



IN HIS SERVICE

DECEMBER / 2001

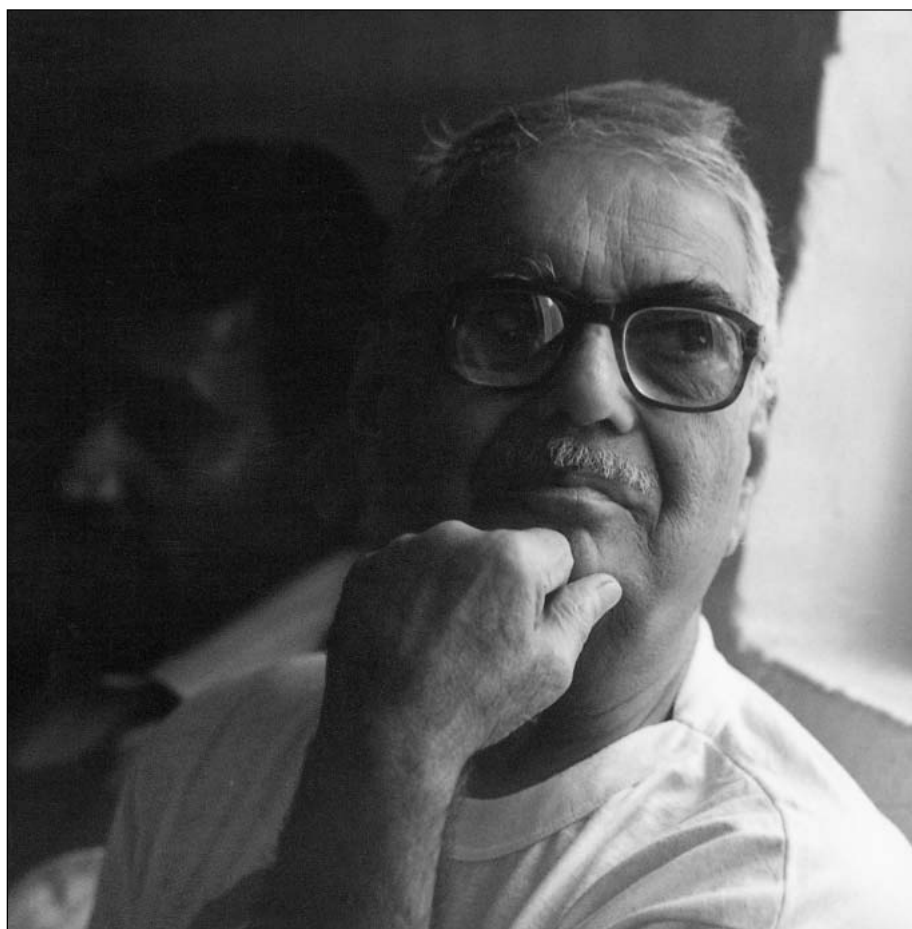
A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

Eruch Returns to Baba

ERUCH JESSAWALA, longtime disciple of Avatar Meher Baba, passed away into the embrace of His Divine Beloved, Avatar Meher Baba, at 2:31 in the morning on 31st August, 2001.

Eruch lived one of the extraordinary lives of our time, and his memory will be honored and cherished for ages to come. Indeed, his name is indissolubly linked with Meher Baba's, since, as Baba said of him, he played the same role in connection with this Avatavic advent as Peter played in the advent of Jesus. "If ever I personally like the company of anyone," Baba once said, "it is that of Eruch."

From the time when Eruch came to join Baba on a permanent basis on 1st August 1938 until the Beloved dropped His physical body in 1969, and for more than three decades thereafter, Eruch served in many capacities. His was the voice more than any other that rendered Baba's silence into human speech, as he interpreted Baba's hand gestures or read out from His dictation on the alphabet board. As Baba's closest male companion, Eruch tended to many of His personal needs and helped inestimably in



Eruch in Mandali Hall during one of many memorable exchanges with pilgrims.

carrying out His wishes in the course of His work. After Baba's passing away, Eruch welcomed thousands of pilgrims to Meher Baba's home at Meherazad and helped many to grow in their intimacy with Him. Indeed, the stories that he told and the insights into the ways of the Avatar that he shared in Mandali Hall, Meherazad are one of the priceless legacies of the Advent. Though (by his own wish) Eruch never played a formal role within the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, he served as an incomparable support during the chairmanships of Mani and Bhau,

showing to one and all, through his own example, the real meaning of humility and harmony. Eruch was born in Bombay, India on 13th October 1916 to Zoroastrian parents, Beheram Jessawala (known as "Papa") and his wife Gaimai. The first meeting with Baba that Eruch remembered took place at Meherabad in 1925, when he was still

a boy of 9. Twelve years later, when Eruch was preparing for a career as an engineer, Baba suddenly called him to Panchgani and asked him, "Will you leave everything and come to be with Me?" "By your grace anything is possible," Eruch replied. With those words his fate was sealed. Within months the family mansion and estate in Nagpur had been sold off, and along with his parents and siblings (Manu, Meheru, and Meherwan) Eruch had become a member of Baba's ashram.

Between 1938 and 1942 Eruch accompanied Baba on the Blue Bus tours (acting as



Eruch and Mani in Mandali Hall at Meherazad.

Letter from the Chairman

All dear ones of the Beloved,

Meher Baba once said, "When Maya reaches its zenith, His universal manifestation will take place. And then spirituality too will reach its zenith."

We can all see the situation in the world at present. And although that situation seems to be sliding from bad to worse, still, out of these worsening situations, we find that the feeling of oneness arises. And this is a great thing! For it marks the beginning. When Beloved Baba's universal manifestation takes place, this feeling of oneness will become firm and strong, not momentary and uncertain, as it is now. For at that time, the grip of Maya will have become weak.

Oneness is the key. When duality dominates over oneness, duality prevails within the world-illusion, and oneness remains hidden. For a long time such has been the case. But now it appears that oneness is, a bit at a time, gathering strength, and the world is starting to feel this strength. The cause of this change is Beloved Baba, who is working to sap and diminish duality's force.

Meanwhile, as this tug-of-war between the forces of chaos and unity goes on in the world scene, here at the Trust we continue with the work of development that Beloved Baba gave us to carry through on. We too are facing various difficulties. But we realize that there is a strength behind appearances, and that strength is the Beloved. What appears before our eyes may be ruination, but internally Beloved Baba is making us strong. Indeed, He is giving strength to all His children, even those who don't know of Him. For He is the Compassionate Father of everyone, and His compassion extends to all His children, whether mischievous or obedient. In this way the development of Meherabad is forging ahead, with a view to embracing all of His children. For if Baba has given us this responsibility, the Trust has the duty to discharge it, in obedience to Him, and for the sake of the children of the one Father.

Based on His instructions, the Trust's development plan has this purpose, to help provide a setting at Meherabad where His children can come close to the Beloved within their hearts and embrace Him there.

V.S.Kalchuri (Bhau), Chairman
Avatar Meher Baba Trust

"Be true to the trust that I have reposed in you."

- AVATAR MEHER BABA

one of the drivers of the Blue Bus), and throughout the decade of the forties was intensively involved with Baba's work with the masts (or divinely intoxicated). In a memorable episode at Vengurla (on the coast of the Indian Ocean) in 1949, Eruch pulled Baba

out of the murky waters of a tidal estuary into which a capsizing fisherman's dugout canoe had just flung them. Later Baba told him, "Just as you pulled me out from the waters of this lagoon, someday I will pull you out of the muck of this illusion."

Spiritual Training under the Trust

Among the various ongoing objects and works of the Trust, spiritual training has a distinctive importance. Other Trust programmes – its pilgrim and visitor accommodations, medical services, educational facilities (such as the Meher English School), archiving and preservation works, afforestation, water resource development, and so forth – have relatively well-defined and specific goals. Spiritual training, however, is the underlying theme, the common thread that links and binds together all work and service on the Trust estate. Ultimately it is the training that Avatar Meher Baba Himself provides, through the medium of His Trust, toward the heart's inner awakening to His love. Thus spiritual training is the true essence of all Trust activities.

Spiritual training is identified in the original Trust Deed, signed by Meher Baba on 6th April 1959, under section (5)(b)(F)(vii), which calls for the provision of –

Facilities for training Baba-lovers in living a life towards spiritual enlightenment according to the instructions which the Settlor may give to the Trustees from time to time.

This sparse description was indeed supplemented “from time to time” over the next ten years by further detailed instructions that Baba gave out in meetings with His mandali and close followers in Guruprasad and Meherazad. Bal Natu took notes at five of these sessions, which, by Baba's order, he later wrote up as a kind of informal “minutes.” Much of this material was subsequently incorporated into the

“Deed of Declaration” at the formation of the Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust in 1975.

In these discussions with the mandali, Meher Baba drew particular attention to the New Life with its “spirit of renunciation and detachment” and “sincere longing for God. You have to be in the world and yet be not of it.” The Trust has a great responsibility about arranging “training [for] others that will create such spirit in them. For this you [yourselves]

have to lead the life of honesty, sincerity, and selflessness.” Only then, Baba said, is such a training possible.

The Trust (Baba said) should disseminate the Avatar's message and life story through various media – films and dramatic performances, books and lectures, songs and paintings and other forms of artistic expression. The Trust

should build libraries and study halls, museums, and even memorials at Meherabad and other

places around the world associated with His work. Following Baba's own personal example, the Trust should

arrange to give medical aid to the unwell, education to the illiterate, and other service to “the poor, the indigent, the sick, the blind, and

the disabled.”

Since the Trust opened its doors and began to function in 1969, a range of Trust activities in service of these purposes have sprung into being. Yet for Trust workers the critical point is that, in performing these various tasks and services, they themselves are the recipients (rather than the dispensers) of spiritual training. It is Beloved Baba's compassion that He has thus given His workers the opportunity to forget themselves in the service of His cause

and thus, over time, to learn the lessons of self-effacement.

Until now, the major guidance in the Trust's spiritual training programme has been provided by Meher Baba's own mandali, who have conveyed their own sense and awareness of Meher Baba's divinely human ways. Thus spiritual training has been governed less by rules and formal structures than by the insight and intuition of the Avatar's close ones.

In 1995 the Trust established a “Mastery in Servitude” programme as the aegis under which Trust activities would be organized. Recognizing that spiritual training was a responsibility that the Trust bears towards all its workers, the Chairman and Trustees organized the Trust work force into several groups. The *sevaks* and *sevikas* are hired employees, many from nearby Arangaon or Ahmednagar. (Sevak means “one who serves.”) The spiritual trainees are volunteers who come to Meherabad and Meherazad from throughout India and the world to dedicate their lives to Avatar Meher Baba through service in full time residence. Of course, pilgrim visitors to Meherabad are also members of Meher Baba's universal family; and for the duration of their stay, the Trust bears responsibility for their accommodation and other needs so that they can enjoy Baba's atmosphere. Their spiritual training comes to them in the form of the various experiences that Avatar Meher Baba bestows upon them in the course of their pilgrimage.

Meher Baba drew particular attention to the New Life with its “spirit of renunciation and detachment” and “sincere longing for God. You have to be in the world and yet be not of it.”

Kamli Coat Rehoused



MEHER BABA'S KAMLI COAT, worn by Him through much of the decade of the 1920s, has been the focus

of a major preservation effort this year.

In fact, the Kamli Coat is one of the prime treasures among the articles of clothing associated with this Advent, having been used by Meher Baba through key phases of His work and carrying, as He said, its own distinct significance.

Kamli is the term for a coarse woolen fabric typically used for blankets. In 1921, when Baba was living in Sakori, Yeshwant Rao, one of Upasni Maharaj's close disciples, fashioned this coat for Baba; and over much of the next ten years He would wear it almost continuously, even sometimes through the heat of the summer. Baba's fondness for the coat was such that, whenever it was damaged, He had it mended, to the point where much of the original material has

been entirely patched over. Baba said of it, “You have no idea the spiritual work I did in this coat. But someday the whole world will know, and they will come and bow down to it.”

Over the past several years the Kamli Coat has been on display in the Museum at Upper Meherabad. Recently, however, its case began to split, and the coat had to be rehoused for protection against insect attack. With the help of an expert from America, a museum-quality plexiglass case was custom made and, with great difficulty, transported to India. In September the Kamli Coat was removed from its old case, extensively photographed, supported with archival padding, and enclosed in its new display case.

The Kamli Coat's new case safeguards it against environmental hazards. The plexiglass filters ultraviolet light; and the case has been made insect-proof. Monitors for temperature and humidity have been placed inside. Duly housed and tended to, it is hoped that the Kamli Coat will continue to touch the hearts of visitors to Meherabad for generations to come.



PHOTOS BY MARTIN COOK



Young Adults Gather In His Love at Meherabad



THE TRUST'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL YOUNG ADULT SAHAVAS took place this year at Meherabad from June 22nd to July 2nd. Using Hostel C at Outer Meherabad as its principal venue, the gathering brought together 72 young men and women (ages 19 through 35) from all over the globe – 41 from India, 24 from the US, five from Australia, and two from Israel. Reminiscent of some of the sahavas gatherings at Meherabad or Guruprasad in Meher Baba's time, the Young Adult Sahavas provided an unprecedented opportunity for young Baba lovers from vastly different backgrounds to commingle freely, without regard to race, caste, religion, or nationality, in the common fellowship of His love.

Two main emphases of the Sahavas were service at Meherabad and the artistic celebration of Meher Baba's love. Each day, after arti and breakfast, the mornings were devoted to service projects, in which sahavasees shared in the Meherabad work life. Service projects included the whitewashing of Mandali Hall at Lower Meherabad, planting trees near the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill, cleaning the Jhopdi, Table Cabin,

and cemeteries, and painting Baba quotes on signs for the Meher English School.

These morning service sessions were supplemented later in the day by workshops on music and song-writing, painting, collage, beading necklaces, stitching and decorating tomb-covers, learning a kind of traditional Indian coloured powder-drawing known as "rangoli," and dance. The afternoons were rounded off with a vigorous hour of sports – cricket, volleyball, soccer, kite-flying, and marbles.

After evening arti and supper, activities continued on into the night. Programmes open to the wider pilgrim and resident community included a concert by Madhusudan, bhanga

and legum dance by the Arangaon villagers, and qawaali singing. Other nights the Sahavas participants watched films or held discussion groups among themselves.

Special highlights interspersed through the ten-day period were visits from Meher Baba's mandali. Bhau opened and closed the Sahavas with talks; and Aloba, Meheru, Katie, and Bal Natu each paid visits and shared reminiscences. For a number of the Indian participants in particular, even though they had been coming to Meherabad

at Amartithi since they were toddlers, this was the first time they had ever met the mandali personally and their first youth sahavas of any kind. Sahavas participants had the further opportunity to visit

with the mandali at Meherazad on July 1st, Meherazad's opening day.

Along with this diverse menu of programmes and activities prepared by the Sahavas organizers, in the middle of the first week Baba threw in some spicy masala of His own. For suddenly sahavasees began falling sick; and soon, more than a third were bedridden. This gave occasion for some spontaneous and unscheduled service, as healthy sahavasees sat up through late-night hours by the bedsides of their suffering companions. As so often happens in Baba's work, this

shared hardship helped to break down barriers and create more informality particularly among Easterners and Westerners.

The Sahavas culmi-

nated on 30th June with an evening programme of "celebrations" in the Meherabad theater in which the Sahavas participants shared with the wider community the fruits of their workshops in the form of song, dance, skit, and other entertainments. On the next evening the sahavasees met for a closing session in Mandali Hall. There, those who felt prompted shared their thoughts and feelings about the previous ten days, and at the end, each took darshan at Baba's chair. It was one of those occasions in which the floodgates of the heart were opened and Baba's presence was most intensely felt. Several said afterwards that this final session was one of the most moving experiences of their lives.

In his concluding talk on 2nd July, Bhau drew attention to the real significance of Sahavas, which is the sharing in

the intimate company of the Beloved. Giving words to what he felt was Baba's own voice within him, Bhau explained that Baba's Sahavas, once started, never really ends. For Baba is like one who brings children down to the Ocean, encouraging them first to wet their feet, then to swim, and at length to dive deeply, until there awakens in them the longing to merge into the Ocean Itself. Thus (as Bhau expressed it) the Beloved says to us –

Know well that once you become aware of My Sahavas, it will not end until you become Me. It continues until that time. The programmes organized for the Sahavas will end, but the Sahavas itself will not end until that time when you unite with Me.

At present, plans are under way for a second Young Adult Sahavas, which is scheduled for 26th June through 3rd July 2002. The size of the gathering will be expanded to 100 participants, 50 from India and 50 from abroad; the age limits are for persons between 19 and 30 years old. Those seeking further information or application forms should write to Meherabad Young Adult Sahavas, care of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, or address e-mails to sahavas@ambppct.org.



Whitewashing Mandali Hall



New friendships formed



Visiting Meherazad



72 young men and women from all over the globe gathered at Meherabad: 41 from India, 24 from the US, 5 from Australia, 2 from Israel.

PHOTOS COMPLIMENTS OF ARISH, JOSH AND MATT.

Adi and Rhoda Dubash Return to Baba

ADI AND RHODA DUBASH, longtime lovers and followers of Avatar Meher Baba, passed away at their home at Meherabad within six weeks of each other, on 4th August and 19th September, respectively.

Adi had originally been drawn into Meher

Baba's contact in the early 1940s through Minoo Kharas, one of His disciples. Soon after her wedding with Adi in 1945, Rhoda had the opportunity for Baba's darshan at Meherabad and immediately felt drawn to Him. Adi and Rhoda followed and served Meher Baba devotedly from that time on.

In the early 1980s Adi and Rhoda left their home in Karachi, Pakistan and settled into Meherabad permanently. In 1987 Adi became a trustee of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, an office which he held until his death.

How to Contribute to Support Development of Meherabad

Amid the ups and downs of life within illusion, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust continues with its work of developing its estate at Meherabad and Meherazad for the benefit of His worldwide family, both now and in the future. And His lovers throughout the world are continuing to give the support which makes that development possible.

Construction work on the Meher Pilgrim Educational Retreat, which is the centrepiece of the Trust's Development Plan, will over the next year be moving ahead in real earnest. Located a kilometer to the West of the Samadhi, the Retreat is designed to accommodate 200 pilgrims. Meanwhile, the new Amartithi site is nearing completion and should be ready for use by Amartithi 2003; the furnishing of the newly-constructed archives building (the Manzil-e-Meher) has begun with the arrival of the first half-dozen custom-manufactured museum cabinets; and most of the 2600 new saplings on Meherabad Hill, planted as part of the afforestation effort, have survived their first critical year.

Further progress in the Development Plan depends, as always, on the contributions which Beloved Baba gives through His lovers. On this point Bhau says, "The world situation is very bad, and the economy is very much affected in every country. Still we know that Beloved Baba's dear ones will not hesitate to continue to share in the development plan, according to their convenience and means, knowing fully well that in doing so they serve the cause of the Beloved.

"It is not for us to go on repeating the same story again and again. Beloved Baba's dear ones are mature, and they understand the situation. It is in response to the call of love, and not in response to demand, that they offer of themselves at His feet, in order to please Him."

For those who feel so prompted, gifts large and small continue to be needed and welcome. In England, contributions can be made tax-deductibly through Avatar Meher Baba Association. In the US there are nine organizations that have grants in place with the Trust to support the Development Plan; tax-deductible contributions can be made to any of these organizations with the request that these monies be applied towards these grants. These nine organizations are: (1) Avatar Meher Baba Foundation Inc.; (2) Avatar Meher Baba Center of Southern California; (3) Meherana; (4) Meher Baba Center of the Twin Cities; (5) Meher Baba House; (6) Meher Baba Washington Gathering; (7) Meher Fund; (8) Meher Prasad; and (9) Sheriar Foundation. US citizens who want further information on these tax-exempt organizations, who have questions regarding making bequests in their wills to the Trust, or who want to name the Trust as a beneficiary of an insurance policy, charitable trust, or IRA should please contact Emory and Susan Ayers, P. O. Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355 (telephone: 860-536-0303, e-mail: EAyers88@aol.com).

Eruch on Spiritual Training

DURING THE 32 YEARS since that original Amartithi, it almost seemed as if Eruch's life of selfless service and self-sacrifice was lived and offered on behalf of all Meher Baba's lovers. But now that he is gone, the challenge to rise high in Beloved Baba's service and to bow low in His surrendrance presents itself with a new degree of seriousness.

Spiritual training is identified in the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Deed as one of the Trust's fundamental objects. Yet whether or not one formally participates in Trust programmes, it is clear that spiritual training, in one sense or another, is essential to the spiritual life. In this respect, as in so many others, Eruch was a model. For despite his own obvious greatness, instead of setting himself above others, Eruch remained until the end, in essence, a spiritual trainee, always taking correction from others and accepting for himself the lowest of stations. The example of true humility that he provided helps to illumi-

nate for all of us the way to the God-Man's feet.

Not long before he died, Eruch, in response to a request from the editor of this newsletter, narrated an illuminating story on this subject of spiritual training. The episode dates from the early years of Eruch's discipleship, when he had first joined Baba in His ashram at Meherabad. In those days the women mandali were living (under Baba's instructions) a highly secluded life in Meher Retreat on the Hill. They had virtually no contact with men. In fact, it was not permitted even to speak the name of a man in the presence of Mehera – Meher Baba's chief woman disciple. A sign posted on the gate of the women's compound warned that no man was allowed to enter.

As a newcomer among the mandali, Eruch's duty at that time was to meet Baba at the gate when He left the women's compound, to accompany Him as He walked in His flowing stride along the path to Lower Meherabad where the men resided, and to

attend to His various needs throughout the day.

On one occasion, when Baba, Eruch, and Padri were standing beside the Meherabad well (located near the Dhuni along the Ahmednagar road), Baba suddenly noticed a stranger turning up the path toward Upper Meherabad.

"Who is that?" Baba asked. "Doesn't he know the rule? Chase after him," Baba gestured to Eruch, "grab him, give him a tight slap, and bring him back here to Me."

As Baba had ordered, Eruch ran after the stranger and caught him just as he was trying to enter the gate. Slapping him soundly, Eruch shouted, "Can't you read the sign? Don't you know that men aren't permitted here?" Ignoring the poor fellow's protestations, Eruch dragged him down the Hill and presented him to Baba.

"What is this?" Baba

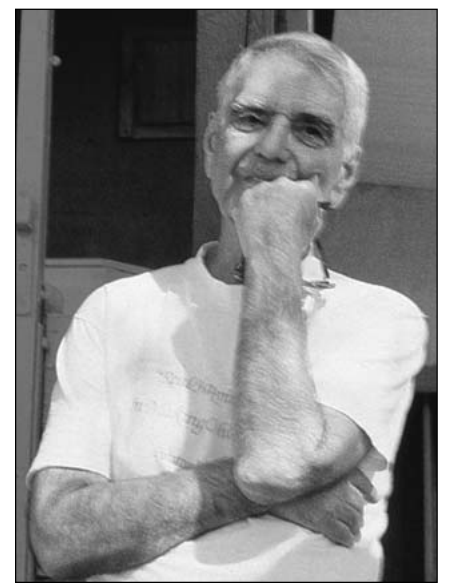


PHOTO BY ALAN LEVINSON

Eruch at Meherazad, 1990.

gestured as the two men approached.

"Baba," the stranger protested, "I came only for Your darshan, but this man slapped me and dragged me here."

Baba smiled lovingly at the visitor. "How blessed you are that you came seeking My darshan," He said, "but you are doubly blessed to have been humiliated while doing so." And as He said this, Baba shot at Eruch a withering look of sheer disgust.

Recalling this episode more than sixty years later, Eruch went on: "And this is the only thing that has kept me with Him all this time. For there is nothing but humiliation in Baba's service. As Baba has shown to us, doubly blessed are we when we are humiliated in trying to serve Him."

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 educa-

tional, 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. Requests for subscrip-

tions to this newsletter can be sent to that address or to: Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, PO Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398, USA (tel. 860-536-0303, e-mail EAyers88@aol.com). 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."

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