

News from Meherabad

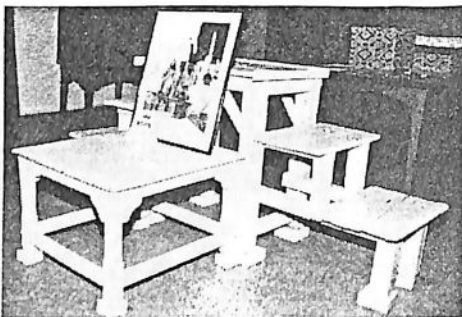
Something Old—Something New

Meredith Klein, 20 Dec. 2000

As many of you know, the West Room of the Meher Retreat building on Meherabad Hill, where some of Baba's Eastern and Western women disciples stayed in the ashram days of the 1930's and 40's, has served as a small museum since the early 70's. The original displays, chosen and arranged by Mehera, Mani and the women Mandali to show a selection of Baba's personal and household items from various times and aspects of His life, have given many of His lovers meaningful contact with these "tangible links" to Him.

In recent years, the Trust's Archives,

Museum and Research Committee (AMRC) has continued caring for the collection of precious Baba treasures to ensure that they are protected for



The step platform that Baba used to wash the feet of the lepers

sharing with His world-wide family. While consulting with museum professionals to find out how to best achieve this goal, we learned about the difference between "people needs" and "item needs." People thrive in air and light and with human touch, but for physical items these same factors hasten deterioration. For the most precious items in the world, the belongings of the Avatar, this law of nature still prevails.

In the museum we thus faced a dilemma - how to preserve the treasures and still provide His lovers access. The consultants who educated us in this predicament also provided a solution: continue to give access through display, but be sure to rotate the items so that they all have a chance to rest in the dark, still environments that will prolong their lives. So, in the second week of November, we began to do this by changing displays in two of the glass-fronted cabinets — one which showed items connected with Baba being adorned and "dressed up" and the other which presented examples of His daily wear from the early years. The crown and the robe, the coat and the sadra, and the other smaller items from these two cabinets were carefully removed, padded and folded with archivally safe materials, placed in boxes specially made to

comfortably hold them, and brought for a well deserved rest to cabinets in the East Room (the companion room to the West, where Mehera and the close women resided in the Meherabad ashram days). Prior to removing these items, a new set of articles had been chosen, along with two photos showing Baba wearing some of them. These photos were blown up to fit the size of

the exhibits and we made padded stands designed to perfectly support and display each of these precious Baba treasures. The result is very beautiful, simple, elegant, and inspiring, as Baba's belongings always are, continuing to hold a fragrance of His physical

presence.

One of the cases shows costumes which were used on special occasions. When Baba was away on trips to the West or for other work, the women mandali passed their spare time with their hearts and minds focused on Him, by designing and creating crowns and jewelry and costume clothing with which to adorn Him. For these they used what they had with them - they would remove gold threads, sequins, etc. from their saris and would use the silk sari material also. Very little was purchased from outside.

In the photo backing this display Beloved Baba is seated like a king on a throne, regally draped with a beautiful sari, a sequined crown atop His flowing hair, and His lotus feet resting on a cushion embroidered by Mehera and the women Mandali. For this occasion, in 1926, Baba had been dressed up by the Prem Ashram boys. The same crown

and the sari are now on display, along with a pair of sequined costume sandals also made

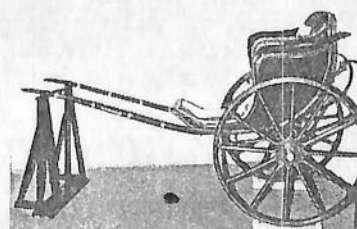
by the women Mandali. The ready-made crown had been purchased in Bombay and brought to Meherabad for the Prem Ashram boys, who yearned to adorn Baba. In addition to the silver sequin embroidery the word "Meher," in Gujerati script, was then embroidered on the green silk centre by the women mandali. The pink silk sari, with a typical Parsi style border embroidered in a floral pattern, originally belonged to Khorshed. After Baba used it, she



The crown and sari with which the Prem Ashram boys adorned their Beloved

no longer wore it. Since those early years, it had been very carefully and lovingly kept amongst Baba's precious articles, accompanied by a note in Goher's handwriting, which reads: "Beloved Baba has used this sari as dhoti in 1926. Meherabad." The pink satin costume sandals had been made for one of Baba's birthdays by Mehera and the women Mandali using soles made by a cobbler. The sandals are embroidered all over with beads and sequins and edged in pink braid. When you look closely you can see the imprint of Baba's feet on the insoles.

The other case contains typical daily clothing of Baba from the 1930's and 40's: a silk coat and cotton lengha. The scene captured in the photograph is also typical - Baba, with lengha and sadra rolled up, actively engaged in the work at hand - in this case, on His birthday in 1940 in Bangalore, giving all the masts in the ashram a bath. The striped silk coat was very much worn by Baba, who preferred such soft clothing. Gaimai (Eruch's mother) and family had had it made, along with two other similar ones, by a tailor in 1937 in Nagpur. The tailor, who was a follower of Tajuddin Baba and then came to love Meher Baba as a result



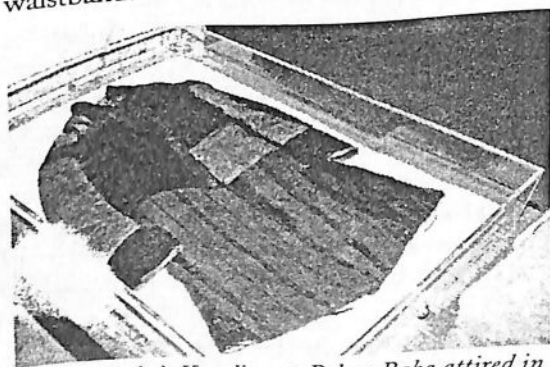
The rickshaw used by Baba during the Prem Ashram period

and then came to love Meher Baba as a result

of stitching for Him, had figured out the measurements just by looking at a photograph of Baba, who was very pleased with the results. This case also shows a typical pair of lengha, which Baba usually wore beneath His sadra. These drawstring pants, of cotton material, are displayed to show the word "Baba" embroidered in red below the waistband.



Baba's silk shirt



Above: Baba's Kamli coat. Below Baba attired in it in the '30's



The AMRC will continue changing the displays in the Meherabad Hill Museum, so even if you have been there often, the next time you come be sure to set aside some time for a visit. I think you will be glad you did!



Books and More - an Archives Update

Meredith Klein, 9 Feb. 2001

Archives, archives, Archives! What are those archive committee folks doing, anyway? These days around Meherabad-azad one hears the word "archives" used in many contexts. Some people inquire about it. Some are excited about it. Some participate in it. Some seek advice about it. Some even spoof it. But almost everyone wonders what it is really all about. Through regular updates in Tavern Talk and other publications the AMRC (Archives, Museum and Research Committee) hopes to continue to provide answers for all those inquiring (and wondering) minds in our Baba family.

This time we would like to share with you some very exciting, hot-off-the-press news and then focus on a significant project which has been quietly but steadily progressing behind-the-scenes for the last few years.

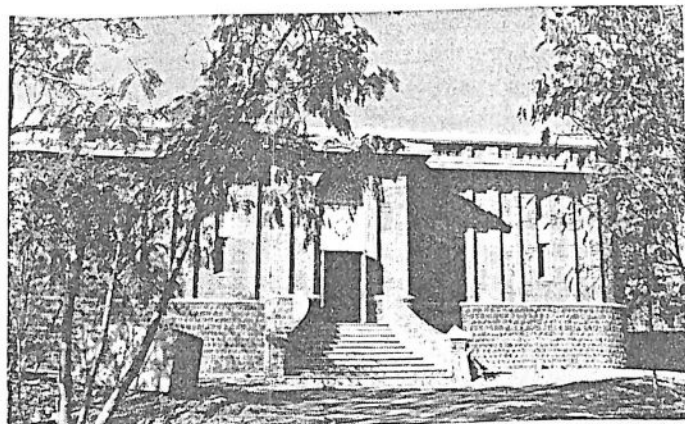
As earlier reported in Tavern Talk, after an arduous and seemingly fruitless search, we felt fortunate to locate a nearby com-

pany capable of manufacturing the special steel cupboards required to protect precious Baba items. The museum quality standards

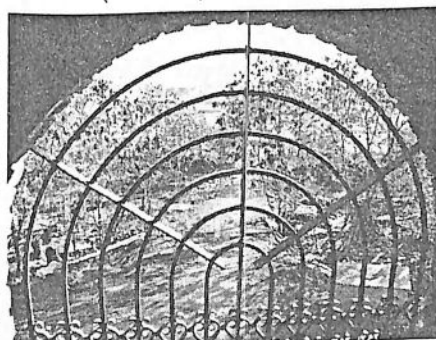
for these cupboards — for everything from the joints, to the gasketing, to the paint job and even to the dimensions — had to be met, and we are very happy to report that they have been. A prototype has recently been delivered and, as one person commented, "it's awesome!" Our technical advisers assure us that in quality and craftsmanship it equals, if not exceeds, those manufactured abroad. Having satisfied the archival standards we can now go ahead and order the various sizes of cupboards re-

quired. And so it appears that Baba, by once again making possible what had appeared nearly impossible, has put His stamp of approval on a major next step in caring for His treasures.

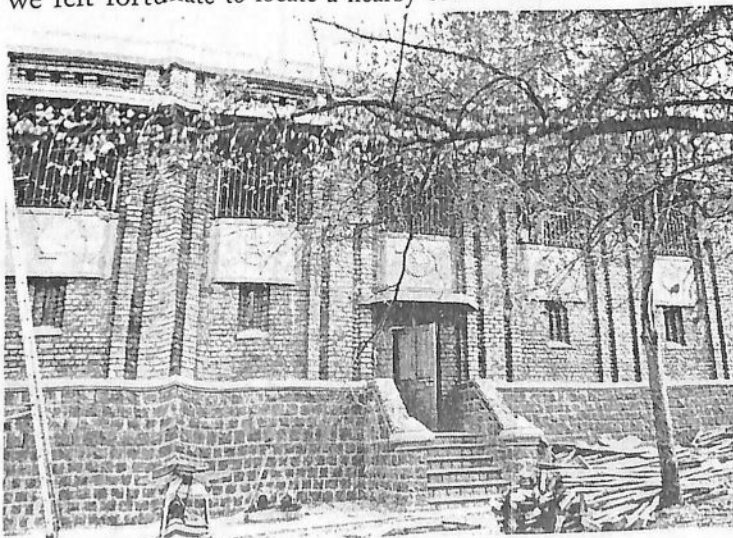
In addition to next steps, we are also most happy to let you know that major strides have already been made towards another



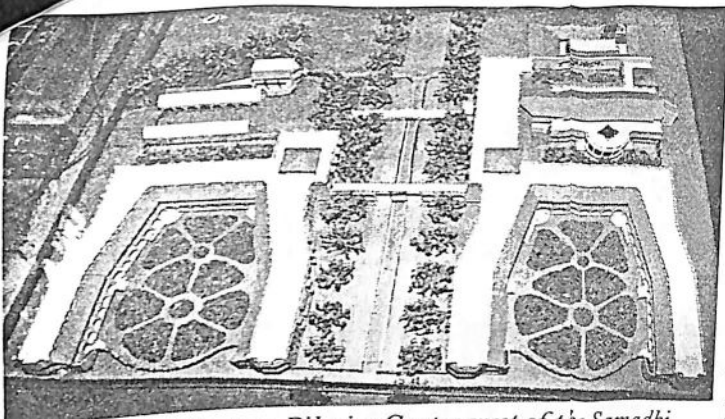
Front view of the archives building just east of the Samadhi



View from window above front door. Imagine the front drive when it is all beautifully landscaped



Side view of archives building



Model of the new Pilgrim Center west of the Samadhi

goal — archiving the materials by and about Beloved Baba. Since 1998, during annual visits here, Flagg Kris (retired librarian and former Meherabad resident) could almost daily be found elbow deep in piles of books and periodicals, and often keenly focused on the computer in front of him. Using an expanded version of a database originally developed to catalogue the books in the Meherabad Hill library, on behalf of the AMRC, Flagg has been meticulously recording the essential details about each and every available Baba publication, in all languages — from the lengthiest of books to the smallest of leaflets.

Besides the cataloging aspect (which includes information about the physical appearance of each item — toward the goal of having the materials selected for archiving be those in the best condition possible), this effort is helping to determine which items are still missing from the necessary number of copies for each individual item (separate editions and printings count as separate items). Last year lists of the missing items, as well as requests regarding future publications, were sent to some of the major Baba publishers and through their generosity we have already begun to fill in some of the blank spaces on the shelves. On behalf of the Trust's archival effort the AMRC would especially like to thank all of you who so willingly responded to help ensure that this priceless published record of His advent is preserved for all time.

This work is in keeping with the caring and sharing guidelines of the Trust which require that the caring (physical stabilization, protection, duplication and documentation) of these archival items be seen to first, thus ensuring future sharing (use and access). In the case of these published materials, of course most are already generally available from various sources.

in Baba's world, has also made us keenly aware that in His timing all the goals will be met (or not!) as He chooses. One thing of which there is no doubt, is that with all the projects underway and those yet to come there will be ample supply of Tavern Talk topics from the AMRC, and so we look forward to sharing them with you again soon.

However, although the archives is not a library, the need for future research access to copies, facsimiles, and in rare instances to originals, is very much recognized, and policies and procedures for this are being established.

In recent times we have become keenly aware that in the archival arena, as in many, the more you do the more there is to do! Although the road appears seemingly endless, the experience of living and working

The Station of Divine Laughter

I performed prayer between the two evening prayers and said to myself, "What was going on? The wonders of the hidden were not revealed in listening to music the night before." And I suddenly saw the Truth (glory be to him who is transcendent) at the windows of the angelic realm, dawning on me as beauty and majesty. And I said . . . "Where were you when you hid during the music?" And He who is transcendent said, "I was with you, as I am now, as you see me!" And I laughed and cried, and my conscience was glad, and my mind and heart. And I said, "My God, why did I not see you there?" He said, I was behind you, and above you, watching you, and on your right and left, as you see me now."

Ruzbihan Baqli, *The Unveiling of Secrets, Diary of a Sufi Master*, [Chapel Hill, NC: Parvardigar Press, 1997] Translated by Carl W. Ernst, 45-46.

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A publication of the Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California

LoveStreet LampPost

welcome...

The LoveStreet LampPost is dedicated with love to Avatar Meher Baba. Its primary purpose is to contribute to a sense of community among all His lovers by providing a place for sharing His remembrance. All the members of the Baba family are invited to contribute to this feast of Love.

Your stories, photos, art work, poetry, letters, articles, and humor are all actively solicited. We seek expressions of Baba's message of Love and Truth.

Please submit your text by email or on computer disks if possible (in any software format); typewritten copy on white paper is also acceptable. Be sure to clearly identify all submissions and credit every quote or reference.

submissions, subscriptions, donations:

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