

Kissed by God

Kissed by God

MY CHILDHOOD
WITH MEHER BABA

CHARLES HAYNES



2 0 2 1

Sheriar Foundation

MYRTLE BEACH, SC

Copyright © 2021 Charles Haynes.

All quotes by Meher Baba © Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust. Used by permission.

Front cover photograph: Charles and Meher Baba, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer: Jane Barry Haynes. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.

Back cover photograph: Charles, 2020. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.

Credits for images used in this book can be found on pages 137–140.

All rights reserved.

Printed in the U.S.A.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, or broadcast. For information write: Sheriar Foundation, 603 Briarwood Drive, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572, USA. Or visit www.sheriarbooks.org.

ISBN: 978-18-80619-55-1



*Every moment I respond to the whole of creation.
My response, being divine, is wholly from love.*

MEHER BABA

THE EVERYTHING AND THE NOTHING, P. 45.

To my brother John and sister Wendy

Together we are Baba's Trio

Forever blessed in His love and service

LIGHTNING

There is a solitude in seeing you,

Followed by your company when you are gone.

You are like heaven's veils of lightning.

I cannot see till afterward

How beautiful you are.

There is a blindness in seeing you,

Followed by the sight of you when you are gone.

WITTER BYNNER

TABLE OF

xiii PREFACE

xv PROLOGUE: HOPE VALLEY

1 PART ONE

Sahavas at Meher Spiritual Center

- 4 Waiting
- 7 Open Arms
- 10 Stolen Time
- 14 Side-by-Side
- 16 Keeping Still
- 17 Reaching Out
- 19 Children's Birthday Party
- 22 Saying Farewell
- 23 Remembrance

CONTENTS

29 PART TWO

East-West Gathering at Guruprasad, November 1962

- 32** Meher Baba's Call
- 34** Arrival
- 38** My Baba
- 41** Protecting Baba
- 45** Seeking Permission
- 48** Alone with Baba
- 51** At His Feet
- 53** The Kiss
- 54** Ocean of Love
- 56** Baba Knows the Heart
- 58** The Gift
- 61** "Become Perfect in My Love"

64 PART THREE

***Messages of Love from Meher Baba,
1958–1969***

113 EPILOGUE

Kissed by God

125 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

127 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**129 BIOGRAPHY OF
AVATAR MEHER BABA**

137 PHOTO CREDITS

PREFACE

The stories collected in these pages are memories from my childhood with Meher Baba. For me, however, they are far more than recollections of the past; they are living experiences in the present. What Baba did then, He does now. Every time the stories are re-told they are new.

Like a time capsule from the past, each story of Meher Baba opens in the present to release the fragrance of His love. Someone, somewhere, sometime is waiting to receive the story—that one special story—that awakens the sleeping heart. When and how this happens, only Beloved Baba knows.

PROLOGUE

Hope Valley

***We look at the world once, in childhood.
The rest is memory.***

Louise Glück

Until the age of seven, I lived in a ranch house in the Hope Valley neighborhood of Durham, North Carolina. In the 1950s, we were a family of five: mother Jane, father Charles, older brother John, younger sister Wendy, and me.

During the Hope Valley years, I was often alone but never lonely. My interior world was richly populated with invented tales of heroes battling on fields of glory. By day, miniature soldiers from every era ventured forth from castles or forts

Charles, John, Jane, and
Wendy at Hope Valley,
Durham, NC



to perform deeds of courage and sacrifice. By night, phantoms of brave men became intimate companions in the darkness, defending honor, succoring wounds.

As soon as I could read, books were treasured companions. Fairy tales, Bible stories written for children, illustrated tales of exotic places and people. Although I kept mostly to myself, I sometimes read aloud to my baby sister Wendy. Because I loved animals, Noah's Ark was a favorite story to recount again and again.

On the outside, I was the proverbial good little boy striving to please a mother who referred to me as her "angel from



Charles at age 7

heaven." When I was ten, three years after we left Hope Valley, Mother revealed that my elevated status was due, in part at least, to my origin story. In an emotional outburst following an angry telephone call with Dad, by then her former husband, the truth came out: my father is not my father. I am her "love child," conceived in the dunes of Myrtle Beach with "the only man I ever loved until Baba."

As soon as those words were out of her mouth, I exclaimed, "I know!" although the news was, in fact, a shock. On some intuitive level, I must have always known.

Charles Haynes remained "Dad" until his death in 1994. If he knew or suspected the truth, he never let on. During the Hope Valley years, Dad and I had a friendly, if somewhat distant relationship. After my parents separated, our infrequent visits made

it difficult to form a close bond. Looking back, I now see how much Dad must have suffered from losing his children through divorce.

Living up to Mother's expectations of angelic perfection was, suffice it to say, emotionally exhausting. When in need of respite, I retreated to my inner world, a safe haven that gave me a measure of happiness and freedom—a place where I could be myself, including my gay self. Of course, I had no concept of “gay” at that age, but same-sex attractions are palpable in my earliest memories. More than sixty years later I can still invoke the mixture of joy and anxiety surrounding my first crush, the older brother of my friend Tommy. From societal clues, I learned early to hide what is a core part of my identity. Like other queer children of the 1950s—a time when homosexuality was widely viewed as a disease, a crime, or both—I was constrained by fear to live simultaneously in two realms.

My interior world was alive, joyful, and often numinous. In stark contrast, the exterior world seemed unreal and profane, a stage drama where everyone was playing an assigned part. I sometimes imagined that people around me, including my family, followed a script withheld from me. In my outsider role, I developed a persona designed to please. One life, two worlds—worlds that only begin to merge when, on the cusp of forty, I meet the man I would marry.

A childhood constant was my fascination with God in the person of Jesus. I have no idea who or what inspired my love of

all things related to God. In my memory, little was said about religion in our home. Nevertheless, by age five I was telling everyone of my determination to be a minister or, inspired by stories of Albert Schweitzer, a missionary. On Sunday mornings I frequently had to persuade my mother to take me to the Presbyterian Church when my parents preferred to sleep in. Although sermons were beyond my comprehension, sitting in the sanctuary singing hymns gave me a sense of joy and peace.

My very first Bible was a prize won for selling biblical scenes in colorful plastic frames to raise funds for our church. Overcoming painful shyness, I went door-to-door convincing neighbors to buy images of the life of Jesus. When my assigned box of pictures was empty, I received a small King James Version of the Bible bound in white leather. Much to my delight, I discovered that all sayings of Jesus were printed in red, leaping off the page to touch my heart. More than sixty years later, that Bible remains a prized possession.

Seeking nearness to God, I sometimes hid in a small musty room just off the kitchen reserved for the housekeeper but empty much of the time. Curtains drawn, door locked, I attempted (with limited success) to empty my mind of all other thoughts but God. Sometimes when I closed my eyes a face I took to be Jesus appeared, an image unlike the illustrations in books or at church. This was, I decided, “my Jesus.”

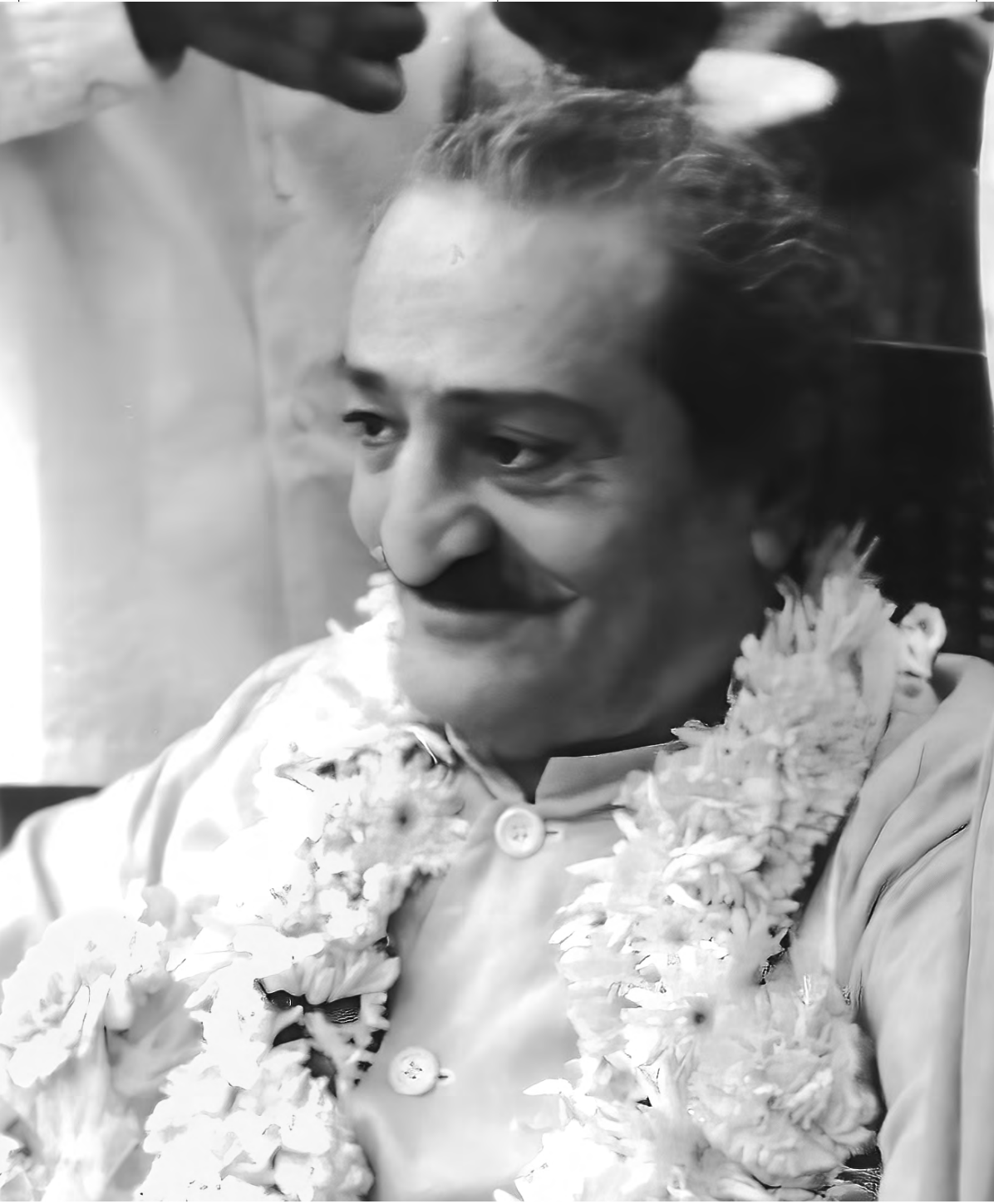
Life in Hope Valley came to a sudden close in the spring of 1957 when I was seven years old. Mother had been bedridden for

some weeks, paralyzed by a mysterious illness that mystified doctors attributed to overworking, perhaps their euphemism for a nervous breakdown. Strangely, I was unperturbed. I went to her bedroom, sat by her side, read Bible stories, and assured her that everything was going to be all right.

Mother later recounted that she experienced an inexplicable mixture of bliss and pain. At her lowest point, she reached out to “the only truly spiritual man that I knew,” her friend Dr. Waldo Beach, a professor at nearby Duke Divinity School. He came immediately and heard her story; then he looked at her in silence for a time. His face lit up with a radiant smile and he said with feeling, “Thank you, Jane. Thank you.” He embraced Mother and left.

At age thirty-two, Mother was convinced her time had come. She felt herself slipping away, leaving the body. She cried out, “But I am not ready—I am not ready.” Suddenly, she was fully in the body. The pain and paralysis were gone, her legs moved easily.

The next day Mother and her three children packed a few belongings and piled into the car—abandoning Hope Valley for Myrtle Beach.



PART ONE



Lagoon Cabin at Meher Spiritual Center

SAHAVAS AT MEHER SPIRITUAL CENTER MAY 1958

What happened yesterday? Nothing. What will happen tomorrow? Nothing. All happens now. This experience of everything happening at this very moment is 'dnyan'; knowledge, wisdom. It has nothing to do with the mind, reason. One who has this experience of eternal knowledge—'dnyan'—is wise. Mind says 'It was yesterday that Baba was here, Baba gave us a discourse, and we all listened, and the children had a party,' and mind also says 'Tomorrow we will have [a] performance.' But one rare being knows that there is no such thing as yesterday or tomorrow. There is the eternal NOW from the beginningless beginning to the endless end. There is one moment only—the ETERNAL NOW. He, who experiences the Eternal Now, finds all doubts, worries, everything dissolved like mist, and remains in eternal bliss.

MEHER BABA
1958 SAHAVAS

WAITING

“Wait here until your name is called.” With that instruction, Mother disappears into a small cabin, leaving me outside surrounded by strangers. Shy, self-conscious at eight years old, I ignore everyone around me and wait for my first meeting with Meher Baba. It is May 21, 1958, a date that will define my life.

I know where I am. A year earlier, Elizabeth Patterson,* one of Baba’s closest Western disciples, had told our family about



Wendy and Charles with Elizabeth at Windy Hill, SC, summer 1957

Meher Baba and Meher Spiritual Center, the site of the gathering. Elizabeth, who asked my siblings and me to call her Aunty Boo, did not say much about Baba in those early months, but she embraced us as her family. In hindsight, it is clear that Aunty Boo, together with Kitty Davy,†

* Elizabeth Chapin Patterson (1896–1980), a businesswoman, met Meher Baba on November 17, 1931, at Harmon-on-Hudson, New York. In the 1930s, she lived and traveled with Baba throughout India and the West. In the 1940s, Elizabeth and Princess Norina Matchabelli co-founded under Baba’s direction Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. See also, *The Day Becomes the Answer: Wit and Wisdom of Elizabeth, Disciple of Meher Baba*, by Charles Haynes (Sheriar Foundation, 2019).

† Kitty Davy (1891–1991), a teacher of music, met Meher Baba in London in 1931 during His first trip to the Western world. She lived with Baba in India from 1937 until 1952 when she was asked by Baba to remain in Myrtle Beach to help Elizabeth and Norina in their work at Meher Center.

another close disciple who helped Elizabeth maintain the Center, prepared our hearts for meeting Baba—not with words or explanations, but by daily acts of loving kindness.

When Baba sent word to Elizabeth that He would be coming to Meher Center for a *sahavas** with His lovers, Mother wanted to be there. But when Elizabeth explained to her that Baba requires those attending to commit to the full two weeks, Mother hesitated. How could she, as producer at her theater in Myrtle Beach, be absent from her work for that long? Elizabeth heard her out, looked directly into her eyes, and said, “I know it will be difficult Jane, but what if it were true and you did not come?” Somehow that turned the key, and Mother resolved to put everything aside to participate in the *sahavas*.

I know why I am here. Two days before, Mother had met Meher Baba in this same cabin, called the Lagoon Cabin. “Where are your children?” He asked. “I want to meet them.” One by one, we are taken to meet Baba. We each have our day: John, the oldest, May 20; Charles, the middle child, May 21; and Wendy, the youngest, May 22. John had suffered a near fatal bicycle accident a few weeks earlier when he was hit by a car at twilight. I later learn that when Mother took John to meet Baba on May 20, she asked, “Will my son be all right, Baba?” Baba placed His hand on John’s bandaged head, looked away into the

* Gatherings held by a guru or Master so that His devotees may enjoy His company for extended periods.

distance, and gestured, “Yes, he will be fine. Have him take a vitamin pill every day and say My name twice.”*

Waiting patiently in line, I do not know what to expect. I am aware that Baba is from India and He is someone great, much loved by Aunty Boo and Kitty. If Mother had prepared me further for the meeting, I do not recall it now. At that time, Mother was drawn to Meher Baba but remained, as she would later describe it, “veiled” from recognizing Him. Reticent to say much to her small children about something she did not fully understand, Mother told us little about Baba. Of the many photographs Elizabeth gave her in that first year, Mother kept only one visible in our home: Meher Baba holding a lamb, an image that reminded Mother of Christ as the Good Shepherd.

As I wait, I begin to wonder about the man behind the screen door. What will He look like? How will He react to me? With tall adults blocking my line of vision, I cannot see inside. Becoming impatient, I peer around the crowd and manage to catch a glimpse of the interior. To my astonishment, I see Jesus sitting there. Not just Jesus, but my Jesus—the one who first appeared to me in my Hope Valley hideaway: long dark hair, thin face covered with a short beard and mustache. I remember thinking, “Oh, it’s Jesus!”—accepting what I see as only a young child can.

* Margaret Craske, one of Baba’s early Western disciples, later told John that Baba gave the order “so you would not forget Him.” John tells me that he has tried to follow Baba’s instructions daily over the years. “I feel blessed,” he says, “to have had a full recovery.”

At that moment, someone comes to the door and calls out, “Charles, come in.” I cross the threshold to begin my new life.

OPEN ARMS

Meher Baba, not Jesus, sits in the chair. I accept this unthinkingly as the two merge as one, never to be separated in my heart from that time forward. Without hesitating, I run across the room into Baba’s open arms. His embrace is deeply familiar, like a home-coming after a long absence. I know Baba; Baba knows me.

At eight, I have no way to describe the profound sense of belonging I experience in His arms. Now I know the word is “recognition,” a gift Meher Baba says He gives when the time is right. In that moment, the Beloved is beyond names or explanations. He simply is.

Released from Baba’s arms, I stand before Him. He gestures, “How you have grown!” Although we have only just met, I accept what He says without question. He communicates so directly that I barely notice His silence. Everything about Baba seems natural, just as it should be.

Reflecting now on those first moments, I am struck anew by the power of communicating with Baba in silence. It was my good fortune to be a small child with no questions or particular words to speak. Baba spoke to me, but through a smile, a glance, a touch, or an embrace. Silence between people can often be awkward and frustrating, but with Baba silence was always

intimate and natural. Through silence, Baba removed all barriers, opening the ears of the heart. In truth, His silence spoke louder than words.

After embracing Baba, I move closer and stand next to His chair. Others are in the room, but I do not notice them. Since I am small and Baba is seated, we face one another at eye level. He looks directly at me with a serious expression and asks the one and only question He will ever ask me: “Would you like to come and live where I live?” Immediately, I think “India,” knowing that is where He is from. I answer with enthusiasm, “Yes, Baba!” Baba smiles, looking pleased. “So be it,” He gestures, “you will.”

Reliving that exchange over the years, I always feel a surge of gratitude that I said yes—or, more likely, was prompted by Baba to say yes. Through all of the challenges and vicissitudes of life, His promise that I will one day live with Him has provided certain hope in times of darkness and doubt. I cannot grasp the full meaning of Baba’s words. But when He comes again, I intend to be there if He will have me.

(Nearly twenty years after that first embrace in the Lagoon Cabin, I sit with Eruch*—Baba’s close disciple and interpreter of His gestures—in the small cabin that served as his bedroom at Meherazad. “Would you like to see how you are remembered?”

* Eruch Jessawalla (1916–2001) met Meher Baba as a young boy in 1925 at Meherabad, India. On May 21, 1938, Baba asked Eruch to leave everything and come to Him. From that time on, Eruch lived and traveled with Baba as one of His closest disciples. Eruch was Baba’s interpreter, first reading the alphabet board Baba used to communicate and later, when Baba abandoned the board, reading Baba’s hand gestures.

he asks. Eruch pulls out a little black book he used during the 1958 Sahavas to keep notes for Baba. Next to each person's name is a notation to help Eruch recall their interaction with Baba—something that was said, an incident that occurred, or an order given by Baba. Next to “Charles” Eruch had written, “Wants to come and live with Baba.”)

When my time with Baba is up, I leave the Lagoon Cabin filled with joy. Standing outside, I feel—without words to express it—that Baba is someone whose presence I never want to leave. For the rest of the sahavas, I have only one aim: be as near to Baba as possible.



Meher Baba meeting His lovers in the Lagoon Cabin during the 1958 Sahavas at Meher Center

STOLEN TIME

Going home to Happy House—the home Elizabeth created for us in Myrtle Beach—I am filled with longing to see Baba again. What to do? Children are not permitted to attend sessions with Baba in the Barn; someone has been hired to care for them at the playground. The few of us who live in Myrtle Beach are supposed to go to school, thus freeing parents to be at the sahas. Once home, I beg Mother to take me with her the next morning to see Baba. She again explains that children cannot be in the Barn gatherings and I must go to school. I am filled with despair.

I later learn Mother is preoccupied that day with her own anxieties and confusion. After meeting Baba, Mother felt deeply drawn to Him and wanted to feel His love. But something was missing: a veil still separated her from Him. “Why,” she wondered, “do I feel that Baba is not looking directly at me?”

That night I toss and turn, upset that tomorrow I go to school, not to the Center. In the early morning, I wake up suddenly and feel something is amiss. Although our bedrooms are far apart, I sense something is disturbing Mother. I rush to her room.

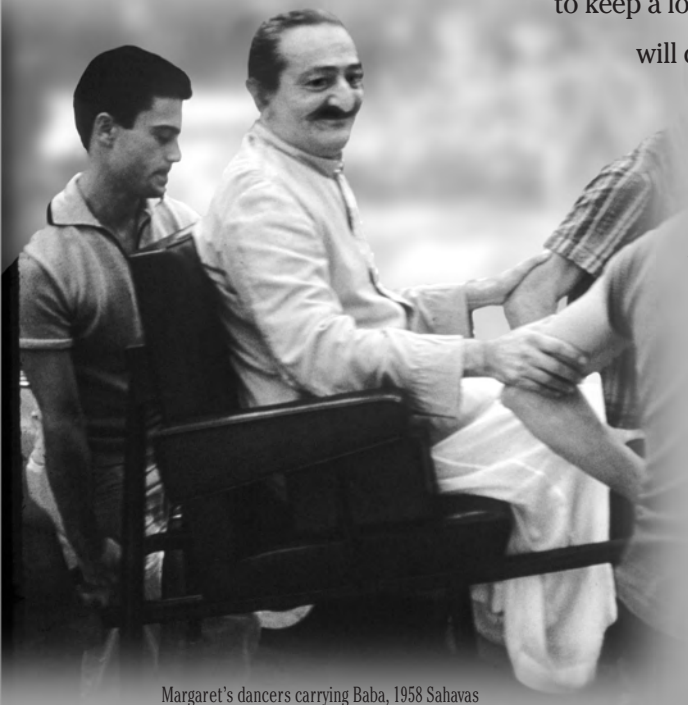
Mother is sitting up in bed, tears streaming down her cheeks. She had awakened suddenly at dawn from a sound, restful sleep. “I heard my name, ‘Jane,’ called audibly,” she later recounted. “There was a fragrance like roses and jasmine together that filled the room. I found myself weeping, hard and deep; the whole inside of me seemed to be pouring out. I could

not stop, yet felt strangely joyous—light—a feeling like what the word ‘blissful’ must mean.”

“Mother, what’s wrong,” I ask, “is everything all right?” Now she is crying and laughing at the same time. She gets up, saying that she must go to the Center immediately. John, Wendy, and I dress hurriedly, eat a quick breakfast, and get ready to catch the bus to school. Mother gets into the car parked in front of Happy House as we begin to walk down the road to the bus stop a few blocks away on Ocean Boulevard.

I am miserable, desperately wanting to go with Mother to see Baba. Every few steps I look back at her car, surprised that it still sits there in the driveway. Just before we arrive at the bus stop, I can no longer hold back. Seeing that the car has not moved, I run back and grab hold of the passenger side door. Mother is in the driver’s seat trying frantically to start the car. In her haste, she appears to have flooded the engine and it will not start. But just as I reach the door, she manages to get it to turn over and the car roars to life. Meanwhile, the bus has come and gone. If Mother wants to leave for the Center without driving me to school, she has no choice but to open the locked door. “All right,” she says with exasperation, “get in.”

I am so happy riding to the Center that my heart hurts. We arrive to discover that everyone is to go to the Barn to be with Baba. I am breaking a rule, but my longing overcomes any misgivings. We find a place to sit in the Barn, anticipating Baba’s arrival. Mother takes a seat in the back; I go near the front to be



Margaret's dancers carrying Baba, 1958 Sahavas

as close to Baba's chair as possible. I try to keep a low profile, hoping no one will question why I am there.

Baba enters, carried in a chair by four ballet dancers—students of Margaret —.

As they pass Mother, Baba gestures for them to put the chair down. He looks at her, His hands folded together by His face, as though He were sleeping. Mother

hears, "Did you sleep

well, Jane?" Not sure what to say—she had deep sleep, but awakened weeping—Mother says, "Yes," then "No." Baba simply smiles and nods, gesturing for the dancers to continue carrying Him to where He will be seated.

During the session, Baba gives a discourse on deep sleep, describing how we return to God each night in deep sleep but we are unconscious of entering that state. The goal, Baba says, is to be in that state consciously. While the discourse is being read out, Mother thinks, "Oh, I had such a deep sleep. That's what it was: a deep sleep."

I sit very still the entire time, staring at Baba. It is the first time seeing Baba with a crowd of people around Him. He is animated, smiling, and appears to notice everything. Although I do not understand the discourses being given, Baba's gestures and the quick movement of His eyes mesmerize me. A beautiful fragrance fills the room—or so it seems to me—a scent I will identify as “Baba” from that day on.

When the session ends, Baba gets into the chair to be carried out. Once again, as He passes my mother, Baba gestures for the chair to be put down. He leans close to her and, once again, asks, “Jane, did you sleep well? Now do you understand?”

What happens next, Mother reveals to us some time later:

I heard these words, with a clarity that never before had I heard sound. As He spoke them with the unmistakable inner voice, He looked deep into my eyes. His own were shining, radiant, deep brown pools of Compassion and Love. His visage changed. Next to me I saw the Christ of my dreams, my prayers, my pains, my desperate hope.... My heart stood still within me. I could only cry out from my soul, silently: “But it is You.” And Baba said to me, “Yes, Jane, it is I.”

SIDE-BY-SIDE

I leave the Barn somewhat dazed and walk alone to the circle near the Lagoon Cabin, hoping to catch a glimpse of Baba coming or going. Someone tells me that Baba is soon leaving for my mother's theater to see a film taken of His 1956 visit to America. I stand in front of the Lagoon Cabin, planning to hold the car door for Baba when He departs.

Baba walks slowly from the door of the cabin to the waiting car, supported by Eruch and Nariman, another close disciple who accompanied Baba on this trip.* Baba sees me holding the door open and smiles. Baba enters the car. Elizabeth is at the wheel; Kitty and the *mandali*† are in the back seat. I close the door and look longingly at Baba through the window.

* Nariman Dadachanji (1913–1974), a chemical engineer, met Meher Baba in 1929 at Karachi, India. He and his wife Arnavaz, married in Baba's presence in 1944, devoted their lives to Baba's work.

† A term most often applied by Meher Baba to those who lived with Him, although Baba sometimes used the term to denote close disciples, those who were of His Circle.



As Elizabeth starts the engine, Baba gestures for her to wait. Then He looks at me and says, "Come with Me."

I can barely contain my excitement. I open the door and Baba moves over to the middle, giving me room to sit next to Him. I get in and feel Him close by my side.

Some years later, I realize how challenging it must have been for Baba to slide over to the middle and put His feet up on the big hump characteristic of cars in those days. Unknown to me at the time, Baba was in great discomfort during the sahasvas, suffering that He describes as necessary for His Universal work. The hip injured in a car accident two years prior was especially painful, making it difficult for Him to walk. Despite this suffering, Baba gives and gives each moment we are with Him—including giving up His seat for a small child.

Baba smiles as He sees Charles holding
car door open for Him on May 22, 1958



Elizabeth drives us through the Center and takes Kings Highway toward Mother's theater a short distance away. During the ride, Kitty says to Baba how wonderful it is that my mother and father might get back together. Perhaps she is prompted to say this because Dad, separated from Mother for nearly a year, had come to the Center earlier that day to pick up my brother John. Although Dad does not meet Baba, he later would often recount that he saw Baba from a distance.

Baba turns so He is facing me. He gestures to Kitty, putting His forefingers together then slowly moving them apart: separation. Kitty said, "Oh, but don't the children need a father?"

Smiling, Baba looks at me, points to His heart, and gestures: "I am their father."

KEEPING STILL

Baba is carried into the theater; I follow close behind. Entering the doorway, I see Mother and Wendy waiting for Him in matching dresses, purple with white dots. Baba has the chair put down and points to Mother and Wendy, clearly delighted at the mother-daughter dresses. He opens His arms wide and Wendy runs to Him for a long, first embrace. Then Baba plays with her, smiling, squeezing her cheeks.

Once inside, Wendy and I find a spot on either side of Baba's feet. Mother signals for us to move away, perhaps worried

that we will block Baba's vision or cause a disturbance. Baba gestures, "No, let them stay." I tell myself to remain very still.

When the film starts, I try to concentrate on images of Baba on the screen, but my eyes keep glancing back to Baba sitting behind me. I gaze down at Baba's feet, resisting a longing to reach over and touch them. Suddenly, I have a tickle in my throat and feel the need to cough. Determined not to disturb Baba, I suppress the urge. Just when I think I can no longer hold it in, Baba reaches out, touches me on the shoulder, and with a smile gestures, "Cough, go ahead and cough."

Baba misses nothing.

REACHING OUT

In those first sahasvas days, I place myself strategically on the path when Baba passes, either walking with assistance or being carried in the chair. When Baba sees me He smiles, reaches out, pats my head or strokes my cheek. I quickly come to expect this special treatment as though Baba is here just for me.



Baba reassures Charles with an embrace on path to the Lagoon Cabin

One day Baba gets out of the car and, supported by walking sticks, makes His way with Nariman to the door of the Lagoon Cabin. I stand in front of the crowd on one side of the path, waiting for Him to pause and give me my now-expected greeting.

When Baba reaches me, however, He keeps on walking without so much as a glance in my direction. Stunned, I feel heartbroken: Baba is ignoring me. It is a new and deeply upsetting experience. Without thinking, I reach out, grab His *sadra*,* and pull. Baba stops, hands His canes to Nariman, and turns to me. Seeing my tearful face, Baba gives me a beautiful smile, bends down, and enfolds me in His arms.

Baba's embrace is captured on film. Mother, standing nearby, snaps a photo in that exact moment. It is a minor miracle. Mother has bought a new camera for the *sahavas*, but apparently had no idea how to operate it properly. For unknown reasons—perhaps her finger was over the lens—the photos she took during our time with Baba came out black. All but one, that is.

Preserved for posterity is the image of Meher Baba responding to a child's longing with a compassionate embrace.

* A white cotton garment, usually hanging below the knees, with long, loose sleeves and a small opening at the neck, often worn over loose cotton trousers.

CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

On the evening before the children's birthday party, Wendy, John, and I are in the dining room of Happy House making a garland for Baba. Pink carnations are piled high on the table ready to be strung on green wire. Excitement grows as we place flower after flower, creating our first gift for Baba.

The next day, Mother drives the three of us to the Center. We are holding the garland carefully on our laps. Children are gathering next to the Caretaker's Cabin for what we are told is a birthday party for us all. Baba has opened the Center to local people in Myrtle Beach—the only such day during His visit to the United States—if, and only if, a child brought them.

Baba arrives and takes His seat under some trees. Wendy, John, and I are given the high sign to come forward and garland Baba. He caresses us and expresses great delight at our flower creation. Soon the crowd follows Baba to a nearby shelter where a seven-layer cake with white icing sits on a large table. Kitty, who has arranged everything, stands next to Baba as we all sing "Happy Birthday." Kitty tries to extinguish a dazzling display of burning candles, much to Baba's amusement.

Baba returns to His seat near the front of a long table of squirming, excited children. Taking care to reserve my spot nearest to Baba, I volunteer to help distribute the cake. Adults hover in the background, many vying to do some small task that might get them closer to Baba. Meanwhile, Baba is filling paper

cups with lemonade to be given to every child—an act I will learn later is *prasad*, symbolizing the gift of love from the Beloved to each heart.

After the cake is eaten, Baba gathers us around to play a game. “Watch carefully,” Baba gestures. “I will throw the candy and you will try to catch it.” I station myself in the front, determined to catch a piece. At one point, Baba looks directly at me, points to me, and then throws the candy. I leap up in the air, but Baba has thrown it in a different direction. Baba gestures, “Too bad! Try harder.” Again Baba looks at me, points at me, and throws. Once again, I jump high to grab the candy—but He has thrown it to the other side. The third time, Baba looks away from me and throws. This time I am on to the game and I reach up and catch the candy tossed in my direction while Baba is looking the other way.

The game ends and we line up before Baba to receive *prasad* in the form of small wrapped candies. When my turn comes, Baba looks at me very seriously and grabs my outstretched hand to give me the candy. Holding onto my hand tightly, Baba pulls me toward Him then pushes me away. Again He pulls me back to Him and again pushes me away and pulls me back. With each push and pull, I come a little closer to Him. Finally He pulls me to Him one last time and enfolds me in an embrace.





Baba glancing at Charles as He gives prasad during the children's birthday party, 1958 Sahavas

Reflecting on this exchange years later, I realize that Baba's tug-of-war could be a metaphor for my life with Him: days, weeks, months feeling Him close and intimate alternating with days, weeks, months feeling Him far away and remote. Over the decades, Baba has repeatedly pushed me away only to pull me back, each time drawing me ever nearer to Him. Through every

push and pull Baba keeps my hand firmly in His without ever letting go.

When the final pull comes—as Baba promises it will one day—the lover is enfolded in the embrace of the Beloved forever.

SAYING FAREWELL

As the *sahavas* ends, Baba calls the men to the garden of His house for a final gathering. Because my brother John and I are in school, we cannot go. I am devastated—heartbroken at missing the opportunity to say goodbye to Baba.

Then word comes through Elizabeth that Baba has invited John and me to His house to say farewell. We are told to come at an appointed time—only the two of us, no one else. Mother drives us through the Center to Baba’s house and stops outside the compound fence to let us out. “Go through the porch door,” she tells us. “Baba is waiting for you.”

I am excited, having never been in Baba’s house. At the same time, I am reluctant because this will be the last time I see Baba before He leaves the Center. With these mixed emotions, I enter the house with my brother. Baba is seated in an armchair in the living room wearing a pink jacket. He is looking directly at us with a radiant smile.

Baba gestures, “Come near.” We walk across the room and stand in front of Him. “I have something for you,” Baba says. He reaches down next to His chair and grabs a handful of candy. He

gestures for us to hold out our hands. We move near to Baba as He places several pieces of candy in each of our outstretched hands.

“This is My instruction to you,” Baba gestures with a serious expression. “You may eat this candy now or eat it some-time later. But one thing is very important: you must eat it all yourself. Do not share with anyone else.” I say, “Yes, Baba” at what is clearly not a difficult order for an eight-year-old.

Baba then opens His arms and enfolds us one by one into His embrace. Then Baba gestures that it is time for us to go. Clutching my gift, I focus on His instructions—my first direct order from Baba. Sadness forgotten, I leave Baba’s presence with a joyous heart.

REMEMBRANCE

Wandering Meher Center paths in the months following Baba’s departure, I sometimes feel He might suddenly appear around the next bend. A presence, a fragrance unmistakably “Baba” pervades the atmosphere, especially surrounding the Lagoon Cabin, the Barn, and His house. Baba is simultaneously near and far away: a paradox that becomes a constant in life with Him. Whenever I feel Him close, my longing to be with Him grows more acute, creating a pain in my heart. Present or absent, Baba always leaves me wanting more.

A few weeks after Baba departs, I write a poem about my experience of Baba’s love. Later it is read out to Baba.

I have Love
I have the earth
Below and the
heavens above
I have the trees
And grass
But most of all
I have Love.

I have Love from
Baba my Master
and my Lord.
My Love for
Him is everlasting
and thick as any board.

I know He is
always in my heart
And when He calls
For me
I will go like
A dart.

And so I have
the earth below
And the heavens
Above. I have the

trees and grass
 But most of all
 And most
 Important I have
 Love!

Elizabeth, ever attuned to my heart,
 decides that I need a dog companion.
 One day she drives up to Happy House
 with a Collie puppy, the runt of the litter
 who I immediately name “Buff” after
 a dog hero in a favorite book. Buff
 becomes my best friend and soon
 begins to receive her own messages
 of love from Baba and Mani.*

“He’s Got the Whole World
 in His Hands”—a spiritual Baba
 loves—plays frequently on the
 radio in 1958, a British singer’s
 version that reaches the top of
 the charts. Hearing the song, I am



Charles and Buff,
 Happy House, 1958

* Mani S. Irani (1918–1996) was Meher Baba’s sister and close disciple. In 1932, Mani joined Baba as one of the resident women mandali. At Baba’s direction, Mani served as close companion to Mehera, Baba’s chief woman disciple. She accompanied Baba on many of His travels and in 1949 was one of the four women disciples chosen to join Baba on the New Life. From 1956 to 1969, Mani wrote eight-two “Family Letters,” giving Baba’s lovers throughout the world news of Baba and His work.

reminded that Meher Baba is more than my companion and father; He is, I had now been told, the Avatar of the Age, who has come for the entire world. At times this thought overwhelms me. How is it possible for Baba to remember me when He has “the whole world in His hands?”

I cannot ask Baba this question because He is in seclusion much of the time that year. We are told not to write to India except for necessary work. I am left to imagine that my Baba—the Baba I feel close to me—is the same Baba who is thousands of miles away. Remembering Him, hoping that He remembers me.

What a child needs—or perhaps what we all need—is confirmation that what we imagine to be true about love is real. During that first year, Baba finds a way—or so it seems to me—to let me know that He has not forgotten me. Letters from Mani to Elizabeth and Kitty contain greetings from Baba to us as Elizabeth’s family: Jane and what He calls “My Trio” (John, Charles, and Wendy). One such letter arrives not long after Baba returned to India. In it, Mani describes hearing from Baba about His time with us:

We could just go on listening to Baba telling us of you all, specially Elizabeth and Kitty, who had arranged everything so wonderfully, and how He kept you constantly on your toes—just like the old ashram days with Him!—And of our dear Ruth and of Jane who has come to love Him so deeply and Charles who

kissed His hands and feet and of dear John and dear Wendy. Baba talked very lovingly of you all, and it was as though you were right here or perhaps we were right there, which is the same thing, for Baba says, "Even now I am there."

In another letter some months later, Mani and Mehera write to my mother saying, "We saw the 1958 Myrtle Beach Sahavas film the other day. There were really beautiful shots and a number of times the dear fair head of little Charles shows beside Baba and Baba would immediately point out to us as also lovely little Wendy."

When these messages arrive, I am reassured. Baba remembers me; He remembers us all.



PART TWO



Avatar Meher Baba in
Guruprasad, Poona,
India, 1960s

A stack of books and a decorative object on a shelf.

***EAST-WEST GATHERING
AT GURUPRASAD
NOVEMBER 1962***

Throughout the years I have been giving many messages and discourses. Today I simply want to tell you who are gathered here in My Love to shut the ears of your minds and open the ears of your hearts to hear My Word when I utter it.

Do not seek My Blessing, which is always with you, but long for the day when My Grace will descend on all who love Me. Most blessed are they who do not even long for My Grace, but simply seek to do My Will.

MEHER BABA

1962 EAST-WEST GATHERING

MEHER BABA'S CALL

In the years following Baba's return to India, I live in expectation that soon we will see Baba again. We are now in New York City, having moved there in 1959 so Mother can pursue an acting career. Not a day goes by without the thought: will today be the day Baba invites us to India for *darshan*?* With every telephone ring, each mail delivery, my heart leaps, waiting for word from Baba.

My hopes soar in January 1962 when Mani writes in a Family Letter, "...there is a large possibility that He will allow His lovers, from both the East and the West to see Him for a short span in the month of May during His sojourn in Poona at Guruprasad. Then again, the span may be as short as an hour (as it was last year) or as long as a week—He won't tell us from now."

* Literally, the act of seeing; audience with a spiritual Master or saint, or the experience of His presence.



Charles reads Christmas story
to Wendy, John, and Buff,
New York, 1961

When I read this, I tell myself that I am ready to go, whatever the length of time Baba gives us. From my time with Elizabeth and Kitty over the years, I learn that every moment with Baba is precious. “Even a glimpse of Baba,” Aunty Boo tells me more than once, “is worth every hardship. A glimpse of Baba is everything.”

In longing to see Baba again, I feel a sense of urgency because Baba tells us that He will soon speak the Word. “What will happen,” I think anxiously, “if Baba breaks His silence before we are called to India? When the world comes to know of Him, will the vast crowds keep me from Baba?” I picture myself on the edge of a mass gathering struggling to get close to Him. “Please, Baba,” I often pray, “let us come to You before You break Your silence.”

What a relief it is, then, when Baba finally sends word that His lovers can come to India—not in May, but in November 1962. Baba makes clear that the *sahavas* will not be a time for asking questions or individual meetings: we are to come only to enjoy being in His company. “My health is very bad,” Baba cables the West just prior to our departure for India, “but your love will help to support Me during the days of the East-West Gathering.”

As the day approaches for our departure, I am both excited and nervous. I have not seen Baba in more than four years—a long period in the life of a child. At the same time, I live with Him every day. The Baba I have come to know in daily life is “my Baba,” not unlike an invisible companion children see and experience as real. A question grows in my mind: “When I

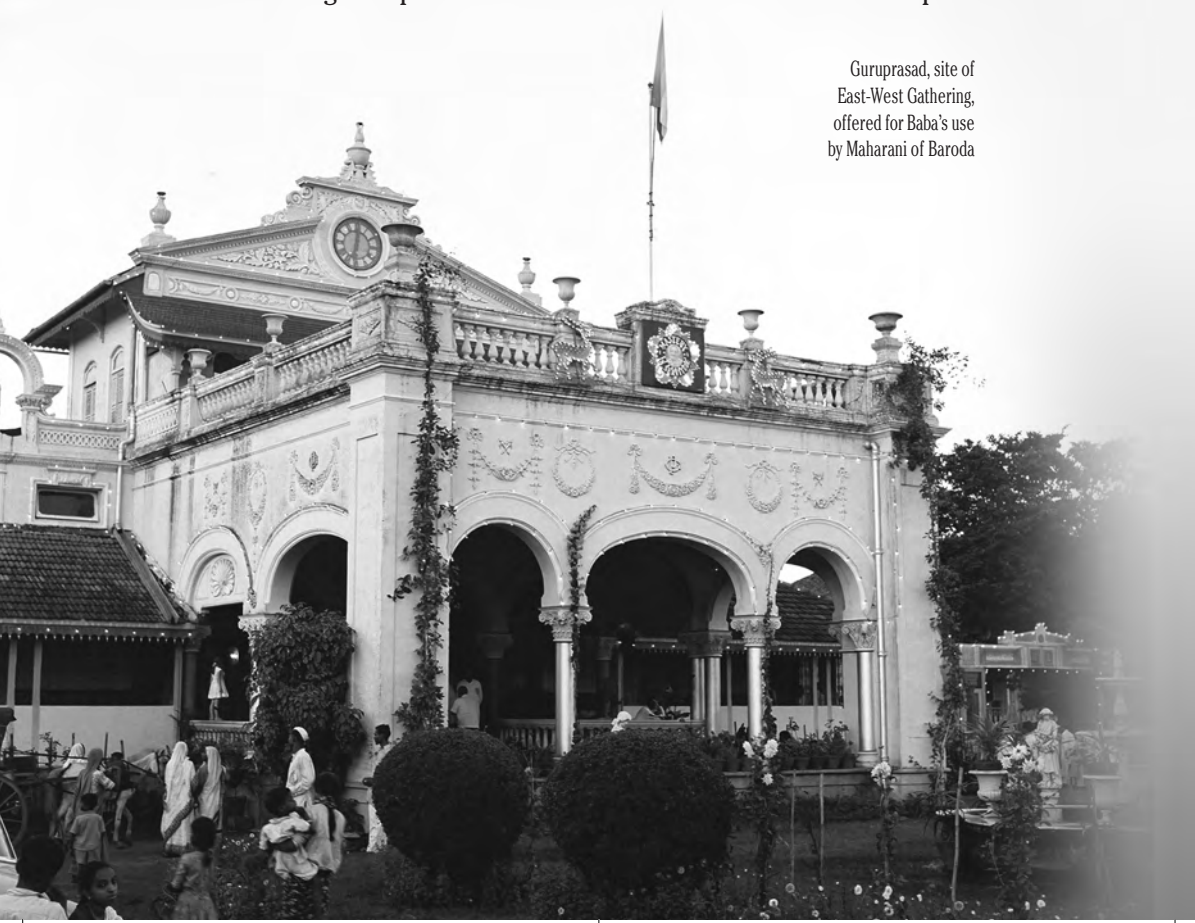
arrive in India, will Baba be ‘my Baba’?” Will what I have discovered about Baba inwardly over these four years correspond to the Baba I will soon see outwardly?

Baba is Baba—but I do not know that yet. I will need to travel halfway across the world to trust the revelations I had found deep within my heart.

ARRIVAL

When we deplane at Bombay airport, I walk down the ramp into a wall of heat and humidity. Once inside, there is no air conditioning, and ceiling fans provide little relief. I am dressed in a wool sport

Guruprasad, site of
East-West Gathering,
offered for Baba's use
by Maharani of Baroda



coat, a white shirt, and a tie in honor of traveling to take darshan. The jacket is mustard yellow with an emblem of some sort on the pocket, attire I imagine befitting a journey to see the Avatar. Mother, for unknown reasons, wears a gray skirt and jacket, also wool. It is soon apparent that these are not the best clothing options for standing in line at the Bombay airport.

One line leads to another in what feels like a never-ending process. The older members of our party—Elizabeth, Kitty, and Ruth—are whisked off into a waiting car, leaving Mother and her three children in a long, winding line with the other Westerner who had traveled on our plane. Mother is clearly very uncomfortable: in the heat, her wool skirt makes her itch. We are both sweating profusely. Nevertheless, we wait patiently as the line inches forward.

After about ten minutes, Elizabeth walks back into the room, comes up to my mother, and says, “Jane, you need to go to the front of the line and get clearance. Ruth is in the car, it is quite warm and we need to leave.” Ruth White, at ninety-two years, is the oldest Westerner to make the journey and has considerable difficulty walking. Elizabeth and Kitty had asked Mother to help Ruth make the difficult journey. “Well,” Mother replies, “I will try my best, Elizabeth.”

Willing the line to move faster, Mother decides to stay put. She cannot face the prospect of breaking in front of all those who are ahead of us. A few minutes later, Elizabeth returns and again says, “Jane, you simply must go ahead of these people. The car is waiting.” Because we are closer to the front, Mother stays in line and hopes for the best.

When Elizabeth comes back for the third time, she minces no words. “Jane,” she says sternly, “Baba has arranged this car for Ruth to be taken immediately to Poona. In obedience to Baba’s wish, you must go to the front of the line now.” Mother replies, “All right, Elizabeth,” adding with exasperation, “why didn’t you say that in the first place!”

We grab our carry-on bags and follow Mother to the front. There we find that the next person to be served is none other than John Bass, a longtime Baba lover from New York.* I cringe, knowing that John and Mother have never gotten along, to put it mildly. John is an imposing man with a large face resembling a bulldog, a countenance that worked well in the 1940s when he served as Norina Matchabelli’s bouncer during her lectures in New York.† John also suffered from a speech impediment that sometimes made it difficult to understand what he was saying.

Itching, sweating, impatient, Mother braces herself and steps right in front of John Bass. As she is waved to the desk by the Indian clerk, Mother looks back at John and says angrily, “And as for you, John Bass, I know exactly what you are thinking—and I don’t give a damn!” Poor John didn’t know what hit him. “What?” he stammered. “What did I do?” Mother turns back to the desk,

* Joseph John Bass met Meher Baba in 1932 in New York City. He devoted his life to Baba’s work, including helping to lead the New York Meher Baba group for many years.

† Princess Norina Matchabelli (1880–1957), a well-known stage and film actress, met Meher Baba on His first visit to the United States in 1931 and lived with Him in India during the 1930s. With Elizabeth, she founded the *Meher Baba Journal* and Meher Spiritual Center.

completes her business, and we are off to the car. Later Mother tells us, “As soon as I shouted at John, the itching stopped, the heat was gone. I felt so much better!”

Flash forward two days. Mother is at Guruprasad for the first darshan, a gathering of the Western women with Baba. After greeting everyone with an embrace, Baba—as is His way—begins asking each one about their life, the loved ones at home. At one point, Baba brings up some of the Western men. “Harry Kenmore,” He says, “says My prayer very forcefully. Do you find this too loud?” (Harry’s rendition of the “Master’s Prayer” is a point of some disagreement in the New York group.) Baba asks several people to comment: some say yes, others say no. Baba says, “Yes, Harry is very loud. But I love the way he recites the prayer because he does it with such conviction and love.”

Baba then focuses on John Bass—another of the group leaders known to ruffle feathers. “John Bass,” Baba says, “he is sometimes hard to understand. Ella, do you understand John?” Ella Winterfeldt replies, “Not always, Baba.” Baba asks a few more people. After a pause, Baba looks over His shoulder where my mother is seated near Him. “And Jane,” Baba says, “how about you? Baba wants to know, do you understand John?”

Without waiting for an answer, Baba gestures, “It is all right. John may be difficult to understand, but always remember: John loves Baba very much—and I love John very much.” In that moment, Mother recounts to me later, all animosity dissolves and she feels a great surge of love for John.

Later that day, Mother seeks out John Bass to convey how Baba had expressed His great love for him. As she relates Baba's words, John stands before her weeping uncontrollably. From that day forward, Jane and John become fast friends and companions in Baba's work.

MY BABA

On my first morning at the Turf Club—our assigned hotel in Poona—my brother John and I are awakened by a shadowy

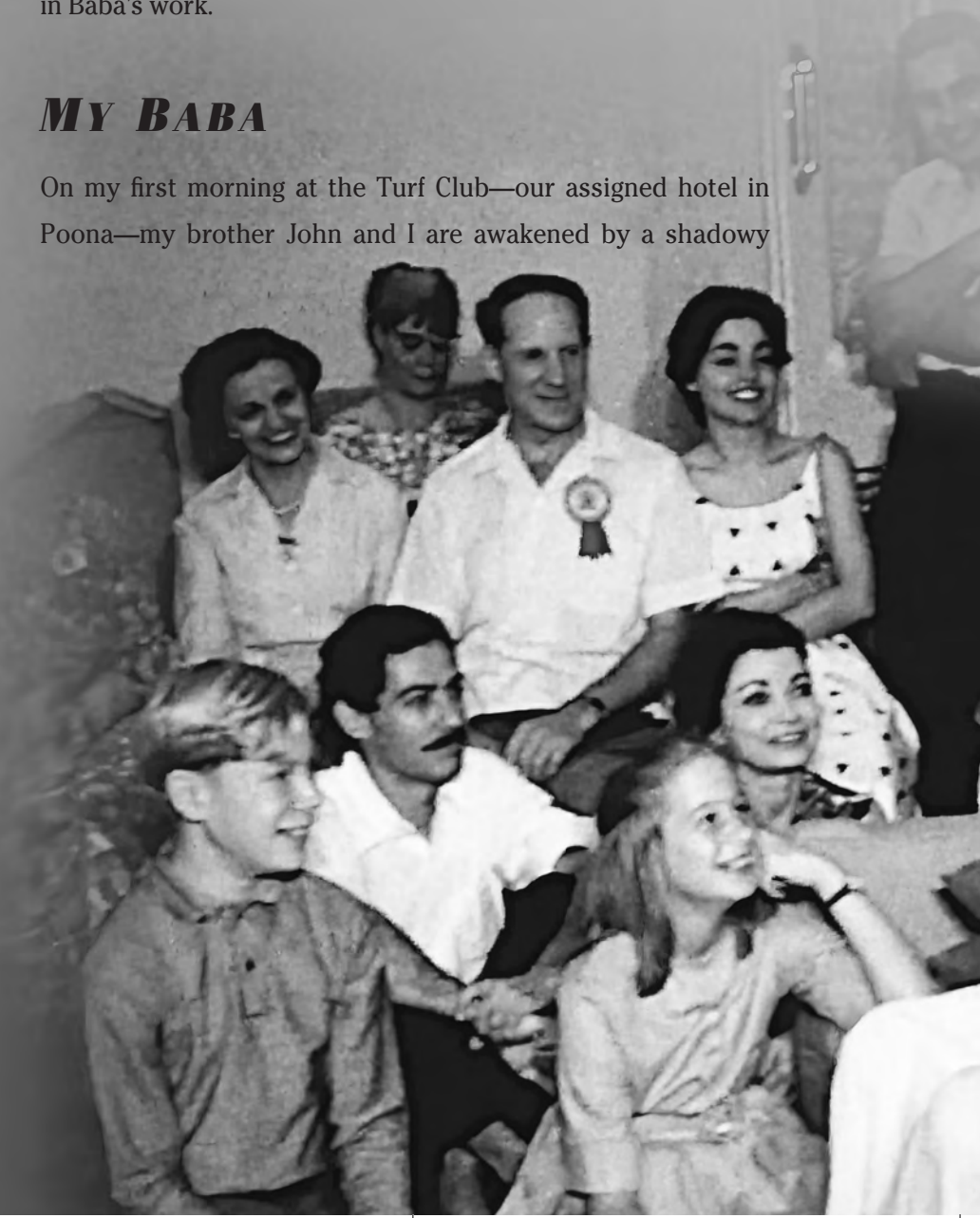
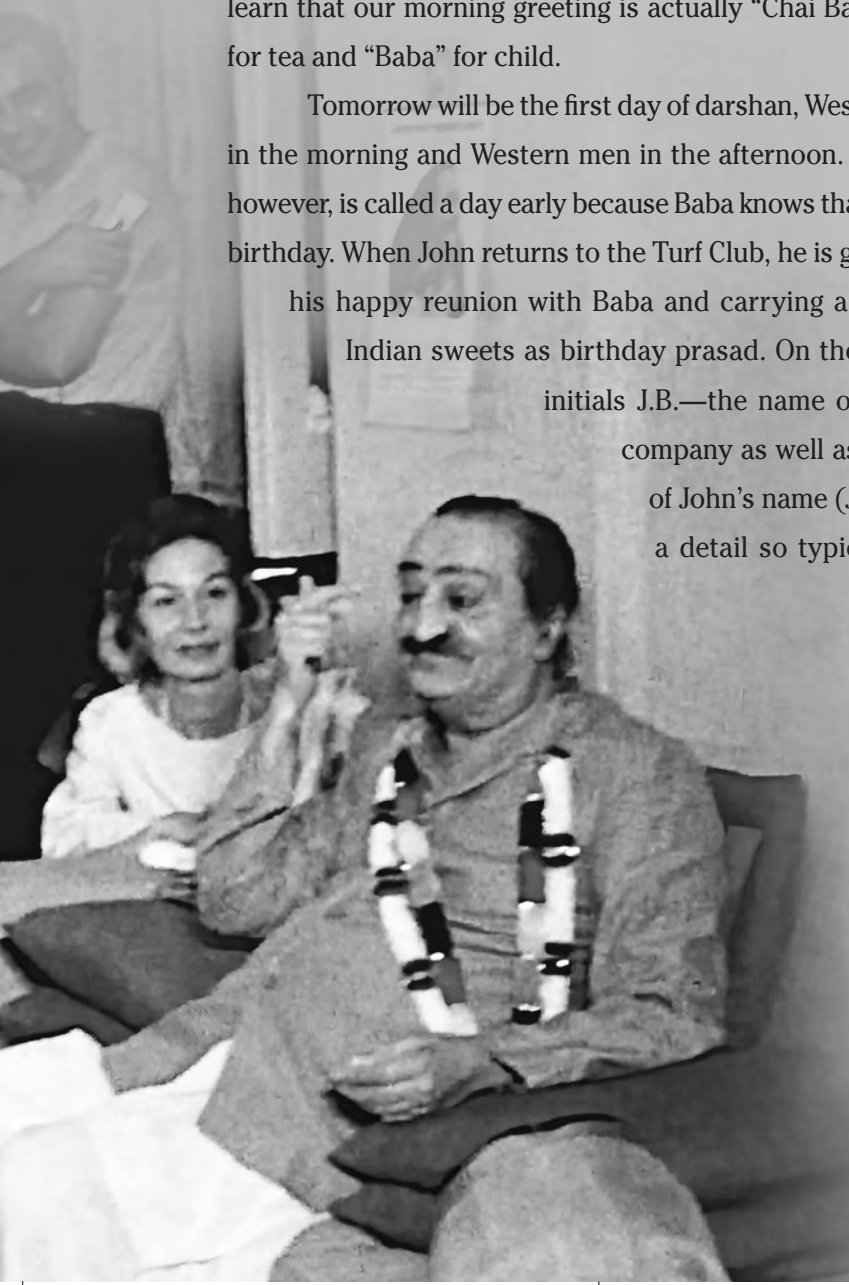


figure standing at the door calling out what sounds like “Jai Baba!” Without waiting for a reply, the man enters the room with a pre-breakfast tray of tea, biscuits, and a banana. Startled at this luxury, I sit up in bed to enjoy my first cup of Indian tea. Later I learn that our morning greeting is actually “Chai Baba”—“chai” for tea and “Baba” for child.

Tomorrow will be the first day of darshan, Western women in the morning and Western men in the afternoon. My brother, however, is called a day early because Baba knows that it is John’s birthday. When John returns to the Turf Club, he is glowing from his happy reunion with Baba and carrying a large tin of Indian sweets as birthday prasad. On the lid are the initials J.B.—the name of the candy company as well as the initials of John’s name (John Barry), a detail so typical of Baba.



Western group with Baba.
Charles and Wendy in front,
Jane next to Baba.

My heart races in anticipation of seeing Baba the next day, but my stomach is beginning to churn. When I fail to appear for lunch, Mother asks for a doctor. Soon a tall Western man comes into my room and says in a British accent, “I am Dr. Donkin. Baba has sent me to take care of you.” With a gentle touch and a loving bed-side manner, Dr. Donkin gives me a pill and pronounces that I will survive. “You have,” he explains with great seriousness, “a medical condition known as ‘Poona tummy.’ Don’t worry. You will be well enough to see Baba tomorrow. I will arrange for a special car to take you directly to Guruprasad.”

As Dr. Donkin leaves my room, I feel grateful to Poona tummy for the gift of encountering one of Baba’s intimate companions and closest disciples. Dr. Donkin keeps to himself, so sightings of him during the darshan are rare. When Dr. Donkin comes back to check on me later that day, I overcome my shyness enough to say a heartfelt “Thank you,” hoping that he will know it is gratitude for far more than his medical help.

The car arrives for me the following afternoon while everyone else is piling onto the bus. Although I am now feeling fine, Dr. Donkin insists that I ride in comfort to Guruprasad, a palace belonging to a devotee, Maharani Shantadevi of Baroda, who makes it available to Baba for His stays in Poona. During the short drive, I think nervously about my burning question: will Baba be “my Baba”?

* Dr. William Donkin (1911–1969), British medical doctor, met Meher Baba in London in 1933. In 1939, Dr. Donkin joined Meher Baba at Meherabad and served as a close disciple until his death in 1969. He is the author of *The Wayfarers: Meher Baba with the God-Intoxicated* (1948).

The Western men gather on the porch outside the door to the main room in Guruprasad. I remove my shoes, take my place in line, and wait my turn to greet Baba. When I step across the threshold to enter the room where Baba is seated, I am suddenly overwhelmed by a powerful fragrance—the same indescribably beautiful scent surrounding Baba in 1958. In that instant, a familiar hand shoots up into the air over the heads of the men in front of me. That beautiful gesture: yes, it is Baba—*my* Baba. All of my anxiety disappears. I am ready for my embrace.

When I reach the front of the line and stand before Baba, Eruch calls out, “Charles, Baba.” Smiling, Baba looks at me. He gestures, “How you have grown!” Then He beckons me into open arms. As I embrace Baba, I whisper into His ear, “I love You, Baba.” Then I rub my cheek against His—fulfilling my longing to experience what His body feels like up close. I then switch sides and rub my other cheek against His: so smooth, like a baby’s skin. Stepping back, I hold Baba by the shoulders and focus on the sensation of touching His body, a moment that will live in my memory for the rest of my life.

PROTECTING BABA

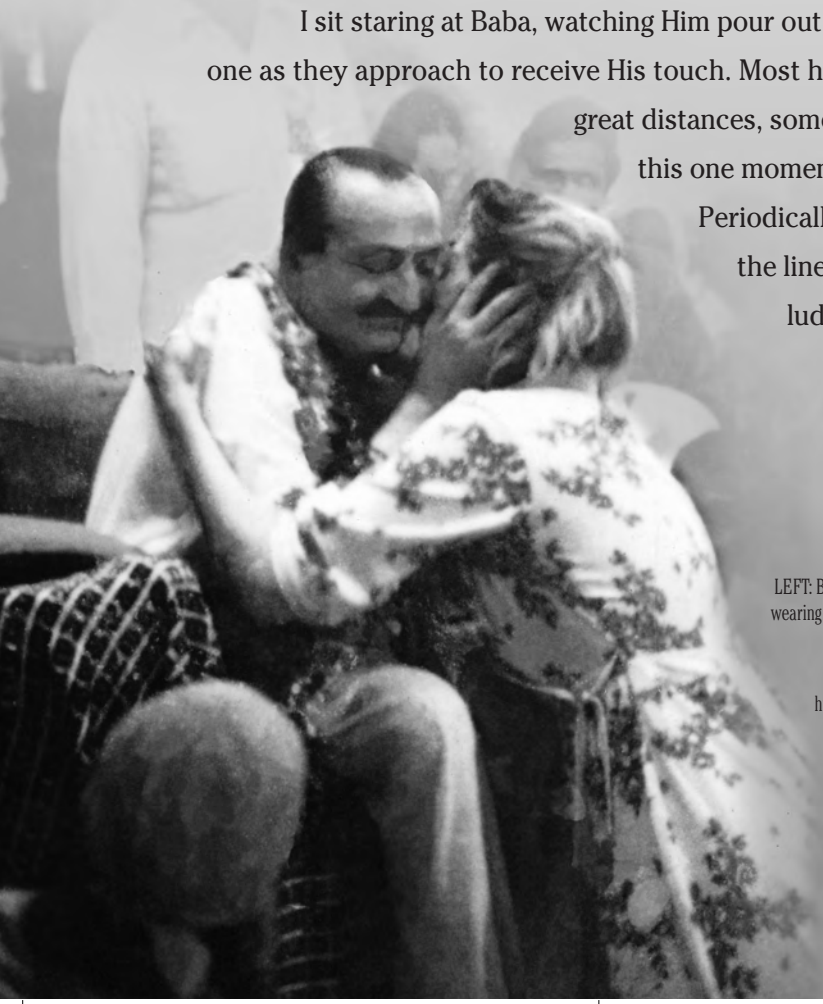
When thousands of Easterners and Westerners first gather together under a broad cloth awning called a *pandal*, rain clouds appear—an unusual occurrence in Poona at this time of year. I am seated in the front row with the other Western men. As is

traditional in India, women are on one side of the aisle, men on the other. We rise as one when Baba appears. From the crowd someone shouts, “Avatar Meher Baba!” We respond, “Ki Jai!”

As Eruch helps Baba take His seat, I think, “How radiant Baba looks.” Later we will learn that Baba was in considerable pain, experiencing muscle spasms for much of the gathering. Due to poor health, Baba cannot fully embrace the 5,000 people waiting in the lines. Instead, He asks the Easterners to take darshan by placing their hands on His knees as He touches them. Despite His suffering, Baba exudes strength, warmth, and humor.

I sit staring at Baba, watching Him pour out love to each one as they approach to receive His touch. Most have traveled great distances, some on foot, for this one moment with Baba.

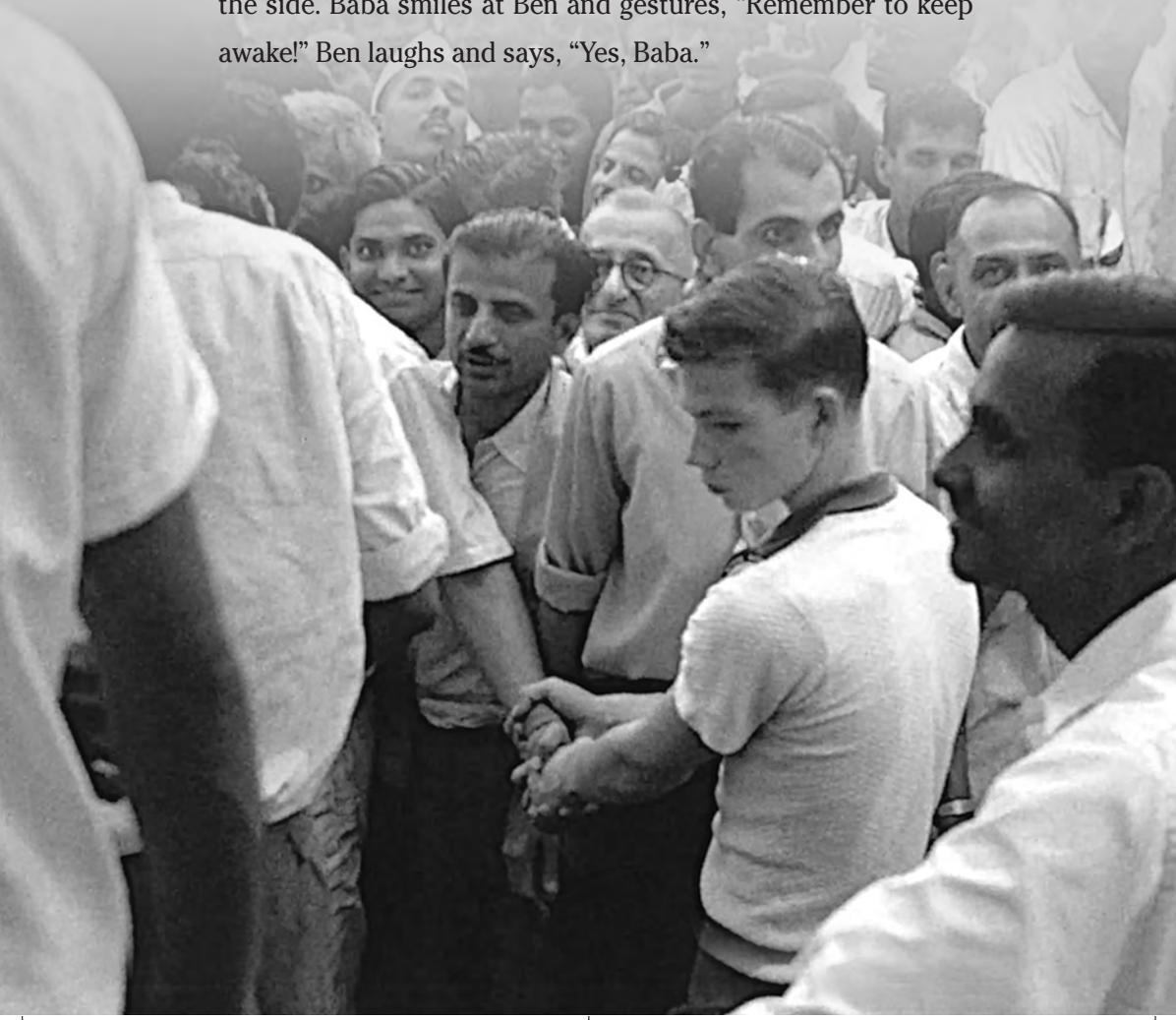
Periodically Baba halts the line for an interlude of *bhajans*,



LEFT: Baba embraces Jane, who is wearing a dress provided by women mandali after rainstorm

RIGHT: John helping form human fence to protect Baba from surging crowd

devotional songs praising the love of the Divine Beloved. During one such pause, Baba looks at me and with a movement of His elbow asks me to nudge Ben Hayman, an elderly chiropractor from Texas, who is sitting next to me. Ben, who has some condition that causes him to nod off occasionally, has a running joke with Baba about his inability to keep awake. Sometimes it seems as though Baba uses Ben as a foil to remind us that we must keep fully alert in His presence—something Baba is very particular about. Although Ben is fully awake, I do as Baba asks and poke him in the side. Baba smiles at Ben and gestures, “Remember to keep awake!” Ben laughs and says, “Yes, Baba.”



When the rain comes, it is a deluge. Water gushes through the thin cloth pandal, which breaks in several places. Everyone is quickly drenched, though all eyes remain on Baba. On the platform under a secure roof, Baba continues giving darshan. Some of the Western women, including Elizabeth, Kitty, and my mother, are taken inside to exchange their wet clothes for dry garments belonging to the women mandali. Elizabeth finds herself in a brown robe that she had worn in the ashram during the 1930s.

In the confusion caused by the rain, the long line of devotees waiting for darshan falls apart and people begin to surge toward the platform where Baba is seated. Someone asks for volunteers to protect Baba from the press of the crowd. My brother John and I jump up to join a human fence in front of Baba. Order is quickly restored and the line re-forms. Nevertheless, I remain standing in front of Baba with my hands outstretched as though my barrier is essential to Baba's safety. At some point, Baba looks at me, stretches out His hands, and asks, "Are you tired?" Although my arms feel as though they are about to fall off, I shake my head, "No, Baba." He nods and smiles.

I stay with my arms outstretched until I realize that I am the only piece of the human fence still standing. Baba, the "preserver and protector of all," lets me imagine for a brief moment that I am protecting Him.

SEEKING PERMISSION

Sitting on the verandah of the Turf Club, I overhear several young girls talking excitedly about walking early the next morning to Guruprasad. Not only will they arrive long before anyone else, but also they will be first in line when the door opens for darshan. Determined not to lose my spot next to Baba, I ask if I can accompany them. “Only if you get permission,” they tell me. “We asked Mehera and she said yes.” If anyone can grant exemption from the rule not to arrive before the appointed time, it is Mehera, Baba’s closest woman disciple.*

Since men cannot speak to Mehera or even be in her presence, I feel stymied. During lunch I barely eat, struggling to come up with a plan. Then it hits me: if Mehera can give permission, then perhaps Eruch can as well. After all, he is—or so it seems to me—the closest of the men disciples. Better still, Eruch will be on the platform this afternoon during the darshan. Maybe during a break in the program, I can take him aside and ask for his help. The plan seems far-fetched because Eruch is constantly busy caring for Baba. But I can think of no alternative.

When we return to Guruprasad that afternoon, I am filled with anxiety about approaching Eruch. What if I take him away from his

* Mehera J. Irani (1907–1989) met Meher Baba in 1922 at the age of 14. In 1924, Meher Baba called Mehera and her mother Daulatmai to join His ashram at Meherabad, India. Mehera became Meher Baba’s closest woman disciple, devoting her life to wholehearted love and service for Baba.



Meher Baba with
Eruch Jessawalla,
close disciple and
interpreter

duties? Will I disturb Baba? But the specter of losing my front-row seat the next morning steels my nerves. I am—always have been—a shy, self-conscious, and introverted child. Few things are more difficult for me than going on a stage in front of thousands of people.

I stand on the side of the platform, watching Baba give darshan. Eruch, as usual, is by His side, adjusting the pillows on His chair, reaching down to remove garlands and fruit placed at His feet, wiping His brow when needed, translating gestures whenever Baba pauses the line to speak to one of His lovers. I am struck by how seamlessly Eruch anticipates Baba's every need. He appears to move instinctively as though he is in tune with Baba's rhythm.

Baba holds up His hands to stop the darshan lines, women on one side and men on the other. He signals for the musicians

gathered on the stage to begin the bhajans. Eruch takes a few steps back from Baba and stands alone with his arms crossed. Now is my chance. I quickly go up the steps on the side of the platform and rush over to Eruch. In a rush of words, I explain my dilemma and ask if he can give me permission to walk early to Guruprasad the next morning.

Eruch looks at me and says nothing for a long, uncomfortable moment. Is this a mistake, I wonder? Should I not have asked? After all, it is Baba's order that we arrive at a certain time. Finally, Eruch shrugs his shoulders and looking helpless says, "What can I do? It is not for me to answer. If you want permission, you must ask Him!"

My heart nearly stops. What have I done? "Go," Eruch says, pointing to Baba, "ask Him." With legs shaking, palms wet, I cross the short distance with Eruch by my side and stand next to Baba. Eruch says to Baba, "Charles has a question." Baba looks at me expectantly. "Baba," I begin. But the words will not come. I start stammering something about walking early with the group of girls. Seeing my discomfort, Eruch rescues me by speaking to Baba in Gujarati, no doubt giving a coherent version of what I am trying to ask.

When Eruch finishes, Baba looks at me with a very serious expression on His face. Then he looks up at Eruch and shrugs His shoulders as if to say, "What to do?" Suddenly I am conscious of thousands of eyes staring at me, likely wondering what weighty matter I have brought to Baba's attention. Baba prolongs the

agony by stroking His chin as though this was the most difficult decision imaginable.

Finally, Baba looks at me and with an emphatic gesture says, "Granted!" Only then do Baba and Eruch break out into enormous smiles. I realize that Baba is enjoying this drama, teasing a very shy and serious boy on an urgent errand. I smile with happiness and great relief. To seal the deal, Baba beckons me into His arms for a warm embrace.

ALONE WITH BABA

As dawn breaks, our little troop heads out for Guruprasad. The girls seem to know the way as we navigate winding streets in a residential neighborhood of Poona. After a brisk walk of about thirty minutes, we see the entrance to the garden surrounding Guruprasad. Without crowds of people lining up to take darshan and various booths set up with Baba's books and photos, the garden is serene and lovely in the cool early morning air.

We walk quietly up the steps to the verandah. From behind a side door, someone signals for the girls to enter. Mehera is expecting them and although they do not say much about it, I gather they are to have tea with the women mandali. I am just as happy to be left alone outside the large French doors, the entryway to the hall where we will soon be with Baba. I will be first in line.

After a few minutes, I am curious to glimpse what the space is like when empty. I gently lift the cloth curtain covering

the doors and peek inside. To my great surprise, I see Baba sitting motionless on the sofa at the far end of the room. Dressed in a white sadra and pink jacket, Baba has already arrived and is waiting for us. Worried that I might be disturbing Baba, I quickly put the curtain back in its place and step back from the entrance.

At that moment, Rano Gayley,* one of the women mandali, enters the verandah from a side door and comes over to me. “Charles,” she says without any introduction, “Baba wants you to say ‘good morning’ to Him.” And then she goes back inside, leaving me standing there a bit stunned.

Somehow I have the presence of mind to take off my shoes before opening the doors to the hall where Baba is seated. I look across the room and Baba is looking directly at me. No one else is present, no mandali, no interpreter, no devotees—no one. For the first time, I am completely alone with Baba.

To say “good morning” as Baba has asked, I need to walk across the expanse of what suddenly seems like a very large room. Slowly I make my way toward Baba under His steady gaze. I am so self-conscious that my legs feel shaky and I have to will myself to put one foot in front of the other. It is, I later decide, the longest walk of my life.

After what feels like an eternity, I finally reach Baba and stand before Him. I remember why I am there and manage to say, “Good

* Rano Gayley (1902–1986), American artist, met Meher Baba in 1933 and spent the rest of her life as a close disciple and artist-in-residence, executing many paintings on spiritual themes at Baba’s direction.



"Only Baba is in the room, no one and nothing else—"

morning, Baba." Baba smiles and nods His head. I look into Baba's eyes; He looks into mine. Nothing is said: I have no words and Baba, of course, is silent. No one is there to interpret His gestures.

As Baba stares intently into my eyes, I find myself dissolving under His loving gaze. My mind empties. I am there, but not there. Only Baba is in the room, no one and nothing else—all-encompassing, complete—a glimpse of Baba beyond Baba that becomes the touchstone of my life.

How long do I stand before Baba? I have no idea. At some point, Baba breaks the spell by opening His arms. I bend down into His embrace, inhaling His familiar, sweet fragrance. Then Baba gestures, “Time to go.” Dazed, I somehow manage to back out of Baba’s presence and return to the verandah.

“Live in the world,” wrote St. John of the Cross, “as if only God and your soul were in it.”

AT HIS FEET

On the second morning of darshan, I am sitting next to Meher Baba’s knee staring intently into His face. Baba sways gently listening to *ghazals** being sung for Him. Baba’s graceful movement combined with the rhythmic beat of drums has a hypnotic effect. My eyes slowly begin to close. Just as they begin to shut, a hand suddenly covers my face. My eyes fly open, and through the splay of Baba’s fingers I see Him smiling at me. “Keep awake!” Baba does not want anyone dozing in His presence.

At one point, Baba picks up the hem of His sadra and says, “Hold on to My *daaman*† with both hands. Love Me more and more and I will take you where I go.” My eyes fix on Baba. As I try to grasp the enormity of what He is saying, the significance of this

* A poetic form with rhyming couplets and a refrain, each line sharing the same meter, which emphasizes the relationship between the lover and the Beloved.

† The hem of a garment. Baba often used this phrase to emphasize the importance of holding on to Him.

moment in His presence, I become anxious. What more can I possibly do to take it all in? I have only these few days with Him, and my capacity to absorb the experience and deepen my connection with Him feels so small and limited. Darshan will soon end and I may never again have this opportunity.

As I struggle with this dilemma, Baba turns and looks directly into my eyes. Reaching down, He grabs my chin and shakes my head vigorously from side to side. Inwardly, I hear Him say, “Don’t worry, just enjoy this moment. Remember, you can only receive what I choose to give.” With that admonition, I let go of all worry and anxiety, content now just to be in His presence. For the remainder of the darshan, Baba gives what He knows I need—no more, no less.

As Eruch would say, “We each have our portion.”

Charles watching
Baba give darshan
at East-West Gathering



THE KISS

Morning darshan has just ended. Meher Baba remains seated, watching as His Western lovers reluctantly trickle out of the room. I linger, hoping for a reprise of the previous two mornings when Baba called me over for an extra embrace. Mother is by my side as we back out, ever so slowly, toward the door.

Baba's gaze sweeps the hall and lands on us. Looking at Mother and pointing to me, He gestures the sign of perfection. I take Him to mean, "I am pleased." Then He looks into my eyes, opens His arms, and—something new—puruses His lips as though to give a kiss.

Without hesitation, I race across the room into His arms. With eyes closed, I kiss Baba full on the lips: soft, warm, tender—a moment of pure bliss. When I open my eyes, Baba is looking at me with what seems like surprise. I suddenly wonder if He meant for me to kiss Him. In the next moment, my question vanishes as Baba enfolds me in His arms.

For the next ten years I say nothing to anyone about the kiss; it feels too intimate to share. Although Mother is a witness, we never speak of it. Then one morning walking with Eruch near Meherazad, he suddenly stops, turns to me, and says, "So you kissed Him." Startled, I reply, "Yes, Eruch. In the moment, I felt that is what Baba wanted me to do." Eruch smiles, shakes his head in wonderment, and says, "We mandali were amazed. You are very fortunate. It was something we had not seen."

OCEAN OF LOVE

On the morning of the last day Baba will give darshan to the Eastern lovers, I again join a few of the young girls for our early morning trek to Guruprasad. Today

Rano awaits us on the verandah. "The crowds are so great," she tells us, "that Baba is up early this morning to

Meher Baba plays with child during darshan program, East-West Gathering



give darshan so that everyone will have a chance.” Then, with a mischievous smile, Rano says, “I want you to surprise Baba. Go through the hall to the platform where He is seated and kiss Him on the back of the head.”

A little nervous about creeping up on Baba from behind, I enter Guruprasad and make my way to the rear door and onto the platform where Baba is giving darshan. It is eerily quiet without the thousands of people sitting under the pandal. Two lines, men on one side, women on the other, are silently inching forward as one by one they come before Baba.

Our little group huddles at the door behind Baba. With some reluctance, I decide to be the first to surprise Baba as Rano instructed. I walk slowly across the stage, bend over, and kiss Baba on the crown of His head. Baba turns, looks at me with a delighted smile, and reaches out to stroke my face. He then gestures for me to sit near Him.

With a gentle touch, a glance, a smile, Baba greets each one of His lovers. Offerings of flowers and fruit pile up at His feet. Garlands are placed around His neck, quickly removed by Eruch to prevent pain in Baba’s neck. Some prostrate themselves before Baba or touch His feet and then their forehead. Tears of joy flow freely. Sometimes Baba halts the line to ask someone a question or to listen to an outpouring of love.

The exchanges between lover and Beloved are palpable, electric. How powerful Baba looks this morning, I think to myself, how boundless His Ocean of Love.

BABA KNOWS THE HEART

At the last morning session with the Westerners, I sit near Baba dressed in my mustard-yellow sport coat, white shirt, and dark tie. Despite the heat, I am determined to look my best for my farewell embrace. Over the past five days, Baba has given with both hands—more intimacy and love than I could have imagined possible. I look at His feet next to me and suddenly have a longing to reach down and touch them. Each day of the darshan, I have had this longing—but no opportunity presented itself. Baba greets Westerners with an embrace and, it feels to me, discourages us from bowing down. Later I read accounts of a few Westerners prostrating themselves before Baba during the East-West Gathering—something I do not notice at the time. Concerned about disturbing Baba, I gaze at His feet—and refrain from doing what I long to do.

Mid-morning, Baba's brother Beheram asks Baba to take the group outside so he can film us with Baba. We follow Baba into the sunshine. He sits in a chair placed there for Him and we quickly surround Him, getting as close as possible. I find a spot behind Baba next to Elizabeth. Beheram instructs Baba to make gestures. "This is a film, after all," he tells Baba. Amused, Baba moves His hands and asks us to do the same.

We walk with Baba back into Guruprasad and take our places after Baba is seated. As I settle in near Baba's feet, I hear Eruch call out, "Charles!" At first I assume Eruch is asking for Charles Purdom, an early English disciple who was writing a



Baba with Westerners; Charles and Elizabeth, behind Baba, Wendy nearby on left

revised edition of his 1930s biography of Baba.* When I look up at Eruch, however, he is looking directly at me. I glance at Baba and He too is looking at me. “Charles,” Eruch says, “Baba wants you to remove His sandals.”

My heart leaps as I bend down to do as Baba asks. I lift the right foot slowly, taking as much time as I dare, and slide the sandal off. Baba does not lift His leg; He lets me feel the full weight of His foot. I do the same with the left foot, holding it in my hands for a moment after the sandal is removed. What flashes through my mind are the words of John the Baptist in the New Testament: “I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of His feet.”

* Charles Benjamin Purdom (1883–1965), British author, met Meher Baba in Devon, England, in 1931, during Baba’s first visit to the West. Purdom was a devoted follower of Meher Baba and Baba’s first biographer, writing *The Perfect Master* in 1937 and *The God-Man* in 1964.

After I place the sandals next to His feet, Baba reaches down and strokes my chin as though I have done something great. I look up at Him and think, “He knows my heart.” For the rest of my life, I will return to that moment and remember: Baba knows my heart.

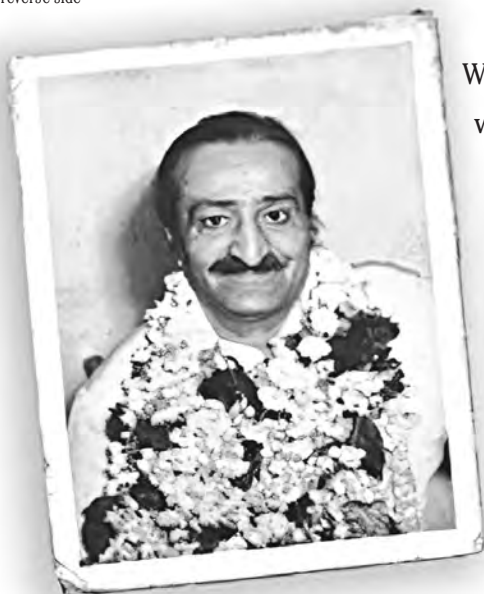
THE GIFT

Now the time has come for the last embrace. We all stand around Baba as one by one each Westerner approaches Baba to say farewell. Always striving to be first in line, this time I hold back in a futile attempt to delay the inevitable. Watching Baba lovingly take each one in His arms, I see the curtain behind Him move. Baba’s sister Mani is peeking out and gesturing for me to come over to her. I quickly go to the curtain and she pulls me inside. Alone with Mani for the first time, I see her holding something in her hands.

LEFT: Photo blessed
by Baba for Charles

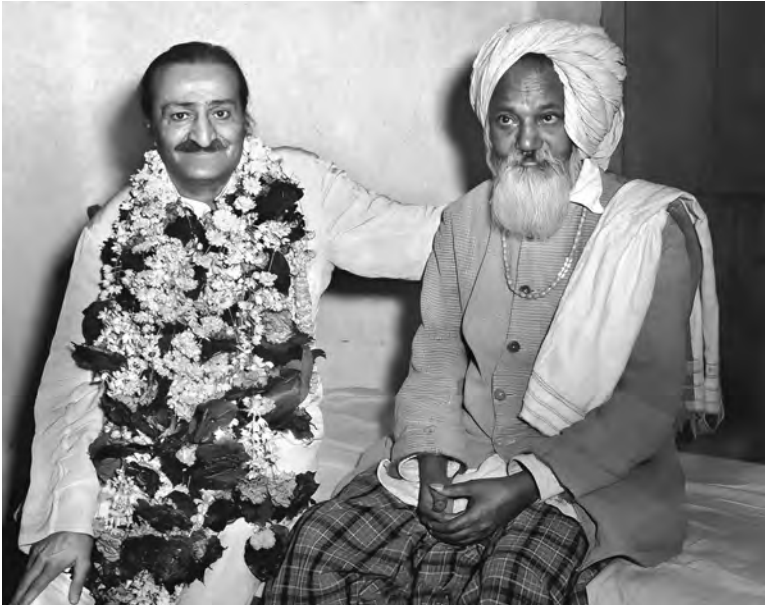
RIGHT: Baba’s
signature on
reverse side

“Charles,” Mani says, “John and Wendy each have a gift from Baba. So He wants you to have one as well. This is a photograph of Baba that He has



blessed for you. I have covered it with plastic so that He is the last one to touch it.” Then Mani turns the photo over and shows me Baba’s signature. “Baba has signed this for you,” she says, “which is very unusual because it is now rare that He signs anything. Keep it close and remember that Baba is always with you.” It is a small photograph of Baba taken in 1955; He is looking directly at the camera with a garland around His neck. The image is cropped so that only the upper half of Baba’s figure is contained within the frame.

Some years later, I come across the complete, uncropped version of the photograph Baba gave me: Baba is sitting with His arm around Ali Shah, one of His favorite *masts*.^{*} Sometime later,



Uncropped version
of blessed photo.
Baba has His arm
around *mast* Ali Shah.

^{*} Individuals who may appear insane but who are actually, according to Baba, “God-intoxicated.” Their ordinary consciousness is transformed by an overpowering experience of Divine Love.

I am reading the supplement to *The Wayfarers* and, curious to know what Baba was doing on July 22, 1949—my birthday—I discover that on that day He was working in seclusion with none other than *mast* Ali Shah. Baba's gift then becomes a constant reminder that everything in life is an unfolding of the Divine Plan.

Holding my gift, I embrace Mani and return to the hall. Darshan is nearly over. Baba looks around and gestures, "Has everyone received an embrace?" A few of us who held back rush forward to embrace Baba one last time. With tears in my eyes, I hold Baba tight and whisper into His ear, "Baba, I love You."

In the final moments, Baba banters with several people, cheering us up with His ever-present humor. At one point, Baba looks over His shoulder at my mother seated just behind Him. "Don't be nervous or afraid," He gestures. Baba's eyes sweep the room. After a quiet moment, Baba says with a serious expression, "I am the Christ. Open your eyes and you will see Me as I really am."

Baba prepares to leave. Reaching for Eruch's arm, He stops and falls back into His seat. Looking helpless, Baba gestures something to Eruch. Then Eruch looks at me and says, "Charles, Baba wants to know, 'where are My sandals?'" With all of the people coming up to embrace Baba, the sandals were pushed under the sofa. I scramble down to retrieve them. Once more, I am able to hold His feet and place a sandal on each one. This will be the last time I touch Beloved Baba.

Now Baba rises with help from Eruch and slowly makes His way out of the room. At times, Baba looks large and powerful. At other times, like today, He appears childlike and fragile—the One who suffers for us all. My eyes follow His receding form—white sadra, pink jacket, and a pink ribbon tied around a braid of hair. “Yes,” I say to myself, “Baba is that. He is the Christ.”

“BECOME PERFECT IN MY LOVE”

When the East-West Gathering ends, some of the Westerners leave for home and others, including Mother, Wendy, and me, stay for several additional days. A day trip takes us to Meherazad, Baba’s residence, and Meherabad, site of Baba’s early ashram and the *Samadhi*—the Tomb-Shrine that will one day contain His body. What thrills me most is the opportunity to encounter two *masts*: Mohammad, a *mast* living at Meherabad who has a long association with Baba, and Twelve Coats (so named because he insists on always wearing twelve coats), a *mast* connected to Baba who happened to be at Meherazad the day we visited. Although both exhibit eccentric behaviors beyond my understanding, both also exude an aura of holiness that grows stronger as I draw near to them.

On the day prior to our departure, I am reconciled to leaving India. The few days of visiting places associated with Baba help dry my tears and ease my pain. As I am packing, word comes to the Turf Club that Baba is leaving Poona tomorrow

morning and invites us to come to Bund Gardens to say farewell. How typical of Baba. After tears and grief dissipate, He allows us to say farewell once again—this time with a light heart.

At 6 a.m. on November 10, a small number of Westerners and a larger group of Easterners gather at Bund Gardens. An hour later, Baba arrives and helped by Eruch takes His seat under a large mango tree, a spot where Hazrat Babajan, one of Baba's Masters, often sat. I am seated on the ground as near as possible to Baba. Little is said as we sit quietly absorbing this precious gift of more time in His physical presence. At one point, Baba looks at me and asks, "Where is your mother?" Startled, I have no idea. Before I can answer, Baba finds her at the edge of the crowd standing between Kitty and Elizabeth. He points to them and makes an emphatic gesture, holding up three fingers. As if fulfilling the

Bund Gardens, Poona,
Nov 10, 1962. Charles,
on left, sees Baba
for last time.



gesture, Mother will in a few years give up her acting career and, with Baba's guidance and approval, move to Myrtle Beach to assist Elizabeth and Kitty at Meher Center.

After we sing an *arti** to Baba, He signals that it is time to depart. Baba gets into the front seat of the car. Crowds of people surge forward as the car begins to drive slowly away, hoping for a last glance from Baba. When I cannot reach the car, I quickly move further down the road to intercept it before Baba exits the gardens. Inching forward, the car reaches near me—but again I am pushed aside by the press of the crowd. At the last moment, just as the car is about to break free, I manage to reach Baba's window. "Goodbye, Baba," I gasp. "I love You." Baba points at me, smiling. Then with a serious expression, He gives an order: "Be happy." The last gesture to me is, once again, the sign of perfection, which again I take to mean, "I am pleased." The car finally breaks through the crowd and disappears down the road. That will be my last glimpse of Meher Baba in human form.

One day some years later, I ask Elizabeth what she thinks Baba meant when He gestured to me the sign of perfection almost every time He looked in my direction. "At the time," I tell her, "I took Baba to be saying that He is pleased." Elizabeth thinks for a moment and replies, "Yes, that is one possible meaning." She pauses and then adds, "But I feel Baba may be saying to you, 'Become perfect in My love.' After all, that is the true aim of our life with Baba."

* An Indian term meaning a song of praise to the Divine Beloved.





PART THREE



Avatar Meher Baba
at Guruprasad, 1960s

***MESSAGES OF LOVE
FROM MEHER BABA
1958-1969***

Those who are united in love know no separation.

*Wherever I am, wherever you are, I am
always with you.*

MEHER BABA



IN THE FINAL YEARS before He dropped His body, Meher Baba spent much time in seclusion completing what He described as “Universal work.” By Baba’s order, contact with the outside world was limited, including letters or cables, except for specific work. When asked for guidance

during this period, Baba often deflected the question, saying, “Do your best and I will help you.” In this way, we gradually learned to trust Baba internally, relying less and less on external contact. Simultaneous with this period of seclusion, interest in Meher Baba surged in the Western world, with hundreds of people coming to love Him and to give their lives to Him. The more Baba withdrew, it seemed, the greater His awakening in the hearts of seekers.

Our family was fortunate to ride on Elizabeth’s coattails. Because of our connection to her as family, we were included in correspondence between Meherazad and Elizabeth in Myrtle Beach—usually through Mani, “Meher Baba’s pen,” as Elizabeth called her. Mani and Mehera were given permission to communicate with Mother, although at times they were prohibited from mentioning Baba’s health or work. On rare occasions, Mani was able to write to me directly and, in the later years, to convey Baba’s wishes for my life. For the most part, however, I grew to rely on Baba’s inner voice. After Baba left His body on January 31, 1969, I continued to experience His inner guidance and loving presence. At the same time, I still longed to be with Him when He takes human form again.

The messages of love from Meher Baba collected here are drawn from cables and letters from Meherazad to Elizabeth, Kitty, my mother Jane, and me from June 1958 through January 1969.

In the year following Meher Baba's sahavas at Meher Center in May 1958, our family receives messages of love from Baba through Mani, each one a reassurance to me that Baba is thinking of us, remembering us. Although correspondence is restricted due to Baba's seclusion, Mani gives me in a few words, especially in the letter of September 23, 1958, confirmation of my conviction that Baba is the Beloved I have always known. ("Elikit" was Baba and Mani's shorthand for Elizabeth and Kitty.)



Valentine made by Mani and sent to Jane, Trio, and Buff in 1961



June 17, 1958

To Elikit from Mani

We could just go on listening to Baba telling us of you all, specially Elizabeth Kitty who had arranged everything so wonderfully and how He kept you constantly on your toes just like the old ashram days with Him! And of our dear Ruth, of Jane who has come to love Him so deeply, and dear Charles who kissed His hands and feet, dear John, and dear Wendy. Baba talked lovingly of you all: it was as though you were right there which is the same thing, for Baba says, "Even now I am there!" With so much love to you, Ruth, Jane and her sweet Trio,

Mani

June 22, 1958

To Jane from Baba

Keep happy in My love and let your three dear little ones love Me more and more.

Love,

Baba



July 1, 1958

To Jane from Mehera

Baba has spoken much about you and of your deep love for Him and of the spontaneous expressions of love from your three dear children, John, Charles, and Wendy. As we now think of them: 'the loving Trio.'

It makes me very happy that you are of the fortunate ones in that you have had the privilege of coming to Baba, of seeing Him and of loving Him.

All during the Sahavas days my thoughts were with you all in Myrtle Beach, as I pictured Baba amongst His lovers, showering His Love upon them. It was a wonderful love feast, and we have received many other beautiful letters telling us of how Baba so unstintingly gave of Himself.

My dearest love,
Lovingly in Baba,
Mehera

July 10, 1958

To Elikit from Mani

This probably brings some of the news that will be repeated later on in the family letters, and I know it brings oceans of love to you ever dearest ones Elikit, Ruth, Jane, and that lovable Trio (a little extra to Charles whom Baba mentioned rather extra special) from Mehera, Goher, Meheru, Naja, Rano, and me,

Mani



John, Wendy, and Charles, circa 1959–60

September 23, 1958

To Elikit from Mani

As Mehera was allowed just once more to write individually, I felt free to send these few lines (this is just for you four) bringing our love to you each dearest ones—Elizabeth, Kitty, Jane, and Ruth—and to Jane’s terrific Trio—whom I’m longing to meet some day. Baba’s adjective for little Charles is ‘unique,’ and He said he has a ‘deep past connection’ with Baba.

Mani

December 6, 1958

To Jane from Mehera

Dear Jane,

It was a happy surprise to know that you have joined the ballet class. Little Wendy will look cute in her ballet costume. Baba often remembers the loving Trio and told us how little Wendy and Charles would run to greet Baba first. Dear Jane you are blessed to be bestowed with physical charm and artistic beauty and above all love for Baba who alone matters. And also three lovely children who are dear to Baba. Always be brave in the thought that in this world of illusion Baba is the only Reality. Baba's love to you. My love to each of you dear ones in Beloved.

Lovingly in Baba,

Mehera

January 5, 1959

To Jane from Mani

Dear Jane,

Beloved gave me the opportunity to read your letter to Him. He loves you Jane, you and your dear little ones—of whom He talks to us with so much love. I appreciate your dear understanding re my usual inability to write separate letters. All that comes written and unwritten for you and our Trio in letters to Elikit comes from the heart—for you are so much

part of the family. That I guess is why I don't feel I'm writing to you for the first time Jane. Some day Mehera and I do hope to see you, and I'd love to play with the children. I'd show off a lot of tricks and games that I am sure they would enjoy as much as I do! This brings a big hug for them.

With His eternal love to you each, which includes
Mehera's and mine,

Mani

July 6, 1959

Mehera and Mani to Jane

You are very close and dear to us Jane, you and the darling Trio. I did want to tell you how touched we were with your letter, which was read to the Beloved. You should have seen His smile of love for you and His big little three! We saw the 1958 Myrtle Beach Sahavas film the other day. There were really beautiful shots and a number of times the dear fair head of little Charles shows beside Baba and Baba would immediately point out to us—as also lovely little Wendy. We loved what you said about St. Teresa, also the name you have chosen for the theater. But you have always been to us Beloved's Jane and our one and only Jane you shall remain.

To our dearest four,

Love from the Beloved,

Mehera and Mani

February 18, 1960

To Jane from Mani

I have made a little card for the Trio and will be sending to Charles. They are real Baba-pearls. Jane is the Lamp that makes them glow in Baba's love, which is always with her in the ups and downs from which she emerges a bigger and braver Jane always.

Love from the Girls
and from the One and Only,
Mani

In February 1960, Mani writes to me directly for the first time. She focuses on our shared love of dogs, a theme that will animate many other messages through the years. From afar, Mani sends much love to my collie Buff, who came into my life soon after Baba left the Center. Over the years, Buff and Wendy's cat Puff will receive many love-messages from Baba and Mani.

February 20, 1960

To Charles from Mani

My dear Charles,

Your letter was lovely as yourself, and brought in it some of your big love for Baba. You are very dear to Him; and I love you too, and sweet Wendy and dear John. Baba is always

with His Trio, whenever you remember Him, which means remembering Him in everything you do so that He will help you to do what will make Him happy; and that means making Mummy happy. Give her a big hug from us. Also a good “rub” to Buff—she will like that if she is like Peter (our little cocker spaniel), who pesters anyone he can get hold of to rub and scratch him. Someday I hope to send you a picture of Peter; and there is also big handsome Mastan, Mehera’s dog.



Jane with Charles and Buff, early 1960s

Yes, Charles, Baba is walking very well—”just like a Master,” as someone said. You should see Baba washing the feet of the poor and lepers. And you should have seen their eyes when they received so much love from Him—just as Buff or Peter would look at you or me when their heart says thank you through their eyes.

You must have loved having Kitty with you—we still miss her, and she was such a real good sport too. Dear Elizabeth also always writes about you all.

Here is once again stacks of love to John, Wendy, and yourself.

In Baba,
Mani

When we move to a new apartment in New York, Elizabeth and Mother cable Mani about the change. Mani responds.

April 14, 1961

To Elijane from Mani

Sending this with heartfelt love in Him who moves with you wherever you move. The only thing that touches or moves Him is His own Love that He receives thru His own dear ones. We girls send you heaps of love and will be there helping to settle the furniture around.

To our favorite Foursome: Jane Trio

Dear love from all at Guruprasad. May He bless your new home, He who has blessed you with His Love, dear Jane, Wendy, Charles, John.

Mani

August 29, 1961

To Jane from Mani

If all the fond thoughts and all the love and all the messages that come to you from your Baba-family here were put end to end, they would make a wonderful bridge from here to New York for you and our loving Trio to step over to

Meherazad and into our welcoming embrace.... Baba sends love to His Trio (and some of course to Buff).... Very much love from Meherazad and lots of love to Wendy John Charles and Buff.

Mani

January 12, 1962

From Baba to Jane

Keep brave and happy in My love. My love to you and My dear Trio.

Baba

In this message, Mani refers to my mother's idea to write a children's book about Baba—"telling the Story of His Love"—a project later eclipsed by Mother's time-consuming efforts to create a booth for Meher Baba at the World's Fair.

February 15, 1962

To Jane from Mani

We send our hearts' deep wishes to you in the "telling of the Story of His Love," and Beloved Baba sends dear you and His Trio His love. Heaps of love to dear Charles John Wendy.

Mani

September 21, 1962

To Jane, Wendy, Charles, and John from Mani

Precious Jane Wendy Charles John,

Your letter to Mehera and myself brought the glow of His love from your Baba-hearts. How we look forward to the gathering of His children around Him at the reunion of the family in November! We loved the pictures you sent.... We love you. Buff and Puff will be there too with their invisible coats on. Give a special slice of love to them from Mehera and myself, but the rest of the 'cake' is for your own dear selves. Beloved Baba sends special love to you His very dear ones: Jane Wendy Charles John.

Mani

After the East-West Gathering, Mani writes to Mother about meeting our family.

November 23, 1962

To Jane from Mani

Jane, my dearest sister,

I have just received your letter—it is as warmly beautiful as yourself—as full of Baba's Love as your truly blessed heart. I do indeed love you and His adorable Trio. What an unbounded happiness I feel to have at last met you, to have talked to you and embraced you and to have seen your face reflecting His love as you gazed at Him with unwavering adoration throughout the darshan hours.

I can see darling Wendy Winkle, jumping like a gazelle in such joy after she had put a fresh-flower garland round His neck and He kissed her. It is a picture that will always be with me. And most lovable Charles whom Baba had spoken of so often. He had to be met to be believed. Give him a kiss from me Jane. And John is such a dear, shy to reveal his feelings, but he is very close to Baba and drawing still closer. Now to think of you dear ones and to “talk” to you (which I have done many times) is to see you so clearly as to want to touch you. So you are here very much with us at Meherazad.



Wendy garlands Baba at the East-West Gathering

Beloved Baba has said that in 1963, except for the Family Letters and writing for some specific work, correspondence to and from us will not be continued. I will express this wish of His more clearly in the Family Letter that I hope to send out before mid-December. His Will be done. We can never give much of ourselves to Him, for we are so little. But in giving our all, we may someday come to realize the All that is Baba. Thank my dearest Charles for all his love that came in his enclosed letter—and hug Wendy for me.

The Beloved was very touched with your letter to Him. He loves you and His Trio and has you with Him always.

I shall soon be writing dearest Elikitruth—it is hard to believe they and you are not here with us still. Dear Mehera, Naja, Meheru, Goher, Rano and myself send you so much love.

Mani

At Baba's request, we each write to Him after the East-West Gathering. This excerpt from my letter is from the Family Letter of December 5, 1962. I no longer have a copy of the full letter.

November 1962

To Baba from Charles

How radiant You looked dear Baba when we were sitting there watching You embrace thousands! To do that as well as carry the burdens of the world was a feat only possible for You. I know that Westerners would never have believed it unless they saw it. You gave each of us so much love and so much joy.

December 28, 1962

To Jane from Mani

The Christmas cable of love from Myrtle Beach reached the Beloved and made Him very happy, for although that is what He has come to give, that is what He is always happy to receive! Blessed are we to be given His grace to know Him and adore Him while He is yet in our midst as God-Man, and may we have His further grace to become worthy of a mite of His infinite compassion and love that He bears for us. Beloved Baba sends His love to you Jane and to His precious Trio, who are very dear to Him. Dearest love and wishes for a Baba-filled Happy New Year to darling John, Charles and Wendy from all your sisters at Meherazad. My luf and a 'wuff' to Buff and to that lovely fluff of a Puff. A kiss to Wendy and to your sweet self, from your sister,

Mani

In 1963, Mother decides to create a booth dedicated to Meher Baba at the New York World's Fair of 1964-65. As the work of finding and creating a booth progressed, Mother writes to India about the effort. Baba responds with messages of love and encouragement.



Booth for Meher Baba in the Pavilion of American Interiors at the New York World's Fair, 1964-65

February 19, 1963

To Jane from Adi K. Irani*

Baba wants me to let you know that He is very pleased with your efforts to secure some little space for Him in the World's Fair. If you do not succeed in getting one, Baba does not want you to feel disappointed, for you already have a corner in His heart! Your feelings in this respect touched Baba.... Baba wants me to convey to you and His dear Trio His Love-Blessing.

Yours in Baba,

Adi Sr.

March 13, 1963

From Baba to Jane

Happy about your World's Fair project.

Love to you Trio.

Baba

July 18, 1963

To Jane from Mani

As St. Teresa said, all the way to heaven is heaven.

Baba is keeping you busy indeed with His work, what with the World's Fair project and the book. I think of when you were sitting at His feet in Guruprasad and the Beloved turned to you and said, "And what work are you doing now Jane?" and you

* Adi K. Irani (1904–1980), known as Adi Sr., was Meher Baba's close disciple and secretary. He met Baba in 1921 at the age of eighteen and served Baba wholeheartedly for the rest of his life. In 1944, Adi Sr. became Baba's personal secretary and in that capacity carried on widespread correspondence on Baba's behalf.

replied, “Your work Baba.” And His emphatic gesture in reply to that I interpreted as: “So be it.” And so it has been and will be.

Keeping the best part of the letter for the end, I must now tell you that your letter was read to Beloved Baba—He is happy and sends His love to His very dear Foursome (His Jane, Wendy, Charles and John). He has permitted me to write this letter in reply.

Fondest love to you from each of your sisters at Meherazad and to our dear Wendy-Charles-John and not forgetting Puff-Buff.

Mani

Mani reads an early draft of the children’s book Mother was writing. Together they decide that the manuscript does not work as a book for children. Mother turns her full attention to the World’s Fair project.

October 12, 1963

To Jane from Mani

Beloved Baba wants me to convey to you that what is precious to Him, far more than any books written or unwritten, is the love of you His dearest ones. Baba sends His Love to you His own dear Jane and to His darling Trio. I end this with a kiss to you and to sweet Wendy and Charles and to dear John.

Mani

October 30, 1963

To Jane from Baba

Your letter to Me and Mani made Me very happy. My love to you Wendy Charles John.

Baba

After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, I attend ceremonies surrounding his funeral thanks to Congressman Graham Purcell, one of Dad's war buddies. Elizabeth sends Mani clippings about Kennedy's service and tells her that I was there thinking of Baba.

December 9, 1963

To Elizabeth from Mani

Dearest Elizabeth,

Another proof of your understanding and sense of timing, when we received the newspaper clippings airmailed by you with graphic details of President Kennedy's funeral. Though we know it happened because it was ordained to be, we have all been deeply moved by this and feel terribly for his young wife and children. Beloved Baba said repeatedly that Pr. Nehru or Radhakrishnan (president of India) should have attended personally.

The message on the memorial card, ordered especially by Mrs. Kennedy (Dear God—please take care of your servant—John Fitzgerald Kennedy) was most touching and

here at Meherazad it was read out to God. The fact that His dear Charles was at the funeral with Baba in His thoughts made Him happy. Baba had a soft spot for him even before he was elected—when many wanted Nixon to be chosen, Baba said Kennedy is the right man. Baba said that this assassination was not President Kennedy’s own loss—he has received a great push forward spiritually—but the loss is for others.

Mani

Each year, Baba sends a cable to Mother on her birthday, December 14.

December 14, 1963

To Jane from Baba

My love to you and My Trio Wendy Charles John.

Reborn in My love you are blessed. Love Me more and more.

Baba

The “folder” Mani refers to in her March 1 cable contains materials about the World’s Fair project. The “little corner” Adi mentions in his letter is the booth for Baba that Mother and other Baba lovers created for Him at the Fair. Baba asks His Western family to contribute to the Fair project. Many, including Kitty, come to New York to volunteer at the booth, giving thousands of people “Meher Baba’s Universal Message.”

March 1, 1964

To Jane from Mani

Baba happy with folder and His Jane Trio's love.

Love Mani

September 22, 1964

To Jane from Adi K. Irani

This letter carries to you, the Trio and all in the little corner, Baba's love and blessings.

Adi

In Mani's letter to Kitty, she refers to my brother John's time interning at the White House. John has contact with President Lyndon Johnson and befriends Johnson's daughter Luci.

September 12, 1964

To Kitty from Mani

It was thrilling to read of the Baba-contact our John has made in the White House! How silently but surely Baba works through His loved ones! It was read out to Baba, also dear Jane's lovely letter to Adi. Beloved Baba wants you to convey His love to John, and to dear Charles and Wendy and to His Jane.

Mani

December 14, 1964

To Jane from Baba

My love blessing to My Trio and you who are blessed
forever in My love and service.

Baba

January 29, 1965

To Jane, Wendy, Charles, John from Mani

Dearest Jane, Wendy, Charles, John,

Your cable received with much love, and the contents
made Beloved Baba happy. His love to you dear ones. Am just
posting the family letter. We think of you so often, and love you.

Mani

In mid-1965, Baba sends word that He will give darshan in December of that year. Our hopes of seeing Baba soar. But in September Baba cancels the sahavas due to the heavy burden of His Universal work and suffering. He asks that each of His Western lovers write a letter directly to Him. What follows is my letter to Baba. At the time of writing this letter we had just moved from New York City to Myrtle Beach at Baba's direction so that Jane could help Elizabeth and Kitty with the work of Meher Center.

September 18, 1965

To Baba from Charles

Dearest Baba,

Thank you for all the wonderful blessings You have given me. My heart seems to swell and tears of joy fall when I think of all the Love You radiate. In words I cannot say what You already know I feel.

You have said that it is Your Will for You to suffer, dear Baba. Yet I wish the world would lighten your heavy burden. Your suffering is a great monument to Your great Love for us. Thank you, dear Baba.

We are happy to be at your home in Myrtle Beach, hopeful that we will be worthy of Your Grace. I love my new school, Baba, and will work hard towards college. Soon they will ask me to decide where I am going to go and what I am going to take. I do not know my answer, because my only desire is to serve You. If it be Your will I hope to be Your missionary or anything as long as it is Yours.

Father, you are kind, even as You suffer and work universally, to listen to all our words, which are empty and small. Fortunately You know our hearts, making words unnecessary.

Even though I know You are with me Baba, I miss your physical Presence. I also miss those unique ones with You. Mani and I are together in love across the sea. I want her to know that Buff and I felt her loss of Peter.

You as the Master make our lives more meaningful in every way. How many times Your westerners said, "What would life be without Baba!" The answer is unthinkable and only in nightmares do we ever dream it!

Thank you, Baba, for the love of Mother, John, Wendy, Auntie Boo, Kitty, and all of the Baba family.

Today I saw a baby squirrel in the Center. He looked at me as if to say, "I am a blessed squirrel." Also near the beach there is a large crane that looks as though he belongs to Your large family. Outside Dilruba the roses are blooming two shades of pink to remind me to be happy and be grateful for Your Love.

I think about You Baba, and try to love You more each day.

Love always,

Charles

As Mother begins assisting Elizabeth and Kitty at Meher Center, Baba sends a cable.

October 8, 1965

To Jane from Baba

I am happy with your work for God in human form.

Love to you and Trio.

Baba

Soon after we move to Myrtle Beach from New York, Buff, then eight years old, falls ill with a deadly virus she picked

up while boarding. Elizabeth informs Mani “dog Buff sick” in a cable acknowledging receipt of the Family Letter. I immediately receive a cable from Baba about Buff.

October 9, 1965

To Charles from Baba

Your love for Me will help Buff who is also mine.

Be in My love for you resigned and happy.

Meher Baba

■ *I cable a reply to Baba. In the interim, Buff died.*

October 10, 1965

From Charles to Baba

Resigned and happy in Your love. Buff has gone to You.

Hope Your suffering has decreased.

Love always,

Charles

■ *Mani writes that Baba has received my cable.*

October 14, 1965

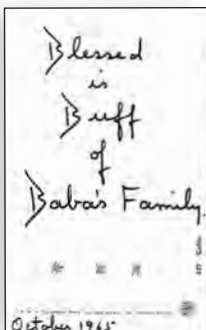
To Charles from Mani

Dear dear Charles,

My heart goes out over land and sea to you Wendy John Jane, in deep understanding of the pain of parting from Buff.



Postcard with
likeness of Buff
sent to Charles
by Mani, 1965



I know the huge void such a parting creates—but that makes all the more room for the ocean of His Love to flow in and fill it to the brim and over! For Buff it is immeasurable gain—for us another step in learning that having gained His Love there can be no loss.

Beloved Baba received your cable—it made Him happy and proud of you. His Love to His dearest Trio, Jane, and Puff too—His happy lovers at Happy House who have come home to His Center, to be so close to Baba-House with dearest Elizabeth and family.

My love to darling Wendy, Jane, John, and you, and (mixed with a saucer of milk) to Puff. And of course to Auntie Boo, Kitty and Ruthie.

Mani

December 12, 1965

To Charles from Mani

Dearest Charles,

My heart is aglow with the warmth of your birthday wishes and greetings in Baba's Love, which fills your life. You are precious to Him. I love you too.

Mani

December 14, 1965

To Jane from Baba

My love to you dearest Jane Trio My happy lovers at
Happy House and all at Dilruba and Center.

Baba

When discussing my future after high school graduation, Elizabeth suggests that I write to Mani asking Baba about what direction to take. Although we are restricted from writing to Baba or the mandali during Baba's seclusion, Elizabeth feels this would fall into the exception Baba gives for work. She also advises me to tell Baba that I have become a vegetarian and ask for His approval.

January 10, 1966

To Mani from Charles

Dearest Mani,

Aunty Boo once told us that if want to do something for Baba, we should ask Him. As much as I do not want to burden Beloved Baba with questions, I feel the time is near when I will need His guidance. My dear Mani, only answer this letter if and when it is convenient for you. I know that you and Baba will understand that I write only out of need and from the heart.

Very soon colleges will ask for applications and choice of courses. I am in my junior year of high school with one more year to go. My decision concerning going on to higher

education must come soon. Before that step can be taken, however, I must know what I want to be in the future.

My only desire is the Will of Beloved Baba. However, I feel He wants us to say what is in our minds and hearts. As a little boy, I wished to be a minister. Then after meeting Baba in 1958, I only wanted to serve Him. Maybe, I thought, I could be a missionary for Baba or in some way spread His Word. This is in my heart, Mani, but I would do anything for Baba. If Beloved Baba wished me to be any occupation I would gladly do it, knowing that all is Baba. As the schools are asking for our line of study and our goals, I wondered if Beloved Baba would make His Will known concerning my future. If Beloved Baba wants me to attend college, there are many to choose from. There are also many choices of courses I could take in college depending on what field I concentrate in. The broadest is the liberal arts curriculum in which you get a little of everything with a major in your last two years. My major could be in religion, English or history. This kind of education would prepare me for no one field, but a basic foundation in several. If Beloved Baba wished me to make His message my life's work, a liberal arts education might be the best. Of course, there are many fields I could enter and subjects I could take. It came to me that maybe Baba would wish me to be educated in a specific field, like teaching, so that I could, if necessary, take work in that profession.

If Baba wants me to go to college, I must decide mostly on my field. I mention this because it may be important to

Baba where I go or the general area of my school. My plans probably sound very vague dear Mani, but that is only because I wish to leave the exactness of the plan to His Will. I hope that I am right in not taking these steps without Baba's guidance. I do feel that only by knowing His Will can I choose my future work. While in a larger sense these steps may seem at times unimportant, I must remember it is also true that only He knows what is important. If I intend to serve My Master, I feel I must ask Him if it is what He wants and if so how I should go about it. If my questions were unrelated to Baba's work, I would hesitate to write this letter. It is because I wish in some small way to be part of the New Humanity that I write.

Dear Mani, I also want to ask Baba about my becoming a vegetarian. Aunty Boo said that since I am doing it for Baba, I should take this opportunity to ask Him if that is His Wish for me.

Time and time again I am reminded of Baba's Wish given in 1958. It is framed on my desk and gains new meaning each day. It reminds me that I am merely a bird in an egg with such a long way to go. Reading the *Religion of Life*, I find this analogy of hatching that Baba concludes by saying, "In the same way, the disciple has to receive from the Master all His loving protection and direction." This is the only true reality of life—His Love.

All of the chaos we create must weigh heavily on Beloved Baba. I pray that His Will is done. I also pray for the relief of His

suffering. Living with the reality of His Love is an unbelievable blessing, which induces one to shout from the rooftops.

We all happily wait for Baba's birthday when we will gather in His Love. Everyone is fine and they send their love. We hope that we can be worthy to have His Love.

I send my love to you dear Mani and hope that I am not adding too much to your tremendous work for Baba. He is my Father, my light. The glow of His Love is my guide and for that I am eternally grateful.

Love in Baba,
Charles

In her reply, Mani conveys Baba's answers to my questions. At the end of the letter, Baba sends love to my sister Diane. Diane Barry Stone, Jane's daughter by an earlier marriage, had reentered our lives in 1963 after having grown up with her father. In 1966, Diane gives birth to her first son, Chris. In 1968, Diane has a second son, Mark. When Mark is born, Mani writes, "Another ancient Baba-lover returning to love and serve Him; for each who is born to His Family is born of His Love."

February 8, 1966

To Charles from Mani

Dear Charles,

Your dear letter arrived yesterday, and it was read out to Beloved Baba today, His birthday according to the Zoroastrian calendar (which does not observe leap-year, hence a different date every four years), so how could I put it off till it was more 'convenient'? I felt your letter was a real birthday gift, for all your love it brought made Baba very happy. This is what Baba wants me to convey to you as His reply:

Baba was touched to hear your letter. Baba approves of your taking courses in the liberal arts, in any university of your choice, which is also practical. Baba wants you to start eating meat again. Baba sends His Love to you, and says you are so dear and close to Him. Beloved Baba sends His Love to His Jane, Wendy, John, Aunty Boo and Kitty, Ruth.

Thank you dear Charles for that beautiful glimpse of the Center you sent, and I loved little 'Peanuts' too (it's the most delightful and sensible bit I've read for some time!). You know Charles, I always think of you as 'Baba's missionary' for He is your mission. In whatever field you serve, whether as teacher, doctor or lawyer etc., when Baba's love is the breath of your life, when He is in your thoughts, words and actions, you are His missionary true and dear—and your very life shall be His miracle. And you are ever dear to Him Charles, which is why you shine so with His Love. It will always light your

way that others too may see His glory and praise Him and come to adore Him. The time for ‘shouting from the rooftops’ will be given to you, in His time, for no longing that is built on the rock of faith can ever be washed away—but will grow till it towers above all desires, all obstacles that the path of Love is strewn with.... Blessed are His Trio and dear Jane.

Please tell our Aunty Boo and Kitty that a few days ago the five volumes of the *Discourses* (signed by Baba) that I referred to in my letter of some days ago, have been posted to them by sea. As Volume I was from the Meherazad shelf, please ask Kitty to post me a copy of it by sea.

My dearest love to you and all our dear ones at Happy House and Dilruba, including Puff and Beauty.*

Mani

Baba wants you to convey to dear Diane (your sister) His love and blessing—her most loving letter to Him was received by Him.

July 1, 1966

To Jane from Baba

How are you? My love to you and My dear Trio.

Meher Baba

* Beauty was Elizabeth's dog. She rescued Beauty from the side of Highway 17 in Myrtle Beach, SC, where he had been abandoned.

In this letter to Elikit, Mani refers to Diane's baby Chris and to Neechie Jenson, a dear friend who eventually purchases Happy House. Later Happy House is given to Meher Center and transported to become cabins for retreat guests. My former room, where I lived during the time we first met Baba, becomes the Tree Room cabin at the Center.

July 8, 1966

To Elikit from Mani

Dearest Elikit,

Cable has just gone off to you from Baba as follows:

My Love to you and all My lovers in Myrtle Beach
and at Center gathered 101% in the fullness of My
Silence. Meher Baba

Your letter Elizabeth dear (of July 1) most welcome, particularly the photos—Jane is quite right, this way one visualizes everyone better. Neechie is a lovely surprise, and Baba is shining from her eyes and Jane's. We can't get over baby Chris—he's simply adorable and Baba had a big smile for him, as He and Mehera and we looked at all the pictures at breakfast time. Baba pointed out that Charles had grown 'great'. His smile blessed dear Neechie Jane Diane Baby Chris and Charles the great.



Diane, Jane, and baby Chris at Meher Center, 1967

Mani

When Meher House is built, we move from Happy House to our new home just across from Baba's House at the Center. Baba sends His blessings.

November 5, 1966

To Jane from Baba

Blessed is Meher House where abide those whose heart is My abode. My Love to you Wendy Charles John Elizabeth Kitty Ruth Diane Baby Chris Neece All.

Meher Baba

A month later, we receive another cable from Baba. It appears to be Baba's confirmation of our new chapter living at Meher House. Years later, however, I discover that Mother had a very different understanding of the message. She had written to Mani in the fall of 1966 expressing concern that I might be gay. At the time, Mother believed that being gay is both a choice—and a devastating way of life. Mother sees Baba's cable as a response to her worry about my sexual orientation, reading it as a message that I will not let Baba down by being gay. Knowing nothing of this at the time, I take the cable as Baba's blessing for my life—including my sexual orientation. After my husband Christopher comes into my life in 1989, Mother changes her views about gay life and marriage. She and Christopher become very close;

she calls him her spiritual son. Mother sees how happy and fulfilled we are together. For the remainder of her life, Mother is our greatest advocate and, in the end, we both read the 1966 cable from Baba as an affirmation of the person Baba intends for me to be in this lifetime.

December 4, 1966

To Jane from Baba

Don't worry, remain happy in My Love. Now that you and children are at Meher House near Me I want Charles Wendy John to live a life that will be My message of Love and Truth to all they come in contact with. Charles Wendy John will not and must not let Me down because they are very dear to Me. Let Charles Wendy John share this cable and each write to Me a direct letter. My love to you Charles Wendy John Diane.

Meher Baba

In response to Baba's order, I write a direct letter to Him. I tell Baba about being accepted by Emory University. I mention Happy Club, a program started by my sister Wendy in 1966 to bring underserved Black children to Meher Center every Saturday for recreation and lunch. I also describe the Community Service Council (CSC). When we return to Myrtle Beach from New York in 1965, the high

school is in its first year of integration (more than a decade after the Supreme Court struck down segregation in public schools). Together with Wendy and a few friends, we reach out to the first Black students allowed to attend Myrtle Beach High and invite them to form a student group dedicated to community service and racial justice. We call it the Community Service Council and develop projects to help the most impoverished parts of the community. CSC was likely the first integrated student high school group in South Carolina. Through Elizabeth, we send updates to Mani about the work of CSC. Through CSC and Happy Club, Mother and other adults get involved in the community, eventually starting a variety of initiatives to provide healthcare and other services to those in need in Myrtle Beach. Mother continues this work until her death in 1997.

December 7, 1966

To Baba from Charles

Dearest Baba,

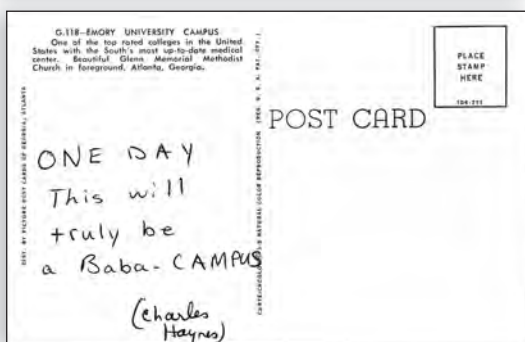
Words fail me when I try to write what is in my heart. You know all that is in me. Yet I must express my mind and heart to You, Father, for I have been blessed to write You. My joy is great at this opportunity.

Baba, You are my Father. In my heart Your Will is my life. In many ways I fail You, but I will try harder every day. My

prayer to You is that Your Will be done in all things. May Your suffering lessen if it be Your Will. May the world love You as You have Loved them, if it be Your Will. Baba, You have given me all things. Your Love has flowed into me and given me my entire existence. I love You. If I know nothing else I know this: I will love You more and more each day. Complete obedience and surrender are my goals. My heart speaks these words to You, Father. Accept them though I am unworthy.

As I sit in Meher House near You, I feel You with me. My hand is in Yours and I walk with You. When I stray You pull me back. I am unworthy of these blessings and yet You give me more each day. Your all-knowledge knows all the reasons. I thank You. To serve You is my goal. Here at the Center one feels a part of every leaf. Baba, You know my wish to serve You in whatever way I can. You know how I love to travel and spread Your Word. Someday, if it be Your Will, I want to care for Your Home and try to show others Your Love. This is a lofty aim, but by Your Grace nothing is impossible. You know when I have failed You; when my thoughts have been impure and my deeds selfish. Forgive me, Father, and help me to aim ever higher.

Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, has accepted me for the fall of 1967 and has also given me a scholarship that will cover over half my expenses. Thank you, Baba. What Divine Joke You have played by having me attend a university where a professor T. J. Altizer proclaims, "God is dead!" Not only are You alive, dear Baba, but You are also waking all of us



Postcard of Emory University sent to Baba by Charles, 1968

to life. Thank you, Baba, for sending me to a school that is as respected and beautiful as Emory is. If it be Your Will I will take Your Message there and try to live as You would have me live.

Dear Mother, who loves You so, has meant so much to me. Even though she is often sick, she is always strong spiritually. She works tirelessly to do Your Will and always is thinking of You. Aunty Boo, the jewel, has shown me by example

what true discipleship is. Thank you for them both and for dear Kitty.

This June I graduate from high school. I have known students here that love You, Father. Tommy Leclair has read Your *Discourses* and feels the power of Your Love. Louise Garrison is also in Your family. You have made them both so happy. Tommy is President of our school and a fine student. Louise has had a rocky path but now she has a Light. Both love You. Others who have heard Your Name are moved. The brotherhood Your Love has brought about in Myrtle Beach is amazing.

The day Your beautiful cable arrived, Negro and White students were meeting together here at Meher House to plan service projects for the community. You have made it possible for us to have so much love here. They saw Your Center and were touched by You. Thank you Baba, for giving Myrtle Beach all this and so much more. Thank you for Happy Club, for the Community Service Council, and for all the other wonderful work You do here. My life is so happy and yet I fail to be what I should be. I must try now harder than ever, for You have said that the time is near.

I have shown Your film of 1962 to the Lutheran Church. I attend there regularly, for I feel that I must take Your Love there and bring the Christ there to do His work. You are the Living Christ and I feel Your presence there. I hope this is Your Will. You have blessed me with opportunities to work for You. This has helped me so. I pray that my efforts are not too faulty, for they are sincere.

Dearest Baba, I go on so long because I am in such Bliss. It is so wonderful to have You with me here. Yet You know how beautiful it is to be with You physically. Master, I hunger for Your embrace. If it be Your Will, may we see You soon. It is hard, I know, with so many and with Your suffering so great. I will be content with whatever Your wish may be. My longing is only the result of Your Love.

Diane is loving You more each day. Baby Chris is a real Baba-Baby. Mother sends her love. Give my love, dear Father, to all my brothers and sisters there. Mani is so often in my

thoughts. She shines like a star and is a living example of Your Love. Any love sent to those dear ones must go through You, the source of Love. For all my Love goes to You.

Let me serve You, Baba, and help me to be worthy.
Thank You for all my many blessings, especially Your Love.
May Your Will be done. I will not let You down. My life is Yours.

All my love, my Father,
Your son,
Charles

■ *In reply to our letters, Baba cables the following:*

December 17, 1966

To Jane from Baba

Inform My dear children Charles Wendy John that their letters full of love made Me very happy. Love to you Trio.

Meher Baba

■ *In a message we receive in early 1967, Baba refers to my receiving a scholarship to attend Emory University. A year later, during my first year at Emory, I send Baba a postcard photograph of the Emory campus and write on the back, "One day this will truly be a Baba campus." In many ways, Emory does become a "Baba campus." Many people learn of Baba through a large group of Baba lovers and various*

public programs about Him. When Christopher and I meet in 1989, we discover an Emory connection. He attended Emory for his freshman year and lived in the same dorm I lived in for my freshman year seventeen years earlier. Not only was it the same dorm, but also the same room—and, amazingly enough, the same bed. Now Christopher says he was looking for me. After Baba dropped the body, Mani returns the postcard of Emory University to me, saying that Baba held the card in His lap and blessed it.

January 14, 1967

To Elizabeth from Mani

Baba is proud and happy to hear of His Charles receiving scholarship—He sends His Love to Charles and to dear John and Wendy and to ALL His Children of the Happy Club.

Mani

Wendy, CSC member
Bill Williams with
Happy Club children,
1968



When graduation from high school approaches, I want to use one of the allotted family seats for the ceremony to invite Baba—since He is my father. After consulting Elizabeth, I send an invitation to Baba through Mani. Just before the ceremony, Baba responds in a letter from Mani.

May 27, 1967

To Charles from Mani

Dear Charles,

The joy your letter gave me filled my heart so tight that it hurt. Your Beloved Father heard your letter and looked very proud of His Charles. He showed your picture to Mehera, saying, 'Look how big and handsome he has grown. See how much he loves Me!' He looked at His children all, smiling His love on each one. Baba wants you to convey His love to Bill, Tommy, and Louise, and all of His dear CSC group, including those who weren't caught by the camera but who are very much in the picture of His vision—also to the family of four-legs and nine-lives.

I am typing this on the Guruprasad verandah, at just about the spot of our first meeting where I saw Baba in your eyes and embraced you. You haven't left Charles; you are always here with us, wherever Baba is. The Beloved's Trio is very dear to Him—His Love to you, John, Wendy.

As you say Charles, Baba will be with you for your graduation as He is with you always. And He who is your Father and God and Master will guide your life to that supreme graduation in His Love, which is the sole Goal of His lovers' lives. Here is His message for you:

I am happy with your graduation from High School and very happy with your aim to graduate in the love of the Highest of the High. My Love to you and My CSC group.

Meher Baba

Much love,

Mani

December 18, 1968

To Elizabeth from Mani

Dearest Elizabeth,

Your letter of 9th received today. Also, the wonderful newspaper enclosures, one about Baba's Charles that has been read out to Baba—He looked so pleased and proud.

My dearest thanks to you all my dearest family for the most lovely birthday greeting cards and wishes—the photographs of His Angels with Diane, sent by our Jane and sweet gazelle, completed my birthday joy.

In heaps of haste and with heaps of love from us all to you each.

Mani

Our last message of love from Meher Baba is received by cable a few days before Baba drops His body. In letters to Mani preceding this cable, Mother and Elizabeth write news of each of the Trio, telling Baba how much we love Him.

January 28, 1969

To Elizabeth from Mani

Received your letter and dear Jane's letter.

Beloved Baba touched with love of His children.

Love All,

Mani



EPILOGUE

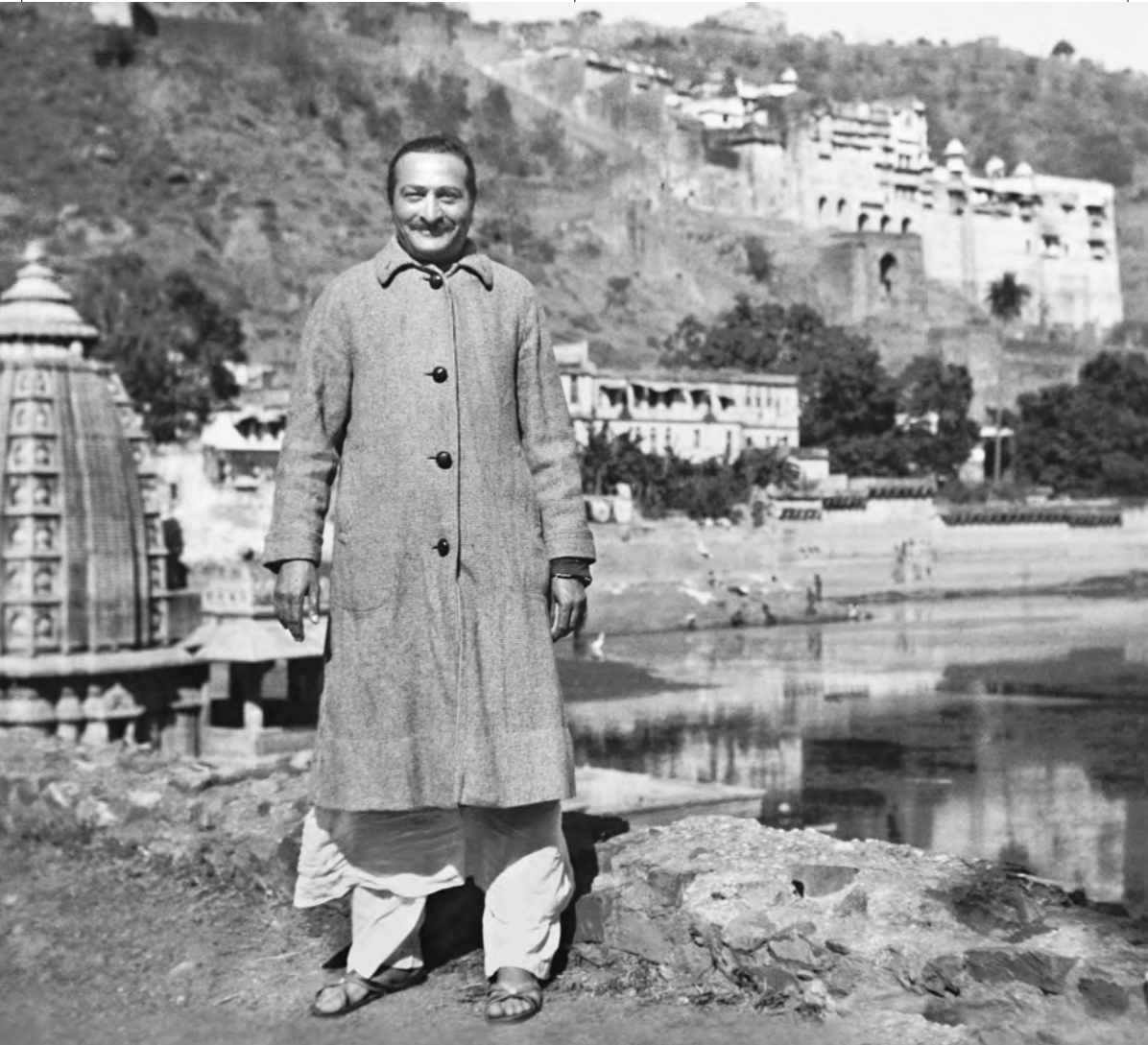


Avatar Meher Baba
in Poona, 1960s

KISSED BY GOD

Know you all that if I am the Highest of the High, My role demands that I strip you of all your possessions and wants, consume all your desires and make you desireless rather than satisfy your desires. Sadhus, saints, yogis and walis can give you what you want; but I take away your wants and free you from attachments and liberate you from the bondage of ignorance. I am the One to take, not the One to give what you want or as you want.

MEHER BABA



Meher Baba wearing
Elizabeth's coat,
Bundi, India, 1939

PAGING THROUGH A MAGAZINE one day, a cartoon catches my attention. It depicts an emaciated, decrepit, ancient-looking man sitting alone high on a mountaintop. His white beard and hair are long and unkempt; his few clothes are in tatters. The caption reads: "He was kissed by God."

Like all good jokes, the cartoon is funny because, as Eruch might say, "It is so true." I can visualize Baba's silent laughter, enjoying the

humor of the Divine jest. After all, what is the spiritual journey if not a losing game? “We must lose ourselves in order to find ourselves,” Baba says, “thus loss itself is gain. We must die to self to live in God; thus death means life.”*

Keeping company with Baba, debris of ego life—our accumulated flotsam and jetsam—is gradually swept away by the Beloved, often without the lover even knowing it. At the end of the journey, Baba promises, we are stripped naked of all impressions and attachments that separate us from Him. Only God remains. “When you go,” Baba says, “then I come.”

Reflecting on my journey in this lifetime with Baba, I now see how Baba takes away the rhinestones, as Elizabeth would say, only to give the diamond of His Love. Of course, I still retain considerable baggage, but I can honestly say Baba has lightened my load. Loss can be difficult, no doubt, and suffering is no joke. But in my experience, the Beloved mitigates the pain through love, grace, and, Baba being Baba, constant humor.

As a child in 1958 and 1962, I paid close attention to Baba—not because of any awareness of my own, but as a gift of His grace. Why Baba gave me the gift of remembering every moment with Him, I am not entirely sure. I do know, however, that the stories of being in His presence continue to shape my daily life—and perhaps, in ways beyond my comprehension, they will also convey something of His fragrance to others who seek God.

* *God Speaks*, second edition, p. 270.

John and Wendy, the other members of Baba's Trio, have grown up living for and in Him just as He asked. Today, John sees Baba's hand in even the smallest details of daily life. My brother has a heart for serving others, spending much of his time now as a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity and other community service efforts. My sister Wendy lives at Meher House and, together with her husband Buz, devote their lives to serving Baba at Meher Center, the place He called His Home in the West. Wendy, Baba's gazelle, radiates Baba's love to all who come to the Center seeking Him.

At this stage of my life, I try to take Elizabeth's advice and listen to Baba in silence each morning—and let the day become the answer. Fortunately Baba weaned us from reliance on His physical form, messages from India, and guidance given through discourses. In the last years, Baba encouraged us to hear Him deep within our hearts, where He speaks through the voice of intuition and conscience. In this way, Baba continues to be present and available to all who seek Him.

Of course, trusting Baba's guidance through the inner voice is not always easy—at least not for me. Multiple voices compete for my attention—most prominently my own ego—sometimes sowing doubt about what I hear from Baba within my heart. Nevertheless, Baba assures us that if we listen to our conscience—the capacity to discern right from wrong, true from false—we will discover how to steer our thoughts, words, and deeds toward what pleases Him.

In life with Baba since 1969, my conscience has been shaped by many sources and influences: stories of Baba's deeds; words

given from His silence; pilgrimages to sacred places associated with His life; and most precious of all, time with His close disciples. After Baba dropped the body, Elizabeth and Kitty continued to be lode-stars for my siblings and me—living exemplars of what it means to put Baba first in all things. Trips to India meant spending time with His close men and women mandali, each one reflecting a facet of Baba’s personality, humor, compassion, and love. First and foremost, without question, was the great privilege of time with Mehera, Baba’s own beloved. Listening to Mehera tell the story of His love—and sitting with Eruch, Mani,

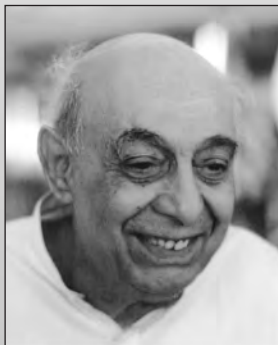
Kitty Davy and
Elizabeth Patterson
at Meher Spiritual
Center, 1970s



Mehera and Charles garlanding Baba’s photo on Wendy’s birthday, Meherazad, 1987



Eruch



Pendu

Pendu, and other close ones—
brought Baba to life in new
and profound ways for me
and countless other pilgrims.

All that Meher Baba
has given, including now
His Tomb-Shrine, provides
invaluable clues to discovering
Him within; but none is Meher
Baba. Mistaking words, deeds, or sacred
places for Baba would be, to
borrow a Zen image, like
mistaking the finger



Mani sharing about Baba with Christopher and Charles, Meherazad, 1993

pointing to the moon for the moon. “The voice that is heard deep within the soul,” Baba says, “is My voice—the voice of inspiration, of intuition, of guidance. Through those who are receptive to this voice, I speak.”*

In my interior life with Baba, questions of conscience—discerning His wish for me—have often been connected to my sexual orientation, especially during periods when LGBTQ people in America were widely persecuted and despised (as they continue to be in many societies today). In such a world, following one’s conscience can be confusing and painful. Although convinced from a young age that Baba accepts me fully, for many years I feared condemnation and rejection from those around me. I retreated to an inner world, a safe space where I could be with Baba alone—as I was on that glorious day in Guruprasad almost sixty years ago.

Lifelong tension between what my conscience tells me about being gay and the messages of homophobia from society erupted into public view in 1994. A group of Baba followers strongly objected to an openly gay couple—my husband Christopher and me—moving to Myrtle Beach to live in Meher House, our family’s home built with Baba’s approval on the edge of the Center. We moved there to help Mother in her work and to give her companionship. Some argued that what they called our “lifestyle” betrayed Baba. Others worried that our presence at Meher House (which had been used by Mother for greeting visitors to the Center) would damage Meher Center’s reputation in conservative Christian South Carolina.

* *Love Alone Prevails*, p. 179.

Fortunately for us, a great many other people in Baba's family from across the world offered support and encouragement. They shared our conviction that being gay is fully accepted by Baba, that it is no barrier to living and working for Him at Meher House or anywhere else. Most touching and significant among those who stood by us were Mani and Eruch—a gift from Baba that helped sustain us through the painful days of the crisis.

At the height of the controversy, I noticed a small booklet on my shelf that had not been opened for many years: a collection of Baba's sayings given to me by Elizabeth published in the 1930s. Opening to a random page, these words from Baba spoke directly to my heart:

Do nothing even to please Me, or the world, against the dictates of your own conscience. Unhesitatingly do what you think to be right and proper, despite the opposition of the world. Let your mind be as firm as a rock that resists strong blasts of wind from all sides.*

Putting the booklet down, I felt renewed resolve to follow my conscience—whatever the cost, however strong the opposition. It is time, I decided, for me to take a stand as a gay man with Baba—and for the Meher Baba family to acknowledge that Baba loves and accepts LGBTQ people just as they are.

Of course, others who also love Baba are free to come to a different understanding—then and now. After all, matters of conscience

* *The Sayings of Shri Meher Baba*, p. 40.

are between each individual and Baba. All any one of us can do is listen to Baba within, act in good faith, and leave the rest to Him.

It is 2021 as I write these words and much has changed in a short time. It is clear now, at least to Christopher and me, that the liberation of LGBTQ people is part of the larger transformation of consciousness that Meher Baba, as the Avatar of the Age, is bringing about in the world. After centuries of oppression and repression, God is awakening humanity to a new understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. In ways we do not fully grasp, Christopher and I feel part of this great work.

Looking back through the lens of the crisis in 1994, I see being gay with Baba as a blessing in my life. Although a source of considerable suffering, especially during those years when I internalized homophobia, outsider status can also be liberating. When excluded from societal norms and expectations, one has more room to follow God's call to be in the world but not of it.

"Become perfect in My love," it turns out, cannot be attained through repression, denial, or one-sided goodness. Instead, as Baba tells us, "Spiritual Perfection is the full development of all the aspects of personality, so Perfection must be all-sided."* Only through integration, a process of moving from fragmented existence to wholeness, does one fully realize Baba—our true Self.

Beloved Baba's last order to me, given on November 10, 1962, was "Be happy." I struggled through the years to obey this order until finally, at age thirty-nine, Baba brought Christopher

* *Discourses*, seventh edition, p. 80.

into my life. Soon after meeting for the first time in the Barn at Meher Center, we knew that Baba brought us together to join our lives as one. Today, after thirty-one years of marriage, we feel the truth of Baba's words when He says, "To have loved one soul is like adding its life to your own." In our shared life with Baba, I finally know what it means to be happy in His Love.

Charles Haynes
Alexandria, Virginia
January 3, 2021

Wedding of Charles
and Christopher,
St. John's Episcopal
Church, Dec. 6, 2014



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Andy Lesnik, Sheila Krynski, and the Board of Directors of Sheriar Foundation for making publication of this book possible. I am especially grateful to Sheila Krynski for her beautiful design and Sheila Gambill for editing the manuscript with such care.

My husband Christopher, who has lived with these stories for more than thirty years, encouraged me to write them down and offered invaluable advice that strengthened the narrative. Without his daily love and support, this book could not have been written.

Kissed by God is dedicated to my sister Wendy and brother John, the other two members of Baba's Trio, in honor of our shared experience of Meher Baba's love. Through them, our family has expanded to include Wendy's husband Buz, John's wife Hwajoo, as well as his son David, daughter-in-law Shannon, and beautiful grandchildren Emory and Caroline.

I also wish to lovingly acknowledge my sister Diane—who later preferred Diana—mentioned in the correspondence from Baba and Mani. Diana came into our lives in 1963 and passed away several years ago. Baba sent His love and blessings to her and, through Mani, her sons Chris and Mark.

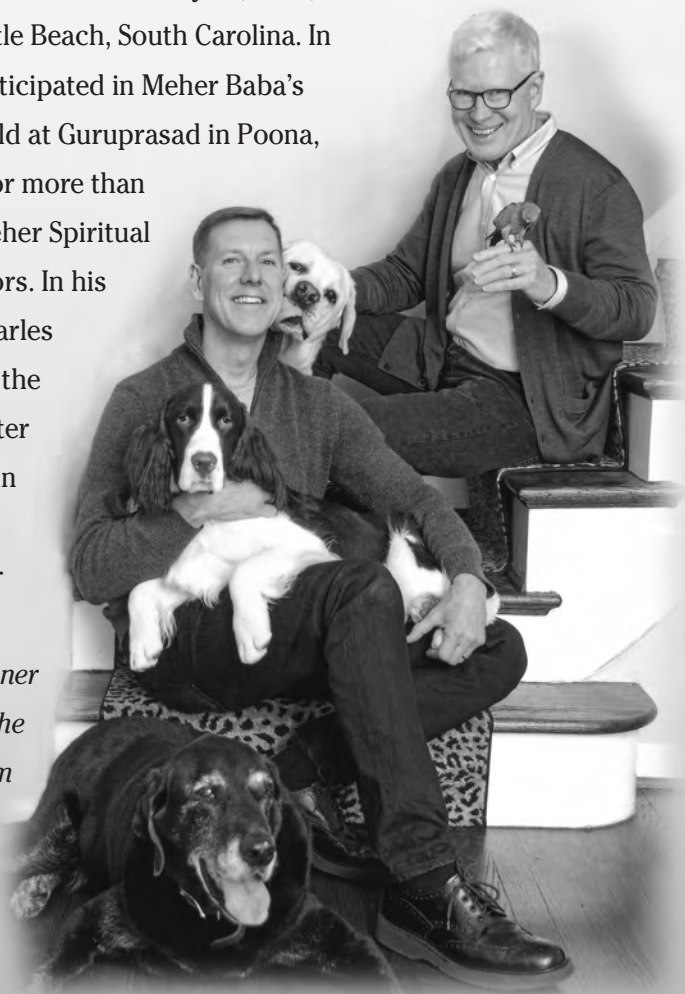
During the writing of this book, I have been nurtured and supported by dear friends despite the barriers created by the pandemic. I would like to thank each and every one.

First, last, and always, Christopher and I are forever grateful to the Beloved for His many gifts, including our life together. As Elizabeth was fond of saying, “When Baba gives, He gives with both hands.”

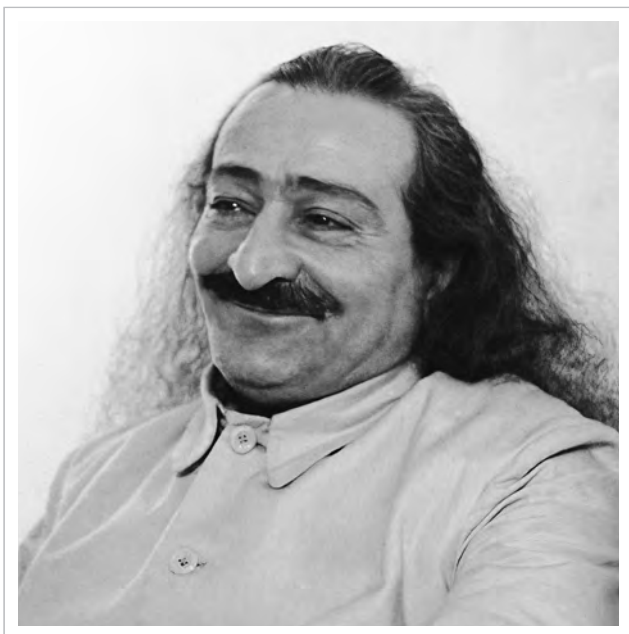
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Haynes met Meher Baba on May 21, 1958, at Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In November 1962, he participated in Meher Baba's East-West Gathering held at Guruprasad in Poona, India. Charles served for more than twenty years on the Meher Spiritual Center Board of Directors. In his professional career, Charles is Founding Director of the Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum in Washington, D.C. He is the author or co-author of ten books, including *Meher Baba*, *The Awakener* and *The Day Becomes the Answer: Wit and Wisdom of Elizabeth, Disciple of Meher Baba*. He and his husband, Christopher Wilson, reside in Alexandria,

Virginia, with their beloved dog companions Jimmy and Elwood, and one dusky-headed Conure parrot named José.



Charles and Christopher with Jefferson, Elwood, Jimmy, and José, 2020



***BIOGRAPHY OF
AVATAR MEHER BABA
(1894–1969)***

*“I have come
not to teach,
but to awaken.”*



IT WAS LOVE that drew Meher Baba's disciples to Him and it was for the sake of love that they remained with Him. Today, it is still love that draws those who seek Him. This is as He would have it, for Meher Baba's only message is now and has always been of Divine Love. His message is given not in words but through an awakening of the heart.

The story of this extraordinary man is thus a story of love. For while many speak of Divine Love, Meher Baba lived it. His was a life of such love, purity, and service that it will stand for all time as the divinely human example of life as it should be lived. To those who have witnessed the simple beauty of His ways, He is the Ancient One, the One who comes age after age to reveal and renew the love of God in the world.

Meher Baba was born Merwan Sheriar Irani on February 25, 1894, in Pune, India. His parents were Persian, and His father, Sheriar Irani, was known as a true seeker of God. Although Merwan was much loved and respected as a youth, there is little in His early life that indicates His spiritual destiny. He attended a Catholic high school and then Deccan College, both in Pune. According to Baba's own account, at age nineteen the veil was lifted and He began to realize who He was.

The unveiling began one day in January 1913, when Merwan, while cycling home from college, encountered Hazrat Babajan, an ancient Muslim woman reputed to be a Perfect Master. From the moment of His first contact with Babajan, Merwan's life completely changed. He began to experience His true identity as being one with God. Merwan was then led to contact four other Perfect Masters, each of whom played a significant role in the process of His unveiling. One of these Masters, Upasni Maharaj, worked with Merwan over a period of seven years. Finally, in 1921, Upasni folded his hands before Merwan, saying, "You are the Avatar. I salute You."

Who is the Avatar? At critical junctures in human history, Meher Baba explained, God takes human form. Although the life and times of each Avatar may be different, the core message of Divine Love is always the same. According to Meher Baba, the Avatar takes on Himself the suffering of the world to bring about a universal transformation of consciousness and the spiritual rebirth of humanity. Because the same Ancient One comes again and again, Meher Baba describes all of the great religions of the world as revelations of God.

Beginning in the 1920s, “Mastery in Servitude” became the theme of Meher Baba’s life. He and His disciples tirelessly served the poor, the sick, the outcasts, and the mentally disturbed—establishing schools, hospitals, and ashrams for this work. Personally caring for those in need, He cleaned the latrines of the untouchables and in many other ways broke down the barriers of the caste system. After washing the feet of the lepers, He bowed down to them, saying, “I bow down to the God in each one of you.” Merwan Irani’s early disciples began to call Him “Meher Baba,” which means “Compassionate Father.”



Meher Baba feeding
mystic Lakhani Shah,
Meherabad, 1939

On July 10, 1925, Meher Baba began His lifelong silence: He would not utter a word for the next forty-four years. “You have asked for and been given enough words,” Baba said, “it is now time to live them.” From His silence, Baba continued to communicate on many levels. His warmth and ever-present humor remained undiminished. When He wished to use words, He spelled out what He wanted to convey by means of a wooden board with the letters of the alphabet printed on it. Many of His sayings and discourses were given by this method. After 1954, Baba gave up use of the board, relying on hand gestures alone.

Meher Baba often stressed that He began His silence in order to break it. “When the Word of My love breaks out of its silence,” Baba said, “and speaks in your hearts, telling you who I really am, you will know that that is the Real Word you have always been longing to hear.”*

A significant dimension of Meher Baba’s life in the late 1930s to the mid-1940s was His work with those He described as God-intoxicated, or *masts*, spiritually advanced individuals whose love for God is so intense that they often appear insane to most observers. In fact, Baba explained, they are not insane; they simply refuse to adjust to the world, lost as they are in the longing for God.

Although we cannot fathom the exact nature of Baba’s inner work with the *masts*, we do know that He gave them spiritual help.

* *The Awakener*, Vol. XI, No. 1, p. 28.

Beyond this, He indicated that He inwardly channeled their love for God into directions that have benefited the entire universe. Baba undertook long and arduous journeys to contact *masts* and others with whom He had special work. From 1937 to 1946, the years of His most extensive *mast* tours in India, Baba personally worked with more than 20,000 *masts*, seekers of God, and with the poor in travels totaling more than 75,000 miles.

In 1949, Meher Baba began an important phase of what He called His Universal work. Dispersing His ashrams and giving up all possessions held in His name, Baba set out on the “New Life.” He made the startling announcement that during this New Life He would cease to be the Master in order to assume the role of seeker of God. A small number of companions were selected to accompany Him on what Baba described as a life of “helplessness and hopelessness.” Living fully in the present, without certainty of shelter or food, the New Life companions gave up everything to trust solely in the mercy of God.

Although the full meaning of this New Life is still unfolding today, at least this much may be gathered from Baba’s statements about that period of His life: In the New Life, God became fully human, thus forging in human consciousness a new path to Himself. The New Life is a life in the world, yet free from the world, in which the seeker loves God for the sake of love alone. By becoming the companion and seeker, Baba brought about a new way of living for God that would be available for all in years to come who have the courage to live it.

Meher Baba emerged from the New Life in 1952 to declare publicly that He was the God-Man, the Avatar of the Age. For the next seventeen years, Baba gave of Himself to an unprecedented degree as He moved toward completion of His work. Baba forewarned His disciples that this work would require of Him great suffering, including the shedding of His blood on American and Indian soil. Outwardly, this suffering took the form of two automobile accidents, the first in the United States (May 24, 1952) and the second in India (December 2, 1956). In one, the entire left side of His body was injured; in the other, the entire right side of His body was severely damaged.

Despite His suffering, Meher Baba opened the gates of His love by giving darshan to thousands of people during the 1950s and early 1960s. During this time, He made three visits to Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, which He called “My Home in the West.” One of the last darshans, the East-West Gathering held in Pune, India, in 1962, symbolized the awakening of oneness at the heart of Baba’s work. People of many races, nationalities, and faiths came together as one family. Meher Baba told the gathering, “May My love make you feel one day that God is in everyone.”

Meher Baba spent His last years completing His Universal work in seclusion. Although the full nature of this work remains to be manifested, Baba was pleased with the results, saying in 1968, “My work is done. It is completed one hundred percent to my satisfaction.” On January 31, 1969, Meher Baba laid aside His

physical body to live forever in the hearts of those who come to know and experience His love.

For those who love and follow Meher Baba today, the story of His love has not ended; it has only just begun. Now is the time of the manifestation of His love. He will not speak through a new creed or dogma, for He has not come to establish a new religion. He will speak His Word of love, as He always has, directly to the heart. And in His speaking, the world will once again be awakened to the reality of Divine Love in our midst.

PHOTO CREDITS

- iii Charles with Baba in Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Still from Film #20, "Myrtle Beach Sahavas with Meher Baba, 1958." Filmed by Charmian Duce Knowles and Don Stevens. Courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.
- v Meher Baba at Bund Gardens after the East-West Gathering, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- xv Charles, John, and Wendy with Jane in Hope Valley, Durham, NC, ca. 1953. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- xvi Charles, around 7 years old. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 1 Meher Baba in Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 2 Lagoon Cabin, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 4 Wendy, Elizabeth, and Charles, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1957. Photographer: Charles Haynes, Sr., Charles' grandfather. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 9 Meher Baba in the Lagoon Cabin, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 12 Margaret Craske's dancers carrying Meher Baba, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer: Ned Foote. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 14–15 Charles and Meher Baba, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 17 Charles and Meher Baba, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer: Jane Barry Haynes. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 21 Charles with Baba in Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Still from Film #20, "Myrtle Beach Sahavas with Meher Baba, 1958." Filmed by Charmian Duce Knowles and Don Stevens. Courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.
- 25 Charles with Buff, his dog, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1958. Photographer: Jane Barry Haynes. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 29 Meher Baba at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.

- 30 Meher Baba in Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1960s. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 32 Charles, Wendy, and John with Buff in New York City, 1961. Photographer: Jane Barry Haynes. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 34 Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 38–39 Baba at morning sessions with the Westerners, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Still from Mani Family Film #6, “East-West Gathering.” Filmed by Beheram. Courtesy of Sheriar Foundation.
- 42 Baba embracing Jane at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 43 John at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Still from Mani Family Film #6, “East-West Gathering.” Filmed by Beheram. Courtesy of Sheriar Foundation.
- 46 Baba and Eruch, 1960s. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 50 Close up of Meher Baba in Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1960s. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 52 Charles looking up at Baba at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 54 Baba with young boy at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 57 Baba with Westerners outside Guruprasad, East-West Gathering, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Darwin Shaw. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 58 Card given to Charles from Mani; (*left*) front, (*right*) back. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 59 Meher Baba with Ali Shah, Arangaon, India, 1955. Photographer: Bhaiya Panday. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.
- 62 Meher Baba bidding farewell at Bund Gardens, Poona, India, 1962. Photographer: Bernard Bruford. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 64–65 Baba with Charles and John at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Still from Mani Family Film #6, “East-West Gathering.” Filmed by Beheram. Courtesy of Sheriar Foundation.

- 66 Meher Baba in Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1960s. Photographer: Beheram. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 68 Meher Baba in Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1967. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 70-71 Valentine made by Mani for the Trio, 1961; (*top*) outside, (*bottom*) inside. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 73 John, Wendy, and Charles, ca. 1959-60. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 77 Charles, Buff, and Jane, Myrtle Beach, SC, early 1960s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 81 Wendy, after garlanding Baba, Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1962. Still from Film, "The East-West Gathering with Meher Baba in Poona, India, 1962." Filmed by Aneece Hassen. Courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.
- 84 Booth dedicated to Meher Baba, World's Fair, 1964-65. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 94 Postcard from Mani, 1965. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 101 Diane Barry Stone with Jane and Diane's baby, Chris, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1967. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 106 Card of Emory University sent to Baba from Charles, 1968; (*top*) front, (*bottom*) back. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 109 Wendy with Happy Club children at a park in Myrtle Beach, SC, 1968. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 113 Meher Baba in Guruprasad, Poona, India, 1965. Photographer: Mantravadi Srirama Moorthy. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives.
- 114-15 Meher Baba in Poona, India, 1960s. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 116 Meher Baba at Bundi, India, 1939. Photographer: Elizabeth Patterson. Courtesy of Elizabeth Chapin Patterson Photo Archive (ECPPA).
- 119 (*above*) Kitty and Elizabeth, sitting on a bench behind Dilruba, in front of Long Lake, Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1970s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Meher Spiritual Center. (*below*) Mehera with Charles garlanding Baba's photo, Meherazad, India, 1987. Photographer unknown.

- 120 (*top left*) Eruch Jessawala. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White. (*top right*) Pendu. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White. (*bottom*) Mani with Charles and Christopher, Meherazad, India, 1993. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 124 Charles and Christopher's wedding, St. John's Episcopal Church, Georgetown, Washington, DC, 2014. Photographer: Dave Scherbel. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 127 Charles and Christopher, 2020. Photographer: Dave Scherbel. Courtesy of Charles Haynes/Christopher Wilson Collection.
- 129 Meher Baba. Photographer: Padri. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.
- 130 Meher Baba, Ahmednagar, India, 1926. Photographer: G.M. Shah. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
- 132 Meher Baba feeding Lakhan Shah *mast* in the Rahuri Cabin, Lower Meherabad, India, 1939. Photographer: Padri. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.

