

Athornan Mandal was formed in 1915 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.

Athornan Mandal established the Dadar Athornan Institute (erstwhile Athornan Boarding Madressa) on 9th November, 1919 (Roj: Aneran Mah Ardibahesht 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. This Institute is a valuable asset of the Parsi community, as it keeps alive the traditions and life style of Parsi priests in the present times.

It provides scriptural, religious and ritual training to children of the priestly class along with secular education upto S.S.C. level. All this, along with boarding, lodging, and allied facilities like medicines, books and stationery are provided 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. Rustomji's tryst with the Institute started in 1928 as a student and lasted for almost 70 years in various capacities as a student, teacher and finally as its most successful Principal.

It was due to his vision and insight that the Annexe building came up in 1990, which houses the Mancherji Joshi Hall, a Library, a Medicare centre and resident Quarters for teachers.

Since its inception about 90 years ago, more than 500 students have studied at this august Institution. Its alumni include

- a) High Priests like Dasturji Dr. Hormazdyar K. Mirza, Dasturji Kaikobad P. Dastur and Dasturji Khurshed <<K. Dastur of Udwarda, Dasturji Meherji K. Mehrji Rana of Navsari and Dasturji Nadirshah P. Unwala of <<Bangalore.
- b) Renowned religious scholars, teachers, preachers and educationists such as Ervad Rustomji N. <<Panthaki, Ervad Ratansha R. Motafram, Ervad Parvez M. Bajan and Ervad Dr. Ramiyar P. Karanjia.
- c) Several Boywallas, Panthakis, and Yozdathregar Mobeds.



Bhantar - Scriptural study:

This Institute was primarily founded for the purpose of providing an enlightened clergy to the Parsi community. A child, admitted between the age of 6 to 8 years, takes at an average about seven years to learn prayers for Navar and Maratab.



After they finish memorising the texts, they are taught the practical aspects like performance of Yasna, Vendidad, Ashirwad, Geh Sarna, and Uthamna rituals.



About ten years ago, the Athornan Mandal - W.Z.O. Fund was launched to encourage young priests to pursue full time priesthood as also to give greater service to the community. This scheme gives handsome monthly stipends to young full time practicing priests from all over India. Presently around 50 young priests are reaping benefits of this scheme. In the last year alone Rupees eleven lakhs were disbursed to young Mobeds in this scheme.

Education:

The Dadar Parsee Youths Assembly High School provides totally free academic education upto S.S.C level to all students since 1966. The Athornan Mandal is deeply grateful to the school authorities for this help. The Institute provides guidance to the students through its residential teachers as well as by specialized tutors in subjects like Maths, Science, Hindi and Marathi.

Most students secure an average of 85 percent in Primary and 55 percent in the secondary. The Institute has the distinction of having a 100% result at S.S.C. examinations. Most students have passed with First class, many with distinctions.



After passing from the Institute, all students practice priesthood, either part time or full time. Many students complete graduation, while a few take up professional careers like Chartered Accountancy, Electronics and Computer Engineering. Some go on to become Professors, Teachers and Doctorates in Sciences and Arts. Some students have settled abroad in places like U.S.A., U.K., Dubai, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, where too they offer their voluntary services as priests.



Facilities and Activities:

The Institute has a full fledged computer room to cater to the students' educational and recreational needs. It also has a cable television. Students learn Karate to augment their physical and mental development. They go for camps, picnics, and educational as well as recreational outings.



The Institute has facilities for indoor games like table-tennis, carrom and chess as well as outdoor games like volley-ball, basket-ball and cricket. It also has a small children's park in the compound with slides, swings and parallel bars and monkey-gym for the children.



The Institute students participate and win several competitions at National, state, city, community, inter-school and inter-house levels in diverse fields like religion, sports and general knowledge.

Excellence in Mobedi:

In the last ten years alone the Institute has given about 25 full fledged priests to the community, many of whom perform higher rituals like the Yasna, Visparad and Vendidad. At least 10 of our students who have passed out in the last two decades have performed Nirang-Dins. Several ex-students serve as Panthakis, Assistant Panthakis and Boywallas at Atash Behrams and Agyaris.

Staff:

The Institute has six resident and eight non-resident staff members, each a specialist in their field. Every activity at the Institute is duly supervised by a duty teacher, not only during study times but also during games time, rest time, meal time and bath time.

Some of our ex-students are allowed to pursue college education while they board, lodge and study at the Institute and assist the regular teaching staff.

Care of students:

Students are provided with rich and nutritious food, the menu for which has been prepared under instructions of a dietician. A Doctor visits twice a week and monitors the general health of the students. The Doctor also manages the Avanbai & Dinshaw Byramjee Medical Centre - a free medicare centre for all communities.



HOW CAN YOU HELP THE INSTITUTE ?

The Institute is a public charitable Institution funded by donations from philanthropic individuals and Trusts. Donations may be given for particular schemes or earmarked funds. The accounts are duly audited every year by a reputed firm of Accountants.

Maintaining a student:

The Institute annually incurs a cost of about Rs. 80,000/- per student. A donor can sponsor a student for a year by a donation of Rs.15,000.00, or by establishing an Endowment Fund of Rs.1,50,000/- (Rupees One lac), from which a student / students can be maintained for a period of 10 years. If the sponsorship is in memory of a departed one, the student remembers the deceased in rituals and prayers. He also takes names of the donor's family in Tandarosti.

Annual Baj-Rojgar Ceremonies:

Annual Afringan, Farokhshi, Baj and Stum (on fruits) are performed by students for five years for a donation of Rs.10,000.00.

Sponsoring a Meal:

A donor can sponsor a meal for students. On festive occasions, students recite a Tandarosti. On death anniversaries a Stum (on fruits) is recited. The costs are Rs.1200.00 for a vegetarian meal, and Rs.1,800.00 for a non-vegetarian meal. Sweet-dishes (pudding, custard, jelly etc.) or ice-cream can be provided for an additional sum of Rs. 400.00 or Rs.600.00. Annual bookings of meals can also be made. A donor can sponsor a breakfast or evening snack for Rs. 500/-. Owing to inflation, the amount specified above may be revised from time to time.

Other earmarked Funds:

- 1) General Maintenance Fund: It can be utilized for any Institute related activity.
- 2) Bhojan Fund: Utilised towards providing food.
- 3) Education Fund: For educational expenses and tuitions.
- 4) Book Fund: Utilised towards purchasing text and note books.
- 5) Library Fund: For maintaining the Institute Library and purchasing books for it.
- 6) Medical Fund: For students' medical expenses and running the Medicare Centre.
- 7) Mobed Amelioration Fund: For providing help to practicing and aged Mobeds.
- 8) Athornan Mandal-WZO Scheme: For providing monthly stipends and related benefits to young < Mobeds.
- 9) Milk Fund: Utilised towards giving milk to students.

Donations can be made either in cash or by Cheque, favouring ***Athornan Mandal***, and sent to the addresses given below. The Athornan Mandal is also authorized to receive foreign contributions. For any further inquiries kindly contact:

The Principal,

Dadar Athornan Institute,
651-52, Firdausi Road,
Mancherji Joshi Parsi Colony,
Dadar, Mumbai 400 014. INDIA.

Telephone: +91-22-24138086; +91-22-6582 5137.

The Joint Honorary Secretaries,

Athornan Mandal,
240, Navsari Bldg., 2nd Flr.,
Dr. Dadabhai Navroji Road,
Fort, Mumbai 400 001. INDIA.

Telephone: +91-22-2207 0784.

Email: info@dadarathornaninstitute.org

With the good will of the community, the Institute is fast approaching its centenary. As long as the work of the Institute is appreciated by the community, it will continue to light the lamps of devotion and learning in the hearts of young priests and inspire them to tend the holy fires. We look forward to your generous patronage.