

# THE PARSEE VOICE

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*For Private Circulation*

## APOLOGY

We regret the delay in the publication of “The Parsee Voice” and crave the indulgence of our readers, many of whom kept up a persistent inquiry about its non-availability.

We are thankful to them for their patience and hope that they may not have any further cause for complaint in future.

– Editor

## Parsees on the Blink!

**The Community, Devoid of Any True Leaders,  
Turns a Blind Eye To The Signal  
That Has Turned Amber!**

**Compare and Contrast The Lives of The Parsees  
A Hundred Years Ago & Today**

*Today's Parsees Have Completely Lost Their Moorings.  
Like A Rudderless Ship, The Poor & The Middle Class  
Are Being Buffeted Between The Materialistic Dross  
of the West and the Rampant, Perennial Ego Clashes Between  
The Wealthy Radicals and Some Equally Die-Hard Elite Traditionals”*

On our desk, we have, by a fortuitous coincidence, two reports on our community – both prepared by non-Parsees. One is an article written by the then U.S. Consul General of Bombay, William Thomas Fee. Entitled, “The Parsees and the Towers of Silence at Bombay, India”, it was published by The National

Geographic Magazine, (NGM) in its issue of December, 1906.

The other is a study report, published exactly 103 years later, in December 2009. Entitled “A Study Report on Socio-Economic and Educational Status of the Parsi Community in India”, it was commissioned by the Parsee

member of the National Commission for Minorities, New Delhi, Dr. (Miss) Mehroo D. Bengalee, and prepared by Anita Rath and Rakhshandah A. Hani of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

**NGM's Article of 1906: "They Have Retained Their Individuality for 1200 years"**. Under this sub-heading, the writer says, "For some 1200 years they have lived among the all-absorbent Hindoos, **yet this mere handful of people have not been absorbed.**

**"During the last 300 years the transmissive influence of an Anglo-Saxon civilisation has been reflected upon them, yet they remain Parsees still. India has in turn been conquered and reconquered by all the great nations of history, from Greek to Britain. Her conquerors have each shaped the affairs of half of the earth... Internecine wars, racial strifes and caste prejudices have robbed her of her own; pestilence and famine have blighted her fairest flower; yet during all these centuries, amid all the vicissitudes of oriental life, have lived the worthy descendants of the ancient Persian people, true to their faith and have substantially preserved and transmitted the main characteristics of their ancestral race. THE PARSEE STANDS UNIQUE IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND.**

(Remember that this is the American Consul General of Bombay writing in 1906! – Editor)

Talking about Parsee women, the writer says, "The long, flowing 'saree' of many silken tints, wrapped about the body in graceful folds, gives to the female Parsee a garment of exquisite beauty and rare comfort. **It would be a matter of great regret if this graceful dress should give place to modern European fashion, with the tight corset and the high-heeled shoe, that destroy the graceful carriage and health of the wearer.**

"The Parsees have imbibed the notion,

supported by long usage and originally imported from Persia, **that it is sinful and contrary to religion to leave the head uncovered, either by day or night; hence a Parsee is never without his skull cap or a woman without her 'mathabana'".**

As if regretting the new trend that had set in then, the writer says, "There is now a marked desire on the part of the Parsees to adapt themselves to the manners and customs of the Europeans... As they advance every year in civilisation and enlightenment, **they copy more closely European manners and modes of living, adopting the bad with the good – regretfully too much of the former."** [All Emphases Provided].

That's it! Being obsessed with Western materialistic mores and manners and chasing crooked shadows in the last 100 years, have proved to be the bugbear of the Parsee community. What the Parsees retained and gained in about 1200 years in India, they jettisoned and lost in just a 100 years! As it is said, it took Nature millions of years to make a man out of a monkey. However, the reverse process took just about 5 minutes!

No wonder then that various studies on the community, made in the last few decades have painted a dismal picture of a once flourishing, prosperous community, collapsing into the throes of a moribund state!

### **Report on the Socio Economic and Educational Status of the Parsi Community in India – December 2009:**

The national level profile of our community as cursorily gleaned from this report is depressing and disappointing. As per the census of 2001, there were just 69,601 Parsees in the country. Almost 67% of them live in Greater Mumbai. "The population of the community is declining in absolute terms and, secondly, it has an inordinate share of greying population in a relatively young country.

**The population of the Parsees had declined by 10% in each decade** (that is 1% every year). If this decline continues unabated, that is, the fertility rate does not improve, the community would lose out on half of its existing population by 2051.

**The age profile of the population has also undergone a significant change since early 20th century. Between 1961 and 2001, the relative share of the population in the age group 65 and above has doubled.** The fact that the proportion of child population (12.3%) is very small, compounds the problem further. This, as per the 2001 census, one in every 8 Parsees was a child under 15 years, whereas 2 in that cohort were 65 years and above.

The Report goes on to give statistical details about the educational and employment aspects and the economic status of the community.

But when we talk of the signal turning amber for the community, we don't mean just the decline in the population and the other statistical flimflams, which are actually the effects or results, rather than the causes of our overall downfall.

The causes are to be seen in the correct perspective and in a holistic way. The root cause, of course, is IGNORANCE – the same root cause of all EVIL which was there even before the Universe began! Ignorance about every basic thing that a Parsee Zarthoshti is supposed to know: his history, present and past, his position in the present-day world, the fundamental tenets and traditions of his

foremost religion, the tentacles of gross materialism that grip him all the time, and how he can try to steer clear of them, and, above all, the basic discipline that, as a good Zoroastrian, he has to inculcate in himself, so as to work in tandem with Nature.

None of these traits do we find in a vast majority of the members of our tiny community today. Any wonder then, that such colossal Ignorance breeds a bloated ego, a complete lack of humility, a totally uncalled for arrogance and self-righteousness, etc. etc.

All this is evident in every walk of Parsee life: from some of the trustees of the BPP and most of the trustees of Fire Temples and Parsee religious and charity trusts, to many of the priestly class and almost all the laity – in whatever profession, vocation or service they may be.

The pages of this inordinately delayed issue of **The Parsee Voice** are loaded with such examples, of faithless, untrustworthy Parsees, given to creature comforts and the pleasures of materialistic life, who have betrayed the faith of their forefathers, who have failed to preserve and protect their ancient heritage and legacy and who are a blot on the 1300-year-old history of the community!

That is why the signal has turned amber. A few years more and it can turn red! Will it?

As a journalist friend keeps telling us, "It's a miracle how Parsees are surviving today". Our silent answer is "**Dast-e-Gaib**" or "The Hidden Hand"!

## 2011 Census

How many Parsees, who sat with the census enumerators recently realised that they were **never** asked a single question about the community/caste/religion, etc., that they belonged to? There were columns for Hindus, Muslims, etc. In which column was the Parsee placed? *Itar* = Others!!

How is it possible then to get the exact number of Parsees existing in India in 2010? The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India will have to move in the matter fast!

\* \* \*

*Eternal Vigilance Is The Price To Pay For  
The Preservation & Protection of Our  
Sacred Fire Temples & Dakhmas*

**Sad Saga of Happenings At The  
Holy Dadyseth Atash Behram**

*Trustees Defy The Instructions of the  
Asst. Municipal Commissioner  
and Dig Up The Front Portion of the Verandah!*

**Devotees Had To Walk Through The Rubble Left  
There By The Contractor!**

So that our readers can understand and appreciate the facts as they occurred, we'll try to give a virtual ball by ball commentary on the deplorable events that unfolded at the oldest Atash Behram of Mumbai – thanks to the whims and intransigence, not to mention, the complete ignorance about how an Atash Behram's sanctity has to be preserved, of just one man, who influenced the trustees in pandering to his fancy!

**Saturday, 13th March, 2010:** A lady first informed us that she saw men cutting stone tiles outside the Dadysett Atash Behram. She couldn't make out where they were to be fitted.

**Sunday, 14th March:** We learnt that one Filly Bapuna was the person, keen to replace the tiles on the three sides of the verandah of the Atash Behram building. We felt that this well-meaning but not well-versed-in-religious-matters gentleman needed to be told that he should not tinker with the flooring, as the hoary stones had absorbed and retained the vibrations of the prayers and rituals of thousands of devotees, mobed sahebs and the Kadmi Dasturs of the past. More importantly, the Atash Padshah, with his 7 magnetic circuits, (Karsh)

starting from the sarposh or the metallic lid on the censer, that holds the visible fire, and extending upto the compound of the building, definitely has a circuit, say, the 5th, going round the verandah. In other words, the verandah of the Atash Behram is a very sacred area, where no non-Zoroastrian can be present.

We, therefore, rang up Bapuna and told him politely that he need not disturb the tiles. To that, he retorted, "If tiles in your home get chipped, won't you replace them? Have you been there?" he asked. "You can talk to the trustees". This was enough for this Editor to realise that he was up against a haughty man!

In the subsequent week, reports came in that work was to start on the 22nd March, the day after Navroz. In the meanwhile, Bomi Mistry, the leader of the Parsee volunteers who have been doing magnificent repairing and renovating work in many Agiaries and Atash Behrams throughout India, twice contacted Bapuna and suggested that the work be carried out by his men. But, there was no positive response.

**The Parsee Voice**, in that week, dashed off letters to the Mumbai Heritage Conservation

Committee (MHCC) that the Dadysett Atash Behram, like all other Fire Temples in Mumbai had been upgraded to (Grade) IIA, which meant, among other things, that prior permission has to be obtained from the MHCC, before removing/replacing any part of the sacred building, and that, the damaged sections, if any, could be repaired only by using the original construction material. Neither of this was sought to be done by the trustees of the Dadysett Charity Trust and by Bapuna.

**Saturday, 20th March:** We felt that Bapuna, who was donating the tiles may not be aware of this Heritage angle. So, we sent him an SMS telling him about the Heritage matter.

The reply he gave stated that he was 'changing old Kota with new Kota which has lived its life of 90 years. Am orthodox myself. Do something productive in life rather than cheap gimmicks like this.'. By writing this last line, Bapuna confirmed what we have said earlier, that, among other things, he knows absolutely nothing about preserving the sanctity of the Atash Padshah, particularly when he was deliberately letting non-Parsee workers inside the Atash Behram.

**Monday, 22nd March:** The 'C' Ward Officer (Asst. Municipal Commissioner), prompted by the letter to the MHCC dictates a letter to the trustees of the Dadysett Charity Trust, instructing them not to begin work at the Atash Behram, without obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the MHCC. This letter was sent to the trust's office before it closed for the day.

Simultaneously, the ward officer spoke politely on the phone to Filly Bapuna, right before us, asking him not to replace the tiles, till the NOC was obtained by the trustees.

Sanguine in the hope that the Atash Padshah would be safe from the depredations of some well-meaning but ignorant Parsees, we were wondering that afternoon, how to put across the spiritual/religious reasons for our objection to the trustees, when came the shocker! A worshipper agitatedly informed us that four

non-Parsee workers were inside the Atash Behram building and had started breaking the flooring on the front side.

This brazen defiance of the order of the Ward Officer took us completely by surprise! Was it a wanton display of authority and braggadocio on the part of the trustees and Bapuna? Did they start work early evening, because they were aware that it was time for the municipal ward office to close?

As instructed by the Asst. Municipal Commissioner, we sent word that work had started in spite of the officer's clear instructions.

**Tuesday, 23rd March:** The Ward Officer was now forced to send the 'Stop Work' notice at the site, by early afternoon. In spite of this, work reportedly continued till evening, by which time the whole front portion of the verandah was shamefully dug up!! We were given to understand that a new trustee, one Behram Ardeshir, and Bapuna, who styled himself as "contractor", supervised the work.

In the meanwhile, a Times of India correspondent who specialises in writing on heritage sites, got wind of this Grade IIA structure, and work having started on it without the MHCC's permission.

It is reliably understood that Ardeshir and Bapuna asked the lady to walk right in from the well side and chatted with her. The Times of India photograph of the rubble left on the front verandah, bears ample testimony to the fact that the picture was taken from the South side from inside the Atash Behram!

In the report published in the Times of India, of 26th March, 2010, Behram Ardeshir made completely incorrect statements. For example, it is a total lie to contend, as the trustees have done, that since "the floor was chipped and broken (sic)", it caused "discomfort to elderly devotees who would trip on them"!! During this editor's regular trips to the Atash Behram, for the last 35 years, he has not come across a single case of any old person tripping and falling, for the simple reason that the tiles are not at all

broken! This 'chipping' and 'breaking' is nothing but the fanciful imagination of Bapuna and some supporting trustees!

Secondly, when Ardeshir talks of "merely replacing old kota stone with new", he conveniently forgets that the Atash Behram building being in the Grade IIA category of the MHCC, must have the same or similar flooring, which prevailed hitherto. There is a huge difference between the old thick designed Kota stones and the present thin simple tile stone that Bapuna has brought. Two comments by elderly veteran visitors to the Atash Behram aptly sums up what we say. One said, "Atash Padshah na makaan maate aava tin-patya tiles?" The second observed, "Arrr... nava tile par kayi bhaari vastu padi to "Karaakri biscot" (old Parsee term for Cream Cracker biscuit) nee kaani tooti jashey".

Again, when the trustees talk of Bomi Mistry "employing non-Parsis" while working at the fire temple, they are wrong. Unlike the trustees, never has Mistry employed a single non-Parsi INSIDE the Atash Behram. Bomi has a couple of non-Parsees who carry out the work of say, cleaning the roof naliyas or cutting some stones, etc., OUTSIDE the building!

Lastly, the report mentions that "both sides admit the current controversy (sic) stems from a past history of conflict between the groups." Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, when in 2004, after the public meeting called by **The Parsee Voice**, to protest against the demolition of the historic more-than-200-year-old building opposite the Atash Behram, the then trustees of the Dadysett Charity Trust dropped the idea of constructing a 7-storeyed building in its place. We were grateful for that!

**Conclusion:** It's a crying shame that, as pointed out in our lead article, most of us are callously indifferent to priceless religious/cultural legacy left behind by our forefathers. The trustees of most of the Fire Temples of India fall in this category. They who are supposed to manage and administer the trust property bestowed to

them, are hardly aware of the basic doctrines and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion via-a-vis the upkeep and maintenance of Agiaries and Atash Behrams.

For example, why dark grey or black stones – rugged at times – were invariably used in the verandah or corridor, and/or the prayer hall, as well as in the sanctum sanctorum or gumbaz of the consecrated, holy Fire Temple. That they best absorb and retain the vibrations of the holy mathravani recited throughout the years of thousands of devotees, and of the sacred ceremonies performed for years and years by the mobed sahebs, is a hard fact of our religion, which is simply not known to most of the trustees of our hallowed institutions. No wonder then, that they fall for the materialistic claptrap of gloss and glitz of shine and silk, namely smooth white marbles and granites!

In the present case of the Dadysett Atash Behram, all those connected with the digging up of the flooring of the verandah are guilty of committing a heinous sin, on three counts: (i) destroying approximately the 5th Kash (circuit) of the Atash Padshah operating around the verandah, (ii) damaging and harming the **staota** or the vibratory colours/images of both the **manthra** and **yasna**, collected for at least a century inside the stones; and (iii) desecrating the sanctity of the Padshah by allowing non-Parsee workers to carry out the work on the verandah, which, in this smallest of all Atash Behrams is a few feet away from the sanctum sanctorum!

And to think that the great saintly Dastur Mulla Firoze bin Mulla Kaus, who had consecrated this exalted Atash Padshah in 1783, had taken special care and pains to ensure that every door and window were fixed according to the auspicious moment in Nature!! Dastur Mulla Firoze among other things, was an expert Najumi/astrologer like his father.

*[Work has restarted on the verandah after three months, on the auspicious(?) lunar eclipse Saturday, 26 June!]*

**Attention Trustees, Panthakis and Mobed Sahebs of Atash Behrams and Agiaries of Mumbai**

Except for those Fire Temples listed below, all others have been declared as falling in Grade IIA in the Heritage List, as per the Notification No. CHE/578/DP/Gen dated 27.6.2008. For any repair/renovation/revamping work in these Fire Temples, prior permission of the Mumbai Heritage

Conservation Committee is absolutely necessary.

Exceptions:

- (1) Petit Fasli Atash Kadeh – New Marine Lines
- (2) Soonabai Hirji Jeevanji Readymoney (Soonaiji Adarian) – Gowalia Tank
- (3) Mithaiwalla Agiary – Grant Road
- (4) Patel Agiary – Andheri

## The Curious Case of Goolrookh M. Gupta

### *Mischievous Elements Behind Her Law Suit In the Ahmedabad High Court?*

*BPP Has A Golden Opportunity To Right The Wrong Perpetrated By Dr. Aspi Golwalla & Co. 20 years Ago!*

### **Will Dinshaw Mehta & Co. Have The Courage To Take The Bull By The Horns?**

In her questionnaire sent to **The Parsee Voice**, among other publications, last August, she had mentioned her name as Goolrukh Gupta. Not once had she stated that she had adopted a Hindu name Neha, after she signed on the dotted line with Mahipal Gupta! Yes, she simply signed on the dotted line before the Registrar of Marriages and some witnesses in 1991, to be called the "wife" of Gupta.

But does the Zoroastrian religion recognise such unions? No. A detailed write-up in this regard has already been given in our last issue. If the religion does not recognise any marriage as valid except the one that it approves of, namely between two Mazdayasni Zarthoshtis, who undergo the **Nahn** (ritual ablution) and the **Ashirwad** ceremonies performed by two ordained priests, no authority – legal, judicial or executive has any right to interfere in this matter.

Through the years, a Mumbai organisation, called

the Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians - (AIMZ) has had some Parsee women who had married non-Parsees, as members. The very name is a contradiction in terms. Words in the English language can be played upon at will by interested persons. There is absolutely nothing like "inter-faith marriages", in the Zoroastrian religion. If it's an inter-faith union, it's not a valid marriage at all! It's as simple as that! And if there is some sort of an "inter-faith union", between a Parsee man or a woman and a non-Parsee woman or a man, he or she cannot call himself or herself a "Zoroastrian".

It is obvious that behind the whole Gupta episode, there are mischievous elements trying their luck, after waiting in the wings for years. Why not try a test case? And Neha Gupta, with her "problem" of presumably not being able to attend the obsequies of her old parents in Valsad, when they pass away, came in handy! The case continues in the Ahmedabad High Court.

**Will The BPP Now Shed Its Pusillanimity And Act?**

Through the years, **The Parsee Voice** has pointed out time and again that Parsee women, who have married "out" cannot be consigned to any Dakhma, if an "affidavit" is given to the PUNCHAYET, that during her life time she professed or practised the Zoroastrian religion, whatever that means!

The BPP, since 1991, when the then Chairman, Dr. Aspi Golwalla and some of his co-trustees like Eruch Desai, Jamsheed Kanga, etc. grafted what was meant to be an affidavit by such a Parsee woman, **only** for the election of a BPP trustee (as per the Consent Order of Justice Sawant in 1981), has made a mockery of the tenets and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion! In 1981, since Parsee women wanted the right to vote for a trustee in the BPP elections, the late B.K. Boman Behram, who was then the Chairman of the Board, had to reluctantly agree to a Consent Order, as the court case came up on Friday and the next day, Saturday, were the elections. So, late evening, a settlement was arrived at between the BPP and the concerned women. They were given the right to vote for a BPP trustee to be elected by the then electoral college, provided an affidavit was furnished, stating that even after their union with non-Parsee men, the Parsee women followed the Zoroastrian religion. The present Chairman, Dinshaw R. Mehta, who was then an active member of the newly formed Committee for Electoral Rights is well aware of this fact.

10 years later, as mentioned above, in the aftermath of the unfortunate Roxan Shah episode, the then BPP, led by Dr. Aspi Golwalla, to placate some Parsee women, who were once again up in arms for not allowing Roxan's body to be consigned to the Tower of Silence, **very conveniently, without the intervention of any court of law, converted the affidavit meant only for electing a BPP trustee, into one for consigning the body of a Parsee woman "married" to a non-Parsee, after her death, if an affidavit on a Rs.20/- stamped**

**paper was executed by her close relatives, that she "followed" the Zoroastrian religion, during her life time, whatever that means!**

Even if such bodies are consigned to the Modi Hirji Watcha Gandhi Dakhma, **it's a totally wrong practice!**

Neha Gupta has used this leeway or loophole in BPP's policy to her advantage to browbeat the Valsad Parsi Anjuman. In her petition to the Ahmedabad High Court, she has not only enclosed the Notice put up by the BPP at Doongerwadi as "Annexure A" but wrongly alleged in her petition that the said 'Notice' even permits women like her "to attend the funeral... at the Tower of Silence in Mumbai". The said 'Notice' does not mention a word about these women being allowed to attend the funeral of other Parsees in the bunglis of the Doongerwadi!

**Zoroastrian Religious Tradition:** According to the Zoroastrian religious practice through the ages, every Parsee Zoroastrian, who has married a non-Zoroastrian, is entitled to *Khurshed Nagirashni*. The women, too, who are born to Parsee Zoroastrian parents but who have married out, have the same right. **Therefore, their bodies have to be put in a non-consecrated Dakhma, popularly known as the Chotra. They cannot be deprived of that right.**

It is, therefore, high time that the BPP trustees clean up the **Chotra**, which has been in disuse for years and consign the bodies of such women there. Let the BPP Chairman pick up the gauntlet and set an example to the other Anjumans and PUNCHAYETS, where there are **Dakhmas**, to make provision for such **Chotras**.

Let the BPP do away once and for all with this silly, stupid "affidavit" practice, which is totally misconceived and has not an iota of support of the Zoroastrian religious tradition and practice!

Will the BPP trustees act now, so that other Anjumans don't have to suffer the taunts of their being incorrigible traditionalists, as against the so-called 'liberal' attitude of the BPP?



# The CAMA BAUG CALAMITY

## *Tower Mania Afflicts Some Of The Trustees!*

Community Cannot Be Deprived Of What It Has Enjoyed  
For 140 years

**Shocking State of Affairs Prevails When Trustees  
Themselves Want To Amend The Trust Deed  
Or Alienate The Trust Property!**

**Newly Appointed Trustee Yazdi H. Desai Rightly Questions  
The Propriety & Purpose Of Such A Move**

Through the decades, we seemed to have got it all wrong. We called it "Cama Baug" and the Agiary therein was known as "Cama Baug ni Agiary". In reality, the baug should have been known as, "Cama Agiary no Baug". At least that's what the Indenture of Trust or Trust Deed, dated the 4th June, 1869 conveys, as shown below. Thus, the Pallonji N. Cursetjee Agiary is the focal point, with the Baug or the compound being incidental, as in the case of all our Fire Temples. But the present-day trustees, led by Sam Rao, Burjor H. Antia, Hoshang Wania, etc. have mischievously laid emphasis on the baug rather than the Agiary. (It should be mentioned here that the trust came to be known as "Cama Baug Charity Trust Fund" in 1938).

The trust deed of 1869 begins thus:

"This Indenture made the fifth day of June One thousand eight hundred and sixty nine between Pallonji Cursetjee Cama of Bombay... and...

**Whereas the said Pallonji Cursetjee Cama being desirous of constructing and maintaining an agiary or fire temple to be called the Pallonji Cama's Agiary and to be dedicated as a place of worship for the Parsee community according to the precepts of the Zoroastrian religion and**

**being also desirous of constructing and maintaining certain buildings to be used in connection with the said agiary or fire temple by the said Parsee community for the purposes herein after mentioned had purchased two adjoining pieces of land which have now been converted into one piece of land at Khetwadi... (Emphasis Provided)**

The objects of the Trust are:

(1) To permit and suffer the Agiary or Fire Temple to be used as public place for prayer and worship by all members of the Parsee Community professing the Zoroastrian Religion and performance of all religious rites and ceremonies according to the doctrines of that religion and of the purposes generally for which an Agiary or Fire Temple is usually employed by the Parsees.

(2) To permit and suffer the said other buildings, furniture and premises for the free use and benefit of the members of the Parsee Community professing Zoroastrian Religion on occasions of marriages and funerals and of all other festive or religious feasts and ceremonies usually observed by the members of the said community and all such other occasions...

From the above quotes, one can easily glean two hard facts. One, that the Settlor and donor's

main aim was to construct and consecrate an Agiary for the benefit of the Parsee Zoroastrians of Khetwadi, Mumbai. Secondly, any other structure or open space was specifically to be used for celebrating Zoroastrian feasts and festivals and for conducting Zoroastrian ceremonies and rituals pertaining to marriages and deaths.

It passes understanding, therefore, how, after a span of 140 years, a tiny handful of Parsees, lured by the tower mania and filthy FSI lucre, men who are supposed to be the trustees of the Agiary, have taken it into their heads to “re-develop” Cama Baug!! There is absolutely no rationale or a single valid reason behind this hare-brained scheme!

In a note dated 24th February, 2010, circulated to his co-trustees, Burjor H. Antia, who always takes pride in calling himself an “Ervad”, says that, “A proposal has been received to construct a tower for residential purpose to (sic) Parsi/ Irani Zoroastrian on leave and licence basis at the side of the big otla after conceding space on three sides to the BMC for road widening and also use some part of the Muktaad Hall for the said project without affecting the sanctity of the Agiary”!!!

Wah, Burjorji bawa, wah! Kiska Baap ki Diwali?! This Ervad Saheb, aided and abetted by the likes of Sam Rao, Hoshang Wania etc. go out of their way to offer the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation, on a platter, as it were, space for road widening? And, in turn they want to satiate their thirst for building towers?!

When Antia says that, “A proposal has been received...” it does not indicate anything. From whom? What for? Justifying the project, Hoshang Wania, told ‘Times of India’ in this regard that, “Under the BMC’s development plan, the civic authorities can take over part of the land.” he was echoing his own words uttered in the early eighties of the last century, when, as a trustee of the Batliwalla Agiary at Tardeo, he had lost a case filed by devout Parsees against a plan to give up the front portion of the Agiary for the widening of the road. He even forgot that

recently the BMC had to give up its plan of widening Hill Road at Bandra, where are located the Tata Agiary and Christian churches, after a vociferous protest from the two communities! **Very unfortunate, that today’s trustees of our religious institutions have become so lily-livered, that they can’t even stand up to the authorities in a legitimate way!**

What is worse, Antia, in his note, mentions two atrocious points which deserve to be condemned by all right thinking Parsees. Firstly, he, as per advice from his lawyer, talks of either filing a suit with the City Civil Court (the cheek) for altering/ amending the trust deed itself, getting the Charity Commissioner’s consent or, the trustees will alienate the trust property and sell the flats in the proposed tower on ownership basis, as against giving them on leave and licence basis to Parsees if amending the trust deed is permitted.

What we fail to understand is how can anyone in his senses call himself a trustee of any property vested in him, which he is supposed to administer and manage as per the wish of the Settlor, if he goes out of his way for a sell-out?

And to think that supposedly traditional Parsee trustees could even dream of alienating the sacred land surrounding the Agiary, is to echo the words of Poet Firdausi – **“O fie on the moving heavens, that Parsees have developed such evil kerdars!”**

Secondly, as if to rub salt into the wounds of the faithful of the community, Antia shockingly refers to the precedent set by Lalbaug’s M.J. Wadia Fire Temple Trust in 2002 – the notorious instance in which the likes of Kersi Limathwalla and Zarir Bhatena joined hands to desecrate the Wadia Agiary. Antia seems to suggest that the Pallonji Khurshedji Cama Agiary meets the same fate as the Lalbaug Agiary! That is,...

#### **The Voice of Reason:**

Let Yazdi Desai, the BPP trustee and the newly appointed trustee of the Cama Baug trust, take over and ask his co-trustees some pertinent questions, not to mention, make some telling

comments in his letter dated 13th March, 2010 to trustee Burjor Antia,

**Excerpts:**

"Subsequent to receiving your note I had requested for a copy of the BMC letter notifying acquisition of part of our Cama Baug property. This is consequent to the impression I got at the meeting of the Board of Trustees on Friday 18th December 2009 that the redevelopment was necessitated only because part of the land was compulsorily being acquired for road widening.

"To my utter surprise, instead of receiving the BMC notification, I received a copy of a letter by Rusi Khambatta to Mr. Hoshang Wania which merely stated that "set back lines are shown on development plan of MCGM. Unless urgently required, MCGM does not serve a notice to clients for handing over of set-back land. This you will agree is contrary to the impression given to me at the aforesaid meeting of the Trustees.

"Moreover, this whole plan of redevelopment as it unravels is being done with complete ambiguity and confusion with no particular objective in mind. We are supposed to build 50 to 60 flats for the poor – who will bear the cost? We want to alienate the property – for whose benefit? For how much inflow? And how will we protect the sanctity of the Agiary with towering buildings hovering around it. How will we protect the sanctity of our Agiary from the invariable hawkers and servants and how will we protect the peace and sanctity of our sacred Varasiyajis?

"It is also quite disturbing that you, Mr. Antia should be citing the case of the M.J. Wadia Agiary Trust to justify the redevelopment of Cama Baug Agiary property. I am sure you are aware Mr. Antia, that in the M.J. Wadia Agiary too, the same Mr. Rusi Khambatta had mischievously designed the redevelopment such that the grand portico was demolished under a fake and false BMC permission, the entrance to the Agiary was changed from West to North and the place occupied by our sacred varasiya and space for the bareshnum gah were all usurped by the new development in spite of

promises shouted from the rooftops that everything will remain intact! On top of all this, the Agiary Trustees allowed the builder 25,000 square feet of area totally free of any cost to build an underground car park below the open Agiary land!

"Interestingly the sacred Varasiyaji of the Wadia Agiary was then housed at the Cama Baug Agiary. I am very concerned that you Mr. Antia should be citing the example of M.J. Wadia Agiary Trust to justify new redevelopment of Cama Baug, when it is common knowledge that the Trustees of the Wadia Agiary, in particular Kersi Limathwalla, had colluded with the builder Zarir Bhathena and this architect Mr. Rusi Khambatta to commercially exploit for their own selfish benefit Agiary land, which allegation is substantiated by the fact that the Agiary Trust received only 3.5 crores whereas the builder Zarir Bhathena made an obscene personal profit in excess of Rs.30 crores and continues to do so for every resale of flats in Hilla Towers in the sacred Agiary compound premises.

"It is totally unnecessary that our Cama Baug Agiary Trust should undertake any sort of development or redevelopment and in the bargain foolishly give up to the BMC our precious community land. The Wadia Agiary complex was redeveloped on the false pretext of raising funds for the Agiary and Cama Baug Agiary suffers from no such handicap.

"As you are aware, there is furore in the community already, for being deprived of its only affordable open air venue for holding marriages, navjotes and other festive functions. Therefore it is my humble plea to you and to all my co-Trustees that we immediately abandon this misconceived idea of redevelopment of our precious Agiary land and instead immediately start accepting bookings for marriages, navjotes and other religious functions for which these august premises have been built in service of our middle class and poor Parsis/Iranis".

Every right-thinking Parsee will endorse Yazdi Desai's concluding plea to "immediately abandon this misconceived idea of redevelopment..."

## Stop This Ugly Spat In Public!

In spite of all the camaraderie and the photo-ops that the community was treated to in October 2008, when seven new trustees came on the BPP Board, with a lot of hugging, back-slapping and promises of working with team-spirit, etc. the situation today is not much different from what prevailed with the previous Board – internal wrangles and mud-slinging in public, not to mention, litigation between the trustees themselves!

The community is simply bewildered why and how **mere trustees of a charity trust** can indulge in playing political football, to settle egoistic scores against one another.

If N.H. Dadrawala feels piqued and isolated, if he thinks there's injustice, he should attend Board meetings and lodge his protest and dissent where necessary. He can then go to Parsee

colonies and tell the voters what exactly is going wrong and how the community is robbed of the promised "accountability and transparency".

Unfortunately, today, he, allegedly at the behest of vested interests, plays the proverbial "dog in the manger". He doesn't attend most of the trust meetings and doesn't want to quit as a trustee, at the behest of some benefactor or the other, on his own admission! If he persists in this vein, his voters and sympathisers are bound to take umbrage at their representative not playing ball with them.

What is also deplorable is the BPP Chairman's penchant for rushing to send rejoinders to every Dadrawala diatribe in the Parsee press. Gentlemen, learn to behave as matured responsible trustees of the purported apex body of the community!

## BPP'S FUNCTIONING – A CRITIQUE

### By One Who Helped Vote 5 of the Trustees on the Board

Parsees are supposed to be adept at aping. Perhaps, there's no other community which can hold a candle to Parsees in copying and mimicking the West. Look, what happened during the 200-plus years of British rule in India. As a scholar put it, Parsees thought they were more British than the British! Nearly 63 years after British rule ended in India, the Parsee habit refuses to die. Whether it's the youth or the elders, they can't help but initiate today the American thinking and lifestyle! We don't deny that other communities and even the Indian media has fallen for such cheap imitations – be they in language (Hey Dude!!), in manners or the lack of them and, of course in their lifestyle! So, why should our geriatric "apex" body, the 300+ years old Bombay Parsi Punchayet lag behind?

**The BPP Review:** Through the years, the BPP's own House Journal – at least that's what it's

supposed to be – has undergone a sea-change, certainly not for the better. **Time was, in the eighties and nineties of the last century the journal, simple, straightforward, black and white publication used to hold a mirror to various activities of the BPP, as a pure and simple biggest Parsee trust.**

Right before us is a copy of Vol. 1 No. 1, dated July, August, Sept. 1981 of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's "Quarterly Review". The Editor was none other than the well-known writer and Secretary of the BPP, Sapur F. Desai, which was very apt: the right man for the right job!

It was a 40-paged issue containing 18 articles in all. The very first is a Message by the **President** of the BPP, B.K. Boman-Behram. Note the designation "President", which is the right

terminology for the head of a trust and not "Chairman", as is being used today, what with the fashionable corporate-culture bug having bitten some worthies of the BPP, a few years ago!

Also note carefully the purpose of the **BPP Review**, as delineated by the President in his "Message". "Several years ago, the idea of having **an official publication to disseminate information about the activities of the Parsi Punchayet was mooted by the Trustees**", he wrote. But somehow, the project was then shelved.

Thereafter, "the compulsion of events and changed time, and what is more, public demand impressed upon the Trustees **the necessity of a medium to bridge the communication gulf between the Punchayet and the community. A lot of misunderstanding and misconception about the performance of the Punchayet, assiduously fostered by propaganda in the press and elsewhere, has left the community in darkness about the real nature, quality and magnitude of the operations of the Punchayet...**

"The aim of the periodical is to present factual data about the working of our ancient and apex body."

These are very pertinent words of what exactly the **BPP Review** should contain. In the last 3 decades, except for occasional deviations, the BPP trustees by and large adhered to the format. Yes, later on, in the last decade or so, the trustees gave in to the demand for multi-coloured glossy pages and succumbed to the temptation of seeing their mug-shots at some function or the other. **But, almost every page, more or less, had a direct bearing on the activities of the BPP or any one or more of its trustees.**

The present Board of Trustees often prides itself on the fact that for the first time in its history, they have been elected by a democratic process and not by an electoral college. Fine, the trustees deserve their win. **But, just as they have the right to administer and govern the trust**

**funds and properties, as they think best for the community, they also have the obligation and the responsibility to the community in general and the voters, in particular, to keep them abreast of their functions and activities, which have a direct bearing on the benefits accruing to and the problems, both old and new, being faced by the community.**

The best outlet or vehicle for what the BPP trustees are actually doing during a month is the **BPP Review**, which has not only undergone a facelift, **but which, of late, does not reflect at all what's happening at 209, D.N. Road!**

The "Review" has been converted into a monthly. No objection. But what about its contents? And, who is in charge of editing, printing and publishing it? Until at least the May 2009 issue, the "Editorial Board" comprised the 7 trustees, "Administration" had the CEO and a couple of other top executives of the BPP, the Editor was the ubiquitous PRO, etc. From October 2009 to March 2010, Shernaaz Engineer was the Consulting Editor of the **BPP Review**. When she took over as the Editor of "Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly", Dinshaw Mehta and his colleagues virtually "outsourced" the BPP Review!

At first, around October 2009, the "Coordination, Design and Printing" was given to Mehta's bosom friend Maneck Davar who owns Spenta Multimedia. Yes, the quality of printing and the publishing style had changed for the better, although there seems to be a gaffe in the March 2010 issue, in that the obligatory statement of Ownership mentions even the "Editor's name as Mehli P. Colah!

But what happened after the departure of Shernaaz Engineer? The contents changed radically. For example, the March 2010 issue had some bearing on BPP's activities or at least what one or more members of the Board were doing.

**The April 2010 issue, which for the first time had on the Editorial Board three new members, presumably belonging to Spenta Multimedia, saw the Contents page undergo**

**a veritable sea-change!** Besides Dinshaw Mehta's "**Chairman's Message**", with his photo imitating some diva columnist (didn't we tell you in the beginning of this piece that Parsees were good at aping...?) holding his jaw, lest it fell off, the articles included, "**Community Khabar**", (annual function of the Parsi Ambulance & Nursing Division!) "**News**" contained High Priests condemning "Meher Master Moos' Heretical Act in Sanjan", how our community around the world celebrated Naoroze, etc. and a small note on "BPP Reviews Marriage Bureau", "**Newsmakers**" comprising "Our Zoroastrians do us proud!" "**Ode to Spring**" (Gustasp Irani writes on celebrating Jamshedi Navruz!; "**The ties that bind**" Benaifer J. Mirza of Spenta Multimedia, the "Executive Publishers", interviews Prof. Shaul Shaked on "Zoroastrianism and Judaism"!! "**Sir Ratan Tata Institute**" by Roshni Dadabhoy, "**For Old Time's sake**" what ZYNG have been up to! "**On a high note**" by Freyan Patel, also of Spenta Multimedia profiles two Parsee musicians!! "**Through the lens**" Binaifer Bharucha and Rustom Vajifdar shedding light on photography!! "**Ava Mahino, Ava Roj**".

Nearly 12 articles, which have hardly anything to do with BPP's functioning are printed on expensive, glossy art paper with multi-coloured pictures et al. **This April 2010 issue of the BPP Review is a colossal disaster!** A complete waste of money and the voter's time. Except for Mehta's skimpy coverage of the housing policy plus a para or two on the litigations against the BPP and their outcome, this "outsourced" BPP Review is exactly what it shouldn't be. Is this what the community in general and the voters, in particular, want?

What happened to all the table-thumping candidates during the election meetings in 2008, when speaker after speaker shouted from the rooftops about "transparency" and "accountability"?

The Chairman and his colleagues on the Board should realise that the community expects the "**BPP Review**" to be a Report Card of the

functioning and performance of each of the 7 trustees on the Board. From time to time, some of these trustees have prided themselves on the fact that they have been democratically elected by the community, etc. By the same token, these very voters who have elected them, expect the septet to come out with detailed answers to some pertinent questions (as enumerated below). The best medium through which this can be done is the **BPP Review**. It's pointless to have dinner meetings once a year when three-four Board members enumerate their "achievements" in general terms; some members of the audience ask a few questions, then everyone goes to enjoy a sumptuous repast! Q.E.D.

This is not what both the community and the trustees themselves, when they were canvassing for votes, had in mind when they talked of accountability and transparency.

In fact, six months after winning the elections, Chairman Mehta wrote in his "Message", inter alia: "This issue of the **BPP Review** comes to you after a bit of a gap. However, we hope to rectify this by issuing it at a faster frequency henceforth, so that our community members can be continually updated with the BPP and its activities.

"It is our endeavour to maintain transparency and your trust at all times, and I am sure my co-trustees will agree with me as I assure each one of you that the Board is steadfast in its single-mindedness to ensure that BPP acts only in the larger interests of the community at all times throughout our tenure". (**BPP Review** – May 2009).

Note the words, "...our community members can be continually updated with **the BPP and its activities**", as also, "**It is our endeavour to maintain transparency and your trust at all times...**"

Before we ask the questions and/or make suggestions, even the May 2010 issue miserably fails to convey information about the actual working and functioning of the BPP, except that as a sop, two pages were devoted to "BPP forges ahead".

**Our Questions and Suggestions:** (1) The Board meetings of the BPP are held once a week, mostly on Tuesdays. At least occasionally, (say, every six months) the readers/voters can be given an idea of the number of meetings attended by each trustee.

(2) The May 2010 issue of the **BPP Review** carries some details under the sub-heading **Doongerwadi Development** in the article on "A round-up of the recent initiatives undertaken by BPP". Mention is made about the "development of Doongerwadi" and how the trustees are "working assiduously for it". Among the items mentioned are: (a) the "complete" transformation of the Albless Bungli, with air-conditioners, "innovative wind chimneys", etc. thanks mainly to a donation of Rs.5.5 lacs from Roshan Lentin (who is a trustee of the Albless Baug) and her son.

The Framji Hormasjee Albless Bungli was the last of the Upper Bunglis to be built on Doongerwadi, in 1960. It is also the biggest. Some years ago, the Cursetji Nowroji Wadia bungli had two blocks, like the Bhabha and the Bennett bunglis. This was converted into one large bungli, thereby reducing the number of upper bunglis from 8 to 7. Thus, through the years, the shortage of upper bunglis where one can stay upto the **Chaharum** and have the 4-day ceremonies performed there, **as enjoined in the religion**, has, many times been felt.

The Albless Bungli is the most spacious of all and, as, Sapur F. Desai, described it and its opposite Hodiwalla Bungli, in his "History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet 1860-1960", they "have large concourse halls for women mourners, well-appointed bed rooms and dining rooms with electric fans, and well laid-out kitchenette with electric fittings".

The need of the hour, therefore, was to split the Albless Bungli into two blocks, with the assistance and permission of the Executors of the Estate of the late Framji H. Albless – and, we believe, Roshan Lentin and her son are two of them. Instead of "completely transforming" the Bungli,

as the Trustees proudly claim, they should have earned the blessings of those departed souls who are unfortunate enough to have been deprived of the 4-day obsequies at Doongerwadi because of the shortage of bunglis.

Again, in the craze for renovation of bunglis, BPP forgets that at some time or the other even any one of the depleted 7 bunglis is out of bounds for community members, who want to abide by the injunctions of the Zoroastrian religion! The restrooms in these bunglis are to be used just for that and not for a 7-hour beauty sleep! The whole purpose of these bunglis is being defeated if state-of-the-art, ultra-modern comforts, as against simple amenities, are provided for the mourners. Who on earth is then going to "keep the **bhoin**"? That is, who will constantly recite the Avesta **Manthra** near the soul in the bungli's concourse, if AC. comforts are to be provided in the rest rooms?

(b) In the same "Doongerwadi Development" sub-para in the BPP Review of May 2010, it is written that, "In order to maintain the serene and beautiful ambience of this sacred grove..." and that the BPP PRO was instrumental in collecting Rs.2 lacs from donors "for revamping the Doongerwadi estate..." No amplification is given to explain what is meant by "revamping"!

The major thrust of our complaint throughout has been that we **don't** want "beautiful ambience" or avenue of trees. **We want all efforts to be made for the efficient and proper functioning of the Dakhmas, without the vultures.**

Come October 2010 and the present Board will be 2 years old. **Has anybody ever given a thought of how to gradually phase out the worst bane and bugbear of Dokhmenashini and Khurshed Nagirishni, as enjoined in the Vendidad? Reference is to the wretched solar panels and concentrators, which, since 2001, are ruining the Dakhmas and destroying the very Natural Principle of the parallel Sun's Rays falling directly on the corpses kept on the pavis and not on iron**

**gehan or biers left inside the Dakhmas by the Nassasalars, as at present?** Has any trustee showed the moral courage to educate the faithful members of our community to the grave dangers of using artificial props and crutches like the solar panels, so that, these concentrators can be reduced in phases and finally the consecrated **Dakhmas** with **Khurshed Nagirishni** can perform their perfect role in Nature?

**Banaji Dakhma:** For the last 3-4 years, one has read and heard about the long-awaited and long-overdue re-opening of the Framji Cawasji Banaji Dakhma – first with a dome on it, then with a rain shelter, and, now, without any covering, as it should be. But, so far nothing has come out of it. The re-opening of the Banaji Dakhma will greatly help relieve the burden on the remaining 3 **Dakhmas**. And please, no solar panels. The auspicious date eludes the BPP trustees, it seems.

**The Chotra:** Once again a timid approach to a dire need of the day. This unconsecrated **Dakhma** deep inside the Doongerwadi complex has been crying out for a clean-up and re-opening for many years! Yet, Board after Board missed out – they had neither the inclination nor the will – reviving the Chotra. Will the present Board be courageous enough to open up the **Chotra** so that farcical “affidavits” can be once and for all done away with?

**Towers of Silence v/s. Tower of Babel:** Issue after issue “The Parsee Voice” has questioned the ethics and propriety behind raising the height of the Godrej Baug tower, which in itself is highly objectionable, from the original 11 storeys to 17 or 18 storeys, so close to the Dakhmas. The latest information we have is that the BMC has now directed the BPP not to keep the height beyond 14 storeys! Even then, all faithful Zoroastrians strongly object to this Tower of Babel – with its retinue of Parsee and non-Parsee residents, including domestics, chauffeurs, butlers and what-have-you – all destroying and vitiating the tranquility and peace of the surroundings near the **Dakhmas!** The trustees will have a lot to

pay for this act of intransigence, in Nature!

**3rd Child Scheme:** Besides the above vital subjects and items on which every **BPP Review** must contain detailed reports (let individual trustees write on what is happening at 209, D.N. Road), we have the “Third Child Scheme”, which has confused us. From April 2009, we are told, the incentive for the 3rd Child Monthly Income was increased from Rs.1000 to Rs.3000. But, from April 2010, even the 2nd child gets an identical incentive till the age of 18. So, after April 2010, why should Parsees bother to have the 3rd one?

**Marriage Bureau:** It’s good that the BPP has revived its Marriage Bureau, where men and women upto 40 meet and mix. But trustee Arnavaz Mistry who is in charge of conducting it, should be responsible for the games being played by prospective brides and grooms. For example, in March 2010, the Sunday edition of the Times of India reported that among the games played was one called “Queen of Sheeba”. A girl or a woman, depending on whether she was 21 or 39, asked her male counterpart in the game to remove his Sudreh and Kusti and give them to her. Without batting an eyelid, the guy, senselessly thinking that he was being chivalrous, handed the very spiritual weapons given to him by our Holy Prophet, to this silly girl – much to the amusement and applause of those present!

Is there no sense of responsibility and dignity not only on the part of the participants, but more so on the part of the BPP trustee who has always proudly claimed that she won the elections getting the highest number of votes? Wasn’t it her duty to draw the line somewhere and tell the future husbands and wives or mothers and fathers, that it was thoroughly improper and equally blasphemous – even in a game – to tinker with the sacred garment and the **Kusti**, which are the greatest spiritual gifts given to us Zoroastrians? Did any of the traditional trustees, after reading Mahafreed Irani’s report in the Times of India, at least caution their lady colleague not to indulge in



such cheap gimmicks?

**The ZYNG Thing Is Not The In Thing:** Chairman Mehta, in one of his 'Messages' in the BPP Review (March 2010) tells us: "The high point of December 2009 was the launch of ZYNG (Zoroastrian Youth for the Next Generation) created as the Youth Wing of the BPP for all Parsis and Iranis between the ages of 15 and 40." Why not a Senior Citizen's Wing of the BPP – say between the ages of 60 and 80, considering that geriatrics and modern Parsees are more in harmony....?

But that apart, in the last 5 or 6 months, "**The Parsee Voice**" has heard caustic, sarcastic remarks, legitimately passed by members of the community that a few of the youngsters had forgotten to wear their Sudreh and Kusti. Is this the new "culture" that the new Board of BPP trustees wants to introduce in the community?

We are not being spoilsports, but have you noticed the highly objectionable acronym endorsed by the BPP? Till they became trustees,

some of them were most vociferous about using the letter 'Z' for 'Zoroastrian', all by itself. Do the trustees realise that sooner than later, without the word "Parsee" in it, their ZYNG will be raided and completely overridden by the hordes of pseudo-Zoroastrians from all over the world? Then what happens to the enchanting smiles of our own ZYNG members?

All this is why we started this 'critique' by stating that Parsees are adept at aping whatever blings and baubles, gloss and glamour are thrown at us from the West. We are still scratching our heads about the absurd and tall claim made on the cover page of the BPP Review of March 2010, that ZYNG will "usher in a fresh agenda for taking the community ahead"! Towards the quagmire of extinction?

Ladies and gentlemen on the Board, we request you to concentrate on the nitty gritty of running the biggest Parsee charity trust and to disseminate purposeful information about the main goings-on in the BPP through the **BPP Review** to the community. Thanks!



### *Congratulations to our BPP Trustees!*

Congratulations to the Hon'ble Chairman of BPP for having floated BPP's new youth wing ZYNG, with a grand objective of promoting paintball tournaments, panipuri eating contest, dance shows and "crowd pleaser" fashion shows etc., amongst other great objectives to educate our youth as announced by them in the BPP review of March, 2010. Such activities like panipuri eating contest are absolutely necessary to motivate our young to reach a dizzy height of success and not think of higher education or reviving the interest in appearing for competitive exams like IAS, IPS or train for MBA's which indeed is too troublesome. It is indeed exhilarating that BPP trustees do not try to train our youth for competitive exams in Administration and

otherwise, for such attempts create anxiety and tension both for our youth and the BPP trustees. The formula coined by our Trustees to instead eat, dance and be merry, is indeed highly commendable as a stress buster and ought to be rightfully followed by other communities and their Panchayets who are wasting their time and monies in motivating their youth to work hard and come up in life through business, education and enterprise. Therefore, our Hon'ble Trustees need to be given the Highest Awards of the Land, for the brilliant discovery regarding the benefits of the merry making formulae, so that unpleasant realities of brain drain, falling population and the possibility of the community ceasing to exist in India can easily be forgotten in mirth and merriness.

Further Kudos to some of our BPP trustees for flying off to Dubai to attend the World Zoroastrian Congress, where one of the former Trustees of

BPP known for heading a radical movement, was given a philanthropy award. We all cheer our Trustees for having a happy time at Dubai instead of unnecessary worrying about the promises given during elections to protect Parsee Traditions and the tenets of the religion. The trustees have rightly kept themselves happy and entertained by watching the Dance programme in Dubai instead of worrying about the community and its problems. More cheers for our Trustees for promoting emigration of Parsee Youth to Australia, New Zealand and Canada and publishing a center page advertisement in **BPP Review** for "migration visa for professionals, degree holders, and trade people below 45 years" and also offering Parsee youth "facility to settle" in distant white lands. Our brilliant Chairman and Trustees are doing a commendable job of transporting our youth to the white countries and, in their wisdom, coming to a conclusion that it does not matter if our young be second class subjects in these foreign lands. The grand theorem created by BPP of promoting gross happiness of youth is definitely more important than working towards the goal of creating wealth and progress, which is indeed a beautiful idea which requires an international prize and award as makers of milestones in human happiness. In any event if the community youth is sent away to distant lands and merged with alien societies it will only bring great happiness to some of our

present trustees of the BPP who can then merrily build luxurious apartments for the rich on the religious properties without fear or opposition from any quarters and become truly a Builder's Parsee Punchayet (BPP). Indeed it is heartening to note that the Parsee community has never been bestowed earlier in the last 300 years with so brilliant trustees who bring happiness to themselves and the community without being troubled by thoughts of fulfilling their election promises or being haunted by the fear of extinction of the community. May the next **BPP Review** also enlighten us about the good work of our Honourable Trustee which the community is eagerly awaiting.

**Rayomand Khushru Zaiwala**  
Chartered Accountant

**Editor's Note:** We have published the above letter from young Rayomand, although we may not necessarily agree with all that he has to say and the manner in which it has been said.

However, the hard fact remains that in the last 20 months that the new trustees have been at the helm, a strong undercurrent of murmur is definitely going around amongst the traditionals in the community that the rosy picture painted by the (outsourced?) **BPP Review**, only deludes the readers into make-believing that everything is hunky-dory at 209, D.N. Road.

## Community Capers

**I. Whose Navjote Is It Anyway?  
Are You A Born Mazdayasni?  
Only Then Can Your Navjote Be  
Performed**

**Children Of D'Gamas, D'Souzas  
or Deshpandes Should Go For  
Baptism And Jannoi, Not  
Navjotes**

The lady doth protest too much! One fails to understand the rationale behind a full page advert

in the Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly recently (unless it was to cock a snook at those who had rightly objected to the "Navjote" being performed), inserted by one Roshni D'souza (nee Malloo) and her spouse Savio, thanking all and sundry who helped in performing a pseudo "Navjote" of their two children on the 16th April.

What beats us is why do Parsee women who "marry" out always turn rebellious and defiant and want to do things, which they wouldn't have even bothered about. Like their bodies being consigned to a **Dakhma** after death; like performing or attending Zoroastrian rituals, etc?

What the likes of Roshni Malloo should remember is that they are committing a cardinal sin in Nature by pottering with the sacred ritual of Navjote. Why?

(1) For a valid, lawful Navjote of a child, both the parents should be Mazdayasni Zarthoshtis, or in today's language, Parsee/Irani Zoroastrians.

(2) There are two basic parts of a valid Navjote:  
 (a) **Nahn** or the Ritual Ablution, wherein, among other things, consecrated **Nirang**, effectively created in a Nirangdin ceremony is used and  
 (b) Preferably, an Athornan with his **Bareshnum** intact, like, the **Boiwalla** of an **Atash Behram** or **Adaran** performs the Navjote.

**This, in itself, completely nullifies the candidature of the child born of a non-Zoroastrian parent, from being initiated into the Pav Mahal of Holy Zarathushtra.**

An ideal Navjote has to be performed early morning in an Agiary/Atash Behram. In such a Navjote, an application is made on behalf of the child, as it were, to permit it to enter the Zarthoshti Pav Mahal, as a **Joti**, that is, the initiator. The child is then affiliated to the **Zaota** energy of the Divine Beings obtaining in the Pav Mahal. His life-breath is joined to the life-force of Prophet Zarathushtra, His disciples and that of the Saoshyants. At that time, the Fravashi of the Prophet is present and affixes its seal on the Khoreh (aura) of the child.

What Roshni D'Souza and, all those, who like her, have their children's fake "Navjotes" performed, have done, is to mock at the sanctity of this sacred ritual and at the foremost Prophet Himself!

## **II. You Take Your Pick & You Pay The Price!**

### **Alkaline Cremation or Freeze-Dry Burials?**

**"Resomation" or "Promession"?**

**Scotland or Sweden?**

We'll be darned! For more than one reason. Firstly, we fail to understand why some Parsees should get themselves tied into knots over new-fangled methods for the "disposal of the dead", unless, of course, they belong to the crematorial cult like, Jamsheed Kanga, Homi KhushruKhan, the ARZ chaps and their supporters in the Parsee media.

For us, it's six of one or half a dozen of the other.

In the Scottish method called "Resomation" or Bio-Cremation, developed in Scotland, the coffin is placed in a special pressure chamber, but instead of fire uses water and alkali-based technique, to reduce the body down to its basic elements. Once complete, the liquid is drained off and one ends up with a "pure(?) white powder", somewhat like cremation ashes.

Within a stainless steel tank, called a Resomater, the body is immersed in a solution of one part of potash lye to twenty parts of water. The temperature rises upto 170 celsius, as gas-powered steam generators build up pressure within the tank. A chemical reaction, called alkaline hydrolysis, where boiling is not involved, separates the body into two forms: (a) bio-fluid or all our building blocks, like salts, sugars, amino acids, etc. and (b) bones, as 'bone-ash'.

In the "Promession" method, discovered by a Swedish biologist, liquid nitrogen is used to super-freeze a corpse, which is then shaken (not stirred?) until it disintegrates into a pile of dust. The pioneer of this cryogenic method, a Swedish woman, said that "the body really falls apart when its really cold and that was something that I felt was appealing and clean".

The crystallised body is then filtered of heavy metals like mercury, and buried in a bio-degradable container, which can nourish a plant or a tree.

### **Thinking of scientists & The Zoroastrian Doctrine**

Scientists of the West who come up with new inventions of the above kinds, from time to time, think of only two things: (a) the environmental

factor, say in traditional burial or cremation and (b) they are obsessed with the **physical body**, both during lifetime and after death. For them, it's always the case of disposal and disintegration of the physical body alone!

Without going into the details about the Zoroastrian method of **Dokhmenashini** and **Khurshed Nagirishni**, which has been extensively covered in **The Parsee Voice**, we shall re-emphasise that every human being has nine constituents, **less than a third of which** is the physical component! The remaining etheric and astral bodies and every single of their particles/atoms has to be accounted for, because there is **no destruction in Nature, only transformation from one state to another!**

Besides, every atom/particle made up of **anasars** or the basic elements, has to be entrusted to the Custodian appointed by Nature for cleansing and safe-keeping – **Daham Yazad**, in whose honour the last **Afringaan** of **Chaharum** is dedicated!

If **Dokhmenashini** as enjoined in the religion is strictly adhered to, the environmental factor becomes incidental, as, it takes care of itself!

No water, no steam, no fire or earth gets polluted.

### III. Congratulations!!

**The Parsee Voice** congratulates Sarosh Homi Kapadia on his appointment as the Chief Justice of India, the highest judicial office in the country. As CJI, he heads the largest judiciary in the world and is the 5th highest ranking office in the country. With sheer hard work, intelligence and grit, he rose from humble beginnings to being CJI. As per his own admission, he always wanted to be a Judge. He is a staunch Zarthoshti, embodying the quintessential Parsee characteristics of honesty, humility and integrity. We wish him all the best in his assignment. May he add his name to the list of those Parsees who have brought lustre to the soil of India!

We also extend our congratulations to the WZO (India) for upholding the all Parsee membership clause in its constitution and resisting the efforts of the WZO (UK) which is making all out efforts to wipe out the unique Parsee/Irani identity. We hope that WZO (India) will stand firm in the face of foreign opposition, to protect the Parsee community from being overrun by wannabe Zoroastrians with vested interests.

### આતશ પાદશાહો પર ગેહ ગેહ ચઢતાં સુખડો

તંત્રી,  
ધી પારસી વોઈસ,

સાહેબ,  
આજે તમે આતશબહેરામ તેમજ અગ્યારીઓમાં જતા હશો તો તમે જોતા હશો કે મોબેદ સાહેબો જે બહેદીનો આવીને બારી તેમજ ખુરયાઓમાં સુખડ મુકે છે તે ટાઇમસર ચઢાવતા નથી. જે ગેહમાં માચી અર્પન થયા પછી બીજી ગેહની માંચીનો ટાઈમ થાય તેટલા વખતમાં એક જ વાર આવીને સુખડ ચઢાવે છે. બાકીનું સુખડ એમજ પડી રહે છે. એ લોકો પછી જ્યાં એ લોકોનો રૂમ હોય ત્યાં જઈને ગપગોલા મારતા હોય છે અથવા તો પેપર વાંચતા હોય છે.

આતશ પાદશાહ ઘણી વખત બરાબર દેખાતા પણ નથી. થોડે થોડે વખતે જઈને સુખડ મુકે તો પાદશાહ સાહેબના સારી રીતે બહેદીનો સેઝદો પણ કરી શકે. આજના વખતમાં ટ્રસ્ટીઓએ મોટા મોટા મોબેદોનાં પગારો વધારી ને કંઈ પણ

જાતની સલાહ આપતાં નથી. ભલે એ લોકોને પગારમાં વધારો કરો પણ સાથે સાથે અગ્યારી તેમજ આતશબહેરામમાં સાફ સફાઈ કરવાનો તેમજ પાદશાહ સાહેબને સારી રીતે જાલવણી કરવાનો હોકમ આપવો જોઈએ. અગરજો કોઈ બહેદીને મોબેદ સાહેબને કહેવા જાય તો તે મોબેદો અમુક અગ્યારીમાં ખુબજ ખરાબ રીતે વર્તાવ કરે છે. તેઓએ ભૂલવું નહીં જોઈએ કે જે પગાર અને જે જગ્યા મળેલી છે તે બહેદીનો ની મહેરબાની થી મળેલી છે. તો તેજ પ્રમાણે અગ્યારીના પંથકી તેમજ મોબેદ સાહેબો થવું એ ટ્રસ્ટી સાહેબો સાથે વાત કરે છે તેવીજ રીતે બહેદીનો સાથે પણ વાત કરવી જોઈએ. ને માન આપવું જોઈએ. તેજ ખરા મોબેદ કહેવાય. આપણે જાણ્યે છીએ કે ઘણાં બહેદીનો પણ ખોટું ખોટું સમજીને વાત કરે છે. તો તેવો સાથે પણ નરમાશથી રહેવું જોઈએ. તેમજ અગ્યારીનું કામ કરનારા માણસો સાથે પણ સારી રીતે રહેવું જોઈએ. અને ટ્રસ્ટી સાહેબોને ખોટી ચાવી મારીને એ લોકોને શું તકલીફો છે તે જાણીને પછી બન્ને જણાઓને સમજાવવા જોઈએ. આજે એ લોકોનો પગાર તેમજ મોબેદી સાહેબનો પગાર તેમજ ઉપરની શું કમાણી છે તે પ્રમાણે રહેવા કહેવું જોઈએ.

- મહેરૂ બી. દેસાઈ