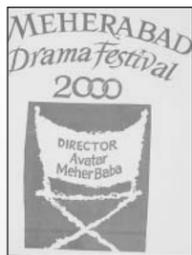




# IN HIS SERVICE

JANUARY / 2001

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD



## First Meherabad Drama Festival Spans Four Languages

On 14th - 15th October 2000 - the weekend commemorating the 51st anniversary of Meher Baba's inauguration of the New Life on 16th October 1949 - the Trust held its first Drama Festival in the theater facility at the Music and Arts Centre ("Hostel A") in Outer Meherabad.

The creation and production of drama was indicated by Meher Baba in the Trust Deed as the fourth item under the third of the Trust's "Objects and Purposes"; that item calls for "the writing and production of 'Plays' based on the messages, discourses, and sayings of Avatar Meher Baba, for the benefit of the public." Over the years, of course, many plays have been written and staged both at Meherabad and Meherazad. This year's drama festival, however, marks a new departure, not only in its scale but in its inclusion of plays created

and brought to Meherabad by Baba lovers from groups in other parts of India.

*Plays from different groups in different languages*

The "Meherabad Drama Festival 2000," as it was entitled, featured four original plays in four languages over a two-day period. Two of them - English language plays - were created and produced at Meherabad over the preceding weeks with pilgrim recruits as the principal actors. A third play, in Hindi and Marathi, was authored and acted by members of the Baba group from Mumbai. The last play, in English and Telugu, was the creation of Baba lovers from Hyderabad.

The theme common to all the plays was "attraction" - from the most material to the divine. The opening English-language drama on Saturday afternoon, "Chilla Nashini," related

in a humorous style the tale of a seeker who pursues God's love by remaining in a circle for forty days and nights and in the process incurs the jealousy of Indra, who tries to tempt him through various means. There followed another largely comic play, "Attraction," which featured an eccentric professor lecturing the theater audience on attraction of various types - atomic, physical, human, and divine. Incorporating excerpts from Baba's Discourses, his lecture was illustrated through dramatic vignettes. These culminate when the principal characters discover Meher Baba as the ultimate Source and Object of all attraction.

On Sunday 15th October members of the Bombay Centre performed "Love Alone," a drama in Hindi and Marathi that chronicles the spiritual journey of a young man, Dyaneshwar,

from a youthful infatuation through various higher forms of search until he finds Meher Baba as the source of true and unconditional love. The drama was accompanied by many songs; and much of the dialogue was rendered through exchanges of poetic couplets. After supper on Sunday night, Baba lovers from Hyderabad staged the story of a Naveen, a young Indian man who marries an American wife and loses himself in the pursuit of money and material pleasure in the United States. Disillusioned at last, he is guided by his wife to Meher Baba; and the play concludes with Naveen recounting his story before Eruch at Meherazad. The play was exceptional in its use of an accompanying computer-generated slide show: a "first" at Meherabad!

### Letter from the Chairman

Our dear ones of the universal family of the Beloved,

With the Meherabad Drama Festival 2000 on New Life weekend just completed, a Trust web site scheduled for opening in the next months, and a Young Adults Sahavas planned for the beginning of next pilgrim season, life at Meherabad continues to flourish, sending out new branches and new blossoms. The seeds which Beloved Baba implanted at Meherabad and Meherazad have been sown deep. They will continue to bear fruit for centuries to come, until the time when Beloved Baba returns to grace us once again with His physical presence in 700 years.

Amid these other activities, work progresses in the Trust's Development Plan, with a groundbreaking for the new Pilgrim Centre having taken place on November 15, 2000. As you will recall, the last issue of *In His Service* contained as an enclosure the Trust's first annual "Financial Report" that gave detailed information not only about the Five-Year Plan but about the Trust's finances as a whole. As the Report indicated, over 70% of the funds needed for Trust activities during the fiscal year 1999-2000 were provided through donations.

Recent increases in the Trust's need for additional funds are a result largely of the Trust's plans to develop new facilities for the increasing number of pilgrims; to enhance community services in education and medical care; to archive precious materials associated with Meher Baba; and to develop the infra-structure necessary to support all the diverse activities at Meherabad.

It is indeed a task beyond words to express appreciation for the cooperation of you all dear ones in serving the cause of the Beloved Baba through His Trust. We simply feel touched by what the Beloved is doing through you. How precious is your love which is making it possible for His dear ones to visit His home and enjoy His glorification. You all are blessed indeed.

V.S. Kalchuri (Bhau), Chairman

AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST



Model for the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, a new pilgrim accommodation facility to be constructed in a pastoral area to the west of Avatar Meher Baba's Samadhi. Ground-breaking for the building took place on 15th November 2000. The Meher Pilgrim Retreat will accommodate 200 visitors; the new Dharamshala, currently under planning and scheduled for construction after the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, will lodge 300 more. These two buildings comprise the heart of current efforts for pilgrim accommodation under the Trust's Development Plan.

# Construction On Schedule for New Archive Building



Front entrance view

## Completion of the Archive Building

During the final months of year 2000, the basic construction work for the new Archives, Museum, and Research Building will be brought to completion. When ground was broken on 1st May 1997 – a midsummer day blessed by a most unseasonable, torrential rainfall and (a few hours later) by an unprecedented hailstorm – a three-year term of construction was anticipated. The finishing of the construction work this year marks the end of the first phase in the creation of a facility for the safe-keeping of documents, films, photos, and personal articles associated with Avatar Meher Baba and His Advent.

The building will be known as Manzil-e-Meher, or “House of Meher,” in memory of Manzil-e-Meem (“House of the Master”) that Meher Baba established in Mumbai in 1922-23. A 15,000-square-foot, two-floor brick-and-stone edifice nestling in the northeastern slope of Meherabad Hill amid new plantings of rosewood, acacia, and neem trees, Manzil-e-Meher has been designed as a “box within a box.” That is, an outer wall encloses an inner wall and an upper roof covers a lower roof, with air buffers in between. This design will provide the collection with natural insulation from temperature and humidity extremes, and will thus reduce dependency on air conditioning, dehumidification, and other technologies of environmental control.

Before the building becomes fully operational, several more years will be required for its equipping and furnishing. In the immediate future, built-in work counters need to be installed and electrical preparations for computers put in place before the inside of the building can be painted. After this, cupboards, computers, desks, and other furniture and equipment need to be procured. Once this phase is completed, the collection materials can be transferred

and rehoused into their new environment, and Manzil-e-Meher can begin to function in real earnest as the main facility for managing the preservation and sharing of this precious legacy with the world.

## Sharing the Collection

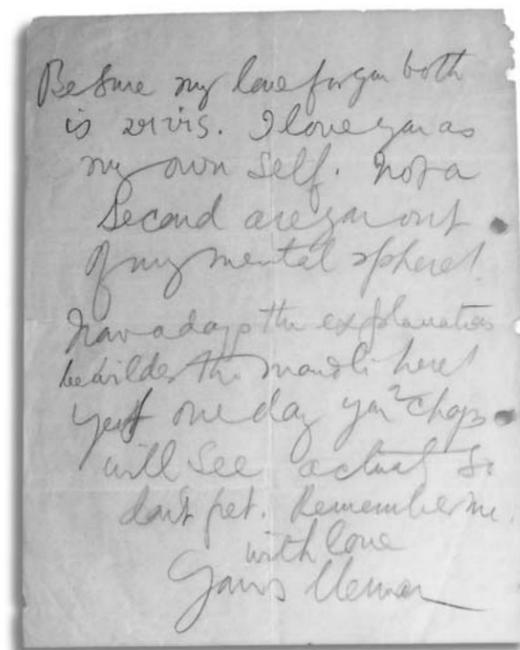
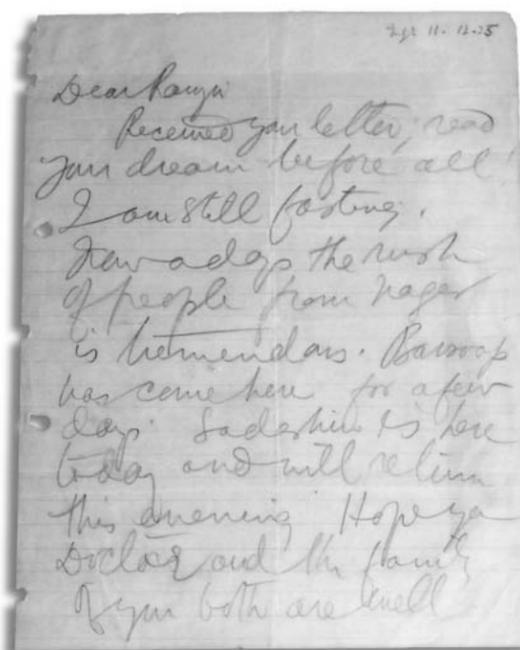
The sharing of these documents, films, photos, and personal articles entails, first, that they be housed and organized in a way that protects and preserves them, allowing them to then be safely made available to the Baba world on an on-going basis. In the course of time, when humanity at large turns to the Avatar, every facet of His life and personality will be of interest, and no paper or object associated with Him will be deemed insignificant.

In the meantime, while this preparation of the archive facility moves ahead, the Trust has embarked on a programme of sharing selected documentary materials from its collection through display on its

forthcoming web site and other media. The first of these sharings was the recent publication of the 39 pages in Meher Baba’s handwriting under the title *In God’s Hand*.

As the second of these presentations, this newsletter brings before you a facsimile reproduction of a letter that Meher Baba wrote to Ramjoo Abdulla, one of His intimate mandali, on 11th December 1925. Five months before He wrote this letter, on 10th July 1925, Meher Baba began the silence that He maintained throughout the rest of His life. For the first eighteen months, Baba communicated largely by writing with chalk on slates. On 1st January 1927, however, He adopted the use of the alphabet board, and after this He wrote with His own hand only on rare occasions. The letter reproduced here, therefore, is a prize selection from a very limited body of personal correspondence surviving in Meher Baba’s own handwriting.

## Reproduction of Baba’s Letter to Ramjoo Abdulla



Ngr [Nagar] 11-12-25

Dear Ramju

Received your letter, read your dream before all. I am still fasting. Nowadays the rush of people from Nagar is tremendous. Barsoap has come here for a few days. Sadashiv is here today and will return this evening. Hope you, Doctor, and the family of you both are well. Be sure my love for you both is akhand [“without a break”]. I love you as my own Self. Not a second are you out of my mental sphere. Nowadays the explanations bewilder the mandali here. Yes, one day you 2 chaps will see actual[ly], so don’t fret. Remember me.

with love,

Yours Merwan



## IN BRIEF

FROM MEHERABAD

**GOOD MONSOON RAINS** With about 26 inches of rainfall through the end of October, Meherabad’s wells have been replenished by the monsoon and should provide good water supply for Amartithi and the rest of the 2000-2001 pilgrim season.

**1200 SILENCE DAY PILGRIMS** For the Silence Day celebration on 10th July, approximately 1200 pilgrims, mostly from Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, were accommodated at Meherabad overnight for periods ranging from one to five days.

Nine hundred ninety-eight visitors were put up (on mattresses) in Hostels C and D alone, facilities which ordinarily accommodate a combined total of 140. Because of overcrowding at Amartithi, Silence Day, and other times of gathering, the Trust’s Five-Year Plan includes provision for the creation of sahas-time accommodation for 4000 additional pilgrims.

**VOLUNTEER DENTISTRY** During August of 2000, a Baba lover dentist from Hyderabad gave one month of voluntary service at Meherabad. During his

stay 1000 school children were screened and 300 received treatment at the Meher Hospital Dental Clinic.

## GROUND BREAKING FOR MEHER PILGRIM RETREAT

On November 15th ground was broken for the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, the new pilgrim centre to be constructed under the Trust’s Five-Year Plan. The site of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat is located on a plateau about a kilometer west of Meher Baba’s Samadhi.

(see photo on front page)



# Trust's Medical Programme Follows Baba's Directives

## *Medicine in the Ashram Days*

On 21st March 1925, during the phase of Meherabad's first great flowering, Meher Baba opened the Meher Charitable Hospital and Dispensary that provided free medical services to villagers of the surrounding region. Housed in the Mess Quarters (the present-day Dharamshala), presided over by a trained doctor, and staffed by the mandali, the Meher Charitable Hospital received the inestimable blessing of the Avatar's own personal touch in its day-to-day operations. For Meher Baba would Himself from time to time take direct part in patient health care, even changing soiled linens and giving occasional prescriptions.

From this time onward through the rest of His physical lifetime, medical service, in one form or another, constituted a regular part of the life of Meher Baba's ashrams. In fact, a remarkable number of Baba's close mandali were doctors. Most of them at one time or another worked in the various clinics created by Baba or under His orders; and they were regularly called into service at sahavases and gatherings. But of special significance was the medical care which Baba's mandali doctors gave to Him personally, particularly from the time of His first automobile accident in Oklahoma in 1952, which marked the beginning in a long decline in His health. For the Avatar - God become Man - takes upon Himself the burden of all humanity's suffering. In receiving the medical ministrations of His close ones, Baba was no doubt doing His own Avataric work on medical practice in the ages to come.

## *Current Medical Facilities at Meherabad*

The Deed for the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, signed by Him on 6th April 1959 and later supplemented by the incorporation of His further instructions, calls for the creation of "medical facilities" and the provision of "medical relief ... to the afflicted." When the Trust began to function shortly after Meher Baba dropped His physical form in 1969, Dr. Goher, the Trust's chief medical officer, helped create new dispensaries providing free medical care to the poor villagers of the Ahmednagar district. The small clinic that she helped to open at Meherazad has since become the Meher Free Dispensary. The Meherabad clinic of the same period has since that time blos-

somed into a small constellation of Trust medical facilities, including the Meher Health Centre, the Meher Hospital, and the Pilgrim Centre Dispensary.

Located on the historic site of the old Family Quarters at the north edge of Arangaon Village, the Meher Health Centre is the primary Trust facility for the provision of basic out-patient health care for the local populace, mostly from Arangaon and nearby villages. Visited by about a hundred patients daily six days a week, the Centre treats a wide variety of common afflictions, such as respiratory infections, bacterial and viral infections, parasitic infections, acute and chronic diarrhea, anemia, skin disease, wounds and injuries, and gynecological complaints. Patients requiring in-hospital care are referred to medical facilities in Ahmednagar. In the Meher Health Centre as in all of its facilities, the Trust's medical team integrates varied forms of treatment, particularly the allopathic, homeopathic, ayurvedic, and acupunctural.

The Meher Hospital at Outer Meherabad has over the past fifteen years come to host a broadening range of services. Though it does not yet function as a full-time hospital facility, Meher Hospital dispensary, open daily six days a week, provides medical care for the Meherabad work force (of almost 200 paid workers), their families, and the general public. The Trust laboratories - one in the hospital and one in the Meher Health Centre - have become crucial adjunct services, performing 400-600 medical tests a month. The medical team also monitors the quality of Meherabad drinking water. In addition to these regular functions, the hospital serves as the venue for bimonthly Trust cataract programmes in which an ophthalmic surgeon performs ocular implants in the hospital's operating theater for about 60 patients a year. In India, cataracts afflict a high proportion of the older population; untreated, cataracts culminate in virtual blindness. (Interestingly enough, it was Baba Himself who sponsored the first Meherabad cataract camp in the Meherabad hospital in 1925.) Another regular Meher Hospital service is its dental clinic, which provides free dental care twice a week, particularly to children from the nearby Arangaon schools.

A third venue for Trust medical care is the Pilgrim Centre Dispensary, which every morning and evening offers treatment for Meherabad pilgrims staying at the Pilgrim Centre, Dharamshala, and the Hostels. In fact, the confluence of diverse human

streams at Meherabad, where a poor local population mingles with visitors from all over the world, creates conditions conducive to epidemics; and this demands special vigilance from the medical staff.

Other Trust medical services include the organization of medical centres for the Amartithi Gathering and a variety of education programmes (on such subjects as AIDS, family planning, and cancer and leprosy detection). At present, the Trust medical team consists of four full-time doctors and a number of others who serve on a part-time or consultancy basis, three nurses, three laboratory technicians, and other ancillary personnel.



*Cataract programme at Meher Hospital at Meherabad.*

## *Meher Free Dispensary at Meherazad*

Though it constitutes a separate legal entity and thus functions independently of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, the Meher Free Dispensary-Meherazad, created in the early 1970s with Mani as its settlor and Goher as its medical director, works in close cooperation with the Trust medical team and draws on the services of a number of the Trust's spiritual trainees. A primary-care out-patient facility like the Meher Health Centre, the Dispensary gives free treatment three days a week to about a hundred patients a day, mostly from Pimpalgaon and nearby villages.

## **Trust Web Site Due to Open**

An Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust web site, giving information about Avatar Meher Baba and the Trust which He created, will be opening on the Internet in the coming months.

One section of the web site will be devoted to Avatar Meher Baba Himself - through a brief biography, selected messages, and a gallery of photographs. Another section will give information about the Trust - the sacred sites that it caretakes, its activities, its plans for estate development, and current news.

The Trust web site can be accessed by pointing your browser to <http://www.AvatarMeherBabaTrust.org>.

<http://www.AvatarMeherBabaTrust.org>

## **Meherabad Young Adults Sahavas Planned for June 2001**

An international Young Adults Sahavas will be held at Meherabad from 22nd June to 2nd July 2001, for Baba lovers age 19-35 from any part of the world. The sahavas will have a special emphasis on service to Avatar Meher Baba at Meherabad and on the artistic celebration of His Divine Love.

Anyone who would like to receive more information may write to: Meherabad Young Adults Sahavas, Attn. Mehera Makeig, Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust, King's Road, Post Bag 31, Ahmednagar 414 001, M.S., India; or you may send e-mails to: [sahavas@ambppct.org](mailto:sahavas@ambppct.org).

[sahavas@ambppct.org](mailto:sahavas@ambppct.org)

## Ongoing Contributions Needed to Support Trust Activities

We are happy to share that last year so many gave generously to the Trust, that work is progressing well. All are invited to share in the effort of furthering the Objects given to the Trust by Meher Baba in the Trust Deed, and in this way the base of support can be broadened. Remember that in Baba's cause, contributions large and small are welcome; contribute only what is appropriate for your individual situation.

In the United States and United Kingdom, contributions can be made tax-deductibly through tax-exempt organizations. In the United States, contributions to the Trust are tax-deductible when the donation is sent to one of the eligible tax-exempt organizations (listed below) that has a grant in place with the Trust. When making your contribution, please indicate that you wish your gift to be used to support that organization's grant to the Trust's Five-Year Development Plan.

Persons in the US who wish to leave bequests in their wills or who would like to designate the Trust as the beneficiary of insurance policies, IRAs, or charitable trusts should contact Emory and Susan Ayers of the Avatar Meher Baba Foundation (at the address below). Emory and Susan can guide them in the best language for assuring favorable tax treatment.

In the UK, tax-deductible contributions can be made to the Meher Baba Association; please contact Sue Biddu, Flat 2, 202 Falcon House, Old Brompton Road, London SW5 0BU, England (171-370-0909). In the US, the following tax-exempt organizations have a grant programmes in place with the Trust: Avatar Meher Baba Foundation Inc., Attn. Emory and Susan Ayers, P.O. Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398 (tel. 860-536-0303, email [EAyers88@aol.com](mailto:EAyers88@aol.com)); Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California, Attn. Kanji Miyao, Treasurer, 1214 S. Van Ness Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90019-3520 (tel. 213-731-3737); Meher Baba House, Attn. Keith Sheridan, 116 West 29th St., New York, NY 10001 (tel. 212-563-5959); The Meher Baba Washington Gathering, Attn. Pam Butler-Stone, 11227 Dewey Court, Kensington, MD 20895 (tel. 301-946-0236); Meher Prasad Inc., Attn. Steve Edelman, 4364 Glengary Drive, Atlanta, GA 30342 (tel. 404-261-3563); Meherana, Attn. Christine Pearson, 5311 Italian Creek Road, Mariposa, CA 95338 (tel. 209-966-5078); Meher Baba Center of the Twin Cities, Attn. Pat Cook, 4724 Zenith Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55410 (tel. 612-920-2056); Meher Fund, Inc., Attn. Rick Flinn, 760 Cumberland Circle, Atlanta, GA 30306 (tel. 404-892-3377); and Sheriar Foundation, Attn. Andy Lesnik, 3005 Highway 17 North Bypass, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577 (tel. 843-272-7282, email [Lesnika@aol.com](mailto:Lesnika@aol.com)).

Baba lovers from countries other than the United States or United Kingdom should send donations to the Trust directly.

# Drama Has Long Colorful History From Baba's Time

While dramatic expression may have embarked on its own "New Life" through the Meherabad Drama Festival 2000, the roots of this activity in connection with Meher Baba's Advent trace back to His paternal uncle Rustom, who directed a film company and later was part-owner of a theatrical company in the early part of the century. Meher Baba Himself always had a dramatic flair; and a number of His close circle members had talents in acting, mimicry, story-telling, and other narrative and dramatic arts. Baba's younger sister Mani was a living fountain of skits, plays, puppet shows, and stories through the years; Norina Matchabelli, Quentin Todd, and Delia DeLeon had extensive professional backgrounds in the theater in Europe; and others among Baba's mandali were often called upon by Him to provide entertainment, both prepared and impromptu, and thus to lend fun and sparkle to ashram life.

A particularly memorable moment in the history of drama in Baba's time was the rendering of the tale of Raja Gopichand, the legendary Hindu king who, after

leading an opulent life, renounced the world and his throne and became a great sage. What was particularly remarkable about this performance, which took place at Meherabad on 25th September 1938, was that all the major roles were played by inmates of the mad ashram! As William Donkin describes it, these men had to be "coaxed and cudged" by Pleader

dropped His body in 1969, plays quickly became featured high points in the Meherabad and Meherabad pilgrim calendar. Apart from skits and short plays in the Meherabad Sunday programmes and assorted performances at Amartithi, the past three decades have witnessed more than fifty major Trust-sponsored original dramatic productions that

at Meherabad and in the amphitheater, "tin shed," and study hall on Meherabad Hill, in recent years the Music and Arts Centre, with its professional theater, has become the principal site for dramatic performance, particularly on the occasion of Meher Baba's birthday on 25th February. Recent noteworthy birthday plays have included "This Man



A scene from "Baba's 100th Birthday Spectacle" at Meherabad

(one of the mandali) into learning "their parts, their cues, their gestures, their positions on the stage." Attended by Baba lovers who came from Bombay and other places, the performance marked a turning point in the history of Baba's "Mad Ashram."

After Meher Baba

have entailed play-writing and the mastery of parts, scenes, costumes, and often songs and dance. These were much encouraged by Mehera, and until 1988 a play was performed on her birthday each December 22nd.

While in the past, plays were staged in the garden

David" and "How It All Happened," both based on film scenarios created by Meher Baba Himself, and "The Ancient One" and "The Time Has Come," both based on a play by Bhau Kalchuri.

## THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST

Created in 1959 under Meher Baba's direction and bearing His signature on its Deed, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust had, at its founding, two purposes. Its first purpose was the provision of means of support to certain named disciples of Avatar Meher Baba who had dedicated their lives to Him and become His dependents in the material sense. Its second, long-term objective was to maintain and develop Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb and associated properties, which would one day become the centre of world pilgrimage, and to serve a range of charitable objects.

In 1975 these two functions were divided: "Avatar Meher Baba Trust Firstly," a temporary trust, took charge of the support of the "beneficiaries," and the "Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust," registered under the Bombay Public Trusts Act 1950, assumed responsibility for pilgrimage facilities and charitable works. Over the past three decades it is the Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust that has become the primary site and focus of activities at Meherabad and other parts of the Trust Estate.

The Trust Deed calls for maintenance of Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb

and the creation of pilgrim facilities; for educational, medical, veterinary, and other charitable services; for estate development and procurement of sources of water; for the propagation of Avatar Meher Baba's message of love and truth through melas, lectures, publication, and the arts; and for spiritual training. The Avatar Meher Baba Trust is dedicated to the cause of Avatar Meher Baba in all its aspects and to that awakening of His love that will be the transformation of the heart and the dawning of a New Humanity.

Donations and inquiries should be sent to: The Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King's Road, Ahmednagar 414 001, Maharashtra State, India