



# IN HIS SERVICE

JUNE / 2017

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

## Samadhi Refreshening

In March and April this year, Avatar Meher Baba's Samadhi underwent extensive maintenance on the exterior. This work is required every five years or so, to keep up a beautiful aesthetic surface on the dome and painted areas, and for waterproofing of the roof to protect the interior. Flaking areas are sanded, surface cracks are cut out and refilled, and the whole surface is given a new coat of paint. This year the gold leaf was also reapplied, on the top finial and on the lettering of Baba's marble slab.

Guidance for this ongoing work is taken from the instructions left by Baba's sister Mani. When, as Chairman of the Trust, Mani oversaw the restoration of the Samadhi in 1990–1991, she paid careful attention to the waterproofing of the exterior and to the colors used for the decorative work—the four religious symbols, the lettering, and the trim around the flat surfaces. Mani approved every color

that the color scheme should remain consistent in the future. Samples were carefully prepared and saved for future reference and these same colors have been used ever since in maintaining the Samadhi.



After the cracks are filled and the surface is sanded, a durable, flexible, breathable acrylic white paint is applied. The colors are applied with oil enamel paints. The white dome surface needs special consideration in the painting. It is done in the coolest hours of the morning, right after morning arti. A team of six people is used for the

process. The paint must be applied onto a cool, wet surface, so it must be done fairly quickly. The six people are in two teams of three; they start together at one point and paint around the dome until they meet on the opposite side. In each team, one tall person starts at the top and paints downward to the halfway point while a second person paints from midpoint to the bottom of

the dome. The third member is spot-checking the whole process, watching for missed areas, bubbles, or insects landing on the surface. And so the three-tiered teams inch around the dome in opposite directions to the finish point on the other side.

This year quite a number of Baba lover volunteers were able to contribute to the project. Most of the contributors were not able to stay for the length of the work and somehow Baba worked it out so that as one or a few would depart, others eager to help would arrive. These changes presented their own challenges, too, as communication became one of the biggest skills needed in coordinating the work. Every new helper had to be oriented to the tasks at hand. As one of them noted, “You can sand too lightly, and you can sand too heavily . . .”.

March and April were very hot months and work schedules had to be devised to cope with the effects of the intense sun. Yet everything had to be done between the hours of morning and evening arti, so there was no avoiding the high daily temperatures for the workers. Working up on the high scaffolding, going up and down the ladder, craning the neck and stretching the arms and legs . . . the physical demands were sometimes considerable. All these challenges together could only point to Baba's work of a different nature: While the volunteers worked on His Samadhi, He most certainly worked on them!

A few of the helpers we spoke to near the end of the work in April were quite eloquent about the privilege they felt in being able to join the Samadhi work:

“It's not work, it's something else altogether. More like meditation.”

“Working on the Samadhi has a natural flow to it; it's comfortable as it touches your heart.”

“It seems to involve mindfulness, awareness.

The sense of cooperation and community is always there. And the focus on Him is paramount.”

*Workers repairing the dome and painted surfaces of the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill.*



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Jai Baba, dear Family,

By the time you receive this message it will be the end of summer and the beginning of the new Pilgrim season. Baba lovers will notice that Beloved Baba's Samadhi has a fresh and shining coat of paint on the exterior. In March and April 2017, several volunteers undertook surface repairs and painting of the dome and roof area of the Samadhi. This year the summer temperatures started quite early. But unmindful of the scorching heat, these volunteers did a wonderful job of painting the dome and it looks very beautiful.

The Trustees join me in saluting our friend and companion in Baba's love, dear Dolly Dastoor, wife of Trustee Jal Dastoor, who joined her Beloved Avatar Meher Baba this past April. Dolly was a dear friend and an inspiration to many, many Baba lovers and new visitors to Meherabad and will be missed for years to come.

This past season, among the many pilgrims from all over India and from 41 countries of the world, we were pleased to welcome newcomers from South Korea. A group of about 15 came during the Amartithi period. They were recently led to Baba through a connection of Mark Choi, a Korean-American Baba lover from California, and

they were very enthusiastic to make their pilgrimage to Baba's home and His Samadhi.

The long awaited vehicular underpass for small vehicles near the present Railway Gate at Arangaon Village has become operational from 29th March and that irritating wait to cross the track is over. Due to the efforts of some Baba lovers, the road leading from the Railway Gate to the Samadhi has been paved by government authorities.

For a long time the Trust has been trying to get permission from the Railway authorities to build a private pedestrian underpass for pilgrims to cross the Railway track going from Lower Meherabad to the Samadhi. Currently, people have to walk across the top of the Railway track, which Railway authorities discourage for safety reasons. Several times in the past they have tried to put up obstacles like steel girders to discourage people from crossing the track. In the not-too-distant future, the track is likely to be doubled. It will become more difficult, and even less safe, for pilgrims to cross the tracks. A pedestrian underpass will also be a tremendous advantage during Amartithi, when thousands have to walk up and down Meherabad Hill.

Up to now the permission from the Railways was not forthcoming and the cost estimate for such a

project was very high. This past year, the Trust has renewed its efforts to find ways of reducing the cost. With the efforts of several Baba lovers, not only has the permission to build the subway been received, but also the cost estimate was reduced by about 20%. We have signed the necessary agreement with the Indian Railways Dept. The budgeted project cost will be Rs. 86 lakhs (US \$133,000). We have deposited with the Railways Dept. Rs. 66 lakhs (US \$102,000), and the rest will be the cost of work on the project to be undertaken by the Trust. The underpass will be built a little to the north of the present pathway. Special contributions from Baba lovers for this project are most welcome. The Trust's Annual Financial Report, along with the Balance Sheet, is published in this issue. This is part of the Board's effort to provide both clarity and transparency with regard to the Trust's finances.

In Baba's Love,  
Shridhar Kelkar, Chairman  
Avatar Meher Baba Trust  
*Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!*



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL LIBERON

## Amartithi 2017

The 48th Amartithi of Avatar Meher Baba was held at Meherabad Jan. 30 – Feb. 1, 2017. Nearly 20,000 Baba pilgrims were accommodated in the hostels, tents, and Meher Pilgrim Retreat. Thousands more came as day visitors. Darshan at the Samadhi continued day and night, while Baba lovers entertained Him and His audience of lovers on the amphitheater facing the Samadhi. The feeling of oneness pervaded the atmosphere as old friends and new met each other at the gathering.



## PART SEVEN | HISTORY OF THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST

### MEHER BABA'S DIRECTIVES TO THE TRUST, AS RECORDED BY BAL NATU, CONTINUED

This is the last of Bal Natu's five entries recording Baba's instructions for the Avatar Meher Baba Trust given out by Him between 1963 and 1968, and the last in our series on the formation of the Trust. On this last occasion, Baba

gave no new "points" regarding the future conduct and activities of the Trust. The focus is rather on the compiling and writing up of Baba's instructions which, fortunately, Bal Natu had noted down over several years. Meher

Baba dropped His physical form three months later. These directives appear to be His last for the Trust He created, which have been put into place by the trustees of the Avatar Meher Baba P. P. C. Trust.

**DOLLY DASTOOR,**  
*dear friend and inspiration to many, served her Beloved Baba throughout her life. She joined Baba on 7 April 2017.*



October 31, 1968

Meherazad

The days I spent at Meherazad during diwali vacation were really very refreshing—life giving. To be with Baba is to experience a marvel each moment. Baba's health was not good; but once He sat in the chair in mandali's hall, to me He looked as radiant and beautiful as ever.

Today Adi K. Irani from Ahmednagar and Padri from Meherabad visited Meherazad, on some work. After attending to the regular correspondence which was read out to Beloved Baba by Eruch and Bhau, Baba attended to other day to day activities. He had a "Talk" with Adi Sr. and Padri for which they had come. Later, in the course of general conversation the subject of the work expected to be done by Avatar Meher Baba Trust, cropped up. Nariman and Kaka Baria were also present but Pendu brought to Baba's notice that Baba intended to give some more directions over the subject on which He was giving specific instructions from time to time. I personally gathered that it was in reference to the clause (b)(F)(vii), mentioned in the Trust Deed. I know some of these instructions which He gave in Guru-Prasad at Poona.

This time, instead of giving any additional instructions, Baba asked Eruch, "Had any of the Trustees compiled the instructions that I have been giving from time to time?" Eruch replied, "I don't know, Baba. Perhaps someone from the Trustees might have done that. With regards to this I have nothing on record."

Baba asked the Trustees who were present, if any of them had collected and compiled the instructions under the clause in question. They replied that for want of time, however much they wished, they couldn't do that. Baba conveyed, "It is said that everyone's work becomes no man's work! Whatever that be you should have attended to this work. Isn't it important? The Trustees ask me for the instructions but they do not note the

directions in detail. Some of you are getting old and it will be harder for you to remember what I have been conveying from time to time. Aren't you really interested in [the] Trust created by me?"

I (Bal Natu) intervened, "Baba, whenever you permit me to be with you, I try to note down the explanations and instructions given by you on important matters. Whenever I was present in Guru-Prasad, at Poona, I had tried to note down the instructions or guidelines but these were scribbled on loose sheets or in different exercise books. On my return to Kurduwadi, I would just try to put these papers in separate files as I intend to prepare a compendium of chronological references, pertaining to various aspects of your life." Baba asked me, "Bal, have you noted down all the instructions?" I (Bal) replied, "As far as I remember, you have commenced giving such directions from the year 1963. I can't say I have noted all the instructions given to the Trustees with regards to this particular clause; but because I felt that this particular subject was rather important, I have tried to put them down in black and white whenever I was present."

Hearing this Baba told me (Bal) to find and collect these notes from the files and to send them to Eruch. Baba told Eruch that after getting these notes, he should see if Bal had noted the main points given by Him. Later Baba added, "Then the Trustees and a few of the mandali sit together and then with the help of these notes and other points that they could remember—given by me at different times, they should prepare a general list of the instructions given by me."

Eruch intervened, "Baba, for this work we shall need a longer period. At present, because of the impending darshan programmes at Poona in summer where we expect many lovers from East and West to visit for your

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## Avataric Treasure

The 7th Annual Legacy Program, Discovering the Avataric Treasure, was conducted Feb. 10 and 11, 2017, in the MPC meeting hall at lower Meherabad. Baba lovers attended four separate sessions during the two days. The topics presented fit into this year's theme: Avatar Meher Baba's life between 1931–1938. As with the previous Avataric Treasure programs,

Baba lovers were invited well in advance to prepare talks, films, and slideshow presentations. Various presenters came from Meherabad, India, and abroad. Topics included Baba's "Early Messages to the West," The Blue Bus Tours, Baba's Work with the God-mad, Baba's Third Trip to Persia, Baba's film "How It All Happened," Baba's Message to Hollywood, and more.

## Children's Sahavas Program 2016

The Meherabad Welcome and Information Office hosted the first Children's Sahavas at Meherabad, a one-day program of singing, games, coloring, skits, and joke-telling on December 24, 2016. Children from ages 2 to 14 were invited to attend, with the younger ones accompanied by a parent. About 25 children participated. The morning session in the MPC meeting hall was just for the kids, and it was followed by a program of entertainment on the stage of the Meherabad Theatre (Music and Arts Centre).

They played musical chairs and learned to sing "You Are My Sunshine," the way Mani sang it for pilgrims. The children's drawings were displayed at the theatre, and many of them performed on stage there too in the afternoon program. It was a treat to see the beautiful, happy energy of the children participating.

"I love small animals, for they are part of my creation. But I love children much more, for with them I am the eternal child, and they in their happy play are my playmates." Meher Baba.



## BABA'S 123<sup>RD</sup> BIRTHDAY

Baba's 123rd birthday celebration at Meherabad began before 5:00 am at His Samadhi, as pilgrims gathered on that sacred hill in silence and darkness to bring in the new Meher year together. Amid the beautiful decorations adorning His Samadhi, prepared specially for this day, prayers, arti, and "Happy Birthday" were offered to Baba. Later in the morning, a joyous singing program was held in the MPC meeting hall, with choirs on stage joined by the audience in singing His praises.

The afternoon drama was "He Gives the Ocean," based on Najoo Kotwal's book of the same name, which details the story of the

Kotwal family's life with Meher Baba. Najoo's parents and their three children were devoted to Baba throughout their lives and lived for a time with Baba in the Meherabad ashram. A Baba lover from Arangaon remarked after the play that she knew Najoo and her family personally and was very moved by the story as it brought everything back for her.

An art exhibit of works of devotion to Baba was presented on the verandah of the Theatre just for the afternoon of Baba's birthday, and an interactive art session for children of all ages was also conducted there before the birthday play.



## 62 Programs Held at Meherabad

Programs celebrating Avatar Meher Baba were held at Meherabad throughout last season. These programs included music concerts by Baba lovers from around the world, Indian qawwali and bhajan singing, a variety of programs commemorating certain events or mandali members on their birthdays, talks and lectures,

films, and dramatic productions. In all there were sixty-two programs attended by a total of 9,832 audience members. Forty-four were held in the MPC Meeting Hall, seventeen in the Theatre (Music and Arts Centre), and one under the Tin Shed, upper Meherabad.

## Visitor Numbers Rising

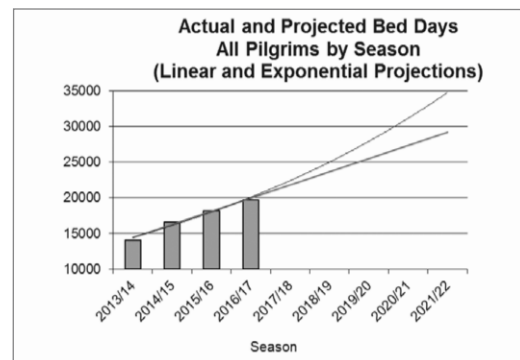
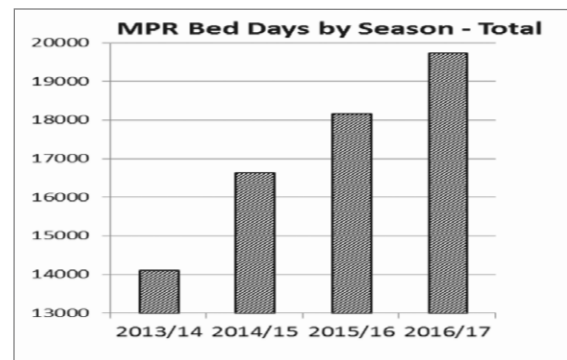
Pilgrim visitors to Meherabad this year came from 47 different countries of the world. The largest contingents, by far, were those from all over India, more than 90% of our total. The Trust accommodated 20,311 pilgrims for Amartithi, and 10,107 during the rest of the pilgrim season (each booking counts as one, even if that person has come more than once).

Detailed statistics for MPR occupancy show that the total bed-days this season was 19,739, 8.6% higher than last season and 40% higher than three years ago. (One pilgrim staying for one night=one bed-day.) Although a ten-year graph shows both increases and decreases from one season to the next, the past four seasons show a clear upward trend.

### ANALYSIS OF MPR OCCUPANCY AS OF 15 MARCH 2017

#### Bed-Days

These graphs show the increase in bed-days over the past 4 seasons and the projected bed-days through to 2021. Note that 1 pilgrim staying for 1 night = 1 bed-day. 35,000 bed-days would equal a 64% occupancy rate.





# Trust Directives

Continued from page 2

darshan–sahas, it is really very hard to spare time for the work you just mentioned. Again to bring all the Trustees and the mandali together at one time will be a problem. Do you really want us to finish this job so quickly?”

Baba gestured, “There is no hurry about it. But as soon as it is possible, do not forget to get this work done.”

I (Bal), said, “Baba, I too will require some time to find these certain pages from my diary notes; then I will have to get the matter typed before sending the papers to Eruchbhai.”

Baba gestured, “Never mind, but bear in mind my instruction to you.”

Looking at those who were sitting in Mandali Hall, Baba continued, “I have conveyed some instructions of this type to Elizabeth and Kitty during my last two visits to the United States regarding the Trust which they have established there. I also mentioned to them then that I would be giving the same kind of instructions when the Trust would be created in India and some of these instructions were conveyed to them during their visit to India in 1962, during the period of East-West Gathering. They told me that one way or the other I had been referring to such instructions since early 40s. During the last few years some of the Trustees asked me for the instructions and directions but somehow they forgot to note down these in proper sequence; don’t worry over that. But now after receiving the papers from Bal Natu try to list all these points and put them in proper shape. In future, you will need these.”

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

Contributions can be made directly to the Trust at: AMBPPC Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King’s Road, Ahmednagar 414001, MS, India. Donations may be sent by personal check or demand draft payable to Avatar Meher Baba PPC Trust and may be in any currency. In addition, a few Baba organizations in the USA and UK have established legal means to accept tax-deductible donations and transfer them to the Trust.

In the UK: Please send tax-deductible contributions to 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 USA, to make tax-deductible donations to support the Development Plan and/or Operating Expense grants being made to the Trust, please see the Trust’s website (click on the “How to Help” button or search <https://www.ambppct.org/fNat.php>). The webpage lists the names and addresses of the U.S. Meher Baba tax-exempt organizations that make grants to the Trust and also provides information on making donations to the Trust by bequest or beneficiary designation.

Trust financial information is provided annually in the Trust Financial Report, sent out with the June/July issue of this newsletter and posted on the Trust website. The Financial Report details 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 in the Trust’s website at [www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org](http://www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org).

# Meherazad’s Inspiring Season

Baba once compared Meherabad and Meherazad to His two eyes; each eye is independent of the other, and yet together they form one image: Him. During the 1954 and 1955 Sahavas occasions, Baba revealed to His lovers that His Samadhi on Meherabad Hill would one day become a place of worldwide pilgrimage; He also arranged special day trips to His home, Meherazad, where He did so much of His Universal Work for humanity.

Today we witness the fruition of His words, with lovers coming from countries around the world to have His darshan. This year a group from South Korea who had just found out about Meher Baba came to Meherabad and Meherazad for the first time. For the Korean group, most of whom were followers of Buddha, visiting Meherazad was a unique experience. As each bowed down at His seat in Mandali Hall and in His room, wandered through Mehera’s garden, saw where Baba did His Manonash work, and stepped into the Blue Bus, His presence was felt so deeply that tears mingled with joy. He had brought them home; they had truly come “to the house of the Lord.”

With Meherwan Jessawala’s passing in July 2016, this was the first season that a Jessawala brother was not in

Mandali Hall telling stories about life with the Godman. We remember what Mani would tell pilgrims when they would ask: “what will happen when you all are gone?” Mani’s answer, “we may be irreplaceable but we are not indispensable,” proved quite true this season. Baba regaled His lovers with a parade of individuals whose stories of meeting Him were touchingly unique and rarely heard. Baba’s nephew Dara and his wife Amrit told their stories, bringing to life the last big event that took place at Meherazad, when Baba celebrated Mehera’s birthday and their wedding reception in 1968. Shridhar Kelkar, Chairman of the Trust, recounted his story of meeting Baba. Digambar Gadekar, whose Baba lineage goes back to his grandfather—the cobbler who made Baba the chapals that He would not discard—shared stories of his and his parents’ life with Baba. Bernard Bruford of Avatar’s Abode, who met Baba as a boy,

Jehangir Daver of Sydney Australia, Gokaran and Urmilla Srivastava of Meherabad, all came forward with stories of their meeting the Godman, to name only a few. As in the years prior when the mandali listened with wonder at the stories of how He brought His lovers to His home, this season also became a give and take of stories and memories, all prompted by Him. Yes, we are in a new era without the mandali, no doubt, but as Eruch would remind us all so often, “He alone gets His work done.” And although this has always been true, this season we found it to be reassuringly so.

As the years continue to unfold in this post-mandali era, the importance of preserving the sanctity, beauty, and intimate atmosphere of Meherazad has become a major focus here. Maintaining His home the way it was during His lifetime, and in the time of the mandali, is seen to with loving care as well as practicality.

Our current such work is the on-going roof

restoration project for Baba’s house. Through the years the mandali carefully maintained Baba’s home, yet over the decades aging, naturally, has taken its toll. For the last three years, towards the end of the pilgrim

season, work has been

undertaken on the roof over the house, to repair the damage done by rainwater leakage and to prevent it from continuing. This year all the tiles over the main part of the building were removed and damaged rafters and beams were repaired. The original roof tiles were cleaned, treated, and replaced.

As Baba lovers have often mentioned, stepping inside the gates of Meherazad into its timeless atmosphere brings a palpable feeling of intimacy with Baba, of being in His presence. Meherazad is a place where every grain of sand has been impregnated with His physical footprint, every path and walkway is a reminder that He is just around the corner, and each room is enlivened by the fragrance of the daily life He led with His mandali. And so the task of preserving Baba’s home for future generations holds deep meaning and inspiration in our hearts.



Baba lovers enjoy Baba’s atmosphere in the garden at Meherazad



## WHAT IS THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST?

CREATED IN 1959 under Meher Baba’s direction, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust has the purpose of fulfilling the objectives in the Trust Deed set out by Baba and the Trustees He appointed. The Trust Deed calls for the maintenance of Avatar Meher Baba’s Tomb; for the creation of pilgrim facilities; for educational, medical, and other charitable services; for estate development and procurement of sources of water; for the advancement of Avatar Meher Baba’s love-message through melas, museums, lectures, publications, and the arts; and for spiritual training.

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**For Reservations to Stay at Meherabad:**  
FOR MEHER PILGRIM RETREAT: [pimco@ambppct.org](mailto:pimco@ambppct.org).  
FOR HOSTEL D/DHARAMSHALA: [jaibaba@ambppct.org](mailto:jaibaba@ambppct.org).

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