



A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD



Current construction work on the Archives, Museum, and Research Building.

Trust Estate Master Plan

The Avatar Meher Baba Trust has established a Master Plan for the large-scale development of its estate over the next five years. This plan envisions the creation of a park-like environment on Meherabad Hill, through a programme (in this first five-year phase) of extensive tree planting that will be complemented (in later years) with the creation of gardens, fountains, and permanent pavilions for pilgrim use during Amartithi and other gatherings. The plan also projects the development of a new site for pilgrim accommodation in a quiet section of the Trust estate approximately one kilometer (or two-thirds of a mile) to the west of the Tomb.

Construction of roads, water reservoirs, and pipelines has already begun, and the laying of foundations for new Amartithi and pilgrim facilities should start within the year.

The decision to embark on a large construction programme at this time springs from several considerations, some immediate and some long term. Since Meher Baba Himself has said that Meherabad would eventually become the greatest centre of pilgrimage in the world, mandali and trustees have long been aware of the need to prepare for the large crowds and continuous streams of pilgrims in the decades ahead.

Over the past few years, however, the overcrowding of existing facilities has made the creation of new pilgrim accommodations a matter of increasing urgency. During the Amartithi Educational

Gathering, when more than 10,000

pilgrims stay at Meherabad overnight, current lodging facilities allow for only 13 square feet per person. For most of the remainder of the nine-month pilgrim season, the Pilgrim Centre is full to capacity, necessitating the accommodation of overflow in the Dharamshala and hostels. And even Hostels D and C, which under ordinary circumstances can provide bedding for up to 50 and 90 visitors respectively, are often full, particularly at Silence Day, Divali, Christmas, and other peak times.

Another consideration that has to be taken seriously into account involves Indian land-use ordinances, which require that the Trust now begin to utilize its properties for appropriate non-agricultural purposes.

For these and other reasons, the Chairman and trustees have concluded

that the time is ripe for the inauguration of a major estate development plan, in preparation for the fulfillment of Baba's words about Meherabad's destiny in the age to come.

The Four Zones

The Master Plan divides the Trust Estate into four zones, as marked on the accompanying map (see pages 3 - 4). These are: (A) Meherabad Hill, (B) Lower Meherabad, (C) Outer Meherabad, and (D) the New Pilgrim Site.

Avatar Meher Baba's Samadhi located on Meherabad Hill (Zone A) is and will always be the heart and soul of Meherabad and the main focus of pilgrimage. Although the Trust Deed calls for the eventual construction of a superstructure over the Tomb, detailed planning in this regard would, according to the mandali and trustees, be premature at this

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Letter from the Chairman

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When God descends to earth in human form as the Ancient One, the Avatar, the Christ, the Rasool, the God-Man, He implants His footprint in every heart. This footprint is the seed of His Divinity which, in due time, germinates and blossoms within everyone. At first only a few have the good fortune of recognizing this universal Awakener in their midst. But slowly the number grows; and at the time of His manifestation humanity at large turns toward Him and receives the benefit of His spiritual push.

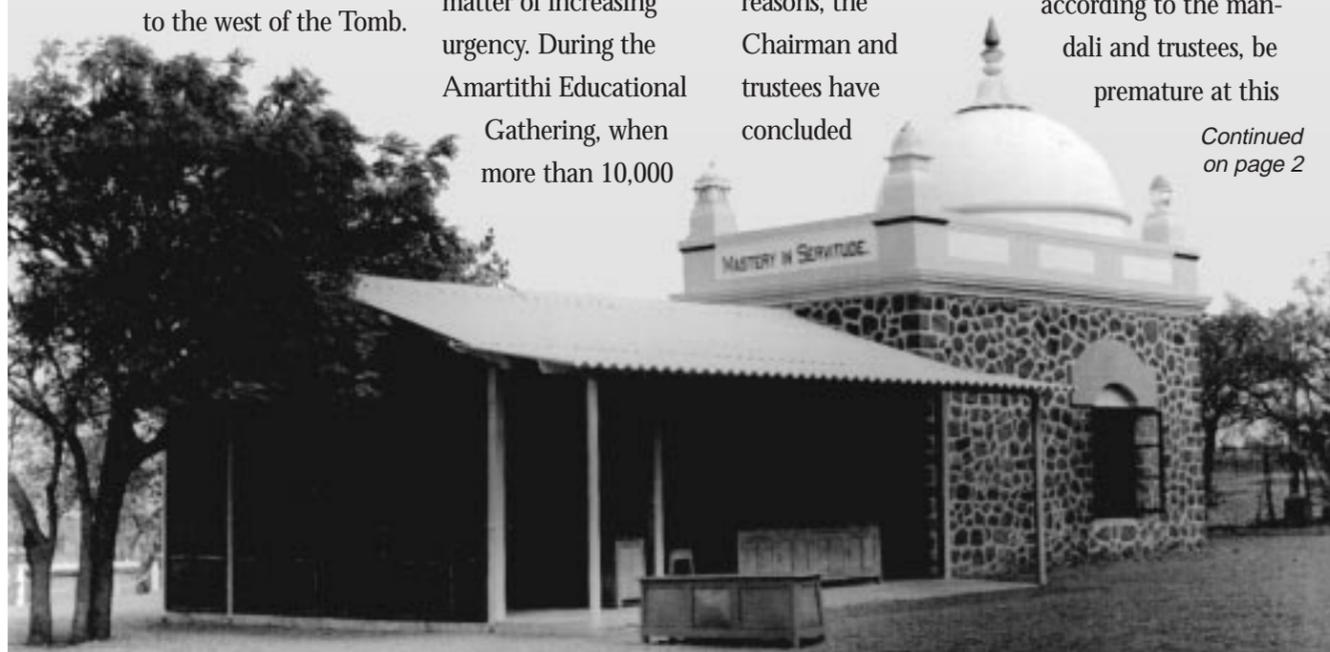
Although the Voice of God speaks eternally, in this Avatic advent, Meher Baba observed external Silence. Nonetheless, for the benefit of those around Him, words did issue from that Silence, first through the medium of the alphabet board, and later through Baba's unique system of hand gestures. At the same time, to maintain external contact with those of His lovers who were living apart from Him, Beloved Baba would dictate letters, messages, and circulars. In the early years Baba's circulars appeared only occasionally; but from the time of the New Life onward, circulars and family letters appeared with greater regularity, providing a major channel of contact between the Beloved and His growing family of lovers worldwide.

Almost three decades have passed since Beloved Avatar Meher Baba dropped His physical form on January 31st 1969. Over these years many of His close ones have returned to Him; and while their absence is keenly felt, at the same time, new hearts have been drawn into His love orbit, and the circle of His lovers continues to grow. Since it is becoming increasingly difficult for those of us among Beloved Baba's mandali to spend time with visitors and newcomers to the extent that we used to do, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust has decided to release this biannual newsletter, In His Service, whose purpose is to keep His worldwide family informed of developments at His Home at Meherabad and to provide a new external voice and vehicle for the silent internal link.

Just as Avatar Meher Baba, the Divine Master, descended from His God-state into Man-form in order to serve His own creation, so it is for the sake of service that His Trust was brought by Him into being and continues to be maintained today. His work He alone can do; yet His service is His lover's opportunity, and supporting His Trust is one of the mediums of this service. Those who serve Baba's Trust through their active efforts and those who do so through the heart-offerings that He gives through them are all alike contributing toward the work which He inaugurated when He created the Trust in 1959 and which He continues to sustain through His ever-guiding presence.

V.S. Kalchuri (Bhau), Chairman
AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST

*Be true to the trust that I repose in you
and remember Me wholeheartedly.
My love and blessings to you.*



junction. Attention has centred rather on the creation of a larger Meherabad Hill environment, particularly in view of the crowds which the Hill must accommodate at Amartithi time.

The major thrust in this regard over the upcoming five-year period will be toward the "greening" of the Hill: Extensive tree planting will help to create an atmosphere of quietude and serenity and, during gatherings, will provide shade for pilgrims during the heat of midday. During the next phase of development after the current five year period, gardens and fountains will be created to help beautify the setting. Raying out radially like spokes of a wheel, six large pedestrian boulevards (in addition to the original path) will provide sight lines toward the Samadhi from various directions.

Meanwhile, in this second phase, the stage and entertainment area, now located at the amphitheater, will be shifted to a new site about 300 meters to

the north of the Samadhi. Pavilions to be erected at various locations on the Hill will provide their own small stages as well as video screens on which audiences can watch darshan at the Samadhi and activities at the main entertainment centre. By these means the crowds will be dispersed over a wider area, and a peaceful atmosphere can be maintained at the Samadhi itself. The circumference of this entire hill zone will be girded by a wall with seven entrances. Vehicular traffic will not be permitted inside this walled enclosure.

The other major new development under the five-year plan involves the creation of a pilgrim education site (D on the map), which will encompass extensive new Amartithi accommodations, a new pilgrim centre, and a new dharamshala. The localities selected for this development, about one kilometer to the west of the Samadhi along the top of two ridges on opposite sides of a dry stream bed and water catchment area, have a particularly serene

and lovely atmosphere and afford scenic vistas of Meherabad Hill and the Samadhi. What makes this site especially suitable for pilgrim accommodation is its quietude and removal from urban sprawl along the Ahmednagar-Daund highway.

The two remaining zones, Lower and Outer Meherabad (B and C), will, under the Master Plan, play widely differing roles. Lower Meherabad, which encompasses Mandali Hall, the Dharamshala, and other buildings immediately to the east of the Ahmednagar-Daund highway as well as the strip of land to the west of the highway as far as the railway tracks, is of signal historical importance, since it was a major hub of Meher Baba's activities from the early 1920s on. Apart from a new administration building and staff quarters, this part of Meherabad will witness only limited development, so that pilgrims and visitors in the future can savour the scene and atmosphere that Beloved Baba Himself created.

Outer Meherabad (C), which extends to the east

of Lower Meherabad, has been designated as the primary site for charitable activities, particularly the educational and medical. At present the education building (housing the Meher English School), the hospital, the hostels, and most of the staff quarters are located in this zone. The current five-year plan calls for additions to the education building and Meher Health Centre and the beginnings of construction of a Meherabad college facility. The major development of Outer Meherabad, however, will come in a later phase.

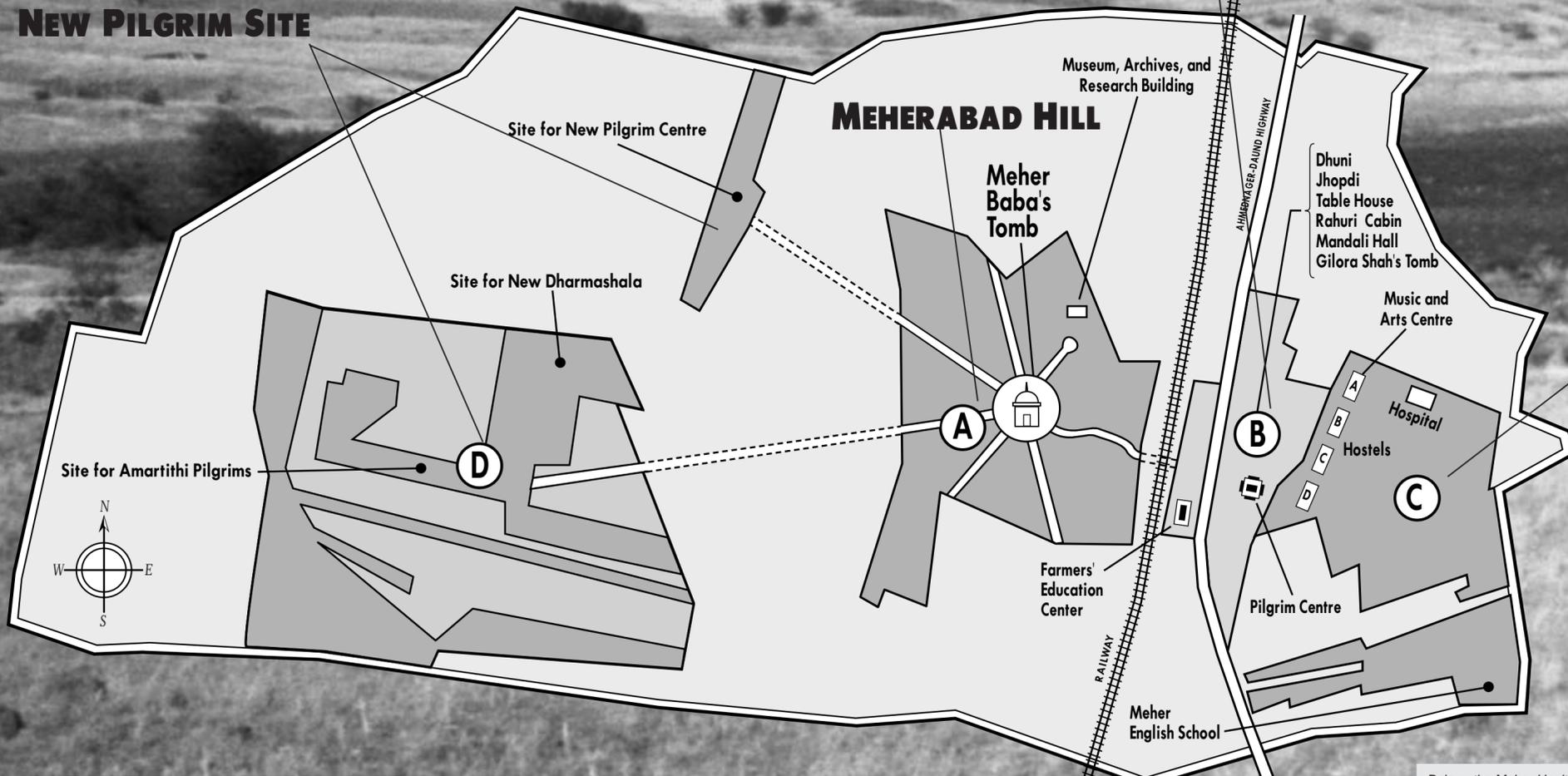
Plan of Construction

Over the upcoming three-to-four year period, the main thrust in the development effort will involve the afforestation of the Hill, the construction of roads, pipelines, and elevated water tanks, and the creation of a new facility (with kitchens, bathrooms, medical and enquiry offices, water and electrical supply, etc.) for the accommodation of up to 4000 pilgrims at Amartithi time. In the year 2000 work will begin on a new Pilgrim Centre and

Dharamshala, for the accommodation of 56 and 120 pilgrims (respectively) during the regular pilgrim season. Meanwhile, construction on the Museum, Archives, and Research Building and other current projects will continue. The projected costs, scheduled over the next five years, come to \$1,890,000 (or Rs.7,87,90,000).

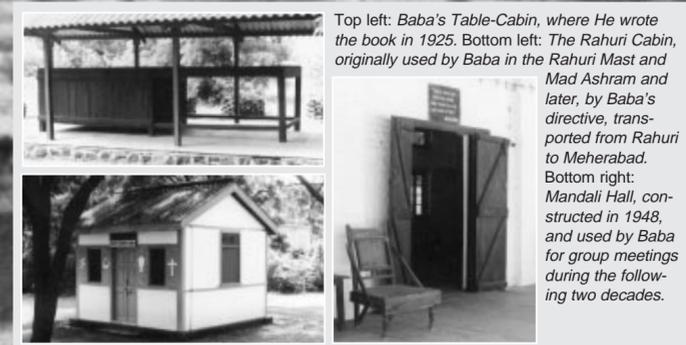
The background landscape photo, taken from the direction of the site for the new Pilgrim Centre (in zone D), shows the crown of Meherabad Hill (on the right). The large white tower building is Meher Retreat, close by Baba's Samadhi.

NEW PILGRIM SITE

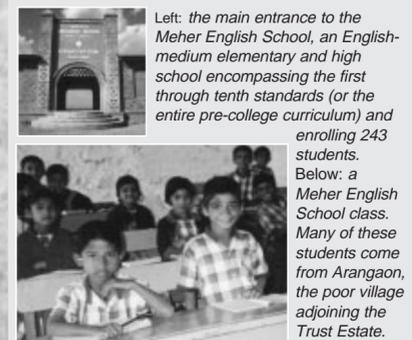


LOWER MEHERABAD

OUTER MEHERABAD



Top left: Baba's Table-Cabin, where He wrote the book in 1925. Bottom left: The Rahuri Cabin, originally used by Baba in the Rahuri Mast and Mad Ashram and later, by Baba's directive, transported from Rahuri to Meherabad. Bottom right: Mandali Hall, constructed in 1948, and used by Baba for group meetings during the following two decades.



Left: the main entrance to the Meher English School, an English-medium elementary and high school encompassing the first through tenth standards (or the entire pre-college curriculum) and enrolling 243 students. Below: a Meher English School class. Many of these students come from Arangaon, the poor village adjoining the Trust Estate.

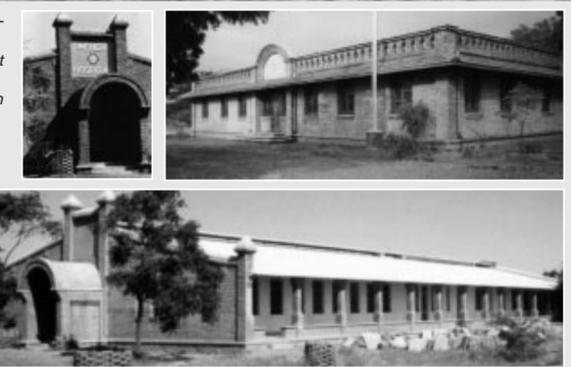


The Amartithi gathering, an annual, three-day event commemorating the dropping of Avatar Meher Baba's physical body on January 31st, 1969, draws some 30,000 pilgrims and visitors from throughout India and the world. The programme reaches its climax in the fifteen minutes of silence, from 12:00 to 12:15 p.m., on January 31st.



A model of the Museum, Archives, and Research Building, currently under construction and scheduled for completion during the year 2000.

Below: the Meher Health Centre, a dispensary originally created by Dr. Goher in the mid-1970s, that currently provides allopathic, homeopathic, acupuntural, and ayurvedic treatment to 100 patients daily. Top centre and lower right: The Meher Hospital, which currently houses a laboratory, staff and pilgrim clinic, dental clinic, and plays temporary host for specialized medical programmes. Upper right: the Isolation Ward, for patients requiring special care.



How To Make Your Donations Tax-Deductible.

In an important development relevant to many Baba lovers, the Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust has recently gained recognition as the equivalent of a U.S. public charity. This recognition makes it possible for individuals in America to donate to the Trust in a tax-advantaged way, provided they do so through qualified domestic organizations.

Since Baba's Trust became active in 1969, it has depended for its financial support exclusively on love-gifts from Meher Baba's world-wide family. Until now, however, though Indian citizens have been able to claim tax deductions on donations to the Trust which for them is a domestic charity, it has not generally been possible for persons from other countries to do so. Only in the United Kingdom (among foreign nations) have tax deductions been allowable, for persons who make Trust donations through the medium of the Meher Baba Association in London.

Late in 1997, however, with the help of U.S. counsel, the Trust prepared an Affidavit which, together with supporting documentation, gave evidence of its equivalence to a U.S. public charity. Though this Affidavit does not permit U.S. citizens and residents to donate to the trust directly in a tax-advantaged way, it does make it easier for U.S. tax-exempt Baba organizations to make grants to the Trust which support its activities and programmes.

What this means, if you are a U.S. citizen or resident, is that you can now support the Trust in a tax-advantaged manner by donating to an eligible U.S. tax-exempt organization and by accompanying your donation with the request that your gift be used in a grant or grants supporting Trust programmes.

For a U.S. tax-exempt Baba organization to become eligible for such grant-giving it must first complete certain legal formalities authorizing it to donate to foreign charities. The organization must then enter into a grant-giving agreement with the Trust.

To date six organizations—Sheriar Foundation (of Myrtle Beach, SC), Meherana (of Mariposa, CA), Meher Prasad (of Atlanta, GA), Avatar Meher Baba Center (of Southern California), Meher Baba House (of New York, NY) and the Meher Baba Washington Gathering (of Washington, DC)—have completed this process. In short, Americans can now support Trust projects in a tax-advantaged way by making contributions to any of these organizations, as described above. Half a dozen other groups and organizations are currently working on the various formalities and may soon become qualified to apply contributions toward Trust grants.

The Trust hopes that similar channels can soon be opened up in other countries; prospects are particularly promising in European countries apart from the U.K. (where this option has already for some time been available) and in Australia. The next issue of In His Service will contain an update on these developments.

Please note, however, that donations to Avatar Meher Baba Trust Firstly (for the support of the mandali and other beneficiaries) cannot be made through U.S. or U.K. tax-exempt organizations. As in the past, these donations must be sent to Trustwallas or directly to the Avatar Meher Baba Trust office in Ahmednagar.

Meherabad: Past and Future

What today is known as Meherabad had been a military camp during World War I. After the war ended in 1918, however, this remote outpost, half a kilometer from the poor village of Arangaon, was abandoned. When Meher Baba and his mandali first visited it in April of 1923, most of the buildings were in ruin, and the countryside was infested with scorpions and snakes.

Within three years, however, Baba had completed the transformation of Meherabad into a thriving community of 500 souls that encompassed an ashram, schools for children, shelters for the poor and leprosy, a dispensary, and a hospital. Several permanent buildings – the *Jhopdi* and the Table-Cabin – had been erected, and other dilapidated or uninhabitable structures – the Post Office, Dharamshala, and Water Tower (now Meher Retreat) – had been repaired or redesigned.

Except for a few neem and banyan trees, Meherabad was largely treeless in those days, and the plains extending to the east, except for an occasional farmer's hut, were empty as far as the eye could see. A deep

sense of peace and purity pervaded the landscape. Often in the early years, as Khorshed still remembers, Baba would set out in His beautiful, swift, sweeping stride on long treks across neighboring fields and ridges and up detritus-littered slopes of distant hills. In this way virtually all of the current Trust Estate (including the New Pilgrim Site)

must have been visited by Him at one time or another.

Unlikely though it might have seemed in those early days, Baba used to foretell a time when pilgrims and lovers would flock to Meherabad in great numbers. Mani would reminisce about occasions in the later 1930s when she, Mehera,

and other eastern and western women disciples were seated around His gadi (or couch) under the veranda of Meher Retreat at Upper Meherabad. "Enjoy the quiet that you experi-

ence now," Baba would say to them. "In the future, there will be a sea of people here. So you who are here with Me, make the most of this opportunity: it will never come again."

Eruch remembers a day, probably in the early 1940s, when he, Baba, and the men mandali were seated on the ground beside the

whole vast expanse will be filled with people.' Baba continued: 'Now, when you go out and try to tell people in the world about Meher Baba, you find that most of them have not even heard of Me. But in the future you will have to search hard to find a person who has not heard of Me.'

During 1955 Sahavas,

THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST

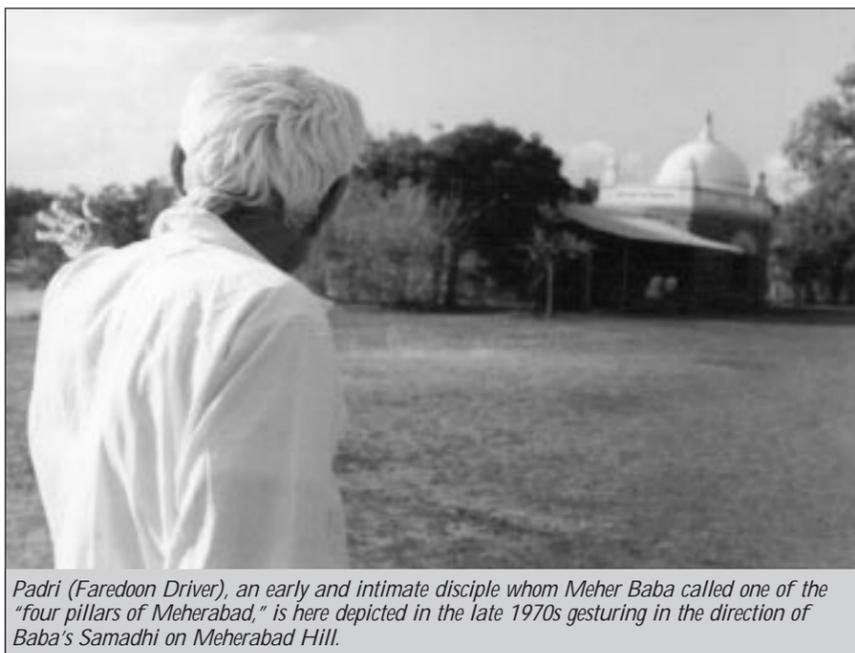
Created in 1959 under Meher Baba's direction and bearing His signature on its Deed, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust had, at its founding, two purposes. Its first purpose was the provision of means of support to certain named disciples of Avatar Meher Baba who had dedicated their lives to Him and become His 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.



Padri (Fareedon Driver), an early and intimate disciple whom Meher Baba called one of the "four pillars of Meherabad," is here depicted in the late 1970s gesturing in the direction of Baba's Samadhi on Meherabad Hill.

PHOTO BY WIN COATES

as Bhau remembers, Baba foretold that Meherabad would eventually become the world's greatest centre of pilgrimage and the vicinity of Meherabad a township. Instructing the lovers gathered around Him to pay their respects at His Samadhi, Baba then said: "When I leave this body, it will come to rest in the Tomb on this hill. After 70 years, this hill will turn into a place of world pilgrimage. How fortunate you all are that you are here in My living presence and that you have come up the hill with Me."