



IN HIS SERVICE

JULY / 2013

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

The 44th Amartithi Commemoration

The annual calendar at the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, and at Meherabad in particular, centers on one day, 31st January, which marks the commemoration of Avatar Meher Baba's body-dropping at Meherazad shortly after noon in 1969.

Many Baba lovers around the world celebrate Meher Baba's birth-taking on 25th February at their home centers, and the Trust tries to conduct its own birthday celebrations so as not to interfere with this. But Amartithi naturally and inevitably draws tens of thousands to His Tomb-Shrine at Meherabad, where the Avatar's body was laid

to rest on that winter's evening forty-four years ago. Even though Amartithi fell on a Tuesday this year, and despite widespread reports of the water shortage that may have deterred some from making the trip, the event drew a record crowd. The final tally of pilgrims registered for overnight accommodation came to



18,708, as compared with 18,336 in 2012. This represents almost a 50% increase over the last five years, compared with a registered pilgrim tally of 12,583 in 2008.

The Amartithi program occurs over a two day period from 30th January until 1st February. Along with the Meherabad staff, the event is managed by a large staff of volunteers, more than a thousand of whom arrive at Meherabad on 28th January and stay through mid-day on the 2nd.

*Photographs: **ABOVE:** Record crowds celebrating Amartithi under the great pandal. **MIDDLE:** Pilgrims young and old pay their respects at the graves of His close ones next to the Samadhi. **BELOW:** The stone-lined path from Lower Meherabad to Baba's Tomb-Shrine, the central focus of His Lovers.*

Photographs by Paul Liboiron

“New Life Circulars” Released through the Online Library

In early March, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust released through its online library a major new body of material that, while often alluded to or cited in bits and pieces in the Meher Baba literature, has in its entirety been largely unavailable to most Baba lovers until now.

Issued serially between 28th October 1949 and 1st February 1952, the “New Life Circulars” played a key role during the New Life phase of Meher Baba's life and work. When He embarked on the New Life with twenty companions on 16th October 1949, Meher Baba effectively cut all ties with His Old Life disciples, lovers, and followers. Indeed, Baba gave them reason to expect that they would never see Him again. Naturally, this created a great shock among His worldwide following. Yet over the next two and a half years, Meher Baba did maintain one link. Sent out at irregular intervals with an average frequency of about one a month, the “Circulars” provided His lovers around the world with full reports of the activities of Meher Baba and His “companions.” Indeed, since Meher Baba had ostensibly renounced His God-state to embrace the role of a Seeker, and since the New Life required of Him and His companions complete openness in all matters personal or otherwise, the “Circulars” provided His non-resident disciples and followers, at the very moment that they were being denied the opportunity and even the future prospect of His darshan, with “windows” into His daily life and doings that were in certain respects more frank and more uncovered than what most of them had been made privy to before.

The “Circulars” were issued serially, each with a date and a series number, from 1 to 34. Actually, since several of the circulars were followed by “supplements” of one sort or another, the total number of communications comes to about forty. Although they incorporate statements directly dictated by Meher Baba, most of them were written by various members of the mandali—Dr. Ghani, Dr. Nilu, Adi, and perhaps others. A few of the “Circulars” are only a paragraph in length, while others are far longer. Indeed, the seventh circular runs to twenty double-column pages, totaling almost 20,000 words! Almost all are written in English, though Circular 8 contains extracts in Marathi, and several other circulars or parts thereof were released concurrently in Hindi. A few, as best we can ascertain, were circulated in typed form, but most of them were typeset and printed by Mohan Printers in Ahmednagar. Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary, published them, under the auspices of Meher Publications, the publisher of record of a number of books and pamphlets during this period;

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New Amartithi Registration Software Goes into Effect

Every year at Amartithi time, among the tens of thousands who pour into Meherabad for the climax of the commemoration on 31st January, upwards of 15,000 have to be housed, accommodated, and provided for in various ways over the two- or three-day period. When they arrive at Ahmednagar, usually by train or bus, pilgrims need to be ferried back and forth between the bus and train stations and Meherabad; to serve this need, the Trust arranges for bus transport throughout the gathering. Once they have arrived at Meherabad, pilgrims need to be assigned to their various accommodation quarters around the Trust Estate where they sleep, bathe, and, in some cases, prepare their food. Naturally, an event on this scale calls for extensive security arrangements, particularly around the buildings and tents where pilgrims reside during their stay; the Trust also provides facilities for emergency medical treatment. Above all, pilgrims need to be expedited in their quest each for his or her moment of darshan in Meher Baba's Samadhi. Since tens of thousands come to Meherabad largely for this purpose, management of the Samadhi queue and darshan process has become one of the leading tasks and challenges for organizers of the Amartithi event.

All of these functions depend on a system of badges and tokens the Trust has developed and implemented

over the last few decades. While the systems work well once they go into effect, the registration process has often been slow. In recent years, pilgrims arriving in Meherabad particularly at peak times have had to wait in lines up to two or three hours before they could complete their registration and collect their tokens and badges.

Through the efforts of a team of Baba lovers from around India, this year a large part of this process was computerized. Bearing the acronym ACTS —“Amartithi Computer Token System”—the new software system utilizes preregistration information from the Trust's data bank to generate Samadhi darshan tokens and badges with all the key information (name, sex, place of stay, and so forth) needed for identification and access to Amartithi accommodation facilities.

Over the 2013 Amartithi more than 1,000 volunteers and 16,000 pilgrims completed their



More than 1,000 volunteers and 16,000 pilgrims completed their registration through the new computerized system.

registration using this new system, with waiting times vastly reduced from past years.

The Trust hopes to improve the software and its implementation further over the next twelve months, to further simplify the experience of arriving Meherabad pilgrims and to enable them to devote more of their Amartithi time to enjoyment of the company of their Beloved.

The Creation of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust

The July 2012 issue of this newsletter inaugurated this series of articles narrating the creation of Baba's Trust.

We resume here with the second installment, which describes the contents of the original Trust Deed.

PART TWO. BABA'S PROVISIONS IN THE ORIGINAL TRUST DEED

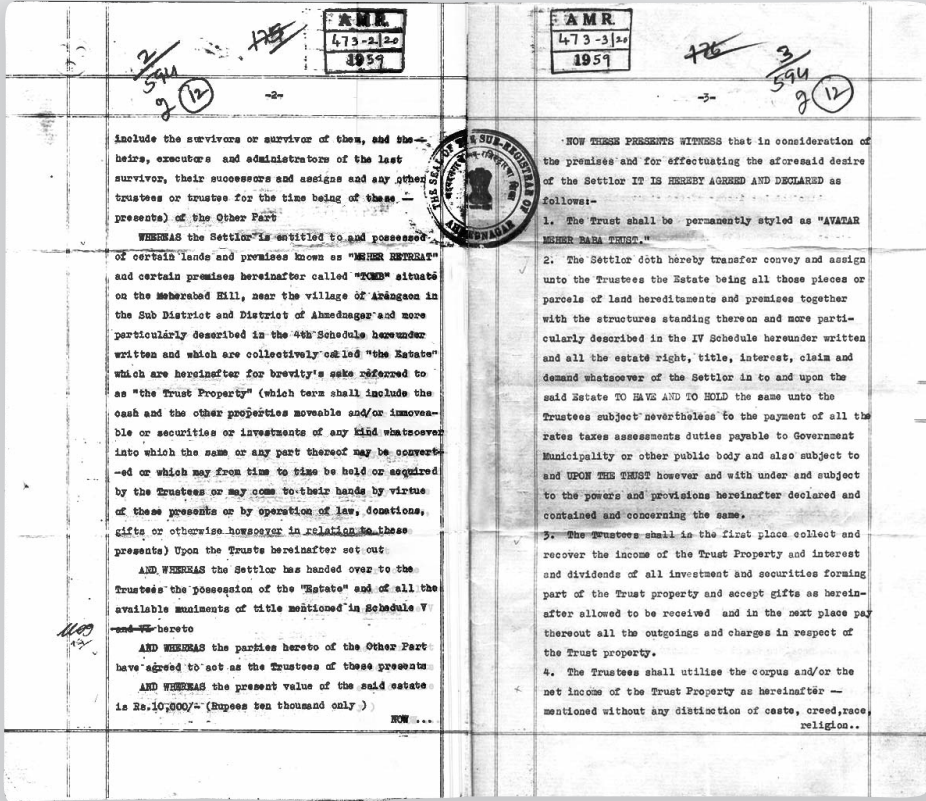
On 6th April 1959, Meher Baba was driven by car from Poona to Meherabad where, in the presence of a sub-registrar named Deshpande, He signed the Deed of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust. The ten original trustees, including Kutumba Sastri, the first Chairman, were in attendance, and they too set their hands to the document. It was duly stamped and registered; and thus the Avatar Meher Baba Trust came into existence. In its original form the Trust Deed remained in force and in effect until the mid-1970s, when new provisions were added and the Avatar Meher Baba Trust was divided into two trusts — Avatar Meher Baba “Firstly” and Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust.

The text of the Trust Deed was typed out on what in India is called government “stamp paper,” purchased for a fee as part of a process of registering a document with the government and establishing it in government records. Every page of the Deed bears the seal of the registrar. The main text, including preliminaries, twenty principal clauses, and five schedules, fills pages 1 through 15. There follow two and a half typed pages (15–17) with signatures (including that of “M.S. Irani”), two more pages of handwritten information, followed by another complete round of signatures, Baba's and the Trustees'.

The document as a whole takes the form of an “indenture,” a formal contract and binding agreement. Its two parties were “M. S. Irani, known as Meher Baba,” whom the document styles as the “Settlor,” and ten named individuals who are designated as the “Trustees.” The Settlor undertakes to “transfer convey and assign” to the Trustees and their “heirs, executors, and administrators” (that is, future trustees) “TO HAVE AND TO HOLD” properties collectively referred to as the “Estate.” Mainly this consisted of the land and buildings of Upper Meherabad, including Meher Retreat and the Tomb. The Trustees were authorized to collect income from Trust properties and interest and dividends from investments and securities and to accept gifts to the Trust, which at this time were limited to a maximum of 1,000 rupees per gift. All income from the Trust, of course, was to be utilized in the fulfillment of Trust objects.

Trust Objects—“Firstly” and “Secondly.” These objects were divided into two

categories, under what the Deed calls “Firstly” and “Secondly.” “Firstly” was concerned with the beneficiaries of the Trust, disciples of Meher Baba who had dedicated their lives to His service and most of whom had no independent means of support. The first of the five Trust Deed “schedules” named twelve female disciples, the second schedule fourteen male disciples, and the third schedule fifteen other disciples, living and deceased, whose families Baba wished to provide for. At the outset, 89% of the Trust's total income was allocated for “Firstly.” At the demise of each



Second and third pages of the Trust Deed

beneficiary in the first two schedules, his or her share was to be reassigned to “Secondly”; in the case of the disciples with families in schedule three, family members would continue to receive payments for ten years after the disciple-beneficiary's demise. In the end, with the death of all eligible beneficiaries, allocations toward “Firstly” would cease altogether and 100% of Trust funds would be channeled to the objects under “Secondly.”

“Secondly” encompassed a wide range of works and objects which since 1975 have become the charge and responsibility of the Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust. Among these objects the Trust Deed names first the upkeep and maintenance of the Trust Estate and the Tomb in particular, where the “Settlor” was to be buried. Other objects follow. The Deed makes detailed arrangements for the burial of Baba's women disciples on the left and right sides of the Tomb. Except for those specifically named, no one else would ever be permitted burial on Meherabad Hill. After this, “according to availability of funds,” the Deed calls for the carrying out of seven objects: (i) the digging of wells; (ii) the accommodation of visitors; (iii)

facilities for lifetime residents; (iv) the construction of an approach road to the top of the Hill; (v) maintenance of cemeteries; (vi) medical facilities for residents, pilgrims, and nearby villagers, along with schooling for their children; and (vii) the establishment of what has come to be known as “spiritual training.”

That last clause, which in subsequent discussions was referred to as “(b)(F)(vii),” reads thus: “Facilities for training Baba-lovers in living a life towards spiritual enlightenment according to instructions which the Settlor may give to the Trustees from time to time.” As

we will see, Baba gave out such instructions on five different occasions over the next decade, instructions which were incorporated into the Trust Deed through a “Deed of Declaration” in 1974. Over the years, Spiritual Training has come to occupy an increasingly central place in the life of the Trust. Indeed, most of the Trust's works can be conceived under this aspect, since the underlying aim of all its activities is to foster the spiritual life lived in dedication to God.

The Organizational Structure of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust.

The Trust Deed gives a few simple instructions relating to the perpetuity of the Board of Trustees and the structure of the Trust as an organization. When the office of a Trustee becomes vacant, the remaining Trustees select a replacement—“without distinction of caste, creed, race, religion, sex or nationality”—by majority vote. At Board meetings, three Trustees form a quorum. The Trust Deed calls for one among the Trustees to be selected as Chairman, whose duties include managing the “routine affairs of the Trust” and presiding at Board meetings. The Trustees are authorized to “prescribe such rules and regulations as they may consider expedient for the management and administration of the Trust” and to carry out such matters of business as their responsibilities as Trustees require. The Trustees are further empowered to create committees and sub-committees and to employ agents to “transact all or any of the business of whatsoever nature required to be done on the premises.”

Such, in summary, are the provisions of the original Deed of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust.

More Questions and Answers about the Avatar Meher Baba Trust

(Continued from the July 2012 issue)

10. QUESTION: Has the Trust put in place policies regarding conflicts of interests in the case of the Trustees?

ANSWER: In 2012, the Trustees decided to articulate the principles that would guide all current and future Trustees in these matters, and a Code of Ethics was adopted. A key clause and provision in the Code clearly states that Trustees shall always act so that their relationships do not involve any conflict of interest with the affairs of the Trust. A summary statement of the Code of Ethics, under the title “Guiding Principles,” was published in the January 2012 issue of this newsletter.

11. QUESTION: We understand that the Trust has undergone a considerable transformation in the last year and half. How would you describe the new organizational structure of the Trust?

ANSWER: The Trust's new organizational structure reflects and responds to the new conditions of management in a post-mandalī era. The administrative system is built around its committees, which carry responsibility for a wide range of Trust activities and functions. In its membership, each committee has a mixture including at least two Trustees along with residents and volunteers. This mixture is intended to facilitate effective communication among committee members and other associated personnel; further, it tries to encourage a collective decision-making process in which all views can be heard. Of course, each committee is free to seek outside or professional help when required.

12. QUESTION: How does the Trust prepare its budgets?

ANSWER: Increasingly, the Trust is reorienting its budgeting process around the committees, each of which will submit a budget in its area of responsibility. For the financial year 2013–14, a number of the committees have submitted such budgets, based on a combination of past years' expenditures and anticipated requirements for new activities and functions in the upcoming financial year. The Finance Committee reviews these budget proposals and consolidates them with the Trust's overall budget prepared by the Accounts Department. Then the Finance Committee makes its recommendations to the Board of Trustees for

their review and approval. Committees are expected to accomplish their activities and functions within the budgets approved by the Board.

13. QUESTION: What are the major funding challenges currently facing the Trust?

ANSWER: The Trust faces a number of funding challenges. Outstanding among these are the high current inflation rate of 7.5%, the steep recent spike in water costs due to drought, hikes in electrical costs, and the steady upgrading in wages for the local staff of about 300 men and women (wage increases over the last two years came to 25% and 15%, respectively). On another front, land prices have skyrocketed in the last half decade; this change greatly impacts on Trust finances, since the Trust still needs to acquire many strips and tracts of land to fulfill the Meherabad and Meherazad Master Plans. All these increased costs are further aggravated by the fact that the flow of donations has slowed down considerably over the last half decade.

14. QUESTION: If you do not receive an official Trust receipt from AMBPCT for the donation that you sent to the Trust, whom should you contact?

ANSWER: Throughout the years, since the time of the mandali, the Trust continues to enforce rigorously a strict policy of issuing receipts for each and every donation received, usually issued immediately upon receipt of the donation if the amount is in cash. Baba was very particular about money matters, and the Mandali have left us with a rich legacy of their own personal examples of meticulousness and painstaking care in dealing with Trust finances. If a donor does not receive a receipt, this is invariably due either to a clerical mistake or to a delay in delivery by the post office. If in reasonable time you do not receive a receipt, please do not hesitate to contact the Trust Office. A duplicate official Trust receipt will be sent to you through the post. It would be in the interest of the Trust that you always insist on a receipt and follow up if you do not receive one. You may contact Trustee Craig Ruff at the Trust Office, either through post or through his email (craig@ambpct.org) for any problem or query you may have regarding a receipt for a donation.

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 these objects to completion, objects that He Himself laid down in the Trust Deed, when it pleases Him to do so.

For those who have not taken the opportunity to contribute, here is how. In the UK, please send your tax-deductible contribution 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 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 relevant information along with a list of eight 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.

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.

A fuller public accounting of Trust finances is provided annually in the Trust Financial Report, sent out with the June issue of this newsletter and posted on the Trust website. The Financial Report details and breaks down 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.

As Pilgrim Season Ends, Water Prospects Look Bleak

After a particularly poor 2012 monsoon season which delivered only fourteen inches of rain, Meherabad faced severe water shortages as it entered into the torrid summer months of April and May. A year of austerity looms on the horizon if the next rainy season fails to deliver the rainfall needed to recharge the depleted Meherabad wells.

As the 2012–13 pilgrim season wound to an end, about 70% of the wells had gone dry, serving only for water storage. Of the 30% that remained productive, only a third yielded potable water. The rest, polluted by sewage infiltrating the ground water supply, were useful in irrigating trees, a large portion of which are likely to perish as the mercury rises, summer winds gather force, and the root systems dry out. During the hot season, more and more of the wells will fail, and the Trust will have to depend wholly on water trucked in from reservoirs to the northwest of Ahmednagar near the Ghat mountains.

As is true in many other aspects of Meherabad life, yearly planning in the water department largely centers around Amartithi. This year, about 1.8 million liters of water were consumed during the four days of the gathering. Water needs for the occasion were supplied by trucks carrying some 700,000 liters during the month of January. An estimated 30,000 pilgrims (including day

visitors) occupied Meherabad Hill this 31st January. By early February, the annual Meherabad water stores were largely used up.

The Trust faces a structural problem as well, because of a deteriorating 4.5 kilometer pipeline between Meherabad and the pump station on the southern outskirts of Ahmednagar. Installed twenty-five years ago, the pipe is made of a brittle material unable to sustain the daily pressurizing and depressurizing that Meherabad water use demands. Over recent years it has begun springing leaks and badly needs to be replaced. Meherabad management hopes to install a high-density polyethylene pipe that will be better suited to endure the strenuous conditions of use in this region of intermittent seasonal rains and erratic water supply.

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, Post Bag 31, King’s Road, Ahmednagar 414 001, M.S., India. Subscriptions to this newsletter can be sent to that address or to: Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, PO Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398, USA (tel. 860-535-0370, email EAyers88@comcast.net). To subscribe to Tavern Talk (the Trust’s electronic newsletter), send an email to Listserv@ambppct.org and include in the text of your message the words: “subscribe

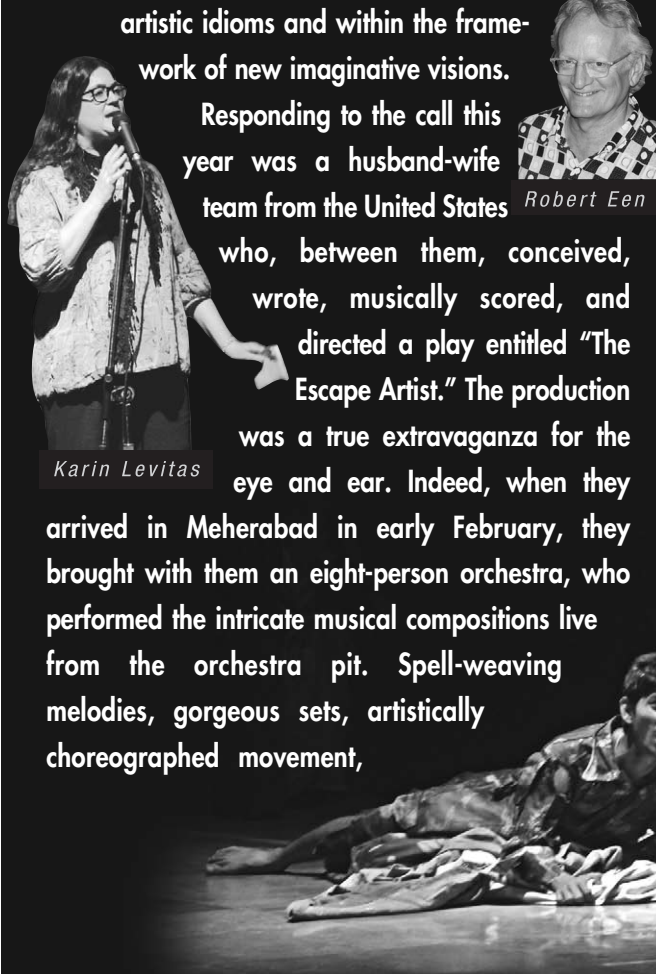
tavern-talk.” Pilgrims seeking accommodation at Meherabad can address their emails to pimco@avatarmeherbabatrust.org (to stay at the Meher Pilgrim Retreat) or to jaibaba@ambppct.org (for Hostel D). Other information (including back issues of this newsletter) can be found on the Avatar Meher Baba Trust’s website at www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org (or www.ambppct.org).

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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.

“THE ESCAPE ARTIST”

Since the early 1970s, it has become customary at Meherabad to celebrate Meher Baba’s birthday with an original drama. At first these plays were staged in the “Tin Shed” on Meherabad Hill, but the venue changed after construction of the theater in Outer Meherabad in the early 1990s. Until 2008, virtually all of the plays were created and composed—often with mandali guidance—by Meherabad residents. But since 2008, the Music and Arts Centre has been extending invitations to Baba lovers around the world who work in the dramatic arts, and as a result, each year the Meherabad-Meherazad community has been feasted with a widened and diversified fare, with the ageless stories of love for God being related in new



Karin Levitas

Robert Een

artistic idioms and within the framework of new imaginative visions. Responding to the call this year was a husband-wife team from the United States who, between them, conceived, wrote, musically scored, and directed a play entitled “The Escape Artist.” The production was a true extravaganza for the eye and ear. Indeed, when they arrived in Meherabad in early February, they brought with them an eight-person orchestra, who performed the intricate musical compositions live from the orchestra pit. Spell-weaving melodies, gorgeous sets, artistically choreographed movement,

and film projection provided the background and milieu for the central drama enacted on the stage, a rendering of the ageless story of a soul’s journey through the rounds of experience that lead him to the feet of the Eternal Beloved, Meher Baba.

A SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY. The story’s protagonist was a young man who, although born into a devout family, was eager to leave home and accordingly enlists in the army. There he is driven by his commander to commit an act that he realizes is evil. He flees—and thus gets launched on his career as an “escape artist,” through the course of which he employs one means after another in a series of desperate attempts to escape from the prison of Mayavic entrapment.

In a succession of episodes, he encounters several guides, including a mastani in her cave, who explains to him that the true Answer lies within, and a blind tavern keeper, who quotes Rumi, Kabir, Hafiz, and Walt Whitman as he quenches the seeker’s thirst with the wine of divine love.

At length the seeker finds himself on a lush island surrounded by adoring gopis. Discovering real love, his heart is broken when the woman he is in love with dies. This impels him to seek through the paths of various religions, until at last he discovers the Master, Meher Baba, who he realizes has been with him from the very start.

Third Annual “Legacy” Program in mid-February

On 15th–16th February, the Trust hosted its third annual “Discovering the Avataric Legacy” program at the main meeting hall in the Meher Pilgrim Centre in Lower Meherabad.

Inaugurated in November of 2010, the “legacy” series provides a forum for Baba lovers around the world to describe and share with others the work carried out in His cause. This year, some fifteen speakers over the course of four sessions, morning and afternoon, gave their presentations, which usually took the form of talks highlighted with powerpoint slides, with questions and participation from the audience invited.

Topics ranged across a wide field. Several speakers discussed the editing of Meher Baba’s words, an especially timely topic at the present time when new material of the Avatar’s authorship is coming into print.

Photographs by Paul Liboiron