOTOGRAPH OF DR. GOHER** - Dr. Goher's face is artfully framed with fabric and flowers. Minimum Bid - \$35.00
- 3. PHOTOGRAPH OF MANI** - Smiling photograph of Mani taken at Meherazad. Taken by Paul Comar. - Minimum Bid - \$25.00
- 4. PHOTOGRAPH OF YOUNG BABA** - Framed -Minimum Bid - \$40.00
- 5. BABA WITH GARLAND** - Framed - Minimum Bid - \$40.00
- 6. MEHER BABA STANDING** - Large 17 x 20 strikingly beautiful picture. Minimum Bid - \$40.00
- 7. NEW LIFE WOMEN** - Photograph of Mehera, Mani, Meheru, and Dr. Goher - Four are available. Minimum Bid - \$25.00

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

- 1. DUNE CHILD** - by Ella Thorp -To be autographed in August - MinimumBid \$20.00

EVENTS AND SERVICES

- 1. HORTICULTURAL CONSULTATION** - One hour consultation at your garden. Multiple consultations offered. Karen Talbot - Minimum Bid. \$35.00

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- 1. EMBROIDERED INDIAN PURSE** - Minimum Bid - \$15.00
- 2. FINE WINES** - Priced Accordingly
- 3. HERB POT** - Your choice of herbswith a range of available herbs - multiple potsavailable - Minimum Bid - \$25.00
- 4. DAYLILIES** - Assorted colors - Gallon Pots - multiple pots available - Minimum Bid - \$ 10.00
- 5. EARRINGS BY LYNNE** - Priced Accordingly
- 6. THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY** - TWO \$50.00 GIFT CARDS - Minimum bid - \$50.00 for each one.
- 7. GIFT CERTIFICATE TO LAVANDE SPA FOR A MANICURE AND PEDICURE**- Minimum Bid - Not yet determined
- 8. TWO VASES CRAFTED BY HAROLD JAMISON** - To be auctioned separately - Minimum Bid on each - \$20.00.

If you would like to offer any additonal items, goods, or services, please contact us. Be creative. If you are able to volunteer before or during the event, please let us know.

If there is an item that you would like to bid on, you can do so right now. We will maintain information by phone or by email: aktalbot@talboito.com. I will maintain daily bidding information for all items and make this available to anyone who requests it.

If you are unable to attend, but would like to send a donation, please do so.

Feel free to share this information with others.

We invite you to learn more about the Meher Free Dispensary by visiting our website www.meherfund.org <<http://www.meherfund.org>> .

It has now been several weeks since the Northern California Baba Community Retreat with Daniel Stone and I have had some time to reflect and process my experience. I hope this retrospection will give an overview of the workshop along with some highlights and insights from some of those who attended. It's difficult to convey the feeling tone of that weekend in words, but maybe all of these pieces combined will suffice.

This retreat took a very different approach than the first one in October. The first retreat focused on the group's past history, present, and future with some time spent on our collective vision. A committee followed up the retreat and wrote the vision statement to present to the group. What also emerged from the first retreat was a felt need for better and deeper communication. A few of us took nonviolent communication workshops, classes, and Anne Makeig came up from San Diego to conduct an introductory NVC workshop for us on New Years Day. In designing this retreat with Daniel, the core group of organizers called and talked with the people who had attended the first retreat. From those conversations, the need to address 'how we treat each other' emerged as the most resonant theme for us. So rather than move forward with the vision from the first session, we went to the heart of things. Daniel chose to use Scott Peck's model of the stages of community (described in *A Different Drum*) as the framework for our retreat.

First stage: Pseudo-Community- Characterized by politeness and boredom which eventually can lead to the disintegration of the community.

Second stage: Chaos- True feelings and issues are brought out into the open. Contention and confusion predominates.

Third stage: Emptiness- Lots of silence between the voices. Feeling lost at sea.

Fourth stage: Authentic Community- Heart to heart open, honest, and respectful communication. Willingness to disagree and the safety to add each one's piece of the Truth into the communal pool.

To prompt us do some communal self-examination, Daniel asked us to respond to two questions. We agreed to use these 'norms': 'I statements'; deep listening; sharing the 'air time' and not giving advice. The purpose of these norms is to encourage a space that is safe for vulnerability, self-disclosure and deep sharing. The first question: When have I felt 'in community' in this group. What was it like? Highlights were: Support for each other during crisis, births and deaths; during the creation and remodeling of the El Cerrito Center; during the Sunday conversation meetings and the meetings at the Talbot's home. The second question: When have I felt NOT 'in community' in this group. What was it like? The themes were: hierarchy; feeling unsafe; backbiting or indirect communication and newcomers sometimes feel unwelcome. On Saturday, we traversed the four planes of community and reached Authenticity Realization. OK, I'm joking- but we did experience the stages and at the end of the day one person suggested that we meditate on the question, "What is Baba's wish for this community?" As each person shared what came to them, I felt a transcendent uplifting feeling and in synchrony there was melodious ringing from a distant bell tower.

Sunday brought a different set of people, many of the same and some who hadn't been there on Saturday. We attempted to move into the deeper

communication of Saturday, but it was difficult to repeat that again, and I don't think we did. Daniel ended by posing this question to us: "How could we change the culture of this community?" When asked, most everyone raised hands with a show of interest to continue to meet and move forward with a more authentic way of connecting. A small group formed to set up some meetings. Everyone is very welcome to attend these meetings, whether or not you attended the Daniel Stone workshops. The dates are at the end of the article. ~LisaGreenstein

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Some personal highlights and insights shared from the weekend retreat.

"I had no expectations and so was surprised and delighted that we actually made progress toward real community. For a while, at least, we managed to stop just being polite to one another and to relate honestly and authentically. Something real happened, and I hope we will be able to pursue real community further with Daniel or on our own."

Billy Baum

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"Since I was only there for the third part of the meeting I don't have full insight into what was discussed. From what I did witness I feel that we're definitely moving in the right direction. I'm excited to see what the future holds. I'm excited to see what the Avatar Meher Baba Center of Northern California can do for the greater community of the Bay Area. There was some talk about people becoming members, I think through this outreach we will bring His name to the minds of many, it is then His job to bring it to the heart. Looking forward to Sunday."

Jess Maron

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"I have been thinking a lot about the weekend. There are two things that have remained vitally alive for me. One felt like a revelation. How hidden, pervasive and inhibiting the idea of hierarchy in relation to BABA is. The conversation about hierarchy helped me to become conscious of a pull to sit back and listen "to the elders". As we struggled and fumbled (with Daniel's skillful guidance) to be authentic and honest, creating an atmosphere where people were taking risks, I felt emboldened to speak what was in my heart. It felt astoundingly alive--living on an edge of unknowing. I was particularly aware of the threat to and cunning of my ego to derail me. As politeness gave way, some people were hurt. It felt to me that some of the pain and hurt was healed and that heartened me. There were moments when I felt the separative barriers of old hurts dissolve into a collective, shared, community pain. The image I carried away from the workshop is of a prism with each participant's connection to Baba reflected in a unique facet- a beautiful, flawed, collective jewel."

Ellen Peskin-Baum

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"I attended only the Sunday meeting of the conference. I could not drag myself to the Saturday meeting, try as I would. I felt conflicted, and it was just as well. I have a long relationship with the MBCNC (Inc.), it spans more than half my life, which is not unusual in this group. I have a strong skepticism about

the effectiveness of such meetings, and I also have a minority view about what this group needs. After attending on Sunday, I give up, I have no idea what this group needs. But it was a good conversation, very honest and determined. The conversation went in much the opposite direction I expected it to go, I found that participants were almost cruelly determined to follow a path of honesty and relevance. No one said, "Shut up." But someone did mention quite pointedly that someone's comment was boring. That was heartening. It might have been boring, but I had tuned out, unfortunately, so I did not hear it. We are so free to "be honest" and nurture at the same time, and since the nurture is so convincing and "first-aidy" the targeted person felt better, apparently, I hope so. I did not think I had much to offer to the conversation, and as a result I did not receive any of the nurturing others received."

Ben Leet

"I feel that many, maybe all of us present at the recent workshop received a powerful sense that our local community of Baba-lovers can, with some effort and Baba's grace, be a more authentic, spiritually-oriented community. One subject raised was how attitudes of exclusivity and hierarchical thinking have tended to interfere in various ways with sharing more deeply and more often with our own brothers and sisters in Baba's Love and remembrance. These attitudes have also stifled the diversity of expressions of love for and service to Baba that I feel we all possess. It is my hope that this glimmer of awakening grace will grow, spread, and enrich our connections and free our longings to express and share within a culture of spiritual companionship."

Ron Greenstein

"Thoughts on Community

For the first time I feel it is possible to be a part of a real Baba community. I have had a glimpse of what that might look like and feel like. I have participated in a process that could bring that about. It was an amazing weekend of possibility. Daniel laid out a model of community evolution first articulated by Scott Peck. It was a useful model to use to view our Baba community. Starting with a pseudo-community, characterized by a superficial level of communication: don't make waves, don't say your truth, it appears to be a community at peace, comfortable. Yet, powerful forces simmer just out of awareness. This pseudo-community phase has been my experience of the Baba community here since I arrived. It is an inevitable place that communities appear to periodically cycle through. But something knocks a community into crisis, where the surface becomes unraveled and chaos and unknowingness predominate. Emptiness is the experience. The emptiness of possibility From this point the community has the potential to move into an authentic community with real interaction and real support for its members and most importantly, real and authentic action. Our focus kept returning to: what does Baba want of us and what are the barriers to fulfilling that? One issue we identified, which I believe surprised us all, was that of hierarchy: it is a natural urge to build a hierarchy - in this case a Baba hierarchy, seeing some as being closer to Baba, more worthy, with answers for us, or better insight into Baba: the Mandali; those who met Baba; those who have lived in India; those who have visited India x number of times. Yet Baba was clear: it is between each of us and Him alone - and links to other Lovers. No religion means no hierarchy. What appeared to be a minor theme turned out to be a huge dynamic. Backbiting was another major theme we reluctantly faced as a factor that keeps us in pseudo-mode - how easy it is to fall into that trap. Painfully we

examined the triangulation of Persecutor/Victim/Savior as a basic form of human communication. As we walked through these themes hearts opened and voices spoke from a deeper truth. I felt so much a part of the process, and the invitation to participate was overwhelming. SO, how do we serve our Beloved in the post-Mandali era, where religion and hierarchy are not an option? How can we be truly in community, supporting each other without interfering with each personal relationship to the Beloved? What is the place of service in our community? How do we welcome newcomers? These are a few of the questions we will embrace in future community gatherings. It was decided by the attendees that we wished to continue to gather in community, welcoming all, new and old, those who attended and those who did not. Attendees wished an opportunity to practice skills identified as important to an authentic community, and to explore the possibilities of authenticity."

Ann Speirs

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On Saturday, July 23, 3:00 p.m. @ The Baba Center- the Community Gathering Planning Committee will gather.

On Sunday, August 21@ 12 noon @ The Baba Center- will be the first Community Gathering, starting with a community pot luck. All are welcome.



## Poem

Mind is like a diamond  
Fracturing light outwards  
In a million rays  
Of enticing beauty.

The heart is like a lens  
Focusing all light inwards  
To one tiny spot  
Of incendiary intensity.

As long as one  
Relies upon the mind,  
One is led down  
A bewildering maze  
Of alluring images  
And assailed by contradictions  
And confusion.

When one steps  
Into the center  
Of one's heart,  
One is consumed  
In clarity.

Steve Klein, O Beloved, poem #7

## 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 bookcase 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](http://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](mailto:ambkj@aol.com)

### **Meher Baba Information**

For introductory information about Avatar Meher Baba, e-mail:  
[info@MeherBabaInformation.org](mailto: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 No.CA website

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

The Meher Baba 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 exiting 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 and phone are listed above.

### **More Local Meetings**

#### Lafayette - Sunday Afternoons

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

Sonoma County - Arti happens once a month, usually the first Sunday.  
Locations vary. Call Ellen Van Allen at 707-528-0357 for specific information.

#### Sacramento area - Meeting times and locations vary

Contact Marilyn Buehler (916) 812-9496 [info@premsay.com](mailto:info@premsay.com)

#### Los Gatos - Sunday Evenings

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

contact for messages to newsletterwallas: [meherbabacenter@gmail.com](mailto:meherbabacenter@gmail.com)  
To subscribe: click on 'join our mailing list' in the side-bar above

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