

Stay with God: a Seven-Session Course of Study of Francis Brabazon's Epic Masterpiece

Saturdays, 2:30–4:30 p.m., April 15 through June 3
Baba's House, Avatar's Abode

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 sessions 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.

Schedule and Topics

Saturday, April 15. 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Session 1. "An Introduction to *Stay with God: Its Author, Textual History, and Organization.*" (i) The life and literary oeuvre of Francis Brabazon. (ii) The making of the book: a literary history of *Stay with God*. (iii) The organization of *Stay with God*: a survey of the book and its parts. (iv) The "proem" and its epic resonances.

Saturday, April 22. 2:30–4:30 p.m.

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

Saturday, April 29, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Session 3. “Praise and Complaint: Francis’s Love Song to God Personal.” (i) Books II and III in the greater design of *Stay with God*. (ii) The love song genre and its conventions. (iii) Praise and complaint: Francis’s use of Baba’s metaphysics in the modalities of personal address. (iv) A close reading of “the Love Song of John Kerry.”

Saturday, May 6, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Session 4. “‘God’s Speaking’: The Divine Theme Narrative in Book III.” (i) A review of the historical context: the Meherabad Sahavas and the publication of *God Speaks* in November of 1955. (ii) Francis’s use of the musical form of “theme and variation” in his four ten-stanza passes through the Divine Theme. (iii) A close reading of Book III, specially focusing on Francis’s use of governing metaphors.

Saturday, May 13, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Session 5. “Book IV and Guidance to the Seeker.” (i) Book IV on the context of the world’s wisdom literature and Francis’s own literary oeuvre. (ii) The structure of Book IV, and its place within *Stay with God*.” (iii) A close reading of the “Steps.”

Saturday, May 27, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Session 6. “Book V, Part 1: 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.

Saturday, June 3, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Session 7. “Book V, Part 2: 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.