



IN HIS SERVICE

JANUARY / 2007

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

Commemoration of Baba's 1956 Accident



ON 2ND DECEMBER 1956, at about 5:30 in the afternoon, while returning by car to Satara after a one-day excursion to Poona, Meher Baba met with a major automobile accident. Eruch had been driving, with Baba in the front seat and Vishnu, Pendu, and Nilu in back. At the town of Utdara, exactly opposite where Baba and twenty men mandali had played a game of cricket eighteen months earlier, the car suddenly veered out of control. Dr. Nilu was killed instantaneously. Pendu had his pelvis crushed and suffered brain damage; Eruch broke all of his ribs. Baba, for His part, sustained many injuries, most significantly, the fracturing of the rim of the cup in His right hip. Though He was subsequently able to walk again, despite medical predictions to the contrary, Baba never fully recovered from this injury; and from that time on, not a day passed for Him without physical pain.

Baba's Satara accident was clearly one of the decisive events of this Avataric advent. To mark the fiftieth anniversary of this momentous, indeed, tragic occasion, on 2nd-3rd December 2006, the Trust hosted a two-day, five-session commemoration in its theater in the Music and Arts Centre in Outer Meherabad. Some four hundred pilgrims came for the program, which featured talks, songs, slides, drama, and a two-part film.

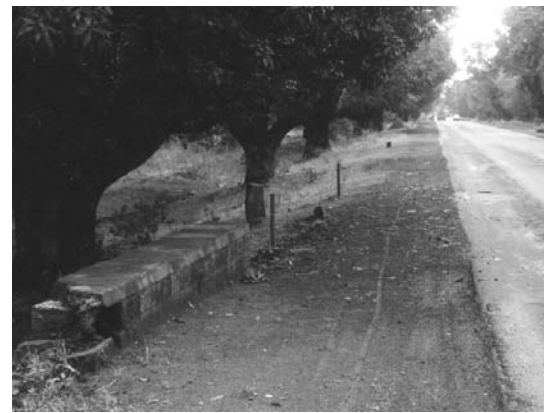
Weekend highlights included talks by Bhau Kalchuri and Meherwan Jessawala, who described in detail the lead-up to the accident, its terrible denouement, and its aftermath. Digambar Gadekar, the son of one of Baba's disciples, narrated some of the experiences of his father, who had been involved in the events earlier on that fateful day. Pratap Ahir, one of the early Poona group's "bhajan mandali" who, from 1950 onwards, performed many

times for Baba, sang several new songs that he had specially composed for this occasion.

The Bombay Baba group staged an original drama in which Meher Baba, as the play's leading character, "talked" (through hand gestures) about the Avatar's sense of humor, which He illustrated through episodes from the lives of the seven major Avatars. The afternoon sessions on both days concluded with a two-part video, "An Act of God." Incorporating video narrations by Eruch, Meherwan, Bhau, Meheru, and others, along with photographs, animation, live singing and dance, and other material, this extraordinary multi-media evocation made this phase and aspect of the Avatar's work vivid and immediate, to an extent that many in attendance had never experienced before.

Baba's two car accidents, the second in Satara and the first in Prague, Oklahoma in 1952, appear to have been connected with the crucifixion which, as Baba explained, the Avatar always takes upon Himself as a part of His work for humanity and the universe.

Site of the Accident Today



(Above) Since the road has recently been widened, the original culvert that Baba's car hit was farther to the right than in this photo.

(Right) Two Utdara villagers being interviewed at the site of the accident, which they personally witnessed fifty years ago



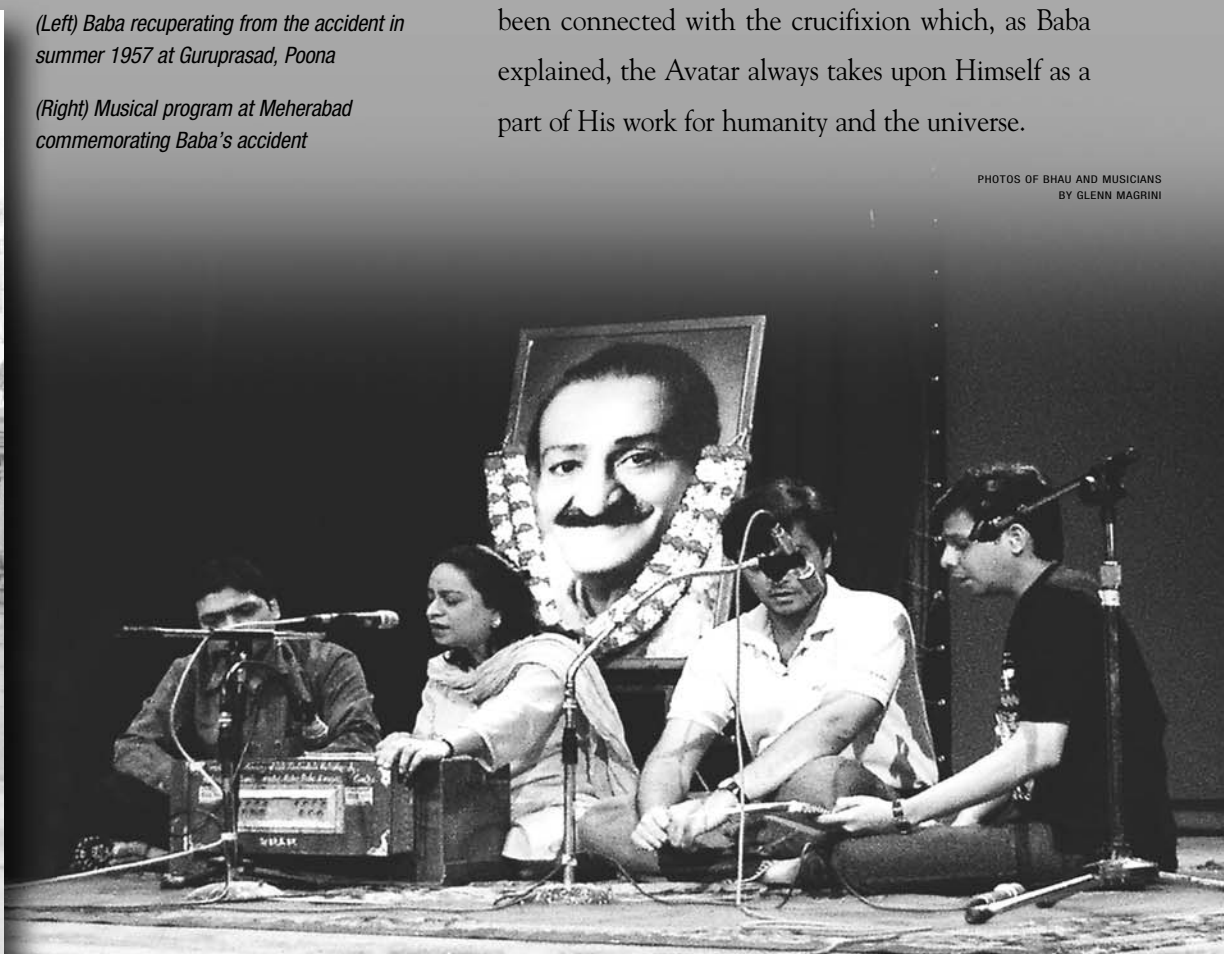
PHOTOS BY BIF SOPER



Bhau

(Left) Baba recuperating from the accident in summer 1957 at Guruprasad, Poona

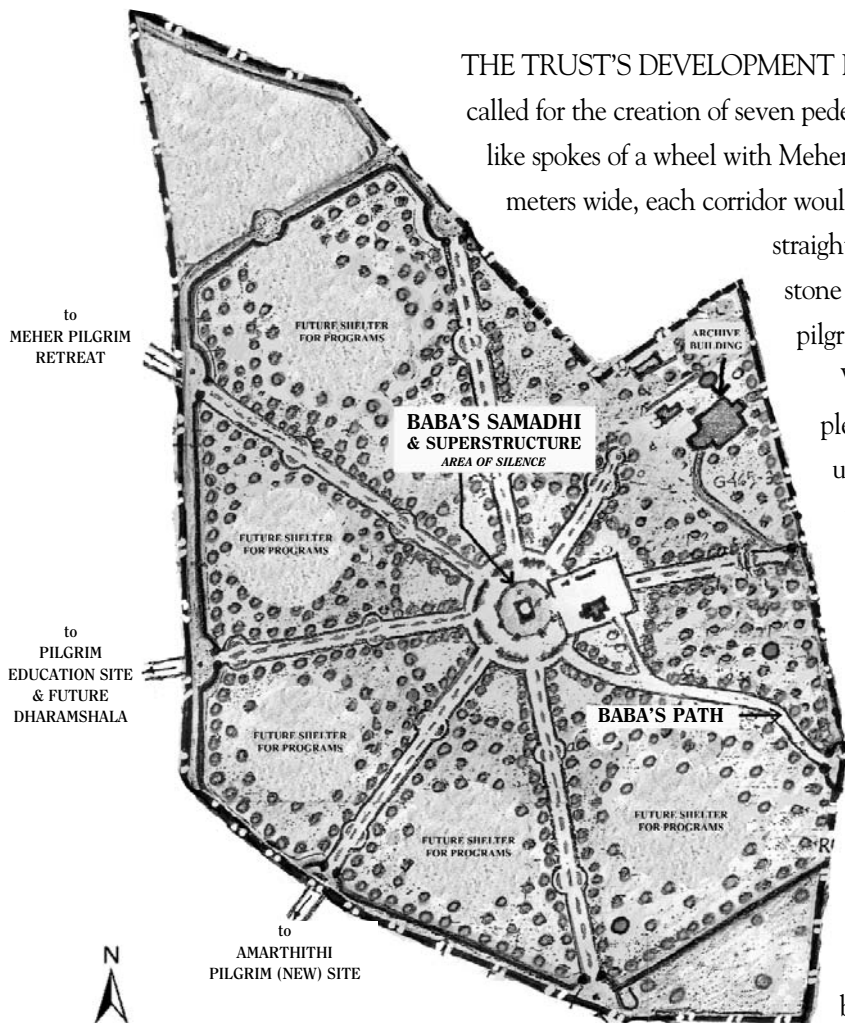
(Right) Musical program at Meherabad commemorating Baba's accident



PHOTOS OF BHAU AND MUSICIANS BY GLENN MAGRINI

PHOTOS OF MEHER BABA COURTESY OF MSI COLLECTION

Pedestrian View Corridor Planned for 2007



THE TRUST'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN, when it was first formulated in 1998, called for the creation of seven pedestrian view corridors, that would radiate out like spokes of a wheel with Meher Baba's Samadhi at their hub. About ten meters wide, each corridor would be bordered on each side by a single straight row of trees. Under the shade of these trees, stone benches at regular intervals would provide pilgrims with spots for rest and reflection.

With the Meher Pilgrim Retreat now complete and functioning, the Trust plans to undertake the construction of the first of these view corridors over the next year. Running from the Samadhi 250 meters in the direction of what is called the New Site (an Amarthithi accommodation facility on the south side of Meherabad Hill), this corridor will be particularly useful each January when Amarthithi draws crowds of tens of thousands to Meherabad. Since the Development Plan was formulated almost a decade ago, several thousand new trees have already been planted in this general vicinity.

New Ahmednagar By-Pass

The Government of Maharashtra has embarked on the construction of an Ahmednagar by-pass highway that will significantly affect the travel and transportation experience of Baba lovers coming to Meherabad on pilgrimage.

By current plans (as you can see on the accompanying map), the new road will complete two-thirds of a circuit around Ahmednagar. Starting from the Ahmednagar-Aurangabad highway just south of Shendi (a village about four kilometers from Meherabad), the ring road will loop around Ahmednagar to the west, meeting up with the Ahmednagar-Pune highway just south of Kedgaon — that is, a few miles on the Pune side of Ahmednagar itself. From there, a new strip of road will cut east near the village of Sonawadi along the fringes of the Trust estate. A flyover will cross the railways tracks and connect with Ahmednagar-Daund highway just on the far side of Arangaon village.

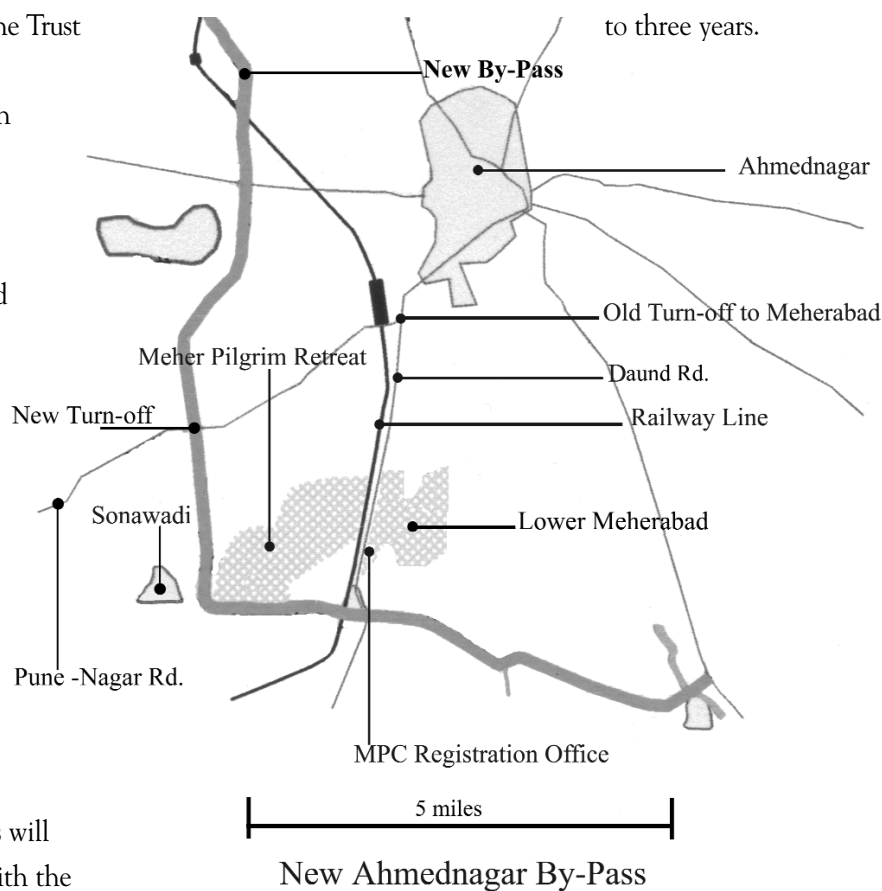
By the original plan, the road and flyover would have passed right through the heart of Meherabad, crossing the Daund highway directly in front of the old Pilgrim Centre. But in response to the Trust's plea, the government graciously redrew its maps, rerouting the new highway to the south.

From Arangaon, the by-pass will continue on until it joins up with the

highway to Solapur, thus completing two-thirds of a circle around Ahmednagar itself.

Once the by-pass has been built, pilgrims traveling from Pune will be spared the necessity of entering into Ahmednagar municipality but can cut directly to Arangaon, avoiding the city traffic. The flyover in particular will impact on the daily life of Meherabad, since it will provide an easy means for cars and other vehicles to pass over the tracks without getting entangled in the village railroad crossing. At present, the crossing frequently causes unanticipated fifteen- to twenty-minute delays, a significant barrier to the flow and movement between Lower Meherabad and the Hill.

The government plans to complete the new by-pass highway in two to three years.



Goolu Dastur Returns to Baba

Goolu Dastur, daughter of Kaikobad, passed away during the night of 14th November in the cottage on Meherabad Hill that she occupied with her sister Jalu for more than half a century.



Goolu

Born in 1926, Goolu's close association with Meher Baba began in July of 1944, when her father Kaikobad was called to Meherabad to live there as one of Baba's resident mandali. Kaikobad brought with him his entire family, which included his wife, three daughters, and a son.

When Kaikobad followed Baba into the New Life, his was the only family to continue residing on the Hill. His wife Jerbai and three daughters stayed on there after the New Life came to an end, through those long decades of the 1950s and 60s when Meherabad was a largely deserted rural outpost.

After their older sister and parents passed away, Goolu and Jalu remained, as the growing influx of pilgrims transformed Meherabad into a beehive of life and activity.

One of the blessed souls of this Advent, Goolu spent almost her entire adult life under Baba's supervision, and she died within a few steps of His Samadhi. Baba's own Meherabad was indeed Goolu's entire world, and her life story is woven into the fabric of that sacred place.

Extraordinary Monsoon Rainfalls

The 2006 monsoon dumped extraordinary rainfalls on the Ahmednagar district, topping off wells almost to



Seclusion Hill, Meherabad, reflected in a new monsoon pond

ground-level, transforming what are usually dry creek and river beds into raging torrents, flooding lakes and bands, swelling large ponds in the corners of farmer's fields that have persisted for weeks into the dry autumn season of November-December.

At Meherabad the seasonal total (June through October) came to just under 40 inches, and at Meherabad, perhaps five inches less than that—in both cases, far, far more than the average. The Pimpalgaon Lake down the approach road from Meherabad filled beyond capacity, so that for almost two months the overflow surged in a slow current across the Vambori road just north of the Meherabad turnoff. Vehicles traveling along the edge of the dam from Happy Valley have had to make their way across a kind of river ford, perhaps a hundred meters across and twelve inches deep.

At Meherabad, the torrential rains of September and early October transformed the dirt roads and fields of Lower Meherabad into a huge mudpot, while the Hill was sluiced with rivulets and rills and little waterfalls. In the valley immediately to the south of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, a large earthen band created a standing lake several acres in extent and spotted here and there with large trees rising out of the water—the kind of sight one would expect to find in a Louisiana bayou more than in the semi-arid plains of the Deccan plateau.

Meherabad-Meherabad residents, local farmers, and other inhabitants of this ordinarily drought-afflicted region look forward hopefully to a year of ample water supplies.

Inauguration of New Meher Free Dispensary Building



Dr. Goher, founder of Meher Free Dispensary

On 1st November 2006, the newly completed Meher Free Dispensary building in Meherazad was inaugurated in a simple ceremony attended by about a hundred Baba lovers from the Ahmednagar area.

Located down a dirt road about two kilometers to the west of historic Meherazad, the new building is far more expansive than its predecessor—7350 as compared with 1500 square feet. Its eighteen principal rooms are configured in a square around a central garden courtyard. Situated in a large open field in a rural farming area, the new building affords a particularly spectacular view of Seclusion Hill. Its removal from the center of Meherazad will help to keep dispensary patients apart from the pilgrims—a desirable effect, since the intermingling of these two populations could contribute to the spread of disease and epidemics.

The 24-hour period preceding the inauguration brought with it its touch of drama: wild winds during the night tore down tree branches and overturned flower pots, while torrential rains threatened to make the dirt roads—rugged in the best of circumstances—outright impassible. Happily, the morning of 1st November dawned bright and sunny, and by 10:30 in the morning a little convoy of cars, jeeps, motorcycles, and a bus had successfully negotiated its way through fields and nullas and parked in the dispensary parking area.



Meheru gave a talk about the history of the Dispensary

The brief ceremony began with a garlanding of Baba's photographs and a recitation of the prayers and arti. Meheru spoke, recalling the dispensaries that Baba had created and operated on a shoestring budget in the early days at Meherabad and elsewhere, and later, the unique services which Dr. Goher rendered, both as Baba's personal physician and as the founder of the Meher Free Dispensary itself and the Meher Health Centre at Meherabad. Bhau followed, chronicling the history of the



Courtyard of new Meher Free Dispensary

Dispensary in more detail, and explaining the difference between social service, which is service according to the world's understanding, and selfless service, which in its true sense only Perfect Ones can perform.

After the program the visitors toured the facility and enjoyed the tasty treats and cold drinks.

From its new location the Meher Free Dispensary will continue to provide free medical services to the poor population of sixty surrounding villages. The medical team, which includes five doctors, is administered by Dr. Michael Ramsden.

Integrating traditional western, ayurvedic, homeopathic, and chiropractic forms of treatment, the Dispensary continues to serve more than a hundred patients each day that it is open.



Falu giving Bhau a tour of the various treatment rooms



PHOTOS BY KACY COOK

Chikungunya Epidemic

The opening of the pilgrim season in June witnessed the arrival of a most unwelcome visitor—an epidemic of the viral fever known as chikungunya.

Carried by mosquitoes, the current African strain of this disease spread in the early months of 2006 from some of the tropical islands in the Indian Ocean through south India. By mid-monsoon, the local population in Ahmednagar district was severely afflicted. For a time, the epidemic decimated the Meherabad-Meherazad work force; in addition, seven residents and four pilgrims have contracted the virus. Some of the cases have been mild, but in the more severe instances, patients are largely debilitated for two to three months together.

Chikungunya is attended by high fever and acute bone pain, particularly in the joints of the hands and feet. Though the disease seldom kills, it creates the sensation of broken bones and thus makes walking

and other movement excruciating. In fact, the name “chikungunya” is derived from an African dialect and means “to walk crooked”—a phenomenon much in evidence in Meherabad of late. (Despite sounding like the English word “chicken,” chikungunya has nothing to do with the avian flu.)

The breed of mosquito that carries it, known as *aedes*, feeds (and bites) in the day-time. This same striped-legged pest carries dengue fever, a perennial hazard in India that can sometimes be fatal. *Aedes* mosquitoes breed in standing water, especially in plastic tanks or discarded plastic containers. Always a vexatious element in the life of Meherabad, the mosquito population has been the particular beneficiary of nature's boon this season in the form of abundant rainfall, which has filled to the brim the many open wells and dotted the Meherabad landscape with puddles and standing pools and ponds.

Since modern medicine has yet to discover an effective cure, the Meherabad medical team has concentrated much effort on prevention. Pilgrims have been repeatedly warned to cover up bare skin and apply mosquito repellent. Water and septic tanks have been inspected and, when found to be leaky, sealed. The medical staff regularly samples pools and other standing water for larvae, and when necessary, treats the water with an eco-friendly product known as BT (*bacillus thuringensis*).

Happily, chikungunya's pilgrimage to Meherabad-Meherazad seems to be coming to a close, and the epidemic has begun to wane. Apparently this pestilence is cyclical: the last outbreak in India struck thirty-seven years ago. Hopefully many more long years will pass before this “crooked walker” hobbles down the Daund highway to visit us again.

New Projects after the MPR

The Avatar Meher Baba Trust is supported entirely by love-gifts from Meher Baba's lovers around the world. The generosity of Baba's worldwide family underwrote the construction of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, which opened its doors this past 15th June. Development projects currently in progress include the expansion of the Meher English School building, construction of staff quarters in the vicinity of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, and completion of the Pilgrim Education Site, a facility that will accommodate 4000 Amartithi pilgrims.

Much has been accomplished, and more needs to be done. Your continued donations will help sustain the Trust in its on-going efforts. 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 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.

"Trust Talk" launched: Official Source for Trust News

SEVEN YEARS AGO the Trust launched an electronic newsletter entitled "Tavern Talk." It was formed with the intention of sharing with Baba's worldwide family current news and stories conveying the flavor of life at Meherabad and Meherazad.

Since that time, Tavern Talk has expanded, both in its subscription list and in the types of stories and articles that it carries. This past November the Trust launched a new line of postings. "Trust Talk," as it has been entitled, will provide a channel for official Trust information: Trust circulars; announcements of programs; schedules of Trust events and activities; the latest health and travel advisories; and previews of the up-coming edition of the newsletter "In His Service" and the Trust's yearly Financial Report.

Trust Talk will also keep you apprised of changes and new features in the Trust web site. For example, did you know that the Trust Deed and Meher Baba's Last Will and Testament, as well as Bhau Kalchuri's new book *The Spiritual Training Programme*, can all be found there? As Amartithi approaches this January, Trust Talk will send out information about webcasts and audio broadcasts through the internet.

Subscriptions to Tavern Talk—which includes Trust Talk, Heart Talk, and the serial publication of the Combined Diary—are available free of charge. The easiest way to subscribe is through the Trust web site at <http://www.ambppct.org>, under the "Events and News" section. You can also subscribe by sending an e-mail to Listserv@ambppct.org and including in the text of your message the words: "subscribe tavern-talk."

Baba's Mandali at Meherazad

KAIKOBAD, 1891–1976

Meher Baba's resident mandali comprised an extraordinary cast of characters, each distinct in personality and in the role he played in the life around the Avatar.

A Zoroastrian from the priestly class, Kaikobad Dastur came to live with Baba in 1944 as a man already in his 50s. He brought most of his family with him. His wife and three daughters settled into the old maternity hospital building on Meherabad Hill, while Kaikobad moved in with the men down below. Over the next quarter century, Kaikobad

continued to reside with Baba, wherever He was.

Eruch used to say that Baba would cultivate and make use of the natural traits of His mandali. As a former priest, Kaikobad was spontaneously attracted to prayer. And so, among all of Baba's disciples, he was the only one whose sole duty was to repeat Baba's name! This he would do 100,000 times a day, keeping count through a system that involved touching the knuckles and joints of his fingers with his finger tips. He was also unusual among Baba's disciples in that he had spiritual experiences. As Baba Himself once commented before a gathering, Kaikobad actually enjoyed glimpses of God's reality and would see a dark room lit up with a brilliance greater than that of the earth's sun.

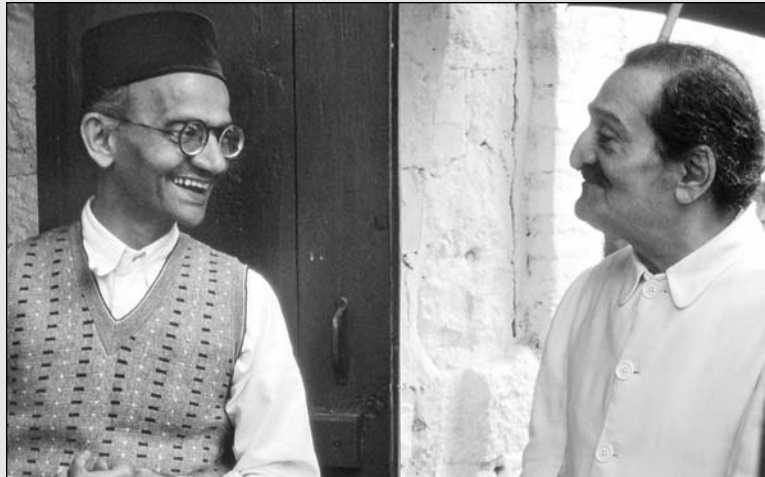
Baba used Kaikobad for special kinds of work, which they would carry out behind closed doors. As Meherwan Jessawala describes it, "Kaikobad would put his foot on a stool and Baba would bow down, touching Kaikobad's foot with His forehead, while Kaikobad would cry out one of the names of God."

When Baba embarked on the New Life in 1949, Kaikobad numbered among the "yes-walas," joining Baba at Dehra Dun. At that time Baba gave him an exceedingly difficult order: he should stop repeating

Baba's name! For in the New Life Baba was one of the companions and no longer wanted to be treated as God in human form.

One day in Satara, Baba suddenly turned to Kaikobad and asked, "What are you doing? Are you still repeating My name?" Kaikobad had not even been

aware that he was doing so. He replied, "Baba, you told me not to repeat Your name, but sometimes, without my even knowing it, my tongue utters it anyway." "But this is My order, and



Baba with Kaikobad in Meherazad

you have broken it!" Baba scolded. "What is the sense of your living with Me in the New Life if you can't obey My orders?" Repeating Baba's name for Kaikobad had become as natural as breathing; to keep from doing so required constant vigilance. Such were the ironies of life in Baba's company!

In 1966, Baba was planning some intensive work with Kaikobad. But before this could come to pass, one day an ant bit him on the foot. Thinking that it was a scorpion, Kaikobad tried to shake it off, and in the process, fell and broke his hip. When he heard the news, Baba was extremely upset. He told the men, "You see how Maya is coming in the way of My work! That is why this has happened."

Kaikobad never fully recovered from this accident, and he spent his final years in a wheelchair. But he continued repeating Baba's name until the end. When Baba dropped his body in 1969, Kaikobad was one of the fourteen disciples residing in Meherazad with Him.

Kaikobad subsequently shifted back to Meherabad to live with his family. He died there on 20th January 1976, and his body was buried in the men's cemetery in Lower Meherabad, between the graves of fellow disciples Gustadji Hansotia and Vishnu Deorukhar.

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. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org). To subscribe to Tavern Talk (the Trust's

electronic newsletter), send an e-mail to Listserv@ambppct.org and include in the text of your message the words: "subscribe tavern-talk." Further information about the Trust can be found on its web site at <http://www.ambppct.org> and <http://www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org>. Subscriptions to **In His Service** or **Tavern Talk** can be submitted through the web site in its "Events and News" section.

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