



Letter from the Chairman

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past Amartithi on January 31st marked the thirtieth anniversary of that Immortal Date in which our Beloved Lord Avatar Meher Baba laid aside that coat through which He had made Himself visible to us. In doing so, He gave to each of us – indeed to all of creation – His spiritual push, which will result, in the end, in our finding Him as He really is. To perform this work of awakening and arousing humanity on the road to Him is the purpose for which He descends into our midst. Truly, great is He.

The first issue of *In His Service* brought to the attention of Beloved Baba's worldwide family the news of the Trust's Five-Year Development Plan for the beautification of Meherabad Hill and for the provision of new pilgrim facilities. Though the Plan is now only three months old (April 1st 1999 having been its commencement date), your response has indeed been heartwarming, and I am happy to say that the work is moving ahead swiftly and smoothly. Indeed, in consideration of the growth in the number of pilgrims over recent years and particularly during this past Amartithi, the Board has decided to expand its plans for the new Pilgrim Centre and Dharamshala where many pilgrims will be accommodated in future years. Further details you will find elsewhere in this report.

Now, as always, the Trust which Avatar Meher Baba created has been entrusted by Him into the hands of His lovers, and it is through your love-gifts, as your hearts prompt you, that its work goes on. On behalf of the mandali and Trust workers, I convey my pranam – salutations – to Him, that Great One, who dwells within the hearts of all His lovers everywhere.

V.S. Kalchuri (Bhau), Chairman

AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST

Meherabad is my Home.

He who sees Me here will know Me; but I cannot be seen without love. So create love!

MEHER BABA ADDRESSING THE BOYS OF THE PREM ASHRAM,
2ND JANUARY 1928

Divine Atmosphere of 30th Amartithi Draws Largest Crowd Ever



From January 30th through February 1st, the thirtieth Amartithi was celebrated on a greater scale than ever before, as record numbers of pilgrims poured into Meherabad from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and other parts of India, as well as from the United States, England, Australia, France, Germany, and elsewhere in the West, to commemorate that "immortal day" when Avatar Meher Baba dropped His physical form in order to take His seat on the throne of

every heart. The programme, conducted under a large multi-coloured pandal extending from Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb-Shrine on the crown of Meherabad Hill to the amphitheater 75 meters down the slope to the east, provided an almost continuous fare of bhajan (devotional song), dance, lecture, and film, as Baba's lovers poured out their hearts to the Ancient One who is forever in their midst. Indeed, as Bhau Kalchuri, Chairman of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, commented in

his welcome address, "Beloved Baba Himself is in reality the true Host of the occasion, welcoming each one of us to His Amartithi, bathing us in His divine atmosphere, and taking part in our programmes as the silent Companion and Witness to the expressions of His lovers' love."

This climax of the Amartithi gathering, in 1999 as in previous years, arrived at noon of 31st January, when darshan at the Samadhi came to a halt and a vast hush descended over the assembled multitude.

There is always something awesome in this fifteen minute silent observation like a small drop from the Ocean of God's Silence – when thousands of Baba's lovers from throughout the world are joined in the remembrance of the God-Man's descent and sacrifice, which enables a slumbering humanity to awaken and rise in His love.

There were still a handful among the crowd this year – Eruch, Bhau, Goher, Meheru, and Aloba – who had been living at Meherabad and can remember firsthand those final hours and moments in 1969 when Avatar Meher Baba laid aside the form which He had worn for almost 75 years. According to His previous instructions, "Begin the Beguine" was played on the gramophone, and His body was transported by ambulance to Meherabad. The setting sun and a rising full moon were simultaneously on the sky's rim as Avatar Meher Baba's body was placed in the crypt in the Samadhi, where it lay uncovered for seven days as throngs of His lovers

came to pay His Man-form their final obeisance.

Now, thirty years later, the throngs of several hundreds of 1969 have become a small multitude of tens of thousands, whose thunderous, united "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!" seven times repeated broke this year's Amartithi-Day silence. Appropriately enough, this anniversary occasion, like the original

Amartithi, was marked by a full moon; indeed, by what is popularly known as a "blue moon" that throughout Amartithi night cast a lustrous silver sheen across the Meherabad landscape outside the pandal.

The 11,200 registered overnight guests represent a high-water mark in Amartithi attendance to date. Daytime crowds swelled to more than three times that number.

While it is Baba Himself and Baba alone who bestows the real "prasad" of His love that is the goal and consummation of pilgrimage, the Trust is working hard to attend to the outer and material needs of Baba's pilgrims, now, and in the years ahead.



Meher English School Continues to Grow



A class in the Meher English School, most of whose 287 students in kindergarten through the tenth standard hail from Arangaon, the village on the south border of the Trust Estate.

Another major Trust activity in the educational sphere is the Meher English School, which this past April completed the thirteenth year of operations from its site in the Education Building on the southeast border of the Trust Estate near Arangaon.

Opened in 1986 as a preschool for kindergartners, the school has grown rapidly, to the point where it now encompasses what is, in the Indian educational system, the entire primary and secondary school curriculum, from kindergarten through the tenth standard. The school's 287 current students are taught by a full-time faculty of eighteen teachers. The Trust additionally provides four mini-vans and a bus to help transport students to and from school.

To date three wings of the Education Building (which houses the Meher English School) have been constructed and are in full use. These three wings contain all basic classrooms, library, general science laboratory, and a computer room. Under the Five-Year Plan, a final wing of the building, which will encompass an assembly hall, gymnasium, and chemistry and physics laboratories, is scheduled for completion in the year 2000.

Inauguration of Meher Health Centre Annex

On 9th January 1999, Dr. Goher Irani inaugurated the newly-constructed Annex to the Meher Health Centre, located on the outskirts of Arangaon village on the south boundary of the Meherabad Estate.

For more than two decades now, the Meher Health Centre has been providing free medical treatment to a patient clientele that hails in the main part from Arangaon and other neighboring villages. Approximately 100 patients a day avail themselves of the Centre's services, which embrace allopathic, homeopathic, ayurvedic, and acupunctural forms of treatment.

The Meher Health Centre originated through the efforts of Dr. Goher in 1973, when it operated as a small dispensary in a room adjacent to Mandali Hall in Lower Meherabad. Three years later it was removed to its current location, a 3000-square-foot building on the site of what had once been the "Family Quarters" in Meherabad. Since the growth of the clinic's clientele in recent years has produced overcrowding, the Annex, constructed under the auspices

of the Five-Year Plan, has been created as a store-room, meeting hall, and facility for special treatments and medical camps.

In fact, this year's inaugural occasion recalled another inauguration on this same site 39 years earlier in which Meher Baba Himself had taken part. At that time what is now the Annex had been a small cabin in the compound of the Family Quarters. At 8:30 in the morning on 2nd January 1960, Baba came from Meherazad with his mandali and Don Stevens, cut the ribbon across the door, and thus opened a new Avatar Meher Baba Arangaon Centre. A pandal had been erected outside; and after inspecting the new Centre, Baba was entertained there by a local party of bhajan singers. Afterwards, Baba paid a visit to Arangaon village where He was welcomed and ushered through the streets by the traditional lazim dance on the part of the men of Arangaon, as has been recorded in one of the films.

Now this spot so rich in the history of its connection with Him has become the site for a new kind of work in His service.



Dr. Goher Irani presides at the inauguration of the Annex for the Meher Health Centre at Meherabad. Originally created by Dr. Goher in 1973, the Meher Health Centre now provides allopathic, homeopathic, ayurvedic, and acupunctural forms of treatment to about 100 patients a day.

Opening of Spiritual Academy Meeting Hall



Another significant inaugural event took place on 28th December 1998, when Bhau Kalchuri, Chairman of the Trust, presided over the opening of the newly-constructed Meeting Hall for the Spiritualized Educational and Cultural Academy and gave an address to the 65 spiritual trainees in attendance.

One of the subjects named in the Trust Deed, spiritual training lies at the core of all Trust activities and constitutes the foundation for the Trust's Mastery in Servitude programme. As Bhau emphasized in his talk, spiritual training is, in its essence,

Stained glass window in the newly-constructed Meeting Hall for the Spiritualized Educational and Cultural Academy, attached to the Savages' Kitchen in Lower Meherabad.

the surrendrance to Baba's will and the cheerful acceptance of those hardships and humiliations through which the ego is gradually faced and annihilated.

The new Hall, which was constructed under the auspices of the Trust's Five-Year Development Plan, will provide, along with meeting space, a small library collection and a quiet atmosphere for study. The Meeting Hall, the Theatre (Hostel A), and the Physical Education Centre (in Hostel B) comprise, at present, the three facilities and venues for the activities of the Academy. In the course of time the Academy will expand to embrace a wide diversity of Trust cultural and educational functions.

Progress Report on New Archives, Museum and Research Building

Construction of Archives Building

On the first of May, 1997, May Day in the West, though this is high summer in the semi-arid plateaus of Maharashtra, ground was broken for the new Archives, Museum and Research Building on the north rim of Meherabad Hill. Preceded the night before by unseasonable and torrential rainfall, presided over by a blazing midsummer sun, and followed by a freakish hailstorm, the ground-breaking event, simple though memorable, marked the inauguration of a major effort to preserve for posterity the personal articles, documents, and photographic images associated with this Avataric Advent.

conditioning, dehumidification, and other technologies can be reduced to a minimum.

After the actual construction, the building will need to "cure" for several months. Then the furnishing and equipping will need to be undertaken, which, the Trust estimates, will entail costs comparable to those of the building itself. In three years it is hoped that the Archives, Museum, and Research Building will be actively in use as a storage and treatment centre for precious archival and museum materials.

Document Rehousing and Collection of Oral Narratives

In the meantime, Trust workers have been proceeding with the massive labour of sorting and organizing the materials that have been collected so far. Much of the early effort has, in fact, been devoted to research into the best methods of preserving textiles, papers, personal and household articles, film, photographs, and old buildings; into the Indian and Western sources of suitable storage cabinets and acid-free folders; and into the background

and histories connected with various Baba treasures. Hundreds of additional hours have been spent in sifting through old trunks and drawers; cataloguing Baba's sadras, handkerchiefs, coats, bedding linens, mosquito nets, combs, razors, buckets and basins, cups, plates, gifts from masts, and other items; rehousing these treasures; and storing them away, pending eventual transport to the new building. More recently, during the 1998-99 pilgrim season, teams of workers devoted themselves over a several-month period to the meticulous sorting, dusting, and rehousing of documentary materials in acid-free folders.

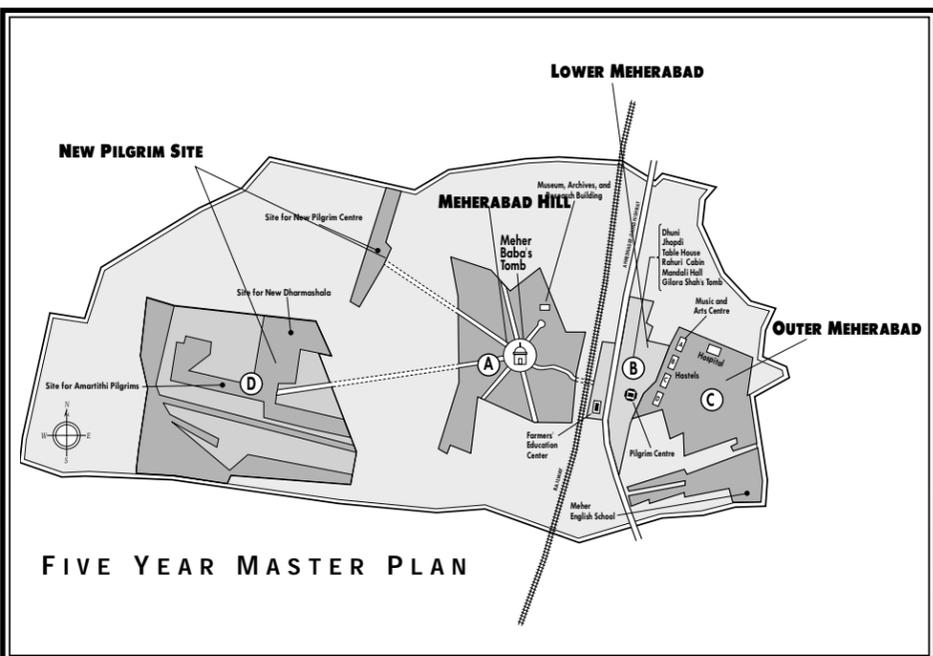
This painstaking work has already yielded some fascinating glimpses into the life of the God-Man. One day, for example, while sorting through old files, a Trust worker unearthed a peculiar chart, about 4 feet by 4 feet, filled with the names of places in India, people, and addresses. Though this strange hodgepodge appeared in itself to have no special significance, Eruch, when he saw it, suddenly remembered its history and connection with an important phase of Baba's work.

The story is this. In 1952, when Baba set out on His tour of the West, Eruch and Pendu were sent on a half-year lecture tour of India. It was at this time that Baba's name first reached the ears of many who were destined to become His followers.

When Baba returned to Meherabad in August, He took the greatest interest in Eruch's account of his and Pendu's travels and contacts. To help give Baba a fuller picture of the tour, Eruch prepared this chart, filled with the names of people and places where contacts had been made. Baba had the chart unrolled on the floor and poured over it sprawling on hands and knees across the document, singling out this name and inquiring after that one, touching and examining every part in the closest detail. Baba then planned His upcoming visit of Andhra and Uttar Pradesh, and that very day Eruch wrote 70 or 80 post cards to the various arrangementwallas and helpers in different localities.

What resulted was the tour of the Fiery Free Life, from November 1952 through January 1953, when Baba's name began to spread like wildfire through regions of India where He had previously been largely unknown. Many of the Baba lovers of today trace their contact back to this period.

None of the significance of this chart in the history of Baba's life could have been appreciated had its story and context not been recalled by Eruch and collected by the archive workers. This archival collection and research is indeed yielding a treasury for future generations of lovers and students of the life of Avatar Meher Baba.



Now, two years later, construction is still proceeding on schedule. The building itself should be completed by the end of 1999. As of the present, the frame has been erected, the concrete roof poured, and the brick walls laid up to the top of the ground floor level. A large structure built on an 85 by 75 foot plinth with a 50 by 50 foot extension, the Archives Building has been designed like a thermos bottle — a box within a box — with double walls and a double roof. The underlying principle here is passive climate control: that is, the design of the building itself mitigates against extremes of humidity and temperature. In this way, dependency on air



A frontal view of the Museum, Archives and Research Building, which burrows on its back side into the north rim of Meherabad Hill. Construction of the Archives Building should be completed by the end of 1999.

5-Year Plan Expanded to Make Possible Increased Pilgrim Facilities

The steady growth over recent years in the number of pilgrims visiting Meherabad, at Amartithi and throughout the pilgrim season, has been taken by the Chairman and Board to indicate that Avatar Meher Baba's Manifestation is gathering momentum. In view of this, and in view of the strong support which Baba's worldwide family is showing for the Five-Year Development Plan, the Trust has decided to increase the scale of its projected new pilgrim facilities.

Whereas under the original Five-Year Plan the new Pilgrim Centre would have provided accommodations for 56 visitors at a time, the newly revised Plan will accommodate 200. The new Dharamshala will similarly be expanded to accommodate 300 pilgrims, instead of the 200 originally planned. Both facilities will be located in the New Pilgrim Site to the West of Meher Baba's Samadhi.

The revisions have given rise to a new budget. The new five-year total \$3,227,000 (or Rs. 12,89,64,000) in comparison to the \$1,890,000 proposed in the original plan. Since the accounting year in India runs from 1st April through 31st March, the Trust is adopting 1st April 1999 as the beginning date for the first year of the Five-Year Plan, which will thus run until March 31st 2004. The four months between December 1998, when the Plan was announced, and March 31st 1999 is being treated as a start-up period in "year zero."

Since the facilities being created under the Plan are for the hosting of Baba's children from throughout the world, it rests with Baba's family to provide the support that will make the implementation of this plan possible. In fact, Baba Lovers around the world have already committed almost \$1,000,000 over the upcoming five-year period, and the level of interest in helping has been very high. Contributions large and small are all of value, since it is the love that inspires your gift, and not its size, that really matters.

If a US Citizen is interested in making a tax-deductible contribution in support of the Trust's Five Year Development Plan, they can do so if their contributions are given to one of the qualified US Meher Baba tax-exempt organizations that make grants to the Trust. The donor needs to request that their gift be used to help support a grant to the trust's Five Year Development Plan. In the United States the organizations are: Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California, Attn. Kanji Miyao, Treasurer, 1214 S. Van Ness Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90019-3530; Meher Baba House, 236 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001; The Meher Baba Washington Gathering, 11227 Dewey Court, Kensington, MD 20895; Meher Prasad Inc., 4364 Glengary Drive, Atlanta, GA 30342; Meherana, 5311 Italian Creek Road, Mariposa, CA 95338; and Sheriar Foundation, 3005 Highway 17 North Bypass, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577. As in past years, Baba Lovers in the United Kingdom should send their deductible donations through Meher Baba Association, 209 Stafford Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 9BU, United Kingdom.

Meherabad Memories

"Meherabad" means "Meher flourishing." The name is apt, for from its very beginnings in the early 1920s, the Meherabad ashram has been a place where Avatar Meher Baba's working, in all its drama and dynamism, has flourished and grown. As early as 1927, this rural outpost six miles from what was then the sleepy town of Ahmednagar had become a small colony with 500 people in residence, a school for boys, and a hospital. Now again, as the century comes to a close, Meherabad teems with life and vitality, as Avatar Meher Baba's message continues to beacon from His Samadhi on the Hill out across a troubled world.

It was at the Dhuni at Lower Meherabad (along the Ahmednagar-Daund road) that Eruch Jessawala, as a Parsi boy of nine years, first met the Man who was soon to become his All in all. In 1938, at the age of 22, Eruch left his home in Nagpur and came to Meherabad to live with Baba permanently. Recently Eruch recalled two episodes from those first few years in the Meherabad ashram which shed insight on

what life means when it is surrendered to Him.

Still a newcomer among the mandali, Eruch's duty at that time was to meet Baba at the gate to Meher Retreat on the Hill, accompany Him as He walked in His beautiful, flowing stride along the path to Lower Meherabad where the men resided, and to attend to His various needs throughout the day.

One afternoon, while they were climbing back up the Hill, Baba asked Eruch, "By the way, what do you do in the evenings after being with Me?" "I keep company with the mandali and listen to their talk," Eruch replied. "What do they talk about?" "They talk about circles," Eruch answered. "This one is supposed to be on the second circle, that one on the third circle, and so forth." "Do you follow what they say?" Baba queried. "I don't understand it at all," Eruch blurted out. "The only circles I know are circles in geometry. But the mandali argue

and discuss and tussle over these things." Baba smiled. "What I want from you," He said, "is to pay this talk no heed. Let it all come in one ear and out the other."

From this, Eruch gathered that spiritual advancement and occult mysteries were none of his business. The task of the "fortunate slave" that Hafiz refers to is to serve the pleasure of the Lord, and nothing more.

These moments from the Divine Life, remembered today in snatches and fragments by Eruch and others who were there at the time, though they may now seem to be receding into the past, in reality still live on: for they saturate the very soil of Meherabad and fill its air with His fragrance.

Indeed, what Meher Baba seems to have given to a few will, in the years ahead, be shared freely and openly among the many. For the life of service, grounded as it is in the Life of His Reality, is for each and all.

And so, as we move into the twenty-first century and as the living memories of those who knew Him gradually depart from our midst, the task of learning to love and obey Him comes increasingly to the fore. Meherabad, the homeland of the heart, holds countless seeds of that love, seeds that He planted when He lived and worked there as the beautiful God-Man.



Mansari sharing memorable stories of life with Baba, over a special cup of tea in her kitchen on top of Meherabad Hill.

PHOTO BY WIN COATES

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 mainte-

nance 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