



JUNE / 2015

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MEHER NAZAR PUBLICATIONS.

Restoring the East Room

Baba in the East Room in the 1930s.

Early this year the East Room of the Meher Retreat building on Meherabad Hill underwent restoration to preserve and maintain the room's physical integrity and to prepare it for being open to visitors. As part of the Trust's archival preservation and sharing work, the restoration was the combined effort of a small team of volunteers and Trust workers who spent several weeks on the project. The room had been carefully emptied of its precious contents: furnishings and personal items from Baba's time belonging to Mehera and the other women mandali.

The East Room's wooden ceiling was cleaned and painted, the frames of the high ventilator windows were repaired and painted, the plastered walls were sanded and prepared for whitewash and then whitewashed. The room was also rewired, and indirect lighting was installed so that no fixtures are visible. This is the first time the room has been worked on since it was whitewashed and outfitted with electricity in 1978.

This room is part of the building that was originally a large water tank belonging to a World War I British military camp and one of three sturdy buildings from that camp still standing when Baba and the mandali first came to Meherabad in 1923. The tank had three big sections: the one to the east, the one to the west, which eventually became the Meherabad Museum, and the one to the south, which juts out and housed the pump, and which is currently the Meherabad Library.

These rooms and the tank of which they were once a part played a number of roles in Baba's ashram life. Baba Himself spent many seclusion hours inside

the empty water tank and even used it as His bedroom at night during 1926. He worked on the writing of His (still missing) book during one such stay inside. At that time it had not yet been converted into rooms, and Baba climbed in and out of the tank via ladders. In 1927, doors were opened in the walls of the big tank so that rooms could be established and used. The stone walls are very thick and had to be broken through with hand tools. Eruch used to recall that when he came to Meherabad as a boy he saw Baba Himself standing at the water tank wall with a crowbar in hand, helping with the stone breaking work. And young Eruch (age eleven years) was given the opportunity to help, too.

The water tank rooms were used to house the Meher Ashram and Prem Ashram boys in 1927-29 and also by Baba and the men mandali for seclusion work in 1930. But the phase of Baba's activities most associated with the East Room of the building was as living quarters for Mehera and some of the other women mandali.

In November 1933, Baba moved His ashram back to Meherabad from Nasik, and six of His women mandali—Mehera, Mani, Naja, Khorshed, Soona Masi, and Valu—began to live in the compound on the Hill, sleeping in the East Room. This began a phase of "poverty, purity, and obedience" for Mehera and the others, for the next five years. It was a life of simplicity and austerity. During this time, Mehera was kept very cloistered by Baba's order. She was not to see anyone from outside and was not to even hear a man's voice or the mention of a man's name.

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The Handwriting on the Wall

An amazing artifact from the days of the Prem Ashram has been revealed in the East Room of the Meher Retreat building on Meherabad Hill. As a team of workers sanded the walls to smooth them for whitewashing, one of them noticed the surface of the wall in one area was exposed to a lower level than its surroundings and there in the older layer appeared markings that looked like writing. The worker stopped and stared. Then slowly and carefully he continued to sand in such a way as to remove the upper covering of whitewash, revealing the letters written below.

A passage of writing emerged in beautiful calligraphic hand, the words written in Farsi (Persian) and dating back to the days before the women mandali's time, back to the Meher Ashram and Prem Ashram time, when school boys were housed in the water tank rooms. The passage is signed by Kaikhushru Afseri, one of Baba's mandali who was known as Raosaheb in the Ashram and who was one of the teachers of the boys.

The area of the lettering was left as it was and covered with a transparent plaque to preserve it for viewing. The lettering was copied onto paper and sent to a Baba lover in Iran who is a professional translator and who, in consultation with an Islamic scholar, has given the translation of the words, which speak for themselves in the accompanying photograph.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TED JUDSON.

Goodbye, Meher ashram, holy land of God!

You brought all my brothers here and taught us a thousand lessons. In this holy room you educated and instructed children from every caste and religion, and one by one you drew them close to you. And now, one year later, you send us on our way with your blessings.

KAIKHUSHRU AFSERI (RAOSAHEB)



The East Room restored to how it looked when the women mandali stayed there.

Roof Project at Meherazad

Pilgrims often wonder what goes on at Meherazad during the summer months, March to June. Eruch and Mani would enjoy a hearty laugh together when they would receive loving letters from pilgrims wishing them a pleasant summer holiday, but having no idea that just as Eruch was reading their letter, incessant hammering was going on a few feet away from him, as the roof over the Blue Bus was being repaired or new electrical wiring was being installed. Such was the norm in their life with Baba, and although Mani and Eruch are no longer the recipients of such letters, summer continues to be an extremely busy time at Meherazad.



Baba's room fortified during construction.

This year, due to major repair and renovation of the roof covering Baba's and Mehera and Mani's rooms, Meherazad closed early on 22nd February. This was the first time that Baba's and Mehera's rooms had been totally

emptied and the roof tiles removed since He had inaugurated the main bungalow at Meherazad in 1948.

For a number of years, there had been increasing leakage into these rooms through the roof. Now the time had come for the preservation work to begin.

Detailed planning had gone into the preparations for months prior to the start of the project, particularly to ensure that every article in Baba's home would be protected and safely removed from the work areas. Everything inside Baba's and Mehera and Mani's rooms had to be carefully wrapped and removed. Even Baba's bed had to be removed from His room, and in the safest way possible.

Once the rooms were emptied of the furnishings, a forest of bamboo poles created a support for the ceiling from within, while a bamboo scaffolding outside was built around the perimeter of Baba's and Mehera and Mani's rooms. The roof repair work could then begin.

In order to finish such a major undertaking in a limited period of time, a team of Baba lovers from the West, in addition to Indian workers and residents from Meherabad and Meherazad, all joined hands and hearts to work on this most blessed project.

Because such work can only be done when pilgrims are not at Meherazad, it had to be scheduled for the months of Indian summer, although these are the hottest months of our year and, naturally, the hardest months in which to work outdoors in the hot sun. But

the Lord sees to everything, especially when His dear ones rely on Him. On the very day of the arrival of team members from America, the skies opened up in an auspicious welcome, blessing the event with a heavy deluge of unseasonable rain, thus cooling the atmosphere for the crew who were not yet acclimatized to the Indian heat.

When preparations were completed, the work on the roof began in earnest with removal of the original roof tiles. The old rotted and damaged rafters were replaced with solid aged teakwood rafters. In addition, the old and new rafters were reinforced with new connectors. A radiant barrier was installed to reflect heat, using marine plywood, and, for the first time, the attic was insulated with both styrofoam and fiberglass batting. When this work was completed, copper valleys and gutters were installed to handle the heavy monsoon downpours. And finally, once all this reconstruction was in place, the tiles were again fitted to the roof. The crowning touch to this labor of love consisted in a fresh coat of paint for both Baba's and Mehera and Mani's rooms. We can hope that they would be pleased!



A few of the roofing team.



Volunteers from the East and the West joined Meherazad residents to replace the roof.



How to Contribute

The Avatar Meher Baba Trust is supported entirely by love-gifts from Meher Baba's lovers around the world. In truth, it is Baba Himself who gives through your hands, and it is Baba Himself who brings the objects to completion which He Himself laid down in the Trust Deed, when it pleases Him to do so.

Contributions can be made directly to the Trust at: AMBPPC Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King's Road, Ahmednagar 414 001, M. S., India. Donations may be sent by personal check or demand draft payable to Avatar Meher Baba PPC Trust and may be in any currency. In addition, a few Baba organizations in the USA and UK have established legal means to accept tax-deductible donations and transfer them to the Trust.

In the UK: Please send tax-deductible contributions to Avatar Meher Baba Association, c/o Sue Chapman, 2 Chapel Hill Row, Craster, Northumberland NE66 3TU, tel. 01 665 57 69 57, e-mail suchapman@hotmail.com.

In the USA, to make tax-deductible contributions or to name the Trust as a beneficiary in your will, 401K, IRA, or insurance policy, please contact Susan Ayers at Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org. AMB Foundation will send you relevant information along with a list of seven Meher Baba tax-exempt organizations that have grants in place to support the Trust. These include a Trust Development Plan grant, an Operating Expense grant, and a grant for the construction of the Memorial Tower.

Trust financial information is provided annually in the Trust Financial Report, sent out with the June/July issue of this newsletter and posted on the Trust website. The Financial Report details information on Trust receipts—including current donations to the three grants—and expenditures; it also provides a current and projected expenditures report for the Trust Development Plan. More information can be found on the Trust's website at www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org.

WHAT IS THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST?

Created in 1959 under Meher Baba's direction, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust has the purpose of fulfilling the objectives in the Trust Deed set out by Baba and the Trustees He appointed. The Trust Deed calls for the maintenance of Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb; for the creation of pilgrim facilities; for educational, medical, and other charitable services; for estate development and procurement of sources of water; for the advancement of Avatar Meher Baba's love-message through melas, museums, lectures, publications, and the arts; and for spiritual training.

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For Reservations to Stay at Meherabad:

For Meher Pilgrim Retreat: pimco@ambppct.org
For Hostel D/Dharamshala: jaibaba@ambppct.org

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Discovering the Avataric Treasure Program

“Celebrating the Pre-silence Phase of Meher Baba’s Avataric Mission, January 1922–July 1925” was the topic of a three-day program of presentations held in the MPC Meeting Hall in February 2015. Part of the ongoing series “Discovering the Avataric Treasure,” the program consisted of a variety of lectures, films, and musical offerings on the theme, all prepared by Baba lovers from different places in India and around the world. Topics included Manzil-e-Meem, the Poona Jhopdi period, a study of the *Infinite Intelligence* master chart, Meher Baba’s early women disciples, Upasni Maharaj, and more.

Pilgrim Accommodation Takes a Swing Upward

Meher Pilgrim Retreat

Following two years of declining numbers, the MPR statistics for last season 2014/2015 show an increase in both the number of pilgrims who stayed and the number of “bed-days” of occupancy. Pilgrim visits this past season were 4,289, up 22% over the previous season and the highest since the MPR opened in 2006/2007. The number of bed-days of occupancy was 16,559, an increase of 18% over the previous season.

However, the increase in bed-days does not indicate a high point, as other seasons prior to 2013/2014 were higher. Although more pilgrims visited the MPR last year than ever, their average length of stay was shorter than in the past and this affects the count of bed-days. The average length of stay per pilgrim is steadily declining, from 7.5 days in 2006/2007 to 3.9 days in 2014/2015. This average is going down for non-Indian pilgrims in particular and staying fairly steady for Indian pilgrims. The average length of stay for Indian pilgrims is 2.3 days. For non-Indian pilgrims it is now 12.7 days, although it was 17.6 days six years ago.

An obvious trend for the MPR is the increase in percentage of visits and percentage of bed-days occupied by Indian pilgrims compared to those from abroad. The percentage of pilgrims staying in the MPR who are from India has increased steadily from 64.8% in 2006/2007 to 85% in 2014/2015. Because our Indian pilgrims stay for shorter visits than those from abroad on average, their percentage of bed-days has been lower, but last season for the first time, the majority of bed-days (50.9%) were occupied by Indians. Pilgrims visited Meherabad from 32 different countries last season, the total visiting from abroad and staying in the MPR reaching 649. Although this number is higher than the previous season it is still fairly low compared to previous years as a whole.

Hostels C/D and Dharamshala

Pilgrim visits in these lower Meherabad accommodations combined was 5,717 for 2014/2015. The previous two seasons were 5,956 and 5,184, respectively. The number of bed-days for the combined facilities was 13,938, very close to the 2013/2014 figure of 13,998. Both recent seasons were somewhat higher than the count for 2012/2013, which was 13,390.

Amartithi 2015

Avatar Meher Baba’s 46th Amartithi event was held at Meherabad, 30th January to 1st February, 2015. Baba’s lovers from all over India and around the world convene each year to commemorate the day He shed



More than 35,000 pilgrims from all over the world gathered on Meherabad Hill to celebrate Amartithi with music, dance, drama, and film.

His mortal form to live eternally in the hearts of His lovers. This year the Trust accommodated 18,896 pilgrims in the hostels and tents and 336 in the MPR.

Near the Samadhi a continuous program of song, dance, drama, and film was presented on the amphitheater stage. Open to anyone who wishes to offer their heart’s rendering, the program represents an impressive cross-section of talents, styles, and forms of performance art from Baba’s family around the world.

Honoring Baba’s Avataric Advent in our time, approximately 36,000 gathered together around His Samadhi at noon on 31st January to keep silence together for fifteen minutes, united as one heart in remembrance of His Divine Presence.



Baba’s Birthday

On 25th February, 2015, Baba lovers gathered at His Samadhi for the early morning arti at 5:00 am to celebrate Avatar Meher Baba’s 121st Birthday. His Samadhi was beautifully decked out in glowing decorations and colored lights as the chill air greeted the pilgrims arriving at their Beloved’s abode. Hearts and voices joined in prayers and arti, followed by the Happy Birthday song. Darshan continued as pilgrims sang His praises and greeted each other with happy hugs and “Jai Baba’s”. Tea was served under the Tin Shed, a long-time tradition on this one morning each year.

Later in the morning a musical program, “Sing God’s Name,” featuring the Baba Birthday Choir and lots of audience participation, was held in the MPC meeting hall in Baba’s honor. An art exhibit for Baba’s birthday was held on the verandahs of the Music and Arts Centre in the afternoon. Paintings, drawings, and photographs were shown. Tea and birthday cake were served, too.



Baba’s Birthday Choir.

The crowning touch of Birthday events was the play “Sheriarji’s Wish Is Granted,” presented in the Meherabad Music and Arts Centre (theater) at 4:30 in the afternoon. A Meherabad original, this play was created in 1988 under Mehera’s guidance, and she dictated much of the dialogue. It was enacted that year for Mehera’s birthday. The story tells of Baba’s father Sheriarji’s spiritual quest as a young man and how God showed him that his aspirations would be fulfilled through his Son. This year’s revival was a lively entertainment, with music from the original play and even a few of the same actors from the presentation 27 years ago.



A scene from the play performed on Baba’s Birthday, “Sheriarji’s Wish Is Granted.”

MEHER BABA'S DIRECTIVES TO THE TRUST, AS RECORDED BY BAL NATU, CONTINUED

On five occasions, between 1963 and 1967, Bal Natu recorded instructions that Meher Baba gave for the future conduct of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, created by Him on 6th April 1959 yet still dormant throughout most of the decade that followed. Bal's previous entry, dated 21 May 1963, was published in the December 2014 issue of this newsletter. We resume

here with Bal's next entry, dated 26 May 1965, following a hiatus of two years. Baba began by stressing honesty in thoughts, words, and deeds. As close readers will note, much of the substance of Baba's following remarks was later incorporated into the "Declaration of Trust" (1975) in the Trust Deed, as items vi, vii, and viii under "objects and purposes" (p. 10). When

the mandali-trustees in attendance on this day complained that under current circumstances it was impossible for them to find time to devote themselves to the affairs of the Trust, which was still wholly inactive, Baba told them not to worry and not to hurry. Trustees in the future would find ways to bring the Trust objects to execution, He assured them. "Wait and see."

May 26, 1965.
Guru-Prasad, Poona.

Beloved Baba had been visiting Guru-Prasad in summer—generally, April to June—every year since 1957. This summer Baba had permitted His lovers to see Him in the first week of May. A few of them stayed on in Poona so that they may get a chance to see Him again. The programmes would generally be over before lunch. The afternoons were quiet at Guru-Prasad.

Today Baba was in a pleasant mood. In the right wing of Guru-Prasad—in mandali's room, a few close Baba lovers, some of the men mandali and a few Trustees including Meherjee were present. In the usual informal chat a reference to the role of Avatar Meher Baba Trust was made by someone. Pendu all of a sudden remembered the instruction Baba had given him to remind Baba about a few more directions that He intended to give to the Trustees and to the mandali in general. He had brought to Baba's notice this point earlier but Baba just gestured "Not now, later on." Today, Baba happened to be in a mood to convey something on this point.

Baba conveyed through gestures (which as usual were interpreted by Eruch), "Since the beginning I am telling you all that honesty — in thoughts, words and deeds, is the most important aspect of life. To be honest is to be natural with oneself and God. It is the prerequisite of real life. With divine honesty and authority I say, "I am the Ancient One." So carry my message of honesty and love to the people of all the nations.

"For this you should encourage talks, speeches, lectures, radio-talks, broadcasts and even television-broadcasts, giving people information why I have come in their midst. You can spread the Universal Message and also other messages and statements proclaiming my Avatarhood. But this should be done by those who lead a life of love and sacrifice and have in them the feeling of brotherhood for the whole of mankind. Such ones are entitled to arrange training for those who sincerely wish to lead a life of service dedicated in my cause for the upliftment of humanity, in its varied spheres of life.

"The Trustees should inspire the writing of books, tracts, booklets and even to publish

journals, magazines, periodicals, souvenirs devoted to me and my cause. This literature can be in different languages so that it may reach the hands of all people. This may be attended to, as may from time to time be feasible — thus narrating and giving a picture of the different aspects of my life and messages, expositions, discourses as well as some special sayings and statements too.

"You can also spread my Name by encouraging people interested in various arts, paintings, sculptures, etching, printing posters, drawings, and slides depicting the various facets of my life and work and dissertations for the benefit of the public—the people of the world. This will bring about the awakening of the hearts."

Meherjee said, "Baba you don't permit the Trust to accept gifts. How is it then possible to fulfill the things through the clause in the Trust Deed which you just mentioned?" Baba smiled and gestured, "Wait, wait. You will come to know as to how the Trustees (of Avatar Meher Baba Trust) will be able to carry into execution all these objects. Don't worry; don't hurry. During my lifetime, I will not permit you to accept gift[s] more than Rs. 1000/=."

Nariman expressed, "The Trust as well as the work of the Trust is at present dormant." Ramjoo added, "It all rests with Baba and His Divine Will. Really speaking, for the present, the Trustees have no time to attend to the work of the Trust and even if Baba permits them to accept gifts, will the Trustees find time to devote to bring about the objects and activities just now mentioned by BABA? The guidelines are more for the future — the posterity. At present, to be frank, may I ask if we really have time to put our minds in the Trust affairs, as we have to attend to different Baba's activities!" Adi Sr. seconded by saying, "Ramjoo is perfectly right. Personally, I hardly get breathing time from my day to day work at the office — particularly as I had to attend to considerably a large correspondence from East and West." Mani added, "I am so engaged in work that I hardly realize the existence of the Trust."

Baba smiled and gestured, "I know how busy you are with the work in hand and that's why I told Meherjee 'to wait'; and I tell you all again, the same: Wait and see."

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Jai Baba Dear Family,

In May I returned from my first trip to the United States, a very full month of visits with many Baba groups there. Although the primary object of my travel was to participate in the Southeast Gathering held at Toccoa, Georgia, from 9th to 12th April, I took the opportunity to visit New York, New Jersey, Asheville, Seattle, Meherana, San Francisco, L.A., and the Meher Center, Beloved Baba's Home in the West, in Myrtle Beach, S.C. I was overwhelmed by the serenity and beauty of Meherana and Meher Mount and the Meher Center.

My heartfelt thanks for the hospitality and love lavished on me at all the places I visited and also the enthusiastic attendance by His lovers at the meetings I addressed. I took the opportunity to explain the various changes in the working of Baba's Trust in India, which have been brought about in the course of the last four years. I also discussed the urgent need for increased financial support of the Trust that Beloved Baba, as Avatar of the Age, has created. This need has grown in recent years so that more help over the next two years is essential to the financial operations of the Trust.

The Trust's Annual Financial Report—which includes the Balance Sheet—is published in this issue. This is part of the Board's ongoing effort to provide both clarity and transparency to the Trust's finances.

In Baba's Love, and with my deepest heartfelt salutations to Him in all of you,

Shridhar Kelkar

Chairman, AMB Trust (AMBPPCT)

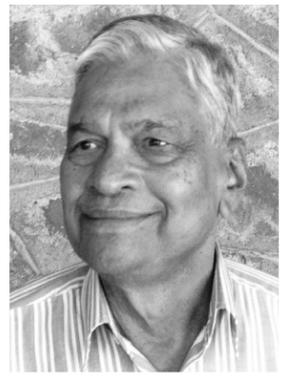


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Restoration of the East Room

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In Mehera's own words (from her book *Mehera*): "Our life was very strict, and for several years we only left our room to go to the kitchen for work, or to the bathroom, or when Baba very occasionally took us for walks. I never walked in the compound, and for exercise I would walk in my room or in the kitchen. Later on Baba did allow us to play badminton where the tin shed now stands. . . . So our lives were very strict, but we had Beloved Baba to ourselves; and how filled with joy we were! His love and His company were all we ever wanted."

The upper story and tower of the building were added in 1938. From 1938 onwards, Baba had the women moving about a lot with Him, during the Blue Bus Tours, the New Life, and other journeys. When they returned to Meherabad in between the tours, the women would again reside in their East Room quarters. Although their residence shifted to Meherazad in 1944, the East Room continued to be Mehera and the other women's room for resting or sleeping whenever they came to Meherabad, even during the years after Baba dropped His body.

Now the East Room will be open during certain times for pilgrim viewing, furnished as it was during the women mandali's residence there and displaying precious articles from their lives with Baba.