

# Mehr Fardoonji



I am so sorry to hear of Mehr passing. When I first came to Chester I attended her yoga classes at the Quaker Centre in Chester. I found her to be a calm and helpful teacher and my yoga improved under her supervision. Most importantly for me there was a crèche for my young son

**Andree O'Connor**

As a yoga teacher myself, i was very glad to be able to meet Mehr, and exchange some ideas.

Thanks to Christine a friend of mine who introduce me to Mehr

She stays in my heart!

**Jeanne du Manoir**

Thank you for been part of our life Mehr, we will always treasure our memories! Lots of love from

Chris. ❤️

**Christine Patterson**

I met Mehr in early December 2025 for the first and what would be the last time. She was very hospitable offering my friend Laura and I tea and dark chocolate digestives which reminded me of childhood. She kindly chatted to us for nearly 2 hours where we discussed her rich and interesting life. She was also curious about us both. She kindly said that we should meet up in the new year and that I should come over for dinner. I wish I had met her earlier on in my life. May she rest in peace.

**Dhivya Prasad**

I have realised that since her death, many of the things I think, say and do are because of her. She was a wise and generous spirit who I'm sure will live on in the hearts and minds of so many of us.

**Janet Dutton**

I grew up in Malpas, my Dad was a local vet, and my Mum was a friend of Mehr.

It's so lovely to hear that Oakcroft continues as part of her legacy.

**Jo Evelyn**

I met Mehra when she was in her early seventies and i in my mid forties. The bond was instantaneous and deeply nourishing for me . I loved her stubbornness, her love of meeting people on Indian trains and just being the rich personality she remained to the end. Being with her in the weeks she recovered from pneumonia in 2024 was a blessing and privilege. Thank you all for sharing memories

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**Jyoti Saikia**

In memory of our dear friend Mehr Jan, who was not only an excellent friend but also a philosopher and a guiding star for many of us. Though physically she is not in Oakcroft, but her work, her idealism, her dedication towards the people and the cause she believed will remain, so her sweet loving memories will be there with all of us. Jay Bhumi was her slogan! I salute the daughter of Mother Earth with tears in my eyes.

We will have all religions prayer meetings in her memory at our Ashram.

**Krishna Mohanty**

Mehr lived a full life, on terms true to her selfless beliefs. As family and friend she touched our lives to make them the richer for it. She was a lady of impeccable character, full of energy and good humour.

Our family will miss her. May her soul Rest in Peace.

**Naush Dinshaw**

We have many happy memories of our friendship with Mehr and of Oakcroft Gardens in their heyday in the 1960s.

**Philip and Felicity Bryers**

Dear Mehr, thank you for everything you taught me, about yoga, about gardens, about living a good life and trying to be a good human being.

I'll miss my teacher and my dear friend.

Sheena

**Sheena Hodgson**

I attended Mehr's yoga class when I came to Chester about 48 years ago. It was at Upton School and then later moved to The Quaker Meetibg House in Frodsham Street, Chester. Mehr was a great yoga teacher and we always had to do yoga, pranayama, relaxation and study a book / usually Jung or Patanjali's aphorisms and then have a discussion about it. Mehr was very feisty, quick to correct you and very friendly and open and as long as you stayed on the right side of her you were fine! Luckily, I came from a feisty Jewish family where everyone talked at once and we were used to confrontation and standing up for ourselves - so I was an equal challenge for Mehr and we got on great with plenty of laughing and expressing ourselves honestly....

However, if you were a quiet type, Mehr would challenge you and some people were really scared by this! It was all done with affection and psychological tactics ..... and many a time I had to come to the defence of a frightened person!

Mehr was full of life, energy and amazing straightforward opinions!

She was also a brilliant knitter! Those Kaf Fassett patterns were no problem to her and she made amazing cardigans full of colour and with natural wool.

We are going to miss this amazing spirited, independent and beautiful woman!

Sue xx

**Susan Wine**

One abiding memory I have of Mehr is her quick thinking. As a family we were at Oakcroft to celebrate Dad's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. At one point my son William ate a muffin, which unknown to him contained walnuts which provoked a severe anaphylactic reaction. Mehr rang the local doctor, but he was out. She received advice from the doctor's wife for Will to be taken to hospital by car. Mehr instead realizing that matters were reaching crisis point rang straight away for an ambulance, which arrived amazingly quickly. The paramedics immediately knew what to do by administering an adrenaline drip, which I am sure saved Will's life. Will was taken to Chester hospital, where he fully recovered.

I have many memories of Oakcroft, which I visited on many occasions over the years. These include admiring the magnificent market garden. Mehr with some help must have worked incredibly hard to make a success of it. The vegetarian meals she prepared often produced

In double quick time, because of other commitments, were invariably tasty and nourishing.

Mehr had a great capacity to get things done on issues which lesser mortals discussed but didn't take action on until it became popular to do so. Examples include Mehr being a pioneer some 10 years ago by installing a heat pump at Oakcroft and driving an electric car. Mehr's strong character and indomitable spirit will be sorely missed.

### **Bevis Gillett**

I first met Mehr in the early 80's when I was a junior doctor living in Shrewsbury and doing a GP attachment in Nantwich. During my commutes, I would stop at Oakcroft to buy organic vegetables and I joined her yoga class; later I did some training at the Chester Natural Health Centre and so collected my veg from Mehr's market stall and attended her yoga class in the Meeting house. In addition to yoga, she taught me much about organic growing, nutrition, herbal medicine, Ghandism, Vedanta. She introduced me to Resurgence magazine, took me to an exhibition about the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore and to see a play of the Bhagavad Gita. She told me fascinating stories of her life and work and we often talked about going to India together but, sadly, I was never able to join her on her trips.

When I subsequently moved to Ruthin she introduced me to some dear friends, Mary Johnson and Janet Tyrrell. Mary and I continued to attend Mehr's yoga class in Chester for a number of years and Mehr would often visit us both in Ruthin. She always got on famously with our three small children who delighted in her stories and her playfulness. Mehr introduced me to the work of Kaffe Fassett

and she knitted a beautiful blanket and a hat which did good service for all three babies. She also made an exquisite shawl for my daughter's wedding.

We saw much less of each other after my family moved back to Bristol in 1994, but we caught up most years when she attended the Land Trust meetings and stayed over with us in Bristol. It was also a delightful coincidence that I became a Member of Redland Quaker Meeting which had been the spiritual home of Nicholas prior to marrying Mehr and moving to Oakcroft.

On reflection, Mehr has been a large influence in my life and she has taught me a lot which has helped me in my personal and professional life. She has been an inspiration and I will miss knowing she is there but I'm glad that her work will live on through Oakcroft.

**Melanie Mackintosh**

Thank you very much for telling us of Mehr's death – particularly as we thinking of visiting her when spring comes. It was lovely to hear of your very recent visit, and to think of her being buried on her own cherished land. We cherished her friendship, and can only be happy at such a lovely death.

In peace, Diana & John

**John and Diana Lampen**

In September 2025, Mehr received two visitors, Keshari, who lives in America, and Krishna (also Known as Bou), who is her Grandmother. Bou lives in India. Keshari is the daughter of Mehr's friend Kasturi, Kasturi being the daughter of Bou... Keshari sent these photographs from their visit. Mehr met Bou in India when she was a teenager and Mehr was in her twenties.



Mehr's life and work at Oakcroft Organic Market Gardens were truly inspiring. When we visited Oakcroft, we were struck not only by the beauty and abundance of the land, but by the spirit in which it was nurtured with such care, independence, and quiet determination. Mehr's commitment to organic growing, community, and shared values shone through everything she did. Oakcroft felt less like a business and more like a living expression of the principles she believed in so deeply.

We remember her as someone who embodied the roots of the organic movement: patient, practical, principled, and generous. Her story reminded us that organic growing is not just about food, but about relationships - with the soil, with people, and with the future. It is especially moving to hear that she took such joy in seeing a new generation carrying forward the work at Oakcroft. That continuity feels like a beautiful part of her legacy.

We feel privileged to have known Mehr as part of the Suma community and to have shared her story. She was indeed one of our longest-standing customers, but more than that, she was part of the wider family of growers and co-operators who have helped shape the movement over decades. Her life stands as a testament to what steady, values-led work can achieve.

Mehr will be remembered with affection, respect, and gratitude.

With warmest wishes and solidarity,

**Sophie**

**On behalf of everyone at Suma**

I first met Mehr when my wife and I were living in North Wales 20 years ago. Ruth was working at the Cheese Shop in Chester where Mehr dropped off her vegetables. I found her utterly inspiring, emanating a quiet truth that connected immediately with me.

I subsequently joined the Soil Association and was able to work with her, supporting her search for a successor for Oakcroft and the relationship with our Land Trust.

Mehr was way ahead of her time and lived such a grounded and principled life. Considering her achievements I was always impressed with her humbleness. Mehr was a guiding star, and I feel unbelievably privileged to have known her.

**Ben Raskin**



Dear Mehr

We send you are lots of love from Alex and Rieky.

5 years ago I came with Antien en Merel to your living. It was great to met you in your our living.

We went to Chester with you, saw all your friend and have a special time there.

That moment will always be in my heart and also the love you gave Antien.

You were like a (second) mother for her.

I hope you can look back to that special life you have had. Your life with all your friends in India and England, special with your love of your live Nicolas and your beautiful gardens full of vegetables.

I always hear -again and again- Nicholas' story about the moment he met Hitler in Austria speaking. And also the moment we were in Mumbai (your born-country) in Gandhi's house to read the letter Gandhi wrote to Hitler in 1939.

Al these moments are in my heart and they will be always remembering you.

Thank you Mehr for all the things you gave to us and specially to Antien.

Have a beautiful journey to the big Light and hope you will meet all your dear-ones again.



Alex and Reiky



Pauline: I am eternally grateful to Mehr for giving me the confidence to continue as an organic gardener in the sixties, when I didn't know anyone else trying.

She was a true guru for the organic movement.

Both she and Minkie were extraordinary women, who enriched and broadened the lives of so many.

A privilege to have known them.

John: We and our children were always delighted and intrigued by the continuous stream of folk working in the garden. Apparently, they had frequently found her name and address pinned to a hostel noticeboard somewhere in Europe.

### **John and Pauline Smout**

The passing of Mehr feels much greater than the passing of a single person. As a child I realised Mehr was different and a very special person. It was only 30 years on that I started to realise how far she was ahead of the rest of the world, in terms of philosophy and the way she lived.

Mehr, your presence will be dearly missed and I'm sorry I did not have more time to spend with you.

Jonathan.

### **Jonathan Smout**

Precious memories of a day at Loch Muick – Jilly with our beautiful, extraordinary Mehr.

Mehr was so keen to get into the mountains and so I suggested we could walk to Loch Muick beneath Lochnagar, our closest Cairngorm summit. It was 10 years ago this year which I can scarce believe..

We took a big, ambitious loop up to the Loch which she absolutely loved..taking in the herds of red deer and Queen Victoria's boathouse on the way. Lochnagar held clouds and rain for us that day, but even with a challenging wind, Mehr had such stamina. I begged her for this photo on the bridge over the little Muick close to the Loch



The mountains may have been the stated objective but my real assigned mission from Mehr that day was to find her some Aberdeen Angus cattle. I'm not sure if everyone will know how much she loved these particular animals! I certainly hadn't til that wonderful day. After our long walk we drove rather unsuccessfully around to some of the spots I knew I had seen them..but the herds that I know are moved continuously around..I began to worry!..Luckily, just before I knew time would be up, we finally struck gold with a field of cows...and calves! :)) Mehr was so happy and excited - photos were essential! Slightly tricky parking on the approach to the King's residence at Birkhall(!) but I was too relieved to have completed the mission to care for the interest we ourselves attracted and in any case somehow being with Mehr always made me feel slightly invincible!

Braver and more certain of what was needed, of what was important in life...time with Mehr always challenged my thinking for the better and inspired me to go again. We loved her deeply as our neighbour for nearly 50 years 💔





The photo is one Mehr gave me from her time in India working on a Gandhian project. It was a shared love for India through which I came to know Mehr. Amazing in the early seventies to find an Indian lady running a market garden in rural Cheshire where there was no local demand for “organic” vegetables.

I was young, searching and impressionable and immediately inspired by Mehr’s lived ideals. I was also quite dreamy in my 20s and Mehr (maybe 40) extremely energetic. In retrospect meeting Mehr was like encountering a force in my life that helped waken me up. I remember learning from Mehr the devotion and care needed to transplant seedlings and the daily discipline of opening and closing the greenhouse. There was never a dull moment and life with Mehr always seemed exciting. Besides her practicality Mehr was such a clear thinker. Despite her strong views I also remember that she enjoyed discussions. I recall a conversation with her several years ago when we spoke about life after death. I remember trying to express some thoughts about journeying to a new birth. Mehr’s view ( at the time anyway) was being like a drop of water dissolving into the river and flowing into the vastness of the ocean. Whatever her experience is now I know she will live on in the hearts of many of us.

I wonder if anyone has ever chronicled the life of Oakcroft and its different phases with Minkie, Peter and Nicolas playing their parts - alongside the countless comings and goings in the flat above. Quite a story!

My other photo of Mehr is from a few years ago when she came to Scotland to meet Jyoti Sahi, an artist and writer she admired from India. This was the one occasion I could offer her hospitality after my countless visits to Oakcroft over the years.

**Judith Jones**

Thinking of Mehr today. So lovely to hear her still familiar voice on the video on the Oakcroft website. I wish it hadn't been so long since I last heard it as Mehr was a pretty fantastic person to have encountered and I am sorry I did not stay in touch. We lived at Oakcroft for a year when I was 10 and I have very fond memories of the place and of Mehr. The bouncy, mossy lawn that was perfect for gymnastics, the intriguing yoga classes (why did they do headstands so slowly), the peace bus parked round the back that we used to play in, learning to avoid picking spinach, and Mehr.

She was very good at making us children feel special. I remember just me being invited to her flat downstairs for lunch and taught to make poached eggs without a poacher which seemed like a magic trick to me (and thoughtful given that me, mum, Colum and Finn were all sharing one room upstairs). She knitted small gnome like dolls called Oakies for a whole gang of kids and they were all different and highly prized. She would decide what animal you were and tell you. She told me I was a chipmunk which I was very insulted by having only ever seen the cartoon version until I saw real ones in America years later and realised that I hadn't needed to take such offence (Alison was a squirrel though and I was jealous). We met lots of lovely and interesting people at Oakcroft and I feel lucky to have lived there and met them, and spent time with her.

Love,

**Ceiridwen**







Across time & place.

32 years ago, handwritten on a small piece of paper, pinned to the library noticeboard was a number.... I phoned it.

You answered. Clearly, precisely and kindly: Malpas 860213.

I still hear you say it now.

And so my travels began.

Take off was Monday night yoga.

From where we journeyed far and wide.

As your students, we stretched and relaxed our bodies and our minds.

With you, we travelled through ancient times and faraway places on the magic carpet woven by your words.

What an adventure! Bumping overland to India, landscapes and doors opening for us. The children in the mountain school bringing hot morning tea, then taking a train to a southern ashram.

Working the land, building, weaving, learning, teaching and planting.

Greatness from tiny seeds.

Back home, from the first snowdrops lifting us out of winter slumber to the falling of the last leaves giving way to the snow-coated distant hills- we saw them all with you.

Everything was joined up.

You connected us. Each of us a single stitch looped together into an amazing, everlasting pattern knitted by your diligent hands.

Past becomes present becomes future, becomes past, becomes present becomes future....

Here we are, right now.

Silent tears in the night.

Making tiny pools of gratitude that become great oceans of love.

**Rekha x**

### **A few memories and reflections from Helen Pankhurst**

Mehr was one of my father's best friends from his LSE days in the late 1940s. According to my father's autobiography, others in that friendship circle included Achang Oneko, who went on to become the Private Secretary to Jomo Kenyatta – Kenya's first President.



My father and Mehr kept in touch when he moved to Ethiopia and she went back to India for a few years before returning to the UK.

In a condolence letter on my grandmother Sylvia's death in Ethiopia (Mehr had met her numerous times) she recalled the Indian saying that "once born – death is inevitable" and she added "Too often we forget this."

Mehr was someone I grew up knowing. We would regularly visit Oakcroft when we came to the UK in the summer and then subsequently when we moved to London either we would go or Mehr would visit us in London. In my teenage years, I sometimes stayed a few days with her on my own, 'helping' at the market stall in Chester and selling strawberries at a layby not far from Oakcroft. She would regularly remind me that as a little child I once bit her, roaring loudly and explaining I was a lion. This piece of information was always relayed with gusto to any friend I introduced her to over the years!

The last time I saw Mehr was in September when I came with my brother, who still lives in Ethiopia. Of all the people I can think of who would have hated being in a hospital or in a care home she would be top of the list. The fact that she didn't have to face either of these, and died at home with friends looking in and take her care of her is absolutely wonderful. She would be so very grateful to all of you who were involved.

I always found Mehr a fascinating person to be with. Principled, engaged, interested, progressive, practical, down to earth, fun, determined, resilient, self-sufficient, social - and always with a twinkle in her eye.



