

THE PARSEE VOICE

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For Private Circulation

A Witch's Cauldron ?

WHAT'S BREWING AT THE FEDERATION MEETINGS?

In our last issue, we had shown how some of the present-day BPP trustees have gone back on the word given by their predecessors, regarding the activities of the Federation. An example was cited in that issue regarding the outburst of the present Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the BPP, B.T. Dastur, at Mhow in 1999.

Before coming to the controversial issues to be taken up at the next Federation meeting at Bardoli on November 29 and 30, it is interesting to note that 12 years ago, in September 1991, when the Federation "examined its own role" at Calicut, its veteran joint honorary secretary, Keki Gandhi, had said, "The Federation only has recommendatory jurisdiction. Executive jurisdiction is in the hands of the anjumans".

An important question that needs to be asked is, how far is each Anjuman or Panchayet truly representative of the Parsee population it claims to represent? Take the case of Mumbai itself. While on paper, about 50% of the Parsees may have been registered as "voters" against the payment of a nominal fee of Rs.5/-, what, in effect, it means is that they have to get themselves **elected** to the electoral college, which can then vote for a trustee of the BPP. But all of them can't, because of limitation of numbers. Thus, these five-rupee members have no direct say in the election of a BPP trustee. In short, therefore, the trustees of the BPP cannot, by any stretch of imagination, claim to be the representatives of the Parsee community of Mumbai! Nor are they *akabars* or *sethias*, as in the past.

The point we are trying to make is that the BPP trustees and their officers have no right to

discuss and decide on issues, which are either religious or social, which have a direct bearing on the traditional fabric of the community, without taking the community into confidence. Maybe, that is why an average Mumbai Parsee is so indifferent to the goings-on in and about the community?

The Mhow millennium meeting of the Federation threw up some real revelations about the mind-set of our BPP trustees, their CEO, as well as members of other Anjumans. The following points have been taken from the report of the meeting by Arnavaz S. Mama, published in **Parsiana** of March 2000.

"Two years in the saddle as the chief executive of the BPP, Dastur presented a list of community problems to the assembled delegates. It included, the demographic imbalance of too many deaths to too few births; the growing poverty; inter-faith marriages and the need to assimilate their offspring; paucity of mobeds; the increasing urbanisation leading to problems with the conventional mode of disposal of the dead; too many agiaries..." etc.

One of the anjumans' member suggested "a small core group of diverse opinions" to discuss "the contentious issues like allowing non-Parsees to see the face of the Parsi dead, the acceptance of the children of Parsi women married outside," etc. Lt. Gen. Adi Sethna, president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, "seconded the suggestion of a small think tank of about five persons... including (Mino) Shroff, Tamboli, Heerjee, a Fozya representative and Dastur, as member secretary" (*Aav Bhai harkhaa...!!*)

At the Mhow meeting, Dastur forcefully argued "for an amendment of the Federation constitution if

necessary : `Say (we) will discuss the controversial issues if they affect the community!!" **"Dastur favoured an initial colloquium with the high priests and failing that, a referendum"**.

Dastur won "the support... of BPP trustees Jamshed Guzder, Minoo Shroff and Dinshaw Tamboly..."

We want to remind our readers that at most Federation meetings, the inseparable duo of Tamboli-Dastur execute their game plan with dexterity, what with Dastur invariably playing the role of Tamboly's mouthpiece!

All credit to the Anjumans/Punchayets of Dahanu, Pune, Ahmedabad and Saronda, for objecting to the change of course.

The Bardoli Capers

Cut to the Federation meeting in June 2003 at Mumbai, and, of course, to the ubiquitous B.T. Dastur... Reported Marzban J. Giara in `Jame' of 22nd June, 2003 : "Mr. B.T. Dastur, CEO of BPP talked of several crucial questions. (1) Non-Parsi spouses in Parsi estates. Housing provided by BPP is meant for Parsi/Irani Zoroastrians only. Do we dislodge intermarried spouses? (2) Adoption among Parsis... (3) Offspring of mixed marriages - a national referendum needs to be held; (4) Inheritance rights of children of mixed marriages; (5) Why do we as a community follow three different calendars?"

"We cannot afford to sweep these problems under the carpet, nor leave it to the High Priests," he said. Mr. Minoo Shroff, BPP Chairman suggested an entire day be devoted to discussions of such issues at the next Federation meeting..."

So, now, what we find is that the over-enthusiastic CEO, in order to please his immediate boss, that "sitting trustee" and the Delhi dons, has the gall to say that in religious matters, the High Priests and the scholars will be by-passed!!

But what does the BPP Chairman, Minoo Shroff, have to say and do in all this?

In his "dossier" of 26th June, 2003, the CEO wrote to all Anjumans, thus: "Chairman, Mr. M.R. Shroff, felt at the Mumbai Federation meeting in June that very many of these issues - concerning the survival and growth of our community - were momentous in character, and deserved a full day's discussion, at our Federation's next meeting at Bardoli, on 29th and 30th November, 2003."

Yet, the same BPP Chairman, Shroff, in a rejoinder to ex-Chairman of the BPP, Eruch Desai, wrote in the `Jame' of 12th October, 2003, "I am surprised to infer Mr. Desai's presumption that the BPP proposes to take radical measures in tackling the community's age-old affairs, customs and practices. At the last meeting of the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans, held in Bombay (sic) on 07/06/2003, **the members expressed that very many important issues affecting the community, deserved a full day's discussion (in camera), at the Federation's next meeting to be held at Bardoli on the 29th and the 30th November, 2003.**" (Emphasis ours).

Notice how conveniently Mr. Shroff transfers the burden of the discussion of the vital religious subjects to the other Anjuman members, while all along, as shown in details, it was his CEO, with the blessings of vested interests, who, for the last three to four years, had been raising these issues at various Federation meetings! One feels like exclaiming, *Et tu, Minoo?* And why should the Bardoli meeting be held *"in camera"*?

Is There A Game-plan Behind All This?

We should pause and think, why the BPP and the FPZAI are so keen on bringing about changes in the age-old religious traditions, doctrines and customs, like the institution of the *Khandhias* and *Nassesalars*, legalising adoption among the Parsees, acceptance of children of Parsee women married outside the community, unification of three Zoroastrian calendars, etc. **WHY?**

Not that these subjects are new. They have been discussed threadbare through the years. In fact, the Adoption of Children Bill was drafted, circulated in the community for its approval and was about to be passed in both the Houses of Parliament in the early eighties of the last century, when at the last minute, with the intervention of the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Parsees were exempted from its provisions (For details, please see our article "Is adoption of children possible for us Parsees?")

The trust deeds of most punchayets and anjumans just tell them to administer and manage the funds and properties held by them in trust. In short, to mind their own business! Then, why are these Johnnies keen to meddle in extra-constitutional subjects and matters, which are religious in nature? What axe do they have to grind?

The answer, to our mind, is blowing in the wind. And that wind is blowing from across the seas. If you revert to the very first issue of "The Parsee Voice" (1st-15th Aug. 2003), there was an article, "Wake up, Humdeens, Thy Survival Is At Stake" by our Associate Editor, wherein he had talked of the formation of a "World Body of Zoroastrians" (WB), by which our unique Parsee Zarthoshti Anjuman will not only be put on par with the polyglot "Zarthushti" (sic) population of North America and Europe (add to that, Africa and Latin America, etc.!) but merged with them!!

Parsees of India have not only survived, but flourished and prospered for nearly 1300 years – why, we shall explain at length, in our future issues.

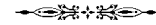
For the moment, we are trying to answer the question, why **these particularly** religious topics, all together, now?

The only answer that keeps staring at us is, the World Body. (1) There is no *Dokhmenashini* anywhere else in the world, except in India. The quickest way to do away with it completely is to knock down the institution of **Khandhias** and **Nassesalars**, who, the BPP trustees think, are mere professional

pall-bearers! (2) So also, only in India, except in small pockets, **where alone live the followers of the Mazdayasni Zarthoshti religion** (as far as the physical world is concerned), **are Parsee women married to non-Parsees debarred from bringing up their children in the Zoroastrian religion.** Abroad, that is not the case. (3) The so-called Zoroastrians of North America and England are fast latching on, albeit thoughtlessly, to the "Fasli" calendar. In India, majority of the Parsees are *Shahenshais* and some are *Kadimis*. (4) Finally, only in India Parsees cannot adopt a child legally, because there is no adoption law for them. They know very well that in any unofficial "adoption", the child is invariably not born of Parsee Zoroastrian parents!

So, if these four hurdles are done away with, the Parsees of India will be on par with the pseudo-Zoroastrians elsewhere, ensuring a smooth transition to their merger with those abroad and paving the way for the Shroff-Tamboly-Dastur's favourite hobby-horse, the World Body!

We hope we are wrong; we are afraid we may be right!



Is Adoption Of Children Possible For Us, Parsees? *The Non-Adoption of "Adoption of Children Bill, 1980"*

23 years ago, in 1980, the Government of India brought a bill in Parliament, called the "Adoption of Children Bill, 1980." "Parsees and more so, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, led by Mr. B.K. Boman Behram, who were more vigilant and active in those days, had proposed a variety of amendments to the Bill. The BPP summoned a Samast Anjuman Meeting at the Cowasjee Jehangir Hall on the 28th August, 1981, and passed a resolution which, in effect, meant that the adopted child cannot get "any religious rights" and that such an adoption will not "affect the validity... or change the meaning, expressed or implied, of any religious or charitable settlements, Trusts or endowments or affect the operation of any rule of personal law which imposes or removes any bar on matrimonial alliances..."

The Minorities Commission had received a spate of

amendments to the original Bill, from various Parsee organisations.

Total Exemption :

But Parsee High Priests, the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee and the Council of Vigilant Parsis, however, felt that all the amendments were wishy-washy and dangerous to our religion and the community. So, they felt that, like the Muslims, the Parsee community should be totally exempted from the provisions of the Bill. What happened later, is recent Parsee history. But Parsees being notoriously short on memory, we give below extensive details from the press release issued by the president of the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, Cowasjee Nusserwanji Dinshaw. A lot of material on this subject was published in **Dini Avaz** of January-February and March-April, 1982, wherein detailed articles were

written by Mr. K.N. Dastoor, who was one of the members of the delegation, who met the P.M. Indira Gandhi and the Minorities Commission in New Delhi in February, 1982, and **Parsiana** of June 1982.

The meetings with the VIPs in New Delhi were arranged by Mrs. Aloo Chibber, M.L.C. and Member of the High Power Panel on Minorities.

What follows is an eye-opener for Lt. Gen. Adi Sethna, the present member of the Minorities Commission and the BPP trustees, who foolishly want to exhume what was buried 21 years ago! We reproduce excerpts from the above-mentioned press release :

"The Priestly deputation comprising Vada Dasturji Meherji K. Meherjirana, Dasturji Dr. Hormuzdyar K. Mirza, Dasturji Dr. Firoze Kotwal, Mobed Framroze Antia and Ervad Kaikhushru N. Dastoor, was received with great respect by the Prime Minister who listened to their memorandum with patience and sympathy. After the discussions, a prayer of blessings was recited by Mobed Framroze Antia. The delegation thanked the Prime Minister for giving them an opportunity to place the religious point of view before her, on the subject.

"The high Priests and Ervad Kaikhushru N. Dastur, also met the Minority Commission twice and thrashed out all the legal issues at great length. The commission appeared to be greatly impressed by the arguments put forward, both religious and legal. A written statement was also handed over to the Commission.

Dasturjis' Reasons For Praying For Total Exemption From the Adoption Bill:

"The priests – Dastours and Mobeds – of the Parsi community and a large majority of its members are opposed to the application of Adoption Bill to the community and pray for total exclusion for reasons hereinafter appearing.

"For a Parsi, the social life is not different from the religious life. The two are interwoven into one inextricable pattern. Social duties and obligations are, for a Parsi, religious duties and obligations, flowing from the commands of the Prophet Zarathushtra. For instance, marriage is a religious sacrament, not a mere legal contract. It is a 'tarikats', a path towards spiritual perfection. Every Parsi is required to wear, by religious command, the white garment and girdle,

called Sudreh and Kushti, throughout his life, wherever he is and whatever he does. This Sudreh-Kushti is not a mere symbol but a spiritual 'Alaat', an instrument of yoga and advancement. Every Parsi is required by religious command to get the ceremonies of his deceased relatives performed. This not only helps the soul of the deceased to advance in his journey in the next world but also helps the living relatives spiritually.

"A Parsi is socially and religiously commanded to lead an active and truthful married life in the service of his or her family, community, society, country and humanity. The religious tenets and commands are the prescriptions which liberate in him or her the spiritual energy and strength to discharge these duties.

"Because of this interwoven social and religious structure, there cannot be a Parsi who is not a Zoroastrian and there cannot be a Zoroastrian who is not a Parsi. Parsi means Parsi Zoroastrian. There cannot be a person who is not a Parsi by race but is a Zoroastrian by religion. The two are one. And that position flows from the Holy Scriptures, the tradition and the custom. Therefore, there cannot be a convert Zoroastrian, and no conversion is ordained or allowed or enjoined in the Zoroastrian religion.

Scriptures Against Conversion

"There is scriptural evidence from the Gathas in support of the truth that Zoroastrian Religion does not and cannot preach conversion.

"When Ahura himself has ordained different religions, each should follow the religion of his birth. Any conversion from one to another is against the Divine Plan and therefore, a sin. Not only the prescriptions and yogas of different religions are different but also their devotions (Daena Vasao, Shyothnao - in Ha 31-11). Each human has a certain wave-length of devotion towards his own Prophet and Religion; and that wave-length is embedded in his gene. This wave-length should not be disturbed either by conversion or a marriage mix-up. This is why Parsis are anxious to preserve their racial gene, which has the religious germ of Zarathushtra embedded in it.

Traditional Evidence For The Concept Of Racial Purity:

"The Zoroastrian Religion lays stress on its spiritual institutions and 'tarikats'. The sacred fire in a fire

temple is specially made and consecrated after a long drawn procedure; so also the Dokhma – the sacred Tower for the dead Parsis. These are regarded as the places of greatest sanctity. No non-Parsi is allowed to enter them. This does not arise out of any disrespect for a non-Parsi, but is based on a spiritual truth that because of different wave-lengths in a non-Parsi a disturbance is caused in the atmosphere. In the most modern times when ESP is an established fact, when psychotronic generators are at work, when the individual constitution of the experimenter is found to enter into and affect his experiment, the fact of the wave disturbance by a non-Parsi cannot be ruled out.

"Only a Parsi born of both Parsi parents is allowed entry in these sacred places; and in the interior room where the sacred Fire burns or where ceremonies are performed, only the Mobed-priest has entry and none else, though a Parsi. Any conversion or any genetic mix-up is, therefore, entirely inconsistent with these religious sanctions, commands, traditions and customs.

"The alleged evidence for conversion from religious writings, relied on by some Parsis, is highly twisted and tortured. When Zarathushtra calls upon his disciples to fight evil, these evidence-twisters read fighting to convert! When Zarathushtra commands to convert evil into good they read conversion of a Mohammedan to a Parsi! For instance, Dr. Dhalla, in his *Zoroastrian Theology*, "The Dinkard sanctions even the use of force for the conversion of the aliens". Thank God, Parsis in India never dreamt of conversion, or use of force for conversion!!

"We submit that advocating conversion is a kind of fanaticism. A Christian trying to convert a Hindu will have to say "My religion is better than yours" or "Christ is superior to Krishna". A Parsi cannot say that, because he is taught by his Prophet that all religions emanate from Ahura's Divine Plan and for every man the religion of his birth is prescribed as a path to his salvation. If this truth is appreciated in our country, there can never be a communal riot!

Judgements At Courts

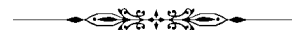
"Justice Davar has, in his Judgement in 1908 stated that Zoroastrian religion enjoins conversion. We submit (i) that this is not a correct statement and (ii) that it is not binding on the Parsi Community.

Davar J. has recorded in his judgement: "That the Parsi Community of Bombay at a public meeting held on 16th April 1905 expressed its disapproval of any conversion being allowed, and are strongly opposed to any such conversion in the present times, and resolved henceforth not to admit even the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers."

"And that Resolution has been followed by several other resolutions from time to time wherein the Community has gone on expressing disapproval towards conversion and any genetic mix up, whether through a Parsi father or a Parsi mother, by a non Parsi spouse. Such Resolutions were passed in 1942, 1947, 1977, 1978. They are on record of the Institutions under whose auspices they were passed in public meetings. The Parsi Community has never encouraged conversion or any genetic mix-up. And we submit on religious authority that there is no distinction between the child of a Parsi mother and a non-Parsi father and that of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother. Both are not Parsis.

"We are firmly of the view that conversion and genetic mix up will lead our community to complete extinction; and adoption will be an active ingredient for such dissolution. This is a grave and serious threat to our very existence. It is a survival problem. We, the Indian Parsis, have rendered meritorious service to the country – right from fighting for its independence to fighting in the battle fields. We do hope that the Government of India will not become a party to our extinction. A community and a religion survives not by mere numbers. External stamping of large numbers as Parsi Zoroastrians without the inherent fire and the in-born racial characteristics would never lead to survival. It would only accelerate a complete mix-up and therefore total wiping off. Our strength have never been in number. Our spiritual and religious equipment is the only source of all our energies and services and the only secret of our survival for 12 centuries in this our great country.

"We also submit that any amendment to the Adoption Bill purporting to preserve religious rights would only lead to litigations and all the uncertainties attached to them. We, therefore, pray for total exemption."



બારડોલીમાં બિહામાગી બલા !

ફેડરેશનની સભા વખતે અંજુમને અને પંચાયતોએ સાવધાન રહેવાની જરૂર !

આમ તો સુરત જીલ્લામાં આવેલું બારડોલીનું નાનું શહેર, આશરે સવાસો પારસીઓની વસ્તી સાથે શાંત અને ઠીક ઠીક રળિયામણું શહેર છે. ત્યાં એક દરેમહેર અને એક ધર્મશાળા, તેમજ કાર્યશાળી અંજુમન પાણ છે. થોડાંક વર્ષો અગાઉ, ત્યાં એક “પારસી કોમ્પ્લેક્સ” પાણ બાંધવામાં આવ્યો, જેથી, જુવાન છોકરાઓ નીચેની દુકાનોમાં ધંધો કરી શકે અને ઉપરનાં માળાઓ ઉપર જરથોશ્તીઓ રહી શકે. ત્યાં દર વર્ષે જશન અને ગાહમ્બારનું જમાણ પાણ યોજાય છે.

નવુંજુનું કરવા માંગે છે, એમાં કોઈ શક નથી!

ખાંધિયા-નસેસાલારો ને ધીરે ધીરે તિલાંજલિ આપવી, જુદીન લગ્ન કરી ચૂકેલી પારસી ઔરતનાં ફરઅંદને જરથોશ્ત દીનમાં લેવા, શહેનશાહી-કદમી પંચાંગો છોડી, “ફસલી” પંચાંગ અપનાવવું અને જરથોશ્તીઓ માટે પાળક (adoption) નો કાયદો ઘડાવો જોઈએ. આ બધું પેલી ઊભી થનારી “વિશ્વ સંસ્થા” (World Body) માંટેની તૈયારી હોઈ શકે?

PUBLIC AWARENESS MEETING

A meeting of the Parsee / Irani Zoroastrian community organised by "The Parsee Voice", is being held to make it aware of the disastrous consequences of the dangerous agenda of the Federation meeting at Bardoli in November 2003, and the proposed formation of the "World Body".

Venue : Framjee Cawasjee Institute, Opp. Metro Cinema, Dhobi Talao, Mumbai.

Date : Friday, 21st November, 2003.

Time : 6.15 p.m.

Speakers include : Adi F. Doctor, Ervad Dr. Rooyintan Peer, Khojeste P. Mistree, etc.

DASTURJI DR. K.M. JAMASPASA WILL BE THE CHIEF GUEST.

આ બારડોલી અંજુમન, અમારી જાણ મુજબ, ખફેડરેશનની મીટિંગોમાં પાણ ભાગ લે છે. એટલેજ કદાચ એનાં કારોબારીઓએ, ફેડરેશનની આવતી સભા બારડોલીમાં રાખવા આમંત્રણ આપ્યું હશે. આ મીટિંગ, જે ૨૮-૩૦મી નવેમ્બરે રાખી છે, ત્યાં, અમારા ગયા અંકમાં જણાવ્યા મુજબ, જે બાબતો ચર્ચાવાની છે, તે અતિ વિવાદાપ્રસદ છે. આની વિગતવાર માહિતી આ અંકનાં અંગ્રેજી વિભાગમાં આપવામાં આવી છે, તેમજ હવે પછીનાં અંકમાં આપીશું. વર્ષોથી એક યા બીજી વ્યક્તિ આ સંસ્થા તરફથી આજ બાબતો ચર્ચાઈ, ચર્ચાઈને છીંછરા જેવી થઈ ગઈ છે, છતાં... પાણ આ વેળા મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયતનાં વધુ પડતાં ઉત્સાહી સી.ઈ.ઓ. શ્રી બી.ટી. દસ્તુર અને એમનાં ઉપરીઓ, ટ્રસ્ટીઓ, મીનૂ શ્રોફ અને ડી.કે. તંબોલી સાથે મળીને આજ અને આવીજ બાબતો બારડોલીમાં ખાસ ઉપાડી કાંઈક

પંચાયતો અને અંજુમનો ફેડરેશનની સભામાં આવી ધાર્મિક બાબતો ચર્ચા શકેજ નહિ, એ તો ખુદ ફેડરેશનનાં બંધારણમાંજ લખાયલું છે, તો પછી નવેમ્બરની આખેરીએ મળનારી બારડોલીની સભામાં એ બનીજ કેમ શકે? માટેજ દરેક અંજુમનની ફરજ છે કે આ બાબતોને હમેશનીજ દફનાવી દઈ, પારસી કોમમાં નાહકની નવી ચર્ચા ઊભી થવા દેવીજ નહિ!

આ સંદર્ભમાં “ધી પારસી વૉઈસ”, પારસી જરથોશ્તીઓની એક બહેર સભા, ફરામજી કાવસજી ઈન્ટિટ્યુટ નાં હોલ માં, શુક્રવાર તા. ૨૧મી નવેમ્બ, ૨૦૦૩ ને દિને, સાંજે ૬.૧૫ કલાકે, બોલાવેલી છે, જેમાં પધારવા સર્વે જરથોશ્તીઓ, અને ખાસ કરીને અંજુમનો અને પંચાયતોનાં પ્રતિનિધીઓને હાર્દિક આમંત્રણ આ અખ્બ્યાર મારફતે આપીએ છીએ!

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