

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xii</i>
1. The Ocean of Love	1
2. The Family Grows	6
3. Pune	13
4. Piloting the Uncertainties of Life	18
5. I am Here	25
6. Other Loving Signs	34
7. Like Master – Like Pupil	40
8. Building Bridges	48
9. The Young Ones	56
10. More Tests for Me	66
11. A Channel to the Other Side	71
12. Rays of Angels	82
13. Guidelines	94
14. Shopping Around	103
15. Laughing with Baba	109
16. Howzzat!	118

17. The Compassionate Father.....	123
18. A Hug to Remember.....	129
19. “God, Why Me?”	137
20. Changing Masters.....	145
21. The King of Hearts.....	153
22. The Samadhi.....	166
23. I Forgive.....	177
24. Food for Thought	186
25. Gone Forever?	198
26. Difficult Decisions.....	205
27. Merging with the Light	211
28. Born Again	217
29. And I Still Listen	224
<i>The Song of Karl</i>	226

Appendix

A. Meher Baba – A Biographical Note	227
B. The Wall of Love at Meherabad	235
C. Those Who Serve Baba	237
D. Information for Pilgrims to Meherabad	239
E. Centres of Information about Meher Baba	241
F. Glossary	243
G. Source Notes	247
H. Copyright Details	251
I. Recommended Reading.....	252

Acknowledgements

I was excited...

In January 2007, I thought that my book *Listening to the Silence* had finally taken some shape. So I copied the rough manuscript on a CD, packed it with a bottle of red wine and some sweets for my publisher and his staff, and marched off to his new office at World Trade Centre in Mumbai, to give it all to him.

But guess what happened? Instead of the seventeenth floor, the lift took me to the eighteenth floor. The liftman apologised for the mistake, and requested me to walk one floor down the staircase. So, armed with all the goodies – my mobile phone, my purse, and the CD, I took the first step down.

The next thing I remember is me saying, “Oh my God! I am falling.” I went head first, down a flight of fifteen huge stone steps, and found myself sitting at the bottom. My left leg was bent inward at the hip, my right ankle was swelling visibly and blood was flowing down from my head. Everything lay scattered on the landing. I looked around for help. My hellos resounded and echoed in space. It was three o’clock in the afternoon, and there was not a soul in sight. I looked up at the steps looming above me and thought, ‘My God, did I actually fall from there and am still alive? Baba, now what?’

A patter of feet answered my question, and a stranger came running down to me. He tried to help me, saw that I was not in a state to get up and ran to find someone. He soon located my publisher, who arrived with some of his staff. I was rushed to the hospital. The result was a broken femur, a fractured ankle, and a deep gash on the head. The bottle of wine, the sweets, the mobile and the CD, were all intact. Nothing broke except my bones.

Listening to the Silence

I tell you all this because I want to show you that the fall was responsible for much more than just pain. It put me out of commission, physically and mentally, for more than three months. It took me back to a time in 1994, when I had fallen down the steps of the home of the renowned medium Mrs. Rishi, just before my first book *Sounds of Silence* was completed. I remembered how I had struggled with a broken ankle to sit for hours at an ordinary old typewriter to finish the manuscript. Most importantly, both times it resulted in so many positive things.

It proved to me that my book was not yet ready to be published. The time was not right, and there was much more to be done. My enforced stay at home resulted in many meetings with those who had written their stories, and provided the opportunity for innumerable changes. It also resulted in a deeper friendship with my publisher.

It took almost two more years and three more surgeries for my bones to heal, and yet more time for the new CD to be completed. I sincerely hope that Baba will eventually be happy with it.

So, here I want to really thank my publisher for patiently standing by me for so long. I thank him for his encouragement and for his conviction that the book was worth publishing. I thank you Gautam, for the amount of calls you made to me through these difficult years to keep me focused, for going through the manuscript chapter by chapter, and for sharing your knowledge and insights with me.

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But most of all, I want to offer my thanks to all those who have shared their stories with me. For me every story was most important but, as much as I would have liked to, it was impossible to include them all. I want you to know that I deeply appreciate the effort.

The creation of this book has been a partnership – a wonderful journey together. I am sure that all those who are walking it with me will look back to remember Khorshed Bhavnagri with gratitude. She has now passed into spirit, but I will forever remain beholden to her, for it was through her connection with her departed sons Vispi and Ratu, that I got to know about Karl – and so to Meher Baba.

Beloved Baba, it has been a very difficult climb up those huge stone steps again. At this stage I am still climbing, knowing full well that only with Your help will it be possible for me to get there.

Thank you my Karl, and my dearest family, for helping me to achieve it.

Nan Umrigar

Introduction

*“When the tongue is silent, the mind speaks;
When the mind is silent, the heart sings;
When the heart stops singing,
The Soul begins to experience its original Self.”¹*

The journey I have travelled from *Sounds of Silence*, my first book, to *Listening to the Silence*, has been a beautiful one. A journey that started alone is now our story and our journey together. This book is about all of you who are now with Baba, and for those of you yet to come, or rather, whom Baba will draw to Himself. As He describes in His own words, *“I am the Thief of Hearts.”* Each story here describes the Divine Thief at work, and after so many years and countless incidents, I still do not cease to be amazed at the perfection of the Perfect One.

My own journey into the Silence began the day my son Karl fell from his horse, one April afternoon in 1979. On the 3rd of May, he passed into the spirit world, and the silence of a great grief fell upon my soul. Then, just when I thought that life would never be the same again, the unbelievable happened. Karl reached out from the beyond and began a chain of communication that described his love for a Master, his “Father in Heaven,” and his beloved Meher Baba in the spirit world. He said that he had a new mission and that while the communication between his world and ours may be understood, justified, or interpreted as an experience, this was “no barrier to the energy that belongs to pure selfless love.” Meher Baba was going to show us that life, in general, held no barriers to a love that is in our hearts.

Karl said in the earliest of his urgings, *“There will be many people who will call on you for help. You must take them all to Baba and know*

Introduction

that once they come to Him, He takes care of them and never lets them down. All you have to do is to bring them to Him. Tell everyone that He has made them a part of His Love, and that Love will never fail them. Happiness and joy are waiting for them. Just be with Him. That is all I have to say."

Karl's love for his beloved Meher Baba has reached out to me and to countless others. It is this spirit of love that prompted me to write my first book *Sounds of Silence*, and now this second book too. This is a book that will tell you more of the love we have and the struggle to love the One who makes it all possible. You may call that One by any name you wish, but for me everything is Baba's. It is Baba's love that has helped me on my way. It is His love that has helped me to emerge from the shroud of silence that had engulfed me and to begin listening to the inner driving urge of the soul; to hear the sounds that have healing messages, the echoes of which still resound in my heart.

Today, I too just listen.

In all this time, I have heard many sad and heartrending stories of accidents, tragedies, broken hearts and troubled marriages. Many, whose loved ones have crossed over to the other side, have come to Baba in order to make a connection with them. Through Baba's grace, I have had the chance to help lift their lives by giving them beautiful messages of love and hope, messages that come from Baba, through Karl. I have had the privilege of taking so many to a paradise called Meherabad, to take some of them over the threshold of the Samadhi, and deliver them into the warm and loving embrace of Meher Baba. I have been a witness to the way so many lives have changed. It has given me much joy to see how Baba has washed away sadness and pain, turned lives around, and I have never ceased to be amazed by the way Baba has touched each and every one with His Love.

Baba says, "Consciously or unconsciously, every living creature seeks one thing. In the lower forms of life and in less advanced human beings, the quest is unconscious; in advanced human beings it is conscious. The object of the quest is called by many names: happiness, peace, freedom, truth, love, perfection, Self-realization, God-realization, union with God. Essentially it is a search for all of these, because all of these and all other noble concepts, no matter what their name, turn out in the end to be one. Everyone

has moments of happiness, glimpses of truth, fleeting experiences of affinity with God; what everyone longs for is to make them permanent... My function is to indicate the direction of the path that man has to travel, point out the pitfalls on the way, lessen the hazards of the difficult passages, and lighten and ease the final lap that ends in the culmination of his quest.

I bring to man divine love and the life eternal.”²

Since the time *Sounds of Silence* has been published, many people have asked questions about my continuing journey and of the unusual experiences of all those that have come to Baba. I am not qualified to explain the spiritual insights that appear with some of the communications but, within my limited understanding, I have tried to put down faithfully all that I have learned over the years, watching as life unfolds. I have to tell you how meeting so many people, interacting with them, hearing their stories and seeing the change in their lives, has affected my own thinking and helped me enormously to discover myself. I know now that when you are sincerely searching, Baba always somehow finds a way of answering your queries.

So, in answer to all these various questions, interspersed with some of my own learning experiences and a few more of Karl's mischievous activities from the spirit world, here is interwoven a collection of stories of this wonderful journey we have all undertaken. There is an outpouring of the heart by all those who have been fortunate enough to make their own connection with the Beloved, and who have had the faith and the courage to continue to walk hand in hand with Him. This book is the combined effort of the many that have come forward to share their sounds with you. Some have only heard whispers, some loud echoes, while a few have really heard the thunder that is God.

My husband, Jimmy, was sceptical and said, “Waste of time... no one will allow you to tell their story or to use their names.” But he was wrong, for not only did everyone readily agree, they also decided to write their own little stories, and believe me they are really written from the heart.

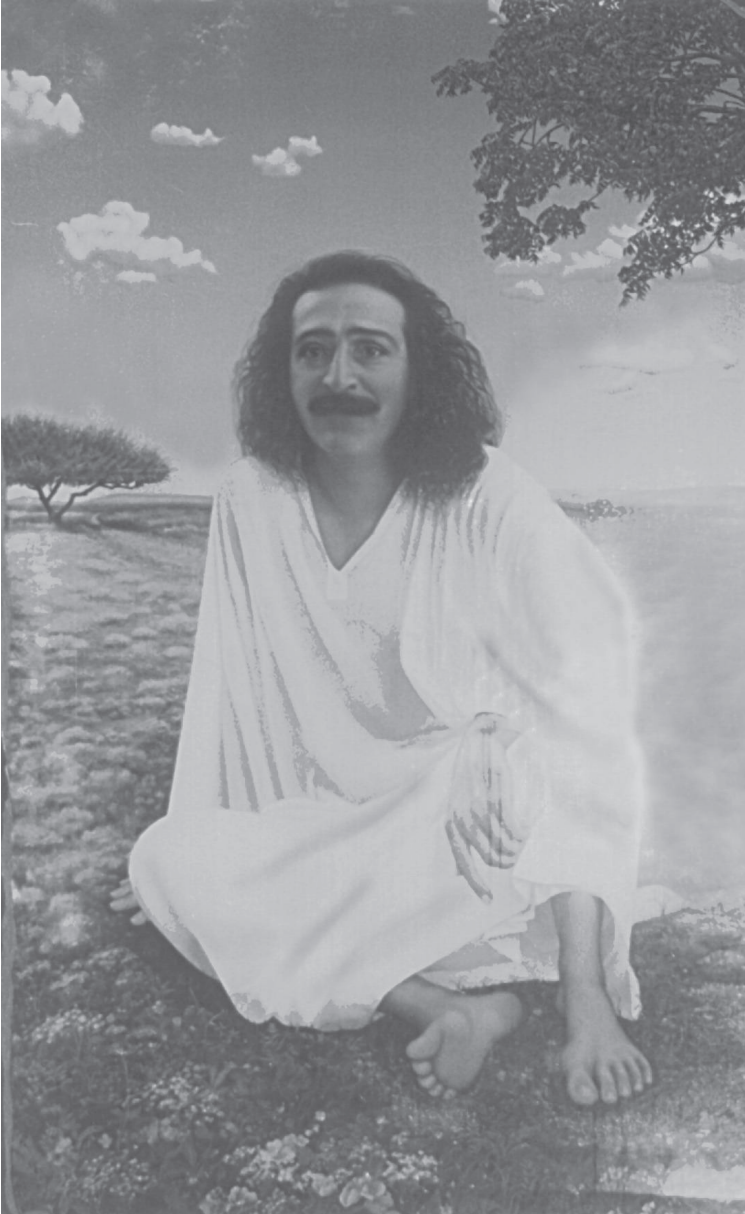
May all their stories reach you, awaken you and help you to know, understand and realise that there is really so much more to life than just living it. I am sure that somewhere, something will

Introduction

touch a chord in your heart and that, maybe, in some small way it will create in you a sense of knowledge and wonder. It may also give you the strength to triumph over adversity, to evolve on your own path and to fulfill your own destiny.

All those who count their blessings must know that God is Love and there is a reason for everything. Those that look to their own personal growth must also know that this change in their perspective will guarantee them a new and better passage through life.

I hope this book will help everyone find that passage.



The picture of Meher Baba that came as my birthday gift.



The Ocean of Love

It was the 3rd of June 1996, and my birthday. I woke up in the morning to a beautiful cloudy sky, a cool breeze, and a light but steady drizzle. Greeting calls from family and friends, and messenger boys bearing baskets of fruit and bunches of flowers became the order of the day.

In a happy mood, I took up my pen and began my daily morning communication with Karl. *"Hi mum,"* he said, *"those in the world want to wish you a happy birthday, and so do we. Baba, your mum, dad and sister, your uncle and aunt, both your grannies and grandpas and so many others who all love you from here; all of them want to wish you Mum. Baba especially says, 'Bless you'."*

Grateful for Baba's special blessings and attention, I jokingly asked whether I was going to receive a gift from Karl himself. Hardly had the words been uttered, there was a knock at my door. My servant Ishwar, who normally would never disturb me at prayer time, said in Gujarati, *"Bai, ain koi aapi ne gayoon che"* (Madam, someone came and left this for you). Saying this, he put an envelope on my table and departed. Staring at the blank white envelope, I could not resist interrupting my morning routine by opening it.

I gasped, for out came a big beautiful picture of Meher Baba!

Holding my precious birthday gift close to my heart, I strolled around my new home in Pune. I went into my little garden, resplendent with its hedges of pink and white hibiscus, and sat down on the bench to think about it all. The years had passed by. Everything was different.

I looked at Baba's picture in my hand and wondered what life

Listening to the Silence

had in store for me. At this time, my family was scattered all over the globe. My son Neville and his family in Dubai, my daughter Tina and her family in Mumbai, and my husband, Jimmy, and I, alone in Pune, away from the place we had called home.

Yes, it did feel a bit strange. Was Baba trying to show me something? I had a sneaky feeling that in His own way, He was trying to convince me that a place called home was really nothing but a space between four walls; that home is really where the heart is, and that those whom we dearly love and call family, would always be with us no matter where we lived.

Loosening my strong attachments... is that what He was up to?

However, these thoughts being too much to handle, I got myself busy settling into my new surroundings hoping very hard that whatever it was, I would be able to learn the lessons well and that Baba had a few lovely surprises around the corner for me.

They were not long in coming. The very next morning the words of Karl's new message leapt out of the pages of my *auto writing* book, "*Mummy, I have already given you the greatest gift of love, the gift of Baba. What more can you ask for? No matter where you are, Baba is with you everywhere, and loving Him is all that matters.*"

This made me think and look back at my life. When I was a little girl, I was terrified of losing my parents. I loved them dearly. My prayer to God was that He would always keep them safe. I cried in fear whenever my father had to leave and go anywhere. I prayed that my sisters and I would always be there for each other in spite of our differences, weaknesses and strengths, especially the smallest one who was born a handicapped child. I prayed for my pets.

My prayers were answered.

When I went to school, I wanted to be as pretty as my house captain, as popular as the head girl, and as clever as my neighbour on the next desk. I kept asking God for that. I also prayed to be able to win all the sports events I took part in, and so make my father proud of me. But most of all I prayed at exam time.

My prayers were answered.

I graduated and went to college, when boyfriends were the objects of my earnest supplications to God. I wanted to become a

drama queen. I prayed for popularity, fun at parties, to be allowed late nights, and not to get caught bunking classes. I prayed for a car of my own, so I could zip around like all the whiz kids around me.

My prayers were answered.

I married my childhood sweetheart and became the mother of three lovely children. Although the deliveries were not easy, I prayed my way through all that, constantly asking God to help my babies to grow up strong, healthy and happy. To have all their dreams come true.

My prayers were all answered – till the day Karl had his accident and fell from his horse that April afternoon. Then I prayed as I had never prayed before. I not only prayed, but I begged of God to let him live.

My prayers were not answered. I prayed no more. The door was shut.

It seemed as if we had all moved into a bottomless pit that had no sunshine coming through. It was a time when the family lost all faith in God and in the goodness of the world. As for me, I was miserable and heartbroken; in fact a complete wreck. I struggled to understand why this had happened. What had we done to deserve this? What was God's role in our suffering and why had He decided to take my son away in the prime of his life? What and who was God really? Was He the Zarathustra I had pictured in my young life, dressed in long white robes and finger pointing towards the sky? Was He a man? Was He light? Was He energy? Was He there at all?

This went on for almost four years till Baba entered my life and everything changed. I will never, ever forget that blessed day when I first stepped over the threshold of the *Samadhi* and into Baba's loving care. Life took a different turn, and in spite of the inner conflict of whether Baba was God, I trusted my son's communication with me, and the very fact that Karl said he was with Him, under His care, and considered Him to be his 'Father in Heaven' began to have some meaning for me.

Then every trip to Meherabad, every new person that came, every new experience I went through, made me understand more and more. Whatever came my way, however small, made me realise that everything that had happened – be it a sign, an appearance,

or an incident – had been orchestrated to bring me closer to Him. My constant prayer became, “Let me know the Truth, God, so I do not spend my days blaming You.”

In His own way Baba answered, “The mind cannot be turned to the Truth by sheer force. In the beginning it has to be coaxed and won over from its usual rambles, just in the same way as it is necessary to coax children in order to induce them to give up their play and take to study. The Master wins over the aspirant to the Truth with infinite dexterity. When the mind is won over to the Truth, all the senses automatically follow.”¹

So it has been with me too. Like that child, I have been coaxed by Baba into accepting His Truths.

Somewhere along the line I learned that God is not the creator of our pain and suffering. It is our own *karma*, the fruits of our past actions which automatically and spontaneously – though at times at a sub-conscious level – create such situations to balance out our karmic debts and dues. Hence it is our soul that chooses the experience of having to go through happiness or tragedy, to soar in ecstasy or struggle through a period of horrible pain. And through it all, God’s presence is always at hand to help us, guide us, and lift us out of our self-created maze, if only we care to call out to Him and experience His ever-flowing and unconditional Love for each one of us.

In other words, it is only through experiencing the ups and downs of our karma and the impressions that give rise to it, that we at last arrive at balance. Only when balance is achieved can we become free and know God.

*Baba says in His book, *God Speaks*, “It is only through these diverse opposite impressions and their respective opposite experiences, that the gross-conscious human soul in the gross world could possibly one day, after millions of births and deaths, and through these opposite experiences of births and deaths, be able to balance or thin out the residual or concentrated opposite impressions.”²*

Slowly I began to understand the role in our life of such periods of trials and turbulence as a part of growth, a balancing act of the past deeds and a move forward towards the goal.

The Ocean of Love

As soon as I began to accept all this, I changed. I began to heal. I started to listen to what God had to say, through Karl, through books, through His followers, through people around me. Although most of it went over my head, I guess somewhere along the way, just a little did sink in, then more, and still yet more. It gave me something to think and ponder over, and to know that when the difficult times come, it is then that God steps in to hold our hand to help us get through it all.

God began to be my friend instead of my enemy.

So where was I now?

Yes, Baba's presence was certainly more alive to me since I had relocated to Pune. Unbelievable as it was, I was actually in the very city where Baba had been born. His family home called 'Baba House' on Dastur Meher Road was just around the corner, and by now He was in possession of more than just one corner of my heart. Baba had definitely become more to me than just my constant companion and the centre of my life.

I closed my eyes in gratitude and looked again at the words in my auto writing book. They said, *"Baba is with you everywhere and loving Him is all that matters."*



Baba's home in Pune.