

The
Meher Baba Washington Gathering

December, 2008 – February, 2009



Washington, D.C., July 30, 1956

“I and God are One...

Therefore think only of Me and constantly repeat My name. The more you think of Me, the more you will realize My love for you. Think of Me, remain cheerful in all your trials and I am with you, helping you. The remedy for all ills is to remember Me constantly and wholeheartedly. Think always of Me, whatever you may be doing, then gradually you will realize that it is I doing everything through you. The best course for My lover is to remember Me wholeheartedly as much as one can... and leave the rest to Me.”

—Avatar Meher Baba
The Samadhi, by Bal Natu p. 96



Calendar of Events



Sat., December 20
Pamela Butler-Stone
301 946-0236

Holiday Party

Party Begins with a Potluck – 6:00PM
Come celebrate the season of light at Pamela and Saroja's home. After a potluck, we will play Baba charades and games. *Please call Pamela to coordinate your potluck contribution.*

Sat., January 17
Terry & Rob Barton
703 883-8093

Gutta Meeting & Potluck

Meeting & Potluck – 5:00PM (Meeting follows at 8:00PM)
This Gutta will focus on planning next quarter's meetings. Our regular coming together to plan the calendar makes our meetings so much richer and generates great ideas for special guests. We need your input!

Welcome Home!

Gathering – 7:30PM Meeting Begins – 8:00PM
Well, welcome back to illusion anyway. Members of Meher Baba's Washington, D.C. family will share stories of recent trips to India. We are grabbing them while they are still jet lagged to get a whiff of the perfume they carry from Baba's Samadhi.

Special Guest Tex Hightower joins us for Amartithi this year:

Sat., January 31
Pamela Butler-Stone
301 946-0236

Amartithi Celebration with Tex Hightower

Gathering – 7:30PM Meeting Begins – 8:00PM
Tex will share the extraordinary story of his first meeting Meher Baba in 1952 at the Meher Center.

Sun., February 1
Jeff & Geri Craddock
301 588-6073

Amartithi Brunch with Tex Hightower

Potluck Brunch – 12:00PM Meeting Begins – 1:30PM
More stories with Tex in the woods of Silver Spring. Please bring food to share. There will be plenty of coffee for those who stayed up to keep silence along with Meherabad. *Please call Geri to coordinate potluck contribution.*

Sat., February 14
Marian Lobred
202 362-0664

Valentine's Day with Our Beloved

Gathering – 6:30PM Dinner and Meeting – 7:00PM
Within the context of Baba's Love, we will read excerpts from Rustom Falahati's *Real Treasures* and share our personal experiences. Marian will host a delicious dinner. *Please RSVP to marianlobred@starpower.net.*

Special Guests Jeff Wolverton and Nan Wicker join us for Meher Baba's Birthday:

Sat., February 21
Pamela Butler-Stone
301 946-0236

Stories and Music for Baba's Birthday

Gathering – 6:30PM Dinner – 7:00PM Meeting Begins – 8:00PM
Come join in an evening of music by Jeff and Nan and a discussion about New Life—how do we live without worry in these turbulent times? Saleem will cook dinner for us all before the meeting. *Please RSVP to Pamela.*

Sun., February 22
Marian Lobred
202 362-0664

Birthday Party with Jeff and Nan will continue!

Party Begins with a Potluck Brunch – 12:00PM
Come celebrate Baba's birthday in a style befitting the King, with stories, music, singing, and, of course, birthday cake!



News from the Gathering



There has been a tremendous amount of upheaval in the world around us since the last newsletter. Baba's statement that "God alone is real and nothing matters but love for God" is a constant challenge to us all as we live in the midst of these tumultuous times. The following message was given by Avatar Meher Baba at Pickfair on 1st June, 1932, and seems to have relevance to our current world situation:

First, it must be understood that the depression is not an accident, nor is it purely the result of over-production and inflation. Those, although the immediate causes, are merely the instruments which were used to bring the depression about. The depression itself was caused by those entrusted with the evolution of humanity. Man has to be stripped of his material possessions in order that he may realize through actual experience that his true base is spiritual and not material. Then will he be ready to receive the Truth which I have come to bring.

This Truth consists of the knowledge that man, instead of being a limited, separate individual completely bound by the illusion of time, space and customs, is eternal in his nature and infinite in his resources. The world illusion is a dream of his imagining, a play enacted in the theater of his consciousness—a comedy in which he is at once the author, producer, director and star. But his absorption in the role, which he has chosen to enact, has made him forgetful of his true self, and he stumbles now as a creature through the path he has created.

Man must be awakened to his true nature. He must see that all material expression depends upon and flows from a spiritual being. Then he will be steadfast and serene under all circumstances. There will be no further need then for the depression and it will disappear...



Photo of a Car Rear Window in Mumbai
Photo © 2008 New York Times

... The self, in fact, is a limitless, indivisible, spiritual essence—eternal in its nature and infinite in its resources. The greatest romance possible in life is to discover this Eternal Reality in the midst of infinite change. Once a person has experienced this, one sees oneself in everything that lives. One recognizes all of life as his life, everybody's interests as his own. The fear of death, the desire for self-preservation, the urge to accumulate substance, the conflict of interests, the anger of thwarted desires are gone. One is no longer bound by the habits of the past, no longer swayed by the hopes of the future. One lives in and enjoys each present moment to the fullest.

Lord Meher Vol. 5
by Bhau Kalchuri

Upcoming Events

We are delighted to welcome Tex Hightower as our special guest for Amartithi. Tex had the privilege of meeting Meher Baba at the Meher Center in 1952, '56, and '58, and again at Guruprasad in 1962. He was one of Margaret Craske's dancers, and one of the few who were given the opportunity to carry Baba in His chair. Tex is an amazing storyteller who has an amazing story to tell. Be sure to mark your calendars for this wonderful weekend!

Jeff Wolverton and Nan Wicker will be our special guests for Baba's birthday celebration. Jeff, who worked closely with Bhau on his book, *Meher Baba's New Life*, will discuss themes of the New Life as they relate to living in the present, particularly during in these anxious and challenging times. Jeff and Nan will interweave their lovely music into the talks. It promises to be an inspiring weekend.

Autumn Highlights

YOUTH SAHAVAS SHARING

The recent calendar got off to a beautiful start as Saleem worked his epicurean magic and brought everyone together with his divine Indian cooking. Following the feast, we were given a rare inside glimpse of the Youth Sahavas, as a number of Baba young people shared what the Youth Sahavas meant to them through photos, stories and music. Many of us who came to Baba in the '70s were struck by the parallels of their stories to our own formative times with Baba at the Meher Center.

SPECIAL GUEST JIM MCGREW

We were delighted to have Jim McGrew as our special guest in November. He spoke about his new book, *Avataric Advents*, which describes the lives and teachings of the last seven avatars. We were reminded how Baba had said he would “bring the religions of the world together like beads on one string,” as Jim provided details and context for each of the advents. He also recounted his extraordinary five-minute meeting with Baba at Meherazad in 1967, and how that has influenced his life through the last 40 years.

BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN IN RETREAT

Twenty-four people gathered for our second annual mountain retreat at the Chanin/McConkey farms near Charlottesville, Virginia. The retreat began on Saturday afternoon with a beautiful Baba welcome of sunny skies and 70-degree temperatures (an unusual gift for early November). We ate lunch on the porch, soaking in the beauty of the mountain vistas and the autumn colors. After lunch we took a lovely walk down to the pond and then visited Edible Landscaping where we sampled persimmons, figs and other exotic fruits. In the evening, Saleem and his cooking crew created another culinary masterpiece which was savored by all. The evening culminated with a showing of “You Alone Exist” followed by the Dhuni fire. On Sunday, after breakfast and morning Arti, we took a brisk two-hour hike along a mountain stream up to a beautiful waterfall. The retreat was so renewing and the setting so beautiful, we hope to make this a semi-annual event. Our thanks to the McConkeys and the Chanins for being such gracious hosts and to everyone who contributed to this great weekend.

GRATITUDE MEETING

The meeting held at Marian's had a certain transcendent quality about it. As we sat around the table sharing

what we were grateful for in our lives, the atmosphere in the room became noticeably lighter and Baba's Presence more deeply felt. Baba once told a devotee to “always be grateful, to give thanks to God every day.” Following are some of the gems of gratitude that were shared that evening.

I am grateful to know that God is in the world and that He chose me to know about Him.

–To have known the Mandali and to see by example how to love and serve Baba.

–To have lived long enough for a second chance to correct my life's long-lived difficulties.

–To have been married all of these years this lifetime to the same person.

–To know that there is more to life than what appears on the surface and to rely on that perspective as a ballast in the storm.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be in the same places where Meher Baba has lived and worked: Meherabad, Meherazad, and the Meher Center.

–For beauty

–This earth

–My health

–Work

–For my lovely wife

–The spiritual life; no reading is more interesting to me.

–My Baba friends who are my closest connections this lifetime.

I am grateful for the difficulties of my life—knowing that they draw me closer to Him.

–That I have loved and have been so loved.

–The Center at Myrtle Beach—that arrival there inspires from me an outpouring of gratitude for it.

–An ability to worry less, knowing that my life is His.

–This lifetime and the sanskaras that I have with their challenges as well as blessings.

–My sense of humor—to not take life so seriously.

I am grateful for Africa, which provides an opportunity to serve, and to observe sacrifice and suffering enough to cause our own to pale.

–For a beautiful daughter, grateful for my children, my family, the high quality of my friendships—including many who are strong women.

P.S. We are grateful to Melanie Davis for recording many of these expressions of gratitude.

NEW BOOK OF POETRY BY ARSENIO RODRIGUEZ

Arsenio Rodriguez, who was part of the Meher Baba Washington Gathering for several years, has just published a book of his original poetry, *The Fermentation of Light*. The book is dedicated to Meher Baba and includes a beautiful poem entitled “Mehera.” Deepak Chopra

has written the forward to the book, which is available from Amazon.com for \$15.00. This could be that perfect Christmas gift you have been looking for!

A TREASURE FROM INDIA

As part of our Rustom Falahati series, we now include another great story from Mani entitled “Peter the Dog.”

A story Mani would often recount was about Baba's dog, Peter. One day Mani was called into Mandali Hall by Baba. He was sitting in His usual chair and the men Mandali were sitting on the floor around Him. Baba gestured towards His feet and Mani noticed that Peter had crawled over toward Baba and was now sleeping there. Thinking that Baba wanted her to remove Peter, she started forward, but Baba gestured to her to look at Peter and she noticed that the dog's legs were moving in his sleep. He was whining as well and Baba gestured, “He is dreaming. He is having a bad dream and is very afraid. He is dreaming that he is being attacked by big dogs and he is very scared. He does not know that he is safe and sleeping at my feet.”

Mani would then add, “That's how we all are. Just like Peter, we are sleeping safely at His feet, but we forget this. Like Peter, we are so absorbed in our illusory dream that we take the illusory suffering to be real and feel the pain. Only on awakening do we experience the reality—that we were always safe with Him.

It helps, to remember during our moments of suffering, that we are only dreaming. He is always with us. Don't let the dream overwhelm you. Remember Him all the time. Call out to Him. Talk to Him. Repeat His name. This weakens the effect of the dream. Have you ever had a dream where you are aware that it's a dream? It's like that. When you remember Him constantly, you become aware of the dream and it does not overwhelm you.

—Rustom Falahati
The Real Treasure II, © 2008.
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Housekeeping Notes

INFINITE INTELLIGENCE

Pamela is looking for her copy of *Infinite Intelligence*. She has loaned it to someone in the group, but now can't remember who that may be (we've all been there!). Any help would be appreciated. Thanks.

News From the World

MUMBAI EVENTS

The terrorist attacks in Mumbai that began on November 26th made headlines for many days. The photo on the first page was part of a slide show published by the *New York Times* online (the whole slide show may still be available at http://www.nytimes.com/slide-show/2008/11/27/world/asia/20081127-mumbaiday_11.html). Baba's face has clearly been seen, and been clearly seen, by a large public.

How did Baba's image come to be here? The following was written by a Baba lover in India:

This is a picture of a car which is always parked outside the restaurant Leopold's, the place where the shooting began on Wednesday night in Bombay. The car belongs to one of the restaurant's owner who comes from a Baba lover family and in the restaurant there is also a huge picture of Baba (the Real Happiness one) right above the cashier. The terrorists apparently sat in the restaurant, ate their meal, paid their bills and then proceeded to open fire, so at some point they most definitely must have caught a glimpse of the picture. It is awfully hard to miss.

MEHER BABA IN THE MEDIA

“Don't Worry, Be Happy”

This caption appeared recently on the front page of the *Washington Post* (December 5, 2008). Beneath it was the following:

Researchers conclude that happiness is contagious and can spread like the flu among the people in your life, unlike unhappiness, which is less contagious... When one person in the network became happy, the chances that a friend, sibling, spouse or next-door neighbor would become happy increased between 8 percent and 34 percent, the researchers found.

The article's description of the contagious nature of happiness brings to mind Baba's words in the following quotation:

True love is essentially self-communicative. Those who don't have it catch it from those who have it. True love is unconquerable and irresistible. It goes on gathering power and spreading itself until eventually it transforms everyone whom it touches.