

SURAT PUNCHAYET'S SECOND FIASCO.

WHY AND HOW WAS THE PROPOSED FUNCTION OF 27-4-96 AT UDWADA CANCELLED?

(Through the Parsi-Pukar Research Wing)

For the second time within a period of one year, the faithful orthodox of the Community have given a stunning slap to the faithless 'Dindushmani'. The first was, on 9th July 1995, when more than 700 Parsis and representatives of the Anjumans of almost all the Parsi places and pockets, held a marathon meeting in Surat (i) to condemn the alleged Navjot of one Mukesh Rathod which was conspiringly engineered by Mr. Soli Katpitia and his group disciples, the trustees of the Surat Parsi Punchayet and (ii) to resolve, as the Parsi denomination, against the proposed sale by the same trustees of large pieces of Dokhma Land at Surat.

The second event occurred in the 4th week of April 1996, when the Faithful Orthodox prevented the same trustees from holding a Dindushmani function at Udwada on the holy Birthday of Paak Iranshah Saheb - Roj Ader, Mah Ader, 1365 Y.Z. - 27th April 1996.

Here is a report of the Orthodox actions and the disgraceful retreat of the so called "Akaabars" of Surat and Bombay.

But first let us spell out the terms "Orthodox faithful" and "the Dindushman faithless", which we have used in the Gujerati Report published in the last issue as also herein.

A community as a Religious denomination can survive only by preserving and protecting its distinctive religious institutions and practices. (A.I.R. 1962 Supreme Court 853.) The Parsi community has mainly seven such distinctive features:

1. "**Sudreh Kushti**", a specially constituted cotton garment and woolen thread.
2. "**Manthra Bandagi**", the prayer through the 'Mantra's of the Holy Avesta Scriptures.
3. "**Yasna**", the rites, rituals ceremonies, 'kriyaa-kaand', for the dead.
4. "**Atash-Baheyraam and Agiari**", the holy Fire Temples, where specially consecrated and constituted Holy Fires are kept constantly worshipped and ever-burning for hundreds of years-even centuries.
5. "**Dokhm-e-Nashini**", a special **religious** method of disposing of the bodies of the dead, at specially made and consecrated place, Dokhma.
6. "**Meher-Patet**" a strict moral code; to be truthful, honest, charitable, obliging, helping others; to try to avoid falling into the snares of carnal pleasures, greed, lust, selfishness, Godlessness; to offer repentance ('Patet') if so snared away.
7. "**Boonak-Pasbaani**", the preservation of the racial gene; not to be mixed up with others by conversion or marriages with non-parsis.

All the seven are the founding pillars of the Community, its Religion and its survival. They are an inseparable package. None of them can exist without all and each of the others.

The "Orthodox Faithful" are that large part of the community in India and abroad, whose anxiety it is to preserve all the seven foundations and thereby preserve the survival of the denomination.

Dindushmani and Faithlessness consist in opposing the seven Religious Disciplines, or most of them, on some hazy ignorant grounds. For such opponents the disciplines are too cumbersome and too much obstructive to their luxurious material life. They are out to find excuses to escape from the rigors of Religious life. This class was born in the present century - 12 centuries after our ancestors arrived in India with the sole intention and aim of preserving and protecting these very Religious and spiritual Institutions. The marsh for the breeding of these germs of extinction was the

desire of the rich Parsis to marry "European madams. The infrastructure of the whole Religion was so much interwoven with the aforesaid seven foundations that avoiding any one would automatically result in avoiding most of the others. If mixed marriages are to be accepted and thereby the 7th discipline is violated, it will result in avoiding most of the other six. They were therefore attacked on grounds which were not only ignorant but also inconsistent and devoid of ordinary reasoning even on this side of the intellectual barrier.

This is faithlessness because there is a complete lack of faith in the spiritual and Religious Institutions. It is "Dindushmani" because it leads to the disappearance of the distinctive Institutions and practices of the Daena and thereby to the extinction of Parsism and the Parsi Community. Is not one who desires to destroy an enemy?

The community opposed and still opposes this onslaught. **But the faithless minority makes more noise than the faithful majority.** The voice of the orthodox is tried to be suppressed by all kinds of Akabari, Dastoori, "Veypaari" and journalistic conspiracies and even black-mail. One of the attempts to do so was organising the aforesaid function at Udwada by the Surat Punchayet trustees.

NOW, THE STORY.

Somewhere around 18-4-96, Surat trustees circulated a handbill announcing that they had organised a function at Udwada on 27-4-96, wherein Mr. Jehan Daruwalla of Mumbai Samachar and Dastur Hormazdiyar Mirza would be honoured, and the Chairmen of the Bombay and Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayets Mr. Jamshed Gazdar and Mr. Kersi Sethna as also Cama's, the owners of Mumbai Samachar would also be "highly priced guests".

Now who is this Jehan Daruwala? An insurance employee, who without knowing the principles and practices of objective journalism became the editor of Mumbai Samachar; and who carried on incessantly an ignorant and malignant campaign against our Religions Institutions and Practices!! Particularly malicious was his propaganda against Dokhma. He went to the intolerable length of saying that he would not send even his dog to Dokhma!

Who is Dastur Mirza? A Dastoor connected with Pak Iranshah, who exhibited several intellectual somersaults in his public life and stance in the guise of high scholasticism, and after decades of pronouncements against conversion, and Juddin marriages and Navjotes, brazenly changed his public colour during Neville-Nusli Wadia episodes.

And Mr J. Guzder of B.P.P., who have set aside their decades long stance and supported conversion, and Juddin Navjotes and marriages and have joined in tolling the bells of extinction. And all other "high-priced guests".....

FIRE! THE FIRST CANON!

"Jarthoshti Dharma Aney Samaj Sevaa Samiti" is a small but powerful organisation in Surat. They swung into action. By 21-4-96, they came out with a handbill in Gujarati and English. Are these people fit even to tread the holy land of Iranshah? The Gujarati text of the handbill is published in our April issue. English text is on the third cover page of this issue.

When the handbill reached the serene village of Udwada, its convincing wordings caused a great perturbation. **The Udwada Samasta Anjuman called an emergency meeting and passed a resolution asking the Surat trustees to cancel the function at Udwada.** A copy of the Resolution was personally brought to the Surat Punchayet by Ervad Saheb Farmroz Sidhwa, the Secretary of the Athornan Anjuman. A copy of the Resolution was also published in Gujarat Samachar. (The text on page 19 of our April issue).

But the Surat trustees, intoxicated by a false sense of power and the lust for cheap publicity, refused to honour Udwada Anjuman's requisition. When the Anjuman refused to allow them to use of the Anjuman ground for the function, they decided to hold it at some other place at, Udwada. Mr. Soli Katpitia, the Surat trustees Guru, whose puppets they have proved to be on several occasions, filed a caveat in court and "arranged", with his usual lunch-dinner-boodle strategies, for police-

protection. **Here was a guest trying to thrust himself upon an unwilling host! Trespass under police protection! Height of indecency, impudence, boorishness!** They even published another advertisement next day, stating that the function would surely be held. (Text on p. 19 of April issue).

When the Surat Seva Samiti handbills reached Navsari, Bombay and other places, the faithful orthodox were greatly disturbed and annoyed. Verily, these cheap publicity-thirsty "high-priced guests" were not fit to be honoured on the holy land of Iranshah. The faithful decided to go to Udwada in large numbers and offer resistance to the holding of the function-police or no police.

In Bombay, Mr. K.N. Dastoor Advocate for Council of Vigilant Parsis, another small but powerful organisation, gave a notice to the Surat trustees that the Udwada function was intended to harm the religious feelings of the Parsis which was a criminal offence and therefore they should stop it. The Parsi vegetarian and Temperance Society and other Orthodox organisations also requested the trustees to cancel the function.

A copy of the Advocate's Notice was sent to Bombay Punchayet. On a phone call from Mr Guzder, Mr. Dastoor told him in no uncertain terms how the faithful orthodox were extremely angry over the proposed tamasha. Mr. Thamasp Mogul Advocate also saw Mr. Guzder and appraised him of the injured feelings of the Community. **Mr. Mogal and the Mobeds of Udwada requested D. Mirza to honour his own Anjuman's Resolution and avoid the function. But in vain.**

Like the donkey in the fable, they insisted that they would sing with their fine voice in the moonlight - who cares for any hammering!

Our research team was informed that Mr Jehan Daruwala, with all his journalistic tomfoolery and impotent power show was first to shiver and succumb. Then followed. Mr. Guzder. There is a difference between receiving applause and brickbats. There were midnight phones between Bombay and Surat. On 25th April, Surat trustees met and in spite of their Guruji, Mr. Katpitia's assurances and entreaties they **DECIDED TO CANCEL THE FUNCTION.**

Specimen of Gracelessness and Public Cowardice.

But even in their act of cancellation, there was a complete lack of grace and courage. On 26-4-96, just one day before, they published an inconspicuous and insignificant looking advertisement in Gujerati newspapers, declaring, in the midst of confused long-winded sentences, that the function was cancelled. The advertisement did not bear the name and signature of the President of the Punchayet, Mr. Bhakka, the otherwise pompous. It read as if the abortive tamasha was organised by "**Bombay - Surat** Parsi Punchayets" - placing Bombay p.p. first! 'Credit, I alone take; discredit, you take first, I am behind you' - a fine piece of public hypocrisy and escapism. Such prestige-ridden Akabars do not know how to be honest about a public defeat. (The text of this hog-wash is on page 20 of our April issue.)

The advertisement offered "the difference of views" as an excuse for the cancellation, whereas in reality it was the enraged religious feelings of the community, which had forced them to gather their cowardice and run away.

In their previous advertisement, which ignored the Udwada Anjuman's Resolution, the Surat trustees had boasted about their "feelings for Religion". On page 20 of our April issue we have given some glaring instances of their alleged feelings for Religion.

Mukesh-Rathod's chapter and the Udwada fiasco show that the backbone of the community is orthodox. It is that handful of the faithless, who noisily try to suppress the orthodox voice. The two events send a powerful message to them that the days of their retreat have arrived.

Bravo! 'Jarthoshti Dharma Aney Samaj Seva Samiti' of Surat. Yours was the first canon!

Bravo! Udvada Samasta Anjuman.

Bravo! Navsari Valiants.

Bravo! Council of Vigilant Parsis, Bombay.

Bravo! Parsi Vegetarian & Temperance Society

The other orthodox - called organisations of Bombay had, this time, some sense, at least to join the band wagon. Our advice to them: Learn your lessons from Surat. ..

(Parsi Pukar – MAY 1996 Vol. 1; No.11)