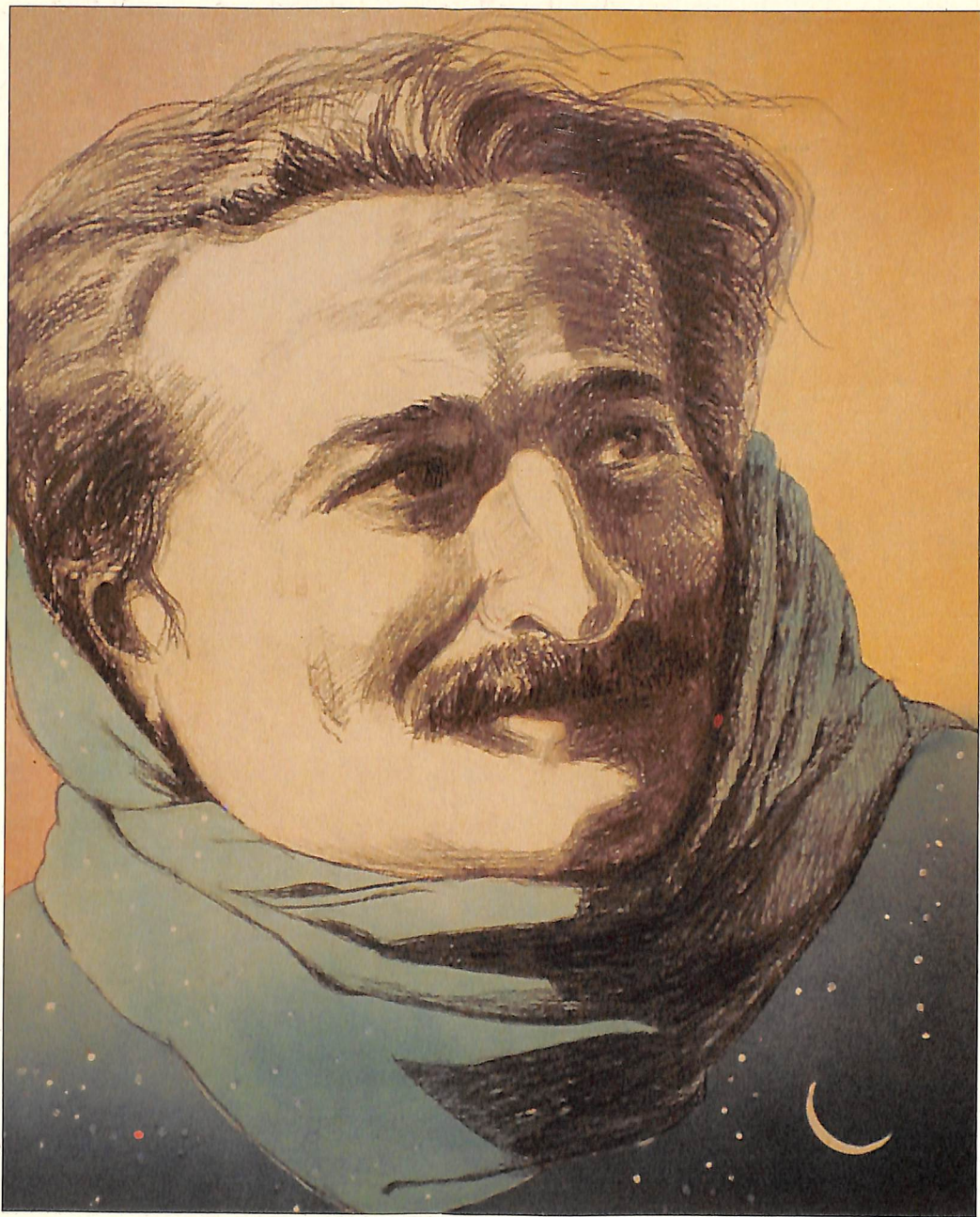


A Garland for Avatar Meher Baba



This series of periodicals, published by Meher Baba Foundation Australia, will be produced as and when material is ready and thus may appear at irregular intervals, but by His Grace they will continue, and each will carry a sequence number and publication date for identification.

The material used will be taken from a variety of sources, principally from notes made over many years by myself and Judith Garbett at Meherazad and Meherabad of stories told by the men and women mandali about Meher Baba and their lives with Him.

It is possible that some of the stories given will differ in odd details from the same stories already published elsewhere. However, they are given as they were told at the time by each of the mandali. Certainly in my own case I regret now that the notes were often short and rough. I feel that at times the material reflects this, but in every issue no attempt has been made to embellish the stories - any embellishments made can introduce personal imagination and distortion to the detriment of truth and service to others.

Bill Le Page

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Photographs by Judith Garbett

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MEHERA PART 2

Stories told by her at Meherazad and
recollections of times spent with her - 1987

- Judith Garbett

It was always such a joy to me to go out to Meherazad in the comfortable big bus owned by the Trust, and to watch for familiar landmarks, particularly Seclusion Hill which can be seen some miles before turning off the main road. As the direction changes one is presented with different aspects of the Hill, but always its beautiful serene shape dominates the landscape on the left hand side, appearing and reappearing according to the terrain. Before long the Pimpalgaon lake comes into view on the right hand side, and then slips behind as the bus turns into the Private Road leading to Meherazad. On either side there are three or four little farms, and outside one small farmhouse with thatched roof which is close to the road, sometimes there are a couple of children playing beside their mother who is sitting on the ground occupied with some task. Pilgrims on that side of the bus often wave to them, and with bright smiles they always wave back calling out 'Jai Baba!'

The bus continues under groups of spreading trees, and Seclusion Hill now looks most beautiful, its unique conical shape silhouetted against the bright sky. It has no trees, just grassy slopes broken here and there with faint uneven lines of rocky formations, and near the top a circle of darker rock hangs like a necklace round its shoulders. In hot bright morning light, or backed with dark grey storm clouds, or against the setting sun, Seclusion Hill always had a very special beauty for me which caught at my heart every time I came to Meherazad. And walking up the winding pathway to the top in earlier years with Eruch, listening to his stories of being there with Baba, feeling Baba's Presence so strongly still, looking out over the miles and miles of lovely countryside on all sides - all this had an indescribable quality which remains alive and unforgettable for me to this day.

Soon the bus reaches the end of the private road. There is a small plain sign reading Private Property, Meherazad, and underneath it a smaller round one saying Car Park with an arrow pointing right. Over to the left under thick shady trees a pair of wide gates, hung on tall stone pillars and bearing the name Meherazad Residence, close off the garden entrance to the women's side. The backs of some small structures are visible as the bus swings to the right, and moves slowly round to the open parking area in front of the Meher Free Dispensary. Everyone in the bus calls out 'Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jail!'

I always got down quickly, opened my umbrella against the hot sun, and walked across to Mandali Hall verandah, passing the corrugated iron sheds on the left where the cars are kept, and the small three-room cottage on the right where different men mandali lived over the years - for example Baidul, Francis Brabazon, and later on Nariman Dadachanji. Bill Le Page also had one of the rooms there when Baba called him to stay for two weeks in February 1967.

Beyond the cottage, between Eruch's cabin and the side door of the Dispensary there are small bright flowerbeds designed by Falu Mistry, youngest son of Jim and Roda Mistry, who lives at Meherazad to help the mandali. I liked to see the very attractive changes he made each year in this area. He also set up the extensive rose garden for Mehera, and there are a number of long beds planted with many very beautiful varieties and colours, all well-established now.

After greeting the mandali on the long verandah and going inside for Baba's darshan, I was happy to sit in Mandali Hall to listen to stories until it was time to go across to be with Mehera on her porch.

Walking through the garden on the women's side has always been a delight for me. All my life I have loved gardening, and flowers of all kinds mean a great deal to me, having a language of their own I feel. These gardens are special because Mehera herself did so much work in them from the time that she, Mani, Meheru and Margaret Craske began to live there with Baba in 1944. At first they stayed in rather ramshackle buildings, as the present main house was



Meherazad Garden, November 1962

not built until 1948. It was very hard work establishing the garden because they were often away travelling with Baba, and the soil was not good, water was always scarce. At one time I remember hearing the little story (possibly from Mani) that Baba one day said to Mehera He liked the garden very much. She told him that it meant a lot of hard work, and He replied that because she put so much effort and loving care into it, that was why He liked it so much.

I still remember so clearly how lovely the garden was in November 1962 when we came there for a few hours after the East-West Gathering was over. It was such a contrast to the sparse, dry, almost arid openness of Meherabad where we had spent the morning. But here amongst lovely trees there was shade and coolness, with bright flowerbeds and a great many pots of geraniums, bougainvilleas and other plants arranged in graceful lines at the edge of pathways, all giving such vivid splashes of colour. I loved Meherazad from the first moments of coming there that day. It was immediately Home to me, and has become more so with every visit since. This most beautiful

Place is filled with Beloved Baba's love, and with the loving welcome always given by His close ones to everyone who comes there.

And year after year Mehera's garden continues to delight all who walk in it, and like myself, many must have sweet memories of it.



On Mehera's porch on the first Tuesday morning of my stay in September 1987 a woman from London asked about the early days when Baba told Mehera and others with her to pray and write God's Name.

Mehera began by telling how she and her mother Daulatmai lived in Poona and when Baba called them to be with Him in May 1924, He told them to bring one trunk of clothes for one year, and their bedding rolls. They had to collect things within a few days. Her mother had to get some clothes stitched.

Mehera's sister Freni was married to Adi Senior's brother Rustom, and her first baby (Meheru's older brother) who had just been born in Poona at her mother's house, was about eight days old. So, leaving all their furniture and valuables in the house, they put a lock on the door and all came to Ahmednagar together. Small Khorshed also joined them. Baba told them to stay in the two rooms with an arch between them in the main building located in what is now the Trust Compound. (These rooms and another adjoining were later used for many years by one of the old mandali, Fram Workingboxwalla, until his death in 1986. The Baba bookshop and Joy Meher trinket shop now occupy two of the rooms.)

Later Baba called Mehera, her mother Daulatmai, and Baba's aunt Dowla Masi (she was Baba's mother's sister) to come to Meherabad. They stayed across the road from the old Post Office in the Bathing Rooms. This building no longer exists, but it had two nice rooms (about 6' x 10' I think - Mehera indicated the size on her porch as she told the story). There was an arch between the rooms with a curtain across. They had their baths at the end of one room, and there was a narrow drain channel round the edge of the room to take the water away. They cooked in the other room.

When Baba called them to come to Meherabad that first time, small Khorshed had said that Baba liked 'fakirs', and that they should not have comforts. She told them not to use a pillow, or to take one to Meherabad. Mehera said it was very hard for her lying on the hard matting without a pillow, but because they thought Baba would like this they didn't take any to Meherabad. But when they got there Baba came to their room and asked them what they had brought, which was one trunk each and their bedding. He looked at these and when He found no pillows, asked why, then said He wanted them to have pillows and to look after their health. So He sent to Ahmednagar for them.

Mehera's mother and Dowla Masi would cook for the mandali and Baba, all had the same food, and Mehera would wash dishes, clean the garlic, or whatever they asked her to do. She didn't know how to cook yet.

One time while cooking was being done Mehera was just outside doing some job for the older women. She saw Baba walking towards them. He looked so beautiful, she said, in the dark Kamli coat which then had no patches, and a white sadra and His lovely hair flowing. He asked about the food, and what she did there. She told Him she didn't know cooking yet but did whatever the older women asked her to. He was pleased, and said she should do some work and keep occupied.

Another time later on the older women prepared the meal - Baba always wanted it early and fast, fast, at about 11:00 or 11:30 in the morning. Mehera now knew how to make a dish for Baba - a puri with thickened milk, not sweet, as a dessert for Him. But the milkman had watered the milk and it wouldn't thicken, so she added some semolina. It was taken to Baba. After a while Mehera and Khorshed were called to Him and He said, 'What is this? It's food for someone sick, like gruel!' They explained what had happened and He said all right and ate some of it.

Later Baba sent them back to Ahmednagar while He and the mandali were away. He told them to write God's Name, fill pages of it, so Mehera wrote 'Yesdan, Yesdan' in tiny writing for about an hour at a time.

He also told them to get a picture of God - Ram or Baba or whichever one they liked - and meditate on it. He said the mind is full of tricks and keeps fluttering (Mehera moved her fingers quickly, making a round shape in the air with her hand, fingers fluttering all the while), and He said they were to keep bringing the mind back to the picture, concentrating on it again.

After Mehera and the others had written God's Name on their sheets of paper, Baba had them cut out each tiny Name separately. Baba told them He wanted these slips mixed with dough to make pellets to throw into the sea for fish to eat. There is also an account of this in Mehera's book 'Mehera', with her additional comment that because there was so much work to do at that point these slips were never made up into pellets.

Baba also told them to make shirts for the poor. Mehera's mother bought the material, a strong khadi-cloth, and they began sewing. They made various children's sizes, and for men a simple style, plain sleeves, no cuff, one button at the neck front, and nice and long. There were about 40 done when Baba came again and He said 'Only 40? Make more, I want more.' So they went on, the number grew to 75, 100, 125, 150, and then Baba said that was what He wanted. He also wanted prasad, a big sack of it. Mehera's mother collected it. It couldn't be messy or sticky, and gradually she got peanuts, puffed rice, chick peas.

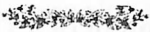
The shirts were tied up in bundles according to sizes and everything was put in a bullock cart and taken to Meherabad where Baba wanted to give it to the poor villagers. At first only the men would come to Baba, but later they brought the women to Him. When the gifts were to be given out, the bundles of shirts were placed for Baba and the big sack of prasad opened. The tiny children sat in their mothers' laps. Baba called each child to come separately to Him and He would give a little shirt with a small amount of prasad on it to the child who would go back proudly to its mother, sit with her and eat the prasad. Gradually all the older ones came to Baba, and finally the men, who were given a larger amount of prasad with their shirts.



Mehera also talked about her father. He was a very tall man, 6'4". She laughed and said she was glad she wasn't tall. He died when she was eight years old. He was a very fine man and she loved him very much.

Then she told us that in 1968, one evening after Mani had finished reading to Baba and she was with Him, she said to Him that she was sad to think that her father had not had the opportunity to know Baba and to love and serve Him. Baba told her not to think that, that he had been born into a Baba family and had been with Baba and loved Him. He would not say Yes or No to her guesses, and although for a while she wondered who it was, she said to us that it was better she did not know.

Mehera recalled that her father was absolutely fearless, and expected her to be the same. One day he put her up on a camel - she was only four years old - and told her to hold tight and not fall off. She managed to cling on, but didn't like the camel-ride movement.



Soon it was time to go to lunch. I had been sitting on a small stool beside Mehera, and it was sweet to be close and watch her face as she told of the early Meherabad times which she was obviously re-living.



Mehera and Judith on the porch

I stood up, and after a moment of waving to others as they left the porch, she turned and smiled at me and I thanked her for the lovely stories as I kissed her. She let me stay there, holding her hands. By then I was the only one near her, and she kept smiling at me happily, saying there were more stories. 'On Thursday I can tell you about Quetta.'



At Mehera's Tea that afternoon I sat at the doorway-end of the big dining table, diagonally opposite Mehera. I always loved to be on that side so that I could look at her as she talked. Usually I tried to sit at the top side of the table, to Baba's left hand which was Mani's place, or the chair next to it, so that I could look straight across the table to Mehera on her side at Baba's right hand.

On the table in front of Baba's chair there was always a small glass bowl with fresh flowers in it. His chair was an armchair, and had a cushion on it. During the '70s and early '80s I often used to go out for the day at different times to help Goher or Meheru with lots of personal and household mending and sewing, and making new items such as curtains for Mandali Hall; bedspreads, canopies and curtains for Baba's Room; and once a new cover for the cushion in Baba's dining room chair. It was round and I remember it took quite a time to make, but looked very nice in the floral-patterned cotton material which Meheru had provided. How I loved doing all these, and how fortunate I always felt that Beloved Baba made use of my sewing ability to make things for His Meherazad home.

There were always twelve women called for Mehera's Tea which was on Tuesdays and Thursdays starting around 4:45 to 5:00 pm. One of the Western residents helping at Meherazad would write down in a special notebook the names of all women and young girls present on those days. One of the mandali, usually Goher, would tick the names of those who had just arrived or who were leaving, as well as others according to how long they had been staying, or how often they had already been to Tea. When it was very crowded one would be asked only two or three times at most, but it was always so wonderful to be told quietly 'You are invited for Mehera's Tea

today!' and go across about 4:30 or so to wait on the porch until Mehera came out after her rest which Baba had ordered her to have every afternoon. As always whenever she appeared, we would all get up from our chairs on the porch to greet her. At teatime she used to stop just inside the doorway, and in a lilting voice and with a twinkle in her eye say to us all, 'Will you come and take tea with me?' then lead the way quickly into the dining room. Whether inside or out she always walked with quick lithe movements, so if one wanted to stay beside her one had to be on the qui vive to keep pace with her!

After all were seated Mehera began spooning out the puffed rice or other delicacy from a round container onto small dishes, handing each one to the woman standing next to her who had earlier been asked to help in this way - she would add a couple of cookies, pass it to the one sitting at Mani's place and from there each dish would be passed on right round the table until all were served. Teapots of regular tea or mint tea, milk and sugar were in the centre of the table and everyone helped themselves to these. Mehera would always like all this done quickly. When her own cup had been filled she sat down, and the stories would begin.

This day she spoke of how difficult it was in the very early days of the 1930s for the Western women disciples to have to share at such close quarters the big room in the old water tank on Meherabad Hill, that is, the West Room, now the Museum. At that time it had no windows at all and was very hot with the door closed. Mehera, Mani, small Khorshed, Naja, small Khorshed's mother Soona Masi, and Valu were in the East Room.

Then in 1938 Baba decided to have the upper story added, and the roof was taken off to do so. Padri was in charge of the work and while it went on Baba took the women to Mahabaleshwar for the summer.

When completed the building was named Meher Retreat. Then the Western women stayed in the upstairs dormitory. Their beds were close together and they had no privacy to dress or put on their make-up, she said. Rano's mother Nonny was a very shy person so Rano hung a sari round her

bed for some privacy for her. It was hard also for Norina, Nadine and Elizabeth who were all used to having every comfort and many luxuries in their own homes.

The 'tin shed' - the open verandah opposite what is now Mansari's kitchen on Meherabad Hill - was also built at that time to give somewhere for the Western women to eat and sit. Before this the area was completely in the open, and was used for badminton games which Baba often used to play with the women.

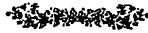
There was some general talk after this. Sometimes Mehera would tell quite a few stories, but at other times, perhaps if she were more tired than usual, it would then be left to us to make contributions to the conversation.

To sit at Baba's table in Mehera's company was always so special. Apart from her stories there were other little reminders of Baba. Now and then she would gently put her hand on the arm of His chair as though He was sitting there, and very softly say 'Baba darling.' One day someone asked about a salt and pepper set shaped as Laurel and Hardy, and she told us 'Baba liked their films very much. They were very funny.'

At the end of the Tea she would stand, and we would also, and turning to the big picture of Baba on the end wall behind His chair she would say 'Beloved... Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!' three times with all of us joining in. Then she would say 'Thank you for your most beautiful love, Baba darling. Help us to love you and serve you.' or 'May we all be worthy of your most beautiful love, Baba darling.' Such words were usually spoken very quietly and hard to catch fully, even by those standing nearest her. Sometimes it was as though we were not there and she was lovingly murmuring to Him herself.

After a moment or two standing there with hands folded to Him, Mehera would turn round and walk quickly to the door. We would follow, and although we didn't want to leave that lovely atmosphere, we had to move out to the porch, say goodbye to her, and walk across to the other side in answer to Aloba's frequent ringing of the bell and his calls of 'Board the

bus!' 'Board the bus!' And so another wonderful day at Meherazad was over.



This time (September 1987) Mehera seemed so relaxed, talked easily and laughed quite a lot. It was lovely to see her like this. In some of my earlier visits she often appeared very tired, and chatted about 'everyday' things to those on the porch, with not so many Baba stories. I mentioned this to Heather Nadel at the Pilgrim Centre one day and she said 'Yes, it is very much so this year with Mehera, who is even more her darling self.' As the longest-serving Western resident, Heather spent a great deal of time with Mehera and the mandali at Meherazad, and also in the Trust Office and at Meherabad.

On the porch I asked Mehera about their visit to Quetta and she gave us this lovely account. It was in 1924. She, Naja, big Khorshed (Jamshed's wife), Soonamasi (small Khorshed's mother), Baba's aunt Dowla Masi, Mehera's mother Daulatmai, and Gulmai (Adi's mother) were there. Mani of course was not yet six years old. Of the men Mehera was not sure of all of them except for Pendu, Padri, Adi Senior and Gustadji.

Baba and the men left Meherabad first for Bombay. Then the women came to Bombay and stayed five days at small Khorshed's parents home, which was a very nice house, Mehera said, with long rooms. They all went by train to Quetta. There was plenty of room in those days, and they had a reserved carriage. They went to Goher's father's house, then stayed in another house with not a stick of furniture - there was a big carpet on the floor and only their trunks in the room.

There was a very big bagulla (cooking pot) for the food for all the men and women. All ate the same food, the cooking being done by Goher's father, but Baba served it to everyone, the men first.

Mehera was the last in line of the women. When she held out her plate to Baba one day, He asked her why she was always last - it was just because she was so shy then. He seized her plate and threw it out to the back landing where it

bounced right down the stairs. Then someone gave her another plate as she stood before Baba. He gave her a very large helping, although she protested, and told her to eat every bit of it. Next day she began standing at the front of the girls, and Baba gave her food without any further throwing of the plate.

One morning there He asked them if they prayed to God. She said, 'Yes, Baba, the Kusti prayer.' 'For how long?' 'About five minutes, Baba.' 'Is that all the time you can give to God?' So He began to dictate a prayer to the three of them in Gujarati, speaking slowly. At the end He took Khorshed's writing to check it and it was correct. Then He looked at Naja's, and she had a few mistakes which He corrected.

Then He looked at Mehera's book - she had written only two lines of it and He asked why. She told Him she didn't know how to write Gujarati well, that there hadn't been time to learn it at the Convent in Poona. So Baba wrote out the whole prayer for her Himself. And she would say it. But later someone stole it from her trunk. 'Who would do such a thing?' Mehera said to us, amazement and sadness in her voice.

Another day Baba told them all to be dressed ready to go out at 4:00 pm. There was a mini-bus which the men got into, and the women were in a car, packed in, with Baba in front and Rustom driving. They drove right out of the city of Quetta to a place of some small mountains, very rocky and steep. Baba and the men climbed, and Baba was soon a long way ahead. He was standing about halfway up, looking very beautiful, Mehera said. He wore a sadra, but always tucked into His shorts. He was young then, 30 years old, and His hair was open, and Mehera recalled that Gulmai used to comb it for Him then. It was now late afternoon and getting darker. There was only a short twilight and Baba said they should go back.

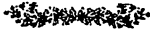
So the men got into the mini-bus and also the older women. The three girls were standing nearby and Baba said 'Why are you standing there? Get into the car!' So they quickly got into the back, and Baba was in front with Rustom again driving. But Rustom couldn't find the way home, roads were going this way and that. They had to ask the way, and

then again ask. It was now dark and lights were being lit. But the girls didn't mind - they were lost, but they were lost with Baba which was wonderful! Eventually they got back to the house, and the older women said they had been worried. The girls weren't! Mehera said that Baba had been staying inside the room in the house and wanted to get out and walk, so He took them for that outing.



There were a few interruptions while Mehera talked about Quetta, but she always came back to the story until it was finished. It was lovely to watch her, realising that she was reliving it, seeing Baba all the time.

As we were leaving the porch for lunch I thanked her for the stories, and she thanked me for reminding her. She spoke about the food, and I asked if Baba always gave her a big helping. She said no, but that she did eat that one. It was just dal and rice and easily digested. I said "And Baba gave it to you", and she smiled 'Yes!'



Another time at Mehera's Tea she talked of Baba's meals. He liked dal and rice best, and ate fish and meat in later years for the protein, but didn't like eating chicken. He said a chicken can be eaten by only one, two or three people, and that mutton is better as many people can eat from the one animal. Fish used were flounder, pomfret and Bombay duck.

Baba liked only fried foods, not boiled. He ate eggs, but just the yoke. Mehera liked the white, so she would give the yoke first to Baba and then take the white herself.

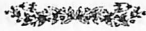
Someone at home had asked me if I knew whether Baba liked strong tea, so I mentioned this and Mehera said Yes, He did, with milk and two and a half teaspoons of sugar.

There are many kinds of dal, and if it was spiced Baba would dip His middle fingertip in it to try - in a very delicate way, as Mehera demonstrated.

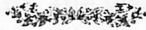
From 19 years of age He ate only vegetarian foods, although as said above, in later life he had meats and fish on the advice of the doctors, but ate only a very small amount.

He didn't like fruit much, except mango and papaya, or fresh figs which Eruch's mother Gaimai would send to Guruprasad. Mehera said these would be washed first, then peeled, and Baba would take a little taste with His finger while playing cards.

Talking of dal reminded Mehera that when Mani was very small she would have rice and dal, and when some rice was left would ask for more dal, then dal was left, so she wanted more rice! Mehera laughed gently as she told us this.



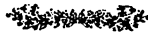
On one of the days when I was not at Tea, others who were there told me about Mehera's stories of Meherabad in the very early years before Baba's Silence. He would sing, and also dance by Himself most beautifully. Mehera commented that although many years later He danced with Margaret Craske it was not as beautiful to watch as when by Himself in the early 1920s - and that was at 4:00 am!



Mehera in her chair on the porch.

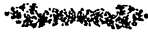
Another story at this Tea was about Mani. When she was about eight years old she had come to Meherabad in school holidays to be with Baba. She knew that Mehera's mother Daulatmai really loved the sound of Persian being spoken. She couldn't understand it but just loved listening to the language. So one day Mani started chattering, pretending to speak Persian and Daulatmai sat enjoying it. But Baba heard her, came into the room and said to Mani 'Why do you trick her like that? It is not nice.' And He put a big pot right over Mani's head and told her to stand in the corner.

Then Khorshed arrived, saw this, and began to giggle about Mani's plight. Again Baba came in and told Khorshed it was not nice to do that to Mani. He put another big pot over Khorshed's head and had her stand alongside Mani. So although He punished Mani, He didn't allow her to be made fun of.



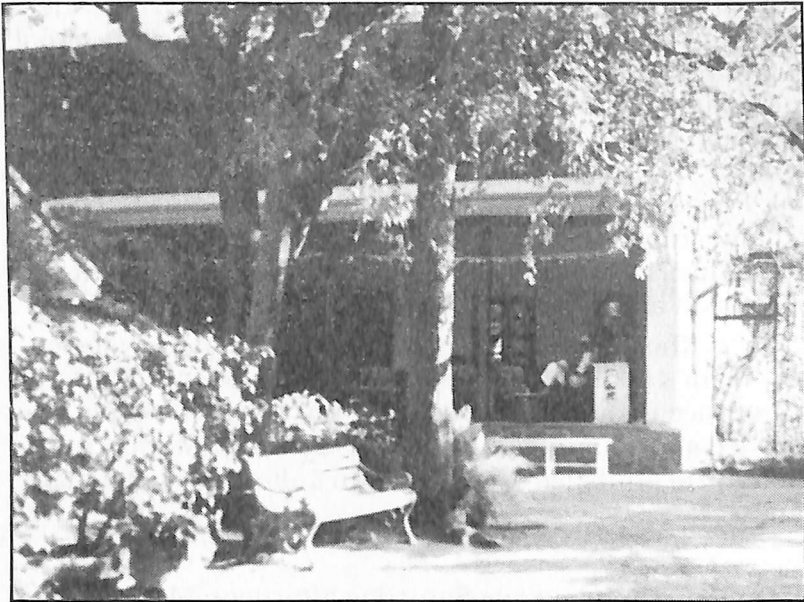
On her porch late one Saturday afternoon Mehera again talked about Meherabad in the early days. Baba and the men were staying in the Post Office, and she and her mother stayed in the Bathing House across the road at Lower Meherabad.

One day they could hear Baba singing and a drum being played. They went over to the Post Office to listen and sat there while Baba went on. Suddenly He stopped and asked Mehera what she was thinking. Mehera said this was the first time that had happened - the first of many, many times. She told us she was so happy that she could answer 'Baba, I was thinking how beautiful your hands are, playing the drum.'



Tuesday 22nd September 1987 turned out to be a very special day for me at Meherazad. In the morning when Mehera came out she said that from inside she saw someone walking in the garden towards the porch, which reminded her how she had so often seen Baba walking there, and how He must have known that so many pilgrims would be coming to Meherazad in the future.

There were no special stories, but it was as always sweet to be in Mehera's company. Just before going to lunch I told



Mehera's porch from the garden

her that this was a kind of birthday for me - the 26th anniversary of meeting Bill Le Page in his office for a job interview, and seeing there for the first time a photo of Baba which had caught my attention although I knew nothing at all about Him at that point. Mehera wished me a happy anniversary, and so it turned out to be.

After lunch I sat for an hour or so in the garden on the seat outside the women's cottage writing up my notes. About 2:45 Casey Cook came and said Mehera wanted me and that she was calling two others as well. I went straight over to the porch and soon Janet Luck and Raine Mormon arrived, and with Heather Nadel too Mehera called us all into the dining room 'for prasad from Baba's table'. Various covered dishes were there, and she first indicated some small golden-coloured lightly spiced pieces, rather dry in texture but very nice. Then Mehera wanted us to try a kind of 'curry sauce' which she poured into cups. The other three exclaimed over it saying how good it was, but one tiny sip was fire in the throat for me! I gasped and coughed and immediately Heather got a glass of

water for me. I said to Mehera I was sorry I just couldn't take it and she didn't mind at all, saying 'No, don't have it, just leave it there.'

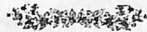
By now we were all standing near the foot of the table and I was on Mehera's side of it. Then Mehera asked me to sit down but the others still stood, and she brought a plate with three portions of rava on it for them and another plate for me - it was delicious. Then Mehera went up to her end of the table, opened a dish with two long white rolls which she cut in half and gave us each one piece. These had been made by Rhoda Dubash's cook - a kind of white philo pastry, very thin, and a sweet mixture in the middle with some currants or similar small dark fruits, again very good. In fact we all kept eating and saying 'delicious' while thanking Mehera. Finally there were four pieces of peeled apple 'to clean your mouth' she said - and it was the sweetest and nicest apple I had tasted in a long while!

Mehera seemed so happy, and to be enjoying giving us these things. The men's side tea-bell had rung when we first went in and now Mehera said to go over and have 'nice hot tea'. She went to wash her hands at the sink in the corner, then said to me to wash too and pointed to the green soap on the top shelf. I noticed she used the Sunlight soap on the low shelf, so evidently that was hers only and I felt happy about that. There was a big towel pegged up just through the back doorway which Mehera used and told me to use also. Then the others washed their hands, and by then Mehera was standing at the other side of the dining room near the door.

I went across and took her hands saying 'Thank you so much Mehera, for the prasad, it was delicious.' She replied 'It's nice that you appreciate it, prasad from Baba's table', and mentioned the message which Ted Judson had given at one time for what she had sent him - he said that even a crumb from Baba's table was so special. I told Mehera I felt it was very special, and that it was as though Baba had given it for my anniversary that day, and she said 'Yes! He remembered you with love.'

I was still holding her hands, and kissed her. We all stood in the main area beside the sitting room for a few minutes

and she said again to go and get our hot tea on the other side. As the others moved to the porch I was last with her. She smiled and said she would go now for her rest. She was always so gentle, so filled with love which radiated from her. I treasured these moments, while they were happening, and whenever recalling them. She always seemed to be quite happy holding my hands, never in a hurry to withdraw, and looked at me so lovingly, 'making kisses' as well as giving kisses on either cheek. So often too as I left the porch she again looked at me, waved and blew kisses from her fingertips, and I did the same as I walked away through the garden, looking back now and then. These memories and many many others of Mehera at Meherazad are so clear, so alive for me still, and the passage of years heightens rather than diminishes their sweetness.



To my surprise I was called for Tea that afternoon which I didn't think would happen because there were a good number of women present, and also because of the special prasad given me by Mehera after lunch.



Mandali Hall verandah, from the garden behind Eruch's cabin

I thought of staying near the foot of the table this time but Davana Brown, one of the Western residents who help the mandali at Meherazad, whispered quickly 'Go on, go with her, sit next to her', and after hesitating a moment I did so. I had not sat there in a long time, so it was most sweet to be beside Mehera as she often turned to me or spoke directly to me. Some on the other side of the table talked quite a lot, but our side was quieter and sometimes I felt almost alone with Mehera. After eating the unusual dish of brown sugar cooked with a kind of thin chapati cut in small pieces and served hot with warm milk I sat back a little so others could see Mehera - but soon when she was telling about her childhood she told me to sit forward so her voice would reach me.

As a small child her father put her up on an elephant, told her to hold on and not fall off - she indicated how she did this. Later her father made her get on a camel which was a very spirited one, with two men holding its head on either side. Her father got up behind her and she had to hold tightly. The movement was jerky at first but very smooth when it ran. Her mother was seated on a very quiet camel in a saddle made for her from an armchair, and worked away with her knitting needles. Because it was such a long ride she had to have something to do! They were moving camp, and everything was packed on the camel-train. Mehera remembered how nice the camels looked moving along in line. Eventually they came to the place in the forest where their servants had erected a very big tent with scalloped trim round it and divisions inside for sitting room and bedrooms. 'Very lovely it was', she said.

Mehera asked me would I be afraid in the forest like that, with wild animals roaring close by. I said I didn't know, perhaps. (Later when writing this down I thought regretfully that I really should have said that most probably I would have been afraid!) She said her father was absolutely fearless, and would tell her and her mother not to be afraid, that he was there to look after them.

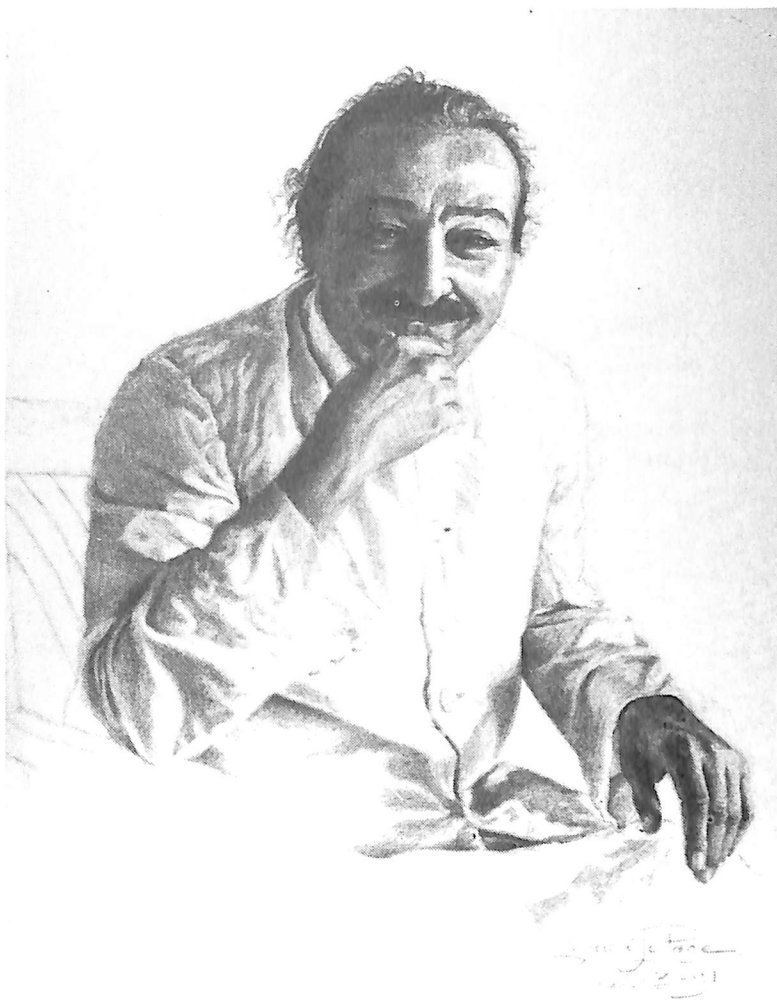
Because of the sweet dish we had been eating there was some talk about milk and buffalos, and Mehera remembered that as a young girl she used to help shake the three days' collection of thick buffalo cream to make butter. She was not

allowed to taste it and said, tantalisingly, 'I can't tell you about that!' However later on Baba allowed her to have 'That much butter every day', and she held up her thumb against two fingers, so I suppose it was a teaspoonful or a little more. This was to compensate for not having something else, but unfortunately I don't remember what this was. I said quietly to her 'Baba's loving care of you', and she immediately smiled at me and reached down and touched my arm very gently and lovingly.

When the Tea was over we stood while Mehera as always spoke her loving words to Baba, then all went out. In saying goodbye she again wished me a happy anniversary and I was very touched that she kept remembering this. It most certainly was a very happy day, filled with Beloved Baba's love.

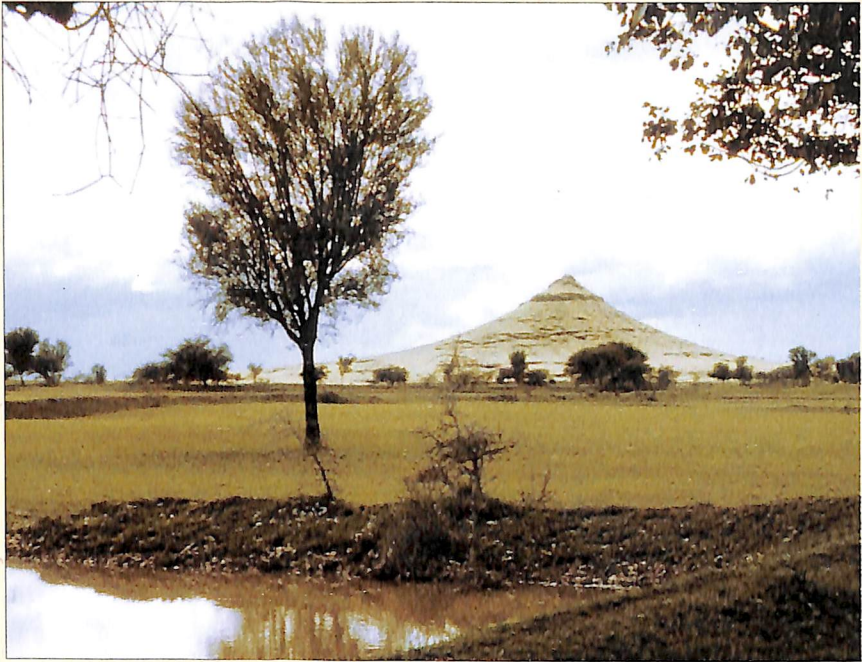
(To be continued)





I want you to make me your constant companion. Think of me more than you think of yourself. The more you think of me, the more you will realise my love for you. Your duty is to keep me constantly with you throughout your thoughts, speech and actions.

Meher Baba



Seclusion Hill, from Meherazad private road

*W*hen Avatar Meher Baba first stayed at Meherazad in 1944 the hill was known as Tembi Hill. It was not a part of the Meherazad property.

In 1947 He wished to spend time there in seclusion. A 99 year lease was granted by the Government so that Baba could use the hill in conjunction with His seclusion work. A small cabin was built for Him on the summit, with another on the next level for the mandali.

At the end of the New Life in November 1951, Baba returned there and again was in seclusion for a month. Then both cabins were dismantled piece by piece and rebuilt in two days at Meherazad where He continued His seclusion until February 1952.

Because of Meher Baba's work there, the hill came to be called Seclusion Hill, and today few know its original name.