

THE PARSEE VOICE

Vol. I. 23

1 – 15 July 2004

For Private Circulation

IS IT A 'FOUNDATION' FOR DISASTER?

Clandestine Goings-on At Udvada!

In early 2003, there was a flutter in the dovecotes of faithful Parsees of Mumbai and Gujarat. The then Tourism Minister of the Central Government, Mr. Jagmohan, agreed to the Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi's suggestion that Udvada, where Parsees go on a pilgrimage, be declared a "Cultural & Tourism Centre". The proposal was put forward to the Government of India, so that adequate wherewithals be provided.

The Government of India contributed a sum of Rs.97.27 lakhs to the Gujarat government, to which the latter added a further sum of Rs.24.32 lakhs, making a total sum of Rs.121.59 lakhs.

The Gujarat Government had recommended (Mr. Narendra Modi's plan was that villages and small towns of Gujarat should be properly developed – **Grām Vikâs** programme. Udvada, unfortunately, was one of them!) that, **to begin with**, Udvada can have a museum and a cultural centre. So also, it was mooted that Udvada can have a lodge for tourists, a "Heritage Walk" facility, an annual gathering where **Parsees** from all over the world can meet and a chain of "Tourist Centres" at places where Iranshah was taken in His 1200-and-odd-years sojourn.

The Hawk Was Watching!

Even before you could say 'Gee, whiz!' the hawk, that villain of the piece, called the WZO, swooped down on its prey and usurped the whole project!

"The Parsee Voice", right since its inception, has demonstrated again and again, that today, the biggest enemy of the Parsee community and the Zoroastrian Religion is that rank hypocritical body, styling itself the "World Zoroastrian Organisation".

This wolf in sheep's clothing has virtually

hijacked almost every aspect and facet of the Parsee community of India, in the last decade. Unless Parsees unite to fight against the deep inroads the WZO has made in our community's fabric, they will rue the day their death-knell is sounded by it!

We are not exaggerating. From the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and the community newspaper, to our Fire Temples, the minds of many gullible Parsees of India, and, now, our last vestige of Spirituality, Holy Iranshah and His environs, the Satanic signature of the World Zoroastrian Organisation runs through them!

The New Danger – FDU!

Holy Iranshah, on whose centre, rests the only **Pav Mahal** of the physical world, which is instrumental in preserving and protecting the Parsees of India for more than 1200 years, is now in grave danger of being virtually ruined, by the shenanigans of a new trust, called the **Foundation for the Development of Udvada!!**

The Origins

Lest our readers get confused, let's get back to the genesis of this new trust. On the 22nd December, 2002, "Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly" published an announcement by Mr. P.K. Lehri, the then Commissioner of Tourism, Government of Gujarat, that the Central and State Governments had collectively sanctioned a sum of Rs.121.59 lakhs for "promoting and perpetuating Udvada as a cultural and heritage centre," some details of which are given at the beginning of this article.

In that announcement, which was later carried in a Gujarati version by the Bombay Samachar also, the other shocking matter (the first was establishment of a museum, a tourist lodge-cum-reception centre, a grand annual festival, etc.) was the following statement

by Mr. Lehri: "After discussions with members of the Parsee community, it was decided that 'a core group' be formed as a Non-Government Organisation." Once that 'core group' was registered as a trust, it would become fully responsible for implementing the project.

"At present, the following individuals will form the 'core group'." Then, Mr. Lehri mentioned the names of (1) **D.K. Tamboly**, "International Marketing Adviser, Chairman of WZO Trust Funds, trustee of Bombay Parsi Punchayet (2) **P.K. Lehri**, former official of the Gujarat Government, Commissioner of Tourism of Gujarat Government. (3) **Minoo R. Shroff**, Vice-Chairman of Raymond Ltd., and trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat. (4) **Burjor H. Antia**, Solicitor-Partner of Mulla & Mulla and Craigie, Blunt and Caroe, Chairman of the Masina Hospital, etc. (5) **Jehangir R.J. Cama**, Chairman of the Cama group of hotels (6) **Mrs. Homai N. Modi**, nominee of the Governor, well-known social worker, joint hon. secretary of the Maharashtra State Red Cross (7) **Homi P. Dhalla**, President of the World Zoroastrian Cultural Foundation, etc.

Âv bhai harkhâ, âpne badhâ sarkhâ

Immediately after this announcement was made, a few right-thinking Parsees from Mumbai, Udvada and Surat, dashed off letters to the Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. P.K. Lehri and the Sarpanch, Gram Punchayet, Udvada, raising three objections :

- (a) The project as envisaged, was objectionable, because it would destroy the sanctity of the entire environs of Iranshah,
- (b) Mr. Lehri's contention that discussions were held with members of the Parsee community was strange, because until his announcement was published and the 'core group's' members were named, the community was totally in the dark about any such 'core group' being formed!
- (c) The composition of the 'core group'. How did the WZO trustees and their supporters jump on the Udvada bandwagon? Elementary, dear reader! Didn't we mention earlier that usurping or hijacking is WZO's stock-in-trade, *baayen haath ka khel?*

DASTUR KHURSHED DASTUR KAIKOBAD DASTOOR'S OBJECTIONS

From among the protestors, most of whom wrote to the authorities and the press in Gujarati, the most prominent was the then newly appointed High Priest of Udvada, Dasturji Khurshed, who published a long statement, which was carried by leading Gujarati papers of Gujarat ("Sandesh", "Gujarat Samachar", "Gujarat Mitra" etc.) in April 2003.

Dasturji very rightly pointed out that,

(i) the huge amount, given by the two governments, should be used only for solving the perennial problems of Udvada *gaam*, namely, improvement in the basic infrastructure, like the road from the station to the Iranshah Atash Behram, regular supply of electricity to Udvada village, saving the village from the ravages of the sea, improvement in bus service from the station to Udvada village, stoppage of Flying Ranees and other fast trains at Udvada, having an open maidan for children to play in, etc.

(ii) "Finally", Dasturji wrote, "**with great regret do we have to inform the Gujarat government that our *gaam* has been given the title of 'Cultural Tourist Centre' and the Committee that has been formed, does not consist of any permanent resident of Udvada. Our Iranshah High Priests and other important local persons have been completely given the go-by! How can people from Mumbai and Ahmedabad, who are totally ignorant about our basic amenities and problems, raise the issues about our *gaam*? We, therefore, request that in this committee, important local residents should be appointed**". Splendid Dasturji!

WZO's Finger In Every Parsee Pie!

Before we continue with what happened thereafter, Mr. Lehri's statement published in December 2002 (mentioned above), stated at the end that, "we hope that Parsees all over the world will welcome these steps taken by the Central and Gujarat governments..."

"In order that the whole project is successful and to meet the day-to-day expenses, the Parsee community will have to contribute to the Fund. The W.Z.O. has agreed to collect the funds for this project..."

Notice that throughout the notification, Mr. Lehri (the Gujarat Government) uses the words, "Parsees" or "Parsee community". None of those in authority know that, some of the main persons to whom they have entrusted the project, just do not have the word "Parsee" in their vocabulary or dictionary. For them, it's the stylish Persian word, "Zarthushti", which means, ANY ONE, who professes the Zoroastrian religion!

That is why members of the Parsee community saw red and objected right from the beginning, both regarding the purpose of the project and the persons entrusted with the task of executing it.

A year later...

We have no idea how much money the Parsees of India contributed to the WZO coffers for the Udvada project.

And we are sure, that they, in turn, don't know what happened to that 'core group'.

That, is the whole purpose of this article. That 'core group' has now been registered (Sept. 2003) and has been christened, "Foundation for Development (read, 'Disaster') of Udvada", with an additional name, Dastur Khurshed K. Dastoor of Udvada, as the Chairman. Since Dasturji had rightly complained earlier in the Gujarat press that locals were ignored, he himself was made a trustee. But, he had also asked for other well-known persons of Udvada to be on the project, who have still been ignored!

Everything is so hush-hush and under wraps that no one outside the "Foundation" knows who the trustees are and whether the sum of over Rs.1 crore plus has already been disbursed to the 'Foundation'! WHY THIS SECRECY? Doesn't the community have a right to know what's happening in their own pilgrimage centre?

The Managing Trustee of the Foundation, D.K. Tamboly, did make an announcement in the FPZAI meeting of June 2003 that the "Foundation..." has been registered, and in the latest FPZAI meeting in June 2004, that, the Collector has been urged to declare Udvada as a heritage precinct... But here, too, he is reported to have declared that a sum of Rs.1 crore 25 lakhs has been 'sanctioned'.

Just 'sanctioned', or disbursed to the Foundation?

Does Udvada village/town need to be "developed" or "preserved"?

All right-thinking Parsees will strongly object to the word "Development" in the name of the trust formed. "Development" necessarily means, 'evolution', 'growth', 'advancement'. **Do we need anything of that sort anywhere near the fountain-source of our very existence and survival, Holy Iranshah and the Pav Mahal built thereon? Or, is the need of the hour to preserve and protect the spiritual atmosphere, the sanctity and the purity of the environs of Holy Iranshah?**

The WZO-infested "Foundation" is going full-steam ahead with the implementation of the first phase of the project: Notifying Udvada as a "Heritage Precinct" and stalling demolition of all existing structures (No objection!)*; Declaring the street leading up to the Atash Behram as a 'Pedestrian Plaza' and a 'Silence Zone' (No objection!); Creating a Museum on the land

***However, Mg. Trustee D.K. Tamboly's grandiose plan to make the Udvada Village precinct a "World Heritage Site" is highly objectionable.**

belonging to the Kasturba Sevashram Trust, which, we believe formerly belonged to Mithooben Petit (Objection!); Developing Tourist or Pilgrim Centre in Udvada (Highly Objectionable!)

One museum on Udvada, in Udvada, started by the WZO Youth Wing a few years ago, is languishing, for want of patronage. So, obviously, if a bigger museum is envisaged by the Foundation, who do you think will regularly patronise it? The Parsees of India? Forget it! It will obviously be the fake, fraudulent 'Zarthushtis' (sic) of Brazil, Venezuela, Africa, etc., not forgetting those of California or Canada, who will start frequenting Udvada, Sanjan, Valsad, Navsari, Vansda, Surat and Baharot, in large numbers, with comfortable Tourist Lodges to stay in, from, where that fancy "Pedestrian Plaza" to Holy Iranshah, would just be a biscuit-throw away!!

This invasion of Udvada, by pseudo-'Zarthushtis', which is exactly what some of the WZO-members of the Foundation have in mind for the future, will be infinitely worse than any invasion of the past by *pinधारis* and the Muslim hordes! For, today, it is simply impossible to move Holy Iranshah anywhere from His present position!

Udvada, therefore, cannot and should not be made a Tourist or a Cultural Centre at all! It should remain a Heritage precinct for Parsee/Irani Zoroastrians only, from all over the world!

PRESERVATION & PROTECTION AND NOT DEVELOPMENT IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR!

The two High Priests of Iranshah, the Udvada Athornan Anjuman, members of the Sanjana 9-families of the world and all faithful Parsees must protest in the strongest terms possible, against converting Udvada into a Tourist-cum-Cultural Town, and certainly not into a "World Heritage Site", as D.K. Tamboly wants it!

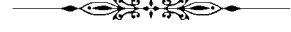
To begin with, protest letters should be sent both to the Government of Gujarat, Collector of the area (whose address is given below) highlighting at least two points: (a) the Gujarat Government and the Chief Minister of Gujarat's motives are noble, in so far as they want the 'Parsees' to have a Heritage Centre of their own. But, in reality, it will be non-Parsees, who style themselves as 'Zarthushtis', who will swarm all over the place; (b) preservation of dilapidated heritage buildings in Udvada is fine, but certainly not at the cost of giving up the most precious religious heritage – **Iranshah and the Pav Mahal!**

Collector's address:

Mr. J. Chudasama
Addl. Collector & Addl. District Magistrate
Collector's Office, Dharampur Road
Valsad 396 001. Gujarat.

Finally, we earnestly appeal to Dasturji Khurshed Dastur Kaikobad Dastoor, as Chairman of the

"Foundation for Development of Udvada", to say, "Thus far, and no further!" No Museum anywhere in Udvada *gaam*, no Tourist Centres or Lodges in Udvada, no Tourist Walks through Udvada and no annual jumboree by all those fake 'Zarthushtis' of the world!



આ “ફાઉન્ડેશન” ઉદવાડા ગામને ઉજાડશે અને

પાક ઈરાનશાહનાં પાયાઓ ખાણી નાંખશે!

ડબલ્યુ.એડ.ઓ. ની ઘૂસાણખોરી, એટલે, આધિ વ્યાધિ અને ઉપાધિ!

આ અંકનાં અંગ્રેજી વિભાગમાં અતિ લંબાણથી ઉદવાડા ગામ માટે આવતી સમસ્યાથી વાંચકવર્ગને ચેતાવ્યા છે. જગ્યાની કમીને લીધે ફરીથી આ બધું અમો ગુજરાતીમાં લઈ નહિ શકતા હોવાથી, ફક્ત મૂળ મુદ્દાઓ રજૂ કરીશું. પરંતુ, અમો અમારા પ્રિય વાંચકો, જેઓ અંગ્રેજી નહિ વાંચી શકતા હોય, તેઓને ખાસ અરજ કર્યે છીએ કે તેઓ આ અંગ્રેજી લખાણ જરૂર કોઈ પાસે વંચાવે, તો ખ્યાલ આવી જશે કે ઉદવાડા ગામ અને પાક ઈરાનશાહ ઉપર ખુદ આપણાંજ આદમીઓ તરફથી કયા પ્રકારનો ખતરો છે!

(૧) ગયે વર્ષે, ભારત સરકાર તેમજ ગુજરાત સરકાર તરફથી ઉદવાડા ગામને “સાંસ્કૃતિક અને વારસારૂપ કેન્દ્ર” તરીકે વિકસાવવા માટે લગભગ રૂ. ૧ કરોડ ૨૨ લાખ ફાળવ્યા હતા. તેમજ, તે માટે એક ચાવીરૂપ બૂથ, જેમાં મોટે ભાગે વર્લ્ડ ઓરાસ્ટ્રીઅન ઑર્ગનાઈઝેશન ના સભ્યો અને તેનાં વિષેકોનો સમાવેશ થતો હતો, સ્થાપવામાં આવ્યું હતું.

(૨) આની સામે કેટલાક પારસી બહેનો અને ભાઈઓએ વાજબી રીતે ઉગ્રવિરોધ કર્યો હતો, જેમાં મુખ્યત્વે પાક ઈરાનશાહનાં તે વેળા નવા નેમાયલા દસ્તુરજી ખુરશેદ દ. કેકોબાદ દસ્તુર પણ હતા. એઓ શ્રીએ પણ ગુજરાતનાં છાપાઓમાં એક નિવેદન મારફતે ઉદવાડા ગામની ખરી સમસ્યાઓ હલ કરવા માટે સરકારને અરજ કરી હતી અને ભારપૂર્વક જણાવ્યું હતું કે ફક્ત મુંબઈ કે અમદાવાદનું પ્રતિનિધિત્વ ધરાવતું એ ચાવીરૂપ બૂથ, “કે જે હમારા ગામની પ્રાથમિક સુવિધાઓ કે અગવડો બાબતે બિલકુલ અજાણ છે, તે ગામનાં પ્રશ્નોની શી રજુઆત કરવાના?” દસ્તુરજી સાહેબે વળી ઉદવાડા ગામની કેટલીક જુની માંગણીઓ હતી, તે પાછળ આ સરકારી ભંડોળ વાપરવા વિનંતી કરી હતી.

(૩) આ વિરોધને પરિણામે, જ્યારે પેલું ચાવીરૂપ બૂથ રેજીસ્ટર થયું, ત્યારે દસ્તુરજી ખુરશેદને પણ તે નવા ટ્રસ્ટમાં લેવામાં આવ્યા. આ ટ્રસ્ટનું ભપકાભરેલું, પણ વાંધાજનક નામ આપ્યું, “ફાઉન્ડેશન ફોર ડીવેલપમેન્ટ ઓફ ઉદવાડા”!

અંગ્રેજી વિભાગમાં અમોએ આનો તીવ્ર વિરોધ કરતાં કેટલાક અગત્યના કારણો આપ્યાં છે, કે સૌ પ્રથમ તો ઉદવાડા ગામને વિકસાવવાની કશીએ જરૂર છેજ નહિ. ફક્ત તેને અને તેની અંદર રહેલા શ્રીજી પાક ઈરાનશાહ અને તેમનાં કેન્દ્ર ઉપર સ્થાપિત થયેલા જાહેર દુનિયાનાં એકલા પાવમહેલને બચાવવાની તાતી જરૂર છે!

(૪) બાકી જે રીતે આ “ફાઉન્ડેશન”ને કાર્ય કરવા માટે લીલી ઝંડી આપવામાં આવી છે, જેમાં ગામમાં એક “મ્યુઝિયમ” અને સાંસ્કૃતિક કેન્દ્ર વિકસાવવું, કે પર્યટકો માટે “લોજ તેમજ આવકાર કેન્દ્ર” વિકસાવવું કે ગામમાં “હેરિટેજ વોક” વિકસાવવું, અને વળી વાર્ષિક મેળાવડો “વિશ્વભરના પારસીઓ” માટે ગોઠવવો વિ.વિ. એ તો ઉદવાડા ગામનાં પાયાઓ ખાણી કાઢવાનીજ વાત થઈ અને જે પ્રાણસમાન પાવમહેલને લીધે હિંદુસ્તાનની પારસી કોમ ૧૨૦૦ ઉપર વર્ષો સુધી ટકી રહી એની તો પાયમાલીજ થવાની! આ WZO નાં ટ્રસ્ટીઓનો “ફાઉન્ડેશન”માં સમાવેશ થયો હોવાથી, ઉદવાડા ગામમાં અને ખુદ પાક ઈરાનશાહમાં દુનિયાનાં હજારો બનાવટી અને દગાખોર “જરથોસ્તીઓ”ની ચોક્કસ ઘૂસાણખોરી થનારજ છે!!

(૫) તેથી અમો દુનિયામાં રહેતા તમામ પારસી જરથોસ્તી ફિરકાને, તેમજ ખાસ કરીને પાક ઈરાનશાહનાં બન્ને માનવંત દસ્તુર સાહેબોને, પાક ઈરાનશાહનાં ખાદેમોને અને નવકુટુંબી ટોળાનાં બધા સભ્યોને ભારપૂર્વક અરજ કર્યે છીએ કે તેઓ એક એક પત્ર, ગુજરાતનાં મુખ્ય પ્રધાન શ્રી નરેન્દ્ર મોદી, તેમજ ઉદવાડા ગામને લગતા કલેક્ટરને તમારો તીવ્ર વિરોધ, આ કહેવાતા વિકાસ સામે જરૂર કરો! આ વિભાગનાં કલેક્ટર સાહેબનું નામ અને સરનામું નીચે મુજબ છે :

શ્રી. જે. યુદાસમા
એડિશનલ કલેક્ટર અને ડિસ્ટ્રીક્ટ મેજિસ્ટ્રેટ
કલેક્ટરની ઓફિસ, ધરમપુર રોડ, વલસાડ 3960001 ગુજરાત.