

Leatrice Shaw Johnston: Grace of God

by Barbara Roberts

Leatrice Shaw Johnston, who knew of Meher Baba since birth, (her parents, Darwin and Jeanne Shaw met Baba inwardly in 1932 and outwardly in 1934), lived a life that was grace personified. When she spoke of her beloved Baba, she was like a dewy rose at the first blush of dawn — she glowed, lit from within.

In a talk given at the L.A. Sahavas entitled “By the Grace of God,” Leatrice explained that when the disciple is ready, the grace of the Master descends, and that this grace will fructify to us who are open to it. This grace was in full bloom when she ran blissfully into Baba’s arms on March 21, 2005.



Leatrice Johnston, 1986.

Leatrice’s first physical encounter with Baba, at age 18, was on May 10, 1952 at the Meher Spiritual Center in South Carolina, when she was old enough to keep an appointment with God. As she sat on the bench outside the Lagoon Cabin, she hung back, a little afraid to go in. She let her mother go first. When she did cross the threshold and fell into Baba’s embrace, all else melted away. She was embraced by divine love, an experience beyond words, so natural. “This is the way it’s supposed to be,” she thought. It was like coming home, something we all know deep inside ourselves.

Baba’s embrace also carried the “malady of love” which creates a longing that cannot be satisfied except by returning Home. She explained that our longing becomes a driving force, like a sword that cuts through every obstacle between us and Baba.

After Baba’s automobile collision in Oklahoma on May 24, 1952, He was sent to the apartment of Ivy Duce in Scarsdale, New York to recover. Leatrice was allowed to be there to answer the phone and help out. In between these light duties, while Baba was rebuilding His shattered body, Leatrice began her inner work. Her old self

was torn down and she began, little by little, with Baba’s help, to build a new structure. She explained that we who are dedicated to Baba all go through this and that it is a process unique to each individual.

Leatrice spent her whole life nurturing her inner, intuitive relationship with Baba. As He wrote to her in 1958 before His visit to the Center, “Don’t be upset if I don’t call you, I’m with you anyway.” She understood that we don’t have to see Baba to be with Him. Yet, meeting Him in person served to deepen her inner communion with Him, and it also sparked a new way of relating to others. “We were seeing each other through the eyes of love.”

Leatrice said Baba’s eyes sparkled like diamonds. Her eyes did the same

when she spoke of Him. When she looked into His eyes, “I kept looking, and there was no end. There was light and I was in it — it was complete beauty. What He was giving out was bliss, taking us to a place without words, into His being. That’s what we are meant to have all the time.”

Speaking of eyes, Leatrice had difficulties with hers — double vision. In 1956, at the Center, she was determined to ask Him what to do (an engineer at her work had offered to pay for her surgery), but Baba brought it up first. He told her to go ahead and do it. In 1958, He held her face like a doctor would, saying, “Beautiful!” She also recognized the greater meaning: Baba brings a fusion of images, from duality to Oneness.

During her recovery from surgery, her eyes bandaged for two weeks, she went into seclusion and reviewed every moment of being with Baba in 1956 (also two weeks). She basked in Baba’s presence day after day, strengthening her inner connection to Him. He showed her how completely she could trust Him. After the bandages were removed, the transformation of her consciousness continued, year

“The Silence” by Francis Brabazon

On 10th July, 1925, Baba ceased speaking. He told his disciples that he would be silent for one year, but the year stretched to the rest of his earth time with us — forty-four years.

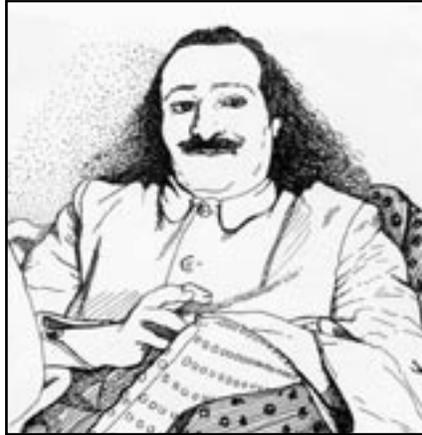
In the beginning he wrote his instructions to the mandali on slates; later, he spelt out words by pointing to the letters of the English alphabet painted on a board, and as some of the disciples became adept at reading his fingers, this became his way of conversing and dictating his discourses and messages. Much later again, in 1954, he discarded the letter-board and communicated by signs, gestures and expression; and to the disciples who lived with him, and to those with whom he lived in their homes and daily work, and on occasion were permitted to come to him, this was the most eloquent way of all — for he was the master of expression and the perfection of mime.

Although Baba was silent, there was no ‘sitting silently at the feet of the master’ with him; indeed, some who came to the ashram for that purpose were looked upon as oddities, unripe yet to enjoy the Master’s company. Conversation was winged; and when the jokes were rich and the stories absurdly tall, Baba was hard put to prevent his merriment breaking into sounding laughter. This was truly God-the-Man — God enjoying his lovers’ efforts to entertain him. And the greatest entertainer of them all was the silent Gustadji. But always behind the lightest moment was a numbed sense of the terrible weight of the world burden he bore and the crucifixion he suffered because of our ignorance; and a horizonless rejoicing that one day he would speak and deliver himself of his burden; and us into a New Humanity.

God-Man’s Silence was our waiting. And still we wait. And we can wait cheerfully because there is nothing else

to do, for he does everything. We wait while he peels off the skins of our ignorance and we stand naked in the truth that each himself is the beloved Who-Alone-exists.

In reality, God said everything that was to be said when he uttered the Word of creation. In that one word, he said the stars and suns and Earth and all its forms and people. It took six periods of vast duration for God’s speaking to be completed. Then he stopped speaking, for everything actual or potential had been said. And the seventh day was of the Original Silence.



Even when he was speaking that one Word which brought the world into existence, and made all words — even when he was shut in the darkness of Nothing which his Word had caused; when he was locked in the hardness of stone; when as a leaf he longed of movement, as a worm for travel, as a fish for wide ocean-acreage, as a bird for rarer atmospheres, as an animal to beautiful man-form, he was silent. All

these things were by his imagination, not of his truth, which is indivisible, and of the very Silence itself. His communication with all the things and beings of his word *has always been in silence, because in silence are all the best things given and received* — and all love-talk ends in the silence of a sigh.

If only we could have become silent when he was with us, enjoying nothing but the sweet word of His presence, we might have lost ourselves entirely *in his song* and seen him as the real Self of ourselves.

We wait for the Wave of his Word to rise on his Ocean of Silence and bet on the doors of our hearts, and cry: Who? Who is your God? — And we will answer in tremendous gladness ‘You, you Beloved, are our God. You are the Ocean of us and we are the drops of You.’

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Leatrice (continued from page 1)

after year. Because she was so helpless, she had to rely totally on Baba. “Strength comes from complete dependence on God.”

Leatrice’s meeting with Baba in 1958 set off explosions of love. Her heart leapt for joy at the thought of being with Him. During that time, she had a dream in which He asked her, “How is it upstairs?” (meaning her mind.) She answered, “Okay — I’m trying to be happy.” Baba replied, “That’s not what you should have said. You should have said, ‘I am happy only when I am living for you, Baba.’” Later, at a tea, Baba said of the Shaw family, “They live only for Me.”

In 1958, on the plane to San Francisco, Leatrice sat apart, trying to love Baba, but she felt completely empty of love. Just then, her mother asked her to get their camera from

her dad. In passing by, Leatrice caught Baba’s glance and this filled her cup with His love. “Baba’s love is a hum that goes on always — we must get quiet and listen to Baba’s silence, enter into this silence and enter into His being.”

Leatrice grew up in a home where she witnessed her parents loving Baba, living His message and obeying Him to the utmost of their ability. In 1941, Baba gave Darwin an order not to touch any female over the age of seven. As Leatrice was just seven, he did not touch even her. Thus, she felt included in the order and included in her father’s obedience to Baba. At another time, Baba ordered her parents to fast for 40 days. Later, they were put on silence for a month. As Leatrice was not allowed to participate, she answered the phone and the door. In so doing, she took on the responsibility for herself in a spiritual way. Though she had the great fortune of growing up in a Baba

C A L L E N D A R

Meetings are held Saturday nights at 7:30, unless otherwise specified. Doors open at 7 PM. Directions to the new center: From Hwy 80 in El Cerrito, take the Central exit east, toward the hills, cross San Pablo, go under the BART tracks to Richmond Ave. turn left, go a few blocks to Stockton (the first stop light), turn right at Stockton, go a couple of blocks, park on the street. The center is on the left side of the street, 6923 Stockton Ave. El Cerrito, CA. Phone: (510) 525-4779

June 4, 7:30 PM - Oklahoma Sahavas Stories

Betty Lowman and Paula Wainwright will share stories of the Oklahoma Sahavas celebrated this May in Prague, Oklahoma, commemorating the 53rd anniversary of the Beloved's accident on American soil.

June 11-19 - Bhau Kalchuri's coming! REALLY!

See the enclosed Bhau Bay Area itinerary or check online (www.meherbabameherbaba.org) for an event near you.

Sunday, June 26, 3 PM - Annual General Meeting

Don't miss this once-yearly event to help with the direction of our Center. We will vote in the new board and vote on our annual budget. Come and support our Center and our democratic process.

July 2 - No meeting - LA Sahvas

July 9, 7:30 PM - An Evening in Siena

Janet White will give a talk on the life of Saint Catherine of Siena, and Alisa Dreyfus will share pictures of her recent trip to Siena, Italy.

Sunday, July 10, 2 PM - Silence Day at the Center

Our Center will be open from 2 - 6 PM for meditation and companionship with other silent observers

July 16,17 - Urban Sahavas with Dr. G.S.N. Moorty

Dr. G.S.N. Moorty, a longtime Indian Baba lover, will regale us with stories of his times with Meher Baba. Baba called him "the talkative disciple of the Silent Master." We are fortunate to have him with us for an entire weekend. We will also have a musical guest.

Saturday, July 16, we will meet at the El Cerrito Center from 11 AM - 6 PM, with a lunch break.

Sunday, July 17, we will meet at the Talbot's, 721 Crossbrook Drive, Moraga, from 11 - 5 PM. Call (925) 376-4325 for directions. Bring potluck lunch.

Suggested donation: Full weekend (Sat and Sun), \$25 for adults, \$10 for ages 18 to 29. \$40 Maximum per family. Single day (Saturday or Sunday), \$15 for adults \$5 for ages 18 to 29. \$25 Maximum per family.

July 23, 7:30 PM - Ron Greenstein in Concert

Come enjoy Ron's lively, heartfelt, original music!

Sunday, July 31, 4 PM - Discourses in The Barn

We will go back in time to the barn in Myrtle Beach, 1958. Through readings and remembrances, we will experience the beautiful, clear and articulate words of Meher Baba. Potluck supper will follow. Main course provided. Please bring a vegetable, salad or desert. Brian Drygas is coordinating. (408) 927-6500.

August 6, 7:30 PM - A Sharing of Baba Treasures

Jack Mormon will bring a number of items including a Sadra that Meher Baba wore during the "Post Office Days" 1923-1924. Bring your treasures to share too!

August 13, 3 PM - Sacred Circle Dancing

Tui Wilchinsky has led Dances of Universal Peace internationally for 35 years and is known for his joyful and inspiring musical style. He will lead us in dancing under the magnolia tree in the Greensteins' lovely backyard. Dancing will start at 3 PM, then there will be a backyard BBQ potluck at 5 PM. Bring a dish to share and something for the grill. Please call for directions. (510) 525-3364. Suggested donation: \$10.

August 20, 7:30 PM - Film Night

We will see the Avatar of the Age on silver screen.

August 27, 7:30 PM - Meher Baba and His Deep Connection to Animals - A talk by Brian Narelle

Brian says, "In 1991, Baba being no longer physically present, I decided to follow a living master by the name of Murray. Murray just happened to be a 600-pound donkey. In his (mostly) silent presence I found a great source of inner peace. This led directly to the writing of my book *LIVING IN VERTICAL TIME*. Tonight we'll examine the special place animals hold in our lives and reflect on some of the special animals in Baba's life."

WEEK-NIGHT MEETINGS AT THE CENTER

We will focus on the Beloved through sharing of stories, personal experiences, poetry, song, or in other creative ways. Meetings will be held on the first Monday, second Tuesday, third Wednesday, and fourth Thursday of each month, beginning at 7:30 PM. We have had five meetings so far, and with the talent, experience and charm among our various fellow Baba followers, they are always interesting. Call Ron Greenstein (510) 525-3364 or Ben Leet (510) 351-8259.

Meher Baba Center of Northern California, Inc.

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family, she reminded us, "Baba wants us all to be His family so we don't have ownership of ourselves."

Leatrice's last physical meeting with Baba was in 1962 at the East-West Gathering in India. While there, Mehera told her, "Now, remember, when you really, really think about Baba, He's really, really there." At the airport on the way home, Baba sent her this cable, "Instead of blood, let My love flow in your veins."

At the Great Darshan of 1969, after Baba dropped His body on January 31, she experienced an even more profound transformation of consciousness via the "momentum of love: It is a flame that burns out sanskaras; it is a shortcut to Him — the way becomes increasingly sure; grace is more and more pronounced." She felt that since 1969, a physical energy has been bombarding the whole planet.

Leatrice experienced great joy at Baba's passing because His suffering was over. She also said that He broke His silence then. During the Darshan, while she and her father Darwin were outside at night looking at the stars, they stood transfixed while feeling Baba's love and presence pouring through. "Baba is breaking His silence in our hearts all the time."

Once, in 1956 at the Center, while *Begin the Beguine* was being sung, at the words, "Darling, I love you," Baba looked directly at Leatrice. (She found out later that her father experienced the same thing.) Leatrice simply did not miss a moment to be with Baba, so much so that He hastened her journey back to Him this lifetime.

Here are some parting words from Leatrice, "The time is now for each of us to take advantage of the opportunity to deepen our personal connection with Baba while His love is flowing and He is so readily available, this being His manifestation."

To receive e-mail updates from the Center, send an e-mail to: elist@MeherBabaMeherBaba.org



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LOCAL MEETINGS

Lafayette - Sunday Afternoons

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

Los Gatos - Sunday Evenings - 8:00 PM

Arti, singing and readings at the home of Clint and Sharon Snyder. Call them at (408) 395-6865, or Betty Lowman at (650) 323-1900.

Petaluma - Sunday Mornings - 11:00 AM

Arti, readings and fellowship. Contact Hermann or Jeanette Loew at (707) 778-1195. Please call ahead.

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 info. on the web: General Info: [www.garlic.com/~cdjohnso/SacMeherBaba/Public Meetings](http://www.garlic.com/~cdjohnso/SacMeherBaba/PublicMeetings): www.premsay.com/MeherBaba

Check out our Web Site:

www.MeherBabaMeherBaba.org

See program information and much more.

THE TRUST

All who wish to share in the commitment laid down by Meher Baba through the Trust should contact Jack Mormon, P.O. Box 70383, Richmond, CA 94807-

FOR ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER CHANGES:

e-mail amba42@yahoo.com or write or call:

Paul Christy 28 Domingo Ave. Apt.A,
Berkeley, CA 94705 (510) 525-4779

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. See our online catalog of books and other materials at www.MeherBabalInformation.org.

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