

“Stay with God: a Four-Day Program on Francis Brabazon’s Epic Masterpiece”

Meherabode, Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California
1214 S Van Ness Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90019
October 29–30 and November 5–6, 2016

Composed at Meher Baba’s directive, read out to Him several times, and incorporating Baba’s own additions and corrections, Francis Brabazon’s *Stay with God* stands alone in the “Meher Baba library” as a presentation without parallel of who the God-Man is and the significance of His Avataric Advent. Sweeping in what it undertakes and supremely beautiful in its poetry, Francis’s epic masterpiece lays a major foundation for the culture of New Humanity in the age to come. Indeed, Meher Baba Himself said that it was second in importance only to *God Speaks*.

Over the four days of this program we will begin to unpack some of the dazzling riches of this multi-dimensional epic treasure palace. The poem is divided into five sections or “books”: the first, a biographical narrative of Baba’s life through the Meherabad Sahavas of 1955; the second, a love-poem; the third, a poetic retelling of the Divine Theme narrative in *God Speaks*; the fourth, a meditation on the “turning” that brings one to the threshold of the spiritual path and the feet of the Perfect Master; and the last, a sweeping survey of the cultural and spiritual history of the world, replete with commentary and criticism, as Francis proclaims and celebrates the descent of the God-Man and the role that He plays age after age.

Much of the program will be devoted to tracing the progress of his “argument” through its various modalities and genres and subject matters. Francis’s many cultural references will be fleshed out and their relevance to his greater theme explained. But most of all, seminar time will be devoted to a close reading of Francis’s poetry. For Francis’s presentation of Baba and His Avatarhood not only marshals a tremendous force of conviction that thrills and persuades the mind, but it is replete with moments of rare poignancy and exquisite beauty that enthrall the heart and awaken the higher feelings, and especially the feeling of love.

The Weekend of October 29–30

Saturday, October 29

10:30 am – 12:30 pm **Session 1.** “An Introduction to *Stay with God*: Its Author, Textual History, and Organization.” (i) A preview of the three-day program. (ii) The vision of *Stay with God* and its possible significance as a tool in Meher Baba’s work for humanity. (iii) The life and literary oeuvre of Francis Brabazon. (iv) The making of the book: a literary history of *Stay with God*. (v) The organization of *Stay with God*: a survey of the book and its parts.

2:30 – 4:30 pm **Session 2.** “The Epic Biography: The Avatar’s Life Narrative through 1955 as Presented in Book I.” (i) The “proem” and its epic resonances. (ii) The Avataric theme and Meher Baba’s early years. (iii) The Meherabad years, the world travels, and Meher Baba’s work with the masts. (iv) Francis’s thematic use of narrative digressions: several major themes. (v) The New Life and the three “free” lives. (vi) The great gatherings and messages of the 1950s, culminating in the Meherabad Sahavas of 1955. (vii) Overview: Francis’s self-conscious act of situating of Meher Baba’s life story in the context of the great Avataric narratives.

Sunday, October 30

10:30 am – 12:30 pm **Session 3.** “Avatar and Personal God: Francis’s Love Song in Book II.” (i) The narrative framing of the love song. (ii) The lover-Beloved dynamic within the greater thematics of SWG. (iii) Some aspects of the love-song as genre. (iv) Development of the love-song: some major themes. (v) Close reading.

2:30 – 4:30 pm **Session 4.** “God Speaking: Francis’s poetic recapitulation of the Divine Theme narrative in Book III.” (i) Historical background: the publication of *God speaks* and the November 1955 Meherabad Sahavas.” (ii) Meher Baba’s discourse on the primal Word (“MMM”). (iii) The Divine Theme as core narrative. (iv) The five passes through the Divine Theme (or four plus one): a close reading.

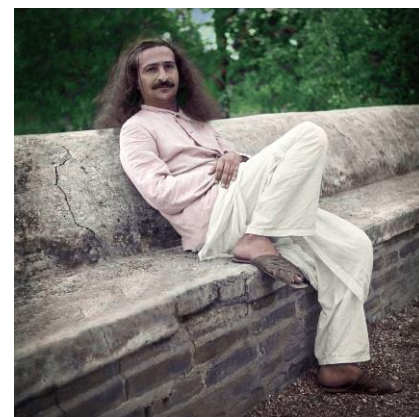
The Weekend of November 5–6

Saturday, November 5

10:30 am – 12:30 pm **Session 5.** “Book IV, ‘The Steps to His Feet’: Wisdom Literature and the Search for the Way.” (i) Context of literary genre: the ghazal, and wisdom literature. (ii) The context of Francis’s literary oeuvre. (iii) The context of SWG. (iv) An analysis of poetic form, theme, structure, and movement in Book IV. (v) Close reading.

2:00 – 4:30 pm **CONCERT**

As a shift, this afternoon gathering will be devoted to the enjoyment of a musical concert, including song-settings from Francis Brabazon’s *Stay With God* and from the *New Life Play*, songs by Ward Parks and others, all performed by Ward Parks, Elaine Munson, Greg & Gay Dunn, and Brendan Montague. Seminar participants are invited to enjoy the concert, and people not attending the Seminar are ALSO invited to enjoy the concert.



Sunday, November 6

10:30 am – 12:30 pm **Session 6.** “Book V, First Exploration: Some Major Organizing Themes, and Francis’s Use of Historical and Cultural References.” (i) Laying a new foundation: the civilizational project of Book V. (ii) The true meaning and significance of “art.” (iii) The historical narrative as a connecting thread throughout Book V. (iv) The import of Francis’s allusions and references: a few examples.

2:30 – 4:30 pm **Session 7.** “Book V, Second Exploration: A Review of the ‘Argument’ through its Four Parts.” (i) Most of this session will be devoted to a tracing through the course of Francis’s “argument” in Book V, which special focus and close reading of select passages. (ii) The five-stanza “Coda” with its extraordinary summation of the poem’s major themes and exhortation to “stay with God!” (iii) An overview of *Stay with God* in the context of an emerging Meher Baba “culture” and the poem’s significance for future generations of readers.