

# **SAMADHI SUPER-STRUCTURE DESIGN**

## **(Revised May 2024)**

To Meher Baba's Worldwide Family,

The Avatar Meher Baba Trust is initiating planning for the Super-Structure that will overarch Baba's Samadhi, and is inviting His lovers to participate in its design. At this time, all who are interested may submit ideas for design. This document:

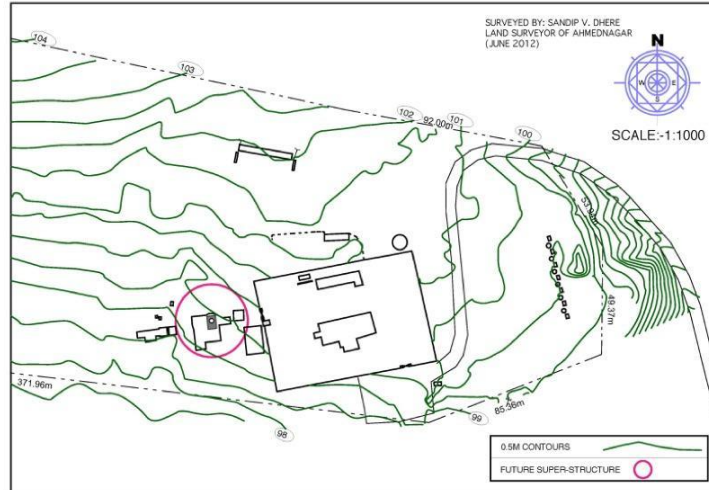
- Provides background information about the Super-Structure
- Clarifies the timing of the design and construction of the Super-Structure
- Shares perspectives about the Super-Structure from the mandali
- Details the design process
- Specifies requirements and guidance for those providing submissions
- Includes an appendix that illustrates how the Super-Structure relates to the darshan experience

This initial call for design ideas is the first opportunity for His lovers to be included in this inspiring process. There will also be an opportunity in a later phase for His lovers to offer feedback on the final designs that have been curated, as described below.

This entire process is intended to capture the imagination and creativity that resides in the worldwide Baba family in order to create a design that is worthy of the Highest of the High.

### **Background:**

The Samadhi of Avatar Meher Baba is the essential focus of pilgrimage for His lovers for all time. This building which sits atop Meherabad Hill was constructed in 1938 using stones from the original Post Office at Meherabad which Beloved Baba and His mandali inhabited in their early time at Meherabad.



*Survey Map of Upper Meherabad*

In 1959, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust was formed and its founding Deed that Meher Baba approved<sup>1</sup> specifies that:

- (A) The existing Tomb must always be available exclusively for the Settlor's physical remains to be buried therein as and when the Settlor drops his body.
- (B) An area of not less than fifty feet on all the four sides of the Tomb to be similarly available for its expansion and for the burial of the physical bodies after death of some of the Settlor's women disciples.
- (C) The existing Tomb proper and the said specified area for its expansion and for the graves which may be or will be there shall always be left completely unaltered and unchanged for all times even when a bigger tomb is built as a super-structure over them i.e. the Tomb proper and the specified area to be included under the super structure as one collective whole

The establishment of the Super-Structure is one of the few aspects of the development of Meherabad that Meher Baba directly specified. The Super-Structure will be important to help preserve the physical structure of the Samadhi, as well as protecting pilgrims from the elements as they approach the Samadhi for darshan. However, beyond its functional value, when the masses come for pilgrimage the Super-Structure will be the first glimpse they receive of the Samadhi complex—a sight which will help prepare them for the preciousness of their intimate darshan at the Samadhi. Therefore, the mandali seemed to fully appreciate the fact that this Super-Structure will become a defining feature of Meherabad. And as such, the greatest effort must be made to ensure that such a feature is worthy of overarching the Samadhi of the Avatar of the Age.

<sup>1</sup> <https://avatarmeherbabatruster.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Trust.pdf>; page 31

## Timing of Super-Structure viz. the Master Plan



The Trust Master Plan<sup>2</sup> calls for the Super-Structure to be constructed, but provides no specific time-frame for when this is to happen. Rather, the Master Plan specifies that the Super-Structure will be built at a time when the number of pilgrims coming to Meherabad has significantly increased from what they are today. Since there is no way to project the rate of increase in the numbers of pilgrims, it is not possible to establish the time when the Super-Structure will be built. Therefore, the Trust recognizes that the actual construction may be some time off.

Nevertheless, the Trust believes that now is the time to come up with the design for the Super-Structure. The urgency of doing this now is in order to incorporate into the design an understanding and appreciation of the mandali's perspectives on the Super-Structure, especially from Mani S. Irani, Meher Baba's sister. It is also important to capture in the design process the experience and perspective of residents and trustees whose close involvement with the development of the Trust Estate has been influenced by the mandali and, for some, their direct contact with Meher Baba.

The appendix provides diagrams that illustrate how darshan might take place within the Super-Structure; it was developed for the Master Plan that the Trust has approved; however it is an illustration for how the increase in numbers of pilgrims could be accommodated for darshan, recognizing that the actual plan for the darshan experience will likely evolve over time, as needed. The Master Plan anticipates that the Super-Structure will eventually have to allow up to 1 million people to take darshan at the Samadhi during a seven-day period.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://avatarmeherbabatrust.org/master-plan/>

## From the Mandali:

Mani S. Irani was Meher Baba's sister and was among the most intimate of Meher Baba's mandali. For many years, she also served as chairman of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust. One morning in October 1992 in the Trust Office, Mani told Ted Judson (Trust architect and Meherabad resident) about a vision she had the night before. She specifically said it was not a dream but a "vision". Mani made this sketch to describe it but said it was not very accurate.



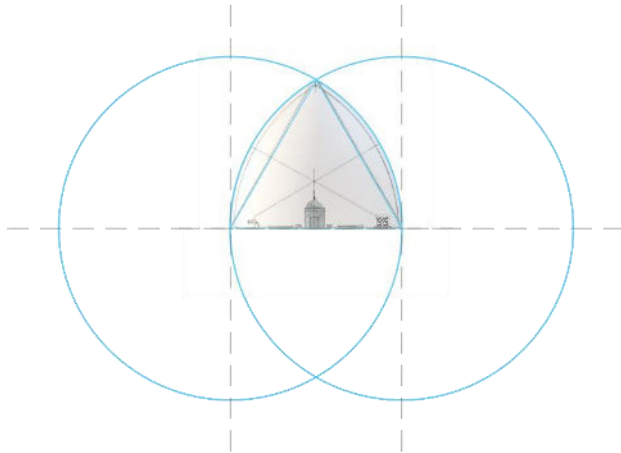
*Mani's sketch of her vision*

The next morning she saw a photo of a building in the newspaper, a portion of which she said was the exact shape of her vision.



*From newspaper article in the Times of India shown by Mani depicting a vesica piscis*

This seems to conform to the shape referred to as a *vesica piscis*, which has been described as symbolising "the interface between the spiritual and physical worlds, represented by the two circles".



*Depiction of vesica piscis overlaid on Samadhi*

Mani also said the Super-Structure should be a canopy over the Tomb and the Samadhi should be easily seen from the outside. Ted made a wire model and showed it to Mani. She did not comment on it but kept it until she went to Baba. Mani's sketch, the newspaper photo and the model are now in the Trust's archives at Meherabad.



*Ted Judson's Wire Model based on Mani's Vision*

Bhau Kalchuri recalled a time when Baba seemed to be referencing the Super-Structure when he noted that *"in 1965 Baba Himself in Mandali Hall called for a matchbox, took out some matches, and made a design with them. At one point, He made the matches into a*

*triangle.*<sup>3</sup> This is consistent with the notion of the *vesica piscis*, which has an equilateral triangle as the essential shape that underlies the form.

In addition, Eruch Jessawala, long-time mandali member, encouraged that the Super-Structure not be embellished in a way that detracts from the simplicity of the atmosphere of Meherabad. He noted that an over-focus on decoration of the structure “will not help glorifying Him but will detract the pilgrims from focusing entirely on Him.” He also suggested a prism be incorporated, projecting the colours of Baba’s flag.

### **Design Process:**

There are two major phases that will lead to a final design:

Phase One: An ad-hoc committee (composed of Trustees, architects, and Archives Department representative) will request submissions of design proposals from the worldwide Baba family; these will be reviewed, and a shortlist of up to seven potential designs will be provided for the Trust’s approval.

Phase Two: A review panel (composed of Trustees, architects, and Archival Department representative) will assess the short-listed designs and winnow it down to the most promising three designs. These three designs will be shared with the worldwide Baba family for feedback; and then in consideration of the feedback, the review panel will refine the three designs and present these to the Trustees to decide on a final design.

The final design may well incorporate features from several of the proposals. The Trust views this as an opportunity for collaboration among designers to discover the most creative ideas that will contribute to a Super-Structure that is inspired by the Avatar of the Age.

*Note that the Trust may make adjustments to this process as warranted.*

### **Requirements and Guidance for Submissions:**

Anyone may submit their ideas for the overall design of the Super-Structure. We request all submitters to do their best to enable the reviewers to clearly visualise your design. This may be through providing one or more of the following:

- Artistic drawing
- Floor plan
- Elevation views
- Model

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<sup>3</sup> <https://avatarmeherbabatrust.org/article-2/>

Designs should meet the following criteria:

- The design should be in compliance with the Trust Deed (reference 'B' and 'C' on page 2 of this document)
- The view of the Samadhi should not be impeded for those who are on the Hill
- The design should conform with the atmosphere of simplicity at Meherabad
- The following should not be disturbed:
  - The Samadhi as well as the graves of the women mandali
  - Baba's Cabin and the Mast Ashram/Cage Room building
  - The wall around the Meher Retreat
  - The graves of Baba's parents, close disciples, and pets

Your submission may also incorporate some or all of the following elements within the overall design:

- Colours
- Shapes
- Textures
- Features (e.g., images, quotes, figures, etc.)
- Lighting
- Materials (e.g., marble, composite, glass, etc.)
- Detailed design of interior/floor plan (e.g., railings, paving patterns, etc.)

It should be noted that Trust policy prohibits disturbing or destroying anything from Baba's time, such as:

- Posts from the gate to Baba's compound
- The trees from Baba's time

However, if warranted an exception to some of these restrictions may be considered for the Super-Structure, since it is being constructed according to Baba's direction. Note that the Sabha Mandap, the Samadhi portico, and anything constructed after 1969, will eventually be removed.

Each submission should help the Trust visualise the proposed Super-Structure, providing sketches and any other relevant information so the proposal can be fully considered. You may also include an explanation of your design that highlights key ideas, including how it could allow up to 1 million pilgrims to take darshan over a seven day period.

Also please note all submissions should:

- Include a brief introduction about yourself and your background, as well as anyone else involved in the preparation of your submission
- Provide your e-mail address or other contact information

- Be submitted either electronically to [samadhisuperstructure@gmail.com](mailto:samadhisuperstructure@gmail.com); or have a copy sent by registered mail to: Chairman—Avatar Meher Baba PPC Trust, Post Bag 31, King’s Road, Ahmednagar, MS, India; PIN code: 414001 (attention: Super-Structure Committee)

It would also be helpful for the Trust to be informed of your interest in making a submission, so you can be notified if there are any changes to the process or time-frames or additional information that could be helpful as you prepare your submission.

All submissions should be received by the Trust no later than December 31, 2025.

Also please note:

- Any questions may be submitted to the committee at [samadhisuperstructure@gmail.com](mailto:samadhisuperstructure@gmail.com); the responses to questions will be consolidated and shared on the Trust website.
- The submitters should be available for follow-up questions from the Trust, as needed.
- The Trust will offer no compensation for the design submissions and we discourage payment to any designers; instead we hope that all submitters will be inspired by their hearts to contribute their ideas for Baba’s Samadhi Super-Structure.
- All submissions will be considered the property of Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust (AMBPPCT).

Finally, it should be understood that there is no expectation that the person/s whose design is selected will necessarily be involved in detailed design drawings or construction; as noted earlier, the timeline for actual construction of the Super-Structure cannot be determined at this time.

Upon receipt, the Trust will acknowledge receipt of the submission by e-mail.

We look forward to the bounty of creative expression that will be released in the design of Beloved Baba’s Samadhi Super-Structure.

In the Love and Service of Avatar Meher Baba,

Framroze Mistry  
Chairman  
Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust



## APPENDIX SUPER-STRUCTURE AND THE DARSHAN EXPERIENCE

The Super-Structure is an essential feature of the Meherabad Master Plan. It is the only aspect of the further development of Meherabad that Meher Baba specified, and it is incorporated in the Trust Deed. The Meherabad Master Plan anticipates how Meherabad will accommodate an increasing number of pilgrims. The maximum number of pilgrims accounted for in the Master Plan allows one million pilgrims to have darshan within line-of-sight of the marble over a seven day period.\* The following diagrams illustrate how the Super-Structure can help facilitate the darshan experience of that number of people. They are provided to help designers envision how the Super-Structure will eventually be used and how it will sit within its larger physical context on Meherabad Hill.

In viewing these diagrams, please note:

- The Meherabad Master Plan calls for the Super-Structure to be constructed when the number of pilgrims is between twice as many as today and five times as many as today; since the future rate of increase in pilgrim numbers cannot be accurately predicted, it is not possible to project with confidence the actual timing of construction of the Super-Structure.
- These diagrams illustrate the darshan experience at the time when 1 million pilgrims are at Meherabad; for the initial period of time after construction, there will probably not be the number of pilgrims that would require major changes to the activities that occur today in and around the Samadhi, such as devotional singing; however, eventually those activities will be conducted in other places on Meherabad Hill outside the immediate vicinity of the Samadhi, as specified in the Meherabad Master Plan.
- These diagrams are not presented as the final plans; rather they were developed during the preparation of the Meherabad Master Plan to demonstrate the feasibility of accommodating a million pilgrims at a time. The Trust understands the actual plan for darshan will be based on the prevailing requirements and available methods and technologies at the time when the demand requires it. Therefore, there is no need at this point to attempt to further refine these diagrams.

*\* The Trust has agreed that at some point in the future, the Amartithi celebration will be for seven days*

DIAGRAM #1: OVERVIEW OF SUPER-STRUCTURE ON MEHERABAD HILL

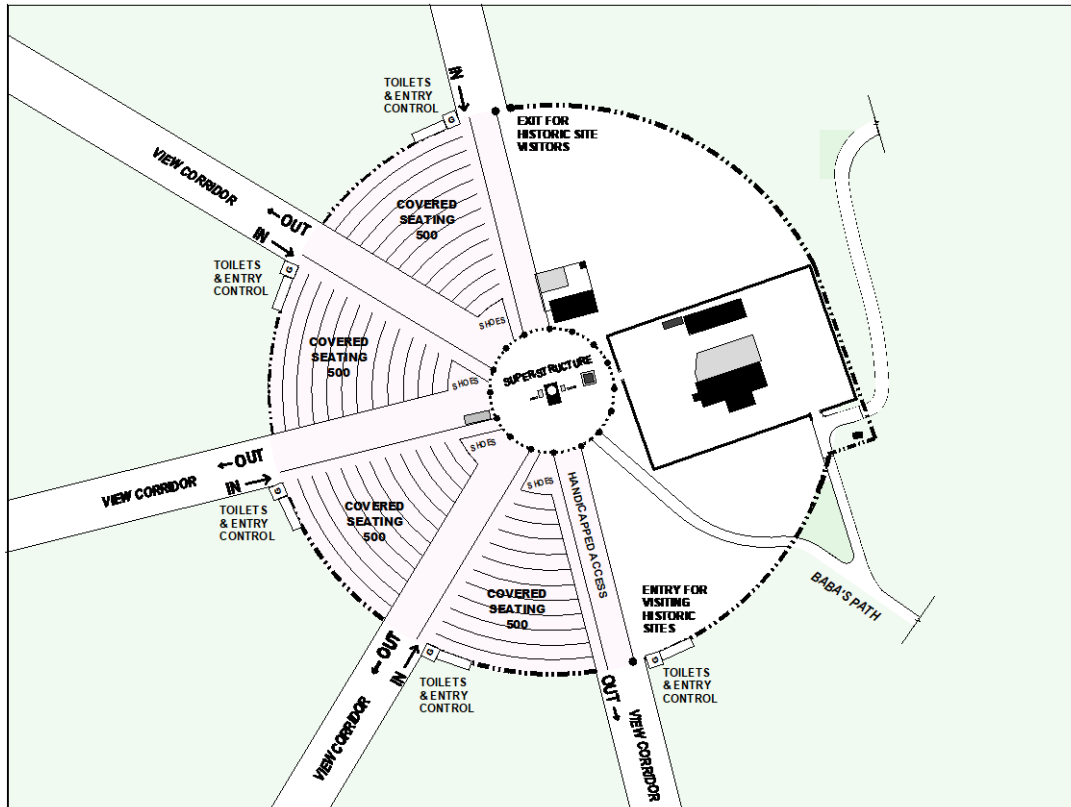


Diagram #1 shows the Super-Structure in the context of the top of Meherabad Hill. The Super-Structure will over-arch the Samadhi, as well as the graves of the women mandali and Baba's Cabin. As the crowds require it, there will be covered seating for 2,000 pilgrims surrounding the Super-Structure on one side, offering protection from the elements as they await their opportunity to enter the Super-Structure for darshan.\* There will be lines-of-sight of the Super-Structure from the five view corridors and Baba's Path that pilgrims will follow as they approach the top of Meherabad Hill. Entry into and regress from the Super-Structure will be provided through the view corridors. Essential facilities for leaving and retrieving shoes as well as toilets will be provided outside the seated area. Provision will be made for people with handicaps to gain access into the Super-Structure.

*\*The design submissions should anticipate the need for an eventual inclusion of a covered seating area surrounding one side of the Super-Structure (as indicated on the diagram), but need not actually include a design for the covered seating area.*

DIAGRAM #2: DARSHAN EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE SUPER-STRUCTURE

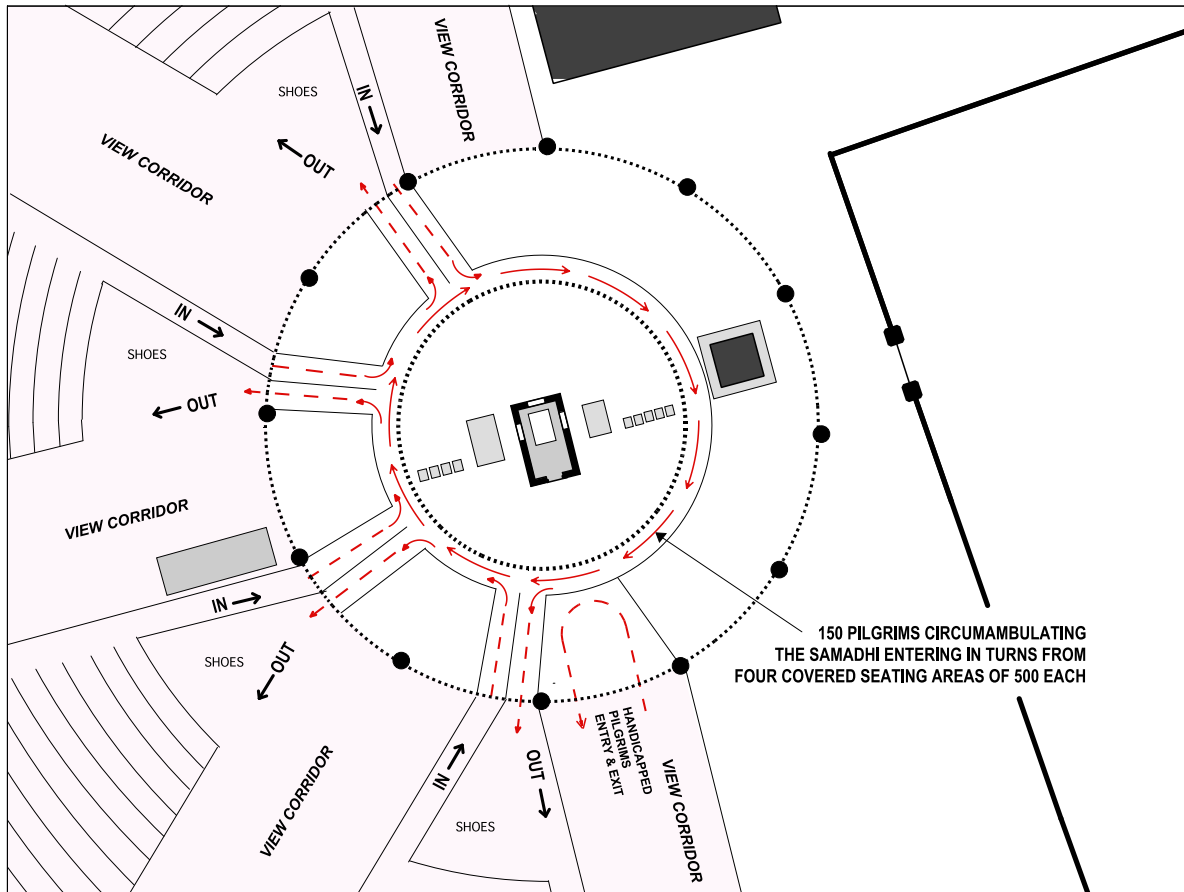


Diagram #2 illustrates how darshan could be experienced when the number of pilgrims has increased to the point where it is not possible to accommodate individuals having darshan experience inside, or even adjacent to, the Samadhi.\* Pilgrims would have received in advance an appointed time to enter into one of the four covered seating areas. When their turn for darshan comes, the pilgrims would deposit their shoes and enter the Super-Structure, where they will be allowed to circumambulate the Samadhi, coming within line-of-sight of the Marble. As they complete their circumambulation, they would exit the Super-Structure from the same place where they had entered, retrieve their shoes, and then exit down the view corridor from which they arrived.

*\*A more complex version of this diagram has been created that shows how darshan is experienced during "surge" periods, such as Amartithi.*