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"What I want from my Lovers is real unadulterated love, and from my genuine workers I expect real work done." - Meher Baba

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COLE PORTER: THE MUSICAL GENIUS BEHIND 'BEGIN THE BEGUINE'

by Joe DiSabatino

In the opening scene of the film *De Lovely*, the 2004 biopic about Cole Porter, the Archangel Gabriel appears to Cole towards the end of his life as he sits at the Steinway in his luxurious Waldorf Astoria penthouse apartment in Manhattan. Gabriel is disguised as an ordinary man but Cole recognizes it's time to take stock of his life, that his end is near. He says, "It's probably too late to start praying. Anyway, for me to believe in God, he'd have to be a song and dance man and really like one of my songs." If he only knew.

Cole Porter was not a religious or spiritually-oriented person, nor did he seem to have the slightest interest in asking the big questions. Extremely wealthy, he lived a life of luxury, had numerous passionate affairs with men while maintaining a maternal, soul-mate kind of relationship with his wife, Linda, eight years his elder. She tolerated his affairs as long as he was discreet. Linda deeply loved Cole and believed in his talent. The two women in his life—his mother Kate and Linda—pampered and indulged his whims because they loved the man and believed in his genius.

Nevertheless, while living in Hollywood in the mid-30's, Cole's success seemed to go his head. Having thrown discretion to the wind, both Cole and Linda were blackmailed by someone who had taken a photo of Cole neither wanted in the papers. That was the last straw for Linda--she moved to Paris and was seriously contemplating divorce.



THE VOICE OF THE 30'S

The truth is, Cole was a hopeless romantic. He was in love with love as much as anyone ever was. For over three decades—the 20's, 30's, 40's and into the 50's—Porter wrote the lyrics and music to over 1,000 songs for musicals and films mostly about one thing: human love. With his characteristic wit, cleverness, humor, and debonair refinement, Porter gave voice to the whole spectrum of human love, from the overtly sexual to the deepest idealistic longings of the heart and soul, often in the same song. After he died in 1964, an additional 100 songs were found in his apartment, songs that remain unpublished to this day.

In a 1973 *New Yorker* article, author Dale Harris writes, "Cole Porter is one of those names that, all by itself, can conjure up the flavor of a particular view of life. For one thing, no other major American songwriter fits so neatly into a single time slot. Irving Berlin's music, decade by decade, gave voice to the changing moods of the first half of the 20th century; you could almost devise a social history of America by using his songs as a framework. Jerome Kern covered almost the same period. George Gershwin moved from the age of *Swanee* to that of *Summertime*. Richard Rodgers wrote songs that epitomize the light-hearted twenties and also the earnest forties and fifties.

But Porter is different. He alone seems fixed in one specific period...for most of us his music is linked to a single decade, the 1930's...Often Porter chose to express feeling through wit, and in this he is perhaps even more the spokesman of a particular world...The best of his witty songs e.g., *The Physician*, *I Get a Kick Out of You* and *You're the Top*—exemplify the qualities prized by the particular section of the leisured classes he belonged to: not so much High Society as Café Society. Café Society in the thirties especially admired the combination of success and style; it approved of qualities like urbanity, quickness of mind, insouciance, daring. *You're the Top* and *Anything Goes* display a cheekiness born of Porter's easy familiarity with the rich, the powerful, the talented, the notorious, the well-publicized."

During the Depression years when the American Dream was on life-support, Porter's paens to love reminded people that life could be exuberantly fun, laughter and wit were still possible. Longing for love, falling in love, carefree sexual passion and flirtation, feeling the pangs of unrequited love, the sweet sadness of saying

goodbye, the hopeless addiction to love (*I've Got You Under My Skin*), the uncertainty and ambiguity of love, the beginnings, middles and endings of love affairs—all those exhilarating and heart-wrenching emotional experiences, that for most people made life worth living beyond the hum-drum daily struggle for survival, were still alive and kicking for the wealthy few.

Cole Porter gave Americans

Anything Goes and you're speeding down a country road in a classic 1935 Grand Raid canary yellow Bugatti roadster convertible with Cole Porter at the wheel. That had to be uplifting to *les miserables* after spending two hours in a grim-faced bread line.

It's said Porter often would write a song a day for months at a time. Sadly, on October 24th, 1937, at the age of 46 when he was at the

ground waiting for the ambulance, he actually finished writing the song *At Long Last, Love*.

If true, there's something profoundly ironic about that—one can speculate that, given the importance Meher Baba placed on the song *Begin the Beguine*—Cole's life-altering accident was Meher Baba's 'at long-last' Love blessing—Baba's blessings often known to

Cole Porter

and the

BEGUINE



hope. The songs he wrote for thirty-eight musicals and numerous films transcended their immediate Broadway or Hollywood context for which they were composed. In his heyday, Porter's songs could be heard on the radio all over America and Western Europe. His songs seemed to soften the harsh lessons being taught by the Depression—through this ingenious song crafter's art, it was as if Meher Baba had one arm around people, supporting them while putting the social fabric through an economic grinder meant to loosen materialistic desires.

Listen to the introduction to *You Got That Thing* and that magical, indefinable 'thing' suddenly comes to life inside you, making your whole being sway and swing with sheer joie de vivre. Close your eyes while Porter sings

peak of his international fame, Porter had a horrendous accident at Piping Rock Riding Club in Locust Valley, Long Island when the horse he was riding shied and fell—not once but twice—on his legs, crushing both of them and fracturing his pelvis. (this happened when Linda had left Cole and moved to Paris, seriously considering a divorce which he didn't want). In the film *De Lovely*, it's a 1,000 lb. rambunctious white stallion that topples over on him and initiates 27 years of ever-worsening pain, suffering and humiliation (he refused to have his legs amputated, as the doctors recommended). Linda came rushing back from Paris and their marriage was saved by the accident. Amazingly, Cole said that while he laid there on the

bring about ego-crunching misfortunes. Porter of course did not know this but the gift of real love from a Master can appear cruel and ruthless. He may not have been consciously spiritual but Porter was certainly connected to his heart, with all its vulnerabilities and vagaries, in a consistent and deep way that few people, let alone men, ever are.

In his birth chart, the Moon in Cancer makes a beautiful aspect to Jupiter in Pisces, the astrological signature for his refined emotional sensitivity. One might say that the best of Cole Porter's songs like *Begin the Beguine*, *Night and Day*, *I've Got You Under My Skin* give the musical experience of the head and heart

struggling for balance, combining as he does, intelligent lyrics with sophisticated emotional depth. And, as Meher Baba recommends, the heart always wins out in a Cole Porter song.

The head says don't you know little fool you never can win, use your mentality, wake up to 'reality'. The heart replies it doesn't matter, just the thought of you makes me stop before I begin (begin what? Withdrawing?)—having Baba or any human beloved under your skin is an itch the mind is powerless to resist. In *Begin the Beguine*, the head says don't play that tune but, by the end, the heart over-rides the head's need to shield the ego from the pain of loss and demands that the tune be played, come what may.

From 1937 until his death in 1964, he handled the constant pain in a spiritually admirable manner. He rarely complained to anyone about his suffering. Cole always tried to present a cheerful or calm, business-like demeanor, despite the fact, that, like Baba Himself in later years, he constantly suffered severe physical pain. "My mother taught me that gentlemen don't complain," he said. After the accident, and despite 35 gruesome corrective surgeries on his legs over the years, he continued writing love songs and witty melodies for musicals and films. He valiantly tried to live his life as much as possible as he had before, despite the humiliation of having to be carried from place to place by his personal valets. I'm reminded of Baba being carried around by the dancers while at Myrtle Beach.

Porter even went to Machu Pichu, Peru two years after his accident, long before comfortable tourist accommodations were available there. He rode a pack horse along a windy, narrow mountainous trail with precipitous drops. His travel companions described him as fearless. Everyone has their limits though—in 1958 one of his legs had to be amputated due to bone marrow infection. After the amputation, he finally admitted he was only "half a man" and went into a severe depression—he never wrote another song until his death six years later in 1964. He died alone from kidney failure—a sad departure for the world-famous socialite who loved entertaining and hosting elaborate parties and balls for his wealthy and famous friends.

Cole was described by those who knew him as genial, debonair, refined, witty, a pleasure to work with on stage or film set, and generous. After a musical, he would always give the entire cast and support crew expensive gifts. He once gave a gold watch to cast and crew as a thank you for a successful Broadway run. It was said he could also be aloof and a bit too snobbishly aristocratic. A highly intelligent Gemini, he bored easily and when he did, he often withdrew into himself to continue

working on a song.

After his accident, he also would withdraw to cope stoically with a surge of intense pain. Due to scar tissue pressing against the nerves of his ruined legs, even a bed sheet or trousers rubbing against his skin felt like a raw, exposed nerve being scraped. Touchingly, he named his injured legs—Josephine was the left and Geraldine ("a hellion, a bitch, a psychopath") — was the right.

BACKGROUND: WEALTH AND TALENT ABOUND

Cole was born in the small town of Peru, Indiana on June 9, 1891. His maternal grandfather was one of the wealthiest persons in the country at the time. His musical talent became apparent at a young age. Encouraged by his mother, Kate, to whom he was devoted his whole life, and his father, a bit of a musician himself, Cole started writing and publishing music by the age of 8. In high school at Peru, Indiana and later at Yale, he was extremely popular because of his ability to entertain with his singing and piano playing, often performing original compositions. Cole started writing musicals while a student at Yale and by

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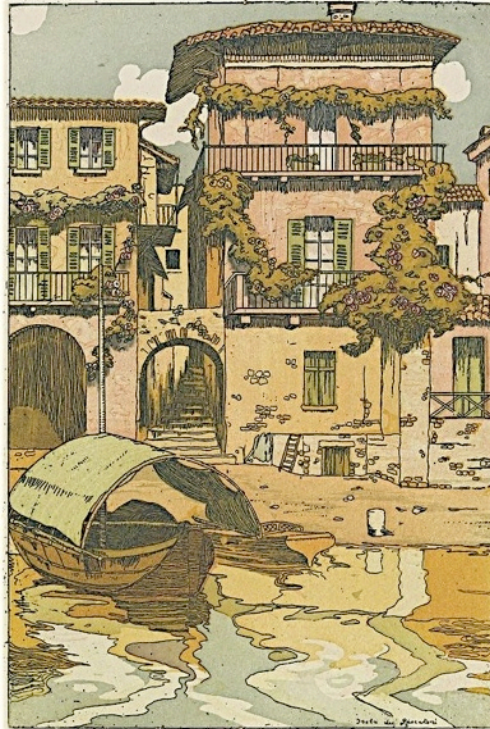
the time he graduated he had written over 300 songs.

With a handsome \$ 2 million graduation endowment from his mother, Cole moved to Paris and sowed his wild oats for a couple of years until he met the socialite beauty Linda Thomas who he eventually married. Coming out of an abusive first marriage, she was even wealthier than he was. In the roaring 20's, the two embarked on a life of extreme luxury, living primarily in Paris and Venice where they hobnobbed with Picasso, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F.Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and other artists from all fields. They were the first jet-setters, loving world travel, parties, collecting antiques, and constant entertaining on an elaborate scale. The Porters once hosted a costume ball in Venice where they converted a large barge in the Grand Canal into an orchestra stand and dance floor. They supplied 50 decked-out gondoliers to taxi guests from their rented sumptuous 'Ca Rezzonico palace overlooking the canal to the floating dance floor. Fireworks lit the night sky.

Actor Kevin Kline who played Porter in *De Lovely* said in an interview, "When he worked, he worked very hard; he brooked no interruption. And when he partied, he partied very hard. His life was a kind of theatre. He had an enormous appetite for pleasure, gastronomical and sexual. He was endlessly curious. A world traveler. Indefatigable." In his heyday, Cole Porter was the *Great Gatsby* of Venice and Paris.

The Porters were friends with Mercedes de Acosta who met Meher Baba in Hollywood in 1932. So Cole may have at least heard Baba's name through de Acosta. Also, he knew the goings on in Hollywood—so it's likely he heard about the splash Meher Baba was making among some of

the famous actors and directors there. The Porters were also friends with British Lord Carnarvon who built the Villa Altachiarra in Portofino, Italy where Baba stayed in the summer of 1933.



MUSICAL GENIUS

Along with other great songwriters/composers of his generation, the so-called 'Tin Pan Alley' composers, such as Irving Berlin, Hoagy Carmichael, Mitchell Parrish, Jerome Kern, Rogers and Hart, and many others, Cole Porter kick-started the movement that transformed popular music into a high art form. Up until World War I, popular music in the United States lacked credibility as art—lyrics and melodies were often childishly sentimental, extremely corny, jingoistic, sexist, racist, predictable and simplistic. For example, in 1912 some of the popular hits had these titles: 'Everybody Loves a Chicken'; 'My Wife's Gone to the Country, Hoorah, Hoorah'; 'Monkey Doodle Dandy'; 'My Sugar-Coated

Chocolate Boy'; 'When That Little Yellow Fellow Plays Piano'; and 'Ching A Ling A Loo'. Not exactly PC.

Educated people relied on classical music for the real thing. That all started to change after the war. As classical music became more and more avant garde and atonal (Stravinsky, etc), losing its popular appeal as a result, popular music gradually became more influential. Starting in the 1920's, popular arrangements became more sophisticated, lyrics more emotionally intelligent. The invention of the radio and air travel exposed talented composers like Cole Porter to multicultural musical influences, particularly jazz progressions with its Latin beats based on syncopated 4-4 dance rhythms rather than the traditional, more simplistic 3-beat measure (1-2-3, 1-2-3, the waltz, etc) that had underpinned European folk music since the Medieval period.

In Porter's music you can also hear Mediterranean/North African/Moroccan musical phrases which was unique to him. Cole also admired Gilbert and Sullivan's witty comic operas which helped his development as a composer while at Yale and later Harvard where he studied harmony and counterpoint.

Songwriter Richard Rodgers wrote in his autobiography about a conversation in which Porter claimed to know the secret to writing hit songs. "I'll write Jewish music", he said. I laughed at what I took to be a joke, but not only was Cole dead serious, he eventually did exactly that," Rodgers said. He pointed to *Begin the Beguine*, *Night and Day* and *Love for Sale* as having "unmistakably Eastern Mediterranean, minor-key melodies." Cole Porter and Jerome Kern's (etc) unique genius lay in their ability to integrate into their music both classical

influences and improvisational jazz structures — their arrangements often sparkle with effervescence and delightful unpredictability. But for Porter, this was true for both in his music and his lyrics—he was the rare composer who wrote both—and he was able to ingeniously marry melody and lyrics in a way no one had ever done before. And very few (such as Lennon & McCartney, Dylan) have done since.

“You could follow a progression from Jerome Kern to Dick Rodgers to Gershwin,” the lyricist Alan Jay Lerner said. “But Cole seemed to spring like Jupiter from Minerva’s head—all made. What he did was so special and...unexplainable that he is really of them all, in a strange way, the most irreplaceable.” Irving Berlin, in a letter to Porter, once wrote a sincere inversion of his own song, saying, “Anything I can do, you can do better.”

More than any other popular composer of his era, Porter composed many of his songs in minor keys or frequently shifted from major to minor within a song. A minor key is created by flattening the 3rd note of any major scale. For instance the C major scale has C-D-E as its first three notes. Flatten the E and you have a C minor scale. Also flatten the 7th note of any minor scale and you have a minor seventh key: C-D-E(flat)-F-G-A-B(flat) becomes C Minor 7th.

What different effects do songs written in major or minor keys have on the listener’s ears? Generally, tunes written in major keys tend to be more extroverted, more optimistic, cheerful, upbeat. For instance, Irving Berlin’s catchy *Cheek to Cheek* was written in C Major with a few minor shifts. It celebrates the sheer joy of being successfully in love. I love her, she loves me, eat your heart out people because we’re the happiest couple in the world, as we watch Fred and Ginger effortlessly glide across the dance floor lost in romantic bliss.

Whereas, write a love song primarily in a minor key and you’re no longer out in the bright sunlight skipping through a field of tulips with your beloved; you’re all alone in a night club with subdued lighting. Your nostalgic, sad, wistful, contemplative, not exactly crying in your beer like country songs want you to do (Cole was too hip for that), licking your love wounds but not in a self-pitying or sentimental way. Porter’s *Just One of Those Things*, in the key of D Minor, is a good example.

Songs written in major flat keys can sound exotic, mysterious, sensual. Porter wrote *Night and Day*, for instance, in the key of B flat. According to Wikipedia, “There are several accounts about the song’s origin. One mentions that he (Porter) was inspired by an Islamic prayer when he visited Morocco. Another account says he was inspired by the Moorish architecture of the [Alcazar Hotel](#) in [Cleveland Heights](#), Ohio. Others mention that he was inspired by a [Mosaic](#) of the [Mausoleum of Galla Placidia](#) in [Ravenna](#), he had been visiting while on his honeymoon in [Italy](#).”

The Beloved’s presence is to be found in the longing for the Beloved, Rumi says. He advises the chickpea to stay in the boiling water and marinade longer in order to be ready for real love to enter. Cole Porter’s love songs are often about just that: the marinating. One could say *Night and Day*, over the years Porter’s greatest earning song with over 100 versions recorded, is the 1930’s jazz era’s version of Rumi’s poem Song of the Reed:



*Night and day, why's it so
That this longing for you
Follows wherever I go*

*In the roaring traffic's boom
In the silence of my lonely room
I think of you night and day*

*Night and day, under the hide of me
There's an, ooh, such a hungry yearning
Burning inside of me*



The soul's lessons in the often disappointing arena of unrequited human love will eventually transmute into spiritual longing. Those experiences are training wheels for the real thing. Other composers knew about minor keys and the effect they have on the listener. But Irving Berlin, Rogers and Hart were hesitant to use them during the Depression. They wanted to cheer people up not worsen their sadness. But Porter wasn't afraid to go there--he intuitively knew that songs could mine the depth of the soul, creating a work of art that transcended economic conditions and fleeting tastes.

Porter loved using the classical technique of sequencing: repeating a theme or motif at a higher or lower pitch. The introduction to *You Got That Thing* is a good example. He introduces a catchy, irresistible melodic hook in the bass register, and then hops to a high register where it's softened, then to the middle range, back and forth, up and down the registers before the singing starts. Musically, he seems to be appealing to the various chakra centers of the listener from the base to the crown and all that implies. Doing that mirrors the intent of the lyrics which suggest that 'that thing' she's got is sexual, emotional, mental and spiritual—in other words, baby, you've got the whole package.

Some of Porter's most famous and enduring hits, many of them in minor keys, include: *'Night and Day'*; *'I Get a Kick Out of You'*; *'In the Still of the Night'*; *'You Do Something To Me'*; *'I've Got You Under My Skin'*; *'You Got That Thing'*; *'You're the Top'*; *'My Heart Belongs to Daddy'*; *'All of You'*; *'Anything Goes'*; *'Every Time We Say Goodbye'*; *'Let's Misbehave'*; *'Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love'*; *'So In Love'*; *'I Love Paris'*; *'What Is This Thing Called Love'*; *'It's De Lovely'*; *'Hey Good Lookin'*; *'You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To'*; *'After You, Who?'* And, of course, *'Begin the Beguine'*.

The playwright Ben Hecht once said, "Old songs are more than tunes, they are little houses in which our hearts once lived. In that sense, Porter was one of the great architects of the twentieth century. We still happily inhabit the pleasure palaces he built for us. He

manufactured joy, that rarest of commodities, with which he excused everything, even himself?"

BEGIN THE BEGUINE: THE AVATAR'S TOUGH CHOICE

In an interview Cole Porter once said this about the writing of *Begin the Beguine*:

"...somewhere around 1925 I was living in Paris and went to see "the Black Martiniquis (from Caribbean)...do their native dance called the Beguine...I was very much taken by the rhythm of the dance, the rhythm was practically that of the already popular rumba but much faster. The moment I saw it I thought of BEGIN THE BEGUINE as a good title for a song and put it away in a notebook, adding a memorandum as to its rhythm and tempo. About ten years later while going around the world (1935, on a cruise ship while working on songs for the musical Jubilee) we stopped at an island in the Lesser Sunda Islands, to the west of New Guinea, at a place called Kalabahi. A native dance was started for us, the first bars of which were to become my song. I looked through my notebook and found again, after ten years, my old title BEGIN THE BEGUINE. For some reason the melody that I heard and the phrase that I had written down seemed to marry. I developed the whole song from that."*

Porter was always trying to stretch the Puritan envelope of what the song and film censors would allow. In William McBrien's biography, he writes, "In the most famous number from 'Jubilee', *Begin the Beguine*, Porter, possibly feeling the oppression of censorship, decided to change the penultimate line

"And we suddenly know the sweetness of sin" to "And we suddenly know what heaven we're in." Undoubtedly, Baba wouldn't have embraced the song if the censors hadn't been looking over Porter's shoulders as he composed the song. Thank you, mean old censors.

Musician Billy Goodrum writes, "What is it about *Begin the Beguine*? As a musician and composer I can say it is an example of difficult and atypical songwriting. There are six stanzas and none of them repeat, which is unusual in a popular song. There are some verses that are similar, but none identical as it twists and winds and builds to a crescendo."

On the jazz web site swingandbeyond.com, there's a page devoted to *Begin the Beguine* that says something similar: "... the form of *Begin the Beguine* is most unusual, an astonishing 108 measures.

In 1938, the vast majority of popular songs contained eight measures of melody repeated three times, with an eight measure 'bridge' or contrasting section, usually coming after the first sixteen measures and before the last eight, creating a thirty-two measure song. (This is the AABA 32 bar song form.) The eight bars of melody in most AABA thirty-two bar songs are what many people remember, and often can whistle. Try to whistle the melody of *Begin the Beguine*. If you get beyond eight bars, you have extraordinary musical talent."

Musicologist and composer [Alec Wilder](#) described the song in his book *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators 1900–1950* as "a maverick, an unprecedented experiment and one which, to this day, after hearing it hundreds of times, I cannot sing or whistle or play from start to finish without the printed music ... about the sixtieth measure I find myself muttering another title, *End the Beguine*. Actually, Porter had already obliged by writing a tongue-in cheek tune called just that-- *End the Beguine*-- which appeared in one of his musicals.

Given that Porter's music frequently mirrored the intent of the lyrics, it's probably safe to say he did the same with *Begin the Beguine*. How? First, you have to ask why in the world he would write a song for the musical *Jubilee* that "twists and winds" without repeating for 108 breathless measures? We know that Meher Baba said the song has "eternal meaning." Did Porter have any idea what he was writing? Or was he simply in rare idealistic form, in the romantic throes of yet another infatuation for a man (there's a story circulating that Cole indeed was madly in love with one of his male travel companions on the cruise ship and that was his



inspiration) while sailing in an exotic part of the world?

There's no way to confirm what Porter was really thinking when he wrote the song, but, when considering the structure of *Begin the Beguine*, I was struck by the number 108. Why 108 measures? Well, in Lord Meher, here's what Meher Baba said about the structure of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice:

"They visited St. Mark's Square at 11:00 A.M., and at the suggestion of the gopis, it was decided to enter the cathedral. Outside, Baba explained the church's architecture and its spiritual significance. He had them count and write down the number of pillars, domes and arches, which came to exactly 120. Baba indicated, "This church is one of the four great spiritual centers of Europe. The whole structure corresponds to the Avatar's 12 disciples of the inner circle and 108 disciples of the outer circle."

108 disciples, 108 measures. Interestingly, in the 1920's the palace Cole and Linda Porter lived in was a stone's throw from St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice.

Wikipedia's entry on the number's symbolism states, "...108 has long been considered a sacred number in Hinduism and yoga. Traditionally, malas, or garlands of prayer beads, come as a string of 108 beads (plus one for the "guru bead," around which the other 108 beads turn like the planets around the sun). A mala is used for counting as you repeat a mantra—much like the Catholic rosary. Renowned mathematicians of Vedic culture viewed 108 as a number of the wholeness of existence. This number

also connects the Sun, Moon, and Earth: The average distance of the Sun and the Moon to Earth is 108 times their respective diameters. Such phenomena have given rise to many examples of ritual significance. According to yogic tradition, there are 108 pithas, or sacred sites, throughout India. And there are also 108 Upanishads and 108 marma points, or sacred places of the body.”

Begin the Beguine unfolds in 6 stanzas. Double that and you have 12. 108 disciples in the outer circle, 12 in the inner. Billy Goodrum wrote that the song “twists and winds and builds to a crescendo.” What else does that? Ultimately, the soul’s long passage from God Unconscious to God Conscious is a journey that twists and winds, never repeating itself (Mani once said, “It’s always a going forward, it’s never a going backwards”) and builds to a grand crescendo of union with the Beloved.

For me the key to grasping the meaning of *Begin the Beguine* lies in what Porter didn’t say in the song. The real meaning is implied, not stated (Cole’s genius!). In the next to last verse the singer tells the orchestra not to play the song, the memories it evokes of lost love and wasted opportunity are too painful:

*So don't let them begin the beguine
Let the love that was once a fire remain an ember;
Let it sleep like the dead desire I only remember
When they begin the beguine.*

Then, in the very next and final verse, the singer is urging just the opposite: sing it. Sing it loud and clear, I want to hear it! What happened in the silent gap between those two verses is the point of the song:

*Oh yes, let them begin the beguine, make them play
Till the stars that were there before return above you,
Till you whisper to me once more,
"Darling, I love you!"
And we suddenly know what heaven we're in,
When they begin the beguine*

What happened is that the perfect love union of long ago is magically no longer a relic of the past, its fading embers gasping for oxygen. Everything about that original divine union that was beautiful back then is now experienced in its fullest grandeur right now in this present eternal moment. Why? Because all memories since are false and bound by time, whereas the original memory of union with the Beloved is the only real memory and is beyond time and can be experienced at any moment, any place. Initially the singer is experiencing with his ego (“Oh I screwed up so bad, I blew it!”); in the final stanza he’s stepped out

of his ego and into his heart and soul. Thank you, Cole, you’re the top.

As playwright Ben Hecht said, “...Porter was one of the great architects of the twentieth century. We still happily inhabit the pleasure palaces he built for us.” So true—in fact, one might go so far as to say that the underlying architecture of *Begin the Beguine* is a three minute musical version of St. Mark’s Cathedral in Venice.

‘BEGIN THE BEGUINE’ AND MEHER DABA’S SILENCE: IS THERE A CONNECTION?

Here’s a quote from Eruch about *Begin the Beguine* in the same article by Billy Goodrum:

...In a conversation with Daniel Ladinsky at Meherazad, Eruch talked about *Begin the Beguine*. “Do you know about Baba’s—and my—marriage to *Begin the Beguine*? For that is really what it was. I carried the words of that song in my pocket for years, and I still have them in my room. Whenever Baba left Meherazad—for years—he would want to make sure I had that song with me. And he would not ask just once, but could ask so many times (and from different angles) . . . that it would defy reason. That song Baba really made sacred—and a prayer. And everyone should really know the words. And I could say to you that *Begin the Beguine* is my greatest link to the world of art—music...and it is the last song I ever sang . . . besides singing Happy Birthday to people. True. And in some ways one could say those words in *Begin the Beguine* were Baba’s greatest link to the world of human music and human art. They surely were mine.

Once while visiting Nariman and Arnava’s apartment in Bombay, Baba asked Eruch if he knew the song. When he replied in the negative, Baba asked Mani to sing it to him. She has described how it seemed unusual in that she had never spoken to Eruch in the twenty years since he had joined the mandali and here Baba wanted her to sing to him. I find it utterly charming that Baba used *Begin the Beguine* as the icebreaker between the two of them and used the situation as a vehicle for His work with Mani, Eruch, and the song itself....”

In the end, Meher Baba had Hutch Hutchinson's version of *Begin the Beguine* played seven times at His internment.

So let's list the relevant facts about Cole Porter, *Begin the Beguine*, and the amazing significance Meher Baba gave to the song, and relate all that to Baba's Silence:

- Cole Porter intuited the title and started writing the music to *Begin the Beguine* sometime in 1925, the year Meher Baba began His silence
- A metaphor Meher Baba often used for the breaking of His silence was the singing of the Original Song. "God will make me sing the first original Song, and those who love me will be lost in that Song and find me to be in every one"; "... I feel very happy to hear music. It reminds me of the first song that was sung ages ago and that song produced this phenomena called the Universe. God will make me soon break my silence and that first original song will be sung again and the world will realize that God alone is real and that every one of us is eternally one with God."
- Mani once wrote, "...The Master Fiddler is here to repair and tune the heartstrings of mankind before He can play the Avataric score, and the world shall dance to the Tune of His making when He gives THE WORD" (Cole Porter: "For me to believe in God, He would have to be a song and dance man...")
- *Begin the Beguine* sounds like a French way of saying beginningless beginning. Baba once said about His silence, "If you were to ask Me when I will break my silence I would say, when I feel like uttering the only real Word that was spoken in the beginningless beginning, as that Word alone is worth uttering. The time for the breaking of my outward silence to utter that Word is very near."
- Everything Baba did had universal ramifications. That was probably true of Baba having Mani and Eruch start to communicate after 20 years by Mani singing *Begin the Beguine* to Eruch. One possibility: the masculine and the

feminine, the head and the heart archetypes (Eruch and Mani) starting to relate in a new way based on the highest spiritual values and this initiating a new humanity pathway for relationships in the future. And the song *Begin the Beguine* was the vehicle Baba chose to do this work with His mandali and maybe, by extension, the whole world.

- For years, Baba pestered Eruch to make sure he had the lyrics to *Begin the Beguine* with him whenever they left Meherabad. It certainly appears that Baba was infusing His special Avataric charge into that song.
- Interestingly, Baba preferred Leslie "Hutch" Hutchinson's, the famous jazz singer from Grenada, version of *Beguine the Beguine* and that's the one they played 7x's. Is it just a coincidence that Hutch and Cole were lovers at one time?
- Baba wanting *Begin the Beguine* to be played 7x's at His internment has to have universal significance. Over the years He seems to have put His charge into that song by having it constantly with Him, and stressing its meaning and importance. Could He have finally released that charge to the world as it was playing 7x's while He lay in state at Meherabad? Was Baba singing it to all the planes of consciousness? Was He singing it to each of us?
- Is *Begin the Beguine* one of the channels Meher Baba is using for the breaking of His silence? Are people being awakened simply by hearing it? By bypassing the objecting ego mind and it's attachment to certain religious beliefs or personal opinions about God, all of which get in the way, the song sneaks through the unlocked back door of the mind and clutches the heart, gradually awakening it to the deeper meaning of the lyrics.

And as that happens for each of us, we may no longer be so tempted by the sweetness of sin because we'll suddenly know what heaven we're in. You know the one--the heaven we've always been in but forgot. Cole Porter, you got that thing.

*The Beguine is a popular dance in the French West Indies, particularly on the island of Martinique and its neighbors. It is derived from the 'bel-air,' the dance of liberation of the slaves. The Beguine was a quadrille dance and the leader would get the bel-air dancers started with the signal of "Beguine" or begin. The Beguine later morphed into the popular jazz era fox trot and rumba.

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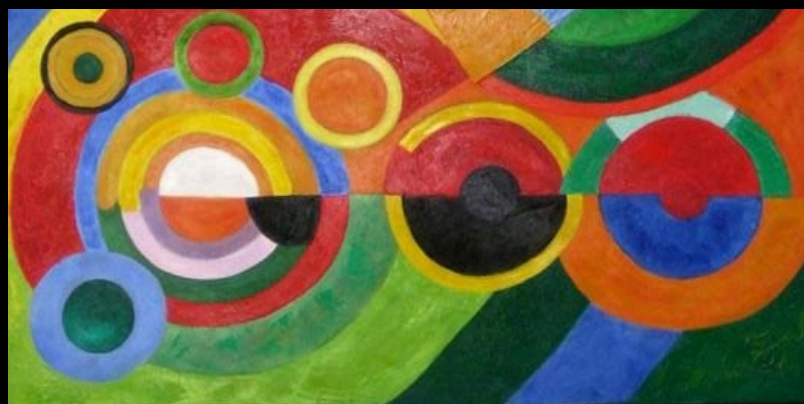
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Begin the Beguine. 1938 Artie Shaw, swingandbeyond.com



“You have to sever, and conquer, the mind to have the spirit rule.”

- Vanessa Weichberger





He's with Us Once More

Soft, the surf tumbles in,
Dark sky breezes
lift palm fronds into gentle sway.
Stars garland the sea.

A note thrills, as if from nowhere,
unseen hands thrum in tune,
loosen all heartstrings.
Love swells again into our song.

His Love sublime,
as if never forgotten,
its mystery beyond masterful.
All begins again.

After a
heartfelt, close
listening to
"Begin the
Beguine" this
came up. —
Irma Sheppard

I came across these typewritten pages while scanning some of the Fred and Ella Winterfeldt archives for the Meher Archive Committee in Asheville earlier this year (2019). They comprise an essay by Adi K. Irani on the 37th anniversary of Meher Baba's silence in 1962. It contains insights on sound and Baba's silence that are profound.

Whether this was a spoken address or for publication is an open question. Forgive the hasty and poorly-lit phone photos. - Karl Moeller

37th ANNIVERSARY OF MEHER BABA'S SILENCE

10th July, 1962

By Adi K. Irani

In general parlance we call sound which is audible and we call silence where there is no audible sound. Silence cannot be thought of without its opposite sound and sound cannot be thought of without its opposite silence. Word uttered is also sound and no utterance of word is silence.

There is yet another silence and sound which is of mind. Though not normally felt and heard they exist in similar opposites and are experienced through the sense of mind.

So there is a silence from word we call word-silence and there is a silence from thought we call mind-silence. Similarly, there is a word-sound and mind-sound.

Far beyond these exist the Silence of the Soul. What sound and silence do the millions enjoy and few observe and they know not what Real Silence is. Real Silence exists everywhere and for all times. Meher Baba is the embodiment of Real Silence.

Sound and silence are interdependent and both exist in each other. Like a musical instrument contains musical notes, silence contains sound. Like milk contains water, sound contains silence. Interexistence of sound and silence holds good for mind-silence and mind-sound. It also holds good for word-silence and word-sound. Yet far beyond both of these is the Real Silence of Meher Baba.

Real Silence is not silencing of sound but the very cause of sound. Real Silence is not sounding of silence but the very cause of silence. Out of the Real Silence comes out mind-silence and out of mind-silence comes out mind-sound. Out of mind-sound comes out word-silence and out of word-silence comes out word-sound or audible sound. So there are two silences and two sounds of the opposites and there is one Real Silence without a second as their Source.

Silence which creates thought or feeling of egoistic greatness and disregards feeling of others or brings about idleness is destructive silence. Silence which integrates individuality controls anger, lust and greed for power and possession and makes one self-reliant and contented is constructive silence.

Sound that frustrates thinking, deadens feeling and destroys useful material objects is destructive sound. Sound that absorbs thinking, heightens feeling and inspires useful action is constructive sound. One of the great constructive effects is brought about by that sound which evokes harmony, by blending differences in thought and feeling. Action motivated by such harmony tends towards the good and happiness of others, irrespective of religion, nationality, colour or material status. Meher Baba is the embodiment of perfect harmony.

It is the repetition of mind-sound and word-sound of any name that represents oneness of existence in everything and every being that is capable of creating a harmonious effect. The name of God common to any religion representing Ultimate Reality is alone qualified to bring within imagination of love a universally harmonious effect. Repetition of the name of the living Avatar who is Personification of God is immensely more effective. This is so because of the physical form, His living Presence affords for love, devotion and guidance and the greatest of all, His Love-Blessing.

It is difficult in the present living condition for man to keep on observing silence. It is ever so easy to repeat the name of God and more easy to repeat the name of the Avatar who is the living Power, Knowledge and Bliss of God. Let the world be convinced of this. If it chooses, not to be convinced by hearing authoritative statements made by Avatar Meher Baba from time to time or by knowledge, arguments, prayers and persuasions, offered by His writings, the world needs to go through a hard way of suffering. Purposeful suffering which may be physical, mental or emotional or all these would inevitably lead man to love one another. Love is the power that can bring human hearts, minds and actions together and establish harmony in spite of diversity. Meher Baba is the embodiment of Love.

Individuality is a magnificent fact of life. Every human is individual. Even a worm has individuality. To deny individuality is to deny one's life. The use and abuse of individuality depends upon its development. The greater a man is in his individuality the stronger can he be to reach good to others. Individualism is the abuse of individuality. Individualism is selfishness and individuality has all the potentiality of selfishness. The hue and cry raised against the 'cult of individuality' by a section of people, may be due to the ignorance of the basic structure of life. It is individualism of an individual that needs to be toned down and removed. An individual can reduce and eliminate individualism by loving and obeying a Perfect Master or the Avatar.

Individuality is linked with the source of consciousness. It is the medium of consciousness. Consciousness can be universally experienced through individuality. The knowledge of Oneness of life can be reached through individuality. Meher Baba is the epitome of world individuality.

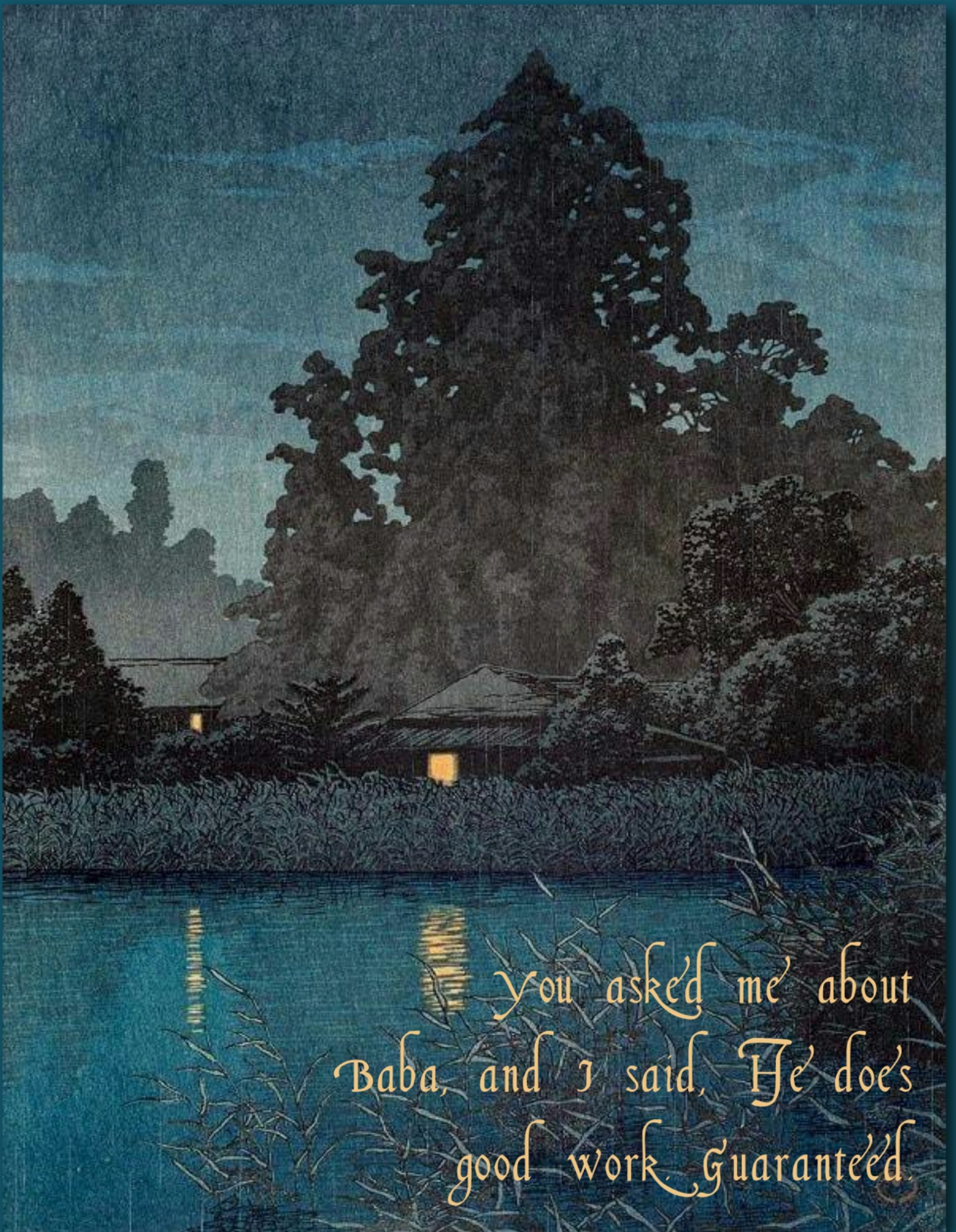
Silencing of sound is not advancement towards Oneness of life. If it is so, stone has already achieved it. On the other hand, life is meant for self expression in a way it makes others happy. Silencing of mind is most useful towards attaining to Oneness, but not through repression. When mind is satiated with its stormy restlessness and unending movement it longs to be silenced. Silence of Meher Baba is far beyond the reach of a silenced-mind.

Silence, sound, consciousness and individuality are the essentials of human life and each has its stability or gravity of existence either absolute or relative. Sound and silence of mind and word exist until their purpose is served and both are abandoned like the skin of a snake. Consciousness and individuality in their fullest development are ever enduring. They become interdependent and are experienced as an ultimate fulfillment of evolution, reincarnation and inner unfoldment of the spiritual path.

This is the 37th year of Meher Baba's Silence. His Silence is the re-affirmation in human consciousness of beyond the beyond Silence of God, of which the voluntary stopping of His speech is an outer expression. The Real Silence personified in His Being is an awakening to man, of the time-serving utility of constructive and destructive silence and sound. It is the manifestation of an overwhelmingly benevolent individuality over self-seeking individualism of our time. It is a life of living Truth of equipoised bliss and suffering (for others) over extremes of pleasure and pain. Above all it is the manifestation of Super Spiritual Perfection over hypocritical, self-impressed or self-declined saintliness.

The mastery of His Silence is His service for humanity. If His love was not so universal and all-embracing His unbroken silence of over three and a half decades would not have been voluntarily undertaken. It is God's love for man, for man to love God in every man. It is an occasion that comes once between 700 and 1400 years for man to avail of the nectar of His Ocean of Love.

May His Silence reign our hearts supreme!



You asked me about
Baba, and I said, He does
good work Guaranteed.



“I slept and I dreamed that
life is all joy. I woke and I
saw that life is all service.
I served and I saw that
service is joy.”



I JUST WANT TO PLAY
IN RUMI'S FIELD, UNFETTERED
AND SILENT, WITH YOU.

Those who have indomitable courage
to face willingly and cheerfully
the worst calamities,
who have unshakable faith in me,
eager to fulfill my slightest wish
at the cost of their happiness and comfort,
they indeed, truly love me.
Meher Baba



There is no deity [worthy of worship] / except for God (Allah) /
Muhammad is God's messenger /
May God [reveal the] shower [of] God's blessings / and peace upon him.

THE SILENT MESSENGER

Book Review by Sarah McNeill

Soon to be published in the UK by the Meher Baba Association, *'The Silent Messenger'* by the late Tom and Dorothy Hopkinson, follows their 1974 book, *'Much Silence'* which focused on the life and message of Avatar Meher Baba. With this new title they amplify and enrich the earlier work with the insights and matured knowledge of their later years and also include quotes from the writings of mandali members and other companions who published books in the years following its appearance. Editor of the new work, Shelagh Rowling, writes "...95% of the message is different in terms of the emphasis (on Love), commentary and quotes and sources. It is this that makes it (*The Silent Messenger*) contemporary..."

When Tom died in 1990, he left a completed, typed-up manuscript. Having spent the last seven years of his life working on it, he wrote sections and then read them out to Dorothy for her comments. In Dorothy's own declining years, it was Sheila Rowling who helped, reading to Dorothy and making notes for her onto the manuscript. Details of their collaboration are found in the book's Foreword. In the years since Dorothy's own passing in 1994, Shelagh Rowling spent further time on the invaluable work of reading and annotating all references and citing sources, a considerable task she completed in 2018.

Of their personal commitment Tom and Dorothy write: "...if we are to recognise and accept them, lasting truths must come in contemporary dress, restated in the light of our expanding knowledge of ourselves and of the universe... such a re-statement of deepest truths in terms of the contemporary world, has been made in our own day by Meher Baba."

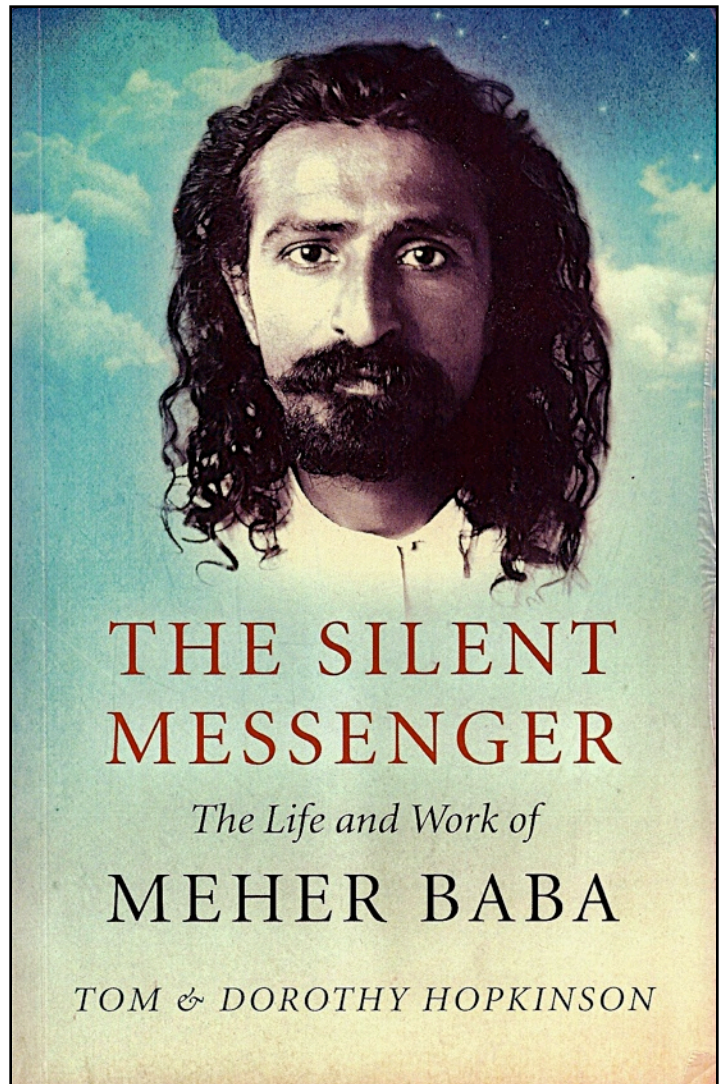
Sir Thomas and Lady Dorothy Hopkinson (to give them their full titles) were among the second wave of early English devotees who met Baba at the Charing Cross Hotel in London in 1952. Dorothy, who had already been in contact with Baba for some years, describes how at that meeting, not only did she find herself unable to speak when Baba addressed her, but how even Tom, an esteemed journalist, was himself apparently also at a loss for words in answer to Baba's smiling question to him. Such anecdotes are part of much incidental biographical detail included in describing their experience of spending time with

Available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Meher Baba, after their meeting in London, in India and elsewhere.

In the decades after Baba's dropped his body in 1969, many new books appeared written not only by his close mandali themselves (Mani, Eruch, Bal Natu, Ghani and others) but also by many of the westerners who had come into direct contact with the Avatar of the Age (such as Kitty Davy, Charles Purdom, Francis Brabazon, Don Stevens, for example), books which provided an increasing readership with a wealth of new information. Hence the decision made by the Hopkinsons to augment their original book. The major development they made in the contents of *'The Silent Messenger'* is not only in the inclusion of additional material from more recent accounts and memoirs but also in their personal, widely informed and experienced commentary on the tremendous events taking place during Baba's lifetime.

The format of the later book is set out in two parts, the first (*The Life of Meher Baba*) being the numbered chapters of Baba's life history, much of which is left as in their original book; and the second



part, (The Message of Meher Baba), organised as numbered sections in the new Table of Contents, being their thought-provoking commentary on the structure and key points of Baba's work.

What makes this book such a good read is not only the range and depth of information made accessible to the reader, it is also the clarity of the narration which (in Part 1) juxtaposes events in a flowing sequence and, (in Part 2) places the important themes of Baba's message within the global context. His themes remain as relevant to us today as they were then. The first part encompasses much of the history of Baba's life, including his travels in the East and in the West; his work with masts; the New Life; his years of seclusion; and the last sahasas – of which the authors write: "...at these Sahavas he made a series of statements plain enough for a child to understand, but with a power and authority unheard for two thousand

years, covering the whole field of human life and of our relationship with God." Chapter 12 gives insights into recurring themes such as Ego and the false self; the true meaning of Love; Baba's demand for honesty and obedience; the role of the Avatar; all leading up to the Final Declaration at Dehra Dun in 1953 and culminating in the Free Life, the Fiery Free Life and the Complicated Free Life.

In Part 2 the authors look back on some of the effects of Baba's message citing world events and showing how these themes remain as important to us today as they were then. "*Barriers which divided East and West have dissolved. Whole nations ... have demanded and secured their freedom. ... In different continents and countries there is a growing sense that all mankind is one. ... Secondly, an awareness has sprung up and is growing of the need actively to protect our common heritage – the earth and seas ... and even the atmosphere itself – against pollution and destruction.*

(p.302) ...these changes have been accompanied and supported by a range of practical and material developments, serving to unite the peoples of the world in ways which seemed inconceivable only half a century ago."

Technical advances we tend to take for granted in our present lives evidence the kind of changes the Hopkinsons refer to here. The book's editor adds, "*The Silent Messenger is a book of hope. The emphasis is on Love. It is about God and our inner selves as being the most natural expression of Perfection.*" And for extra 'added value' (as if that were needed!) this new book, unlike its predecessor, is illustrated with photographs as well as a map. Pictures of Baba are always a joy to behold – and the excellent reproduction of a very striking image of Baba's face on the front cover of *The Silent Messenger* is particularly effective in attracting attention – making this a great book to read on the train! Or anywhere.



Most people would say that the drifting of one small fall leaf is not an important sign. I would say it is one if the most important parts of Autumn. If you haven't contemplated the death and rebirth that Fall shows, and the representation of death and rebirth of life, then you're not really contemplating the concept...to the fullest. But we all know death is needed for the circle of life, and is not always a bad thing.

- Cyprus Weichberger (age 13)

Go take a dip...

Go take a dip in the pure light of early morning
Feel coolness wash away all fear
As vestiges of nightmare vanish.
If you hear a lark
Lift your face to its rain of song,
Hear its ecstasy;
If you can see
See through the dreams
Let this sound shred illusion.
A bird the size of a butterfly
Parts the veils and rises up
Go through
Go through
Can part of you ascend?
Did we ever have this form?
What more
To rise at dawn
And feel the new light and its kiss
To sing of bliss
And be the song.



The Guest House

Welcome

Come in to a

Celebration of love

Baba is here

Looking out on the porch

The trees are shades of green and grey

The lake is still

Reflecting the foggy sky above

Where is Mehera?

You can feel her presence as you enter her room

Where is Mani?

Listen carefully

You might hear her whispering

Thank you Baba

For being here with me

I feel hugged

Jai Baba

- Anne Weichberger



For Sarah Weichberger, by Laurent

Sasa said to Baba, "By the Grace of You, I am still here"

Can't you understand this? It is so clear!

Her flight was cancelled so she returned to our home, my dear.

Gives us another night for cheers with wine (or beer).

Baba said Saint Francis of Assisi had no fear.

Be like him. What about me? I am a small cog in Baba's Gears.

Baba once said to me "Stay in the Present Moment, here and now..." I am here ...

Another time he was in a hut in Abington Square Park and gestured me to come near ...

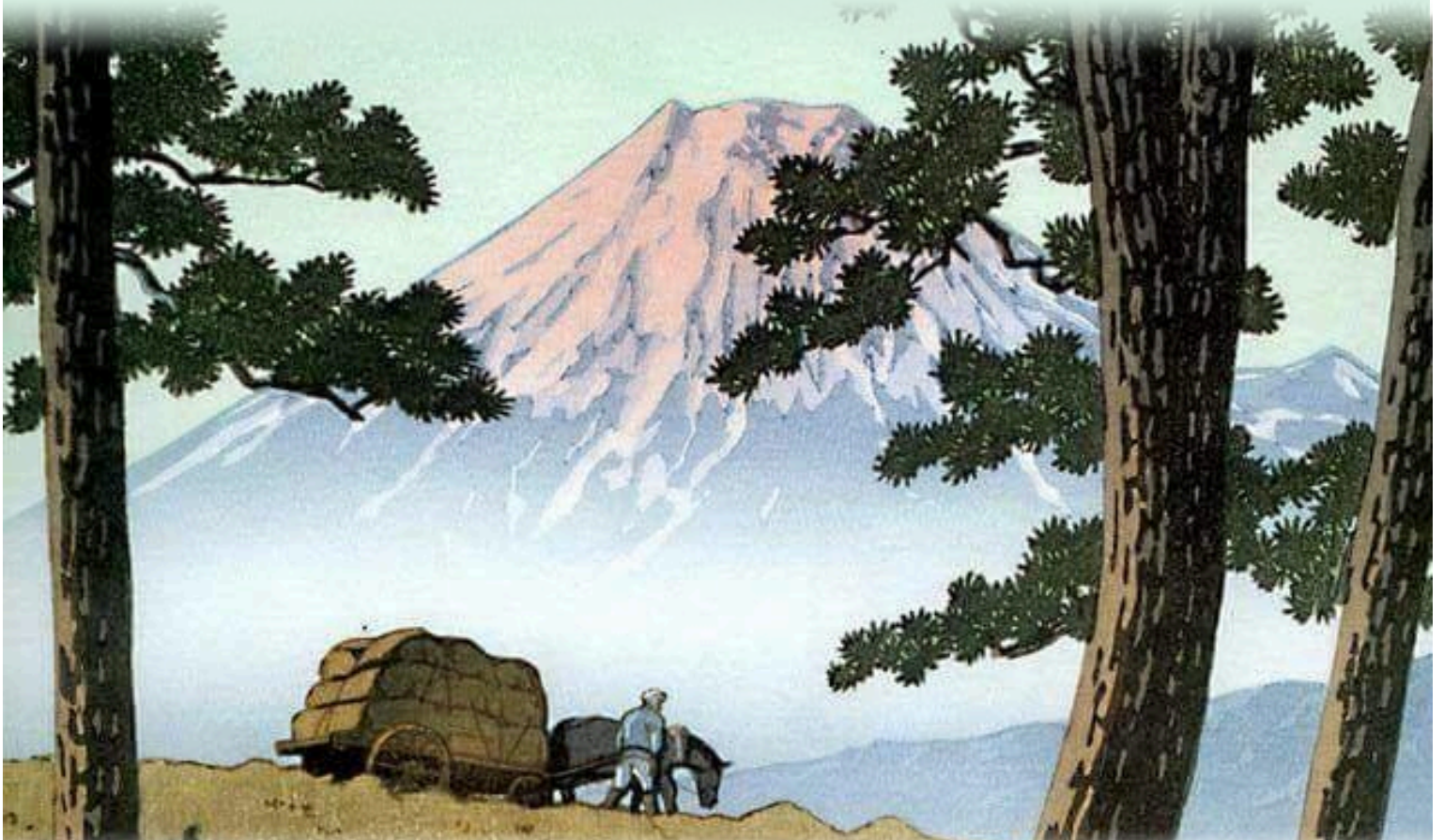
Who is Meher Baba? The Avatar! He has no peer!!!

What was He like? He came to love us all: straight, bisexual and queer.

My boat belongs to Him now, He is my Captain, I asked Him to steer.

Why? Because Laurent's father left and never returned, see the sadness of my cold tear?

Love



On Grace

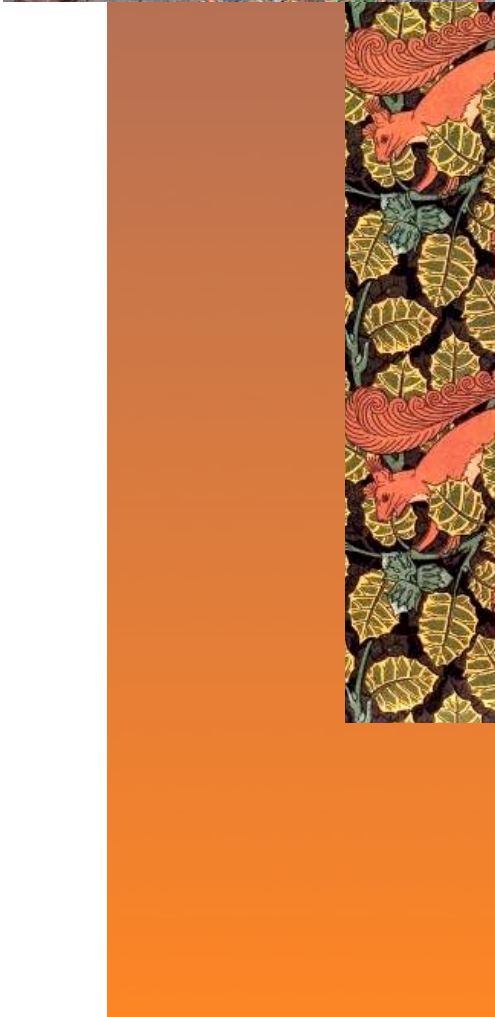
There are many points which lead to grace.

- Wishing well for others at the cost of one's self;
- Never backbiting;
- Tolerance supreme;
- Trying not to worry (which is almost impossible, but try anyway);
- Thinking more of the good points in others and less of their bad points.
- When Christ said, "Love your neighbor," he did not mean fall in love with your neighbor. If you do one of the above perfectly the rest must follow. Then grace descends. Have love; and when you have love, union with the Beloved is certain. When you love, you give. When you fall in love, you want. Love me in any way you like, but love me. It is all the same.
- Love me. I am pure, the source of purity, so I consume all weaknesses in my fire of love.
- Give your sins, weaknesses, virtues all to me — but give. I would not mind even one falling in love with me; I can purify. But when you fall in love with anybody else you cannot call it love.
- Love is pure as God. It gives and never asks; that needs grace.
- Yogis in the Himalayas, with their long eyelashes and beards meditating for years, sitting in samadhi, they have not this love. It is so precious. The mother dies for her child — a supreme sacrifice — yet it is not love. Heroes die for their country, but that is not love.
- You can only know love when you have love. You cannot understand it theoretically, you have to experience it.
- Majnun loved Laila. This was pure love, not physical, not intellectual, but spiritual love. He saw Laila in everything and everywhere. He never thought of eating, drinking, sleeping without thinking of her. All the time he wanted her happiness. He would have gladly seen her married to another if he knew that would make her happy.
- At last, it led him to me. When you love there is no thought of self, but of the Beloved every second continually.
- You would not be able to have this love even if you tried. It requires grace. But trying leads to grace.
- What is God? Love. Infinite love.

~ Meher Baba, in Lord Meher on-line edition p.1844



New construction at The Lagoon Cabin, Meher Spiritual Center, Sunday afternoon August 11, 2019. A “handicap access” has been constructed at the South entrance to the cabin. This work was completed in the Fall of 2019, allowing for wheelchairs and more to enter the cabin. Photo by Laurent Weichberger.



MEHER BABA



Howe'ver someone' may treat you, you should always be' calm. Howe'ver one' may pierce' you with sharp words, you should bear them quietly with patience'. This is real bravery and courage'.

THE ILLUMINATED hafiz

ILLUMINATIONS BY MICHAEL & SALIHA GREEN
TRANSLATIONS BY COLEMAN BARKS, ROBERT BLY,
MEHER BABA & PETER BOOTH
FOREWORD BY OMID SAFI

Love Poems for the Journey to Light

Book review by Karl Moeller

Sufi poetry was not written as entertainment. Read in the original Persian or Arabic by a prepared student of mysticism, the best Sufi poetry can help the murid's spiritual progress. Most of the imagery and metaphors come from the character of the Sufi. The Wine is the intoxication of divine Love (jadhba). This image is used deliberately, in an abstinent Muslim society, to make it clear that the absorption of the dervish in Allah is not simple emotionality. Drunken men tend to dance, as in the Mevlevi sama, so the Wine and the Dance go hand in hand. The Tavern is the world, and yet Wine is readily available in the Tavern.

A drunkard wasted away on
Love's way
His sweet drunken slumber
Is profoundest prayer.
—'Iraqi (1213-1289)

A recurring theme in Sufi poetry and teaching is the 'treasure in the ruins,' sometimes the 'Tavern Of Ruin' — kharabat. The message is that you must ruthlessly tear down your house, or the tavern, to the last stone, because there is a treasure in the foundation. This metaphor represents the gradual eradication of the false self, in which all external attachment falls away, leaving the treasure, a surrendered, winged heart.

Finding readable translations which have not been drained of the essence is a difficult but extremely rewarding task. Editor Nancy Barton chose the content carefully, using world-class Hafiz translators Coleman Barks, Robert Bly, Omid Safi, and Peter Booth. Meher Baba is well-represented here, both in prose and having translated quite a few Hafiz pieces over the years. Near the end of the book there is a new Hafiz biography by Peter Booth, acknowledged as a major scholar of Persian Sufism.

It's difficult to believe that it has been over twenty years since Michael Green published *The*

Illuminated Rumi. This groundbreaking book melded Rumi's deathless poetry with the finest imaginable illustrations. It's been on our bookshelf and often taken out for silent meditation.

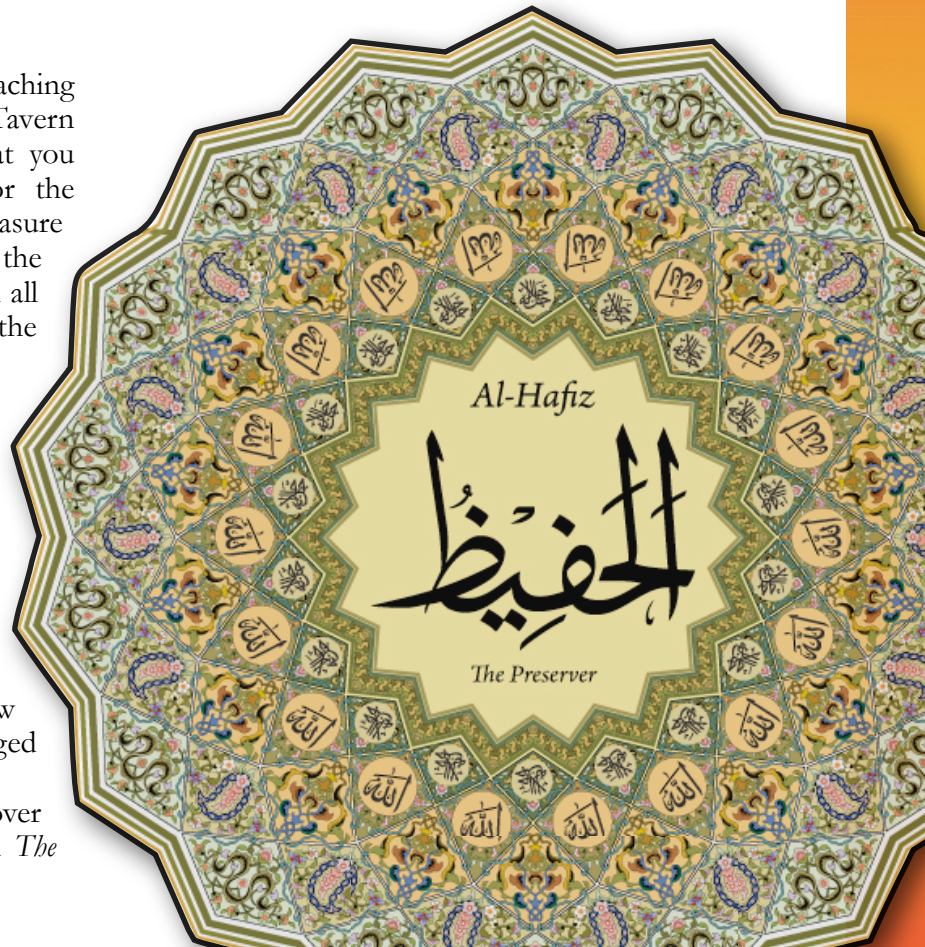
So, let's take these items as axiomatic: that the Sufi poetry is of the highest, from a perfect master, translated by the best, and the standard of illustration and 'illumination' is of the highest.

Therefore, I choose to show instead of tell.

Availability:

Online: Sheriar Books, Amazon worldwide in English, B&N, Indie Bound, Sounds True, Target, all in US. New South Books in AU.

Brick and Mortar: booksellers around the country and world.

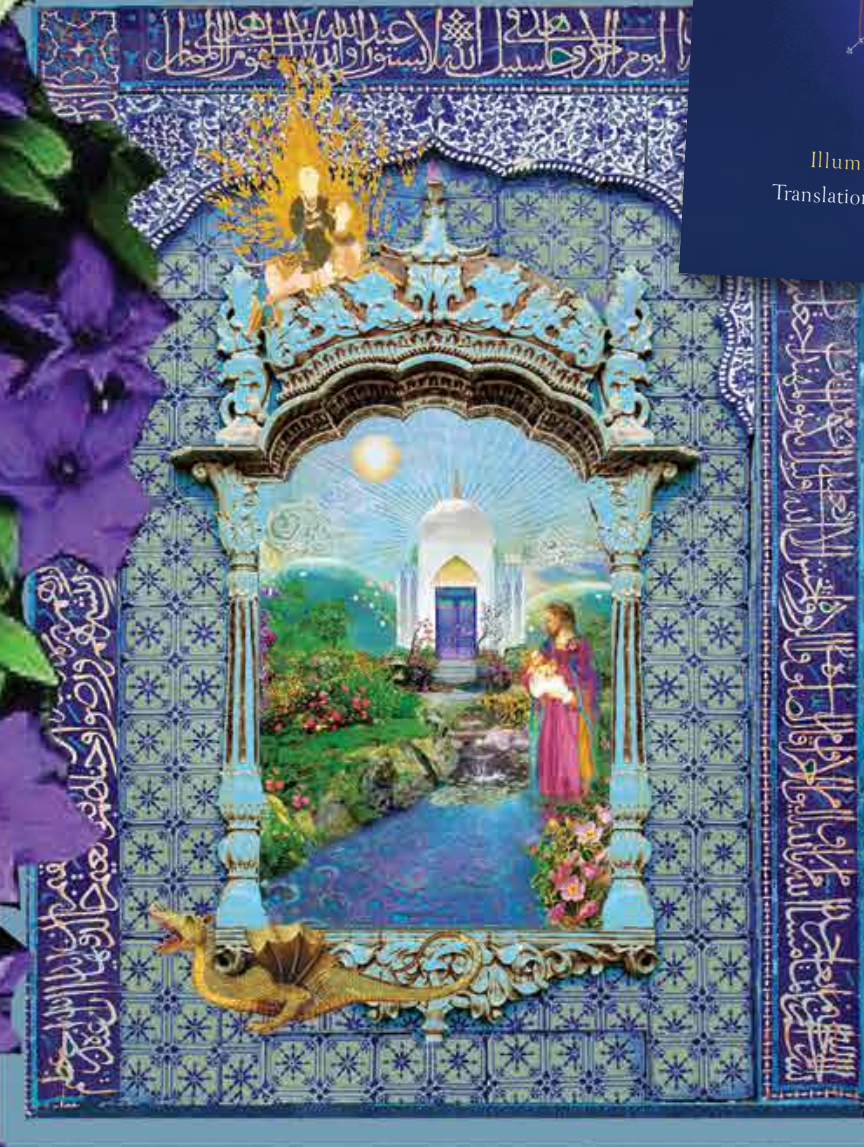


THE ILLUMINATED *hafiz*

LOVE POEMS
FOR THE JOURNEY
TO LIGHT



Illuminations by Michael & Saliha Green
Translations by Coleman Barks, Robert Bly & Others
Foreword by Omid Safi



WHEN YOUR IMAGE PASSES
BEFORE THE ROSE GARDEN OF THE EYE,
THE HEART COMES TO THE WINDOW OF SIGHT.

*W*ash your hands of this coppery existence
so that one day you will get the alchemy of love and become gold.



*T*he lover says to the Master . . .

You have taught me something
that has made me forget everything.
You have created in me a desire that says do not desire anything.

You have given me that *One Word* which says: words mean nothing.
O Master, I was seeking God and thought Him this and that.

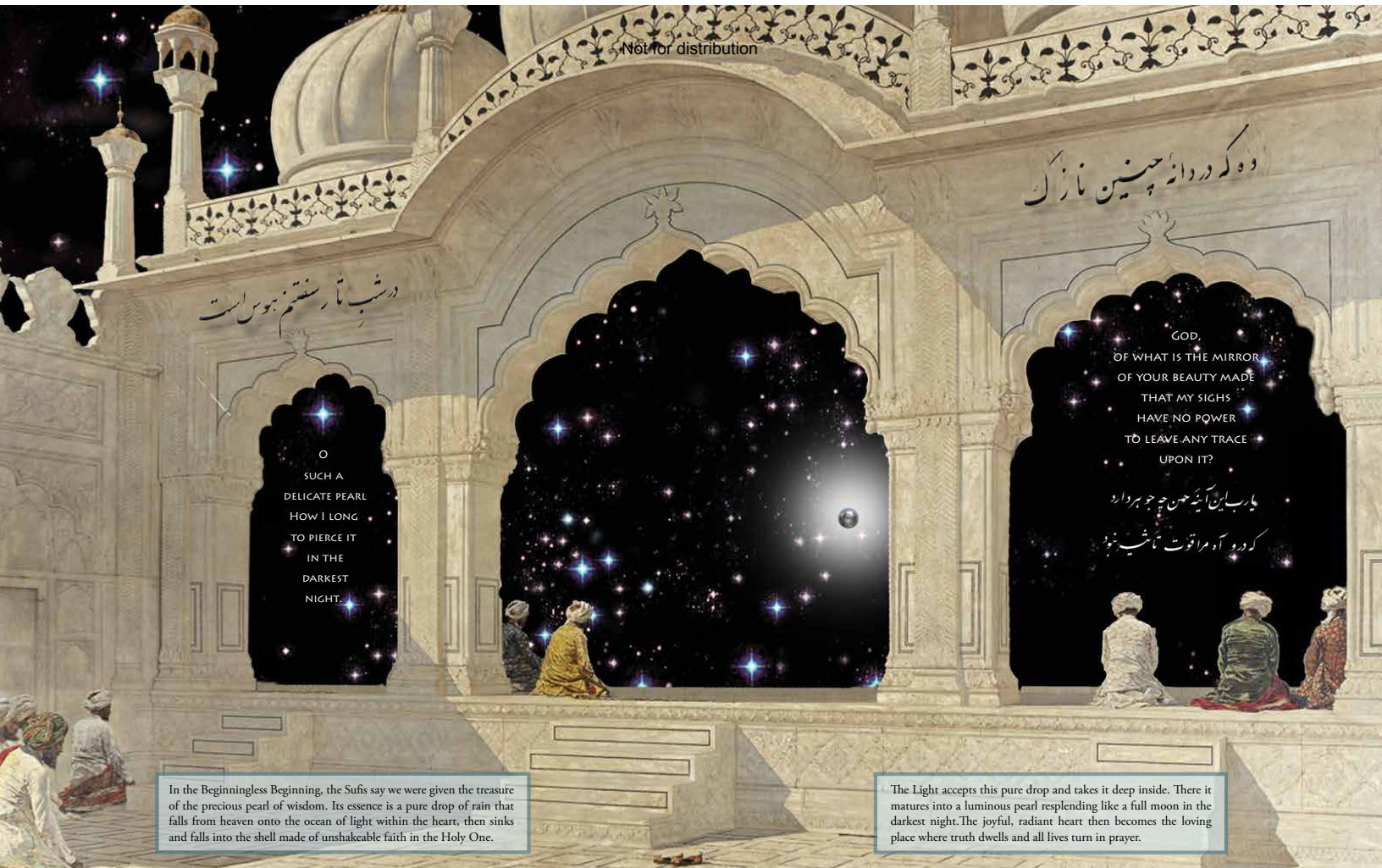
Now, you have given me something of which even
my imagination cannot produce its shadow.

THE ILLUMINATED
hafiz

The volume also includes short essays. This one is by longtime Meherabad resident and Meher Baba devotee, a noted scholar of Persian poetry and Sufism, Peter Booth.



A BIOGRAPHY
 BY PETER BOOTH



Not for distribution

دشمن ما را ستم نبوس است

O
 SUCH A
 DELICATE PEARL
 HOW I LONG
 TO PIERCE IT
 IN THE
 DARKEST
 NIGHT.

دو که در دانه چسبین نازاک

GOD,
 OF WHAT IS THE MIRROR
 OF YOUR BEAUTY MADE
 THAT MY SIGHS
 HAVE NO POWER
 TO LEAVE ANY TRACE
 UPON IT?
 یارب این آینه حسن چه جز بردارد
 کرد و آه مرا توت نامش نبود

In the Beginningless Beginning, the Sufis say we were given the treasure of the precious pearl of wisdom. Its essence is a pure drop of rain that falls from heaven onto the ocean of light within the heart, then sinks and falls into the shell made of unshakeable faith in the Holy One.

The Light accepts this pure drop and takes it deep inside. There it matures into a luminous pearl resplending like a full moon in the darkest night. The joyful, radiant heart then becomes the loving place where truth dwells and all lives turn in prayer.

Not for distribution

Last night in the radiance

LAST NIGHT I HEARD ANGELS
POUNING ON THE DOOR
OF THE TAVERN.

THEY HAD KNEADED
THE CLAY OF ADAM,
AND THEY THREW
THE CLAY IN THE SHAPE
OF A WINE CUP.

I AM A NOBODY,
JUST A SQUATTER
SITTING IN THE DUST
OF THE PUBLIC STREET;
AND YET THESE SACRED BEINGS
FROM THE INNERMOST SANCTUARY
DRANK SOME WINE WITH ME.

THE HEAVENS COULD NOT BEAR
THE WEIGHT OF THE TRUST.
WHEN THE LOTS WERE
THROWN AGAIN,
THE TRUST FELL ON MAN,
ON ME, AN IDIOT AND A FOOL.

LET'S FORGIVE
THE SEVENTY-TWO SECTS
FOR THEIR RIDICULOUS WARS
AND MISBEHAVIORS.
BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T ACCEPT
THE PATH OF TRUTH,
THEY TOOK THE ROAD OF MOONSHINE.



THANKS BE TO GOD,
THE DARLING WHOM I LOVE AND I
LIVE IN PEACE. EACH TIME THE PLAYFUL ANGELS
IN PARADISE CATCH SIGHT OF US,
THEY REACH FOR THEIR WINE GLASSES
AND DANCE.

In the cosmology of Persian mystics the descent of man's spirit is represented in an allegory that describes angels, under God's instructions, kneading dust with the wine of God's love over a forty-day period and shaping it into human form—the chalice of the covenant of God's love. It is the metaphorical drinking of the wine of God's love that leads the soul back to its source in God. The Persian mystics call this process the spiritual path. The culmination of this journey is termed God-realization, or Union with God as infinite eternal Love. This is the subject of Hafiz's poetry—his magnificent love poems for our journey to light.

Not for distribution

This is what the broke drunkard says.



DON'T VEX ME WITH YOUR CONTEMPT.
OLD FRIENDS HAVE CERTAIN RIGHTS, SURELY,
MORE RARE THAN ALL THE JEWELS YOU'VE STASHED.

BUT YOUR FACE, THE WEALTH
THAT MIRRORS THE SUN AND MOON,
I CAN'T SAY ITS VALUE!

DON'T SCOLD ME AGAIN. WHATEVER HAPPENED
WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN, WASN'T IT?

DON'T YOU WORRY THAT MY BREATH
MAY STAIN YOUR WHITE WOOL?

POUR ME MORE OF THAT FROM LAST NIGHT,
SO I CAN FORGET HOW MUCH I SPENT.

AND HAFIZ! I WANT TO HEAR YOUR SONGS.
THEY'RE THE BEST, I SWEAR IT,
BY THE BOOK INSCRIBED IN YOUR CHEST.

میان عاشق و معشوق هیچ حایل
نمیشود حجاب خودی حافظ از میان



*Now that you've ripped open the shirt of their patience,
your lovers will not let go of the hem of your garment.*

*Between lover and Beloved
there is no veil.
Hafiz, you yourself are the veil.
Get out of the way.*

THE ILLUMINATED
hafiz

حافظ شمس الدين



*A*LL I WANT IS TO BE NEAR YOU.
PRAISE GOD FOR THIS DESIRE,
AND LET IT INTENSIFY!

PRIESTS AND ELDERS HAVE A DIFFERENT VIEW.
"DRUNKEN SOTS," THEY CALL US LOVERS.

PEOPLE WITH NOTHING THAT THEY WANT,
LET THEM LIVE THEIR DIM RIGHTEOUSNESS.

DARLING, MY SOUL, SEPARATED FROM YOU,
HAS NO WORDS BUT WEeping.

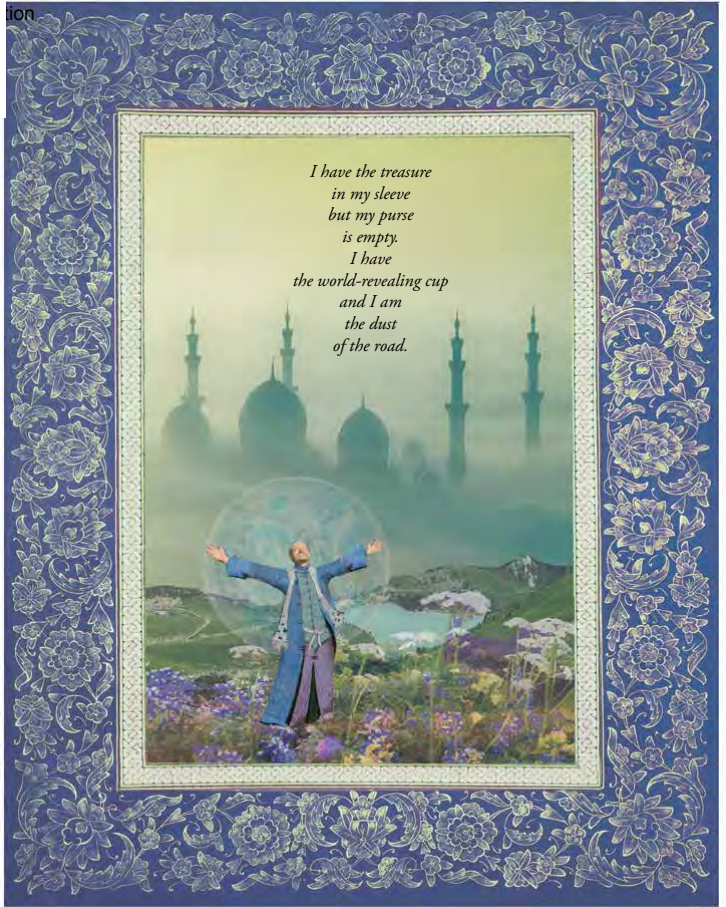
THE CYPRESS TRIES TO HOLD YOUR GESTURES.
THE MOON, YOUR LOOK.

HAFIZ DOES NOT MUCH CARE ANYMORE
FOR EVENING DISCOURSE
OR MORNING PRAYER,

WHEN THERE'S SOME SMALL CHANCE
YOU'LL LEAN DOWN TO KISS.



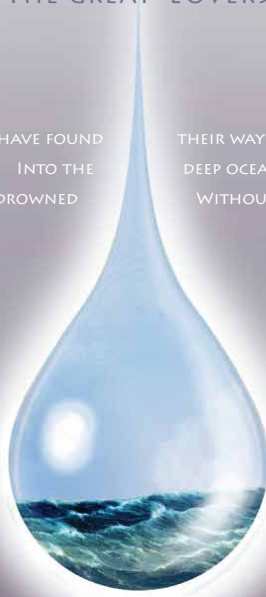
*Loving you this way is driving me mad,
for already
I talk to the moon and see angels in my sleep.*



THE GREAT LOVERS

HAVE FOUND
INTO THE
AND DROWNED

THEIR WAY
DEEP OCEAN,
WITHOUT EVER TAKING



ONE DROP FROM THE SEA.

Not for distribution



*In the school of God and in the company of the Perfect Master,
try, try, and try again so that one day you also become perfect.*



*W*ash your hands of books if you are my classmate,
because the lesson of Love is in no book.

THE ILLUMINATED
hafiz



*B*y the light of a sheikh a pilgrim finds the Beloved.
Heart-lost, at life's end, help us taste that wine!
The time of judging who's drunk and who's sober,
who's right or wrong, who's closer to God
or farther away, all that's over!

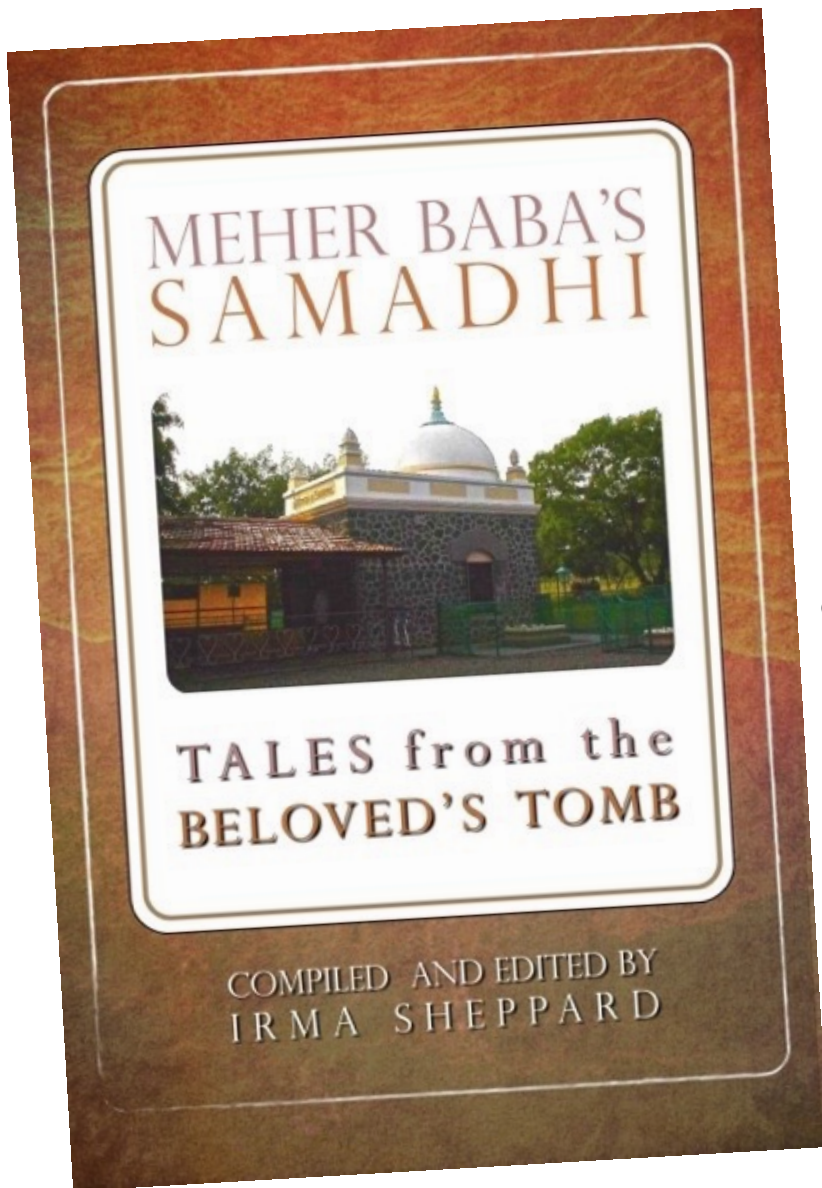
This caravan is led instead by a great delight,
the simple joy that sits with us.

That is the grace.

Hafiz! It may be that you've just poured the toast
that will wash love free of all its pictures.

Soliciting Submissions

Assiduously Seeking Stories



If you have had a significant or remarkable experience in Meher Baba's Samadhi, or one directly relating to His Samadhi—uplifting, heartwarming, challenging or humorous—please write it up and send it to Irma Sheppard for inclusion in

*Meher Baba's Samadhi:
Tales from the Beloved's Tomb.*

Stories may be of any length.

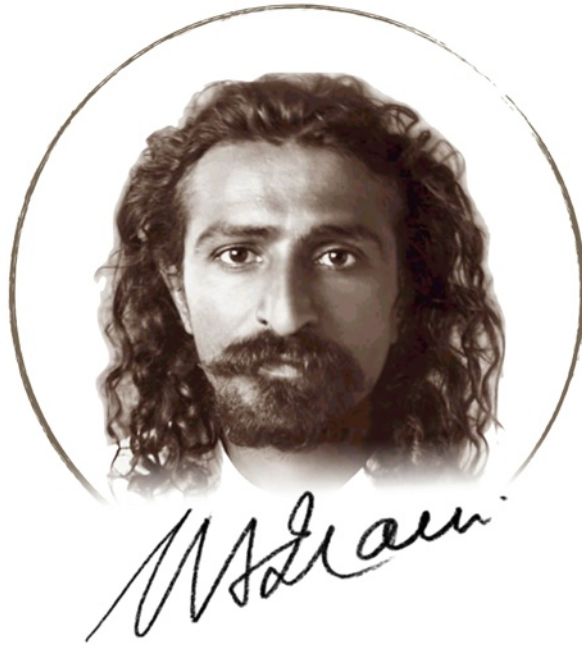
**Proceeds to benefit the Meher Archive
Collective in Asheville, North Carolina.**

Please forward this invitation to anyone you think may be interested. Thank you.

Email

irmasheppard@icloud.com

for guidelines.



*Ground stop in New York
Nothing in, nothing out so
I think of Baba*

“All that failing means is ‘not knowing.’”
~ Dream Guide (to Laurent Weichberger on Sept. 5, 2019)



Decorative flourish
If the aspirant is to
love and serve the world
which does not understand
him or even is intolerant
towards him, he must
develop infinite forbearance.

– Meher Baba

WE WELCOME

ALL RACES

ALL RELIGIONS

ALL COUNTRIES
OF ORIGIN

ALL SEXUAL
ORIENTATIONS

ALL GENDERS

WE STAND WITH YOU
YOU ARE SAFE HERE

As seen by Laurent in North Carolina



As seen by Vanessa in North Carolina

“Spiritually, a big meeting of spiritual personages took place here the likes of which has never before been held.”—Meher Baba

In 1932, Meher Baba chose to travel to Assisi, the home of one of his favorite saints, St. Francis, for the purpose of an unprecedented celestial meeting. The effects of this meeting have reverberated down through time in ways we cannot fathom, yet many are now being drawn to this stunning spiritual city.

Meher Baba in Assisi is a beautiful 80-page color book filled with photographs and stories of Baba and Francis, including extensive excerpts about Baba’s time in Assisi, the story of the life of St. Francis, photos of sites that Baba likely visited, lovely pilgrimage stories, useful travel information about Assisi, and some thoughts about Baba’s important universal work in this ancient city in the mountains of Italy.

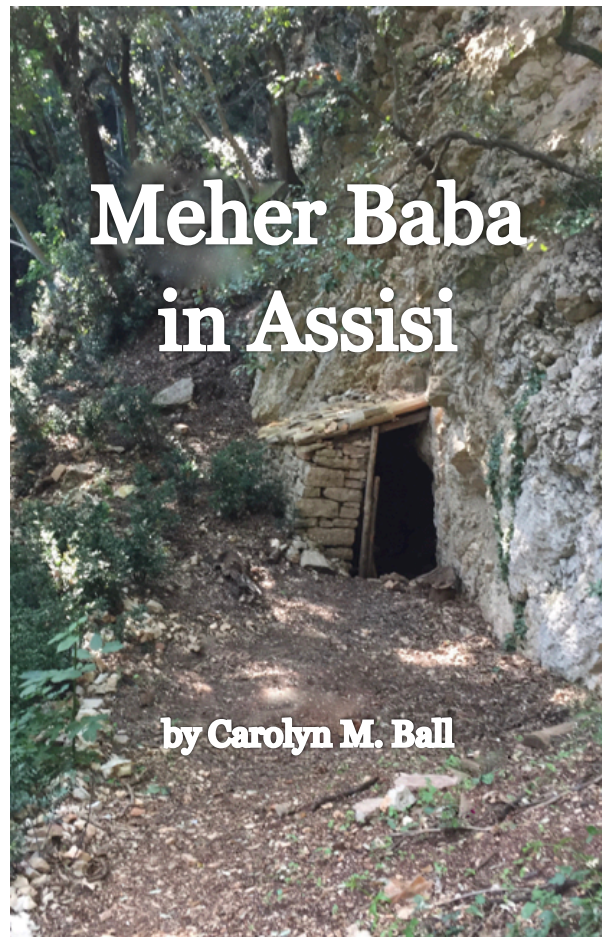
Baba...was entranced by the beauty of the Umbrian landscape. St Francis must have often walked this road and enjoyed this scene. —Herbert Davy, on descending the mountain from the cave.

I felt Assisi was the spiritual powerhouse between Meherabad and Myrtle Beach—the main link on the East West chain—emanating God, Baba's supreme Divine energy throughout Europe. The energy was so reminiscent of Meherazad and so very potent... —Sue Chapman



“You have compiled a real page turner. Reading your book brought back memories of my own and allowed me to read how this great lover of God—St. Francis— influenced and touched other Baba lovers.... You have created a real gift.” —Frank Parker

Carolyn Ball’s visits to Assisi, where she experienced a merging of Jesus and Beloved Meher Baba, of East and West, was so exquisite that she wanted to share that with others, and this book is the result. Carolyn is a counselor, and author of five books, including *Meher Baba’s Next Wave* and *Waves and Waves of Love*.



You can order *Meher Baba in Assisi* from Amazon.com, purchase it through Sheriar Books, or order it directly from her by sending your name and address with a check payable to Carolyn Ball for \$16.75 plus \$3.50 for shipping to: 890 Briarwood Drive, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572



Photo by Joy Stone

**Judy Stone
Nunneley
and Elizabeth
Erickson with the
photographer's
dog, Peaches,
when they visited
the Shrine to the
Perfect Man in
Columbus,
New Mexico,
June 1995.**

The Shrine to the Perfect Man

■ by Elizabeth Erickson

From a letter to Barbara Eck from Elizabeth Erickson, August, 1995

In a recent issue of *Glow International*, I read with interest an article about a man named Earl Starcher who died in Myrtle Beach last January. He was affectionately referred to as *Earl the Pearl* by Mani, Baba's sister. The article explained that Earl, an engineer, measured Baba's tomb in India and constructed a replica complete with the four sculptures, one on each cornice of the domed roof, that are symbols of four of the world's great religions.

This replica tomb, "the shrine to the Perfect Man,"

Earl chose to build in Columbus, New Mexico, home of Pancho Villa State Park. (Columbus is known also to be the stopping place for rogues, misfits, revolutionaries and sundries, according to my friend, Dick. *Great!* I thought).

My friend, Judy Stone Nunneley and I were installing an exhibition in Las Cruces. We decided to extend the trip and make a visit to the shrine. I made the calls, (we had the name of a contact), and my happiness grew into uncontrollable smiles as I thought of this trip that came to feel like a pilgrimage.

Judy Stone Nunneley, Joy Stone (Judy's mother) and I

set out early one morning for Columbus. About forty miles out, into the desert, I thought, "It's the Deccan plain." I'd not seen a landscape like it since India—the resemblance was real.

We arrived in Columbus at hot, high noon. The beautiful little town square cactus park was empty; the grocer suggested we use the phone in the town hall across the street. Mr. Dave Shade came to escort us to the shrine, explaining more details of how he knew Earl Starcher, and the present status of the place.

We pulled up to a beautiful sight—the tomb shape, a bright pink dome and under, the sign, "Mastery in Servi-

tude." I caught my breath. My eyes filled with gleeful tears.

Mr. Shade kindly gave us a tour of the grounds which included Earl's home, a garden behind, and the marvelous shrine. I walked up to the brightly painted turquoise green, rose, pink, orange building, repeating Baba's name so happily and stepping onto the threshold, looking into the interior. I can only say I stopped every thought.

The big chunk of plywood, leaning, and the several other lengths of board, along with the dirt floor, signaled the unfinished interior—or maybe the perfect finish. Then I saw the red plumb bob suspended from a string, hanging like a Heart in the exact center of the place. I was so moved by this. We quietly walked all around, examining the structure and taking in the enormity of the labor involved.

Later, we returned at sunset. We walked up the path to the threshold, said prayers and sang a few songs. We were very happy to be there. We lingered, snapped photos. The blue shadows were long. The pink dome reflected the soft orange light. I turned around one last time with the same delighted grin on my face that had been there for months in anticipation, said *thank you, Earl!* and walked back down the path to the truck.

This article first appeared in *The Heartland News*, Meher Baba Center of the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul), September 1995. © 1995 MBCTC. Reprinted with permission.

Quotation

"The practical way for the average man to express love is to speak lovingly, think lovingly and act lovingly towards all mankind, feeling God to be present in everyone."

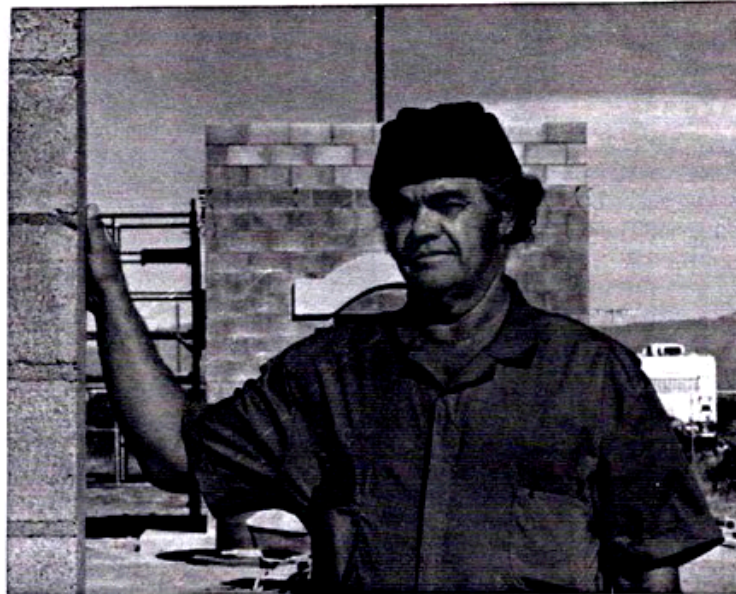
—Meher Baba

Listen, Humanity by Meher Baba, narrated and edited by Don Stevens, p. 187 © 1982, AMBPPCT

He built it with love —

Meher Baba's Shrine

■ by Richard J. Procyk



■ At left, Earl Starcher stands before the shrine during the beginning of the construction period in the mid-'80s.

■ Below, Earl climbs the scaffold. The dome in the foreground and the last 3 of the 4 corner sculptures were soon set into place.

The gleaming white dome of the shrine shone in the desert sun like a welcoming beacon in the distance as I drove into the little town of Columbus, New Mexico.

Then I turned into the last street and "The Perfect Man Shrine," seemed to loom up in its beauty and splendor against the contrasting stark desert sand and muted mountains in the background.

Once in front, the shrine built as a replica of Meher Baba's tomb in India stood tall like a surreal painting in gentle pastels of blue, pink, grey and white, emphasized by the shades of brown and grey of the desert floor. Emblazoned over the entrance is the message, "Mastery in Servitude."

The four sculptured religious icons placed on each corner of the domed roof symbolically proclaim four of the major religions of the world. The smile that covered my face was one of appreciation and joy as I viewed this statement made in stone—a monument built with love. I meditated quietly as my mind flashed back to the beginning of this journey.

It was in the early 1960s when Earl Starcher, who was my brother-in-law, came to my house in Miami, Florida for a visit. Earl at this time was employed by the Federal Aviation Agency as an Air Traffic Controller at the Miami International Airport. He definitely

was a man of this world, single, somewhat materialistic, living the hectic life surrounded with stewardesses, pilots—all in the fast lane, with no particular direction regarding religious philosophy or the spiritual life.

My parents were Theosophists and my library included books written by Krishnamurti, H.P. Blavatsky, Besant, Gurdjieff, Yogananda, Ouspensky, Alan Watts and others on metaphysics and religious philosophy. Earl inquired about this material and we were soon discussing the search for the spiritual path, the need for enlightenment, and that the serious neophyte had to reach the state of awareness before the life of "transformation" could begin. When Earl was leaving he asked where he

could go to expand on these ideas and was directed to the Theosophical Society in Miami.

Several months later he visited again and stated that he had become interested in astrology and that friends, Lois and Gerry Seeley (who now live in Myrtle Beach), had introduced him to the philosophy of Meher Baba. He appeared different in his demeanor and bore a quiet, contemplative attitude that was new and powerful. I listened while he spoke of a "higher purpose" and the need to live the spiritual life. It was obvious that his interest was sincere and I was impressed with the level of intensity he displayed so soon in his spiritual quest.

Apparently, as an "old soul," he quickly recognized the spiri-

tual path as part of the process of reawakening, and asked me to join him in several of the Meher Baba meetings at the Forbes home. After one of the meetings Ann Forbes joined us and smiled as she advised me that I had been a monk in a prior existence and that Earl and I had been brothers. It would be years later that I would realize how deep the karmic ties ran.

Earl's new life

Earl's service and love of Meher Baba took a dramatic turn in 1965 when he resigned from the Federal Aviation Agency. He gave up the material world and began the life of surrender and transformation by adopting the role of poverty, service, celibacy, detachment,



and complete devotion to Baba. The detachment was severe and included his family whom he loved, but would not see for the next 30 years. A few years later I was no longer married to his sister, making it possible in his eyes, to reestablish his concern for them through me.

When the Federal government learned Earl gave up his position to serve the poor, the handicapped, those in need, and devote himself to the spiritual path with no means of income, they suggested a disability pension as they assumed that only job related stress at the Miami Air Tower could account for such unusual behavior. Unusual, indeed, for those still caught up in the material world.

Earl was soon at the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, SC and later traveled the country looking for a spiritual site. He had a vision of a Baba learning center and shrine that would attract those who wished to study in a retreat-like atmosphere while at a replica of Baba's Tomb-shrine without having to travel to India as he had done several times. He remarked how much the aura of the New Mexico country side—the silence of the desert, the power of the mountains, and the feeling of spirituality—reminded him of India.

Speaking of the shrine in one of his letters, he states, "This shrine is not a temple or a place of worship. It is a replica of the Tomb-shrine of Avatar Meher

Baba that is located in Ahmednagar, India. The shrine has a temporary Reality and existence. Its value lies in pointing to Avatar Meher Baba's Reality of eternal existence and life eternal. The sole purpose of this shrine is to inform its visitors of Meher Baba's . . . love for all. At first, I wanted to name it the Perfect Man Shrine, however, as this name could have been confusing to the general public—The Avatar Meher Baba Shrine appeared more appropriate."

Building the shrine

Earl began the shrine in the mid-1980s, and immediately faced many challenging difficulties. When he applied for a building permit he was denied until he submitted a plan designed by an engineer. Then they insisted that a contractor build it, with more time lost and the additional anxiety and frustration. Finally, in a strange turn, he suddenly had permission to build it himself.

The letter continues, "At present (Oct. 12, 1988) I am working with white cement trying to get the proper mix to build the dome. The white cement should look very nice and will need little or no maintenance. The shrine walls will be constructed with 'split face' blocks. These blocks will be of a charcoal color and should go very well with the white cement. It should look very much like the field stone that they used in

the Samadhi."

To construct the religious symbols for the roof of the shrine and to obtain the precise building measurements, Earl requested that Ann Conlon, who was going to Meherabad, take telephoto close-ups of the religious icons along with the beams and inside construction of the Samadhi. Later a local sculptor would be brought in to re-create the religious icons for the roof and the spire for the dome.

Before working on the shrine, Earl had constructed a combination information center, library, and museum that he envisioned one day to be staffed by Baba followers for those who made the pilgrimage to Columbus. The information center, library, museum, garden and guest house are part of the buildings in the compound surrounded by 8-foot concrete walls. This research center complex was to accommodate serious students as a retreat and provide information to the visitors of the shrine.

The two years before his death on November 1, 1994, Earl had been contacting scientists regarding Meher Baba's concept of evolution. Some responded as did Professor Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, Cornell University, Division of Biological Sciences, Ithaca, New York:

"Dear Mr. Starcher,

Thank you for sending me the Fax message concerning the 1934 message of Avatar Meher Baba. I should be most grateful to you if you

would provide me with the published source of the statements you have included in your communication.

I suspect that what Meher Baba means by "In the beginning of this cycle" is a reference to the Kali-Yug, or present part of the cosmic cycle which embraces historic time.

I look forward to hearing from you about the reference citation.

*Sincerely,
Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, Professor"*

It is unfortunate, indeed, that Earl Starcher passed away before this line of communication and others were completed. However, his monument and research center is now a reality and awaits the pilgrim-visitor to view one man's effort to serve God.

You may visit

An archaeologist and his wife who is a teacher have now bought Earl's place and plan to move there in November. They promise to preserve it (the Shrine) and add flowers and a fountain. When I asked the wife why they would perpetuate its care, she said, "I can feel he built it with such love."

For those going west into the "land of enchantment," Dave Shade can make arrangements for a visit to the shrine. You will find Columbus is a charming village-town at 4,000-foot elevation, where there are no traffic lights, and a local phone call is still a dime. There is Martha's for Bed and Breakfast, Grannie's and a Mexican Cantina for home-cooked meals.

ings that would be comfortable on Worth Avenue (Palm Beach) are located on Broadway and the side streets. Dave and Judy Shade had the largest art gallery in town, and are still a presence with their art at the Las Fronteras.

The museum in town had been the old train depot when Baba rode through Columbus on his way to Albuquerque in the 1930s. Earl had no way of knowing when he purchased the land that Baba had been there before him, but he felt the spirituality and he knew that if he built the shrine "they would come...."

Richard J. Procyk is retired and lives in Jupiter, Florida where he is an avocational archaeologist and teaches courses at the museum there. He is currently at work on a book about the early archaeological history of that area.

