



IN HIS SERVICE

JULY / 2006

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

FOR THE FIRST DECADE after Meher Baba dropped His physical form, most pilgrims stayed in Ahmednagar city; just a few—twelve at a time—could be accommodated for Monday-to-Friday stints at Meherabad itself. But with the opening of the Pilgrim Centre in 1980, the number increased to fifty six for a nine-month season; and in the following years hostels C and D expanded the capacity further.

The inauguration of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat on 15th June of this year represents another quantum leap. The increase not only in the number of pilgrims but in the expanse of the Trust estate brought into active use represents, indeed, one of the most significant transformations of Meherabad since 1969.

ARRIVING AT MEHERABAD. The start of the 2006–07 season brings with it a new experience for non-Indian pilgrims arriving at Baba’s Home.

Whereas in the past one had first to pay a visit to the Trust Office in Ahmednagar city, now this little excursion can be by-passed, and pilgrims can proceed directly to the Pilgrim Registration Office in its new location in the old Pilgrim Centre building in Lower Meherabad.

From here you drive by bus or car or rickshaw to the railway crossing in Arangaon village, turn right, turn left, and continue for about a kilometer, up to the top of a large bund (earthen dike). This vantage point provides a beautiful view of the ridges and gullies of “outback” Meherabad. Looking sharply to the right across a valley and water-catchment area, you can see the Samadhi and the crown of Meherabad Hill a quarter-mile to the north, while the Meher Pilgrim Retreat looms prominently before you.

LAYOUT OF THE MPR. The new building has two large wings for pilgrim accommodation, a women’s wing and a men’s.

Laid out in the form of a square “C” facing Baba’s Tomb, each wing has two floors, with twenty-four rooms for pilgrim accommodation on each, adding up to 96 rooms total. There are singles, doubles, triples, and rooms for

The Road to Meher Pilgrim Retreat



PHOTOS BY BIF SOFER (LEFT) AND HOMIYAR MISTRY (BELOW)

four. Each pilgrim will have his or her own writing desk, and partitions within rooms create semi-private areas. There are eight bathrooms in each wing, four per floor. Each floor ends in a reading room, whose east walls are all windows, through which one can look out across the fields toward the crown of Meherabad Hill.

A third major part of the building centers around the dining hall, a large, high-roofed room designed so as to create several smaller areas for eating and conversation. Sixteen large mural paintings have

just been installed on the upper walls, and another large full-length portrait of Baba stands above the entrance. Outside the glassed-in east veranda of the dining hall is a courtyard that contains the old hand-pump used by the mandali in the 1920s, as well as a newly-completed marble statue of Baba with Mohammed the mast. To the west of the hall is the tile garden, a charming small outdoor area with stone benches and tables, a rosewood and neem tree, and the magnificent new tile wall. Overlooking the garden is a large terrace and the music room. Another terrace extends to the other side of the dining hall. From these two terraces, and from the roofs above the men’s and women’s wings, one can enjoy a 360-degree panoramic view for many miles out across Ahmednagar valley.

THE TILE WALL. Innumerable little sagas and dramas are strewn along the trail that leads to the Meher Pilgrim Retreat’s opening on 15th June, but one particularly delightful story concerns the 7-by-85-foot tile wall, entitled “Welcome to My World.”

Launched in 2002, this project aimed to provide Baba lovers all around the world, artists and non-artists alike, with an opportunity to make an artistic contribution to the MPR building. All were invited to paint with colorful glazes their own six square-inch tiles—each as many as he or she wanted. When all the 2000-some tiles were created, baked in the kiln, and shipped to Meherabad, the project artist would assemble them into a pleasing and harmonious design.

Over the four-year span about a thousand tiles were completed in Meherabad itself and another thousand overseas. This latter batch had to be shipped to India, and naturally, a number were broken in transit. Since the tiles had been created at different times and places under the supervision of different people, it was impossible to ascertain exactly how many there were. 2145 tiles were needed; but the actual available number could easily have exceeded or fallen short of this total even by as much as several hundred.

Finally, in the last stage of the process, the assembling and designing of the tiles into a coherent artistic pattern was carried out this past January–February on the floor of a large hall in the MPR’s upper level. But as the work came to its completion, it turned out that the very last vacant square got filled by the very last tile. By a most amazing coincidence, the number of tiles needed and the number of tiles supplied precisely matched: 2145 exactly! (1184)



Trust Embraces Editorial Principles

OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust has embraced certain principles regarding the editing of Meher Baba’s words.

A fundamental distinction concerns publication: material that was published by Meher Baba under His own name during His lifetime calls for different treatment than unpublished material does.

BABA’S PUBLISHED WORDS. Books, messages, sayings, etc., that were published during Baba’s lifetime should be left essentially untouched. For if what Baba publically gave forth to the world continues to be editorially tampered with, eventually it will be altered beyond recognition. Surely Baba’s words should be accorded as much respect as the words of other authors are. If, in publishing a book or message, Baba put His name on it, then it is His, whatever process led to its creation, and its primary text needs to be preserved intact.

The Trust does allow, nonetheless, for alterations

in the areas of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. For posterity ought not to be bound to these kinds of minor errors and inconsistencies in the original printings. Nonetheless, such editing should be exceedingly sparse and constrained, and all changes, howsoever small, should be duly recorded and made publically available, preferably within the edition itself.

BABA’S UNPUBLISHED WORDS. Unpublished material, by contrast, often requires more extensive editing, if it is to be made accessible to general readers. The manuscript that served as the source for *Infinite Intelligence*, for example, is often almost unreadable in its raw form. Another major repository of Baba’s words are the reminiscences of Baba’s mandali and other lovers of His, many of whom have recalled what Baba said on various occasions. Such records clearly need to be compiled, compared, and edited before they are ready for presentation to the world.

In this connection the Trust takes guidance from a comment Meher Baba made in 1927 regarding the editing of His words (“The Combined Diary,” Vol. II, folio 355):

“No, it is not advisable to send my notes and lectures for composition to anyone who is away from me. The writer must be here to ensure correctness. . . . My explanations may be re-composed in stylish and forceful language, but the spirit and meaning must remain unchanged. . . . Such a writer will come in the course of time.”

When unpublished material is edited for publication, the Trust is committed to preserving the original sources and making them available in some form. These sources will always remain the “authoritative texts” from which new published versions can be prepared when the need for this becomes apparent.

Indian Edition of *Lord Meher* Published

On Amartithi Day 2006, a new Indian edition of *Lord Meher*, Bhau Kalchuri’s epic biography of the Avatar of the Age, was published and released before the crowd of many thousands gathered on Meherabad Hill.

Originally written in obedience to an order given by Baba a few days before dropping His body in 1969, *Lord Meher* was published in the United States over a fifteen-year period between the late 1980s and 2001. In late 2003 its copyright came to the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, which immediately began to arrange with Meher Mownavani, a publisher in Hyderabad, for the release of an Indian edition.

The new *Lord Meher* is 4661 pages long and fills eight volumes. The 2.2 million words of its text are interlaced with more than 1900 photographs.

First Archival Material Moved into the Manzil-e-Meher

After much careful planning and preparation and a trial run with archival supplies, this past February the Trust Archives moved the first cabinet-full of precious documents into Manzil-e-Meher—the archives building on Meherabad Hill.

Bringing material into an archival facility is a critical and sensitive step, particularly because of the threat of insects. To eliminate these pests, in-coming documents are frozen in a freeze-thaw-freeze-thaw cycle over a period of two weeks for each batch, a procedure which kills not just the insects but their larvae as well.

Now that the procedures and protocols have been established, ongoing movements of material into the Manzil-e-Meher can resume this coming autumn, following a necessary interval due to to the heat of summer (March to June) and humidity of the monsoon (June to September).

37th Pilgrim Season Comes to a Close

AMARTITHI. The thirty-seventh anniversary of Avatar Meher Baba’s setting aside of His physical form was commemorated, as usual, with a three-day gathering at Meherabad, from 30th January through 1st February. All day until the wee hours of the morning, Baba’s lovers from throughout the world poured out their love for Him in the amphitheater on Meherabad Hill through songs and bhajans, dances, talks, skits and plays and other performances. The hour-long film showing each night after sunset is always a popular event, which fills to overflowing the large Amartithi pandal. Meanwhile, day and night throughout the event, pilgrims in the queue waited their turn to bow down before the Ancient One in His Samadhi.

Amartithi attendance has been at something of a plateau for the last few years; the 10,270 pilgrims registered for overnight accommodation exceeded last year’s total by 173. Happily, the weather was clement this year, and all the events and programmes passed off smoothly.

BABA’S BIRTHDAY. In the early pre-dawn of 25th February, several hundred pilgrims queued up at the Samadhi in time for the five-minute Meher Dhoon (singing of Meher Baba’s name) culminating in seven cries of “Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!” at five o’clock sharp. Thus each year does Meherabad mark the moment when the Avatar took birth in a small house in Poona a hundred and twelve years ago.



Scene from Amartithi skit at Meherabad

The birthday drama that afternoon told the story of Leila and Majnun, the famous Persian lovers whose pure unrequited love, as Meher Baba Himself said, transcended the human and brought them to the divine. As recounted by the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Persian epic romancer Nizami Ganjavi (whose narrative formed the basis for the Meherabad play), Majnun, rejected by Leila’s family, leaves home and becomes a madman in

the desert, living in the company of wild beasts and remembering Leila constantly. Leila herself is compelled to marry; yet their love endures nonetheless.

So severe is their separation that they meet face-to-face only once, at a distance.

Shortly afterwards, Leila dies.

Such is the story known to tradition. But Baba Himself added this all-important detail: that in the end Majnun encountered a Perfect Master who gave him God-realization. In the Meherabad rendering, the Master and his disciple

became important characters, precipitating many of the major threads of action and weaving them into a closure.

PILGRIM CENTRE CLOSSES. 2005–06 marked the final season of the Meher Pilgrim Centre in Lower Meherabad, which had opened on 19th June 1980 and served its final meal on 15th March twenty-six years later. Starting 15th June, its role will be taken over by the Meher Pilgrim Retreat to the west of the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill.

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LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF
M.S. IRANI, otherwise known as Meher Baba.
This is the last Will and Testament of me, MERWAN
SHERIAR IRANI, otherwise known as MEHER BABA, aged about
5 years, at present residing at No.24, Guruprasad, Bund Garden
Road, Poona.
1. I hereby REVOKE all Wills and Codicils heretofore made
by me.
2. I have executed a Declaration of Trust on 6th day of
April 1959 in respect of property which is known as Avtar Meher

The *Discourses*, Copyright, and the Preservation of Meher Baba's Words

Samadhi on Meherabad Hill and other parts of His Avataric legacy, Baba made clear His wishes for the future management of His books and messages. Indeed, He finalized these arrangements as one of the late acts in His Advent, less than two years before dropping His body.

HISTORY OF THE *DISCOURSES*.

Meher Baba's *Discourses* present distinct challenges for the Trust as copyright holder, since, during Baba's own lifetime, they were published in several different editions. A brief history is this.

Originally these short essays were dictated by Baba and "written up" by His disciple C.D. Deshmukh for publication in "The Meher Baba Journal", a serial issued on a monthly basis between 1938 and 1942. This group of original discourses, with the addition of a few more, was subsequently published by Adi K. Irani in a five-volume set between 1941 and 1954. Subsequently, Charles Purdom, with Baba's approval, reedited the collection with a view towards publishing it in Great Britain. Purdom's version, which tried to simplify and reduce the style while leaving the idea content intact, was released by Victor Gollancz in 1955 under the title *God to Man and Man to God*.

During one of Don Stevens' visits to Meherabad in the 1960s, Baba asked him to undertake another reediting of the five-volume set. This effort fructified in what is called the sixth edition, three blue volumes edited by Don Stevens and Ivy Duce and published by Sufism Reoriented in 1967. Finally, the *Discourses* were edited one last time, by Eruch Jessawala, Bal Natu, and Flagg Kris. This led to the publication of the seventh edition by Sheriar Foundation in 1987.

All of these editions have been in print for various spans of time, and so far as we know, Meher Baba never indicated that any of them should be suppressed. Nonetheless, over the last twenty years the seventh edition has become the general standard. The debate that has arisen recently lies between proponents of this seventh edition and proponents of the sixth.

TRUST POLICY REGARDING THE *DISCOURSES*.

Since these questions were brought to its attention two years ago, the Trust has studied the matter closely and arrived at the following determinations.

In the management of its copyrights, the Trust's role is to serve as a custodian of works of Meher Baba's authorship in its possession. This role requires that the Trust refuse to permit further editorial revision of literary works that Meher Baba

published under His name during His lifetime. No responsible literary editor would contemplate the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays, any more that a museum curator would countenance the repainting and artistic improvement" of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

If such respect is accorded to the productions of ordinary human authorship and artistry, surely this protection should be extended to the literary creations of the Avatar of the Age.

The case of the *Discourses* is unusual, in that Meher Baba had the book reedited and reissued several times with His express approval. It is true that the preparation of the seventh edition was carried out after He dropped His body. Yet one of its editors was Eruch Jessawala, who played a most unique and extraordinary role in the articulation of Meher Baba's silence into speech. Further, it seems Baba once indicated to His sister Mani that the *Discourses* should be edited again, and Eruch may have been responding to this directive.

The Trust has decided that any of the editions of the *Discourses* published during Meher Baba's lifetime, as well as the seventh edition as a special case, is in principle eligible for republication. The decision as to which editions will be made available at any given time will be governed by practical considerations—such as the expense of publication, public demand, and other such factors.

But in principle, the selection between editions will be left to Meher Baba's lovers and to posterity. Many Baba lovers have studied and meditated on the *Discourses* for years together. They read not just with their minds but with their hearts also, and beyond reading, they try to put His words into action. Such persons should be free to select whichever edition they find to be most touching and illuminating. In determining which edition of the *Discourses* is the best one, the lovers of God will be the supreme court.

NOTE: early in 2006, two American Baba lovers released an unauthorized publication of the sixth edition of Meher Baba's *Discourses*. Even though this reprinting bears a Trust copyright notice, Baba's Trust was not informed prior to the republication and its permission was never secured. This illegal, pirate edition should not be sold by book sellers.

In fact, for the last eight months the Trust has been actively working towards a legitimate republication of the sixth edition, which will appear under a Sheriar Foundation imprint soon. When it is republished, the sixth will join the seventh edition of the *Discourses* and will be available to the public.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand this
day of June One thousand nine hundred and Sixty-seven.

Signed by the above Testator)
in the joint presence of us)
who in his presence and that)
of each other have hereunto)
subscribed our names as)
witnesses.

TRUE COPY
Y. B. JAIN
NOTARY



Mani S. Irani
E. B. Jessawala

New Projects after the MPR

The opening of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat on 15th June culminates the first phase of the Trust's Development Plan, which tries to bring to fruition major objects set forth by Avatar Meher Baba in the Trust Deed. Since 1998, almost two and a half million dollars have been donated to the Plan by almost a thousand people. The Trust wishes to thank all of Meher Baba's lovers around the world, whose steadfast love and support are the foundation for the on-going effort.

The Financial Report that accompanies this newsletter gives full details on work completed and projects planned for the next few years. Now that the MPR is operational, other projects and objects come into the foreground. In the immediate future, the Trust will be expanding the Meher English School so that it can accommodate an increased enrollment; continuing with the furnishing of the archives buildings at Meherabad and Meherazad; laying a 3.5 kilometer pipeline as part of a new government water scheme that will greatly help to alleviate the chronic water shortages of Meherazad; and purchasing land.

The Trust is also beginning to formulate plans for a major new Dharamshala near the Pilgrim Education Site to the south-west of the Samadhi. Hallowed by many centuries of use in India, the word "dharamshala" refers to a resting house for pilgrims. Meher Baba Himself created dharamshalas from the earliest years of Meherabad; what is currently called the Dharamshala in Lower Meherabad is one of the original structures there. As the Report explains, the new Dharamshala will "house several hundreds of Baba Lovers in the most simple of accommodations at reasonable charges." Further details will be presented in future issues of this newsletter as plans unfold.

Much has been accomplished, and more needs to be done. Your continued gifts will help sustain the Trust in its on-going efforts. For those who have not availed themselves of the opportunity to contribute, here is how. In the UK, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Avatar Meher Baba Association c/o of Sue Chapman, 3 Whin Hill, Craster NE663TP, UK tel 01 665 57 69 57, e-mail suchapman@hotmail.com. In the United States, persons who wish to make tax-deductible contributions or wish to name the Trust as a beneficiary in their will, 401K, IRA, or Insurance policy should contact Emory and Susan Ayers P.O. Box 398, Mystic CT 06355 (tel. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org); they will send you a list of eight Meher Baba tax-exempt organizations that have a grant in place to support the Trust Development Plan and other relevant information. Baba lovers from other parts of the world should send contributions directly to the AMBPPC Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King's Road, Ahmednagar 414001, Maharashtra State, India. Further information can be found in the Trust's web site at www.ambppct.org.

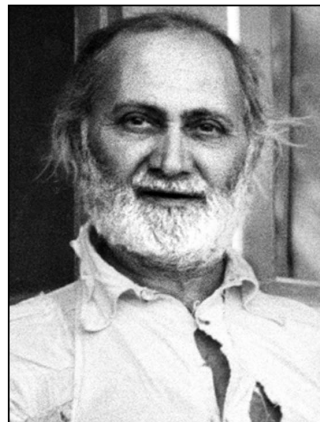
Anecdotes of the Meherazad Mandali

Gustadji, 1890-1957

WHEN BABA MOVED TO PIMPALGAON REST HOUSE, later called Meherazad, in 1943, most of His mandali, both men and women, remained behind at Meherabad. During the next quarter-century, though many came and went for varying periods, just a few resided at Meherazad with Baba full time. Their personalities are indelibly impressed upon this place. Like the buildings and gardened grounds, their memories form a part of the living scene and history of Baba's working here.

In this and up-coming issues of *In His Service* we will be recollecting a few anecdotes of some of these great souls who enjoyed the intimacy of the Ancient One in this most intimate of settings. Many pilgrims today met the mandali still living in mid-70s and later; but some of the earlier ones—Baidul, Kaka Baria, Kaikobad—are less familiar.

We begin with Baba's dear friend from the early years of His advent, Gustad Nusserwanji Hansotia, known as Gustadji.



Gustadji, 1952

A LOVEABLE FAQIR. A faqir at heart, Gustadji came to Baba after having previously served Sai Baba and Upasni Maharaj; and for a time Baba brought him into close association with Hazrat Babajan as well. Garrulous and good-natured, he loved to spin long yarns which would amuse Baba and the mandali. Yet on 1st May 1927, Baba put him on complete silence, which he maintained for the rest of his life. When Gustadji died thirty years later in 1957, Baba actually shed tears (one of the few times He did this), gesturing that Gustadji was the "best companion." At that time Baba also said that Gustadji had realized Him.

COLLECTOR OF JUNK. Unlike the other mandali, Gustadji had no specific work allotted to him; indeed, Baba had actually ordered him not to work at all! So, to while away his time, he would collect all kinds of oddments—rags, empty baskets, leaves, scraps of paper, and other assorted junk. He would go to great trouble in this strange pursuit; and from time to time his collected rubbish would get sold on the market. Gustadji would then use the money to buy candy, and each of the mandali would get a piece.

Naturally, in the hubbub around Baba, this habit could prove aggravating to the others. But Baba, for His part, seemed to enjoy this eccentricity of Gustadji's. "He would smile," Eruch recalled, "and sometimes He would even help by pointing out a scrap of something lying on the tracks or platform. Meanwhile the wind would blow, carrying it away, and Gustadji would run chasing after it."

"We were little children and at the same time grownups," Eruch concluded, "rough and tough when it came to following His behests, but like children in His presence."

GUSTADJI'S GOLD WATCH.

Gustadji stayed in the tiny corner room—Room No. 6—in the cottage across from Mandali Hall. Sometimes people would send him little household articles like soap or perfumes, blankets, pillows, even a nice mattress. But Gustadji was a man who really had no wants. So when he received this stuff, he wouldn't use it, but like a pack rat he would stash it away in his room amid the trucks and suitcases and stacks of rubbish.

After Gustadji died, his brother Slamson came to collect his effects. Slamson knew that Baba had once given Gustadji a real gold watch with an alarm in it, but he couldn't find it anywhere. "Has someone taken it?" he asked Eruch.

"No, of course not," Eruch replied. No one cares for it. Have you searched through all his things?"

"It wasn't in his suitcases or trunks."

"Gustadji was not the man to keep such a special item in a traditional place like that," Eruch laughed. Pointing to an old brown shoe that Slamson had thrown out on the floor, Eruch joked, "have you checked there?"

Slamson picked up the shoe. It was so old and worn that it had been repaired with wire to keep it in one piece.

He looked at Eruch. "Are you sure? A gold watch in an old shoe?"

Gustadji had stuffed the toe of the shoe with old rags; but sure enough, in the middle of the rag, wrapped up in paper, there was the gold watch!

WHAT IS 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: to provide means of subsistence to certain named disciples of Meher Baba's, and to fulfill certain charitable objects. Today, the first of these functions is discharged under "Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Firstly," and the second under "Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust."

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 promulgation of

Avatar Meher Baba's love-message through melas, lectures, publication, and the arts; and for spiritual training. The Trust's current Development Plan focuses on the creation of new facilities for pilgrim accommodation at Meherabad and other goals.

Inquiries and contributions can be sent to: The Chairman, Avatar Meher Baba Trust, King's Road, Post Bag 31, Ahmednagar 414 001, M.S., India. Subscriptions to this newsletter can be sent to that address or to: Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, P.O. Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398, USA (tel. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org). To subscribe to Tavern Talk (the Trust's electronic newsletter), send an e-mail to

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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.