

When Phiroze Masani All But Succeeded In Living Up To The Vandidad's Injunctions

It was the year 1934. In Meerut, a 9 month old child of Mr. Maneckji P. Cooper of Bombay died of Preumoria in her mother's arms on that 3rd of April. A paternal aunt, who was a doctor, took the child to Delhi and after the appropriate ceremonies got the child buried in the Aram (sic)gaah. Mr. Cooper rushed to Delhi to take the body back to Bombay for Dokhmenashini.

He took the help of Ervad Phiroze S. Masani, who approached the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat for permission to allow the body to be brought to Bombay and consigned either to a Dakhma or the Chotra. The Trustees, however, told him that as the child was only 9 months old and had been buried for more than ten days, it was not advisable to exhume the body. It was also explained that gehsarna had been once performed and as such, another gehsarna could not be performed. In view of this the 'riman' body would have to be put on the Chotra. Ervad Phiroze's request was declined by the Trustees in April 1934.

Not to give up so easily, the great scholar and solicitor got the Bombay Police Commis-

sioner's permission on the following terms:

- (1) that the coffin is packed in accordance with instructions of Government order,
- (2) that the package on arrival here is taken directly to the Tower of Silence, and
- (3) that the package is not opened till then.

The B P P Trustees suggested the following conditions informally to Mr. Masani :

- (1) The Trustees will not be responsible in any way. All Government and Municipal orders to be followed by Mr. Masani.
- (2) The body to be consigned to the 'Chotra'.
- (3) The Coffin to be opened in the open compound of the Doongurwadi and all implements for the purpose to be provided by Mr. Masani.
- (4) If Geh-Sarna were to be performed, it should be done where the coffin is opened.
- (5) No big gathering to be allowed.

Ervad Masani agreed to those terms. But the Delhi Anjuman declined to allow exhumation (so very typical of it!)

Extracted From Sapur Desai's "History of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat".

Vandidad

Vandidad Chapter 3 para 12 and 13 give a clear - cut injunction that if a dog or a human being is buried, they should be forthwith exhumed and the Carcass as well as the corpse should be exposed to the sunlight.