

Avatar's Abode
1958 - 2008

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Beloved Meher Baba, who gifted all of us with a beautiful place to remember Him through.

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Wel – Come To Avatar’s Abode

*...all who come in love for Avatar Meher Baba
and all who seek to know of Him.*

The establishment of this Blessed Place of Pilgrimage was directed by Meher Baba, and in 1958 came here physically to leave His Presence as a guide and inspiration for all for seek their Beloved God. Avatar’s Abode thus became a Place for re-focusing one’s life, assessing where one is at, and where one is going. Because He is here more potently than in the general environment, we may better gauge or measure what we may become. Here we may rest and meditate, absorb His atmosphere, and assess how we can serve others more truly, more generously, better able to take stock of the course of our life, and renew again the real purpose of it: To love God, to live for God and die for God.

Introduction

It seems that with each of my books I begin with words about Avatar’s Abode, the Place at which the books are written, and which still features so largely in my life. So I will continue the practice and write of Avatar’s Abode.

***Meher Baba’s House.** The long slope from our house to Beloved Baba’s House was not smooth lawn and gardens in June 1958. I remember it as a narrow, overgrown field with stunted wattle, gum and other self-sown trees. As I walk towards His House I recall the circular driveway running beneath the verandah of the House, roughly to the edge of the present border garden and returning midway between the House and the Meeting Hall to rejoin the entrance road. That area, now known as the Baba*

square, was a very simple layout then - some odd shrubs and trees, remnants surrounding the farmhouse that had been there roughly between the House and Meeting Hall. Standing there again in this area, I recall a delightful incident from that incandescent time with Beloved Baba in June 1958. As I wrote about this incident earlier:

'Generally throughout this second visit to Australia Baba was serious, at times unsmiling and withdrawn, and certainly more stern than He had been on His first visit. It was as though he intended to quicken the germination of the seed of love which He had sown on the first visit, and was less inclined to humour our moods, our "will we" or "will we not" love and obey Him. But, of course, with Baba, humour and natural humanness was never long absent and would break through at unexpected moments. One such little incident was when I was walking with Him the length of the veranda of His House. We stopped, and



He pointed questioningly towards some tropical fruit growing nearby. I said, 'They are pawpaws, Baba,' and I shall never forget the quizzical, humorous look He gave me, with His hands in a typical questioning gesture, as though saying, 'Oh! This Australian language!' Eruch then explained to me that the word for the fruit in India is 'papaya '

Baba also took some or all of us on occasions for an unhurried walk in the sun, or would stand with us and gaze over the green fields to the East of His House, towards the distant but visible ocean. On one such occasion, He stood with a group of us, Francis by His side, beneath the window of His room. There

were then few trees and we were able to see the ocean. He remarked on the beauty of Avatar's Abode, and then affectionately pinching Francis's car, said how well he had chosen for His Abode.

Because such times with the Lord are eternal, the heart forever responds when they are sung in words, or relived in those places. Reading, listening, thinking of them gives again the assurance to the groping heart to take strength and go forward in His love. So I relive walking the earth floor of the verandah with Him, standing with Him as He sits withdrawn on a chair near His door, sitting with Him in the vibrant warmth and 'homey' atmosphere of His House, being with Him in the charged and challenging time of His first meeting with us in the Meeting Hall - and I can understand wholeheartedly the innate longing of others to experience in spirit those times too. Well, we cannot return the Meeting Hall to its original state - with its temporary hessian walls, and earth floor; but we can do so to a large extent with Baba's House. Maintaining the simplicity and original arrangement of His House, reminds me of a wonderful story from the late 1930's:

In 1939 a wealthy Baba lover from South India offered at the lotus feet of the Lord a very large parcel of land. Baba decided to establish on this land a Universal Spiritual Centre, and He directed that a ground-breaking ceremony be held in December 1939. Thousands were to attend including many high officials such as the Prime Minister of the State. Baba and the men and women mandali were staying quite a distance from the land. As the time approached for departure to the land, Baba came to the room where His mother was and seeing her, said, 'We are leaving soon and you are not already dressed.' 'Can't You see - I am already dressed!' And indeed she had on a most beautiful sari, one that she considered worthy of the occasion. 'Don't tell

Me you are going to wear that sari!" "But You said it was to be a most important occasion with many dignitaries.'

Then Baba said to her, ' You are the mother of a Fakir, and you should wear a sari that befits the mother of a Fakir. Look at this jacket I am wearing.' - and sure enough there were patches on it. Shireen immediately said that Baba should change the coat - but Baba refused, and insisted that she change her sari to a plain ordinary one. Shireen wept but did as He asked. It must have pained the compassionate One to see His dear mother weep, yet His work is paramount and so He ensured that she attended the ceremony appropriately dressed.

Such a story takes me back in memory to the bare setting of that converted wool-shed, and the incredible richness of the Being that occupied it as though it was a palace. Of course His bedroom opening within that structure is indeed a palace albeit simple: its carpet and tastefully covered bed and cushions, its beautifully-grained timber walls and furniture, befits the paradise of His heart as it envelops in Love all who enter.

*Bill Le Page,
Chairman
Avatar's Abode Trust*



Why Woombye?

Ray Kerkhove

Meher Baba's Sahavas at Avatar's Abode was His last anywhere outside India. It occurred during a phase of His intense suffering. Why did He come to Woombye?

The district was not without some sort of spiritual past. For many centuries prior to Meher Baba's visit, the hills just 15kms west of Avatar's Abode echoed with the chants of one of Australia's largest Aboriginal

gatherings. Every three years, distant tribes made an arduous pilgrimage to the region's sacred bunya pine groves.

Once white settlement began, the Sunshine Coast district attracted an unusually large variety of religious communities and utopian dreamers – everything from Scottish Quakers to Finnish socialists. In fact, one of the closest towns to Avatar's Abode (Nambour) boasted more churches per head of population than any other Australian centre. Keil Mountain in Woombye was part of this background – being named after its first settler - the son of a German missionary (Heinrich Keil).

But none of this was the reason for Avatar's Abode. Early Australian Baba lovers resided far to the south - in Melbourne and Sydney. It was these cities that Baba visited in 1956. Not a single Baba lover lived in Queensland.

The Australians' urge to establish something for Baba in Queensland grew out of a letter from Meher Baba's sister, Mani Irani. In 11th January 1958, she wrote to the Australian group that:

'As in the USA, Baba will give His Sahavas in Australia at one place only. Baba leaves the Sahavas arranging to Francis, with loving and willing co-operation and help from all as possible. Baba has outlined the main points, and leaves the details to you. For the site of the Sahavas: Baba gives first preference to Queensland, and second preference to Beacon Hill. Baba would like Queensland if the climate is good during

June, and if the place is practical from all angles - finance, convenience, climate, accommodation for all, etc. But you should not feel bound by this. If Queensland is not found to be practical from the above mentioned points then you should drop the idea and make arrangements at Beacon Hill for all concerned. If Queensland is to be found practical, then it would be ideal - for Baba would be blessing with His presence yet another part of Australia. Baba wishes Francis to let Him know which is decided..'

This letter impelled Francis to drive from Sydney to a number of Queensland locations (including the hills of Tamborine Mountain and Buderim) in search of a possible 'first preference' venue. Fortunately, Baba considered Francis's choice - a run-down pineapple farm on the top of Keil Mountain - to be "excellently suitable."



Baba's reasons for favouring Woombye may forever remain a mystery. However, Mani's letter implies that Baba needed a warmer location for the Sahavas - perhaps on account of His health, as Baba was recuperating from His second, severe car accident.



Whatever the case, neither Francis nor any of the Australian Baba group had visited Queensland before. It was a bold move to purchase a run-down farm so far from Sydney. To transform it into a place fit for the Avatar, Baba lovers had to drive back and forth for several hundred - or even thousands - of kilometers between Keil Mountain and their homes or work in Sydney or Melbourne. Others simply camped out. Despite such distances and several other obstacles - no power, no running water, and a great deal of mud and rain - in a few months the group established a site that Meher Baba Himself found worthy to name *Avatar's Abode*.

Meher Baba's 1958 Sahavas Message

(Mahabaleshwar – 12th April 1958)

I am coming to America and Australia solely to give my Sahavas to My lovers, and I want each of you to come with the longing to receive just that. I want this Sahavas to be, above all, a close companionship between your Beloved and His lovers; and if you wish to sustain this unique relationship, then do not come with questions or the desire to seek discourses and explanations. Come with the preparedness to receive fully whatever I may give you, with the thought of being completely resigned to My Will.

My suffering is becoming daily more intense, and my health is daily growing worse, but my physical body continues to bear the burden of it all. Despite it all I will hold the Sahavas. I expect from you a deep understanding of my self-imposed suffering, which is begotten of my compassion and love for mankind. Also understand that I will not undergo medical examinations or treatments for my injured hip either in America or Australia. No doctor or treatment will be of any help before the pain I am undergoing has served its purpose. Remember that my coming is entirely to give my Sahavas to you all.

This Sahavas will be unique in the sense that you will witness and share my present universal suffering by being near me as my fortunate companions - being with the Ancient One, who will at the time be completely on the human level with you. It will be helpful to all those participating in the Sahavas, to know the oft repeated hint I have given to those living with me - reminding them of my 'Declaration' wherein I stated that my glorification will follow my humiliation, and pointing out that this period of

my Sahavas will fall within the orbit of my universal suffering and helplessness.

A similar circular was sent out prior to the Meherabad Sahavas in February. My Sahavasis who come with love and resignation to My Will, had the utmost happiness of receiving far and above what they expected. Likewise with you all, I may give you more, much more than you expect - or maybe nothing, and that nothing may prove everything. So I say, come with open hearts to receive much or nothing from your Divine Beloved.

Come prepared to receive not so much of my words, but of my Silence.

*My love to each and
all of you.*

- Baba



Memories of Meher Baba's Stay

Arrival

Baba turns to my father and says, 'Drive fast,' which perhaps burnt up a few of his racing sanskaras, I don't know. I gather they went over 80 mph. This went on for some time. Then, Baba said 'Sufficient' or 'time to stop that now.' But the thing is, they got to Avatar's Abode way ahead of schedule. Much to Francis's dismay for the rest of his life, Baba was greeted by some of the men running away! ... That was the greeting we gave Baba!

- Bernard Bruford

* * * *

The men had been told to be at the farmhouse to welcome Baba but they were caught unawares when they heard cars approaching their tents... The first hint the people at the farmhouse had of Baba's arrival, was the scurrying of men, racing down the hill, shouting 'He's here, He's here, Baba's here!'

- Elsie Smart

* * * *



First Sessions: The Meeting Hall



While we were gathered with Baba, He asked Francis details of the preparation of the property, and Baba expressed both delight and surprise about just what, and how much, had been done for His visit. Back in India, Baba later recounted to His close ones, details of this property and its preparation for him, and He said of Francis, 'What daring!'

- Bernard Bruford

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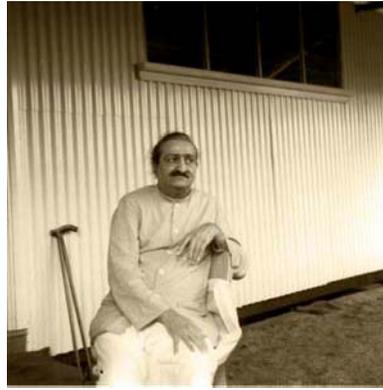
Baba asked further questions about the property, its size and shape, and to whom did it belong, and Francis replied, 'It is now your property, Baba.' Baba gave the property back to Francis, saying He now held neither goods nor property. Baba then asked many questions about the finances and about who had contributed to the buildings, and each was asked to stand as the names were mentioned... Baba ordered that these people were to have their contributions returned to them.

- Bill Le Page

* * * *

My mother was ordered to explain to Colin what Baba means by 100% obedience – she did so during the tea break – thinking ‘What on earth will I say to Colin?’ She opened her mouth and said, ‘You see, I believe Baba knows everything,’ and was about to go on when Colin’s face lit up and he said, ‘Oh, that’s alright then,’ and trotted off...”

- *Cynthia Adams*



* * * *

The man who had stood up was an artist. He was ready to go home. Baba sent for him and kindly said to him, ‘I am not asking you to obey Me now. I am asking you to stay as a favor to Me.’ The man left Baba’s presence thinking, ‘Ah, I’ve had a victory.’ And then he stopped, and he thought – I’ve run away from things all my life – and he ran back to Baba and begged Him to be allowed to obey. Baba allowed him to obey.

- *John Grant*

* * * *



Baba noticed the young lad again with tears in his eyes. He said, ‘When you cry, see Baba cries too!’ as He pointed outside to the rain that was gently falling. Like people who have struggled through a great torrent and are now safe, we all felt the tension of the day and the last few days blown away as a thunderstorm clears the air.

- *Elsie Smart*

* * * *

Before Baba's arrival at Kiel Mountain everyone was busy and tensions would develop, people would argue about this and that, but after the main meeting where Baba emphasized 'I am within each one,' and 'Help others lovingly,' there was peace. Everyone was doing things for others and all the petty quarrels ceased.

- John Grant



* * * *

Visiting His Lovers

When Baba came into that room (in the farmhouse) He pointed to the bunk and was told it was May's (May Lundquist). Then He pointed at the picture (she had) of Himself, and said how dear May was to Him and how much she loved Him... I do remember 100 percent clearly... the wonderful smile on Baba's face and His pleasure in May's love.

- Joanna Bruford

* * * *





In Baba's House

The reading was interspersed with occasional interruptions from Baba. At one time, Baba raised His hand, saying He liked the weather with the warm rain – how it reminded Him of the Sahavas in India in the old days, when they were held in very primitive conditions. At another time, He gestured lovingly towards a young child who had

fallen asleep in the lap of her father during the reading, and then asked Francis did he think all were tired and should the group go out for a while?

- Bill Le Page

* * * *

I sat on the steps of the farm house and then saw the lights of Baba's cabin in the distance, all ablaze. I thought, 'At least Baba is awake and knows how I feel,' and stopped feeling all alone. Just then, a snout was shoved into my hand. It was the dog, Prince, which had also come for the Sahavas and could not be driven away, no matter how hard the people there tried. Prince was a big, fierce and tattered dog, which looked as though he had tramped half way across Australia to attend the Sahavas.



- Cynthia Adams

* * * *

Baba asked could they show moving pictures taken in India and America, but the electricity had not yet been connected to Avatar's Abode so we were unable to see these movies. Now Baba asked the men to tell their stories. He said: 'You must either make Me laugh with your humour, or weep with your love.'

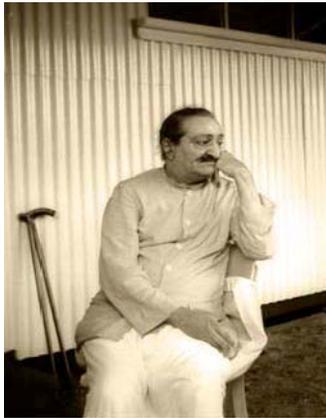
- John Grant

* * * *

He wanted someone to sing to Him. He wanted some songs. And we all sat looking at each other like stuffed mullets! ...Everybody's looking at one another – what can we sing? What can we sing? Francis is saying, 'well, come on, Baba wants you to sing a song!' but nobody could think of anything – at least not anything suitable! Somebody said, 'what about a Christmas carol?' *Away in a Manger* – that was it! And Francis stood there looking so crestfallen. ... Francis who was the writer and all that – he hadn't thought to teach us one song! You can imagine! It wasn't even Christmas!

- Diana Snow

* * * *



All had returned to the farmhouse thinking that the morning program was over, (but) everyone was called back again to receive Baba's Prasad of a sweet. Baba threw a sweet to one or another, but if missed, it had to be returned to Him for a second throw... I was on one side of the house and Francis on the other. Baba looked at

Francis, and with me thinking Francis was next to receive a sweet, I found it fair and spare in my cupped hands resting in my lap, a distance of at least twenty feet between myself and Baba. I had not moved.

- *Bill Le Page*



* * * *

He was just so relaxed! He was always so relaxed – it was just like being at home with your family... He sat there on the bed and beside Him He had a lot of things that the women mandali had sent out. He leaned over – there was a little game going on – He was picking out what He would give to whom. It was really lovely to see Baba taking so much time in such a little thing... He told us that there were several different kinds of gifts. There were four large photographs, some little leather sandals and some bangles. Everyone received something.

- *Joanna Bruford*

The Significance of Avatar's Abode

Ray Kerkhove

According to Meher Baba, Avatar's Abode is:

- "My Abode" (Telegram June 1967).
- "My own Place, to which I want all Australia to come" (Letter 12 Feb 1968).
- "My house" (John Grant 1987: 121).

One day:

- "It will become one of the great places of pilgrimage in the world" (Le Page, recalling Baba's words in Circular 9 Feb 1983).
- "Thousands will come to this place in future" (Cynthia Borg, recalling Baba's words in her article for *Glow International* Nov. '95: 6)

It is the Place where we need to act:

- "...to receive people in His love and to fan the spark of interest that has drawn them to His Place and to draw them closer to Him and His work" (Letter 12 Feb 1968)
- "(to) spare no effort to bring about and maintain good neighbourly relations with all around in the district so that a lover or follower of Baba becomes a household word meaning 'he or she who thinks of others.'" (*The Wishes of Meher Baba*, 27 Feb. 1967).

In both Australia and India, Beloved Baba often spoke of the "beauty" of Avatar's Abode (John Grant, *Practical Spirituality with Meher Baba* 1987: 101; Bill Le Page, *The Turning of the Key* 1993, 120, 124).

Avatar's Abode: 50 Years

Ray Kerkhove

1958-1967 The Dawn



The beginning:
Baba's visit -
first buildings;
first Anniversaries,
first residents.



After the drama and glory of the actual Sahavas, those who initially formed Avatar's Abode were a tiny group – just two families, Francis (for a while), and very occasional visitors. Yet they lived snugly under Baba's watchful eye. Family letters and Baba's instructions dictated many activities – giving a sense of being part of Baba's on-going work: "don't eat "X" for so many months", "repeat my name on such-and-such a date," etc etc



Tropic farmland prevailed: cane, bananas, pawpaws, pineapples, mud, bush and a lot of bare earth. But the views and tranquility were stupendous (360 degrees). Bushfires raged. Cows and goats plodded about in the warm rain, munching grass under Baba's window. Life was simple, but there were poems, there were songs...

A lot of hard work was done both before Baba's visit and after: building, fencing, weed eradication, farming and road-building. Probably at no other time was the Abode community so typically Australian and so deeply involved with the wider community.



1967-1978 The Love Feast

A joyous awakening followed. "The flower children" – hundreds of youth – now the bulk of the Baba lovers in Australia – came to Baba through ordinary and extraordinary occurrences. Large numbers flocked to meetings and Anniversaries. There was much enthusiasm.



Local talent blossomed through various projects. People were producing films, books, dramas, poems, prose, songs, painting, posters and drawings. "Baba culture" was up and running. Rehearsals for musical and dramatic performances became a focal activity, under Francis' interrogation. Baba's House and its vicinity became a stage – a theatre – a Divine wine shop where people spent rustic times eating vegetable stew and drinking deeply of Baba and each other's company. Baba's House was the core of this activity, being not only a stage, meeting place, and storeroom of reminders of Baba's visit (which were all out on





display for anyone to handle), but the home of one of His mandali: Francis Brabazon.

1978 – 1983 Development

Massive, sudden development: Bill Le Page and *Meher Baba Foundation* enacted what remains the basic layout of Abode. Ring roads, lawns, the Pilgrim Quarters and several other dwellings and sheds sprang up.

The property bustled with the addition of several new residents, workers, caretakers, tradesmen and an entire maintenance crew. A local Baba community formed – more and more Baba people moving to the Sunshine Coast. Some families established their homes on Meher Road.



There was a tak-tak-tak of builder's hammers, a drone and crash of bulldozers clearing scrub, scarred earth, concrete slabs...

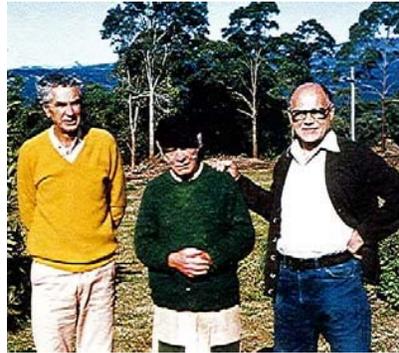
There were orchards of guavas and citrus, horses in paddocks, ducks in the ponds, cats and dogs greeting

every visitor, and the prancing, screaming peacocks and guinea fowl... Surrounding the property, a 300 acre buffer zone was being farmed with macadamias.



1983 – 1993 Quiet Intensity

Difficult, intense years followed. Francis Brabazon died, and other residents grew frail. The current *Avatar's Abode Trust* went through its birth pangs whilst locals struggled to cope with all kinds of crises: administrative, interpersonal, medical... Many people were busy rearing children, establishing homes and careers.



Avatar's Abode grew quieter.

However, a close-knit, "village atmosphere" prevailed from time to time. There was much interaction between many families and especially their children (the future Baba youth). For the latter, the Avatar's Abode became the Magic Playground – venue for their games, sports and hideouts. Swings, sheds, sandpits and adventure playgrounds were added.





Lantana scrubs were cut up and burnt: boulders rolled away. Quietly – tastefully – the place was beautified: flower beds, a bookstore and library, building interiors decorated with floral arrangements and bright artworks... Reg Paffle mowed and mowed – until the Abode was an unbroken plain of rolling lawn.



Meanwhile, a sense of “devotional space” was emerging as the “Baba Square” became each visitor’s private sanctuary: family picnics on the lawn; the ‘flower ladies’ arranging their vases.

1993 – 1998



Opening Transition

Several factors combined to push Avatar’s Abode out of the insular mood it was enjoying. There was the loss of the extensive buffer zone around

the property; the absence of teens and children (who grew up and left home); the presence of more and more non-Baba lovers along Meher Road; and the appearance of housing estates close to the property. 'The world' was fast encroaching – jogging along the Abode's tracks; hiking



through its bushland.

Also, there were more pilgrims, more visitors and more 'weekenders'. Mandali and other 'special guests' graced us.



Such influx created more need for facilities, boundaries, rules, structures. Committees and designated duties emerged to deal with some of the changes. The Abode was compelled both to delineate itself and to open itself – adding gates, signs, entrance roads, glossy information booklets and an entire Reception Building.

Surrounded by quasi-suburbs, the tranquility, the heritage, the greenery of Avatar's Abode became more obvious. This awareness stimulated a passion for preserving Avatar's Abode– preserving its flora and fauna, its buildings, its relics, its documents, its traditions, its atmosphere.

Avatar's Abode took on a park like, showpiece appearance. It was a place to sit and ponder; long rambling walks; cups of tea in the Meeting Hall; a bushland sanctuary. Koalas and gliders returned. Many trees and flowering shrubs reached maturity. Parrots and tiny honeyeaters fluttered and

screached amongst the gums and grevilleas.

1998 – 2008 Winds of Change



Avatar's Abode is again changing. Many Abode locals and original resident had by now moved away or died – their homes becoming 'family accommodation' for visitors. Although in some ways Avatar's Abode is now quieter, in other respects there are a greater range of gatherings (e.g. the Youth Sahavas; the Spring Sahavas) and a greater range of Abode-related interest or work groups.



People over the current decade have been involved with Avatar's Abode in a greater variety of ways: a men's group; singing groups; discussion groups; social groups; study groups; a permaculture gardening group; drama groups; art groups; committees for this; sub-committees for that...

For some locals, life has become a stream of seemingly unending meetings.

As a consequence of this diversity, a number of new activities have been trialed – Open Days, Dhunis, Seminars, planning and

management workshops...



To cater to such activities, there are more (and much better furnished) facilities including upgraded pilgrim accommodatio



n and 'the Shed' – actually a fine performance and dining hall.

No doubt this is all a taste of things to come...

The Origin of Avatar's Abode's Anniversary

"The first anniversary of Baba's visit was of course in 1959. ... Robert Rouse conveyed that Francis (who was living in India with Baba) considered it appropriate that for one evening the residents have a day off work and gather in Baba's House for the evening meal.

For the second anniversary, Francis suggested to Robert a performance – the first Anniversary entertainment. Robert selected The Bridge from Francis Brabazon's book Singing Threshold. The cast numbered five and the audience comprised nine people. The play used one prop – a bail of wood wool left over from making mattresses two years previously."

- Bernard Bruford

"The first two Anniversaries of Meher Baba's Sahavas at Avatar's Abode were celebrated by us residents gathering on a relevant day and having our main meal in Baba House. In 1961, however, Francis Brabazon asked us to remember Baba's stay in 1958, and His continuing presence, by performing songs dances and plays — to entertain Baba by clothing our praise of His beauty, and our attention to His truth, in beautiful form. One reason for this way of remembering was because, as Francis once wrote, "Baba loves nothing better than good singing or dancing or a play...to lighten His burden." Another reason is that Art conveys the message more effectively, because of the warmth of form, than the cold dryness of abstract thought. Francis' contribution to that year was four songs that Baba had asked Francis to write. Remembrance as entertainment has been a keynote at Avatar's Abode ever since."

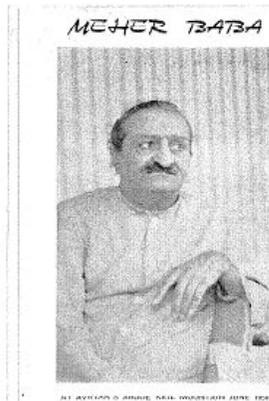
- Robert Rouse

The Development of Avatar's Abode's Anniversaries

David Hobson & Ray Kerkhove

From 1959 until the late 60s, the Anniversary was a very tiny, family affair: the Brufords, Rouses, Le Pages, Shipways, Diana Snow, Grace Swan, Marj Donaldson, May Lundquist, Ken Davis, Judith Garbett, Reg Pafle, Ena Lemmon and Beryl Giddens attending some, or all. At that time, it was celebrated on the weekend closest to the 3rd to 6th June (the dates of Baba's visit in 1958).

In those early years, entertainment invariably comprised a film (once that electricity had been connected, unlike when Baba visited!), individual or group singing, and sometimes a play. Francis's *Let Us the People Sing* was published in 1962. This provided one of the first sources of Australian Baba songs to be rehearsed for the event.



In 1968 and '69, Anniversaries started to swell with the arrival of new, young Baba lovers. However, the first truly 'big' Anniversary was in 1970. Seemingly overnight, Baba had drawn into His Love-Orbit many youth. The days of intimate gatherings of merely twenty or so close ones were over.

Some of those Anniversaries in Baba's House in the '70s and early '80s were really crowded. Through Francis, there was a strong emphasis on plays, and, of course, instrumental music, songs and films. Weeks before Anniversary, the Abode bustled with evening and weekend rehearsals. The build up was spent in some very funny moments as plays and songs were fine-tuned for the Beloved. Skits and songs were prepared not just at the Abode, but in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

To cater for the many skits and plays, a stage and tiered seating were erected inside Baba's House. An outdoor stage was also built. Back then, attendees often resided in caravans parked not far from Baba's House.

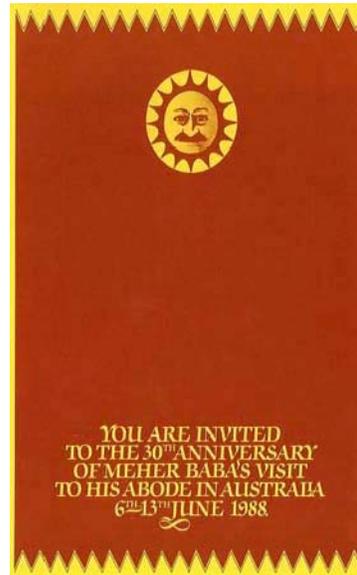
The trend of inviting special guests was begun in 1981 by Bill bringing Filis Frederick. Many other guests followed, including – between the late '80s and mid '90s – even close mandali such as Bhau, Katie and Meheru.

It was in 1988 - the 30th Anniversary - that the program moved out of Baba's House and into a marquee.

Subsequently, circus-like structures became a feature of the event, placed in various locations including the lower field. The marquees required quite a bit of maintenance in wind and rain – wall-washing, trench digging etc. Meanwhile, Baba's House became a quiet area.

Into the '90s, Anniversary spread over several venues. Whilst the main program ran in one location, certain activities or displays started being located in Baba's House, the Meeting Hall or elsewhere. Indeed, special tents emerged for kids, youth, cooking, dining, book sales, coffee, reception or other purposes. The Reception Building, performance Shed and extra toilets were built partly to cater to these expanding needs. Another change during the past fifteen years has been the growing practice of reserving all accommodation on the Abode either for Anniversary workers or special guests. This means that other visitors now tend to be bunked up and down Meher Road, in hotels or even in nearby resorts.

Meanwhile, during the current decade, perhaps due to the growing amount of networking and 'catching up' that occurs, Anniversary seating and dining has become increasingly refined. We now enjoy extensive menus, coffee



machines and ever-changing dishes. With all this has come the introduction of voluntary donations to help run the event, and a culture of task-specific volunteerism - teams of people who prefer to serve the Beloved and His lovers by being annual washer-uppers, toilet-suppliers, kitchen hands or whatever else is required.

An invitation...

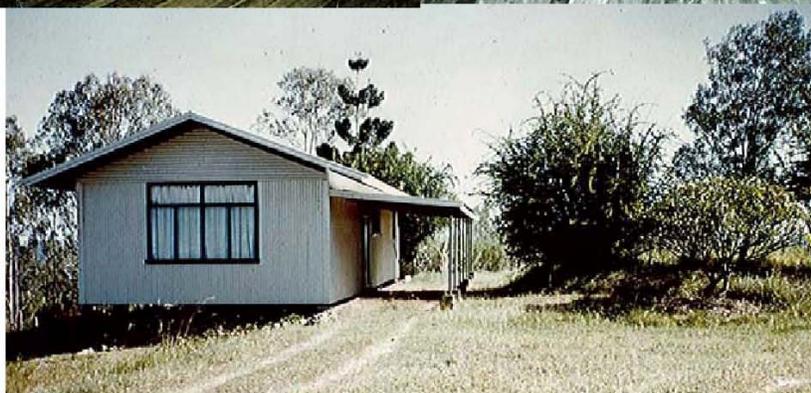
*... to the 40th Anniversary Celebration of
Meher Baba's visit to His Abode in Australia*

3rd - 8th June 1998

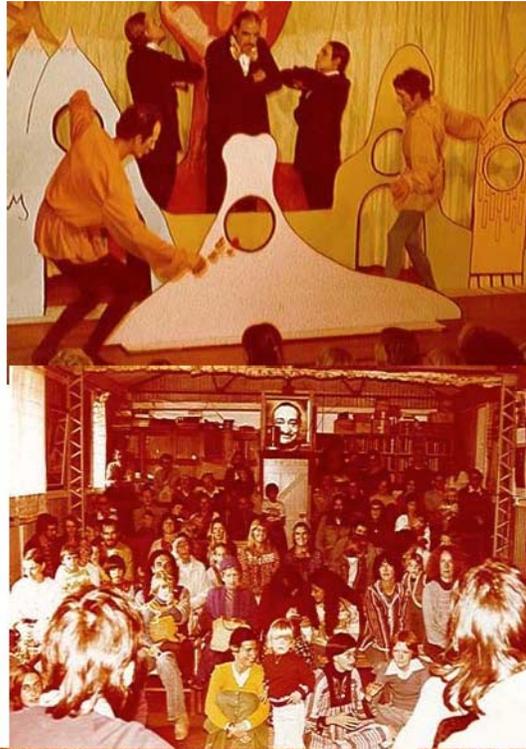


*"Although I am ever with My lovers individually,
I am always happy when they gather in My love,
so celebrate this anniversary at My Abode with a bang and
let My message fill every corner of your hearts. Love to you all."*

*Baba
Telegram to Avatar's Abode 1967*



Anniversaries: 1959 - 1967



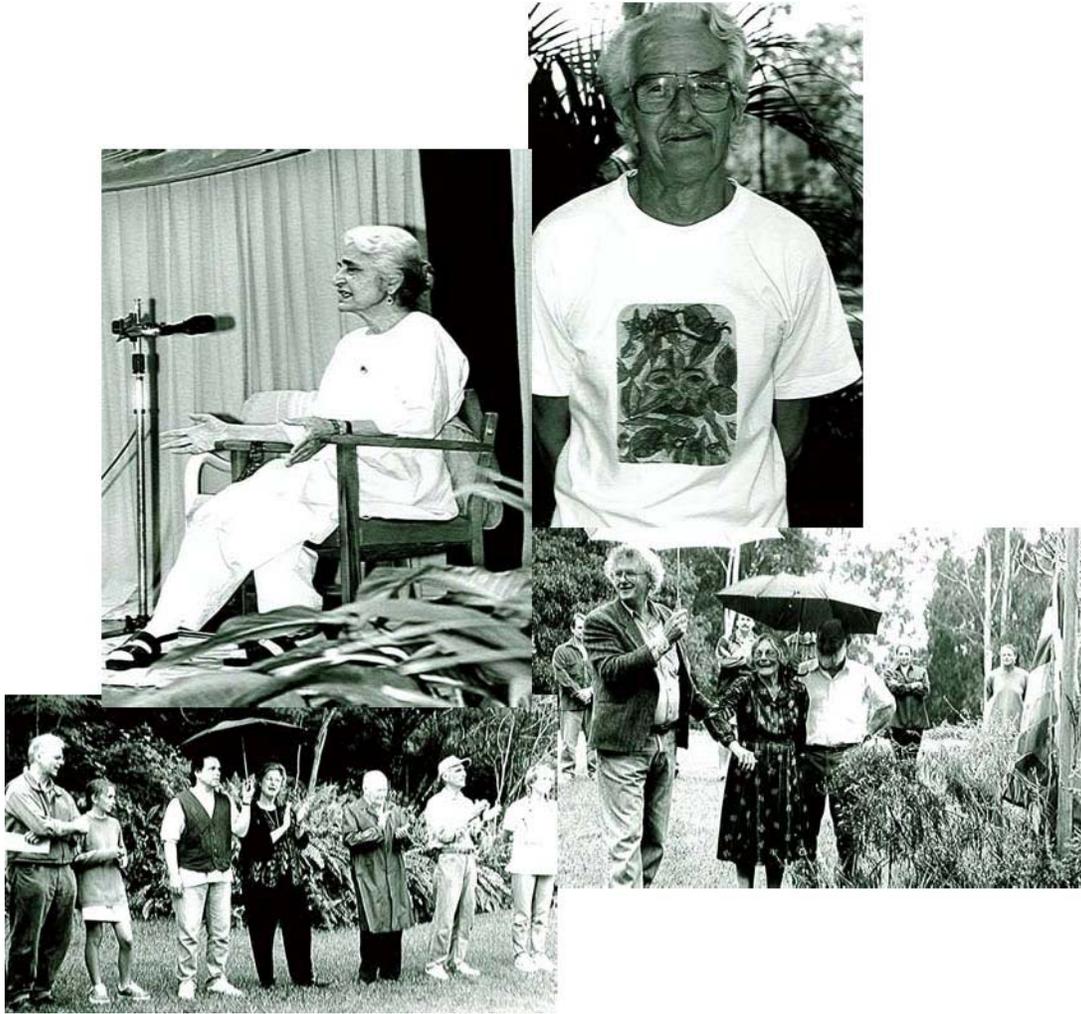
Anniversaries: 1967 - 1978



Anniversaries: 1978 - 1983



Anniversaries: 1983 - 1993



Anniversaries: 1993 - 1998



Anniversaries: 1998 - 2008

1958 Sahavas Attendees

Colin Adams	Roy Baulch
Stan Adams	Meryl Baulch
Clarice Adams	Peter Baulch
Noel Adams	Joan Baulch
Cynthia Adams	Philip Baulch
Lawrence Adolphus	Francis Brabazon
Wallace Ainsworth	
	John Bruford
Giffen Alston	Joan Bruford
Joanna Bruford (17)	Oswald Hall
Bernard Bruford (15)	
Robert Buchanan	Dr Denis O'Brien
	Bill Le Page
Milly Chant	Joan Le Page
	Ruth Le Page (9)
Frank Cordell	Michael Le Page (7)
	Jenny Le Page (4)
Ken Davis	Roy Le Page
Majorie Donaldson	Alma Le Page
	Reg Paffle
Emily Firmstone	
Beryl Giddens	Jack Paynter
John Grant	
Dot Harris	
Frances Lee	
Dr Norman Lee	
Ena Lemmon	Diana Snow
	Grace Swan
May Lundquist	
	Ethel Woodford
Robert Rouse	Jean Woodford
Lorna Rouse	Craig Woodford
Radha Rouse (1)	