



John R. Hinnells

THE ZOROASTRIAN DIASPORA

Religion and Migration

OXFORD

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Religion and Migration

*The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures,
the Oriental Faculty, Oxford 1985*

JOHN R. HINNELLS

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*This book is dedicated to
my mentor Professor Mary Boyce,
a pioneering scholar, inspirational teacher,
stern critic, and generous friend*

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PREFACE

This book has grown out of the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures delivered in 1985 in the Oriental Institute at Oxford. It was a great honour to be invited to deliver such a prestigious series of lectures. The previous Katrak lecturer had been my mentor, Prof. Mary Boyce.¹ Her research for these lectures was so innovative and scholarly that she was awarded the Burton Gold Medal by the Royal Asiatic Society. Her fieldwork among orthodox Zoroastrians in remote villages of Iran, where the religion had been practised traditionally and with devotion for millennia, caused her to question the scholarly presuppositions that had dominated the subject for a century. It transformed her own perspective, and she has subsequently influenced the assumptions of those who have come after her.² Following such groundbreaking research by one's own teacher was a daunting prospect. I am grateful to the Trustees of the Katrak lectureship for inviting me to do so, even if somewhat overwhelmed.

As I had undertaken research for these lectures for the previous three years, I have been working on this book for a total of twenty years, or—put another way—for one third of my life. I am grateful to the Trustees and to the Clarendon Press for their patience and good will, and for their acceptance of what had been intended as just one chapter, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, published as a separate volume in 1996. In one sense, this book is Volume 2 of those lectures. There have been many reasons for its long gestation. A major factor has been the extent of the fieldwork involved. It has included several visits to India, two to Pakistan, three to Hong Kong, as well as trips to Zanzibar, Kenya, France, Germany, several visits to communities in different parts of Canada and the USA, and two to Australia. I estimate that this research has involved approximately 250,000 miles of travel. There have been ten spells in hospital for major surgery, with lengthy periods in

¹ *Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford, 1977; repr. Lanham, 1989.

² For a study of her scholarly distinctiveness see Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies: Selected Works of John R. Hinnells*, Aldershot, 2000, pp. 7–25.

a wheelchair. The most serious of all problems was the death in 1996 of my much-loved wife Marianne, who had been the mainstay of my life for thirty-five years.

Obviously such global travel, and the worldwide survey questionnaire that I undertook, was financially expensive. I am deeply grateful to many bodies and individuals for their support: to the universities of Oxford, Manchester, Hong Kong, London University (SOAS); the British Academy and the Spalding Trusts; and among Zoroastrians, the Aresh, Rivetna and Treasurywala families. Numerous individuals have helped in various ways: Burjor and Zarin Avari, the Avari family in Karachi, Shahpur F. Captain, Ruby Cooper, Rusi and Roshan Dalal, Malcolm Deboo, Dolly Dastoor, the Dotiwala family in Houston, Maria Leontiner, the Marker family in Karachi, Jimmy Master, Cyrus and Virasp Mehta, Silloo and Fali Mehta, Shirin and Jimmy Mistry, Khojeste Mistree, Homai Modi, Sam and Phiroza Nariman, Jehangir Patel, the late Jamshed Pavri and his wife Roda, Godrej Sidhwa, Dinshaw Tamboly, Gillian Towler Mehta and her family. I am also very grateful to Nyrmla Singh, who took a break from her own postgraduate studies to undertake a visit to Zanzibar and Kenya when I was unable for medical reasons to go. Similarly I wish to record my profound thanks to Sarah Longair for going to Sydney and Melbourne to update my material when health again prevented me from travelling. Both of them produced valuable data. I wish to record particular thanks to Belinda Baker, for her outstanding professional competence in copy-editing this book. She noted and corrected countless mistakes on my part. I am also very grateful to Nora Firby for her care in preparing the index, a large task with a book of this length. I wish also to express my profound thanks to the OUP cartographer who produced the maps. I am also grateful to the doctors who have cared for me, above all my orthopaedic surgeons Mr Kevin Hardinge and Mr Fred Robinson; my own doctor, Dr Emma Baldwin, has been a model of professional wisdom and kindness.

In addition to members of my family, other individuals who merit special thanks are the Revd Professor Christopher Evans, who first inspired in me the love of academic studies; and Dastur Dr JamaspAsa, friend and guide in Parsi matters. Three friends have enabled me to keep going after my wife's death, notably May Earl, Alison Houghton, and Desmond O'Grady. Alison has

expended much time and energy hunting down books, references and details in libraries in Cambridge and London during my periods of immobility and has also read the whole manuscript to correct many errors. Without her help I doubt if the book would have been published. I am also very grateful to the Fellows of Clare Hall and Robinson College for making me a member of two scholarly and kindly communities in Cambridge. My two sons, Mark and Duncan, have helped me enormously, especially since Anne's death, and have always been sources of joy and pride as my wife was throughout her life. Finally I wish to offer my profound thanks to Professor Mary Boyce, my mentor for over thirty-five years, and friend for decades. Her scholarly rigour made her a challenging teacher; her sound judgement, theoretic originality, love for the subject, and not least personal kindness, have been an inspiration throughout my academic career. Words are not adequate to thank her; I have therefore dedicated this book to her.

J.R.H.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AET	Athravan Educational Trust
AIMZ	Association of Intermarried Zoroastrians
APOO	‘A Place of our own’—a term used by Zoroastrians in Melbourne
ASP	Afro-Shirazi Party (in Zanzibar)
AZA	Australian Zoroastrian Association (based in Sydney)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BPP	Bombay Parsi Punchayet
BVS	Virbaijee Boys School, Karachi
CER	Committee for Electoral Reform
CIE	Companion of the Indian Empire
COVP	Council of Vigilant Parsis
CPWR	Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, held in Chicago in 1993
CUZ	Committee of United Zoroastrians (based in Mumbai)
CZC	Californian Zoroastrian Centre (based near Los Angeles)
FED	Federation of Zoroastrian Associations in India
FEZAA	Federation of Australian Zoroastrian Associations (a proposed federation not fully formed at the time of writing)
FEZANA	Federation of Zoroastrian Associations in North America
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IMS	Indian Medical Service
INC	Indian National Congress
IRM	Informal Religious Meetings (Karachi)
IZA	Iranian Zoroastrian Association (New York)
KPI	Karachi Parsi Institute
MP	Member of [the British] Parliament
NAMC	North American Mobed Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization within the United Nations
NSW	New South Wales, Australia

PD	Parliamentary Debates (or Hansard) the record of Parliamentary speeches in London
PFTP	Parsi Fire Temple Party (in Zanzibar)
PZO	Persian Zoroastrian Organization (based in California)
RE	Religious Education
SMA	Special Marriages Act
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, London University
TMZA	Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (based at Anaheim)
NOLZA	North London Zoroastrian Association
UN	United Nations (based in New York)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCZF	World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (proposed, but at the time of writing still a subject of debate)
WZO	World Zoroastrian Organization
YMZA	Young Men's Zoroastrian Association (Karachi)
YZs	Young Zoroastrians (a group running functions for the youth) in ZTFE
NP	Zanzibar Nationalist Party
ZAA	Zoroastrian Association of Alberta (based in Calgary and Edmonton)
ZAA	Zoroastrian Association of Arizona
ZAC	Zoroastrian Association of California (based near Los Angeles)
ZAGBA	Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area
ZAGNY	Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York
ZAH	Zoroastrian Association of Houston
ZAK	Zoroastrian Association of Kansas
ZAMC	Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago
ZANC	Zarthosti Anjuman of Northern California (based around San Francisco)
ZANT	Zoroastrian Association of North Texas
ZAPANJ	Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey
ZAF	Zoroastrian Association of Florida
ZAQ	Zoroastrian Association of Quebec
ZAV	Zoroastrian Association of Victoria
ZBSC	Zoroastrian Association of British Columbia (based in Vancouver)

Zoro.	Abbreviation (used in the Tables) for Zoroastrian
ZS	Zoroastrian Studies
ZSC	Zoroastrian Sports Committee (committee of FEZANA)
ZSO	Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (based in Toronto)
ZSWS	Zoroastrian Society of Washington State
ZTFE	Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (based in London)
ZWIN	Zarathushti Women's International Network
ZYNA	Zarathushti Youth of North America (group within FEZANA)

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Introduction: Key Issues for This Book

The Zoroastrian Perspective

Studies of Zoroastrianism have commonly focused on the ancient religion in the old country. Zaehner, notoriously, entitled his classic work *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*,¹ with the twilight being the end of the Sasanian era in the seventh century CE. There have been some studies of Zoroastrians in Islamic Iran,² and a number of the Parsis in India.³ Only Boyce has written on both Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis.⁴ The only scholar to undertake a comparative study of the Parsi diaspora has been my friend, and former student, Rashna Writer, who looked at Zoroastrians in Britain, America, Canada and Pakistan;⁵ otherwise there is only my own *Zoroastrians in Britain*.⁶ The point is that the Zoroastrian diaspora has been mostly ignored by scholars. The central conviction behind this book is that the diaspora groups have made a significant role in the development of the community and the religion in the old country. Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy is famous for both his communal and his cosmopolitan charities, notably in education and religion, but he was only able to do this because of the fortune he made in China. Similarly, the Cowasji Dinshaws were able to undertake such vast philanthropic work because of their business success in Aden and East Africa. Dadabhai Naoroji

¹ London, 1961.

² In the chronological order of their subject matter: J. K. Choksey, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society*, Columbia, 1997; M. Boyce, *Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford, 1977; J. Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran: Conversion, Assimilation, or Persistence*, New York, 1990.

³ For a bibliographical survey see Hinnells, 'The Parsis: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, 3, 1980, pp. 100–49. The 'standard' work on the Parsis is E. Kulke, *The Parsees in India: A Minority as Agents of Social Change*, Munich, 1974. Unfortunately he ignores the religion of the Parsis.

⁴ *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London, repr. 2000.

⁵ *Zoroastrians: An Unstructured Nation*, Lanham, 1994.

⁶ Oxford, 1996.

was a key political figure in the Indian National Congress, but much of that role owed a great deal to his work in Britain, in particular his role as MP in the Westminster Parliament. Parsis are justly proud of two prominent (and contrasting) musicians, Zubin Mehta and Freddie Mercury, whose fame and fortunes were made in the diaspora. The diaspora communities are also important in their own right, not least because of the contributions each has made to its 'new country'. For example, it was a Parsi who took the crucial steps to build the University of Hong Kong. Parsis were crucial in the development of Zanzibar's port as a diversified market place, and in building the town into a modern 'city'. At the turn of the millennium, diaspora Zoroastrians are having a substantial impact on religious debates in India and Iran, just as diasporic funding continues to support long-treasured Parsi Institutions in India.⁷ Similarly, the moves for a world body have been led from the diaspora.⁸ What happens in one Zoroastrian community, in times of globalization, affects others. Unquestionably the study of the ancient religion in the old country is important, but to understand Zoroastrianism in the modern world, even in the nineteenth century, it is essential to study diasporic groups. Many Zoroastrians believe that with the demographic decline in the Parsi community in India, the future of the world's oldest prophetic/revealed religion lies in the New World.

This is the first book to undertake a study of Zoroastrians not only in Independent India but also in the 'old' nineteenth-century diaspora in China; in the province formerly known as Sind; in East Africa and London; as well as in the newer communities in Germany, France, Canada, the USA and Australia. The pattern of research behind each chapter has been to visit the countries named to study the archives there, to stay with Zoroastrian families in order to see or 'feel' the diaspora groups from within. A global survey was undertaken which yielded 1,840 responses to questions on demographic issues (age, gender, composition, length of residence, second-generation responses), religious beliefs and practices, and secular culture (language, food, music, etc.) In part,

⁷ The obvious example of this is the substantial funds donated by the Jokhi Trusts in Hong Kong to the Parsee General Hospital in Mumbai; see *Parsiana*, Feb.–Mar. 1995, pp. 92–100 and Apr. 2002, pp. 18–22.

⁸ The World Zoroastrian Organization (discussed in Ch. 10) was started in London; the key moves for another international federation have been led from America.

therefore, this book is a historical work involving archival sources; it has involved anthropological participant observation and sociological data analysis. In addition, I believe that I have read all the books published by Parsis in the last thirty years, both in the old country and the diaspora. My aim has been to document the remarkable histories and achievements of the various Zoroastrian communities around the world. It has also been to compare the different experiences, strategies, hopes and fears in the various countries. One of the basic questions asked is, how different is it being a Zoroastrian in, say, Hong Kong and Australia, or in Los Angeles and London? How do different immigration and race policies impact upon a religious minority? The study has also compared the experiences of Zoroastrians in large centres such as Toronto, where there are 3,000–4,000 Zoroastrians with a well-established ‘centre’ or building, and in small, scattered groups with few community networks and even fewer resources, such as the groups in Germany and France. It is important also to compare communities within countries, because it cannot be taken for granted that different cities in the same country are of a single ‘type’. In America, for example, there are important differences between the communities in Houston and in Chicago, as there are between those in Sydney and Melbourne in Australia.

In much contemporary scholarly writing, for example in anthropology and on religion, it has become common for scholars to ‘locate’ themselves, to identify their biases, presuppositions, and relations with the arena where they study. In my case this is essential, because while I seek never to take sides in community disputes, I am nevertheless conscious of a bias in my approach and use of sources. Numerous Parsis in many countries have become close personal friends in the course of my stays in different places. Many of the names referred to in this book are those of people for whom I have a deep respect and affection. I have stayed with them at times of celebrations such as initiations and weddings, and shared their grief as deaths have occurred in the homes while I have been staying there, just as they shared my grief when my wife died. I have acted as confidant to a number, and they have been my confidants at crucial moments. Sometimes, people I consider to be close friends have been vigorous opponents, in some cases even taking each other to court. I have been present at many of the bitter disputes referred to in the book. Writing the scholarly ‘neutral’

or 'objective' account has been a difficult task. Most of my close friends are naturally people of my generation. Although I hope I have sought carefully to pay attention to the views and concerns of the youth, it is perhaps inevitable that my writing commonly reflects the view of people of my own age. Because many of my friends, especially in Mumbai, come from the Orthodox or traditional wing of the community, there is an obvious danger that I may not give a balanced account of bitter community debates. The biggest bias, or imbalance of sources, and the one which I most regret, is that contacts with the Iranian Zoroastrian community are not as close as they are with Parsis. In the 1970s I visited Iran many times, but that has not been possible since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Although Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis have preserved much of their common ancient heritage, there are nevertheless differences, some substantial, not only in secular culture (notably language, food, and music) but also in religion. Perhaps it is inevitable that immersing oneself in either group will inevitably result in a less deep understanding of the other. Of course, I have many Iranian Zoroastrian friends in various countries and I have sought to represent their concerns also, but this book leaves a gap, which it is to be hoped another scholar will fill by undertaking an international comparative study of Iranian Zoroastrians around the world. I considered using the word 'Parsi' in the title of the book because of my awareness of my contacts. But because of the number of my Iranian friends, especially in Vancouver, California, Germany and London, and the importance and impact of Iranian Zoroastrians in the diaspora, it would have been wrong to exclude them. There is a further important factor. Many younger members of the international communities no longer wish to be known by what they see as purely ethnic markers, namely Parsis and Iranians, but simply as Zoroastrians; so that is the title I have used in the book.

Communities around the world have trusted me with unrivalled access to their archives. In centres as far apart as Toronto, London and Hong Kong I have been given open access to any of the files I have asked to read. They have all been willing to discuss any question I raised. Inevitably, not everyone in every community is a saint, and I do know of some scandals, but I have rarely referred to them. Each chapter has been sent to at least one member, usually more, of the communities I am writing about, to ensure

that the text is accurate. In discussing disputes I have sought to depersonalize them and have used as bland a style of writing as possible. Some of my academic colleagues will consider this a failure of objective, neutral, factual historical writing. However, I also believe an academic has to be sensitive to the consequences of his/her work. We are not remote and distant from what we study; we do not live in a vacuum. Generally I have sought to respect the feelings of individuals, but this cannot always be done. What we write does, for better or for worse, influence the people we write about. After the publication of my *Zoroastrians in Britain* I found that I had unwittingly caused distress and offence to one person because I had expressed my gratitude for help given in a footnote where I had used the material and not in the preface where it was felt it would have been more prominent. In this book, as in the first, I have acknowledged help at the point in the text where the material relates to the specific help given. Some people have given me help over many years and in a broad rather than a specific manner. I have acknowledged their help in the general introduction because it is not possible to say they helped me with a precise detail. I do not intend discourtesy to anyone by thanking him or her in a relevant footnote. It is certainly my earnest hope that my writing never causes offence.

In each chapter I have identified the nature and potential bias in my sources. Records such as minutes of meetings have the appearance of primary sources, but they may reflect only one perspective on the issues discussed and they are frequently bland. Wherever possible I have consulted the views of different participants in the debates. However, fortunately for the historian, Parsi diasporic communities have a strong tradition of making and keeping community records, so that the sources are therefore often extensive. Many Parsis are eager to learn, and to write about, their own community. Their results are not always published, but typed and circulated. A number of such writers have generously given me copies of their writings. I am grateful to all of them, because their works have nuggets of historical gold in them that would never have otherwise been known. I have, of course, acknowledged these sources in the relevant footnotes.

Whatever the problems of this study, and the joys, it is—from a Zoroastrian studies perspective—an attempt to document and analyse the global spread of the religion. There is no reliable

information on the global Zoroastrian population. Government figures in Iran suggest a far more numerous following there than was thought; the latest published figures claim there are more than 100,000 in the mother country. The number of Parsis in India is declining. The 1991 census showed a slight increase, and some in India insist that because of migration the total population remains reasonably constant around 100,000 to 120,000 (excluding an unknown number in Iran). The figures for deaths so regularly exceed the number of births in India, that the figure in the old country can be expected to continue to decline.⁹ In the diaspora, by contrast, the numbers can be expected to increase, because it is mainly young people who have migrated and so the number of births can be expected to exceed deaths over the next two or three decades. But whatever the numerical total of Zoroastrians globally, there can be no doubt that Zoroastrians are now found in more countries around the world than at any previous time in the history of this ancient and noble religion. There have been Zoroastrian diasporas before: during the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian eras (from the sixth century BCE to the seventh century CE), Zoroastrians travelled for conquest and trade, but they did not go to such distant climes as America and Australia, though they did go to China. As Zoroastrians are now spread around more countries than ever before, and as the numbers, in the case of the Parsis at least, appear to be declining, the study of those migrations, their achievements, patterns of settlements, and the consequences of migration become matters of great significance for the study of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrians typically do not consider themselves part of the (South) Asian diaspora. Parsis see themselves as generally being on good terms with other people from India or Pakistan; some would identify themselves as Indians. Iranian Zoroastrians generally see themselves as distinct from Iranian Muslims, even though on occasions they share festivals. Zoroastrians wish to assert their own unique identity as Zoroastrians, or the ‘real’, ‘true’ Iranians/Persians. But viewed from the outside they are seen as part of the South Asian diaspora, and Iranian Zoroastrians part of the Iranian exodus. They have been subject to the same

⁹ The internationally read Parsi magazine, *Parsiana*, gives in each issue the details of the recorded births, marriages and deaths. Its figures for Mumbai may not be completely accurate, but they are undoubtedly substantially correct.

immigration and race relations law; they have generally migrated at the same time and were subject to similar problems, for example, racial discrimination. In an ideal world it would have been good to consider other South Asian and Iranian groups in each of the countries studied. While this can be done to great advantage with one destination, as Baumann has done with Southall in London,¹⁰ it is simply impossible in one lifetime to undertake such comparative work in every location discussed in this book. Nevertheless I have tried to read studies of other communities in each country with a view to being able to identify what is a common diasporic experience and what is distinctly Zoroastrian.

A Question of Scale

One problem in writing this book has been the question of scale. The study covers eleven countries and has involved living in and reading the records in twenty-four cities around the world. This has involved seeking to understand the context of the Zoroastrian communities in very diverse historical, political and cultural settings. In covering such a range of countries and topics it was important to be ruthless in focusing directly on what was relevant to my subject. I am conscious of curtailing discussion of many interesting topics, of some important theoretical issues or of contemporary historical external events. Attention has been focused directly on what I judged to be essential to the Zoroastrian community. It was, for example, not possible to write about Parsis in Karachi without studying the history of Pakistan, or in Hong Kong without studying Sino-British relations, or Zanzibar without reading East African history, or in America without studying the history of immigration and multicultural policies. In writing the relevant chapters it has been necessary to set out that context, but because of the huge libraries of reading that could have been undertaken, it has been essential to be selective and focus on only those issues that impacted on the Zoroastrian communities. For example, while reading and writing on Karachi Parsis I paid little attention to the war which saw the birth of Bangladesh. While of

¹⁰ M. Baumann, *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic*, Cambridge, 1996.

huge importance in the history of Pakistan, it had relatively little impact on the Parsis. (Apart from the fact that there were Parsi generals on both sides; indeed, the Parsi Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw commanded the Indian army!) But other than providing heroes, that war did not have a direct or significant effect on the Parsi communities in either country.

While writing about Parsis in India I have focused mainly on Bombay. This choice is logical in that Bombay/Mumbai is the main centre of Indian Parsis, where all the major institutions are located with which diasporic leaders engage, and it is the city from which most Parsis have migrated. That leaves out Parsis in Calcutta, Pune, Madras and Bangalore, not to mention the historically important communities in Gujarat. There are several other diaspora groups I would dearly have liked to study, notably those in Aden, Singapore¹¹ and South Africa among the 'older' settlements, the Gulf States and New Zealand among more recent groupings. I hope the opportunity will come for me to research those communities also. There is another topic which I considered including. Since the 1960s a number of groups from Central Asia have claimed Zoroastrian ancestry. The first time I came across them was in Tehran in the early 1970s when a number of

¹¹ Mary Clemmey kindly lent me a file of papers concerning her family history. The first Parsi known to have moved to Singapore was a convict. It was his approaching death that prompted others who had settled there to obtain land for a cemetery in 1827. More Parsis settled in 1829. One of the early leading figures among the Parsis was Framruze Sorabjee Sattana, who started business in Singapore in 1840. He was the only non-European among the first shareholders to fund a library in 1844. He became a prominent Freemason. His son, Cursetjee Frommurze, entered a business partnership with John M. Little in 1845 as Auctioneers and Commission Agents. In 1862 Cursetjee married out of the community, to an English woman, Maryanne. This was the marriage from which Mary is descended and the reason for her search for her family history. Little took over the business and it eventually became a famous departmental store (Robinsons). In the mid-19th c. another eminent Parsi was Dhunjibhoy Hormusji, who became a member of the Grand Jury. A family member of the firm Byramjee Hormusji Cama & Co started a free school for Chinese children. Another major Parsi of the 19th c. was Edaljee Khory, a lawyer, who had a Masonic Lodge named after him in 1891. In 1903 Navroji Mistri settled in Singapore and started an aerated water company before venturing into real estate and the restaurant business. The road next to his factory was named Navroji Road after him. He brought other Parsis to the island. Numbers were small but several of them became prominent citizens. More arrived in the 1960s, several with Singapore Airlines; others were executives in industry, factories, insurance, finance and medicine. To my knowledge no one has written a history of Singapore Parsis and I am grateful to Mary Clemmey for sharing her discoveries with me. She in turn is indebted to Mr Rutton M. H. Patel in Singapore.

Kurds approached the Imperial Court for recognition as Zoroastrians.¹² Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, other groups from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have claimed Zoroastrian ancestry and sought support from Zoroastrians in India and the West.¹³ The response has been mixed, but mainly cautious. However, as I have only talked to one such claimant directly, I cannot claim first-hand knowledge and have therefore decided to omit this interesting topic. Potentially it is a major issue: if several million people are recognized as Zoroastrians, whose knowledge of doctrine, practice and history is typically rather hazy, where would the leadership lie, and how would resources from a community of 120,000-plus be utilized?

This book studies the older settlements of Karachi, Hong Kong, Zanzibar and London, and the newer ones in Canada, USA, Australia, France and Germany so that there is a balance between the old and the new diasporas. How to deal with Bombay was a problem. Eventually I focused on the post-Independence period only, despite the fact that in other chapters the history of the old diasporas is taken back to the nineteenth century. The reasoning was that my next book, written jointly with Dastur JamaspAsa, is on 'The History and Religion of the Parsis in Bombay Presidency (1662–1947)'. A brief introduction here on the earlier period

¹² Two groups of Kurds are the Yezidis and Ahl-i Haqq, rather loosely linked with Muslim groups and preserving some ancient Iranian beliefs and practices. See the articles under those titles by P. Kreyenbroek, in Hinnells (ed.), *The New Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, Harmondsworth, 1997, and the bibliography on pp. 633 ff. For a Parsi response rejecting their Zoroastrian ancestry, see Dadrawala 'The Yezidis of Kurdistan—are they really Zoroastrians???' at www.members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/deen33f.html. Such groups are viewed in a different light by the Zarathushtrian Assembly discussed in Ch. 10, with a number of western converts to Zoroastrianism who see these Central Asian groups as 'lost' Zoroastrians. On a meeting of Russian Zoroastrians in St Petersburg, 28 May 2000, see Ervad Burzin E. Aytashband's account of his visit in the Karachi magazine *Ushao*, Oct.–Nov. 2000, pp. 11–18. On 'Zoroastrian' Kurds in Germany, see A. Bana, 'Faith without Fetters' in *Hamazor*, May 2000, pp. 30–2, p. 45 of the same issue on St Petersburg and p. 51 for Uzbekistan. Dolly Dastoor, 'Many Faces of Zarathushtris', *Hamazor*, issue 3, 2002, pp. 39–43, gives a fascinating account of her visit in 2001 to Zoroastrian groups in Moscow, St Petersburg, Sweden; she met others from Tajikistan, Belarus and Ukraine.

¹³ On the visit of Tajik leaders to Mumbai, see *Parsiana*, May 1992, pp. 26–9 and June 1992, pp. 25–30, which relates a sympathetic hearing for them from the Parsi establishment. They are also supported by some of the more 'occult' branches of Zoroastrianism in Mumbai, notably Dr Meher Master Moos, whose work will be discussed in the next chapter. Briefly, she claims that much of the religious authority for her teaching derives from otherwise secret Zoroastrians in Iran and Central Asia.

would inevitably have been superficial. Furthermore, there have been accounts of the Parsis in British India, notably that of Kulke and the excellent recent publication by Palsetia, which unlike Kulke deals with questions of religion.¹⁴ There has been virtually nothing published on Zoroastrians in the other settlements. However, there has also been almost nothing published on Bombay Parsis since Indian Independence.¹⁵ It was important to provide a reasonably substantial account of Parsis in modern Bombay/Mumbai because one of the key themes in this book is the interaction between the diaspora communities and those in the old country. Their interaction is crucial for an understanding of the Parsi diaspora. (The impossibility of a comparable study of interaction with Iran has already been noted, with regret.)

The tight focus of this book is on the period from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s, the period of the greatest migration activity among Parsis from India, Pakistan and East Africa; it covers the fall of the Shah and the departure of many Iranian Zoroastrians from the old country. It was also the period when a world body was formed. The global survey undertaken for this book provides a picture at the end of that period of intense activity and a basis for an analysis of trends. With the older diasporas it was essential to give the earlier historical context, since the only single book on these Zoroastrian diasporas is my *Zoroastrians in Britain*. The publishers were, however, keen that I include Britain in this book also, so that it is reasonably comprehensive. In order to avoid mere repetition and summary, France and Germany are included (as the British-based body is known as the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe). The section on Mancherjee Bhownagree has been revised in the light of John Mcleod's fine research, not yet published, on this Tory MP. Material has also been included relating the last years of the twentieth century, events which occurred after I wrote my earlier book. Because the extent of the fieldwork, reading and data analysis took me a further decade I have included 'end pictures', as it were, to look at how the various communities have emerged from those decades of intense migratory activity. The 'final end note' is the Seventh World (Millennium) Congress in Texas; this was the first time such a world congress had taken place in the diaspora, and it

¹⁴ J. S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*, Leiden, 2001.

¹⁵ Palsetia has a good epilogue on the debates on intermarriage, pp. 320–37.

was an event of significance for many diaspora Zoroastrians in their relations with the old country. Most chapters follow a similar pattern. After looking at the relevant history of the region being studied, a brief depiction of the Zoroastrian community in that region based on my survey is given, followed by a discussion of how that community has grown, and the chapter ends with a consideration of events in the 1990s.

It has been difficult to be consistent on the spelling of Parsi names. It is common for modern western writers to replace the 'ee' in various names with an 'i', for example Parsee becomes Parsi, Jeejeebhoy becomes Jijibhoy. There is a case for spelling names how the person referred to spelt it, for example 'Bhownaggee' not 'Bhownagree', but that can look odd in the context of widespread contemporary spelling. Where a person has left substantial personal records I have generally followed that spelling, even though it leads to inconsistencies in spelling the same name used by different people. Even here it is difficult to be consistent, for Parsis themselves do not strictly follow one spelling of their name for example with the common suffix 'walla' or 'wala'. Some of the non-Parsi sources, for example the Jardine Archive in Cambridge used in Chapter 4 on China, used idiosyncratic spelling, often not recognizing the difference between personal and family names. There is another problem of consistency. Parsis use a person's father's name as their middle name, but this is not always available in the sources used. It has been included where possible. I have included, usually in footnotes, the names of early traders and migrants, for example in Canton, Hong Kong and East Africa, in the hope of tracing family and trading connections.

The Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Many of the terms used in this book raise questions of theory and method in the wider field of religious, sociological and anthropological studies.¹⁶ Words commonly used in the following chapters

¹⁶ I wish to record my thanks to Prof. Kim Knott of Leeds for reading through this section for me, and not only saving me from some errors, but also improving the structure of the discussion significantly. Any faults which remain are, of course, my own responsibility.

ideally require detailed discussion, notably what is meant by ‘community’, ‘culture’, ‘tradition’, ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’. In *Zoroastrians in Britain* (pp. 44–9) I discussed my use of many of these terms; they are used in the same sense here to avoid confusion for anyone looking at both books. But there are terms that need to be used here which were not discussed in that book. In my opinion, terming the new place of settlement ‘the host society’ is inappropriate. Many western societies have either not been good hosts, or have largely ignored any duty to the settlers. It is commonly the communities, in this case Zoroastrians, who have acted as hosts to the ‘newcomers’. Throughout this book, therefore, I have used the phrases ‘old country’ and ‘new country’ as advised by Rashna Writer. ‘Homeland’ I have generally used to refer to Iran, the ‘real’ homeland for most Zoroastrians, even if the ancestors of most diasporic Zoroastrians have lived on the Indian subcontinent for a millennium.

Some place names

A brief note is necessary on the use of the terms ‘Iran’ and ‘Persia’. Technically, the former is the correct name for the country throughout its history, because Persia is only a province in the south-west of the country. For much of Iranian history Persia was the province from which the ruling dynasties came, for example, during the Achaemenid and Sasanian times. For those eras the name ‘Persia’ is a reasonable name for the whole. However, many diaspora Zoroastrians in the New World prefer to use the term ‘Persia’ rather than the current official name of the country, ‘Iran’, in order to evoke the memories of pre-Islamic Iran. In what follows, Iran will be used in a secular context, but ‘Persia’ when referring to the Zoroastrian perceptions of their homeland.

An explanation is also due of the terms ‘West’ and ‘New World’. It is illogical to include Australia under the term ‘West’; as seen from the Indian, Pakistan and Iranian perspectives it is to the east. ‘The West’ is a common expression in the media generally, and in Zoroastrian writing, to refer to the countries which are historically derived from European, mostly British, legal and administrative origins. The term ‘New World’ is also illogical in view of the extremely long history of the Inuit and other North American traditions, which the invaders drove into small settlements. But

again, it is a common expression in the media and in Zoroastrian literature. In this context the 'New World' includes Australia as part of the West. As part of the drive to change British street and town names and invoke ancient Indian forms in the 1990s, Bombay was officially changed to Mumbai. Generally I have tried to use Bombay when referring to the pre-1990s and Mumbai thereafter. It was sometimes difficult to be consistent in this.

'Culture'

'Culture' is a highly contested term in religious, social and anthropological fields. It is the subject of countless books and articles. One basic question is whether religion is part of culture or culture part of religion. But the debates are far more complex than this simple point.¹⁷ In this context, I intend to point to what Zoroastrians themselves commonly see as their 'culture', that which marks them off as distinctive from other religious or racial communities. For many this would include religion, but not for all, because there are atheists who would wish to identify themselves as Zoroastrians. For them their 'culture' can indicate food, music, language, or personal and social values, notably family connections and responsibilities, charitable work, the much-quoted ethical triad of Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds, and above all, perhaps, their history. It could also include humour and for the older generation of Parsis traditional dramas (*nataks*). Iranian Zoroastrian 'culture' is commonly seen as being somewhat different, albeit the two worlds overlap considerably. Language is yet more important to Iranians than to Parsis, as is (Iranian) music. There is particular Iranian enjoyment of certain festivals (the *gahambars*). For some the bonds of 'Iranian-ness' can mean links with other Iranians, including Muslims, rather than Parsis, especially in the New Year celebration, No Ruz. Nationality and culture are closely linked for Iranian Zoroastrians who have felt compelled to leave their homeland. Different Zoroastrians would

¹⁷ It may be dangerous to point to any specific articles, because of the risk of giving an unrepresentative perspective on the debate. But for anyone wishing to gain an impression of the complexity of the discussions, a reasonable starting point is R. Williams, *Culture and Society, 1750–1950*, New York, 1958. Two useful overviews of the debates are T. Masuzawa, 'Culture', in M. C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago, 1998, pp. 70–93 and M. Hulsther, 'Religion and Culture', in Hinnells (ed.), *Companion to the Study of Religion* (forthcoming).

have a slightly different ‘mix’ of ingredients for their Zoroastrian culture, but the above list includes what most would value.

Community

In *Zoroastrians in Britain*, I commented on the problems with the term ‘community’, because the word does not refer to any clearly definable formal body; therefore, ‘In a real sense there is no Zoroastrian community in Britain.’ There is a diversity of groupings, and the term community generally refers to ‘we Zoroastrians’ as opposed to ‘them’, the non-Zoroastrians. In a discussion of the international scene that is even more the case. Zoroastrians and commentators use the term ‘the community’ to refer to the global Zoroastrian diaspora as well as a small local group, which may not even be formally established. It is worth repeating the argument that ‘Even if the historian considers this entity to be mythical, it is nevertheless a powerful myth, which affects the sense of self-identity among Zoroastrians. The term therefore has value, even if the above qualification is necessary.’ I still hold to that value of the myth, and am relieved to find that other scholars find the term ‘community’ useful, even if it and the group are vague and in flux.¹⁸

Boundaries

Various scholars have drawn attention to the importance of boundaries for communities: who ‘patrols’ them, why and how?¹⁹ There are differing perceptions of how people reach out beyond those boundaries to the wider society. In the 1980s these discussions focused on the second and third generation being ‘caught between cultures’.²⁰ However, an important contributor to that

¹⁸ Two books which I have found useful in reflections on this topic are A. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Manchester, 1985, and G. Baumann, *Contesting Culture*. Cambridge, 1996. Pages 189–203 are particularly relevant to my reflections on Zoroastrians, especially his comments on ‘members of *communities* drawing upon some shared values and compatible versions of their history that distinguished them from selected others’. His later comment on ‘the shared heritage that each ethnic *community* equates with its *culture* [emphasis original]’ (p. 190), are particularly relevant to how I understand the use of these terms among Zoroastrians.

¹⁹ See A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London, 1996, p. 199. For a discussion of ‘assimilation’ see R. Brubaker, ‘The Return of Assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany and the United States’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24 (4), 2001, pp. 531–48.

²⁰ See, e.g. J. L. Watson, *Between Two Cultures*, Oxford, 1977.

discussion, Roger Ballard, now argues that the young are commonly 'skilled cultural navigators' moving between cultures with as little sense of clash as truly bilingual people experience moving between languages. Ballard also stresses that diasporic members adapt to wider society on their own terms.²¹ He emphasizes that the second and third generation are not mere pawns in the control of outsiders. While not wanting to dispute this point totally, Vertovec offers the counter argument that this can sound too much like 'rational choice theory, and that people are ever aware of what they are doing and are selecting paths which will give them what they seek'.²² These are issues which will be considered with reference to Zoroastrians in the Conclusion.

Tradition

One reviewer of *Zoroastrians in Britain* questioned my use of the term 'tradition', especially in the singular, for example when writing about the 'transmission of tradition'. Obviously there are a variety of traditions, Parsi, Iranian, Orthodox, Liberal, etc. However, it is my contention that any one person at any one time adheres to a particular tradition. That tradition, of course, may be recast in a different situation or over time. Traditions are not static; even those thought of as ancient have been reformulated, recast, revised.²³ Similarly as 'traditions' change, so does 'ethnicity'. Hastings writes about the 'real' genetic and the mythic genetic origins of ethnicity.²⁴ The fact that there are many and changing traditions or ethnicities does not preclude the use of the singular when referring to a specific instance or process.

Multiculturalism

An area which has been sadly neglected in the study of religions is the impact of multiculturalism on participants in multicultural

²¹ R. Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, London, 1994, pp. 29–33.

²² S. Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns*, London, 2000, pp. 156 ff.

²³ See E. Hobsbawn, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983, repr. 1996, pp. 1–14.

²⁴ A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 173 ff.

events. Baumann is one of the few scholars to address this question directly.²⁵ It is essential to be precise concerning what is, and what is not, being discussed. There is clearly a huge body of literature on inter-faith dialogue circling round such issues as how a believer in the truth of one religion can hold a dialogue with someone with a different belief system.²⁶ The point here is perhaps a more phenomenological one: what is the impact of religious minorities engaging in dialogue with established Christian denominations? How does it affect their own beliefs and practices? For some participants, 'inter-faith dialogue' is looking for common patterns, or shared beliefs, maybe even moving towards a universalist faith. Multiculturalism is a liberal concern to aid understanding between religious groups, i.e. the aim is not to change people's religion, but to operate with the conviction that if each knows more about the other, the result will be greater understanding and tolerance. (Rarely does it address the possibility that if people know more about another religion, they may reject it more vigorously.) What is the impact of inviting people from another religion into one's own temple? This is especially important for Zoroastrians because in India only Parsis can enter the temples. How does having other religious groups coming to observe worship affect the Zoroastrian experience? In speaking to each other there is a tendency for religious minorities to explain things in Christian terms, referring for example to Diwali as 'our Christmas', or describing Muslim and Sikh leaders as priests. What are the consequences of, say, Hindus having a Christmas tree and exchanging Christmas presents? Various writers point to the tendency for diasporic communities to be influenced by the idea of Sunday as the temple or gurdwara, etc. day, something preserved for set days and for major festivals and rites of passage, rather than as part of the very fabric of daily

²⁵ *Contesting Culture*, pp. 173–87. Vertovec has looked at the problems caused by the notion of multiculturalism in regard to political issues, see his 'Multiculturalism, Culturalism and Public Incorporation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 1, 1996, pp. 49–69 with a substantial bibliography.

²⁶ The obvious example of people in this dialogue is John Hick in e.g. *God and the Universe of Faiths*, London, 1977; *God has Many Names*, London, 1980; and *An Interpretation of Religion*, Basingstoke, 1989. See also G. D'Costa, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation*, Lanham, 1987; M. Barnes, *Religions in Conversation: Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*, London, 1989.

life.²⁷ Baumann notes that the non-Christian groups engaged in dialogue tend to be represented by the smaller groups within a religion, such as the Ahmaddiya, or Ramgarhia Sikhs from East Africa, or the smaller religions such as the Baha'i. From the Christian side it tends to be the more 'liberal' groups of the establishment who are represented rather than, say, fundamentalists (unless they are seeking to convert). What are the consequences of people from the various religions taking part in a 'multi-faith' act of worship? Do the participants carry this liberal, perhaps unrepresentative, image of the other religions back into their own community? It is not uncommon to find that the representatives of the diasporic religious groups become the 'gate keepers' of their religion in their region; the interpreters of their religion to the outside world and the filters through which the other religions are viewed by many of their own community. It is common for them to formulate an account of their religion designed to stimulate respect from others, to explain things in easily comprehensible terms, leaving out the beliefs, practices and attitudes which others may find alien. A sanitized, anodyne or universalist account is often given, which may in fact gain credence within their own community. Representing one's community in multi-faith activities gives status to those who represent the group, especially if this involves meeting such people as British royalty, the President of the USA, the Pope or the Dalai Lama.

Diaspora

The term and concept requiring most discussion here is 'diaspora'. It is a much-used and debated term. It is important not simply because the word is used in the title of the book (though as we shall see some scholars have denied that the Parsis are a diaspora), but even more because seeing Zoroastrians as a diaspora comparable to other groups, such as Sikhs, Hindus, etc., enables comparisons that I am convinced help in the understanding of contexts and patterns, strategies, and above all distinctive features of Zoroastrians (or their ancestors) who have migrated.

²⁷ See e.g. K. Knott, *Hinduism in Leeds: A Study of Religious Practice in the Hindu Community and Hindu-Related Groups*, Leeds, 1986, p. 46. Gillespie refers to the pattern of present exchange, television viewing and celebratory family meals, 'but not the Turkey type Christmas'. *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, London, 1995, p. 107. See also Vertovec, *Hindu Diaspora*, pp. 40 ff.

What is a diaspora?

In seeking to identify through comparative studies which are the distinctively Zoroastrian and which the common diasporic experiences, a consideration of what is meant by diaspora is essential. It is also important because of the extent of debate on this subject, and the fact that the only two publications I have found which refer to the Parsis reject the notion of a Parsi diaspora. There are eleven journals devoted to diaspora and countless others in which important relevant articles appear.²⁸ The term was originally used in Jewish²⁹ and Greek studies but has been found useful by many scholars concerned with migration, immigration and race relations. The first academic to press for the value of studying religious diasporas in the modern world was Ninian Smart.³⁰ He raised various issues which have later become matters of debate beyond the field of Religious Studies, for example the relations of diasporas with their old countries. He drew attention to the fact that, contrary to external perception, diasporic communities are not always 'westernized' and 'liberal'; some incline to be no less orthodox than those in the old country. Further, he drew attention to the practice of constructing a universalist picture of the religion and pointed to the patterns of religious transformation common in many diaspora communities. His article did not include an extensive discussion of what is meant by 'diaspora' other than noting that in 'many diasporas there is an element of exile'. Other Religious Studies scholars have used the term without debating meaning and patterns.³¹ Outside Religious Studies,

²⁸ They are: *Diaspora; International Migration Review; International Migration; New Community; Journal of Racial and Ethnic Relations; Immigrants and Minorities; Revue européenne des migrations internationales; Immigration and Nationality Law Practice; Immigrants and Minorities; Asian and Pacific Migration Journal; Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. There are several journals which have a specifically national focus but often include articles on migrants, e.g. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* and the *Journal of Australian Studies*. There are also journals on law, politics, sociology, urban studies which include relevant material.

²⁹ See M. Baumann, 'Conceptualizing Diaspora: The Preservation of Religious Identity in Foreign Parts Exemplified by Hindu Communities outside India', *Temenos*, 31, 1995, pp. 19–35.

³⁰ 'The Importance of Diasporas', in S. Shaked, D. Shulman and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, Leiden, 1987, pp. 288–97. The scholar widely accepted as the pioneer in the study of diasporas is P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, London, 1993.

³¹ e.g. M. Nye, *A Place For Our Gods: The Construction of an Edinburgh Hindu Temple Community*, London, 1995, p. 22.

however, there has been much debate on what combination of features is necessary for a group to be called a diaspora. Tölölyan, who launched the journal *Diaspora*, produced an interesting overview of the movement of the subject in the early years of the journal's life.³² He points to six overlapping concepts: diaspora, ethnicity, nationalism, transnational links, globalization and 'post-coloniality'. He comments that whereas 'diaspora' was 'a term once saturated with meanings of loss, dislocation, powerlessness and plain pain' before it became a useful way of describing dispersions, it has now become 'a synonym for related phenomena recently covered by distinct terms like expatriate, exile, ethnic minority, refugee, migrant, sojourner and overseas community' (pp. 9 f.) When authors sought 'an ideal type' of 'diaspora' following the Jewish model, the key features were seen to be coercion, which led to uprooting and resettlement, a clear concept and collective memory of the homeland, a yearning for a return to that homeland, and community 'patrolling its boundaries'. Diasporas, Tölölyan said, keep contact with the homeland, either with the 'mythicized idea of homeland' or with its physical place of origin. (p. 14).

S. Vertovec, in a substantial review of literature about and theories of 'diaspora', identifies three discernible meanings in the concept 'diaspora' in recent (1997) writing on the subject.³³ These are:

1. *Diaspora as social form*, notably specific social relationships cemented by special ties to history and geography, created as a result of voluntary or forced migration to at least two other countries; collective identities being sustained by reference to an ethnic myth of common origin and a tie to a special place; the institutionalizing of networks of exchange and communication; the maintenance of explicit and implicit ties with the homelands; solidarity with co-ethnic members in countries of settlement; a sense of not being fully accepted, alienation or exclusion by the 'host society'. The second set of discernible meanings, he says, are the tensions of political orientations, with divided loyalties

³² 'Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment', *Diaspora*, 5:1, 1996, pp. 3–36.

³³ 'Three Meanings of "Diaspora," Exemplified among South Asian Religions', *Diaspora*, 6:3, 1997, pp. 277–99. A version of this paper appears as chapter 7 in *The Hindu Diaspora*.

to homelands and host countries; and the third are economic strategies which are important in international finance and commerce, through the pooling of economic resources among ethnic members. Writers also emphasize the 'triadic' relationships: the global ethnic dispersion, the places where they live, and the homeland states.

2. *Diaspora as a type of consciousness.* Other writers, he notes, emphasize the variety of experiences, states of mind and a sense of identity. Two key factors are the negative experience of discrimination and exclusion and a positive link to their historical heritage. The awareness of 'multi-locality' gives a sense of both 'here' and 'there', a sense of roots and routes. Some emphasize diasporas leaving a trail of collective memory, and creating new 'maps of desire and attachment'. Others emphasize the self-questioning stimulated in the diaspora, for example 'routine habitual religious practice, rote learning and "blind faith" are no longer operational.' A further aspect of diaspora as a type of consciousness is the number of diasporic persons continuing to visit the subcontinent on pilgrimage. Vertovec points to Baumann's assertion that 'whatever one does and thinks is intrinsically and distinctively *culture* bound.'³⁴ However, he also draws attention to Knott and Khokhers' study, which notes how some young Muslim women distinguished between the 'culture' of their parents, who conformed to ethnic traditions emblematic of religion, e.g. dress, and the culture of the young, who wished to adopt a simple Muslim identity.

3. *Diaspora as a mode of cultural production.* Viewing diaspora communities in the context of globalization, various writers emphasize the fluid identities among diasporic people, or the hybrid mixing of identities in different contexts, not least among the youth, whose socialization has taken place in different cultural contexts. This may include the 'retraditionization' of key concepts and their different understanding of tradition.

Typologies of diasporas

Several scholars have sought to produce typologies of diasporas. The study that discusses this in most detail is Cohen.³⁵ He tried to

³⁴ Baumann, *Contesting Cultures*, p. 107.

³⁵ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London, 1997. See also C. Tilly, 'Transplanting Networks' in V. Yans-McLaughlin (ed.), *Immigration Reconsidered*, New York,

find a means of typologizing various diasporas, not by ignoring what they share in common, but by highlighting their most important characteristics' (p. 29). He identifies the following types and illustrates them by specific examples: victim (Jewish and Armenian), labour (Indian), trade (Chinese), imperial (British) and cultural (Afro-Caribbean). He acknowledges that these types can change in the course of time, and that some diaspora groups fit more than one typology. For a group to be identified as a type of diaspora he lists the following necessary common features:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions.
2. An expansion from a homeland (in search of work or for colonial ambitions).
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements.
4. An idealization of the putative homeland and collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation.
5. The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation.
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate.
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group.
8. A sense of empathy or solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement.
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (p. 26).

Words mean what we want them to, and their meanings change over time. It is important to specify what one means by a term. Clifford writes:

We should be wary of constructing our working definition on a term like *diaspora* by recourse to an 'ideal type' . . . the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or

symbolic homeland . . . Decentred, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return and a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation or resistance maybe as important as the projection of a specific origin.³⁶

For Clifford there are other key factors involved in diaspora 'constituting homes away from home' and 'separate places become effectively a single community through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods and information' (pp. 302 f.). He argues that none of the 'diasporas' fully conforms to the 'ideal type' of the Jewish diaspora, and stresses that there is a danger of defining an ideal type, noting that not all the Jews have wanted to return (p. 305).

Various scholars question Cohen's assertion that a myth of return to the old country is a necessary quality of a diasporic community. Tölölyan, for example, says:

A repeated turning to the concept and/or the reality of the homeland and other diaspora kin, through memory, written and visual texts, travel, gifts and assistance etcetera. The orientation towards the homeland center can be a symbolic ritual . . . It may manifest itself in philanthropic concern . . . an ethnic community differs from a diaspora by the extent to which that latter's commitment to maintain connections with its homeland and its kin in others states is absent, weak or at best intermittent, and manifested by individuals rather than the community as a whole. For example, Italian Americans can be classified as ethnics; their links are associated in a fragmentary way with food, music and special occasions.³⁷

Tölölyan acknowledges that the nature of groups can change from ethnic to diasporic, or the reverse, according to circumstances.

Brah also questions the importance of the 'return motif':

Where is 'home?' On the one hand 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. . . . The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings.³⁸

³⁶ J. Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 (3), 1994, pp. 302–38 at p. 306.

³⁷ 'Rethinking Diasporas', pp. 14–16.

³⁸ A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp. 192 f.

F. Anthias offers a different definition:

‘Diaspora’ references a connection between groups across different nation states whose commonality derives from an original but maybe removed homeland; a new identity becomes constructed on a world scale, which crosses national borders and boundaries.

She rejects the label ‘ethnic minority’ because it assumes the dominant group does not have an ethnicity, but also argues that diaspora studies have neglected crucial questions of class and gender.³⁹

My own position is that it is mistaken to define ‘diaspora’ wholly based on an image of the Jewish phenomenon. However, there has to be a powerful emotional bond to an actual or idealized homeland, distant from the new home. The key factors are a sense of a historical relationship with that place of perceived origin, and an international network of co-ethnics, or co-religionists. To posit a sense of hostility in the place of the new home is also giving dominance to the ‘ideal Jewish type’, but a sense of difference, which may or may not include hostility, is a key factor. The need to reconceptualize the heritage (religious or secular) is common, but that process can take many forms: mostly there is a universalizing of the tradition, but there may equally be a reassertion of ‘orthodoxy’. In whatever form the tradition is preserved, there is a common pattern of the younger generation identifying their religion as a key feature of their identity.

Two scholars assert that the Parsis do not constitute a diasporic community. Their objections require immediate attention if the title of this book is to be thought to have any legitimacy. W. Safran wrote:

The diaspora of the Parsis is in several respects comparable to that of the Jews: its members have been held together by a common religion and they have engaged in commerce and free professions, have been pioneers in industrial innovation and have performed various useful services to the ruling class. Like the Jews, the Parsis have been loyal to the government. But unlike the Jews, they are not widely dispersed but concentrated in a single area—the Bombay region of India. Moreover they have no myth of a return to their original homeland, Iran, whence they migrated in the eighth century. The weakness of the Parsi ‘homeland’ consciousness can be attributed in part to the caste system of India

³⁹ ‘Evaluating “Diaspora”: Beyond Ethnicity’, *Sociology*, 32 (3), 1998, pp. 557–80 at pp. 558 f.

and the relatively tolerant attitude of Hinduism, both of which made for a greater acceptance of social and ethnocultural segmentation, and made Parsis feel less exceptional.⁴⁰

Similarly, Cohen writes of the Parsis:

They are not so much a travelling nation . . . as a travelling religion. However, this aspect of Zoroastrianism also limits the extent to which we can call Parsees a diaspora: they do not seek to return to, or to recreate a homeland. . . .

In general I would argue that religions provide additional cement to bind a diasporic consciousness, but they do not constitute diasporas in and of themselves . . . The myth and idealization of a homeland and a return movement are also conspicuously absent in the case of world religions.⁴¹

The contention behind this book is that both of these judgements are mistaken. I trust that this study of Parsis in eleven countries establishes that Safran is factually incorrect to say that they have only one base, the Bombay region. The argument of both Safran and Cohen that Parsis do not constitute a diaspora because there is no wish to return to, or recreate, a homeland is equally factually incorrect. As we shall see, Parsis, like Iranian Zoroastrians, have a strong concept of the homeland, which is why Parsis say they are not Indians but Persians. Books about Iran, ancient Iranian artefacts and Iranian symbols decorate all the Zoroastrian homes I have lived in, and in recent years Zoroastrians from India, Pakistan, Australia, Britain, Canada and America have undertaken organized religious tours of the homeland. It is not feasible in the contemporary political situation in Iran for them to envisage a return to settle in the homeland, in view of the policies of the Islamic Republic which is in power. But in the 1970s when the Shah was in power, many contemplated, and some actually did, return to Iran. While I was visiting India and Iran regularly in the 1970s, numerous Parsis asked me whether I thought it was safe, and whether they should return to Iran. During the World Zoroastrian Congress in Iran in 1996 Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians alike visited the homeland and deeply appreciated the assurances of the Islamic leaders that they respected

⁴⁰ W. Safran, 'Diasporas on Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, Spring 1991, pp. 883–99 at p. 89.

⁴¹ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, pp. 188 ff.

Zoroastrianism as the original prophetic religion of the country.⁴² To say that the Parsis do not wish to return to the homeland is simply incorrect. Many of them in practice do not anticipate returning to Iran to live, just as countless Jews over the centuries drink to the toast 'next year in Jerusalem', but neither in medieval times nor in contemporary America have most Jews envisaged returning to live in Israel. Similarly most Hindus living in the West, for all their attachment to the homeland and periodic visits to India, do not envisage moving from London or Toronto to settle in India. The idealization and powerful emotional attachment of diaspora Zoroastrians to the homeland is encapsulated in a video made by a team of young American Zoroastrian professionals recording their pilgrimage to Iran.⁴³ The video is appropriately named 'In the Footsteps of our Forefathers'. This is but one example of many that demonstrate a love for Persia. Indeed, many second- and third-generation Parsis in America see Persia rather than India as their homeland.

Cohen's arguments about world religions also need to be questioned. What is a 'world religion'? The logical argument is that a world religion is one that is open to anyone in the world. In that sense Zoroastrianism is not a world religion because of its attitudes to conversion, just as Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism are not world religions. If Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism are world religions because they are found in countries around the world, then so is Zoroastrianism.⁴⁴ I also find it difficult to see Cohen's reasons for stating that a religion cannot be a diaspora when that religion clearly involves an image of a religious homeland.

⁴² There is an account of the Congress and its debates in *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1996, pp. 58–71. Audiences were granted by IRI Leader Imam Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. This account, naturally from a Parsi perspective given the place where the account was published, emphasizes the Parsis' Persian heritage. This was reportedly recognized by the Iranian leaders. For example, Khomeini referred to 'Iran, the land of the divine Prophet Zarathushtra . . . your land' (op. cit. p. 68).

⁴³ Produced by Tenaz H. Dubash, 2000. This has been shown at the Millennium Congress in Houston, in a World Zoroastrian Organization function in 2002, and at a communal function in Sydney, as well as in many homes. A similar point is made differently in a video, 'Paradise', produced by two young Zoroastrians in British Columbia, Shajriar Shahriari and Shervin Shahriari, 1997, where they are transported back in time and are taught by the Prophet and seek guidance from such major historical figures as Cyrus the Great.

⁴⁴ Vertovec argues that Hinduism is an exceptional case as a religion that is racially bounded but still merits consideration as a diasporic phenomenon. *The Hindu Diaspora*, pp. 1 f. If Hinduism is an exception, and he implies Judaism and Sikhism are also, then Zoroastrianism is equally an exception. It is a rule with many exceptions!

Patterns in diasporas

A number of scholars have identified the key factors in diasporic settlement. Knott identified five key factors, which in *Zoroastrians in Britain* I extended into ten.⁴⁵ Vertovec, Clarke and Peach proposed seventeen factors grouped under four rubrics.⁴⁶ Different factors affect different diasporas: for example, caste is a bigger factor for Hindus and Sikhs than it is for Zoroastrians. There are several common themes in these lists. One important factor is the old country—where people come from, the nation and the rural or urban setting; the extent and nature of links with the old country, and contemporary events in the old country. A second feature is the nature of the migration—whether it was to escape oppression or seek better educational and career opportunities, and whether it was undertaken alone or as part of a family network. A third group of factors is to do with relations with the new country—perceptions of it, the experience of racism or of pluralism and also the nature of ‘their’ community in the new land (for example, whether there is a formal organization and a building of their own in which to meet). To these common factors my own studies added the nature and level of education, employment and

⁴⁵ K. Knott, ‘Religion and Identity, and the Study of Ethnic Minority Religions in Britain’, in V. Hayes (ed.), *Identity Issues and World Religions*, Sydney, 1986. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 305–7 and Hinnells (ed.), *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, Harmondsworth, 1997, pp. 821–6. These were: 1. Which country people migrated from, and whether they came from an urban or rural background; 2. People’s perception of the new country; 3. The nature of the migration process; 4. What people were (e.g. education levels) prior to migration; 5. When people migrated (both their age at migration and which decade they migrated in); 6. Who people migrated with (alone or in an extended family); 7. Where people migrated to—both which new country and whether people joined an established Zoroastrian group or not; 8. What people did post-migration e.g. education and career; 9. Who people are—gender and career; 10. External events either in the old or new countries. I followed Knott’s seven areas of maturation, namely: 1. language; 2. Patterns of transmitting the tradition(s); 3. Perceptions of self-identity; 4. Patterns of group identity; 5. Leadership; 6. Universalization; 7. The impact of western ideas.

⁴⁶ C. Clarke, C. Peach and S. Vertovec, *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 5–7, reproduced in Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora*, pp. 21–3. They are: 1. *Migration processes and factors of settlement* (a) Type of migration; (b) Extent of ties with South Asia; (c) Economic activity in the new context; (d) Geographic features of settlement; (e) Infrastructure of ‘host’ society. 2. *Cultural composition* (a) Religion; (b) Language; (c) Region of origin; (d) Caste; (e) Degree of ‘cultural homogenization’. 3. *Social structure and political power* (a) Extent and nature of racial and ethnic pluralism; (b) Class composition; (c) Degree of ‘institutionalized’ racism. 4. *Community Development* (a) Organizations; (b) Leadership; (c) Ethnic convergence or conflict.

gender. Clarke *et al.* added economic activity in the new country, language and class composition.⁴⁷ All three works cited also pointed to the importance and nature of leadership; universalization; patterns of asserting self and group identity. Anthias also stresses the importance of studying the role of women in the transmission of culture, and of class differences. She asks what the commonalities are between a north Indian, upper class, Oxbridge-educated university teacher and a Pakistani waiter or grocer.⁴⁸

Various other studies have drawn attention to other factors in settlement patterns. One study by Naficy, which relates specifically to patterns of Iranian settlement in the United States, is especially appropriate to this study and merits particular attention here. In the course of this book there are various references to the powerful sense of Iranian Zoroastrians being the ‘real’ Iranians (or sometimes Persians, to evoke the image of the ancient culture). Naficy’s comments on the preservation of Iranian-ness in America are particularly relevant here. However, the points that he makes about Iranians are, in my opinion, appropriate to other diaspora groups and his work merits more attention than it has received. Naficy studied ‘Iranian nostalgia’ as evidenced by American-produced Iranian television, music and videos.⁴⁹ The theme of his article is the (re)creation of the image of Iran and of the experience of exile. Naficy uses ‘exile’ to express the concept that the other authors cited would have termed ‘diaspora’. He writes: ‘The “glorious return,” the operative engine of actively maintained exile must remain unrealized; in the words of Rumi, the exile must roam and pant to return but never actually achieve it’ (p. 288). He continues later:

However, this nostalgic past is itself ideological in that, as Said writes in *Orientalism* (p. 55), it has become an ‘imaginary geography,’ a construction created by exilic narratives. But this construction is not hermetic, since the ‘real’ past threatens to reproduce itself as a lack or loss; it is against

⁴⁷ Clarke *et al.* added religion, which I did not separate as I was writing about a religious group, and caste, which does not have a place in the Zoroastrian community unless one interprets their attitudes to intermarriage as a caste-like feature.

⁴⁸ ‘Evaluating “Diasporas”’, pp. 570 f.

⁴⁹ H. Naficy, ‘The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile’, in *Diaspora*, 1:3, 1991, pp. 285–302.

the threat of such a loss that the nostalgic past must be turned into a series of nostalgic objects, into fetish souvenirs that can be displayed and consumed repeatedly. Photo albums, letters, diaries, and telephones.

. . . The exiles construct their difference through not just what they see and hear but through their senses of smell, taste and touch. (pp. 288 f.)

He points out that musicians and artists are often opposed to the current Islamic regime because it forbids music and the arts. Iranians appeal to symbolism that pre-dates the factions, and this can mean that they glance to the pre-Islamic past: 'The past that [Iranian] exile television has found suitable as its reference point is chiefly the pre-Islamic past, in whose fetishes are encoded the values of Iranian antiquity, historicity, national chauvinism, patriotism and superiority, and which are repeatedly circulated within exile television's political economy' (p. 297).⁵⁰

Naficy argues that the boundaries of the group are largely symbolically constructed, and sometimes imperceptible to outsiders. The boundaries can be reconstructed by members of the community itself and are maintained through the use and interpretation of symbols (p. 295). He emphasizes the importance of rituals for heightening the consciousness of communal boundaries, which are particularly reinforced at times of celebration such as marriage or festivals in the calendar. Such rituals, he continues, acquire particular prominence when boundaries are being blurred, undermined or weakened. He concludes with the perception of the past, and in particular the different constructions of that past, held by the exiles and those back in the old country: 'there are different versions of history: official versions and those held in popular memory. At home [Iran] the official history is promulgated by mainline media; in Iranian exile, a kind of official history is propagated by largely royalist producers and consumers' (p. 299).

Other scholars have also drawn attention to many themes that commonly recur in various diaspora groups. Van der Veer emphasizes the romanticizing of the old country, and the tendency to

⁵⁰ A similar point is made with reference to the Hindu community by Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora*, p. 20 with regard to the use of the *Ramayana* in the diaspora. See also Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, who explains the text's popularity: 'the theme of exile, suffering, struggle and eventual return', p. 64. There is a fascinating study by Gillespie of the importance of videos, etc. among Hindus: Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*. R. Jackson and E. Nesbitt note the importance of traditional art in transmitting the tradition to children among Hindus in Coventry, *Hindu Children in Britain*, Stoke on Trent, 1993.

become more Indian after migration than before.⁵¹ Similarly, Clifford notes that ‘some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations’.⁵² Transnational groups seek to assert links with home in the old country and in the new by, as Clifford puts it, ‘constructing homes away from home’ (p. 302). A phrase several authors use is that people in the diaspora are affected both ‘by their roots, and their routes [of migration]’. A number of scholars also rightly emphasize the pathways of globalization—the links between the diaspora groups, and not only with the old country.⁵³ This range of interaction is facilitated by modern communications and ease of travel, and also by transnational or multinational companies, which move both people and capital around the globe. Cohen points to the importance of what he terms ‘global cities’. He lists Tokyo, London and New York, to which, especially for the purposes of this book, one might add Hong Kong and Toronto.

Who migrates and why?

Brah emphasizes a different dimension of diasporas. She writes:

At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as a diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots elsewhere . . . The question is not simply about *who travels*, but *when*, *how*, and *under what circumstances* [emphasis in the original].⁵⁴

This raises a theme studied by relatively few scholars, but clearly of importance, namely the difficulties faced in the process of migration, the complexity of the issues which lead people to migrate.⁵⁵ Who is it that migrates? Faist expresses the problem well: ‘Why are there so few migrants from most places? And why

⁵¹ P. van der Veer (ed.), *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*, Philadelphia, 1995, p. 7. Cohen likewise comments that the British in imperial times were more British in their diaspora, with their tea parties and clubs, than they were at home.

⁵² ‘Diaspora’, p. 307.

⁵³ See particularly Cohen, ch. 7, ‘Diasporas in the Age of Globalization’.

⁵⁴ *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 182.

⁵⁵ See esp. E. R. Barkan, *Asian and Pacific Islander Migration to the United States*, Westport, Conn., pp. 10–39.

are there so many from only a few places?’ He continues: ‘In most cases the number of potential movement participants is much higher than the number of those actually participating in events. Crucially the question is how potential participants in social movements and migration networks turn into actual ones.’⁵⁶ Brah expresses a similar point differently: ‘The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings.’⁵⁷ So to her earlier question might be added others: who sees themselves as benefiting from the huge step of migration, what benefits do they anticipate and how do they fare? In the course of this book it will be important to consider the different patterns of settlement of people who migrated for different reasons, e.g. Iranian refugees after 1979, or young single people travelling for education, or elders joining their young families in the diaspora.

Political issues and diasporic communities

It is remarkable in the study of diasporas how little attention has been paid to comparative studies of immigration and race relations laws and their impacts. Authors refer to them in their accounts of when, and sometimes why, migrations happened when they did. For example, in Britain in the 1960s, the South Asians feared that racist concerns about ‘this island race being swamped by immigrants’ would lead to the closing of doors on immigration. Many men, therefore, brought their wives and families to Britain, with the result that the numbers of South Asians increased significantly.⁵⁸ What has rarely, if ever, been attempted is a comparative study of the impact of race and immigration laws on the religions within western countries. The nearest attempt is by Christian Joppke, who studies first the immigration laws and their motives in the United States, Germany and Great Britain, and then the race relations laws and policies in those three countries.⁵⁹ His

⁵⁶ T. Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 4–6.

⁵⁷ *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 193.

⁵⁸ C. Holmes, *John Bull’s Island: Immigration and British Society 1871–1971*, London, 1988, and S. Sagar, *Race and Politics in Britain*, London, 1992.

⁵⁹ *Immigrations and the Nation-State*, Oxford, 1999.

study is fascinating, but it is not part of his brief to look at the impact of these policies on the religious groups of those countries.⁶⁰ It would be interesting to see studies of, for example, the impact on religious groups of the German policy on guest workers, who (until the new millennium) could not become citizens, even if their parents were born in Germany, compared with the French and American policies of encouraging early acceptance of citizenship. There have been comparative studies of American, Canadian and Australian policies, as we shall see in Chapters 8 and 9, but again there has been little attention paid to the impact of these policies on the respective religions. The comparisons are of a historical nature because of the interactions of the governments. The nearest study of this kind is Nye's work on the impact of planning laws on the building of a Hindu temple in Britain, but again this is (reasonably) focused on a specific sequence of events and does not discuss the impact of the policies on religion.⁶¹

Conclusion

This book is aimed at two audiences: (a) those interested in Zoroastrianism; it is the first book to consider the modern diaspora, and it has been a cause of excitement to fly into a country knowing that no one has written on this subject before; (b) those scholars who engage in debate on diaspora communities, or on migration, be they concerned with Religious Studies or not. I hope the book has value as an attempt to compare the experiences and networks around the globe of one religious/ethnic minority. In one sense, the Zoroastrians are a peg on to which is hung a wider debate. The two dimensions of this book support each other. By viewing Zoroastrians in the broader field of diaspora studies one is provoked to question or to look for trends that one might otherwise overlook. It also facilitates an understanding of what is and what

⁶⁰ One criticism I have of his book is that he writes as though the 'closed door' policy of successive British governments has been watertight. In fact there has been some limited inward migration since the 1970s, partly of spouses when a British Asian finds a spouse in South Asia, and partly as a result of a policy of international recruitment in specific areas where there is a lack of suitably trained people in Britain, e.g. doctors, nurses and teachers. The door is not as watertight as Joppke (or the Government) assert.

⁶¹ M. Nye, *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain: Krishna Consciousness, Religious Freedom and the Politics of Location*, London, 2001.

is not distinctive about the Zoroastrian diaspora. The Zoroastrians are, in my opinion, an excellent ‘test case’ for theories and analysis of transnational, diasporic cultures, and of migration studies, precisely because their numbers are so small. One can come to know personally a substantial proportion of the communities around the world, or as one person put it to me, I have written two words for every Zoroastrian living outside Iran!

Parsis in Post-Independence Bombay

Introduction

India in general, and Bombay in particular, is home for more Zoroastrians than anywhere else in the modern world. Apart from the original Iranian homeland, the Indian community has the longest and the most diverse Zoroastrian history.¹ India is a country of extremes, and the religious situation there is as varied as in any country. The Parsi communities around the subcontinent are themselves very different, from small impoverished groups in rural Gujarat to the small but wealthy and powerful community in Delhi. Bombay houses more temples, libraries, housing colonies, educational and medical resources for Parsis than anywhere else. It is therefore difficult to do justice to that community in one chapter. In what follows, the broad picture of post-Independence India in general, and of Bombay in particular, will be painted in very broad brushstrokes. The picture will be viewed from the distinctive perspective of the Parsis. It would be impossible and inappropriate in the space available to give a balanced perspective of the country and its commercial capital. The study of Independent India's history is a huge complex of wide-ranging subjects. Any account must necessarily be selective. This chapter focuses on what is relevant to one community, predominantly in one city. It cannot, therefore, include such important subjects as separatist movements, agrarian reform, the language conflicts of the South, etc. But as no community exists in a hermetically sealed vacuum, it is important to set the relevant dimensions of the wider context.

Prior to Independence, Parsis were divided over the political future: many expressed concern about their fate in a land that had

¹ I am grateful to Dastur Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, Mrs Homai Mody and Jehangir Patel for reading through this chapter and saving me from many errors; any which remain are, of course, my responsibility. Khojeste Mistree has also kindly checked the sections of the chapter referring to activities.

been divided over religion and feared the removal of the British rule under which they had flourished. Others were supporters and activists within the Congress camp; indeed, Parsis were pioneers in the party's foundation. There had been vigorous internal debates concerning the wisdom of seeking formal registration as a minority to have their rights preserved. The final conclusion was that they could and should stand or fall by their merits and not seek any privileged status. How they fared in this new secular state, with a large Hindu majority, is the subject of this chapter. But first it is important to look at the whole picture of national patterns against which the Parsi situation has to be viewed.

Independent India

Nehru

Having resisted granting Independence for decades, the British Government eventually pushed the process through with considerable haste.² As 'the tryst with destiny', to use Nehru's words, approached, Hindus fled from the prospect of Islamic Pakistan, and Muslims fled from what they perceived as Hindu India. The result was carnage, as extremists on both sides slew those whom they had come to see as their enemies, in huge numbers. Thousands of refugees moved to the large cities such as Delhi and Bombay, but these cities also suffered the loss of some important Muslims and Hindus. These religious conflicts, before and after Independence, were major factors in Independent India's emphasis on secularism. Never again, it was urged, should there be such religious conflict. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, personally visited and intervened in situations where violence against Muslims was threatened. The breakaway of such a large area of

² It is inappropriate to insert footnotes for individual points in such a broad-brushstroke picture. For a general historical account from Independence until the end of the 1970s, see H. Kulke and D. Rothermund, *A History of India*, 2nd edn. London, 1992, ch. 8; P. Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India 1740–1975*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1978; S. Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 2nd edn., Oxford, 1982, chs. 23–5; and more particularly P. B. Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, 2nd edn., 1994, Cambridge (*New Cambridge History of India*, vol. iv.1); S. Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, London, 1997, with extensive bibliographical essay; S. S. Harrison, P. H. Kreisberg and D. Kux (eds.), *India and Pakistan: the First Fifty Years*, New Delhi, 1999; B. Chandra, *India after Independence*, New Delhi, 1999. From the perspective of this book a helpful study of the Hindu–Muslim conflicts, from an extensive body of literature, is P. van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, Univ. of California Press, 1994.

what had been (British) India to form Pakistan reinforced the unwillingness shown by either nation to see portions of its land seceded, a factor in the treatment of secessionist claims in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam. Having experienced political impotence under colonial rule, the new leaders were determined to draw up a clear and balanced constitution for the new state, something achieved by a member of the backward classes, Dr Ambedkar.

In his early years as Prime Minister, Nehru was locked in political battle with Sardar Patel, but after Patel's defeat in 1950 Nehru became the unquestioned leader in India and was respected overseas as a leader among the non-aligned nations. His aim was a socialist state. His problems, among many others, were extensive poverty and famine, especially following droughts, a seriously weakened industrial and economic base, and military difficulties with China and Pakistan. Especially in his early years he was dependent on the largely intact old Indian Civil Service, a resource he sometimes relied on more than he did his political colleagues, so that some authors have spoken of the Congress Raj succeeding the British Raj.³ Internally there were political divisions as India wrestled with the artificiality of the boundaries drawn up by the British, which had often ignored local circumstances—for example, linguistic and cultural ties. Yet remarkable developments took place. There was a determined drive for industrialization, something contrary to Gandhi's philosophy, resulting in a building and technological expansion, the development of higher education and research centres, and progressive urbanization as people moved to the cities for work. The use of higher-yield grains slowly eased the worst famines and from the 1950s to the 1960s life expectancy grew from around 32 to over 50. Urban areas grew dramatically and became alienated from the rural masses.⁴ Civilian authority was strictly maintained over the military, hence the absence of any single leader of the armed forces (although its separate branches, army, navy and air force, had their own commanders). India preserved the democracy lost in so many emerging nations.

The Gandhis

Despite problems, not least in his last years, and his serious illness in 1962, Nehru's position in post-Independence India was

³ R. W. Stern, *Changing India*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 137.

⁴ R. Ramachandran, *Urbanization and Urban Systems in India*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 69–73.

impregnable. Opposition parties existed, but could not seriously challenge the vast Congress majority. Though the jockeying for the succession was active for a couple of years before his death in 1964, the rivalries did not threaten his position. Lal Bahadur Shastri emerged as Prime Minister, a man more like Gandhi than Nehru in much of his philosophy. After Shastri's sudden death in January 1966, Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, was chosen as party leader and was confirmed as Prime Minister by an election in 1967. She inherited the mantle of the great man and his many achievements, but also many problems: war with China in 1962, the Hindi crisis in 1965 (following the proclamation of Hindi as the national language, bitterly opposed by the southern states), war with Pakistan in 1965 and problems in Kashmir. Mrs Gandhi's political prominence lasted until her assassination in 1984, but included periods of great turbulence, notably her proclamation of the Emergency in 1975, when the Allahabad court overturned her election, her defeat at the ensuing election in 1977, but her return to power in 1980. She, too, faced war with Pakistan in 1971 after north-east India had been overwhelmed with refugees from the atrocities committed by West Pakistani forces in East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) because of moves for Independence. Most well known is her action in the Golden Temple against Bhindranwala, a man she had ironically used to foment divisions in the Punjab (1984). Her actions there aroused the deepest anger among Sikhs around the world, not least in Britain and Canada, but also caused resentment in India and led to her eventual assassination by two of her Sikh bodyguards. In nineteen years she changed much in Indian political life. Her instinct was to centralize power in her own hands, and to this end she sought to control state governors and assemblies and allowed more influence to her entourage than to senior figures in her party. She transformed the process of mass mobilization, effectively used by Mahatma Gandhi, to gain the support of the backward and deprived classes at election times, skilfully using television, film and poster images to project her own personality. She continued the policies of nationalization, but found herself able to do little to deal with rising economic problems aggravated by the costs incurred by the refugee problem, the Indo-Pakistan war and the OPEC oil price rise. India has one of the most dramatic population growth rates. Her son, Sanjay, allegedly with

help from violent youth groups, sought to persuade, indeed enforce, sterilization, a policy which made not only him unpopular but rebounded against his mother also. The Punjab crisis apart, however, undoubtedly her greatest difficulty was the Emergency (1975). Initially this resulted in fewer strikes, increased industrial production and therefore led to a healthier economy. But the political, and eventually personal, consequences were considerable. Many of her erstwhile supporters left her side in public or quiet protest at the imprisonment of opponents and the suspension of democracy. She had thought that the economic improvement would carry her through the election that she called at short notice in 1977 to disadvantage opposition parties who until recently had been banned or imprisoned. She was wrong, and suffered years in opposition. She learned from this, at least to some extent, and through intensive nationwide campaigning returned to power in 1980. She proved to have a mastery of populist campaigning.

Following her assassination, her older son, Rajiv, hitherto an airline pilot not a politician, assumed what was being presented as almost dynastic rule. He won a landslide victory in the 1984 election, with some 80% of the seats in Parliament. Initially, he moved to ease state control and to limit import controls, also to liberalize licensing and to encourage private enterprise and investment. For a year the economy appeared to flourish, and technology in particular developed, but thereafter his entourage turned him away from the economic free path, and interest groups manoeuvred to turn the policies in their individual favour. When Rajiv was assassinated in 1991 by a Tamil suicide bomber, not only did the Gandhi dynasty come to an end, but the national political scene fragmented. The regions attempted to reverse the centralizing policies of the Gandhis. Although the Congress Party remained the largest single national party, its influence was strong in only a few areas. Regional parties and concerns became the order of the day. Politicians showed little party loyalty but moved where their interests were best served. Factionalism, not party loyalty, was the norm. Thus from the early 1990s, it is difficult to write about national trends; it becomes essential to focus on the individual states and regions. For the purposes of this book, that means the State of Maharashtra and specifically the city of Bombay, later renamed Mumbai. There are, however, two trends that affect the

whole country: the danger of nuclear war with Pakistan from 2001, and the rising violence between Hindus and Muslims, especially in Gujarat. As India now has more Muslims in its population than there are in Pakistan, there is a threat of both international and civil war.

Religion in Independent India

It is necessary first to comment briefly on the place of religion in Independent India. As noted above, the experience of Partition and the establishment of a Muslim state in Pakistan provoked Indian leaders, notably Nehru, to stress the secular nature of India. Secularism has different shades of meaning in different contexts. In the study of western secularization the emphasis is on the separation of Church and State, and the decreasing influence of religion on political, legal and national institutional and social affairs. In India the emphasis is rather on the concern for freedom of expression for all religions, and their security within legal and state matters. The aim was that there should not simply be a Hindu India opposed to a Muslim Pakistan. From the 1970s, and increasingly in the 1980s and 1990s, many Hindus in much of the country, but especially in the urban areas, argued that in a democracy the concerns of the majority, the Hindus, should predominate. In order to mobilize the mass vote, Hindu symbols were frequently used in public. Although the Swatantra (a free enterprise party) and Janata (an alignment of more left-wing groups which came together during the Emergency) parties continued, the increasing trend in the 1990s was to political fragmentation and the growth of the Hindu nationalist groups, notably the BJP, formed in 1980 out of the old Bharatiya Jan Sangh, an upgrade of the pre-Independence Hindu Mahasabha. Although the BJP calls for Hindu rights and uses Hindu symbols, it is in some ways a secular group whose goal is the economic and military development (including nuclear weapons) of India. It is concerned to ease centralist controls and to develop a wider free-market economy. In various parts of India it has become the dominant party, obtaining over a hundred parliamentary seats in the process and increasing the 3% share of the vote achieved by its prototype to 20% in 1991. It therefore not only attracts the mass Hindu vote, it also gains the support of the middle class, economists and many

industrialists; in 1998 it became the ruling party in government. The mass appeal has resulted in violence in many urban areas where the BJP is strongest. These nationalist concerns were highlighted by the events surrounding the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya, which had allegedly been built on a site sacred to Hindus, as it was believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram. The police did little to prevent the protest march or the demolition of the masjid in 1992, the culmination of a campaign started in 1984. This excited Hindu passions not only nationally, but also throughout the diaspora. Hindutva, 'Hinduness', was the cause of the day. There was violence in many cities as Hindus attacked Muslims; over a thousand died in Mumbai alone. Again, there appears to have been little police attempt to restrain the mobs. Increasingly, many are questioning the desirability of secularism as a basis for state policy when the country is so predominantly of one religion. Voices are raised protesting at the 'pampering of the Muslims', and the violence between Sikhs and Hindus, especially in the 1980s, means that although attacks have been directed predominantly against Muslims, they are not the only focus of religious opposition. The strength of Hindu religious feeling, many felt, had all too often been overlooked. It was after all a Hindu, a Brahmin, who assassinated Gandhi in 1947 following Independence, for what was considered to be his weakness in the face of Muslim demands. What, unwittingly, stimulated the outburst of Hindutva was the screening on television in 1987–8 of the great Hindu epic the *Ramayana*. Crowds in villages and urban slums alike watched the many episodes. Alongside this was the heroization, almost the deification, of famous film stars. Appearing as a deity in film was an aid to political advancement for some actors.⁵

India at the dawn of the new millennium

Democracy appears strong in India. Its elections are the largest in the world; the voter participation rate has grown consistently and substantially since Independence. Indian democracy was a strong enough force to survive the Emergency. And yet in many ways it runs counter to much Indian tradition. It is, for example, neither a natural ally of the caste system, nor part of the royal power

⁵ Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, pp. 154–61 and esp. 172–8.

traditional in ancient India and preserved into modern times with the princely states. Some of the old ways have been quietly preserved, indeed are strengthening. They can be seen, for example, in the role of courtly advisers, whose loyalty is to the person in power, not to party principle; in the vertical loyalties of patronage; in rewards for favours, less charitably described as bribes; and in the strength of a dynasty. Power in India commonly derives either from associations, such as caste associations, or from leader–follower relations. Religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims, and with Pakistan, has brought to the fore the threat, indeed in 2002 the reality, of communal bloodshed and the fear of nuclear war.

Following Nehru’s vision, India has evolved as an industrial nation, first seeking to meet its own needs and then developing its export trade. There has also been a growth, in the hands of established families—especially in Calcutta and Bombay—of small industries, not least in the electronic goods market. The result has been a booming share market, leading to investment and the growth of a number of industrial cities. But despite the growth of production of indigenous goods, India remained a ‘poor’ country at the end of the millennium, with a per capita growth income still of only 1.3%; and with extensive undernourishment. Yet—despite the fiscal crises of the 1980s—it has the lowest external debt as a percentage of gross national product of all developing countries, apart from China. In the south, notably Bangalore, the computer industry has developed considerably. While exports are helped by the low value of the rupee, import costs are extremely high. The unequal distribution of wealth, the extent of impoverishment of urban sprawls (despite the big city lights publicized on the television screen), the decline of Russia—a major financial backer first under Nehru and then under Mrs Gandhi—all mean that the demands by the growing population for their slice of the national cake became more strident, not least from the students and the young, and from the masses whose needs have not been met by the politicians campaigning for democracy. Since the end of the Nehru–Gandhi dynasty, the shape of politics has changed, with an increasing fractionalization of Indian politics, that has led to unstable coalition government. Widespread corruption has undermined the authority of many institutions and violence continues in local politics.

Post-Independence Bombay

The growth of Bombay

Bombay, like many other Indian cities, both experienced a wave of refugees at the time of Partition and lost some important Muslims, as noted above. As droughts and poor harvests afflicted the Gujarat countryside in the 1950s, so economic refugees migrated to Bombay, a trend which has continued unremittingly into the new millennium, with the result that the population of Bombay has increased by some 700% in that time. Television and cinema screen images of the glittering lights of the metropolis have continued to entice new arrivals. But as Bombay city is an island, it has been unable to grow significantly, despite some land reclamation. The size of the island increased by 1,000 acres, or less than 10%, in thirty years.⁶ In percentage terms the period of greatest growth was 1941–51, when the population increased by 56%, though the increase in actual figures was at its greatest in the period 1981–91. Only 6% of the 950,000 migrants in the 1940s came from Pakistan; most were economic migrants.⁷ There have been two substantive studies of migration to Bombay, by Zachariah and Bulsara.⁸ Their basic theme is that in that period the majority (approximately 70%) of Bombay's population was born outside the city; that most migrants came with little education; and that there was a heavy preponderance of males (160 males per 100 females in 1961, levelling to 136 per 100 in 1981⁹). Most migrants (73%), even more than in proportion to the overall populations, were Hindus, with 13% Muslims (15% of the 1961 Bombay population). An unknown, but substantial, proportion of migrants had little choice but to live on the streets and in the most temporary of accommodation (water pipes on the roadside, impermanent structures with sacking or plastic sheeting).¹⁰

⁶ M. Kosambi, *Bombay in Transition: The Growth and Social Ecology of a Colonial City, 1880–1980*, Stockholm, 1986, p. 131.

⁷ Kosambi, *Bombay*, p. 125.

⁸ K. C. Zachariah, *Migrants in Greater Bombay*, New York, 1968 and J. F. Bulsara, *Patterns of Social Development in Metropolitan Areas*, New Delhi, 1970.

⁹ Kosambi, *Bombay*, p. 165.

¹⁰ The figures are unavailable because of the impossibility of conducting reliable surveys of such a transient population. Bulsara concludes his statistical study with a chapter of graphic personal accounts of the difficulties faced by migrants interviewed for his study (pp. 314–24). See also J. Seabrook, *Life and Labour in a Bombay Slum*, London, 1987, and for a sensitive but vivid fictional account see the novel by R. Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, Toronto, 1995.

Such living conditions, and the failed hopes for remunerative work, inevitably resulted in a high return rate, so approximately 30% of males returned to their homes outside Bombay within five years. Despite the returners, there is little doubt that hutments, shacks and pavement dwellers increased significantly in the 1990s. Such concentrations of seriously underprivileged people naturally provide fertile areas for discontent, as politicians proclaim democracy but do little about the disparities. These areas are one source of recruitment for the Hindu nationalist cause, though in Bombay the situation is more complex, as will be seen below. Although the proportion of Bombay's population who were born in Greater Bombay increased from 25% in 1941 to 37% in 1961, that still leaves two-thirds of the population born outside the extended limits of the city.¹¹ Inevitably there have been shifts of population trends within Bombay. As numbers have increased, so the densely populated areas have spread into the northern suburbs, especially to the north-west. But the main business and commercial areas remain in the south, so that the density of commuting traffic is without equal in the western world. In central Bombay (Ward C), the density of population reaches 1,598 persons per acre.¹² The newer industries have been located in the north. Future plans propose expansion across the Thana Creek on the mainland, but there has been little movement so far.

Bombay politics

Despite these population changes there are ways in which Bombay is cut off, metaphorically as well as literally, as an island independent of India, largely free from government bureaucracy. Its primacy as India's commercial capital, banking centre and premier port is only marginally eroded. With the growth of industry, especially engineering and chemicals, in northern Bombay, the city remains in many ways the engine of the Indian economy. Studies of employment patterns indicate that commerce and industry are expanding and the prominence of the professions has declined somewhat. It is India's most cosmopolitan city.¹³ Bulsara found there were 197 languages and dialects spoken in Bombay.¹⁴

¹¹ Kosambi, *Bombay*, p. 165. For a readable and illustrated account of Bombay, old and new, see S. Dwivedi and R. Mehrotra, *Bombay: The Cities Within*, Bombay, 1995, and P. Rohatgi, P. Godrej and R. Mehrotra (eds.), *Bombay to Mumbai*, Mumbai, 1997.

¹² Kosambi, *Bombay*, p. 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁴ *Patterns*, p. 53.

There has been no later comparable study, but there is little doubt that the number of languages has increased as migration and trade have both expanded. Yet the religious balance of the city has changed relatively little in the period studied by Zachariah. 'He shows that in the period 1941–61, the city's population of Hindus had decreased from 68% to 67%; Muslims had decreased from 17% of the city's population to 15%; Christians had decreased by 1% to 6% of the population; Parsis were down from 4% to 2% whereas Jains had increased from 2% to 4%, and Buddhists had changed from 0% to 5%. There were no Jews according to his figures, and only 1% of the city's population was Sikh.¹⁵

Bombay has evolved politically. The first major development came in 1960 when Bombay Presidency was bifurcated into Gujarat and Maharashtra, with Bombay eventually being linked not with Gujarat but with Maharashtra. The change was part of the national move to redefine state boundaries along linguistic lines. Bombay therefore moved from its historical link with Gujarati to Hindi, as the national language post-Independence, and to Marathi, the regional language, after 1960. The language change reflected and affected local political ties and concerns; Marathi rulers favoured Marathis in employment, education, etc. In national political terms, Mumbai remains one of the major centres where the Congress Party is the largest party¹⁶ but the Shiv Sena, related to the BJP, has significantly increased its influence. The Shiv Sena, 'the army of Shiva' was started in the 1960s as an anti-immigrant movement. Its central platform was that Maharashtrians should receive preference in employment and education. The original target of its attacks were Tamils from South India, mocked as 'lungiwallas', and depicted as criminals, gamblers, illicit liquor dealers, pimps, goondas, and Communists.¹⁷ The concern was that the Tamils were better educated in English and were taking a high proportion of middle management jobs. But from the 1980s its main target has been the Muslims, notably, but not only, through the pogroms in 1992 against Muslims following the Ayodhya incident. Its main recruitment has been from disaffected and impoverished youth in the slum areas of Bombay, and members have often been associated

¹⁵ Zachariah, *Migrants*, p. 27.

¹⁶ Brass, *Politics of India*, p. 90.

¹⁷ S. Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, London, 1997, p. 141.

with outbreaks of violence. But it has also sought to provide better educational and medical facilities for the poor Maharashtrians (it has not been noted for cosmopolitan work). The Shiv Sena does not share Gandhi's and Nehru's vision of a secular India, but instead has the view of a government concerned with the needs of the majority in its area. In the 1998 elections it came to power in Mumbai.

In short, since Independence, Bombay has grown hugely in population, but minimally in geographical terms. The result has been increasing density of population and traffic problems of an order that it is difficult for anyone who has not visited the city to appreciate. The problems of travel have been exacerbated by the declining inner city residential population as people moved to the suburbs, especially in 1971–81, so that an increasing number of people commute into the city. Industry and commerce has grown significantly, but so also has the proportion of the poor and slum dwellers. In that environment, radical politics have flourished, as Maharashtrians fear that they suffer in the face of the wave of migrants who take jobs and other opportunities from them. Bombay is India's most cosmopolitan city, but the Maharashtrians seek to assert their 'ownership' of the city: street names are altered to reflect their traditions, and the city's name has been changed back to the ancient one of Mumbai.

Parsis after Partition

Parsi demography

Before considering the history of Parsis in Independent India and in Bombay/Mumbai, it will be helpful first to look at the changing demographic features of the community. Unfortunately, this process is complicated by the fact that the decadal censuses did not ask the same questions, so some features can only be discussed with reference to specific decades. The 1961 census yielded most information about Parsis because the community's apex body, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, paid for a special study, whereas the 1991 census provided only minimal data, merely population figures in each state. There were, however, various demographic studies undertaken by Parsis or outside academics and these can be utilized to provide a fuller, if still somewhat fragmented, picture.

TABLE 2.1. *Parsi numbers in India, 1941–1991*

	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
<i>Total Parsi Indian population</i>	114,490	111,791	100,772	91,266	71,630	76,382
<i>Parsis in Gujarat</i>	N/A*	N/A	17,714	15,131	11,732	12,924
<i>Parsis in Bombay</i>	59,813	68,660	70,065	64,667	50,053	53,794

* As Bombay Presidency was bifurcated in 1960 there are no figures for Gujarat pre-1960.

Parsi numbers in India

In broad terms it can be seen from Table 2.1 that the overall Parsi population has declined steadily since 1941, with a dramatic decline of 20% from 1971 to 1981. There was a steady migration from Gujarat to Bombay. There was reported to be a marginal trend to move out from Bombay to Pune in the 1990s, as people commuted rather than pay the high accommodation costs of Bombay, and to the computer software industries around Bangalore, but no published figures establish this rumour. The 1991 census indicates an increase of 4,752, reversing the earlier trend, with an increase in Bombay of 3,741. Various explanations have been advanced for this. One argument has been that the decline has bottomed out and the numbers can now be expected to remain constant. This view ignores not only the monthly record of deaths exceeding births published in the widely read magazine, *Parsiiana*, but also the age structure of the community recorded in all studies. A different explanation for the 1991 increase is that publicity given to the declining numbers, within the community, has resulted in Parsis (who may previously have recorded themselves simply as Indians, Gujaratis, etc.) being more careful to record their ethnic identity. A third explanation is that census data in a country as vast as India cannot be very precise and that too much significance should not be attached to one set of figures. First, however, it is necessary to look at the pre-1990 trends.

Parsis in Gujarat

The move from Gujarat to Bombay was marked throughout the twentieth century. The fundamental cause was the increasing

impoverishment of the rural Parsis.¹⁸ This first became an acute problem in the 1940s and 1950s, with the introduction of prohibition in 1947, because many Parsis (48% of families studied by Shah) earned their living in the toddy, or liquor, trade. Of families studied by Shah, 55% then turned to agriculture as their main or sole occupation, with 70% earning part of their income from agriculture. They sought to farm the land they had tenanted out. But new land tenancy legislation, introduced in 1950, restricted the income a landlord could derive from his tenant. It also determined a sequence of five categories of person to whom he could sell, in order of priority, and severely restricted his right to claim back the land for his own use. Traditional agricultural land holdings therefore had their profitability undermined. These problems were further compounded by a series of droughts and poor harvests in four out of the seven years between 1947 and 1954. To compound the problem, transport was nationalized and a number of Parsis lost this livelihood. The result was real poverty. Of the families surveyed by Shah, 15% had no source of income, and 76% fell below the average necessary for a family of four. Mistry in 1967 found similar conditions in his survey of Parsis in a nearby part of rural Gujarat. The young and able left Gujarat to seek work in Bombay, and the villages became the homes of the elderly, the disabled, the poorly educated and women who could not join a partner in Bombay. The communities in the very region which had made Parsis powerful and wealthy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became a declining, impoverished and ageing relic: an area for charitable giving, but also it has to be said an object of patronizing attitudes, as many of the sophisticated Bombayites labelled them 'the junglis'. In the 1980s and 1990s there was increasing concern among urban Parsis for their rural co-religionists and a report was commissioned by WZO and the Surat Panchayet, and produced by Bhaya in 1988.¹⁹ She confirmed the continuation of most of the trends highlighted above. The male-female ratio had stabilized and there had been some

¹⁸ There have been two major studies relating to the 1950s and 1960s: B. V. Shah, *The Godavara Parsis: A Socio-economic Study of a Rural Community in South Gujarat*, Surat, 1954 and M. P. Mistry, *Report of the Survey of Gujarat Parsis (Rural)*, Bombay, 1967.

¹⁹ C. P. Bhaya, *Report of the Socio-Economic Survey of Rural South-Gujarat Parsees*, sponsored by WZO and Surat Parsee Panchayat, Surat, 1988. This report will be discussed further in Ch. 10 in the section on the WZO.

educational advancement, but poverty and indebtedness remained major problems. Directories of Parsis in Navsari and Surat did not yield such hard statistical data, but similarly reflect the dire straits of many Parsis in rural Gujarat.²⁰ The numerical and economic centre of the Parsis in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century-India is therefore Mumbai, and that community now merits attention.

Bombay Parsi demography

There have been four major collections of demographic data on Bombay Parsis since Independence: Desai in 1947;²¹ a special volume on Parsis produced in the India Census of 1961; a substantial study undertaken by Karkal in 1984;²² and a further report commissioned by the BPP in 1999 which was published by Singh and Gowri. Since July 1987, *Parsiana* has published ten times per year figures on births, marriages and deaths. The editor stresses that these figures cannot be precise, for they depend heavily on reports from hospitals and families for much of the information, not least births and marriages. Nevertheless, they indicate a general pattern of the substantial excess of deaths over births each year; a figure confirmed by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's own statistics (Table 2.2).²³

In 1947 Desai analysed the birth, marriage and death rates in the community. He argued that fertility in the Parsi community was on the decline, that as marriages were being delayed or avoided, so deaths would exceed births and the community would diminish in numerical terms. His arguments appeared to many to be too apocalyptic and were contra-indicated by the fact that in 1941–51 the Parsi population reached a new peak. However, the 1961 census established that his forecasts had been somewhat optimistic and that the numerical decline began approximately

²⁰ S. K. Vajifdar, *Directory and Survey Report of Parsis of Navsari*, Navsari, 1974 (Gujarati) and R. R. Marshall, *Parsi Population of Surat*, Surat, 1975 (Gujarati).

²¹ S. F. Desai, *A Community at the Crossroads*, Bombay, 1946.

²² M. Karkal, *Survey of Parsi Population of Greater Bombay—1982*, Bombay, 1984. See also K. Gould, *Parsiana*, March 1987, pp. 44–51.

²³ Bombay Parsi Punchayet, *Statistical Outline 1971–80*, Bombay, 1981, p. 58. D. P. Singh and Dr V. Gowri, *Parsis of Mumbai: A Socio-demographic Profile*, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The last was extensively covered in *Parsiana*, Aug. 2000, pp. 113–19. In what follows the focus is mainly on that *Parsiana* report because later chapters will discuss the impact of these reports on the various communities, whose sole source is the *Parsiana* report.

TABLE 2.2. *BPP Review of excess of deaths over births*

Year	Births	Deaths	Excess	Year	Births	Deaths	Excess
1955	788	878	90	1978	648	1047	399
1956	817	902	85	1979	646	1084	438
1957	807	1007	200	1980	646	1084	438
1958	797	956	159	1981	650	997	347
1959	790	935	145	1982	462	983	521
1960	806	969	163	1983	486	1020	534
1961	870	971	101	1984	570	1092	522
1962	861	1001	140	1985	601	966	365
1963	844	1007	163	1986	500	1027	527
1964	893	1078	185	1987	580	974	394
1965	856	1037	181	1988	620	1048	428
1966	821	1027	206	1989	437	965	528
1967	812	1034	222	1990	220	961	741
1968	766	1016	250	1991	446	898	452
1969	730	1055	325	1992	418	1053	635
1970	699	1084	385	1993	447	1055	608
1971	692	1035	343	1994	412	998	586
1972	706	1057	351	1995	367	936	569
1973	677	1020	343	1996	380	989	609
1974	643	979	336	1997	321	903	582
1975	576	1010	434	1998	305	996	691
1976	520	1018	498	1999	276	928	652
1977	636	1059	423				

a decade earlier than he had foreseen. The 1961 census therefore merits discussion.

The proportion of Indian Parsis living in Bombay increased from 85.91% to 90.36% from 1941 to 1961. In 1961 20.8% had been born outside Bombay, mostly Gujarat (18%). There were marginally more women than men (1,034 to 1,000), in contrast to the general population of Greater Bombay where men outnumbered women (1000 : 663). Whereas the mean age for non-Parsi males in the city's wider population was 24, for Parsi men it was 37. In a growing population one would expect 40% of the population to be under 15 and only 10% over the age of 50; among Parsis the respective figures are 17.84 and 30.59. The mean age at marriage for Parsis was 31.38 for men, 26.55 for women (24.78 and 19.45

for the wider Bombay population). A consequence of this was the smaller number of children per family. The 1961 census expresses this in terms of (*a*) number of children 0–4 per 1,000 females aged 15–44 and (*b*) number of children aged 0–4 per 1,000 married females. Whichever group is considered, Parsi women have fewer children than does the general female population of Bombay (see Table 2.3).

Educational achievements are a characteristic feature of the Parsi community and therefore merit documentation. The figures in Table 2.4 show literacy rates among the wider Bombay population, and among Parsis, both male and female. There are two points meriting comment. In each age group for both genders the Parsis have a higher literacy rate than does the wider Bombay population; Parsi women in particular have a higher literacy than the wider female population, indeed in most groups higher than that of Parsi males. These figures are highly distinctive for India as a whole, and the implications will be discussed below. One of the consequences is that more Parsi women in the age bracket 15–34 (i.e. the normal childbearing age in India), 29.06%, are gainfully employed, compared with only 12.54% of the wider Bombay female population. Whereas the number of births in the Bombay Parsi community totalled 1,015 in 1952, it was down to 870 in 1961. The number of deaths had risen from 904 to 971 in the

TABLE 2.3. *Children aged 0–4 per 1,000 females in Bombay, 1961*

	Children of females aged 15–44	Children of married females
Wider Bombay population	554	735
Bombay Parsis	294	537

TABLE 2.4. *Literacy rates among the Bombay population and Parsis (%)*

	All ages	0–9	10–14	15–19	20+
Bombay males	65.10	27.39	87.65	82.60	70.91
Bombay females	48.81	25.32	86.61	71.88	50.33
Parsi males	89.89	42.17	91.03	92.50	96.54
Parsi females	90.45	46.43	99.18	99.32	95.03

same period. In short, the Parsi population of Bombay, in contrast to the wider population in that city, was an ageing community with a regressive population trend. The women are well educated, and are delaying marriage, at least in part, to use that education. The consequence is an excess of deaths over births, which threatens a diminishing population.

The Parsis have not funded another specific census analysis, but the apex body, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, commissioned a non-Parsi researcher, Prof. (Mrs) Malini Karkal, of the International Institute for Population Sciences in Bombay to undertake a study of the Parsi population of Greater Bombay in 1982 (published 1984). She undertook a random survey of 2,000 Parsi households from the seven constituencies of the city in which Parsis are concentrated. In broad terms, Karkal found that by using various measures such as physical size of dwelling, luxuries owned, number of people per dwelling and income, Parsis generally had a better standard of living than the wider Bombay population. She also found that the trends identified in the 1961 census had continued, specifically the age composition of the community, marriage patterns and fertility. In terms of age, whereas in the 1971 census (the latest figures available when Karkal wrote) 32.58% of the Greater Bombay population was under the age of 15, and only 2% over the age of 65, among Parsis Karkal found only 12.14% under the age of 15 and 19.16% over the age of 65. She points out that the United Nations defines a population as aged if more than 7% are over the age of 65. The Parsi population over 65 had grown from 14.10% since 1971 to 20.3%, a remarkable increase in little over a decade. (In 1911, the over-65 age group represented only 4.21% of the Bombay Parsi population.) The median age had increased from 37.02 in the 1961 survey to 40.27 in Karkal's survey. The ageing tendency had therefore significantly increased. The young dependency ratio declined from 37.21 to 22.92 in the same period. The community therefore continued ageing, and not reproducing itself.

Karkal found that Parsi educational achievements continued to be significant. Only 7% of males and females under the age of 40 were illiterate, whereas 35.08% of men and 37.27% of women under the age of 40 were graduates (postgraduate figures for the same age group are 8.93% for men and 7.61% for women). These figures have implications for employment patterns. The male

TABLE 2.5. *Employment patterns among males and females aged 25–29*
(% general Bombay and Parsi populations)

Occupational category	General Bombay population		Parsi population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Profession/technical	5.33	20.90	17.80	21.14
Admin./Exec./managerial	3.93	1.00	22.44	20.58
Clerical	14.12	20.93	18.20	21.61
Sales	14.26	7.45	19.01	28.81
Transport	48.32	24.87	8.47	3.27
Production	2.10	1.61	11.14	4.58
Sports/recreation	10.83	22.41	1.46	0.92
Fishermen etc.	1.11	0.83	—	—
Total	100	100	100	100
Participation rate	57.53	7.68	57.45	28.77

employment ratios of Parsi men and those for urban male employment nationally²⁴ are roughly similar; the difference lies in the figures for women. Whereas only 12.17% of Indian urban women are in gainful employment, 71.78% of Parsi women aged 25–9 are so employed. The figures for the types of employment for all age groups are complex.²⁵ In the present context, therefore, it clarifies the central issue to focus on the employment patterns of males and females aged 25–9, that is, the age after graduation, when child-bearing might be thought to be most likely (Table 2.5).

The point here is that Parsi women tend to enter more senior employment than do women from the wider population and are not seriously disadvantaged compared with Parsi males during their twenties, that is, in the age range where most Bombay women are having children. The rate of Parsi women's participation in employment is substantially higher (by almost 400%) than is the rate of women in the wider Bombay population. Of the families interviewed, 44.80% of males and 37.98% of women were never married. The mean age at marriage Karkal found to be 29.36; late marriages among females, she discovered, had

²⁴ Karkal makes the point that employment patterns are different in rural areas where women follow agricultural pursuits, and therefore have a higher proportion in work than in urban areas (Karkal, *Survey*, p. 69).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 74–8.

increased by nearly 50% from 1901. Both these figures contrast greatly with those for wider Bombay, where marriage is almost universal and takes place at a much younger age. In her studies of the never-married, Karkal found (pp. 89–91) that it was predominantly the graduate women, in contrast to the less well educated, who were putting off marriage. When interviewed, the never-marrieds most commonly (96%) considered that relationships with in-laws were crucial in the success or failure of a marriage. When women marry, Karkal found, they typically had small families: the mean number of pregnancies for all Parsi women was only 1.95; the mean number of live births was 1.68 (pp. 106–7). The trends to late marriage, or no marriage, and the declining birth rate, especially among the well educated, were also confirmed by Billimoria's later study.²⁶

Singh and Gowrie surveyed 6,596 households and a population of 20,423 in baugs, colonies, and independent households in forty-five other areas of Greater Bombay. Their findings confirm the continuing trend identified in previous studies. Whereas in India generally there are 5.5 persons per household, the average for Parsis was 3 persons. They found that 38.7% were graduates and 11% had studied up to Masters level. Forty per cent of men and 30% of Parsi women remain unmarried throughout their lives. The average age at marriage for those who do wed is 30.6 for men, 26.8 for women. On average Parsi women have 1.54 children and over 12% remain childless. Whereas in the wider Indian population 35% of people are under 15, among Parsis the percentage is 10.4, and in contrast to only 5% of people in the wider population being over the age 65, in the Parsis they represent 23.8%. The community is, therefore, continuing to age dramatically. As far as occupations are concerned, they found that 34.4% are in service, 6.3% in business, 12.6% are students, 17% housewives and 25% live on pensions and savings. There is clearly a problem not only with declining numbers, but also in the maintenance of the population both now and in the future. Unlike previous surveys, Singh and Gowrie's survey collected information on religion: 70% described themselves as religious, 29% not very religious and only 1% not religious at all; 95% said that they prayed daily at home, 15% also visited the fire temple daily and 83% said

²⁶ H. M. Billimoria, *A Study of Attitudes of Parsi Youth (Female) Towards Marriage*, Bombay, n.d.

that they visited it occasionally; 88% said that they participated in almost all religious ceremonies. Slightly more respondents thought that the future of the community in relation to other Indian groups was insecure rather than secure (36%–34%); 28% thought that the community faced extinction.

Communal demographic awareness

The actual statistics are only one side of the issue: the other is the extent to which they are known and appreciated in the community. Successive writers, Parsi and non-Parsi, have highlighted the trends in books, articles and magazines in a way which has confronted virtually all Bombay Parsis.²⁷ The fact that *Parsiana* has regularly carried figures for births and deaths, where the latter consistently outnumber the former, keeps the issue at the forefront in many discussions. The editor of that magazine, Jehangir Patel, not by nature a pessimist, wrote in 1985: 'We cannot reverse the trend towards extinction. No miracle can save the community. But a change in attitude could help us better cope with the inevitable.' Similarly, in an editorial on the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the journal, Patel focused his attention in the first part of the piece on the implication for the diverse institutions of the inevitable decline of the Indian Parsi population.²⁸ In a paper based on a lecture at Harvard on religious problems facing the community, the High Priest, Dastur Dr H. D. K. Mirza, highlighted the issue of being 'a dwindling and an ageing community'.²⁹

²⁷ P. Axelrod, 'Twilight Years', *Parsiana*, Sept. 1976, pp. 26–31, mainly on his Ph.D. thesis *A social and Demographic Comparison of Parsis, Saraswat Brahmins and Jains in Bombay*, North Carolina, 1976; K. Gould, 'An Ageing, Dwindling Community', *Parsiana*, Mar. 1989, pp. 55–62; M. Karkal, 'The Lost Tribe', *Parsiana*, Dec. 1984, pp. 18–22; P. Gandhi, 'Surveying the Community', *Parsiana*, Mar. 1987, pp. 55–62; A. Khullar, 'The 1991 Census—Cause for Rejoicing or Reflection?', *Parsiana*, Nov. 1995, pp. 14–17. Khullar's earlier work was mainly on Parsis in Delhi; see her study *A Socio-Economic Survey of the Parsis of Delhi*, Delhi, 1978. The subject was also covered in various papers at World Congresses, e.g., Desai 1964 ('Statistics of World Zoroastrians with Special Reference to Indian Zoroastrians') and Karkal 1985 ('The Dying Community'). The subject of declining numbers is covered in several other Parsi publications, e.g. the Orthodox *Jame Jamshed*, originally a daily, now a weekly, and the more reforming *Bombay Samachar*. Although these publications sell more copies in Bombay than *Parsiana*, the latter has a more global circulation and hence its prominence in the above, for it may be assumed to influence Zoroastrians in the diaspora. The BPP Review of the excess of deaths over births was, for example, reproduced in the Australian (Sydney) newsletter *Manashni*, vol. 2, issue 3, May–July 2001. See also n. 23 above on Singh and Gowrie.

²⁸ Nov. 1994, pp. 3–8.

²⁹ H. D. K. Mirza, *Some Religious Problems Facing the Parsi Community*, 2nd edn., Bombay, 1983.

In a meeting with the press, a new board of Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees in 1982 identified housing as a major problem facing the community, restricting its growth. They informed the journalists that there was a waiting list of 7,000, with some people waiting for twenty years and living in single-room accommodation. With the housing available, they estimated that they could meet the needs of only 700 people over the next five years. To deal with the problem they needed 7 crores, but they had only Rs 61 lakhs.³⁰ The radical newspaper *Bombay Samachar* drew attention to the fact that not only did deaths continue to exceed the number of births, but also the gap was growing, so that whereas in 1971 there were 343 more deaths than births, the excess in 1981 was 419.³¹ In the September 1985 issue of the *Newsletter* of the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (explained below, hereafter FED) the front-page issue was the stark findings of the 1981 Indian census, showing a 20% decline in Parsi numbers. The above demographic data is, therefore, not a question of obscure statistical analysis, but a prominent element in Parsi consciousness and debate.³² How it affects debates on social and religious issues will be discussed below. After this brief look at the broad demographic trends, it is now appropriate to consider the place of Parsis in Independent India.

Parsis in Independent India

The national perspective

Despite some of the Parsi voices in the Independence movement, the broad mass of Parsis throughout the nineteenth, and much of the twentieth centuries, have been pro-British. They considered that they had flourished in the Empire economically, educationally, politically and socially. Many believed that there was a broad set of common values.³³ The president of the BPP, Sir Shapoorji B. Billimoria, in a speech to the crowd attending a public *jashan* to

³⁰ *Bombay Samachar*, 9 May 1982.

³¹ *Bombay Samachar*, 21 Feb. 1982.

³² The matter is debated publicly as documented above, yet Singh and Gowrie found that although 90% of respondents were aware of dwindling numbers, 45% attributed it to conversion to other faiths, 75% thought it was due to emigration, and 80% thought it was due to intermarriage.

³³ J. R. Hinnells, 'Parsis and the British', *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute*, Bombay, 46, 1978, pp. 1–92, and see chs. 5–8 of J. R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies, the Selected Works of John R. Hinnells*, hereafter *Selected Works*.

mark Indian Independence, stressed the contribution of their small community to the cause of Independence, their long history in India and their loyalty, their identification with India's other communities, their cosmopolitan charities and their confidence in the promises of security so that they did not seek special provisions. He also drew attention to the number of Parsis who had been given important roles in the new administration both in Delhi and in Bombay. Yet the speech (translated in full in Appendix 1) has a hesitant tone, saying that the Parsis have no reason to doubt the promise that there will be no persecution, and emphasizing the virtues of English statesmanship, culture and civilization. The rest of this chapter is concerned with tracing the outcome of that Independence for Parsis in Bombay.

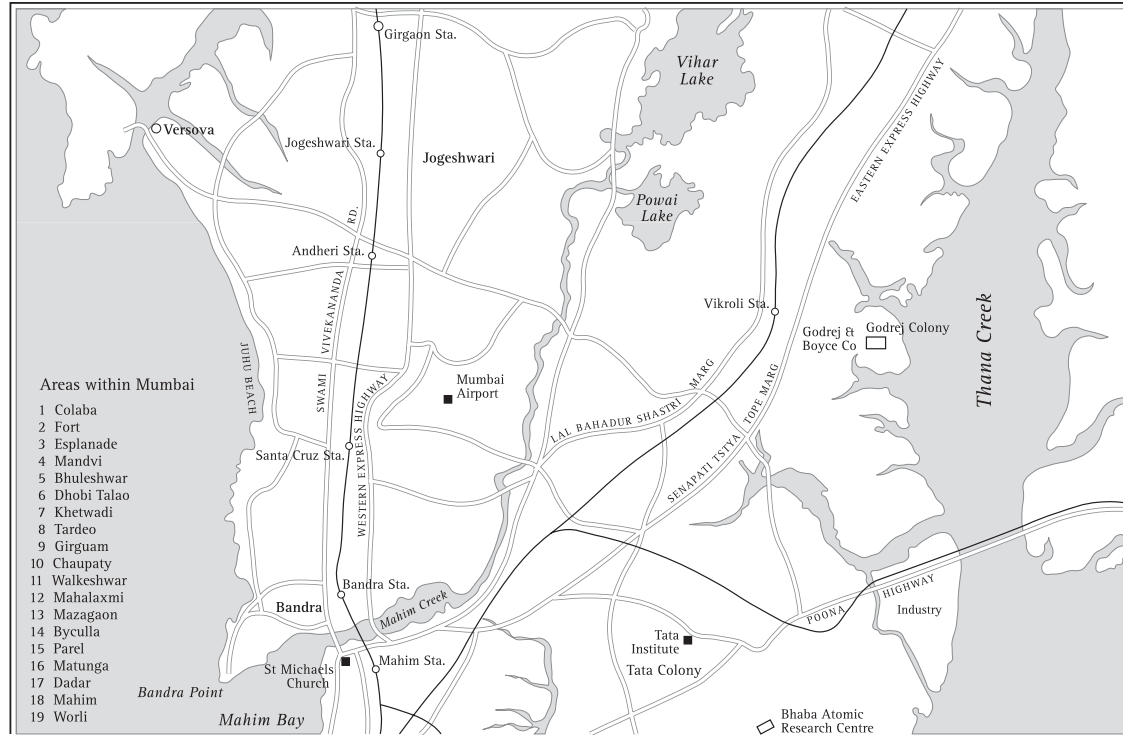
Popular Parsi tradition has it that the community has declined not only numerically but also in terms of influence in the course of the twentieth century. An initial consideration of the place of Parsis in Independent India would not support that. Parsis have occupied the post of head of each branch of the armed forces since 1947: Aspi Engineer, Air Chief Marshal, 1960; Jal Cursetji, Naval Chief of Staff, 1976; Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Chief of the Army Staff from 1969 and decorated for his success in leading the Indian army in the 1971 conflict with Pakistan.³⁴

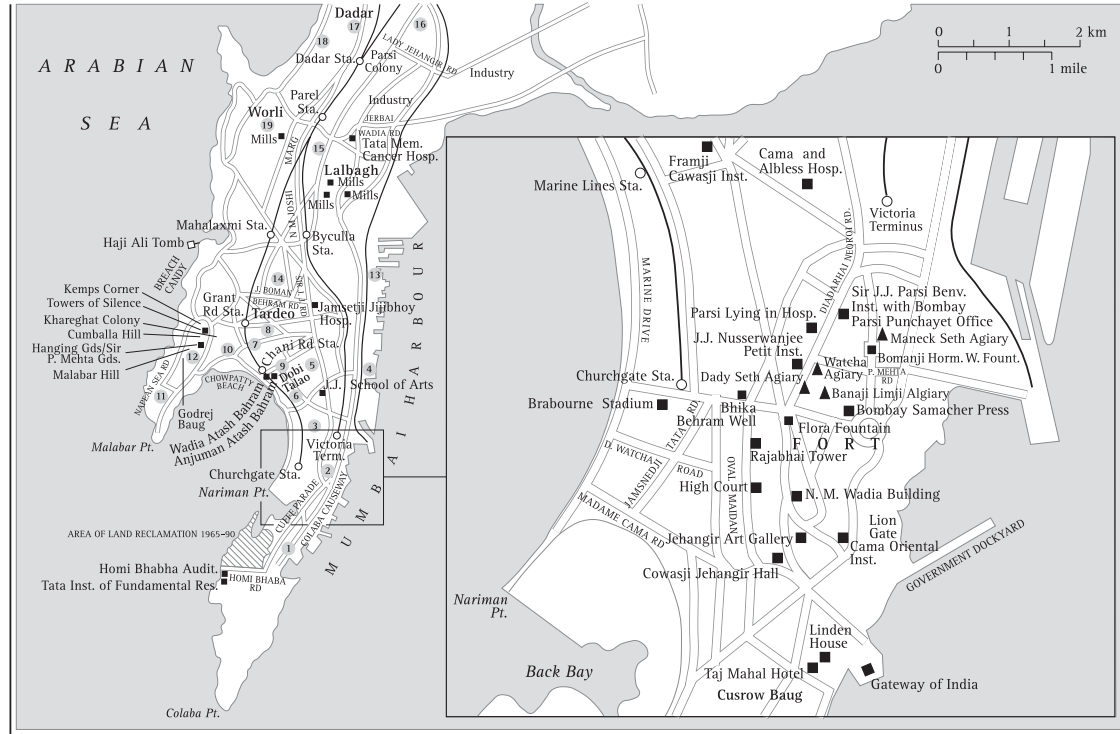
Parsis in Indian politics

There have also been prominent Parsis in politics. Chronologically the first influential Parsi in Independent Indian politics was Feroze Gandhi (1912–60). He was active in the Congress Party in the 1930s and through his ties with the Nehru family knew Mahatma Gandhi, who said of the young Feroze: 'If I could get seven boys like Feroze to work for me, I will get Swaraj in seven days.'³⁵ In 1935 he studied Political Science, Economics and Journalism at the London School of Economics (LSE) and there a relationship developed with Indira Nehru (then studying at Oxford). They became engaged in 1937, and married in 1942. Their eldest son, Rajiv, was born in 1944 and Sanjay in 1946. In 1952 Feroze was elected to the National Assembly, where it is said that he was something of a thorn in the flesh of his father-in-law, Nehru, for his pursuit of corruption, which led to the conviction of a leading industrialist and

³⁴ P. Nanavutty, *The Parsis*, New Delhi, 2nd edn., 1980. On Manekshaw see F. Depinder Singh, *Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw: Soldiering with Dignity*, New Delhi, 2002.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77.





Parsi Locations in Mumbai

- (a) Base map developed from details in maps of Mumbai issued by D. N. Publisher and Marg Publications on which has been created
 (b) the first map (to my knowledge) that highlights the Parsi connections with Mumbai

the resignation of the Finance Minister. The Gandhis separated but did not divorce, and Feroze died in 1960. Parsis commonly say that although Mrs Gandhi saw her sons as Hindus, technically they were Parsis. Rajiv in particular is said to have been like his father. Rightly or wrongly, a number of Parsi leaders believed that Mrs Gandhi had a particular affection and respect for the Parsi community. Certainly, whenever she visited Bombay she made personal calls on her Parsi relatives,³⁶ and several Parsi leaders have told me in private that they personally had direct access to her and obtained her support in such matters as disputed land claims in Bombay. When she was contemplating introducing an Adoption Bill in 1982 she received a deputation of Parsi priests and granted their petition to be exempted from the proposed legislation.³⁷ Both she and Rajiv visited the Parsi temple in Delhi on festive occasions,³⁸ and there were condolence meetings following their assassinations,³⁹ although these have been held for many public figures, including British monarchs. The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India sent Rajiv condolence letters on his mother's assassination.⁴⁰ In private, many Parsis have commented to me that technically Rajiv Gandhi was a Parsi, being the offspring of a male Parsi, though under his mother's influence his religion was Hindu. Others have said that of the two sons, he was much more like his father. The significant point behind such comments in this context is not so much whether they are accurate, but that they indicate that Parsis did not feel politically impotent, or marginalized.⁴¹

³⁶ See *Parsiana*, Apr. 1984, pp. 1–5, an article headed 'Indira Gandhi "One of Us"', quoting her speech at a Delhi Anjuman meeting, where she said: 'I have a soft spot in my heart for Parsis; otherwise I would not have gone to the extent of marrying one.' Of her late husband she said: 'He was a good representative of your community—nay, my community.' She went on to say 'Our community is a very small one.' The visit, and her speech, was also reported in the national newspapers the *Daily* (2 Apr.) and *Mid-day* (3 Apr.).

³⁷ *Parsiana*, June 1982, p. 15.

³⁸ *Parsiana*, Supplement, Apr. 1984, pp. 1–5 and for Rajiv, *Parsiana*, Oct. 1989, p. 7. The newspaper *Mid-Day*, 20 Apr. 1981, reports on Mrs Gandhi's attendance at her Parsi family's wedding, and also on her calling on them when in Bombay.

³⁹ *Parsiana*, Jan. 1985, p. 2; Aug. 1991, p. 19, where it is said that Rajiv 'had a special affinity and love for our Parsi community'. The *FED Newsletter*, no. 71, Sept. 1989, reported on Rajiv and his wife hosting a reception for Parsis on the unveiling of Madame Cama's portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament. *FED Newsletter* also includes a notice of the Parsi condolence meeting on the death of Rajiv Gandhi.

⁴⁰ *FED Newsletter*, no. 13, Oct. 1984.

⁴¹ Unfortunately the biography of Gandhi by N. Nugent (*Rajiv Gandhi: Son of a Dynasty*, London, 1990) says little about his relations with his father and nothing about his relationship with the Parsis (see pp. 29–42, where such material might have been included).

Minoo Masani began his political life in the Congress Socialist Party and became its General Secretary, but in 1959 he helped set up the Swatantra Party, once more becoming General Secretary.⁴² He had a short spell as chairman of the Minorities Commission, but resigned after three months because he believed that the conditions he had set were not complied with. He held various senior positions: Mayor of Bombay, 1943–4; member of the Indian Legislative Assembly 1945–7 (nominated by his former antagonist Sardar Patel, after Mahatma Gandhi had effected a reconciliation); member of the Constituent Assembly, 1947–8; Member of Parliament and Leader of the Opposition 1949–52 and 1957–70. He also served as Indian Ambassador in Brazil from 1948 to 1949. He described himself (in private conversation)⁴³ as a natural opposition person, a position he undertook vocally at the time of the Emergency, though he was never imprisoned.

Sir Homi Mody (1881–1969) was originally a businessman, and was involved in the First Round Table Conference in London in 1930 as a representative of Indian Commerce.⁴⁴ He joined the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1941 and was given the Supply portfolio, but he resigned in 1942 during one of Gandhi's fasts to death, this one to protest at the imprisonment of Congress leaders. He took various official positions, including being a member of the Minorities Commission, and then became Governor of Uttar Pradesh. Like Masani, Modi was a member of the Swatantra Party. His speeches in the Central Assembly in the 1930s had not met with Congress agreement as he worked with the Independent Party under Jinnah, but it was under personal pressure from Nehru and Patel that Mody accepted the governorship. That, however, did not inhibit the capitalist Modi (he had senior positions at Tatas and the Central Bank of India and was president of the Employers' Federation of India) from protesting personally and forcefully at Nehru's programme of nationalization. He was also prominent in the opposition to making Bombay part of Maharashtra, on the grounds that Maharashtrians comprised less than 50% of the population.

Nani Palkhivala (1920–2002) was another prominent political figure whose early links with Congress became strained. In his

⁴² Chandra, *India after Independence*, pp. 213–15.

⁴³ See also in his autobiography, M. Masani, *Bliss was it in That Dawn*, Delhi, 1977.

⁴⁴ For a biography see D. R. Mankekar, *Homi Mody*, Bombay, 1968.

case, they reached breaking point at the time of the Emergency, and he supported the Janata Party. Palkhivala made his basic reputation as a tax lawyer; he was a director of several Tata companies, a member of the Law Commission, and an ambassador to the USA. For several years he gave prompt responses to the Indian annual budget, not in learned bodies, but in Bombay's huge Brabourne stadium to audiences of 70,000 and more. Although a passionate crusader for the Indian constitution and advocate of the enormous achievements of democracy in the country, his own fear, expressed in private conversation, was that corruption has reached such a level that the main hope for Parsis in the future lies overseas. A cross-section of his political and community lectures and articles illustrates his remarkable wide-ranging vision, acuteness of mind and willingness to criticize the highest authorities in more candid terms than one would expect from someone who served as the country's ambassador in perhaps the most important embassy in his nation's politics.⁴⁵

Homi Taleyarkhan (d. 1998) served on the Bombay Municipal Council for four years after Independence and then held various cabinet posts under successive Chief Ministers in Maharashtra State politics, including the post of Chief Whip for the Congress Party. Mrs Gandhi made him the first Governor of the politically sensitive new state of Sikkim, and he then held the post of ambassador to Libya for a double term of six years, during which time he significantly improved Indian–Libyan relations. He often functioned as spokesman for the national Government on important matters, for example the Indo-Pakistan War. He served as a senior member of the National Minorities Commission until its work was ended in Maharashtra by Shiv Sena.⁴⁶ Whereas Mody and Masani were long-standing critics of the Congress Party, and Palkhivala left it, Taleyarkhan remained to the last a member, an allegiance he affirmed by wearing the Congress cap on public occasions.

These political differences highlight a characteristic feature of Parsi political involvement, namely that they are not aligned with any one political grouping. Individuals make their personal choices. It has the consequence that the community as a whole

⁴⁵ N. Palkhivala, *We the Nation: The Last Decades*, Delhi, 1994. See also M. R. Pai, *The Legend of Nani Palkhivala*, Mumbai, 2002. For his obituary, see *Parsiiana*, Apr. 2003, pp. 48–52.

⁴⁶ S. Chavan, *Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan: A Man of Devotion, Dedication and Commitment*, Aurangabad, 1996.

receives favours from none, but it also provokes the anger of none. In the lead-up to the 1998 elections when it was evident that Shiv Sena would come to power in Bombay, and that the BJP were likely to lead the next government, there was no discernible fear among Parsis. They argued, in private conversation, that they were too small and insignificant to be a target of political attack, unlike Muslims. On the one hand they were also accepted as being politically neutral on balance and as committed workers for the overall Indian cause.

This point is reinforced by a brief consideration of Parsis elected to the various parliamentary establishments. Since Indian Independence there have been five Parsi Members of the Lower (elected) House in Delhi: Feroze Gandhi, Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh; Minoo Masani, for the Swatantra Party in Assam/Gujarat; Piloo Mody, also for the Swatantra Party in Gujarat; Noshir Bharucha, for the Praja (People's) Socialist Party in Maharashtra; Homi Daji for Madhya Pradesh, related to the Communist Party of India. There have also been three members of the Upper House (nominated by the President or the Regional Assemblies): Prof. Ardeshir Wadia, nominated by the President; Mrs Roda Mistry, nominated by the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh; and Rusi Karanjia. Marzban Patrawala served in more than ten ministries over the years in Maharashtra State between 1982 and 1995.⁴⁷ As if to emphasize yet further the non-party alliance of the community as a whole, it was a Parsi, Dr M. M. Gilder, who was Minister for Prohibition in the old Bombay State from 1950 to 1955, running a policy which, it has already been noted, was financially ruinous for many Parsis in Gujarat.

Parsi perceptions of India

Parsi allegiance to the nation has been consistently expressed publicly since the *jashan* and speech of Sir Shapoorji Billimoria on Independence mentioned above. Similar events were held as marks of condolence following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, and at the time of his funeral.⁴⁸ Parsis are also proud of the fact

⁴⁷ He died in 1999. I am grateful to him for much of the information in this paragraph given in a private conversation shortly before his unexpected death.

⁴⁸ *PP* VIII.v. 281 for 30 Jan. 1948, 282 for 9 Feb. 288 for 30 Mar. I wish to record my profound thanks to my friend and mentor Dastur Dr K. M. JamaspAsa for his help in working through, and translating, the volumes of the *Prakash*.

that a Parsi carried a portion of his ashes to South Africa.⁴⁹ Parsi firms, notably the Tatas and the Wadias, gave substantial sums totalling over six million rupees to the Gandhi memorial fund.⁵⁰ *Jashans* were held to celebrate Republic Day⁵¹ and, as noted above, condolence meetings were held on the assassinations of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.⁵² When the State of Maharashtra came into existence, a multi-religious public celebration was held at which two Parsi High Priests, Dasturs Dabu and JamaspAsa, blessed the new state. A similar Parsi function was held at one of the Atash Bahrams, and by Parsis in eight other towns.⁵³ When the Prime Minister called for donations to the defence fund at the time of the Indo-China War, various Parsi firms made substantial donations, including Rs 4,000,000 from the Tatas, and Rs 500,000 from the Godrejs.⁵⁴ The text relating the Parsi migration from Iran to India, dating from 1600 CE, the *Kisseh-i Sanjan*, depicts the journey as part of Zoroastrian destiny, as undertaken on the advice of a wise astrologer priest; that is, it was written in the stars. It also refers to prayers for deliverance at sea from a life-threatening storm, and as a result of these prayers the Parsis came to land safely in India. The Parsi settlement in India was therefore seen as an answer to prayer.⁵⁵ A similar sentiment is still expressed by many Parsis; for example, a letter to the editor published in *Parsiana* (July 1989, p. 3) reads: 'It's a blessing of Ahura Mazda that, of all nations, we landed in India when we were being persecuted in Iran . . . we have become an inseparable part of Indian society.' My own subjective impression is that when I first began visiting Bombay in the early 1970s, there was still a leaning back, especially among the older generation, to the days of the British Raj, although there was also a strong loyalty to India. However, at the turn of the millennium, I found the community to be clearly and unequivocally India-focused. There is some debate on what their place in India should be. At the time of the Round Table Conferences, there was discussion in the community on whether Parsis should seek special

⁴⁹ *PP* VIII.v. 299 for 10 June and IX.ii.316 for 7 Nov. 1956.

⁵⁰ *PP* VIII.v. 338 and 371. ⁵¹ *PP* IX.ii.156 for 26 Jan. 1954.

⁵² *Parsiana*, Jan. 1998, p. 2; *Bombay Samachar*, May 1991.

⁵³ *PP* IX.ii. 512 for 27 Apr. 1960. ⁵⁴ *PP* IX.ii. 25, for 3 Nov. 1962.

⁵⁵ For translation and discussion of the *Kisseh* see H. E. Eduljee, *Kisseh-i Sanjan*, Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1991. See also the discussion of the text by P. Axelrod, 'Myth and Identity in the Indian Zoroastrian Community', *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, 3, 1980, pp. 150-65.

minority status, as some other groups did.⁵⁶ It was then decided that they should not look for special privileges, but that they should simply try to gain advancement through their own qualities and excellence. That remained the majority view until the 1990s, but as communalism grows and Maratis tend to favour Maratis and Gujaratis favour Gujaratis, so Parsis feel they are being excluded. One example of this is found in entry to higher education. Because of reserved places for backward and other classes in such popular subjects as Medicine and Engineering, those groups are gaining university places with marks of around 50%, but Parsis having no reserved places, have to gain in excess of 90% to win entrance.

It should also be emphasized that Parsis not only believe that they have been blessed by being in India; they are also convinced that they have contributed much to India. It can be invidious to give a list of great achievers, because of the arbitrary nature of omissions. But in order to underline the Parsi conviction, it may be worth highlighting a few, other than the military and political figures already noted, who have been important figures in Indian life. They have produced some distinguished scientists and scholars; perhaps the most outstanding was Homi Babha, the pioneer of India's atomic energy programme.⁵⁷ In economic and industrial terms, the largest Indian firm is that of the Tatas. Their concerns range from steel production (the town of Jamshedpur is named after the founder of India's steel industry, Jamshed Tata), to the manufacture of cars, lorries and buses, various engineering firms, tea, clothing, soaps, investments, luxury hotels, electricity and power generation companies, chemicals and oil processing. Until nationalization, they owned Air India, another example of how socialist policies affected Parsis, although they were not directly targeted.⁵⁸ It is one of the world's largest firms. South Asia's largest private firm is that of the Godrejs, still owned by

⁵⁶ S. F. Desai, *History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet 1860–1960*, Bombay, 1977, pp. 124–8, 324–8.

⁵⁷ See H. Dalal, *Prophet of the Atomic Age, Dr Homi J. Bhabha*, Bombay, 1994.

⁵⁸ There has, surprisingly, been no balanced study of the Tata empire. The life of the pioneer has been chronicled by J. N. Harris (*Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata: A Chronicle of his Life*, 2nd ed., Bombay, 1958), and in a more recent less critical study by B. Sh. Saklatvala and K. Khosla (*Jamsetji Tata*, Delhi, 1970). The broadest ranging study of the firm is R. M. Lala (*The Creation of Wealth: A Tata Story*, Bombay, 1981). There is also a study of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, one of many established by the family, R. M. Lala, *The Heartbeat of a Trust*, Bombay, 1984.

a prominent and respected Parsi family. Their base is in metal products, from the manufacture of safes to office furniture, typewriters, fridges, workshop equipment, machinery and forklift trucks; in conjunction with other overseas firms they are actively engaged in the production of advanced technology products.⁵⁹ Their factory site at Vikhroli has schools, homes and medical facilities. It also includes a large nature reserve.⁶⁰

Most issues of *Parsiana* include pieces on Parsi artists and dancers who have succeeded. The major international conductor Zubin Mehta, who will appear in the chapters on Britain and the USA, remains a hero in Bombay also, one hugely welcomed there whenever he visits India. There have been several leading Parsi lawyers, but in the 1990s perhaps the most prominent was Soli Sorabjee, prosecutor for the International War Crimes Trials from the former Yugoslavia, and Attorney General of India. Tehmtan Andhyarujina was also made Solicitor General of India.⁶¹ The achievements of Parsis have been honoured and publicized by the Parsi Punchayet, the Federation of Indian Zoroastrians and the World Zoroastrian Organization, and in numerous books.⁶² For example, in 2002 the BPP honoured three Parsis, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Sorabjee and Andhyarujina.⁶³ In short, the Parsis have continued to play a role in Independent India out of proportion to their numbers, though the prominence may not be as great as at the end of the nineteenth century. They continue to feel reasonably safe in India, they are committed to the country, and they justifiably believe that they make substantial contributions to it.

Parsis in Bombay/Mumbai Post-Independence

The dramatic increase in the population of Bombay has resulted in the movement and concentration of different groups, including the Parsis. Their dispersion around the city is due in part to the

⁵⁹ B. K. Karanjia, *Godrej: A Hundred Years*, Delhi, 1997 (2 vols.).

⁶⁰ See B. K. Karanjia, *Final Victory: The Life and Death of Naval Pirojsha Godrej*, Mumbai 2000, and on the Mangrove Project see *A Symbiosis of Industry and Nature*, published by the Soonabai Pirojsha Godrej Fund, Mumbai, 2000.

⁶¹ *Parsiana*, Feb.–March, 1994, p. 18 and Nov. 1996, A. S. Mama, ‘He Goes by the Law’, pp. 28–32.

⁶² Nanavutty, *Parsis*, for example.

⁶³ See A. S. Mama, ‘Honor—and Humor at Rustam Baug’, *Parsiana*, May 2002, pp. 26–9.

building of housing colonies outside the city proper, for example in Andheri.⁶⁴ But they also continue to be concentrated in the Fort area, Malabar Hill, Mahalaxmi and Tardeo. They have been affected by the changing political ties. Whereas in British India their languages were English and Gujarati, after Independence first Hindi and then Marathi became official languages for political purposes. English remains a nationally recognized language, but aspects of Parsi traditions associated with Gujarati have been weakened, as it becomes the third language for young people. Since Independence, government funding has not been given for community- or religious-specific schools. The Parsi schools, therefore, had to become cosmopolitan and inevitably lost something of their distinctive character. But a trend was already evident for well-to-do Parsis to send their children to Catholic or missionary schools because of their disciplinary and educational records.

Inevitably, the broad trends noted above for Bombay have had an impact upon Parsis. Bombay has long been growing as a centre for Indian Parsis, but this developed further after Independence, as the rural economy suffered from prohibition and tenancy legislation. The increasing importance of commercial and industrial activities, based in the city, along with the educational institutions for such professions such as law and medicine, also drew people to Bombay for work. The growing public support for Shiv Sena has not yet had widespread impact on the Parsis. A Parsi couple, Phiroze and Mehroo Medhora, were killed in the 1992 riots. This was because they happened to live in a building that was set on fire in an attack on some Muslims who also lived there, not because they were Parsis. There are individual stories of Parsis being surrounded by mobs who mistook them for Muslims, but when their identity was confirmed they were released unharmed. Parsi homes and colonies were threatened by violent Hindu mobs searching for Muslims who might be given shelter. There was sufficient unease for the BPP to announce provisions for sheltering Parsis whose homes were destroyed. The Punchayet and such leaders as J. R. D. Tata and Nani Palkhivala actively pressed for protection at the very highest level. But these incidents once again resulted in cosmopolitan philanthropic charity, as individuals and charities donated funds and goods through

⁶⁴ Kosambi, *Bombay in Transition*, p. 136.

various organizations for all the afflicted.⁶⁵ The favours shown to Maharashtrians can, of course, in the long term work to the educational and career disadvantage of Parsis. But the people with whom I discussed this simply observed that Parsis had long learned to succeed by being seen to be better than most at what they did, and that as a small pro-India minority they were not seen as a threat, and therefore not as a target, by aggressive Hindu groups. There have been occasional fears that the Bombay Government might question the acceptability of much Parsi-owned land, particularly the extensive grounds around the Towers of Silence at Doongerwadi, in the centre of crowded Bombay. Periodic alarmist newspaper stories alleging the discovery of parts of bodies in nearby streets, said to have been carried by the crows, have sometimes highlighted these fears.⁶⁶ At the time of writing there has been no such direct threat. Parsi charity in Bombay remains active, and is not only community-targeted. In 1953, of the 5,003 charitable trusts registered in Bombay, 935 were Parsi, 719 Muslim and only 59 Christian or Jewish.⁶⁷ Just one modern illustration of cosmopolitan charitable work is the Parsi-funded free ambulance service maintained for the use of all communities.⁶⁸ The role of Parsis in Maharashtra State politics and the celebrations of the coming into existence of Maharashtra State have already been noted. The contributions of the great nationwide industries of Tatas and Godrejs are, of course, Bombay based and they too should be born in mind when considering the local scene. Parsis have held important local positions since Independence: the Commissioner for Bombay, Kanga,⁶⁹ and three Parsis have been Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University (Masani, Wadia and Dr (Mrs) Mehroo Bengalee).

Parsi Institutions

There is a plethora of Parsi institutional bodies, almost all based in Bombay but many having an impact beyond the city and into the diaspora. The apex body of the community, with varying

⁶⁵ Homi Rogers, 'One Couple Burned to Death', *Parsiana*, Feb. 1993, pp. 21–6.

⁶⁶ *Mid-Day*, 22 Apr. 1981.

⁶⁷ *PP* IX.ii.137 for 25 Dec. 1953.

⁶⁸ *Bombay Samachar*, 1 Apr. 1994. The service started in 1904.

⁶⁹ A. S. Mama, 'A Wonderful Opportunity', *Parsiana*, May 1985, pp. 22–6.

degrees of influence throughout India and indeed worldwide, is the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and that will require substantial discussion. Parsi communities large and small around India have their own governing bodies, Punchayets or Anjumans. Since the 1970s they have joined together in the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. Although its concerns are nationwide, and each Association sends a representative, the president of the Federation is always the president of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and therefore its history can properly be discussed under the heading of Bombay. The Punchayet and the Federation are social bodies which, where possible, avoid involvement in religious matters, although that is not always possible. There are bodies concerned with community (not regional or national) politics. One body was originally established in the 1980s to introduce electoral reform, namely the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER). This immediately triggered an opposite group, the Orthodox Committee for United Zoroastrians (CUZ). These bodies quickly became involved in religious disputes. Less religiously contentious was the Community Development Institute, which reports on social concerns such as housing. The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman similarly has little religious involvement and is concerned primarily with issues of a social nature involving Iranian Zoroastrians, both the descendants of nineteenth-century refugees and more recent arrivals. It is, however, difficult among Bombay Parsis to separate social, political and religious concerns. For example, the Association for Intermarried Zoroastrians (AIMZ) grew out of the controversy after Roxan Shah's death, discussed below. It quickly became involved in a number of religious questions, notably the initiation of the children of Parsi women married out of the community.

There are many specifically religious bodies. There are two priestly seminaries, the Athornan Madressa at Dadar Colony and the Cama Madressa at Andheri. These are the only institutions in the world dedicated to the training of Zoroastrian priests, and therefore they are where young Zoroastrians in the diaspora who wish to become priests sometimes go, if not for their whole education, at least for some of the preparations for the priestly initiation. There are various specifically religious groups: some concerned with preserving traditional practice, such as the Jashan Committee, others with a more educational role, such as Zoroastrian Studies

and the Young Collegians Zoroastrian Association (YCZA, discussed further below). Other groups are associated with particular teachings, notably the occult Ilm-i Khshnoom. Another group, the Athravan Trust, is concerned with the welfare and education of priests, a concern of other bodies also. There are yet more organizations, or Trusts, concerned with the running of hospitals, temples, libraries, schools, housing colonies and other social concerns. Before looking in some detail at major bodies, it is first important to review the sources for an account of these groups.

Bombay Parsi newspapers and magazines

One feature of the Parsi community, as noted above, is its high literacy rates. It is not, therefore, surprising that there are numerous newspapers and magazines in the community. Although it is not appropriate here to give the history of each, it is important to note their focus, concerns and biases, because of their extensive use in the footnotes of this chapter. The oldest is the *Bombay Samachar* (Asia's oldest printed newspaper), founded in 1822. It is read by diverse Gujarati-reading communities: for example, it is read by some Muslims. In the twentieth century its Parsi coverage has generally had a Reforming perspective but this changed in the late 1990s to an Orthodox perspective. It is commonly critical not only of the establishment (notably the BPP) but also of the traditional or Orthodox point of view. It was the only Bombay newspaper which commonly supported the World Zoroastrian Organization, a world body started in Britain, and also generally associated with some Liberal causes (see Chapter 10). The *Bombay Samachar* (*BS*) inclines to convey the views of diaspora Zoroastrians more sympathetically than most Bombay newspapers. Ideologically opposed to the *BS* is the *Jame Jamshed* (*Jame*), started in 1832. Whereas the *Samachar* is for various communities, the *Jame* is specifically for Parsis. It includes matrimonial columns, parents reporting the successes of their children, columns on health, investments and legal matters. It also has a social dimension with pages on the cinema and sport. Its comic cartoon strip is especially popular. Although sometimes critical of the BPP, it is the mouthpiece of more traditional writers. Some of its editors and contributors have been leading Orthodox speakers; two whose names occur in the following pages are its editor (until his death), Adi Murzban, and Adi Doctor. In 1994 Dastur Kotwal

began a question and answer column. The *Jame* was a daily, but its falling circulation reduced it to a weekly. It is mainly in Gujarati, but has English columns and is widely read by the older generation, some of whom send copies to their families in the diaspora. It would, however, be a mistake to categorize these newspapers too narrowly. Although it is a common supporter of reforming causes, the *Samachar* has sometimes taken unexpected stances. For example, the Orthodox Dastur Mirza has written for it, not only single articles, but even a series, and on one occasion he attacked an Orthodox publication in the *Samachar*'s columns.⁷⁰ Similarly, although it is generally reasonable to describe the *Jame* as Orthodox, the label 'Orthodox' covers many shades of opinion, and in the columns of the *Jame* there have been attacks by some Orthodox writers on other Orthodox teachers.⁷¹ As the *Samachar* became Orthodox, so the *Jame* became more liberal, for example in supporting WZO.

There has been a succession of short lived newsletters and newspapers representing the Orthodox point of view, and different perspectives within the broad band of Orthodoxy. Those representing views on current community matters are the *Parsee Voice* (started by a chairman of the BPP, Boman-Behram) and *Deen Parast* (still publishing at the time of writing).⁷²

The main source quoted in this book is *Parsiana*. It dates from the 1960s, but was transformed by its new (and still serving) owner and editor, Jehangir Patel, in the early 1970s. Patel had studied and worked in journalism in America before taking over *Parsiana*, transforming it from a small, cyclostyled, little-read paper into a substantial, professionally produced magazine. It is sometimes considered Reformist by Orthodox writers, partly because of Patel's role in the early stages of the CER's campaign for the rights of intermarried Parsi women, discussed elsewhere. But generally its tone seeks to be neutral. The letters column includes comments from all sides of the religious debates; it includes historical and secular items. In this context it is an appropriate primary source for this period because it is widely read in the diaspora as

⁷⁰ See for example the following issues: 28 Jan. 1993; on 10 Nov. 1991 he wrote a series of articles on Sasanian Zoroastrianism, and on 27 Mar. pp. 2–8, he attacked *Deen Parast* regarding that magazine's coverage of the Tata *uthumna* discussed below.

⁷¹ e.g. in the mid-1990s there were some very critical pieces by and about Nariman, Peer and Dadrawala.

⁷² There are also newsletters/magazines issued by various religious groups, which will be discussed in the comments on their groups.

well as in Bombay, unlike the *BS* and *Jame*.⁷³ It regularly contains news about the diaspora groups and has articles by them. Furthermore, it is kept by some western university libraries and is therefore easier for non-Zoroastrian readers to access.

Bombay Parsi social institutions

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet

The starting point for a discussion of Parsi social institutions has to be the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP). The body goes back to the eighteenth century.⁷⁴ Originally it was a paternalistic semi-governing body. In the twentieth century it became predominantly a charitable body. However, because of the considerable extent of that charity—it is Bombay's biggest landlord—it continues to have some authority and despite frequent press criticism within the community, the BPP, its trustees, and especially its chairman, have substantial standing in the community. After Independence a conference of all major Bombay Parsi Trusts was convened by the BPP to deal with post-war reconstruction, and a committee structure was evolved to oversee agriculture, industry, education and health, including workshops for the disabled and orphans.⁷⁵ Over the next fifty years the emphasis of its work inevitably changed. By 1961 it is estimated that it administered the funds of over 1,000 endowments, a number which has grown with donations both large and small. In 1981 it published details of a fourteen-fold increase in donations for construction of charitable buildings (mostly housing) from 1971 to 1980.⁷⁶ The 1981 (unpublished) figures show an increase in diverse charities, from education to religious purposes, from Rs 663,919 in 1970 to Rs 1,197,264 in 1981.⁷⁷

⁷³ The following are the circulation figures, kindly supplied by Patel, in Jan. 1998: Maharashtra 1,795 (mostly Bombay); rest of India 471 (including 131 in Gujarat); USA 247; Canada 81; Pakistan 42; Australia 38; United Arab Emirates 16; Hong Kong 4; Misc. 92; total non Indian circulation 646. In practice it is read more widely than these figures suggest. In some centres, e.g. Hong Kong, where Parsis meet regularly, the few copies going there are passed around most people. Some copies, and cuttings, of *Jame* are sent by Mumbai families to relatives in the diaspora.

⁷⁴ For a historical overview and bibliography see J. Hinnells, 'Bombay Parsi Punchayet', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. ix, fasc. 4, pp. 349 ff.

⁷⁵ BPP, *Conference of Trusts*, Bombay, 1945, and S. F. Desai, *The Parsi Panchayet and its Working*, Bombay, 1963.

⁷⁶ BPP, *Statistical Outline (1971–80)*, Bombay, 1981.

⁷⁷ Figures kindly supplied personally by Mr R. K. Anklesaria, former Chief Executive of the BPP. I am indebted to him and to its current staff for their consistent willingness to supply me with any information requested, and ready agreement to discuss any issue I raised.

It is impossible to write a coherent history of the BPP, partly because of lack of space, but also because detailed records were published for some years and not for others. Generally the policies and actions of the trustees were more transparent from the 1980s, when quarterly then bi-monthly reports, were published, but these ceased in the 1990s. By the 1990s the primary focus of its activities was housing, to try to deal with the problem of the diminishing population. Public and press alike argued that Parsis were delaying marriage and having small families because of the difficulties and costs associated with housing in Bombay. In 1998 the BPP was responsible for eighteen colonies incorporating 240 buildings housing 3,967 tenants, with some 154 shops included in those colonies. The largest of the recent colonies is Godrej Baug, begun in the 1980s, most of its sixteen buildings being erected in the 1990s. In order to counter allegations of corruption in the allocation of this subsidized accommodation, guidelines of eligibility were published and revised early in the 1990s. To apply, people have to establish that they do not already own a property and that their income is below a certain level. Emergency cases apart (e.g. where existing accommodation has collapsed), priority is given to engaged couples and married people still of childbearing age. Credit is also given to people who have been on the waiting list a long time. The allocation of properties, and other housing policies, remains controversial and is a subject of frequent press speculation.⁷⁸ One major subject of debate is whether the BPP should sell some properties in order to generate income to invest in more building, or whether the trustees should allocate all properties in their possession in order to reduce the waiting list of 2,000 applicants. The BPP has also constructed nine buildings encompassing 423 flats for sale to Parsis. In the 1990s the policy has been doubted on two additional grounds. A BPP-commissioned survey questioned whether the availability of accommodation actually resulted in earlier marriages and more births.⁷⁹ Further, it has been suggested that as the community numbers are decreasing, the need for subsidized housing will inevitably decrease.⁸⁰ There are of course further problems: once tenants have moved in, it is

⁷⁸ See e.g. the report of the then newly elected trustee, Dinshaw Tamboly, *Parsiana*, Oct. 1997, p. 12.

⁷⁹ P. M. Rani, *Study of the Effect of Housing on Fertility Behaviours among the Parsis*, Bombay, 1992.

⁸⁰ Patel, *Parsiana*, Nov. 1994, p. 5.

difficult to remove them even if their original applications are found to be invalid (for example people who were found to own a property already, or whose engagement was broken off). In the 1990s new building declined because of a shortage of capital. In its place an incentive scheme was established for larger families, with the BPP promising to meet the costs of a third child⁸¹. One problem implied in the above, but important to detail, is that despite the public perception of a hugely wealthy Punchayet sitting on vast fortunes, there is in fact a relative paucity of available funds. This is partly because endowed funds are commonly tied to a specific purpose that it is difficult to change without costly court procedures. Further, current social changes in India mean that the wage bill for the same size of workforce has increased dramatically, thus reducing funds for other activities. Furthermore, many community buildings were constructed decades ago, and the costs of renovation are mounting.

Housing is not the only concern of the Punchayet. It also runs a temple, rest homes and sanatoria, a hostel, schools, boys' and girls' homes, a college of commerce and an employment bureau. The number of students assisted with education costs increased in the decade 1971–81 from 375 to 522 per annum. In that period, maintenance help for the poor increased from 326 persons to 519 and the number of people assisted with interest free loans increased from 32 to 78. Further, in that decade, the annual wage bill of the industrial institute (providing jobs for people who would otherwise be unemployed) increased by 400%.⁸²

There are also efforts to develop social networks for young Parsis. A marriage bureau has been organized, but the 'success rate' is not high. Much more successful has been a summer camp programme. Approximately two hundred young Parsis approaching school leaving age assemble in Bombay and have an extensive programme on employment, higher education opportunities, personal development and advice on sexual matters,⁸³ as well as enjoying purely social functions. The young people come from all

⁸¹ Announced in, among other publications, *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1994, p. 2. It was also reported in the west, e.g. in *The Times*, 7 Feb. 2003.

⁸² *Statistical Outline*; the figures were updated for me by Mr Anklesaria.

⁸³ The launching of this programme was reported in *Parsiana*, Oct. 1987, pp. 18–21 (N. J. Madon, 'Holiday Programme for Youth'). It is good to report that the programme has grown since that optimistic report of the launch. See also *Parsiana*, Apr. 1989, pp. 13 f; *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1995, pp. 114–22; *Parsiana*, Apr. 1997, p. 26.

over India, but those who are from Bombay continue to meet during the following year. The anecdotal evidence is that this work is much more successful than the bureau. There is also a social worker who assesses needy cases and advises the Panchayet on who needs what help. The effort to halt the declining population is not, therefore, restricted just to housing.

The work of the BPP is huge, especially in view of the microscopic size of the community. Perhaps inevitably, the disputes over its conduct of affairs, and the elections for trusteeship are matters of public debate and concern. A system of election, rather than appointment, became the subject of a law case in 1906, and the cumbersome method of election lasted into the period of Independent India. That system and the question of eligibility to vote have been contentious issues in the 1980s and 1990s. The election system introduced in the early years of the twentieth century was unwieldy, with four different categories of persons comprising different constituencies in an electoral college, or Anjuman committee, which in turn elected the seven trustees, the most senior one of whom became chairman. The intention had been to give greater influence to substantial benefactors and graduates.⁸⁴ This was changed in 1987 to a simpler system with only two constituencies—donors of substantial benefactions to the BPP, and registered voters—the two registers electing an equal number of people to the electoral college. Eventually the new electoral scheme had to be a matter for the courts.⁸⁵

The major confrontation has been over the voting rights of Parsi women married out of the community. Unlike out-married males, they had been excluded from voting. In a test case in the Bombay High Court in 1906 it was stated that among Parsis descent was through the father, so that the offspring of a male Parsi could be initiated, but not the offspring of a female Parsi who had married out.⁸⁶ Women were assumed to acquire the religion of their husband and thereby to have renounced their Parsi heritage and rights. In 1981 a group of women challenged

⁸⁴ See the protest letter which was an important trigger for change, published in *Parsiana*, Supplement, July 1978, 2.6, pp. 1 f., also Supplement, June 1980, 3.2, pp. 1–3, a letter originally published in the conservative newspaper, the *Jame Jamshed*. The BPP had decided in March 1978 to form a committee to advise on electoral reform. The letters protested at the slow pace for change.

⁸⁵ *Parsiana*, Mar. 1987, pp. 19–20.

⁸⁶ See further 'Intermarriage', below.

the implications of this for BPP election voting rights, claiming sex discrimination because men married out were allowed to vote, but women married out were not. The case was more complex than this single issue, for the BPP was also criticized for the timing of the elections, but the significant issue for the longer term was the rights of intermarried Parsi women. The Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) was set up to campaign on this, and other, issues. In reaction, the then president of the BPP, Boman-Behram and an Orthodox trustee, Dr Nellie Noble, formed a counter group, the Committee of United Zoroastrians (CUZ), with a magazine as its mouthpiece, the *Parsee Voice*. This represented a group of Orthodox religious interests, the occult, or Khshnoomic bodies, the Jashan Committee and others discussed below. Some of their candidates for the electoral college were prominent religious figures, for example Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal, Dr Meher Master Moos, Adi Doctor, Dr Homi Dhalla, Ervad Aibara (all writers whose work will be discussed below), as well as several senior priests and the principal of the madressa. CER was supported by some leading lawyers, Palkhivala for example, and Jehangir Patel, the editor of *Parsiana*.⁸⁷ The issue became a question of Orthodoxy versus Reform, and assumed apocalyptic religious dimensions. So, for example, one newspaper advertisement for the CUZ read:

Before you make up your mind which group to vote for—CER or CUZ—please ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I want my community to disintegrate into a race of half-caste Zoroastrians through mixed marriage?
2. Do I want Parsi women who have married out of the community to become Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet?
3. Ultimately, do I want my Community to die out and our religion to disappear?

If your answer to all these three questions is an emphatic ‘No’—then you know whom to vote for—CUZ of course.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See *Parsiana* Supplement, Feb. 1981, 3.8, pp. 1–12.

⁸⁸ *Jame*, 28 Feb. 1981. See also a letter in *Jame Jamshed*, 14 Mar. 1981, ‘Dear Parsi voter, think! Are you ready and willing to sign the death register of our community? Who will be the future trustees of the Parsi Punchayet? Respectful orthodox or irresponsible reformists? This depends entirely on you. If you vote for the orthodox group—i.e. CUZ then your future is in safe hands. But if you vote for the CER then only radicals and reformists are likely to become the future trustees. Be sure of that. When this happens the community’s

The result was a huge majority for the CER,⁸⁹ as well as a High Court judgement in their favour on the question of the rights of intermarried women.⁹⁰ The CER celebrated with a public event at a fire temple, a thanksgiving *jashan*.⁹¹ The Orthodox coalition fell apart, though it was replaced two years later by a Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP) committed to such issues as preserving the rites and religious traditions, opposing intermarriage and the initiation of offspring of intermarriage.⁹² Despite some periods of difficulty, by the 1990s the CER had its nominees occupying several BPP trusteeships. In 1981 religion became a central issue in what had begun as community politics campaign. It continued to be an issue. In the January–February issue of *Deen Parast*, 1993, after a long attack on alleged corruption at the BPP polls, the writer, B. K. Mistry, concludes:

Now where do we go from here? Within the next seven years, the whole Board of BPP Trustees will be taken over by reformists. What will be the fate, then, of our religion? What will happen to our Doongerwadi lands? Will crematoria be installed at Doongerwadi? And will the reformists foist conversion on the community? Are we to look forward meekly to the extinction of our community?

In the pre-election campaign CER had asserted that:

We are reformists; socio-economic, not religious reformists... CER proposes... to revive, uphold and strengthen the belief in the Zoroastrian faith and religion. All matters pertaining to religion, customs and practices to be left to the clergy and religious scholars.⁹³

fate will be sealed. Religious reforms will take shape and all your dreams will be shattered. All that Parsees have held dear for 1300 years will disappear.' On 12 Mar. 1981 another letter writer asked 'what is the guarantee that these reformist trustees holding heterodox religious views will not sell the agiaris, too, since according to them the Zarathustrian religion is universal. Now with this thought in your mind go and caste your vote.' See also *Kaiser-i Hind*, 25 Jan. 1981 'will you choose those who hold dear our traditional values and our religious institutions and ceremonies and who fight, as our forefathers did for thirteen centuries, to preserve our identity as a community OR will you choose those who decry and would destroy our religious beliefs and want to do away with "dokhmanashini" in favour of cremation, who advocate inter-communal marriages and admission for children of non-Parsi fathers and Parsi mothers into our fold?'

⁸⁹ *Jame Jamshed*, 14 May 1981, CER won 271 seats in the Electoral College out of 303. On the court judgement see *Jame*, 27 May 1981.

⁹⁰ *Parsiana*, Mar. 1981, pp 3–9; *Jame*, 27 May 1981.

⁹¹ *Bombay Samachar*, 13 May 1981.

⁹² *Parsiana*, Mar. 1983, pp. 61–3.

⁹³ *Bombay Samachar*, 30 Apr. 1981.

There have been issues on which the CER-dominated board of trustees has been criticized for not keeping to that declaration, notably in the cases of Roxan Shah and Neville Wadia discussed below, but the point here is that religion has a high profile in community affairs, both social and political.

Because of the status and influence of trustees, the elections are normally fiercely competitive, even when wider social and political issues are not involved. The candidates engage in substantial propaganda, and their campaigns are covered in the Parsi journals. *Parsiana*, for example, publishes statements by each candidate, with their photographs, but since the early days of CER it has not taken sides in such campaigns. The arguments and debates are fully recorded, and there are many divisions. As well as the Orthodox v. Reform dimension of the CER combat with the CUZ, there have also been tensions between opponents and supporters of the World Zoroastrian Organization; there have been resignations by leading figures exasperated with the conduct of affairs,⁹⁴ and a court case between contenders for the chairmanship.⁹⁵ The chairman who began his period of office with an earnest attempt to unite the community,⁹⁶ Dr Aspi Golwalla, was falsely accused of dishonesty in the allocation of flats but was completely exonerated by the court.⁹⁷ The BPP was taken to court regarding its proposed revision to its election system.⁹⁸ In the late 1990s, divisions were rumoured to be so deep that only a small fraction of agendas were completed at meetings.⁹⁹ Popular allegations of corruption, notably over the allocation of accommodation, are rife (though, it has to be said, unproven). The consequence of these divisions and conflicts is that the apex body is less effective than many think is essential if the community is to survive. Indeed, a newly elected trustee, Dinshaw Tamboly, commented in 1997 that 'the reputation as well as

⁹⁴ The former judge, Jal Vimadalal, *Parsiana*, Jan. 1986, pp. 16–19.

⁹⁵ The dispute was between Guzder and Kanga, *Parsiana*, Sept.–Dec. 1993, pp. 35–42; May 1994, p. 13; June 1994, p. 12; July–August 1994, p. 30.

⁹⁶ *Parsiana*, Mar. 1982, pp. 18–29 (H. D. Doctor, 'The Vigilantes').

⁹⁷ See *Parsiana*, Aug. 1987, pp. 5–9, and the account of his exoneration, A. S. Mama, 'Golwalla Exonerated', Sept. 1988, pp. 29–30, *Parsiana*, Jan. 1989, pp. 27 f. (A. S. Mama, 'High Court Stalls Katrak').

⁹⁸ *Parsiana*, Aug. 1987, pp. 29–32. The outcome was reported in A. S. Mama, 'A New Anjuman Committee by August?' *Parsiana*, Jan. 1992, pp. 23 f.

⁹⁹ See the letter of Vakil in *BS*, June 1997 and the collection of correspondence in *BS*, July 1997.

the image of the BPP in general and the trustees in particular is at its lowest ebb ever.¹⁰⁰ Yet even the BPP's most trenchant critic, the *Samachar*, had as a headline: 'The future of the community depends upon the type of persons we install in our apex body.'¹⁰¹ The implication is that whatever the criticisms of individual trustees, the BPP as an institution is central to the future of the community.

The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet is the largest single Zoroastrian body in India, but it is not the only Punchayet, and some communities use the title Anjuman. In 1972 the various Punchayets and Anjumans in India formed an over-arching body, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. The Federation was discussed over an eleven-year period, 1960–71, and it started functioning in 1972–3. But in 1978 the BPP left the Federation, partly owing to personality clashes between the Bombay and the Delhi presidents, but also because of a religious issue, when Delhi accepted non-Zoroastrian spouses as members. When Bombay left, so did several other important groups: Surat, Poona, Madras and Baroda, for example.¹⁰² In 1978 the BPP voted to return, and so did the others. In 1985 there was again a threat that the BPP would withdraw from the Federation, because they feared being outvoted at meetings, despite representing more Zoroastrians than all the other Anjumans combined. The BPP Trustees were split 4 : 3 on the issue, but Naoroji Godrej proposed the compromise that reasserted the autonomy of all Anjumans.¹⁰³ Consequently, the Federation now represents fifty Anjumans and Punchayets, embracing approximately 90% of India's Parsi population.¹⁰⁴ The BPP chairman is *ex officio* Federation chairman, and the vice-chairs are the representatives of Delhi and Calcutta.

¹⁰⁰ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1997, p. 12. In private conversation a few potential benefactors have informed me that they would not donate to good causes through the BPP at present, because of its reputation of being slow in action.

¹⁰² *Parsiana*, May–June 1978, p. 3, and the interview with the Delhi President, Nargolwala, pp. 26–37 of that issue. The seeds of the difference can be seen in an interview with the BPP chairman, Boman-Behram, in *Parsiana*, Jan. 1978, pp. 29–35. The split is reported in *Parsiana* Supplement, Feb. 1978, 2.2. Nargolwala's long letter of regret was published in *Parsiana*, Mar. 1978, pp. 27–9.

¹⁰³ *FED Newsletter*, no. 26, Nov. 1985 and see his obituary, *FED Newsletter*, no. 85, Nov. 1990.

¹⁰⁴ *FED Newsletter*, no. 20, May 1985.

In July 1978, it was decided to exclude religion from the discussions in order to avoid divisions, a decision confirmed at a meeting in April 1981. The concerns of the Federation are, therefore, essentially social: the problems of diminishing or defunct anjumans and their properties; employment prospects for Parsis; maintaining contacts between small and scattered groups; and providing a debating forum on key issues of the day, not least the community's demographic problems. The Federation undertakes studies of the smaller communities outside Bombay.¹⁰⁵ It is also involved in the planning of World Congresses, and in particular the annual All-India Parsi Youth Festival, started in 1986. A recurring theme in Federation discussions is the problems of the priesthood, its impoverishment and declining numbers. The press is admitted to discussions, though over the succeeding years *Parsiana* has been the magazine to give the most regular and extensive treatment of the proceedings. The Federation has produced its own *Newsletter* since April 1981, which includes some news from the overseas groups and often contains a youth page.¹⁰⁶ The Federation meetings are held in different centres around India, with the result that the concerns of these groups are better known to leaders in the bigger centres, notably Mumbai. In addition to national meetings, zonal meetings are organized in the four main regions where Parsis live. Since 1980, *Parsiana* has similarly included more articles on the smaller groups, with the consequence that there is a stronger sense of being a national community, not simply a Bombay community with a few odd groups elsewhere. Representatives of overseas Associations may also attend, especially when matters relating to them are debated: for example relations with the World Zoroastrian Organization, which will be discussed below.¹⁰⁷ The Federation has been described by its critics as a talking shop, but that talking may be said to have affected the perspective of what constitutes the 'Parsi community in India' and is starting to co-ordinate activities.

¹⁰⁵ *FED Newsletter*, no. 15, Dec. 1985, on Bhavnagar; no. 25 Oct. 1985, on Poona and Hyderabad; no. 72, Oct. 1989 on Secunderbad.

¹⁰⁶ This was especially common in the early 1990s, with the front page declared a Youth Page in issues 86, 88, 89, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 110, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 123, 129, 134, and still quite regularly thereafter. These reported on youth achievements, activities and conferences in different places, and had articles on issues of particular relevance to young people.

¹⁰⁷ An example is the Calcutta meeting, *Parsiana* Mar. 1984, p. 24.

The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman

There are various Zoroastrian bodies in Bombay not discussed here, for example the Jashan Committee which, as its name suggests, organizes religious functions as well as conducting some social activities and voicing Orthodox views on controversial matters. Generally speaking, the Associations included are those which have an impact on diaspora groups. One that merits inclusion, although it is not active in the western diaspora, is the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman. One result of Maneckji Limji Hataria's crusading work in Iran on behalf of his Iranian co-religionists in the mid-nineteenth century¹⁰⁸ was that from the end of that century small family groups of Zoroastrians left Iran and sought security in India. They mostly settled in Bombay, often staying in a *dharamsala* for a time, with their children living in orphanages in order to receive education.¹⁰⁹ Some first-generation Iranian migrants had difficulties with the English language when they settled in Bombay, and this gave them problems in employment: some felt the well-to-do Parsis treated them in a patronizing manner. A number later went into restaurant or tea-house businesses. Some also went into law, medicine and industry. A founder and the first president of the Anjuman, for example, was Dinshaw Jijibhoy Irani, a solicitor. He and other Anjuman lawyers sought to protect the landholding rights of Zoroastrians in Iran. A number of Iranian Zoroastrians, together with some wealthy Parsi backers, began to work for improved conditions for poor Zoroastrians, and to this end formed the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman in 1918. A priority has been building and helping to run schools and orphanages in Iran, especially in the cities from which the migrants came, Yazd and Kerman. A pioneering figure was P. D. Marker, who opened an orphanage for Zoroastrian boys and a high school in Yazd in 1923. The Anjuman has also sought to spread knowledge of Iranian Zoroastrianism among Parsis and to encourage knowledge of the religion back in Iran. To this end

¹⁰⁸ A translation of Hataria's book *Rishale Ej Har Shiyaate Iran*, published in 1865, is serialized in *Parsiiana*, Aug. 1990, pp. 60–4; Sept. 1990, pp. 34 ff.; Oct. 1990, pp. 39–42; Dec. 1990, pp. 29–32; Jan. 1991, pp. 14–18. The standard article on Hataria is Boyce, 'Maneckji Limji Hataria in Iran', *K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Golden Jubilee Volume*, Bombay 1969, pp. 19–31.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. the life sketch of Dr Major Aderbad Behram Irani in the *Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman Nowrooz Festival Programme*, 21 Mar. 1975, pp. 1–4 and of Shapur Behram Irani, in the *Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman Nowrooz Festival Programme*, 21 Mar. 1980 (not paginated).

Irani and Marker funded a stay in Bombay of the Persian scholar Pouré Davoud, for him to produce a Persian translation of the *Gathas* (subsequently translated into English by D. J. Irani) in 1927 and also a translation of the *Yashts*. In addition, the Anjuman runs various charities for the welfare of priests, the sick and elderly, and organizes the occasional social function for Iranian Zoroastrians. Its funds come partly from donations, and partly from land it holds that was gifted to it by an Iranian Zoroastrian, Jamshed Khodaram Narsiabadi, in gratitude for legal work successfully undertaken on his behalf by D. J. Irani. Although some of the Iranian Zoroastrians have traditional Zoroastrian or Persian names, others use 'Irani' as a surname. A number of Iranian Zoroastrians based in Bombay developed business interests in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s when the nation's wealth and industrial drive was growing. In the western diaspora they have on occasions played an important role in mediating between the Parsis and the Iranian Zoroastrians.

A parallel body to the Anjuman, the Iran League, was started in the early twentieth century, to strengthen the bonds between Parsis and the Zoroastrians of Iran in cultural and commercial activities. Some of the leading founding figures in the League were Parsis, notably Hormusji Cowasji Adenwalla, who, it will be seen below (Chapter 6), was a Parsi influential in the East African as well as the Bombay Parsi communities. This body published the *Iran League Quarterly* from Bombay, starting in 1930. Although most of the articles were on Zoroastrianism, some discussed the national poets, Hafiz, Rumi and the writer of the great Iranian epic, the *Shah Name*. The articles dealt with both ancient and modern Iran.¹¹⁰ The Anjuman and the League collaborated in encouraging some leading Iranian Zoroastrians to visit Bombay and thereby influenced a number of religious leaders in the old country with some of the liberalizing, or Reforming, tendencies

¹¹⁰ e.g. there were articles on Hafez in vol. II, 2–3, Jan.–Apr., 1932, 95–106; modern Persian poets and men of letters in both vols. I and II, 1930 and 1931; British and Soviet interests in Persia in vol. II, no. 1, 1931, pp. 51–60; land purchase in Khuzestan in vol. II, 2–3, Jan.–Apr. 1932, pp. 175 ff. Persia under Reza Shah, vol. II, 4, 1932, 236–8; the Khurds, 1933, vol. IV, 31–40 also Jan.–Apr. 1934, 2–3, 125–7, 147–58, as well as articles on Zoroaster, the Achaemenids, Cyrus the Great and Babylon. Vol. V, 1, Oct. 1934 was almost wholly on Firdawsi. This balance was maintained in later volumes. So e.g. in 1963 there was an article by the new Shah on the future of Iran and one on the history of Seistan.

then strong in Bombay. Perhaps the most notable example is Kaikhosrov Shahrokh. He later became a member of the Iranian Parliament, the Majlis, and a member of the Senate, a man whose integrity earned him the respect and confidence of the Shah, and whose family are now in the western diaspora.¹¹¹

Bombay Parsi Society

The family

The family is the basic unit in most societies, although what are seen as the boundaries of families may change. Among Parsis in general, but especially in India, the extended family system is strong.¹¹² Commonly, the first theme in a conversation between Parsis meeting for the first time is to explore any possible family connections. The search is rarely in vain! The knowledge of the family tree, including what westerners would consider distant cousins, is extensive.

Cramped and expensive housing conditions mean that generations often live together. Many Parsis of my acquaintance, including individuals who have studied overseas, live with their parents, even when married and with a family of their own. In part this is due to the cost of housing in Bombay, but the purpose is not only for the young to care for the elderly, but also for the elders to care for their grandchildren while parents are at work. Many younger Bombay Parsis do not see this as ideal and couples often seek a home of their own, however attached they may be to their parents. Nevertheless, my subjective impression based on numerous research visits over thirty years, and staying with various families, is that bonds are close, not only between families within Bombay, but also with those who have migrated overseas. Family values, loyalties and respect seem to me to be strong. Respect for, and the care of, the elders is assumed by most to be a clear responsibility, and one that is rarely neglected. Divorces do happen, and compared with some Indian societies the level is high, but in comparison with western groups it is low. The figures for divorces in the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court in Bombay show an average of 7–12% of marriages ending in divorce in the period 1961–92.

¹¹¹ S. Shahrokh and R. Writer, *The Memoirs of Kaikhosrow Shahrokh*, Lewiston and Lampeter, 1994, pp. 17 ff.

¹¹² Some of the older generation fear, however, that it is being eroded.

There is no indication of any particular pattern. For example, there were 260 marriages in 1992 and only 18 divorces (7%) whereas in 1971 12% of marriages ended in divorce. The number of marriages is decreasing (505 in 1961, 260 in 1992), but the number of divorces is down in proportion.¹¹³ This, it should be added, despite the fact that the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, amended in 1988, permits divorce on wider grounds than in many Indian societies. These grounds include cruelty (mental or physical), mutual consent, adultery, unsoundness of mind, non-consummation of the marriage, impotency, bigamy, desertion, or conversion to another religion. The changes were proposed by the Federation, considered and supported by the Minorities Commission, approved by Parliament and the President.¹¹⁴ The BPP runs a marriage counselling service, which seeks to aid reconciliation, and where that is not feasible, then legal and counselling services can be brought in.¹¹⁵

In the 1980s and 1990s the genre of Parsi English novels has grown considerably and in many ways can provide a useful insight into the community.¹¹⁶ The two major novelists, Sidhwa and Mistry, live in the USA and Canada respectively, but most of the others

¹¹³ Report taken from Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court, Bombay, registrar, published in *Parsiana*, Nov. 1992, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ The amendments are discussed in issues of *Parsiana*: Jan. 1987, pp. 20 f.; May 1988, p. 9; Apr. 1992, p. 3; May 1992, pp. 32 f.; June 1992, pp. 32 f.; July 1992, pp. 33 f.; Aug. 1992, pp. 106–9; Sept. 1992, pp. 31 f. See also M. Shabbir and S. C. Manchanda, *Parsi Law in India (as amended by Act of 1988)*, Allahabad, 5th edn. 1991—a reference I owe to my former student, Huzan Kharas-Frazier. Parsi divorces are heard in the Bombay High Court before a judge and jury, the only instance of the jury system still continuing in India.

¹¹⁵ A brief account of this work is given in the paper presented by R. K. Anklesaria to the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress, Bombay 1990, entitled 'Regional Experiences of the 4th Congress Recommendations—Experiences and Future Priorities' and published for private circulation.

¹¹⁶ N. E. Bharucha, 'The Parsi Voice in Recent English Fiction: An Assertion of Ethnic Identity', in N. E. Bharucha and V. Sarang (eds.), *Indian-English Fiction 1980–90: An Assessment*, Delhi, 1994, pp. 73–88; J. R. Hinnells, 'Novel Religion: The Reflection of Zoroastrianism in Modern Parsi Secular Literature', in A. Sharma (ed.), *The Sun of our Choices: Essays in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe*, Atlanta, 1996, pp. 384–407; Hutoxi G. Wadia, 'Uneasily At Home: A Comparative Study of the Works of the Parsi Novelists of the Indian Sub-continent and the Jewish Novelists of the USA', Ph.D. thesis, South Gujarat University (Surat), 1994, unpublished. Roshan G. Shahini, 'Polyphonous Voices in the City: Bombay's Indian-English Fiction', in S. Patel and A. Thorner (eds.), *Bombay Mosaic of Modern Culture*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 99–112. The biggest study is N. Kapadia, *Parsi Fiction* (2 vols.), Delhi, 2001. See also R. K. Dhawan and N. Kapadia (eds.), *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*, New Delhi, 1996; N. Kapadia and A. G. Kha (eds.), *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan*, New Delhi, 1997; J. Dodiya (ed.), *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry*, New Delhi, 1998; V. E. Noble Dass and R. K. Dhawan (eds.), *Fictions of the Nineties*, New Delhi, 1998.

live and write in India. These novels portray different stereotypes of Parsi family relations: the dominant husband and timid wife; the domineering wife and mild husband; the spoilt son and dutiful daughter; the promiscuous young girl who shocks her brother; boys who feel free to sleep around but who do not expect their sisters to do the same; tensions between father and children as the father tries to exert his authority; fathers who indulge their children. There is no single pattern of Parsi family relations, and many different types are portrayed in the novels. If there is one common theme, it is that family relationships are depicted as loving ones, however that love is expressed. Abuse and brutality are rarely portrayed. Although there are cases of abuse in the Parsi community, my own observations suggest that, as the novelists imply, such cases are rare. Three themes in the novels, documented elsewhere in this chapter by figures, are first, the assumption that young Parsi women are generally highly educated and career-motivated; they are socially free to mix with people of their own age, male as well as female, from within and from without the community. Second, almost all the novels refer to intermarriage, a question that greatly concerns the community, as will be seen in the next section. Third, the authors bring out vividly the extent to which Parsis are typically very class-conscious.

Most of the novels describe young boys trying out sex with other young boys, though adult homosexuality is rarely described. The exception is the semi-autobiographical novel of Firdaus Kanga, *Trying to Grow*, written in Bombay and about Bombay.¹¹⁷ Kanga has suffered throughout his life from brittle bone disease, which has confined him to a wheelchair for life. He is also openly gay. Both of these dimensions of his own life are true of the central character of his book. The book is written with humour, no self-pity, and candour. People of lesser achievements, have been feted in the community, Kanga has not. One group occasionally asks me for suggestions about speakers/contributors for lectures/papers. When I recommended Kanga strongly, interest vanished when it emerged that he was gay.¹¹⁸ Homosexuality is widely

¹¹⁷ *Trying to Grow*, first published in London in 1990. *The Times Magazine*, 8 Nov. 1997, pp. 31–5 has an extended article on the film made from his first book, and Kanga himself played the lead role.

¹¹⁸ The film *Bombay Boys* written and produced by Kaizad Gustad includes the theme of two Parsi males attracted to each other. The film was reviewed by S. Engineer in *Parsiiana*, May 1999, p. 35 and her interview with Gustad is on pp. 30–4 of that issue.

condemned in theory and in practice, in ancient texts and modern custom. For example, the Orthodox Toronto-based Parsi, Pervin Mistry, wrote in a Bombay paper 'All revealed religions have a commandment against gay behaviour . . . It is totally against Nature, against the Will and Plan of God to be gay.'¹¹⁹ In private, some Zoroastrians have talked to me about being too afraid of communal censure to acknowledge openly that they are gay. This is true of many societies, but my subjective impression is that this is particularly so among Zoroastrians, where marriage is a duty. It is not simply a duty for the laity; it is also required for priests. A High Priest, for example, cannot perform some of the higher ceremonies until he is married and becomes, in Zoroastrian thought, a full person. However, although marriage is a duty, and increased family size a necessity for communal survival many individuals who have chosen to remain single are not judged harshly.

The youth

There are various schemes in Mumbai which are aimed at keeping the youth within the community by giving them an opportunity to meet socially. It is hoped that through meeting with fellow Zoroastrians, more will find a marriage partner within the community. The BPP youth summer groups have already been mentioned. It is thought that these meetings are more effective than the marriage bureau run by the Panchayet. The Federation runs an annual 'Youth Meet' as well as having a youth page in its newsletter. One of the oldest groups, 'The Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association (YCZA) was founded in 1952 by Prof. Nadir Modi and Prof. Khurshed Sheriar. At a celebratory golden jubilee function in 2002, Modi estimated that as there has been an average of fifty functions per year for fifty years, the Association had organized some 2,500 functions. YCZA provides scholarships and medical aid, as well as organizing social events.¹²⁰ Books on such careers as medicine, science and commerce are donated by alumni and given to current students. In order to encourage the Zoroastrian youth to pursue higher education the BPP, Tatas and Godrej give scholarships for vocational studies.

¹¹⁹ *Deen Parast*, Feb.–Mar. 1995, pp. 4–6, see also July–Aug. 1995, p. 9.

¹²⁰ H. P. Guzder, 'Collegian Camaraderie', *Parsiana*, May 2002, pp. 17 f.

WZO has also run projects for the youth in Mumbai. The aim of these bodies is not, therefore, only to bring about more in-marriages but to help young people fulfil their professional potential.

Housing

Housing is widely seen as a problem. The awareness of the need for more housing has already been alluded to in the discussion of BPP policy. Hormazdyar S. Dalal in papers researched for, and published by, the Zoroastrian Community Development has documented the extent of poverty among Parsis living in sub-standard accommodation, desperate for BPP housing. In two reports in 1984 he described cases of Parsis being compelled by poverty to live in red-light areas and frightened to go out; of multiple sharing of toilets in chawls; of several generations living in a single room; of buildings which were not safe in monsoons; and the case of a family of three generations, including a pregnant mother, who were homeless because of the collapse of their home and forced to live in a transit camp. He has also detailed the extensive problems of the decaying fabric of temples, sanatoria and guesthouses (*dharamsalas*). Because so many of the buildings were erected during the period of affluence in the late nineteenth century, they are now in desperate need of renovation. He estimated that this applied to 60% of temples and gave a description of fifteen temples that were in urgent need of repair. The sanatoria in Bombay, he reported, tended not to be used for their original purpose of convalescence after illness, but rather as transit camps for homeless Parsis who have lost their accommodation and are awaiting BPP or other assistance. One of the three sanatoria in the city, he reported, was in a very distressing condition. Some of those in the more rural areas of India are in an even worse state.¹²¹ Although the building of flats increased substantially in the late 1980s and 1990s, Federation and *Parsiana* reports indicate that the physical decay of Parsi structures continues. Although the widespread image of Parsis is of middle-class persons, and Karkal has shown that generally Parsis have a higher standard living than most of the wider

¹²¹ The themes in these reports are summarized in the Zoroastrian Community Development Institute's newsletter *Astavani*, started in Jan. 1982. The reports themselves are undated and cyclostyled, not conventionally published. Those on the housing and sanatoria, kindly given to me by Mr Dalal, were produced in 1984. They were published also in the *Jame* that year (Feb., Sept. and Dec.).

Bombay population, nevertheless there is poverty, very poor housing and homelessness among the Bombay Parsi population.

Care for the elderly

A matter for increasing concern in view of current demographic patterns is the care of the elderly, as they become a major proportion of the community at a time when the youth are decreasing. In the priestly city of Navsari a new home for the elderly was opened in 1997, funded by a philanthropic Parsi from Hong Kong, and a day centre has been opened by the WZO. But there has been no such development in Mumbai. In the metropolis there are three hospitals which the Parsis helped to build: the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Hospital (a major university teaching hospital), the Masina Hospital in Byculla and the Petit Parsee General Hospital on Cumballa Hill.¹²² Each of these has a Parsi ward; in the Masina and Parsee General these are for chronic cases. The Parsee General has received substantial investment in the 1990s, again in the form of a generous donation from Hong Kong.¹²³ There is also the Parukh Dharamsala in one of the larger colonies (Khareghat colony) which provides accommodation for the elderly, up to 193 people, though with private rooms for only twenty-eight. There are many Parsi charities for the poor. Kharas identified forty-six charitable bodies in Bombay for Parsis, which in 1987 gave help in 1,148 cases (multiple applications occur).¹²⁴ The number of people helped by individual charities includes 156 by the N. M. Wadia charities and 175 by the BPP. There is also a Centre for the Advancement of Philanthropy founded in 1987,¹²⁵ which advises on best practice. Kharas found that of those whom the BPP charities identified as poor, the average age was 67; that 69% were retired, all were people who had not had a higher education, and most (64%) were those who had been in unskilled jobs. Most had difficulties in affording medicines. The people in the Parukh Dharamsala were those who had no family to care for them. Among those afflicted by poverty in Bombay are many of the

¹²² This hospital has been the recipient of some substantial benefactions around the turn of the millennium. See A. S. Mama, 'Refurbishing the Parsee General Hospital', *Parsiana*, Apr. 2002, pp. 18–22.

¹²³ For a study of Parsi medical charities and hospitals see Hinnells, 'War and Medicine in Zoroastrianism', in *Selected Works*, pp. 277–300.

¹²⁴ Huzan Kharas, 'Aged and Poverty Groups in the Zoroastrian Community in India', paper to the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress, 1990.

¹²⁵ See N. Dadrawala, 'Championing Charity', *Parsiana*, Jul.–Aug. 1997, p. 73.

priests, who will be discussed in the next section. The point here is that the phenomenon of Parsi poverty is not something restricted to rural Gujarat but is nowadays found also in the great metropolis.¹²⁶ The acute housing problems identified in the 1980s had eased somewhat at the end of the millennium, partly because of new housing developments, and partly because with the decreasing numbers the demand had fallen. But undoubtedly poverty remains.

Medical matters

Another common theme in Parsi discussions is medical problems. There is a concern that in-breeding (10% of Parsi marriages are to first cousins) may result in some disorders. The only substantial work done on this was published in 1973, but the issue is alluded to in other publications.¹²⁷ Karkal, in her 1984 study of Parsis, suggested that infertility might be a problem in the community. She stresses that arguments based on people's answers to questions on the use of contraceptives are not necessarily reliable, but she concludes that the evidence suggests that even when Parsi women do not use contraceptives, the number of births remains low. In part this may be due to the late age of marriage, but women in their thirties do have children and it is noticeable how few children are conceived in Parsi families. A popular, but unproven, allegation made by some Parsis is that such in-breeding may increase the levels of psychiatric disorders. Certain forms of cancer, some believe, are more prevalent among the Parsis. But the only clearly established genetic problem faced by the Parsis is a deficiency of the enzyme G6PD, which may lead to jaundice in the new-born, and can adversely affect the red blood cell count under the influence of some drugs (e.g. aspirin, quinine or heavy doses of vitamin C).¹²⁸ These medical concerns are raised in the debates on intermarriage discussed below.

Parsi decline?

A common theme in Parsi discourse is that the community is less successful and less dynamic than it was in the nineteenth century

¹²⁶ See also the article by A. S. Mama in *Parsiana*, Jan. 1990, pp. 20–1.

¹²⁷ J. V. Undevia, *Population Genetics of the Parsis*, Miami, 1973.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* Notices about this problem appeared in various Parsi newspapers and magazines, for example in *Parsiana*. For other studies on various Parsi medical problems see M. D. Petit, H. S. Mehta, and P. S. Jhabvala (eds.), *The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital Diamond Jubilee*, Bombay, 1972, pp. 62–6, 79 ff., 85–95, 100 ff.

and that the Indian community is on the decline. This is reflected, for example, in the opening statement of the initial public document of the Zoroastrian Community Development Institute, founded on 8 July 1978:

The gradual slide towards lower, middle class, in fact the increasing incidence of poverty in the community; the financial difficulties of many worthy communal institutions; the disposals of fine Parsee properties, both public and private; the reducing adherence of Parsees to religious requirements, traditions and customs; the decreasing knowledge, awareness and pride in Zoroastrian ideals and ethics; the weakening bonds between Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian; the increasing scarcity of qualified priests, and diminution of our very population; the creeping influence of other religions with their Gods and Saints; the slow break-up of Parsee family life—all these were painful reminders that communal health was failing, and that imaginative, modern, well-planned, community programmes are badly needed.

In personal conversation, and in the letter columns of the popular press, such as the *Jame*¹²⁹ and the *Parsee Voice*, the view is often expressed that nowadays young Parsi men, in contrast to young Parsi women, are less achievement-orientated, less hard working, more spoilt, and prefer a safe office job rather than the risks, and potential success, of entrepreneurship. This theme occurs also in some of the contemporary Parsi novels. The anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann argued that in the days of the Raj, Parsis followed the British role model and presented themselves, in contrast to their image of Indians in general, as manly, dynamic, powerful, strong, progressive, heroic, whereas in Independent India the community in general, and young men in particular, are seen as the reverse.¹³⁰ Luhrmann's book has been rather unpopular and controversial in some circles.¹³¹ Yet visitors are often told that the present generation has none of the hero giants of the nineteenth century such as Naoroji and Pherozezshah Mehta. The widely popular Parsi playwright, and former

¹²⁹ This was a theme in the letters column in 1981 for example, see *Jame*, 2 June 1981 and 31 May 1981. It is a subject which has recurred so often that full documentation would occupy too much space unnecessarily.

¹³⁰ T. Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*, Harvard, 1996.

¹³¹ See e.g. the contrasting reviews by R. Kevala and K. Antia in *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 1996, pp. 74–8.

editor of *Jame Jamshed*, Adi Murzban, wrote in the *Jame* (10 May 1981):

The British Raj treated the Parsis so well, that we started breeding a generation of opulence-minded Parsis. The British Raj has gone, the affluence has gone but the luxury mindedness of the Parsis has remained . . . the present young Parsi is an odd mixture of a pseudo westerner trying half heartedly to be absorbed in the Indian scene and Indian culture.

The real culprits, he concluded, were the parents. There is also a common emphasis on the increase of begging in the community, for example outside temples and the funeral grounds on festival days. Separation and divorce are often said to be on the increase. I have been told by well-informed individuals that prostitution is increasing in the community, both in the form of high-class escorts working the luxury hotels and in brothels, which I have been told by a Punchayet official exist in two Parsi colonies. I cannot confirm that at first hand, but whether or not these stories are factually true, there is a common belief that they are, in marked contrast to the time when the community in British India proudly proclaimed that there were no beggars or prostitutes among the Parsis. In short, the social standing of Parsis is widely believed in the community to be declining.

A word of caution is needed, however. In most societies, the older generation condemns the younger generation for not living up to the standards of their day. Further, just as Parsis are the best source of anti-Parsi jokes, so they can be the harshest critics, as well as the most ardent supporters, of their community. Sometimes these allegations are part of the message of social reformers and may be exaggerated. While older Parsis may feel able to voice these criticisms, they take less kindly to outsiders doing so. The reason for relating them here is to outline an element of popular discourse and some of its common themes, to balance the emphasis on community achievements. This discourse is certainly known by diaspora Zoroastrians, who are the main subject of this book. Whether the historian should take these criticisms as accurately reflecting the general state of the community is another question.

In contrast, however, to the themes of financial, physical, moral and economic decline, many Parsis stress the reverse, namely their unique qualities and virtues. All magazines include pieces on Parsi achievements. The best example is perhaps *Parsiana*, both because of

its coverage and because of its wide international readership. In the seven-year period 1990–6 (taken simply as a sample period, and the one in which Luhrmann did her research) *Parsiana* published approximately 150 articles on individual Parsis who had been successful. The range is immense: most were on successful business people (38 separate articles¹³²); artists (12); doctors (11); dancers/actors/musicians (8); religious figures (6); journalists (6); lawyers (5); military personnel (4). Others included social workers (3), bankers, teachers and architects. These figures do not include the several pages in each issue allocated to ‘Events and Personalities’ and ‘Zoroastrians Abroad’, which generally record Parsi achievers, nor the obituaries, nor the various reports on the BPP, Federation, WZO or Navsari Anjuman honouring successful Parsis. They do not take account of the whole issue of *Parsiana* devoted to North American Zoroastrian entrepreneurs.¹³³ Luhrmann stresses the Parsi emphasis on memories of a golden past. Over this same seven-year period there were a total of twenty pieces on former heroes, but that figure gives a distorted impression, because in several instances, e.g. the account of the achievements of the Parsi campaigner for Zoroastrian rights in Iran, Hataria, the reports are broken down into several episodes (see further below). The general emphasis of this most widely read of Parsi publications is therefore on Parsi success in business, the professions and various branches of the arts. This is despite the fact that it was in *Parsiana* that the stark warnings quoted above, about the demographic crisis facing the community, were given. Parsis may have a memory of a golden past and an awareness of numerical and material decay, but they also have an immense, and legitimate, pride in the continuing achievements of their community. The balancing of the self-image is important. In its positive emphasis, *Parsiana* is not unique, for various publications emphasize the success of the Parsis.¹³⁴ It is also a theme in much of the diaspora literature, as will

¹³² A subject meriting further study is the networking of Zoroastrian businesses in this period. This theme will recur in the chapter on America. It should, however, be noted here that the Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank has a long history and until 1985 was for Zoroastrians only (*Parsiana*, Jan. 1986, p. 34 and Dec. 1986, p. 32). In 1993 the Zorastrians were formed to help Parsi business interests (*Parsiana*, Aug. 1993, p. 20). There are a number of Parsis on the various boards of the Tata companies, and the world’s richest Zoroastrian is probably the owner of the property firm, Pallonji. However it would be simplistic to describe these as Parsi firms. People are not appointed because they are Parsis.

¹³³ Jan. 1996.

¹³⁴ S. H. Katrak, *Who are the Parsees?* Karachi, 1965; P. Nanavutty, *The Parsis*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1980.

be seen below. There is both a self-doubt and pride within the modern Parsi community in Mumbai.

Conclusion on Parsi society

There are therefore diverse social groups within Bombay Parsi society, and diverse (self) perceptions of the state of the community, in terms of its wealth, dynamism and future. These should not be seen as conflicting perceptions, but rather as complementary wrestling with hopes and fears, memories and strategies for survival within a complex but living, and therefore, changing society. But the picture is yet more complex and dynamic, for so many social, cultural and political issues revolve around religious questions. The turning of the political battles of the CER and the CUZ over the rights of intermarried women to vote in BPP elections into religious issues, and threats of destroying the community, are but one example of how religious questions lie at the heart of many debates. It is not possible to understand the Parsi community without looking at both social and religious issues.

Religious Movements, and Movements of Religious Thought

This section will look first at the physical provisions of the religion—temples, priests and teachers, then at the major schools of religious thought, and finally at some of the major debates that have taken place since Independence.

Temples and priests

The temples

There has been concern for a long time that some rural communities can no longer maintain their religious buildings, such as temples and sanatoria, as numbers diminish with younger and able-bodied persons migrating to Bombay; the few left behind are simply unable to maintain the properties.¹³⁵ But the problem exists in Mumbai also. Concern was expressed by four trustees of the BPP, and some lay people, in discussions with *Parsiana* editorial

¹³⁵ See, e.g. *Parsiana*, March 1983, p. 12 regarding Tithal, and the sale of the sanatorium to the Jains in the Apr. 1987 issue (A. S. Mama 'Tithal Sale Stalled'). In Sept. 1986 similar concerns were expressed about Nargol, and in May 1994, pp. 25–9, it was reported in *Parsiana* that the Federation was having to take over the funding problems at Mhow. This is a theme raised at many Federation meetings.

staff as early as 1974, before the debates on declining numbers became prominent.¹³⁶ There were then forty-three agiaries and the four Atash Bahrams. One problem is that the Parsi population has declined even in Bombay; it has also relocated, as was noted above. In particular, people have moved residence from the central Fort area where nine of the older temples were constructed, notably the Banaji Limji Agiary in 1709, Maneckji Seth (1735) and the Dadiseth (1783) all in the Fort Area. Although some of these earliest buildings have been replaced, most of the existing structures are at least a hundred years old and so in need of renovation. As the population moves to the baugs in the suburbs, so the number of people attending in the old quarters declines, and income diminishes both for building work and the priests. Some temples decline because of the popularity of others nearby. At least seven agiaries can be identified which face such problems.¹³⁷ In contrast, others are quite well resourced for different reasons: seven agiaries are near Parsi colonies; two are close to offices where Parsis work; some engage in entrepreneurial activity (selling water or plants); and eight are associated with either a particular person or religious group.¹³⁸ It is important to

¹³⁶ A. S. Mama, 'The Federation as Custodian', *Parsiana*, May 1974, pp. 29–35.

¹³⁷ The Godavara and Langrana Agiaries in the Fort area, the Mithaiwalla Agiary and the Ranji Agiary, both in Grant Road, the Batliwalla Agiary in Tardeo, are examples of such temples. The state of the Langrana Agiary was publicized in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1983, p. 39 (H. D. Doctor, 'Fire Sale'). Some temples experience such problems with funds and priests that they are closed between the *boi* ceremonies performed five times daily to feed the fire. An example of this was the Vaacha Agiary in the Fort area. This remains true also at the Godavara Agiary in the Fort area. Information kindly supplied by Ervad Dr R. Karanjia, principal of the Athornan Madressa, January 1998. For photographs and details of temples in Mumbai, the rest of India and globally see M. J. Giara, *Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples*, 2nd edn., Mumbai, 2002.

¹³⁸ Examples of agiaries close to baugs are the Karani Agiary in Cusrow Baug, the Rustomfaramna Agiary near the Dadar colony, the Tata Agiary in Bandra, the Patel Agiary in Andheri and the Patel Agiary near Malcom Baug in Jogeshwari, the Vachhagandhi Agiary near the Khargehat colony, the Mevawalla Agiary near Rustom and Jer Baugs. The Banaji Limji Agiary in the Fort area is used by office workers, but has no resident priest, so some worker-priests serve in the temple in the morning and in the office in the afternoon. The Dadiseth Agiary is similarly well supported and resourced by office workers. Temples supported by an interest in specific religious figures or groups include the Karani Agiary in Cusrow Baug, associated with Aibara; the Dadiseth Agiary in the Fort area, associated with the Kadmis; the Maneckji Petit Agiary, associated with the Faslis on New Marine Lines near Church gate station. Aslaji Bhikhaji Agiary in Girgaon, associated with Kookadaru; the Mithaiwalla Agiary in Grant Road, patronized by the Pundolites; the Boyce Agiary in Tardeo, associated with followers of Khshnoom; the Patel Agiary in Mazagaon, with a largish Iranian Zoroastrian following; the Sopariwalla Agiary in Mahim, with a number of Pundole followers. Information again kindly supplied by Ervad Dr K. Karanjia. The people and groups named in this note will be discussed below.

stress that with only one exception (the Fasli Agiary which follows a different calendar) there is no suggestion that an association with one group or figure means anything like the denominational divides of Christianity. Any Parsi can, and does, visit any agiary. The rites performed are the same in each; save only that some larger temples are able to perform some liturgies, which a lack of resources makes impossible elsewhere. For example, some keep a bull from which the sacred drink of *nirang* can be consecrated. A further cause for concern is that as the size of the Parsi population declines, numbers may become too small even to maintain those temples which currently appear secure.¹³⁹ There have been calls to move some of the fires to other temples, or to new temples in baugs, as has been done in the past,¹⁴⁰ but some Orthodox writers have questioned the doctrinal soundness of moving fires, even when a building is being renovated.¹⁴¹

But again, the story is not wholly one of gloom. In a period of less than three months at the turn of the millennium, three new houses of worship were opened in Mumbai.¹⁴² One was the Seth Ardeshir Bhicajee Patel Dadgah in the new housing complex in Andheri, consecrated on 23 January 2000. This has the lowest grade of fire so that it will be easier to maintain in view of the declining number of priests. On 14 November 1999 a full Dar-e-Mehr was consecrated, and on 21 December 1999 the Shapoorji Fakirji Jokhi Agiary was opened in the Godrej Baug. The third of these, funded from the estate of a Hong Kong Parsi (see Chapter 3), involved transporting the consecrated fire, which was ninety-nine years old, from the village of Tavri near Navsari in 1964 when the Parsi population had dwindled to just one. It was then moved to Navsari to be housed until it was agreed to install it in the new building in Andheri.¹⁴³ The shell of the building had been built,

¹³⁹ See the editorial in *Parsiana*, Nov. 1994, pp. 3–5.

¹⁴⁰ The fire was, for example, moved from the temple in Aden in 1976 when the last few Parsis left there. In 1994 the Atash Dadgah at Elahi Baug was moved and enshrined in the Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy Agiary in Pune.

¹⁴¹ Adi Doctor, 'Face-lift for the Fires', *Parsiana*, Aug. 2001, pp. 64–80.

¹⁴² *Parsiana*, Mar. 2000, pp. 108–44.

¹⁴³ This brief account glosses over numerous disputes. There had been previous attempts to house other ancient fires there, but individuals had persuaded the Charity Commissioner to block the move. Despite the title of Godrej Baug (so named because the Godrej family had been the pioneers behind the colony), Naoroji Godrej had resigned in disgust from the BPP when he was falsely accused of seeking to profit from his donation to the baug. When the Agiary was built, it had external Assyrian motifs on its walls, which

but awaited a consecrated fire to make it a house of worship. The fire was moved first to the temple in Sanjan, where it stayed for the day, tended by a team of priests, before being moved for the night to a temple in Mumbai. On the third night it was moved into its new home in Godrej Baug. The move involved extensive preparations in order that the fire's sanctity should not be polluted. The preservation of the sacred fire, being the presence of God, is vital, and each fire has its own identity and integrity. The fire must not come into the presence of dirt, or pollution, and its reinstallation involves lengthy and joyous ceremonies. The fire was carried in a receptacle previously designed for, and used in, the transfer of the fire from Aden to Mumbai. Two vehicles were refitted entirely, one to carry the fire, the other as a back-up in case the first broke down. All seats except the driver's were taken out, so that the priests could sit and tend and protect the fire in transit. The fire was moved at night so that it should not be dimmed by any other light. Police cleared the road, so that no alien gaze should defile it, and long processions of Parsis accompanied the fire, led by priests in full priestly garb, with mouths covered (in *padan*), and drawn swords and priestly maces symbolically representing their readiness to fight evil to protect the fire. A lorry-cum-water-carrier washed the roads, which were swept clean, and *pavis*, or sacred areas, marked in sand. The instalment ceremonies were then performed. The consequence is that people, young and old, visit their own temple and offer their prayers before the sacred fire far more often than they did when they had to travel a distance. The Agiary is becoming a focal point for the life of the 1,700-plus residents of the Godrej Baug.

Also at the start of the new millennium, two old Bombay agiaries were renovated: the 100-year-old Seth Pherozechah Ardeshir Patel Dar-e-Mehr, also in Andheri, and the 291-year-old Banaji Limji Agiary, the oldest in Bombay, right in what is now the heart of the city in the Fort Area.¹⁴⁴ While the building was being renovated, the fire was kept apart in a separate room. Although

provoked dissent. The details are in A. S. Mama, 'The Consecrated Convoy', *Parsiana*, Mar. 2000, pp. 116–49. The account here focuses on what is religiously significant, namely what is involved in moving a sacred fire, and not on disputes.

¹⁴⁴ See *Parsiana*, Aug. 2000, pp. 120–32. The same issue also reports the restoration of a much-loved and used well in central Bombay, the Bhikha Behram well, used not just for physical but also spiritual refreshment as a place for prayer. The structure is 275 years old (p. 136).

there are a range of problems confronting Parsis in Mumbai—serious demographic difficulties; fears that the community has lost its vitality; concerns about the decline of buildings as well as numbers—still at the dawn of the new millennium there is life in the Zoroastrian community.

The priesthood

The problems are not simply of decaying buildings in areas where Parsis no longer live. There are also worries about human resources, particularly the diminishing number of priests. This was the subject of a collection of articles in the November 1997 issue of *Parsiana*. Some of the problems identified were: the lack of respect for a priesthood not highly educated in western terms; the considerable time and physical demands of the profession; and the extremely poor pay. The strict discipline associated with the priest maintaining the required level of physical and spiritual purity precludes a social life, for attending a theatre or eating outside is forbidden, especially for those who serve in the sanctuary of the Atash Bahrams. It is not a profession chosen by many of the adults, or the children, from priestly families who have better career prospects in the outside world.¹⁴⁵ In the same month that the *Parsiana* articles appeared, the Federation discussed the plight of the priesthood, but concluded that, as it was a delicate matter, a report should be prepared for future discussion. Two of the High Priests, Dasturs Mirza and Kotwal, wrote a scathing attack on the debate, saying that discussions and reports had been produced for years, dating back to the 1964 World Zoroastrian Congress, the papers of which must be lying in the BPP offices. The time had come, they said, not for reports but for action.¹⁴⁶ The issue was again discussed at the next World Congress and various High Priests wrote articles in the press.¹⁴⁷

In 1984–5 a scheme to aid the priestly profession became a matter of intense public debate. A young Parsi woman, Huzan

¹⁴⁵ The president of the Cama Athornan Institute, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, appealed for more candidates to come and study at the Institute because numbers were dropping seriously (*Parsiana*, June 1982, p. 5).

¹⁴⁶ *Parsiana*, Feb. 1976, p. 15.

¹⁴⁷ *Parsiana*, June 1977, p. 5 on the Congress; the relevant papers were published in *Parsiana*, Aug.–Nov. 1978, pp. 35–9. It was something highlighted by Dastur Mirza, who pointed out that such debates went back at least to Sir J. J. Modi, secretary of the BPP in 1915 (H. D. K. Mirza, *Some Religious Problems Facing the Parsi Community*, 2nd edn., Bombay, 1983, p. 20).

Kharas, wrote a thesis at Bombay University on the plight of the priesthood. The thesis was summarized in congresses, public lectures and in *Parsiana*.¹⁴⁸ She interviewed priests at virtually all of the agiaries and Atash Bahrams and concluded that the actual state of the priesthood was worse than the earlier debates had suggested. Not only were the priests concerned about their present impecunious condition, they were even more concerned at their inability to provide for their old age, and for medical expenses. In the period 1980–5 only seven young boys had come forward for the priesthood, but in that time fifty priests had died or retired. On 11 May 1985 the Athravan Educational Trust (AET) was launched. Prominent among the speakers were Homi Ranina, a trustee of the BPP, Dastur Firoze Kotwal, and Khojeste Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies (discussed below). The thanksgiving *jashan* was celebrated by over 200 priests—which means more than half the priestly population of Bombay participated. The plans were outlined as having two phases. In the first five years, fifteen boys were to be selected and given a scholarship to facilitate their studies, and were guaranteed an income on completion. There was also an attempt to extend the traditional priestly training course. In phase two it was planned to improve the condition of existing priests. The new Trust was to be overseen on a daily basis by Huzan Kharas.¹⁴⁹ AET was controversial even before its inception. The Council of Vigilant Parsis tried to have an advertisement placed in the *Jame* decrying the move, and letters for and against it appeared in subsequent newsletters and magazines. The validity of the thesis was questioned on the grounds that it was ‘a random and biased survey by a “researcher” who did not have even an elementary knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of a Fire Temple priest’. Kharas was also criticized for her ‘feminist logic’.¹⁵⁰ In fact, her sample had not been random, but to prove her point she subsequently extended her survey to cover all Bombay temples, and the conclusion was reinforced rather than undermined. More substantial issues were raised by two of the High Priests, Dasturs Mirza and JamaspAsa. They criticized the Trust because of the details in the Trust Deed, registered with the Charity Commissioner on 21 February 1985, and published in

¹⁴⁸ July 1984, pp. 11–12. The thesis was submitted in Apr. 1984.

¹⁴⁹ N. J. Madon, ‘Athravan Trust Inaugurated’, *Parsiana*, June 1985, pp. 12–14.

¹⁵⁰ *Parsee Voice*, 1–15 May 1985 pp. 1f, see also 16–31 May 1985, June 1985, pp. 1–4.

full in the *Jame* in July that year. Their concern was that although the appeal for funds had been made to improve the lot of the priests, nowhere in the actual Trust Deed did the words 'Athravan', 'mobed' or 'Parsi priest' appear. They concluded that the Trust must have cosmopolitan, multi-purpose objectives. They quoted the concerns expressed by an eminent jurist, S. R. Vakil, published in the *Bombay Samachar* and the *Jame Jamshed*.¹⁵¹ The issue was unusual in uniting the editors of both newspapers. Public debates, letters to the papers and public meetings were organized.¹⁵² The scheme went ahead and the first AET 'graduates' emerged in 1990.¹⁵³ It has, however, remained a focus of debate and legal challenge.¹⁵⁴ The root causes of the fury over an enterprise concerned to deal with a long-identified religious problem are difficult to determine. On the one hand AET is accused of claiming charitable status, which requires cosmopolitan concerns that it says it does not have; on the other, it is suspected of having cosmopolitan concerns that it was not publicizing.¹⁵⁵ Some have alleged that personality clashes lie at the heart of the dispute. Yet there is also the feeling that when a body involving a Dastur and a BPP trustee seeks to deal with a major problem, it is derided. The issue became more complicated by a landlord-tenancy dispute over the AET offices in the Cama Oriental Institute building. The court found in favour of AET and in public the furore over AET has subsided. From an outside perspective what seems sad is that people who are deeply committed to the religion, all from a traditional perspective, are in conflict, and that there is even a division among the Dasturs. Fortunately at the turn of the millennium the Dasturs and most priests are in religious agreement on AET.

This problem of visible religious conflict is something that will recur in succeeding chapters. Public dispute concerning the priesthood has erupted in other areas also: in conflicts between trustees and priests for example, climaxing in 1997 with a conflict between Dastur Kotwal and his trustees which led to the Dastur's resignation. The consequent vacancy has not been filled some years later, because the persons approached were not willing to

¹⁵¹ 21 July 1985. See the Dasturs' letter in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1985, pp. 80 a–c.

¹⁵² *Parsiana*, Sept. 1985, pp. 14–18.

¹⁵³ *Parsiana*, July 1990, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ *Parsiana*, Nov. 1985, pp. 7, 11 f. then in *Parsiana*, Jan. 1996, pp. 3f, 25–31.

¹⁵⁵ See, e.g. *Samachar*, 9 Dec. 1990.

undermine Dastur Kotwal's stand.¹⁵⁶ AET has run three educational programmes for the madressa since its inception and is currently (2003) teaching eleven full-time priests, many of whom are Yazdathraga (i.e. trained to perform the highest temple rituals) serving in the four Atash Bahrams in Bombay. AET has also organized several seminars in Bombay University. The concern to improve the lot of the priesthood, has not, however, been undertaken only by AET. In the 1990s it was also a focus of WZO's activities, with the newly elected trustee of the BPP, Dinshaw Tamboly, taking a leading role in the fundraising. *Parsiana* undertook a survey of the perceptions and practices of priests' wives.¹⁵⁷ The beliefs and practices they asserted reflected a traditional position among the wives, and many said that the pay and conditions (e.g. pensions and medical care) were inadequate. But most (87%) said that they considered priests' families were respected and most (79%) would encourage their sons to take up the profession. What emerged was a commitment to the religion, and a pride in what their husbands were doing, but a sense of injustice at the treatment by the Punthakey system¹⁵⁸ and temple trustees.

However, one of the High Priests, Dastur JamaspAsa, has identified a different focus of religious concern, namely what he sees as the lack of spiritual commitment on the part of Zoroastrians. This was an issue he addressed publicly in 1984, and has returned to on several occasions since, notably at the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in London in 1997. His appeal there met with an enthusiastic standing ovation from the youth, itself perhaps an indicator that young Zoroastrians do want to be reminded of the spiritual element at the heart of their religion.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Parsiana*, July 1985, pp. 1–5 concerning the Sodawaterwalla Agiary in Bombay; Sept. 1987, pp. 17–25 in Surat.

¹⁵⁷ Mar. 2001, pp. 193–202. As there were only twenty-three responses to the 100 questionnaires sent out, the sample base might be considered small.

¹⁵⁸ The senior priest in a large temple or area, the Punthakey, allots religious duties, and thereby the payments, to specific priests.

¹⁵⁹ K. M. JamaspAsa, 'The Priestly Dilemma', *Parsiana*, Sept. 1984, pp. 4 f, 'This Tribal Consciousness is Crucial', *Parsiana*, Nov. 1994, p. 56—recalling the words of Dastur Mirza's lecture in Harvard, and again at the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in London, in 1997, *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1997, pp. 103 f. I am grateful to Dastur JamaspAsa and his family not only for the help indicated elsewhere, but also for welcoming me as a guest to stay in their home when the last of the Chinoy family died, with whom I stayed on many visits.

‘Schools’ of religious belief

Introduction

Langstaff demonstrated that twentieth-century Parsi thought passed through three historical phases: (a) before the First World War, when western, specifically Protestant, thought was dominant, as a result of earlier missionary and contemporary western scholarly influence. This emphasis on doctrinal ‘rationality’ was challenged to some degree by what was then the less popular occult school of thought; (b) the inter-war years, when western influences declined, the occult teachings remained and Hindu doctrinal influences began to emerge; (c) post-Independence India, when western influences declined, Hindu influences increased and the occult interests expanded.¹⁶⁰ In the late 1980s and the 1990s, subsequent to Langstaff’s study, there has also been a growth in what might loosely be termed new religious movements and a fascination for the miraculous. This chapter is concerned only with this post-Independence material. What all publications, including my own, had focused on was either the physical side of the religion—temples and priests, or the textual side—what people wrote. There had been a consistent neglect of the popular level of spirituality. This has been corrected by a publication of Philip Kreyenbroek, in collaboration with Shehnaz N. Munshi. They collected the oral traditions of a range of individuals, traditionalist, neo-traditionalist, modernist, occult, etc.¹⁶¹ Some of that invaluable material is incorporated into this chapter.

Parsi scholarship

There have been several different types of writing produced by Bombay Parsis. It is, perhaps, important to begin with the scholarly and historical studies that have been produced within the community. Each of the three High Priests (Dasturs) resident in Bombay (Mirza, JamaspAsa and Kotwal) in the 1980s and 1990s

¹⁶⁰ H. Langstaff, ‘The Impact of Western Education and Political Changes upon the Religious Teachings of Indian Parsis in the Twentieth Century’, Ph.D. thesis (unpublished), Manchester University, 1983. A shortened form of her thesis is *Indian Parsis in the Twentieth Century*, by the Informal Religious Meetings Trust Funds, Karachi 1987. See also Hinnells, ‘Social Change and Religious Transformation among Bombay Parsis in the Early 20th Century’, and ‘Contemporary Zoroastrian Philosophy’, chs. 9 and 12 in *Selected Works*.

¹⁶¹ Philip G. Kreyenbroek in collaboration with Shehnaz Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about their Religion*, London, 2001.

has published scholarly works. Mirza, following a doctorate at London University, has published a history of the Parsis,¹⁶² philological articles in learned publications, and religious articles in more popular form. JamaspAsa, after postdoctoral work at the University of Mainz, has published editions and translations of Avestan texts and edited over fifty Pahlavi manuscripts in conjunction with the Pahlavi University in Shiraz.¹⁶³ He, too, has published philological articles in learned publications and the occasional religious contribution in more popular outlets. Kotwal, in conjunction with three western scholars, Boyce, Boyd and Kreyenbroek, has produced some scholarly translations of ancient liturgical texts and written learned articles on ritual matters.¹⁶⁴ He, too, has contributed more popular articles for his co-religionists, for example in the *Jame Jamshed*. The ancient tradition of scholarly Zoroastrian priest has, therefore, been maintained.

In addition, a number of individual lay Parsis have published historical studies or general accounts of the religion both for community and external consumption: Piloo Nanavutty from Delhi has, among other books, published a translation and commentary of the Gathas;¹⁶⁵ R. A. Wadia has produced a series of important studies on his ancestors;¹⁶⁶ R. B. Paymaster, as well as being a fine editor of the *Parsi Prakash*, also produced an invaluable book on early Parsi history.¹⁶⁷ Katrak wrote an overview of Zoroastrian history and religion with a view to educating people outside the community as well as within.¹⁶⁸ Darukhanawala has collected details on many famous Parsis,¹⁶⁹ Masani has written on the great hero, Dadabhai Naoroji, and Eduljee has written several scholarly articles on Parsi history.¹⁷⁰ But although religion is an

¹⁶² *Outlines of Parsi History*, 2nd edn., Bombay, 1987. Here and in the next two footnotes I have not attempted to give a full bibliography for each Dastur, but rather chosen one example of each of their work.

¹⁶³ K. M. JamaspAsa, *Aogemadaeca: A Zoroastrian Liturgy*, Vienna, 1982.

¹⁶⁴ See F. M. Kotwal and J. Boyd, *A Persian Offering. The Yasna: a Zoroastrian High Liturgy*, Paris, 1991.

¹⁶⁵ *The Gathas of Zarathushtra: Hymns in Praise of Wisdom*, Ahmedabad, 1999. For a reasonably comprehensive survey of Parsi publications prior to 1980 see Hinnells, 'The Parsis: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, 3, 1980, pp. 100–49.

¹⁶⁶ *The Bombay Dockyard and the Wadia Master Builders*, 2nd edn., Bombay, 1957.

¹⁶⁷ R. B. Paymaster, *Early History of the Parsees in India: From their Landing in Sanjan to 1700 A.D.*, Bombay, 1954.

¹⁶⁸ S. K. H. Katrak, *Who are the Parsees?*, Karachi, 1965.

¹⁶⁹ H. D. Darukhanawala, *Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil*, 2 vols., Bombay 1939 and 1963.

¹⁷⁰ R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The 'Grand Old Man' of India*, London, 1939. For Eduljee see n. 55 above.

element in all these works, they are not themselves reflective, or determinative, of broad Parsi religious developments. It was important to set the more popular writings within the context of Parsi scholarship, but for the purposes of this section it is the more popular writings that are central. The following pages will look first at some of the doctrinal movements within the community, and then at some of the issues that have been debated.

Parsis and Hindu philosophy

Hinduism has long exerted influence on the Parsis.¹⁷¹ It can be seen in various customs, for example, marking the forehead with red kunkun on auspicious occasions, and in the impact of caste traditions on the perceptions of community boundaries. In the pre-British period some Parsi priests were students and teachers of Sanskrit, but it is remarkable how relatively little of this appears to have seeped into the broad stream of community belief. In the hundred years of Protestant influence, approximately from the 1840s to the 1940s, various reform movements sought to eradicate what were seen as superstitious Hindu accretions. But after the departure of British rule, and in Independent, secular—but Hindu-dominated—India, the more philosophical dimensions of Hindu traditions can be seen to exercise an influence on Parsi writers. The Bengali Hindu, J. M. Chatterji, wrote three books interpreting Zoroastrianism in the light of his faith.¹⁷² It is not possible to document the impact of these books, although they can be seen on bookshelves in the homes of many Bombay Parsis and they are occasionally quoted in Parsi writings. What they indicate to Parsis is a serious and sympathetic interest in their religion by a Hindu writer. From the Parsi perspective, one of the earliest writers to incorporate traditional Hindu philosophy was Taraporewala, a now widely respected translator of the Gathas. He used the teachings of *purusha* and *prakriti* to explain ideas on good and evil, and also expounded his belief in karma and rebirth.¹⁷³ Wadia is an example of a post-Independence writer deploying Hindu philosophical terms and ideas to elucidate his Zoroastrian beliefs. For example, he uses Hindu terms in his attempt to ‘penetrate into the very depth of man’ to understand

¹⁷¹ A more detailed study of the next two sections can be found in *Selected Works*, ch. 12.

¹⁷² J. M. Chatterji, *The Hymns of Atharvana Zaratrushtra*, Calcutta, 1967; *Messages of the Gathas*, Calcutta, 1971; *Atharvan Zaratrushtra: The Foremost Prophet*, Calcutta, 1971.

¹⁷³ I. J. S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zaratrushtra*, Bombay, 1965, pp. 43, 52.

the different 'Flows of Conscious Energy' constituted of consciousness (*Chit*) and energy (*Ananda*).¹⁷⁴ In his later work he refers to *Asha*, which it is the duty of every Zoroastrian to embody: 'it is only on the light of Divinity penetrating the veil of *Maya* that man gets into a state of *Ashem*.' Following Hindu ideas, he explains suffering as being the natural impurities of man and the *kamas* which develop these impurities, and he refers to 'a certain kind of *Shakti* which can awaken inner spiritual or Divine Fire within man'.¹⁷⁵

Another writer to use Hindu vocabulary and concepts was Dastur Framroze Bode.¹⁷⁶ This aspect of his teaching is best illustrated in a collection of his articles and lectures.¹⁷⁷ He writes of the seamless web of consciousness, and declares that 'Our present state of consciousness is the result of ignorance (*avidya*), bewildered limited consciousness (*maya*) and form-creating karmic activities (*samskara*). All appearances are *maya* when seen from the universality of cosmic consciousness' (p. 98). In these interpretations Bode believed that Hindu teachings gave an insight into the Indo-Iranian thought-world of the prophet Zoroaster, whom he described as 'the Founder of the Mystical Magian Brotherhood . . . the Master Adept in the science of spiritual Self-Unfoldment, who mystically apprehended all the Divine Laws governing the Universe. He was a Ratu—Illustrious Master of Spiritual Wisdom' (p. 30). Obviously an outside western academic would question the historical continuity between Zoroaster's teachings and Bode's account. But all religions change through time, and as they settle in different cultures so many adherents seek to explain their beliefs in ways that seem meaningful, that 'speak to' the situation of their audience. As Christian theology has indigenized in India, Africa and Europe, so has Zoroastrianism in India. None of the teachers believe that they are misrepresenting what they see as the basic Zoroastrian message, but rather that they have been

¹⁷⁴ J. K. Wadia, *The Inner Man*, Calcutta 1968.

¹⁷⁵ J. K. Wadia, *A Few Zoroastrian Fundamentals*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 29.

¹⁷⁶ Bode was a controversial figure. In the 1940s he was verbally, almost physically, attacked for his role in the Bansa *naujotes* discussed below. He was unpopular in many quarters for his association with an American group claiming occult links with Zoroastrianism, a group headed by Mother Gloria. Because of the time he spent in America, he was eventually asked to resign his Dasturship. Controversy continued to be associated with him in India, though he had a following in some diaspora groups. But it was not his use of Hindu imagery which made him controversial, it was more personal issues. Some details of his life are included in his obituary in *Parsiana*, May 1989, pp. 40–3.

¹⁷⁷ F. A. Bode, *Sharing the Joy of Learning*, Bombay, 1978.

inspired to understand the heart of their religion with fresh insight. This is reflected in popular practice also. Kreyenbroek includes stories of Parsis using Hindu beliefs and practice, without any sense of inconsistency. So, for example, Mrs E, speaking of her Parsi mother-in-law said: 'she does have pictures [of Sai Baba], I think that she believes very strongly in Ganesh, but only as an outsider, not as part of her. She says it is lucky, Lakshmi is [also] lucky. I think lots of Parsis believe in that kind of thing.' She goes on to talk about her mother-in-law observing the Hindu custom of washing money in milk on the thirteenth day of the Divali festival, which many Parsis also observe, and also appeals to her. She then talks about her father: 'he has suddenly very much gone into Hindu philosophy, he reads a lot of that. And he has some very interesting books; I myself have been very attracted to Maharishi Ramana's philosophy.'¹⁷⁸

Parsis and the occult

The majority of Parsi publications in Independent India, however, have reflected various expressions of occult tradition(s). Parsis were very active in the Theosophical Society, from the movement's arrival in Bombay in 1879 until Annie Besant moved the centre to Madras in 1907; she also increasingly emphasized the Society's Hindu links. At that point the Parsis became less active. What Theosophy had offered was an alternative to the western, rational, Protestant-like trends of the reformers. It had justified cherished Zoroastrian traditions such as prayer and devotion to the fire, and yet had done so in a movement which, coming from the West, was not seen as being merely reactionary. Theosophy was attractive to the educated of many Indian communities for the same reasons. It encouraged allegiance to one's religious heritage, be that Zoroastrianism or Hinduism, which Theosophists declared had a depth of occult science and experience that western scholars failed to comprehend. These religious needs that Theosophy had met continued after 1907.¹⁷⁹ From the

¹⁷⁸ Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, pp. 192–5. This is one of many such examples included by Kreyenbroek.

¹⁷⁹ There have been a few Zoroastrian individuals who have seen themselves as members of the Theosophical Society. The most prominent writer among them was Dastur K. S. Dabu, a man much respected for his quiet life of devotion and discipline, even by those who do not share his doctrinal position. Three of his books are: *Message of Zarathushtra*, Bombay, 1956; *Zarathushtra and His Teachings*, Bombay, 1966; *Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism*, Bombay, 1969.

1920s there emerged what might be described as a Zoroastrian Theosophy, *Ilm-i Khshnoom*, or the path of knowledge. It replaced Theosophy's hidden Tibetan masters with a secret race of physical and spiritual giants living in Iran who had preserved the ancient spiritual teachings of that country. These teachings, it was claimed, had been imparted in secret to Behramshah Shroff. He and his followers started their teaching in Surat in 1907 but moved to Bombay two years later.¹⁸⁰ From the 1960s *Khshnoomic* teaching has increased in influence. Like Theosophy, it teaches that the soul must seek release from its material bonds by a life of asceticism and vegetarianism. There is a belief in each person's spiritual aura, which must be protected from the impurity of evil as the soul seeks to progress upwards towards release from the round of rebirth. *Khshnoomists* believe that each person is born into the religion God considered appropriate for his or her state of spiritual advancement, and that Zoroastrianism is the religion into which one is born prior to final release. There are, however, different 'wings' of *Khshnoom*. There is no formal movement with a defined membership, and liturgical differences are minimal—basically *Khshnoomists* stress the strict observance of traditional laws, especially in matters related to purity. There is only one temple built by *Khshnoomists*, and any Zoroastrian may enter, so that it would be wrong to treat *Ilm-i Khshnoom* as a sect; it is rather a movement of belief. Within that movement there are three main teaching groups. One group was led by Pundole, whose followers built a temple in the holy village of Udwarda. This caused an outcry among some of the Orthodox, because it was thought to be wrong to build a temple near to the great Atash Bahram, in which burns the most revered of all Parsi fires, consecrated as an act of thanksgiving when Parsis arrived in India. The matter went to court, which found in favour of the Pundolites.¹⁸¹

A second group follows the teachings of Dr (Mrs) Meher Master-Moos. She claims to have found trunks full of the writings of the master Behramshah Shroff, and states that her books are

¹⁸⁰ On Shroff see Hinnells, 'Behramshah Naoroji Shroff', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. iv, fasc. 1, pp. 109 f.

¹⁸¹ See the account in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1981, pp. 51ff. and on Pundolite doctrine, *Parsiana* Supplement, Sept. 1983, p. 11. Pundolite teaching had been attacked by Dastur Mirza and F. Nariman (see *Parsiana*, July 1980). The court ruling in favour of the Pundolites was published in *Jame Jamshed*, 23 May 1981.

simply translations of his Gujarati work. She also runs a college in the town of Sanjan, where Parsis are thought to have arrived in India, and links her teaching to holistic alternative medicine. There is an extended interview with Dr Master-Moos in Kreyenbroek (pp. 231–8). One of the main purposes of her college, she said: ‘was to prepare the people of this earth for leading a life in harmony with Cosmic Laws which are contained in the ancient Avestan tradition, and to prepare people for the advent of the Spiritual Rainnidar, Shah Varjavand Sahin at the end of this [i.e. twentieth] century or at the beginning of the next century.’ She explained her belief in the occult power of the higher liturgies, the *Yasna* and *Vendidad* and above all the *Nirangdin*. Only the souls which have had these ceremonies performed for them can proceed speedily from the cycle of reincarnation through numerous travails before proceeding to the Chinvat Bridge where the soul discards even its ethereal body. It then proceeds on through the solar system. She believes that in 1981 her astral body was transported by Sarosh Yazad (the Yazata, or heavenly being, Sraosha) through different levels of existence to be initiated for her work. She saw her own life, past, present and future and had a vision of the founder of Khshnoom, Shroff. Much of her teaching focuses on the idea of each person having their own aura which can affect, and be affected by, the vibrations of rituals or polluted by evil, impure vibrations.

Two teachers who reject Mrs Moos’ claim to have access to Shroff’s own writings expound what they believe to be his authentic teaching. They are Adi Doctor¹⁸² and K. N. Dastoor.¹⁸³ The teachings of the first are propounded in America by two of his students, and both Doctor and Dastoor are active in religious, social and political campaigns in the Bombay community today. They are respected by many as the upholders of Orthodoxy. From

¹⁸² Adi Doctor worked as the editor of the Orthodox newsletter, the *Parsee Voice*, referred to above, during its period of publication. He has also campaigned against the moving of sacred fires during the renovation or the closure of a temple, *Parsiana*, May 1988, pp. 42 ff. and October 1988, p. 3, see also June 1989, pp. 29 f. In *Parsiana*, Aug. 1988, pp. 91–100 he provided a useful, if partisan, account of debates within Orthodoxy. For one of his books see *The Divine Science of Navjote and Sudreh-Kushti*, Bombay, 1993. There is an interview with him in Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, pp. 239–45.

¹⁸³ e.g. K. N. Dastoor, *Zarathushtra, the Yazata*, Bombay, 1984; see also his contributions to Khshnoomic journal, *Dharma Prakash*, his contributions to *Jame Jamshed*, and his work on the editorial board of *Deen Parast*.

the perspective of the outside observer, the doctrinal differences between these three 'groups' are small, but their collective voice is strong. My subjective impression is that they are more influential today than they were twenty years earlier. Parsis who may not call themselves Khshnoomists nevertheless find some of their teachings and language helpful; this is so among the priesthood as well as the laity, even though Shroff and his followers were not themselves priests. Perhaps the most widely accepted of their beliefs are those concerning astral bodies and the powerfully positive vibrations of Avestan prayers.

Zoroastrian Studies

In 1977 a doctrinally very different religious group developed, Zoroastrian Studies, founded by Khojeste Mistree and Shehrnaz Panthaky. Mistree had previously forsaken a career as an accountant in London in order to study his religion at the University of Oxford under R. C. Zaehner. Zaehner died early on in Mistree's studies, and his supervision was undertaken by Prof. Mary Boyce at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. This supervision proved significant. Mistree had both an interest in mystical practices and a hunger for knowledge about the early history of his religion. Boyce was then elaborating her theories on the essential continuity of the Zoroastrian tradition, preserved, she believed, with great faithfulness by the priests over the millennia in the liturgical setting, which in an oral tradition, she argued, ensured strict adherence to the word.¹⁸⁴ Her scholarly influence is evident in much of Mistree's teachings.¹⁸⁵ After graduation, Mistree returned to Bombay and, aided in the first few weeks by one of his Oxford contemporaries, Dr Alan Williams, began a programme of public lectures on Zoroastrianism.¹⁸⁶ They proved so popular that Bombay auditoria had to be hired, and still lectures had to be repeated because of the interest they aroused. Between 1978 and 1980 he gave more than one lecture per week in

¹⁸⁴ See ch. 1 in *Selected Works* for a discussion of Boyce's theories.

¹⁸⁵ Some of his opponents criticized him for being under the influence of Mary Boyce. Thus *Parsee Voice*, I, 16, 1–15 June 1984: 'however tradition-bound one might be as a student in India, after one goes abroad, breathes the air of materialism and imbibes the Western materialistic culture, one tends to fly off at a tangent. The classic case of the late Dr M. N. Dhalla is right before us.'

¹⁸⁶ See *Parsiana*, June 1980, Supplement, pp. 25–7.

various institutes and fire temples. In 1978 he began teaching-visits overseas, in Australia, Britain, North America and in numerous other diaspora communities. Generally the majority of his audiences were young, well-educated professionals wanting to know more about their heritage. Inevitably, perhaps, his popularity provoked opposition from both Orthodox and Reform groups, from the Khshnoomists and from the Liberal Dastur Bode. The *Bombay Samachar* was strongly opposed to Mistree, though the Orthodox *Jame Jamshed* was more sympathetic—indeed in 1980 it voted him man of the year. When he began formal structured courses in 1979, students had to gain entry by submitting pieces of written work, for he intended to train this first group into teachers to work with him. A number did so after completing a three-year course. Zoroastrian Studies, therefore, began as an educational body.¹⁸⁷ This work has been continued through a newsletter, started in 1979, assuming its present format and nomenclature *Ushta* in 1982. The newsletter not only includes information about ZS activities; it also has a children's page and often includes more substantial pieces written either by ZS members or by scholars of the religion. From the early days, the religious education has been both for educated adults, and for children in separate classes. In the 1990s several Parsi schools asked ZS to run their religious education classes; indeed, such demand for classes exceeded what ZS could supply. There have been two publications by ZS for these different groups: Ava Mehta, a school teacher, wrote a book for children¹⁸⁸ and Mistree wrote a book for adults.¹⁸⁹ ZS is the largest religious education organization in the Zoroastrian world and also helps non-Zoroastrian scholars studying the Parsis in Mumbai. In addition ZS sells some publications of western and Parsi scholars for Parsis in Mumbai. The education programme has always involved religious practice, prayers and meditations. In the 1990s, as the situation eased in Iran, Mistree organized regular (mostly annual) religious and educational pilgrimages to Iran, which have attracted Zoroastrians from various countries and are now being copied by other groups. As an expression of traditional Zoroastrian ideals, ZS has also undertaken charitable

¹⁸⁷ Mistree gave an account of his vision for Zoroastrian Studies in its early years in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1981, pp. 46–9.

¹⁸⁸ A. Mehta, *Zoroastrianism: The Story of Our Religion*, Bombay, 1988.

¹⁸⁹ K. Mistree, *Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective*, Bombay, 1982.

work, notably amongst poor Parsis in Gujarat, Bombay and in Iran, especially in the villages near Yazd.¹⁹⁰

Perhaps the most common focus of criticism of ZS, and Mistree in particular, concerns the content of his teaching. Mistree propounds a view, accepted by most western academics, that the Middle Persian or Pahlavi literature contains traditional, or classical, Zoroastrian theology.¹⁹¹ That literature clearly articulates the belief that good and evil derive from two ultimately opposed forces, Ohrmazd and Ahriman, and that suffering of the innocent shows Ohrmazd is not omnipotent. Some of Mistree's critics argue that he is making Zoroastrianism into a dualism, and allege that he calls upon Zoroastrians to worship two gods.¹⁹² Most western academics would argue that the belief in an all-loving God opposed to a powerful evil being is to be found not only in the Pahlavi literature but in the earlier texts also. Mistree is condemned by some Orthodox and Liberal Parsis for accepting western scholarship;¹⁹³ but he also emphasizes many Orthodox teachings, notably on purity and pollution, opposition to inter-marriage, and the religious obligation to perform traditional ceremonies and prayers in the sacred language. Despite his Orthodox critics, therefore, it is reasonable to describe him as Orthodox.

The interview with Mistree published in Kreyenbroek's book brings out more about Mistree's mystical experience than any previous publication has.¹⁹⁴ He had experienced the paranormal in childhood, from Hindu families his mother treated as a doctor in Pune. He became well known as a water diviner, and it was his

¹⁹⁰ *Ushta*, Aug. 1986.

¹⁹¹ This statement requires some modification, in that Shaked has argued that there was no single Zoroastrian tradition until the pressures of Islamic oppression forced the priests to define more precisely what constitutes Zoroastrianism (*Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran*, London, 1994). He argues that the Pahlavi literature contains one group's perception of Zoroastrianism, and that prior to the Islamic era there was a diversity of religious traditions in ancient Iran. Nevertheless, Shaked accepts that much of the doctrine in that literature is legitimately characterized as Zoroastrian. For a discussion, see *Selected Works*, ch. 1 and Boyce's response *BSoAs* 59, 1996, pp. 68–86.

¹⁹² This is an allegation often made by writers in the Reformist 'wing' of the community, including the *Bombay Samachar*, and by many Iranian Zoroastrians in the West. But it is asserted also by some Orthodox writers, e.g. the High Priest Dastur H. D. K. Mirza in an article in *Samachar*, 8 Oct. 1994; see also 12 Feb. 1995 and 14 May 1995.

¹⁹³ So Sir Rustom Masani in *Samachar*, 3.1982, similarly *Samachar*, 1 Feb. 1981; 8 Nov. 1981. This allegation is also made by a number of Iranian Zoroastrians in the diaspora.

¹⁹⁴ *Living Zoroastrianism*, pp. 126–45.

reputation for this which led to his first visit to England, a visit which was to transform his life. As well as studying books on Zoroastrianism he also studied Kabbalah and then with a Sufi group in London. While sitting quietly he received messages, or directions. He was told by a Sufi teacher to go to Iran to learn more about the spiritual life, and to deepen his religious understanding of Zoroastrianism. The 'miraculous' aspects of that and other ventures are clearly something which lie at the heart of his religious work. He comments in the interview on how he communicates with the sacred fires, and they with him. On the pilgrimages he leads to Iran he seeks to help others experience the paranormal, mystical, side of the religion, as well as learning about Zoroastrian history. He believes that a good Zoroastrian religious education based on sound scholarship is the key to the community's survival, but this is inseparable from the personal religious experience of his living Zoroastrianism.

Diverse religious strands

The westernized, liberal, reforming movement does not have many followers in Bombay post-Independence. The theme appears in the Bombay literature, notably in the *Bombay Samachar*, but also in the letters column of *Parsiana*. However, these columns are often written by 'out of town' Parsis, notably by overseas Zoroastrians, for example Farokh Vajifdar from London, Prof. Kaikhusroo Irani in New York and Dr Ali Jafarey in California. This is in contrast to the second half of the nineteenth century, and the early twentieth century. What is growing in Mumbai is an interest in new religious movements in general, and groups associated with miracles and miraculous prayers in particular.

The non-Zoroastrian figure who probably attracts most attention is Sai Baba, both Sai Baba of Shirdi and the living Satya Sai Baba. He is followed not only by ordinary Parsis but also by some of the leaders: Nani Palkiwalla, for example, has made public his devotion to Sai Baba, as did the brilliant Parsi scientist, Homi Babha.¹⁹⁵ One Parsi, Homi P. Dadi-Barjor, also known as Homi Babha, has altered his lifestyle and dress to follow the teachings of Sai Babha, actually living in Shirdi.¹⁹⁶ Rajneesh is less popular but nevertheless has some Parsi followers, and his comments on

¹⁹⁵ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1984, p. 7; Mar. 1985, pp. 3–5 for Palkiwalla; Oct. 1989, p. 16 for Homi Babha.

¹⁹⁶ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1989, pp. 16–18.

Zoroastrianism were published in the Parsi press.¹⁹⁷ One of the general features of religion in Bombay is the absence of barriers between the religions. Some roadside shrines, for example, have images of figures from Hinduism, Christianity, the Babas and other religions. There is also a widespread custom of praying once a week at certain holy places for seven consecutive weeks, for example at a Catholic church in Mahim and at a Muslim holy site (Hajji Ali Tomb). Numbers of Parsis have taken part in this pilgrimage for several years.¹⁹⁸ One lady who was interviewed for Kreyenbroek's book said: 'I pray to Mother Mary, and to dear Dominic Xavier . . . [F]or Sai Baba I just light a simple divo, I put a little statue, that is all, and I say "Sai Baba, please help us"'.¹⁹⁹ Another, when talking of the healing which follows special prayers at one of the agiaries, related:

And there are Parsis praying to the peepul tree also, it is a Hindu belief because Shiva is supposed to be in the peepul tree. To me, Yoga has taught that Shiva is your superconsciousness! And what is Ahura Mazda but your superconsciousness, your cosmic consciousness, your light? So Shiva and Ahura Mazda and Cosmic Consciousness is all the same! . . . we have a cosmopolitan crowd here, somebody will go to Sai Baba and bring me a little statue . . . if they bring me little gods—they brought me a Krishna, they brought me an *OM*, they brought a Mother Mary, they brought me a Christ, they brought me a Shiva—I am lucky.²⁰⁰

From the late 1960s another fire temple, Aslaji's Agiary on Grant Road, has been a pilgrimage site for many Parsis on the sixteenth day of the Zoroastrian month (*Meher roj*), especially if that falls on a Friday, and above all on the feast of Mehragan, the day of Meher (Mithra) in the month of Meher, when three or four thousand will attend. Prayers offered on such occasions are thought by some to bring miraculous cures.²⁰¹ One lady in Kreyenbroek's study expresses these sentiments in a typical manner: 'I believe very strongly in Behram Yazad. And my mother-in-law believes very much in Ashishvang *roj*, and she

¹⁹⁷ *Parsiana*, Mar. 1981, p. 49–51 quotes at length from his discourse 'Zarathushtra Must Have Had an Immense Sense of Humour'. This started from the Zoroastrian tradition that Zoroaster laughed at birth because, according to Rajneesh, he found the world to be so crazy. Zoroaster, he said, was one of the few founders of religions to have a sense of humour. The Orthodox *Jame* included an item defending Rajneesh, 30 Oct. 1994, p. 17.

¹⁹⁸ *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1994, pp. 88–91.

¹⁹⁹ *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 217.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 210 f. For a very similar account see *ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁰¹ H. J. Rogers, 'If it's Meher roj, it must be Aslaji's', *Parsiana*, Feb. 1989, pp. 24–32.

believes in Meher *roj*. She believes very much in visiting the Aslaji Agiary.²⁰² 'Believing in' a particular *roj* or Yazad means that the person believes in the effectiveness of prayers addressed at that time and/or to that heavenly being. They are considered to be powerful prayers, which answer needs and questions, in illness or before some major activity.²⁰³ In the early 1990s the practice developed of Parsis going to the Banaji Atash Behram near Charni Road Station, believing that wishes made in the name of an unknown Jalbawa are powerful and can effect miraculous cures, or give guidance in a crisis.²⁰⁴

Just as Parsi pilgrimages have become popular, so too there have been Parsi religious figures whose prayers are believed to have miraculous curing powers. One particularly popular figure is Dastur²⁰⁵ Jamsedji Sorabji Kookaduru (1831–1900). He is believed to have lived a simple life, never using a vehicle, and to have prayed intensively, sometimes with miraculous results of healing.²⁰⁶ On a noted occasion he is said to have produced gold, which enabled the building of the last of the Atash Bahrams, the Anjuman Atash Bahram in Dhobi Talao in Bombay. A hall is named after him in that Atash Bahram to this day. His followers also believed that because, 'His third eye had opened, he was able to foretell future events accurately.'²⁰⁷

Kookaduru's popularity has increased from the 1960s because of the teaching of a follower, Ervad Nadarsha N. Aibara (1933–89).²⁰⁸ From the age of 7 Aibara prayed intensely and heard a voice guiding him, that of Kookaduru. In 1954 he was appointed to the

²⁰² *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 192.

²⁰³ See e.g. Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 148 regarding praying to Behram Yazad before taking exams, also pp. 216, 220, 225, 239. Another popular practice is to pray the *Ardivisur Yasht*, to the waters, in connection with childbirth, p. 94.

²⁰⁴ P. Gandhi, 'If it's Monday, it must be Banajis', *Parsiana*, July 1992, pp. 14–16.

²⁰⁵ An honorific, not factual, title in his case.

²⁰⁶ Ervad Erach D. Daboo, *Galaxy of Parsi Saints, Lustre of Parsi Sainthood*, Surat, 1983, pp. 15–17 on Kookaduru. He also includes among modern saints Behramshah Shroff (pp. 54–60) and Dastur Dabu (pp. 61–5). Daboo wrote a small book simply on *Kookaduru: Sant Dasturji Kookaduru*, E.T. M. J. Giara, Bombay, 1993.

²⁰⁷ *Anjuman Atash Bahram—Mumbai: A Brief History (1897–1996)*, Mumbai, 1996, pp. 8, 25. For a popular retelling of this miracle by Kookaduru, see Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 257.

²⁰⁸ Anon., *Biography of the Late Dasturji Ervad Nadersha Navroji Aibara*, Bombay n.d. (approximately 1993). Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, includes an extended interview with his son, Ervad Yazdi N. Aibara, pp. 258–71. There the son, who though qualified in commerce took up the priesthood, gives moving accounts of his perception of his father.

staff of the Cama Athornan Madressa at Andheri, where he eventually became joint principal. In 1972 he had what might be described as a visionary experience: while praying, suddenly he was confronted with a blinding, all encompassing glorious light. His surprised and questioning look received the answer that the aura of light was that of Rushad Dasturji Kookadaru Sahib, 'who then instructed him in the recitation of certain *nirangs* (prayers); . . . the light force in all its glory entered Ervad Nadarsha's body and he felt a great force and tremendous power surge through his body. He felt uplifted and pure' (p. 12).²⁰⁹ Thereafter Aibara became famous for giving people *nirangs* which helped in sickness, or at times of personal crisis. Aibara never claimed these to be his own *nirangs*, but rather that they were inspired by Kookadaru. His son described what happened in the following words:

and some Zoroastrians used to come to him, saying, 'Dasturji, my problem is this, my problem is that . . .' sickness problems, business problems, anything. Anyone can come and say, please give me some prayers so that I can get relief. So he used to give certain lines, 'You pray this.' Those lines were given from the reply which he was getting from inside, from the inner voice . . .²¹⁰

He also strongly encouraged people to read and hold in their mind the stories from the *Shah-name*. In 1979 he moved to the Karani Agiary in what is known as the queen of the colonies, Cusraw Baug. Parsis came from far and wide to seek his guidance and *nirangs*. On the guidance of the voice within him, he campaigned, eventually successfully, for the building of Kukadaroo Hall in the Agiary. Various grateful Zoroastrians had wanted to pay Dastur Aibara for his help, but he had always refused on the instruction of the inner voice, until one day he was told to put the donations into a Kookadaru Trust, and it was from this money that the hall was built.²¹¹ Also at his insistence a Kookadaru Agiary was started at Sanjan, a consecration attended by Dastur Firoze Kotwal, though no other High Priests or leading members of the BPP attended. Many believed that it was impractical to build a temple where there were only fifteen to twenty

²⁰⁹ The same incident is related by his son in Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 260.

²¹⁰ Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 259.

²¹¹ Quoted in Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, pp. 263–5. The son states that his father had been unhappy about the agiary in Sanjan because of the inevitable problems of finding priests. For an account of a follower of Aibara, see Kreyenbroek, p. 221.

Parsi residents.²¹² On his death, he handed on the work of giving *nirangs* to his wife.

These hagiographies indicate the fascination for the miraculous among many Parsis in Bombay, the belief in the power of prayers and a reverence for mystical priests within their own tradition. Astrology, too, is strong in popular Parsi thought. There is relatively little evidence of Parsis converting to Christianity or Islam. The Indian holy men who are popular are those who encourage people to find spirituality within their own tradition and who do not ask them to sever their connections with their heritage. Some seek inspiration from participating in religious acts shared with other religions, but quietly many others seek it within their own sacred space and from their own holy men.

An unusual Parsi 'holy couple' are Jai Gururani Nagkanya (Yogini), or Mataji,—formerly known as Nargis Minocher Bharucha—and her heir, Jai Gurudev Sri Jimmy Yogiraj, formerly Jimmy Pallonji Master. They are leaders of a new religious movement, based in their own Parsi Wadia colony in Lal Baug, but their followers are predominantly non-Parsis. The 'holy couple' are considered by their devotees to 'possess inborn divinity, enlightened to become one with the Almighty'. Gururani, in particular, is said to have performed countless healing miracles, and both of them can bestow grace through their *darshanas*, in halls charged with *shakti*—the benevolent force that precedes and lingers in places graced by the celestial duo. But again, this is a movement that does not involve the rejection of a Parsi's Zoroastrian heritage, because Gururani regularly visits Zoroastrian temples and ceremonies, taking her Parsi devotees on trips to Udwada. It is not Zoroastrianism that she rejects but the spiritual power of the Parsi priests.²¹³

Two main themes emerge from this brief overview of Parsi religious movements. The first is that, in contrast to the earlier periods studied by Langstaff, there is minimal western influence on post-Independence Parsi religious movements. Only Mistree might be said to show the influence of western scholarship. But, unlike earlier Reform movements, this has not resulted in what might be described as the Protestantization of his message, for

²¹² A. S. Mama, 'The Significance of Sanjan', *Parsiana*, Dec. 1989, pp. 20–6.

²¹³ H. J. Rogers, 'Cons or Icons of Faith', *Parsiana*, Jan. 1987, pp. 22–7.

Mistree eschews such Reformist practices as prayers in the vernacular, the erosion of the purity laws, the exclusive devotion to God and exclusion of other spiritual forces, and denial of an independent force of evil. Second, in phenomenology of religion terms, what one can see among late twentieth-century Parsis is a growth in forms of new religious movements. Students of such phenomena in the West typically emphasize how these movements are most commonly found among the educated middle classes, people who are instinctively religious but do not find fulfilment in their received religion.²¹⁴ Parsis are an obvious 'recruiting ground' for such movements. But it is only those groups that do not demand a conversion that would involve them in rejecting their inherited religion which normally attract Parsis, for the Parsi sense of 'tribal' loyalty (a phrase used by many Parsis), or '*Parsi-panu*', Parsi culture, is very strong. What many seek is a spiritual, charismatic leadership that they can enjoy without rejecting their heritage.

There is another dimension to Parsis and religion which has to be acknowledged also, namely the level of secularization. '*Parsi-panu*' is powerful, but belief in a God, or the formal religious practice, is not something which characterizes everyone. Sam M. Taraporevala produced a fascinating—if sad to read—Ph.D. thesis on the religion of Parsi college students.²¹⁵ From a sophisticated statistical analysis of a survey questionnaire he concluded that although a high proportion of Zoroastrian undergraduates believed in some sort of God, only a small proportion were active in the religion. His conclusions on what were the important influences among those who were religious are particularly interesting. The major factor was, not surprisingly, the family and its spirituality; he found especially that it was the mother much more than the father who taught the children about the religion. He classified the level of religious activity and found that generally students followed the religion of their parents, though usually the parents were more active. After the parents, the grandparents were the

²¹⁴ There is such a mass of literature on this subject it is not easy to give a reasonable overview in a necessarily short space. Two obvious examples are E. Barker, *The Making of a Moonie*, Oxford, 1984, repr. 1993—on patterns of recruitment among the followers of the Reverend Moon's Unification Church, and Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*, Harvard, 1989, on recruitment among magical and witchcraft groups in London.

²¹⁵ 'Religiosity in an Urban Setting: A Study of Parsi College Students in the City of Bombay', University of Bombay, 1987 (unpublished).

next important factor, or a teacher whom they had encountered. Taraporevala looked also at the influence of the college, of peers—where he found religion was rarely discussed. One part of his conclusion has special importance for Parsi planners, and points the way to some further research, for he found that among collegians, those who grew up in a baug were more likely to practise their religion than those from cosmopolitan areas (pp. 358–61). The implication of his work is that future leaders in the Parsi community may have a decreasing commitment to their religious heritage. In a community that values and pursues higher education, this substantial evidence of a declining religious commitment among students is a serious matter.

Recent Parsi debates

Introduction

There are various subjects of lively debate within the Mumbai community at the dawn of the new millennium which do not impact greatly on the diaspora communities, including calendar issues and to some extent the Tower of Silence (*dokhma*) controversies. Different methods of intercalation have resulted in the observance of two calendars in the community in India, Shahenshai and Kadmi. The pattern of festivals is the same, but they are observed a few weeks apart. This has led to only minimal liturgical differences, and no doctrinal disputes. Although in the pre-British period this was a matter of bitter, indeed violent, argument, in the twenty-first century the continuing debates are not as fierce as they used to be. In the early twenty-first century, there was an attempt to reform the calendar and make it consistent with the western Gregorian calendar, but this resulted simply in a third calendar, the Fasli. Generally the diaspora groups prefer the Fasli calendar because it is easier to integrate into the western calendar of their environment, but many Associations follow the other calendars in order to avoid conflict with the ‘old country’. So it has been a matter of debate, but not as intense as it is in India. It is not, therefore, necessary to go into this issue in detail in this book.

Controversy over the dokhmas

There have been debates in Bombay concerning the Towers of Silence for many years. In part this has been concern over reporting

in the outside press of the unhygienic nature of the *dokhmas* and allegations that crows drop human remains in the roads, as noted above. But more fundamental within the Parsi press have been the threats to, but the determination to preserve, the traditional Tower of Silence funerals, or *dokhmenashini*. This has been such a fierce debate, and remains so at the beginning of the millennium, that it cannot be neglected here, even if it does not impact greatly on the diaspora communities. A central question has been whether there are enough vultures to maintain the practice. In 1973 a new BPP trustee, Shiavax R. Vakil, declared publicly that as the BPP trustee with responsibility for the funeral grounds (Doongerwadi), he had entered the *dokhma* to see whether reports of bodies lying rotting for a long time were true. He said that he saw many bodies lying there untouched, they were in various degrees of rotting, and the stench was terrible. He condemned the BPP and the priests for insisting on people using the *dokhmas*, in Bombay or elsewhere, where there were no vultures and said that other forms of disposal should be allowed.²¹⁶

This debate slowly subsided, despite occasional eruptions. But it was renewed with yet greater ferocity at the turn of the millennium. A virus decimated the vulture population so there could no longer be any doubt that the corpses were not being devoured, and were being left to decay over a very long period. The smell was nauseous to nearby residents, and entering the *dokhma* was so revolting that the corpse bearers were not exposing the body in the traditional manner. The bereaved grieved at the thought of their loved ones being delivered into such conditions. Many called for accepting the use of burial or a crematorium, and if not the building of a crematorium for Zoroastrians at Doongerwadi, then at least for having the funeral prayers recited at Doongerwadi, before the body was taken to the Bombay crematorium. Some felt that this threatened the revered tradition, but their solutions to the problems diverged. Two solutions have not provoked much controversy—yet. One involves the use of herbal-cum-chemical powders to curtail the stench emerging from the *dokhma*; the other pumping ozone gases in to dissipate it. The priests gave their clearance to both these projects providing the walls of the *dokhma* were not breached.

²¹⁶ See *Parsiana*, Nov.–Dec. 1973, pp. 7–19.

Discussion has focused on two other proposed solutions. Khojeste Mistree and his ZS members called for a breeding programme under the guidance of a British vulture specialist, making the area an aviary in which young vultures brought from elsewhere could be reared and bred. A different solution was proposed by others, notably Dr Homi Dhalla, who campaigned for the installation of solar heat panels which would concentrate solar energy to dry out the decaying corpses more quickly. The former project is said by its opponents to be unlikely to succeed, because of the number of birds that would be needed, and the danger of a further virus making all the extensive provisions pointless. It would also be the most expensive of the options. However, the vulture specialist said that it was possible, and its advocates pointed out that this would preserve the old traditions. The solar panels are dismissed by the opponents as 'frying the bodies'. Dastur Kotwal publicly declared that solar panels were a form of solar crematorium within the precincts of the *dokhmas*. The system has also been said to be unusable in the wet monsoon periods. The BPP trustees called a Samast Anjuman meeting, which was attended by over a thousand Parsis. The arguments were fierce, and vitriolic, but the vast majority supported the aviary project. The trustees subsequently said they would examine the options in detail. At first they were inclined to allow people who, in the prevailing circumstances, wanted to do so, to have the prayers performed at Doongerwadi before committal in the crematorium. But the Orthodox opposition was immediate and fierce, so that the trustees rescinded their decision.²¹⁷ At the time of writing, the fierce arguments continue, with no decision yet in sight. This is not an issue which impinges significantly on the diaspora, since there is no possibility of *dokhmenashini* overseas, and cremation, or burial, are inevitable. Some in the diaspora feel alienated by the intensity of this argument, which they see as a local affair for Mumbai; they think it displays an insensitivity to the feelings of those in the diaspora who are compelled to have the form of funeral being so vehemently attacked by many in the old country.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ *Parsiana*, Jan. 2001, pp. 32–7, on the *Samast Anjuman*, and pp. 41 f., on the debate at the Federation. The issues raised by each were discussed at length in the next *Parsiana*, Mar. 2001, pp. 124–56. The trustees decided to withdraw their earlier decision to allow funeral rights at Doongerwadi for those to be buried or cremated (pp. 144–56).

²¹⁸ See Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli from the USA in *Parsiana*, Jan. 2001, pp. 46–7.

Some Mumbai debates concern issues that started in the overseas community and have then been taken up in the old country. The obvious example is the making of a film in America about Zoroastrianism, *Wings of Fire*, focusing on the world famous conductor Zubin Mehta's quest for his roots. This caused considerable debate in Bombay over the portrayal of the prophet and his teachings. It, and similar issues such as the conversion of an American, Peterson, will be discussed in the chapter on the country where the matter first arose, North America.

Intermarriage and conversion

Introduction and the legal background Intermarriage and the related issue of conversion are the biggest issues in Mumbai religious debates that have an impact on the diaspora groups. These topics, therefore, merit detailed discussion. It is also necessary to give a brief account of related matters early in the twentieth century. In 1903 the Parsi industrial giant, J. R. D. Tata, married a French lady, Suzanne Brière. Her *naujote* was performed and the couple's claim was that she was thereby entitled to the privileges of a Parsi, for example the use of temples and, in due course, a funeral in a Tower of Silence. Never had such a conversion been known before, at least such a public one. There was intense debate. A committee was established to discuss the question of *juddin* (non-Zoroastrian) initiations. Its subcommittee produced a report saying that when Parsis arrived in India they had accepted those who wanted to embrace the religion. The main committee refused to accept the report and blocked its publication. During this debate a Rajput lady, married to a Zoroastrian, had her *naujote* performed and declared she wanted to have a *dokhma* funeral. As she was in poor health this was an issue that could not be long delayed. The BPP, through its then secretary Dr (later Sir) Jivanji Modi, sought the advice of legal council. Council was divided. At a public meeting in 1905 resolutions were passed saying that only Parsi Zoroastrians and not converts were entitled to benefit from Parsi Trusts and institutions (i.e. temples and *dokhmas*). The matter went to court in 1906, the Parsi Panchayet Case, Suit no. 689. The plaintiffs were not only members of the Tata family, including J. R. D., but also other Parsi dignitaries, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Sir Dinshaw Petit. Their case was twofold: (a) that properly initiated persons should be recognized as Zoroastrians and

entitled to benefit from the Trusts; (b) that the current board of trustees was not legally constituted since they had not been elected but had been appointed by their predecessors. They were therefore unable to make any directives. Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy (IVth baronet) led the BPP defendants. The community was, therefore, seen to be split at its highest social level. The case was one of principle. Some Parsis have justified excluding non-Parsis from community charities on the grounds that the number of poor people who would convert to benefit from the charities would swamp the restricted funds.²¹⁹ Clearly there was no prospect of Mrs Tata seeking charitable help. The matter was therefore a specifically religious one concerning access to temples and *dokhmas*.

The Orthodox Parsi judge, Mr Justice Davar, presided, but because of the sensitive nature of the case he was joined by the English judge, Mr Justice Beaman.²²⁰ (The latter was, however, an active Theosophist, a movement antithetical to the Reforming groups and supportive of the Orthodox.) Their judgement on the legality of the trustees appointment was clear—they agreed with the plaintiffs and the BPP was told to organize an electoral scheme, the trustees being given interim legal powers to continue the workings of the Punchayet. It is on the other issue that attention is focused here. It is also the more complex of the two issues. The plaintiffs' contention was that Zoroastrianism not only permitted, but enjoined, conversion. The two ladies did not themselves appear in court, and the senior judge, Mr Justice Davar, concluded that this meant the court could not rule on the crucial issue: since they made no claim, a claim could not be judged. Justices Davar and Beaman then proceeded to give their 'commentary', or

²¹⁹ When noting the fear of the funds designated for Parsis being swamped, it should also be noted that the Parsis had separately made very substantial charitable donations to cosmopolitan charities, e.g. the founding of the city's largest hospital, the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Hospital. For a study of Parsi charity, see *Selected Works*, ch. 11.

²²⁰ Perhaps the best account of the case is Writer, *Contemporary Zoroastrians*, pp. 129–49. There is also a good discussion in J. S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*, Leiden, 2001, pp. 226–51, and 266–75 on the related Rangoon case. The 1906 case was serialized in *Parsiana*, Oct. 1981, pp. 16–13; Nov. 1981, 2–3; Dec. 1981, pp. 10–12; Jan. 1982, pp. 2–5; Feb. 1982, pp. 3–5; Mar. 1982, pp. 35–39; Apr. 1982, pp. 4–7; May 1982, pp. 14–19; June 1982, pp. 21–5; July 1982, pp. 2–4; Aug. 1982, pp. 57–71; Sept. 1982, pp. 3–5; Oct. 1982, pp. 29–31; Nov. 1982, pp. 4–5, 11; Jan. 1983, pp. 29–33, 37; Mar. 1983, pp. 79–83. The fact that this popular Parsi journal allocated so much space over sixteen issues to this judgement both indicates the importance the community attaches to the case, and establishes that the details of the judgement are available to a wide Parsi readership and in the diaspora.

obiter dicta, on the case presented in court. The defendants cited historical cases, and produced in court people who claimed to have been converted and had their *naujotes* performed. Davar's condemnation of the priests, and others involved in their initiation, clearly betrayed his Orthodox position. He concluded that although Zoroastrianism had practised conversion, this practice had fallen into disuse in India:

while I find that although the conversion of juddins is permissible amongst Zoroastrians, I also find that such conversions are entirely unknown to the Zoroastrian communities of India; and far from it being customary or usual for them to convert a juddin, the Zoroastrian communities of India have never attempted, encouraged, or permitted the conversion of juddins to Zoroastrianism . . . The usage of twelve centuries, however, proves that, under their altered circumstances—away from their fatherland, amidst surroundings never within the contemplation of the Prophet when he promulgated his religion—the enjoyment to propagate the Zoroastrian religion amongst aliens has fallen into complete disuse.²²¹

Mr Justice Beaman came to a similar conclusion via a different route, for he concluded that the Parsis had become a caste and that within Indian society people could not be converted from one caste to another. Lineage, he concluded, was everything in Parsi thinking. The most blameless foreigner could not be admitted, but anyone of Zoroastrian lineage could be. The matter, he said, was not a matter of religion but of 'pure, unadulterated Oriental caste'.²²² He concluded that if an entire *juddin* was admitted to the religion, he or she would not, as a matter of right, be entitled to use the Funds and institutions which had been

founded and endowed only for the members of the Parsi community, and that the Parsi community consists of Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants, and who are born of Zoroastrian parents, and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, who came to India, either temporarily or permanently, and the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion.²²³

The judgement in the 1906 case was reinforced in the community mind by a case in Rangoon involving a girl called Bella.²²⁴

²²¹ *Parsi Panchayet Case*, Suit 689 of 1906, pp. 81, 86 (hereafter *PPC*).

²²² *PPC*, pp. 151–3.

²²³ *PPC*, p. 117.

²²⁴ Hinnells, 'Parsi Attitudes to Religious Pluralism', in H. Coward (ed.), *Modern Indian Responses to Religious Pluralism*, New York, 1987, pp. 195–233 at 209–12.

She was the daughter of a non-Parsi father and a Parsi mother, but was adopted by a Parsi trustee of the Rangoon temple on her father's death. Her *naujote* was performed and when she first entered a temple in 1915 a court case ensued. Davar took an active role in the dispute in his role as a trustee of the BPP, but in that role he asserted that his own earlier judgement had declared such acts illegal. The Burma court found in Bella's favour, and quoted the 1906 judgement which had said that conversion had been part of Zoroastrianism.²²⁵ Caste was not a matter of discussion in the Burma court. The plaintiffs took the case to the Privy Council in London, who overturned the previous ruling saying that the Trust Deeds of that specific temple had designated the building for the use of Parsi Zoroastrians.

It is important to reflect on the implications of these judgements. Although Davar interjected in the Burma case that the earlier case he presided over had shown that *juddin naujotes* were illegal, he himself in the 1906 case had specifically said that as Mrs Tata and the Rajput lady did not appear in court, the court could not rule on the claim. He further emphasized, as did Justice Beaman, that all subsequent comments made by them both were *obiter dicta* and were therefore not legally binding. The Privy Council made the point that their ruling applied to one specific temple and its trust deeds and did not have general application. In legal terms, it is, therefore, questionable whether these judgements have universal application. They are referred to in contemporary debates, but one might ask whether a 1906 case in British India is binding in Independent India, and what its authority is in the diaspora.

Some further relevant historical incidents There have been other incidents that complicate the issue further. On two well-publicized occasions numbers of people with a Zoroastrian father have been initiated, but there has been public protest because of the non-Parsi mother. The first pre-dates the 1906 court case. In 1882 in Mazgaon eleven people, children and adults, were initiated, all the nine elders having married out. Despite the involvement of respected priests, including Dastur JamaspAsana and Kukadaroo, there was widespread public protest, led by the BPP and the scholar priest Dastur Sanjana.²²⁶ Similarly in 1942 Dastur

²²⁵ This judgement was published by *Parsiana*, May 1990, pp. 32–6.

²²⁶ Desai, *History of the BPP*, p. 13, and Hinnells, 'Parsi Attitudes'.

Minocher JamaspAsa (son of the one involved in the Mazgaon incident) and Dastur Bode performed the initiation of seventy-seven people, aged between 7 and 60, all with Parsi fathers who had married out. There was considerable uproar and threats of violence.²²⁷ These incidents show that in practice, both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Parsis often imposed stricter conditions than outlined in the 1906 case, and there has been substantial opposition to the *naujote* of a child of any intermarried parent.

Intermarriage and conversion at the end of the millennium The debate on intermarriage and conversion has been central to Parsi concerns from the mid-1970s until the late 1990s both in Bombay and the diaspora. It is therefore important to trace this debate, even if individual incidents can only be dealt with briefly. There have been few periods without some such controversy in the Bombay Parsi community, especially since the mid-1970s. A starting point of this section may be taken as 1978 and what became known as the Cama Baug episode.²²⁸ A Parsi male was refused permission by officials of the Cama Baug fire temple on Grant Road for his daughter's initiation because he was married out. Court action was averted (on the alleged grounds of breaking the country's law) when he was allowed to use another baug, but a low profile was maintained by not publicizing the event more than three days in advance. It was at the same time that the split between the BPP and the Federation occurred, in part on the grounds that the Delhi Anjuman allowed non-Zoroastrian spouses into their temple and into Anjuman membership.²²⁹ Clearly the trustees of the baug were acting more strictly than had been suggested in the 1906 judgement by Davar.

In 1980 the subject of the rights of intermarried women became a matter of intense public debate, with the demands of such Parsi ladies to vote in BPP elections; the CER came into existence and were successful in their legal challenge on this question. At approximately the same time a prominent Parsi lawyer, Homi P. Ranina, published a pamphlet with a supplement written by

²²⁷ Desai, *History*, pp. 159–61, pp. 338 f; pp. 296–301 of that publication are appendices of legal advice given in the light of these incidents and judgements.

²²⁸ *Parsiana*, May–June 1978, pp. 18–25.

²²⁹ *Parsiana*, May–June 1978, pp. 26–37, interview with the Delhi President, Shrivast Nargolwala.

Dastur Kotwal. This stated clearly the Orthodox position on intermarriage.²³⁰ Ranina argued that an appropriate analogy was the practice in breeding animals: one would not cross an Alsatian with a Dobermann, and similarly one does not mix breeds of horses. In the supplement it is argued that marrying outside the fold is next to adultery, because the marriage is not solemnized according to the rites and customs of the Zoroastrian religion, and that if a woman claims to continue her religion, this is hollow and hypocritical. Regarding the Special Marriages Act, in which people are not required to reject their religion, Kotwal asserted 'I would like to stress with all the emphasis at my command, that such a marriage has no sanctity in our religion.' Any subsequent child 'is considered to be illegitimate'.

Also in 1980, there was controversy over a proposed Adoption of Children Bill. The then Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, intended to pass a law enabling Indian citizens to adopt a child of any caste or religion and 'to confer on the adopted child all rights, civil, social and religious of the adoptive father'. In a letter to the Prime Minister, dated 9 February 1981, Dastur Dr H. D. K. Mirza argued that the Parsis should be exempt from the bill because 'its application would threaten the very existence of the community'. Mrs Gandhi received a deputation of High Priests, and a committee was established to produce an appeal document.²³¹ It argued that:

A Parsi can be a Parsi only by birth and not by adoption or conversion or a non-Parsi adoption. Racial and genetic purity is a command of Religion. Parsis left Iran to preserve their spiritual Institutions like Sudreh-Kushti . . . Fire Temples, Dokhmas, Death Ceremonies—and above all the genetic purity, which is the very foundation of the Parsi life.

It concluded:

what is required is the preservation of the inherent genetic and racial characteristics along with all the spiritual gifts our prophet graciously bestowed on us.

Reforming Parsis, for example Nargolwala, also petitioned Mrs Gandhi,²³² but the Orthodox petition was successful and

²³⁰ *Mixed Marriages Among Parsis—Can They be Justified?* Bombay, n.d.

²³¹ Special Committee for Adoption Bill of the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, *Adoption of Children Bill, 1980, Parsi Zoroastrian Point of View*, published for private circulation, 1980.

²³² *Parsiana*, July 1981, p. 17.

Parsis were exempt. The episode indicates that whatever the grounds given in the 1906 case concerning conversion, in the minds of traditional religious leaders in the 1980s the issue was one of genetic, or racial, identity. It should be added that Parsis typically assert that this does not indicate a sense of racial superiority. They state that they do not wish to subordinate any other group, but simply to be conscious of their identity, and diminishing in numbers though they may be, they want to preserve what they are.²³³

Bombay and the Peterson naujote The next high-profile public event on the intermarriage/conversion issue took place outside Bombay: the initiation in New York of a white American not of Zoroastrian descent, Joseph Peterson, on 5 March 1983. This will be considered in some detail in the chapter on America, but it merits brief comment here because of the impact it had in Bombay. This was in many ways a more dramatic event than the others discussed above, in so far as there was no question of intermarriage; rather, it was a straight issue of conversion by someone from a Jewish-Christian background. It attracted huge comment in the Bombay press: *Parsiana* reported the events and the opinions of both sides, the *Bombay Samachar* and *Jame Jamshed* took their opposing Reforming and Orthodox attitudes (the *Jame* had reported the planned *naujote* on 15 February). There were public meetings, with various associations speaking out on the matter; those opposing it included the BPP, two priestly bodies, the Cama Athornan Institute, the Athornan Mandal, the Council of Vigilant Parsis, Zoroastrian Studies and the Jashan Committee. There were several North American Zoroastrian priests involved in the *naujote*. The one who spoke out on the issue most publicly, Kersey Antia from Chicago, was the target of particular attacks and was not allowed to speak at the ensuing World Congress in Bombay, and he alleged that he was threatened with physical attack.²³⁴ The three prominent

²³³ See e.g. H. B. Dhalla, 'A Brief Study of Intermarriage in America with Reference to the Parsi Community', in N. E. Turel (ed.), *1251st Anniversary of the Installation of Sacred Iranshah Atash Bahram*, Bombay, 1972, pp. 80–93.

²³⁴ Ironically, the first issue of *Parsiana* after the serialization of the 1906 law case was the one in which the forthcoming Peterson *naujote* was reported (Mar. 1983, pp. 17–31). The actual event was reported in Apr. 1983 (pp. 1–7) and the fierce debate began in the May 1983 issue, pp. 16–17. There is an account of the various organizations' reactions in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1983, pp. 49–79. The incident was the subject of many letters in the Readers' Forum pages of *Parsiana* for months to come.

High Priests in Bombay, Dasturs Mirza, JamaspAsa and Kotwal, released a pamphlet, *Conversion: A Myth Exploded*, and their views were published in the three papers, *Jame*,²³⁵ *Samachar* and *Parsiana*. They described the *navjote* as 'against the Zoroastrian religion, tradition and long standing customs, manners and practices . . . the so-called navjote is an insult, mockery and cruel joke.' The Dasturs disputed the translations of the texts used to legitimate the *navjote* and rejected the historical arguments advanced. Conversion as a practice, they contended, 'has brought strife, destruction, devastation and misery on mankind'. They warned that if proselytism was practised in democratic countries, the position of Zoroastrians living in non-secular countries ruled by religious heads could be endangered. The allusion to Iran was obvious. The significance of this event here is the impact that events in the diaspora can have on Bombay Parsis. It is inevitable in a book of this nature that chapters deal with the communities separately, but it is important to note the interaction between groups in different countries. For some in the diaspora Bombay was seen as the centre of religious authority, which they looked to to condemn the Peterson *navjote*.²³⁶ For others, Bombay represented a conservative body out of touch with developments, especially in the modern West. The relations between the old country and the new Associations is a theme which will recur below.

The Roxan Shah case

Perhaps even more contentious in Bombay than the Peterson *navjote* was the case of Roxan Shah in 1990.²³⁷ Roxan Shah was killed in a car accident on 27 July 1990. Her Parsi-Zoroastrian parents wanted her to have a *dokhma* funeral. The BPP trustees refused this on the grounds that she had married out of the community. The parents responded that her wedding took place under the provisions of the Special Marriages Act (SMA), in which she did not have to reject her religion, and that she had continued to practise the Zoroastrian religion. The BPP consulted the High Priests,

²³⁵ To be precise, the pamphlet was the publication of an original article in the *Jame*, 9–10 June 1983.

²³⁶ See e.g. the letter of Sarosh Khambatta published in *Jame Jamshed*, 5 Feb. 1983 informing readers of the planned *navjote* and asking the established religious bodies to write and condemn the action. The letter is quoted in Ch. 8 below.

²³⁷ There is thorough coverage of this incident in Kharas Fraser, *Intermarriage*, esp. pp. 113–21. See also Palsetia, *The Parsis of India*, pp. 323–5.

who said that priests should not perform the death ceremonies at the Tower of Silence. The *Bombay Samachar* (29 July 1990) took up the case in subsequent issues, and in separate published booklets of its articles²³⁸ campaigned against the decision of the BPP. Roxan Shah's father took legal advice and threatened the BPP with court action.²³⁹ The opinion was then sought of the High Priest, Dastur Kotwal; his response was published in the *Samachar* (2 September) and in *Parsiana* (September 1990, pp. 27–9). His comments on this issue were used in later debates, and therefore merit quotation. He congratulated the BPP on the decision. He registered concern that the BPP was planning to allow intermarried women such facilities in the future, if they had married under the SMA and the family produced an affidavit to confirm that the woman had remained a practising Zoroastrian. Zoroastrian tradition, Kotwal argued, was that on marriage a woman took the name and religion of her husband. He went on: 'To marry outside the fold is next to adultery since the marriage is not solemnised according to the rites and customs of the Zoroastrian religion.' Referring to the Avesta, he stated that a marriage between a Zoroastrian and a non-Zoroastrian 'hurts and distresses Ahura Mazda'. If a woman claims that because she continues to wear the *sudre* and *kusti* and says her prayers she is therefore a Zoroastrian, then:

We firmly hold that, from the religious point of view, her claim of being a Zoroastrian is hollow, hypocritical and full of pretensions. A woman marrying outside the community cannot observe the rules of purity as laid down by the Zoroastrian religion . . . when she bears children of a non-Zoroastrian seed (*tokham*) and participates in Zoroastrian ceremonies, such women do great damage to the Zoroastrian religion.

He said that although he was aware of the provisions of the Special Marriages Act, 'I would like to stress with all the emphasis at my command that such marriage has no sanctity in our religion.' He said he realized that there had been cases where intermarried women had been given a *dokhma* funeral, but that these decisions by the BPP had been wrong. He continued:

I may point out that the dokhmenashini ceremony [*dokhma* funeral] is based on religion and not on law. Hence only the religious view has to

²³⁸ *The Case of Roxan Darshan Shah*, a collection of letters and articles from the period 29 July 1990–7 Oct. 1990, and a second was published of letters, 3 Feb.–17 Mar. 1991.

²³⁹ Letter dated 8 Aug. 1990, published *Bombay Samachar*, 19 Aug. 1990.

be taken and the legal view has to be ignored . . . issues of faith and identity of a microscopic community like the Parsis, cannot be settled by court judgements, but by the upholders of religion who are the high priests . . . the fundamental laws of the Zoroastrian religion cannot be changed merely to serve the pressures of the so-called broad-minded and liberal Parsis of today, nor can they be changed in view of the Special Marriage Act. If there is a conflict between the legal position and the religious view, the divine laws of God must prevail.

The other High Priests, Dasturs Mirza and JamaspAsa, supported Kotwal's views on forbidding the *dokhma* funeral of intermarried women, but were more cautious on Parsis ignoring the law of the land.²⁴⁰ The legal question became important because the opinion was sought of the retired Chief Justice of India, Y. V. Chandrachud, and he asserted the right of women married under the SMA to continue to affirm their own previous religious identity.²⁴¹ Some even argued that by choosing to marry under the SMA, such women were actually reaffirming their own religion. Thirty-two intermarried Parsi ladies then wrote to the BPP seeking assurance that, in the event of their death, their Zoroastrian religious identity would be recognized and that they would be given a *dokhma* funeral. The argument was also advanced that since the families of intermarried men were not required to produce an affidavit, the requirement in the case of women was an example of gender discrimination, something contrary to Indian law.²⁴² Public meetings and letters to the three main Parsi newspapers and magazines continued for months. In an interview with *Parsiana*, Kotwal reaffirmed his opinion that intermarriage 'is an act of adultery in a strictly religious sense'.²⁴³ Mobeds who had helped in such funerals 'he described as "greedy" and derisively labelled their association with "rich, liberal-minded behdins" as a marriage of convenience'.²⁴⁴ Kotwal then argued that, in his opinion, men who had married out should also be excluded from the religious life of the community: 'a Zoroastrian man who is united in marriage with a non-Zoroastrian, his religious life is

²⁴⁰ *Deen Parast*, June 1991, pp. 4 f. where they argued that one must obey the laws of the land, even if one does not like them and campaigns to change them. See also *Deen Parast* Mar. 1992, pp. 1–4.

²⁴¹ For his two somewhat different opinions see *Parsiana*, May 1991, pp. 17–19.

²⁴² A.S. Mama, 'Controversy Continues', *Parsiana*, Oct. 1990, pp. 27–30.

²⁴³ A. S. Mama, 'If You Want to Come Back, I Want to Stop You', Sep. 1990, pp. 30–3.

²⁴⁴ *Parsiana*, Sep. 1990, p. 31.

vitiated and therefore he should be kept out.' He said that in speaking to an intermarried person, 'if you want to come back, I want to stop you'. Kotwal also presided over a public meeting organized by the Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP) on 12 October attended almost wholly by Orthodox Parsis, where opposition to intermarriage was strongly affirmed. Even though the meeting may not have been representative of the whole community, it showed the strength of Orthodox feeling.²⁴⁵ It caused debates in the Federation, and 130 signatories published an objection to the rights being given to intermarried women.²⁴⁶ Some leading Orthodox people, for example Homi Ranina, trustee of the BPP, who had opposed the BPP solution, wrote pamphlets against conversion and intermarriage. A meeting of 200 practising mobeds, on 17 November, resolved not to perform the *naujotes* of intermarried persons.²⁴⁷

J. R. D. Tata's funeral In 1991–3 there were several disputed *naujotes* reported of the children of intermarriages.²⁴⁸ But the next major debate was in 1993. The Parsi industrialist J. R. D. Tata, who was born of an intermarriage and had married out of the community, died in Switzerland on 29 November. An Orthodox priest from London and a past president of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, Ervad Zal Sethna, performed part of the Zoroastrian funeral ceremony (the *gehsarna*), before the body was laid to rest in a Paris mausoleum. On 1 December, at the funeral grounds in Bombay, two of the Dasturs, together with ten priests, performed the fourth-day ceremony for his soul (the *uthamna*). Dastur Firoze Kotwal and Ervad Dr Peshotan Peer condemned the action.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Report on the meeting, *Parsiana*, Oct. 1990, pp. 33–6.

²⁴⁶ P. Gandhi, 'Confronted by Controversies', *Parsiana*, Dec. 1990, pp. 19–24, 26–8.

²⁴⁷ *Deen Parast*, Feb. 1992, p.5.

²⁴⁸ *Parsiana*, Aug. 1992, p. 48 ('Doors Closed to Darius'). A Swiss-born boy, Darius, of a non-Parsi father, had his *naujote* performed in Secunderbad, but only the Delhi Agiary were willing to grant him entry. P. Gandhi, 'The Making and Breaking of Priests', *Parsiana*, June 1993, pp. 16 f. relates the dispute over the initiation of a child of an intermarried Parsi father into the first stage of the priesthood, *navar*, an act strongly condemned by the three High Priests.

²⁴⁹ A. S. Mama, 'JRD: The Last Rites and Wrongs', *Parsiana*, Jan. 1994, p. 21. The debate was reported in the non-Parsi press, *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, 2 Dec. 1993 and *The Times of India*. Tata's obituary was published in *Parsiana*, Feb.–Mar. 1994, pp. 133–8. The *Bombay Samachar* (January 1994) supported the *uthamna* on various grounds,

The Wadia naujotes An event which caused yet more debate concerns the Wadia family, specifically Sir Neville Wadia and his son Nusli. Neville Wadia's father had married out of the community and Neville had been baptized into his parents' Christian faith. The Wadias have funded some of the biggest Parsi charities in Bombay, especially in housing. In 1984 they were reported to have financed 1,585 residential flats in five baugs, and Neville Wadia had regularly visited the colonies on his visits from Switzerland. In an interview given to *Parsiana* in 1974,²⁵⁰ he emphasized his Parsi racial identity, but stressed his happiness within the Church of England. However, on a visit to Bombay in 1984, when he was fêted at the queen of the colonies, Cusrow Baug, he made a speech which indicated the way his mind was moving towards his ancestral community. He said: 'I firmly believe that it is the Zoroastrian religion with its very positive approach to life instilled into you since childhood which is the basis of your good fortune. It is this which has given you the faith that you can achieve what you do.' He went on to argue that the term 'Parsi' denoted a race, and then speaking of his father and himself, said:

Sir Ness was racially a pure Parsi, and I think very few Parsis would deny this fact—or disown him on account of his joining another religion. We not only claim to be Parsis but have dedicated ourselves to the community. Above all, we are proud of being Parsis. Every time I come here I get a warm and affectionate welcome. You make me feel that I am one of you, and this I appreciate very much indeed.

He went on to say that being a Zoroastrian meant being someone who believed in God as revealed through Zoroaster, and who had had their *naujote* performed. He continued: 'Let me confess openly that I am greatly attracted by the wonderful teachings of Zoroaster . . . as you know, my father by conviction became a Christian. While I am happy to belong to the Church of England. . . . I know that if it had been left to me I would have chosen to follow the shining truth of Zoroaster.'²⁵¹

including the argument that the Court of India prohibits discrimination on the ground of religion. It praised the Dasturs who acted and questioned the third who did not. The *uthumna* was opposed in *Deen Parast*, Dec. 1993, pp. 1 f.

²⁵⁰ June–July, pp. 14–17, 34–37.

²⁵¹ *Parsiana*, May 1984, p. 21. *Bombay Samachar* had noted this speech at the time and in an editorial concluded: 'The prodigal is knocking at the door. What are we waiting for? Will the leadership of the community rise to the occasion?'

There was a function to honour Neville Wadia in January 1987, attended by 1,500 of the residents of one of the Wadia colonies, Rustom Baug, but there is no report of him making such statements there about his Parsi ancestry or attraction to Zoroastrianism.²⁵² The next newspaper report was of his initiation, performed on 24 September 1994.²⁵³ From October 1994 the columns of *Parsiana*, *Bombay Samachar* and *Jame Jamshed* were full of comments on the event. *Parsiana* published the prior correspondence that he had with the High Priests, which included their reasons for agreeing to his *naujote*. He had first approached Dastur Kotwal, who had been the most vocal of the High Priests in the case of Roxan Shah. Initially Kotwal was doubtful on the grounds that Zoroastrianism did not allow conversion. He suggested, however, that although a *naujote* ceremony would be inappropriate, a purification and repentance purification bath might allow his 'reappointment' to the Zoroastrian faith. Wadia said that ever since his return from schooling in England:

I have since then felt and have been accepted by the community as a Parsee, irrespective of my religion. My own roots are purely Zoroastrian, and under certain circumstances which were beyond my control, this deviation has come into my life. So my desire is to come back into the original Zoroastrian fold. I have always tried to follow the teachings of Zoroaster and act accordingly, especially in the Parsee community. . . . For many years I have not only regretted that I am not a Zoroastrian, but had a strong desire to resume the religion of my ancestors, and I felt more a Zoroastrian than the religion in which I was brought up. Even then . . . I have never gone into an Agiary, although I am very anxious to do so, because I did not like to hurt the sentiments of the community.

Wadia explained that his Zoroastrian friends in London and Toronto had encouraged him to seek to have his *naujote* performed. The two High Priests, Dasturs Mirza and JamaspAsa, noted the great services his family had rendered to the community. They compared his case to those allowed for in the Persian *Rivayets* where Zoroastrians were allowed to return to their religion, abandoned under 'certain circumstances' (which in the cases referred to in the *Rivayets* was in the face of Islamic pressure). They stated that they considered a full *naujote* ceremony would be

²⁵² P. Toddywalla, 'The "diamond" of Rustom Baug', *Parsiana*, Mar. 1987, pp. 23 ff.

²⁵³ *Parsiana*, Sept. 1994, p. 10.

proper after a purificatory bath. Dastur Hormazdyar Dastur and Dastur N. M. Dastur concurred in this judgement but Dastur Meherji Rana of Navsari, while acknowledging the community's debt to the Wadia family, argued that a *navjote* cannot be performed on someone of Wadia's age. In a further letter, Kotwal accepted the suggestion of a *navjote*. He believed that Wadia's case 'merits special consideration. Please note that I do not wish to set up a doctrinal precedent or generate a controversy.'

Despite Kotwal's intentions, the *navjote* did cause a controversy. In the February–March issue of *Parsiana* the Orthodox priest of Bangalore reported (pp. 3–4) on his discussions with the Bombay Dasturs and related how he returned to Bangalore a sad person because, he alleged, the *navjote* had been agreed to as a 'consideration for services rendered'. The controversy grew, with fierce attacks on the three High Priests, especially on Kotwal because of the apparent inconsistency of his stand over Roxan Shah and in the Wadia case. The attacks were particularly strong in *Deen Parast*, a magazine with which Kotwal had been closely associated.²⁵⁴ In November that year the four High Priests (Mirza, JamaspAsa, Kotwal and Dastur) published a rebuttal of the criticisms of them.²⁵⁵ They stressed that Zoroastrianism forbade conversion of people from other religions but allowed people to return to their ancestral faith. They also refuted the argument that initiations had to be performed by the age of 15, even though it is normal to perform them before puberty. They concluded 'that the present case is not one of conversion but of reverting to the ancestral faith'. The issue was discussed at a Federation meeting in Delhi in January 1995. In the lively debate the chairman of the BPP indicated that it accepted the ruling of the High Priests.²⁵⁶ In the correspondence columns of the various papers, many Zoroastrians expressed the view that it may have been proper for Sir Ness Wadia, the father of Neville Wadia, to have returned to his ancestral religion, but as Neville Wadia had been born into

²⁵⁴ See *Deen Parast*, Nov.–Dec. 1994, pp. 1–4; Feb.–Mar. 1995, pp. 2 f., 12; Apr. 1995, pp. 1 f. 6; Dec. 1995, pp. 1–4; June–July 1996, pp. 1–3. Articles appeared in the *Jame* attacking Kotwal, to which he responded sharply in *Jame*, 17 Dec. 1995, and again on 18 Dec.

²⁵⁵ *Parsiana*, Nov. 1995, 29–34. The High Priest of Surat, Dastur N. M. Dastur, retracted his support for the *navjote* in a letter dated 9 Jan. 1996, i.e. after the initiation had been performed.

²⁵⁶ A. S. Mama, 'The Federation Reviews the Wadia Navjote', *Parsiana*, Apr. 1995, pp. 39 f.

a Christian family, and had been baptized, his *naujote* did represent a conversion. Indeed, it was pointed out that not only had Neville Wadia been born of Christian parents, and had been baptized, he had also married a Muslim, the daughter of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. So when Neville's son, Nusli, was initiated on 8 October 1995, he was the son of a Christian father and a Muslim mother. This was seen as destroying the case for Neville Wadia's *naujote* not setting a precedent.²⁵⁷ Neville Wadia, and his son Nusli, remained quiet during the disputes, but in an interview for *Parsiana* shortly before his death Neville spoke warmly of his return to his ancestral religion. Although he did not go to the temple very often, he prayed daily and received a Zoroastrian funeral.²⁵⁸

Perhaps inevitably the debate then turned to the question of the rights of women who had married out under the Special Marriages Act, and who asserted that they had never left the religion. Should they not be allowed the access to the religious rites, e.g. funerals, that Neville Wadia had been granted?²⁵⁹ This theme has been pursued, largely in private, by some of the intermarried Zoroastrian women. On 27 November 1991, they had formally established the Association of Intermarried Zoroastrians (AIMZ) and held their first meeting on 15 July 1992.²⁶⁰ Its objectives were to agitate for, protest in favour of and safeguard the rights, privileges and benefits available to Parsi Zoroastrians married to those who were not Parsi Zoroastrians, and for rights of the children of such marriages. In 1996 they began to publish a newsletter, *Aavedan*. Here they reported that they had sought to have the question of intermarried Parsis discussed at the forthcoming World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran; but the BPP said that the topics had already been fixed in Iran and that it could not add to them. Their support came not only from Bombay, but also from America. They claimed that the actions of the High Priests over

²⁵⁷ Adi Doctor in a pungent attack in a special supplement of *Deen Parast*, for Sept.–Nov. 1995.

²⁵⁸ *Parsiana*, Nov. 1999, pp. 38 f.

²⁵⁹ *Parsiana*, Feb.–Mar. 1996, p. 4. It would be impossible to document all such letters, as there were so many, but as an indication of how widespread the protest was they merit attention. They came not only from Reforming sections who complained at the apparent inequality of treatment of Roxan Shah and Neville Wadia, but also from the Orthodox, for example B. K. Mistry in *Jame Jamshed*, 18 Dec. 1994, p. 11.

²⁶⁰ A. S. Mama, 'Safeguarding the Rights, Privileges, Benefits . . .', *Parsiana*, Jan. 1992, pp. 25–6 and Aug. 1992, pp. 53–9.

Neville Wadia were sending a message of great importance to the community.²⁶¹ Although AIMZ was started by some intermarried Parsi women, its membership is not entirely female. In 1998 it had fifty-seven full women members and twenty-one full male members, plus fifty spouses and a supporting group of seventy-four.²⁶² These ladies were at that time seeking permission from the BPP for them to be given access to the one agiary owned by the Punchayet, which was in urgent need of renovation, and rarely used. At the time of writing a decision has not been made.

The significance of these events is that the issue of intermarriage, and of conversion, has become more rather than less prominent, the debate yet more acrimonious, in recent years. That debate has been noted with great interest in the diaspora. The initiation debate has had a further dimension. As early as the 1960s reports began to be received of Kurds and Yazidis claiming to be Zoroastrians. They gained greater prominence in the 1990s. At the North American Congress in Vancouver (discussed in Chapter 8), one of their representatives was invited to give a key paper on his community. The debate has been strong in Mumbai also. It has been particularly associated with Dr Meher Master-Moos, who has visited Central Asia where people from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have made similar claims. Reactions have been mixed. For some, these groups provide hope for the future of the religion, for their numbers are in the millions, not thousands. But others are more cautious: for if these people's links with Zoroastrianism have been seriously weakened, then through numbers alone, and not through the 'correctness' of their beliefs and practices, they could have an adverse effect on what most Zoroastrians see as 'real' Zoroastrianism.²⁶³

The issue of intermarriage again surfaced as a major public dispute. *Parsiana* editor Jehangir Patel informed me in a personal conversation in January 2003 that one in three marriages performed were, according to figures he had gathered, outmarriages. Six of the seven Dasturs decided to take a public stand and in various newspapers (e.g. *Jame*, 23 March 2003) and declared that

²⁶¹ *Jame Jamshed*, 12 Feb. 1995, p. 12.

²⁶² Information supplied by the chairperson, Meher Amersey, during a meeting in January 1998 in her home.

²⁶³ See e.g. *Deen Parast*, Aug.–Sep. 1996, pp. 11 f., and again June–July 1997, p. 3, and *Bombay Samachar*, 21 Mar. 1993.

the initiation of the children of Parsi fathers who had married out should not be initiated. They severely reprimanded what they called ‘the renegade priests’ who gave a blessing to such marriages. They accepted that intermarriages were civil contracts under civil law, ‘However, marriage from the Zoroastrian point of view is a sacrament and, therefore, such civil marriages maybe valid from the point of view of civil law, but such marriages cannot be considered lawful from a religious point of view.’ They asserted that intermarriages, and the initiation of offspring of such marriages, were a ‘threat to the very survival of the Parsi Zoroastrian community’; . . . if this trend continues, ‘the day is not far when the unique “Parsi Zoroastrian” identity which the community has zealously preserved since centuries will be diluted and subsequently wiped out.’ A vitriolic dispute broke out, leading one person to describe the Dastur’s declaration as ‘the Talibanization of Zoroastrianism’. Even Jehangir Patel, who had for years avoided involvement in religious debates, produced a severely critical editorial of the declaration, recalling the approval of the Dasturs to the initiation of Sir Neville Wadia (discussed above), who had been born of Christian parents. The ripples of the debate spread throughout the diaspora. Even though I have always refused to become involved in community debates, I received telephone calls from several very anxious and some angry Zoroastrians in the diaspora. Subsequently some of the Dasturs rescinded their censure on intermarriages which followed the 1906 law case, i.e. allowing the children of Parsi males to be initiated. Undoubtedly the debate will rage for many years to come.²⁶⁴

This account of communal disputes in Mumbai may leave the impression that intermarriage and conversion are the only debates in the community. They loom large, but are not the sole focus of discussion. There are other issues, in addition to *dokhmenashini*. Some of the most widely debated have been noted

²⁶⁴ For Patel’s editorial, see *Parsiana*, Apr. 2003, p. 1 and for an account of the furor see Parinaz M. Gandhi, ‘To Safeguard the Survival . . .’, a copy of the Dastur’s declaration and comments from a leading Parsi figure, ex BPP trustee Jamsheed G. Kanga. See also pp. 21–9 of the same issue of *Parsiana*. Dasturs JamaspaAsa, Kotwal and Noshirwan Dastur rescinded part of their resolution and accepted the 1960 High Court Decision allowing the initiation of the children of Parsi males who married out. The Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians have stated that they intend to challenge what they see as sex discrimination in the courts. See P. M. Gandhi, ‘On Further Reflection . . .’, *Parsiana*, May 2003, pp. 22 f.

in passing: battles for trusteeship of the BPP, and its conduct of affairs; whether it is right to move fires after their consecration; disputes between followers of various religious groups, for example the Orthodox attitude towards the Pundolites. But the focus of this chapter has been on the debates that are not only important in Mumbai but also in the diaspora; these are, above all else, inter-marriage and conversion. Inter-marriage does occur in Mumbai and is a matter of dispute there (see above on the AIMZ), but it is not as common in practice as the arguments suggest. Where it does occur it tends to be among the highly educated and well-to-do. It is a feature of cosmopolitan groups, but not so common among Parsis living in the baugs.²⁶⁵ It is such a contentious issue because it highlights a number of concerns. At a time when the future of the community appears numerically in danger, questions of boundaries, of identity, gender roles and equality become of major importance. The security of a 'caste'-like group in earlier Indian society was greater than it is in a modern, urban, highly educated, socially and geographically mobile cosmopolitan society like Mumbai. As women achieve higher education and enjoy important economic professional roles, so they demand equality with their menfolk.

Conclusion

There have been a number of changes in the course of the last hundred years. At the start of the twentieth century Parsis were accused of being too pro-British, and many distanced themselves from the wider Indian population, despite the public assertions of two political leaders, Mehta and Naoroji, that they were Indian first and Parsi second. With the end of British rule, identification with India politically and culturally has increased. This is evidenced in their religion also. The Reformist calls for the Protestantizing of the religion have not been so strong, and the emergence of the so-called new religious movements, and the devotion to such figures as the Babas, soften somewhat the religious divide. But this can be exaggerated, for in Gujarat over the centuries Parsis

²⁶⁵ See H. Kharas Fraser, 'Inter-marriage of Zoroastrian Women in Bombay', Ph.D. thesis (unpublished), Manchester, 1993.

adapted in many ways to the beliefs and practices of their Hindu neighbours. It is the westernizing of the religion that has declined in Mumbai, as belief in miracles, miraculous figures and prayers has become ever more popular.

In the early years after Independence Parsis were involved in India's political life. The growing communalism at the end of the century, has not resulted in any persecution of Parsis, not even at the time of the riots in the early 1990s. But the communalism which gives advantage to certain groups in education and jobs has meant that Parsis have had to work yet harder to succeed. This they have largely done. Various demographic and sociological studies show that they are an ageing, numerically declining community, where deaths exceed births, where the older practice of large families has diminished with more people remaining single, and family sizes decreasing. Concerns over the shrinking size of the community have led to substantial efforts to improve the supply of affordable housing, but not yet to much greater provision for the elderly. In comparison with the general Mumbai population, Parsis tend to have a higher material standard of living. In contrast with the nineteenth century, they have perhaps fewer people with vast wealth, and more who are poor. Nevertheless, on the whole, the community is middle class. A number are now benefiting from India's growing industrialization, and it may be that the community is inclining towards business rather than the professions. As we shall see in the rest of the book, several thousand highly educated Parsis have migrated overseas, but in Mumbai there is a sense that the quality of those who stayed is high. There is pride that the main centre in the world for crucial Zoroastrian resources, Atash Bahrams and temples, madressas and the BPP, remains Mumbai. There is evidently still a deep commitment to the religion. The level of practice has been shown by independent researchers to be high and the interest, especially among the youth, in the teaching of Mistree suggests a wish to know more about their heritage, be that through books, magazines, or tours to Iran. The huge numbers attending the installation of the fire in the Godrej Baug is further testimony to the continued commitment to the religion. Indeed, it is my impression that the Orthodox movement is stronger now than it was at the beginning of the last century. The debates over the religion would not be so fierce if the orthodox commitment were not there. There is some evidence

of the influence of the diaspora over the community in Mumbai, partly in the debates over Peterson and the film *Wings of Fire*, but also in the personal contact by telephone and letter and visits to family and friends in the new countries. The traffic of influence does not go in only one direction. Contemporary Mumbai Parsis are distinctive for their adherence to the belief in the miraculous power of key prayers recited correctly and at certain times. There is also devotion to holy people, not just Zoroastrians. Also popular are general Indian religious practices such as seeking protection from the power of the evil eye, and the use of figures from non-Zoroastrian traditions. The proliferation of the new religious movements is a common feature of urban religion worldwide, and these attract some Parsis as they do followers of other religions.

The debates which rage—sometimes an appropriate word!—are centred on three core issues: the preservation of traditions (e.g. *dokhmenashini*), community boundaries (e.g. intermarriage, and who can and cannot be considered a Zoroastrian), and the demographic problem—not only the declining numbers, but also the changing role of women. In Parsi debates there remains a place for dialogue with western academics: whether it is the collaboration between western and Parsi academics, or Parsis studying in the West, there obtains a more positive and constructive dialogue between Zoroastrians and those who study them than is common in the broad field of the study of religions.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Of course there are exceptions. In *Deen Parast*, Jan.–Feb. 1997 there was an article criticizing ‘the craze for inviting foreign scholars’. And in Nov.–Dec., 1997, p. 1 there was an attack on one European academic for his translation of the *Gathas*. These, however, remain isolated exceptions.

The Global Zoroastrian Diaspora

Introduction: the Survey

In the years 1983–7 I undertook a survey of Zoroastrian communities around the world, specifically in Britain, Hong Kong, America, Canada, Australia and Kenya. The text of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 3. In Karachi, I sent out what had been intended only as a trial questionnaire for a wider study of Parsis; since that data proved so interesting, and the data-base was larger than for most trial runs, the data is included here. It may, however, be judicious to treat Karachi data cautiously because of the real possibility of a skewed sample. For that reason the data is not discussed in a separate section in the chapter on Karachi. Nor is there a section on the survey in the chapter on East Africa, because the communities there are so small. Looking back over the recent history of the Parsi diaspora, this was a fortuitous moment to have undertaken such a study. The 1980s were crucial years in various ways for the different communities: it was a period of consolidation in Britain, of growth and development in Canada and the USA, and the beginning of the growth period in Australia. In Kenya, by contrast, it was a period of decline, and a similar process was then developing in Pakistan. Hong Kong was awaiting the handover of rule from Britain to China. By the 1980s the East African Parsis were making their presence felt, especially in Britain, and also in this period Iranian Zoroastrians were settling in western countries. It was therefore a decade of significant change. Freezing such a moment in time to take a snapshot of the community has historical value. It would be fascinating to undertake another such survey to provide a longitudinal study. The survey was undertaken with the help of the Associations in the various centres: in Canada and the USA this was organized by Perviz and Hushtasp Bhumghara. Respondents were encouraged to pass forms on to fellow Zoroastrians whom

they knew who were not members of Associations, a snowball effect that yielded a wide range of respondents. Ideally, of course, one would wish to ensure a balanced sample, but because there is no known universe, no central lists of all Parsis, and because there is no obvious Zoroastrian family name, unlike Singh among Sikhs, checking electoral registers or telephone directories is pointless. The response rate varied from 25% in Britain to 90% of the then known membership in Sydney and Melbourne. The data was put onto the computer and analysed by Gillian Mehta and her family. Without them the work could not have been undertaken.¹

The data will be used in the chapters on the various countries, and in the Conclusion it will be analysed not by region but by 'type' (gender, age, education, etc.). Prior to studying the history of the growth and development of the various diaspora communities around the world, it will be helpful to give a broad overview of the population of the diaspora, as indicated by the frequency-distribution of the data, in order to give a broad picture of the global Zoroastrian population so that the distinctive features of the various Associations become clear.

I must stress that I am not trained in quantitative survey work,² but it has proved to be a valuable aid to this multifaceted study of the Zoroastrian diaspora, alongside the archival and fieldwork that have gone into this study. The 1,840 responses to a questionnaire with over 170 variables provided a substantial, and so far unique, set of data on living Zoroastrians.

Some Demographic Patterns

One-fifth of my respondents had migrated before 1965, so that there was a significant proportion of long-established people in the diaspora. Of the respondents, 53% were male, 47% female.³ Most (46%) were in the age bracket 30–50, but 15% were over 60 and 6% were under 20 years of age. The great majority

¹ It is also important to acknowledge the considerable help of the Regional Computing Centre at Manchester, for much of the work was done during my time at that University.

² I am indebted to my former colleague at Manchester, Prof. Peter Halfpenny, for his guidance on this aspect of my work.

³ Percentages are nearly always rounded up to the nearest whole number, except where the proportion represents less than 0.5%.

(70%) were married, with 22% single, 5% widowed, and only 3% divorced or separated; 14% of respondents had married out of the community. Of the 1,076 respondents with children, most had families with two children (44%); only 2% had four or more children. So although most people were married with children, globally the diaspora community was not at reproduction level. Unlike many South Asian groups in the 'West', only a quarter (24%) were part of an extended family network; 63% belonged to a nuclear family and 14% were single.

Language and education

Although only 21% said that they considered English their mother tongue,⁴ more people could read and write only in English (38%), than could in Gujarati (32%) or Persian (5%). This reflects partly the westernized nature of the Parsi community in the old country, and the very high levels of education among diaspora Zoroastrians. Only 4% of respondents completed their education by the age of 16; 46% studied for a degree, and a further 30% for a higher degree, 48% of them in the West. Globally, there was a roughly equal proportion of arts and science graduates (34% and 31%), but, as we shall see, there are different patterns in the various western countries.

Questions of identity and networks

Networking in the 'global community' was strong, with 64% keeping in regular contact with Zoroastrians in other countries, and 73% in such contact within their country of residence. But more than half of respondents (57%) did not read any Zoroastrian papers or magazines; by far the most widely read was *Parsiana* (by 12% of respondents). Approximately one in three respondents said that they attended a Zoroastrian centre in their country regularly for religious, social or communal functions, and a further 40% did so sometimes. Only 11% said that they never visited a centre, and in most cases that was because there was no centre near them. Generally, their perception of community relations was good, with only 15% saying relations were poor between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis (compared with 39% who said they were good/excellent); 5% said they were poor/bad among

⁴ 13% simply recorded English as their mother tongue, 8% both English and Gujarati.

Parsis (compared with 64% saying they were good/excellent). Very few said that they had received financial help, or help with employment, when they arrived, though a number said that they received considerable or reasonable help with accommodation (34%) or personal support (50%).

Generally, respondents believed that they had good/excellent relations with the wider society in their new country (65%, only 3% saying relations were poor/bad). But globally, 36% said that they believed that they had been discriminated against because of their ethnicity, 24% specifying colour. This was mostly felt at work (28%), but for some it was in housing, education, police and in politics (10–13% in each). As far as community relations in the old country were concerned, 73% thought that they had good/excellent relations with the British (in India or East Africa) and 72% with the Hindus. Relations with Muslims were thought to be good/excellent by only 60%, and only 25% thought relations with Black Africans in East Africa were good/excellent.

The question of personal identity is a complicated one. Although most identified ‘the old country’ as their mother country,⁵ when asked to define their citizenship, nearly half emphasized their Zoroastrian-ness, 31% stressed the country of residence and 26% the country of birth. The great majority (84%) said that they ate Indian or Iranian food often (less than 1% said that they never ate such food); relatively few (20%) said that they wore Indian or Iranian dress often. In part, the latter figure is explained by the fact that there is no obvious Iranian dress for men, and the sari is far more popular among Parsi women than any Iranian garments are for Iranian Zoroastrians. Male Parsi dress is for communal functions only. When asked what in their heritage was worth preserving, most (90%) said religion, 74% said food, and 67% said their language. Art, music and dress were not valued by so many.⁶

Religious belief and practice

The majority of diaspora Zoroastrians had received little or no religious education—54% had not been taught the meaning of the prayers; 60% had never attended classes in Zoroastrianism.

⁵ India 61%; Pakistan 10%, Iran 8%; only 8% said a western country.

⁶ 47%, 39% and 39% respectively.

But the level of religious activity was high: 70% said that they prayed daily, mostly (65%) wholly in Avestan. Sixty-eight per cent said that they always wore the sudre and kusti; only 12% said that they never wore these religious garments. Only 8% said that they did not practise any of the religious traditions,⁷ and most observed several (29%). Not all of the religious practice was strictly Zoroastrian, so 14% said that they venerated Sai Baba, and 3% also venerated Jalaram Bapa and St Francis Xavier. Most parents (69%) said that they had taught their children the traditional Avestan prayers, or would do so. Only 6% expressed any doubts about having their children's *naujotes* performed. The majority of respondents described themselves religiously as Liberals (52%); the term 'Reformist' was used by far fewer (6%). Although only 1% said that they were involved in Theosophy or Ilm-i Khshnoom, 12% of respondents identified themselves as Orthodox. One hundred and seventy-five or 10% of respondents described themselves as 'non-practising'. In terms of key issues debated in Mumbai, globally the Zoroastrians tend to express Liberal views; only 19% said that they wanted a funeral at a Tower of Silence, compared with 47% who preferred cremation. Only 8% preferred burial. The majority (68%) expressed various levels of acceptance of intermarriage, whereas 29% expressed their opposition to it, and most of those (13%) recorded that they would accept it under protest. Only 16% said that they would restrict initiation to the child of a Parsi father, most (70%) accepting the child of any intermarried Zoroastrian; indeed, 60% would accept the *naujote* of an intermarried spouse and 56% the initiation of any committed Zoroastrian who was not of Zoroastrian ancestry. But only 12% thought that Zoroastrians should seek converts. Only a minority would exclude non-Zoroastrians from religious places in India (36%), never mind prayer rooms in the West (17%), but 42% would restrict access either to times when there was no ceremony or to serious students of the religion. Of those who believed in a life after death, most (64%) said they believed in the immortality of the soul, 48% in a heaven and hell, 40% in reincarnation and only 12% in bodily resurrection. Very few thought that prayers for the dead were meaningless (3%).

⁷ Specified for the purpose of this question as celebrating Pateti/No Ruz, the *gahambars* and lighting a *divo*, or a combination of these.

Many (35%) asserted that they were essential, 22% thought they benefited the dead, 17% asserted a 'humanist' view that they benefited the living, 10% believed that they benefit both the living and the dead. This may be thought to be a high level of belief in rites that are particularly focused on temples in the old country.

Most people thought that their beliefs and practices had changed little after migration, though more thought that their practices had changed considerably or a lot (29%) in comparison with their beliefs (17%).⁸ An important question for a new country is where authority lies in settling (religious) disputes. Only 11% looked to India, 1% to Iran,⁹ 9% to local leaders, more (24%) to specially convened meetings; but most (30%) thought that the individual's own conscience was the real authority. Looking to the future, the two main dangers foreseen were declining numbers (71%), and the youth not following the religion (52%).¹⁰ The main hope for the future lay in the strength of the community's ethical values (85%), Zoroastrianism's track record of survival (79%), a worldwide movement to unite Zoroastrians (79%), and the youth (69%). Only 22% looked to the work of a future saviour.

Conclusion

The global Zoroastrian diasporic population, therefore, consisted in the 1980s predominantly of young married people, though with a number of young single people (future chapters will show they were mostly students), with small families. Most were not part of an extended family network, though some had siblings or parents in the new country. The incidence of separation and divorce was low, but more than one in ten were married out. They were highly educated: more people had undertaken postgraduate study than completed their education at school level. Links with fellow Zoroastrians, both within their country and abroad, were strong, but there was relatively little reading of Zoroastrian literature.

⁸ The figures for assertions that there had been little or no change: in terms of practices 65%, beliefs 77%.

⁹ In both countries it was the priests rather than the Panchayet or Anjuman to whom people would turn.

¹⁰ Others were: conversion to another religion 24% and persecution 9%.

Few had received much religious education before emigrating. Their perception of internal community relations was positive, as was their perception of external relations, despite the fact that over a third believed they had faced racial discrimination. Although the old country remained part of self-identity for many, most wished to assert both their Zoroastrian identity and citizenship of the new country. The Zoroastrian love of food was not weakened by diaspora life, and almost all asserted that the religion should be maintained. Some levels of practice were high, especially in comparison to the wider western society, notably the practice of prayer, the wearing of *sudre* and *kusti* and participation in the festivals. Belief in the traditional prayers for the dead also remained strong. But the diasporic population did not share the views of co-religionists in Mumbai about the importance of *dokhmas*, and was more open to the idea of intermarriage than are people in any of the old countries. Most saw themselves as being liberal in the religion, but the Orthodox voice was present. Very few believed that the priestly or secular leaders in the old country had any authority over them, nor did many recognize the authority of their own local leaders, but rather preferred to follow their own conscience. Yet most asserted that they had changed their beliefs and practices relatively little in the new environment. The great majority recognized the problem of declining numbers, yet most saw reason to hope for the future of the religion.

That was the broad global picture drawn from the survey. Chapters 4–9 will look at how the various communities around the world grew and developed, and at the common and distinctive features of Associations as far apart as China and England, Australia and Africa, America and Pakistan. Chapter 10 considers again the global perspective, of how different groups of people, the highly educated, the scientists, men and women, and people from different ‘sending’ countries, notably India, Pakistan, East Africa or Iran, have settled overseas. As well as global patterns it will look at issues of globalization such as a World Body and the Internet. First, however, it is important to see how the various regional groups started and evolved and what their distinctive features are.

The Parsis in Hong Kong and the China Seas

In Bombay, Parsis are conscious not only of their long history in India, but also of their Indo-Iranian heritage and of the ancestry they share with aspects of Hinduism. Parsis settling in the China Seas were acutely conscious of the huge cultural differences between them and the wider population. One central question of this chapter is how this affected their trajectory of settlement. Before tracing their history from the days of the earliest Parsi businessman in the region (Hirji Jivanji Readymoney in 1756) it is important to locate the Parsis in the wider setting of British and Indian trade in the region.¹

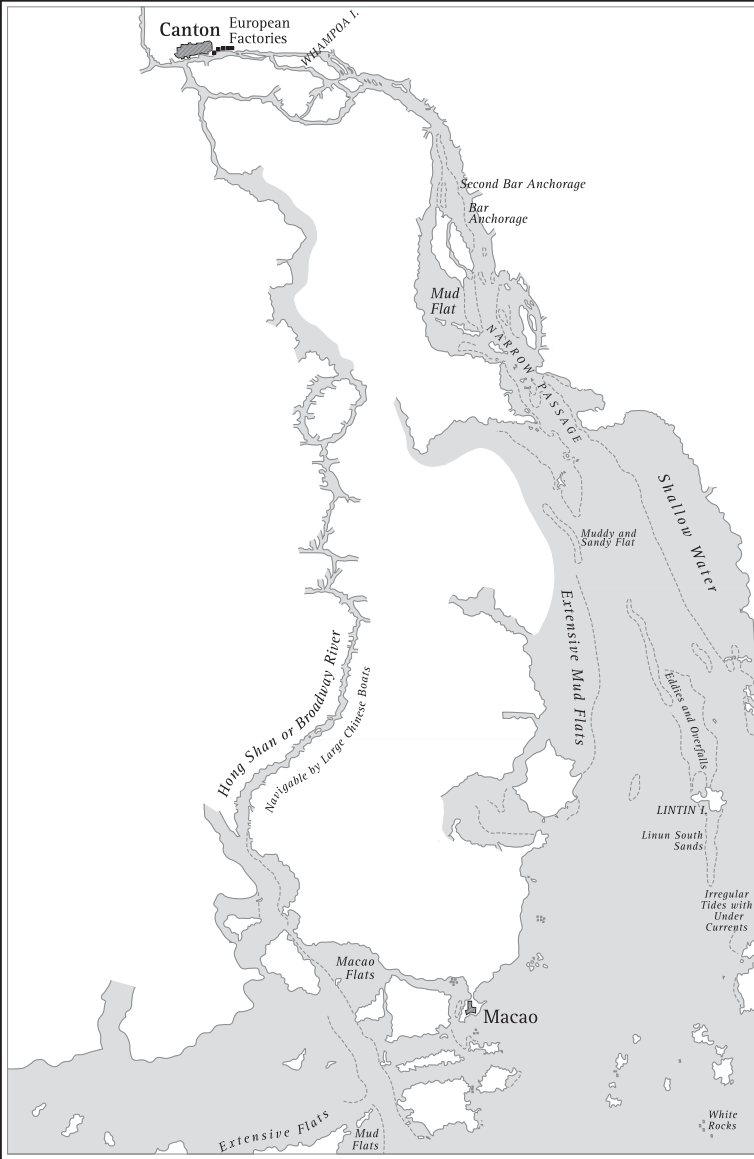
The British in China

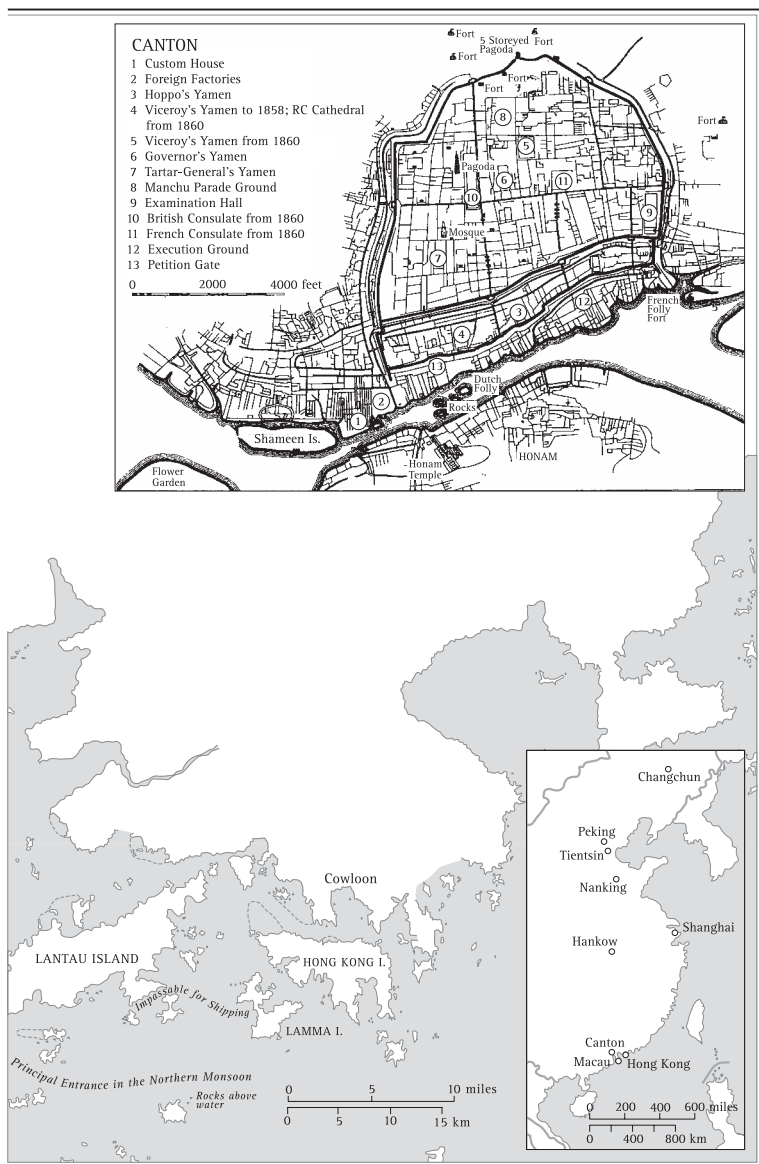
Britain and the opium trade

Evidently this chapter can only be concerned with those aspects of a huge history which impact directly on the Parsis. The Portuguese were the first European traders in the region, settling in Macau in 1557.² The first East India Company ship arrived in 1687, but trade did not develop until the seventeenth century. The commodities which the British wanted to acquire in China were predominantly tea, cotton and silk. Their problem was that as the Chinese were virtually self-sufficient and did not need foreign currency, the British had little to trade to buy Chinese goods. The

¹ I wish to record my thanks to Drs Sam and Phiroza Nariman and Jimmy Master for reading this chapter and for saving me from many errors; any which remain are of course my responsibility. My thanks also to Prof. Hugh Baker at SOAS for guidance with my reading on the history of the China Seas.

² It is presumably the Portuguese primacy which explains the use of the Spanish and Mexican dollar in the China trade. K. N. Vaid, *The Overseas Indian Community in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 1972, p. 58.





Hong Kong and the China Seas

(Top) Inset map of Canton: H. B. Morse, The International Relations of the Chinese Empire, 3 vols., Hong Kong: Kelly and Walsh, 1918. (Opposite) Map of river approaches to Canton based on A Chart of the Canton River . . . by James Wyle, geographer to the Queen, 1840 (in the possession of Cambridge University library). I would like to record my sincere thanks to the Map Section for their help in locating appropriate sources

solution they adopted was to bring opium, mainly from India, to China. Opium had long been a legal part of Chinese medicine, as laudanum was part of British medicine until the twentieth century; indeed, opium was used as a recreational drug in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But smoking it was illegal in China. The story of the British trade is long and complex, and subject to various interpretations. From the contemporary British perspective the trade was necessary to acquire purchasing power; it was a growing trade, increasing by 2000% in the period 1799 to 1849. By 1876 it was estimated that 26% of the total revenue of the British Government in India was derived from the opium trade. The economic links between Hong Kong and India were close, notably through shipping lines, traders and banking. By 1881, 86% of the island's trade with India was in opium, until the trade was banned in the early twentieth century.³

The Chinese authorities rated traders as lowly persons, and required British traders to deal only with Hongers, regardless of the status representatives had in British eyes. The splendidly titled 'Superintendents of Trade' held little status among the Chinese and they were not allowed to meet Mandarins. The Chinese restricted foreign activity to specified areas: near the port of Canton traders were restricted to Shameen island during the trading season, with larger sea-going vessels anchored down the river

³ Perhaps the best study of the background to Parsis in the opium trade (though they are mentioned in passing rather than being the subject of the book) is M. Greenberg, 'British Trade and the Opening of China, 1800–42', in P. Tuck, *Britain and the China Trade 1635–1842*, repr. London, 2000, pp. 1–238 (originally published in two parts, Cambridge 1951, California 1997). Included in the series is an old work on British and Chinese traders: H. B. Morse, *Britain and the China Trade, 1635–1842*, edited with a new introduction by P. Tuck from the *Chronicles of the East India Company, Trade to China*. Unfortunately from the perspective of this chapter Morse focuses only on the British and American figures. Parsis are mentioned only in passing and whereas European owners of ships or people resident in Hong Kong are named individually, he gives only the number of Parsis involved (see vol. iv, pp. 56, 109, 187, 190, 200 f., 254). Less substantial, but more focused on Parsis, is N. Benjamin, 'Bombay's "Country trade" with China (1767–1865)', *Indian Historical Review*, 1974, 1.1. Some older standard accounts of Hong Kong and the opium trade are: G. R. Sayer, *Hong Kong: Birth, Adolescence and Coming of Age*, Oxford, 1937; G. Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 1958, rev. edn., 1973. H. Mcleavy, *The Modern History of China*, London, 1967, specifically chs. 3, 4; E. Holt, *The Opium Wars in China*, London, 1964; A. Whaley, *The Opium Wars through Chinese Eyes*, London, 1958. A popular account is N. Cameron, *An Illustrated History of Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 1997. F. Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong*, London, 1997 questions some of the received wisdom, e.g. the appropriateness of calling the Anglo-Chinese battles 'the opium wars', seeing them rather as battles concerning trading rights with opium simply as a trigger (pp. 78–97).

towards the sea at Whampoa. The traders were required to retreat to the island of Macau for the non-trading season, or go back home. The prominent English firms in the region, Jardine Matheson and Co. and Dents, were fierce rivals. They dealt with many smaller traders, both at the supply end (Bombay and Calcutta in particular) and at the distribution end along the coast of China. The attitude of the British was that if the Chinese wished to ban opium, then it was their responsibility to impose and police the ban. But the demand in China was such that suppliers, Chinese users and middlemen would always be available and so the British did not hesitate to pursue the business. Initially the Chinese authorities had considered legalizing the trade, but opposed it from 1837. At a meeting of merchants and those involved with trade to China in London that year, concern was expressed to find a base in Canton where merchants could live with their families, and under British law. They also resolved to find an island base off the coast of China 'where [the] British factory may peaceably reside, subject to laws of its own Government and removed from all collision or dispute with Chinese subjects and authorities'.⁴

In 1839 tensions were high between the British and the Chinese authorities, and an Imperial Commissioner, Lin Tse-hsu, was sent to stop the trade. The Mandarins and the police made ready the square in front of the foreign factories to execute a Chinese man for trading in opium. The chairman of the general Chamber of Commerce protested to His Excellency the Chinese Viceroy of Canton that the square had been kept for the factories for many years and this event meant that 'the square was fitted with many thousands of the lower classes of people', so that rioting might break out and property be damaged. In his reply the Viceroy said that the man had been tried and sentenced to death by strangulation because of the pernicious introduction of opium into Canton by 'depraved foreigners'. The land in front of the factories he went on, 'is all the territory of the celestial empire, and is merely granted by the great emperor, from motives of extraordinary grace and clemency as a temporary resting place for all the foreigners', and of the protest he said: 'No daring presumption, no absurd complainings can exceed this. They are execrable in

⁴ *The Times*, 4 Jan. 1837, a reference I owe to Mrs Alison Houghton.

the extreme.' The execution was carried out in front of the factories to discourage others.⁵

Subsequently the Hong merchants wrote to the Chamber of Commerce stating that to continue to trade with China the merchants must give a bond that they would not deal in opium. If they refused they would be sent away. Future landings would only be allowed if such a bond was given.⁶ The practice had been to keep the sea-going schooners at Whampoa and for smaller vessels sailed by Chinese smugglers to take the opium into China. The Emperor then made a proclamation making Lin Tse-hsu Governor of Canton with strict orders to stop the smuggling of the opium that was destroying the lives of many Chinese, simply to make money for foreigners. Individual Chinese who destroyed their opium and gave up their pipes would not be prosecuted.⁷ Lin arrived in Canton on 10 March 1839 and in a lengthy proclamation, dated 18 March, he declared that all chests of opium in storage in the ships or factories must be handed over for burning. If more ships came in the future, the cargoes would be confiscated and their crews put to death. But if the opium was handed over, past misdeeds would not be punished. China was self-sufficient and neither needed nor wanted foreign trade that was solely for the interest of foreign merchants; if necessary the port of Canton would be closed.⁸ The merchants protested that the opium was not theirs to hand over, but belonged to merchants in Bengal and

⁵ Quoted in J. Slade, *Narrative of the Late Proceedings and Events in China*, Canton, 1839, pp. 3A–D. Slade gives a lengthy detailed contemporary account of this and the subsequent acts involving Commissioner Lin. His considerable collection of documents and the exchange of letters forms the basis of much of the following account of the episode involving Governor Lin. It is also based on a contemporary British summary of the following incidents contained in the Jardine Matheson archive at Cambridge University Library (JM A8/121/30). I am grateful to Jardine Matheson and Company for giving me permission to study this archive, and to the staff of Cambridge University Library for alerting me to it, and for their considerable help in enabling me to consult it. Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China* is based largely on this archive. In part the archive contains original letters and documents, and some is on microfilm. The archive is not yet fully indexed. Despite the fact that some letters are illegible, and there is much overwriting, a more thorough study of the several thousand pieces of correspondence relating to Parsis is merited. There are, for example, nearly 2,000 letters of Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sons in the letters file, and nearly 800 references to Bomanjee and Ardaseer Hormasjee. Many of these are simply straightforward commercial letters, yielding little information for general Parsi history, but it remains an inadequately researched archive from the Parsi perspective.

⁶ Letter dated 16 Jan. 1839, Slade, *Narrative*, p. 11.

⁷ Proclamation published in the *Peking Gazette*, 21 Jan. 1839, Slade, *Narrative*, pp. 13–15.

⁸ Slade, *Narrative*, pp. 27–31.

Bombay. They did, however, say that they would not bring opium again and many, including the leading houses of Jardine and Dents, said that they would discourage others from bringing opium in the future. Lin responded by banning anyone from leaving Canton (by refusing to allow the essential pilots to guide them along the estuary), and confined merchants to their factories. He said that if all the opium was not handed over, he would 'select for execution one or two of the most unworthy of their number', from among both British merchants and the Hong. The merchants met with the Hong to discuss how many chests could be handed over as a token and agreed on 1,000, but it was decided that the Hong would not pay for them since that would result in their decapitation because they would be purchasing opium.

Admiral Sir Charles Elliot, the Superintendant of Trade, immediately went to Canton to conduct negotiations. On Sunday at 9.00 a.m., native servants working for the merchants were ordered by Lin to leave and were forbidden to supply food or coolies to help the merchants. Troops surrounded the British consulate and all boats were taken away. Eventually, on 27 March Elliot, accepting responsibility on behalf of the British Government, handed over 20,283 chests of opium,⁹ but ten people were kept under guard until all negotiations concerning present and future trade were settled. They were eventually allowed to leave on 23 May. Lin stated: 'we, the commissioner and governor, have reverently embodied the heaven like benevolence of the great emperor and remitted the punishment of their offences.' But he went on, if they ever came back, 'their offences shall surely be punished with severity. There shall certainly be no renewed leniency or indulgence.'¹⁰ The merchants petitioned the British Foreign Minister, Lord Palmerston, to ensure the security of future trade. In a letter to him and the Privy Council dated 1 June 1839 the merchants pointed out that the opium trade was 'encouraged and conducted by the Government of India', the trade was 'under the express sanction and authority of the British Government, entirely for state purposes, in this way the Government have derived an enormous revenue from it, latterly two million sterling per annum.'¹¹

⁹ A chest contained 135–60 lb of opium.

¹⁰ Slade, *Narrative*, pp. 105 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 139–43.

After the Lin incident the British traders did not trade opium at Canton, but withdrew to Macau and used others to smuggle the opium into China.¹²

In a parliamentary debate in 1843 Lord Ashley proposed the suppression of the opium trade. He maintained that 'the continuance of the opium trade and the monopoly of its growth in territories of British India is destructive of all relations of amity between Britain and China.' But the counter was that this was true only if opium 'continues to be contraband'. Negotiations, it was reported, were taking place between Sir Henry Pottinger and the Chinese which might lead to the legalization of the trade: 'In which case, opium could not harm amity between England and China.' The opium trade was 'worth £1,200,000 per annum to the Indian Government and this is a large sum of money which could not be obtained from any other source without offending someone in India'.¹³ The British attitude was, in short, that it was the Chinese responsibility to control their own smugglers, but that the best solution was for them to legalize the sale of opium because this would remove animosity between the two countries. Britain could not stop the trade because it needed the money.

The Commissioner Lin incident highlighted the general problem of the British in the region, the lack of their own base. This was needed not simply for security and storage of goods (notably warehouses for opium), but also for legal reasons. While British traders were at Shameen, and other trading centres, they were not subject to British law, nor effectively controlled by Chinese law. A British base could be subject to British law and people's conduct regulated to some extent. Because of the piracy common in the region, it was also important to have a safe harbour for vessels. The British had taken possession of Hong Kong when Elliott raised the flag there in January 1841. The British Government was displeased with this possession of what the Foreign Secretary described as 'a barren island with hardly a house upon it'.¹⁴ Elliott was removed from office and summoned home in disgrace (though he appears to have been reinstated in official esteem later).

Elliott's successors in Hong Kong grew to appreciate his foresight. Slowly the settlement developed under British governance

¹² Welsh, *History*, p. 92.

¹³ The debate was reported in *The Times*, 3 Mar. 1843.

¹⁴ Endacott, *History*, pp. 17 f.

and free from the control of the Chinese, although the island was mostly populated by migrant Chinese seeking lucrative employment. The colony was subject to many problems. The maintenance of law was difficult, with the Governor having few resources to impose regulations on traders, who viewed its directions as a nuisance. Pirates at sea and brigands on land made the growing colony no more secure than the 'Wild West' in America. Health was also a problem, as plague and diseases associated with poor sanitation in a tropical climate were prevalent. Within this beleaguered British colony, class and rank became of considerable social significance. Status was determined by birth and professional position, with boundaries perhaps even more sharply drawn than in Britain. The clubs, and dress codes, of London life were replicated in Hong Kong. The boundary between the British and the 'Orientals' was especially strong, although some Eurasian Indians did mediate between the British and the Chinese.¹⁵

War and money markets

The 1842 war with China was not the last. Hostilities were renewed in 1857, and settled by the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858 (ratified by the Convention of Peking in 1860). This gave access to ten more Chinese ports and allowed a settlement in Canton. The wider access to Chinese ports and markets made the need for Hong Kong less clear and the island entered a period of relative obscurity. In 1866 there was an international run on the banks. Jardine Matheson and Co. were able to sell their investments prior to the collapse of the market because of the extremely swift passage of one of their boats warning them of the impending disaster. Dents were not so fortunate and the firm eventually collapsed, leaving Jardine Matheson and Co. as the only British Hong. The collapse also led to the closure of several banks. Of the first eleven banks in Hong Kong, nine had been leading Indian banks, the Chartered Bank of India and the Oriental Bank, for example. But in 1864 the idea grew of having a bank with local priorities, local share support and local directors. One of the concerns was that banks in China might, like their Indian predecessors, be 'lured' to London and lose their local concern. As other banks fell in the

¹⁵ H. Lethgerbridge, *Hong Kong: Stability and Change*, Hong Kong, 1978, pp. 163–88; J. Warner, *Hong Kong One Hundred Years Ago*, Hong Kong, 1996.

face of the market collapse, the new and local Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank stabilized and grew from the embers of others' failures¹⁶ to become one of the world's great banks. Although Hong Kong in the 1860s was struggling with various banking problems, health and safety issues, and a relative eclipse in favour of other ports, nevertheless the Chinese, and the non-Chinese, populations were growing. In 1862 there were 3,034 non-Chinese and 120,477 Chinese in the island; in 1895 there were 10,828 non-Chinese and 237,670 Chinese—as the Chinese population doubled, the non-Chinese trebled.¹⁷ This would, of course, have included an unknown number of Indians, but it may be assumed that a substantial proportion were Europeans, especially because this was the time of the crash of the Bombay Stock Market, when Indian businesses closed and many of their overseas members had to return to India. In 1898 the British Government agreed a lease with the Chinese of an area of the mainland (Kowloon and the 'New Territories') for a hundred years. The British had been reluctant to acquire more land, but the activities of the Russians, Japanese and Germans in the area made them fear for their security in Hong Kong. An area of the mainland was thus acquired to establish a base to protect Hong Kong from the threat of recently developed artillery. It was the expiry of this lease which led to the handover of Hong Kong to the Chinese in 1997, for although Hong Kong island had been ceded in perpetuity in theory, in practice it could not be retained separately from the New Territories because of its dependence on them (for drinking water, for example).

The twentieth century

In the period 1850–1950, British foreign policy in Asia was dominated by Indian interests. Hong Kong trade continued to diminish, owing particularly to the growth of Shanghai and then Singapore, which left Hong Kong as something of a backwater. The Second World War, or the Pacific War, began the change in Hong Kong's status. The Japanese captured Canton in 1938, but the British were then cautious about helping the Chinese, being concerned at the prospect of two fronts in the war, with Germany

¹⁶ See F. H. H. King, *The History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, Cambridge, 1987, vol. i.

¹⁷ Welsh, *History*, p. 253.

in Europe and Japan in the Pacific. The attack on Pearl Harbor, the landings in Malaya, air raids on Hong Kong, the sinking of the battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *Repulse*, all within a few days in December 1941, changed the political situation dramatically in the Pacific. It was recognized from the outset that Hong Kong was indefensible, but the British Government encouraged its people to fight to the last, street by street. However, the British forces surrendered quickly in December 1941, seeing the position as hopeless and anticipating that such action would avoid mass destruction. Thousands were raped, many killed brutally, particularly doctors and nurses at a hospital where the British had a supply depot. The British were put in prisoner of war camps. Food and basic supplies were short throughout the entire occupation. The Chinese, who at first thought they had little quarrel with the Japanese, suffered as much as anyone. Whereas the Indian communities in China had not been suspect, they were in Hong Kong, because they were thought to have co-operated with the British. Hong Kong was not seen as a major front, so the elite Japanese forces were deployed elsewhere and the people in Hong Kong were badly treated by the less professional Japanese soldiers. The eviction of the Japanese from Hong Kong in 1945 was soon followed by the march of the People's Liberation Army across China. Within a few years Hong Kong's population increased by 400%; although most were Chinese, a number were Indians who had been told to leave China.

From the mid-1950s Hong Kong industry began to flourish, not least through the activity of some of the new arrivals, especially those from Shanghai. From the 1960s its economy grew dramatically, and by the 1970s financial stability enabled substantial spending on education, health, living accommodation and transport. There were fears that the revolutionary fervour of the mainland would spread to Hong Kong, but these concerns over China were balanced by a consciousness of the overriding importance of trade with China and the investment potential. In the 1980s the British Government negotiated the handover of the colony back to the Chinese. In Hong Kong there was a feeling that deals were being set up without the involvement of those who would have to live with the consequences. Many, especially people from India, or those of Indian ancestry but born in Hong Kong, feared for their future in Chinese Hong Kong and sought reassurance from

the then British Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, that their British passports would give them right of entry and settlement in Britain. She refused, and the Labour opposition did not argue. The situation became more fraught in June 1989 when student protests in Tiananmen Square in Beijing were brutally put down. Hong Kong people feared that similar ruthless treatment might be meted out to them after the handover. In July 1990 full British passports, granting the right of settlement, were given to the heads of 50,000 families to whom it was thought special consideration was due because of their contribution to Hong Kong. This was not well received by some sections of the Conservative and Labour parties. After the 50,000 heads of households scheme was finalized it was realized that there were still several thousand people in Hong Kong of Indian, Pakistani, and Nepali origin who did not qualify for UK passports under the scheme. The British 'passports' which did not give the right of entry to Britain effectively left such people stateless after 1997. A pressure group, the Indian Resource Group, led by young Sindhis, but including a Parsi, mounted a campaign both in London and with Chris Patten, then Governor of Hong Kong. On a visit to Britain Patten persuaded his long-standing friend, John Major, then Prime Minister, to accept the rights of more Hong Kong citizens to settle in Britain. These measures in practice appear to have slowed down the rate of migration, for people were willing to stay so long as they knew that they could leave if it became necessary. Despite some display of potential military power by the Chinese at the time of the handover, in the following years the armed forces have not been in evidence on the streets of Hong Kong, civil and religious rights are now being respected and, the tourist trade apart, much Hong business continues, indeed in parts flourishes, in the specially administered region within the Chinese nation that is Hong Kong.

Parsis in China

Survey data of Hong Kong Parsis in the 1980s

Appendix 2, Table 1: 1–35 tabulates the data collected from my global survey. At the time of the survey there were approximately 120 Zoroastrians in Hong Kong. The sixty-six responses therefore gave a response rate of approximately 50%, unusually high for

postal surveys. Nearly one in four respondents were born in the region, a far higher proportion than in most countries (save only Kenya and Pakistan). The majority of Zoroastrian residents in Hong Kong were born in India. But again, like the older centres of Karachi and Kenya, Hong Kong yielded a substantial proportion of respondents (one-third) who had moved there prior to the 1960s. It was, therefore, a settled community. In terms of age structure, there were more people over the age of 55 (30%) than in most diaspora communities, except in London, which had a very similar age distribution to Hong Kong. The American, Canadian and Australian Zoroastrian populations were much younger. The Kenyan Zoroastrian population was older, for reasons which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Hong Kong was one of the few centres surveyed where women outnumbered men. Like the other older centres, Hong Kong had a relatively small number of single persons, and a small (but growing) number of intermarriages. There was a large proportion of people with no family in the region. As far as education is concerned, a relatively high proportion of people completed education at school level, fewer than in the rest of the diaspora undertook postgraduate study, and relatively few studied science. A high proportion of people were not in employment (it is reasonable to assume that these were retired persons, not people unable to get work). A high proportion of people held managerial positions, but there were relatively fewer in executive posts. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents than from elsewhere in the diaspora corresponded with Zoroastrians overseas regularly, but a higher proportion were in regular contact with Zoroastrians locally.¹⁸ More Hong Kong Zoroastrians said that they read Zoroastrian literature than did respondents in most diaspora communities.

The figures for religious practice are difficult to interpret. Slightly fewer respondents in Hong Kong than elsewhere said that they prayed daily, or wore *sudre* and *kusti* or ate Indian food, but the differences between centres were so small that it was difficult to attach much significance to them. The percentage of Hong Kong respondents who described themselves as

¹⁸ It was stressed in Chapter 3 that the Karachi sample was small, since the survey there was seen only as a pilot study. This was one of the instances where the sample is almost certainly skewed, for the questionnaire went out mostly to the active members of the community.

non-practising was fractionally higher than in most other diaspora communities, yet the numbers saying that they celebrated the *gahambars* were slightly higher. The difference here could be that, as there is easy access to the Zoroastrian building, more attended the functions there. Further, in this old centre a number of the earlier settlers have endowed funds for *gahambars* to be observed in their memory, facilitating social functions with food and drink. Although Hong Kong respondents generally did not assert a belief in the different forms of the after life, in comparison with other communities, they nevertheless tended more than others to affirm that prayers for the dead are essential (see Appendix 2, Table 1: 27–8). The explanation for this is probably that the Parsi cemetery in Hong Kong is not only accessible by transport, it is also part of the communal consciousness, because their full-time priest goes regularly to the cemetery and performs the prayers for the dead. They were, therefore, more aware of death ceremonies than respondents in, say, the scattered groups in North America. As far as funerals were concerned, more respondents said that they wanted a funeral in a Tower of Silence than did respondents from other communities, save only for Karachi. The ties with India were emotionally close, and it is not as long a journey from Hong Kong as it is from North America to the *dokhmas* of Bombay; these facts probably explain the answers to the question on funerals (see Appendix 2, Table 1: 21). Another factor may also be the higher proportion of older people in Hong Kong than in, say, America. Fewer Hong Kong respondents than those from America, Canada and Australia approved of intermarriage, but they were not as opposed as the other, older, settlements of Britain, Karachi and Kenya (see Appendix 2, Table 1: 33–5). However, they shared the Indian opposition to non-Zoroastrians being allowed into temples, another marker of the closeness with India. Along with Sydney, of all the diaspora groups, Hong Kong respondents were most likely to assert that community relations there were good. They also asserted that external relations were good, and fewer of them believed that they faced discrimination (see Appendix 2, Table 1: 35–7). Broadly, therefore, the survey showed a pattern similar to those of the older diaspora settlements (Karachi, Britain and East Africa) and somewhat different from the ‘New World’ of Australia, Canada and the USA. The broad picture was of a close community aware of its ties with India, but not especially religious. The

rest of this chapter is concerned with how the community came to be, and what factors have moulded its history and character.

Parsis in Canton and the opium trade

Early Parsi involvement in the opium trade

The first Parsi known to have traded in the China Seas was Hirji Jivanji Readymoney in 1756, with his two ships, the *Hornby* and the *Royal Charlotte*. But the nature of that trade is unknown.¹⁹ There are various references in the columns of the *Parsi Prakash* to other Parsis trading in the region: two drowned at sea in 1768; Edulji B. Edulkaka made his first trip in 1775; D. M. Readymoney made his first visit in 1779 and H. E. Cama made the first of his and his family's many trips in 1786.²⁰ There are various indications, such as details in obituaries in the *Prakash*, or business notices, that there were a number of Parsis engaging extensively in the opium trade. A contemporary source puts the figures of Parsis in the trade at 200, but that source had reasons to exaggerate.²¹ This early trade was all based at Canton. A petition to the representative of the East India Company there in 1790, seeking help

¹⁹ *PP* I. 41. Although this is the first reference to a Parsi in the region, Zoroastrians traded with China at least as early as the Sassanian period. But that is part of a totally different trading history, hence in this paragraph the emphasis on 'Parsi'. In the references to the China trade I am indebted to the late Mr Jamshed Pavri, originally of Hong Kong, later of Vancouver, who taught me much during my stay as house guest with him and his wife, Roda. Mr Pavri generously allowed me to consult the notes he had made over the years. I am also indebted to to Ervad Rustam Ranaji Pavri who was the priest in Hong Kong during my first visit there, and who went through all the *Parsi Prakash* indexed references to Parsis in the China Seas with me. With the permission of the Association he also read with me the minute books and Anjuman files, a labour which took many days and for which I am deeply grateful. In subsequent visits the Association kindly permitted me to work through the more recent records on my own.

²⁰ *PPI*. 108. Mr Pavri's personal notes record that Eduljee Bomanji Edulkaka first went to China in 1775 and spent nearly thirty years there. His source is not identified. He states that Hormusji R. Chinai made his first visit to China in 1793. Another early trader was Hormusji S. Dolakhau in 1775, who thereafter made thirty visits. Hormusji Cama's first visit in 1786 was undertaken with Edulkaka. Merwanji M. Tabak made his first visit in 1790, and took Jamsetji Jijibhoy with him on his 1799 visit. The Parsi said to have visited China most often was Jamshed J. Porter, who died in 1837 having made forty-two visits. Greenberg, *British Trade*, is focused on the role of the British, but in passing he makes a number of references to the numbers and importance of Parsis in the trade (see pp. 32, 78, 60(2) 55, 49(1), 84, 89, 93, 114, 119, 127, 130, 137, 146, 150, 160, 173). A little-known source is Guo Deyon, *The Parsi Merchants at the Port of Canton During the Opium Wars*, E. T. Wilfred Liao for Dolly Dastoor, who kindly sent me a copy. See further below on the Jardine archives.

²¹ James Innes, in 1825, but he was arguing for greater British influence. See Greenberg, *British Trade*, p. 33.

because a Chinese Hong was not making due payment, was signed by three Muslims and four Parsis.²²

The most famous of these early traders was Jamsetji Jijibhoy (hereafter JJ). He made the first of his five visits in 1799; the others were in 1802, 1804, 1805 and 1807. His 1805 trip was the most dramatic. He published an account of it in the *Bombay Courier*.²³ His vessel was captured by two French ships. He, together with eight Muslims and four English passengers, was taken to Madagascar, where all were accused (falsely) of conspiring to kill a Frenchman. When they arrived at the Cape of Good Hope the French admiral refused to let them take any of their merchandise off the vessel, allowing them only the clothes they stood up in. After much suffering and lack of food they eventually secured a passage on a Dutch vessel going to Calcutta, where JJ was able to obtain money from his office for the journey. He then pressed on to China. An important detail not included in JJ's account was that among the English passengers was William Jardine.²⁴ This was the start of a long, successful and friendly business relationship. Jijibhoy became the only Asian director of Jardine Matheson and Co., though Framji Cowasji was also a 'joint adventurer' with Jardine.²⁵ The Jardine Matheson archive in Cambridge University Library holds some 600 letters from JJ.²⁶ The archive is generally composed of formal notes of sailings, concerning the value and extent of the goods conveyed. There is the occasional personal reference. For example, Sir JJ II, wrote to inform Jardine that he and his brothers were named as the executors 'in my late lamented father's will' and that it would take twelve months to clear the estate; they hoped that Jardine would 'continue to correspond and do business'.²⁷ It has been estimated that in the

²² *PP* I, 71 f. The Parsis named were Edulkaka, N. B. Chinai, M. D. Colah and M. Nowroji.

²³ 9 Apr. 1806, see the account in D. F. Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, London, 1884, vol. ii, pp. 79–88.

²⁴ M. Reid includes a piece on Jijibhoy in M. Keswick (ed.), *The Thistle and the Jade: A Celebration of 150 years of Jardine Matheson and Company*, London, 1982, p. 17.

²⁵ J. Steuart, *Jardine Matheson and Company*, Hong Kong, 1934 (private publication), p. 47.

²⁶ The letters file also indicates some 500 from his son and approximately 800 from the firm Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy and Sons. The letters are of a straightforward commercial nature; none, as far as I have seen, contain important personal information. They focus on the price, quality and origin of the opium being supplied by JJ to Jardine. For other Parsi firms, for example the Camas, the archive includes several thousand letters to or from Parsis engaged in the opium trade in the China Seas.

²⁷ Reel 59, p. 169, letter dated 14 May 1859.

1830s, JJ and Sons were the largest constituent of Jardine Matheson. In the 1830s Jardines were annually transacting more than £1 million worth of business, with JJ and Sons remitting to London about £150,000 per year through Jardine in China.²⁸ Jardine described JJ and Sons as 'the best managed business this side of the Cape'. But JJ was not intimidated by such powerful figures; he was prepared to reject opium that was not of sufficient quality.²⁹ He was also prepared to take the initiative in business ventures: for example he informed Jardine that he had decided to put their jointly owned clippers up for sale, because they could not compete with the newly introduced steamers.³⁰

The Jardine archive shows not only the extent of the trade between JJ and Jardine Matheson and Co., but also the number of other Parsis trading with this prominent company in the 1820s and later, notably Jamsetji Byramji, Ruttonjee Edulji,³¹ Hormasji Bomanji,³² Ardashir Hormasji,³³ D. Ruttonjee and Co.,³⁴ and the Eduljees. Not all of these individuals visited the China Seas; some supplied goods from Bombay and Calcutta, notably Framji Cowasji and Hirjibhoy Rustomji.³⁵ The archive includes the annual accounts of some firms, notably Ruttonjee and Co. from 1862 to 1876,³⁶ and also the accounts of the goods carried by the ship *Cowasji Family* with its six-weekly sailings, the main load being opium.³⁷ Although consisting entirely of formal business letters, this correspondence indicates the forceful nature of Parsis in business, especially that of Jijibhoy. Contrary to the popular image of Parsis being cringing and supine in their attitudes to the British, many of the letters complain in strong terms that Jardine Matheson were not obtaining the highest prices they could for

²⁸ Sir JJ was one of Jardine's main outlets (or correspondents) in Bombay, deriving better terms, as well as moral and financial support. Greenberg, *British Trade*, pp. 150, 164.

²⁹ Jardine archive at Cambridge A/8/102/5.

³⁰ Reel 58, p. 105 letter dated 15 Jan. 1853.

³¹ Reel 59, pp. 245, 252.

³² Jardine archive A/8/91/10 gives the accounts for opium stock, 1849–51.

³³ Jardine archive A/8/123.

³⁴ A/8/42/2 records the accounts of this firm for the period 1862–76.

³⁵ As noted above, the archive as a whole has not been thoroughly and systematically indexed and recorded. The original archivist clearly had trouble deciding which were forenames and which surnames, or family names, and with their spelling. The letters are inconsistent in the spelling of names, the use of first names, and the inclusion of the father's name. For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is families rather than individual traders' names that are important.

³⁶ A/8/30/10 and A/8/42/2.

³⁷ Jardine archive A8/101/3.

opium by trading in different places rather than just in local markets.³⁸ Ruttonjee Eduljee was blunt in his criticisms of some of the staff of Jardine Matheson. For example, he wrote to Jardine Matheson, commenting acidly: 'A little fore-thought and closer attention to business would I feel sure have prevented them from acting this inconsiderately [in selling at lower prices than was possible]. I need scarcely remark that such treatment offers us no inducement to enlarge my operations.' In another letter he says: 'I dare say this has not escaped your attention and I trust my business will receive more careful attention.'³⁹ Nevertheless, subsequent letters show that Eduljee was shipping some 1,400–1,700 chests per voyage to Jardine Matheson. In the early part of 1867 he sent 4,250 chests of opium in three steamers. His trade was therefore substantial.⁴⁰

Further Parsi involvements in the opium trade

There are other indications in diverse sources of the extent of Parsi involvement in the opium trade from the early days. There were seven Parsi signatories to the petition of Canton traders to the British Parliament, 24 December 1830, urging government action to stop Chinese efforts to block the opium trade.⁴¹ Similarly, on 10 August 1834 a letter to Napier demanding action against the Chinese was signed by twenty-four Parsis.⁴² Napier convened a meeting on 25 August 1834 with twenty-four merchants, to draw up plans for a Chamber of Commerce; eight of the merchants attending were Parsis, and one, Dadabhai Rustamji Banaji, drew up the rules and regulations. These references indicate the importance of these Parsi merchants in the local trade.⁴³

³⁸ See for example the letter of JJ dated 21 Aug. 1824, letter 12, reel 17 B6/4/1-271, letter 13, 31 July same year and reel. 15 Mar. 1848, letter P (51), reel 58; 7 May 1848, letter P54, same reel. See also the letter from Ruttonjee Eduljee to Jardine Matheson (P) 243, 14 Jan. 1867. See also P248, 252, dated 14 Feb. and 1 Mar. 1867, reel 59.

³⁹ P243, 14 Jan. 1867, and see reel 59, p. 258, letter dated 29 Mar. 1867.

⁴⁰ Jardine archive P243, letter dated 14 Jan. 1867 and P248, 252 dated 14 Feb. and 1 Mar. 1867 reel 59. See further his letters of 29 Jan. 1867; 14 Feb. and 1 Mar. 1867.

⁴¹ Framji, Kohidaru, Chinai, Tarachand, Patuck, Kharas, Moos, PPI. 234.

⁴² Two members of the Banaji family, two Wadias, Jamshedji, Colah, Parekh, Petgra, Langda, Fardoonji, Vicaji, Modi, Lashkari, Bhandara, two Nusserwanjis, Chinai, Mulla, Screwalla, Khambatta, Harda, Seth, Bengali (PP. I, p. 269).

⁴³ The seven other Parsi attendees with Banaji were Parekh, Colah, Cawaji, (M. J.) Wadia, Lashkari, Vicaji, Bhandara. PPI. 271. When the Chamber was formed there were two Parsi office bearers, D. R. Banaji and F. P. Patuck. PPI. 298.

There was, therefore, direct contact between the Chinese and the Parsis at the time of the tension between Napier's successor Elliott and the Chinese Commissioner, when the latter advised peace-loving Parsis to leave Canton while they could do so safely. When Elliott temporarily solved the situation, fifty-four Parsi merchants made a collection to send a thanksgiving charitable donation on 22 September 1834 for the poor people of the village of Udwarda, where the oldest and most revered of holy fires is housed. The information suggests that there were altogether approximately seventy Parsis in Canton at the time.⁴⁴ But even this figure may underestimate the numbers. For in 1829–39 alone, fifty Parsis are recorded as shipping opium to Magniac and Company.⁴⁵

In 1837 a huge fire engulfed Surat. When news reached Canton, there was a collection raised among the Parsis, as in other communities. For such a cause one might reasonably assume that all the Parsis would donate, so the list of contributors is important. Forty-seven names are specified, with the tantalizing phrase 'and others'. There are eight new names.⁴⁶ Two years later (23 January 1839) William Jardine left China for Britain and forty-seven Parsis signed an address and contributed to a gift of 'plate'. There are seven new names.⁴⁷ Jardine stayed in Bombay on the return voyage and was there fêted in the home of JJ, when many merchants, predominantly Parsis, made a collection to honour him.⁴⁸

The Parsis were deeply involved in the 1839 Lin incident related above. There were three Parsis on the Chamber of Commerce committee which first met to discuss Lin's threats, Dadabhai Rustomjee (who seems to have been the most prominent in meetings and in drafting documents), H. Rustomjee and D. Furdunjee.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Merchants named in the list in addition to the ones already cited include: Meherji, Panday, Paowalla, Petigara, Maneckji, Dolakhau, Batliwalla, Nadershah, Harda, Langda, Unwalla, Madrasi, Vajifdar, Bharbhaiya, Motiwalla, Kohidaroo, Hardana, Ghia. Several families had two brothers there, the Camas, Colahs and Banajis had three or more (PP, I. 273 f.).

⁴⁵ Greenberg, *British Trade*, p. 37.

⁴⁶ They include Bisni, Rana, Petigara, Dolakhau, Mehtana, Kohidaru, Mulla-Ferozna, Noshangi, Tashkar, Irani, Ranji, Lala, Bhanja, Lalcaca, Khan, Pochaji with now five Banajis (PP, I, 307). The generosity of the Parsi response merits comment. Whereas the Hindu and Bohra communities raised \$460, the Parsis raised \$10,521.

⁴⁷ They are: Boxy, Dadabhai, Harda, Tabak, Cawasji, Bhanja, Cooverji. For the text of the address, and list of names, see Steuart, *Jardine Matheson*, pp. 83 f. ⁴⁸ PP I. 392.

⁴⁹ Slade, *Narrative*, pp. 31, 37, 42. In Slade and in the Jardine archive the same names are sometimes spelt inconsistently; in some cases there is an initial rather than the personal name, in some cases the name is given. Hence the inconsistency in spelling in what follows.

In that same year, on 25 March, the Parsi merchants petitioned the Chinese Commissioner, Lin Tse-hsu, regarding the impounding of opium which they claimed was not theirs and for which they only had custody. On this occasion there were only twenty-four petitioners, although thirty-eight Parsis are listed among those he placed under house arrest.⁵⁰ Of the 20,283 chests of opium that he burned, 1,000 cases belonged to Dadabhai and Maneckji Rustamjee Banajee alone, and 1,324 to Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee.⁵¹ Lin required four Parsis to remain as hostages; these were Dadabhai Rustamjee Banajee, one of the Patel brothers, Bhandara and Screwalla, though they too were eventually allowed to leave.⁵² Two Parsis are also named among the merchants who met in Macau on 12 June 1839 after their departure from Canton.⁵³ Fifteen Parsis signed a letter of appreciation to Elliott for his handling of the situation.⁵⁴ Among those who sought recompense from the British Government for the opium that Elliot had told them to hand over was Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, whose letter dated 3 January 1844 sought compensation for the 1,324 cases he had handed over.⁵⁵ An indication of who the leading traders were is perhaps the list of ten Parsi signatories on a petition, from 162 merchants, to the East India Company protesting against the increased duty on opium. These were JJ and Sons, K. C. Banajee and Sons, F. C. Banajee, four Wadias, M. N. Petit, Dadyseth and Batliwala.⁵⁶ When the Union Jack was raised in Hong Kong on 26 January 1841, after Elliott had taken possession of the island, three of the four Indian merchant firms represented there were Parsi—Cawasjee Pallanjee and Co.; F. M. Talati; and Rustomjee Dhunjishaw of P. Cama and Co. Parsis were therefore participants in several of the early historic events in the emergence of the British base of Hong Kong and in British actions around the China Seas.

⁵⁰ Slade, *Narrative*, p. 57 lists them as: D and M. Rustomjee; Shavuxshaw Rustomjee, Cowasji Sapoorjee, Hormuzjee Byramjee, Dossabhoy Hormusjee, C. Pallanjee, C. Bomanjee, Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, A & D. Furdoonjee, Burjorji Manackjee, Hormusji Framjee, Framjee Dadabhoy, Bomanjee Manackjee, Bomanjee Hosunjee, Jamsetjee Rustomjee, Pallonjee Dorabjee, Cursetjee Shapoorjee, Nesserwanjee Dorabjee, Framjee Jamsetjee and P. Nesserwanjee Patell.

⁵¹ *PP* I. 366, and an account of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee dated 3 and 8 Jan. 1844 in Jardine archive, Cambridge, A8/121/39.

⁵² Slade, *Narrative*, p. 87.

⁵³ They are Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee and Dadabhai Rustomjee, Slade, *Narrative*, p. 117.

⁵⁴ *PP* I. 366.

⁵⁵ Letter in the Jardine archive, A8/121/39.

⁵⁶ *PP*, I. 503.

The trading was hazardous in various ways. In the 1830s there was the threat of Chinese action, although in fact no Parsi is known to have suffered physically. More were lost at sea,⁵⁷ and others through unsanitary conditions in the tropical climate. The oldest Parsi graveyard in the region is on Macau, where twelve are buried.⁵⁸ But the normal assumption was that, after trading profitably, men returned to their families in India. Not all profited. Several businesses in China were bankrupted by the collapse of the Bombay stock market in the 1860s, but the actual trade in China itself was not always profitable, as Sir JJ comments in a letter in the Jardine Matheson archive.⁵⁹ The purchase price, shipping and agency costs were not always covered by the prices obtained on the market. Nevertheless, several leading Parsi families owe the basis of their wealth to the opium trade. By the 1860s many of them were diversifying. Jardines began to move out of opium in the face of rivalry from Dents, and by the 1870s the trade was dominated by the Sassoons. Companies who dealt with Jardines, such as Sir JJ and Sons, also turned to other markets, for example silks and cottons.

Parsi institutions in Canton

When the story of the Parsis in the China Seas is commented on at all, for example by Vaid, it tends to be from the perspective of the Hong Kong community.⁶⁰ But the oldest Association, and for decades the most important, was in Canton. The first firm there was established in 1794 by Cawasjee Pallanjee, but it moved to Hong Kong in 1841. Dadabhai and Maneckjee Rustomjee were agents for the Sun Insurance office in Canton in 1834, working in parallel with such big houses as Dents and Jardine Matheson. The same source refers to seventy-four ships arriving in Canton in 1834 flying the British flag; nine had come from London, thirty-one

⁵⁷ PP I. 294 (for 13 July 1836) illustrates the dangers of the China trade. The ship *Hormusji Bomanji* was caught in a typhoon and during the night collided with another ship. All lives were lost, including fourteen Parsis.

⁵⁸ The earliest is from 1829. There is one from the 1830s, ten from the 1840s and one from 1870. All were graves of young males who had died in the region. In contrast to the Chinese attitude to merchants, the grave inscriptions show that these Parsis used the term 'merchant' with considerable pride. I am grateful to my late wife Marianne for scrambling around the very uneven terrain to read these inscriptions for me.

⁵⁹ Letter P53, dated 10 Apr. 1848, reel 58 states that he had been making losses for some years. JJ was knighted in 1842.

⁶⁰ K. N. Vaid, *The Overseas Indian Community in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 1972.

from Bombay and two from Calcutta. It is likely that many of the Bombay ships were part of the Parsi trade.⁶¹ In February 1845, Burjorji S. Sumaligara collected funds for the purchase of the Macau cemetery, and the first Canton Zoroastrian Anjuman was founded. The first 'community' gathering was held at the offices of Dadabhai and Maneckjee Rustamjee Banajee, whose firm would keep the records, and their aim was to raise funds for the performance of religious ceremonies and for charitable aid to the needy. They collected \$8,678, from sixty-three named individuals. The major donors were Cama and Co. and Modi and Co.⁶² Four trustees were appointed. The first Parsi to die in Canton was F. M. Mehta in 1836; he had to be buried alongside the English traders, so the members of the Association purchased a funeral ground in Whampoa in 1845, which was first used in 1847.⁶³ They also purchased a property in Macau for Parsis to visit out of the trading season, when they were required to vacate Canton.⁶⁴ A fund was started in 1855 towards the purchase of a property in Canton, but the building never materialized, although a structure was erected in the funeral ground in 1860 so that the annual death ceremonies could be performed, whatever the weather, at any time of the year. From 1834 the Canton community had their own priest, Ervad Dorabjee B. Futajia, who served until 1856,

⁶¹ *The AngloChinese Kalendar for the Christian Year 1834*, pp. 26, 74. W. Milburn, *Oriental Commerce: Containing a Geographical Description of the Principal Places in the East Indies, China and Japan*, London, 1813, vol. i, p. 237 notes that of twenty-nine ships sailing out of Bombay in 1812, ten were owned by Parsis (Ardaseer Dady—who owned two, Pestonjee Bomanjee, Framjee Cowasji, Nusserwanjee Monackjee—who owned two, Dhunjibhoy Sorabjee, Hormuzjee Bomanjee and Muncherjee Jamsetji). Obviously this early source pre-dates the significant rise of Sir JJ.

⁶² The donation list includes seven Camas, five Langranas, three Modis and three Colahs, indicating perhaps the extent of family networks and not just individual involvements.

⁶³ Jamshed Pavri in 1987 produced a five-page cyclostyled document entitled 'Whampoa House and Cemetery', based mainly on the *Parsi Prakash*, but also on his own local knowledge. The first Parsi to be buried in Whampoa Parsi cemetery was Nusserwanji J. Batiwala, who died at the age of 21 on 14 Sept. 1867. The records show the following dates recorded in the cemetery: 1847, 1849, 1850 (2), 1851 (3), 1852 (2), 1855, 1859, 1918. Of these deaths only five were of people over the age of 40, the early deaths being a pointer to the unhealthy conditions. The fact that there were only twelve deaths in seventy years indicates that there was no settled community. The 'residents' simply came for trade and returned to their families in India.

⁶⁴ The donors included Dhunjibhai Neheramjee Rana; Nusserwanji Bomanjee Modi; Cowasjee Sapoorjee Langrana and Ruttonjee Hormusjee Cama. Their account was opened with \$8,678, J. Pavri, 'Hong Kong, Canton and Macau', in *Proceedings of the III World Zoroastrian Congress*, Bombay, 1978 (unpaginated). The donation list indicates a total of seventy Parsis in Canton at that time. *PPI*. 461 f.

when fifty-nine Parsis signed the address of thanks.⁶⁵ It is unlikely that any Parsi in town would not have signed such an address and this may, therefore, be taken as a reasonably reliable indicator of the size of the 'community'. Futajia was succeeded, on a voluntary basis, by Pestonjee R. Dadachanji, but from 1872 Pestonjee B. Damania was retained on a salary to look after a building at Whampoa, gifted by Dorabji N. Cama in 1860, and to attend to the religious needs of the emerging community. The Canton Parsis collected funds for the establishment of burial grounds in other centres, notably Singapore in 1829, and Shanghai in 1854, but also at Hong Kong and, of course, Canton itself. They started a fund in that year for the relief of destitute blind and insane Chinese, managed by Cama and Co. In 1892 they established a *gahambar* fund for festive communal meals, an important dimension of Zoroastrian community life.⁶⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, the Parsi community was formed in Canton. A building was finally erected in 1926, after much trouble had been experienced in the fundraising, in which cause the Hong Kong Parsis had declined to help. The Canton Association flourished until the Second World War, when its assets were transferred to Hong Kong.

Shanghai

It is somewhat easier to give a connected account of internal community affairs in Shanghai, because it produced its own history covering the period 1854–1935, which consists basically of a summary of the community's annual reports.⁶⁷ Such primary sources are both invaluable and somewhat skewed. These particular records are unusually frank about the community disagreements, with details of the subject matter and names. But there are inevitably areas in which they are reticent. Generally they make little reference to the external political situation in China and the community's relationship with the Chinese. They are also discreet about the recipients of their charity. From the outside historian's point of view that is a pity, because it is evident that for decades the community gave significant charitable donations and it would

⁶⁵ *PP*, I, 705.

⁶⁶ Pavri, 'Hong Kong, Canton and Macau'.

⁶⁷ K. D. Mistry and D. S. Dadyburjor, *A Review of the Origin and Growth of the Shanghai Parsee Cemetery Trust Funds, 1854–1934*, Shanghai, 1935 (for private circulation only). Hereafter in the piece on Shanghai, the page references in the text are to this source.

have been interesting to identify their priorities. The details about religious belief and practice, or social functions, are scanty.⁶⁸ There are occasional uncertainties about the dates of changes, but generally the records provide a connected picture of the 'institution' of the community. Unfortunately this record gives little indication of the role of the Parsis in Shanghai. I have been able to trace only one reference to a Parsi in non-Parsi Shanghai records: D. Burjorji was the only non-European at a meeting on 11 July 1854 at the British consulate to draw up municipal regulations and to establish a police force to oversee their European settlement.⁶⁹ This indicates a significant social status for Burjorji among European traders.

The Anjuman grew out of an original meeting of three or four traders who had moved there from Hong Kong to open branches for opium, cotton and cotton yarn in 1847. With the growth of female education, and more freedom, women began to travel with their husbands and so the community became more settled and increased in size. By 1934 it had grown to 124 people—sixty males, thirty-one females, thirty-three children. By 1934, sixty-one Parsi children had been born in Shanghai, and there were thirty-five deaths in that period.⁷⁰ The first physical development was the purchase of fenced land for burial, in what was then a suburb of Shanghai, with money donated by the Canton Parsis. Collections from members on religious festivals facilitated the building of a proper wall and land levelling in 1857. In 1862 Dorab N. Cama built a gate with a room over it for religious functions. In that same year it was decided that the local Parsi residents should buy out the share of the Hong Kong and Canton Parsi Associations, which was agreed, with the proviso that if the ground was sold the money should be remitted to Hong Kong. The 'declaration of independence' was largely triggered by a letter from the Hong Kong trustees alleging mismanagement of Trust funds. Thereafter the cemetery was run by the Shanghai Association, led mainly by representatives of the Cama and Pallonji firms, with Dadabhai Burjorji taking a leading individual role.

⁶⁸ For example, the records refer to passing to 'Parsee indoor and outdoor clubs'. One may surmise that the former would be for card games and billiards, judging from other social centres, but beyond that nothing is known. See p. 103.

⁶⁹ *The Official Papers of the Administration of Affairs at the Port of Shanghai*, Shanghai, 1854.

⁷⁰ Mistry and Dadyburjor, *Shanghai Parsee Cemetery*, p. 3.

Hong Kong retained a background role in that the proceeds of any sale of land were to be returned to them, but this right was bought out in 1910 when the Shanghai Association became truly independent (p. 36). In 1866 a building with a library was erected. It was some twenty years before income reliably exceeded expenditure. The administration of the Trusts was difficult because of the frequent resignations of trustees as they were leaving Shanghai (e.g. p. 18, with reference to 1891). From 1896 the community began to send more regular charitable donations to the needy Parsis in Bombay. They remitted their general excess of income over expenditure,⁷¹ with 5% to non-Zoroastrian causes, mostly poor local Chinese; a portion of the rest was for Iranian Zoroastrians, but donations were made mainly to Parsis in India. The few charities which are specified are for education and, especially, medicine. The scheme for the regulation and management of the Trust was laid down in November 1872. Para 7 states that the first use of such money should be for cemeteries for Zoroastrians in any place 'in China, Japan or elsewhere in the Far East'. Thereafter it was for 'the relief and support of poor or indigent persons of any caste creed or nationality', and finally for 'any other religious charitable humanitarian or benevolent purpose'. The maximum for Zoroastrian religious benefaction was 1,200 taels and 300 taels for non-Zoroastrians (p. 187).⁷²

By 1899 the number of Parsis was increasing, so that an additional floor had to be added over the old prayer hall. The Association was subject to a number of internal disputes at the turn of the century focusing on the redrafting of the Trust Deeds and the administration of business. It would appear that these difficulties arose in part from the fact that the members were not accustomed to running community Associations, but, being successful businessmen, were accustomed to asserting themselves—hence the growing pains of a new Association! Another recurring problem was the admission of non-Parsis to community-owned property, namely the cemetery and associated gardens which were used for social meetings and festivals meals. At a special meeting in 1910 (p. 34) it was agreed that: 'No person or persons other

⁷¹ This could be quite a substantial sum. In 1934, one of the few years where this is detailed, the sum given in charities was \$10,496 (p. 156).

⁷² *The AngloChinese Kalendar* for the year 1834, p. 32, states that 720 taels were worth \$1,000 Spanish.

than members of the Parsee community shall be permitted to make use of the said Cemetery or buildings in its enclosure. The said buildings are to be used for religious or other purposes affecting the welfare of the Community.' The meeting also agreed to make a handsome donation to the Parsee General Hospital in Bombay, subject only to the condition that Shanghai Parsis be given the same benefits as any Bombay Parsis.⁷³ The investments of the community increased by approximately 350% in the years 1912–19⁷⁴ and discussions ensued on the use of this money. The first proposal to be agreed (23 December 1918, pp. 53 f.) was for a social centre for feasting and 'auspicious communal occasions' (61). This meeting and a later one (26 February 1919) rejected the expenditure for a priest and decided to continue using the voluntary service of local Parsis of priestly descent (pp. 54–8). It is evident that a full-time priest was employed within a few years, but the exact date of his appointment is not specified.⁷⁵ At a meeting on 31 March 1921 the community voted to donate charitable help to the Hong Kong community, which was having difficulty meeting its costs, a reversal of its status in the nineteenth century (p. 66).⁷⁶ Similarly, in 1922 the community made a donation to the building fund in Canton. There are occasional suggestions of aid to other Zoroastrians in the China Seas, for example, allowing the priest to travel to other centres to perform initiations, but the

⁷³ Hospitals appear to have been a focus for such charity. On 13 Apr. 1898 a donation was agreed to the Masina hospital, though the Trust deed meant that, as it was not a charity exclusively for Parsis, the donation was smaller, though on reconsideration on 2 Nov. 1913 this was increased five-fold. A larger donation was made on 6 July 1913 (p. 42) to the Dorabji N. Mehta Parsis Maternity Hospital fund in Navsari and on 23 Dec. 1918 a donation was agreed for the Parsi fever hospital (p. 52). The only recorded non-medical charity donations were made to the Yazd Girls' High School in 1918; the Bombay Fund for the relief of poor Parsis in 1918 (p. 51); for Parsi families injured in the riots following the Prince of Wales's arrival in Bombay in Dec. 1921, (p. 72). On 26 Jan. 1926 a grant was agreed for a Zoroastrian school in Iran (pp. 93 f.). Page 86 notes that each year they had made (relatively small) donations to local Chinese hospitals. There is also a reference to annually agreed lists of charities; none are specified, and no percentages are given, though almost all were said to be Zoroastrian. Only 500 taels total per annum was allocated for all non-Zoroastrian charities, which was the amount given in a single donation to a Parsi hospital.

⁷⁴ From 83 taels in 1912 to 51,689.59 in 1919 (pp. 42–64).

⁷⁵ In Hong Kong note files I found the date 7 Mar. 1919 but it is not clear if this was a full-time mobed or someone else taking over the duties part-time.

⁷⁶ A further donation was made in 1924, but after much argument it was agreed that the Hong Kong Association should first seek the support of some of its own wealthy members (p. 82).

records suggest less inter-Parsi contact in China than one might have expected.⁷⁷

Foreign trade had grown in Shanghai since it had become one of the treaty ports in 1843, but it grew particularly in the late 1920s when Nanking became the capital. The Parsis benefited from this, with their investments more than doubling between 1919 and 1925, and then more than doubling again between 1925 and 1934.⁷⁸ This enabled them to increase their land holding. In 1932 they built a new prayer hall, and a new funeral ground a year later.⁷⁹ The community funds were such that the fine new building was paid for out of income, without loans or any indebtedness. The president in his speech on that occasion exhorted the community to make frequent use of it:

and he further beseeched the ladies to grace all such holy and happy occasions with their presence and attend in large numbers all the Jasan ceremonies and such other religious rites with their children so that from their very childhood their little beloved ones might be saturated with a strong love for their religion, and a reverent and righteous feeling for a spiritual life and clean life, and be inspired with love and respect for their elders and ancestors. (pp. 139 f.)

This speech, inevitably somewhat flowery on such an occasion, may suggest that concern for the transmission of religion and culture was stronger than the recorded minutes indicate. But they also point to the place of women in the community. By the initial Trust Deed, voting at AGMs was only for men aged 21 and over (and they had to have lived in Shanghai for the preceding three months, p. 192). Women had not been mentioned as being present previously.⁸⁰ This raises the question of the place of women in the community, not least with regard to the purity laws. The only

⁷⁷ In August 1925, for example, the priest's assistance was requested in Kobe (p. 87) and in July 1926 Parsis in Tientsin and Peking sought financial assistance for a cemetery (pp. 96 f.). In the appendix to the Minutes Book (p. 204) the burial of a mother and child, Mrs Cooverbai Maneckshaw Hormusji (Bulsara) and her son who died at birth, are registered as buried in 'Parsee Cemetery in Peking'. Six other burials are noted in China, in Tientsin, Hankow and Changchun, but they are said to be international cemeteries. Help was given in 1933 to purchase a cemetery in Penang (p. 153). Obviously there were many Parsi stories that have left no known records.

⁷⁸ 1919—51, 689.59 taels (p. 64); 1925, 103,207.66 (p. 93), and 241,357.49 in 1934 (p. 165).

⁷⁹ pp. 135–140 and 151.
⁸⁰ e.g. at a special meeting on 14 July 1927 to express regret at the death of a former Shanghai resident, Burjorji C. Sethna.

possible reference to this is that when the then priest offered to stay a further five years if he could bring his family, the trustees refused the condition, because they did not want the family living in the building. In Parsi terms, this almost certainly means that there was concern that during her menstrual cycle the wife would be seen as polluting the religious environment, an issue which will recur below in relation to the Hong Kong community. Apart from during menstruation, the social involvement of the women and their attendance at religious functions appears to have been encouraged, yet was also a matter for comment. The same purity laws, it has been noted, meant that non-Zoroastrians could not attend religious functions, but they were welcome at social events. The Parsi club, like most such centres around the diaspora, was for card games, billiards, table tennis, reading Bombay papers, and community gossip.

By 1927 there were the early signs of external political problems. At a meeting on 26 January 1927 (pp. 98 f.), doubt was expressed about buying further land 'in view of the uncertain political situation at that time'. In that same meeting the trustees discussed reinvesting their main funds, which had hitherto been in the bonds of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 'but as a strong agitation was going on amongst the Chinese population to take possession of the Foreign settlement', they sought community opinion on what they should do 'in case of emergency and if the political situation grew more serious'. It was decided to seek the advice of the British Consul. His reply 'had not taken any alarming view of the situation, and though his reply was couched in a calm and peaceful tone, the general opinion prevailing amongst the members of the community was that it was not advisable to hold on to these investments any longer' (p. 101).

By 1932 concerns were increasing. At the AGM on 16 March a Parsi resident of Hong Kong expressed the deep gratitude of his co-residents to the Shanghai trustees for the accommodation given them in Shanghai, 'when the Japanese troops occupied that district, and bombarded it, partly destroying it' (p. 132). At a special meeting a month later doubts were expressed about agreeing to the request for the priest to go to Hankow to perform an initiation for fears for his safety, 'owing to the political unrest, and war clouds threatening to burst out in North China, [the speaker Mr Viccajee] saw great danger to life and property lurking in that

area' (p. 133). So, balancing the increased prosperity of the Parsis, was a growing sense of external political danger. The Shanghai Parsis did not suffer in the war as much as those in Hong Kong did, because in the former city Indians were seen as fellow Asians, whereas in Hong Kong the Indian communities were seen as collaborators with the British. But when the Communists took over China in 1947, the Parsis (estimates suggest about 120 persons) had to leave, some moving to India, and others to Hong Kong, which becomes the centre of attention for the rest of this chapter. The Chinese authorities took over all Parsi properties, including the graveyard, despite protests from Bombay and the British embassy in Peking.⁸¹

Parsis in Hong Kong

The early years

Opium was not the only business in which Parsis were involved in the China Seas. Although Parsis traded in cotton and other goods at Canton, much of the wider trade was conducted in Hong Kong. There are glimpses in the records of other pioneering Parsis. One of the first to succeed outside opium and banking was Dorabji Naoroji, who went from Bombay to Hong Kong as a cook. His bakery became well known and he moved into the hotel business, owning several establishments including the prestigious King Edward Hotel, one of the most famous hotels in Asia. He is better known as the originator of the Star Ferry, the flotilla of ships transporting people between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon on the mainland. It is said that the business began when Dorabji lent his boat to family and friends to cross to Kowloon. Demand for its use was so heavy that he purchased a second boat, *Morning Star*. The ferry service began commercially in 1880; by 1890 four boats were in operation, averaging 147 crossings per day.⁸² By the beginning of the millennium the crossings between Hong Kong and Kowloon, and various other places, are too numerous to count.

⁸¹ Information supplied in a private letter dated 24 Oct. 1987, by Jamshed Pavri.

⁸² *Hong Kong Standard*, 24 Oct. 1984.

Parsis had a role in the growth of banking in Hong Kong. Because much of the China trade was conducted through Bombay and other Indian ports, Indian banks were active in the early years of the trade, notably the Chartered Bank of India and the Oriental Banking Corporation. Parsis had been important in the development of these banks. When the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank was formed in 1864, Parsis were on the planning committee and on the first board of directors of the new bank. They were Pallonjee Framjee and Rustomjee Dhunjeeshaw of P. A. and P. F. Cama. Dhunjeeshaw had to resign in 1865, because of the declining fortunes of the Camas, and Framjee left the colony in 1866.⁸³ It is interesting to note which names did not appear on the list of directors, notably Sir JJ and Sons. They were too closely allied with Jardines, who were kept off the board of the bank by Dents, a major force in the growth of the bank. This illustrates the problem of Indian merchants, even firms as large as Sir JJ and Sons, when their major partners were caught up in personal and trading rivalries. The Camas did relatively little trade with Jardine Matheson and Co. and so could be linked with the bank.⁸⁴ Also linked to the bank, but not a director, was H. N. Mody, again, not a Jardine person. Mody moved quite early in his business career from opium to land investment, especially in Kowloon. With Sir Paul Chater he formed the Hong Kong Land Company, a firm which still owned much land at the end of the twentieth century. Later Mody developed the Hong Kong Share Market and Stock Exchange. He became more of a figure on the social scene than most Asians were able to, and owned race horses, racing being a major interest in the island;⁸⁵ he was the first president of the Kowloon Cricket Club, laying the foundation stone of the new pavilion in 1908, a role normally the strict preserve of the British;⁸⁶ in 1912 he opened a charitable sailors' and soldiers' home in Hong Kong. The act for which he is most remembered is his initiative in starting Hong Kong University. Moves had already begun to start a medical school, but Mody was

⁸³ F. H. H. King, *History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, Cambridge, 1987, vol. i, p. 54 concerning the provisional committee; pp. 88, 90 and 135 concerning their excellent records in the establishment of the bank, and pp. 166–9 on their departure from the colony.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁸⁵ Vaid, *Overseas Indian Community*, pp. 54–7.

⁸⁶ P. A. Hall, *Kowloon Cricket Club: A History*, Kowloon, 1983, ch. 2.

determined to see a full university established. His original, and generous, offer to pay half the establishment costs was doubled in order to encourage government to play its part with the maintenance fund. Fearing that he might die before the project came to fruition, Mody fixed a time-limit to his offer. Unfortunately he died between the time when the foundation stone was laid (March 1910) and the opening in September 1912.⁸⁷

The Hong Kong Parsi community began as an offshoot of the older Canton Association. After the British took possession in 1841, a number of Parsis moved there. As Vaid remarks, it is important to note the difference between Parsis who used Hong Kong as their main base, and others based in Shanghai or Canton who used Hong Kong as a branch office.⁸⁸ The names of the latter may appear in subscription lists, etc., but it was the former who developed the Anjuman and contributed to Hong Kong life. One of the earliest firms to move their base from Canton to Hong Kong was Cowasjee Pallanjee and Co. in 1841. The first action of the Anjuman was the acquisition of a cemetery in 1845. (A new *bungli*, or place for funeral ceremonies, was opened at the cemetery in 1931.) In 1861 a religious building was opened, followed by a Parsi club in 1871. The original building was disposed of in 1923, and a new one opened in 1931, which was extended with an upper floor in 1970. This in turn was replaced by a new building in 1993.⁸⁹ Behind this bare list of dates for properties lies a more complex history of the Association in Hong Kong.

Formally, the body is known as the Incorporated Trusts of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macau. Canton has already been discussed. Macau was the base where Parsis stayed outside the trading season in Canton. It always retained the character of a place of rest and recuperation, with, for example, a rest house and gambling facilities. The first Parsi fund-raising in the China Seas region took place in Canton in 1845, to buy a property in Macau.⁹⁰ This was sold in 1939 because it was rarely being used.⁹¹ Hong Kong was originally

⁸⁷ B. Mellor, *The History of the University of Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 1980, vol. i, ch. 3.

⁸⁸ *Overseas Indian Community*, p. 52.

⁸⁹ There is a brief overview of the history in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1993, pp. 55–61.

⁹⁰ *PP*, I, 461 f.

⁹¹ Special General Meeting 10, 1939. The minutes note that when the Japanese attacked Shanghai in 1937, the Parsi refugees stayed in Hong Kong rather than Macau and similarly when they attacked Canton in 1938 they still did not go to Macau.

secondary to Canton and its history until the end of the Pacific War included times of prosperity and times of decline, notably during the period of Shanghai's prosperity from the early twentieth century through to the 1940s. As Hong Kong's fortunes declined, so did those of the Parsi Anjuman there. At the AGM on 8 April 1930 a vote of thanks was passed to the Shanghai community for a loan to help them in their economic troubles. This was repeated in successive years. Indeed in 1934 the Hong Kong funds were transferred to Canton, and the administration of those funds was handed over to Canton in 1937.⁹²

Hong Kong Parsis and the Pacific War

The Ruttonjee family flourished in the provision trade, especially in liquor.⁹³ Hormusjee Ruttonjee started as a wine merchant in Hong Kong in 1886 and his son, Jehangir, established the Hong Kong brewery. This passed into Japanese hands during the war, but when it reverted to the Ruttonjees after the war they sold it to San Miguel breweries. Jehangir also diversified into housing, it is said he had 1,000 tenants and his flats were used by Parsi refugees during the war.⁹⁴ In 1948 he funded the building of a TB sanatorium, with a final donation of \$1.3 million in memory of his daughter Tehmina, who had died of the disease. It became a major centre of treatment for people throughout South East Asia. The hospital was staffed with Catholic nuns from the Irish Colomban Sisters until 1988. In 1956 Jehangir gave a substantial donation for a convalescent home for patients to recuperate after treatment for tuberculosis, in memory of his second daughter, Freni, who died of cancer in 1953. In 1994 the then Governor, Chris Patten, opened a new hospital as part of the redevelopment of the sanatorium, which had outlived its usefulness. Although funded by government, like most Hong Kong hospitals, the new hospital was named the Ruttonjee Hospital in recognition of the family's history of support for medical causes.⁹⁵ This Hong Kong Parsi (indeed widespread Parsi) tradition of charitable support for medical work has been continued by another notable member of the Parsi community, Shapurji Fakirji Jokhi.

⁹² AGM file, 12 Jan. 1938.

⁹³ Vaid, *Overseas Indian Community*, p. 55.

⁹⁴ G. Rawdon, 'The Story of the Ruttonjees', *Hong Kong Tatler*, Feb. 1981, pp. 44–9, and *Parsiana*, March 1988, pp. 13–15 on the family's role in recent property development.

⁹⁵ A. S. Mama, 'Hong Kong's Ruttonji Hospital', *Parsiana*, Oct. 1994, pp. 24–6.

Parsis were active in Hong Kong during the Japanese occupation. Jehangir Ruttonjee and his son Dhun (later to be prominent in Hong Kong politics as a Legislative Councillor, and twice decorated by the British Government) were imprisoned and tortured for the help they gave to oppressed people in Hong Kong.⁹⁶ Several homes, for example that of the Pavris, were used to house Parsis who had been deprived of their own homes. Perhaps the most famous benefactor, although intensely shy, was Shapurji Jokhi, mentioned above.⁹⁷ He was imprisoned for eleven months, kept in solitary confinement, tortured and sentenced to death for supplying food and medicine parcels to British prisoners. Shortly before his impending execution he had a dream that he would be set free and vowed that if he were, he would build a housing colony back in his native Navsari. When a new commandant came to the camp he reviewed all the death sentences and asked Jokhi if he had indeed supplied such parcels and why. Jokhi said that he would do the same for a Japanese prisoner because his religion required him to feed the sick. 'We are', he said, 'Asiatic religious people.' The commandant, a religious man, was moved and commuted the death sentence to imprisonment, and three months later Jokhi was released. He had always been a religious man (a follower of Khshnoom), and spent most of the rest of his life funding a large colony in the name of his mother and his recently deceased wife. The first block of flats was opened in April, 1973 with seventy flats, the second building in December 1981 and a third in the mid-1980s. They are designed to provide subsidized housing for some 2,000 poor and middle-class Parsis. While in hospital in Bombay he saw how much the Parsee General Hospital needed help, and gave generously to it.⁹⁸ A wing of that hospital was dedicated to him in 1995, following further considerable donations from his estate after his death.⁹⁹

Other Parsis known to have been tortured were Behram C. Tavadia, and his brother-in-law Jal Patel. They were residents

⁹⁶ Rawdon, *Hong Kong Tatler*, p. 47; see also Endacott, *History*, pp. 144, 146.

⁹⁷ His story is outlined in his obituary 'Shapurji Jokhi: slaved, saved, staked', in *Parsiana*, Mar. 1990, pp. 95–9, but some of the following details are based on my own meeting with Mr Jokhi during my first visit to Hong Kong, perhaps the most moving and inspiring meeting during the course of this research.

⁹⁸ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1989, p. 9. The Godrej Baug Agiary is named after him because his estate funded the move of the fire from Tavri to Mumbai, see Ch. 2.

⁹⁹ A. S. Mama, 'The Gift from Hong Kong', *Parsiana*, Feb.–Mar. 1995, pp. 92–100.

in Canton during the war. Patel was the president of the Indian Association in Canton and attempted to obtain a more generous ration of food for the Indians. The Japanese suspected they were British spies and so they, and a visitor, Minoo Master, were arrested. All three were tortured and badly beaten. Minoo Master was released after two months, and the others after three months, but Patel died from his injuries. In Hong Kong two brothers, the Kotwall brothers, were executed.¹⁰⁰ One of them, Jimmy, had been a BAAG (British Army Aid Group) agent, helping people to escape and supplying medicines to people in the war camps. He was entrapped by a fellow Indian. Another Parsi, Sir Robert Kotwal, acted as spokesman for the Chinese during the war, when he was known as Lo Kuk-wo. This is said to have been at the request of the British, though some thought that his compliance with the Chinese went further than his position required. He was later suspended from duty and investigated by the British, but cleared.¹⁰¹ He never presented himself as a Parsi because he was practically excommunicated from the community when he married a Chinese wife, and he never had further contacts with the Parsi community after he was refused permission to see his father's face at his funeral because of his marriage out of the community.

The post-war period

After the Second World War and the Communist takeover in China the Parsis, like other Indian groups, were given a year to conclude their affairs and leave the country. Some were able to take their movable property and funds with them, but many obviously lost much because they were unable to obtain reasonable prices for their properties. Some returned to India, but most moved to Hong Kong, which therefore became the largest centre for Parsis in the region. After the Japanese capture, the dispersal of funds in Hong Kong was more difficult, and the Anjuman's problems were increasing. The bank investments became of little value and some were transferred because of fear of them being

¹⁰⁰ My main source is the oral reports in the community, but see also E. Ride, *BAAG Hong Kong Resistance, 1942–5*, Hong Kong, 1981, p. 160 where Jimmy Kotwall is reported to have been a British agent entrapped by Indian collaborators for helping escapees and for getting medicines into prisons. See also G. B. Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 175–8 on the position of Indians in Hong Kong, and pp. 126., 129, 131, 242 f., and 387 on Kotwall.

¹⁰¹ Welsh, *History*, p. 422; Endacott, *History*, pp. 126 f., 129, 131, 242 f., 387.

taken over by the Japanese. Securities were withdrawn from banks and kept privately. Not only was the brewery occupied, but the Japanese Commander in Chief took over for his residence Buxey Lodge, the former home of Sir H. Mody, which had been gifted to the Anjuman by his widow. Many were made homeless. Individuals found themselves with little or no income, so the members of the Anjuman who still had any money paid into a fund to help the less well off.¹⁰² Even in the early years after the war, the Anjuman's funds were in dire straits so that the AGM in May 1949 was told that they did not have sufficient funds even to pay the priest. The situation was saved by a communal collection. By 1950 the economy of Hong Kong was improving and with it the fortunes of the Anjuman, enabling repair work to be carried out at the cemetery, and to the Zoroastrian building. Shelter was given to some Parsis who were still in personal crises. By the AGM in May 1959 the financial position was described as 'very sound'.

In the following fifty years, the Parsis of Hong Kong grew in wealth, paralleling the growth of Hong Kong in general. In the 1980s, as concern grew over the return of Hong Kong to China, a president of the Parsi community wrote to Mrs Thatcher seeking reassurance that their British passports would entitle them to settle in Britain. In a written reply, the Prime Minister's Private Secretary, David Barclay told Noshir Pavri (who had been awarded the MBE for his services to the colony), that all people of the British dependent territories 'who have acquired British nationality, will be eligible to retain a status after June 1997 which will enable them to continue to travel on British passports, and which will enable them to seek consular protection while in third countries. It is not, however, the intention to grant holders of the new status the right of abode in the United Kingdom.' In short, they were told that they could go anywhere, providing they did not come to live in Britain!¹⁰³

In the ten years leading up to the handover of rule in Hong Kong from Britain to China, the Parsi community in Hong Kong had actually grown from approximately 150 to 200 because people were redeployed there by multinational firms. The nature of

¹⁰² Extraordinary meeting, 7 Sept. 1942. The AGM for 1943 documented the declining resources of the Anjuman as expenses continued but income decreased. Their attempts to obtain the monies due for their buildings, e.g. in Shanghai or Macau, were in vain.

¹⁰³ Letter dated 3 Dec. 1984, preserved in the Parsi house records.

that population had, however, changed. Whereas the origins of the community lay in trade and business, by the 1990s it was becoming predominantly professional. The offspring of the successful business people were sometimes following in the family business, but more often they were pursuing higher education, especially overseas. Most of those who travelled overseas for such education stayed there in the professions, but some returned as lawyers, doctors, etc. There was also a new type of arrival, Parsis who had been successful in the employ of multinational companies being moved to Hong Kong for their parent company. Such people may stay for many years, but there is a sense that they are more transient than the descendants of the old families. In part this is for pension reasons. There is no old age pension scheme in Hong Kong. To stay on after retirement requires ownership of property—which is very expensive in the crowded island—and substantial financial resources. The elders of the successful business firms rarely retire fully, but for pleasure and for reward, continue business on a smaller scale. Successful professionals, lawyers for example, can earn larger salaries in Hong Kong than in most other countries, but this is rarely sufficient to live on in full retirement. The community, therefore, has two dimensions to it—the old business families and the generally young or middle-aged professionals. The older families live in flats in the same building, in three cases originally built by the family, so that there is a strong sense of community feeling. There is a third group, of unknown size, of younger staff employed by Cathay Pacific, especially flight attendants, who have little direct contact with the community. These different social groups also have different profiles. Those who have been educated abroad are more likely to have married out of the community. When I made the first of my three research visits to Hong Kong in 1984, none of the older families had any member who had married out. When I returned for my third visit in 1998, there was hardly a single family in the colony without one member married out. This has been a strong trend since the mid-1980s. It means that the strict guidelines followed only ten years earlier were being questioned, as will be seen below.

There has been relatively little debate in the post-war period on the running of the Anjuman, other than whether a woman could become a trustee. Although this had long been mooted in Shanghai (but never acted on), it was rejected at several meetings

in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁴ It was eventually accepted in 1989, when one woman was permitted to become a trustee. The debates on the building focused more on who could enter it, when, and to which parts non-Zoroastrians could go. There was a married priest for a time, but the Orthodox members were concerned about the purity laws during his wife's periods of menstruation. In the opinion of some, the problem was made worse by the fact that the floors were wooden, a porous substance in terms of the purity laws, unlike concrete or especially marble.¹⁰⁵ Non-Zoroastrians were allowed into the building for social occasions, and into the prayer room when a ceremony was not being performed. The problem was distinguishing between a religious and a social occasion in terms of the seasonal festivals, the *gahambars*, when the community meals are viewed as religious functions, especially when they had been endowed for that purpose. As intermarriage became more common in the post-war years, the question of the presence of non-Zoroastrians became more difficult, because it meant that spouses could share the meal when it was a wholly secular occasion, but not at the *gahambars*. This has not been solved at the beginning of the century. Members report that spouses understand and accept this, but that was not what I was told by the spouses themselves in private. Their point was that one of the cooks was a non-Zoroastrian, left-over food was given to non-Zoroastrians (a traditional act of charity), but yet they as spouses were excluded. Which community boundaries to preserve, when and where, is a fundamental issue for diaspora communities, raising both questions of principle and severely practical problems.

The major event for Hong Kong Parsis in recent years has been the erection of a new building. This has more implications than

¹⁰⁴ For example at a special meeting following the AGM on 1 Nov. 1978. The vote was twenty-seven for change, thirty-seven against. It was again discussed on 3 Apr. 1981 at a special general meeting. At an EGM on 28 Nov. 1989 it was agreed that there should be one woman trustee, and Mrs Ruby Minoo Master was elected.

¹⁰⁵ Hong Kong AGM, 13 Nov. 1964. The problem came in an unexpected manner. The community had always appointed single priests, despite the fact that marriage is a religious duty for priests and lay people in Zoroastrianism, because of the practical problems raised by the purity laws. But in 1964 the existing priest informed the trustees that he was returning to Bombay to get married and would be bringing his wife back with him. As she was past the menopause this did not present such a problem in her case. The normal solution was to seek a widower of mature years, and one divorcé was appointed. The problem of the porous wooden floors and the purity laws also emerged when the building at the cemetery was being renovated. AGM 24 July 1969.

are at first apparent to the outsider. There had been discussions for a year or two,¹⁰⁶ because older members could not cope with the stairs. A lift was mooted, but found to be expensive. A major cause of doubt was the imminence of the handover of the colony back to China, and fears that the community's future under Chinese rule would replicate conditions on the mainland, when they had been compelled to leave after the Communist takeover and property had been lost. However, at an extraordinary general meeting on 6 June 1990 the vote for proceeding was overwhelming (forty-eight votes for, ten against). The financial case had been well prepared. The fact that the Anjuman already owned the land was significant, for it is land, not erecting a building, which is expensive in Hong Kong. So the old building was demolished, the community rented a hall for meetings for two years and the new building was opened on 21 March 1993. The building was financed partly out of reserves, partly from a bank loan. But the twenty-eight-storey building has only the third to sixth floors for the community; the rest are rented out, generating a substantial income which was estimated to recover costs within an eight-year period. A 100% occupancy rate was quickly achieved, raising an annual income of eight million Hong Kong dollars. The loan was paid back early by selling some share investments, and so all the income is now available for the community. Not only does this ensure a healthy financial situation for the Anjuman, it also facilitates considerable charitable activity. At the turn of the millenium occupancy of the building has fallen to approximately 50%, but nevertheless income exceeds expenditure. The volatility of global financial markets evident in the early years of the new millennium and doubts about the commercial failure of Hong Kong (and its rivalry with Shanghai) has raised the concerns of many Parsis regarding their future.

The Anjuman had long engaged in charitable work whenever its income exceeded its expenditure. There has always been some charitable giving to poor Hong Kong Chinese, not least to the Sisters of Mercy, the order started by Mother Teresa. But the bulk of the charitable work, as with Shanghai, had always been back in India. The largest donation had been to the building of the Godrej Baug in Bombay, but the lengthy delays and disputes over

¹⁰⁶ e.g. at an EGM on 12 June 1989.

the allocation of flats had caused unease about similar funding through the BPP. At the end of the millennium the priority was for medical charities for Bombay Parsis, notably the Parsee General Hospital.¹⁰⁷ Inevitably there is concern that too much publicity will trigger too many causes which do not have such merit. There is a general, unwritten, agreement, that funds should only be given to other diaspora groups where they are also funding themselves, and where there is harmony. Consequently, appeals for help from Associations which are known to be seriously divided have been turned down. Self-help is a central part of the Anjuman's ethic. Thus loans rather than grants are given to Parsis for studies, to be repaid out of income when in employment. The emphasis is on social concerns, health and education for poor Parsis, rather than religious projects, though I was told that it is unlikely that if any of the great temples was in desperate need it would be turned down. In private of course, there are considerable debates and some 'arm twisting'. This income means that in terms of resources per head in the community, the Hong Kong Anjuman is the richest Zoroastrian community in the world. It is determined to use that money wisely.

The new building has, inevitably, raised some of the issues discussed earlier about priests' wives living on the property, about women at religious functions during menstruation, about non-Zoroastrian spouses at religious functions. So far there has been no change.

The Anjuman's Perceptions of Itself, of Others, and of the Future

When the Council of Hong Kong's Indian Associations petitioned the Governor in Council (18 January 1985) on the matter of the rights of Hong Kong's 6,000 Indians to use their passports to settle in Britain, they stressed how much the Indians had contributed to the Colony: four Indian merchants were present at the raising of the British flag; Indians served faithfully in the Civil Service and in the forces, not least in the Pacific area; they founded the

¹⁰⁷ So at an EGM on 27 Aug. 1997, it was agreed to donate one million rupees 'to the Bomanjee Dinshaw Petit Parsee General Hospital, Mumbai, for the upkeep of the hospital's totally free medical care for the poor'. On 2 June 1997, HK\$800,000 was given for a new building for the Yazd Education Trust, a Parsi school in Maharashtra.

Star Ferry; started the University; built the Seamen's Institute; donated the statue of Queen Victoria; opened the first banks, including the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank; and have donated schools and hospitals to the Colony.¹⁰⁸ Although the Parsis had not been involved in that petition, and are not active in the Council of Hong Kong's Indian Associations, in fact it was they who had been the leaders in each of the contributions to Hong Kong specified in the petition. In practice, the Parsis do not see themselves as part of the Hong Kong Indian community. Their links with Parsis in India are close. Geographically, it is easier for them to return to the old country than it is for Parsis from Britain and especially from America, so most do go back at least on alternate years. The focus of their charitable giving indicates a deep sense of their links. And yet in conversation, many have said they do not think of themselves as Indian. If for political reasons they had to leave Hong Kong, I was told, few would go to India. There is no single obvious destination: some prefer Australia because of the climate and the Pacific rim links; some prefer America as a land of opportunity; but a number specify Britain, especially now they have British passports. The fact that Hong Kong has so recently passed from British control means that their links with the United Kingdom are closer than are those of many Indian Parsis. But in the early years of the third millennium, the situation in Hong Kong is seen to be stable and few contemplate leaving.

Again in private conversations in 1998, many Hong Kong Parsis commented to me on the changes that are taking place within the community. The first is the gradual shift from a business-orientated community to a professional one. Although a few children have gone into the family business, they, and other siblings, are seeking higher education in the West,¹⁰⁹ and from this experience are moving into the professions as noted above. As other professionals are being deployed by their multinationals into Hong Kong,

¹⁰⁸ Petition to His Excellency Sir Edward Youde, GCMG, MBE Governor in Council, submitted on behalf of the Council of Hong Kong Indian Associations by its secretary, K. B. Rathi. The Associations named are: the India Association, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Hindu Association, the Hong Kong Indian Women's Club and the Khalsa Diwan. It mentioned in passing the Zoroastrian (Parsee) Club but did not say that it was the Parsis who had made most of the contributions.

¹⁰⁹ Only one young Parsi has attended Hong Kong University. The pressure for places is huge, and the demands for learning of a traditional kind are such that many prefer the atmosphere of a western university.

so they too are tilting the scales somewhat towards the professions. In the 1990s there have been five Parsi firms active in business, and more are involved in service industries, for example in insurance and asset management. Some of the older businessmen are only semi-retired and keep their concerns moving. One consequence of this western education is that almost all of the old large families now have at least one member married out. The current priest at the time of my 1998 research visit was not willing to perform the initiations of children born of intermarriages, and in this he shared the views of the trustees. But his term of office was coming to an end, and quiet discussions were taking place about the viewpoints that would be appropriate in a new priest. In fact the new priest held similar views to his predecessor. The wording of some recent benefactions for community meals had been changed so that intermarrieds could attend. There was a general acceptance that the rate of intermarriage would increase. There are a number of children under the age of 12, but few between 13–20, so many young Zoroastrians consider that the chances of finding a spouse there are remote. Only a few are willing to visit India to seek a spouse. An increasing proportion assume that they will meet their spouse through higher education or in their career. The younger Zoroastrians do not meet socially very often. The new building has a room for children to play in while their parents are at 'the club,' but it is a club for the older people: meals, drinks, cards. The only function each year specifically for children is the Christmas party. There are no religious education classes. When asked why there was no provision for the children's religious education, most people said that travelling across the island, the busy business and social lives they lead, means that few would participate if these activities were organized. Some younger parents expressed in private their concern that the children were not made to feel valued at the club.

The views expressed in private about the future of the community varied. Most considered that the situation would not alter much in the next five to ten years. Many people thought that there would be no dramatic change for even longer. The Chinese Government had promised that little would change for fifty years, and while it was seeking the handover of Taiwan to the mainland, most of my informants thought that change would not be dramatic in Hong Kong. Some believed that Hong Kong was a key economic

factor in Chinese growth, but others thought that as Hong Kong had declined when other cities like Shanghai grew at the start of the century, so this could happen again. Most were of the opinion that in the face of globalization and of the entry of China into world markets, the time of the small entrepreneur in the import–export trade was disappearing, except in specialist markets. Business people may, therefore, become part of larger concerns rather than simply run the traditional family business. Few saw the prospect of a Parsi community beyond fifty years.

A feature of Hong Kong Parsi life that virtually all informants expressed was the harmonious unity within the community. The danger of emphasizing the shifting balance between businessmen and professionals, noted above, is that it may create the image that these social differences reflect different ‘camps’ in the community. There is little evidence of this. The Anjuman is run by trustees who are members of the old business families, but even in private the younger or more recent arrivals among the professionals thought that this was advantageous, since the older business people had the contacts, and the know-how, to run the Anjuman’s affairs. The professionals deployed in Hong Kong by their firms are, in comparison to the old-established business families, relatively transient, even though their stay may extend for ten or even twenty years. But as noted above, few retire in Hong Kong. There is also concern that newcomers might seek to take over, as they are seen as having done in Singapore, and a fear of the rash expenditure of resources which would undermine the sound Anjuman finances. These healthy balances, and excellent facilities, enjoyed by the Anjuman are seen as evidence that the affairs have been well conducted. There was a strong and unified determination that Hong Kong would not become divided, as so many other Parsi communities have been. There is a quiet pride, and sense of duty, in their extensive charitable activities. Occasionally there is a sense that other Zoroastrian communities come too readily to seek financial assistance rather than help themselves. There is little or no networking with other diaspora groups; only a few individuals are in contact with friends who have moved to Singapore, otherwise all the international links are with the community in India. They are also approached by others, not least from Pakistan, to find career opportunities. That is almost

impossible to achieve. Immigration law is so tight that before taking someone from overseas, it has to be shown that there is no one locally who could do the job, and in business that can rarely be shown.

There is relatively little interaction with Chinese traditions. The care for elders might be compared to the Chinese customs, but respect for elders, family and ancestors is a strong Zoroastrian tradition, and one that has not been challenged in China as it has been in the West. In Hong Kong it is normal to bring a Feng Shui expert into a new home, office or building, to advise on the distribution of space and disposition of furniture to ensure harmony with the spirits. On my two visits in the 1980s, few Parsi businessmen said they had undertaken such consultations, but in one case an expert was consulted quietly over the plans for the new building. I was told, with some pride, that he had changed little, only small details. For example, he advised them not to have a sharp point at the corner of the building, because the sharp point represents a dagger, whereas Parsis are gentle and charitable, so it should be rounded off; and it was. But in the disposition of the funeral ground, another case where one would naturally look for influence, there is none. The community is proud that it sorts out its own problems, though occasionally it asks for the private opinion of the High Priest in Navsari, Dastur MeherjiRana. In short, the Hong Kong Anjuman is something of an oasis of affluence, benevolence and harmony at a distance emotionally, not just geographically, from other groups. Religion is seen to be an active part of community life in the employment of a full-time priest (virtually unique in the modern diaspora) who prays regularly for the deceased at the cemetery, and in the celebration of the *gahambars* and occasional other rites, such as a *jashan* in the home at important moments. But it does not have a prominent part. The study of the religion is practically non-existent. There have been three lectures by outside academics, one by Prof. Oxtoby from Toronto, and two by myself. But we travelled there at our own initiative for research, not at the invitation of the Anjuman. There has only been one book written on the religion from within the Anjuman. Whether this absence of religious study is a factor in the communal harmony it is difficult (especially for an academic!) to say. The Anjuman is often referred to in conversation as

‘the Parsi Club’. This may be legally unwise because of the taxing consequences on the property, and it is not entirely true, because there are religious functions held there. But there is some truth in it. The Anjuman fulfils the functions of the old Parsi clubs of Canton and Shanghai; it is also now in a position to do much more.

The Parsis of Karachi

Introduction

So far the Parsis have been studied in cosmopolitan, but Hindu-dominated, Bombay and in the Chinese environment. The Karachi setting is evidently different, for here Parsis now live in an Islamic state. Given the history of the persecution of Zoroastrians under Muslim rule in their Iranian homeland, the obvious question to ask is whether their experiences have been any different in a state created in the name of Islam. But Parsi history in Karachi pre-dates the Partition of India and it is essential for reasons that will become obvious to trace that earlier history. When the Parsis migrated to Karachi in the nineteenth century they were moving within the sphere of British rule, for it is only since the arrival of the British in the Province of Sind that there has been a recorded Parsi presence in the region. This chapter must therefore start with a brief overview of the history of the British arrival in Sind.

The British in Sind

The region known as Sind has a long history dating back to the Indus Valley civilization; the area was also important during Iranian movements eastwards, and in the history of Islamic expansion into India.¹ For the purposes of this chapter, however, the

¹ I wish to express particular gratitude to Mr Cyrus Mehta for his help with this chapter. He has been most helpful in many ways since our first meeting in the early 1970s, but as an ex-Karachi man he has been of particular assistance in this chapter, as has his brother, Virasp, who kindly read through the text and saved me from many errors. He also added a number of useful pieces of information from his memory, details not available in other publications. His suggestions have virtually all been included—with gratitude. Any failings, which remain, are, of course, my responsibility. My former student Emma-Jane Whitehead has been a great help also. She wrote an excellent undergraduate dissertation on ‘The Parsis in Karachi’ and passed on to me her substantial collection of notes and papers for consultation. I am also indebted to Thomas Metcalfe, Berkeley, for early guidance in the 1980s in my reading and to Prof. Ian Talbot of Coventry for kindly reading this chapter.

relevant story begins with the British arrival in the region. This overview does not attempt to provide a balanced picture of the region, but only to highlight the features relevant to the later study of the Parsis. For that reason, I have not paid attention to what was for Sind, and especially for Pakistan, the huge issue of Punjab, and mention only in passing the establishment of Bangladesh.

There are references to British influence in Sind from 1635 to 1662 and 1758 to 1775.² But it was the late eighteenth century before the British took a serious interest in the region. Their fear was that Napoleon, and later the Persians or the Russians, would follow this route to the Indian Ocean and to India itself. Despite some concerns in London at the extension of conquered territory, some local British officials insisted on a presence both in Sind and also in Afghanistan. This led to a succession of very expensive and disastrous campaigns, the Afghan Wars (1839–42, 1878–81). In this context the most relevant is the First Afghan War, when the British supported a Sikh claimant to the throne against the established Dost Mohammad. On the allegation of a Russian agent in Kabul, the British marched to support their Sikh nominee in 1839. He was unable to rule unsupported, so the British army of invasion became one of occupation. A large camp of suppliers grew to meet the needs of this army. But the position of the British became untenable from 1841 and they had to negotiate for a retreat, which few soldiers and suppliers survived.

The initial interest, therefore, was in the provision of a buffer region shielding the Indian jewel in the British crown. There was also trade rivalry with the local Amirs and between them and the Sikhs, and over the use of the Indus for trade. When the British found that they could not rely on a strong alliance with either the Amirs or the Sikhs, in 1843 Sir Charles Napier marched on Hyderabad, Khaipur and Mirpur. He did this against the advice of senior aides and to the unease of the British Government, who feared that the extension of their rule would increase costs unacceptably. The Court of Directors of the East India Company were even more concerned, but acquiesced in the face of government persuasion. Another motive reputed to Napier is that, after the Afghanistan débâcle, he wanted to make a public show of British power in the region. On the annexation of Sind in 1843

² R. A. Huttenback, *British Relations with Sind 1799–1843*, Berkeley, 1962, p. vii.

Napier was made Governor General. He was initially based in Hyderabad, but then moved his base to the cooler seashore of Karachi. This brief outline glosses over numerous instances of British bad faith on local negotiations, and substantial changes of policies. The relevant consequence in this context is Napier's building of Karachi harbour and the development of an irrigation system to transform the infertile lands of the Indus valley. The population also increased, from an estimated 14,000 in an area of 5 square miles, to 56,879 in an area of 74 square miles.³ Those who benefited from his good public works built a hall in his memory, which remains a prominent landmark in Karachi to this day. In 1847 Sind was merged into the administrative orbit of Bombay Presidency and the post of Governor of Sind was abolished. There was subsequently a sense of Sind being on the margin of British concerns, although Sir Bartle Frere, 1851–9, proved to be a good commissioner for the region and developed both the harbour and roads. The Second Afghan War ended in total ignominy and defeat, like the first. However, a result of the two campaigns was that the supply lines and movements of troops went through Sind, thereby bringing more British interest in, and resources to, the region.⁴

In the nineteenth century the port of Karachi grew considerably, supplying and functioning as an outlet for a huge hinterland. So from 1881 to 1901 the population increased from 73,560 to 116,663. The port was developed in the 1850s, much of the trade being with Bombay (a quarter of the ships entering Karachi were from Bombay and a quarter of the departing ships sailed for Bombay) and various European houses were opened. The cotton boom in South Asia at the time of the American Civil War boosted trade through Karachi. There were various further developments that significantly enhanced the port. The first was the opening of the Karachi–Kotri railway in 1861, for hitherto Karachi had been a port with little more than a desert hinterland. In 1862, the start of the Karachi–England telegraphic service

³ In addition to Huttenbach see Azimussan Haider, *History of Karachi*, private publication of a Karachi Ph.D. thesis, pp. 10–12 and the same author, *A History of Karachi Port*, Karachi, 1980.

⁴ There is a large body of literature on these campaigns. Convenient accounts are T. A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars*, London, 1980; A. H. Bilgrami, *Afghanistan and British India, 1873–1907*, New Delhi, 1972; D. P. Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876–1907*, Queensland, 1963; M. Barthorpe, *The North West Frontier—British India and Afghanistan*, 1982.

enhanced the port's international links. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 brought Karachi nearer to Britain than Bombay was, which had not been the case when ships had to sail around Africa. The introduction of steamers increased the use of this route, as there was a coaling station at Aden. In 1887 the Karachi Port Trust was opened.⁵ By the 1880s several of the big Bombay banks had opened in Karachi and in the same decade more railways were built (to Quetta and Punjab), thus opening up the interior for trade. Trade grew to such an extent that the Karachi Chamber of Commerce was opened in 1897. Irrigation schemes meant that the major exports were agricultural produce, primarily wheat and then cotton. From the 1920s, Karachi was second only to Bombay as a cotton exporter. Sind was separated from the Bombay Presidency and was made a separate province in 1936. From that year the Muslim League came into prominence. Karachi remained a cosmopolitan city, with its wealth and trade in the hands of Hindus. With their departure in 1947, the gap in the city's trade was filled not by local Muslims, but by Muslims who migrated from India, especially the Ismailis from Bombay and Menons from Kathawar.

The concerns of Sind in the first half of the twentieth century were not only with trade, but also with politics, as the Muslim League's tensions with the INC grew and the calls for the establishment of a Muslim state became more vocal.⁶ This history is, of course, a particularly sensitive one, with considerably different perspectives. Karachi is significant in the battle for nationhood for various reasons. First, it was the birthplace of Jinnah, the father of the nation. It was also, by the mid-twentieth century, not only the sole port but also the main trading centre of the region. It was made the capital city of the newly emergent Pakistan for these reasons, and because it was at some distance from the Indian border with its soldiers, although the Muslim League and the Punjabis had objected.⁷ So Karachi

⁵ Haider, *History of Karachi*, pp. 44–52.

⁶ On the tensions between Hindus and Muslims, and the internal Muslim divisions in the lead-up to the period of Partition, in Sind see I. Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: The Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India 1937–47*, Karachi, 1988, pp. 31–57.

⁷ Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857–1948*, Karachi, 1991, p. 269; S. J. Burki, *Pakistan: The Continuing Search for Nationhood*, Boulder, Colo., 2nd edn., 1991, p. 24. The standard biography of Jinnah is S. Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, Oxford, 1984. More recently there is the somewhat controversial A. S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity*,

was dramatically changed as a result of the formation of the nation.⁸

The Establishment of Pakistan

Karachi: the foremost city of Pakistan

The flood of migrants in both directions between Pakistan and India, after Partition, and the terrible violence associated with those movements, are a well-known part of history. Most of the estimated eight million Muslim refugees travelling to Pakistan went to urban centres, especially to Karachi, which changed from having a majority Hindu population to being predominantly Muslim. In 1951 it is estimated that 57% of Karachi residents were refugees.⁹ Many of the refugees represented a new class of residents: they were professionals from various Indian cities, many educated and westernized, and able to staff government offices and develop industry.¹⁰ The centre of government remained in Karachi until General Ayub Khan came to power and moved the capital from the refugee-dominated Karachi to the garrison town of Rawalpindi.

The history of Pakistan is not easily summarized.¹¹ In the first years after 1947 there was a period of democratic rule, with governments changing swiftly. On his death in 1948 Jinnah was succeeded by Liaqat Ali Khan, who was murdered in 1951. In the period 1958–71 there were two military dictatorships, with a bureaucracy composed both of the military and of civilians. The years 1972–7 saw the return of a democratically elected leader, Bhutto, but he in turn was overthrown by a military coup, that of General Zia ul Haqq. Bhutto was imprisoned on a charge of complicity in murder and was hanged in 1979. Zia ruled from

London, 1997. Both of these, in their different ways, seek to restore the adverse image of Jinnah in the western press and media, exemplified for example in the widely popular Attenborough film on Gandhi.

⁸ Sayeed, *Pakistan*, p. 64 notes that in 1927 the Muslim League had called for a separate Province of Sind, some three years before Sir Muhammad Iqbal called for a Muslim state.

⁹ Burki, *Pakistan*, pp. 39–42.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 162; J. Malik, *Colonialization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan*, Delhi, 1996, pp. 17–23.

¹¹ See I. Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, London, 1998, covering the period 1947–98. For the period covering both Bhutto and Zia, and the phenomenon of Islamization, see pp. 215–86.

1977 to 1988, when he was killed in mysterious circumstances in an air crash. Thereafter in the 1990s there was a period of democratically elected leaders, but of short-lived governments and insecure coalitions characterized by serious internal disputes, and again at the end of the millennium the establishment of military rule once more under Musharraf. In short, in its first fifty years of existence, Pakistan has had twenty-seven years of military rule, three heads of state killed or executed, and four periods of martial law. It has also had four constitutions, in 1956, 1962, 1973 and 1985, when Zia gave himself absolute power. During this period the population of Pakistan grew from 32 million to 113 million, a growth experienced mainly in the urban areas, notably Karachi.¹²

Within this turbulent history there are major issues of particular concern for this chapter: the economic development of Pakistan and the related subject of the country's international relations; the policies of Islamization and the associated questions of education and the power of the clergy.

The Pakistan economy

With an average increase in GNP of 4% per annum over the fifty years of independence, Pakistan has one of the higher growth rates among emerging national economies. Because of political tensions in the early years after Partition, Pakistan developed its manufacturing industry in order to avoid foreign, i.e. Indian, imports. This was owing in part to the role of the urbanized refugees who had little knowledge of agriculture. In the later 1950s the growth resulted more from agriculture, partly because of the re-emerging power of the great landlords and also because of the move of the capital from Karachi to the new capital of Islamabad, which was more representative of rural Pakistan. Overall in the 1960s the economy was buoyant. Under Bhutto in the 1970s there was substantial nationalization of large-scale industries and banks, but an encouragement of private investment in smaller concerns.¹³ One motive was to invest in major industries; another was to curb the power of some of the leading families. Zia reversed most of Bhutto's policies, and the rate of growth

¹² Burki, *Pakistan*, p. 171.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111–20, 122–3; O. Noman, *Pakistan: Political and Economic History since 1947*, London, 1988, pp. 75–8.

increased substantially in the 1980s. Whereas Bhutto had alienated Sindhi landlords, Punjabi farmers, the merchants and industrialists of Karachi, Zia supported them. Benazir Bhutto did not share her father's socialist orientation and encouraged private enterprise and utilities, but the instability of the 1990s, the decline of international financial aid and the ever-increasing allegations of corruption have seriously reduced the country's economic standing.

Pakistan's foreign relations

A major feature of the Pakistan economy has been its foreign relations, namely the wars with India, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and consequent American interest in Pakistan, and relations with the Middle Eastern oil countries.

After the India–Pakistan battles of 1948–9 there was further conflict in 1965 over Kashmir, and then in 1971 when Bangladesh, with Indian military support, gained its independence. There have been various periods of heightened tension, not least in 1985, 1990 and 1997–8 when the two countries undertook nuclear tests and in 2002 when it seemed that these weapons would be used in disputes over Kashmir. The country also became the focus of unrest when the Taliban escaped from western military force in Afghanistan and merged with various militant Muslim groups in Pakistan. In one sense the 1971 war may be seen to have benefited Pakistan, in that it was no longer responsible for a region (Bangladesh) with serious endemic poverty. Further, while the nation had straddled India, its policies remained India-focused. Once confined within its own boundaries, its attention could be concentrated on other things. But whatever the advantages in theory, in practice the war was a huge blow to morale and resulted in the fall of the Government. It also left a yet greater suspicion of India and tensions continued. These military concerns gave huge importance to the armed forces and consumed the bulk of the nation's finances; Pakistan is second only to Israel in the proportion of its GNP allocated for defence;¹⁴ the development of a nuclear capability in the 1990s was a drain on resources and triggered international disapproval.

Whereas after Partition India at first sought a non-aligned status, Pakistan sought political ties with America. In 1954 a Mutual

¹⁴ Noman, *Pakistan*, p. 179.

Defence Agreement was signed, and Pakistan joined American-supported military alliances, CENTA and SEATO.¹⁵ When Bhutto was hanged, American support diminished, until the Russians invaded Afghanistan. This transformed the Pakistan economy, for the Americans were willing to give substantial aid and military power for support in the battle against the Russians, as they were again in 2002 when seeking support for the war in Afghanistan. Post-1979, Pakistan was considered a frontline state and became the third largest recipient of American aid. Similarly, several Middle Eastern Muslim states funded and supported the Mujahidin and the three million refugees, especially as Zia's policy of Islamization grew.¹⁶

These two sources of aid were obviously a huge benefit to Pakistan's economy. Another major source of income was the large number of workers who went abroad in the late 1970s, to the Gulf States in particular (some to western countries). The money they sent back to their families meant that the nation's economy did not suffer as much from the oil price rises as did those of many other developing nations. It has been estimated that as much as 80% of the trade deficit was covered by these remittances.¹⁷ In the 1990s these sources weakened as American relations improved with the Russians, who withdrew from Afghanistan. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and its aftermath, also had a serious impact on the Pakistan economy because of the consequent oil price rise and because a number of Pakistanis moved from the Middle East back home, so their income was lost. Under Zia there had been something of a second industrial revolution; agricultural growth created a need for machinery; high taxes resulted in the non-reporting of business, and the resulting 'black money' oiled the wheels of the drugs and armaments trade. But some of the profits of 'black economy' were also used to fund industrial growth. However, the volatile nature of subsequent politics has caused problems for continued economic growth. The rise and fall of the economy is therefore a consequence both of internal and international political developments.

Islamization

These international pressures have reinforced a fundamental issue, the identity of Pakistan. There are also internal issues. Pakistan is

¹⁵ Burki, *Pakistan*, pp. 192–9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1991, pp. 197 f.; Malik, *Colonialization*, p. 38.

¹⁷ Burki, *Pakistan*, p. 131; Noman, *Pakistan*, pp. 161–6.

not a natural geographic unit. There are deep ethnic divisions within the country, between the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the peoples of the Northwest Frontier Provinces (mainly but not only Pathan) and Baluchistan. The Government and the upper echelons of the armed forces have generally reflected the ethnic origin of the leader of the day, for example under Zia the Punjabis were at the forefront. There has been hostility to central government on three grounds: (a) ethnic and linguistic diversity; (b) economic disparity among the regions—even after the independence of Bengalis in Bangladesh; (c) resentment against an authoritative, centralized government.¹⁸ The nation was created as an Islamic state and this was in a real sense its *raison d'être*. But the early leaders did little to promulgate an Islamic state. Jinnah's links with Islam have been seen as somewhat tenuous. He refused to base the Pakistan constitution on Islamic principles, and assured Hindus, Sikhs and others that the creation of a Muslim state would not mean the establishment of religious rule.¹⁹

The logic of the creation of Pakistan appeared to be undermined also by Jinnah's successors. In the early years of the country's history, its organization was determined not so much by Islamic ideals but by the inherited old colonial bureaucracy. The religious leaders, the *ulama*, were consistently distanced from power, while Zia, for his part, sought to bring many of them under state control.²⁰ Western-style democracy was not favoured for various reasons. Prior to 1971 it would have meant that Pakistan was dominated by the Bengalis of the east, and the rulers were all from western Pakistan. There was little sympathy for the Bengalis; Ayub Khan, for example, considered them not simply to be ethnically different, but also heavily influenced by Hinduism. When Bhutto came to power through the electoral system, he at first sought to weaken the power of the military, but was later obliged to appease them. He was more successful in weakening the power of the bureaucracy.

It was Zia, more than anyone else, who sought to use Islamization as a means of state control. In his first speech after coming to power, he said: 'I consider the introduction of an Islamic system as an essential pre-requisite for the country.'²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 192–216.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 3; Burki, *Pakistan*, p. 40.

²⁰ See Noman, *Pakistan*, pp. 9–12, but above all Malik, *Colonialization, passim*.

²¹ Noman, *Pakistan*, p. 118.

J. Malik has shown in detail how this was done by bringing the religious teachers and their followers under state control through the Government's administration of *zakat* funds, to fund those institutions which followed state policy.²² Zia also imposed stricter Islamic laws and punishments and in countless ways raised the profile of Islam. He came from a religious background, but a factor in his policy of Islamization was to unite the powers of the state in the face of external and internal threats. His policies also brought him closer to, and he became a beneficiary of, such oil-rich Islamic states as Saudi Arabia.²³ After his death he was succeeded by the liberal, more western-orientated Benazir Bhutto, but her hands were tied by old allies of Zia, notably the powerful President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, and Benazir's great antagonist, also a Zia protégé, Nawaz Sharif, who was himself to be overthrown by General Musharraf. Despite the reason for the creation of the state, there has therefore been only an eleven-year period (1977–88) when Islamic priorities have been highly profiled by the Government. From the 1990s, however, the many products of the religious schools developed by Zia, and the proliferation of 'sects' that emerged from them, have produced a generation of determined young people, with easy access to arms, who have brought violence onto the streets, not least in the metropolis of Karachi. The *ulama* never fully came under the control of Zia, and their supporters sought in their way to enhance the Islamization of Pakistan as they have radicalized and militarized themselves, a process reinforced by the movement of the Taliban and al-Qaeda into Pakistan from Afghanistan.²⁴

Parsis in Karachi

The early arrivals

Any account of this topic is necessarily heavily dependent on one source: Jehangir F. Punthakey's *Karachi Zoroastrian Calendar*, published in Gujarati in 1919.²⁵ He was born in Karachi in 1881 and worked in the family printing press, producing the *Parsi Sansar and*

²² *Colonialization*, pp. 179–294.

²³ Burki, *Pakistan*, p. 33; Noman, *Pakistan*, p. 145.

²⁴ Malik, *Colonialization*, pp. 303–7.

²⁵ This was translated into English by a descendant, F. Punthakey, Karachi, 1989.

Loke Sevak, one of the oldest Gujarati newspapers. He was active in most Parsi charitable concerns in the area, including being a trustee of the Anjuman Trust Fund. In 1932 he became a member of the Karachi Municipal Corporation, and deputy mayor in 1938, the year of his death. Through these and other activities he was able to collect numerous details about the early Parsi arrivals in a way that no other writer could now emulate. The following section is, necessarily, based on his work, but it seeks to give some pattern to the mass of details he collected in his *Calendar*.

There are indications of individual Parsis in Sind in the tenth and twelfth centuries, but essentially the modern community dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. The basis of Karachi Parsi wealth was their role as military contractors and commissariat agents from the days of Sir Charles Napier. Punthakey believes that the first Parsi firm in the region was the Jassawalla Company, based in Hyderabad, 1820–5. Two members of the firm accompanied the British forces in their invasion of Kabul in 1839 and shops were opened in Sukkur, Jallabad and Kabul.²⁶ There is also reference to the family having shops in Karachi and Ferozepure. Punthakey notes five more families arriving in the 1830s: Readymoney, Panday, Marker, Bhedwar and Rajkotwalla.

When Sir Alexander Burns left Bombay on a diplomatic mission to Dost Mohammad Khan, he wanted to take some students from the Bombay Native Education Society, but the only one willing to go was a Parsi, Nauroji Fardoonji. He returned to Bombay in 1838, but there is no record of him having used the experience to develop trade in the area. Until the annexation of Karachi, the main Parsi base in the region was at Hyderabad, but when the British moved to Karachi so too did the Parsis and the first major house to be established there was that of Hormusji Dadabhoy Ghadialy in 1844. He had been a contractor to the British forces in the First Afghan War and made a fortune from buying jewels from the Amirs. He was the first of the Parsis to bring his family to Karachi, and therefore the first to make clear his intention to stay, an example soon followed by others. Another Parsi who supplied the British forces in the Afghan campaign was

²⁶ Punthakey, *Calendar*, p. 13. See also D.J. Patel, *Parsis of Kurrachee*, Karachi, 1994, p. 12. Although he does not mention Punthakey, Patel is evidently heavily dependent on him. B. H. Antia provided a balanced overview of Parsi history in Pakistan in *Parsiana*, Feb. 2001, pp. 42–5.

Burjorji Nanabhoy Bilimoria (also known as Kabuli). He was there for two years from 1839, but, fortunately for him, when the British retreated he was kept prisoner in Kabul and so survived, unlike all but one of those who went on the retreat. He returned to open up a business in Hyderabad. Often the records do not indicate what the businesses of the Parsis were, but a common one was the liquor trade. One of the early figures in this trade was Dinshaw Pirozeshaw Minwalla (nephew of Ghadialy) who came in 1839,²⁷ followed shortly by Maneck Mehta in 1843. The following year Ruttonji Framji Canteenwalla moved his trade, supplying liquor to the forces, from Poona to Karachi. He brought his three sons with him and opened a large shop, with another in Jacobabad, where General Jacob commanded the Indian regiments. As the regiments moved around, so Canteenwalla moved his business. Another 1839 arrival, Dosabhoy Meherwan Wadia, developed trade with America, a visionary activity for that time, which resulted in him being made honorary American consul in Karachi. Just as the liquor trade was one common feature of the early Karachi Parsi community, so too was a Surat ancestry. Many Parsis were forced to leave the city during this period as a result of droughts followed by years of famine, fire and plague. Many went to Bombay, but a number travelled north to Karachi. One noted figure to combine both of these features was Hormusji Sohrabji Kothari, who arrived from Surat in 1846. When the cholera epidemic was at its height, he distributed sherry and champagne freely to the people! It was not only liquor that Parsis supplied to the British; many acted as general suppliers, some traded in cloth, or in beds and bedding; others worked as *dubashes* (stevedores). In the early years there were few 'professionals'. One exception was Kaikhusroo Fardoonji, who passed his civil engineer's examination in 1847 and moved immediately to Karachi as a surveyor of public works. In 1857, Dr Burjorji Rustomji moved to Karachi after gaining his medical degree from the Grant Medical College in Bombay, and worked at the government dispensary. He went on to write a number of books on medicine for the public.

In the 1850s a number of future leading families moved to Karachi. Dosabhoy Ghadyalli came in 1850 with the silk trade;

²⁷ Punthakey notes that the Government nominated Minwalla to be a member of the Municipality and made him a delegate of the District Matrimonial Court.

Hormusji Pestonji Shroff arrived in 1852 as a *dubash*, followed by Pestonji Bhikhaji in 1855. A major development was the opening of the port in 1853, when a passage was opened for ships of up to 800 tons, which expanded the Bombay–Karachi trade. On his retirement in 1857 from the government dockyard in Bombay, Ardeshir Wadia started running the Indus steam flotilla to develop trade on the Indus. Byramjee Eduljee also arrived in the mid-1850s and moved into the liquor trade. Byramji Pirojshah Minwalla, too, came at that time and later became an owner of fishing vessels.²⁸ Anyone knowing much of the modern Karachi Parsi community will recognize many of these early names, for the descendants of these early settlers continued to play an important role throughout the twentieth century.

The early Parsi settlers were not only important within the Parsi community; some of them also became prominent citizens of Karachi. In 1859 Dinshaw Maneckji purchased a printing press and newspaper, the *Sind Kased*, the first native press in the region. The first Karachi Parsi to develop extensive European trade was Hormusji Jamshed Rustomji, who moved to Karachi in his youth. He started as an importer of wine but also dealt in insurance and real estate, placing regular advertisements for desirable residences and office accommodation to let.²⁹ With European backing, he started the Karachi Tramway Company in 1884. He became a member of the municipality and a trustee of the port, a man respected by some of the British rulers.³⁰ One of the founder members of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce in 1860 was a Parsi firm, Ardashir & Co. Parsis continued to be important in the work of the Chamber; for example, the millionaire philanthropist, Sir Jehangir Kothari, represented the Chamber at the Chicago exhibition in 1893, while he was on a world tour. It was the Parsi judge of the Small Causes Court who regularized the Chamber's affairs in 1903.³¹ Similarly, when the Freemasonry lodge, 'Harmony', was opened in 1868, nine of the founding members were Parsis.³²

²⁸ Patel, *Kurrachee*, pp. 18–21.

²⁹ See, e.g. the *Sind Official Gazette* for 2 Oct. 1869, 6 and 13 Nov. 1869, 4 Dec. 1869.

³⁰ N. Gupta, *Hoormusjee J. Rustomjee: A Personal Testimony*, Allahabad, 1935. Gupta had been a political ally of Rustomjee in the latter's fierce rivalry with the Dinshaws.

³¹ H. Feldman, *Karachi through a Hundred Years: The Centenary History of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1860–1960*, Karachi, 1960, pp. 2, 74, 97 respectively.

³² Punthakey, *Zoroastrian Calendar*, p. 48 lists them as Ardeshir Gustadji Kohiyar; Jamshedji Ardeshir Maneckshah; Dadabhai Hirjibhai Patel; Kurshedji Darashah Majaina;

The Second Afghan War provided new opportunities for some Parsis whose families later became well established. Punthakey, then collector of taxes, turned to trade as a supplier to the forces, and Edulji Dinshaw built his fortune on this trade before diversifying in Karachi; above all, he moved into land and factories. Dinshaw was also prominent as a charitable benefactor, being, for example, the biggest single donor to the Sind Arts College in 1883 and the main donor to the Lady Dufferin Hospital in Karachi, 1896. In addition, he funded several dispensaries.³³ He was made a director of the Land and Shipping Company; a delegate of the Parsi Matrimonial Court; a trustee of the Karachi Port Trust and a member of the Municipal Corporation.³⁴ In 1899 he was made a Companion of the Indian Empire in recognition of his services to Karachi.³⁵ Edulji Dinshaw and his son, Nadirshaw, were respected citizens. In recognition of their services to the city, their statues were placed at the intersection of the city's main roads. After Partition, under Islamic law, the statues were removed. Eventually they were taken from the municipality storehouse and were placed in the grounds of the Karachi Parsi Institute.

There is one further group of Zoroastrian arrivals requiring comment, namely, the refugees from Iran. After Maneckji Limji Hataria (1813–1890)³⁶ had petitioned the Shah for the Zoroastrians in Iran, small numbers began to leave and settle in India, anticipating not only personal security but also support from their co-religionists, as Hataria had aided them in Iran. Sadly, not all their hopes were realized. Many Parsis viewed their Iranian co-religionists as poor, uneducated and unsophisticated. Their language difficulties made it difficult for them to obtain profitable employment, so many worked as servants in wealthy Parsi homes. A refugee fund, essentially for the Iranian Zoroastrians, was

Navroji Nusserwanji Pochaji; Dadabhai Edulji Sukhia; Dinshaw Pestonji Nazar; Faredoonji Nusserwanji; Magamwalla; and Meherwanji Ardeshir Mukadam. It is noteworthy that these are names which have not occurred before, but these people must have had a degree of social and business respectability to be accepted into a Freemasons' lodge. They indicate that the records omit names which would at the time have been seen as significant.

³³ Patel, *Kurrachee*, pp. 39, 42, 43.

³⁴ Haider, *Karachi*, p. 52.

³⁵ Punthakey, *Calendar*, p. 32. For further details on the charity work and the honours given to Dinshaw see *Sind Gazette*, 23 Aug. 1889, 26 Aug. 1890 and 25 Aug. 1908—references I owe to Thomas R. Metcalfe.

³⁶ For his achievements see M. Boyce, 'Maneckji Limji Hataria in Iran', in N. D. Minocher-Homji and M. F. Kanga, *K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Golden Jubilee Volume*, Bombay, 1969, pp. 9–31.

established by Shapurji Sopariwala in 1888.³⁷ The business they became associated with was the running of teashops, the first in Karachi being opened in 1893 by Jehangir Rustom Irani.³⁸ There were many Irani teashops, but after Partition their numbers dwindled.

By the late nineteenth century it is possible to be reasonably precise about Parsi numbers. In 1881 there were 1,062 Zoroastrians in Sind, of whom just over half (556) were married or widowed, i.e. they had come as families. By 1891 the community had increased by 50% to 1,534, and by 1911 it had reached 2,411. The growth was partly due to migration, but also to the number of births. Punthakey shows that every year between 1895 and 1911 births considerably exceeded deaths (e.g. in 1896 there were 611 births, only 30 deaths).³⁹ This growth in size, and in particular the growth of families, meant that there was an increasing number of institutions developed to provide for their needs.

Early Parsi institutions in Karachi

A significant community action indicating a perception of settlement has always been, as we have seen in the chapter on China, the establishment of a funeral ground. One was established in Hyderabad a short (but unknown) length of time before 1846, when a wall was built around the cemetery.⁴⁰ The Karachi funeral ground, or *aramghah*, was also established sometime between 1839 and 1844. In 1848 the first traditional *dokhma* was built in Karachi, by Hormusji Ghadialy. By 1873 it was evident that the community was growing so much that a new and large *dokhma* was needed. The collection of funds started in 1873 and the *dokhma* was consecrated in 1875.

³⁷ Patel, *Kurrachee*, p. 43.

³⁸ Punthakey, *Calendar*, p. 53.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 149. See also E. H. Aitken, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sind*, Karachi, 1907; Patel, *Kurrachee*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ It is interesting to note some of the names Punthakey lists as donors (*Calendar*, p. 18). They include Maneckji Limji Hataria, also members of the following families: Jassawalla, Panday, Ghadialy, Sohrabji, Bilimoria (Kabuli), Mody, Sethna, Cooper, Minwala, Mehta, Vatcha, Pandol, Tehmulji, Kotwal, Ghaswalla, Pettigara, Dadabhoy, Byramji, Chicken, Messmen, Shamgirna and Basha. Altogether, Punthakey lists twenty six individuals, all male. What is significant is that many of the later prominent families are included on this list. One feature that will emerge in this chapter is the long establishment of certain families. General brief accounts of Parsis in Karachi and Sind appeared in *Parsiana*, Mar. 1980, pp. 17 f.; Sept. 1990, pp. 19–23, though some of the statements provoked a negative reaction as showing an Indian bias, *Parsiana*, Sept. 1991, p. 3.

What is significant in Karachi Parsi history compared with that in the China Seas is the early date at which a range of community institutions and buildings were established. By the time that the Parsi population had exceeded 2,000, i.e. by 1911, the following projects had been achieved in addition to the funeral ground:

- 1849 The first temple.
- 1859 The first Parsi school (Balaksala, later to become the Bai Virbaiji Sopariwala Parsi High School, discussed below).
- 1854 Charity flats built.
- 1859 Opening of first Parsi school for boys and girls.
- 1869 A second fire temple.
- 1870 Opening of new school building.
- 1880 Rabadi school.
- 1882 The first Parsi charitable dispensary.
- 1887 The second Parsi charitable dispensary.
- 1888 Jehangir Rajkotwalla Baug—a *dharamsala* for Parsis moving to Karachi to stay until they could establish a home.
- 1889 Jehangir Baug for poor Parsis.
- 1894 Karachi Parsi Institute, originally named the Karachi Parsi Gymkhana—a social centre mainly for sports cricket, billiards, etc. Originally it was for men only, for arranged dinners and parties for members' children. In 1899 women were allowed to dine also. The premises were also used for marriage and initiation ceremonies
- 1894 Parsis were the major donors for the building of Karachi's main hospital, the Lady Dufferin Hospital.
- 1903 A home for Parsi widows; third Parsi dispensary; Zoroastrian Club (Karachi Parsi Institute).
- 1904 Swimming pool at Karachi Parsi Institute.⁴¹
- 1906 A new building for the Parsi school.
- 1908 The establishment of the Parsi Punchayet Board.
- 1909 The establishment of the Parsi Maternity Hospital; the start of a Parsi newspaper, the *Parsi Sansar and Lok Sevak*; flats at the Zoroastrian club for outstation visitors.⁴²
- 1910 The Young Men's Zoroastrian Association, a social and educational body.

⁴¹ It was built through individual donations. The highest donation was Rs. 5,000 from Kavasji H. Katrak and so it was named the Katrak Swimming Bath.

⁴² A fully equipped maternity home was built in 1920 by Nusserwanji R. Mehta in memory of his wife and was called the Bai Gulbai Maternity Home.

1911 A subsidized block of flats for Parsis and the H. J. Rustomjee Poor House.

Within the next few years, two more housing colonies and two maternity wards were added. This is a remarkable record for such a small group. It not only indicates the wealth of the community and its charitable concerns, but also demonstrates that, from an early time, the Karachi Parsis saw themselves as being permanent settlers in Sind, more so than the communities in China and other diaspora groups did. By tracing briefly the history of some of these institutions one may gain a picture of priorities and of communal self-perceptions. Rather than detail each one separately, this chapter will look at the different types of institutions.

Religious institutions

Religious institutions were chronologically the earliest concern of the early Karachi Parsi settlers. 1839 witnessed the opening of the first burial ground and the arrival of a priest. In 1848 a *dokhma* was opened and the first *alat* was brought from Gujarat.⁴³ In 1849 the first fire temple was opened, and a *nasakhana* built for the corpse-bearers, a property rebuilt in 1866. In 1869 a school was turned into a temple, with a proper temple being opened in 1875. The first sacred bull, or *varasya*, was consecrated in 1875 and a year later the first *nirangdin* was performed—when the bull's urine was consecrated. In 1881 a fund for the priests' salary and payment for corpse-bearers was established. In 1904 the second temple fire was upgraded to the status of a permanently burning fire (Atash Adaran). This was rapid provision of a substantial religious infrastructure for what was still a relatively small community. The funeral grounds are consistent with priorities of Parsi communities around the world. The act of greater significance than is obvious to the outside world was the consecration of the *varasya*, for this indicates a determination of religious independence.⁴⁴ The community in Bombay did not have a *varasya* for approximately 150 years after its foundation. It was, of course, easier for them to obtain the *nirang* and bull's hair for the rituals from Gujarat than it was for Parsis from the more distant Sind, yet it demonstrates a determination to resource not only the lower or outer ceremonies, but also the higher or inner liturgies.⁴⁵

⁴³ Punthakey, *Calendar*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁴⁵ Unfortunately such a bull is no longer kept in the Karachi fire temples.

The accommodation for the corpse-bearers was also significant. It had been customary for wealthy Parsi families to have their Parsi servants carry the corpse to the funeral ground, but with the increasing wealth of the community few had Parsi servants, as Parsis avoided such menial roles. So a regulated force of pall-bearers (*khandhias*) was formed and a central provision therefore became necessary.⁴⁶

The first Dar-i Mihr was consecrated in 1849 in the area known as Sadar Bazaar. There had been a dispute regarding who would fund the temple. Ghadiali, who had opened the *dokhma*, wished to fund it, but after some disputes it was agreed that Hirjibhoy Jamshadji Behrana would do so. It is noteworthy that whenever religious buildings or funds were required in the nineteenth century, the money was quickly forthcoming. Behrana's widow, in compliance with his wishes, had the building renewed in 1875, and an upper storey was added and the whole thoroughly renovated in 1918.⁴⁷ The second temple, a dadgah, was consecrated in an old school building in 1869. Located in Ghadikhata district, it was named in memory of Dosabhoy Meherwanji Wadia. The utensils came from China—an interesting indication of the international networks functioning even then. Most funds were raised locally, but nearly a third came from Bombay. The fire was upgraded in 1904 to enable the performance of higher ceremonies. Kavasji Katrak provided funds for the consecration ceremony and maintenance.⁴⁸ The first full-time priest appears to have been appointed in 1848.⁴⁹ Fundamentally, therefore, the complete provision for the religious life of the Parsis of Karachi was in place within sixty years of the arrival of the first settlers, in a community totalling approximately only 1,500 persons (although that number was also the largest Zoroastrian diaspora community of the time).

Educational institutions

In chronological terms educational institutions were the second priority of Karachi Parsis. The first school was opened in 1859 for teaching boys and girls Gujarati and Zoroastrian prayers. The numbers of pupils gradually grew and in 1870 the school moved

⁴⁶ Punthakey, *Calendar*, pp. 74–8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–83.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

to a large house donated by Shapurji Soparivala and was named—after his late wife—the Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School, a name it bears today. From 1875 English was introduced into the school and the girls' syllabus was extended to include sewing classes. The 1871 records show that the syllabus included arithmetic, reading, writing, history and geography.⁵⁰ In the 1870s the numbers of boys and girls attending were roughly equal.⁵¹ The 1878 report refers to the education of a deaf mute girl, indicating a care for the disabled as well as the able-bodied.⁵² The 1898 records show the addition of a kindergarten,⁵³ and in 1904 a gymnasium was added.⁵⁴ In 1906 it moved to yet larger premises and in 1918 the girls were provided with a separate school, the Mama Parsi Girls Secondary School.⁵⁵ In 1889 another Parsi, Ervad Rustomji Pestonj Rabadi, opened a cosmopolitan school, with a particular concern for the less well-off.⁵⁶ This, and the Catholic schools, provided fierce competition for attracting the best Parsi students. The moves for female education were not easily implemented. Some traditional sections of the community opposed them and it proved difficult to obtain suitable lady teachers.⁵⁷ A brief history such as this necessarily glosses over the struggles of many valiant workers. The Mama Girls School once opened was quickly successful, with 171 pupils registered in 1918, a number which grew slowly and steadily over the following years.⁵⁸ But the perception of an appropriate syllabus was not strictly academic—there were few matriculations; it was, rather, domestic skills that were emphasized. In 1922 the boys' school expanded physically and intellectually when it became a High School. Under its headmaster, Dr M. B. Pithawala, Zoroastrian religious education was strong.

Karachi Parsis have also been active in developing higher education in the region. The earliest moves date back to 1885, when Parsis were prominent among the donors to the Sind Arts College—three in particular: Edulji Dinshaw, H. J. Rustomji and Jehangir Hormusji Kothari. Unfortunately, relatively few Parsis

⁵⁰ *The Virbaijeeite Centenary Volume*, Karachi, 1959 (no named editor; hereafter *Virbaijeeite*), pp. 11 f. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 24. ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵⁵ Punthakey, *Calendar*, pp. 86–9 and especially *Virbaijeeite*, pp. 1–71.

⁵⁶ *Virbaijeeite*, p. 21; Punthakey, *Calendar*, pp. 90–1. ⁵⁷ *Virbaijeeite*, pp. 36–8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

took advantage of this opportunity (262 in thirty-two years), preferring to study in Bombay.⁵⁹ In 1946 a Parsi, Sheriyar D. Contractor, led the move to develop a technical workshop at the BVS, an interest that developed later into the Dinshaw Engineering College, which eventually was made into a university. He was an educationalist throughout his life. After retiring as Director of Education, he served as an honorary secretary of both the Parsi schools. He was a leading figure and a trustee of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman.⁶⁰

The educational developments were not confined only to schools and universities. Various charitably-minded Parsis established other funds: for the education of young Zoroastrians, both in Karachi and overseas, for books,⁶¹ for libraries and reading rooms.⁶²

Social institutions

The term 'social' in this context covers two main areas: housing and opportunities for Parsis to meet. The Karachi Parsis addressed the issue of communal housing before the community in Bombay did. The records are somewhat ambiguous, but it would appear that the first accommodation for Zoroastrians in Karachi dates back to 1854, with another in 1889, the latter known as Jehangir Baug, funded by Jehangir Rajkotwala, whose family had built the earlier structure.⁶³ These were basically *dharamsalas*, rest homes for Parsis travelling to, or settling in, Karachi. Similarly, in 1909 flats were built in the grounds of the Parsi Club to accommodate Parsis from the outstations coming for social occasions. The earliest charitable housing, designed to give permanent accommodation, was a home for widows in 1903, funded by the family of H. J. Rustomji in his memory.⁶⁴ In 1906 K. B. Katrak announced a fund for flats for poor Parsis. After a wide search for suitable land, it was eventually decided (1908) to build this on community grounds, previously called the Panchayet Wadi, now known as Anjuman Baug. The flats were built in 1911 and five more buildings were soon erected on that land. It was to manage this property that the first formal board of Panchayet trustees was formed, with a constitution in 1919.⁶⁵ In 1918 Edulji Dinshaw erected a building with ten flats.⁶⁶ These moves for

⁵⁹ Punthakey, *Calendar*, p. 95.

⁶⁰ *Virbajjeeite*, pp. 67–71.

⁶¹ Punthakey, *Calendar*, p. 94.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 119–22.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–1, 110.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

charitable housing for the poor anticipated similar moves some years later in Bombay. They were the start of a substantial programme in Karachi. Later projects included the Katrak Parsi Colony in 1926. It was first established in 1923 and was registered as the Karachi Parsi Co-operative Housing Society Ltd., under the Co-operative Society's Act. It is the oldest housing society in Karachi. A block comprising twenty-four flats was built with donations made by the Mehta and Dubash families as an extension to the Parsi colony in 1930 and is known as Noshirwan Mehta Naman; it is now managed by the Karachi Parsi Anjuman. The Anjuman also manages Jamshed Baug with eighty flats. The Cyrus Minwalla Colony is a project built after Partition, in memory of a well-known hotelier. It was built under the Co-operative Society's Act known as the Zoroastrian Co-operative Housing Society Ltd. There have, therefore, been substantial programmes to provide housing for Parsis in Karachi.

Living in colonies is obviously one way for Parsis to meet and interact. But there have been other important social organizations. The first was the Zoroastrian Club opened in 1893, more commonly known as the Karachi Parsi Institute or KPI, or the Parsi Gymkhana. It was founded by two Parsis eager to encourage sporting activities among the youth of the community, in particular Dr Kaikhusroo N. Spencer and Prof. Burjorji J. Padshah. As well as indoor games such as billiards and cards, outdoor sports such as cricket (a pavilion was opened in 1916 and a swimming pool in 1904), tennis, football and hockey also became popular at the KPI.⁶⁷

Another important development in the social history of Karachi Parsis was the founding of the Young Men's Zoroastrian Association (YMZA) in 1910.⁶⁸ The meeting which agreed to found the YMZA was chaired by Dastur Dhalla (discussed below), then only 35 years of age. The original idea was that of Dinshaw N. Kabraji, aged 21. The editor of the *Parsi Sansar*, Pherozechah R. Mehta, who was also YMZA's literary secretary, supported

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 127–30.

⁶⁸ The major source for an account of its foundation is 'The First Fifty Years: Being a Record of the Work of the Young Men's Zoroastrian Association, Karachi'. This is an anonymous twenty pages of typed (unpublished) foolscap material, produced in 1960, for the golden jubilee of the YMZA. There is also a five-page foolscap typed text written by B. S. H. J. Rustumji. On the platinum anniversary F. K. Dadachanji produced an unpublished typed eulogy of the YMZA.

him. The leaders he named in an article came forward and supported the YMZA, notably Sir Jehangir. H. Kothari, who was elected the first president, K. H. Katrak and the then young, later very influential, Jamshed Mehta. Edulji Dinshaw gave financial support. So the foundation of the YMZA was a combined effort by the young and by 'the great and the good'. Consciously modelled on the success of the YMCA in the West, it was concerned to provide recreational opportunities, reading matter in order to cultivate a taste for literature, and help with health and physical fitness. Clause 2 of the rules and regulations passed in October 1910 stated:

The objects of the association are: (a) The diffusion of ethical and religious knowledge and the cultivation of elocutionary and argumentative powers by means of lectures, debates and readings on literary and scientific subjects open either to the members of the association or to the general public as the association from time to time determines. (b) The promotion of goodwill and friendliness by means of social gatherings etc.⁶⁹

The first report mentions a wish to erect a building for a library and reading room—which was opened in 1920. The second report (1911) mentions twenty-two daily newspapers, weeklies or magazines that were contributed to the YMZA. The Association contributed eleven, including the obvious Parsi newspapers *Jame Jamshed*, *The Parsi*, *Hindi Punch*, *Parsi Sansar* (Kothari supplied *Rast Gofar*). But non-Parsi papers were also included—*The Times of India*, *Physical Culture* and *Tit Bits* (Association-supplied), *Illustrated London News*, *Madame* and *Fry's The Man's Magazine* (by Kothari). The papers suggest an attempt to create a Parsi gentleman's club.⁷⁰ The lectures were mainly on secular subjects ('Does Civilization lead to Morality?') but religious classes were also held, given mostly by Dastur Dhallā. The most successful cultural occasions appear to have been *Shah Name* readings. The new Association was supported in its early years by the KPI, notably by the provision of facilities, and since there was then no rivalry the YMZA attempted little in the way of sports. In the first five years of its history, membership of the YMZA increased over 50%, from 97 to 164.⁷¹ Parallel to the Young Men's Association was formed the Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal for ladies in 1912.

⁶⁹ Anon., *Jamshed Nusserwanji: A memorial*, Karachi, 1954, pp. 2–4.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 7. ⁷¹ Ibid., p. 5.

The object was slightly different: 'to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and to work in such directions as would make a Parsi Lady an ornament of a Parsi home'.⁷² It has undertaken much wider work also. In its eighty-nine years, it has not only alleviated the sufferings of the poor, but through its large endowment funds has served the community by way of medical aid, educational grants for local and higher studies abroad and child welfare programmes.

Another branch of Parsi social concern in Karachi has been medicine. This began in 1882 with the first Parsi charitable dispensary, followed by a second in 1887 and a third in 1903, all funded by Edulji Dinshaw. In 1908 Dr Kaikhusroo D. Contractor, as noted above, started a maternity home at his own expense in a house next to his own. With funding arranged by Jamshed Mehta, this grew over the years into the Parsi Maternity Home, a place concerned not only with medicine but also with religious needs, where the purity laws could be observed.⁷³ The main focus of Karachi Parsi medical charity does not carry a Parsi name. The Lady Dufferin Hospital was opened in 1894 in honour of the Vicerene, but the single largest donor was Edulji Dinshaw. A ward was maintained in this hospital for Parsis, and Parsis continue to be substantial benefactors (often anonymously) to this, Karachi's largest hospital.⁷⁴ In 1936 the Parsee General Hospital was opened in Karachi and named after Bomanshaw Minocher-Homji. This concern has been sustained at the end of the millennium. On his death in 1999, Mr Justice Dorab Patel, the only one of the three judges to vote against the execution of Bhutto under General Zia, donated all his wealth for the construction of a kidney hospital.⁷⁵

Thus, within a hundred years the Parsis of Karachi grew significantly in numbers and in the material and social provision for their community needs. What is striking is how the community from early times saw Karachi as its base, as its home. How this attitude fared after the creation of the Muslim State of Pakistan will be considered below. First, however, it is important to look at a major aspect of the Zoroastrian religious life of Karachi, and of

⁷² Ibid., p. 11.

⁷³ Punthakey, *Calendar*, pp. 98–100.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 97. The reference to anonymous benefactions is based on information communicated personally by a non-Parsi senior member of the managing body when I visited the hospital.

⁷⁵ *Parsiana*, Feb. 2000, p. 42.

the wider community: the work of (later Dastur) Dr Maneckji N. Dhalla.

Dastur M. N. Dhalla (1875–1956)

Dhalla was born in Surat but moved at the age of 3 with his father and uncle, when they became priests in Karachi. They were extremely poor, living in an especially deprived area of the city. Dhalla's weakness at mathematics meant that he did not matriculate, so instead of going to university he edited religious periodicals, but the costs of publication drove him into debt. He read voraciously in the library in his spare time. He was initiated as a priest at the age of 15, and was devoted to the Zoroastrian religion, frequently delivering fiery Orthodox lectures and articles. In his private life, he sought to follow a strict observance of the purity laws, but his wife did not always agree with them. His lectures and writings brought him to the attention of the liberal reformer in Bombay, K. R. Cama, who arranged for him to study in Bombay for a BA in Avesta and Pahlavi, which he obtained in 1904. There he decided to adopt a low profile in the Orthodox–Liberal debates, which were very lively. In Bombay he came to the attention of the visiting distinguished Professor of Iranian Studies from Columbia University, New York, A. V. W. Jackson. Dhalla proceeded to study in New York, gaining an MA in 1906 and a Ph.D. in 1908—the first Zoroastrian to obtain such a western qualification in Zoroastrian studies. While at Columbia, Dhalla took the opportunity to study a whole range of subjects, notably Sociology under Giddings, and Comparative Religion, attending the lectures of Spencer. Spencer was then elaborating his theories on the evolution of religion, tracing a growth from animism to polytheism to henotheism to the peak of the evolutionary ladder, an ethical monotheism. Jackson's own committed Protestant faith also undoubtedly had a powerful impact on the Karachi priest. In his autobiography Dhalla gave his own account of the impact of these studies:

By reading books on anthropology and sociology, I began to examine scientifically, questions relating to superstition, magic, customs, ceremonies, prayer, priesthood, society, marriage and other allied subjects. I studied their origins historically, and, for the very first time I began to see vividly how they have progressed from the primitive stage to their present condition.

My three years and nine months of scientific and critical study at Columbia University of such subjects as theology, ethics, anthropology, sociology and philosophy eradicated religious misconceptions that had gathered in my mind due to my blinded mental vision, traditional beliefs and up-bringing. As the clouds of superstition dispersed, the mist of mental darkness was rent asunder. I was free of the religion of fear that was the belief of infant humanity and turned towards the pure religion of love, the religion as preached by the prophets and uncorrupted by their fanatical followers.

Now that I had been enlightened by scientific study, and now that I had come to know and gain so much, I no longer adhered to old ideas. My thinking, my outlook, my ideals and my philosophy of life changed. The purpose and meaning of living changed—everything changed.

I was now eager to become the thinker of new thoughts, the student of new ideas and the propagator of new concepts. In 1905 I had set foot on American soil as an orthodox. Now in 1909 I was leaving the shores of the New World as a reformist.⁷⁶

There are three dimensions to Dhalla's life thereafter. First, he was elected the Dastur of Karachi in 1909, and until his death led a life of simple and deep devotion. Some of his critics in Bombay and elsewhere have tended to overlook this dimension to his life. But all who knew him personally speak of his pastoral and spiritual work with sincere admiration. Second, he organized many bodies and undertook numerous religious initiatives. Perhaps the most (in³)famous of these was a series of Zoroastrian conferences in Bombay, in 1910–19. He sought to balance the contribution of Liberal and Orthodox, lay and priestly; indeed, one of the leading Orthodox Dasturs, Dastur Darab Sanjana of the Wadia Atash Bahram in Bombay, agreed to chair the first conference. Most of the leading Bombay figures supported the initiative, until a whispering campaign alleged radical reforming plots to let non-Zoroastrians into the community and to stop *dokhma* funerals. The conferences became the targets of fierce communal debate and eventually, after nine annual conferences, Dhalla gave up the endeavour.⁷⁷ Another religious initiative was a sustained programme over many years of lectures and classes in Karachi. Perhaps the best illustration is the *Hamkhara* sermons under

⁷⁶ M. N. Dhalla, *Dastur Dhalla: The Saga of a Soul: An Autobiography of Shams-ul-ulama Dastur Dr Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla*, trans. Gool and B. S. H. J. Rustomji, Karachi, 1975, pp. 157–8.

⁷⁷ Dhalla, *Saga*, pp. 285–301 on the first conference, also pp. 372–84.

the auspices of the YMZA. Here he introduced congregational prayers, not common in Zoroastrian tradition. For his lectures a well-intentioned supporter donated a teak platform, with rails, for him to deliver his sermons. There was an outcry, for Dhalla was thought to be introducing the Christian pulpit, and rumours spread that he was going to bring in an organ for hymn-singing.⁷⁸ Third, and most important in this context, is his writing. He produced many papers, but of particular significance here are a series of books on Zoroastrian history and theology, one on his view of past religious history, one on the future of religion, and a devotional book of prayers.⁷⁹ These are not only important from the perspective of past history, but are also of contemporary relevance, for the writings of this western-educated Karachi High Priest are often quoted by American Zoroastrian communities today. Many Zoroastrians find meaningful expositions in the writings of this devout Zoroastrian who wrestled with western thought decades before they did.

Dhalla sought to contextualize Zoroastrians in the global history of religions. He presented Zoroastrianism as the peak of the evolutionary ladder, for he argued that Ahura Mazda revealed the world's first ethical monotheism to the prophet Zoroaster. The prophet's followers, however, were not as spiritually developed as he was, and they quickly relapsed into the ancient nature worship and polytheism of former times so that Zoroastrianism became encrusted with superstition and magical beliefs by the priesthood. Modern western scholarship, he believed, laid bare the original prophetic message and established Zoroastrianism as a high ethical monotheism.

The two publications which show his interpretation best are his *History*, an academic work developing his *Theology* with new material and seventeen new chapters, and his devotional work, *Homage*. *History*, p. xxxi, states: 'Zoroastrianism . . . as preached in the Gathas is the very embodiment of the simple and the abstract. It is the realization of the ideal. It is the form to which the coming generations have to conform. Deviation from it means a fall,

⁷⁸ Dhalla, *Saga*, pp. 309–14.

⁷⁹ Following the order in which they are mentioned above the books are: *Zoroastrian Theology*, New York, 1914; *History of Zoroastrianism*, New York, 1938; *Our Perfecting World*, New York, 1930; *Mankind Whither Bound?* Karachi, 1950; *Homage unto Ahura Mazda*, 1944—and many reprints. The last of these is now available on the Internet—see Ch. 10 below.

a degeneration of the religious life.’ Consistent with contemporary Protestant thought, and biblical scholarship, Dhalla viewed the later medieval theology as a degeneration from the pure prophetic message. His devotional work makes no reference to the traditional myths of creation and renovation. Perhaps the most significant omission is any reference to the cosmic evil being, Ahriman. Hence the classical perspective on death as the work of evil is no longer possible. He therefore speaks of death as Ahura calling men back to himself, and explains the death of children as being due to the fact that they were so good that Ahura called them back to himself—both views on death common among contemporary liberal Protestants. Hell he interprets as a state of mind. His own religious position is especially evident in the closing chapters of his *History* when he writes about modern history. Even on the contents page (p. xvii) he headlines a section ‘Orthodoxy is obstinacy to forget anything old and learn anything new.’ His chapter on ‘The Reform Movement’ indicates where he thinks truth lies, and his attack on the Theosophists and occult tendencies equally highlights his rationalizing, westernized approach.

What Dhalla gave to his people was an exposition of the religion consistent with the latest western scholarship. Among the Orthodox of Bombay this was contentious. He was often invited to lecture there and had his supporters in Bombay, but the lectures were at times disrupted by Orthodox protests. Among his people in Karachi his personality ensured that his teachings were generally respected, increasingly so as the years passed. In addition to his writings, he was deeply influential on different generations because of the teachings he gave in temples, in meetings, in school classrooms and in small groups. He gave a priority to religious education in Karachi that it did not have in Bombay. Some of the prominent religious teachers in Karachi at the end of the twentieth century had been students of Dhalla, as too have some of the religious teachers in the diaspora. In recognition of his work Columbia University gave him an Honorary Litt.D. in 1929, and the Government awarded him the title *Shams ul ulama* in 1935.⁸⁰

However popular and influential Dhalla was, it would be a mistake to think that the religious life of Karachi Parsis was

⁸⁰ *Saga*, pp. 442–51, 488–91 respectively.

fundamentally determined by western-influenced theology. Passing references in the biography of Marker (to be discussed below) and interviews with older residents of the city make it clear that the daily devotional round, *loban*, the burning of a *divo*, *kusti* prayers, faith in the efficacy of favoured prayers, four-day wedding ceremonies, observance of the purity laws (including restrictions on a mother after childbirth) and temple devotions, all remained part of the typical Parsi life. And Dastur Dhalla was part of that spiritual life, for although his western studies affected his writings, every person I have spoken to who knew him, refers to his love for the practice of the religion, indeed his saintly qualities. However Protestant the Dastur may be seen to be in his writings, in his personal life the practices of the religion he believed sustained his soul, just as they did those of lay community members.⁸¹ He was the last High Priest of the Parsis of Karachi. After his death in 1956, the community perpetuated his memory by establishing an institution in his name, the Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute. It invites lecturers from abroad, and publishes his books. His extensive library was acquired by the Government, but it has now been recovered for the community through the good offices of Mr Byram D. Avari and is housed in the Cyrus Minwalla Colony.

Parsis in Pakistan

Just as some Parsis in Bombay might have been nervous at the end of the British rule under which they had flourished, so also one might have expected that Parsis in Karachi would view the establishment of an Islamic state as a matter for concern, given the communal memory of the suffering of Zoroastrians in Islamic Iran. This section will assess their fate in Pakistan.

The figures

An initial impression of how Parsis fared can be gathered from a study of the demographic figures. In the decades leading up to

⁸¹ In addition to information gathered on my visits to Karachi, I am also indebted to Prof. Philip Kreyenbroek for allowing me to see some of the transcriptions of interviews with older Parsis conducted in one of his research projects (published under the title *Living Zoroastrianism* and discussed in Ch. 2 above), including one from a Bombay lady brought up in Karachi.

TABLE 5.1. *Parsi numbers in Karachi, 1881–1941*

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Parsis	969	1,408	1,841	2,202	2,720	3,364	3,721

Partition, there had been a steady increase in the Sind Parsi population, as Table 5.1 shows. This gave Karachi the fourth largest Parsi population in western India after Bombay (59,813), Surat (4,938) and Navsari (3,727). In 1941, approximately one-third of Parsis in Karachi had not been born there (1,178 out of 3,721), indicating that the population growth was due not simply to increased family sizes, but also to migration.⁸² After Partition the numbers initially increased further—in 1951 there were 5,018; but they began to decline in 1961 (4,685) until 1995, when there were 2,824 Parsis in Pakistan, 2,647 in Karachi.⁸³ There are two factors behind these declining numbers. The first is the common Parsi demographic pattern of an ageing population, more never-marrieds and smaller families. Gustafson identified this trend in the 1960s.⁸⁴ She noted that whereas the median age for Muslims in Karachi was 22, for Parsis it was 37. Whereas the number of initiations exceeded the number of deaths in the 1960s, the reverse was the case from the 1970s (Table 5.2). The late Panthaki, Dinshaw Sohrabji Charna, provided me with these

⁸² Figures from M. B. Pithawalla and B. S. H. J. Rustomji, 'Population Trends of the Parsi Settlements on the West Coast of India', *Journal of the University of Bombay*, 13 (new series pt. 4), Jan. 1945, pp. 30–45. See also Pithawalla, 'The Gujarat Region and the Parsees: A Historico-geographical Survey', *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society*, 7 Apr.–July, 1945, pp. 88–111.

⁸³ These and the following figures of the 1995 population are taken from Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal's *Zarathushtrian Census of Pakistan*, 1995. The Banu Mandal, as indicated elsewhere in this chapter, is a ladies' social organization. Although it is not a professional data-collection organization, the Banu Mandal, administering numerous charities, especially of a medical and educational nature, has perhaps the best range of networks in the community. Sixty individuals in Karachi, one each in Multan, Lahore, Islamabad, Quetta and Peshawar, collected data during the Eid holidays when the majority of Parsis would be at home. Few surveys ever achieve 100% reliability, but the general professional nature of the people involved, and the respect in which the Mandal is universally held, means that these figures are likely to be as reliable as one could hope for—probably more reliable than an official census.

⁸⁴ E. B. Gustafson, 'A Demographic Dilemma: The Parsis of Karachi', *Social Biology*, 16 1969, pp. 115–27.

TABLE 5.2. *Parsi initiations and deaths in Karachi, 1965–1986*

	Initiations	Deaths
1965	42	44
1966	65	57
1967	72	64
1968	72	49
1969	55	46
1970	58	55
1971	44	64
1972	51	50
1973	83	54
1974	57	48
1975	48	66
1976	47	47
1977	34	52
1978	44	48
1979	42	50
1980	29	51
1981	44	52
1982	33	63
1983	31	48
1984	38	55
1985	39	47
1986	24	50

figures.⁸⁵ Although not part of an official record, such records kept assiduously by a senior priest—the one responsible for allocating priestly duties—can be taken as providing a broadly reliable picture. If anything, the number of initiations may give a biased impression, as some of them would be of children of families living in the West brought back for their *naujotes*. In this case, of course, the number of deaths exceeding initiations is a more gloomy figure, since few if any funerals would be of Zoroastrians brought back for a *dokhma* funeral.

⁸⁵ The figures for *naujotes* are not available post-1987, but Virasp Mehta has supplied the following figures for deaths: 1987—55; 1988—44; 1989—68; 1990—49; 1991—59; 1992—61; 1993—41; 1994—53; 1995—42; 1996—51; 1997—38; 1998—44; 1999—32; 2000—46. Without the comparable *naujote* figures it is difficult to comment on death ratios, but they are likely to be declining because of the diminishing size of the population.

There is a second factor from the 1960s, and that is the numbers migrating westwards. Gustafson estimated that about 10.2%, or 48 persons were leaving the community every year. The Karachi Banu Mandal's census (p. 27) found that a total of 1,114 persons had emigrated, most since 1978. They also noted that 68 persons were then studying abroad. Most of those living abroad reside in the USA (47.38%), with 68 in Britain, 70 in continental Europe, 20 in Canada, 12 in India and only 8 in Australia at that time. Similarly, of those studying abroad most (42 = 61.76%) were in the USA, 17 in the UK and only 3 in Australia. The pattern appears to be that whereas in the 1960s and 1970s families migrated, including some of the leading members of the community, in more recent times the older established professionals and businessmen are remaining where their contacts are, while their children study and remain abroad, mostly in the USA, others in Britain. According to the Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal Directory, in 1999 there were 2,379 Parsis in Karachi, 186 in other cities in Pakistan, giving a total of 2,565 Zoroastrians in Pakistan. So, after an increase in the Karachi Parsi population in the years prior to the creation of Pakistan, and in the first few years of the nation's existence, numbers have now declined back to where they were in 1911. But now there is the significant difference that the population is a much older one than it was then.⁸⁶ Approximately one-third (990 out of 2,824) are over the age of 60.⁸⁷ More Parsis in Pakistan have a degree or higher qualification than completed their education at school level (35.93% compared with 33.35%), with 322 individuals still studying, and only one illiterate Parsi was found in the whole country. Approximately one-third (202 out of 545) of those with higher qualifications were females, even though they represent the majority of the Parsi population. The women do not appear to be achieving as

⁸⁶ Parsis often suggest that out-marriage is a further factor in the decline of numbers. Ervad Charna kept a list of the out-marriages he knew of—in such a small community the general pattern, if not the absolute figures, is likely to be reliable. From 1947 to 1985 he knew of 106 boys marrying out (83 to Christians; 12 to Muslims, 2 to Hindus; and the rest were of unknown religious affiliation). He knew of 109 girls who had married out (38 to Christians; 58 to Muslims; 2 to Hindus; and the rest to those of of unknown affiliation). The number of girls marrying Muslims is significant, because the girls would be required to renounce their religion. Two hundred out-marriages over forty years is a loss to a community where conversion of the spouse is not possible, but the figures are not as large as some rumours have suggested.

⁸⁷ *Zarathushtrian Census*, p. 2.

highly in Pakistan as they are in Bombay, but many more Parsi women achieve far more in terms of education and careers than the wider female population in Pakistan has been able to achieve. Most Parsis (31.91%) are employed in the service industry, only 11.08% in business. This service to business ratio is especially true of women but is also found among men (260 are in business compared with 490 in the service industry). These figures indicate that the nature of the community has changed in the course of the twentieth century. But the levels achieved by the Parsis remain significant, with 220 individuals being managers, 141 academics/teachers, 99 engineers, 83 bankers, 64 doctors, 11 judges/advocates. Households remain small in size, with only 8.35% larger than four persons. There are 1,052 single people, two-thirds of them (684) over the age of 20.

Reference has already been made to the probability that the Karachi sample in my survey was almost certainly skewed and so it is necessary to make only cautious statements about the picture it produced. The figures suggest that it was generally an older population with more single people than is common in the diaspora. More of the respondents were part of an extended family. Although generally well educated, relatively few had undertaken postgraduate study; those who had done so had generally studied in Pakistan—people who studied overseas tended to have stayed there. They were opposed to intermarriage. In Pakistan that would probably mean marriage to a Muslim which would require conversion to Islam. The level of religious practice (for example prayer) was high and more Karachi respondents than from elsewhere in the diaspora expressed a belief in life after death and stressed the importance of prayers for the dead. They affirmed the good relations within the community and few believed in 1985 that they were subject to discrimination.

The question now to be addressed is how the Parsi community of Pakistan, particularly in Karachi, made the transition from their flourishing condition at Independence to where they are today.

Parsis under Islamic rule

Some notable figures

As Independence approached, the Parsis were not as nervous as might have been expected, because of their conviction that the

wider society saw them not merely as unthreatening, but rather as substantial contributors to the region. This is well reflected in Bapsi Sidhwa's semi-autobiographical novel, *Ice Candy Man*, published in 1988, in which, although the disintegration of friendships between Karachi youngsters as the violence grew after Partition is related, no antagonism is shown towards the Parsis by any of the warring groups (the book is discussed in Chapter 10 below). An indicator of this respect for Parsis in the wider population is a book published by a non-Parsi in Karachi in 1944 illustrating 'the colourful personalities of Sind'. It included twelve Parsis noted for their contributions to industry, local government, education and especially for their philanthropy. This 'outsider's' recognition of the contributions to Sind by these individual Parsis was not an unrepresentative image of the community as a whole.⁸⁸ The role of two men in particular, in this crucial period, merits special note: one was a Parsi, one a non-Parsi. The Parsi was Jamshed Nusserwanji Mehta (1886–1952). His father had been a highly successful businessman, running a wine and spirits business and owning several factories, and so Mehta was a rich man. But he gave away virtually all his fortune to the needy of all communities, while he himself lived like an ascetic. He devoted his life to Karachi, entering the Municipality in 1918, a body he described as 'a temple for the service of the poor'.⁸⁹ In his substantial review of Karachi Municipality (1925) he concluded

⁸⁸ M. U. Abbassi, *The Colourful Personalities of Sind*, Karachi, 1944. He identifies twelve people as Parsis, but includes a thirteenth not so identified—Fakirjee P. Golwalla, vice-president of the Sind Cantonment Board, a director of the Hyderabad Mercantile Bank and of an Electrical Company. Those he does identify, with a brief indication of where they are seen to have made their contribution, are: Peshotan S. Dubash (p. 142), lecturer, poet, homeopath; K. M. Irani, Agent of the Imperial Bank of India (p. 108); J. N. Mehta, president of Municipal Council, mayor, chairman, Buyers' and Shippers' Chamber, charity (p. 37); S. H. Katrak, mayor, JP, Commissioner for Hindustan Schools Association, charity (p. 41); Sir Kavasji H. Katrak, said to be one of twelve most prominent citizens, magistrate, vice-president of Municipality, charity (p. 138); A. H. Mama, 'the Grand Old Man of Sind', mayor, philanthropy (p. 39); Nusserwanji R. Mehta, started tile, ice, aerated water, salt factories, flour mills and a steam roller mill, charity (p. 67); Pestonjee Bhicajee, 'Grand Old Man of Harbour', treats workers well (p. 178); Hoshang Rabadi, educationist (p. 159); M. E. Kandalwala, landlord, merchant, pioneer in automobiles, civic and communal work (p. 64). He also refers to two Parsi industrial concerns.

⁸⁹ Two Friends, *Jamshed Nusserwanji: A Yagin, Karachi*, n.d. (c.1948): 13. It is almost impossible to write a historical account of Mehta, because all the publications referring to him are hagiographic. Perhaps the most factual is C. P. Mehta, *Jamshed Nusserwanji Mehta*, London, 1998, see also Anon., *Jamshed Nusserwanji*, 1954.

the nineteen chapters with the words:

Let each person rise early every morning, put his hands on his heart and say 'This is my city' and let only fifty men act conscientiously to that vow 'This is my city' and all will be well. Almighty pours his blessings on them, gives them knowledge, gives strength and leads them on to become His instruments.⁹⁰

As the quotation indicates, Mehta was a religious person. He was involved in the Parsi community but gave most of his talks under the umbrella of the Theosophical Society. He was elected president of the Municipality for thirteen consecutive years and then mayor when that office was created. He was known as the 'maker of modern Karachi'. He was particularly associated with concerns for the disabled, and the poor and with subsidized housing and free primary education; he led campaigns for the victims of epidemics, floods, earthquakes and riots. He eventually resigned from the Council in 1937 because he considered that corruption was becoming rife. When Sind was separated from Bombay Presidency in 1936, Mehta was elected to the Sind Legislative Assembly, but resigned after three years, again because of what he saw as corruption. Although he was loved by all Karachi's population, he had in fact declined Jinnah's offer to join his party.⁹¹ He wore the attire of a congressman, but he was not a member of the All India Congress Party. He preferred to work as an independent member in the Karachi Municipality and in the Sind Assembly. Nevertheless he headed various semi-government agencies, in particular dealing with the resettlement of refugees who migrated from India. When he died, the Government closed all public offices and schools and over 100,000 people are said to have gone onto the streets at the time of his funeral. Something of the veneration felt for him can be seen in a newspaper article which spoke of him as 'one who, having perfected himself was acting as a divine invisible force working for the uplift of man . . . was it Jamshed speaking or some invisible force of spirit that was making use of his temporal body for the diffusion of divine wisdom?'⁹²

⁹⁰ J. N. Mehta, *Karachi Municipality: Its Administration, Activities and its Future*, Karachi, 1925, p. 144.

⁹¹ Mehta had also been president of the Karachi branch of Annie Besant's Home Rule League.

⁹² *Dawn*, 1 Aug. 1984.

The significant non-Parsi was the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He not only publicly affirmed the rights of minorities in his speech to the Constitutional Assembly, and in meeting Parsi delegations,⁹³ but was also seen to have close Parsi connections. His mentor had been the ‘Lion of Bombay’, Sir Pherozechah Mehta. He assisted Dadabhai Naoroji in his first parliamentary campaign and was his secretary during his presidency of the Calcutta INC meeting.⁹⁴ Jinnah’s wife, Rattanbai, was a Parsi, the daughter of Sir Dinshaw Petit.⁹⁵ In turn, his daughter married a Parsi (Neville Wadia, who had converted to Christianity, discussed in Chapter 2 above). One of the medical team that sought to save him towards the end was also a Parsi, Dr Mistry from Bombay.⁹⁶ Other members of his entourage at different stages were Parsis: Dr Bharucha, M. N. Kotwal, his lawyer, and F. R. Hansotia, his police escort on many occasions.

Important though Mehta and Jinnah were, they alone of course were not responsible for the Parsi position in Karachi. Many Parsis have held important, and diverse, roles in the young nation’s history. The early pre-cabinet meetings of Liaqat Ali Khan were held at the Beech Luxury Hotel owned by the Parsi Dinshaw Avari. It was then Karachi’s most splendid hotel—soon to be joined by the Metropole, also owned by a Parsi, Cyrus Minwalla. The Beech Luxury Hotel was built in 1948 and was used by staff from various embassies and businesses moving to the new capital of Pakistan. The Avari family went on to own the Avari Towers Hotel, originally built as the Karachi Hilton in 1985, and the Lahore Hilton, 1975.⁹⁷ Not only did Dinshaw Avari rise from life in a Bombay orphanage to become a leading hotelier; he also became president of the Anjuman. His son, Behram, won a gold medal at the Asian Games for yachting and was decorated by the President of Pakistan. Behram also represented minorities in Parliament.⁹⁸ The Avaris have had access to various political leaders, including General Zia and earlier, in 1959, the then President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, who attended the celebrations

⁹³ K. A. Marker, *A Petal from the Rose*, Karachi, 1985 (2 vols.), ii, pp. 52 ff.; Ahmed, *Jinnah*, p. 178.

⁹⁴ Wolpert, *Jinnah*, pp. 10 f., 19 f., 26; Ahmed, *Jinnah*, pp. 4, 6.

⁹⁵ Wolpert, *Jinnah*, pp. 43 f.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 368 f.

⁹⁷ *Parsiana*, Mar. 1987, pp. 59–62, also personal information from Mr Avari. I wish to record my thanks to Mr Avari for being my host on one of my visits to Pakistan, and to Mrs Minwalla on another visit.

⁹⁸ See his obituary in *Parsiana*, Mar. 1989, pp. 109–11.

at the Beech Luxury Hotel to mark the birth of the prophet, Khordad Sal. His speech is recorded in the 41st Annual Report of the YMZA:

The teachings of Prophet Zoroaster are indeed, a source of infinite inspiration not only to Parsees but to all those who believe in the sanctity of moral and spiritual values in human lives. It redounds to the credit of the Parsee community that they have endeavoured to translate the teachings of their Prophet into their day to day lives and have sought to apply the principles of their religion to the practical fields of social and economic enterprise. Pakistan has every reason to be proud of her Parsee citizens who have contributed so much to the progress and development of the nation. Spirit of loyalty and unreserved co-operation which Parsees have shown wherever they have settled down is a tribute to the greatness of their religion as to their wisdom. The people of Karachi owe a great debt of gratitude to the Parsee community for the immense contribution they have made to the economic development of the City. The many welfare institutions which Parsee philanthropists have raised in Karachi are a boon to its citizens. The tradition of public welfare which Parsees have built is worthy of emulation by other communities in Karachi and elsewhere in Pakistan.

... It will be our earnest endeavour to ensure that Parsees—like other communities—continue to enjoy equal rights as free citizens of a free country. You have rightly observed that the patriotism of the Parsees is second to none. Nobody is more conscious than I of the great patriotic zeal which you have displayed (pp. 11 f.)

The Markers are a particularly prominent family in politics. The autobiography of Kekobad Ardeshir Marker, 1896–1984, has been published in two volumes.⁹⁹ It is a remarkable story of a man whose early travels were in a bullock cart, and whose last was in a jumbo jet. The Marker family was based in Quetta where they ran an ice factory (founded 1931) and a pharmaceutical company (1941). Kekobad's father started the family fortune as a supplier to the British and with the money earned the family also endowed many charities, not least the Marker school in Yazd, Iran. The British trusted both father and son and each worked in his time as First Class Magistrate and Senior Civil Judge. Kekobad's son, Jamshid, has served as Pakistan's ambassador under numerous governments in such important postings as Russia, France, Japan, the United States and at the United Nations.

⁹⁹ *Petal from the Rose*, see n. 93.

He acted as spokesman for the non-aligned nations at the UN, and was the Secretary General's special envoy in East Timor when the war there was ended. The text of the autobiography (or memoir, since it was dictated from memory not written from notes) gives a personal insight into many of the events and people mentioned in this book. The Markers were related by marriage to such leading families as the Minwallas and the Edulji Dinshaws. They were prominent in the links with Iran, both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in the post-1979 events yet to be related. Kekobad Marker travelled widely, for business, pleasure and medical treatment, and so he met many beyond the confines of Pakistan, including the Shah, Bhownaggee and Saklatvalla.¹⁰⁰ He was present at the Delhi Durbar in 1912, and at the Independence celebrations, and was subsequently horrified at the mass killings and assaults. It was Kekobad Marker who led the deputation to Jinnah seeking assurances about the community's future. At the national level he worked with energy and integrity to develop Pakistan's economy as director of the Pakistan Industrial Finance Corporation, and then as chairman of the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan for seven years (two was supposed to be the maximum term, but the Government urged him to continue). As an outsider, I had anticipated that Parsis would fear a military government in an Islamic country. Although there have been concerns, the periods of instability which have so often been associated with democracy, not least under Bhutto, have generally caused even greater anxiety—a fact reflected in the observations of Kekobad Marker.¹⁰¹ One fear is that in fully democratic elections candidates would pander to the views of the (vociferous) majority and ignore the minorities. His memoir is remarkable for its insights into the life and times of the Parsis, and of Pakistan.

The Edulji Dinshaws have been a widely respected family after Independence as they were before. Hoshang N. E. Dinshaw (died 1967), in addition to funding the Nadir Dinshaw Engineering College, played an important part in the economic development of the new nation. He held several major posts, including chairman of the Public Investment Council, and of the Reorganisation Council; president of the central board of directors of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., vol. i, pp. 177 f. and 212–16, respectively.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., vol. ii, pp. 185–191.

National Bank from 1952 to 1964; vice-president of the Federation of the Chamber of Commerce in Karachi; a founder member of the Old Buyers' and Shippers' Chamber of Commerce and of the Pakistan Industrial Finance Corporation (later the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan in which Marker was involved); and a director of the Karachi Electrical Supply Company. He was offered a knighthood, as Jamshed Mehta had been, and like him declined it on the grounds that he believed in 'Duty for duty's sake and not worldly rewards.'¹⁰² So two Parsis, Marker and Dinshaw, were at the forefront of the drive to develop the nation's economy.

Another prominent business family has been the Cowasjees, who owned a large portion of Pakistan's fleet of commercial ships for the transporting of goods, essential to the Pakistan economy. The fleet was nationalized, without recompense, by Bhutto, but the family later received some compensation and are, again, prominent in Karachi business. Unfortunately much less has been written about them than about other prominent families.

As well as remarkable families, there have also been some noteworthy individual achievements among Karachi Parsis, which by giving the community a good public image have contributed to its security. One of the most remarkable individuals was Mr Justice Dorab F. Patel, 1927–97.¹⁰³ He came from a wealthy Quetta family, which at one time had rivalled the Markers. After studies in Bombay, and at the London School of Economics, he was called to the Bar and after two years' practice in London returned to Karachi. He first worked in civil law and was then elevated to the bench of the West Pakistan High Court; in 1976 he was appointed to the Supreme Court. He was one of the three judges in the trial that led to the hanging of Bhutto in 1977—and it was he who delivered the judgement that the hanging was wrong, even though he was opposed to the style of Bhutto's government. When Zia promulgated the Provisional Constitutional Order subordinating judiciary to military courts and requiring judges to take an oath to uphold the constitution, Patel refused and thereby probably lost the opportunity to become Chief Justice of the

¹⁰² From an obituary supplied to me by the family, but source unknown. An article in the *Parsi Sansar*, 3 May 1978, indicates that the focus of the known charities of the Dinshaws, is on medicine and housing for the poor, including, e.g. a total of 226 flats.

¹⁰³ Obituary, H. J. Rogers, 'Patel: Pakistan's Pride', *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1997, pp. 188 f.

Pakistan Supreme Court. He was invited to be the ambassador in Paris, but said that he could not represent a government with whose policies he had such fundamental differences. Thereafter, he devoted his life to human rights and social welfare, becoming in 1984 a member of the Asian Human Rights Commission and then in 1987 of the International Commission of Jurists. In achieving such high office in a Muslim state, and in standing so fearlessly against a president known not to like opposition, Patel showed remarkable courage as well as a powerful sense of justice. Another Parsi, Justice Rustom Sidhwa, served as a judge of the Supreme Court from 1989 until 1993, when the General Assembly of the United Nations chose him to be one the eleven judges of the UN International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavian war criminals, sitting in The Hague.

Other Parsis have held high office in the Pakistan army: two, F. Golwalla and Sarosh Irani, becoming a brigadier and a colonel respectively and both were decorated in the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. At the time of writing Kaizad M. Soporivala holds the rank of major-general, the highest rank held by a member of the Parsi community. Two Karachi Parsis have become international ballerinas—Rashna Homji and Nichola Katrak. Others have taken political roles. Hoshang Broacha and Dinshaw Anklesaria represented the minorities in the Sind Assembly in 1976 and 1998 respectively and Minoo Bhandhara stood in the National Assembly. Mr Jamshed Kharas served as ambassador in Rome and Mr Homi Homji represented the United Nations in Bangkok before retiring to Canada. This small community has, therefore, produced a remarkable number of significant individuals who have served in high positions in Pakistan.

Parsi institutions in Pakistan

Several of the bodies discussed above under the heading ‘Early Parsi Institutions in Karachi’ have continued since Independence, and some new ones have been established.

Religious institutions The temples have continued in use, but the problem of staffing them has increased. The 1995 community census recorded seven priests in Pakistan; this is for three temples—the two in Karachi and the very pleasant modern structure housing

the hundred-year-old fire in Lahore.¹⁰⁴ The maintenance of a permanently burning fire requires a team of priests in order to feed the fire at the five appointed times of the day and night. The problems of maintenance in a small community are especially acute: in Lahore there are now only eighty-six Zoroastrians. In the interregnum between priests, lay Parsis undertook the care of the fire on a rota basis. But even in Karachi, the number of priests is a problem. For the two fire temples there are only six full-time priests and two part-time priests. This is partly because, as in Bombay, few of the able young men wish to enter the full-time priesthood; consequently most priests are elderly. Some of the younger men of priestly descent who have entered business have migrated to the West. The number of priests is declining rapidly. On my first research visit to Pakistan (December 1985) there were nineteen mobeds, including six below the age of 35, although five of these worked part time; by contrast, in the 1995 survey there were seven priests throughout Pakistan. The shortage of priests to maintain the community's devotional life is therefore an acute problem. The fact that none of the serving priests has a son entering the profession means that in the next generation the problem will be even worse. One of the younger mobeds, P. D. Magol, has started a Mobed Welfare Trust to care for the older members of the profession, not only in Pakistan but also back in the holy centre of Udwada. It has been somewhat controversial, as the Athravan Trust in Bombay has been. But Magol, too, has now left and settled in India.

One consequence of the increasingly visible Islamization of Pakistan has been a perceived increase in attendance at the temples. Pakistan was the only country visited in the course of this research where the elders of the community stated that the young were more religious than they themselves had been in their youth. Such a statement cannot be verified, but it is an unusual perception. The explanation given was that whereas in the West peer pressure discouraged youngsters from going to religious functions, in Pakistan non-Parsi peers (notably Muslim youth) were glad to be seen to be religious. It is also a natural reaction for a community that fears external religious tensions to unite and strengthen its own ties, not least in a temple.

¹⁰⁴ See *Parsiana*, May 1993, pp. 17 f. on the centenary of the Bai Avانبai Ardeshir Cooper Agiary in Lahore.

There is also a problem with the *dokhmas*. Because of the proximity of the flightpath to Karachi International Airport, the vultures had to be shot. Since 1963, therefore, bodies have been exposed for the crows and heat of the summer to decompose. The trustees reported in 1988 that in fact the bodies were not decomposing; that the pit at the centre was blocked and required cleaning. This process was abandoned because of the difficulty of finding people willing to undertake the task and so the community has begun to debate the purchase of land for a burial ground.¹⁰⁵ The Anjuman acquired a plot of land for use as a burial ground, but the idea was dropped because of the distance from the city and the high cost of secure fencing. Subsequently they were able to organize the cleaning of the *dokhma*, so both of the Karachi Towers of Silence are in use, but as in Mumbai the problem is the slow or only partial decomposition of the bodies without vultures. In Lahore and Quetta burial grounds are used.

Social institutions The building of charitable housing has increased since Independence, partly to assist the poor, for example people whose funds were tied up in India, and who could not therefore maintain a home. Such housing also facilitated close communal contact. There are five Anjuman properties (some were mentioned above): Anjuman Baug, which includes Rajkotwalla Baug (eighty-two flats); Garikhata Property with three blocks of twenty-four flats; Jamshed Memorial Baug with sixty-four flats; Noshirwan Naman (twenty-four flats); and Doongerwadi Property, 52 acres which includes the Cyrus Colony and co-operative building ventures. In addition to the twenty-two Trust Funds in Karachi looking after communal properties, there are the Dinshaw charities (approximately 150 flats); Kotharis (forty flats), Cowasjee Foundation (thirty-two) and Kandarwalas (twenty-four). One of the priorities of Dinshah Avari on becoming Anjuman president was to increase the housing stock further. In 1961 there were 950 Parsi family units for a population of some 4,000. By the late 1980s that figure had fallen to 902 properties, with redevelopment. However, they were serving a population which had declined to substantially less than 3,000, so although there were only 5% fewer units, the 25% decline in the

¹⁰⁵ A. S. Mama, 'Burial Ground for Karachi', *Parsiana*, Dec. 1988, pp. 15 f.

population meant that a greater proportion could live in communal housing.¹⁰⁶

An important social body is the Banu Mandal, the ladies' society. This was originally started in 1912 as a sewing circle by Sohrab Mehta, nephew of Jamshed Mehta, who left lakhs of Rupees to charity.¹⁰⁷ Its work from the 1980s onwards has been essentially charitable, originally for women, but increasingly for anyone in the community; the census work cited above is but one example. The largest sum of money (approximately 50% of the total budget) is spent on education, including loans to students, for education in technology, the arts and sports. The second main area of expenditure (approximately 25% of the budget) is poor relief, for social problems and help in the home. A third area of activity is medical work, including payment of hospital and dispensary bills of the poor and lower middle classes, as well as preventative work through education. The members are also concerned with the rehabilitation of the able-bodied, making people self-sufficient by teaching them arts and crafts and by helping them set up businesses. Child welfare is another of their concerns. Finally, the women of the society undertake various charitable labours, supplying clean linen for the hospital, entertainment and education programmes. All work is voluntary so that the money donated goes to meeting the needs of those they seek to help, with minimal overheads. Apart from the *Zoroastrian Census of Pakistan* and booklets on educational charities to which Parsis may apply, there is little in print on the Banu Mandal, but its impact on the community is undoubted.¹⁰⁸

Educational and religious institutions The Virbaijee Boys School and the Mama Girls School continue to thrive, but few Parsis attend them. Jinnah had asked the community to open the school doors to non-Parsis, and at the time of writing I am told that there are approximately ten Muslim students for each Parsi. Within the wider population the schools have a high standing. The headteacher and some of the staff continued to be Parsis through the 1980s, but the community increasingly sent their children to the Catholic school, which had a reputation for

¹⁰⁶ Information kindly supplied by Mr Ghadiali during my visit in 1985.

¹⁰⁷ Information on the Banu Mandal was kindly supplied by Mrs A. Ratan Bilimoria in March 1985.

¹⁰⁸ *Parsiana*, Dec. 1994, p. 14.

particularly high academic standards. Such financially independent schools were also able to resist the pressures for Urdu as a medium of instruction and for Islamic ideas to determine the syllabus. The BVS and Mama schools, although they do not have the power of such strong overseas religious funding as the Catholics have, continue Zoroastrian classes and religious prayers on holy days, for Parsi children outside the main curriculum, unlike earlier pre-Zia days when Zoroastrianism had been part of the mainstream curriculum.¹⁰⁹

There have been other educational developments. There had been a Montessori section in the BVS, and a building for it was opened in 1961. This is probably the only all-Parsi Montessori school in existence. When it first opened it had 120 pupils, but by the end of the 1980s it had only sixty-one, because the number of Parsi children had diminished as parents migrated. It takes children from 2 to 6 years old. The morning begins with prayers first in Avestan, then in English. The syllabus includes Zoroastrian religious classes, to give the children a foundation in their faith. The classes emphasize the basic Zoroastrian ethic of good thoughts, words and deeds, and relate the stories of the heroes of the faith, above all of course, Zoroaster, but also some modern figures such as Dadabhai Naoroji and Dastur Dhalla.

Another religious education venture was the opening in August 1977 of a Friday school for young children. It grew from a small group for friends and family of the three founders (Mrs A. M. Dinshaw, Mrs G. S. Talati and Mr Virasp Mehta) into quite a large school. The driving force behind the Friday school was parents' concern for the religious needs of their children in a strongly Islamic country. Song and artwork are as much part of the classes as stories of the heroes and the teaching of prayers. This informal school caters particularly for children at non-Parsi schools. When Friday ceased to be a weekly holiday, the school functioned on Sundays and so is known now as 'the Sunday School for Little Zarthushtis'. Following the emigration of one of the key teachers, the school now works under the aegis of the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal.

¹⁰⁹ *Parsiana*, Sept. 1991, p. 3. On a personal note, I recall with great pleasure during my visits to Karachi taking part in the Zoroastrian classes in these schools, and remember the joy of meeting Zoroastrian children who wanted to know about their religion.

A small group which has worked quietly and effectively to teach and maintain interest in the religion is the Informal Religious Meetings (IRM). These were started in 1975 as monthly question-and-answer meetings, and as they became popular so small lecture and discussion sessions started. In 1978 drama was introduced as a means of raising interest in religious and social issues affecting the community. In 1979 a cyclostyle 'bulletin' was brought out which was essentially the programme of the group. This grew into a regular booklet, *Ushao*, still appearing regularly at the beginning of the century, but now circulated by e-mail as its editor, Virasp Mehta, has emigrated to America. A typical issue includes quotations from the *Gathas*, sometimes a piece from one of the popular Parsi writers—Dhalla, Jamshed Mehta, Ali Jafarey (who lived in Karachi in the 1960s) and occasionally Bode. It commonly includes also an article by a member of the community, or by someone from the diaspora—America or Australia—on Iranian history or the religion, and a note regarding a famous Parsi. The booklet contains some nuggets of little-known information, for example the story of Nauzer Nowrojee from McLeod Ganj, a friend of the Dalai Lama's, who suggested to the Dalai Lama that on his forced departure from Tibet he should set up his base there, which he did. Functioning as the base of the Tibetan Government in exile has transformed the sleepy settlement into an international place of pilgrimage.¹¹⁰

There is a considerable overlap of membership between the Informal Religious Meetings and those organizing the Sunday school, with the IRM supplying most of the paperwork, handouts, etc. for the school. The IRM also has prayer and meditation meetings and quizzes and encourages the singing of religious songs. It has also published five books on Zoroastrianism.¹¹¹ The basic concern is to increase knowledge of, and maintain interest in, the religion among Parsis within the Muslim state. The numbers attending the lectures (usually by community members) and discussions are small, drawn mainly from the older generation, but *Ushao* reaches quite a wide readership. Drawing and prayer

¹¹⁰ *Ushao*, Jan.–Feb. 2001, pp. 1–4.

¹¹¹ These are: T. R. Sethna, *The Book of Instructions on Zoroastrian Religion*, 1985; N. M. Magol, *Contemplation on Sudreh Kusti Prayers* 1985; H. Langstaff, *Parsis in the Twentieth Century*, 1987; N. P. Mehta, *Let Us Pray with Zarthushtra*; D. J. Patel, *Parsis of Karachi*; B. S. Rustomjee, *Teachings of Zarthushtra*.

competitions, as well as plays and campfires, are organized to encourage the children to enjoy their ancestral religion. The normal lecture and prayer meetings are held in a reading room and library owned by the Karachi Parsi Co-operative Housing Society and the public functions (plays, exhibitions) in a hall owned by the Banu Mandal, so the running costs are small and met by donations from some of the Parsi charities in Karachi, and from individuals.

The Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute was established in 1963 in memory of the revered Dastur. Its primary function is 'the diffusion of social, ethical, religious and literary knowledge among members of the Parsi Community' and 'social, moral and religious awakening of the Parsi community'.¹¹² It mounts lectures and symposia on Zoroastrian topics, given largely by community members and others from Karachi. In the early days Dr Ali Jafarey was a regular speaker, and occasionally speakers came from elsewhere, for example, Dastur Dabu, Dastur Mirza, Khojeste Mistree, Ervad Aibara, and Dr Master-Moos from Bombay. Its functions are sometimes held in collaboration with other bodies, such as the Young Men's Zoroastrian Association. Many of the lectures, especially in the early years, were on Dhalla's work. The anniversary of his death is always observed. The Institute also had some books printed, notably Dhalla's *Homage unto Ahura Mazda*, and purchased several hundred copies of books written by members on the religion, and then distributed them free of charge. The initial membership of 148 grew to 180 in the 1980s. But with the declining Karachi Parsi population, the long-standing problem of organizing a lecture programme to attract a reasonable audience has become more difficult.

The problem of the declining population has also affected one of the older bodies, including the Young Men's Zoroastrian Association (YMZA). Annual Reports show the membership declined from 185 in 1961 to 81 in 1982. The result has been that whereas in the mid-1960s there was an active programme, in 1982 and 1983 there were no lectures, although the annual elocution and painting programme continued. The problems were, however, greater than declining numbers. There were also personal conflicts, which resulted in the late 1960s in some prominent figures being associated with Dhalla Memorial Institute

¹¹² Constitution Aims and Objects.

(including Behram Rustomjee) and another (Sohrab Katrak) with the YMZA.¹¹³ The annual report for 1983 (p. 1) notes the paucity of young men in the Association and community—a problem exacerbated during the 1990s. In the 1980s there were a number of functions organized jointly by the YMZA and the Dhalla Memorial Institute, notably several series of lectures by overseas speakers. The lectures tended to be on religious themes, but those by community members ranged over a number of subjects—for example social welfare, music, socio-economic matters. They also organized workshops on problems facing the community, such as housing.

But, as so often in modern Parsi history, communal in-fighting has consumed much energy. Reference has already been made to the Katrak–Rustomjee tensions. There have been others. The feud between two leading families came to a head in a lawsuit over Anjuman elections in 1982—a case which received substantial publicity and is said to have caused Zia to comment that if the Parsis were so divided, what hope was there for democracy in Pakistan?¹¹⁴ There have been countless other fierce personal battles within the community, the details of which need not concern the outside world.¹¹⁵ The significant question is, why are there such deep antagonisms—law suits, even threats of violence—in a diminishing community facing the threat of extinction, whose young feel so vulnerable in the face of increasing Islamization in the country? Disputes are a feature of all the communities studied, though they are perhaps less evident in Hong Kong. In part, the explanation is that such small communities are like families

¹¹³ General Body Minute Book, 13 July, 1966; August 13, 1967; July 17, 1973. The Minute Book of the Council of Management, 21 Aug. 1967. These Minute Books also make frequent references to the financial difficulties faced by the Association even in the 1950s and 1960s.

¹¹⁴ The case came to court on 27 Jan. 1983, amid allegations not only of improper electioneering but even of armed intimidation. After the case was concluded in 1985 the family feud, unfortunately, continued, *Parsiana*, Feb. 1989, p. 16. Informally I understand at the end of the millennium that some of the heat has gone out of the feud.

¹¹⁵ The extent of the feuding is illustrated by a single example and the comments of a member of the community. In 1985 there was an attempt to form a 'Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan'. One issue for debate was the relative roles of Karachi Parsis and those in other cities. In a circular dated 25 Mar. 1985, Viraf Darogo argued against the non-Karachi Parsis because their leaders had 'lost all importance in view of ill-feeling and hatred among themselves. In their petty and personal conflict, they have lost sight of community interest, and by indifference to compromise have demonstrated the lack of qualities for leadership.' For similar views on community divisions, see *Parsiana*, Sept. 1990, p. 23.

who have their internal fights, even though they may present a united face to the outside world. Another problem is that as the threat of extinction grows, so the battles for survival become more potent. Each side fears that what the other is doing can threaten the end of the community, hence passions run high over such issues as the reforms of Dhalla. Also in a community which is so successful in economic and social terms, there is a plethora of 'chiefs' and a shortage of workers, so many believe that they can provide the leadership to save the community. One Parsi religious teacher explained the issue to me in theological terms. Zoroastrians, he said, are brought up to see a complete divide between the Truth and the Lie, righteousness and evil. There can be no compromise. When people disagree, the other party is seen as belonging to the camp of falsehood.

Karachi Parsi Religious and Secular Literature

Dastur Dhalla taught many Karachi Zoroastrians and a number have continued his teaching and writing activities. There are four main authors of books on Zoroastrianism: Sohrab Katrak, T. R. Sethna, Godrej Sidhwa and F. K. Dadachanji, all of whom came under the personal influence of Dhalla. The prominent writer of secular literature is Bapsy Sidhwa, brought up in Lahore, now living in Texas. Two of her first three novels are on Parsis in Pakistan (see further Chapter 10 below).

Katrak was a businessman, a mayor of Karachi, a prominent member of various communal bodies, notably the YMZA, and a benefactor of many communal causes. His book is essentially a history of Zoroastrianism from prehistoric times to the contemporary Parsi scene, with approximately half the book on the latter subject.¹¹⁶ The account of the Iranian Zoroastrians (ch. 11) portrays the community there as mainly of 'the humbler class' and stresses what Parsis have done for their Iranian co-religionists, but glosses over the considerable achievements of many twentieth-century Iranian Zoroastrians. This is the sort of imbalance which many Iranian Zoroastrians in the diaspora have found offensive. The chapters on the Parsis stress the considerable Parsi

¹¹⁶ S. K. H. Katrak, *Who are the Parsees?*, Karachi, 1965.

achievements (chs. 13–15), and there follows an account of major rituals. There is a summary dismissal of Parsi Theosophists (ch. 23) and otherwise little on doctrine. In the circumstances, Katrak's chapter on Parsis post-Partition is interesting (ch. 24). He emphasizes the problems Partition has caused: making it difficult for Parsis from the two countries to marry; the inaccessibility of Karachi Parsi funds tied up in Indian banks; and the problems for Pakistan Parsis wanting to visit their holy sites in India. He is positive about the position of the Parsis in Pakistan: 'The Parsees as a loyal and faithful race are happy and contented with the new regime.' He stresses the regime's opposition to corruption and the protection of minorities. Of President Ayub Khan he wrote: 'he is an idol of the Parsees who have the greatest regard and respect for him, and feel that since the partition of the country they have never been more secure, more free and more happy.'¹¹⁷ Katrak also publicly pays respect to Islam, just as Ayub Kahn had paid tribute to Zoroaster:

Prominent Parsi and Hindu citizens paid glowing tributes to Holy Prophet Mohammed at a meeting arranged by the Ahmadiya Muslim Assoc. in Karachi yesterday. Sohrab Katrak spoke on the mission of the Holy Prophet, symbol of the emancipation of humanity; the Parsi leader said the system of zakat introduced by Islam was a very significant economic factor in the life of Muslims.¹¹⁸

Sethna's life was devoted to providing translations of such Zoroastrian texts as the *Yashts* (1976) for the benefit of his community. He also produced selections of writings of some of the earlier scholars, such as J. J. Modi (1980), and reviewed the arguments on the date of the Prophet (n.d.). Sethna was not a scholar in the conventional western sense, in that he had not undertaken formal linguistic studies. He worked by comparing existing translations, checking them against standard Avesta and Pahlavi dictionaries and then providing a translation that he believed reflected the spirit of the prayer and the religion. In so doing, he produced books which gave spiritual sustenance to his community. As a person he was quiet and rather self-effacing, a man whose evident religious commitment shone through his writings.

¹¹⁷ *Who are the Parsees?*, p. 256.

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 7 Oct. 1959, a reference I owe to Mrs A. Houghton.

Godrej Sidhwa was initiated as a priest (*ervad*) and commonly introduces public functions with prayers, and takes some of the communal rituals outside the temple. As a businessman he cannot lead the life committed to total ritual purity required for the temple liturgies. But he is known as a priest, and also as a teacher because he gave classes in the Parsi schools for years. His writings therefore have a religious authority, whereas most Parsi writers on religion are members of the laity. He also has authority as a prominent student of Dastur Dhalla. In addition to his lectures and pamphlets, he has written a widely used book.¹¹⁹ Eleven of the fourteen chapters are on liturgical matters.¹²⁰ The preface to both editions states that the book is written for Pakistan Parsis because they have such difficulty in obtaining books from India, and that the book has grown out of his teaching work. He affirms his conviction that individuals and societies need religion to progress and the first need of religion is faith: 'The religion of Holy Zarathushtra teaches faith in Transcendent Reality.' He dismisses the popular contention that Zoroastrianism is (merely) an ethical code, urging that it is a way of life, laid down by 'the master of every science': '[Zarathushtra] was exceptionally endowed spiritually, intellectually and morally. He was far above the rest of his race in every attribute which contributes toward human perfection.' He quotes Dastur Peshotan Sanjana approvingly: 'Zoroaster was the greatest spiritual force produced by our world. He was a colossal religious genius. He was the greatest Law-Giver, the Greatest Teacher, the greatest of the prophets, the unique one who revealed the Mind and the Will of Ahura Mazda.' In Zarathushtra, writes Sidhwa, 'we have a model teacher . . . He conquered all by the force of his reasoning and arguments, his piety and his prayers and by the force of the truth of his divine teachings . . . He is the original emissary of God.'¹²¹ It is interesting to note the emphases in these passages. There is none of the Hindu influence evident in the writings of such Bombay Parsis as Bode or Taraporevala. The divine origins of the teachings (but not any divine status of the Prophet), the emissary from God, the prophetic role, the law-giver revealing the mind and will of God, and the reference to the transcendent reality—all are themes

¹¹⁹ G. D. Sidhwa, *Discourses on Zoroastrianism*, Karachi 1978, revised 1985.

¹²⁰ The other chapters are on the prophet, belief in life after death, and three 'forgotten' religions (Mithraism, Manichaeism and Mazdakism).

¹²¹ *Discourses*, pp. i–iii.

which would resonate with Muslims. That is not to say these ideas come from Islam; they can be found in earlier Zoroastrian texts. But the choice of themes, emphases, words and ideas suggest a concern to present a teaching that would not provoke hostility in Islamic Pakistan.

The writings of Dadachanji have slightly different emphases from those of Sidhwa.¹²² They are more secular, partly in that they emphasize the ancient history of Iran and then politics, commerce, professions, the role of women, science and the arts of the Parsis.¹²³ The theme of his first book is to show that:

through patience, perseverance, hard work, honesty, industry and the noble virtues which they have inherited from their forefathers, the Parsis rose to the highest pinnacle of glory in every walk of life . . . never before in the history of mankind has so much been achieved by so few. It would perhaps be difficult to find another community or an ethnic group of such microscopic dimensions that has shone so brilliantly in the world.¹²⁴

It is essential for such a minority living in a potentially hostile religious environment that community members both know what their religion stands for, and have a knowledge of, and a pride in, their history. In this sense Sidhwa and Dadachanji are complementary. Dadachanji's later book is more difficult to characterize, for it consists of the texts of 108 speeches and newspaper articles produced by him. The first twenty-eight items are on religion, but naturally, given their original function, address popular issues in a manner accessible to the general public. The next twenty are on 'prominent Parsis', both from India and Pakistan. As many of them are speeches made in honour of, or at death anniversaries of the individual they are not critical biographies, but laudatory accounts. The underlying theme of all entries is the presentation of as positive an image as possible of the Parsis to the outside world. For example, one is a speech outlining the Parsi contributions to Pakistan, delivered to the Minorities Conference in 1973 (pp. 320–3).

Marker's book¹²⁵ is the work of a grandmother, the wife of the late Kekobad Marker, dedicated to her grandchildren and

¹²² F. K. Dadachanji, *Parsis Ancient and Modern*, Karachi, 1980; and *Speeches and Writings on Zoroastrian Religion, Culture and Civilization*. Karachi, 1995.

¹²³ *Parsis Ancient and Modern*, chs. 1–7 and 8–13 respectively.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹²⁵ M. K. Marker, *Religion and History of the Parsees*, Karachi, 1997.

providing the sort of understanding of her religion, to which she was deeply committed, that she wanted to pass on to them. It is based on a 1929 Gujarati book, *Žorthoshti Dharam Gyan (Knowledge of Žarthoshti Religion)*, written in Secunderbad by Framroz F. Hirjibehdin. There are various personal contributions by Mrs Marker herself, an explanation of the purity laws related to menstruation (pp. 57–9), and an explanation of the value of the *dokhma* funeral (p. 159). There are chapters on the Prophet, secular history, the great epic, the *Shah Name*, and several on the religious practices, initiation, weddings, death, temples and rituals. It is a practical guide intended for the younger generation. The doctrinal emphasis differs little from that of Sidhwa and Dadachanji, friends who helped the author. An interesting detail is the listing of Dastur Dhalla among the great Dasturs of Zoroastrian history, alongside Tansar from Sassanian times, some of the great Pahlavi writers and Meherji Rana, generally considered the senior Parsi High Priest. This esteem reflects the widespread attitude among Karachi Parsis to their own Dastur.

The two books (and numerous lectures) of Homi Minocher Homji are different again.¹²⁶ Since Homji's second book was written after he moved to Toronto, it belongs to a later chapter. Homji was a high-ranking United Nations official and his first book reflects the approach of an experienced administrator. After a brief review of the religion and its history he focuses on statistics, and on strategies for modernizing the community ranging from economics to housing, legal, political and cultural matters. It is written to encourage Parsi reform. He writes: 'Time moves on but Parsis do not; we do not realize when it is time for change and when we do it is usually too late . . . Our anomaly is that economically we are a free enterprise, capitalistic, liberal society, but socially we are rigid, conservative, non-changing religious group.' On post-Independence Parsis he writes:

Having to some extent already degenerated through narrow parochial attitudes, prolonged genetic inbreeding, isolation from indigenous sister communities, and a weakening community structure resulting from internecine disputes, the community failed to measure up to the requisites of the changed situation . . . Whereas the majority, particularly in larger urban centres, gives distinct visual evidence of an impoverished

¹²⁶ H. B. M. Homji, *O Whither Parsis? Placate and Perish, or Reform and Flourish*, Karachi, 1978; *Zoroastrianism: Contemporary Perceptions of Ancient Wisdom*, Toronto, 1989.

and unhealthy community, frustrated, leaderless and unable to adjust to the disappearance of the British Raj, it tries to seek refuge by invoking a community and racial superiority which, in fact, no longer exists.

The hope he sees lies in the younger professional groups who migrate abroad, a path he himself eventually trod in moving to Toronto. He speaks scathingly of being 'cluttered up with rituals and priest-craft'. His own description of his work is that it 'is a post-Partition sociological analysis of the Parsi community in general and of the community in Pakistan in particular. It deals with issues of today and tomorrow—not of yester-years, and projects a practical, not a religious approach.'¹²⁷ Evidently this is a very different point of view and range of concerns from those already discussed. Whereas much of Dadachanji's material is addressed to an external audience, Homji's is targeted at his fellow Karachi Parsis.

The last author to be noted is different again. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Parsi novelist brought up in Pakistan but, following the success of her two early novels, she migrated to the USA, where she has continued her literary work. Sidhwa was born in Karachi in 1936, but brought up in Lahore. Her first novel, *The Crow Eaters*, was published in Pakistan in 1978, in India in 1980 and then in the West.¹²⁸ She wrote one other while in Pakistan,¹²⁹ but that is not about Parsis and not so relevant to this chapter. A work completed in America reflects, in a semi-autobiographical way, on the place of Parsis in Pakistan at the time of Partition, and the bloody conflicts between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims (*Ice Candy Man*). Her first novel tells the story of a lovable rascal, Freddie, taking his young family to Lahore by bullock cart in the nineteenth century to profit from the trade opportunities with the British in the region. Gradually his business grows, not always honestly, until he becomes a major figure in the community and wider society, eventually marrying his daughter to the son of one of the great Parsi knights of Bombay. The story is told with a mischievous sense of humour. Just as the best source of anti-Jewish jokes is the Jewish community, so Parsis are merciless in their own self-presentation; Sidhwa's book displays that humour as well as a love of the tribe. The depiction of Freddie's tumultuous relations with his

¹²⁷ All the quotations are taken from his introduction, pp. x–xvi, of *Whither Parsis?*

¹²⁸ B. Sidhwa, *The Crow Eaters*, Karachi, 1978. ¹²⁹ *The Bride*, London, 1983.

mother-in-law, of Parsi idiosyncrasies and the occasional graphic (though not erotic) description of sex shocked the Pakistan community when the novel first came out, though now her international success means that she is respected by her compatriots. The portrayal of Parsi communal pride, the strong sense of identity, references to the religion, the rather teasing account of Parsi imitations of the British, the use of Parsi Gujarati phrases (translated) make this one of the most enjoyable of the many recent Parsi novels in English.¹³⁰ *Ice Candy Man* is concerned with the way in which Sind's various religious groups became distrustful and violent towards each other, how friend attacked friend, all seen through the eyes of a small, disabled Parsi girl. As the Sikhs and Hindus felt increasingly compelled to flee for their lives, the Parsis remained, confident that with their neutral and respected position they were safe staying on in the new Islamic state. The novel was subsequently made into a film for general release and as a video.¹³¹

Conclusion

The speed with which the Karachi community developed its religious, educational and social infrastructure was remarkable, and indicative of the early resolve to settle there rather than simply use the city as a temporary base before returning 'home' to India. It was essentially a business community, and in the nineteenth century developed a history and pattern of life not wholly different from that of Bombay. The emergence of Muslim Pakistan inevitably affected the nature of the community and its religion in the second half of the twentieth century. Many retain reasonable postal links with family and friends in India, but travel between the two, and staying in 'the other' country is not easy. One Karachi Parsi suggested to me that there are three Zoroastrian worlds—India, the West, and Pakistan—which in some ways

¹³⁰ There have been two important collections of studies of Sidhwa's work: R. K. Dhawan and N. Kapadia, *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*, New Delhi, 1996, and N. Kapadia, J. Dodiya and R. K. Dhawan, *Parsi Fiction*, vol. ii, pp. 9–99, New Delhi, 2001. There is only a slight overlap between the chapters in the two studies even though two people were involved in each book. See also J. Punwani, 'A High Profile,' *Parsiiana*, Dec. 1985, pp. 37 f.

¹³¹ The film and video, entitled *Earth* was produced by Deepa Mehta, reported on in *Parsiiana*, Sept. 2000, pp. 40–2 (P. M. Gandhi, 'Down to Earth'). In America the novel is sold under the title *Cracking India*.

belongs with Iran in that Zoroastrians there share the experience of life in a Muslim country. There are closer links between the two communities than has so far been indicated.¹³² From the time of Hataria in the nineteenth century there has been a group of Iranian Zoroastrians residing in Karachi (see pp. 202 f. above). This trend was accentuated when conditions in Islamic Iran after the fall of the Shah were at their worst. A number of Iranian refugees fled eastwards and were cared for in Pakistan. Writer in her study gives an account of her meetings with some refugees.¹³³ Few spoke English (not a widespread language in Iran) but most were young male professionals. They had left because they had found their future as Zoroastrians (viewed as unclean (*najesh*) fire-worshippers), blocked in Muslim Iran. Their journey over the mountains was hazardous and because of the conditions in Afghanistan would now be virtually impossible. They had left at great cost, because there is little chance that they will be allowed to return to Iran, and so will never see their families again. The Pakistan Parsis gave them accommodation and an English education and helped them seek an entry visa to the West by obtaining a United Nations blue card confirming their refugee status.

Living within Muslim Pakistan has not imposed the severe restrictions faced by Zoroastrians in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, there is a strong sense of a significant chasm between the Parsis and wider Pakistan society. There is little external socializing, hence the benefit of the many social as well as educational and medical provisions within the community. A few younger Parsis, educated since Zia's regime, have been obliged to study Urdu and so have some fluency in that language, but those who went to Parsi schools (which tends to mean the older generation) and who live in Parsi colonies are more likely to speak Gujarati. Perhaps the most common language is English. Similarly, a few Parsis wear shalwar-kameez, but not many, and even fewer are interested in local music and literature. The introduction of Hadoot law under Zia has left many Parsis, including

¹³² During my first visit, Mrs Bilimoria of the Banu Mandal estimated that 20% of Zoroastrians in Karachi in the mid-1980s were of Iranian origin, working in teashops and minor businesses. She informed me that there were no religious tensions between the two Zoroastrian groups.

¹³³ R. Writer, *Contemporary Zoroastrians: An Unstructured Nation*, New York, 1994, pp. 185–98.

a Parsi High Court Judge, uneasy about their long-term legal security.¹³⁴ Consequently, whereas Parsis were once consciously and proudly citizens of Pakistan, there is among the younger population some unease on this issue. Intermarriage is naturally frowned on, for that inevitably means conversion to Islam. They are conscious and proud of their difference as Zoroastrians. However, the Zoroastrian tradition of benevolent giving to the poor and oppressed remains strong. In December 2001 Karachi Zoroastrians raised sufficient funds (including £1,000 from the World Zoroastrian Organization discussed in Chapter 10 below) to send three lorry-loads of food and clothes to an Afghan refugee camp. The work was led by a past president of the Banu Mandal, Toxy Cowasjee.¹³⁵

But despite this conscious sense of distance between the Muslim and Parsi communities, it is inevitable that the religion is affected. Sidhwa's careful emphasis on certain features of the religion that would not cause Muslim hostility is a case in point. The Muslim attitudes to purity mean that the community in Pakistan is more conscious of this aspect of the religion than many are in the West. Questions of intermarriage and the purity laws have, for example, caused serious debate regarding who may and who may not stay with Parsis in a Lahore Parsi colony, specifically concerning offspring who have married out.¹³⁶ Thus far Parsis, as Parsis, have not been the targets of Muslim attack, although one, Captain Feroze Kanga, did die as a result of a random shooting in

¹³⁴ See on this general issue of the distance between Parsis and the wider Pakistan population, Writer, *Contemporary Zoroastrians*, pp. 171–84, on the laws and her interview with Mr Justice Dorab Patel, pp. 176 f.

¹³⁵ See S. Golwalla, 'Citizens of Karachi Send Relief Goods to Afghan Refugees', *Hamazor*, 2002, pp. 10–13.

¹³⁶ Minute Book of the Trustees of the Bai Avabai A. Cooper Agiary Trust, Lahore, 17 Oct. 1980. Mr Justice Rustom S. Sidhwa advised that a man who had married out could take his daughter into the temple, after her *naujote*, if he also undertook a *naujote* to indicate that he had returned to his Zoroastrian faith. He had been married under the Special Marriages Act and was therefore judged not to have renounced his religion. The Lahore Anjuman minutes of the trustees' meeting, dated 14 and 22 May 1980, debated whether a girl of Parsi parents who had married an American by a civil, not religious, marriage and who had since left her husband, could stay with her mother in the Anjuman flat. Similarly the minutes of 13 Nov. 1985 record a debate over whether a Parsi girl could stay with her mother though she had been married to a Muslim. Because she had a civil ceremony in Britain, and had not therefore converted, could she stay with her parents? The fact that these incidents provoked such intense debate indicates the seriousness with which community boundaries are maintained.

a conflict between warring gangs; little attempt was made to treat him speedily.¹³⁷

The history of Parsis in Karachi, therefore, has moved through different stages, from pioneering work in the growth of Karachi, to leadership roles in the early history of the nation, to a concern at the potential threat of what is seen as the growing militancy of Islam in Pakistan, and increasing gang violence. The older generation appear set to remain, but many of the younger generation, who are able to travel to the West for education and employment, do so. The numbers are, therefore, consistently reduced: the young migrate, and the elders die. An analysis of figures for deaths in *Ushao* showed that the number of deaths per year increased from thirty-two in 1999 to forty-six in 2000. The average age of death was 77 for males, 79.4 for females. Only two people had died under the age of 50, an indicator of the age of the general community.¹³⁸ As the numbers decline, so too do donations and subscriptions, and use of such facilities as the Dhalla library diminishes. The demographic issues have an impact on the material and social structures of the Parsis in Karachi.

¹³⁷ A Cowasjee, 'Why Did He Die?', *Parsiana*, Sept. 1995, p. 29.

¹³⁸ *Ushao*, Mar.–Apr. 2001, pp. 17 f.

Zoroastrians in East Africa

The Context: East African Asians

The oldest written indication of trade between India and East Africa, *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, dates from the first century of the Christian era (c. 80CE), but many scholars believe that such trade flourished centuries before that.^{1,2} The trade was mainly in Arab hands for centuries.³ The first European power to rule these waves was Portugal, until the eighteenth century and the rise of Britain. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided a direct route to Europe, and the introduction of fast steamers not dependent on the weather was a further important development for trade. From the perspective of Parsi history, the story begins in the nineteenth century, so that is where this discussion starts. Although other small Parsi communities grew in Uganda and South Africa,⁴ the focus of this book is on the two larger and older

¹ As ever, I am indebted to many people for their help. In this chapter special thanks are due to my former student, Nyrmla Singh. On two occasions plans had been made for me to visit Zanzibar and Kenya, and on each occasion doctors argued strongly against me travelling. Nyrmla, therefore, went in my place to collect the materials—a task she performed extremely well. She was helped by a number of Parsis in Britain and East Africa. In alphabetical order these were: Messrs Austin, Avari, Bhungara, Byramji, Dalal, Dolasa, Madan and Patel. I am grateful to Burjor Avari (formerly from Kenya) and Rusi Dalal (formerly from Zanzibar) for reading through this chapter and saving me from many errors; any that remain are of course my responsibility. Rusi also kindly obtained various books and photographs for me from East Africa. So far there have been no publications on Parsis in South Africa. I hope I may soon be able to fill that lacuna.

² Z. Marsh and G. W. Kingsnorth, *A History of East Africa*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 16.

³ K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge, 1985.

⁴ The standard work on Uganda is H. S. Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, London, 1968, which includes numerous references to Parsis. Jal Dastur, formerly of Uganda, later of Vancouver, produced a twenty-three-page account of his memories of Parsi individuals in Uganda. Most went to Uganda in government or bank (National Bank of India) employment, and from the early 20th c. in the cotton business. Most went alone and returned to India for retirement; see J. Dastur, *Parsees (Zoroastrians) in Uganda East Africa*, n.d. I am grateful to Mr Dastur for a copy of his work. A notable example of such a Parsi businessman

communities in Zanzibar and Kenya. It is, however, important to set these two countries in the wider East African context.

The sources

A preliminary word is necessary on sources. The early accounts of travellers such as Burton in 1872,⁵ and the diplomat Hardinge in 1928,⁶ naturally give the British imperial perspective. The 'upper class' and typically 'orientalist' perspective is given by Hamilton.⁷ Lyne has similarly written from a British imperialist viewpoint, as shown for example in his perceptions of the Africans and Arabs.⁸ The modern historian whose work on the economy is of major importance, Sheriff, writes from an explicitly Marxist perspective.⁹ The nature of the Parsi sources will be discussed below.

Zanzibar in the nineteenth century

Zanzibar rose to prominence from 1832, when the Sultan of Oman, Seyyid Said, moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar. Hitherto his forebears had used their island possession as the outlet for mainland trade. From 1832 it became the centre of the sultanate. Seyyid Said traded with the Europeans, but fearing

was one of Mr Dastur's family, Pesi F. Dastur (1886–1919). He arrived in Uganda in 1907, became Head Clerk of the National Bank of India, and undertook considerable social work in Uganda. He started the Kampala General Agency to buy and export cotton, resisting European attempts to exclude Indians from the profitable cotton trade. He went on to build several ginneries. See S. Pandit (ed.), *Asians in East and Central Africa*, Nairobi, 1963, pp. 69 f. On Aden the standard work, with numerous references to Parsis, is R. J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule, 1837–1967*, London, 1975. See *Parsiana*, Dec. 1976, pp. 18–20, for the consecration of the temple in 1854 and the move of the fire to Bombay on 14 November 1976. On the role of Indira Gandhi, the chartering of an Air India Boeing staffed by Parsis, and police escorts for a procession of eight buses and seventy cars, see R. K. Anklesaria, *A Miracle—The Journey of the Holy Fire Atash Adarian from Aden to Lonavla on 14 November*, 1976, Lonavla, 1999.

⁵ R. F. Burton, *Zanzibar, City, Island and Coast*, London 1872, 2 vols. The manuscript was written in 1857, but was lost for many years in the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, which delayed publication.

⁶ Sir A. Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in the East*, London, 1928.

⁷ G. Hamilton, *Princes of Zing, the Rulers of Zanzibar*, London, 1957.

⁸ R. N. Lyne, *Zanzibar in Contemporary Times*, London, 1905, e.g. pp. 78 f. Similarly E. Younghusband, *Glimpses of East Africa and Zanzibar*, London, 1908, gives a very 'imperial' British perspective, e.g. pp. 250 f. on the British navy's bombardment of Zanzibar and pp. 239–44 on Barghash. Perhaps the best example is her (probably not humorously intended) remark on the building of the East African Railway: 'While the railway was being constructed lions caused a great deal of inconvenience by walking off with the coolies working on the line' (p. 41).

⁹ A. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*, Nairobi, 1987, and Sheriff and E. Ferguson (eds.), *Zanzibar under Colonial Rule*, Nairobi, 1991.



East Africa

Note: I owe the location of the river Miningani to John Mehta who identified it as the outlet of the Tunghi from a German document of Klaus Richter, Deutsch-Ostafrika 1885 bis 1890, Auf dem Weg vom Schutzbriefsystem zur Reichskolonialverwaltung. I am very grateful to John for his successful search for this location.

their overwhelming influence, welcomed Indian traders.¹⁰ Until the mid to late nineteenth century the main trade had been in slaves captured in the interior and collected for shipment from Zanzibar. As the slave trade was gradually closed down, the clove trade replaced it; indeed, trade increased considerably, for it diversified also.¹¹ Following Seyyid Said's death in 1856, there was a dispute concerning the succession; one of the claimants, Barghash, was exiled to Bombay, where he settled in Parsee Bazaar Street in the Fort area—where many Parsis lived.¹²

As the region's trade flourished through the nineteenth century, so various powers became interested in the area: the French, Belgians, Germans, Italians, Portuguese and British, as well as the Americans. In 1876 King Leopold of Belgium established the International African Association to ban the slave trade and to represent other European interests in East Africa. Prior to 1880 the general European policy appears to have been to let East Africa develop by encouraging the spread of Christianity and commerce, but to leave the administration to the native rulers, notably the Sultan of Zanzibar. However, the degree of control exercised over his foreign, and then internal, policies grew rapidly. In 1884 at the Berlin Conference the process of demarcating European spheres of interest grew, and in 1885 a commission (which did not include the Sultan or any native representative) to draw up boundaries for the European spheres of influence designated what was to become Kenya as being under British authority. The land which was to become Tanganyika was under German control; the coastal strip and the islands were left under the rule of the Sultan, but 'guided' by the British, until in 1890 they became a British Protectorate.¹³ The 'nations' were created simply to serve European trading interests and bore no relationship to traditional affiliations.¹⁴ Whereas previously the sultanate

¹⁰ R. G. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890–1939*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 17 f.

¹¹ See esp. Sheriff, *Slaves, and Spices*.

¹² H. Kased, 'Parsee Lustre on the Emerald Isle of Zanzibar', n.d., unpublished typescript, p. 36.

¹³ Z. Marsh and G. W. Kingsworth, *A History of East Africa*, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 89–106; J. Iliffe, 'Tanzania under German and British Rule', in B. A. Ogot and J. A. Kieran (eds.), *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*, Nairobi, 1968, p. 296; J. S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa c. 1895–1980*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 6 f.

¹⁴ On European imperial rule in Africa, especially on its people and the land, see B. Davidson, *Africa in Modern History: The Search for a New Society*, London, 1978, esp. pp. 106–23.

had extended from Zanzibar into the hinterland of the East Coast of Africa, this treaty restricted the Sultan's kingdom to the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, Mafia and Lamu, and a 10-mile deep coastal belt a thousand miles long, from the River Miningani in the south to Kipani in the north.

Barghash's time in India had given him an international perspective, which he used to develop his kingdom. To obtain food, and extend his clove sales, Barghash developed trade with India, running four steamer ships on this route, and in 1872 he started a monthly steamer service, Zanzibar–Aden, thus linking with the London mail service. He also agreed to the formation of the East Africa Association, not unlike the East India Company, to encourage more trade with Europe. This trade grew significantly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In Zanzibar itself he undertook a large building programme, with four new palaces and for his people a vital project to supply fresh drinking water.¹⁵ Despite his international trading ventures, he was dependent on the British, and although he won some prestige with a formal visit to London in 1875, he was ruthlessly manipulated by them in the interests of British trade in the region.¹⁶

The successors of Barghash similarly had their powers gradually eroded when Zanzibar became a Protectorate in 1895 (to 'defend' it against growing German interests). Officials from the Foreign Office in London came to control ever more of the internal law, the succession, the powers of the Sultans, and acted as regents for young rulers. The original British policy was not so much to rule directly, but rather to manipulate and control the region through the Sultan—though the distinction soon became questionable.¹⁷

¹⁵ F. B. Pearce, *Zanzibar: The Island Metropolis of Eastern Africa*, London, 1920, pp. 263–9; W. H. Ingrams, *Zanzibar: Its History and its People*, London, 1931, p. 165; S. G. Ayany, *A History of Zanzibar: A Study in Constitutional Development, 1934–64*, Nairobi, 1970, pp. 13 f.; G. Hamilton, *Princes of Zinj: The Rulers of Zanzibar*, London, 1957, pp. 134–74. For a collection of old photographs of Barghash's building works, see A. Sheriff, *Historical Zanzibar: Romance of the Ages*, Zanzibar, 1995, especially pp. 20 f.

¹⁶ See the assessments of W. W. A. Fitzgerald, *Travels in the Coastlands of East Africa*, London, 1872, p. 534 on his work in agriculture, on p. 569 describing him as 'Seyyid Barghash, the great Sultan of Zanzibar'; also Lyne, *Zanzibar*, p. 141 on his general achievements. See also R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians, the Official Mind of Imperialism*, London, 1965, pp. 41–52.

¹⁷ L. H. Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar under the Foreign Office, 1890–1913*, London, 1953, *passim*; J. E. Flint, 'Zanzibar, 1890–1950', in V. Harlow and E. M. Chilver with A. Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, Oxford, 1965, vol. ii, pp. 641–71; Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa*, pp. 196 ff.

Some of the local British officials, notably Hardinge, were more understanding of, and sympathetic to, the interests of the Arab rulers of Zanzibar. While Consul General in Zanzibar, Hardinge thought that he had negotiated the return of the coastal strip to Zanzibar, but in 1894 the British proclaimed themselves rulers of the mainland.

The notorious example of the violence the British were willing to use to enforce their authority came in 1896. When the Sultan Hamid bin Thuwaini died, an earlier—and in Arab eyes legitimate—claimant to the throne, Seyyid Khaled, entered the palace with his troops. The acting British Agent, Basil Cave, and the Consul General, General Sir Lloyd Mathews, attempted to enter the palace and install the British choice, but they were forced to leave. The forces of the Sultan and the British eyed each other for three days. The British were reinforced so that there were five naval ships in the harbour. The leader of the naval force, Admiral Rawson, demanded complete surrender by 9 a.m. Talks were refused. Promptly at 9 o'clock the ships bombarded the palace. Within thirty minutes, 500 people were killed or injured. Because the ships were out of range of the Arab rifles, only one British life was lost. The palace was devastated and the Arabs forced to surrender. Lyne, writing in 1905, exemplifies the British attitude: 'the brief exhibition of power had the effect of clearing from the minds of the Arabs all doubt as to Great Britain's ability to compel its acceptance.'¹⁸

The British saw Mombasa as the port for the future and with the proclamation of the formation of the East African Protectorate began the building of the East African Railway from that city.¹⁹

The East African Railway

The building of the East African Railway changed the history of East Africa, in political, economic and social terms. The British interest in what became Uganda was due in part to their interest in the source of the Nile. The land between there and the coast was a vast no-man's land. To open up that 'barren' region was a huge undertaking. The problems were numerous: tribal uprisings, escarpments, dense bush and rock to be hacked through, a shortage

¹⁸ Lyne, *Zanzibar*, p. 205. Sheriff, *Historical Zanzibar*, pp. 52–9, shows the devastation of the palace complex after the bombardment.

¹⁹ Hardinge, *Diplomatist*, chs. 3–6.

of water, the tsetse fly—and the lions. The railway was known as the ‘lunatic line’. It rose from the humid port of Mombasa to a height of 8,000 feet at a summit covered in virgin forest. The decision to build it was taken in 1895, and the first piece of line from Mombasa was laid in 1896. Indentured, or ‘coolie’, labour was imported from India, mainly from the Punjab through Karachi, but professionals were recruited mostly from Bombay. By 1899 the railway had reached what was then a Maasai kraal, but was to become Nairobi, and in 1901 it arrived at Lake Victoria, the productive region of what was to become Uganda. The total labour force recruited was some 32,000, with the first 350 arriving in Mombasa in January 1896. Disease was rife and lions devoured twenty-eight people. A total of 2,493 died in the construction of the railway and 7,000 had to be invalided home.²⁰ The recruitment of both labouring and professional workers from India was well described by Sir Harry Johnston in 1899: ‘I wonder if in England the importance of one aspect of this railway construction has been realized? It means the driving of a wedge of India two miles broad right across East Africa from Mombasa.’²¹ The railway line moved the important centre of trade from Zanzibar to the mainland; the port of Mombasa flourished, the new city of Nairobi developed, new trading opportunities blossomed and new crops such as cotton and sisal were produced.

By 1900 the number of Indians in East Africa is estimated at 35,000, and many of these were the indentured labourers on the railway. A number remained after their period of labour, but it was the traders and professionals who stayed on, rather than the labourers. It is thought there were around 25,000 and by 1948 as many as 190,000.²² These ‘middle-class’ professionals were integrated into a British system. Gundara refers to ‘the gradual one-dimensional British personality of the Indian community in Zanzibar’, and to the ‘strongly entrenched British nationality’ of the Indian community’s legal terms.²³ Yet they remained outsiders. The British Consulate officials vigorously asserted ‘British nationality’ throughout the nineteenth century on behalf of the

²⁰ L. H. Hollingsworth, *The Asians of East Africa*, London, 1960, p. 47.

²¹ Quoted in Mangat, *History*, p. 40 and see pp. 32–50.

²² Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, p. 17, see also Gregory, *India and East Africa*, pp. 52–61.

²³ J. S. Gundara, ‘Indians in 19th Century Zanzibar’, in M. Israel and K. N. Wagle (eds.), *Ethnicity, Identity, Migration in the South Asian Context*, Toronto, 1993, pp. 291–319.

Indian community, although their essential commercial interests were being negated. They were given the duties, but not the benefits, of the British in East Africa.

East Africa and India

British domination resulted in the strengthening of links with India in general and Bombay in particular. Crofton, writing in 1921, detailed the proportion of imports and exports of Zanzibar in the period 1893–1920.²⁴ He showed that the bulk of trade lay with British India, which represented approximately one-third of all imports, twice as much as with Britain, for example; and accounted for one-fifth of all exports, rivalled only by trade with Tanganyika. Indian moneylenders financed much Zanzibari trade, especially the clove trade, the basis of the Zanzibar economy. It has been estimated that in 1938 India took 90% of Zanzibar's one-crop economy.²⁵ This made the landlord class dependent on Indian moneylenders.²⁶ The links were, however, more than economic. For example, one British concern had been to evolve a legal system in the island along western lines. From 1897 the Indian Code of Criminal and Civil Procedure applied to Zanzibar, as though it were a district of the Bombay Presidency. In criminal cases the assistant judge was deemed to be a magistrate of the district of Bombay Presidency and the High Court of Judicature of Bombay was deemed to be the High Court of Zanzibar—apart from cases involving the Sultan's own Arab citizens, who could appeal to him.²⁷ In one sense East Africa was an outpost of India. In the nineteenth century, consuls in Zanzibar were seconded from the Indian Civil Service; many of the clerks were Indians and so used Indian models of administration. Similarly, many of the lower managerial classes were Indian: draughtsmen, cashiers, customs officers and policemen. In 1908 the Indian silver rupee was the acknowledged coin of the Protectorate, because of the close trading ties.²⁸ The first stamps issued in Zanzibar (10 November 1895) were contemporary British Indian stamps, overprinted 'Zanzibar' and issued in terms of Indian currency in rupees and annas. No less a person than

²⁴ R. H. Crofton, *Zanzibar Affairs 1914–33*, repr. London, 1953, pp. 22–8.

²⁵ Ayany, *History*, p. 21. ²⁶ Sherriff and Ferguson, *Zanzibar*, p. 154.

²⁷ Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar*, p. 162 f. ²⁸ Sherriff and Ferguson, *Zanzibar*, p. 37.

Winston Churchill paid tribute to the Indian contribution to the development of East Africa:

It was the Sikh (and Punjabi Muslim) soldier who bore an honourable part in the conquest and pacification of these East African countries. It is the Indian trader [who] has more than anyone else developed the early beginnings of trade . . . It was by Indian labour that the one vital railway on which everything else depends was constructed. It is the Indian banker who supplies the large part of the capital²⁹

Because Indian communities generally kept within segregated areas, parts of the large towns such as Mombasa and Zanzibar were like Indian bazaars. Another feature of the Indian link with the island was the provision of schools for Indian children, but not for Arabs or Africans. Their education enabled the Indians to assume a disproportionate number of posts in government and civil service.³⁰ Africans played little role in the Arab-dominated administration, controlled by Britain.

East Africa was a potential outpost of India in a different sense. Some Indian leaders looked to the Indian annexation of East Africa. For example, A. M. Jivanjee, the richest and foremost Indian in East Africa who, among many other things, was the main supplier for the labour and resources for the building of the East African Railway, said in 1906: 'I would go so far as to advocate the annexation of this African territory [Kenya] to the Indian Empire, with Provincial Government under the Indian Viceroy. Let it be opened to us and in a very few years it will be a second India.'³¹ Similarly, the Bombay Parsi Sir Dinshah M. Petit sent three remonstrances to the British Government in the early 1920s, describing Kenya as 'the natural outlet for India's surplus population'.³²

Kenya's White settlers

In some ways the biggest change introduced by the railway was the increasing number of White settlers coming from South Africa and from Britain. From 1902 they were encouraged to settle in order to farm the rich uplands. But with the new White settlers came also social problems and divisions. By 1911 there were 3,175 White settlers, and 9,650 by 1921. Settlement by

²⁹ Mangat, *History*, p. 61.

³⁰ Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar*, p. 186.

³¹ Quoted by Bogot in B. A. Bogot and J. A. Kieran, *Zamani, a Survey of East African History*, Nairobi, 1968, p. 263.

³² Quoted in Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 232.

soldiers was encouraged after each of the world wars. They demanded the best land, and were given it in the uplands. They also insisted that the 'Asiatics' as well as the Blacks were kept at a distance. Sir Donald Stewart in a letter to Lord Lyttleton in 1905 commented, 'Owing to the insanitary habits of Asiatics and Africans, they are not fit persons to take up land as neighbours to Europeans.'³³ In 1906 it was decreed that only Whites could settle in the desirable uplands.³⁴ There were also White objections to the number of Indians, and so as early as 1902 they were calling for restrictions on them:

the further immigration of Asiatics into this country is entirely detrimental to the European settler in particular and to the native inhabitant generally, it being considered that such importation creates unfair competition to Europeans and natives, the latter being in every way superior in physique and morality, and more amenable to European supervision. Further the money earned by the native of the country remains here whereas the Asiatic takes away all his earnings to his native country.³⁵

One of the many problems was that different communities stereotyped the others. The Africans tended to depict Indians as cheats, mean and secretive; the Asians characterized the Africans as dull, unintelligent, lazy and dishonest. The Europeans presented themselves as the guardians of the poor, innocent Africans, protecting them from the machinations of the Asians, who were portrayed as usurers and exploiters.³⁶ Missionaries similarly presented themselves as the protectors of the Blacks against the Indians and to this end the Bishop of Uganda called for the geographical segregation of the races, and European women appealed to the Government for protection from the 'Indian menace'.³⁷ Settlers from South Africa reinforced the British attitudes, and it was that country's legislation which influenced policy in East Africa. East African society has been described as having a tripartite structure, with Europeans in the top ruling stratum, Indians in the middle rank of managers and traders, with the Africans, the peasants, at the bottom of the social pile. The European conquest of Africa exacted a heavy price for the Africans. Between 1902 and 1911, the African population was almost halved as people died from the

³³ Quoted in Mangat, *History*, p. 100.

³⁴ Hollingsworth, *Asians of East Africa*, p. 56.

³⁵ European Settlers in Nairobi petition, quoted in Mangat, *History*, p. 98.

³⁶ P. and Y. P. Ghai, *Portrait of a Minority: Asians in East Africa*, Oxford, 1970, p. 5.

³⁷ Hollingsworth, *Asians of East Africa*, pp. 87 f.

diseases or infections, such as influenza, introduced by the Europeans. Africans were not only subjugated but impoverished, being refused any opportunity to improve their condition either by farming good land or engaging in trading new products such as coffee; nor could they have a good education.³⁸

There were protests to the British Government in London about the unjust treatment of Asians in Africa, not only from East Africa, but also from India and from some British liberals.³⁹ Petitions were sent to senior government figures, but little in fact changed. No concessions were given on the land issue and only two nominated Asian representatives were on the Kenyan Legislative Council—the rest were White—even though in Nairobi Indians paid 25% of municipal rates and Europeans only 6.5%. In 1930, 70% of government funds were drawn from the hut tax, i.e. from Africans, not Europeans. Voting rights were not matched with taxes, or even education and property ownership, as the Indians proposed. Yet the Whites were allocated 11,000 square miles, the Indians 32 square miles.⁴⁰ Put another way, in 1926 land was apportioned in such a way that there were 400 Africans per square mile, whereas the European farmers had 500 acres each. The White settlers may have presented themselves as the protectors of the Blacks—but that did not stop them from arguing that increased wages would make the Blacks lazy, and often paying wages in kind rather than cash to ensure dependency and forced labour (even from children, women and the elderly).⁴¹

Various informants have told me that the British in Kenya were more racially prejudiced against Asians than they were in India. Salvadori has collected memories of Asians in Kenya; frequently those memories are of deep racial prejudice, in work, in medicine and education, and in social relations. This was a key factor in the

³⁸ See in particular W. R. Ochieng (ed.), *A Modern History of Kenya 1895–1980*, Nairobi, 1989 *passim* and esp. the chapter by J. Lonsdale, ‘The Conquest State, 1895–1904’.

³⁹ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, chs. 6–10, esp. pp. 131 f., 142 f., 161, 192, 195, 221, 230–4, 503. One major problem was that the East African Asian campaign had no leader comparable to Gandhi, and the INC was more concerned with Indian Independence than with overseas concerns, so their support was sporadic. After Independence Nehru was focused on relations with other independent nations, and not with Indians in East Africa. A leading campaigner for the rights of Asians in Africa was Sir Mancherjee Bhownaggree, discussed in Ch. 7 below.

⁴⁰ Mangat, *History*, p. 122.

⁴¹ T. Zeleza, ‘The Establishment of Colonial Rule, 1905–20’, in W. R. Ochieng, *A Modern History of Kenya 1895–1980*, Nairobi, 1989, pp. 39–52. See also Davidson, *Africa in Modern History*, pp. 118 f.

history of Asians in Kenya, and one to be considered in studying East African Parsis in the diaspora.⁴²

The twentieth century

There were several significant political and social developments in the early twentieth century.⁴³ The East Africa Railway resulted in the growth of Mombasa as a port, to the gradual decline of Zanzibar. Important social changes were triggered by the arrival of the White settlers. There was a major change in Indian standing in East Africa. Whereas in the second half of the nineteenth century Indians had been seen as leading traders, resourcing much of Kenya's economic activity, with the arrival of the White settlers they felt themselves marginalized. Although they were still prominent traders, they considered they were not given the recognition or the value they deserved, nor the political influence they merited. They were discriminated against in health, education and justice, and through segregation they were denied any element of social equality. Their contribution to the growth of the colony was ignored.⁴⁴ Perhaps the greatest consequence was that after the Second World War, the British had neither the human and financial resources, nor the will, to rule a global empire, especially in the face of American opposition. With the model of Indian Independence came the first hope of African independence. Tinker mapped out the overseas Indian population at the time of Indian Independence (1947). The largest settlements were in Ceylon and Burma (approximately 750,000 in each), compared with 184,355 in East Africa. Within that East African Asian

⁴² This view is expressed so frequently in Salvadori's collection of memories of Asians in East Africa (C. Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows: Stories of Indian Pioneers in Kenya*, Nairobi, 1997) that it is almost meaningless to cite specific examples. Three must suffice here: an Asian doctor was not allowed to treat Europeans in a European hospital, they had to go to a European doctor (p. 175); memories of white police beating and imprisoning Asians without cause (p. 159); the prejudice against a white woman married to a Goan (p. 174). It was experienced even by highly professional people, e.g. a Parsi who was responsible for much of the major building work in Zanzibar and Mombasa, stories related below.

⁴³ The standard work on the overall picture is V. Harlow and E. M. Chilver with A. Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, especially for this section the chapters by D. A. Low, 'British East Africa: the establishment of British rule 1895–1912', pp. 1–56, C. C. Wrigley, 'Kenya: the patterns of economic life 1902–1945', pp. 209–64, and G. Bennett, 'Settlers and Politics in Kenya, up to 1945', pp. 265–332. On Mombasa see K. Janmuhamed, *A History of Mombasa, c. 1895–1939: Some Aspects of Economic and Social Life in an East African Port Town during Colonial Rule*, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1978, pp. 44–95.

⁴⁴ D. D. C. Don Nanjra, *The Status of Aliens in East Africa*, New York, 1976, pp. 68 f.

population most were in Kenya (90,528); followed by Tanganyika (44,248); Uganda (33,767) and Zanzibar (15,812).⁴⁵ In global terms, therefore, the Indian diaspora in East Africa is not large, but the Indian communities in the four countries listed will be seen to have been significant. It is important for this modern period to treat Zanzibar and Kenya separately.

The post-war period in Zanzibar

The First World War largely passed Zanzibar by.⁴⁶ As a result of protest, local interests began to be taken into account more as the 1920s passed. In Zanzibar there was not the problem of white settlers. However, Zanzibar's trade could not remain unaffected by the collapse of the American share market in 1929. The clove market in particular, but others as well, virtually collapsed and the 1930s were spent trying to recover the situation.

As the African nations were given independence in the 1960s and the British departure became evident, so the struggles to inherit control grew. The Indian population had become ever more powerful in the civil administration, so that the *New York Times* accused the Indians of holding the islands off the East Africa coast in an iron grasp, and said that they were taking over British East Africa's colonies.⁴⁷ Political parties grew to reflect the interests of the various groups. The Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), although proclaiming a platform of Africa for the Africans, was mainly concerned to proclaim the Arab cause. The Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) spoke for the Africans, the squatters and the poor.⁴⁸ There were fears on all sides. The Africans feared that Muslim rule would result in the reintroduction of slavery; the Arabs feared being swamped by the African majority—that is, that the impoverished would supplant the landed classes. The Indian population was reluctant to see the British depart so speedily, fearing the other two groups would shut them out. They formed the Indian National Association, but that quickly became fragmented. In the 1957 elections the ASP were dominant. The Arab groups did not win a seat, so the election was seen to link

⁴⁵ H. Tinker, *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Oxford, 1977.

⁴⁶ Flint, 'Zanzibar', pp. 657–66.

⁴⁷ 8 June 1954, p. 7 cited in Ayany, *History*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ 'Shirazi' alludes to a group of Persians said to have migrated from Shiraz centuries earlier.

Zanzibar more with East Africa than with the Middle East, with which it had been connected since the time of Seyyid. The elections caused racial tension, and independence was hardly real, for the six representatives were elected only by people over the age of 40 who owned property and could read and write; that is, by 13% of the population. The other seats were filled by the nominees of the Sultan, who acted on the 'advice' of the British Resident; by now the Sultan was a ruler like the British monarch, with little political or administrative responsibility.

Calls for genuine independence grew, and in 1960 the newly elected Ian Macleod, a liberal Conservative Colonial Secretary, established a commission to look into the prospects.⁴⁹ The recommendation was that the Sultan should continue to be above politics; that there should be a salaried opposition, but that all members of the Legislative Council should be elected. Their deliberations were to be overseen by an independent Speaker. Racial issues dogged the 1961 election campaign. The ZNP, while claiming to be nationalist and to speak for the poor, was linked to the Muslim groups, whereas the ASP again stressed the interests of the Africans and emphasized ties with the mainland. The ASP won the election by one seat, which itself was won by one vote on the island of Pemba. Such a result could not stand; indeed it resulted in riots: sixty-four people were killed, sixty-three of them Arabs. In 1962, A constitutional conference was called in London. The ZNP and ASP were implacably opposed. The ASP proclaimed the Africanization of Zanzibar. It called for another election, which, through increasing the franchise and increasing the number of seats, it thought it would win. The British Government eventually closed the conference, saying that the parties had shown they were not ready for independence. One of the few definite steps taken was the acknowledgement by Zanzibari politicians that they did not wish to retain authority over the expensive coastal strip, which Kenya wanted as a gateway to world trade.

The closure of the conference resulted in protests, arrests and racial fears in Zanzibar, along with the fear of a Communist takeover. In an election in 1963, the ZNP won by eighteen seats to thirteen, and independence came on 10 December 1963. The

⁴⁹ The following general account of post-Second World War history is based on Ayany, *History*; M. F. Lofchie, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*, Princeton, 1965 and various Parsi informants.

ASP argued that British rule had been replaced by Arab rule. On 11 January 1964, a revolution broke out and on 18 January the one-party state of the People's Republic of Zanzibar was declared. Estimates of people killed in the revolution vary from 500 to 13,000. The rebel forces were led by 'Field Marshal' John Okello, who gave power to the ASP, and the Africanization of the Civil Service quickly followed. Okello was himself overthrown, as a non-Zanzibari (he was Ugandan, and Christian, not a Muslim) and was replaced by President Abud Karume. The British were slow to recognize the new regime, which soon agreed to an Act of Union with Tanganyika, forming the new country of Tanzania under the leadership of Julius Nyerere; the process of Africanization was accelerated.

The post-war period in Kenya

Whereas the First World War had had a relatively small impact on East Africa, the Second World War had a considerable effect.⁵⁰ East Africa, like other countries studied in this book, experienced the global movement of peoples, with Africans and Asians recruited for the forces and other aspects of the war effort. But it was also able to benefit from the great demand for food and other agricultural products grown in the region. In the years following the Second World War the influence of the White population in Kenya began to decline with the fall of the Empire, but Whites still had the wealth gained through farming the fertile uplands.⁵¹ Indians moved into some of the administrative vacancies, and the first twenty years after the war saw a significant increase in the number and influence of Indians in the region. This is illustrated in Table 6.1.⁵²

The 1948 population in Kenya breaks down into a total 45,238 Hindus and 27,583 Muslims;⁵³ by 1962 the proportion of Hindus

⁵⁰ The worldwide slump of the 1920s did however have a considerable impact on the Kenyan economy.

⁵¹ In focusing on Kenya, because of the study of the Parsis in that country, it is important to note that the histories of other East African countries were somewhat different.

⁵² See also Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth 1920–1950*, London, 1976. The figures are disputed, see Mangat, *History*, p. 140. Y. Tandon, 'A Political Survey', in Ghai and Ghai, *Portrait of a Minority*, p. 70 gives the 1948 East African Asian population as 183,00, rising to 352,300 in 1963.

⁵³ Muslims, see Mangat, *History*, p. 142. See also Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, p. 13; Hollingsworth, *Asians of East Africa*, p. 1.

TABLE 6.1. *Population figures for Kenya, 1931, 1948 and 1962*

	1931	1948	1962
African population	3,000,000 (?)	5,251,120	8,365,942
Asians	43,623	97,687	176,613

Source: Based on H. Tinker, *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Oxford, 1977, p. 119.

TABLE 6.2. *Income earned by different racial groups in Kenya in 1962 (% Population)*

Income (p.a.)	Africans	Arabs and Somalis	Asians	Europeans
Under 120	91.4	86	11	1.5
120–159	1.7	2.0	13	2.55
160–199	1.7	1.9	3.3	0.6
200–399	4.7	7.2	4.3	3.2
400+	0.5	2.0	68.4	92.2

Source: Based on P. and Y. P. Ghai, *Portrait of a Minority: Asians in East Africa*, Oxford, 1970, p. 109.

had increased in comparison with Muslims (55% : 23%).⁵⁴ The White settlers used the situation to consolidate their position further by conscripting more labourers to the farms so that Kenya met its 'obligations' to supply food for the allies as they sought to overcome post-war food shortages.⁵⁵ The White minority still enjoyed a hugely privileged financial position, as illustrated by Table 6.2.⁵⁶

Still excluded from the fertile uplands, Indians moved into the middle management jobs, and into the leafy suburbs previously dominated by the Whites. In part they were able to do this because, throughout the twentieth century, Asians had given major priority to schooling for their children, pressing governments to provide schools where the influences of the missionaries were not so dangerous. In proportion to their numbers, far more

⁵⁴ Tinker, *Banyan Tree*, p. 120.

⁵⁵ Ogot and Kieran, *Zamani*, pp. 281–3.

⁵⁶ See also A. Bharati, *The Asians in East Africa, Jayhind and Uhuru*, Chicago, 1972, p. 105.

Indians than Africans had a schooling, and more went to university, initially in Britain or India, later to institutions in Africa.⁵⁷ The build-up of tension was gradual from the 1940s to the 1960s (obviously the roots went back to an earlier period). Asians dominated the socially respectable professions; so, for example, in 1963, of 750 doctors in Kenya, 695 were Asian.⁵⁸ In the post-war era there was increasing urbanization, and the different lifestyle, reflected in cars and houses, became more evident, especially as Africans were restricted to outlying areas and subject to a curfew. There was seen to be an outflow of capital, both to India and Britain, so Africans increasingly perceived that Indians were draining away the nation's wealth. As Africans became more aware of the outside world, and of independence movements, so dissatisfaction with their own experience grew. The land-ownership rights, high salaries, taxation advantages, managerial responsibilities—all were seen to lie with non-Africans. Thus squeezed, the Blacks began to proclaim their rights in their own country. A relatively early indicator of this dissatisfaction was the growth of African associations to represent their interests against the British and the Asians—sixty-three existed in Mombasa alone in 1946, twenty-eight of which were formed in that year.⁵⁹ Some eventually came to the conclusion that independence would not be achieved simply through constitutional means: the Mau Mau, a group of freedom fighters, began their campaign in Kenya in the 1950s. The British reaction was to declare a state of emergency in 1952. African political parties were banned in 1953—and then permitted again after 1955. The first election, with limited franchise, was held in 1957. At a meeting in Lancaster House in London in 1960 the Black voice was recognized, but it was a case of too little, too late.

Some Indians were active in the early post-war moves for independence in East Africa,⁶⁰ but over the years many Asians became

⁵⁷ See especially P. N. Rattansi and M. Abdulla, 'An Educational Survey', in Ghai and Ghai, *Portrait of a Minority*, pp. 128–50.

⁵⁸ Tinker, *Banyan Tree*, pp. 122–6; W. G. Kuepper and G. L. Lynne Lackey and E. Nelson Swinerton, *Ugandan Asians in Great Britain*, London, 1975, pp. 35 f.; M. Twaddle, *Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians*, London, 1975, p. 9 f.; A. A. Mazrui, 'Independent East Africa', p. 378; Ogot and Kieran, *Zamani*, ch. 17.

⁵⁹ Y. Tandon, 'A Political Survey', in Ghai and Ghai, *Portrait of a Minority*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ D. A. Seidenberg, *Mercantile Adventurers: The World of East African Asians 1750–1985*, London, 1996, pp. 148–78.

fearful for their future. In the build-up to the independence of African states, the East African Asians found themselves without international support. During the days of Empire the India Office and the Viceroy had represented their interests, but after its own Independence India's prime concern was her relationship with other independent nations. Since the East African Asians had chosen to live in another country, often with a non-Indian passport, they were seen as beyond India's responsibility. Nehru, for example, was of the opinion that East African Asians should identify with their newly emerging nations. Similarly, the British sought the favour of the emerging African states and had long sought to drive a wedge between Africans and Asians. Many East African Asians became nervous for their future; others accepted the coming of African Independence passively.⁶¹

Independence in Kenya

Independence was given to Kenya on 12 December 1963.⁶² As the nation states emerged, so the question of citizenship became acute for the Asians. Hitherto they had not had to choose between a British or an African passport, and so it has been said that their hearts were in India, their wealth in Britain and their bodies in Africa. Now they had to choose. Few in Kenya (as elsewhere) chose an Indian passport, because of their perception of poverty and limited opportunities there. Relatively few chose a passport of an East African country for similar reasons. Residents were given up to two years to register their African nationality. When the queues of Asians at the British Embassy applying for passports were seen to grow, anti-Asian feeling increased also.⁶³ As feelings grew, so it seemed the cry for Africanization became a cry for 'Blackenization'.⁶⁴ This was the pattern of events that led to thousands of Kenyan Asians departing for Britain in the mid-1960s, an exodus dramatically highlighted by the sudden, brutally enforced, expulsion of all Asians in Uganda by General Idi Amin. But his act, however cruel, should not be seen as coming suddenly.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Tandon, 'Political Survey', pp. 75–82.

⁶² A. A. Mazrui, 'Independent East Africa', ch. 17 in Ogot and Kieran, *Zamani*; Seidenberg, *Mercantile Adventurers*, pp. 179–209.

⁶³ Nanjra, *Status of Aliens*, pp. 161–3; P. M. Bhatt, *A History of Asians in Kenya 1900–1970*, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1978, pp. 342–91.

⁶⁴ Bhatt, *History*, pp. 343, 355, 374.

⁶⁵ Tinker, *Banyan Tree*, pp. 126–37; 154–8.

The history of Zanzibar was different, as British rule was succeeded by some Arab dominance, but not such that Asians felt threatened, until the Black-orientated revolution a few weeks after Independence in 1964. Whereas in Kenya the conflict was between the Africans and the British, in Zanzibar there was a more complex struggle for power for it included the Arabs who wanted to establish a Muslim state, and the British and the Africans who did not want to see Arab domination.⁶⁶

Some qualifications

This chapter has tended to generalize the term 'Asians'. There were of course many different groups, groups that often did not collaborate. The Muslims, for example, had stronger ties with the African countries than with India after Independence, unlike the Hindus. But even these terms are generalizations. Within the Muslim 'community' there were the Sunni (e.g. the Arabs) and Ismailis—whom the former do not recognize as Muslims. Similarly, it is often inappropriate to refer to the 'Hindu community'. Most people were more conscious of their Gujarati, Punjabi or Goan origin. Even with those divisions, Patels tended to look after Patels, and so on. The word 'community' implies a far more monolithic body than existed in practice. The only legitimation of such general terms as Asian, Hindu, etc. is that outsiders, commonly British or African, did not distinguish between the various groupings—but that is to let outsiders determine description, rarely a desirable practice. Perhaps the one group which had more coherence than others was the Sikhs, though even here regional differences existed.⁶⁷ There have been many debates concerning the importance of caste among East African 'Asians'. For some writers, this was a social structure that travelled with migration; for others it was not. On balance it would seem that where groups were small there was little scope for caste divisions, but as numbers grew after the Second World War, the various groupings became large enough for some to observe certain caste distinctions. Caste

⁶⁶ J. Iliffe, 'Tanzania under German and British Rule', in Ogot and Kieran, *Zamani*, pp. 308 f.

⁶⁷ Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, p. 110; Tinker, *Banyan Tree*, p. 120; Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, pp. 12–16. There have been many debates concerning the importance of caste among East African 'Asians'. That topic has not been pursued here because it is not relevant for the Parsis. If it had an impact on them at all, it was probably that it reinforced their sense of distinctiveness.

was generally an important factor for most groups as far as marriage partners were concerned. But in the post-war era, the educated westernized men tended to group together in clubs, generally representing business or professional interests. Here dining and drinking with those of a different caste was more common.⁶⁸

Parsis in Zanzibar: the Emerald Isle

The sources

It is only possible to write about topics for which there are historical sources.⁶⁹ Often those sources have a particular bias. This general point is especially relevant to this chapter. The records of the Zoroastrian community in Zanzibar are uneven. The broad history from the 1880s to 1940s is on the whole not controversial, but some records have been lost, having been kept by the Parsi firm Cowasji Dinshaw and Brothers of Aden—often known as ‘the Adenwallas’—who became deeply embroiled in community disputes from 1950. During that later period almost all the available documentation reflects the views of one party, the newly elected Zoroastrian Anjuman of Zanzibar, and in particular its energetic secretary, Hoshang Kased. With such sources it is difficult to provide a balanced account of the community, although I have tried to balance informants from the opposing groups. From the perspective of the Parsi historian the problem is compounded by the fact that many external writers are either hostile to the Indian community in general, for example the constitutional historian Hollingsworth,⁷⁰ or refer to the Parsis and dismiss them as of little significance. Ingrams, for example, describes the Parsis as ‘of no historical or ethnological importance’.⁷¹ This chapter will argue

⁶⁸ Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, pp. 16, 25, 27, 114, 116, 173; Hollingsworth, *The Asians of East Africa*, London, 1960, p. 3; Twaddle, *Expulsion of a Minority*, p. 11.

⁶⁹ The subheading ‘Parsis in Zanzibar: the Emerald Isle’ deliberately invokes the title of an unpublished typescript of Hoshang Kased, formerly of Zanzibar, now residing in Mumbai, used extensively with his permission. By alluding to the title of his manuscript, I wish to indicate the extent of my indebtedness to him. As will emerge, Kased himself was a central figure in the disputes, that form an important part of this section. I am deeply grateful to him for his kind help, but clearly there is the problem of bias in my sources.

⁷⁰ Hollingsworth, *Zanzibar*.

⁷¹ Ingrams, *Zanzibar*, p. 29. Some early writers disregard East African Asians altogether, e.g. W. W. A. Fitzgerald, *Travels in the Coastlands of British East Africa and the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba*, London, 1898, whose concern was the land and its resources, especially agriculture.

that Parsis were of more importance in Zanzibar than Ingrams acknowledged, and that the Zanzibari community was important for Parsi history both in India and in the western diaspora from the 1960s. There is one further important but little-known source, a travelogue written by Darukhanawala in 1905.⁷² This is the story of one of the early Zanzibari Parsi pioneers as he journeyed along the recently built railway and on into Uganda. Some of his asides provide useful insights into the community and its ideas.

It was noted above that before becoming Sultan, Barghash had been exiled to Bombay where he lived near Parsis. He came into contact with a number of them, for example K. N. Cama, and the famous first Parsi judge in the British (Small Causes) Court, Maneckji Cursetji.⁷³ It was from Barghash's accession to the throne in Zanzibar in 1870 that Zanzibar became a part of Parsi history, for among other Indians he brought with him were some notable Parsis, including Darukhanawala and his brother. This history will, therefore, start from 1870.

The early arrivals

Darukhanawala's travelogue (p. 173) identifies the first Parsi to do business in Zanzibar as an agent of Seth Kamani, in approximately 1830. He states that the agent was so appalled at the slave trade that he promptly left. Kamani's business went bankrupt, but at the cost of everything he owned, he dutifully paid all his creditors, refusing charitable help. Unfortunately he died shortly afterwards. Kased's notes record the name of the first Zanzibari Parsi as Maneckji A. Mistry, a member of the Wadia family and trader from Surat, who arrived in approximately 1845.⁷⁴ For him Zanzibar was an escape, for he had hit his European senior at work, an offence for which he would have been executed had he not managed to escape in one of the Sultan's boats. He built up his business in Zanzibar, eventually bringing his wife and children to the island. Darukhanawala also reports that:

during his reign (1856–1870) Sultan Seyyid Majoid had called an expert Parsi carpenter. He gave him a big salary and respected him very much.

⁷² S. M. Darukhanawala, 'Africa in Darkness', in C. Salvadori and J. Aldrick (eds.), *Two Indian Travellers*, Mombasa, 1997, pp. 99–238. Historians, especially of the Parsi community, are deeply indebted to the editors for making this source available. To my knowledge it has never been used before.

⁷³ Darukhanawala, *Africa*, p. 174.

⁷⁴ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, p. 35.

But the carpenter was not happy in Zanzibar so in the end he was sent back to India. From 1873 the Parsis started coming to Zanzibar and by 1875 there were many, and today there are about 100 Parsis who have settled in Zanzibar.⁷⁵

An American traveller, Osgood, in 1854 reports encountering Parsis in several ports in the Indian Ocean on his travels in Zanzibar (pp. 35, 47), Aden (pp. 126, 160) and Mocha (p. 100). He evidently held them in high regard:

They are partial to the protection of the English Government . . . The Parsees adhere strictly to their religion and have never been known to adapt the manners of any other sects with whom their business intercourse has brought them. Their religion is politically a good one, and wherever found they are considered pattern citizens, by reason of a liberal and hospitable care for the poor—whom they do not permit to beg of other sects—their quiet energy, industrious habits, courteous address, tolerant loyalty and good morals. Than a Parsee, can be found no more faithful and enduring a friend, no more assiduous catcher—and at the same time liberal squanderer—of money, no more skilful merchant or mechanic, no more tidy, accommodating and respectful servant . . . a handsome man, . . . countenance open, animated, and bearing with intelligence. The Parsees never intermarry with other races.⁷⁶

Another early account of the Parsis in Zanzibar was that of Burton, published in 1872 but actually written in 1857.

A few Parsees from Bombay visited Zanzibar . . . two were carpenters and a third was a watchmaker, dishonest as his craft usually is. To the general consternation of Europeans, two Parsee agents lately landed on the Island, sent by some Bombay House whose name they concealed. These will probably be followed by others, and if that most energetic of commercial races once makes a good footing at Zanzibar, it will presently change the condition of trade. They are viewed without prejudice by the Arabs and the Wasawahili. The late Seyyid [Said] was so anxious to attract Parsees who might free him from the arrogance, and the annoyance of ‘white merchants’, that he would willingly have allowed them to build a ‘Tower of Silence’, and to perform, uninterrupted, all the rites of their religion.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Darukhanawala, *Africa*, p. 174.

⁷⁶ J. B. F. Osgood, *Notes of Travels or Recollections of Majunga, Zanzibar, Muscat, Aden, Mocha and Other Eastern Ports*, Salem, 1854, p. 201. The whole of ch. 29 (pp. 200–2) is on the Parsis. His account of their religion is balanced, and so presumably well informed. He refers to a Parsi owning the only hotel in Aden, the Prince of Wales Hotel, but he does not speak highly of it (p. 126)! Less informative is G. Dale, *The Peoples of Zanzibar, their Customs and Religion*, New York, 1920, repr. 1969.

⁷⁷ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol., pp. 335–6.

A later report of the Parsis is that of Pearce (1920). Concluding his account of the Indian communities in Zanzibar, he writes:

Last but not least are the Parsis. They are of very recent advent to Zanzibar. In 1861 the official archives show that there was only one Parsi in the Sultanate. Since that time they have slowly increased, and now number about sixty-four. Thoroughly well educated on modern lines, broad minded, affable, enlightened, and highly civilised, they are respected by all and much liked by the European communities.⁷⁸

The first Parsi known to have followed Sultan Barghash and settled in Zanzibar (1875) was Bomanjee M. Darukhanawala, who worked as an engineer on one of the Sultan's steamers and then became Minister of Public Works, a post he occupied until his retirement in 1908.⁷⁹ At an unknown date within the next five years he was joined by his brother Sohrabji M. Darukhanawala, who was the first Superintendent of Health, and the author of the travelogue quoted above. Another early settler was Mancherjee P. Talati, a court registrar who came in 1875–8. Similarly, Bomanji D. Talati, who came in 1887–90, also became court registrar. A further indicator of the nature of the early Parsi settlement in Zanzibar is a report written by Rastom⁸⁰ K. Sidwa (whose work in later Zanzibar history will be discussed below). He wrote a short piece on the Parsis for a sort of 'Who's Who' of Asians in Zanzibar, edited in 1963. Because of his role in the community he was particularly well informed. He reported:

the majority [of Parsis] being in the Government Service . . . The earliest members of the Parsi community came about 85 years ago in the Sultan's government as either Marine Engineering or Mechanics or Civil Servants and, at a later date, as employees of the National Bank of India Ltd. (now the National Grindley's Bank Ltd.) the first foreign bank to be established in India and to have opened offices in Zanzibar and in British East Africa. There were also a dozen or more Parsis who came to Cable and Wireless Ltd., then known as the Eastern Telegraph Co., and that number is still with them today.⁸¹

Kased's unpublished notes, not included in his manuscript, indicate some of the early years of settlement. The names of

⁷⁸ F. B. Pearce, *Zanzibar: The Island Metropolis of Eastern Africa*, London, 1920, p. 258.

⁷⁹ Silver Jubilee Number of the *Samachar*, 1929, p. 52; Darukhanawala, *Africa*, p. 174.

⁸⁰ The spelling of Rustom used in my source.

⁸¹ S. Pandit (ed.), *Asians in East and Central Africa*, Nairobi, 1963, p. 12.

the settlers, and in particular their professions, are of historical interest.

<i>Year of Arrival</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Profession</i>
1883	Dr Pestonji B. Nariman	Sultan's physician
1887	Rustomji N. Talati	Government building contractor
1889	Shapurji B. Sidhwa	Electrical engineer (employed by the Sultan) ⁸²
1892	Sorabji M. Mistry	Business and E. African Government service
1892	Framji P. Doctor	Advocate, High Court
1892	Hoshang B. Vania	Advocate, High Court
1892	Merwanji R. Boyce	Advocate, High Court ⁸³
1893	Maneckji B. Dalal	Superintendent of Police
1893	Maneck F. Mehta	Cashier, Government Treasury
1896	Maneckji Dalal	Chief Police Inspector ⁸⁴

These reports reveal an obvious difference between the early pattern of the settlement in Zanzibar, and the merchant base of the Parsi communities in the China Seas and Karachi. In Zanzibar, the early Parsi arrivals were a predominantly professional group, largely in government service, in building and engineering. There is only the occasional reference to them as agents. Unlike those whose names are in the Macao graveyard, none of them appear to have claimed to be merchants. Other sources indicate that another group of Parsi migrants to Zanzibar consisted of builders and carpenters to work on the Sultan's building programme, but their lower public profile means that we know less about them.⁸⁵

⁸² Sidhwa later diversified. In 1907 he started a soda-water and ice factory. He invested his profits in land, planting 43,000 clove trees, 40,499 coconut palms and 900 fruit trees. Gregory, *Indians in East Africa*, p. 116 and Pandit, *Asians in East and Central Africa*, pp. 59 f. and see also the advertisement for Sidhwa's ice and mineral water factory, p. 364 (details of Pandit, n. 4 above).

⁸³ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, p. 83 also mentions Mancherjee Pestonjee Asavaid as another Parsi barrister working in Zanzibar before 1900.

⁸⁴ Silver Jubilee Number of the *Samachar*, 1929, p. 52.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

The founding of the Anjuman

The Anjuman was started in 1875 and its first panel of trustees was formed in 1881, with two Talati brothers (Hormusji N. and Maneckji P. Talati) and the Darukhanawala brothers. In 1882 Sohrabji Darukhanawala brought with him from India the first Zanzibari priest, Ervad Bhicaji P. Sidhwa from Udwada, and he started the first ritual fire in a separate room on the ground floor of Darukhanawala's own home.⁸⁶ The same year the trustees purchased some land on which community buildings were to be erected, and Sultan Barghash gave them land for a cemetery. In 1884 the various craftsmen and engineers, working under the supervision of Bomanjee Darukhanawala, built the community hall and a building for the fire. Although the community numbered only twenty-six in 1884, the following year the Anjuman built a community hall, priest's quarters and kitchen. The *dadgah* (third grade of fire) was then moved to the main building in the community's wadi, or Shemba.⁸⁷ In 1886 they laid the foundations of a *dokhma* near the cemetery. That was never completed, because the Consul General, General Lloyd Matthews (who ordered the notorious bombardment) and others obtained an injunction from the court. They argued that the exposure of corpses in low-lying land (unlike in Bombay, where the *dokhma* is on a hill) would cause smells 'and the probability of infection-carrying flies being attracted to the decomposition might prove a source of danger to neighbouring residents'. It should be noted that there were then neither vultures nor crows in Zanzibar. The judge said:

I am of the opinion, and find as fact that there is imminent danger and that the apprehended injury if it does come will be irreparable . . . [on the advice of doctors consulted I] fail to see why the plaintiffs should be exposed to the danger of life and health . . . especially when the whole country round Zanzibar is open to the defendants.

The injunction was granted, and the Parsis had to pay costs.⁸⁸ The *dokhma* was never built.

In 1887, according to a contemporary, Major J. R. L. Macdonald, there were seventy-nine Parsis in Zanzibar.⁸⁹ In 1889 a new priest's

⁸⁶ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, pp. 55–9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–51.

⁸⁸ Civil Case No. 470 of 1886 in the Court of HM Consul General at Zanzibar.

⁸⁹ Gregory, *Indians in East Africa*, p. 37.

residence was built. Eight years later, in 1895, Dorabji Dinshawji Adenwalla (the last 'name' became a commonly used family name because of their huge base in Aden) built a prayer hall in the Parsi *shamba* in memory of his son,⁹⁰ with a trust fund for its maintenance.⁹¹ So, although still only few in numbers⁹² within twenty years the Parsis had the physical resources to practise the Zoroastrian religion, even though they had to use a burial ground, not a *dokhma*. In 1905 the prayer hall was extended.⁹³

At the instigation of the trustees, the firm Cowasji Dinshaws and Bros. (hereafter Cowasji Dinshaws) had established a branch of their firm in Zanzibar in 1884. Among their various activities, they ran steamers from Aden along the East African coast, so that a base in Zanzibar was a logical step. They were invited to become suppliers of provisions to the British in 1888 by H. E. Sir William Hewett, when he scrapped the naval store ship. The Cowasji Dinshaws opened their Zanzibar office, run by members of the family.⁹⁴ Kased lists their other offices as being in Aden, Asmara (Eritrea), Djibouti (French Somaliland), Berbera (British Somaliland), Hoddeidah (Yemen), and later Mombasa and Dar es Salaam.⁹⁵ In 1909 they inaugurated a new steamer service between Zanzibar, Pemba, Tanga, Mombasa, Lamu, Malindi and Kisimayu.⁹⁶ As well as supplying the British, the Cowasji Dinshaws also were Agents for the Imperial German East Africa Flotilla from 1902 to 1914.⁹⁷ From this extensive international trade their wealth was considerable. They were merchants on an international scale, unlike earlier settlers in Zanzibar. They were also prominent in charitable work. The Cowasji Dinshaws were thus the counterparts in East Africa of JJ and Sons in China.

In 1886 the Anjuman funds had been transferred to the firm of Cowasji Dinshaws,⁹⁸ who then ran the Anjuman and its properties until after the Second World War. When the Cowasji Dinshaws took responsibility for the Anjuman funds, they formed a Managing Committee with one member of the Cowasji

⁹⁰ *Bulletin Extraordinary*, No. 5/53, para 9. ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, para 11; *Parsi Lustre*, p. 73.

⁹² Kased's records that there were only thirty-six men and nine women and children at that time, so Macdonald's figures may be over-optimistic.

⁹³ *Rast Gofar*, 28 Jan. 1906.

⁹⁴ Silver Jubilee Number of the *Samachar*, 1929, p. 53

⁹⁵ *Parsi Lustre*, p. 61.

⁹⁶ *The Gazette for Zanzibar and East Africa*, 10 Feb. 1909.

⁹⁷ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, p. 62.

⁹⁸ *Bulletin Extraordinary*, No. 5/53, para 5.

Dinshaw family, three members of the Talati family and Bomanjee Darukhanawala. The intention was to achieve some degree of continuity with the earlier Anjuman,⁹⁹ though there had to be a court case in 1884 before the old treasurer was willing to hand over the money.¹⁰⁰

The Parsi graveyard in Zanzibar provides more clues about the early and growing composition of the community there. It includes some 125 graves. Twenty-seven of those graves indicate an Indian origin, mostly Bombay (seventeen), with four from Surat, the rest from various parts of Gujarat. The earliest grave with a readable inscription is dated 1883.¹⁰¹ The presence of women in a community indicates a perception of long-term settlement, and that the Anjuman was not composed only of men on short visits to earn money before returning home to their families. It is, therefore, worth noting that the oldest woman's grave is dated 1898.¹⁰² Similarly, infant deaths indicate the raising of families in the community. There are twenty children's graves in the cemetery, the oldest dated 1888, for a child of the Talati family (grave 70). There are also six graves of people born in Zanzibar at the turn of the century.¹⁰³ This small professional community, therefore, established itself quickly both in terms of religious resources and of family settlement. The number of family graves suggest that the largest family groupings were the Talatis (eleven graves), Sidhwas (seven graves), Elavias (five graves) and Darukhanawalas (four graves).¹⁰⁴

Parsis in Zanzibar in the early twentieth century

The history of the community after the takeover of the Cowasji Dinshaws is not well documented, though Kased notes a number

⁹⁹ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 43–5.

¹⁰¹ Grave 53 of Rustam C. Bharucha, died 28 July 1883. It should be emphasized that some of the inscriptions are no longer legible, so older graves are possible. Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, p. 55 states that the families started coming in 1886.

¹⁰² Grave 67, Bai Maneckbai Bomanji Dhunjibhai Talati, aged 48.

¹⁰³ Grave 88, Firoze S. Madon, born Zanzibar, 1900; grave 71, child of the Dalal family, 1901; grave 94, B. M. Mehta, born Zanzibar 1902; grave 82, a child of the Alavia family, 1902; grave 13, Mrs Dhanbai R. Sidhwa, born Pemba, 1907; grave 25, Mrs Mehra Cawasji Chothia, born Zanzibar 1908. Grave 78 is of A. B. Sutaria, born in Dar es Salam in 1901.

¹⁰⁴ Again it has to be stressed that these figures would probably be different if all inscriptions were legible. They therefore indicate a general pattern, but are not precise numbers. Elavia's descendents recounted their Zanzibar memories in *Parsiana*, Oct. 1996, p. 19.

of disputes at the turn of the century over the accountability of the firm and Anjuman funding.¹⁰⁵ There are some external sources indicating the standing of individual Parsis on the island in the early twentieth century. The first is a speech given by Basil Cave, the Agent and Consul General, whom Sir A. Hardinge described as 'my own able acting locum tenens'.¹⁰⁶ It was Cave who, with General Sir Lloyd Mathews, was unable to enter the palace and install the British nominee as Sultan, an event that provoked the bombardment of the palace. He was, therefore, a high-ranking British official. In response to a presentation made by the Parsi community to him on his departure in October 1908, Cave said:

As I look back over the 17 years that we have spent in Zanzibar I am struck by the large number of Parsee gentlemen in the official, legal and mercantile worlds with whom we have come into contact, and whom, happily, we have been able to count as friends. If I may begin with those with whom I have been most closely associated. There are three names that I can never forget, Bomanji Dhunjibhoy Talati, Mancherji Pestonji Talati and Hormusji Nouroji Talati—for how much the name of Talati stands in Zanzibar—men who have held in turn the post of Head Clerk at His Majesty's Agency and Consulate General, as loyal and faithful public servants as could be found anywhere; and in the younger generation there are two, Framroze Shapoorji Ayrton and Cursetji Dinshaw Bazarmaster, who bid fair to follow in their predecessors' footsteps and to whom I am indebted for much loyal and valuable assistance. Outside my own personal staff there have been Bomanji Maneckji, his brother Sorabji and Cursetji, the old Registrar, three of the oldest and most faithful officers that the Zanzibar Government has ever had; Nariman, our first Medical Officer; Hormus Laskari, as upright and single minded a lawyer as I have ever known; Merwanjee Boyce, always ready to place his services and his time at the disposal of those who need them; Framroze Doctor, the same and as Registrar in whose hands I am sure that the honour of the Court is in safe keeping; Rustomji Nawroji Talati and Bhedwar, builders of modern palaces; Dubash, Chief Accountant at the Treasury; those stirring cricketers D. F. Dubash, Ranji and Framji Dinshaw, playing the game and playing it well . . . and last but not least, that long succession of brothers and cousins—Muncher, Kaikobad, Dinshaw, Sorabji and Shawakshaw—who have worthily upheld the character of the eminent firm of Cowasji Dinshaw . . . It is a long list—in view of the size of the community, a surprisingly long list—of men who by their own merits have won their way to the top of the professions . . .

¹⁰⁵ *Parsi Lustre*, pp. 46 f., 59 f.

¹⁰⁶ Hardinge, *Diplomatist*, p. 190.

He then went on to refer to the Zoroastrian traditions of being 'self reliant, law-abiding, as straight as a die in all their dealings, generous to a fault . . . in Zanzibar, as in India, one of the most loyal members of that great body politic which is called the British Empire. I appreciate to the full that loyalty and the support for which I have never asked you in vain.'¹⁰⁷

There is another external, this time published, account of the Parsis from that year, the book of the traveller Ethel Younghusband, in which she includes a generally well-informed chapter on the community.¹⁰⁸

By far the most superior of the natives of India who have come to Zanzibar are the Parsis, mostly from Bombay. They are a most interesting people, quite different in nearly every way from the other children of India. They are, to begin with, very much lighter in colour, most of them being as light as the people of Southern Europe, and some even lighter . . .

Now many Parsees follow various professions, *viz.*, that of the law, medicine, or engineering; most of them, though, are merchants and contractors, other clerks, many of these last, in Government employ. Some of each have settled in Zanzibar. The barristers dress absolutely like Englishmen, but the others still retain their headdress . . . The women still retain their national dress in Zanzibar . . .

. . . Parsees generally are noted for their kindness, generosity and benevolence towards others less well off than they are; they build many public institutions and subscribe liberally to funds for any worthy object. They attain their position by hard work and good business faculties, perseverance being one of their strong points. Parsis do not allow infant marriages . . . The Parsis, unlike their Indian neighbours, may only marry one wife at a time. . . . Mr Boyce, a Parsee barrister in Zanzibar, whose wife and children were in England, so that the children should be well educated¹⁰⁹

Cave and Younghusband's points regarding the professional nature of the Zanzibari Parsi community is confirmed by other sources. The published non-European staff list of the Zanzibar Protectorate for 1923 lists sixteen Parsis, including S. H. Talati as

¹⁰⁷ Reported in *The Gazette for Zanzibar & East Africa*, 28 Oct. 1908, and see the Silver Jubilee Number of the *Samachar*, 1929, p. 52. Sheriff, *Historical Zanzibar*, p. 80 includes a photograph taken at this time, of four civil servants. Two are obviously English; the other two equally obviously are Parsis, a visual confirmation of their governmental role.

¹⁰⁸ Her account of the *dokhma* and its principles is well informed, so too are her comments on attitudes to the fire (pp. 262 f. and 268 f. respectively).

¹⁰⁹ Younghusband, *Glimpses*, pp. 261–71.

office superintendent in the secretariat, eight clerks, four engineers in the shipping department, and a sub-assistant surgeon. The offices they were employed in included shipping, customs, and work at the port, but they were not in the police or agricultural departments. The total number of Parsis in Zanzibar at this time is estimated to have been 216.¹¹⁰ Other Parsis also held important positions, for example P. S. Doctor, a lawyer, had been an unofficial member of the Legislative Council in 1927 and 1931 and became Registrar of the High Courts, in which post he continued into the post-war years, retiring in 1963.¹¹¹ A British Resident ran the Sultan's government. Under him was a Secretary of State, and below him eight Assistant Secretaries, effectively working as ministers did in Britain, running various departments such as Education. Two of these were Parsis, Rusi Madon and Eruch Gundevia.¹¹²

Parsis in Zanzibar after the Second World War

The position of Parsis in Zanzibar after the Second World War is particularly interesting. Various figures became prominent in the period 1945–64. Ten Zanzibari Parsis were made Members of the British Empire (MBE);¹¹³ seven were decorated by the Sultan and made Chancellors of the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar.¹¹⁴ Parsis also held important offices: Rustom S. Madon was nominated by the Government to membership of the Legislative Council in 1957, and in 1962 Rustom K. Sidhwa was the first elected Asian member of the Council.¹¹⁵ In 1961 he had represented the Afro-Shirazi Party at the Zanzibar Independence Conference in London.¹¹⁶ The first mayor of Zanzibar was Pervez S. Talati.

¹¹⁰ Gregory, *Indians in East Africa*, pp. 116, 407.

¹¹¹ Golden Jubilee Number of the *Samachar*, 1952, pp. 9, 52. See also S. Pandit, *Asians in East and Central Africa*, pp. 95 f.

¹¹² Information from Rusi Dalal. Rusi Madon, I understand, was there from 1935, i.e. in pre-war years.

¹¹³ S. H. Talati; T. J. Bhumgara; J. F. Jasawala; J. F. Dastoor; D. H. Daruwala; E. N. Gundevia; K. S. Madon; and two women—Mrs M. S. Talati and Mrs A. A. Arjani. In addition to these names taken from Kased, Jamshed D. Byramjee also received the award for his extensive social work, serving for several years as president of the Nairobi Social Service League (Pandit, *Asians in East and Central Africa*, p. 113).

¹¹⁴ S. H. Talati; R. K. Sidhwa; H. H. Kased; K. S. Madon; K. S. Talati; E. N. Gundevia; D. R. Mistry.

¹¹⁵ This is the Rustom Sidhwa mentioned above and there spelt, as per the source quoted, Pandit, 'Rastom'. Pandit includes a brief account of Sidhwa's achievements on pp. 260 f.

¹¹⁶ *Bulletin* 25/61, 27/63.

Keki S. Talati and Rustom K. Sidhwa were successively the first two chairmen of the Zanzibar Township Council (1955–7). What was happening was that Parsis were taking offices which, though new, were replacements of roles previously occupied by the British. In 1956 there were 215 Parsis in Zanzibar.¹¹⁷ Perhaps the most important appointment was that of Keki. S. Madon as the first Speaker of the Legislative Council in 1961. The occasion was described in the *Zanzibar Voice*.¹¹⁸

Two days earlier precisely at 10.15 a.m. His Excellency [the British Resident, Sir George Mooring] with the Honourable the Chief Justice arrived in the Council Hall and were welcomed by the Chief Secretary. His Excellency then addressed the House and quoting Sir Erskine May's book on Parliamentary Practice, said that the Speaker is the representative of the House itself in its powers, proceedings and dignity. His chief characteristics are authority and impartiality. He is the custodian of the prestige and honour of the House and Members must acknowledge his authority at all times.

His Excellency added that the task ahead before the Speaker as well as members will not be easy particularly during debates when the heat rises and tempers are frayed, and at that time the Speaker, who is the one person above dispute, must be respected. The appointment of the first Speaker, he added, is symbolic of the constitutional advance and also a turning point in the history of the Council.

Community divisions

Ironically, this period when Parsis were assuming a more prominent political, rather than simply high-level administrative, role, was also the time when the community was most divided. In the post-war period Cowasji Dinshaws changed their practice in managing their Zanzibar office, sending a manager rather than a member of the family. It is important to emphasize that the sole source for the following account is Kased and the Anjuman papers, which as secretary he kept. These do include some court and other independent sources, but they too have been selected by Kased. Given this potential bias, the story will be related in general terms, and used for later discussion of wider issues.

On 14 February 1942, the first meeting was held in what was to be a protracted and acrimonious debate. A number of Zanzibari

¹¹⁷ S. Pandit, *Asians in East and Central Africa*, Nairobi, 1963, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ 4 Dec. 1960. Sheriff, *Historical Zanzibar*, p. 93, includes a photograph of the occasion.

Parsis were concerned that, despite communal requests, the Cowasji Dinshaws had not registered the land occupied by the temple, the priests house, etc. under the local government regulations (the Land Perpetual Succession Decree). In order to do this they had to adopt a constitution and become a corporate body with trustees. This caused tension with the firm's Zanzibar manager in particular. In a letter dated 5 September 1944, Dinshaw H. C. Dinshaw as head of the firm stated that if the Cowasji Dinshaws were to continue to fund the building and bear associated costs, then the head of their firm in Zanzibar must be considered head of the community, and as head of the community would represent their interests to the Government. If he was not so recognized, then the Cowasji Dinshaws would withdraw their financial support. The community was divided in its response. Matters came to a head in 1953 with the formal establishment of 'the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman—Zanzibar'. One hundred and fifteen Zanzibari Parsis, said to represent 70% of the community, met on 16 February and approved the articles of their constitution: a constitution eventually recognized by the Government on 31 December 1953.¹¹⁹ Opposed to the Anjuman was the Parsee Association, a group that supported the traditional arrangement with the Cowasji Dinshaws.¹²⁰

One of the key problems for the Anjuman was funding for the temple and priestly salaries and so they imposed a compulsory subscription of 1% of each family's income as a donation, in contrast to the voluntary subscriptions of previous years. The Anjuman asserted that the non-subscribers would be given access to the religious resources, the services of the priest and to the rituals, but would not be allowed to vote at Anjuman meetings.¹²¹ The matter eventually went to court, which found in favour of the Anjuman.¹²² The financial problems were compounded by the fact that the Cowasji Dinshaw's manager had refused to fund

¹¹⁹ *Bulletin* 8/54.

¹²⁰ The new Anjuman began a regular *Bulletin* following this meeting. Much of the following account is derived from issues of that *Bulletin*, but the picture gained is inevitably close to that in Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, as Kased was the secretary who produced the *Bulletin*. The *Bulletin Extraordinary* 5/53 gives the story of the Agiary Trust and the current debate.

¹²¹ *Bulletin* 13/55. It names those of the rival Association who had availed themselves of these services although not paying subscriptions. They were Jamshed F. Dastoor; Jivanji F. Jasawala; Rustam A. Siganporia; Manchershaw D. Elavia; Eruch N. Gundevia and Behram D. Mehta.

¹²² *Bulletin* 23/60.

the agiary's annual renovation before the *muktad* ceremonies. He also denied that the founder had established a trust to maintain the agiary.¹²³ In addition, the manager had dramatically reduced the funds for sandalwood, thereby threatening the continued life of the fire in the temple. Community donations quickly raised the money to fund this.¹²⁴ It may be that one factor in the company's refusal to maintain the building and continue the funding was its own financial crisis, because in 1954 the firm in Zanzibar went into receivership, although it was eventually saved.¹²⁵ The new Anjuman was also religiously active in re-establishing the Avesta classes for children, which had ceased. The number of rituals in the fire temple also increased.

In 1956, through mediation, there was some reconciliation between the Association and the Anjuman, although the Anjuman records continue to deprecate the published 'untruthful and malicious statements and propaganda in the press in East Africa and India'.¹²⁶ Part of this reconciliation was an agreement that the head of the Dinshaw family be ex-officio head of the community, but the Zanzibar-based vice-president represented the community to government. The firm's manager was given an ex-officio seat on the managing committee and one of the leaders of the Parsee Association, Jivanjee F. Jasavala, was put on the board of trustees and made treasurer, but his membership did not last long.¹²⁷ A list of the members of the two groups shows that there were 170 members (including forty minors) in the Anjuman, compared with sixty-six (including twenty minors) in the Parsee Association—with eleven seeking to remain neutral. The list of members shows that the divisions were within, and not simply between, families.¹²⁸

Unfortunately, another opposition group was promptly formed, the Parsee Fire Temple Party (PFTP). The membership was a mixture of some of the old Association, and some disgruntled members of the Anjuman party. Their proclaimed concerns were religious. They wanted to make the priest's position permanent and argued that the whole community, not just the Anjuman, had

¹²³ *Bulletin* 5/53; 14/55.

¹²⁴ *Bulletin* 6/53.

¹²⁵ *Bulletin* 8/54.

¹²⁶ *Bulletin* 15/55.

¹²⁷ *Bulletin* 20/59; 22/60; 24/61.

¹²⁸ There were members of the Bulsara, Darukhanawala, Elavia, Engineer, Mehta and Sidhwa families in each group. In the case of the Engineer family, there were brothers in each camp.

the right to determine the priest's working conditions, and contended that the priests were responsible to the whole community. The Anjuman argued that the elected officers of the Anjuman held the authority.¹²⁹ In 1960 both priests left. The junior priest left because his contract was at an end, but the senior priest, Ardeshir Dastoor, alleged ill-treatment by the Anjuman. One part of the allegation was poor pay, and Kased issued three sides of foolscap on 27 February 1960, seeking to justify the priestly pay levels. Something of the relations between lay Anjuman and officials is perhaps reflected in a letter from Kased to Dinshaw H. C. Dinshaw, dated 14 October 1959. The Anjuman's critics had complained to Cowasji Dinshaws that the mobeds had not been thanked for performing the (lengthy) *muktad* ceremonies. In justification Kased responded that no thanks had ever been expressed to the mobeds for performing *muktad* ceremonies: 'This is because it is one of the duties of the mobeds to lay the muktad table and to perform this and other ceremonies for which they have been engaged and paid monthly.' The contracts of the priests with the Anjuman consistently refer to them as 'employees'. The argument of the PFTP was that the priests should be treated with proper respect and consideration. At no point in the documentation is there any suggestion that the priests themselves had any authority, even in religious terms. They were simply considered the paid employees of the lay community, serving under tight contracts at the direction of Anjuman officials functioning in a menial capacity.

The matter came to a head with the end of the period of service of the assistant priest, Darabshaw G. Bhada who returned to Bombay.¹³⁰ As noted above, the senior priest also left because of what he considered the ill-treatment meted out by the Anjuman,¹³¹ so in the interregnum before the arrival of a new priest from Bombay the members of the community had to tend the fire themselves.¹³²

The divisions were public and acrimonious, and once more concluded in court action. A member of the opposition party was required by the court to publish an apology in the press for eleven

¹²⁹ *Bulletin* 22/60; 24/61.

¹³⁰ The details are in Kased's notes, but not in the typescript.

¹³¹ *Bulletin* 22/60; Kased's response is in three sides of foolscap dated 27 Feb. 1960.

¹³² *Bulletin* 24/61.

articles published in the *Adal Insaf*, a local weekly newspaper. In this he was required to acknowledge them to be:

untrue and false articles attacking the character of [the President and Secretary].¹³³ The defamatory statements and imputations . . . are absolutely false and wholly unfounded and I . . . hereby express my regret . . . for the unwarranted attacks on their character . . . and hereby apologise to them for any inconvenience and injury.

Ironically, this apology appeared alongside the article in the same issue of the *Zanzibar Voice* announcing Madon's installation as Speaker of the Council, undermining the good public image of the Zoroastrians.¹³⁴ Similar problems with public disputes and lawsuits have been noted in other centres—and will be seen again in chapters below. Parsis are not unique in the Asian diaspora in experiencing such conflicts; indeed in other groups I have been reliably informed murder has been committed, not something found in recorded Zoroastrian history! Why there are such fierce disputes is a question demanding more consideration in the study of diaspora religions.

Religion among Zanzibar's Parsis

Although there is no Zanzibar tradition of religious literature as there was in Karachi, the Anjuman's *Bulletin* clearly indicates a high level of religious practice. In addition to the two or three *naujotes*, weddings and funerals recorded most years, many temple rituals were also observed. The totals were announced at the annual general meeting, and indicate there were thirty to forty *jashans* per annum, 350 to 600 *Baj Rojgar* ceremonies, between three and twenty *machi* and twelve to fifteen *Fareshtas*.¹³⁵ Ten days of *muktd* ceremonies were regularly performed. How these traditional rites were understood it is not easy to say. There are signs of Hindu influence. Crofton relates the story of an invitation from Mrs Dinshaw to attend the *Vahi Puja* ceremony, a rite adopted from the Hindus to usher in the commercial year. He describes how everyone sat in the office, with the books laid out on the floor

¹³³ The names are in the records, but have been omitted here to respect the sensitivities of those involved.

¹³⁴ The court case was reported in *Bulletin* 24/61, the case was No. 81 of 1959, and the case returned to court on 11 Nov. 1960 because the required apology had not yet been made.

¹³⁵ Thanksgiving prayers and remembrance ceremonies, see *Bulletin* 19/58; 20/59; 25/61.

in a recess in front of which were dishes of coconuts, cereals and cakes, signifying plenty. Wicks burned in tumblers of oil, with candles in modern holders and 'a brazier on which was smouldering sweet-smelling sandalwood'. The manager and five members of the firm sat cross-legged behind the books

and the priest took up his seat in front of the fire. The ceremony of opening the new books then began, each Parsi taking one book and entering on the front page the names of the new accounts; the priest meanwhile chanting prayers and keeping the fire plied with fragrant fuel . . . The ceremony was brought to a close by Mrs Dinshaw who with much grace went round to all present touching each forehead with a red coloured pigment for good fortune.¹³⁶

On the other hand the religion could be expressed in Christian and Islamic terms, a point neatly illustrated in a copy of a letter from Kased, writing as secretary of the Anjuman, to the Sultan's private secretary following the death ceremonies for the late Sultan:

I have also the honour to inform you that soon after the above ceremony, the Community performed a 'Jashan' (Thanksgiving Mass) ceremony on the Accession on the throne of Zanzibar, of our most beloved Sultan Seyyid Jamshid Bin Abbdulla Bin Khalifa, offering humble prayers to the Almighty Allah to grant His Highness, our beloved Sultan, long, healthy and happy life to rule over us all in peace prosperity and plenty for many years to come, Amen.¹³⁷

The explanation of the *jashan* as a 'mass' occurs a number of times in Kased's notes and typescript.¹³⁸ There are two indications of the Orthodoxy of the community. From 1960 the Orthodox journal, *Parsee Avaz*, was kept by the Anjuman, and when priestly guidance was needed they brought Dastur Dr H. K. Mirza from Bombay, a visit which gave the community a high profile; his audience with the Sultan in 1962 was reported with a photograph in the newspaper.¹³⁹ Within the community, he supported the Anjuman, in particular its efforts to maintain the sacred fire in the face of the criticisms from the Fire Temple Party.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ R. H. Crofton, *Zanzibar Affairs, 1914-33*, London, 1953, pp. 146 f. Bombay Parsis at the time also observed this ceremony; it was not specific to Zanzibari Parsis.

¹³⁷ Letter dated 2 Aug. 1963.

¹³⁸ *Bulletin* 25/61.

¹³⁹ *East African Standard*, 27 Apr. 1962.

¹⁴⁰ *Bulletin* 27/63.

Zanzibar Parsis and 'other' societies

The role of women in Parsi society

A brief introductory word on the role of women is necessary, because Parsis in virtually all diaspora groups are justly proud of the part women play in their society, and in this they see themselves as being distinct from other Asian groups. Parsi women appear to have been fairly prominent in the community, although there is no reference to a woman trustee. They are prominent in lists of charitable donors, two received the MBE, and two were awarded the Queen's Coronation medal. Miss Freny S. Talati was the first woman doctor on the island and she tended the Parsis without charge. The women also had a cricket team, and took part with men in Parsi dramas.

Parsi loyalty to Zanzibar

Parsi relations with other communities were mixed. Their loyalty to the British and Sultan's government was commonly expressed, and explicitly appreciated. For example, at the *jashan* for the Parsi New Year, September 1952, prayers were offered 'for the health and long-life of our beloved Sultan Seyyid Sir Khalifa Bin Harub and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II; for the peace and prosperity in the Protectorate; the British Empire; the Commonwealth and the whole world'.¹⁴¹ In the only book (as far as I know) published by a Zanzibari Parsi on Zoroastrianism, the concluding paragraph reads: 'Thus we have lived and wish to live and maintain our identity of yore. May God help us and our future unborn generations to be true to our tradition of tolerance, service and loyalty to KING and COUNTRY in which we make our home.' Earlier (p. 10) Sidhwa had emphasized 'All prophets are accepted [by us] as Messengers of God.'¹⁴² The themes of the role of women, contributions to society and loyalty to the Government were also identified in the piece submitted by Rustom Sidhwa to Pandit's volume (see p. 267 above). As the piece is short but intended to give a positive impression to the outside world of what the Parsis themselves saw as important, the attributes it describes may be taken as being those which Zanzibar Parsis

¹⁴¹ *Bulletin* 3/53.

¹⁴² The Hon'ble R. Sidhwa, *Persia and the Present Day Parsees*, Zanzibar, n.d.

of the period saw as their distinguishing features. His piece, there, merits quoting, despite some repetition of details mentioned above:

Members of the Parsi Community, including ladies, have always taken leading part in the social work for all communities of Zanzibar and it is a matter of some pride that five male members and two ladies of this community were made MBEs. Among the professionals there are today [1956] three lawyers and a lady doctor (MB, BS) practising in Zanzibar. There is a Fire Temple of Worship built about seventy-five years ago and several members of this tiny community, at various times, have liberally supported deserving general charities. The Sultans of Zanzibar have on several occasions praised the loyalty and generosity of the Parsi community and have honoured several of its members on different occasions.¹⁴³

Zanzibar's Parsis and the British

In general, Parsis see themselves as more in sympathy with the British than with most members of the other Indian communities. Kased includes in his typescript a particularly interesting, and illuminating, episode in Dar es Salaam. In 1902 there were three Parsis in Dar es Salaam, including one Bomanjee N. Surti, who had moved there from Zanzibar in 1889. The German Government had imposed dual jurisdiction in German East Africa. *Bezirksgericht* was law relating to the court of superior jurisdiction, and this applied to Europeans and certain Christians, e.g. the Goanese. *Bezirksamt* was the law of the court of lower, or inferior, jurisdiction, applied to Africans and Indians. Subjects of the latter had no right to be tried in the higher court. Initially, the Parsis were included with the Africans and Indians as subject to *Bezirksamt*. Surti was concerned that Parsis who came after him should not be subject to this lower law; the Consul General (Sir Basil Cave, whose speech to the Parsis was quoted above) appealed to the Imperial German Governor on their behalf. After a succession of letters over a year, the Governor informed the Parsis in 1903 that there would be no objection to this change of status on the part of the Parsis, but they must address themselves directly to the imperial authorities. That appeal exemplifies the common Parsi perception of their relationship to India and Britain, and is worth

¹⁴³ Pandit, *Asians in East and Central Africa*, p. 12.

quoting at length.¹⁴⁴ The episode also relates directly to Zanzibar, for Surti feared that if it became apparent that there were only three Parsis in the German Territory the appeal would lack credibility. On Cave's advice, he therefore obtained the unanimous support of the Zanzibar Anjuman, which presented itself as the mouthpiece of all Parsis in East Africa. Cowasji Dinshaws also supported the appeal—a firm, as we have seen, that worked as suppliers to the German as well as the British navy. Drafted with Cave's assistance the petition read:

[*Petition Dar-es-Salaam September 1903*]

To Graf Adolf Baron Von Gotzen

Governor for Imperial German East Africa, Dar es Salaam

May It Please Your Excellency,

We the undersigned members of the Parsee community now residing at Dar es Salaam on behalf of ourselves and members of our community hereafter residing or trading at Dar es Salaam or in German East Africa beg most respectfully to approach you on a question which affects not only ourselves but also those of our community we might think it advantageous to come, to settle and carry on business within German East Africa . . .

Up to now we have been subject to Bezirksamt. We now humbly and respectfully venture to urge that members of our, that is the Parsee community, are sufficiently advanced to enjoy the rights and privileges of those tried by Bezirskgericht.

Our community though Indian in the sense that we have settled in India for generations is not really Indian because India was not originally our native land, our ancestors having to fly from Persia at the time of the Mahomedan conquest, and also because in our customs, habits, manners and religion our community is different from any other in India.

Your Excellency's countrymen like Max Muller, Dr Buhler and many other savants, all of them Germans, have studied deeply the history of our community and have thrown considerable light on the subject by their research and these savants have been good enough to consider us sufficiently advanced. The main body of our sect after their flight from Persia settled in India and the British Government helping us, our community in India has prospered much and helped materially in the trade

¹⁴⁴ The sole source for a description of this episode is, as far as I have been able to discover, Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, pp. 79–82.

and prosperity of India. It is our hope that in the years to come they may occupy a like position in German East Africa and that a large number of our community may be peacefully settled under German rule.

Your Excellency, from these arguments and for these reasons, will see that our community in India as admitted by the British Government occupies socially and intellectually the foremost position among other communities.

We have the privilege of having a monotheistic religion; the moral code prescribed by our religion is on a par with the ethics of the Christian faith; our customs and habits are in no way repugnant to the cleanliness of body or soul and our laws are adaptable to European jurisprudence.¹⁴⁵

This petition, in the light of the explicit support of Sir Basil Cave, convinced Count von Gotzen, and the legal status of the Parsis was changed. The emphasis on the good relations with the British, the trading and economic benefits to the rulers, the difference from other Indians, and the shared Zoroastrian–Christian ideals are emphases that are a common part of Parsi discourse. Something of the Parsi perceptions of the British and Indian communities is reflected in Darukhanawala's travelogue. He condemned the racism that lay behind the exclusion of Indians from the fertile upland areas, and he himself had been prevented from undertaking such a venture. He wrote: 'On the whole, the Indians are not liked, favoured or respected in the country.' He stressed the crucial role of the Indians not just in building, but in running, the railway. 'In spite of all these sacrifices and hard work, Indians are segregated and not allowed to own land or to farm . . . Ignorant white officials harm the Government's interest by following this racist policy.'¹⁴⁶ But he was also critical of what he considered to be the typical Indian in East Africa. He wrote:

The wind of the white man's revulsion for black people that blows over Natal also blows here. Indians are to be blamed for that to some extent. The first reason for the English revulsion for black people is because of the Indians who originally had menial jobs but have now become rich but whose manners and habits have not changed. First of all they are not educated, and then they have no idea of cleanliness.

The Indians see no reason to change. Wherever they go, whatever direction on earth, the Indians are disliked by the Whites who never accept them. The Whites just cannot bear them. This is why the Whites find it painful to be around them and try to send them as far away as

¹⁴⁵ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, pp. 79–82.

¹⁴⁶ *Africa in Darkness*, p. 163.

possible. If instead of such people, there had been educated Indians in South Africa and the rest of Africa, the question of racial segregation would not have arisen. The English came across ignorant, ill-kempt and rude Indians in South Africa and other places in Africa, and believed that all Indians were like that. How were they to know there could be so much difference between one person and another?

Zanzibar's Parsis and India(ns)

Yet the Parsi ties with India were strong. In 1962–3 Zanzibar was subject to severe flooding and according to their practice the Parsis donated quite generously to the funds for helping the afflicted. But the same *Bulletin* (27/63) also reported a much larger donation (shs 3,445 to shs 275) to the National Indian Defence Fund for supporting India against Chinese aggression. My ex-Zanzibari sources inform me that the Indian community with which they mixed most was the Goans. The social club had facilities for entertainment and sports including an indoor badminton court and an outdoor tennis court, and members of both communities attended ballroom dances at the Parsi Club and the Goan Institute. There were also intercommunal cricket matches, and a 'cosmopolitan' cricket team. The Parsi perspective on themselves, therefore, was that they were more like the British than other groups in Africa, but they did not simply ape the British uncritically. There was a strong sense of a link with India, and Indian causes. But above all else, they were themselves, a distinct racial and cultural group. They typically see themselves as part of society's élite in any country.¹⁴⁷

One interesting episode in the Zanzibar Parsi community's history which highlights their community pride, and to a certain extent their westernization, is their quest to win the Zanzibar cricket cup outright. Cricket has featured in other Parsi centres—Bombay, Hong Kong, Britain—and it will reappear in Chapter 9 on Australia. In India, generally, both in the past and the present, cricket is a game pursued passionately by all communities. It is not therefore simply a demonstration of Parsi westernization. Playing for a European team was of course something rare for Asians anywhere. But in Zanzibar, in 1892, three Parsis played for the

¹⁴⁷ An illustration of this may be the emphasis on F. S. Madon's role as a leading Freemason in his obituary.

European team against the navy and visiting ships. In 1899 the *Gazette for Zanzibar and East Africa* (6 September) refers to a Parsi cricket team, and lists the members. In 1901 the manager-partner of Cowasji Dinshaws, Kekobad, summoned a community meeting in order 'to consider and find out ways and means of improving the present unsatisfactory condition in which the Parsee Cricket Club, at present is, and to put it in a sound footing'. The move received community-wide support, and as the number of Parsis working in Zanzibar increased, the team's results improved. In 1924 the Parsis won the Dr Albuquerque Cricket Shield—in the face of competition not only of Arab, Hindu, Bohora but also of European teams. They repeated this achievement the following year, so in 1927 there were intensive community efforts to win for the third occasion in order that they might keep the shield in perpetuity. At the AGM a formal selection committee was established, chaired by Meherjee Dinshaw, head of the community, with new players coming and daily training practices introduced. To widespread communal delight, the Parsi team won for the third year and kept the cup.¹⁴⁸ In Parsi thought, cricket is part of the gentility, the 'fair play' of western ideals.¹⁴⁹ A similar value system is reflected in Parsi attitudes to Freemasonry, and it is therefore significant that a Parsi, Feroze S. Madon, was a leading Mason.

Zanzibar's Parsis relations with other Parsis

Zanzibari Parsis had occasional contact with Parsis elsewhere in East Africa. Not only did the priest from Zanzibar travel to the mainland and undertake ceremonies for the Zoroastrians there,¹⁵⁰ but Zoroastrians from outside Zanzibar contributed to the funds for the sandalwood and for the temple. The *Bulletin* records donations from places as far apart as the Seychelles, Durban, Kisangali, Lorenzo Marques, as well as the nearer Mombasa, Nairobi and Pemba.¹⁵¹ Bodies were sometimes brought from the mainland to Zanzibar for burial.¹⁵² There are also references to marriages between Zoroastrians from Zanzibar and Dar es

¹⁴⁸ Kased, *Parsi Lustre*, pp. 85–7.

¹⁴⁹ Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 85–7, quoting speeches on the departure, arrival and return of the first Parsi cricket team to tour England.

¹⁵¹ *Bulletin* 13/55; 18/57; 19/58; 24/61.

¹⁵⁰ *Bulletin* 18/57.
¹⁵² *Bulletin* 19/58; 20/59.

Salaam and Nairobi,¹⁵³ and at No Ruz greetings were exchanged between Anjumans. My informants tell me that there was more contact with the community in Mombasa than with Nairobi. Darukhanawala shows that there were contacts even in the early days, for when he reached Uganda he was greeted by an old friend.¹⁵⁴ I have been able to find few contacts with the larger community in Aden, other than the commercial interests of the Cowasji Dinshaws.

The end of an era

My informants tell me that at Independence, although there was some concern over the economic future, there was no thought of leaving the island. People assumed that they would remain for life, for they loved the island and had their own religious facilities. Both parties in the arguments assert that the documents studied probably give an exaggerated view of the divisions among Zanzibar's Parsis. Their memories are generally of a good life in Zanzibar. I have talked to several Zanzibari Parsis who were on the island on the day of the revolution. Even when the gunfiring was heard, they did not assume that there was a revolution. As the 'rebels' moved in, it was (mistakenly) rumoured that Russian ships lying offshore had moved into the harbour. People were told to remain in their homes; there was shooting and looting. But few Parsis were harmed. I was told of only one Parsi who, after being personally summoned by the new President, was first slapped and then thrown into prison, because as a magistrate he had found against the new President in a court case. But the two Talati brothers, lawyers who had appeared for the new President before, pleaded his case and promised that if he were released they would see he left the island immediately, which he did. The new President in fact made a broadcast stating that the Parsis should not be harmed, because of their contribution to Zanzibar. This protection was also due to the influence of the Talati brothers, and to the fact that another Parsi, Sidhwa, had campaigned for the Afro-Shirazi party. Parsis had been seen to work for Zanzibar, not simply for themselves. They were known to have worked for

¹⁵³ *Bulletin* 15/55; 16/56; 22/60.

¹⁵⁴ Darukhanawala, *Africa in Darkness*, pp. 125, 142.

both opposition parties. Despite this protection, the political situation seemed so volatile that virtually all the Parsis decided to leave. They were allowed to take their possessions and were not impeded, although of course they lost all their property and landholdings. The Parsi story in Zanzibar came to a relatively quick, and sad, end. Some of the elders who had property in India went back to the old country, but most moved to Britain. The few who stayed managed to maintain the fire until the mid-1980s, but the priest left, and the fire went out.

There is, however, a concerted effort to preserve something of this once thriving centre. A couple of Parsis stayed on and protected the 'Parsee Shemba' (compound) and graveyard. A *navjote* and wedding were celebrated there in 1969 but thereafter only three families were left to look after the Shemba so that it was not encroached upon or confiscated: Thrity and Rusi Madon, Eireen and Asad Talati and Tehemton Bhungara tended the grounds and had the sanctuary periodically cleaned and repainted when necessary. In 2001 Rusi Dalal from London circulated as many ex-Zanzibari Parsis as possible and raised funds to maintain the property, even though the two families left there were moving out. The hope is also to bring out the *afargan*, the 'fire altar', because of its sacred associations and perhaps even install it in the proposed temple in London (discussed below). There is a strong desire not to allow the long and successful history of Zoroastrianism on the Emerald Isle to fade away. One family, the direct descendants of Darukhanawala, the early pioneer, remain behind.

Parsis in Kenya

This section discusses the Parsi communities in the region that became Kenya, but the story pre-dates the formation of the country. There are in fact two stories under this heading, those of the communities in Mombasa and in Nairobi. It is remarkable how little these two stories interact. There are reliable figures for the number of Parsis in Kenya in 1948: there were 184 Parsi males and 150 females, giving a total of 334, representing 0.2% of the nation's population.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ *Report on the Census of the Non-Native Population of Kenya Colony and Protectorate*, on the night of 25 Feb. 1948, p. 61. On p. 65 it is recorded that there had been only 201 Parsis in the region in 1931.

Parsis in Mombasa

It is again important to highlight the question of sources. In comparison with Zanzibar, there is a paucity of sources. In what follows I am grateful to, and dependent on, Dara E. Patel, a joint trustee of the Anjuman who kindly collected oral traditions and supplied me with eleven pages of detailed information on people and milestones in the history of the Mombasa Parsi Anjuman. Other sources are detailed in the notes as they are used. As in Zanzibar, the story of this Anjuman includes accounts of intense debates and court battles.¹⁵⁶

The early settlers

When Darukhanawala visited Mombasa in 1905, he was met by his cousin, with whom he stayed for twelve days. 'We visited the ruins of the ancient city, houses, forts, the Parsi Anjuman and other buildings.' So there was a Parsi community on the mainland from the turn of the century at least, but that early history cannot be reconstructed. Mr Patel's father moved from India in 1910. He had been born in Daman, near Surat, educated in Bombay and called to Mombasa by his elder brother, Jamshedji, who in turn had been called by his maternal uncle Sohrabji M. Mistry, who had arrived in 1880 and established himself as a leading contractor and merchant. This 'lineage' exemplifies much of Parsi migration to the East Coast of Africa—relatives calling relatives to come for trade. Normally they came as single males and returned to India. It was the twentieth century before many families settled in Mombasa. Not all came as contractors: others were professionals. Jamshedji, for example, worked in the law-court, and he also called his brother Bamanji to work in the court. Mr Patel's father, Edalji, similarly worked for various well-known law firms in Mombasa. Another leading early Parsi arrival, along with the contractor Sorabji Mistry, was Jehangir Bhedwar, who built several government and commercial buildings including the old lawcourt, customs house, treasury building, railway station, post office, the building of one of the leading supply firms, Mackenion Mackenzie, and the original building of the National Bank of India—the first bank in the area. Bhedwar and Mistry were

¹⁵⁶ There are a number of Patels in Parsi history in the region: my informant is denoted by the form 'Mr Patel'.

therefore important figures in the growth of Mombasa at the turn of the century. There is a tradition in Mombasa that Bhedwar had even built the old port: steamships started calling at Mombasa in 1870. On the main gate of the old port there is a bust of a person wearing what appears to be the traditional Parsi black cap, thought to represent Bhedwar. There is no proof that Parsis played a role in the early Arab history of the old city and port of Mombasa, but they were involved from the time of the British interest in the region.

The individuals mentioned so far came directly from India, but a number also came from Zanzibar, mostly professionals and court officials, engineers, surveyors, accountants and contractors who were responsible for the East African Railway. Several of the early settlers were officials of the National Bank of India, including two head cashiers.¹⁵⁷ Others worked for Makenion Mackenzie and Co. (later Smith Mackenzie and Co.) as cashiers and managers, especially in wharfage. The other leading firm in which Parsis were concerned was African Wharfage Co. (later Kenya Landing and Shipping Co.). Often, as in the very early days, Parsi managers called relatives and friends from Zanzibar, Aden and India. As a result the community had a network of family relations. The leading Mombasa Parsi families at this time were the Talatis and the Patels. There are minimal records from this period. One that does exist is a Trust Deed from 8 October 1897, whereby a Parsi lady, Dhanbai P. Botliwalla, donated land for use by the community as a cemetery. The management of this property indicates that the Anjuman existed at least from 1897, though some believe that it goes back to 1860. The Trust Deed identifies five Parsis as trustees—Rustomji N. Talati, merchant; Khurshedji Nusserwanji, surveyor; Byramji Rustomji, pleader; Pestonji J. Mehta, clerk; and Perozshaw B. Khras, cashier. To these names should be added Rustomji D. Talati, the husband of the donor. Mr Patel informs me that it is thought that there were at that time approximately twenty families, perhaps sixty individual Parsis, in Mombasa.

The cemetery, as in Zanzibar, gives some evidence of the patterns of settlement. Of the eighty graves, thirty-eight are for men, twenty-four for women and fifteen for children. Ten of the sixteen early graves are those of children. This suggests perhaps more

¹⁵⁷ Dinshaw N. Batliwalla and Edalji H. Sopariwalla.

families living in Mombasa at that time than is generally realized. It also suggests quite a high rate of infant mortality. The low number of adult deaths until the 1950s¹⁵⁸ suggests that families, like single persons, retired back to India.

One of the earlier external references to Mombasa Parsis is an unfortunate event involving a Parsi priest. The *East Africa and Uganda Mail* for 13 July 1901, welcomed the news of the arrival of a Parsi priest:

Our Zoroastrian friends have, thro: [*sic*] the initial efforts of Mr R. N. Talati, a well known merchant in town, brought out a priest of their own denomination. We believe he has covenanted for a term of three years, and besides private local support, will draw a stated small annual salary. The priest has taken up his residence in the Makupa Shamba where it is intended to build a fire temple.

But within three months there was a sad article in the same newspaper (5 October 1901) headed ‘The Rage of the Mob’:

A Parsee Priest was nearly killed by the town’s people on Saturday afternoon. To touch one of the mob is like putting fire to dry Makuti (coconut) leaves. The cry was caught up and spread from man to man, from woman to child, that the priest was bleeding children and making their blood into medicine. The shouting was blood curdling, they swore the bodies or heads were then thrown down an old disused well. The police tried lowering candles, but they all went out and then hurricane lamps, but the air was too foul to let a man down. They have nearly killed the priest who lives in a terrible state covered with weals from heavy sticks. Some of the rioters have been arrested; perhaps the riot was got up to cover robberies that occur from time to time on the road.

Two weeks later (19 October) the same newspaper reported:

We regret to report that the Parsee priest who was so roughly handled by the mob, the other day, continues to get fever. It is feared a change of air will be necessary for his recovery. The Parsee temple at Makupa, meanwhile is deserted.

Two years later (28 November 1903), the newspaper reported the arrival of a new priest. He came as the guest of Messrs R. N. Talati and Co. The paper concluded: ‘We hope that the Arabs and Africans will look upon the reverend gentleman as the “sacred man” of the East, and cause no more riot or tumult

¹⁵⁸ Fourteen children; twelve men, nine women—one identified as dying in childbirth.

as they did last year.' A week later (5 December 1903), the paper recorded a much happier event, what is likely to have been the first *naujote* on the mainland of Africa:

the Navjote ceremonies of the two youngsters of Mr Framji Edalji Pundole, Cashier of HM's Customs, were successfully performed in his bungalow . . . by the Parsi priest in the presence of a large assemblage of the Parsi ladies and gentlemen. After the ceremonies, the ladies and gentlemen were served with some light refreshments, such as cakes, wines, ice-cream, &c., the party dispersed late in the evening. A Swahili band, to charm and cheer the spectators, was in attendance.¹⁵⁹

The employment of a priest so early in the Mombasa community's history indicates that a high priority was given to religious practice. The Pundoles were clearly some of the early professional settlers in Mombasa. Having their children's *naujote* in Mombasa rather than on a visit back to Bombay may also be taken as an indication of the intention to settle, and the Swahili dance band may indicate that the family were prepared to accept a small element of African culture.

One prominent Parsi in the early part of the century was Cowasji M. Dalal, who was first mentioned as a pleader in the Mombasa Indian Trading Association in 1905. He was one of the first Indians to be nominated to the Kenya Legislative Council, but he resigned in 1920 in protest at the British refusal to acknowledge the Indian electoral rights.¹⁶⁰ Another Parsi to rise to local political prominence was H. H. Mody, who became a member of the Mombasa Municipal Board in 1938.¹⁶¹

Two Parsis played an important role in developing Asian cricket in Mombasa and beyond. The *East African Standard* (20 November 1937) included a paragraph on the first of these:

There has just retired from the services of the National Bank of India one who has done much to foster cricket in Kenya. He is Mr Burjorji M. Commissariat of Mombasa. Mr Burjorji Commissariat first came to Mombasa some thirty years ago, and for practically the whole of that period he has held the post of cashier with the Bank.

When Mr Commissariat first came to Mombasa cricket was at a low ebb. Under his helpful interest the game soon took firm root, and much of its progress today, not only at the Coast, but also in Kenya and East Africa generally, has been due to his efforts.

¹⁵⁹ The newspaper reports are included in C. Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows*, pp. 108 f.

¹⁶⁰ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, pp. 81, 179, 195.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 456.

Twenty-five years ago he formed the 'Burjorji XI' and this team has occupied a very prominent place in the game during the last quarter of a century.

On his retirement from active participation in the game Mr Commissariat was paid a distinctive honour by the Mombasa Sports Club. In recognition of his services to cricket he was elected an honorary life member of the Club, an honour which has been accorded to no other member of the Asian community.¹⁶²

The other prominent Parsi cricketer was E. P. Nowrojee, a lawyer by profession, who captained the Asian cricket team and after much pressure persuaded the Europeans that they should have an annual three-day cricket match, the first being held in 1933. The fact that previous approaches had been rebuffed is an indication of the way Whites kept themselves at a distance from Asians, even as opponents in sports.¹⁶³ Later two Parsis played for the Kenyan cricket team (Jehangir Austin and Savak K. Talavia).

Several Parsis undertook social work in the wider community.¹⁶⁴ The typically Parsi Dramatic Society was strong in Mombasa from the 1930s, and its popularity in wider society meant that its functions could be used for fundraising.¹⁶⁵ Perhaps the individual to achieve greatest prominence in Mombasa society was Erach R. Avari. As well as being active in the Social Service League, and in the running of the Pandya Memorial Hospital, he became chairman of the Indian Association for six years. Dara Patel (my informant) was a follower of Jomo Kenyatta, became treasurer of the Mombasa branch of the Kenya African National Union, and worked as publicity secretary in the election campaign prior to Independence. He was active in the opposition to the ceding of the East Coast strip to Zanzibar. In his visits to Zanzibar for the negotiations, ironically, he was debating with two Parsis, Rustom Sidhwa for the Afro-Shirazi party and Ratti Bulsara for the Nationalist Party, another example of Parsis being loyal to their country rather than giving priority to communal ties. He and his wife were invited to the flag-raising ceremony at Independence, and

¹⁶² Quoted in Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows*, p. 164.

¹⁶³ Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows*, p. 165.

¹⁶⁴ Dr Nariman A. Dotiwalla with the Social Service League; Dhunjisha Parekh, fundraiser for the Coast Gymkhana; Frenu Talavia, a widely respected midwife; Mrs Aloo S. Talavia, principal of a girls' school, social worker and active in the Indian (later Mombasa) Women's Association; and Miss Freni Cama, social worker and member of the Indian Women's Association.

¹⁶⁵ The leading figure in this was Dhunjisha Parekh.

to the swearing-in ceremony the following day, 10 December 1963, in the presence of Jomo Kenyatta. He was one of the first Kenyan Indians who applied for Kenyan citizenship after Independence.

Mombasa Parsis' land and institutions

Land was donated to the community. The firm Cowasji Dinshaw and Bros. of Aden, in 1897, gave land in the vicinity of the cemetery, and Sorabji Mistry similarly gave nearby land. Bhedwar then erected, at the community's expense, a building in which religious ceremonies such as initiations, weddings and funerals could be conducted. Another Parsi, Edalji Sopariwalla, dug a sweet-water well, for the pure water needed in the ceremonies. The whole area became known as the Parsi Shemba, Swahili for Parsi Baug. As part of its administrative role in connection with the property, the Anjuman adopted its first constitution in 1910. This was not fully registered with government, and a further one was drawn up in 1945 that corrected this state of affairs. One change in the constitution was that the franchise was given to women. Over the years a dozen women have held offices, including those of secretary,¹⁶⁶ and chairperson.¹⁶⁷ In the post-war period, when the community is estimated to have grown to over 300, there have been several building projects. In 1931 a building was erected which was intended for accommodation, but it was leased to the Government to house the Government Indian Elementary School. The income from this ensured a stable economic condition for the community until the building was vacated in the 1960s. In 1948 the foundation-stone was laid for a building containing six rental flats. In 1959 and 1978 further buildings were opened for accommodation and in 1963 a rest house. One plot of land was sold in 1976, and the funds used to develop the main site with a prayer hall and to add further accommodation above the rest house. The Parsi complex, therefore, consists of six buildings and a nearby cemetery.

Religion among Mombasa Parsis

Obviously the liturgical life of the community could not be as full as that in Zanzibar, because of the lack of a fully fledged temple.

¹⁶⁶ The first was Mrs Najoo E. Avari in 1980.

¹⁶⁷ Dr (Mrs) Homai Engineer in 1984.

Nevertheless, the traditions have been observed as strictly as possible. Priests have been employed from India by providing them with work in one of the Parsi-run firms. Traditionally the community has tried to have two priests, as two are required for certain ceremonies (notably funerals), but as numbers decreased in the later years this has not always been possible. The descriptions of the funeral ceremonies contained in extant sources and reports, namely the drawing of the ring with an iron nail round the body, the bringing-in of the dog, the position of the corpse, the use of clean but old clothing, are traditional even though the circumstances meant that the dead had to be buried. The use of pictures of the Prophet, or of Zoroastrian holy men, and the burning of the *divo* in the home, are common. The leaders have commonly looked for traditional priests. Many look back to the early 1960s, when there were nearly 350 Parsis in Mombasa, as a golden period. The older generation still in Mombasa see it as a time of activity, and as a time of less in-fighting than there was in the 1980s.

Mombasa Parsis in the 1980s

Subscription lists indicate a Parsi population of approximately seventy individuals. The majority of the community were of the older generation, since their children had sought education in Britain or America, and settled there. The outflow of Parsis to the West had, therefore, continued since the 1960s, though in less dramatic fashion. All but six families lived within the complex.

A search through the address list showed that there were twenty-eight family units. Of these, ten consisted of single persons and eight of widowed people. Twenty-five people were over the age of 60 and six families had children under the age of 21. Six families had no children. Thirty-one individuals were born in East Africa; twenty-nine in India. Nine families had children living in the West. Two individuals had married Hindus, but only one kept in contact with the community. Two men had married Muslims and two others had converted to Islam. There was one Christian nun of Parsi birth. Only three Parsis had moved to Mombasa since 1964.

Leadership

One theme to emerge throughout this book is the balance between religious and secular leadership. The first paid priest,

Ervad Charna, was brought to Mombasa in 1909. In 1911 there were two honorary priests, the Jina brothers, who both worked as clerks in Mombasa. In 1940 priestly resources were depleted and Ervad Jal Karkaria stood alone, although a lay elder of the community stood with him at funerals.¹⁶⁸ He left Mombasa and moved to London in the 1970s, where he continued to serve the community as a priest. His brother, Dara, returned to India in 1981. Maintaining a religious leadership in a small diaspora group is an acute problem. It is not simply the cost of maintaining a priest, for if that were so then jobs could be found. Nor is it merely a matter of the mobed not being available if he is engaged in secular work. The problem is that the priest's purity is difficult to maintain while he is involved in a normal, secular life. There is also the obvious point that although the need for a priest can be urgent at certain times, for example at the time of a death, in a small community such a need arises only occasionally. For example in 1987 (the last year for which I have records) the Sukesht prayer hall was booked out on only seven occasions. Two of those were private parties, the others were *jashans*.

Community leadership in all diaspora groups is in the hands of lay people. Commonly the person chosen to be president, or chair, is the person thought best able to present the community to the outside world. In a community with many of its members able to do this, the tension between potential leaders for what is seen as a position of prestige can be intense. In Mombasa, as in Zanzibar and other centres discussed, this has been a problem and was a particularly acute one in 1987–8. There were acrimonious disputes between the trustees and the Managing Committee. In part these were personality clashes, but there was also a question of principle. Where did authority lie in the calling and running of meetings? Who had the authority to keep the records, to fix rents in community flats and authorize repairs? The dispute raged so fiercely at one meeting that the police were asked to intervene.¹⁶⁹ Eventually the matter was referred to the District

¹⁶⁸ 'Standing' in a ceremony is a common Zoroastrian phrase. Much of the time at a funeral the priest is literally standing, but the term is also used for rituals such as the *jashan* where much of the time is spent seated on the floor.

¹⁶⁹ See letter of protests from the Managing Committee to the Attorney-General in Nairobi dated 8 Sept. 1987, copied to the Provincial Commissioner, District

Officer's Office, and the African District Officer was brought in to chair a meeting to seek reconciliation in the Parsi community. After three warnings the District Officer had to cancel the meeting because of disorder. He therefore ruled that the Managing Committee had shown that it could not in practice run the Anjuman, so he dissolved it and handed authority over to the trustees; another election for a new managing committee was held.¹⁷⁰

The problems did not, however, disappear. The community was deeply divided and disputes continued over matters large and small, as each side took up the cudgels against the other. Obviously this is a sad state of affairs, given the diminishing numbers of the small community living so closely together in the complex, yet in the midst of a very different culture.

Parsis in Nairobi

My principle source for this section is a collection of over 3,000 microfiche records of the Managing Committee, AGM files, copies of circulars and varied correspondence, all kindly made available for me by Mr Dolassa in Nairobi. As these are official community records, minutes approved by subsequent meetings, they clearly have a degree of impartiality or objectivity. Yet even here, one has to recognize possible bias. In Nairobi, as elsewhere, there have been factions, and the records represent the views of those in office. As noted elsewhere, such records generally tend to give a rather bland account so that one has to be alert to sense any alternative interpretations.

Pre-Independence Nairobi

Darukhanawala reports that when he visited Nairobi at the start of the twentieth century there were twenty Parsis there.¹⁷¹ One he mentions is Seth Gandhi, a lawyer; he also refers to railway workers, to someone who ran a 'home distillery' and to some accountants; 'There used to be a Parsee hotel but it no longer exists . . .'. While in Nairobi, Darukhanawala sought to buy land there but was

Commissioner, Provincial CID officer, Principal State Counsel and the Makupa police station in Mombasa. The point is that the conflicts were made very public.

¹⁷⁰ Letter of A. R. K. Odico to the chairman and secretary of the Anjuman dated 19 Nov. 1987. The result of the new elections, producing a different Managing Committee, was announced in a circular dated 27 May 1988.

¹⁷¹ *Africa in Darkness*, pp. 125 f.

blocked by Governor Cave because, as an Indian, he could not purchase good land.¹⁷² It is striking that although Cave supported Parsi pleas to be recognized as Europeans under German law, he still would not let them live near him.

A brief overview of the history of the Parsi community in Nairobi is given in a letter from the then president and secretary of the Anjuman to a Bombay Parsi, A. D. Shroff (dated 16 August 1962), seeking funding. The Anjuman was established in 1904 'by a handful of Parsis'. Nairobi was, in those days, just a small town of tents and tin shanties with a sprinkling of Asians and Europeans. A funeral ground was obtained, a move triggered by two deaths. A Parsi advocate practising in Nairobi, P. K. Ghandy, purchased four acres in Quarry Road, built a corrugated iron building on the site and presented the whole to the community in memory of his late wife. The site had no electricity, water or sanitation. In 1918 two Parsis died in a flu epidemic, and from donations at their *uthamna* ceremonies funds were raised for a well. The site was the only asset of the Anjuman and so it was maintained by voluntary contributions. Other early pioneers mentioned by informants, with their diverse careers, are Dinshaw Byramjee Randeria, who came as a railway engineer in 1892 but turned to real estate in 1907; Sorabji Hooker, who was in business in Nairobi in approximately 1900; and Cowasjee Khambata, who ran a curio shop at about the same time. Names from the second decade of the twentieth century include Dinshaw Mehta, a cashier of the National Bank in 1911; Jehangir Ghadialy, who came as a watchmaker and dealer in 1912; Nariman D. Mehta, who arrived in 1915 as a government court clerk; Homi N. Modi, who started an import and export trade in 1918; and Naoroji and Vakil, who came as railway driver and bank cashier respectively, also in 1918. This list shows the great diversity of businesses and professions of the early settlers—they were lawyers, clerks, businessmen and railway drivers. It is difficult to categorize this early Nairobi community as clearly as was possible for the communities in Hong Kong, Karachi or Zanzibar. By the 1930s it became more professional, with more lawyers, doctors and dentists as well as businessmen.

In 1932 further funds were collected to replace the dilapidated iron building with a stone one, where death ceremonies and *jashans* could be performed. In 1942 an Association was formed to

¹⁷² *op.cit.* p. 129.

take advantage of a government offer of one and a half acres of land, and to utilize a bequest from the Byramjee family to erect a building for religious, social and sporting activities. Unfortunately 'some personal differences of opinion' arose between members of the two Associations—the Nairobi Parsee Anjuman and the new Parsee Zoroastrian Association of Kenya. The two plots administered by the two Associations, the old cemetery and the new 'social structure', were 3 miles apart, which increased maintenance costs. The bare bones of this, and subsequent history contained in the letter, can be 'fleshed out' from other sources.

Unlike the early records of the Parsee Anjuman, the files of the Parsee Zoroastrian Association of Kenya records are extant. The founding meeting took place on 25 February 1942 to 'promote religious and social interest among the community; to increase fraternity and to become more religious and social'.¹⁷³ Such a body had been attempted in the 1930s, but lack of funds and co-operation are said to have resulted in its premature demise. It was agreed that women were to have free membership, but could not vote. It was also agreed that any Parsi Zoroastrian could use the facilities, whether or not they were members of the Association.¹⁷⁴ At the original founding of the Association there were twenty-nine members, which quickly rose to fifty-five, a substantial proportion of the community.¹⁷⁵ The land was actually allocated by the Government on 12 August of that year.¹⁷⁶ The full plans for a rest house and a social building could not be implemented because of the shortage of materials due to the war, but the foundation stone of the Avanbai D. Byramjee rest house was laid on 18 October 1942. When the Association found it did not have the money to complete the building, the Byramjee family undertook to do so. The rest house was opened with a *jashan*, and was said to be a 'place of our own wherein we can have our social, religious and other functions'. Until a separate hall could be built, the main hall of the rest house was to be used as a club hall for the use of Parsis only, according to the by-laws. Chairs, card tables and table tennis tables were donated. Some newspapers were subscribed to. Previously, the only social meeting of Parsis

¹⁷³ See Minutes of Special General Meeting, 13 Mar. 1977 for an account of this body.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of Special General Meeting, 7 May 1942, and see the secretary's 'maiden' report to the 1943 AGM, dated 28 Jan. 1943.

¹⁷⁵ Secretary's Report for the year ending 1942.

¹⁷⁶ Managing Committee Minutes of that date.

appears to have been the occasional cricket match, 'a few resulting in our favour'.¹⁷⁷ The new Association joined the Asian Sports Association, and the India links were exemplified by the posting on the noticeboard of an appeal for funds from the South African Indian National Congress.¹⁷⁸

The new facilities were not entirely successful. On the rental side, matters started well. The two rooms were rented out quite regularly, because during the war people could not easily travel to India and therefore looked for somewhere to stay that was safer than the port of Mombasa. The rest house's first Annual Report mentions visitors from Mombasa, Eldoret, Zanzibar, Arusha and Mogadishu. The rental money provided an income for maintaining the premises. In the early 1940s the rest house was used when many women and children of all communities were evacuated from the coastal city of Mombasa because the port was thought to be under naval threat from the German fleet.¹⁷⁹ In a letter dated 16 April 1943 the secretary of the Mombasa Anjuman explained that they were having to evacuate two women, eighty-two children and two infirm men. He asked the Nairobi Parsis whether they could provide transit camps if they could not find homes for them all. In the end not all of these people came to Nairobi. The sports facilities were not, however, a success and people complained at the poor standards.¹⁸⁰ By 1950 problems were emerging with the building. Owing to deterioration, extensive work was required and a lack of funds prevented the building of flats for the priest or for rental.¹⁸¹ But social relations were improving, for a 'mass meeting' of the Parsis of Nairobi agreed to a report calling for the amalgamation of the two Associations, which despite an earlier tumultuous meeting, was agreed to in November 1950.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Second Annual Report for the year ending 31 Dec. 1943, tabled at the AGM, 25 Feb. 1944. The newspapers taken were the *Kaiser-i Hind*, *Life Magazine*, *Kenya Daily Mail* and the *Illustrated Weekly of India*—an interesting blend of British, Kenyan and Indian publications. The *Jame Jamshed* was taken from 1948.

¹⁷⁸ Minutes of the Managing Committee for 13 Apr. and 18 May respectively.

¹⁷⁹ Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Kenya minutes, April 1942.

¹⁸⁰ Managing Committee's Annual Report, 1944–5.

¹⁸¹ Managing Committee Minutes, 19 June and 16 July 1950.

¹⁸² Managing Committee Minutes of meetings, 8 Nov., 22 Nov. and 25 Nov. 1950. The chairman of the Association, H. C. V. Hormasjee, argued that the merger was unnecessary, and expressed himself with particular vigour. On the other hand some of the old Anjuman

Nairobi Parsis at Independence

The early 1960s were probably the era when the Nairobi community flourished most. The numbers exceeded 200. In 1963 there were 109 males, 108 females. The age distribution was: 0–15 years, 48 persons; 16–55, 143 persons; 56 and over, 26 persons.¹⁸³ The social calendar for that year indicated one event per month, specifically seven *jashans*, one *gahambar* feast, No Ruz, two purely social dinners and a children's fireworks party. Social functions included table tennis, whist drives and picnic parties. The music specified for dancing at the No Ruz function (1964) included the Beatles, Cliff Richard, Elvis Presley—and Johann Strauss. These social occasions were, therefore, westernized in nature. The nearest to 'Indian' style events noted in the circulars was the occasional Gujarati play (*natak*), a typical feature of Parsi social life and humour. Although this appears from the records to be the 'highpoint' of the Nairobi community's history, there are hints that already problems were growing, because in 1962 a benevolent fund was established to support elderly unemployed members of the community who became destitute.¹⁸⁴

In 1963 Kenya became a sovereign nation. True to the Zoroastrian tradition of loyalty to the ruling authorities, the Parsis welcomed the new Government and publicly pledged their loyalty. In a communal circular, November 1963, it was stated:

Many of us now living in Nairobi can claim association with Nairobi in its infancy and it is but befitting that we should claim pride in the development during the forthcoming Uhuru celebrations.

It is proposed to present to the Prime Minister on behalf of our community a suitable scroll expressing our pleasure at Kenya gaining its Independence and our loyalty to the future Government.

A note to President Jomo Kenyatta expressed 'felicitations on the unified emergence of our country as a sovereign Republic'. It went on: 'It is with pride that we congratulate you, Sir, as our first and most illustrious President and pray that our country may long

members were concerned that they were becoming responsible for the debts and maintenance costs relating to the Association's buildings.

¹⁸³ Letter dated 8 Nov. to the organizers of the Second World Zoroastrian Congress. The letter also states that there were fifteen children under the age of 5.

¹⁸⁴ Managing Committee Minutes, 12 Apr. 1967. The most successful fundraising events involved hiring of movies and showing them to the public.

continue to progress in peace and unity under your sole guidance and through your wisdom and statesmanship play its rightful place in the world.' The annual social calendar hereafter included an annual Kenyatta Day celebration, which included a *jashan* and prayer offerings for the nation. The notices of these events were sent to three Kenyan newspapers, the *Daily Nation*, the *Voice of Kenya* and *African Samachar*.¹⁸⁵ The secretary's annual reports at the AGMs for 1968–9 called for the members of the community to express their support for the Government at public functions, saying, 'if we fail to live up to the requirements occasioned by the changing conditions . . . we shall make the conditions for our younger generation more difficult.'¹⁸⁶ So, for example, on 27 June 1971 ten Parsis joined the procession to Uhuru Park to celebrate Kenyatta day.¹⁸⁷

The Managing Committee reinforced these communal appeals by issuing notes to the president. For example, in a message sent through diplomatic channels, and to the press, they reported the Anjuman resolution of thanks for:

the wise and dedicated leadership . . . and the stability and prosperity that has been a consequence of Your Excellency's statesmanship. . . . In their continuing tradition of loyalty to the popularly elected Government of Kenya, the Parsis vehemently condemn the recent conspiracy to overthrow the Government by unlawful means. If anything that episode has revealed to the world that the cause of justice, law and order still prevails in this land and that the strong position vested in Your Excellency the Government cannot be assailed by a few misguided people.

The members of the Nairobi Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman pray for Your Excellency's long life, happiness and continued leadership of the Government and peoples of the Republic and will steadfastly respond to the call for Hambo.

Signed K. D. Moddie, President.¹⁸⁸

When Kenyatta died in 1978 a one-minute's silence was observed at the Managing Committee meeting, a prayer meeting was held and a letter of condolence sent to the new President

¹⁸⁵ See e.g. communal circulars dated 2 Dec. 1963 and 14 Oct. 1964; the letters and notices dated 13 Oct. 1966; letter to President Kenyatta on the completion of the second year of Independence dated 7 Dec. 1965; 17 Oct. 1970.

¹⁸⁶ Secretary's annual report for 1968–9. There was an even stronger appeal tabled at the AGM on 17 Apr. 1970.

¹⁸⁷ Managing Committee Minutes for 26 June and 5 July 1971.

¹⁸⁸ See also the secretary's annual report for 1964; the letter of condolence to President Kenyatta on the assassination of one of his senior ministers, Mboya, dated 17 July 1969.

Arap Moi—with copies to the *Voice of Kenya* and the *Daily Nation*.¹⁸⁹

Parsi emigration

In contrast to these public affirmations by the leaders, a number of Parsis began quietly leaving Kenya. The first time this process is referred to in the records is in the 1967–8 Annual Report, where it is stated that twenty-eight members had left for Britain.¹⁹⁰ In the secretary's report for July 1971–4 (an Annual Report was not issued in that period) it was noted that fourteen families, comprising forty-seven persons, plus one bachelor, had left. Within the following few months three more members with three children left, making a total of fifty-three persons. The Parsi population was then reported as being 100, thirty-eight males, thirty-three females and twenty-nine children, four of whom were stationed outside Nairobi. A further six members were expected to leave shortly. The secretary's report for 1974–5 noted that in that year another seventeen persons left, so that the community now numbered only eighty-three people—thirty-three males, thirty-one females and nineteen children. Most people migrated to Britain and some went to India. There was an interesting initiative from Iran: Farhang Mehr¹⁹¹ wrote on 19 August 1968, regarding help for Parsis wishing to go to Iran. The problem of the community's diminishing numbers was exacerbated by the fact that the number of deaths exceeded the number of births in this ageing community.¹⁹²

The departures created managerial problems, because some of those departing were committee members, including a chairman. One consequence was that the size of the Managing Committee had to be reduced from twelve to nine. So at the AGM on 17 April 1970, the chairman urged those remaining to be more active in the Anjuman. He appealed to 'all those who are still here and to

¹⁸⁹ Such communal letters of condolence had been customary in Nairobi. For example, on 5 Feb. 1948 the Anjuman had sent a condolence letter to Nehru following Gandhi's death. Similarly a letter of concern and good wishes was sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies when the King was ill and on 22 Oct. 1951; a condolence letter was sent to the Central Muslim Association in Nairobi on the death of Liaquat Ali Khan.

¹⁹⁰ Tabled at the AGM, 6 Apr. 1968.

¹⁹¹ On Mehr's role as Deputy Prime Minister in Iran see Ch. 8 on America, below.

¹⁹² Reports to the AGMs of 30 May 1983 and 16 May 1986.

those who have or will make this country as their home, should on all occasions come out in full force and lend their support in the causes that are being undertaken not only for our Community but also the Country's National occasions.'

There were social consequences of the departures, as the Annual Reports show: the level of activity in the social calendar decreased, with fewer dinners and *jashans*. They also had significant economic implications. The number of subscriptions diminished. Fewer people were coming to Nairobi and staying in the rest house, so that income declined, yet the standing charges and wages of staff had to be paid. In 1971 the rest house was renovated, and there was inconclusive discussion on whether to rent out the property.¹⁹³ The cost of maintaining the property was not small—for example, in 1986 the cemetery wall had to be rebuilt when heavy rains caused it to collapse.¹⁹⁴ But the problems were greater than that. Previously, land used for religious purposes was not taxed. This changed, and site value rates were imposed. As the city grew, so land values rose and therefore taxes increased. After annual appeals from the Managing Committee to secure alternative funding, for example by seeking a mortgage to increase the number of flats for rental at the rest house, the decision was eventually taken unanimously in 1977 to sell the rest house.¹⁹⁵ At the Managing Committee meeting on 12 August that year it was reported that the property had been sold, at the upper end of the scale sought, to the Sikh group, the East African Namdhari Sangat.¹⁹⁶

In one sense the position post-1977 was similar to that of the 1930s, in terms of numbers and assets. But in other ways the situation was very different. During the period of British rule, the Parsis in Kenya, as in much of the Empire, considered themselves somewhat apart from other Asian groups and closer to the British on the social ladder. Rightly or wrongly, they typically felt secure and successful. The social and political context under Black rule in Africa was seen by many of them as different. From the 1970s there were no really wealthy Parsis who could sponsor buildings, events and religious resources. The sale of the rest

¹⁹³ Managing Committee, 10 Mar. 1971.

¹⁹⁴ Managing Committee Meeting, 19 July 1986.

¹⁹⁵ The Special General Meeting was held on 13 Mar. 1977.

¹⁹⁶ See the secretary's annual report tabled at the 1977 AGM.

house did create a substantial fund, the Avanbai and Dinshaw Byramjee Endowment Fund, established for 'religious and charitable purposes, and partly to grant funds for educational or other purposes'.¹⁹⁷ It had the funds to carry out the much-needed renovations at the funeral grounds and buildings.¹⁹⁸ It was also able to carry out a fundamental Zoroastrian religious duty, namely charitable work for the needy. It is interesting to note which charities were chosen. These were Mother Teresa's home, the Fatima Children's Home, the Society for the Deaf and Dumb, and the children's cancer ward at the Kenya National Hospital. In the first allocation the last two were replaced by the League of Friends' fund for wheelchairs for spinal injuries, and the Kenya Ear Fund, which was carrying out a number of ear operations.¹⁹⁹ When a Parsi couple who had left Kenya and returned to India wanted to donate to a charity as a token of thanks to the Kenya Anjuman, the Indian charity chosen was the Parsee General Hospital.²⁰⁰ Currency regulations prevented Kenyan Parsis from making direct donations to charities in India, but the priorities chosen were typical of traditional values—medicine, especially treatment for the poor in society at large. There is also a clear example of Parsi charity for which, to my knowledge, no records are extant. The Dinshaw Byramjee Free Dispensary was founded by the Byramjee family, but was run under the Social Services League, overseen by three Parsi trustees. Charity was, typically for Parsis, written into the 1965 Anjuman constitution—the fourth of a long list of aims and objectives was 'to render assistance to the disabled or destitute citizens of Kenya'.

Monetary problems remained, however, for the small community, which lacked major sponsors. Consequently, in the 1980s debates grew about the option to sell off part of the funeral grounds. The first minuted reference to this discussion is from March 1987—when an approach was reported to the Ismaili community whose cemetery was nearby, and who required more space. The proposal was to sell off two-and-a-half acres, leaving the Parsis with one-and-a-half. There was some objection at

¹⁹⁷ Managing Committee Minutes, 5 Dec. 1977.

¹⁹⁸ Minutes of the AGM, 16 Mar. 1981.

¹⁹⁹ Managing Committee Minutes, 17 May 1987.

²⁰⁰ Managing Committee Minutes, 7 May 1988.

the meetings on the grounds that the land might be needed. The counter-argument was that maintenance costs were high, the Parsi numbers were decreasing and there was the risk that the land might be encroached upon, or taken away, so that the community would get nothing for it. An alternative suggestion was to rent some of the land to the Ismailis for them to use as a car park. Eventually the decision was taken to sell.²⁰¹

Intermarriage and other disputes

The debate on the sale of part of the funeral grounds became embroiled with another, wider, and potentially more divisive, issue, namely intermarriage. Part of the unease about the sale of the land to the Ismailis arose from the fact that one member of the Zoroastrian community involved in the debate was married to an Ismaili who came to some functions with her. Intermarriage with members of other Indian communities was probably more widespread than the official record acknowledges. In-marriage is difficult in a small and dwindling community. Relations with other Indian groups were mixed. At a purely social level, my informants tell me, there was socializing, for example on public occasions, at Diwali, in sports and occasionally in politics. Some saw close Indian ties as dangerous. So in 1962, Hoshang Shroff wrote a letter of protest to the secretary of the Anjuman, expressing concern that collecting money to aid India in her distress might give the Government in Kenya the impression 'that our emotional ties are still very strong with our country of origin rather than with Kenya and that we have not sufficiently clearly identified ourselves with African nationalism'.²⁰²

The earliest minuted indication of the problem of intermarriage was made in 1970, when some people objected to the presence of non-Parsis at a funeral.²⁰³ When the priest learned of their presence he condemned this 'serious breach in religious discipline'. The Managing Committee agreed to circulate this rebuke to the whole community. When the priest, Ervad Soli Rabady, eventually left for India, the layman who stood for him in

²⁰¹ Managing Committee Minutes, 7 Mar. 1987; 17 May 1987.

²⁰² Letter in Anjuman files, dated 2 Nov. 1962.

²⁰³ My sources inform me that the problem related to the presence of a non-Parsi family member of an intermarried person.

ceremonies, Mr Byramjee, made it clear that he would not accept such a presence either.²⁰⁴

Because of one particular intermarriage, the Anjuman secretary wrote to the secretary of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet for advice. In return he was sent the judgement of several Bombay High Priests. Three of them, Dasturs Dabu, H. N. K. Dastur of Poona and Minocherhomji, argued that those married by the Special Marriages Act of 1954 were not required to renounce their religion.

Therefore, if she (or he) was born a Parsi, duly admitted to the Zoroastrian fold by Navjote rite continues to remain a Zoroastrian—then she is a Parsi Zoroastrian . . . Where the ceremony of marriage has been carried out in accordance with some other religion . . . naturally she is supposed to owe allegiance to another prophet, and she cannot remain a Parsi Zoroastrian. She goes out of our fold entirely.²⁰⁵

Three other Dasturs, Dasturs Mirza, JamaspAsa and K. M. Kutar, argued that the person who has married out, even under the Special Marriages Act, has taken him or her self out of the community: 'According to Zoroastrian religion marriage is NOT a civil contract, it is a religious sacrament . . . If a Zoroastrian (male or female) marries in any other way, he or she discards the important sacrament of the Zoroastrian religion, and thus forsakes the Religion and the Community.' Mirza's long letter concludes with the observation that because of the purity laws, if a Zoroastrian male or female 'comes in marital intercourse with a non-Zoroastrian, he or she cannot observe the rules of ritual purity of Zoroastrian religion . . . Such a person goes out of the Zoroastrian fold and the Parsi community.'²⁰⁶ The Anjuman also approached some of the High Priests directly, namely Mirza, JamaspAsa and Dabu.²⁰⁷ Their replies to Nairobi were consistent with their advice to Bombay, though less detailed. The Anjuman also sought the guidance of a leading Parsi lawyer, Prof. P. K. Irani, Dean of Law at Bombay University. He advised:

A Zoroastrian lady (or gentleman) marrying a non-Zoroastrian will continue to be a Zoroastrian and, therefore, entitled to be a member of

²⁰⁴ Managing Committee Minutes, 7 Oct. and 6 Nov. 1970; for Byramjee see AGM 9 Nov. 1984.

²⁰⁵ Quotation taken from the response of Dastur Dabu dated 5 Aug. 1964.

²⁰⁶ Letter dated 15 Sept. 1964.

²⁰⁷ Replies to Nairobi dated 18 Oct. 1969, 10 Oct. and 22 Sept. 1969 respectively.

the Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman as long as she (or he) does not embrace another religion . . . On her demise, such a lady, is entitled to the benefit of the religious ceremony of 'Gehsarnu' and the same can be performed by a Zoroastrian priests.

But he also pointed out that the children of any intermarried Zoroastrian woman could not be taken into the Zoroastrian religion.²⁰⁸

Religion and Nairobi Parsis

It is difficult to say a great deal about the religion in Nairobi, because the sources are not specific. The conflicts over intermarriage suggest a strong traditional element. This is reflected also in the verbal descriptions I have been given of the practices: the refusal of the priestly deputy to say the funeral prayers at a cremation; how he scrubbed with disinfectant chairs that had been sat on by the family of an intermarried member. Care was commonly taken not to leave cut hair or nails around. The explanation in the records is that they might be used for voodoo, but in historical terms this amounts to a preservation of the traditional purity laws. The anecdotal evidence I have is that a number of people, especially the elders, pray five times daily and some keep a fire burning in their home, or at least have a *divo*. One of the leaders has related privately that his wife continues the tradition of carrying the fire around the house morning and evening to purify the home. The manner in which funerals are carried out is also as traditional as circumstances allow, with a circle marked around the corpse with an iron nail, and a dog brought into the presence of the deceased. As the younger people leave, so there may be a tendency for the traditional ways to remain strong in the dwindling community.

The traditional nature of the community is reflected in its attitude to priests. The priestly-lay relations in Nairobi are in marked contrast to those which developed in Zanzibar. The third priest to serve in Nairobi, Soli Rabady, arrived in 1921 and served until 1981. Both in the Annual Reports, and in the function to honour him on his departure for India, the tone is consistently

²⁰⁸ Letter dated 14 Mar. 1970. Irani also refers to an article he had written on 'The personal law of Parsis in India', in a book published by Allen and Unwin in 1968, *Family Law in Asia and Africa*.

warm and respectful. He had had secular employment. He came to Nairobi—where his brother had been performing the ceremonies—to work in the Supreme Court. In 1933 he was transferred to a government school, but after a short spell in Uganda he opened his own school in 1950.²⁰⁹

Zoroastrians are typically proud of the fact that their religion has commonly been more open to women's roles than most other religions. This has been the case in Nairobi since the 1950s. In the original Anjuman women could not vote in elections nor be elected to office. But after the amalgamation with the Association in 1950 women both had the vote and could stand for office. The attendance lists of functions in the 1950s, including meetings on crucial issues such as the amalgamation, show that women composed between one-third and a half of people present.²¹⁰ In 1981 Mrs A. M. Dastoor was elected chair of the Managing Committee; at the same time Mrs B. K. J. Contractor became secretary for four years, and she in turn was succeeded by a woman. In terms of the purity laws, however, the usual situation is that on communal occasions women do not go to the funeral ground (or the kitchen) during menstruation.

One problem has been that with dwindling numbers and resources, the social life of the community has suffered. One attempt to counteract this has been 'Meet and Greet'. This is an informal arrangement, involving no committee, where families take it in turn to host lunches on the first Sunday in each month. The hosts organize the function, arrange for cutlery, etc., provide dessert and refreshments, and members bring the actual lunch.

Nairobi Zoroastrians in the late 1980s

There were at the close of the 1980s sixty-three Zoroastrians in Nairobi, sixty adults and three minors. None of these was under 10 years of age, but thirty-one were over the age of 50 (seventeen over the age of 60). It is therefore an elderly, and progressively ageing, community. One in five of the community had a university degree or professional qualification, but relatively few were in the professions (five, including three teachers). The majority (seventeen)

²⁰⁹ Record of a function dated 21 June 1981, in his honour.

²¹⁰ Parsee Zoroastrian Association of Kenya, Special General Meeting, 18 Oct. 1942; the AGM on 28 Jan. 1943; the AGM on 25 Sept. 1953.

were in self-owned businesses, with four business executives. Most lived in rented accommodation (fifteen out of twenty-eight families). Of the thirty-three households, seven included non-Zoroastrians; only nine households included what might be termed 'a next generation Zoroastrian'.²¹¹ Some of the old families remain, for example Mr and Mrs Temulji Byramjee, but the number of extended families is now relatively small.

In my survey (Appendix 2, Table 1: 1–37), there were thirty-seven responses from Kenya.²¹² In hard numbers that is a small sample, so that it would be unwise to draw strong conclusions. It does however represent nearly one half of the total Parsi population of Kenya at that time. It is therefore of some interest and value. Eleven of my respondents had been born in India and two were born in Britain. There were no respondents from Pakistan, or Iran. Nine of my respondents had moved to Kenya before the 1960s, but eight had settled after the period of 'Africanization', so the story is not simply one of emigration. The tables in Appendix 2, Table 1: 1–37 use percentage figures for all groups discussed. This is questionable with the Kenyan sample because it was so small. In what follows actual 'hard' numbers will be used. Most of my respondents were aged 50 or older; nineteen of them were in this age bracket, whereas ten were in their thirties or forties and only one was under 20. Most respondents (twenty-four) were married, only four were single and there was one widowed person. Two of my respondents had married out of the community. In the early history of Parsis in East Africa, extended families were common; that is no longer the case. Twenty-six of my respondents were from nuclear families, only four were part of an extended family. The change was due to the departure of so many people in the 1960s. In contrast to western Zoroastrian diasporas, the majority of my respondents from Kenya had concluded their education at school level [N = 18]. Only eleven

²¹¹ These figures were kindly supplied by Mr Dolassa and analysed by Ms Nyrmla Singh.

²¹² In other chapters figures from my survey have come at the beginning of the chapter followed by a discussion of how this situation came to pass, and what has happened since, because the 1980s—when my survey was undertaken—has internationally been a key decade for Zoroastrians. But in Kenya the 1960s were the key decade, so the survey has been included the appropriate chronological sequence. The survey was not undertaken in Zanzibar because in the 1980s there were only two families.

people were graduates; none of them had undertaken postgraduate studies. The majority studied the arts; only four said that they had been educated in the sciences. The career profiles were different from those in the western diasporas, with more people being in clerical work (ten), with nine working at managerial level and only three in what might be described as 'executive' level employment.

My respondents indicated an active network; twenty-two of the thirty-three who answered the question on corresponding with Zoroastrians 'abroad' said that they did so regularly, and naturally in a small community most (twenty-four out of twenty-nine) said that they were in regular contact with Zoroastrians in Kenya. Only a minority said that they read Zoroastrian literature (thirteen out of thirty-one). Twenty four of the twenty-eight people who answered the question on prayer said that they prayed daily. The majority (eighteen) described themselves as religiously Liberal; seven described themselves as Orthodox and four said that they did not practice the religion. Something of the 'traditional' nature of the religion is reflected in answers on prayers for the dead. Most (nineteen) said that they were absolutely necessary, and only two gave the humanistic explanation that the prayers benefited the living. The majority of respondents (nineteen) said that they accepted intermarriage, whereas twelve said that they objected to it, although most people (fourteen) said that the priests should not perform such weddings. They were evenly divided on whether only offspring of a Zoroastrian father should be initiated (fifteen) and fourteen thought that the offspring of a Zoroastrian woman could be initiated. Most respondents objected to the initiation of a spouse (seventeen opposed), but eleven would accept such an initiation. Only four respondents said that a non-Zoroastrian should be excluded from religious premises. The Kenyan respondents were unusual in that most people wanted burial, whereas seven wanted to be cremated and six people expressed a wish to be taken to a *dokhma*. Only one respondent said that they did not believe in an immortal soul, and fifteen of twenty-three who answered the question on reincarnation affirmed this belief. Despite the disputes mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, most people (fourteen) said that community relations were good or excellent; nine thought the relations were somewhat mixed, but only four respondents said they were poor. Their

perceptions of relations with the wider black community were more positive than those who left Africa in the 1960s feared they would be. Twenty-three of the thirty-one people who answered this question thought that external relations were good/excellent, and only six people said that they had faced discrimination. The answers suggest that those who have stayed have done so because they are positive about life in Kenya.

Conclusion

Parsis came to East Africa, first to Zanzibar and then across to the mainland, as part of the network first developed by Sultan Barghash and continued by the British between Bombay and the East Coast of Africa. The earliest arrivals were professionals, but over a decade the settlement grew more into a business community. Under the British, they saw themselves as part of the establishment in the Emerald Isle, and then as fulfilling a role in the development of the East African Railway and the consequent growth in Mombasa and Nairobi. They were conscious of their separate identity, not only from Blacks and the British, but also from other Indian communities. The links with Indian Parsis have remained strong from the earliest days, when many returned to the old country for retirement, until the approach of the millennium when the community turned to Bombay High Priests for direction. The primary focus of their charitable work was India. Throughout this book Parsis have been seen to be loyal to the government of the day, wherever they have lived. Those who felt unable to give that loyalty after Independence left, mostly to settle in Britain. Those who remained have publicly identified with their new government. There are now effectively no Parsi residents in Zanzibar (following the revolution) the island which had been the hub of the Parsi East African network because of its temple and priest. In Kenya, the Parsi population is ageing and declining. As so often in the Parsi universe, the community is deeply divided, not least over questions of intermarriage and because of personality clashes. But the religion is strong among most Parsis, and in its practices and beliefs is characteristically traditional or Orthodox.

Forgotten Parsis

Written histories typically focus on institutions and formal associations. It is rare for the isolated or quiet people to form part of a historical account. Fortunately, Salvadori's collection of memoirs includes some of these 'forgotten people'. It is appropriate to end this chapter with two such stories of Parsis not associated with any Anjuman but who lived a good and quiet life.

The following was related to Salvadori by Eddie S. Pereira concerning his first visit to Fort Hall, a small town 60 miles north of Nairobi, in 1934. There he visited the native hospital:

It was run by a Parsie [*sic*] doctor, Dastur, a wonderful man. His title was wrong; he was called Sub Assistant Surgeon but that was because he was an Indian with a degree in medicine from Bombay. He was in fact the District Medical Officer. Dr Dastur and my father were the only two tennis players; later I was taught tennis by Dr Dastur. And we played chess too . . . Dr Dastur's wife had a piano in the house and we both played it.²¹³

Salvadori includes selections from a thirty-page report written by Dr Dastur, 'The annual Medical report for Baringo District and the Native Hospital Kabarnet from 1935', based on six 'safaris' he had conducted into the remote areas that year.²¹⁴ Dastur moved to East Africa after his marriage in 1932 and lived there until he died in 1941, leaving a widow and three children. When the war broke out he joined the Army Medical Corps, but never left Kenya.

Dinshaw S. Talati lived in Faza, the main town on Pate Island, a four-hour boat journey from Lamu. He was the son of a Zanzibar pioneer, Shapurji Talati. He opened a clothing shop in Faza; he rarely left his home, but was respected by all who met him. He gave credit (without charging interest) to those in need. He lived quietly, alone—he never married, but was liked by all. How many more were there like Dinshaw whose quiet lives were never recorded in AGM meetings?²¹⁵

²¹³ Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows*, pp. 34 f.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140 f.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 114 f.

The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

My previous book, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, covers much of the ground in this chapter but the publishers thought that there was merit in having this subject treated inside the same covers as the studies of the other diaspora communities.¹ Certainly it makes this book more self-standing, and facilitates comparison between the diverse communities in the West. As London is home to the oldest Zoroastrian community in the western world, and has the largest Zoroastrian population outside the old countries, it would have been strange to have omitted the subject. Its inclusion also brings the material up to date, for the research for the earlier book only went as far as 1994, and much that is important has happened since then, both within the community and in scholarship. This chapter is different also because the title of the Trust Funds of Europe has been taken seriously and the story taken beyond the shores of Britain to look, albeit briefly, at Zoroastrians in France and Germany. There is therefore a substantial proportion of new material (approximately 25%), as well as revision of some (notably on Bhownagree).

The Context

South Asians in Britain

Parsis rarely see themselves as (South) Asians. Although typically conscious of an Indian identity, they are also conscious of their

¹ I wish to place on record my deep appreciation of the considerable help that I have received from Malcolm M. Deboo not only for reading this chapter and saving me from many errors but also for his willingness and efficiency in supplying me with countless references and copies of important documents. Various past presidents have also helped, in chronological order: Shahpur F. Captain, Dr (Mrs) Kutar, Ervad Zal N. Sethna, Rusi M. Dalal and Dohrab E. Mistry. As ever, I wish to record my thanks to Cyrus P. Mehta, the first Zoroastrian I met. It was he and his family who first inspired in me my love of the living community.

distinctiveness, and of their Persian ancestry. Nevertheless, from an outside historian's perspective, although it is essential to value their own assessment of their identity, their migration to Britain has to be understood against the background of (South) Asian migration to Britain, because the history of their migration is part of that wider history; they have been subject to the same immigration laws and race relations policy.

Britain has been a destination for migrants from at least Roman times, followed by Saxons, Normans and others. Because of the history of the British Empire, South Asians have been travelling to Britain for longer than to any other western country. From the seventeenth century wealthy British families returned from Asia bringing servants, or 'pets', who were sometimes sold on virtually as slaves. From the eighteenth century South Asians came as seamen (or lascars) who left their ships while in British ports. They were stereotypically seen as poverty-stricken individuals, criminals, people who went with white prostitutes, producing half-breed children who embodied the sins of both parents. Lascars were therefore seen as threatening the purity of the British race. South Asians were regarded as pedlars, or as the 'coolies of the Empire'. There was a contrasting image of the fabulously wealthy princes, mostly from India and Iran, who were seen visiting royalty and leading figures in British society. Those able to glimpse this other side of British life thus saw Asians as polarized between the sophisticated upper classes and the menial, poverty-stricken ignorant masses, and associated them with the images of the heathen worship of many gods reported by early missionaries. These proved to be lasting impressions on the British public.² The soldiers, administrators and missionaries of the Empire conveyed both in South Asia and in Britain their perception of themselves as 'bearing the White man's burden' in directing the affairs of the natives 'for their own good'. They also saw the Empire as being a resource for the good of Britain.

² The literature is extensive and this is not the place for a full bibliography. Some of the main accounts are: C. Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society 1871-1971*, London, 1988; D. Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions: Comparative Religion in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Britain*, Manchester, 1984; K. Vadgama, *India in Britain*, London, 1984; R. Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes*, London, 1986; A. Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: India and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain*, Berkeley, 1998; J. Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, New Haven, 1999.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a number of future leaders came from the Empire to study in Britain, including Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere from Africa, Gandhi and Nehru from India. There was some concern among the British political leaders that such students would collaborate with radicals and Communists among the student body and foment revolution. There were huge changes in attitudes and settlement patterns following the Second World War. A number of people who had served in the Medical Corps joined the emerging National Health Service, and others who had fought for the Allies settled in Britain, for at that time any citizen in the Empire had the right to travel and settle. Another major factor for change was the urgent British need for workers to replace the many young soldiers who had died in the war. Recruitment drives were undertaken mostly in the Caribbean and South Asia for manual workers to carry out the labouring tasks the White British did not want, but which were vital in the effort to restore industry. The stereotypes of Blacks and Asians made them obvious targets for such recruitment. The labourers who were recruited typically came from economically disadvantaged rural areas. Chain migration was common—young migrant workers in Britain encouraging friends and family back home to join them, so that a large proportion of workers came from specific regions; indeed some villages in Punjab in particular were almost emptied of young, able-bodied males. A third factor was that after the War Britain had neither the resources, nor the same will, and certainly not the American support, to continue her days of Empire. The doors were therefore open for migration. Other nations, obviously, were involved, so there were many Polish, Irish, Italian and other European economic migrants who came to help rebuild British industry.

Prior to the 1960s Britain had one of the most liberal immigration regimes, for any citizen of a country in the Empire had an automatic right to settle in Britain. No entry permits were required. In the late 1950s some politicians questioned this policy and by 1962 there were many public expressions of concern at what was perceived to be the danger of large numbers of immigrants. At the same time there were no anti-racist policies in place, so that guest houses and hotels posted notices declaring 'No Blacks'. Both Labour and Tory governments in the 1960s sought to bring new

immigration to an end (spouses of people already settled were an exception). Previously, South Asian migrants had been single male workers, coming without their families to earn money to send to their families 'back home'. They worked long shifts and lived as cheaply as possible. They rented not simply a room, but even a share of a bed, used by different shift workers, to save money, thereby reinforcing the widespread image of Asians as living in poverty and squalor. Once the doors of entry began to close, the men sent for their wives and families, so that they could join them before it was too late. People who had envisaged returning to the subcontinent were provoked to stay, so that the numbers of South Asians in the country increased dramatically on the threat of exclusion. The nature of the 'communities' changed, because the men living with a view of return now considered themselves settled with their families. The wives also ensured that traditional family, religious and social values were followed. So Sikhs grew their beards, community centres opened and soon gave way to temples and mosques. Instead of single men sharing a bed in a rented property, families bought houses. The growth of households, first in inner city areas, then gradually into the suburbs, alarmed local Whites, who expressed concern for their jobs, schools and hospitals.

The policies of Arabization in Aden, the revolution in Zanzibar, Africanization in East Africa, and above all the brutal expulsion of Asians from Uganda, resulted in larger numbers of Asians arriving in Britain from East Africa. Some chose to take Kenyan or Tanzanian passports (see Ch. 6 above), a few went to India, but most moved to Britain. The television news reporting of planeloads of Asian arrivals provoked more hostility than compassion, and was a strong factor in the Government's policy to restrict immigration. Because of the size of the total population for a relatively small island, immigration in the second half of the twentieth century was seen as more of a threat than it was in Canada, the USA or Australia. The fact that Blacks and Asians tended to be concentrated in certain areas (Blacks and Asians in London³ and Birmingham, Asians in the old textile centres of

³ Indeed different groups are to be found predominately in different suburbs, Indians in Ealing and Brent, Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, for example. A new website was opened in 2003 displaying historic documents, old photographs, and some audio recordings of migrants coming to Britain from South Asia and the Caribbean, as well as Jews and Irish people, for the period 1800–2000 CE. See www.movinghere.org.uk

Manchester, Bradford, Leeds and in Leicester) there was a popular perception of a greater Black and Asian presence than formal statistics indicate. Whereas in Australia and Canada migrants have been seen as an economic advantage for the new country, that has rarely been emphasized in Britain, even though the ageing and shrinking White population will become disproportionately dependent on the taxes of the younger (and therefore working) Asian population.

There was little difference between Labour and Tory party policies on immigration. The Labour Government perhaps gave rather more emphasis than their political opponents to what they presented as the countermeasure to restricted entry, namely legal equality for those who had settled. So, balancing immigration law, they introduced race relations law. The old notices for accommodation and employment proclaiming 'No Blacks' in theory, if not always in practice, gave way to policies promising equality of opportunity. Indeed, in areas of greater concentration of 'ethnic minorities', education and social services were given Special Factor (Section 11) Funding to aid them in policies of settlement.⁴ In an oft-quoted statement, taken to be the epitome of Labour Party policy, the then Junior Home Office Minister, Roy Hattersley, said 'Integration without control is impossible but control without integration is indefensible.' This policy of 'balance' was a feature of the 1970s and early 1980s. The restrictions on new entrants have remained strict, involving what the political Right presented as the 'threat to the purity of this island race' (given the earlier history of immigration to Britain, this is a somewhat questionable concept); it was voicing a fairly popular perception. Even at the turn of the

⁴ The literature on this subject is yet greater. Helpful from the perspective of this book are: M. Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, London, 1979; E. E. Cashmore and A. B. Troyna, *Introduction to Race Relations*, 2nd edn., London and New York, 1990; I. Diamond and S. Clarke, 'Demographic Patterns among Britain's Ethnic Groups', in H. Joshi (ed.), *The Changing Population of Britain*, Oxford, 1989, ch. 11; R. Miles, *Racism after Race Relations*, London, 1993; R. Miles and A. Phizacklea, *White Man's Country*, London, 1993; P. Panayi, *Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain*, Manchester, 1994; P. B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1990; S. Saggat, *Race and Politics in Britain*, London, 1992; J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*, 2nd edn., London, 1993; D. Mason, *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain*, Oxford, 1995; T. Madood and R. R. Berthoud (eds.), *Ethnic Minorities in Britain, The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities*, London, 1997 (with a substantial bibliography); C. Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation State: The United States, Germany, and Great Britain*, Oxford, 1999; R. Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation*, Oxford, 2000. See also n. 6 below.

millennium the words 'economic migrant' are still used as a disparaging term, even though millions of British people have been economic migrants to Canada, Australia and elsewhere. Quietly, successive British governments have been compelled to seek recruits from overseas for certain areas of employment, notably medicine, teaching and to some extent the IT industry. The problems of prejudice continue, as witnessed notoriously by the Stephen Lawrence case in 1993, when the police were judged to have been negligent in investigating the racial murder of a Black youth. In a subsequent inquiry, the police force as a whole was found to be institutionally racist. In 2001, for the first time, there were Asian riots in the north of England. Racist chants at football matches, and the taunts of players, suggest that whatever Government may proclaim, the experience of prejudice remains strong both in institutional policy and at the grass roots.⁵ However, for those who settle, British citizenship is not simply possible, but expected.

Because the 'Ethnic' question had been omitted from census data collected prior to 1991 it was always difficult to estimate the size of the various populations. Even with the introduction of the Ethnic question in 1991, it was still only possible to indicate how many originated from India, Pakistan, etc., not whether they were Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. Table 7.1 would probably command reasonably widespread acceptance as a best guess of the figures 1961–91.⁶

There are two further dimensions of the South Asian story meriting discussion here: 1. The internal characteristics and differences of the Asian community; 2. The changing demographics of the Asian groups. It should be noted that in Britain, 'Asian' almost always means South Asian. Chinese from Hong Kong apart, there are few migrants from East or South East Asia, unlike in other western countries studied. The British Asian population has grown predominantly from the old Empire, or the New Commonwealth.

⁵ In a Home Office-funded project in 1999–2000, the University of Derby found that the majority of institutions involved with 'visible minorities' believed that they faced religious discrimination. Among Christians who responded it was mostly the Black (led) churches which believed that they faced such discrimination. See P. Weller, A. Feldman and K. Purdam, *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales*, London, 2001. It is important to note, however, in the context of this book, that the Zoroastrian sample was skewed and many views attributed to them do not represent the views of ZTFE.

⁶ See also C. Peach (ed.), *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, ii. *The Ethnic Minority Populations of Great Britain*, London, 1996.

TABLE 7.1. *Populations of immigrant communities in Britain, 1961–1991*

	1961	1971	1981	1991
India	81,400	240,730	673,704	840,255
Pakistan	24,900	127,500	295,400	476,555
Bangladesh	[N/A]	[N/A]	64,562	162,835
East Africa	NA	44,860	181,321	—
TOTALS	106,300	413,090	1,214,987	1,479,645
% of total pop.	0.23	0.85	2.52	3.4

Source: Taken from Hinnells, 'South Asians in Britain', in H. Coward, J. Hinnells and R. Williams (eds.), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, New York, 2000, p. 83, based on R. Ballard, *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, London, 1994, p. 7; D. Coleman and J. Salt (eds.), *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, i. *Demographic Characteristics of the Ethnic Minority Populations*, London, 1996, p. 88.

It was noted above how the South Asians who migrated to Britain typically came from economically disadvantaged rural backgrounds. Studies of the British communities in the 1990s demonstrated that the second generation was substantially different from their parents who migrated. Because of the value traditionally attached to education in South Asia, a very high proportion of second-generation South Asians pursued higher education, especially in the fields of medicine, law and accountancy. The East African Asians had the highest percentage, followed by the Indians, the Pakistanis and finally the Bangladeshis (as a group who arrived later, it may be that their figures will become closer to the other groups within the next few years). A higher proportion of South Asians go to university than do the young of the White majority population.⁷ Although there is some evidence that the South Asians do not obtain employment appropriate for their education, nevertheless, they are moving up the income and professional ladders in comparison with the earlier settlers. With the changing educational and social standing of the communities, their household size decreases towards that of the Whites. Single households are fewer, as are cohabitation and divorce, in comparison with wider British

⁷ See T. Jones, *Britain's Ethnic Minorities*, London, 1993.

society. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are more likely to live as extended families than East African Asians or Indians. It is essential not to view the British South Asian presence as a monolithic and unchanging phenomenon.

The study of South Asian religion in Britain

The only way to estimate the number of followers of the various religions in Britain is to assume that a certain percentage of each ethnic group follow a specific religion, e.g. that nearly all Pakistanis are Muslims. This is obviously simplistic, especially when applied to people from India. Different commentators have produced significantly different figures, and the following indicates the sort of range of numbers suggested by wise and experienced scholars in the field: Muslims 750,000–1,200,000; Hindus 300,000–500,000; Sikhs 300,000–450,000; There are thought to be approximately 20,000 Jains.⁸ There have been many fine studies of South Asian communities in Britain, but until the mid- to late-1980s these were almost all of a sociological or political nature; the religions of these communities were commonly ignored. In part this may be a criticism of the sociologists and political historians for focusing on the one dimension of the group they studied and prioritizing their own concerns, commonly humanist. It is also a failure of people in Religious Studies to take these communities seriously. The prevailing assumption was that ‘real’ Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, etc. was the religion of the old country, and commonly the ancient religion. Religious Studies in Britain in those years usually neglected the modern forms of the religions, especially the diaspora groups. To some extent both groups of scholars were reflecting what were, and remain, two fairly common assumptions in Britain: first, that Britain is a secular state where religion does not have great significance; second, that where religion is to be found it is a private matter, a question of personal faith and morals. This presumption lies, for example, behind various government initiatives, and especially non-initiatives, such as the refusal to consider applications for funding from religious groups, but accepting those from social bodies and centres. It has also been used as a justification for not taking religious issues into account in policies—witness the existence of legislation against racial but not against religious discrimination.

⁸ See Hinnells, ‘South Asians in Britain’, p. 86 for a brief discussion of the numbers.

What the various groups of scholars and politicians ignored was the fact that within these groups of South Asians, religion was often a matter of importance. As we shall see, for groups like the Zoroastrians, religion is of considerable community importance, for many South Asians do not see religion as one aspect of life, as simply a question of personal belief, but rather as a crucial marker of group or individual identity.

The causes and course of the change in scholarly attitudes would make an interesting study in itself. Here it is possible to give only a brief overview, but I write as one who was guilty of the narrow-mindedness of Religious Studies in Britain prior to the 1980s. In my opinion, a significant factor for change was the establishment of the Centre for Community Religions started by Professor Michael Pye at the University of Leeds. The first researcher to undertake substantial work in this area was Kim Knott, then a research student, now Professor, at Leeds, with her work on Hindus in Leeds.⁹ The Leeds project has continued to generate such studies,¹⁰ as have various people associated with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London.¹¹ Other notable studies include those of Nesbitt and Jackson,¹² and Nye.¹³ The broad themes that they address were indicated in Chapter 1 above. Western social structures inevitably impact on forms of institutionalization (for example, conformity with the law to obtain tax exemption can require new committee structures and involve different styles of leadership). External perceptions of a religion can affect not only the public presentation but even internal emphases, for example the prioritizing of a sacred 'scripture', or the classification of someone as, say, Hindu rather than as a devotee of Krishna or Rama, or of a particular holy man like Sai Baba.

⁹ See esp. *Hinduism in Leeds*, Leeds, 1986 and *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna Movement*, Wellingborough, 1986.

¹⁰ Notably, but not only, D. Bowen, *The Sathya Sai Baba Community in Bradford*, Leeds, 1998; S. Kalsi, *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain*, Leeds, 1992; A. Mason, *Religions in Leeds*, Stroud, 1994; P. Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, London, 1994.

¹¹ H. Kanitkar and R. Jackson, *Hindus in Britain*, London, 1982; R. Burghart (ed.), *Hinduism in Great Britain: The Perpetuation of Religion in an Alien Cultural Milieu*, London, 1987; S. Firth, *Death, Dying and Bereavement in a British Hindu Community*, Kampen, 1997 (originally a SOAS Ph.D.); and Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, Oxford, 1996. My former SOAS colleague Dr Werner Menski publishes in a different field (the Law and British Asians), but I always found his conversations thought-provoking and helpful.

¹² R. Jackson and E. Nesbitt, *Hindu Children in Britain*, Stoke-on-Trent, 1993.

¹³ *A Place for our Gods: The Construction of an Edinburgh Hindu Temple Community*, London, 1995.

A Demographic Profile of British Zoroastrians in the 1980s

The compilation of Zoroastrian address lists was not as common in any country in the mid-1980s as it became at the end of the century. It is therefore difficult to give any idea of the number of Zoroastrians then in Britain. The address lists at Zoroastrian House had about 600 addresses, and it was not uncommon to suggest a total of 2,000 Zoroastrians in the country. Since there have been few new migrants, and at the beginning of the millennium most estimates of Zoroastrians numbers approach 6–7,000, it seems likely there were more Zoroastrians in the country at an earlier date than was realized, but they were not then linked with the Association. From my survey conducted in the mid-1980s, the following demographic profile of the known community can be reconstructed (see Appendix 2, Table 1: 1–37). The majority (over 50%) of British Zoroastrians were born in Bombay, with a further 10% from the rest of India. The next largest group were the East African Parsis; this is a distinctive feature of the British community, for they are a much smaller group in Canada, and there were few in Australia or the USA. The other main country of birth was Pakistan. There are thought to be fewer Iranian Zoroastrians, under 10% of the Zoroastrian population. One in five of my respondents arrived in Britain prior to the 1960s, two-thirds arrived in the 1960s or 1970s, and few came thereafter. It was broadly a younger population than that in the old country, but had a higher proportion of elders than found in any other western country. It had also a higher proportion of under-25s than America and Canada, a consequence of there being a longer established community. There were more single people among British Zoroastrians than elsewhere in the diaspora, and there were more second- and third-generation Zoroastrians. The figures for intermarriage are complex. In all western countries the proportion of intermarried Zoroastrians is higher in the scattered groups than in the centres, so for example 24% of Zoroastrians outside London were intermarried, compared with 16% in London; these figures were on the high side both for scattered groups and for centres.

In comparison with the wider British public, even in comparison with other South Asians in Britain, British Zoroastrians had a high proportion of people with degrees and postgraduate qualifications,

but the Zoroastrians in America had yet higher qualifications. The levels of employment reflect these figures. The British Zoroastrians were successful in their careers in the British context. How did this community come to pass?

The Early Settlement

The nineteenth century

It is important to prefix this section with a discussion of Parsi perceptions of their relationship with the British, for that explains the ideas behind many of their actions described here. In broad terms, the Parsi response to British rule in India was very positive. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that, although a tiny minority, they were able to flourish in British India, whereas under Muslim rule in their Iranian homeland they had been oppressed. But there were critics of British rule, some of them very powerful verbal attacks, as we shall see when discussing Saklatvalla.

The first Zoroastrian, probably the first Indian, to visit Britain was Naoroji Rustomji Maneck (Seth) in 1724.¹⁴ His family had enabled the earliest British traders to develop their business in Bombay and Gujarat, his father Rustom Maneck Seth serving as their broker first in Surat then in Bombay. He even negotiated for them with the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb. However, a later Governor of Bombay, Philips, accused the family of dishonesty and supported their Hindu rival, Vitaldas Parak; he put Rustom's sons under house arrest. Various senior British officials who knew the family appealed on their behalf, including the commander of the naval squadron in the Indian Ocean, Commodore Mathews, and the Muslim Governor of Surat, but to no avail. Naoroji managed

¹⁴ See *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 77–9. The main sources for the following episode are: J. J. Modi, 'Rustam Manock (1635–1721 A.C.), the broker of the English East India Company (1699 A.C.) and the Persian Qisseh (History) of Rustam Manock: A Study', in the Collection of Modi's *Asiatic Papers*, Bombay, 1929, iv, pp. 161–320; D. L. White, *Parsis as Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth Century Western India: The Rustam Manock Family and the Parsi Community of Surat and Bombay*, Anne Arbor, 1979, ch. 3; M. S. Commissariat, 'The First Parsi in England (1724–25): Nawroji Rustom Maneck of Surat and his relations with the East Indian Company', in R. P. Masani (ed.), *M. P. Kharghat Memorial Volume*, Bombay, 1953, pp. 221–58; S. K. Hodivala, *History of the Seth Family* (in Gujarati), Bombay, 1931. These studies have now been superseded by the excellent study of H. E. Eduljee, 'Rustom Manek and His Sons: Brokers of Surat', *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute*, 1995, no. 60, pp. 1–90.

to get away and sailed with Commodore Mathews to London to appeal to the Court of Directors of the East India Company. He stayed for a year while his appeal was being heard and developed good trading contacts. The Court found in his favour, ordering the release of the still imprisoned brother and the return of all monies due, with interest. A substantial sum was paid in London (£19,125) which enabled him to load a ship with goods to take back, the rest being paid in rupees. The previous Governor and family friend, Charles Boone, now back in London, supported Naoroji and on the happy outcome of the appeal wrote to the family:

Since Nowrojee's coming to England he hath been very ill, but he has taken great pains in this business, and everybody here hath great value and esteem for him because he has managed this affair to the satisfaction of the Hon'ble Company, and for the good and interest of his brothers and family, therefore you ought to make him a handsome present for his long and fatiguing voyage and good services.

On his return Naoroji was fêted. An area in central Bombay was named Naoroji Hill after him, and the income from this land ensured the family fortune for two centuries. He was elected a leader of the first Bombay Parsi Punchayet. In his will he bequeathed money to build the Maneckji Seth Agiary in central (Fort) Bombay. It can be reasonably assumed that among the Parsis, and others, this gave an impression of the British authorities as a power that would listen to a plea, and overrule local authorities if they were convinced of the justice of the case. Equally, one may assume it gave an impression of benefit to be derived from visiting Britain.

There were three main groups of Parsis who travelled to Britain in the nineteenth century: businessmen going for trade or to learn about their trade; students; and travellers on a grand tour. Each group has importance. From 1840 several leading Parsi industrialists travelled to Britain to learn from the technological developments there. The first was Ardeshir K. Wadia, who travelled under the auspices of the East India Company to study developments in marine engineering. He had long prided himself on being at the forefront of technology, having introduced gas lighting to Bombay in 1835. He was a member of the famous ship-building family and wanted to develop that industry further in Bombay. As a result of his stay he was appointed Chief Engineer

and Inspector of Machinery in Bombay, an appointment which is known to have excited jealousy from some British residents. He was among the founding trustees of what became the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) in 1861 and was buried in the Zoroastrian cemetery, Brookwood. In 1841, two of his cousins, Naoroji and Hirjibhoy Meherwanji, came for similar reasons. They produced some fascinating diary accounts of their stay, which will be discussed below. R. B. Desai came in 1857 to study the soap industry and returned to build a factory; R. M. Darukhanawala studied the manufacture of explosives before returning to Bombay as head of the explosives department of the government artillery depot; A. C. Wadia came in 1859 to purchase boiler machinery and in 1860 Ookerji came to buy a steamer.¹⁵ J. N. Tata made the first of a series of visits to study the Lancashire textile industry in 1865, before starting his Nagpur Empress Mills.¹⁶ The first Indian firm to be set up in Britain was a Parsi one. In 1855 Dadabhai Naoroji, the future religious reformer K. R. Cama, and his Orthodox cousin M. H. Cama, set up offices in London and Liverpool. They dealt with a range of goods in the import and export trade—thread, opium, wine and spirits. Naoroji and K. R. Cama resigned because they disapproved of opium and alcohol. The business folded, but M. H. Cama stayed on, and Naoroji funded his early political campaign from the profits of his own import–export trade. So the initial venture led on to more successful businesses.

More Parsis came as formal students from the 1860s, almost all to do postgraduate work following the establishment of Bombay University in 1857. The most popular subjects and destinations were Manchester for technology, Edinburgh for Medicine, and London for Law and Medicine. The first medical graduate, Muncherjee B. Kolah, gained his MD from St Andrews and his FRCS from London in 1861.¹⁷ Several future Parsi leaders pursued their studies in London. Pherozechah Mehta, often referred to as the ‘uncrowned king of Bombay’, who was hugely influential in the politics of western India and the early years of the Indian National Congress, studied in London in 1868. The first Indian to become a judge, Cursetji Maneckji Shroff, studied in

¹⁵ *PP* II. 484 and 521; *PP* I. 797, 827.

¹⁶ J. R. Harris, *Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata*, Bombay, 1925.

¹⁷ For his and other early student details see *Zoroastrians in Britain*, p. 82.

Oxford in 1864—the first Indian to do so. He became a leading social reformer in India. Later came one of the other leading social reformers, Malabari.¹⁸ Most of these businessmen and students came as single males with the assumption of an early return to their families in India. But when Naoroji brought his family over to settle in 1865, others came also. These were the early stages of the formation of a Zoroastrian community in Britain, some hundred years before other South Asian families began to settle there.

Travellers on the grand tour are not usually important in the growth of a Zoroastrian community, but their visits are of interest for various reasons. It is noteworthy how early Parsi women travelled with their husbands. The first such touring family was that of Dr B. Cooper in 1858. In 1862 two of C. M. Shroff's daughters came as part of their father's ardent campaign for educating women. In 1868 one of K. R. Cama's daughters, Bhikhaiji, the wife of a London Parsi resident, D. P. Cama, travelled throughout Britain. J. H. Kothari undertook a grand world tour with his family, visiting Britain in 1883–4, before travelling throughout Europe, America, China and Japan. The first Indian woman to study at Oxford was a Parsi, Cornelia Sorabji, in 1889. The 'coming out' of Parsi woman took place much earlier than it did in other Indian communities.

One tour merits particular attention, partly for humorous reasons, but also because it indicates an important feature of Anglo-Parsi relations, and that is the visit of the first Indian cricket team to tour England.¹⁹ The first Parsi cricket club, the Oriental Cricket Club, was formed in 1848 and renamed the Zoroastrian Cricket Club in 1850. Other Parsi and Indian cricket clubs soon followed in Bombay. The intercommunal matches could be tense affairs; those between the Parsis and the Muslims sometimes had to be cancelled for this reason. All of the Indian cricket teams were eager to defeat the Europeans. Discussions started in 1878 on sending a team to England to learn about the game. The tour eventually took place in 1886. The results were disappointing (played 28, won 1, lost 19, drew 8). The motive for learning the game, however, was what was seen as important. The president of the club, Pherozechah Mehta, in proposing the toast to the

¹⁸ See Burton, *At the Heart of Empire*, pp. 152–87.

¹⁹ *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 85–7.

departing team, said:

I must say that the object of the team in going to England is a very modest one. Cricket, as you know, is the national game of England. It has taken root among the Parsi community, and as artists go to Italy to do homage to the great masters, as pilgrims go to Jerusalem to worship at a shrine, or as students in the Middle Ages went to the chief seats of learning in places where Science and Philosophy had made their home, so now the Parsis are going to England to do homage to the English cricketers, to learn something of their noble and manly pastime in the very country which is its chosen home.²⁰

The English perception of the tour is reflected in the comments of the magazine *Cricket ChitChat* of 1887.

A visit of a team of native Cricketers (Parsis) to England is an event of no small significance, not only from the standpoint of cricket, but also from the political point of view. Anything which can tend to promote an assimilation of tastes and habits between the English and native subjects of our Empress Queen cannot fail to conduce to the solidity of the British Empire, and if only for that reason this latest development of cricket, the zeal with which the natives of India are working to secure proficiency in the chief and the best of our sports, cannot be overestimated. The Parsi fraternity is the most intelligent, as well as the most loyal of the races scattered over our Indian possessions.²¹

There are two important themes in these quotations. The first is the perception of the 'Britishness' of cricket; the second is the Parsi engagement with cricket with the reference to the assimilation of tastes and habits being conducive to the solidity of the Empire, and Mehta's reference to the noble and manly pastime. Parsi love of cricket is reflected in the cartoons of the Parsi-run *Hindi Punch* in the nineteenth century, and in the fact that two Parsi histories of cricket had been written by 1900. Prominent figures of Indian British society were aware of this love. An English judge in the Indian Civil Service, C. A. Kincaid, for example, wrote an article arguing that the only explanation for the Parsi aptitude for cricket, and the preservation of their identity in India, must be that they, like the British, had derived their qualities from the Greeks, something which for the Zoroastrians he dates back to the time of Alexander's invasion of Persia. He does not explain how either the British, or

²⁰ H. D. Darukhanawala, *Parsis and Sports*, Bombay, 1935, pp. 61 f. and PP III. 183.

²¹ M. K. Patel, *History of Parsee Cricket*, Bombay, 1892, pp. 8 f.

cricket, had Greek connections! The article was reproduced in full in the magazine *The Parsi*, where the only comment of the editor was that he would date the Greek influence back to earlier times.²² There was, therefore, more significance attached to this cricket tour than simply being a good holiday. It was seen as reflecting a shared value system between the Parsis and the British.

Travellers' tales

Several of these travellers wrote fascinating journals, diaries and impressions of what they saw. These are interesting for their own sake, contain first-hand accounts of how Parsis from India saw Britain, and may be assumed to have influenced their friends back in India with their picture of life in Britain.²³

One of the dominant impressions made on the travellers appears to have been the busy-ness and the bustle of London life.

From the immense number of people, and vehicles of every description, that we saw hurrying along apparently in great haste, and from the increasing noise, we were apprehensive that some public commotion had taken place . . . Every street down which we looked, appeared to be pouring out countless multitudes to swell the throng . . . But we were afterwards informed that this constant tide of human beings was to be witnessed every day for twelve or fourteen hours.²⁴

Well may they call it [London] great and busy. The continual and most extraordinary bustle and traffic is quite sufficient to bewilder the ordinary stranger; on the footwalks the business people seem to rush along as if for a race; carts, drays, omnibuses and crowds of other vehicles, completely fill the street. It is there that you see that time is money.²⁵

²² The original article appeared in *East and West*, Feb. 1905 and was reproduced in *The Parsi*, Mar. 1905.

²³ Because they were written in English they would have been read only by the educated middle classes in Bombay, but they are precisely the sort of people who were likely to consider undertaking such travels themselves. One that I have not included in this book, or in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, is Cornelia Sorabji, the first Indian woman to study law at Oxford. Her father (but not her mother) was born a Parsi but he converted to Christianity and was ordained. She herself was a Christian. That, and the fact that as far as I can discern she had little impact on the Parsi community, is why I have omitted her. However, she did describe herself as of Parsi nationality and I have sometimes wondered if I was wrong to exclude her. See the account in Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, pp. 110–51.

²⁴ J. N. and H. M. Wadia, *Journal of a Residence of Two Years and a Half in Great Britain*, London, 1841, p. 29.

²⁵ J. H. Kothari, *Impressions of a First Tour Around the World in 1883 and 1884*, London, 1889, p. 14.

The widespread importance of technology impressed them greatly.

What is there in England that cannot be done by steam? Carriages fly upon iron railroads heated by coal, wood is sawn by steam, iron is hammered into anchors, and rolled into plates, bars and wire by steam.

The very fires to get up all these powerful machines are blown up by steam, water is pumped by steam, butter is churned by steam, books are printed by steam, money is coined by steam, ships heedless of wind and tide, navigate the seas by steam, guns are fired by steam, and every article of clothing from head to foot is made by steam.²⁶

The same authors, the Wadias, were convinced that this (technological) knowledge was the foundation of British power:

What has been the principal means of her [Britain] doing this? Why by knowledge or science put into practice, because knowledge is power; and it is by power of knowledge alone, and not by power of arms, that she has so many means of attracting the world to her, and extending the spread of her empire. (p. 25)

The Wadia brothers were impressed by the way the world was attracted to Britain:

We were greatly surprised to see the amazing number of ships going out and pouring into the Thames, and steamers every now and then running backwards and forwards; we cannot convey to our countrymen any idea of the immense number of vessels . . . colliers, timber ships, merchantmen, steamers, and many other crafts, from all parts of the world. Hastening as it were, to seek refuge in a river, which is but a stream compared to the Ganges and the Indus . . . we thought it a great wonder that such a small, and insignificant a speck as England appears on the map of the world, can thus attract so many nations of the world to her. (p. 24)

Most of these early travellers were impressed by pageantry, especially by royalty, and all of them went to see, or be seen by, them. The Wadia brothers again supply most details. One day they took up a position where the Queen was known to walk. She noticed their traditional dress and sent a messenger asking for their names and which country they were from. On receiving their card she 'did us the honour upon reaching the end of the terrace again to look upon us, and what to her was the novelty, our costume'. They were fulsome in their comments on her regal

²⁶ Wadias, *Journal*, pp. 134 f.

qualities (pp. 234 f. and 102). Modi relates a similar experience when K. R. Cama and Dosabhai Framji visited Balmoral. The Queen noticed them in the crowd and invited them to tour the castle and they were provided with lunch, although they did not meet the Queen. Cama spoke of her *khoreh*, her (royal) glory.²⁷

But the travellers were not uncritical of England. Wadia in 1840 and Malabari in 1893 were forcibly struck by the dirt and poverty of London, and expressed their gratitude that India was not as bad: 'The scene was to me very extraordinary. I had never before witnessed so dense a fog, and the streets and shops were lighted with gas, although it was noon day . . . Another nuisance of London is the dirty state of the road compared with Bombay.'²⁸ Malabari was struck by the extremes of wealth and poverty:

Poor as India is, I thank God she knows not much of the poverty to which parts of Great Britain have been accustomed—the East end of London, for instance, parts of Glasgow, and other congested centres of life. Men and women living in a chronic state of emaciation, till they can hardly be recognised as human; picking up as food, what even animals will turn away from; sleeping fifty, sixty, eighty of them together of all ages and both sexes, in a hole that could not hold ten with decency; swearing, fighting, trampling on one another; filling the room with foul confusion and fouler air. This is not a picture of occasional misery; in some places it represents the every-day life of the victims of misfortune.²⁹

Some of the travellers also commented on the racial prejudice they encountered, especially from two parts of society: 'We would inform our countrymen that the majority of the lower orders in England are very rude in their manners and behaviour towards strangers, whom they do not like to see in their country.'³⁰ 'The drivers of the cabs and other public vehicles, are an insolent and imposing set of men, who take every advantage, especially of foreigners.'³¹ Naoroji Ferdoonji, in a paper delivered in London in 1874, attacked 'the ignorance that prevails in this country regarding the condition of India'.³² He was of the opinion that in

²⁷ J. J. Modi, *K. R. Cama*, Bombay, 1932, pp. 18–22.

²⁸ A. C. Wadia, *Diary of an Overland Journey from Bombay to England*, London, 1840, pp. 26, 65.

²⁹ B. M. Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, London 1893 (Bombay, 3rd edn., 1895), p. 85.

³⁰ Wadias, *Journal*, p. 109.

³¹ Wadia, *Diary*, p. 65, see also Malabari, *Indian Eye*, p. 152.

³² N. Ferdoonji, 'The Personal Bearing of Europeans towards the Natives', Lecture to the East India Association, London, 1874, p. 3.

Britain he and his countrymen were treated reasonably, but that in India they were treated as:

[a] conquered and inferior race . . . This feeling of superiority and race antagonism, which pervades all classes of Europeans in India, is the chief cause of a great and growing evil. [Indians] are often treated with incivility, harshness and even contempt and personal violence. They are frequently stigmatised as niggers, a nation of liars, perjurers, forgers, devoid of gratitude, trust and good nature . . . On many occasions the subject race is treated as if they were rude barbarians and inhuman savages . . . A considerable number of European officers and others belonging to the dominant race are often so reckless in their demeanour in the interior of the country that they have no hesitation in shooting, killing, assaulting and ill treating the Natives, and committing gross outrages.

He went on to complain that Europeans who were violent to, or even killed, Indians were not punished, and Indians were forced to live under a different set of legal rights. He concluded that there was different treatment in Britain from that experienced in India, and that the right class of Englishman was not being sent out: an Englishman sent to India 'considered himself a superior being belonging to the ruling class, moves in his own proud and limited circle, assumes high airs, lords over the natives of India, whom he treats as an inferior and abject race.'³³

In addition to the perception of British racism, there were aspects of British social life which did not appeal to the travellers. The Wadia brothers could not understand the English love of gardening and why 'gentlemen should dig the ground with their own hands, and in fact go through all the duties of a gardener merely to pass away their time'.³⁴ They could not understand why people liked ballet. After watching a famous dancer (Taglioni) they could not see why she was paid so highly 'to stand for a long time like a goose upon one leg . . . Had we not seen instances that convinced us the English were clever people, we would have thought them very foolish indeed thus to pay a dancing puppet' (pp. 102 f.). They were critical of the British press for being so inflammatory. Malabari deplored British family morals, commenting that marriage was going out of fashion and that British friendship was as fickle as the weather and not reliable, unlike Asiatic friendship.³⁵

³³ Ferdunji, *Personal Bearing*, pp. 4 f., 18.

³⁵ *Indian Eye*, pp. 66 f. and 119 f.

³⁴ Wadias, *Journal*, p. 88.

The Wadias were highly critical of the mutual attacks of the Christian sects: 'Oh, we thought, would that religion in England was not taken up as a trade! Would that charity and brotherly love were preached and acted upon, instead of finding faults with their fellow brethren, and exciting each other to bitter religious hatred'.³⁶ Malabari, also, found the Anglican Church lacking in inspiration for him: 'There seems to be a good deal of drawl in the reading, and a good deal of vocal gymnastics' (p. 97).

Perhaps the most amusing passages of these travellers' accounts are those of the Wadia brothers about Parliament. They tried to explain to their readers the composition of the House of Lords. After referring to the great landowners and the bishops, they went on:

After sometime admirals of the navy and commanders of the army were made noblemen and sent to the House of Peers, sometimes persons have been made noblemen for lending their lives to the King, sometimes if a person has been very troublesome in the House of Commons and has been constantly asking for information not pleasant for the Government to give, he has been made a nobleman; if a minister wanted votes upon a particular measure which he was anxious to carry, a peerage has been conferred upon a person to abstain from voting on the question; and if a man who held a place in a ministry was found to be of no use, and would not resign his situation, he was made a nobleman and sent to the House of Peers.

They commented on the length of speeches, even when the voting outcome was known, thus wasting much time. But it was the House of Commons which impressed them least:

and yet upon the whole we were disappointed. We had expected to have seen the representatives of all the wealth, all the talent, all the resources of the country, better dressed and a different looking set of men. We saw them with their hats upon their heads for the last two or three hours sleeping in all directions, and only opening their eyes now and then, when a cheer louder than common struck upon their ears. (pp. 182 f.)

So although the nineteenth-century Parsi travellers to Britain found much that they admired, notably industry and royalty, there was much of which they were critical—the dirt and poverty, racial prejudice, and lack of integrity in newspapers, the church, family

³⁶ Wadias, *Journal*, p. 209.

life and even in Parliament. Authors who name the Parsis as craven in their attitude to the British have not always read their sources thoroughly!

Zoroastrian literature for the British

Several Parsi authors writing between 1858 and 1938 produced books and papers on their religion intended for consumption by the British. Being who they were, these writers can be seen to reflect a broad trend of Parsi attitudes. They were: Framjee (1858), who later wrote under the name Karaka (1884), Dadabhai Naoroji (1862 and 1908), Kapadia (1905), A. S. N. Wadia (1912) and Masani (1938).³⁷ Most of these writers were prominent figures; all had a high level of western education. Karaka was a politician. He was the first Indian chairman of the Bombay Municipality, a member of the Bombay Legislative Council and a founder member of the Bombay Presidency Association, though he resigned from the last after one year, fearing that its work might alienate the British. His strongly pro-British stand is reflected in the fact that his second work was dedicated to the Prince of Wales and ends with the words, 'God Bless the Queen.' His aim was clearly to write a book that would commend his people to the rulers. But behind this motive lay knowledge of his community's history. Dadabhai Naoroji was also a prominent politician. Again, his motive was to commend Zoroastrianism to the British, but rather than emphasize Parsi achievements as Karaka did, he stressed how at its heart Zoroastrianism was like Protestant Christianity, apart from the fact that superstitious ignorant priests had defiled the pure teaching of the Prophet. His work is characterized as much by his religious reforming zeal as by his political motives. Sir Rustom Masani is more difficult to characterize. He worked as the editor of a newspaper (*Indian Spectator*, which was devoted to conveying Indian views to British politicians), he held senior posts in the banking world, was the first Indian to be Municipal Commissioner and

³⁷ D. Framjee, *The Parsees: Their History, Manners, Customs, and Religion*, London, 1858; D. Naoroji, 'The Parsee Religion', *Proceedings of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society*, 1862 (lecture delivered 1861); and 'The Parsi Religion', in W. Sheowring and C. W. Thies, *Religious Systems of the World*, London, 1908; D. F. Karaka, *History of the Parsis* (2 vols.), London, 1884; S. A. Kapadia, *The Teachings of Zoroaster and the Philosophy of the Parsi Religion*, London, 1905; A. S. N. Wadia, *The Message of Zoroaster*, London, 1912; and R. P. Masani, *The Religion of the Good Life*, London, 1938.

finally became Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University. He expounded an abstract, rational religion of 'good thoughts, words and deeds', where evil is not a separate force but is the struggle within a person, 'a ceaseless conflict between the animal and the human, the diabolic and the divine'. As far as devotion before the fire was concerned, he wrote: 'What indeed, can be a more natural and more sublime representation of Him who is Himself Eternal Light, than a pure, undefiled flame?'³⁸

Whereas Karaka sought to paint a glowing picture of the Parsi community in the round, Kapadia's smaller book is focused on religion. Kapadia was a lecturer at University College, London and a lawyer. He was active in the Zoroastrian Trust Funds and was joint editor of the 'Wisdom of the East' series published by John Murray in London. He was essentially a London-based intellectual. Ardeshir S. Wadia, in contrast, was Bombay based, a Professor of English and History at Bombay's prestigious Elphinstone College. He also wrote on Indian social affairs and may be classed as politically right wing; he argued, for example, that education should not be available to everyone, because some could not benefit from it and people were needed for menial tasks. He vigorously opposed Naoroji's calls for Independence. His book aimed to show the British how like their form of Christianity Parsi religion was. Each of the authors, therefore, has a strong communal agenda. Inevitably, in view of their education and motives, each of the authors made substantial use of western academics and writers.³⁹ The one exception is Naoroji, which is very surprising, because in his political speeches he commonly stacked up enormous numbers of quotations of western writers who shared his views. The reason for this omission appears to be that Naoroji had little knowledge of western scholarship on Zoroastrianism.

All of the writers, without exception, emphasize monotheism. Framjee was writing only fifteen years after Wilson's attack on Bombay Parsis, and much of his emphasis is intended to counter Wilson-type criticisms; for example, he argues that Ahriman should be understood simply in an allegorical sense. The allegorical interpretation of myth and ritual (notably in seeing the purity

³⁸ *Religion of the Good Life*, pp. 11 and 80 respectively.

³⁹ The following summary points are justified in more detail in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 97–102.

laws in terms of modern hygiene) is retained through all writers down to Masani. All the writers refute the Muslim label of Zoroastrians as fire worshippers. Equally, all of them emphasize not simply a similarity to Christianity, but specifically to British values, notably royalty and common ethical mores. A western writer whom these authors, like many Parsis, made use of was Samuel Laing, one time Minister of Finance for India, who wrote several books on science and religion. In the one on Zoroastrianism he stressed that Zoroastrian teaching on good and evil was consistent with the laws of polarity, the positive and the negative forces of electricity, uncovered by modern science. He also emphasized the sweet reasonableness of Zoroastrian teaching and made a lengthy quotation of a passage from Andrew Carnegie on the inspiring nature of Parsi prayers before the ocean and the setting sun.⁴⁰ The goal was to show that the nature of Zoroastrianism marked it as different from all other religions in India, and it was in full accord with the highest ideals of Christian Britain.

Parsis, both in India and Britain, were convinced not only that their religion and communal ideals were in accord with those of the rulers, but also that this was recognized by the British. To this end they could, and did, point to the number of honours bestowed on their members. Foremost were the baronetcies (above all Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy), and the sixty-three knighthoods.⁴¹ A Parsi, Shirinbai M. Cursetjee, was the first Indian to be presented at Court, in 1865, and the columns of the *Parsi Prakash* detail eight more such presentations in the nineteenth century.⁴² They were also proud of their elections to learned and socially exclusive societies. For example, Cursetji Maneckji Shroff, though he had been turned down for membership of the Royal Asiatic Society in India because he was a native, was elected in London in 1835. Six years later he was refused admission to the Masonic Lodge in India, for the same reason, but he was admitted in Europe in 1842, whereon he returned to India and started a lodge for 'natives'. The columns of the *Parsi Prakash* also catalogue nineteen instances of Parsi biographies and articles on distinguished Parsis in such socially prestigious publications as the *Illustrated London News*, *Vanity Fair*, the *Graphic*

⁴⁰ S. Laing, *A Modern Zoroastrian*, London, 1890, pp. 219 f.

⁴¹ See the lists in S. H. Karak, *Who are the Parsis?*, Karachi, 1958, app. K.

⁴² The detailed references for these summary points are given in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 102–4.

and the *Daily Telegraph*. The first of these, on Cursetji R. Wadia, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* as early as 6 January 1849. The Parsi community, both in Britain and in India, made substantial contributions to the Allied cause in both world wars, with eighty-one losing their lives, and in the Second War alone they donated in excess of seven million pounds. These donations were recorded not only in the columns of the *Parsi Prakash*, but also in specially produced *Parsi War Memorial Volumes*.⁴³

Some Parsis unquestionably went to extremes in their pro-British stance. An example is the author of the ladies' column in the Bombay magazine, *The Parsi*. She saw the establishment of a Parsi community in London as a glorious idea to aspire to:

The closer union of the Europeans and Parsis is the finest thing that can happen to our race. It will mean the *lifting up* of a people who are lying *low*, though possessing all the qualities of a European race. It will make our men more of 'men' than they are at present and will make our women better women. The complete Europeanization of the Parsis is now a mere matter of time . . . Imagine 100 well-to-do Parsi families settled down in England and bringing up their children in English schools and colleges! What a glorious day that would be for the race!⁴⁴

Although she represents a strand of Parsi thought and attitude, and although Parsis on the whole were generally pro-British and believed that there was much in common in the values of the two races, nevertheless, most Parsis took a more balanced perspective and were not wholly uncritical of the British and life in Britain. Alongside the writer in the ladies' column of *The Parsi*, it is also important to note that Parsis were active in the inception and the early years of the Indian National Congress: it was a Parsi who first called for Independence (Naoroji) and a Parsi who first unfurled the Indian flag (Madame Cama). As we saw in Chapter 2, Parsis were associated with Gandhi, and one of the harshest critics of Britain, Saklatvalla, was a Parsi (see below). But between the extremes of *The Parsi* and Saklatvalla, most Parsis who travelled to England did so in the conviction that they shared important values and ideals, and that they were respected by the British. The early travellers brought their own cooks to ensure that food was prepared in accord with the purity laws, and younger visitors sometimes came with

⁴³ For details see Hinnells, 'War and Medicine in Zoroastrianism', in *Selected Works*, pp. 277–300, at pp. 288 f.

⁴⁴ *The Parsi*, August, 1905, pp. 324 f.

guardians to ensure they were not enticed away by western religion or culture. But despite these safeguards, most came to what they perceived as a culture that was not alien, from which they could learn, but to which they could also contribute.

British Zoroastrian Institutions

The foundations

The Zoroastrian Association⁴⁵ was the first Asian religious association founded in Britain, and the records survive of its foundation. In a letter dated 15 August 1861, Muncherjee Hormusji Cama circulated a letter countersigned by Dadabhai Nauroji—who was then of course still in his early days as a merchant, and not yet a politician.⁴⁶ The letter invited Zoroastrians known to be living in England to form an Association. It reads:

To Zoroastrians of England

Sirs,

Our people go to several countries for business. There each person gives according to his means for religious (charitable) purposes and thus performs meritorious deeds. This enables them not only to perform good deeds but also enables them to live in harmony with one another and be with one another in good times and bad.

Currently by the grace of God we are about 50—including students (who come here for higher studies)⁴⁷ and our number is likely to increase year by year. For this reason it is essential to consider this matter urgently.

⁴⁵ The Association underwent a series of name changes. When it was first formed on 31 Oct. 1861 it was called ‘Religious Funds of the Zarathushtrians of Europe’. On 25 Sep. 1889 it became ‘The Charitable Fund of the Zoroastrians of Europe’. On 14 Aug. 1909 it became ‘The Incorporated Parsee Association of Europe’. On 8 Aug. 1971 the name was changed to ‘The Zoroastrian Association of Europe’, and its present name ‘Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (Incorporated)’ became the name from 1 Feb. 1979. The last of these, abbreviated to ZTFE, is the one that will be commonly used in what follows. Technically that is incorrect when writing about the years before 1979, but the use of a variety of names may have been confusing. The changes reflect modifications to the constitution, and Parsee was changed to Zoroastrian in 1971 to take account of the presence of Iranian Zoroastrians. These names do not indicate separate or rival bodies.

⁴⁶ More detailed accounts, with full references, to the matters discussed in this section are to be found in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, ch. 4.

⁴⁷ It is worth noting that this reference to students coming for higher studies indicates that this trend pre-dates the dates given above, which were based on the columns of the *Parsi Prakash*.

If you think my idea is good, we can arrange to meet at some place, listen to each other's views and reach a satisfactory conclusion.⁴⁸

Cama chaired the meeting at his home on 22 September 1861, which was attended by fifteen people,⁴⁹ and a draft constitution was mailed to (unnamed) Zoroastrians known to reside in Manchester and Liverpool. A redrafting committee, involving Naoroji, was formed. In a document submitted to a meeting on 6 October it was emphasized that this Association was a European one, not just for Britain. The document states: 'It was decided that the chief administrative office of the Fund at present will be in England but if at some later stage the Zarthoshti population in any other city is more than that in England the administrative office should be shifted to such a city.'⁵⁰ Funds that were raised, it stated, 'should be utilised to build houses in every such city of the European continent where the number of Zarthostis is on the increase'. At a subsequent meeting (13 November) Cama was elected chairman and Naoroji a trustee of the Funds established through collected donations. The third trustee, and the senior one, was Ardeshir K. Wadia. Six funds were established; their purpose indicates the perceived priorities of the founders. They were: to bury the dead; to help destitute Zoroastrians in Europe to return to India; to purchase books about Zoroastrianism; to help 'scholars dealing with research in Zoroastrianism [and] to help intelligent and suitable Zoroastrians for research work in Zoroastrianism'; to establish a 'House of Prayer'; and finally to organize a general fund for miscellaneous expenditure.⁵¹ The prioritizing of charity for the poor and the support for scholarship are characteristic of Zoroastrian communities. There was a rather surprising restriction on voting and office holders to 'any Zoroastrian living in the main centre city', thereby excluding those in Manchester and Liverpool to whom the draft constitution had been sent.

⁴⁸ I am indebted to Cyrus P. Mehta for his translation of this Gujarati document.

⁴⁹ The minutes record the following names: A. K. Wadia; D. Naoroji; Dr B. Dorabji; E. Nusserwanji; J. Burjorji; A. U. Engineer; Dr M. B. Colah; R. K. Engineer; P. Pestonjee; D. K. Ratnagar; R. S. Umrigar; B. M. Modi; F. B. Cama; N. C. Ponchajina; M. H. Cama. The list of names includes the first Parsi to become an FRCS, Umrigar, and two sets of people from the same family—Engineers and Camas, suggesting some chain migration.

⁵⁰ My attention was kindly drawn to this document, as to so many others, by Malcolm M. Deboo. He rightly criticized my use of the term 'the London Association' in *Zoroastrians in Britain*. I am grateful to him for the translation of this document from Gujarati.

⁵¹ Minute Book for 13 Nov. pp. 6–8.

Problems arose immediately with Bombay, where it was reported that Zoroastrians in London were planning to build a fully consecrated temple without due consultation with the old country and the trustees hastened to assure them that this was not the case.⁵² Naoroji was elected chairman in 1863, succeeding Cama, who returned to India. The first thirty to forty years of the Trusts' history were beset by financial problems because several merchants were suffering from the collapse of the Bombay stock market, following the economic crash in what is widely referred to as 'the share mania', when many Parsis lost their fortunes. As a result fewer Parsis than anticipated came to London, and so membership numbers dropped. Meetings had to be cancelled because they were not quorate and rules had to be changed to allow individuals to hold more than one office as there were not enough volunteers. There is no suggestion of any nineteenth-century social functions; essentially the Trusts appear to have been functioning as an ethnic burial club, comparable to those for specific groups in wider British society.

The incorporation

The history of the Trusts changed from 1908. Naoroji retired and returned to India because of ill health. Bhownagree was elected chairman in his place. Under his chairmanship the Trusts were transformed in three ways: 1. He considered the nature of the Trusts inadequate to deal with the growing numbers, and so he employed the parliamentary lawyers, Bull and Bull, to draw up the Memorandum and Articles of Association, which resulted in the formal Incorporated Parsee Association of Europe in 1909. 2. He injected a strong social dimension into the Association's activities. 3. The first Zoroastrian buildings in Britain were acquired.

The concerns of the original Trusts were not overturned and the charitable and academic support were preserved, but the caring role of the Association was stressed. Such a formal document required more definitions than had been deployed in the original Trusts, notably concerning membership. As there were no Iranian Zoroastrians in London at that time, the title 'Parsi' may have been appropriate. But the original documents had not been clear about the position of intermarrieds. It was agreed that only 'Parsees of

⁵² Reported in *Rast Gofar*, 3 Nov. 1861.

the Zoroastrian faith' could be members, thereby excluding spouses and offspring of intermarriages. The first recorded problem of the presence of non-Zoroastrians was raised at the AGM on 14 September 1891 and concerned the non-Zoroastrians at the funeral of Mrs D. P. Cama. At the AGM the following year it was agreed that they would be allowed to be present at funerals. In 1910, J. R. D. Tata, then in Paris, wrote to ask about the rights of people who were not Zoroastrian by birth, but had married a Zoroastrian and believed in the religion. He asked if they could become members of the Association, able to participate in the religion and be buried in the Zoroastrian cemetery at Brookwood (see below). The letter was raising the question of the marriage which had provoked the 1906 law case (see Chapter 2). The Association consulted Naoroji (then retired to India), as the only surviving original trustee, asking what the original intention had been.⁵³ In 1923 the problem emerged of the non-Zoroastrian spouse of a member wanting to be buried at Brookwood. On the advice of the then secretary to the BPP, Sir J. J. Modi, it was ruled she could not be interred there. The question was raised with regard to the wife, and specifically with the children, of Saklatvalla. The practice advised by Modi was to allow the *navjote* of the children of a Parsi male, but not of the non-Zoroastrian spouse. These problems indicate at an early date the difficulty of defining the boundaries of the community, the observance of the purity laws and the locus of religious authority for practices in the diaspora, which as far as the European Association was concerned was Bombay and the specifically the BPP.⁵⁴

From 1908 the records started referring to social functions in the Association. At Pateti that year 'a large number, about 60 ladies and gentlemen spent the afternoon on the river in a specially chartered steamer followed by a dinner' (AGM minutes). On another occasion a banquet was held at the Criterion restaurant to which the Rt. Hon. Lord Ampthill and Harold Cox MP 'were invited as the guests of the Community in appreciation of the valuable services they had rendered to our, among other, Communities of India in advocating their rights and better treatment in South Africa.' The political interests of Bhownaggee are evident in this because

⁵³ Letter from R. D. Tata dated 25 Feb. 1910.

⁵⁴ The reply of Sir J. J. Modi was tabled at the AGM for 1922–3, held on 11 Aug. 1923.

of the reference to South Africa (see below). But at subsequent functions a Maharaja, a Muslim leader, Field Marshal the Earl Haig, and the Oxford academic, L. H. Mills, attended. Other venues used included the Ritz, the National Liberal Club and Caxton Hall. The aim was presumably to project the image of the Parsi community as a sophisticated, loyal and splendid body. The standing of the community was assisted by the appointment of a Parsi, Sir Dadiba Dalal, as the first Indian to become Indian High Commissioner in London in 1923. This image was enhanced by Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanjee, who purchased from the Duchess of Sutherland the Windsor estate, said to be one of the most expensive homes in the country, with grounds so extensive that they included a racecourse. He made a fortune as supplier to the army in the Boer and First World Wars, and was knighted for his extensive charity, targeted particularly towards war victims. The Association also made use of Ratan Tata's mansion, York House, at Twickenham, a property large enough to be used as a town hall a few years later. The social life, and the social standing, of Parsis in London changed significantly in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially with the first three Asian MPs at Westminster: Naoroji (1892–5), Bhownagree (1895–1906) and Saklatvalla (1922–3, 1924–9). All three are discussed below.

The Parsi Social Union

The provision of a social life for a small community composed of different age groups, and people from varied backgrounds, is extremely difficult. There are indications that Bhownagree's development of a high social life provoked difficulties elsewhere. That appears to be at least part of the explanation for the establishment of 'the Parsi Social Union'. The first Annual Report (1906/7) explains some of the tensions involved. The Union was started:

by a small body of Parsis who were actuated by the desire to promote a better social intercourse among members of the community. The idea did not find favour in certain quarters, from which hostile manoeuvres were set on foot to nip in the bud this excellent and much desired idea of a Club in a country where club life is an essential thing. Thanks to the sagacity and broadmindedness of your committee it took very prompt measures to disarm the opposition. An informal conference was held on July 2nd, 1906, between your committee and Sir Muncherjee Bhownagree, who was acting on behalf of the Committee of the Zoroastrian Fund, your

committee acceded to Sir Muncherjee Bhownaggee's request and changed the name 'Parsi Club' into 'Parsi Social Union'.

The stated aims and objectives were: 1. To promote and increase social intercourse and good will among members of the Parsi community. 2. To bring Parsis into closer touch with Europeans and other nations of the East. 3. To hold debates and read papers on social, legal, scientific and literary subjects. 4. To afford every possible assistance to Parsis who came over to Europe either for study, or business or health, or any other purpose.⁵⁵ The membership of the Union appears to have consisted predominantly of students. A later chairman (J. C. Coyajee) stated that it had been formed to help people studying in the UK and under its regulations four of the seven managing trustees were to be students, plus corresponding members to represent the Union at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh. The records also suggest a branch in Manchester. Dadabhai Naoroji was the first vice-president, before he left for India, and members of distinguished families were prominent: Dorab J. N. Tata was a vice-president, B. D. Petit was president and S. A. Kapadia, the University College lawyer and author discussed above, was also involved. The first year's programme included lectures on Lakeland poets and one on 'Cumnor, An Historic English Village'. At one of its functions there were 100 guests, including a member of the Persian legation and two prominent political figures, Sir Thomas Barclay and Sir Curzon Wylie. But despite this aura of respectability there was conflict with the Association. The first Annual Report relates that the Association had dissuaded the Northbrook Society from allowing the student body to use its rooms in Piccadilly, but the Union was able to have the decision reversed and was put on the list of Privileged Associations. In 1922 there was a spate of correspondence in the Indian press, in *The Times of India*, the Bombay *Sanj Vartaman* and the Karachi *Parsi Sansar*, when an article appeared (7 August) saying that the young people thought that 'the Parsi Association of Europe is too much under the control of elderly people and tends too much towards entertaining personages at expensive banquets... The object of the Union seems to be to create a rather less august and more sociable centre for Parsis in London.' Bhownaggee responded on behalf of the Association, saying that the Union was 'a very

⁵⁵ *Rules and Regulations of the Parsi Social Union*, 1907, p. 3.

small body of very small means'. In this episode lay a foretaste of problems awaiting future diaspora communities, namely how to balance the interests of different groups when numbers limited the frequency, and therefore the range, of activities. What Bhownaggee and his generation wanted was not what the young students were looking for. Presenting an image of high social standing for the long-term resident British Zoroastrians was not a particular priority for students in Britain on a limited budget for a restricted length of time.

Broacha House

Ironically, in view of the last words of the previous section, the first long-term planning for a building emerged from the student body in Edinburgh, where a number of Parsis came for medical studies. In 1909 the Parsi Union persuaded Sir Shapurji Broacha to establish a student hostel and club there. He purchased a house, provided furniture and an endowment for running the house, which was to be named after him. The trustees were Broacha, Bhownaggee, a Parsi student, Appoo and N. J. Mulla, and an Edinburgh law firm. Virtually nothing is heard of this hostel until major problems arose in the 1930s. The housekeeper, who had a fifteen-year lease, refused to take Parsi students because if she did 'the police would be after her'. As she was known to have various European students the problem was clearly one of colour prejudice. But, despite the fact that there were Parsi students looking for and being refused accommodation, it was found difficult to evict her until the end of her lease. Eventually the property was sold in 1947 and the money donated to the Trust Funds in London.⁵⁶ The first attempt to buy a property for Zoroastrians in Britain therefore ended in frustration.

Problems, growing numbers, and the need for a Zoroastrian house

The numbers attending functions in the years before the First World War tended to be approximately one hundred. In 1911 there were ninety-five individual subscribers to the Association, many of whom had some family here. But wartime problems, and

⁵⁶ This account is based on M. H. Dadachanjee, *Life Sketch of Sir Shapoorjee Bharucha*, Bombay, 1928 (in Gujarati) and the Zoroastrian House file entitled 'Broacha House'.

the slump in the following years, reduced the numbers coming for business, and some of those who were in Britain fell on hard times and turned to the Association for help to return to India. These problems are outlined in a letter dated 6 June 1917, in response to an appeal for money for a temple in India:

The committee regret that your request for subscription to your fund has not much chance of being complied with, for the bulk of Parsi residents here are students living on the allowances made by their parents for their education. There are very few here . . . [writing illegible] older residents, the calls upon whom for various purposes are so frequent and numerous especially in the present troubled and distressed times, that you can easily understand their inability to give any appreciable money help elsewhere. We ourselves have to support the funds of this association for the benefit of distressed cases here and for maintaining the burial ground and other necessary communal expenses . . . the burdens of even living expenses owing to war and the urgent calls made for subscriptions in various ways for help to soldiers and charities connected with the war.

Similarly on 30 March 1922, the then secretary, Desai, wrote to Sir J. J. Modi, secretary of the BPP, explaining that the Association did not have the money to meet its demands. They had an income of £150, but in the previous eighteen months had to pay £120 to assist three individuals to return to India, and they currently had a lady with two sons who was helpless and applying to the Association for aid. He explained that 'in this country no Parsee should be allowed to resort to begging or to be a charge upon the rates and thus tarnish the name and fame of the community in the Metropolis of the Empire.' He explained that when the Association was formed it had been assumed that firms would flourish and that there would be only the odd instance of repatriation every five years, but the slump in the British economy meant that they were unable to cope. While he was visiting Bombay later that year he went to the BPP to seek help for funds for this purpose and he reported to Bhownaggee on his return: 'I had a little hot discussion with Sir C. J. Readymoney who began to criticise your turning the Association into a Limited Company; ultimately they assured me that they would be willing to help us in the repatriation of any Parsi when a demand is beyond our means.'⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Letter dated 12 Aug. 1922. The allusion to the Limited Company refers to the formal Incorporation outlined above.

It is worth illustrating the social work of the Association with a specific example recorded in the Association files from the early 1920s.⁵⁸ A lady from Bombay sought help in tracing her father in England. He had last been heard of in the Manchester area, so the London Association sent letters to the Union Workhouse Hospital in Manchester, to Withington Hospital in Chorlton, to Hope Hospital in Salford and to the Salford Union Infirmary in Pendleton. In the last letter the secretary commented: 'I beg to point out that the gentleman referred to is a Parsi residing in England for nearly 60 years, and although as you say "coloured" he is whiter than a good European in every respect.' Clearly the secretary thought it necessary to dispel any false stereotype of an Indian. Eventually the man was found, given £50 and a second-class ticket back to Bombay. The search was, therefore, extensive, effective and charitable. More such work became necessary as the slump deepened.

At the time that the funds were stretched, numbers were growing and the need for a Zoroastrian house was increasingly pressed. Discussions began in earnest at a meeting on 16 December 1914 under the urging of Mr F. Ilavna. The call was not just for a religious building but for an administrative base and social centre. The Association sold its Government of India bonds; Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji promised £5,000 and Dr E. J. Khory £1,500. Just as a communal appeal was being launched in 1920, a property was found and purchased, 168 Cromwell Road, South Kensington, on the road where Bhownaggee lived. But problems soon developed with the house. It was larger than the Association needed, it was in need of urgent and extensive renovation, which they could not afford, and it was devaluing because of its condition. It is clear from the correspondence files that the building was causing divisions in the community. In 1925 they disposed of the property. Despite some doubts about a property by Bhownaggee an alternative was purchased, 11 Russell Road, Kensington. It was smaller than the previous one, and was freehold. Different people funded different rooms, which were then named after them: the Bamjee ritual room, the Sir Dhunjibhoy and Lady Bomanji room for social functions; the Khory room for 'temporary shelter to indigent

⁵⁸ The individuals are mentioned in the files, but for obvious reasons anonymity is preserved in this account.

Parsees stranded in England'. The building became a social centre or club, for card games, billiards, etc; it was also a hostel and in part a ritual centre. The opening by Bhownagree was reported in *The Times* and was attended by dignitaries from London and Bombay (Sir Dhunjibhoy and Lady Bomanji, Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy, Sir Ness Wadia, Lady Dorabji Tata). The success of the new house was commented on in the AGM on 28 October 1931:

Up to recent years the Association's objects were confined mainly to the maintenance of the Community's burial ground, the proper disposal of remains, and the repatriation of any indigent member stranded in Europe . . . In recent years there has been a welcome addition to the activities of the Association . . . the establishment of the House where they had now assembled had opened out what might be regarded as the social side of the Association . . . its amenities and functions [attracted] a larger and more frequent attendance at its communal gatherings.

The burial club had grown into an Association, and now into a community.

The funeral ground

Several references have been made to the need for, and importance of, a funeral ground, and it is important to give an overview of its history. The Trust Funds negotiated a burial area in the cemetery at Brookwood with the London Necropolis Company in 1863. Over the years, the size of that plot and its facilities have grown. Its boundary was marked by a hedge in 1863, with columns at the entrance to mark off the Zoroastrian boundary. In 1901 a 'chapel' or *sagdi* was erected, where prayers and appropriate purifications could be undertaken. This, and other developments, were opened by Mrs Jerbai Wadia, widow of Naoroji N. Wadia. This was the first attempt to carve out a distinctively Zoroastrian space in Britain and so it is worth quoting a contemporary account of the opening.

The fire was kindled and some Avestan prayers were recited by Mr Kekobad B. Dastur Meherjirana and Mr Ardeshir M. Masani. Sir George Birwood delivered a lecture on the Parsis and the history of their religion. Then Sir M. M. Bhownagree KCIE, talked on the life of the late Mr Wadia and then Mr Nusserwanji Naoroji Wadia, one of the sons of the deceased, requested the Zoroastrian Fund Committee of London to take over the building in their care which was accepted by its President, Mr Dadabhoy Naoroji, on its behalf. The building and mausoleum are built on the style of the Persepolis palace, the Astodan in the centre

resembles the Astodan of Cyrus at Pasargadae with seven steps from where four paths lead in four directions at the end of which a door is supposed to be built.⁵⁹

The evocation of architectural motifs from the fifth-century BCE royal palace of Persepolis, started by Darius, is an expression of the consciousness of the Iranian ancestry of the Parsi community. Achaemenid symbols are commonly used on Bombay temples, especially those from the nineteenth century. But Persepolis was a source of inspiration for much later Iranian, e.g. Sasanian, as well as Parsi art. The Zoroastrian section of Brookwood is therefore derived from the source of much ancient and modern religious symbolism. The allusion to the Astodan of Cyrus is much less common in Parsi art and suggests some knowledge of Iranian archaeology. It is noticeable that the main royal burial ground near Persepolis, Naqsh-i Rostam, was not used as a source of imagery. That funeral art is specifically concerned with the status of the king, whereas Persepolitan motifs became identified with Zoroastrianism generally, and not only the royal person. A study of the gravestones at Brookwood suggests a development over the years. The earliest gravestone is a conventional western headstone, devoid of any religious symbols but using the date from the Parsi calendar. Later ones began to emulate some Middle Eastern patterns, with pictures of the deceased, and on the sides of the stones representations of the fire and liturgical implements. The newspaper reports also allude to the symbols of the Zoroastrian cosmos, with indication of the four directions, and the seven steps, seven being a number at the heart of Zoroastrian theology: the seven Amesha Spentas, the seven creations, etc. The dead were, therefore, being laid to rest in a space clearly designated as Zoroastrian.

Unfortunately, the opening of the religious building and the Zoroastrian design of the cemetery have not been the end of the story of Brookwood, for there have been many problems over the years with the owners. As the community grew, so members became increasingly aware of the need for more space. It was extended in 1908 with help from the Tata family, some of whose members are buried in Brookwood in splendid mausoleums.⁶⁰ In 1938 the community debated the possibility of cremating the

⁵⁹ *PP* IV. 35.

⁶⁰ Specifically, J. N. Tata, the 'Captain of Indian industry' and his sons Sir Ratan and Sir Dorab J. Tata.

dead, so that less burial ground would be needed. Some of the religious issues at the 1938 AGM are worth quoting because others, both in India and in the diaspora, have raised similar points. Modern crematoria, one member (Jilla) argued, are different from traditional Indian forms of cremation and cause less religious offence. 'Disposal by exposure to Electric Radiant Heat Rays serves the same purpose as solar rays and does away with the gruesome idea of access to birds . . . Science teaches that fire can never be defiled for it consumed all impurities but ultimately retains its integrity and remains pure by itself.'⁶¹ It is important to note how diaspora Zoroastrians, like members of other diaspora religious groups, have to rationalize the changes they are compelled by circumstance to make.

The problem of space at Brookwood continued into the post-Second World War era. There had been difficulties with the owners not maintaining the grounds, despite increasing the charges. In 1974 the new owners, Maximillian Investments Ltd., tried to link their agreement to extensions to the *sagdi* with a substantial charge of £40,000 for more land, and a further increase in funeral charges. They apparently assumed that the Association would have little choice but to comply. The matter went to court and eventually an out-of-court settlement was reached which gave the Association the freehold of what they had already purchased; adjacent land was purchased for £1, the Association's legal fees were paid and excess burial charges were returned. Clearly the settlement was a triumph for the Association, and justified the determination of its leaders, notably the then vice-president, Shahpur F. Captain, not to submit to pressure. The extended *sagdi*, funded by Arbab Rustom Guiv and the Zarthoshty brothers, was built.⁶²

An International Centre

There are several references in the files to the Association being 'at the heart of empire'. From the early days there has been a

⁶¹ AGM, 12 Sept. 1938.

⁶² S. Captain, '1861–1984 Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe and the World Zoroastrian Organization', *World Zoroastrian*, 1984, pp. 1–8 at p. 5; Meetings files relating to 13 Jan. and Feb. 1974, 9 Mar., 27 Apr., 8 June 1975; 28 Mar. 1976. There are also occasional references to Zoroastrians dying in Europe being buried at Brookwood, for example Fardoonji H. Banaji, who died on 20 Aug. 1933 in Italy.

sense of this being much more than just a London Association. This was expressed in two main ways: 1. Accepting responsibility for indigent Zoroastrians in Europe, which usually meant facilitating their funeral; 2. Being used as a platform for appeals on behalf of oppressed Iranian Zoroastrians.

The earliest reference to the burial of an overseas Zoroastrian in London is to Mrs Dorabji Saklatvalla,⁶³ whose remains were brought from New York. In 1916 the Association funded the transportation of the body of Maneckjee Sethna from Monte Carlo to London, and a year later the body of Ardeshir Patel from Paris.⁶⁴ In 1919 Mr R. D. Cooper was informed that he was the French representative of the Association, but I could find no reference to any subsequent contact. The longest-standing such commitment was for five Zoroastrian graves in Berlin from approximately 1923, because their families in India declined to look after them.⁶⁵ The Church took over their upkeep in 1986, very much against the wishes of the Association for they felt that Zoroastrians should look after their own. But their protests were ignored.

Despite the heroic efforts of Hataria in mediating on behalf of the Iranian Zoroastrians to the Shah, the ruthlessly oppressed minority needed all the assistance and support that could be raised.⁶⁶ When the Shah, Nasir-i-Din, visited London in 1873, a deputation of four Parsis⁶⁷ went to Buckingham Palace to plead the cause of their co-religionists, and took with them Sir Henry Rawlinson, former ambassador to Tehran, and E. B. Eastwick MP. The Shah indicated that he would 'give the subject his best attention on his return to Persia', but when nothing happened, the Parsis made further representations through the British Embassy

⁶³ Shapurji Saklatvalla's mother.

⁶⁴ The brother of Madame Cama, who was exiled to Paris by the British for her political work in India.

⁶⁵ The 1938 Annual Report reported success in tracing the names of the five people buried in Berlin. They were: Hirji S. Nagarwalla; Mrs Fieruseh K. Shahrokh; Kaikhoshru D. Broacha, Minocher J. Khambatta and Cowasji E. Ghadiali.

⁶⁶ For the Zoroastrian experience in Muslim Iran see Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London, 1979 (repr., with new introduction, 2000), chs. 10–14, pp. 210 f. 218 f. on Hataria. A contemporary source that gives an account of 19th-c. Iranian Zoroastrians is E. J. Browne, *A Year amongst the Persians*, London 1893 (especially chs. 13–15). For a study of earlier accounts see N. Firby, *European Travellers and Their Perceptions of Zoroastrians in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Berlin, 1988.

⁶⁷ Ardeshir K. Wadia, as senior trustee; Dadabhai Naoroji as president, Naoroji Fardunji and Dr K. K. Bahadurji.

and some small relief was given. On a further visit in 1899, the Shah then in power, Muzaffar ad-din Qajar, also received a deputation of Parsis while he was in Europe. The address of welcome was drawn up by Bhownaggree and presented by Naoroji to the monarch at the Royal Palace Hotel in Ostend. They had been asked to make this approach by prominent Bombay Parsis (notably Sir Dinshah Petit), so it was not simply London-based Parsis who saw their position at the heart of empire as having political potential. It is reasonable to assume that the fact that two of the Parsis had recently been, or were, MPs at Westminster would have left an impression on the Shah of the oppressed Zoroastrians having some influential European supporters.

Other occasions were also used by members of the Association to influence the Persian authorities. On 26 June 1907, a reception was held at the Criterion restaurant for the Persian ambassador on the announcement of the new Shah's accession to the throne. Under the new Shah (Mohammed Ali Shah Qajar) the parliament, or Majlis, was established and a Zoroastrian, Jamshid Bahman Jamshidian, became a member. The sixty-six Parsis assembled in London presented an address for the amelioration of conditions for the Iranian Zoroastrians, asking specifically:

That he may grant to our co-religionists, who are subject to his sovereignty, the same rights, privileges, and protection which His Majesty has evinced his desire to extend to the Persian nation under the constitution which has recently been inaugurated in his Empire.

We are deeply sensible of the assurances conveyed to us and the unquestionable proof already given by His Imperial Majesty of the interest he and his government feel in the welfare of our co-religionists. The privilege of representation granted to them in the new Persian Parliament and the nomination of Arbab Jamshid to a seat there has, as Your Excellency is doubtless aware, evoked sentiments of gratitude from all Parsees. We trust that this is an earnest of the genuine solicitude for the welfare of the Zoroastrian subjects entertained by the Persian Government and we beg humbly to represent through you to His Imperial Majesty that every measure of justice, of generous kindness, and above all assured protection of their lives and property will be gratefully repaid by their increasing loyalty and devotion to His Majesty's throne and august person.

Another address drawn up by Bhownaggree was presented in a casket in London in 1919 to the last Shah of the Qajar dynasty

(Ahmed Shah Qajar), for which the Tehran Anjuman sent a letter of appreciation.⁶⁸ The next petition was presented at what turned out to be a significant moment in Persian history: the coronation of the new Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty after the last Qajar had been deposed. After some hesitation because of the uncertainty of the new political situation, at a meeting on 18 May 1926 a petition was unanimously agreed which included the words:

Resolved that at this the first Meeting of the Committee of the Parsee Association of Europe, London, since the coronation of His Imperial Majesty Riza Shah Pahlavi as Shah-in-Shah of Persia the Committee beg leave to convey their congratulations upon his accession. It is their fervent prayer that he may reign long and prosperously over the country with which they have cherished ancestral associations and whose peoples include some thousands of their co-religionists. They rejoice in the many evidences of virility, justice and wise statesmanship, which were afforded by His Majesty during the years of his Prime Ministership. They trace to this cause in large measure the restoration of good order and prosperity to the country, and in particular they beg to convey, with their felicitations, warm appreciation of the paternal interest His Majesty has shown in the welfare of their fellow Zoroastrians in Iran.

The Persian chargé d'affaires promised in a letter to have the address presented to the new Shah, and subsequently attended a reception organized by the Association. Unusually, the new Shah signed this acknowledgement personally. These incidents not only illustrate the feeling that a London base could be used politically for the religion, but also demonstrate that the Zoroastrians in Britain were conscious of their Persian ancestry. At the time of the revolution in 1979, Zoroastrians from Britain joined those from other western countries who sought to do what was possible to protect the Zoroastrians in Iran. It is not mere coincidence that the first world body, the World Zoroastrian Organization, was started from London.

After the Second World War

The aftermath of war

Zoroastrians shared with the wider population the problems of life in war-torn Britain. The records for these years are few, and it

⁶⁸ Meetings file for 13 Oct. 1919. Letter of appreciation dated 17 May 1920.

may be assumed that activities were curtailed. At the conclusion of the war the Association sent a letter to the King's private secretary: 'The Parsee community of London assembled at Zoroastrian House . . . to celebrate their New Year, take this opportunity to send their humble and respectful duty and sincere congratulations to Your Majesty at the successful conclusion of the World War and the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan.'⁶⁹ Although the numbers of Zoroastrians increased after the war, mainly owing to people in the Medical Corps settling in Britain and working for the National Health Service, there are no records which provide numbers. What the records show is that for some twenty years the Association struggled, especially with its finances. Many Association members suffered, like the rest of the population, and many needed help, as did some of the new settlers. The funds had been depleted by the war effort, and the investments in Government securities lost much of their value because the War Cabinet had been forced to reduce their worth. Income tax had increased sharply so that expenditure exceeded income, and the Association had to eat into its capital. The situation was transformed in the 1960s and 1970s in various ways. In economic terms, a change of investment policy in 1962 helped the funds significantly; the Zoroastrians shared in the increasing wealth of the country; in 1979 the Association became a charitable institution, which saved considerable sums in tax; and membership subscriptions increased in size appreciably with the numbers of new arrivals. In the 1960s many Zoroastrians migrated from India and Pakistan, along with many South Asians, to Britain. The Parsi pattern of migration at this time mirrored that of the other South Asian communities: a few Parsis remained in East Africa, a few went to India and a small number to Canada, but most from East Africa and Aden settled in Britain. The increased number of Zoroastrians brought to a head a debate which had been simmering from at least 1931, the need for a new house.

A New Zoroastrian house

At the AGM on 28 October 1931 mention was made of the growing numbers of members at functions and on increasing use of the property for social events. But the war years and the economic

⁶⁹ Letter file, 2 Sept. 1945.

difficulties meant that little could be done for two decades. However, despite the considerable economic problems, with extensive work needed at the funeral ground and at Russell Road, and the numbers of indigent Parsis seeking assistance to return to India, the then president, Jehangir D. Moos, spearheaded a campaign for a new house. He produced a six-page document in 1959 for use not only in Britain, but also in India, from where it was assumed many of the funds might come. The document is worth quoting at length because it provides an unusually clear account of a group's self-perception at the time when the wider South Asian migration to Britain was in its early phase.

The document begins with a brief history of the Association and records some early benefactions. It notes that whereas the old house had accommodated functions when only seventy people came, now it needed space for 165 people and as a result 'members of our Community are reluctant to go to a crowded Zoroastrian House after their first visit and they stay away.' The document then comments on the religious needs of members: 'A Zoroastrian cannot live by bread alone. The spiritual side of life is of vital importance to any Religious Community.' This is a significant indicator of a further changing emphasis in the self-perception of the Association, from an informal burial club, to a social body, now to 'a Religious Community'. The document then explains why religion is increasingly important:

In the midst of highly organised and liberally subsidised Proselytising Religions, we Zoroastrians are fighting a losing battle . . . As our people are naturally inclined towards religion, they inevitably drift into one or other of the highly organised religions which keep open doors and receive you with open arms. They have so much more to offer with their powerful resources in the way of highly paid, learned lecturers and priests, wonderfully furnished and well appointed Churches and places of worship . . . In the absence of religious instruction in our own institutions, our children naturally learn and adopt other religions in the Schools and in social contacts. The first generation of Zoroastrians who came to live in Europe, generally have the necessary training and knowledge to follow their own religion. The second generation is rarely properly instructed, and the process of merging with others becomes evident. The third generation is almost completely lost to our religion. This process has been going on for the last hundred years and we have lost some of our best sons and daughters to other communities.

The document continues on the subject of religion, arguing that:

Our great religion has contributed very largely to the subsequent religions including Judaism and Christianity; and the Greek civilisation owes a great debt to our Religion . . . We are, therefore, naturally anxious to preserve our heritage for posterity . . . All Great Religions have a common purpose, but owing to our different backgrounds, we all feel more at home in our own religion and further we are more likely to make quicker progress, ethically and spiritually, by following our own in which we were born. It is part of our make-up, therefore we must preserve and not destroy that which is of spiritual value to us.

The document concludes: 'A spacious House, a large Assembly Hall, a proper place of worship worthy of our tradition is a real necessity.' Moos' affirmation of the long-held desire for a proper place of worship is consistent with the aims set out in 1861; what is interesting is how he sets that long-standing wish in the context of the changes in the 1960s. The document thus highlights the dangers seen by others who settled in the West in the twentieth century: the threat of proselytizing religions, the lure of good facilities, the danger of contact with people from other religions eroding Zoroastrian commitment, and the erosion of identity over successive generations. But the document, like others to follow in America and Australia, takes great pride in the historical importance of Zoroastrianism, and affirms the widespread Zoroastrian belief that people should remain in the tradition into which they were born. Moos foresaw in the 1950s what others would argue decades later.

Moos started the quest for raising funds in 1959 and received promises of support from Bombay and Pakistan, but as progress appeared slow, several members became dispirited and asked for their money back. But when 88 Compayne Gardens was found, things moved quickly. It was a property that was reasonably central, large, near an underground station, and because it was in need of substantial renovation the price was not too high. The Association was able to buy it without borrowing, simply by selling off some investments. It was opened on 6 September 1969 by the president of the BPP, Nadirshah Mulla, with 350 members assembled. It must have been the biggest Zoroastrian function held in the West. A *jashan* was performed with eight priests, led by Dastur Dr Sohrab Kutar, who then carried out 'the age-old ceremony of

“Boi-Maachi” in the Keeblah. Thereafter Members in turn offered their Prayers in the presence of the holy Fire created by Dasturji Sahib.⁷⁰

Because members were aware that there were many Zoroastrians ‘out there’ who did not belong to the Association, they were convinced of the need for an extension to accommodate a larger meeting and function room. This was opened in 1983 thanks to the munificence of Arbab Rustom Guiv and the Zarthoshty brothers, benefactors who had facilitated the extension to the *sagdi* at Brookwood. In the discussions about the physical provision for larger social functions two of the prominent leaders in the 1970s, Dr (Mrs) Shirin Kutar and Shahpur Captain, drew attention to the number of Zoroastrians from East Africa who were not yet involved in the Association and whose membership they should encourage.⁷¹

There have been attempts to obtain the services of a full-time priest; indeed at one time there were strenuous efforts to fund such a post for Sir J. J. Modi, who as well as being secretary of the BPP, and a priest, was also an important scholar. But the funds could not be raised. On one occasion a priest was appointed, but tensions arose between him and the Association and finding life in cold, wet London hard, he returned to India. The priests have, therefore, been part-time, individuals who came from priestly families but migrated for educational or business reasons. There have been many devoted and hard-working individuals, but one, Dr Sohrab H. Kutar, stands out. He graduated as a medical doctor in Bombay in 1935, though during university vacations he had worked in an agiary in Poona, something not common in the diaspora priesthood. He arrived in Britain shortly before the outbreak of war and volunteered to join the Royal Army Medical Corps, serving for over five years with the Eighth Army. Field Marshal Montgomery decorated him with the Star of Africa for his work in the North Africa campaign. He was subsequently transferred to the Corps in India. At the end of the war, he and his new wife, Shirin, moved back to London and started a husband and wife medical practice. In 1964 he was the first, and still the only, mobed living outside India and Iran to be recognized by

⁷⁰ The quotation is taken from an unpublished document duplicated by the Association to record the event.

⁷¹ Meetings files for 31 Jan. 1970 and 4 June 1978.

the priestly authorities in the old country as a Dastur. There was some debate over this recognition because in his medical work he necessarily came into contact with pollution, for example, the samples for laboratory tests. But the Bombay High Priests decreed that because in his work and in his person he was a priest of the highest ideals, he was a fit person to be a Dastur.⁷² He was formally presented with a shawl as a token of his authority on 17 January 1965, a position he held until his death on 20 April 1984. He was a quiet, rather shy man, deeply honourable and profoundly spiritual, so that he was respected by all who met him, including myself. During his Dasturship there were no acrimonious religious debates in the Association. Unfortunately, deep religious divisions did break out after his death.

With the growing numbers, and in particular with the changing composition of the membership, which now included not only Zoroastrians from East Africa but also Iranian Zoroastrians after the revolution, it became necessary to redraft the constitution; in particular the term 'Parsee Association' was no longer appropriate. The charitable status also demanded such a revision. As religion was emphasized more from the time of Moos as President, and especially in the new house, so the ethnic term Parsi, as well as being offensive to Iranians, became less appropriate; so in 1971 and 1979 the redrafted constitution of the renamed 'Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (Incorporated)' came into being.

The growth of local associations

From the 1980s a number of formal local Associations have been established; there had been informal groups in Leicester in the 1970s, in Newcastle upon Tyne in the early 1980s. The North London Zoroastrian Association (NOLZA) was formed in 1982 'to meet the local needs of the Zoroastrian community in the context of Ethnic Community Development in North London and is in no way a rival body competing with the long established national organisation.'⁷³ The constitution of this body emphasized educational and social concerns more than religious activities. Unusually for Zoroastrian groups it emphasized that it was a 'voluntary self-help ethnic minority Community Group'. It was,

⁷² For further details on Dastur Kutar see my *Selected Works*, pp. 277–9.

⁷³ Personal letter from the first chairman, Faredun Madan, 15 Oct. 1989.

therefore, eligible for local ethnic-minority funding, a source of income which many Zoroastrian groups do not seek, believing that they should not ask for public money. In becoming affiliated to Haringey Community Relations Council, NOLZA identified itself with the wider Indian community more than is common among Zoroastrian diaspora groups. NOLZA does this because its founder works in community relations and sees his own community within the wider local context. A similar group was set up in nearby Harrow. Each Association had around 200 members in the 1990s, though at the beginning of the millennium NOLZA is not very active. The Harrow group is similar to NOLZA in that it brings Zoroastrians together at the local level. It is different in that it does not seek ethnic-minority funding and though some of its members are engaged in community relations, the group as a whole has not tied itself into that network as closely as NOLZA. NOLZA had an Iranian office bearer, whereas Harrow consists of people from India and Pakistan. The two groups have shared social occasions, but the Harrow group has been more involved in educational debates and inter-faith dialogue.

A smaller group was started in south London, mainly around Wimbledon, in 1988. This group tends to leave the religious functions to the ZTFE and concentrates on social functions of a distinctly Parsi nature, with *nataks*, Parsi food, day trips, educational lectures and visits.

The most recently formally established group is the Northwest Zoroastrian Community, formed in Manchester in 1987.⁷⁴ It is a more mixed Association than the others, including among its founders Zoroastrians from India, Pakistan, East Africa (both Zanzibar and Kenya) and Iranian Zoroastrians. The group has had to address the question of intermarriage because, having been so scattered and with little or no previous contact with Zoroastrians (one member had not met a Zoroastrian for thirty years), many have married out. Non-Zoroastrians are welcome as associate members, and come to the social functions, but not to the prayers which precede such functions. The group came together when the founders were in their forties, bringing up

⁷⁴ See *Community Celebration: North West Zoroastrians Entering the Millenium, 1987–97*, Manchester, 1997, with memories of founding members and profiles of many in their community.

young children and wanting them to mix with fellow Zoroastrians. As the children grow up, and the founders become elders, the group is not as active in the third millennium as it was in the early 1990s, but it continues to meet fruitfully and amicably. So, for example, when the Bombay High Priest Dastur Kotwal visited England in 2000, he visited Manchester (and Durham) to perform a *jashan*.

It is inevitable that these smaller, and necessarily less formal, groups, change more quickly than does ZTFE. Being smaller they are more influenced by their leaders: for example, Madan's influence in linking NOLZA with community relations work, and the Northwest community meeting around three particular families with young children. The fact that the issues that bring the members together are transient does not lessen their value, but makes it more difficult for the historian to paint a longer term picture.

Zoroastrians in British Politics

Zoroastrians consistently emphasize that they are loyal to the government of whichever country they live in, hence the fact that Parsis fought on both sides during the Indo-Pakistan conflict. They have also taken an active part in the politics of several countries where they have settled in the old diasporas. Because this book is about the diaspora, there has been no mention of the role taken by Zoroastrians in Iranian politics as soon as they were permitted to take part in the twentieth century: the closeness of Kaikhusroo Shahrokh to the Shah, and the work of Farhang Mehr as Deputy Finance Minister, then Deputy Prime Minister, under the last Shah (discussed in Ch. 10 below), to name but two examples.⁷⁵ In earlier chapters we have seen Parsis involved in the Indian National Congress, Bombay politics, the Parliament in Pakistan and the new Kenyan Parliament. Political activity has also been a feature of Zoroastrian life in Britain.

Zoroastrians in local politics

The first Zoroastrian known to have achieved office in local government was Naoroji D. Allbless, who was elected president

⁷⁵ On the former see S. Shahrokh and R. Writer, *The Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh*, New York and Lampeter, 1994. On the latter see Ch. 9 below.

of Hampton District Council in 1901, and in 1904 became a member of Surrey and Middlesex County Council.⁷⁶ N. M. Taramchand was elected to Mansfield Town Council in 1906 and then re-elected for thirteen years, but he failed in his parliamentary candidature in 1918.⁷⁷ A. R. Kapadia was elected to Ilford Urban District Council in the 1920s⁷⁸ and in the 1980s two Harrow Zoroastrians, Zerbanoo Gifford and Thrity Shroff, were elected Liberal Councillors of Harrow Council. Gifford went on to stand for Parliament and, although increasing the Liberal vote substantially, was not elected. She has, thereafter, campaigned on various political issues, mostly women's rights, ethnic minority issues and at the turn of the millennium, community relations. In 2000, a long-serving committee member of ZTFE, Filly R. Mavalwalla, was elected mayor of Redbridge in Surrey, the first Asian to achieve this. He brought something of his religion with him into office, arranging for a visiting High Priest, Dastur Kotwal, to give a lecture at the town hall, and having as his chaplain one of the senior priests from Zoroastrian House, so that Zoroastrian prayers could be recited at civic functions. There is much pride among the Zoroastrians that their members serve the wider community, and in the positive image this gives to their religion. They are particularly proud of the fact that the first three Asian MPs elected to the Westminster Parliament were all Parsis.

Zoroastrians in national politics

In view of the fact that Zoroastrians provided the first three Asian MPs at Westminster, it is ironic that in 1833, the MP for Oxford University expressed disbelief that a Parsi might become an MP. In a debate on whether to allow Jews into Parliament, the question was asked 'Where do we stop? If you once admit into the House of Commons people who deny the authority of the Gospels, will you let in a Mussalman? Will you let in a Parsee? Will you let in a Hindoo, who worships a lump of stone with seven heads?'⁷⁹ Sixty years later there was a Parsi Member of Parliament!

⁷⁶ *PP* IV. 55 and his obituary on 15 Nov. 1935, *PP* VIII. 258.

⁷⁷ *PP* VI. 224.

⁷⁸ *PP* VI. 315.

⁷⁹ See on the Member for Oxford University's speech T. Little, 'Let us open to them the doors of the House of Commons', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 34/35, spring/summer 2002, pp. 17–21 at p. 19.

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917, Liberal MP for Central Finsbury, 1892–1895)

Although he was born in Mandvi, Gujarat, the first thirty years of Naoroji's life were based in Bombay.⁸⁰ He became India's first Indian professor (of Mathematics) at the prestigious Elphinstone Institution when only 28 years of age. During his academic career he was an active social reformer, campaigning for female education (even organizing home tuition for young ladies), against infant marriage and for the remarriage of widows. Within the Parsi community, he started the religious reforming society 'Rahnumae Mazdayasnian Sabha' and what was originally a campaigning reformist newspaper, *Rast Goftar*—which ironically turned against the INC and Dadabhai. From 1855 to 1874 he was mainly based in England, first working with the Camas to start an Indian firm in 1855, and then from 1859 trading on his own account. He used his income to become involved in politics. He was long convinced that the British were fundamentally just, but that they were ignorant about India; his crusade was therefore to inform in order to reform British rule. Perhaps his most famous remark in this context is the following:

We Indian people believe in one thing, and that is that although John Bull is a little thick-headed, once we can penetrate through his head into his brain that a certain thing is right and proper to be done, you can be quite sure that it will be done.⁸¹

In 1865 he formed the London Indian Society (later the East India Association), which held regular lectures about the condition of India and sought to attract MPs and political leaders. During the 1860s he began to elaborate his 'drain theory', arguing, that although Britain made important contributions to India, e.g. roads and education, she nevertheless drained away more of India's wealth through taxation and through the high-earning officials in India investing their money back in Britain. This will be elaborated below in the section on his parliamentary contribution. At the end

⁸⁰ There are two main substantial books on Naoroji, R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India*, London 1939 (3rd abbreviated edn., Mysore, 1969) and O. Ralph, *Naoroji: The First Asian M.P. A Biography of Dadabhai Naoroji: India's patriot and Britain's M.P.*, London, 1997. At the centenary celebrations of his election more popular works were produced by Z. Gifford, *Dadabhai Naoroji: Britain's First Asian M.P.*, London, 1992, and F. Vajifdar, *The Twist in the Rope: A Study of Patriot Dadabhai Naoroji*, London, 1993.

⁸¹ Natesan (publisher, no author is identified), *Famous Parsis*, Madras, 1906, p. 262.

of this phase of his life he articulated these theories in his book, *The Poverty of India*, published in 1873.

From 1874 to 1885, Naoroji spent most of his time in India involved in politics there: first, he was the Dewan (Prime Minister) of Baroda, but he resigned after a few months in protest at the prince's corruption and then immersed himself in Bombay politics. Thinking that his future was now in India, he closed his London office. He became a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and Town Council. He started the *Voice of India*, a newspaper that collected and disseminated Indian public opinion as reflected in the native press. In 1855 he had been instrumental in forming the Bombay Association, a society committed to informing British opinion in order to reform the rule. That Association soon lapsed, so in 1885 Naoroji was involved in setting up a revived body, the Bombay Presidency Association; these two bodies were the precursors to the Indian National Congress. But by 1884 Naoroji was already convinced that the only base from which to influence British policy was London, and so he began the campaign to win a parliamentary seat. At the age of 60, therefore, he moved back to London to begin the next and most public phase of his life.

His first attempt to win a seat (the Holborn constituency) was always a lost cause, because with the snap election he had only two weeks to campaign in what was a safe Tory seat. But he immediately sought a winnable constituency. It took five years of internal party feuding for him to win the nomination for Central Finsbury. In August 1887 he won the most votes to be the prospective candidate, but successive rival opponents were put up against him. Although the records do not prove it, there is little doubt that he was opposed on racial grounds. When he stood in the General Election in July 1892 he was elected, by just three votes. A recount increased that to five votes, and then his Tory opponent alleged campaigning irregularities. The case was withdrawn five months later, and so after five years of acrimonious dispute, Naoroji was secure in his position as MP. His supporters had included prominent Liberals, notably William Wedderburn (an INC sympathizer) and ex-Viceroy. Racial prejudice was evidenced in the campaigning. The then Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, referred to him in a public speech as 'a blackman', and earned for himself a rebuke from the Queen, and much sympathetic support for Naoroji. In his campaign he was presented as

being 'really' British and he campaigned on local, not Indian, issues. After his victory some of the press chided his constituents for electing 'an Asiatic fire-worshipper'.

Naoroji's parliamentary message

During his three years in Parliament Naoroji spoke fifty-three times: twenty times on the condition of India; eight times on the Indian Civil Service (ICS); five times concerning a proposed Royal Commission on Indian affairs; four times on the Indian currency; twice on Indian opium revenues; and he was involved in the presentation of ten petitions.⁸² His most active year in Parliament was 1893, when he spoke twenty-nine times, speaking for up to two hours at a time (as was not unusual for his day), which amounts to a lot of words addressed to Parliament!⁸³ The underlying theme of practically all his speeches was the 'drain theory'. He employed his mathematical ability to document, in detail, his conviction that £1,600,000,000 had been transferred from India to Britain not only through tax, but also through British officials investing their money back in Britain from their salaries in India raised from the Indian taxpayer. He pointed out that India had been required to fund not only Indian concerns but also British Imperial interests that were of no interest to India. For example, in his submission to the Welby Commission in 1896 he protested that India provided £16 million of the total £21 million for the Afghan Wars, and that Indians had been among the forces to fight and die, thus shedding their blood as well as paying most of the costs of this British conquest.⁸⁴ Similarly he argued that they had been required to shed their blood for and fund the Abyssinian campaign, which had been pursued merely to save face after a public insult.⁸⁵ Further, he questioned why India

⁸² The chapter in *Zoroastrians in Britain* deploys a number of quotes and extensive cross-referencing to other speeches in the footnotes, a level of detail not possible in a relatively short section within a chapter.

⁸³ In addition to *Zoroastrians in Britain* and the books referred to in n. 80 f. see C. L. Parekh, *Essays, Speeches and Writings of the Hon'ble Dadabhai Naoroji*, Bombay, 1887; C. Monk, 'Member for India: The Parliamentary Lives of Dadabhai Naoroji and Mancherjee Bhownagree', M. Phil. thesis, Manchester, 1985 (unpubl.). I wish to record my appreciation of what Candida taught me on this subject while she studied under my supervision. The main source is *Hansard*, the daily transcript of parliamentary speeches, entitled *Parliamentary Debates (PD)*.

⁸⁴ Natesan, *Famous Parsis*, pp. 330–59.

⁸⁵ Paper to the East India Association, London, 2 May 1867, reproduced in Parekh, *Essays*, p. 29.

should fund the British navy, since ‘There was not a single Indian employed in the navy . . . There was not a single ship from or to India which belonged to India . . . there is every inch of the British navy required for the protection of these blessed isles.’⁸⁶ He argued to the Welby Commission that Britain should pay for what she took, that India should only have to pay for what benefited her, ‘all the other charges being the imposition of tyranny’.

It was not only the drain of money to which he objected; there was also the drain of talent, because Indians were deprived of opportunity. The Indian Civil Service entry examinations were, for example, timetabled so that Indians were disadvantaged. They were held only in England, requiring a lengthy and costly overseas stay, at a young age (22) when Indians could not hope to have caught up on the advantages of people educated in England. Furthermore, the examination was based on the public school syllabus. Naoroji campaigned for simultaneous examinations in India and England for the ICS, and for a common results list strictly in order of merit. He argued that here, and in the Indian Medical Service (IMS), favour was shown to the British, contravening Queen Victoria’s proclamation on becoming Empress of India in 1858 that ‘our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability and integrity, duly to discharge’.⁸⁷ He argued that justice was vital in the Empire: ‘The whole problem of India is in a nutshell. Never can a foreign rule be anything but a curse to any country, except in so far as it approaches a native rule.’ In the House he commented: ‘Brute force may make an Empire, but brute force would not maintain it; it was moral force and justice and righteousness alone that would maintain it.’⁸⁸

Naoroji’s influence

Naoroji is commonly referred to as ‘the Grand Old Man of India’, and in India he became a national hero. He is the only person to have presided over three INC annual meetings. On his tours of India huge crowds acclaimed him wherever he went. He

⁸⁶ Parliamentary speech, 12 Feb. 1895, Natesan, *Famous Parsis*, pp. 159 f.

⁸⁷ *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 164 f.

⁸⁸ Parekh, *Essays*, p. 501 and Natesan, *Famous Parsis*, p. 159.

was offered various honours, for example a knighthood, but the only one he accepted was an honorary doctorate from his old University, Bombay. In later Parsi literature he is always referred to in terms of awe. But it was not always thus. When he first indicated his plan to seek a parliamentary seat, several leaders, notably Pherozechah Mehta and Wedderburn, said that he would be better employed campaigning in India. Some of the establishment figures feared that his involvement in party politics would count against them when the opposition came to power. His work in Parliament gives at least a first impression of success: he started the Indian Parliamentary Party for members of any party who had an interest in Indian affairs, aimed at increasing knowledge about, and interest in, Indian debates. He campaigned for a Royal Commission on Indian finance and was made a member of it. Some political opponents sought to undermine his popular esteem as 'the Member for India' by pointing out that he was a member of a minority race with experience in only one part of India. But this attempt failed, the farcical nature of the charge demonstrated by the acclaim afforded him in India and the Indian press. He even managed to get a motion through Parliament to support the Indian cause in ICS examinations, against Government's wishes. But the harsh truth is that he was not successful in provoking MPs' interests in the problems of peoples thousands of miles away from their own constituencies. The membership of the Royal Commission was chosen to defeat his wishes and the minority report he and Wedderburn submitted was ignored, as was the parliamentary victory he obtained.

The end of Naoroji's career

In the early years of the twentieth century Naoroji increasingly moved to the political Left, towards the Socialists. Although he carefully avoided calling for violent demonstrations he forecast such violence with ever-greater frequency. By 1904 he was calling for Indian Independence. In his speech at the Socialist Congress at Amsterdam, 14–20 August 1904, he declared:

Imperialism of brute force is barbarism. The Imperialism of civilisation is the Imperialism of equal rights, equal duties, and equal freedoms. The remedy is in the hands of the British people. They must compel their Government to fulfil the promise that had been made to India. The

remedy is to give India self-government. She should be treated like other colonies.⁸⁹

The last major speech of his life, his presidential speech to the 1906 INC meeting at Calcutta, reflects the sad regret he felt at the British failure: 'Since my early efforts, I must say that I have felt so many disappointments as would be sufficient to break any heart and lead one to despair and even, I am afraid, to rebel.'⁹⁰ After that speech his poor health forced him into retirement in India, where, venerated but not very influential, he led a quite life, advising correspondents visitors.

Mancherjee Bhownaggee (1851–1933, Tory MP for Bethnal Green, 1895–1905)

The following account of Bhownaggee⁹¹ has been significantly changed from that in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, and from what I would have written had not Prof. John McLeod of Louisville sent me a draft of a biography he is writing of Bhownaggee. His book is based on more thorough scholarship than anyone has previously deployed on this subject and it will clearly be a standard work. It would be unjust to him to document all the assertions made in what follows, for it is he who uncovered sources not previously used. In fairness to him I have indicated where my statements are heavily dependent on his work.⁹²

A brief biography

Mancherjee Bhownaggee was born in Bombay, the son of a wealthy merchant. After a short career as a journalist he succeeded

⁸⁹ Quoted in Masani, p. 432. Masani (ch. 30) reproduces passages from many private newsletters from the last years of his life, expressing increasing exasperation at the failure of the British to respond to even minimal reasonable appeals.

⁹⁰ The speech is reproduced in Natesan, *Famous Parsis*, p. 82.

⁹¹ Bhownaggee has received much less attention than his parliamentary predecessor. See Monk, *Member for India*, Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, and Hinnells and O. Ralph, *Bhownaggee: Member of Parliament: 1895–1906*, London, 1995, which was modified and expanded in Hinnells, *Selected Works*, pp. 307–34. Prof. J. McLeod has not only convinced me of some errors in my previous account of Bhownaggee, he has also convinced me that we should adopt Bhownaggee's own spelling of his name, which I do in this book. I am grateful to him for reading this chapter and saving me from various errors. Any which remain, are of course, my own responsibility.

⁹² In contrast to McLeod's original scholarly book is the piece on Bhownaggee in J. Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, Yale, 1999, pp. 240–8. In my opinion, he merely reproduces earlier opinion on Bhownaggee, without a serious study of the original sources.

his father in agency work for the State of Bhavnagar. The Maharajah sent him to London to study law and he was called to the Bar in 1885. McLeod has uncovered sources that indicate that even at this early date Bhownagree was mixing in high English society, for example in the Northbrook Indian Society, for whose premises he solicited a substantial donation from the Maharajah. He formed a strong friendship with Sir George Birdwood, and through him met many influential political and social figures. He became involved on the committee, chaired by the Prince of Wales, for the mounting of the Imperial Exhibition in 1886, in which context he met and worked with political leaders and royalty. For his work on the committee he was made a Companion of the Indian Empire (CIE). He returned to India in 1887 where, at the Maharajah's request, he drew up a radically reforming state constitution. Family sources have related to me an interesting detail: as a token of thanks the Maharajah gifted him ownership rights of several villages. He accepted these out of courtesy to the Maharajah, but he willed that the villages be returned to the state on the death of his offspring because he did not believe that anyone had the right to own people or land on a hereditary principle. During this return visit to India he was associated with several reforming causes, notably in support of female education and he campaigned for the rights of Indian women, and gave evidence to the Public Service Commission in favour of employing more natives in the Indian administration.

In 1888 Bhownagree's sister died and he was clearly deeply affected by her death. In his letters he speaks of himself as depressed, and he gave several charitable benefactions in her name. It was during this period that he appears to have come into conflict with the INC. In November 1888 an anonymous article appeared in *Rast Goftar* warning Parsis to keep clear of the revolutionaries in Congress. His fiercest critic, Sir Dinshaw E. Wacha, blamed Bhownagree for the article, though as McLeod points out, there is no evidence for this and as it was written during his sister's illness, which preoccupied his thoughts, it may be thought unlikely that he wrote it. Three years later he returned to England alone; his wife stayed in India because the English climate did not suit her. He began to seek a parliamentary seat, writing to Sir George Birdwood to emphasize that not all Indians supported the INC. The first public hint that he was seeking a seat came at a banquet

in honour of Naoroji in 1892. His cause provoked different responses. Simon Digby, an ally of Naoroji, supported him, and Naoroji never opposed him in public. But the leaders of the INC were bitter in their attacks. Prominent in the onslaught was Wacha, the Parsi Secretary of the INC, later prominent in the Western Indian Liberal Federation, and Naoroji's main source of Indian information. In letters to Naoroji he spoke of 'that pomposity of "Bow and agree"' and later in 1896 he said: 'as to this busybody Bhownaggee he is determined to play the grand role.'⁹³ But in the years 1891–4, as McLeod shows, Bhownaggee's perception of which place constituted his home changed from India to London, where he had an ever-growing circle of influential and political friends, including former and future Viceroy. He was active in meeting and helping numerous Indian, especially Parsi, visitors to London. Bhownaggee was involved from 1891 in the royal plans to turn the Imperial Exhibition into a permanent institute. He was by no means alone among Indian leaders in opposing the link between the Indian cause and just one party, the Liberals, and in a two-party state, where the other party will in due course come to power, their case was not unreasonable. Bhownaggee was also concerned that the British rulers should not stereotype all Indian leaders as radicals. His emergence as a parliamentary candidate was the outcome of many quiet discussions; McLeod has managed to unearth more of these than any previous writer. The more prominent Bhownaggee became, the shriller became Wacha's attacks.

Bhownaggee in Parliament

Bhownaggee's election was a surprise. He was the third candidate to be approached to stand for what was thought of as an unwinnable seat, yet he achieved a clear majority in North East Bethnal Green constituency. In part this seems to have been due to complacency on the part of the Liberals; also, Bhownaggee was a good orator and ran an efficient campaign on English, not Indian issues. For example, he opposed the disestablishment of the Church of England and was against Home Rule for Ireland. On the personal side he stressed that he had lived in England for fourteen years and had a special interest in constitutional affairs. As a result Bhownaggee entered Parliament as Naoroji left it.

⁹³ For detailed references see the paper in *Selected Works*.

Once in Parliament he discoursed eloquently on the blessings of British rule in India, referring to 'our Empire'. He attacked such INC leaders as Sir William Wedderburn in terms which the established English press, notably *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Manchester Guardian*, thought were intemperate. He believed that the aim of education in India was not to remove British rule, but to educate the Indian people so that they might profit from being part of the Empire. There is, therefore, some support for the view of Bhownaggee as cravenly pro-British. However, in my opinion, this view cannot be sustained if a careful study is undertaken of his parliamentary message.

Bhownaggee made 182 of his 267 parliamentary interventions on Indian affairs, with a further forty-four on Indians in South Africa. He made forty-one interventions in British affairs, of which twenty-five were on local Bethnal Green issues. Whatever his election campaign emphasis, his parliamentary work was India-focused. Like Naoroji he attacked the drain of Indian resources (actually using Naoroji's term). But the two men's understanding of the drain and how to deal with it were different. Like Naoroji, Bhownaggee condemned the imposition of Indian taxes for causes which did not benefit India, for example the annexation of Chitral, the garrison in South Africa (1903) and the Tibet campaign (1903–4). Similarly, he attacked the increase in British military pay out of Indian taxes. He also protested that the garrison in India was twice the size it needed to be and was paid for by Indian taxpayers.⁹⁴ Regarding this financial injustice he warned: 'The Patience and fortitude of the people in India were severely put to the test. More even than their bodily sufferings, their mental condition was one of extreme strain and anxiety.' He warned of the danger of political firebrands if policy continued as it was.

In one sense, Bhownaggee was more radical in his views on education than Naoroji. He dismissed arts education as producing too many intellectuals who were mere 'spouters and writers' (it is not irrelevant to note the number of arts graduates among the INC leadership). He campaigned for workshops and scientific laboratories, and technological developments to aid the Indian economy and avoid the crippling excess of imports over exports, especially imports of basic items for daily life. He criticized government

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 312 f.

restrictions on existing Indian industries. He feared that the decline of traditional industries would result in the further impoverishment of India. This trading imbalance was what Bhownaggee identified as the great drain of India's wealth. Throughout his parliamentary career he called for forestry schools, polytechnics, industrial schools and industrial exhibitions to aid Indian manufacturers. He appealed for grants for Indians to pursue practical and technical subjects in Europe, urged that the Imperial Institute, to which Indians had donated, should do more for Indians. He protested when the Cooper's Hill Engineering College, established to help British people study engineering before going to India, was closed because of lack of students, yet Indians were excluded. Unlike Naoroji, he campaigned for the expansion of the railway network. Naoroji feared that this would increase India's debt, whereas Bhownaggee believed that it would help industry and the smooth movement of supplies at times of famine. The Indian newspaper *Indian Spectator*, allied with the INC, urged Bhownaggee to pursue more modest reforms in education.

Bhownaggee also campaigned more vigorously for justice than has been acknowledged. In 1900 he protested that Indian members of the Indian Medical Service were excluded from senior posts. Such racial considerations, he argued, were 'inconsistent with the traditions of British rule in India'. Like Naoroji before him, he pointed out the inconsistency of such practices with the promises of the Queen Empress. He campaigned against the imposition of the Salt Tax, because this had the greatest effect on those who could least afford it (1903). In 1905 he noted with concern the rising numbers of refusals of appeals to the Secretary of State for India. On several occasions he protested at the lack of medical or educational provision for labourers' children on tea and other plantations, and he spoke out for the rights of lascars on P & O ships.

The campaign with which he was most associated was the cause of Indians in South Africa. In forty-four parliamentary interventions, he argued that Britain was not honouring the pledges of equality of all subjects. In the late nineteenth century, Indians were treated badly in what was then the independent Transvaal Republic. When the Boer War broke out in 1889 many observers expected that a British victory would mean an improvement of conditions. This did not happen and annexation of the Transvaal

to the British Empire in 1900 was followed by an increase in racial discrimination against Indians. He argued that Indian subjects: 'were treated in a manner that was a disgrace to the Empire, were robbed of the rights that belonged to them not only as citizens of the Empire, but as human beings, without a word of protest from statesmen . . . no wonder this talk of care for Indian interests was regarded as hollow by the whole community of India.' In South Africa in particular, but in the debate on countless other subjects also, Bhownaggree consistently and powerfully attacked any hint of racism directed against Indian citizens. McLeod's account of Bhownaggree's South Africa campaign is particularly acute. In it he shows that Bhownaggree had conceived of a Briton being anyone within the Empire, and that the authority to rule depended not on whether one was English or Indian, white or not-white, but on class, education and social standing. McLeod also demonstrates a much closer contact between Bhownaggree and Gandhi than I had indicated in my previous writings, at least until 1909, when it seems that Gandhi began to ignore Bhownaggree's advice. The precise reason is not clear, for by then Bhownaggree's worth and role were being increasingly recognized if not by Wacha, at least by other prominent leaders such as Gokale, who came to power in Congress in 1903.

In my previous publications I argued that Bhownaggree's position changed following his 1896 tour of India. I suggested that the opposition he faced shook him and that this caused him to soften his stand. McLeod has shown that to be wrong. The perception of such Indian antagonism was over-influenced by Wacha's accounts; Bhownaggree himself sought a quiet visit for at least much of the time because he had gone to India to grieve with his family on his mother's recent death. The adverse newspaper reports were due to Wacha's backstage pressure, displaying what McLeod describes as a pathological hatred of Bhownaggree. In some cases the newspapers even changed their original stand after Wacha had contacted them. The secretary of the INC clearly wielded substantial influence, for example by refusing Bhownaggree's request to attend the annual meeting of the INC. On his return, as McLeod shows, Bhownaggree's assaults on Congress and the Indian language press were among his fiercest yet. His probing questions in Parliament often yielded important information that would not otherwise have been available. He maintained pressure on the Government

in respect of India, often asking questions that one suspects Government did not want to be asked. Government commonly ignored his suggestions, but a detailed reading of his contributions reveals stern questioning, which on one occasion led to him voting against his own party and on others abstaining, something British MPs are not supposed to do. In the Jubilee New Years Honours list (1897) he was knighted for his services. McLeod dates the easing of tensions with the INC from about 1900, as Gokhale supported the sort of educational and industrial reforms Bhownagree had long campaigned for, and as Bhownagree focused his attention ever more on South Africa, a campaign that even Wacha did not attack.

Bhownagree's standing

McLeod has shown, contrary to what I had written, that Bhownagree was active after he left Parliament, but in a different way. He became the elder statesman, above the party-political divide. He also needed the support of both parties, and of Congress, for his campaign in South Africa. He was seen in many circles as the most prominent Indian figure in Britain and as a result was invited to take part in, or chair, various committees and campaigns. He was, for example, chairman of the Northbrook Indian Society, the East India Association and the Indian Social Club and he presided over the welcome given to Gokhale on his 1912 London visit. He was also, of course, the president of the Parsee Association of London. His work there is discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The records at Zoroastrian House in London include two letters written to Bhownagree by the prominent Iranian Zoroastrian, Kaykhusrow Shahrokh (in the letter he adds 'Kermani' as indication of his birth-place). The letters illustrate his high standing in the Zoroastrian world. One letter, dated 10 April 1907, was a covering note sent with a copy of a book Shahrokh had written in Persian about Zoroastrianism to increase knowledge of the Good Religion both within and outside the community. The opening of the letter reads:

Dear Respected Sir,

How much fortunate shall I be to reach to the high dignity of gaining the honour of representing myself as an atom before the rays of the sun of your Excellencies benevolence.

It is, of course, customary in Iran to use what might be seen in some other cultures as flowery introductions, but the whole tenor

of the letter indicates a high esteem of Bhownaggee. In a further letter, dated 19 April 1909, he explicitly states that Bhownaggee's political and social standing benefits Zoroastrians: 'Because your Excellency advances in High ranks, the effect is our happy day and succession here.'

It is difficult to assess his relations with Naoroji. There are indications that the two worked together at Zoroastrian House, and that Bhownaggee respected Naoroji's achievements. For example, he presided at a banquet to fête Naoroji after his election to Parliament. Neither appears to have attacked the other publicly. It seems that the relationship began reasonably. In the Naoroji archive in the National Archives of India in Delhi there are several letters from Bhownaggee to Naoroji during the period September 1870 to May 1904. The earlier letters strike a cordial tone. For example, on 8 September 1891 Bhownaggee wrote:

My dear Mr Dadabhai

Will you give me the pleasure of your company at dinner here [Northbrook Indian Club] tomorrow at 1.30 please. I am asking Badhurjee to whom I intend it as a little farewell and also Sir S. Birdwood, Mr Wardle the great silk man who has taken such an interest in Indian industry, Mr Judge [writing becomes illegible] and Digby. I hope you will come.⁹⁵

The letters show that each sought the help of the other in various causes, such as raising subscriptions to honour Birdwood⁹⁶ or tabling questions in the House of Commons.⁹⁷ On Naoroji's request Bhownaggee made a private approach to Neville Chamberlain on behalf of some Parsis in South Africa;⁹⁸ the two took up the case of the Revd Eduljee, who had been falsely accused and imprisoned on a charge of animal abuse.⁹⁹ Until 1893 the letters are friendlier

⁹⁵ I am grateful to the library staff of the University of Toronto, who have a microfilm of the archive, for allowing me to consult the archive in Cambridge. The archive includes thirty letters from Bhownaggee to Naoroji. This letter is on reel 3, reference B-130 (2). A similar invitation was issued on 14 June 1891, reel 3, B-130 (1). B-130(3) is a New Year's card sent by Bhownaggee showing the Avabai Bhownaggee Home for Nurses.

⁹⁶ Letters dated 20 Feb., 7 Mar., 14 Mar., 17 Mar. 1892, reel 3, B-130 (6) to B-130 (9).

⁹⁷ Letters dated 8 Apr. 1903, Reel 3, B-130 (20) and 20 Apr. 1904 B-130 (24) letter dated 5 Aug. 1904, reel 3, B-130 (26).

⁹⁸ Letter dated 7 May 1903, reel 3, B-130 (21).

⁹⁹ Letter dated 22 July 1903 reel 3, B-130 (22 and 23). The case became a part of Parsi history when it was eventually solved by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. *FEZANA Journal*, Fall 2001, pp. 80 f.

in tone than they were after 1900 (there is a complete gap in correspondence between 1893 and 1900). The warmest tone is the note of condolence Bhownaggee sent on the death of Naoroji's son:

I returned only two days ago from Scotland and not until I saw a paragraph in the papers did I know of the grievous bereavement you have suffered by the untimely loss of your . . . [writing illegible] son. I was rushing up to the National Liberal Club when Mr Tate told me you were at Hounslow. I would have liked to see you at Hounslow, but knowing your quiet nature, I do not feel justified in breaking in on your retirement immediately. If it will not be disagreeable let me have line or ask your son-in-law to write and I will come.

Words are weak to express my sympathy for you. It is like a thunderbolt from a bright sky and I am shocked to think of the great grief that overwhelms in your old age the bright life that should have been yours. But the ways [of] Providence are inscrutable, and I trust, my esteemed and beloved friend, that the courage, the good common sense, and the patience which you have exercised through life will not fail to bear you up against your dire misfortune.

May God almighty grant you strength to do so.

Ever yours in sincere sympathy.¹⁰⁰

One year earlier (November 1892) at the dinner to honour Naoroji on his election as MP his tone had also been warm. It is inevitable that on such an occasion Bhownaggee would have spoken well of Naoroji, but the tone of his speech seemed that of someone who sincerely admired and liked him. He said: 'Throughout all his [Naoroji's] long and eventful life there have been many eminent qualities of the head as well as the heart that have marked his career. His moderation has been proverbial . . . he has no enemy. His temperance of language, even when engaged in debates and discussions of a warm nature, has been remarkable.'¹⁰¹ After the seven-year gap in the correspondence the two men continued to collaborate, but the tone of the letters became more formal and focused on the business in hand. There are few references to them dining together in the later period.

Because of his campaign on behalf of Indians in South Africa, Bhownaggee was in correspondence with Gandhi, and it is clear

¹⁰⁰ Letter dated 9 Oct. 1893, reel 3, B-130 (11).

¹⁰¹ Reel 3, B-130 (30).

from Gandhi's letters that he valued Bhownaggree's work. In *Zoroastrians in Britain* (pp. 188 f.) I published hitherto unknown letters from Gandhi to Bhownaggree. The first, from 6 August 1898 said:

The Committee of the British Indians in Natal having heard of work done by and on behalf of the British Indians in South Africa hereby places on record its thanks to Sir M. M. Bhownaggree, KCIE, MP for the splendid support extended to the cause of the British Indian in South Africa and hereby directs the Honorary Secretary [Gandhi] to convey this resolution to Sir M. M. Bhownaggree.¹⁰²

In 1903 when Bhownaggree was thought to be contemplating retiring from the House of Commons Gandhi wrote: 'we in South Africa had come to rely upon the fruits of your continuous labours in the House on our behalf.' And when he left the House in 1906 Gandhi wrote: '[The result] deprives us in South Africa of our greatest champion in the House of Commons.' In a letter from Naoroji to Bhownaggree in the same archive, the Grand Old Man, as he was known, wrote: 'You are doing much work privately for the British Indians in Africa. It may be somewhat [writing unclear] desirable that this work should made public. When [writing unclear] you think so, could you let me know. I would ask *India* to publish it.' A number of Parsi writers who collected narratives of Parsi achievers and pioneers, notably Katrak¹⁰³ and Nanavutty,¹⁰⁴ include many who achieved far less than Bhownaggree but omit this Tory MP from their histories. In view of the respect he eventually gained from prominent campaigners in India, the omission is regrettable.

Bhownaggree's Zoroastrian funeral in November 1933 was attended mainly by Parsis, but also by representatives of the various bodies for which he had worked, for example the Northbrook Society and the Indian High Commission. His non-Parsi friends paid tribute to him at a memorial service at St Luke's Church, Radcliffe Square, where he had worshipped for years, and where he had funded a memorial to his sister.

¹⁰² I am grateful to Rashna Writer for noting this correspondence and transcribing it for me when it, along with other papers relating to Gandhi, came up for sale by auction at Sotheby's in London, 1990. The purchaser is not known.

¹⁰³ S. H. Katrak, *Who Are the Parsees?* Karachi, 1958.

¹⁰⁴ P. Nanavutty, *The Parsis*, Delhi, 1980.

Shapurji Saklatvalla (1874–1936, Labour then Communist MP for Battersea, 1922–1923, 1924–1929)

Saklatvalla's life

Whereas Bhowaggree was until recently maligned, Saklatvalla was until recently ignored.¹⁰⁵ He was born in Bombay. His grandfather was related to, and an important partner of, Nusserwanji Tata, father of the famous J. N. who took the Saklatvalla family into his home in 1902. He turned the young Shapurji against his own father and favoured him to the extent that his own son was jealous, something which caused Saklatvalla problems later on. He studied at the Catholic St Xavier's College, where the disciplined life of the priests and nuns made a strong impression on him. In the early years of the twentieth century he and some friends worked with a bacteriologist, Prof. Vladimir Haffkine, immunizing Bombay's poor against bubonic plague. Haffkine had left Russia to escape Tsarist surveillance, and it is reasonable to suppose that his socialist views influenced Saklatvalla. After this experience he spent time depressed in a sanatorium. He joined Tatas in 1901, and in 1902 began prospecting for iron and coal in Central India with Dorabji Tata and an American. In particular he explored the area that was to become Jamshedpur, the centre of the Indian steel industry. He pursued this quest further than either of the Tatas did, sometimes to the detriment of his own health in the jungles and swamps, sometimes in the face of danger from lions and tigers, and to his own future career disadvantage because of Dorabji's increasing jealousy. More than any of his colleagues he lived among, and worked with, the labourers, presumably out of his growing socialist convictions, but certainly to their reinforcement. Partly for the sake of his health, and partly to distance his views from those of the Congress-orientated Tatas,

¹⁰⁵ Since *Zoroastrians in Britain* there has been one new substantial study of Saklatvalla, M. Wadsworth, *Comrade Sak: Shapurji Saklatvalla, a Political Biography*, Leeds, 1998. The author states that he is not an academic, and there are places where his Marxist perspective is discernible. But it is well informed and readable. Although Wadsworth has no substantial additional material compared with earlier studies, the collection of memories on Saklatvalla from his constituents, and other similar sources, make it a useful book. Whereas Saklatvalla was until recently the most neglected of the British Parsi politicians, he is now the most studied, although there is nothing academically equivalent to McLeod's forthcoming book on Bhowaggree. The other two major works are M. J. Squires, *Saklatvalla: A Political Biography*, London, 1990; and the biography by his daughter, Sehri Saklatvalla, *The Fifth Commandment: biography of Shapurji Saklatvalla*, Salford, 1991.

he was sent to the outer reaches of the Tata empire—London. Few books have previously paid due attention to the fact that in plague-ridden Bombay and in the jungles, Saklatvalla had spent what was to prove half his life working for the poor.

When he arrived in London in 1905 he was again depressed and ill and went to take the waters at the Derbyshire spa town of Matlock. There he fell in love with a waitress at his hotel. A year later he married Elizabeth, known as Sally, and renamed by Saklatvalla as Seri. They had five children in what appears to have been a stable, if somewhat outwardly unaffectionate, marriage. Saklatvalla arrived in England a member of the Liberal Party; he moved progressively to the Left through the Independent Labour to the Communist Party. Wadsworth gives a good account of his increasing political activity, and the left-wing sympathies of the Battersea constituency, making intelligible what at first seems incredible, namely the election of an Indian Communist as a Member of the British Parliament (indeed he was the only Communist ever to be elected to Westminster). He lost his seat in 1923, but regained it a year later. His parliamentary years were full of events outside Parliament which merit discussion before an analysis of his parliamentary message.

He undertook a visit to the Soviet Union, which influenced him deeply, but was banned by the American authorities from a parliamentary visit to the USA. He was a prominent figure during the miners' and the General Strike. In 1926 he was imprisoned for two months because in a speech in Trafalgar Square he called for the soldiers not to take up arms against the unarmed strikers. When he appeared in court he refused to be bound over, and so was sent to prison. Throughout much of his life, especially after his release from prison, he was subject to police surveillance, and the intelligence services opened his mail. Even though his rallies had never been associated with violence, the police often cancelled his speeches at the last minute, when it was too late to make alternative arrangements, as a means of preventing him addressing the electors.

In 1927, after considerable protests against prevarication by the Government (involving an appeal to the Prime Minister) he was allowed to visit his homeland, India. The delay in granting a visa meant there was insufficient time to make detailed plans for his trip, but nevertheless he had an extensive national tour from

Karachi to Calcutta to Madras, as well, of course, Bombay. He addressed large audiences in many cities. His relations with the INC leadership were mixed. Generally, Nehru was willing to attend his lectures, and on Saklatavalla's death sent a message to the funeral. Relations with Gandhi were much more strained. Saklatavalla was hostile to Gandhi's negative views on Indian industrialization. Gandhi's spinning wheel did not, in Saklatavalla's opinion, satisfy the economic needs of the workers, and he objected to the way that Gandhi allowed himself to be venerated. Gandhi had little sympathy for Saklatavalla's Marxist views. Yet my impression is that much of the tension was due to a personality clash. After they eventually met at Gandhi's ashram, Saklatavalla despaired of the possibility of building bridges, and published their correspondence.¹⁰⁶ Opposition to Gandhi, especially in public, was something the INC, and probably Gandhi himself, did not tolerate, as a Bombay Parsi was to find in the 1930s.¹⁰⁷ What is also interesting in the context of this book are the different reactions of the Parsis in India to Saklatavalla. In Bombay the reactions of the community leaders were polarized. For example, at a meeting of the Bombay Corporation, Sir Dinshah Petit, H. P. Mody, Byramji Jijibhoy, J. B. Petit and the Hon'ble Sir Pheroze Sethna opposed the presentation of an address to Saklatavalla on his visit to the city, whereas four other Parsis (including F. K. Nariman) supported such a presentation.¹⁰⁸ At a meeting in Navsari, Saklatavalla was given the freedom of the city, and was honoured by the senior of the Dasturs, Dastur Meherjirana.

Perhaps symbolic of the impact of this visit on Saklatavalla himself was that at the Navsari function he wore traditional Parsi dress. Contact with his family, and other Parsis, seems to have stirred his sense of Parsi identity. On his return from India he was moved to renew contacts with the Association. He had attended meetings previously, but, following clashes with Bhownagree, he appears to have withdrawn. Now he sought agreement for the initiation of his children. As chairman, Bhownagree, after consultation with Sir J. J. Modi in Bombay, agreed to the function, even though Saklatavalla had married out of the community and had

¹⁰⁶ See P. Saha, *Shahpurji Saklatavala: A short Biography*, Delhi, 1970, pp. 67–88; Wadsworth, *Comrade Sak*, pp. 151–73.

¹⁰⁷ F. K. Nariman in the 1930s, see E. Kulke, *The Parsees in India: A Minority as Agent of Social Change*, Munich, 1974, pp. 200 f.

¹⁰⁸ *Zoroastrians in Britain*, p. 201 for details.

undergone a Christian baptism while at St Xavier's. Saklatvalla assured the Association that he had only done this to see what it felt like, and had never given up his Zoroastrian religion. Later the same year, 1927, the Association also gave permission for him and his children (but not his wife) to be buried at Brookwood.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the most moving renewal of contact was with Bhownaggee. Saklatvalla wrote to Bhownaggee during an (unsuccessful) election campaign in Glasgow in 1930:

My politics and standards of fights are otherwise at pole's end from yours, yet there are several factors that often make me think of you. When you first started breaking the Indian superstition that all Liberals are really liberal and all Conservatives were cruel you were considered to be the only 'fool among all wise men'! After 35 years the supposition still lingers. Now in Labour we have worse Impostors even than in Liberals, and in so-called Left-Wing I.L. Pers. [Independent Labour Party] we reach the maximum of political hypocrisy of present day. My last few years are spent in fighting this error, if injustice and oppression are to be fought. Our old-fashioned countrymen still adhere to this superstition. Gandhi seriously replies to Fenner Brockway, and he and Punditji waste their time in giving long interviews to Slocomb. What a leg-pulling all round! Or is it the case of Birds of the same feather? When in between my whirlwind campaign work I give thoughts to these things, I think of you.

In his concluding sentence, Saklatvalla adds that he realizes that 'in word and spirit my politics will be unacceptable to you'. Bhownaggee responded, expressing his appreciation of Saklatvalla's letter during a busy election campaign.

The couple of generations that have elapsed since my notions of men and matters political were taking shape, have not shaken the foundations of my beliefs; and as I have never cared to shift them in accordance with popular, that is mob, moods, I have been content to look on while groups of favourite leaders have enjoyed their transient day of fame, and passed into oblivion or been surpassed by others of their kind, feeling firm in the faith that I, or rather my beliefs, (for it is not persons, but principles that live) shall be in some remote future justified of . . . [writing unclear] I have seen your election literature. It is not new to me. The goal being the same, namely the welfare of India, it is only in the methods of attaining it, lies the difference.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 130 f. for details.

In his later years Saklatvalla's influence seems to have waned. He travelled the country speaking on behalf of the Party, but he had no impact on policy. He lost influence following his departure from Parliament, when he could not return to India and as the power of the unions declined. The Party praised him more on his death than in his later years, when they had on occasion publicly reprimanded him, for example for engaging in the 'superstition' of his children's initiation.

Saklatvalla's parliamentary message

It is more difficult to give a brief, focused account of Saklatvalla's parliamentary campaigns, in comparison with those of the other two MPs, because he ranged so widely in terms both of subject matter and of (inter)national vision, even within the confines of a single speech. His maiden speech (23 November 1922) illustrates the general pattern. He started with unemployment and its causes, for example investment in jute mills in Bengal, which paid substantially lower wages than in Britain, thus impoverishing Indian workers and making British workers unemployed. He also alluded to the problems of India and Dundee. The cult of private enterprise, he said, was enriching the political bosses and ruining the workers. He then attacked the principle of one nation dictating the governmental structures of another, condemning the British for what they had done in Ireland, India, Egypt and Mesopotamia. He strongly criticized the Government's record on the treatment of minorities, particularly Catholics in Westminster, minorities in Armenia and Mesopotamia, and the unemployed in Britain. He objected to the Irish Treaty and said Britain should ensure justice both in Ireland and South Africa. He then condemned the Government for failing to recognize the new Russian leaders because they had been involved in revolution, while acknowledging Mussolini and the King of Serbia.

The subjects on which he spoke over the years may be listed as follows:

1923: Ireland—15 times; India—14; individual cases—4; social issues in Britain—3; local constituency issues—3; Sudan, Russia, China, Peru and the police—1 each.

1924—5: armed forces—11; India—11; Communism—9; social issues in Britain—6; individual cases—6; coal—4; Russia,

Palestine and Poland/Lithuania—3 each; China and Egypt—2 each; Morocco, Baltic Sea, Singapore, Indians in South Africa—1 each.

1926: General Strike—12 (on the related topic of the coal strike a further 4); police—8; armed forces—5 (NB: both of the two last topics were related to the General Strike); individual cases—5; Communism—4; India—4; social issues in Britain—3; China—3; Russia, Africa—2 each; broad overseas issues—2; imperialism—2;

1927: India—9; China—5; individual cases—4; Palestine—3; armed forces—3; Persia, Communism, trades unions, British social issues, local issues—2 each; Russia, South Africa, Egypt, Japan, the police, House of Commons affairs, imperialism, Foreign Legion—1 each.

1928: India—18; individual/local issues—15; Communism, armed forces and parliamentary matters—6 each; Scotland—5; Civil Service—4; Afghanistan, British social issues—3 each; Africa, Egypt, Russia, Japan, Kenya, Persia, Sudan, Iraq, coal, Kellogg Pact on disarmament, Empire—1 each.

He also made four personal statements on his release from prison, where he said that he had been better treated than the miners had been.

These summaries are somewhat arbitrary, because a speech on Russia and one on Communism may in fact be on the same or a related subject. Lengthy circuitous speeches such as his maiden speech are difficult to categorize. However, they illustrate Saklatvalla's international perspective, the range of his interests and the changing emphases of his parliamentary contribution according to unfolding political events. He was not as focused on any one issue as Naoroji was on his 'drain theory'. Saklatvalla spoke mostly on Ireland in 1923 when the Irish Treaty was being effected. In 1924–5 he paid most attention to the build-up of the armed and special reserve forces as social unrest grew. In 1926 he was concerned mostly with the General Strike, and after his visit to India in 1927 that country was a major subject for him. The two broad areas which concerned him were (a) social issues, mainly in Britain; (b) imperialism in general and British imperialism in particular. In Britain, he argued, there was no real justice: society was run in the interests of the ruling not the working class, even though it was the latter that generated the wealth. He campaigned for

various disadvantaged groups, for example the wives and children of criminals, pensions and better health insurance for the workers. For Saklatvalla the armed forces were one of his concerns for social welfare because they were deployed for the wealthy landowner against the masses of the poor at the time of the General Strike. He did not call for violence from the workers, but he did appeal to the soldiers 'not to kill us and not to shoot the workers'.¹¹⁰

Even more fundamentally he questioned the purpose of the armed forces in general. They were not deployed to safeguard food supplies, as Government claimed, but for imperial power; so, for example, he pointed out that Britain did not import food from China but maintained a substantial armed presence in the region. Although there was famine in Ireland the air force did not take food supplies. He saw injustice at the centre of British policy. He argued, for example, that Britain would not co-operate with Russian rule because of bloodshed during the revolution, yet the Empire was founded on bloodshed.

This country has shed a hundred times more blood of people of all nations in the world. You have slaughtered Frenchmen, Spaniards, Dutch and Russians, you have slaughtered Turks, Persians and Afghans . . . You killed in their own homes the Punjabis, Bengalis and the Mahrattas, and the Ceylonese, the Burmese, the Malaysians and the Chinese. You murdered poor, primitive races, people who did not know the geography of where your country was situated as the Sudanese, the Zulus, the Bantus and the Swazis and you had not the remotest excuse that they were going to attack and kill you. You have butchered them and murdered them in a wholesale manner. You have killed them in their own country. There is no nation in the world . . . which has devoured more human lives and created more murders than the British nation and the British Parliament.¹¹¹

He attacked the principle of the Simon Commission in India, questioning the right of one nation to impose a constitution on another thousands of miles away, and pointing out that the British would not accept that for themselves from the Chinese. He further argued that Britain imposed one set of criteria on parts of the Empire run by Whites, and different ones for non-White countries. He protested that although Trade Unions were legal in Britain, they were not in India. British rule, notably in India,

¹¹⁰ PD 188: 2109 and esp. 2120, 1 Dec. 1925.

¹¹¹ PD 222: 174 f., 7 Nov. 1928.

reduced people to serfdom: their industries were made to serve the interests of Britain while the Indian workers lived in such unsanitary conditions that their life expectancy was drastically reduced. Basically, Saklatvalla argued, class-ridden Britain gave justice neither to its own working classes, nor to those in nations where she ruled.

Saklatvalla's influence

It is difficult to see precisely what achievements Saklatvalla can be credited with. In Parliament he was totally ignored. The Speaker often prevented him from speaking, other MPs ignored rather than disputed with him, as did Government. There was nothing comparable to Naoroji's Royal Commission, nor the variety of small ways in which McLeod has shown that Bhownaggee had an effect on the Government. It is not easy to establish that he had much impact on the Communist Party, partly because we do not know what in his parliamentary message was his own and what was written for him by the Party (for it is clear that his speeches were written for him). We cannot compare his speeches in Parliament with those outside, because he then spoke extempore so that there are no notes and few records. The most that he appears to have done is to put Asia in general, and India in particular, on the Communist Party agenda.¹¹²

As a person he emerges from Zoroastrian House records as a conciliator. He approached the Association for his children's initiations and was the first to seek reconciliation with Bhownaggee in the 1920s; and it was Saklatvalla who took the initiative and wrote to Bhownaggee during his Glasgow campaign. Although he and Gandhi did not have good relations, and there was much about Congress which he objected to, nevertheless on the last speech of his Indian tour he called publicly for people to unite behind Congress, as the only body likely to achieve Independence for India. His parliamentary speeches were blunt, but his manner was always courteous and he was meticulous in his observation of parliamentary etiquette. All writers and reports of his speeches refer to him as charismatic, but that is not the impression gained from reading parliamentary records, which suggest that his outside speeches were less tightly controlled than his parliamentary work. He therefore remains something of an enigma.

¹¹² M. Squires, *Saklatvalla: A Political Biography*, London, 1990. pp. 143–55.

Conclusions on British Parsis in politics

The overriding impression of the various Parsi politicians, especially those in Parliament, is that they were different. There is no single 'Parsi voice' or political perspective. Each of them was something of an idealist, though their ideals were not the same. Both Naoroji and Bhownaggee, in Parliament, sought to reform, not remove, British rule. The analysis of the problem and their proposed solutions were different. Naoroji's focus on the drain of resources through tax and through British officials sending money back to England caused him to argue for a change in the tax agenda—India should not pay for causes other than her own, and in this he and Bhownaggee agreed. But whereas Naoroji thereby emphasized keeping the tax bill down wherever possible, for example, by not building railways, Bhownaggee argued for greater investment in Indian technology and industry to give the country financial stability. Saklatvalla was the only one to call in Parliament for the removal of British rule. The three MPs do not appear to have been particularly friendly at Zoroastrian House (Wadsworth refers to Saklatvalla bringing his friends to disrupt meetings chaired by Bhownaggee), yet mostly they appear to have collaborated. There is little evidence that any of them used their political position for Parsi communal interests, save only in petitions to the Shah on behalf of Iranian Zoroastrians; Naoroji and Bhownaggee brought leading figures to Zoroastrian functions partly to give an impression of a high-class society. In parliamentary affairs at least, they were, as Naoroji and Pherozezshah Mehta both said, Indians first and Parsis second. Both Bhownaggee and Saklatvalla, especially on their India tours, worked more closely with Muslim leaders than with the INC. The one to have the best personal relations with Gandhi was Bhownaggee, at least until 1909, through his South Africa campaign, though one suspects that at a distance Gandhi respected Naoroji. Each of them was an ardent campaigner for what he believed to be just, though each differed in his perception of what constituted justice. Naoroji's central claim was for justice for India, as was Bhownaggee's. The latter remained of the opinion that it was in India's interests to remain under British rule, but that that rule needed to change, regarding tax, education and especially the defence of Indians' rights in the colony of South Africa. Saklatvalla sought the rights of workers worldwide, but especially

in India and Britain. Each of them displayed courage in standing by what he believed in: Naoroji in the face of lengthy battles to oppose his candidature; Bhownaggee in standing against the sustained onslaught of INC leaders, notably Wacha; and Saklatvalla in choosing prison rather than withdraw his plea to the soldiers not to fire on unarmed strikers. Indeed, it is thought that had he been prepared to tone down his message, and to accept the Labour whip, he could have become Under Secretary of State for India. (It may also have been the case that had Bhownaggee toned down his criticisms, he could have gained a higher position in the Tory Party.) They were all in their different ways principled fighters for what they believed was justice for India; their Zoroastrian upbringing taught them to attack evil and defend the good, wherever they saw it.

Religion among British Zoroastrians

The British community has not experienced the extensive debates over religious matters that will be seen to occur in America, or in Mumbai. But inevitably there have been some. Perhaps the most common debate in Britain relates to community boundaries, specifically the place of non-Zoroastrians at key rituals and places. Early in Naoroji's presidency there was a debate over whether non-Zoroastrians could attend a Zoroastrian funeral. This resurfaced as a major issue in the 1970s and 1980s when the non-Zoroastrian spouse of a deceased member was asked to leave the *bungli* during the annual death ceremony. This some found particularly hurtful because the deceased had been a prominent and respected leader; his widow also had been a stalwart supporter of the Association. This was the tip of an iceberg, for there was unease in some quarters that non-Zoroastrians had been welcomed into the prayer room, and given prominent positions at *jashans*. One important factor in the reassertion of traditional boundaries, based on the purity laws, was the growing influence of Parsis from Aden and East Africa, for in Africa they had preserved the values and ways of an earlier period in Indian belief and practice. Several scholars have argued that East African Asians, be they Hindus or Sikhs, are more orthodox than their co-religionists who migrated directly from India. This view was explicitly argued by a priest and president of

ZTFE, Darius Sethna, in *Parsiana* (November 1968): 'The structure of the Zoroastrian community in the UK has now changed. While formerly the community [was] composed of the Bombay and Karachi Parsis . . . today the majority is from Mombasa, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Aden. They are all very conservative minded.' Some of them felt strongly that the earlier settlers had become too liberal in their willingness to assimilate. The conflict was therefore focused on appropriate practices, but there was also a personality conflict, especially in the 1980s.

From the 1980s there was a greater desire to develop a religious education programme and there was wide support for bringing Khojeste Mistree from India to run intensive and extended workshops especially for the young people. His impact was important. In very general terms, a significant proportion of the more 'liberal' wing moved with the WZO, leaving the ZTFE a more traditional body. It would be easy to exaggerate this statement, because some people were members of both, despite the intensity of the conflict between the respected leaders, but there is some truth in the assertion.

It is possible to give a general picture of the place of religion among British Zoroastrians in the mid-1980s because, in addition to the international survey, a supplementary questionnaire was sent only to British Zoroastrians, and Manchester University also funded a research assistant, Dr Rashna Writer, for one year, to conduct 232 structured, in-depth interviews. The collection of research data for the picture of Zoroastrianism in Britain in the 1980s is greater than for the communities in other chapters. The details have been published in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, and Rashna Writer has also published her reflections.¹¹³ The resultant picture merits further consideration over a decade later. Although there are regional Associations and informal groups in different British cities, as discussed above, the Zoroastrian population of Britain is based predominantly in London, in three particular areas: Harrow and Wembley to the north-west and Wimbledon in the south. In Britain, as in other countries studied, there is a different pattern between the scattered groups and those living in a centre. The former tend to intermarry more, they have even higher rates of education and career success. They tend to observe their religious

¹¹³ *Contemporary Zoroastrians*, pp. 224–37.

practices less frequently, and for obvious reasons tend to be in less frequent contact with fellow Zoroastrians.

The first point to note is the high level of awareness and assertion of Zoroastrian identity: 85% of elders and 75% of youth surveyed described themselves as practising Zoroastrians, and even those who did not, generally asserted that Zoroastrianism was a part of their identity. Writer has shown that sense of identity to be complex and shifting between being British, Indian/Pakistani/Iranian, etc. and being the 'real Persians'. Another group saw themselves as British or felt close to India. There was a preference for asserting Persian, not Iranian, identity, for this reinforced the bond with the ancient heritage, not with the modern political state. For a substantial proportion of informants, being identified as 'Asian' was offensive. For them it is an alien, meaningless, externally imposed label, ignoring their historic ancestry.

The language patterns are less complex. Iranians preserve their Farsi, even among the younger generation for whom English is part of daily life. Gujarati is much less common among Parsis, especially written Gujarati. For the older generation particularly, Gujarati may be the language of family conversation, and humour (the traditional *natak* is still enjoyed by many), but the language of business, of theorizing and policy-making, is commonly English, the language of virtually all their twentieth century records. At festive occasions, in general conversation, it is not uncommon to switch between languages within a sentence. For most of the younger generation, including those in close contact with the old country, English is the medium of communication at all times.

In conversation, most of my informants who were not born in Britain said that they believed that they had become more religious after migration than they were before. The people who are most commonly religiously active are retired people, housewives, those who did not go to university (especially if their schooling was in the old country), those who continue to think in their mother tongue, those who visit Zoroastrian House regularly and who return to the old country more often, those who have migrated recently, people from rural Gujarat (as opposed to cosmopolitan Mumbai), from East Africa, and those who have children. The converse is also true to a certain extent: those who express less commitment to the faith are the youth, single people, people born in Britain, those with a high level of educational and career success, those who do not attend

Zoroastrian House and who do not intend to return to the old country. But the picture is more complex than that simple polarization might suggest. A higher percentage of Zoroastrian youth affirm their religious identity and follow traditional practice than is common in wider British society. When they are involved in their religion, then both Writer and myself found that they are commonly more traditional than their elders, in terms of attitudes to the old country, the place of non-Zoroastrians at Zoroastrian House and, in one sense, their attitude to intermarriage. Although most accept that the numbers of intermarrieds will grow, and they commonly assert that they would accept the spouses, there is nevertheless a high proportion saying that the ideal is in-marriage. A number of informants asserted that if they could not find a Zoroastrian partner, they would choose not to get married, partly because of the communal hassle, partly because of the difficulty over the religious and cultural identity of any offspring. Although a number look at the adverts for partners, few have been comfortable with the idea of visits back to the old country in a quest for a spouse, and my own anecdotal evidence from knowing a number of young people is that many do delay marriage beyond what is common even for Parsis in their wish to find a Zoroastrian partner, and some never do. My informants, however, tell me that in the late 1990s there is a growing willingness to consider spouses from the old country as the quest for their roots grows. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was an evident increase in the number of young people participating not just in social events, but also in religious classes, some for example run by Rashna Writer on behalf of London University Extra Mural Department, at Zoroastrian House, and seminars run by Khojeste Mistree. As noted in *Zoroastrians in Britain*, there was a much higher level of religious activity in general, especially with youth participation, in the early 1990s than was observable when I first started going to Zoroastrian House in the early 1970s.

There is another general pattern: young people tend to be religious after the manner, and to the level, of their parents until they leave home, generally for university, when they drift from the tradition, until they get married; when this is to a Zoroastrian, and then when they have children, they become active in the religion. For the great majority of people who identify themselves as 'Zoroastrian', the term denotes not simply a set of privately held beliefs, but rather indicates a communal allegiance, a historic identity, not mere group

membership, but a blood, genetic or racial lineage. Their religion is tied in with their history as a tiny persecuted minority, but also as the inheritors of one of the great historic civilizations which influenced not only Greece and Rome, but also Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the words of some of my informants: '[we are] carrying on a long tradition. You feel, being so few in numbers, it is quite a precious thing. It is rare for people to belong to such a small group and not to have a sense of heritage.' Another commented 'I feel very proud that it is the oldest religion.' And a non-practising Zoroastrian commented: 'It is part of me, it is my past. Even though I may not be practising, it is a part of my history and I am proud of it.' Whatever their personal beliefs about such cosmological ideas as life after death, few members of the community would want to set themselves apart from this communal allegiance, be they elders or young people.

In view of this communal perspective, it is important to discuss how Zoroastrians see themselves in relation to other communities. Their general attitude to the British is interesting, especially in view of the traditional Parsi views on their relationship with the British. Of the elders of the community, 84% said that they were not impressed by British youth and would not want their own youngsters to grow up like their peers in wider society. The most common words used to describe the British were 'cold', 'distant', 'unreliable', 'patronizing', 'do not trust them'. There was a fairly widespread belief that the British are more sexually promiscuous than Zoroastrians, that they neglect family responsibilities and do not care for their elders as they should. A majority also said that it is difficult to have a close friendship with British people. In his final address at the 2000 AGM, a retiring trustee, Cawas Sethna said that: 'In this country we can fortunately embrace and adopt some of the good points of the British way of life which we of the older generation lived with in India . . . However, I think we should NOT pick up some of the adverse aspects of life for example, some aspects of family life among the working classes with high divorce rates.'

Another important aspect of the Zoroastrian perspective on the British is their perception of facing racial prejudice. The supplementary questionnaire sent out in Britain focused particularly on this subject, which was followed up in the in-depth interviews. In global terms, the community where the highest number of

respondents said that they faced discrimination was Toronto (48% of respondents). But in follow-up questions respondents indicated that this was not frequent or substantial and that it was most commonly experienced in obtaining one's first job. However, my informants told me, once you were in a post you were judged on ability, not race. In London, 42% of respondents commented that they had faced discrimination, 39% frequently (cf. 23% in Toronto). Furthermore, it was discerned in a number of areas, not only in employment, but particularly in schools (from peers, teachers and the curriculum), housing and the police. A survey like this cannot establish that there was in fact prejudice, since I was not present when such incidents occurred: it can only record people's perceptions. However, my own belief is that my figures underestimate the frequency, because several respondents and interviewees said that they had not faced racial discrimination, but later commented that they had experienced 'Paki-bashing'. Children reported in private that they had not told their parents of problems because they did not want to worry them. When the statistics for those who believe they have, and those who believe that they have not, faced discrimination are compared it is possible to identify certain groups (not) having this perception. The groups who believe that they have faced discrimination are, most commonly, housewives, retired persons and elders, those who have arrived recently, and those born in Britain, people with children rather than singles, people who continue to think in an Asian language, people who did not go to university. It was also these groups who emphasized that race is a part of religion, especially East Africans. In Appendix 2, Table 1: 35–7 and the three notes following highlight the fact that fewer British Zoroastrians, especially those in London, considered their relations with the wider population to be excellent or good, than in almost any other centre studied. More of them than anywhere else considered that they faced discrimination at work, in housing and in education and more of them said that discrimination was on the basis of colour. The international perspective will be discussed further in Chapter 10 in the section on the global survey.

In view of the perception of racial prejudice, respondents and interviewees were asked what they considered to be the greatest threats to their community in Britain. The biggest perceived threat was not racial prejudice but the impact of British social values on

the family, although the younger generation did see racial discrimination as the greatest threat. But despite these perceived threats, two-thirds of Zoroastrians said that they had close Anglo-Saxon friends, especially those with a higher education and those with successful careers. The majority of respondents (57%) thought that they had excellent relations with wider British society. In the supplement distributed only in Britain (498 responses) Zoroastrians asserted that they considered themselves to be equal with Europeans and superior to other religious and racial groups, Muslims, Hindus, other Asians and Black Africans. At different points in the questionnaire and interviews, questions were asked about their sense of identity. Mostly, the elders and early settlers defined themselves in terms of the old country; those born in the West described themselves mainly as British; but all groups preferred to identify themselves as Zoroastrians. In the 1970s, scholars writing about migrant groups used the idea of being caught between cultures, though by the 1990s this was being questioned on the grounds that such a concept presumed clear and exclusive boundaries to cultures. At least in the 1980s, when this survey and the interviews were conducted, this vocabulary had become reasonably common parlance and people were asked if they considered themselves thus caught. Less than half the interviewees felt caught in this way. The people who did tended to be the young, those who had recently migrated, those born here or whose higher education was in Britain, single rather than married persons, and those who attended Zoroastrian House infrequently. The pattern appeared to be that those who felt strongly Zoroastrian, or strongly British, did not feel caught, but people who were unsure of their identity did. It is worth quoting some of the actual words of interviewees. A Karachi-born Zoroastrian said: 'I am not totally British in attitude and thinking. But when I go to Pakistan I don't understand their everyday life, then I am stuck in limbo. I ask myself "where do I belong?"' A 34-year-old lady said: 'My mind says I should behave like a Zoroastrian, but my body says western. I feel a Zoroastrian but I have western attitudes.' A teenage girl brought together a number of themes discussed: 'When I started feeling that way [caught between two cultures] I was frightened. I thought I was losing a grip on what I was. So I studied my religion and culture. Now I have no hesitancy at all in saying what I am. I am comfortable being a Zoroastrian in Britain. I would be comfortable being

a Zoroastrian anywhere, even in Outer Mongolia.’ But another 17-year-old Parsi said: ‘We have no home really. We feel foreign wherever we are, foreign in India, foreign in Britain. Where do I belong? I don’t belong in Britain; I don’t belong in India.’ It would be wrong to give a picture of a community at a loss for its identity, but there are some, approximately one-third of respondents, who were hesitant about it, or in the language of one interviewee, about the different parts of their persona. In Chapter 1 there was a summary of the debate between Ballard, Vertovec and others concerning the perception of South Asians in Britain being caught between cultures, or skilled cultural navigators. The evidence from this study is that it is not a question of either/or, but rather of ‘both . . . and’. The Zoroastrian community is not a monolithic whole, but a vibrant group within which there are a range of personalities, experiences and reactions to British society.

British Zoroastrians at the Turn of the Millennium

The picture that it was possible to paint when I wrote *Zoroastrians in Britain* (1994) was cautiously optimistic. The number of festivals celebrated was increasing, especially the *gahambars*. The numbers attending major functions were growing, the priests reported increasing numbers of families asking for religious functions in the home, for example *jashans* and purification rites after childbirth were being increasingly observed. Childrens’ education classes and weekly prayer classes for children of *naujote* age flourished more than ever before. Community (*hambandagi*) prayers were recited before most functions, including secular lectures; the number of visiting religious leaders, notably the Dasturs, had begun to increase. What has happened since the writing of this optimistic account?

Religious practice in the new millennium

In the conclusion to *Zoroastrians in Britain* I commented on the increase of religious practice from the 1960s to 1995 (the year I finished writing that book). Since then the level of religious activity has increased further. In the year 2000–1 thirty-five *jashans* were performed, including the times of all the festivals and the

ten *muktad* days according to both the main Parsi calendar (Shahenshai) and following the Iranian calendar, and the *uthumna* or *siroza* prayers for the souls of departed patrons. There are eighteen practising mobeds, so it has become possible to hold all these ceremonies, even if the festival occurs during the working week. Each such religious function is followed by a social event, and meals on most occasions are sponsored by philanthropists, or a family in memory of a deceased family member. There have been further courses on Zoroastrianism led by Khojeste Mistree and as we shall see below, there have been many more visits by leading priestly figures from India than any other Association. Of all the diaspora communities, ZTFE is probably closer emotionally to India than any except perhaps Hong Kong. Although there are no precise figures to prove it, it is my strong impression that the frequency of visits back to the old country is increasing. Those of us who were involved in race-relations work back in the 1960s generally assumed that the level of religious practice would diminish as migrants assimilated; that assumption is clearly wrong. To underline how different this was in comparison with earlier years, the Annual Report for 1935 noted only one religious function in the whole year, and that was organized because an Indian priest was passing through London. At the 1938 AGM it was resolved to try and hold two *jashans* per annum. One factor in the increased religious activity is that the size of the community has increased, but it also arises from a concern to make ZTFE not simply an 'old fashioned gentleman's club', and a clear recognition of the fact that it is the religion which gives the community its identity.

The commitment to the study of Zoroastrianism is also a distinctive feature of ZTFE. This was part of the original Trusts' objectives in 1861 and has been pursued with particular determination at the end of the millennium in two ways in particular. First, ZTFE has probably the largest library of books on Zoroastrianism of any western diaspora group. At the Houston World (Millennium) Congress in 2000, ZTFE organized and paid for a book exhibition and sale which they claim, probably correctly, was the largest ever mounted for the community.¹¹⁴ Books on Zoroastrianism, mostly brought over from India, are on regular

¹¹⁴ See A. S. Mama, 'Well Booked', *Parsiana*, Mar. 2001, pp. 76–8. The exhibition was organized by Malcolm Deboo.

sale to the community and visitors. Second, ZTFE maintains close links with the academic world. Western scholars are often called upon to give lectures, and their books on the religion are sometimes launched at functions in Zoroastrian House. The School of Oriental and African Studies in London University has created the first post ever tied to Zoroastrian Studies; hitherto Zoroastrian specialists have been placed either in Comparative Religion, or Middle Eastern language or archaeology departments. This has been possible because of two anonymous bequests, a substantial donation from Mehraban Zartoshty, and support from SOAS. Zoroastrians have attended some of the courses and Zoroastrian postgraduates have been given financial support for their studies. SOAS has also hosted an annual lecture in memory of the late Dastur Kutar, with funds obtained through the good offices of WZO (discussed further in Chapter 10 below). As we shall see in the chapter on America, the practice of inviting outside western scholars to address the Associations has declined there. That has not happened in Britain. ZTFE has not, however, neglected the scholarship of its own members; in addition to the increasing number of invitations to religious leaders, they have also funded the scholarly studies of people from India, notably a research visit to Cambridge to work on liturgical texts by Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal.¹¹⁵ An important religious development in Britain has been the engagement with inter-faith activities.

Inter-faith activities

There has been an evident, deliberate and explicitly articulated increase in the Zoroastrian involvement in inter-faith activity. The causes and consequences merit discussion. In the 1970s and 1980s requests from universities, schools and other similar educational groups were responded to positively. Especially in the 1970s spouses of intermarrieds were accepted, so there was no antagonism towards external groups. But there was relatively little conscious inter-religious activity. However, two episodes in particular raised concerns about the projection of the image of the religion. The Sunday newspaper the *Observer* ran a colour supplement with an A–Z on cults, and included Zoroastrianism. The community

¹¹⁵ Details of all these religious and academic activities are included in the ZTFE Annual Report for 2000–1.

was offended and outraged at this classification of what is arguably the world's oldest prophetic religion. Partly they feared for their external image, and partly they were concerned at what impression of their heritage this would give their children. Community leaders and interested academics protested to the paper about the offensiveness of this historically ludicrous listing, but the only response I saw simply said 'we needed something for "Z."' There was no concern for the people offended. The problem with being such a small community is that outsiders do not trouble about causing distress. The equivalent insult would not have been levelled at British Muslims. There was a similar but unrelated episode in June 1994. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales said in a television programme that he wanted his traditional role as Defender of the [Anglican] Faith to become Defender of Faiths, be they Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Islam or Zoroastrianism. Few viewers knew who the Zoroastrians were. In the capital city's main evening newspaper, the *London Evening Standard* of 27 July there was an article on the royal statement which all the Zoroastrians I know found offensive: 'the notion of Charles being defender of faith . . . strikes me as bizarre. Take those Zoroastrians . . .'; the report goes on to describe them as worshipping 'an evil god'; it alludes to them leaving the dead 'to be devoured in Towers of Silence by rats'; it states that the Muslims view Zoroastrians as idolaters and in the last paragraph refers to 'the ceremony being conducted in the various dead languages favoured by the Zoroastrians'. The mocking tone, the put-downs, inaccuracies (the writer did not say what Muslims have said of Christians!), all display the vulnerability of such a small group to journalistic ridicule and media insensitivity.

The community has responded quietly in diverse ways. In part it has taken every opportunity to publicize its achievements, notably the centenary of Naoroji's entry to Parliament when three books were published, a formal dinner was held in Parliament, and functions were mounted at the Indian High Commission. Something similar was done, though on a smaller scale, for Bhownaggee's centenary. Those in the royal honours list are publicized. The inter-faith activities have various merits: for Zoroastrians one is the way in which they themselves are represented—validly—as followers of one of the great religions of history. So from 1993, the ZTFE president of the day has been

invited to take part in the procession of the religious leaders into Westminster Abbey for the Commonwealth Day service, when he has been introduced to the Queen and other members of the royal family. 10 December 1994 was celebrated globally as United Nations Human Rights Day, and a special inter-faith service of observance was held at Zoroastrian House, concluding with a Zoroastrian ‘prayer’, from an inscription of Darius from Persepolis. The event was co-hosted by ZTFE and Amnesty International, and like traditional Zoroastrian gatherings, ended with a festive meal. Zoroastrians have participated in, and contributed prayers to, United Nations Day for World Peace, and Ervad Bhedwar offered prayers at the prayerful reunion called by the late Cardinal Hulme in Westminster Cathedral.¹¹⁶ Through such connections the president of ZTFE, has been invited to royal garden parties at Buckingham Palace¹¹⁷ and to multi-faith discussions on racism and religious education at Lambeth Palace, the official home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the senior cleric in the global Anglican Communion.¹¹⁸ In 1994 and again in 2000 a ‘Pilgrimage March’ around London ended at Zoroastrian House with a warm welcome and reception.¹¹⁹ In the same year ZTFE participated at book launches with Prince Philip at St James’s Palace,¹²⁰ and in the International World Congress on Religion and Peace in Riva Del Garda near Verona. There, ‘Ervad Sethna [from London] lit the fire with Zoroastrian prayers to inaugurate the conference, and all the other faiths lit their candles individually from the main fire which was kept burning for 21 days.’¹²¹ An event that the community believes to be significant is the inclusion of Zoroastrianism as one of the nine religions represented in the Faith Zone of the Millennium Dome. The president and senior priest were invited to the Prime Minister’s reception in the House of Lords at the opening and were introduced to senior members of the royal family, to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. For the exhibition a series of very dramatic photographs were taken of a *jashan*

¹¹⁶ *Newsletter*, 19 Jan. 1997.

¹¹⁷ *Newsletter*, August 7 1998, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ The first Peace Pilgrimage was advertised in the *Quarterly Circular*, 22 Apr. 1994, p. 3. The Pilgrimage started in Bow in the East End, and visited a synagogue, a Quaker meeting place, Hindu and Buddhist temples, churches, and a mosque.

¹²⁰ Annual Report, 1 Apr. 1994–31 Mar. 1995, p. 2.

¹²¹ Minutes of the AGM, 13 Nov. 1994, p. 4.

ceremony.¹²² It is estimated that six million people saw the photographs. These and other similar events have triggered radio programmes, and better informed newspaper articles, when journalists have attended a ceremony and encountered the Zoroastrian community spirit for themselves. People who have met the community do not write the sort of offensive nonsense quoted above. Another high-profile development occurred when the then Indian High Commissioner, H. E. Dr Singhvi, hosted a No Ruz celebration at his official residence in March 1996, with prominent figures from the Hindu community (the Hinduja brothers) and the Iranian Consul General.¹²³ In 1999, the new High Commissioner, Lalit Mann Singh, hosted the event at India House. The *Newsletter* reported that Sanjay Gandhi's widow, who had produced a book on Zoroastrian names, attended and asserted that her late husband had wished to bring their children up as Zoroastrians.¹²⁴

The thinking behind ZTFE involvement in these activities has been articulated in various *Newsletters* and president's reports. It is worth quoting some of them to highlight the motivation involved. The appeal to members to join the Peace Pilgrimage referred to above read: '[This is a] unique opportunity to spend time together as people of faith, witnessing to the values of peace and interfaith understanding and exploring the world of different faith traditions.'¹²⁵ Another Annual Report noted:

Significant Zoroastrian participation has been evident in many multi-faith activities held all over London and elsewhere, creating the desired awareness of the presence of Zoroastrians in the country. Reference to Zoroastrians has begun to be included in multifaith publications, most notably our inclusion in the 'Multi Faith Directory of Great Britain'.

The report then goes on to record that invitations to leaders of other religions to visit Zoroastrian House have resulted in reciprocal invitations to attend 'other religious and non-religious public, intercommunal, governmental and national events.'¹²⁶ Inter-faith activity is seen as a long-term commitment, so in one

¹²² See the Annual Report for 1999–2000 and *Newsletter*, 11 May 1999.

¹²³ *Newsletter*, 22 Apr. 1997, pp. 2 f.

¹²⁴ *Newsletter*, 11 May 1999.

¹²⁵ Quarterly circular, Apr. 1994, p. 3. The Young Zoroastrians' leaflet associated with that circular strongly encouraged members to join, saying 'This year the ZTFE (Inc.) is greatly honoured that the Peace Pilgrimage will finish at the Zoroastrian House.'

¹²⁶ AGM Report, 1 Apr.–31 Mar. 1995, p. 3.

Annual Report it was said: 'The Association takes its Inter-Faith responsibilities very seriously and has undertaken to expand its involvement in the future.'¹²⁷ The community is aware of the importance of being seen as a major religion on the stage of history. On another occasion the *Newsletter* commented: 'The ZTFE acknowledges the untiring and selfless work of the Inter Faith Network and of our representatives to the IFN. It is through such participation that Zoroastrianism has now been recognised as one of the 9 major religions in the UK.'¹²⁸ In the Annual Report for the year 1999–2000, the president commented that 'Participation in Inter-Faith activities has been a new but important feature of the Association's work in the last 10 years.' This has helped to raise the profile of Zoroastrianism in the community at large. In some Zoroastrian communities, for example in America, I have been told that inter-faith work is starting to be questioned on the grounds that it leads to influence upon, or changes within, Zoroastrian practice as common denominators are sought for functions. Some have said that having people from other religions present at your ritual changes the atmosphere. But I have not heard that said among ZTFE members. One reason for the widespread acceptance of this activity, according to my informants, is that it was started by one of the most traditional of recent presidents, Ervad Zal Sethna. Members feel that if someone of his position is comfortable with what is happening, then it must be reasonable. Such involvement has also been sanctioned by the respected traditional Dasturs, JamaspAsa and Kotwal, who have also taken part in similar events at international level. Another important factor has been the personal commitment of a respected member of ZTFE, Jehangir Sarosh. He attended the Millennium Summit of World Religions for Peace at the United Nations and has gained considerable respect in inter-faith circles beyond his own community. He was elected the European chairman of the World Council of Religions for Peace and was then elected co-vice-chair of the Inter Faith Network for the UK.¹²⁹ The community as a whole takes great pride in the prominence their ancient religion now has at major inter-religious functions.

¹²⁷ AGM Report, 1 Apr.–31 Mar. 1998, p. 3.

¹²⁹ The ZTFE Annual Report 2000–1, p. 11.

¹²⁸ *Newsletter*, 7 Aug. 1998, p. 3.

One function, which many were able to enjoy, was the visit of the Earl of Wessex (the Queen's youngest son) and his wife Sophie, Countess of Wessex, representing Her Majesty the Queen, at a communal celebration of the fifty years of her reign in June 2002. In a friendly and happy atmosphere, traditional prayers affirming central Zoroastrian values were recited and translated, the history and achievements of the community were related and sincere affirmations of communal loyalty to the crown were asserted.¹³⁰

The youth programme

There has been a substantial youth programme throughout much of the last decade, with events ranging from parties to attendance at BBC recordings, badminton, cricket, skating, self-defence classes, and a youth pilgrimage to Iran. But the biggest event in this calendar was the staging of the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in London, 4–11 July 1997, which was attended by 400 Zoroastrians, the majority (250) from overseas, indeed from fifteen different countries (there was even a waiting list in case of cancellations). Sponsors enabled the Young Zoroastrians (YZs) to charge a congress fee low enough to allow youth from overseas to attend. For the first part of the week the Congress was held in a large hotel, which became virtually an international Zoroastrian youth village. The second half was based at Zoroastrian House with visitors staying in various Zoroastrian homes, spending the daytime socializing and sightseeing, the evenings in workshops at Zoroastrian House. The speakers provided an interesting balance. They included senior religious leaders from India, the two high priests Dasturs K. M. JamaspAsa and F. M. Kotwal, Ervad Dr R. Karanjia, the principal of the Athornan Madressa in Mumbai, the respected priest Ervad Dr Peer, also from Mumbai, and the prominent teacher Khojeste Mistree. Ervad Godrej Sidhwa from Karachi was present. There were some senior Zoroastrian writers and figures from different countries: Rashna Writer from London, Dr Sam Kerr from Sydney, Mehraban Zarthoshty (whom the youth honoured for his philanthropic work) and some outside academics (Dr Vesta Curtis from the British Museum, Peter Clark from the University of Wales at Cardiff and Dr Jenny Rose from

¹³⁰ The event was reported by Arnavaz Mama, 'A Royal Visit', *Parsiana*, Aug. 2002, pp. 46–8.

California). There were also many papers from young Zoroastrians from around the world on what being a Zoroastrian meant to them at the end of the second millennium, with contributions from people both of Parsi and of Iranian descent. These included Shiraz Mistry, 'A Zoroastrian in Australia'; a paper by Vishtasp Mehr Soroushian from the USA on balancing peer and parental pressure and expectations while growing up as a Zoroastrian; and one by Rashna Gadialy from the USA on what children in the West should be taught about their religion. There were some intense debates on intermarriage and women priests. The social programme was naturally extensive: a grand ball, a variety show with talent spots, two *nataks* put on by the youth a disco, and many informal parties around the city. The event was organized by the YZs themselves. It was a considerable operation, with a turnover of £110,00, 1,800 metres of fax paper used, fifteen-lever arch files of correspondence, and 4,800 meals served. A small profit was made to assist the launch of the next World Youth Congress.¹³¹ The reports I have heard stressed above all the psychological importance of being made so aware of being part of a living religion spread over many countries, of living for a week in an international Zoroastrian community. Young people who at school, university or work are commonly the only Zoroastrians there, find considerable support from such opportunities to meet co-religionists from around the world who are also proud of their identity, and are often wrestling with similar problems. There was deep pleasure in sharing common values, or, as one person put it in one write-up 'letting our kusties hang out and not caring!' In a real sense, the dancing to loud music in the bar and by the pool were as important as the most powerful lecture. The chair of the organizing committee, Kerman Jasavala, was given the World Youth Award at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, for his achievement in taking the lead role in the congress. The organizing of the Congress brought many British Zoroastrians to work together as a team and to become much more involved in Zoroastrian House than many of them had before. My information is that, without a major comparable event, some of that intense collaborative activity has not found a subsequent outlet.

¹³¹ An extensive report was published by A. S. Mama, 'Together to the 21st Century', *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1997, pp. 92–114. The youth also produced a large commemorative booklet.

New premises

For many years some members had feared that the present Zoroastrian House could not accommodate the numbers that attended big events, despite the extension in 1982, and wished for a larger prayer room, indeed, for a consecrated temple. In October 1992 the 'Zoroastrian House New Premises Fund' was started. In 1993 a booklet was produced by a steering committee set up to guide the project entitled *The Unimpeded March of the Zoroastrian Spirit into the Twenty-first Century*. It explains (pp. 6 f.) that the numbers attending Zoroastrian House had increased because of the arrivals of 'a lot' of East African Parsis in the 1960s, the Iranian Zoroastrians after the revolution, and the increasing interest of the youth. The idea at that time was to provide purpose-built premises. It also stated, 'There is an undoubted desire, expressed by an overwhelming majority of our community, to enthrone the Holy Fire here, thus making the United Kingdom the first place in the Western Hemisphere to experience an occasion of global uniqueness' (p. 8). Attendances already soared to 600, and the Managing Committee's view was that more would attend if there were larger and better facilities. Car parking around the present house was described as 'a nightmare', and the old Victorian building did not suit its purpose very well; for example, the washing and toilet facilities were inadequate to meet the needs of so many to wash before prayer, and the old building was expensive to maintain. The committee also wished to establish a dadgah fire because they felt 'that the members now want to establish a more profound Zoroastrian religious base in the United Kingdom. . . . The creation of Dadgah and the consequent consecration of the Holy Fire would be a step in the right direction to satisfy the newly acquired fervour amongst our youth.' The intention was to make the dadgah, with the associated mobed's accommodation, for Zoroastrians only, but Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians could use the separate social structure. They said that they were looking for premises that could accommodate up to 1,200 people, dining space for up to 400 people, good car parking space, and various recreation rooms and office spaces. The original plans also included a *bungli* for funerals. The cost was estimated at £2.5 million to cover three phases: purchase of land, building, and fitting-out. The intention was to raise the capital costs from fundraising functions but especially from large donors.

The funds from the sale of the existing house were to be invested and used for the maintenance of the new premises.

The acquisition of new premises has caused difficulties in most western diaspora groups. In order to avoid divisions, successive committees held Open Forums to brief members and listen to their comments. One difficulty was finding a suitable site. In 1997, for example, the London Borough of Harrow invited the committee to bid for a large plot of land in an appropriate area which had been earmarked for a place of worship, or for recreational purposes. The committee was enthusiastic and submitted a bid, but it was not successful.¹³² Finding a suitable place has always been a problem.

Almost inevitably, opposition surfaced. The objections were that the present premises were well served by public transport and provided a place of worship in the centre of London, suitable for the poor and elderly. In fact, some argued, the building was under-utilised apart from a small number of events each year. The present *Setayesh Gah*, it was said, was little used on a regular basis, so what reason was there for thinking that an Atash Dadgah, some twenty miles from the centre, would be much used? The fear was expressed that future generations might not be able to maintain such a large property, just like some Parsi communities in India and Zanzibar. On the question of parking, it was asked whether the expense justified the acquisition of a hundred spaces for about twenty occasions per annum. There was concern that the estimates were too optimistic and that the new premises would cost more, and would not be supportable from Association funds. The steering committee had put out a questionnaire in 1997 to solicit views; critics pointed out that there was only a 25% response, which was not an adequate basis for proceeding.

At a forum in July 1997 this survey was discussed. An area of concern was the Association's funds. These, being heavily dependent on investments in the stock market, could go down, just as they had increased in recent times. It was, therefore, suggested that subscriptions should be increased to provide a secure income. The survey, analysed by the YZs, independent of the Managing Committee, had an impact upon committee thinking. For example, the priority of most respondents (58%) was a place of worship, followed by 23%

¹³² *Newsletter*, 22 Apr., 1997.

giving priority to a larger assembly hall, and 7% to a 'chapel of rest' (*bungli*). Only 3–4% gave priority to a library, sports facilities or accommodation, so the committee then said they would now not pursue these options. Forty-nine per cent of respondents stressed that they wanted a *dadgah*, but more than a third, 38%, wanted a fully consecrated *agiary*. Importantly, 81% of youth respondents (aged 15–25) gave a place of worship as the highest priority—compared with only 68% of those over 50. The committee also noted the geographical distribution of respondents: 34% were from north-west London, 20% from north-east London, 11% from south-west London and 8% from south-east London. A further noteworthy point to arise from the survey was that a majority (58%) thought that the Association should have a full-time salaried priest rather than continue with the present voluntary, part-time arrangement.¹³³

Most annual reports of any Association try to give an 'up-beat' account of the health of the community. But the ZTFE Annual Report for the year 2000 was particularly positive in tone. It merits analysis, despite being somewhat repetitive of what I have written above, because it highlights what the community, not an outsider, considers to have been the key developments. The highlight was said to be 'the recognition of Zoroastrianism as one of the nine major religions of the United Kingdom and representation in the Faith Zone of the Millennium Dome'. Other high points were the visits of the Association's great benefactors, Mr and Mrs Mehraban Zartoshty and Dastur Kotwal, the election of Filly Maravala as mayor of the London Borough of Redbridge and the development of the Zarthoshty Brothers Chair in Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS. The report also announced with delight, both in the text and in the colour photograph on the cover, the acquisition of the new premises. At a special meeting on 9 November 1999 the committee had been mandated to execute the New Premises Project. Within six weeks of hearing of the availability of a now disused cinema in Harrow, the region of London where most Zoroastrians live, the outstanding funds were raised to purchase this property, built in a classic Art Deco style. It was purchased for £1,358,000 on 29 September 2000, over half the sum having been given by the Zarthoshty brothers. In the new millennium the Association has acquired premises, without selling

¹³³ AGM Report for 2000–1 and the account in *Parsiana*, Nov. 2000, pp. 20–2.

the old, that are large enough to accommodate the growing demands identified in 1993, and without incurring any debts.

A consecrated Atash Dadgah associated with the new building is seen as the next development for ZTFE. Malcolm M. Deboo and Paurushasp B. Jila produced a detailed report on what this involved in religious terms.¹³⁴ The report was based on meetings with seven leading and appropriate people in Mumbai and visits to the four Atash Bahrams and six agiaryies in Mumbai.¹³⁵ The significance of this is that ZTFE was taking greater care to ensure the acceptance of the project by traditional authoritative sources in India, than had been taken for any other project planned in the West, again illustrating the religious ties in Britain with the old country. The report detailed requirements for a greenhouse for the necessary plants and a well, and outlined the essential features of the structure (the axis of the building, steps, security, the essential rooms and the design of the sanctuary). Finally it indicated the key rituals involved in the foundations and consecration of the Atash Dadgah. The whole report was checked and received signed approval by Dastur Kotwal. Few Associations have taken such care over ensuring the precise religious requirements.¹³⁶

London as an international centre

From the Association's inception, it has always had a European perspective. Over the decades countless prominent figures have called as they 'passed through' the heart of the Empire, for example the Parsi members of the Round Table conferences in the build-up to Indian Independence. Parsis from America and Europe have been buried at Brookwood. In the 1970s, visiting Zoroastrians, priest and lay, 'called upon' the Association. That 'calling' has become a more substantial visiting. From the 1980s, Khojeste Mistree became a not infrequent teacher of seminars. Dastur Kotwal made several visits in the 1990s and a long one in 2000. Dastur JamaspAsa visited London

¹³⁴ *Consecrated Atash Dadgah: the first traditionally consecrated Zoroastrian Fire Temple in the West, enthroning an ever-burning fire*, London, 2001.

¹³⁵ Dastur Kotwal, Ervad Asphandiar R. Dadachanji, Panthaky of the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai; Ervad Dr Roointan Peer, Director of Avestan Studies in Puna; Ervad D. Ramiyar P. Karanjia, principal of the Athornan Boarding Madressa in Mumbai; Khojeste P. Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies; Faribourz Nariman, an Architect specializing in fire temple design and a student of Pahlavi literature; and Firoza Punthakey-Mistree, an art historian specializing in fire temple architecture in Iran and India.

¹³⁶ ZTFE is overwhelmingly of Parsi descent; there is no record of advice being sought in Iran.

in 1997, and Ervad Dr Ramiyar, the principal of the Madressa, has made three visits in this period. As well as youth and leaders from around the world attending the youth congress, many individual travelling Zoroastrians have visited Zoroastrian House. These have included senior priests, for example Mobed Firouz Azargoshasb the Mobed-Mobedan from Iran (1992), Dastur Unwala of Bangalore (1997) and Dastur Mirza from Mumbai (1996). Several novelists have come to launch their books (for example Tina Mehta,¹³⁷ Armin Wandrewala,¹³⁸ Perveen Dadachanji¹³⁹); Parsi academics have given lectures (Nilufer Bharucha, who lectured on Parsi novels,¹⁴⁰ Prof. Nawaz Mody¹⁴¹); and various other Zoroastrian writers (Jer Randeria¹⁴² and Piloo Nanavutty¹⁴³) have visited. British participation has also been evident in North American Zoroastrian Congresses during the 1990s, and in the American-led calls for a new world body (see Chapter 10). Closer contacts between Associations are to be expected as an aspect of globalization, but there is also a sense of the British Zoroastrians, being the oldest and largest Association outside the old countries, having a legitimate leadership role in the global Zoroastrian diaspora. To this end, it is significant that ZTFE has bid to host the next World Zoroastrian Congress in 2005, following that held in Houston; this would be only the second time such a World Congress has been held outside India or Iran. This international role is also evident in the hosting of the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, and in the emerging links between London and Associations in France and Germany.

Zoroastrians in Paris

The context

There is a wealth of literature on French immigration and race-relations law and policy, but little referring to South Asians.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ *The Zarathushtrian Saga*, Calcutta, 1995.

¹³⁸ *The Turning*, New Delhi, 1996.

¹³⁹ *Illusions and Disillusions*, London, 1998.

¹⁴⁰ See her article 'The Parsi Voice in Recent Indian English Fiction: An Assertion of Ethnic Identity', in N. E. Bharucha and V. Sarang, *Indian English Fiction, 1980–90: An Assessment*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 73–88.

¹⁴¹ Pherozezshah Mehta, *Maker of Modern India*, Mumbai, 1997.

¹⁴² *The Parsi Mind: A Zoroastrian Asset to Culture*, New Delhi, 1993.

¹⁴³ *The Gathas*, New Delhi, 2000.

¹⁴⁴ I wish to record my sincere thanks to SOAS for funding my research visits to Paris and to Bonn in 1996–7. Ms Ruby Cooper had made a preliminary visit to Paris on my behalf.

Non-European migration to France is predominantly Muslim and mainly from North Africa, specifically Algeria. Naturally these groups are the focus of most studies.¹⁴⁵ Iranian Muslims are generally noted in passing.¹⁴⁶ In broad terms, France accepted immigrants until the economic problems of the 1970s following the oil price rise. Thereafter, there have been fluctuating attempts to restrict immigration, and a failed attempt to persuade immigrant workers to return to their old countries in 1977–8. But generally there has been a policy of integration of those who have immigrated.¹⁴⁷ In general terms, whereas Britain emphasizes plurality, France stresses integration. The focus has been different according to the Left or Right inclinations of the governments of the day, though most governments have been restricted by popular opinion, and at times by the extreme demands of the extreme Right, notably J. Le Pen.¹⁴⁸ In principle, the nation of the great Revolution has sought to encourage fraternity among its citizens, for the children of immigrants, at least, have an automatic right to become French citizens. France has also generally attached importance to a programme of family reunification, so that immigration in total has not stopped. Paris provided sanctuary for successive deposed Iranian leaders throughout the twentieth century, and in the first five years after the 1979 revolution some 20,000 Iranians had settled there, most of them single, well-educated males (women joined them as soon as travel restrictions permitted), including former high ranking officials and professionals. As hopes for a return to Iran began to dim, so there was a growing eagerness to preserve Iranian culture, be it through celebrating No Ruz, concerts or exhibitions. But there are many, and potentially

¹⁴⁵ See e.g. J. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh, 1992, ch. 2; B. Lewis and D. Schnapper (eds.), *Muslims in Europe*, London, 1994, ch. 4; G. Nonneman, T. Niblock and B. Szajkowski (eds.), *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*, Reading, 1996, ch. 11.

¹⁴⁶ An exception to this is A. Fatrhi (ed.), *Iranian Refugees and Exiles Since Khomeini*, Costa Mesa, 1991, ch. 7.

¹⁴⁷ For a comparison of patterns of settlement and integration in France and Britain see M. Banton, 'National Integration in France and Britain', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27, 1, Jan. 2001, pp. 151–68. See also M. Tribalat, P. Simon and B. Riandey, *De l'immigration à l'assimilation, une enquête sur les immigrés et leurs enfants*, Paris, 1996.

¹⁴⁸ C. T. Husbards, 'The Mainstream Right and the Politics of Immigration in France: Major Developments in the 1980s', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 14 (2), pp. 170–98; C. Wihtol de Wenden, 'Immigration Policy and the Issue of Nationality', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 14 (3), July 1991, pp. 319–22; D. Schnapper, 'A Host Country of Immigrants That Does Not Know Itself', *Diaspora*, 1:3, 1991, pp. 353–63.

conflicting, Iranian groups in France; assassinations triggered deep unease at publicity, although for some years different groups have produced literature critical of the new regime.¹⁴⁹

Parisian Zoroastrians

There were only half a dozen Zoroastrian families in Paris in 1996, individuals who had gone there for very different reasons. There is no Association story to tell, and no records, just personal histories. Some of my informants stressed that they wished to be anonymous and, of course, that wish is respected in what follows. Others were happy to be identified, and so they are. The interviews behind my account were conducted on a one-to-one basis, partly for reasons of confidentiality, partly also because people would answer differently in front of others. Before turning to those interviews it is important to refer if only briefly to (Madame) Bhikaiji Cama (1836–1936), an early vigorous campaigner for Indian Independence who lived in exile in Paris. Born and educated in Bombay she was married to Rustomji the son of K. R. Cama, but it was an unhappy marriage. She came to Britain in 1901 for medical treatment and was inspired by various Hindu radicals, notably the anarchist Shyamji Krishna Verma. Her own speeches and articles were fiery, and to avoid imprisonment in Britain she fled to Paris where she lived most of her life. She started various radical journals. The first was *Vanemataram*, which was published in Geneva and smuggled into India through the French city of Pondicherry. She is said to have smuggled arms through the same route. Speaking fluent French, German and English, she made various lecture tours in America and Europe. She is famed for unfurling what became the national flag of Independent India at a meeting in Germany in 1907. The British sought her extradition but the French refused. In the immediate pre-war years she is said to have influenced a number of Parsi women, but the police followed both her and them. During the war the French agreed to the British request to intern her (1915–18). Her health broke down and she never again became prominent in the radical fight for Independence. She was allowed to return to her Bombay home in January 1936 on condition that

¹⁴⁹ V. Nassehy-Behnam, 'Iranian Immigrants in France', in A. Fathi, *Iranian Refugees and Exiles since Khomeini*, Costa Mesa, 1991, pp. 102–17.

she withdrew from politics, which she did; she died in August that year.¹⁵⁰

Shiavax Cooper was a representative for a firm dealing in pearls in 1929 and stayed in Paris with his wife and two daughters. The owners were Jains and could not travel by sea, so Mr Cooper acted on their behalf. In the inter-war years various Parsi dignitaries, notably Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji, Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, members of the Adenwala family and the Tatas visited Paris, and made contact with the few Parsi families living there. They were following in something of a tradition, because a number of the nineteenth-century travellers quoted above, notably Kothari, also visited Paris, which they decided was a better place than London for its culture. During the war Cooper and his brother were at first interned for being British subjects, but when released they fled to the south of France, taking their valuables, for example Mr Cooper's pearls, with them. After the war he tried returning to India, but comments that he did not find India the same when it was not under British rule and so went back to Paris. There he and two other families (Bhownagary and Dasturs) celebrated major functions together, notably Pateti and No Ruz at each other's homes. In 1955 he went to Bombay to get married, and in 1956 the first of his daughters was born. He, and they, wear the *sudre* and *kusti* and continue to say their prayers, but it is a private religious life, of necessity. Another Parsi couple arrived in the early 1970s, both from India. The wife wears the *sudre* and *kusti*, says her prayers before the *divo*, reads *Parsiana* and *Jame Jamshed*. Again, the religion is preserved valiantly in private. Because the numbers are so small intermarriage is common, though Mr Cooper's daughter married a Parsi.

Others came for education, for example Jehangir Bhownagary, son of a Parsi father and a French mother, a lady who made hats and clothes for dancers. Ultimately, he informed me, he was related to both Bhownaggree and Saklatvalla. When his father returned to India with a French wife he had faced discrimination,

¹⁵⁰ There are brief accounts of her in Kulke, *Parses in India*, pp. 210 f.; P. Nanavutty, *The Parsis*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1980, pp. 71–3. The only study of her so far is a small book by Khorshed Sethna, *Madame Bhikaiji Cama*, Delhi, 1987. But she has been seriously neglected—Katrak for example in his book on Parsis does not mention her even though he has a chapter on the war (S. K. H. Katrak, *Who are the Parses?*, Karachi, 1958). There is a need for a substantial study of her.

though Sir J. J. Modi had performed his *navjote*. He was a *navar* but knew only the main prayers, and in private offered Zoroastrian or Christian prayers, for he had been educated in a Catholic school. He did not enjoy business and went into journalism and the media, which was important in Bombay in the Second World War, for the city was the clearing house for all film material from the region. After the war he worked for UNESCO in France, surveying film and radio facilities in order to rebuild them. After working his way up the administrative ladder he was offered a post in Delhi with the Indian Union Public Service Commission and became head of the films division, producing a newsreel and two documentaries per week, in nine languages. In 1957 he returned to UNESCO, but had a further secondment to India, at Mrs Gandhi's request, in 1965–7. He again returned to UNESCO in Paris for the remaining twelve years of his working life, and retirement. His wife returns to Bombay every two years, writes and telephones regularly and reads *Jame* and *Parsiāna*, so the contact with their roots is not lost, and he would like to see more Association meetings in Paris. His daughter was married out, and though her grandson's *navjote* had been performed, her daughter did not go back to India, because of the treatment the child might receive. She herself had always felt nostalgic when entering a temple, but had not done so on her last visit. Perhaps the ties are weakening, for it is difficult to maintain the Zoroastrian tradition when living in isolation from co-religionists.

Another Parsi I met was on a brief (approximately six-month) stay while his wife worked in a Paris bank. His sons went to an international school in Paris, which they liked, but he did not want his children brought up there. He himself wears his *sudre* and *kusti*, but does not know the meaning of the prayers, and burns a *divo*, but only in front of his mother's picture. He had no Zoroastrian religious education in childhood, and does not believe it is possible to sustain a Zoroastrian identity in the West. He reads *Parsiāna*, but has no Zoroastrian contacts in the West other than family in Los Angeles. He did not foresee any possibility of there being a Zoroastrian Association in France in thirty years' time.

One Parsi seeking to restore an Association asserts that eighty to a hundred Zoroastrians (Iranians and Parsis) used to attend meetings, but now no longer do so. Contrary to other estimates, he believes that there are about a hundred Zoroastrians in Paris,

though he thinks only between five and ten are under the age of 35. He himself asserts his Parsi Zoroastrian identity, but states that he is not religious. Even when he is in India he does not go to the temple; he stopped going when he was 14. On his biannual visits back to India, he visits friends and then enjoys touring India. He plans a 'root-finding tour' to such places as Udwada and Navsari, but this is because he is seeking his culture, the places where his ancestors lived, not his religious roots. He wants the Association to revive not for religious reasons, but so that he can meet people from the same culture. He himself has married out of the community, having married a fellow student while he was at Freiburg. But intermarriage does not present problems for Parisian Parsis he says, because such a high proportion is married out.

I was introduced to one person of Armenian birth who had become a Zoroastrian in France. This person did not know many Zoroastrians, but became convinced that it was the right religion. This individual was aware of some Kurdish converts to Zoroastrianism and had made contact with Iranian Zoroastrians who had facilitated attendance at some Zoroastrian family functions; it has not been possible to attend many Zoroastrian ceremonies, but a welcome had been extended at all the social meetings.¹⁵¹

A Parsi woman from Bombay went to study in Paris to be independent and to further her education. She had learned French at school, and at the time French immigration law was easier than it is today. She became an au pair and then stayed on. She asserts that she is a Parsi Zoroastrian, but is not in any way religious. She only visits a temple in India once in every third or fourth trip back. She reads *Parsiana* and likes to read of the success stories, but is not interested in reading anything on religion and does not want to be pulled back into the community, because she does not want to lose her independence. Nevertheless, she said, the fact that you are a Zoroastrian means instant friendship when you meet another Zoroastrian, and so she meets socially with the other Zoroastrians in Paris a couple of times each year. For her, being a Zoroastrian meant being good and honest. She saw no problem in being both a Zoroastrian and an atheist. She would not settle back in India, because that would restrict the independence that she has come to value in France.

¹⁵¹ Name and gender omitted at the person's request.

Another Parsi woman settled in Paris after being a headmistress in Bombay and then studying educational administration in Paris, a city she came to love. Her sons also moved. She writes to her sisters in India and visits occasionally. Her last visit took place two years before the interview. She prays daily, but does not see this as relating to a personal deity, but rather as a form of meditation or concentration. She does not read Zoroastrian literature, other than *Parsiiana*, but she describes herself as hungry for knowledge and keeps encouraging the Association to meet and hold functions more often.

One Iranian woman had been an academic in Iran and had published work on Iranian history. She had studied and been associated with women's groups in post-revolutionary Iran. She was imprisoned, tortured and sentenced to death, but had managed to escape and leave the country, so she settled in France where she had taken a Ph.D. In Iran, her grandmother had been visibly a Zoroastrian, but her father was not officially one. For her, one cannot be a Zoroastrian clandestinely: daily prayers are essential and one should lead a life of truth, for Zoroastrianism is a way of life. Her initiation was performed in Los Angeles. She has been invited back to Iran by her family still there, but she was reluctant to go. She did not think that there would be a French Zoroastrian Association, because all Zoroastrians in Paris are old. Zoroastrianism, she thought, would necessarily change. In Iran the religion was concerned to reverence nature; she did not think the strictness of the religion would be maintained. She also commented on the number of conversions to Zoroastrianism among Iranians and Armenians.

One Parsi woman from India worked in Paris for eighteen months and enjoyed it so much that she stayed. Her marriage to a Parsi had failed. She returned to India each year and kept in touch with her friends, most of whom are in India, by telephone, e-mail and fax. But when she returned to India she did not visit the temples, nor did she wear the *sudre* and *kusti*, nor did she read Zoroastrian literature. Like her family, she said she was not religious. When asked how she saw her identity, she said it was Indian rather than Parsi, yet she was also Zoroastrian, and French, so she concluded she was an internationalist. She said she was not sure what she wanted for her funeral, and sometimes thought of returning to Bombay. She did not think that there would be a Zoroastrian community in France in twenty years' time.

Since the revolution in 1979 there have been a larger but unknown number of Iranian Zoroastrians in Paris. However, the two groups, Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians, do not meet as groups, only occasionally at an individual level. At the time of my visit there was a dispute within the Iranian community between those who did, and those did not, attend the funeral in Paris of the former Prime Minister Bhaktiar. Both Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians told me that there was a fundamental difference between the two groups: whereas the Parsis are accustomed to a democratic and secure society, Iranian Zoroastrians are not, and coming from a repressive country, they are reluctant to speak openly or give addresses and personal details. More than one person stated that since the revolution there had been people converting to Zoroastrianism. Others also commented that a number of French Muslims joined with Zoroastrians at the main festivals.

The resulting picture from these personal experiences is that it is difficult to speak of a community in Paris. It is, rather, a question of individuals occasionally meeting socially as Parsis, i.e. as an ethnic group, with no communal Zoroastrian practice, although one or two older people continue their religious practice in private. Virtually everyone said that they had no knowledge of the religion, though all thought its emphasis on good thoughts, words and deeds made it a religion worthy of respect. Work, or a love of the city, the conviction that Paris is a civilized place to be, brought people there and few thought of leaving it. It is noticeable how many read *Parsiana* as a means of keeping in touch, however remotely, with the community. There was commonly a sense of pride in being Parsi, but because their meetings are essentially ethnic socializing, they are not the sort of functions where Parsis meet Iranian Zoroastrians. Each group seems to know very little of the other. The information I was given suggested that the Iranian Zoroastrians also met ethnically, rather than religiously, which is why they were joined by other Iranians, perhaps more often than by Parsis. Few of them had contact with Zoroastrians or Parsis outside France and their old country, apart from those who had close relatives in other countries, e.g. Australia and USA. On the analogy of a wheel, those who maintained contacts with other Zoroastrians did so as spokes to the hub of India, but there was no rim of international networking. This may change if ZTFE attempts to improve links are more successful. The determination

of some individuals to continue the practice of their religion is remarkable. What is striking is the sense of pride in their identity on the part of everyone, whatever their religious position. When numbers are so small, there is little scope for erecting strong community barriers against the intermarrieds, or against others with no Zoroastrian ancestry. From a Zoroastrian perspective the contrast between London and Paris is considerable.

Zoroastrians in Germany

The context

The laws on immigration and citizenship are different in Germany from those Britain and France. What follows concerns race and immigration policies at the time when I visited Germany (1997). The law has changed at the start of the new millennium, making it easier for people to acquire German citizenship. In Britain the law is based on the idea of *ius soli*, i.e. citizenship of the place of birth, so that people born in Britain are British citizens. In Germany citizenship laws are based on *ius sanguinis*, i.e. citizenship by descent, so, in theory at least, a third-generation Indian in Germany would not be German but remain Indian, of the race of their parents, or grandparents. Until the early 1970s, Germany needed labour, manual and professional, so that immigration into the country was relatively easy and a number came for study as well as for employment. As unemployment decreased in the 1970s, immigration became considerably more difficult. The assumption behind German law and policy is that the student or visiting worker will not assimilate, and will not stay permanently but return to the country of origin. Such a person is therefore a *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker), not a German citizen. This leaves various disadvantages: work permits are job-specific and if the job is lost, or a person becomes dependent on social welfare, they can be returned to their ancestral home. Political and other rights are also restricted. In 1983 a bill was passed to encourage immigrants to return home, and to finance their return, but few took the ‘opportunity’. Naturalization is, at the turn of the millennium, possible either following an extended residence in Germany, or for those born in Germany. The right is there to apply; but it is not an automatic process. Joppke, in his comparative study of immigration in

Britain and Germany, stresses however, that though immigrants as immigrants have few rights, the German Constitution protects the rights of individuals and so the courts have on various occasions protected the rights of individual immigrants.¹⁵² The securest base for naturalization is marriage to a German. There is a strong tendency to emphasize the 'otherness' of all non-Germans, not least those with a different-coloured skin, or those seen to be dressing differently, for example wearing the *hijab*.¹⁵³ People of German descent automatically become German citizens when arriving in Germany. The main non-European immigrant groups in Germany are from Turkey and Yugoslavia, but Hamburg has a substantial Iranian population. There are fewer than 140,000 South Asians in Germany, of whom a little over 70,000 are from India and Pakistan.¹⁵⁴ Kerala Christians apart (recruited for nursing work), there are few attempts to develop communal infrastructures, organization or buildings. Few take an active political role.

German Zoroastrians

There are two main groups of Zoroastrians in Germany: Iranian Zoroastrians in and around Hamburg, and Parsis, who are fairly widely scattered, though a number congregate in Bonn each No Ruz. There is virtually no contact between these groups. At the time of writing there is no Association, but a Parsi who has moved to Germany from the USA, Sam Motashaw, knowing how useful Associations have been there, wishes to start one. Some Parsis were reluctant, on the grounds that the formal registration of an Association as a religious group, which takes considerable administrative labour in Germany, might lead people to think that they are a new religious movement, against which they believe there is much prejudice. However, both the pro-campaigner and the doubter attended the Millennium Congress in Houston and as a result are planning to start an Association.

¹⁵² C. Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State, The United States, Germany, and Great Britain*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 64–75.

¹⁵³ I am grateful to Urmila Goel for permission to use her SOAS MA thesis 'Citizenship and Identity among Second Generation South Asians in West European Countries', 1998 (unpublished). She compares British and German law. For a comparison of German and French law see W. Seifert, 'Admissions Policy, Patterns of Migration and Integration: The German and French Cases Compared,' *New Community*, 23 (4) Oct. 1997, pp. 441–60.

¹⁵⁴ C. Schmalz-Jacobsen and G. Hansen, (eds.), *Kleines Lexikon der ethnischen Minderheiten in Deutschland*, Munich, 1997, cited in Goel, 'Citizenship and Identity among Second Generation South Asians in West European Countries', MA thesis, SOAS, 1998. p. 4.

The first Zoroastrians we know of to settle in Germany were those whose graves are in Berlin (referred to earlier in this chapter), but nothing is known of their life and work. The 'early' Zoroastrian arrivals came in the 1960s, mainly to study or work in engineering or pharmaceuticals, two areas for which post-war Germany had a strong reputation. Iranian Zoroastrians went to Hamburg, the main centre for Iranians, and for the carpet trade, in Germany. Some have moved to Germany at the behest of the multinational employers, some just for a fixed period. Most of the Iranian Zoroastrians came after the revolution, but the number of new arrivals has diminished considerably, partly because conditions are better under the more moderate regime in Iran, and partly because émigrés have all their family property confiscated by the State. There is a high proportion of intermarriage, because there are so few Zoroastrians in Germany that people are unlikely to meet a partner there. I met only one Zoroastrian couple who had met and married in Germany while studying there. Some people went to India for a spouse, but most married locally. Some met their future German partner in India, in one case when she was working at the German consulate in Bombay, another at the Max Muller Bhavan (Goethe Institute) in Pune. Marriage to a German is effectively the only way of becoming a German citizen as opposed to a *gastarbeiter*. All informants, with only one exception, said that they had faced racial prejudice, and even that exception said that in employment there was a glass ceiling which was difficult for non-Germans to pass through. One young informant took it for granted that he would be beaten up periodically, an experience which he had had all his life. Several said that they had chosen to study and work in Germany because of their subject, but they now wished they had settled elsewhere, perhaps in Britain, or, as most said, in America. One woman told me that she presented herself as English (which her accent and dress suggested), to avoid the prejudice that she is convinced Indians face in Germany. Another person commented that being a Zoroastrian and a single person is a lonely existence in Germany.

I had been told that there were between 200 and 800 Zoroastrian families in the area around Hamburg. One of their prominent members, Mr Morwandad, however, told me that there are only fifteen Zoroastrian families, totalling seventy-two persons; all but one are Iranians. That one exception is a Parsi who is married to an Iranian Zoroastrian. Mr Morwandad has

some contact with Iranian Zoroastrians in other countries, notably London and America (he is distantly related to Mehraban Zartoshty). There is a small Iranian community in Hamburg as a result of the carpet trade, with several Persian restaurants, one in particular being a popular place to call for a social chat. At the annual No Ruz celebrations there are up to 200 people present, but many are Iranian Muslims. Several of the Iranian Zoroastrians are married out, but their spouses are made welcome at their gatherings. Nowadays, Mr Morwandad says, there are only two Zoroastrians in the carpet trade, the others are professionals—lawyers, doctors, engineers and chemists. Few of them speak English, and in some cases their German is reported to be halting. More than one informant said that because Hamburg was a cosmopolitan city, there was relatively less racial prejudice there compared with Bavaria or East Germany. Because of the prejudice, I was told, *Auslanders* had to work harder than Germans, or be better at their work, to maintain any degree of parity.

The Parsi married to an Iranian Zoroastrian, Mr Ichaporia, had worked in Iran, where he met his wife. He found it easier to settle in Germany than in the USA. He is a graphic artist, working in the advertising business. His children had their *naujote* in Bombay, but the family knows Iran better. He himself visits his family in Bombay most years, and enjoys visiting the fire temples and speaking in Gujarati. As a family they are happy in Germany and believe Hamburg is a good part of the country for them to live, and they see no likelihood of moving on. They keep a picture of the Prophet on the walls of their home, but there is little opportunity to partake in religious functions, and they do not have access to any religious literature. It is, therefore, difficult to have more than a sense of ethnic identity, which makes it hard to decide at No Ruz whether to attend the Iranian function in Hamburg or the Parsi one in Bonn. Being so involved in the planning and preparation of the Hamburg one, that is where they go.

A Parsi woman I spoke to had been dismissed from her teaching post when she pleaded guilty in court to racial prejudice for an article she wrote attacking ‘the march of Islam’. She was subsequently physically assaulted, which she believes was a consequence of her article. She maintains her links with her Parsi friends and family in Bombay, going back most years. She believes

that her Zoroastrian identity has been reinforced in the last few years; indeed, only recently has she come to consider herself a real Zoroastrian. She expressed some views, for example on the aura, and referred to Meher Master-Moos, which suggested a leaning towards the 'occult' dimension of Zoroastrianism. She criticized the teaching of Mistree as dualistic. She also expressed strongly what she believed to be Zoroastrian teachings on conception and abortion; in short, she engaged intellectually with the doctrines of the religion more than most of my informants. She feels emotionally close to the Bombay Parsi community, but does not envisage a permanent return there nor, despite her experiences, does she envisage leaving Germany.

Another Parsi in Hamburg had been a sailor, but married a German and settled in Hamburg, where he took his Master's certificate and then undertook shore-based work. He enjoys speaking Gujarati to a fellow Parsi and visits Bombay alternate years, normally going to Udwada. He continues to wear his *sudre* and *kusti*, and prays daily. From his descriptions of trips to fire temples in India it is evident how much he loves visiting them. On retirement he plans to spend more time reading about and studying his religion.

Several sources told me that many Iranian Muslims comment privately that they are secret Zoroastrians. A number of Zoroastrians in Hamburg told me of their interest in, and some contact with, Kurdish Zoroastrians. Indeed, I was taken for dinner with one. He said that there were some 5,000 Yezidis in Germany, where they were able to migrate because they were taken for Turkish workers. Back in Turkey he put the numbers at 50–100,000. He told me that there were few Zoroastrian practices, no *sudre* and *kusti* or texts, because of Turkish oppression. But, he said, the Yezidis think of themselves as having a Zoroastrian history going back many centuries. He related an account of how on successive occasions their villages had been attacked, and the women raped and carried away. They were, he said, caught between Turkish oppression and the PPK who terrorized them into giving funds and blackmailed them.

The rest of the German Zoroastrian community is Parsi and widely scattered. In 1997 there were a few more than fifty addresses known to Mr Motashaw, who was compiling a database. These include a few single people, some married with children,

and some intermarried. Most are in Nordrhein-Westfalen, with six addresses in Dusseldorf and five in Bonn. One of the longest-established families, Dr and Dr (Mrs) Poonawala, live in Bonn. Dr Poonawala did his Ph.D. in Pharmaceuticals and started the study of Medicine, but eventually decided to work as a Pharmacist. His wife works in Cologne as an eye specialist. They are the only Zoroastrian couple I encountered who had met and married their Zoroastrian spouses in Germany. Mrs Poonawala's mother lives with them for part of the year, and with another daughter who lives nearby for the rest of the year. The mother's influence on the 'Zoroastrian-ness' of the family was evident. She has made a *sudre* for each member of the family, with the material brought back from India, which they wear. The Poonawalas' son lives nearby, and eats with the family nearly every day. So there is, unusually for German Zoroastrians, something of an extended family in close touch. Dr Poonawalla considers himself to be an active Zoroastrian. After work he spends time in prayer; his mother-in-law and his son also pray regularly. He taught his children Gujarati. The family organizes a No Ruz dinner each year in their (spacious) home¹⁵⁵ for Zoroastrians in the Rhine region, and from the south. Only Parsis attend it.

Several informants told me that they are Zoroastrians, though very few of them wore the *sudre* and *kusti*, or lit a *divo*. Few of them missed a temple, but enjoyed going to them on their regular visits to India, although others who had migrated to Germany said how much they missed the temple. Those same informants were people who prayed regularly, wore a *sudre* and lit a *divo* at home (interestingly, the person who seemed the most active in this regard was married out of the community). The only informants who did not visit India regularly were people born in the West. They nearly all said that they prayed occasionally. None of my informants said that they would describe themselves as German, but quite a number who said that they were Zoroastrians would describe themselves as Indian rather than Parsi. One commented that while they lived in India they had not felt Indian, but they did after migration to Germany. Those who were married out, or who had German partners, said that their partners were interested in visiting India, and most who had been liked it as a place to visit.

¹⁵⁵ I wish to place on record my thanks to them for being such gracious hosts.

Although some had encountered opposition to their out-marriage, most said that the immediate family had treated their spouse well, even in one case keeping in contact after the couple had divorced. In another case, however, a woman who had met a German in India felt thrown out by the community after her marriage, although her mother has accepted the situation. She has few Parsi friends in Germany, because of the distances, so she would like an Association to be formed, because she enjoys the meetings. Clearly for her, social contacts with her community are important, despite her sense of rejection. Very few of them read Zoroastrian literature, apart from *Parsiana*. But some felt that it focused too much on the (insular) BPP, and that the news commonly showed religious intolerance. The emphasis on scandals and on felicitations between fellow Indian Parsis looked insular from their perspective, and neglected the religion. However much my informants missed Mumbai, only those on temporary business secondment could imagine returning to live there. Several expressed interest in the formation of an Association, but few saw a long-term future for Zoroastrianism in Germany, because the families were so few and so scattered, and there were so few young people.

I had the opportunity to talk to a number of young Zoroastrians on a one-to-one basis. Their comments are separated from those of the family in order to preserve their anonymity. There is no single pattern to describe identity. Even within one family, one sibling enjoyed visiting Parsi temples in India, the other did not; one group considered themselves German, the other had supported Iran during the 1998 soccer world cup. One young Zoroastrian said he had not visited Mumbai since his *naujote*, and although he would quite like to go again, he feared that it would be a visit spent in a hotel calling upon people he did not know. Yet he also felt isolated in Germany. He knew very few Indians, fewer Parsis, and socializing with Germans, he said, was difficult. One young Zoroastrian, whose family was rejected by the community when his mother married out, is proud to be Indian, likes to visit India, has pictures of Indian deities (not Zoroastrian motifs) in his room and has undertaken research on India language and society. For him his Indian identity appears paramount and his Parsi or Zoroastrian identity is non-existent. Most younger people I spoke to who had been born in Germany said that they did not feel at

home there or in India, and thought if they visited Iran they would not expect to feel at home there either. This was asserted both by people who practised their religion, and by those who did not. One young Zoroastrian, shortly to marry a Zoroastrian from the old country, spoke forcibly about the pressure put on young Zoroastrians to marry into the fold. This, he said, means that as soon as they socialize with Zoroastrians of the opposite sex, everyone speculates on whether they will get married. The result is that it puts the youngsters off such social contacts and drives them into contacts with non-Zoroastrian and so increases intermarriage.¹⁵⁶ This informant was the only young Zoroastrian I met in Germany who is marrying into the religion. But despite the fact that some of the young people are finding German partners, there is generally a deeper perception of racial prejudice, of being 'othered', in Germany than I have found in any country visited in the course of this research. Although many appreciated the quality of life in Germany, more than one aspired to retire to another western country and no one asserted a strong sense of being German. The barriers were seen to have been erected by Germans.

European Links with ZTFE

Apart from a (very) few personal links between Zoroastrians in mainland Europe and Britain, there was no contact between the people discussed in the last two sections and ZTFE. However, at the start of the new millennium there are moves to make contact. This was first publicly expressed in the substantially increased number of French and German Zoroastrians listed in the 2000 Directory produced by ZTFE.¹⁵⁷ These links are in part due to the global move to have contacts between Associations. This had been happening informally between ZTFE and American Associations particularly at the times of a World Congress, or in discussions about the controversial WZO discussed in Chapter 10. When the proposal of a rival body to WZO composed of federal bodies, for example the Federation of Zoroastrians in India and the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America

¹⁵⁶ He pleaded that I include this point in my book. As it represents views I have heard from many in different countries, I have done as he asked.

¹⁵⁷ There are only eight for France, but seventy for Germany.

(FEZANA), it seemed logical to form a European Federation based on ZTFE. This coincided with some individuals settling in Germany who had lived in larger Zoroastrian communities elsewhere and sought international contacts. So in 2000 ZTFE appointed a former president, Rusi Dalal, to be its European representative. As a first step he attended the No Ruz in Bonn in 2001, so that the first semi-official contacts were of an enjoyable, social nature. The nature of that Federation would clearly need sensitive handling, because no Zoroastrian group likes to feel 'swallowed up' and there are significant differences between the groups in the three countries, not least in what is in Britain the very sensitive area of intermarriage.

Conclusion

The key turning points

There have been a number of key turning points in the history of Zoroastrians in Britain, which have affected the nature of the community here. The early travellers reinforced Parsi perceptions of their relations with the British. They also reinforced the educational priorities of leading members in the old country. The formation of the Association in 1861 created the earliest Asian Association in the western world and with the arrival of a significant number of Zoroastrians in the 1960s Britain became part of both the old and the new Zoroastrian diaspora communities. The early emphasis on the European dimension of the Association and the petitions to the Shah emphasized the perception of the British Zoroastrians as being at the 'heart of empire', though perhaps the biggest factor in this was the role of the three MPs, something unequalled in political achievement anywhere in the diaspora. The acquisition of a property, the first in 1920, similarly locates the British Zoroastrians as a mid-point between the old and the new diasporas. The property was acquired at a later date than those in Sind, China and East Africa, but decades before those on the North American continent or Australia. The changing nature of the four buildings, Cromwell Road, Russell Road, Compayne Gardens and Harrow, reflect the changing nature of the community. It is not simply that the Association is numerically larger; there has also been an increasing emphasis on the provision of space for

worship. A key factor in the second half of the twentieth century was the arrival of some Iranian Zoroastrians, though in terms of numbers and influence even more important was the arrival of the East African Zoroastrians. When they came to positions of communal power in the late 1980s there was a significant swing towards Orthodoxy. At the turn of the century a key turning point was the involvement in inter-faith activities, and the impact this has had on the position of Zoroastrians and their recognition in British society.

British Zoroastrians and British Asians

There are various ways in which the Zoroastrian, specifically the Parsi, patterns of settlement in Britain have paralleled those of other South Asian communities. Above all, Parsis and South Asians have been subject to the same experience of immigration and race-relations policies. Parsis were free to settle in Britain prior to the 1960s without visas or entry permits. Although the Association has a longer history than any other South Asian community, nevertheless the majority of its members came in the 1960s and since then new primary migration has been restricted. They have been affected, as any other South Asian community, by the experience of discrimination, and race-relations legislation. Although Zoroastrians typically do not want to be seen as Asian, the stark reality is that that is how most outsiders see them. As with other communities, the impact of East African Asian migration in the 1960s has been considerable, especially in their traditional religious orientation. There have been important religious leaders among British Zoroastrians, for example Ervad Zal Sethna, an Orthodox East African who was elected president of the Association. At the turn of the century, the most active of the priests, Ervad Rustom Bhedwar, has been elected onto the Managing Committee precisely because of the importance attached to religious issues, but generally the leadership has been in the hands of the laity. As with other British Asians, both religion and the general culture, *Parsi-panu*, are seen as key factors in the preservation of identity among the youth as among the elders. It would be oversimplistic to say that there is one common pattern of assimilation, of being caught between cultures, or being skilled cultural navigators; British Zoroastrian youth are at least as diverse as their elders are.

There are other ways in which British Zoroastrians can be seen to be different from other British Asians. The length of their history of settlement in Britain, their perception of themselves as being like, and being liked by, the British—despite the experience of racial discrimination—has given a different social role and self-image among British Zoroastrians. Their positive perception of being at the ‘heart of the empire’, of the benefits accrued by life in Britain, of their sense of their historical importance as an international group, and not least their pride in their MPs and other political leaders, is something which marks them as different and has an impact on their self-image. Whereas the vast majority of other British South Asian migrants came as manual workers, the majority of primary British Zoroastrian migrants, both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries came as educated professionals. There have been some merchants, for example that is how Dadabhai Naoroji and K. R. Cama first came to Britain, and it was the role that gave Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanjee his fabulous wealth. But typically Parsis came as doctors, lawyers and engineers. Whereas most early South Asian migrants lived in inner city areas seeking to save money to send back to India, Zoroastrians typically went straight to the leafy suburbs. The longer history of the Zoroastrian community means that they have a more diverse age range, with a greater proportion of elders, and of the second- and third-generation young. One obvious distinctive and important feature is their much smaller numbers. The most optimistic estimate of their numbers as 10,000 in Britain still leaves them far smaller than any other community from the Indian subcontinent. That has consequent implications for their limited financial and human resources, and means that their voting power is weaker. Perhaps the most important distinction is that few Parsis see themselves as Asians. They have many facets to their sense of self-identity, but for most their Persian origins are of considerable importance.

British and other Zoroastrian diasporas

It is premature to undertake a comparison between British and other western diasporas that have not yet been considered. However, it is worth noting the differences from the other older diasporas considered in preceding chapters. The early British Zoroastrians were less business-orientated than the early travellers

to China or Sind, but more professional, like the Zanzibari Parsis. In all of the earlier diasporas Parsis were involved with the British in trade, but the wider 'local' society was seen as significantly 'other'. There were few social contacts with the Chinese, Black Africans or the various groups in Sind (Pathans, Sindhis, etc.). Because of their self-perception as being favoured and respected by the British, there was less sense of living in a potentially hostile environment which may be the explanation for why it took them proportionately much longer to make material provisions for the religion, e.g. a temple and full-time priest. In Britain, they commonly saw the significant distinctions to be those of class rather than race. That is why Naoroji and Bhownagree could stand for Parliament. (Saklatvalla is a more complicated phenomenon—being of high social class but opposed to class divisions in society.) Bhownagree was able to invite British dignitaries to Zoroastrians' functions because of his class. Because Zoroastrians were at the heart of empire, the 'big names' who were associated with them were not only their own MPs and wealthy individuals, but also those who came from India, for example Sir Pheroze Sethna and Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Readymoney as part of the Round Table conferences in their search for greater Indian autonomy. Although Bombay Parsis had similar perceptions of class, it was not such a factor in the other old diasporas. Parsis were not allowed to socialize with the Chinese, and did not wish to in Africa as they had in India, and as they did in Britain. The nature of the Zoroastrian experience is different among scattered groups—Zoroastrians living as individuals away from Associations and religious functions, whether in East Africa, or in modern France and Germany. Zoroastrians in London have a significant advantage over these individuals because of the support of an active Zoroastrian network. The question now to be addressed is, how is the British Zoroastrian diaspora the same as or different from other western groups?

Zoroastrians in the United States and Canada

Introduction

This chapter, like the previous one, includes more than one country; but the United States (US) and Canada are more intertwined than Britain, France and Germany were seen to be.¹ In what follows, where the subject relates to the whole North American continent, as it sometimes does, then the label America is used; the US refers only to the United States of America. People outside the American continent often see the two countries as parts of a whole. This is sometimes appropriate for Zoroastrian history; for example, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, FEZANA, is an overarching body for Associations in both countries; its officers are drawn from either and its excellent magazine is circulated in both. But Canadians in particular often wish to stress their differences from the US in terms not only of politics but also of culture and the law. It is certainly important to begin the discussion of the immigration and race-relations policies of the two separately.

¹ Work on this introduction, and that to the Australia chapter, owes a great deal to Mrs J. Leeming of the University Library, Derby, for an extensive literature search she undertook for me, and to Maria Leontiner for tracking down many of the publications while I was hospitalized. It is dangerous to begin naming Zoroastrians who have helped me, because there have been so many. They know who they are and I thank them all. But I do have to pay especial thanks to the Rivetna family. Roshan and Rohinton have not only hosted me on several occasions, they have also plied me with much material from their own huge archive, and both kindly read through the draft of this chapter. I am also indebted to Dolly Dastoor for her ready help, and for reading this chapter. Any mistakes that remain are, of course, my own responsibility. I am grateful also to Kaemerz and Hvovi Dotiwalla with whom I have stayed several times; even by Zoroastrian standards they have been very generous hosts. I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to Alison Houghton for spending many hours working through bibliographies and especially statistics relating to Asians in Canada, USA, and for the next chapter, Australia.

Although Zoroastrianism is a relatively new phenomenon on the North American landscape, it requires a longer chapter than any other topic in this volume. One reason is the growing importance and influence of American Zoroastrians at the beginning of the millennium. But the subject also requires more extensive treatment because of its complexity. In other chapters, it has been necessary to look at only two or three Associations. On the American continent there are over twenty Associations, with a mix of nationalities (Iranian, Indian, Pakistani, East African, Canadian and American), plus the diversity of the many differences between states, not just between Canada and the United States, but between Associations within each of those countries. The vast distances, and other factors, have made for a greater diversity in the Zoroastrian population on this continent than is found elsewhere.

The Context: US immigration and race policy

The inscription on the Statue of Liberty invites to the US ‘your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free’. This is not an accurate depiction of the broad swathe of US immigration policy. It is common to divide the history of the various policies into the following periods.²

1. *The Colonial Period, 1609–1775*, the period of European, largely Protestant British, recruitment of labour for land conquest and the genocide of the Native American people. The Puritans were but one group who developed the colonies for religious reasons.

2. *The Open Door era, 1776–1881*, when immigrants were actively sought. This is a major phase of American history but not relevant to the theme of this book.

3. *The Era of Regulation, 1882–1916*, when a long phase of monitoring arrivals began, ‘so that only those thought to be most adaptable to American society would be admitted’. The regulations were mainly against the Chinese in western USA, but there was also reaction against the Sikhs who moved from British Columbia to

² See, e.g. W. S. Bernard, ‘Immigration: History of U.S. Policy’, in S. Thernstrom (ed.), *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, pp. 486–95. See also A. Behdad, ‘Nationalism and Immigration to the United States’, *Diaspora*, 6:2, 1997, pp. 155–78. Particularly useful for this chapter is S. Chandrasekhar, ‘A History of United States Legislation with Respect to Immigration from India’, in Chandrasekhar (ed.), *From India to America: A Brief History of Immigration, Problems of Discrimination; Admission and Assimilation*, La Jolla, 1982, pp. 11–28.

Oregon and to California in 1907.³ The European immigration began to involve more South and East European settlers. By the end of the nineteenth century moves were undertaken to restrict immigration. In 1910 a congressionally appointed commission reported on what it considered to be the alarming aspects of immigration. It argued that new immigrants were racially inferior to the old immigrants from northern and western Europe. Such views came to dominate in the next period.

4. *The Era of Restriction, 1917–1964.* The Immigration Act of 1917 included a literacy test for those over 16. No labourers were allowed from the Asiatic Barred Zone, which included India. Indians were no longer recognized as Caucasians.⁴ The Act also centralized policy as a Federal and not simply a State issue. The Quota [Johnson] Act of 1921 restricted the annual number of entrants of each admissible country to 3% of that nationality which had been recorded in the US Census of 1910. No limitations were placed on immigration from the western hemisphere. Nor were restrictions placed on Mexico, because of the need for cheap labour. In 1921 a new ‘non-quota’ category was included which allowed in, among others, people in the performing arts, academia and medicine. In 1924 the Johnson-Reid Act tightened restrictions, reducing the annual quota of foreign-born nationals from 3% to 2% in the 1890 census—an even lower census base than had been taken in the 1921 Act. From the perspective of Indian migration, it effectively meant there was no quota for the subcontinent. The Supreme Court ruled in 1923 that Indians were no longer considered ‘free white persons’, but were defined as Asian under immigration and naturalization procedures, and so came from the ‘Asiatic Barred Zone’.⁵ In his presentation of the Act Johnson said that the American people:

have seen, patient and plain, the encroachments of the foreign-born flood upon their own lives . . . the myth of the melting pot has been discredited. . . . The United States is our land. If it was not the land of our fathers, at least it may be, and it should be, the land of our children. We intend to maintain it so. The day of unalloyed welcome to all peoples, the day of indiscriminate acceptance of all races, has definitely ended.⁶

³ R. B. Williams, *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 14.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R. B. Williams, ‘Asian and Pakistani Religions in the US’, *Annals, AAPSSS*, 558, July 1998, p. 180. See also P. Saran and E. Eames (eds.), *The New Ethnic: Asian Indians in the United States*, New York, 1980, p. 29.

⁶ Quoted in Bernard, ‘Immigration’, p. 493.

The aim of this policy, which was to last until 1965, was to prevent change in the ethnic composition of the US. The depression of the 1930s meant that fewer people wanted to migrate to the US, and the Government imposed ever more restrictions on those who might become charges upon the State, including Jews fleeing the Nazi regime.⁷ In the early years following the Second World War, entry restrictions were eased for war brides, and displaced persons from such places as Hungary and Indonesia were admitted in order to win some Cold War allies. On the other hand, anyone with Communist party membership was excluded. In 1952 the Immigration and Nationality [McCarran-Walter] Act 'tidied up' the previous decades of change and ensured that northern and western European nations took up 85% of the total annual quota of immigrants. It eased entry requirements in one significant way: special-preference categories were introduced for immigrants with extraordinary educational or technical training, or with special abilities. From the Indian perspective, one important feature was the opening of the doors to students. In the 1960s America's proclamation to lead the free world seemed incompatible with its nationality/racially based immigration policy and John F. Kennedy called for drastic change. He, however, was concerned with allowing more European Catholics into the country. Similarly, the term 'melting pot' was not originally used for the assimilation of Asian peoples, but only for the blending of different European nationalities after the First World War.⁸

5. *The Era of Liberalization, post-1965.* The Hart-Celler Act was passed in 1965, taking effect in 1968. It raised the number of migrants to 290,000. Other western hemisphere countries were allocated 120,000 visas; the eastern hemisphere was allocated 170,000, but no more than 20,000 to any one country. The change for India was significant because the previous quota system had militated against them; now the criteria were free of racial or historical implications. But even the Hart-Celler Act was not designed to facilitate more Asian migration; it specifically

⁷ See M. J. Churgin, 'Mass Exoduses: The Response of the US', *International Migration Review*, 30, I, pp. 310–24 at 313.

⁸ On US immigration and race-relations 'policies' see C. Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation State*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 23–61 and 147–85. See also H. J. Abramson, 'Assimilation and Pluralism', in S. Thernston (ed.), *Harvard Encyclopaedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, pp. 150–60.

reassured people that there would not be many immigrants from Asia. However this changed in 1976 when the allocations for eastern and western hemispheres were equalized.⁹

The Hart-Celler Act gave preference to four categories of family members and to two categories of employment. From the perspective of the subcontinent the family preferences were less important than the employment opportunities, because so few people from India and Pakistan already resided in the US. The two employment categories were: (a) members of the professions of exceptional ability and their spouses and children, and (b) 'workers in skilled or unskilled occupations in which laborers are in short supply in the United States, their spouses and children'.¹⁰ The result was a substantial increase in the number of Indian-born migrants to the United States. Decadel figures for all Asian migrants are: 1974—131,000; 1984—256,000; 1994—292,000. In this 'all Asian' group approximately one-third came for employment entry, the others under family preferences.¹¹ Whereas in the 1980 census there were 371,630 South Asians in the US, by 1990 there were 896,818 (815,447 from India, 81,371 from Pakistan).¹² Because most South Asians settled under employment criteria, most came as English-speaking, well educated (30% college graduates; 54% postgraduates), young, middle-class, urban professionals, with a substantial proportion of doctors and engineers, the professions the US needed most. Indeed, India became the world's largest exporter of medical doctors, and there were more western-trained Iranian doctors in the US than in Iran. Typically they live in small nuclear families and while critical of certain features of modern Indian life—caste, corruption, dirt—they nevertheless retain close links with family and friends, through letters, visits, Indian movies and videos. The role of the Associations in bringing people together, in giving occasions for the use of the 'old' language, traditional food and dress, are

⁹ E. E. Sandis, 'Ethnic Group Trends in New York', in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, p. 107. ¹⁰ Summarized in Williams, *Immigrants*, p. 16.

¹¹ See A. P. Lobo and J. J. Salvo, 'Changing US Immigration Law and the Occupational Selectivity of Asian Immigrants', *International Migration Review*, 32, 1998, pp. 737–60 at 737–41.

¹² See Manoranjan Dutta, 'Asian Indian Americans: Search for an Economic Profile', in Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, pp. 77–92. Also R. B. Williams, 'South Asians in the United States', in H. Coward, J. R. Hinnells and R. B. Williams (eds.), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, New York, 2000, p. 215.

important.¹³ Although institutionally assimilated in the US they are culturally linked with the old country. In the 1980s family immigration grew substantially, although later commercial and occupational migration became strong.¹⁴ The main motivation for migration has been the perceived benefit of American higher education: career prospects and the education of the young,¹⁵ but the processes by which potential migrants make the decision to move are many and complex.¹⁶

Migrants do not come like sheets of clean blotting paper, ready to absorb anything; they are not free of presuppositions, nor do they remain unaffected by the US.¹⁷ The 'melting pot' has been dismissed as 'but a myth' by Glazer-Moynian,¹⁸ but it remains part of the image of the US, for many see America as a society that 'makes strong assimilation demands, while often giving only begrudging toleration to ethnic diversity'.¹⁹ Behdad asserts very strongly that, 'The notion of cultural and political assimilation always underlies the myth of the immigrants, as newcomers are expected to lose their old national "skins" in order to become Americans.'²⁰ The original motive behind the 'melting pot' was not wholly negative. It was claimed that everyone's (or at least all Europeans') cultural heritage would melt down, or fuse, into the pot of American society, so that each country contributed its own rich flavour to the whole.²¹ The ideal was that 'we are now all Americans, but we all contribute our bit to American way of life.'²²

¹³ M. P. Fisher, 'Indian Ethnic Identity: The Role of the Association in the New York Indian Population', in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, pp. 177–92.

¹⁴ Williams, *Immigrants*, pp. 17 f. Lobo and Salvo, 'Changing US Immigration Law', pp. 737, 748. P. J. Leonhard-Spark and P. Saran in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, pp. 137, 140, 151; P. A. Thottathil and P. Saran, 'An Economic Profile of Asian Indians', in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, pp. 233–46; A. Nimbark, 'Some Observations on Asian Indians in an American Educational Setting', in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, pp. 247–71; J. Y. Fenton, *Transplanting Religious Traditions: Asian Indians in America*, New York, 1988, pp. 20, 30–2.

¹⁵ Fenton, *Transplanting*, pp. 25 f.

¹⁶ E. R. Baran, *Asian and Pacific Islander Migration to the US, a Model for New Global Patterns*, Westport, Conn., 1992, pp. 17–23, 33–9.

¹⁷ See the articles by M. Novak, 'Pluralism: A Humanistic Perspective' and M. Walzer, 'Pluralism: A Political Perspective', in Thernstrom, *Harvard Encyclopaedia*, pp. 772–87.

¹⁸ See Nimbark in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, p. 275.

¹⁹ See Leonhard-Spark in Saran and Eames, *New Ethnicities*, p. 137.

²⁰ Behdad, 'Nationalism and Immigration', p. 160, though the whole article merits study.

²¹ M. D'Innocenzo and J. P. Siremen, *Immigration and Ethnicity: American Society—'Melting Pot' or 'Salad Bowl'?*, Hofstra, 1992, pp. ix–xi.

²² The obvious negative side of this was, of course, that people were pressured to lose their own identity, which people the world over rarely wish to do. That reaction will be

But what is 'the American way of life'? Ethnically the US is very diverse. It has been estimated that in 1983 only 14% had an Anglo-Saxon heritage; 13% German, 12% Afro-American; 11% Hispanic. It has also been estimated that 87% of Americans associate socially only with their own group.²³ The same researchers concluded, on the subject of competing ethnic prides: 'certain ethnic groups are demonstrably the target of widespread prejudice and hate, and many of the groups surveyed expressed disdained suspicion of all groups but their own.' The White working class, they found, were plainly racist in their attitudes, towards Blacks in particular, and were hostile and distrustful towards immigrant ethnics in general and the law has not always offered appropriate protection to religious minorities.²⁴ Because the US is such a large and diverse country several authors have concentrated on the situation in different cities.²⁵ To write about Zoroastrians, not only in different cities in the US but also in Canada, is to encompass a particularly large and complex subject.

Iranian migration to the US

Before turning to Canada, it is important to comment on Iranian migration also, for whereas Iranian Zoroastrians have not been prominent in the communities discussed in previous chapters, they do feature largely in certain areas of the North American continent. The Iranian migration is a more complex phenomenon than the Indian, because some Iranians came as immigrants while others came as refugees. Most governments are more wary of refugees than of immigrants, for the latter can be selected according to their potential contribution to the nation. In the US the main concentration of Iranians in general is in California; indeed an area south of the UCLA campus is known as 'little Tehran'.

discussed throughout this chapter. See esp. D. Eck, *A New Religious America*, San Francisco, 2001, pp. 294–334.

²³ W. E. Lambert and D. M. Taylor, *Coping with Cultural and Racial Diversity in Urban America*, New York, 1990, pp. 14–22.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 164 f.

²⁵ There is a fascinating study of various communities in Houston in H. R. Ebaugh and J. S. Chafetz (eds.), *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*, Lanham, 2000. Two books which do look across American cities for theoretical discussion of diasporas are: C. B. Brettell and J. F. Hollifield (eds.) *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*, New York, 2000; and J. E. Braziel and A. Mannur (eds.) *Theorizing Diaspora*, Oxford, 2003. The books look at issues internationally but their emphasis is heavily on America.

The Iranian 'community' includes Muslims, Armenians, Jews and Bahai's as well as Zoroastrians. The first movement from Iran took place in the period 1950–77 when approximately 35,000 came to study in America. Numbers grew dramatically after the oil price boom because Iranian families could afford to send their children to university and the universities in Iran could not expand quickly enough to take in the numbers, nor could they speedily supply the technical and other resources for the science subjects in particular. Most Iranians during this era came as immigrants. The revolution in 1979 triggered more movements of refugees. Between 1978 and 1986 approximately 104,000 Iranians migrated to the US, again mostly students, but among the refugees came both wealthy, urbanized people from Tehran, and some less wealthy and less well-educated Iranians. The numbers were at their highest in the years between the revolution and the closure of the American embassy in Tehran—when direct migration to the US became harder. It is notoriously difficult to give precise numbers, partly because there are no reliable sources, and partly because some groups wish to inflate the figure in order to be seen as more politically important. A cautious estimate puts Iranian immigrants at: 1965—*c.* 1,500; 1978—5,861; 1980—121,000; 1986—250,000. Because such a high proportion came as students, they are a highly professional and economically successful group.²⁶ After Los Angeles the largest groups of Iranians are found in San Francisco, New York (approximately 10% of Iranians in the USA) and then in Texas, with a high proportion of Iranian students in Houston.²⁷ Many of the students subsequently took out US citizenship. It should be noted that a significant number of Iranian Zoroastrians also migrated to Canada, particularly Vancouver and a number to Toronto.

Although various writers comment that the different Iranian groups do not intermingle, and that the Muslims are not accustomed to forming associations, there are important indicators of

²⁶ M. Bozorgmehr, G. Sabagh and C. Der-Martiroosian, 'Beyond Nationality: Religio-Ethnic Diversity', in R. Kelley (ed.), *Iranglees, Iranians in Los Angeles*, University of California Press, 1993, pp. 59–79.

²⁷ M. Bozorgmehr and G. Sabagh, 'High Status Immigrants: A Statistical Profile of Iranians in the US', *Iranian Studies*, 31, 3–4, 1988, pp. 5–36 at 16–19. On estimating the numbers of Iranians in the US, see pp. 9–15. See also J. H. Lorentz and J. T. Wertine, 'Iranians', in *Harvard Encyclopaedia of American Ethnic Groups*, pp. 521–4.

'Iranian-ness' which can be observed in diverse bodies. Naficy has produced a fascinating study of 'Iranian nostalgia' as evidenced by American-produced Iranian Television, music and videos; this was discussed in Chapter 1.²⁸ The points he made that are especially appropriate in this chapter are: the importance of nostalgic objects for invoking the sense of geography and the ancient culture; the importance of rituals and festivals for reaffirming community boundaries; and the distinctive diaspora perception of history. All this is yet more true of Iranian Zoroastrians than of any other religious group, for the Zoroastrians see themselves as the 'true ancient Persians'.

Canadian immigration

There is an old truism that Canada is a nation of immigrants. It takes more immigrants per capita than does the US, the majority coming from non-traditional sources, notably Asia.²⁹ It has had to take in migrants not simply because of a low fertility rate, with a small population in a large country, but also because since the nineteenth century it has lost considerable numbers annually to the US. In the 1900 US census 1.2 million were recorded as Canadian-born, a figure which constituted one-quarter of Canada's population at that time. It is estimated that between 1820 and 1990 4.3 million migrated south of the border.³⁰ However, the Canadian immigration policy has long been to confine entry strictly to White North Europeans, particularly English and French. The earliest recorded South Asian arrivals came at the start of the twentieth century. A few Punjabis, mainly Sikhs, travelled across Canada en route to the coronation of Edward VII in 1902. On their return they took back accounts of a land which inspired some to travel and settle. In the years 1904–8 there were 5,179 Punjabi settlers.³¹ Until 1906 there were few problems. They were treated as British subjects, the economy was flourishing and labour was in short supply.

²⁸ 'The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile', *Diaspora*, 1:3, 1991, pp. 285–302.

²⁹ J. H. Thompson and M. Weinfeld, 'Entry and Exit: Canadian Immigration Policy in Context', *Annals of the American Academy PSS*, March 1995, p. 185; P. Ongley and D. Pearson, 'Post-1945 International Migration: New Zealand, Australia and Canada Compared', *International Migration Review*, 29, 3, p. 779.

³⁰ Thompson and Weinfeld, 'Entry and Exit', p. 191.

³¹ N. Buchignani and D. M. Indra with R. Srivastara, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada*, Toronto, 1985.

But increasing numbers of Punjabi migrants coincided with an economic downturn, and officials began to speak out against a 'flood' of cheap Asiatic labour. Economic factors meant that many people lived in the same house, thus reinforcing stereotypes of unhygienic overcrowding. In 1907 the vote was removed from them, which automatically meant that they lost other civil rights and political influence. When migrants arrived 900 at a time in ships, opposition grew.³² So in 1908 an Order in Council was laid which required all migrants to arrive with a through ticket on a continuous journey from their homeland direct to British Columbia, then the only port of entry for Asians. As no ships sailed direct from India to Canada, travellers had to change ship in Hong Kong, and, with no through ticketing, this requirement effectively stopped immigration from India. The ban was total and included wives and children. Men visiting India experienced difficulty when trying to re-enter Canada. The social treatment of the Punjabis was completely exclusionary. The British supported the Canadian policy, subject only to the consideration that they did not want it to excite nationalist feelings in India. The treatment of the settlers was such that this is precisely what it did. In 1914 an enterprising Sikh chartered a ship, the *Komagata Maru*, to sail from Calcutta, collecting more migrants en route in China and Japan. When it arrived at Vancouver the authorities compelled it to anchor in the bay, would not allow any new settlers to disembark (only a few returnees), and also refused provisions or the taking away of waste. Life for the 376 passengers (including two women and three children) was extremely unpleasant for two months. Eventually the passengers agreed to a single test case instead of each person's individual right to a court hearing, a process during which lawyers could have hoped to find loopholes in the law. The test case was lost and the Government sent a cruiser to compel departure once the ship had been provisioned. The ensuing violence, which led to the assassination of an official and consequent executions, characterized Punjabi—Canadian relations over the years of the First World War. In the following twenty years the only immigrants allowed were approximately 300 wives, and virtually no new Asian settlers.

It was not until after the Second World War, with Independence in India and other countries, and Canada's wish for international

³² Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, p. 22.

credibility in the United Nations, that policies changed. The first tentative steps towards a wider immigration policy allowed East and South Europeans to migrate. As far as Asia was concerned, there had been some Chinese and Japanese migrants at the start of the century, but they too had faced discrimination. As for South Asians, until then virtually all settlement had been in British Columbia. In 1951, in the face of pressure from India, a quota was established, allowing in 150 Indians, 100 Pakistanis and 50 Ceylonese. The Indian total was increased to 300 two years later because of the number of applications. By the end of 1961, 2,388 Indian immigrant visas had been issued and 2,000 relatives had been granted entry, but there were still Punjabis settling in British Columbia.³³ In 1962 the Government decided to remove all racial and national restrictions from immigration regulations and in 1967 a points system was set in place. With this change, migrants came from much of India and Pakistan. Whereas the Punjabi migration had consisted mostly of manual workers, the new migrants were predominantly professionals and managers selected to meet Canada's economic needs. Discrimination on the basis of race, or nationality, was abolished; instead, the selection criteria were imposed for an 'Independent Class' of people, admitted on the grounds of their potential contribution to Canada, together with their immediate family (spouse and children under 18), admitted as 'Family (later Sponsored Dependants) Class'. A third group was 'Assisted Relatives Class', more distant relatives who were still subject to entry selection but could obtain a bonus of fifteen points because of their existing family in Canada. The criteria for the first and third groups included education, age (the elderly were disadvantaged), language proficiency in English or French, and pre-arranged employment. Subsequently, an 'Entrepreneur or Investor Class' was admitted, for which the criteria specified the amount of investment required, or a time limit in which to start a business that created a specific number of jobs.³⁴ In Canada the issue of immigration was complicated by debates over language—French and English—and by political issues between the two areas of Canada, French- and English-speaking. It was to meet these problems that

³³ Ibid., p. 106.

³⁴ A. G. Green and D. A. Green, 'Canadian Immigration Policy: The Effectiveness of the Points System and Other Instruments', *Canadian Journal of Economics*, November 1995, pp. 1006–41.

Prime Minister Trudeau, in 1971, campaigned for a framework of official multiculturalism within one of official bilingualism. The two regions of Canada also had different views on immigration, both European and Asian.³⁵ The peak 'recruitment' period was 1967–71, but with a 'tap on, tap off policy', according to the economic state of the nation and its needs, there have been various peaks and troughs through the following decades. Policy has also been modified according to the prioritizing of family reunification, manual and professional workers.

Table 8.1 shows clearly how immigration numbers from India peaked in the years 1973–5, and again in 1980–1 (though not to the same levels). Immigration from Pakistan also peaked in 1973–5. The peak number of Ugandan refugees came two years earlier than the migration from Kenya, although Kenya has sent more immigrants than Uganda, and Tanzania figures similarly peaked in 1972–6. Numbers from India and Pakistan increased fourfold in the 1970s compared with the 1960s; from East Africa it was a fourteen-fold increase.³⁶

It is important to note not only when numbers increased significantly, but also the changing nature within that migration flow. Whereas East Indians constituted only 1.7% of immigrants in 1963–7, in 1983–7 they formed 9.4% of all Canadian immigrants. Whereas in 1963–7, 65.4% of South Asian immigrants were in managerial or professional work, in 1983–7 they constituted only 10.2%. The proportion of student migrants increased significantly from 8.6% in 1963–7 to 53.2% in 1983–7. The immigrants from the 1960s onwards tended to favour Ontario rather than British Columbia, though East and South East Asians still favoured Vancouver. The 1981 census showed that almost half of Indo-Pakistanis (the census category) were in Ontario, and a quarter in British Columbia.³⁷ In the late 1970s a modification of the

³⁵ J. Atchison, 'Patterns of Australian and Canadian Immigration 1900–1983', *International Migration*, 22, 1984, pp. 4–32; and Atchison, 'Immigration in Two Federations: Canada and Australia', *International Migration*, 26, 1988, pp. 5–31. The two articles are very similar, even word for word at times, but the latter has more material relevant to this chapter.

³⁶ Figures derived from Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp. 113–15. My studies of East African Parsis suggest that there were a number who first migrated to Britain and who then moved on to Canada. The East African countries listed are chosen, as are the other figures, because of their relevance to the Parsis discussed below.

³⁷ Ontario: 108,140 out of a national total of 223,235 = 48%. British Columbia, 61,500 out of 223,235 = 27.5%. Quebec, 17,410 out of 223,235 = 8%. J. Kralt and

Table 8.1. Asian and East African immigration to Canada, 1962–1982

	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	TOTAL		
India	529	737	1,154	2,241	2,233	3,966	3,229	5,395	19,484		
Pakistan	55	121	282	423	566	648	627	1,005	3,727		
East Africa:											
Uganda	2	3	7	18	54	68	62	69	1,990		
Kenya	9	18	46	112	114	239	359	363			
Tanzania	3	7	17	42	75	115	135	54			
	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	TOTAL
India	5,670	5,313	5,049	9,203	12,868	10,144	6,733	6,772	5,110	4,517	71,379
Pakistan	1,010	968	1,190	2,285	2,315	2,165	2,173	1,321	1,159	1,117	15,703
East Africa:											
Uganda	90	141	5,021	2,056	423	112	29	248	43	16	27,604
Kenya	245	289	320	1,193	2,394	2,477	1,202	540	227	319	
Tanzania	49	180	1,105	1,688	2,024	2,188	1,299	790	361	535	
	1980			1981			1982			TOTAL	
India	8,464			8,256			1,776			18,496	
Pakistan	878			731			868			2,477	
East Africa:											
Uganda	7			16			45			2,678	
Kenya	360			345			277				
Tanzania	450			664			514				

priorities resulted in more Family than Independent Category migrants (the former increasing from 57% to 86% from the early 1970s to the end of the decade).³⁸ The South Asian migrants made a particular contribution to the demographic picture of Canada; the community profile was of a younger, more highly educated, more professional, more likely to be married and less likely to be divorced population in comparison with the total Canadian population.³⁹

R. D'Costa, *Statistical Profile of Visible Minorities in Canada (1981)*, table 1; for the 1991 census I have used *Statistics Canada: Religions in Canada*, Ottawa, 1993.

³⁸ See R. D'Costa, 'Socio-Demographic Characteristics of South Asians in Canada', in M. Israel and N. K. Wagle (eds.), *Ethnicity, Identity, Migration: The South Asian Context*, Toronto, 1993, pp. 181–95.

³⁹ D'Costa, 'Socio-Demographic Characteristics', pp. 189–92. For the figures see J. Kralt and R. D'Costa, 'Statistical Profile of Visible Minorities in Canada (1981)',

The year 1987 saw a particular problem in Canada. The Meech Lake Accord to amend the Constitution because of the views of French-speaking people in Quebec raised questions for multiculturalism. One-third of Canada's population were of neither French nor British descent. As one editor of a magazine put it: 'Furthermore this archaic notion of the "two founding races" takes no notice of the historical significance of our Native peoples.'⁴⁰ He then asked: 'Is multiculturalism subordinate to Quebec's distinctiveness?' The minority groups wanted a revised Constitution that recognized multiculturalism on the same level as bilingualism, 'if all cultural and linguistic groups are to see themselves as part of the fundamental character of Canada'.

Immigration into Canada peaked in 1987 and 1988, at over 150,000 per annum compared with under 100,000 per annum between 1983 and 1985; immigration from Asia and the Pacific showing by far the greatest increase, representing 43% of all landings.⁴¹

For the purposes of this chapter the key years are the settlement years, 1980–1990, the decade within which my survey was conducted; censuses were conducted at each end of that period.⁴² In the 1990s, the total number of immigrants in Canada almost trebled in comparison with the 1980s, increasing from just under 90,000 p.a., to over 250,000 p.a. The numbers from India increased from the figures of the early 1980s, though not in the same proportion as did Asian migration in general, for the majority now came from East Asia.⁴³ At the start of the 1990s the census

tables 1–25, in O. P. Dwivedi (ed.), *Canada 2000: Race Relations and Public Policy*, Guelph, 1989, specifically tables 8–10. For example in the 1981 census 22.7% of Indo-Pakistanis had a degree (M. 28%; F. 17.1%), compared with 16.7% of the total non-visible minorities (M. 20.8%; F. 12.7%). Tables 13–15 demonstrate that the Indo-Pakistanis had a higher labour-force participation rate than other groups (73.5%, total visible minorities 72.5% and total non-visible minorities 64.4%). Table 19 shows the average total income of Indo-Pakistanis was higher in general and for men than for the other groups: Indo-Pakistanis \$13,835 (M. \$17,670, F. \$8,632); Total visible minorities \$12,589 (M. \$15,730, F. \$9,011); Total non-visible population \$13,011 (M. \$16,970, F. \$8,387).

⁴⁰ Editorial, *Northern Mosaic*, Apr./June, 1987, p. 2.

⁴¹ See A. H. Richmond in P. Hank (ed.), *Immigration History and Policy, Australia and Canada*, Monash, 1990, pp. 5–21.

⁴² For the 1981 census see Kralt and R. D'Costa, 'Statistical Profile'. For the 1991 census see *Statistics Canada: Religions in Canada*, Ottawa, 1993.

⁴³ J. D. Frideres, 'Canada's Changing Immigration Policy: Implications for Asian Immigrants', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 5, 4, 1996, pp. 449–70 at 455. The Indian immigration figures for 1991–5 were 12,848, 1994, 17,228, for 1995, 16,199—Frideres, p. 464.

showed that there were approximately 420,000 South Asians in Canada.⁴⁴

This planned growth in Asian migration provoked the Government to undertake a number of reviews of policy specifically on multiculturalism.⁴⁵ These policies evolved in the 1970s from a concern with the needs and interests of established European migrant groups, for example, the Ukrainians.⁴⁶ In 1971 this became a multiculturalism policy within a bilingual (French and English) framework. In 1977 the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibited discrimination on the grounds of 'race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted'.⁴⁷ In 1982 the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched in the Constitution so that rights could not readily be eradicated. The Equal Rights Section came into force in 1982. In 1987 a report was published calling for further funding, more political prominence and influence of the multiculturalism policy.⁴⁸ In 1994 there was an extensive national consultation on immigration 'to develop a vision of Canada which could in turn be used as a blueprint for the twenty-first century'. Ten key issues were identified and working groups were set up to look at each of these. A flavour of the whole can be gathered from the following examples:

How do we realise the benefits of immigration to Canada in areas such as regional impact, workforce skills, job creation and international competitiveness?

How do we achieve a coherent strategy within Canada and among nations to deal with international migration pressures?

⁴⁴ Statistics Canada, *Religions in Canada*, Ottawa, 1993. The figures for 1981 and 1991 are not easily compared because different categories are used; for example the introduction in 1991 of 'Eastern non-Christian' is so general that it is difficult to deploy here.

⁴⁵ See D. Bloom, G. Grenier and M. Gunderson, 'The Changing Labour Market Position of Canadian Immigrants', *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 27, 46, Nov. 1995, pp. 987–1005; D'Costa, 'Socio-Demographic Characteristics', pp. 189–92.

⁴⁶ A. H. Richmond, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia: The Contradictions and Crises of the 1980s', *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 3, 1991, pp. 87–110 at 102.

⁴⁷ J. Atchison, 'Immigration in Two Federations: Canada and Australia', *International Migration Review*, 26, 1, 1988, pp. 5–32 at 19.

⁴⁸ Report of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism, *Multiculturalism: Building the Canadian Mosaic*, Ottawa, 1987 (chairman of the committee, G. Mitges). See also Atchison, 'Immigration', pp. 16 f.

What are the key elements of a strategy for integrating newcomers into Canadian society?

The point behind these questions is that, in contrast with British policy, the Canadian Government, while highlighting issues to be addressed, saw immigration as a potential and substantial benefit to Canada. The statement of the policy begins: 'Canada will be a society which allows all members to reach their potential, a society with common values and obligations, a society which respects individual rights and a peaceful society.' The Government looked for migrants with the appropriate skills-base for Canada's needs, to enhance the positive effects of immigration.

People will have to have high levels of social capital, education, job skills, entrepreneurs, the ability to speak one official language and requiring few social services. Such individuals can adjust quickly into the labour force and generate incomes. As a result, they will contribute to the tax base without burdening the capital investment of Canada, namely health, education, and other social benefit plans. Thus in matching our concern to reduce costs, a greater proportion of immigrants who can immediately participate in Canadian society will be selected over those who require some capital investment before being able to participate and integrate. Moreover, if individuals possessing these skills have dependants, the dependants will also have to be evaluated according to their social capital.

This quest focused the search for immigrants on single, independent immigrants, and away from the family reunification programme.⁴⁹

There was also an emphasis on attracting business immigrants and people with venture capital, business acumen or entrepreneurial skills. Substantial non-refundable fees were required to cover the costs of administering immigration, thus generating an income which it was expected, would yield \$330 million by the end of the century.⁵⁰ Such policies may be said to be the opposite of the declaration on the (American) Statue of Liberty, about sending 'your tired, your poor, your huddled masses'. On immigration (as opposed to refugee⁵¹) policy the Canadian principle was that as the

⁴⁹ Frideres, 'Canada's Changing Policy,' pp. 456–60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 461–3.

⁵¹ Canada has allocated a proportion of immigrant places for refugees, though that figure, and even the idea of a fixed number, has varied over the years. In the late 1980s, the time when my survey was conducted, Canada was looking to take 30,000 refugees. Richmond, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism', p. 95.

nation needed immigrants, it must select those who would meet its needs, who would not create public cost, and who would bring investment into the country. But given that the country needed the right immigrants, it was then important to ensure the equality of all its citizens, and their commitment to Canada and its ideals.

It would, however, be a mistake to imply that Canada's multicultural policy has eliminated all the racial discrimination which was the official policy in the 'Whites only' era. The mid-1970s, for example, has been identified as a time of increasing racial discrimination, not least in jobs and in the spread of stereotypes of Asians as living in squalid, overcrowded conditions, exploiting government services, being clannish, arrogant and confrontational.⁵² In the face of propaganda from extremist groups and violence against people and property, even of police harassment against visible minorities in the 1980s, a Ministry of Multiculturalism was established in 1988 which called for affirmative action.⁵³ A 1997 study of a 1991 survey of attitudes found that the majority of the population were most comfortable being with people of British or French origin, less comfortable with those of various other European origins, and least comfortable with non-Whites. The majority were more comfortable with people born in Canada than with new arrivals, but 'nativity is much less important than occupation and ethnicity in shaping prestige evaluations'. The survey found that visible minorities were more readily accepted, or had higher fraternity levels, in British Columbia than Ontario, and were least readily accepted in Quebec. The historic reasons for such attitudes to Asians were the alleged fear that they might swamp Canada; that they were so different as to be unassailable; that Asians competed with Whites for cheap labour and were seen as a health hazard.⁵⁴ These fears are ironic in view of the fact that, proportionally, South Asians are generally

⁵² Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp. 212–14, 218, 224, 221, 222. These authors are of the opinion that the prejudice against South Asians is even greater than against the Chinese.

⁵³ Richmond, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism', p. 102.

⁵⁴ L. S. Laczko, 'Feelings of Fraternity in Canada: An Empirical Exploration of Regional Differences', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 6, 3–4, 1997, pp. 343–61. See also J. W. Berry and R. Kalin, 'Multicultural and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada: An Overview of the 1991 National Survey', *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 27 (3), 1995, pp. 301–20. On the difficulty of Asians in obtaining the same pay for the same work see D. E. Bloom *et al.*, 'The Changing Labour Market Position of Canadian Immigrants', *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 28, 4b, Nov. 1995, pp. 987–1005.

better educated; and tend to be in higher level professional careers, not least medicine, than the wider population.

Some comparisons

Both Canada and the US moved away from a 'Whites only' policy in the mid-1960s. There was something of a common historical background between the two countries in that both had previously sought to attract North European and (Montreal apart) Protestant migrants. The Punjabi settlers who moved to Canada early in the twentieth century also migrated to California. In both countries there were White racist policies towards the native settlers. The post-Second World War era, with the emergence of independent nations, India for example, forced the hand of governments who wanted influence on the world stage and especially at the United Nations. There were differences, of course. Canada had not had the open-door era that US had, nor was the US losing a substantial proportion of its population annually through emigration, as Canada was. In proportion to the existing general population, Canada accepted a higher ratio of immigrants than the US (1 : 30, c.f. US 1 : 73).⁵⁵ The problems of racism continued in both countries at the popular level, but Canada developed a high-profile official commitment to multiculturalism, a commitment taken up subsequently by other countries.

Zoroastrian Settlement on the North American Continent

A profile of North American Zoroastrians in the 1980s

This section is based on my 1984–5 survey, distributed through the various Associations.^{56, 57} Nine hundred and fifteen responses

⁵⁵ Atchison, 'Immigration', p. 22.

⁵⁶ I am grateful to the Associations in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Houston, Toronto (and later Vancouver) for allowing me to read through their files of AGMs, EGMs, committee reports. In what follows I have, where possible, quoted documents that are more widely accessible such as congress proceedings, newsletters and *Parsiana*, but virtually all those references have been cross-checked with the original files. I am also deeply grateful to the families in the various cities who have welcomed me into their homes, sometimes on several visits. The late Jamshed and Roda Pavri in particular made me welcome on a number of occasions and Mr Pavri gave me access to his considerable collection of records of Zoroastrians both on Hong Kong and Vancouver. I wish to thank also the Treasurywallas and Kangas for their gracious hospitality and Bella Tata for organizing much of my visit and driving me around.

⁵⁷ An earlier publication of the survey findings was reprinted in *Selected Papers*, pp. 367–409.

were received from the 2,000 questionnaires distributed in Canada and USA. Much of the credit for this high response rate is due to Hushtasp and Perviz Bhumgara, who distributed the questionnaire across the American continent, and to the organizational efficiency of the Associations.⁵⁸ There were no reliable estimates of numbers of Zoroastrians in this period, but across the whole continent a best guess would be in the order of 3,000–5,000. As a proportion of the global figure, therefore, this survey can be taken as reasonably reliable. Of course there are weaknesses, which must be recognized. The survey was sent out at the time of the split between the largely Parsi-dominated Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA). The returns from the Iranian members were therefore small. In California, one of the leading Iranian Zoroastrian figures, Mrs Farangis Shahrokh, went to great lengths to encourage Iranian Zoroastrians to complete the questionnaire, so that those figures may be considered a more reliable guide to Iranian Zoroastrian beliefs; though this is more true of Los Angeles than of San Francisco. Unfortunately, in the mid-1980s my own relations with the Zoroastrians in British Columbia were not as warm as they subsequently became, so the response rate from that Association was low and the general totals for the rest of Canada may be affected.⁵⁹

After preliminary analysis of the returns it was decided to present the material under the following headings: Chicago, California, Texas, New York, 'the rest' of the USA, Toronto, and 'the rest' of Canada. Chicago, New York and Toronto are obviously clearly defined centres and require no explanation. The California sample is based mainly on Los Angeles, both the Parsi and the Iranian groups there, but there were some responses also from San Francisco, which were almost all Iranian. The other smaller Associations were put together because they shared a similar experience in seeking to preserve their tradition and culture without the aid of a physical centre, and living in small scattered

⁵⁸ As with all sections relating to the survey, I must again record my profound gratitude to Gillian Towler Mehta and family for making the survey possible. In this chapter in particular their own experience of living in America for years was especially useful in identifying trends and patterns, though the fault for any failing remains, of course, my own.

⁵⁹ In the commentary on the collected data, I am aware of the useful survey provided by the Association in British Columbia for the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay, and I have visited Vancouver three times subsequent to the survey.

groups. However, as these divisions of the material were tested, one Association stood out, for reasons that will become apparent: Houston is dealt with separately even though at the time of the survey it was not a centre with a physical building. The tables on which the following summaries are based are given in Appendix 2. The overview here, it is hoped, will aid understanding.

California apart, it can be seen from Appendix 2, Table 1 that Iranian Zoroastrians represented under 12% of the Zoroastrian population at the time of the survey, though for the reasons given it may be assumed that there were more in New York and Vancouver than these figures indicate. The figures for those born 'in the West' (see Appendix 2, Table 3) indicate that overall in the 1980s the Zoroastrian population on the continent was of the first generation, with the majority coming from India. In the US there were relatively few Zoroastrians from East Africa, but there was a higher proportion in Canada. Houston alone had a substantial proportion from Pakistan, a distinctive feature to which we shall return. In some areas, New York, the 'rest' of the US and in Canada, there was clearly some onward migration from Britain. The Toronto Association (more correctly the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) was somewhat more mixed than others were, and had a separate organization, the Iranian Zoroastrian Cultural Kanoun.⁶⁰

Table 1:1–2 in Appendix 2 shows how, in contrast to Britain, very few respondents settled in the West before the 1960s. Whatever the dates of the establishment of Associations, the centres people moved to in any numbers in the 1960s were Chicago, Toronto, and the rest of Canada (some to the rest of the USA). In the 1970s all Associations grew significantly, especially California, New York, and 'the rest' of the US. In the 1980s the main growth was in Houston and California. If one takes as a general principle that variations between groups of less than 10% are not significant (using the term in a general not a technical sense), then there were no significant differences of age structures between North American Associations—10–20% were under the age of 30, 60% were in their thirties and forties, and only 5–10% were in their sixties and over. In comparison to the age range of the British

⁶⁰ My survey elicited few responses from Iranian Zoroastrians in Toronto. This, I was told, was because in the mid-1980s they were very cautious about personal details being published in view of the situation in Iran.

Zoroastrians and especially in contrast to the Bombay Parsis, this constituted a very young population. Generally (Table 1: 4) there was a slight preponderance of males across the continent, less than 20% of respondents were single, and, despite some of the debates to be discussed below, intermarriage was relatively low—under 20% were married out and two-thirds were part of an extended family. In the scattered groups in the USA and Canada as in Britain, however, there was a greater proportion of males, of single people, and of intermarrieds (see Appendix 2, Table 1: 3–6). The figures suggest that it was young single males who migrated to the scattered groups, whereas the in-marrieds tended to settle where there was an Association. One may presume that living away from Associations limits the opportunities of marrying within the community and that is why intermarriage occurred more often in the scattered groups. There was a tendency towards nuclear families in Toronto and Canada, and extended families in Chicago, Houston and New York. California appeared to have a higher proportion of single people with no extended family in the region.

Table 1: 12 in Appendix 2 shows that of those in employment, the majority were in managerial or executive class employment. In the older US centres in particular (Chicago, New York and the ‘rest’ of America), approximately 50% were in executive-class employment, compared with one-third in Canada. Table 1: 13–15 shows that, in international perspective, American and Canadian Zoroastrians kept in touch with fellow Zoroastrians both in the old country and ‘here’, and read Zoroastrian literature, more than did British Zoroastrians. But there were differences between American Associations. More Californian respondents said that they had more regular contact with Zoroastrians locally than did most other groups. In the ‘rest of America’ fewer respondents were in touch with Zoroastrians ‘here’, presumably because of the distances. There were wide differences between the groups on reading Zoroastrian literature; for example, only 26% did so in Houston compared with 60% in California. It is perhaps significant that the figures are higher where there is a well-established newsletter, which there was in California, but not in Houston, when this survey was conducted. If that explanation is correct, the newsletters clearly serve as an important means of Zoroastrian communication. Table 1: 22–31 in Appendix 2 suggests that in general respondents in Toronto and Canada inclined somewhat more towards Orthodoxy than people in

the USA did, both in their own assessment and in their beliefs and practices. Within the USA more people in Chicago and New York described themselves as Liberal, and this was reflected in their beliefs and practices associated with funerals, intermarriage, permitting non-Zoroastrians into their prayer rooms and their beliefs concerning prayers for the dead. These centres contrasted with respondents from Houston and California in particular. There was a different pattern in higher education between USA and the other western countries, in that more of their people had pursued postgraduate studies in America, whereas a number in Britain and Canada had pursued such studies in India. How these characteristics impact on religious belief and practice will be discussed later. First, a brief history of Zoroastrians on the continent is appropriate.

The earliest settlers: pre-1965

Probably the earliest Parsi contacts with the North American continent came through trade between Boston (Salem) and Bombay. The first such contact dates from 1799, when Nichols relates that he conducted his business with 'Parsees, some of the most intelligent people I have ever known, rich and honourable in their dealings'.⁶¹ The first Parsi known to have visited Salem for trade appears in a 1937 autobiography of Caroline Howard, who recalls the visit of an unnamed Parsi to her home. She writes, 'I remember that we all screamed at him and spoke very distinctly, as if we were talking to a child, and that he answered us in a very low cultivated refined voice, using much better English than we did!' She comments that he was returning to India after a six-year absence during which he had studied at Oxford, and over tea 'told us many interesting things of his life in Bombay'.⁶² There was a case of what might be described as an 'eccentric' Zoroastrian in Arizona in 1869. Charles Poston from Arizona visited Bombay in 1869 and claims he was converted to Zoroastrianism and initiated.

⁶¹ M. Nichols (ed.), *George Nichols, Salem Shipmaster and Merchant: An Autobiography*, Salem Mass., n.d., p. 33. I am indebted to Susan Bean of the Peabody Essex Museum for all the references to the early Parsi-Boston contacts. She also drew my attention to a manuscript in preparation of what was then (1997) an unpublished journal of William Rogers to Bombay in 1817-18, a document in the Peabody Essex Museum. See the article by her in *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1997, pp. 20-3.

⁶² Caroline Howard King, *When I Lived in Salem*, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1937, p. 37. See further T. N. Layton, *The Voyage of the Frolic: New England Merchants and the Opium Trade*, Stanford University Press, 1997.

On his return to America he bought land to build a temple and petitioned the Shah for funds; his application was ignored, and little more was heard of his Zoroastrian activity in America!⁶³

Chandrasekhar has unearthed references to early Zoroastrian contacts with North America which I have not seen published anywhere else.⁶⁴ He mentions 'a leading Parsi businessman, Dossabhoy Merwanji, who had visited the United States more than once and was familiar with American business and trade conditions as well as consular rules and regulations'. He befriended the American consul in Bombay, Edward Ely, who when he fell ill and returned to America in 1852 appointed Merwanji 'to act in my name as Vice-Consul of the United States at Bombay, I'm holding myself responsible for all his acts and fidelity'. He wrote to the American Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, 'In the absence of Americans at this place I have preferred him [Merwanji] to any English merchant resident.'⁶⁵ Chandrasekhar then states that in 1888 another Parsi, Hormusji E. Bode, was appointed Vice-Consul and when the Consul died in 1889, Bode held that responsibility until another American arrived in 1898. The most intriguing episode related by Chandrasekhar, however, relates to Parsis from Baroda. Three businessmen wrote to the US Consul in Bombay in 1876 seeking information on conditions in America, for many of their number were contemplating migrating there:

Cotton Ginning Factory
Baroda
30 August 1876

To
The American Consul
Bombay
Dear Sir,

Many enterprising and intelligent Parsees are desirous of emigrating to the New World and of establishing themselves as colonists on the same plan and system as Europeans [*sic*] settlers have been doing. It is a thought uppermost in the minds of some of our Community to form themselves into a body and by so doing to invest a certain Amount of their own Capital

⁶³ See the report in *FEZANA Journal*, May 1992, pp. 5 f. from J. Myers, 'Charles Poston, Father of Arizona', *Arizona Highways Magazine*, referring to Poston's book *The Sun Worshippers of Asia*, published in London 1872, America 1877.

⁶⁴ *From India to America*, pp. 12–15. He expresses his indebtedness to a private communication from Prof. Dwijendranath Tripathi (n. 10, p. 27).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

in purchasing Cultivable lands of Considerable Area. The principal object of such an investment is to found a separate Colony of Parsees only in a land which has been from times immemorial the fostering nurse of many an enterprising and needy adventurer and well-to-do Capitalists where they Can without the slightest impediment preserve and follow the religion of their forefathers. But they are not sufficiently informed as to the climate, resources and husbandry of the very vast country of the United States and the little knowledge they are in a position of obtaining from several books and pamphlets is so uncertain and so unreliable that it fails to make a vivid impression on their minds and attract them directly to the subject.

We the undersigned therefore deem you the Constituted representative of the Independent States as the chief and very reliable source of all authentic information in the matter. You are perhaps already aware that the Parsees of Western India do not fall even a whit behind their immediate neighbors the Englishmen and their distant fellow-men the Europeans wherever the Spirit of noble enterprise and great undertakings is concerned. A settlement in America at the earliest opportunity has become the subject of our grave considerations, but our minds are not sufficiently enlightened in it, as they ought to be. Being placed in a position of the full particulars which we request you to supply us with we intend to lay before our Community in public lectures and Journals all the advantages derivable from their monetary concerns, their social Connections and their taking part in a system of politics by making the foreign but cherished country as their new home and permanent domicile. But for a successful achievement of our plan and rendering our information and arguments unimpeachable we indispensably need your able support and Cooperation. We fully comprehend the usefulness of all such informations [*sic*] supplied by you, and we can not but appreciate their full values which is really uncomparable [*sic*] to that of all Knowledge we can by dint of exertion and Close applications gather from writers and authorities.

We shall therefore feel ourselves highly obliged by your favouring us at your earliest convenience with all particulars or references for such particulars as are of paramount importance to us in the Carrying out of our somewhat arduous scheme and with the successful accomplishment your name shall be associated with grateful remembrance by all those who will in future profit thereby,

We remain etc.

Signed Roostumjee Mehrwanji N (Narelwala)

Sorabjee Muncherjee Master

Eduljee Jamsetjee Nehory⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Chandrasekhar, *From India to America*, pp. 11–15. Quoted with the publisher's kind permission.

The details in Chandrasekhar are not sufficient for this material to be cross-checked, but the fact that there is no evidence of a Baroda Parsi settlement in America indicates that they did not receive either appropriate information or support. These merchants are not known other than from this letter and so it is impossible to say if there was a serious plan for such a migration to take place from Baroda, but in view of those to China and East Africa it is not surprising that such a mercantile venture to America was considered.

The first person to have produced a general account of Zoroastrian arrivals on the continent is the late Vancouver-based Parsi Jamshed Pavri, and an excellent compilation of the stories of Zoroastrians in USA and Canada from the earliest times through to the 1960s has been written by Roshan Rivetna.⁶⁷ The earliest person known to have moved to America was Maneckji F. Javeri, who prospected for gold in California in the 1860s. A little more is known of Pestonji F. Davar, who came from Bombay and Hong Kong in 1892. He settled in San Francisco and became a millionaire. On his death he left much of his estate to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. His son, however, converted to Christianity and left his money to the church. As a member of an isolated Zoroastrian family, he evidently found it impossible to maintain his religious traditions and, as a second-generation American leaving the community, he represents an archetypal pattern that many Zoroastrians fear. In 1904 Phiroze D. Saklatvalla moved to New York to represent the Parsi industrial giants, the Tatas. Unlike his brother who became an MP in England, Phiroze succeeded in business, becoming known as the 'oil king'. A vivid picture of Saklatvalla's wealth and splendid lifestyle is to be found in the memories of another early Parsi settler on the continent, Rustomji Wadia. He came to America as an engineer but lost his job in the Depression and bought a flourishing Indian restaurant, the Rajah, near Times Square in mid-town Manhattan. This became the meeting place for the few Zoroastrians who lived there and for those passing through.⁶⁸ Saklatvalla, Wadia, Pheroze Lashkeri (who worked for Ford) and Behram Saklatvalla,

⁶⁷ See J. Pavri's address to the Montreal Congress, 'Contributions of Zoroastrians to the North American Society', in *The Zoroastrian Challenge in North America, Proceedings of the Fourth North American Congress*, 1983, pp. 88–94; *Parsiana*, Jan. 1976, pp. 23–7, and also the *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1997, pp. 26–8. See further, Roshan Rivetna, 'Coming to North America', *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1997, pp. 30–45.

⁶⁸ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1991, pp. 24 f. See also the tribute to Wadia on his death in Rustom D. Wadia, 'The Shadow of Suicide', *Parsiana*, Feb. 1993, p. 15.

who made steel patterns in Pittsburgh, started the first Zoroastrian Association of New York (and therefore the first on the continent) in 1929. Another early settler was Nasli Heeramaneck, who is said to have come with 75 cents in his pocket but became a famous art collector with splendid collections of Indian, Nepali and Tibetan materials; these were eventually acquired by the County Museum of Art of Los Angeles. The Association was started on the suggestion of Dastur Dhalla when he revisited New York, where he had lived during his postgraduate studies in 1905–9.⁶⁹ Intermarriage was almost inevitable in this fledgling community. The resident members were very supportive of Lashkeri when he announced his engagement to a non-Zoroastrian, but Dhalla declined to be present and bless the proceedings. Lashkeri was so distraught that he committed suicide before the wedding.⁷⁰ The strictness of the so-called ‘Protestant Dastur’ was rarely commented on, but in some ways he was indeed strict, for he had also declined to perform the *Bella naujote* in Rangoon. The Association died with its founder, Phiroze Saklatwalla, in 1934, though ‘Association’ is a rather grand title for such a small group. It was also something of a prototype of later settlement patterns distinctive of North American Zoroastrians, involving the bureaucratic concern to institutionalize, or formalize, groups and activities. This early group, with its millionaires, reinforced the image of America as a land of opportunity.

After the Immigration Act of 1917, Asians were banned from entering America. Consequently the Zoroastrians who did come were students, and there was the occasional passing businessman. Their meeting place was usually Mr Wadia’s restaurant. Pavri notes three Parsis who successfully opposed the cancelling of their citizenship papers by the authorities: Bulsara, Wadia and Dinshaw P. F. Ghadiali. Ghadiali had started out as an electrician, indeed had two patents to his name. After an initial visit to the US to meet Edison in 1896, he settled there in 1911 and became a professor at the New York College of Engineering. He joined the army and became a commander in the New York Police Reserve Air Force Pioneers Wing. He was honoured with the Liberty Medal for his war services and was asked to lead the Wing in the 1919 Independence Day Parade. His grounds for opposing the cancellation of his citizenship

⁶⁹ This information was given to me personally by Mr Wadia.

⁷⁰ See Wadia, in *Parsiana*, 1991, detailed in n. 68 above.

papers was not his contribution to America, but (like Wadia and Balsara) his contention that he was not a Hindu, but of a white race. The court found that 'Parsees do belong to the white race'.⁷¹ That defence, like the wording said to have been on his Independence Day flag—'Parsi Zoroastrian American forever'—points to the general question of identity posed at the end of the twentieth century, namely the balancing of religious, ethnic and national identities. The issue of the *FEZANA Journal* covering these early arrivals mentions others who came in the first half of the century: J. A. Sethna in 1913, the Jahanian brothers in 1916, and F. S. Bamji in 1935—all for engineering. Pavri notes several instances of distinguished Zoroastrians who came in the fractionally easier immigration climate of the 1940s. These include Meherwan C. Irani consultant and innovative mining engineer; Rustomji Bana, distinguished architect; Jehangir N. Badhni, sometime Chief Engineer of the Iranian Government; Mehraban Zarthoshty, who started in the import-export trade and became a successful business man and is now an important philanthropist; and Kaikhosrov Irani, who came as a physicist and later became Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York. Homi Engineer, who had achieved high military office before becoming Senior Surveyor for North India, arrived in Vancouver in 1957, where he was joined a year later by the Pavris.⁷² Mehli Mehta moved to Philadelphia in 1959 as a violinist and two years later his son, Zubin, came as the Musical Director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. His brother, Zarin, had already settled in Montreal as an accountant. Zubin moved to Los Angeles in 1962 and eventually to the New York Philharmonic in 1978.⁷³ He, too, is a person who will re-emerge in the history of Zoroastrians on the North American continent. Prior to 1965, therefore, a few outstanding individuals came for specific posts or as students. The numbers increased over the next twenty years, but there was no substantial Zoroastrian migration to America.

An early copy of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario's *Newsletter* gave an overview of early Parsi visitors to Canada.⁷⁴ In addition

⁷¹ Pavri, 'Contributions', p. 89, and Kersi B. Shroff, *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1997, which on p. 28 includes a legal account of the 1909 and 1910 court cases.

⁷² See the Sept.–Nov. 1999 issue of *In Search of Truth*, the Vancouver newsletter.

⁷³ *FEZANA Journal*, Summer 1999, pp. 47–53.

⁷⁴ Apr. 1976, III. 9. See also J. Pavri, *The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia 1968–1978*, (hereafter *ZSBC*) Vancouver (private publication), 1978 (a collection of the major reports, e.g. of the AGMs of the Society, in that period), pp. ii–iv.

to Javeri joining in the gold rush north of Vancouver in 1866, a prominent Bombay Parsi, Sir Pheroze Sethna, visited Canada several times in the 1920s and 1930s to discuss the possibility of Parsis settling there. He was not successful, despite his long-standing association with, and prominent position in, the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. A number of Parsis studied at Toronto University from 1922 (when Shiavax Nawroji studied dentistry). In the early 1960s students such as Dara Dastur, Keki Bharucha and Boman Ghadiali came, and they were the first to obtain immigrant landed status. They established 'the Zoroastrian fraternity' in Toronto in 1966. A number of important future leaders also came before the crucial year of 1965 namely Jehangir (Paymaster) Medora (1946), Keki Bhote (1948), Dr Jehan Bagli, Sam Tata (1956), Eruch Munshi (1957), Dr Rustom Sarfeh, Jamshed Pavri, Dr Shahriar Mehrabi (1958), Dr Lovji Cama,⁷⁵ and Dr Jamshed Mavalwalla (1960). Some of these very early settlers encountered real problems of loneliness and isolation, far from home with few co-religionists and no effective support networks.⁷⁶ Many of these early arrivals became prominent leaders among North American Zoroastrians in the 1980s and 1990s.

Migration studies commonly neglect to bring out the serious difficulties faced by settlers, including a lack of money. One now well-known and established family laughingly told me of their first days in the US with about \$10 between them for food and lodging, half of which the husband gave to a young American in need. Another related how he sat on a wall wondering how to get started. He saw an American in difficulties, helped him and was promptly given a job. The need to meet fellow Zoroastrians was real, but there were so few. Once groups began to form, although always small compared to other Asian groups, proportionately they grew quickly. For example, the membership lists at Houston (one of the groups established later) show 148 people in 1979 (including 51 children), 187 in 1981 (with 62 children) and 218 in 1982 (including 72 children); this represents a growth of one-third in three years, but it was still only a small number of adults to build a 'community'. North America was a daunting prospect to many of the new settlers who came alone.

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Dr and Mrs Cama for making me a welcome guest in their home.

⁷⁶ *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1997, pp. 39, 46, 48 f.

The settlement years, 1965–1990

The pioneers

Pavri's *Directory of Zoroastrians in North America*, produced in December 1965, lists 291 adults and 79 children. Of the adults 158 (54%) were single and 37 (13%) intermarried. They were located mainly in Ontario (52 adults); California (50 adults); New York (46 adults) and Quebec (28 adults). Those numbers grew dramatically. It quickly became easy to migrate to Canada, because two resident Zoroastrians, Jehangir (Paymaster) Medora⁷⁷ and Jamshed Pavri persuaded a Mr Nigosian of the immigration department and a Mr Delaney, head of the immigration service in Toronto, that the Parsis were people with exceptionally high educational achievements. In conjunction with a travel agent in Bombay a system was set up whereby (I am assured by individuals who did this) one could apply to migrate in the morning and be on the evening flight the same day. The earliest informal Associations were in Montreal, Vancouver and Chicago in 1965–8; the first informal Association in Toronto was started in 1966. The first community letter that I have been able to trace was started in Chicago on 1 June 1966 and presented itself as the production of the 'Zoroastrian Association of America'.⁷⁸ The first paragraph sets the tone of many papers to come:

The Zoroastrian population in the United States and Canada is already the fourth largest Zoroastrian community in the world—next only to India, Iran and Pakistan. With the liberalizing of immigration laws in both the United States and Canada, the lure that the New World holds for Parsis abroad, it is not inconceivable that by the end of this century the Zoroastrian community in North America will jump to second place. It is time, therefore, for those of us in the vanguard of this migration, to plan on ways and means to preserve our identity and our heritage, while participating fully in the American way of life.

The Zoroastrian community in Vancouver quickly protested at this claim to represent all American Zoroastrians. Their pioneering families, the Engineers and Pavris, had drafted a constitution

⁷⁷ His story is told by Roshan Rivetna in *FEZANA Journal*, Summer 1997, pp. 44 f. He is estimated to have helped 2,000 Parsis relocate.

⁷⁸ There is an interesting interview with the Chicago leader of those early years, Keki Bhote, in A. S. Mama, 'What Kind of Legacy Will We Leave Behind?' *Parsiana*, Dec. 1996, pp. 21 f.

in 1960 and felt that their communal role was not being recognized.⁷⁹ This was the first occasion on which a major issue of the future was aired: the question of leadership. This can be a sensitive matter in any minority community especially if its members feel restricted in outside opportunities. Leadership has been a matter of lively, and bitter, debate at various stages of American Zoroastrian history. On the other hand the role of leader is important, because the role of an individual here can have greater impact than in a larger body. In this instance, there was, in the opinion of Bhote, a need for a co-ordinated movement across the continent, because the resources available to individual groups were inadequate to meet the needs that were foreseen. This was a fact later recognized in Vancouver.⁸⁰ Bhote and others continued the campaign for a national body over many years until it emerged in 1986–7. The quotation from the newsletter contains two other issues, which have continued to be at the forefront of community debate and will be recurring themes in this chapter. The first is the conviction that a significant part of future Zoroastrian history will be in America. This sense of confidence and assertiveness in the Zoroastrian world is real. For example, Loyji Cama of New York declared in his paper to the 1977 Congress in Chicago: ‘We are in a somewhat similar situation to what it must have been 1,300 years ago when our ancestors came to India . . . I believe that the best of the community has been brought here by a divine plan.’ As we shall see below, in the years of consolidation and growth of the 1990s, that American leadership was more often and explicitly highlighted.

The second feature of the quotation that merits highlighting, because of its prophetic nature, is the awareness of the need to balance the faithful preservation of identity, heritage and customs with the wish to participate fully in American life. This has been the underlying theme of successive North American Zoroastrian conferences, papers and study groups, and is the basic issue underlying much of the rest of this chapter. One example: the 1985 North American Zoroastrian Conference in Los Angeles was entitled: ‘The Preservation of Zoroastrian Identity through Adoption to Changing Environments’. Since the 1966 newsletter

⁷⁹ On the early history of the Vancouver Association see *Parsiana*, July 1993, p. 14.

⁸⁰ See the Minutes of the meeting of October 8th, 1967 published in J. Pavri, *ZSBC*, p. 24.

mentioned above, twenty-three formal Associations have been started, almost all for Zoroastrians from Iran and the Indian sub-continent, though a few are either predominantly or explicitly Iranian.

*Building an infrastructure—associations, buildings, conferences, etc.
(1929–2000).*

- 1929 First Zoroastrian Association started in New York (folded a few years later).
- 1965 Zoroastrian Association America started in Chicago (folded three to four years later).
- 1966 Zoroastrian Fraternity (Toronto) started to help Zoroastrians migrate from India.
- 1967 Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ) founded.
- 1968 Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZBSC) (Vancouver) founded.
- 1971 Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (Toronto) (ZSO) founded.
- 1973 Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) founded.
- 1974 Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) founded.
- 1974 *Gavashni* (Newsletter of Quebec) started.
- 1975 Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAMC) founded.
- 1975 First North American Zoroastrian Symposium, Toronto.
- 1976 Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) founded.
- 1977 Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr, New York Darbe Mehr, inaugurated.
- 1977 Second North American Zoroastrian Conference, Chicago.
- 1979 Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. founded.
- 1979 Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) founded.
- 1980 California Zoroastrian Center (CVC) started.
- 1980 Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) founded.
- 1980 Zoroastrian Association of Alberta (ZAA) founded.
- 1980 Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA), Los Angeles, founded.
- 1980 Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr, Toronto, inaugurated.

- 1981 Persian Zoroastrian Organisation (California) (PZO) founded.
- 1982 Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA) founded.
- 1982 Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress, Montreal.
- 1983 Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA) founded.
- 1983 North American Mobeds Conference, Toronto.
- 1983 Arbab Rustom Darbe Mehr, Chicago, inaugurated.
- 1985 Fifth North American Congress, Los Angeles.
- 1986 Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, Vancouver, inaugurated.
- 1986 Iranian Zoroastrian Association [IZA] started in New York.
- 1986 Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e Mehr and Californian Zoroastrian Centre, Los Angeles, inaugurated.
- 1986 Rustom Guiv Dar-e Mehr, Atash Kadeh, San José, inaugurated.
- 1987 Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) registered.
- 1987 First North American Youth Camp, Houston.
- 1987 *Payk-e-Mehr* publication, to promote Persian culture and Zoroastrian religion, Vancouver.
- 1988 First Zoroastrian Olympics, California.
- 1988 FEZANA established Zoroastrian Sports Committee [ZSC].
- 1988 Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America, Kankash-e-Mobedan.
- 1988 Sixth North American Zoroastrian Congress.
- 1989 Zoroastrian Association of North Texas [ZANT] founded.
- 1989 Second Zoroastrian Youth Camp, Houston.
- 1989 Second Zoroastrian Olympics, California.
- 1990 Third Zoroastrian Olympics, California.
- 1990 Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress, Houston.
- 1990 Fourth North American Youth Congress, Toronto.
- 1990 Zoroastrian Center and Dar-e Mehr, Washington DC, purchased.
- 1990 Zoroastrian Society of Washington State [ZSWS] founded.
- 1990 Zarathushtrian Assembly founded in Los Angeles.
- 1990 Zoroastrian Association of Arizona (ZAA) founded.
- 1990 Zoroastrian Association of Kansas (ZAK) founded.
- 1990 First Zoroastrian Scouts Group . . . 100, Toronto.

- 1991 Fifth North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress, Vancouver.
- 1991 Zoroastrian Association of Atlantic Canada founded.
- 1992 Fourth Zoroastrian Olympics, California State University.
- 1992 Mobed Council formally established.
- 1992 Eighth North American Congress, Vancouver.
- 1993 North American Mobeds Council (NAMC), registered, Toronto.
- 1993 First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, Los Angeles.
- 1994 Zarathushti Youth of North America (ZYNA) formed by FEZANA.
- 1994 Fifth Zoroastrian Olympics, California.
- 1994 First North America Gatha Conference, Costa Mesa, California.
- 1994 Sixth North American Youth Congress, Chicago.
- 1995 World Conference on Yashts, Florida.
- 1995 Seventh North American Youth Congress, California (Stanford).
- 1995 Iranian Zoroastrian Cultural Kanoun, Toronto.
- 1996 Second North American Gatha Conference, Houston.
- 1996 Tenth North American Congress, San Francisco.
- 1997 Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Centre, Houston.
- 1997 First International Avesta Conference, Boston.
- 1997 FEZANA received NGO status at UN.
- 1997 First Zarathushti Business Conference & Expo, Las Vegas.
- 1997 Zoroastrian Association of the Rocky Mountains (ZARM) founded.
- 1998 Zoroastrian Association of Florida (ZAF).
- 1998 Eleventh North American Zoroastrian Congress, New York.
- 1998 Second Zarathushti Business Conference, Las Vegas.
- 1999 Eighth North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress, Montreal.
- 1999 Second International Avesta Conference, Calgary.
- 2000 Seventh Zarathushti Games, Houston.
- 2000 Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, Houston.⁸¹

⁸¹ The dates of the Associations and Darbe Mehrs can be found in *FEZANA Journal*, Summer 1996, pp. 32–60 and the Congresses and other events are reported in the regular *Journal*. I am grateful to Dolly Dastoor for checking, and in some cases correcting, my time chart.

There are, at the beginning of the millennium, as well as the twenty-three Associations, about a dozen smaller and looser groups. The largest Associations are Toronto (5,000-plus) Vancouver (1,500-plus) and the various Californian groups which together total approximately 2,500.⁸² The figures do, however, require some caution. As a general rule of thumb, most Zoroastrian bodies estimate how many Zoroastrians are known to live in the region and then double that figure because of the number of people not in contact with an Association. Some of the Association address lists do not have full records, because many people do not want their addresses and details published. In the privacy and anonymity of the 1991 Canadian census, fewer people recorded themselves as Zoroastrian than the Associations' figures would lead one to expect. The total figure for the whole of Canada was 3,185 (1,620 M., 1,565 F.). It has been objected that these figure greatly underestimate the number of Zoroastrians because the question was ambiguous, and some simply identified themselves as 'Indian'. The figures broke down as follows:

Nova Scotia	10
Quebec	270
Ontario	2,140
Manitoba	55
Saskatchewan	10
Alberta	125
British Columbia	580

Comparable information is not available for the US, but these figures emphasize the need for caution in estimating numbers. In contrast, the FEZANA *Millenium Commemorative Issue* (p. 10) gives the numbers for Canada as 7,000. The 1990s did see an increase in numbers, but not of that magnitude. The figure of 18,000 for the USA may be similarly optimistic. The latest American *Directory* includes approximately 10,000 names.⁸³

Most of the Associations have generated newsletters of various types. These largely consist of local news—functions, family events, etc., but often include news from the old country. Some have attempted an educational role, notably *Gavashni*, produced in Montreal in 'the early years' by the Zoroastrian Association of

⁸² On the range of nine Californian groups see *Hamazor*, 2002, I, pp. 50 f.

⁸³ *Zarathushtis in North America, Directory*, FEZANA, 2001.

Quebec and edited by Dr Jehan Bagli; the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario under its founding editor Sabar Bulsara; and *The Zoroastrian*, produced in Los Angeles by Dr Ali Jafarey, a controversial person with a wide following, who will be discussed below. A distinctive newsletter is *Payk-e-Mehr* ('*Message of Love*'), edited by Dr Mehraban Sharvini in Vancouver, for this last-
 ing publication is in both Farsi and English. It first appeared in 1986 and copies are sent overseas, mainly to Iran. Another Farsi Publication—in both Farsi and English—is published from Vancouver: *Iran Zamin*, edited by Fariborz Rahnamoon, available also on his website www.ancientiran.com, it was started somewhat later, in 2000. In the later 1990s, the production of the excellent journal of the national body, FEZANA, meant that the other newsletters became more conventional, with news of local upcoming events, achievements of members, meetings, funds, etc. This is, of course, a vital function for the majority of Zoroastrians across the continent, because their primary focus is on meeting with co-religionists for religious or social functions and not with broad national and international issues. Although containing much local information, these newsletters were originally seen as having a wider national role, as networks across the continent, indeed back to the old country, for copies were often sent to *Parsiana* and major events were reported in that magazine. In one sense the *Federation Newsletter* (see Chapter 2 above) followed the American development.⁸⁴ The only 'circulars' not to have news but to focus exclusively on religious matter are Jafarey's (Reforming) *The Zoroastrian* (later replaced by *Spenta*) and another Californian, but doctrinally diametrically opposed, religious circular the *Mazdayasni Connection*, produced by Silloo and Fali Mehta, which communicates Khshnoomic teaching, especially that of Adi Doctor (see Chapter 2).⁸⁵ There have been two other Zoroastrian media organizations in this period. The first is the Zoroastrian Foundation, which had links with Bombay but whose main, or only, product is a lavishly produced book, *In Search of My God*, published anonymously in 1978. The other is Persepolis Productions, a body set up to launch a film featuring Zubin Mehta's

⁸⁴ The newsletter networks were commented on in *Parsiana*, May 1981, p. 7. It quoted a statement of *Gavashni*, 'The opening up of a source of dialogue between our scattered communities . . . we consider as a first necessary step for our survival as a separate ethnic community.'

⁸⁵ I wish to express my gratitude to Mr and Mrs Mehta for making me so welcome in their home, and for sending me their journal.





Zarathushti Presence in North America

Taken with kind permission of the editor, Roshan Rivetna, from the FEZANA Journal Special Commemorative Issue, Winter 2000, pp. 84 ff.

quest for his roots, an 'epic' in more than one sense, which will be discussed below.

Buildings have been opened in New York (1977), Toronto (1980), Chicago (1983), Los Angeles (1980, moving to new, purpose-built premises in 1986); San José (1986); Vancouver (1986); Washington (1990); and Houston (1997). It is not easy for someone from the majority society to appreciate how vital these are for members of a minority group in the modern West. One young Zoroastrian in Toronto once commented to me, 'Every day I am in a multicultural environment at school. I want one place to go where I can be myself.' In Hong Kong, East Africa and Sind, as we have seen, the Parsis were quick to establish social-cum-religious centres. The centre has a dual function: it is a place where Zoroastrians can meet, mingle, network, so providing not simply enjoyable social occasions, but also mutual support; further, it facilitates meetings between young people. But Zoroastrians also need a place apart for the practice of the religion. The prayer rooms in the West are not fully consecrated temples, unlike those in Sind and Zanzibar, and so do not need the services of a full-time priest, but they acquire a sense of holiness when prayers and religious ceremonies are practised there for years. How these issues are worked out will be discussed below. Here the focus is on the establishment of organizations and institutions.

The story of these buildings is an important part of North American Zoroastrian history. In each case the raising of funds has been a problem because the numbers are small, and the costs are high. To compound the difficulties, the American work ethic and high living costs mean that the young married people (the people with perhaps the greatest interest in such a provision because of their children), both husband and wife, have to work extremely hard to survive in America. They have little spare time, or money, to support the venture. Some of the leaders also lament the loss of the tradition of collective giving in the community, fearing that the history of great benefactors has eroded the individual's sense of responsibility to the community. The Chicago building is something of an exception in this history, because it is the only one which was physically built by the toil of members' own hands. This has produced a special bond between the people and the structure.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ See the booklet, *Inauguration of the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Centre of Chicago*, Chicago, 1983.

Each building opened in this period depended to a greater or lesser degree on funds from Arbab Rustom Guiv and his Trust. The debate has been along the same lines in each case, but was perhaps at its most acute with the first building, the one in New York. The focus of the debate was the ownership of the property. ZAGNY believed that the late Arbab Rustom Guiv had given the property to ZAGNY, and that therefore they were the rightful owners. The chairman of the Guiv Trust, Dr Rustom Sarfeh, believed that the ultimate ownership belonged with the Trusts, who leased the property to the Association at a peppercorn rent, but that the affairs of the property—as distinct from the general affairs of the Association—should be run by a special board of trustees, half appointed by the Trust, half by the Association. The debate was complicated by two further elements. One was a personality clash. Dr Sarfeh was a forceful personality. While outwardly courteous, he was inclined to be scathing and personal in his criticisms. A third factor was the Iranian–Parsi divide. This ultimately led to the establishment of a separate Iranian Association (see below). Sarfeh stated that as the money for the building was Iranian money, Iranians should have the majority voice among the building’s Trustees. There were protracted negotiations to seek a mutually acceptable arrangement and when the final proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by a general meeting of ZAGNY, the matter went to court, where the judge found in favour of ZAGNY. The implications of this for Zoroastrian relations in New York will be discussed below; the significance here is that as a result of this disagreement, the Guiv Trusts hereafter took great pains to ensure that their terms were agreed in advance: the Trusts’ ownership of the buildings; the composition of the board of the trustees; and various details such as the naming of a centre after Guiv. Guiv also insisted that the buildings be termed *Darbe Mehr* (not the traditional *Dar-i Mihr*), which he interpreted as ‘the door of love’. He made it clear that he expected anyone to be welcomed into the building, Zoroastrian or not. The first Association to be so affected was Toronto. The various Associations have sought to raise funds themselves, and there have been other substantial benefactors, notably Mehraban and Faridoon Zartoshty, but in each case, both on the North American continent and in Australia, a sizeable proportion of the money has come from the Guiv Trusts.

Key benefactors

In view of this central role played by Guiv in the growth of Darbe Mehrs on the American continent, it is appropriate to give a brief account of Guiv at this point.⁸⁷ Rustom Behman Guiv (Arbab is an honorific title) was born in Yazd in 1888, the son of a modest businessman who dealt in cloth. He attended school in Yazd, but at the age of 20 undertook the long and hazardous mule ride to Tehran, where he and his brothers flourished in the import and export business. They moved into real estate and he bought land in two areas to the north of Tehran, known as Rustamabad, which he transformed into fertile agricultural land—producing fruits and grain for export. From 1933 he was active in the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman and in 1940 he succeeded Keikhosrow Shahrokh as President. He gave some of his land to the Anjuman and its sale solved their financial difficulties. Two years later he was elected representative of the Zoroastrians in the Iranian Parliament (Majlis). In 1953 he visited Bombay and was greatly impressed by the housing colonies, especially Cusrow Baug, and so with members of the Tafti and Aresh families developed Tehran-Pars, a colony in garden-like surroundings north of Tehran, for poor and low-income Zoroastrians. He sold his home, giving the funds to the Anjuman, and went to live in the colony. He also funded boys' and girls' schools in Tehran. In 1960 he started a factory in Tehran. What he is most remembered for, however, is his work for the Anjuman, serving as president for twenty-seven years, and his work in Parliament for five consecutive terms of office, until the Shah excluded him on the grounds that he had served long enough, and made him a senator. He is known above all as a great philanthropist. He turned his attention to the needs in America as a result of the advice of his friend and guide, Dr Rustom Sarfeh, and Professor Farhang Mehr, formally Vice-Chancellor of Shiraz University (discussed below). He agreed to donate \$180,000 to New York in 1975, and two years later promised a donation of US\$600,000 to Toronto. After the Iranian revolution, Iranian passport holders were not readmitted to the US if they left, so he could not travel from his new home in California to Toronto. From 1978 he contemplated turning his investments towards housing for poor Zoroastrians in Bombay, and had his visa

⁸⁷ The following account is based on a cyclostyled four-page tribute produced by the indefatigable late Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver in 1980. As Mr Pavri had many close Iranian friends from whom he gained information, the account can be taken to be reliable. See also Dr Daryoush Jahanian, 'A Tale of Two Rustams', *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 2000, pp. 89 f.

permitted he would have wished to settle in India. But he remained in America, giving \$150,000 to Chicago, and \$108,000 to the Zoroastrian Center in California. After the New York disagreement, he thereafter leased the properties to the Associations for ninety-nine years at \$1.00 per year. He died in 1980. His wife, Morvarid, was a powerful support in his charitable work, both during his life and after his death. A Trust Body in California and a Foundation in New York, which dispense the funds, manage his estate.⁸⁸ The Rustom Guiv Foundation was established on 4 February 1980 naming Jamshid Guiv, Rostam Sarfeh, Shari Merabi, B. Kaviyani, Farokh Patel and Morvarid Guiv as trustees. The income of the 'estate' was 'for religious purposes', for 'groups or organisations engaged in the practice and advance of the Zoroastrian religion'. The trustees were given full discretion, save only that tax laws must not be contravened, nor must any individual person benefit. The trustees can act on a majority decision. When one trustee's term ends, then the other trustees can replace that person. Although they have funded the purchase of burial plots in California and Chicago, and aided a mobed study fund, the money has been targeted at Zoroastrian buildings in the diaspora.

Two other important benefactors, in America, but also globally, are Mehraban Zartoshty and his brother Faridoon. Donations in the Zartoshty name have always been given in the name of both brothers, for as Mehraban put it, on his brother's death in 2000, 'we were one soul inhabiting two bodies'. Their father had taught them that in business they should always allocate a fixed proportion of their profits to charity. It is this regular contribution which has built the substantial charity fund from which they have given. Mehraban is the brother best known in the West, for he settled first in Britain, then in Canada and spends much of his time with his family in California. The brothers were born in Yazd. Mehraban went to Bombay to matriculate. His original intention had been to study Medicine but he entered the family business. In 1948 he went to the USA to study Business Administration, and returned to the family business in Iran, until the revolution. The Zartoshty brothers have given substantial sums to centres in America, Britain (see Chapter 7), India,⁸⁹ and Australia (see Chapter 9). In addition

⁸⁸ My source of information on the Trust and Foundation was Dr Rustam Sarfeh.

⁸⁹ Notably to the Panchayet for education, to the Petit Parsee General Hospital and to Bombay University for the establishment of the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Research Centre, and to the oldest Bombay temple, Banaji Limji Agiary.

they have donated funds outside the community: for example, in the year 2000 they gave the funds to start the Zartoshty Brothers lectureship in Zoroastrian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. In 1990 Mehraban gave a rare interview, in which this quiet and self-effacing Iranian benefactor discouraged debate on controversial issues at a forthcoming congress. He said that he would accept the families of intermarried Zoroastrians, but wanted to encourage Zoroastrian family life and larger families. He is a mobed, and serves as president of the North American Iranian mobeds (*Kankash-e-Mobedan*), but he rarely officiates in ceremonies, though he did perform the *naujote* of his grandsons. His religion is a key part of his life; he and his brother have funded the management of the Atash Bahram in Yazd for the last thirty years. His benefactions have not caused the controversies that have been associated with the Guiv Trusts, because he himself rarely attaches conditions, but negotiates quietly and directly himself—and I can vouchsafe as one who has negotiated with Mr Zartoshty, that it is done in a quiet and gentle manner.

Congresses

A different, but important, means of networking, as well as newsletters, has been a series of North American Zoroastrian congresses. Those held in this period were in Toronto (1975); Chicago (1977); New York (1979); Montreal (1982); Los Angeles (1985); Toronto (1988); Houston (1990).⁹⁰ The proceedings of four of the first six were published, the exceptions being those in New York and Los Angeles. The choice of topics, and especially of speakers, can be a highly controversial matter because of the significance for the balance of views represented, so the 1985 LA congress was, then and later, seen to have had a strongly reforming steer. The Montreal Congress was important because of the issues which arose there, in particular concerning conversion, as we shall see below. The positive side of the congresses has been their role in bringing together Zoroastrians who live thousands of miles apart and who would otherwise probably not meet. The youth programme has been particularly important in this regard. But a general concern about the congresses was that because each

⁹⁰ Beyond the period under discussion, congresses have also been held at Vancouver (1992), San Francisco (1996), New York (1998); Houston (2000); Chicago (2002).

was organized by a different local Association, there was no ongoing administration or activity between meetings. Further, as some Associations sought to inspire people with their view on topics previously discussed, there was a feeling that they rehearsed the same old issues—and arguments. The result was that collective policies did not emerge.

An ‘umbrella’ organization

The proposal for an overarching body was first made by Bhote, at a meeting of the Zoroastrians in Vancouver.⁹¹ The establishment of such a body was listed as the first goal of the Chicago Symposium (1977, *Proceedings*, pp. 1 f.) and Jehan Bagli, of Montreal, was charged with the responsibility for drawing up proposals. In a letter dated 19 November 1979 to the president of the Third Symposium, Bagli stated that the groundwork had been done and proposals had been formulated. But responses from many Associations were simply not forthcoming. In 1980 Dr Bagli resigned from this responsibility. The work was taken over by Dr Lovji Cama from New York. Again the responses were limited. One problem for the delegates was attending meetings across such vast distances. Many felt that the ideals were impractical. But at a deeper level, suspicion lingered, especially among the traditional groups, that a national body might seek to impose changes that would be unacceptable locally. At the Los Angeles Congress in 1985 the establishment of such a body was blocked in the delegates’ meeting, but reopened on the floor of the congress when the Chicago president, a popular figure, Rohinton Rivetna, was asked to draft a constitution for a national body.⁹² This he did and further convened a ‘constitutional convention’ in Chicago in May 1986. Subsequently, consensus was reached on the constitution of the Federation of Zoroastrians in North America (FEZANA), and all existing Associations (then numbering sixteen) were signatories to it. And so the dream of an overarching two-nation body became a reality. Rivetna was elected its first president. FEZANA marks the start of the third stage of Zoroastrian history in North America, one of collaboration in the growth and establishment of Zoroastrianism. Its elected officers have no powers; all decisions

⁹¹ See minutes of meeting for 8 Oct. 1967, Pavri, *ΣSBC*, p. 24.

⁹² FEZANA *Journal*, Summer 1996, p. 30.

lie with the committees. Its highly successful journal became an important primary source for the history of North American Zoroastrians and will be studied below. It will hereafter be referred to simply as *Journal*. How FEZANA developed in the 1990s will be discussed in the section on the 1990s, below.

*Religious Issues among American Zoroastrians in the
Settlement Years*

Change and continuity

Perhaps the fundamental issue facing the different communities across the continent is the question of adaptation to American life: how far must this go if the religion is to be meaningful to people who live in the New World, rather than in India or Iran, and to the young in particular? Or is change impossible if continuity, indeed the essence, of the tradition and of identity is to be preserved? The issue emerged in particular in relation to the formal practices, notably the rites and ceremonies, for these are a formal enactment of the tradition. It was identified at the first meeting of UZANA (the short-lived precursor to FEZANA) on 7 October 1978; specifically, point 6 of the agreement drawn up at that meeting was headed 'Adaptation of Code Changes to suit the Social Environment of this Continent'. The paragraph reads:

It was agreed by all that this would be a slow process as change was frightening, but we should get uniformity of action across the continent and performances and practices of certain religious ceremonies in non-traditional ways should become acceptable to all of the community.

Some degree of change is inevitable, because nowhere in the New World is there a fully consecrated temple as required for the higher rituals, nor is there a *dokhma* for the traditional funeral ceremonies.⁹³ There is also a problem involving the priests. Few Indian and only one Iranian priest have migrated to the New World in order to function as full-time priests. The people who act are mostly those of a priestly lineage who had the basic priestly

⁹³ See L. Cama's speech to the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay, 1978, p. 4. Similarly Mavalwala at the Toronto North American Zoroastrian Congress questioned the applicability of purity laws associated with childbirth, even when rationalized as hygiene rules, in a modern hospital (p. 45).

initiation (*navar*, and sometimes *maratab*) in childhood in order to preserve the lineage but who did not expect to function as priests when they migrated. They moved to the New World for a secular career, and in view of the paucity of priests, were asked to perform as priests and spiritual guides, even though these were roles which they had never envisaged undertaking. As one put it: 'When I arrived in the US five years ago I had not the slightest idea that shortly I would be asked to perform the duties of a priest in addition to my regular job as an accountant.'⁹⁴ Such priests naturally had not been schooled in the intricate details of the liturgies. Many foresaw the danger of priests performing the rituals differently in various centres, especially as there was pressure from various sources, not only the young, for the lengthy, complex rituals to be shortened, and modified, to make them more meaningful in a new environment. So, for example, Rivetna in a speech at the Montreal Congress in 1982 said:

we need standard procedures for the performance of ceremonies adapted to the North American environment. These include Navjote and wedding ceremonies, jashans, gahambars, mukhtad and other ceremonies.

... we need recommendations on ways and means of ordaining a new breed of priests on this continent; we cannot indefinitely depend on getting priests from India and Iran ...

We, the laity, who most often end up running the Association, tend to forget the spiritual and religious needs of the community. We should strive to elevate our priests to a stature where we can turn over the helm to them. To cope with this duty, we require a new breed of priests, priests that not only perform ceremonies, but who would also impart religious knowledge, fill the spiritual void in our religious lives, and guide the course of our religion on this continent.⁹⁵

In order to avoid unilateral actions, and achieve some co-ordinated thought and practice, a national meeting of priests was organized by one of the Toronto priests, Kobad Zarolia (26 November 1983). The report of the meeting was circulated to all Associations and to all known practising priests. It dealt in particular with *navjote* and funeral ceremonies, and the training of priests. It envisaged the eventual initiation of adopted children,

⁹⁴ See Pervez Patel, 'West Side Story', *Parsiana*, Nov. 1975, p. 22.

⁹⁵ *Proceedings*, p. 118.

spouses and any non-Zoroastrian who sought entry to the religion 'but only after a lot of community input and discussions. May be in next 100 years we may complete all the steps, or a few.' Other issues discussed included the use of sermons to provide religious instruction, as provided in the wider Christian society; the consolidating of Iranian and Parsi ceremonies in a uniform pattern; and the funeral of a non-Zoroastrian spouse. The extent of the religious problems encountered by Zoroastrians in the New World is well illustrated by the problem of funerals. The difficulty is not simply the lack of a *dokhma*. In the old country there are professionals who cater for the funeral needs of families—people who know the purity laws, who can take the corpse to the special places for its preparation, a team of priests well versed in the proper ceremonies. In America, few of the priests officiated at funerals before migration; there is not time at an American funeral parlour to say the required prayers, there are not the proper facilities and the families do not know what is expected of them. The situation can be even worse because the huge distances across the continent may mean there is not a priest of any sort available. Times of bereavement are times when any grieving person is deeply concerned 'to do the right thing' for the departed. Such a range of problems can cause the deepest distress. In order to help the families the ZSO produced a leaflet in 1981 for people to keep at home for such moments, and Montreal also produced one in 1983; since then many Associations have done so.⁹⁶ The Toronto Mobed' Conference also considered the roles which the laity can undertake at funerals.⁹⁷ Various Associations have made arrangements with specific funeral parlours so that Zoroastrians wash the body and dress it in a *sudre* and *kusti*, a *divo* is lit at the head of the body and the *geh sarna* ceremony is performed before Zoroastrian men carry the body to the crematorium. Practices can, therefore, be evolved, but for the early settlers there were real problems.

The importance and changing role of ceremonies was well articulated by one of the founding Toronto priests, Yezdi Antia, at the 1985 North American Zoroastrian Congress in Los Angeles:

Many among us believe that the practice of Zoroastrianism is riddled with rituals. Perhaps it was true in India, especially in respect to ceremonies for our departed. In the west, however, this is no longer the case.

⁹⁶ See *Parsiana*, Mar. 1981, p.21.

⁹⁷ *Parsiana*, Aug. 1984, p. 12. I am grateful to Yezdi for his hospitality.

Rituals are the centre of our social life here. Naujote, Marriage, Death and Jashan ceremonies are occasions for the community to gather together from miles around, to affirm our faith, and give visible and tangible sense of identity to our children. In our main cities, we are scattered far and wide and we need more, not fewer, rituals, for a purpose and an occasion to meet together.

The *jashan* is a part of the ancient tradition, and is still important in both Iran and India. But it has acquired perhaps yet more importance in the diaspora. Even in the old country it is a rite which can be celebrated outside the temple, for example, in the home. By the substitution of certain prayers it can be used as a blessing (e.g. for a new home), in thanksgiving, for example, after victory in war, to honour a new Dastur, in memory of the deceased and in many other contexts. These various factors make it especially appropriate as the centre of a communal meeting. But even this popular rite can be difficult, because traditionally it needs more than one priest. However, the distance problem means that sometimes only one priest is available, so that some modification of this especially popular liturgy is necessary. The priests are, therefore, conscious of the pressures for change. But they are also concerned about introducing changes that would alienate them from their fellow priests in the old country. For example, at a later Mobed Conference in Toronto (1989) there was much discussion about the adoption of the Fasli calendar, because this is by design easier to integrate into the western calendar year than either of the other two used in the old country.

But the mobeds were loath to take a unilateral decision that would distance them from the practitioners of the religion in India to whom they looked for guidance and help when the need arises. The mobeds similarly felt ill-equipped to abridge ceremonies like the *jashan* and *geh sarna* [funeral ceremony] and unanimously agreed to perform them in the traditional way.⁹⁸

The senior priest in Chicago, Kersey Antia, a practising psychologist, raised at the 1982 Montreal Congress the question of the appropriate requirements for an American priesthood. Should it be hereditary? In a technologically advanced society, especially in a computer-orientated society, is the priestly memorization of the sacred text necessary, as it was among less literate people?

⁹⁸ *Parsiana*, June 1989, p. 19.

Since the higher ceremonies cannot be performed in the New World, there is no point in the priests knowing how to perform them. Antia saw that future priests in America would need a knowledge of comparative religion (because of intermarriage and to counter propaganda) and psychology (for pastoral purposes), and experience to help them instruct and guide the young.⁹⁹ In the same year as the Toronto Mobed Conference, a fund was started in Montreal to finance the training of American Zoroastrian boys of priestly families. The fund was launched in memory of a young mobed, Parvez Kotwal, who was killed in an accident.¹⁰⁰ What emerged as practice was that, prior to going to India for their priestly initiation, American Zoroastrians of a priestly family should study with their fathers and seek guidance from one of the elders, for example, Jehan Bagli in Montreal or Kersey Antia in Chicago.¹⁰¹

There are, therefore, various points at which some American Zoroastrians see change as both necessary and inevitable. But that change is seen as a threat by others. Many of my Zoroastrian friends in North America, as well as elsewhere, have told me that they became more religious after migration than they were before, because religion is at the heart of identity and basic to community ties. They also commented that they practise their religion for the sake of their children. Although they migrated for a better life for their children, they are also very conscious of the threats and dangers of American society: the drug scene, sexual promiscuity, weaker family ties and easy divorce, so that the children for whom they migrated seem to be also in danger. Pleas to the young to retain their heritage are impassioned. Dr Bahram Faradiéh from Chicago put the problem thus at the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay in 1978: 'We in the US unfortunately do not have the luxury of time. Our children, who are mostly of an impressionable age now, are growing up fast'. Regarding the American Zoroastrian community, he went on:

We are spread so thin across this wide land and are so heavily exposed to western culture as broadcast through the media of communications—particularly television—that unless we take positive steps to prevent it,

⁹⁹ *Proceedings*, pp. 147–51.

¹⁰⁰ *Gavashmi*, Dec. 1982.

¹⁰¹ Bagli and Adi Unwala have published a book for young priests on how to perform ceremonies.

the retention of Zoroastrian identity in the New World will be lost. Perpetuation, Survival, Assimilation are connotations which are uppermost in our minds. Nowhere in the world are the social pressures to conform as great as in the United States. Most of our adults who have been brought up in India and Iran have an innate mechanism to resist these pressures; however, our children through their formative years are not equipped with such attitudes. Every one of you has heard the hackneyed phrase 'United States is the melting pot of cultures.'

To Zoroastrians in this part of the world this cliché portends the threat of annihilation. Similarly, Eruch Munshi speaking to the Toronto Congress after commenting that education, housing and hospitals are not the requirements in America that they are in India, said: 'The requirement of identity is what concerns me, as far as my children are concerned, and I think it concerns me far more when I contemplate whether my grandchildren will remain Zoroastrians, or be within the community.'¹⁰² Jal Guzder, again at Toronto (p. 60), expressed succinctly the particular problems of such a small community, and spoke about the lack of community contact and loss of identity faced by many: 'I come into contact with Parsis maybe once a month . . . we don't come home and participate in religious or Parsi activities . . . here we are all basically individualistic, we are integrated, and we are subject to the historical forces of the "melting pot".' The emotional consequences of the perceived threat of change were stressed by an unnamed speaker at a small symposium in Toronto in 1983: 'some of us who have not yet emotionally adjusted to the changed environment of life in North America are experiencing grief at having had to leave our lands of birth. Under these circumstances, we want to cling on to the traditional, and do not want to recognise and accept change.'¹⁰³

The threat of change and consequent loss of identity is seen by many as being far greater in America than elsewhere. Thus Adi Davar from Washington, a retired senior figure at the World Bank and therefore visibly successful in the West, said at the Montreal Conference:

India, or Pakistan or Burma, where, whether you like it or not, the religious influences and cultural influences in these countries were based on the principles of live and let live . . . But the country we now call home,

¹⁰² *Proceedings*, p. 56.

¹⁰³ Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, *Newsletter*, 1983, p. 4.

and which our children and their children's children will call home, is not such a live and let live culture. It is a culture which is based on the theory of melting pot. It is supposed to dissolve your older culture to melt it into a new culture which is uniquely Canadian and uniquely American. This is what our children are fighting against.¹⁰⁴

The same perception of threat to one's identity was put forcefully by Tahamton Aresh in an undated circular at the end of his period as president of the California-based Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Association: 'I strongly uphold the age-old traditions and practices of the Zoroastrian faith for it is clear to me that our religious legacy must be passed down intact to our children for posterity. Let it not be said by historians of the future that in a matter of one generation we abandoned the heritage of thousands of years.'¹⁰⁵ For some the threat of change has been seen simply as something that must be accepted as inevitable. As Behram Parsi expressed it at the Toronto Congress (p. 69): 'In the next two decades my daughter and your children will not accept the religion as it has been handed down to us.' Indeed, Mavalwalla, at the same Congress (p. 41) saw it as a present reality: 'We may still be Zoroastrians but we are no longer the same people when we live in Canada'. The threat of change is seen to be particularly acute through intermarriage. But it would be wrong to assume that pressures for change inevitably resulted in a 'progressive liberalization'. Some Orthodox voices remain strong, both on the Internet as we shall see in Chapter 10 below, but also at conferences. For example, at the Seventh World Congress in Houston in 2000 a closely printed nineteen-page document was widely circulated called 'Welcome to Traditionalism', covering such issues as the language of prayer, the importance of rituals and the wrongs of intermarriage.

Intermarriage, community identity and conversion

In-marriage has been the norm among Zoroastrians in India and Iran for at least a millennium, if not throughout history. In Iran, marriage to a Muslim necessarily involved conversion to Islam.

¹⁰⁴ *Proceedings*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁵ See also the interview with him in A. S. Mama, 'We must keep among ourselves', *Parsiana*, July 1991, pp. 28 f. I am grateful to Mr and Mrs Aresh for making me a welcome guest in their home.

In India, out-marriage went against caste traditions. Where intermarriage occurred in either country it typically caused serious family and social problems, which thereby reinforced the norm. However, it is widely accepted among American Zoroastrians that intermarriage is inevitable. Bagli said at the Toronto Conference: 'Sheer statistics of numbers of other communities in relation to the number of non-Zoroastrians around can predict for us that many Zoroastrian youngsters will decide upon marital union with a non-Zoroastrian spouse. We must view this event as a natural consequence of being on this continent.'¹⁰⁶

From the perspective of the 'old country' this is seen as a dire threat. Thus, writing from India to the first Toronto Mobed Conference, Adi Doctor argued that the American Zoroastrians' first priority was to marry within the community. With such a goal in mind, various Associations have organized youth groups with discos, picnics, activity weekends and sleepovers, and put adverts in newsletters and magazines such as *Parsiana* and the *FEZANA Journal*. The time chart on pages 455–7 above indicates the growing emphasis on youth activities, with 'Zarathushti Olympics' and youth conferences. These have achieved some success: for example, Roshan Rivetna, who produces the matrimonial column in the *Journal*, estimates that there have been twenty to thirty marriages arising from a decade of such advertisements.¹⁰⁷ But these, Pheroze Dastoor commented in 1982, are not likely to achieve their object:

The suggestions that Youth should be brainwashed to choose Zoroastrian life-partners and to ensure that youth meetings, picnics and dances should be encouraged is not a new idea. Together with advertising in matrimonial columns and seeking help of 'kaj-walli' (matchmakers) has been an age-old Parsee India custom, obviously not a very successful one nowadays. This would be harder to implement and could be less successful in [an] American context, what with eight to twelve hours per day of non-Zoroastrian influence in schools, colleges, clubs, socialising and working. [The] possibility of physical, romantic attractions and resulting attachments [is] much stronger than love-at-first-sight at once a month Zoroastrian youth picnics.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Proceedings*, pp. 12 f. See also Irani at Montreal (*Proceedings*, p. 105); Bagli again at Montreal (*Proceedings*, p. 160); Mavalwala at Toronto (*Proceedings*, p. 45).

¹⁰⁷ In private conversation, Jan. 2001.

¹⁰⁸ *Gavashni*, Sept. 1982, p. 7.

Where intermarriage occurs, disagreements and tension often develop within the community. For example, a letter was published in *Gavashni* from a 26-year-old Parsi woman whose attempts to find a Zoroastrian partner proved fruitless, but she did find a happy marriage with a Canadian who accepted her ardent wish to pass on her religion to their children. The editor, Bagli, commended her commitment, but this provoked intense hostility in the Indian press and from an American correspondent.¹⁰⁹ In that year, 1987, a well-known office-bearer of an American Association announced her resignation from the Association, with evident distress, because of her concern that her son would be rejected by vocal members of the community as she had married an American.¹¹⁰

The arguments against intermarriage are the same in North America as they have been seen to be elsewhere—the erosion of racial identity,¹¹¹ the alleged increase in marital breakdowns and loss of any identity for the children of mixed marriages.¹¹² Because intermarriage appears to be more common in America, the consequences are seen to be more dramatic. In one American Association the wife of a priest is American-born, and she is actively involved as an office-bearer in the Association. Non-Zoroastrian partners visit the centres and are present at ceremonies in most of the Associations. As in London, so in Toronto, this can give particular problems at the time of *muktad* when the dead are remembered. Because death rites involve such strong notions of purity and pollution, it is a time when the impure presence of a *juddin* causes problems for traditional Zoroastrians. At *muktad* in Toronto in 1984 a non-Zoroastrian spouse was asked to leave the prayer room. In a subsequent *Newsletter*¹¹³ the agreed position of the Managing Committee was expressed in a notice that said: ‘A special request is being made to non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children, although they are legally entitled to enter the Atash Dadgah room

¹⁰⁹ For the Indian press see *Dini Avaz*, 1986, 11, pp. 4–8; for the American response, *Gavashni*, Mar. 1987, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ *Parsiana*, Apr. 1987, p. 25. In fact the lady has stayed within the Zoroastrian network, and became a prominent figure.

¹¹¹ *Proceedings* of the Chicago Open Forum held on 12 June 1983 and the Orthodox Bombay lawyer Ranina writing in the columns of *Mazdayasni Connection*, Oct.–Dec. 1983, pp. 10–13.

¹¹² R. Irani, Montreal Congress *Proceedings*, pp. 123 f.

¹¹³ July 1985, p. 2.

at all times, to refrain from attending the prayers in the prayer room for these five holy days, for the sake of maintaining harmony in the community.' This produced such intense debate in the community and so many concerns were raised about the effect this would have on families that in the *Newsletter* the following month, the president, Dhun Baya, said that spouses and children of Zoroastrians should be admitted, otherwise they would be driven from the community, but that no other non-Zoroastrians should be admitted.

Behind such debates lie, in part at least, a question of identity: are Zoroastrians a religious or an ethnic grouping? If the former, then can spouses and non-Zoroastrians be excluded? If the latter, how should the group be identified, since there are a number of ethnic groups within the community (Indians, Iranians, Pakistanis, Americans, etc.)? The religious identity should, presumably, exclude the non-religious individuals of Zoroastrian parents, who may, nevertheless, have a strong sense of communal identity. It also ignores the fact that some outsiders, particularly American authorities, view them as an ethnic group. However, many, not least the young, want to be identified as a religious group, and as Americans or Canadians. As Mavalwalla said at the Toronto Congress, 'Are we here because we follow a religion together or are we an ethnic community? We are first Canadian, and then everything else.'¹¹⁴ But others want to assert their religious identity first.¹¹⁵ The emphasis on the Zoroastrian identity being primarily religious raises for many the question of conversion. This has surfaced in other countries, but nowhere as acutely as in America.

The subject of conversion was raised by Pavri and Treasurywala at the Toronto Congress,¹¹⁶ and again at the Chicago Congress in 1977 by Bagli.¹¹⁷ It was a major issue at the Montreal Congress in 1982. Adi Davar made a strong plea for the initiation of non-Zoroastrians, not only of spouses, or children of mixed marriages, but for the acceptance of any non-Zoroastrians

¹¹⁴ See also Kabraji, Toronto Conference *Proceedings*, p. 87; Davar, Montreal Congress *Proceedings*, p. 127; Mavalwalla, Chicago *Proceedings*, p. 69.

¹¹⁵ Pavri to AGM at Vancouver, 24 Apr. 1977, *ZSBC*, p. 204; and the General Meeting, 27 Oct. 1973, *ZSCBC*, p. 135, and especially to the board of directors, 30 July 1973, *ZSBC*, p. 131. See further below the discussion of Roshan Rivetna's item in *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1999, reprinted *Parsiana*, Mar. 2000, p. 19.

¹¹⁶ *Proceedings*, pp. 25, 137. I am grateful to Mr and Mrs Treasurywala for making my wife and me welcome guests in their home.

¹¹⁷ *Proceedings*, p. 79.

who had genuine beliefs and wanted to join the religion. It has become common in America to distinguish between conversion, i.e. active proselytism—which very few support—and the ‘acceptance’ of those who come forward of their own initiative to seek initiation. Davar’s paper was subsequently published separately. It provoked such discussion at the Congress that an additional session had to be timetabled and the Montreal Association was asked to undertake a survey of authoritative opinions in America, Britain and India, from western academics and from Zoroastrian priests. The results were published in September 1983, but by then events had overtaken the discussions.

The Peterson *navjote*

Speaking after Davar at the Montreal Congress had been Joseph Peterson. He was from a Christian background, although from a Parsi perspective he was from a mixed marriage, because his mother was a Catholic, his father a Protestant. An earlier edition of *Gavashni* had referred to his interest in Zoroastrianism from the age of 15. He opened his Montreal paper with the words, ‘Although I am not a Parsi or Irani, my interest in this subject has approached obsession.’ He gave an account of how the books he had read in libraries, notably the *Sacred Books of the East* and Maria Wilkins Smith’s translation of the *Gathas*, filled him with a love for Zoroastrianism, how he had made his own *sudre* and *kusti* and how he had tried to live according to the religion. On Saturday 5 March 1983 he was initiated by four Zoroastrian priests at the New York centre. The event was sponsored by the Guiv Trusts. Although the trustees did not begin the process for initiation, they strongly supported it. Two of the trustees in particular, Sarfeh and Merabi, were involved and Sarfeh was keen that the event be publicized.¹¹⁸ The senior New York priest, Noshir Hormuzdyar, made it clear at the ceremony that he and his colleagues appreciated that it was the sort of event that Guiv had wanted. He said:

Arbab believed that the doors of this temple should be kept open to all mankind and that we should be willing to ‘accept’ anyone who is willing to join us . . . Arbab believed that Zoroastrian religious knowledge should be shared and imparted and made available to anyone and everyone irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex, age or race. That his religion

¹¹⁸ Porus Cooper, ‘The Navjote of Joseph Peterson’, *Parsiana*, Apr. 1983, p. 7.

should be allowed to develop further; that it should be allowed to blossom and grow side by side with other religions in this free society.

The fact that the event was publicized in advance heightened the controversy. *Parsiana*¹¹⁹ printed Peterson's Montreal speech and included an article on the subject by Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani. A separate issue was produced on the actual initiation (April 1983) and the debate filled many columns in future issues. The action was welcomed in various quarters in America, for example in the Zoroastrian Center in California. In the preceding year the minutes of the board of trustees recorded that the Bombay High Priest, Dastur Minocher Homji, 'has advised Darius [Irani, a Trustee] that it is our duty to accept and convert people to Zoroastrianism'.¹²⁰ The same board of trustees later asserted that, 'It is against the US constitution to deny Mr Peterson what religion he desires . . . we cannot form our own laws.'¹²¹

The event provoked considerable reaction in Bombay. News of the impending *navjote* was published in the Orthodox newspaper, *Jame Jamshed*¹²² in the form of a letter from a member of the Chicago community, Sarosh M. Khambatta, to his father.¹²³ He later protested that this had been a private letter and he had no idea of how the press had obtained a copy. In it he attacked one of the priests in particular, Kersey Antia from Chicago, for his involvement, saying: 'We in Chicago are split about this Navjote.' He sought a letter of condemnation for the act from religious authorities in Bombay. These were sent by the president of one of the priestly madressas (Cama Athornan Institute), Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy, and by J. F. Shroff, trustee of the Athornan Mandal (Priestly Association) in Bombay. Sir JJ said in his letter: 'As Mr Joseph Peterson is a Non-Parsi, he can never be initiated into the Zoroastrian fold.' He argued that 'the matter should also have been properly and rightly referred to the learned and erudite

¹¹⁹ Mar. 1983, pp. 17–31.

¹²⁰ Meeting dated 28 Sept. 1982.

¹²¹ Minutes of the board of trustees, 23 Feb. 1983.

¹²² 16 Mar. 1983.

¹²³ See e.g. the letter of Sarosh Khambatta published in *Jame Jamshed*, 5 Feb. 1983 informing readers of the planned *navjote* and asking 'Could you approach the Cama Athornan Institute or any other religious body which confers the priesthood to Zoroastrians, and obtain a letter on their letterhead stating that this action of conversion and mixed marriage is deplored and condemned by them . . . If they [the officiating priests] could be excommunicated from Priesthood it would be great. There are many others who are writing to these Institutes from here.'

High Priests and Avestan Scholars of international repute and the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay.¹²⁴ Similarly Shroff said, 'We very much deprecate, deplore and condemn in no uncertain terms the disgraceful action . . . The incident is without doubt a blot on the fair name of the community and the precepts laid down by our Lord Zarathushtra.' He also enclosed a series of documents relating to earlier judgements for what he considered authoritative precedents. These were: 1. From the 1906 law case in the Bombay High Court (see Chapter 2), specifically the Anjuman resolution overturning the committee's acceptance of conversion, but did not include the judgement of Justices Davar and Beaman; 2. A 1918 resolution of the Athornan Anjuman in Bombay condemning intermarriage with a resolution that people who intermarry should be ostracized and the priests involved should be boycotted; 3. A 1961 document in which fourteen senior priests from Navsari, Bombay, Surat and Poona asserted the authority to give directions on religion (in this case funeral ceremonies, not initiations).

One point behind all these documents is the belief that community and priestly directives in Bombay have religious authority over Zoroastrian practice overseas. This question of authority will be addressed below. The point here is the intensity of the debate in Bombay, not only in the *Jame* but also in other sections of the press also, for example the *Bombay Samachar*, which has Liberal inclinations and tended to support the *naujote*. *Parsiana* editorially proclaimed a neutral position and printed letters representing contrasting viewpoints, and numerous other articles, reports of meetings and speeches were included. In Bombay, the strongest views were expressed by the Orthodox side, notably (but not only), the three High Priests, Mirza, JamaspAsa and Kotwal, but also by laity, for example Faribourz Nariman, Khojeste Mistree, Adi Doctor and Homi Ranina. But supportive views were also expressed by some in Bombay, notably Jehan Daruwala, editor of the *Bombay Samachar*, Nani Palkiwala (an eminent diplomat and jurist) and S. R. Vakil, a writer on religious matters.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Letter dated 30 Mar. 1983.

¹²⁵ The contrary views are represented in *Parsiana*, 1983 Aug. pp. 67–77, see also the scholarly (Orthodox) priest Rohinton Peer in *Jame Jamshed*, 7 July 1983. Many of these views are collected in the Montreal Report on the *Conversion of Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian Precepts: Do they Have a Place?* Montreal, Sept. 1983.

The arguments were commonly personal, almost always vitriolic. The intensity of the comments from Bombay fuelled the debates within the North American community. Whereas Sarfeh had sought to publicize the event, trustees of the New York Darbe Mehr in a published letter insisted that it had been a private function, not one organized by them. Twelve New York priests also published a letter (1 July 1983) stating that they would not join in functions with Antia (although it was later pointed out that some of the signatories had never functioned in New York anyway¹²⁶). Khambatta, who had first written to Bombay about the event, was attacked by members of the Guiv Trusts as being ‘mentally, emotionally and culturally unprepared and incompatible to live in a free country like USA, where racism is abolished and people are left free to worship their God the way they choose’. In personal conversation, a number of Zoroastrians have expressed to me the view that traditional Indian attitudes to conversion expressed in America could provoke a legal test case concerning racial prejudice. This I have heard especially in Toronto, where the Association received \$260,000 from the State as part of its multicultural programme. Some Bombay leaders interpreted the Peterson affair as part of the Parsi versus Iranian Zoroastrian divide: ‘This entire situation has been engineered by those who have a vested interest. Antia craves for publicity while Hormuzdyar is married to a foreigner. The American Iranian Zoroastrians besides, look only to the Gathas—the songs of Prophet Zoroaster—which don’t mention conversion and which they don’t understand anyway.’¹²⁷ Antia has faced perhaps the most criticism, not simply because he participated, but because of his vigorous defence in print of the *naujote*. His writings have been published in India as well as in America. *Parsiana* quoted his views and published separately his booklet, *The Argument for Acceptance*, in 1982. Antia and Khojeste Mistree, in particular, have clashed fiercely. Antia offered his resignation to his Chicago board at a meeting on 13 February 1983. It was rejected only by the casting-vote of the chairman. Five members left the Association in protest. Antia has faced much hostility outside America. His paper for the 1985 World Congress in Bombay was not accepted. The reason given

¹²⁶ Letter of Hormuzdyar to his uncle in Udwarda, published in *Parsiana*, Oct. 1984, pp. 24 f.

¹²⁷ *Bombay*, 7–21, July 1983, p. 17.

was shortage of time, but in an exchange of letters¹²⁸ Professor Irani of New York wrote to the Congress chairman, Jimmy Guzder in Bombay, offering to cut his own paper in order to allow Antia to speak. His offer was not accepted. At the close of the World Zoroastrian Organization symposium in London in 1984, Antia was asked not to participate in the concluding *jashan* for fear of causing divisions. One factor behind his being ostracized is that his priestly colleagues fear that if they function with him in rituals, they may be debarred from performing in temples in India, which a number would wish to do after retirement.¹²⁹

One argument adduced by the Orthodox was that had Zoroastrians accepted converts in Iran during the Shah's era, they would now be suffering like the Baha'i and that such initiations could still make the Iranian community vulnerable. In interviews after the *navjote*, two leading figures (Hormuzdyar and Kaikhosrov Irani) stressed that Peterson had come to them; that they had accepted, not converted him; that he came from a Christian not a Muslim background. The Iranian priests had been deliberately left out of the photographs because of the fear that the perception of proselytism could trigger persecution in Iran.¹³⁰ The opinion of the Mobed (Priestly) Council in Tehran was therefore sought. After an official meeting called to discuss the matter, their letter of reply was written on 24 May 1983. It concluded:

Asho Zarathushtra does not advocate force to spread the religion, but has kept it open for all. He has laid down rules and regulations for the propagation and promotion of the religion as well as for the acceptance of non-Zoroastrians. He has never reserved it for the Aryans or for a particular caste of people . . . The above citations¹³¹ show that the propagation and promotion of the religion is a meritorious deed . . . If Zoroastrians believe that our religion is one of the great living religions of the world and that it is beneficial to all peoples of the world, we must propagate it. We must accept persons who want to embrace the Zoroastrian religion.¹³²

As mentioned above, the debate has sometimes been characterized as a Parsi versus Iranian Zoroastrian debate. There is an element

¹²⁸ Dated 6 and 20 Dec. 1984.

¹²⁹ See Guiv Darbe Mehr board of trustees meeting, New York, 10 Aug. 1983.

¹³⁰ P. Cooper, 'The Navjote of Joseph Peterson', *Parsiana*, Apr. 1983, p. 3.

¹³¹ From the *Gathas*, *Yasna*. 30:2; 33:2; 46:5.

¹³² Published in *Parsiana*, Sept. 1983, pp. 6 f.; *Gavashmi*, Sept. 1983, pp. 12 f. It was also quoted in the Montreal 1983 report on the debate on conversion.

of truth in this in so far as the Guiv Trusts sponsored the event, the majority of the campaigners for it were Iranian and the majority of the opponents were Parsis. The most vocal supporter of Antia was the Iranian-dominated California Zoroastrian Centre in which Ali Jafarey was the teacher. But the situation is more complex than that. The controversial paper calling for the acceptance of converts was by the Parsi Davar; two Parsis were among the four priests who performed the initiation; leading Bombay figures supported the initiation and the person who wrote most in defence of the *naujote* was the Parsi priest Antia. The Chicago Open Forum on conversion, attended mostly by Parsis, voted 90% in favour of the acceptance of the *naujote* of spouse and children, and 86% voted for the acceptance of anyone who came forward of their own volition and accepted the religion. A substantial issue behind the debates is one of religious authority: do the religious leaders in the old country have authority to direct the religious beliefs and practices of diaspora communities?

Religious authority in the diaspora

Few Iranians or Parsis would consider Iran to be a centre whose directives they should seek to resolve doctrinal disputes. Only 1% of respondents to my survey would seek such a ruling. The question to the Mobed Council in Tehran following the Peterson *naujote* was virtually unique, and was only asked because others, notably Parsis, had introduced the Iranian dimension in their arguments. Those who turn to the 'old country' for authoritative guidance are sections of the Parsi community. The letters from Jijibhoy, Shroff, Doctor and others in the Peterson case, all indicate a conviction that authority lies in the traditional priests, especially Dasturs Mirza, JamaspAsa and Kotwal, and in Indian practices, not, as they see it, in 'the whims and fancies' of those who have migrated for material advantage. Such a view is found in some quarters in the diaspora. Bhathena at the Montreal Congress argued that the new communities should not cut themselves off from the homeland, but rather, as the early settlers in India did, turn to the old country for guidance.¹³³ Munshi at the Chicago Congress reminded people of their ties to the old country, and their own responsibility to preserve the tradition: 'our

¹³³ *Proceedings*, p. 173.

aunts and uncle, our relatives, are still in Bombay or India and whatever we do here is going to have repercussions over there . . . Nobody should pinpoint in five or ten years that these were the individuals in North America who practically wrecked the whole tradition.¹³⁴

An unnamed speaker from the floor at the floor of the Chicago Open Forum on conversion said: 'As far as religion is concerned, we are very immature. Our priests themselves admit they aren't scholars of the religion so we have to depend upon India and Iran for our background and knowledge. Let us not alienate them; let us not push them away.'¹³⁵

There is also a consciousness that the new communities have to turn to India for the supply or training, and the initiation, of priests.¹³⁶ So, for example, Kersey Antia's son went to Bombay for his *navjote*, and for his initiation into the priesthood.¹³⁷ One indicator of this sense of religious dependence is the number of American tours made by Indian Parsi priests and teachers, normally at the invitation and expense of the American Associations, but sometimes also to see their own family who have migrated. The following list of visits made before 1985 is put together from a study of the Minute Books of the various Associations: Dastur Framroz Bode made a number of visits to California in the 1970s, but this was often to the Mazdayasni group in California rather than to the Zoroastrian Associations. The first to come as a result of such formal invitations were Dastur Minocher Homji (1974, 1984, 1985); Dr Homi Dhalla from Bombay (1977); Dastur Mirza from Udwada and Bombay (1978); Khojeste Mistree from Zoroastrian Studies, Bombay (1978, 1982, 1985); Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal from Bombay (1979, 1980, 1985, 1986 and many subsequent visits); 'Dastur' Aibara, a traditional priest from Bombay (1984).¹³⁸ There have been fewer visits from Iranian leaders, owing in part to the situation in that country. The only record I found was Dastoor Firoz Azargoshab in 1984 (and in the later period,

¹³⁴ Toronto *Proceedings*, p. 51.

¹³⁵ Report, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Mavalwalla, Toronto *Proceedings*, p. 77.

¹³⁷ *Parsiana*, Mar. 1981, p. 21 also reports the *navar* of two young boys from Montreal, Dastoor and Panthaki.

¹³⁸ The title 'Dastur' is put in inverted commas, because Aibara was not technically a Dastur, but is often given the honorific title in popular usage. The work of Dastur Aibara is discussed in Ch. 2 above.

Mobed Jehangir Oshidari for the Parliament of World Religions, Chicago, 1993). Also significant in the diaspora–old country relations is the fact that many American Zoroastrians make visits to the old country whenever possible. When they do so, they make pilgrimages to major temples and Atash Bahrams, especially to Udwada. So it is recorded in the minutes of the Vancouver Association: ‘The holy fire at Udwada radiates munificence and glory to Zoroastrians everywhere and it is the duty of every Zoroastrian to pay homage to the sacred perpetually-burning fire.’¹³⁹ All diaspora Zoroastrians still have family and/or friends back in the old country whom they visit, especially for such family functions as *naujotes*, weddings or funerals. There is also quite frequent contact by ‘telephone and letter. So although America and India are geographically far apart, it would be a mistake to imply an emotional or personal gulf between the communities. The exchange of newsletters and journals, such as *Parsiana*, may sometimes emphasize the doctrinal differences, but the personal links commonly remain strong.

There is another dimension to the subject of diaspora–old country relations. Many American Zoroastrians are convinced that they in the New World represent the future of the religion because in America there is a concentration of dynamic leaders. For example, Rohinton Rivetna, in his speech at the opening of the Chicago centre on 3 September 1983, said:

I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, is there a group anywhere in the world, with the strong sense of commitment and involvement of North American Zoroastrians? Is there a group anywhere in the world that has achieved what the North American Zoroastrians have achieved in the short space of their existence? Is there a group anywhere in the world that is more dynamic, more dedicated, or more determined than the North American Zoroastrians?

Similarly, Lovji Cama at the Chicago Congress said that ‘the best of a community has been brought by a divine plan’.¹⁴⁰ Homi Homji at the Seventh North American Congress speculated that, ‘With the demographic degeneration of the Parsi population in India and Pakistan and the upsurge and unity in North America,

¹³⁹ Reported at the AGM, 27 Oct. 1973, p. 135 when the committee resolved to make regular donations for the burning of *machi* (sandalwood) on the holy fire on their behalf.

¹⁴⁰ See also Bagli to the Toronto Symposium, *Proceedings*, p. 9, ‘the very cream of the same progressive [Parsi] community has come over to this continent’.

it is conceivable that . . . the global Zoroastrian focus may move from Bombay to North America, and FEZANA, in turn, may provide a world Zoroastrian democratic leadership.¹⁴¹ It is not uncommon to find parallels drawn between the original Parsi migration to India and the new settlement in America. This was articulated by Moti Balsara in her introduction to the first session at the 1975 Toronto Symposium: 'One might say that there is a sort of a parallel between our starting a Zoroastrian community on this continent and between the time when we first started as a very small community in India.' The establishment of Zoroastrian communities can thus be seen by some of their members as a turning point in the religion. It is not only Zoroastrians in America who see diaspora groups in the New World as the future leaders of the religion. The respected Bombay Parsi writer, Aspi Moddie, has expressed the same view: 'The leadership in North America is more dynamic and comes from all age groups, not least the youth, and from more women. FEZANA produced a lady president in less than a decade, which the Indian Federation has not done in nearly three decades.' He also criticized Bombay Parsis for not being democratic.¹⁴²

To some in America, the Indian Parsi community represents an antiquated past, incapable of organising its own affairs, much less able to direct those in a different setting. So Homi Homji speaking at an earlier congress, after criticizing what he describes as 'toothless Panchayets' riven by controversy, presiding over a rapidly diminishing community, said:

The question for us here in North America is whether we can continue to accept such lack of leadership and remote influence from halfway round the world. If these institutions are unable to assess the need for change even within their own local flock, what understanding and action can we expect from them of the entirely different milieu of the New World?

He concluded: 'We must retain from our tradition what is useful and applicable, reject what is harmful or hinders our progress, and innovate procedures and practices necessary to fill the gap that has resulted from our moving away from a static and archaic system of the countries we left behind.'¹⁴³ Similarly, Bahram

¹⁴¹ Houston, 1990.

¹⁴² A Moddie, 'A Different Approach', *Parsiana*, Jan. 1997, p. 27.

¹⁴³ Montreal Congress, 1982, *Proceedings*, pp. 136 f.

Faradiéh reported to his Chicago Association on the Third World Zoroastrian Congress he had attended in Bombay: 'Having witnessed in Bombay the inability of the Congress to resolve any vital issues he stressed the fact that they were an autonomous independent group charged with the future of our children, and that we should mould our own future as we see fit and as dictated by circumstances and laws of this country.'¹⁴⁴ Behind this conclusion lay a deep frustration at what he saw as the pointless in-fighting of Punchayet trustees (some respected figures had recently resigned over allegations concerning the management of charitable funds for housing) and the way in which the needs of diaspora Parsis were ignored. He had called for the establishment of a body to guide Zoroastrians worldwide on practice. He had said:

the Chicago Zoroastrians are striving very hard to succeed in their endeavor to establish a grass-roots organization upon which our children can build in the future. However, in our enthusiasm we do not wish to stray too far away from the beaten path such that the resultant society becomes unrecognizable from its parent society . . . we are seeking help and guidance and there is no one to turn to. It is for this reason that I earnestly appeal to the Congress to establish an august body of learned priests and scholars to whom we can turn for guidance and information. The body should have the responsibility of urging uniform standards of ethics, conduct and practices among the various associations in many parts of the world. Of course every association should have the right of final choice for acceptance or not of a particular practice. All we ask is that such a body be available to those who do seek guidance.

At the same Congress, Munshi made a similar plea for guidance:

In America Zoroastrians have a deep hunger for genuine religious experience and awareness and we need help to find the richness of our noble and ancient religion . . . We are concerned for the youth of our community and are trying to assist them in their quest for authentic religious fulfillment through religious classes, seminars and group discussions . . . In the absence of sound religious leadership, some of us have started manipulating Zarathushtra's teaching and code of ethics to suit our vested social interest.

In particular he asked for guidance on the *naujote* of children of intermarriages.

¹⁴⁴ Chicago AGM, 11 June 1978.

When the Third World Congress responded to neither of these requests for guidance and leadership, then Faradiéh decided American Zoroastrians had to chart their own path. In a similar vein, Dolly Dastoor of Montreal had stressed, in an interview to *Parsiana* in 1979, the importance of establishing a unified American Zoroastrian organization because, 'we cannot keep referring back to India all the time. Our conditions are quite different from those existing here.'¹⁴⁵ Such frustration at the perceived lack of leadership and understanding can be seen in the views of many who decided that they had no choice but to take a lead themselves. Bagli at Chicago, and later in *Gavashni*, saw inevitable changes as a reaction to 'the stagnation of the Zoroastrian religion across the board. Let us start here first. We will learn from it and then go out and do it around the world.'¹⁴⁶

These appeals for guidance and support were made five years before the Peterson *naujote*. The Bombay reaction to the *naujote* was probably a major factor in growing tensions between Bombay and North American Zoroastrians. An unnamed speaker at the Chicago Open Forum on conversion (12 June 1983) declared:

We Zoroastrians in North America had better refrain from clannishness and racism. We had better review our customs in the light of present day environment. How long can we depend on India and Iran to spoon-feed us with antiquated religious direction. The religious knowledge of an average priest in India, let alone the laity, is pathetic. We need bold moves, we need bold priests who let their consciences speak; we need bold administrators who take the strain of controversy, calculating and coming up with solutions.¹⁴⁷

As we have seen in other centres, the debates over policies and religious issues are particularly intense because both sides are aware that if the wrong decisions or policies are implemented, this diminishing religion could come to an end. The passionate intensity of the debates is due in part to the fact that in such a highly educated and economically successful community there are many accustomed to the mantle of leadership and who are ready to speak out forcefully. It is also due in part to internal ethnic clashes,

¹⁴⁵ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1979, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ Chicago *Proceedings*, p. 90; *Gavashni*, June 1984, p. 7. See also Minwalla, Toronto *Proceedings*, p. 31; Cama, Bombay, 1978, pp. 6 f.

¹⁴⁷ See also Bagli, Toronto *Proceedings*, p. 9; and in the same volume Munshi, pp. 5–7; Bhote, p. 68.

above all between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis, which have been more acute in America than anywhere.

The Iranian Zoroastrian–Parsi divide

The contact between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis in their respective homelands has, over the centuries, been sporadic, as was seen in Chapter 2. Viewing each other from a distance across the Hindu Kush, both have seen the other simply as co-religionists. Parsis have commonly regarded Iranians as ‘blood brothers’ and so have often accepted the possibility of an Iranian ‘converting’—or better, ‘returning’—to their religion. In the nineteenth century a number of Parsis campaigned on behalf of oppressed Iranian Zoroastrians, were benefactors for schools and other social needs, and helped those able to leave Iran to seek a new life in India. (It has to be said, also, that many Parsis were patronizing in their attitude to Iranian Zoroastrians.) There has been discussion in Bombay since 1904 of Parsis returning to their Iranian homeland, and this speculation peaked in the early 1970s when the Shah encouraged them to return and help build the economy and infrastructure of what was then a rapidly expanding nation. When the Shah fell from power in 1979, the Zoroastrian communities in America were composed almost wholly of Parsis. It is obvious from the records of various Associations, notably California, Chicago, Vancouver, Toronto and Quebec, that many Zoroastrians pressed their respective governments to view sympathetically requests from their Iranian co-religionists for visas. One may presume that far more was done than is on the record. The main centres to which the Iranians migrated were New York, Vancouver, Toronto and, increasingly, California.

As the Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis began to settle down in the same Associations, apparently trivial differences between them slowly emerged, for example, over food¹⁴⁸ and dress. They were symptoms of a deeper cultural divide, notably in language, in the observance of festivals and in fundamental religious assumptions: for example, the value of the priesthood; the authoritative place of revealed scripture; the contrast between a human, if holy, prophet and the idea of a divine being on earth; and the

¹⁴⁸ The ZAGNY newsletter of 14 Dec. 1981 relates that Chinese food was bought in for a function at the Darbe Mehr, rather than provoke the Iranian dislike of Parsi food as too spicy, or the Parsi view of Iranian kebabs as boring.

importance of rituals. The doctrinal differences reflect a millennium of separation in Muslim and Hindu environments respectively. Another factor is that most of the Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated were well-to-do urban people, mainly from Tehran, where they had an urbane, cosmopolitan life, and their traditions were different from those preserved in the villages: for example, the purity laws, where beliefs and practices were more similar to the Orthodox Parsi traditions. The Tehran Zoroastrians had been influenced not only by the Muslim environment but also by the more Reforming wing of the Parsis. There is, therefore, to some extent in America, an element of the Orthodox–Reform divide following nationality boundaries. The causes for the patterns of difference are complex. The religious debates have often focused on conversion, not least the Peterson *naujote*, but they have also been about communal and social issues. Language has been a major problem. Few of the Iranian Zoroastrians had planned to migrate, and so there was little preparation. Farsi is much stronger among them than Gujarati is among Parsis. French, rather than English, had been the second language in Iran. Both groups enjoy speaking their old language at social functions. But it is a common human experience that if others in a room are speaking in a language one does not understand, the notion often arises that one is being spoken about and criticized. The result has been suspicion. In almost all places, California and Vancouver apart, the Parsis are in a substantial majority; consequently Iranian Zoroastrians have felt that the democratic process of elections, one person, one vote, has not given them reasonable representation in committees or as office-bearers.¹⁴⁹ In some centres, New York for example, places on the board were set aside for Iranians.¹⁵⁰ In Chicago a different policy was adopted, whereby anyone who wanted to serve on the board could sign up, and that board then elected its own officers.¹⁵¹ Attempts have been made to explain each party's customs to the others, notably Iranian observance of the *gahambars*, Mehragan and Jashne Sadeh in particular, which had dropped into disuse among Parsis from Bombay. Persian classes and Persian evenings were also organized.¹⁵² But suspicions

¹⁴⁹ The newsletter of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario [Toronto] Executive Committee for July 1982 records the Iranian boycott of elections after the AGM, 27 June 1982.

¹⁵⁰ ZAGNY circular, 6 Mar. 1985, records the allocation of a vice-president and meetings secretary of the board for Iranians.

¹⁵¹ P. Cooper, 'The ZAGNY Split', *Parsiana*, June 1985, p. 7.

¹⁵² ZSO AGM, 28 June 1981.

remained: the Iranians commonly consider the Parsi attitude to conversion to be racist; at the Los Angeles 1985 Congress some Parsis accused Jafarey of being a Muslim and condemned the Iranians' reluctance to use the language of the new country. In large centres of Iranian Zoroastrians, lectures in English are translated into Persian. The Association in Vancouver has worked hard to keep the two groups together, and the Iranian Zoroastrians are particularly active. As noted above, *Payk-e-Mehr* is edited from Vancouver and as we shall see in Chapter 10 a major Internet site is run from the city.

Despite these moves to bring the two groups together, in some places basically separate Associations have been formed. In Los Angeles, Mrs Farangis Shahrokh started an Iranian Cultural Association. Originally she envisaged an affiliation with the Parsi-dominated Zoroastrian Association of California, and then in 1979 a link was discussed with the Bombay-based Zoroastrian Foundation. But cultural and personal differences were evident and in 1979 it was decided to open a Zoroastrian Centre separately from the Parsis. In 1980 Arbab Rustom Guiv promised a building, which was opened later that year. By 1982 planning began to erect a purpose-built centre, and this was opened in 1986. It is a striking building, and a number of Parsis began to attend. Some appreciated the use of a gas flame to provide a permanently burning fire (suggesting that the original fires in Iran may have been the products of the vast gas, as well as oil, fields). Others thought that this neglected the whole concept of serving the fire, which underlies the ritual, a view that has been expressed strongly to me by an Iranian Zoroastrian as well as Parsis.¹⁵³

Although there were tensions between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis in California, the Associations there did not come about as a direct result of such antagonism, as did the separate Associations in New York. ZAGNY had been Parsi-dominated, but one of the founders, and holder of one of the three places on the board reserved for Iranians, Khodarahm Hematti (vice-president 1982–4), alleged poor book-keeping and a neglect of Iranian interests.¹⁵⁴ The first recorded meeting of the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) was held in New York on 20 May 1984, when it

¹⁵³ Mr Parviz Varjavand in private conversation during the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, Houston, 2000.

¹⁵⁴ The allegations were made in much more forceful language. The sources for the following account are a circular issued by the then President, Ivy Gandhi, to members, dated 6 Mar. 1985; a report in a special issue of *Parsiana*, June 1985, also Aug. 1985, p. 282,

was resolved to form a separate body; previously it had been seen as a group within ZAGNY representing Iranian interests and organizing appropriate functions. Considerable tension arose over the rights of the new body, which stressed it was separate from ZAGNY, to use the centre, its premises, address and telephone number for business purposes. When ZAGNY asked if IZA functions were open to all ZAGNY members, no answer was received. A meeting was arranged between the two groups, but the IZA did not attend because it complained that the agenda had been set by ZAGNY. Further disputes arose over the rights of the IZA to use the property without paying rent and over contributions to repairs. At the same time a dispute broke out with the Guiv Trusts on the ownership of the building (as they did later in Toronto and Sydney). Because two of the founder members of the IZA, Sohrab Mehrabi and Dr Rustom Sarfeh, were Guiv trustees, the ZAGNY fear was that they would be excluded from the centre which they had built up, albeit with substantial Guiv funding. When ZAGNY 'overwhelmingly' rejected the Guiv Trust's conditions for their use of the building, the matter went to court, and the court found in ZAGNY's favour. That was not the end of the problems, because the annual budget from the Guiv Trusts for maintenance of the building (\$5,000) fell far short of the real costs (\$17,000). However, the IZA refused to contribute towards the shortfall, on the grounds that the property had been purchased with Iranian money and they had previously paid their dues as ZAGNY members. During the 1990s the sharpness of the division eased somewhat, but they remain separate Associations, and moves to raise the money for a new and more appropriate building have been difficult; however, in 2000 moves involving both the IZA and ZAGNY made a new centre possible.

A compounding problem in negotiations between the two groups is the grief which many Iranian Zoroastrians feel at the more or less enforced exile from their homeland. Because they felt compelled to migrate, through fear of persecution, Iranian Zoroastrians are understandably very sensitive over issues such as language, food and

and my own study of the minutes of both the ZAGNY board also of the AGM. All of these are, of course, produced from the ZAGNY perspective. In addition I spent some time interviewing Mr Hermati in his home. Subsequent events were covered in various issues of *Parsiana*, Dec. 1985, p. 13; Apr. 1986, p. 17; May 1987, p. 15; Jan. 1989, pp. 15ff; Oct. 1989, pp. 13 f.

festivals, and are particularly resentful over any perceived slight of their traditions. The Iranian Zoroastrians feel bonded to their heritage, its symbols, expressions and rituals, at least as much as the Iranians in Los Angeles discussed by Naficy (see Chapter 1). Whereas Parsis can easily visit the old country, friends and families, Iranian Zoroastrians find that difficult. Because the Iranians felt forced to leave the Zoroastrian homeland, and cannot easily return, they grieve for it. From the Parsi perspective, the Iranian Zoroastrians do not always value the Parsi aid to the Iranians a century ago (and since). The Iranians are thought not to appreciate the work that was put in to build up the Association(s) before they migrated to the continent, and are seen as making demands which are not democratic and therefore unreasonable (specifically the eradication of one person, one vote, for committee elections). Resentment can be provoked by the fairly common first-generation Iranian insistence on not using the language of the new country. Some Parsis have expressed resentment at feeling excluded from such festivals as No Ruz, which some Iranian Zoroastrians celebrate with other Iranians—Muslims, for example (a complaint noticed above with respect to Germany). Equally, Iranians can resent the Parsi tendency to use Gujarati at social functions, or their failure to celebrate festivals in what they consider to be ‘the proper way’. So there are tensions on both sides as the two groups seek to settle down together in the New World. It is worth recording one particular example of Parsi–Iranian collaboration, namely the help for refugees from Iran. In the early years following the revolution, Khojeste Mistree was deeply involved, along with Parsis in Pakistan and America, in obtaining entry visas to the US. Such activity necessarily had to be very discreet, but with financial help from two leading American-based Iranian Zoroastrians, a number of refugees were assisted. There is a moving letter of thanks from twelve such refugees in one of the early issues of the *Journal*.¹⁵⁵ Working through internal multicultural policies in small Associations is more difficult than outsiders readily understand. It is

¹⁵⁵ *Journal*, Dec. 1989, pp. 1–3, *Parsiana*, May 1989, p. 12 which noted that FEZANA had, with the help of Khojeste Mistree, signed an agreement with the US Department of State to bring Iranian Zoroastrians stranded in India and Pakistan to the US. They needed assured support such as accommodation and employment, medical and educational provision, before they could come. See also R. Writer, *Contemporary Zoroastrians: An Unstructured Nation*, Lanham and New York, 1994, pp. 185–98. The role of the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) will be discussed in Ch. 10.

the hope of many Zoroastrians that, with succeeding generations, these various wounds will heal.¹⁵⁶

*The Specifically North American Dimension to
Zoroastrian Communities*

Concern for the young

our greatest resource, our first priority, and the basis of all hope for the future remain our children. It is to them that the ancient knowledge and practices of our religion and way of life must be imparted, if Zoroastrianism is not to become extinct on this continent.¹⁵⁷

Most Zoroastrian communities around the globe are concerned for their young people, partly because of the strength of the family unit in their traditions, and partly because diminishing numbers make the transmission of the tradition to the next generation a question of communal life or death. But few if any centres have articulated and responded to this need as fully as the American Zoroastrians. The problem there is accentuated by the vast distances not simply between centres but within the areas covered by an Association. The other problem, especially in the US, is the fear of the ‘melting pot’ noted above. This section focuses on the efforts to counter these perceived problems.

The first issue of *Parsiana* to include a section on ‘Zoroastrians Abroad’ included a quotation from the outgoing president of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, Yezdi Antia:

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the retaining of our identity is the dissemination of information amongst Zoroastrians about themselves. An average Zoroastrian is not very well acquainted with the principles of his religion. Very few amongst us can discuss very knowledgeably our history, Iranian and Indian. This is not surprising and is due to the lack of simple and concise publications on this subject that are suitable in a North American context. This also prevents us from imparting to our children basic and factual knowledge about ourselves that can give them a sense of identity.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ See e.g. Munshi’s interview in *Parsiana*, Oct. 1989, pp. 13 f.

¹⁵⁷ Bulsara at the Montreal Congress, *Proceedings*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁸ *Parsiana*, June–Sept. 1976, p. 27.

The various North American congresses typically have youth sections; for example, at Montreal there was a panel entitled 'Youth Debate: Will Zoroastrian Culture Survive on this Continent?'¹⁵⁹ In addition to the youth programmes of the various Associations already noted, a series of American Zoroastrian Youth Congresses have been organized, starting in Los Angeles in 1987.¹⁶⁰ In 1993 FEZANA organized the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Los Angeles, but that, and its consequences, will be discussed in the following section on the 1990s. Most Zoroastrian communities (Hong Kong is an exception) have active youth programmes, but they are particularly strong on the North American continent. The general media often refer to the 'cult of youth' in America, and if this were not matched within the Zoroastrian community the dangers of losing those youths would be yet greater. There is acute awareness that the young meet fellow Zoroastrians rarely more than once a month, but are in daily contact with American youth culture. A powerful paper was presented at the Seventh World Congress in Houston by Laila F. M. Contractor who, moved by her close Zoroastrian friend's conversion to Christianity, set out to interview others who had converted and/or married out in order to find out why they had done this. A common response was that Christian churches were found to be peaceful and priests were helpful at times of difficulty. Her respondents said that they had felt marginalized at Zoroastrian functions. Those who married out said that they had an insufficient knowledge of their religion to remain within it. This is a fear that has led to religious education becoming a characteristic feature of North American Zoroastrian communities.

Religious education

Religious education (RE) has a higher profile in North America than in almost any other centre, certainly higher than in Bombay. As Cama stressed in his 1978 Bombay Congress paper (p. 3), not only do young people not meet Zoroastrians very often, they also: 'do not have frequent exposure to ritual and ceremony, some do not know what an Agiari or Atash Behram looks like. Living in a

¹⁵⁹ *Proceedings*, pp. 52–71.

¹⁶⁰ Jim Arjani, 'Not afraid to say "I am a Zoroastrian"', *Parsiana*, Dec. 1987, p. 22. A follow-up was organized in Chicago in 1988 (*Parsiana*, Nov. 1988, pp. 19–21).

Judaeo-Christian society they are likely to be influenced by those ideas . . . During their adolescent years and later they attend school and college and work with a non-Zoroastrian society.' The organization of RE classes is part of the original stated aims of several Associations; for example, the earliest formal Association, that of the Zoroastrian Association of America based in Chicago, set up a Religious Studies Committee in 1966.¹⁶¹ Similarly the letter of the Zoroastrian Association of British Columbia (Vancouver) to the registrar to establish the Association (2 October 1967) gave as the second reason for its foundation: 'To disseminate the knowledge of Zoroastrian religion especially for the benefit of the younger generation.' The *Newsletter* of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia reasserted this priority, and reflects a widespread commitment. The plan was to start an education committee whose objective would be: 'to stimulate religious thought and inspire deep religious feelings among children and their parents, to invigorate the bond of brotherhood and unity among us Zoroastrians and to revitalize our heritage through prayers, religious ceremonies and customs.'¹⁶²

Although the records of many Associations show that the early leaders were concerned that members were slow to take advantage of the classes, the considerable efforts made by some indicate how important a Zoroastrian religious education was to many parents. The ZAGNY newsletter of 14 December 1981, mentions one family which travelled 185 miles in each direction to bring their three children to religious classes. ZAGNY highlights the problem of many Associations across the continent: its membership was spread over fifty to a hundred towns, only 50% lived in New York City, with the rest scattered over a hundred-mile radius.¹⁶³ In Toronto, one member (Noshir Parakh) sought to counter this problem by starting a 'fetch and carry service', collecting the children

¹⁶¹ Minutes of the meeting of 5 Apr. 1966 and mentioned in the first *Newsletter*, June 1966. It was similarly a priority in the other early Associations: New York, Annual Report, 1 March 1976; Toronto, see the first executive committee meeting, 8 May 1971. The earliest constitution of the Zoroastrian Association of California, dated 22 July 1978, put as its second objective: 'To inspire religious thought and feeling among Zoroastrian children.' Once the Zoroastrian Center was established in Los Angeles (Anaheim) the records show that the first series of functions arranged (Mar.–Sept. 1981) included three religious talks, two Avesta classes (one in English, one in Persian), and a Farsi class.

¹⁶² *Newsletter*, 20 June 1982.

¹⁶³ Lowji Cama reported to *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1995, p. 33.

and taking them to his home for the classes.¹⁶⁴ This action proved to be a turning point in the RE programme of a centre with perhaps the greatest activity in this area. Classes were started on opposite sides of the city to enable families to come. It is not uncommon to find young Zoroastrians expressing a deep desire for informed guidance on their heritage. One example is that of Phil Sidhwa, the founder of the Zarthushti Youth of Ontario, in a newsletter he started for this group in September 1981:

In our co-existence with the western world, we tend to ignore our very own traditions, and we inadvertently break apart the foundations of our forefathers . . . If only our very own knowledgeable elders of the community, and I believe there are many, would inconvenience themselves just a little, to teach our religion to no one else than their children, we would regain the supremacy and acknowledgement that we once possessed and deserved . . . The youth of today are starving with curiosity to gain knowledge of their heritage. We feel hopelessly trapped between the attitude and ideology of western civilization and our sincere desire to explore and uncover the foundation of our culture.¹⁶⁵

A New York initiative, subsequently taken up by other Associations, was the start of the 'Good Life' Zoroastrian emblem in the Scouting movement. This was officially launched on 10 December 1983, to provide an RE programme on Zoroastrianism for the young of the community. It was officially recognized by the Scouting movement for the award of a badge.¹⁶⁶ The inspiration behind the venture, Fred Morris, was himself a leading scoutmaster and a Zoroastrian. Here, as in other Associations, the acquisition of certificates is seen as an appropriate stimulant to learning among North American Zoroastrians. Another initiative to encourage Sunday school attendance started in the 1980s in Chicago and still successful at the end of the millennium, is organizing a sleepover the night before so that learning about the religion is associated with socializing. Some of the people I first met as youngsters in my visits in the early 1980s are now adults. Talking to me at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in 2000, a number commented on the close group ties that such weekends achieved and that, for them at least, friendships so formed had outlasted those made at college, which ended with graduation.

¹⁶⁴ Zoroastrian Society of Ontario *Newsletter*, Mar. 1977.

¹⁶⁵ See also the speech of (Miss) Binaifer Davar to the Montreal Congress, *Proceedings*, pp. 56–8.

¹⁶⁶ ZAGNY *Newsletter*, 2 Jan. 1984.

But the will to learn about religion is not confined simply to the youth. In personal conversation many Zoroastrians have commented to me that not only their religious commitment, but also their desire to learn about their religion increased after migration, partly to answer their children's questions, partly to answer the questions of outsiders, and partly because life in a new culture accentuated their own sense of distinctiveness. With their high educational achievements many Zoroastrians in India, and especially Pakistan, take a serious interest in their religion through books and lectures (see Chapters 2 and 4). But this is yet further developed in America, particularly in Associations near university departments of Iranian studies. The obvious example is New York, where Professor Kaikhusroo Irani started a series of classes for the elders while their children had their Sunday school. He and Lovji Cama (who was given the role in the community of 'Dean of Studies') organized day schools and seminars.¹⁶⁷ The Association records show that the following non-Zoroastrian speakers lectured to ZAGNY during these settlement years: Dale Bishop (1977, 1979); Carl Zemensky (1977); Stanley Insler (1981); Shaul Shaked (1981); James Russell (1981, 1983); Jacob Stern (1981); Charles Evans (1982); Cyrus Pangborn (1984); Mary Boyce (1985); John Hinnells (1985). The list of Zoroastrian speakers is enormous. ZAGNY also hosted the Third North American Zoroastrian Congress, which included four non-Zoroastrian academic speakers: Will Oxtoby, Ehsan Yarshater, Dale Bishop and Sir Harold Bailey. Toronto, Chicago and others also have invited various non-Zoroastrian academics.¹⁶⁸ This is a substantial programme of seeking scholarly contributions to the life of the Associations. But most Associations have concentrated on Zoroastrian speakers. Various centres have set up libraries for members, for example in Anaheim, Chicago and Toronto, and extensive efforts are being made in the new millennium in Houston. The smaller and more scattered groups, for example Alberta, obviously find it much more difficult to mount academic programmes for their members. So, although RE is a distinctive feature of American Zoroastrianism, the pattern varies from

¹⁶⁷ ZAGNY *Newsletter*, 4 Apr. 1984.

¹⁶⁸ Lecture courses were given by Oxtoby and Nigosian in 1977, 1978, 1980 and hosted by Mclure (1975) and Hinnells (1980, 1985).

one Association to another, depending on size, locality, local resources and policy.

What are the consequences of this American emphasis on RE? There is a consciousness of the need to articulate a set of teachings which are meaningful in the New World, both so that they attract the young and also to avoid mockery or alienation from wider American society. The fear of being branded racists for the policy on (non-)conversion has already been alluded to. Another fear expressed in some quarters is that the ritual interests of Parsi priests from India might make Zoroastrianism appear 'superstitious' to Americans. For example, when 'Dastur' Aibara visited America his attraction for some of the elders was not matched by interest among the youth, with his emphasis (speaking only in Gujarati) on the efficacy of personal mantras (see Chapter 2 above). Another example was the protest from the board of the Zoroastrian Center in California to Dastur Kotwal from Bombay, questioning his choice of the study of the major liturgical texts, the *Nirangistan*, during his stay at Harvard, because they feared it would not be for the good of the image of the religion.¹⁶⁹ The Center's publication, *The Zoroastrian*, contains a number of articles antagonistic to what they perceive as a ritualistic priesthood,¹⁷⁰ and rejecting what they see as the late religious corruption of much of the Middle Persian tradition.¹⁷¹ When the American Academy of Religion devoted a section of its annual congress to 'Ritual in the Zoroastrian Tradition' in 1986, the Center protested that the focus was on the later materials, and Parsi priestly practices. They argued successfully for a paper to be read by Dr Ali Jafarey on the pure Gathic teaching and on Iranian traditions.¹⁷² The other American newsletter to emphasize doctrine was the Quebec-based *Gavashni*. Its doctrinal position approximates to that of *The Zoroastrian*. It was not so concerned to present the Iranian perspective, and was somewhat more sympathetic to priestly concerns and rituals. But its editors (Bagli, in particular) were unhappy about much use of the Middle Persian tradition, not least the cosmic dualism it explicitly elaborates. *Gavashni*, like

¹⁶⁹ Agreed at a meeting on 13 Jan. 1980.

¹⁷⁰ For example, June–Oct. 1984. This Center has a particularly strong Reforming movement that will be discussed below.

¹⁷¹ See the issues for May 1985 supplement, also Dec. 1983; Jan. 1984.

¹⁷² *The Zoroastrian*, Dec.–Jan. 1989, pp. 3–7.

The Zoroastrian, was very concerned to present Zoroastrianism as unequivocally monotheistic and, in emphasizing this, sought to distance itself from the parts of the tradition that might undermine its doctrinal stance.

The doctrinal position of these two periodicals is, in this regard, somewhat similar to the teachings of Dastur Dhalla, the Karachi Dastur who studied under Jackson at New York (see Chapter 5). Although Dhalla's work provoked much criticism from the Orthodox in Bombay when it appeared, his perspective on the religion seems to meet the intellectual and religious needs of many North American Zoroastrians at the turn of the millennium. The newsletter of the Association in Ontario, for example, often included lengthy quotations from him in issues published during this period. He is also quoted quite often in *The Zoroastrian*, at meetings elsewhere and by the Chicago priest, Antia.¹⁷³ His attempt to reconcile western scholarship and religious values with Zoroastrian devotion and ideals evidently met the religious needs of a later generation encountering comparable difficulties in the New World.

The practice and understanding of prayer is a particular issue of concern for many American Zoroastrians. Dhalla was quite traditional in his own devotional practice, but he was also conscious of the need of many western-educated people for devotional prayers in the vernacular, hence his book *Homage unto Ahura Mazda*. Numerous American Associations, for example, New York, Chicago and Toronto, have sought translations of the prayers so that the young can understand them. In this they are expressing a perception of the function of prayer which is more in accord with Protestant understandings of prayer as dialogue with God, rather than the understanding of prayer elaborated by the Orthodox priesthood in Bombay.¹⁷⁴ In the New World, prayers recited without understanding are interpreted as superstitious. The Orthodox priestly perspective is that prayers are the activation of holy words of religious power, first uttered by the Prophet when he saw Ahura Mazda and which, when recited in a state of purity, with devotion and intent, make actively present the spiritual forces to which they refer. From the latter perspective, understanding can

¹⁷³ For example at ZAGNY, see 'Kindling Fires—Jashn-e-Sadeh', *Parsiana*, Mar. 1982, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ See 'War and Medicine in Zoroastrianism' in *Selected Works*, pp. 277–300 at 299 f.

be an impediment since it restricts the worshipper to the mere conceptual level of human language.

The public image

Implicit in much of this, in addition to concern for their own young, is the fundamental concern with the presentation of an image to the wider society. American Zoroastrians are acutely conscious that few outsiders have heard of their religion. So, at the Toronto Congress, Mavalwalla said (p. 43): 'Here . . . your name means nothing other than to connect you to a poverty-stricken part of the world. Only a few academics and a handful of others can properly differentiate a Zoroastrian . . . One of the major objects of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario is to teach all our fellow Canadians to recognize us in the light of our faith.' The need was underlined for Toronto Zoroastrians when they purchased a building for their centre, and local residents sought to impose a by-law restricting permission to single-family residences in the area because they feared 'that it was a strange religious group'. The initial ruling was declared null and void by the Ontario Supreme Court, 30 June 1978, on the grounds that it was 'enacted in bad faith and discriminatory'.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, when a television programme used the word 'cult' with reference to a Zoroastrian, while the picture of the Toronto Center was on the screen, the executive committee supported a strong protest from their president saying, 'Obviously your research section cannot have carried out an in-depth study of this ancient faith to so degrade it by referring to it as a cult, and equating it with some faddish religious movement.'¹⁷⁶ It is the same concern that explains the vigour with which publications perceived as defamatory are attacked. So, for example, June Kronholz wrote an article in the *Wall Street Journal* with the heading and subheading: 'After 3,400 years, India's Parsis fear they are dying out: lag in marriages, births hits sect of Fire Worshipers; the trouble with vultures.'¹⁷⁷ Letters of protest were sent by Bagli from Quebec, Pavri of Vancouver, Irani from Los Angeles and James Russell of Columbia University. The labels

¹⁷⁵ ZSO Newsletter, May/June 1978, also July/Aug. 1978. The Newsletter on 1 Nov. 1980 reported on the opening of the Centre, and included a speech by the mayor. He had originally supported the neighbours, but he commented at the opening that their fears had been unnecessary.

¹⁷⁶ Record of executive meeting of 25 July 1979.

¹⁷⁷ 27 May 1982.

‘sect’ and ‘fire worshippers’ were especially offensive, for it was feared that these would lower the standing of the religion in the eyes of outsiders and the community’s young people.¹⁷⁸

One positive step taken by many Associations around the world to present a good profile of the religion to the public is to be involved in inter-faith groups and multicultural activities. To my knowledge, no American Association refrains from such involvement, but Toronto,¹⁷⁹ Vancouver¹⁸⁰ and Chicago are especially active. One of the early activists in this field a Vancouver Zoroastrian, Ed Edulji, was deeply involved in the development of multiculturalism in British Columbia. This area became even more prominent in the 1990s (see below).

The achievers

Another key element in establishing the respectability of the community is the emphasis on the achievements of Zoroastrians. News of individual success, for example at college or in employment, is regularly featured in all newsletters. At each North American Zoroastrian Congress, and at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress there have been awards for ‘Outstanding Young Zarathushti’ and ‘Outstanding Zarathushti Student’. The former has several times been given to someone who has been outstandingly successful in business, but who has also been active within the Zoroastrian community locally or nationally. One recipient, in 1998, was Orang Demehry, who was then running a project analysing the US Department of Defense’s non-appropriated activities and developing best business practice in some areas for the House of Representatives.¹⁸¹ Firdaus Bhathena won the Excellence in Business Award in 2002 for founding a software infrastructure company in 2000, becoming its president and chief executive. In its first two years of business his company raised \$11 million of venture capital and employs forty employees—all this by Bhathena’s thirty-second birthday.¹⁸² The aim is not simply to reward success, but also to provide role models for Zoroastrian youth.

¹⁷⁸ See the report in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1982, p. 21.

¹⁷⁹ See report of AGM, 15 June 1984.

¹⁸⁰ For the early Zoroastrian moves in Vancouver see Pavri *JSBC*, p. 46, referring to meetings in 1970.

¹⁸¹ North American Zarathushti Community Awards Programme, July 1998, New York.

¹⁸² North American Zarathushti Community Awards Programme, 6 July 2002, Chicago.

Among the older generation some names are often referred to, for example Nani Palkiwalla, who became Indian ambassador to the US, and Jamsheed Marker, who was appointed Pakistan Ambassador in the US and at the UN. There are a number of highly successful professionals resident in North America, for example Dinshah F. Mehta, who became vice-president of the Chase Manhattan Bank,¹⁸³ and Jehan Bagli, elected Distinguished Research Fellow in the Wyeth-Ayerst Research Laboratories in Princeton.¹⁸⁴ A prominent figure amongst the Iranian Zoroastrians is Professor Farhang Mehr. Born in Tehran in 1923, he studied both engineering and law in Tehran, and at the London School of Economics for a Ph.D. Initially on his return to Iran he taught international relations at the military academy, where he first met the Shah. During his student days, and again on his return to Iran, he was liberal in his politics and basically pro-Shah. After working for such government enterprises as the National Iranian Oil Company, he came to the attention of ministers, until he eventually became Iran's representative to Opec, a Vice-Minister of Finance (a non Muslim could not become a Minister), and the Deputy Prime Minister. In 1971, he was made Chancellor of one of Iran's most prestigious educational establishments, the Pahlavi University in Shiraz. There, he presided over its growth into a major international university and was deeply involved in arranging the 2,500th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Persian Empire. He remained as Chancellor until the revolution, making the university one of the least troublesome political centres, through his reputation for listening to different points of view and for acting justly. After the revolution he was put on the list for arrest and execution because he had held high office under the Shah. He had to go into hiding, until after three years, he was able to escape across the mountains to Turkey, on foot and by horse. He stayed in Europe until he was able to get a visa to enter the US. Eventually his family was able to join him. Here, with his family again around him, he became Professor of International Relations at Boston University. The rise of a Zoroastrian to such prominence in an Islamic country is without parallel.¹⁸⁵ In his private life, Mehr has been an active Zoroastrian from childhood, taking a leading role in the Tehran

¹⁸³ *Parsiana*, June 1992, pp. 17–19.

¹⁸⁴ *Parsiana*, Dec. 1995, p. 16.

¹⁸⁵ L. M. Alphonse, *Triumph over Discrimination: The Life-Story of Farhang Mehr*, WZC, 2000.

Anjuman, and in religious organizations in America, and in the World Zoroastrian Organization (see further Chapter 10); he authored a widely read book on Zoroastrian philosophy.¹⁸⁶ He continues wherever possible in public and private to press contemporary Iranian leaders to respect the human rights of Zoroastrians in Iran.¹⁸⁷

Perhaps the American Zoroastrian achiever with the highest public image is the musician Zubin Mehta. The newsletters of any city in which he performs pay particular attention to his concerts.¹⁸⁸ Mehta is conscious—and proud—of both his Indian and Zoroastrian origins. He refers to them in interviews with such magazines as the *International Herald Tribune*.¹⁸⁹ Various Associations have sought his backing. He was asked, for example, to become a trustee of the Ancient Iran Cultural Society of California, the ‘prototype’ of the Zoroastrian Center, and was asked by them to compose a Zoroastrian hymn.¹⁹⁰ He has joined various Associations in their fundraising efforts for their buildings, notably Chicago¹⁹¹ and especially New York. ZAGNY facilitated ‘Apro Zubin’ with a *jashan* and lunch in his honour in April 1980, when he was presented with a scroll by Professor Irani, with a poetic translation of a Gathic text, ‘Verily shall I render homage to the Lord in the Abode of Songs’. In December 1982 he invited fifty young Zoroastrians to a young persons’ concert he was conducting.¹⁹² There have been occasions when he has asserted his identity in public, as he himself recalled

¹⁸⁶ *The Zoroastrian Tradition: An Introduction to the Ancient Wisdom of Zarathushtra*, Rockport, Mass., 1991.

¹⁸⁷ See *Humata*, nos. 10 and 11, Fall 2001, pp. 1–6, relating the visit of the Iranian President, Hojatolislam Mohammad Khatami, to the United Nations. At a public meeting Mehr pointed out that although Zoroastrianism was one of the three recognized minority religions in Iran, a new law was passed in 1991 reinstating earlier law to the effect that if a Zoroastrian becomes a Muslim he or she will inherit the whole of their parents’ estate, and that Zoroastrians were not allowed blood money as Muslims were. This he said militated against Iranian claims of equal rights in an Iranian civil society. Mehr was delighted to announce in *Hamazor*, 3, 2002 pp. 29 f. that his quest had proved successful.

¹⁸⁸ See, e.g. the ZSO Newsletter for April/May 1982 when he conducted the Israeli Philharmonic in Toronto.

¹⁸⁹ See the reproduction of the *Herald Tribune* article, H. C. Schonberg, ‘The Indian Connection’, in *Parsiana*, Sept. 1984.

¹⁹⁰ Letters dated 12 July 1980 and 29 August 1981 respectively, both consulted in the Center’s files.

¹⁹¹ Reported in the *Naperville Sun*, 28 August 1981, also in *Parsiana*, Apr. 1981, p. 13, and there was a report in the Association’s Newsletter, Oct. 1981, p. 15.

¹⁹² ZAGNY Newsletter, 10 Feb. 1983.

in an interview published in *Parsiana*. He had commented that he was:

staunchly loyal to the country of his birth. Mehta is aghast at the stance some Parsis in North America have adopted: 'they don't think they're Indian. They don't belong to any Indian association. They call themselves Zoroastrians or Parsis, but not Indians . . . You don't forget the country that has harbored you for a thousand years! Is India just a transit lounge? Are we just passing through?' . . . Mehta says that he used to wear the sudre kusti [while studying] in Vienna—and in his final Bombay concert he conducted in a dagli . . . During the Bombay stays, he not only visits the agiary but makes a point to treat the accompanying orchestra to a traditional Parsi repast.

The article also reported that he had arranged to have his daughter's *naujote* performed. In so doing he was undertaking a significant act, because he is married to a non-Zoroastrian. Her *naujote* was not a matter of controversy, both because the community loved him, and because, as the offspring of a Parsi male, according to the 1906 High Court judgement, she could officially be initiated.

Wings of Fire

Mehta's biggest involvement with the projection of the Zoroastrian image was the production of a film and video (categorized as a 'docu-drama') which eventually appeared in 1986, entitled *Wings of Fire*.¹⁹³ The project itself became something of an epic. The first report of it I can find was made in the summer of 1981.¹⁹⁴ Thereafter it was commonly reported in newsletters in America, India, Britain, Hong Kong and elsewhere.¹⁹⁵ The film producer was Cyrus Bharucha, a British-born Zoroastrian, who had worked for several years for the BBC on such prize-winning projects as *Gandhi's India* and *The Forsyte Saga*. He brought some famous names into the project, for example, William Humble, a scriptwriter involved in British productions such as *Churchill: The Wilderness Years* and a very popular series *All Creatures Great and Small*. He had also

¹⁹³ The earlier provisional title had been 'A Quest for Zarathushtra' and then 'Legacy of the Forgotten Prophet'.

¹⁹⁴ *Mid-Day*, 7 July 1981 reported in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1981, p. 15.

¹⁹⁵ The first American reference I can find is the ZAGNY *Newsletter* of 1 Oct. 1981. See the reports in *Parsiana*, January 1983, pp. 16–19; Apr. 1983, p. 11; May 1983, pp. 4 f.; May 1985, p. 17; July 1986, pp. 4, 17; Sept. 1986, p. 7; Jan. 1987, pp. 9 f. For the American press see the *New York Times*, 10 April 1983.

won American television awards. Further, Bharucha persuaded some actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company to take part. With the basic theme being Mehta's 'quest for his roots', the film looked set to be a huge success.

The raising of funds for such an ambitious project proved a protracted business, with donations made and shares purchased by individual firms (for example the Tatas and Godrejs) and Zoroastrian Associations around the world. In India the funds were collected by a trust established for the film, the Oriental Heritage Trust, under the chairmanship of the diplomat Nani Palkiwala. It also received the active co-operation of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, the High Priest Dastur Firoze Kotwal, and the founder of Zoroastrian Studies, Khojeste Mistree (the last two eventually appeared in the film). In America the foundation was registered as Persepolis Productions Inc., and was closely related to ZAGNY, which made loans, helped raise funds through various functions and acted as a collecting point so that, as a tax-exempt body, it ensured that the donations could be tax-deductible.¹⁹⁶

An inevitable consequence of such international fundraising from diverse Zoroastrian bodies, and of the extremely high profile of the project, was that many people wanted to have an influential voice in the making, especially in the script, of the film. A script committee was established at the Montreal Congress consisting of Professor Irani (on whose approval of the script the ZAGNY support was conditional); Dr Jehan Bagli, the Quebec-based editor of *Gavashni*, and Dastur Minocher Homji of Bombay. All these individuals have a reputation for being on the Liberal or Reforming wing of the community. They were supported by Khojeste Mistree, who was also present. The producer, Bharucha, brought two western academics with him to a script meeting, Dr James Russell (then of Columbia University) and Dr Alan Williams of Manchester University, both with the reputation for being close to the Orthodox, or traditional, wing of the community. A committee is rarely likely to produce a flowing script, but such totally contrasting positions as were represented at the meeting inevitably generated mutually exclusive interpretations of the doctrine and the result was extreme rancour. Prof. Farhang Mehr, as chairman of the committee, wrote to Dolly Dastoor, who had

¹⁹⁶ ZAGNY correspondence file, S. Merabi to I. Gandhi and F. Patel, dated 22 May 1982.

been president of the Montreal Congress, requiring her to put on record that he had walked out of the meeting because of the acrimony and because he and the committee thought the whole script to be 'inadequate and harmful'.¹⁹⁷ Prof. Irani also registered his disapproval of the script with ZAGNY because 'it propagates the message of dualism and does not show Zoroastrianism as a monotheistic religion'.¹⁹⁸ The film was later questioned, and then attacked, from another side. Two High Priests, Dasturs Mirza and JamaspAsa, censured the script for presenting Zoroaster as a philosopher: 'denuding the prophet of his supernatural status and showing him as a mere mortal'. There was also a fear that it would attract converts, for the Peterson *naujote* was still part of contemporary debate.¹⁹⁹ The Dasturs did not reject the idea of a film, but feared, on the basis of press reports and interviews, that 'the effect of [this] film is going to be quite adverse and harmful especially to the younger generation'.²⁰⁰ Bharucha sought to reassure the Dasturs in the next issue of *Parsiana* and satisfied one enough for him to agree to participate (Dastur Kotwal).

The debate continued throughout the making and editing of the film. So in 1984–5 the Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP) circulated widely a copy of a letter they sent to the Central Board of Film Censors in India saying that the film 'will be a deliberate and malicious outrage on the Parsi Zoroastrian community where religious feelings are sought to be violently hurt by insulting . . . its religion and/or its beliefs'. Although normally COVP are diametrically opposed on doctrinal matters to the American Zoroastrians who had been on the script committee, the two sides came together to condemn the script for the same reason, that it presented Zoroastrianism as a dualism. The COVP added the objection that Zoroaster was presented as subject to human frailties and not 'as a divine being'.²⁰¹ Subsequently COVP petitioned the Bombay High Court for a staying order against the public

¹⁹⁷ Letter dated 8 Mar. 1983.

¹⁹⁸ Board meeting minutes, 30 Mar 1984. In February of that year Farhang Mehr had written to the ZAGNY board, again in his role as chair of the committee, 'to record that the community has no involvement with the script of the film, The Quest for Zarathushtra since November 1982'—ZAGNY miscellaneous correspondence file.

¹⁹⁹ *Parsiana*, Aug. 1983, p. 65.

²⁰⁰ H. K. Mirza, K. M. JamaspAsa and F. M. Kotwal, 'Inquest "Quest"', *Parsiana*, Mar. 1983, pp. 49 f. and a document published separately by the Council of Vigilant Parsis.

²⁰¹ *Parsiana*, May 1985, p. 17.

screening of the film. The case went to appeal on 25 July and the court found in favour of the producers, so the film was shown.²⁰² It appeared in Bombay cinemas and on national network TV in India, and videos have circulated widely among Zoroastrians around the world. It had its gala premiere in New York in October 1985, but it has not reached a large non-Zoroastrian market. The controversy raged so fiercely because of the perceived vulnerability of a tiny and threatened community in the face of a powerful medium, especially with the involvement of a community hero. Some feared that this publicity might attract converts and so cause further division, just as the furor over the Peterson *naujote* was beginning to subside. The Iranians felt that their perspective on the religion was neglected because the influential voices had been from the Parsis, and others feared that it might project the community in a bad light to the outside world. The motivation for making the film was to increase knowledge about, and respect for, the religion, not least among its own young people. It is difficult for outsiders, coming from a majority tradition, to appreciate how deeply troubling it is for a minority group when they perceive threats on many sides. Films made about Jesus that some Christians believe to be blasphemous cause distress, but they are not likely to have a significant effect on the course of Christian history. There was a real fear on the part of many that *Wings of Fire* might significantly impact on the future of the diminishing Zoroastrian community. In fact this did not happen and many, especially young people, have been supported in their religious identity.

Patterns of religious belief and practice among North American Zoroastrians in the 1980s

Having discussed the demographics, the settlement history of Zoroastrians in Canada and the US, and some of the major community issues, it is appropriate here to look at the pattern of beliefs and practices which the survey indicated in the mid-1980s. Appendix 2, Table 1 (b) shows that two-thirds, or more, of American Zoroastrians said that they prayed daily. This proportion was similar to that in the older diaspora groups in Britain and Hong Kong, but less than in the older centres of Karachi and

²⁰² *Parsiana*, July 1986, pp. 4, 17 and Sept. 1986, pp. 7 f.

Kenya, and less than in Australia. But there were differences in America. In both Toronto and Houston there were more people saying that they prayed daily (72%) than in Chicago and the scattered Canadian groups. Fewer American Zoroastrians in general, and those in Chicago in particular, reported that they wore the *sudre* and *kusti*, less often than did Zoroastrians in the more traditional centres of London, Karachi, Kenya—or Sydney. (The lower figures for California are readily explained by the fact that Iranian Zoroastrians attribute less significance to them than do Parsis.) Within America it was respondents from Houston who most commonly affirmed that they wore the *sudre* and *kusti*. As far as the other common religious practices of observing the festivals (*gahambars*) and lighting a divo are concerned, again the American Zoroastrians appeared to observe them less readily than did co-religionists in both the older centres and in Australia. In this instance such practices, particularly the *gahambars*, were observed where there were ‘centres’ such as Chicago, rather than in the Associations which then did not have a building, for example Houston and the scattered groups. But very few Zoroastrians anywhere said that they observed neither. A key indicator (for Parsis more than Iranian Zoroastrians) was their aspiration to have a funeral at a *dokhma*. In comparison with other diaspora groups the American groups differed considerably, especially between their own Associations: 20–5% in Houston and California, but only 4–6% in Chicago and New York desired such a funeral. The significance of these patterns will be commented on below. Relatively few, approximately one in ten, said that they were non-practising, but a greater proportion of respondents from Chicago and the scattered groups in Canada and US made such an assertion compared with Houston or California. Practising or not, an overwhelming majority, as high as 91% (Houston), said that they often ate Indian or Iranian food; it was only in the scattered US groups where the figure ‘dropped as low’ as 80%! Food is clearly a key feature of Zoroastrian life in America.

Attitudes to intermarriage were, especially in the 1980s, an important indicator of Orthodox or Reforming inclinations. More respondents from Chicago than from any other centre in the world indicated an acceptance of intermarriage. Houston had, with California (the base not only of Iranian Zoroastrians but also of a strong Orthodox Parsi group), the highest number of

respondents objecting to intermarriage. Once again, the wider US, Chicago and Houston groups stood at opposite ends of the Reform–Orthodox divide. Where such marriages did occur, then again Chicago and Houston were at opposite ends of the spectrum on their views that priests should or should not perform the ceremony. Here the Californian response was different in that they accepted that where intermarriages occurred, the priests could be involved. The Chicago responses on initiating partners or children of intermarriages, or allowing non-Zoroastrians to enter temples, were on the Reforming wing of views; Houston was on the Orthodox wing. Between those two, New York and the rest of US tended to the more liberal, with Toronto in the middle. Across the continent therefore there were contrasting religious viewpoints. How this compares with the international perspective will be considered in the Conclusion.

Beliefs relating to life after death also varied from one group to another. Broadly two-thirds of respondents affirmed a belief in the immortality of the soul, but there were differences in the form of the belief in the afterlife. Academics assert that resurrection is the traditional Zoroastrian belief, and that rebirth is a Hindu influence on Zoroastrians, on Parsis in particular. It is striking that, Toronto apart (18%), few North American Zoroastrians said they believed in a resurrection, whereas approximately half of Canadian responses, and of those from Houston, affirmed a belief in resurrection. This may be taken as a marker of respondents being close to the traditions of the Indian old country. In Chicago, by contrast, only one in four held this belief. Similarly, whereas in broad terms approximately one-third of American Zoroastrians believed that prayers for the dead are essential, only 18% in Chicago did so. Again Houston leaned towards the Orthodox wing, with 38% affirming such a belief. The majority asserted that their beliefs and practices had not changed in the new country, though more said that their practices rather than their beliefs had changed.

The perceptions of community relations also varied across the continent. Most (80+%) asserted that intra-Parsi relations were good, though the figure was somewhat lower in Chicago. In California where there was an intense Orthodox–Reform debate figures were substantially lower. Fewer respondents in all centres thought that Parsi–Iranian relations were excellent, and the numbers were substantially lower in California and New York. In all the

American groups, respondents affirmed that their relations with wider society were good (approximately two-thirds). Only in Houston was there a significantly smaller group making this affirmation. On a later visit to that city some people commented on the problems of the Bible belt, and some referred to the Ku Klux Klan, but that information was gathered a few years after the survey. The figures on discrimination are interesting. In global terms more Zoroastrians from Toronto than from any other centre said that they had experienced discrimination. That figure requires qualification in that on subsequent visits to follow up issues, people said that though there was discrimination, it was not frequent and found mostly in employment, especially in securing a first job. Once a person had proved himself or herself, then they were accepted. The situation was different in London, where the discrimination was said to be frequent, and substantial. In Chapter 11 the question will be addressed of why there are differences between different centres, between, say, Houston and Chicago. Are the differences simply due to the context, i.e. the local conditions, or is it that different groups of Zoroastrians will assimilate in different ways, and that specific groups characterize these Associations, so that internal community factors give rise to different patterns of belief and practice? It is also important to note that there are commonly divergent groups within an Association. For example, although the survey consistently found the Houston community to be more traditional than others across the continent, Yezdi Rustomjee, writing the chapter on Houston's Zoroastrians in Ebaugh and Chhafetz' book, emphasizes what others would consider the Reforming perspective but whose proponents he terms 'the progressives'. His account of purity laws, intermarriage and conversion would not be accepted by those he calls 'the traditionalists' in his own community.²⁰³

The 1990s: A Period of Consolidation and Growth

A time of change

Some prominent Zoroastrian leaders in the 1990s argued that whereas in the 1960s and 1970s the focus of attention was on survival, now the time had come to view the future more confidently.

²⁰³ *Religion and the New Immigrants*, pp. 243–53 at 248.

In 1997 Dolly Dastoor, then president of FEZANA, wrote:

In my opinion we have arrived at that moment in our history on this continent when we should give up our preoccupation with survival. The question of survival should be put to rest once and for all. The constant fight for survival makes it impossible for the psyche to participate fully in the human experience, for survival requires the individual to adopt defensive attitudes and to refuse openness to others.

We should now be working toward the more positive experience of consolidation. We are here to stay, to consolidate our presence and take our rightful place, center stage, in every facet of North American life as Zarathushtis. . . . [we should look] at larger issues of raising the Zarathushti consciousness on how we, as North American Zarathushtis, can add value to the North American society . . . on larger issues of raising Zarathushti consciousness, Zarathushti spirituality and Zarathushti religiosity . . . We need to grow, not only at the individual level but also at the structural and organizational level. We need to establish ourselves by way of more associations, more anjumans, more community centres, more foundations for education, for medical treatment, agencies for social, psychological and religious counselling, professional and business networks.²⁰⁴

In a similar passage written a year earlier she had concluded:

In our zeal for survival, the leadership has become defensive, which in turn had made us confrontational towards ourselves and each other. We were stifling and suffocating the voices of our young adults, we were frustrating our youth, and as adults we were inflicting wounds on each other we were not even aware of. We were bleeding and we did not know it.²⁰⁵

The call was 'to move on to bigger and better things'. This section will look at how some of the issues of the settlement years have developed in this time of change.

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA)

There are various factors that inspired this change in perception. One was the growing number of formal Associations, and of Zoroastrian buildings across the continent. Another was the growing numbers of Zoroastrians in America. Migration had slowed

²⁰⁴ FEZANA *Journal*, Fall 1997, p. 3. See also her words in *Journal*, Spring 1998, p. 2 and Summer 1998, pp. 2 f. In the rest of this chapter '*Journal*' will refer only to the FEZANA publication.

²⁰⁵ *Journal*, Fall 1996, p. 3.

down, but because it was mostly a young community, birth rates exceeded death rates and so the numbers grew. By the end of the 1990s there were approximately 9,000 known members of Associations, and it was estimated that this probably represented only a half of the real numbers in North America.²⁰⁶ The growing size of the Associations, and the involvement in them, is indicated by the fact that at the turn of the millennium several were looking for either extensions or new properties: Chicago, New York, Vancouver and Toronto. But perhaps the biggest single factor was the continent-wide collaboration in an overarching or umbrella organization, the Federation of Zoroastrians in North America (FEZANA). As noted above, this had been a dream for many years. Rivetna was charged with the task of producing proposals for a unifying body, which was born in 1987. Each of the regional Associations is a member of the Federation, nineteen from USA and four from Canada—smaller and informal Associations are corresponding members. Representatives of the Associations are on the board of directors, and votes are weighted according to the size of the Association. There are five elected officers (president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and assistant secretary) but they have no voting powers, serving only as administrators. In the early days, it was essential to reassure members that FEZANA would not seek to impose ‘central’ policies (e.g. on conversion or rituals), but was rather a facilitator enabling Associations to fulfil their maximum potential. The intention was, and remains, to pool resources and ideas to achieve more collaboratively than could be done individually. But FEZANA does not pass judgement on what should be done locally, nor does it define policy on religion. There are committees concerned with funds and finance,²⁰⁷ research and historic preservation,²⁰⁸ census and North American directory,²⁰⁹ and

²⁰⁶ Noshir Langrana, ‘Observations on Demography of Zarathushtis in North America’, *Journal*, Winter 1999, pp. 30–3. But see above on the problem of estimating numbers.

²⁰⁷ These include Welfare Fund, Religious Education, Student Aid Fund, Helping Hands Youth, Properties Fund, and General Fund. As of 1999 the fund categories had been changed to: General, Welfare, RE, Scholarship and Critical Assistance, see *Journal*, Spring 2000, p. 72.

²⁰⁸ This publishes a journal, and various books and organizes academic Gatha or Avesta conferences.

²⁰⁹ The first edition was published in 1996, a revised and expanded version was published in 1998 and a third in 2000.

a religious education committee.²¹⁰ An example of collaboration was the production of an agreed religious education curriculum, divided into six levels, each of which can take two years. The various Associations supply some of their materials to help small Associations provide an education on Zoroastrianism to prepare their children for growing up in America.²¹¹ But this agreed 'national' curriculum can be seen to have grown out of the work of Associations, for in *Journal*, February 1993, there had been a review of eighteen Associations' curricula (pp. 12–24). This had highlighted a huge diversity of practice, with Sunday schools involving numbers from six to 160, from informal—almost extempore—syllabuses, to structured programmes spanning several years. Almost all taught the *kusti* prayers, but what was covered under doctrine varied enormously (discussed further below). It is through such committees as this one that FEZANA carries out most of its work. The outcomes of this review will be discussed under the heading 'Religious education', below.

In 1995 a Mission Statement was agreed, which read:

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) is a federation consisting of Zoroastrian Associations of the United States of America and Canada whose mission is:

To preserve the religion of Prophet Zarathushtra.

To be a strong federation committed to putting the Zoroastrian community firmly and clearly on the American map, and ensuring the survival, unity, progress and prosperity of the Zoroastrian community on this continent, thereby preserving its religious and cultural identity.

To facilitate the efforts of its Member Associations, and through them their individual members, in the cultivation of a model Zoroastrian environment in their homes and communities, where Zoroastrian values are promoted and nurtured, and where the teachings of Zarathushtra are imparted, lived and practised every day.

To work closely in co-operation with Zoroastrian communities abroad, in deliberations for a common goal of a united world Zoroastrian community.

To provide effective leadership in addressing the critical issues of our times with wisdom and righteousness.

This mission is to be achieved through the promotion of learning and understanding, through the clarification of any misconceptions, through

²¹⁰ See the account of FEZANA in *Journal*, Summer 1996, pp. 10–16.

²¹¹ *Journal*, Fall 1996, p. 4.

the establishment of infrastructures, by working in co-operation with other religious bodies and communities, through networking, by dissemination of information relating to the Zoroastrian faith and communities, by guiding and co-ordinating the efforts of its member Associations whilst respecting their individuality and inalienable rights, and without compromising the everlasting message of Zarathushtra.²¹²

Growing out of this, a first ten-year Strategic Plan was published in 1997 under the presidency of Dolly Dastoor. It declared its vision to be:

To develop a Zarthushti community in North America that is well-connected, well educated, well-grounded in Zarthushti religious thought, values and ethics, respectful of diversity, strong in collective giving, economically prosperous, a community which will be recognized for its contribution in all aspects of religious and communal life.

The ten-year plan (1997–2007) identified the following four ‘Shared Spaces’:

1. *Leading a Zarthushti Life*, which opened with the words: Our overriding aspiration is to be identified as a distinct religious community.’ It went on to stress the importance of knowing and being able to articulate what a Zarthushti is; the organization of courses, seminars, books etc. on the religion.

2. *‘Thousand points of Light’*—methods of mobilizing community resources, the youth, bringing harmony within the community and improving the economic prosperity of the community.

3. *Internal Infrastructures* to make Zarthushtis and their organizations financially self-supporting ‘and strengthen our base as a religious community’. These would organize study groups; develop advisory groups and a council of elders to advise the president and the Associations, and an economic council to help businesses; make provision for the elderly and frail; organize scholarships.

4. *External Infrastructures* to develop links with other Zarthushti communities, develop worldwide Zarthushti community (federation), a centre for Zarthushti studies and a spiritual centre.

Small working groups were established to carry these plans forward. Some of them immediately proved difficult, for example, the council of elders, the long-term effort to achieve an agreed unified calendar and a centre for Zoroastrian studies. But others,

²¹² *Journal*, Winter 1995, p. 9.

for example the business network, are happening, and the debates over the world body continue (and will be discussed in Chapter 10). Continent-wide collaboration is resulting in constructive approaches rather than the defensive measures of the settlement years.

One of the most visible achievements of FEZANA is its regular and admirable *Journal* edited and produced by Roshan Rivetna, with guest editors for specific issues. Each issue has a message from the president, news of Associations from across the continent, especially the annual general meeting and the biannual North American Congress, international (Zoroastrian) news on inter-faith activities, upcoming events, achievements of American Zoroastrians, a matrimonial column and news of births and deaths. Each issue has a theme. These range from religious subjects such as the scriptures (Winter 1998), the *Gathas* (Spring 1998), prayer (Fall 1999), initiation (Winter 1997); academic subjects like the date and birth place of Zoroaster (Fall 1997); to historical material, for example the history of Iran (Summer and Fall 2000). Some issues have focused on Zarathushtis in North America, for example the stories of those early settlers who came to America (Spring 1997), mobeds in North America (Fall 1998). There have been supplements on Zoroastrian businesses (Winter 1995) and professionals (Summer 1997);²¹³ Zoroastrian women past and present (Fall 1994), Zoroastrian musicians (Summer 1999). Consistent with their proclaimed intention the religious subjects include pieces by both Orthodox writers (Silloo Mehta and Pervin Mistry) and Reformers such as Ali Jafarey. Even in the late 1990s most writers continue to be the early founders (Bagli, Cama, Dastoor, Irani, Rivetna), although there has been, with only a short break (1999) a 'Youthfully Speaking' section. The *Journal* therefore provides a highly informative resource on activities and diverse views on religious and secular issues.

FEZANA organizes a biennial North American Zoroastrian Congress, hosted by a different Association each time. In the years when these major gatherings are not held there is a smaller annual meeting to discuss business, again hosted by a different Association. Youth congresses have been organized, a Zarathushti business network is growing, so that gradually collaborative work

²¹³ Reproduced as a Special Issue in *Parsiana*, May 1997.

brings Zarathushtis together from across this vast continent, providing networks for support, as well as sharing of views and collaboration in planning. The majority of 'ordinary' members of an Association may not be active in FEZANA; the leaders and very active members are Presidents of FEZANA, Dolly Dastoor in particular, have sought to incorporate the 'grass roots' membership by undertaking extensive tours of the Associations.

The youth

A central concern of FEZANA, as of most Zoroastrian Associations, has been to involve the youth and facilitate their interaction. In addition to the 'Youthfully Speaking' section of the *Journal* there have been a number of FEZANA youth activities, camping trips,²¹⁴ National Youth Congresses, ski trips, a Caribbean and other cruises,²¹⁵ volleyball²¹⁶ and Olympic Games²¹⁷ tournaments. Such events are far more ambitious than could have been attempted by any Association working on its own. The first World Zoroastrian Youth Congress was held in Los Angeles in 1993.²¹⁸ In 1994 FEZANA formed a youth section, 'The Zarthushti Youth of North America' (ZYNA) 'to provide the next generation of Zarthushtis with a mechanism for meaningful change'.²¹⁹ They have been active in canvassing youth views, collecting data, making presentations at workshops and seminars, for example at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, and campaigning for a professorship in Zarathushti Studies at an American university. In 2000 they organized a highly successful tour of Iran, specifically for the youth, and produced an inspiring video by Tanaz Dubash, *In the Footsteps of our Forefathers*, on the responses of these young Zarthushtis to their historic homeland. At the Congress in Houston, as well as awards to such major figures as Zubin Mehta, the World Zarathushti Youth Award for Outstanding Leadership was made to Karman Jasavala for his role in 'the advancement of Zarthushti faith among the Zarathushti youth in the United Kingdom . . . and

²¹⁴ *Journal*, Nov. 1992, p. 8 regarding camping at the Yosemite National Park. The Winter 1993 *Journal* mentions three camps in one year—in Vancouver, California and New York.

²¹⁵ See the two-page account, *Journal*, Spring 1998, pp. 66 f.

²¹⁶ *Journal*, Fall 1998, p. 11.

²¹⁷ *Journal*, Nov. 1992, p. 6.

²¹⁸ *Journal*, Spring 1994, pp. 18–26.

²¹⁹ See the article by the two first co-chairs, Mazda Antia and Jim Engineer, *Journal*, Summer 1996, p. 28.

who is considered to be an emerging outstanding, dynamic and forward-looking future leader of the worldwide Zarathushti community.’²²⁰

The youth have commonly emphasized the need for change. A skit at the 1992 North American Congress in Vancouver had as its theme: ‘Change is coming! Are you ready? Change in prayer, study, religion and name.’²²¹ But the change they most commonly stress is the need to stop the bickering and quarrelling, which they see as prominent among their elders; this in part involves loosing the ethnic ties and uniting as Zoroastrians, a theme discussed further below.²²² From an outside perspective, it appears to me that the hopes of the 1970s and 1980s that many of the divisions, Orthodox–Liberal, Iranian–Parsi would fade with the second generation were perhaps simplistic. Many of the youth reflect the religion of their parents. But they would appear to be ready to accept these differences rather than fight over them, though it would be naïve to suggest that there are no debates. At the Seventh World (Millennium) Congress there were two balls, because the hotel did not have one ballroom large enough. There was no formal separation, but the elders went to one, which I attended, and the youth went to another—which my son attended (and clearly enjoyed immensely!). What is happening is adjustment, but at least among those who attended the Congress (mostly a self-selected group, of course) there was no loss of pride in their history and identity. The formal deliberations of the Congress may have achieved few, if any, concrete proposals (see Chapter 11), but the social interaction, not least among the youth, was successful, and important. This is relevant here, for although there were Zoroastrian youth from other countries, it was overwhelmingly American youth who attended. The youth ‘stream’ of the Congress tended to feature different issues from the rest of programme. The main programme broadly focused on theoretical issues best discussed in Chapter 11, for example, whether it was necessary for Zoroastrianism to bifurcate along Liberal–Orthodox lines as the Jewish community has. The youth tended to focus on the issues which confronted them,

²²⁰ The wording is from *A Zarathushti Odyssey, the Programme of the Houston 2000 Congress*, p. 36.

²²¹ *Journal*, Nov. 1992, p. 2.

²²² See the report of the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held in London, *Journal*, Fall 1997, pp. 47–9; *Journal*, Winter 1999, pp. 64–5. See also *Journal*, Spring 1997, pp. 52 f.

intermarriage, male–female roles, the place of the *Gathas* in daily life and not least the growth of small totally informal groups of young Zarathushti doctors, lawyers, etc. meeting with others just entering the profession. The networking was perhaps the single most important feature not just of this Congress, but of all the youth activities.

The priesthood and religion

One of the key issues in communal discussion has been the nature and role of the priesthood on the American continent. There is only one full-time Zoroastrian priest, Mobed Bahram Shahzadi, at the Iranian Zoroastrian-dominated Darbe Mehr in Los Angeles (Westminster).²²³ Until recently all Parsi priests were professionals, or businessmen, who came to America in their secular, not their religious, capacity, although at the end of the millennium there were one or two coming (to Chicago and Washington) on special religious priests' visas. Few, if any, anticipated the central religious role they would have to play. The work of the priest is especially difficult across such a large continent where small communities can be hundreds of miles from a priest. The role which they are expected to play is different from that of the mobed working full-time in an agiary in India, as it is in most diaspora communities and as it was in the early settlement years. It is not simply that they work in a voluntary not a paid capacity; in America at the turn of the millennium, there is a demand for mobeds to undertake teaching and counselling roles, comparable to those provided by the Christian priests. There have also been some calls for the establishment of a full-time, salaried priesthood. Various strategies have been adopted which merit comment. First, however, it is important to highlight a distinctive feature of American mobeds. In India there has been much discussion about the lack of a highly educated priesthood (Dasturs apart), and concerns have commonly been expressed at how few mobeds are highly educated in secular terms. The American mobeds are different. In an issue of the *Journal* (Fall 1998) devoted to the priesthood there is an account of some thirty mobeds. The most common professions are business and accountancy (almost one in three, and including one professor

²²³ Born in Yazd, he was trained in Tehran where he was made Navar. He also edits the local newsletter, *Mah-Nameh*.

of management). Thereafter, there are computer specialists (five), people in insurance (four), students (four), with others from such professions as medicine and psychology; and the issue includes eight born in America.²²⁴ It would therefore be wrong to think of American mobeds as priests are perceived in India. In addition to priests who have had their *navar* or *maratab* performed in India, American Zoroastrians have started training *mobedyars*, or assistant priests. They may not be of a priestly lineage, but they are committed to the religion and are trained in some of the outer rituals, such as *jashans* and *naujotes*. Such a development has been undertaken with the approval of priests from India, but in practice the Iranian Zoroastrians have taken a leading role in this. Some have questioned whether in North America the concept of a hereditary priesthood has any legitimacy.²²⁵ Two priestly bodies have been established across the continent: one is the Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America (CIMNA), chaired by the priest and leading philanthropist, Mobed Mehraban Zarthoshty,²²⁶ and the other is the (predominantly Parsi) North American Mobeds Council, started in Toronto by Ervad Kobad Zarolia. Because of the restricted training some of them have received, and because of time pressures in America, one theme in discussions has been whether major and lengthy liturgies should be standardized, and curtailed. To this end there have been discussions about the production of a prayer-book, and of the circulation of standard sermon structures.²²⁷ Thus far, the mobeds have refrained from attempting to produce any liturgies significantly different from those in the old country.

Religious education

There have been tentative moves towards an overarching resources provision, if not a religious policy. FEZANA has moved carefully on this because it has always emphasized that the authority lies in

²²⁴ The survey put together by Mobed Jal Birdy from California provoked discussion. He excluded Mobeds who had married out of the community because 'their decision to marry out portrays an ultimate betrayal of our community', *Journal*, Winter 1998, p. 76. Some of the well-established priests are married out, and his list omitted some young American-born Zarathushtris.

²²⁵ Mazda Antia, *Journal*, Winter 1994, pp. 41–3.

²²⁶ This body has also been active in running summer camps, led primarily by Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi.

²²⁷ See e.g. *Journal*, Fall 1993, pp. 8, 14–21, in particular on the required qualities of a North American mobed.

the Associations who constitute the board. It has however sought to support Associations with some provisions. So, for example, Kayomارش Mehta, as chair of FEZANA's Religious Education Committee, produced an RE curriculum. First, a review was undertaken of the great range of RE materials and programmes followed in the different Associations.²²⁸ These varied not just between large Associations with relatively good resources, such as Toronto, and smaller and especially newer groups, but also between Iranian and Parsi (the former tended to place more emphasis on Persian classes and the *Shah Name*). Virtually all included lessons on the prayers, but beyond that there were huge differences, for example, in the extent to which modern history was included. At the FEZANA AGM at San Francisco in 1996, Kayomارش Mehta and his co-chair of the Education Committee, the late Villy Gandhi:

distributed a comprehensive . . . curriculum that outlines various aspects of our religion: Doctrine, Scriptures, Prayers, Rituals, Ethics and History. The curriculum is distributed in six levels modeled on the format of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago. Each level can be covered in two years. The same curriculum can be used for Adult Education, at an accelerated pace. For associations that cannot have six levels of classes, several levels can be grouped together to suit their needs.²²⁹

To a similar end, in 1998 FEZANA published *The Zarathushti Religion: A Basic Text*. This was written by Khojeste Mistree and Mobed Fariborz Sohrab Shahzadi, an example of Parsi–Iranian collaboration. The book was edited by Khojeste's brother, Farrokh. It includes a thirty-one-page appendix of commentaries on the main text, written by individuals representing different points of view. The book grew out of a wish to meet a request from a Zarathushti youth at an Iranian Mobed Council religious summer camp for a basic textbook. It is laid out with spaces so that teachers using it can add their own notes, making it, in Farrokh Mistree's words, 'a living document', although it has grown out of Khojeste Mistree's book discussed in Chapter 2 above, *Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective*. The chapter headings indicate the basic nature of the work: 'The prophet'; 'Zarathushti Doctrine and Ethics'; 'The Ritual Spiral'; 'Iranian Languages and

²²⁸ *Journal*, Feb. 1993, pp. 12–24.

²²⁹ Report in *Journal*, Fall 1996, p. 4.

Texts'; 'Some Basic Prayers'; 'Religious Calendars'; 'The Sacred Fires and Priests'; 'Some Dates in History'. This production is important for its collaborative nature and its attempt to allow for diverse interpretations (e.g. over monotheism and dualism) in order to provide a widely acceptable teaching resource. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the curriculum and the *Basic Text*, although not universally used, are referred to and used quite widely. The religious education provision in America is maturing, without falling into the danger of being prescriptive, leaving the Orthodox and Khshnoomists, and also the Reforming wing, to use materials they prefer.

Iranian Zoroastrians

FEZANA has included Iranians among its office-bearers, but thus far none has been elected president.²³⁰ Occasionally a 'Farsi page' is included in the *Journal* and there have been entries on Iranian festivals,²³¹ Iranian shrines, visits to Iran,²³² the World Congress in Tehran,²³³ issues devoted to various themes, for example on the mobeds, have included Iranian examples.²³⁴ But there are still the appeals to unite, which suggest continuing difficulties.²³⁵ Language remains a key problem, for few Parsis read the Farsi journals, notably *Payk-e-Mehr*, that have been produced, and relatively few appeals for Iranian partners, or charitable causes, appear in the English columns of the *Journal*. The sense of ethnic/national differences can sometimes still be considerable. For example, the Zoroastrian Association of Northern California decided not to celebrate festivals jointly with the Persian Zoroastrian Organization because, 'we have nothing in common, the two cultures are different, we do not share the same language, even the food is quite a change . . . and the festivals are also celebrated in a totally different

²³⁰ The newly elected secretary and vice-president in 1998 were both Iranians, *Journal*, Fall 1998, p. 3.

²³¹ *Journal*, Winter 1996, p. 18; Winter 1999, p. 5 reporting on a *Jashan-e Mehrigan* which was attended by Iranians of different religions.

²³² *Journal*, Fall 1996, pp. 32–42.

²³³ *Journal*, Fall 1996, pp. 23–31.

²³⁴ *Journal*, Aug. 1993, see the articles by Shahzadi, see also *Journal*, Spring 1997, pp. 14 f. on two distinguished Iranian Zoroastrians, Dr Harvesf, a doctor, and K. Shahryary, a retired Iranian general. Shahzadi contributed to the issue on 'Women in Zoroastrianism', *Journal*, Fall 1994, and several Iranians contributed to the issue on the *Shah Name*, *Journal*, Winter 1994, pp. 22–38. See also the section on Iranian weddings in the Spring 1995 issue, pp. 320–35 and an explanation of the *Sedre-Pushi* prayers, Winter 1997, pp. 34–8.

²³⁵ *Journal*, Winter 1996, p. 82.

manner.²³⁶ But some balance is retained between the two groups through the work of important individuals, notably Prof. Farhang Mehr, who played a key role in encouraging Rustom Guiv to donate funds for the building of Darbe Mehrs. His friendship with Prof. Kaikhusroo Irani, of Iranian ancestry but brought up in India, has in practice aided good relations. The problem has surfaced more often in connection with the work of Ali Jafarey in California, in particular with regard to his acceptance of converts of people with no Zoroastrian ancestry. Nevertheless, he has contributed articles to the *Journal*²³⁷ and spoken at North American Congresses. His invitation to the 2000 World Zoroastrian Congress provoked particular hostility. The tensions between Iranians and Parsis do, therefore, still exist, as witnessed by the separate Associations in New York and California, but there is a desire not to publicize them.

The California Zoroastrian Center and the Zarathushtrian Assembly

Dr Ali Jafarey started his work in America during the settlement years in California, specifically at Anaheim, in collaboration with Mrs Farangis Shahrokh in the newly established California Zoroastrian Center. A first informal meeting was held on 21 May 1979. The committee was composed entirely of Iranian Zoroastrians. There were several notable figures involved. Mrs Shahrokh was elected president; other members were Darius Irani, Mehraban Zartoshty, and Dr Rostam Sarfeh. Dr Ali Jafarey joined the Center in October 1982.²³⁸ He was controversial from the beginning, for various reasons. One factor was his Islamic background; another was his interpretation of the doctrine. He focused heavily on the *Gathas* and argued that acceptance of converts, if not active proselytizing, was part of the religion. He questioned whether devotion to other divine beings, and the value of associated rituals, was compatible with the monotheism that he stressed lay at the heart of the Prophet's message. These teachings

²³⁶ *Journal*, Fall 1996, pp. 55 f.

²³⁷ *Journal*, Aug. 1993 on the role of the mobed, and his emphasis on the *ratu*; Spring 1998, on the *Gathas*. See also on being a Zoroastrian by choice, *Journal*, Spring 1999, p. 57.

²³⁸ For an account of the early history of the Californian Zoroastrian Center see the articles by Mrs. Farangis K. Shahrokh in *The Zoroastrian*, 5-1 and 5-2, Feb./Mar. and Apr./May, 1987.

are to be found in the early newsletter, *The Zoroastrian*. In 1990 he, together with others, notably Kaikhusroo Irani, formed the Zarathushtrian Assembly in Los Angeles as a non-profit, non-political religious corporation; it was officially launched on 22 March 1991. It stressed that it was unique in not being a separatist split from a parent body. It was formed:

[as] an organisation which does not identify itself with the Institutionalised Zoroastrianism as an ethnic entity or with any associations, institutions, and other sacerdotal, sanctified, social, financial, charitable, singular or federated establishments. It lies outside the closed communal religious fold of traditionalist and orthodox Zoroastrians. It does not seek any recognition by an authority/authorities of the traditional Zoroastrian community . . . Nevertheless, the Zarathushtrian Assembly is a Zarathushtrian organisation. It has, in theory and practice, RESTORED the religion of Good Conscience to its Gathic purity and Zarathushtrian universality . . . Membership of the Zarathushtrian Assembly is open to all those who, of their own individual accord and after full consideration and conviction, choose the Good Religion and wish to belong to its world fellowship. . . . The Gathas are the only guide in life for the members of the Assembly . . . Its ceremonies are based on the Gathic texts . . . It does not convert people simply because the Good Religion is a religion of personal choice and does not indulge in persuaded, pursued, and pushed conversion. [Emphasis original]²³⁹

Some people become ‘friends’ of the Assembly and can participate in all activities except voting and standing for election.²⁴⁰ The Assembly asserts that it recognizes scholars, priests or not, who have mature knowledge of their faith. But

what it does not recognize is the murmuring priest who goes by **rōte** [emphasis original] alone and does not know and understand what he recites and performs, and yet demands obedience and blind following from the simple, kept-in-the-dark laity. And true to the Gathic tradition, the Assembly does not entertain a priestly class or division. It has proficient persons who officiate at religious ceremonies from birth through initiation to memorial. . . . Any able person, male or female, may qualify on the concrete basis of his/her knowledge to be chosen and recognized as a ‘*rātū*’, a leader, ‘*aethrapaiti*,’ a teacher, or ‘*hamidhpaiti*,’ an assembly head.²⁴¹

²³⁹ See also www.zoroastrian.org/The_Zarathushtrian_Assembly, under Frequently Asked Questions [FAQs], p. 3.

²⁴⁰ See under ‘The Good Religion’ and ‘The Institutionalized Zoroastrianism’ on the site www.Zoroastrian.org p. 14. See also groups.yahoo.com/group/zoroastrians/message/777, which makes the same point.

²⁴¹ See Zoroastrian.org/english/articles/essay.htm

The Assembly does, thereby, affirm that it is a Zarathushtrian organization, 'because it precisely follows Zarathushtra'. It has groups in a number of countries, notably in Latin America. Most of its publications, be they hard copy or on the 'zoroastrian.org' site, are by Ali Jafarey. This and related sites will be discussed in Chapter 10.

The Assembly asserts that it does not convert people. It disseminates the divine message of Zarathushtra, and accepts those who, after due consideration, decide of their own free will to choose the Good Religion, and recognizes them as Zarathushtis through their *naujote* (*sedrej pushi*) ceremony.²⁴² In a photograph in the Commemorative Issue, Jafarey is shown conducting the initiation of an Englishman, a Cuban American and an Iranian. Although they say that they do not convert, members of the Assembly are prepared to take the initiative in encouraging people to join them, as I found personally during the World Congress in Houston, when a European-American approached me. When I asserted my personal lack of religion, with quiet dignity he promptly left me alone. Where proselytism and conversion begin and end, is not clear cut. The Zarathushtrian Assembly affirms that it neither wishes to join nor to receive benefit from any other Zoroastrian body, e.g. FEZANA, and some Zarathushtis therefore are content to let them 'do their own thing', providing they do not impinge on other Zarathushti organizations. But when Ali Jafarey was not at first asked to speak at the Millennium World Congress there was a huge outcry and protest that threatened the very occurrence of the Congress. In the end he was invited by FEZANA to speak at a 'separate' function, in the middle of the Congress, in the Congress hotel and to debate conversion with an Orthodox teacher (Dastoor) from Mumbai. Many of my informants, including some of the Houston organizers, felt that this might lead to interference with the Zoroastrian Associations. Despite anxieties to the contrary, the event passed off peacefully, although a number of American Zoroastrian leaders absented themselves from the meeting, indeed, some even from the Congress.

From an external academic perspective, specifically that of comparative religion, the Assembly resembles some of the new religious movements that are common, especially in California.

²⁴² Passage taken from an account of the Assembly by Jehan Bagli, *FEZANA Millennium Commemorative Issue*, 2000, pp. 97–9 at 98.

Like the Krishna Consciousness Movement (or Hari Krishnas), for example, it claims to follow the teaching of the great teachers of an ancient religion in a manner appropriate for the New World. The extent to which that claim is historically valid, and the relations with the wider members of that religion (especially the relationship in England),²⁴³ may be questioned. But phenomenologically, the Zarathushtrian Assembly has interesting comparisons in the way it carries the ancient message to the modern world through the instruction of people not born into that religion. This episode relating to Jafarey, like the Peterson *naujote* in the settlement years, has raised at the end of the millennium the question of Zoroastrian identity.

Zarathushti Identity

The question of identity has been seen to be a central feature of Zoroastrian communities around the world, as it is in America. The issue was addressed in the theme of the Spring 1999 *Journal* 'The Making of a Zarathushti'. Two authors in particular merit quoting. The Editor Roshan Rivetna wrote:

Here in America the question of my identity is not as clear-cut as it was in the little Parsi world I came from. My loyalties are between calling myself a Parsi and calling myself a Zarathushti or a Zoroastrian . . . I am told 'We should not call ourselves Parsis or Iranis, we are all Zarathushtis.' While my mind tells me that this is the right approach and I must separate my ethnicity from my religion, my heart is very sad about the thought of giving up the Parsi appellation. I find it very difficult to make the separation. In fact I also throw my nationality into the pot—of India, the country of my birth, North America, my country of adoption, and sometimes also Iran where my forefathers came from, the motherland of my religion. I really think of myself as a Parsi-Indian-Iranian-North American-Zarathushti.

After reflecting on what identity her children might assert she concludes: 'As for me and my family, can we go back to being simply Parsis—no ifs, ands or buts?' Later in the same issue (p. 42) Khurshid Bapasola asserted: 'I am a Zarathushti. I prefer to describe myself as a Zarathushti first, then as a Parsi and an Indian. If I think a little further, then I am a Mazdayasni, Zarathushti,

²⁴³ See e.g. M. Nye, *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain: Krishna Consciousness, Religious Freedom, and the Politics of Location*, London, 2001.

Parsi, Indian, Citizen of the United States of America.’ There are, therefore, many layers and dimensions to the question of identity.

Each of the Associations’ constitutions theoretically has to address the question, ‘Who is a Zarathushti?’ But of the twenty-one Associations with such constitutions in 1999, fourteen restricted their definition to membership of the Association.²⁴⁴ It is generally implied that spouses and children of intermarrieds can be members (see for example the constitutions of Chicago, Toronto and Washington State). Only three specify that membership is restricted to those born of a Zarathushti—the Traditional Mazdayasni Anjuman in California, Houston and Quebec. But virtually all American Associations avoid defining ‘Zarathushti’.²⁴⁵ One suspects that the definition is avoided for the practical reason of preventing disputes at the delicate time of drawing up a constitution, which is almost always done when an Association is being started. Just one Association has addressed the question of a definition in open debate; The Zoroastrian Association of British Columbia produced an agreed definition where it is explicit that being a Zoroastrian is not a matter of birth. After three years of debates, at an EGM in 1996 more than 75% of members approved a change to the constitution which included the following definition of a Zoroastrian: ‘A Zoroastrian is a person who attests to be a true believer and follower of the religion as propounded by Asho Zarathushtra in the Gathas, and who subscribes to established Zoroastrian habitual or customary practices.’ Membership of the Association explicitly includes someone ‘not born of Zoroastrian parents, but who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion’.²⁴⁶ At the opposite end of the spectrum is a definition proposed by Ervad Jal Birdy, as a member of ‘The Group of Concerned Zoroastrians’, which explicitly requires that both parents must be Zoroastrians: ‘The term “Zoroastrian” refers to a person who has descended from both Zoroastrian parents and who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion by a traditional Sudreh-Pushin ceremony.’²⁴⁷ My informants tell me that in practice most mobeds in America will initiate the offspring of an intermarried Zoroastrian,

²⁴⁴ *Journal*, Spring 1999, pp. 64–6. An earlier compilation was published in the *Journal*, Feb. 1992, pp. 16–18, before the Vancouver debate.

²⁴⁵ *Parsiana*, Mar. 2000, pp. 170–4.

²⁴⁶ *Journal*, Fall 1996, pp. 8 f.

²⁴⁷ *Journal*, May 1991, p. 9.

but thus far, Joseph Peterson and the Zarathushtrian Assembly of Dr Jafarey are the only known examples of the initiation of people of no Zoroastrian parentage. The broader Vancouver definition has, therefore, yet to be tested.

One dimension to this identity debate has been nomenclature. In the Winter issue of the *Journal*, 1996, Jamshed Udvadia proposed standardizing the name of the religion, and the Prophet, not along the western lines of Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism, but along what he considered traditional Iranian lines, Zarathushtra and Zarathushtis (p. 82). After debate at the AGM this was adopted by FEZANA.²⁴⁸ The gist of the argument was that a name is important, and it should not be a name determined by outsiders who did not know the original religion, and based on a false Greek etymology of the prophet's name. Behind the debates, therefore, was a wish to assert their own identity in their own words, and the word chosen identified the community primarily in religious terms.

Although ethnicity has been, and remains for many, an important aspect of their persona, religion has played a high profile in the Associations and in FEZANA. This has been noted in connection with the importance attached to religious education for the young and not so young. But the concern is not simply with education. For example, in the Winter 1998 issue of the *Journal* (p. 3) the incoming president, Framroze Patel, discussed which prayers should be recited at the start of which sort of Association and Federation meetings. Similarly, in his column in the Winter 1999 issue the president, in introducing an issue on socio-religious issues, concluded, 'At FEZANA, let all our actions be made in accordance with the admonition of the Prophet' (p. 5). The question of 'what prayers are appropriate when' was discussed at some length in the Fall 1999 issue of the *Journal* (pp. 28–39), guest-edited by Kersey Antia. One young Zarathushti, Aysha Ghadiali, described the difference between herself and her Indian Parsi friends in terms of knowing and 'doing' the religion. She wrote:

We, the young Zarathushtis of North America, are less apt to pray, wear our sudre and kushti, cook traditional meals and know the traditions and customs compared to our counterparts in Iran or India. However, if you

²⁴⁸ See the announcement, Fall 1997, p. 7. Udvadia's argument was reproduced in full in the *Journal*, Spring 1999, pp. 8 f.

asked us to explain what being a Zarathushti means, what our history is and what the religion preaches to lead a good life, we may prove overall to have a greater understanding of the religion . . . This may be explained as a cultural difference. We don't live near agiaries or atash behrams, and though we are also a minority in India and Iran, here we have to constantly explain ourselves. We, in North America must know how to explain our religion because we are constantly asked to by our peers, colleagues and elders at school or work.

But 'knowing about' is seen as also 'doing', as Ms Ghadiali put it; it is also important to have the 'spiritual life'. It would be oversimplistic for this book to present the American Zarathushtis as focusing only on knowledge about the religion; many also emphasize the practice of prayer, and stress that worship as well as RE is important. Practice and worship are perhaps stressed more at the end of the millennium than they were in the social gatherings of the 1960s that laid the foundations for the Associations.

Inter-faith activities

The urge to learn about, and to practise, the religion has not led the Zarathushtis to isolate themselves from other religions. Indeed, the Americans have probably engaged in inter-faith activities more fully than have Zoroastrians in other countries, except perhaps in Britain in the late 1990s. This has been a prominent feature of FEZANA and the Associations throughout the 1990s. At the start of the decade, the Zoroastrians (as they were then known) were prominent in the 1993 World Parliament of Religions, led by Rohinton Rivetna, a 'Founding Trustee' of the Parliament. The *Journal* for November 1992 (p. 9) encouraged Zoroastrians to apply to read a paper.²⁴⁹ The actual event was covered in some detail in the Winter 1993 *Journal* (pp. 14–39), including the series of *jashans* organized in Zoroastrian communities around the world to mark the event. A number of Zoroastrian figures were among the 7,000 representatives of the 150 religions: they included Dastur JamaspAsa, Dr Ramiya Karanjia, then assistant principal of the Athornan Madressa in Bombay, Dr Homi Dhalla and Padma Shri Homi Taleyarkhan from Bombay; and from Iran, Dastur Dr Jehangir Oshidari, vice-president of the Mobed Council of Tehran. There were twenty-six papers by Zoroastrians (some speakers gave two

²⁴⁹ The Aug. 1993 issue (pp. 10 f.) gave a report on the 1893 Parliament and the unclear accounts of Zoroastrian participation and whether this actually involved attendance.

papers), and Dastur JamaspAsa, who was one of the fourteen presidents of the Parliament, gave an invocation in the closing ceremonies. It was seen by FEZANA as ensuring 'that Zarthushtis took its [*sic*] rightful place alongside other major religions of the world' (p. 14). A letter of appreciation of Rivetna's role was published by J. Modi, which said, 'In one stroke, Zoroastrianism found itself seated amongst the world's most renowned religious groups and framed for posterity in the full glare of international spotlight.'²⁵⁰ Rivetna went on to play a leading part in organizing the 1999 World Parliament in South Africa, as a trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR).²⁵¹ Rivetna, as the person in FEZANA responsible for external affairs, was involved in another high-profile event: he negotiated a role for Zoroastrians at the inter-faith service at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. The principles of the charter were reaffirmed in the presence of President Clinton and other world leaders. Dastur JamaspAsa's message was printed in the programme and a Parsi priest took part in the procession; Zoroastrians were involved in the two-day seminar at Berkeley that followed. Zoroastrians also participated in the associated inter-faith conference for youth.²⁵² At another fiftieth UN anniversary function, this time in New York, Dastur Firoze Kotwal was an invited speaker at a two-day symposium and an inter-faith celebration at New York's Cathedral of St John.²⁵³

Rivetna was involved in 1996 in starting a religious group with some parallels to the United Nations—the United Religions—and he started their newsletter, *Religions Together*.²⁵⁴ The following year, 1997, FEZANA was granted Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status at the UN, the fulfilment of a dream Parsis had held for some time. In 1998 they were asked to designate their representatives, who were then given passes to attend meetings at the UN concerned with economic and social matters.²⁵⁵ The purpose

²⁵⁰ *Journal*, Winter 1993, p. 47.

²⁵¹ *Journal*, Winter 1998, p. 15.

²⁵² *Journal*, Fall 1995, pp. 32–7.

²⁵³ *Journal*, Winter 1995, p. 14.

²⁵⁴ *Journal*, Fall 1996, p. 9. See the update, Spring 1997, p. 9 which informed readers of upcoming regional conferences, the one in India to be organized by Dr Homi Dhalla. The same page also gives an account of Zoroastrians at World Religion Day Conferences and of participating in Chicago's Cardinal Bernadin's memorial service.

²⁵⁵ Three were nominated for the participation in New York meetings: Nentin, Patel and Rivetna; two for Geneva meetings: Davar and Tangree (from France) and Vera Mehta (from Vienna). *Journal*, Spring 1998, p. 3.

of such activities is to overcome the marginalization, even exclusion, of their religion from the concerns of the outside world, a process which has all too often led to ignorant abuse in the media,²⁵⁶ or even what Rivetna describes as their holocaust experience in the homeland.²⁵⁷ The phrase regarding Zoroastrianism taking its rightful place among the religions is entirely significant, for there is a deep sense that it has not been given its due recognition in the modern world. However, at the close of the millennium there were signs that the level of inter-faith activity in America is declining. My informants relate that there has been little involvement of the Zarathushtis as an NGO body of the UN, and that few Associations are taking active or leadership roles in inter-faith groups, not least because of the demands of time these make, for little evident, immediate benefit.

Academic study of Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrians on the American continent have had closer links with academics than have any other group. This was noted above, especially in connection with New York (see 'Religious education'). It has been maintained through the 1990s at a national level, though communal pride has been expressed in the prominence given to scholars, professional and 'private', from within the community, notably Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani and Prof. Farhang Mehr. Dr Pallan Ichaporia, who worked with the German linguist Prof. Dr Helmut Humbach, has organized academic seminars on the Avesta and the Yashts, and edited a new journal, for FEZANA, *The Journal of the Research and Historical Preservation Committee*. This started in 1995, but only a limited number of issues appeared. The journal *Humata*, started in 1997 and edited by Farhang Mehr and Kaikhusroo Irani, is a product of the Center for Ancient Iranian Studies, and has been published each year until 2000. The intention was to publish quarterly at each of the major Iranian festivals. It is distinctive for having a regular and substantial proportion of its contents in Farsi. The contributors are all Zoroastrians, both Iranian and Parsi, though all might be described as belonging more to the Liberal wing of the community. Some articles have a straight historical focus, but others are

²⁵⁶ See e.g. *Journal*, Winter 1997, p. 16. and the protests over a film on general release, *Wishmaster*, which associated Zoroastrianism with evil and sorcery. The protests were ignored by the film-makers.

²⁵⁷ *Journal*, Winter 1996, p. 12.

concerned with the practice of the ancient religion in the modern world.²⁵⁸ Another Anglo-Persian publication is *Iran Zamin*, produced by Fariborz Rahnamoon from Vancouver. It is the publication of the Ancient Iranian Cultural and Religious Research and Development Center; the English section is available on the Center's website (www.ancientiran.com). Most articles are written by Iranian Zoroastrians.

A number of individuals who have professional careers also work industriously as private scholars, for example Sarosh Maneckshaw, who has dedicated much of his private time to study, as has the research chemist Dr Jehan Bagli. Dr Kersey Antia, the priest from Chicago who initiated Peterson, in his youth had studied Avesta and Pahlavi with Dastur Kotwal in Bombay. A Parsi scholar who emerged into greater prominence at the end of the 1990s is Prof. Jamsheed Chocksy. This Parsi of Sri Lankan ancestry studied for his Ph.D. at Harvard with the distinguished Iranologist R. N. Frye, has a professorship at Indiana University and was honoured for his scholarship by the community at a North American Congress. In publications, and at Gatha²⁵⁹ or Avesta²⁶⁰ conferences, the Zarathushtis seek to balance their own scholars with non-Zarathushtis, for example Frye, Hinnells, Humbach, Malandra, Schwartz and Windfuhr. They have also held symposia at Harvard,²⁶¹ and lobbied successfully for sessions on Zoroastrianism at the American Academy of Religion.²⁶² The fundamental conviction of these highly educated Zoroastrians is that scholarly knowledge is important for both their own and their children's understanding of their heritage, and for the perpetuation of that inheritance. They are also convinced that their scholars can, and should, work with the non-Zoroastrian academy in the 'outside' world. But the picture is not uniform. There are Zarathushtis who resent outside western scholarly influence, a

²⁵⁸ For the former see K. R. Bhote, 'Seminal Contributions of Ancient Iran to World Civilizations', *Humata*, Fall 1997, pp. 34–41. For the latter, see (among many others), Yezdi Rustomji, 'The Gathas in a Zarathushtrian Life', *Humata*, Spring 1998, pp. 65–9.

²⁵⁹ *Journal*, Winter 1994, p. 12 in Costa Mesa; the second was in Houston, in 1996, *Journal*, Winter 1996, pp. 20–3.

²⁶⁰ A conference on the *Yashts*, *Journal*, Fall 1995, p. 6, see also *Journal*, Winter 1995. Ichaporia organized a conference on 'The Historical Evolution of Zoroastrian Scriptures'. The first International Avesta Congress was in Boston in 1997 (*Journal*, Spring 1998, pp. 12–19), and a third in Alberta in 1999.

²⁶¹ *Journal*, Winter 1994, p. 5.

²⁶² *Journal*, Spring 1996, p. 9. Reprinted in *Parsiana*, May 1997.

caution found more among Iranians than the Parsis, but not specific to either. For example, at the World Congress in Houston, there was not a single non-Zoroastrian speaker, the outcome of some fierce Internet disputes. But it is not only at this Congress that the trend is to be observed. In the 1980s Jamshed Pavri attacked bitterly a publication of Mary Boyce, for saying that Zoroaster had three wives, and that next-of-kin marriage was part of ancient Iranian tradition, points accepted by most western academics. Looking through newsletters from the 1990s of New York and Toronto, places where such speakers were commonly invited, one can see that there has been a noticeable decline in the number of non-Zoroastrian speakers at local, as well as (inter)national, level. In part this may be a reaction against some individuals who have been thought to seek undue influence, and in part a growing reliance on community members. In my opinion, as an outside academic, it would be sad if the outstanding collaborative attitudes of the earlier years declined; for Zoroastrians, more than any other diaspora group, have worked substantially, frequently and harmoniously with the academic world. This decline in collaboration is more evident in America than in Britain.

Zarathushti business networks

A distinctive feature of Zarathushti developments in the 1990s has been the growth of the business network. The *Journal* for Fall 1993 announced the production of a directory of Zoroastrian businesses and professionals as a first step in developing a network to improve business relationships between Zarathushtis and to promote community development. The news item was prefixed by the appeal 'Please support our Zoroastrian entrepreneurs' (p. 13). FEZANA published a sample of Zarathushti business and enterprises, in anticipation of a later comprehensive directory.²⁶³ The first Zarathushti Business Conference, spearheaded by Rohinton Rivetna and Farshid Salamati, was held in Las Vegas in 1997 with participants ranging from Jamsheed Marker, the former Ambassador to Washington and the UN, to young people who had only started their business four months earlier. The declared aim was 'prepar[ing] a tool for a further networking system for the benefit of our community'. In part there was guidance and advice from

²⁶³ *Journal*, Winter 1995, pp. 37–91.

from the experienced, as well as offers and appeals for collaboration.²⁶⁴ A further business conference was held a year later, again in Las Vegas, where plans were laid to start a Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce.²⁶⁵ This was inaugurated at the World Congress in Houston 2000 and had four initial directors: Sarosh Collector, Homi Davier, Rohinton Rivetna and Kobad Zarolia.²⁶⁶ After the Congress the Zarathushti Women's International Network (ZWIN) was born. It is a web-based network to support and encourage women in diverse ways.

Some issues addressed in the years of growth

Thus far attention has been focused on what steps FEZANA has taken. It is also important to look at what issues it has addressed. One that occupied much of its time in the early years was the observance of an agreed calendar. This was a difficult issue, because the Fasli calendar was the one most easily followed in the West, being based on the Gregorian, but in India the great majority follow the Shenshahi calendar, which is itself different from that used in Iran (the Qadmis, also observed by a minority of Parsis). Diaspora Zoroastrians have generally been reluctant to follow a calendar different from the old country, not simply because of sentiment, though that is important, but also for the practical reason that being out of step with the old country can result in families celebrating the great festivals at different times. The subject has been discussed in many issues of the *Journal*, and there is broad support for the Fasli calendar because of its integration into the western calendar, but FEZANA has taken no official position and even in its *Millennium Commemorative Issue* of the *Journal* still uses Fasli, Shenshai and Qadmi dates.

Behind much FEZANA discussion lies the (half) implied belief that the Zarathushtis of the New World are in one sense, at least, the (potential) leaders of the Zoroastrian world. This belief was noted earlier in the chapter in the section on the Associations, and continued in the 1990s. At the seventh North American Congress

²⁶⁴ *Journal*, Winter 1997, pp. 72–7.

²⁶⁵ *Journal*, Spring 1999, p. 79. A chapter was opened in Delhi on 23 Jan. 2003. See *Parsiana*, Mar. 2003, pp. 42–64.

²⁶⁶ The last name, Zarolia, highlights one of the distinctive features of North American mobeds commented on above, for Zarolia was also a pioneer of the Council of Mobeds. The roles of priests in Zoroastrian society in India and America are very different.

in Houston in 1990 it was reported: 'It is quite conceivable that in the future the focus on Zoroastrianism may shift from India to North America and FEZANA may then provide a World Zoroastrian Democratic leadership.'²⁶⁷ When it was decided to hold the millennium World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, the editor of the 'Youthfully Speaking' section of the *Journal* reported the president Dolly Dastoor as asserting: 'The World Congress to be held in Houston, Texas, is the first step to showing our brethren in Iran and India, that North America is indeed the new homeland of the Zarathusti culture.'²⁶⁸ This conviction has appeared also in the attempt to set up a world body. The WZO will be discussed in Chapter 10, but frustration at its constitution, which recognizes only individual membership, giving individuals the same voting rights as large bodies like the BPP, triggered moves to start a World Council of Federations (WCZF) along the lines of FEZANA, led by Rivetna.²⁶⁹ After discussions with WZO and other interested parties in America (in 1993, after the World Parliament took the opportunity of having a number of overseas visitors), and with the Federation in India,²⁷⁰ an international dialogue ensued. Eventually FEZANA itself backed away from establishing a second body, but again called for more discussions.²⁷¹ In these moves, American Zoroastrians were seen to be at the forefront of international developments in Zoroastrianism.

FEZANA in perspective

Dr Rustom Kevala, by profession a rocket scientist, wrote an editorial in the *Journal*, August 1991, on 'What led to the birth of FEZANA?' It is worth quoting at length because it gives a personal picture of the changing nature of the Zarathushti 'community' in America:

FEZANA was founded to provide synergism, and a louder voice, to the tiny Zarthushti community on this continent. Because it exists, it represents all Zarthushtis in North America . . . by its very existence, it provides a common platform to all of us, and it represents the longings and the goals of the 10,000 American Zarthushtis to the millions of other Americans, and to the thousands of other Zarthushtis spread all over the world.

²⁶⁷ *Journal*, Dec. 1990, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ *Journal*, Fall 1997, p. 47.

²⁶⁹ *Journal*, Spring 1997, p. 14; Spring 1998, p. 3.

²⁷⁰ *Journal*, Spring 1998, p. 19.

²⁷¹ *Journal*, Fall 1999, pp. 11 f.

But FEZANA is more than that. The birth of FEZANA signifies an awakening of a sense of purpose within the Zarthushti community in North America. Its existence represents a real shift in our needs. There is a realization that the local associations cannot meet all our needs. We have to try to define these needs through rhetoric, congresses and conferences, without coming to a consensus. Even though some among us think they know the solutions to our problems, and others think there are no problems, the mechanism for defining the problems and implementing solutions still eludes us.

Back in 1967, when I moved to Chicago with my wife and 2-year-old daughter, there were 20 or 30 Zarthushti families already settled in Chicago-land. One of them took a day off and showed us around Chicago to help us find an apartment. After we were settled, we got to know all the Zarthushtis in Chicago, and formed many lasting friendships. Later we moved to Boston and then to Washington, and formed similar friendships.

These groups had a strong need to get together often. They were not all that interested in the Zarathushti religion, though that was clearly the common link. There was no mention of studying the Gathas, or providing religious education for the children, or improving Parsi–Irani relations. Few among us had the time to study the Gathas, the children were too young, and there were no community assets or religious discussions to spoil relations. They did not even consider building meeting halls or places of worship. They met at the Little House of Glencoe, or some other picnic spot. But the fellowship did provide a sense of community and a chance for being with people who just naturally felt comfortable with one another. There were common goals (to get ahead in western society), common tastes (*dhansak*), and a common concept of what our religion stood for (good thoughts, good words, good deeds). We had good jobs, we knew that our children would have the best opportunities for learning and growth, and we knew that we all had bright futures ahead for us.

Twenty years later, things were very different. Some of us clearly had had a better chance in reaching one or more of our aspirations; but there was a price to pay. There was something missing. The children had grown up. And there was strife. Those who had good jobs had prospered by immersing themselves in their work, to find they had neglected their children's and their own spiritual needs. Those who had continued to socialize with other Zarthushtis had found fulfillment in their family lives, but found themselves isolated from the American mainstream. Those who had married American-born spouses had become Americanized, at the expense of losing old contacts and even friendships. And most of these Zarathushtis in America felt an inner emptiness

without the religious edifices and support networks they had left behind in India, Pakistan and Iran.

Of course this is an oversimplification. The picture is not as clear and dramatic. But this is how I can put it in this limited column.

And that is why FEZANA was born. We must give this baby a chance. Perhaps this baby can grow up to be our salvation!²⁷²

In the following issue the then President, Rohinton Rivetna, outlined his vision for the future of FEZANA and then identified the specific tasks and grave issues ahead.

There are many tasks that lie ahead. Some that come to mind are: religious education for our children, our youth, and our adults; developing informational materials on Zoroastrianism; developing a cadre of spiritual leaders and Mobeds versed in the doctrinal, ritual and ministerial aspects; establishment of a seminary and North American Center; social welfare for the needy and aged both within the Zoroastrian community and outside; facilitating marriages within the faith; keeping our flock together; projecting a better understanding of our faith to others through participation in inter-faith activities; and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Also, there are many grave issues that need to be addressed. We cannot sit back and wait for their miraculous disappearance. Some of these are: marriages between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians; acceptance/non acceptance of spouses and children of such marriages; conversion/acceptance; declining world population and North American demographics; promoting Parsee–Irani understanding; and adoption of a unified calendar.

It is worth looking back over the 1990s to assess the fulfilment of these desires, with a reflection from the then President, Dolly Dastoor, on the first seven years:

In the short span of 7 years much has been achieved, many instruments have been started to bring about cohesiveness e.g. our combined efforts to develop a mission for ourselves, a unified calendar, and our demographic profile, help to the Zarthushti refugees from Iran, the Journal, the congresses, the Olympics, the business network, the youth network, the women's network, our presence at the Parliament of World's religions and other international meetings and more. But the most important

²⁷² Kevala wrote a moving piece in *Journal*, Spring 1997, p. 4 on how, despite his professional success, he had not found happiness until he found his place in the Zoroastrian community.

achievement is that we are talking to each other; we support each other and draw from the strength and talents of each other.²⁷³

Dastoor is right in stressing the achievements of FEZANA in what is a relatively short space of time. Its co-ordinating role has facilitated ventures, from academic congresses to ski trips, that no Association working alone could have done. Without being prescriptive it has produced guidelines and material for religious education. The networking among the youth is striking, so that the story is not simply of out-marriage. The mobeds have addressed problems together, and there are several young America-born mobeds. Inter-faith activities were noteworthy in the mid-1990s, but less evident at the end of the millennium. The meetings of businessmen and the formation of a Chamber of Commerce are foundations for wider collaboration in the future. Parsi–Iranian tensions remain, indeed, they became acute in the planning of the Seventh World Congress, as we shall see in Chapter 10. But much has been achieved, and the achievement is encapsulated in, but not restricted to, the collaboration over a basic religious text. Writing as someone who has lived with American Zoroastrian families many times and in eight cities from the early 1980s through to 2001, and who has attended the acrimonious Congress in Los Angeles, the birth of FEZANA at Toronto, and then the millennium conference (plus smaller meetings in between), what strikes me as an outsider is how things have changed, and how the infrastructure, be that buildings or committees, has grown to manage that change. The Congress platforms are still dominated by the pioneers of the early years, but some of the youth, and more recent arrivals, are being heard. Individuals whom I have seen disputing violently now speak of ‘disagreeing agreeably’. The disputes can still be conducted with a level of ferocity that can make the outsider (this one anyway!) want to shrink away, and, what is far more serious, alienate many of the youth. But the fact remains that for all the tensions and all the problems, the Associations co-operate for the good of the community: some of them are very traditional, others are clearly Reforming; in New York, California

²⁷³ *Journal*, Spring 1995, p. 3. See also the editor’s column, Spring 1996, p. 2. It described 1995 as a watershed with participation in the UN50 which ‘gave us tremendous exposure and self-confidence in our future’. The issue of the *Journal* on Zarathushti enterprise ‘showed our surprising strength in the North American business arena’. The staging of the Youth Congress in San Francisco was also seen as a major advance.

and Toronto there are still separate Iranian Associations. But despite the clashes they still collaborate, for example in seeking a new centre together in New York. Yet Kevala still asked in the *Millennium Commemorative Issue* what FEZANA had achieved. He, and others, still consider that the community, continent-wide, is at a crossroads.²⁷⁴

Particular note needs to be taken of the role of the *Journal*. It has grown from an original print-run of fifty to a regular subscription list of 1,500.²⁷⁵ Although for many the important dimension of the Zoroastrian community is local socializing, food and friendship, the *Journal* gives a truly continent-wide dimension to the Association. Its tone seeks to be, and is, positive. It occasionally reflects some of the struggles faced by individuals and groups as they seek to settle in the New World. The psychologist priest Kersey Antia wrote about the psychological problems faced in migration; another psychologist, and former president of FEZANA, Dolly Dastoor, wrote movingly about leaving (grand)parents in the old country to grow old without children there to help, and the problems of the elderly in America.²⁷⁶ But the *Journal* projects, as it were, the establishment or 'official' view of the elders. For the names which appear in the columns, or in the news, tend still at the beginning of the millennium to be the voices of the early years. The voice of the youth does appear in FEZANA, but it is even more apparent on the Internet, in the unedited, unelected, first rush of enthusiasm voiced there.

Conclusion

Although there were Zoroastrian contacts with America from the eighteenth century, the history of the Zoroastrian Associations in America dates from the mid-to late 1960s. Seen from this perspective it is the most recent of all the diaspora groups studied thus far. Nevertheless the history of Zoroastrians in the North American continent is complex because of the number, geographical spread

²⁷⁴ pp. 5, 91. See also Homi Homji, p. 91.

²⁷⁵ For the original 'print run' see vol. i, part ii, Dec. 1988, p. 3. The figure is slightly misleading in that Associations were encouraged to photocopy issues for members. But the modern product is too big and well produced (e.g. with colour photographs) for that to be feasible. My source for the modern figure is Roshan Rivetna, editor-in-chief of the *Journal*.

²⁷⁶ *Journal*, Spring 1999, pp. 53–6.

and differences between the Associations. The key turning points after the opening of the door for immigration of people from Asia in 1963 into Canada and 1965 into the USA were the early years of the formation of Associations in the late 1960s and early 1970s; the launch of a 'newsletter' with significant religious content (*Gavashni* in 1974); the start of the building programme for Darbe Mehrs, beginning with New York in 1977; and the arrival of Iranian Zoroastrians in the 1980s. There have been tensions in several Associations, but the Parsi-Iranian clash gained prominence in 1986 with the split in New York between ZAGNY and the Iranian Zoroastrian Association. Individual events of significance have been the Peterson *naujote* in 1983, which was the tip of the iceberg of the debate on conversion, a debate which again came to prominence in 1990 with the founding of the Zarathushtrian Assembly by Dr Ali Jafarey. The film *Wings of Fire* launched in 1981 (first screened in 1985) was one of a number of focal points for doctrinal debates. In terms of collaboration and administration the establishment of FEZANA in 1987 was a key turning point. Important publishing ventures were the launch of the Persian journal *Payk-e-Mehr* in 1987 and the FEZANA *Journal* in 1988. Concern for the youth has been a characteristic of all Associations virtually from their inception; perhaps the key moment in North America was the first Youth Congress in Los Angeles, 1987 and the start of the youth wing of FEZANA in 1994. A distinctive feature of the 1990s was the involvement in inter-faith activities. There had been earlier local moves, but the role of the Zoroastrians in the World Parliament of Religions in 1993 was significant. The launch of the first Zarathushti business network is something that many hope will come to be regarded as another key moment. The holding of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston 2000, which started the new millennium with American Zoroastrians moving towards centre stage, is seen by many as particularly important.

North American Zoroastrians have a number of distinctive features. The Canadian Zoroastrians feel less culturally threatened by the Canadian Government's multiculturalism programme than the Zoroastrians in the USA do by the image of the melting pot. That policy was first articulated to encourage Europeans to integrate, and may have been a myth, but the message in the myth of the pressure to become 'all-American' was a major factor in policies evolved in the early settlement years especially for Zoroastrians

in the USA. In reaction to this, and reflecting the very high levels of education and involvement of so many experienced and senior people from many big corporations, America (including Canada) has evolved 'bigger and better' (to use the widespread popular image of America) religious education and youth programmes than anywhere else. Education and concerns for the youth are part of the earliest history of the Zoroastrian communities in Karachi and London, but the continent-wide collaboration through FEZANA has enabled more grand-scale events, such as the regular Youth Congresses, and social functions such as skiing, Caribbean cruises and biennial Congresses.²⁷⁷ The speed with which Zoroastrian buildings were opened across the continent was a result of two factors, one being the presence in America and Canada of major benefactors, namely Arbab Rustom Guiv and the Zarthoshti brothers. The programme was also due to the determination of the various Associations to make long-term provision for their communities, being aware from the outset that these predominantly young Zoroastrian populations had come to stay. There was no 'myth of return' among North American Zoroastrians. The vast distances between Associations have propelled them into a pioneering Federation forming an umbrella organization to facilitate collaboration. It is only in the USA that there is a policy for accepting converts, specifically, and from a religious studies perspective not surprisingly, in California with the Zarathushtrian Assembly. The founding of priestly organizations, both Parsi and Iranian, to debate the provision of religious services across the continent is another feature of the high level of organizational concern, as too are the business networks. Such activities are observable elsewhere, ZTFE for example, but they have a higher profile in North America. The level of religious activity increased in London in the 1990s, but it was a distinctive feature of the North American communities from early times, and is more apparent, as we shall see, than in Australia. There have been tensions between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians in various countries, but they have greater prominence in North America because more Iranian Zoroastrian refugees and migrants came to Canada (Vancouver and Toronto) and America (California) than anywhere else. The problem of

²⁷⁷ Chronologically the Federation in India pre-dates that in North America, but it has not brought about as many visible achievements as FEZANA.

intermarriage is something faced by Zoroastrians in many countries, but it is seen as a more common phenomenon in North America and broadly, a more accepting policy has evolved there than elsewhere. There have, for example, been disputes about non-Zoroastrian spouses present at *muktad* ceremonies in many countries, but these have had a smaller impact in North America than in ZTFE. Non-Zoroastrian spouses are included in more functions in most Associations than in other countries.

But it is dangerous to generalize about the North Americans, for the Associations are different. The obvious contrasts are between the Zarathushtrian Assembly and the traditional Zoroastrian Anjuman, both in California. But these groups were formed for specific and contrasting reasons. Across the continent Associations are different, the obvious examples being 'liberal' Chicago and 'traditional' Houston. Toronto, the largest Association on the continent, is inevitably different in the range of its provisions for its members, especially in such things as social functions and religious programmes, from some of the newer and much smaller Associations. As ZTFE has seen itself as a major international centre because of its place at the heart of empire, so now many North American Zoroastrians see themselves as future leaders of Zoroastrianism worldwide. They also see religion as an important part of their personal and communal identity. For example, at the Toronto AGM in 1993 a task force was set up to advise on the problems of assimilation and the preservation of identity in North America. The resulting report considered the 'big picture' of demographic decline, the frequency and consequences of intermarriage, but as on previous occasions in Toronto particular attention was given to religious practice and in an Appendix the task force drew up an unusual document—something not done in India—advising people on what the daily religious practices should be. They emphasized four activities. First, people should set aside a religious corner or room in the house 'where such religious artifacts such as an oil lamp, portrait of the Prophet, incense burner etc. are kept'. The second activity was 'wearing the Sudreh and Kusti and reciting Kusti prayers each morning and night, and where practicable, before meals and after using the washroom'. Third, family members should 'recite at a minimum, the Srosh Baj prayers before embarking on the day's activities and before retiring at night'. Finally they recommended 'lighting a fire and censuring the house by burning incense and sandalwood on appropriate days'.

Zoroastrians in Australia

The Context: Asian Migration to Australia

The White Australia policy

Although there was some South Asian migration to Australia in the nineteenth century, numbers were few: servants on ships, some labourers and merchants.^{1, 2} From the late nineteenth century

¹ I wish to record my profound thanks to Sarah Longair for undertaking a research visit in July–Aug. 2000, when I was unable to go, to collect material to update the chapter from the details I had gathered on my visit in 1988 and through correspondence. Sarah's organization of her substantial collection of material and her insightful comments have proved invaluable in writing this chapter. I am grateful also to the Associations in both Sydney and Melbourne for their help both to me in the 1980s and to Sarah during her visit, especially Capt. Sachinwala and the Sanjanas. I am grateful to Purvez Kolsawalla for reading this chapter and saving me from various errors; any which remain are, of course, my own responsibility.

² There is a substantial body of literature on Australian immigration policy, but only a small portion of it is important for this chapter, specifically that section overviewing the history of migration from the Indian subcontinent. Here the main works are C. Inglis, S. Gunasekaran, G. Sullivan and Chung-Tong Wu, *Asians in Australia, the Dynamics of Migration and Settlement*, Singapore, 1992, ch. 3; S. Castles, *The 'New' Migration and Australian Immigration Policy*, pp. 45–72, but this book is mostly on South East Asian migration to Australia. On migration policy in general, with special reference to South Asia, see J. Jupp, 'From "White Australia" to "Part of Asia": Recent Shifts in Australian Immigration Policy towards the Region', *International Migration Review*, 29, 1, pp. 207–28; J. Jupp, *Immigration*, Sydney, 1991; P. Bilimoria, 'The Australian South Asian diaspora', in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, Harmondsworth, 1997, pp. 728–55. There are a several comparative studies of Australian and Canadian policy that are relevant here, e.g.: A. H. Richmond and J. Zubrzycki, *Immigrants in Canada and Australia*, Toronto, 1984; A. H. Richmond, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia: The Contradictions and Crises of the 1980s', *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 3, 1991, pp. 87–110 (with a good bibliography); J. Atchison, 'Patterns of Australian and Canadian Immigration, 1900–83', *International Migration*, 22, 1984, pp. 4–32; 'Immigration in Two Federations: Canada and Australia', *International Migration Review*, 26, 1, 1988, pp. 5–32; P. Ongley and D. Pearson, 'Post-1945 International Migration: New Zealand, Australia and Canada Compared', *International Migration Review*, 29, 3, 1995, pp. 765–93. O. P. Dwivedi et al. (eds.), *Canada 2000: Race Relations and Public Policy*, Guelph, 1989; P. Hanks (ed.), *Immigration History and Policy, Australia and Canada*, Monash, 1990. The most authoritative work, detailed and readable, is F. Hawkins, *Critical Years in Immigration, Canada and Australia Compared*, 3rd edn., Montreal, 1991.

a 'White Australia' policy was pursued. The term was first used in the 1880s. It was cast in legislation in the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, and was the policy of the Australian Labor Party—the first national social democratic government in the world—and of its affiliate, the Australian Workers' Union. The aim was to achieve an ethnically homogeneous society, and it was based on contemporary fashionable racial attitudes. Non-Europeans, especially the Aborigines, were considered of lower racial stock, so it was thought that intermarriage would debase the White population. Attempts were therefore made to 'save the mixed race, if necessary by removing them from home and community'.³ Based on the assumption that the Aborigines and remaining numbers of a nineteenth-century Chinese community would die out, Australia sought to develop its population by attracting British migrants. Although Irish migrants were often Catholic, generally the population of Australia was seen as being White, British and Protestant. Australia insulated herself from the immediate region and strengthened her ties with the seat of empire on the other side of the world. For 150 years (1831–1982) Australian public funds were used to facilitate an assisted passages scheme for British migrants. Australia, more than other Commonwealth countries, gave a high priority to immigration, but that was immigration from one sending country, Britain. In the 1940s such schemes were also agreed with the Netherlands, Eire and displaced persons from the Balkan nations and, in the 1950s and 1960s, with prospective immigrants from Hungary and Czechoslovakia.⁴

After the Second World War

In the early years after the Second World War, Australia provided an attractive destination for those from war-torn Britain, but as Britain's economic situation improved so fewer migrated to the southern hemisphere. Initially, Australia turned to other sending countries in Europe, including the south and east of the continent. The Australian aim was to achieve growth through expansion of the workforce and of the consumer base. This peaked in 1969–70 with 185,000 settler arrivals; most were still from Britain. Younger workers were sought who would increase the population for

³ Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 83.

⁴ Atchison, 'Patterns', pp. 11 f.

defensive purposes in case of an invasion from Asia, as well as to develop the economy and to provide resources for the social services.⁵ British immigration was not restricted until 1975. Other developments were also weakening the link to the 'mother country'. These included: the evident lack of wisdom in having such a close tie to a country on the other side of the world which no longer ruled a global empire; British entry into the European market; the decrease in British investment in Australia; and the Vietnam War, which tied Australia more into the Pacific region. As Canada and the United States began to open their doors to Asian migration, and as newly independent states protested at the White Australia policies, so Australian policy on immigration also changed. An early indication, in the mid-1950s, of a more 'liberal' policy was that the non-European partner in a mixed-race marriage was allowed to apply for citizenship after fifteen years residence in Australia.⁶ But for the next twenty to thirty years liberalism in immigration meant accepting more south and east Europeans and towards the end of this period some eastern Mediterranean people. The conscious inclusion of Asian migrants came later still. This is reflected in some of the scholarly literature on Australia; see, for example, Jayasuriya, who criticizes writers for not disaggregating the data relating to ethnic minorities. But he himself only disaggregates the term 'Asian' when writing of refugees.⁷ It was becoming increasingly apparent that the Pacific region and Asia would become ever more important to the Australian economy. The key development was the 1972 election of the Whitlam Labor Government, which a year later declared that future admissions would be based on a universal policy, ignoring race, ethnicity, religion or cultural background.⁸ However, that Government reduced the number of immigrants and, significantly in this context, thereby reduced the number of Asians settling in Australia. The new Liberal-National Country Party Coalition Government elected in 1975 was conservative in many areas, but liberal in immigration, which it saw as of benefit for Australian

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 85.

⁷ Jayasuriya, 'Immigration Policies and Ethnic Relations in Australia', in Dwivedi, *Canada 2000*.

⁸ See espe. Hawkins, *Critical Years*, pp. 93–115 on the twists and turns in the emerging Australian attitude towards and management of, immigration policy. See also Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 86.

TABLE 9.1. *Asian birthplaces of the Australian population: 1981, 1986 and 1991*

	1981	1986	1991
India	41,657	47,816	60,958
China	26,760	37,468	77,799
Malaysia	31,598	47,802	71,665
Philippines	15,431	33,727	73,144
Pakistan	2,527	3,605	5,806
TOTAL	256,611	405,654	665,315

Figures taken from J. Jupp, *Immigration*, Sydney, 1991, 'From White Australia', pp. 212 f.

economic development. The search for an equitable admissions policy took many turns, but the general priority was given to family reunification. Policies were generally more cautious than in Canada.⁹ In 1979 a system approximating to the Canadian points system was introduced to determine which applicants were appropriate for immigration, whatever their nationality, though English-speaking skills and narrowly defined occupational skills, and the priority given to non-dependent families, still favoured British applicants. From the mid-1970s the proportion of Asian migrants increased. The main four sending countries were India, (mainland) China, Malaysia and the Philippines. Relatively few came from Pakistan. The figures for 1981, 1986 and 1991 are given in Table 9.1.¹⁰ Inevitably the number of settlers varied from year to year, according to local economic considerations, but Australia, more than Britain, has been willing to accept migrants at times of recession with the aim of improving the economic situation.

One of the fears behind earlier immigration policy had been that Asians would be poorly educated, with depressed working and living conditions. In fact migration from Asia, with the exception of Indo-China (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), has been of the well-educated, middle-class achievers, with 44.3% of people

⁹ See Hawkins, *Critical Years*, chs. 3 and 5.

¹⁰ Figures for earlier years are in Hawkins, *Critical Years*, p. 265. Her figures conflated the returns from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. These gave a combined number of immigrants for 1971 of 39,160; see pp. 260–7 for some statistical comparisons with Canada.

from India being professionals.¹¹ Of South Asian migrants, 20% have degrees and a further 10% have higher degrees, compared with 12% in the White Australian population. The 1991 census showed that 83% of Australia's South Asian migrants arrived after 1981 and that 50% of them were in the age group 25–44 (compared with 31% of the Australian population); that is, they are economically active. A higher proportion of such migrants are married than are the White Australians, more have younger children and there is a lower divorce rate. The family bonds are therefore strong.¹²

Australian Multiculturalism

Unlike Canada, Australia has not evolved a formal, coherent policy of multiculturalism, but there has rather been a plethora of programmes, mostly short-term, and generally formulated several years later than in Canada.¹³ By the mid-1970s Australia was developing the sort of race-free immigration controls that Canada had achieved in the previous decade. Also at this time the emphasis shifted from simple control of immigration, to concern with post-arrival settlement services. The term 'multiculturalism' was becoming widely accepted. In Australia this had a threefold focus: community languages, the creation of a tolerant, non-discriminatory society enriched by and sensitive to diversity, and the goal of equity and participation to offset inequality and disadvantage. In the early 1970s there was no national body to speak for non-British migrants. In 1975 state-wide ethnic community councils were started, with New South Wales as the strongest, and by 1979 all states had such councils. A federation of these councils was organized with its headquarters in Sydney. In the 1980s official support was given for community languages and a Research Institute was established to refine the concept of multiculturalism

¹¹ Jupp, *Immigration*, pp. 213 f.

¹² Bilimoria, pp. 733 f. The most formal statement was a Labor Government document, *Our Nation: Multicultural Australia and the 21st Century*, Canberra, 1999. But the Labor Party lost the next election and there have been public protests during electioneering against 'liberal' immigration policies.

¹³ On Australian policy on religion and culture see G. Bouma, 'Cultural Diversity, Religious Plurality and Government Policy in Australia', in J. R. Hinnells and W. Menski (eds.), *From Generation to Generation* (forthcoming). On the comparison with Canada see Atchison, 'Patterns' and 'Immigration in Two Federations'. On a succession of influential Australian discussion papers see Hawkins, *Critical Years*, pp. 232–9.

and to increase knowledge of Australian cultural diversity.¹⁴ The Institute was abolished in 1987 by the Hawke Government. A Bureau of Immigration Research was formed in 1989, based in Melbourne, to evaluate policy, collect data and produce publications.¹⁵

In many ways successive governments were ahead of public opinion in their attitudes to immigration, and were compelled to proceed cautiously. So, for example, a survey in 1984 found that 62% of Australians disapproved of increased Asian migration.¹⁶ At the local level of state politics resistance to immigrant groups continued and was often manifest in opposition to planning applications for centres of worship, as experienced by the Orthodox Church, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu groups. In the mid-1980s one city council declared itself to be a 'mosque-free zone', though in the face of challenges the council had to back down.¹⁷ Ethnic radio and multicultural television was established through a Special Broadcasting Service, and the Government subsidized weekend ethnic schools and the teaching of community languages, though these have at times appeared to be under some threat.¹⁸ Such policies reflect a multicultural, rather than an assimilationist attitude, if not forming a formal coherent policy. Funding for religious schools, e.g. by Jews or Muslims, and the option of 'released time' in which religious groups can provide instruction for their young,¹⁹ are not relevant to this chapter because the Parsis are too small and scattered a community to be able to take advantage of these opportunities. At the popular level, not least in the media, and at election time in the 1990s, there have been occasional outbursts of opposition to immigration, and some repetition of White Australia themes. Australia remains a predominantly White country, with twenty times as many Australians looking to European rather than to Asian roots, and Australia is still not as cosmopolitan as Canada or the USA.²⁰ Only about one in twenty persons is not of European descent.²¹ There has been occasional political questioning of the nation's

¹⁴ Hawkins, *Critical Years*, pp. 137–40.

¹⁵ J. Niewenhuysen, 'The Bureau of Immigration Research: Its Early Days', in Hanks, *Immigration History and Policy*, pp. 34–8.

¹⁶ Hawkins, *Critical Years*, p. 274.

¹⁷ See Bouma 'Cultural Diversity', and M. T. Humphrey, 'Is This a Mosque-Free Zone?: Islam and the State in Australia', *Migration Monitor*, 3, 12, 1989, p. 3.

¹⁸ Jupp, *Immigration*, pp. 101–6.

¹⁹ See Bouma, 'Cultural Diversity'.

²⁰ Jupp, 'From "White Australia"', pp. 218–25.

²¹ Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 108.

acceptance of refugees (already restricted to specific areas) and of the assimilability of Asians, but in general terms it is difficult to conceive of Australia returning to a Whites-only policy, even if the levels of immigration are reduced. Australia has changed: instead of being overwhelmingly Protestant, the largest practising denomination is Catholic; about 25% of the population are of non-British origin, and over 15% were born overseas in non-English-speaking countries.²² By the 1990s there were nearly twice as many Asian as British immigrants settling in Australia, although Britain remains the single largest sender country.²³ A central debate, however, is whether a ceiling should be fixed to the overall population size, in the order of twenty-two million,²⁴ because of the problem of such resources as water. This has been countered by arguments related to global warming which suggest that Australia could accept a much larger population.²⁵ Various governments have seen migration as a spur to development; even at times of unemployment, on the grounds that immigrants create more jobs than they take.²⁶ By the turn of the millennium, Sydney and Melbourne especially were visibly diverse societies. At the most cynical level, any government has to take account of the ethnic minority vote.

Australian and Canadian immigration policy compared

There are obvious points of comparison between the two countries: both were part of the British Empire and Commonwealth, both wanted to be seen as modern, liberal, democratic nations, with a sympathy for refugees. Both selected individuals and families to meet the perceived needs of their nation. The two have a similar, yet different, legislative framework for multicultural policy and both see a degree of immigration as necessary for economic growth. Both see that without immigration, they are faced with the problem of an ageing and numerically declining population. There has been substantial discussion between the governments of the two countries over the years. But whereas Australia debates a possible ceiling to population numbers, Canada has a more open-ended view. Australia, after a particularly restrictive early history, has

²² Jupp, 'From "White Australia"', p. 212.

²³ Ongley and Pearson, 'Post-1945 International Migration', p. 780.

²⁴ Atchison, 'Immigration in Two Federations', p. 19.

²⁵ Hawkins, *Critical Years*, p. 263.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

given a high priority to immigration,²⁷ but both countries have had fluctuating policies depending in particular on periods of economic growth and recession, though inevitably influenced by party politics.²⁸ In both cases East and South Europeans provided 'bridges' between the original British (and north European) policy and the later acceptance of Asian immigrants. Both Australia and Canada have evolved a points policy to target the immigrants suited to their national needs. It is likely that Australia learned from Canada but each was facing similar concerns, with similar problems (population shortage) and had similar goals: a balance of national economic needs and a proclaimed liberal international policy. There is little in Australia to compare with the French dimension to Canadian policy, but equally there is nothing in Canada comparable to the Pacific Island links. Whereas Canada lost people to its neighbour America, Australia has drawn from its neighbour New Zealand. Australia has a longer history of ethnic differentiation, but West Coast Canada and Australia have both had significant East and South East Asian migrations from the 1980s. The period of the significant growth in numbers of Asian migration to Australia was approximately twenty years later than Canada. Australia also took approximately 30% fewer refugees but was ready to accept more business migrants.²⁹ Australia still remains a more homogeneous and British (Anglo-Celtic) nation.³⁰ The two nations interpret the term 'multicultural' differently.³¹ The Canadian model is of a vertical mosaic, whereby the different races and cultures preserve their historic identity and are encouraged and enabled to do so by the State. Australia from the outset sought to integrate immigrants and the aim is national unity, so that the Government's programme for multiculturalism comes under Australian studies, something for everyone. The goal is freedom from discrimination, equal life chances for all, full economic, political and social participation. But there are also the balancing responsibilities: everyone must have overriding and unifying commitment to the interest and future of Australia.³²

²⁷ Ongley and Pearson, 'Post-1945 International Migration', p. 766. See also Atchison, 'Patterns', and 'Immigration in Two Federations'. In particular Hawkins, *Critical Years*; P. Hanks, *Immigration History and Policy, Australia and Canada*, Monash, 1990.

²⁸ Richmond and Zubrzycki, *Immigrants in Canada and Australia*, pp. 87 f. Hawkins, *Critical Years*, *passim*.

²⁹ Richmond, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism', pp. 95 f.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³¹ See esp. Hawkins, *Critical Years*, ch. 5.

³² Richmond, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism', p. 103.

Australian Zoroastrians in the 1980s

As with other chapters, this one will commence with a description, based on my survey, of the broad nature of the community in the 1980s, and will then proceed to discuss (a) how the groups came to be, and (b) how they developed after this snapshot. In Australia two Associations were studied, in Sydney and Melbourne, the main ones at the time of the survey.³³ The point behind this comparison of two contrasting Zoroastrian Associations (in terms of size, migration patterns, one with, one without a building) is to try to understand the Australian and not just, say, the Sydney experience. Because Melbourne is a more recent and smaller settlement it does not have the same range of records and so less can be written about that Association; nevertheless it is worth including in this chapter.³⁴

The response rate to the survey from these two Associations was particularly good, thanks to the efforts of two individuals in the two bodies, Noshir Irani and Jimmy Mistree. They encouraged members to hand over a completed questionnaire while I was in Australia—but before I gave a lecture, to avoid conditioning the responses. Appendix 2, Table 1 shows that the Sydney and Melbourne communities had a number of distinctive features. They were predominantly Zoroastrians from India, with none from East Africa, only a few twice migrants, i.e. Zoroastrians who have moved on from another western county. In Melbourne there were no Zoroastrians from Karachi, but 12% of respondents in Sydney were from that country, a sending country we have seen in other chapters to be significant. There were very few Iranian

³³ In 1987 one of the Sydney Zoroastrians, Purvez Kolsawalla, undertook a 'Social and Demographic Survey of the Sydney Association'. His main findings were that 86% of adults were married, 61% were under the age of 50; 32% had been in Australia for less than five years; there was a high level of graduate study, 60.8%, with a further 19% having done postgraduate work. Later the same year he undertook an attitudinal survey, which focused on questions then being debated in Sydney, namely the acceptance of the offspring of intermarried spouses (forty-six of the fifty-nine replies said they should be accepted); only ten people indicated they were willing to help say funeral prayers when a priest was not available; and forty-eight of the fifty-three replies said they wanted the Association to mount *muktad* prayers. Both of the surveys were photocopied for circulation and the first was summarized in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1987, pp. 25–7, 79.

³⁴ I wish to record my thanks to Noshir Irani for organizing my Sydney visit and taking me around.

Zoroastrian responses, partly because there were not many active Iranian Zoroastrian members of the Association.³⁵

The main period of arrival was the 1970s and 1980s, with Melbourne growing a decade or so later than Sydney.³⁶ There were relatively few differences in the educational patterns of members (See Appendix 2, Table 1: 9–10). In Melbourne 78% of respondents had a first or higher degree, as 82% had in Sydney. Melbourne had a more science-based Parsi population (32%, Sydney 22%). In both cities approximately 40% were in managerial or executive-class employment. Sydney appeared to have a higher proportion of members in the early stages of their careers; i.e. aged under 40 (see Table 1: 4). There were more single people in Sydney (29% compared with 19% in Melbourne, see Table 1: 5), and fewer extended families (Sydney 7%, Melbourne 17%, see Table 1: 7). Sydney had a higher rate of intermarrieds (18% of marriages, Melbourne 8%, see Table 1: 5). Given the higher incidence of intermarriage, it is not surprising that there was a higher acceptance of it (Sydney 81%, Melbourne 64%, see Table 1: 22–6) and a greater willingness to allow non-Zoroastrians into prayer rooms (with or without qualifications). The picture of religious beliefs and practices was complex. In Sydney a higher proportion were in touch with local Zoroastrians—an outcome of the building project, presumably, as the building had just been purchased when my survey was carried out (see Table 1: 14, 17, 18). This may also be the explanation for the higher percentage eating Indian food regularly in that city. More Sydney Zoroastrians read Zoroastrian literature than did the Melbourne respondents (see Table 1: 15; this may be explained by the consistently high standard of the Sydney newsletter). My respondents from Melbourne tended to describe themselves as Orthodox more than did people

³⁵ Working through the then (1988) current address list with one of the active members of the Association we identified twelve Iranian Zoroastrian families on the list, with a total of forty-nine individuals, including singles and Iranians married to Parsis. Seven families had members who attended occasionally. With seventy-nine responses to my questionnaire from Melbourne, that represented in excess of 50% of all adult members, active or not completing the Survey. In Sydney there were at that time 225 adults on the membership list, so with 119 responses, that again represented a response rate of over 50% of Association members, active and inactive. The returns represented approximately 90% of the active membership.

³⁶ A study of the membership address list for 1981 and 1988 in Melbourne shows an increase of members from 127 to 216 in those seven years, i.e. 70%.

in Sydney and this is reflected in their beliefs and practices associated with intermarriage and funerals. More people in Sydney believed in reincarnation, and in Melbourne more believed in resurrection, a feature probably explained by the influence of two Sunday school teachers in Melbourne who were educated in their religion and held a traditional point of view.³⁷ Sydney Zoroastrians were more inclined to state that their beliefs had changed after migration (see Table 1: 30–1), though the majority still said their beliefs had not changed significantly. As far as community relations were concerned, in both cities one in five respondents said that relations between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians were very mixed or poor. But Sydney respondents were far more positive about internal Parsi relations (in Sydney 76% thought relations were good or excellent, compared with only 56% in Melbourne). There was no significant difference in the two Associations' perceptions of relations with non-Zoroastrians, 74% and 73% saying that relations were good or excellent. Similarly, there was no significant difference over the perceptions of racial prejudice, with less than one-third of respondents in both cities saying they had faced such problems (see Table 1: 32–6).

In short, the Australian Zoroastrians were recently settled, well-educated, middle-class professionals, who considered that they had good relations with wider society. The Sydney population, the older of the two settlements, tended to have more young people, more singles and fewer extended families. The Sydney community saw itself as more united than the Melbourne group does, but the Melbourne group tended to be more traditional in religious terms.

Zoroastrians in Sydney

The sources

A preliminary note is necessary.³⁸ Reconstructing the history of any community is difficult because of the balancing of sources,

³⁷ As we have seen in other chapters, a belief in reincarnation tends to be associated with close Indian ties. The figures for belief in reincarnation were Sydney 51%; Melbourne 40%. For a belief in resurrection, Sydney 6% and Melbourne 21%.

³⁸ After I had written this chapter Purvez Kolsawalla published a CD with summaries of the records of the Sydney Association, an invaluable aid to those wishing to study this subject. I am grateful to him for sending me a copy.

and their potential bias. Few Zoroastrian communities record in their 'public' documents such as newsletters the details of their internal conflicts and problems. They commonly give a positive and optimistic picture. This is highlighted in Sydney with some explicit notes in their records. In 1990 the then president urged members of the Managing Committee 'that any matter or letter discussed in Committee meetings *'should be kept strictly within the Committee'* (underlining in original Minutes).³⁹ Managing Committee minutes in 1993 (15 September) record: 'It was also firmly decided that any issues which are likely to spark off controversy/antagonism in the community will be refrained from being published in the [newsletter] *Manashni*.' Later the editor of *Manashni* wrote: 'Manashni is read all over the world and we would like to project a unified image. All the arguments/discussions, which take place at AGMs and EGMs, should stop there. These discussions are *for members only*' (underlining in original newsletter).⁴⁰ Obviously these leave both a historical difficulty, and an ethical problem, for the scholar. I have been given generous access to the records of the committee, as well as copies of *Manashni*, but there is information available which the community does not wish to be made public. I have tried to use that material in a sensitive fashion. There are details in the files of some debates and issues which I have chosen not to include out of respect for the confidentiality the above remarks request. I have also omitted names in the discussion of sensitive issues.

Zoroastrian arrivals

There were only occasional Zoroastrian arrivals prior to the 1960s. One is recorded in the 1881 census.⁴¹ At the turn of the century Messrs Gundevia and Masani are known to have lived in the Sydney area, but it is presumed that their descendants did not stay in the religion because nothing is known of them.⁴² One Hirji Lentin was born in Sydney in 1925, left as a child and returned in

³⁹ Managing Committee file for 13 July 1990.

⁴⁰ *Manashni*, Oct. 1991.

⁴¹ Bilimoria, 'Australian South Asian Diaspora', p. 728. Arnavaz Chubb, 'Rediscovering One's Roots', *Parsiana*, Feb.–Mar. 1995, p. 112, refers to various shipwrecks along the coast of Victoria including two from the 19th c. the *Sir Jamsetji Family* and *Pestonjee Bomanjee*.

⁴² P. Kolsawalla's 'History of Zoroastrian Migration', Sydney, 1987, private publication, not paginated. See also under Genesis in his CD *History of AZA 1967–2002*, where he states that a boatload of Parsis came. See also the report in *Parsiana*, July 1990, p. 16 and the unpaginated brochure of the Inaugural Jashan booklet, Sunday 9 Feb. 1986.

the 1950s as a British passport holder.⁴³ A few individuals arrived in 1967/8: Akhtar and Nawzer Ostorwari, Shahpur and Mahbanu (Mae) Ostowari (an Iranian Zoroastrian educated in Pune), Dr Vispi and Farida Davar, Silloo and Barry Rush, Jangoo Unwala, Dr Sam and Arnavaz Kerr, Piloo and Cynthia Bilimoria, Maneck and Jal Taraporewala. Another family among the early settlers was that of Jimmy and Shirin Mistry, whose home was used for social functions and committee meetings.⁴⁴ They came as individual families, meeting occasionally in each other's houses for dinners. These names indicate the mix of people: most from India, but some from Iran, and intermarried couples. In the early 1970s numbers are estimated to have been only seventy-five. A loose Association was started in 1970 named the Australian Zoroastrian Association, with a constitution, and it was registered under the Charitable Donations Acts of New South Wales. The committee consisted of Akhtar Ostowari (president), Firoze Irani (vice-president), Purvez Kolsawalla (secretary), Jehangir Mistry (treasurer), and Dr Sam Kerr and Jal Taraporewala. All remained prominent in the Association for many years. The 'oral tradition' is that there were some personality clashes, but the Bilimoria family, coming a little later and not involved in early disputes, brought people together. In a fascinating account of the memories of the early arrivals, Kolsawalla relates the motivations and difficulties of various individuals. The key attractions were, in addition to the climate, easier immigration than the USA, English language and education, the anticipation of better job prospects and a better lifestyle. Most people found a job and accommodation within a few weeks but many had strong feelings of homesickness, missing family and experiencing loneliness. On return visits to India most people were overwhelmed by the friendliness of families, but were shocked at the noise, dirt and overcrowded living, though many said that they were impressed at India's industrial improvement. Nearly all of Kolsawalla's informants commented that they had become more religious in the new country.⁴⁵

⁴³ Mr Lentin in private conversation.

⁴⁴ Kolsawalla, 'Genesis' I wish to record my thanks to the Mistrees for making me so welcome as their house guest. I am also grateful to them and to the Vazifdar family and Captain Sachinwala for making Sarah Longair so welcome on her visit to Melbourne and Sydney on my behalf. In Sydney I am grateful to the Katrak family for making me welcome as their house guest.

⁴⁵ Kolsawalla, CD, under 'Zoroastrians Down Under! Reminiscences of some members of AZA'.

A newsletter was started in 1976. A turning point appears to have been the visit of Khojeste Mistree in 1978, to see his brother Farrokh, an important person in the early history of the Sydney community.⁴⁶ Another important early arrival was Dr Peshotan Katrak, a surgeon who served as priest and who, single-handedly in the early days, performed all the community's ceremonies. 1978 was also the year in which the collection of funds started to build 'a place of our own'.⁴⁷ Even in these early days, the community consisted of families rather than single people. The husband usually came first until he could find work and a place to live, but the intention, and practice, was to bring the family as soon as possible. There were no long-term plans to return to India, as there had been in the China Seas and Zanzibar. Because of the family orientation, the early motives behind meetings were social, but there was also a concern to hand on the heritage to the younger generation, hence the early discussions for a house. A brief account of this early period was provided in an interview with Mrs Mahabanu Ostawari, then secretary of the Australian Zoroastrian Association, with *Parsiana* in Bombay.⁴⁸ She reported at the end of 1969 that whereas there had been only seven or eight Zoroastrian families in the early 1960s, there were now 200 individual Zoroastrians in New South Wales, with 'quite an influx from Calcutta'. From about 1974, she said, there had been a growing earnestness to have an Association. Thus far individuals were meeting for Jamshedi Navroz, Pateti and Christmas. There was an annual *jashan* at the start of year, but mostly they met for social activities, picnics, theatres, discussion and study groups. Sunday schools were held alternate weeks, with the reading of *Shah Name* stories by Farrokh Mistree, and prayers were taught to the children. There had been three *naujotes* in three years. She concluded, 'AZA also had the distinction of having a non-Zoroastrian Secretary a year ago, who served three terms.' Other sources indicate that the earliest arrivals were from India and Iran, but that later Zoroastrians came also from Pakistan and Sri Lanka.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Parsiana*, May–June 1978, p. 15. Farrokh later moved to America where he again became a prominent member of the Zoroastrian community.

⁴⁷ Kolsawalla, CD, under 'Foundation Committee'.

⁴⁸ *Parsiana*, May–June 1978, p. 15.

⁴⁹ Inaugural *Jashan* booklet (not paginated).

Much in these early details reflects longer-term trends. Many of the names of the early arrivals remain important in the community's history through the 1980s and 1990s. The balance of social activity and religious education, and the place of non-Zoroastrians in the Association, are foretastes of issues ahead. The first recorded discussion of a Sunday school is in a *Newsletter* dated 1 December 1976. It says:

I am sure that one of our major aims and concerns is to spread the teachings of Zoroaster among our young ones, especially those born in Australia . . . we must remember that our children are no longer in the religious environment that we enjoyed and knew. It would be so easy for them to lose our ancient tradition, culture and religious background in this country.

This concern about transmitting the tradition explains the communal pride in the publication of a full-page spread and photograph of the *naujote* of a young Australian Parsi girl, Rashna Mody. The editor of the *Newsletter* commented: 'I personally think we should thank the Modys for the publicity and I hope that such future items are equally in the news, because I feel recognition of our community in Australia is long overdue.'⁵⁰ The columns of the 1970s newsletters are prophetic of issues to come: the prominence of Christmas celebrations;⁵¹ the acute problems of gathering subscriptions and especially the need for more donations to the building project;⁵² non-Zoroastrians supporting the community;⁵³ and problems with adverse press images.⁵⁴

The pattern of growth

The pattern of membership growth can be seen from a study of the annual numbers (Table 9.2), which indicate both the rapid growth and the periods of fastest growth, in the period leading up to my survey.

⁵⁰ The magazine article appeared in the *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 Apr. 1977.

⁵¹ *Newsletter*, 8 Nov. 1979 of the Christmas Party, 'Santa Claus will be there with his bag of goodies and there should be lots of fun for the children' (repeated in Nov. 1980 and 1981). Indeed the *Newsletter* of 6 Dec. 1979, ends with a verse of 'Once in Royal David's City'.⁵² 7 Oct. 1979, but a refrain in virtually every *Newsletter*.

⁵³ Two non-Zoroastrians are identified as members of the new Managing Committee.

⁵⁴ The *Newsletter* of 28 May 1979 includes an angry report of a piece in *The Age*, 8 May 1978, based on an interview with a member of the community.

TABLE 9.2. *Numbers in the Sydney community, 1973–1985*

	Members	Families
1973	110	38
1974	166	55
1975	166	59
1977/8	199	68
1979/80	224	75
1980/1	231	86
1981/2	257	99
1983/4	261	138
1984/5	370	142

Noshir Irani kindly sat for many hours with me going through the then current Association address list providing background details, mostly demographic, of the membership. The count showed: 433 individuals in 143 families, with 29 people from Iran, 19 from Pakistan, 4 from Britain, 1 from each of the East Africa, Sri Lanka and the Gulf States. The rest came from India. Eighty-three families were regular attenders at functions; 20 came very rarely; 31 people were married out and 9 of them still attended functions. Of the 273 adults whose details were known, 213 were university graduates. The next section of this chapter will plot the story behind those figures.

A place of our own

Fundraising

One of the central concerns of the ensuing fifteen years started in the 1970s—the planning and fundraising for ‘a place of our own’. The history of this crusade has two main dimensions: the raising of funds and the problems with the use of the property. Because the Sydney group was small and middle-class (rather than wealthy), it was inevitably difficult to raise sufficient funds to buy the land and a suitable building. Numerous appeals and fundraising events were held, but young families recently settled in Australia could not raise the sums required. It was therefore inevitable that they should look to outside benefactors. In the *Newsletter* in 1977 (15 November) reference was made to the Arbab

Rustom Guiv donation to the New York Association, a report which ended with the question, 'Our turn next?' The first formal approach was made in 1980; negotiations were to consume considerable time and energy throughout the coming decade. Nevertheless, following the initial launch at a function attended by Khojeste Mistree and Zubin Mehta, a building fund was begun in 1978. Money was raised locally by such functions as an 'Indian Fashion Extravaganza', the raffle of an Air India ticket, food stalls; a core group of twenty families donated a prescribed sum each year from the inception of the scheme in 1978. The Ostowari family gave a substantial donation of A\$60,000.⁵⁵ These internally raised funds enabled the Association to buy five acres of land, with a house in Annangrove. The purchase was agreed at a general body meeting in October 1985 and contracts were exchanged in December.⁵⁶ An inaugural *jashan* was celebrated on 9 February 1986. The regular Sunday school classes moved from a private home to the 'place of our own' the following month, and a communal barbecue was organized in May. At that stage all seemed well, externally. But in fact problems were just beginning.

Financial negotiations

Money was needed to develop the property. The Zarthoshty brothers promised a donation, without conditions. It was made clear that money could be available from the Guiv Trusts, but the negotiations over the conditions were protracted. The Guiv trustees insisted that they should own the property and would lease it to the Association for a nominal sum (one dollar per year) for a long period, hundreds of years if necessary. Dr Rustom Sarfeh, who had conducted similar negotiations with Associations in Canada and the US, argued the Guiv case. AZA maintained that it was different in that it already owned the property. Sarfeh offered to buy the property off the Association. The details of this negotiation are preserved in a number of letters between the Association and Dr Sarfeh, and in particular in a letter from the then president, Purvez Kolsawalla, to the AZA committee following some discussions in America. In response to the AZA comment that

⁵⁵ See the account of the Foundation Committee in the Inaugural Jashan booklet, Sunday 9 Feb. 1986.

⁵⁶ *Manashni*, Oct. 1985, and Nov.–Dec. 1985.

‘it appeared that they seemed intent on acquiring a property rather than making a donation’, the Trusts replied that the money could always be given to someone else, and reiterated Arbab Rustom Guiv’s own conviction that in return for the donation the Trusts should have at least a partial share in the property, in order to see that the intentions of the benefactor were honoured.⁵⁷

The debate over ownership then turned to the balance of members on a Managing Committee of the building, a committee that was to be a subcommittee of the Association, charged with general oversight of policy regarding the building but not its day-to-day care and use. The Trusts wished to nominate the majority of such a committee from among the AZA membership; the Association considered that as they had raised most of the funds they should have the majority representation. The Trust also pressed that the committee should include Iranian Zoroastrians. Sarfeh insisted that before any cheque was sent:

at least two Executive Board Members of the Foundation Committee should be elected from amongst the Iranian Zoroastrian Community. That is because the money being from Iran, the Rustom Guiv Trustees think it is fair that the Iranian Zoroastrians also take part in the way the money is being spent. This requirement is attached to all donations made by our beloved Arbab Rustom Guiv.⁵⁸

Katrak responded to this point on Iranian membership:

As regards the condition that at least 2 Executive Board Members of the Foundation Committee be elected amongst the Iranian Zoroastrian Community here which has so far been an extremely cohesive and friendly family . . . Neither in our Constitution, nor in practice, have we ever sought to establish a privileged position for any particular group . . . Before the Foundation Committee was re-elected at our Annual General Meeting we approached two Irani Zoroastrians for position on the Committee, but neither of them could accept the nomination because of time constraints, although they have actively supported our work in the past, and have offered to provide any assistance that we may require.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Letter P. Katrak to Kolsawalla, 23 Sep. 1986. This long, handwritten letter was written en route from Los Angeles to Houston after a personal meeting with Dr Sarfeh and other Guiv trustees. Although it was written after some of the negotiations outlined below, it gives a retrospective view of the progress of negotiations, obviously from the AZA perspective.

⁵⁸ Sarfeh to Katrak, 2 July 1984.

⁵⁹ Katrak to Sarfeh, 28 Aug. 1984.

Sarfeh commented on recent community elections to the Managing Committee, 'one gets surprised there is not even one Irani amongst them. Is it because of lack of interest or because they are sure they will be outvoted by the Parsees who at present have the majority of votes?'⁶⁰ Ironically, in the sentences immediately preceeding this question, Sarfeh had written that in the New World they should not be thinking in the old sectional terms, but simply as Zoroastrians. After referring to the problems of living in 'this melting pot of humanity' he wrote: 'It should be remembered that by our free will we have chosen to reside in countries who do the sectarian philosophy, Parsees, Irani, Pakistanis etc., but thanks God religion and the way of worshipping it is left free. Therefore we [being] such a small community should introduce ourselves as Zoroastrians . . .'. In a letter to Katrak of 1 February 1986, Sarfeh commented that if the persons in authority in Sydney at present were there for eternity, the Guiv Trusts would have no problems. But after their experiences with the property in New York, where the trustees did not pay attention to the question of ownership and 'now the management has changed and we are in an awkward situation which might end in the court of justice. For this reason the Trustees have decided not to repeat the same mistake.' After referring to the seven Guiv Darbe Mehrs in western countries, he said that they have always insisted on nominating three of the six board members, and he sent samples of constitutions agreed in America. Dr Katrak responded that what the Trusts were doing was 'insisting that the AZA who owned the land and the building should relinquish ownership to the Guiv Trusts who would have donated only about one quarter of the total cost of the project! The AZA obviously cannot accept these conditions.'⁶¹ Sarfeh responded that ownership of the property should be reflected in a legal document in such a way that it represented the rights of the benefactors in proportion to their donation. 'The Darbe Mehr is the greatest asset of the Association, with many donors, and a sub committee should be established which represented the interests of those donors.' He concluded that if these conditions are not acceptable, 'then we suggest that you may forget about the donation from Arbab Guiv. Probably you can raise that much money easily from your other charitable members.

⁶⁰ Sarfeh to Katrak, 13 Nov. 1984.

⁶¹ Katrak to Sarfeh, 10 Mar. 1986.

Mrs Guiv thinks that probably in time she could donate this money for establishment of a Shah Verahram Izad or an Atash Bahram.⁶² In his reply Katrak accepted that AZA would retain ownership of the property, and would proceed to have the legal documents drawn up, showing that A\$90,000 of the cost was to be borne by Arbab Rustam and Morvarid Guiv. He also accepted that the trusts should nominate two trustees (from AZA membership) and the Association would nominate three. Having agreed to the terms, he asked for the money.⁶³ When the Deed of Release was actually signed on 19 November 1987, clauses 11–13 stipulated that the donor (Rustom Guiv Trust) should appoint five persons who were members of the Association who were resident in Australia to form a subcommittee. All five (identified by name in clause 13) were Iranians. In clause 2, however, it was stated that the monies ‘shall be used for the erection of a house of prayer . . . the legal and beneficial ownership in which shall be vested in the Association, on lands owned by the Association’.

As in some American Associations, Dr Sarfeh’s letters sometimes caused personal offence to the recipients. For example, he wrote to Purvez Kolsawalla (a Parsi), then president; ‘I remember you telling me that the Parsees even refuse to pay their membership dues. Possibly this is in their culture, and the way of their practice in India. I think someone should tell them that in western countries every member of a Church, Synagogue, Temple etc. is supposed to pay his gathering and worshipping center, the same way he pays for his personal living quarters.’ He then commented on the building, and named the President: ‘I think it is a suitable place for the Headquarters of Kolsawalla for administering his personal affairs. The committee should purchase the present premises for their beloved President.’⁶⁴

In the debates over ownership another issue was the naming of the property. From the outset the Guiv Trusts had insisted on this being ‘the Arbab Rustom and Morvarid Guiv Darbe Meher’. The AZA questioned this on the grounds that, if a larger donor was found, should not their name be used? The negotiations yielded the proposal that naming different parts of the building should reflect the proportion of the donation; so, for example, the Darbe

⁶² Sarfeh to Katrak, 11 Apr. 1986.

⁶⁴ *Manashni*, Apr.–May 1992.

⁶³ Katrak to Sarfeh, 19 May 1986.

Mehr was indeed named after the Guivs, and the library was named after the second largest donors, the Zarthoshty brothers.

Problems with neighbours

But funding and ownership rights were only one aspect of the problems of 'the place of our own'. In 1987 trouble began with the neighbours. In October complaints were made to the police about members parking on the roadside, near a narrow bend and on private side roads. More complaints were made when a youth group played loud music into the early hours of the morning.⁶⁵ On another occasion, a neighbour was rude to community members and the committee considered approaching the Anti-Discrimination Board, but decided not to do so.⁶⁶ A newspaper interview had been published with the neighbours on the problems they were having with the Association—who protested strongly at the unbalanced reporting of the issue.⁶⁷ The neighbours had the planned development stalled for one year on the grounds of traffic noise, inadequate sewage, invasion of privacy and access roads being jammed by what the newspaper described as 'an obscure religious movement'. The neighbours and politicians were invited to meet members and to attend a function, but they declined. The Council imposed such restrictions that use of the property had to stop, not only for major functions such as No Ruz, but small events, for example, the monthly Sunday school meetings.⁶⁸ In a local paper an article was published which the Association found deeply offensive.⁶⁹ It was headed 'Row over sect's move to suburb' and said:

A religious row is brewing between residents and an obscure sect over plans to set up a permanent meeting and biblical instruction house at Annangrove . . . One of the reasons for the residents' objection was 'The activities and attitudes of the Zoroastrian members are not acceptable.' . . . A spokesman for the residents, Ron Prior, says he is 'dead

⁶⁵ The problem was associated with a youth disco. Most people left at 1.00–1.30 a.m., but the cleaners danced for another hour or so. *Manashni*, July 1987.

⁶⁶ AZA Committee file, 8 May 1988.

⁶⁷ *Parramatta Mercury*, 17 Apr. 1988. *The Mercury*, 12 Apr. 1988, reported in *Manashni*, May 1988 and in *Parsiana*, June 1988, p. 15.

⁶⁸ *Parsiana*, March 1989, p. 16; Aug. 1989, pp. 46–8.

⁶⁹ *Hill Shire Times*, 20 June 1989. It was discussed at a general meeting and published in *Manashni*, July 1989. A similar report, describing them as 'An obscure religious group' was also published in *Hill News*, 6 June 1989.

against' using this site as a meeting place. Mr Prior went on to allege that plans to erect a centre had been 'pushed under the table' until the group gained approval for holding meetings. They will then have existing rights and go ahead and build. The majority of the members don't come from the shire and because religious organisations don't pay rates, we are going to have to pay for them.

There was a very short quotation of a denial from the then president, Noshir Irani, in the article but no substantial AZA perspective was included. The *Manashni* editor Kersi Meher-Homji wrote a response which was published (25 July 1989). He began by pointing out that they were not a sect but a well-established religion and went on:

We have no quarrels with our fellow residents . . . Being a minority community and friendly, we assimilate easily . . . [residents' objection that activities are not acceptable] has stumped us. A recent demographic survey shows that 6 per cent of our members are in the medical profession, 7 per cent are engineers and 8 per cent are in accountancy and finance; 60.8 per cent of us are university graduates compared with the Australian average of under 5 per cent. Of these 60.8 per cent, 19 per cent have postgraduate qualifications. And yet we are unacceptable to some of our highly erudite neighbours!

He acknowledged that there was one noisy late night party in June 1987: 'That is one party in four years' stay at Annangrove! . . . Australia is our country because it is free and beautiful. All we ask is a fair go. It is certainly unfair to ask us, Australian citizens, to move from the property we bought with our hard-earned money!'

The Association then had to decide whether to sell and relocate, or whether to stay and contest the Council decision in the Appeal Court, which had effectively closed the property. At the AG Meeting on 20 September the situation was summed up:

The idealists said 'Injustice has been done to us by the Council. We have done nothing wrong; why should we leave our property and relocate?' The realists agreed on the injustice theme but warned that 'even if we win the appeal (chances 60%; cost \$10–15,000) we won't be happy as the neighbours will continue to bicker. So we should be sensible and relocate.'

A decision was postponed for three months in which time detailed figures, alternative properties, and individuals' views were to be collected. The Managing Committee and the house subcommittee

had voted to relocate, and brought those recommendations to the general body. The four-page briefing document, however, carried no recommendations, but included the wording of appropriate alternative resolutions, estimates of the financial costs of each alternative and a list of six alternative properties inspected, with their advantages and disadvantages. At the extraordinary general meeting, the majority view was that they should stay and fight, a motion carried by 126 votes to 99. The vote to appeal to the Land and Environment Court was then carried by 170 votes to 40.⁷⁰

At a further general meeting ten months later the question was revisited in the light of the engineer's and other reports; costs were high, and an alternative property had been identified, but again, the will of the meeting was to stay and fight.⁷¹ The appeal started on 21 September 1990 and lasted five days (not the three expected). A single adjudicator heard the case. The neighbours' barrister produced eight witnesses, the chief town architect and the chief engineer plus six neighbours. The AZA's barrister produced four witnesses, three consultants (a town planner, a traffic engineer and a sewage engineer) and the current AZA president, Noshir Irani, who was cross-examined for one and a half days in the witness box. The court visited the site and the homes of the neighbours. Judgement was given in favour of the AZA and all the conditions imposed (e.g. parking and sewage arrangements) were those the AZA had proposed. The *Manashni* report then emphasized that it was important to take care with parking and to establish good relations with neighbours.⁷²

Another hurdle

But still the problems were not over. The extra costs of the extended court case, and the costs of the building work, were significantly more than the Association had in its reserves. A letter was therefore sent to Mr Zarthoshty to ask whether his donation, which had been given without conditions, could be used to meet these bills. He refused, saying that they must raise the money themselves, or forget the whole idea. He argued that using the money for these purposes would mean that they did not have the funds to build a new Darbe Mehr. He, as the Guivs before him,

⁷⁰ *Manashni*, Nov.–Dec. 1989.

⁷¹ *Manashni*, Aug. 1990, pp. 3–5, and Sep. 1990, p. 1.

⁷² *Manashni*, Oct. 1990.

raised the question of involving the Iranian Zoroastrians on the Managing Committee, saying, 'taking into consideration the 20/30 families against 150 Parsi families how can they be successful in case of voting?'⁷³ He exhorted them to follow the precedent Jamshed Pavri had set in Vancouver for allocating a specific number of places on the board for the different sections of the community. The March–June 1991 editorial of *Manashni* expressed the feeling of despair felt by some: 'The Foundation Sub-Committees became non-functional and many of us became negative and full of self-doubts.'⁷⁴ The problems appeared never-ending, despite the fact that they had had a number of successes—they had persuaded the solicitors to write off the outstanding bill and they had successfully defended a case against an auditor who had tried to increase his agreed fee of \$880 to \$4,000. Some Association members, especially those recently settled in Sydney, were questioning the value of owning a property. Open letters circulated (which were not published in *Manashni* because some of the allegations bordered on the libellous), questioning whether the zoning, restrictions on the frequency (three social events including Christmas) and time of day for functions (all must finish by 8.00 p.m.), and the fixed number of parking spaces (seventy), meant that the costly project was a white elephant. It was further alleged that as no Zoroastrian architect had been employed, the building did not have a Zoroastrian appearance. Finally, and controversially, the letters accused the committee of not publishing the full judgement in order that their triumph might look greater.⁷⁵ The *Manashni* editor, Kersi Meher-Homji, however, took a strongly optimistic approach, saying that a centre was needed to give a sense of identity; it would be a place to hold functions, and Hinnells's statistics showed the importance of a centre in preserving the tradition. He noted that some centres overseas had caused divisions but he asserted:

We are overall, a united close-knit community, although we think differently on some issues. And why not? But when it comes to the crunch, we rush out of our way to help those in need. The Parsi–Irani differences which have

⁷³ Letter included in the president's column of *Manashni*, Oct. 1990.

⁷⁴ The subcommittee had folded because people were not willing to stand for election to it.

⁷⁵ A highly critical letter along these lines, but without some other allegations, was published in *Manashni*, Nov.–Dec. 1991.

dogged a few Zoroastrian Associations overseas are non-existent here. We are all ONE in NSW and always will be ONE—Inshah Ahura.

He then called for more fundraising activity for the ‘new, squeaky clean, *functional* AZA House’. The tide, he asserted, was turning, the time was come to raise the remaining funds needed and to proceed with a new building which would meet the Council’s requirements and for which overseas donations could properly be used.

But even in the same *Newsletter*, another of the long-standing workers, Tim Desai, voiced thoughts that the new building would cost something like \$250,000 yet it could only be approximately 10% larger. He thought it best to introduce the Council’s requirements by members doing much of the work themselves to save money. But by November of that year it was agreed to proceed with consulting the Council on plans for a new building. The plans took twelve months to finalize. Their agreement was announced to the worldwide community through the columns of *Parsiana* in July 1993 (p. 14). Despite the ever-present problem of raising yet more funds, the September 1994 issue of *Parsiana* was able to announce, through a two-page spread, that the new Arbab Rustom and Morvarid Guiv Darbe Mehr, after six months of building work, had been inaugurated with a *jashan* on 12 July 1994. It had a 240-seater hall, with ‘kebla’, and a library named after the Zarthoshty brothers. The five-year exile of the Association from its own property (1989–94), enforced by the Council, was at an end. The 200 families (plus fifty to eighty singles) were now able to use their property for Sunday schools, prayer meetings and social functions, though these had to be held during the day and only a certain number could take place in any one year. Plans were already being discussed for the use of some of the three acres of bush land that formed part of the property.⁷⁶

Further disputes

A different, and perhaps more internally divisive, series of arguments erupted over the fittings of the property. The first was regarding plaques recording donations; the second over two paintings of the Prophet, one depicting him according to western conventions; and a third concerned a proposed memorial rose garden. The last of these will be discussed in the section on religion,

⁷⁶ A. S. Mama, ‘Dawn of a New Era Down Under’, *Parsiana*, Sep. 1994, pp. 20 f and 27.

for reasons that will become apparent. The question over the plaques was whether they should be placed according to the size of donation, or alphabetically. A related issue was the spread of the plaques towards the *kebla*. It would be a mistake to think that the sequence of the plaques was simply a question of vanity. Most of the plaques recorded donations in memory of a departed loved one. There was also a feeling that these plaques prioritized the giving of money and neglected the contributions of people's time and labour.⁷⁷ The feelings became so intense that three past presidents tabled an undated letter at the AGM saying how perturbed and unhappy they were at recent events and calling for an end to the acrimony which they said was not uncommon elsewhere, but had not been typical of Sydney. The debate over the paintings was settled by a community vote on whether the different portraits should be hung in the building; a substantial majority agreed that they should be.⁷⁸

Further issues arose concerning the use of the building and a possible extension. Some people felt that there should be separate teaching and meeting rooms. The Sunday school had to be held in the hall, the echoes in which meant that children could not hear what the teacher said because of the jollity of the parents in the background. In the view of some, not least the teachers, this gave the children the impression that the classes were not serious. In a presidential letter published in *Manashni* the following observations were made.

Recently the privileges all of us enjoy at the AZA house have been misused by a small group of people and this has had a direct effect on the main task at hand, namely, teaching religion and culture to our children . . . the joviality that elders engage in is getting out of hand and has a disruptive effect on the classes which are being held in the same hall . . . classroom order has seriously declined over the last few months . . . By observing the revelling of parents, the children have naturally come to the conclusion that Sunday School means 'no studies, just have a good time.' I as President of the AZA, need to know whether religious classes have a priority among Zoroastrians in Sydney . . . If the majority of the parents and children do not want to continue Sunday classes and alternatively wish to use AZA House solely as a recreation club on the weekend [then inform the President].⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *Manashni*, Apr.–May 1995.

⁷⁸ *Manashni*, June–July 1996.

⁷⁹ *Manashni*, Aug.–Oct. 1996.

Yet more problems were noted: because of the property's location and a lack of transport the youth could not get to it on their own; numbers attending functions were such that it was extremely hot inside and the crowds overflowed outside. The new house did not, therefore, have all the benefits the pioneers aspired to. In 1997 the president's column regretted the declining numbers of the Association, and that few were willing to give their time to work for it. Thus it was estimated that although there were 348 paying members, only fifty attended the A G Meeting, that 80% of the work was done by 15% of members. An angry young editor complained that unlike Associations in America and Europe, the Sydney Zoroastrians were stagnating,⁸⁰ and one young event organizer stated that he would not plan another youth dance because of the very poor turnout.⁸¹

A happy conclusion—and triumph

The sense of triumph when in 1987 the building of their own was opened was palpable, and justified. As this section has documented, the trials were many, some of them serious, but only a few divided the community. On the whole, the community remained unified in its determination to 'have a place of our own'. It is difficult for an outsider to appreciate how much such a place means to a diaspora community. In the chapters on Britain and America, we have seen that such properties commonly provoke dispute and division. That did happen in Sydney, and the records show more than this text has detailed, yet fundamentally the Association remained united, not least in the face of external attacks from neighbours. Having obtained their goal of 'a place of our own', the next task was to run that place.

Community ties

The property has been perhaps the biggest single issue since the mid-1970s, but naturally there are other issues that have been important.

⁸⁰ *Manashni*, Jan.–Feb. 1998.

⁸¹ *Manashni*, Mar.–Apr. 1998. Ironically this appeared in the same issue in which the president said he was encouraged by the large attendance at meetings: 'There is certainly, a positive atmosphere of goodwill and tolerance, which seems to become infectious, as more and more, both the young and not so young, appear to succumb to this welcome malady.' The different perceptions of people, and especially of generations, makes a balanced assessment difficult.

The question of identity is of paramount importance, but it is very complex. It was invoked as a reason for 'a place of our own'. But there are other dimensions also. A central question has to be the nature of that identity: Australian, Indian, Iranian, or Zoroastrian?

In the newspaper article mentioned above, and in some of the court debates, AZA members were keen to assert that they were Australian citizens. How did that affect their ties to the old country? The links to India are evident and are shown, for example, by their commitment to teach Gujarati at Sunday school. Government funds for ethnic languages aided the long-lasting commitment of teachers and parents,⁸² though the former sometimes registered their concern at the small numbers attending.⁸³ The teachers also told the parents that more language work should be done at home, because one hour per month was not sufficient for the children to learn much Gujarati.⁸⁴ On a number of occasions, Gujarati *nataks* were mounted;⁸⁵ one *natak* was so successful that it was staged on two subsequent occasions for other Indian communities.⁸⁶ In 1991 a No Ruz function included a Parsi Gujarati comedy (and Indian dance),⁸⁷ and in 1997 two Parsi *nataks* were mounted publicly and were well attended by non-Parsi Gujaratis.⁸⁸ In personal conversation, a number of people stated that their young sometimes conversed with their elders in Gujarati, and that on visiting the old country they had displayed more knowledge of the language than their parents realized that they had, though their understanding was said to be better than their spoken Gujarati. The evidence for links

⁸² The first reference I can find to a proposition to mount Gujarati children's classes is in AZA Managing Committee files for 5 May 1980. Reference is made to the Association receiving funds from the Ministry of Education to aid the teaching of Gujarati in AZA minute book, 16 Nov. 1980. The AZA Managing Committee minute book for 11 Oct. 1981 records that the Association joined the Ethnic Council. *Parsiiana*, Nov. 1986, p. 19 records an appeal for sponsors for a competition for children to learn Gujarati. *Manashni*, Jan.–Feb. 1999 (no pagination in this issue) lists prizes for the children's Gujarati class, and one pupil was awarded a merit certificate for NSW Ethnic Schools Board for Gujarati.

⁸³ *Manashni*, July 1983.

⁸⁴ Managing Committee file, 9 Oct. 1983.

⁸⁵ *Manashni*, Apr. 1983, advertises a *natak* being mounted for the Melbourne Zoroastrians. *Manashni*, May 1984 records a visit by the Melbourne Zoroastrians and their performance of a *natak* at a *gahambar* function. A *natak* was also performed at Jamshedi Navroze reported in *Parsiiana*, Apr. 1989, p. 18. In the Oct. 1989 edition of *Manashni* the co-ordinator of the Sunday school, Gooloo Katrak (p. 4), reported on the success of Gujarati classes at the Sunday school. Such activities were still functioning a decade later, for *Manashni*, Feb. 2000, p. 4 refers to a fundraising event which involved a Gujarati play and Indian music. I am grateful to Mr and Mrs Katrak for making me a welcome guest in their home.

⁸⁷ *Manashni*, Sept.–Oct. 1991.

⁸⁶ *Manashni*, July 1990, p. 4.
⁸⁸ *Manashni*, Mar.–May 1997.

with other Indian diaspora communities is clearer in Sydney than for any other centre I have studied. The most frequent indicator of this is the participation in the India-Australian cricket league and table tennis competitions; and a Sydney Parsi played for the Indo-Australia cricket club.⁸⁹ There are also notices informing members of yoga classes, sometimes held at AZA house,⁹⁰ of Diwali functions,⁹¹ Goanese evenings,⁹² and public Indian music evenings.⁹³ Noshir Irani, as well as serving more than once as president of AZA, was also elected president of the Indo-Australian Cultural Society⁹⁴ and he encouraged the Association from time to time to develop links with the wider Indian community.⁹⁵ In diverse ways, therefore, the Parsis in Sydney have interacted more with Indian communities in the region than has been observed in other centres. The Indian-ness of the community is noteworthy.

It is more difficult to comment on the Iranian links of the community. There were Iranian families prominent at key moments, for example the Ostowaris, both at the outset and in the 1990s when the Darbe Mehr was complete. Persian classes have been mounted at various stages of AZA history.⁹⁶ The Association was active in seeking to help Iranian refugees after the 1979 revolution.⁹⁷ There was a deeply moving personal moment during one of my seminars in Sydney when a young Iranian girl expressed her strong sense of not belonging in Australia, but wanting to return. She wanted an Iranian husband and would be glad for her parents to

⁸⁹ Cyrus Pestonji, *Manashni*, Nov.–Dec. 1989, p. 9.

⁹⁰ *Manashni*, July–Aug. 1998, p. 1. See also *Manashni* Nov.–Dec. 1998, p. 7.

⁹¹ The back cover of *Manashni* of Nov.–Dec. 1998 wishes 'loved ones, our members and friends a very happy Dipavali' and includes a Shiva Nataraja picture. In July–Aug. 1991, there had been a notice of India Day celebrations.

⁹² *Manashni*, May 1990, p. 8.

⁹³ *Manashni*, Sept. 1999, p. 1. Also at a *jashan gahambar*, *Manashni*, July 1993 and May 1994.

⁹⁴ *Manashni*, Oct. 1983.

⁹⁵ Managing Committee file, 14 Apr. 1984.

⁹⁶ *Manashni*, Aug. 1982 noted Persian classes were starting. A reference in *Manashni*, July 1986 shows they were still continuing, though in May 1987 attendance was said to be poor. In the June 1986 issue it was stated that the classes were to restart but the May 1987 *Manashni* again reports falling numbers.

⁹⁷ *Manashni*, June 1989, p. 3. Zoroastrian Studies in Bombay were helping Iranian Zoroastrian refugees. They were concerned because the Indian authorities were inclined to send them back to Iran, which would lead to persecution and possible death. In Australia, as in other countries, refugee support groups were set up. The AZA officers wrote to Canberra and met a senior immigration official in Sydney, but little help was forthcoming. A community-wide appeal was launched in the Jan.–Feb. issue of *Manashni* asking for sponsors and accommodation for Iranian Zoroastrian refugees (pp. 10 f.).

arrange a marriage for her, something she saw as no different from going to a party to look for a partner. Her statement ended on a plaintive note when she explained how she thought in Persian and loved the language. Her cry from the heart reflected the views of a number of Iranian Zoroastrians who belonged to the Persian Association. In the September–October 1992 issue of *Manashni* three pages were included in Farsi, but the size of that contribution soon diminished, and ceased after a few months. Tensions between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis surfaced in 1992 when twenty six Iranians signed an open letter of complaint on eight specific issues. Under the second they said that, ‘Unfortunately the AZA from its very inception has not been (quite) attractive to the Iranian Zarthusties. Those who initially came forward with zeal and interest were slowly discouraged; the new emigrants find themselves alone and in the middle of conflict of opinions, thereby having to keep away from the AZA.’ They asserted that the AZA did not attach importance ‘to the cultural and religious needs of the Iranian families . . . Instead of promoting our ancestral culture, the energy, facilities and resources of the community are being consumed for organising and promoting European festivals and culture.’ They called for the celebration of more traditional Zoroastrian ceremonies (*gahambars*, Tirgan, Mehragan, etc.) and concluded ‘Most important of all, avoid difference and forming of groups, which has been to the disadvantage of the community till today.’ The Managing Committee issued a public reply, saying that they shared the ideals and believed that they were trying to meet these wishes already, but would particularly welcome help from the Iranians in mounting the proposed festivals, classes, etc. They did not respond to the question of the European festival (an allusion to the debates over celebrating Christmas, which is discussed below). Also in October 1992 it was reported that 1,500 Iranians, Zoroastrians, Kurds, Assyrians and others enjoyed the biggest Mehragan festival ever celebrated in the southern hemisphere.⁹⁸ In the later 1990s there was a growing trend in AZA functions to have a mixture of Iranian and Parsi food,⁹⁹ and to celebrate such festivals as

⁹⁸ *Manashni*, Nov.–Dec. 1992. Similarly in 2000 Iranians, both Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, celebrated No Ruz.

⁹⁹ The first occasion this was noted was at the 1990 No Ruz function; the practice was continued in the No Ruz function of 2000—*Manashni*, Feb. 2000, p. 1.

Mehragan and Sadeh, which are still important to Iranians but not nowadays observed by Parsis in India.¹⁰⁰ The *Manashni* editor painted a vivid picture:

Ervad brothers Neville and Carl Desai conducted the Sadeh prayers at Balmoral [NSW] beach. Picture this: a beautiful beach, a setting sun, a large group of people holding hands in a circle and the sounds of the Atash ni niyash . . . to the dying sound of prayer and waves, each of us solemnly ignited a flame, which soon became a roaring bonfire. It was a truly moving moment. For those who were not present, we can only say, we wish you had been there.¹⁰¹

The *Newsletter* also includes an account of how emotionally moved a group of Australians were at the Zoroastrians prayers around the bonfire on the beach at the festival of fire.

Whether the emphasis is on being Parsi, Zoroastrian or Iranian, a recurrent theme is the reporting of these events is their significance as the biggest Zoroastrian or Iranian group, building, festival or celebration in the southern hemisphere.¹⁰²

The public image

The story of Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians praying and eating together raises the question of what Zoroastrian identity the AZA is seeking to convey. The earlier references to identity refer to ethnic, national or cultural expressions: Gujarati and Persian, the Australian-Indian and the Persian Associations. In the early years of migration it is natural that these should be prominent. But the question of what it means to be a Zoroastrian Association has recurred through the years. The particularly Australian nature of this problem was highlighted in a 1982 circular regarding plans for a centre:

Perhaps our greatest gift to our children is to give them a sense of identity and worth. In their school environment they feel singled out as being

¹⁰⁰ *Manashni*, June–July 1991, p. 5; Jan./Feb. 1992 (no pagination), Jashne Sadeh; see also Oct./Nov. 1999, pp. 1, 4, 11 which also records the success of a Mehragan festival function with 380 people attending and an Iranian musician. The report refers to bringing Iranians and Parsis together in Australia after food and festivities, and the mingling of cultures with music. There was ‘spontaneous, uninhibited dancing. Sing-alongs included old favorites and new, western, Iranian and Indian tunes . . . Mr Mozayani sent the crowd in raptures by his mastery of tar instruments.’

¹⁰¹ *Manashni*, Feb. 2000, p. 3.

¹⁰² See e.g. the report of the celebration of the Sardesh festival, *Manashni*, Jan.–Feb. 1993, the president’s column.

different from their peers and these children, being normal, would reject their own religion, culture and traditions so as to conform with their mates . . . To the average Australian, the word 'Zoroastrian' can hardly be pronounced, let alone spelt. It is so difficult it tends to be lumped together with weird cults and disease!

Unfortunately the writer was speaking prophetically, not only in the light of the newspaper headlines over the disputes with neighbours already referred to, but also with regard to a television programme. The *Today* show on 12 September 1997 had included an item entitled 'Bewitched', which listed Zoroastrians amidst the 'cults' of 'witches, satanists, pagans, pantheists, druids'. Association protests were ignored, as was an invitation to come and meet the community. A formal complaint was made to the Australian Broadcasting Association (ABA), who found in favour of the Association and also reprimanded the show's producers for not informing the AZA of the due complaints procedures. Eventually, after further protests, the television company did write with an apology and promised to consult the Association for such items in the future.¹⁰³ A serious problem for a minority group, such as the Zoroastrians, is that the media are (even) less careful about the accuracy of their accounts than they are with large bodies such as the Muslims. The negative impact not only on outsiders, but also on the young within the community, can do more harm than is readily apparent.

In order to counter such negative public images the community attaches particular importance to people and events that present a positive image of the community. For example, the publicity associated with the first *naujote* in Australia, referred to above, provided an opportunity for publicly presenting Zoroastrianism as 'the first monotheistic religion', explaining the belief that 'God is light', that the priest is a surgeon, and that Zoroastrianism involves dedicating one's life to 'good thoughts, good words and good deeds'. The social occasion was described in terms of

¹⁰³ A. S. Mama, 'Zoroastrian Democracy in Sydney', *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1998, pp. 34–38b; June 1999, pp. 16, 18. *Manashni*, Mar.–Apr. 1999, pp. 3 f. Concern was expressed in the Management Committee that in a newspaper article it had been reported that in Zoroastrianism women are impure, and the complaint was that someone in the community must have given a false impression of the religion. But the *Manashni* editor explained that a journalist had simplified what he had been told for a popular article. See general correspondence letter of P. Jahanian.

‘exquisite heirloom saris, the enjoyment of succulent and tasty Indian and Parsee dishes’.¹⁰⁴ A similar example of a positive newspaper account was on the delights of Parsi cooking in a full-page spread in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.¹⁰⁵ Once again the article provided a peg on which to hang positive information about the community:

Is it Australia’s smallest ethnic community? It is certainly one of the best fed . . . They cook splendidly for their festivals. Their prophet Zoroaster was probably the first prophet in the history of religions and the first to proclaim the existence of just one God . . . highly educated and philanthropic people proud of their traditions, and just as proud that they are cosmopolitan people who mix well wherever they go and don’t cluster in ghettos.

As in many other communities in America and elsewhere, the visits of Zubin Mehta give the community a positive external image, and a deep sense of pride.¹⁰⁶ Outside interest was aroused when a young Sydney Zoroastrian, Beghzad Bana, had his *navar* ceremony in Bombay. The item in the *Sydney Morning Herald* provided an opportunity to assert publicly that: ‘We want our children to mingle in the Aussie culture, but we also want them to know our traditions’ and that ‘The Zoroastrian religion, which uses the symbol of fire much as Christians use the Cross, is based on the message Zoroaster received from God telling mankind to live by three rules—good thoughts, good words and good deeds.’ It also noted that, ‘Most Australian Zoroastrians work in the professions.’¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the success of Zoroastrians at table tennis and cricket, the writing of books on cricket by the long-serving editor of *Manashni*, Meher-Homji,¹⁰⁸ all stimulated a positive awareness of a minority which is vulnerable to media misinformation.

¹⁰⁴ *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 27 Apr. 1977.

¹⁰⁵ *Manashni*, Jan.–Feb. 1991, p. 7 on *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Nov. 1990, an article based on the reporter’s dinner with a Parsi family.

¹⁰⁶ His first visit after the founding of the Association was in 1984 (Managing Committee notes, Feb. 1984) when a group booking and a meeting with the maestro were arranged. He also visited them in 1989, *Manashni*, Sept. 1989, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 1994, reprinted in *Manashni*, Aug. 1994. The initiation subsequently appeared in an ABC religious TV programme (*Manashni*, Nov.–Dec. 1994, and again July–Aug. 1995).

¹⁰⁸ *Cricket’s Great Families*, 1980; *1,000 Tests* (on cricket 1877–1984), 1985. He was also a regular columnist for *Sportsweek* (India) and *Cricketer* (Australia), and the consulting editor in charge of the sports section of the new newspaper, *The Indian Down Under*.

Conversely, there have been occasions when the Managing Committee has urged members to take more care in making remarks about the community to the media that could give them a bad image.¹⁰⁹ Projecting a positive community image is, therefore, a major concern. But the question they have needed to ask for internal, as well as external, understanding is, just who is a Zoroastrian?

Being Zoroastrian

In the annexe of the constitution (3.(2)(a)) a Zoroastrian is defined for purposes of incorporation as, 'a person who is a believer or a follower of the religion as propounded by our prophet Zarathushtra, who has not only signified his willingness to be initiated into the Zoroastrian religion but has been so initiated in accordance with the practice(s) followed by Zoroastrians.' Non-Zoroastrians may be honorary and associate members of the Association.¹¹⁰ The definition recommended by the committee was, 'any Zoroastrian or any person married to a Zoroastrian or any child where one or both parents are Zoroastrians or any individual with Zoroastrian ancestry is eligible to be a member.'¹¹¹ But this was later seen to raise problems, for a person may have Zoroastrian ancestry some generations back but now could belong to another religion. What would such 'Zoroastrian' identity consist of? A suggestion was to accept anyone whose grandparents were Zoroastrians, which would solve the problem for a couple of generations. Another proposal was that they might restrict membership to those with one Zoroastrian parent.¹¹² The majority vote at a special meeting was that a member is 'a Zoroastrian, his or her spouse and their children and the progeny of the children thereafter'.¹¹³ Intermarriage has been a matter of debate in all the communities considered in this book. Sydney is the centre where intermarrieds have been most accepted and involved in the Association. Individuals not born Zoroastrians have served on the Managing Committee,¹¹⁴ and

¹⁰⁹ *Manashmi*, 28 May 1979.

¹¹⁰ *Manashmi*, June 1985, also Dec. 1985, p. 13. The debate was also reported in *Parsiana*, Mar. 1987, pp. 15 f, 97 f.; Oct. 1987, p. 15.

¹¹² *Manashmi*, Feb. 1987, president's column.

¹¹³ *Manashmi*, Dec. 1987, Report of EGM (held 13 Sept. 1987). See the Certificate of Incorporation as a Public Company, dated 10 Sept. 1986, Articles of Association 3 (I) and 3 (2).

¹¹⁴ Newsletter, Aug. 7, 1979.

been editor of the newsletter, and an active priest is married to someone not born a Zoroastrian. In a small youth group discussion in July 2000, most of the young people said that they would like to marry a Zoroastrian, but that it did not seem a realistic aspiration. They knew their Zoroastrian peer group in Sydney so well that it was difficult to think of them as potential spouses. Most were willing to travel to India to look for a spouse, because they did not want to upset their parents, and they were aware of the problems for an intermarried couple of bringing up a child. In a separate group discussion with the parents, several said that the reason for giving priority to 'a place of our own' was to help in-marriage. It remains, therefore, a matter of debate.

There have been debates about the religious dimension of the community. Early on it was thought that emphasizing the religious nature of the Association might help tax-exempt status, but it was felt then that the community as a whole did not want a religious flavour.¹¹⁵ It was decided after discussion that the president did not have to be a practising Zoroastrian.¹¹⁶ Similarly, the Managing Committee minutes for 2 October 1992 record the concern, 'to keep religion out of Managing Committee. It was explained that this related to the beliefs and not to the religion per se.' This clearly expresses a non-doctrinal priority in what was seen as the heart of the religion. The motive was to try to reduce disputes. Yet there has been continued emphasis on the importance of the Sunday school since 1976. There are, of course, religious and non-religious people in the Association. The extent to which religion is a part of, or separate from, culture is a major issue for both Zoroastrians and external academic discourse. In the West, especially in a Protestant context, religion is an individual matter of faith. That is the case for some Zoroastrians, but for many it is rather a question of identity within the community. Where religion is understood in a 'Protestant' way, then conversion, or acceptance, is more acceptable than it is where religion is identified with communal identity.

The debate over the 'religious' dimension of Zoroastrianism and the boundaries of (un)acceptable assimilation is manifest in various ways and can be illustrated by an incident in 1999. Until 1999 it had been normal to have a Christmas tree in the building,

¹¹⁵ Source of information, Farokh Mistree in private conversation.

¹¹⁶ Managing Committee file, 25 May 1982.

during December, and the newsletter regularly referred to Santa Claus coming with lots of presents. So, for example, in the January to February 1999 issue of *Manashni*, a report on the Christmas function commented: 'the turnout indicated that the spirit of Christmas is alive and well . . . this is what Christmas is about: getting together, enjoying one another's company and celebrating an occasion which is not confined to one religious section of people but is universal. Ever since its inception the AZA has always celebrated Christmas and will go on doing so!' It was these Christian festivities which the Iranians complained of when they referred to European festivals. To an Iranian, brought up in a Muslim society, Christmas seems more alien than it does to someone brought up in India, where a substantial British influence remains. During a lecture to AZA, Prof. Farhang Mehr referred with regret to the prominence given to such a Christian festivity. After the lecture a questioner expanded on this theme, which became a short-term matter of dispute with the president. In a letter to *Manashni*, the protester, one Mr Sethna, objected to the tree, which was under the picture of Zoroaster. He asked whether a Christmas party would be staged in a Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Muslim centre of worship. Although the Darbe Mehr 'is not officially consecrated, it is already sanctified by the performance of many JASHANS, recitations of HUMBANDAGIS and performance of FUNERAL PRAYERS' (capitals in original). The contrasting cultural backgrounds were highlighted when in 1999 the Association introduced the Iranian Deygan festival to balance Christmas. In this someone played the role of Baba Firuz, a traditional Iranian figure, and danced around the room handing out sweets and presents as in Iran,¹¹⁷ but this is reported to have seemed alien to a number of Parsi children. In the same issue of *Manashni* that reported the Deygan festival, an explanation of the Christmas tree was given which linked Mithras' birthday with 25 December, when it is said evergreen trees were decorated. The article concluded: 'Today we should be proud that modern Xmas practices are rituals that come from our very own culture and customs. They have been both adopted and adapted to suit different people and different times. The proud origins of ancient Persia should be narrated to our children.'

¹¹⁷ *Manashni*, Jan. 2000 (not paginated).

Another good example of an issue which highlights questions of tradition and assimilation was the proposal to establish a rose garden in memory of 'the dear departed', which one family was willing to fund. This was to have been a small, oval garden with a central elevated rose bed, the whole area being screened by conifers. It was proposed that there should be memorial plaques, but no scattering or burial of ashes. In a general discussion of the proposal, various doubts were expressed. It was thought that it would be a unique development, that it would provoke images of a burial ground, that such a garden should not be located near an agiary or Atash Bahram; it was said to be against the spirit of the religion because it meant permanent grieving and it would be better to have a sports complex, library or scholarships than a remembrance in stone. Such a development, it was said, would seem like Christianity. The proposal was voted down by a ratio of 3 : 1.¹¹⁸ The boundaries of assimilation and the preservation of culture can be difficult to determine.¹¹⁹ Comparing the notice-boards of early issues of *Manashni*, and those at the end of the 1990s, especially after the opening of the Darbe Mehr, and the interaction between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians, one sees that there is more emphasis on religious activities in the later years, although it has been agreed that the president does not have to be religious. Interestingly, in a small discussion group in 2000, a young visitor from Toronto commented on how much less religion there appeared to be in the Sydney community compared with that in Toronto.

As was noted above, Sunday schools were seen as important from early days, but these have not been easy to manage. One problem has been to ensure the proper training of teachers and the provision of resources. There have sometimes been complaints that the children were bored, but at others there has been evident fondness for the teachers, and some Sunday school friendships have lasted for years; to later arrivals the group can then look like a clique. The problems in attracting the youth have been considerable. Many of them spend most of their time with non-Zoroastrians, and many of these non-Zoroastrians are not religious, which has an impact on the young Zoroastrians'

¹¹⁸ Minutes of the AGM, Aug. 1999.

¹¹⁹ For the debate see *Manashni*, May–June 1999, p. 10, for the renaming of the function, *Manashni*, Oct.–Nov. 1999.

perception of religion. An internal survey found that relatively few of the children of regular-attending parents themselves came regularly. Some youths commented in 2000 that although they were proud of their identity, they were embarrassed and alienated by the quarrelling and gossiping among the elders, which they said sometimes appeared to them to border on fanaticism, and the example of the Christmas tree dispute was cited. Further, it was said that parents did not understand or empathize with young people who had not been brought up in India. Some of the youngsters said that, although they enjoyed going to India, they did not feel at home there and that the dominance of religion there made them feel inadequate. They wanted more information and debate on the religion. They also complained that functions and rituals were too long. The age-old, and almost universal, generation gap can be exacerbated when the two generations are brought up in different cultures, and each has different needs to be fulfilled by communal events.

Making provision for the religious needs of a young diaspora community is not easy. There have, for example, been difficulties in finding someone able to say the funeral prayers at the crematorium. Three volunteers were eventually found, and the question was raised whether women could say the prayers—there being no tradition of women's community (as opposed to domestic) ritual, mainly because of the purity laws.¹²⁰ There have been discussions concerning the recruitment of a priest from India, but the costs, and liturgical provisions (especially before the Darbe Mehr was built) made it impossible.¹²¹ There have been two people committed to encouraging the study of religion among the adults. One is Dr Sam Kerr, who started a column on religion in *Manashni* in July 1986, and has maintained it for many years. The other is Dr Purvez Kolsawalla, who first started collecting demographic data on the community, and then obtained videos on the religion for sale. He has also conducted discussion groups for parents, on the theme of being a Zoroastrian in Australia, while the children were in the Sunday school. To stimulate an interest in their own community's history he produced the CD of records used above. In order to educate himself he took a doctorate at the Zoroastrian

¹²⁰ Managing Committee file, 5 May and 13 Aug. 1983.

¹²¹ Managing Committee file, 9 May 1985 and 14 Feb. 1988.

College in Sanjan run by Dr Mrs Master-Moos (see Chapter 2 on Bombay). But certain Bombay priestly authorities have denigrated some of the AZA activities, in once case questioning the validity of Kolsawalla's doctorate.¹²² On another occasion the AZA was attacked in the Bombay press because it debated changing the name from Zoroastrian to Zarathushtrian, on the grounds that the former is based on the Greek term for the religion, whereas the latter is more traditional.¹²³ Both attacks were hurtful and provoked the protest from Kolsawalla that the Bombay Parsi press ignored triumphs such as the court case and organizing *nataks*, but a resolution for debate, which was in any case defeated independently of Bombay criticism, made headlines in the *Bombay Samachar* and was reported in the *Federation Newsletter* and fiercely attacked by Dastur Mirza.¹²⁴ Until the late 1990s there were few visiting religious lecturers, only myself in 1988. In the 1990s, however, there has been an intensive seminar by Khojeste Mistree,¹²⁵ and lectures also from Prof. Farhang Mehr,¹²⁶ Professor Kaikhusroo Irani¹²⁷ and Dr Ali Jafarey (the last three, it might be noted, all from the USA, not from India).¹²⁸ The only visit of a High Priest occurred when Dastur Dr Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, and his priestly son Jamasp, came in the spring of 1999 to perform a wedding.¹²⁹ Although *Manashni* regularly includes appeals from Indian Parsi causes, for hospitals, agiaries, medical aid, etc., there has been relatively little visible or practical support from Bombay for the religious needs of the biggest Zoroastrian community in the southern hemisphere. The consequence has been that the community which had sought to give some priority to the maintenance of its Zoroastrian heritage from its inception had, until 1999, received no guidance from the religious bodies in India. Lay people who, though educated, had not been schooled in the religion, attempted to teach the community. However great the desire to preserve the religion, some resources, both personal and material (e.g. books), are essential.

¹²² *Parsiana*, Apr. 1992, p. 15.

¹²³ *Parsiana*, Nov. 1991, p. 28. This pre-dated the discussion in North America referred to in Ch. 8 above.

¹²⁴ *Manashni*, July–Aug. 1991, pp. 11–14.

¹²⁵ *Manashni*, Oct.–Nov. 1999, p. 15.

¹²⁶ *Manashni*, Jan.–Feb. 1999 (not paginated).

¹²⁷ *Manashni*, July–Aug. 1999, p. 1 His lectures were summarized in subsequent issues of *Manashni* (Sept. 1999, pp. 6 f. and Oct.–Nov. 1999, p. 16).

¹²⁸ *Manashni*, Oct.–Nov. 1999, p. 11.

¹²⁹ Reported in *Manashni*, Mar.–Apr. 1999, p. 6; and July–Aug. 1999, p. 11.

The desire to know about the religion is clearly evidenced by the large turnouts, and the enthusiasm, when visiting lecturers come. In Canada and America the longer established communities have been able, between them, to raise the funds to bring more speakers from India and Iran. In this regard the Australian groups have felt more religiously isolated. The only record of a visit from a leading Iranian that I have been able to trace was of the Zoroastrian representative in the Majlis, Parviz Ravani, but that was not a religious visit.¹³⁰

Being Australian

We're fortunate to be living in a country like Australia where the community is prosperous and able to sustain a fairly decent standard of living. We have the added advantage of living in a country where law and order prevails, there is freedom to practise religion and human life is secure.¹³¹

Not only in the printed columns of newsletters, but also in private conversation, Sydney Zoroastrians have expressed a strong sense of being Australian, of the beauty and freedom of Australia, and of a pride in the country especially at sporting events when the national anthem is played. In keeping with tradition, and as an expression of commitment to the new country, in October 1996 the Managing Committee resolved to make annual donations to Australian charities. The two main reasons for choosing Australia as a destination for migration were the climate, which is more temperate than most of Canada, and the employment prospects. However in private, some well-established Sydney Zoroastrians said that they had not been able to rise to the levels of seniority that they would have achieved in India. A number of people had declined to identify their job in the Association's Directory because they had been compelled to take work which, in the Parsi value system, did not have high status. It would therefore be simplistic to suggest that life in Australia was all that everyone had hoped for.

The social life

The social life of the community is important for all Zoroastrians, whether they are religious or 'secular'. Coming together for meals

¹³⁰ *Manashni*, July–Aug. 1995.

¹³¹ *Manashni*, Aug.–Oct. 1996.

and to observe major festivals is how the Association started. The range of functions has increased over the years to include youth activities (some, but not all, linked to the Sunday school): Friday evening functions (bring your own food and wine), tennis and table-tennis tournaments,¹³² lecture programmes, as well as *nataks* and other activities already discussed. In a six-month programme of events at the Darbe Mehr in 1999, there were twenty-three events in the first half of the year, including the festivals. It is difficult to say whether these functions, which can attract several hundred Zoroastrians, are religious or secular. Fundamentally, it does not matter, anymore than whether Christmas is a strictly religious or a family function in many British homes. They are times of coming together as a community, a time to enjoy food, the language of the old country, to preserve identity through a network of friends, and a place to be one's self. Since the opening of the Darbe Mehr, inevitably the level of activity has increased. Of course with the passage of time, as earlier settlers grow old, and as families move over from India, senior citizens' functions have grown. One problem, inevitably, is that functions that appeal to one group, be that the elders of the community or the Parsis, do not appeal to others, for example the youth or the Iranian Zoroastrians.

An activity which has become even more prominent in Sydney than perhaps in any other Parsi community is cricket. This is not only because of Kersey Meher-Homji's books and his work as a regular newspaper cricket columnist.¹³³ There has also been an enthusiastic young team which plays regularly in the Inter Cultural Cricket Tournament, and which has sometimes been very successful both in league and cup competitions, triumphs enthusiastically described in the columns of *Manashni*.¹³⁴ Indeed, in April 1990 a separate document was produced on the 1989–90 triumphant season in which they won the league and were grand finalists in the knock-out competition, where they were beaten by a team of Sri Lankans. The document details match by match,

¹³² The first tennis tournament was in Mar. 1989, another was held in 1991, see *Manashni*, June–July 1991, p. 3. The table tennis tournament has been virtually an annual event. For success in the Indo-Australian Table Tennis Tournament, where Zoroastrians won four of the six events, see *Manashni*, July–Aug. 1991, p. 1. Cricket still figures in the 1998–9 issues of *Manashni*.

¹³³ *Parsiana*, Sept. 1987, p. 13.

¹³⁴ The first mention of a meeting concerning cricket is in *Manashni*, 9 Sept. 1981. '[T]he first Zoroastrian cricket match on Australian soil' was reported in January 1982.

player by player, the story of that success.¹³⁵ The successes of the captain, Cyrus Pestonji, not only for the Association, but also in scoring centuries in successive matches for the Indo-Australian Cricket Club, are enthusiastically reported.¹³⁶ There are at least two dimensions to this cricketing story. It is obviously a question of pride for the Association, a positive image to present in the press. It is also the case that, as we have seen in earlier chapters, cricket has been a lasting part of the imperial heritage on the subcontinent in general, and among the Parsis in particular.¹³⁷ The AZA, therefore, succeeded where Parsis have trodden before, in the old country, though towards the end of the 1990s the level of sporting activity in general, and cricket in particular, declined.

Sydney Zoroastrians at the turn of the millennium

In 1999, the Sydney Zoroastrians produced an updated Directory of members. It listed 254 'households, with a total of 850 people in those households'. Discussing this list with two of the established members, or elders, of the Association, made it possible to put together the following profile. The list details thirty-nine Iranian households, twenty with people from Pakistan, six from Calcutta, two from East Africa and one from Canada. The rest of the Zoroastrian population is from Bombay. One hundred and fifty-nine households had people who had been there for over twelve years, eighty of them for twenty years or more. Thirty-five households consisted of an intermarried couple. The two elders identified sixty-six households as having members who attended the centre regularly. The elders were asked to classify the occupation of the individuals where this was known. The majority were identified as administrators, with people in the professions, business, accountancy and medicine coming close 'joint seconds'. Only one person was identified as a manual worker. This growing community has therefore retained the middle-class status identified in my survey, and still has roughly the same proportion of people from the various 'sending' countries.

¹³⁵ The following season was also successful, with the team again reaching the semi-final: *Manashni*, Jan./Feb. 1991, p. 10, Mar.-June 1991, p. 15.

¹³⁶ *Manashni*, Nov.-Dec. 1989, p. 9.

¹³⁷ See Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, 1996, pp. 85-7 and in Chs. 4 and 6 in this book on Hong Kong and East Africa.

In December 2000, a 'Secret Women's Business Report' was prepared by Dinaz Mistry, vice-president of AZA. The title did not indicate secretiveness but alluded to an interest-catching court case, fought by women of the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal tribe to preserve their sacred rites. In the Zoroastrian activity, twelve women had a series of meetings to produce policy proposals. The main problems that they identified were: the lack of an infrastructure to support people in need, drugs, loneliness, unemployment, a sense of apathy, adult inflexibility and insensitivity towards their youth, and difficulties between the old and new settlers. They stated that there was a tendency for cliques to develop according to place of origin, not only Iranians and Parsis, but also settlers from Bombay, Karachi and Calcutta. They also reported people's concerns about the difficulties in getting to the AZA house. They made a series of recommendations, including one that the men should now form a think tank.

Zoroastrians in Melbourne

From an Australian perspective, Sydney and Melbourne are geographically close, less than a thousand miles apart. The two cities are traditional rivals. The two Zoroastrian communities have good relations, but they are very different.

The founding years

The Melbourne group's origins lie in informal dinner parties in the homes of different Parsi families living in Melbourne in 1974, notably the Batliwallas, Iranis, Dastors, Jungalwallas and three Rustomjees—Framroze, who died in 1978 but had been a leading spirit; Noshir, who framed the constitution and Pilloo, who became the first president. It was formally established in 1978. In 1980 they organized their first Pateti (with 115 attendees) and No Ruz (124 attendees). The early social activities included boat and film trips, a cricket match and a camping trip. But 'the need for more traditional religious celebrations was felt by many.' Some members suggested that 'ZAV [The Zoroastrian Association of Victoria] functions should place less emphasis on food and encourage differing activities blending our traditions with the

Australian way of life.¹³⁸ Religious education classes were started in the early 1980s, but were closed down in 1987 owing to lack of support.¹³⁹ In the same year, however, a newsletter, *Rathaeshtar*, was started,¹⁴⁰ and the Association was formally incorporated.¹⁴¹ A questionnaire was circulated around the community, also in 1987, consulting the people on what the members thought its priorities should be. It had an impressive 73% response rate. There was a 100% agreement that there should be an Association, and a substantial majority (83% v. 17%) thought that the Association should mean 'more than just occasional "get-togethers", where food and entertainment are the focal interests'. But what that something more was, was not clear. Thirty-two percent thought it should be social, 31% voted for cultural and mutual help, 10% voted for financial concerns, and religion was supported by only 6%. Yet, as the organizers commented, answers to other questions suggested more of a concern for religion. So, for example, 80% said that the Association should have an initiated 'dastur' there; 72% wanted religious instruction for children; 77% thought the Association had a part in providing 'an ethnic religious identity' for members; 86% thought they should keep their identity whilst assimilating. To this end, 69% wanted the adults to meet occasionally for 'prayer meetings and/or religious discussions'. The kind of get-togethers receiving the most votes were picnics, dinner dances and going to restaurants or plays. The implication of this appears to be that while there was a general concern to preserve culture/religion, there was no clear idea of any specifically religious activity. Only one person suggested an annual community *jashan*. When the constitution was agreed in 1987 it is noteworthy that under the seven subcommittees listed, ranging from migration to entertainment, there was none on religion.¹⁴² It might, therefore, be concluded that at this stage of the Association's history the body was of a secular nature, though

¹³⁸ Managing Committee minutes for 5 Mar. and 24 Sept. 1982 respectively. The discussion continued for the same Committee file for 9 Nov. 1986, records the view that 'the Association must be able to provide more than just entertainment'.

¹³⁹ Circular dated 2 Feb. 1987.

¹⁴⁰ The first issue was dated 27 July 1987.

¹⁴¹ EGM dated 14 June 1987.

¹⁴² Paragraph 65 of the constitution lists subcommittees on migration, membership, finance, social services, entertainment, public relations, sport and 'any other sub-committee which the General Committee determines'. To my knowledge there has never been a religion subcommittee.

with some broad but vague concern for the religion, not least of the children.¹⁴³

Forging an identity

The early years were dominated by two issues. The first was the development of a constitution, which required members to identify what their priorities and goals were. The second issue was whether to raise the funds to buy 'a place of our own' (APOO).

The Constitution

The Melbourne constitution and the associated 'Statement of Purposes' are particularly interesting. In brief, the ten purposes specified in the constitution are:

- (a) To preserve traditional and cultural identity of Zoroastrians in the multi-cultural society of Australia.
- (b) To make a cultural contribution to Australian society.
- (c) To preserve and advance the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion among members of the Association and Zoroastrian migrants to Australia.
- (d) To aid the integration of Zoroastrian migrants into the Australian community.
- (e) To develop co-operation, friendly relations and mutual understanding between the people of Australia and Zoroastrian migrants . . .
- (f) To afford relief to Zoroastrian migrants in distress . . .
- (g) To maintain and preserve cordial and fraternal relations with all Zoroastrian Associations in the world.
- (h) To contribute to the promotion and advancement of the interests and welfare of the Commonwealth of Australia.
- (i) To assist, by donations or otherwise, charities in Australia and overseas.
- (j) To promote and maintain cordial relations with Associations or bodies of other Religions and Cultures.

What is noteworthy is the emphasis in these stated purposes on relations with Australian society (in (a), (b), (d), (e), (h), (i) and by

¹⁴³ The circular giving the answers to the questionnaires sent to forty-six families was circulated on 27 Apr. 1987, together with two appendices of written comments from respondents, and responses from the committee.

implication (j)). This is far more, for example, than in the 1862 constitution in London or even in modern American constitutions. The agreed constitution reproduced much of this. Only (c), (f), (g) are purposes specific to the internal affairs of the Zoroastrian community. The emphasis on contributing to Australian multicultural society is without parallel in any community studied. It is also striking that in the constitution (p. 4) the Association also said that one of its concerns was ‘To . . . aid Australia in the prosecution of any war in which the Commonwealth is engaged.’ The Australian identity, and a sense of not simply being Indian, is clearly indicated by a discussion at the AGM in 1988. The Indian community of Victoria was reported to be organizing a Federation of the Indian Communal Organisations in order ‘to make unified approach to the problems facing the migrants from India such as, acceptance of Indian qualifications, discrimination in migration policy etc.’ The reasons the ZAV gave for not joining are significant for their self-understanding, and are worth quoting.

1. The ZAV is basically a cultural organization intended to preserve the identity of Zoroastrians and advance the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion among the members of the Association and the Zoroastrian migrants in Australia.
2. The members of our Association come not only from India, but from other parts of the world also like Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and some even from Africa.
3. Most of the members now being Australian citizens do not wish to belong to any politically motivated lobbying or pressure group.

The ‘Australianess’ of the Melbourne group is important. It is significant that the next newsletter recorded an agreement to work for closer links with the Zoroastrians in Sydney, but not with the Melbourne India Association.¹⁴⁴ This changed during the 1990s under different leaders. The willingness to join an Australian Zoroastrian Association continued, but at the 1997–8 AGM it was agreed to join the Indian Communal Federation, and the group did so the following year. This involved serious debates over what it meant to be a multicultural body, and the unhappiness of

¹⁴⁴ *Rathaeshhtar*, 25 July 1988.

certain Iranian Zoroastrians at the visible India link led to their departure from the Association. Earlier the Association had responded to the Indian High Commissioner's request for details of Indian Associations, and the Parsis mounted a display and stall as part of the Australian Indian Society's contribution to the International Folk Fest in 1994.¹⁴⁵

The definition of 'Zoroastrian' in the Constitution is also interesting. It reads (2.7):

'Zoroastrian' means a person who has been admitted to the Zoroastrian faith by the performance of a Navjote Ceremony and has not thereafter renounced the same and/or declared his allegiance to any other religion.

There is no reference to ancestry. The definition was the subject of a lively discussion at an extraordinary general meeting to discuss the Incorporation of the Association. One of the Managing Committee, Mr David Izaac,

pointed out that a true Zoroastrian is not necessarily a person who has [had] performed a *Navjote* Ceremony. He can also be a person who professes the faith. A big argument arose and many decided to leave the religious aspect out. But Dr Piloo Rustomjee rightly pointed out that the word Zoroastrian is just an interpretation of a word and if it is completely removed we will see the demise of the Association. Therefore the matter about the meaning of the word 'Zoroastrian' was moved back for discussion.¹⁴⁶

The question of Zoroastrian identity will recur outside this discussion of the constitution.

A place of our own (APOO)

The debates over obtaining 'a place of our own' have been long. Major problems in Melbourne were that community numbers were so much smaller than in Sydney, the potential for raising funds internally was much less, and the Sydney problems in negotiating with the Guiv Trusts made leaders in Melbourne hesitant to follow that path. Nevertheless, at the AGM on 24 July 1984 there was a majority vote in favour of seeking to raise the funds. A subcommittee was formed and the matter came up for debate

¹⁴⁵ Managing Committee file, 2 Oct. 1993; *Rathaeshitar*, Feb. 1999. Nevertheless, some Parsis remained reluctant to join the Indian Association.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of EGM for 14 June 1987.

at successive AGMs.¹⁴⁷ The arguments for APOO were that it would provide a meeting place, a focal point for Association activity with a library; the building would increase in value, and could be rented out to raise funds. The fears were that it would be impossible to raise the funds, and that if they had a building it might cause divisions, either in the quest for the property, or over intermarriage issues concerning who could enter or use it for what purpose.¹⁴⁸ The situation is summed up in the Managing Committee files for 14 August 1988:

Questioned why a hall was needed, Purviz Dubash said, 'The Zoroastrian religion is under serious threat of extinction. This threat has been sensed by Zoroastrians all over the world. More and more permanent organisations are springing up all over the world to act as life-lines of communication between Zoroastrians of the world. In Melbourne we are the last generation to take any action in this matter and if we fail Zoroastrians will surely be dead in a few years time in Melbourne.' The members agreed wholeheartedly to put our best effort into this project despite the lack of interest projected by the members as seen from the low numbers who have promised to attend the Plan of Action meeting on 20 September 1988.¹⁴⁹

But opinions were always divided,¹⁵⁰ and by the turn of the millennium the Managing Committee wanted to close the building committee because of the difficulties and perceived impossibility of the task. One long-standing concern of the Managing Committee was that people voted for fundraising, but did not support it by attending meetings or subscribing to events.¹⁵¹ Undoubtedly a major problem was that most members in such a young community have themselves only recently migrated, and are still in the early stages of their careers and home-building on a new continent. Their time and financial resources are therefore

¹⁴⁷ 28 July 1985; 27 July 1986.

¹⁴⁸ See esp. the report of the AGM, 28 July 1985. It was the subject of an EGM on 23 Nov. 1991.

¹⁴⁹ See also the records of the planning meeting, 14 Aug. 1989.

¹⁵⁰ For example, at the AGM on 21 July 1996, the decision to continue plans for a building was supported by thirty-two and opposed by twenty-two of those voting.

¹⁵¹ For example, the Sept. 1996 issue of *Rathaeshdar* announced sadly that it had only six orders for a photograph of over forty children at a ZAV function, which had been reported on enthusiastically in the June 1996 issue. The president commented regretfully in the December 1996 issue that despite the vote for a building project, only a handful turned up to a meeting. A report of that meeting and the various ideas for raising funds is in the (unpaginated) Dec. 1996 issue of *Rathaeshdar*.

very limited. It is often only the long established, and the elders, who have the ability to make the necessary contributions, however well intentioned younger or more recent arrivals may be.

Questions of identity

The issue behind the Association, the Constitution, APOO and other activities, is the preservation of identity. As in Sydney, there is a question of what that identity is. The initial impression of the newsletter, *Rathaeshhtar*, is that the identity is specifically Parsi. Thus the jokes and cartoons in several early issues are all in Gujarati,¹⁵² or the characters are clearly indicated as Parsis by their dress,¹⁵³ and the recipes tended to be for Indian/Parsi dishes.¹⁵⁴ Melbourne was, as noted above, involved like Sydney, in mounting the traditional Gujarati plays, *nataks*.¹⁵⁵ Until September 1995 the overseas news was virtually all from India, with nothing from Iran.¹⁵⁶ The newsletter also carried announcements of Diwali functions or Indian Independence Day celebrations in the early years, despite the reluctance noted above to joining the Indian Association.¹⁵⁷

A trend developed, however, from the early 1990s, towards involving Iranians. First, there was an appeal from the then president, Arnavaz Chubb, written in both Farsi and English, to Iranian Zoroastrians to participate. She wrote:

Of late, many Zoroastrians from Iran have not been taking an active part in the functions of the Z.A.V.C. Please note that the Z.A.V.C. is for all Zoroastrians from all parts of the world (universe).

We are a small community in Melbourne and it is important that we should remain together for the greater benefit of each other. Though there are cultural differences between the Iranians and Parsees yet we

¹⁵² *Rathaeshhtar*, Aug. 1994, p. 3; Feb. 1995, inside front cover; Oct. 1995, inside front cover.

¹⁵³ *Rathaeshhtar*, Aug. 1994, p. 1 (the first cartoon in the newsletter), p. 2; Feb. 1995, inside front cover, p. 2; Oct. 1995, inside front cover; Feb. 1996, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Rathaeshhtar*, May 1992, p. 4 or in cartoons about food—*Rathaeshhtar*, June 1996, inside front cover.

¹⁵⁵ The first reference I have been able to trace is the minutes of the Managing Committee, 4 Feb. 1983.

¹⁵⁶ A Parsi priest honoured for performing 160 *nirangdins*; an Indian stamp with a portrait of J. R. D. Tata; Damania Airlines starting a new Bombay–Goa catamaran service, *Rathaeshhtar*, Feb. 1995. A Parsi sanctuary unearthed in Gujarat and a Parsi identified in a Mughal painting, Oct. 1995.

¹⁵⁷ *Rathaeshhtar*, Nov. 1991, p. 3, reported also in Mar. 1992, p. 2 and May 1992, p. 3.

are from the one stock. In our prayers and in many other aspects we are alike.

I appeal to you as brothers and sisters of one family to be with us as one united group because we need each other in these difficult times.

Kindly reconsider and join in all festivals and prayer meetings of the Z.A.V.C.¹⁵⁸

Thereafter the notices of some functions, specifically No Ruz, began to proclaim that it was an Iranian festival with its own symbolism and music,¹⁵⁹ although in 1996 as an experiment Malaysian and Chinese foods were served.¹⁶⁰ In that same year, articles began to appear explaining the Iranian traditions and customs, in this case Jamshedi No Ruz. Later that year there was an explanation of the Iranian tradition of the *sofreh haftseen*, the highly symbolic table setting for No Ruz.¹⁶¹ The September 1996 issue was notable for a four-page article on the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran and the first instalment of an extensive report on a tour of Zoroastrian Iran.

The item on the Tehran conference is worth discussing because the Melbourne newsletter gave the Tehran Congress greater coverage than did any other local Zoroastrian newsletter. It included quotations from two speeches, in particular, the words of the Hon'ble Vice President of Iran, Ayatollah Mohajerani, who had declared to Zoroastrians assembled from around the world, 'This land is your own land.' The other speech quoted was by Ayatollah Syed Ali Khomeini, who said: 'It is Iran's good fortune that our country was the birthplace of Zarathustra . . . not every country is so fortunate as to have had a prophet born on its soil. Zoroastrianism came several centuries before Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran today officially recognises the divine religion of Zarathustra.'¹⁶² The allocation of five pages of the newsletter to Iran stands in contrast to previous coverage, and the quoted passages emphasizing that Iran is the Zoroastrians' own land might have been seen as redressing the national balance. However, in the same issue was a full-page advertisement for 'A Traditional Zoroastrian Nite' which had the captions for all three cartoons exclusively in Gujarati and figures who were all

¹⁵⁸ *Rathaeshhtar*, Nov. 1991, pp. 4 f.

¹⁵⁹ *Rathaeshhtar*, Mar. 1992, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Rathaeshhtar*, Feb. 1996.

¹⁶¹ *Rathaeshhtar*, June 1996.

¹⁶² *Rathaeshhtar*, Sept. 1996, pp. 17–20.

obviously Parsi (p. 10). It was a presentation of a 'traditional Zoroastrian' event that would attract traditional Parsis but not Iranian Zoroastrians. The next newsletter announced the Jamshedi No Ruz. The cartoon showed a Parsi couple alongside the *haftseen* table, and advertised both Iranian and Parsi dishes.¹⁶³ What was evidently happening in the early 1990s was a natural process whereby people in the early years of their migration were tied strongly to their ethnic culture. The brother/sisterhood of Iranians and Parsis referred to by the president only has reality where this is seen in terms of Zoroastrianism. In terms of secular ethnicity, food, music, dress, there is no bond. It is in matters concerning the ancient religion that the family ties are clear. Partly in response to pressure from the minority group of Iranian Zoroastrians, and partly, perhaps, as a marker of a growing sense of religious identity, the Parsi-Iranian features were set within a Zoroastrian context. Yet the 'ethnic' divide continued. The link to the Indian Association caused problems for a number of Iranian Zoroastrians who joined Iranian Associations in Victoria, and the newsletters continued to contain, predominantly, news from Parsis in India. In *Rathaeshtar*, May 2000, there was a notice concerning the death of the senior Iranian Zoroastrian priest, the Mobed-e Mobedan, Rostam Shahzadi. But the item was preceded by a page and a half of Zoroastrian achievers who were all Parsi, and was followed by a long passage from the Orthodox Bombay Parsi newspaper *Deen Parast*, a paper with religious views that few Iranian Zoroastrians would accept. Despite the various efforts to balance representation, therefore, the Melbourne newsletter, and the activities it reflects, continued to depict a Parsi rather than a broad Zoroastrian perspective. In this sense it reflected an ethnic more than a religious emphasis, in so far as such a distinction is valid in this context. Traditions that mattered to one group seemed strange to the others, and the records include instances of ridicule.¹⁶⁴ The two groups may share a common religion, but the perception of

¹⁶³ See also the May 1997 *Rathaeshtar*, which had two news items pertaining to Iranian Zoroastrians, the eleventh anniversary of the Canadian based Iranian Zoroastrian magazine, *Payk-e-Mehr*, and UNESCO'S designation of Yazd as the second most historically significant city in the world after Venice. The issue also included a one-page notice of the Maidhyarem Gahambar, a festival maintained in Iran, but not in India, and where, again, Iranian and Parsi foods are advertised.

¹⁶⁴ See, e.g. the discussion at the Managing Committee, 15 Jan. 1995. On attitudes to food see Managing Committee file for 12 Jan. 1997. In personal interviews the same

that religion, and the different cultural traditions that each have acquired, can sometimes create rather than remove barriers.

As indicated above, it was necessary for the Association to define what is understood by a 'Zoroastrian'. The constitution did not refer to ancestry in the definition; this was partly, it would appear, in response to the views of one person with no Zoroastrian parentage, but who had served on the Managing Committee. The matter has, however, come to a head on more than one occasion. For example, in a Managing Committee meeting in 1987 the then Sunday school teacher said that she would teach prayers only to: 'children who are pure Parsi—in other words children born of both Parsi parents. This has caused a lot of concern within our community and therefore Sunday School will not be operating temporarily'.¹⁶⁵ The word 'Parsi' here could be glossed 'of Zoroastrian parents', for in other contexts the teacher had worked with the Iranian Zoroastrians. The Sunday school continued to be somewhat sporadic in the late 1980s and early 1990s,¹⁶⁶ but there were also discussion groups. *Rathaeshtar* has also included some religious items: an article from the Sydney Zoroastrian Dr Sam Kerr,¹⁶⁷ some short poetic sermons written by a member, Shahryar Noushi,¹⁶⁸ and a message from the Bombay High Priest, Dastur Dr K. M. JamaspAsa.¹⁶⁹ There have also been a number of short articles by another of the Association's own members, Arnavaz Chubb, who had previously undertaken post-graduate studies on Zoroastrianism with Dastur JamaspAsa in Bombay.¹⁷⁰ In the last years of the millennium there were three religious speakers: Dr Oric Basirov (A SOAS archaeologist), who spoke on the ancient history of the religion;¹⁷¹ Cyrus Cooper, a Parsi from London and follower of Pundol,¹⁷² and Khojeste Mistree. Unfortunately, the organization of two of these events caused deep and lasting bitterness within the community.

problem was related in connection with the Iranian figure used to parallel that of Father Christmas, which appeared strange to Parsis.

¹⁶⁵ Managing Committee, 1 Feb. 1987.

¹⁶⁶ Attempts to revive it are recorded in *Rathaeshtar*, 27 July 1987, from when it seems to have run for several years.

¹⁶⁷ *Rathaeshtar*, Nov. 1991, pp. 7–11.

¹⁶⁸ Nov. 1991, p. 6; Mar. 1992, p. 4. May 1992, p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ *Rathaeshtar*, May 1992, pp. 5 f.

¹⁷⁰ *Rathaeshtar*, Aug. 1994, (on prayer); Feb. 1995 (on 'the story of Christmas'—but specifically on the magi and Mithraism); Feb. 1996 (on Jamshedi No Ruz); June 1996 (on sayings from Middle Persian wisdom literature).

¹⁷¹ *Rathaeshtar*, Feb. 1999.

¹⁷² *Rathaeshtar*, Feb. 2000 announced his summer visit.

It seems to be the case that there can be no single identity for the community. For some members, notably recent settlers, be they Iranians or Parsis ethnic factors such as language, food and dress, are commonly pre-eminent. Some members of the Association are deeply religious in private as in public, and for them religion is crucial to their identity and they naturally want it to play a larger part in Association affairs. One such person wrote: 'it is very desirable that we keep in touch with religious matters by whatever means we have at present. Please remember that the Parsees/Zarhostis exist with their religious identity only. The title of our Association itself has a tag of religion viz., Zoroastrian/Zarathushtrian.'¹⁷³ For some of the individuals who hold such views strongly, the multicultural dimension of the work can be taken too far. Others are atheists, yet still feel tied to the 'kith and kin' of their community. Many non-religious individuals have as strong a sense of their history and culture as their religious friends do, but their identity is not expressed through specifically religious functions. The distinction between a religious and cultural association has been articulated more than once; so for example one member in a private letter over a dispute wrote to another: 'This is not a religious association . . . but a cultural association which openly accepts members who were not born Zoroastrians. It is, therefore, not only appropriate but also obligatory for those members to be welcomed and not reviled.'¹⁷⁴ In fact the Managing Committee had previously (11 September 1993) discussed a change in the constitution to split ZAV into two separate bodies: 1. The Anjuman where being a Zoroastrian would be mandatory; 2. the ZAV—a social club open to all. The debate was postponed to a later EGM, but the change has not been implemented, not least because the community is very small to support two bodies. For some the land of their birth is 'home', for others Australia is 'their' country. As in Sydney, many Melbourne Parsis speak and write with enthusiasm of Australia and its merits. For example, Shirin Mistry, writing to an American Zoroastrian about her experiences as a volunteer at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, said 'everything was unbelievably fantastic. The Aussies lived up to

¹⁷³ *Rathaeshitar*, Jan. 1998.

¹⁷⁴ Private correspondence from Sep. 1999 shown, and explained, to me in the course of my research.

their fun-loving kindest best and I was indeed very proud to have been able to do my patriotic bit in a cause we love passionately!’¹⁷⁵ More than one of these identities can feature in the self-understanding of a single individual; for example, the most religious individual may also be tied to the ethnicity of the ‘old country’, or to Australian identity. Because individuals can have multiple identities, so too must an Association, and yet the preservation of identity was seen by all as the reason for the founding of the Association.

Social life

Whatever the significance attached to religious meetings and literature might be, the social activities remained prominent, whether these were weekend trips to Sydney,¹⁷⁶ Chinese and casino lunches,¹⁷⁷ theatre trips, barbecues,¹⁷⁸ or bingo.¹⁷⁹ The Melbourne Association, like others around the world, has benefited from a visit by Zubin Mehta.¹⁸⁰ But even here there can be problems. As in so many Associations, the challenge was to engage the youth who were bored at the functions designed for the elders.¹⁸¹ There was a serious note of concern on this in the second issue of *Rathaeshhtar*:

A community is like a family unit. Just as the parents desire the well being of their children; the community has to nurture its youth to bring about a healthy, flourishing society. We are a very small community in a new country in a diverse environment. We have, therefore, a special responsibility towards our posterity. A Community’s well-being depends on future generations. Unfortunately, we seem to falter in this respect. We seldom meet our youngsters.

The explanation given for not meeting with the youth was that there were time problems arising from studies and early career pressures. So it was proposed that they should organize a ‘meet the youth programme’.¹⁸² The youth were invited to choose the dates,

¹⁷⁵ Shirin Mistry to Firdosh Mehta, 7 Oct. 2000.

¹⁷⁶ See also *Rathaeshhtar*, Oct. 1995, a camp near the beauty spot of Apollo Bay.

¹⁷⁷ *Rathaeshhtar*, Sept. 1996, p. 9; also Dec. 1996—reported in spring 1997 in the president’s column, which records that there was a busload of Zoroastrians who enjoyed the visit.

¹⁷⁸ Managing Committee files, 20 Apr. 1989.

¹⁷⁹ *Rathaeshhtar*, Nov. 1991, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ See Managing Committee files, 20 Apr. 1989.

¹⁸¹ Managing Committee minutes, 1 Mar. 1987, no. 3.

¹⁸² *Rathaeshhtar*, 21 Sept. 1987.

the nature of the events and the location, and the elders would do the organizing. Unfortunately there was no response,¹⁸³ though later there was an attempt to start a Zoroastrian band, a computer club and a disco. There was also an attempt to start a monthly youth meeting.¹⁸⁴ But sometimes, for example 1998, no youth events were organized during the year.¹⁸⁵ There was, naturally, considerable delight when a young boy, Behzad Kotwal, went to Navsari and was initiated as a *navar*.¹⁸⁶ Bridging the gap between two generations can be a problem in many social groups, but that difficulty is compounded if the generations grew up on different continents. *Nataks* and Gujarati cartoons are evocative for people who have moved from India, but for the youth, as well as for Iranian Zoroastrians, they suggest a different culture. They appeal to one identity and not another. It is natural to enjoy talking in, say, Gujarati, about family, friends and memories in the old country, but that feeling of togetherness necessarily makes others who are not fluent in Gujarati feel excluded—again, not only Iranians but also the youth. It should also be noted, of course, that Iranian Zoroastrians have strong ties to their language, food, memories and music. The different cultural identities are difficult to reconcile if they are not both grounded in a Zoroastrian identity and a shared language.

Numbers

Although it is not possible to give exact figures over the years, a general picture can be given of those who have joined the Association, and who asserted on a census that they are Zoroastrian. The 1997 Australian census recorded 347 Zoroastrians in the state of Victoria, with 333 in the city of Melbourne.¹⁸⁷ In 1999–2000 the official list of subscribers listed eighty members, fifty seven with family membership, nineteen single and four ‘other’. Allowing for an average of 2.5 persons per family, that would give a membership total of approximately 108 (137 if three persons per family). It is not

¹⁸³ *Rathaeshhtar*, 21 Nov. 1987. Similarly at the AGM on 10 Sept. 1995, it was noted, with regret, that few youths had attended functions.

¹⁸⁴ 21 Jan. 1988 and 21 Mar. 1988. 21 Apr. 1988. Sept. 1996, p. 12. But the Dec. 1996 issue reports that there was a very poor response and the Committee appealed to parents to send their children.

¹⁸⁵ Managing Committee files, 3 May 1998, when it was also questioned whether a youth member was needed.

¹⁸⁶ *Rathaeshhtar*, Feb. 1996.

¹⁸⁷ Information kindly obtained for me by Prof. Gary Bouma of Monash University.

possible to estimate the number of non-paid-up 'members', but it is noticeable that some names from earlier years, not least some Iranian names, are missing and one may suppose these represented people who chose not to rejoin in the light of disagreements; the numbers were balanced by some new arrivals. The last Directory available was published in 1992. The Directors tend to provide more details, giving family numbers for example, but also include known non-paying members. The 1992 Directory listed 283 Zoroastrians (in the case of twenty-four families the names suggested that they were intermarried).

Divisions within the community

One academic criticism of my *Zoroastrians in Britain* was that Zoroastrians were presented as without fault, and that not enough attention was given to the arguments within the community. Writing about divisions can be harmful to the people one is writing about, because it highlights potential or real wounds, can reinforce divisions, and gives long-term, worldwide importance to what may be private, personal and in need of forgetful silence. But of course communities do row, sometimes very bitterly and publicly. What they disagree over can be as important for an understanding of a community as what they agree on. If the historian is to tell it 'as it really is', then disputes have to be discussed. But the following seeks to avoid personal questions as much as possible (though of course personality clashes are common) and focuses on issues, not names.

The causes of disputes are similar in most Parsi communities: generational problems, tensions between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis, or Orthodox versus Reform arguments, especially relating to intermarriage. Another common cause of tension can be the hurt feelings of the 'early settlers' when later arrivals seek to change, or are thought not to value, what had been achieved. Otherwise tensions or problems arise between the religious and non-religious members over priorities; the drive for influence can be a powerful cause of tension, even though it has sometimes been difficult to find people to take up major offices, notably president, because of the demands it makes on time. Yet, of course, many are ready to criticize their officers. What matters deeply to one person—'a building of our own' or religious functions—can seem unimportant to another. Sometimes in large groups individual personal tensions

can be relatively insignificant; in a small community such as Melbourne that cannot be, and personality clashes can erupt and dominate Association affairs for a long time. At such times, people's motives are frequently called into question. Well-intentioned initiatives have sometimes been interpreted as ego trips; tensions simmering beneath the surface can erupt as part of another issue, resulting in fury and hurt, lawsuits and threats of legal action, in divisions and departures from the Association. The period 1999–2002 has been a time of particular communal tension in Melbourne, a time when disputes were so intense that they spilled over to affect other Associations. In an ideal world, such a small group would stand together to withstand the threat of communal extinction, but human life in general, and Parsi life in particular, is not like that. Assertions of unity and harmony in newsletters do not always reflect the reality of daily community life. Vituperative exchanges drive away from the Association those whose commitment is not already unshakeable, not least the youth, whose involvement is crucial to the survival of the Association. They also drive apart erstwhile friends, even friends whose collaboration has previously been crucial to the history of the Association. As old battles are refought, wounds reopen and so other conflicts erupt. Outsiders rarely appreciate the complexities of internal disputes in small diaspora communities, or understand the strength of feeling in what Naficy (see Chapter 1) might describe as the recreated world of the old country.

Conclusion

Australian Zoroastrians in both Sydney and Melbourne are characterized by two features: their strong ties to the old country and a very firm commitment to their new one. Both communities have affirmed publicly their identity as Australian citizens. This is particularly noteworthy in the Melbourne constitution. Their reactions to other Asian groups in their city have been different. In Sydney there have been cultural and sporting links with other Indian groups. In Melbourne there was, for many years, a straight refusal to be linked to a cross-community Indian organization. Because of both groups' positive perceptions of Australia, there have been various moves with regard to immigration, basically

reassuring co-religionists in the old country that they will not find discrimination,¹⁸⁸ and that very few ever want to go back. But they have also stressed some of the difficulties in finding a first job, in part because of initial discrimination in the work-place and in part because of the problems arising from non-recognition of many Indian qualifications.¹⁸⁹ There has also been a cautionary note about the skills needed to gain entry under the points system.¹⁹⁰ New settlers are regularly welcomed in the columns of the newsletters, and help is often given, but because of the typical Parsi diaspora unhappiness with a ghetto, Zoroastrian families live in different parts of cities and so the level of practical help can be limited.

As a growing centre, Sydney sees itself as having a leading role in the southern hemisphere, and is seeking to pioneer the Federation of Australian Zoroastrian Associations (FEZAA, a move inspired by the American FEZANA). The scope is seen as potentially spreading beyond Australia and could include New Zealand, Singapore and even Hong Kong but in 2000 the Association consists just of AZA Sydney, Melbourne, and one group in New Zealand. It is likely that in the early years of the third millennium Australasia will continue to be a growth centre for Zoroastrianism, as Britain has on the whole closed its doors to immigration and in Canada and the USA the immigration tap is turned off and on. A few new small centres are growing, notably in Perth (Zoroastrian population estimated at 150), Brisbane (where there are said to be thirty families), and New Zealand, which is growing steadily.¹⁹¹ It was noted at the beginning of the chapter how more educated and professional the Asian population as a whole is in comparison with wider Australian society. The Zoroastrians are yet more highly educated. In general terms, the Zoroastrians are having smaller families, have less extensive

¹⁸⁸ See e.g. Mahbanu Ostowari, in her *Parsiana* interview, May–June 1978, p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ *Parsiana*, July 1990, p. 16. The new president of the AZA, Nauzer Bana, in an interview with *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1998, pp. 34–38b, related how his Indian accountancy qualifications had not been recognized and he had to study for seven years to gain recognition.

¹⁹⁰ Noshir Irani in *Parsiana*, Aug. 1983, p. 11 in response to what he thought had been an over-emphasis on the ease of entry to Australia from a Melbourne Parsi. See also *Parsiana*, Apr. 1992, pp. 13 f., Kolsawalla on the need for secretarial and computing skills.

¹⁹¹ *Parsiana*, Nov. 1997, p. 15. For accounts of the Zoroastrians in Perth and New Zealand see A. S. Mama 'A Country Apart', *Parsiana*, Jan. 1999, pp. 20, 48, and G. Irani, 'On a High Down Under', Sept. 1999, pp. 24–6.

family networks and do not have quite as young an age profile as other Australian Asian groups. Nor do they have the material and financial resources to undertake such projects as community schools. But in comparison with other Zoroastrian diaspora groups, they are clearly centres of growing importance. The Australian Zoroastrians have a much higher proportion of Indian-born members than the Associations in Britain, Canada and the USA, lacking significant numbers from Pakistan or East Africa. The fact that the Australian Associations are more recent developments is probably the explanation for the more widespread use of Gujarati at functions and in newsletters, something rare in other 'western' Zoroastrian publications. But the links with the Iranian Zoroastrians, and the rise of the younger generation, probably mean that the Australians too will use less Gujarati, and gradually the self-description of Zoroastrian rather than Parsi (or Iranian Zoroastrian?) will grow. Thus far, Australian Zoroastrians lack the religious education infrastructure that has grown especially in Canada and the USA. Without that there must be some concern about the fulfilment of the aspiration to hand the heritage on to their young children.

The similarities and differences between the Melbourne and Sydney Associations are diverse. In both there is a strong Aussie patriotism. Each has experienced some problems with the Iranian Zoroastrian–Parsi divide, but at the end of the millennium the stress on Indian links—with the Indian Association, the emphasis on Gujarati jokes, cartoons and functions—made the division more evident in Melbourne. Both Associations have problems in attracting the youth to their activities, and in each centre the young people said that the Indian-ness, but above all the disputes, were what distanced them from the culture which their elders were pressing. In each community there has been a debate on whether religious or secular culture is the *raison d'être* of the Association. The emphasis inevitably varies from president to president, from one committee to another, in each city, but the acquisition of a building where religious functions can be celebrated has resulted in more of a religious dimension in Sydney than in Melbourne. Ultimately the big difference is the obvious one of size, and the implications that has for the possibility of having a building and for mounting activities which attract different groups. In the 1970s and 1980s the Sydney leadership worked

particularly hard at achieving a spirit of unity, whereas the records of Melbourne have for many years hinted at communal tensions. In my survey in the 1980s, fewer people in Melbourne than in Sydney affirmed a sense of harmony and at the end of the second millennium tensions were greater than ever in Melbourne. The founding of a building, and the internal unity in the face of external pressures may better equip the Sydney Association to cope with the inevitable tensions more effectively than Melbourne at the dawn of the third millennium.

Globalizing Trends

Introduction

‘Globalization’ is a topic discussed in relation to many subjects, for example politics, economics and the study of diverse cultures. The interpretation of the term varies considerably, as do the accounts of its origins. Some, notably Giddens, consider it a consequence of modernism, others see it as the precursor of modernism, tracing its origins back to the time when large sailing ships replaced vessels propelled simply by oars, a change which resulted in global exploration.¹ Globalization is evident in some aspects of life, for example, in economic markets, but has been seen as a trend in many dimensions of life, including religion. One aspect of such studies is not only the identification of global patterns, but also the growth of particularist responses to globalization, for example, fundamentalism in certain religions, notably Christianity and Islam. In the case of Christianity, globalization is seen as related to the growth of world empires, especially western imperialism. This chapter will focus on four issues: 1. The formation of a world body, the World Zoroastrian Organization; 2. The Internet communications which remove geographical distance to facilitate instant communication; 3. The Millennium World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, Texas, in 2000, perhaps the largest gatherings of Zoroastrians from around the world for many centuries; 4. The global patterns identified in the survey.

¹ As I do not seek to undertake a comprehensive study of the various debates it is not necessary to provide a full bibliography. The following are the books that I found thought-provoking in this particular context: P. Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London, 1994 (especially the case studies in part 2); M. Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture*, London, 1990; A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, Cambridge, 1991; R. Robertson and W. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order*, New York, 1991; R. Robertson, *Globalization*, London, 1992. From the perspective of wider studies of globalization there are several major authors omitted from this list, notably I. Wallerstein.

There are other aspects of Zoroastrian globalization which others may have chosen to include, notably the growing genre of the Parsi novel in English (there has not been a comparable growth in Iranian Zoroastrian literature). Some of these novels have been turned into films.² There have been two studies of the Parsi novel.³ Since their publication more novels have appeared,⁴ and further studies are to be hoped for. Most of these novels were published first in India, then in the West. Despite their importance in the understanding of the various communities from which they emerged, I am not convinced that they are the outcome, or expression, of Zoroastrian globalization. They are fairly widely read by Parsis both in India and the West, and two authors in particular, Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry, are read and fêted, but even their works tend to focus on the communities back in Pakistan or India respectively. Sidhwa's latest novel focuses on migration from the subcontinent to America,⁵ but I still do not think that it is a feature of globalization. As well as constituting 'good reads' they are also important as examples of Parsi humour, family and social values and not least because of the image they seek to project of their religion, namely as an abstract ethical monotheism, but stressing particularly the emotional power of Parsi devotions before the fire.⁶ Almost all choose to give a sympathetic account of those practices which provoke external comment, notably funeral rites. They also convey the deep sense of communal pride which typifies, and understandably so, the communities. Several also reflect the popular practices associated with good luck signs and the evil eye. An example of a video which is perhaps more reflective of globalization is Tenaz Dubash's *In the Footsteps of Our Forefathers*, 2000, which follows a group of young American Zoroastrians on a religious pilgrimage to the ancient

² For example Sidhwa's book *Ice Candy Man* (London, 1988) into a Hindi film with English subtitles, *Earth*. Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (London 1991) was also made into a film but was shown almost exclusively in India; see an account in *Parsiiana*, Oct. 1999, pp. 32 f.

³ For further references on Parsi novels see n. 116 in Ch. 2 above.

⁴ e.g. R. Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, Toronto, 1995; A. Wandrewala, *The Turning*, Mumbai, 1996; A. Vakil, *Beach Boy*, Harmondsworth, 1997; M. Pestonji, *Mixed Marriage and Other Parsi stories*, Delhi, 1999; F. M. Dinshaw, *Discovering Ashavan*, Karachi, 2001; R. Mistry, *Family Matters*, London, 2002. Each of Mistry's three novels has been short-listed for the prestigious Booker Prize.

⁵ *An American Brat*, Minneapolis, 1993.

⁶ Three which seem to me to deal with these issues particularly well are B. K. Karanjia, *More of an Indian*, Delhi, 1970; Sidhwa, *The Crow Eaters*, originally published in Lahore in 1978; R. Mistry, *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, Harmondsworth, 1987.

sites of Iran. It provides a moving account of intelligent and articulate people on a search for their roots. It is a video that featured prominently at the Millennium World Congress, and has been the focus of WZO and other meetings. Its influence is likely to be international, if not global.

*The World Zoroastrian Organization*⁷

The origins

The first recorded proposal for the forming of a world body was made in 1962 by Bailey Irani of the ZTFE at the World Congress in Tehran.⁸ In 1966, Jehangir Moos, then president of ZTFE, collected twenty-four signatures for an appeal for the formation of a world body. This proposal was reaffirmed at the Second and Third World Congresses in Bombay (1976 and 1978). In a series of papers at the Third World Congress several prominent individuals pressed the case for such a body. Farangis Shahrokh argued that: 'dispersal led to fragmentation and resulted in out-marriage. It is the desire and fervent wish of the few Zoroastrians so widely scattered over the globe, to see and feel that an organisation does in fact exist which can provide a continuity and a solid link with their co-religionists in other parts of the world.' Keki Bhote of New York similarly pressed the case that: 'Either we plan together, organise together, work together and manage ourselves to preserve our religion and our way of life, or—we go it alone, ISLANDS unto ourselves, until our anarchy drowns us into extinction.' His fellow American Zoroastrian, Eruch Munshi, argued for the establishment of an umbrella organization and apex body based at the BPP.⁹ After this Congress, J. N. Guzder wrote to all

⁷ I wish to record my grateful thanks to Shahpur F. Captain for reading this section and saving me from various errors; any which remain are, of course, my responsibility. I am also grateful to the officers of WZO who not only allowed me to read all their files, but also brought them to my home because at that time I was medically unable to travel. WZO produced a short account of their early history in *A Brief History of the World Zoroastrian Organization*, published in London in 1991. In *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 144–8, I wrote about the formation of WZO using mostly the ZTFE archives. This account is based almost wholly on WZO's own records.

⁸ In her speech at the launch of WZO in 1980 Dr (Mrs) Kutar recorded that with Bailey Irani, she and Jehangir Moos had sought legal advice on the possibility of establishing a world body based in London.

⁹ The quotations are drawn from Mrs Kutar's opening speech to the WZO in 1980.

Anjumans asking for the names of representatives, but still nothing happened.

The ZTFE committee members repeatedly urged the BPP to act on successive World Congress resolutions regarding the formation of a world body. One of the reasons for the proposal was to provide support for small groups of Zoroastrians living in (potentially) alien settings, East Africa and Pakistan being identified as possible problem areas. As fears grew over the future of Zoroastrians in Iran in the late 1970s, so the pleas for such a body grew. Dr Farhang Mehr, then Chancellor of Tehran University and previously Deputy Prime Minister in Iran, encouraged such moves. During a visit to London, he urged Shahpur Captain (who had been elected president of ZTFE in 1978) to take the initiative and set up a world body based in the stable British political and economic climate where there would be no problems with foreign exchange.¹⁰ Another guiding figure was Dr Jal Bulsara, who had extensive global experience from his work in the United Nations. The platform for the launch of the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) was a seminar, which Bulsara led, at the London School of Economics in 1977. The concern was that as nothing had been done for eighteen years, some vulnerable Zoroastrians would be left without an international voice to speak on their behalf. The political situation in Iran was a major factor in the decision to set up such a body in London. On 8 May 1978 Jal Bulsara urged the BPP to set up a world body with its headquarters in Bombay, and regional offices in Britain and America.¹¹ He, along with Sohrab Godrej, had a meeting with the BPP to try to persuade them to act, but without success.

The foundation

All the earliest calls for a WZO argued for a world body based in Bombay, specifically under the aegis of the BPP. When nothing was done, and conscious of the increasing problems of oppressed

¹⁰ Letter of gratitude for advice, Shahpur Captain to Farhang Mehr, 28 Dec. 1978. Mehr was invited to become a founder member (which he did) and Captain expressed growing concerns about the position for the Zoroastrians in Iran. During the fierce community debates of the mid-1990s, Farhang Mehr confirmed that he had taken this initiative with Shahpur Captain 'to ensure the community's survival at the global level' (Mehr to Davar, 13 May 1993).

¹¹ Letter of Bulsara to Rohinton Rivetna, 13 Mar. 1979, responding to one from him dated 7 Dec. 1977 encouraging the establishment of a world body.

Zoroastrians, Dr Farhang Mehr again asked Captain to take an initiative, this time at the ZTFE AGM in 1979. In a circular letter sent to leading Zoroastrians worldwide, Captain noted the problems of Zoroastrians in East Africa, Pakistan and Iran, but stressed that 'WZO will be a socio-religious body and not a political organization. We will invite all individuals Zarthushtis and Anjumans to join it.'¹² At the founding of the WZO Dr (Mrs) Kutar gave a specific example: 'I know, for example, at present there are just seven Zoroastrian individuals (adults) in Zanzibar. When in near future the World Zoroastrian Organisation writes to them, and they get the news of formation of a World Body, their eyes will fill with tears of joy, knowing someone knows of them and is interested in them.' This initiative was undertaken by the then officers of the ZTFE in London, notably Shahpur Captain and Dr (Mrs) Kutar. Most of those invited to be members of the new body agreed, for example, Jamshed Pavri, Rusi and Sabar Bulsara, Behram Farhadieh, Dady Mistry (Delhi) and some leading Iranian Zoroastrians—Arbab Rustom Guiv, Dr Rustom Sarfeh, Mehraban Zarthoshty, Mehraban Faranghi and Rostam Yaganegi. Guzder of the BPP did not reply to his invitation. The first meeting was held at Zoroastrian House in London on 18 July 1980, when Captain set out the global vision of WZO. One of the priorities, he said, 'is to synthesize our people. At present a Zarthushti in Karachi is a Karachiite, and one in Calcutta is a Calcutta-ite. But if both join WZO, maybe their thinking may change and they may feel one with each other.' His second point was that: 'Local leaders or Anjumans see the problems in local terms and are not geared to looking at problems from a global point of view. The committee of WZO can give a different perspective than that given by a local body.'¹³

The initial membership consisted of seventeen people from Britain, four from Iran, two from India, two from USA and one from Canada, but following an intensive membership drive the balance was soon modified. The constitution was based mainly

¹² Among the listed recipients were: J. Guzder (BPP), Dr Rustom Sarfeh (California and associated with the Guiv Trusts), Dr Behram Farhadieh (Illinois), Dr Kersey Antia (also Illinois) Dr R. Bulsara (Toronto) and Jamshed Pavri (Vancouver). Ervad Darius Sethna of ZTFE joined at the first meeting.

¹³ *Parsiana* reported the launch in Sept.–Nov. 1988, pp. 1 f. but the quotations from the speeches are taken from WZO files.

upon that of the ZTFE,¹⁴ and also on that of the Federation in India—which is ironic in view of the vigorous opposition of both bodies in years to come. However, controversy soon arose. The first protest came from Jamshed Pavri, who contested the original constitution, saying it was not international enough in that it excluded intermarried spouses from membership;¹⁵ this was a view supported by Mrs Farangis Shahrokh, a prominent Zoroastrian in California.¹⁶ Invitations were circulated to all Anjumans globally and separate letters of invitation were sent to prominent figures such as Nani Palkiwala in Bombay and Noshir Irani in Sydney. The aim clearly was to attract prominent leaders in order to benefit from their connections.

To some extent the early priorities of WZO were a reaction against what was widely seen as the failure of the established bodies, such as the BPP, to act. The driving spirit was similar to that expressed by North American leaders when Bombay authorities ignored their questions.¹⁷ From the early days a major issue was the role and influence of Bombay leaders and organizations. In order to encourage grassroots involvement, and with some disappointment at the lethargy of established bodies, membership drives were focused on individuals, though Anjumans were also invited. Captain explained the thinking on this in a letter to Mehraban Zarthoshty:

we came to the conclusion that individual Zoroastrians should get out of their slumber and join each other in this enterprise. In other words the WZO should have real support of the grass roots Zoroastrians. . . . Secondly, it is individuals who voice their views at the annual general meetings and at any time they want to, so that a consensus emerges and we come to know what our people feel and think. It is the basis of each and every democratic body and WZO is such a democratic body. . . . Finally it was felt that if the WZO were to be the apex organisation of all the Anjumans/Associations, then the individual Zoroastrian would have no interest and the real feeling of belonging to a world wide community would not be gendered.¹⁸

¹⁴ Indeed, the constitution was so similar, the British authorities turned down its original drafting (letter dated 13 Aug. 1979).

¹⁵ He also objected to the publication of the constitution without prior consultation.

¹⁶ Letter dated 26 Apr. 1980.

¹⁷ See Chapter 8, 'Religious authority in the diaspora'.

¹⁸ Letter dated 21 Apr. 1981.

One of the first to join was the Delhi Anjuman. The focus on individuals was supported by various leading Zoroastrians, notably, but not only, by Farangis Shahrokh.¹⁹ Others, however, felt that the London-based initiative was presumptuous on the part of the original twenty-four individuals involved.²⁰ The vocal support of religious figures was also sought.²¹

Opposition from the BPP

At the World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay in 1981, Mr J. (universally known as Jimmy) Guzder, chairman of the Congress and Dr Aspi Golwalla, chairman of the BPP, stated from the opening platform that they would not start another world body.²² But negotiations between the two bodies have appeared unending. From the start numerous letters were sent by WZO officers to the chairman and trustees of the BPP, and during annual visits to India WZO officials regularly met and corresponded with the trustees, and the Federation, to seek some accommodation.²³ Early meetings were held in March–April 1983.²⁴ The Indian response, expressed particularly by BPP, but also in Surat and Delhi, was that the WZO should be an apex body of Anjumans, and there should be no provision for the voting of individuals. They wanted to see such a body chaired by the BPP, with representatives from other Indian Associations.²⁵ The headquarters of such a body, it was said, must be in Bombay. Many Associations (for example, Bangalore and Hyderabad) raised the question of intermarriages and expressed concern that

¹⁹ Letter to Shahpur Captain, 30 June 1981.

²⁰ Letter to Shahpur Captain from Jehan Bagli, then of Montreal, and editor of one of the most successful American newsletters, *Gavashni*.

²¹ S. Kutar to Khojeste Mistree, 21 May 1981, and Mehraban Zarthoshty to Mistree, 20 May 1981. Zarthoshty was a strong supporter in the early days, not only through generous donations to individual causes, many anonymously, but also in pleading the cause with senior figures. For example, he clashed with Jamshed Pavri at the 1981 Vancouver AGM by supporting WZO.

²² This is commented on in much WZO correspondence, e.g. Captain to Dadi Engineer, 2 Sept. 1996. As I was present at the time I can confirm the accuracy of the statement.

²³ e.g. Captain to Kanga, 11 Mar. 1982; reply 29 May 1982 arguing that the world body should be a federation of Anjumans in various countries.

²⁴ *Parsiana*, 1983 June reported the Indian tour of the WZO officers and included a photograph of them meeting the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi.

²⁵ Report of Shahpur Captain's India tour, 28 Mar.–30 Apr. 1983 submitted to the WZO board.

the definition of a 'Zoroastrian' would be interpreted in a Reformist manner.²⁶ The proposal of giving each Association a single vote was not viewed by many, in India and beyond, to be adequate representation for large and long-established bodies.²⁷ Maneck Gheyara, president of the Surat Punchayet, expressed concern that a world body facing such a diversity of practices in different areas might seek to direct what local groups should do.²⁸ A substantial, but rarely articulated, concern was power. Whoever headed the world body would be seen as having considerable standing and influence within the community, and different individuals were perceived to be seeking that power for themselves. Despite the fact that the BPP had failed to act as agreed at congresses, the trustees were of the unequivocal view that 'such a world body can be created only under the auspices of the BPP and in Bombay, and that the governing body should be entirely in the hands of the trustees of the BPP.'²⁹ They also feared the control of power leaving India and going to people in London. In reply, WZO officers asserted that this body was to be democratic, unlike many of the Punchayets where there was not universal suffrage (Bombay) or where trustees were not elected at all (Surat).³⁰ A few Indian Anjumans joined WZO (e.g. Calcutta, Nagpur and originally Delhi) but none of the major old ones did so. Tensions within Indian Associations, for example at Delhi, affected WZO attempts to grow.

Strong early supporters in India were Dadi Mistry in Delhi and Jehan Daruwalla, the editor of the *Bombay Samachar*. Some speakers at Federation meetings spoke on behalf of WZO, for example Clubwalla from Madras, who said that the day was coming when Indian Zoroastrians would need the assistance of overseas communities. H. P. Bodhanvala of Jamshedpur said: 'someone has to take the lead—rightly or wrongly—please do not

²⁶ In fact the original constitution stated explicitly that membership was only for Zoroastrians by birth, the reason, as noted above, for Pavri's resignation. One of the causes of this concern was probably that one of the founding members of the board of officers was Kersey Antia, the Chicago priest involved in Peterson's *navjote* (*Bombay Samachar*, 1 May 1983) and Captain's report to M. Zarthoshty on his recent visit to India, 2 June 1983.

²⁷ Captain to Dadi Mistry, 2 Sept. 1981. Aspi Golwalla to Captain, 16 May 1983.

²⁸ Gheyara to D. Mistry, 20 Nov. 1981.

²⁹ Daruwalla to Dadi Mistry, 18 Feb. 1983 and Daruwalla to Captain, 11 Mar. 1983.

³⁰ Dr (Mrs) Kutar to Nargolwalla, 12 Dec. 1981.

ignore the 40 percent of the population residing abroad. Let us join hands, come together and find an acceptable solution for Zoroastrians all over India.’³¹ But the general view of the Federation was that only Anjumans and not individuals could belong to a world body. It was also commonly asserted that the Indian voice should dominate, and the headquarters should be in Bombay.³² To counter the last point, WZO developed an Indian chapter, with Dadi Engineer in the chair, and Dadi Mistry as secretary. Palkiwalla was a relatively early member of the chapter, and Taleyarkhan joined later. One problem in India, and elsewhere, was what many involved spoke of as ‘coping with the big egos’. People wanted to have power to make pronouncements and develop policies free of London involvement. Some resented the influential role of the London members.³³ The motive to involve prominent individuals for their standing and influence sometimes rebounded against WZO as some of those individuals were thought to seek self-aggrandizement. Some of its early supporters later became WZO’s critics.³⁴

A ‘rival’ world body?

A public attempt to marginalize WZO, and start a rival, India-based body, took place at the 1984 World Congress in Bombay.³⁵ In a preliminary circular the organizer, Jimmy Guzder, proposed that the fifth of the main topics to be discussed in the programme should be the creation of a world body. He wrote:

As there is a need for a properly constituted and representative world body, in view of the scattering of the community in different parts of the globe, under this topic, speakers would discuss the constitution, membership, organisation structure, location and other aspects for such a World Body. We would like the delegates from different parts of the

³¹ *Parsiana*, Oct. 1983, p. 16.

³² S. Nargolwalla to Keki Gandhi (secretary of the Federation), 21 Oct. 1983, and Guzder to Gandhi 3 Nov. 1983.

³³ Notes from J. Guzder to Captain, 26 Apr. 1984 following a February meeting of the Federation and WZO. See also the letter from the Hong Kong Anjuman, N. Pavri to Captain, 7 May 1984 saying they resented any implication that WZO could oversee matters of local Anjumans, and were unhappy at the drawing up of the constitution being a ‘*fait accompli*’ with no consultation.

³⁴ Six of the original twenty-six signatories became stern critics of WZO.

³⁵ The following account is based on a report by Shahpur Captain to the Managing Committee, which was published almost verbatim in the *WZO Newsletter*, 5 Mar. 1985. I was at the Congress and heard directly from participants of the arguments.

world to give their views on the manner in which the world body should be constituted, so that there is an equitable system of representation, and how it should function in view of the dispersal of the community all over the world. These views would be discussed and a committee constituted for implementing the recommendations as approved by the Congress.

Not only did this make no reference to the existing WZO; its officers were not invited to the Congress, and were admitted only after a protest.³⁶ At the Congress Eruch Desai was the only BPP trustee to speak positively about WZO. He argued that there should not be two bodies, but that the world body should be based on Anjumans, not individuals. Existing individual members he argued should remain; though with no voting powers and no new individuals should be admitted. The Managing Committee should consist of six vice-presidents, secretaries and treasurers to reflect the six main regions: America, Europe, Middle East (Iran, Pakistan, Gulf States, Central Asia), Greater Bombay, the rest of India and the Far East (from Hong Kong to Australia). Around the main programme of the World Congress there were various private meetings of interested parties, mostly Desai, Guzder and Golwala who represented BPP, K. D. Irani, Dadi Engineer and Mistry and Captain. Captain proposed that each individual person and Anjuman should have one vote, but there could be as many as 100 Anjumans. There should be two main committees, with fifteen persons representing the Anjumans and fifteen representing the individuals, with the chair alternating between the two groups.

The session of the Congress allocated to discussions on a world body was chaired by Farhang Mehr. The outcome of the debate was that the Congress members recommended that the present WZO should be supported and strengthened, individual membership should remain, the headquarters should be in London, no Anjuman or group should control WZO, and a bi-cameral body should be developed, with committees of Anjumans and of individuals balancing each other. After the debate, BPP and WZO representatives met privately. Captain suggested some modifications to meet the objections to the constitution so that any major issue (the definition of what constituted a 'major' issue to be

³⁶ Letter of protest from Captain dated 27 Oct. 1984.

defined by a mutually accepted lawyer) would require a majority of 75%, which would mean that individuals could not outvote the institutions (or vice versa). He also suggested that the BPP join for a trial period of twenty years to see how WZO worked. But agreement proved impossible. During these public and private meetings, Shiavax Nargolwala, an early member and supporter of WZO, constantly attacked WZO and threatened it with court action over various issues. But he died in a car crash in August 1986, and so his threats were never fulfilled.³⁷ Other frequent attacks were made by Aspi Golwalla, then chairman of the BPP, who said he had heard that WZO did not have as many members as had been thought, and so asked them to supply membership numbers.³⁸

In Britain leadership of the Trust Funds changed (see Chapter 7 above). In 1985 there was a considerable furore over the refusal to allow Mrs Moos, the Dutch widow of the former and respected chair Jehangir D. Moos, to attend the annual death prayers (*Farvardigan*) prayers at Brookwood, something she had always done previously. The priestly Sethna brothers (Zal and Darius), and other East African Parsis, objected to what they saw as the liberalizing of Zoroastrian traditions concerning *juddins* at *Farvardigan* or *muktad* prayers. In May 1987 Captain (followed by Mrs Kutar and Rumi Sethna and half the committee) resigned from ZTFE because resolutions Captain was known to oppose had been passed during his absence in hospital. In October that year the new ZTFE management asked the WZO officers to remove all their papers and possessions from Zoroastrian House.³⁹ ZTFE was now clearly separated from, indeed opposed to, WZO. Mutual antagonism became deep, and long lasting.

WZO's main support in these early years, apart from a few prominent individuals, came from outside India. These 'overseas' Zoroastrians tended to think differently, especially on the issue of the BPP not being in a position of control. So Karachi trustee D. B. Ghadialy wrote to Captain:

If the full control [of WZO] is given to the Bombay Parsi Anjuman it will be the death knell of small non-Indian Anjumans and members

³⁷ Letters urging Captain to be careful with Nargolwala's verbal attacks were sent by Dadi Engineer, 9 Feb. 1985 and by Daruwalla to Captain, 22 Mar. 1985.

³⁸ Letter dated 23 Apr. 1985. Opponents have frequently repeated this call over the years.

³⁹ Letter to Captain, 29 Oct. 1987.

from Pakistan, Iran, Canada, USA as by the weightage of sheer numbers they will dominate the whole show and Indian Parsi politics will muddle the present smooth sailing of WZO affairs . . . Bombay Parsi Anjuman which has to deal with the problems of over 2,000 dole seekers, about 200 street walkers and over one hundred narcotic addicts, according to their own figures, has enough problems of its own and cannot help WZO.⁴⁰

Similarly, Sarfeh wrote from California: 'Bombay Parsis cannot, after the passing of British rule, protect others and should just look after local affairs.'⁴¹ But in India also there were some surprisingly high-profile individuals who became members, notably Dastur Meherjirana of Navsari, traditionally the most senior of all Parsi priests.⁴²

Some WZO activities

One of the two earliest concerns of WZO was to aid Iranian Zoroastrians in their quest for refugee status in the West.⁴³ On 14 February 1979 they wrote carefully diplomatic letters to the new leaders on behalf of Iranian Zoroastrians. To Khomeini they wrote:

Your Holiness,

May the praise of the Almighty God be on you. We, the representatives of the Zartoshtian Community of Europe, send greetings of good health, peace and prosperity to your Holiness and the Iranian Nation under your spiritual leadership.

The Almighty God is merciful and as the Imam we are sure that our Zartoshtian Brothers of Iran will be under your protection and will continue to live in peace and harmony under your benign Benevolence.

To the new Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, they wrote to wish the New Regime every success and prosperity and peace will soon return under your wise and considerate leadership.

We are specifically concerned about the welfare and safety of our co-religionist Zartoshtians. We feel sure that the Authorities in Iran will respect the rights and properties of our community in Iran.

⁴⁰ Dated 18 Aug. 1985.

⁴¹ Letter to Captain dated 19 Aug. 1985.

⁴² He and his wife joined on 9 Jan. 1987.

⁴³ Many letters on this issue exist in the files. These have been studied but as they commonly contain personal information they are not detailed here. In view of some later accusations against WZO that they did not help Iranian refugees, I can state that I have read many such letters personally.

We feel confident that under your mature and just direction our fellow Zartoshtians in Iran will continue to enjoy peaceful and harmonious co-existence as they have done in the past.

The situation which the proponents of WZO feared had come about: there was a real threat to the Zoroastrian minority in Iran. The need for a powerful external and diplomatic voice to speak on behalf of those in danger was evident. This work continues in the third millennium, for WZO appealed on behalf of people from Tajikistan who they accepted had become Zoroastrians.⁴⁴ They also sought redress for the many Zoroastrian properties taken over by governments in different countries such as China and Aden.⁴⁵ Work on behalf of individuals has been extensive: collecting the estate of a Zoroastrian who died in Britain for his family in America, tracing creditors in various parts of the world and arranging for the settlement of debts.

In 1984 WZO began organizing a series of academic conferences, bringing together speakers from inside the community and from the outside academic world. A second was organized in 1986 (proceedings published 1986), and a later meeting was organized in Chicago (1987, proceedings published 1990), and others again in London.⁴⁶ Perhaps its largest such venture was the first World Gatha colloquium in London in 1993.⁴⁷ The influential Jamshed Pavri from Vancouver had argued, 'I always tell my community not to invite any non-Zoroastrians or non-Zoroastrian scholars at any of our conventions or gatherings, but it seems fashionable to do so.'⁴⁸ These WZO conferences brought together an international team of speakers. In the Gatha colloquium, for example, outside scholars who took part included P. Thieme and H. Humbach (Germany), I. Gershevitch, P. Kreyenbroek (still then in England), S. Insler and M. Schwartz (USA). In 1996 another conference was organized on 'The Religious and Secular Literature of the Zoroastrian Tradition', with nine distinguished outside academics (new names in WZO proceedings included two from Italy, Cereti and Gnoli, and the French scholar F. De Blois).

⁴⁴ *Hamazor*, 2002, 1, pp. 16–20, see also pp. 32–6, a report of Farhang Mehr pressing on Iranian leaders the injustice being done by new laws introduced in 1991; see above Ch. 8.

⁴⁵ Captain to Hathadaru, 6 Aug. 1981 *re* Aden.

⁴⁶ In 1987 (published 1988); the first Youth Conference 1987 (published 1989); 1988 (published 1990); 1989 (published 1992).

⁴⁷ Edited by F. Vajifdar, published 1998.

⁴⁸ J. K. Pavri to Captain, 12 Oct. 1988.

All except the last of these conferences were published. The conferences represent but one side of the academic activity of WZO, which has also given grants (or loans) to research students, and to Manchester University library for the purchase of Zoroastrian books; and through its good offices an annual lecture has been funded at SOAS in memory of the late Dastur Kutar. WZO has also published a calendar each year, which gives dates from all three Zoroastrian calendars. A further publishing venture, started in Bombay, has been a newsletter, *Hamazor*, March 1985. It boldly declared 'That a communication gap on a global basis exists among Zoroastrians is a fact none can deny. However to BRIDGE this gap as far as possible shall be *Hamazor's* sincere endeavour.' At times it has proved difficult to find individuals, already in full-time work, to edit and contribute to the newsletter. It has also been difficult to balance both the interests of the Indian readers it wished to attract, and global concerns.⁴⁹ Indeed, a general problem for WZO, especially in the early years, was that its work was carried out by working people who undertook this voluntary task in their own spare time. Some critics were quick to object if paperwork was not dealt with speedily.

WZO was active in religious matters also, notably raising sponsorship for young Parsi boys to study for the priesthood at the Dadar Madressa in Bombay, and in 1994 started a poor priests' project which by 1995 was supporting 100 retired mobeds.⁵⁰ It has also sponsored the *navjotes* of the children of poor Gujarati farmers.⁵¹ Another activity that was tried was an exchange of youth between London and India. A youth wing was started⁵² and a youth Congress held,⁵³ both in the 1980s. In 1995 a pilgrimage to Iran was organized. WZO funded holidays for poor Parsi widows with children. A substantial number of individuals have been helped financially in cases where specialist medical treatment was available only in the West. This initiative was started in 1992. Later, Noshirwan Cowasji, a London-based WZO member, made it his main concern to raise a substantial sum so that funds should

⁴⁹ As it is produced in India by a Parsi editor, in practice most news and articles are predominantly India-focused. Some diaspora news items are included, but these depend on people supplying materials. There is relatively little on Iran or Britain.

⁵⁰ Annual Report for the year ending 31 Dec. 1995, p. 6.

⁵¹ *Hamazor*, Aug. 1994, p. 1.

⁵² For its objectives and work see *Hamazor*, Summer 1998, pp. 53 f. and 42 f.

⁵³ 1987, published 1989.

be available for urgent treatment on a regular basis and help would not be dependent on the success of individual appeals. He died in 2001, having raised over a quarter of a million pounds to set up such a fund.⁵⁴ WZO has held functions to honour distinguished Zoroastrians in many fields, including young people who did well in examinations or at sport.⁵⁵ It has arranged contributions to Darbe Mehrs in Chicago, Los Angeles and Vancouver, a house in Delhi for the mobed, the complete renovation of two Parsi chawls in Bombay and to the Parsi infirmary at Navsari. In 1998 it opened an old people's home in Navsari, the Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Centre for Senior Citizens.⁵⁶ A rest house has been opened at Sanjan either for Parsis on holiday, or for people from overseas seeking a base from which to visit the religious sites, notably the Atash Bahrams in Gujarat (opened 23 September 2001).⁵⁷ It has significantly improved accommodation at Udwada for people visiting the Atash Bahram there. There are many cases where individuals in India were assisted, usually on the nomination of Dinshaw Tamboly, who checked the need, integrity, etc. of the individuals and sent his recommendations to London. The most common, though by no means only, needs have been medical treatment and help for poor elderly widows. WZO itself has relatively few funds. An anonymous well-wisher donated £150,000 in 1983.⁵⁸ The money was given for WZO to use as a fund from the interest on which it could conduct business. These funds were established in a separate Trust managed by named WZO officers. But the main means of funding that WZO has pursued is to present detailed and verified claims from needy individuals and causes to wealthy benefactors, who have proved more ready to invest in a specific, known case, rather than contribute to the building of a large body of funds such as are held by the BPP.⁵⁹

Poor Parsi Gujarati farmers' project

The activity for which WZO became famous is the scheme for supporting poor Zoroastrians in rural Gujarat. Erachshah A. Gandhi,

⁵⁴ *Hamazor*, Summer 2001, pp. 4–6.

⁵⁵ See e.g. *Hamazor*, Summer 2001, p. 3.

⁵⁶ I wish to record my gratitude to Dinshaw Tamboly for arranging for me to visit the old people's home.

⁵⁷ *Hamazor*, 2002, I, pp. 27–8.

⁵⁸ Permission was later given to reveal their names, Mehraban and Goli Farhangi.

⁵⁹ For an inside overview of WZO achievements see Rumi Sethna 'WZO, its Present and Future', *Hamazor*, Summer 2001, pp. 66–9 and an account of the various activities, pp. 11–20.

of Mandvi, had campaigned for this cause at the Third World Congress in Bombay in March 1978, and on 1 January 1981 he wrote to the BPP, but nothing was done.⁶⁰ He then wrote to the newly formed WZO, specifically to Dr (Mrs) Kutar on 17 January 1981. That year, Captain wrote to the president of the Surat Punchayet, Maneck Gheyara, to persuade him to collaborate with WZO on a programme of alleviation for poor farmers. In his reply Gheyara said that a survey would be expensive, and it would be a better use of money to adopt a poor Parsi.⁶¹ During his visit to India in 1983 Captain persuaded the Surat Punchayet to fund, jointly with WZO, a survey of the conditions of poor rural Parsis in Gujarat so that plans would be based on a foundation of secure knowledge. The reports by Shah and Mistry discussed in Chapter 2 above appear to have lain gathering dust on library shelves, ignored by all Parsi institutions. Surat Punchayet and WZO commissioned a lecturer at the University of Baroda, Cashmera M. Bharucha (later Bhaya), to run the research project.⁶² She and her assistants visited 687 families in 209 villages in South Gujarat between June 1984 and December 1985. The final report, published in 1988, identified a larger than expected number of extremely poor Zoroastrians in a distressed condition.

Dinshaw Tamboly was a key person in carrying out the WZO work in Gujarat. He was elected to the main WZO committee 31 December 1984. In January 1986 he took Captain around some of the remote villages near his own hometown of Navsari. An extremely important factor in the programme has been the regular (normally monthly) visits by Tamboly and his wife to the villages in the region of Navsari, and by Davar Kavasji T. Modi and his wife to the villages near Surat, to monitor the problems and progress of the individuals and their families.⁶³ WZO officers from London often accompanied Tamboly and Modi in their tour

⁶⁰ He had written to Mrs Gandhi on this issue as early as 25 Feb. 1966.

⁶¹ Letter dated 29 Jan. 1982; a doubt he again expressed in a letter to Captain dated 8 Mar. 1983. On 22 June that year Captain confirmed to Gheyara that WZO would raise Rs 20,000 if Surat Punchayet and the BPP would contribute the same. On 5 Oct. 1983 Gheyara wrote asking Captain to send the WZO contribution because they were now in a position to commence the survey.

⁶² The content of the Baya report is discussed in Ch. 2 above.

⁶³ WZO separately sent clothes and shoes to the poor in some Gujarati villages.

of the villages, usually about twenty on each visit.⁶⁴ They made videos of the problems people faced, and later on of the ways in which they had been helped to overcome their difficulties. The videos were taken by WZO officers when visiting communities in order to raise funds for the work, notably to Hong Kong, the Gulf States, America, Canada and Australia. The journeys in Gujarat were not always easy. Without proper roads they had to resort to bullock carts, or walk ankle-deep in mud over long distances.⁶⁵ At a meeting with Tamboly and Captain in Surat in January 1989, the Surat trustees stressed the problems faced by Parsi farmers in Gujarat as a result of the banning of toddy production, the nationalization of transport (a number of Parsis had run buses as a source of income) and new legislation which had curtailed their chances to farm effectively.⁶⁶ Some of the experiences related are, by any standards, heart-rending: elderly widows and widowers unable to dig wells, repair homes, or earn even a minimum wage. One of the main problems was the complete dependence on unreliable monsoons, which could either wash crops away or not come at all, thus leading to drought. Some of the villages were a considerable distance from a road, so contacting individuals was difficult. The huts in which people lived were often in desperate need of urgent repair. In a report for *Bombay Samachar* and *Parsiiana*, Tamboly wrote of the conditions of these poor Zoroastrians:

Many of our community members will be surprised and distressed to know that our coreligionists live in huts, the walls of which are made from mud; the floors are of cowdung which require a fresh lick every month. Most of these families do not have wells of their own and have to draw water for their daily needs from the common village well; during the hot summer months when the water level drops appreciably, a line forms for drawing water from 2.00 in the morning. Medical assistance does not exist.⁶⁷

He went on to comment that the sick had to be taken to a doctor in a bullock cart. To buy seeds they had to borrow money from moneylenders at an extortionate rate, and children often did not

⁶⁴ It was not only the London officers who toured the villages. In 1992 Kolsawalla from Sydney also undertook a tour, as I was privileged to do in 2002, a visit kindly arranged for me by Dinshaw Tamboly.

⁶⁵ Dinshaw Tamboly to Captain, 4 June 1990.

⁶⁶ See Ch. 2 above for details.

⁶⁷ Report sent 22 Oct. 1990.

get any education, because Parsis in these villages were remote from any opportunities for education or training.

The first cheque from the World Zoroastrian Trust fund, for £1,000, to implement the Bhaya report was sent in June, 1990. The proposal was that aid should be given to help the farmers repair their homes where necessary, but then support should be given which enabled them to improve their earnings so that they could be self-supporting. To this end WZO gave help to dig or deepen wells, and supplied pumps and engines to water the land so that the farmers were not completely dependent on unpredictable monsoons. Tractors were hired to level the land and make it better for farming. Where necessary, people were supplied with bullocks for work on the farms. Able-bodied young men were sent on college courses on farming at an agricultural college in Navsari, and experts were taken to the farms to advise the farmers on economic planting, for example trees which after eight years could be cut and sold. Where the land could not be farmed, people were enabled to start poultry and rabbit farms, women were supplied with sewing machines, flour-grinding mills were started and nurseries were planted for the supply of appropriate plants or saplings. In some cases young couples in the villages were helped to marry and raise a family by purchasing a small 'cottage' for them and providing the funds to help bring up their children (e.g. by paying the necessary medical costs), until such time as the couple could become economically self-supporting.⁶⁸ Some youngsters were funded to stay at the Surat or Navsari orphanages so that they could have an education.⁶⁹ The vulnerability of the villagers was highlighted by three successive years of drought up to 1993. But in the following year there was extensive flooding which destroyed crops, homes, bridges and poultry farms and killed the cattle.⁷⁰ It was decided at the outset that help should be targeted to villages where the precise details were known of people's extreme poverty, so that help could be seen to be given to the truly needy. The *Bombay Samachar* (September 1990) championed WZO's 'mission of mercy' and stressed that although funds were received from the BPP and Surat Punchayet, it was a WZO initiative. A study of the

⁶⁸ *Hamazor*, July–Aug., 1993, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Report of meeting dated 17 Jan. 1989. See also the special issue of *Hamazor*, Nov., 1991.

⁷⁰ *Hamazor*, July–Aug., 1993, pp. 12–14. WZO representatives were among the first people to gain access to the villages after the floods.

annual accounts shows that over the succeeding years the WZO funds raised commonly exceeded the fixed sums given by these two Punchayets, which had in any case made a contribution for only two years.⁷¹ There were frequent suspicions that the BPP and the Surat Punchayet had only become engaged because they did not want WZO to get all the credit. One example of this mutual suspicion was an article published in the *Bombay Samachar* on 16 September 1990, by the then chairman of the BPP, which was specifically on the work for poor farmers in Gujarat. It never once mentioned the initiative of WZO.⁷² In 1993, *Parsiana* and *Bombay Samachar* published letters from the Surat Punchayet marginalizing the role of WZO in the Gujarat farmers' project, which Captain rejected in a responding letter.⁷³ The Federation was seen as making criticisms from the sidelines without contributing to the work.⁷⁴

By the end of the year 2000, WZO had worked in 149 villages assisting 355 families, with 164 families supplied with pumps, 149 with pipelines. Up to that date WZO had raised Rs 28,468,990 specifically for this work.⁷⁵ They had also helped poor Parsis set up in business by providing such items as computers, and taxis, and paying for training for a motor mechanic with funds donated from the Jijibhoy Trusts. One factor in WZO's ability to raise such funding is that the project in general, and Tamboly in particular, gained respect for the transparency and integrity of the organization's accounting and its prompt use of the money to help identified individuals with specific needs.⁷⁶ It was these features, for example, which led the Hong Kong Anjuman to start supporting such projects.⁷⁷ In 1992

⁷¹ To give but two examples from the many in the records, on 31 May 1991, WZO had that year raised Rs 471,655 plus £3,026. The BPP and Surat Punchayet each continued to give the original agreed figure of Rs 200,000. Similarly in 1993 whereas the Surat Punchayet and the BPP continued their donation of Rs 200,000 the WZO contribution was Rs 1,514,949 (Tamboly to Captain, 30 July 1993).

⁷² The same is true of an appeal made by Golwala in the *Jame*, 7 Oct. 1990, for funds for the projects, which asked for money to be sent to him at the Federation, but did not mention WZO.

⁷³ Captain to J. Patel, 7 May 1993.

⁷⁴ Tamboly to Captain, 13 Aug. 1990 and 30 Aug. 1990.

⁷⁵ Figures kindly supplied by Dinshaw Tamboly during my research visit to Gujarat, 2001–2.

⁷⁶ This general pattern may be illustrated by a specific example. On 10 May 1991 Tamboly wrote a report covering four sides of foolscap explaining exactly how a London couple's money had been used in a specific situation, with names addresses, receipts, etc. This was normal practice with such donations, not an isolated instance.

⁷⁷ N. Pavri to Tamboly, 14 May 1991.

a jeep was purchased to enable Tamboly and others to visit the remote villages, even when rains made travel difficult. Criticism was never far away, however. At a Federation meeting in September 1992, WZO was criticized for covering a limited number of villages and it was suggested it should work for Parsis in Maharashtra also. The response of the WZO representative present was that if the Federation wanted more villages to be covered, they should set to and do it themselves.

Although this work in Gujarat has been the main activity for which WZO is known, its officers want to assert that it does much more besides. The amount of money spent on different projects varied according to which appeals met with the greatest response in any one year. So, for example, in 1994 WZO spent 400% more on medical aid than in Gujarat; indeed, it spent more that year on its mobed Fund than on Gujarat causes. There are times when the evident success in Gujarat has eclipsed some of the other work done by WZO. Its officers feel that sometimes it is dismissed as ‘merely’ a charitable institution. For example, the president of the BPP wrote:

At present the WZO is functioning like a Welfare Trust doing good work in different parts of India and contributes its funds for good causes. While this is creditable it does not thereby qualify to be considered as a world body. We, therefore, feel that perhaps it would be better if WZO continues to do this good work and functions as a welfare trust for the benefit of the community and gives up its pretensions as the world body for Zoroastrians which it cannot obviously be when the majority of Federations and Anjuman [*sic*] are not its members.⁷⁸

In response to this WZO officers have commented to me in private conversation that BPP has traditionally presented itself as a welfare body. They also believe that the selective account of their work, focusing just on Gujarat, ignores their work in education, supporting priests, providing places for pilgrims and representing vulnerable people in various countries.

More controversy

Debates on the world body became more intense before and after major conferences, or votes on relevant policy issues and particular

⁷⁸ Golwalla to Captain, 22 June 1992. In the margin of this file copy of the letter, a cryptic note has been added—‘should a world body not do such work?’ See also *Hamazor*, Autumn–Winter 1997, p. 5.

meetings. In 1993 a different controversy opened up concerning WZO. Following a vote of members, it was decided that non-Zoroastrian spouses and children of mixed marriages could become members of WZO. As was noted above, it was in large part because WZO did not originally do this that Pavri resigned and attacked the organization. It was a step which the Bombay Orthodox had suspected from the beginning because of the membership of Kersey Antia and because Ali Jafarey had been invited to speak at the workshops. The president of ZTFE was quick to condemn the move, saying: 'We submit that WZO would, in essence, become a non-communal body with the distinct possibility of it being governed in the future by non-Zoroastrians. WZO would then cease to exist as a Zoroastrian body if your proposals are accepted by the members.' He agreed that this step meant that they would not get money from Zoroastrian charities and the move would cause dissensions and divisions.⁷⁹ There was also a letter of protest from Pakistan, because of Parsi vulnerability in Muslim countries if Zoroastrians were seen to convert.⁸⁰ The WZO view was that, in the global perspective, intermarriage was increasing dramatically and it did not wish to divide families by excluding spouses and children. It also pointed out that non-Zoroastrian spouses could not hold office.⁸¹ Some prominent figures in India resigned over the issue, for example, Dastur Meherjirana and Dadrawalla, who had edited *Hamazor*. Some wrote in confidence saying they felt that their position required them to do this, but in private they continued to support the work of WZO. The resignations were mostly from Indian-based groups, for example, the Deolali/Nasik Zoroastrian Anjuman⁸² and the D. J. Bahadurji charities.⁸³ Perhaps the greatest danger was the folding of the WZO India chapter because some of its members thought that there had not been adequate prior consultation.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Kersey J. Jassavala of ZTFE to Ruby Contractor, new chair of WZO, 24 Mar. 1993.

⁸⁰ Initially the Karachi chapter had flourished under the hand of Tehmurasp Sethna, but after his death the WZO in Pakistan became embroiled in some long-standing family disputes there which are alluded to in Ch. 4 above.

⁸¹ Tamboly to Captain, 3 May 1993. Captain also wrote a letter along these lines to various Indian newspapers on 20 Aug. 1993.

⁸² Letter dated 4 July 1993.

⁸³ Letter dated 1 Dec. 1993.

⁸⁴ Tamboly to Captain, 28 July 1993.

A new separate body?

1990–1993

Moves continued throughout the 1990s to establish a separate world body. After the World Congress in Bombay, 8 January 1990, there was a meeting of a newly established 'Inter-Regional Zoroastrian Congress Committee', which comprised the chairman of the BPP (Guzder), nine people from India (including two honorary secretaries), two from FEZANA (Homji and Rivetna), two from Iran (Shahzadi and Mehraban Kushesh) and two from Britain (Dalal and the then president, Jussawalla). The purpose was said to be to implement the recommendations of the World Congress, though there were no WZO officers among the invitees, despite the congress recommendation on Item V (see above). Specialist groups were established to deal with specific issues. Other names were given for people to be invited to join the council, for example, a representative from Australia and Pakistan. The chair was to be the chair of the BPP and the headquarters were to be in Bombay. The agreement was to focus on four recommendations: 1. Demographic trends; 2. Youth; 3. Religious education (to produce suitable books and train teachers); 4. Social welfare, particularly the problems of the poor and aged. They also included the long-term goal of the creation of a world body. The Inter-regional Congress Committee seems to have done little to implement these aims.

The following year Rivetna held a meeting with WZO officers in London (21 September).⁸⁵ It concluded amicably with the proposal that the Federation and Anjumans should form a council, the 'WZO Sub-committee of Federations and Anjumans', and a meeting of these groups was to be called in London in 1992. But in June of 1992 the BPP refused to accept the principle that individuals could have the same voting powers as Anjumans. It also objected to the idea that the Council of Federations was only a subcommittee of the parent body, WZO, which it was said currently, 'just functions as a welfare trust'.⁸⁶ Similarly, Rivetna had written two months earlier (April 1992) that one could not talk of Federations and Associations 'joining WZO'; rather, the aim was to establish a new 'Council of Federations' and the follow-up

⁸⁵ An account is given in *Hamazor*, Autumn–Winter 1997, pp. 11–21.

⁸⁶ Guzder to Captain, 22 June 1992.

question was, how this new Council affiliated with WZO.⁸⁷ In 1992 Rivetna said it would be premature to call the planned Constitutional Convention, because there had been no forward movement. Instead, he said, the idea was emerging of an independent Confederation of Anjumans.

The next surge in the debate was associated with a planned informal meeting of interested parties to follow the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993, where a number of Zoroastrian participants were expected. During his visits to England and India, Rivetna proposed a Federation of Anjumans, pointing not only to FEZANA in America, but also to the Federation in India and the potential for one in both Europe and the Pacific (including Hong Kong and Singapore as well as Australia and New Zealand). He, and others, also saw the potential for a Federation of Anjumans in the Middle East with Iran and some countries in the Gulf. The aim was to establish an apex body that would unite all Zoroastrians everywhere in a way which many thought WZO did not do because of its emphasis on individuals. This was the subject for the post-World Parliament meeting. At the FEZANA AGM on 13 July that year the following motion was passed:

Be it resolved that a constitutional convention be convened in Chicago to draft a constitution for a Council of Federations under the auspices of FEZANA in September 1993, being the opportune time when representatives from India, Australia, London, possibly Iran and elsewhere are expected to be in Chicago for the centennial celebration of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, and that Rohinton Rivetna organise the event.

At the Chicago meeting, WZO was severely criticized by one its former patrons, though others, notably K. D. Irani and Adi Davar, sought to find a middle way. They suggested that WZO remain the sole world body, but that it adapt a constitution which gave authority over certain matters, notably those other than welfare work, to the 'House' or 'Body' of Federations in a bicameral structure.⁸⁸ The debates over the changed constitution, however, proved to be long-lasting. Rivetna's long-standing commitment to

⁸⁷ Rivetna to Captain, 21 Apr. 1992.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the Constitutional Conference, Chicago, 5–6 Sept. 1993. This followed an informal meeting on 3 Sept. but the debates between the two are very similar. Vocal among the WZO critics were representatives from ZTFE, Shahrokh Shahrokh, Rusi Dalal and Zal Sethna. Dr Oshidari from Iran was, however, supportive.

a world body was reinforced by his experience of how various religions presented themselves at the World Parliament of Religions, in which he was deeply involved.⁸⁹

1996–1999

1996–7 was a time of intense lobbying on both sides, because of the forthcoming vote in FEZANA on whether it should support a new world body. This debate was not confined to America. As Homi Homji from Toronto put it: ‘Strong egos, power politics and vested interests are inhibiting the global diaspora from coming together to work out a proper solution. I call for networking.’⁹⁰ The argument for a World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (WCZF), which found favour in India, was largely associated in the West with Rohinton Rivetna. An article in *Parsiana* on the World Council of Zoroastrian Federations which had been agreed by BPP, Federation, FEZANA and ZTFE proposed a voting system such that no one group could dominate.⁹¹

There were others who thought differently: for example, Farhang Mehr argued that there should be no new body to rival WZO, though he added his voice to the calls for reformation of the constitution.⁹² The strongest account of the argument against the proposed role of the Anjumans was put in a letter by Captain to Tamboly.⁹³ He adduced five reasons why he was cautious about the role of the Anjumans. First, he said, one could not have Anjumans outvoting the majority views of members. Second, he pointed out that Anjumans have a history of joining and then leaving bodies, for example BPP and the Federation, or Delhi and the WZO and ZTFE in and out of WZO. Third, he said that all Anjumans and Associations had different practices; for example, on the role of intermarrieds’ spouses and children. Fourth, many Associations had a problem with the division between Parsis and Iranians. Finally, he said that Anjumans and Associations are not

⁸⁹ See A. S. Mama, ‘We are Much Closer Together’, *Parsiana*, May 1996, pp. 15–17.

⁹⁰ In a letter to *Bombay Samachar*, *Jame*, *Parsiana*, Dec. 1996.

⁹¹ See A. S. Mama, ‘Federation’s Nod for World Council’, *Parsiana*, Jan. 1997, pp. 22–6.

⁹² He expressed this view forcibly in a faxed letter to Captain, 25 Feb. 1997. Mehr had been invited to a meeting on the subject in London. He replied that he would come on one condition: ‘that [you] are earnest in accommodating other Associations’ views on accommodating the associations’ precedence over the individual members (perhaps on the basis of bicameral system). Otherwise the trip would be a waste of time, effort and money.’

⁹³ Letter dated 2 Dec. 1996.

really representative of their members: the Indian and American Federations cannot discuss controversial matters so they 'just eat, meet and gossip'. He recalled how when the Gujarat project started it was said that WZO did not understand the local mentality and so the work should be left to the local Anjuman; but history had shown differently.

A voice with growing influence in the mid to late 1990s was that of Adi Davar, but he chose to work mostly through letters to individuals and in small group meetings.⁹⁴ He was quietly influential, urging Rivetna that WZO did more than good philanthropic work, for it had helped Iranian Zoroastrians and promoted the study of Zoroastrianism.⁹⁵ He had one-to-one meetings with Rivetna to try to bring the two views together. He also urged Captain to work more on Indian and American Associations.⁹⁶ In addition he pressed Captain to found a chapter in Iran and to get the Iranian members of the western Associations to join WZO, especially the smaller groups in Hamburg, Austria, Italy, Scandinavia and Spain. Even so, he concluded that it would be necessary to give Associations 'greater prominence'.⁹⁷ There were meetings in London and of the Federation to prepare the ground for the respective sides.⁹⁸ Davar drafted a proposed structure for WZO, and he wrote again on receiving Captain's response, urging him not to be defensive, and to work for more family memberships.⁹⁹ On 21 July 1997, Captain circulated to Anjumans and Associations details of impending fundamental structural changes in the WZO constitution. In India, Tamboly and the president of WZO (India), Dadi Engineer, wrote a circular to all Anjumans in India listing twenty-eight activities that WZO was pursuing, pointing out that the fact that WZO can raise such large sums of money showed how much confidence people had in WZO. In July 1997, Captain wrote to

⁹⁴ He exchanged numerous letters with Shahpur Captain, proposing various specific constitutional amendments, but also measures that could enhance the standing of WZO.

⁹⁵ 27 Mar. 1997. In Dec. 1997 there was an informal meeting between Rivetna and Davar, which was followed by an exchange of memos confirming that they believed opinions were converging on the idea that WZO and WCZF should be merged. Different perceptions of these conclusions emerged later.

⁹⁶ Letter dated 8 Jan. 1998.

⁹⁷ Davar to Captain, 8 Jan. 1997, also a letter dated 12 June 1997.

⁹⁸ See letter of Mehr, 25 Feb. 1997 on the London meeting. *Parsiana*, Jan. 1997 includes a piece on the WCZF as agreed by BPP, Federation FEZANA and ZTFE, a powerful and vocal grouping.

⁹⁹ 16 May 1997.

Dolly Dastoor, the President of FEZANA, with an overview of WZO history and emphasizing the broad aims of the WZO, which he listed as fostering:

(a) A broad sense of Zoroastrian identity, common religious heritage and perpetuation of the faith and its values, particularly among Zoroastrian youth; (b) unity and cohesiveness among Zoroastrian communities around the world; (c) better understanding of Zoroastrians and their faith among non-Zoroastrian communities in which they live; (d) strengthened bonds between followers of the faith, which have differing national or ethnic backgrounds; and (e) effect solutions for any of the above, through bridging differences of beliefs, traditions and practices.

WZO, he indicated, was affronted at being labelled 'like the Red Cross'. He stressed that he respected the Red Cross, but WZO's opponents ignored much of the religious and scholarly work that the organization supported.¹⁰⁰

There has also been an Iranian dimension to WZO. This was first indicated by the support for Iranian refugees, and the number of new members from Iran elected at meetings, especially in the first few years. In this debate the Iranian Zoroastrians did not support the BPP case. Dr Mahyar Ardeshiri from Tehran (as the man charged with implementing the recommendations of the Sixth World Congress in Iran) wrote to Guzder with copies to Dolly Dastoor, Rivetna and Captain. He pointed out that: 'Your statement that after the 2nd 3rd, 4th and 5th congresses it has been more or less assumed that Bombay/India is the central venue for the World Body is not reflected in our records. If that was the case why the Parsi Punchayet did not act sooner to establish it in Bombay?' He dismissed the BPP claim that India was home to more Zoroastrians than anywhere else, referring to the official Iranian census which said that there were 94,000 in Iran, compared with India's 75,000. He concluded:

The Sixth Zoroastrian Congress did not endorse the creation of new world body (WCZF). It recommends changes in the constitution of WZO to accommodate the views of the anjumans and, if agreed by a majority, its venue to be moved to Iran. Hence we are opposed to proliferation of

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Captain to Dastoor, 31 May 1997 complaining that the Spring issue of the FEZANA *Journal* had an article by Rivetna that misrepresented WZO by speaking of it as doing 'very laudable work in the social welfare and educational areas'. Captain wanted it stressed that they did much more than this.

World Bodies which results in duplization [*sic*] of work, waste of money and manpower.¹⁰¹

At the FEZANA AGM on 10 August 1997, held at Crestone, Dastoor as president organized a major debate in which Rivetna and Davar made presentations on their views regarding a new body, and Firdosh Mehta and Farhang Mehr responded.¹⁰² The overall conclusion was that a decision on FEZANA support or rejection of a new body could not be decided at an AGM, but should be sent back to the Associations for a debate and vote. Following this delay of six months in the FEZANA vote, Rivetna circulated letters seeking support, Davar urged Captain to do likewise.¹⁰³ In a circular dated 23 June 1997 the Federation secretary, Keki Ghandy, indicated that at the Federation meeting in 15 December 1996, only one Anjuman, Ahmedabad, had voted against the formation of the WCZF. All the big centres, he said, were for a new body. He also pointed out that eleven of the twenty-one American Associations supported the setting up of a new world body, as Dalal did in ZTFE. Eventually, the American Associations voted on whether FEZANA should be a founding member of a new world council. The result was announced in the December 1997 FEZANA magazine. There was a 100% response recording a clear majority for keeping the WZO as the only world body, but also for its constitution to be reformed.¹⁰⁴ The same view had been expressed by the new president of the ZTFE, Dorab Mistry, in a briefing letter to Dalal who was attending a Federation meeting in India: 'We would not like you to speak in favour of establishing a second world body. The ZTFE committee are not in favour of establishing a second world body.'¹⁰⁵ Dastoor also called on Davar and Rivetna to continue their dialogue in the light of the vote. A week after Dastoor had announced the outcome of the vote, Rivetna wrote a circular letter to people in all regions (dated 19 December) to say that he still considered that the WZO, as

¹⁰¹ Letter to Guzder, copied to Dastoor, Rivetna and Captain, dated 7 Aug. 1997.

¹⁰² Mehr made the telling point that the only Federation to support the WCZF was that in India. Even there prominent figures such as Palkhivala and the former Member of the Indian Parliament, Roda Mistry, and two members of the BPP (Tamboly and Engineer) opposed the creation of such a second body.

¹⁰³ Letter dated 10 Aug. 1997.

¹⁰⁴ A. S. Mama, 'The World Body in Perspective', *Parsiana*, Nov. 1997, pp. 36–48.

¹⁰⁵ Letters to Tamboly, WZO and to Dalal, 29 Jan. 1998. Underlining in the original letter.

presently structured, could not serve as a representative world council. He pointed out that the Indian Federation would be discussing the situation at its forthcoming meeting at Indore.

Various sub-groups were formed in the late 1990s to try to reach agreement on a revised WZO constitution. In April 1999 WZO produced a revised final draft of the Memorandum and Articles of Association. This included the membership of spouses and children of intermarrieds, but added that only initiated Zoroastrians could become members of the Councils of the Federations and of Individuals. It defined eight regions¹⁰⁶ each of which, it was suggested, should elect two members, so that the Council of Individuals should consist of sixteen members. Within the Federations the voting strength should reflect the number of Zoroastrians there. The international board would thus have thirty-two members who would elect the president, vice-president, honorary secretary and treasurer. The secretariat, to be based in London, should be headed by an efficient and professional secretary-general elected by the international board. 'Given the legal residency requirements for the secretariat, the Secretary General will probably be a UK resident.'

The third millennium

The year 2000 saw another peak in the debates. In spring 2,000 the BPP hosted a meeting 'of the regions'. Present was a ZTFE representative (Mistry), the president of FEZANA (Framroze Patel), Rivetna, the secretary of the Indian Federation (Keki Gandhi), the president of the Sydney Association (Sachinwala) representing Australia, and seven BPP trustees, including Tamboly and Engineer.¹⁰⁷ The last two named were there as BPP trustees not as members of WZO, who were invited but unable to go. It was decided to start a new body, consisting only of organizations, with no individual membership, and having its centre in India, with regional secretaries each of equal status. The meeting issued a 'clarion' call to Zoroastrians:

For the GLORIOUS NEW ZOROASTRIAN WORLD WIDE AWAKENING, the urgent need of the moment is for all ZOROASTRIANS to unite on a global

¹⁰⁶ These were India, Iran, North America, Europe, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, the Far East and South Asia, Pakistan and the Persian Gulf.

¹⁰⁷ Tamboly was elected a trustee of the BPP in 1996, see A. S. Mama, 'If they need help I want to help them', *Parsiana*, Sept. 1996, pp. 33–6.

basis [and] establish a powerful international apex CONFEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN FEDERATIONS.

...

In the light of the [*sic*] over the centuries compassion and understanding, encouragement and support by the Government and people of India, the Conference consensus was that the world city Mumbai—the financial and commercial capital of India—shall be the home of this World Body. The Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and regional representatives also request each and every brother and sister Zoroastrian to support this ambitious and global effort of our community within your respective region by calling upon your leaders to endorse such a proposal. For the good of ZOROASTRIANS everywhere we must ACT NOW! Let us resolve that no matter what, we shall individually and collectively enable and empower the first of its kind in the world conference of Zoroastrians to ceaselessly work for improving the quality of life of every single Zoroastrian on the planet earth.¹⁰⁸

After the meeting, an evidently unhappy Tamboly wrote to the president of the WZO, Rumi Sethna, that the WZO redraft of their constitution had been rejected, and apart from Engineer and himself everyone else voted to start a new body which WZO could in due course join if it changed its constitution. He concluded, 'let us carry on serving our community'. He indicated that he did not wish to be part of any future negotiations but would 'get on and use time constructively'.¹⁰⁹ Back in America this meeting of the regions proposal was opposed by some. For example, Mehr wrote that, 'I as a lifelong advocate of Zarathushti solidarity world-wide propose to member Associations of FEZANA to condemn this move' and he suggested passing a vote of no confidence in the two people who had attended the Federation meeting from America, including the president of FEZANA.¹¹⁰ Rumi Sethna wrote a substantial response to the Bombay document, which was published in *Jame* (26 March 2000). His argument was that a small number of individuals had flouted the frequently expressed views of the silent majority of Zoroastrians in establishing a new body. After a very brief review of the extensive work undertaken by WZO he pointed to the outcome of the World Congress in Tehran and to the FEZANA vote, and to the two

¹⁰⁸ BPP *Review*, Spring 2000. See also A. S. Mama, 'A World Body of Federations', *Parsiiana*, Feb. 2000, pp. 23 f.

¹⁰⁹ Letter dated 13 Jan. 2000.

¹¹⁰ Reprinted sympathetically in the *Jame*, Apr. 2000.

years of negotiations between WZO and supporters of WCZF, for the redrafted WZO constitution. The only bodies not to support this redraft, he said, were the Federation in India and ZTFE. He pointed to explicit support for the WZO redraft from Iran, Australia (specifically Kolsawalla, who said the WCZF had previously treated him as the spokesperson for Australia), Pakistan, Singapore and the Swedish, French and German Associations (mainly Iranian Zoroastrians) and from the previous president of FEZANA, Dastoor.¹¹¹ The meeting had said that the two bodies could merge when WZO met their demands. But, Sethna pointed out, they had in fact now started the new world body and it would be inevitable that its supporters would want to preserve it, and so they were saddled with two world bodies for a tiny community. In March, the hitherto traditional Parsi newspaper, *Jame*, declared itself unhappy

with the leadership provided by our Bombay Parsi Punchayet, but are happy with the WZO's role. Dinshaw Tamboly and Dadi Engineer, Trustees of the Punchayet, having worked with both the Associations, say 'no new body' . . . Let Zoroastrians in each and every nook and corner of India speak to their leaders. The Trustees of each and every Punchayet or Anjuman, should deliberate over this issue and then speak with one resounding voice supporting WZO . . . Let the silent majority awaken before it is too late. Let posterity not blame us for inaction in spite of being forewarned.

Yet more negotiations took place between Irani and Rivetna and they believed that they were edging ever closer. Indeed, in his report Irani concluded that FEZANA should join WZO: 'I consider this draft entirely satisfactory to the concerns of FEZANA.' Rivetna circulated a report to FEZANA on the meeting of the regions that had taken place in London, 25–6 November, 2000, saying that they were nearly there with an agreement. The outstanding questions he identified as 1. The definition of a Zoroastrian; 2. The inequitable voting at WZO general meetings; and 3. The use of proxy votes. He expressed himself confident of success, and thought all would be settled at the forthcoming millennium conference in Houston. It was perhaps optimistic to think of such success, since the meeting of the regions was not attended by WZO, whose support could not therefore be assured.

¹¹¹ Letter to Rumi Sethna (copies to Rivetna and Patel) dated 21 Nov. 1999.

At the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress there were meetings to discuss a world body. They remained acrimonious, even though WZO representatives were not present, and it is noteworthy that a whole issue of *Hamazor* on the Congress did not mention the meetings about a new world body.¹¹² It is ironic that one explicitly stated motive for having a membership based on individuals was to 'avoid any possibility of politics creeping into the organization'.¹¹³ Subsequent to that Congress, FEZANA rejected the proposal of Framroze Patel (the then president of FEZANA) to join WZO. Instead, a subcommittee of FEZANA was formed to seek a way forward, with Khorshed Jungalwalla as chair. At the time of writing, despite occasional affirmations of hope, it seems from the outside that the two sides are effectively as far apart as ever. The 'grapevine' view is that a new world body will be formed.

Some changing allegiances and recurring arguments

The changing patterns of alliances are interesting. Whereas in religious teaching America is generally seen as Liberal, in political matters the BPP and the Indian Federation are closer to the reforms proposed by Rivetna. The Iranian view has broadly been supportive of WZO, apart from their opinion that the headquarters should be in Iran.¹¹⁴ Whereas the *Jame* had originally been opposed to WZO, by 2000 its new editor was supporting WZO against the BPP because, it said, 'people do not trust the BPP'.¹¹⁵

One of the arguments advanced by several people in the late 1990s was that there had been a logic in the individual membership of WZO in the early 1980s, when relatively few Zoroastrian Associations had been formed in many countries, e.g. America. But now that more Associations had been formed, with Federations in India, America and potentially in Europe, what was required was a world structure that reflected the importance of Associations.¹¹⁶ Both sides accused the other of preventing unity. On the one hand, some argued that since the BPP trustees themselves were known to be bitterly divided, how could they

¹¹² *Hamazor*, Spring 2001.

¹¹³ Minutes of the first meeting of WZO, at Zoroastrian House, London, 18–19 July 1980.

¹¹⁴ Circular letter of Mahyar Ardeshiri (who had been charged with implementing the recommendations of the World Congress in Tehran), 4 Dec. 1999.

¹¹⁵ Editorial, 26 Mar. 2000.

¹¹⁶ Mehran Khadivi to Rumi Sethna (new President of WZO) 6 Nov. 1999.

lead a united worldwide body? On the other hand, some of the opponents of WZO pointed to the deep antagonism between the London officers of WZO and ZTFE. The WCZF proponents also argued that WZO was not democratic, because its representatives in various countries were appointed not elected.¹¹⁷ In its turn, the WZO pointed out that since the BPP was so unpopular in Mumbai, it could not be said to represent the Zoroastrian population there; further, the voting process for trusteeship was available to only approximately 3,000 of the city's Parsi inhabitants. As noted above, some also pointed to the fact that the Surat Punchayet trustees had not been elected, but were appointed.¹¹⁸ As WZO is criticized for not being truly representative, so also it in turn has questioned whether local Associations are truly representative, as it is widely accepted that only a half, or perhaps two-thirds, of the Zoroastrian population in any city actually join their local Association. Each side therefore charged the other with not being democratic and with being divisive. A further argument adduced by Rivetna was that the WZO constitution had had to be put together quickly by a few individuals and without much consultation because of the dramatic events in Iran and the urgent need to have a body to work for Zoroastrians there.¹¹⁹ In that situation the ZTFE constitution had been used as the foundation of WZO, but that, he said, was not appropriate in a world body.¹²⁰ Conversely, WZO has argued that the constitution of FEZANA is inappropriate for the establishment of a world body.

Despite the remarkable work that WZO has undoubtedly undertaken, and some amendments to its constitution, still the battle appears to be over the basic issue of the Indian perspective that a world body has to be controlled from India, specifically the BPP in Mumbai, and that such a global leadership should be entrusted to established Associations, not to individuals. To many in Iran and the diaspora, not only WZO members, that demand seems unreasonable in view of the BPP's failure to act over such a long period from the 1960s to the 1980s. It is also seen by many to show that the Bombay establishment has an insular not a global

¹¹⁷ The WZO practice is to invite people to have their name put forward, and the nominations are voted on at AGMs. Members who are unable to attend can submit proxies.

¹¹⁸ Captain, letter published *Jame*, 11 Oct. 1997.

¹¹⁹ I am reliably informed that in fact drawing up the constitution had taken eighteen months.

¹²⁰ Circular letter dated 15 June 1997.

perspective. After the Seventh World Congress the Zoroastrian Association of Houston brought forward a range of new proposals which made the existing WZO one of the Federations. Its global work would give it substantial voting powers, but the requirement that a majority decision must have a 75% majority would mean that no one body, for example, the Federation in India, could succeed without building coalitions. A further problem quickly emerged: both the Sydney and Melbourne Associations withdrew from the Australian Federation. According to rumours this was because their WZO members displayed more loyalty to WZO than to their Associations. The virtual collapse of the Australian Federation made a world body consisting of Federations difficult because it would leave out the only communities in the southern hemisphere. The question of which body, and which individual, can be said to represent Zoroastrians at a global level remains embedded in dispute.

Global Networks: Zoroastrians on the Internet

Internet diversity

The Internet revolution has inevitably affected a community characterized by such high levels of education as the Zoroastrians. Search engines generally identify in excess of 2,000 sites on an Internet surf. This section omits those which are externally generated, notably sites from encyclopaedias and dictionaries, and looks only at those run by Zoroastrians, especially those produced by Zoroastrians for their co-religionists. Inevitably sites change: some disappear, others appear, some alter dramatically, some become neglected. What is written about now may be changed by the time this book is published. But the Internet is a major medium of global communications at the start of the third millennium, and so it merits serious attention. Even more transient phenomena than the formal websites are the various chat rooms set up by groups of individuals to which they subscribe, and in which they argue fiercely. Because these are so fleeting, often set up in connection with one debate or incident (e.g. the Seventh World Congress in Houston), they cannot be discussed adequately in a conventional publication which takes a year to publish and

(one hopes!) is in use for many years. The discussion archives associated with some major sites are, however, considered below.

Zoroastrians at Stanford produced one of the earliest effective sites, which by 2002, unfortunately, is not maintained. All the points of view discussed in previous chapters, and more, are expressed on the Internet. There are sites with fairly straightforward information. Joseph Peterson, whose *navjote* caused such disputes in the 1980s, has maintained a site used by Zoroastrians of all persuasions, which is basically a textual resource. He has put on the Internet not only Avestan but also Pahlavi and various other historical and religious texts.¹²¹ 'Parsicommunity' is largely informative, with contents on matrimonials, personal announcements, business and address listings, shopping and astrology. It has some religious articles, mostly by Jehan Daruwalla, the former editor of the *Bombay Samachar*, who stands on the Liberal wing of the community in India.¹²² Another mainly factual, Parsi-orientated site is run by Sarosh R. Petigara. It has the Gujarati, with English translation, of what has become the Parsi anthem, details of Parsi temples and other religious buildings in India, guidance on what to pray and when. There are a few doctrinal articles, of a traditional nature, for example on the *navjote* by Pervin Mistry, and one on the symbolism of the *Fravahar/Farohar* by Dr H. P. B. Neku.¹²³ In contrast there is one site which, though carrying some partisan religious views, is primarily dedicated to Persian culture, language, music, art and architecture. This site, run by Feraydoon Demehri out of Vancouver, has some religious material on it, notably accounts of the main festivals, such as No Ruz (a very helpful item for people wishing to learn about this key Iranian festival). A particular interest of the site, at the time of writing, is its role in encouraging the growth of Iranian music and *Gatha* songs. It includes items on places in Iran and business directories. It is one of the best-maintained sites.¹²⁴ There are sites for most of the Zoroastrian Associations in America and Britain, but these generally are factual records of their work and membership and do not contain a significant amount of religious material. FEZANA¹²⁵ and WZO¹²⁶ similarly have their factual sites, the latter making use of the global network to press its standing as an international body.

¹²¹ www.avesta.org

¹²² www.parsicommunity.com

¹²³ www.office-corner.com/am/top_.htm

¹²⁴ O'Shihan Cultural Organization at www.oshihan.org/index.html

¹²⁵ www.fezana.org

¹²⁶ www.w-z-o.org/organisation.html

To illustrate further the diversity of Zoroastrian Internet sites, without any claim to be comprehensive, four more very different sites may be noted. There is a Zoroastrians women's site whose purpose is 'helping women manage their multiple life roles in the family, their profession and in society'.¹²⁷ The Orthodox newspaper *Jame Jamshed* is on line,¹²⁸ so too is a Zoroastrian youth site that seeks to link people in the various professions (education, medicine, engineering, etc.).¹²⁹ The Internet has also been used to spread internationally knowledge of small local communities, for example the website of Baroda youth group.¹³⁰

In terms of religion, there are some Orthodox sites, notably the 'World of Traditional Zoroastrianism' which has possibly the largest number of articles as items on its menu. In March 2002, it had 240 articles on the religion.¹³¹ Although it is not specifically a Khshnoomic site, many of the articles reflect a Khshnoomist perspective, because of the amount of material from K. N. Dastoor. There are other Orthodox sites, but they tend to carry less material, and are mostly informative for people with like views, including for example, detailed directions on which prayers to say when and how often. There are a number of more or less traditional sites, mostly informative rather than doctrinal.¹³² Soli Bamji has a traditional doctrinally-orientated site focusing on key beliefs and practices such as fire, fire temples, *fravashi* and *naujote*.¹³³ There are more sites dedicated to the Liberal perspective, notably 'Zoroastrian net', which includes a number of articles on the interpretation of the *Gathas*, including some by Dina McIntyre. It has a page on publications from the Zarathushtrian Assembly, but also a list of the publications of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute and notices about 'Parsi Bazaar' (which organizes *naujotes* and weddings). It is therefore quite a mixed site.¹³⁴

Iranian Zoroastrians have set up a number of sites, many of which incline towards a Liberal religious position. A substantial site reflecting such a perspective is run by Shahriar Shahriari, with a large range of articles on religion (notably by Dina McIntyre

¹²⁷ Zarathushtri/Zoroastrian Women's International Network at www.zwin3.net

¹²⁸ www.jamejamshedonline.com ¹²⁹ www.zoroastrianyouth.com

¹³⁰ www.buzy.orgz ¹³¹ members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/tenets33.html

¹³² <http://www.office-corner.Com/am/whorzoroastrians.htm>, see also <http://gilbreth.ecn.purdue.edu/~bulsara/Zoroastrian> and Zoroastrian@net (<http://www.geocities.com/farz3/zoro.htm>). Ahuramazda.com is concerned with appeals for a fund for a *dokhma*.

¹³³ www3.sympatico.ca/zoroastrian

¹³⁴ <http://www.zoroastrian.net>

and Dr Daryoush Jahanian as well as many by Shahriari himself), with translations of the *Gathas*, and the full text of Dhalla's *Homage unto Ahura Mazda*. It is a technically sophisticated site with a tour of a cyber temple and a children's corner. This site is also notable for extensive archives of religious debates.¹³⁵ The Zarathushtrian Assembly's¹³⁶ site includes many articles by Ali Jafarey, notably his collection of essays entitled 'My Message' and a longish article, 'The Good Religion and Institutionalized Zoroastrianism', in which he sets out his understanding of how his message differs from that of 'traditional' Zoroastrianism.¹³⁷ In that article he writes: 'the Good Religion is a universal, progressive, and modernizing religion meant for the humanity at large. The Institutionalized Zoroastrianism, in its present traditional form, is an ethnical [*sic*], static, and closed religion of a specific community. The two stand apart in their outlook.'

A related site focusing on educational materials is 'Vohuman', which has approximately 200 articles. The site is organized mainly by Iranian Zoroastrians from northern California. A good proportion of the articles are by Iranian Zoroastrians; Jafarey's works are posted, as too are some by 'Liberal' Parsis such as Adi Davar, Jehan Bagli, and Dasturs Dhalla, Bode and Minocher-Homji. There are a number of articles on prominent Zarathushtis, both Iranian and Parsi. It contains several translations of the *Gathas*, by Mobed Firouz Azargoshab and D. J. Irani and a commentary on the *Gathas* by McIntyre, and provides links to the on-line translations of Taraporevala and Jafarey. The site also includes articles by non-Zoroastrians, for example, Henry Lord's seventeenth century account of the Parsis and work by Martin Haug, A. V. W. Jackson, R. N. Frye and Stanley Insler.¹³⁸

There are various sites run by people not born Zoroastrians who have been converted to the Good Religion. The most prominent individual on the net from this perspective is Ronald Delavega. He has ties with the Zarathushtrian Assembly, but in addition runs another website, 'Zoroastrianism'.¹³⁹ A Swedish group of converts

¹³⁵ www.zarathushtra.com. This site also has extensive network links.

¹³⁶ www.zoroastrian.org/ which has articles in English, Persian, Spanish and Portuguese.

¹³⁷ Many of Jafarey's articles had previously been published in hard copy in a journal he runs, *Spenta*.

¹³⁸ www.vohuman.org/Vohuman.htm

¹³⁹ www.zoroastrianism.cc

run their own website, 'Zoroastrian Community'.¹⁴⁰ Also at this end of the spectrum is 'The New Age Zoroastrian Society'.¹⁴¹ In some ways one interesting set of sites are the discussion pages which erupt at times of controversy, notably an extremely fierce debate prior to the Seventh World Congress held at Houston in 2000, which will be discussed below. Some sites are particularly useful for the range of network links they include.¹⁴² One of the most frequently accessed sites appears to be the 'World of Traditional Zoroastrianism', which on 1 March 2002 had been accessed 177,457 times in its history; 'Zarathushtra.com' had 116,843 hits over a similar period, whereas 'pars.com' has had 'only' 42,368. These figures illustrate the extensive use made of the Internet, and highlight the importance of its study. Websites are consulted more frequently than most books are.

Internet debates

Most sites express the point of view of a single group; relatively few engage in dialogue or debate with people of opposing views, although they often contain attacks on their opponents. For example, the Traditional Zoroastrian website contains attacks on what it calls 'the liberal-controlled WZO', but there are no WZO responses listed.¹⁴³ That website also raised a campaign against a site operated by Sun Microsystems on which Jafarey was quoted by 'Mehrdad K' using insulting and offensive language about traditional Zoroastrianism. It persuaded the Internet supplier to close the site down because of these attacks.¹⁴⁴ (The site was later reopened through another Internet supplier.) There have been occasions when Zoroastrians have disputed with fellow Zoroastrians on the Internet. Contrary views can, for example, be found in 'Zarathushtra.com', which has substantial archives of correspondence as far back as 1997. The contributors are mainly American, but there are messages from people in Australia, Pakistan, the Gulf States, South Africa, Malaysia, and Europe (including Norway, Sweden, Italy and Britain). The site is, therefore, truly global. It had some 1,340 messages from December 1997

¹⁴⁰ www.webzc.com/maine.htm

¹⁴¹ www.kfinan.com/zoroastrians.html

¹⁴² see esp. www.zarathushtra.com/z/links and www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/rel/z-aster.htm

¹⁴³ members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/tenets33.html

¹⁴⁴ members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/tosun33.html, see also *Parsiiana*, May 1999, pp. 21 f.

until 28 February 2002 so although it is global it is not consulted as much as some of the other sites discussed here. Some of the contributions are by people who contribute to other sites also: Delavega, for example. In addition to many students seeking information, there are some Baha'i and Iranian Muslims who assert that deep down they are Zoroastrians. But most authors on any site are communicating with people of like views. I could not, for example, find any material by Delavega on the Traditional Zoroastrian site, or the reverse. Sometimes articles are written specifically for posting on the Internet, but many, if not most, sites reproduce articles originally published elsewhere. Inevitably, one tends to find each site favouring particular authors of the same persuasion or approach. There are few Iranian Zoroastrians on the traditional Zoroastrian websites, but a substantial number on those produced by the Zarathushtrian Assembly and linked sites, for example, Dr Mehrborzin Soroushian and Mobed Rostam Shahzadi. In contrast, 'The World of Traditional Zoroastrianism' has articles only by Parsis, mostly from India, notably Ervad Dr Hoshang J. Bhadha, Ervad Ratanshah Motafram, Noshir Dadrawala, Roni Khan, Ervad K. N. Dastur; and articles by the Orthodox Dasturs JamaspAsa and Firoze Kotwal. The site also has selections from Orthodox papers, notably, *Deen Parast*, *Parsi Pukar*, and *Jame*, and articles on Khshnoom and the Pundolites. The only frequent contributor from outside India is Ms Pervin J. Mistry from Toronto. The site which comes closest to representing the view of both Orthodox and Reforming wings is 'Zoroastrian net', which includes a number of articles by Kaizad Bhabha (who tells the story of the miraculous appearance, and prayers taught by Aasan Behram Yazad), and a number of articles by Dina McIntyre.¹⁴⁵ There is only one writer whose work is used on a range of sites, namely Dr Pallan Ichaporia.

There is one site where both Orthodox and Reform, Iranians and Parsis, people born and people not born Zoroastrians, exchange views, and that is on the Yahoo groups site.¹⁴⁶ The views about their respective 'opponents' are typically confrontational, conveyed with a force that seems to an outsider to preclude genuine debate. Perhaps the most common theme is the Zoroastrianness

¹⁴⁵ www.zoroastrian.net/

¹⁴⁶ groups.yahoo.com/group/zoroastrians

or otherwise of Ali Jafarey. The arguments which raged regarding his attendance at the Houston Congress continued long after the event, with both sides castigating the other in the most vitriolic language.¹⁴⁷ Periodically, appeals are made to protagonists to stop their attacks, and others are moved to unsubscribe; such is the strength of feelings expressed.

Major themes and issues

Introduction

The Traditional Zoroastrian site identifies seven tenets of the religion. Many of these form the focus of debate with the Reforming wing. They are (in brief):

1. All our Scriptures are Sacred, including the Gathas, Yashts and the Vendidad. We pray all of them in our Fire Temples before the Sacred Fire, and they have immense spiritual power, their very utterance in the sacred Avestan language serving to further righteousness and fight evil.
2. All our fire temples and rituals of the Yasna are sacred and necessary for the religion, such as the Nirang-din ceremony . . .
3. Dakhma-nashini is the only method of corpse-destruction of the dead body . . .
4. Marrying, Zarathushtri man or woman, to a Zarathushtri only is commanded in our religion in the Vendidad, to preserve the spiritual strength of . . . the religion, and the ethnic identity of the Zarathushtri Aryans.
5. . . there was no 'conversion' because the Aryans . . . were already Mazdayasnis when Zarathushtra came . . . the righteous of every religion go to heaven, all religions are equal . . .
6. The observance of the Laws of the Vendidad is an important pillar of the Zarathushtri religion. This includes . . . menstrual seclusion . . . The Vendidad also carries strong moral injunctions against the acts of homosexuality and prostitution . . .
7. Faith and hope in the coming of the Saoshyant (Saviour) . . . to defeat evil and further righteousness . . . [and] the final spiritual battle between the forces of good and evil . . . The World will be made perfect again . . .

These tenets set the agenda for the main debates between the various Zoroastrian groups.

¹⁴⁷ The latest such exchange I have noted was in October 2001.

Intermarriage

Intermarriage, and for Parsis the associated idea of conversion, is probably the biggest single issue on most Internet sites. K. N. Dastoor, in an article originally published in *Parsi Pukar*, lists as the seventh of the key features of the ‘package of Parsi life’: ‘A Parsi has to preserve his racial gene and not allow it to be mixed up by marriage outside the fold.’¹⁴⁸ In what is a long article written for the Internet, Roni Khan compared the Parsi and Jewish experiences of intermarriage, and argued that:

the Zarathushtrian Marriage Sacraments are not and cannot be, bestowed on Parsi intermarriages—for men and women both [a refutation of the 1906 Bombay High Court Case]. These intermarriages are always civil, not religious, marriages. The very definition of the term ‘civil’ is: lay, secular, temporal, not ecclesiastical. It needs to be emphasised and understood that Zarathushtrian marriage is a religious sacrament and not just a civil contract.¹⁴⁹

He argues that in the eyes of the Zoroastrian religion a marriage that could not be performed under ‘its own marital sacraments’ cannot be recognized. He argues that: ‘While the children of intermarried Parsis should never be demeaned, embarrassed or ostracized in any way in any non-religious sphere of life, the line of non-acceptance has to be drawn without fear or favour insofar as the Zarathushtrian Religion is concerned.’ Ervad (Dr) Hoshang J. Bhada offers an esoteric reason against intermarriage. He states that all were born into the religion which God deems appropriate, and that everyone has their own ‘internal energies’ which are developed in the womb, and which should not be mixed with people of a different religion. Further he argues that Zoroastrian rituals generate vibrations which must only be experienced by Zoroastrians.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/pukar33e.html. See also the attack on Dina McIntyre because she married out of the community, is a colleague of ‘the Muslim Ali Akbar [Ali Jaferey]’, and is one of the founding/leading members of a Gatha-only organization along with Ali Akbar. Members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/sassani33.html and members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/survival33.html reproducing a letter originally published in the *Jame* where Dastur JamaspAsa condemns priests who initiate the children of intermarrieds.¹⁴⁹ members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/inter3.html

¹⁵⁰ ‘Prohibition of Non/inter-married Zarathustris in Religious Ceremonies’, members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/prohib33.html. Other similar articles are ‘Reply to

The diametrically opposed view is expressed on various websites, especially those associated with the Zarathushtrian Assembly. The most frequent writer in their columns, apart from Ali Jafarey, is Delavega. He can be harsh in his vocabulary, but mostly his articles on his own website ('The World of Zoroastrianism') are measured. For example, in an article on 'Conversion in Mazdayasna', he writes that although Mazdayasna is a universal religion, its 'missionary spirit is not the classical proselytizing style practised by many religions. Instead of proselytizing, Mazdayasna seeks to inform. We provide information on Mazdayasni belief and practice . . . we accept all who of their own free and informed choice, wish to accept Mazdayasna as their vision of God and their way of life.'¹⁵¹ The Parsis and Iranians, he argues, dropped the practice of conversion because of their respective historical situations. He expounds some of his core assumptions in the following words:

Zarathushtra's is a message about a spirituality that progresses towards self-realization, fulfilment and completeness, as a good creation of a totally good God. It is a message of freedom, freedom to choose, freedom from fear, freedom from guilt, freedom from sin, freedom from stultifying rituals, superstitious practices, fake spirituality and ceremonials. The God of Zarathushtra, is not a God of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not', God in Zoroastrianism does not care what you wear, what and when you eat or where and when you worship. God instead cares how righteous, progressive and good you are. The Zoroastrian Religion pictures humanity as the growing and evolving creation of a God that respects it, and wants it to collaborate in the task of preserving, nourishing, fostering and refreshing this Living World of ours. . . . Mazdayasna . . . teaches the equality of all mortals before their Wise creator God; who only sees a difference in righteousness among mortals. Thus there is equality of race, nation, sex and social position.¹⁵²

the Inter-married Association' by Porus H. Havewala, the administrator of the Internet Traditional Zarathushtris mailing list on ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/toi33b.html; N. H. Dadrawala, 'Why Parsis Discourage Mixed Marriages', ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/discour33.html; Dadrawala, 'Intermarriage is a Deadly Sin for the Zarathushtris, as per a great Zarathushtri Sage', ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/inter.html; P. Mistry, 'Intermarriage', ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/inter2..html; Ervad Jal N. Birdy, 'The Bane of Mixed Marriages', ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/jalb33a.html

¹⁵¹ www.zoroastrianism.cc/conversion_in_mazdayasna.html

¹⁵² zoroastrianism.cc/universal_religion.html

The fiercest debates on initiation are probably those on the Yahoo groups site. For example, Dariush Ostowari refers to the Orthodox 'ludicrous mentality', and compares wanting to preserve the race to the mentality of Hitler and the Klu Klux Klan.¹⁵³ Delavega refers to the 'isolationist priesthood', asserting that 'Asho Zarathushtra (*sic*) . . . CONVERTED every single person that followed him in those days'.¹⁵⁴ Some of those calling for the acceptance of converts are Parsis. For example, 'Homi' wrote on the 'zbnet' site:

To me, this religious apartheid is obnoxious and very distasteful. Zarathushtra himself was a free thinker, his philosophy was of free choice and very sublime. Our hardliners are good people, but somewhere along the line they seem to be misguided, and one of their major fault [*sic*] is believing in this ridiculous [*sic*] idea of purity of race and non-conversion. To me, it seems quite clear AND BETTER to have new blood added rather than intermarrying and multiplying inherent defects from one generation to another. I am looking forward to the day when one sees Zoroastrians of different sizes, shapes and colours viz.; Chinese, Africans, Europeans, and various other admixtures, the more the merrier.¹⁵⁵

There are various writers, mostly Iranian Muslims, who say that they wish to 'convert' back to the old religion of their country.¹⁵⁶ But there are also examples of people from Ireland and 'white' America wanting to convert.¹⁵⁷

Rituals and worship

The Traditional Zoroastrian website has the most articles on rituals. Seventy-five of its 240 articles are on ritual prayer and practice as prioritized in its seven tenets listed above. There are articles on *dokhtmas*, but twenty-one out of the twenty-seven are related to the

¹⁵³ Message 2258 dated 6 Mar. 2002 on groups.yahoo.com/group/zoroastrians/message/2258. In another message (1801) he describes his opponents' views as 'ludicrous and idiotic'. In various messages he uses extreme language to accuse traditional Zoroastrians of being racists because of their attitude to intermarriage.

¹⁵⁴ www.zbnet.com/_disc1/00000046.htm

¹⁵⁵ zbnet.com/_disc0000004c.htm

¹⁵⁶ Omid, zbnet.com/_disc1/00000047.htm. See also zarathushtra.com/z/discussion1/_disc00000023.htm, *ibid.* 00000028.htm, *ibid.* 000000e0.htm

¹⁵⁷ See www.zbnet.com/_disc1/000000f2.htm and *ibid.* 00000043.htm respectively.

contemporary controversy on funerals in Mumbai, and the disappearance of the vultures. There are nine articles each on prayer and fire (compared with twenty-seven on conversion and inter-marriage). None of these articles represents the Liberal perspective.

In the Yahoo groups, the majority of contributions come from the Reforming wing, so that the greatest emphasis is on the *Gathas* and the work of the Gatha Study Group, with occasional articles on the fire. There is also a regular feature 'A Thought a Day, to Practice, Say and Pray' by the Zarathushtrian Assembly. There are some entries from the 'traditional' Zoroastrians, notably CRRC1, who is clearly a Pundolite and writes about the power of prayers and the hope for a saviour. One 'Poros' wrote: 'The great Nirangdin ritual—the ceremony that creates Holy Nirang—is practised only in India/Pakistan, not in Iran. This ceremony is so holy that at the end, the hands of our purest Dasturjees can even pass through Fire without being harmed.' The response to this assertion was to mock: 'The funniest part of this e-mail is his explanation of some crazy ritual.'¹⁵⁸ The 'Liberal' wing's perceptions of rituals is summed up by Dariush Ostowari (message 2005): 'I think rituals are essential if one must feel a sense of belonging in a materialistic manner, that is fine. However, it becomes "idiotic" when such rituals take over the faith and de-emphasize the foundation of the faith which was the ethical excellence Zartosht talked about.' Similarly, Delavega wrote: 'What I, Jafarey and many others, including Dariush O., have been saying is that we are giving the priority to ritual over substance and the substance is the ethical message.' Appeals to the practice of ancestors he dismisses because 'it is not important what sense they made to a mind of 2000 years ago'. He goes on: 'Indeed we are really trying to preserve rituals. The first book, after the *Gathas*, the Assembly asked me to translate into Spanish was Zarathushtrian Ceremonies. What we are not willing to preserve is the fossilized remains of a lifeless ritual or practice which are actually harmful to the spirituality . . . and against the letter or the spirit of the *Gathas*.'¹⁵⁹ In the Zoroastrian building in Anaheim a living gas flame is used rather than a traditional

¹⁵⁸ Message 2258. In an earlier discussion (message 42) a letter-writer spoke of it as 'this Foul Smelling concoction made from animal urine'.

¹⁵⁹ Message 2019.

sandalwood fire. For traditional Zoroastrians this is not the presence of the divine and removes the concept of devout service to the fire. The Assembly responded in various ways, for example, on the Yahoo group message board. In message 2348 (10 March 2002) the use of sandalwood is described as 'entirely wasteful and ecologically destructive to use up forests'. The writer argues that 'the primitive fires were the ones that erupted at natural gas', so that this modern development follows ancient practice.

From the traditional Zarathushtrian perspective, their own religion, with its great heritage, is being mocked and changed by outsiders. To the Reformists, traditional Zoroastrians are reducing the visionary message of the Prophet to a racial phenomenon.

Differing views of authority

Inevitably, the various websites invoke different religious authorities according to their Orthodox or Reform allegiances. Consequently, the Orthodox and traditional sites invoke the Dasturs, utilize the Middle Persian texts and the whole Avesta, not least the *Vendidad* and the purity laws it sets forth.¹⁶⁰ The sites associated with the Reforming wing of the religion affirm the authority only of the *Gathas*, and reject the *Vendidad* for containing pre-Zoroastrian ideas that came to corrupt pure Zoroastrian teaching.¹⁶¹

Ultimately for Zoroastrians in most groups, the main authority is Zoroaster, but there are different perceptions of his nature and role. According to the Zarathushtrian Assembly:

in the Institutionalized Zoroastrianism Zarathushtra is more of a reformer than a founder of an ancient Iranian religion which had deviated from its path. He cleansed the religion of its daeva worship and superstition, but perpetuated all the 'good' old beliefs and rituals. He is the 'prophet' of an ethnic community, at present represented by Iranians and Parsis. Yet some Zoroastrians consider him a Divine Being of supernatural power and knowledge . . .

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/tenets33.html. On the 'mystical' content of the *Vendidad* see Dastoor, on members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/puker33b.html

¹⁶¹ www.vohuman.org/'Is the Vendidad a Zarathushtrian Scripture? For an Orthodox repost arguing that the 'Gatha alone cult' rejects important scriptural works, members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/gathas33.html

Zarathushtra founded an altogether new religion on the basis of his divine revelation. He eliminated every rite and ritual that was performed to appease false gods, enrich priests, and exploit people. He cleansed minds of superstition. He taught a very sublime and strong doctrine.¹⁶²

In contrast, although inclining towards the Reforming wing, Jehan Daruwalla accepts that the Prophet incorporated some old beliefs and practices, for example, the three great prayers of the religion. He therefore identifies the Prophet as a reformer.¹⁶³ The Zarathushtrian Assembly rejects the concept of the priestly role, and instead claims it is returning to the Gathic teaching of the *ratu*: 'The Zarathushtrian Assembly has, in its Gathic restoration move, restored the term and the post. Its elected qualified officiants are known as in precisely the Gathic sense.'¹⁶⁴ Jafarey sums up the concept of the leader or *ratu*:

he or she is a humble, yet inspiring intellectual who justly leads the righteousness and wrongful as well as the intermediates to promote the living world to peace and prosperity, and ultimately to wholeness and immortality. The *ratu* was the most competent and learned . . . the post warranted a love for learning, practicing and teaching religious knowledge at all levels of the society.

Jafarey emphasizes that the *ratu* is chosen by members of the religion.¹⁶⁵ He is, of course, the *ratu* for Assembly followers. The view is that a person does not have to be initiated to be a Zoroastrian, but those who show appropriate knowledge and commitment may be initiated by a *ratu*.¹⁶⁶

For Khshnoomists the earthly source of religious authority are the hidden masters in Iran, and the teachings of Shroff. Dastoor states that two germs have led to the degradation of the Zoroastrian community '*One was the onslaught of sciences and the other was the advent of Zoroastrian studies in the West*' (emphasis in the original).¹⁶⁷ In contrast, for leading figures in the

¹⁶² [www.zoroastrianism.org/The Good Religion](http://www.zoroastrianism.org/The_Good_Religion)

¹⁶³ www.parsicommunity.com/Religion/Articles/article9.htm

¹⁶⁴ www.zoroastrian.org/ratu, p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ www.zoroastrian.org/english/articles/Ratu.htm

¹⁶⁶ [www.zoroastrianism.cc/the world of Zoroastrianism](http://www.zoroastrianism.cc/the_world_of_Zoroastrianism), by Ronald Delavega, an article on conversion.

¹⁶⁷ Members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/pukar33e.html. He made the same point in another article (same Internet site as before in an article entitled 'The Internet Blasphemies of the Parsi Religion').

Zarathushtrian Assembly, it is western scholars who have uncovered the teaching:

After the deaths of ancient teachers and the loss of books his message was lost . . . however, thanks to the long, arduous and painstaking work of literally hundreds of scholars in the last 200 or so years, the original message of Zoroastrianism, the message of its ‘Manthran’ (Thought-provoker) Zarathushtra, Zoroastrianism has surfaced once again, revealing it as ever relevant, unique and inspiring.¹⁶⁸

From these studies, they maintain, Zoroaster can be seen to be a founder of a new religion.¹⁶⁹ True worshippers simply ‘honor the Manthran, like a great teacher and a righteous person’.¹⁷⁰ The image projected of him is that of a thinker or philosopher: ‘Disillusioned and distressed by the ritual-laden and sacrifice-ridden practices of his day, Zarathushtra turned to his inner self and to nature to find answers to questions which baffled his mind.’¹⁷¹ In contrast to the Traditional Zoroastrians and their website, the Assembly website has a translation of the *Gathas*—or seventeen songs, as they refer to them. They do not include the rest of the Avesta, or the Pahlavi literature. The *Gathas*, Jafarey argues, do not propound any elaborate ceremonies; rather, the only prayer rituals in the *Gathas*: ‘are that a blazing fire was lighted within an enclosure, the prayerful stood around it, sang songs from the Gathas to God with bowed heads and uplifted hands. There was no priest who led the laity and there were no laypersons who were led. It was a collective prayer, a collective

¹⁶⁸ Ronald Delavega, see w.zoroastrianism.cc/universal_religion.html

¹⁶⁹ www.zoroastrianism.cc/zarathushtra_biography.html, see also Jafarey on www.zoroastrian.org/english/other/faq.htm

¹⁷⁰ www.zoroastrianism.cc/conversion_in_mazdayasna.html

¹⁷¹ www.zoroastrianism.cc/mazda_ahura.html. Similarly, Jafarey wrote: ‘He kept asking questions concerning the world and its creator. The priests of the ancient polytheistic cult could not provide him with satisfactory answers . . . Disappointed by the response from the priests, Zarathushtra turned to his inner self and the thought-provoking nature around him . . . His trained missionaries preached the divine message far and wide’, www.zoroastrian.org/english/articles/religion.htm. While stressing the philosophical dimension of Zoroaster’s message, Shahriar Shahriari argues that ‘his philosophical mind was subjugated to his prophetic vision’ (www.zarathushtra.com/z/article/philprophet.htm).

devotion.¹⁷² The Assembly, he states:

does not recognise . . . the murmuring priest who goes by rote alone and does not know and understand what he recites and performs, and yet demands obedience and blind following from the simple, kept-in-the-dark laity . . . true to the Gathic tradition, the Assembly does not entertain a priestly class or division. It has proficient persons who officiate at religious ceremonies . . . and convey the Divine Message by practising it for their own selves, teaching it to those who want to learn, and spreading it around the world.¹⁷³

Another contrast between the Zarathushtrian Assembly and the Traditional Zoroastrians is in their cosmology. For the former, there is a consistent emphasis on reason, and abstract thought. So, for example, heaven and hell 'are timeless states of consciousness'.¹⁷⁴ For the Traditional Zoroastrians, not only is there belief in a future saviour and the renovation, as in the tenets cited above, but the perception of heaven, and the beliefs associated with fire, are projected in a cosmic dimension: 'Fire is referred as both an Amashaspand and a yazata . . . Fire is worshipped as the Greatest Divinity by the Zarathushtrians and it is equated with Ahura Mazda's Own Inner Light and Life.'¹⁷⁵ In attitudes to initiation, prayer, religious authority, indeed in the very understanding of the nature of existence, the Traditional Zoroastrians and the Liberals, especially as represented in the Zarathushtrian Assembly, are spiritual worlds apart.

Conclusion

The Internet enables Zoroastrians around the globe to react quickly to events, such as the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001,¹⁷⁶ or the meetings in Mumbai to protest over the various solutions to the loss of vultures at Doongervadi. Sometimes the very speed of communication

¹⁷² [www.zoroastrian.org/english/articles/rituals in the *Gathas*](http://www.zoroastrian.org/english/articles/rituals%20in%20the%20Gathas).

¹⁷³ www.zoroastrian.org/english/articles/essay.htm

¹⁷⁴ S. Shahriari, www.zarathushtra.com/z/article/overview.htu, and most entries in Delavega's site, www.zoroastrianism.cc

¹⁷⁵ P.J. Mistry, ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/son33.html

¹⁷⁶ See e.g. the moving prayer composed and posted on the web by Shahriar Shahriari, www.zoroastrian.net/memorial1.htm

exacerbates problems precisely because it is fast; messages can be written with great speed and little time for reflection.¹⁷⁷ This tends to generate much heat in debates, which is as true for the Traditional Zoroastrian website as for the Liberal wing. It affects pieces written for the sites as well as the messages on the boards. The venom is encouraged by the fact that many contributors post their material under pseudonyms, so that anonymity provides the freedom to be more acrimonious than personal contact would. But that is when there are debates; most sites on religion tend to be produced for people of like mind. It is impossible to assess the impact of the various sites, since there is no information available on who accesses them. As contributors send material to more than one site, it is easy to get an inflated idea of the number of Zoroastrians who access the sites. Many of the large numbers of 'hits' could well come from outside students seeking to gain knowledge of the religion. If that is the case, then of course the fact that the material is produced at speed, without any editing, means that an unbalanced picture may be gained. Where there are notes of who is ceasing their subscription, it is commonly from the 'moderate' voices in a previous debate. As a result the Internet often functions as a platform for extreme views. But whether users are Zoroastrians or not, the number of 'hits' illustrates the considerable importance, for good or ill, of Zoroastrianism on the Internet.

The Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, Houston, 2000

The context

There have been six World Zoroastrian Congresses held in either Bombay or Tehran.¹⁷⁸ They have all been important in their own way, for example, the early congresses and that in Bombay in 1990 featured debates on the WZO. The 1996 Congress in Tehran had particular importance, being the first held in Iran since the fall of the Shah. The visibility and recognition given to the original

¹⁷⁷ This is not true, of course, where published materials are made available on the Internet.

¹⁷⁸ The Congresses were First, Tehran 1960; Second, Bombay 1964; Third, Bombay 1978; Fourth, Bombay 1985; Fifth, Bombay 1990; Sixth, Tehran 1996.

religion of the country by the leaders of the Islamic Republic was seen to be very significant for Zoroastrians in Iran, indeed around the world. In some ways the message of the Congress was encapsulated in the treatment given to Farhang Mehr, the former Deputy Prime Minister, under the Shah: a man who had to escape in secret from his country, was officially welcomed and treated as an honoured guest of the nation. Leading mullahs expressly praised the message of the Prophet Zarathushtra and the contribution of his religion to Iran and to the world. Each of the congresses provided an opportunity, which was taken, for Zoroastrians around the world to gather and debate what were seen as the key issues of the day. Interaction, dialogue, conflict and plans were the outcome of these various meetings. It is too early to say if these resulted in effective action.

From the perspective of globalization, the World Congress in Houston had special significance. In part this was because it was the first World Congress held outside the two old countries. Many Zoroastrians, especially Americans, saw this as recognition of the importance of the diaspora, of the global spread, for the future of the religion. It was also the largest World Zoroastrian Congress to date, with 2,500 participants turning a large Texan hotel complex into a Zoroastrian village as people met from around the world. Each congress has, despite its international character, reflected the priorities of the host country. Indian and Iranian priorities have characterized the previous meetings. This one was planned in consultation with leaders from the old countries, but the majority of participants, and the overall perspective of the Congress, was steered mainly by Zoroastrians on the American continent. It was organized by the Association in Houston, but held under the banner of FEZANA. Congress officials and the planning groups were structured to represent the interests of both the local Association and the national body.

Planning problems

The planning of the Congress sought to give platforms for speakers from the old countries as well as from the New World.¹⁷⁹ Dasturs, leading mobeds and prominent teachers were invited. But

¹⁷⁹ For an upbeat, yet bland, piece on the planning problems see A. S. Mama, 'Help us Get the Congress to You', *Parsiana*, May 2000, pp. 24 f.

the planning was overwhelmed by a debate on whether to invite Ali Jafarey. The local Association, Houston, has been noted for its traditional nature, and many of its members were not inclined to invite him, recognizing neither his teaching as a 'true' Zoroastrianism, nor himself as 'a real' Zoroastrian. To others, however, his teaching is seen as a return to the authentic teaching of the Prophet, free of later priestly superstition and of the ethnic bias alleged to be prominent among traditional Parsis. Initially, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet supported his participation, until they were informed of his work in converting non-Zoroastrians. Leading members of the Zarathushtrian Assembly campaigned on his behalf. The campaign was conducted mostly on the Internet, and in some confrontational planning meetings. His supporters argued not only that his teaching was true to the message of Zoroaster, but also that non-Zoroastrians had been invited to address such congresses before so that even by his opponents' own perspective there was no reason to exclude him. Others stressed that the freedom of speech embodied in the American Constitution required that he should be allowed to speak. Each side referred to their opponents in vitriolic language. Several planning meetings were dominated by the dispute, with resolutions and counter-resolutions from various local Associations; New York, for example, were strong supporters of Jafarey's right to speak. The tensions were such that the future of the Congress seemed in doubt. In order to avoid the accusation of excluding Jafarey because he was not a Zoroastrian, the organizers agreed that no non-Zoroastrian speakers should be invited, a very unusual step for Zoroastrian congresses. Discussions about honouring non-Zoroastrians were also dropped to try to avoid the allegation of treating Jafarey differently.¹⁸⁰ The compromise eventually reached was for FEZANA to host a 'debate' during, but 'apart' from, the Congress, between Jafarey and the Orthodox Khshnoomist Bombay teacher Adi Doctor.¹⁸¹ The debate was held in the ballroom of the main hotel and was attended by a huge audience. The fear of conflict was such that hotel security staff were much in

¹⁸⁰ Only two non-Zoroastrians were involved in any way. Kreyenbroek and Hinnells were invited to contribute pieces to the Special Millenium Commemorative Journal Issue, and Hinnells's volume of *Selected Works* was one of several books launched at the Congress.

¹⁸¹ A brief overview of the debate is given by Dina McIntyre, www.zoroastrianet/ 'Dina G. McIntyre provides a personal view'.

evidence. In fact the debate was conducted in an unantagonistic atmosphere and there was none of the confrontational abuse which had characterized the earlier disputes.

Leaving aside the vitriol, the issue highlighted a key question in the context of discussions on globalization: is Zoroastrianism a religion intimately related to a single racial group or a universal religion to which anyone can be initiated? Is religion part of a culture that one enters into from birth, a part of one's ultimate origin? Or does the religion have a global message and truth from which any person can benefit? This issue affected a range of contributions to the Congress. There were three debates on the subject 'One Zarathushtra, Many Zarathushtis', involving a discussion on whether there should be an acknowledgement of different Zoroastrian 'sects' or denominations, recognizing the different beliefs, practices and ties of the Orthodox and Reforming wings. Two of the prominent debaters were Khojeste Mistree and Farhang Mehr, speakers who had clashed strongly many times before. In fact they concurred that they should 'disagree agreeably'. In a later Internet message Dina McIntyre supported the recognition of such a separation.¹⁸² The aim, it was emphasized, was to avoid the acrimony, which could drive the youth away from the religion. The practical problem, inevitably, was who should retain ownership of the various properties, Trusts and charities. Despite this agreement between adversaries, no formal results have materialized from addressing this big question of the global future of the ancient religion.

Happier notes

But the Congress did not only address one issue. Another theme was the role of the youth in the future of the religion. Running through the Congress was a pathway of meetings organized by, and focusing on, the youth. This combined social and debating meetings. Among the former were the seventh Zarathushti Games organized over two days before the Congress. In addition to track events there were competitions in basketball, volleyball, table tennis, discus, shot-put and swimming. There was also a dance specifically for the youth held concurrently with a dance for the elders to mark the turn of the New Year and the start of the

¹⁸² [www.zoroastrian.net/Dina McIntyre discusses Khojeste Mistree's call](http://www.zoroastrian.net/Dina_McIntyre_discusses_Khojeste_Mistree's_call).

new millennium. The debates for the youth were less acrimonious than some of those of the elders. The purpose was to aid networking, whether through business, or meetings with people established in a profession advising those just starting, for example, in medicine. In support of the youth, as well as the elders, a Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce was started.

A theme that spanned the generations was the greatness of the Zoroastrian heritage. This was celebrated both in exhibitions (of Sasanian coins and Zoroastrian dress down the ages), through a video presentation on 'Our Legacy', and with the launch of the video *In the Footsteps of Our Forefathers* (discussed in the Introduction to this chapter). An event which has become common in North American Zoroastrian Congresses, and at special functions organized by the BPP and WZO in India, was the honouring of some great living achievers. The Outstanding World Zarathushti Award was made to Prof. Kaikhusroo Irani of New York. Mehraban Zartoshty was honoured for his philanthropic work; Dr Jamshed Irani for achievements in business; Zubin Mehta for excellence in the performing arts; Kerman Jasavala from London with a youth award for outstanding leadership in his work for organizing the World Youth Congress in Britain. Finally Shahram Akhtar-khavari, an Iranian designer, was honoured for his design of the award trophy. There were also events celebrating the global unity of the religion. The theme of unity was visually depicted in a 'Unity quilt' featuring the logos of Associations worldwide. There was a concert involving the first performance by the 'World Zoroastrian Orchestra'.¹⁸³ Finally there was a function to honour women's achievements in the community over the years.

The impact of the Congress

What were the achievements of the Congress? An initial impression from the debates is the aggravation of divisions, particularly through the acrimony over Jafarey's participation. They resulted in the absence of many leading figures, notably Dasturs from India and some of the senior figures in America. There were timetabled sessions on the future of FEZANA, especially its funding, and the role of the priesthood. Many of the speakers repeated

¹⁸³ There were two Australian members, four from India and one from Canada, but most—nineteen—came from USA.

positions they had long been associated with. The formation of a world body to replace WZO proved to be acrimonious, despite the fact that the leaders of WZO stayed away from the meeting. Old divisions were therefore made visible, and in some cases probably reinforced. However, in comments published in the *FEZANA Journal* after the Congress¹⁸⁴ the view expressed most frequently was that the excellent organization behind the event facilitated the interaction between Zarthushtis from around the world, enabling them to renew old friendships and make new ones. Another note of hope was the positive atmosphere in the meetings of the youth. In the long term, the Congress asserted the importance of the diaspora in the future of Zoroastrianism. At the time of writing, it looks likely that the next World Congress will be in Britain, which will reinforce the importance of the global perspective. It will have to address the issue of the divisions between the elders, the authority of leaders in India and Iran, and the policies concerning the future role of the youth. In short, the congresses enhance the process of globalization.

The Global Survey

The survey thus far has been used to form a picture of the community in each of the diasporic groups studied. Such a focus is important in seeking to construct a history of the various communities. However, these studies alone might suggest that Zoroastrians are simply the products of their local environment. This section will therefore address the big picture of patterns of settlement not according to local conditions, but according to general trends. Are there global patterns of settlement of different groups, e.g. according to level or type of education, according to country of birth, patterns that may be found wherever, say, East African Parsis or Iranian Zoroastrians settle? Because the following discussions are dividing the global response of 1,840 into just two or three subgroups, for example, male and female, the number involved in each subgroup provides a far larger base for arguments so that percentages became more reliable and stronger assertions are possible. Some of the statements in what follows

¹⁸⁴ Spring 2001, pp. 56–87. Virtually the whole issue was dedicated to the Congress.

disagree with some comments in certain of my preliminary publications on this topic; where they do, it is the assertions in this publication which should be followed because the final data bank is larger and the figures have been cross-checked.¹⁸⁵

It is important to add some notes of caution about the survey. My original intention had been to produce a substantial monograph just on the survey and to develop a sophisticated analysis of the data. I changed my mind and included it as just one section of a chapter because I became increasingly conscious of my own limitations regarding statistical analysis. To have written a monograph analysing the whole survey would have been to 'play to my own weaknesses'. But the data collected is interesting and worth inclusion, if for no other reason than that it might challenge others more appropriately qualified than I am to undertake such a study not just of Zoroastrians but of other diasporic communities also. I find it difficult to believe that some of the trends and patterns of settlement of the various groups discussed in this section, for example, gender and generational issues, the impact of western and higher education, family structures, are specific only to Zoroastrians.

It is important to highlight some of the weaknesses and dangers in what follows. Where the tables compare large groups of a similar size (for example the comparative study of the 961 male and 851 female answers in Table 2), then the data is fairly strong and the conclusions drawn are reasonably secure. In other tables, however, because of the potential interest of the topic, I have compared the responses of a large group with those of a much smaller sample. For example, in Table 4 I tested a hypothesis which I had developed as a result of my contacts with Zoroastrians in so many countries for over thirty years. My hypothesis was that people who had migrated from urban areas, e.g. Mumbai or Karachi, had been prepared for living in the West by their lifestyle in metropolitan areas, whereas my impression was that my Zoroastrian friends who had migrated from more rural backgrounds, such as parts of Gujarat, found life in the West a greater shock and resisted the pressure to assimilate more vigorously than had the people from Bombay/Mumbai. Table 4 supports that hypothesis,

¹⁸⁵ Here and elsewhere in this chapter references to comments in my previous writings are to three main publications: Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, ch. 6; Hinnells (ed.), *The New Penguin Handbook of Living Religions*, 2nd edn., Harmondsworth, 1998, pp. 819–47; Hinnells, *Selected Works*, pp. 335–430.

but comparing a sample group of 769 people with one of only 62 is methodologically questionable. A 10% difference within subgroups of over 700 people reflects a group of 70-plus, whereas 10% of 62 persons represents only six people. The conclusions of such a comparison must be viewed with caution. I hope others more appropriately qualified than I may find the hypothesis challenging and pursue the question with greater sophistication than I have. To alert the reader to such problems I have indicated in square brackets [N =] the precise number of answers to every question by each group. In the tables in Appendix 2, the number [N =] indicates how many respondents fall into a category, so to refer to Table 2 again, 66% of 961 male respondents said that they prayed daily, and 74% of the 851 female respondents said that they prayed daily. Respondents were told that if they did not like any question, they should leave it out and press on. As a result the number of answers to each question by any one group varied. For example, in almost all groups fewer respondents answered questions relating to religious beliefs than answered questions on religious practices (or on demographic issues). That fact alone is interesting because it is due, almost certainly, in part to the lesser emphasis given to doctrine among most Zoroastrians than among, say, Protestants. I have drawn attention to the parts of the tables where the imbalance of sample sizes requires caution.

There are many other aspects of these tables which the specialist in survey work would question. I have rarely given the figures for those who answered a question in the negative and have equally rarely indicated the number of people who answered 'Don't Know'—an option for virtually every question. My thinking was that I was interested mostly in the actual responses received. Nor do my tables include details of the mean compared to the average, nor to the standard deviation, which a specialist would have included. It is not only that I am not a statistician, it is also a question of space. The very first computer printout of the survey material relating to the following section exceeded 120,000 pages, and I subsequently asked very many more questions of the data. The option was either to give a limited account of the total data, or to give a full account of a small part of the data—or to give the publisher a book unpublishable on the grounds of size. I took the first option. It is my hope that this material will be of interest, and will challenge, encourage debate and trigger further study.

A 'shorthand' is developed in what follows to save repetition and space. One to be noted is the variable about observing Pateti/No Ruz, the *gahambars*, and keeping a *divo* (oil lamp) burning in the home. Obviously there were several variations in the answers to this question. In what follows I have generally summarized the answers by referring to 'All (or none) of the Zoroastrian traditions'. However, with various groups one custom is more significant than others. For example, to the Iranian Zoroastrians the celebration of festivals, especially the *gahambars*, is particularly important and so the answer is broken down accordingly. Because of such different priorities of practices and beliefs the tables in Appendix 2 do not always list exactly the same questions, although there is a general consistency in order to facilitate comparison. Another shorthand has been used relating to attitudes towards funerals. It would not have been clear to have asked 'Do you believe in *dokhmenashni*?', i.e. funerals involving the exposure of the body in a Tower of Silence, or *dokhma*, because respondents might believe in it in principle, but can obviously not practise it in the diaspora. Respondents were, therefore, asked what sort of funeral they wanted for themselves. Because of the need to avoid a repetition of a complex question and answer, I have used the shorthand of 'a *dokhma* funeral'. That is not a Zoroastrian term, but I hope that the shorthand is clear and unambiguous.

The brief discussion at the end of Chapter 3 looking at a range of 'litmus tests' to identify patterns of religious belief and practice applies particularly to this section. In what follows the data is studied under three main headings: the practice of the religion (prayer, wearing *sudre* and *kusti*, observing the traditions and attending religious functions); beliefs (intermarriage, the afterlife, whether beliefs and practices have changed); and ethnic or national ties (citizenship, practice and value of secular/cultural traditions, such as food, language etc.). In comments on whether or not respondents held 'traditional beliefs' (e.g. the importance of prayers for the dead), there is no intention of evaluating the truth or otherwise of a belief, but rather of looking for one marker, among others, of the extent to which people have retained their links with what have been long-held traditions.

A further qualification is necessary. It does not follow that because most people in a group tended to, say, practise the religion more traditionally, or to have closer ties with the old country,

that all the people in that group did so. It is worth emphasizing this obvious point, because the use of precise percentage figures gives an image of complete objectivity which appears to brook no dispute. When below it is said that Parsis from Pakistan tended to be more traditional in the religious beliefs and practices than those from Mumbai, it does not follow that all Parsis from Pakistan were religious. A danger with surveys such as this is that they can appear deterministic, giving, for example, the idea that all Iranian Zoroastrians have the same beliefs and practices. My experience of Zoroastrians is that they are very individualistic; nevertheless it is possible to identify certain trends and patterns and this section is concerned with this process.

One final introductory point regarding the survey is the nature of the sample. In such a survey there is a danger that respondents will only be those who are in contact with a centre, people practising the religion and a few people who may be seen by community officials as 'on the margins of Zoroastrian society'. It was pleasing to obtain responses from a number of intermarried people [N = 203]; people who rarely attended a Zoroastrian centre [N = 208]; people who did not read Zoroastrian literature [N = 1027]; people who rarely corresponded with other Zoroastrians [N = 179]; people who rarely met other Zoroastrians [N = 85]; people who rarely or never prayed [N = 270]; people who said that they did not practise their religion [N = 175]; people who rarely or never visited a Zoroastrian centre [N = 339]; people who thought it was not worth preserving the religion [N = 174]. The sample therefore reflected a broad range of people and perspectives.

Gender issues (Table 2)

There were 961 responses from men and 851 responses from women in the survey, which provide a good foundation for analysis (see Table 2 in Appendix 2). Broadly speaking, the women recorded a higher proportion of respondents praying daily,¹⁸⁶ observing all the Zoroastrian traditions; more women than men affirmed a belief in one or other form of an afterlife; more of them believed that the prayers for the dead were essential. What

¹⁸⁶ The fact that fewer women say they always wear *sudre* and *kusti* is not necessarily significant. There is a style of *sudre* for wearing under a sari with a bare midriff, but it is not as convenient a garment as it is for a man.

might be described, as 'markers of ethnicity' were also stronger among women. More of them said that they often ate Indian or Iranian food; more of them wore Indian or Iranian dress regularly; more of them identified themselves in terms of their country of birth, whereas men tended rather to assert their identity more in terms of the country of residence. More women than men wanted to preserve their traditional music, dress, religion and language. Sometimes the percentage differences were small, but the trend was consistent.¹⁸⁷ The picture is of women being more active and more traditional in belief and practice than men. It is, therefore, regrettable that so many books on diasporic communities emphasize the role of men.

Previous country of residence (Table 3)

Studies of Asians in the West commonly assert that the 'twice migrant' East Africans are typically more traditional than Asians who have migrated directly from India.^{188, 189} Within the Zoroastrian community it is commonly said that the Iranian Zoroastrians have different patterns of beliefs and practices from Parsis. It is often assumed that people who migrated from one western country to another are more likely to be secular. Appendix 2, Table 3 compares the figures for beliefs and practices of these various 'national' origins.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ The substantial difference in the wearing of traditional dress (men 14%, women 27%) is perhaps less significant. Even in India, for example, men commonly wear western dress, whereas women commonly wear saris.

¹⁸⁸ In virtually all cases 'previous country of residence' indicates the place of birth. But there has been significant onward migration, for example, from Britain to North America. Some of the people who migrated westwards from East Africa had been born in India or Pakistan, but appear in this section under East Africa, their last place of residence.

¹⁸⁹ The typical 'traditional' or 'Orthodox' orientation of the East African Asians is now widely accepted by scholars. The person who pioneered this understanding was P. Bhachu, *Twice Migrants: East African Sikh Settlers in Britain*, London, 1985.

¹⁹⁰ The respondents included nineteen individuals who had moved to a western country from Hong Kong, but to include a percentage in the main text for such a small number would have created an impression of greater reliability for those percentages than would have been warranted. A general pattern is noted here for information, but the percentages, and therefore the conclusion, should be treated with caution, although the patterns reflect the features of the Hong Kong community discussed in Ch. 3. The features for which the diasporic Hong Kongese were noteworthy were that relatively few (15%, in so far as a percentage is acceptable) would permit non-Zoroastrians into a western prayer room. A relatively high proportion believed in an immortal soul (68%) and few in reincarnation (31%). A fairly high proportion (40%) said that they attended religious functions often, and more than any other group (17%) thought that religious authority lay in India. Few of

The practice of the religion

More people from East Africa, India and Pakistan said they prayed daily than did those from the West, and in particular in comparison with the Iranian Zoroastrians. It is to be expected that fewer diaspora Iranians wore the *sudre* and *kusti* regularly because these religious items of dress have not been such a central part of Iranian practice, but, again, more people from East Africa and the subcontinent rather than 'westerners' wore them regularly. The figures for the 'Zoroastrian traditions' are slightly more complicated. Many more people from East Africa than from any other group observed all these traditions. Only a minority of any group observed none of them, and hardly any of the East Africans or Iranians said that they observed none of the traditions. More Iranians than any other group said that they observed the various festivals.

In terms of the 'traditional' range of attitudes, fewer East Africans or Iranians wanted a funeral at a *dokhma*, which is not surprising since such practices are not part of the tradition of their previous country. It was those from India who most commonly asserted their desire for a *dokhma* funeral. More of the 'westerners' and people from India were accepting of inter-marriage, whereas fewer among the two groups from Muslim countries, Iranians and Pakistani Zoroastrians, accepted inter-marriage. Those from East Africa tended to be stricter. But despite their objection to intermarriage, more Iranian Zoroastrians than any other group would have allowed non-Zoroastrians in the prayer rooms, whereas fewer East Africans than any other group are willing to allow *juddins* to enter. On this question more of the 'westerners' would allow non-Zoroastrians into the prayer rooms in comparison with any group other than

them thought that their beliefs and practices had changed a lot since migrating. A small proportion asserted their citizenship in terms of the country of birth, whereas a high proportion (52%) asserted citizenship of the country of residence. Fewer ex-Hong Kongese than any other group asserted their Zoroastrian-ness. Fewer of them eat Indian food, and none said that they wore Indian dress often. Fewer Hong Kongese than any other group thought language and religion worth preserving (37 and 74% respectively); although they were positive about Parsi communal relations, they tended to be cautious at saying their relations with other groups were good. Although this is a small sample, it is nevertheless noteworthy that the features highlighted are precisely those found in the study of Hong Kong in Ch. 3 above, for example keeping *juddins* out of prayer rooms, attending functions regularly and keeping close ties with India.

the Iranians.¹⁹¹ The explanation for the Iranian pattern of beliefs is that they wished to preserve their Iranian-ness, i.e. family ties, but they were less inclined to exclude others from the religion.

Religious beliefs

In terms of beliefs, more people from Pakistan than any other group affirmed one or other forms of a belief in the after life; fewer Iranian and 'westerners' held such a belief. Affirmations in a belief in the afterlife, and that prayers for the dead were essential, were fairly high among those from India. It was among the Iranians and the 'westerners' that more people asserted the humanistic interpretation that prayers for the dead benefit the living rather than the dead. There was little difference between the various groups in the small proportion who accepted the religious authority of 'the old country', though a smaller proportion of Iranians than Indians turned to the old country for guidance. The figures for attending religious functions were surprising for those in contact with the various communities at the turn of the millennium. But when this survey was undertaken, in the mid-1980s, the highest proportion of respondents saying that they attended such functions was Iranians. At this time also, the East Africans were still not as fully integrated into many Associations as they were at the end of the millennium. These two sets of figures may not reflect later patterns. More Iranians than any other group said that their religious beliefs and practices had not changed

¹⁹¹ If the figures for respondents of British origin are separated from those who had moved on from another western country, for example from Canada to Australia (N = 104 and 45 respectively), the former British respondents are far less inclined than the other 'westerners' to allow non-Zoroastrians into the prayer room (35% and 50% respectively). There are other indicators of the 'ex-British' being more traditional, for example, more of them believe in an immortal soul (58% and 46% respectively). There are also differences in national and cultural links. Fewer ex-British think their beliefs have changed much (18% and 26% respectively), but more think that their practices have changed a lot (32% and 18% respectively). The explanation for this may be that in London the facilities of Zoroastrian House are more established than they are in American or Australian Associations, so that after moving on they were conscious of not being able to maintain the traditions they had in London. The ex-British are less inclined to assert their identity in terms of the country of birth (21% and 35% respectively), and more of them assert their citizenship in terms of the country of residence (36% and 31%), or in terms of their Zoroastrianness (49% and 39%). More ex-British Zoroastrians assert that relations between Iranians and Parsis are good (35% and 24%), presumably because such tensions have never been as great in Britain as in much of America. As discussed in n. 190 although the hard numbers are low, the pattern suggests that the twice migrants carry with them something of the traditions of their previous community.

subsequent to migration. More people from India than from anywhere else said that their beliefs and practices had changed considerably. These figures reinforce a point made earlier, that people who felt compelled to migrate, and consequently have a sense of not wanting to be where they are, resisted assimilation more than those who had chosen to migrate for their own self-perceived benefit.

Ethnic ties

A range of questions addressed issues of respondents' ethnic/national ties. Substantially more Iranians than any other group asserted their identity in terms of the country of birth. In contrast, groups from countries where there had been a sense of distance or alienation from the wider population in the old country, East Africa and Pakistan, asserted their identity in terms of the country of residence. The Iranians and the East Africans in particular asserted the Zoroastrian-ness of their identity (this issue will be discussed further below). The great majority of all groups ate Indian or Iranian food often. Perhaps studies of Asian diasporas should study food more thoroughly.¹⁹² Again, it was the East Africans and the Iranians, even more than others, who valued this part of their heritage. Overall, the great majority of all groups said that the religion, the traditional language (especially the Iranians), and food should be preserved. More than any other group the Iranians wanted to preserve their traditional music and art. This is understandable as Indian art and music has fewer cultural ties for Zoroastrians on the subcontinent, but it is also a marker of the particularly strong ties that Iranians feel for the heritage and the ties to the homeland of the religion. The points made by Naficy discussed in Chapter 1 above are as appropriate for Iranian Zoroastrians as for the other Iranian groups which he studied in Los Angeles. As far as relations in the diaspora communities are concerned, only one in three respondents in all groups thought that relations between Iranians and Parsis were good. Apart from the Iranians, two-thirds of most other groups

¹⁹² There are a number of Parsi recipe books. The one I find helpful, because of its section on associated customs, is Bhicoo J. Manekshaw, *Parsi Food and Customs*, Penguin India, 1996. There are Internet sites which have sections on Parsi recipes, notably gilbreth.ecn.purdue.edu/~bulsara/Zoroastrian, ParsiOnline.com and parsicomunity.com

thought that relations between Parsis were good. Respondents who had migrated from Pakistan tended to have the most positive view of diaspora relations, but fewer East Africans than any other group thought that relations between old and new migrants were good, an indicator of their marginalization in the 1980s. A longitudinal study of these groups in the new millennium would be very interesting.

Reflections on the 'national' trends

The broad picture is that in terms of beliefs, e.g. life after death, those who most commonly asserted their traditions were the Pakistani Zoroastrians, followed by people from India. Parsis from Pakistan, more than any other group, asserted traditional beliefs regarding funerals, intermarriage, in excluding non-Zoroastrians from prayer rooms, practising the traditional rites associated with prayer, the wearing of *sudre* and *kusti*, festivals and lighting the *divo*. They were less inclined than others to preserve some of the secular ethnic traditions, for example music and art. Their links to their land of birth, for example in affirmation of citizenship, were not as strong as their ties to their new country of residence. The explanation seems clear. In Chapter 5 on Pakistan it was noted that the prominence given to Islam in the wider society affected the priority given to religion by the Zoroastrians and the comparatively high level of religious education there in comparison with Parsis in Bombay. Although loyal to the nation while living there, in accord with Zoroastrian tradition, Parsis from Pakistan nevertheless do not have such strong links to their country of birth as do Iranian Zoroastrians.

The East African Parsis were traditional in terms of practices such as prayer, wearing *sudre* and *kusti*, observing festivals, and lighting a *divo*. In particular they were strong on the preservation of community boundaries, expressed for example in their views on intermarriage and excluding non-Zoroastrians from western prayer rooms. They were also strong on some ethnic traditions (food, language, music and art), but not on the importance of a *dokhma* for funerals, and they affirmed citizenship expressed in terms of their current country of residence. These features are understandable after their experience in East Africa, where community boundaries were strong, there was no *dokhma*; people who had lived for some time in East Africa had their ties to India or

Pakistan weakened, and their ties to East Africa were not strong. At the time of the survey, the East Africans were somewhat distanced from the wider Zoroastrian community, and so they attended a centre less often. A survey taken in the third millennium may be expected to show different features.

The Iranians were the group with the strongest ties to the culture of their old country, specifically in the preservation of language, music and art. They were the strongest in asserting their identity in terms of the country of birth rather than in terms of country of residence, or they asserted their Zoroastrian-ness. They tended less than most groups to affirm traditional beliefs such as the importance of prayers for the dead. Because they saw themselves as marginalized by Parsis in the 1980s, fewer of them attended a Zoroastrian centre than did Parsis from India or Pakistan. (This has changed since the survey, particularly in California, where Iranian Zoroastrians have built two centres, one in Anaheim and one near San José.) Their religious practices, notably the festivals, were associated with group identity rather than with personal practice, such as prayer. Although they were more willing than other groups to allow non-Zoroastrians into prayer rooms, they were more opposed to intermarriage than any other groups. The implication is that their priority is to preserve their ethnicity but they were less opposed than any other group to non-Zoroastrians participating in their religious and social events.

Parsis from India were more orientated towards the old country than people from Pakistan or East Africa, and attended Zoroastrian functions more often than the other Parsi groups. They were also more inclined to accept intermarriage. In terms of religious beliefs they accepted more of the traditional doctrines than people from East Africa did, but not as many as Parsis from Pakistan. In community discussions I have often heard it said that the Indian-born Parsis are more religious and Orthodox than others are, but that is not born out by this study. Based on the purely anecdotal evidence of my experience, I suspect that the Bombay Parsis would be more polarized than other groups on their attitude to prayer, the urbanized and westernized individuals believing in a more Protestantized religion (emphasizing the meaning of prayers and rituals) whereas others followed the traditional Indian acceptance of the miraculous and mantric power of prayer.

Turning to the 'twice (or thrice) migrant' westerners (i.e. those who have migrated from one western country to another), fewer of them in comparison with the other groups practised the religion, fewer of them said that they prayed daily or wore the *sudre* and *kusti*. Fewer of them, in comparison with other groups migrating from non-western countries, observed any of the Zoroastrian traditions and more of them expressed non-traditional views on intermarriage and on allowing non-Zoroastrians into western prayer rooms. Fewer of these western migrants affirmed a belief in an afterlife, or the importance of the prayers for the dead, except in the humanistic form of providing help for the living. Fewer of these 'westerners' than members of other groups asserted their Zoroastrian-ness, ate Indian or Iranian food or wore Indian or Iranian dress regularly. Fewer of them wanted to preserve the religion or the traditional language. The implication of these figures is that onward migration in the western world appears to be linked to a weakening of religious and ethnic ties.

In short, whatever the local diasporic conditions of race and immigration law and policy, the various 'national' groups bring with them their own distinctive qualities, ideals and practices. The Zoroastrian diaspora is not a uniform, monolithic whole but embraces a range of traditions derived, at least in part, from diverse geographical backgrounds. The East African Parsis are very conscious of community boundaries; Parsis from Pakistan are typically strong in religious belief and practice. Both groups typically identify with the new country more than other groups. The Iranian Zoroastrians are very conscious of their Iranian culture, their links with other Iranians at festivals, and their centres. People from India have strong ties with the old country, but are less traditional in their religion than Parsis from Pakistan. People who move from one western country to another tend to be the ones most distanced from their religious and cultural heritage.

Rural versus urban origins (Table 4)

In previous publications I have speculated that there may be different patterns of settlement between people who migrated to the West from rural and from urban areas. Appendix 2, Table 4 compares the responses to religious questions of respondents from

Gujarat with those from Bombay. The caution expressed above must be registered again, concerning the imbalance of the sample size of these two groups, with only sixty-seven responses from people from Gujarat. The samples from Iran and Pakistan were yet smaller and made a comparison of such subgroups impossible, but it is reasonable to suppose that if a rural–urban comparison is valid for migrants from rural versus urban India, it may also be true of migrants from these other countries. Table 4 shows that the level of religious practice was greater among the diaspora Zoroastrians who came from Gujarat than it was among people who came from Bombay. More ‘Gujaratis’ prayed daily, wore the *sudre* and *kusti* all the time; more of them in the diaspora ate Indian food and wore Indian dress regularly. In terms of belief, more of them wanted a traditional *dokhma* funeral, and more of them objected to intermarriage and to the presence of non-Zoroastrians in western prayer rooms. More Gujaratis affirmed a belief in an afterlife, the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, heaven and hell, and the importance of prayers for the dead. More of them often attended a Zoroastrian centre in the diaspora, than did the ‘Bombayites’. More Gujaratis looked to India’s priestly authorities, and more of them asserted their identity in terms of the country of their birth rather than the country in which they now resided. More of them had positive perceptions of diaspora Parsi relations. If the disparity of sample sizes permits any conclusion from this table, the implication seems to be clear, that life in the great cosmopolitan metropolis of Bombay starts a process of westernization which results in diaspora Parsis from Bombay assimilating more readily than do those who come from more rural backgrounds. It might be hypothesized that because (semi-) rural migrants find western urban life such a shock, they assert their identity and community boundaries more strongly.

Language and religion (Table 5)

Language is obviously a key factor in the pattern of religious beliefs and practices in the diaspora. If this research were to be replicated, this subject would merit greater attention than I gave it. It is difficult to untangle a complex web of factors. The questionnaire asked what people described as their mother tongue. But when I followed up this question during my fieldwork it was

clear that ‘mother tongue’ meant different things to different people—either the language of the old country, which they may not know well, or the language that they most commonly use. There was a clear picture as far as Iranians are concerned: the Persian language meant a great deal to all my respondents from this group. The picture is more complicated with Parsis. In conversation I have asked people what language they thought in, but that clearly depends on the subject. Gujarati, for example, may be used when talking about family matters; English when discussing, say, world affairs. I once asked an informant, if he dropped a brick on his big toe, what language would he swear in; to which came the answer, ‘It depends on who was in the room!’ Parsis commonly switch from Gujarati to English, or the reverse, in mid-sentence. The most useful way of seeking the information that I wanted was to ask which language people could read other than English, for it is clear that many people speak but do not read or write in Gujarati. All the Associations studied keep their records, policy statements, conduct business, etc. in English. Identifying which language people conducted their personal affairs in, and in which they wrote down their thoughts, seemed a reasonable indicator of the extent to which diaspora Zoroastrians have assimilated, and the extent to which they remained in close touch with their roots. This point could be exaggerated, because even among Parsis in Mumbai, English is common in conversation and is the language for most formal documents and books. In (rural) Gujarat, the normal language of communication is Gujarati, hence the link between this topic and the previous one. It also reaffirms some of the points made above about Iranian Zoroastrians.

Table 5 in Appendix 2 summarizes the findings on this topic. Many of the respondents were able to read in a mixture of languages, e.g. other European languages. Because the combinations were many, this table identified only those who could read in Gujarati or Persian, and the third column is for those who read in no language other than English. More Gujarati readers said they prayed daily than did English readers, and still fewer Persian readers said that they prayed daily. More Gujarati readers said they wore the *sudre* and *kusti* at all times, than did the English readers. Since the *sudre* and *kusti* is not such a central part of traditional Iranian practice, the smaller number there was to be expected. Fewer English readers observed the Zoroastrian traditions associated

with festivals and the *dīvo*, compared with the Gujarati readers, more of whom practised all of them. The Iranians most commonly observed the festivals, especially No Ruz and the *gahambars*. As Naficy noted regarding Iranians in California, the festivals, as the markers of the annual cycle in the old country, assume considerable importance for these exiles. As far as funerals are concerned, Gujarati readers tended to prefer a *dokhma* funeral, whereas English readers preferred cremation. More Iranians opted for burial, which in view of general practice in Islamic Iran is understandable. More English readers accepted intermarrieds, but the Iranians had similar patterns of response to the Gujarati readers for reasons discussed above. More of the Gujarati readers than any other group asserted a belief in one or other form of the afterlife. This was naturally particularly marked in the belief in reincarnation: a belief associated more with India than Iran. But more of the Gujarati readers also affirmed the importance of prayers for the dead. They were also more likely to accept the religious authority of the old country. There was relatively little difference between the groups in their perception of the extent to which they had changed their beliefs in the new country, but more Iranians than the other groups said that their practices had changed little. In all groups, the majority asserted their identity in terms of being Zoroastrian, but the 'English readers' asserted their identity in terms of the country of residence. There were different priorities for the three groups regarding what merits preservation. A substantial majority in all groups, especially the Gujarati readers, affirmed that the religion is worth keeping, but many more Iranians than the other groups wanted to preserve the music, art and language of the old country. Although Parsis commonly have strong emotional links with India, the ties of diasporic Iranians to the old country are immensely strong, as they consider themselves to be the true Iranians. Feeling compelled to leave their homeland, they have particularly strong emotional ties to it. More Iranian Zoroastrians affirmed that they experienced racial discrimination than did the others. These figures may have been affected by the suspicion faced by many Iranians after the Revolution and the siege of the American Embassy in Tehran, since most of my Iranian respondents were in America and this subject was fresh in people's memory at the time of the survey in the 1980s.

Place of primary education (Table 6)

In some senses, where a person is born may not be the determinative factor: for example, a family might move a few days after a baby's birth. A saying commonly attributed to Jesuit teachers is 'Give us a child until he is seven, and he is ours for life.' It therefore seemed important to compare not just the last location before migration, but where people had their primary education. Table 6 in the Appendix 2 summarizes the survey data comparing patterns of religion between those whose earliest formal education was in a non-western country (India, Pakistan or Iran) and the West. It is again important to note the difference in sample sizes [$N = 1588$ and 132], but a sample of 132 is reasonably large as a basis for cautious judgment. There is a consistent pattern of those who had their primary education in 'the non-western world' practising and affirming Zoroastrian beliefs more than do those whose primary education was in the West. More of them prayed daily and wore *sudre* and *kusti*. Fewer of them observed none of the festivals; more of them observed them all and lit a *divo*. More of them affirmed traditional views on intermarriage and the place of non-Zoroastrians in western prayer rooms. Consistently more of those who had their early education in a non-western country affirmed a belief in the various forms of an afterlife, and regarded prayers for the dead to be essential. More of the western-educated asserted the humanistic belief that the prayers for the dead benefit the living. More of them than their western-educated co-religionists affirmed that these prayers aided the dead rather than the living. More of them said that they often ate Indian or Iranian food and many more of them said that they always wore *sudre* and *kusti*. More of them attended religious functions in the diaspora than did their western-educated fellows, and more of them thought that the religion was worth preserving. However, it was the western-educated who most commonly asserted that they wished to preserve the secular dimensions of their culture—food, music, dress and art. Those who had their education in 'the old world' consistently affirmed that community relations were good. The evidence suggests that the location of early education is an important factor in the preservation specifically of the religious heritage, but not necessarily of secular ethnicity. This distinction between preserving the religious and the secular dimensions of ethnicity will reoccur below.

Religious education in childhood (Table 7)

In most countries studied in this book there was a common emphasis on the importance of religious classes being organized for the young, to equip them to withstand the pressures of the outside world. (Hong Kong and East Africa were the exceptions.) Table 7 in Appendix 2 summarizes the data comparing the religious beliefs and practices of those who did, and those who did not, have a Zoroastrian religious education in their youth. This data deliberately does not distinguish between those who had such classes in the old country, but simply between those who did and did not have such religious education, wherever they had it. In this table the numbers are sufficiently large for the conclusions to be drawn with confidence [$N = 734$ and 1077]. The percentage differences are not as great between the two groups as they are in Table 6 discussed above; nevertheless there was a clear and consistent pattern that those who had had religious education classes practised their religion more often than those who did not. More of them affirmed traditional religious beliefs, and more of them identified with the community and the religion. More of them said that they prayed daily, and fewer of them said that they never prayed.¹⁹³ More of them always wore *sudre* and *kusti* and fewer of them said that they never wore these religious items. Fewer of them said that they observed none of the traditions, and more of them said that they observed all of them. The religious views of those who had a Zoroastrian religious education were also more traditional than those who had not had such classes. More of those who had classes wanted a *dokhma* funeral; fewer of them accepted intermarriage and more of them had outright objections to intermarriage. Similarly, more of those who had had religious classes affirmed a belief in the various forms of an afterlife, and more of them believed that the prayers for the dead aided the deceased. More of them attended a diaspora centre for religious functions, and more of them believed that religion and the old language were worth preserving. More of the class attendees accepted Indian religious authority, and asserted their identity either in terms of the old country or as Zoroastrians. There was,

¹⁹³ Because the percentage gap between the two groups is less than in the previous table, some of the following details include the two extreme possible answers, e.g. pray daily and never pray, to verify that the small difference does not mask a number of in-between positions, such as praying occasionally.

therefore, a clear pattern of more of those who had a Zoroastrian religious education in childhood practising the religion, and maintaining traditional beliefs, in comparison with those who did not have such classes. In the earlier chapters it was commonly seen that Associations had difficulties in organizing 'Sunday' schools because of pressures of time and distance, but the impact of such classes is evident. It is, perhaps, not surprising that religious classes have no impact on the preservation of people's 'secular ethnicity'; the differences in percentages relating to food, music and art are too similar to justify a strong statement, but what difference there was suggests that those who had religious classes attributed fractionally less importance to food, music, dress and art.

Level of education (Table 8)

In previous publications I have alluded to different patterns of religion according to the level of education pursued. Table 8 in Appendix 2 summarizes the comparative figures for those who completed their education at school level and those who pursued postgraduate studies. Again both sample groups were sufficiently large in number and there was not too great a contrast, so that confidence can be placed in the conclusions [N = 341 and 539]. There was a general pattern of those who had pursued the highest level of education practising the religion less than those who had not proceeded beyond schooling. More of the school-leavers said that they prayed daily and always wore the *sudre* and *kusti*. More of them observed all the Zoroastrian traditions, and fewer of them observed none. Generally, more of those who completed their education at school affirmed belief in an afterlife, though more of the highly educated asserted a general belief in an immortal soul. Fewer of the highly educated believed in the prayers for the dead being essential, and more of them asserted the 'humanist' view that such prayers aid the living rather than the dead. It was the school-leavers who tended to affirm the traditional beliefs exemplified in the wish for a *dokhma* funeral, in the non-acceptance of intermarriage, and on the exclusion of non-Zoroastrians from western prayer rooms. It was the school-leavers who most commonly attended their local centre for religious functions, and more of them accepted the religious authorities in the 'old country'. In the light of these patterns it is not surprising that it was the highly educated who most commonly said that they had

changed their religious beliefs and practices in the new country. The patterns of 'secular ethnic practices' were more complex. It was the school-leavers who most commonly said that they wore Indian or Iranian dress. There was little difference between the groups on the value of preserving religion and language, but it was the highly educated who wished to preserve some of the non-religious culture of the old country, notably food and art. Although fewer of the very highly educated affirmed religious beliefs and practices, it does not follow that they have weaker community ties: they attended functions and valued secular culture, apart from dress, more than the less highly educated. In view of the high proportions of highly educated people in the Zoroastrian diaspora, the link between a higher education and weakening of traditional religious belief and practices could be significant for the future of the diaspora groups.

Type of education (Table 9)

In the study of the various countries, it was noted that some types of graduates tended to migrate to certain countries rather than others; for example, arts graduates had commonly migrated to Britain and Canada whereas science graduates tended to migrate to the USA. Appendix 2, Table 9 compares the patterns of beliefs and practices of such graduates. Once more the samples were large and balanced enough for there to be reasonable confidence in the assertions [N = arts 562, sciences 508; 770 responses said 'other', including 292 saying a mixture.] Although the figures did not differ widely, there was nevertheless a fairly common pattern that arts graduates tended to practise the religion and preserved the traditional beliefs more than the scientists did. More arts graduates said that they prayed daily than did the scientists, though there was little difference on the wearing of the *sudra* and *kusti*. Arts graduates tended to have more traditional views on excluding non-Zoroastrians from western prayer rooms and preferred a *dokhma* funeral. More of them asserted a belief in various forms of the afterlife, and more arts graduates believed that the prayers for the dead were essential and benefited the dead, whereas more scientists believed that they benefited the living. Slightly more arts than science graduates accepted that religious authority lay in the old country. The scientists tended to affirm more than the arts graduates that their beliefs and practices had

changed in the new country, and more of them asserted the citizenship of their country of residence rather than the country of their birth. More arts than science graduates believed that the religion and the old language were worth preserving, but their views were not so different on the secular dimensions of ethnicity. In short, as with the level of education, so also the nature of that education affected religious belief and practice and perceptions of change in the western world.

Type of career (Table 10)

In previous publications I have tentatively advanced the hypothesis that there are different patterns of religious belief and practice between businessmen and people in the professions (law, medicine, academia etc.). Table 10 summarizes the data on religion for the two groups. Once more the sample sizes are large and balanced enough for confidence to be placed in the conclusions drawn from the data [N = business persons 362; professionals 573]. Typically, more of the businessmen, in comparison with the professionals, said that they prayed daily and more of them asserted a belief in an afterlife. More of them thought that prayers for the dead were essential and that the prayers benefited the dead, whereas the professionals tended to assert the 'humanist' belief that they benefited the living. More businessmen accepted the authority of the priests in the old country; more of them asserted traditional views on such issues as a *dokhma* funeral, more objected to intermarriage and more of them wanted to exclude non-Zoroastrians from western prayer rooms. More businessmen than professionals asserted that they had not changed their religious beliefs or practices in the West, and more of them asserted their citizenship in terms of the place of birth rather than in terms of residence. Fewer of them, surprisingly in the light of the above trends, asserted their identity in terms of their Zoroastrian-ness. It was, on the other hand, the professionals who tended to say that the secular ethnic traditions (food, music, dress and art) were worth preserving. The anecdotal evidence gained from my various periods of fieldwork was that the businessmen tended to want to get on with 'doing' their religion, whereas the highly educated professionals wanted to think about, and debate, beliefs and practices. These findings support that subjective impression, and are probably affected by the trend noted above on the impact of higher

levels of education. Many Zoroastrian businessmen are graduates, but fewer of them, in comparison with the professionals, have undertaken postgraduate study. As with the highly educated and the scientists, fewer traditional beliefs and practices do not necessarily mean a loss of interest in their cultural heritage, for the professionals valued their secular ethnicity even more than the businessmen did. Preserving *Parsi-panu* can be strong even if people are not religious, just as being Iranian matters to non-religious Iranian Zoroastrians.

Period of migration (Table 11)

In previous publications I have suggested that there are broad differences between the patterns of belief and practice between Zoroastrians who have migrated in the different decades. Table 11 summarizes the figures behind that assertion and details the [N =] N figures. It should be noted that there were only 67 respondents who had migrated prior to the 1950s compared with 669 who had migrated in the 1970s. Caution needs to be exercised in comparing the percentages, but the pre-1950 arrivals were such an interesting group, given that globally migration was a feature of the 1960s and later, that it was judged worth keeping the pre-1960s figures separate. In what follows, by early settlers I refer to those who migrated before the 1960s (i.e. conflating the pre-1950s with pre-1960s so that N = 179 therefore gives greater confidence in the comparisons); the middle period indicates the 1960s and 1970s when most respondents migrated; the later settlers were those who had migrated in the 1980s. The pattern is not absolutely consistent, but in general terms, the earliest and the latest settlers tended to practise the religion more, and affirmed more traditional beliefs. For example, fewer migrants of the 'middle period', the 1960s and 1970s, said that they prayed daily, wore the *sudre/kusti* daily; nor did so many of them say that they preferred a *dokhma* funeral. Fewer 'middle period' settlers raised objections to intermarriage and fewer of them would bar non-Zoroastrians from the western prayer rooms. The reason appears to be that the earliest settlers now form the older generation, and patterns associated with age will be discussed below. The people who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s were the pioneers, people who were highly educated, very positive about the New World, the innovative trailblazers. The latest arrivals are people who still

remain close to the old countries, and their ties are both emotional and religious. It is this group that tended to assert that they had not changed their religious beliefs or practices very much, in contrast to the settlers in the 'middle period'. The new settlers more commonly affirmed that religion and language were worth preserving, and ate Indian or Iranian food often, and attended a Zoroastrian centre for religious functions more frequently. There was little difference between the groups regarding other secular dimensions of their ethnicity, namely food, music and art. It was the earliest and the latest settlers who identified themselves as citizens of the country of birth, whereas the 'middle period' settlers identified themselves as citizens of the country of residence. The latest settlers were those most likely to assert their Zoroastrianness. There were other exceptions to this general pattern which were readily explicable. Fewer of the early settlers said they attended religious functions often, presumably because of decreasing mobility as they grew older. Conversely, it is probably because of their age that more of them believed that prayers for the dead were essential, and age was probably the explanation for the earlier settlers wearing the *sudre* and *kusti* most. In view of these comments it is important to compare the patterns of religious belief and practice associated with age.

Age groups (Table 12)

In many societies the received wisdom is that young people are less religious than older people are. That pattern did emerge in this study, but, as will be seen, the picture is more complex than a simple graph. The general picture (Appendix 2, Table 12) is that between the ages of 20 and 60 people tended to be less religious than those over 60 were. The subject of the under-20s will be discussed at the end of this section. More older people said that they prayed daily and wore the *sudre* and *kusti* regularly. Fewer of them said that they observed none of the Zoroastrian traditions and more observed all of them in comparison with younger people. More older people preferred a *dokhma* funeral in comparison with the middle-aged. Fewer old people approved of intermarriage, but more youngsters said that they wished to exclude non-Zoroastrians from the western prayer rooms. More of the older people affirmed a belief in the afterlife, and asserted that prayers for the dead were essential. More youngsters, rather than

the elders, considered that these prayers aid the living. More elders asserted their identity in terms of the country of residence, rather than of birth; it was the youngsters who asserted their Zoroastrian-ness. It was mostly the young and middle-aged who wanted to preserve the secular ethnic traditions, namely food, art and even language. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was mostly the elders who asserted that the religion was worth preserving. The elders, rather than the young people, were consistently more positive about community relations, be that between Iranians and Parsis, or between Parsis, or between old and new immigrants. Given the comments in the previous chapters that the youngsters found the battles of their elders put them off the community, these figures are striking confirmation of that anecdotal evidence. The broad point, therefore, is that the level of religious belief was higher among the older members of the community, the over-60s, and particularly those aged 70 and over.

The figures for the under-20s merit further comment. Although fewer affirmed religious belief and practice less than their elders did, it is worth noting how many of them still asserted their religious belief and practice, more than might be expected from a survey of the wider population of that age. Over half of the younger respondents said that they prayed daily and wore the *sudre* and *kusti* regularly. As many youngsters said that they celebrated the festivals as did those in any other age group. The same was true for accepting the authority of bodies in the old country. There were some areas where the young were stricter than their elders, notably in their wish for a traditional *dokhma* funeral, and more of them wanted to exclude non-Zoroastrians from their prayer rooms. As related in Chapter 8 on North America, they wanted a place to go where they could be themselves. It is also worth drawing attention to the fact that it was the youngsters in particular who wanted to assert their identity in terms of their Zoroastrian-ness. It would, therefore, be simplistic to assert that the youngsters who responded to this survey were less religious than their elders were. There was a substantial amount of religious belief and practice, and a degree of traditionalism, among them. More of them than the elders were keen to preserve such secular traditions as food and language. This table is further evidence of the error common in the 1960s' assumption that migrant communities would follow a steady trajectory of assimilation.

Perhaps the age at which the figures suggest a lower level of belief and practice is the twenties. The reason for this may be something to do with family patterns.

Family patterns (Table 13)

There was a general pattern for more of the married, and especially the widowed, people practising the religion, and for more of them to affirm religious beliefs than did single, or separated and divorced persons (Appendix 2, Table 13). A larger percentage of widowed persons, and to a lesser but still important extent, more of the married persons said that they prayed daily, wore the *sudre* and *kusti* regularly, ate Indian or Iranian food, and wore the dress of the old country, than did people in the two other groups. It is noticeable that in most instances the figures for the separated or divorced people were very similar to those for the single, never (yet) married persons. More married and widowed persons took traditional views on religious questions; for example, fewer of them accepted intermarriage, and the widowed especially affirmed the importance of prayers for the dead. These are the two groups who most commonly said that they attended Zoroastrian centres regularly for religious functions. More of them also observed all of the traditions than did the single or separated or divorced people. Contrasting attitudes to citizenship will be discussed below in the study of Table 23. Fewer single people asserted that the religion was worth preserving. The exceptions to this general pattern are that the single people were more traditional regarding funerals, which is not what one might have expected. It may be because a high proportion of single people were young, and this was seen to be a way in which young people were more traditional than many of their elders. There was relatively little difference between the groups on excluding non-Zoroastrians from the prayer rooms. Single and divorced people tended to be more negative in their assessment of community relations. Married life, therefore, appears to be associated with people becoming more identified with their traditions. But there are, of course, different types of family, and the following sections will consider these.

Nuclear and extended families (Table 14)

My subjective impression, based on staying with both nuclear and extended families, was that the presence of a wider family,

especially with the older generation of the grandparents, commonly resulted in a more traditional religious practice. The figures in Appendix 2, Table 14 compare nuclear and extended families. More members of nuclear families said that they prayed daily, and slightly more of them always wore *sudre* and *kusti*. Slightly more of the members of nuclear families said that they wanted a traditional *dokhma* funeral and in general more of them expressed a belief in one or other forms of a belief in the afterlife. There were only minimal differences on attitudes to prayers for the dead. More members of extended families said that their beliefs and practices had changed after migration. Members of extended families tended to assert their identity either in terms of the country of their birth, or as Zoroastrians, whereas more nuclear families asserted their citizenship of the country of residence. Consistently, members of nuclear families thought it was worth preserving both the religion and the secular aspects of their inheritance (music, dress, art and language). These figures do not, therefore, support my assumption. They suggest that although there is not a great difference between nuclear and extended family views on their religion, the nuclear families tend to be more traditional than the extended families. The figures for people without a family in the new country are interesting. The level of private religious practice, daily prayer, wearing *sudre* and *kusti* and their emphasis on the importance of preserving the religion was as high as any other group, and sometimes (notably in prayer) much higher. Their involvement in community activities was lower; for example, participation in festivals and religious functions, wearing Indian or Iranian dress and the importance attached to using the traditional language. They were also the group which considered that their religious beliefs and practices had changed in the new country. In practice, therefore, it seems that Associations are appreciated most by nuclear families. Is it the case that extended families feel less need of networking beyond the family?

Families with children (Table 15)

An impression I had gained from fieldwork is that having a child affects, among other things, a person's perspective on their heritage, and that the process of marriage and parenthood commonly returned a person to their traditions. Table 15 in Appendix 2

compares the figures for people who had, and those who did not have, children. More of those with children said they wore *sudre* and *kusti* often; more of them expressed traditional views on intermarriage and on excluding non-Zoroastrians from western prayer rooms. More of those with children affirmed a belief in the diverse forms of the after life; more of them attended a Zoroastrian centre for religious functions than did those without children. More of those with children accepted the religious authority of the old country, yet they defined their citizenship more in terms of the country of residence, whereas those without children tended to assert citizenship of their country of birth. Home, it appears, is where the children are. More of those with children asserted their Zoroastrian identity. The pattern with secular dimensions of the tradition is less clear cut. There was little difference regarding the practice of wearing Indian or Iranian dress, but more of those with children often ate Indian or Iranian food. Although the differences were small, there was a trend for more of those with children to say that they wished to preserve traditions associated with food, music, dress, religion and language. Having children, therefore, appears to result in a greater concern to practice the religion, to follow its teachings and preserve their customs.

Intermarrieds (Table 16)

The figures in Tables 13–15 in Appendix 2 relate to all marriages. It is the contention of some in the community that marriage to a non-Zoroastrian is associated with a weakened commitment to the religion. Table 16 in Appendix 2 compares the answers to the key religious questions of respondents who had married within the community with those who had married out. More of the ‘in-marrieds’ said that they prayed daily than did the ‘out-marrieds’, more said that they wore the *sudre* and *kusti* daily and that they attended religious functions regularly. More of them expressed the traditional perspective on wanting a *dokhma* funeral; more of them affirmed a belief in the afterlife and considered that prayers for the dead were essential, and more of them affirmed that such prayers benefited the dead, whereas the out-marrieds tended to take a more humanistic view and considered that the prayers benefited the living. More of the in-marrieds accepted the religious authority of the old country. More of the out-marrieds

thought their religious beliefs and practice had changed considerably since migration. Whereas the in-marrieds defined their citizenship in terms of the country of birth, or as Zoroastrians, the out-marrieds tended to define their citizenship in terms of the country of residence. The pattern of the in-marrieds asserting their traditional culture was expressed in secular matters also. More of the in-marrieds often ate Indian or Iranian food, and regularly wore Indian or Iranian dress. More in-marrieds than out-marrieds thought it worth preserving not only the religion, but also music, dress and language (though not food and art), but the differences were not as marked on the secular dimensions of life as they were on the religious dimension.

The interpretation of these figures, however, is not simple. They do not necessarily show that it is the less religious who marry out, or that intermarriage makes them less religious. It could be that the awareness of a hostile reception at community functions drives people away from the religion. These figures do not show cause and effect; they give a snapshot of which religious beliefs and practices were associated with different groups at the time of the survey.

Who are the religious people?

A different way of identifying patterns of religious belief and practice is to compare the demographic details of those who affirmed religious belief and practice and those who did not. This is done in Tables 17–21 in Appendix 2 by comparing first the figures for those who said that they prayed regularly with those who said that they rarely or never prayed. Second, Table 18 compares the figures for those who said that they attended a Zoroastrian centre regularly and those who said that they rarely attended. Finally, Table 22 compares the figures for those who said that they were Orthodox, Liberal and Non-practising. Are there identifiable demographic trends behind these self-identified active and non-active religious people? Analysing the figures this way cross-checks some of the assertions made above.

'Pray-ers' and 'non-pray-ers' (Table 17)

In regional terms, the centres with the highest proportions of people who said that they prayed daily were from Karachi, Melbourne, Houston and Sydney (93%, 94%, 91%, 90% respectively).

The groups where fewer people said that they prayed daily were the scattered groups in Canada, USA and Britain (76%, 79%, 80%). The first comment to make is that all these figures for praying daily were high, more than one would expect from a study of the wider population. They also highlight a general point made in this study, namely that religion is an important factor in the lives (and identities) of diaspora Zoroastrians. But a pattern of 12–17% difference is noteworthy and merits comment. The Karachi figure should be treated cautiously, for this table is of those who now live in Karachi, not the people who migrated from Karachi, and the Karachi sample, as noted earlier, is almost certainly skewed. Melbourne and Sydney were probably high because they were the most recent settlements and people living there were still emotionally close to the old country. Houston was seen in Chapter 8 to be perhaps the most traditional centre in North America, probably because of the high proportion of people who had migrated there from Pakistan. It has also been noted before that it was people living in the scattered groups, with few fellow Zoroastrians nearby to provide the support network, who tended to practise their religion least.

There was remarkably little difference between the figures for those who have been in the West for over thirty years and those who had arrived later, though the figures for those in their first year in the New World were significantly higher if the very low sample size is accepted (Appendix 2, Table 17). This table confirms the earlier assertion that women pray more than men do. The figures for people of different age groups who prayed show that the percentage increases steadily with each decade of a person's life, with 67% of the under-twenties saying they prayed daily, compared with 93% of those over the age of 70. Although fewer young Zoroastrians said that they prayed daily, that remains a high percentage in comparison with what one is likely to find in the wider population. A higher proportion of the married, and especially the widowed, respondents affirmed that they prayed regularly than did single people. Fewer out-married than in-married people said that they prayed regularly. More of those who read in Gujarati asserted that they prayed regularly than did members of any other group, with fewer Persian readers saying they prayed regularly than did the English readers. More of those whose education was completed at school level and more of the arts than the science students asserted that they prayed regularly.

More of those who went to religious classes in childhood affirmed that they prayed regularly. Education therefore, has an important impact on religious practice.

Zoroastrian networks (Tables 18–20)

Many more of those who said that they regularly attended a centre affirmed that they prayed daily, wore *sudre* and *kusti* often, wanted a *dokhma* funeral, objected to intermarriage, and wanted to exclude non-Zoroastrians from the prayer room (Appendix 2, Table 18). Many more of the regular than the rare attendees affirmed their belief in one or more forms of the afterlife, more of them asserted that prayers for the dead were essential and benefit the dead than did the non-attendees. More of the regular attendees accepted that the religious authority lies in the old country, and more of them said that they had not changed either their religious beliefs or practices in the New World. More non-attendees asserted their identity in terms of the country of residence, and fewer asserted that they were Zoroastrians. In terms of secular culture, more of those who attended a Zoroastrian centre regularly said that they ate Indian or Iranian food often, and more of them said they wore Indian or Iranian dress—though more of the non-attendees said that the traditional food was worth keeping. More of the regular attendees asserted the value of the secular traditions, though the percentage difference was not as great as it was when the question was posed whether respondents thought that the religion and the language should be preserved. Those who attended regularly tended to have a more positive opinion of internal community relations.

However much conflict the establishment of centres sometimes provokes within an Association, their effect is marked in the preservation of both religious and secular traditions.

Appendix 2, Table 19 compares the figures for those who did and those who did not read some form of Zoroastrian literature regularly. Once again, there was a clear trend for those who kept in contact with fellow Zoroastrians, in this instance through their reading, to assert that they practised their religion more regularly. This commitment was shown in various ways: in the numbers of those who prayed daily, wearing *sudre* and *kusti* regularly, in displaying traditional attitudes to intermarriage, believing in the diverse forms of the afterlife, in the assertion of their Zoroastrian

identity, and in valuing secular practices associated with food, dress, music, art or language. The link between reading Zoroastrian literature and practising the religion and preserving the cultural traditions was strong. These figures do not establish that either was the cause of the other, but are rather an indicator that the two go together. The most widely read single piece of Zoroastrian literature was *Parsiana*, but the local newsletters were the type of literature most commonly taken. Tables 18 and 19 together, therefore, indicate the importance of local efforts to have a centre and newsletter, however much work they require.

Table 20 in Appendix 2 compares the beliefs and practices of those who said that they kept in regular correspondence with Zoroastrians ‘abroad’, and those who said that they rarely or never did. A note of caution must be registered before proceeding to discuss this table. There is a substantial difference in sample size, $N = 1151$ that regularly corresponded compared with 179 who rarely corresponded with Zoroastrians ‘abroad’. With a sample of 179, however, the figures, though to be treated with caution, may be acceptable. What the figures do show is the extent of international networking among diaspora Zoroastrians. More of those who said that they kept in regular contact said that they prayed daily, wore *sudre* and *kusti* often, more of them objected to intermarriage and affirmed a belief in an afterlife. More of them affirmed the importance of the prayers for the dead, but more who did not keep in contact with Zoroastrians abroad affirmed the ‘humanist’ opinion that such prayers helped the living rather than the dead. The ‘regular corresponders’ said they attended Zoroastrian centres regularly, and fewer of them asserted that they had changed their religious beliefs very much. Apart from food, the ‘regular correspondents’ affirmed the importance of the various ethnic traditions, but especially the religion and language. In theory one can practise the Zoroastrian religion when living alone. There is no requirement to go to a temple; what is required is to say the prayers, for Parsis to wear the *sudre* and *kusti*, observe the purity laws and pray before the fire—but that can, and ideally should, be the sun. In reality, however, Zoroastrians observe their religion more closely when their beliefs and practices are reaffirmed by contact with fellow Zoroastrians. The networks are therefore of major importance in perpetuating the tradition, and they reaffirm the secular culture also. Both groups, however, see

preserving traditional food as important; indeed it is viewed as even more important than religion by those who do not correspond with fellow Zoroastrians. The data garnered from this survey therefore confirms the anecdotal evidence discussed in Chapter 7, specifically the interviews in France and Germany.

The Orthodox, Liberals and non-practitioners (Table 21)

Just as it was interesting to see who the people were who tended to pray, etc., so also it is interesting to see if there is any clear type of person who tends to be Orthodox, or Liberal—or who does not practise the religion [N = 208, 910, 175]. Table 21, Appendix 2, compares the figures for those who chose these designations from a list of possibilities. The overall breakdown of figures shows that 16% of respondents who used these three labels described themselves as Orthodox, 70% as Liberal, and 14% said that they did not practise the religion. The diaspora, overall, therefore considered itself to be Liberal, with almost as many saying they did not practise the religion as used the self-description of Orthodox. But there were different patterns between different groups.

The centres where most people said that they were Orthodox were Melbourne, Kenya and California (29%, 24%, 23% respectively).¹⁹⁴ The centres where the smallest proportion described themselves as Orthodox were Chicago and the scattered groups in the USA (9%, 13%). Conversely, the cities where the largest numbers asserted that they were Liberal were Houston, Chicago and New York (78%, 76%, 73% respectively). The places where fewer respondents said that they were Liberal were Kenya, the scattered groups in Canada and California (62%, 63%, 65%). The cities where most people said that they were non-practising were the scattered groups in both Canada and USA, Toronto and Sydney (19%, 17%, 16%, 16% respectively). The cities where fewest people said that they did not practise were Melbourne, and Houston (5%, 7% respectively). There were, therefore, some geographical patterns. It was the scattered groups in Canada, USA (and Britain) who were most likely to say that they were either Liberal or non-practising. These patterns highlight an important point, namely what one person considered to be 'Orthodox,' may have

¹⁹⁴ In what follows I have omitted the figures for Karachi because the sample there was skewed.

been 'Liberal' to someone else. This is important in assessing the Houston figures, for the respondents from there consistently showed themselves to be more traditional than respondents from Chicago were, even though more of them used the self-description of Liberal. What might have been perceived as Liberal in Karachi might have been seen as Orthodox in Chicago.

It would, however, be wrong to classify all Zoroastrians in one centre as belonging to any one group. For example, the most Orthodox home in North America in which I have been fortunate to stay was in California. The purity laws were strictly maintained. A fire was kept burning in the home, and during periods of menstruation the wife would go to stay in a hotel in order to avoid defiling the fire. She could not travel to the hotel in their car, otherwise that would have been polluted and could not be used for transporting the fire. She therefore used a taxi. (Husband and wife found the impression this gave to neighbours highly amusing!) The Orthodox or Khshnoomist magazine *Mazdayasnie Connection* is edited from California, which is also the base of the Traditional Mazdayasni Anjuman. In stark contrast, California is where Jafarey works, and where there are many Iranian Zoroastrians who in the eyes of most Parsis would be considered 'Liberal'. These diversities were not simply scattered round the large state, but were all found in the Los Angeles/Anaheim area. This note on California highlights the danger of depicting Zoroastrians in one centre as a monolithic whole; one can only write about broad trends or patterns.

As Table 21 in Appendix 2 shows, generally, more of the people who had lived in the diaspora for the longest time (thirty years and more) described themselves as Orthodox and those who had been there for a shorter time (under thirty years) were more likely to describe themselves as Liberals. Approximately one in ten for all years described themselves as non-practitioners. The people who had been in the diaspora for less than a year were the group in which most people said that they did not practise the religion, yet a highish proportion said they were Orthodox and in various tables they emerged as having high levels of religious practice. The explanation for these figures may be that recent migrants from the subcontinent were polarized between those who had chosen to distance themselves emotionally as well as physically from the old country and those who had a strong desire to preserve

their heritage.¹⁹⁵ The gender differences were small, though a smaller proportion of women than men described themselves as non-practising. Age appeared to be a bigger factor than length of residence in the country, at least as far as Orthodoxy and non-practitioners were concerned. More respondents who were under 25 years of age said that they did not practise the religion and fewer described themselves as Orthodox than did members of any other group. The position was reversed with the elders; more people described themselves as Orthodox than said that they were not practising.

In terms of families, more married and especially widowed respondents described themselves as Orthodox, and fewer described themselves as not practising. In contrast, fewer single or separated people said that they were Orthodox, and more of them said that they were non-practising. It is difficult to see any pattern associated with the different types of family. More of those who had married out said that they were not practising the religion than did the in-marrieds. More people who read Gujarati literature asserted their Orthodoxy, and fewer of them said that they did not practise their religion. Fewer people who read Persian described themselves as Orthodox, and were as likely as 'English-only-readers' to describe themselves as non-practitioners. Education was a factor in religious self-description: more school leavers than any other educational group described themselves as Orthodox, and fewer of them described themselves as 'non-practitioners.' By contrast, fewer postgraduates said that they were Orthodox, and more said that they were not practising the religion. More science than arts graduates said that they did not practise the religion. In terms of career, more of those in clerical grades described themselves as Orthodox, whereas more of those in executive-level employment said that they did not practise the religion. Respondents who rarely corresponded with or met fellow Zoroastrians in the diaspora generally described themselves as not practising, whereas most who were in contact with Zoroastrians overseas and in the diaspora said that they were Orthodox. More respondents who had attended Zoroastrian classes in their youth described themselves as Orthodox, compared with those who had

¹⁹⁵ As there were only twenty-four respondents who had migrated within the previous twelve months, the figures are at best suggestive. It may be that such a small sample yields an unsafe result.

had no such classes and it was the latter who were more likely to say that they did not practise the religion.

There are, therefore, patterns of age, family, language, childhood education and religious classes, higher and scientific education, and contact with Zoroastrian networks, which emerged as important factors in the formation of the self-perceived Orthodox, Liberal and Non-practising diaspora Zoroastrians.

The perception of discrimination (Table 22)

Discrimination was a problem perceived by approximately one in three of my respondents. Appendix 2, Table 22 gives the figures for that perception among different groups. It was most commonly asserted by people from East Africa, or respondents who had been born in the West, and especially by those who had migrated in the 1960s. Fewer recent migrants said that they had faced discrimination. Men rather than women said that they faced discrimination. The people who most commonly said that they had faced discrimination were in the age range 30 to 60; those least likely to make this assertion were the young (under 20) and those over 70. Those who were separated or divorced more commonly said that they had faced discrimination, and more of those respondents who were married to a non-Zoroastrian, in comparison with the in-marrieds, similarly believed that they faced discrimination. It was a perception more commonly expressed among those who read Persian, and by people who had been educated both in the old and the new countries. More of those who had undertaken postgraduate studies, those who had studied science, and those in the highest level of employment, considered that they had faced discrimination. More of those who were not in close contact with their own community, either in the diaspora, or in correspondence with Zoroastrians 'abroad', said that they had faced discrimination.

These figures contain trends that might surprise some people. The general population's stereotype of those facing discrimination is that they are the least well-educated, those who bury themselves in their own community and do not 'assimilate'. That stereotypical image is contradicted here, especially by the figures for the highly educated, scientists, and those in the highest levels of employment. Further, it was the people who did not keep in contact with their community, including those who had married

out, who were most likely to consider that they faced prejudice. These figures suggest that there is no one type of person who provokes discrimination, unless attaining a high education and being successful does so—out of jealousy? The anecdotal evidence of my own conversations with Zoroastrians in fifteen countries over three decades is that it is often people in the legal and medical professions who consider that they have faced discrimination. There is a strong feeling in many countries that to succeed you have to be seen to be twice as good as the local person. People whom I know well personally have had threatening phone calls and windows smashed; they include successful lawyers, accountants and in one case someone active in mainstream party politics. The Zoroastrians in many countries reasonably feel that they have contributed much to their societies, but a substantial proportion believe that they have been discriminated against by that society. However, there are many who have said that they do not face discrimination. Some respondents to the trial run of the survey, and close friends, urged me not to include this question in my survey because they did not face discrimination, and asking about it might cause concern. I did not wish to arouse concern, but it seemed to me, then and now, that such questions need to be addressed. One person said that because the Parsis were so educated, successful and assimilated they did not face discrimination. Unfortunately, from this survey it seems that it is precisely such people who are most likely to consider that they have faced discrimination.

Questions of identity (Table 23:1–22)

A theme throughout this book, but highlighted particularly in Chapter 8 on North America, and in some of the tables studied in this section, is the diversity of self-understandings of many Zoroastrians. For example, some people who have migrated saw their identity in terms of the country of birth, others emphasized the country of present residence, yet others identified themselves simply as Zoroastrian and others as an amalgam of these. The subject is so important and complex that it merits more extensive treatment here. Table 23 analyses the survey under the heading of Citizenship. It is again important to emphasize that this survey was conducted in the mid 1980s—when vocabulary was used and academic debates pursued in a way that they would not be in the

new millennium. The issue of whether the offspring of migrants were 'caught between cultures' has been one example discussed in the Introduction and which will again be considered in the Conclusion. Similarly, the following discussion on citizenship would now be phrased differently, especially in Britain where many Zoroastrian youth themselves seek to distinguish between citizenship—in terms of which passport you hold—race, ethnicity, religion and culture. The term 'citizenship' has become more problematic in academic discourse in Britain since the Government has devised curricula in schools to make pupils 'better citizens'. Nevertheless, some of the issues lying behind this vocabulary are still concerns in the third millennium, and merit reflection. It would have been artificial and improper to cloak this discussion in vocabulary which was not used in the questionnaire. The figures in Appendix 2, Table 23 show a limited range of responses; many respondents indicated 'other', but they yielded such a diverse range that they could not be included within the confines of this book.¹⁹⁶ That very diversity highlights the complexity of respondents' self understandings. The overall pattern was that most respondents wished to assert their Zoroastrian identity, usually as Zoroastrian citizens of the country of residence, but even there, and certainly in terms of 'old' and new countries, there was a range of responses so that numerous qualifications are essential.

Table 23(1), analyses the responses of Zoroastrians living in all the countries studied, except Kenya, where few respondents answered this question because it was a very sensitive one in this country at the time of the survey. The high percentage of respondents from Hong Kong who asserted their identity by country of birth may be misleading because it is not uncommon for mothers-to-be to go to India for the birth, to be with family there. Few Hong Kong respondents wanted to assert their identity in terms of their place of residence, not even as Zoroastrian citizens of what was a British colony at the time of the survey.

Two sets of figures stand out: the low percentage of respondents from Toronto and from Canada in general who asserted their citizenship in terms of the old country, in comparison with

¹⁹⁶ Four hundred and thirty-three respondents indicated a further combination of amalgamations of self-descriptions, fifty-eight indicated 'other'.

respondents from the USA. In Chapter 8 emphasis was laid on the different perceptions of the benefits of Canadian multiculturalism and the perceived threat of the melting pot in the USA. Many more Canadian respondents identified themselves as Canadians, whereas in the USA identity was asserted in terms of country of birth, or simply as Zoroastrians. Few American respondents wanted to assert their identity as Americans. There were differences between different centres in the USA. In California more respondents wanted to assert their identity in terms either of the country of birth, or as Zoroastrians of the old country, a feature reflecting the high number of responses from Iranian Zoroastrians there. Compared with other centres in the USA, more Chicago respondents were willing to assert their identity in terms of the country of residence, especially as Zoroastrian residents of that country, in contrast, for example, with respondents from Houston or New York. In the chapter on North America, Chicago respondents were seen to be typically 'Liberal', Houston respondents more traditional, including their ties to the old country.

In Melbourne, as in Canada, fewer respondents asserted their citizenship in terms of the old country, and more of them asserted their Australian identity. In Chapter 9 on Australia it was noted that the constitution of the Melbourne Association emphasized its members' commitment to, and role in, Australia, more than any other constitution studied in the course of this work emphasized its national ties. In Sydney, in contrast, there was seen to be an unusual degree of Zoroastrian involvement with other emigrés from India and so more respondents from that Association than from Melbourne identified themselves with the old country. In London, the emphasis was on simply being Zoroastrian. It would be interesting to see whether any further survey taken after the ZTFE's involvement in inter-faith activities has affected that self-perception.

Table 23 (2) presents the responses to the question of citizenship according to country of previous residence. Fewer people born in the West asserted their Zoroastrian identity, though even here, two-thirds wished to do so. Iranian Zoroastrians more than any other group asserted their citizenship in terms of the old country. Few who had migrated from East Africa or Pakistan asserted their identity in terms of the country of birth—understandably perhaps in that

the 'old country' did not feel like 'their country'. They therefore preferred to describe themselves either as simply Zoroastrians, or more often as Zoroastrian citizens of the country of residence. Although most respondents who had migrated from India identified themselves in terms of the new country, a bigger proportion asserted their citizenship in terms of the old country than did people from any other country, except those from Iran.

In broad terms, the people who had settled in the New World at an earlier time were willing to identify themselves as citizens of the country of residence (Appendix 2, table 23(3)). The exceptions, however, were the very early settlers, people who migrated before the 1960s. This feature becomes yet more marked if the low number of respondents who had migrated in the 1940s [$N = 44$] is allowed; then those older migrants maintained their identity in terms of the country of birth, and fewer of them used the self-appellation of 'Zoroastrian'. On several issues, the people who migrated in the 1970s, and especially the 1960s, have been seen to be the innovative, 'Liberal' members of the various communities. The later 1980s migrants still tended to define themselves in terms of the old country.

Location is but one factor affecting perceptions of citizenship. Gender is another (Appendix 2, Table 23(4)). Women tended to identify more with the old country than men did, and they identified themselves as Zoroastrians more than men did. One element in this may perhaps be where women are at home as the homemakers, for we will see below under career that it is people who go out to their workplace who tended to be those who identified with the new country more. Another factor is likely to be—as discussed elsewhere in this section—that women tended to be more active in the religion than men were.

Age is also a factor (Appendix 2, Table 23(5)). Roughly one in five respondents identified themselves as citizens of the country of birth, more younger people identified themselves as Zoroastrian citizens of their birthplace, but most older respondents (40 years old and upwards) identified themselves as Zoroastrian citizens of the country of residence. This trend for elders rather than young people to identify with the new country goes against many of the stereotypical images of the youth in diaspora communities seeking to 'break away' from the culture of their parent's generation.

Families are also a factor in self-perceptions of citizenship (Appendix 2, Table 23 (6–9)). Married people tended to assert their citizenship in terms of the country of residence, and their Zoroastrian identity, more than did single people and in particular contrast with widowed people, who tended to identify with the old country. The first thought to explain this last point is that it is a factor of age, but in the previous paragraph more older people than younger ones were seen to assert their identity in terms of the country of residence. Few of the elders identified themselves as Zoroastrian citizens of the old country.

Respondents who had married out of the community tended to identify themselves more as citizens of the new country, or country of residence. Few of them asserted their identity as Zoroastrian citizens of the country of birth, but more of them identified themselves as Zoroastrian citizens of the country of residence. Having children seems to have a significant correlation (a word not used here in its technical sense) with identity in terms of the country of residence—home is where the children are—particularly with being a Zoroastrian citizen of the new country. Members of nuclear rather than extended families tended to identify with the country of residence. This finding surprised me. I had anticipated that the presence of parents, siblings, etc. would make people feel more ‘at home’ in the new country, whereas these figures suggest that living within a small Zoroastrian world encourages contact with the old country. Nuclear families perhaps mix more with non-Zoroastrians, and so more of them identified themselves as citizens of the country of residence.

In view of the impact of levels and types of education on other issues discussed in this section it was natural to expect that such educational patterns might impact on the perceptions of citizenship (Appendix 2, Table 23 (10–11)). The more highly educated and the scientists tended to identify with the country of residence rather than with that of birth, but the differences were relatively small. The picture is more complex when career patterns are studied. Broadly speaking, the high career achievers in employment terms tended to assert their citizenship in terms of the country of residence, particularly as Zoroastrian citizens of the country of residence, whereas people who were mostly focused on the home, retired people and homemakers, tended to assert their identity in terms of the old country. The outside workplace (i.e. the distinction

is not between unemployed and employed, since homemaking is clearly a major demand and of prime importance) tended to be associated with linking people to the country of residence, and with the straightforward assertion of being a Zoroastrian.

One obvious set of issues is the extent to which Zoroastrian networks did or did not reinforce links with the old or the new country (Appendix 2, Table 23 (13–16)). Corresponding with Zoroastrians in other countries was clearly seen to be something which continued ties with the old country—more of the regular correspondents asserted their identity in terms of the old country rather than of residence, more of them consistently emphasized their Zoroastrian identity. The same is true of people who kept in contact with fellow Zoroastrians ‘here’—whichever diasporic community they were part of. The trend of asserting Zoroastrian identity can also be traced in the table for respondents who read Zoroastrian literature and for those who attended a Zoroastrian centre regularly. Clearly involvement in the various Zoroastrian networks is associated with the preservation and assertion of a Zoroastrian identity. That may seem an obvious point to make, but it is a point which can easily be overlooked when academics study just one dimension of a diasporic community. The survey was undertaken prior to the boom in the use of the Internet. If this study were to be replicated now, I have little doubt but that it also would be seen to be significant. In the West it is often assumed that religion is a matter of private belief. That is clearly an oversimplification in the study of Asian cultures and religions in general; it is certainly not an appropriate assumption about Zoroastrians. The importance of the networking illustrates how and why some of the ‘forgotten Zoroastrians’ mentioned at the end of Chapter 6 on East Africa were forgotten. It was—and is—difficult to maintain a Zoroastrian identity living apart from a Zoroastrian community. Some might argue that the fact that individuals lived apart from Zoroastrians shows that they had already lost their identity. My experience of meeting Zoroastrians in France and Germany (Chapter 7), where people, some with a strong sense of Zoroastrian identity, have been compelled for professional reasons to live in a country with very few Zoroastrian networks, and where—to an outsider at least—there appears to be a consequent threat to their Zoroastrian identity. Despite common assertions that someone can be a Zoroastrian and practise the

religion anywhere and without substantial religious resources, in practice it is evident that people without complex Zoroastrian networks tend to lose their 'Zoroastrian-ness'.

A further and related question is to enquire whether commitment to Zoroastrian practices and beliefs, especially those relating to the non-Zoroastrian world, impact on the sense of citizenship. Table 23 (17 and 18)) indicates that more of the people who rarely prayed or wore *sudre* and *kusti* were more likely to assert their identity in terms of the country of birth, whereas those who regularly practised their religion tended rather to assert their identity in terms of the country of residence, specifically as Zoroastrian citizens of the new country. It is, therefore, not simply that in theory there is no conflict between being a Zoroastrian and being committed to the new country; if anything it is practising Zoroastrians who are most likely to assert citizenship of the new country.

The pattern was somewhat different with the questions relating to Zoroastrian attitudes to non-Zoroastrians (Appendix 2, Table 23 (19–23)). Respondents who were opposed to intermarriage more often asserted their identity in terms of the old country, and especially as Zoroastrians—the same was true of the responses on the question of allowing non-Zoroastrians into a prayer room 'here' in the West. When asked for their perception of Zoroastrian relations with the non-Zoroastrian world 'here', those who asserted their Zoroastrian identity, especially those who said that they were Zoroastrian citizens of the new country, were the people who considered relations with non-Zoroastrians to be excellent. There was, however, a small (but only a small) pattern of those who asserted their Zoroastrian citizenship of the old country to be those who were more cautious about what they considered the 'mixed' state of community relations. The pattern is less easy to identify with regard to those who considered that they have faced discrimination. The majority of those who believed that they had faced discrimination nevertheless identified themselves as citizens of the place of residence rather than of the old country. This set of figures once more challenges the common stereotype created by the majority of western populations that people facing discrimination are those who would not identify with their new country of residence. This set of figures suggests precisely the opposite. Those who asserted their Zoroastrian citizenship are

the very people who mostly said that they faced discrimination in that new country despite their allegiance to it.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century there were relatively few international contacts between Zoroastrian diaspora groups. Those that there were went from the diaspora directly back to India, like spokes on a wheel back to the hub, with no surrounding rim. Through the second half of the twentieth century, and especially at the turn of the millennium, there has been substantial and increasing interaction between the various diasporic groups. Those in Hong Kong and East Africa are somewhat less active internationally, but those in the New World interact regularly at a global level. Perhaps networking is a phenomenon of urban or metropolitan groups. It has been less effective between urban and rural groups. The work of the WZO appears to have brought, apparently for the first time, an awareness, even in nearby Mumbai, of Zoroastrian poverty in the rural areas of Gujarat. There had been previous reports, as discussed in Chapter 2, but these appear to have lain gathering dust in libraries, so that the videos which were made of the problems came as a complete shock to many. The urban Zoroastrians, in India and America, appear to have a growing appreciation of Zoroastrian poverty in rural Iran because of the pilgrimages to the old centres, but there has not (yet) been the same surge of economic and material aid as there has been in Gujarat.

Global interaction has resulted in various Associations adopting similar strategies for community survival. The obvious example is the activity in the field of inter-faith dialogue and participation in multicultural events. This has been especially evident in America and Britain, but leading Indian figures, for example, Dasturs JamaspAsa and Kotwal and Dr Homi Dhalla, have travelled from India for events at the United Nations or the Vatican. ZTFE's recent role in multi-faith activities in Britain resulted in Zoroastrianism being recognized as one of the nation's nine religions, and leaders participating in national events have given the religion a visibility which it is to be hoped will counter some of the ignorant media reports, that had previously been common in

western countries. In this and other fields of activity Associations in different countries have learned from each other. Documents and policies are discussed by e-mail, on Internet sites and by telephone. But in my own experience interaction is also strong through personal meetings at congresses or broken journeys when visiting another country on business. The Zoroastrian world is both global and yet small; it is one where news and views are frequently exchanged. The telephone network is not documentable, but having spent countless periods in Zoroastrian homes around the world for decades, I am deeply conscious of how people in one part of the world know and talk to fellow Zoroastrians elsewhere frequently and at length. This is especially true between America, Britain, India and Pakistan; it is a little less true for Australia, and even less so with Hong Kong and East Africa, although the Hong Kong–India links are very close. Contact between Mumbai and the rural areas is better, not only through the work of WZO, but also through that of other groups such as Zoroastrian Studies, who have had projects to help the poor Parsis in Gujarat, or projects to save Udwada from coastal erosion. Travel between Mumbai and Surat is reasonable, but contact beyond that to the villages I found was not common as recently as 2002. But pilgrimage to important historical or holy sites, Sanjan, Bahrot caves, Navsari, Surat and especially Udwada are growing in popularity; however, they do not include the small and remote villages. Interaction depends more on technology than it does on conventional means of travel. The Peterson *naujote* in New York triggered debates around the Zoroastrian world. Issues of global strategy and leadership, of economic aid or religious guidance, result in worldwide interaction. Further, wherever Zoroastrians may be settled, there are common patterns of who believes and practises the religion, and in what manner. Zoroastrians in the diaspora often face local challenges; they also experience global trends.

External and internal community forces have resulted in complex perceptions of identity. They are affected by national policies in the different countries, by where people migrated from, by family and community networks, education, career gender and by religious belief and practice. If this study were to be replicated then a sophisticated analysis would undoubtedly highlight yet greater complexity in the issues of identity. But the great majority,

religious people and the non-religious, commonly still highlight their Zoroastrian-ness, however that is interpreted.

The precise figures for percentage responses can give too strong an impression of objectivity. Respondents' understanding of questions and therefore their responses can vary. One example cited above is the interpretation of terms such as Orthodox and Liberal, especially when comparing responses from people in the new world and the old world. What is Orthodox in America may not seem to be so in India, and the phrase 'mother tongue' may be interpreted differently. Nevertheless, such surveys can be helpful in painting a broad picture of patterns and trends. In my own opinion these must be cross-checked by fieldwork on the ground. I also found the survey findings helpful in highlighting issues to be considered in research visits to the various communities. The British community apart, my survey work was undertaken prior to the research visit for fear of affecting the data I collected. I commonly asked Zoroastrians if they found that the patterns identified in the survey reflected their own perceptions and experience, and I am glad to say they commonly did.

This research, especially the survey, focused wholly on Zoroastrians. I am not claiming that they are unique in their demographic patterns, for example the impact of postgraduate research or studies in science on religious belief and practice. It would be interesting to see whether similar patterns are to be found among other Asian diasporic communities. If this study were to trigger comparable analyses of other communities then the value of this work would be greatly enhanced. It is important to repeat the note of caution that this survey was conducted in the 1980s and the patterns may be different in the third millennium because of changing political (and Political) circumstances, and the influence of the second and third generations in the New World. It was fortuitous that the survey was conducted in a decade with which the wisdom of hindsight was so significant in Zoroastrian diaspora history, for example in relation to the Zoroastrian refugees from Iran, the growing influence of East African Parsis in Britain, the patterns of settlement in North America, and the emergence of communities in Australia. It would be fascinating to see how things have, and have not, changed.

Conclusion

The Zoroastrian Diasporas

There have been various Zoroastrian diasporas throughout history; the earliest were during Iran's imperial history as the Achaemenid armies and traders moved through much of the then known world, a phenomenon that was repeated under the Parthians and Sasanians. Just one example of a Zoroastrian diaspora from this imperial era is that in Anatolia, and probably started under the Achaemenids, and assumed considerable historic importance in the first centuries BCE and CE.¹ The migration of Zoroastrians to India, leading to the growth of the Parsi community there, was itself a diaspora. The modern Zoroastrian diaspora has taken place in two main phases: the mid-nineteenth century and the second half of the twentieth century. The first, which might be termed the older Zoroastrian diaspora, was to China, Sind, East Africa and Britain; the second was to Britain again (in the 1960s) and to the New World of Canada, USA and Australia. This second phase involved more 'sending countries', Pakistan, East Africa and Iran, whereas the first had been just from India. There have been two groups of 'twice migrants', people from Pakistan and East Africa—indeed, if one includes the migration to India one can speak of some Parsis from Bombay as 'thrice migrants'. The British diaspora is different in that it is part of both the nineteenth century, and the post-1960 migrations. The foundations of the community were laid by the first diaspora, but it was during the second period that the larger numbers settled. The global picture is yet more complicated because there have been onward migrations in the western world,

¹ For an extensive study see M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. iii with Frantz Grenet, *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, Leiden, 1991.

for example from Britain to Canada, Australia and the United States.

The first modern Zoroastrian diaspora

The first phase of the modern Zoroastrian diaspora had its roots in the eighteenth century. The first Zoroastrian to visit Britain travelled in 1724 and the early opium traders sailed from Bombay to the China Seas from 1794. The earliest indicator of the settlement of Zoroastrian groups is the acquisition of a funeral ground. These were obtained in Karachi in 1839, Canton (Whampoa) in 1847, London in 1863, Zanzibar in 1883 and Mombasa in 1897. In each case there is an earlier history of Parsi travellers, merchants, and in the case of Britain, students. It was from these early diasporic settlements in the nineteenth century that much of the money was earned which was remitted to India to enable the building of temples and other communal resources.

In China and East Africa the earliest Parsi visitors were doing just that, paying a visit—they were usually men who had left their families back in India, where they normally returned after a few years. As resources grew, such as funeral grounds, Associations and religious buildings, so families began to settle in the diaspora also. Families settled in Sind from an early date, leading to the early provision of a temple, *dokhma*, school and charitable dispensary. In one sense Sind was an ‘overseas’ Parsi community, for travel was more often by ship than by land because of the difficult terrain. In another sense it was part of the same country—British India. All the migrations in this early period were linked to trade within the British Empire. The exception was Zanzibar, where some Parsis were recruited by Sultan Barghash as a result of his stay in Bombay. But here also, the dominant trading power was the British.

East Africa is the only settlement where professionals were more usual than businessmen were. But even in East Africa the family with the most influence were merchants—Cowasji Dinshaw and Brothers. Travellers to Britain came as travellers to ‘the seat of empire’; others came for education, either formal university studies or to study at first hand British industry in order to bring about Bombay’s industrial revolution. Relatively few came to Britain as merchants. There were exceptions, notably Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanjee, but even he made his fortune not from

trade in Britain but rather as a supplier to the British in the Boer War, which then enabled him to settle in Britain. Parsis made fortunes through trade with the British overseas, not through trade in Britain, which was in the hands of the British.

In all of this overseas trade Parsis, rightly or wrongly, considered that they had a special relationship with the British. This is to be seen in Bombay in the socializing between the two communities; in China where a Parsi (Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy) was on the board of directors of Jardine Matheson and Co. and on the committee which established the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank; in Sind as suppliers in the Afghan Wars; in East Africa, as exemplified in the successful plea to be subject to European not native laws; and in Britain above all in the role of the three MPs. The Parsi perception of Anglo-Parsi relations was that they were different from those of other Indian communities with the British. They were also convinced that they flourished under British rule. Saklatvala and Madame Cama were unusual in the force of their criticism of Britain. Although Naoroji eventually despaired at reforming British rule and so led the call for Independence, he nevertheless remained on good terms with the British. A nice illustration of this is that the (British) Governor of Bombay, Sir George Clarke, called upon Naoroji in his home to felicitate him on the occasion of his eighty-sixth birthday; this was not the act of a high official to a 'native' for whom he had no respect.² Most western travellers to the various diasporic Parsi communities commented favourably on the honesty, reliability and distinctiveness of the Parsis. There was little Parsi socializing with the Chinese, Black Africans or Sindhis. One exception was cricket, a feature of most early settlements, where Parsis formed teams against other Indian communities, all sharing the aim of beating the British team; otherwise contact between Parsis and local Indian Associations was not common.

The early Associations' buildings were rather like 'gentlemen's clubs', with provision for card games and billiards and papers to read; they were meeting places where Parsis socialized together rather than taking part in local pastimes. Karachi was different, and its facilities more extensive, because it quickly became a place

² Naoroji Archive, Reel 6, C-169 (4) 8 Sept. 1910. There are several letters between the two in adjacent records of that file showing substantial agreement over India's needs.

of settlement for families. From the names on the various documents quoted in each chapter it is evident that the traders in all diasporic settlements were often related, brothers or cousins. In the various settlements the families of those early settlers often continued even at the end of the twentieth century to be 'the big families'. Relatively few families traded in more than one region. Few traded both in China and East Africa, for example. Some families traded in more than one centre in a region, for example Cowasji Dinshaw and Brothers in both Aden and Zanzibar and the Jijibhoys in Canton, Shanghai and Hong Kong. But this was rare. The general pattern was to develop extensive links in one region.

In all centres in the earlier diaspora the religious life was practised, with priests and temples in Zanzibar, Aden and Karachi and religious buildings, if not temples, in China. The constitutions of Associations emphasized their Zoroastrian character, but teaching about the religion was not part of their communal life. It was not seen as necessary for religious practice, or for their ethnic identity. London was slightly different. No religious provision was made in Britain until later in the twentieth century; indeed, the first building to be purchased in Britain for Zoroastrian use was a hostel for Parsi students at Edinburgh. Although there were few religious functions, the constitution emphasized the Association's support for research and publications about Zoroastrianism, not least to influence British public opinion. All early diaspora groups turned to Bombay or Navsari as the source of religious authority and direction. There was little or no contact between the diaspora groups, even between relatively 'local' communities, for example, between Canton and Hong Kong or Mombasa and Nairobi. Debates about intermarriage and the attendance of non-Zoroastrians at religious events, notably funerals, took place in all settlements. Even those who wished to allow non-Zoroastrians into community functions nevertheless maintained strict community boundaries. Inter-faith activities, regular outside socializing, and 'assimilation' were not features of this first sequence of diaspora settlements.

Iranian Zoroastrians were not at that time members of these communities, for in the nineteenth century Zoroastrians in Iran were suffering a period of oppression, with no opportunity to engage in overseas trade and travel. The one exception to this was

Sind. After the heroic work in Iran of Hataria, who worked assiduously for nearly forty years (1854–90) to ease the financial and social oppression of Zoroastrians, some refugees made their way to Karachi (and to Bombay) where they became known for their tea shops.

There have been examples of Parsi involvement in national politics in the first diaspora, for example in Sind, Zanzibar and Kenya and in the role of the Parsis in the early history of the opium trade in Canton. The diasporic settlement where Parsis were clearly involved in national politics in the nineteenth century was Britain, where Naoroji and Bhownaggee became members of the Parliament at Westminster, followed by Saklatvalla in the twentieth century. Although they stood for London constituencies, and occasionally spoke on local politics, fundamentally they were seeking to present the case for the reform of British rule in India. It was only in Britain that Parsis published accounts of their history and religion to inform the local population about Zoroastrianism. The motive again was to influence British policy in India, and to mark out Parsis with their ancient Persian history as different from other Indian groups, and to convey the high ethical and social values of the religion that had impacted on Judaism and Christianity. It was as a result of this western travel, as well as through the visits of western scholars to India, that the Parsis developed their interest in academic studies of their heritage. The pioneer in this study was K. R. Cama, who on his return to India from business in Britain in 1851 stayed in France and Germany to undertake scholarly studies, which he then introduced in Bombay. It was therefore not only money but also scholarship and technology which diaspora Zoroastrians contributed to the old country.

The second modern Zoroastrian diaspora

The later Zoroastrian diaspora in the second half of the twentieth century was different from the first. As noted above, the migration was from more countries, not only from India but also from Pakistan and East Africa, that is, of ‘twice migrants’, and from Iran. At first some Iranian Zoroastrians came to the West because of the opportunities for Iranians to travel in the 1970s. After 1979 the migration was of refugees escaping from the new Islamic Republic of Iran. The late twentieth-century diaspora is therefore a much more diverse phenomenon than the earlier one. This later

diasporic movement was rarely for trade. It was either for education and career development—or for leaving alien regimes; these included not only Iran, but also the increasing Islamization in Pakistan, and the Black African policies in East Africa. In the twentieth century for the most part Zoroastrians were migrating in order to settle, although some who came for higher education intended to return, but finding career opportunities better in the West, stayed on. Such students apart, this second migration included families from the outset, or at least the families followed quickly once the husband had found accommodation. The migrants were typically highly educated professionals. Those who left Iran were of two types: the wealthy, urbanized educated and/or successful entrepreneurs, or young Zoroastrian men who escaped through Afghanistan to Pakistan, or westwards through Turkey. They had little or no hope of ever returning to their families. They were able to leave with little more than what they could carry when travelling on foot. Considerable effort was put into helping them by Zoroastrians in Pakistan, India, Canada, the USA and the then embryonic WZO, first by supporting their status as refugees, and then by finding accommodation and work, and helping them learn English.

There was some chain migration, for example Karachi Zoroastrians in Houston encouraged friends or family to join them, but more often it was nuclear families that travelled to the West. They sometimes brought grandparents when they were settled. This second migration was therefore generally seen from the outset as a move to settle. Generally the migrants were people who had achieved a level of success in the old country in education and the professions, or they were refugees, if not from persecution, at least from social oppression, or the fear of persecution. Refugees apart, most who migrated were young.

The patterns of settlement are also different in the two diasporas. The early meetings in this second diaspora were simply social occasions, involving sharing traditional meals, comparing experiences and having the opportunity to use the old language and reminisce. But soon, especially in North America, concern grew about transmitting their heritage to the next generation. Unlike the first diaspora, members of the new groups in the West did not keep so strictly within community boundaries socially. In North America and Australia distances between cities are vast, and for

several years there were few communal provisions, so that the new settlers met fellow Zoroastrians infrequently. This was less true in Britain because of the older settlement which had grown out of the first diaspora; distances are not so great and Zoroastrians are concentrated mostly in one city, London. But in the other three western countries, especially in the USA, there was considerable concern that their young people, meeting few fellow Zoroastrians, would quickly assimilate and leave their heritage behind. The image of the old American melting-pot concerned many parents. The result was the quite rapid development of Associations, most of which emphasized the importance of Zoroastrian religious education from the outset. Newsletters became an important means of communication concerning social functions—meals, *nataks*, festivals; lectures and conferences assumed more importance than in the old countries, for now the settlers no longer lived daily in a Zoroastrian environment.

The modern diaspora communities are also different in their general attitude to their new homeland. In the older diasporas there was little or no question concerning their Zoroastrian identity in China or Africa. Their perspectives were directed back to India and they worked within the compass of one empire. In the new diasporas, especially in Canada and Australia, there is a strong sense of identifying with the new country, as Canadians or Aussies. Whereas previously the self-identification was clear and simple—they were Parsis—in the newer settlements there are various identities, not just as Iranian Zoroastrian or Parsi, but also as American, or as Indian, or a Zoroastrian Aussie, or a Parsi Aussie. This does not necessarily indicate confusion over self-identity, rather a more complex understanding of a person's place in the new society. The community boundaries are not so clear. Involvement in inter-faith groups has substantial benefits: for example, giving Zoroastrians (inter)national recognition as one of the great religions, and thereby decreasing the likelihood of the mocking/patronizing/insulting media images that had previously been experienced in each country. What has not been studied adequately, either with Zoroastrianism or any other religion, is the impact that participation in such inter-faith activities has on the community. For example, at a meeting of the directors of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, 20 January 1984, there was a discussion about a forthcoming Jashan-Sadeh celebration,

which was to be attended by some inter-faith groups. The traditional practice is to recite the Litany to the fire (*Atash Nyaish*) before the sacred fire. The record of the discussion reads:

[Mr X] said that in the English translation it describes fire as the son of Ahura Mazda. [Mrs Y] felt that some Muslim guests will also be coming and they will think that we are fire worshippers and it might not look good either. In short, finally, it was agreed that we should have the Atash Nyaesh as is except drop the word 'worship'.

What was agreed was to omit from the translation what in traditional Zoroastrian belief and practice is a key word in the Avestan prayer. This debate was carried further at a subsequent Education Committee meeting, 11 March 1984. Agenda item 5 reads:

The recitation of the Atesh Niyaesh and reading of same in English and Persian, especially the English version had upsetted [sic] some members. In the Atesh Niyacash, it describes fire as the son of Ahura Mazda. Some Muslim guests were present and that too, was another reason. [Mr Z] said what is the purpose of having functions if the sole purpose is to eat, dance and go home? If some members became so upset with the Atesh Niyaesh where fire is symbolically described as the son of Ahura Mazda, what would happen if we recite the Meher Yasht at Mehrgan? Do we abandon all prayers and for what reasons? Perhaps in future we should only recite selected verses from the Gathas.³

When community members represent their Association in inter-faith groups, it is common for them to give an account of the religion that is meant to convey a good impression to others, a rather anodyne, or universalist, presentation. Such representatives, gatekeepers to the community, acquire status, and the account produced for external religious groups can become the accepted image within the religion. This is not an entirely a new phenomenon. It was seen in the chapter on Zanzibar how Christian terms like 'mass' could be used to explain a Zoroastrian ceremony to an outsider; or in the Pakistan chapter, how an account of Zoroastrian theology was conveyed in terms which would resonate with

³ In both of these quotations the names have been omitted from the original to avoid giving embarrassment. The *Atash Nyaish* is translated in M. N. Dhalla, *The Nyaishes or Zoroastrian Litanies*, repr. New York, 1965, pp. 134–87. The *Meher* (or *Mithra*) *Yasht* is a hymn to Mithra, which is fundamentally pre-Zoroastrian and deploys militaristic imagery. It is recited at the festival of Mithra, which is still popular in Iran and is increasingly being celebrated in the diasporic communities where Iranian Zoroastrians are influential. For a translation see I. Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, Cambridge, 1959, pp. 73–147.

Muslims. Because inter-faith activities are more common than they were at the time of the first diaspora, this practice has become more frequent. One example is the emphasis in such meetings of the importance of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, but avoiding any reference to the purity laws as they relate to menstruation. The latter, it is commonly thought, would not give the positive image that the simple threefold ethic does.

Although Zoroastrians in almost all diaspora communities feel a strong loyalty to that country (the possible exception is in Germany, for reasons discussed below), many nevertheless consider that they have faced racial discrimination. In all countries surveyed, on average one in three respondents said that they believed they had faced racial discrimination. The perception is more common in some countries, or some cities, than others, as discussed in Chapter 10. The typical and understandable response is for them to assert their Zoroastrian identity more, not less. The more alien the outside world is perceived to be, the stronger become the community boundaries. In contrast, the less hostile and more accommodating the outside world is perceived to be, the more multicultural the state, the more my informants are eager to assert their national identity. This I found to be especially true in Canada. The high profile multicultural policy there means that more Zoroastrians assert their Canadian allegiance than do Zoroastrians in some other western groups. This is demonstrated on Table 23(1), which shows that a substantial majority of Zoroastrians in Canada in general, particularly Toronto, identified their citizenship in terms of their country of residence, whereas in the USA the majority identified themselves as citizens of their country of birth. That is despite the fact that more of my Canadian respondents asserted that they had faced racial discrimination. In discussion they commented that the discrimination was mostly faced in obtaining one's first job, but once one was seen to be good at it, then people were accepted. In Canada, as elsewhere, there is a sense that the Government is ahead of the general public in liberal multiculturalism. In the 1990s in many countries, Britain, Australia, Germany and France, for example, the strength of the right wing vote in elections has surprised many observers. It is mostly at that 'popular' level that my informants believe that they have faced discrimination. It is not only discrimination or a perception of a hostile environment that reinforces

community boundaries. To some extent strong pressure to conform, as with the image of the American melting-pot, can trigger a response of seeking to assert one's traditional identity.

There are further differences between the two eras of migration and their diasporic forms. In the nineteenth century there was a clear recognition of the authority of Bombay. In the New World that has been questioned, not least in North America. Exasperation grew as in successive World Zoroastrian Congresses diaspora Zoroastrians sought guidance from Bombay on religious policy and called for a world body, requests that were ignored by the Bombay establishment. Eventually many of the highly educated, leading professionals decided to take decisions for themselves. Further, as noted in the America chapter, a number of diaspora Zoroastrians think the future of the religion rests not so much with the ageing, diminishing community in the old country with its crumbling institutions, but with the dynamic communities in the West. That is not to deny that many in North America respect some traditional leaders, typically the Dasturs rather than the leaders of the BPP, and invite them over so that they can learn from them. In this respect the British community inclines somewhat more to the older respect for Indian authorities. In Hong Kong, as an example of the older diaspora, though they take many decisions for themselves, if there is a matter of religious debate then formal or informal advice is sought from Mumbai or Navsari.

Whether or not the traditional authorities in the old country are recognized, affection for the old country remains strong. It is not just the elders who make periodic visits to India or Iran. Some of the youth I have spoken to react negatively to what they see as the dirt and corruption of India. But many more have told me how warm the friendship and family ties are, and how they love the opportunity to visit the temples, especially the Atash Bahrams, Udwarda in particular. In a research project of 240 structured in-depth interviews conducted in Britain by Dr Rashna Writer and myself, 88% of the youths questioned said that they had visited India; 58% had made three or more visits. Whereas 41% of them said that they felt a stranger there, 55% of those questioned said that the visit gave them pleasure. One commented: 'I like it there [I was] taken straight into the center of the people.' Another said 'I love India very much. Their character is similar to mine.' A third

one reported 'I felt immediately at home . . . [it was a] very similar Parsi home to our own.' I am reliably informed that in Britain there is at the dawn of the new millennium an increased willingness on the part of the youth to look for a marriage partner in India. All of the people I have spoken to who have been on tours of Iran, especially the youth, are deeply moved by their encounters with co-religionists, and the holy and historic sites they visit. The sense of roots is very strong among all with whom I have discussed this. The video *In the Footsteps of Our Forefathers* mentioned in Chapter 8, the record of a pilgrimage made by a group of American Zoroastrian youth across Iran, is but the (splendid) tip of an iceberg of deep love and pride in the ultimate homeland. Members of the new diasporas are more conscious of their Persian ancestry than people in the old diasporas were. For the latter, Iran was seen as a land of oppression, where Zoroastrians were poor and downtrodden and had little contact with the outside world. Unlike members of the first diasporas, those in the New World may not envisage returning to live in the old country, but it remains a major factor in their self-understanding. Great pride is commonly shown in the long history of their religion, a history which has involved Zoroastrian influence on other religions, and there is also pride in being a member of such a small community. Symbols ultimately deriving from the ancient Achaemenid palace of Persepolis decorate the walls of homes and meeting places more now than they did in the nineteenth century. Similarly, videos and tapes of prayers evoke powerful and treasured historical memories and emotions. A popular tie with the Persian past is the Persian epic, the *Shah Name*, the 'Epic of the Kings'. This much loved text, composed in the tenth century from ancient myths and legends once recited by court and village minstrels, has been described as 'an amalgamation of the Persian equivalents of chapters in the book of Genesis, the Odyssey, Paradise Lost, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Shakespeare'.⁴ Beloved in Parsi, and especially Iranian Zoroastrian, homes with its stories of ancient Persian heroes and villains, it has inspired countless Persian miniatures, and its tales are related by parents to children and at Sunday schools. It plays a role in the Zoroastrian diaspora

⁴ R. Levy, *The Epic of the Kings: Shah-nama, the National Epic of Persia by Ferdowsi*, London, 1967, p. xix. See also Hinnells, *Persian Mythology*, 1985, pp. 112–17.

comparable to that of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in the Hindu diaspora. Any future survey should focus more on these links with the Persian homeland than did my 1980s questionnaire. Based entirely on anecdotal evidence, my impression is that many young people have a stronger emotional tie to the old country, either Persia or India, than many of the innovative 1960s pioneers who left their past behind as they flew away. It seems to me that many young Zoroastrians in the western world find an even greater fulfilment in their visits to their roots than do earlier settlers. But that emotional tie is not likely to lead many to return to the old country to live.

In the nineteenth-century diaspora communities religious practice followed as closely as possible the patterns set in India. In the second diaspora there remains a strong desire to maintain the old traditions but there are more debates on what changes are helpful, or necessary, in the New World. The old 'rote learning' is questioned by many and there is a growing emphasis, particularly in North America, on understanding the prayers and rituals. The nature of the priesthood is also changing. In several nineteenth-century diaspora communities, full-time traditional priests were employed. Most of the practising priests in the modern diaspora are highly educated individuals in the secular world but not many are fully trained in priestly work. In India since the nineteenth century concern has been expressed about the level of secular education for the priesthood, and in many quarters there is a perception that priests do not command the respect that they used to. This attitude has been manifest in some of the discussions of the old diaspora communities, such as Zanzibar. In the modern diaspora, the education and the professional standing of the priests commonly leads to more individual respect, mixed with gratitude to them for giving their spare time to serve the communities. On the one hand, there is recognition that rituals must be different because of the absence of consecrated temples, and with the speed of life in the West, there is less time for lengthy rites. On the other hand, there is a wish to preserve as many of the traditions as possible. The sanctuaries in prayer rooms in western countries follow the architectural structure of the sanctuary in the old country. They reflect the general layout, with tiled floors, a large *afringan*⁵—usually brought from India—for the fire, a bell for use

⁵ A large, usually silver, object that outsiders commonly call a 'fire altar'.

in the ceremonies and symbolic swords decorating the wall behind the fire as seen from the entrance. Only one prayer room in the western world differs strongly from the general pattern, that in the purpose-built structure in Los Angeles. But even there, Iranian themes are strong, for it is a community with a substantial proportion of Iranian Zoroastrians. Naficy, whose article was discussed in Chapter 1, emphasizes the importance of smell, taste and touch in recreating the nostalgic past. That expresses well the beliefs and practices in western Zoroastrian religious meetings, the consistent use of sandalwood on the fire, the importance attached to having a meal at functions, the saying of the *sudre* and *kusti* prayers, and the warmth with which people greet each other. The festivals, *gahambars*, had become less prominent in India, but where there are Iranian Zoroastrians these seasonal festivals have become part of the annual cycle in most western diasporic groups—as Naficy noted in his article. This nostalgic past is not something enjoyed only by the elders, but by the youth also, for the structure of the prayer room, the symbols, the smell, taste and touch together create a Zoroastrian world with which many want to identify because for them religion is a clear marker of their identity. Some may not value the ethnic markers (such as *nataks*) as their parents do, but religion for many of them is what makes them what they are.

There are other differences between the old and the new diasporas. Although very few Zoroastrians in the New World have engaged in national politics as those in the older diaspora did, they nevertheless have more social contact with the ‘outside world’. It has been rare for Zoroastrian groups to seek government funding for minority groups (the North London and Sydney communities apart). There has been relatively little contact with other Indian religious groups (Sydney and the North London Association are the exceptions) but the Zoroastrians are again interacting more with the wider society, with other Canadians, Americans or Aussies than did their forebears. Indeed, unlike people in the old diaspora, Zoroastrians in the New World are keen to assert that they are American, Canadian, Aussie or British. They are happy to see their identity as multifaceted. This is less true of Iranian Zoroastrians. Their Iranian-ness remains pivotal for them (see Table 23). They, more than Parsis, are ready to socialize and observe the festivals with fellow migrants from the

old country, for example celebrating No Ruz with Iranian Muslims, Baha'is, etc., in Hamburg, California and British Columbia. It will be interesting to see how their second and third generations react to these identities.

Arising mainly from the work of Ali Jafarey and the Zarathushtrian Assembly discussed in Chapter 8, a number of Iranian Shia Muslims have been quietly initiated into Zoroastrianism, particularly in California, but in many other countries too, for example in Latin America and Europe. My informant tells me that he personally has initiated over 200 people in an eighteen-month period during 2002–3 in Britain. These Iranians understand that the Iranian President, Rafsanjani, has asserted that it is no crime for Iranians to return to the religion of their forefathers. In part their Zoroastrian initiation is said to be a reaction against what they see as 'the Islam of Khomeini'. There have been a few Muslims from Pakistan who have been initiated, but greater caution is felt necessary in these cases because there is not the same network of contacts as there is among Iranians, to enable the checking of contacts' backgrounds and motives. Some of these individuals have become members of WZO, but report a sense of a lack of warmth in their reception. There are few contacts with Zoroastrian House in London. In Britain as elsewhere (notably California, Brazil, Germany, and Sweden) it is essentially an Iranian network. At the time of writing there have been no initiations of Turks or Kurds. They do, however, have links with groups in the old Soviet Union, especially in Tajikistan. Because these groups wish to grow quietly, in part so they do not alienate the mullahs or the Iranian government, it is not easy to give a profile of them. My British informant tells me that he has initiated people from the age of 15 to 60, and that the majority are men. Although a number are medical personnel there is no clear pattern of educational or social levels among the initiates. He has not yet initiated people of 'Anglo-Saxon' ancestry, but he would do so if he could be sure of the warmth in their heart for the pure teachings of the *Gathas*. These groups bring together a number of themes in this book: the very powerful sense of the Persian heritage among Iranians; international networking; the emergence of large numbers and groups of peoples in the former Soviet Union claiming Zoroastrian ancestry; the influence of Jafarey; the Parsi-Iranian Zoroastrian tensions; the celebration of No Ruz with

fellow Iranians, Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian, and the diversity of understandings of just who is, and can be, a Zoroastrian.

Factors Affecting Zoroastrian Diasporas

Geographic factors

In the Introduction the question was asked, 'How different is it being a Zoroastrian in Los Angeles or London, Hong Kong or Sydney?' There are clear differences, some apparently simple, yet with profound consequences. For example, the fact that in Hong Kong people live in reasonably close proximity means that they can, and most do, attend the Friday night dinners. This old diaspora has the wealth to be able to hold weekly dinners, some paid for by long established Trusts, others through the wealth of the Association. The Zoroastrians meet regularly in a pleasant Zoroastrian environment. They also have the wealth to employ a full-time priest, so that the old traditions are preserved. But, as in the old country, there is little or no religious education. People know who they are—Parsis—and see no need for studies of the religion, which in their opinion commonly causes divisions.

In the USA, religion has a high public profile even though it is officially a secular nation. The religious nature of American Associations is evident. There are also important geographical factors. The distances between Associations are huge, and even within one Association people are scattered over a large area. The young may meet a fellow Zoroastrian once a month but American peers daily. In North America children are encouraged at school to ask questions. Because of the fear of assimilation, there has from the inception of Associations been an emphasis on religious education so that the young people know who they are, what their heritage is and what makes them different in order that they may resist the pressures of assimilation. In Karachi, religion has a high profile because of the government policies regarding Islamization. There also the level of religious education and practice among Zoroastrians is high. In Melbourne, in contrast, where there is no centre for important rituals, the emphasis in the files of the Association is that it is a cultural body and it was explicitly agreed that the president need not be religious. For them, one can be a Zoroastrian and an atheist.

Different local Associations in different parts of the world are subject to external local influences. There are relatively few Iranians in many countries, for example, Britain and Australia, and none in the old diasporas of Hong Kong and East Africa, whereas in Los Angeles and Vancouver there are many Iranians, both Zoroastrians, Muslims and others. The growth of the Zarathushtrian Assembly in Los Angeles is not surprising, as California is one of the states in which new religious movements flourish; some are based on interpretations of ancient Asian traditions, and some not. The presence of so many Iranians belonging to different religions yet all very conscious of their Iranian-ness results in a large festival gathering, musical evenings, access to videos and a television station, which all reinforce the ties to the old country. Religious communities are like chameleons: they change their 'colour' in different environments. Just as Christianity is different in, say, Ireland and Africa, so also Zoroastrian groups have to take account of the local situation if their tradition is to be meaningful to them, to the young especially, in different social and cultural situations. It is inevitable that Zoroastrianism will be seen differently in, say, Los Angeles, a modern western city with many new religious movements, and many Iranians, than in, say, Mombasa or Hong Kong. On that axis, London would be at the mid-point. Plotting each city on the axis may be fraught with difficulties, but an axis exists.

The size of communities

The size of the communities to a large extent determines religious practice. Toronto, for example, has the largest Zoroastrian community in the New World. Toronto Zoroastrians have been able, with substantial financial support from the Ontario Government, to establish impressive facilities, both in terms of their building and with human resources to run Sunday schools on different sides of the city.⁶ In France and Germany, by contrast, numbers are so small that there is no established Association, no building, no possibility of Sunday school classes, because there are only a few families in any one city. Maintaining a religious identity in such a context is very difficult. In Germany,

⁶ At the time of writing there is a move to have another building, this time a consecrated temple.

for example, at the time of writing there was no Association and Zoroastrians met for a meal once a year on No Ruz in the home of a Parsi in Bonn. In France numbers are so small that intermarriage is the norm. The survey showed that in the 'scattered groups' in any country, Britain, Canada or the USA, the level of religious practice is lower than in established centres; for example, fewer say their prayers daily and intermarriage is more common. Another feature of scattered groups, commonly neglected by scholars, are the emotional difficulties, especially loneliness, faced by many who have migrated to a country where they are unlikely to meet fellow Zoroastrians (or Hindus, Gujaratis, etc.).

Local factors

There are other differences between centres in any one country which are due to internal factors (as opposed to the external factors discussed above). In the United States, for example, there is a marked difference between the communities in Chicago and Houston. Consistently in the survey the former was found to be more Liberal and the latter more Orthodox.⁷ One major factor in this difference of emphasis is that Houston has the highest proportion of Zoroastrians from Pakistan compared with any other Association in North America. In the survey, Zoroastrians from Karachi were found to be more traditional in the diaspora than people from Bombay. In Houston this was in large measure a result of the work of one particularly kindly lady helping fellow Karachi-ites to migrate, in effect triggering chain migration. It was also the result of the influence of some of the early leaders. It is, in my experience, difficult to exaggerate the impact of key leaders in the early days of an Association. The danger with undertaking survey questionnaires is that the key details can be lost in the study of general patterns (which is why I thought it essential to visit all the centres I wrote about). The early settlers developed strategies for settlement and supported new arrivals, not necessarily with money, but with finding accommodation and or/work, and above all with friendship.

Vancouver is a good illustration of a distinctive Zoroastrian community shaped by local factors. Unusually for a Zoroastrian Association, the number of Parsis and of Iranian Zoroastrians is

⁷ See further chs. 17 and 18 in *Selected Works*, pp. 367–430.

approximately equal. (In California there are people from both groups, but the Associations tend to be predominantly one or the other.) The nature of the Vancouver community was moulded significantly by one individual, the late Jamshed Pavri. He constantly emphasized the importance of both groups being represented on committees. The Association's newsletter included material in both English and Farsi. The calendar of events from early times took care to include popular festivals from both communities; lectures in English were often translated into Farsi as they took place. Not least, he had friends in both groups. From the 'grapevine' I understand that there were times when this unity was strained, but at the time of writing the Association remains united. This is in total contrast to New York, where two formal Associations resulted from the breakaway of Iranian Zoroastrians. Those tensions are easing, but the two Associations remain separate.

London is different again. Because of the long history of the Association it has developed some substantial resources, notably a large house with a library, and a funeral ground. Also because of that long history there is a broader demographic picture: there are third-generation Zoroastrians, more older people, and more babies. Physically and emotionally the ZTFE is nearer to India than the North American Associations are. An important factor is the higher proportion of East African Parsis, 'twice migrants'. In all studies of East African Asian migrants, be they Sikh or Hindu, they have been found to be more traditional than people migrating directly from India. The East African Zoroastrians are also more traditional and they had a major influence on the Association in the 1990s. Zoroastrians in London are conscious of living in a major international centre of banking and commerce, with extensive international communications and potential for travel. These were some of the reasons why the WZO was started in London. The involvement in inter-faith activities in the 1990s has also had considerable impact. It has resulted in Zoroastrianism being recognized as one of the nine world religions in Britain and its leaders are invited to royal and state functions, to Buckingham Palace and to receptions at the Prime Minister's home. The opportunity to project an important political image was seized with the centenary of the elections of Naoroji and Bhownaggee to Parliament. Such recognition increases pride in the community,

especially when contrasted with earlier media images of Zoroastrianism as a new cult.

Political factors

In Chapter 1 the question was asked, 'What is the impact on the religious communities of the policies of the governments in the new lands?' National and local government policies do have an effect on communities. Because of the access route to a Green Card in the United States, the Associations there are composed of extremely highly educated people, typically scientists, whereas in Hong Kong the proportion of people pursuing higher education, though growing among the young, is less, and there are few scientists. In Chapter 10 different patterns of belief and practice were seen to be associated with differences in education. Whereas the Government of the United States has relatively few nationwide multicultural policies (the power of the market place determines how people fare), in Britain, Canada and, later, Australia there are strong government multicultural policies intended to encourage religious groups to preserve their heritage.

In Britain, schools are required to teach religious education (RE). The basis of the curriculum is expected to be Christianity, though 'World Religions' or 'Comparative Religion' is taught in religious studies programmes in many schools. The aim is to respect, indeed celebrate, difference. Of course, there are state and religious schools where this policy is not pursued, and there are right-wing conservative, religious groups which oppose this, but the education policy at the dawn of the millennium is to encourage knowledge about, and understanding of, the religions practised in Britain. The consequence is that young Zoroastrians need information and resources to meet questions at school on what Zoroastrianism is, does and teaches. Further, parents are aware that at school their children are going to learn about Christianity, so it is important that they learn about their own religion. ZTFE has also to be ready for requests from schools for visits or information.

In Australia there has been funding for the teaching of minority languages. The message given by the national Government about the place, status and recognition afforded to religious minorities can affect the attitudes of the general public, even though there may be protests and prejudice from some quarters.

Religion is not as highly profiled as it is in American society, or as in British education, so although in Sydney (and to a lesser extent Melbourne) there have been Sunday schools, the Associations do not emphasize religion or religious education as other communities in the New World do. In the records there is an account of a young Toronto Zoroastrian visiting Australia and commenting explicitly on how little religion is emphasized there in comparison with Toronto. (The self-perception of the Association as a cultural body was noted above.)

German government policy at the time this research was undertaken (the policy changed in 2000) was that all Germans automatically became citizens when they 'returned' from Eastern Europe or Russia; but non-Germans did not become citizens, even if their parents had been born in Germany. Foreigners remained 'guest workers'. There was no assumption that the immigrants would assimilate, and there were few German multicultural policies. The schools taught only Catholic or Protestant Christianity, and there was little attempt to teach about other religions. All my German informants said that they believed that they and their religion were seen as foreign. They were generally left in peace by the Government but quite a number of younger people told me of their experiences of violence. The German Zoroastrians were hesitant to undertake the considerable paperwork necessary to register as a religious association, and feared they would be seen as a new religious movement, which commonly face hostility. In France, in contrast, government policy assumes that settlement leads to citizenship and assimilation.

Canada, Australia and the USA all see immigrants (in controlled numbers) as potentially beneficial to the country. Since the 1960s, Britain has publicly asserted a closed-door policy. The term 'economic migrant' is used by the British media and politicians as a derogatory label—which is ironic in view of the British invasion and suppression of lands lived in by the traditional peoples of the three countries discussed here, and elsewhere. Government policies on immigration and education do, therefore, impact on the life of religious groups. What still remain to be implemented in many countries are policies on medical care, police and social services that recognize differences, and there is little training of staff in the implications of religious and cultural differences for their work. Simplistic and false stereotypes

continue to affect policy in many areas in most countries studied here.

Distinctive Zoroastrian Diasporic Features

How typical or different are Zoroastrians when compared with other South Asians in the western countries studied here?

Numbers

A simple and obvious factor that has considerable impact is the relative size of the religious groups. Because Muslims, for example, have greater numbers and some wealthy sponsors from the Middle East, they are able to press governments in various countries to take account of their needs. They also have the numbers and funds to obtain greater resources, for example to have their own schools. This is never likely to be something Zoroastrians in the diaspora could achieve. In no country are Zoroastrians likely to be able to build such splendid temples as Hindus have in London (Neasden) and in the United States. In Britain, one significant difference between Zoroastrians and other South Asians is that whereas the majority of the latter came as manual workers, Zoroastrians have almost all come as highly educated professionals. The second generation of British South Asians has a high proportion of their youth pursuing higher education, those of Indian ancestry having a greater proportion of their young going to university than do the Whites. But there remain areas of educational and social deprivation, especially in some inner cities, which affect South Asians in Britain. Parsis were and continue to be highly educated. In North America and Australia entry permits have long tended to favour the well educated, so the South Asian diaspora communities in these three countries are different from those in Britain, but even so the Zoroastrians are yet more educated. The fact that the general population in all western countries know far less, indeed most know nothing, about the Zoroastrians can lead to suspicion, even mocking, and has done so in each of the diasporic communities studied in the New World. The case is different with Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. Whereas some communities tend to congregate in one particular area, Zoroastrians have not done that, so that in each city they are more widely scattered than

other groups, a fact which has increased the difficulty of organizing functions. Hindus and Muslims in the diaspora can reasonably easily meet co-religionists in a way that Zoroastrians, especially in Canada, the United States and Australia, cannot. In the case of Zoroastrianism, there are perhaps two diasporas, Iranian and Parsi. The Muslim diasporas obviously include many ethnicities or nationalities, and there are caste and regional differences within the Hindu diasporas; but in many places the numbers of those 'subgroups' are sufficient to enable them to have their separate centres, temples or mosques. This has rarely happened with the Zoroastrians, so that religious centres have to cater for disparate groups, notably Iranian and Parsi, or Orthodox and Reform, as once was true of the early Indian migrants.

Gender issues

Another distinctive feature of the Zoroastrian diaspora is the role of women. Zoroastrians have commonly emphasized, with good cause, that men and women are equal in Zoroastrian belief and practice: their private and public acts of worship and their duties are the same; initiation and funeral rites are the same. The implications of the purity laws complicate the picture for women, but the traditional view is that because women have the key role in the birth of another member of Ahura Mazda's army their role is especially significant, and the purity laws are a consequence of this special status. Throughout recorded history Zoroastrian women have had greater protection and rights in law than in many other cultures. In the diaspora this equality is reflected in the role of women in the various Associations. There have been women presidents, for example Dr (Mrs) Kutar in Britain (both of ZTFE and WZO) and Dr Dolly Dastoor, the second president of FEZANA. Only Hong Kong has been slow in permitting women trustees. One dimension that has been seriously lacking in studies of Zoroastrianism (as in other academic fields) is the role of women in the religious upbringing of children. In the Sunday (or Friday) schools I have visited there are more women than men teachers. Staying in numerous homes around the diaspora, I have observed that it is the mothers (or grandparents where they are present) who take a leading role in teaching their children about the religion, whether it is telling stories from the religion, e.g. the *Shah Name*, to the children in bed at night, or in arranging *navjotes*

and weddings. The important domestic role is probably shared by many South Asian communities, but not so the public role. Thus far there have been no Zoroastrian women priests, but at Youth Congresses the women have argued for them, so far without success.

Demographic features

An important factor in the Zoroastrian diaspora is that, for Parsis at least, there is a huge consciousness that numbers in the old country are diminishing, whereas in the diaspora they are increasing. There is a greater likelihood, therefore, of the diaspora acquiring a leading role in the future of the religion. Hindu and Muslim diasporas are important, and in some cases provide funds to help people in the old country, but it is not likely, for example, that Hindus in America will be the key leaders in the future of Hinduism; but this could be the case for Indian Zoroastrians. One factor in the intensity of the community's debates is the fear that if the wrong policy decision is taken on key issues, it could precipitate the disappearance of the religion. If Hinduism were to disappear from the American continent it would be a tragic loss, but it would not be likely to produce a crisis in the total Hindu world.

Intermarriage

In comparison with other South Asian groups Zoroastrians probably experience more intermarriage than others do. This is a matter of grave concern to most Parsis in India, and indeed to Orthodox Zoroastrians in the West. In each chapter of this book it has been seen to be a subject of intense and bitter debate. Research suggests that it is not as common as the Orthodox fear.⁸ Nevertheless, it is a growing fear, and a growing phenomenon. Intermarriage often causes family distress, but it is rare for a family to reject someone totally for marrying out. Nor are there any enforced (in contrast to arranged) marriages. With varying degrees of regret, most diaspora Zoroastrians see intermarriage as inevitable because of the small size of some communities, with few opportunities to meet a suitable partner. It is also seen as an outcome of increased westernization, which in other ways has benefited the community. Iranians oppose out marriage yet more.

⁸ See Huzan Kharas, 'Intermarriage of Zoroastrian Women in Bombay', Ph.D. thesis, Manchester, 1993 (unpublished). Some of my Mumbai informants, however, assert that the phenomenon has increased significantly since Huzan wrote her thesis.

Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrian academics

A marked feature of the Zoroastrian community is the generally positive relations they have with outside scholars who study their history and religion. This is true in the old country, and especially in the New World. In Britain, Canada and America outside academics have often been invited to deliver lectures; their books are housed in Zoroastrian libraries, private or communal. Indeed, many western academics have had some of their research supported financially by Zoroastrians, as I have, with no strings attached as to the subject matter or treatment (save only the instances mentioned in Chapter 1). Some Iranians have expressed regret that western academics focus too much on Pahlavi (to them medieval, superstitious) or ritual texts, and by emphasizing the traditional teachings on evil make Zoroastrians sound dualistic. In recent years, however, there have been fewer invitations to non-Zoroastrian academics to give lectures at their meetings in Canada and the USA, but the positive relationship generally continues. This is especially true in Britain, as indicated, for example, by the funding by the Zarthoshty brothers of a post in Zoroastrian Studies at the School of Oriental Studies, London University, in 2001. ZTFE are happy to organize functions to launch new books by academics and they and WZO continue to invite outside scholars to lecture at appropriate functions. There has been nothing equivalent to the death threats some of my colleagues in Sikh and Islamic studies have faced.

Zoroastrians as a Typical Diaspora

Zoroastrians and the old country

Despite the views of Safran and Cohen discussed in Chapter 1, namely that Parsis do not constitute a diaspora, the argument in this book is that in many ways they represent a typical form of this phenomenon. Indeed, they make an exceptionally good test case for study. There is a strong sense of the homeland. This is notably Iran, but also for some Parsis India is a homeland, in addition to, not instead of, Iran. There are many ways in which this ultimate Persian ancestry is manifested. Some of these are: the emotional ties to the homeland; the assertion that Zoroastrians are the true or original Persians; the wish to go on pilgrimage; the evocation in

home and temple of motifs in the architecture and its decoration; the invocation of Persian ancestry as being their distinguishing feature among India's many millions; the love of the tales from the *Shah Name*, the great Persian epic; the theme of the homeland in videos and novels. All these, and more, combine to give Zoroastrians a particularly strong sense of a homeland, one that may be difficult to settle in for political reasons, but to which many travel when possible. That homeland lies at the core of their identity. These features certainly fulfil the criteria demanded by Tölölyan, Clifford, Anthias, Brah and Vertovec.

The Zoroastrian sense of history

Zoroastrians of any age, and in whichever country they live, have in my experience a strong sense of their great history. Not everyone knows the scholarly details, but there is pride in some key moments: the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great, pursuing what was then a unique policy of religious tolerance, for example, in allowing the Jews to return home from their imposed exile in Babylonia, and giving them royal and financial support for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Most Zoroastrians are aware, in general terms, of the many theories of Zoroastrian influence on biblical teachings.⁹ There is also general awareness of both the contribution of Zoroastrians to modern Iran, notably that of Farhang Mehr, and of the Parsi leaders to Indian industry, banking, politics, law, medicine, science and arts. A pride in the record of achievements, and of the common origin of all in Iran, is a strong dimension in the Zoroastrian persona. In 2002 a remarkable book was published, edited by two Bombay Parsi women, Pheroza J. Godfrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, *A Zoroastrian Tapestry*. This huge volume (762 pages in large format with lavish illustrations) with contributions from thirteen western academics and sixteen Zoroastrians, covers the history, religion and secular culture in Iran, India and the West for a lay reader, Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian. In the foreword the editors emphasize the sense of Zoroastrian history:

Being distinct from the mainstream cultures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, the question is often posed 'Who are the

⁹ See my *Selected Works*, chs. 2–4. As I was drafting this piece for the first time, a splendid volume arrived in the post produced by FEZANA and edited by Roshan Rivetna, produced specifically for introducing the outside world to Zoroastrians. Pages 22–9 emphasize this precise point, namely the influence that Zoroastrianism has exerted over other religions.

Zoroastrians?’ To understand the spirit and ethos of the Zoroastrian people it is important to go back three thousand five hundred years to the life and times of the Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra who was the founder of the oldest revealed religion—Zoroastrianism. . . . Integral to the understanding of the Zoroastrian faith is the era of the great imperial dynasties of the Achaemenians, Parthians and Sasanians each of whom played a seminal role in establishing Zoroastrianism as the faith of their empires . . . [It] had some degree of influence on religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Zoroastrian loyalties

Most studies of diasporas emphasize the tension between loyalties to the old country and to the new. This is not as evident among Zoroastrians as among other groups, because it has long been part of their tradition to be loyal to the country in which they live and to the ruler of that country. In Indo-Pakistan wars there have been Parsi generals on both sides; at the times of tension in East Africa, those Zoroastrians who stayed publicly affirmed strong loyalty to the new government. Those who could not make such an affirmation left. During the two world wars Parsis gave money and lives to the allied cause. There has as yet been little demand for such loyalty to be shown in Canada, the USA and Australia, but in the respective chapters the theme of loyalty has emerged clearly. Parsis are devoted to the old country, and loyal to the new. They do not have the tensions between loyalties that some writers have suggested are characteristic of diaspora groups. The Iranian Zoroastrians, refugees from the old country, have a particularly strong loyalty to Iran, its history, language, music and food. They too appreciate their freedom and security in the New World, though they fear the dilution of moral and family values.

Troubled relationships?

One dimension most diaspora scholars refer to is the diasporic sense of what Cohen calls a ‘troubled relationship with host societies’; Clifford speaks of an ‘ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation or resistance’. As indicated in various chapters, approximately one in three Zoroastrians consider that they have experienced racial prejudice. More Canadian Zoroastrians said that they had experienced racial discrimination but there respondents affirmed it was only occasional and insubstantial (usually in gaining one’s first job), whereas in Britain, especially London,

it was thought to be more frequent and substantial especially, in employment and education. In my interviews in Germany (where the survey was not circulated) all but one of my informants stated that they faced racial discrimination frequently and substantially. There is, therefore, for a significant minority a sense of distance from certain sections of the wider population, despite their own loyalty. The respondents who most frequently said that they faced discrimination were those born in the West, the highly educated and those successful in their careers. Subsequent to this survey there has been a political swing to the Right in most of the countries studied; one might therefore anticipate that more respondents would state that they had experienced discrimination.

Transnational networks

International interaction between diaspora groups is another feature commonly emphasized by writers in this field. This is certainly a feature of the modern Zoroastrian diaspora. The World Congresses, the international Youth Congresses, the participation in the national conferences of others (notably in America), the Internet, the moves for a world body, all involve close international relations. A Zoroastrian World Chamber of Commerce has been established, but at the time of writing it is effective in North America rather than elsewhere.¹⁰ In India there are strong but informal economic networks. It is, in my experience, at the informal level where networking is at its strongest among Zoroastrians, with contact by telephone, letters, travel and in social gatherings providing mutual support and encouragement. The emphasis in theoretical studies on global networks as a characteristic of diaspora communities is, in my opinion, questionable. Such networks exist in modern societies but they were far more difficult to establish in earlier times. In the first Zoroastrian diaspora, for example, there was relatively little contact between the diaspora groups; communications were mostly back to India. There have also been, as was seen in the chapter on East Africa, individuals or families who had little contact with fellow Zoroastrians. In earlier times runners and horse riders provided some communication, but networking on any scale is surely a modern phenomenon more a product of technology than of diasporic experience.

¹⁰ See e.g. the report on the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce with its various chapters, *FEZANA Journal*, Summer 2002, p. 25. A chapter was opened in Delhi in 2003.

Zoroastrianism and a Typology of Diasporas

Cohen's typology of diasporas was discussed in Chapter 1. Each type is evident in the Zoroastrian world. The victim diaspora is reflected in the origins of the Parsi community seeking a new land of religious freedom in India because of Islamic oppression in their own country. It is also found in modern history, notably in the Iranian Zoroastrian diaspora following the fall of the Shah in 1979, but also in the departure of most Zoroastrians from East Africa in the face of Africanization in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and the revolution in both Aden and Zanzibar. It may also be represented by the Zoroastrians who have migrated from Pakistan in the face of growing Islamization, and the strength of Muslim militants there. Cohen's second type, a labour diaspora, is perhaps the least common among Zoroastrians, unless under his term 'labour' includes the many scientists, businessmen and professionals who have pursued their careers in the West. There has not been a labour migration comparable to those he points to, the Indian 'coolie' migration to build the railway line in East Africa, or of workers in the fields in Trinidad and elsewhere. Similarly, Zoroastrians have not in modern times had an imperial diaspora, though such may be suggested for Zoroastrian armies in the Middle East and India during Iran's imperial history. The cultural diaspora is evident in all the communities I have visited, especially those in the New World. The Zoroastrian example reinforces the point Cohen made, namely that the same community can embody more than one type of diaspora group, and that diasporas change over time.

Several writers on diaspora studies imply that a diaspora is not a short-lived phenomenon, but it is also suggested that after a few generations it may no longer be a diaspora. The Parsi experience for over a thousand years in India suggests that there is no such time limit. A community remains a diaspora as long as the diasporic frame of mind and social structure continues. The facts that Parsis in India have continued to retain a strong sense of a different homeland from where they live; that they have sought to visit Iran when possible; that they evoke collective memories of Persia through motifs in temples and homes, the campaigns on behalf of oppressed co-religionists in the old country. All these features indicate that the Parsis remain a diaspora in India, even after a millennium.

Common Features of Maturation

Leadership

Zoroastrians share many experiences with other diasporic communities in their process of maturation in the West. The emergence of a new leadership is an obvious example. People are elected to represent an Association to the outside world, generally because they are good at external communications, not just in language but also in style. They thereby acquire significant status within the community. Sometimes such people are not typical of the wider membership, which can lead to challenges for leadership. As people feel discriminated against in the outside world in their desired promotion (in social, political or economic spheres), so the drive for community leadership can be stronger. It is not common for priests to acquire such a role among Zoroastrians, but it does happen. The most active priest in Britain, Ervad Rustom Bhedwar, for example, is on the Managing Committee at ZTFE precisely because a religious contribution to discussions is valued. He has also been asked to take significant external roles. The Summer 2002 issue of the American FEZANA *Journal* proudly gives details of his participation in the Day of Prayer for World Peace called at the Vatican by the Pope (pp. 12 f.). But in the older diasporas, the priests were seen as undertaking only a liturgical role and were not therefore expected to be prominent in communal social or political affairs. As was seen in the chapter on East Africa, they are sometimes viewed as mere labourers and not given great respect.

Language

Language is a problem that Zoroastrians share with other South Asian diasporas. The Iranian Zoroastrians commonly speak in Farsi inside the family, so that the young grow up knowing the language. But few Parsis use Gujarati extensively in their home, except when conversing with grandparents. Some (bawdy) jokes and family memories may be discussed in Gujarati, but the main language of communication is English, and, they believe, properly so since they are living in the English-speaking world. But in various communities, Parsis lament the lack of knowledge of Gujarati among the young. Some Associations have tried teaching Gujarati

at Sunday schools, but an hour or so a month or even a week is not found adequate for the child to develop a working knowledge, especially of the written form of the language. However, even in Mumbai Gujarati is not such a crucial language as Farsi is to the Iranian Zoroastrians. It is, after all, a language acquired after migration to India and was not part of their ancient heritage. But in losing this linguistic facility, some parents fear that the young are missing out on an important part of their culture, from the fun of *nataks* to the history of the religion and other cultural features of their history in Gujarat.

Boundaries

It is common in studies of diaspora groups to refer to ‘patrolling community boundaries’. In Zoroastrian communities around the world the debate is whether outsiders can cross the boundary and become Zoroastrian. The place of intermarried spouses and their offspring has been a recurring theme throughout this book. Intermarriage was not an issue in Iran, for any Muslim seeking to become a Zoroastrian would have been harshly punished, even executed, for so doing. The matter came to a head in Bombay in the early twentieth century when Tata married a French lady who subsequently sought recognition as Zoroastrian. The issue became a test case in the Bombay High Court in 1906, which ruled that non-Zoroastrian spouses could not become Zoroastrians and only the offspring of a Parsi male could be seen as Zoroastrian. That rule has generally been applied not only in India but also by Orthodox Parsis throughout the diaspora. In Chapter 2 it was seen to be a major issue throughout the twentieth century in Bombay, culminating in the bitter disputes over the right of the intermarried Roxan Shah to be given a Zoroastrian funeral, and the *navjote* of Neville Wadia and his son. There have been bitter disputes in each diasporic community. The matter has commonly become acute at the annual *muktaḍ* ceremonies for the dead in Britain, America and Canada. But the presence of intermarried spouses and their children at any religious function is a matter of fierce debate in all communities. As intermarriage becomes a more common phenomenon, there is increasing debate over who can be considered to be within the community and who cannot. In some countries the spouses and offspring (sometimes including the offspring of Parsi males) cannot be initiated (India,

Pakistan, Hong Kong, ZTFE, East Africa). The position is less clear in Australia and some North American Associations but in most North American Associations the children of intermarried Zoroastrians are accepted quietly. Examples of 'conversion' remain rare, restricted to Peterson in New York and the Zarathushtrian Assembly in California. When WZO accepted non-Zoroastrians as members there were fierce protests. At an EGM in Vancouver the Zoroastrians of British Columbia agreed a definition of a Zoroastrian which explicitly stated that race was not a factor. The issue is bound to come to a head once again when the *naujote* of a non-Zoroastrian becomes public. The arguments are the same in most countries: religion is part of a God-given identity, a question of genes, of preserving the identity of the race; the fear (in India) of being swamped by converts seeking access to the charitable funds for Zoroastrians; and the belief that it is psychologically dangerous to change one's religion because it is a part of one's basic identity. On the other hand people argue that if not even the spouses and offspring of intermarrieds are accepted, then the community will die out. It is further argued that the exclusion of the intermarried is simply a product of the caste system in India, which is not appropriate in the New World. In North America some ask whether preventing people from becoming Zoroastrians is contrary to the American Constitution, which gives everyone the right to freedom of choice in religion. Restricting the religion to people of one race is said by some to be racist. Another question is what right anyone has to deny the benefits of the Good Religion to others who choose to follow it of their own free will. To this some respond that they can practise the religion in private, but they do not have to come to religious functions. A fundamental debate is whether Zoroastrianism is a religion or racial marker. If Zoroastrianism is part of one's inherited or God-given identity, then the *naujote* of people who have no Zoroastrian parent is impossible. If religion is a set of beliefs and practices that are unique and provide spiritual development and a direct route to God, why should anyone be denied initiation? The Orthodox reply is generally that all religions have truth and value, all are part of a wider culture and one should be brought up in the religion of one's own culture. The fact that some describe themselves as both Zoroastrians and atheists reinforces, for some, the argument of Zoroastrian being a marker of racial identity.

Another 'boundary', which is commonly debated in Zoroastrian discourse, is the extent to which the practices of other religions or cultures should be followed by Zoroastrians. This came to a head in Sydney with the arguments over whether Santa Claus coming to give presents to the children and the decoration of the Darbe Mehr with Christmas trees were acceptable. To the Iranians especially, but also to some Parsis, this use of European ideas associated with a Christian festival was inappropriate in a Zoroastrian religious space. For others the question was simply, 'Why deprive our children of harmless fun?' For some Parsis, Iranian Zoroastrians celebrating No Ruz with other Iranians, Muslims, Baha'is etc. is changing the boundary of allegiances, excluding fellow Zoroastrians. There has been debate in Hong Kong over who can attend what festivals. Leading members of the old families exclude the spouses of the intermarried from the *gahambars* because they are religious festivals, and endowed in some cases by patrons who intended them only for Zoroastrians. The leaders commonly assert that the spouses understand and appreciate this. In private conversation with me, however, the spouses denied this. Why, they asked, should they be excluded, when there is a Chinese cook and left-over food is given to poor non-Zoroastrians?

The presence of non-Zoroastrians at religious functions is another example of boundary disputes in many communities. In India it is not only that non-Zoroastrians should not enter consecrated temples; they should not attend such functions as *jashans* either. This has been followed in many diaspora communities. In London, offence was taken when a non-Zoroastrian visitor was given a place near the fire. On one occasion when I was invited to a *jashan* in a friend's home, I later learned that some Parsis had been concerned for my safety because as a non-Zoroastrian, I lacked the protection of *sudre* and *kusti* and without appropriate spiritual preparation the unseen spiritual forces associated with the fire might be harmful to me. Boundaries, therefore, can be seen not simply as protecting those within, but also those outside. Further, there is the concern that having 'spectators' at religious functions distracts people at such personal times as prayer. To counteract this anxiety, when inter-faith groups visit a Zoroastrian function in London they are invited to a specially arranged occasion, or a demonstration, rather than to a regular act of worship

for Zoroastrians. Boundaries, in this case, are needed to preserve the religious experience.

Menstruation is another time of impurity, in traditional thought and practice. Blood within the body is life-giving, but outside the body, like all bodily issue, is impure dead matter. Because of this, Orthodox Parsi women would not go to the temple or touch sacred objects at such a time. Interpreting this in the diaspora has produced tensions. In Hong Kong, for example, it is expected that a priest will be a bachelor or widower, because if his wife lived on the premises she would pollute the sacred space when she menstruated. The traditions of the temple are transferred to the community's building even though it is not a fully consecrated temple. There are therefore internal boundaries within the community as well as between the community and the outside world.

Funerals are a matter of great sensitivity. Huge offence has been experienced when intermarried people, or non-Zoroastrian friends, are not allowed to go to a funeral, or see the face of the deceased. Issues of purity and impurity are at their greatest at times of death in many traditions, especially in Zoroastrianism where death is the manifestation and presence of evil forces so that physical space has to be put between oneself and the powerful force of pollution, the corpse. The corpse of a good person is more polluting than that of someone who is wicked, because the former represents a greater victory for the evil powers. In the old country there are professionals who ensure that all that is necessary is done to protect people from evil and to aid the soul. In the New World there are few people with such knowledge, especially in the scattered groups. Several Associations have followed the example of Toronto and produced guidance notes for families to keep to guide them on what should be done at the time of death. Some of the traditional rites cannot be performed in the diaspora because there is not a consecrated temple, so the family priest performs the necessary rites in India. Some funeral parlours allow time and space for the prayers, but for several years a failure in the scattered groups to make the proper arrangements has resulted in yet greater grief because the family is unable 'to do the right thing'. Translating the purity laws in relation to death can be very difficult in the diaspora.

Drawing a clear boundary line between the Zoroastrian and the non-Zoroastrian world involves difficult and complex issues.

Post-migration religiosity

Many Zoroastrians have said to me in private that they became more religious, more Zoroastrian, after their migration than they were before, partly through a need to maintain their identity when everything seemed to be changing. Living outside a Zoroastrian culture, many come to see that their religion is their defining characteristic. It is not just the elders who migrated who have this sense. Many people brought up in the West assert that it is Zoroastrianism that makes them who they are. Being Zoroastrian makes them feel special, distinctive, and it is a heritage of which they are proud. How to transmit that religious heritage is something that different Associations approach in different ways. In Hong Kong, the assumption seems to be that the club atmosphere will appeal to the young. In Karachi, in America and increasingly in Britain, knowledge about the religion can be linked with an increased practice of it. There are more rites performed at the turn of the millennium than there were in the 1970s, and that is not simply because the communities are larger—it is because they are changing and religion is seen as more important. As noted above, in Canada and the USA great importance is attached to the teaching materials used in the home, and at the Darbe Mehrs. Videos and audiotapes are used, as in other South Asian groups, but not to the same extent. The printed word and in North America the Internet remain probably the most common media of communication and teaching among Zoroastrians. Australia, Melbourne in particular, is different from America in that religion is not emphasized so much.

Diversity within Zoroastrianism

Another feature important to consider is what, in my experience, is the growing dislocation in the religious culture between Mumbai and the diaspora. Kreyenbroek's book, quoted in Chapter 2,¹¹ highlights what seems to me to be a trend among Indian Parsis to follow a more 'mystical', occult orientation in which the mantric power of prayer is emphasized; in which miracles are part of the

¹¹ Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, pp. 231–75.

daily fabric of the religion; where dreams and voices are powerful forces and where 'holy men' have a big following. In one sense Zoroastrianism in Mumbai is becoming 'Hinduized', just as at the end of the nineteenth century it became westernized. On the chameleon principle, or making the religion meaningful, that is to be expected. Living in a different religious culture in the West, many diaspora groups are becoming 'Protestantized'. Zoroastrians in the New World commonly believe that it is important to understand the meaning of prayers and rituals; it is vital to know what the religion teaches. In a Mumbai Parsi colony, or Hong Kong, it is *being* a Parsi Zoroastrian that is important. In the New World, knowledge, teachings and understanding are essential. Of course there are exceptions on both sides. Mistree's Zoroastrian Studies in Mumbai is active in spreading knowledge of teachings and there are Zoroastrians in Los Angeles and Toronto who have an occult understanding of their religion. But they are not representative of the broad trend of their respective communities, which is part of the reason for the controversy surrounding the growth of Zoroastrian Studies, especially in its early years. In Pakistan there are different pressures. In the face of increasing Islamization it is important to emphasize monotheism and to avoid any hint of accepting converts. If the different Zoroastrian worlds do grow apart spiritually, then the question of religious authority will loom yet larger.

In the study of racial minorities in the 1980s it was common to refer to the younger generation being 'caught between two cultures'. Ballard, in his challenging introduction to his book, prefers to emphasize that the young are 'skilled cultural navigators' and adapt to western culture on their own terms. The debate between Ballard and Vertovec was discussed in Chapter 1.¹² My own experience of the Zoroastrian community is that it is not a question of 'either . . . or' but 'both . . . and'. Some youngsters in questionnaires and interviews have said that they feel caught between their parents' culture and that of their non-Zoroastrian friends. Others have told me that there is no difficulty in moving smoothly from one framework at home to another in the outside world. As the third generation grows up, it may be that the difference between the Zoroastrian world and that outside appears less dramatic.

¹² See p. 15 above.

A number of the youth have told me that although in childhood they saw fellow Zoroastrians infrequently, and non-Zoroastrians daily, raising fears that friendships would be more common with the non-Zoroastrian world, in fact through Sunday schools, camps and other youth activities, the friendships which have lasted have been those with Zoroastrians. They have grown up keeping in closer contact with fellow Zoroastrians than was expected in the 1980s. The shared values and ideals have been more important in their contacts than had been anticipated. The future of Zoroastrianism in the diaspora does not therefore appear as bleak as it is sometimes presented.

Identity is a particularly complex issue in the diaspora. Although, as said above, many do not feel ‘caught between cultures’, there can still be debates about one’s own identity. The Iranian Zoroastrians, especially the first generation, have few doubts about their identity—they are the true Persians. For Indian (as opposed to Pakistan or East African) Parsis the issue is more complex. For almost all of them there is strong sense of their ultimate Persian ancestry, and most also have a deep affection for, or ties with, India, the land which gave them freedom and security. Zoroastrians also have a strong sense of loyalty to whichever country they live in. Among the second generation there is a growing sense of Zoroastrian identity. Sometimes one dimension is more prominent, for example when visiting India, at times another, for example in the prayer rooms, or another when with non-Zoroastrian friends. If the diaspora and India do go along different religious paths, then religious identity may become more fragmented with the potential for a feeling of religious distance from the old country. Zoroastrians in the New World especially are aware of a need to change. But change can be frightening, and some continuity is essential if old ties are to be preserved. The balance of change and continuity is a difficult one. The phrase quoted in Chapter 1 is particularly apt for western Zoroastrians: there is a search for ‘roots and for routes’.

End Word

In their various diasporas, Zoroastrians now live in more countries than at any other time in their history. It is important to note the

considerable contributions made by the Zoroastrian diaspora communities to their new countries. Politicians and the media in various countries, especially Britain, imply that immigrant groups have their own interests as their sole concern. Wherever Zoroastrians have settled they have enriched wider society. They have, for example, started universities in Hong Kong and Karachi (originally the Dinshaw Engineering College); in proportion to their numbers they have donated very generously to charitable concerns. Many have worked in the caring professions and played important roles in local politics. Diaspora Zoroastrians have also contributed much to the Zoroastrian world. In India Sir JJ's huge charities in education, medicine and religion were funded from his profits in the China trade. Funds from China enabled the building of Atash Bahrams and agiaris, as did the profits of the Cowasji Dinshaw Brothers from the East Africa trade. More recently the Jokhi Trusts in Hong Kong have built a housing colony in Navsari and refurbished the deteriorating Parsee General Hospital in Mumbai. Diaspora Zoroastrians have also helped in Iran. Schools, colonies, even the maintenance of the Atash Bahram in Yazd has been funded from the diaspora. British Zoroastrians at the end of the nineteenth century pressed the Iranian Government to show justice to the Iranian Zoroastrians when it pulled back from agreements made with Hataria. Similarly, Zoroastrians in various western countries aided co-religionists seeking to leave Iran after the revolution in 1979. They and other refugees from East Africa found safety and support in diaspora communities. Many of the great figures honoured in Zoroastrian history have achieved their status in the diaspora, for example Naoroji and Zubin Mehta. Western leadership has been prominent in the establishment of the original World Zoroastrian Organization and again in the discussions for a new world body. It was the diaspora-led WZO that pioneered help for poor farmers in Gujarat who had previously been neglected by the rich and powerful in Bombay. That organization, and countless individual Zoroastrians in the diaspora, have contributed substantial funds to provide medical care for those in the old country who need, but can not afford, specialist treatment in the West. Diaspora Zoroastrians have given their religion international prominence in inter-faith activities in Chicago, at the United Nations, in Britain and in Rome. Diaspora contacts have, for good or ill, affected

Zoroastrian belief and practice back in the old country, with Cama's studies in Europe, Dastur Dhalla in New York, Dastur JamaspAsa in Mainz, Dastur Kotwal in London and Harvard, Khojeste Mistree in Oxford.

The common perception in the broad field of the study of religions is of diaspora as a top-down model, with influence and authority in the old centre percolating down to diaspora communities. This requires serious revision in the study of Zoroastrianism. There is a crucial two-way interaction between the old country and the diasporic communities, with the latter being—in the Zoroastrian case—an important source of funding and fame, and a medium through which Zoroastrianism contributes globally. Conversely, some religious leaders in the old country have an important effect on the diaspora, notably Khojeste Mistree, with his teaching work in many diaspora countries. There is now more transnational interaction than ever before. What happens in one country affects Zoroastrians in another country. There is no single Zoroastrian diaspora, for the different groups in various countries sometimes contrast greatly with each other. Indeed, Zoroastrian Associations in a single country can differ significantly. In a real sense there is no such thing as the Zoroastrian diaspora. There are many Zoroastrian diaspora communities; they are all different, but together they form a rich tapestry.

APPENDIX 1

Speech of Sir Shapoorji Bomanji Billimoria, President of the BPP, at a Public *Jashan* to Mark Indian Independence

Honourable Dastoor, ladies and Gentlemen;¹

On this auspicious and glorious day—the foundation day of the great dominions established through the freedom granted to our country by the British King and Parliament—we meet here, this evening, to express our joy and pleasure, along with our brothers and sisters from other communities. Although we are a small community, our leaders helped to achieve the national independence by joining in the first struggle for freedom waged by the Indian National Congress. We can, today, proudly savour the fruits of independence. The first call and direction for Self-Rule had come from the man who is honoured as the ‘Grand Father’ of Indian Nationalism, the man who is remembered even today in the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of our people—the great Dr Dadabhai Naoroji. He handed to us two powerful concepts: ‘Self-Rule’ and ‘Indigenous’ (Swaraj and Swadeshi)—and it was he who aroused the conscience of the British people and Parliament in relation to the poverty of India. Other struggles were led by the ‘uncrowned’ king of Bombay, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, and his trusted adviser, Sir Dinshaw Wacha. The late Sir Phirozeshah had perceived from the beginning that unless the people developed a civic sense among themselves they would not be worthy of the freedom. That is why he fought long and hard in the corridors of the Bombay Municipality, as a result of which Bombay is honoured as a premier city of India. Both Sir Phirozeshah and Sir Dinshaw contributed to the work of the Indian National Congress. It is entirely appropriate that in view of the struggles fought by our leaders, we celebrate today, along with our friends from other communities—the communities with whom we have lived harmoniously for a long time.

Ever since our ancestors were received in this country twelve hundred years ago, we have shown loyalty to all the rulers. We have also endeavoured to serve the country in different ways, as a token of our gratitude

¹ The original Gujarati is given in S. F. Desai, *History of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet 1860–1960*, Bombay, 1981, pp. 329–32. I am indebted to Burjor Avari for making this translation for me to publish. The speech was delivered at a function held on 15 Aug. 1947 at Albless Baug.

for the hospitality bestowed on our elders and leaders in the past. We have never been, and are not, communalists. Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy is remembered with great affection by many people for his munificent charities in building hospitals, dispensaries, schools and wells, the charities that have enhanced the respect for our community. The industrialist Jamshedji Tata gained fame through his pioneering entrepreneurship in industry. The name Tata will for ever be associated with the iron and steel industry of India. In a variety of ways India owes a great debt of gratitude to Sir Jamshetji, who can be compared to Andrew Carnegie of the USA or Lord Nuffield of Great Britain.

The charities established by the Wadia, Readymoney and Tata families are worth tens of millions, and they do not discriminate against members of other communities. The struggle for India waged in the British Parliament by three Parsi MPs—Dr Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree and Shapurji Saklatvalla—won the hearts of all the people of India. The Parsees have never demanded electoral advantage for themselves or any form of autonomy. Their policy has always been to identify with the welfare of the people of India. It is a suitable occasion for me to remind you of the words of Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, who said:

To ask the Parsis to isolate themselves and their interests from those of other natives of this country is to preach something not only equally selfish, but a great deal more short-sighted and unwise. In our case, it would be almost suicidal policy. Its ultimate effect would be only to reduce us to insignificance. We are a power in this Presidency as a small but enlightened and enterprising portion of the natives of this country, and as such, participate in its greatness. Isolated as Parsis pure and simple, holding ourselves aloof from the other natives of the country, without common interests, common sympathies and common co-operation, we might still remain an interesting community, but of no account whatsoever in the great march of events moulding the lofty destinies of this magnificent land.

On this great occasion we remember his words. Our happiness lies in the prosperity of our country and of our brothers and sisters in other communities.

In recent times, during Round Table Conference, we did not demand any special or reserved seats for ourselves. In our present Constituent Assembly Sir Homi Mody has conspicuously refrained from pressurizing the Minorities Committee to give us a preferential treatment. We have always relied on, and trusted in, the good words and promises given to us that we shall not be denied justice. Both the Congress government

and the Pakistan government have assured us that there will be no persecution against us. We have no reason to doubt their word.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour for you that, although we are such a small community, the Congress government shows a caring attitude towards us. In the central cabinet in Delhi the trade and industry portfolio is held with great skill and admiration from his colleagues by Hon. Cooverji Bhabha. The post of Mayor or First Citizen of Bombay, India's premier city, is filled by Ardeshir P. Sabawala, to the satisfaction of people of the city. The first Lady Sheriff of Bombay is Mrs Mitha Lam, who is carrying out her duties with great distinction. The first person to be appointed to a danger-prone role of a Police Commissioner is Constable Jehangir Sorabji Bharucha, a man of great authority. Members of our small community serve our country in numerous ways, and will continue to do so. There are not two opinions about their contribution.

From today the British dominion over India has come to an end. The voluntary transfer of power will be remembered as a momentous event of history; and India will forget the quarrels of the past and continue her friendship with Britain. Both Britain and India can only benefit from the friendship. I am again reminded of the memorable words used by Sir Phirozeshah Mehta in his Presidential address at the 1890 session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta, when he said:

I have no fears but that the English statesmanship will ultimately respond to the call. I have unbounded faith in the living and fertilising principles of English culture and English civilization. It may be that at times the prospect may look dark and gloomy. If the interests of the services are antagonistic to and prevail over the interests of the Indian people, it is still only one side of the shield.

All the great forces of English life and society, moral, social, intellectual, political, are, if slowly yet steadily and irresistibly, declaring themselves for the choice which will make the connection of England and India a blessing to themselves and to the whole world for countless generations.

As many honoured and esteemed speakers will want to say something about this auspicious day I shall not take too much of your precious time. However, on your behalf, I have a pleasant duty to perform, which is to send telegrams of congratulations to the leaders of the two dominions, I shall read aloud their contents.

TO THE HON'BLE THE PRIME MINISTER PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU PARSI
PUBLIC MEETING CALLED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE PARSI PUNCHAYET
OFFERED THANKSGIVING PRAYERS FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA FOL-
LOWED BY A PUBLIC MEETING STOP THE MEETING RESOLVED TO CONVEY

TO YOU ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY THEIR HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS ON THIS AUSPICIOUS OCCASION STOP THE COMMUNITY PRAYS THAT INDIA WILL NOW TAKE ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE AMONG THE GREAT NATIONS OF THE WORLD AND THAT THE ALMIGHTY MAY ORDAIN FOR ITS VAST POPULATION A PEACEFUL CONTENTED AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE.

TO QUAID-E-AZAM MAHOMMED ALI JINNAH PARSİ PUBLIC MEETING CALLED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE PARSİ PUNCHAYET OFFERED THANKSGIVING PRAYERS FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE TWO GREAT DOMINIONS IN OUR COUNTRY FOLLOWED BY A PUBLIC MEETING STOP THE MEETING RESOLVED TO CONVEY TO YOUR EXCELLENCY ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY THEIR HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS ON THIS AUSPICIOUS OCCASION STOP THE COMMUNITY PRAYS THAT THE DOMINIONS WILL NOW TAKE THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE AMONG THE GREAT NATIONS OF THE WORLD AND THAT THE ALMIGHTY MAY ORDAIN FOR THEIR VAST POPULATION A PEACEFUL CONTENTED AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE.

Today is the golden day which will be remembered for ever. I am sure that you will mark your approval of the telegrams of felicitations sent by the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet by your thunderous applause.

APPENDIX 2

Survey Data

Table 1: The Global DataTABLE 1 (1) *Where respondents came from (%)*

Previous county of residence	London	UK	Hong Kong	Present abode		California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
				Karachi	Chicago									
Iran	6	2	0	NA	11	40	10	8	9	4	6	3	7	NA
Bombay	52	42	51	NA	60	32	35	67	51	54	53	74	54	NA
Rest of India	11	13	26	NA	12	12	16	11	17	8	16	11	22	NA
East Africa	17	18	0	NA	1	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	NA
Pakistan	10	6	0	NA	5	6	31	2	10	12	2	0	12	NA
China	0	2	13	NA	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	3	NA
London	2	14	2	NA	4	2	6	6	6	13	20	3	1	NA
UK	0	2	0	NA	4	2	0	1	4	2	0	6	0	NA
Canada	1	0	4	NA	2	5	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	NA
USA	1	1	2	NA	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	NA
Australia	0	0	0	NA	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	NA
[N =]	[198]	[203]	[47]		[83]	[128]	[49]	[101]	[175]	[206]	[90]	[70]	[100]	

Missing observations = 336.

Figures are not given for Karachi or Kenya because they are 'Not Appropriate' (NA) on this table because respondents had been born there. The sample size for Kenya is so small that percentages need to be viewed with great caution on every table. They at most indicate only a broad trend. In charts UK/USA/Canada shorthand for 'rest of the country'.

TABLE 1 (2) *Decade of arrival in present abode (%)*

Previous county of residence	London	UK	Hong Kong	Present abode		California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
				Karachi	Chicago									
Pre-1940s	2	2	12	NA	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	NA
1940s	3	4	14	NA	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	NA
1950s	17	15	8	NA	3	1	0	3	8	1	4	0	1	NA
1960s	37	41	19	NA	39	14	11	21	26	35	28	9	13	NA
1970s	33	31	20	NA	45	52	47	53	51	49	44	39	37	NA
1980s*	18	16	14	NA	9	45	23	11	37	31	24	39	57	NA
[N =]	[226]	[220]	[51]	NA	[85]	[143]	[55]	[60]	[229]	[218]	[101]	[75]	[116]	NA

Missing observations = 225. *Survey conducted mid 1980s, full decadal figures unavailable.

TABLE 1 (3) *Gender (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Men	51	53	47	59	51	54	55	55	60	50	58	53	40	53
Women	49	47	53	41	49	46	45	45	40	50	42	47	60	47
[N =]	[251]	[232]	[66]	[115]	[86]	[149]	[55]	[110]	[186]	[224]	[101]	[79]	[119]	[32]

Missing observations = 35.

TABLE 1 (4) *Age of respondents (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Under 20s	9	8	6	6	4	6	4	3	2	4	3	12	7	3
20s	13	13	16	16	11	19	17	8	14	11	13	12	19	0
30s	16	14	19	11	35	30	35	29	35	24	25	16	24	14
40s	19	30	23	16	30	26	22	33	30	29	31	22	18	20
50s	20	20	14	21	15	11	18	18	15	9	18	29	19	33
60s	17	9	14	19	4	4	0	5	3	9	5	7	12	23
70s	6	6	8	11	1	4	4	4	1	5	5	2	1	7
[N =]	[240]	[226]	[64]	[112]	[82]	[145]	[54]	[101]	[181]	[221]	[98]	[76]	[117]	[30]

Missing observations = 88.

TABLE 1 (5) *Marital status of respondents (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Single	34	22	20	26	11	31	18	16	15	17	20	19	29	13
Married	55	67	71	63	85	66	76	79	80	76	71	76	65	78
Separated/div.	4	4	3	2	2	1	4	1	3	4	4	3	0	6
Widowed	7	7	6	9	2	2	2	4	2	3	5	2	6	3
[N =]	[251]	[233]	[66]	[114]	[87]	[150]	[55]	[110]	[185]	[221]	[101]	[79]	[119]	[32]

Missing observations = 37.

TABLE 1 (6) *Intermarriage (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Z'ian spouse	84	76	88	96	84	92	95	87	77	92	80	92	82	93
Non Z'ian spouse	16	24	12	4	16	8	5	13	23	8	20	8	18	7
[N =]	[166]	[180]	[51]	[84]	[76]	[101]	[43]	[93]	[156]	[181]	[75]	[65]	[82]	[28]

Missing observations = 456 (question inappropriate for single persons).

TABLE 1 (7) *Type of family (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Nuclear	13	11	13	3	11	16	7	13	13	25	25	79	91	87
Extended	73	76	70	97	77	66	73	71	66	60	61	17	7	13
No family	14	13	27	1	13	18	20	16	21	15	14	4	2	0
[N =]	[250]	[234]	[64]	[114]	[86]	[146]	[55]	[109]	[184]	[222]	[100]	[77]	[115]	[30]

Missing observations = 53.

TABLE 1 (8) *Language respondents read in (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Gujarati	51	45	51	56	41	26	45	42	37	46	29	30	36	60
Persian	6	1	0	0	13	35	11	8	7	4	8	0	4	0
English only	43	54	49	44	46	39	44	50	56	50	63	70	60	40
[N =]	[203]	[188]	[53]	[75]	[71]	[113]	[45]	[76]	[127]	[187]	[70]	[54]	[94]	[25]

Missing observations = 459 (numerous variations of different combinations of languages).

TABLE 1 (9) *Level at which respondents completed formal education (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
School	22	26	36	25	13	14	26	7	5	24	20	22	18	55
1 st degree	51	48	47	57	41	52	30	41	37	52	57	52	59	38
Postgraduate	27	26	17	18	46	34	43	52	58	34	23	26	23	0
[N =]	[222]	[215]	[64]	[109]	[86]	[146]	[53]	[105]	[182]	[209]	[93]	[73]	[113]	[29]

Missing observations = 141 (many 'other' e.g. business qualifications).

TABLE 1 (10) *Type of education (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Arts	32	28	54	46	30	27	33	28	29	40	25	38	40	55
Sciences	29	29	14	21	40	43	35	33	45	25	27	32	22	15
'Other'	35	43	32	33	30	30	32	39	26	35	48	30	38	30
[N =]	[227]	[211]	[56]	[102]	[83]	[139]	[49]	[104]	[177]	[196]	[90]	[69]	[114]	[27]*

Missing observations = 141 (many 'other' e.g. combinations and business qualifications).

TABLE 1 (11) *Place of postgraduate education (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
India	35	17	36	5	14	17	19	24	18	38	65	91	67	NA
Pakistan	2	0	9	90	3	0	14	2	4	9	0	0	17	NA
UK	60	83	55	5	9	0	5	6	5	7	18	0	11	NA
Canada	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	33	17	0	0	NA
USA	3	0	0	0	74	80	62	69	73	13	0	9	6	NA
[N =]	[57]	[47]	[11]	[19]	[35]	[40]	[21]	[51]	[89]	[45]	[17]	[11]	[18]	NA

As the sample size is small in several categories, considerable caution is required when interpreting these figures.

Missing observations = 1379 (the table was concerned with only group).

TABLE 1 (12) *Career (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
At home	32	21	38	25	19	24	22	16	22	20	14	24	25	31
Manual	2	4	3	6	3	0	8	4	2	7	5	10	1	3
Clerical	31	36	16	19	14	18	16	16	12	31	29	24	36	35
Managerial	8	7	25	28	10	21	12	13	10	10	17	13	11	21
Executive	27	32	18	22	54	37	42	52	54	32	34	29	27	10
[N =]	[247]	[227]	[61]	[110]	[79]	[132]	[50]	[103]	[180]	[211]	[93]	[76]	[117]	[29]

Missing observations = 125.

TABLE 1 (13) *Correspondence with Zoroastrians 'abroad' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Regularly	61	63	60	51	67	68	67	71	70	67	63	59	57	69
Sometimes	27	28	26	38	22	26	22	20	21	20	31	31	29	28
Rarely/never	12	9	12	12	11	6	11	9	9	13	6	10	14	3
[N =]	[246]	[230]	[65]	[112]	[87]	[145]	[55]	[108]	[184]	[222]	[98]	[78]	[118]	[32]

Missing observations = 60.

TABLE 1 (14) *Contact with Zoroastrians 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Regularly	67	63	77	83	70	83	72	71	62	76	80	73	86	83
Sometimes	27	29	17	15	26	15	17	23	32	19	10	23	12	17
Rarely/never	6	8	6	2	3	2	11	6	6	5	10	4	2	0
[N =]	[246]	[228]	[65]	[112]	[86]	[147]	[54]	[109]	[178]	[220]	[100]	[78]	[120]	[29]

Missing observations = 68.

TABLE 1 (15) *Read Zoroastrian literature*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Yes	27%	21	50	56	42%	60%	26%	39%	48%	52%	51%	36%	62%	42%
No	73	79	50	44	58	40	74	61	52	48	49	64	38	58
[N =]	[244]	[230]	[64]	[107]	[82]	[148]	[53]	[107]	[184]	[219]	[100]	[78]	[120]	[29]

Missing observations = 75.

TABLE 1 (16) *Pray (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Daily	72	72	73	86	65	73	75	72	69	77	70	83	80	86
Rarely/never	28	28	27	14	35	27	25	28	31	23	30	17	20	14
[N =]	[236]	[210]	[60]	[108]	[85]	[138]	[52]	[106]	[173]	[208]	[91]	[75]	[118]	[28]

Missing observations = 152.

TABLE 1 (17) *Attend Zoroastrian centre for religious functions (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Regularly	31	14	60	27	42	56	33	38	37	39	32	60	56	76
Sometimes	48	45	33	51	43	30	23	44	40	44	24	35	42	14
Rarely/never	19	22	5	17	12	7	21	16	10	15	11	4	2	10
No centre	2	19	2	5	4	8	23	3	13	2	33	0	0	0
[N =]	[232]	[205]	[58]	[78]	[82]	[137]	[43]	[96]	[153]	[203]	[81]	[48]	[104]	[21]

Missing observations = 299.

TABLE 1 (18) *Eat Indian/Iranian Food (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Often	83	80	80	80	88	88	89	90	79	85	85	85	93	97
[N =]	[247]	[231]	[65]	[107]	[87]	[146]	[54]	[108]	[186]	[224]	[100]	[79]	[121]	[29]

Missing observations = 56.

TABLE 1 (19) *Wear Indian/Iranian Dress (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Often	18	14	27	48	12	41	12	16	15	13	11	20	23	54
Sometimes	21	19	22	21	17	15	25	24	21	20	19	29	26	19
Communal occasions	25	26	24	13	31	17	27	31	24	27	26	19	32	19
Rarely/never	36	41	27	18	40	27	36	29	40	40	44	32	19	8
[N =]	[231]	[212]	[59]	[99]	[82]	[125]	[51]	[103]	[181]	[207]	[96]	[72]	[117]	[26]

Missing observations = 179 (the question was less appropriate for Iranian Zoroastrians).

TABLE 1 (20) *How respondents described themselves (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Orthodox	16	14	16	9	9	23	15	12	14	19	18	29	12	24
Liberal	72	74	71	85	76	65	78	77	66	65	63	66	72	62
Non-practising	12	12	14	6	15	12	7	11	20	16	19	5	16	14
[N =]	[179]	[167]	[44]	[87]	[66]	[101]	[41]	[73]	[118]	[151]	[75]	[58]	[86]	[29]

Missing observations = 565. There were various 'other' terms which have been omitted in this table.

TABLE 1 (21) *Respondents' funeral wishes (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Tower of Silence	26	24	40	63	5	33	26	8	22	16	18	40	22	27
Cremation	62	68	44	32	78	60	63	85	65	74	67	42	73	32
Burial	12	8	16	5	17	7	11	7	13	10	15	18	5	41
[N =]	[N = 173]	[169]	[45]	[103]	[60]	[108]	[43]	[77]	[128]	[172]	[82]	[60]	[99]	[22]

Missing observations = 497. 'Don't mind' answers not included in this table.

TABLE 1 (22) *Respondents' attitude to intermarriage (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Approve	67	74	72	40	79	54	56	84	76	74	86	64	81	61
Disapprove	33	26	28	60	21	46	44	16	24	26	14	36	19	39
[N =]	[245]	[220]	[61]	[99]	[85]	[142]	[52]	[110]	[174]	[215]	[97]	[72]	[116]	[31]

Missing observations = 121.

TABLE 1 (23) *Should priests bless intermarriages? (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Yes	43	38	56	40	65	64	38	70	56	58	52	39	48	27
Don't Know	21	23	11	16	11	12	13	15	18	20	19	29	26	26
No	36	39	33	44	25	24	49	15	26	22	29	32	26	47
[N =]	[242]	[229]	[63]	[109]	[85]	[143]	[55]	[106]	[179]	[219]	[94]	[76]	[120]	[30]

Missing observations = 90.

TABLE 1 (24) *Should the offspring of intermarriages be allowed to have a naujote performed? (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Only if father Z'ian	18	18	21	32	6	9	5	5	6	12	12	25	10	47
If either parent Z'ian	60	62	69	54	91	66	60	82	77	78	80	61	81	44
No	13	11	7	11	1	16	4	2	8	4	4	8	3	6
Don't know	9	9	3	4	2	9	5	5	6	6	4	7	6	3
[N =]	[245]	[229]	[62]	[112]	[86]	[147]	[55]	[109]	[181]	[218]	[99]	[76]	[121]	[32]

Missing observations = 68.

TABLE 1 (25) *Should non-Zoroastrian spouses be allowed to have a naujote? (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Yes	63	60	65	64	79	71	58	84	72	63	61	61	76	39
[N =]	[227]	[211]	[57]	[104]	[81]	[132]	[52]	[97]	[171]	[189]	[87]	[67]	[109]	[28]

Missing observations = 228.

TABLE 1 (26) *Should non-Zoroastrians be allowed in the prayer room 'here'? (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Yes	30	33	30	19	69	45	24	51	43	33	42	45	40	52
Yes on certain conditions	45	46	47	44	19	34	56	44	44	48	55	32	46	33
Never	25	21	14	37	12	21	20	5	13	18	3	23	14	15
[N =]	[227]	[209]	[60]	[84]	[83]	[126]	[50]	[97]	[165]	[201]	[94]	[62]	[102]	[27]

Missing observations = 253.

TABLE 1 (27) *Affirm a belief in: (%)*[illegible]

TABLE 1 (28) *Prayers for the dead (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Absolutely necessary	43	32	44	40	18	32	38	25	30	28	36	42	34	61
Benefit the dead	17	19	11	23	14	25	20	11	12	25	22	20	38	19
Benefit the living	16	15	19	4	25	21	7	22	23	12	17	12	14	7
Benefit dead and living	7	10	6	16	19	4	9	20	12	14	5	0	0	0
Don't know	9	16	13	9	19	14	18	16	16	16	6	17	9	13
Other	5	3	5	8	4	2	2	0	4	3	2	4	0	0
Meaningless	3	6	3	1	1	2	6	3	2	2	2	1	5	0
[N =]	[249]	[227]	[64]	[113]	[84]	[139]	[55]	[108]	[181]	[218]	[98]	[77]	[120]	[31]

Missing observations = 76.

TABLE 1 (29) *Authority in disputes (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Priests in India	8	5	20	0	9	13	8	1	8	8	10	8	3	6
BPP	4	5	3	4	0	4	13	2	6	3	2	7	3	13
Priests in Iran	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Iranian Anjuman	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Local leaders	7	9	12	19	11	9	6	11	9	12	8	7	4	3
Specially convened meetings	23	28	15	18	23	21	15	31	22	32	23	17	20	36
Individual conscience	33	32	22	33	37	23	32	25	32	17	34	30	42	42
‘Other’	25	20	27	26	20	27	26	28	22	28	23	27	27	0
[N =]	[235]	[214]	[60]	[107]	[80]	[138]	[53]	[103]	[179]	[210]	[91]	[74]	[117]	[31]

Missing observations = 148.

TABLE 1 (30) *Consider beliefs changed 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Quite a lot	17	21	9	NA	18	15	14	24	26	20	24	6	16	NA
Changed little	34	30	41	NA	38	28	21	40	39	37	25	36	24	NA
Not at all	49	49	50	NA	44	57	65	36	35	43	51	58	60	NA
[N =]	[209]	[203]	[58]	NA	[84]	[135]	[52]	[103]	[175]	[202]	[96]	[72]	[110]	NA

Missing observations = 253.

TABLE 1 (31) *Consider practices changed 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Quite a lot	30	37	15	NA	34	26	17	39	39	32	33	18	23	NA
Changed little	36	32	40	NA	33	28	50	39	34	40	30	41	42	NA
Not at all	34	31	45	NA	34	46	33	22	27	28	37	41	36	NA
[N =]	[188]	[191]	[53]	NA	[77]	[123]	[46]	[104]	[167]	[193]	[93]	[63]	[101]	NA

Missing observations = 358.

TABLE 1 (32) *Parsi/Iranian Zoroastrian Relations 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Excellent/good	37	37	NA	71	35	24	31	15	38	36	43	47	41	NA
Reasonable/mixed	34	37	NA	25	45	39	45	45	36	33	17	11	45	NA
Poor/bad	14	9	NA	1	16	32	8	25	16	19	12	13	9	NA
[N =]	[221]	[197]	NA	[98]	[81]	[137]	[49]	[100]	[173]	[137]	[89]	[75]	[114]	NA

Missing observations = 196.

TABLE 1 (33) *Internal Parsi relations 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Excellent/good	62	61	76	83	70	40	70	66	69	56	69	56	76	47
Reasonable/ mixed	25	26	21	13	17	37	20	27	22	31	24	36	17	30
Poor/bad	8	4	0	2	8	8	6	8	9	7	6	8	3	13
[N =]	[229]	[206]	[64]	[99]	[81]	[124]	[50]	[101]	[173]	[209]	[95]	[70]	[113]	[30]

Missing observations = 196.

TABLE 1 (34) *Relations between old and new immigrants 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Excellent/good	42	37	60	NA	57	47	40	59	57	48	65	51	61	NA
Reasonable/ mixed	32	32	35	NA	26	36	25	27	24	34	21	38	32	NA
Poor/bad	9	7	2	NA	9	5	18	4	5	7	9	8	3	NA
[N =]	[201]	[189]	[49]	NA	[78]	[112]	[40]	[93]	[162]	[194]	[89]	[66]	[112]	NA

Missing observations = 382. The question is not applicable for Karachi or Kenya because there has been minimal inward migration of Zoroastrians in these two communities. There had at the time of the survey been some inward migration in Britain, but relatively little. The figures for both London and UK should therefore be treated with some caution.

TABLE 1 (35) *Relations with Non-Zoroastrians 'here' (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Excellent/good	54	61	74	71	70	62	53	68	71	68	60	74	73	74
Reasonable/ mixed	37	27	20	27	22	28	34	19	23	22	30	17	20	19
Don't know	7	10	3	2	3	6	4	12	4	5	7	6	5	7
Poor/bad	2	2	3	0	5	4	9	1	2	5	3	3	2	0
[N =]	[244]	[228]	[65]	[109]	[86]	[143]	[53]	[104]	[181]	[218]	[99]	[78]	[115]	[31]

Missing observations = 86.

TABLE 1 (36) *Faced discrimination? (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Yes	42	37	27	16	30	37	35	37	37	49	44	30	28	20
No	58	63	73	84	70	63	65	63	63	51	55	70	72	80
[N =]	[243]	[222]	[63]	[98]	[84]	[137]	[54]	[104]	[186]	[218]	[99]	[76]	[116]	[30]

Missing observations = 110.

TABLE 1 (37) *Faced discrimination at work? (%)*

	London	UK	Hong Kong	Karachi	Chicago	California	Houston	New York	USA	Toronto	Canada	Melbourne	Sydney	Kenya
Frequently	38	33	NA	NA	45 (?)	26	26 (?)	31 (?)	18	23	25	11 (?)	22 (?)	NA
[N =]	[78]	[66]	[9]	[8]	[22]	[46]	[19]	[36]	[66]	[106]	[40]	[18]	[27]	[4]

Missing observations = 1295, since this table looks only at the 628 who said they faced discrimination. Some of the [N =] are so low that they have been marked 'Not Appropriate' (NA). Others are also so low that question marks have been placed after the percentage figure to emphasize that the figure is questionable. The sample is more reliable only for London, UK, California, USA, Toronto and perhaps Canada.

Note 1: Faced discrimination in housing

The sample size under this heading is so small that a formal table would be inappropriate. In Britain 54 respondents said that they had faced discrimination in housing, of whom 30 said they had faced it frequently. In the UK 44 respondents said that they faced discrimination in housing, but only 22 said it was frequent. In California 40 individuals said they had experienced such discrimination, but only 4 said that they had faced it frequently. In New York 36 respondents said that they had faced such discrimination but only 11 said frequently. In Sydney 27 respondents had faced such discrimination in housing, but only 6 frequently. In total 437 individuals said that they had faced discrimination in housing, of whom 78 were in London and 66 in the UK.

Note 2: Faced discrimination in education

Globally 420 respondents said that they had faced discrimination in education, of whom 44 were in London and 43 in the rest of UK. Thirty-eight respondents from California, 61 in USA, 102 in Toronto and 36 from the rest of Canada said that they had faced such discrimination. The other places surveyed had much smaller figures, for example only 7 in Karachi, 9 in Melbourne and 2 of the small Kenya sample.

Note 3: Faced discrimination on grounds of colour

A total of 546 respondents said that they had faced discrimination on grounds of colour; 86 were from London and 77 from the rest of the UK. Sixty-two respondents from USA, 104 from Toronto and 44 from Canada said that they had faced colour prejudice. In Britain 55 said that they had experienced this frequently. The nearest comparable figures were Toronto (27 individuals); the other groups said it occurred sometimes or only occasionally.

Table 2: Male/Female Beliefs and Practices

Question	Male (%)	Female (%)
Religious practices		
<i>Prayer</i>	[N = 961]	[N = 851]
Pray daily	66	74
Sometimes pray	15	16
Rarely pray	18	10
<i>Wear sudre and kusti</i>	[N = 955]	[N = 844]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	71	64
Sometimes wear <i>s/k</i>	9	11
Rarely wear <i>s/k</i>	20	25
<i>Z'ian traditions*</i>	[N = 941]	[N = 836]
Practise none of Z'ian traditions	8	7
Practise All of Z'ian traditions	28	31
<i>Funerals*</i>	[N = 957]	[N = 847]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	20	18
Cremation	46	49
Burial	8	8
Attend Z'ian centre for religious functions regularly	82	82 [N = 366 and 350]
<i>Intermarriage*</i>	[N = 950]	[N = 846]
Accept intermarriage	67	68
Object to intermarriage	29	28
Don't know	4	3
Allow non-Zoros in western prayer room	38	34
Allow non-Zoros with strict conditions	41	42
Never allow entry	17	19
Religious beliefs		
<i>Believe in:*</i>		
Immortal soul	62	67 [N = 754 and 628]
Reincarnation	34	47 [N = 687 and 602]
Resurrection	10	14 [N = 600 and 459]
Heaven and hell	45	51 [N = 692 and 554]
Prayers for dead essential	82	86 [N = 945 and 835]
Religious authority in 'old country'	13	12 [N = 920 and 787]
Religious beliefs changed a lot 'here'	19	16 [N = 913 and 790]
Religious practices changed a lot 'here'	28	29 [N = 869 and 727]

Question	Male (%)	Female (%)
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i> *	[N = 949]	[N = 839]
Country of birth	23	28
Country of residence	34	27
Zoroastrian citizenship	47	52
(NB some people ticked more than one option)		
Secular culture [†]		
<i>Indian or Iranian Food</i>	[N = 960]	[N = 850]
Often eat	82	86
Sometimes eat	12	10
Rarely eat	5	4
<i>Indian or Iranian dress</i>	[N = 862]	[N = 813]
Often wear	14	27
Sometimes wear	12	31
Only at communal functions	27	23
Rarely wear	47	19
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>		
Traditional music	38	40 [N = 830 and 735]
Traditional dress	31	47 [N = 833 and 746]
The religion	89	91 [N = 899 and 799]
Traditional art	48	46 [N = 845 and 738]
Traditional language	64	71 [N = 864 and 769]

Where the answer was a straight 'yes/no' the 'no's have been excluded, as have diverse range of 'others' involving small numbers. The latter are denoted by*.

[†] I am aware that the word 'culture' is a contested word. I did not want use a term such as '*parsi-panu*' because I wanted a term that could apply to Iranians. The discussion is not about 'ethnicity' and so I used 'culture' as the nearest term for what I wanted.

Table 3: Previous Country of Residence

Question	India (%)	Pakistan (%)	Iran (%)	East Africa (%)	West (%)	[N =]
Religious practices						
Pray daily	75	76	46	68	59	[N = 963-148-125-165-177]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	74	74	21	72	53	[N = 952-148-125-166-177]
Attend religious functions regularly	39	33	40	24	41	[N = 819-130-119-147-147]
<i>Observe 'Zoroastrian traditions':</i>						
All	28	29	24	38	24	[N = 945-147-124-163-172]
Pateti, No Ruz, <i>gahambar</i> s	12	14	31	6	16	[N = 945-147-124-163-172]
Pateti, No Ruz	23	24	32	18	19	[N = 945-147-124-163-172]
None	9	8	2	1	13	[N = 945-147-124-163-172]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	22	16	9	9	15	[N = 955-149-125-163-178]
Accept intermarriage	71	60	60	62	77	[N = 955-145-124-163-178]
Object to intermarriage	26	36	39	33	20	[N = 955-145-124-163-178]
Allow non-Zoros in western prayer room	36	37	58	28	38	[N = 885-138-115-158-169]
Religious beliefs						
<i>Believe in:</i>						
Immortal soul	68	74	58	56	55	[N = 724-113-100-122-143]
Reincarnation	44	47	29	40	35	[N = 695-94-80-124-132]
Resurrection	13	20	8	7	7	[N = 560-70-75-101-114]
Heaven and hell	48	66	36	54	30	[N = 644-95-86-125-122]
<i>Prayers for dead:</i>						
Essential	35	40	28	44	20	[N = 944-148-123-162-174]
Benefit the dead	22	20	14	18	24	[N = 944-148-123-162-174]
Benefit the living	15	8	31	12	20	[N = 944-148-123-162-174]

Religious authority in 'old country'	14	12	9	11	11	[N = 917-138-116-154-168]
Religious beliefs changed quite a lot 'here'	19	12	9	25	19	[N = 932-134-120-163-168]
Religious practices changed quite a lot 'here'	31	30	22	32	25	[N = 875-126-109-155-158]
Secular culture						
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i>						
Country of birth	24	13	43	9	25	[N = 949-145-125-161-179]
Country of residence	32	41	12	44	36	[N = 949-145-125-161-179]
Zoroastrianness	48	48	58	57	44	[N = 949-145-125-161-179]
Often eat Indian or Iranian food	85	78	87	92	81	[N = 963-148-125-166-180]
Often wear Indian or Iranian dress	17	19	52	18	12	[N = 916-136-94-153-167]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>						
Traditional food	76	73	62	74	83	[N = 870-145-122-148-166]
Traditional music	36	38	62	45	42	[N = 810-140-122-142-152]
Traditional dress	40	35	23	46	40	[N = 827-139-120-141-153]
Traditional art	43	46	65	55	49	[N = 825-138-122-141-160]
Traditional language	66	67	88	74	59	[N = 858-144-120-147-162]
The religion	91	94	87	89	85	[N = 898-146-124-151-170]
<i>Community relations good between:</i>						
Iranians and Parsis	40	48	31	28	32	[N = 867-130-121-142-157]
Between Parsis	67	69	39	62	61	[N = 903-134-93-157-168]
Old and new immigrants	55	55	44	39	49	[N = 823-116-94-142-152]
Faced discrimination	35	33	43	46	41	[N = 933-142-120-159-172]

Table 4: Rural and Urban Origins of Migrants

Question	Bombay (%)	Gujarat (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	76	80	[N = 769 and 61]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	73	92	[N = 758 and 60]
Attend religious functions often	39	56	[N = 649 and 57]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	22	31	[N = 760 and 62]
Object to intermarriage	24	50	[N = 764 and 61]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer room	16	22	[N = 708 and 54]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	64	85	[N = 578 and 52]
Reincarnation	43	49	[N = 567 and 45]
Resurrection	14	8	[N = 462 and 32]
Heaven and hell	46	60	[N = 528 and 42]
Prayers for dead essential	33	60	[N = 755 and 62]
Prayers for dead help living	15	11	[N = 755 and 62]
Religious authority lies in 'old country'	8	19	[N = 731 and 62]
Secular culture			
<i>Express citizenship in terms of</i>			
Country of birth	25	27	[N = 758 and 59]
Country of residence	31	29	[N = 758 and 59]
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	85	95	[N = 768 and 62]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	16	37	[N = 728 and 60]
Consider Parsi relations good	66	79	[N = 717 and 60]

Table 5: Languages in Which Respondents Read

Question	Gujarati (%)	Persian (%)	English only (%)	[N =]
Religious practices				
Pray daily	85	41	63	[N = 586–96–698]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	85	17	61	[N = 578–92–695]
Observe all Z'ian traditions	37	21	22	[N = 579–94–678]
Observe only Pateti/No Ruz	17	32	29	[N = 579–94–678]
Observe <i>Pateti, No Ruz and Gahambar</i>	11	31	13	[N = 579–94–678]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	23	2	15	[N = 584–93–692]
Want cremation	47	41	51	[N = 584–93–692]
Want burial	8	32	7	[N = 584–93–692]
Accept intermarriage	57	59	78	[N = 579–94–694]
Allow non-Zoros in prayer room here	32	61	38	[N = 543–87–654]
Religious beliefs				
<i>Believe in:</i>				
Immortal soul	68	56	61	[N = 423–76–556]
Reincarnation	50	32	35	[N = 386–62–534]
Resurrection	13	11	9	[N = 294–57–453]
Heaven and hell	57	35	43	[N = 370–68–506]
Prayers for dead essential	88	79	78	[N = 581–89–686]
Religious authority in old country	17	7	8	[N = 554–84–658]
Religious beliefs changed little here	80	79	72	[N = 561–93–647]
Religious practices changed little here	69	72	60	[N = 528–85–610]
Secular culture				
<i>Citizenship expressed in terms of:</i>				
Country of birth	23	45	22	[N = 578–93–688]
Country of residence	32	10	36	[N = 578–93–688]
Zoroastrian-ness	58	54	48	[N = 578–93–688]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>				
Traditional food	66	59	80	[N = 537–90–635]
Traditional music	35	67	34	[N = 513–90–586]
Traditional art	40	66	49	[N = 511–91–605]
Traditional dress	40	23	38	[N = 518–89–592]
The religion	93	87	88	[N = 549–92–650]
Traditional language	65	89	61	[N = 532–89–624]
Consider faced discrimination	37	45	33	[N = 557–87–681]

Table 6: Country of Primary Education

Question	Non-western country (%)	Western country (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	72	44	[N = 1,588 and 130]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	70	47	[N = 1,577 and 131]
Observe Z'ian 'traditions':			
None	11	7	[N = 1,583 and 133]
All	24	30	[N = 1,583 and 133]
Attend religious functions regularly	39	30	[N = 1,355 and 109]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	20	18	[N = 1,552 and 130]
Object to intermarriage	31	13	[N = 1,572 and 132]
Allow non-Zoros in western prayer rooms	37	31	[N = 1,461 and 121]
Religious beliefs			
Believe in:			
Immortal soul	66	54	[N = 1,204 and 113]
Reincarnation	42	22	[N = 1,124 and 107]
Resurrection	12	9	[N = 1,124 and 107]
Heaven and hell	50	34	[N = 907 and 103]
Prayers for dead:			
Essential	35	23	[N = 1,566 and 125]
Benefit dead	21	10	[N = 1,566 and 125]
Benefit living	15	24	[N = 1,566 and 125]
Secular culture			
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	86	70	[N = 1,583 and 133]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	21	2	[N = 1,471 and 123]
Consider worth preserving:			
The religion	91	76	[N = 1500 and 120]
Traditional food	73	88	[N = 1,454 and 121]
Traditional music	39	44	[N = 1,379 and 109]
Traditional dress	39	42	[N = 1,387 and 113]
Traditional art	46	67	[N = 1,388 and 116]
Traditional language	68	67	[N = 1,434 and 119]
Community relations good between:			
Iranians and Parsis	41	21	[N = 1,418 and 120]
Between Parsis	66	53	[N = 1,458 and 121]
Between new and old immigrants	53	36	[N = 1,290 and 114]

**Table 7: Attended Religious Classes
in Childhood (%)**

Question	Did attend (%)	Did not attend (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	73	68	[N = 731 and 1068]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	69	66	[N = 724 and 1062]
Observe all Z'ian traditions	33	26	[N = 726 and 1063]
Attend religious functions regularly	84	80	[N = 320 and 386]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	22	18	[N = 727 and 1060]
Accept intermarriage	62	72	[N = 719 and 1063]
Object to intermarriage	35	25	[N = 719 and 1063]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	18	17	[N = 672 and 986]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	67	63	[N = 551 and 820]
Reincarnation	42	39	[N = 522 and 759]
Heaven and hell	52	45	[N = 504 and 736]
Prayers for dead essential	88	80	[N = 716 and 1046]
Religious authority in 'old country'	14	11	[N = 694 and 1,001]
Secular culture			
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	27	25	[N = 716 and 1,057]
Country of residence	31	32	[N = 716 and 1,057]
Zoroastrian-ness	53	48	[N = 716 and 1,057]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
The religion	91	89	[N = 687 and 994]
Traditional language	70	66	[N = 671 and 944]
Traditional food	69	77	[N = 672 and 966]
Traditional music	39	39	[N = 640 and 906]
Traditional dress	38	39	[N = 645 and 915]
Traditional art	46	48	[N = 646 and 921]

Table 8: Level at which Education Completed

Question	School (%)	Postgraduate study (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	73	66	[N = 339 and 532]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	73	66	[N = 334 and 533]
Observe all Z'ian traditions	39	21	[N = 331 and 525]
Attend religious functions regularly	44	38	[N = 279 and 468]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	22	18	[N = 330 and 537]
Accept intermarriage	58	70	[N = 331 and 530]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	22	12	[N = 309 and 501]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	59	63	[N = 240 and 443]
Reincarnation	45	29	[N = 246 and 400]
Resurrection	12	11	[N = 178 and 366]
Heaven and hell	51	46	[N = 220 and 412]
Prayers for dead essential	44	28	[N = 329 and 525]
Prayers benefit dead	22	16	[N = 329 and 525]
Prayers benefit living	9	22	[N = 329 and 525]
Religious authority in old country	16	11	[N = 305 and 512]
Religious beliefs changed a lot here	12	23	[N = 314 and 514]
Religious practices changed a lot here	23	34	[N = 282 and 498]
Secular culture			
Often eat Indian or Iranian food	84	82	[N = 335 and 537]
Often wear Indian or Iranian dress	31	14	[N = 301 and 504]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	67	79	[N = 292 and 513]
Traditional music	61	42	[N = 275 and 492]
Traditional art	46	52	[N = 278 and 497]
The religion	89	89	[N = 302 and 521]
Traditional language	69	69	[N = 290 and 507]

Table 9: Type of Education

Question	Arts (%)	Sciences (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	74	63	[N = 557 and 506]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	65	66	[N = 552 and 501]
Observe all Z'ian traditions	29	23	[N = 552 and 501]
Attend religious functions regularly	37	36	[N = 467 and 436]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	20	17	[N = 552 and 504]
Object to intermarriage	30	29	[N = 552 and 498]
Exclude non-Zoros from prayer rooms here	19	14	[N = 516 and 462]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	69	62	[N = 415 and 404]
Reincarnation	50	30	[N = 386 and 359]
Resurrection	12	11	[N = 291 and 316]
Heaven and hell	54	45	[N = 345 and 336]
Prayers for dead essential	36	28	[N = 543 and 496]
Benefit dead	22	19	[N = 543 and 496]
Benefit the living	14	20	[N = 543 and 496]
Religious authority in old country	13	10	[N = 528 and 488]
Religious beliefs changed a lot here	15	18	[N = 514 and 482]
Religious practices changed a lot here	25	29	[N = 468 and 461]
Secular culture			
<i>Define citizenship in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	28	26	[N = 549 and 494]
Country of residence	30	33	[N = 549 and 494]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	73	75	[N = 513 and 456]
Traditional music	38	38	[N = 476 and 456]
Traditional dress	46	30	[N = 490 and 454]
Traditional art	49	45	[N = 486 and 461]
The religion	92	89	[N = 534 and 482]
Traditional language	68	64	[N = 504 and 467]

Table 10: Type of Career

Question	Business person (%)	Professional (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	74	68	[N = 362 and 573]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	75	63	[N = 355 and 569]
Regularly attend religious functions	39	36	[N = 305 and 484]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	22	19	[N = 381 and 574]
Object to intermarriage	21	16	[N = 359 and 568]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	21	16	[N = 333 and 525]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	66	62	[N = 286 and 445]
Reincarnation	48	39	[N = 264 and 415]
Heaven and hell	49	42	[N = 263 and 389]
Prayers for dead necessary	37	31	[N = 354 and 566]
Benefit dead	21	19	[N = 354 and 566]
Benefit living	12	19	[N = 354 and 566]
Religious authority in old country	15	8	[N = 343 and 546]
Religious beliefs changed little here	78	81	[N = 335 and 543]
Religious practices changed little here	69	63	[N = 324 and 513]
Secular culture			
<i>Affirm citizenship in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	28	23	[N = 356 and 572]
Country of residence	31	34	[N = 356 and 572]
Zoroastrian-ness	45	71	[N = 356 and 572]
Often eat Indian or Iranian food	85	84	[N = 358 and 575]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	74	76	[N = 329 and 535]
Traditional music	35	44	[N = 308 and 497]
Traditional art	45	50	[N = 308 and 507]
Traditional dress	37	42	[N = 356 and 572]

Table 11: Decade of Arrival

Question	Pre-1950s (%)	1950s (%)	1960s (%)	1970s (%)	1980s	[N =]
Religious practices						
Pray daily	78	72	68	68	75	[N = 67–112–437–669–338]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	81	61	71	63	71	[N = 62–112–436–662–338]
<i>Observe Z'ian traditions:</i>						
All	25	21	30	28	30	[N = 67–111–438–668–338]
Pateti, No Ruz, <i>gahambars</i>	20	15	11	16	9	[N = 67–111–438–668–338]
None	14	7	6	7	12	[N = 67–111–438–668–338]
Attend religious functions often	33	33	39	36	45	[N = 54–100–392–577–280]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	25	13	15	14	26	[N = 67–112–434–664–337]
Object to intermarriage	38	22	24	27	36	[N = 67–112–434–661–336]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	22	9	17	15	20	[N = 53–107–410–628–305]
Religious beliefs						
<i>Believe in:</i>						
Immortal soul	66	67	63	63	68	[N = 50–84–328–522–254]
Reincarnation	43	50	41	38	47	[N = 44–76–326–469–241]
Resurrection	17	12	14	9	11	[N = 35–65–266–393–188]

Table 11: Continued

Question	Pre-1950s (%)	1950s (%)	1960s (%)	1970s (%)	1980s	[N =]
Heaven and hell	50	45	51	47	45	[N = 38–73–297–470–229]
Prayers for dead essential	46	35	34	33	33	[N = 65–110–433–651–331]
Religious authority in old country	19	9	13	11	12	[N = 63–107–414–628–319]
Religious beliefs changed a lot here	20	18	25	18	8	[N = 61–108–430–645–323]
Religious practices changed a lot here	25	42	36	31	17	[N = 53–98–404–607–304]
Secular culture						
Assert citizenship in terms of:						
Country of birth	31	14	18	19	39	[N = 68–112–433–659–331]
Country of residence	33	36	39	32	25	[N = 68–112–433–659–331]
Zoroastrian-ness	34	37	48	52	53	[N = 68–112–433–659–331]
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	66	69	85	87	88	[N = 68–111–439–668–339]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	33	18	14	20	22	[N = 54–102–417–622–311]

Consider worth preserving:

Traditional dress	44	32	37	39	39	[N = 55–108–408–595–245]
Traditional food	73	68	77	74	74	[N = 55–105–419–619–286]
Traditional music	41	40	37	40	43	[N = 54–107–403–586–247]
Traditional art	47	48	46	48	47	[N = 53–105–412–588–260]
The religion	86	94	88	90	91	[N = 56–108–417–622–323]
Traditional language	73	60	64	70	73	[N = 55–109–414–604–208]

Community relations good between:

Iranian Z'ians and Parsis	58	46	37	33	39	[N = 55–95–396–601–302]
Parsis	71	63	64	64	58	[N = 63–98–412–613–300]
Old and new immigrants	56	52	50	51	52	[N = 50–87–378–554–287]

Table 12: Age Groups

Question	Under 20s (%)	20s (%)	30s (%)	40s (%)	50s (%)	60s (%)	70+ (%)	[N =]
Religious practices								
Pray daily	53	56	66	72	73	83	90	[N = 100-242-407-445-322-160-98]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	59	51	65	70	71	80	86	[N = 101-241-406-444-318-157-95]
Zoroastrian traditions observed:								
None	12	9	7	7	8	8	6	[N = 93-233-398-443-321-158-93]
Pateti, No Ruz, <i>gahambars</i>	17	16	13	10	17	15	14	[N = 93-233-398-443-321-158-93]
All	28	31	24	30	28	36	39	[N = 93-233-398-443-321-158-93]
Attend religious functions often	30	32	34	42	38	47	40	[N = 79-203-346-390-283-130-83]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	23	26	20	18	17	18	24	[N = 98-240-407-445-323-159-96]
Accept intermarriage	75	72	71	62	69	66	58	[N = 100-240-405-442-318-157-96]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	20	19	15	20	15	16	16	[N = 92-227-385-410-300-141-83]
Religious beliefs								
<i>Believe in:</i>								
Immortal soul	56	68	63	61	61	78	75	[N = 90-197-314-331-245-115-64]
Reincarnation	22	31	41	43	45	48	54	[N = 83-181-299-319-225-101-56]
Resurrection	10	12	10	12	9	14	32	[N = 78-162-257-263-177-63-41]
Heaven and hell	46	40	48	48	44	57	49	[N = 85-181-292-315-207-91-49]
<i>Prayers for dead:</i>								
Essential	22	30	30	37	33	44	45	[N = 97-234-401-443-317-155-93]
Benefit the dead	19	16	24	20	21	21	15	[N = 97-234-401-443-317-155-93]
Benefit living	20	15	18	15	15	12	12	[N = 97-234-401-443-317-155-93]

Religious authority in old country	13	10	11	14	10	13	17	[N = 89–229–390–422–304–149–87]
Beliefs changed a lot here	10	19	17	22	16	14	10	[N = 87–221–388–428–305–150–86]
Practices changed a lot here	11	25	34	33	27	24	22	[N = 84–212–378–405–280–127–76]
Secular culture								
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i>								
County of birth	36	31	29	26	19	25	17	[N = 99–240–396–444–320–155–95]
Country of residence	24	28	31	34	31	32	25	[N = 99–240–396–444–320–155–95]
Zoroastrian-ness	52	51	54	54	44	42	39	[N = 99–240–396–444–320–155–95]
Often eat Indian or Iranian food	76	79	88	86	82	83	85	[N = 100–245–408–443–319–160–97]
Often wear Indian or Iranian dress	5	10	18	17	25	34	45	[N = 88–222–381–425–293–141–88]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>								
Traditional food	85	82	78	75	69	64	46	[N = 92–220–381–413–294–144–78]
Traditional music	29	41	39	40	42	37	34	[N = 80–204–364–395–277–134–79]
Traditional dress	34	41	38	43	36	36	40	[N = 82–210–363–404–284–133–80]
Traditional art	50	55	48	46	50	40	35	[N = 84–211–363–400–279–136–80]
The religion	76	86	93	89	92	93	90	[N = 89–225–394–425–299–149–82]
Traditional language	67	70	73	68	64	62	51	[N = 88–218–380–409–285–141–79]
<i>Community relations good between:</i>								
Iranians and Parsis	34	30	37	31	46	54	60	[N = 94–215–372–412–279–136–77]
Parsis	56	56	63	63	68	72	71	[N = 91–223–380–418–291–139–82]
New and old migrants	39	41	52	49	56	55	66	[N = 83–198–347384–256–115–59]

The [N =] for respondents over the age of 70 is low compared with the sample size for people in their forties. They were retained as a separate group of respondents in their sixties because the differences between the two age groups are interesting, but caution is necessary in the use of that column.

Table 13: Family Relations

Questions	Single (%)	Married (%)	Separated/ divorced (%)	Widowed (%)	[N =]
Religious practices					
Pray daily	61	72	65	92	[N = 401-1274-48-83]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	58	70	53	88	[N = 404-1259-48-82]
Observe <i>Ṣ'ian</i> traditions:					
All	27	30	26	38	[N = 386-1258-46-80]
None	10	7	40	3	[N = 386-1258-46-80]
Attend religious functions often	27	40	30	46	[N = 333-1103-38-67]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	23	18	19	18	[N = 400-1268-47-83]
Accept intermarriage	74	66	76	60	[N = 401-1260-47-83]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	18	17	16	19	[N = 375-1179-44-69]
Describe self as:					
Orthodox	10	12	9	20	[N = 378-1231-46-80]
Liberal	47	54	48	55	[N = 378-1231-46-80]
Non-practising	15	8	19	9	[N = 378-1231-46-80]
Religious beliefs					
Believe in:					
Immortal soul	65	63	55	78	[N = 332-952-35-58]
Reincarnation	32	42	50	57	[N = 294-904-33-51]
Resurrection	12	11	13	28	[N = 263-729-28-32]
Heaven and hell	48	48	41	55	[N = 299-865-32-42]

<i>Prayers for the dead:</i>					
Absolutely necessary	30	35	31	52	[N = 393-1251-47-82]
Benefit dead	19	21	15	15	[N = 393-1251-47-82]
Benefit living	18	16	10	11	[N = 393-1251-47-82]
Religious authority in old country	9	13	5	11	[N = 375-1210-44-73]
Beliefs changed a lot here	16	18	18	19	[N = 372-1209-46-73]
Practices changed a lot here	25	29	25	41	[N = 353-1140-41-61]
Secular culture					
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i>					
Country of birth	31	25	14	27	[N = 401-1256-47-79]
Country of residence	29	33	29	19	[N = 401-1256-47-79]
Zoroastrian-ness	47	52	40	31	[N = 401-1256-47-79]
<i>Worth preserving:</i>					
Traditional food	77	74	71	54	[N = 371-1168-40-72]
Traditional music	35	41	35	34	[N = 346-1102-41-70]
Traditional dress	37	40	41	31	[N = 363-1111-41-68]
Traditional art	51	47	39	29	[N = 354-1113-41-69]
The religion	82	92	94	93	[N = 371-1145-41-69]
Traditional languages	68	68	64	59	[N = 371-1145-42-69]
<i>Community relations good between:</i>					
Parsis and Iranians	32	39	32	65	[N = 369-1142-39-63]
Parsis	55	67	44	74	[N = 370-1173-45-65]
New and old migrants	44	53	36	62	[N = 328-1043-40-56]

Table 14: Type of Family

Questions	Nuclear (%)	Extended (%)	No Family (%)	[N =]
Religious practices				
Pray daily	74	67	82	[N = 430–1122–242]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	69	66	69	[N = 425–1114–242]
<i>Observe Žian traditions:</i>				
All	31	30	21	[N = 430–1112–242]
Pateti, No Ruz, <i>gahambars</i>	12	14	16	[N = 430–1112–242]
None	16	4	8	[N = 430–1112–242]
Attend religious functions often	45	34	38	[N = 350–969–217]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	21	17	25	[N = 425–1123–240]
Object to intermarriage	26	30	30	[N = 428–1112–240]
Allow non-Zoros in western prayer room	39	36	34	[N = 396–1043–223]
Religious beliefs				
<i>Believe in:</i>				
Immortal soul	66	64	63	[N = 329–845–199]
Reincarnation	43	37	41	[N = 312–788–181]
Resurrection	15	11	10	[N = 247–652–154]
Heaven and hell	45	49	49	[N = 285–778–175]
Prayers for dead essential	36	35	27	[N = 419–1107–236]
Beliefs changed a lot here	15	18	17	[N = 415–1037–237]
Practices changed a lot here	24	29	31	[N = 381–986–216]
Secular culture				
<i>Define citizenship in terms of:</i>				
Country of birth	22	26	28	[N = 422–1111–240]
Country of residence	37	31	25	[N = 422–1111–240]
Zoroastrian-ness	49	51	45	[N = 422–1111–240]
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	84	84	86	[N = 428–1120–243]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	20	20	17	[N = 401–1025–233]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>				
Traditional food	85	69	75	[N = 344–1069–232]
Traditional music	49	37	37	[N = 267–1062–227]
Traditional dress	52	36	31	[N = 285–1058–227]
Traditional art	60	45	42	[N = 283–1062–230]
The religion	93	88	92	[N = 380–1077–230]
Traditional language	76	65	64	[N = 330–1062–231]
Believe faced discrimination	34	37	38	[N = 419–1072–238]

Table 15: With(out) Children

Questions	With children (%)	No children (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	72	66	[N = 1226–696]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	71	62	[N = 1213–596]
Observe all Z'ian traditions	30	25	[N = 1207–579]
Attend religious functions regularly	41	37	[N = 1071–483]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	17	18	[N = 1221–593]
Accept intermarriage	63	78	[N = 1209–597]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	18	12	[N = 1130–552]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	65	60	[N = 921–469]
Reincarnation	43	39	[N = 869–428]
Resurrection	12	11	[N = 694–371]
Heaven and hell	48	46	[N = 824–429]
Prayers for dead essential	38	27	[N = 1204–585]
Prayers benefit dead	23	19	[N = 1204–585]
Prayers benefit living	15	20	[N = 1204–585]
Religious authority in old country	13	9	[N = 1158–558]
Religious beliefs changed a lot here	19	14	[N = 1160–553]
Religious practices changed quite a lot here	32	27	[N = 1086–520]
Secular culture			
<i>Citizenship asserted in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	24	27	[N = 1209–589]
Country of residence	33	29	[N = 1209–589]
Zoroastrian-ness	53	37	[N = 1209–589]
Often eat Indian or Iranian food	88	80	[N = 1223–596]
Often wear Indian or Iranian dress	21	23	[N = 1149–534]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	73	72	[N = 1129–535]
Traditional music	40	38	[N = 1077–495]
Traditional art	46	47	[N = 1082–510]
The religion	92	88	[N = 1155–552]
Traditional language	68	58	[N = 1107–534]

Table 16: Inter-marriage

Questions	In-marrieds (%)	Out-marrieds (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	75	55	[N = 1193–200]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	75	47	[N = 1179–198]
<i>Observe Z'ian traditions:</i>			
All	32	14	[N = 1181–192]
None	5	17	[N = 1181–192]
Attend religious functions often	42	28	[N = 1170–198]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	20	8	[N = 1186–202]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	65	61	[N = 877–158]
Reincarnation	43	45	[N = 831–150]
Resurrection	12	10	[N = 653–131]
Heaven and hell	50	41	[N = 789–144]
<i>Prayers for dead:</i>			
Essential	38	21	[N = 1170–198]
Prayers benefit dead	21	15	[N = 1170–198]
Prayers benefit living	13	27	[N = 1170–198]
Religious authority in old country	15	7	[N = 1127–194]
Religious beliefs changed here quite a lot	16	28	[N = 1120–198]
Religious practices changed here quite a lot	27	47	[N = 1046–187]
Secular culture			
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	25	19	[N = 1171–201]
Country of residence	31	41	[N = 1171–201]
Zoroastrian-ness	52	40	[N = 1171–201]
Often eat Indian or Iranian food	90	67	[N = 1190–199]
Often wear Indian or Iranian dress	24	11	[N = 1113–184]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	72	81	[N = 1087–186]
Traditional music	41	39	[N = 1034–175]
Traditional dress	40	34	[N = 1040–176]
Traditional art	45	55	[N = 1040–179]
The religion	92	89	[N = 1119–192]
Traditional language	67	65	[N = 1067–184]

Table 17: Who Prays?

Questions	Pray regularly (%)	Rarely/never pray (%)	[N =]
<i>Length of time been in diaspora:</i>			
10 years	85	15	[N = 513]
11–20 years	85	15	[N = 520]
21–30 years	84	16	[N = 188]
30+ years	83	17	[N = 93]
Less than a year	96	4	[N = 26]*
Men	80	20	[N = 796]
Women	90	10	[N = 700]
<i>Age groups:</i>			
Under 20	67	33	[N = 79]
20–29	77	23	[N = 176]
30–39	83	17	[N = 326]
40–49	87	13	[N = 371]
50–59	87	13	[N = 272]
60–69	92	8	[N = 144]
70+	93	7	[N = 95]
<i>Marital status:</i>			
Single	76	24	[N = 323]
Married	87	13	[N = 1052]
Separated/divorced	77	23	[N = 43]*
Widowed	97	3	[N = 78]
<i>Married to:</i>			
A Zoroastrian	90	10	[N = 997]
Non-Zoroastrian	71	29	[N = 156]
<i>Type of family:</i>			
Nuclear	88	12	[N = 365]
Extended	83	17	[N = 907]
No family	85	15	[N = 208]
<i>Language read in:</i>			
Gujarati	94	6	[N = 531]
Persian	70	30	[N = 56]*
English only	77	23	[N = 564]
<i>Educational level completed:</i>			
Schooling only	89	11	[N = 375]
Degree level	85	15	[N = 676]
Postgraduate study	80	20	[N = 442]
<i>Type of education:</i>			
Arts	88	12	[N = 466]
Science	79	21	[N = 399]
<i>Religious classes in childhood?</i>			
Yes	90	10	[N = 535]
No	81	19	[N = 888]
<i>Correspond with Z'ians 'abroad':</i>			
Regularly	90	10	[N = 971]
Rarely/never	66	34	[N = 133]
<i>Contact with Z'ians 'here':</i>			
Regularly	88	12	[N = 1100]
Rarely/never	80	20	[N = 311]

*Note low [N =]; these figures should be used with caution.

**Table 18: Attendance at a Zoroastrian Centre
for Religious Functions**

Questions	Regularly (%)	Infrequently (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	80	48	[N = 583–207]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	76	49	[N = 581–206]
<i>Observe Zoroastrian traditions:</i>			
None	5	8	[N = 583–206]
All	47	17	[N = 583–206]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	24	11	[N = 581–205]
Accept intermarriage	56	84	[N = 579–208]
Object to intermarriage	40	14	[N = 579–208]
Don't know	4	2	[N = 579–208]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	20	8	[N = 535–195]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	72	46	[N = 453–156]
Reincarnation	44	36	[N = 436–148]
Resurrection	13	8	[N = 350–130]
Heaven and hell	52	33	[N = 418–144]
<i>Prayers for dead:</i>			
Essential	42	19	[N = 570–206]
Prayers benefit dead	21	14	[N = 570–206]
Prayers benefit living	12	24	[N = 570–206]
Religious authority in old country	19	22	[N = 559–186]
Religious beliefs changed little here	77	68	[N = 565–189]
Religious practices changed little here	71	50	[N = 520–187]
Secular culture			
<i>Citizenship asserted in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	26	30	[N = 577–204]
Country of residence	29	39	[N = 577–204]
Zoroastrian-ness	54	38	[N = 577–204]

Table 18: Continued

Questions	Regularly (%)	Infrequently (%)	[N =]
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	92	74	[N = 582–206]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	28	7	[N = 555–191]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	71	77	[N = 536–200]
Traditional music	40	39	[N = 503–195]
Traditional dress	42	36	[N = 515–195]
Traditional art	47	46	[N = 509–198]
The religion	94	80	[N = 554–199]
Traditional language	73	61	[N = 529–198]
<i>Consider relations good between:</i>			
Parsis and Iranian Zoros	42	32	[N = 543–180]
Parsis	69	52	[N = 536–193]
Old and new immigrants	58	35	[N = 495–178]

**Table 19: A Comparison of Those Who Do (not)
Read Zoroastrian Literature**

Questions	Read Zoroastrian Literature (%)	Do not read Zoroastrian Literature (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	76	65	[N = 759–1016]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	72	64	[N = 751–1013]
Attend religious functions often	52	26	[N = 667–852]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	24	16	[N = 752–1014]
Object to intermarriage	35	23	[N = 742–1017]
Exclude non-Zoros from western prayer rooms	20	15	[N = 696–945]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortality of the soul	71	59	[N = 580–776]
Reincarnation	42	39	[N = 543–728]
Resurrection	13	10	[N = 433–625]
Heaven and hell	52	45	[N = 516–714]
Prayers for dead essential	42	29	[N = 740–1003]
Religious authority in old country	9	6	[N = 719–955]
Secular culture			
Assert Zoroastrian identity	51	48	[N = 747–1003]
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	87	82	[N = 755–1016]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	27	14	[N = 701–938]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	73	75	[N = 702–921]
Traditional music	43	36	[N = 658–876]
Traditional dress	44	34	[N = 671–877]
Traditional art	49	46	[N = 669–886]
The religion	93	87	[N = 720–946]
Traditional language	72	63	[N = 687–917]

Table 20: Correspondence with Zoroastrians Overseas

Questions	Correspond regularly (%)	Correspond rarely (%)	[N =]
Religious practices			
Pray daily	77	48	[N = 1146–183]
Always wear <i>sudre</i> and <i>kusti</i>	72	58	[N = 1133–183]
<i>Observe Zoroastrian traditions:</i>			
None	7	12	[N = 1132–176]
All	32	22	[N = 1132–176]
Attend religious functions often	42	22	[N = 1001–143]
Want <i>dokhma</i> funeral	20	17	[N = 1138–183]
Object to intermarriage	29	24	[N = 1134–181]
Non-Zoros may enter western prayer rooms	35	39	[N = 1060–176]
Religious beliefs			
<i>Believe in:</i>			
Immortal soul	67	56	[N = 872–148]
Reincarnation	42	34	[N = 809–140]
Resurrection	12	8	[N = 659–124]
Heaven and hell	51	45	[N = 785–137]
<i>Prayers for dead:</i>			
Essential	36	29	[N = 1125–182]
Prayers benefit dead	21	15	[N = 1125–182]
Prayers benefit living	15	19	[N = 1125–182]
Religious authority in old country	14	13	[N = 1087–173]
Religious beliefs changed a lot here	16	23	[N = 1085–167]
Religious practices changed a lot here	28	27	[N = 1013–158]
Secular culture			
<i>Assert citizenship in terms of:</i>			
Country of birth	26	19	[N = 1126–182]
Country of residence	30	39	[N = 1126–182]
Zoroastrian-ness	53	47	[N = 1126–182]
Eat Indian or Iranian food often	84	92	[N = 1144–181]
Wear Indian or Iranian dress often	23	19	[N = 1074–190]
<i>Consider worth preserving:</i>			
Traditional food	73	79	[N = 1198–82]
Traditional music	38	33	[N = 1120–77]
Traditional dress	41	27	[N = 1135–75]
Traditional art	46	41	[N = 1134–82]
The religion	91	48	[N = 1223–82]
Traditional language	70	59	[N = 1174–97]

Table 21: Religious Self-Description

Questions	Orthodox (%)	Liberal (%)	Non-practising (%)	[N =]
<i>Number of years in diaspora:</i>				
1–9 years	16	70	12	[N = 385]
10–19	17	71	12	[N = 498]
20–29	14	70	16	[N = 162]
30–39	22	66	12	[N = 50]*
40–49	24	66	10	[N = 29]*
Less than 1 year	21	54	25	[N = 24]*
<i>Gender:</i>				
Men	16	69	15	[N = 650]
Women	16	72	12	[N = 633]
<i>Age:</i>				
Under 25	11	59	30	[N = 56]*
26–35	12	70	17	[N = 169]
36–45	12	73	15	[N = 278]
46–55	20	66	14	[N = 327]
56–65	18	72	10	[N = 229]
66+	18	76	7	[N = 201]
<i>Marital status:</i>				
Single	13	66	21	[N = 267]
Married	16	72	11	[N = 915]
Separated/ divorced	11	68	21	[N = 38]*
Widowed	24	66	10	[N = 67]*
<i>Type of family:</i>				
Nuclear	16	68	16	[N = 313]
Extended	16	72	12	[N = 793]
None	18	67	15	[N = 168]
<i>Marriage partner:</i>				
Zoroastrian	18	73	9	[N = 880]
Non Zoroastrian	7	65	28	[N = 127]
<i>Language read in:</i>				
Gujarati	21	72	7	[N = 434]
Persian	5	77	18	[N = 62]*
English	13	69	18	[N = 479]
<i>Level of education completed:</i>				
Schooling	21	70	9	[N = 248]
Degree	14	72	13	[N = 609]
Postgraduate study	15	67	18	[N = 350]

Table 21: Continued

Questions	Orthodox (%)	Liberal (%)	Non-practising (%)	[N =]
<i>Type of education:</i>				
Arts	16	73	11	[N = 441]
Sciences	15	68	17	[N = 328]
<i>Career</i>				
Home-based (retired or parent working at home)	18	72	10	[N = 302]
Clerical	24	69	7	[N = 54]*
Managerial	13	75	13	[N = 486]
Executive	18	64	18	[N = 388]
<i>Correspond with Zoroastrians abroad:</i>				
Regularly	19	71	10	[N = 826]
Rarely/never	7	60	32	[N = 138]
<i>Contact with Zoroastrians 'here':</i>				
Regularly	18	72	11	[N = 940]
Rarely/never	7	60	32	[N = 68]*
<i>Attended Zoroastrian classes in youth:</i>				
Yes	18	74	8	[N = 519]
No	11	69	17	[N = 753]

These [N =] numbers indicate a small sample group and caution is necessary in comparing them with the larger sample groups. This is especially so when N = under 50.

Table 22: Those Perceiving Discrimination

Question	Perceiving discrimination (%) [N = 630]	Not perceiving discrimination (%) [N = 1091]	[N =]
<i>Country of origin:</i>			
East Africa	46%	54%	[N = 178]
India	35	65	[N = 964]
Pakistan	34	66	[N = 140]
Iran	39	61	[N = 136]
The West	41	59	[N = 145]
Born 'here'	22	78	[N = 123]
<i>When settled:</i>			
Pre-1960s	36	64	[N = 171]
1960s	46	54	[N = 427]
1970s	35	65	[N = 643]
1980s	32	68	[N = 329]
<i>Gender:</i>			
Male	42	58	[N = 930]
Female	29	71	[N = 915]
<i>Ages:</i>			
Under 20	26	74	[N = 95]
20s	32	68	[N = 236]
30s	38	62	[N = 398]
40s	41	59	[N = 433]
50s	40	60	[N = 309]
60s	28	72	[N = 148]
70+	27	73	[N = 86]
<i>Family</i>			
Single	37	63	[N = 391]
Married	36	64	[N = 1227]
Separated/ divorced	50	50	[N = 52]
Widowed	27	73	[N = 74]
<i>Marriage partner</i>			
Zoroastrian	35	65	[N = 1137]
Non-Zoroastrian	43	57	[N = 200]
<i>Type of family</i>			
Nuclear	34	66	[N = 419]
Extended	37	63	[N = 678]
No family	38	62	[N = 238]

Table 22: Continued

Question	Perceiving discrimination (%) [N = 630]	Not perceiving discrimination (%) [N = 1091]	[N =]
<i>Language read in:</i>			
Gujarati	37	63	[N = 557]
Persian	45	55	[N = 87]
English	33	67	[N = 681]
<i>Educated:</i>			
In the West	26	74	[N = 204]
Old country and West	43	57	[N = 737]
Old country	32	68	[N = 799]
<i>Level of education completed:</i>			
School	25	75	[N = 314]
Degree	37	63	[N = 800]
Postgraduate	43	57	[N = 528]
<i>Type of education:</i>			
Liberal Arts	30	70	[N = 535]
Scientists	39	61	[N = 492]
<i>Occupation:</i>			
Non	29	71	[N = 381]
Clerical	35	65	[N = 72]
Managerial	35	65	[N = 657]
Executive	44	56	[N = 557]
<i>Contact with Zoroastrians abroad:</i>			
Regularly	35	65	[N = 1101]
Rarely/Never	44	56	[N = 178]
<i>Contact with Zoroastrians here:</i>			
Regularly	36	64	[N = 1252]
Rarely/Never	41	59	[N = 88]
Pray daily	35	65	[N = 1210]
Rarely/never pray	43	57	[N = 262]

Table 23: Citizenship

TABLE 23 (1) *Place of current residence*

Question	Assert identity/citizenship in terms of:					
	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	As Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Place living						
London	15	11	28	20	26	[N = 148]
Rest of UK	22	14	20	9	36	[N = 169]
Hong Kong	42	8	17	23	10	[N = 52]
Karachi	31	3	25	27	14	[N = 93]
Chicago	17	15	25	6	37	[N = 71]
California	27	4	22	33	15	[N = 113]
Houston	15	17	22	22	24	[N = 41]
New York	23	6	13	34	23	[N = 47]
Rest of USA	17	11	30	15	27	[N = 160]
Toronto	10	18	11	9	52	[N = 159]
Rest of						
Canada	7	18	18	16	40	[N = 67]
Melbourne	7	25	18	8	42	[N = 60]
Sydney	21	9	13	12	45	[N = 77]

NB. Kenya is not included because only 18 answered this question, which makes any percentage unreliable

The above table may be simplified by merging both birthplace and Zoroastrian birthplace, conflating place of residence and Zoroastrian residence, and combining the figures for Zoroastrian. Conflating figures for the third group means totals exceed 100%. The conflated figures are based on the original data, not from conflating the figures in this chart. Rounding up or down to the nearest whole figure results in the odd 1% variation from the above table. Thus:

	Place of birth (%)	Place of residence (%)	As a Zoroastrian (%)
London	34	37%	74
Rest of UK	31	50	64
Hong Kong	65	17	50
Pakistan	58	17	66
Chicago	23	52	68
California	59	19	70
Houston	37	41	68
New York	57	30	70
Rest of USA	32	38	72
Toronto	19	70	72
Rest of Canada	24	58	75
Melbourne	17	67	68
Sydney	32	55	70

TABLE 23 (2): *Previous country of residence*

Country	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
India	19	13	20	15	33	[N = 683]
Pakistan	11	17	18	11	43	[N = 93]
Iran	20	4	25	38	13	[N = 106]
East Africa	10	14	28	4	45	[N = 132]
West	20	15	17	17	42	[N = 109]

Simplified table conflating categories:

Country	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
India	34	46	68
Pakistan	22	60	72
Iran	58	17	76
East Africa	14	58	77
West	34	45	64

TABLE 23 (3): *Length of time in new country*

Question	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As a Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Pre-1960s	21	21	18	5	34	[N = 112]
1960s	13	16	21	7	44	[N = 288]
1970s	16	12	22	17	34	[N = 471]
1980s	25	8	21	24	22	[N = 262]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Pre-1960s	27	55	57
1960s	20	59	72
1970s	32	46	73
1980s	49	31	67

If the figures for pre-1950s are isolated then the pattern is even more marked. Twenty-five per cent of people who migrated in that earlier period defined their citizenship in terms of country of birthplace and only, 13% in terms of the country of residence; 6% simply as Zoroastrian; 9% as Zoroastrian citizen of residence. In simplified terms that gives birthplace 34%, residence 50%; 50% as Zoroastrian pre-1950. However, caution is needed as N = (only) 44.

TABLE 23 (4) *Citizenship and gender*

Question	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Male	18	16	19	15	32	[N = 675]
Female	19	8	23	20	30	[N = 606]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Male	32	48	66
Female	39	38	73

TABLE 23 (5) *Citizenship and age*

Question	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Under 25	19	13	22	27	18	[N = 77]
26–35	19	14	24	21	22	[N = 184]
36–45	19	10	22	18	30	[N = 307]
46–55	18	10	18	18	37	[N = 325]
56–65	19	13	23	9	36	[N = 207]
66+	20	15	17	14	34	[N = 152]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Under 25	47	31	68
26–35	40	36	67
36–45	37	41	71
46–55	35	47	72
56–65	29	49	68
66+	34	49	64

TABLE 23 (6) *Citizenship and families*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Single	21	16	20	20	23	[N = 300]
Married	17	11	21	16	34	[N = 908]
Widowed	39	5	18	9	30	[N = 44]

Seperated/divorced omitted as N = only 26.

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Single	41	39	63
Married	33	45	71
Widowed	48	35	57

TABLE 23 (7) *Citizenship and intermarriage*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
In-married	18	10	22	17	33	[N = 842]
Inter-married	19	21	11	9	40	[N = 136]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
In-married	35	43	72
Inter-married	28	61	60

TABLE 23 (8) *Citizenship and children*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
With children	15	10	21	15	36	[N = 768]
No children	26	18	15	15	26	[N = 100]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
With children	33	46	72
No children	41	44	56

TABLE 23 (9) *Citizenship and type of family*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Nuclear family	19	13	17	11	40	[N = 303]
Extended family	18	12	22	18	30	[N = 808]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Nuclear family	30	52	68
Extended family	36	42	70

TABLE 23 (10) *Citizenship and level of education*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Schooling only	20	11	22	18	30	[N = 235]
Degree level	20	13	26	16	30	[N = 610]
Postgraduate	18	12	18	18	34	[N = 364]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Schooling only	38	40	69
Degree level	36	43	67
Postgraduate	36	46	71

TABLE 23 (11) *Citizenship and type of education*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Arts education	22	11	20	17	30	[N = 401]
Science education	16	12	20	20	32	[N = 361]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Arts education	38	41	67
Science education	35	45	72

TABLE 23 (12) *Citizenship and career*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Retired or homemaker*	17	7	24	22	29	[N = 294]
Manual	16	13	27	11	33	[N = 45]
Clerical	17	11	24	14	34	[N = 303]
Managerial	28	12	19	17	23	[N = 145]
Executive level	17	16	17	15	35	[N = 438]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Retired or homemaker*	40	36	75
Manual	27	47	71
Clerical	30	45	72
Managerial	45	36	59
Executive	32	51	67

*It must be stressed I am not implying that a homemaker is a retired person: the term refers to people whose main place of work is not outside the home.

TABLE 23 (13) *Citizenship and Zoroastrian networks: correspond with Zoroastrians 'overseas'*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Correspond regularly	18	10	23	17	32	[N = 816]
Rarely/never	12	20	19	13	29	[N = 142]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Correspond regularly	35	42	72
Rarely/never	25	49	61

TABLE 23 (14) *In contact with Zoroastrians 'here'*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Regular contact	19	11	21	18	32	[N = 941]
Contact rarely	27	24	10	13	26	[N = 62]

The considerable difference in sample sizes means caution should be exercised in using this table.

Simplified table conflating categories

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Regular contact	37	42	71
Contact rare	40	50	48

TABLE 23 (15) *Citizenship and reading Zoroastrian literature*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Yes, read Z'ian lit.	19	7	24	17	34	[N = 519]
No	18	16	19	17	30	[N = 741]

Simplified table conflating categories

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Yes	36	41	75
No	35	46	66

TABLE 23 (16) *Attend Zoroastrian centre*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Attend Regularly	18	6	22	18	35	[N = 408]
Rarely Attend	25	24	10	14	27	[N = 154]

Simplified table conflating categories

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Attend regularly	37	41	75
Rarely attend	39	51	51

TABLE 23 (17) *Prayer: Citizenship and Zoroastrian practice*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Pray daily	17	10	23	17	33	[N = 877]
Rarely/never pray	18	13	18	20	30	[N = 322]

Simplified table conflating categories

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Pray daily	34	43	73
Rarely/never pray	38	44	67

TABLE 23 (18) *Wear sudre and kusti*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Always wear	19	9	23	17	34	[N = 848]
Sometimes wear	17	14	19	16	35	[N = 257]
Rarely/never wear	27	27	11	20	16	[N = 166]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Always wear	34	42	74
Rarely/never wear	46	42	47

TABLE 23 (19) *Intermarriage: Citizenship and relations with non-Zoroastrans*

Category	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Accept intermarriage	19	15	18	15	33	[N = 495]
Object to intermarriage	20	5	26	22	28	[N = 376]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Accept Intermarriage	34	48	65
Object to Intermarriage	40	33	77

TABLE 23 (20) *Allow Non-Zoroastrians in prayer room 'here'?*

	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Yes	21	16	15	16	32	[N = 412]
Conditional yes	13	10	21	19	36	[N = 497]
Never	26	9	31	14	25	[N = 221]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Yes	37	48	63
Conditional yes	32	47	77
Never	36	33	70

TABLE 23 (21) *Perceptions of relations with non-Zoroastrians*

	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Relations good/ excellent	18	11	22	16	37	[N = 854]
Relations mixed	18	14	18	20	31	[N = 294]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of pl. of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Relations good/ excellent	35	44	71
Relations mixed	38	44	68

Only 32 individuals of the 1,840 responses described external relations as poor, so that response is excluded from this table.

TABLE 23 (22) *Consider have faced discrimination on grounds of ethnicity?*

	C. of birthplace (%)	C. of pl. of resid. (%)	As Z'ian (%)	Z'ian c. of birthplace (%)	As Z'ian c. of pl. of resid. (%)	[N =]
Yes	16	14	20	14	35	[N = 425]
No	20	11	21	18	29	[N = 808]

Simplified table conflating categories:

	C. of birthplace	C. of place of resid.	As a Zoroastrian
Yes	31	49	70
No	38	41	69

APPENDIX 3

Survey Questionnaire on Contemporary Zoroastrianism around the World

Please check, or tick (✓), as appropriate alongside each question.

1. **Residence**

- (a) Where do you live now? Please name
nearest town/city and state/county _____
- (b) Where did you live before coming
to this country? Please name
nearest town/city and State/county _____
- (c) Which year did you come to this
country? _____
- (d) How many times have you moved
residence in this country? _____

2. **Sex** Are you

- (a) male? _____
- (b) female? _____

3. **Age** How old are you?

(Please state exact age in years) _____

4. **MARITAL STATUS** Are you

- (a) Single? _____
- (b) Married? _____
- (c) Separated? _____
- (d) Divorced? _____
- (e) Widowed? _____
- (f) Other (please specify) _____

5. **MARRIAGE PARTNER** Is your marriage partner

- (a) Zoroastrian? _____
- (b) Non-Zoroastrian? (Please specify his/her religion and race, e.g. Christian/Anglo-Saxon or Muslim/Indian) _____

6. **CHILDREN** Do you have children living at home?

- (a) None _____
- (b) Male (please state number and their ages, youngest to oldest) _____
- (c) Female (please state number and their ages, youngest to oldest) _____

7. **FAMILY** Do you have relatives in this country?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Parents _____
- (c) Brothers or sisters _____
- (d) Children living away from home _____
- (e) Aunts and Uncles (maternal or paternal) _____
- (f) Cousins _____
- (g) Nephews/nieces _____
- (h) Brother or sisters-in-law _____
- (i) Grandparents _____

8. **MOTHER TONGUE** Is your mother tongue

- (a) Gujarati? _____
- (b) English? _____
- (c) Persian? _____
- (d) Other? (please specify) _____

9. GENERAL READING AND WRITING

Do you read any literature or write (e.g. letters) in a language other than English?

- (a) No
- (b) Yes (Please specify in which language)

Read	Write

10. TYPE OF EDUCATION

- (a) At what age did you finish your formal education (School, College or University)? _____
- (b) Please check/tick where you received a particular type of education in the boxes provided

Where	India	Pakistan	Africa (please state country)	Canada	U.K.	Hong Kong	U.S.A.	Iran	Australia	Singapore	Other (please specify)
(i) Primary School											
(ii) Secondary School											
(iii) College or University											
(iv) Post-graduate											
(v) Professional											
(vi) Other (please specify)											

11. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EDUCATION?

- (a) Liberal/Arts _____
- (b) Scientific _____
- (c) Both liberal and Scientific _____
- (d) Other (please specify) _____

12. OCCUPATION

- (a) What is your occupation?
Please be as specific as possible _____
- (b) What was your occupation before
arrival in this country _____
- (c) When you first arrived in this country _____
- (d) Not relevant (e.g. because born in
this country) _____

13. PARENTS OCCUPATION Please state the occupation of

- (a) Father _____
- (b) Mother _____

14. CORRESPONDENCE

Do you correspond with friends or relatives **abroad?** (Please tick as appropriate)

	Zoroastrian	Non-Zoroastrian
(a) Regularly		
(b) Sometimes		
(c) Rarely		
(d) Never		

15. DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ZOROASTRIAN AND NON-ZOROASTRIAN FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN THE COMMUNITY YOU LIVE IN?

	Zoroastrian	Non-Zoroastrian
(a) Regularly		
(b) Sometimes		
(c) Rarely		
(d) Never		

16. DO YOU READ ANY ZOROASTRIAN MAGAZINES/ NEWSPAPERS?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please specify which) _____

17. DO YOU READ ANY NON-ZOROASTRIAN RELIGIOUS LITERATURE?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please specify which) _____

18. WERE YOU ORIGINALLY TAUGHT TO RECITE YOUR PRAYERS IN AVESTAN?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please state which country you lived in at the time) _____

19. WERE YOU TAUGHT THE MEANING OF THE PRAYERS?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please state which country you lived in at that time) _____

20. DID YOU RECEIVE INSTRUCTION IN THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION AT SCHOOL?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please state which country you lived in at the time) _____

21. DID YOU ATTEND A ZOROASTRIAN DAY OR BOARDING SCHOOL?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please state which country you lived in at the time) _____

22. DID YOU, AS A CHILD, ATTEND ANY RELIGIOUS CLASSES IN ZOROASTRIANISM?

- (a) No _____
- (b) Yes (please state which country you lived in at the time) _____

23. DO YOU PRAY AT HOME?

- (a) Five times a day _____
- (b) At least once a day _____
- (c) Sometimes _____
- (d) Infrequently _____
- (e) Only in a crisis _____
- (f) Never _____

24. IF YOU STILL PRAY, WHICH FORM OF PRAYER DO YOU ADOPT?

- (a) Wholly in Avestan language? _____
- (b) Some prayers in Avestan, some in the vernacular (e.g. Gujarati or English) _____
- (c) All prayers in the vernacular _____

25. DO YOU FOLLOW ANY NON-ZOROASTRIAN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES?

- (a) Traditions associated with Sai Baba _____
- (b) Traditions associated with Jalaram Bapa _____
- (c) Traditions associated with St. Francis Xavier _____
- (d) Traditions associated with Theosophy _____
- (e) Yoga _____
- (f) Others (please specify) _____

26. DO YOU WEAR SUDRE/KUSTI?

- (a) Always _____
- (b) Sometimes _____
- (c) Rarely _____
- (d) Only on communal occasions _____
- (e) Never _____

27. **ZOROASTRIAN TRADITIONS AND CULTURE** Do you

- (a) Observe Pateti or Noruz (New Year) celebrations? _____
- (b) Observe gahambars (seasonal festivals)? _____
- (c) Keep a small fire (oil lamp) burning at home? _____

28. **DO YOU**

Eat Indian/Iranian food and/or wear Indian/Irani dress?

	Food	Dress
(a) Often		
(b) Sometimes		
(c) Rarely		
(d) Only on communal occasions		
(e) Never		

29. **IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS, DID YOU, DO YOU OR WILL YOU TEACH THEM TO PRAY?**

	Have already taught them	Am teaching them now	Intend to teach them
(a) Only in Avestan			
(b) Part Avestan, part vernacular			
(c) Wholly vernacular			
(d) Any other form of spiritual practice (please specify)			
(e) Definitely will NOT teach them to pray			_____
(f) Undecided			_____
(g) No children			_____
(h) Not thought about it			_____

30. **NAUJOTE** If you have children under 16 years old

- (a) Has their naujote been performed? _____
- (b) Do you intend to have their naujote performed? _____
- (c) Do you definitely intend NOT to have their naujote performed? _____
- (d) Undecided _____
- (e) No children under 16 _____

31. **IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS OLD WHOSE NAUJOTE HAS BEEN PERFORMED, DO THEY WEAR SUDRE/KUSTI?**

- (a) Always _____
- (b) Sometimes _____
- (c) Rarely _____
- (d) Only on communal occasions _____
- (e) Never _____
- (f) No children under 16 _____

32. **IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS WHO DO NOT WEAR SUDRE/KUSTI, DO YOU ADVISE THEM TO WEAR IT?**

- (a) Yes _____
- (b) No _____
- (c) Leave the decision to them _____
- (d) No children under 16 _____

33. **TO WHICH CLASS DO YOU BELONG?**

- (a) Athornan (priestly) _____
- (b) Behdin (non priestly) _____
- (c) Don't know _____

34. **IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE PRIESTLY CLASS**

- (a) Did your father undertake Navar?
- (b) Did you undertake Navar?
- (c) Will your sons undertake Navar?

Yes	No	Don't know

35. **ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF BEHDIN CHILDREN UNDERTAKING NAVAR-MARATAB IN ORDER TO PERFORM PRIESTLY DUTIES?**

- (a) Yes _____
- (b) No _____
- (c) Don't know _____

36. **CONCERNING ZOROASTRIANISM. DO YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS**

- (a) Orthodox? _____
- (b) Liberal? _____
- (c) Reformist? _____
- (d) Theosophist? _____
- (e) Follower of Ilm-i-Kshnoom? _____
- (f) Consider these terms meaningless? _____
- (g) Non-practising? _____
- (h) Other (please specify) _____

37. **WHICH ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR DO YOU OBSERVE?**

- (a) Shahenshai _____
- (b) Kadmi _____
- (c) Fasli _____
- (d) Don't know _____
- (e) None _____

38. **WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING FUNERAL PRACTICES WOULD YOU CHOOSE?**

- (a) Insist on your body being flown to a Tower of Silence _____
- (b) Prefer your body to be flown to a Tower of Silence _____
- (c) Cremation _____
- (d) Burial _____
- (e) Burial of ashes after cremation _____
- (f) Do not mind _____
- (g) Don't know _____

39. **REGARDING MARRIAGES BETWEEN ZOROASTRIANS AND NON-ZOROASTRIANS, DO YOU**

- (a) Approve? _____
- (b) Accept? _____
- (c) Accept under protest? _____
- (d) Object to? _____
- (e) Don't know _____

40. **MIXED MARRIAGES**

If marriages between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians occur, should they be performed by Zoroastrian priests according to Zoroastrian rites?

- (a) Yes _____
- (b) No _____
- (c) Don't know _____

41. **CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES**

In your opinion, should children of marriages between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians be brought up as Zoroastrians and undergo Naujote?

- (a) Yes, but only if **FATHER** is a Zoroastrian _____
- (b) Yes if **EITHER** parent is a Zoroastrian _____
- (c) No _____
- (d) Don't know _____

42. **CONVERSION**

- (a) **Should a non-Zoroastrian spouse**, if they so desire, be allowed to become a Zoroastrian by undergoing Naujote?
- (a) Yes _____
- (b) No _____
- (c) Don't know _____
- (b) Should **any** non-Zoroastrian who demonstrates a sincere interest in the religion be allowed to become a Zoroastrian by undergoing the Naujote?
- (a) Yes _____
- (b) No _____
- (c) Don't know _____
- (c) Should the community **actively seek** converts from any race?
- (a) Yes _____
- (b) No _____
- (c) Don't know _____
- (d) Any other option you prefer _____
(please specify) _____

43. **SHOULD NON-ZOROASTRIANS BE PERMITTED TO ENTER FIRE TEMPLES?**

	In India	In Iran	Prayer rooms in this country
(a) Yes at any time			
(b) Yes providing no religious ceremonies are taking place			
(c) Yes but only if they are serious students of Zoroastrianism			
(d) For social functions (e.g. weddings, funerals)			
(e) No, never			
(f) Don't know			

44. LIFE AFTER DEATH? DO YOU BELIEVE IN

- (a) Immortality of the soul?
 (b) Reincarnation?
 (c) Resurrection of the body?
 (d) Heaven and Hell?
 (e) Heaven only?
 (f) Other (please specify)

Yes	No	Don't know

45. DO YOU REGARD ZOROASTRIAN PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES FOR THE DEAD AS

- (a) Absolutely necessary?
 (b) Beneficial for the dead?
 (c) Beneficial for the living?
 (d) Meaningless?
 (e) Don't know?

46. DO YOU BELONG TO ANY ORGANISATION?

Religious Cultural Social Political

Zoroastrian				
Non-Zoroastrian				

47. (A). IF THERE IS A ZOROASTRIAN CENTRE WHICH YOU CAN ATTEND, DO YOU DO SO

Regularly Sometimes Rarely Never

(a) On religious occasions?				
(b) For social occasions?				
(c) For meetings concerning community matters?				
(d) There is no centre in reasonable travelling distance				

47. **(B).IF THERE IS NO ZOROASTRIAN CENTRE YOU CAN ATTEND**

What are your views on establishing one?

- (i) Very desirable and would give generous financial support _____
- (ii) Desirable and would contribute _____
- (iii) Consider one would be impractical _____
- (iv) Have no views on the subject _____
- (v) Any other views (please specify) _____

48. **DO YOU SEE ANY DANGER AHEAD FOR THE ZOROASTRIAN FAITH?**

- (a) No _____
- (b) Declining numbers _____
- (c) Youth not following the religion _____
- (d) Conversion to other religions _____
- (e) Persecution by intolerant religions or governments _____
- (f) Don't know _____
- (g) Other (please specify) _____

49. **WHAT ASPECTS OF ZOROASTRIANISM GIVE YOU MOST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?**

	Yes	No	Don't know
(a) A Saviour to come			
(b) The youth of the community			
(c) A world wide movement to unite Zoroastrians			
(d) Its past record of survival			
(e) Its strong ethical values			
(f) Any other (please specify)			

50. (A). **WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU CONSIDER NECESSARY FOR ZOROASTRIANS IN THIS COUNTRY?**

(Check or tick as many or as few as you wish)

(a) A full time priesthood _____	(h) Translations of papers and books _____
(b) Priests trained in India or Iran _____	(i) Introductory books on Zoroastrianism _____
(c) Performance of Inner ceremonies, (i.e. those performed in a temple e.g. Yasna, Vendidad) _____	(j) Major changes to ceremonies _____
(d) All ceremonies for the dead _____	(k) Strict preservation of rituals _____
(e) More social functions _____	(l) Provision of a Zoroastrian cemetery _____
(f) More religious rites _____	(m) Stronger links between Zoroastrian groups _____
(g) Courses on Zoroastrianism _____	(n) Any other (please specify) _____

(B). Please indicate which of the above you consider most important.

- First _____
- Second _____
- Third _____

51. **RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY**

When religious disputes arise (e.g. over conversion) which **ONE** of the following, in your opinion, should determine policy?

(a) Priests in India	_____
(b) Bombay Parsi Panchayet	_____
(c) Priests in Iran	_____
(d) Irani Anjoman	_____
(e) Local Zoroastrian leaders	_____
(f) Special meetings (e.g. Zoroastrian conferences)	_____
(g) The individual's own conscience	_____
(h) Other (please specify)	_____

52. **CHANGING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

Do you consider that your religious beliefs and practices have changed since you came to this country?

- (a) Considerably
- (b) Quite a lot
- (c) Very little
- (d) Not at all
- (e) Irrelevant (e.g. because born here)
- (f) Don't know

Beliefs	Practices

53. **FUNDAMENTALLY, HOW DO YOU WISH TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF?**

- (a) As a citizen of the country you were born in (e.g. Parsi, Irani, Indian) _____
- (b) As a citizen of the country in which you now reside (e.g. USA, Canada, Britain, etc.) _____
- (c) Simply in religious terms as a Zoroastrian _____
- (d) As a Zoroastrian citizen of the country you were born in _____
- (e) As a Zoroastrian citizen of the country you now reside in _____
- (f) Other (please specify) _____

54. **MOTHER COUNTRY**

Which of the following do you consider to be your mother country?

- (a) India _____
- (b) Pakistan _____
- (c) Africa (specify which country) _____
- (d) Britain _____
- (e) Hong Kong _____
- (f) America _____
- (g) Canada _____
- (h) Australia _____
- (i) Other (please specify) _____

55. **CULTURE**

Which aspects of the Indo-Pakistan, or Irani, culture do you consider worth preserving in this country?

- (a) Food _____
- (b) Music _____
- (c) Dress _____
- (d) Religion _____
- (e) Arts _____
- (f) Language _____
- (g) Others (please specify) _____

56. **DO YOU FEEL THE NEED TO EXPLAIN YOUR CULTURE TO NON-ZOROASTRIANS IN THIS COUNTRY?**

- (a) Never _____
- (b) Sometimes _____
- (c) Quite often _____
- (d) Always _____

57. **RELATIONS BETWEEN ZOROASTRIANS**

How would you describe relations **as they are in practice** (not necessarily what you consider they **should** be) in your community?

	Between Irani Zoroastrians & Parsis	Between Parsis	Between new and older immigrants
(a) Excellent			
(b) Good			
(c) Reasonable			
(d) Very mixed			
(e) Poor			
(f) Bad			
(g) Don't know			
(h) Please specify any particular problems you have in this regard			

58. **DO YOU CONSIDER ZOROASTRIANS ALREADY SETTLED IN THIS COUNTRY HELPED YOU WHEN YOU ARRIVED HERE?**

	Financially	With accommodation	With employment	Personally	Other (please specify)
(a) Considerably					
(b) Reasonably					
(c) Very Little					
(d) Not at all					
(e) Irrelevant					

59. **RELATIONS BETWEEN ZOROASTRIANS AND NON-ZOROASTRIANS**

How would you describe typical relations between your community and other races in this country?

- (a) Excellent _____
- (b) Good _____
- (c) Reasonable _____
- (d) Very mixed _____
- (e) Poor _____
- (f) Bad _____
- (g) Don't know _____
- (h) Please specify any particular problems you see in this regard _____

60. **WHAT IS YOUR MEMORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ZOROASTRIANS AND NON-ZOROASTRIANS IN THE COUNTRY OF YOUR BIRTH?**

	English	Muslims	Hindus	Blacks (e.g. in Africa)	Chinese	Other Asians (e.g. in Africa)	Others (e.g. Bah'ā'ī) please specify
(a) Excellent							
(b) Good							
(c) Reasonable							
(d) Very mixed							
(e) Poor							
(f) Bad							
(g) Don't know							

- (h) If relations were different at work from social mixing please indicate how they differed (using above categories) with which community.

61. **DO YOU CONSIDER YOU HAVE EVER FACED PREJUDICE (DISCRIMINATION) AGAINST YOU ON GROUNDS OF YOUR ETHNIC ORIGIN?**

(a) No _____

(b) Yes _____

If 'Yes' please indicate:

(i) in what ways?

	Occupation	Housing	Education	Police attitudes
(a) Frequently				
(b) Sometimes				
(c) Rarely				

(ii) on what grounds?

	Language	Politics	Colour	Other (please specify)
(a) Frequently				
(b) Sometimes				
(c) Rarely				

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GLOSSARY

- Adaran** The second grade of ritual fire, used in temples but not homes.
- Afarganiyu** 'Fire altar', a vessel in which the sacred fire burns.
- Agiary** Gujarati 'house of fire', common term for temples in India.
- Ahura Mazda** 'Wise Lord', 'Lord Wisdom', the term used for God.
- Amesha Spentas** Bounteous, or Holy Immortals; seven heavenly beings or 'aspects' of Ahura Mazda.
- Anjuman** 'Community' or an Association.
- Aramghah** Zoroastrian cemetery for burials.
- Asha** 'Truth', 'Righteousness', one of the seven Amesha Spentas.
- Asha Zarathushtra** Righteous Zarathushtra, common term for the Prophet.
- Ashem Vohu** Prayer in praise of Asha, offered many times daily.
- Astodan** (of Cyrus the Great) Stone burial mound.
- Atash** Sacred fire
- Atash Bahram** First and highest grade of ritual fire, temples housing such fire, sometimes known as 'cathedral fire temples'.
- Atash Nyaish** 'Litany' to the fire.
- Athornan** Priest.
- Athornan Madressa** College for training priests.
- Avesta** The holy book of Zoroastrians.
- Baug** Place, e.g. housing colony or compound for celebrating weddings and initiations.
- Bahman Yazad** A heavenly being to whom many Parsis pray.
- Boi-Maachi** The rite of feeding the sacred fire with sandalwood.
- Bungli** Building where corpses are taken for washing and funeral prayers.
- Chinvat Bridge** Bridge over which souls of deceased cross, the righteous to heaven but from which the wicked fall into hell.
- Cusrow Baug** Large Parsi housing colony in Mumbai, often termed 'the queen of the colonies'.
- Dadgah** Third or lowest grade of ritual fire, can be tended by lay people in their home or by priests in a temple.
- Dar-e Mehr/Dar-i Mihr** 'Gate' or 'Court' of Mithra, term for a temple.
- Darbe Mehr** Term used for community buildings in the diaspora funded by Guiv Trusts, interpreted as meaning 'place of love'.
- Dastur** High Priest.

- Deygan** Festival celebrated by Iranian Zoroastrians in mid-winter.
- Dhansak** Popular Parsi food for festive occasions, with distinctive flavour and ingredients from the dish of the same name in Indian restaurants in the West.
- Dharmasala** Guesthouses for Parsis.
- Divo** Small oil lamp lit in many homes, representing the sacred fire.
- Diwali** Hindu festival but respected by Parsis in India.
- Dokhma** Tall round structure in which the dead are laid for the vultures to consume, commonly referred to as ‘Towers of Silence’.
- Dokhmenashini** Traditional funeral conducted in a *dokhma*.
- Doongerwadi** Grounds around *dokhmas*.
- Ervad** A male who has undergone the first stage of priestly initiation and can perform outer or lower rituals.
- Fareshta** Lengthy ritual, normally involving several priests, performed as an act of thanksgiving, e.g. at weddings.
- Farohar** The winged symbol, interpreted by some as the symbol of Ahura Mazda, by others as the *fravashi*.
- Farokshi** Prayers for the dead.
- Farsi** Form of Persian language common among Iranian Zoroastrians.
- Farvardigan** Ceremony in memory of, and invoking, the ancestors (term used by Iranian Zoroastrians, see the Parsi *muktad*).
- Fasli** Zoroastrian calendar introduced in early nineteenth century to accord with the Gregorian calendar.
- Fravashi** The heavenly ‘soul’ which all people are thought to have.
- Gahambars** Seven seasonal festivals.
- Gathas** The hymns of the Prophet Zoroaster.
- Gehsarna** Part of the traditional Zoroastrian funeral.
- Guiv Trusts** Trusts established by Arbab Rustom Guiv which have funded most of the Zoroastrian buildings in the diaspora.
- Haftseen table** See *Sofreh haftseen*.
- Hambandagi** Communal prayers commonly offered at the start of functions.
- Hamkhara** (Ahura Mazda’s) fellow worker, in Parsi usage sometimes used for an important divine being.
- Ilm-i Khshnoom** Twentieth-century Parsi occult movement, influential in India.
- Jamshedi Navroz/No Ruz** The Zoroastrian New Year.
- Jashan** Traditional Zoroastrian rite, used on most occasions in the diaspora; traditionally it can be used for various purposes, e.g. blessing a new home, or honouring a new Dastur.
- Jashan-Sadeh** Festival popular among Iranian Zoroastrians.
- Juddin** A non-Zoroastrian.
- Kadmi** A Parsi calendar initially introduced to synchronize with the Iranian calendar.

- Kankash-e-Mobedan** North American Iranian Mobed Council.
- Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal** Zoroastrian Women's society in Karachi which undertakes much charitable work.
- Keeblah** A Muslim term occasionally used by Zoroastrians to indicate the prayer room.
- Khandiars** Corpse-bearers at *dokhmas*.
- Kusti** Sacred lambswool cord worn around the waist after initiation, thought of as the swordbelt of the faith.
- Loban** Incense
- Machi ceremonies** Ceremonies to feed the fire used in temples, or diasporic prayer rooms.
- Maidhyarem Gahambar** One of the seasonal festivals observed by Iranian Zoroastrians.
- Majlis** Iranian Parliament.
- Manthra** Word used by Parsis for spiritually powerful prayers.
- Maratab** Second grade of priestly initiation, qualifying a male to perform higher or inner temple liturgies.
- Mazdayasni** Literally, 'worshippers of Mazda', a common term in the community for 'Zoroastrians'.
- Mehragan/Meheragan** A popular seasonal festival associated with Mithra, celebrated particularly by Iranian Zoroastrians.
- Mobed** Priest.
- Mobed-e-Mobedan** The senior mobed among Iranian Zoroastrians.
- Muktabad** Annual ceremonies celebrated by Parsis in honour of ancestors, see *Fravardigan*.
- Najesh** Muslim term referring to impurity.
- Nasakhana** Place where nassersalas live.
- Nassesalas** Professionals who prepare the body for the funeral.
- Natak** Gujarati play; Parsi *nataks* typically have bawdy humour.
- Naujote/navjote** Initiation
- Navar** First grade of priestly initiation, qualifying a man to perform outer or lower ceremonies.
- Nirang/Nirangdin** Consecrated cow's urine, and the ceremony of consecration.
- Nirangistan** Ancient text of priestly instruction.
- Nirangs** Prayers.
- Niyayesh** A litany.
- No Ruz** Zoroastrian New Year.
- Ohrmazd** Later term (Pahlavi) for Ahura Mazda.
- Padan** Mask worn over priest's mouth when tending the fire.
- Pahlavi** Ancient Iranian language in which many theological texts were written; and the name taken by the last royal dynasty in Iran.
- Panthak** An area, like a parish, where one senior priest (Punthaky) allocates rituals to fellow priests.

Parsi-panu Parsi culture or ‘Parsi-ness’.

Parsi Shamba (Swahili) Parsi colony or baug in Zanzibar and Mombasa.

Pateti Parsi New Year.

Pavis Grooves or marks on the ground defining a sacred space.

Punchayet A traditional form of leadership or governing body among Parsis; Bombay Parsi Punchayet is commonly seen as the senior Punchayet.

Pundolites Followers of a twentieth-century Parsi occult teacher.

Punthaky system System whereby a group of Zoroastrian priests are assigned duties by a senior member, the Punthaky.

Purity laws Religious laws on purity and impurity.

Qadmi See *Kadmi*.

Ratu A Zoroastrian teacher. The term appears in the *Gathas* and is emphasized as the role of the key figure in the Zarathushtrian Assembly.

Rivayets A series of letters and explanations of religious practice sent by Iranian Zoroastrians to the Parsis in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Roj Day of the month; each *roj* is associated with a particular heavenly being.

Sagdi Place for prayers at Zoroastrian funerals.

Samast anjuman A community meeting to discuss key issues.

Saoshyant Saviour.

Sasanian Iranian empire, Iran from third to seventh century CE.

Sedre pushi Iranian Zoroastrian term for initiation.

Setayesh Gah ‘Inner sanctum’ of prayer room.

Shahenshai The oldest of the three Parsi calendars.

Shah Name Multi-volumed story of ancient Iranian myth and legend.

Siroza Prayers for departed souls

Sofreh haftseen A symbolic table-setting of seven objects used by Iranian Zoroastrians.

Sudre Sacred white cotton shirt with which the child is invested on initiation.

Tirgan Festival preserved by Iranian Zoroastrians, not much celebrated by Parsis.

Uthumna/uthamna Funeral prayers at which charitable bequests are often made in memory of the deceased.

Varasya Consecrated white bull whose hair and urine are used in rituals.

Vendidad Text in the Avesta detailing purity laws.

Yasht Long hymns in the Avesta, some pre- and some post-Zoroaster.

Yazata/yazad Heavenly beings to whom devotion is paid.

Yasna Literally ‘worship’, used as name of an important ceremony, and forms a text in the Avesta.

Yezidis Members of a Kurdish group originating from a twelfth-century Muslim teacher, deploying much ancient Iranian imagery; condemned by Muslims as heretics and devil worshippers.

Zarathushti/Zarthoshti The term Zoroastrians emerged from Greek usage, but many diaspora ‘Zoroastrians’, especially in North America, prefer the Iranian-based ‘Zarathushti’.

Zarathushtra The Iranian form of the Greek term for the Prophet ‘Zoroaster’.

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