

A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

A Master Plan for Meherazad

A year or two before he passed a way, Eruch recalled a very striking comment of Baba's on the relation between the two major sites of his working in this Advent. Meherabad and Meherazad, Baba had said, were like His two eyes: they exist independently of

each other, yet they function jointly to create one image—the image of Him.

His primary ashram

between 1923 and the early 1940s, Meherabad represents growth, dynamism, projects and plans, fertility, the bursting forth of activity. Here Baba is God in His unbounded aspect. Crowned by the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill—the great site of world pilgrimage—its spaces are public and expansive, inviting and encompassing the seas of humanity.

Meherazad, by contrast, is Baba's home, a place for intimacy with Him. Baba first visited there in 1943, and for most of the next quarter century, its simple buildings and gardened walkways, bordered with flower pots and shaded with babul and tamarind and gulmor trees, provided the environment for much of His universal work and His association with close ones

in the later years. Meherazad will always be remembered particularly in connection with Baba's beloved Mehera, for it

was here that her love for Him found its fullest and freest amplitude of expression: and the perfume of that love, like the fragrant neem and jasmine and frangi-pani that she helped to cultivate, permeates the place as a kind of timeless essence, reminding us all of the

sweetness and immediacy of God's presence in our every moment and breath.

FORMULATION OF A MASTER PLAN.

During Baba's lifetime, Meherazad

was primarily a place of residence. But immediately after He dropped His body in 1969, pilgrims from around the world began to pour in, availing themselves of treasured moments in the company of the Avatar's disciples and partaking of Baba's matchless atmosphere there.

But as the years wore on and many of His mandali returned to Him, those remaining came to feel that provision should be made for the posterity of this "sanctified site," as Eruch once called it, for the benefit of generations to come.

A series of meetings on this subject in 1999 resulted two years later in the Meherazad Master Plan, a 200-page document signed and approved by the mandali and outlining a roadmap for Meherazad's future. At the heart of the plan is the love for the original Meherazad of Baba's time, in all its simple splendor. This will remain unchanged. The purpose of the plan is, in preserving Meherazad, to make it available to the greater world in a manner that is true to its nature, so that visitors and lovers of God in the future can have a

Meher Pilgrim Retreat due to Open June '06

UNDER CONSTRUCTION FOR 4 YEARS, the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, the Trust's new pilgrim accommodation facility, will have its grand opening at the beginning of the pilgrim season in 2006. The Retreat will accommodate 200 pilgrims, compared with the capacity of 56 in the current Meher Pilgrim Centre. It is situated on the crown of the long ridge that runs to the west of the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill and affords a beautiful view in all directions. It will remove pilgrim life from the busy and congested Ahmednagar-Daund highway.

The Trust has allocated in its budget for two buses that will provide regular transport to Baba's Tomb from the Retreat and Hostel D. Pilgrim registration is also being shifted to Meherabad, so that in the future pilgrims will no longer have to stop in Ahmednagar on their way to Baba's Home.

taste of what the intimacy of living with Him, the God-Man and beloved of all humanity, must have been like.

TWO ZONES. Under the Plan, Meherazad divides into two zones, inner and outer. The inner or historical Meherazad is comprised of those properties that Baba Himself resided in and used. It has three sections: the core residential property, Seclusion Hill, and the mile-long approach road. Collectively, these comprise 12.6 acres.

Inner Meherazad will never be developed or modified, but kept as it was in 1969—or, in the case of some spaces like Mandali Hall, 1999. It will be a place where pilgrims and lovers of God, like the mandali in their time, can sip the wine of Beloved Baba's immediate nearness—away from the darshan crowds and bustle of programs and activities. So that visitors can enjoy this experience of intimacy with Him in ages when the masses come on pilgrimage, access will be limited to a few at a time.

Outer Meherazad will provide centers where visitors can gather to watch films and videos, listen to tapes, read literature, converse, eat, sing songs, and engage in other activities that help cultivate and sustain the mood and feeling of the place. They can take walks through the extensive gardens and woods and landscaped grounds. Outer Meherazad will also provide research facilities for persons studying Meher Baba's life and message. The Meher Free Dispensary and other medical and educational facilities, rendering assistance to the poor, sick, and needy, will be concentrated in an area near the west border of the Meherazad Estate.

For now, the Plan has no timetable. Present efforts are concentrated on purchasing the essential lands, which will total something like 500 acres. Now and in the future, Meherazad needs workers in residence with skills in various departments. Staff accommodation for eight persons have already been constructed and are ready for use. More staff quarters and related facilities will be constructed in Outer Meherazad in due course.



SITE PLAN SHOWING HOW MEHERAZAD MIGHT LOOK IN 50 YEARS

The Meherazad Legacy

A BRIEF HISTORY. Meher Baba first used the Pimpalgaon property that we now call Meherazad in December 1943 during a few days' work in seclusion. In early 1944 the land and structures were purchased for Him at auction, and in April He shifted his residence there full time.

At the outset of the New Life in 1949, Baba gifted the property to His disciple Nariman Dadachanji. But during the Manonash period culminating in January 1952, he resumed residence there once again. Over the next four years His headquarters shifted from place to place, but after His automobile accident in Satara in December 1956, Baba settled in Meherazad permanently, except for summers in Guruprasad in Pune.

After Baba dropped His physical form in His room in Meherazad in 1969, His Mandali continued to reside there. On Nariman's death in 1975, the property was inherited by his wife Arnavaz. By Arnavaz's wish, in 1999, Meherazad property came under the custody of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust.

AN OVERVIEW OF MEHERAZAD. Starting at the Pimpalgaon reservoir, one approaches Meherazad along a three-quarter-mile dirt road shaded by nandoorgie trees. Meherazad residence itself divides into two parts, a men's and a women's side, separated by the wall running along the back side of Mandali Hall. Behind the house, several furlongs to the south rises Seclusion Hill, where Baba completed important seclusion work in 1947 and again in 1951.

WOMEN'S SIDE. Originally Meherazad had four structures, only a bungalow (now the small cottage), two cabins (later Aloba's and Pendu's rooms), and a storage room (the "rice go-down"). In August 1948 construction of the main house was completed, and Baba moved into His room upstairs. Later, Baba shifted to the ground floor. The women mandali occupied other rooms in the main bungalow and cottage nearby. A watchman from the men's side kept awake in Baba's room each night.



COTTAGE ON WOMEN'S SIDE

Much of the reason behind the move from Meherabad was to provide Mehera with greater abundance of water for gardens; and over the following two decades the Meherazad residence, with its productive wells and nearby lake, was transformed into a bowered and blossoming paradise. This legacy has been maintained. And so today during the torrid summer months, the trees and bushes are a riot of living color—flaming crimson in upper branches of gulmor, the magenta bougainvillea, the bluish-purple jacaranda flowers, the yellow lebernum, the pink and white blossoms of the champa tree.

MEN'S SIDE. Shortly after Baba moved into Meherazad with His men and women mandali in April 1944, to house the two Desoto cars (gifts from Elizabeth Patterson), He had the men build a makeshift garage, with a dirt floor

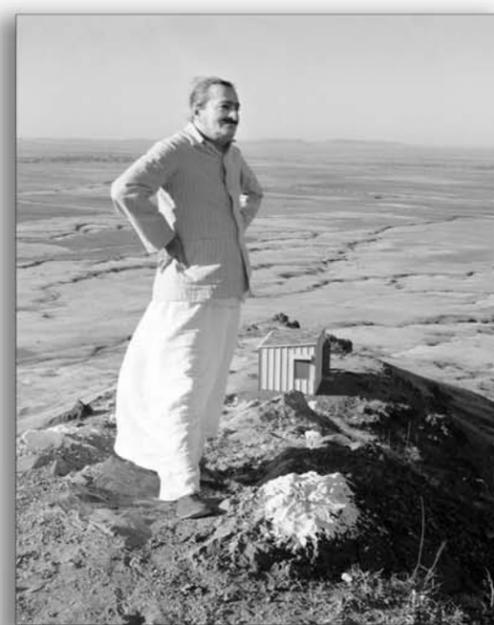
and bamboo matting for walls. After the New Life, mud walls replaced the bamboo, as the garage was converted into a stable for Mehera's horse Sheba.

In the corner of the stable was a soap-box used by Sheba's groom, and hay covered the ground. Later, after the horse had been given away to the military, one day Baba strode in through the back door with His Mandali, took His seat on the soap box, and asked, "Any letters?" Thus the garage-turned-stable was further converted into the "office" of the Avatar where He would meet with the mandali and conduct daily business.

Gradually Mandali Hall was enlarged, and the cow-dung floor was covered with farsi (stone slabs). After Baba dropped His body, Mandali Hall was central to the pilgrim experience, since Eruch would hold forth there for many hours each day, mesmerizing visitors with his reminiscences and wonderful expositions on Baba's truth.

The line of rooms running to the east of Mandali Hall was constructed in the 1940s for the accommodation of the men. The veranda outside was not built until the early 1970s. The Blue Bus was used by Baba during his Great Seclusion of 1949. After the New Life, the New Life Caravan was placed outside the door to Mandali Hall (next to the Manonash Cabin), before being moved to its present location in later years.

SECLUSION HILL. When searching for a new residence in the 1930s, Baba had specified a place suitable for seclusion as one of the requirements. The barren, rocky, eroded up-cropping known to the local villagers as dhakti tembi ("little hill") answered to this need.



BABA ON SECLUSION HILL

In November 1947, Padri constructed for Baba's use two ten-by-twelve-foot tile and asbestos cabins on what came to be known as Seclusion Hill, and over the next month Baba spent many hours a day working there with Ali Shah, one of His favorite masts. At the conclusion of the New Life four years later, traveling on foot with His companions from

Hyderabad, Baba moved back into these cabins for His Manonash seclusion work. After a short time, Baba had Padri dismantle the cabins and reconstruct them as a single room on the men's side, where Baba brought Manonash to its climax in January 1952. In later years the Manonash Cabin served as Eruch's personal bedroom and office.



MEHERAZAD GATES AT THE END OF THE APPROACH ROAD

Busy Pilgrim Season; Amartithi “Showers of Grace”

THE 2004-05 PILGRIM SEASON was by far the busiest to date. A total of 910 foreign pilgrims stayed at the Pilgrim Centre and other Meherabad facilities—a new record. Though figures for Indian pilgrims are not so easily gleaned (since nationals do not need to register with the police), clearly the numbers have been increasing dramatically in recent years.

At present the regular pilgrim accommodation facilities—the Pilgrim Centre, Hostel D, and the Dharamshala—are being taxed to the extreme, and often pilgrims must stay in other spaces, such as the Meher Hospital or Isolation Ward. One more year of overcrowding is in prospect. But June 2006 will occasion the opening of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat and pilgrim life experience at Meherabad will then enter a new phase.

UNEXPECTED AMARTITHI RAINFALL. While the total number of pilgrims visiting over the entire season has increased, the size of the Amartithi celebration has held relatively constant over the last half-decade. The 10,046 registered pilgrims in 2005 fell short of the 2004 total by 378.

Water in the Summer Season

Though the 2004 monsoon was a good one, the fierce summer season has, as usual, dried up most of the local wells, and Meherabad has become almost completely dependent on water drawn through its new pipeline, completed in 2003.

Arangaon village, on the south border of the Meherabad Estate, depends on Trust water supplies as well. As the village wells fail, crowds of villagers with pots and plastic water jugs gather at the water spigot on the back side of Mandali Hall at lower Meherabad and return home, carrying their water vessels on their heads or bicycles. At present 30,000–40,000 liters of water, about a quarter of Meherabad's daily total, is being given to the villagers.

Clearly water shortages will continue to afflict this part of India for many years to come.

Infinite Intelligence and Lord Meher due for Publication

Two major Trust-copyrighted works are due for publication in the next few months.

Infinite Intelligence, based on a manuscript from the 1920s whose author is believed to be Meher Baba Himself, will be published this autumn by Sheriar Foundation, North Myrtle Beach. The work has been edited at the Trust, under the oversight of Bhau Kalchuri, and prepared for publication with the help of a team of workers around the world.

A new, revised edition of *Lord Meher*, Bhau Kalchuri's epic biography of the Avatar, is being published by Meher Mownavani Publishers in Hyderabad.

Perhaps this is just as well, for many of those who did come had to endure an unexpected hardship: rain! In Maharashtra, the monsoon extends from June to October. While fluke rainfalls sometimes strike in other months, January is perhaps the driest time of the year. In consequence, the pandals erected to serve as hostels, dining tents, and gathering places for pilgrims sport colorful, thin cloth roofs that provide excellent cover against the sun but are basically useless in rain showers.

Over the last thirty years, with one exception (in 1981), the problem simply has not arisen. But this year on January 30st—the first day of the gathering—an intermittent drizzle began in the early afternoon. By late night some of the dormitory pandals had become sodden messes. Rainwater would collect in the lowest sagging sections of the roof cloth and trickle or gush down into the open space below. The flooring, which consisted of canvas covering the dirt beneath, became soaked and muddy. For much of the night running into the 31st, the rain continued on and off. Women and children were evacuated from some of the worst-afflicted pandals and relocated in the verandas of the Hospital and Meher Pilgrim Centre. But for many pilgrims, unfortunately, the thirty-sixth Amartithi will be remembered as a cold and sleepless affair.

The Trust is studying various expedients for the future—such as differently shaped pandal roofs and a layer of plastic between layers of cloth. This year's bad weather may have served as a wake-up call.

On a more positive note, the 2005 Amartithi witnessed further development in its program of internet webcasts. In recent seasons, audio-visual segments from high points in the Amartithi program have been posted on the Trust web site for downloading; or, in some cases, they have been streamed near-live. But the poor internet connections in Arangaon have made it impossible to provide video streaming of good quality.

This year, therefore, the main webcasting took audio form; in effect, the Trust web site provided radio coverage of major portions of the Amartithi gathering. Since broadband may be arriving at Meherabad soon, the future offers good prospects for the expansion of webcast coverage.

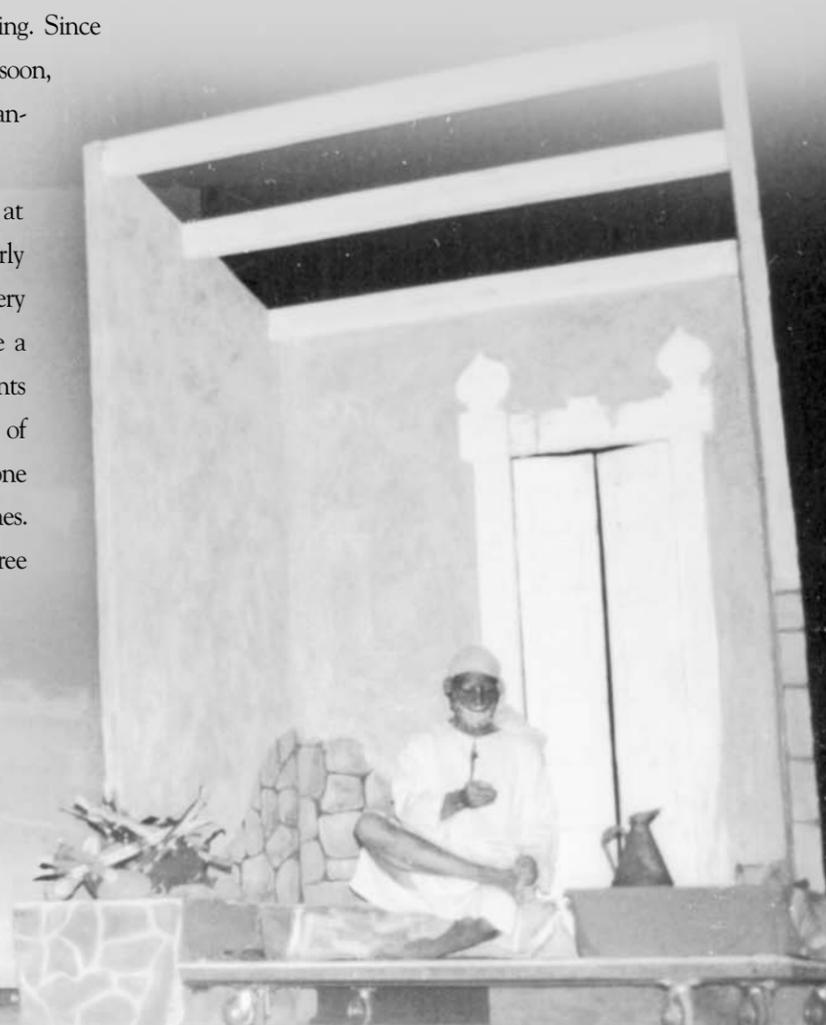
THE BIRTHDAY. Baba's Birthday at Meherabad is a magical occasion. The early morning program, to be sure, is the same every year: crowds gather in the darkness outside a Samadhi brightly decorated with ornaments and flowers; and at five a.m.—the hour of Merwan's birth in Pune in 1894—everyone shouts “Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!” seven times. Spontaneous singing continues there for three

hours until breakfast (a lavish affair). While nothing in this pre-dawn commemoration stands out as new or remarkable in itself, it always seems to have a special charm and charge to it. The feeling of Baba's sweetness that saturates His birthday is quite different from the darshan experience of Amartithi.

Each Birthday at Meherabad features the late-afternoon presentation of an original drama, created and performed by a hastily improvised theatrical troop of Meherabad pilgrims and residents who work overtime during the three-week stretch between Amartithi clean-up and February 25th. Running to about an hour and a half and making full use of the Meherabad theater (the Music and Arts Centre) with its full-scale stage and vastly improved light and sound systems, the Birthday drama is, by Meherabad standards, always a gala event. This year the subject was the life of Sai Baba of Shirdi, the great Sadguru who bestowed upon Avatar Meher Baba God's Infinite Power. The play recounted Sai Baba's previous life experience with the Perfect Master Zar-Zari-Zar-Baksh at Khuldabad, his childhood under the tutelage of the blind saint Gopal Rao, his Realization and return to ordinary consciousness through the intervention of the Perfect Master Akkalkot Swami, and numerous episodes from his subsequent career at Shirdi, most notably his contact with the young Merwan Irani.

Though the play had many high points and striking effects, the greatest surprise was provided by the Lord Himself. At the very moment in the play when Sai Baba was proclaiming young Merwan to be Parvardigar (“Parvardigar ho!”)—eliciting from the pit singers and orchestra a dramatic outburst of song—Bhau Kalchuri, one of Meher Baba's mandali and the Trust's Chairman, watching the play from the audience, suddenly passed out and had to be rushed to the hospital! The problem proved to be dehydration, and within several days Bhau was back to normal.

SCENE FROM BIRTHDAY
PLAY ABOUT SAI BABA
OF SHIRDI.



Development Plan reaching a Milestone

June of 2006 will stand as a milestone in the recent history of Meherabad, as the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, under construction since 2001, opens its doors and begins to accommodate pilgrims on a full-time basis. The Retreat has from its inception been the centerpiece of the Trust's Development Plan, inaugurated in 1998; and its completion marks the end of one phase and the beginning of a new one.

Providing a place of rest and renewal for 200 pilgrims visiting the God-Man's Samadhi, the Retreat has been constructed with funds contributed over the last seven years by over 900 lovers of Meher Baba from around the world. The total costs of the building and related infrastructure run to \$1.6 million. This year another \$295,000 is still needed to complete the facility and to support various other projects indicated in the Financial Report included with this issue of *In His Service*.

Many of you will soon receive a letter and flyer with pictures of the Retreat and a description of its current status. Your response is critical in helping to bring this work through the completion of its final phase. The many persons who have already contributed in response to the article in the February issue of *In His Service* have given this year's effort a good start, in that over \$50,000 has already been contributed toward the \$295,000 that the project needs.

This work is for the benefit of Meher Baba's lovers in their greater pilgrimage to Him. It depends on His wish; if He wishes it to continue, He will continue to provide through your hands. Gifts great and small are all from Him and will serve His work through the Trust. Continued support from past contributors is greatly needed and appreciated.

For those who have not availed themselves of the opportunity to contribute, here is how. In the UK, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Avatar Meher Baba Association c/o of Sue Chapman, 3 Whin Hill, Craster NE663TP, UK (tel 01 665 57 69 57, e-mail suchapman@hotmail.com.) In the United States, persons who wish to make tax-deductible contributions or wish to name the Trust as a beneficiary in their will, 401K, IRA, or insurance policy should contact Emory and Susan Ayers, P.O. Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355 (tel. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org); they will send you a list of eight Meher Baba tax-exempt organizations that have a grant in place to support the Trust Development Plan and other relevant information.

Baba lovers from other parts of the world should send contributions directly to the AMBPPC Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King's Road, Ahmednagar 414001, Maharashtra State, India. Further information can be found in the Trust's web site at www.ambppct.org.

Tales from Meherazad

MANDALI HALL. During the 1950s and 60s, Mandali Hall furnished the setting for innumerable dramas in the daily life in the God-Man's household. One such concern His disciple Baidul. Though both Kaka and Baidul had been with Baba since the 1920s, they quarreled incessantly. One day it so happened that both wanted to wash their faces at the tap at the same time. An altercation ensued, with Kaka shouting at Baidul and Baidul shouting back. Eventually the other men Mandali had to separate them.

Now when Baba came for His daily visits to Mandali Hall, each man occupied his own designated place. Baidul had been growing a beard, and as Baba walked past, He was in the habit of pausing to stroke it. But on this day, Baba ignored him completely. Taking His own seat, Baba dictated to him through Eruch, "Did you notice that today I did not caress your beard? I am very displeased with what you have done. You should not have behaved as you did!" And He proceeded to reprimand him scathingly.

Lion of a man though he was, before Baba, Baidul was like a child. These words of censure cut him to the quick, and he broke down, weeping loudly. Baba then told him never to behave this way again, and in the end, gave him a loving embrace.

BABA'S HOUSE. Much of the shape and character of Meherazad was born of Mehera's love for her Beloved. She wanted everything to be beautiful for Him and labored to create an oasis of beauty in the middle of a drought-stricken area.

When she designed Baba's house, Mehera placed Baba's bedroom upstairs where He could enjoy privacy and yet be reached by the men mandali, by route of the outdoor staircase, without intruding into the women's quarters.

Later, however, Baba moved downstairs, and that is the room that pilgrims visit today. How did the change occur?

On 2nd December 1956, Baba's right hip was shattered in the automobile accident in Satara. Nonetheless, returning to Meherazad, He resumed residence in the upstairs room as soon as He could.

Mehera, Mani, Goher, and the other women repeatedly urged Him to move downstairs, but they could not convince Him. But one winter morning He started to go down the stairs, with His left hand on the banister and Mehera by His side. He was holding a scarf over His face to protect His nose and mouth from

the cold wind. Suddenly His foot slipped, and though He caught Himself before falling, the pain to His hip joint was excruciating.

This time, when Mehera pleaded with Him, Baba agreed. Knowing, nonetheless, that He might change His mind, the women carried His things downstairs while Baba was with the men mandali. When He returned to the women's side for lunch, everything was ready. The move was complete.

It was in this room that Beloved Avatar Meher Baba dropped His physical body on 31st January 1969.

SECLUSION HILL. Baba used the Hill for major seclusions twice, in 1947 and 1951. Several years later, during the 1955 Sahavas program, Baba personally led the sahavasees up to the summit. The trail climbs moderately steeply, running to the west, until, nearing the top, suddenly it switches back, and one faces in the direction of Meherazad again. Arriving at this point with the sahavasees following, Baba suddenly stopped and gave this wonderful analogy for the spiritual path.

Baba said: after many lifetimes in the rounds of reincarnation, a man begins to wonder, Who am I? And what is the purpose that I was born for? Eventually, the man renounces the world. "And what is the world?" Here Baba would point towards Meherazad.

Having determined his goal, now the man sets out with a hop, skip and a jump. What joy arises in him at his first glimpse of the summit! After that, he encounters many pitfalls along the way. Sometimes he falls, sometimes he even fractures his bones, but so great is his determination to reach the heights that he persists, climbing on and on.

But a time arrives when the path seems to reverse itself, and he finds himself looking at the world (Meherazad) again. He thinks that he has made no progress and that all his efforts have been unavailing. Indeed, he even seems to be going backwards, away from the Beloved! But in actuality, he is continuing in his ascent.

"But I tell you," Baba said, "when this stage comes, don't be despondent, but keep going. Come on!" And with this, Baba turned and led them up the last steep stretch to the top of the Hill.



BABA'S HOUSE

WHAT IS THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST?

CREATED IN 1959 under Meher Baba's direction and bearing His signature on its Deed, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust had at its founding two purposes: to provide means of subsistence to certain named disciples of Meher Baba's, and to fulfill certain charitable objects. Today, the first of these functions is discharged under "Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Firstly," and the second under "Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust."

The Trust Deed calls for maintenance of Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb and the creation of pilgrim facilities; for educational, medical, veterinary, and other charitable services; for estate development and procurement of sources of water; for the

promulgation of Avatar Meher Baba's love-message through melas, lectures, publication, and the arts; and for spiritual training. The Trust's current Development Plan focuses on the creation of new facilities for pilgrim accommodation at Meherabad and other goals.

Inquiries and contributions can be sent to: The Chairman, Avatar Meher Baba Trust, King's Road, Post Bag 31, Ahmednagar 414 001, M.S., India. Subscriptions to this newsletter can be sent to that address or to: Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, PO Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398, USA (tel. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org). To subscribe to *Tavern Talk* (the Trust's

electronic newsletter), send an e-mail to Listserv@ambppct.org and include in the text of your message the words: "subscribe tavern-talk." Further information about the Trust can be found on its web site at www.ambppct.org and www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org. Subscriptions to *In His Service* or *Tavern Talk* can be submitted through the web site in its "Events and News" section.

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