

**PARSI JUNCTION issue dated September 06, 2020 &
comment by Mr. Noshir Dadrawala.**

NOSHIR DADRAWALA ON PRAYER HALL CONTROVERSY

The Prayer Hall at the Worli Crematorium has thrown up an ugly controversy.

The trustees of the Prayer Hall Trust assert that use of the hall is free and the sum of Rs. 48,000 is the maximum amount that the Co-ordinator (Ervad Framroze Mirza) has been authorised to recover for performance of various ceremonies over four days and for distributing to Mobeds, ancillary staff and service & material providers.

Many find the sum of Rs. 48,000 steep. However, the Worli Prayer Hall Co-ordinator is of the view that what he charges for prayer facilities is on par with what priests charge for four days prayers elsewhere too.

But, now here is the catch.

Many want only the Geh Sarna to be done at the prayer hall and the rest of the ceremonies at their Agyari. This of course would be a loss of income for the coordinator because the rate fixed by the trust for just the Geh Sarna ceremony is Rs. 6,000/-

Thus, the coordinator has taken the stand that even if just the Geh Sarna is performed relatives must pay for the full package of 4 days ceremonies.

It's like a lunch of dinner buffet deal. Have one serving or four servings the rate is the same.

Can the trust prevail on the coordinator to relax his rigid stand? Yes it can.

But, assuming the coordinator quits how many other priests are ready to take his place? Not many, we are informed.

So we have a situation where...

1. If a Parsi dies due to covid his or her's mortal remains have to be cremated (or buried) but cannot be left exposed to the sky at a dokhma under written directive of the BMC.
2. The relative is forced to get all 4 days ceremonies performed at Worli for a fee of Rs. 48,000 which is collected by the coordinator (not the trust) and for which no receipt is issued.
3. The other option is to get just the Geh Sarna performed at the prayer hall, but still pay Rs. 48,000 and get Uthamna, Chahrum and other ceremonies performed at the agyari and pay additionally to the Agyari Panthaky.

Is this fair?

We think not.

What is an alternative solution?

As suggested by our learned High Priest Dasturji Dr. Firoze M Kotwal, let relatives of those who unfortunately die of Covid19 directly cremate the dead either at Worli or Chandanwadi and for which the cost is very nominal and two priests perform the Geh Ceremony at Doongerwadi facing the dokhma.

All other ceremonies can be performed at the agyari.

This would be practical, cost effective and as suggested and blessed by one of our most learned and scholarly High Priest.

The ultra orthodox may be quick to argue that this is a back door entry to allow cremation. But honestly it is not.

Those who cremate ones who die of Covid do so not out of choice but compulsion and only for such cases there should be no hesitancy in allowing priest to perform the Geh Sarna facing the dokhma for the emotional solace of the grieving members of the family.

Are we ready take a stand in these difficult times?

Are we going to simply complain about the problem or work on the solution.

No real purpose will be served quarrelling with the trustees or the Prayer Hall Trust or the Coordinator.

The solution is simple, practical, economical, blessed by a learned High Priest and one which most bereaved family members would welcome.

Kill the controversy and focus on the solution.

Noshir H Dadrawala"

ERVAD FARAMROZE MIRZA REBUTS NOSHIR'S ARGUMENTS

"Dear Noshir Dadrawalla,

You are circulating on WhatsApp giving wrong information about Prayer Hall and me that we have thrown up ugly controversy. Here you are totally mistaken. This has not done by us but it's due to statement's given by Dasturji Firoze Kotwal about the Prayers which can be done at agyari of the covid-19 cremated deceased and further on going to the extent that funeral prayers can be held EVEN without the body at Doongerwadi.

Secondly you have mentioned I insist that only for gehsarna the party has to pay Rs 48000/= which is completely absurd. This amount is for all 4 days prayers and it's only Rs 6000/= for gehsarna and for

your knowledge which I did yesterday itself of Late Kersy Dadrewalla at Parking lot of Prayer Hall Worli AND CHARGED HIM ONLY Rs. 6000/ for the Geh Sarna only. The next day his brother was also cremated due to Covid and he was also charged only Rs. 6000/ for the Geh Sarna only. If you want to, you can cross verify with the party whose his remaining prayers are done by KAPPAWALLA Agiary.

I am totally in shock that a learned person like you compares Prayers of deceased with a lunch or dinner buffet. Further in my 53 years of spell praying for deceased first at Doongerwadi and from last 20 years praying for the deceased who opt for any other disposal system other than dokhmeneshini, I have never imposed my dictates to the relatives about which prayers should be performed.

I leave it to them to decide and I only take the money of that particular Prayer. I have not taken rigid stand. It's Dasturji Kotwal statement's which have thrown up the ugly controversy. Same Dasturji Kotwal was one to ban me from Doongerwadi & Fire temple's for praying for cremated deceased at crematoriums (and not at Doongerwadi) as it was against our religion but now all of a sudden how cremation has become religious necessity and SHAM prayers allowed at Doongerwadi without even the body.

I would like to go further one step in last 6 months from March to August how many mobeds came forward to pray gehsarna at any Crematorium. Not one. It was only me all alone who performed the gehsarna at chandanwadi & Worli surrounded by 8 to 10 covid-19 deceased and their families & friends risking my own self being a senior citizen .

Now I would like to draw your attention that if Harvesp Madon and other mobeds are prepared to do gehsarna at Doongerwadi dokhma gates without dead body why they don't come at Crematorium where the dead body is there and do Geh Sarna there itself with the body if they are allowed by Dasturji Feroze Kotwal to pray for covid-19 cremated deceased instead of this farce of doing cremation at Prayer Hall and then doing the Geh Sarna at Doongerwadi facing some Dokhma wall without the body. ARE THEY COWARDS TO AVOID THE THREAT OF COVID INFECTION!

Now you should hold Dasturji Feroze Kotwal responsible for the ongoing controversy due to his controversial suggestion to do so at Doongerwadi without the body of the deceased and not me because I was and I am always ready to perform geh sarna & other following prayers of the deceased in any circumstances.

Ervad Framroze Sohrabji Mirza””

NOSHIR, PARSI JUNCTION HOLDS YOU IN HIGH RESPECT BUT YOUR SUGGESTION TO CREMATE THE BODY WITHOUT ANY RITUALS AND THEN DO SOME SYMBOLIC GEH SARNA AT DOONGERWADI BY TWO PRIESTS WITHOUT THE BODY BUT FACING SOME DOKHMA WALLS SEEMS FARCICAL TO SAY THE LEAST AND MEANINGLESS AS VADA DASTURJI OF

UDVADA KHURSHED DASTUR PROCLAIMED WHEN THIS IDEA WAS FIRST MOOTED.

DOONGERWADI TRUST DEED SPECIFICALLY LAYS DOWN USE OF THE LAND ONLY FOR DOKHMENASHINI AND HENCE EVEN THIS SYMBOLIC SHAM GESTURE OF DOING GEH SARNA AT DOONGERWADI WITHOUT THE BODY WILL BE AGAINST THE OBJECTS OF THE TRUST DEED AND HENCE ALL TRUSTEES WOULD BE IN BREACH OF THE SAME AND ONCE AGAIN THE ORTHODOX MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE BOUND TO RISE UP AGAINST SUCH DICTATS.

WHAT WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT IF THE MOBEDS ARE WILLING TO DO GEH SARNA AT DOONGERWADI FOR A CREMATED BODY WITHOUT THE BODY THAN WHY CANNOT SUCH A PRIEST DO THE ACTUAL GEH SARNA IN FRONT OF THE COVID BODY AT THE CREMATORIA ITSELF INSTEAD OF ALL THIS SHAM DHONGIDOX WITHOUT THE BODY AT DOONGERWADI IN BREACH OF THE TRUST DEED. IF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE OF COVID IS CITED THEN MOVE THE CHARITY COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE AND HAVE THE TRUST DEED OF 1857 AMENDED.

ARE MOST MOBEDS READY TO DO GEH SARNA FOR A CREMATED COVID BODY AT DOONGERWADI BUT NOT AT THE PRAYER HALL FOR FEAR OF THE CONTAGIOUS COVID AFFECTING THEM? IT WOULD SEEM SO SINCE ERVAD MIRZA HAS POINTED OUT THAT NOT A SINGLE MOBED CAME TO THE PRAYER HALL FOR DOING GEH SARNA OF COVID BODIES AND HE ALONE WAS THE BRAVE WARRIOR WHO DID THE GEH SARNA'S OF ALL THE COVID DECEASED. IN THAT IT WOULD SEEM THAT MOST MOBEDS ARE OPPORTUNISTS. IF THEY WERE SINCERE THEN THEY WOULD ALSO DO THE GEH SARNA AT THE PRAYER HALL OF A COVID INFECTED DECEASED IF THEY ARE READY TO DO SO AT DOONGERWADI.

IN ANY CASE SINCE ERVAD MIRZA HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IN VIEW OF THE DIFFICULT TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC FACING OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS, HE HAS AGREED TO CHARGE ONLY FOR THE PRAYERS THAT ARE DONE AT THE PRAYER HALL AS REQUESTED BY THE RELATIVES AND HAS ALREADY STARTED CHARGING ONLY RS 6000/ FOR GEH SARNA ALONE AND REST OF THE PRAYERS ARE BEING DONE AT AGIARIES IF THE RELATIVES SO DESIRE.

SINCE THE HIGH COST OF GEH SARNA ALONE IS NO LONGER THE CRITERIA, WE HOPE THE HIGH PRIESTS, VADA DASTURJI'S JAMASPASA, KOTWAL AND KHURSHED DASTUR, WILL IGNORE THE MAIL OF NOSHIR DADRAWALA SEEKING THEIR INDULGENCE TO ALLOW TWO PRIESTS TO DO THE GEH SARNA AT DOONGERWADI OF A CREMATED BODY AT A CREMATORIA WITHOUT THE BODY OF A COVID CREMATED DECEASED AT DOONGERWADI, TO AVOID ANY FURTHER CONTROVERSY ON THIS ISSUE.

I am happy to read in today's Parsi Junction that "ERVAD MIRZA HAS MADE IT CLEAR

THAT IN VIEW OF THE DIFFICULT TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC FACING OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS, HE HAS AGREED TO CHARGE ONLY FOR THE PRAYERS THAT ARE DONE AT THE PRAYER HALL AS REQUESTED BY THE RELATIVES AND HAS ALREADY STARTED CHARGING ONLY RS 6000/ FOR GEH SARNA ALONE AND REST OF THE PRAYERS ARE BEING DONE AT AGIARIES IF THE RELATIVES SO DESIRE."

Thank you Ervad Framroze Mirza for taking a compassionate stand.

Noshir H Dadrawala