

THE PARSEE VOICE

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Editorial

Calling All Parsee Zarthoshti Anjumans / Punchayets !

BOMBSHELL AT BARDOLI!!

A six-paged circular-letter dated the 26th June, 2003, was sent to all the Anjumans and Punchayets by B.T. Dastur, Chief Executive of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, wherein he wrote, "A few vital issues concerning the survival and growth of our small, but great, Community were discussed" (at the Federation meeting in Mumbai on 7th and 8th June, 2003).

Further he wrote, "Chairman, Mr. M.R. Shroff, felt that very many of those issues were momentous in character, and deserved a full day's discussion, at our Federation's next meeting, at Bardoli on 29th and 30th November, 2003."

Dastur then enumerates "the items which deserve your Punchayet/Anjuman's closest study and attention..."

Among these items are : the high divorce rate amongst the Parsees; one-third of the Parsees marry outside...; children of mixed marriages; adoption among the Parsees; three calendars prevailing in the community and their 'unification'; assets of the community; the institution of Khandhias and Nassesalars; population of the Parsees, etc. etc.

This so-called "dossier" of Dastur is even more loaded than that of the late Dr. David Kelly!

For our purpose, we wish to draw the urgent attention of the Punchayets/Anjumans to the following topics, which cannot/should not be brought up at a Federation meeting, before

being thoroughly discussed in the community, particularly among the High Priests, the Athornans and the religious scholars.

But before taking them up, we would like to give a brief history of the Federation of the Parsi Zarthoshti Anjumans of India (FPZAI) for the benefit of our readers, and particularly, for the present-day trustees and members of various Anjumans.

Brief History of FPZAI and the role played by the BPP

The Federation came into being in 1970, with the laudable purpose of bringing the scattered Punchayets and Anjumans of India on a common platform. But soon, it was found that a couple of the members, led by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, were calling the shots. Their favourite hobbyhorse was the acceptance of the children of inter-married Parsee women and the women themselves as members of their Anjumans.

In Mumbai, the then daily Jam-e-Jamshed, edited by Adi Marzban, carried articles and letters from irate Parsees asking the BPP to quit the Federation. After Mr. B.K. BomanBehram became the Chairman of the BPP, it resigned its membership of the Federation in January 1978. A jubilant community held a public meeting at Dhobi Talao's Framjee Cawasjee Institute on 19th February, 1978, where, **under the chairmanship of Dastur Dr. H.K. Mirza, the erudite speakers, including Dastur Dr. Firoz Kotwal,**

Ervad Dr. Minocher Karkhanawalla, Dastur Kaikobad Firoze Dastur of Udwada, and Mr. Homi H.J.H. Taleyarkhan, lambasted the irreligious activities of the Federation, that proved dangerous to the very existence of the Parsee community and its separate identity.

Three resolutions were passed condemning mixed marriages and conversion, the attack against Dokhmenashini, praising the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet for resigning from the Federation, etc.

Following this, many other Anjumans and Punchayets left the Federation, as petty quarrels and spats became rampant in the Federation. The FPZAI was, at that stage, virtually on its last legs. On the 12th April, 1981, an extraordinary meeting of the Federation was called in New Delhi. The bickerings reached such heights, that a member was forced to exclaim, "We want a Federation which works."

A new strategy was sought to be evolved by the remnant of the Federation. It sent feelers to Mr. Nani Palkhivala to be the President of the Federation. Mr. Palkhivala, however, after learning the facts, refused to preside over a mere "rump"! As a journalist put it, "He refused to fritter away his time in an association where unending bickerings are going on!"

When Dr. Aspi Golwala became the Chairman of the BPP, fresh overtures were made by the DPA President, Mr. Nargolwala, to entice it to rejoin the Federation. **The BPP soon succumbed, with Dr. Golwala assuring the Mumbai Parsees that at no time will the Federation and the BPP be guided by the policies of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. These assurances were given**

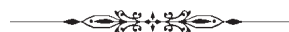
in connection with the righteous apprehensions of the Mumbai Parsees, regarding *juddin* marriages, cremation etc.

Behind our Backs

Today, we want to tell the entire Parsee community that all kinds of tactics and strategies are employed by a couple of trustees of the BPP and their CEO, B.T. Dastur, at various Federation meetings, to push through items and agendas that are totally detrimental to our Mazdayasni Zarthoshti religion, and to the unique separate identity of the Parsees, which they have preserved in India for more than 1200 years.

It was the same B.T. Dastur, who had the cheek to exclaim at the Federation meeting in Mhow, in November 1999, "If (according) to the earlier charter, controversial issues will not be discussed, the Federation is not worth its salt"! Since when has a Punchayet CEO enjoyed such unbridled powers?

We strongly urge all small and big Anjumans and Punchayets to see through the gameplan of the BPP representatives at the Federation and to protest strongly against their destructive tactics. It is up to you, particularly the Anjumans/Punchayets of Pune, Ahmedabad, Surat, Navsari, etc. to apply the brakes to the mindless hurtling, across the precipice, of the juggernaut called the Bombay Parsi Punchayet! Raise your voice against the BPP's agenda of anti-religious topics! Before the Bardoli meeting, "The Parsee Voice" will carry articles touching on these explosive subjects.



A PYRRHIC VICTORY!

One wonders why champagne was uncorked at 209, D.N. Road, Mumbai on the evening of the 27th September, 2003!! What were they celebrating? **Out of a total of 1350 voters, which means just about 3% of the total approximate population of say 45,000 Parsees in Mumbai, Mr. D.K. Tamboly got 490 votes! That works out to only 36% of the total number of existing voters and 76% of those who actually voted!**

Here was a "sitting trustee" **for seven years**, who believed like a pompous panjandrum, throwing his weight about in Parsee baugs and colonies, where the self-appointed 'dadas' refused his opponent, Yazdi Desai, a total new-comer, who had just **one month** to contest the election, a platform in Navroze Baug, Panthaky Baug and Cusrow Baug, to name only a few, to address the voters!

What do the BPP trustees think themselves to be? Omnipotent owners of these baugs? Does it have to be drilled into their minds that they are only supposed to manage and administer the funds and properties they hold in trust for the benefit of the Parsee community, and that they are no more *Akabars* or *Sethias*?

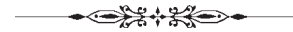
What kind of an election is this, where the "sitting trustee" virtually "buys" the votes? **The WZO crumbs that Mr. Tamboly threw in the last seven years, where the recipients of the largesse felt obliged to vote for him now, during the BPP elections, militates against all sense of equity and justice. Not only that, it flouts and makes a mockery of the very principles of the BPP Election Scheme, as laid down by the Hon. Courts from time to time!**

It was indeed a pyrrhic victory that was celebrated that evening of the 27th September. And what role did a section of the Parsee press play in all this? **Ignominious!** Instead of creating a level-playing field for a totally new candidate (all these talks of "democracy" seemed so hollow!), week after week that old, doddering "Jame", lived up to its recent

reputation, of plumbing the depths of rabid journalism! Not only that, the weekly created a laughable *faux pas*, when exactly a fortnight before the elections, it wrote in its Gujarati editorial, "*Gayi Kaale* (that is, on the 13th September) *choontni na parinaam maan, doodh nu doodh and paani nu paani purvaar thayi gayun*".

Berjis Desai, the columnist of the "Parsi Tari Aarsi" column in the Bombay Samchar Weekly almost did a ditto! Obviously, having filed his "report" before the normal deadline, he bungled in the 28th September issue by stating: "Dinshaw Tamboly was elected last evening by a humungous (the by-now hackneyed term made popular by Jaipal Reddy) majority. Yazdi Desai was smashed like an irritating mosquito". Earlier, he had glibly talked of fruitcakes and spongecakes or even nutcakes; that Yazdi Desai would be eaten for dinner by Tamboly on the 27th September, etc. Black humour couldn't have gone so far!

At the end of it all, both 'Jame' and Berjis Desai, themselves, had to eat crow!!

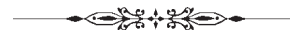


Our Associate Editor writes

Though Yazdi may have lost the BPP seat to Tamboly, he is still a winner on many counts. In all honesty, neither Yazdi nor any of his team members had any illusions of victory. We knew all along that this was going to be an uphill task. He had just one month in which to campaign, a campaign in which he had to actually go from door to door to put across his view. Jame was giving nothing but adverse publicity and certain baug associations had literally ganged up against him and refused to provide a platform from which he could put forth his case to all the voters. His request to Tamboly to meet him on a common platform also went unanswered. In spite of all this, he still secured 23% of the votes polled. This itself is a victory of sorts! **These were protest votes against Tamboly.**

In all this, the most important objective of informing the community about various issues, was achieved. Yazdi stood up like a real MAN and fought for the principles and issues that he dearly espoused. He cared for his community and religion and willingly held the banner of orthodoxy high without worrying about failure.

I salute you, Yazdi and thank you for sharing our convictions and joining our common cause of protecting the religion and community. It was indeed an honour to be associated with your campaign. I also salute his dynamic wife, Anahita, who stood like the proverbial Rock of Gibraltar behind him through all this.



પારસી કોમની પીઠ પાછળ થતા કાવાદાવા !

હિંદની પારસી પંચાયતો અને અંજુમનોએ જાગ્રત અને સતેજ રહેવાની તાતી જરૂર !

પ્રિય વાંચકો

“ધી પારસી વૉઈસ” તમારી તહેનાત માં આજે પહેલી વાર આ ગુજરાતી વિભાગ મારફતે રજુ થાય છે. આ શરૂઆતનાંજ અંકમાં અમો એક ચેતવણીનું રણશગું ખાસ ફૂંકીએ છીએ.

છેલ્લા થોડાક વર્ષોથી સમગ્ર પારસી કોમની જાણ બહાર મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયત અને એના વિષેકો, પારસી કોમનાં અને જરથોશ્તી દીનનાં પાયાઓ ખણી રહ્યા છે, જેની જાણ કોઈને ખાસ થતીજ નથી, એટલી સીફતથી આ કાર્યો કરવામાં આવે છે!

ગયા જુન મહિનામાં, મુંબઈમાં, બે દિવસ સુધી ફેડરેશન ઓફ પારસી જરથોશ્તી અંજુમન્સ ઓફ ઈન્ડિયાની બેઠક મળી હતી. તેની અંદર જે વિષયો ચર્ચાયા, તે કોમની હસ્તી-નીસ્તી ને હિળાવી દે, તેવા હતા :

(૧) ખાંધ્યા-નસેસાલારો ની સેંકડો વર્ષોની રૂઢી ને હીલાંજલી આપવી; (૨) પારસી કોમમાં હાલમાં ત્રણ પંચાંગો ચાલે છે, તેને એકત્ર કરી, ફક્ત “ફસ્લી” પંચાંગ ચાલુ રાખવું; (૩) પારસીઓમાં દત્તક લેવાનો કાયદો શરૂ કરાવવો જોઈએ; (૪) જુદીન “લગ્નો” કરતી પારસી ઔરતનાં ફરજાંદોને, જરથોશ્તી દીનમાં લેવા, વિગેરે.

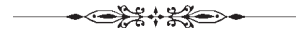
જ્યારે વર્ષો અગાઉ, મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયત આ ફેડરેશનમાં ૧૯૮૦નાં દાયકામાં ફરીથી જોડાઈ હતી, ત્યારે મુંબઈનાં પારસીઓએ કેટલાક વાજબી વાંધાઓ ઉઠાવ્યા હતા, કે જે

વાંધાઓને તે વેળાનાં પંચાયતનાં પ્રમુખ ડો. અરુપી ગોલવાળાએ, પાયા વિનાનાં જણાવ્યા હતા, અને ખાત્રી આપી હતી કે જુદીન પ્રશ્ન, તેમજ બીજા વાંધા ભરેલા વિષયો, અમો ફેડરેશનની મીટિંગોમાં ચર્ચાશું નહિં. આજે, આજ મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયતનાં કોઈક ત્રસ્ટીઓ અને તેમના વડા કાર્યકારી ઓફિસર, બી.ટી. દસ્તુરની આગેવાની કેઠાળ, કોમ અને દીનને અતિષ્ય નુકસાન કરનારા વિષયો, આ ફેડરેશનની સભાઓમાં ચર્ચા તેની ઉપર કાર્ય કરવામાં આવે છે!!

આ બધું, મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયત, પારસી કોમની જાગ્ર બહાર કરી, નાની અંજુમનોને પોતાની તરફેણમાં કરી, કરાવી રહી છે.

આવતી બારડોલીની ફેડરેશનની સભામાં પાગુ આજ મુદ્દાઓ, જેમાંનાં કેટલાક તો કોઈ પાગુ પંચાયત કે અંજુમનનાં બંધારણની બહારનાં વિષયો છે, જે આ ફેડરેશનને કોઈ સત્તાજ નથી, કે કોમનાં દસ્તુરો અને દીનનાં સ્કોલરોની ગેરહાજરીમાં, ચર્ચે!

“ધી પારસી વૉઈસ” એનાં આવતા અંકોમાં આમાંની કેટલીક વ્યાખ્યાનોની વિસ્તારીને છણાવટ કરશે. તેટલાં, દરેક પંચાયત અને અંજુમન, ખાસ કરીને ગુજરાતની મોટી અંજુમનોની ફરજ છે કે ફેડરેશનમાં આ ધાર્મિક વ્યાખ્યાનો ચર્ચાતાં અટકાવવી!



THE PARSEE VOICE, wishes to thank all its readers and well-wishers for the overwhelming response and encouragement received from all sections of the Parsee community. It promises to continue fighting for Truth, Justice and Right.

If you wish to receive future issues of THE PARSEE VOICE, please send us your name and address at the Post Bag or Email address given below immediately.

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