



# IN HIS SERVICE

DECEMBER / 2020

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

*Although I see none during seclusion . . . the silent communion continues as ever. For there is no separation in Love, and wherever I am, under any condition of seclusion in the remotest corner of the globe, I am always with you, who love me so and are ever so close to me.*

MEHER BABA

## CARING FOR THE SAMADHI

Meherabad has enjoyed an unusual amount of rain this monsoon season, about twice as much as our yearly average. One result of the increased rain has been some minor but persistent damage to the murals on the inside of Baba's Samadhi.

As established by Baba in 1959, the Trust has the responsibility of the maintenance and upkeep of the Samadhi. Much care has been taken over the years to prevent leaks and water damage, and as a result, the Samadhi remains structurally sound despite the heavy monsoon we are having this year. In most years the Samadhi walls absorb some moisture and there are small areas of water damage to the paintings inside. These areas are noted and then cleaned and repaired when the rains have stopped. This year the rains started early and were also very heavy. This means the walls absorbed more moisture and for longer than usual.

When we realized that we had a larger moisture problem than usual we contacted a number of experts who have consulted and advised us in the past on how to conserve

the Samadhi building and murals. We then began a drying process using fans and a dehumidifier, both outside and inside the Samadhi, and are having good success. We are now able to begin cleaning the damaged spots. By Baba's grace, the lockdown has meant that the Samadhi has been closed during this time, enabling the dehumidifier to do its work.

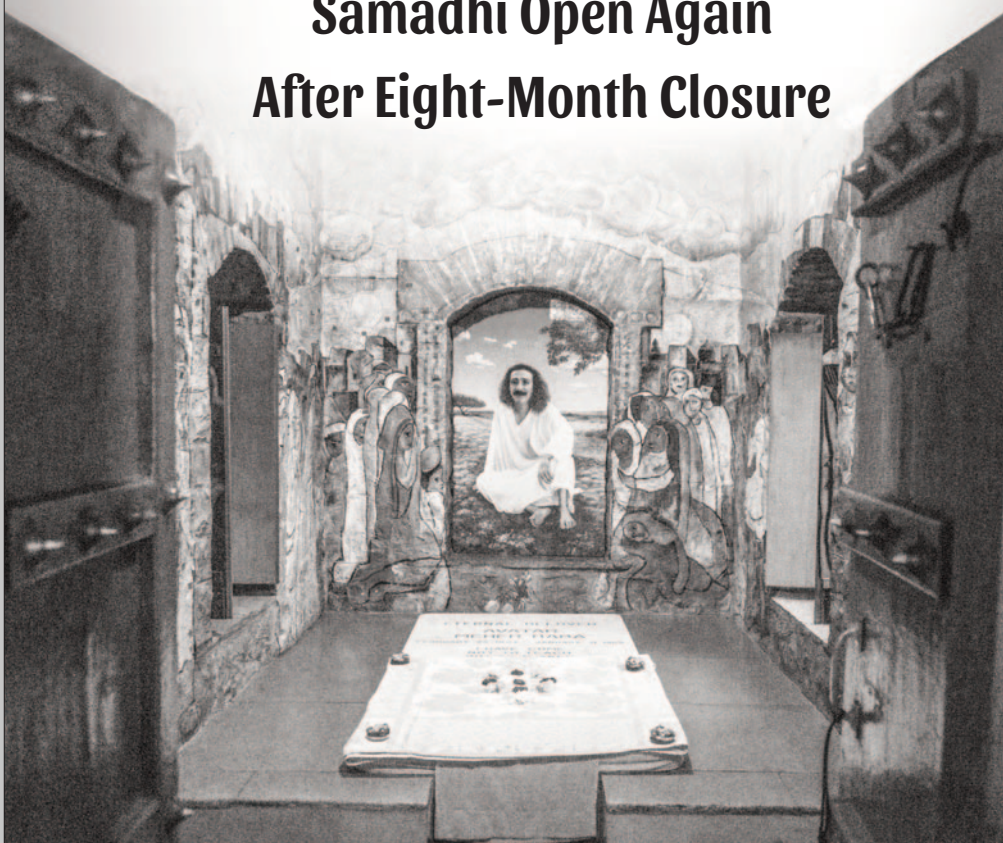
Steps have also been taken to keep excess water away from the Samadhi by adding a temporary gutter above the window on the left-hand side of the building, where the water entry was worst, and by creating small drainage channels at ground level to divert surface water away from the Samadhi.

The next procedures are to finish cleaning the damaged areas and then, in the dry season, to touch up the paint on the damaged spots.

— ARCHIVES TEAM

### Meherabad Flourishing

#### Samadhi Open Again After Eight-Month Closure



## ELEPHANT RAIN AT MEHERABAD

Meherabad rain records were broken by massive showers accompanied by thunder and lightning, creating gigantic lakes that still exist today. One longtime resident has been recording the rainfall with the same gauge on Meherabad Hill since 2004. On July 23rd, the heaviest one-day Meherabad rain was recorded with 6 inches/152.4mm of rain. By Oct 25th, this year's total reached 1219.2mm or 48 inches, a record by all accounts! The yearly average at Meherabad is 24 inches/609.6mm. June and July were the heaviest months.

According to *The Times of India*, the monsoon season officially ended on September 30th but the rains kept coming. The grand total of Mother Nature's extended season will no doubt break the Maharashtra record from 1958 of 148 inches/3,759.7mm. The recording stations closest to Meherabad (Chaas, Walki, Kedgaon) report that the seasonal rainfall has been more than 150% of the normal amount and for nearby Kedgaon it has been 182.5% more.

This extended monsoon season continued into November. In addition to being a boon for the water table, the extensive rain has also damaged roads; and the farmers' crops that suffer due to drought

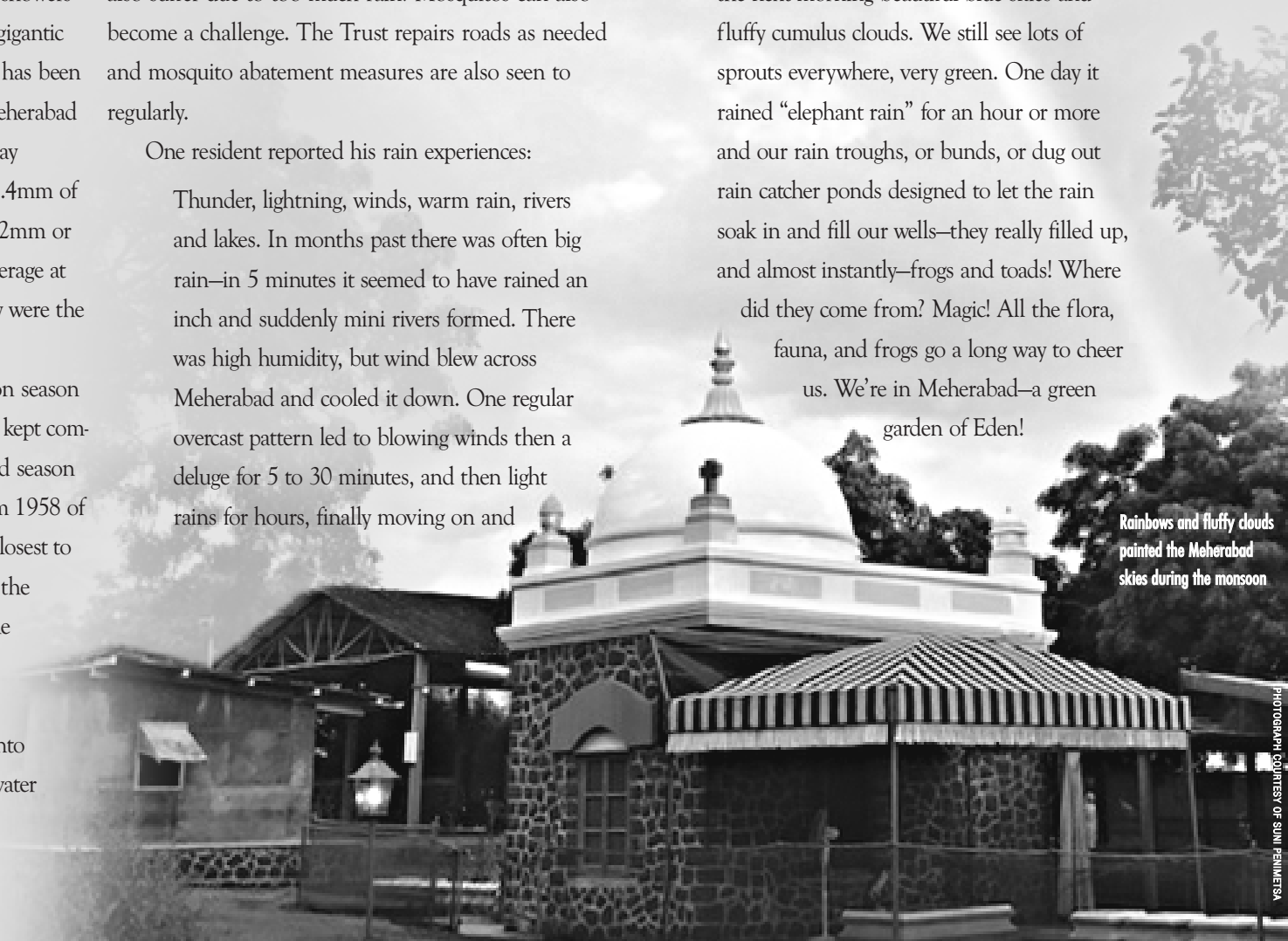
also suffer due to too much rain. Mosquitos can also become a challenge. The Trust repairs roads as needed and mosquito abatement measures are also seen to regularly.

One resident reported his rain experiences:

Thunder, lightning, winds, warm rain, rivers and lakes. In months past there was often big rain—in 5 minutes it seemed to have rained an inch and suddenly mini rivers formed. There was high humidity, but wind blew across Meherabad and cooled it down. One regular overcast pattern led to blowing winds then a deluge for 5 to 30 minutes, and then light rains for hours, finally moving on and

the next morning beautiful blue skies and fluffy cumulus clouds. We still see lots of sprouts everywhere, very green. One day it rained "elephant rain" for an hour or more and our rain troughs, or bunds, or dug out rain catcher ponds designed to let the rain soak in and fill our wells—they really filled up, and almost instantly—frogs and toads! Where did they come from? Magic! All the flora, fauna, and frogs go a long way to cheer us. We're in Meherabad—a green garden of Eden!

Rainbows and fluffy clouds painted the Meherabad skies during the monsoon



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL LIBRION

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SUM PERNIETSA



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Baba Family,

Since last March the whole world has been in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic that still continues. Although some governmental restrictions have loosened, India is still observing mandated guidelines.

Meherabad and Meherazad remain closed. Naturally Baba's lovers worldwide want to know about Beloved Baba's Samadhi and about darshan. The Maharashtra Government announced that places of religious worship can be opened from November 16th onward. (Please see full details in announcement.)

In addition to this unique global situation, Meherabad itself has experienced another unprecedented first: record-breaking

rainfall. Due to these heavy rains Meherabad is green all over. There is uncontrolled growth of weeds, and after the rains stop we will have to undertake massive clearing operations as there is always danger of wild-fires, especially in the overgrown hedges. All the wells

are full to the brim. Maybe next year we will not have any shortage of water, even if the rains fail.

The Trust staff is doing whatever work is available. Some essential repairs/renovation to some structures are being carried out. Regular maintenance work is also being done.

People have been concerned about how the Trust is faring financially. So far, we have not faced any financial problems. Even though Baba lovers are not

## Samadhi Announcement by the Chairman

In accordance with new guidelines set by the government for places of worship, Beloved Baba's Samadhi will be open for Darshan from Thursday 19th of November onward from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. There will be no Prayer and Arti either in the morning or evening. Nobody will be allowed to enter the Samadhi. Darshan can be taken from the door by folding hands with no bowing down near the threshold or any other place in the portico. All must leave the area quickly and not unnecessarily linger in the Samadhi area. No prasada will be distributed or accepted and no garlands or flowers may be offered. Wearing a mask is compulsory. All must observe social distancing 6 feet away from each other while in the Darshan line and are requested to follow the instructions given by the Samadhi volunteers.

here physically, online donations continue to be received, both from overseas as well as India. All donations are lovingly accepted and appreciated.

The Trust sent out the circular on Oct 1st announcing that there will

be no Amartithi programme held at Meherabad. We have requested people to not come to Meherabad. A virtual program of Amartithi will be webcast. Please see the details on the Trust website.

We do miss all the friends and pilgrims who usually come to Meherabad. But this is life! We know everything is exactly as Beloved Baba wishes.

Let us continue to trust in Him always.

In Baba's love,

Shridhar Kelkar, Chairman  
Avatar Mehera Baba Trust  
*Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!*



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL LIBERON

## VIRTUALITY

### Tomb-Shrine, Dhuni, and Young Adult Sahavas

Baba lovers have missed being at Meherabad this year, but Baba's lovers have gathered via the internet with His "inner-net" of love.

Around the world people have been sharing Baba's love with new and old friends through talks, prayers, and arti.

The Trust streams the interior of Beloved Baba's Tomb daily from 7-7pm. The lighting of the Dhuni is also streamed, although attending the Dhuni is still discouraged due to governmental guidelines on groups gathering. (See website for links.)

One annual Meherabad gathering each year is the Young Adult Sahavas. This year it happened virtually. Baba's lovers below the age of 35 gather for a week of focus on the Beloved through the arts. Participants come from around the world. Because of the global pandemic, the first virtual Young Adult Sahavas was held 20th-28th June, and was met with much enthusiasm by over 200! Held in four languages, evening broadcasts of talks, Baba songs, and presentations were held daily. Weekend programs were shared globally and weekday workshops were held for Sahavas attendees. Live programs included interactive sessions that the latest technology provides. Baba is never limited by time or space!

### Virtual Amartithi Programme

Avatar Meher Baba's 52nd Amartithi will be celebrated with an Online Programme this year from 30th January 2 pm until midnight, and 31st January 7 am until midnight.

The love-filled Amartithi programme will feature bhajans, qawwali, music and dances on video by His lovers worldwide, as well as Baba films, prayers, and artis in various languages. "Begin the Beguine," "Meher Dhun," and the Silence at 12 noon on 31st January will be webcast live.

Until December 10th, submissions can be made by following the Virtual Amartithi link on the left side menu of the Trust website's homepage:

<https://avatarmeherbabatrust.org/index.php/avatar-meher-baba-virtual-amartithi-2021/>

The Government of India has become very concerned how foreign money entering India is used and who is controlling those funds. The Government's concerns extend to organizations, institutions, public charitable trusts, etc., that receive foreign funds as donations and where foreigners are in a controlling position as office holders, executives, or trustees. To comply with the Government regulations, the Board of Trustees and in particular our foreign trustees have made the following decision:

In the best interests of Beloved Baba's Trust, the Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable and Avatar Meher Baba Trust (Firstly), both derived from the original

Trust Deed that Beloved Baba signed in 1959, our dear Trustees Heather Nadel, Craig Ruff, and Merwan Dubash have resigned. Heather and Craig have lived here for over 40 years and have been blessed to have lived and worked with the mandali. Merwan Dubash was blessed to be in Baba's company on several occasions. These indeed are unique souls and we will miss having them play the roles of trustees. However, they will happily continue to serve Beloved Baba through the Trust as they always have been doing.

In due course the Board will select new trustees to fill these vacancies.

Shridhar Kelkar, Chairman  
Avatar Meher Baba Trust

## News NUGGETS

## TRUST EVENTS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**COVID UPDATE AND MEDICAL SERVICES:** Mumbai, Pune, and later Ahmednagar were Covid "hot spots" for a while. Although there have been a few cases in Arangaon and among the Meherabad workers, there is no major spread in the local rural area. Meher Health Centre and Meher Free Dispensary are open with limited hours, and consultations are available at Meher Hospital. All patients and staff strictly adhere to Covid safety requirements.

**VILLAGE RELATIONS:** In addition to providing ongoing medical care to the local villages, the Trust continues to support educational efforts in the Arangaon and Pimpalgaon Malvi areas by providing books, information technology materials, and sporting equipment to several village schools, as well as helping with repair and maintenance of these locations. During the hot summer months of drought, the Trust provided funding to facilitate riverbed excavation, road construction, and water transportation (tankers), as well as helping with fodder for starving animals. During the Covid lockdown period the Trust also provided funding and foodstuffs to feed the poor.

**INTERNATIONAL LOCKDOWN PILGRIMS:** Most of the international pilgrims and residents that could not leave India from March 23rd onward are still at Meherabad, although some were able to leave on special consulate-arranged flights thru their various countries. The Indian government has granted visa extensions due to the pandemic. Once normal flights are resumed, which may not happen until 2021, the government may require foreigners to leave within 30 days.

**MEHER ENGLISH SCHOOL:** The current session is completed. The principal attends each day and teachers thrice weekly. Staff are busy helping the students with online study. Parents have been very involved.

**LIBRARY:** The 11th Annual Legacy Program on "Discovering the Avataric Treasure" will be presented online in March 2021. The program will be based on Baba's life and work from 1952 to 1953. See website for more details.

**MEHER NAZAR TRUST COMPOUND:** While the world and country are embroiled in a pandemic sweeping cities and villages, Meher Nazar remains quite the hub of Meher Baba activities involving numerous virtual programs and Trust activities.



# NEW TRUSTEE—AMRIT IRANI

On November 28, 2020, the Board of Trustees appointed Amrit Dara Irani as a trustee of the Avatar Meher Baba PPC Trust, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust (“Firstly”), the Meherazad Public Charitable Trust, and Meher Free Dispensary (Meherazad).

Born in November 1949 to close Meher Baba disciples Shatrughan and Subdhara Kumar in Dehra Dun, India, Amrit was given her name by Mehera. She

met Beloved Baba as a newborn during His New Life, and along with Baba’s women mandali and her mother, accompanied Baba to Hardwar for the Kumbh Mela at that time. She lived under Baba’s orders from childhood, and at His wish, on December 23, 1968, she married Baba’s nephew, Dara Irani, in His presence at Meherazad. Their sons, Meherwan and Jamshed, are also Baba lovers.

Amrit has lived in Ahmednagar and Meherabad since 1973 and is actively involved with Beloved Baba’s Samadhi and Baba’s pilgrims. She serves as a trustee in place of Jal Dastoor, who retired from the board last year.



Amrit Dara Irani, new trustee of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Meherazad Public Charitable Trust, and Meher Free Dispensary

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL LIBORION

## LIFE and WILDLIFE at Meherabad

Due to abundant water and a minimum of human interference, wildlife on the Hill is flourishing.

Herds of gazelles (*chinkaras*) have been scarce in recent years with all the development, but this year there is at least one mating pair. In the absence of pilgrim activity, they graze right on top of the Hill and near the Samadhi.

There is also a pair of foxes denning just beneath the brow of the Hill on the far side of the MPR.

One person had a civet cat make a midnight visit to her home one night, and another saw a very large monitor lizard! Near-blind shrews boldly visit their human neighbors.

Early on in the monsoon a variety of monkeys seemed to be having a convention at many locations in Meherabad, with several taking up the prestigious position as Tomb watchmen.



Every tank, gully, and mud-well are brimming, even on top of the Hill! Water flows from every cleft of the earth and, in Arangaon, the river has been overflowing. The evolutionary kingdom is certainly not observing “lockdown,” with many species swarming Meherabad.

There is the boisterous croaking of amphibians—the tiniest toads to the largest granddaddy frogs raise their voices in praise to the rain. Thousands of butterflies are flitting everywhere, yellow mostly, but also white and multicolored, as well as red dragonflies. Birds are even making new sounds: A raven was actually heard purring near the Samadhi the other day!

A current Meherabad list of winged wonders sounds like the *Conference of the Birds*: Woodpeckers, Indian *cuchals* (cuckoo), Kingfishers, Raptors with more than 6-foot wingspans, Weaver birds, Ducks, Sparrows, Robins, Crows,



ABOVE CENTER: A beautiful Indian gazelle (*chinkara*) grazing at upper Meherabad during the rainy season

LEFT: Many varieties of colorful butterflies beautify the atmosphere of Meherabad after the rains

RIGHT: Majestic Hoopoe, the wise leader of birds in the tale, *Conference of the Birds*, reigns at Meherabad

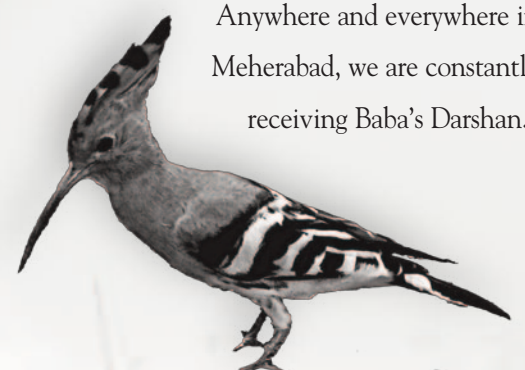
BELOW: Flowers love the rain, blossoming happily near the Main Bungalow at lower Meherabad

Lovebirds, (*budgies*), Hoopoes, Partridges, Egrets, Hummingbirds, Nightingales, Peacocks, White-necked Storks, Indian Rollers and more!

A few Meherabad residents share their experiences about rainy season lockdown: “One afternoon when it had stopped raining, I rode my bicycle around the Hill and stopped at the well where the nursery is. Looking over the parapet to check the water level, I noticed several hanging nests made by weaver birds. And the birds were bright yellow! Made my day!”

“Even with the Tomb door locked, it didn’t feel as though Darshan ceased at all.

Anywhere and everywhere in Meherabad, we are constantly receiving Baba’s Darshan.”



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SIMON REECE

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BILLY SPER

*In the future, Meherabad will be like Jerusalem. For my spiritual work, it is the best possible place. It will always be the center of my work.*

MEHER BABA

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL LIBORION



Continued from page 2

**TRUST MASTER PLAN:** Last year the planning committee shared a draft Master Plan during engagement sessions at major Baba centers in the West and India. Over 1,000 people directly participated in these sessions. The committee has spent this year digesting the helpful feedback and considering modifications to the plan and will present a final Master Plan in the coming months to the board of trustees. Once approved, the Trust will communicate with the entire Baba family the vision for how the Trust properties will be developed over time.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION:** 1,800 more trees have been recently planted. Other work includes planting bamboo, tree and shrub pruning, weeding, grass cutting, soil cultivation, irrigation maintenance and repairs, solid waste and sewage handling, tree nursery maintenance, and propagation of archival trees in the Meherabad tree nursery. Fencing is being constructed at Meherabad for security purposes, establishing permanent Trust boundaries, shielding afforestation from livestock, and preserving a peaceful atmosphere from unnecessary motorcycle traffic.

**PHOTO ALBUMS NOW LINKED ON WEBSITE:** The Trust website now features a photo album page under the “Activities” tab:

<https://avatarmeherbabatrust.org/index.php/photo-albums/>

## 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, by personal check or demand draft payable to Avatar Meher Baba PPC Trust or online (India only)—See “HOW TO HELP” on the Trust’s website [www.ambppct.org/whereContribute.php](http://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” at: [www.ambppct.org/fNat.php](http://www.ambppct.org/fNat.php).)

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

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 the Trust’s financial position and receipts and expenditures. More information can be found in the Trust’s website at [www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org](http://www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org).

# MEHERAZAD

## Remembering a Walk with Mehera

From a resident in Meherazad: “Meherazad like Meherabad normally struggles with water scarcity, but this year’s monsoon has brought almost forty inches of rainfall to Baba’s home. In October the rains are still continuing to fall, creating a lush landscape, narrowing the path up Seclusion Hill with overgrown grass and wild flowers, filling all the wells, flooding the roads, and most particularly overflowing the Pimpalgaon Lake, something we haven’t seen since the early eighties, when Baba’s beloved Mehera was still with us

One day after heavy rains, Mehera decided it would be fun for all of us girls to accompany her to the lake and see the water. The lake had overflowed its retainer wall and cascaded over the edge like a waterfall. Mehera,

who always found pleasure in nature, enjoyed it so much that she took off her *sapats* (the red velvet slip-on shoes she wore) and stood barefoot with us on the stone wall, gazing out over the lake as the water rushed over her toes. Today, almost forty years later, the lake is once again overflowing its boundary walls—just as it did when Baba’s beloved Mehera was with us.”

## Mangos from Baba’s tree at Meherazad

Because Beloved Baba has provided abundant rains this year, Baba’s Meherazad mango tree has produced plentiful mangos and some were distributed to Meher Nazar in Ahmednagar. One industrious resident sprouted her mango seed, which is now a healthy seedling. The tree at Meherazad is one of seven mango trees sprouted by Mehera. On a *mast* tour Baba was given mangos by a *mast* and He ate them. He saved the seeds and gave them to Mehera to sprout. All seven sprouted and were planted in a row in Meherazad. Unfortunately, a drought killed most of the trees. Only one remains in Meherazad today. This little seedling at Meher Nazar is a direct descendant of the original tree!

Pimpalgaon Malvi reservoir creating lovely waterfalls near Meherazad

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DAYANA BROWN

## An Hour of Rarest Bliss

*One resident’s reflection of time on the Hill*

From March 15th to October 8th, I had been to Baba’s Samadhi and said the prayers for more than two hundred days consecutively; a blissful circumstance. The Samadhi shimmered through the searing heat of summer then glistened in the rain while the Sacred Hill of Meherabad transformed itself from sun-bleached stones to verdant parkland. The abundant monsoon filled every hollow with holy water. The trees gleamed green, dripped shade, and bid the grass come forth to whisper God’s name. Dormant grasses stormed the well-used tracks and stony pathways. Even the Samadhi’s gravel skirt put forth a green burr of praise, and the short stretch of hedge that once formed the boundary of Baba’s early compound on the Hill became lush with shoots and leafy arti.

One afternoon, I found myself alone at the Samadhi as it began to rain. The rain soon became

heavy. All creatures took shelter and the world stood still in heaven’s cool libation. The rain came down in stair-rods. The cabin gutter ran a waterfall, as did the tin shed gutter, whose waters cut a swirling path across the compound, through the gates, past the corner of the Mandap, and to the Ocean. It rained so for more than an hour. There was nowhere to go, nothing to do; an hour of rarest bliss. They also serve who only stand and wait.

The Hill has become an English garden scene in the monsoon months. Certainly, when unruly nature’s bounty has been temporarily tamed to English garden symmetry by the Trust workers, the Samadhi sits in a green arena as if set for a picnic and lawn tennis. Once, as I was taking my leave of the Hallowed Ground, I thought I heard “Advantage Baba” on Love’s gentle summer evening breeze.

Rivulets after an abundant monsoon rain fill every hollow near the Amphitheatre on Meherabad Hill

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RAMI BOTHE

## 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.  
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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](mailto:pimco@ambppct.org). FOR HOSTEL D/DHARAMSHALA: [jaibaba@ambppct.org](mailto:jaibaba@ambppct.org).

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