

Letters to God

An Account of Contacting the God-Man

By William G Reading

**This is an account of my stay in Ahmednagar, India, to the best of my recollection,
in August 1968 with some context to my correspondence with Meher Baba.**



I arrived in Ahmednagar (Nagar) by bus on the 5th August after seeing Jal (Baba's brother) in Poona. I went straight to Meher Nazar Trust Compound to see Adi K Irani (Baba's Secretary) to register my arrival and enquire about accommodation. I was directed to a small hotel not far from the Trust Compound.

Some of the first replies to my initial letters to Baba have unfortunately been lost or misplaced some years after my return to Australia in September 1968. Naturally the first letters were of a sort of introductory nature with loving responses from Baba via Eruch (Eruch B Jessawala) and Adi K to me.

Eruch emphasized a few times that Baba was in seclusion and was not receiving any correspondence at the time and that I was fortunate that Baba permitted my notes to be read to Him.

In my first letter to Baba I explained that I'd heard of Him back in Sydney, Australia in 1966 and had been to some of Bill Le Page's meetings at Beacon Hill, that "I didn't 'know' if Baba was the Avatar" (God incarnate) but "the writings I'd read of Baba seemed to be the unquestionable truth to me." And that I'd very much like to see Him.

Baba didn't suggest or say what I should do in the first few replies, (particularly whether I could see Him or not) other than His love would be with me and I should think of Him and remember Him always. He did say in one of the replies that He would have His nazar on me. One day while I was talking with Adi in his office, I said I didn't know what vocation I was going to do, without hesitation Adi said, "It doesn't matter what you do as long as you are honest."

After a few days, as there was no message from Baba re seeing Him or go etc. I felt that I wasn't expressing myself adequately through my letters to Baba. Dr William Donkin who was residing at the Trust Compound had just given me a copy of *The Wayfarers* (Donkin's account of Baba's work with masts and the God-mad) to read and seeing the first photo of Baba in the book (taken by Padri in 1941) I thought I'd do a sketch of Baba using this photo as reference.

In the evening back at my little hotel room I started drawing a portrait of Baba using a black ballpoint pen on a small artist's sketch pad. While I was sketching I noticed a small mouse running around on the floor, quite bold and indifferent to me being there. I put some leftover chapati on the floor; the mouse didn't run away but quietly nibbled on and finished off the bits of chapati. After some hours and a few cigarettes at about midnight I'd finished the sketch, and for some reason I just wrote 'O Baba' in the top right corner.

The next morning I went to see Adi K at his office, and showing him the sketch of Baba, asked if it could be sent to Baba. Adi was very happy to see the drawing. He seemed happier about this drawing than the letters I had sent to Baba and said he would send it in the next post to Meherazad and that I should see him the next day.

At Adi's office late next morning Adi had my sketch (still attached to sketch pad) with Baba's signature along the right hand edge and a small note from Baba via Eruch saying that "... your drawing was shown to Baba this morning Baba expressed His happiness to see William's drawing,"- and that I should keep the sketch pad and fill it with Baba drawings.... that I should think of Him always.... and that "His nazar would be on William." (Much later I found out that the photo I used was one of Baba's favourite portraits of Him.) I was surprised and delighted with Baba signing my sketch of Him, but still no mention of being able to see Him.

The next day I hired a bicycle to ride out to Meherabad. Being the 'rainy' season it had rained the night before which suppressed the dust on the dirt road to Meherabad. The surrounding fields were lush and green, large trees on either side arched over the road. Upon arriving at Meherabad I was introduced to Padri (Fareedoon N Driver) who asked where I came from and how I came to know of Baba. While talking with Padri we were interrupted by a servant with a message for Padri. Padri suddenly started berating the servant so severely that I felt I must be guilty of something also. Padri soon composed himself and suggested I meet Mohammed, a fifth plane mast that Baba had worked with for many years. Mohammed seemed preoccupied and Padri coaxed the mast into shaking hands with me. The second our hands meet I felt a sort of 'electric' sensation go through me; there was no discomfort, just some sort of force for a few seconds. Mohammed seemed to lighten up and smiled at the both of us as Padri was talking to him. I took this opportunity to take some photos of Mohammed.

Padri suggested having a cup of tea back in his room. While Padri was talking about Baba and Meherabad my mind went blank. I could not hear Padri and all I saw in my mind was a vast ocean, absolutely still and tranquil. An incredible feeling of peace came over me and I broke down and cried. Suddenly I could hear Padri asking if I was all right. I started to apologize to Padri as I felt embarrassed at breaking down in front of someone that I had just met. Padri didn't want to hear it, and just ordered some more tea from one of the servants. Padri's demeanour changed somewhat as he seemed to understand my tears. After a few more cups of tea, Padri said I should see Baba's Samadhi (Tomb Shrine) up the hill. Padri showed me Gilori Shah's tomb before crossing the road and rail tracks to the path that led up to Baba's Samadhi.

The Samadhi and surrounding area was peaceful and quiet with not a soul to be seen. Padri unlocked the door to the Samadhi (There was no annex or entrance cover at this time) and said to go in. He left me alone as he went off with some chore or message to someone in the nearby buildings. As I looked at the murals inside I felt like getting into the crypt which was four or five feet deep with one awkward narrow step to get down. I crouched down at

the head of the crypt and thought of Baba and what it would be like when Baba's body would eventually be placed here. After I had climbed out Padri returned, locked the door to the Samadhi and we walked back to Lower Meherabad for more cups of tea. Before going back to my hotel in Nagar I took a photo of Baba's Samadhi.

The next day I spent riding around Nagar on my hired bicycle, sightseeing and taking some photos of children and the locals.

Next morning, I went to the Trust Compound in Nagar to return *The Wayfarers* to Dr Donkin. As I was looking into Adi's office where he was engaged with some business men, Donkin spotted me and called me over to his room in the compound. After returning *The Wayfarers* to Donkin, many cups of tea were had as he talked about his book (*The Wayfarers*). Donkin gave me some photos of the masts mentioned in the book. One of which was an original print of Karim Baba in Calcutta, a sixth plane mast, background unedited as seen in *The Wayfarers*. Donkin kept offering me cups of tea; I finally had to decline any more. He then suggested going for a picnic at Seclusion Hill and to call in on him the next morning.

I found Donkin the next morning looking very British, wearing greyish beret and short sleeved blue shirt, short pants, long blue socks with red tops and hiking boots. He was standing next to his red English Wolseley sedan. We drove out towards Meherazad where Baba was staying. As we came towards Shiva and Seclusion Hills, it was slightly overcast with shafts of sunlight and showers of rain falling in the distance. Donkin pulled over to the side of the road about half a mile from the foot of Shiva Hill, Meherazad just on the other side to the north. Leaving his car at the side of the road we hiked towards Shiva Hill with its ancient little Khandoba temple on top. Pausing to catch our breath at the foot of Shiva Hill, we started up the south side. There seemed to be no path as we scrambled over rocks and rubble. No doubt Donkin's hiking boots were the right choice of footwear for this task.

Reaching the top of Shiva Hill we were presented with a panoramic view of Meherazad and surrounding country side. The vista was quite beautiful with sunlit areas around Meherazad and miles off into the distance dark grey skies dropping showers of rain onto the earth. While I was gazing at the vista and peering into the old temple, Donkin gave me his pair of binoculars that he had brought with him. He walked off to the other side of the temple and left me alone with the binoculars. Wasting no time I climbed a corner of the ruins to get a slightly better view of Meherazad and spied intently on Meherazad hoping to get a glimpse of Baba if He came out of one of the buildings. Not a single person or even one of the resident dogs could be seen. My heart went out to Baba. I had already unreservedly accepted Baba as the Avatar back in Australia, I just asked for some confirmation of His divinity. I thought of camping in the old temple in the hope of catching a glimpse of Baba over the next few days.

After a short time Donkin reappeared at the corner of the temple. As he leant on the corner I took a photo of him with Meherazad in the background. While giving the binoculars back to Donkin we noticed in front of us a large Dung beetle on the ground rolling a ball of dung

about the size of a squash ball. Donkin pulled a long needle out of the lapel of his shirt and pinned the ball of dung to the ground. The beetle with its hind legs moved the pinned ball round and round till it eventually pushed the ball up and off the needle and proceeded on its merry rolling way. To this day I'm still wondering if there was some mystical message in this little incident.

As we were about to leave to go over to Seclusion Hill, Donkin started looking for his glasses. Not knowing where they were I took off down the hill like a mountain goat thinking that if they were not at the bottom of the hill where we stopped to catch our breath, Donkin could look for them around the old temple. When I got to the bottom I found his glasses on a rock where we had stopped. Suddenly Donkin appeared behind me all red in the face, sweating and out of breath. He had thought I was going to make a dash to Meherazad to see Baba! It would have been double trouble for both of us if I had tried to do so. Baba was in strict seclusion at this time. After a few minutes while Donkin got his breath back, we heard someone coming from Meherazad, shouting something out. We looked around the side of the hill to see a servant in white with two dogs on leashes in the field about half-way from Meherazad coming towards us. Donkin spoke some local dialect to him and the servant returned to Meherazad. Someone in Meherazad had spotted us roaming around on Shiva Hill and sent the servant out to investigate.

It was about midday as we started off to Seclusion Hill not far to the west. As we were walking up the winding path to the top of Seclusion Hill it became overcast. Looking over to Shiva Hill a perfect rainbow appeared above the hill. I stopped to take a photo. About half-way up the path I looked back towards Meherazad, the rainbow had slowly moved over Meherazad with one end finishing on the roof of one of the buildings. It went past the ridge of the roof and finished in the middle of the roof! I was stunned and elated as I took this extraordinary and beautiful scene as Baba confirming his divinity to me. Donkin was a few yards ahead of me going up the path. I called for him to turn and look. He turned and gazed for a few moments as if it was just another day in his life with Baba. Unfortunately I didn't have the presence of mind to take a photo; it seemed that this rainbow was just for my sake. By the time we reached the top of Seclusion Hill the sun was shining again and the rainbow had completely disappeared.

At the top of Seclusion Hill we sat on small concrete slab which was all that was left of a cabin that Padri had built for Baba's Manonash (Annihilation of the Mind) seclusion work. Donkin had brought a small picnic basket with him containing some light snacks and two small thermoses of tea. As we consumed the snacks and drank the tea, not much was said between us, we seemed to sit in silence. Finally the time came for us to return to Nagar.

Back at the Trust Compound in Nagar, Donkin turned to me and said, "You are the new humanity." (i.e.; I represented the 'new humanity') Many years later I found out that Donkin had pretended to those around him that I was his cousin from Australia! No doubt this was to make my being there acceptable as Baba was not dealing with any visitors at this time.

The next day (9th August) I wrote another note to Baba and dropped it off to Adi at the Trust Compound for the next mail delivery to Meherazad. The following morning at Adi's office there was a message from Baba (Eurch dictating) saying "... Baba wants William to know that He is already with him, and that William can now leave Ahmednagar for Australia – taking Baba with him in his heart ..." I was surprised, Baba was saying it's time to go, yet I wasn't planning on returning to Australia right then. I quickly wrote another note to Baba mentioning that I was thinking of going up to Nepal, north of India. That afternoon I received a reply from Baba (Eurch dictating) saying "Your note was read to Baba and He wants you to go straight to Australia. He does not want you to go to Nepal ..." At the bottom of the letter was a small note from Francis Brabazon, an Australian poet residing with Baba at Meherazad, wishing me well and "... all the best in the life of loving service to the God Man."

Babas words were final and I started getting ready for my return to Australia. The next morning I bought a bus ticket for Poona. At about midday after saying goodbye to Adi and Donkin at the Trust Compound, I boarded the bus for Poona. Leaving Nagar in the bus, my heart broke or should I say my heart burst, shedding tears thinking of Baba. I felt like I was leaving my true home, where I should truly be. The feeling of Baba's Love was overwhelming.

For the week that I was in Ahmednagar there seemed to be no other visitors or pilgrims, Eastern or Western. I didn't write beforehand requesting to see Baba as I didn't want a reply of refusal. I just thought I'd show up and see what happens. Jal (Baba's brother) in Poona didn't tell me that I shouldn't try to see Baba because He was in strict seclusion. On the contrary, he seemed to like my intention of seeing Baba. One aspect of Babas' seclusion at this time was in two parts; in the first part He was not allowing Himself to see any of His lovers, and in the second part He was not allowing any of His lovers to see Him. I arrived in Nagar during the latter part.

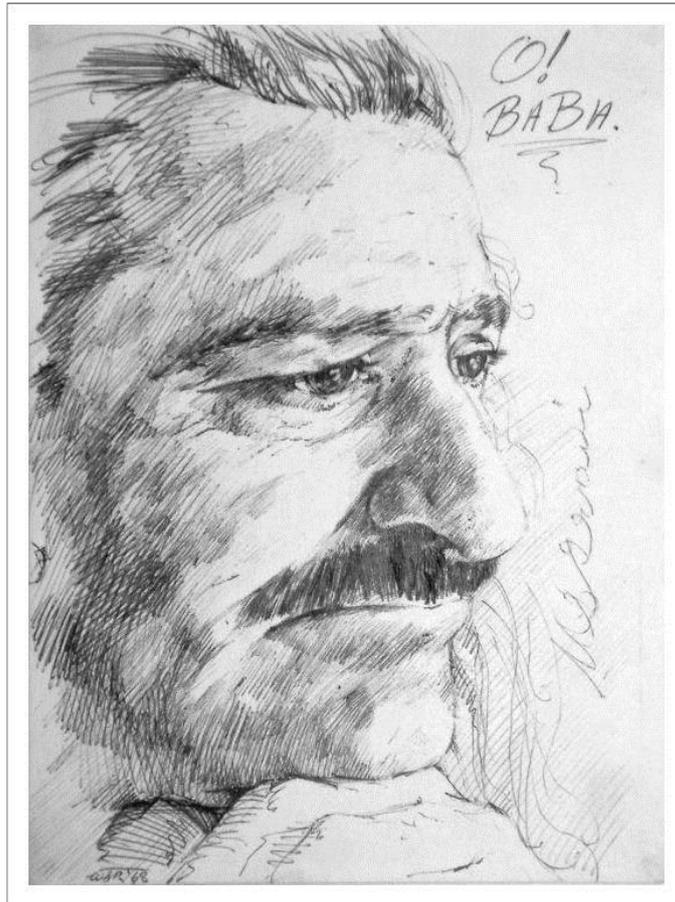
Years later I found out that Baba had remarked to the mandali at the time: "It is not necessary for William to see me, as my having signed his drawing is tantamount to his having had my darshan."

Ahmednagar and surrounds, Adi K, Dr Donkin and Pardi, including the weather and all that was there, seemed only to exist to respond to Babas wish.

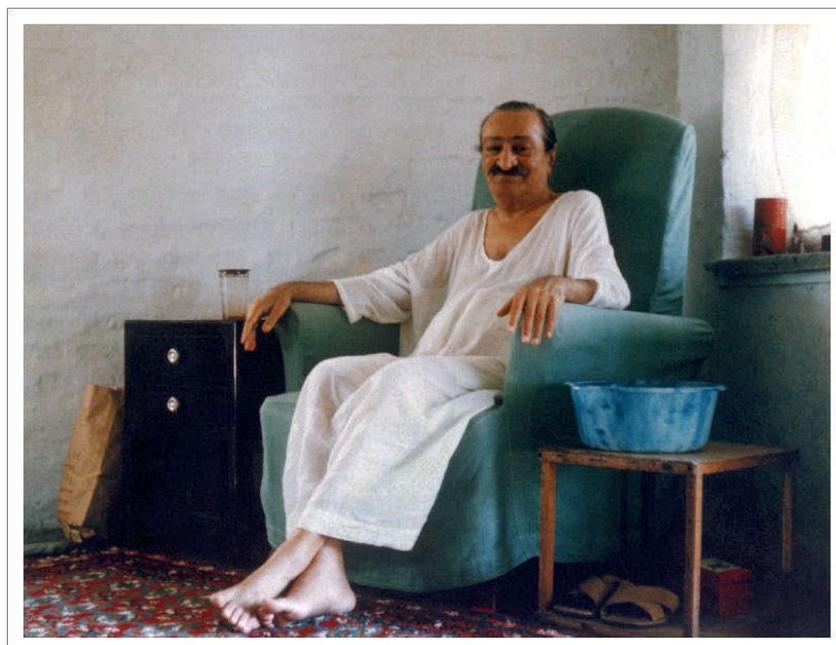
A few days later, travelling by train for Madras on route to Australia I had my 21st birthday. I left India on board HMS *Rajula* from Madras, on the 18th of August 1968.

Jai Baba.
William Reading
Sept 2016





My sketch of Baba with His Signature.
Original size 5 x 7 inches

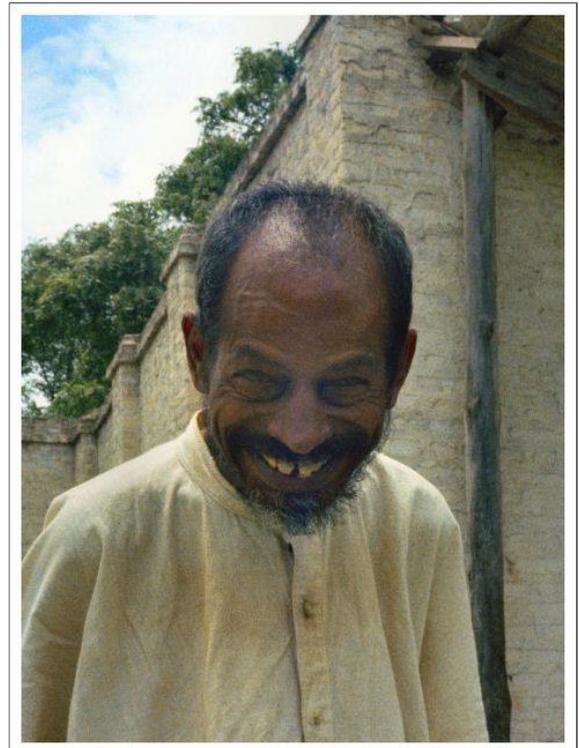
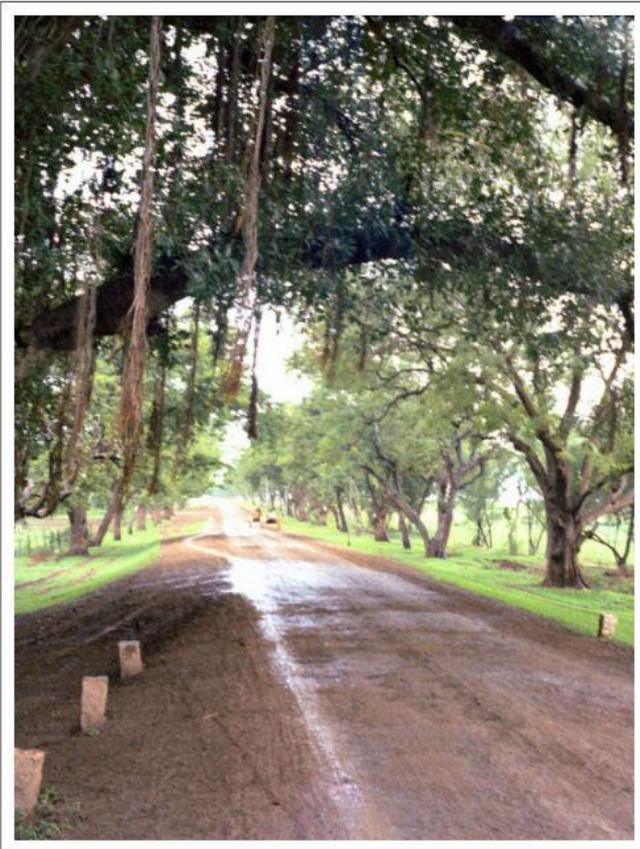


Meher Baba in Mandali Hall at Meherzad. Oct 1964
This is where Baba received my correspondence.
Photo given to me by Dr Donkin.
Photo by Marvin Campen.

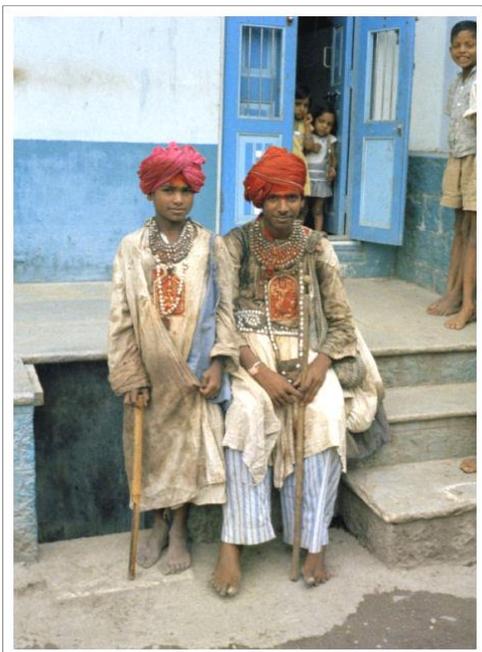
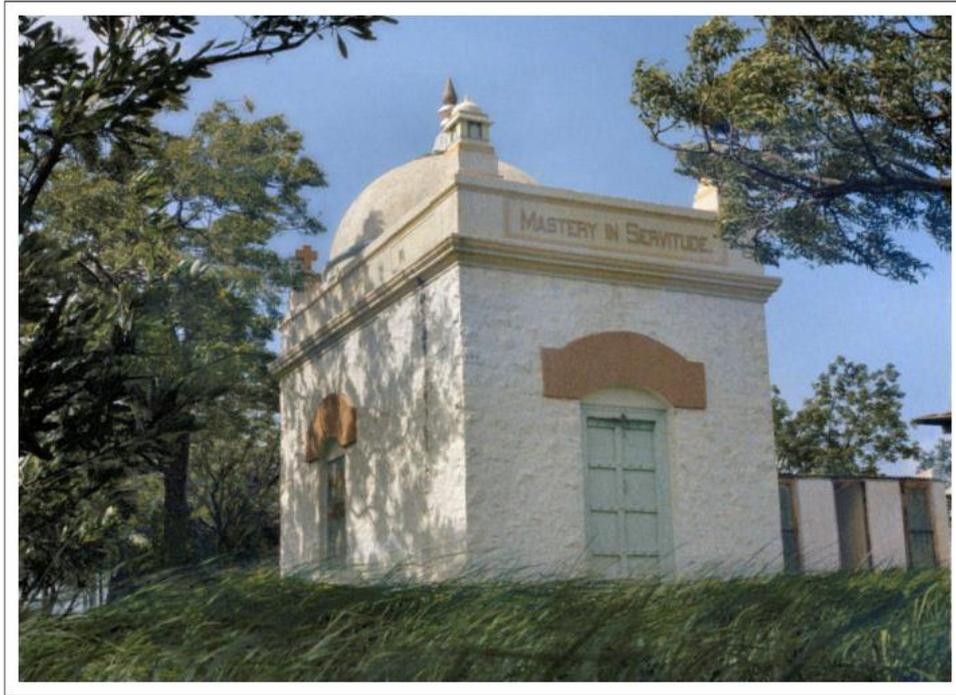
Photos of Ahmednagar, Meherabad and Meherazad shown in order of being taken. August 1968



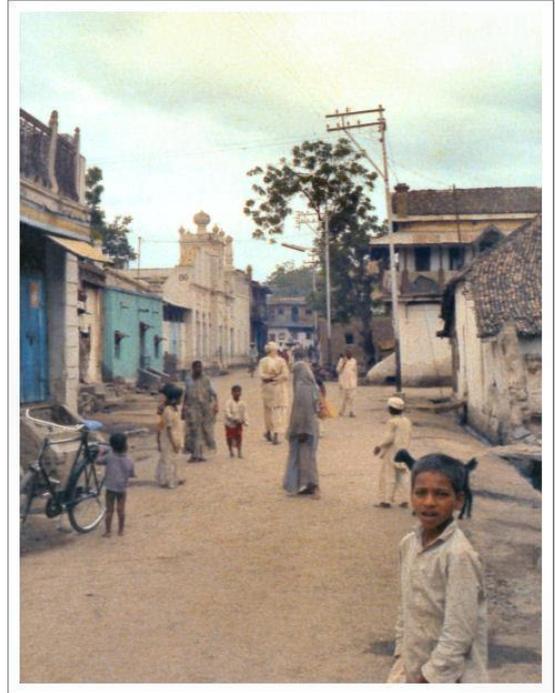
1. Above: Meher Nazar Trust Compound. Adi K's office right, Dr Donkin's residence to the left.
2. Top right: Bold little mouse in my hotel room.



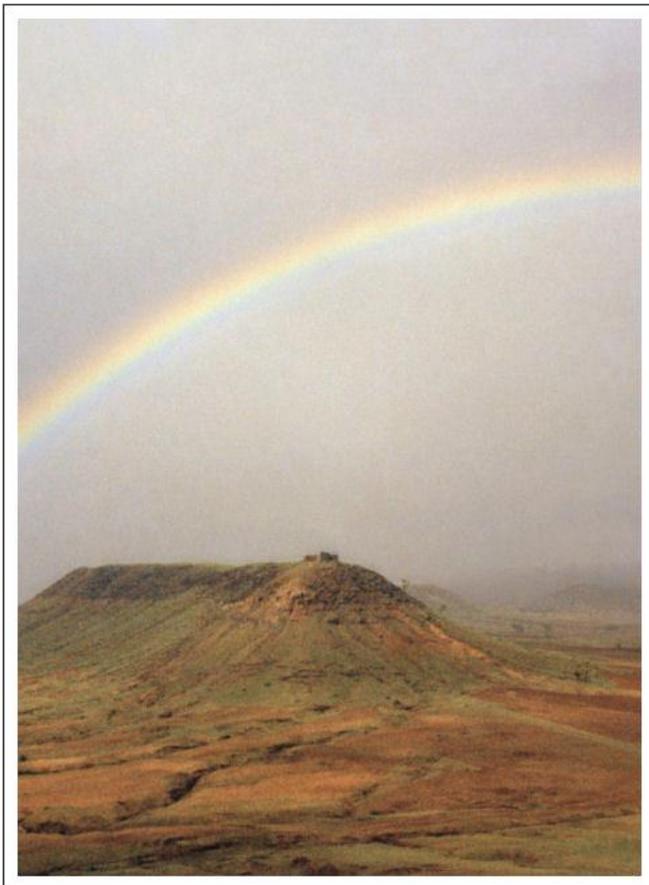
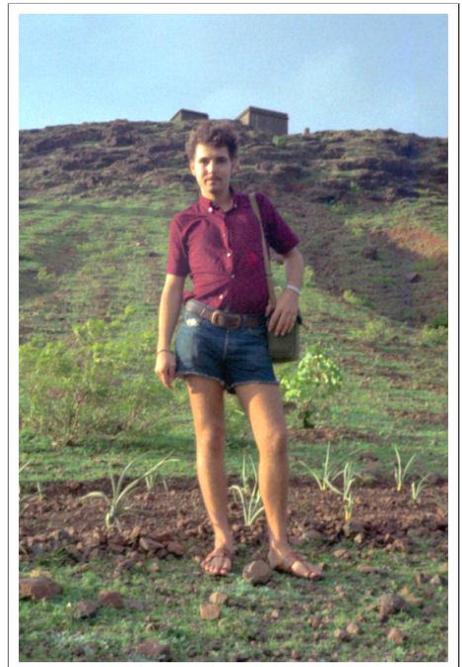
3. Left: The road to Meherabad.
4. Right: Mohammed the mast at Meherabad.



5. Top: Baba's Samadhi at Meherabad.
6. Mid left: Group of Ahmednagar children
7. Right: Hair cut for Ahmednagar child.
8. Left: Two young Gypsies in Ahmednagar.



9. Top left: Women washing clothes in Ahmednagar.
10. Top right: Street scene in Ahmednagar.
11. Bottom: On the road to Meherazad. Seclusion Hill on left with Shiva Hill to the right.



12. Top left: Shiva Hill ruins with Dr Donkin, Meherazad in the background.
13. Top right: Dung beetle on top of Shiva Hill.
14. Bottom left: Rainbow over Shiva Hill, looking from Seclusion Hill.
15. Mid right: Self at bottom of Shiva Hill. Photo by Dr Donkin.