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AFP's Unpalatable Khichdi **The Mountain Laboured,** **Only To Produce a 7-legged Mouse?** *Dirty Games Some People Play*

Indeed, indeed! As Jame Weekly put it, on the 10th August, it is indeed "staggering". Even stunning, and, of course, shocking! We mean the panel of people put up for the trusteeship of the BPP. For weeks and months they toiled to get ideal candidates, but it is obvious that they have failed miserably.

Let's begin from the beginning. What does "AFP" stand for? There are more than 250 meanings of this acronym. We suggest the following for your consideration, as to which would apply exactly to the new locally concocted AFP:

- (1) Asset Forfeiture Programme
- (2) Air Filled Persons
- (3) Acute Flaccid Paralysis

The crafty mastermind behind our desi AFP, is that of columnist, Berjis Desai, who not only dreams but daydreams. No wonder, he has come out with what he called a "Dream Team", all of which reminds us of the Italian composer Giuseppe Tartini, who lived in the 18th century. Among his many compositions, is a famous work called the "Devil's Trill" sonata.

The story goes that, almost like columnist Desai, Tartini had a habit

of dreaming. One night he dreamt that he had entered into a pact with the Devil, who promised to be at his service on all occasions. After making several trials of his obedience, he gave the Devil his violin, in order to discover what sort of a musician he was, when, to his great astonishment, he heard a solo, so exquisitely beautiful that he awoke with surprise and delight, and instantly seizing his instrument, he endeavoured, but in vain, to express what he had just heard. He, however, composed a violin solo, which he named 'The Devil's Trill' sonata.

To any discerning analyst of the Parsee political scene in the last one or two years, Desai, who with Tamboly (oops, read that as "Jame Weekly") and Jehangir Patel of "Parsiana", had virtually entered into a pact with Ahriman (or Satan or Devil), moved hell and earth to ensure that orthodoxy or traditionalism was delivered a lethal blow – whether it was the resolution to the resignation drama of the four BPP trustees, the drawing up of the new election scheme, ensuring that it passed muster in the court of law, the filing of the Originating Summons in the matter of getting a foothold inside Doongerwadi for those who

wished to be cremated, and **finally scrambled up a panel of seven totally disparate elements from the community, whose names Desai announced with a lot of fanfare and trumpet calls on the 9th August.**

DIRTY GAMES SOME PEOPLE PLAY:

Before we come to analysing the so-called 'panel' of candidates, each and every Parsee voter should be made aware of some dirty games played by the Devil's disciples.

The tactics or gimmicks employed by columnist Desai and his colleagues in the AFP are:

(1) Months before the BPP elections were announced, Desai suggested "consensus" candidates with WAPIZ, at the same time hoping that the latter wouldn't appeal against the High Court's judgement in the Supreme Court. At that time, Jame Weekly kept on a sustained tirade against Khojeste Mistree of WAPIZ and Dinshaw Mehta, the present trustee of the BPP – the two persons they don't want in the Punchayet, cause they are scared stiff of their general popularity

(2) When WAPIZ did not pay any heed to the overtures of columnist Desai, he slightly changed his tune and began dropping names for trusteeship, like Sam Bharucha, etc., so as to overawe thinking Parsees and WAPIZ.

(3) He, however, soon realised that he was unable to cut any ice with people that mattered. So, he changed his tactics subtly and employed the carrot and the stick approach: in the first, he began praising certain individuals, as "honest and good" or "sweet" and "young and dynamic", etc., while in the latter, i.e. the stiletto-at-the-neck approach, the Parsi Tari Arsi columnist made no bones about how there won't be any need to proceed with the Originating

Summons in the Bombay High Court, once his and his comrades-in-arms (AFP)'s candidates get inside the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. Because, then, the new trustees would hand the cremationists, a Bungli at Doongerwadi for their pseudo-rituals and there won't be any need for litigation. He had wound up that write-up with a "Ha, Ha!" betraying his mindset and his tryst with Ahriman.

(4) The other gimmick that he kept using from time to time was, what in logic would be called "illicit generalisation". He tried to do that with some effect so as to throw dust in the eyes of the readers and listeners, particularly in his speech at the meeting on the 9th, which was sent for publication in advance to **Jame Weekly** and his **Bombay Samachar** column. Note the words he used: first of all he constantly talks of "Divine intervention", "Cosmic directing the consciousness of these good men and women..." (referring to the scorching seven candidates handpicked by **him**.) Only he keeps forgetting when he invokes the higher Powers, that there is also the Dark Side and its Forces in Nature!

He, who is supposed to be a Navar-Martab from Navsari, freely quotes from the Mahabharata or the Gita, but never from the Vendidad or Visperad...! Ask him why?

But the classic part of his insatiable love for that "illicit generalisation" comes into prominence when, like King Canute, he superciliously uses words like "the entire community" or "this community owes a debt of gratitude", etc. In other words, the man is so pompous, and full of hyperbole, that what he and some of his bosom colleagues, whether from AFP or AZA, whose members he has praised sky-high, **after** all these years, that is just before announcing the paranoid panel, forget that the ground realities of what constitutes a "community" are entirely different.

WARNING TO THE VOTERS

(1) Stop getting carried away by what Jame may tell you in its horrifying headlines or how the PTA columnist uses sugary words to lull or hypnotise you into believing that what he writes is the truth. In reality, as a lawyer, he has developed expertise in passing off half-truths as truths, or subtly camouflaging truth itself!

Look at the way he has played around with the most important responsibility of the BPP trustee, preserving and protecting the Dakhmas. After telling you that AFP will concentrate on housing, helping the poor, education, etc., he introduces the subject incidentally, vaguely, thus: "The Mission Statement of the AFP-7 provides that each candidate shall work towards strengthening the Dokhmenashini system and protecting the Doongerwadi lands". Aren't these hollow words familiar? Haven't we read or heard them before? And pray how are they going to do it? By giving a 'cremate ni bungli' to the protagonists of cremation, under the guise of buying peace!!

When years ago, BPP trustees including D.K. Tamboly filed an affidavit in the Bombay High Court, swearing that they are firm believers in Dokhmenashini, what happened when that now defunct DDD-AG group came up? Tamboly led from the front in supporting the lawyers and the doctors! What happened a little over a year ago? Three men, advised by the PTA columnist, filed an Originating Summons in the Bombay High Court asking for the performance of rituals on Doongerwadi lands for Parsees who opt for cremation. Four trustees, Shroff, Mehta, Dadi Engineer and Antia opposed. it. But what did Tamboly do? **He filed an affidavit stating that he agreed with the petitioners that a bungli can be given**

for those not using Dokhmenashini. Thank goodness he doesn't intend standing for the election again, at least, not at present! And what did Maneck Engineer do? Since the worthy forms a part of the septinal, we'll deal with him later.

(2) Do not at all be impressed by silly statements like, "Each member of the AFP-7 enjoys such a status in society, that it would be ridiculous for any one to even suggest that he or she will be influenced by or controlled in any manner by any group or individual."

They are always called the "AFP-7". Thus, only a gull or a fool would believe what that scheming craftsman of words has said. **All these seven candidates will have to work within the framework and the parameters laid down by the AFP. Their agenda will have to be that of the AFP.** An unproclaimed whip will be cracked the moment any one of these seven, **if at all elected**, veers away from the set agenda!

(3) Finally, dear voters, never forget that "Devil's Trill". In Jame, it may be shrill and strident. In the Bombay Samachar, it may lull you into complacency. It will still be the "Devil's Trill"!

THE AFP CANDIDATES

Let's read first what the PTA columnist has to say about them and then examine each one of them, warts and all.

"AFP decided that, in these difficult times, the need of the hour, was to place before the community, a panel of seven good men and women, independent of any group, faction or organisation (really?), untouched by any controversy (Now, now! You really mean to say they are all paragons of virtue?!), leaders in their walks of life, of great integrity and honesty (ahem!)."

Now, as one Sadhu said to another, "Let's get to the brass tacks!". Jame Weekly of 10th August, 2008, has given small bi-datas of each of the candidates. We shall supplement that by stating what Jame conveniently forgot to mention.

In this issue, we shall be taking up three of them. In the next, we'll take up the remaining four.

NADIR A. MODI

Nearly 78-year-old Nadirshah, as he is known to his friends (if elected, he'll be 85 by the time his term gets over!) is reported to have told columnist Desai of AFP that, "Something within me says that this is a call to duty. How can I refuse my community?" Our simple question is, why did Nadirshah have to wait till this ripe old age to listen to that "something within" him? Yes, we fully grant him that honour of "upholding the 'Parsis only' covenant", whereby he saved at least 100 Parsi buildings in the Dadar Parsi Colony, without charging any fees.

But that was donkeys years ago! What after that? Nadirshah became the Chairman of Mumbai's Athornan Mandal in the mid-1990s. Since then, several burning religious issues, particularly connected with Doongerwadi, came up in the last 8 years. Did the Athornan Mandal pass a single resolution **signed by Nadirshah** to uphold the sanctity of the Dakhmas and Dokhmenashini?

In 2001, when the "health hazard" bogey in the Dakhmas cropped up, the Athornan Mandal called a Special General Meeting on the 25th March, 2001 at the Mancherji Joshi Memorial Hall, Dadar Parsi Colony. Dastur Dr. K.M. Jamaspasa presided over the meeting. Besides him, there were Ervad Aspandiar R. Dadachanji, Vice President Ervad (now Dastur) Dr. Peshotan Mirza, Ervad Parvez Bajan, Ervad Dr. Ramyar Karanjia, Ervad Khushru (now Dastur Khurshed) K. Dastur and Ervad

Nairyosang J. Turel. **But the Chairman Ervad Nadir A. Modi was conspicuous by his absence at this very important meeting, to protest against the 6:1 decision taken by the BPP trustees in February 2001, to permit the use of the Doongerwadi complex for ceremonies, whether or not the Dokhmenashini system is availed of.**

Interestingly, as reported in the very column, now edited by Berjis Desai, "Ervad Khushru K. Dastur... appealed to the Athornans not to get carried away by false propaganda, and be united. "United we stand, divided we fall", he said. Today, the erstwhile Ervad Khushru has been installed as the President of the Athornan Mandal, thanks to Ervad Nadir Modi.

Thereafter, there were ample opportunities for Prof. Nadir Modi, as the Chairman of the Athornan Mandal to help preserve the Dakhmas – as when Dhun Baria & Co. created a racket with the photographs of corpses in the Dakhmas, or when there was a fire in the Bisney Dakhma, or when, recently, a group of aberrated individuals filed the Originating Summons against the BPP trustees, the majority of whom refused to give permission for using a bungli as a "prayer hall" for those opting for cremation or burial. How come that all along he "refused" his "community", 97% of whom want only the Dokhmenashini system to prevail at Doongerwadi? Both, as a legal luminary and as an ordained priest, the Chairman of the Athornan Mandal, could have stepped in to defuse the crisis. Unfortunately, the legal expert is more adept at waxing eloquent about case laws and sections and articles of various Acts, rather than accessing the **Pargards** of the **Vendidad** or **Hās** of the **Yasna!**

Voters must remember one very important point: the Trust Deed of the BPP begins with naming the different Dakhmas at Doongerwadi, as the prime and basic asset of the

organisation. The main questions that voters must ask each and every candidate contesting the elections are: (a) what are you going to do about the efficient functioning of the Dakhmas, keeping in mind their sanctity and the injunctions given in the Vendidad about **Khurshed Nagirashni**; and (b) will you take a firm stand against giving any part of the Doongerwadi complex for any purpose other than Dokhmenashini?

If a person like Nadirshah were to quote some court judgment or the other, instead of the chapter and verse of the Scriptures, **he cannot be on the new Board of Trustees.**

Again, when renegade "priest" Kersey Antia lectured in favour of 'Conversion' on the 2nd February in Mumbai, the Athornan Mandal, under Nadirshah, chose to remain absolutely silent! Why? **Was there no inner voice in all these instances prompting you to act for your community?**

THE LALBAUG AGIARY CASE

Let us make it clear at the outset that a lawyer is free to select his clients and take up the brief for them. Nadir Modi did just that in the Wadia Agiary case, when he represented the trustees of the said Agiary. **But, in the process, Modi as the Chairman of the Athornan Mandal and as a priest himself, gave the Zoroastrian religion, its precepts, practices and traditions a complete go-by!**

So loud was the hue and cry against Modi's stand that a signature campaign was launched in the form of a letter to Dastur Khurshed Dastur of Udvada, who is the President of the Athornan Mandal, requesting him to ask Modi to quit his chairmanship. We wondered how a man, who was appointed by Modi himself at the helm of the Athornan Mandal, could sack his benefactor! But what's noteworthy

here, is a report entitled "**Link with builder lands Parsi lawyer in a spot**" by Swati Deshpande, that appeared in The Times of India of 3rd October, 2005. Therein, Modi is reported to have said, "At my age, nothing supprises me". We ask the voters at this stage, what exactly did he mean by that? **If elected as a BPP trustee, will Modi fling such cryptic, meaningless statements at the Parsee community from time to time?**

Anyway, Modi went on to tell TOI that he was doing his "duty as a lawyer" by representing the trustees. Further, he said, (note this very carefully) "It is not ethical for a lawyer to decline a brief unless there is personal difficulty". **In this particular case, was it only "personal difficulty", Nadirshah when an Adaran Saheb was going to be desecrated, which you knew quite well?** What's even more galling is that, Modi went on to add that **he won at every stage in the case!**

And how? Here we give only three instances, which were told to us, when the suit was with the Charity Commissioner. At that time we felt that this was surely the nadir (pun intended or not is left to the reader) of any argument a Parsee lawyer, and that, too, a Zoroastrian priest and a scion of the illustrious Dr. Jivanji Modi, could make.

Firstly, Modi is said to have told the Charity Commissioner that the definition of an "Agiary" is only the sanctum in which the holy Adaran saheb presides and not the whole structure in which He is housed. This, remark was made apropos the minimum distance to be measured from Bathena's towering monstrosity that was to come up. Let's see what Modi's respected grandfather exactly had to say in this regard in his "**The religious ceremonies and customs of the Parsis**": After explaining what a fire-temple is, Dr. Jivanji Modi says, "These temples have generally a place or a set of

apartments attached where the... inner liturgical ceremonies are performed. These places are known as the Dare-e-Meher... **Generally the whole religious building, including the chamber of the sacred fire, is called the Dar-e-Meher. A little later he writes, "The building is spoken of generally as the Atash Behram or Atash Adaran." Is it that Ervad Modi, Chairman of the Athornan Mandal, was unaware of what an Agiary is or was it a clear case of the lawyer in him suppressing the priest within?**

Secondly, Modi flourished photographs, perhaps taken by his clients, of the Anjuman Atash Behram, Ranji Agiary, etc. as to how buildings and shops, even belonging to non-Parsees, were there cheek-by-jowl with the sacred religious buildings! Apart from the extremely odious and disgraceful comparison, didn't Modi know that in the past, when the Agiaries and the Atash Behrams came up in Mumbai, there were hardly any buildings/shops touching them, and, if and when they did come up, **the trustees of yore scrupulously ensured that none of them was owned by a non-Zoroastrian! If today, there are these secular buildings in which non-Parsees reside, that is only because the ownership/tenancy passed on to them, because of the exigencies of modern times.**

Thirdly, very shockingly, Modi spoke of the **Varasiaji** as an "Albino bull", and made fun of the petitioners in putting such great emphasis on a quadruped and endowing him with sanctity and an esoteric aura!! Before arguing in this manner, the least that was expected of him was to put aside his priestly **Pagdi** for good, as, without the sacred **Varasia**, Modi would never have been a **Navar-Maratab!**

Finally, the **coup de grace** delivered by Modi to the correspondent of The Times

of India in 2005, is worth remembering when you go to vote. He said, the controversy was "part of a game of life". **Should we bring in communalism before professionalism?" Communalism?! When we talk of our consecrated Dakhmas and Fire Temples, it's 'communalism'? If, God forbid, Modi becomes a BPP trustee, where, as the manager and administrator of the properties under his charge, he is sure to plump for his so-called "professionalism" rather than preserving the sanctity of the Dakhmas and their environs. Nope! Our votes certainly do not go to him!**

MANECK H. ENGINEER

The 2nd name in the AFP Panel. Maneckji made the first attempt at trusteeship in June 2001, but was defeated by 120 votes at the hustings by Dinshaw Mehta. A year later, Rustom Tirandaz was to retire. Once again Maneck tried his luck. This time, he defeated Tirandaz. Why this extreme keenness to somehow or the other get inside the BPP, we wondered. It was Yazdi Bhagwagar, who did the explaining, just before the 2002 elections. With so many Parsee lands lying vacant in Mumbai, it's a pity that nearly 900 families have been deprived of a roof over their heads, he said. If Maneck were to come in, it would facilitate construction of buildings for the poor and middle-class Parsees.

In the last nearly 6 years that Maneckji has been a trustee, we don't know how many buildings he has got constructed for the indigent Parsees. What we do know is that, at least in Dadar, a Panchayet building that was to be demolished, to make way for a new high-rise, has been held up for the last nearly five years, thanks, we understand, to the wish of Maneckji. If the present trustee and his friend Bhagwagar have succeeded in housing even a small percent of those deprived, we would really like to know.

Then ginger groups, like AZA, need not have toiled so hard recently, to create a veritable *tamasha*, with the help of Jame Weekly, at the Charity Commissioner's office?

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Soon, one realised, why Maneckji was so desperate to become a trustee. All he was supposed to do was, Follow the Leader! It began with that farcical resignation drama in May 2006., which the Circus Master had initiated. Pronto, Maneckji followed suit!

This trend became more prominent, when the BPP trustees, by a majority, rescinded the obnoxious Resolution of 6th February, 2001, by which they had agreed to allow the bunglis at Doongerwadi "to those who opt for methods of disposal other than the traditional system..." However, it was held in abeyance for nearly six years, because of strong objections from the High Priests and the entire Parsee community. What prompted the sudden reconsideration in December 2006?

Once again that mischievous imp in the PTA column had hinted at an Originating Summons to be filed in the Bombay High Court against the BPP trustees, so as to compel them to implement the resolution of 2001. Both Tamboly and Engineer did not attend the crucial meeting of December 2006, for reasons of their own.

On January 16th, 2007, Tamboly wrote a long letter to his colleagues stating that instead of rescinding the earlier decisions, the trustees should have gone ahead and implemented them! Maneck Engineer, who too, had not attended the December 2006 meeting, followed just two days later by a letter stating that such decisions of rescinding an earlier decision, should not be taken in a hurry and that he was not a trustee in 2001. He, therefore, wanted a thorough discussion on this issue. If not, "the trustees may go ahead... and note

that I have preferred to abstain from voting without adequate discussions and application of mind."

Do you, dear voter, smell a rat in all this? We do! When the issue went to court, it could be demonstrated before the learned judge that the voting was 4-2 AND NOT 5-1! The game was slightly given out by the PTA columnist himself, who of course had master-minded the Originating Summons. In the issue of 18-2-2007, he wrote: "Maneck Engineer, excellent human being that he is, appears to be a little disinterested these days in what his more aggressive colleagues are cooking up and obviously did not pay enough attention to have his dissent recorded at the time of voting, though we understand that he did vigorously oppose the cancellation but later just gave up in disgust. In any event, he has had the courage to subsequently record his dissent.....";.

What the present-day voter has to remember is that Maneck Engineer still does not object to giving a Doongerwadi bungli for rituals to be performed for those Parsees cremated or buried!!!

In March 2007, when The Parsee Voice team was called by the trustees to suggest ways to bring the Dakhmas back on the track, when we specifically requested Engineer to clear and clean the channels (nikoris) emanating from the Dakhmas at four sides, he expressed his inability to do so!

Our latest experience with Engineer was not all that bad. It was the new high-rise coming up at Godrej Baug, from which there was a possibility of the Dakhmas being visible (See our last issue). Engineer seemed to go out of his way to placate our fears. **The cat jumped out of the bag, when the AFP panel was announced on the 9th August! Watch out!!**

NOSHIR H. DADRAWALA

Standing from a panel formed by the rank heterodox? they ask us in amazement. But we are not surprised! **For, we assert with all the emphasis at our command that today, Dadrawala is not at all a traditionalist.** He loves to wear orthodoxy on his sleeves to fool the gullible. A true orthodox is known by his actions, not empty, pompous words! He doesn't have to proclaim aloud, everytime he speaks or writes, that he is a traditional. Dadrawala does exactly that! His deeds completely betray his words.

Extremely fond of publicity of any kind, he will have no compunction in running with the hare and hunting with the hound. If Oscar Wilde were alive today, Dadrawala would have inspired him to change the oft-quoted line, "a woman of no principle" to "a man of no principle"!

We have ample evidence to substantiate our contention, but **we shall give only three examples of this person's prevarication and vacillation, which makes him thoroughly unreliable!**

(1) While the whole Parsee community was thoroughly worked up by the new assault on the Dakhmas, a couple of years ago, when the likes of Dhun Baria set up by vested interests, including Dadrawala's "good friend", the PTA columnist raised a hue and cry about corpses rotting and stinking in the Dakhmas, and pressurising the BPP to give a bungli for ceremonies to be performed of those who opted for non-traditional systems of disposal, Dadrawala, instead of joining the ranks of those of us who strongly protested against this anti-Zoroastrian propaganda, had the temerity to state that one may give in to the demands of the Deen-Dushmans! What does that make Dadrawala? An angelic being? On the 12th October, 2006, the BPP

had called a meeting of all sides of opinion on this subject. Dadrawala shamefully chose to sit in the company of those who clamoured for a change at Doongerwadi!!!

(2) Since Dadrawala loves to be a *mota bawa*, and since Tamboly had once again taken him to his bosom, after he got him ruthlessly panned in the Jame Weekly of August 2003, and this timorous man withdrew from the election as a candidate, where he had stood against the smooth operator, he was invited to a meeting on the re-opening of the Banaji Dakhma. Dadrawala, among others, voted for having a roof or a dome over the Dakhma. It's the same man who, had rightly opposed any covering over a Dakhma, when an aviary was mooted in 2001!!

(3) **Dadrawala thought nothing of hobnobbing with the FDU, AGAINST WHOM THE ENTIRE ORTHODOX LOBBY INCLUDING ALL OF THE HIGH PRIESTS EXCEPT ONE, HAD FOUGHT RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING!** Not only that, the man compered the FDU meetings and programmes in Udvada, knowing fully well, that his new comrade-in-arms, Khurshed Dastur, the Udvada High Priest was hand-in-glove with the enemies of the religion!

We do not wish to waste any more space on the man we don't trust at all. All that we shall firmly state is that if Dadrawala still wants to earn some *poonya* in this incarnation, instead of trying for a seat in the BPP, he should retire to a distant retreat and listen to the voice of his conscience. *Mea Culpa!*

(In our next issue, we shall deal with the remaining four candidates proposed by AFP. We shall also explain the game-plan and the booby-trap being laid by the delusive Big Boss of AFP. Till then, we caution voters against taking at face value, what is dished out by AFP. – Editor)