

Pilgrimage to Meherabad

By William M. Stephens

KUP'S KOMMENT:

Pilgrimage to Meherabad appeared in *Fellowship in Prayer* in August 1982. In early November 1990 author of the article and *HC* Columnist, **Bill Stephens**, along with his wife **Peggy**, family members and friends will be on their annual pilgrimage to Meherabad, India. Although invited to go, I had made a previous commitment to be in Sweden at this time. I look forward to cashing in my "rain check" for 1991 and join the group then with goodness to all concerned and Thy will being done. Since the late 1960s when I became interested in magic and corresponded with a few fine Indian magicians I had the desire to visit this land. One year to go!!!

Now, there follows a self-explanatory excerpt of a recent letter from Bill and then the feature article. Thanks Bill and God bless you and yours on the trip!!!

Dear Roy:

Here are eight of my treasured photographs of Meherabad and Meherazad and some of Baba's intimate mandali (close disciples).

Ed note: This story (Pilgrimage to Meherabad) was written and photos taken at Christmastime 1973 during Bill and Peggy's first pilgrimage to Meher Baba. In the ensuing years the region has changed and flourished.

The photographs were made at a time of great drought which parched the entire Deccan plateau of central India. Now there is an adequate water supply and irrigation methods. Many hundreds of trees and flowering plants have caused the whole area to blossom (Meherabad means "Flourishing Abode of Meher"). So many people now come to take Meher Baba's darshan (to bow at His feet in His Tomb or Samadhi) that a beautiful pilgrim center (like an inn) has been built. Among other new buildings, a hospital has been constructed to serve the many indigent people in the surrounding region.

Re the photos: Panday, a man who took many great photographs of Meher Baba and who is shown handpainting one of them in his studio, has passed on. Eruch Jessawala is still there, however, and he tells many wonderful and inspiring stories of his years with the Avatar



Meher Baba

of the Age. Tiny Mansari, who is in charge of the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill, is also still there to greet visitors and to show them the museum and library on Meherabad Hill where many priceless mementos of Meher Baba's life are displayed. Baba's sister Mani is also still there and directs the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, which administers the properties dedicated to Meher Baba. Mohamed the mast (pronounced "must") still lives at Meherabad and is one of many God-intoxicated souls are slowed down. The masts are literally saturated with love and intoxicated by the love and presence of Almighty God. An ad-



Bill Stephens

vanced soul such as Mohamed sees God everywhere and in everything, but he is still separate from his Divine Beloved. In two more lifetimes, Baba said, Mohamed will be God-realized and will function as a Perfect Master to bring other persons to the reality of God.

Thanks much. On our forthcoming trip to Meherabad I will shoot some updated pictures especially for *Health Consciousness*.

Jai Baba! Much love in the Divine Beloved —

Bill

When, during the sixties, I first heard of Avatar Meher Baba, I felt strangely drawn to him. All I knew about him was that he lived in India, had been silent for more than forty years, and claimed to be God.

At that time I was a forty-year-old

Where the suffering is greatest, the longing for God is strongest.

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"Let's get one thing clear, Quackbusters would be doing us all a favor if they helped weed out the mad, the malevolent and the mistaken from medicine — all medicine. Alternative and complementary medicine has its share of nonsense and charlatans, among them medical doctors who have jumped aboard the gravy train and weekend qualified 'practitioners' who don't know a brain tumor from a bunion."

— Simon Martin
Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine
 (JACM, August 1989 p22)

question accepted (unorthodox) methods until we satisfy ourselves that they can withstand scrutiny from others. A recent example of just how important it is that we accept the need for self-scrutiny came after I reported (in JACM) briefly on an unfavorable study involving Applied Kinesiology. This study had shown that in assessing for zinc deficiency there had been no more than a random degree of accuracy and that instrumentation showed that muscles were inaccurately assessed by the AK practitioners, as testing weaker or stronger, 50% of the time. I received abusive mail as a result of this report, saying that we 'must all stick together' in the alternative field, and 'not rock the boat.' My reply is that if we all stick together in support of unsubstantiated claims we will all sink together, and justifiably so.

Now, I realize that there are many reasons for this individual test possibly being inaccurate, and that explanations have been forthcoming as to just how such an assessment should have been conducted. Fine, this opens up the debate and clears suspicions which non-reporting of the study would have prevented. We must be seen to be more

We must be responsible and self-critical, and should only defend what we are certain of. If we do otherwise we play into the hands of those who would destroy us, the quackbusters.

self-critical than our critics; more open to questioning our own methodology and concepts than the quackbusters; not bound by a phony code of honor which says we must defend the indefensible in the face attack; and, as I said in my reply to the attack on my reporting, focus on and deal with the message, don't shoot the messenger.

Other examples of such attention to unorthodox elements are the recent British Medical Journal article showing very poor results using iridology. This was reported in JACM as was a careful examination of just why this was not the final word on the possible usefulness of this diagnostic method. The current hys-

teria against germanium usage (nephrotoxicity is claimed) is another example. We should not be defending the use of this substance until we know that such toxicity is absent. We must be responsible and self-critical, and should only defend what we are certain of. If we do otherwise we play into the hands of those who would destroy us, the quackbusters.

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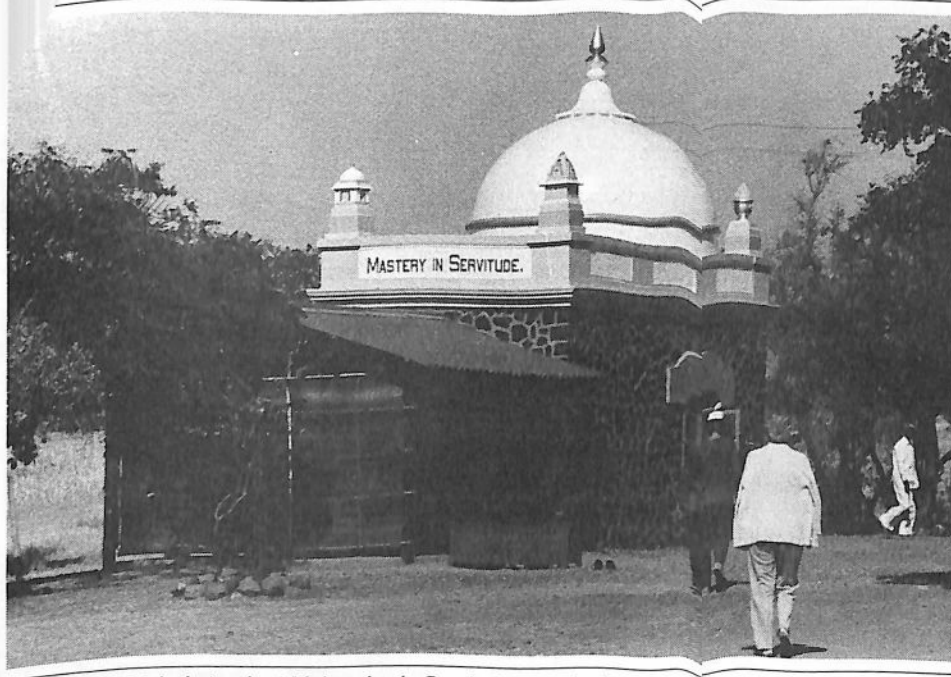
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Meher Baba's tomb at Meherabad. Symbols atop the building represent some of the major religions of the world — Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Baba's parents were Parsis (of Persian blood, followers of Zoroaster, or Zarathustra), but he always maintained that he belonged to no religion — all religions at heart were one. Baba said that his mission was to bring all religions together, "like beads on one string."

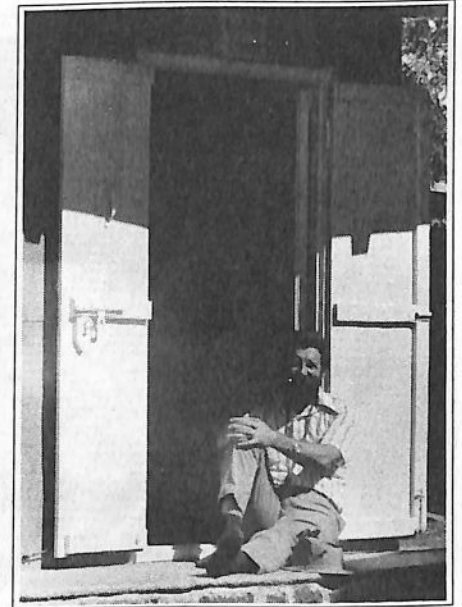
Photo by William M. Stephens

editor of an international scientific journal. For as long as I could remember I had been a devout agnostic. I had never seen a photograph of Meher Baba, nor read a word he had written. I had no idea what the word *avatar* meant.

As soon as I accepted him, I found I also loved and accepted Jesus. They are one in consciousness, both manifesta-

tions of the same universal spirit. Baba said, "I was Krishna, I was Ram. I was Zoroaster and Buddha, I was Jesus. I was this one and that one, and now I am Meher Baba."

By the time I knew who he was, he had completed his work and passed on. But the contact had been made, the link established. That link, I am convinced,



Bill Stephens outside Meher Baba's room, atop Meherabad Hill, where Baba's Samadhi is located.

will draw me to him when he comes back, as the God-man always does. You don't choose your Master. He chooses you. Whether you follow Jesus or Baba depends upon your own experiences in past lives.

For years my wife Peggy and I loved Meher Baba without feeling any urge to travel halfway around the world to pay our respects to a marble slab in a concrete tomb on a barren hilltop. But then Baba called, and we went. After traveling in Europe and the East for several months, our son Roger, then twenty, was already in Meherabad. He had no reason to expect us to join him, and our arrival there would surprise him no less than it amazed us.

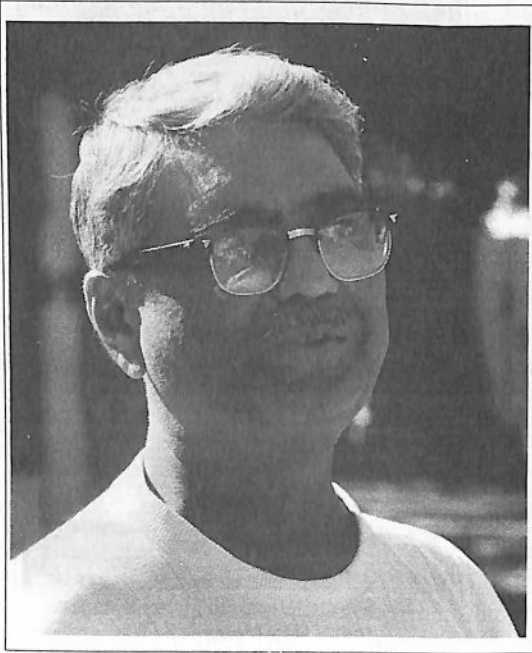
We flew, in late December, from Miami to London to Dubai to Bombay. On the streets of Bombay, we experienced severe culture shock. Stepping over sleeping bodies on the sidewalk, being accosted by big-eyed children with deformed arms and by pathetic mothers holding babies, we knew we were in India. Where the suffering is greatest, the longing for God is strongest.

Next came a wild taxi-ride of a hundred miles through the plains and over the mountains to Poona. Four passengers and their luggage on a tiny Fiat driven by a madman. Cost: twenty rupees (about four dollars) each.

Here are excerpts from my journal: December 23: We reached Poona, to-



Mani (right), Meher Baba's sister, greets visitors and pilgrims who come to see Meher Baba's home at Meherabad.



Eruch Jessawala, one of Meher Baba's mandali (or close disciple) has spent virtually his entire life serving Baba.

Photo by Roger Stephens



Tiny (4'6") Mansari, a disciple of Meher Baba since the age of 18. Mansari has lived on Meherabad Hill since 1938. Her main job since 1969 (when Baba "dropped his body") has been to take care of the tomb.

Photo by William M. Stephens

tally exhausted, and checked into the Amir Hotel. A few minutes later, Baba's brother Jal came tapping at our door, eager to take us out to dinner. Jal is a sweet, loving man. He wanted to show us where Baba was born, where he grew up, the schools he went to, the neem tree under which the female *sadguru*, Hazrat Babajan, kissed him on the forehead, thus lifting the veil of his consciousness, and the giant mango tree by the river where he and Babajan sat together in later years. We reluctantly decided to postpone seeing these special places, since a group of twenty-nine Sufis from California arrived in a chartered bus bound for Meherabad and had two empty seats, so we seized this opportunity to complete the trip in comfort with friends.

December 24: The last six miles, from Ahmednagar to Meherabad, seemed endless. I wondered how often Meher Baba had walked that dusty road along the row of weeping figs. His eyes had seen the same fields of waving millet, the same flat-topped hills, the same banyan under which a robber used to hide and waylay travelers until Baba called him and he fell at the avatar's feet. We passed bullock carts, graceful women in saris carrying brass pitchers on their heads, bicyclists in *dhotis*, motorized rickshaws, buffaloes driven down the road by a tiny boy with a stick.

... Finally, Lower Meherabad: a clus-

ter of patients waiting outside the Meher Free Dispensary, the big neem tree where Baba used to sit. A quarter-mile further, in Arangaon Village, a group of villagers stood by an ancient gray mosque. They smiled at us and called, "Jai Baba!" We turned onto the road to Upper Meherabad. Atop the hill, Baba's tomb reflected the sunlight. Happy tears filled my eyes. We passed a sign reading BABA'S SAMADHI — WAY UP, with an arrow pointing ahead, and my laughter only increased the tears. Peggy said, "I wonder where we'll see Roger."

The bus pulled up and parked. Seated on the edge of a concrete platform a hundred feet from the tomb was Roger. He was doing an acrylic painting of the tomb. I stuck my head out a window and shouted, "Jai Baba, Roger!" Jumping up and running toward us, he yelled, "Mansari!" We learned later that he had just been telling Mansari, who takes care of the tomb, how much he missed us and that this would be his first Christmas away from home.

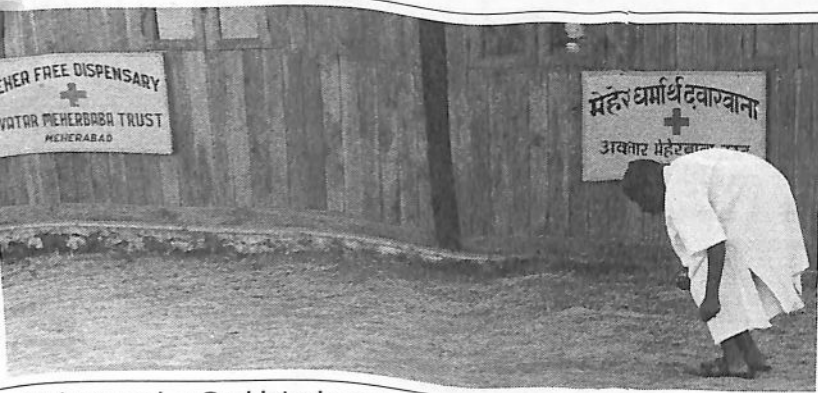
Christmas Day: A memorable experience, riding bikes at dawn down the road to Meherabad . . . the smell and glow of wood fires, people carrying firewood or water on their heads, dark figures passing like shadows against a golden backdrop of early morning.

While we walked up the hill, the crimson sun arose over the distant hills. A crowd was at the tomb for morning

arti (devotionals) — prayers and songs in Gujarati, Marathi, and English, people from many lands and faiths. The silence and presence within the tomb were too intense to describe. Leaving the tomb, each person received *prasad* — in this case, a very sweet Indian candy — from Mansari.

After breakfast we left for Meherezad, the other center for Baba's work, about fifteen miles. It is a peaceful place. We relaxed on a long verandah, while Mani, Baba's sister, Eruch Bhau, and Aloba tell stories about Baba. All the *mandali* (close disciples) are warm and open individuals. Many of them are Parsis. Others are Moslems, Christians, Hindus. None of them knew Peggy and I were coming, but they greeted us by name and embraced us. I feel as if I have come home. Everyone who goes to Meherezad gets the same treatment. If Meher Baba can produce people like these . . . How fortunate we are to know the close ones — men like Adi, Padri, and Pendu, the last remaining disciples from the original group that gathered around Baba in 1921. To think that these men knew Baba before he began his silence! Adi told us Baba had the most beautiful voice he ever heard and was always singing and playing the *tabla*.

December 26: We had a special program of Qawali singers and Indian dancers, also a Christmas play done by the California Sufis. The most moving per-



Mohammed, a God-intoxicated soul who experiences a very high state of consciousness, has been with Meher Baba for more than 40 years. Mohammed frequently goes into states in which he is apparently unaware of his surroundings for long periods of time. At times he has gone without food or water for literally weeks. Here he stares motionless at the ground. Meher Baba said that Mohammed is in the Mental World (on the Fifth Plane, sainthood, according to the planes of consciousness defined in Meher Baba's book *God Speaks*) and will be a Perfect Master after two more lifetimes.

Photo by William M. Stephens



Panday, in his studio, at Ahmednagar, hand-coloring one of the many photos he made of Meher Baba. Photo by William M. Stephens

formance I ever saw was a dance in pantomime, representing the spiritual journey to God, performed by a lovely Hindu woman who once danced for Baba.

December 27: Outside the tomb today I met Kaikobad, who is eighty-three and repeats Baba's name 100,000 times a day. I felt great power coming from him. Often he is in a high state of consciousness in which he sees nothing but Baba everywhere and in everything.

Tiny Mansari (4'-6") served us tea in a primitive kitchen on Meherzad Hill. She told us about the time Baba gave her a big stick to protect herself with when he left on his wanderings in 1949. One night, she awoke to find a cobra on her chest. She threw it off, lit a lamp, found the stick, and killed the cobra. Then she saw that Baba had materialized in the room and was watching her with a serious expression. She crawled back into bed, but could not sleep, since she preferred to feast her eyes on her vision of Baba, which remained vivid and lifelike until dawn.

December 28: This afternoon we visited Panday's studio. Panday took most of the photographs of Baba. He does marvelous oil-tintings of black-and-white photographs. (Color film, though available, is exorbitantly costly in India, color prints prohibitive.) Panday is also an accomplished artist and has finished a tremendous painting to be exhibited during *Amartithi* (January 31, the anni-

versary of the day Baba dropped his body). I wish we could stay for it. Thousands of people come from all over the world. They say it's an incredible love-feast, with singing and dancing, a celebration of joy in the love of "one who never dies."

December 31: Peggy gave Mohammed, the *mast* (pronounced "must"), a box of raisins. He was delighted. Mohammed is in a good mood. Recently, according to Padri, Mohammed went eighteen days without eating, drinking water, or going to the bathroom. Meher Baba worked longer with him — he's a fifth-plane saint — than with any of the other "God-intoxicated souls." Baba said that after two more lifetimes, Mohammed will be a *sadguru* (perfect master).

January 4: Mehera showed Peggy the tree outside her window on which Baba's face appeared shortly after he dropped his body. The image is still very distinct. Mehera told us a story that Baba used to tell about a goods train. All the cars that hang on go with the engine to the goal, it doesn't matter if the cars are hauling gold or scrap-iron, if they hang on, they get there. Baba's point, of course, is that we should hang onto his *damaan* — the hem of his *sadra*.

January 5: We climbed the hill and had tea with Mansari and Dolly Dastur, who has been with Baba all her life. Eve-

ning *arti* was beautiful, and I felt Baba more strongly in the tomb than at any other time. He sent a current of divine love through me that virtually paralyzed me. I wanted it to never end.

January 7: Left Ahmednagar. As our train passed through Meherabad, the tomb and the tower were visible for about fifteen minutes.

For further information about Meher Baba, write to: Meher Spiritual Center, P.O. Box 487, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577.

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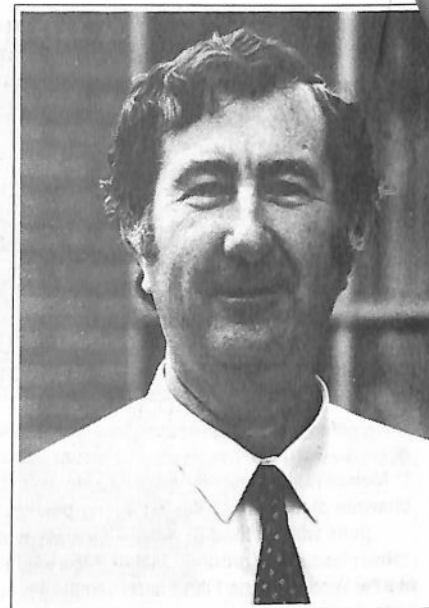
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REACH OUT

By J. Ross Marsh, D.C.



J. Ross Marsh, D.C.

I realize that I am preaching to the converted, as I reflect on where I believe chiropractic should be, please understand that despite twenty-five or twenty-six years involvement with chiropractic, it is only in recent years that I have tried to practice what I preach here today. If I am critical of a profession that, above all others, has the charter, understanding and motivation to change the world, it's because I believe that we, as individuals, have regarded personal success and comfort as the standard on which to judge chiropractic's success. Friends, personal comfort does not change the world. Somehow, in the time we have together, I would like you to reflect on where chiropractic is, and where it could be. If I sound hard, remember it is the same criticism that I, myself, must accept. I do not intend to be obsessed with the past, but I do encourage us, you and me, to reach out, to grasp for the stars.

Early in life I developed what James Parker calls 'A Poverty Complex' which made me almost the perfect candidate for the monastic life. Indeed I embraced such a life in the early years of my life. Poverty, however, is not the only vow you take in the monastic life. There are two others: chastity and obedience. whilst I was ideally suited for poverty, I had awful problems with the other two — one out of three is not a pass in the monastic life.

For a long time I carried this poverty complex (plus lots of others) with me. During that time I equated security with money. As I accumulated more wealth, my insecurities remained — and even grew. No one had explained to me the difference between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is a source of abundance and vibrancy; the Dead Sea, as the name indicates, is associated with death. It is so salty that absolutely nothing can grow within its boundaries. There is a critical factor that makes a tremendous difference between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. That, I think, is a good example for chiropractic. What makes the Dead Sea dead? Everything is coming in; nothing is going out. That, I think is a reflection for us as a profession. We all have lots coming in from chiropractic. How many of us are giving out for chiropractic or for the improvement of the planet.

There is little doubt in my mind that, like lots of practices and businesses in this country, if we consulted the patients or the consumers, they would have the notion that chiropractors, in this case, were in business primarily for themselves.

I don't believe people see us as a giving profession. It's certainly time that this was changed. Probably the only time chiropractors approach governments is when they want something: they want the law changed; they want to gain entry

into a particular social welfare system. Don't you think it would be far better if we, as a profession, were approaching governments, offering to do something — say, some of these planetary improvement projects that Dick Smith would support, like Robert Swan's icewalk, or the different projects that involve exchanging children from different countries, so as to break down cultural and social barriers. The prime minister mentioned that he would like to see a billion trees planted by the turn of the century. What if the profession went to the prime minister and undertook to achieve a part of that project and organized it locally with each chiropractor? I believe we have to get into this area as a profession to show that we are a caring, giving profession. Oh boy, do you think that after all that giving, when we wanted something from the government, we wouldn't get a hearing!

It's like my analogy earlier about the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, there is a very important principle here that if we, as chiropractors, are pretending to understand how the body works, then we should be putting it into practice. There are those amongst us who figure that we needn't spend money on research. Well,

What makes the Dead Sea dead? Everything is coming in; nothing is going out. That, I think is a reflection for us as a profession.