

# Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 336: Dadar and MF Cama Athornan Institutes - Invaluable Assets of the Parsi Community

Hello all Tele Class friends:

## Meherwanji Cama's VISION

**Baheshtanashin Meherwanji Cama had a VISION about our Parsi Mobeds' future 107 years ago!**

**(From booklet: *The M. F. Cama Athornan Institute Beckons You*)**

“Mr. Meherwanji Muncherji Cama, realized long ago that the members of the Athornan Community had considerably degenerated materially and intellectually and their remuneration and prospects as priests were so poor that it made their sacred calling unattractive to the educated and intelligent members of the community. He also realized that their education was so much neglected, their intellectual attainments so low and their qualification for advancing the spiritual welfare of the Zoroastrian community so poor, misconceived and misdirected that they never could command that respect and regard which as the Spiritual Leaders and guides of the Community they were entitled to expect.”

**“He wrote a letter dated 12/08/1912 to the Trustees of the N. M. Wadia Charities, Bombay, to take up the question of amelioration of the Parsi Priests, stating:**

“We have all sorts of Funds and Institutions of various kinds. They have been and are well supported by our Community and to supplement them will do little good. What I do humbly suggest to the Trustees is to do something that has been so sorely needed and if its object is fairly fulfilled will have lasting effect upon the social, moral and religious welfare of the Parsis”. [\(see attached file\)](#)

It seems that Meherwanji's letter fell on deaf ears for some time. However, in 1915, Athornan Mandal was formed by priestly and lay stalwarts like Dastur Darab Peshotan Sanjana, Dastur Minocher Jamaspji Jamasp Asana, Seth Jehangirji Vimadalal, Seth Faredun Dadachanji, and Ervad Mahyar Nowroji Kutar for the welfare of the community and its priestly class.

**[\(Please see the attached Appeal from Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, Principal, Dadar Athornan Institute, celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary\)](#)**

Athornan Mandal established the Dadar Athornan Institute (erstwhile Athornan Boarding Madressa) on 9th November, 1919 (Roj: Aneran Mah Ardibahešt 1289 YZ), as a public charitable Institution dedicated to the cause of providing religious as well as secular education to children of the priestly class and train them to be ideal priests who can be spiritual guides to the community.

However, Meherwanji Cama never gave up on his vision and single-handedly started

Mancherji Faramji Cama Athornan Institute (MFCAl), in memory of his late father, first in Jogeshwari, Mumbai, on Tuesday March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1923 and later shifted to the current magnificent structure in Andheri.

Both these Institutes were valuable assets of the Parsi community, as they kept alive the traditions and lifestyle of Parsi priests in the present times.

Both Institutes provided scriptural, religious and ritual training to children of the priestly class. Along with these, MFCAl provided secular education up to S.S.C. level (High School).

Initially, Dadar Institute did not provide secular studies and some of their students, after completing Navar and Martab training, transferred to MFCAl for their secular training up to SSC. When I was in MFCAl, from 1945 to 1954, many such transferees were in MFCAl.

Sometime later on, MFCAl Management had a misguided thought that the Parsi priest students should not be taught secular studies and stopped the teaching up to SSC. This particular decision started the slow demise of MFCAl which eventually had no students within few years. Today, there is only one teacher and no student in this magnificent building! So very sad!

However, Dadar Athornan Institute (DAI) continued to function and introduced secular studies up to SSC, providing boarding, lodging, and allied facilities like medicines, books and stationery absolutely free of cost.

The Institute was closed down in 1965 due to lack of funds. It was restarted a year later, with Ervad Rustomji N. Panthaki as the Principal, who with his noble wife Jalamai guided the Institute for almost 30 years and nurtured it to a very respectable position in the international Zoroastrian community.

Since the inception of DAI 100 years ago, and of MFCAl 96 years ago, more than 500 students have studied at both these august Institutions. Their alumni include many Dasturjis, renowned religious scholars, teachers, preachers and educationists, and many Atash Behram Boiwallas.

With Camaji in mind, we present today a MFCAl Monajat written in his honor by none other than our Gujarati Teacher/Poet Kantilal Upadhyay which we used to sing after our nightly prayers when selected by our duty teacher. It is a wonderful tribute to this magnanimous soul who built a major religious institute:

### **Ex-MFCAl Students remember Meherwanjee Cama by a Monajat By Kantilal Upadhyay Saheb:**

[\(Please hear the attached .mp3 file for its recitation\)](#)

Sneha thaki vandan sahu kareeyeh!	Let us all bow our heads with love!
Sneha thaki vandan sahu kareeyeh!	Let us all bow our heads with love!
Pyaraa Caamaajee, Hamaaraah,	To our own beloved Caamaajee!

Pyaraa Caamaajee!	To our own beloved Caamaajee!
Oopakaaroh kadeeyeh na veesareeyeh, Oopakaaroh kadeeyeh na veesareeyeh,	We will never forget all his acts of kindness to us!
Pyaraa Caamaajee, Hamaaraah, Pyaraa Caamaajee!	To our own beloved Caamaajee! To our own beloved Caamaajee!
Weedhyaa daan hamoneh aapyaah,	He gave us the gift of knowledge,
Agnyaan naa andhaarah kaapyaah,	He demolished the darkness of ignorance,
Dharma tanaa oondaah moola sthaapyaah,	He established the deep roots of religion in us!
Dharma tanaa oondaah moola sthaapyaah,	He established the deep roots of religion in us!
Pyaraa Caamaajee, Hamaaraah, Pyaraa Caamaajee!	To our own beloved Caamaajee! To our own beloved Caamaajee!

Dharma naava neh doobattoo jaanee, Satwar tehnaah thayaah sukaanee,  Taaryuh naava weenaah kai haaneeh, Taaryuh naava weenaah kai haaneeh,	He saw drowning of the ship of our religion, Right away he became the Captain of this ship, He saved the ship without any harm right away!
Pyaraa Caamaajee, Hamaaraah, Pyaraa Caamaajee!	To our own beloved Caamaajee! To our own beloved Caamaajee!
Dharma peetaah chhoh aapa hamaaraah, Varasaavoh tama aasheesh pyaaraah,  Dharma tanaah ujjavala seetaaraah, Dharma tanaah ujjavala seetaaraah,	Thou art our religious guide! May you always shower the loving blessings on us!  Thou art the shining star of our community!
Pyaraa Caamaajee, Hamaaraah, Pyaraa Caamaajee!	To our own beloved Caamaajee! To our own beloved Caamaajee!
Sneha thaki vandan sahu kareeyeh! Sneha thaki vandan sahu kareeyeh!	Let us all bow our heads with love! Let us all bow our heads with love!
Pyaraa Caamaajee, Hamaaraah, Pyaraa Caamaajee!	To our own beloved Caamaajee! To our own beloved Caamaajee!

(Monajat written by none other than our Gujarati teacher, poet par excellence late Shreeji Kantilal M. Upadhyay, translated by me in English)

### SPD Explanation:

1. "The M.F.Cama Athornan Institute is, by itself, a testimony to the vision, foresight and greatness of its founder. Seth Mehewanji Muncherji Cama saw and recognized the great need in our Community of enlightened full-fledged Yozdathregar 'Mobeds' who could service the spiritual needs of our Zoroastrian community. His vision was to sow seeds of religious knowledge in the minds and hearts of the young in order that they

could become enlightened priests.”

2. “Meherwanji felt that if above objective was fulfilled, it would have a lasting effect upon the social, moral and religious welfare of the Parsees and as such, our Institute has produced several learned scholars who have gone out and indeed been of great help and guidance to members of our community.”
3. When I was a student of MFCAI from 1945 – 1954, we had over 70 students and 14 teachers. And now, in a dilapidated, unattended and left to the environs, the school has one teacher and no student!

**And the management refuses its use to its own ex-students!?! What a tragic ending of the magnificent ‘DREAM’ of Camaji?**

**May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence and eternal enthusiasm!**

**In HIS SERVICE 24/7!**

**Atha Janyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)**

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli

*Meherwanji Mancherji Camaji.jpg*

