



A NEWSLETTER FROM MEHERABAD

## Meherabad Faces Alarming Water Shortage

THE ONSET OF SUMMER, 2002, brought with it a new crisis. For almost within days of the closing of the Pilgrim Centre and Hostels on March 15th, the wells began to run dry. And with no new rainfall in prospect before the arrival of the monsoon at summer's end in June, Meherabad found itself in the middle of an emergency.

The water shortage was not, of course, altogether unanticipated. Water has been a chronic problem at Meherabad and Meherazad since the earliest days of these ashrams. No doubt for this reason the search for new water sources occupied top position among the various objects and purposes listed in the Trust Deed when Baba signed it in 1959. Since that time, scores of wells – both bore wells and open wells – have been dug all across the Meherabad estate. In the last few years several particularly good underground streams have been struck in the western sections not far from the new Amartithi site.

The 2001 monsoon was a mediocre one; for though actual rainfall totals were only somewhat below the average, the season brought with it few of the “elephant rains” needed to fill the bunds and thus feed the ground water. Anticipating trouble, in the final weeks of pilgrim season, the Trust dug more than

ten new bore wells, including several at what looked like promising sites. This, in conjunction with the allotment that Meherabad receives every two days from the Ahmednagar municipality, would be enough, the Chairman hoped, to tide Meherabad through what was sure in any case to be a difficult summer.

But the new wells proved to be unproductive and salty; and because of the crisis throughout the district, the Trust was able to draw only a fraction of its municipal quota. Moreover, because of increased local drilling and water use for sugar cane farming and other purposes, the ground water level throughout Maharashtra has been dropping year by year. And so, by late March, a number of the best Meherabad wells dried up, and others were producing only a trickle. At the beginning of summer, water scarcity was as acute as in most years it is at summer's end in early June.

At the same time, major construction under the Development Plan on the Meher Pilgrim Retreat – work that was tied to the terms of contract with a local construction company and that therefore could not be postponed – had hit its full stride. Some 9000 gallons a day were needed for

this work; more water was required to sustain the thousands of vulnerable young saplings planted as part of the development plan's afforestation effort three years ago; and of course residents need water for drinking and personal use. And if the 2002 monsoon was delayed or failed altogether, the new pilgrim season – which in its first month features the Young Adults Sahavas and the Silence Day gathering – would have to launch itself amid some of the most austere water conditions in memory.

In this crisis, the Meherabad-Meherazad community held a series of meetings and went into an emergency mode. All non-essential water use was eliminated; many flowers died, and new-growth trees had to make do on survival rations; water for bathing and other personal needs was cut to a minimum; and even “grey water” was saved for the vegetable garden, toilet cleaning, and other functions.

But clearly some more

adequate and long-term solution was required. Taking this year's emergency as a sign and warning from Baba, the Chairman and his staff engaged in discussions with Ahmednagar city engineers. The fruit of these negotiations has been the granting of a separate pipeline to Meherabad which would have its own initial allowance of 200,000 liters per day. This supply, it is hoped, will solve the Trust's water problem for at least a number of years.

It devolves upon the Trust, however, to construct the necessary two-kilometer permanent cast iron pipeline from the Meherabad sump to the municipal supply line. The cost of this pipeline, along with the laying of a new five-kilometer high-density polyethylene pipeline from the sump to Meherabad and other water-related infrastructure, is expected to run in the neighborhood of \$125,000 (Rs. 60,00,000). Once the two-kilometer

pipeline is in place (hopefully within the next few months), the new water allotment should cost initially an estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000 (Rs. 7,50,000 to 10,00,000) annually. Nonetheless, the Chairman and Board feel that these costs are unavoidable as the Trust moves ahead in the fulfillment of its mission.



## Letter from the Chairman

My dearest dear ones of the Beloved,

In the domain of illusion there are always ups and downs. In Reality, there is no up and down. Reality always exists as Reality, and nothing happens to Reality at any time. But everything happens in illusion.

Earlier this year we had been moving ahead in the development of the Trust Estate, and projects we had undertaken under our plan we were carrying out. We had prepared our 2002-03 budget and dispatched it to the organizations which are helping the development of the Trust Estate through their grants. So we were happy, thinking that, with the accounts completed and statements prepared, we were free.

But Beloved Baba has His own ways. Since we were “up,” immediately He brought us “down.” For just then – as March was ending – the water supply at Meherabad dried up, and we found ourselves in an alarming situation. Meherabad has many wells – open and bore; but despite that, we had no water. We could not understand what to do.

Even our water supply from the municipality began to fail us. For other parties tap into the same line, and they began to fight with us for what is actually our water allotment. Thus we found ourselves in difficulty.

Really speaking, in the Trust Deed Baba had indicated that a permanent water supply should be found for Meherabad. Until now, we have depended largely on well water. Although we have a municipal allotment, it is limited. Once, when the pipeline for that municipal supply was damaged, a year and a half went by before it was repaired. For we had water from other sources, and we didn't take the problem seriously enough. This is why Baba has brought us down. Now we realize we need a permanent water source.

In April we brought a proposal before the municipality, and in response, we got sanction for a direct pipeline from Ahmednagar to our sump. Though the cost for this pipeline, along with another pipeline from the sump to the Meherabad estate, may come to \$125,000, creating this new infrastructure is a must for us, and we have to do it. We feel this is Beloved Baba's wish; and all this crisis has come about so that we remain alert. The first object in the Trust Deed we must fulfill first.

We know that the dear ones of Beloved Baba's worldwide family are the source which makes work on the Development Plan possible; their love, cooperation, and dedication are the basis for what we are doing. Until now, though water resource development was included in the Development Plan, we had not given it a budget, since we thought we could manage for the time being. But Beloved Baba has given us a surprise, and we stand before Him as sinners, since we neglected this important priority item. We are sorry for this.

May Beloved Avatar Meher Baba be with you, and may you remain strong and healthy, to serve His dear cause through the Trust.

V.S. Kalchuri (Bhau), Chairman  
AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST

*“Be true to the trust that I have reposed in you.”*

— AVATAR MEHER BABA

# Trust Allowed to Buy More Land



Architect Ted Judson working on Master Plan

IN A MAJOR NEW DEVELOPMENT, the government of Maharashtra, in cooperation with the Trust, is now in the final stages of recognizing Meherabad and

Meherazad as pilgrimage centres. This recognition will bring with it permission for the Trust to buy substantial further acreage for development of its estate. This breakthrough makes it possible as never before for the Trust to move ahead with regard to certain long-term objects in its master plan.

## Future Horizons in Meherabad and Meherazad.

The Trust's need for more land becomes obvious in view of Meher Baba's forecast that Meherabad-Meherazad would eventually become a great centre of world pilgrimage. Many Baba lovers are already acquainted with the Trust's Development Plan - whose centrepiece is the Meher Pilgrim Retreat, now under construction. The Development Plan is focused on short- and intermediate-term needs, particularly in pilgrim accommodation. But the Chairman and Board have long been aware of their greater responsibilities to posterity and their duty to provide in other ways for the generations to come.

Several of the Trust's longer-term plans, which clearly call for an expansion of the current estate, are as follows. For Amartithi and other gatherings, a darshan area around the Samadhi - which will eventually be enclosed within a superstructure - needs to be created large enough for crowds of hundreds of thousands. Naturally this will necessitate development of many associated facilities, particularly in the area of pilgrim accommodation, which will be centred in the ridges and valleys to the west of the Tomb. In addition, as a long-term project, the Trust is now envisioning an exhibition centre that will present Meher Baba's life and work with the help of advanced technology. "Meher Baba in Motion" will even-

tually incorporate outdoor performance areas, interactive theatres, film and video centres, and multimedia exhibition halls which will be placed among gardens and plazas.

At Meherazad, unlike Meherabad, primary attention will be devoted to preserving a more secluded atmosphere where pilgrims can savor the intimate scenes and settings of Meher Baba's "home life" during the final decades of His advent. The inner precincts of Meherazad property will be visited by pilgrims in small groups. Around the periphery - in properties adjoining Meherazad, the approach road, and Seclusion Hill - the Master Plan envisions botanical gardens with welcome and information centres where pilgrims can watch films and enjoy other exhibitions relating to Meher Baba's life and work.

Under the current Master Plan, 500 acres each at Meherabad and Meherazad have been designated for these various purposes.

## History of the Estate.

Ironically enough, much of the property which the Trust now needs to procure (or which it managed to buy back at great cost and difficulty over the last thirty years) was at an earlier time owned by Baba and His close ones; but at the outset of the New Life in 1949, all of what He owned (except for the Samadhi) was given away. A few years after Baba's return to Meherazad in 1952, Sarosh Irani, who had received sixteen acres at Upper Meherabad, returned them to Baba, as did Meherji Karkaria with his twenty-five acres in Lower Meherabad. And so, when Baba dropped His body in 1969, the Trust owned a total of forty-one acres - a fraction of its current holdings. Meanwhile, the eleven acres of Meherazad property, which Baba had gifted to Nariman Dadachanji, remained in Nariman's name, though of course they were placed fully at Baba's disposal; Nariman's wife Arnavaz transferred their title to the Trust in 1999.

The new land purchase allowance radically revises Trust prospects in its estate planning. Land acquisition has been incorporated into the Trust's Development Plan and will become a high priority in the years ahead.

## An End-of-the-Pilgrim-Season Diary



The pilgrim season at Meherabad and Meherazad always seems to step up in energy and vitality during the winter months, when the weather is pleasant, the number of happy-hearted pilgrims swells, and major celebra-

tions - particularly Amartithi and His Birthday - bring the annual Baba calendar to its climax.

**MEHERA'S BIRTHDAY & CHRISTMAS.** December 22nd marks the commemoration of the birthday of Baba's Mehera, an event which begins at 10:00 a.m. when the Meherazad women mandali arrive at the Samadhi for arti. As in the past, this year's gathering was an occasion of joy through heartfelt song and poetry, as those in attendance paid tribute to Mehera's incredible love for her Beloved. Just three days later Christmas was celebrated in the intimate atmosphere of Meherazad garden, colorfully decorated and arrayed for a morning of entertainment for young and old alike. Baba lovers shared together the good cheer of the season in a feeling of brotherly love inspired by His loving presence everywhere.

**NEW YEAR'S.** December 31st found Baba lovers flocking to Meherabad to see in the New Year. Once again the feeling of togetherness and the shared experience of Baba's love in His lovers' lives was the theme enlivening the event. After dinner, a dance party and a candlelight procession up Meherabad Hill, all gathered at Baba's Samadhi for midnight prayers and arti. At this powerfully intimate time at the cusp of a new yearly cycle, many among those present (or so one imagines) were perhaps moved to rededicate their lives to the Lord of Love.

**AMARTITHI.** Towards the end of January, Meherabad takes on a new appearance as the colorful shade pandals spice up the environment around Baba's Samadhi, the focal point of the upcoming Amartithi gathering. At lower, upper, and outer Meherabad tents spring up - for pilgrim accommodation, for dining, and for stalls selling snacks



## IN BRIEF . . . FROM MEHERABAD

**RABIES VACCINATIONS** The Meherabad Veterinary Clinic has annually been vaccinating dogs and cats of Meherabad and Arangaon for rabies. This year two visiting veterinarians from Pune who specialize in small animals - a husband and wife team - attended on two days and vaccinated 47 dogs and 8 cats, about twice as many as were done in previous years. As the health of the animal population in our area affects humans too, the Trust has plans to expand and improve the veterinary health care offered, for both pets and stray animals.

**DRUM-BEATS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST** Iran was Meher Baba's ancestral home (on both His

father's and mother's sides); and Persian was His favorite language. In view of which, it has been pleasing to see greater numbers of Iranians coming to Meherabad each year, particularly at Amartithi time. This year's influx was the largest to date. Many nights under the stars near the foreign pilgrims' Amartithi food tent, the air was filled with the sweet sounds of Persian singing to the accompaniment of daf (a Persian drum) and violin. Before returning home in February, the Iranian visitors regaled the Meherazad mandali with a programme of drumming, dancing, and ghazals.

**PLAYS WITHIN THE DIVINE PLAY** As it moves

into its tenth year, the Meherabad theater - Hostel A - is coming into its own. This last season brought with it some substantial technical up-grades, with the donation of new quality speakers and microphones and major improvements in the stage lighting. Meanwhile, Baba groups from around the world are bringing their plays to the Lord's home and "playground." Thus the final few months of pilgrims season witnessed a Hindi drama on the subject of the search for God and a Marathi version of Baba's own dramatic narrative "This Man David" - in addition to the regular Meherabad birthday production, which this year was an English-language life of Maulana Rumi.

and Baba-related articles and souvenirs. In the final days of January streams of pilgrims started to pour in: this year more than 10,500 registered for overnight accommodation, in addition to the thousands of others who attended unregistered or came as day visitors. Hailing from all points in the Baba globe, these lovers come to bow their heads at His feet in His Samadhi and thus to honor His presence in their hearts and in the world. The atmosphere of overflowing love during the three days of the Amartithi celebration has indeed a transporting effect.

**GOD SPEAKS SEMINAR.** In mid-February this year, Meherabad played host to an event of quite a different kind. Don Stevens, one of the original editors of Meher Baba's book God Speaks, has for the last several years been conducting seminars at Baba centres all around the world on the topic of this extraordinary book. By invitation of the Chairman, Don came to Meherabad to offer a four-session seminar here. Held in the Study Hall at upper Meherabad, the seminar sessions were attended by some 70 participants. Seminar participants were delighted with the exchange of ideas and insights into the significance of this Book of books.

**THE BIRTHDAY.** Baba's 108th birthday was celebrated with several days' worth of activities, beginning with arti at 5:00 a.m. February 25th, the hour when the tiny infant Merwan was born. Some of the Meherazad mandali came to Meherabad for darshan and arti later in the morning, and more attended the dramatic performance in the theatre at 4:30 p.m. The play this year was the life of Maulana Rumi, Persian poet and Perfect Master. Centering around Rumi's relationship with his Master, Shams-i Tabriz, and the controversies generated by their unorthodox ways, the story was a poignant portrayal of the heights of divine Love. The talent and hard work of the players and theatre crew resulted in a beautiful performance. Meanwhile, the Ahmednagar Baba Centre had arranged for a series of concerts and events in honour of Baba's birthday that unfolded over several days. These culminated in two big open-air feasts, held at the Trust Compound, Meher Nazar. Over 2000 people were served a free meal in a pleasant atmosphere.

**PILGRIM SEASON ENDS.** Meherazad closed for the season after its last pilgrim day on February 28th, and Meherabad shortly afterwards, on March 15th. As the heat of summer settled in, the last pilgrims said a grateful goodbye to their Home of the heart, till next visit.

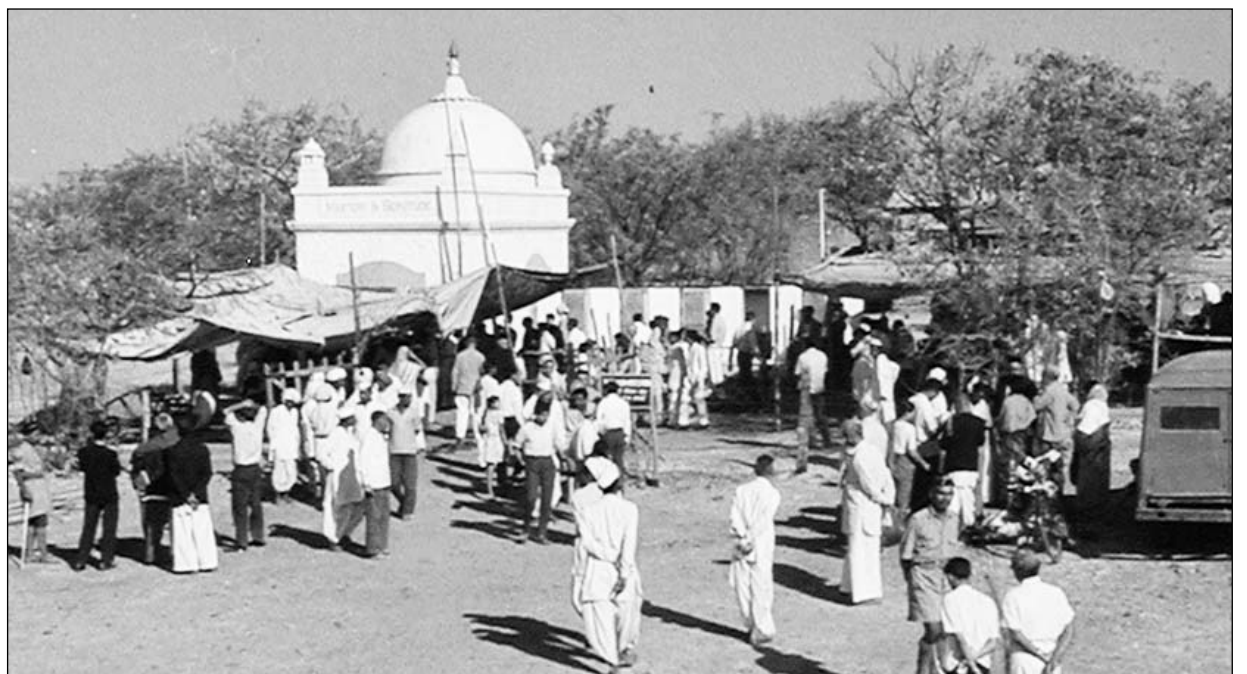
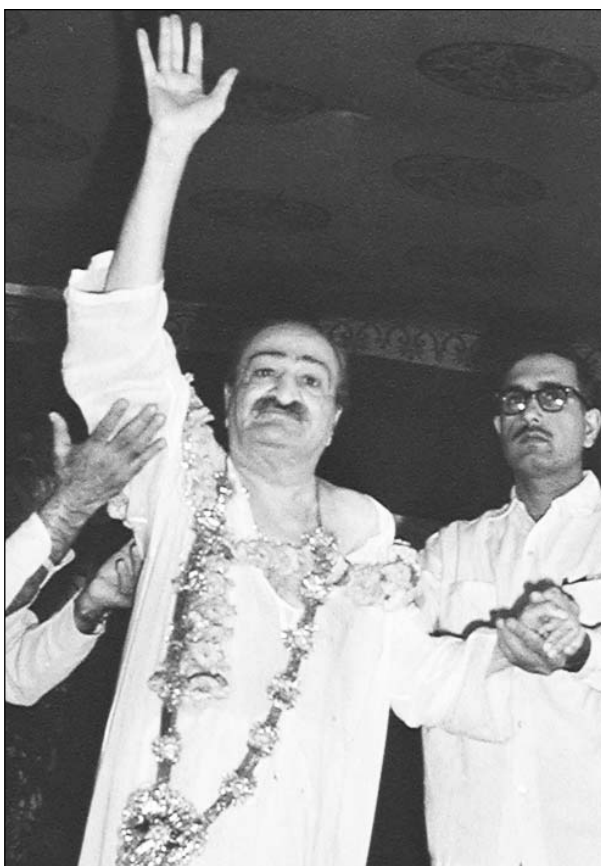
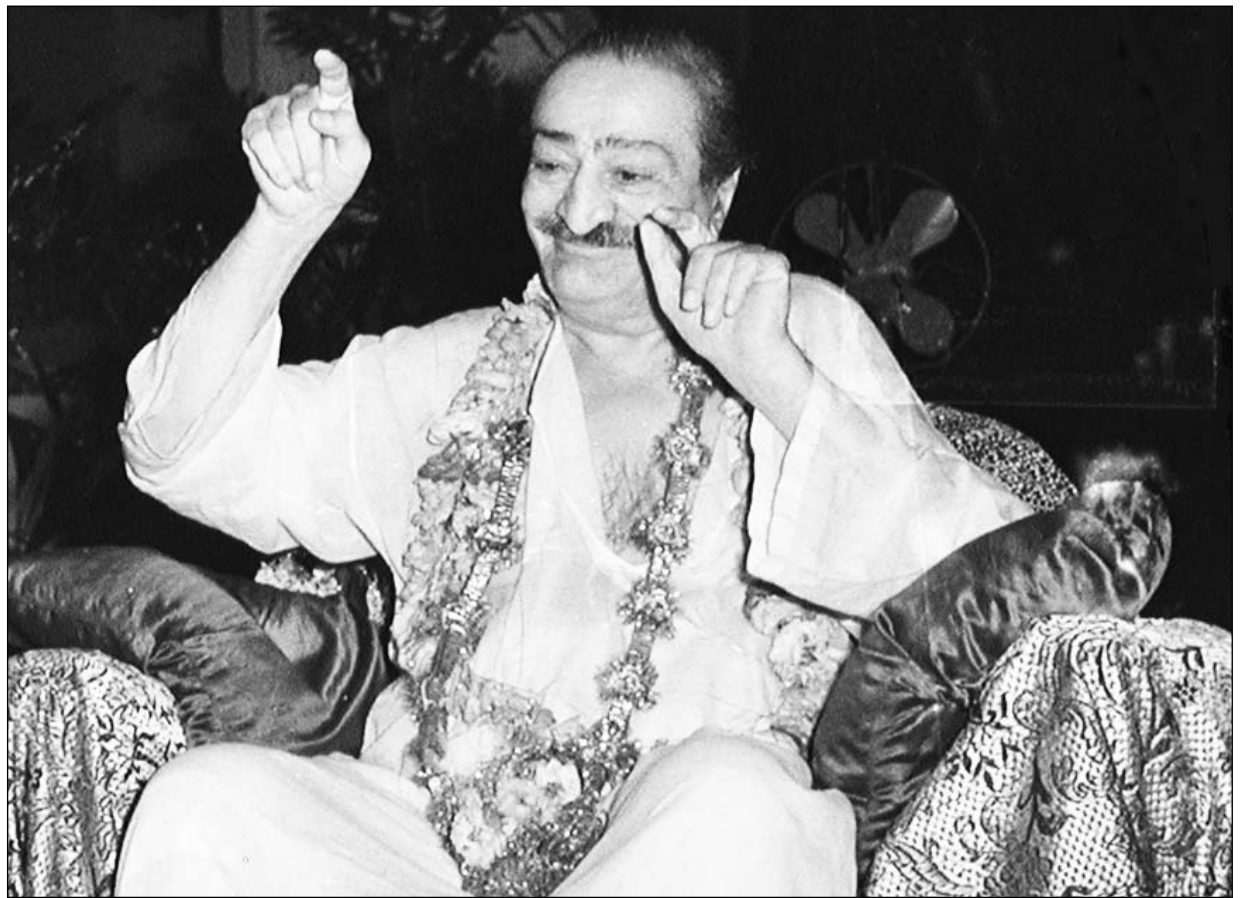
# New Photo Collection Given to the Trust

MANTRAVADI SRIRAMA MOORTHY, formerly a member of the Guntur Baba group in Andhra Pradesh and now a resident of New Jersey, USA, recently donated to the Trust his magnificent collection of 225 negatives of photographs of Meher Baba. Taken by Mr. Moorthy in black and white mostly during the 1965 darshans at Guruprasad and the Poona Baba Centre, the negatives, though now aging, are still in good condition and provide many marvelous images of the Beloved that few people have seen until now.

By arrangement with Mr. Moorthy, the Trust will look to the long-term preservation of the originals and

the creation of duplicate masters. For these purposes, both gelatine photographic techniques and more recent digital technologies are being brought into use. All needed equipment and facilities are currently available on the Trust estate. Meanwhile, prints are being made available for purchase through the Guntur group.

Several images from the Moorthy collection are displayed on this page. Particularly well-known is the photograph that for many years stood by the north window at the head of the marble slab in Beloved Baba's Samadhi.



## Supporting Trust Estate Development

The recently-granted permission for the Trust to purchase substantial new acreage carries major implications in terms of the Trust's long-term planning. For while until now the Trust's Development Plan has focused primarily on the construction of new buildings (for pilgrim accommodation, archiving, and other needs), in the future more resources will need to be devoted to the expansion and consolidation of the estate.

As is explained in the Financial Report accompanying this newsletter, no specific allotment of funds for land acquisition has been incorporated into the Development Plan budget for the next few years. For the Trust does not wish to disturb or divert progress on current Development Plan projects.

Instead, a line item has been incorporated into the budget with allocation of funds "To Be Determined." This allows for the purchase of particularly crucial pieces of property by the Trust if they become available and funds are on hand. At the same time, it allows Baba lovers around the world to make contributions specifically allocated for land acquisition if they desire this. Such donations, if they originate from the United States or the United Kingdom, are eligible for tax deduction – if the donor contributes to Meher Baba Association in the UK or to one of the eight Meher Baba organizations in the US (listed below) that has a grant program in place with the Trust, and if the donor requests that the contribution be used for the Trust Development Plan.

Although 2001 was a year of hardship economic and otherwise for many people, we have been surprised and touched to find that the number of contributors to the Development Plan almost tripled, from 135 to 400. As you know, the Trust development work is being done for the sake of His lovers, now and in the future. Meher Baba repeatedly emphasized that what matters most when money is given in His cause was the love behind it.

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 (c/o Sue Chapman, 3 Whin Hill, Craster NE663TP, UK, tel. 01 665 57 69 57, e-mail suchapman@hotmail.com). In the US there are eight 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 eight 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; and (8) 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, email: EAyers88@aol.com).

# Water and the Founding of Meherabad

AS MEHERABAD and Meherabad struggle through another long, hot summer of drought, one is put in mind of the perennial hardships that Baba and His close ones endured on the water front. In fact, for all the Avatar's unpredictability, on this point at least it seems that His mandali could rely: that whenever He moved into a new "permanent" home, water scarcity, like an old friend, would be waiting to greet Him.

This problem plagued the Meherabad ashram from its very earliest days. For while Meherabad pilgrims today enjoy such amenities as faucets and flush toilets, in the mid-20s water had to be drawn from wells and poured into 25-liter kerosine tins; these would be attached by ropes to the ends of bamboo poles which Pendu and another man would carry, balancing them on their shoulders. Or else it would be siphoned into barrels and lugged in bullock carts.

Under such conditions water was precious as gold. Meheru, the youngest of the Meherabad women mandali, still recalls her first

summer at Meherabad after joining Baba permanently in the early 1940s, when water use was being strictly rationed. "Six mugs of water (half a pail) would be measured out. Out of this, we would bathe. And with what we saved, we would wash our clothes – since our old, patched garments could not have withstood the dhobi (washer-man)."

Partly because of these chronic water shortages at Meherabad, in 1940 Baba expressed His wish for a new site for the ashram. The conditions He set were these: that the property should be neither too close nor too far away from Ahmednagar; it should enjoy ample water supply; and it should be situated near a hill suitable for His seclusion work.

Within a fortnight Vishnu noticed an advertisement in a local newspaper for the auction of a piece of Ahmednagar municipal property near

Pimpalgaon-Malvi which appeared to meet Baba's specifications. Consisting of an approach road, a small cottage, several free-standing rooms, another old building that provided the foundations for what later became Baba's house, and a few surrounding acres, the property had recently served as the residence for the engineer who had overseen construction of the (just-completed)

at first the property had only a few shade trees, new trees and flowers were planted; and in this way Meherabad, which means "Meher freed," was gradually transformed into the arboreal paradise that one finds there today.

Yet even at Meherabad, water supply was far from luxuriant. To provide for basic domestic needs, a woman was hired to carry jugs from the public water tap at Pimpalgaon lake. Used water, as Meheru recalls, "was saved to try and bring a little bit of greenery to the place in the months before the monsoons began." Meanwhile, precious drinking water was drawn from the Meherabad well. "In the past, passers-by who wanted to drink or wash themselves would avail themselves of well water by walking down the well's stone steps. To prevent this and keep the water clean, Margaret Craske was given watch duty. And without her even saying a word, just the sight of this western woman would frighten away the village folks. They would back away like they had seen an apparition!"

### Meherabad in the 40s

"Six mugs of water (half a pail) would be measured out. Out of this, we would bathe. And with what we saved, we would wash our clothes – since our old, patched garments could not have withstood the dhobi (washer-man)."

Meheru

## 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. 860-536-0303, e-mail EAyers88@aol.com). To subscribe to Tavern Talk (the Trust's electronic newsletter), send an e-mail to [Listserv@ambppct.org](mailto:Listserv@ambppct.org) and include in the text of your message the words: "subscribe tavern-talk."

*"In His Service" is the newsletter of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust; all articles and other material are compiled under the direction of the Chairman. Issued biannually, it is designed and published by Sheriar Press, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, USA.*

Donations and inquiries should be sent to: The Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King's Road, Ahmednagar 414 001, Maharashtra State, India