

**A PARSI LADY'S
HUNGER AND THIRST FAST AT SURAT
GURUSOME STORY OF THE OPPRESSIONS AND BREACH OF THE
PARSI PROMISES BY THE SURAT PUNCHAYET TRUSTEES**

Malpractices, Maladministration, Mismanagement

at Punchayet's Sir J. J. School

Something extraordinary has happened in Surat.

On 18th and 19th June 1996 A Parsi lady Smt. Khurshid Viraf Sethna went on fast till death against the oppression and tyranny inflicted upon the students and their parents by the management and administration of Sir J. J. English School, Surat.

Who are the administrators?

The Trustees of the Surat Parsi Punchayet acting through their sale Guru, Soli Katpitia.

Their oppression had 23 main limbs, each more gruesome than the other!

Our Gujerati Section carries a full report of the ghastly episodes that arose out of the Hitlerian high handedness of the Trustees and how the said oppression is now followed by a breach of faith and trust by the same Katpitian Trustees.

Shortly stated, the management of the School illegally charged deposits, admissions fees, examination fees; compelled the parents to buy books only from a particular store which charged higher than the market-price; compelled them to buy books in addition to the syllabus (for example a Rs. 150 dictionary for even I standard students); compelled them to buy inferior quality uniforms from one particular store only at higher prices; compelled the girl students to wear short skirts; ill treated students - even beat them-if the high-handed and obviously corrupt practices were objected to by their parents; interviews and reinterviews were taken even of those students who had passed; and those who had failed were promoted after

charging money. Parents' objections and complaints were deliberately ignored. All this was inflicted by Principal Smt Hutoxi Driver under the direct encouragement of the notorious Mr. Katpitia. She was principal of all the three sections of the School, which by itself was illegal. The Parents Association, when formed was ignored brazenfacedly.

At last the simmering exploded. The Parents' Association (PA) took up the matter with the Government of Gujerat and the Education Minister Mr. Nalin Bhat, and the Secretary of PA **Mrs. Khurshid Shetna sat down opposite the Punchayet Office on fast till death, from 7 a.m. on 18th June 1996.** The whole of Surat city was shaken. Newspaper headlines glittered. Parivar video displayed the fasting scene on T.V. Eminent people from all walks of the life including a retired district judge, an M.L.A., a corporator, Govt. and Police officials and Mayor Mr. Fakirbhai Chauhan visited Mrs. Khurshid. She had refused to drink water even. On 18-6-96 at about 6 p.m. a group of people chased Dr. Bhaeea shouting "Bhacca Hai Hai" when he came out on his bike from the Punchayet Office.

On 19-6-96 Mayor Mr. Chauhan actively intervenced and compelled the Punchayet to hold a meeting at the Mayor's Office at 4 p.m. between the administrators and PA. Only one of the trustees, Dr. Bhacca was present. There were some other spoon-fed people on their behalf. Most of the speaking was done by Mr.. Katpitia. In spite of her fast deteriorating condition Khurshid gave a stubborn fight and made Katpitia and Bhacca agree to yield on 20 out of 23 points. On the remaining three points, it was agreed that the Trustees would act accord-

ing to the directions of the Government authorities. These three points were: Returning of deposits, returning of exam fees and not having one principal for all the three Sections. It was also agreed that the understandings arrived at the meeting would be formally reduced to writing and signed by Trustees and PA. As it is, the discussion and the Trustees' agreements on each of the 23 points are recorded on the Minutes prepared by no less a person than Mr. Survaiya, the District Education Officer, (DCO).

Mrs. Khurshid broke her fast at 7 p.m. on 19-6-96, after the meeting.

When Mr. Fakirbhai called the parties to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on 10-8-96, the Trustees did not turn up and thus added a further vice of breach of trust and faith to the list of their oppressions.

On the three points left to the Government, DCO has conveyed the decisions of the Govt. to their Trustees that

- (i) the deposits should be returned
- (ii) the decision to return the exam fees should be immediately taken by the Trustees and
- (iii) there should be different principals for the primary and secondary sections.

As the matter stands, the Trustees have refused to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and have NOT implemented Government directives and Orders on the three points. It is reported that the Government have instructed the education Dept. to take firm steps to ensure that deposits are returned.

So these are the working methodologies of the Trustees: -

1. They act with high-handedness caring a hoot for the difficulties of the parents or the psyche of the students.
2. Their insistence on one book stall and one cloth store smells of the usual commission corruption.
3. They indulge in unlawful collection of deposit fees, exam fees, and other money on various occasions,
4. They flout Government directives and

orders.

5. The whole show of this woeful episodes is carried on by Mr. Katpitia and the Trustees are puppets in his hands. Only one Trustee remained present at the crucial meeting of 19-6-96, and there too he did not speak a word. Only Katpitia went on babbling, beginning with a high pitched authoritative voice which went on developing cracks as the meeting proceeded.
6. The promise given at the meeting that the Trustees will sign the Agreement regarding the decisions taken at the meeting, has been broken.
7. The promise given at the meeting to abide by the Govt decisions on the three points has also be broken.

A big question also arises; **how is it that the Trustees dance to the tune of Katpitia? Is it just their lethargy or is it that they have for some hidden reasons mortgaged their own intelligence to him and is now not in a position to redeem the mortgage? In either case, they deserve a forceful removal from trusteeship.**

And if these are the methodologies of the Trustees, Donors! Beware! ...

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