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FDU Takes The Community For A Ride! What Were They “Commemorating” on 28th October 2007?

FDU’s Cunning Cover-up By Thrusting Udvada Samast Anjuman Up-Front To “Celebrate” A Bizarre 265th Anniversary!

*“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil
is for good men to do nothing” – Edmund Burke*

It is a sad story of how, in the name of Iranshah, the trustees of the Foundation for Development of Udvada (FDU), particularly its Chairman, Dastur Khurshed Dastoor and its Managing Trustee, D.K. Tamboly, took the community for a ride. And the community obliged!

7th October, 2007: Jame Weekly and Bombay Samachar published a press release by the Chairman of FDU, Dastur Khurshed, with the head lines, *“With the Blessings of Ahura Mazda, History, is set to repeat at Udvada. Sunday, 28th October 1742: Iranshah enthroned at Udvada Sunday 28th October 2007: Zoroastrian Information Centre set to open at Udvada.”*

How many Parsees paused to think about the following glaring points in the heading itself?

(a) The word “history” had been misused, in that, a mere convenient coincidence of two dates, both of which were hardly of any importance, was sought to be glorified.

(b) The FDU Chairman, Dastur Khurshed, and all those who call themselves scholars or

historians have subsequently blundered in using the word, “enthroned”. Holy Iranshah was **not enthroned** on 28th October 1742. **It was only the date of his arrival in Udvada from Valsad!** He was enthroned in Udvada much later! So, there is nothing “historical” about the **Atash Padshah** being brought from Valsad!

(c) **Very clearly, the FDU Chairman has deliberately mixed up the so-called “enthronement” of the Spiritual Monarch of the Parsees with a totally mundane, materialistic institution (the Information Centre), which has been strongly opposed by a large number of Parsees. What is this wretched “Information Centre” in comparison with Holy Iranshah?**

(d) The same FDU Chairman had, in his own words, told the community in the Parsee press on 26th September, 2004 that, “...since there are numerous hotels and dharamshalas already existing and operating at Udvada, there would be no need of establishing any tourist lodge or **information centre**”.

Parsees! What's the matter with you? The community is supposed to be an enlightened one! And yet, rather thoughtlessly some of you went ga ga over this notice in the Parsee press?! **What history was made when Iranshah was per force taken from Sanjan to Bahrot to Vansda to Navsari to Surat... and finally to Udvada?** Bringing the Holy of Holies to Udvada was a dire necessity, as the enemy was in hot pursuit of the valiant *khidmatgaars*, who were running with the Fire! Again, didn't it occur to you that at none of these places were such arrivals of the Holy Fire "celebrated"? Then, why now?

14th October 2007: An advertisement on the front page of the Weekly, for the first time, talked of two things: (i) "Commemorating 265 years of Iranshah at Udvada", it proclaimed! Still some of our snoozers never asked themselves, "265 years? What's there to celebrate in such an odd number?? That too, when the 100th, 150th, 200th and 250th years of his stay in Udvada were not celebrated by inviting Parsees from all over the world?"

(ii) **For the first time, the name of the "Udvada Samast Anjuman" (USA) as the co-organiser with FDU was introduced!** Watch this fun: The "meeting" of the USA was supposed to be called at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday the 14th October, 2007. Readers of Jame Weekly had already read the advertisement 3-4 hours **before** the Anjuman meeting was called!!

But the bigger joke is that the Managing Trustee of FDU, D.K. Tamboly, who dashed off a 4-plus-page mail to his "Brethren residing Overseas" **on 6th October, 2007, written on the letter-head of FDU** stated that, "We are delighted to inform our brethren residing overseas that Udvada Samast Anjuman and Foundation For Development of Udvada have jointly collaborated to commemorate..."

Here was the Managing Trustee of FDU telling all concerned 8 days before the official USA meeting that the Udvada Anjuman had okayed the "commemoration", knowing fully well that the "Samast Anjuman", as and when it meets, will have to okay what is a "fait accompli"! What do you call all this? Gher no Gahambar?!

FDU's Top Brass Becomes Fuzzy-Headed For The 2nd time!

The strangest thing so far, that is, till

14th October 2007, was that Nature or Holy Iranshah seemed to have drawn a curtain on the senses of the FDU trustees, in that they were blissfully unaware of the assembly elections in Gujarat, which were already announced! This fact was well known even to a school boy in Gujarat and Maharashtra!

This was the 2nd time that the "tube light" didn't even flicker! A year ago, in November 2006, the same persons completely lost sight of the gram punchayat elections! The question in the minds of the faithful is, "Will Iranshah score a hat-trick?"

Till the middle of October 2007, all those who received invitations to attend the "inauguration of the Zoroastrian Information Centre", found that they were on the letterhead of FDU, with the correspondence address of "Vada Dasturji Khurshed..." at Cusrow Baug! Yes, even Homer nodded!

21st October 2007: So muddle-headed had some Parsees become, that an advertisement by a daily announced the "Saalgiri Celebrations of our Atash Padsha Sahib"! A third one? One 'saalgiri' is celebrated on Shehenshai **parab** of Adar. The other is held on the Fasli **parab** of Adar, on November 24th each year. Now a 3rd was sought to be "commemorated" by the FDU Chairman, who also happens to be one of the two High Priests of Iranshah!

That day's Jame Weekly was sullenly silent about FDU's shenanigans! The "tube light" had started flickering, perhaps? Only an advertisement about the already trumpeted "Commemoration of 265 years..." Nowhere in the advertisement any mention of FDU or the "Information Centre". Just the pick-up places for the picnic to Udvada!!

Perfect Plot For Priyadarshan?

"Silver coins commemorating the occasion will be available on sale for Rs.500/- each", it proclaimed. "Arre yaar, who mentioned this silver coin (which has on one side the picture of the Museum, oops, Information Centre) in the ad?" 'Shakti Kapoor' could have shouted to 'Paresh Rawal!' "For God's sake, cut out all references to FDU and the 'Information Centre! Don't you know that the election code can in no circumstances, be violated in Gujarat? Stupid!"

But, as it happens in Priyadarshan's films, no one was aware till almost the eve of 28th October,

that 'Akshaye Khanna' had already built a shamiana, bang next to the "Information Centre"!!

In Mumbai, Dastur Khurshed went about proclaiming in notices put up in some Agiaries, etc. that the function was very much on and that it would be held near the actual site! It was the Election Commission in Gujarat and the Valsad Collector, who, despite pleadings from the FDU trustees, directed them to dismantle the entire mandap or shamiana a little before the 27th October, and a new one had to be hurriedly put up on the Petit grounds!!

If the FDU trustees have even a modicum of sense of proportion and a jot of respect for Holy Iranshah, they should never repeat the mistake. Instead, they should remember the thrashing they got from the Holy of Holies – for the 2nd time!

28th October, 2007: So allergic and panicky had the FDU trustees become to the words "FDU" and "Information Centre" that the banners on the buses were cut hurriedly to camouflage the three taboo letters F.D.U. (taboo to the trustees themselves!!) Can you beat that?

But, after all, this was like a Priyadarshan farce! Everyone running around and at their wits end! *Bhagam Bhag-2 perhaps?* They forgot even at the last minute that most of the persons on the dais were FDU trustees, including the FDU chairman and the managing trustee, Mino Shroff, Burjor Antia, Homi Dhalla and Homai Mody, among others!

So, like the Pravin Mahajan trial, it was suddenly decided that the meeting for the "celebrations" was to be held in camera! Some reporters from the local press were not allowed in. Were the trustees scared that because there were FDU trustees on the dais, someone may raise an objection about the **choontny acharsanhita?** Or were they afraid that as in our celluloid farce, some speaker may blurt out, "FDU" or "Information Centre"? **And, by the way, how many members of the Udvada Samast Anjuman spoke or even were present on the dais?**

We inquired of those who attended the function as to what the speakers said. The standard reply was, "Who's bothered? We were enjoying our lunch!"

While this tamasha was enacted inside the shamiana, outside Iranshah, as people poured out of the buses, they were made to stand in a queue so that discipline(?) could be maintained before entering the small Petit building, where Iranshah is presently housed.

But in this queue also, there was a touch of Priyadarshan! Listen to this dialogue: An elderly Parsee to a couple of young girls in the queue: "Mai, how can you go inside without performing your kusti? For all you know, you may not even have taken your bath in Udvada." One of the young girls: "But uncle, what can we do? The queue has extended on the road outside. How do you expect us to perform the kusti, without breaking the queue? Once we break it, we will have to go right at the back!"

So, dear readers, the supreme irony was, that in a function organised by none other than one high priest of Iranshah, so many persons went to pay respect to the great Padshah, without even performing kusti-padyab, let alone having a bath!! And yet, the same man had the audacity to proclaim that he along with a few others were there to protect Iranshah!

Inside the shamiana, an old lady, who had given her name for a commemorative coin, and wanted to know when she would get it, was asked to clam up. No coin and No souvenir – both have "FDU" or "Zoroastrian Information Centre" inscribed or written on them!

28th October, 2007: The D(Dooms) Day! In Mumbai, the FDU trustees managed to gang up different persons to write felicitous messages for them. "Please do not mention anything about FDU or Information Centre therein. Just write about the 'historic' 265th 'anniversary', they were told. So we found that Jame Weekly of that day was splashed with these solicited messages. One of them, however, stood out like a sore thumb and clamoured for attention. That was the shocking and incongruous message of Dr. Miss Mehroo D. Bengalee!

Awakening The Sleeping Giant:

As a member of the National Minorities Commission a former trustee of the BPP, an ex-Vice Chancellor and a founder-member of WAPIZ, Dr. Bengalee, who also happens to be an avid reader of "The Parsee Voice", should have realised that

by giving such a message, she was walking right into a trap laid by the FDU trustees, particularly when she knew that she had unwittingly awakened the sleeping giant, called the FDU!

Since November 2006, the FDU, which was indirectly rebuffed by the Government of Gujarat, in that, further funds were not released, as many Parsees had raised severe objections against some FDU trustees, and particularly their two trust deeds!

So, to all intents and purposes, FDU was relatively quiet on the Udvada front. In August 2007, Dr. Bengalee, as the member of the National Minorities Commission, accompanied by prominent Parsee gentlemen of Gujarat went to meet the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, and impressed upon him to give top priority to infrastructural projects in Udvada. She submitted a 10-point programme, which was readily agreed to, the condition being that no private organisation be given the funds. The then Collector of Valsad was duly instructed, who may have also informed the Udvada gram punchayet about it.

That is how Dastur Khurshed, as one of the two high priests of Udvada, came into the picture and, therefore, as you have guessed, the FDU trustees themselves! A little before Dr. Bengalee met the C.M., a couple of FDU trustees were in the know of it.

That little nudge was sufficient to wake up the FDU giant, which took up the programme as its own and in sheer desperation, conjured up the coincidence of the Gregorian dates of 28th October 1742 and 28th October 2007.

Dr. Bengalee's 'message' published in Jame Weekly of 28th October

Reverting to Dr. Bengalee's message, let's analyse it threadbare, which even perhaps Dr. Bengalee herself may not have done! **Hers is the only message that talks of the Foundation for Development of Udvada, its trustees and the Zoroastrian Information Centre. It does not at all, even allude to the so-called "Commemoration" of the 265th "anniversary" of bringing Iranshah to Udvada!**

Everyone else, including the two top brass of the FDU themselves, refer to this anniversary! In her 4-paragraphed 'message', Dr. Bengalee sings paens of praise for the "Zoroastrian Information Centre" alone!!

We daresay that the message was not drafted by her. All that she seemed to have done was, sign it! Always remember that when you read words like, "May Ahura Mazda bless..." or "With the blessings of Ahura Mazda," the favourite expression of an FDU trustee, it's the case of the Devil quoting the Scriptures!

Secondly, bang next to Dr. Bengalee's message, the WZO Chairman's message has been published, which has specifically praised two persons: Dr. Bengalee, who, as the founder-member of WAPIZ, had agreed to be 'a guest of honour(?)' and, Dastur Dr. Peshotan Mirza, who, after continuously condemning the activities of FDU in Udvada, had supported "the community project" – the Zoroastrian Information Centre!! Incidentally, Dr. Mirza was conspicuous by his absence at the Udvada function, because he was away on a WZO tour of Iran!!

Of course, as "Guest of Honour" Dr. Bengalee was escorted, feted and, above all, reminded that she was a WAPIZ trustee in the midst of FDU trustees, all of whom were on the dais! Was not the moral code of election violated here? No wonder doors were closed to the secular media! But, what about Dr. Bengalee's principles? One more case of "Will you come into my parlour? said the spider to the fly"! Who's next?

FDU's Cunning Cover-Up:

The whole misadventure undertaken by the FDU was a cunning cover-up to throw dust in the eyes of both the Gujarat government and the Election Commission, by projecting the "show" as an innocuous religious one organised by the Udvada Samast Anjuman!! Any wonder that banners on buses with FDU initials emblazoned on them, were cut out before the buses left Mumbai? The FDU Chairman Dastur Khurshed should realise before it is too late that Holy Iranshah doesn't tolerate tamashas and hypocrisy in His name!

In the next couple of months, when the so-called Information Centre will be opened, there will be more chaos and mayhem tom-tommed as 'miracles' by the enemies of Holy Iranshah!

Stalemate : BPP Elections Postponed!

All Game-Plans & Strategies by BPP & AFP Come To A Nought!

BPP Trustees Keep Mumbai Parsees In The Dark

***Radical Changes In Election Scheme Rushed Through
Without The Community's Approval!***

**Couple Of Self-Styled Do-Gooders Lead
The BPP Trustees By Their Nose To Jettison The Electoral College!**

In our last issue (Vol. IV 9 & 10) we had alluded to the "debatable order" of Justice Khanwilkar regarding the election scheme of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, which was passed on 5th April, 2007.

What is amazing is that an average member of the community throughout has been totally kept in the the dark about what's happening. Neither the trustees, whose duty it was to spell out the details of the radical change in the election scheme to every member of the community, nor the regular Parsee press deemed it their duty to enlighten the Parsee community! Instead three men, each from Jame Weekly, Bombay Samachar and Parsiana, took it upon themselves to form a rag-tag group, calling it AFP, or Adult Franchise for Progress – whatever that means! They took it upon themselves to call the shots and constituted a virtual supra-punchayet. It issued press notes from time to time telling the community that now that the electoral battle has been won in a court of law, do as we tell you...

The BPP woke up from its slumber to issue public notice that only the Board of Trustees has the right to issue notices to the voters to guide them about any matter pertaining to the future elections.

In all this, any ordinary member of the Parsee community was completely at sea, as to what was actually happening? How, suddenly new seven trustees were to be elected, how was the 100-year-old Electoral College given the go-by? Why did the BPP trustees go to the Bombay High Court? And, what was the so-called "Historic Judgment" all about?

All that these Parsees/Iranis of Mumbai were repeatedly told was, "Now, each one of you can vote to elect a trustee. All you have to do is to become a member of the General Register by filling in a form , paying Rs.10/- and affixing two mug-shots!! So, whooppee! We have given you that right which was deprived for the last 100 years! But, remember, when it comes to voting actual individuals as trustees, do as we tell you. We shall brainwash you about the candidates we want you to vote for!"

In short, the majority in the community was in the dark as to what was actually happening and how and why did it happen. Their friends, neighbours or relatives told them in person or on the phone that they have to rush to the BPP office and fill in the forms.

It was a month or so later, after April 2007, that the impact of the whole exercise, cunningly planned and executed by certain individuals, for reasons of their own, began to seep in the minds of many Parsees, because till today, they are wondering what hit them!

So, dear readers, for your edification, we begin from the beginning and give you in very simple terms what has happened, how it happened, what will happen in the future, and how a handful of columnists and scribblers become self-appointed "leaders" of the community, playing their own game, in which some of the BPP trustees fell for their ploy!

Purdah Faash!

In order to facilitate your understanding of the game-plan masterminded by a handful of

people, concentrate on at least two points, which have been specially highlighted here, so that you will realise and appreciate how cunningly and surreptitiously the whole election scheme was turned around on its head and presented to the Bombay High Court.

On 4th October, 2006, in the Board meeting, trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet unanimously approved of the "proposed amendments" to the election scheme and passed a resolution that the Register of the Elected Members of the Anjuman Committee be abolished and that the principle of universal adult franchise be adopted.

Why? Because they felt that the "Parsi community had a strong conscience(?) that the trustees should be elected by the method of universal adult franchise." They stated in their petition to the Bombay High Court that the Parsi community is highly literate and sufficiently intelligent (what a discovery!) to understand the issues involved in relation to the direct election of the trustees.

These worthies(?) also asserted that they arrived at the unanimous decision only after considering the views and the suggestions received from the members of the Parsi community, which as we all know, is a total, blatant lie!

20 years ago, when the election scheme came up for amendment in the Bombay High Court, when two of the present trustees – Minoo Shroff and Dinshaw Mehta were trustees, it was the then active body, Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP), which had intervened and asked for Direct Franchise for the Parsee community. But Justice Hospet Suresh had told the COVP that they were ahead of the times! The BPP insisted only on a cosmetic amendment!

Further amendment was made in the Scheme in 1992-93. But from the year 1908, when the scheme was first mooted in accordance with the order passed by Dinshaw Davar and Beaman J.J., till 2006, no amendment of the Election Scheme ever asked for "universal adult franchise"!

The last amendment was filed by the BPP trustees on 27th January, 2000, which was sanctioned by Mr. Justice Mohite on 1st April

2005. By this order, the Bombay High Court had asked the trustees to conduct the Anjuman Committee elections within a stipulated period. **The trustees failed to do this.**

Instead, in the Jame Weekly of 10th December, 2006, the BPP trustees published a notice stating that they have proposed amendments to the Scheme of Election of the trustees.

How did the trustees, after so many years, vehemently opposing direct franchise by all adult members of the community, suddenly hit upon this **radical change** in the election scheme?

The answer is: the murkiest of murky politics that was thoroughly unprincipled, that prevailed in the corridors of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet for years on end! Trustees, divided into groups and cliques indulged in one-upmanship to tear each other down. The climax came when four of the six trustees in a raw assertion of political might, dramatically resigned in June 2006. Soon, thereafter, they withdrew their resignations!

The two groups felt the need to maintain a facade of good faith, after months of washing each other's dirty linen in public. A hurried agreement was cobbled up, namely that all the six would resign, so that a new Board could be elected!

But that community watchdog, WAPIZ, threw a spanner in their works, by filing an Originating Summons before the High Court, seeking a declaration that four of the trustees had vacated the office in June 2006, and therefore had ceased to be trustees from that date!

But on the 8th February 2007, Mrs. Justice Roshan S. Dalvi, on purely technical grounds, negated the contentions of WAPIZ.

Soon thereafter, as already pointed out, Justice Khanwilkar's questionable order was passed in April 2007.

Subsequent events of appeals against this order pending with the Division Bench are recent history. The long and short of it is that the community suffers because it is saddled with mud-slinging trustees.

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A BPP TRUSTEE – THROUGH THE AGES

Believe it or not, but in those halcyon days when Parsee benevolent sethias ruled the roost, there was neither Dadabhai Naoroji Road, nor the J.J. Benevolent Institution or 209, where the BPP office is today.

Actually, the Board of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet was formed on 28th November, 1823. But, long before that the Panchayet was in existence, though in a crude form.

The Parsi Panchayet in its earliest existence did not have a separate office of its own. Whoever was the leading personality or elder in the 17th and early 18th centuries, the working was carried on in his pedhi or at his home. Later, the meetings were held at the Dadyseth Agiary in Fort! The word **Panchayet** is a Hindi word meaning a group of five persons. An example of the working of the then "Panchayet" was given by Maneckji Cursetji, who wrote under the pen-name of "Q in the Corner": "The old and most respectable members of the late Panchayet made written 'Bandobusts', rules and regulations for the better government of their caste, defining punishment to be inflicted upon those who ever transgressed the same

"That such 'Bundobasts' were duly published, promulgated and approved of by their general assembly...

"At such a general meeting every Parsee, be he high or low, great or small, had a right to attend and take part in the proceedings, and offer his vote of assent or dissent to every proposition which the heads or leading members of the Panchayet used from time to time to submit for approval of their body.

"That no decision could be passed, no offender against the rules of the cast be punished, or his punishment mitigated; no religious or other mandates issued or retracted but that which met the approval of the majority; if not the whole, of the Parsees then congregated at such general assembly; **and be it said, to the honour and credit of those highly respected individuals THEN composing the Panchayet, that they invariably conducted themselves in discharge of their most responsible duties, by treating rich and poor men as alike by their decisions were ever cheerfully conformed by, and met with the highest commendation and respect from Parsees, not only of Bombay but of Guzerat and other parts of India also.**"

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, Maneckji Cursetji laments the "fall" of the Parsee Panchayet! He wrote: "**All was peace and harmony, Sir** (the Editor of the Bombay Times, which later went on to become The Times of India), **so long as the then Panchayat acted upon the principles laid down by their 'Bandobusts', and it was then that the Panchayat's decisions were held supreme even in the Supreme Court, and by other judicial and magisterial authorities at Bombay.**

But alas, unfortunately for the Parsees, such a state of things did not continue long enough – it was too good to do so."

What would Maneckji Cursetji have said about the warring, supercilious trustees of today? As some middle-class Parsees say in Gujarati – *kootra-bilada no khel chhe!*

WHO IS A PARSEE?

For the first 1200 years that we settled in India, no one bothered to ask this question, except perhaps the legendary Rajput King Jadav Rana, when Parsees first landed in India, after they left Iran.

We say 1200 years and not 1300 years, because the question, who is a Parsee, first cropped up a century ago. No one must have dreamt then that a **faux pas** by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet committed in 1905, would be rued by posterity!

In the beginning of the 20th century, the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet had issued a notification in Gujarati, dated 9th February, 1905, which stated that, "We, the undersigned Trustees of Funds and Properties of the Parsi Panchayet, do hereby notify for the information of the public that we are advised by learned Counsel that the Funds and Religious Properties under our charge – such as, Towers of Silence, Dharmashalas, Nasakhans, Fire Temples, etc. – are held by us for the benefit of those only who are Parsees by

birth and at the same time Zoroastrians by religion. Such only are entitled to the benefit of these Funds and Properties. The benefit of the Funds and abovesaid properties, in our charge, cannot be given to those who are not Parsee Zoroastrians, as described above."

As this notification was not clear about those born of Parsee fathers and non-Parsee mothers, but who were already invested with Sudreh and Kusti, another notification was issued under the signature of the then BPP Secretary, Ervad Dr. Jivanji Modi, that they, too, were entitled to the benefit of the Funds and properties!

That did it! It sealed the fate of the vast majority of the community, who vehemently opposed such a definition. It rankled like a barb in later years! A veritable licence was given to Parsee men to indulge in dalliance with alien women and have the "Navjote" of the offsprings performed. In later years of the 20th century, this blunder by the BPP, got strangely but inextricably linked with the Davar-Beaman judgement, which **never** talked of "Navjotes" of children of Parsee men and non-Parsee women!!

So, the definition of a Parsee, as per the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's own definition in 1905, was:

(i) the descendants of the original emigrants into India from Persia who profess the Zoroastrian religion

(ii) the descendants of the Zoroastrians in Persia who were not amongst the original emigrants, **but who are of the same stock and have since that date from time to time, come to India and have settled here, either permanently or temporarily, and who profess the Zoroastrian religion.**

(iii) The children of a Parsi father by an alien mother, if such children are admitted into the religion of their fathers and profess the Zoroastrian religion.

(During the course of the judgment, Justice Dinshah Davar had to acknowledge the boo-boo made by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet in 1905! – Ed.)

This then was the definition of a Parsee, right upto the early eighties of the 20th century.

Melodrama of the 80s

In early 1981, a few Zoroastrian women having

non-Parsee "husbands", filed a suit against the Bombay Parsi Punchayet that their names be included in the electoral register, for the Anjuman Committee elections. But the women's plea was dismissed by Justice Guttal of the City Civil Court. The plaintiffs rushed to the Bombay High Court, when it was just past the Court's time. So, Mr. Justice P.B. Sawant heard the counsels for the two sides in his chamber. **The Court then gave the consent order that those Parsee women who have married outside and wish to have their names included in the electoral register, should file an affidavit through their lawyers with the BPP, stating that such women professed and practised the Zoroastrian religion.**

Notice that, this was no judgement. It was just an arrangement of convenience, as the elections were to be held the very next day. Again, this consent order gave no licence to Parsee women married to aliens to get a carte blanche for future dealings with the Punchayet!

But that's exactly what happened! In the early eighties when the women went to court for their electoral rights, B.K. Boman-Behram was the President of the Punchayet. Thereafter, when A.F. Golwalla took over the reins, the "Roxan Shah case" came up before the Punchayet in the early nineties. By that time, the BPP had cleverly, shrewdly, converted Justice Sawant's Consent Order as the "law of the land" for the Parsees and not only incorporated it in subsequent election schemes, but diluted, as well as distorted it to put both males and females marrying outside, on par!

Thus, the present definition of a Parsee, according to the BPP, for the purpose of elections, is as follows:

"The expression 'Parsee' throughout this scheme unless otherwise qualified means a Parsee (including an Irani Parsee) [What's that?!] whether male or female of the age of 21 years or upwards [now reduced to 18!] professing the Zoroastrian faith and who, shall, if so required by the Trustees, have filed in the Office of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet an affidavit in such form as may be prescribed or required by the Trustees that such male or female, as the case may be, has not renounced the Zoroastrian faith, whether by reason of marriage to a non-Zoroastrian

spouse or otherwise and continues to profess the Zoroastrian faith."

A break-up of this definition is interesting: (a) Have you ever heard of an "Irani Parsee"? He could be an Irani Zoroastrian "of the same stock" as mentioned by Davar-Beaman. But there's no expression as weird as an "Irani Parsee" – a big blunder or thoughtlessness of the drafters of the BPP affidavit! (b) Notice how the "female" of the species has been deliberately juxtaposed with the "male", thereby arbitrarily, putting the male on par with the female!

(c) The twisting and distortion of Justice Sawant's consent order are evident in the following words: "... and who shall **if so required by the trustees**, have filed ... an affidavit ..."

Originally, it was not left to the BPP trustees to decide, who should or should not execute the affidavit. It was mandatory on the part of

Parsee women who had non-Parsee spouses to file such an affidavit!

But then, as all right thinking people know today, who **truly** professes the Zoroastrian faith, let alone practise it, is a point of conjecture!

The Ancient Definition: During the thousands of years of Parsee history, when the mighty Zoroastrian empires flourished, the definition of a 'Parsee' was a far, far cry from the anaemic, pellucid definition of the present times.

In that era, a true "Parsee" was one who was **pure** in mind and heart and a person of sterling character, with truth and integrity as his watchwords!

The Parsees were the Aryans or Iranians, who had the seed of righteousness and truthfulness in them (*Airi Chithra*), who practised every tenet and canon of the Mazdayasni Zarthoshti religion!!

A HEINOUS SIN & A CARDINAL BLUNDER!

What Happens To The Soul Of Bhikhu Fitter?

According to obituaries published in The Bombay Samachar of Saturday and Sunday, 17 and 18 November, 2007, an 80-year-old gentleman living at Captain Colony, Tardeo, Mumbai, died in the Parsi General Hospital on the 16th November at 10.35 a.m. We understand that he had a fall in his bathroom and was taken to hospital, where he died later.

A shocking "*Parsee maran sambandhi*" item announced in The Bombay Samachar on Saturday that none of the relatives of the gentleman, Bhikhu D. Fitter, had come forward to take his body. The report wrongly stated that the corpse was handed over to the Tardeo Police Station. What was meant was that the said police station was informed by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, whereas the body was kept in that wretched morgue at Doongerwadi!!

On Sunday, 18th November, Mr. Fitter's body was declared "**Na-varis**", and readers were informed that if nobody comes to claim the body, the body will be consigned to the Dakhma by the BPP **at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, 19th November, that is nearly 80 hours after his death!! This is preposterous!**

While one can understand BPP's stand of pushing the panic button in such cases, after the bitter experience, of the late Ardeshir Cursetjee's murder episode, one simply fails to understand the callous, indifferent approach of the deceased's relatives or acquaintances, who failed to claim his body!

The BPP should make it a rule that an unclaimed Parsee corpse will be consigned to the Dakhma after 24 hours of his / her death.

Everyone concerned should remember that the four stages of after-death procedures – **Sachkar, Geh-Sarna, Dokhmenashini** and the 3-nights **Sarosh** rituals are indispensable for a Zoroastrian after death and before **Chaharum!** In the case of the late Bhikhu Fitter, his body unnecessarily lay in the morgue for more than three days and it was consigned to the Dakhma, **after the Chaharum morning!!**

A heinous sin, indeed for all concerned and a cardinal blunder on the part of the BPP trustees!

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OUR MAILBOX

ATASH PADSHAHS & CELLS DON'T JELL

The Editor – The Parsee Voice

Time and again, signboards and notices are put up in various Agiaries and Atash Behrams, requesting the members of the community, not to carry their cellphones or atleast to switch them off, while entering the hallowed premises – but in vain. Now a recent study by, Swedish scientists, has revealed that an hour a day on the cell phone – for a period of 10 years (cancer cells can take atleast a decade to develop) could increase the chances of contracting malignant brain tumour or develop hearing and sleep disorders. Wouldn't it be correct to say that those who insist on carrying their cellphones (in an 'on' mode) while standing right in front of the Holy Fire, could contract the same ailment, within 5 years?

One often sees these cell addicts, in the Fire Temple, fumbling to locate the phone, desperately trying to switch it off, while running out as fast as possible,

when the phone rings and disturbs the serenity of the atmosphere.

So, why carry them in the first place? How did everyone manage, just over a decade ago, when there were no such instruments? How many patients lost their lives, when doctors, while entering the Fire Temples, did not have these instruments with them?

The only communication with the Lord, has to be through the Avesta prayers, A prayer is a free outgoing call to God, which requires no battery, no charging, no SIM card. The signal is always good and there is never a network problem! Infact, there is endless talk time and life long validity!

Kisi aur mobile mein, yeh baat nahin hain! Lagi Shart?

Yours Faithfully
Bapsy Karanjia

President Vladimir Putin on Iran, Zoroastrianism & Khayam

An interview with IRNA Information Agency and Iranian State Television

Question: Over these last few years you have succeeded in taking important steps that have changed Russia's position in the world, and here in Iran you are received well and are a popular figure. Iranians would like to hear about the President of Russia from the President himself. We know here that you still keep up your sports activities, and we also know that you are interested in Persian literature, especially in the poetry of Omar Khayam.

Could you tell us what you think of Omar Khayam's poetry?

Putin: I do not consider myself an expert on Persian literature, to my great regret. I have only fragmentary knowledge of Persian literature, but what I have read and heard has always interested me greatly. **The same goes for Iranian history. This is part of the world's history. Iran is a world power. Its territory originally stretched from the Middle East to India. Even part of the former Soviet Union was part of ancient Iran's territory. Iran is the home of early religions,**

of Zoroastrianism, and some specialists think that this was the source from which Judaism, Christianity and Islam would later spring. But now there is evidence suggesting that Zoroastrianism first emerged on Russian soil – in the southern Urals – and that population migrations took this religions culture to other places, including to Iran.

What I want to say is that the history of our countries and the interaction between our cultures goes much deeper and has much deeper roots than specialists sometimes think. This is the guarantee that we will always find a way of solving any problems that arise, because we understand each other.

As for Omar Khayam, I simply love his work, I like his poetry. I know that not everywhere in the Muslim world do people like his work as much as I do, but that does not make his poetry any worse.

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“એફ.ડી.યુ.” નો મૂળ નાટક વગરનો ફીક્કો ફારસ!

નાક કટા તો કટા લેકીન ઘી તો ચટા!

“ઈરાનશાહ” નું નામ અને અમારું કામ!

૨૮મી ઓક્ટોબર, ૨૦૦૭ને દીને ઉદવાડામાં

“એફ.ડી.યુ.” એ પોતાનીજ હસી ઉડાવી!

બે મૂળ વાતો પહેલે કહી દઈએ: (૧) તમે જાણો છો તેમ, “એનિવર્સરી” કે “જ્યુબીલી” વિ. ખ્યાલો, બ્રિટિશ રાજની વસિયત તરીકે હિંદુસ્તાનને મળ્યા! તેની અગાઉ કોઈ પણ પ્રકારની “એનિવર્સરી” વિ., શું પારસીઓ કે શું હિંદુઓ, ઉજવતા હતાજ નહિ. ઘણુંજ થાય તો કોઈ “રાઉન્ડિ ક્વિગરવાલા” સાલો થયાં હોય, જેમ કે, ૧૦૦, ૨૦૦, ૩૦૦ વિ. તો કદાચ કોઈ ઉજવણી થઈ હોય, કે જે બરહક હતું, પરંતુ, ૬૫, ૭૩, ૧૦૭, ૧૮૯ કે ૨૬૫ વર્ષો કોઈ બનાવને વહી ગયાં હોય, તેની ઉજવણી?! એટલે શરૂઆતમાંજ, કોઈપણ ડાહ્યા પુરૂષને લાગવુંજ જોઈએ કે, દાળમાં કેઠે કંઈ કાળુંજ છે! આ બાબત પર હવે પછી ફરીથી આવીશું.

(૨) શ્રીમંત કે પછી મધ્યમ વર્ગનાં પારસીઓ બિચારા “ભૂખાંદાસ” હોય અને તેથી જ્યાં પણ વિનામૂલ્ય જમવાનું આમંત્રણ હોય ત્યાં દોડી જાય તો કોઈ પણ એઓનો વાંક કેમ કાઢે? વળી બિચારા કેટરરને પણ પોતાની મહેનતનાં બે પૈસા વધુ કમાવાનો મોકો મળે, તો કોઈને વાંધો હોવો જોઈએ નહિં.

એટલે ૨૫૦૦ કે ૩૫૦૦ કે જેની આંકડો હોય તેટલાં લોકો ઉદવાડા વેર જઈને રમકડાં સાથનાં ભોજનનો લાભ લે, તો પણ કોઈને શિકાયત કરવાની જરૂર નથી!

પરંતુ, જ્યારે પેલી “એફ.ડી.યુ.” નામની નામચીન સંસ્થા કે જે છેલ્લાં સાડા ચાર વર્ષોથી બધાને ઉઠાજ ભણાવે છે, તે શરૂઆતમાં, યાને ૭મી ઓક્ટોબર, ૨૦૦૭નાં જામે વીકલીમાં, અંગ્રેજીમાં જાહેર કરે કે તેના આશરા હેઠળ, એક માહિતી ધામનું ઉદવાડામાં ઉદ્ઘાટન થનાર છે (પેલાં “મ્યુઝિયમ” ને સીફતથી “ઈન્ફરમેશન સેન્ટર” નામ આપી દીધું!) તેમજ એક જબરજસ્ત

“ઈતિહાસીક” બનાવ બનનાર છે, ત્યારે અમે બેઠા થઈ ગયા! ધમ દઈને કોઈએ મોટી શોધ કીધી કે, આ માહિતી ધામની સાથે પેલાં યાત્રાધામ સાથનો કોઈ સંબંધ ભોલા પણ ભાનભૂલા પારસીઓને બતાવીએ, તો બે કાંકરે એક પક્ષી મરે! આવી વર્તાણુંકમાં અપ્રમાણિકતા, આદંબર અને પ્રપંચજ હોઈ શકે! (૩) “અરે મળી ગયું! મળી ગયું!” શું? “આ તારીખો જુઓ! ૨૭મી ઓક્ટોબર ૧૭૪૨ અને ૨૭મી ઓક્ટોબર, ૨૦૦૭!” એટલે? કેટલાં વર્ષો થઈ ગયાં? અરે વળી ૨૬૫! ૨૬૫? તે વળી કઈ જાતની જ્યુબીલી? “શ શ શ... આ બાબતમાં આવા સવાલો પૂછાયજ નહીં. પારસીઓ ઈતિહાસમાં મોટું મીંડુજ હોય, એટલે આ “એન્ટરોન્મેન્ટ” (તપ્તનશીન) શબ્દજ લખવાનો, કે તે તારીખેજ ઈરાનશાહને ઉદવાડામાં “એન્ટરોન” કીધા હતા! અને તેમાં વળી આવી જાહેરાત “એફ.ડી.યુ.” નાં પ્રમુખ અને “વડા દસ્તુર” ખુરશેદ ની સહી સાથની હોય, તો તો પછી શંકાને સ્થાનજ ક્યાં હોય? માર તોપ, અલ્લાહ સચ છે! (૪) બીજો સવાલ એ ઊભો થાય છે, કે શું પાક ઈરાનશાહને સુરત, નવસારી, વાંસદા કે વલસાડ લઈ ગયા, નવસારીમાં ૩૦૦ ઉપર વર્ષો એ પાદશાહ બીરાજ્યા, તે ત્યાં ૨૬૫ સાલની ઉજવણી કરી હતી? ત્રીજો સવાલ... અરે, ભાઈ, સવાલો છોડીને સીધો જવાબજ આપી દોને કે હકીકત શું છે?

ચાર, શ્રીજીને કેવા સંજોગોમાં અને કેવી પરિસ્થિતિમાં ઉદવાડા, વલસાડથી, નાસ્તા ભાગતા, તે વેળાનાં એમનાં ખાદેમો લાવ્યા હતા, અને ત્યાં (ઉદવાડામાં) એક મોબેદ સાહેબ ભાહેલાનાં ઘેરમાં એઓશ્રીને રાખ્યા હતા, એ વાત અનોખી છે. તે તારીખ જે હતી તે ૨૭ ઓક્ટોબર, ૧૭૪૨ હતી! ત્યાર પછી લાંબે વખતે એમને માટે બંધાયલા નવા મકાનમાં એઓને તપ્તનશીન કર્યા હતા!

(૫) ત્યારે ૭ અક્ટોબર, ૨૦૦૭નાં જામે માં “એફ.ડી.યુ.”, માહિતીધામ અને આ ૨૮મી અક્ટોબરની “ઈતિહાસીક” તારીખ સિવાય, બીજી કોઈપણ વ્યક્તિ કે સંસ્થાનો ઉલ્લેખ ન હતો. પણ ૧૪મી અક્ટોબર, ૨૦૦૭નાં જામેનાં પહેલાંજ પાના ઉપર જાહેર ખબર પ્રગટ થઈ, તેમાં આ “એફ.ડી.યુ.” સાથે “ઉદવાડા સમસ્ત અંજુમન”નું નામ આમેજ કરવામાં આવ્યું, કે જેથી જેઓ “એફ.ડી.યુ.”નું નામ સાંભળી મોઢું કુમળાવે, તેઓને સઘ્યારો રહેકે ચાલો ત્યાંની અંજુમનનો પણ સાથ છે! જોકે અમારી જાણ મુજબ આ “સમસ્ત અંજુમન”ની સભા તો ૧૪મીએ સહવારે ૧૧.૦૦ કલાકે બોલાવવામાં આવી હતી! અને થોડાકજ વખતમાં બધું ઓ.કે. થઈ ગયું હતું!

(૬) રમુજની વાત તો એ છે કે આ “એફ.ડી.યુ.”નાં પ્રમુખ દસ્તુર ખુરશેદ અને તેના મેનેજીંગ ટ્રસ્ટીને એટલું ભાન ન ગયું કે જે એઓએ પેલાં “ઈન્ફો સેન્ટર”ની જાહેરાતમાં ઉકમાઈથી લખેલું કે, આ પ્રોજેક્ટ ગુજરાત અને કેન્દ્રની સરકારો નાણાંની મદદથી ઊભું થયું છે...

જડતા અને જડવાદમાં ગુમરાહ થઈ ગએલા આ સંસ્થાનાં ટ્રસ્ટીઓને એ પણ ભાન ન રહ્યું કે ગુજરાતમાં ચૂંટણી આચારસંહિતાનાં કાયદાઓ, લાગુ પડી ગયા હતા, એટલે આવી જાહેરાતો થઈજ ન શકે! આ હતી બીજી વારની પાક ઈરાનશાહની મૂંગી લપડાક! ગયે વર્ષે આવોજ એક ફટકો આ “એફ.ડી.યુ.”નાં ટ્રસ્ટીઓ અને તેઓને મળતા વિષેકોને શ્રીજીએ ચૂપચાપ માર્યો હતો! પરંતુ, ભૌતિક અમન-ચમનમાં અટવાયલાઓ આ બધું સમજી કેમ શકે?

જ્યારે ગાંધીનગરમાંથી ચૂંટણી પંચ અને ગુજરાત સરકાર તરફથી માહિતી કેન્દ્રનાં ઉદઘાટન વિષે વાંઘો ઉઠાવવામાં આવ્યો, ત્યારે પ્રમુખ દસ્તુર ખુરશેદે ૧૮મી અક્ટોબરે પત્ર લખી, તેઓને આશ્વાસન આપ્યું હતું કે, અમો તમને ખાત્રી આપીએ છીએ કે “એફ.ડી.યુ.” તરફથી માહિતી કેન્દ્રનું ઉદઘાટન થશે નહિં, અને ફક્ત અમારી અંજુમન તરફથી ધાર્મિક

મેળાવડોજ થશે! પરંતુ આ ભાઈ આ અગત્યની બીના પારસી કોમને જણાવતાંજ ભૂલી ગયા!

એઓ તો મુંબઈ, સુરત, નવસારી વિ. નાં પારસીઓ આગળ ખોટી રજુઆતજ કરતા રહ્યા કે ઉદવાડામાં મેળાવડો જેમ છે તેમજ ચાલુ રહશે! સુરતમાં તા. ૨૬મી ઓક્ટોબરે પારસી પ્રગતિ મંડળ પાસે હેન્ડબિલો છપાવ્યાં હતાં કે જેનાં મથાળામાં, આ મંડળ સાથે “એફ.ડી.યુ.”નું વળગણ પણ લગાડવામાં આવ્યું હતું! તેમાં પણ “ઉદવાડા સમસ્ત અંજુમન” નું નામો નીશાન હતુંજ નહિં! તે હેન્ડબિલમાંતો વળી સુરતની પારસી પંચાયતનો એફ.ડી.યુ. ને સહકાર આપવાની પણ ત્યાંના “પ્રગતિ મંડળે” વાત કરી હતી!

અમારું આ બધું લખવાની નેમ એજ છે કે, જ્યારે પણ અને જ્યાં પણ “એફ.ડી.યુ.” પોતાની પહોંચ લંબાવે છે, ત્યારે અને ત્યાં, બનાવટ, ઢોંગ અને જુઠાણાનોજ આશરો તે સંસ્થા લે છે!

આ ૨૬મી બનાવટી સાલગ્રેહ વિ. તો પેલાં માહિતીધામ નો ઢાંકપીછોડ કરવા માટેજ ઉપજાવી કાઢવામાં આવી હતી!

તેજ મુજબ, છેલ્લે જ્યારે ચૂંટણી આચારસંહિતાની પિસ્તોલ “એફ.ડી.યુ.” ને માથે મુકવામાં આવી, ત્યારે નાક કટા તો કટા લેકીન ઘી તો ચટાનાં નિયમ પ્રમાણે, કોઈપણ કાળે ૨-૩ હજાર પારસીઓને ઉદવાડાની પિકનિકે લઈ જવાનાજ છીએ, એવીખોટી મમત “એફ.ડી.યુ.” એ લીધીજ લીધી.

ફક્ત એકજ પ્રશ્ન આ ભાનભૂલા ભાઈઓને કોઈએ પૂછ્યોજ નહિં, કે, ઉદવાડા સમસ્ત અંજુમનનાં, દસ્તુર ખુરશેદ સિવાય, કેટલા સભ્યો મંચ ઉપર બેઠેલા? જવાબ મળતે “એક પણ નહિં. “આ તો “એફ.ડી.યુ.નોજ” બધો તમાશો હતો!

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આ બધું લખવાનો અમારો હેતુ એકજ છે, કે છેલ્લા સાડા ચાર વર્ષથી જ્યારે “એફ.ડી.યુ.” અસ્તિત્વમાં આવ્યું, ત્યારથી તે પોતાની ઉદવાડા મઘેની પ્રવૃત્તિઓ કા તો છૂપાછૂપ રીતે કરે છે, કે કાં તો તેઓનાં કાર્યોમાં હમેશાં પારસી કોમને મહામૂર્ખ બનાવવા, છેતરપિંડી, અને દંભનોજ ઉપ્યોગ કરવામાં આવે છે! દીનદારોએ બહુ સાવધાન રહેવાની જરૂર છે!