

# THE PARSEE VOICE

Vol. I. 22

16 – 30 June 2004

For Private Circulation

## THE FPZAI, ITS CONSTITUTION & ITS MEETINGS Whose writ runs at the Federation?

In exactly a year's time, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India held three meetings in Mumbai, Bardoli and Mumbai. One gets to know about the happenings at these meetings from reports filed by Arnavaz S. Mama (**Parsiana**) and Marzban H. Giara (**Jame Weekly** or **The Bombay Samachar**).

They (the reports) give us some idea about the mind-sets of those who take an active part at the meetings and those who are determined to clam up, when they should be taking up vital issues concerning our community and religion. If they are asked, why they kept their mouths shut, a stock answer is, "*Arre, Federation nee meeting maan tau badha khawa-peevee avech*"! So much for the silent majority, who open their mouths only to put some food in them!

But, we are more concerned about the 'big shots' at such meetings, who keep on yackety-yacking about different subjects under the sun! These include some of our BPP trustees, their incorrigible CEO, the trustees of the Delhi, Madras (Chennai) Anjumans, and, of course, the Hon. Secretary of the Federation itself.

**What at once intrigues and fascinates us is that, almost all of them take up cudgels for issues and causes, which totally militate against the aims and objects of their own Federation, as laid down in its constitution!!**

**For example, as all of us know, the very name of the Federation has the words, "Parsi and Zoroastrian" in it. The Aims and Objects of the Federation talk of encouraging, promoting, increasing contact, cooperation, unity and solidarity among the Parsi Zoroastrians of India, or solving the problems of the Parsis, etc. etc.**

**But, what's more interesting and important is that the Federation's membership is open to those**

**Anjumans whose members are Parsi Zoroastrians. The definition of a Zoroastrian is the same as has been accepted willy nilly by the community in the last few decades, namely,**

- (a) Children of both spouses who are Parsees;
- (b) Children of spouses both or one of whom are Irani Zoroastrians;
- (c) Children of Parsee fathers and non-Parsee mothers.

So many conclusions can be drawn therefrom :

**(1) Anjumans like the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) or perhaps even the Chennai one, who have either already allowed children of either Parsi spouses to become members of the Anjuman or are about to allow such persons to become members, can by no stretch of imagination continue as members of the Federation. They also cannot call themselves 'Parsi Anjumans! Will the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Keki Gandhi, who is also from Delhi, remove these Anjumans forthwith from the membership of the FPZAI?**

But then, ironically Mr. Gandhi, himself, who has suddenly woken up to justifying what the DPA and others have done, has stated in the April 2004 issue of the FED Newsletter, *inter alia*, that, "it is... within the powers of each Anjuman to formulate rules regarding membership of children of Parsi mothers by non-Parsi fathers as also non-Parsi spouses of Parsi Zoroastrians and also to establish funds for their benefit from fresh donations and manage them."

Isn't it high time that, if the perennial noddies in the Federation meetings don't act, the Parsees of Mumbai should show both such errant Anjumans and the Hon. Secretary of the Federation, the door, for acting in flagrant violation of the Federation's own Constitution?

*contd. on page 4*

*We reproduce in these pages for record (i) the letter written by the 7 High Priests of India to the Trustees of the Dadyseth Charity Trust; and (ii) the message of Dastur Dr. Kaikhushroo Dastur Minocher Jamasp Asa, read out at "The Parsee Voice" meeting, on 10th June, 2004.*

**Re.: Preservation of the Heritage buildings  
in the Dadyseth Atash Behram Complex, Fanaswadi.**

We, the High Priests of the Parsee/Irani community of India, have come to learn with dismay that you propose to demolish the over-200-year-old residential building in the Atash Behram Complex, wherein live our priests and some other Parsee tenants.

Dadyseth House is a heritage structure where 200 years ago, the most well known High Priests of the Zoroastrian Kadmi sect lived, namely Dastur Mulla Kaus and his illustrious son, Dastur Mulla Firoze, who were both involved in the actual consecration of this oldest Atash Behram in Mumbai.

Moreover, we have been told that permission has been granted to demolish Dadyseth House on the grounds that the structure is dilapidated and beyond repair. We, as High Priests, are saddened that the "repair route" has not been sought by you and that you have instead approached a prominent Parsi builder to demolish Dadyseth House and in its place, construct, a 7-storey building. We believe that this proposed demolition and redevelopment would, in a sense, throw away the glorious heritage of our community and desecrate the sanctity of this special area.

May we respectfully point out that the Dadyseth Atash Behram Complex was built some 221 years ago and that it still stands rock solid with its architectural features and a unique old world charm. Dadyseth House is also part of this unique socio-cultural heritage; more so as two of the most famous High Priests of the Kadmi sect lived there, as stated earlier.

Importantly, taking into consideration the spiritual aspects in this case, we would like to emphasize that the Holy Fire, which burns in our Fire temples, is not just a consecrated Fire, which sparkles in the censer *but is a spiritual entity* and is seen as the Son of God. Avesta – *tava atarsh puthra ahurahe mazdao*. Hence the faithful address such a fire as Padshah Saheb – Kingly Lord, who it is held, is enjoined to live in a comfortable and sacred space, which in turn has to be created and maintained with due sanctity and care.

It is our considered opinion that constructing a Residential building of 50-60 flats will bring in its wake much traffic, with noise, hawkers and other housing-related activities to the doorstep of this sacred house of worship and its environs. Furthermore, we are informed that a new motorable road is planned through the Atash Behram complex itself which, in our opinion, will vitiate the solemnity and sanctity and destroy the spiritual ambience of the sacred Fire.

All the Atash Behram buildings should be viewed as a composite whole with all the surrounding adjuncts, which are necessary to carry out the rites and rituals prescribed by the Zoroastrian faith. Hence, structures which house the Sacred White Bull, as well as goats, etc., should not be compromised or moved to new locations. Likewise, the adjoining structure to the Atash Behram must also be retained as this structure is meant to house the sacred Fire temporarily, from time to time.

We believe that large housing complex in the Atash Behram compound will disturb the general ambience and sacred space, which the Holy Fire requires for its well-being.

We request you to respect the religious sentiments of the community and desist from any development in the Atash Behram Complex.

We look forward to your positive response, which may be sent C/o. Dasturji JamaspAsa, Linden House, Mahakavi Bhushan Marg, above HDFC Bank, Mumbai 400 001.

Yours in His service,

**Dastur Dr. K. JamaspAsa (Mumbai), Dastur Dr. F. Kotwal (Mumbai), Dastur Dr. Peshotan Mirza (Udwada), Dastur Khurshed Kaikobad Dastoor (Udwada), Dastur Cyrus Noshirwan Dastoor (Surat), Dastur Meherji Meherjirana (Navsari), Dastur Nadirshah Unvala (Bangalore).**

Dear Adi Doctor,

I would like this short message to be read out by the Organizers, as I am unable to attend your protest meeting this evening, regarding the proposed development in the Dadyseth Atash Behram complex at Fanaswadi, in Mumbai.

As High Priests, it is our duty to safeguard our religion and its rich heritage, which gives our community its distinct identity. The beliefs and practices of our faith give us a religious continuity going back to our ancestors. Our socio-religious Institutions and Trusts have given the community a well deserved accolade, "**Parsi, thy name is Charity**". Helping those in need, is a very laudable religious duty, however it should not be done at the expense of religious complexes being developed for indiscriminate monetary gains. The Holy Fire has sanctity in a sacred space, which in my opinion, should not be disturbed, irreversibly.

The Dadyseth Atash Behram complex is regrettably in the eye of a storm wherein the trustees have not taken the community into confidence, in terms of what they propose to do. To demolish Dadyseth House, a heritage structure, and replace it with a tall multi-storeyed building, is, in my view, erroneous and unnecessary, as by doing so, the Trustees are obliterating the memory of two outstanding Kadmi Priests of the late 18th century, namely Dastur Mulla Kaus and his illustrious son, Dastur Mulla Firoze who lived in Dadyseth House for many years, and in fact consecrated the very first Atash Behram, in Mumbai.

We must learn to preserve our heritage as is done by all other communities rather than sever our ties with the past. A huge new residential building so close to the Atash Behram is indeed not advisable. Instead, repairing the old structure and strengthening it makes more sense, so that the Holy Fire continues to enjoy living in its peaceful surroundings in which it has done so, for over two centuries.

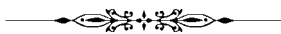
I am confident that the Mistry family of builders, whom I have personally known for a good many years, will not do anything detrimental to affect the sanctity of our Atash Behram and its sacred environment. Their noble act of wanting to do charity can easily be channelized in another direction, whereby they could build a huge, new *baug* for the less privileged, named after their illustrious founder, Shapoorji, who used to visit the Atash Behram daily and had great faith in the Padshah Saheb. Such a project, if undertaken by his son and grandsons, whom I have also known for many years, will truly help our poor who are in need of accommodation.

As High Priests it our duty to uphold the spirituality of our faith, through the safety and well being of our sacred fires and therefore I hope that the Trustees of the Dadyseth Atash Behram will desist from going ahead with a project which will divide the community further and create disharmony within our fold.

May wise counsel prevail with the blessings of Ahura Mazda in this matter and may Charity be done elsewhere by the well-known Mistry family of builders in a spirit of harmony and good-will benefiting the entire community.

Yours in His Service,

**Kaikhushroo M. JamaspAsa**



contd. from page 1

(2) There are many other examples of rank hypocrisy perpetrated by other individual members, who talk glibly at the Federation meetings.

One such is that of Mr. Burjor H. Antia, who became a trustee of the BPP, just a year-and-a-half ago. He is the same Ervad Burjor H. Antia, who fills up columns and columns of the Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly, come Pateti or Jamshedi Navroz, pontificating on Zoroastrian orthodoxy, the basic tenets of the religion, how Parsis must live lives as their ancestors did, etc.

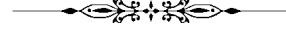
In his election manifesto and in the other fliers, he had bombarded the voters with, he had talked of how strict a traditionalist, he is.

Yet, in both the Federation meetings of June 2003 and 2004, Mr. Antia, who heads the religious committee of the BPP, donned his WZO trustee cap and "made a strong plea for pragmatism and a catholicity of approach towards Zoroastrians of all origins and persuasions (May the Good Lord help and save us!) and advocated the creation of a community tribunal to address the internal disputes". (Parsiana's report in its issue of August 2003).

This year, just a few weeks ago, the same Mr. Antia is reported to have said in the Federation meeting, alluding to Khojeste Mistree's apprehensions about forming the "World Body": "All of Khojeste's concerns were hypothetical. Have not the communists and the Americans joined the United Nations despite their differences?" (Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly's report 27th June, 2004).

Shouldn't Mr. Antia himself go back to his manifesto and the other mailers he had sent to the electorate, when Rustom Tirandaz was being "crucified" in one Parsee paper?

In our earlier issues, we had requested that "Rasna Honcho" Mr. Areez Khambatta, the President of the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayet and Mr. Dara Irani, the President of the Poona Parsi Panchayet, who are the zonal Vice Presidents of the Federation, to speak up, particularly when the issue of that notorious "World Body" was being discussed, but they, too, chose to look the other way! Why? Does the BPP CEO have some magic potion which makes otherwise loquacious persons tongue-tied?



## એક યઓઝદાથ્રેગરની મુશ્કેલી ટાળવામાં મદદ કરશો?

અમો એક ભલા જવાન યઓઝદાથ્રેગરને ઓળખીએ છીએ. સાધારણ જરથોસ્તી દીનની તરીકતો પાળવાની તેઓ કોષિશ કરે છે. પરંતુ એમનું કુટુંબ, ૪-૫ જણાનું (ઘણીઆણી અને ફરઝદો) હોવાથી, એકજ ઓરડામાં રહેવાનું અશક્ય બની રહ્યું છે!

હાલનાં જમાનામાં આવા જવાન યઓઝદાથ્રેગરો મુંબઈ જેવા શહેરમાં ઘણાંજ કમચાલ્ય હોય છે, અને તેવાઓને, કુટુંબ સહીત રહેવા માટે પૂરતી જગ્યા કરી આપવાની આપણી બધાની ધાર્મિક ફરજ બને છે.

તો અમો અમારા ભલાં, દીનદાર વાંચકો અને શુભેચ્છકોને ખાસ આગ્રહ અને વિનંતી કર્યે છીએ, કે ફક્ત બે ઓરડાવાળો એક ફ્લેટ, મરિન લાઈન્સ થી ઠાકુરદ્વાર વચ્ચે, કે પછી તાડદેવ યા ગ્રાન્ટ રોડની અતરાફમાં, તેઓનાં ધ્યાનમાં હોય, યા તો કોઈ બુર્જોગ પારસી બાનુ યા ગ્રહસ્થ તેઓનાં મોટા ઘરમાં તેઓને બે છૂટા ઓરડા ભાડે આપી શકતા હોય, તો અમને "પારસી વૉઈસ" નાં એડ્રેસે તુરતજ જણાવે!

આવાં ભલાં પરમાર્થી કામમાં એક practising યઓઝદાથ્રેગર ને આપણી નૈતિક ફરજ તરીકે મદદ કરીશું, તો કુદરતમાં ચોક્કસ પુણ્ય ઊભું કરીશું !

## બાધું, પીધું ને...

હા, હા! હાલમાં પૂરી થએલી ફેડરેશન ઑફ પારસી જરથોસ્તી અન્બુમન્ઝ ઑફ ઈન્ડિયા નાં પણ એજ હાલ થયા! દિલ્લી પારસી અન્બુમન અને મુંબઈ પારસી પંચાયતનાં કેટલાક ટ્રસ્ટીઓએ પોતાનાં ઈબરાની બાળ બિલાવી બીબા બધાઓની ગોચા બોલતીજ બંધ કરી દીધી. કોઈકો, જેઓ કાંઈ બોલવા હાથ ઉપર કરે તો સેકેટરી, શ્રી કેકી ગાંધી, તેઓને હાથ કરી બેસાડી દે!

એક ભાઈએ ફરિયાદ કરી કે જુન ૨૦૦૩ ની મીટિંગમાં એઓ બાવળની કાઠીની સમસ્યા માટે કાંઈક કહેવા માંગતા હતા, પણ એઓને બેસી જવા જણાવ્યું હતું!

મુંબઈ અને ગુજરાતનાં પારસીઓએ સાથે મળી આ ફેડરેશનની સભાઓ સામે વિરોધ કરવોજ જોઈએ, કારણ ત્યાં કોમ અને દીનનાં પાયાઓ ખણી કાઢવાનીજ ચર્ચાઓ થાય છે!

