

Celebrating Divine Presence:
Journeys into God



*This book is dedicated
to those committed to the journey into God,
who acknowledge and live the truth
of our Oneness, like “beads on one string.”
May we travel together as brothers and sisters
— in peace.*



*Beads on One String gathering in Flagstaff, November 4, 2007.
(L-R) Ameeta Vora, Thom Knoles, Laurent
Weichberger, Kelly McCabe, Haring Singh Khalsa, Esther
Stewart, (not present: Yaakov Weintraub, Karl Moeller, and
Lopon Tsultim Wangmo).*

CELEBRATING DIVINE PRESENCE: JOURNEYS INTO GOD

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Prologue

Wayne Smith

WHEN I MENTIONED TO LAURENT that maybe not all who opened this book would be familiar with the name “Meher Baba” (referred to here by Don Stevens), he asked me to try rectify this by adding some words to the Foreword. I immediately expressed my concern, for where do you start trying to describe the indescribable, capturing the ineffable in words – it’s a bit like trying to pour the ocean into a cup, or drawing down an infinite blue sky and folding it away inside your pocket.

The term “Avatar” is another word you might also encounter for the first time in this book and one which does capture for me the very essence of who Meher Baba really is. It’s an ancient Hindu term, literally an “incarnation,” a concept which refers specifically to the incarnation of transcendent God into a visible, tangible form. This form is usually experienced by humanity as being that of another human being, what has been referred to in other traditions as the “Christ,” or the “Messiah.” But, as Meher Baba has explained, this most magical and exalted of all spiritual transformations isn’t just restricted to the human form, for whenever God is brought down into Creation, like crystal veined through rock or sunlight that cuts through dust, “... God mingles with mankind as man and with the world of ants as an ant, etc. But the man of the world cannot perceive this and hence simply says that God has become man and remains satisfied with this understanding in his own world of mankind.”*

*From *God Speaks*, by Meher Baba, p.252 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1973).

Personally this concept of the avatar is my favorite in all the spirituality that I have so far encountered, especially also because this incarnating of God doesn't just happen the once, but periodically according to Meher Baba, about every thousand years or so, "... whenever there is too much evil in the world", as Krishna explained to Arjuna all those years ago. A truth, I feel, that still holds true today.



Foreword

Don E.Stevens

MEHER BABA'S LONDON ADDRESS to the press: Shortly after arriving for his second visit to England in 1932, Meher Baba addressed the British press by telling them in London that he had not come to found a new religion, but to gather together the world's great existing faiths like beads on one string,* and that he would revivify them and thus make their doctrines available to the seekers of the truth. After that stunning statement he did not refer at any later date to what he might have done during his lifetime in this regard. He did, however, speak many times of a New Humanity and also of a New Life and even of a New Age, all of which might have had something to do with each other and also with what he had said he would do related to the existing great religions.

There the matter rested largely for decades after the departure of Meher Baba from Creation. That is, apparently these momentous statements of intent had had no follow-up on his part. Then all that began to stir in the late 70s when some films that Meher Baba had asked me to take for him in the early 60s started a very quiet but important stirring into life. This came about due to the curiosity of several devotees who had heard about their existence and insisted that if these filmed locations had been important enough to Meher Baba to ask that they be filmed, then they were also automatically important to his devotees as well.

*"I intend to bring together all religions and cults like beads on one string and revitalize them for individual and collective needs" –Meher Baba. See also, *Lord Meher*, Vol. 5, p. 1554.

The nagging on this topic continued until 2004, when I got fed up, oddly enough not with the decades of nagging, but with my own continued postponement of what I knew would be an exhausting journey which undoubtedly would finally come to rest on my shoulders. As by that time I was well into my 80s, it was not a very pleasant holiday to look forward to at that time of life. But, to my amazement, I heard the words, “Then let’s do it now!”

Now it just so happened that Meher Baba, as was his rather frequent habit, had involved me in several other obviously important but totally unexplained events dealing with spots of historical importance or religious veneration. The chief of these latter was Kailash Temple among the Ellora Caves near Aurangabad. Meher Baba had asked me to visit it in the early evening in company with his chief male devotee, Eruch Jessawala, who would stand guard at the entry to the temple while I made my way to the chief temple room and sat, at Baba’s instructions. Those instructions from Baba were no more than to sit until I felt I had finished. Finished what, was not examined, before or ever after, until I put a few dots together and made up my own story.

Shortly after sitting down that evening in the pitch black temple room I began to feel a pressure develop in my chest region, and this increased at an alarming rate. I feared at first I had caught a galloping bronchial infection, but then discarded this line of reasoning. I simply got up and left the temple room, whereupon the chest pain disappeared. I told my story to Eruch, who was waiting at the gate to the temple. He made not comment. Nor did Baba when he got the brief story out of me the following morning on my return to Meherazad. Nor did either Baba or Eruch ever again refer to that Kailash Temple episode.

Pilgrimage

It was only in 2004 when I returned with the first pilgrimage group to visit this and the other sites Baba had me film, that the next chapter rolled out quickly and simply. As I leaned up against my favorite pillar in the temple I began to feel the identical chest pressure, but before it had reached the acute stage I abruptly and positively identified it. It was the force of Meher Baba's spiritual presence which in some manner he had impregnated into the locale of Kailash, and which I now knew from having experienced it on various important occasions when I had accompanied Meher Baba on several of his important public visits. But it was not "instead of" the natural spiritual force of Kailash, but harmoniously "in addition to."

Here I must insert another chapter of which Eruch is also the principal figure. Very near the end of Eruch's life he told me on a visit to India that he had finally had the opportunity to see the films that Baba had asked me to take for him, about which Eruch knew the planning part, but had never seen the filmed results. Now he told me very simply that all of the spots Baba had had me film were also places that Baba had asked Eruch on repeated occasions to take Baba to visit, completely anonymously, without this being known even to the very close Mandali of Baba. When they would arrive there, Eruch said, Baba would rest in deep meditation, and then they would leave without Baba explaining anything about the purpose of this operation.

Such was the story of Eruch, and he emphasized that Baba had done this repeatedly at each locale, and never explained to Eruch and always completely unknown to the Mandali. Baba was often like that, and we had grown used to the fact that such events often became clear through later events, but some are still in the file of unexplained happenings that occurred in Baba's presence.

When I left the Hammersmith Hospital after returning from that 2004 Pilgrimage, suddenly the thought came to me, This is all about the beads on one string, and now it all makes sense. Baba was busy all those years putting in the basic investment, and now it is clearly up to us to build the next steps onto what he has put in place.

End of story? Not quite. Beloved Eruch supplied to me one more essential, many years ago when he was telling me details of events that happened with Baba during the three year period of the new Life which several of the close ones spent in Baba's company. Eruch's words were, "Don, you cannot imagine the glory of the companionship with the Avatar that we experienced in those times in his close presence."

Don E. Stevens · Paris, France

September 20, 2007



Introduction

Jane Chin, Ph.D.

THIS BOOK CAME TO ME at a time when I was going through a life transition: I had just become a parent.

Ten years ago, when I was a biochemistry graduate student, I did “timed” experiments in the laboratory. I was supposed to add chemicals to cells in petri dishes every two hours and observe how the chemicals affected cell growth over time. I would often miss one or two time-points because I couldn’t wake up in time, even when I slept overnight at the lab. In the early months as a new mother, I woke up every two hours to feed my baby, a feat that I am relieved that I was able to accomplish. I have “adaptation scars,” however: a gash on my ankle when I tripped over myself in the pitch black of night and cut my right ankle with my left toenail; a cut on my finger in a moment of fatigue when I pushed my fingers against the inside metal edge of the formula container; a welt on my scalp where I pushed the hairpins too hard too quickly in my hurry to tie back my hair to see what I was doing at 2 A.M.

Those of you who have parented a newborn will understand why I saw “getting through each day” as a meditation in itself. Every day was different, unpredictable, full of highs and lows, with the promise to do it all again the next day.

Yet what caught me off-guard was not the sleep deprivation or blurred boundaries between night and day. What blind-sided me was the revelation of how much I had equated myself with external qualifiers and the roles I had played. I defined myself by the goals I achieved, money I made, and how well I performed as

a career professional and entrepreneur. In making a conscious decision to become a stay-at-home mom for at least my son's first year of life, I was ill prepared for the ego pathologies that would emerge.

This switch of gears from “performance to participation” led me to ask the question, “Who Am I?”

I had asked this question before, but now more was at stake. My son may ask me this question one day.

When I first received this book, I thought I was going to learn about different religions and faith traditions. What I did not expect was an invitation to the intensely personal journey of the struggle and desire for truth.

As I read each personal account of a faith tradition, I saw a reflection of my thoughts and feelings in the thoughts and feelings of my fellow travelers. You learn about the basic tenets of each faith.

You may form an idea of the similarities and differences between faiths, and, like me, you may gain insight into the origin of faith-based conflict. But I am most grateful for the companionship each contributing author offers for what is a solitary journey to the Self. Each explores in his or her own unique way the question – Who Am I? – through a personal journey to the Divine, and ultimately a return to the Self.

There is no shortage of commercially available packages for enlightenment and spiritual prescription. Workshops and seminars abound, each claiming to be a solution that I may be seeking. In the past, I had been quick to discard and discount what I considered “a spiritual fad.” Given today's ease of connecting through technology, viral marketing has left its mark on spiritual programs. Gurus partner with talk show hosts. Celebrities lend leverage to spiritual products and services. In

Karl Moeller's account of the Sufi tradition, where our spiritual journey is not only about rules or guidelines, I considered the possibility that all solutions may be potentially valid solutions for someone, somewhere, at some time in the course of their life. The idea that there is "no single recipe for enlightenment" made sense to me. What does not work for me may help another as our journeys converge. I embraced the idea that popularizing spiritual exploration engages those who may otherwise not give this subject a second glance.

Having spent decades in school, I came to see knowledge as critical; after all, "knowledge is power." If I acquired more knowledge, wouldn't this get me closer to the truth I sought? As I read Thomas M. Knoles' explanation of Vedanta, I understood that information is not the end, but a means. Knowledge in itself is not power without the Knower, because knowledge is a scaffold that we build from or a ledge we can spring forth to increased understanding. The journey is about merging into something bigger. The aim is not to expand the "known", but instead, to expand the "Knower". Only then can I shift from desiring to experience inspiration to becoming inspiration.

This book also came to me at a time when I began questioning the role of spiritual teachers, philosophers, and gurus. I was puzzled by popular philosophers who espoused evolution of consciousness yet exhibited behaviors that appeared to fly in the face of what they preached. Therefore, reading Kelly William McCabe's vivacious description of Hinduism gave me relief and excitement. I was relieved as I read the words that confirmed my suspicion that the true spiritual teachers in this world are not those who have the gift of spiritual gab, but people whose manifestation of light and love are visible without clever marketing. Many of these people are not charismatic spiritual celebrities

and don't have sophisticated websites, yet the way they conduct themselves through their lives and in relationship with other human beings are exemplary of goodness and truth.

When I came to this line by McCabe: "I remember reading about some young famous western philosopher ... and finding out what a mess he had made of his life and thinking 'why in the world would anybody pay attention to the ideas – however intellectually brilliant they may be – of someone who was so obviously screwed up?' I wrote in the margins, Yes. I want to shake [McCabe's] hand for saying this. Common sense has become a rarity in books dealing with spiritual topics. What I had found in these words is an affirmation that a spiritual "system" is relevant to me if it helps me get closer to my journey home.

Philosophical eloquence may satiate my intellectual mind temporarily, but words do not get me closer to my authentic self. Words that come from those who work by double standards are like a person with bad credit trying to tell me I have poor financial sense.

If you are considering a spiritual path and reading this book to decide "which one," what I have learned from these authors is simply "start." Any beginning is a worthwhile beginning to your journey.

Through your intention of searching, you may discover as I have discovered, that in the process of aiming for your destination, the beauty of your path unfolds in magical ways. Sacredness is not in the show of miracles, but in the subtle beauty of ordinary lives, including your own. You only have to connect with the gifts that come your way every day, pay attention when a gift shows up, and say "yes" to invitations that resonate with you. I said yes to the commitment of spending one year to doing only what I love to do. This led me to say yes to an online *Friend Request* from Laurent Weichberger, which led me to say yes to many

profound conversations with him, to this point of saying yes to sharing my thoughts with you here. Lopon Tsultim Wangmo said yes to an invitation on a postcard that was mistakenly delivered to her. This led her to say yes to hours of chanting in a foreign language she did not understand, which led her to the Buddhist path. Will you say yes to an invitation to your personal journey's magical unfolding?

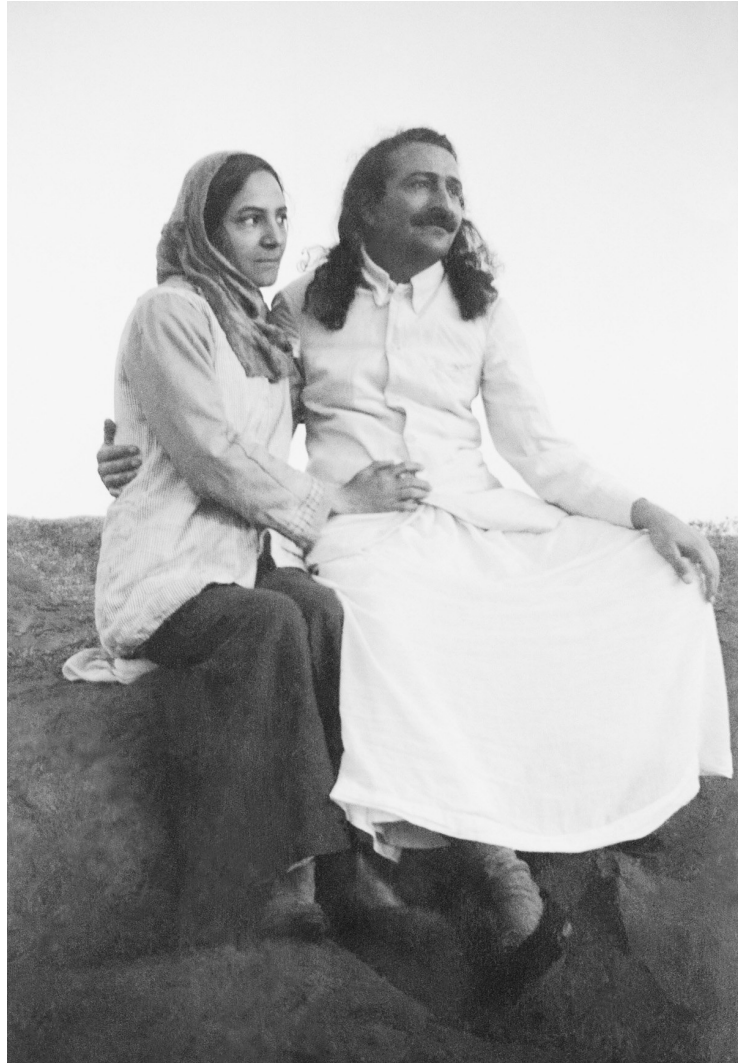
“That I Am” is at once the path and the destination in this personal journey into the Divine, but until I read this book, I had forgotten that the key word here is “personal.” The single most critical variable we get to work with – that we *can* work with – in this lifetime, is ourselves.

In closing, if I may suggest an approach to reading this book, I would recommend that you allow Laurent's chapter, Listening, be your guide. Many of us listen for the sake of grabbing the baton and speaking our views. I know I am often guilty of letting my mind chatter ceaselessly instead of purely listening to the speaker. Laurent takes the art of listening one step further and reminds us to beware of listening only for our own experiences for the purpose of turning the conversation to ourselves. Laurent's chapter asks that we focus on the speaker even as we are unsure where the speaker is taking us. Isn't this embrace in the unknown, to follow without constantly wanting to lead, the very act of faith?

In Gratitude,
Jane Chin, Ph.D.



CELEBRATING DIVINE PRESENCE



MANI, MSI COLLECTION

Mehera J. Irani with Avatar Meher Baba at Meherabad,
India, in 1936.*

*Meher Baba said, “She is my very breath without which I cannot live,” from *Mehera*, by Mehera J. Irani with Janet Judson and Shelley Marrich (New Jersey: Beloved Books, 1989). He said Mehera loved him more than any other being, and he gave her the highest status in his circle of disciples.

Listening

Laurent Weichberger

WHEN I HAD JUST FINISHED A DRAFT OF MY CHAPTER, *Ancient Mysticism*, I had a dream in which there was a saintly man, and he had just read the chapter. Naturally, I asked him his feelings about it. He was pensive, and said he liked it very much but there was something missing, that I should add to it. I eagerly asked him, “What should I add?” Instead of responding in words, he turned to the front page of the chapter and wrote in ink the word “Listening.” I woke up, and knew exactly what he meant. This chapter is what I am adding to that original writing.

There are many levels of listening. For some reason, in this present age where there is so-incredibly-much information, we as a global culture have lost touch with what it means to simply listen to another person, or for one group of souls to listen to another group, or for one faith to listen to another faith. I see an image of most communication as being pushed outward from an individual, or from a group, or from a faith toward another and then a sense of wait for the next opportunity to push more. However, I feel what is indicated as the next stage of listening development reveals a circular (and reciprocal) flow of energy, where the listening encourages more sharing, and one grows through the receiving of what is being shared, and flourishes within the experience of sensitive, honest, and nurturing communication.

I am reminded of visits I made to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Georgia, where Father Anthony used to tell us about

the lives of the monks who live by the Rule of Benedict. What I remember is that the monks there have their time divided each day into preset-parts, such as reading scripture, devotions and praying, meditation and contemplation, as well as other spiritual practices. Lastly, and quite importantly, another aspect, vital to the monk, was not doing anything but simply – to be – and listen for the Lord. This final aspect struck me as extraordinary. Shortly after my writing the above a dear spiritual sister, Alison (who was completely unaware that I wrote about this Benedictine practice), reminded me of this type of “listening” within the Benedictine Order, and so I feel now it is confirmed that I should share it here.

How much time do we set aside to just be with & listen to the Divine, our loved ones, children, spouse, sisters and brothers, parents, and friends? If we belong to a certain faith, or spiritual path, do we “tune people out” when we have decided they are “other” and therefore not worthy of being listened to? Do we pre-judge people as unworthy of being listened to?

One of the jokes that Anthony told us, which has become a favorite of mine is this: One day a man who had been engrossed in his worldly life finally got fed up, and disgusted with the ways of the world. He decided he wanted to be a monk and live a holy life, and so he found a monastery in the countryside and requested one of the monks there for a meeting with the Abbot, and waited. Finally the Abbot came, and standing before the man says, “Yes my son?” The man hangs his head, and starts to explain, “I have had enough of the world, I want to come live here with you, to become a monk, and ...” but the Abbot interrupts him and says, “Oh no my son, let me tell you about our life here, and then you can decide.” The man looks up at him and listens. “First of all, we live a very simple life, there is no excitement here. You get one small room, and it is quite Spartan. The food is not the rich food

you are used to eating. Also, we live a celibate life, and we remain completely silent.” The man thinks all of this over and says to the Abbot, “I understand all that you have said, and I still want to join you and live your holy life.” That day the man becomes a monk, with the Abbot’s blessing, but the Abbot tells him, “I will allow you only two words every five years.” So the new monk moves into his small room, and the years roll by. After five years there is a knock at his door, and answering it he sees the Abbot there, who asks, “Well?” And the new monk says, “Hard bed,” but he remains a monk. The years continue to unfold, with prayers, and readings, and meals and dishes, and after another five years, there is a knock at the monk’s door. Again it is the Abbot who says, “Well?” And the monk replies, “Cold food,” But he remains a monk. Now getting a little grey, the monk continues another five years, and after 15 years on this path there is a knock at the door. Opening it he sees his Abbot standing there with the customary, “Well?” But this time the monk replies, “I quit!” And the Abbot says, “Well, it’s no wonder, all you’ve done since you came here is bitch and moan!”

Speaking of which, one of the criticisms I have had of my own spiritual community over two decades is that they tend to put up on a stage, with a microphone, only those who have met the Spiritual Master in his human form. Those who have met him purely spiritually (within) tend not to be invited to speak.¹ Even if the same truths be told, the messenger is often deemed unworthy if they lack the stamp of a physical meeting with the Master. This is misguided. My feeling is that it should probably be the opposite, as those whose faith and experience is so strong that they follow the Master year after year, without having met him physically, are most worthy of being listened to carefully and having our full attention. The difficulty which arises then is that we must use our inner sense, our intuition, to determine

the truth as it is shared. This is no doubt a vital process that many are now being called upon to engage in fully.

Another way of saying the same thing is that if a child were to speak the same truth into a microphone as, let us say, St. Francis or a disciple of Buddha, would the audience be able to hear and receive this truth as told by the child? If not, there is something terribly wrong with the picture. I like to keep a diary, and looking back over past entries can help me become more aware of my own process, and spiritual unfoldment in general. I also make it a point not to tell (or teach) my children about God, but to allow them to receive through their own experience, to find their own way. Just yesterday, I read this entry from August, 2000, where I quoted my daughter saying, "We are always God. God does everything we do." So when Aspen (at age five) shared that with me, you bet I was listening.

Listening, at least in part, means embracing the Truth of the situation and hearing the truth as it manifests, sometimes in places and ways unexpected. The truth should be perceived and not simply accepted based on the package, or wrapping on the container of the message. This is our individual responsibility as the listener, to discern and distinguish based on experience and intuition. If a drug addict speaks the truth, it is Truth and should be honored as such. This means listening for Truth in and through all forms. How well do we listen as individuals to others? Do we need to remember how to listen, or work at learning how to listen? What are the tools of listening? How well do we listen as a group, or a nation, or a faith, to other groups?

Exemplars of Listening

My wife, Lilly, reminded me, "There have been examples throughout history of leaders and prophets listening to the Divine within them, and within the people surrounding them,

which have led to great changes in the world. Martin Luther King, Jr. listened to the state of his people and their suffering when he put his neck on the line to lead the Civil Rights Movement in a non-violent manner. This led to the adoption of equal rights for minorities in this country.”²

The Prophet Zarathustra listened to the state of those around him when he gave humanity extremely straightforward precepts, “Think truly. Speak truly. Act truly.” He also gave them an image of living fire to represent the purity and reality of Beloved God. These seemingly simple commands are even today found to be so difficult to live up to by most people, showing that the path to Truth is often made unnecessarily complicated. Meher Baba has shown me that the Truth can be expressed in the most simple terms.

Abraham listened to his Lord YHWH (the Hebrew name of God) when the Lord asked him to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering, and Abraham again listened when an angel of the Lord commanded him to stop before slaying this precious son. Who can have such obedience, so total and complete?³ This story continues to inspire Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

Prince Rama listened to his stepmother, Kaikeyi, when she exercised her “wish” and exiled Rama for 14 years solely so that her own son, Bharata, could be made King instead of Rama.⁴ Afterwards, when Rama did become King after all, the Hindu people were given the example of His divine life of perfect humility, and called him Lord Rama. Over 5000 years later, Rama’s story proves to be a constant example to millions of Hindus the world over, of how best to behave in a variety of challenging circumstances.

Krishna listened to his disciples. When Arjuna and his brothers, especially Yudhisthira, decided it was time for war, Krishna became Arjuna’s chariot driver. Krishna demonstrated that the

divine life can be perfectly at peace in any role. That Krishna could be an integral part of a violent war between ruling royal families gave many a new view about what it means to be detached from the ways of the world.

Prince Buddha listened to his inner voice when it told him he must renounce his royal surroundings, including his wife and child, and live penniless as a wandering mystic until he reached enlightenment. Not that anyone should take this as an example and leave their family, but that a Prince would renounce not only his family, but all the princely trappings, for a life of come-what-may and spiritual austerities, was a dramatic example of living from one's gut.

Jesus listened to God, His Father, in the Garden of Gethsemane when they made the Divine decision to go forward with the crucifixion to benefit all humanity. The result, as we know, is the perfect story about the man of love despised by those to whom He reached out with perfect tenderness, and humility.

Saint Catherine⁵ listened to Jesus when He came to her in her bedroom, and gently, but firmly, ordered to her to leave her room, to re-enter the world, and work for Him and promised to guide her. She did, going first into the kitchen to help her mother, then becoming a nurse. Finally, she corresponded with the Pope in France, boldly begging him to return the papacy to Italy. She was made a "Doctor of the Church," although she was barely able to read and write.

Mohammed (peace be upon him) listened to his own human nature when he decided to flee from Mecca to Medina, as the Arabian tribes sent representatives to his house to assassinate him in his sleep. He was saved by his own chief disciple, Ali who waited for them instead so that Mohammed could get away safely. Such is love. Mohammed's humanness was exalted by God, and he became the perfect man to hundreds of millions.

And Meher Baba listened to the state of the 20TH century world, when he decided that since God's principles and precepts had been ignored by humanity at large, in this present Avataric form he would observe total silence. What happens when the one who should be speaking keeps silent so that those who are saying nothing can have the floor? My uncle Dieter shared with me recently that, "What is demanded of us is that we learn a new way of listening to what Baba says without speaking."⁶ To me this begs the questions, Can a spiritual being speak without words, and what is the spiritual value of silence? The life of Baba speaks volumes.

Effective Listening

I am reminded of a conversation I had with Lilly, after we watched a popular movie called *Juno* the other night with our daughter Aspen (now age 13). The plot has a girl, named Juno, a teenager (age 16) give birth to a healthy baby boy which she gives away in a closed adoption. Lilly asked me if Meher Baba had said anything about "abortion" and I told her a story I had heard, wherein Baba was approached by a young Hindu couple. My understanding was that they were not married, but she was pregnant. Baba heard their request for help in this extremely delicate situation, as Hinduism is famously conservative on this particular issue, and arranged that she come stay with him for six months provided her parents agreed. She did not tell her parents of the pregnancy. Baba himself found a married couple and arranged for the baby, once born, to be placed with them. The girl gave birth, the newborn was given a home, and the young woman returned home after the six months period. I can hear much in this story if I listen carefully. Also, I didn't like the film *Juno* much, because I was disappointed in her lack of emotional involvement with her baby, and the mixed messages I heard the film sending.

I have been asked to give examples of how we can listen more effectively. What I know is that most people seem to listen only for what the sharing means to them, meaning, they hear only that which resonates with their own experience, and then turn the conversation in a direction to which they can continue to relate. Usually, this turns the conversation away from the speaker, so that now they have something to say. I am sure we have all been in this situation. To me, truly effective listening means keeping the focus on the speaker, even if unsure of where the conversation is going, and when drawn to comment (or give feedback) to go deeper into what the speaker is trying to get across. This means really going toward unity of understanding, not continually shifting the conversation around. In this way, the focus remains on the issue at hand, and does not go back and forth from one person's self-interest to the other. When practicing this, I have found, the listener's intuition may elucidate something fundamental and important in what the speaker is conveying, and sharing that intuition helps both the listener and the speaker go deeper into the heart of the matter. In other words, the ego must let go of its desire to be the center of attention and to focus fully on the other for effective listening to take place, and somehow this gives an opportunity for intuition to speak up as well.

In a group setting, I believe, one group may listen effectively to another when, instead of making demands to be heard, the group sincerely tries to put itself into the mind-set of the other group, and listen for the meaning or issues that are being wrestled with. For example, a group of Christians may desire to listen to a group of Muslims, and in order to accomplish this effectively, the Christians must try to put themselves into the Islamic view, and not push a Christian view into that process. By Islamic view, I mean, imagine that you met a prophet who shared with you what the Archangel Gabriel said to him last night, and

what you experienced from this man was divinity in action. Try to forget the senseless acts of violence committed in anyone's name, whether Mohammed or Jesus, or for any cause, and just imagine what the early Muslims experienced. It is difficult but certainly not impossible, and the fruits of this type of listening are astounding.

To give another example, I will tell you what Father Anthony said about the visit from the Dalai Lama to the Monastery in Georgia. Anthony told us that when the Dalai Lama came to Georgia, he asked his American assistant, are there monks living here? And someone said, yes, but in Conyers at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. So he said, "Let's go there." And he went with his own monks who accompanied him on his tour, and his translator. When he arrived, according to Father Anthony, he wanted to meet the Abbot and some of the Roman Catholic monks, and introduce his Tibetan Buddhist monks, so that together they could start to share their "experiences." The gist of it was not sharing dramatic Hollywood-experiences of powers and visions, but simply their experiences of living as monks on a spiritual path, and the beauty of that walk.

What astounded Father Anthony was that as the sharing went on over some hours, something became crystal clear to all the monks, regardless of their faith: they all shared the same experience, but the terminology and culture surrounding that experience was different. In other words, at an essential level, each monk had progressed according to common experiential truths, regardless of the ideology or religious background. As a Meher Baba follower who had been given numerous examples by Baba of the unity of all religious ideals, this made perfect sense to me. Anthony's story was a dramatic confirmation that there is essentially one Divine Truth, and according to Baba, one Infinite God for all humanity, no matter how many ways humans have

come to regard this Beloved Divine Being, or which names they use to address that One in their tender moments.

As a result, there are so many faiths all over the world, each striving to move closer to the Truth of Oneness, to please God in one form or another. The question that must be asked is how can we learn to listen to one another? What can each faith learn from the other faiths to help bring a state of Oneness amongst all mankind? I believe if we beseech the Divine for the answers to such questions, that One will surely guide us. I am now certain that listening is an aspect of love, and love is an aspect of forgiveness, and to me both love and forgiveness are Divine attributes. Let us move closer to the truth of Oneness through practicing that love which God has exemplified throughout the ages, by sending into the world matchless prophets, avatars, masters, saints and sincere lovers of God, who continue to inspire humanity to embrace and celebrate the Divine Presence in any and all forms.

