



IN HIS SERVICE

JUNE / 2020

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

Meherabad Lockdown

“AM I NOT THE AVATAR?”

Quarantine then and now –Meherabad’s British Army history

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME Meherabad has served as a “quarantine” camp. Most Baba lovers know that the sacred place we know as Meherabad was a British Army Post in 1917–18. The land was leased by the British who constructed several substantial buildings: the massive tank rooms on the Hill that provided the means to save and distribute water, a Post Office Building conveniently located near the railroad tracks, and the dormitory-style Dharamshala quarters.

But do we know why the British built them? These buildings served as quarantine quarters for an international group of prisoners of war. The prisoners of war were mostly German and Austrian officers and businessmen who had been nicely housed in the posher Ahmednagar Camp area, which even had tennis courts for their use. There they were accommodated with the lifestyle fineries of gentlemen of their status, which elegantly included delicious pastries made by a pastry chef. In November 1916, there was a resurgence of the plague in Ahmednagar (not Spanish flu). When it came time for inoculation against the plague, these prisoners of war were given the same choice as British Army officers. They could have the inoculation for the plague or they could refuse and move to segregation camps for the purpose of quarantining them. The area that became Meherabad was one such POW quarantine camp that was constructed quickly by the 2nd/128th Pioneers of the Indian Army in 1917–18.*

World War I ended shortly thereafter at the end of 1918 and this camp was no longer needed. The British abandoned it, and through a series of transactions Adi K. Irani’s parents Kaikushru and Gaimai Irani came to own it. (There is so much more to the story. Search “Historic Meherabad” on the Trust website). The property that became Meherabad most likely was only inhabited by farmers until the first “settlement” was constructed specifically for international prisoners of war. It’s as if these substantial buildings were built just for Baba’s purposes of eventually housing His mandali, *masts*, and lovers from around the world.

The world is in a state of fear and perplexity. No one knows what is going to happen, but wait and see. I know all, the present and the future, and nothing can stop the work I am here to do. Am I not the Avatar? And the world will know it and accept Me as such. Be calm; be steady and firm as a rock in your faith and love for Me. I can then use you as a channel for My work, the work of Divine Love for the upliftment of humanity.

MEHER BABA

BABA ALONE KNOWS THE WORK He does. Meherabad was busy this past pilgrim season with many events involving thousands of people. Amartithi and Baba’s Birthday were enjoyed en masse by an international mix of His lovers. The Dhuni on 12th March was very well attended by several hundred people as one of the last main activities of the pilgrim season ending March 15th. Who attending this lively dhuni would have guessed that only one week later the doors to Beloved Baba’s Samadhi would be closed, Arti would be discontinued, and dozens of pilgrims would not be able to return to their home countries?

World news travels quickly. By February all became aware of the coronavirus spreading throughout China, Iran, and the rest of the world. Most pilgrims departed on or before March 15th, but from the 13th of March, foreigners were banned from entering India. By March 22nd, outgoing flights were cancelled and no one was able to leave India. What started out at Meherabad as a phenomenon effecting a few Irani pilgrims whose country was now closed became a more widespread issue. With only four hours’ notice the prime minister of India announced the world’s largest lockdown, affecting 1.3 billion people.

Meherabad was on lockdown. But the remaining pilgrims and residents were happy to be safely in Baba’s Home and atmosphere during this time. The current population of about 100 foreigners includes Chinese, Iranis, Germans, British, Americans, Canadians, French, Australians, and others. Some embassies are helping citizens leave India on organized flights. Commercial airlines are waiting for the go-ahead to resume limited flights.

Locally, the Trust works with Indian officials to see that all at Meherabad abide by the guidelines.

Although restrictions are still in place, most necessities for daily life have worked out for all at Meherabad. (As of this writing the lockdown has been extended until May 18th.)

At first only essential Trust employees were working. Now there are staggered shifts to allow for social distancing. The Trust has continued paying all 200 workers’ wages. Like so many charitable organizations, the financial impact on the Trust resulting from this pandemic remains to be seen. (See the Financial Report.)

On January 31, 1930, Baba visited Meherabad following an intense three-week seclusion and stated:

“In the future, Meherabad will be like Jerusalem. For My spiritual work, it is the best place. It will always be the center of My work.”

Meherabad, as a beacon of world pilgrimage, is an international microcosm of the world and its workings. From the Trust workers who live nearby, to the Indian nationals who have retired there, to the international residents who live full or part-time at Meherabad—all take part in Baba’s perfectly choreographed dance of humanity, serving His objectives of welcoming sincere souls who find Him at the threshold of His Tomb, but most importantly in the inner sanctum of their hearts.

THE SAMADHI IN SECLUSION

Although you may not see Me physically, be certain I am always with you. The only place that can hold Me is the heart. Keep Me close with you—I am always there.

MEHER BABA

A stillness pervades Meherabad Hill. Beloved Avatar Meher Baba’s Tomb-shrine is closed as a result of India “lockdown.” No one can go inside, take darshan at His threshold, or receive prasad. There is no Arti or gathering for prayers.

Early every morning, one of the women who has supervised the Samadhi cleaning during usual times now unlocks the Tomb door, crosses the threshold, and goes inside. She cleans alone, offers no garland, but

Continued on page 4

* See <https://wiki.fibis.org/w/Ahmadnagar> and <https://archive.org/details/reportsonbritish00inte/mode/2up>.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Baba Family,

This pandemic is an unprecedented happening. Never before in known history has the whole world gone into a total lockdown—stopping all forms of activities, businesses, and transport and forcing people to stay at home. Beloved Baba had talked of destruction of three-quarters of the world. Many thought “has that time come?” Luckily things are not that bad. By discouraging people from coming into close contact with each other, the spread of the virus is controlled. The number of people recovering from the infection far exceeds the number of deaths. There is always a silver lining to dark clouds. The universal lockdown and the resultant reduction in pollution levels all around the world have amply demonstrated how much we need to care for the environment. At Meherabad on 18th March we decided to close darshan at the Samadhi. All gathering there has stopped. We also decided that only half the Trust workers would come on duty each day so that they can work without coming in close contact with each other.

No doubt this unprecedented pandemic has caused untold miseries to economically poor sections of society, especially daily wage earners. Governments everywhere are trying to mitigate the hardships of these poor people by extending direct

and indirect financial and material help to them. The Trust is also doing its part. We have donated money to the Prime Minister’s Fund and the State Chief Minister’s aid fund and distributed about 1,000 packages of essentials like sugar, tea, and oil among deserving needy families around Meherabad and Meherazad.

As of the date of this writing, we are not sure when we will be able to open the pilgrim facilities, which usually open on 15th June. We will decide that in due course. Even when we open the facilities, not many pilgrims will be able to come due to transport problems. We have decided to cancel the Silence Day gathering, which in past years has had as many as 2,000 pilgrims congregate at Meherabad.

In December 1958, when a person came unannounced for Baba’s darshan and wanted to know “When will Baba really come out of seclusion,” Baba’s reply was:

I am really the only one who is not in seclusion. It is the rest of humanity that is in seclusion. I have come to make it emerge into eternal freedom!

On the face of it, it is difficult to understand the meaning of this statement. In this Advent, Beloved Baba observed seclusion for His Universal

work on and off until He dropped His physical form. But I feel what Baba wants to convey is that as God He is not in seclusion. He is available to us 24x7. He never takes rest. There is no need for any physical contact with God. There is no need of any place of worship to remember Him. We can remember Him from wherever we are, whatever we are doing. Beloved Baba has said:

Attend to all your duties and you can still love Baba by dedicating all good and bad to Him. Just as we dress our body with clothes and then forget all about the dress we are wearing on that day, similarly dress your soul with thoughts of Baba and Baba will then be with you all the time, even without your paying any further attention.

In this enforced seclusion let us remember Him more and more, and still yet more, and make Him our Constant Companion.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

Shridhar Kelkar
Chairman, Avatar Meher Baba Trust



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL LEBRON

A Solitary Dhuni April 12, 2020

*O Dhuni of Meherabad . . .
You have the power to flourish things
and also to destroy them;
both are your blessings.*

MEHER BABA

In accordance with Baba’s 1941 directive to light the Dhuni on the 12th of every month, it is lit at sunset. Since gatherings are prohibited due to the nationwide lockdown, the Chairman requested that no one attend. One of the few residents who was assisting at the dhuni described the scene in April:

Meherabad looked deserted, there was hardly any traffic on the road; yet the old Meherabad buildings felt vibrant. It felt poignant—the Dhuni burning with only a few souls around. No singing. It reminded me of Baba’s words: “This New Life will live by itself eternally even if there is no one to live it.” As darkness descended, soft *daf* drumming was heard coming from near the Jopdi, giving a sense of life.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PRASHANT DADAR

News UGGETS

TRUST EVENTS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- **PILGRIMS FROM INDIA** and nineteen other countries stayed at Meherabad last season.
- **PILGRIM SEASON** featured plentiful activities at Meherabad, Meher Nazar, and Meherazad—tours, talks, films, concerts, study.
- **MEHERA’S BIRTHDAY** celebrated at Meherazad with music and prasad; at Meherabad with a stunning dance concert in the theatre.
- **APPROXIMATELY 50,000 PEOPLE** were at Meherabad January 31st, Amartithi’s largest day. All programmes and darshan went smoothly.
- **BABA’S BIRTHDAY** joyfully celebrated with enthusiastic 5:00 a.m. arti, SING HIS NAME concert, art show, and performance of “Where is God,” a lighthearted play about a seeker.
- **LEGACY PROGRAMME** in February focused on the New Life.
- **SOLAR WORK** continues on the MPR to generate electricity.
- **WATER PIPELINES** from Ahmednagar installed.
- **ARCHIVAL TREE PROJECT** mapped all the trees at Meherabad and Meherazad in conjunction with local college students.
- **DHOND ROAD UNDERPASS** (near dhuni) and pedestrian walkway (under railroad tracks) very successful.
- **MEHER NAZAR TRUST COMPOUND** hosted tours, talks, and concerts in conjunction with Ahmednagar Centre.
- **MEHER ENGLISH SCHOOL** closed in early March due to pandemic.
- **ARCHIVES AND PUBLICATIONS** very busy with exciting ongoing projects.



● **MEDICAL**—at Meher Health Centre, Arangaon, and Meher Free Dispensary, Meherazad, services

continue. Ongoing medical care is one of the major ways the Trust helps the local community. In order to safeguard doctors, nurses, and patients, special precautions have been instituted during this pandemic: markers for each patient to stand six feet away from each other while they are waiting to be seen; partitions to keep some separation between each patient and the doctor seeing them; and masks and gloves being utilized to protect the healthcare providers and patients.



A new sewer pipeline was constructed at the MPC replacing the aging 40-year-old system

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANNE MOREGNE

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK QUENY



Inlaid mosaic
Buddhist wheel
symbol on the
base of the
Tower (below)

Baba lovers
forming a garland
around the Memorial
Tower during its
inauguration (above)

Memorial Tower of Glory

*A silent proclamation to the unity of all religions . . .
A life of sacrifice based on love is never lost . . .*

MEHER BABA



ON DECEMBER 23, 2019, seventy-five years to the day of Baba's dedication of the Memorial Tower site at Meherabad, several hundred people witnessed the inauguration of this "Tower of Glory"—a fulfillment of Baba's directive. In His message for this occasion in 1944, Baba's words pay tribute to the lovers of God who dedicate their lives to the cause of Life Divine:

*You are today witnessing a solemn occasion of supreme importance. . . . The spiritual grandeur of those who set aside all thought of the self and make their lives an offering to the divine and imperative Cause of the Master is in itself ineffable. While the beauty of such lives surpasses all description, the Memorial Tower to be created here is something much more than an ornament of crowning glory for those souls themselves. A visible memorial like a Tower can itself become a medium for inspiring the generations to come.**

During the hour-long inauguration Baba's entire message was read out in English and Hindi. This inspiring message is majestically inscribed on a freestanding wall near the two stone markers of Baba's disciples Chanji and Masaji that Baba dedicated in 1944. The ceremony included talks, songs, garlanding of the markers, and the scattering of hundreds of roses in the exact location where Baba offered petals for His dear "departed souls" seventy-five years ago.

Gazing at the
struck by the sheer
tall monument

magnificent tower we are
beauty of this fifty-six-foot-
of shining marble. The
crowning touch of the
tower is the glass and
prism spire formed
of artistically
glass panels,
designed to
scatter rainbow
colors on the base
of the tower below
when sunlight is refracted
through them. Right on cue
at the end of the inauguration
ceremony the rainbow reflection
landed on the symbols on the northwest
side and was visible to the attendees as
they formed a human garland around the
tower singing Baba's "Seven Names of God."

Ted Judson, the designer of the Memorial Tower, explained that the large foundational plinth is shaped like the Mastery in Servitude emblem and the tower design is based on a geometric formula creating the shape that has become known as "Gabriel's Horn." It is shaped like a horn that drops from a mathematical infinity above and spreads out in an ever-expanding circle below. Paradoxically, it is finite in volume. As such, it is a unique geometrical shape that descends from the infinite to encompass the finite—like the Avatar!

After trying several designs over the years Ted became inspired with the final idea when Eric Nadel shared the "Gabriel's Horn" concept with him. The construction of the Tower began in 2009. Due to technical advancements that have only happened in recent years we witness Baba's perfect timing in the design, management, and fulfillment of construction in 2019. As in the New Life, when there would often be impossible requests that Baba would ask His mandali to make of total strangers, Ted found many willing providers to go the extra mile to fulfill the tiniest detail needed. Some even invented new protocols to get the jobs done. Because of the precise digital stone cutting now available, Baba's Tower of Glory in the shape of Gabriel's Horn is the only known marble monument of this kind in the world.

After experiencing the initial impression of this towering wonder, we see the 355 names inscribed on the base of the Tower. What an impact it is reading the names of Baba's early mandali, family members, beloved *masts*, and stalwart followers from East and West—people from all walks of life. Then there are names of souls not known yet to the viewers. Efforts are being made now to find information on every name on the tower and to create a bio-glossary about them.

*Their memory is being perpetuated because it will be an example for those who are living, as well as for those who are to come. A life of sacrifice based on love is never lost; it is not only beautiful and fruitful in itself but also in the creative inspiration which it leaves behind.**

About the Memorial Tower A Pilgrim's Observation

When talking about the construction of The Memorial Tower, Ted Judson said there was no Plan B. Having seen the Tower and having heard of the several challenges that had to be overcome to make it, it is easier to believe that there was never a Plan A. It was all Plan B all the way, Baba's Plan, right from 1944 to 2019.

This astounding monument, a one-of-a-kind universal wonder, deserves to be studied by everyone inclined toward engineering. It is a lesson in science, human ingenuity, and sheer perseverance.

Yet, it was never about calculations and drawings alone. It was also about coaxing others to deliver a few pipes, marble pieces, fragile prisms, and special paints. When one got stuck, another appeared on the scene to push the task forward. Logic and commercial prudence stepped aside as one miracle after another led the project to its conclusion.

It was yet another lesson that you can master the impossible, if you have the love and determination to serve His will.

He who came not to teach would perhaps awaken in some of the more skeptical among us the urge to go beyond the simple $xy = 1$ equation and marvel at the nothing and everything the Tower's shape holds. The One who planned this "reservoir of inspiration and power" shall playfully wink at us in seven hues as we stand at the near-zero base and dare to contemplate infinity.

As we go on loving Him and holding on to Him, no matter what, perhaps some of us shall live lives in the "imperative cause of the Master" and become worthy of a petal reserved for "those who are to come."

Jai Baba!
Vijayakumar Kotteri

Baba's theme of oneness conveyed so beautifully in His Dedication is also visually expressed by the resplendent Mastery in Servitude emblem and symbols of the world's religions. Including these vibrant inlaid porcelain mosaic emblems with coloring relevant to the history of each religion fulfills Baba's wish.

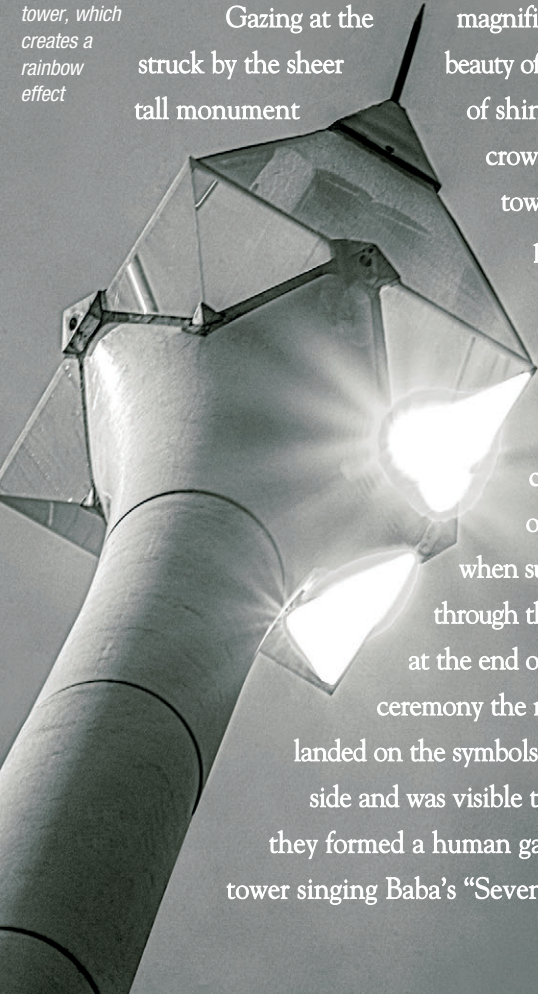
The Tower will be in memory of men belonging to different religions and will, in fact, represent the fundamental unity of all the great world religions. All the great world religions have in their own ways revealed the same One Truth which I bring anew, and this unity of all religions will be clearly emphasized by placing on the Tower the emblems of all the important world religions. The Tower shall thus be a silent proclamation of the unity of all religions.

* All excerpts from "Meher Baba's 1944 Message at the Foundation Ceremony of the Memorial Tower."

For more information about the history, design, construction, and inauguration of the Memorial Tower, go to the Trust Website and search "Memorial Tower" <https://www.ambppct.org/>.

To see a video of the Memorial Tower Inauguration: <http://ambppct.org/>.

Glass and
prism spire
on top of the
tower, which
creates a
rainbow
effect



The Samadhi in Seclusion

Continued from page 1

gently places a few local blossoms on Baba’s marble cloth. She then locks the familiar door and Baba’s Tomb is prepared for the day. Later, she attends to the Samadhi’s windows. Baba’s Cabin and the women mandali’s shrines are also cleaned. The fences around the shrines are locked as soon as the cleaning is done. There is always an experienced security man on duty at the Samadhi, day and night, and security cameras are monitored by the Trust Office.

During the day, a few people come near the Tomb and bow their heads, pay their respects, or open the little portico gate and sit under the enclosure for a few moments in silence before going on their way. One resident wrote:

Each time I sneak out to visit the Samadhi for a few minutes, I have this feeling that Baba is extremely busy inside—too busy to give darshan, but actually His presence is felt everywhere else throughout the day; so I continue going once a day and find something very strang—a mix of overpowering emanations of some Divine Power and an absence of intimacy—an intimacy which is all the more available as soon as I turn inside toward my “man-mandir” (heart-temple).

How to Contribute

In 1959 Baba established the AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST. Stated in His Trust Deed are many objects, including the upkeep of all the Meherabad and Meherazad facilities supporting pilgrimage to Beloved Baba’s Tomb-shrine and home, as well as services to the public, mainly through its medical facilities and the Meher English School. Trust facilities are available to anyone “irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion, nationality, or sex.” THE 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.

Anyone in the world can donate directly to the Trust in any currency at: AMBPPC Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King’s Road, Ahmednagar 414001, MS, India. Donations may be by personal check or demand draft payable to Avatar Meher Baba PPC Trust or can be made online (India only)—see “HOW TO HELP” on the Trust’s website: <https://www.ambppct.org/whereContribute.php>. Foreign nationals can also donate to the Trust through a few Baba organizations in the USA and UK that have been established to accept tax-deductible donations and transfer them to the Trust. (To see the list of organizations, click “FOREIGN NATIONALS” www.ambppct.org/fNat.php.)

Another way to support the Trust is to list it as a beneficiary in your personal Legacy. (See “LEGACIES” <https://www.ambppct.org/legacies.php>.)

Trust financial information is provided annually in the Trust Financial Report, sent out with the June issue of this newsletter and posted on the Trust website. The Financial Report details information on the Trust’s financial position and receipts and expenditures. More information can be found on the Trust’s website: www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org.

AT MEHERAZAD

THIS PAST PILGRIM SEASON, like so many before it, reflected a beautiful quilt of cultures and countries from around the globe coming together like “beads on one string” in Baba’s love. Visitors from nineteen countries mingled freely together with His lovers from all over India, enjoying the sanctified atmosphere of His home, Meherazad.

Keeping Baba’s home in beautiful condition for His lovers requires constant vigilance; repair work is necessary. Because of the intense heat of the summer, this year’s restorations began during the height of the pilgrim season, when the weather is more conducive to outdoor labor. The project was to repair, renovate, and restore the women servants’ quarters and the storage areas. This included what has been known as the “rice go-down,” one of the original rooms on the property in which Baba stayed temporarily. A team of Baba lovers from the United States, Argentina, India, Australia, and Israel joined hands to work together on the project during their pilgrimage.

For those whose pilgrimage coincided with Meherazad’s annual Children’s Day programme on 21st February, an extra treat was in store as they witnessed Pimpalgaon children and their teachers descend upon Meherazad for a wonderful give and take of delightful performances. The children danced and sang, heard stories about Baba, and giggled as they witnessed a magic show, in which some became the magician’s assistants. Afterward, they took darshan in Mandali Hall and pilgrims helped in giving out the prasad. It was a love feast that crossed nationalities and generations.

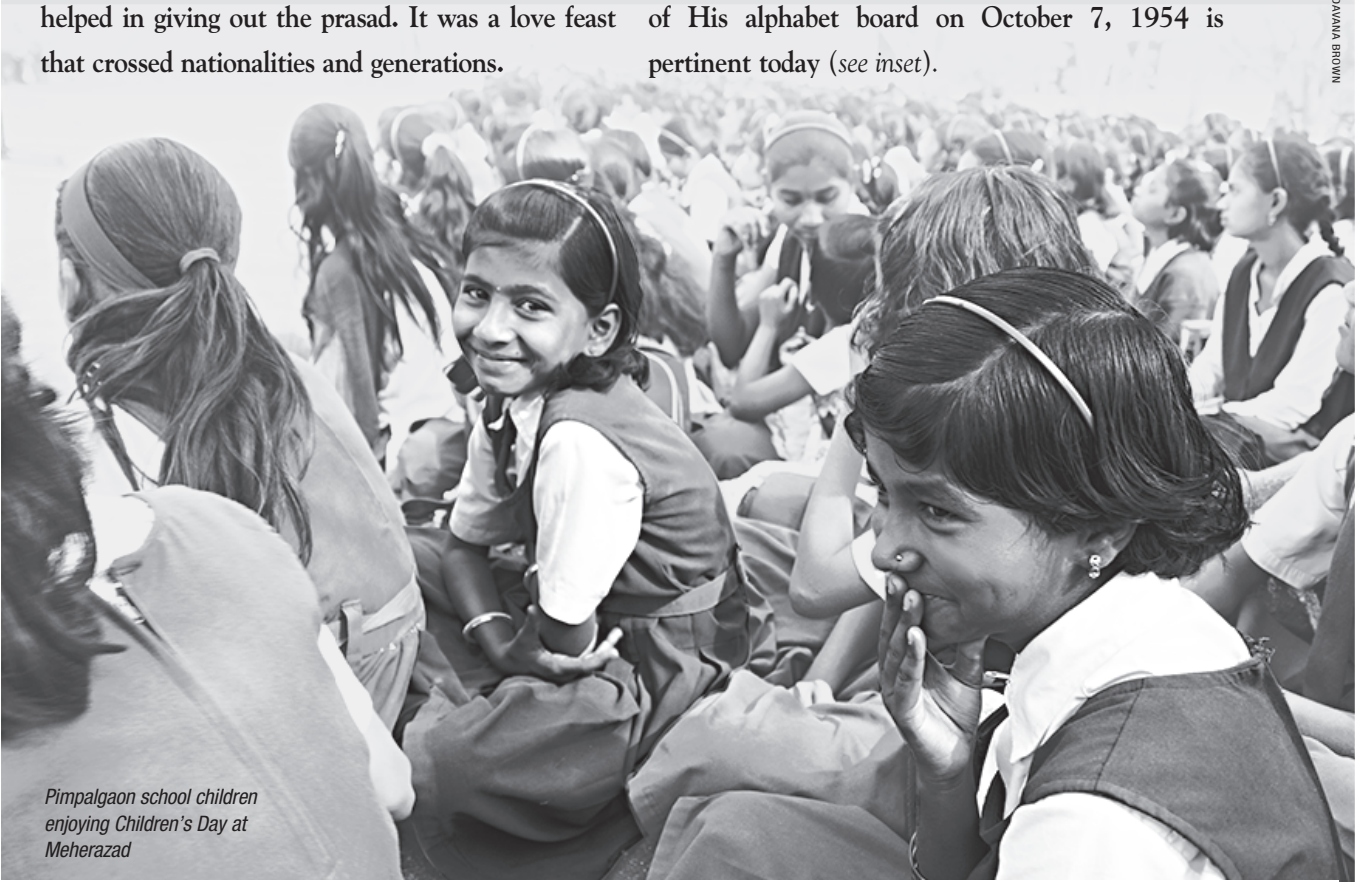
As the pilgrim season came to a close, with hugs and reminders to take Him with you wherever you may go, no one could have imagined how prescient those farewells would turn out to be, nor what our Beloved had destined to unfold: a worldwide pandemic that would reach across oceans, borders, castes, creeds, and religions, turning the world “topsy-turvy,” an expression and gesture that Baba had used to illustrate to His mandali what would come to pass in the future.

Today Meherazad is in strict lockdown. Only those who are residents of Meherazad are permitted to be there, except for a skeleton crew of workers. Only Meher Free Dispensary has kept its doors open to treat the patients who depend on it for medical care; many would have no way to get their necessary medicines without the clinic’s help. Special safely precautions are strictly observed.

*I am always with you
and I am not away from
you. I was, am and will
remain eternally with you,
and it is for promoting this
realization that I have
severed external contact.
This will enable all persons
to realize Truth by being
bound to each other
with internal links.*

MEHER BABA

The 2019–2020 pilgrim season will surely be remembered by His lovers because of the impact of His love felt during their pilgrimage to His home. Perhaps the ensuing pandemic, which has not only closed Baba’s Samadhi and His home but also His centers worldwide, may serve a more far-reaching purpose in our relationship with the Beloved. In this time of upheaval, an excerpt from Baba’s last message given out before He discarded the use of His alphabet board on October 7, 1954 is pertinent today (see inset).



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.

Contact: The Chairman, Avatar Meher Baba Trust, King’s Road, Post Bag 31, Ahmednagar 414001, M.S., India.
Email: chairman@ambppct.org.
Website: www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org.
Subscribe to In His Service: INDIA: chairman@ambppct.org. OTHER COUNTRIES: mailroom@sheriapress.com.
Subscribe to Tavern Talk (the Trust’s electronic newsletter): <http://mymeherbaba.com/mailman/listinfo/tavern-talk>. Or sign on via the Trust website: <http://ambppct.org/subscription.php>.

For Reservations to Stay at Meherabad: FOR MEHER PILGRIM RETREAT: pimco@ambppct.org. FOR HOSTEL D/DHARAMSHALA: jaibaba@ambppct.org.

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. All articles are copyrighted © 2020 Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust, Ahmednagar, India.

DONATIONS AND INQUIRIES SHOULD BE SENT TO: THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST, POST BAG NO. 31, KING’S ROAD, AHMEDNAGAR 414001, MAHARASHTRA STATE, INDIA.