

Baba Loved Us Too

By Mehera J. Irani

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook

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Baba Loved Us Too

by Mehera J. Irani

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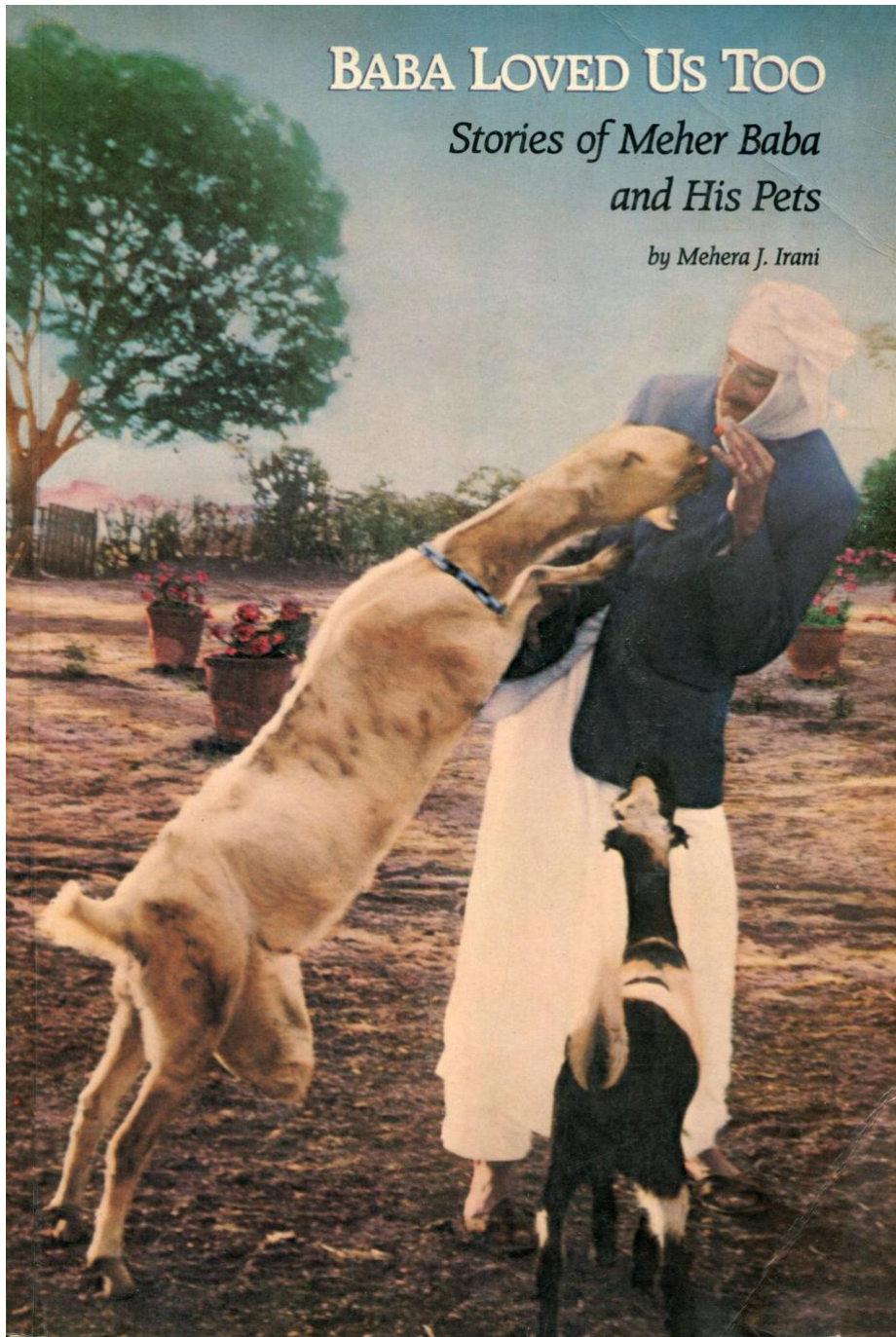
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BABA LOVED US TOO

*Stories of Meher Baba
and His Pets*

by Mehera J. Irani



BABA
LOVED
US TOO

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Meher Baba with a goat

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Dedicated

to the winged

and the four-footed lovers

of the Avatar

There dwells in a desolate countryside
On a far off lovely hill,
Its head turned up to the wide
Blue sky,
A yellow daffodil.

As it sways with joy in the gentle
Breeze.
It sings a song or two,
Which hold the sweetest words
On Earth.
Oh, Baba, I, too, love you.

Around a pink rose in my garden
Hovers a bumble bee.
From rose to rose it dances wild in sheerest
Ecstasy.
It whispers to the flowers all
Kissing the shining dew
Says words that every flower knows,
Oh, Baba loves me too.



Mau

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Preface

All of you who had met dear Mehera and known her over the years must have come to love her not only for her one-pointed love for Beloved Baba, which brought Him so alive to you, but also for her love and personal interest in all of you, His dear family. So deep was her loss at Beloved Baba's passing that it was years before that natural interest and zest she had in life were reawakened. This could only have come about through Beloved Baba's love for her that supported her through these years.

Seeing her smiling warmly and talking animatedly to the Baba lovers who visited His Home, of the one topic that filled her life - few could have guessed at that deep longing in her heart to be reunited with her Beloved.

Mehera would often very feelingly talk to us of Beloved Baba's magnanimity and the love He showered on us and His care and concern for all. "Our own parents could not have given us more," Mehera would often say.

"We thought we had given up everything to serve Baba - but what had we given up for Him who was the Lord of the Three Worlds?

"In Beloved Baba's beautiful company we had not only been to many lovely places in India but also accompanied Him to the West."

PREFACE

All this Mehera would remember with deep appreciation and wonder.

Knowing Mehera's love for horses and riding, Baba even fulfilled this desire whenever possible. We were in Panchgani in 1943, where a spirited white mare had been procured for Mehera.

Around the surrounding area of our secluded bungalow which was a few miles away from the town, Baba told Mehera she could go out riding every morning. Mani and I, one of us on foot, the other riding by turns, would try to keep up with her in our amateurish way, on a gentler mare. Mehera really enjoyed those rides and Baba was happy in her happiness.

The day came one morning when Baba said all the ladies of the ashram should come out to watch Mehera ride.

Looking very trim and girlish in her shirt and slacks and felt hat, Mehera, mounted on her white mare, went quite some distance out of sight up the quiet dirt road. When she turned homeward, she let the animal have its head. Ever ready for a good run, the mare, with little or no encouragement, gathered speed. Faster and ever faster she went galloping past us like a flash - rider and horse as one in complete harmony with one another.

Mehera often talked of Sheba winning her race, but this is the ride I like to remember and still envision in my mind's eye.

How proud and happy Beloved Baba was of His beloved Mehera!

The hours she spent talking of Beloved Baba were happy ones for dear Mehera, for in the recounting of those days she would be reliving them again. Mehera loved animals and this

PREFACE

book of hers, telling of the many pets Beloved Baba had kept, has a joyousness that will infect the reader, for it is the joyousness and love that comes from those happy days being relived with Beloved Baba in her thoughts as she recounted each story.

May your love for Avatar Meher Baba and your desire to please Him predominate in your lives. That is what Mehera would want of each one of us.

Jai Baba!

—*Meheru*

Acknowledgments

Many Baba lovers have heard Mehera talk of Baba and His pets. When she would sometimes hear garbled versions of these stories, she would feel the need for them to be recorded accurately. This created the nucleus of the idea for this book. Meheru didn't allow Mehera to forget her promise to Filis* that she would write about Baba's pets for *The Awakener*. One or two stories did appear in *The Awakener* in abbreviated form. They were so well received that this encouraged Mehera to expand the project into a book. So in her usual meticulous way, she undertook the writing of these stories with the dedication she always gave to any work for Baba.

Many loving efforts went into the making of this book. Special thanks to Meheru for giving Mehera the support and encouragement that made the book possible, along with the tireless efforts of Davana Brown who assisted Mehera in recording each story.

* Filis Frederick was the editor of *The Awakener* magazine

Introduction

In the twenty years since Baba shed His beautiful man-form, we have been witnesses to the continual unfoldment of His love — shining brightly from the eyes of His near and dear, young and old lovers who have been drawn to His Home, Meherazad, longing to know more about our life with Him.

Animals have always played a special role in our life with Baba, not only as His pets, receiving His personal touch and contact, but also, it seems, as a channel of His work, reaching out to all the animal world and the whole of creation.

We have learned through Baba's example that there is no creature too small or insignificant to be the recipient of His loving glance and attention — that nothing is left unattended or is overlooked by the God-Man. God takes man's form and becomes the living expression of Perfection as man. He is the Perfect Caretaker of all creatures, big and small, beautiful and ugly. And how can it be otherwise, when the God-Man is love itself. He takes care of all creation because love cannot do other than love.

From the early years on the Hill at Meherabad, when there were just six of us women — Mani, Soonamasi, Naja, Khorshed, Valu, and me — Baba shared with us His sweet love of nature and all forms of life. It was there on the Hill

INTRODUCTION

that the first pets made their appearance in our lives, having been brought to us by Baba to care for and nurture. Since that time, birds and animals have continued to be a part of our life — throughout the many tours with Baba, during the New Life, and up to the present at Meherazad.

I hope a ray of Beloved Baba's boundless and beautiful love will shine through this small collection of animal stories, making it possible for each one who reads them to have a glimpse of the unique fun and joy that we have experienced in our life with Meher Baba.

—*Mehera J. Irani*

The White Horse: Sufi

I was educated at the Convent of Jesus and Mary in Poona. One day, when I was about eleven years old, my friend Zeena came up to me at recess and said, "Mehera, let's go to Babajan. She is very great and whatever you ask for she will give you. So, come with me now."

I remember thinking, Babajan's tree is very far from here. I knew she sat under a neem tree on the roadside, and I also knew that it would not be possible for Zeena and me to go there and return before the school bell would ring. I was always very shy, not at all bold, and I told Zeena that we would miss the bell and would not get back in time. Zeena said, "No, Babajan is just close by."

Our school was surrounded by a high wall. I had no idea that Babajan was really sitting just on the other side of the school wall. But Zeena was insistent and again said, "Babajan is just close by." So we held hands and went together.

As we approached Babajan, Zeena said to me, "Think hard what you want to ask for, and you go first!" I said, "No, you go first!" You see, I was not prepared to ask for anything. I was just going along because my friend Zeena wanted me to come with her. You know, so many girls would know what to ask for — to be first in their class, or to have higher educa-

BABA LOVED US TOO

tion. But I never cared for all that, and anyway it was not in my destiny.

Zeena knelt before Babajan and whispered something which I could not hear. Then it was my turn. I knelt before Babajan and she looked at me almost questioningly. I had nothing in my mind to ask for, so I started to glance around quickly. There was a tonga in the distance and suddenly my attention was drawn to the horse.

I have always loved horses. My father had taught me to ride when I was six years old, but after he died, my mother did not want to keep horses as they require a lot of work. You need to have a groom, proper food, and space to exercise them. Seeing the horse though, I said to Babajan, "I want a horse."

Babajan nodded her head and gazed at me with a very slight smile. How can I describe it? Well, "knowing". Then she looked upward toward the sky and started to speak very softly in Urdu. I could not catch most of what she said as her head was turned to the side away from me. But I did hear her say, "Yes, He will be very beautiful. All the world will love Him." Babajan spoke some more words under her breath, then turned toward me and said, "All right beta (beta means 'my child'), you may go." I got up and Zeena and I caught hands and ran back to school. Once in school, we were so busy that we promptly forgot about our visit to Babajan.

One day after school, I was playing with my cousins at home in the garden. It must have been about three months after my meeting with Babajan. We used to play in the evening together, and that day we were playing a game called gillidanda. My aunt came up to me and said, "Mehera, your

THE WHITE HORSE: SUFI

mother has bought you a horse!" I heard her, but did not really take in what she was saying as I was having too much fun playing, and felt sure that my mother would not buy a horse. So I continued our game. But my aunt came closer and said to me, "Go see for yourself. It is true!" Then my cousins and I stopped our game and we ran to the stable behind the house.

I could not believe my eyes! Standing in the stable was the most beautiful horse — all pink and white. It had one blue eye and one black eye, and was very spirited, too! The more spirited a horse, the more I loved it!

My mother had arranged for a groom to take care of the horse. A day or two passed by and then the thought crossed my mind — "Now, I've got a horse, why not go riding?" I did not tell anyone what I was thinking because I was afraid the adults would not let me ride a new horse. I went to the storeroom where my sister's and my saddles were kept. I found mine and ran back to the stable with it, asking the groom to help me saddle the horse. The horse was a bit tall for me so the groom gave me a lift up. I did not want anyone to stop me from riding, so instead of going out the front of the house, I went by the back across the fields. Some elders saw me and called to me to come back, shouting that I might be thrown and fall off. I signed to them that I was safe and kept riding.

I rode toward Bund Garden where I knew there was a lovely bridle path. I used to envy the British women I had seen riding their horses along the broad path and I thought, "I'll ride there too!" I had a nice long ride and came home safely. But after that, I rode only two or three times more.

BABA LOVED US TOO

After my mother found out about Baba, she would go and see Him whenever He was in Poona. Vishnu Master would come to tell my mother, "Baba has come to Poona and you can have His darshan."

Mother would sit by Baba's side or as near to Him as possible, and always would be the last one to leave. One day Baba asked her, "Is there anything you want?" My mother then told Baba that she would love to come and stay with Him and serve Him. Baba told her, "How can you serve Me? I'm not staying in one place. But when I am permanently staying in Meherabad, I'll call you." It happened just as Baba had promised. My mother and I were the first women Baba called to stay with Him at Meherabad.

We were living at No. 9 Todiwalla Road in Poona. My white horse was then about one year old and, during this time, my sister Freni was with us. She had come to stay with my mother and me because she was expecting her first baby. It is our custom that the daughter returns to her mother's place for the first pregnancy. Freni had just given birth to a baby boy when the telegram from Baba arrived telling my mother and me to come to Meherabad as soon as we could, and to bring with us one trunk each, full of clothing to last an entire year, and our bedding. My mother immediately began to make preparations. She started shopping for cotton saris and cloth to make blouses to last a year. Then all these necessary items had to be stitched by the tailor. Finally everything was ready. When my sister's baby was only ten days old, we boarded the train for Ahmednagar. We were all so happy and excited about going to Baba. None of the servants were to know that we were going away for good. I

THE WHITE HORSE: SUFI

remember my mother put a big padlock on the door of our house and told the servants we were going to another place. The servants were told to feed our horse and pet dog, Peter. All the valuables and furniture were just left behind.

When we arrived at the Ahmednagar train station, Soonamai, who is Goher's aunt, and Sarosh were there to receive us along with Gulmai and Kaikushru who had come to see their grandchild. It was a warm welcome. Soonamai took my sister's baby in her arms and after we all greeted each other, we climbed into a waiting carriage and proceeded to Khushru Quarters. (Khushru Quarters is now known as "Meher Nazar" and is where the Avatar Meher Baba Trust is located.)

Baba had instructed Rustom, Freni's husband, to go to Poona after we had left and put everything in order at the house. Rustom was to sell the furniture, send our piano to Ahmednagar, and sell the horse and carriage.

However, when Rustom told Baba that the white horse was very beautiful, rather than sell him, Baba decided to have Rustom bring the horse to Ahmednagar.

Baba named the horse Sufi and he was the first pet to be brought to Meherabad. Sufi was very spirited and Baba fed him sweets to sweeten him up!

Baba also acquired an all-white bullock and a pure white dog. And typical of Baba's matchless sense of humour, he named the bull Sant (Saint) and the dog Sadhu. They certainly didn't seem to live up to their names as they were full of mischief and unmanageable. These animals kept the mandali's hands full, adding greatly to their already hectic schedules.

BABA LOVED US TOO

When we first came from Poona to join Baba, we stayed in Ahmednagar. We had not as yet come to stay in Meherabad. I heard later that shortly after Sufi's arrival in Meherabad, Baba had him honoured in a special Puja ceremony. Baba, Himself, did not worship the animal, but He did have those present pay homage to the white horse as representing the mount of the Kali Yuga Avatar.

Baba rode Sufi bareback for a minute and because Sufi had such a spirited nature, two members of the mandali had to stand on either side of him and hold his head by the bridle so that Baba could mount him!

Though I never thought about it then, I feel now it was indeed a significant action for Baba to mount the white horse and thus fulfill the prophesies of the ancient Hindu scriptures which depict the Avatar of this Age riding a white horse.

Chum

*D*uring the years we stayed on the Hill at Upper Meherabad, Baba brought us many pets. At different times we kept and cared for rabbits, birds, monkeys, pigs and, of course, pet dogs.

Our life was very strict and secluded, yet it brimmed over with the richness of serving Beloved Baba. Each day we would look forward to Baba's company. When Baba would return from the mandali, we would be waiting to greet Him.

Now as I recall these memories, I am reminded of Baba's pet dog, Chum. Chum came to us when he was one month old. I remember when I first saw him. Baba had just walked up the Hill and was standing before me with this darling little puppy cradled lovingly in His arms. You could feel the love and care with which Baba had carried the pup all the way up the Hill. He was white with brown markings on his ears and back.

Baba always loved naming the pets and this one He called Chum. The name really suited him, too.

When Chum was two months old, Baba told us that it was time to train Chum to be a watchdog. Baba wanted Chum to spend the nights outside with the watchman. Valu, who loved animals very much, would carry little Chum to the watchman each night so that he would get the habit. By the



Meher Baba playing with Chum

CHUM

time Chum was six months old, he was too big and heavy to be carried anymore. Valu couldn't even lift him! But no matter how hard we tried to encourage him to walk beside her, he just would not budge. He was so lazy — Chum's response was, "Why can't you pick me up and put me outside like when I was young!" We laughed at Chum's stubbornness, but, oh, the difficulty we all had — you can have no idea. For three days we had to coax and push him outside. Finally Chum realised that his days of being carried were over and went on his own.

Chum's love for Baba was unique. He was not only a real chum to Baba — faithful to the end — but he was also extremely protective of Baba and jealous of any attention Baba would give to others — animal or human. He was a good watchdog, but sometimes his possessive attitude toward Baba made life difficult and sometimes it did provoke our laughter.

Whenever Baba was seated, Chum would go over to Baba and sit by His sandals. Sometimes he would even jump up on the gadi and sit down in Baba's lap. And Baba allowed this and lavished loving attention on him. At these times although Chum would not growl, you knew it was best to avoid him.

I remember once Baba was resting for ten or fifteen minutes after lunch. Innocently, Mani went over to straighten Baba's sandals. This disturbed Chum from his sleep, and without warning he leapt up and bit Mani!

Baba's response was immediate. He was very angry with Chum and Chum knew it. Baba picked up His sandal and gave Chum such a sound beating that afterward Baba's palm was red and smarting from the force of it. We girls even

BABA LOVED US TOO

poured cold water over Baba's hand to help ease the pain. But you see, our safety was of paramount importance to Baba and He wanted to ensure it by teaching Chum a lesson he would never forget.

And truly it was an unforgettable scene; not a single growl or whimper of protest escaped from Chum. That fierce lion was like a lamb; his submission to Baba's will was so complete. Chum bowed his head in absolute acceptance of his punishment, and in Chum's total submission, we girls witnessed how big that big dog's heart was when it came to Baba.

One day Baba came into the kitchen looking very pleased. He had a naughty twinkle in His eye as He pointed at a stuffed fox He was holding in His hand. Baba signed, "Isn't it lovely?" and we agreed, for it was lovely indeed. The expression on its face really made you feel it was quite alive!

We all shared in the fun with Baba, admiring the stuffed fox and commenting on its unusual beauty. After a few minutes, we put it in the corner out of the way. Baba finished His meal, read a while, and then as usual told us He would rest for a few minutes. You know, Baba's sleep was very light. The slightest sound might disturb Him, so after finishing our chores, we would sit quietly while Baba rested, knowing that at any moment He might wake up.

Now what got into Naja's head, I don't know — perhaps Naja was just plain bored — but very softly she started calling "Choo ... Chum" all the while pointing furtively at the stuffed fox lying in the corner. Chum, dozing nearby, at first ignored Naja's whispered call. But in India, dogs respond to the word "Choo". It excites their interest and when said

CHUM

with force, alerts them to danger.

We couldn't imagine what Naja was thinking; after all, she knew as well as we did that Baba shouldn't be disturbed while resting. But Naja was determined to find out Chum's reaction to the fox. We girls just sat there, wide-eyed and transfixed, not knowing what would happen next. Finally, the force of "Choo ... Chum" penetrated, and Chum opened one bleary eye, and then the other, and then there was no stopping him. He lunged at that fox's throat, shredding it virtually in two!

With that, the spell was broken and we girls rose to action, trying our best to quiet Chum before Baba woke up. Poor Naja, having instigated the commotion, now wanted to stop it. She grabbed the fox from Chum and held it high above her head so he couldn't reach it. The fox was raining sawdust all over the kitchen floor, Chum was barking his head off, we girls had become a chorus of "No! Chum! No!" and in the midst of this storm of noise and confusion came Baba's thunderous clap! "What is this?" Baba gestured. "Is this the time to play when I'm resting?" Baba scolded Naja and we did too! For years afterward, whenever Naja would start some playful mischief, we would remind her of "Choo Chum". Later we tried to sew the stuffed fox back together, but it never looked the same. Somehow even the fox's expression had changed from alert and ready, to bedraggled and limp.

In 1935, Baba was staying in the little cabin on the Hill next to The Samadhi. He was in seclusion in that room and on fast. We girls, though, were permitted to see Baba for a few minutes in the evening when we would bring piping hot

BABA LOVED US TOO

bhakri (unleavened millet bread) to Him. Baba would feed this bread to Chum, and that reminds me of a very funny incident that happened at the time.

Chum would sit outside on the parapet surrounding the cabin. The day Baba broke His fast, a cow happened to be grazing outside. Baba threw some bread to the cow and when Chum saw this, he could not contain his jealousy! Baba's prasad should be for him, not this cow! It didn't matter to Chum in the least that Baba had given him his share — from Chum's point of view it should all be for him. Chum rushed at the cow and chased it round and round the cabin. The cow didn't want to give up its bread, and Chum didn't want to give up chasing the cow! Faster and faster they ran until dog and cow were a blur of motion. After awhile you couldn't tell who was chasing whom! So you see, Chum's possessive and jealous nature also provided us with some funny moments. But really I tell you, Chum loved Baba so much and so deeply, he felt it was his sacred duty to protect Baba from everyone.

When we left Meherabad to travel with Baba, Chum was kept at Lower Meherabad.

This is the story of Baba's pet dog, Chum. It is also the story of all of Baba's pets. Because Baba emanated love, this real love evoked in each of His pets a deep and unswerving loyalty and devotion to Him. Each pet yearned to be in Baba's proximity, just as we yearned to be with Baba. And just as we longed to give our all, so did each of Baba's pets — especially Chum, that big and valiant dog who loved Baba so much.

The Baby Parrots

At the end of 1933, we came with Baba from Nasik to stay at Upper Meherabad for the first time. There were six of us — old aunt Soonamasi, Mani, Khorshed, Naja, Valu, and myself.

From 1934 onward, Baba brought us many different pets. Though we had much work to attend to during the day, it was always a special joy to care for and nurture these pets that Baba so lovingly would bring to us.

During the mornings, Baba would be down the Hill with the men mandali, and every day at quarter to eleven, He would come up the Hill for His lunch and to be with us.

One day I remember Baba came up the Hill a little earlier than usual. We were all busy getting everything ready for Baba's lunch. When Baba entered our room, He beckoned to me to come near. As I came closer, I saw Baba put His hand in His coat pocket, and then quickly take it out again. Though I could tell that Baba was holding something, I couldn't see what it was. Baba held out his hand, letting me know that He wanted to give me whatever was in it. I held out mine, and Baba slipped something alive into the palm of my hand! Imagine my surprise when I saw a tiny pink scrawny baby parrot with a huge red beak. It had no feathers at all — just pink flesh!

BABA LOVED US TOO

"Oh Baba! It's so ugly!" I said. "It doesn't have a single feather."

"Keep it," Baba gestured. "It will grow into a beautiful bird."

Then Baba turned to Mani and called her. Again Baba slipped His hand into His pocket, only to bring out another tiny featherless baby parrot. This one He put in Mani's hand. Baba had one more "surprise" left, and this one was given to Khorshed who was standing nearby.

"Now," Baba said as He seated Himself on His gadi (divan), "put the baby parrots in front of Me."

Just then, all three baby parrots started to cry and squawk. They looked so helpless and funny; all in a row with their mouths wide open like handbags! They were squawking loudly because they were very hungry.

Baba said, "Come on, we'll feed them. Hurry up and bring some food for them. Bring chick-pea flour and ghee." Ghee is clarified butter.

We brought the flour and ghee and, after mixing it together, Baba formed this mixture into little pellets that could be fed to the baby parrots.

Baba quickly fed the first parrot with the chick-pea mixture. Then He fed the second baby and then the third. By the time Baba had finished feeding the third baby, the first one was crying hungrily for more. So Baba fed them each again. Baba looked so happy as He fed the tiny pink parrots. The three featherless babies ate and ate and ate. And, because they had eaten so much, they began to groan. Baba told us, "Now we must give them a walk to help digest their food. Otherwise they will get a stomach ache."

THE BABY PARROTS

We put the parrots on the floor and Baba gently nudged each one from behind with His finger to start it walking. As they waddled, they groaned. They looked so ugly with their skinny legs, big claws, featherless bodies, bloated stomachs, and huge red beaks. Eventually, by pushing them along with our fingers, we managed to give them a slow but steady walk across the floor. When they had crossed the length of the room, Baba turned them around to walk back again. After this round of exercise was completed, they were no longer groaning. Baba told us, "Now they will be all right."

For some days we continued this feeding and exercise programme until the baby parrots began to grow bigger. And, when all their bright green feathers appeared, we recalled how Baba had assured us that these three ugly skinny baby parrots would become truly beautiful birds. And, of course, Baba — all knowing — was right!

The Baby Mynahs

Among the birds we cared for while staying on the Hill at Upper Meherabad were three mynahs. One day our servant girl found three baby birds on the ground outside our room and she brought them to us. Apparently they had been nesting in our roof and had somehow fallen off. We knew that baby birds must have protein to grow strong and there was no meat allowed at Meherabad. How could we care for these babies? We told the servant to put them back in the nest, hoping that the mother would not reject them. She did this, but in a short while they were again on the ground crying from hunger. Now what to do? Soon the mystery was solved when we discovered another mynah nesting nearby. You see, these poor babies had lost their own mother and the neighbouring mynah, knowing this, threw them down so someone else might adopt them and feed them. She had her own babies and could not care for these orphan mynahs also.

The poor babies were crying piteously. Baby birds really need a lot of protein to grow their feathers and gain the strength necessary to fly. We felt very sad at seeing their plight and so brought them into the kitchen in a basket to show to Baba.

Baba would come up the Hill at quarter to eleven each

THE BABY MYNAHS

morning for His lunch. When Baba came and saw the birds, He really felt sad for them. Baba said we must keep them. "Come on," gestured Baba, "we will feed them." Baba instructed us to make chickpea flour and ghee pellets for the birds. We kneaded the flour and, after mixing it with the ghee, made it into little pellets. This concoction we gave to Baba who fed each bird a little at a time. But this was not enough food. Baba told our servant girl to bring grasshoppers, beetles, or earthworms for the little birds to eat.

After Baba went down the Hill, we gave the girl a small tin in which to collect the insects. Meherabad is very dry and it doesn't have much good vegetation or rich soil where beetles and other varieties of insects thrive. This poor girl soon became disheartened. What should she do? She could not find any good bugs! Then she had an idea! She decided to turn over a rock and see what was living underneath. The first rock revealed a scorpion! She was so desperate to find food for the poor babies that, without hesitation, she cut off the poisonous half of the scorpion's tail and put the rest of the scorpion in the tin. Now she turned over one rock after another and, would you believe it, she found half a dozen scorpions!

We were so surprised to see a tin filled with scorpions, but we eagerly mashed them and fed them to the baby birds. The mynah babies were so hungry that they ate the scorpions with relish!

When Baba returned, He was pleased that we had found some suitable protein for the birds. The babies grew healthy and strong. We would feed them any and all insects procured plus the scorpions, and each day Baba would come and feed

BABA LOVED US TOO

them the chickpea mixture. But with what difficulty we brought up these birds, you can have no idea! Five hundred times a day a mother bird brings food for her babies and we had to take her place!

Baba has told us that not a leaf falls without His willing it. It was as if by Beloved Baba's very wish and design that these three baby mynahs were found helpless and motherless at Meherabad. In that way, we were not only able to clear Meherabad of the scorpions, but help these orphan birds to grow up strong and healthy and with the loving attention and presence of Baba. As days passed by, the birds would fly away and then come back to the kitchen for food. It was always heartwarming to hear their sweet little voices calling for us.

When Baba would come to the kitchen, He would ask for cream and chapaties broken into tiny pieces. This Baba would feed to the birds. Only after they had eaten their fill would Baba eat His own meal. Because the birds had no mother to teach them how to find food, their total concentration was on Baba and us. We had become their surrogate mothers.

As Baba entered the gate one day, two of the mynahs flew toward Him and perched on His shoulders, one on each side. Baba continued to walk toward the kitchen, came inside, and sat down on His gadi (divan). Baba smiled as He gestured at the two birds on His shoulders, "See how sweet they are? They must be hungry. Bring food for them." And when we brought the food, Baba happily fed them.

Gradually, the mynahs became more and more independent, learning to find food for themselves and depending less

THE BABY MYNAHS

on us. Finally the day came when they could fend for themselves. But it was not uncommon for us to see them alight affectionately on Baba's finger or shoulder. Especially, we would enjoy watching Baba as He walked through the gate with His mynah friends perched on His shoulders.

One cannot help but wonder at the inexplicable destiny of these three baby mynahs — from helplessness and hopelessness, without mother and food, they found their way into the arms of the One Real Mother and Father of us all. How blessed they were to be adopted by the Avatar.

The Salunkis

I don't think you have salunkis in the West, but these birds are very common here.

They are lovely little birds biscuit coloured, with a little black cap on their heads and dark feathers. And they really have a sweet voice.

During those early cloistered years at Meherabad, Baba one day brought us some salunkis to keep as pets. Someone had given them to Baba and so He gave them to us.

Khorshed was told by Baba to take care of the birds. She was to change their water, feed them, and clean their cage. Everything was fine for a few days. Then Khorshed cut her finger while working in the kitchen. It was a tiny cut, hardly noticeable, but she didn't take proper care of it and the cut became septic. In India, one has to be extremely careful about dirt. A small insignificant wound can become infected overnight. And this is exactly what happened to Khorshed.

Baba told Khorshed that she shouldn't clean the cage of the salunkis until her cut had healed. Mani and I were now to be in charge of the birds. I have to laugh when I think of the two of us. We felt so proud to be in charge of those birds. Mani and I were determined to give the best care possible to the salunkis. We cleaned their cage until it sparkled, gave them sunbaths outside — everything we could think of we

THE SALUNKIS

did for those birds. The whole morning passed by in making sure they had fresh water and enough lettuce and bird seed to eat.

Just as we were admiring our morning's labour of love, we were called to the kitchen for lunch. It was early and Baba had not yet arrived. He was still with the men mandali. Mani and I went to the kitchen and sat down to eat.

While we were eating, one of the servant girls came into the kitchen and told Mani and me that the salunkis were on the roof! We were used to seeing wild salunkis chirping away as they perched on our roof. So we thought she was referring to the wild birds. But the girl was insistent. She said, "No. They aren't the wild birds, they are ours. The cage is empty! Our birds are on the roof!"

Mani and I looked at each other in shock! Here we had done our very best for Baba to take care of those birds, and would you believe it, we forgot to shut the cage door. Such a simple thing and we both forgot.

Mani and I didn't know what to do. Soon Baba came and we told Him what had happened. Baba certainly wasn't pleased. He looked at us, gesturing, "You did everything so perfectly, how is it that you forgot to close the cage door?" Mani and I didn't say a word, but we each remembered how proud we had felt in doing such a good job — especially because it was our first day in charge of the birds. And we knew that whatever contact Baba had wanted with the birds was now broken. But Baba took it well. He just said, "Never mind, let them be free."

The Talking Mynah

After Baba shifted the Meherabad ashram to Nasik, He instructed my sister Freni and her husband Rustom to settle there. Baba would visit them frequently, and they in turn would be frequent visitors to Meherabad. My sister Freni was one of the few women allowed to stay with us at Upper Meherabad.

On one of Baba's visits to Nasik, Rustom presented Baba with a beautiful Nepalese Mynah which he had bought in Bombay.

We were really enchanted with this beautiful bird. It did not look at all like the ordinary mynahs one sees — his appearance was unusually lovely and striking. He was jet black with short, thick, orange-coloured legs and a matching orange-coloured beak which was well-shaped and broad. From his ears hung two delicate, oval-shaped flaps with a lace-like design in the skin.

We discovered that the mynah loved music. Whenever Mani would play the sitar, the bird would dance. The two little flaps that hung from his ears would sway gently from side to side with the bird's movements and the mynah would gracefully hop from one leg to the other in time to the music. It sounds extraordinary but the mynah had a sense of rhythm and Baba really enjoyed watching him.

THE TALKING MYNAH

Baba told us we should try and teach the bird to speak in our language. This bird had been living in a South Indian household and spoke in a language foreign to us. But the mynah was a remarkable mimic — it could imitate the sounds it heard perfectly. It would cry like a baby and wheeze like an old man with an awful asthmatic cough. I'm not exaggerating, the crying sounded exactly like a child's and the wheezing and coughing sounded so realistic that if you didn't know it was the mynah, you'd mistake it for someone suffering from bronchitis!

And that reminds me of a funny incident that occurred when Baba's mother, Shireenmai, came for a visit. She had no idea we had a mynah for a pet.

Shireenmai was staying in the West Room, or what is now known as the Museum. We girls were staying in the East Room. Shireenmai had just arrived and was preoccupied with arranging her things. We were busy with our usual daily chores. Suddenly, Shireenmai heard what sounded like a baby crying in the next room. She wondered whose baby it could be, as she didn't think there was any baby staying with us on the Hill. But the cries were coming from the next room! A few minutes later, Shireenmai heard the sound of terrible asthmatic coughing and wheezing. Now she wondered which one of us was ill. She was very concerned for our health and wanted to know who it was that was suffering from bronchitis.

Later, when Shireenmai found out it was our pet mynah that she had heard, we all had a good laugh — our mynah had fooled Shireenmai with its perfect mimicry!

Early each morning, I would stand before the mynah's

BABA LOVED US TOO

cage and repeat clearly and loudly, "Baba darling ... Baba darling." On the fourth day I had a surprise. I was so happy, the mynah repeated, "Baba darling," imitating me! I knew Baba would love to hear it!

As soon as Baba came up the Hill, I told Him the news — the bird could now speak! Then I tried to coax the mynah to talk but he just kept silent. We waited and waited expectantly, but he remained absolutely mute. It was so disappointing. Finally Baba turned to leave and as He stood on the step leading out of the room, the mynah called out, "Baba darling" so sweetly you felt the bird was saying, "Don't go, Baba darling."

I tried to teach the mynah some other words but there was never enough time.

The Westerners were coming for Baba's 1937 birthday celebration in Nasik and we girls could not wait to show them our talking mynah.

Unfortunately, one day there was a very bad storm with heavy rainfall and the bird caught a draft through an open window. Birds have very delicate constitutions and the mynah contracted pneumonia. Despite all our care and attention, the mynah never regained his strength. We tried everything to restore his health. We even gave him hot fomentation with warm cloths, but nothing worked.

We did not want to leave the bird alone in this condition, so the mynah was brought into the kitchen. That way we could keep an eye on him as we did our chores.

At the end, the mynah was so weak that he could hardly raise himself up from the floor of the cage. With great difficulty he looked up and just said, "Baba," and died. Baba

THE TALKING MYNAH

had come for His lunch and He picked up the mynah in His hands and held the bird very lovingly. Then we wrapped the mynah in a soft white cloth and Baba buried him under the neem tree outside the kitchen at Meherabad.



Meher Baba with Mittu, the mischievous

Mittu

When Pilamai came to see Baba in Dehra Dun, she brought with her, from Karachi, a lovely pair of parrots. Though the male was the sweeter of the two, the female, Mittu, had the most personality. She never learned to talk, but she made up for it with her pranks.

We would place a vessel on the ground for the birds to bathe in. It was entertaining to watch what they would do as they each behaved so differently. The male would go first. He would hop daintily inside the vessel and wash himself thoroughly. When he was finished, he had a peculiar habit — with his beak rubbing against the ground, he would circle the bowl, walking round and round it several times.

When Mittu's turn came, the entertainment really began. She would watch the male, then strut toward the bath as though she was a regal lady. But, amusingly, Mittu never actually bathed! Once in a great while she would stand in the bowl demurely drinking a little water and then jump out. That was all! She just loved to make a show of everything. That is what I mean by personality.

Unfortunately, the male bird did not live for very long and we felt sad about that. But Mittu remained healthy and became part of our ashram life — even travelling with us.

BABA LOVED US TOO

From Dehra Dun Baba took us to Rishikesh, an area deeply revered by Hindus as a place of pilgrimage.

Baba had arranged for us to stay in a spacious bungalow overlooking the sparkling and swift-flowing waters of the sacred Ganges. Our bungalow was situated at a height, surrounded by forest and mountains. It was very picturesque there and so sweet of Baba to have found us such a beautiful location.

To reach our bungalow we had to cross the Ganges by boat, for in those days the only bridge spanning the river's expanse was the Lakshman Juhla suspension bridge. This bridge was much used by pilgrims beginning their climb into the Himalayas to the holy places of worship nestled in the high peaks.

I remember on one occasion Baba took us for a walk from our bungalow to the bridge. As we stood there with Baba, watching this seemingly endless procession of pilgrims go by, the elderly leaning on staffs, being helped by the young, those unable to walk being carried in make-shift sedan chairs or riding horses, the poor weighed down with huge bundles on their heads, many of us had the same thought: all these people are undertaking such a strenuous journey, little knowing that God is here at the roadside watching them as they begin their ascent.

For us, the best part of the day came when we would walk down to the river and wash our clothes. It was summer-time and very hot and steamy. Washing our clothes was a welcome relief as we would dip our feet in the cool Ganges water and feel nice and refreshed. The Ganges is sacred to Hindus, and everyday as we washed our clothes we would see

MITTU

the many sadhus and pilgrims bathing in the holy waters or standing waist deep absorbed in prayer. But the real reason I am sharing this with you is because it reminds me of one special day in Rishikesh when our Mittu did the pilgrims one better!

We girls were getting everything ready for Baba's bath, and that entailed a lot of work. There were no conveniences like we have today. Baba's water had to be heated on a wood fire and the pails carried to the bathing room. And I'm not talking about one pail of water — Baba wanted four pails of water and the temperature of the water had to be just right — not too hot and not too cold — lukewarm. So you can understand that it took some time to arrange everything perfectly for Baba.

Mittu was with us in the house and she would walk about freely here and there. We knew that Mittu meant mischief — her beak was always busy nibbling at something, but we were preoccupied with our task at hand. No one was thinking of Mittu, our thoughts were on Baba and getting His bath ready.

Baba arrived and went inside the bathing room. He took off His sadra and tossed it on the little table nearby. A few moments later a very strange thing happened. Baba's sadra began to move by itself! None of us had accidentally touched it, it just started moving! Really, if we hadn't seen it with our own eyes, we would have thought we were imagining it. The sadra continued to twist and sway until Baba lifted it up. There underneath was Mittu! We had forgotten about Mittu with all our concentration on Baba. No one had even noticed her enter the bathing room, let alone wrap herself in Baba's

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sadra.

Baba laughed silently, His eyes sparkling and His cheeks turning pink. He was really tickled. "Mittu," Baba gestured, "is very naughty! She is a real mavali!" Mavali means rascal in Gujarati, and Baba certainly was right!

Mittu liked fruit, seeds, and nuts, but she was also fond of rice, dal, and chutney! Mani and I would eat together in our room. Our meals would be sent to us on a small tray. Mittu of course had her own food, but she was more interested in ours! She would waddle over to our tray and impatiently knock on the vessel lids ... tap ... tap ... tap ... announcing to us her presence. She wanted to make sure we understood that even if we had no interest in the food, she did!

Mani would then mix together a little rice, dal, and chutney and feed it to her. If Mani was busy with something else, then I would feed her. And sometimes Baba, too, would feed her rice and dal from His own hand.

Life with Mittu was never boring, and sometimes it could be quite exasperating, because you never did know what might happen next!

This brings to my mind an incident that occurred in Mahabaleshwar. Mahabaleshwar is a beautiful hill station a few hours' drive from Poona. There are many paths meandering through the woods and we would often go on long walks with Baba. It was especially wonderful when we would reach a clearing and Baba would stop with us for a few minutes under the shady trees, enjoying the breathtaking beauty of His own creation.

Now, we were getting ready for a walk. I put my jacket

MITTU

on Mani's bed while I attended to some last minute chores. Mittu was sitting quietly on Mani's bed, and I remember thinking to myself, "I'll just be five minutes, then I'll pick up my jacket." But you know how it is when you are getting ready to go out. There is always some distraction — something that diverts your attention. I couldn't have left my jacket on Mani's bed for more than five minutes, but it was more than enough time for Mittu! That naughty parrot had chewed up all the press buttons (snaps) on my jacket! And how do you punish a parrot? I tried to admonish her — shaking my finger and telling her how naughty she was to spoil my jacket, but Mittu boldly returned my scolding with a loud squawk! And that squawk became louder and more indignant! It was clear that Mittu thought, "Why should you scold me? I was just enjoying myself!" In the end, I wondered who was scolding whom!

When we stayed on the Hill at Meherabad, our room was what is known today as the East Room. Mani and I shared this room and when I look back on those days, I think it was good that we were so young and eager to serve Baba.

That room had originally been a water storage tank in the time of the British. It has no windows and only small ventilators up at the top. We had no furniture other than our beds and a small stool. We lived out of our trunks with no cupboards in which to store our clothes. In fact, we hung our clothes across a string. Having no tables, we used our beds for everything — sewing, writing — they were our all-purpose furniture.

Now what happened was this. Mani was standing in front of her bed measuring some cloth she wanted to make

BABA LOVED US TOO

into a blouse. Lying on her bed were many pins with brightly coloured glass heads. Mittu was perched on top of Mani's bedpost watching her as she measured and cut the cloth. Someone called Mani and she left the room for a few minutes. I was preoccupied with my own work. Then a funny sound caught my ear — a cracking sound as though someone nearby was cracking nuts. Once, twice, three times I heard the sound. I couldn't figure it out. I looked up from my work wondering where that noise could be coming from. Should I give you a guess? Mittu had climbed down from the bedpost and was sitting on Mani's bed, intently cracking the glass bead on the head of each pin! That mischievous bird had been waiting for her chance and when Mani left the room, she got it!

Parrots love to crack seeds, especially chilis, and those bright red and green beads must have attracted Mittu's attention and curiosity. She couldn't resist finding out if they were edible.

Quickly I admonished Mittu and just as quickly she ran up the bedpost, perching at the top with the most innocent expression on her face. But as soon as I turned my back, there was that cracking noise again. Mittu had climbed down again to get at the pins!

Mani returned and I told her what had happened. "Mani," I said, "you better hurry up and finish your blouse or you won't have any pins left!"

Mittu was also with us in Lahore. It was in Lahore that Baba separated the women into two groups. Mani, Meheru, Valu, Rano, Margaret, and Kitty were with me in one bungalow and, a short distance away, there was another bun-

MITTU

galow which housed the rest of the women. The second group came to our bungalow once a week when Baba would call them for a visit. They would cook rice and dal and chutney and bring it with them. We would eat together on the porch of our house.

Lahore was a beautiful well-planned city, and where we stayed on its outskirts it was called Garden Town. Though there was very little rainfall, the water supply was amply provided by an extensive canal system which also irrigated the gardens in different areas of the city.

One day Margaret asked Mani if she could take Mittu for a walk in the garden. Mittu was friendly with everyone, so Mani agreed. Mani perched Mittu on Margaret's shoulder and the happy pair strolled through the compound garden.

A short while later, Margaret returned and remarked to Mani that Mittu had been no trouble at all. Mani removed Mittu from Margaret's shoulder and found out exactly why Mittu had been so quiet. All this time Mittu had been chewing on Margaret's blouse, nicely making a huge hole in the shoulder. Margaret didn't praise Mittu now. Instead she told us, "That Mittu, she ruined my very best and favourite blouse!" Margaret never dared to take Mittu on her shoulder again.

Lahore could be very hot, but it was pleasant to sit on the porch overlooking the garden which even had a fountain in it. It was toward the end of our stay in Lahore that Mittu almost lost her life. We were busy packing up our belongings and had left Mittu outside in her cage on the porch. We knew she would be safe there, so we didn't bother about her and continued our packing.

BABA LOVED US TOO

Suddenly we heard a loud cry for help from Mittu. We knew from the sound of her call that she was in danger. We ran out of the house to see what had happened and, horrified, we found Mittu's cage empty. It had all happened very fast. One minute Mittu had been in her cage and the next she had disappeared! Our eyes scanned the porch and garden and then we saw her. Mittu was being dragged away by a mongoose!

We all started shouting at once, trying to scare the mongoose. Our porch had a wall and steps into the garden and Meheru, quick-thinking, jumped over the wall to try to catch the mongoose. We kept shouting as this was our only weapon to scare the mongoose. In his fright, he finally dropped Mittu and scurried away under the thick hedge.

We picked Mittu up and carried her into the house. She was in shock. Really, I tell you, Mittu was a brave parrot. Any other bird would most certainly have died from the shock.

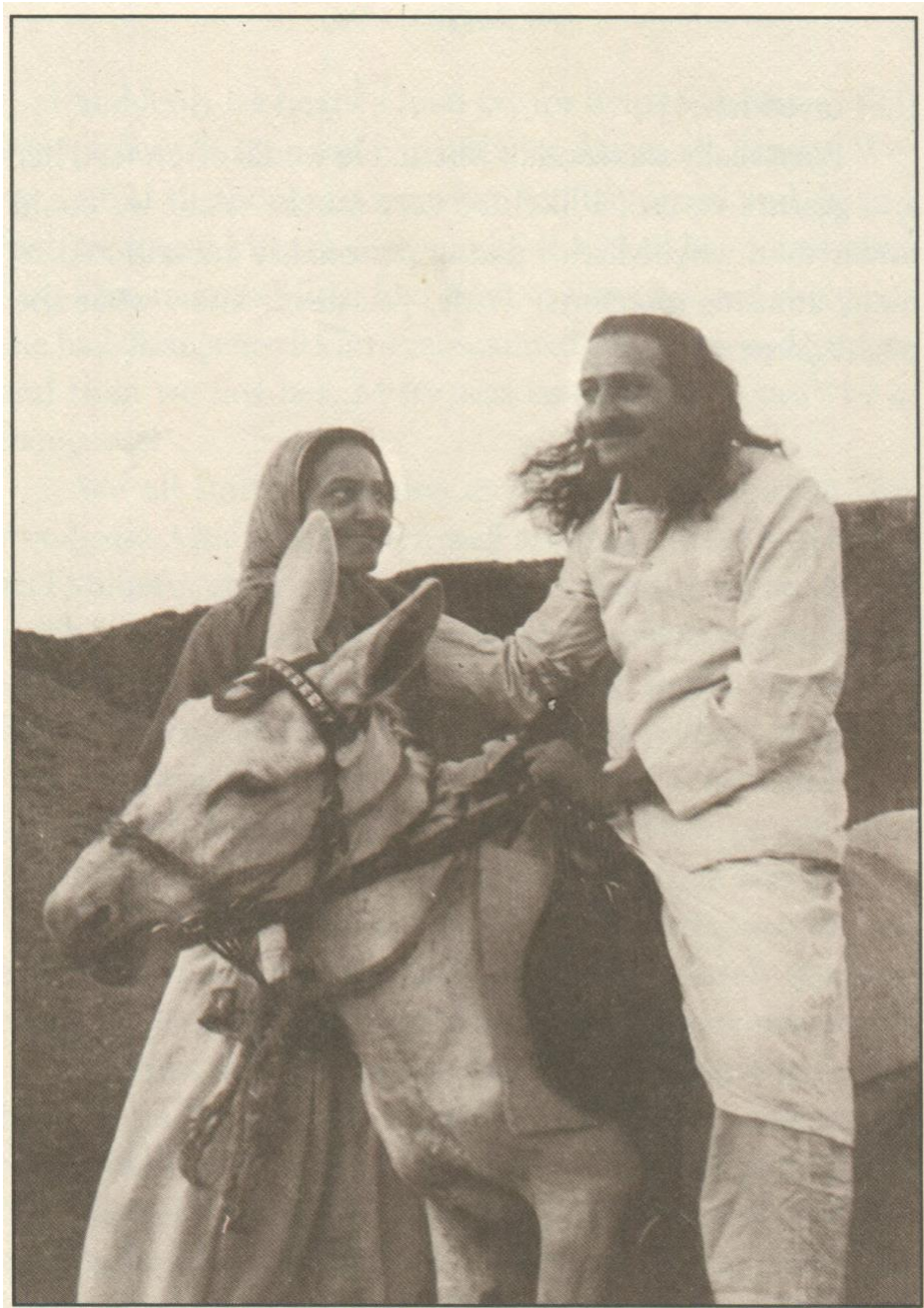
We wrapped her in warm cloths and tried to soothe her as best we could. But you could see how absolutely terrified she was. Her eyes were huge and the pupils were dilated.

In a few days, Mittu was fine. You must be wondering how the mongoose got hold of Mittu, Well, ironically, it was Mittu's own mischief that caused her close call with death. You see, her cage had fine brass wire. Mittu had pressed the wires out and wriggled herself free. Then, feeling grand, she boldly perched on the top of her cage, surveyed the porch and garden, and flew down. Little did she know that the mongoose had cleverly hidden himself behind the hedge and was watching her every movement. That moment of freedom had almost cost Mittu her life! It was only Baba's Grace

MITTU

that saved her.

Baba really was fond of Mittu. He would often feed her and gesture to us, "I like her very much." And we could understand why. Mittu's daring personality contributed to many amusing moments. Truly, you never knew what she might do next!



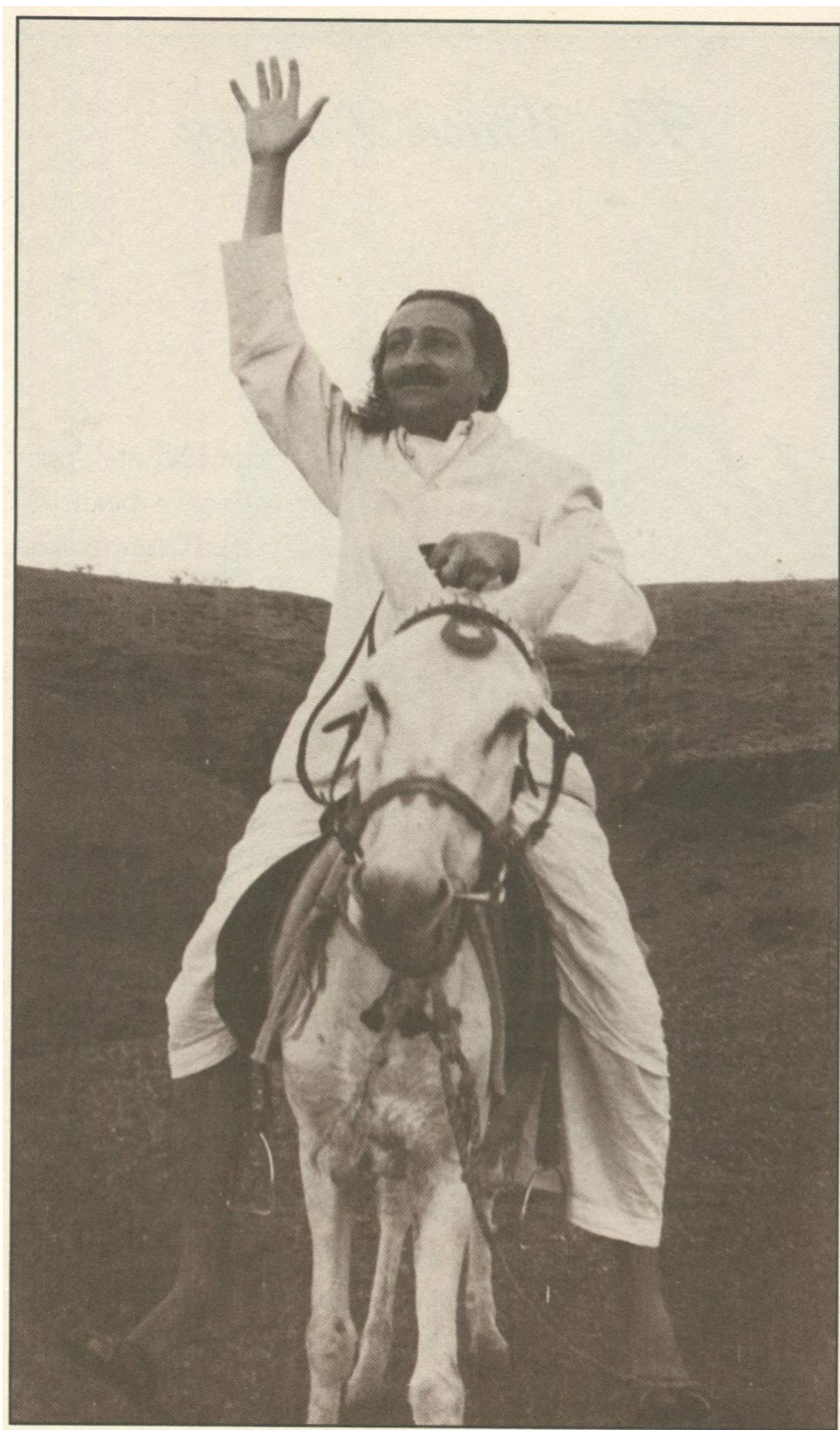
Meher Baba, Mehera, and Champa on Meherabad Hill

The White Donkey

While we were staying on the Hill at Upper Meherabad someone gave Baba a beautiful snow-white donkey. She was named Champa and was very tall and stately, giving the impression of a pony rather than an ordinary donkey. Baba loved her very much. He would caress her and feed her with much care. Sometimes when Baba would hug Champa, He would hold her so close that His head would touch hers. In fact, there is a photo of Baba embracing this sweet animal.

In those early years, our life with Baba was very strict. We were not allowed outside the compound except when Baba, Himself, would come and take us outside for walks. Champa would be brought with us so that she too could have some exercise. We would lead her along as we walked with Baba over the hills behind the Samadhi.

After two days of going on these walks with Baba, the idea came to me that Champa was fully grown and could easily bear weight. One day as we returned from our walk, I told Baba that this donkey was strong enough to carry the weight of a man. "Baba, men ride these animals. Why don't You ride her? You could easily and it would not hurt her at all!" Baba took a moment to reflect on what I was suggesting



Meher Baba astride Champa

THE WHITE DONKEY

and then said, "All right. Tomorrow you saddle her and I'll ride!"

We were so happy all we could think about was how sweet and lovely darling Baba would look riding that pure white donkey. The next morning as we cooked and attended to our other work, our thoughts were on Baba.

And when Baba did ride Champa, it reminded us of Biblical times when Jesus had also ridden a donkey. Now we were seeing our Beloved Baba, Christ come again, astride this same simple animal. What a blessing for dear Champa, and what a beautiful sight for our eyes to behold. After a short ride, Baba got down, and for some days after that, Baba would ride Champa for short distances across the hillsides.

It was on one of these occasions that Mani photographed Baba astride Champa. She had been given a little box camera, and luckily liked to bring it along on our walks.

Irene Billo, a Swiss girl, came to stay with us on the Hill. She loved animals very much and Baba, knowing this, put Champa in her care. Then after some time, Baba decided to travel and He gave Champa to one of His devotees.

Baba's love for these dear animals was always touching to witness for it emanated from the very source of love. We can never understand the ways of the Avatar, for His ways are unfathomable. But what we can understand is that God is love and love must love. All of these animals whose destiny brought them into His contact were immensely fortunate to receive His love.

The Baby Bird

*I*n 1933, there were just a few of us living on the Hill at Upper Meherabad. One morning it so happened that a tiny baby bird was discovered by one of the women servants as she walked up the Hill. The baby bird looked so helpless sitting in the grass that she couldn't resist picking it up and bringing it to us. We also thought that the bird was sweet-looking.

Except for Naja, who was in bed at that time due to weakness and ill health, we were all busy in the kitchen. We decided to give the baby bird to Naja to feed and keep warm. It was a perfect arrangement. Naja held the tiny bird in her hand, keeping it warm and safe with her in bed. Naja was happy to have the baby bird, and the baby bird was happy to be snug in bed with Naja!

The bird grew up and when it was strong enough to fly, we let it go.

You may be wondering why I included this story, since Baba really didn't have any contact with this bird. It has come to my mind only to illustrate how Baba instilled in each of us respect for all forms of life. Through His tireless and loving example of care and concern for even the tiniest creatures we, too, were inspired with such feelings.

The White Rabbits

*B*aba was soon to depart for the West, and knowing how much we would miss Him, He gave us projects to occupy our minds and hands while He was away, besides two darling little white rabbits to keep us company.

We were told by Baba to make a large frame that would hold 12 photos of Him. Except for the cutting of the glass, we did everything ourselves, from the carpentry to the designs around the photos. After our daily work was finished, we would work on this frame. The two baby rabbits would play in the room while we would sit on the floor cutting out crepe paper roses and flowers for the frame's design. We would also design clips and brooches made from Baba's hair – embroidering His brown curls into many beautiful patterns.

We placed alfalfa grass, carrots, and water in the center of the room for the rabbits. They would eat, drink, and then hop and play between our trunks. They were so cute — snow white in colour with pink eyes.

The room we stayed in is called the East Room. If you have been to Meherabad, you may have seen it. It is in the

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building called Meher Retreat. That building was originally a water storage tank built by the British during World War I. It has thick stone walls and no windows. It was not until 1938 that the upper story of Meher Retreat was built. Anyway, that is where we stayed and the two little bunnies gave us good company while Baba was away.

Soon a month had passed by and the baby bunnies had matured. The consequences of two fully-grown rabbits never occurred to us. But after some time, one of the servants observed that the bunnies would soon be having babies!

What we now call the Library Room in this same building was empty. Someone suggested that we keep the rabbits there and place one of the big earthenware water containers called ranjan on its side, making it a perfect place for the mother rabbit to have her babies. We put earth at the mouth of the ranjan. Then the mother could easily go in and out as she pleased. It turned out to be just the right idea! The mother gave birth to her babies safely inside the container, protected from any prying eyes.

Baba's mother, Shireenmai, came to visit us at this time. She told us not to touch any of the newborn bunnies. If they are touched by others, the mother rabbit will reject them. We followed her advice and left the babies alone. After the mother rabbit would finish feeding them, she would hide the babies from sight by kicking up some of the earth around the opening of the ranjan.

Shireenmai stayed about 13 days and then left for Poona. It was not long after her visit that we heard the best possible news. Baba had returned from His trip to the West!

THE WHITE RABBITS

We were so happy to know that Baba would soon be with us again at Meherabad. We girls decided to give Baba a big surprise.

When Baba came back to Meherabad, we greeted Him happily and then let Him relax. After He had washed and had His lunch, we gave Him our surprise. What do you suppose we did? We got a tray and put the baby bunnies on it and covered them with a cloth. Then we brought the tray to Baba. Baba was seated on the divan so we placed the tray in front of Him. Baba removed the cloth and discovered four darling baby bunnies! He took them in His arms and lovingly caressed them. The bunnies looked so sweet as Baba hugged each one. And Baba looked so happy playing with them. Baba wanted to feed the bunnies but they kept jumping out of His hands.

Our surprise was a real success! Just thinking about it now makes me smile as Baba was really pleased.

We kept these rabbits for some time. Then when we left with Baba on some travels, they were given away. But the memory of Baba hugging those baby rabbits is as vivid today as it was when we gave Baba our special surprise.

This reminds me of another pet we had many years later. In the year 1950, we were staying in Mahabaleshwar. One day a woman happened to bring us a wild baby hare not more than one month old. It was ginger coloured with white spots on its head, and had a sweet appearance. From the beginning, the baby felt at home with us and we loved it very much. It was a gentle hare and would sit quietly in our laps while we fed it milk.

Every morning before Baba would go to the mandali

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side, He would pet and caress it. Baba would be so relaxed and happy as He played with the new pet. And every night when we would go to the sink to brush our teeth and wash before going to sleep, the little hare would follow along behind us. He would imitate us by cleaning himself — almost as if to say, "I also wash before retiring!"

We kept the baby hare in the house so that it would be safe from any stray animals. I knew that to remain healthy it needed sunshine. Outside my window there was a porch. One day I suggested to Mani that we give the hare a sunbath. There were no dogs or cats nearby and it would be safe there as I could easily keep an eye on him through the window. Mani agreed, so we put him on the porch.

For a few minutes, I watched while the baby hare happily sunned himself. Then you will never believe what happened! Suddenly a big black crow swooped down, grabbed the dear little hare by his ears and flew away! I couldn't believe my eyes! The next moment the bunny was sailing through the air, high above the garden, heading toward the thick forest that surrounded our bungalow.

I called to Mani and the girls to come quickly. We all started to shout as we ran into the forest, trying to scare the crow. It was difficult to make out the exact tree where the crow had perched. Under our feet there was a carpet of dried leaves. Desperately we searched here and there. Suddenly we heard a rustling sound and when we looked under the leaves, there was the baby hare. What a relief! We were so happy to have found him safe and sound. Each one of us petted and hugged the sweet little hare. Then we brought him home and gave him some warm milk. Later when we told Baba what had

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happened, He held the hare in His arms and lovingly caressed and cuddled him. What a fortunate hare to have escaped from the crow into the arms of the Lord!



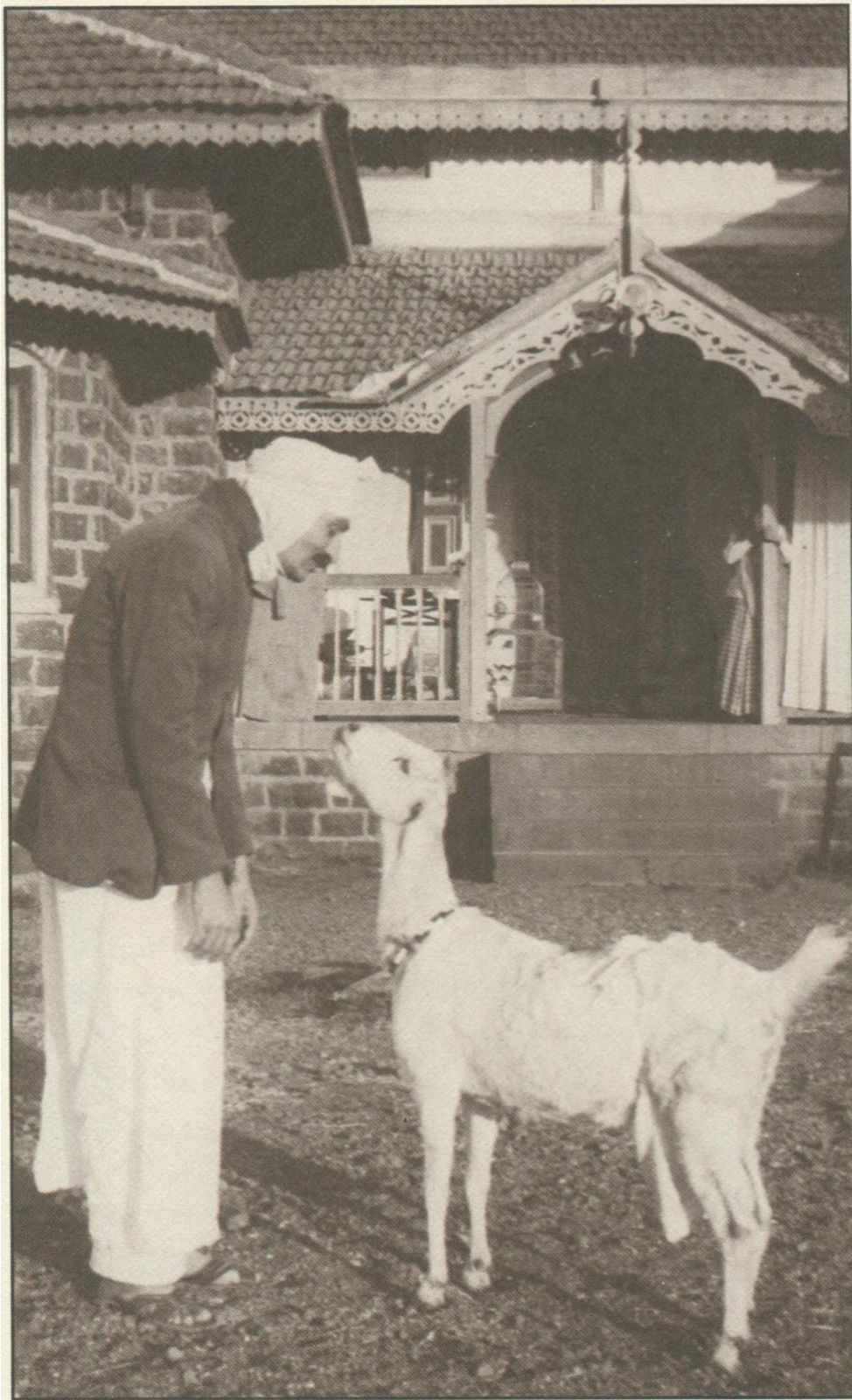
Meher Baba with Lily, the Deer

A Deer at Meherabad

*P*rior to the arrival of the Westerners at Meherabad, Baba had been given a baby deer. It was six months old and Baba kept it with the men mandali. Occasionally Baba brought the deer up the Hill and that reminds me of one funny incident that amused Baba and all of us very much.

Baba was seated, and we girls were gathered around Him. The deer was tied by a short string to Baba's gadi. Naja was standing nearby and she put out her hand to pet the deer. But as soon as she did, the deer butted her. Again she tried to pet the deer and again it butted her. Finally Baba told Naja to leave the deer alone.

This deer was later given away when Baba moved the Meherabad ashram to Bangalore, and there we acquired another deer, named Lily.



A special moment with Meher Baba and the goat in Nasik

Goats

When Baba returned to India after His trip to Canada, He was very ill. The cold climate had affected His health adversely. A goat had been given to Baba and it was suggested that Baba drink goat's milk as it is beneficial for colds and coughs. Goats eat many different herbs and grasses which give their milk healthful qualities.

This goat loved to follow Baba around and play with Him. Baba, in turn, enjoyed feeding the goat tasty pieces of toast and chapaties. Baba would raise His hand up high, out of the goat's reach, and the goat would stand on her hind legs, balancing her front legs on Baba's chest, so she could gobble up these delicious treats.

Have you ever heard of goats in the house? I remember an amusing incident that occurred in August of 1949. This was shortly before Baba announced His plans for the New Life.

Perhaps you have heard of Baba's Great Seclusion of forty days. During this intensive phase of His Universal Work, Baba remained confined in the Blue Bus at Meherazad, and instructed all of His lovers to keep silence. Those forty days of silence gave each of us an inkling of the immense restriction Baba had placed on Himself by not speaking.

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A few days after Baba stepped out of His seclusion, He wanted to have a complete change. With one or two of the mandali, He took Mani, Goher, Meheru, and myself to Satara to get away from everything and relax.

Considering the heavy monsoon rains, the weather was beautiful with intervals of bright sunshine pushing away the dark and heavy clouds. We were happy that Baba seemed to be relaxed and was enjoying the change of scenery.

One afternoon, just after His lunch, Baba left the dining room table to go wash His hands. He had hardly stepped out of the room when we heard His imperative clap. Immediately ¹ we girls rushed to the adjoining room to see what Baba wanted. And there Baba stood — the Master Showman — pointing dramatically at three goats standing on Goher's bed, nodding drowsily. Baba was acting as if He had conjured up those three goats out of a hat — just for our entertainment. It was too funny for words. Baba with a naughty gleam in His beautiful brown eyes, and with the flare of a magician, gestured, "What will Goher have on her bed next!" All of us had a good laugh and shooed the reluctant goats out of the room.

The Mongoose

While we were staying on the Hill at Meherabad, Baba one day brought us a baby mongoose.

The mongoose was a lovely silvery gray in colour and extremely timid. It wouldn't let us pet it and though it was frisky, it seemed to be ill.

Baba was very concerned about the mongoose's health and I remember how lovingly Baba suggested we apply an Anti-Flogisteen plaster to its chest in the hopes of curing it. My sister had come from Nasik to be with us for a few days and Baba put her in charge of the mongoose, so she applied the plaster.

Anti-Flogisteen plaster was very expensive because it came from the West and naturally was meant for people. But Baba wanted to give the best care possible to the mongoose. Despite all our efforts to cure the mongoose, it didn't survive.

The Pet Snake

A pet snake was given to Baba by someone who had heard that Baba was keeping pets. The snake's fangs had been removed so it wasn't poisonous.

Baba brought the snake to me and said, "Don't be afraid. It won't bite." But what do you think? When I held the snake it felt cold and stiff like a stick! I didn't like it at all.

We girls were staying on the Hill at Meherabad. We put the snake on the floor of our room and it wriggled away under our trunks. Then when we wanted it, we couldn't find it.

After a day we told Baba we really didn't like the snake, so Baba took it down the Hill and never brought it up again!

Two Baby English Bulls

Baba had two English bulls at Meherabad. These calves were very cute. One was white in colour with black patches and the other was predominantly black in colour with white patches. For the first week they were kept with us and *Baba* and I would give them milk from a large feeding bottle. When they grew bigger and could eat grass and hay, they were sent to Lower Meherabad for the men mandali to take care of. The bulls grew into fine sturdy animals and were used for plowing the fields at Meherabad; we no longer had any connection with them.

Later when we were at Meherazad in 1948-49, *Baba* had these two bullocks brought here to plow our land.

It seems that *Baba* had it in mind for *Raja*, the black bullock, to be part of our animal entourage in the New Life, for in December of 1949, *Padri* was told by *Baba* to bring *Raja* and the Caravan to Sarnath, by rail. Another Indian bullock was also brought with *Raja*. These two bullocks pulled the Caravan during our New Life travels.

And on that New Life journey, walking through unfamiliar countryside, stopping for the night in mango groves or wherever we could find an available water supply, our one source of security and comfort, other than *Baba's* company,



Meher Baba, Mehera, and two English calves

TWO BABY ENGLISH BULLS

was the Caravan. At night, Mani, Meheru, Goher, and I would sleep inside the Caravan and those little bunks to our tired bodies seemed heaven sent.

Raja and his bullock companion brought the Caravan to Dehra Dun where a different phase of the New Life was begun in which the animals no longer had a part. Raja and his partner were given to Nanni Dunya ("Small World"), an institute for deaf and dumb children in Dehra Dun.

Some years later when we returned to Dehra Dun, the officials of this institute invited Baba to visit the school and give darshan to the children.

As a gesture of gratitude for the gift of those two valuable animals, the institute presented Baba with a tiny piece of beautifully polished wood. One of the children had painted on it a picture of Baba wearing a garland and beneath the painting had written, "O Silent Baba, give us speech."

Baba gave this lovely miniature wooden plaque to me and it is still one of my treasured possessions for it is a reminder not only of Raja, but also of those little children whom Baba blessed.



Typhoon

I don't recall the exact year Typhoon arrived, but I do remember Baba walking briskly through Meherazad garden carrying a little ball of wriggling fluff in His arms. It was during our first years at Meherazad so it must have been around 1944. There was a terrific storm that same evening so Baba, with a twinkle of mischief in His lovely brown eyes, named the terrier pup Typhoon. I think half the fun for Baba was in naming the pets — He had such a marvelous sense of humour. So much joy and humour flowed from Baba's gestures — how can I convey to you the vibrancy of His Silence. No one else could communicate so fully as Baba did.

From the beginning Typhoon was not only sweet natured, but unusually intelligent. Since I was always busy attending to Baba, Typhoon was put into Mani's care as she had more time to see to her food and needs. But of course, being part of the family, everyone played with the new pet, and Mani and I taught her many tricks. She learned to walk on her hind legs and beg and once she even entertained Baba in a little skirt that I had made for her. Baba enjoyed Typhoon's tricks.

Typhoon was an apt pupil too. Even when she was a puppy we noticed her keen intelligence. You know how

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natural it is for a hungry puppy to whimper and cry — you almost have to put its nose in the milk dish before it realises it is there. Typhoon was different. She would sit patiently next to the brick where Mani would place her bowl as though she realised that if she waited there, soon we would understand that she was hungry and bring her some milk.

When we left Meherazad on our travels with Baba, Typhoon came along. Typhoon was about 6 months old. She was a good traveller, too — quiet and obedient.

Typhoon travelled with us from Bombay to Raipur and on to Kashmir. Sarosh had driven us in his car to Bombay, and there we picked up Goher who had just finished her medical studies and was to join us. We were to travel from Bombay to Raipur by train. Whenever there was a long halt at a railway station, it was Goher's responsibility to give Typhoon a run. After having been cooped up in the cramped train compartment, she was very excited to get out. Instead of doing her business quickly, Typhoon played with Goher's ankles and sniffed around the station, intrigued by all the enticing smells. We tried to get her to hurry, but it was of no use. Soon we heard the train whistle. Goher and Typhoon were still nowhere in sight. Now what to do? We girls began to worry that the train might leave without them. Just in time, Goher appeared with Typhoon and boarded the train.

Have you ever heard of Jal Kerawalla? His whole life was dedicated to Baba — there was nothing he would not do for Him. He was a Magistrate and, with his influential position in the government, he was very helpful in Baba's work.

Jal had specially arranged for Baba's stay in Raipur, and when we arrived at the Raipur train station, we were sur-

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prised to see a huge crowd of people on the platform. They had all come to welcome Baba. Until then, we girls had always been in the background. We were not used to being received by big crowds. But that is exactly what happened at Raipur. All those people who had gathered on the platform had come specially to get a glimpse of Baba!

An aisle had been created so that Baba and we girls could walk through the surging throng. We kept our eyes down, shyly following Baba while the crowds stood reverently with hands folded together.

On our journey to Kashmir, Baba decided to take a circuitous route, by car, to Badnera. Baba wanted to contact a special mast there.

Though it was wartime and commodities were scarce, Jal, through his influential position, miraculously procured for Baba two cars and enough petrol for the long journey. The mandali and Rano, with all our luggage, travelled in a large station wagon. Goher had returned to Bombay for further medical studies, so Baba had called Rano to take her place. We girls rode with Baba in a smaller car.

But plans did not always work out and there were many delays. We were supposed to reach Nagpur by 4 p.m., but instead we passed through its lighted streets late at night. An hour later, when we were well into wilderness, our car broke down! Jal apologetically asked us all to get down as it would lighten the load. Mani and Meheru decided to help push the car, but Baba told me not to, so I took charge of Typhoon and the numerous sacks and bundles filled with our supplies. And what I couldn't hold, Mani and Meheru put by the side of the road. You see, whenever we travelled with Baba, each of us

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girls carried our own cup, saucer, plate, and individual toiletries in a bag of our own.

There were several unsuccessful attempts to get the car going, and it was only after Baba gave a hand that the engine started up like magic. We girls again piled into the car. We felt so tired and dusty from riding all day and into the night, but Typhoon seemed refreshed after her midnight stretch! After we reached our destination it was discovered that Mani's sack containing her cup and plate had somehow been left behind. Later we found out that the mandali had also been stranded and spent the night by the roadside trying to fix their car!

In Srinagar, Kashmir, Baba arranged for us to stay in a lovely bungalow which had a beautiful garden. It was just perfect for us, and Typhoon had a nice enclosed area in which she could romp about freely. One day Meheru was playing with her in the garden when suddenly a stranger appeared. Typhoon's curiosity was aroused and she ran over to the young man and began barking incessantly. Meheru ran over too, and started to question the stranger, asking him why he had entered the garden and what he wanted.

In the meantime, Mani, hearing Typhoon's excited barking, stuck her head out of an upstairs window. Seeing the stranger she shouted to Meheru, "He must be the Tongawalla. Why did he come so soon? It's too early."

But the young man had only one answer to all their questions: "Hoozoor-e-Boozoor ... Hoozoor-e-Boozoor!?" Mani and Meheru could not figure out what in the world he was saying. "Hoozoor-e-Boozoor?" It was a puzzle to both of them.

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Later when we were together with Baba, Mani and Meheru told Him about the incident in the garden. Baba smiled and, pointing to Himself, gestured that the young man, a mast, was referring to Him — Baba. He was asking for "The Great One!"

While in Kashmir, Baba took us to an exhibition of arts and crafts. It was so sweet of Baba and we were so happy in His Company. He encouraged me to get whatever I liked and I thought of the girls left behind at Meherabad. It would be nice to bring them back some little gifts. We chose useful items, like scarves and woolen sweaters, and I saw a lovely pair of fur-lined slippers that I thought would be nice and comfortable for Baba. When Typhoon saw those slippers, she got so excited — she thought they were some kind of animal! Baba wore the slippers a few times while we were in Kashmir and then I put them away. Sometime later, after we had returned to Meherabad, I was opening my cupboard one day when Typhoon started growling and barking up a storm! I couldn't understand what had gotten into her — she was so excited. Then my eye fell on Baba's slippers tucked away neatly on the shelf. Typhoon had been excited by those slippers again!

Baba also took us to the south of India, and while we were staying in Hyderabad something very amusing happened.

Sarosh had given us two completely black bull terriers and they were named Raja and Rani. You may not know this, but Raja means king and Rani means queen.

At this time, some of the women mandali from Meherabad were called to be with us for a month. They would

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come a few at a time. Guloo and Jaloo who still live on Meherabad Hill, and their sister Meheru, along with Mansari came in one group. Now, if you have met Guloo and Jaloo you can imagine the fun! One of the first questions they asked upon arrival in Hyderabad was, "Where are the Raja and Rani? We have heard that a Raja and Rani are staying with you. Can we meet them?"

For a few seconds we drew a blank — then it dawned on us which Raja and Rani they meant! It was our bull terrier pups!

Typhoon died while we were in Hyderabad. Her very excitable nature unfortunately was her downfall and I mean it quite literally!

One day Typhoon was chasing a cat on our upstairs terrace. The cat jumped down and Typhoon, in her excitement, leaped over the low parapet of the terrace and fell to the garden below. She died a few weeks later from internal injuries caused by her fall. It was very sad, but she was fortunate to have lived so close to Baba during her short life.



Meher Baba with that lucky monkey

The Story of Lucky and Jumpu

When the Westerners came to stay with us at Upper Meherabad, our lives underwent change. Now there were more of us — a blending of Eastern and Western personalities, and a long succession of pets. The one thing we all had in common was our desire to please Baba, and Baba in His care and concern for us, made sure we each had ample opportunities to do so.

I remember one day when we were all gathered together around Baba, I believe the year was 1939. Anyway, the subject of monkeys somehow came up in the conversation. Norina was telling Baba how adorable monkeys are and expressed a desire to have one for a pet. "Oh, Baba," she exclaimed, "monkeys are so cute and you know they are quite smart and can be trained, too!"

Baba did not say anything at the time, but it wasn't long after this talk that a tiny new pet made his appearance in our household. Someone had given Baba a cute little baby monkey and I will never forget how sweet Baba looked holding that tiny, fluffy, brown creature right in the palm of His hand.

When Norina saw Baba holding the monkey, she smiled happily, telling Baba, "Oh, what a dear thing he is!"

Whenever Baba brought us a new pet, He would be the

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first one to feed it. Baba told us to bring some food. We gave Baba some bananas and He began feeding the new pet. Baba looked so pleased as He fed and played with the little monkey whose cheeks now bulged out like two balloons from the bananas. We all stood around enjoying the fun, until Baba handed over the monkey to Norina telling us that he was now in her charge.

Perhaps you have seen the photographs of Baba with a tiny monkey. The monkey in those photographs is Lucky. I remember those photos were taken during the Blue Bus tour. Our first stop was Sholapur and it was there that those pictures were taken.

Of course, anyone who knows about monkeys will not find it surprising that after a few days, when Lucky got used to us, he became quite bold. Poor Norina had her hands full! ·

Norina, with the other Westerners, was staying upstairs in the room we now call the Study Hall, above the Museum at Upper Meherabad. The accommodations for the Westerners, considering their backgrounds, were quite sparse. Each one had her own bed and a small table nearby on which to keep her personal possessions. Now little Lucky, after a few days, became very mischievous. He took Norina's things from her table and began throwing them out the window. Lucky grabbed Norina's toothpaste tube and began squeezing it and biting it. Imagine what a mess — toothpaste on the table, chair, window, everywhere you looked was toothpaste! And what a sight was Lucky. He had it all over his mouth and chin and you know how frothy toothpaste gets. Well, we just could not stop laughing. It was really too funny for words. There was Norina running after her dear

THE STORY OF LUCKY & JUMPU

Lucky shouting, "Naughty monkey. Mustn't do that. Come here you naughty monkey!" until she finally caught him and promptly tied him up.

Soon afterward, we left with Baba for Bangalore and Lucky came with us. Baba of course continued to come and play with Lucky just as He had done at Meherabad. In the evenings, Lucky would come and be with me in my room. I used to sit by the side of the window and sew while little Lucky, tied on a leash, would amuse himself and me playing nearby.

Eventually Lucky was given away to a Baba-lover. Though Lucky was not the only monkey to live with the Avatar as one of His pets, he certainly had the perfect name, for only a lucky monkey could have the good fortune not only to be played with and fed by Baba, but to amuse Him.

Talking about monkeys reminds me of another monkey Baba had for a pet. Oh, what a sweet monkey he was — most extraordinarily loving. All he wanted to do was cuddle up to you and sit in your lap. But let me tell you the story.

We were in Calcutta at the time and all the Westerners were with us. This included Norina, Elizabeth, Kitty, Rano, Nadine, Margaret, and Irene. One day we were visiting a pet shop with Baba and so all of us were having a good time laughing and talking together as we looked around the shop.

The pet shop was rather large and had many cages, most of which were empty except for some parrots and a few other animals. It appeared as if people had already bought most of the animals in the shop. As we walked along with Baba, we stopped at one cage that had a cute little golden-blonde furred monkey — very fair-skinned with delicate facial fea-

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tures and no tail whatsoever, a very sweet-looking monkey. I remember Baba stopped in front of the cage and just looked at the monkey for a minute or two at the most, and then went on. The monkey seemed very happy as Baba looked at him. He just gazed back at Baba with such feeling that we all felt he was really drawn to Baba. Of course, Baba had by then turned the corner and walked away. This had all taken place in the span of a minute or two — not longer. As soon as Baba walked away, the monkey started to jump and cry, holding the bars of his cage and screeching wildly. You can really have no idea how pathetic he looked as he cried and cried, and what feeling it evoked in us as we watched. He just would not stop crying. I felt so sorry and sad for the little animal that I ran over to Baba, explaining how restless the little monkey had become as soon as Baba had left.

Baba walked over to the monkey's cage and, upon seeing Baba, the tiny monkey quieted down immediately. Baba said to find out how much he cost, which we did, and then Baba bought him. We put him in a rather large basket, tall enough in height so that the monkey could sit comfortably in it. Then we left the shop for our hotel. Outside, we saw a street vendor selling peanuts and guavas, so we bought some for the : new pet.

We returned to our hotel with the monkey and he seemed quite content to be with us, not at all scared or shy. It was soon lunch time and we were all feeling hungry. We left the monkey in our room while we went to the dining room for our meal. As we sat down to eat, I suddenly heard loud sounds of banging and crying coming from our room. I realised it must be the little monkey crying again for our

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company. "Baba," I said, "this monkey is really restless. He doesn't want to be left alone." "Yes," gestured Baba, "he must be very hungry. Bring him here and tie him to a chair at the end of the dining room." As soon as he saw us, he again quieted down so we could finish our meal.

You know, Baba named this monkey Jumpu because he was always jumping and restless, but he was really an unusual monkey. He was not mischievous like Lucky; he was extremely gentle and affectionate and loving. But so much so that it became almost impossible to do one's work with him around. He wanted constant attention just like a human infant. As soon as you would come near, he would jump into your arms!

We eventually came back to Meherabad from Calcutta, and Jumpu returned with us. He still wanted constant attention and, naturally, now we had much work to attend to and could not cuddle and hold him as much as he wanted. He would be tied to a pole outside the kitchen in the shade, and whenever we would come outside, Jumpu would be there, just waiting to cling to us and be held in our arms. Luckily, Kitty was very fond of this monkey and she would always give him food. But as soon as she would move away, Jumpu would start screaming, just like a human baby needing love.

You know, the reason I wanted to share this story with you is because it illustrates so vividly the ever-flowing love, care, and concern of the Avatar for His creatures, and how God never fails to respond to our longing. God is love and love must love, so even a monkey blessed to come in contact with the Avatar feels that love.

But there is one funny episode that I should share with

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you concerning Jumpu. As I mentioned earlier in the story, Jumpu was carried in a large basket and was brought back with us from Calcutta to Meherabad by train. As there were so many of us, two compartments were booked. Baba and some of us girls, including Margaret, were in one compartment, and in the other compartment were Norina, Elizabeth, Kitty, Rano, Irene, and Nadine. Now it so happened that Norina knew that animals were not allowed in the compartment and Jumpu would have to be concealed from the eyes of the ticket collector. A plan was devised so that someone would warn Norina when the ticket collector was about to approach so she could quickly hide Jumpu in his basket. Elizabeth had also brought a bird in a cage with her and she, too, was determined not to get caught. As soon as Elizabeth heard the ticket collector was coming, she ran to the toilet with her bird and kept him there, while Norina quickly stuffed her hand into Jumpu's basket in order to keep him quiet. What a funny predicament — Norina with her hand slipped under the lid of the basket scratching Jumpu's back and ears to keep him content, and also trying to act totally innocent and at ease as the conductor came by for the tickets. Actually, Jumpu did make a sudden noise but everyone turned and looked out the window pretending to see a bird outside and the ticket collector was fooled. Baba really enjoyed hearing the tale of Norina's and Elizabeth's close calls!

So there you have it! Two monkeys whose destiny it was to become pets of the Avatar. One whose fate it was to be given as a gift to Baba, and the other monkey who longed so wholeheartedly to be with the God-Man, that God, being all compassionate, granted his heart's desire.

Pets in Bangalore

Elizabeth Patterson was one of the early Western devotees who came to India to stay in the ashram with Baba. She loved animals very much and when she joined us at Meherabad, she brought along her pet dog, Kippy, a Boston Terrier that had been given to her for her birthday.

The Study Hall, which is the upper floor of the Meher Retreat Building, was the dormitory where the Western women slept. When we look back on those years, we cannot help but admire their love for and dedication to Beloved Baba. Life was not easy for them. None of them were very young, and Elizabeth had a bad back which made it difficult for her to climb the stairs leading up to the dormitory. Yet, without a murmur of complaint, she would daily trudge up and down those steep steps. And I don't mean once or twice a day; Elizabeth would go up and down, and back and forth, each time Baba would call the Westerners, for her own needs, and especially for her dear little Kippy who had to have her daily runs and outings.

Chum was already with us at Upper Meherabad and now we had Elizabeth's Kippy, too. We girls used to call Kippy the Princess in the Tower because, with Chum's jealous temperament, the two dogs had to be kept apart. Chum

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could have easily made a meal of Kippy in one bite!

Baba knew the soft spot in Elizabeth's heart for animals, and so to please her Baba had two tiny pink piglets brought to Meherabad to be under her care. The baby pigs were so cute that we all immediately fell in love with them. They were kept in a large cage in a corner of the dormitory.

Baba often came and watched the pigs. It was really fascinating to see how they ate and moved about, and to listen to the funny sounds they made. Baba named them Nutty and Guppy. They grew very fast as we fed them all kinds of good food — vegetables, potato skins, oats, and various grains, so they put on weight quickly, becoming pink and plump. Elizabeth looked after them very lovingly.

In December, 1938, Baba left Meherabad on the Blue Bus tours. We travelled all over India — East, West, North, South — from before dawn till nightfall. The bus was supposed to hold only 16 passengers, but Baba had it bulging with almost 30 of us — women, children, and pets. There was not an inch of space that wasn't occupied by someone or something! The bus had bench seats on both sides, facing the front, and an aisle down the middle, just like an ordinary bus. Those youngest among us sat in the aisle on little stools or on huge bundles. We would ride all day and sometimes into the night on the most bumpy and dusty roads. But since we had Baba's company we didn't mind the discomforts.

Elizabeth was one of the drivers of the Blue Bus and Kippy was one of the passengers. Whenever we would stop, villagers would crowd around us excitedly exclaiming to each other "Look, the circus has come to town!" And you couldn't blame them for thinking so — seeing a parrot, a

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monkey, a dog, and a bowl of goldfish along with all of us tumble out of the bus. We looked so funny covered with dust from head to foot! Later, Baba had Elizabeth drive her car and Eruch or Dr. Donkin drove the bus. Then we girls, along with little Kippy, rode with Baba in the car. It was such comfort after having ridden in that bumpy bus.

At the end of 1939, Baba moved the entire ashram to Bangalore, in the south of India. Baba had arranged for us to stay in a beautiful house called "The Links". This property was very spacious and just perfect for Baba's needs. It had a large compound with a number of small buildings which were utilised by Baba. Baba had a mast ashram in one corner, besides a hut for His seclusion work.

When the pigs were two years old, they had babies. It was such a nice feeling to know that the babies we had raised were now having babies of their own. And when the babies were born, they looked like miniature replicas of their parents.

There were more than twenty Eastern and Western women living at The Links, so there was much household work. I had to cook for Baba, Mani had writing to do, and Khorshed had to look after Meheru's little two-year-old brother. You can imagine all the work involved in cooking for over twenty people, it didn't leave much spare time. But despite all the household work, we had to attend to a growing menagerie of pets!

Besides Kippy, Nutty and Gutty and their babies, we also had Lucky, a cat which was given by Baba to Nadine Tolstoy to care for, a wire-haired terrier named Gracie that Baba gave to Irene Billo, and two pairs of dogs — Jingo and

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Bingo, and Sunny and Bunny. Margaret was in charge of Sunny and Bunny and that brings to my mind a funny incident.

Baba had given us meditation for a specified period each day. No one was exempt; each one had to see to her chores, including the pets, and be ready when the bell for meditation was rung. We would rush to our places with Baba's photo in front of us. He was to be our meditation. Now what happened was this. After a few minutes Rano heard giggles. At first she ignored them and continued with her meditation, but in a short while she heard them again. Soon Rano's meditation was half on those giggles! Finally she recognised it was Margaret's voice. When the meditation period was over, Rano asked Margaret, "What was so funny?" "It was Sunny and Bunny," Margaret replied, "I kept on saying Sunny ... Bunny ... instead of Baba ... Baba ... !"

Elizabeth had permission to drive into town and attend to different errands. One day Elizabeth was driving through the big open-air market when she spied a peacock dancing and strutting in the street. She was so captivated by the bird that when she returned home, she couldn't resist mentioning it to Baba. With His agreement Elizabeth bought the bird and brought it back to The Links. That is how we acquired Moti. Baba liked Moti very much.

Moti loved to dance and, in certain months, he would give "love-calls". His voice was not sweet, but he looked most extraordinarily beautiful when dancing, or perched on his swing at night with his majestic tail sweeping down in full plumage. Moti loved to be the centre of attention and would dance whenever and wherever the mood struck him. His

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performances were really unforgettable, especially when witnessed against a backdrop of impending sunset or sunrise. He was not shy and quite often he would come up to you, with his head down as an invitation to scratch his neck.

Our Bangalore zoo also included a gentle white lamb we named Mary, a rabbit whose name Snowy aptly describes him, and a deer named Lily. Elizabeth would feed Lily. There were two larger monkeys kept in cages outside, but Baba had very little contact with them.

Eventually, Baba decided to leave Bangalore, and we travelled from Bangalore to Goa, to Belgaum, and to Happy Valley where we stayed for a few weeks, and finally back to Meherabad. All the animals were given away except for Kippy, Lucky, Gracie, Jingo and Bingo, and of course our dear friend, Moti.

In later years at Meherabad, some other birds — chickens, turkeys, peahens, and peacocks were brought to join our zoo on the Hill. Unlike Moti, these peacocks were not tame and so Baba had them eventually given away.

After the New Life, when we returned to Meherabad, we learned that Moti was still a resident of Meherabad. Whenever we girls would visit Meherabad, we would look forward to seeing our old friend of earlier days and it delighted our hearts to find that he, too, had not forgotten us.



Baba hugging Cracker

Cracker

*I*n 1946 Baba with a group of us came to stay at a bungalow on the outskirts of Dehra Dun on the Saharanpur Road. It was a nice secluded house with a large compound quite a distance from the road, so Baba was not disturbed by the sound of traffic. In the compound, but not too close to the bungalow, was a cottage for the men mandali to stay.

Besides Mani, Meheru, and myself, there were Khorshed, Katie, Soonamasi, Naja, Rano, and Kitty. Margaret, too, had come, but within a few weeks of our arrival, following Baba's wishes, she returned to England by ship from Bombay. This was the termination of her stay with us in India, and we were sorry to see her leave.

We stayed in Dehra Dun for several months. During this period Baba, with some of the men mandali, went very often for mast work. It was very convenient for them to walk to the gate and catch the bus there. And on their return, which was always sooner than the date given, it was such joy to see Baba unexpectedly coming down the driveway toward the house. We would rush to the verandah to greet Him.

On one occasion Baba took us all to Hardwar for an overnight stay during the *Mela*. Another time Baba took Mani, Meheru, Rano, and myself to a tiny hamlet way in the



Mehera holding Cracker

CRACKER

Himalayas called Katryan and another time in place of Rano, Baba took Kitty with us girls to Simla.

It was just after the war and India was still under British rule. Our memory of Simla was of a very picturesque town, high up in the mountains in a beautiful setting with ranges of snow-capped peaks seen in the distance. The streets were clean and not at all crowded. Baba would take us for walks through the town. Our attention would often go to the lovely dogs that the English ladies would be taking on their walks.

Seeing our interest in dogs, Baba suggested we could acquire one that we liked. We decided that the pair of Scottish Terriers looked the cutest so Kitty, with her usual energy and enthusiasm to please Baba, made enquiries and visited many dog owners on the chance of getting a Scottish pup. But this was not possible at such short notice, so we gave up the idea.

Some time later after our return to Dehra Dun, imagine our surprise and joy when Baba on His return via Delhi from one of His mast trips, came back bringing a Scottish Terrier pup with Him. It was so sweet and caring of Baba to remember.

He was the cutest looking puppy and we all fell in love with him immediately. He was named Cracker by his previous owner and a firecracker he was by temperament, but very lovable. He was to be Mani's dog, but everyone had a share in taking care of him. Kitty, who loved taking Cracker out for walks, was one of his favourite aunts.

Once Baba had retired to His room at night and the front and back doors were shut, Cracker had free run of the

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house. Except for Baba's room on the ground floor, our bedrooms were upstairs and we had to move about quietly so as not to disturb Baba whose sleep was very light. Cracker too, was very quiet and did not disturb anyone, but from the pieces of charcoal lying about the house, we knew he was quite active at night.

Those of us who had to get up the earliest and go down and start our early morning chores, had to be alert where we stepped, for not only did the pieces of coal have to be avoided, but Cracker could scatter his droppings in different places, too. Meheru especially had to be careful when coming up with the pails of hot water for Baba's morning shave and wash in the bathroom upstairs. Fortunately the house had electricity, but no plumbing. The water was supplied from a well near the gate, brought over to the house by two women specially employed for this work, plus the gardener who drew the water from the well.

From Dehra Dun, in December, Baba made the shift to Mahabaleshwar, where we stayed at Florence Hall, Aga Khan's bungalow, for the first time.

In Mahabaleshwar, Cracker loved going with Baba and us for walks. Later, Baba had a big mast ashram set up in some large outside quarters near the mandali's house. In a cottage nearby, Baba would do His work in seclusion.

Very early in the morning Baba would wave goodbye and go down the shady pathway to the cottage for His work. We had to hold Cracker back from going with Baba as he very much wanted to follow. He would tug on his leash and when that didn't work, start begging to be freed so as to follow Baba. But we knew that Baba could not be disturbed.

CRACKER

Baba would be at His work the whole morning and told us we should continue our morning walks. We soon got to know the shortcuts through the forest and Cracker would specially enjoy these walks — running ahead and chasing monkeys or squirrels or flushing out birds.

One time, way ahead of us, we heard a lot of barking and, recognising Cracker's bark, rushed to the spot to see what the commotion was. There he was, frantically barking and chasing some buffaloes round and round a clump of trees. We wanted to laugh but realised that the situation was quite serious. "No, Cracker. Come here, Cracker," to no avail. Our voices were lost in the din. At last Meheru somehow managed to catch Cracker and pick him up in her arms, and that quieted the buffaloes.

Seeing two women up in a tree, we scolded them for being scared of such a small dog. It was not the dog that had scared them, they said, but their own buffaloes who were half-wild. "See," said one of them baring her chest and showing us a wound, "this is what one of the buffaloes had done with its horn." It was good that none of us was hurt and that Cracker had gotten off "scot free", or it would not have been such a humorous story.

From Mahabaleshwar, Baba and we came to Satara, and later to Meherabad and Meherazad. In Meherazad, it was difficult to give Cracker the freedom we wished for him. Baba had warned us that if he went to the village, the shepherds' big dogs would make mincemeat of him. Since we could not take this risk, we felt Cracker would be safer at Meherabad. There in Upper Meherabad, Kitty would be only too happy to look after him and take him out for walks. And when all

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the gates of the compound were closed, he could be left free for some hours in the day.

On our frequent visits to Meherabad with Baba, we were always glad to see our dear Cracker looking happy and well cared for, eager to get a pat from Baba and from each of us.

Foundy

The story of Foundy and how he was "found" is very interesting. Elizabeth had gone to the train station in Quetta, and while there a peculiar sight caught her attention. A very handsome dog, black in colour with thick fur, kept jumping on each train as it stopped at the station. The dog would rush into the compartments only to be pulled off by the train attendants. Again and again the same scene was enacted as a new train halted at the station.

Elizabeth's curiosity was aroused and so she asked the station master about the dog. He told her that this dog had been owned by a military officer. When the officer was transferred, he gave the dog to his friend. But the dog's loyalty to his master was really out of the ordinary. From the day the dog saw his owner leave Quetta on a train, he had been valiantly trying to board each train in quest of his missing master.

Elizabeth's heart went out to this orphaned dog. She brought him home and told Baba the sad story. Baba felt compassion for the dog and, understanding Elizabeth's deep concern for animals, allowed her to keep it. Baba named the dog "Foundy" because he was found.

During the war years, Baba sent Elizabeth and Norina

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and Nadine back to the West. Elizabeth didn't want Foundy to lose his master twice, so she took him with her to the States along with her pet Boston Terrier, Kippy. We were in Ajmer when they said their parting farewells to Baba. It was a heartfelt scene, for each of them felt the uncertainty of seeing Baba again.

Little did we know that this was the last time we would be seeing Nadine Tolstoy. In a courtly gesture, she made a last adieu to her Beloved King, kneeling before Him and reverently kissing His hand.

When Baba called Elizabeth once again to be with Him in India, Elizabeth wrote Baba from America asking permission to send Foundy back to India. Knowing how much Elizabeth loved Foundy, Baba agreed.

Foundy arrived in India by airplane freight and a Baba-lover picked him up at the airport.

When we moved to Rusipop's house in Ahmednagar in 1948, Foundy came with us. He was, by this time, quite old and blind. But he was a sweet-natured dog and wasn't much trouble to take care of. When Elizabeth had to return once again to the States for a month, Baba put Naggu, Meheru's sister who was with us on holiday, in charge of his care.

Baba always enquired after the pets and of course Foundy would often get a pat and loving caress from Baba. It seems that was what Foundy was waiting for — one last caress from Baba. Just a few minutes after Baba had given Foundy a loving pat and had left the room, Foundy breathed his last.

The Golden Oriole

We were staying at Pop's (Goher and Katie's father's) house in Ahmednagar. One night there was a terrific wind storm, and the next morning we discovered a bird's nest in a tree outside had turned over and a baby oriole had fallen from the nest to the ground. We felt sorry for the orphaned bird and decided we should try to take care of it.

Mani was helping Donkin with the typing of *The Wayfarers*, so she asked him what we should feed this baby bird. Donkin said, "Oh, just a worm or two." Mani took this to mean that the bird might eat four or five worms a day. Little did we know that one or two worms actually meant four or five hundred! Baby birds have voracious appetites. They need to eat and eat in order to grow their feathers and have strength to fly. How tiring it must be for the mother bird. She is constantly searching for grubs to feed her babies.

Really, it was too much — all the time we spent in feeding the little baby bird. Then when we finally sat down to do our own work, Baba came. And, you will never believe it! As soon as the bird saw Baba, it started to cry — chee, chee, chee — as if it was starving!

Baba looked from the bird to us and gestured, "The poor little oriole is so hungry and you all are sitting there?"

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"But Baba, we just fed the bird five minutes ago."

In the beginning we felt pity for the baby oriole, but in the end, we felt pity for ourselves! All we were doing was feeding the bird! And this was during a period when Baba had us on a fast!

As the days passed by, the bird grew up. One day Baba told us to close all the doors and windows and let the bird fly in our room. When we did, the oriole flew beautifully. It was fun to watch it fly around our room. The bird perched on Baba's photo and looked very happy.

Two days later, we were in the garden with Baba. Baba gestured for us to bring the bird in its cage outside. Baba then opened the door of the cage and the oriole flew out. It flew high into a tree some distance away. Baba looked pleased to see the bird healthy and once again free.

Bhooty

*B*aba had heard of a mast living in the foothills of the Himalayas and He wanted to contact him. I can't recall the exact region of the Himalayas but Baba and five of the men mandali set out to contact this mast. It was an arduous journey as Baba and the men mandali had to hike for many miles in the hot sun and through rocky and steep hills along narrow paths.

We girls, of course, did not accompany Baba on these mast trips, but often when Baba returned, He would share stories of their adventures.

On this journey as they were walking through one of the valleys that connect the foothills of the Himalayas, Baba noticed a scattering of goats and sheep grazing in the distance and a darling black mountain puppy. The puppy was immediately drawn to Baba and came scampering over. Baba stopped for a minute to pet her and then turned toward the steep hill that He and the mandali were about to climb. The puppy continued to follow Baba. She would playfully frisk and jump at Baba's feet. As they climbed higher and higher up the ridge of the mountain, the pup, undaunted, tagged along from behind. Now the path was getting dangerous, being barely wide enough for one or two people. On one side was a sheer drop and on the other side the wall of the

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mountain.

Suddenly, they heard a whimpering sound behind them. To their dismay, they saw that the puppy had slipped off the edge and was dangling from a rock below. The puppy was just managing to hold on to the ledge with its two front paws! Baba rushed to the puppy and lifted her to safety. He gestured to the mandali, "This puppy is really brave and strong to have held on to the rock until I could save her. I like her very much."

Baba and the men continued on, this time with one of the mandali carrying the puppy. When they reached the mast Baba met with him alone, while the mandali stood at a distance with their backs to Baba. As soon as Baba's work was completed to His satisfaction, they began the journey home. When they crossed that same valley where Baba had first seen the puppy, He had one of the men mandali enquire if the owner would part with the dog. The man agreed, and so Baba brought the puppy all the way back to Ahmednagar.

We girls were staying at Rusipop's house in Ahmednagar. The house at Meherazad was under construction. It was 1948, a year prior to the New Life, and Norina and Elizabeth were staying with us.

The mandali were a short distance away in a house called the Ice Factory. Baba could easily walk between the two residences. Kaka Baria was doing the cooking for the mandali and for Norina and Elizabeth who had to have special food.

During this period, Dr. Donkin had finished the printing of *The Wayfarers*. He had discovered that several maps showing the places where Baba had contacted the masts had

BHOOTY

spelling errors. Our task was to meticulously erase the incorrect letters and with black ink carefully write in the correct letters. It was painstaking work requiring our full concentration. So our time passed in correcting maps of the whereabouts of the masts, while Baba contacted the masts!

When Baba returned from His mast trip, He told us the story of the puppy's narrow escape from death, and how He had rescued her. Baba's gestures were so perfect in their expression that we all listened spellbound. In silence, how eloquently Baba spoke. He made the story come alive.

When we saw the puppy we fell in love with her. She was fluffy and plump and really lovely to look at. Baba told us He had brought the puppy for Kaka as she would make a good watchdog, being a pure Tibetan Mastiff. These dogs are known for their fearlessness and are very strong.

Baba named the puppy Gol-Gol (round-round) because she was just that. Kaka called her Gul (flower), and we girls called her Bhooty because she looked like she was wearing booties or slippers. Her paws were white, then to her ankles she was brown, and the rest of her was black. Above each eye was a yellow spot giving her the appearance of having four eyes! And, I'm not exaggerating, her coat was so thick that you couldn't part it.

When the construction of the big bungalow at Meherazad was finished, Baba brought us here to stay. Baba, knowing Bhooty's nature, hot-tempered and distrustful of strangers, wanted to make sure that we girls would be safe if Bhooty ever happened to be free. You see, Bhooty wouldn't let anyone except Baba and Kaka come near her. She would snap and growl and so was always kept on a short leash.



Meher Baba holding Bhooty on a leash

BHOOTY

Baba wanted Bhooty to know that we girls belonged to the house. Baba one day told us all to stand on the verandah of the house, as He was going to bring Bhooty over to meet us. We were to speak to her in our own voices so that she could get used to us. Baba brought Bhooty over on a short leash. Bhooty walked like a Parisian lady wearing high heels — each step measured daintily, not like an ordinary dog. She was a purebred and wanted us to know it.

We followed Baba and Bhooty into the house and out to the kitchen verandah. We'd say "Bhooty ... Bhooty ..." trying to make friends with her. But Bhooty looked at us coldly. Baba told us to bring a plate with an egg on it for Bhooty. Then Baba told me to give Bhooty the egg. She slowly and deliberately walked over to the plate. Even with the egg just waiting for her to eat it, she remained dignified and ladylike. She didn't rush and lap it up like some hungry and greedy dog. Oh, no, she ate her egg slowly and delicately. And when she had finished, she looked up and said with those yellow eyes, "Yes, I like eggs. It was good of you to give me an egg. Thank you."

After a few days, Bhooty did become warmer toward us, but her proud independent nature did not allow much more than that. She never played with us, she just showed a friendly tolerance.

In 1949, Baba announced His plans for the New Life. Mani, Meheru, Goher, and I were to accompany Baba. Kaka was also going to accompany Baba, so someone was found to stay with Bhooty. Later on, after the New Life was completed and Baba was going out on tour, He had Kaka remain at Meherazad to watch over the property. Bhooty was Kaka's



Mehera and Meher Baba with Bhooty in Meherazad garden

BHOOTY

only companion.

When Baba finally returned to Meherazad, Kaka told Baba how glad he was to have had Bhooty here with him. Kaka felt safe at night only because of Bhooty's presence. I should mention here that Meherazad was not as you know it now — it was quite a wild area. There were wolves and hyenas living in the surrounding hills and at night they would come out prowling for prey. Once Bhooty chased a jackal up a tree and kept watch over it until morning! Bhooty was such a good watchdog that she would keep alert throughout the night, surveying each corner of the property, listening for stray sounds, and watching out for intruders. She would continue her rounds till daybreak, so with Bhooty as Kaka's companion and guard, Kaka didn't feel afraid.

When Bhooty had puppies we were with Baba in Poona. Baba sent word to Kaka that he wanted to see the puppy that looked most like its mother. Adi Senior arranged to drive Kaka — with the prized puppy held on Kaka's lap — to Poona in his car. That puppy was Mastan, Baba's most beloved pet. But before I tell you that story, let me share with you one last incident about Bhooty, Mastan's mother.

We already had Peter, Mani's pet dog, with us, and after Mastan was born, Peter and Mastan would love to play together in the Meherazad garden. One day Bhooty started to play with her pup Mastan and Peter became very jealous. He growled at Bhooty: "Why are you playing with my friend?"

Peter couldn't understand it. He would see Bhooty run and jump with Mastan, pushing him over and playfully holding on to Mastan's neck, teaching him how to catch prey.



Baba kissing Bhooty

BHOOTY

Peter would growl at Bhooty, saying to her "Don't do that!" And it was so funny because if Bhooty had wanted to, she could have eaten Peter in one bite! Bhooty would patiently look at Peter and with disdain in those yellow eyes say, "But Mastan is my puppy. Don't you know better? I'm his mother!"

Eventually Bhooty and Peter became good friends, but Bhooty always maintained her dignity, even while playing with the other dogs. Her proud air — part of her cool Himalayan nature — always set her apart.

When Bhooty died, Baba was in seclusion. No outsiders were allowed to see Him and the mandali had strict instructions that He must not be disturbed.

Kaka loved Bhooty very much, but his obedience to Baba was unquestioning. Not wanting to disturb Baba with the news of the occurrence, Kaka quietly began preparations for Bhooty's burial.

When I heard that Bhooty had died, I felt Baba would want to know. I waited until Baba had come to our side and then I personally told Him.

For a few moments Baba was silent as He took in the news. Then He gestured to me, "Bhooty loved Me and served Me faithfully. In her next life she will take human form. Now I must go there." Immediately word was sent to the mandali that Baba was coming over.

Baba stood before Bhooty's grave and with His own hands showered flowers over her before the first earth covered her. What a fortunate end to a fortunate life!



Meher Baba with Begum in Mahabaleshwar – the day Baba stepped into the 'Old Life.'

Begum

*I*n October 16, 1949, Baba set out on the New Life. Those whom Baba chose to accompany Him were fortunate, for it was a unique opportunity to leave everything behind and just live each day as it dawned in His company. We girls, that is Mani, Goher, Meheru, and myself, were with Baba throughout the New Life. And though there were hardships to endure, being with Baba made up for any discomforts. It was an unforgettable and wonderful time to be with Baba.

In 1950, we came from Dehra Dun to Satara and that is where this story begins.

One day while we were out on a walk with Baba, I happened to notice three horses grazing by the roadside. One was a mare and her baby was alongside her. These horses were very small, like little ponies. The baby looked really cute as she nibbled the grass near her mother. The foal was so sweet, I drew Baba's attention to her. "Baba, look at that darling baby horse!" Baba smiled lovingly as He watched the tiny horse, admiring her cuteness and petite stature. He asked me, "Do you like her?" "Oh, yes Baba. I love her!" "All right," Baba gestured. He told Goher to ask the traders if they would sell us the foal. The traders at once agreed. Baba told Goher to have the horse brought back to our house. After our walk,

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we returned home to find the baby horse tied up outside the kitchen. Baba told me to give her half a seer (about a half litre) of milk in the morning and evening.

I have always loved horses. It occurred to me that being a foal she would feel frightened at night in a big stable, so we asked the gardener to bring some goats to keep her company.

Baba named the tiny filly Begum, which means "lady" in Urdu. Begum was really a lovable pet. She was extraordinarily plain in looks with no style at all. But she made up for it with her good nature and we all loved her very much.

We were in Satara for three months. Baba, in the month of October, took us to Mahabaleshwar which is a beautiful hill station about two hours' journey from Satara. It is a mountainous, forested area perfect for long walks, and it is very quiet there so Baba liked its atmosphere.

While we were in Mahabaleshwar, Baba was in strict seclusion. He did not want us to feel house-bound, so He encouraged us to take walks every morning. Of course Begum came too. It was great fun to have her along. She was spirited, but because she had come to us as a baby, she would follow us like a dog follows its master. After she got used to going on walks, Begum devised her own unique style of accompanying us.

Begum was always looking for green grass and as we walked along she would stop here and there to graze awhile. She would watch us out of the corner of her eye — keeping us just in sight — and before we were too far away, she would gallop fast to catch up with us. Begum looked so sweet with her mane flying as she would race by us.

We decided to take Begum into the bazaar to see what

BEGUM

would happen. Little Begum followed us like a well-trained dog — quiet and tame. As we walked through the bazaar, people wondered at how a horse could follow freely without a halter. The people of the town were so amazed that we became known as the "ghorawallis" — ladies with the horse!

One evening Goher and Mani were returning home from an errand. The road on which they were walking formed a fork, leaving a broad center space where the three roads branched off from each other. Begum had been following them. Now, what came into Begum's head and made her shy we will never know. Suddenly she started to run. Round and round Goher and Mani she galloped, making it impossible for them to move. Goher and Mani didn't know what to do. Begum was galloping circles around them! The sun was setting and they wanted to reach home before dark, but they just could not get Begum to stop. More than ten minutes passed by before Begum slowed down and stopped, allowing them to continue on their way home. When Goher and Mani told us the story of Begum's funny trick, we all laughed and Baba was much amused. But it had given Mani and Goher a real fright.

So you can see that Begum was a very naughty and playful horse. She really amused Baba and all of us with her spirited antics. Begum was more of a household pet than one would expect from a horse, let alone one called "Lady". But that was the funny thing about Begum. She was really just a cute little country horse, and no matter how hard we tried to groom her into looking like a lady, we never succeeded. I remember once I even dressed her up for the Dassera Day (a festival honouring horses), and in spite of all the flowers and

BABA LOVED US TOO

decorations, Begum still looked as plain as ever!

We girls loved to go for long walks with Baba. Sometimes we would have a picnic under the trees. One day Baba took us for a walk to Ling-mala waterfall. It was not an easy road, but rough-going as you had to watch your footing over the loose rocks. Baba and I were walking side by side down the narrow, thickly-forested path. Without warning, Begum pushed her head between us. Only then did she feel protected from the forest on either side.

In Mahabaleshwar, there are forested areas where there are wild animals including tigers. We felt perfectly safe, as tigers do not roam the paths where people walk. But Begum with her horse-sense felt wary of the thick forest. When we came to the clearing at the edge of the mountain, she became her old happy self. The view from the mountain heights was really breathtaking; waterfalls, blue valley below, and the sheer mountain cliffs framing the great expanse. And, because Baba was with us, we enjoyed it all the more having the Creator, Himself, as our companion.

The servants' quarters, out-buildings, and stables were situated far from our house. I was concerned about little Begum being isolated from us, so we devised a home-stable for her in one of the large dressing rooms. We spread gunnysacks and grass on the floor and she was comfortable and content during the nights.

Sometimes when we were together in the drawing room, Baba would remember Begum and tell us to bring Him some carrots and send her inside. Begum would then be brought to Baba for a pat and caress, and He would give her the carrots.

On October 13, 1950, Baba stepped into the 'Old Life' for

BEGUM

one day. He sent for the mandali from Poona, Meherabad, and Meherazad, and other devotees from around India, to join Him at Florence Hall, Mahabaleshwar for a special programme. Baba had arranged for Qawali singing in the drawing room. After the singing was over, I told Goher to give Baba some carrots. Then I let Begum into the room.

Baba may have stepped into the 'old life', but old life or new life, Begum didn't care which life she stepped into as long as Baba was present and carrots were forthcoming! She went straight up to Baba without hesitation, and He fed her the carrots. The mandali were surprised and amused to see a horse in the drawing room eating carrots from Baba's hand. And Padri, who had been given permission by Baba to take photographs that day, was quick to snap this delightful scene.

Florence Hall, built on a hillside, was beautifully situated with a lovely view. It had many steps going down into the garden. One day I called to Begum from the front verandah. I had a bowl of milk ready for her. I could not see her as she was grazing in the forest, but whenever I would call her name, Begum would first neigh happily and then come running to me. As I was waiting for her with the milk, calling, "Begum, Begum," she came galloping toward me and surprised me by climbing up the many steps!

Baba called Kitty and Rano from Bombay to be with us for a month at Florence Hall. They arrived in the night and the next morning we all gathered together in the drawing room. Kitty and Rano had brought us a big crate of fruit and they were bending over it trying to pry open the box. The idea came to me that it would be real fun to bring Begum in to greet them. Kitty and Rano did not know that we had a tiny

BABA LOVED US TOO

horse living with us. While their backs were turned, I quietly led Begum into the room. They were most surprised to see a horse in the drawing room!

In May 1951, we left Mahabaleshwar for Hyderabad and Baba decided it would be best if Begum remained in Mahabaleshwar. A man there happily agreed to keep Begum.

Begum, the tiny "lady" horse, provided Baba and all of us with many happy moments during our stays in Satara and Mahabaleshwar. And though the New Life is remembered as an important phase of Baba's work, there is a corner of our hearts that also remembers it because of the fun-filled times we spent with Baba and the animals that shared those unique days with us.

A Fox at Meherazad

We were at Meherazad when Baba one day brought us a baby fox. The fox was shy and hid behind the trunks in our room. It wouldn't come out no matter how hard we tried to befriend it. We had to run after it every time we fed it. It was such a job for us — we had to chase the baby fox around our trunks just to feed it.

Finally we said, "Baba, this is too much!" Baba with a sparkle in His eyes gestured, "All right, I'll give the fox back!"



Meher Baba and Mehera with Peter on a walk in Mahabaleshwar

Peter

*P*eter entered our lives in Mussorie, a beautiful hill station nestled high in the mountains above Dehra Dun. This was in 1953.

Baba had recovered from the car accident in the States and His long graceful stride had returned. We girls felt happy to see Baba once again walking freely.

We would go on long walks with Baba up and down the hills admiring the view of the snow-clad Himalayas in the distance and the lovely English-style cottages that were tucked snugly into the hillsides by a series of terraces created by stone walls.

Our bungalow was at the top of one of the hills and on our daily walk down the hill, we would pass by a cottage fronted by a huge sprawling rose bush. The sprays of roses were gorgeous and we could not resist stopping for a moment to gaze at them. They cascaded over the stone wall like a pink waterfall. This gave me a thought. Wouldn't it be lovely to have a photo of Baba standing in front of the roses!

I asked Baba and He agreed, so Goher phoned the photographer in town and told him to come the next day and take the photo. But the photographer did not come. Almost a week went by and, naturally, the roses began to drop off. I was disappointed because the appearance of the roses had

BABA LOVED US TOO

changed. I told Goher to tell the photographer not to come now, it was too late. But of course when he heard we wanted to cancel the appointment, he insisted that he would come right out. When the photo was finally taken, Baba told me to stand next to Him.

This particular cottage was owned by a Mrs. McLeod who lived with her daughter and family year round in Mussorie. They had a small farm with ducks and chickens and cows. Her sister, Mrs. Cooper, was always seated on the verandah of the house as we passed by. Mrs. Cooper was an elderly lady who came to stay with her sister during the summer holidays. She was the matron of a big hotel in Agra. Mussorie is cool during the summer months and Agra is very hot, so it was a pleasant change for her, and she would sit outside on the verandah enjoying the cool breeze while she read a book.

Every day we walked past her gate on our strolls with Baba. After a few days, Mrs. Cooper must have become curious — always hearing our voices but never Baba's. One day she quickly came to the gate to greet us as we passed by. It was clear she wanted to make friends with us. Mani and Meheru said "hello" and "good morning". Mrs. Cooper was very sweet and we could tell that she was lonely for company. She asked us to visit her, and Mani and Goher occasionally went to her house for a visit.

When Mrs. Cooper found out that Baba was silent, she became more and more interested in knowing about Him. You could tell that her respect was genuine. During one of our conversations with her, she came to know that Baba liked to have stories read to Him. Mrs. McLeod was in charge

PETER

of the private library, so Mrs. Cooper promptly got the keys from her sister and led us to the library. It was wonderful! We browsed through the shelves and found Agatha Christie and Edgar Wallace mysteries for Baba, and chose some novels for ourselves. When we were finished, each of us carried a huge stack of books home. During our entire stay in Mussorie, this library was at our disposal.

One day, Mrs. Cooper told Mani that her sister's pet cocker spaniel had had puppies. She asked Mani if she would like to have one of the two puppies left from the litter. Mani said, "Yes, but I have to ask my friend." When she returned home, Mani asked me if I would go with her to see the puppies, because I knew more about dogs. I agreed and we both went together to Mrs. McLeod's.

Mrs. Cooper brought the mother, a beautiful golden spaniel, and the two puppies out to the front garden. One of the puppies was white with brown markings and the other was a jet black male. We watched the puppies tumble and play together in the garden and I liked the look of the black puppy best. Mrs. Cooper told us his name was Peter. She put Peter in my arms and I carried him home for the first half of the journey. Then I gave him to Mani to carry for the second half. I'll tell you why: Peter was very quiet and did not struggle in my arms at all, but he was a bit nervous and kept dribbling saliva on my sleeve. My arm and blouse were soaking wet. Finally I told Mani, "You better carry him the rest of the way home. I've done my share!" So Mani took Peter in her arms and by the time we reached our bungalow, he had given us both a good soaking!

Once home, Peter was very shy. We left him in the

BABA LOVED US TOO

dining room and he hid under the table.

Baba came from the mandali at quarter to eleven in the morning and we showed Him the new puppy. Baba asked his name and gestured that he looked nice and we should feed him. "Never mind that we don't have meat," Baba told us, "give him milk and bread." As soon as Peter finished eating, he slid under the dining room table again. Gradually he did get used to us.

The house we were staying in had a big semi-circular sunroom — one side was glassed in and we had a beautiful view of the Himalayan mountain range which even in summer was snowcapped. We would gather around Baba in this room. Mani would read to Baba as we listened, and occasionally Peter would curl up in Baba's lap.

When Baba first saw Peter, He told Mani and me to care for him jointly. But I told Baba that it's always best if a dog knows one person as his master, otherwise he becomes confused. Baba said that Mani should care for him and that is how Peter became Mani's pet.

We stayed in Mussorie a month, and then Baba decided to return to Dehra Dun. But before we left Mussorie, Mrs. Cooper asked us for our address in Dehra Dun. We knew she had become fond of us and had respect for Baba, so we didn't think much of it.

After we had settled in Dehra Dun, one day we noticed an elderly woman approaching the steps of our bungalow. It was Mrs. Cooper. She told us she would like to see Peter again, and asked how he was doing. We brought Mrs. Cooper into the drawing room and after a few minutes' conversation, she expressed her real reason for coming to visit us. It was not

PETER

Peter she wanted to see, but Baba. "May I see Meher Baba?" she asked. We did not know what to say. One of us went to Baba and asked Him. Baba said it was all right and came into the drawing room and stood in front of Mrs. Cooper. She said something like, "I'm glad you came to Mussorie and I am happy I met you." Then she did something quite extraordinary. She took Baba's hand and put it on her head. "Baba," she said, looking earnestly into His eyes, "please bless me."

Baba looked at her compassionately, allowing her to hold His hand on her head. Then Mrs. Cooper left. We never saw her again, but recounting this episode makes me wonder: here was this Christian lady who really didn't know anything about Baba, yet had such faith and conviction in who He must be that she boldly put His hand on her head requesting His blessing.

There is one last story about Peter I would like to share with you. We were in Satara at the time. One morning I heard the sound of squirrels on the roof. I was outside gardening when I heard this incessant "chee-chee" sound. I knew something must be wrong with the squirrels. They were crying so loudly.

We had a young Hindu girl who helped us. She was thirteen years old and very agile. So she climbed up on the roof and brought the baby squirrels down. We prepared a nice wooden box for them and put the babies inside it. Then we fed them milk with fine bread crumbs. They were very hungry and ate and drank till there was nothing left! Peter watched us. He saw that we put the babies in the box and fed them, so he knew they were ours and different from the wild squirrels he chased. He would watch the squirrels eat and



Peter with the squirrels

PETER

when they were finished, he would lick up whatever was left, but he was always gentle with them.

When the squirrels were eight or ten days old, we would shut the doors and let them exercise inside the house. Peter was so protective of them that if they happened to stray outside the house by mistake, he would be very worried and warn us to bring them back inside.

In the evenings, Mani, Rano, Naja, and Meheru would go for walks, taking Peter with them. After the arrival of the baby squirrels, Peter had no interest in going out on these walks. He would just sit contentedly near the baby squirrels' box, keeping watch over them. Peter had become their protector!

When we put the squirrels outside, Peter would patiently sit nearby watching their antics. Peter had really become their surrogate mother. They would run straight to him, freely playing and climbing all over him. The way Peter allowed the squirrels such liberty, you knew that he really loved them.

One day I told Mani to take a photo of Peter with the squirrels. I had Peter sit outside Baba's room and left the squirrels free to run on him. The squirrels began climbing on Peter. They climbed up his legs to his shoulders. I told Mani, "Quick, take their picture!" but Mani was a bit slow and by the time she had clicked the camera, the squirrels had already climbed down from Peter's shoulders and were on his legs and feet. That is the story behind the photo of Peter and the squirrels.

When the squirrels grew bigger, we decided to let them go so they could have a normal squirrel life. We didn't want



Peter the Professor. He was a big ham.

PETER

Peter to chase them like he did the wild squirrels around our bungalow, so we took them in their box far into the forest where there were other wild squirrels. We let them loose at the bottom of a tree where we saw other squirrels playing. Happily they ran up the tree and began their "new life".

Now, if you want any more stories about Peter, you will have to ask Mani. After all, Peter was Mani's pet.



Mehera and Meher Baba with Sheba who is decorated for Dassera

Sheba

*A*t the time of this story, we were staying in Dehra Dun, in North India. The year was 1953.

Baba had gone out with some of the mandali for His mast work and they were travelling in a small touring car. Whenever Baba and the men mandali travelled, it was always under crowded conditions and there wouldn't be any spare space in the car. Baba would sit in the front with the driver and the mandali would be squeezed into the back seat. As they were driving along, Baba happened to see a baby horse grazing beside its mother on the roadside. Baba and the mandali were on their way back to Dehra Dun. Baba gestured to the men, "I like this little horse. But how can we fit the horse in the car? A dog you could carry on your lap, but where is the room for a baby horse? Never mind. Let it be."

When Baba came home, He told us about the baby horse. Baba said to me, "Mehera, you would have loved the foal. It looked so sweet." "Yes, Baba," I replied, "I would have loved it." Baba then gestured, "Let it go. We will see about it later."

Baba again remembered the baby horse when He was with the mandali. Kumar was listening and immediately thought Baba would like to have a baby horse for a pet.

BABA LOVED US TOO

"Baba, if you give me permission, I could get you a horse. Should I try for one?" asked Kumar. "Yes," Baba told him, "try your luck and see if you can find one. Be sure it is a filly."

I can't recall how much time elapsed before Kumar found a baby filly to bring for Baba, but I do remember that it was during the middle of the night when the message came to Baba that the filly had arrived. Dr. Nilu was on night watch and he relayed the news that Kumar had tied the filly to a tree in the mandali compound and had returned home.

In the morning after Baba had His breakfast, He went to the mandali. He told Dr. Nilu and some of the mandali to bring the horse over to the women's side for us to see.

None of the mandali were used to handling horses. One of the men mandali untied the foal and, holding the rope loosely, began to lead her over to our side. Suddenly, without warning, the filly gave a good yank at the rope and freed herself. She galloped out through the gate and down the main road before any of the mandali could stop her. It was good that there was no traffic, only a few people leisurely walking along the roadside.

The horse ran faster and faster with Dr. Nilu and some of the mandali chasing after her, shouting, "Stop! Stop!" The thought of the mandali running down the road after this spirited little filly is really too funny for words. It makes me laugh even to think of it now. Somehow, with the help of a few onlookers, they were able to catch hold of her and bring her back to the house.

Baba admonished the men over the incident, telling them in no uncertain terms that they should have been more careful. "After all, you weren't leading a cow!" Baba told

SHEBA

them. Then He had the filly brought over to our compound.

When we saw the baby horse, we fell in love with her immediately. Baba was standing on the verandah with us. "Doesn't she look fine?" asked Baba. Then Baba told me to pet her. "Don't worry, she won't bite. I want you to look after her. Give her half a seer of milk morning and evening. Now bring some milk." I gave her the milk and we watched as she drank it happily. After having had the milk, she was friendly. Baba told me to remove the rope from around her neck and walk with her. It was so sweet, she just turned around and followed me. I named her Sheba because she had such a stately bearing — like a queen.

Sheba was an attractive foal, and she grew into a very beautiful horse. She was a mix of Arabian and English and a rich chestnut in colour. From below the knee, three of her legs were white and the other brown. She had a white streak that ran from her forehead to the tip of her nose. And, with her golden mane flying in the breeze as she ran, Sheba looked like a horse out of a storybook.

While Baba was with the mandali, I would take care of Sheba. I would massage her legs, neck, chest, and back — just as I had seen the groom do when I was a little girl. I'd brush her and feed her and give her a clean bed of hay every night.

The house in which we were staying was perfectly designed for having a horse as a pet. It was so convenient. We made the garage into a stable and my bedroom had a window that looked right into the garage! That way I could keep an eye on Sheba when she was in the stable and I was in the house.

After lunch, we girls were supposed to rest. But Baba

BABA LOVED US TOO

would often come to my room and wake me, saying, "Mehera, let's see what Sheba is doing." Together we would peek through the window into her stable and there would be Sheba lying fast asleep on her fresh bed of hay.

The porch had three steps down to the stable-garage which was on a lower level. I put Sheba's feed box on a four-legged stand in front of the steps. I wanted Sheba to be able to eat comfortably and not have to bend her neck down to the ground to eat her grass and feed like ordinary country horses have to do. That's why I made her feed box on a level with her body.

I would give her green grass to eat and she would really relish it. Baba, too, would often feed Sheba grass and carrots from His own hand. I remember one day when Baba came to Sheba's stable. She had not been with us for very long and Peter was newly acquainted with her. Baba fed Sheba a few stalks of grass just as Peter happened to come by. Peter noticed that Baba was feeding Sheba. Well, Peter was not a dog to be outdone. Wagging his tail, he boldly jumped in Sheba's feed box and sat down right in the middle of the grass. Peter looked up at Baba expectantly as if asking Him, "So why aren't you feeding me?" Sheba still had her head in the feed box, but she didn't bite or harm Peter in any way. She didn't even nudge him! Sheba kept on eating, totally unconcerned. We were all surprised to see how friendly Sheba behaved toward Peter. Animals don't like to be disturbed while they are eating and here was Peter sitting in her feed box! Sheba was really an unusual horse. Baba bent down and picked up a few stalks of grass for Peter, gesturing, "Is it all right for Peter to eat much grass?" But Peter wasn't

SHEBA

interested in the grass, he only wanted to make sure that he got his share of Baba's prasad.

The house in Dehra Dun was well situated. There was a broad gravel driveway with mango trees growing around the edge of the compound.

The vet had told us that it was best to keep Sheba free and let her exercise on her own, so the grounds were ideal. Sheba would run round and round the house and compound, really enjoying herself while getting good exercise. Of course, allowing her to run free brought about some amusing incidents.

The woman who washed our pots and pans had asked us to save our used tea leaves so she could use them for making her own tea. We would dry the tea leaves on newspapers laid on the grass behind the kitchen. We were happy to help this woman in what little way we could. She had four children and at one time had been very wealthy. Then during the Partition she had lost everything and now worked to support herself and her family.

Sheba saw those tea leaves one day as she roamed about behind the kitchen, and could not resist a little taste. She bent down and began nibbling the leaves. They were delicious, so Sheba ate and ate. But the newspaper caught between her teeth, and with each nibble, the newspaper crackled! The noise of the newspaper startled Sheba and she shied. She ran and ran but couldn't let go of the paper. The more she ran, the more the newspaper rattled and crackled.

I was inside the house at the time. Finally someone saw Sheba running frantically and called to me to come outside and help Sheba. I got Sheba to stop long enough to pull the

BABA LOVED US TOO

newspaper loose from her teeth.

Oh! Did Sheba feel nice then. You could see how relieved she was to get that rattling paper out of her teeth! After that, we always had to be careful when we dried the tea leaves, as we knew how much Sheba liked them.

Sheba was a very spirited horse and would rear on her hind legs as she playfully ran round the house. We were used to her running freely, so we would go about our daily chores in the house without paying much attention. But one day I happened to come out on the verandah while Sheba was running full speed around the house. Peter was running behind her, close to Sheba's swiftly moving hooves. This worried me as Peter could get hurt. I stood on the verandah and yelled, "Stop! Stop! Peter, stop! Come here ... no, Peter ... no!" Peter, unaware of the danger, paid no attention to me. He wanted to play with Sheba. Peter and Sheba turned the corner and were lost to my view. Then I saw Peter; what a difference a few seconds had made. Now all Peter's exuberance was gone. Instead, Peter was walking slowly up the steps toward me, looking sad and hurt. You could see from his woebegone expression and his drooping ears that he couldn't understand Sheba's behaviour.

I bent down to see if Peter was bruised. A clump of earth had stuck to his head like a scab which made me think that Sheba must have accidentally kicked him. And Peter did seem to be in a state of shock. "Mani ... Mani ... Mani," I called. "Come quickly. I think Peter has been kicked by Sheba. He may have a concussion."

Mani carried Peter into the house and laid him down on her bed with his head on her pillow. None of the pets were

SHEBA

ever allowed on the furniture, not on chairs, beds, or cushions. This was an exception — we were so concerned for Peter.

We called Goher and explained to her what had happened. She examined Peter and found there was no concussion, but he did appear to be in shock.

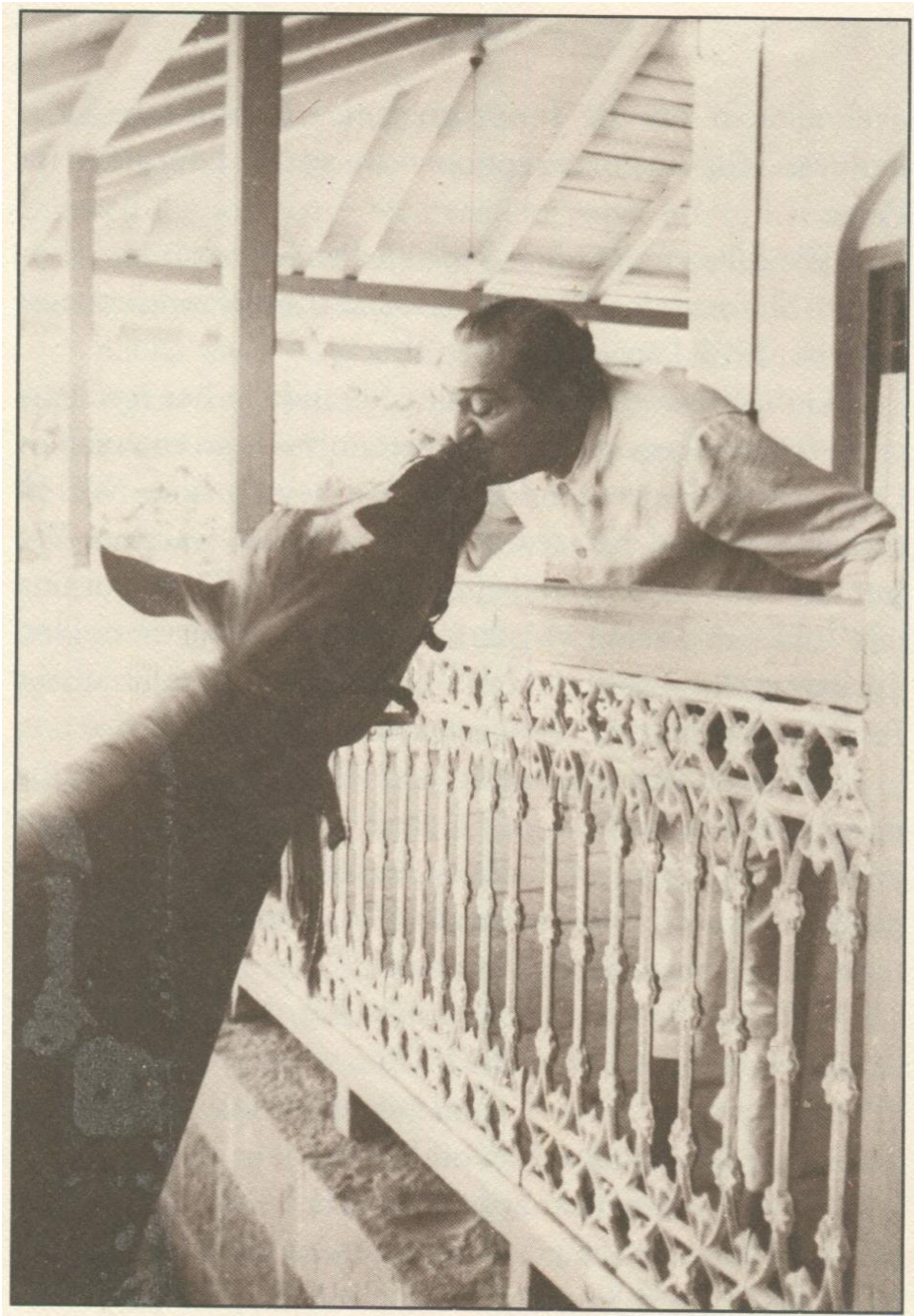
Goher always kept a bottle of brandy in her medicine chest for emergencies, and this certainly was an emergency. Goher gave Peter some brandy to revive him. We all gathered around his bedside to watch his reaction. We wanted Peter to get well before Baba came. Then, turning our backs to Peter, we started talking among ourselves, discussing what we should tell Baba. Thinking again about Peter's sad condition, we turned around.

What do you suppose we saw? There was Peter sitting upright on the bed, wagging his tail, and looking as bright-eyed as ever. Peter soulfully looked into our eyes. "May I please have a little more brandy? You know that was quite tasty. I liked that brandy very much!"

"What!! Naughty Peter, you're not sick at all. And to think you had us all so worried! Off my bed!" scolded Mani. "Peter, down ... down!" And with that she gave Peter a playful pat and whisked him off her bed.

Have you ever heard of a horse in a house? Well, in our life with Baba, the impossible became possible. One day I heard someone calling my name, "Mehera, Mehera come quickly. Sheba is in your bedroom!"

Sheba had climbed the steps up to the verandah and had walked into my room. Horses can climb up steps, but they cannot easily climb down. It is very dangerous if a horse



Meher Baba kissing Sheba every afternoon in Satara

SHEBA

injures his legs, so now I had to quickly figure out how to get Sheba out of the house.

I will never forget that day — my brain really started working. I remembered that the kitchen had only two steps to the outside. If I could guide Sheba out of our bedroom through the dining room very very slowly, without scaring her, maybe we could get her out through the kitchen door.

Remember, we girls had to handle Sheba ourselves — there were no men around to help us. Soon Baba would be returning from the mandali. There was no time to waste.

We removed all the chairs in the dining room so that Sheba would not bump into anything. Slowly, I tried to coax her around the dining room table into the kitchen and hopefully out the kitchen door. But Sheba refused to go down those two steps.

Someone suggested that one of us push her from behind and another pull her from the front. Still Sheba wouldn't budge. Then I got an idea. I'd stand outside, in front of Sheba, and tempt her with a bowl of milk. Maybe the milk would entice her. I covered the steps with hay, thinking if Sheba didn't see them maybe she wouldn't be scared. But no success.

Baba came at 5:30 p.m. and was surprised to find Sheba in the kitchen. Baba jokingly gestured, "A horse in the house is too much. Whoever heard of such a thing!"

Baba listened intently as we anxiously explained what had happened. Baba suggested we call the vet from the Government Stable. We did, and he told us that the only solution was to carry the horse outside. He promised to send four men from their stables with strong rope.

BABA LOVED US TOO

Just as the men arrived at our gate, Sheba had a change of mind! She stepped down! To this day we'll never know what prompted Sheba — the milk ... the pushing and pulling ... whatever it was, we were relieved to see her outside.

Baba silently shared in our laughter, His eyes sparkling with amusement at Sheba's mischievous pranks.

There were two pillars that marked the entrance to our compound in Dehra Dun. The actual gate was missing. Baba felt that there should be a barricade because of Sheba. Two bamboo poles were erected horizontally between the pillars with a gap in between so a person could walk through, but a horse could not get out.

Peter was our mail dog. Every day he would go to the gate and collect the papers and letters from the post man and bring them to us. Mani had trained him to carry things in a little basket which he held in his mouth. There was also a small metal bell near the gate placed on the ground. If anyone came to the gate, they were to ring the bell and Goher would answer it.

One evening Mani was reading to Baba while we were listening. Just then the bell rang. We all waited for Goher to answer it. Hardly a moment went by before we heard it again. Mani stopped reading and called out to Goher to answer the bell. As soon as Mani started to read again, the bell began ringing — this time it was louder and more insistent. Baba was puzzled and gestured to us, "Why hasn't Goher answered the bell? Where is she?"

We all went out on the verandah to find out for ourselves who was ringing the bell. And who do you suppose we saw? It was Goher, herself! She was standing outside the gate

SHEBA

ringing the bell, while Sheba was inside guarding the entrance. Sheba had become the watchdog! She wouldn't let Goher come in.

Goher yelled, "I've been ringing and ringing this bell, waiting for one of you to come and help me. Sheba won't let me inside." Baba then told me to hold Sheba so Goher could pass through. It was quite a funny predicament, even Goher was laughing.

From Dehra Dun, we travelled to Mahabaleshwar. Baba always liked its quiet atmosphere. We were there for six months. Sheba was also allowed to be free at Mahabaleshwar. She would run in the garden and graze and play.

One day Rano brought a message to Baba from the mandali. Mr. Sahastrabudhe, an elderly Hindu gentleman who owned a hotel in Mahabaleshwar, had arrived and he wished to see Baba. Mr. Sahastrabudhe supplied the mandali's food, so he was known to us. Baba told Rano to escort him over to our bungalow.

The mandali's house was just a few minutes away, and it was a lovely walk between the two residences. On one side there were tall shady trees and along the other side of the driveway was a short stone wall separating the property from the forest.

Rano met Sahastrabudhe and they began to walk together down the long broad driveway toward our house. They were having a leisurely walk and chat about Baba when Sheba spied them from afar. She started to walk toward them. Sahastrabudhe had never seen a horse roaming free and was concerned to see this one approaching them. Rano assured him that there was nothing to worry about, it was

BABA LOVED US TOO

Sheba, our pet horse. "Besides," Rano said, "she knows me and I'm with you." But Rano had spoken too soon. Sheba came nearer with her head held high, ears pricked up, and a frisk of her tail that showed undeniably her displeasure. Mr. Sahastrabudhe felt frightened of Sheba.

Rano told him, "Quick, let's climb the wall!"

The wall was just three feet high with a broad, flat top. You could easily walk on the wall, but Sahastrabudhe was elderly — he had not expected to have to climb a wall to see Baba! So there were the two of them walking the distance to our bungalow on top of the wall, while Sheba nicely trotted alongside them conveniently on the driveway.

When Rano and Sahastrabudhe reached our bungalow, Baba was standing on the verandah to receive them. Baba looked amused as He gestured to Rano, "I was wondering why you were taking so long. What is happening?"

Rano shouted back, "Baba, Sheba won't let us come down! She is shy of the new person!"

Baba smiled and called for us to come. When I saw Rano and Sahastrabudhe marooned on the wall, I found it so funny. Sheba, our "watchdog", had been at her pranks again! Then I caught hold of Sheba and led her away.

From Dehra Dun and Mahabaleshwar, we came to Satara. In Satara, we had a groom for Sheba. He saw to her feed and exercise. One morning while the groom was walking Sheba along the roadside, an Irani gentleman happened to pass by. He owned race horses and was interested in knowing who owned Sheba. When he was told she was Baba's horse, he decided to come the next day and ask Baba if he could come to the stable and guide the groom in the best ways of

SHEBA

caring for Sheba. Baba gave him permission to come whenever he liked.

This man, whose name was Jehangir, would come in the morning to Sheba's stable before going to work. He would sit on a soap box in the corner of the stable and discuss with the groom Sheba's diet — how much green grass, salt, and dry grass she should have. Jehangir wanted to test Sheba's speed and Baba allowed him to time her. It was discovered that Sheba was as fast as a race horse! Of course, this finding excited Jehangir and he asked Baba if he could train Sheba for the races. Baba agreed, so Jehangir began Sheba's training in earnest. When the racing season began, Jehangir asked Baba if he could take Sheba to Poona and enter her in the races. The answer from Baba was, "No!" Jehangir was disappointed as he had no choice but to abide by Baba's wish.

In Satara, our house had a big compound which was well-barricaded. Here, too, Sheba was allowed to run free during much of the day. In addition to the main gate at the entrance of our driveway, there was a tiny rustic gate near Sheba's stable and the house. It was made specially for the mandali so that they could come and go independently from Baba's room which had its own outside entrance.

The mandali would wait at this gate until they were called by Baba. We again converted the garage into a stable. It was a perfect arrangement. There was a large oblong screened window so Sheba could look out toward the small gate from her stall.

One day Dr. Donkin was waiting at the gate for Baba's call. Feeling bored, he lit his cigar to pass the time smoking. The aroma of the tobacco wafted its way through the air to

BABA LOVED US TOO

Sheba in her stable, and her appetite was aroused. She started rubbing her lips against the screen window. The strange sound attracted Donkin's attention. Curious, he walked over to Sheba. As Donkin watched Sheba rub her lips against the screen, he got an idea. Perhaps Sheba would like some tobacco. Dr. Donkin slipped a few shreds of tobacco through the holes in the screen and, would you believe it, that lady of many tastes gobbled it up! Hardly a moment passed by before Sheba began rubbing her lips once more against the screen, letting Donkin know she was ready for an encore.

After that, Sheba and Donkin were fast friends. Sheba would always greet Donkin happily each time she saw him approaching the gate, and Donkin would conquer his boredom by feeding Sheba the stumps of his cigars or a pinch of his pipe tobacco.

During the midday afternoons, we would rest and relax inside the house, catching up on a little sewing and reading. The servants would also rest after their afternoon meal as it was too hot to be out of doors. The compound would be deserted except for Sheba who would be free to roam about near her stable and the servants' quarters.

We didn't have visitors; usually the only people coming and going were the mandali or the servants or a few outsiders who might be called in for some work.

It happened that one day a Marathi landowner came unexpectedly to see Goher about some work. None of us knew he had entered the compound. Confidently, he walked his bicycle through the main gate and proceeded toward our bungalow. He hadn't come half way when Sheba saw him and started to walk toward him. She was curious and was not

SHEBA

going to let an unknown person pass by unnoticed. Sheba pricked up her ears, lifted her head, and started to prance toward the stranger, letting him know who was the boss here! The man was petrified. He had never expected to see a horse loose in the compound, and Sheba's greeting was anything but friendly. "Help! Help!" he called.

Our servants heard the man's plaintive cry and ran outside. They tried to calm Sheba by calling out her name — "Sheba! Sheba!"

But the man was so scared, he thought they were saying, "Shiva! Shiva!" which to the Hindus is one of the sacred names of God! And here in India, it is traditionally known that one should remember the Lord and take His name with your last breath. In his desperation, this man must have thought that they were calling out the Lord's name because his end was near. So with all his heart, he began calling out to the Lord — "Shiva! Shiva! Shiva!"

Hearing all this commotion, we came outside. As soon as Sheba saw us she calmed down and came toward us.

Baba had a good laugh over Sheba's high-spirited antics. Because of her, He had been remembered wholeheartedly!

From Satara we came to Poona and then, after two or three months, returned to Meherazad. It was around Baba's birthday which we quietly celebrated with a cake and candles.

In Meherazad, we had a groom to take care of Sheba. He would massage and brush her and take her out for daily exercise. Sheba's stable was the Mandali Hall. Of course then it looked like a stable. It had a dirt floor and a bamboo railing divided it into two sections. One side was for Sheba's stall and

BABA LOVED US TOO

the other side for her supplies — saddles, feed, etc.

The groom would take Sheba out into the countryside for her exercise. Meherazad and the surrounding area were totally undeveloped. There were fields, dirt roads, and the hills. One day Sarosh happened to spot the groom and Sheba on the road. Sarosh was on his way to see Baba. He was so surprised at seeing a thoroughbred horse in this area that he stopped the groom to inquire who owned the horse. The groom told Sarosh that the horse belonged to Baba.

When Sarosh met Baba he asked Him how such a fine horse ended up at Meherazad. "This is not a safe place for a horse. There are no straight roads and many ditches. The fields are uneven and if she runs freely she could get hurt. Why don't you give her to the Military Riding School in Ahmednagar? They will take good care of her." Baba refused, telling Sarosh, "No. She is Mehera's pet horse." When Baba said no, Sarosh did not pursue the matter further. But Goher was there at the time and she heard Sarosh ask about Sheba. So Goher told me what had transpired and said I should decide what I think would be best if Baba asks me about Sheba.

When Baba came over for His lunch, He told me about His conversation with Sarosh. "Baba," I replied, "I don't mind if you give Sheba to the Military Riding School. Now she is grown up and needs to have good exercise. It will be good for her." Baba looked at me so lovingly and with such gentleness. "You don't mind if we give her away? You won't worry?" He asked. "No, Baba," I assured Him. "I will be happy about it."

When Sarosh came next to Meherazad, Baba told him

SHEBA

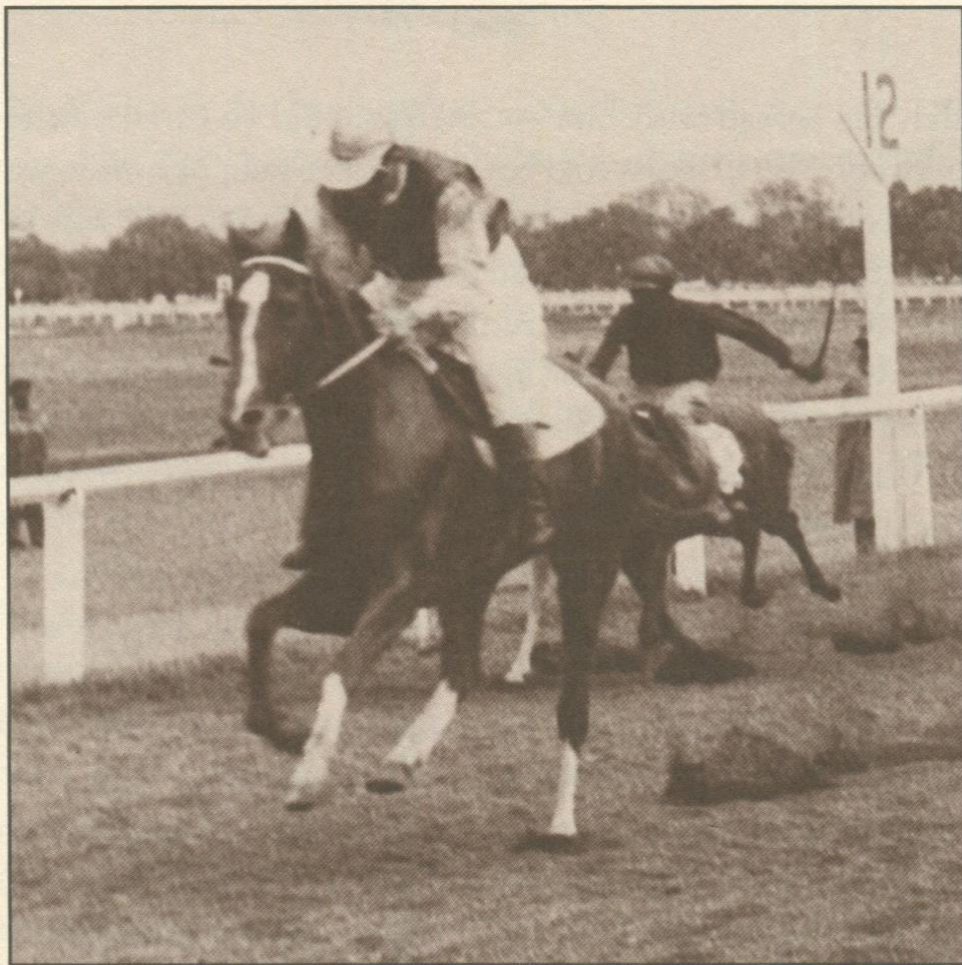
that He agreed with him — Sheba should be given to the military. "But," Baba told Sarosh, "don't take her while we are here. Wait until after we leave for Poona." It was in March that we left Meherazad to spend the summer in Poona and at the end of June we returned to Meherazad.

On our return, Sarosh again visited Baba. Baba enquired of Sarosh if he had seen Sheba. "Yes, Baba," Sarosh said, "she is fine. If the girls would like to see her I can arrange to take them to the stables."

Baba told us the good news when He came over to the women's side. "Tomorrow dress up in your saris. Sarosh will take you to see Sheba." Oh, we were so happy we couldn't wait to see Sheba. Now all we could think about was what we should bring for Sheba. We wanted to bring all her favourite treats to eat, and each of us remembered something Sheba loved. Goher said, "Sheba likes tea, so I'll bring her tea leaves." Mani said, "Sheba likes crisp toasted chapaties, so I'll bring that." Rano said, "Sheba likes carrots, so I'll bring carrots for her to munch." And I said, "Sheba likes mangoes best of all, so I'll bring her some delicious mangoes."

The following day we had everything ready — bags filled with Sheba's favourite things — a picnic pack fit for our queen Sheba!

Sarosh arrived and we all got into the car. Then the girls told me, "Mehera, now you have been away from Sheba for three months. She has probably forgotten her kissing trick. Take care and don't say 'Koti, Koti' because she might bite you." "Koti" means kiss in Gujarati and I had taught Sheba to kiss Baba and us. I felt sure that Sheba hadn't forgotten. Confidently I told the girls, I was sure she would remember us



*(above) Close-up of Sheba with Capt. Soli Padamjee winning the race
(below) Sheba crosses the finish line first*

SHEBA

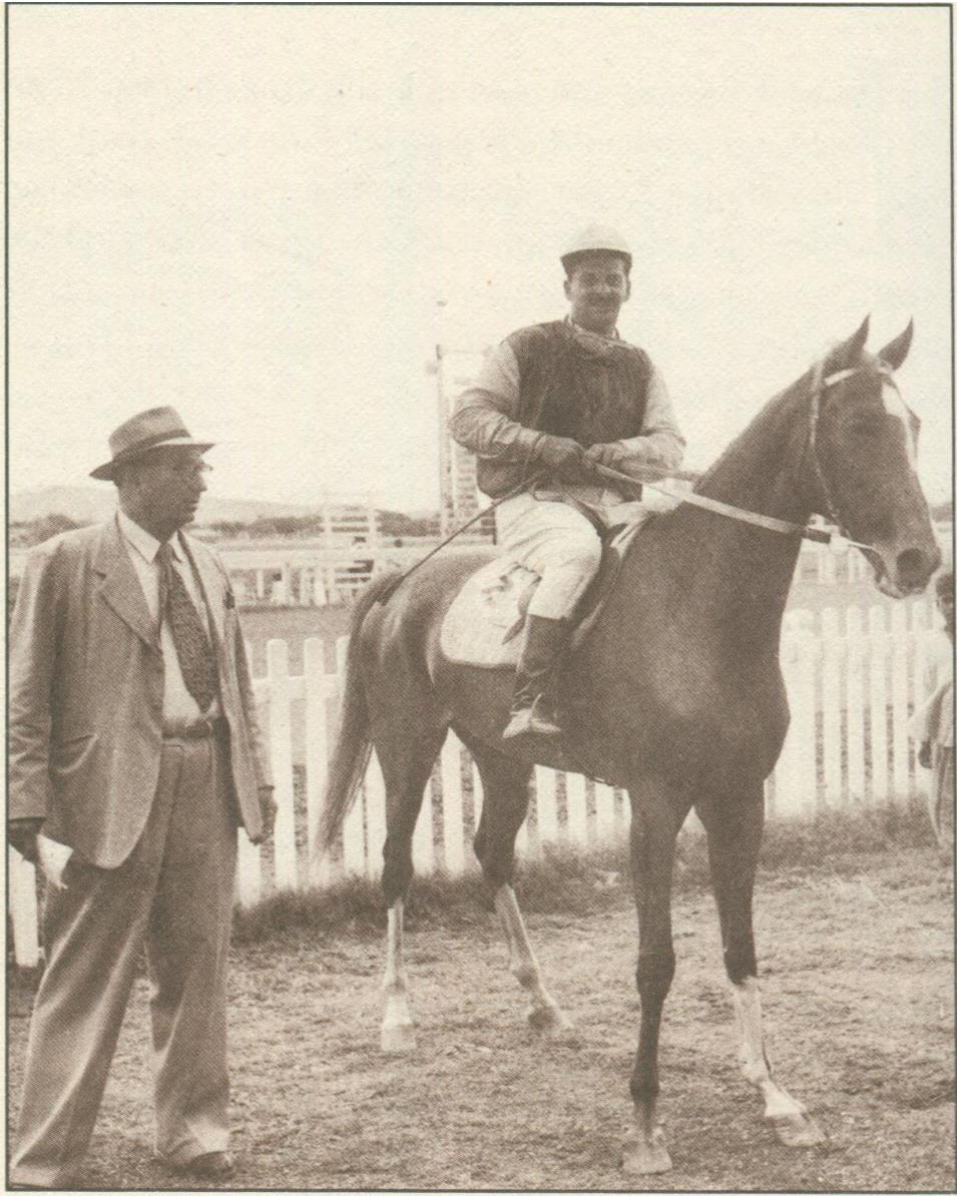
and the trick because she used to kiss Baba every day.

As we approached the Military Riding School, we saw there were three or four grooms standing near the stables. Sarosh signaled for them to move away and we boldly walked toward Sheba's stable. The men were surprised to see us walk so boldly, because Sheba, a high-spirited horse, would often give them trouble.

Sheba recognised us immediately, expressing her joy by nodding her head and prancing around in her stable. Very confidently I cut a slice of mango and said, "Sheba, Koti ... Koti (kiss ... kiss)." Sheba put her head over the bamboo railings and kissed me — nose to nose we kissed. It was such a sweet reunion; words cannot describe it. Then each of us in turn gave Sheba the goodies we had brought for her. And Sheba wanted to eat everything. She munched and crunched as fast as she could. After everything was finished we petted her, and at sunset we left in the car to return to Meherazad. Just as our car was about to drive off, the groom brought Sheba out to graze in the nearby grass. Sheba looked happy and contented.

Now it so happened that the military judges horses for their speed. Sheba was timed and it was discovered that she was very fast. Thus the military wanted to have her run in their races. Sheba was entered in the races at Poona and was found to be so much faster than the other horses that they gave her a handicap — she had to start at quite a distance behind the other horses.

The race began and, if you have ever seen a horse race, you know how at first the horses are packed very close together. Then the swifter ones move out ahead. Because



Sheba, after winning the race. Sarosh, looking on, is poised to move away quickly in case Sheba moves unpredictably.

SHEBA

Sheba had to begin farther behind the other horses, when she caught up to them she couldn't get through — there was no room. Sheba's jockey did something extraordinary; he actually lessened Sheba's speed and made her go around the other horses along the outside of the track. This is the greater distance. But Sheba was so fast that, despite this maneuver, she overtook the other horses and won the race! Not only won the race, but won it by a whole length! And even after Sheba passed the finish line she kept running. She was so fast the jockey couldn't stop her.

After the race, Sheba was photographed with Sarosh. Baba had told Sarosh that if Sheba won, a photo should be taken of Sheba with Sarosh standing beside her. In that photo, Sheba looks so alert and frisky, she doesn't look tired at all. In fact, she looks like she is ready to run another race.

When Baba shared with me the details of Sheba's victorious race, I told Baba, "You gave her the energy to win this race." Darling Baba just smiled at me knowingly.

Rammu

One day Meheru happened to find a stray puppy on Meherazad property. She called me over to see the puppy and asked if I wanted to keep him. He was a good-looking mutt — ginger coloured and sweet looking, with a large head and short nose.

Mongrels are often hardier than the purebreds, so they don't need the same care and attention to grow up healthy and strong. In that way they make good pets as well as watchdogs. So I said yes, let's keep him.

Mastan was already here with us at Meherazad, so we sent the new puppy over to the mandali side where we would send his food and he would be taken care of.

Baba named the new puppy Rammu and soon he grew from a skinny, bony puppy into a nice sturdy dog.

When Rammu was about four months old, I would play with him in the garden. After sunset it was cool and pleasant outside and I would teach Rammu tricks. I kept a little bowl with bits of mutton ready as rewards for Rammu. I taught him to beg and jump over a stick.

One day at breakfast I told Baba that I had taught Rammu some tricks. Baba said, "Yes, later I'll see them." So I left it at that. Baba went over to the mandali side and nothing more was said about it. But it so happened that a few

RAMMU

days later Rammu had his opportunity to show off his tricks for Baba.

Baba had finished His seclusion work and was still seated in His chair in Mandali Hall when He told one of the mandali to bring him some toast and to call the dog, Rammu, inside.

If you have been to Meherazad, you can picture where Baba was seated. Baba's chair was placed then as it is now, in the corner of Mandali Hall near the door. Baba was seated with His feet stretched out on what you call a poof — one of those round high cushions.

Rammu was brought into the Hall and stood to the left of Baba, close to where Baba's feet rested on the cushion. Baba showed the toast to Rammu, holding it on the opposite side — to His right — away from where Rammu stood anxiously eyeing the toast. Can you guess what happened? Rammu's desire for the toast was so strong that in an instant he had jumped over Baba's legs and had eaten the toast from His hand.

When Baba came over to the women's side, He would often share with us stories about Rammu's amusing antics. And Baba, with His remarkably expressive gestures, brought the entire scene before our eyes. Baba never let us feel like we had missed something.

I remember especially one very funny story Baba told us about another time when He was feeding toast to Rammu. On that day, Baba took a little more time in breaking the toast into pieces and Rammu just couldn't wait. He was so eager to get his toast reward that he began to jump back and forth over Baba's legs! Once, twice, three times he jumped across Baba's legs. Baba, much amused, gestured, "Look,

BABA LOVED US TOO

Rammu is in such a hurry he is racing me for the toast!"

During this time, 1967 through 1968, Baba was engaged in His Universal Work and would remain in seclusion for hours at a time.

Life at Meherazad revolved around these periods of Baba's work. We had to do our best to ensure that no extraneous sounds would reach Baba's ears and disturb Him. Everyone living at Meherazad had to be particularly alert and on guard. The garden work had to be stopped, the neighbours were requested to keep their children quiet, even the crows' caw had to be controlled. Meheru would keep alert for the disquieting sound of the crows.

In addition to the mandali, servants, neighbors, and children, the dogs especially had to be kept quiet and still. But Rammu was impossible! He was like a Houdini! No matter how we tied him up, he would always wriggle free. We tried so many different types of collars and harnesses to no avail. And when Rammu was free, you can guess where he would run: straight to Baba in Mandali Hall, slipping through the tiny slit of an opening where the door was kept ajar.

There was no solution other than to have one of the boys from the mandali side sit with Rammu under the big mango tree, a short distance away from Meherazad gate. When Baba's work was finished, life as usual would resume and that meant that Rammu could be free. The moment he was let loose, he would run straight to Baba.

When Baba would return to the women's side, He would look so frail and tired that we felt concerned for His health and wished there was some way we could help lighten His mood. Baba would tell us that playing with Rammu was

RAMMU

most relaxing. It pleased me to know that the tricks I had taught Rammu entertained Baba. How fortunate for Rammu not only to receive prasad from Baba's hand, but in his eagerness to do so, inadvertently provide Baba with needed relaxation at such a crucial time.

I should add here that the name Rammu means "to play" in Gujarati. Wasn't it sweet and so like Baba to give this pup the perfect name!



Mehera relaxing with Pegu on verandah of Guruprasad

Pegu

*E*very summer from 1958 to 1968, Baba would leave Ahmednagar to stay at Guruprasad in Poona. You may have seen the movies of Baba at Guruprasad, and if so, perhaps you noticed the Siamese cat playing happily at Baba's feet. That was Pegu, the cat this story is about.

Not far from Guruprasad lived a family who had recently moved to Poona. They owned two pets, a dog and a Siamese cat named Pegu. Pegu and the dog were good friends and would always play together. The pets never lacked for anything as their owners loved them very much. But shortly after this family settled in Poona, Pegu ran away despite all the loving care he received at home. We hear many stories about the lovers of God who leave everything — family, wealth, and home to find God, but I'm sure this is the first story you've heard about a cat who ran away from his home to live at the feet of the God-Man! And not only did he live with Baba and all of us, he was the first one each morning to have Baba's darshan. But before I tell you how that happened, let me start from the beginning.

Early one morning I saw a cat in the dressing room. As soon as he saw me, he ran away. I told Baba what had happened and when I saw the cat again, I brought him to

BABA LOVED US TOO

Baba. It was love at first sight for Pegu. He just rushed to Baba and rubbed his head at Baba's feet. Baba told me that the cat was very fortunate to have His darshan.

In the meantime, when it was discovered that Pegu was missing from his home, the family started a search. Eventually it brought them to Guruprasad. Imagine, the family's runaway cat gave them the opportunity of seeing Baba!

First the mother came and thanked Baba for taking care of Pegu. Naturally, she requested that he be allowed to return home with her. But when she saw how happy and contented he looked sleeping on my suitcase, she didn't have the heart to disturb him and left him with us.

Later her son came to Guruprasad for the same purpose. He asked Baba if he could take Pegu back home and Baba agreed. He thanked Baba, picked up Pegu and proceeded to walk out of Guruprasad and down the driveway to the street. Just as the boy reached the gate, Pegu jumped out of his arms and ran back to Guruprasad. Pegu was determined to stay with Baba! And so Pegu joined the household as the new pet.

Every morning Pegu would seat himself in front of Baba's bedroom door. Before I could open it wide enough to enter myself, Pegu would slip through the narrow opening and have Baba's darshan first! Pegu looked so sweet as he would nestle his head against Baba's feet. Truly Pegu's love for Baba was unique.

Pegu proved to be an unusual cat. Unlike most cats, he was very well-behaved. He would always wait patiently for his food without disturbing us with his meows.

Baba loved Pegu very much and would always remember him before He would eat Himself. I remember one day Gaimai

PEGU

sent fish for Baba's lunch. Baba eagerly called for Pegu. As soon as Pegu came, Baba took a big piece of fish in His hand to give to Pegu and I had to rush to put a plate under it so it wouldn't fall on the carpet! Of course, Pegu really relished the fish and that made Baba happy.

At the end of each summer, we would begin preparations for our return to Meherazad. Though we were happy to come home, it meant leaving Pegu behind. I recall one summer when Baba was especially concerned about Pegu's welfare. Baba always made ample provision for Pegu's food and care in our absence, but this time He really seemed uneasy about leaving him behind. None of us could understand why, as cats are quite independent creatures and can take care of themselves.

Nevertheless, before we left Poona for Ahmednagar, Baba warned Khorshed several times to take good care of Pegu. Khorshed, you see, would stay with us at Guruprasad during the summer and then return to her home in Bombay when we left for Meherazad. It was her duty to remain in Guruprasad for a day or two and make sure everything was in order before she returned home. Khorshed assured Baba that she would keep careful watch over Pegu and see that he was well fed.

We returned to Meherazad and everything seemed fine for a day or two. Then one morning when Baba came from the mandali side to rest before lunch, He remembered Pegu. Baba gestured to me, "Mehera, I wonder how Pegu is. Do you think he is eating? He could be starving and die!"

Baba expressed such concern that I tried my best to assure Him that Pegu was fine. "Baba," I said, "there is

BABA LOVED US TOO

nothing to worry about. Cats are not like dogs, they are quite independent and can look after themselves." But the expression on Baba's face conveyed that my answer had not satisfied Him. Baba turned to Meheru and told her to send a postcard to Khorshed in Bombay asking if Pegu was all right. Meheru quickly wrote the note and read it out to Baba. Our bazaar man was still at Meherazad collecting the mail, so the timing was perfect. It was given to him to post immediately from town. As soon as the letter had been written and sent out, Baba's mood totally changed. All His apprehension seemed to vanish.

Little did we know that while we were at home at Meherazad, a real drama was being enacted at Guruprasad.

It happened that while Khorshed was busy putting everything in its proper place, Pegu, unbeknown to her, had slipped into one of the lower shelves of a cupboard. Khorshed had her back turned and didn't notice. Carefully she finished her work and closed the cupboard door and locked it. Now that her work was completed, she got ready to leave for Bombay. Then she remembered Baba's warning to her to look after Pegu. She asked the servants if they had seen the cat. They told her that he must have gone out. Believing Pegu to be outside, Khorshed left Guruprasad and returned to her home in Bombay.

Two days later, the caretaker of Guruprasad property came to clean the carpets, dust, and sweep the premises. While sweeping one of the rooms, the man heard a very strange sound — like scratching and tiny cries. At first he just ignored it, but the sound was so persistent and it seemed to be coming from inside the cupboard! Finally, he decided to call

PEGU

Mr. Mohite, the manager of Guruprasad. Immediately Mohite pried open the cupboard door and out walked an emaciated and scared Pegu. The cat hadn't had any food or water for two days.

And that's not the end of the drama. A week or so later, we received a letter from Khorshed in which she had told Baba and us girls not to worry, that Pegu was fine!

No wonder Baba had expressed such loving concern. As man He plays out the role of perfect "unknowing" and yet as God there is nothing He doesn't know!

You would think that after that dreadful experience, Pegu would have learned his lesson and never again burrow into a cupboard. But the very next summer Pegu was at it again. Somehow he never was cured of the habit!



Meher Baba with Mastan as a puppy

Mastan

A book about Baba's pets would not be complete without the story of Mastan. Of all Baba's pets, the expression of love between Baba and Mastan was as unique as it was endearing. Perhaps it was a reflection of Mastan's almost childlike affection for Baba — the way he would look into Baba's eyes, play with Baba, wait for Baba's call, be comforted by Baba; and Baba's response to Mastan was all love.

While we were in Poona with Baba, Mastan was born at Meherazad. When Baba heard that Bhooty had given birth to four puppies, He sent word to Kaka that He wanted him to bring to Poona the puppy that looked most like its mother, Bhooty.

Baba was reclining on His bed when Kaka arrived with the new puppy. Baba lovingly took the pup in His arms, cuddling and caressing him. Then He told us the puppy must be tired and hungry, so we were to feed him and let him rest. We gave the puppy milk and bread.

After we finished our lunch, we again thought of the puppy. It was then that we discovered that he had mysteriously disappeared! We looked everywhere and just couldn't find him. "Where could he have gone?" we asked ourselves. As we wondered where to look next, Mani thought of look-

BABA LOVED US TOO

ing under the sofa. It had a long frilly cover that reached to the carpet, and when we lifted it, there was the puppy fast asleep!

Kaka returned to Meherazad that same day taking the puppy with him. It wasn't until we returned to Meherazad that the puppy was named. Baba called us into His room and asked; "What name shall we give this new puppy?" We suggested several names, but Baba didn't seem to like any of them. Then Baba started thinking of names Himself. "What about Plato?" gestured Baba. We just looked at Baba as we weren't sure about such a name. Mani spoke up, telling Baba that Plato would be a difficult name as we already had a Peter. "It will be awkward to call Peter ... Plato ... " Mani explained. Baba said, "Well, we will find another name." Baba thought for a moment or two, and then said, "All right. How about Mastan? Now, no more changing names!"

When Mastan was still a tiny puppy, Baba gave him to me to look after. Mastan was my pet and Peter was Mani's. Mastan was a beautiful dog. Even as a puppy it was clear that he would grow into a strikingly lovely dog. He had the same markings as his mother, Bhooty. I've already told you about how Bhooty looked like she had two sets of eyes. Mastan was the same. He, too, had those yellow spots above his eyes making him appear to have four eyes! And at the very tip of his tail were four little white hairs.

Mastan and Peter played together. From their initial introduction they were fast friends. When Peter met Mastan for the first time, Peter went right up to Mastan and licked his nose in welcome.

In the beginning, Mastan and Peter were on equal terms

MASTAN

in size because Mastan was still a baby. But soon Mastan grew bigger and taller than Peter. Peter would look up at Mastan questioningly with his cocker spaniel eyes asking, "Why have you grown so big?" Of course Mastan was still a puppy and was not aware of his size or strength. He just wanted to continue to play, rolling and tumbling with his pal Peter. As the days passed by, however, Peter would be consistently pushed down by one of Mastan's big paws. Peter was a very clever and intelligent dog, so now whenever Mastan would want to play, Peter would run to the verandah, lie down on the thick door mat, and then look up at Mastan giving the o.k. signal: "Now I'm ready to play with you, but not on the hard stone floor! Play with me here where there is a soft mat."

Though Mastan was very fond of Peter, Peter really loved Mastan more than Mastan loved him. Peter's concern for Mastan's well-being was quite exceptional.

In the mornings while Baba was with the mandali, I would often be stitching in my room. One day around 10:30 a.m., Peter came scampering in and put his head right between my knees. With his tail wagging, he looked up at me expectantly.

I knew that Peter must want something to greet me that way — so I figured that he must be hungry. I gave him his food and then returned to my sewing. But what do you think — in a few minutes Peter was back! Again those soulful eyes looked up into mine questioningly. "Don't you understand?" And then, you know, it was like telepathy, I realized that Peter wanted me to feed Mastan. He was worried that Mastan must be hungry, too. Only after Peter saw that Mastan



Mehera with Mastan looking out from her bedroom window

MASTAN

had eaten his share did he feel contented and happy. Of course, Mastan loved Peter, too, and after his companion died, he felt it very much. This made us realise how much he loved Peter in return.

In the afternoons I would give Mastan his food, but later on Baba wanted to feed Mastan Himself. He would ask me to bring Mastan to His room. Mastan was never allowed to be free. Except in the mid-afternoon when he would rest in the passageway, I would keep Mastan on a long leash. When I would free Mastan, he would never run away. He would wait patiently until I said, "Go to Baba, Mastan. Go to Baba." Then he would go romping happily to Baba's room. We taught Mastan to kiss Baba and he would do it so sweetly, like a child showing affection for his father.

Baba would pat His bed for Mastan to come on and jump up. Rano and Meheru would place an old spread over the bed at Baba's feet and Mastan would sit there contentedly. He would look at us with a twinkle in his eyes as if to say, "See! See where I am seated! Right next to Baba!"

Baba would then tell me to quickly bring Mastan his food. His plate would be kept ready — bhakri (millet bread) broken up in gravy with pieces of mutton. Baba would carefully take out the pieces of meat — the very best ones — and give these to Mastan, leaving the remainder for me to give to Mastan later.

Baba was relaxed and happy as He fed Mastan on His bed. With His own hands, He lovingly fed Mastan morsel by morsel. Then when all the meat was finished, Baba would snap His fingers, gesturing for Mastan to jump down. I would have to coax Mastan, saying, "Come on. Down, Mastan,

BABA LOVED US TOO

down." Of course eventually he would obey me and jump down, wagging his tail slightly in a sort of "Thank you, Baba," gesture.

I remember one day especially when Baba gestured to me, "Isn't Mastan like a child? He looks so big, but he is just like a child. After this life, I will see that he is born as a human being."

And Baba's love for Mastan affected us all very deeply.

After the accident, it was painful for Baba to move about and He would be carried in the lift chair to and from Mandali Hall to His room. I remember one afternoon particularly, as Mastan was stretched out in the passageway sleeping soundly. He was resting in an awkward location because Baba would have to walk around Him in order to enter His room. I started to wake Mastan when Baba gently stopped me, gesturing "Let him be." Baba took on the pain and inconvenience of having to walk around Mastan — His love for him was so great.

But still we girls would often feel helpless, seeing how Baba would give of Himself so fully even at the cost of His own comfort.

Baba had always been a good traveller, but in those later years even the drive from Guruprasad, Poona, to Meherazad caused Him great discomfort and pain. Baba could not sit comfortably in the car due to His hip injury and thus the journey was quite tiring for Him.

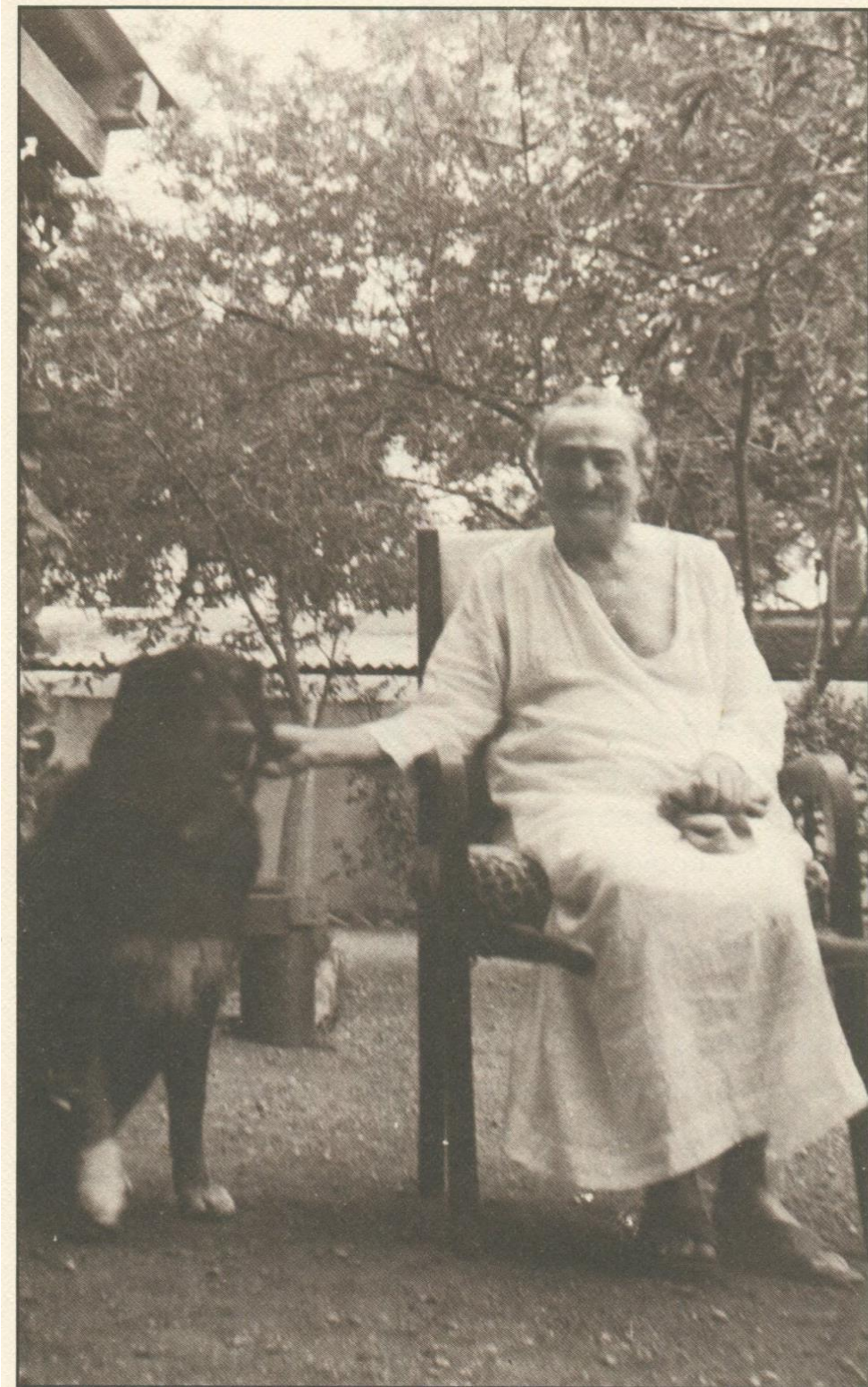
Yet Baba knew how eagerly Mastan and Peter awaited his arrival home, and He would never fail to remember them first before seeing to His own needs. As soon as Baba entered the house, He would sit down in a chair in the hallway and

MASTAN

call for Mastan and Peter. Not until He had given each of them a loving pat and special tidbits to eat would He rest and relax from the long journey.

From 1965 onward, Baba no longer fed Mastan on His bed. Instead, Baba fed him his lunch at the dining room table. The doctors wanted Baba to have a high protein diet, and so we would try to give Baba an ample amount of mutton in His curry. But every day we would see Baba line up five or six pieces of mutton along the edge of His plate. Only then would He begin to eat His curry and rice. We thought at first that perhaps Baba was saving those pieces to eat last, but after He ate two or three pieces of meat with His curry, Baba would gesture that He was finished with His meal and to call Mastan. "But Baba," we would say, "You've forgotten to eat the mutton." Baba would patiently gesture to us, "No, this is for Mastan." We would reply, "Baba, you need to have high protein and Mastan's food is ready separately in his own plate. You should eat it, Baba." But Baba would remain firm and tell us, "No, this is for Mastan. I like to give Mastan his share and he likes me to give it. Mastan is happy to have it, and I am happy to give it." And Mastan really did relish it because it was from Baba. Baba would feed Mastan faster and faster, and more and more. He gave each morsel with such love you knew that Mastan felt it.

From 13th December 1968, Baba stayed in His room except for short visits to the mandali side. He was not feeling strong, and Mastan was no longer fed by Baba at the table. Mastan missed Baba's attention and couldn't understand why he was no longer receiving treats from Baba's hand. I can still recall how forlorn Mastan looked as he stood silently



Meher Baba with Mastan

MASTAN

gazing at Baba's chair as if asking, "Why isn't Baba coming here anymore?"

When I told Baba about Mastan's behaviour, Baba's expression softened and He nodded knowingly. Gesturing to His heart, Baba signed, "Mastan loves me very dearly."

After Baba dropped His body, Mastan really missed Baba and sensed something was wrong. He felt Baba's absence deeply.

One day Mastan did something very unusual. You see, Mastan was never left free except to rest in the passageway during the midday when it was too hot outside. Unlike most dogs, he never sniffed about and had never entered the dining room or Baba's room on his own without being called. But that day was different. I saw Mastan slowly walk into the dining room and go over to Baba's chair. Very solemnly, he went around Baba's chair and circumambulated the dining room table. Then he walked out of the room into the passageway and lay down with a deep, deep sigh. It was as if he knew that he would never see his beloved Baba again. The expression in his eyes and his whole demeanor spoke of his heart's grief.

Still, Mastan had to be sure that his Baba was gone. Again on another day he did something he had never done before — Mastan walked into Baba's room alone. No one saw Mastan but me and I did not stop him, but watched silently to see what he would do.

Very slowly Mastan walked around Baba's bed, just as he had walked around the dining room table and Baba's chair. Then he came into the passageway as if he finally had accepted that Baba was no longer here. From then on,

BABA LOVED US TOO

Mastan gradually stopped eating. I would try to tempt him with choice morsels of meat, but he would not touch it. I would have to force-feed him and I knew that this could not go on indefinitely. Mastan was getting thinner and thinner, and very weak.

Finally the day came when we were to leave Meherazad and go to Poona for the 1969 Darshan Programme. Before we got into the car I remembered Mastan. He was lying down listlessly, too weak to stand up. It was clear that he wouldn't live much longer. I put my hand on his head and repeated Baba's Name and asked Baba to make it easy for him, for I knew this would be the last time I'd see Mastan. It was March when we left for the Great Darshan Programme in Guruprasad, Poona, and on 18th April, while we were still in Guruprasad, word came that Mastan had died.

Baba's love and protection for his dear "child", Mastan, continues even to this day. Pilgrims who come to Meherazad and wish to see the Meher Free Dispensary can have a glimpse of Mastan's grave which is clearly marked.

At the time Mastan was buried, the Meher Free Dispensary building which you see now, had not yet been built. Later, when Dr. Goher needed more space to expand the dispensary, a dilemma arose as Mastan's grave was located where a new room extension was to be constructed. It was finally decided to leave Mastan where he was and build the room around his grave. Thus, Mastan has a roof over his head and four walls around him to protect him from wind and rain. And he is ever remembered by all because of his love for Beloved Baba which keeps his memory alive in the hearts of Baba-lovers everywhere!

For further information or a complete list of books by or about
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BABA LOVED US TOO

Stories of Meher Baba and His Pets

by Mehera J. Irani



Mehera, Meher Baba, and Pegu

"We hear many stories about the lovers of God who leave everything – family, wealth, and home to find God, but I'm sure this is the first story you've heard about a cat who ran away from his home to live at the feet of the God-Man."

—from Mehera's story, "Pegu"