

## STATEMENT AND VISION



# *Dedicated to the community*

Dinshaw Rusi Mehta

Dear Community Members,

I am seeking re-election as a Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP).

I sincerely believe that during the time I have served as a Trustee, **I have fulfilled my role with honesty, integrity and diligence, always keeping the interests of the community in the forefront.** I have been one of the most hardworking Trustees of the BPP and deserve another term to see to fruition tasks left unfinished and implement new projects that would benefit the community.



### Background

I am an Engineer by qualification, having graduated with a B.Chem. degree and an M.Sc. (Tech) from the Bombay University's prestigious Department of Chemical Technology (UDCT).

I was born into a middle-class family that has consistently served the city of Mumbai and I am justifiably proud of my roots. My father, late Rusi Mehta, was one of the longest serving Corporators and won his last election with a record majority. My

**It is essential for every member of the community to have a basic understanding of the BPP and its functioning.**

- The unanimous consent of all 7 BPP Trustees is required for all decisions relating to allotment of flats. This is mandatory.
- All other decisions require majority consent of the Trustees.
- No single trustee has the right to authorise or implement any housing allotments, projects, schemes or programmes.
- All Trustees of the BPP are jointly responsible for every decision taken by the Board.
- Every decision of the BPP is minuted and signed by all the Trustees or the Chairman.

Thus, as an individual Trustee, I cannot act according to my whims and fancies.

brother Noshir served as a Corporator for three consecutive terms and was Chairman of the BEST Committee. My sister Anahita is, at present, a Corporator for the second successive term.

I have used my experience of more than 35 years in the field of construction and repairs of buildings in Mumbai in addressing the maintenance, repairs and other housing problems of the BPP.

### **Bombay Parsi Panchayat**

My dedication to the BPP has been indisputable. Not only have I attended almost every meeting of the Board of Trustees and its various committees and sub-committees, I also devote at least four to five hours every single working day to the affairs of the Panchayat and meeting the poor and needy of the community. I regularly visit each and every baug in Mumbai, and I have always been there in times of crisis or to resolve specific problems.

*“ I spend at least 4 to 5 hours every day on Panchayat affairs and on meeting the poor and the needy of our community.”*

**The community knows that in addition to being contactable 24/7, I ensure that I am available to ANY Parsi with ANY problem, be it in the domain of housing, education, medical needs, subsidy in rent or licence fees, doles, repairs to our innumerable old properties, settlement of suits, water problems and various other needs of the people. I try to understand the problems faced by each individual and assist him or her in whatever way I can without compromising the basic tenets of the BPP.**

### **BPP Corpus**

When I entered the BPP, its capital was a mere Rs. 16 crores. The Trust properties were in dire need of repairs and maintenance. **The first priority I set myself was to ensure that the BPP did not go bankrupt.** As property was our only asset, I conceived the Scheme of Donors Right, and Refundable Security Deposit Scheme. The BPP was able to settle disputed flats, and allow tenants to vacate their flats legally. Not only did the corpus increase, the BPP also saved huge legal costs and realised rents otherwise frozen. The scheme was unanimously approved by all the then Trustees and has resulted in the BPP corpus increasing from **Rs. 16 crores in 1994 to over Rs. 120 crores in 2008.** Every donation or deposit received has gone to the coffers of the BPP and NOT A SINGLE TRUSTEE HAS BENEFITED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, from any such donation or allotment of flats. The scheme has also provided the BPP enough capital to initiate new projects and assist the community at large.

With the increase in its corpus, the BPP simultaneously developed housing for the community to be given on merit.

- Developed more than 100 flats in the Nirlon property, which the Trustees were, at one time, contemplating selling. I objected to the sale and persuaded them to construct flats for Parsis. Another 100 flats are proposed to be constructed by Mr. Nusli Wadia and the Wadia Committee of Management, and it is proposed that the colony be named Neville Baug.
- Purchased the Jal Hotel Plot, situated in the centre of Panthaky Baug, Andheri, to prevent it from being redeveloped by the owners for non-Parsis. Purchased by the Trustees for Rs. 3 crores, the plot is now worth at least Rs. 8 crores and will, I hope, be developed to house more Parsis.
- Constructed two ownership buildings at Panthaky Baug, which will house more than 100 families.
- **Apart from housing, the BPP has increased outflow on its welfare activities to the poor and needy from approximately Rs. 1 lakh per month in the 1980s to Rs. 55 lakhs per month at present.**
- Increased grants and interest-free loans to students aspiring to pursue higher education from Rs. 20,000 earlier to over Rs. 1 lakh at present.
- To fuel the spirit of entrepreneurship, a Venture Capital Fund for Parsis has been formed. The BPP has made an initial contribution of Rs. 30 lakhs with a commitment to contribute Rs. 3 crores.

### **...and the fight goes on**

I have been consistent in my opposition to those who are against the development of more housing for the community.

- A slum-encroached plot opposite Panthaky Baug was initially approved for development. However, the Trustees felt there was no need to waste charity funds on construction of these flats and the proposal was shelved. I opposed this decision, stating that the need for new housing for the Parsi community is a priority.
- In spite of a real, physical threat, I took an active role in the removal of all the kharwas who had encroached on over 8,000 sq. ft. of Doongerwadi and Ambawadi properties and thereafter redeveloped the same for housing Khandias and Doongerwadi staff.
- Through innumerable personal hearings at the Office of the Collector of Mumbai, I finally succeeded in obtaining Land Revenue exemption for all the Panchayat properties, pending since 1987, thus saving lakhs of Rupees for the BPP.

“ *The capital of the BPP has increased from Rs. 16 crores when I became a Trustee to over Rs. 120 crores today.* ”

- I continue to coordinate with the Municipal Department and other authorities for all the problems faced by our properties.
- I have ensured reduction in the rateable value of various Panchayat properties, thereby saving lakhs of rupees in property tax, benefiting both the residents and the BPP.
- I personally appeared before the Revenue and Forest Appellate Authority and obtained relief from levy of over Rs. 5 lakhs for excavation at Panthaky Baug.
- Along with ex-Trustee Rustom Tirandaz, I prevented the handover of the internal road in Panthaky Baug to the B.M.C. This would have divided the baug to the detriment of the safety and security of its residents. We successfully prevented a similar handover at Dhunbaiwadi.
- During the 2000 Amendment of Scheme application before the High Court, Rustom Tirandaz and I made separate applications for adult franchise. In 2006, all the Trustees agreed to adult franchise and the scheme was sanctioned by the High Court.
- **I had intervened with the Charity Commissioner in the proposed sale of flats to non-Parsis in Petit Towers at Petit Sanatorium. Due to my intervention, the sale of flats to Parsis was at a special rate of Rs. 10,000 per sq. ft. and from the profits from the sale of the other flats of over Rs. 100 crores, the Petit Trust is committed to construct a colony of around 300 flats to house needy Parsis.**
- **Due to my intervention, the proposed sale of Marzban Sanatorium at Khandala was shelved and with generous financial support from Mrs. Scylla Vatcha, it has been restored and is available for use by Parsis.**
- I also obtained permission from MHADA to redevelop dilapidated buildings on Plots 782-785 in Dadar Parsi Colony with F.S.I. of 2.5. This would have benefitted the community by FSI of almost one lakh sq. ft. free of cost. However, this was opposed on the specious plea that in 10 years there would be more flats than Parsis and there was no need to construct further housing.

*“ I opposed the sale of the Tehmulji Lying-in Hospital at Fort, and proposed its redevelopment to benefit the community.”*

## **My focus of devotion and service has been the community through the BPP. My other activities are:**

- Free, 24-hour ambulance services available from the premises of Rusi Mehta Welfare Centre.
- Approximately 550 Parsis are given doles ranging from Rs. 300 to Rs. 1,000 every month.
- Tardeo Vyamshala, of which I am President, caters to the health and wellbeing of the poor children of the locality and provides them almost free gymnasium facilities.

## **During my tenure, the Trustees of the BPP:**

- Have set up a fertility clinic to assist couples to bear children.
- Provided third child assistance, which is continuing in a successful way.
- Encouraged youth-oriented programmes and initiated the popular and successful Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY).
- Encouraged and financed sports activities on an ongoing basis at Rustom Baug.
- Have set up a Polyclinic at Gamadia Colony with 16 cubicles to be given to aspiring young doctors at subsidized rates.
- Have strengthened the interaction between the Trustees and the associations of every BPP Baug.
- Have helped in setting up the World Zarthusti Chamber of Commerce to help Parsis trade among themselves.

### **The Dokhmenashini Issue**

I feel passionately for the Zoroastrian faith. I have a great devotion to our religion, its traditions, rituals and our customs. Since the last few years, I have endeavoured my best, along with my co-Trustees, to solve the serious problems at Doongerwadi within the religious framework and the Trust Deed. Despite my irrevocable personal commitment to Dokhmenashini, as a Trustee, I have tried to reconcile conflicting views within the objects of the Trust Deed and to ensure that there is no schism or split in the community. Our experiment with solar panels is one such effort.

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**A**ny Trustee who does not easily bend to show favour but adopts a bold, aggressive and practical approach has always met with the fiercest criticism from people who are affected by progress. My detractors have tried their best to defame and malign me to suit their ends. I have faced the fiercest criticism and have been a victim of baseless allegations by those whose vested commercial interests I have strongly opposed as they were harmful and against the best interests of the community. This has not, and will not, deter me in my commitment to serve my community.

**I am a firm believer that if our declining numbers are to be arrested it is imperative to prevent our youth marrying outside our community.** Every fifth marriage today is an inter-communal marriage. This reality poses a serious threat to our existence. To increase the Parsi population we have to endeavour that our Parsi youth marry among themselves and the best way to ensure this is to continue to expand the legacy of Parsi Baugs and Colonies left behind by our ancestors by constructing more flats in existing colonies. Those Parsi families living in far off places like Vasai, Nalasopara and Virar also need to be brought into the baug environment.

The advent of the government policy of redevelopment and reconstruction of old buildings in Mumbai has opened up

opportunities for increasing the housing stock hitherto unavailable to the cash-starved BPP.

Under the present policy of MHADA it is possible to redevelop our older colonies by **utilizing FSI almost to the extent of 3.00** (which is more than double the present constructed area.) This can translate into new buildings of all types suitable to all strata of our community.

**Redevelopment of Navroze Baug**, which at present, houses 350 families in old and dilapidated buildings, using a built-up area of 3,13,822 sq.ft. Under the MHADA scheme we can re-develop the existing buildings to provide 650 flats, with additional FSI of 3,87,742 sq.ft. in addition to rehousing the existing 350 families in new buildings.

**Redevelopment of Contractor Baug**, which at present, houses 230 occupants with an area of 124,346 sq.ft. could generate additional FSI of 235,458 sq.ft. and with the available FSI, the re-development of Contractor Baug would permit the construction of 390 flats in addition to rehousing the existing 230 occupants.

**Redevelopment of 782-785 Dadar Parsi Colony (DPC)** can be reviewed and reinitiated before MHADA so that 240 additional flats become available for our community. There are other plots in DPC which could generate 100 new flats.

**Development of the Jal Hotel plot, Panthaky Baug,** along with the balance FSI would permit the construction of an additional 150 flats. Further, I propose we develop the slum-encumbered area at Panthaky Baug adding a further 100 flats. Sufficient corpus would need to be generated to subsidize the rents as well as to maintain the buildings, which could be done from the proposed ownership building at Godrej Baug.

Unfortunately, with the majority of the current Trustees believing that in 10 years there will be more flats than Parsis, construction proposals for new housing ventures have been shelved. At present there are about 960 applicants on our growing waiting list in various categories whilst we have just about 84 flats available. I am of the firm belief that new developments need to be commenced

on an urgent basis so that all Parsis are housed in Baugs and Colonies, with special priority to be given to engaged couples with fixed dates of marriage.

I have always stressed that next to Housing, the greatest need of the community is education, specifically providing opportunities and funding the needy among us with a thirst for bettering themselves through education. I have been serving both the education and Higher Education Committees of the BPP. Our allocation towards educational efforts has been increased four-fold. Apart from providing tuition fees and subsidizing local medical and engineering education, **we have increased grants and loans for those wanting to go abroad for further studies from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 1,20,000.**

**Election dates at six centres from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

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|-----|--|------------|
| (a) | Khareghat Memorial Hall, Khareghat Colony,<br>Hughes Road, Mumbai – 400 007. | 04-10-2008 |
| (b) | Rustom Baug, Byculla   | 05-10-2008 |
| (c) | Sir J. J. School Building, Ground Floor, Fort                                | 11-10-2008 |
| (d) | Sir Shapurji Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W)                                      | 12-10-2008 |
| (e) | Sir J. J. School Building, Ground Floor, Fort                                | 18-10-2008 |
| (f) | J. B. Vatcha School, Dadar   | 19-10-2008 |

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For details, log on to [www.dinshawmehta.com](http://www.dinshawmehta.com), e-mail [dinshaw@dinshawmehta.com](mailto:dinshaw@dinshawmehta.com), or call Hormuz on 9820211427 or Darayus on 9820340034.

## The road ahead...

1. **Instead of squandering charity funds in litigation, all occupants of our various colonies, be they tenants or licensees, will be allowed to benefit from tenancies if they desire to vacate their premises, subject to the Trust getting a fair share of their transfer fees, as the law now allows this.**
2. A lot of mistrust has been generated by the old occupants being tenants or deemed tenants while the new occupants allotted are being given on leave-license basis. **It will be my endeavour to give all equal protection of law and convert the leave-license to tenancy with the cooperation of my co-trustees.**
3. Will ensure the restoration of Tehmulji Lying-in Hospital, which is presently in dire need of funds.
4. We need to have more homes for the aged like the Parukh Dharamshala, somewhere in the suburbs.
5. Grants for medical treatment for poor and middle-class Parsis need to be increased substantially.
6. **Monthly doles to the poor of Rs. 400 to Rs, 1,000 per month need to be increased substantially.**
7. Apart from housing, the greatest need of the community is education and our allocation for subsidizing tuition fees and local medical and engineering education will be increased. Grants and loans for those going abroad will also be enhanced.
8. Grants for gifted children in the field of sports will also be encouraged.
9. With the co-operation of local Corporators, water problems of all colonies should be attended to.
10. **We will attempt to have a road or colony named after Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw.**
11. Initiatives for Parsi marriages by way of priority in housing should be continued.
12. **The BPP will function in an open and transparent manner with every member of the community having a Right to Information.**

I promise to commence all these projects in earnest immediately upon my election, I hope, with the co-operation of the other newly elected Trustees. I seek re-election not for fame or personal glory or to appease my ego or settle personal scores, but only to continue to serve my community.

It is my earnest appeal that if you believe, in light of my past record of service and my vision for our future, that I am a deserving choice, I would urge you to support me in my endeavours through your vote.

Sincerely,



Dinshaw Rusi Mehta  
September 3, 2008.