

## Heart Warming Response

The continuing response from the worldwide community of Meher Baba's lovers to the Trust's request for donations to fund the Development Plan has been heart-warming. Despite many uncertainties regarding world economic conditions, more Baba lovers than ever before have been taking the opportunity to participate.

In recent months a new, colorful brochure illustrating many of the Trust's activities and progress on its Development Plan was mailed to every household on the Trust's mailing list for America, and the brochure was widely distributed in the United Kingdom as well. Through future mailings of the pamphlet and through this newsletter the Trust plans to keep you informed of the use to which your contributions are being applied in the ongoing work at Meherabad and Meherazad.

One recent correspondent, expressing the viewpoint of many, wrote about feeling inspired by the opportunity "to contribute even a little towards this future city of God!" Others spoke of their concern about the water shortage at Meherabad and voiced the wish that their contribution be used to help pay for the water line being installed to alleviate this shortage.

Happily, the critical work under the Development Plan is proceeding well, if not always easily or smoothly. Despite water shortages that have necessitated the purchasing of tanker-loads of water on a daily basis, the construction on the Meher Pilgrim Retreat has not had to slow down at all; the Young Adults Sahavas and pilgrim season have gone ahead as usual; and new pipeline connection with the Ahmednagar municipal water supply promises relief on the water front in coming months and years.

As always, contributions both large and small are welcome. It is the Beloved who gives through the hands of His lovers. While it is the Trust's duty to keep His worldwide family informed of ongoing Trust work and associated needs, the Chairman and board accept whatever He wishes to provide.

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](mailto: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 860-536-0303 e-mail [EAYers88@aol.com](mailto:EAYers88@aol.com); 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 414 001, Maharashtra State, India.

## Leave Your Longings But Take Your Belongings

THERE IS A PECULIAR SILENCE that pervades the men mandali's verandah during teatime at Meherazad these days. Yes, conversation ebbs and flows as it did before, along with the appreciative munching of cookies and sipping from steaming hot tea cups, as residents and workers gather for their traditional 3 p.m. break. But a feeling of loss permeates the atmosphere. Everyone senses it. Everyone knows it. For a large part of the life of the party has gone.

Baba's mandali, as Mani once said, though not indispensable, are irreplaceable. Who could possibly take the place of Aloba? He brought his own unique blend of wit and humor, wisdom and dignity, and unquestioning obedience and love for his Beloved Lord Avatar Meher Baba, even to the simple task of dispensing tea. The tea he poured was steeped in a lifetime of love for the God-Man, a life such as kings would envy.

The name Aloba was given to him by Baba Himself during the New Life. But Baba gave him other sobriquets as well – such as "Snake Killer,"

"Good Mechanic," and, most aptly, "Electricity." In connection with this last nickname, Eruch once commented that Baba had to be very careful about giving Aloba an order. For in his enthusiasm, Aloba would oftentimes set about obeying the order before Baba had even finished giving it! Legions of pilgrims



Aloba during Amartithi sharing stories of his life with Baba.

who have flocked to Meherazad since 1969 will remember Aloba for his many signature phrases, gestures, and loud noises. "Come for tea!" he used to shout out at teatime, loudly ringing the veranda bell. But since pilgrims and visitors, reluctant to leave Eruch's company, would linger on in Mandali Hall, the command soon became, "Rush out for tea!"

The end of the pilgrim day would be marked by an ear-splitting whistle and the cry,

"Time to depart!" But since love-intoxicated pilgrims would sometimes leave behind their hats, bags, or umbrellas, this announcement would be followed up with the injunction, "Leave your longings but take your belongings!" "Cat says meow" – this meant that Aloba was pleased about something; and if he had just deliv-

ple of a man who was completely fearless – as he showed during visits to Iran, when he unhesitatingly displayed Baba films and handed out Baba literature, even with police in attendance, at the risk of being put behind bars. "Why should one worry?" Aloba would say with conviction. "My dear, when you have God behind you, what is to fear?"

Aloba used to exhort the pilgrims, explaining, "Baba is God. There is no doubt of that. If you have 100% faith in this, He will help you 100%. But if you have only 70% faith" – and here Aloba would demonstrate lukewarm faith with a waggle of his hand and a tremulous voice – "then Baba will help only 70%."

Towards the end of Aloba's life, during Eruch's own travail of failing health, Aloba one evening shared that he had had a wonderful dream. In the dream Baba had come to him in Mandali Hall. "Baba looked radiant," Aloba said. "He looked at me and He told me: Meher Baba came as God. Eruch is matchless as my Minister; and My Aloba is incomparable!"

er some particularly clever comment or repartee, he would indicate self-satisfaction with a loud clicking sound. All of these little catch-phrases and mannerisms arose out of such child-like unselfconsciousness that it is hard to remember them without laughing.

But underneath all of this, Aloba possessed a greatness and human warmth that was grounded in his absolute faith and conviction in Meher Baba's divinity. Aloba truly gave us the exam-



## Aloba returns to Baba

ALI AKBAR SHAPURZAMAN, known to the Baba world by the nickname that Meher Baba gave him – Aloba – passed away in Inlaks hospital in Pune on 13th August 2002. Born on 12th July 1916, Aloba first encountered Meher Baba in 1927. Muslim by birth and Iranian by extraction, Aloba had a fiery nature that fed on a fierce and unshakable conviction in Meher Baba's Godhood. He was the only student of the Meher Ashram period who later became one of Meher Baba's resident mandali, and was the last survivor among the men mandali who had accompanied Baba on His New Life.

Aloba's birthplace, Yezd in Iran, was Meher Baba's ancestral home as well, on both His father's and mother's side. At the age of 7 Aloba came to India with his uncle. After working for 4 years in Iranian restaurants in Mumbai, in 1927, Aloba came to Meherabad and enrolled in the Hazrat Babajan School.

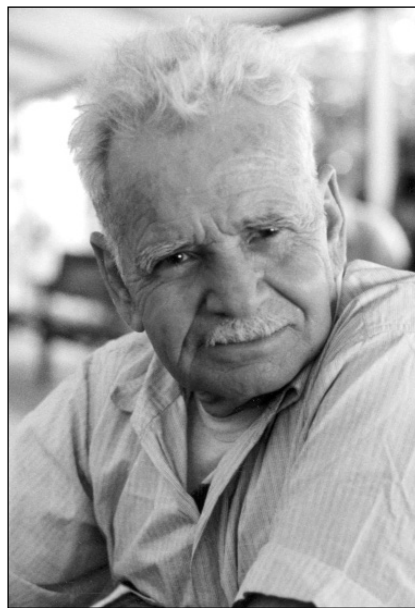
Life in the Meher Ashram, as Aloba later said, was superb. None of the boys wanted to leave; and when, a number of them were removed from school by their parents, they would weep for days together. In Aloba's case, this misfortune struck late one afternoon in 1928 when his uncle arrived suddenly at Meherabad and insisted on taking the boy back to Mumbai.

Aloba remained for several years in Mumbai, working as the cashier in an Irani teashop. But after chancing to see Baba's disciple Baidul in the teashop in 1934, strong spiritual feelings began to surge in him, and he felt irresistibly impelled to renew his contact with Baba. Slipping away in the night without telling anyone, Aloba made his way to Nasik, where, encountering Baba among His mandali, Aloba did not at first recognize Him. But when Baba then came out of the bungalow with an alphabet board in His hand and hair flowing freely, Aloba immediately collapsed at His feet. Baba's mandali helped him up again, but Aloba could not bear Baba's glory and again fell down in the dust in front of Him. Three times this happened and on the third time Baba told him, "have control, have balance"; and He told him to return after one month. Thus Aloba's contact with his Master Meher Baba

was reestablished.

In the years that followed, Aloba and a partner opened a tea-shop in Mumbai. At first, business was meager. But on one of Aloba's visits Baba told him that the business would grow, and immediately thereafter the shop became extremely successful.

This phase in Aloba's life came to an end in 1949 with the announcement of the New Life. Aloba set out with Baba and His New Life companions on October 16th and remained with Him until June 1950, when Aloba returned to the Old Life, taking up residence in Mumbai and later in Pune. But in



Aloba in a pensive moment at Meherazad.

1952 Aloba was called to rejoin Baba as one of His resident mandali, and he remained with Him permanently thereafter. Over the last 6 months of his life, Aloba's health began to fail badly. But as Arnavaz said, Aloba's excruciating suffering was not from his physical pain, but rather from the depths of his longing for union with Beloved Baba. In early August, Aloba fell and fractured his hip. After several weeks, he was taken to Pune for further medical treatment and on August 13th, immediately on the conclusion of hip surgery, he passed away from a pulmonary embolism. In fact, since he had been given spinal anaesthesia, Aloba had been conscious throughout the surgery and kept repeating loudly, Baba is God! So toward the end of the operation Aloba was requested to be quiet since his speaking was disturbing the surgical procedure. Aloba agreed to this; but as soon as the surgery was complete, he shouted, Jai Baba! Those were the last words he uttered, for almost immediately his blood pressure suddenly began to drop and his heart stopped beating.

Small in stature, Aloba was a giant in Baba's love and has won his own unique place in the hearts of those who knew him. Aloba's body now lies beside that of Eruch, who passed away the previous year, in the men mandali's cemetery in Lower Meherabad.

## Letter from the Chairman

My dear ones of the Beloved,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and Meherazad Mandali, it is my pleasure to inform you of the development of the objects taken under the Development Plan. As all you dear ones consider Meherabad and Meherazad as your home, it is my duty to let you know, my brothers and sisters, what is happening in the Home where our Beloved lived in physical form. And He is still living actively as the Eternal One.

With great difficulty, permission has been obtained for a pipeline from the municipal source direct to our sump near Kinetic Engineering. Additionally, the laying of another pipeline from the sump to Meherabad, (roughly 6 kilometers) will begin after completing the pipeline from the municipal source to our sump. The cost from the municipal source to our sump (about 2 kilometers) will be about \$73,000. After its completion, we will give another contract for the remaining 6 kilometers.

At present, we are getting water to Meherabad through tankers from Ahmednagar because this year the rain failed. This has been going on since summer. When construction of our pipeline has been completed, we will be free from this difficulty, at least for a while. But, with the Trust Estate expanding, additional water sources will again be needed.

The construction of Meher Pilgrim Retreat (the new Pilgrim Centre) is going on very well. We have engaged tankers for water from Ahmednagar to keep the construction work from stopping. The construction of the staff quarters is also going on very well. We have not as yet taken up the construction of the administration building. When the day does come that construction of the registration office is complete, pilgrims will be able to go directly to Meherabad and will no longer have to come to the Trust compound in Ahmednagar.

The Archives building, "Manzil-e-Meher," is complete and furnishing is going on, as well as discussion about the administration. The first phase of the arrangement of the pilgrims for the Educational Gathering, Amartithi, is complete and the second phase is under way. A ground breaking program for the construction of the Meherazad Archives Building was held on the 14th of November.

If we thank Beloved Baba's dear ones for their loving help for the Development Plan, it is not sufficient. We feel touched with their loving help so that the objects which the Beloved has given in the Trust Deed may be fulfilled. And this help is a very lasting help. We may forget but the Beloved will never forget until the time we become one with Him. So, our help is the responsibility for Him which He fulfills to perform His Divine Duty. How compassionate He is and how fortunate His dear ones are, that we try our best to make His Home beautiful by fulfilling the objects He has given in the Trust Deed. How great He is that He makes His own room in every heart and lights the lamp of love so that His dear ones may see His Divine Face in their hearts one day. But until that day comes He cannot be free from His responsibility.

May Beloved Avatar Meher Baba bless you all with His love so that you may serve His cause through the Trust and feel happy to feel that you are doing your duty to please Him.

V.S. Kalchuri (Bhau), Chairman  
Avatar Meher Baba Trust

*"Be true to the trust that I have reposed in you."*  
– Avatar Meher Baba

## 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, PO Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398, USA (tel. 860-536-0303, e-mail [EAYers88@aol.com](mailto:EAYers88@aol.com)). To subscribe to *Tavern Talk* (the Trust's electronic newsletter), send an e-mail to [Listserv@ambppct.org](mailto:Listserv@ambppct.org) and include in the text of your message the words: "subscribe tavern-talk."

*"In His Service" is the newsletter of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust; all articles and other material are compiled under the direction of the Chairman. Issued biannually, it is designed and published by Sheriar Press, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, USA.*

*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*



# Sufi Programmes on a Golden Anniversary

THE YEAR 2002 marked the golden anniversary of many significant events in the life of the Avatar including the creation of Sufism Reoriented, whose “Charter of Guidance” Meher Baba signed at Meherabad on November 14, 1952 on the eve of the Fiery Free Life. It seems appropriate then, that 50 years later, a group of nearly 200 Sufis, led by Murshida Carol Weyland Conner, came to Meherabad to present a full week’s worth of original programs celebrating the life and work of the One who brought Sufism Reoriented into being.

The venue for these programmes was the theater in the Music and Arts Centre at Outer Meherabad. While the Centre now plays host during most months in the pilgrim season to plays and musical performances, the Sufi presentations were truly outstanding in their scope and scale, amounting to a kind of mini-festival.

Over a one-week period, from August 11-17th, five separate programmes in the Music and Arts Centre at Meherabad (in addition to two more in Mandali Hall at Meherazad) drew on the efforts of more than 60

performers, 25 technical staff, and 15 supporting workers, all of whom came from America to participate in this offering.

Most of the programmes were musical reviews, in which songs and music are drawn together on the thread of a linking narrative or theme. The first of these, “God Speaks – the Musical,” provided a light-hearted spoofing (with such song titles as “God Speaks Rap” and “Old Miz Maya”) on aspects of the “divine comedy” as set forth in *God Speaks*. The next day an ensemble of lady singers interwove melodies and harmonies in the repetition of Meher Baba’s name, while (for the last 15 minutes) a montage of His photographs was projected on a screen. On Tuesday at Meherazad, a leading “Sufi minstrel,” with the help of 5 other singers, regaled the mandali and pilgrims with a selection of his compositions.

There followed on the next day a choral presentation, as 35 men and women singers, along with 3 soloists, rendered choral compositions in several different musical idioms. On Thursday (August 15th) a programme entitled “Francis Brabazon: Images of Love” offered readings of poems of love and complaint from the work of the great Australian poet and disciple of Meher Baba, poems that were paired with original songs on the same themes.

The final two presentations were dramatizations based on Meher Baba’s life-story. Merwan’s Toddy Shop, drawing on a period in Baba’s life shortly after His Realization, recounted, through narrative, song, and dramatic monologue, how a lowly toddy shop (in effect, a tavern) was transformed into the “tavern of love” whose customers came to prefer the divine inebriation to the earthly.

On August 17th the final programme, “Meher Baba’s Life in Song,” presented songs and vignettes of Baba’s childhood, His unveiling by Hazrat Babajan, and His work with His first circle of disciples in the Manzil-e-Meem ashram in Mumbai. Nearly 50 singers, actors, and dancers took part in this celebration of the early life of the God-Man.

In addition to the artistic material that went into their composition, these programmes entailed an enormous effort on the technical front. A large quantity of lighting and sound equipment was brought in by the Sufi group for the occasion, which was used in conjunction with the existing Meherabad facilities. Some of the sets and other materials used for the festival were left behind, to the permanent enhancement of the Meherabad theater and the Trust’s programme for the arts.

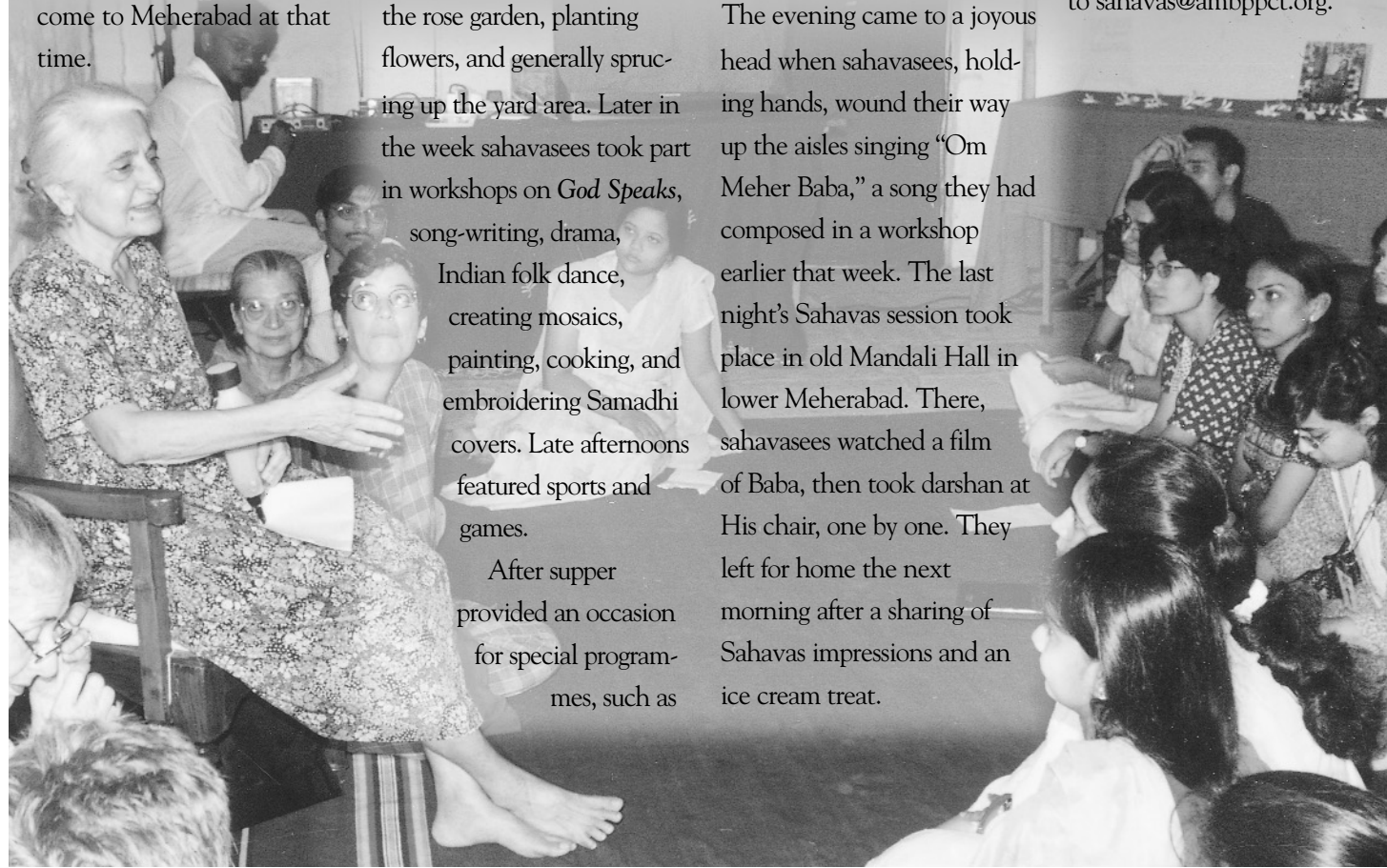


God Speaks, The Musical! Sunday, August 11, 2002

# Second Meherabad Young Adult Sahavas

THE TRUST’S INTERNATIONAL YOUNG ADULT SAHAVAS was held again this year at Meherabad, between 26th June and 3rd July. 83 young people between the ages of 19 and 30, along with 12 volunteers and 9 workers from the Meherabad resident staff, came together for a week of singing, talking, working, serving and sharing in the remembrance of Beloved Avatar Meher Baba.

Though the Sahavas draws on the participation of Baba lovers from all over the world, this year world events threw a monkey wrench into the works, effectively nullifying the international dimension of the gathering. In May, the threat of hostilities between India and Pakistan had heightened, and foreigners in India were advised to leave the country. In light of these warnings, in early June the Trust issued a notice requesting Baba lovers from abroad not to come to Meherabad at that time.



Within two weeks, with the easing of the international situation, this request was withdrawn; but by that time all but two foreign Sahavas registrants had canceled their trips.

New to the 2002 Sahavas was the involvement of 12 volunteers, who arrived 2 days before the beginning of the Sahavas for a programme of volunteer training. Another new feature in 2002 was the media room, where people could watch videos of Baba and the mandali, listen to audio tapes of Baba music and talks or view scanned images of Baba on a computer.

Activities were varied, some involving the entire group of sahavasees, others taking place within smaller groups. On the second day, participants enjoyed a walk to the Meher Health Centre at the edge of Arangaon village and spent the morning there planting hedges with brick borders, building a fence for the rose garden, planting flowers, and generally sprucing up the yard area. Later in the week sahavasees took part in workshops on *God Speaks*, song-writing, drama, Indian folk dance, creating mosaics, painting, cooking, and embroidering Samadhi covers. Late afternoons featured sports and games.

After supper provided an occasion for special programmes, such as

a bhajan concert by Madhusudan and his wife Subhadra, a group dance, watching Baba movies, and a discussion on relationships in the context of Baba’s family of lovers.

Special treats in the course of the gathering were visits by Meherazad mandali. Meheru shared memories of Mehera and her matchless love for the Beloved; Katie told funny stories about ashram life; Meherwan, Manu, Sam, and Roshan remembered times with Baba and Eruch; Bal Natu shared anecdotes and reflections on Baba. On the second to last day of the gathering, the sahavasees visited Meherazad, enjoying the company of Baba’s dear ones there as well as a brisk walk up Seclusion Hill.

On the fifth evening of the gathering, sahavasees shared artistic expressions of their love for Baba through song and dance with the greater Meherabad community in the Meherabad theater. The evening came to a joyous head when sahavasees, holding hands, wound their way up the aisles singing “Om Meher Baba,” a song they had composed in a workshop earlier that week. The last night’s Sahavas session took place in old Mandali Hall in lower Meherabad. There, sahavasees watched a film of Baba, then took darshan at His chair, one by one. They left for home the next morning after a sharing of Sahavas impressions and an ice cream treat.

Though Bhau was traveling in the West at the time of the Sahavas, he sent special messages for the opening and closing of the programme. In his closing address, Bhau explained the significance of sahavas thus:

**Why have we started the Young Adult Sahavas at Meherabad? It was started so that we remain in company with the Beloved. Not only during the Sahavas period here, but all the time. He is with us, thousands of times closer than our breath. He is One with us. Therefore, the opening of this Sahavas Program is that each one should make a room in his or her heart for the Beloved, for all time. It will be then the beginning of having His Sahavas.**

The Trust’s Young Adult Sahavas has now become an annual event. Persons seeking information about the 2003 Sahavas can write to Meherabad Young Adult Sahavas, c/o Avatar Meher Baba Trust, or send an email to [sahavas@ambppct.org](mailto:sahavas@ambppct.org).

# One-Year Monitoring of the Manzil-e-Meher Begins

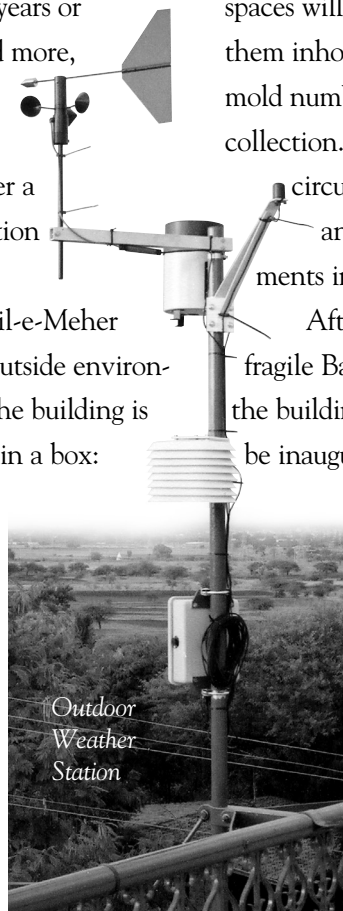


The completion of the physical construction of Manzil-e-Meher (the Trust’s new collection management facility on the east slope of Meherabad Hill) has ushered in a new phase in the Trust’s ongoing effort to preserve personal articles, papers, films, and photographs associated with Meher Baba’s Advent.

For a full year beginning October 1, 2002, the new building will undergo a comprehensive programme of diagnostic monitoring. The monitoring will help determine how outside weather conditions, temperature, relative humidity, wind, and sunshine affect conditions inside the building. This information will be crucial to the care and preservation of the precious Baba treasures which will be moved into the building only after the monitoring has been successfully completed.

The reason that this diagnostic monitoring is essential is that Manzil-e-Meher was designed on the concept of passive climate control. Traditionally in the West, museum and archiving facilities control climate conditions through energy-consuming technologies such as air conditioning, heating, and dehumidification. These technologies are extremely expensive and will grow more so as energy costs rise. In India, reliance on outside energy sources becomes especially problematic in view of frequent electrical blackouts. Moreover, since the legacy of the Avatar will endure not just for years or decades but rather for centuries and more, the Trust has chosen to employ methods in the preservation of this legacy that could be sustainable over a long period of time, even if civilization passes through profound changes.

The basic principle which Manzil-e-Meher draws upon is insulation from the outside environment through buffering. In effect, the building is like a thermos bottle, or a box within a box: two roofs, one above the other, are separated by an air channel, and two outside walls are divided by a thermal corridor. This buffering is intended to moderate extremes of change in temperature and humidity and thus to provide stable conditions for the perishable personal items of Baba’s, papers, and other articles.

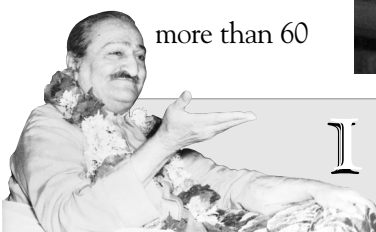


Outdoor Weather Station

To study just how well the facility actually works and in what ways outside weather conditions impact on internal conditions, Trust workers, in concert with outside specialists, will be collecting a range of data. An outdoor weather station will continuously measure temperature, relative humidity, rainfall, wind velocity, wind direction, sunshine, and other variables. At the same time, temperature and relative humidity will be continuously read in several rooms, inside room walls, and on the roof. Computer readouts of this data will be analyzed by a professional in the United States, who will then send detailed instructions relating to a regimen of opening and closing doors and windows – factors which will also be figured into the analysis. Through this 12-month monitoring process, archival workers hope to acquire a detailed working knowledge of how this new building can optimally be used.

Concurrent with the diagnostic monitoring, certain other kinds of work within the building will be moving ahead. The furnishing of the facility (with storage cabinets, treatment facilities and supplies, office equipment, and so forth) is already proceeding. Computers in office spaces will, over the next year, come into use for the recording and processing of information relating to the collection, correspondence, and other purposes. Rooms and other interior spaces will be carefully cleaned and sealed to make them inhospitable to insects. Indeed, insects and mold number among the foremost hazards to the collection. Meticulous housekeeping and air circulation, along with passive temperature and humidity control, are prime instruments in the war against these pests.

After this 12-month period, precious and fragile Baba treasures will gradually be moved into the building, and the next stage in the process will be inaugurated. The end in prospect, of course, is to share this material with Baba lovers throughout the world, through publication, through display at Meherabad, and through loans to Baba groups. The labor of many hands and hearts will be needed in the course of making this possible, and many avenues and opportunities of service will be available to those who would like to take part in the ongoing work inside Manzil-e-Meher.



## IN BRIEF

### SILENCE DAY.

The anniversary of Meher Baba’s silence-taking in 1925 was commemorated in 2002, as usual, in silence, and about 1000 pilgrims made the trip to Meherabad in honour of the occasion. With Baba’s help once again

the pilgrims were accommodated in the Hostel C and D facilities.

### NEW LIFE RAINS.

On the original New Life Day in 1949, Meher Baba, as He set out from Meherabad with His twenty companions, was greeted by a heavy rainfall. Fifty-three years

later, almost two inches of rain welcomed the 200 padyatris who came down the Ahmednagar-Daund highway to Meherabad late in the afternoon on New Life Day (October 16th) after a 190-kilometer walk from Nasik.

*Padyatra* is the Hindi word for a pilgrimage on

foot to a sacred place; though in the West such practice tapered off with the closing of the Middle Ages, in India it is not uncommon even today. The padyatra from Nasik was a seven-day affair and involved not only youngsters but people in their 50s and 60s and older. The ele-

phant rain which their arrival occasioned was the first significant downpour in more than a month.

### THE RETREAT RISES.

In the two years since groundbreaking on 15th November 2000, the Meher Pilgrim Retreat in the Pilgrim Education

Site to the west of the Samadhi is rising from its foundations to something approaching its full stature. Indeed, on the east wing of the women’s side, one can now climb the stairs to the roof of the first floor (what in America would be called the second floor) and enjoy one of the best and

## IN BRIEF

most panoramic views in the whole area.

The construction plan has been designed to keep a wide range of tradesmen – foundation layers, stone masons, brick layers, carpenters, plasterers, tilers laying the polished slate flooring, roofers, and soon painters and

electricians – all working at the same time. By current projections, the construction of the building itself will be completed by 2004-05. Meanwhile, planning is underway for the opening of the facility, which will constitute an operation on a scale unseen at Meherabad until now.

When it is operating at full capacity, the Retreat will lodge and board 200 pilgrims.

### CANDLES LIGHT THE NIGHT AT DIVALI.

Divali or the Festival of Lights – the major Hindu celebration of the year, something comparable to Christmas in

the west – brought in an influx of Indian pilgrims to Meherabad. On Divali night (November 4th) the Pilgrim Centre was decorated with garlands and ragoli – an ornamental design work on the ground and stone floor done with colored powder; the evening was ablaze with candles in

doorways; and after nightfall the crackle and boom of fireworks and firecrackers from Ahmednagar was like the skirmishing of some nearby battle.

A week before the event, on October 25th, several hundred Trust workers gathered in the theater in outer

Meherabad for what is called Narayan Seva (an annual love-gift from the Trust in the form of sweets and money). On this occasion Bhau gave a talk on the inner significance of Narayan Seva and the real meaning of work rendered in Baba’s service.