

## “In God’s Hand” To Be Released This Summer

concepts —  
Natural  
Light,  
Natural  
Darkness,  
unnatural  
darkness,

and unnatural light. The second half of the essay reviews the process by which consciousness dissociates from mind (the unnatural darkness) and realizes its own true Self as the Natural Light.

While Baba appears to have composed quickly, the handwritten expression has force and beauty. Most of the text is predominantly in English, with Gujarati and Hindi interspersed; but pp. 34-38 are predominantly in Gujarati, with a few English words. A cover page bears the inscription — in the hand of Ramjoo Abdulla, one of Baba’s close disciples — that reads: “Explanations of

Spirituality in Baba’s own hand, probably written in 1925.” Though the exact circumstances of composition and early preservation of the manuscript remain uncertain, Bhau remembers that, at Meherabad in the 1960s, Ramjoo gave his diaries to Baba, who then entrusted them to Mani. It is possible that the box that contained the diaries also contained these 39 pages.

The first half of *In God’s Hand* is a full-color facsimile of the original manuscript. In the “Supplement” that follows, the facsimile copies are reproduced again, though in a smaller format and in black and white, in the upper portion of each page. Beneath these facsimiles, Baba’s text has been transcribed into a readable Palatino font, with slight

editing and with English translations of the Gujarati. In the footnotes and appendices all of Baba’s original Gujarati has been rendered into typography, both in a Gujarati type face and in Roman type transliteration. A “Glossary” gives further on some of the specialized vocabulary that Baba employs. Representing the first significant publication of new material of Meher Baba’s own authorship in several decades, this book gives to the world a document that is remarkable in the form of its expression as well as in its content. As the flyleaf notes, the book’s release “opens a window on an event unprecedented in mankind’s recorded history: the God-Man writing about God in His own hand.”

### Letter from the Chairman

Dear brothers and sisters,

Throughout the years of His Advent Avatar Meher Baba, the perfect Host, used to take the greatest care for the physical well-being of His lovers and devotees when they came to stay with Him at times of sahas. Even from the earliest days of the Meherabad ashram this was the case. In 1925, when Meherabad was first beginning to flourish, Baba had constructed the original dharamshala, known as the Upasni Serai, where His lovers were provided with free accommodation and food. Three decades later, during the great darshans and sahasas of the 1950s, Baba went to great lengths to ensure that the basic physical needs of His lovers were satisfied for the time that they were with Him. Food and bedding were simple, but always clean and healthy. In this way, the Divine Beloved helped His lovers during the time of sahas to forget about the world and their own bodies and to open their hearts to His love.

The Trust that Baba created has always had the caretaking of pilgrims, who come to Meherabad to bow down before Him at His Samadhi, as its highest priority. In the 1970s, limited facilities made it possible to host at Meherabad only a few pilgrims at a time. But since the opening of the Pilgrim Centre in 1980 and Hostel D a few years later, the Trust has been able to provide simple food and lodging at Meherabad to almost all pilgrims who want to stay there. In recent years, however, these facilities have become overcrowded. For this reason the Trust has made the construction of a new Pilgrim Centre and Dharamshala the centerpieces of its Development Plan.

Now the design for the new Pilgrim Centre has been completed and approved by the Board of Trustees, and I am happy to present it to you in this issue of the Trust’s newsletter. Designated for an area within the New Pilgrim Site about a kilometer from the Samadhi, the Pilgrim Centre will be situated in a quiet, pastoral area in the Trust Estate removed from the highway. 200 pilgrims at a time will be able to stay there; and the site has room for further expansion later. Groundbreaking is scheduled for later this year.

This issue of *In His Service* also brings to you for the first time a financial statement from the Trust on expenses and income, both for the Development Plan and for the Trust as a whole. It is clear that the Trust can continue in its development only with the wholehearted support of Meher Baba’s worldwide family. The new Pilgrim Centre is for you, His lovers, and it can be built only through your continuing contributions. In this as in all things, it is Baba’s wish that will prevail.

On behalf of Avatar Meher Baba’s mandali and the trustees of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, I wish you all the blessings of His grace and nazar, as we move on together into a new millennium in His love.

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

## Update on New Pilgrim Centre

At its meeting on 3rd May, the Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust’s Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the basic design for a

new Pilgrim Centre at Meherabad drafted by Trust architect Ted Judson. The new Pilgrim Centre will be constructed on the

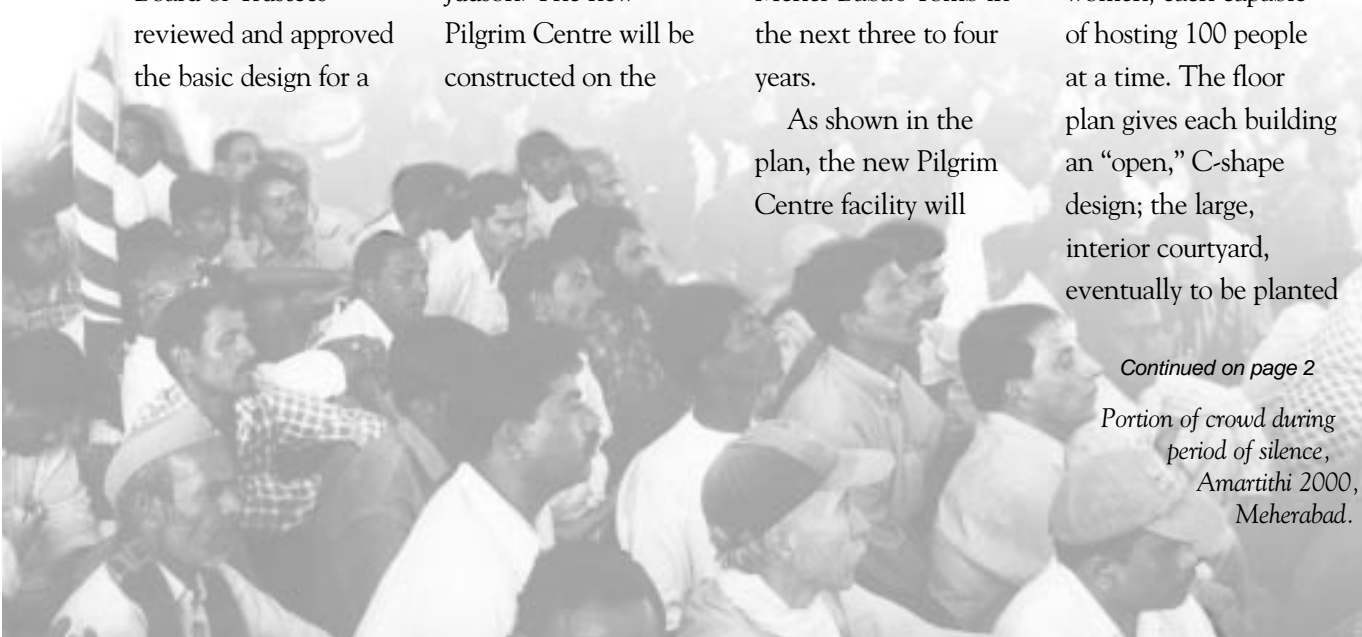
Pilgrim Education Site one kilometer (0.6 miles) to the west of Meher Baba’s Tomb in the next three to four years.

As shown in the plan, the new Pilgrim Centre facility will

provide two separate two-floor buildings, one for men and one for women, each capable of hosting 100 people at a time. The floor plan gives each building an “open,” C-shape design; the large, interior courtyard, eventually to be planted

*Continued on page 2*

*Portion of crowd during  
period of silence,  
Amartithi 2000,  
Meherabad.*



# Update on New Pilgrim Centre

*Continued from page 1*

with trees and gardens, will face Meher Baba’s Samadhi. Rooms will accommodate one, two, three, or four pilgrims at a time, with partitions further subdividing the space. Each building will have four designated reading rooms (two per floor). Outside verandas and courtyards will provide further spaces where pilgrims can read, talk among themselves, or enjoy the quiet of this rural and pastoral region in the Meherabad estate.

A separate dining hall, common to the men and women, will be constructed to the west of the women’s quarters. Administration, reception, and other services will be centred in small wings attaching to each dormitory. Running on an east-west trajectory, a pedestrian walkway and view corridor links the Pilgrim Centre area with Meherabad Hill and Baba’s Samadhi.

The new Pilgrim Centre will be constructed on a strip of property that, under the master plan, will eventually provide the site for four more pilgrim accommodation buildings of similar design. Construction work on the first two dormitory buildings and dining hall will begin later this year.

Estimated costs for the new Pilgrim Centre are \$675,000. The new Amartithi site (for 4000 people) and the new Dharamshala (for 300) — which are the other pilgrim accommodation facilities included under the Plan — will cost an additional \$1,050,000. Total costs under the current Development

Plan budget are \$3,227,000.

### Overcrowding of Existing Pilgrim Facilities

The creation of the new Pilgrim Centre represents a much-needed response to a steady, long-term pattern of growth in the number of Meherabad pilgrims that is straining current facilities to their limit. The existing Pilgrim Centre, with its 56-person capacity, cannot, through the greater part

in any case. Even during ordinary periods, because of overcrowding pilgrims often have to be asked to change rooms or even to move into another building several times in a pilgrimage.

Particularly striking over the past few years has been the growth in the number of pilgrims from India, who seek accommodation both at Hostel D and in the Pilgrim Centre. Over Silence Day last season,

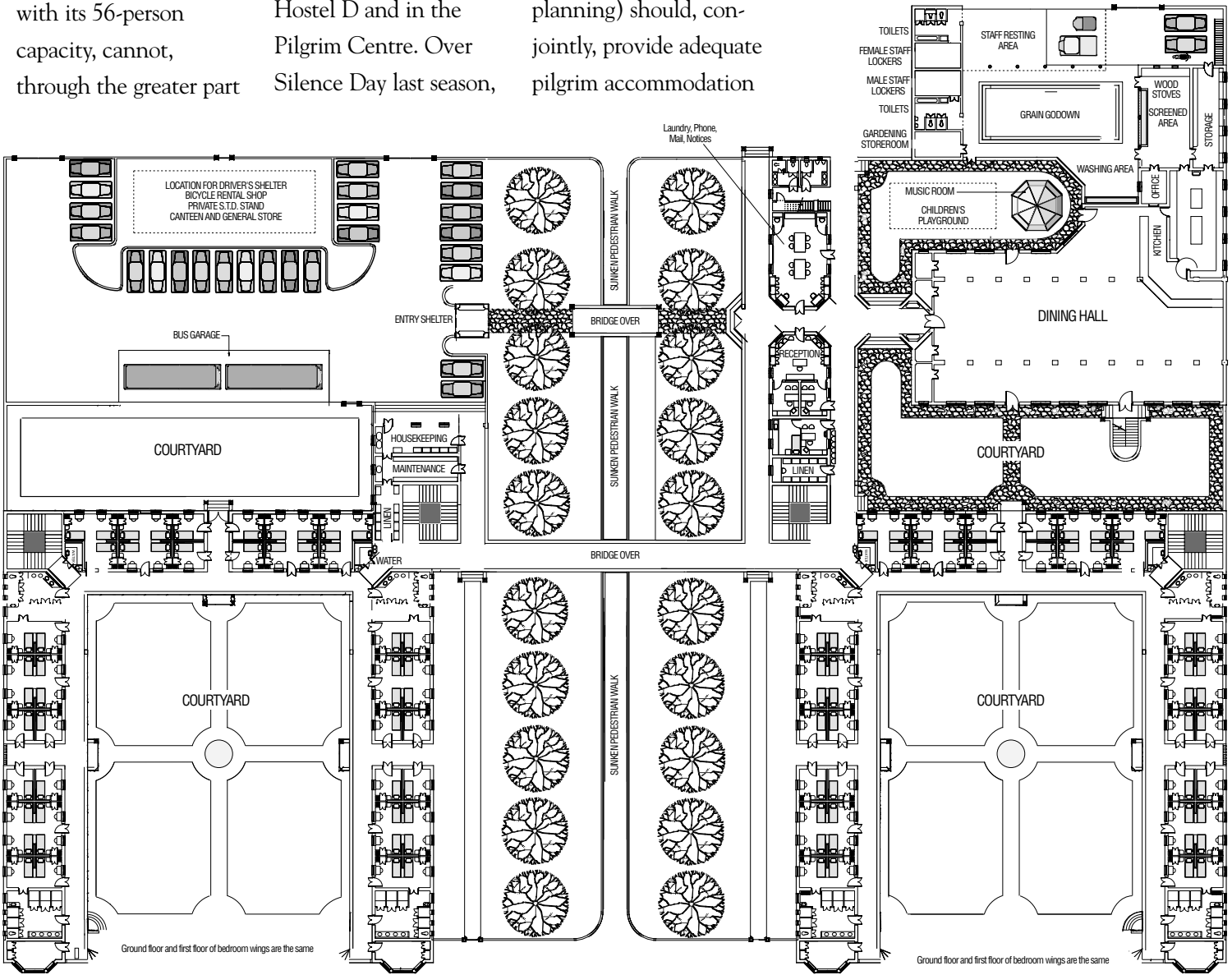
Day, a group of more than two hundred pad-yatris (pilgrims on foot) were hosted in the Outer Meherabad facilities for several nights.

It was primarily for pilgrim care and accommodation — a paramount Trust priority — that the Five Year Development Plan was formulated in 1998. The New Pilgrim Centre and new Dharamshala (still in planning) should, conjointly, provide adequate pilgrim accommodation

days before the New Life the properties that now comprise the new Pilgrim Centre and Dharamshala sites, facing each other from their respective hilltops across the intervening ravine, actually belonged to Baba; and it is pleasant to imagine His having visited them, as, of course, He must have done at various times. His love suffuses

will be accommodated at this site, which will be operational in about three years.

The first year of the Five-Year Plan has also witnessed the construction of vital infrastructure for the New Pilgrim Site, in the form of two elevated and two ground-level water tanks with a combined capacity of 250,000 gallons; 1.6 km. (1 mile) of



of the pilgrim season, accommodate all who want to stay there, necessitating overflow to the old Dharamshala. Even the Pilgrim Centre and Dharamshala conjointly, which can host a total of 80, are now often inadequate. For almost two months of the nine-month pilgrim season, overflow pilgrims have to be put up under temporary, makeshift arrangements in Outer Meherabad — and this does not include the two to three weeks around Amartithi, when pilgrims must be accommodated under temporary arrangements

when about 1000 visitors came to Meherabad, 140 asked for reservations at the Pilgrim Centre, whose maximum capacity is 56. But even in February, when most Indians remain at their home residences, the number of overflow pilgrims, who could not fit into the Pilgrim Centre or Dharamshala and had to be accommodated in Outer Meherabad, totaled 120. During October, traditionally one of the quietest months, about 70 Indians and 75 foreigners were accommodated at the Pilgrim Centre; in addition, during the week around New Life

facilities for the intermediate period of the next decade.

### The New Site

As one stands on the site of the new Pilgrim Centre today, now green with a ten-year growth of rosewood and eucalyptus trees, and looks across the long ridge toward Meher Retreat to the east, it is not hard to imagine what Meherabad must have looked like in the early decades of the century when Baba lived here. As Khorshed used to recall, Baba loved to hike and trek across the fields and hills around Meherabad. In those

this landscape and will provide a natural environment for His lovers when they come here to offer their hearts to Him at His Samadhi.

### Other Progress

While plans progress toward Pilgrim Centre ground-breaking later this year, work under the Trust’s Development Plan forges ahead on other fronts. At the new Amartithi site, construction of basic facilities — inquiry office, medical stations, storeroom, waiting shelter, kitchens, and other amenities — is well under way. Approximately 4000 Amartithi guests

new roads; and a high-tension electrical wire to the new Amartithi site. Total projected costs for infrastructure under the Five-Year Plan come to \$396,000.

In Outer Meherabad, the final wing of the Education Building, including an assembly hall and two laboratories, is now completed and will be ready for use in the up-coming school year. The Education Building houses the Meher English School, a Trust-sponsored elementary and high school serving about 300 students from the vicinity of Arangaon village.

# Afforestation of Meherabad Hill



MEHERABAD HILL is the heart and centre of Meherabad. For it is the site of the Tomb-Shrine of Avatar Meher Baba, where the body that housed Reality now lies.

The Trust's long term master plan envisions a minimum of construction on the Hill. At several locations small entertainment pavilions will be erected for use in the Amartithi gathering, and a larger stage area will be built at the north of the Samadhi. Eventually the Tomb will be covered by a superstructure; but the planning for this is being deferred until a later date.

For the present, the main thrust under the Development Plan concerns the planting of trees. The large crowds in the future will need shade. For even in January, the noonday sun can be enervating, while in other seasons, its tropical intensity can precipitate severe dehydration and even

sunstroke.

Thus, over the past twelve months, some 2250 four-foot pits have been dug and 2100 tree seedlings planted across a 25-acre plot of the estate on the Hill's southeast slope.

Another 500 seedlings will be planted and their pits filled in during the next monsoon. The new trees have been arranged in a grid pattern at twenty-foot intervals, so that, when they mature, they will comprise a closed-canopy forest that provides effective sun screening. Lines for drip irrigation have been put in place; during the summer months these supply to each new tree two to four gallons of water hourly over two eight-to-twelve hour periods every third day. In this way the new growth can be sustained during the sunny seasons from late October to early June when, in a typical year, virtually no rain falls.

A decade from now, when the canopy effect starts to be felt and as the larger forest ecosystem begins to get established, pilgrims will be able to enjoy a

bio-diversity rich in interest both to lovers of nature and spiritual lore. Of the five trees that are often associated in India with shrines and sacred sanctuaries, three – neems, banyans, and pipals (or bodhis) – are prominent in the new Meherabad Hill afforestation. Neems, of course, will be associated by many Baba lovers with Hazrat Babajan; and it was a neem tree – still standing today along the Ahmednagar-Daund highway – that Baba sat under when He first came to Meherabad on 4th May 1923. Banyans, which grow along Pilgrim Path (leading up the Hill to the Samadhi) and at many other places in Meherabad, are famous for their long, trailing branches which drop down and, taking root in the ground, eventually establish themselves as

new tree trunks that are still connected with the parent. In this regard Baba once compared the banyan tree to a Master and His disciples: taking their substance from their Master (who is like the main trunk), the disciples (like rooting branches) become Perfect Ones in their own right. The pipal or bodhi tree is most closely associated with Gautama Buddha, who was sitting under a tree of this type when He attained Realization.

The complete tree plantation of the 75 designated acres on Meherabad Hill will take five to seven years. In centuries past, it is said that much of the Deccan plateau was clad with woods and jungle. The near-desertification of much of this landscape has been largely an effect

of the strip-

ping away of the forest cover; erosion and poverty have been further consequences. The reforesting of the Hill, at the heart of the Avatar's Home at Meherabad, will be a step toward the restoration of an environment more native to this part of the world.

## *Tree Plantation in Decades Past*

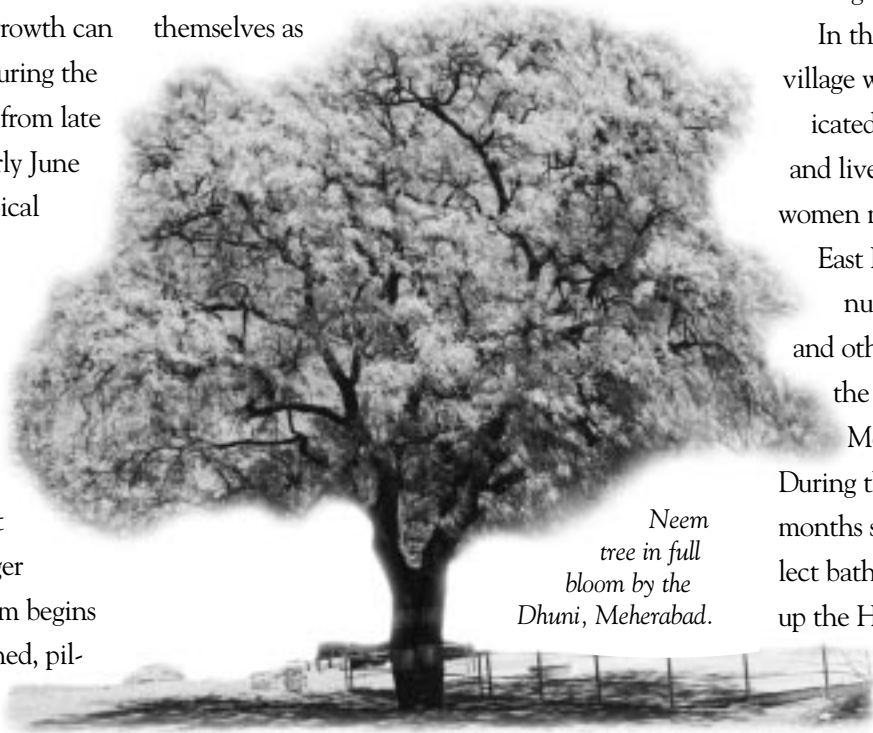
When Baba first came to Meherabad in 1923, there were few major trees in the area, apart from the neems along the highway. Despite acute water shortages, during the first efflorescence of the Meherabad ashram, the mandali managed to create a vegetated compound area with a garden and even a few mango and lime trees. Unfortunately, most of this plant life died off during the droughts of ensuing decades.

In the 1940s Valu, a village woman who dedicated her life to Baba and lived with the women mandali in the East Room, planted a number of banyans and other trees along the path leading up Meherabad Hill.

During the summer months she would collect bath water and lug it up the Hill in tin boxes suspended from a pole across her

shoulders in an effort to keep the young saplings alive. Baba was deeply touched with her efforts; and now many pilgrims benefit by them, as they enjoy the cool shade of these majestic trees in the hot midday, or stand watching the silver light trickle and splash through banyan leaves and branches on nights of the full moon.

After the Trust began to function in 1969, reforestation work took on a more thoroughgoing character. Mehera was particularly concerned that Meherabad – which means “Meher flourishing” – should flourish with trees and plants. More than a hundred young saplings were personally germinated by her and sent for planting at different locations at Meherabad. In 1978-79, through the efforts of Dadi Kerawalla, a 24-acre plot immediately to the south of the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill was planted with tamarinds, avalas, bors, jamunds, and wood apples – all fruit-bearing species. Concurrently much of the Hill was leveled and “bunded” (i.e. diked with earthen ridges to prevent water runoff and erosion); now rows of densely-clustered, spike-pointed agave along ridges of these “bunds” serve as live fencing.



*Neem tree in full bloom by the Dhuni, Meherabad.*



## IN BRIEF

## FROM MEHERABAD

### HAMIRPUR HEART-FEAST.

Meher Baba called Hamirpur His “heart,” because of the great love that flourishes there despite the prevailing poverty and illiteracy. This year, through an anonymous contribution, free meals at the Amartithi celebration were provided for more than 800 pilgrims from Hamirpur district.

### AMARTITHI ON THE INTERNET.

Through the efforts of several Baba lovers from Hyderabad, several brief segments of the Amartithi programme on Meherabad Hill were broadcast on the internet through a main Meher Baba web site this year. This year's success raises the hope of more extensive Amartithi web site coverage in the future.

### MILLENNIAL MOON.

As if to salute the Avatar of the age at the turn of the millennium, the moon made special appearances on two significant dates in the 1999 Baba calendar. For the first time since 1969, Amartithi night (January 31st) witnessed a “blue moon” – which is the name for the second full moon in a month. And at the other end of the year, Mehera's birth-

day on December 22nd coincided with the brightest full moon in more than a century.





# How to Contribute

In accordance with Meher Baba’s directives as set forth in the Trust Deed, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust is currently developing both in its facilities and its programmes. Those who would like to support the work of the Trust can do so in many ways. The Trust’s affidavit of equivalency in conjunction with the grant programs of the qualified tax-exempt organizations (listed below) provide the infrastructure for Baba lovers to make tax-deductible financial contributions to the Trust in the form of cash, appreciated stock, credit card deductions, or bequests in wills.

U.S. residents can make tax-deductible donations for the Five-Year Plan to the following organizations, all of which have grant programmes with the Trust: Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California, Attn. Kanji Miyao, Treasurer, 1214 S. Van Ness Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90019-3520 (tel. 213-731-3737); Meher Baba House, Attn. Keith Sheridan, 236 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001 (tel. 212-645-6400); The Meher Baba Washington Gathering, Attn. Pam Butler-Stone, 11227 Dewey Court, Kensington, MD 20895 (tel. 301-946-0236); Meher Prasad Inc., 4364 Glengary Drive, Atlanta, GA 30342 (tel. 404-261-3563); Meherana, Attn. Christine Pearson, 5311 Italian Creek Road, Mariposa, CA 95338 (tel. 209-966-5078); Meher Baba Center of the Twin cities, Attn. Patrick Cook, 4724 Zenith Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55410 (tel. 612-920-2056); Meher Fund, Inc. Attn. Rick Flinn, 760 Cumberland Circle, Atlanta, GA 30306 (tel. 404-892-3377); and Sheriar Foundation, Attn. Andy Lesnik, 3005 Highway 17 North ByPass, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577 (tel. 843-448-1102, email Trust@sheriarfoundation.org). Questions can be addressed to Sheriar Foundation, Attn. Andy Lesnik (as above) or to Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, Attn. Emory and Susan Ayers, P.O. Box 398 Mystic, CT 06355-0398 (tel. 860-536-0303, fax 860-536-2318, email eayers88@aol.com). Laws vary from one country to the next. For information in the UK, please contact Sue Biddu, Flat 2, 202 Falcon House, Old Brompton Road, London SW5 0BU, England (207-603-5577); Baba lovers from other countries should send their donations to the Trust directly.

# “Tavern Talk,” an Electronic Newsletter

Since January the Trust has been sending out periodic news postings through the internet to a subscriber email list. “Tavern Talk,” as this new electronic publication has been entitled, will serve as a kind of informal worldwide “family letter” carrying announcements, news and stories from the mandali, reports on special events such as the Amartithi and Birthday programmes, moments and episodes and fragrances from the life of Meherabad and Meherazad, and other miscellaneous accounts.

The phrase “Tavern Talk” is an allusion to the divine “Tavern of Love” celebrated in the ghazals of Hafiz and other Sufi poets. To subscribe, send an email to <Listserv@ambppct.com>, and in the body of the communication type: subscribe tavern-talk.

# Meherazad Memories

As Meherabad Hill and other parts of the Trust Estate begin to flourish with a profusion of young saplings, one is put in mind of the role trees played within the various home environments where Baba lived during the years of His Advent.

Since the Deccan plateau in Maharashtra where Baba resided is semi-arid, the cultivation of trees and gardens at His various abodes was seldom an easy affair. Of all Baba’s close ones it was especially Mehera who loved flowering things. The restriction and seclusion of her life during the early years of the Meherabad ashram, however, left her with little scope for gardening, although there were others among the mandali at that time who struggled arduously, in the face of harsh weather and continual water shortage, to bring some living green to the environment there.

But it was particularly after Baba’s move to Meherazad in the 1940s that Mehera’s love for nature was given outlet; and it was at Meherazad more than anywhere else that a “garden of Allah,”

with flowers and groves and arboreal walkways, became an actuality. In fact, the trees and nearby water supply (in Pimpalgaon reservoir) were part of what Baba liked about the Meherazad property in the first place. A number of the neems and other trees in Meherazad today were already standing when Baba and the mandali first moved there. Others were



Mehera by the tree outside her window

planted later. The tall, hardy nandoor-kees (cousins of the banyan) that now shade the Meherazad approach road, for example, were, at Mehera’s request, planted from graftings one year before Baba left on the New Life. By far the most memorable of the Meherazad trees, howev-

er, is the umar which still stands outside Mehera’s window. The story connected with this tree begins in 1959 when Joanna Smith, one of Baba’s followers, enjoyed the good fortune not only of being allowed to visit Baba at Meherazad but of being taken by Him on a tour of the gardens on the hill side of the house. While passing by Mehera’s window on their return, Baba paused

opportunity to ask Him, “Baba, why did you point to this particular tree? It is a very nice tree, but aren’t there better ones?” Baba gestured to her, “You’ll see; later on you will know.”

Ten years after this, in 1969 Baba dropped His physical form, and Mehera, the Beloved’s beloved, was plunged into the deep agonies of bereavement. In the midst of this period, one day, as she was looking out her window, suddenly her eye was drawn to the umar tree where, at eye level facing her window, a clear image of Baba’s face had formed in the bark. In the following several years thousands of people witnessed this remarkable natural likeness, which to Mehera stood as a sign of Baba’s continuing presence and love for her amidst her loss.

Many beautiful stories like this inhabit the nooks and corners and secluded spots of the arboreal haven of Meherazad today, whose tall trees now provide shade for His lovers just as they provided shade for the Beloved decades ago.

## 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.