Chapter III

Reading the Life of The Other: Other scribes’, Parsi Perspectives

To understand the present community better it was important to study work done by various scholars, especially with respect to the research topic. This exercise helps in formulating the Aims and Objectives for the study. After an overview on Zoroastrianism and Parsees, I am presenting the work done by various scholars in the same field.

The present review consists of reviews of books and papers written on Parsees in context to the present study. Parsee community is one of the most educated communities in India. We find records of prayers and ceremonies from 19th century till date. This review does not include history of religion, prophet and the sacred text because that aspect of religion was out of scope of this study. Review of magazines and newspapers is also done because ‘Aims and Objectives’ are based on current problems which are covered in these newspapers and magazines articles.

The review is divided into two sections. The first section ‘Religion and Customs’ consists of reviews of books which talked about history of Parsees, their flight from Iran to India. It also includes their rituals, ceremonies, and prayers. The second section ‘Contemporary Issues’ is divided into four subsections - Dwindling Numbers, Intercommunity Marriages, Conversion, and dokhmenashini System. These sections review of various books, papers along with articles in magazines and newspapers. It was important to include articles from newspapers and magazines because this review talks about contemporary issues in the community, which are dealt nicely in these articles. These topics pertain to contemporary problems in the community which have lead to various controversies in the community. These controversies have given rise to two conflicting schools of thoughts - the Orthodox and Reformists.
Religion and Customs

The earliest documentation that I came across on social aspect of religion was done in 1847 by J. P. Patel. Patel in 1847, gave a detailed description of Zoroastrian religion. Patel had talked about the relationship between religion and science and concluded that they are different but they are becoming friendly. The book talked about the principles of religion and its evolution over the course of time. It addressed some basic questions which were concerned with consciousness and human life. The book talked about dilemma human beings went through which led them to answer questions by throwing light on the meaning of human life. The occurrence of conflict between good and evil would always be there and humans should take the path of righteousness and lead a good life. With the help of religious scriptures Patel had shown the importance of maintaining health and hygiene. Patel had also talks about the ceremonies and practices followed by Zoroastrians in brief. At the end Patel had discussed magic, occult, and numerology in context of Zoroastrian religion (Patel; 1847).

Poston, in 1872 talked about the history, religion, and customs of Parsis. The book was divided into two sections. The first section had contents based on Poston’s observations with respect to religion and customs of Parsis. Poston called Parsis as ‘The Sun Worshipers’ and talked about the history of Zarathushtra and the religion. The second section consisted of letters written on Parsis by various travelers in the past, which included social and religious matters of the community (Poston; 1872).

Karaka in 1884 talked about the history of Parsis from Persia to India. The book gave one of the most comprehensive accounts of history of Parsis. Karaka had thrown light on rituals, beliefs, customs, and ceremonies of the community. The book was divided into two sections, the first section started with introduction to Parsis and their travel account to India; their travel to Bombay and influence of British which helped in their education. This section talked about the social dynamics of Parsis and thrown light on internal government, education, and law. The second section talked about the prominent Parsis. It had also thrown light on their religion, which involved story of Zarathushtra and his philosophy. The book also gave brief account of rituals and importance of fire (Karaka; 1884).
Haug in 1861 summarized account of history of Parsis in Iran in which Haug talked about the origin of their religion and talked of Prophet Zarathushtra. Later Haug gave a comprehensive account of their travel in India (Haug; 1861). In 1861, Naoroji read a paper before the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, in which Naoroji talked about the teachings of Zarathushtra and gave brief description of Zoroastrian customs and practices (Naoroji; 1905).

In 1887, Modi described the good and bad omens observed by Parsis and compared them to other communities of Mumbai, mainly Hindus, and pointed out similarities with them. Some of the good omens Modi described were man leaving his house meeting a woman with pot full of water, seeing a sweeper with his basket on his head, coming across fish, meet corpse on road, serpent passes on one’s right hand, serpent passes over body while asleep, meet a washer man with a bundle of clothes, meet a person with flowers, to see a pot of toddy, ringing of clock, firing of a gun, striking of clock and turning and looking back to the house if someone calls. The bad omens Modi discussed are, cat crosses the day, sneeze, breaking of a chandelier, breaking of glass bangles, falling off of turban, whining of a dog at night, cawing of a crow, sight of an owl and shoe lying inverted. From these Good and Bad omens it is very obvious that these are taken from Hindus. At the end of the paper, Modi also talked about the auspicious and inauspicious beliefs observed by Parsis, e.g. Tuesdays and Fridays are considered inauspicious, right foot is considered auspicious and women are always careful to speak auspicious language (Modi; 1911).

Dadabhai Naoroji, in 1889, talked about the history of religion and the impact of other communities on it. Naoroji observed that with the increase in contact with other communities, Parsis started adopting their religious ceremonies and practices and forgetting their own. Later the author talked about the Zoroastrian Philosophy in the social context (Naoroji; 1889).

Dubash in the book, talked about Parsi way of life. In the book Dubash has given importance and meaning of day to day rituals in a question-answer format. Elaborated answers of questions are given with the help of religious text i.e. laws of Vendidad Dubash had explained the importance and usefulness for preservation of health and
hygiene. Dubash had also explained the benefits of Zoroastrian religious practices with the help of theories of modern medicine (Dubash; 1906).

Modi in 1909, had described the Parsee customs and how much they have adopted from the Hindus. Modi noted remarkable similarity between symbolism in Parsee and Hindu marriages. Modi described the way the following ceremonies are similar in Hindus and Parsees:

- Putting on of the *Mangalasutram* by the Hindus and *Rehal* by the Parsees
- The details of the Hand-fastening ceremonies among the Hindus and the *Hathewara* ceremony among the Parsees.
- Skirt-fastening among both
- Holding of curtains between both
- Throwing of rice
- Feet-washing
- Eating together (Modi; 1911).


Some books were written in innovative manner to teach Parsi children their religion. From authors’ perspective, many young Parsis were ignorant and had forgotten of their great religion. Monasterie and Moos in 1911, had beautifully and explained Zoroastrian ritual and practices, their importance and the meaning. It talks about Zarathushtra, and ritualistic importance of fire. It also talked about day to day practice of religion, the difference between good and evil and duty of human beings to follow the righteous path (Monasterie and Moos; 1911). Jhabvala, in 1944, talked about the teachings of Zarathushtra and path shown by him, in a very simple way to make children understand the religion. The book was written to teach young Parsis, their religion (Jhabvala; 1944).

In 1882, Olcott delivered a Lecture at the Town Hall, Bombay, on Zoroastrianism in which Olcott had talked about the history of Zoroastrianism and its influence on other
religions like Judaism and Christianity. Later in a question-answer format, Olcott had answered questions which come to the mind of common man, related to Zoroastrian belief and practices. Olcott gave answers to these questions in detailed manner. He had made the importance of rituals clear (Olcott; 1913).

Dhalla, in 1914 gave a complete account of the history and evolution of religion and prevalent beliefs and practices, from pre-gathic period till the period this book was written. The book was documented in chronological manner and talked about the primitive faith of Iran. It gives comprehensive details of different periods in history like the Gathic period, Avestan period, Phalavi Period, Period of decadence and the Revival period. The last section ‘The Revival Period’ talked about the Zoroastrians of India, i.e. the Parsis. It gave details of practices and beliefs of Zoroastrians in India. The influence of other religions, lead to change and disputes in the community; which gave rise to the divide between modernists and traditionalists. With the influence of British, Parsis became more flexible in adapting their culture, which also resulted in change in religious practices and perception. This also modified the religious conceptions of the younger generation because they became more knowledgeable and priests failed to satisfy queries of the youth. After the attack of Christian missionaries on Zoroastrianism, Parsis led a crusade against non-Zoroastrian practices (Dhalla; 1914). After 24 years, in 1938, Dhalla published a revised version of this book, in which Dhalla added a few chapters on Zoroastrian faith (Dhalla; 1938).

Sarabji, in 1926 had talked about the religion in detail and called Parsis as ‘Aryans of Iran’. Sarabji has talked about the prophet and his preaching’s. The difference between good and evil and man should follow righteous path. Sarabji had also explained Gathas and had mentioned the description is author’s own interpretation of Gathas. Later Sarabji talks about the religion on Persia and has discussed the ceremonies and customs of Parsis (Sarabji; 1926).

Rezwi in 1928 talked about Zoroastrian religion in context of Biblical and Quranic teachings. Rezwi had shown how the Zoroastrian religion is misunderstood by various researchers, especially researchers from other religions e.g. Zoroastrians were called ‘Fire worshipers’. Rezwi talked about history of the religion, Zarathushtra’s life, his creations,
his doctrines, and sacred text. Rezwi talked about the relationship between Zoroastrianism and Islamism and the influence of Islam on Zoroastrianism. Later in the book, Rezwi talked about Parsis of India, in which shows the religious view point of then present generation, which claims to be descendents of original Zarathushtra’s stock (Rezwi; 1928).

Dhalla, in 1930 had discussed evolution of Parsis in context of - religious, mental, social, economic, and physical growth. In evolution of religion, Dhalla had talked about the message of Zarathushtra, his preaching’s, how to differentiate between good and evil and chose good to lead a righteous path. In evolution of mind Dhalla had talked about the evolution from language, thought to present educational scenario. In evolution of economics, Dhalla talked about the trade and occupational aspect (Dhalla; 1930).

Masani, in 1938 talked about the Zoroastrian religion, teachings of Zarathushtra and the way the religion survived over centuries. The book was divided into two sections. First section talked about the fundamental doctrines of Zoroastrianism and second section talked about rituals and practices, this section was greatly influenced by J.J. Modi’s work. In the first section Masani, talked about Zarathushtra’s life, the creation and man’s role in the universe, i.e. for fulfillment of Gods mission of man and man should always take the path of righteousness, which come from good words, thoughts, and deeds. Masani explained the meaning of evil and how it created problems in life and by facing the evil and fighting it one can attain the righteous path. The world is a battle field between good and evil and man has to resist evil (Masani; 1938).

Drower, in 1944 stated his opinion on importance of components used in rituals. According to him, more than fire it was water which played a significant role in Parsi rituals. Drower gave comprehensive account of fire temple, which included kinds of fire temples, the structure of fire temple, its main features, importance of those features and objects seen in fire temple. The description of players involved in functioning of the fire temple was also included. Further, Drower discussed different rituals and ceremonies which took place in the sanctity of fire temple, like the Haoma ceremony, Yasna ceremony, the ceremony of five twigs, and arifgan ceremony. In summary Drower describes that in ceremonies like yasna, arifgan, the zoti, officiating priest is a principal
actor, whereas raspi, the fire priest played a subordinate role. Other than water, all the symbols of living vegetation had no connection with fire. The soul purpose of sacred fire during ritual proceedings had no role than to provide, “sweet odor”. It is the water which is magic, regenerating, and purifying agent. None of the implements or objects used passed through fire; all are in perpetual contact with water. Before they begin to officiate, priests took a purifying bath. Even the fire temple, with its well running water, and its sacred trees, bore witness to the essential part played by water in the Parsi ritual (Drower; 1944).

Wadia in 1949 talked about the social and economic life of Parsis, in which Wadia had focused in charitable organizations and welfare workers. Wadia had also talked about the problems of the present community in context to economics and the change that was taking place in the community. Though Parsi philanthropy was still alive but there were issues of housing which were affecting the family structure, as people are not getting married due to housing issues. Wadia had also discussed education among Parsis; women are getting more educated than men. In context to present problems, Wadia had also discussed the future of the community (Wadia; 1949).

1970, Dobbin described the formation of Parsi Panchayat in eighteenth and nineteenth century. The paper talked about revival of Panchayat from functioning body to authoritative body which represented the community. In eighteenth century Parsi Panchayat was formed. With constant immigration of Parsis to Mumbai, Parsi Panchayat faced problems to maintain its authority. It was difficult for members to command respect beyond one generation. As seats were filled in by the son’s of rich families, Panchayat became place of the rich. Panchayat lost trust among poor because members condoned various issues of social importance, like, bigamy in their circle, denied justice to poor, married their illegitimate children openly, and refused to transact business publicly. After facing troubles to set guidelines for the community, some Parsi took up the responsibility to provide satisfactory code of conduct and a tribunal to administer them. In the social economic turmoil in mid nineteenth century, the code of conduct on matters like property inheritance, marriage and divorce etc, were formalized by the government which were criticized by the Parsis. These laws underwent changes to suit needs of Parsis. After some decades, Parsis realized that their numbers were going down and only rival hope in front
of other communities was educating the Parsis. Committee was created which provided loans to Parsis to study and subsequent employment. Later on a body was created to give charity to the poor and maintain Tower of Silence. Parsis became aware of their distinctiveness, and needed to organize and promote their interests. They also realized that they had overthrown their existing representative body, the Parsi Panchayat. In late nineteenth century, there was agitation in the community where Parsis could be represented in their dealings with government, or with other countries. At that time issues were raised over Tower of Silence where Parsis realized the need for affirmative authority to represent the community, which lead to revival of Parsi Panchayat (Dobbin; 1970).

Duchesne-Guillemin’s in 1970 in the book, started with geographical and historical distribution of Parsis. Later in the book Duchesne-Guillemin gave a multifarious account of symbolism used in Zoroastrian religion. Duchesne-Guillemin talked about rituals and practices in Zoroastrianism and explained the meaning of symbols and their importance. Duchesne-Guillemin has talked about the symbols of souls (e.g. Fravashi), Entities (e.g. Asho), rituals (e.g. fire, sudreh), and emblems (God and men) (Duchesne-Guillemin; 1970).

Duchesne-Guillemin in 1973 starts talking about the historical and geographical distribution of Zoroastrians. Later on Duchesne-Guillemin gave a brief sketch of the present Zoroastrian community. Duchesne-Guillemin then gave an account of the religious history of Zoroastrians, in which Zarathushtra’s origin and life is explained. The book documented rituals and practices of Zoroastrians. Towards the end Duchesne-Guillemin talked about the relationship of Parsis with other communities and the influence of these communities on Parsis, e.g. Gabar in Iran and Hindu, Muslims and Christians in India. Attempt was made by the Parsis to rediscover religion which was driven first by Gabars. Their loyalty to Jadav Rana also influenced religious practices. Their interaction with Akbar had an impact on theology of religion. Later on in India, they adopted western culture and were influenced by Christianity, which led to a conversion controversy of a Parsis into Christianity (Duchesne-Guillemin; 1973).
Dabu and Spenser in 1974 provided information on Zarathushtra’s doctrine and teachings in a Question-Answer format. Dabu and Spenser have explained the religious significance of ceremonies and rituals, practiced in day to day life (Dabu and Spenser; 1974).

In 1978, Homji, wrote about the past, present and future of the Parsi community. Homji talked about the glorious history of Parsis and in the present community where they stood. The way Parsis were proud of their past and adhered to it but they didn’t do anything to bring about change for the betterment of the community, when they tried to change it was generally too late. Throughout the world rapid change was happening which affected everyone at an individual level, but Parsis saw no need for change. Homji described Parsis as ‘socially rigid, conservative, non-changing religious group’. For adaptability and social mobility Parsis changed in the past which gave them wealth and social rigidity helped them retain their religion, beliefs customs, and practices. But Parsis did not know where to shop, when should they make changes to be in pace with other communities. After independence the edge Parsis had on basis of education, begin to diminish with other communities getting educated. On the whole, as a community they begin to deteriorate on socio-economic grading due to various reasons. One of the handicaps was the status of minority community which was incapable of providing strong leadership. Moreover the degeneration also happened through narrow parochial attitudes and prolonged genetic inbreeding. After the British Raj, the urban Parsis presented themselves in an image of superior community which no longer existed in post-British Raj. That time the middle aged group moved with times and with hard work made good change. The younger lot got tired of double standards, lack of genuine, modern, and honest community leadership moved away to distant lands to the life where they had freedom of expression and were away from religious conventions and constrains. This left behind the traditionalists, who were old and aging, the reformists were not able to make any change, and the community was dwindling to extinction. This led to hardening of religious attitude of the community and failure to bring change. Many young Parsis started losing faith and were not emotionally attached to their religion or got emotional support from religion. This attracted them to other faiths and beliefs, which provided them greater satisfaction. The middle-aged parents didn’t know much about religion and
they couldn’t teach anything about it to their children. These changes led to the formation of present community where Parsis had no idea if they were really vanishing. Homji had posed questions to the community and had shown that they had come too far and there is need for change if they want to survive as a community. Homji had taken an open-minded viewpoint and he wanted the community to change (Homji; 1978).

Kulke in 1978, touched upon the socio-political aspect of Parsis and the change that was brought about in the community. As Parsis adapted to the change brought in by British, they became the pacemakers for change in Indian society. In the book, emphasis is placed from year 1880 -1920, during which Parsis became evident. Due to their adaptation to western culture, Parsees underwent social and cultural changes. This change affected all the other aspects of Parsis like religion, economics, education status etc. This also gave rise to age old question of Parsi Identity. Kulke had also covered Parsi lifestyle comprehensively (Kulke; 1978).

Pastakia in 1980, talked about the history of Zoroastrian religion and Zarathushtra’s teachings. Pastakia talked about the elements of Zoroastrianism, like fire, sudreh etc, and Zoroastrian way of life. The book also consisted of brief description of ceremonies. Towards the end Pastakia had taken abstracts from Parsiana and Jam-e-Jamshed. He had dealt with contemporary issues of conversion and inter-community marriages and had shown that these practiced had ill-effects on the community (Pastakia; 1980).

Mallik, in 1980, gave description of all the religious ceremonies and customs of the Parsis (Mallik; 1980). Similarly, in 1982 Kutar, gave detailed account auspicious ceremonies of marriage, Navjote and Jashan (Kutar; 1982).

Pangborn in 1982, gave a brief description of Zoroastrianism. Pangborn started with describing the birth of Zarathushtra, his teachings and doctrines, and Zoroastrian scriptures. Later on description of fire temple was given which focused on the structure of fire temple. The book talked about the making and responsibility of priesthood. The book also talked about Zoroastrian rituals and described rites de passage. It also addressed issues of morality and ethics which differentiated between good and evil. It showed that humans should always take a right path. At the end the book talked about the
present concerns of the society of conversion and inter-community marriages and its ill-effects on the society (Pangborn; 1982).

Modi in 1986 had given comprehensive details of all Parsi ceremonies. Modi had drawn parallel to the religion of Zarathushtra and shown the meaning and importance of ceremonies from that perspective. The book is considered ‘Bible’ of ceremonies by many Parsis. The book is divided into five sections, the first section talks about the rites de passage ceremonies i.e. birth, marriage and death. The second section consists of all the purification ceremonies common man and priests have to undergo before performing a ritual. The third section talked about the initiation ceremonies for the priest and common man. The forth section talked about the consecration ceremonies of religious places. The last section has liturgical ceremonies, which are the ceremonies which took place for specific purposes. The section was divided into inner and outer ceremonies (Modi; 1986).

In 1989 Writer talked about the factors that led to Indianization and Westernization of Parsis across the course of history. The complex process of identity was the result of their geographical dislocation. In the process of adapting to new environment, Parsis had to take up Indian culture. Along with guidelines given by Jadav Rana, they also adopted other social practices like, child marriage, separate dining for men and women, Panchayat System. They were distinguished from other Indian communities because of their religion. Their religion was the infrastructure on which social patterns of the group were made. The reincarnation of national identity was important for acceptance. Despite of being outside culture of local community, they were referred to as Indian caste and it was this institution of caste which helped them retain their distinctiveness. Though they were considered caste but they were alien to idea of Hindu caste system, they thus possessed, Zoroastrian heritage with Hindu socio-cultural values and practices. With the advent of British in India, Parsis came in contact with Europeans and established working relationship with them. They were quick to embrace western culture and pick up English, due to which they became famous among the British. This acceptance of western culture further complicated the identity issue. British used Parsis for political and commercial purpose, though they treated them as Indians. With independence, this further disillusioned their identity. Though they have spend millennium in India, but still they
were not able to accept India, they empathy for Iran and lost civilization still remains in Parsis. All these events have lead to a new chapter, mobility towards west (Writer; 1989).

Sidwa, in 1989 gave comprehensive details of the death ceremonies including the rituals and prayers done by the priests and family members (Sidwa; 1989).

Choksy, in 1989 gave comprehensive details about Zoroastrian inner and outer rituals and the idea of purity in them. Choksy explained the meaning and benefit of each ritual in detail. Choksy showed the relationship between religious values, practices, and mythology. Choksy compared the practices of past and mapped it to contemporary practices. Choksy also talked about purity observed in other religions, Judaism, Islamism, and Hinduism (Choksy; 1989).

Jafarey, in 1991 gave a comprehensive account of the original religion of Zarathushtra and the transformed religion which is practiced today. The book started with history of Zoroastrianism and life of Zarathushtra, his doctrines. Jafarey talked about the beliefs and practices of Iran and they way they differed in India with which identity is preserved. Jafarey give an account of influence of other religions on Zoroastrianism like, the idea of ‘confession of sin’, which came from orthodox Christianity. The unconscious attributing every event into good or bad; came from Islamism. Turning community to close caste like sociology came from Hindu Influence. Jafarey talked about the present issues in the community of dwindling numbers which is result of mix-marriages and excommunication. Though there were reactions from both traditionalists and reformists but Parsis of India had to accept the truth and change, they had to accept people from outside to survive as a community. This attitude was changing but acceptance had to come in the community (Jafarey; 1991).

Randeria, in 1993 talked about culture of Parsis. Their history in Persia, the migration that happened to India and the struggle to settle down in India and way community evolved to its present state. Randeria talked about the economic and political scenario at the time of British Raj and changes that came in after that. It also talks about the trends in culture of Parsis. The cultural practices and their priorities that differ at individual, family and community level, e.g. individual and family are more concerned about the socio-religious obligations whereas Panchayat was more concerned about the identity and...
ethnicity issues. Randeria also talked about the revolution which took place in the fields of economics, social, political, and education, which not only helped the Parsis but also influenced other communities. Randeria talked about the cultural changes which lead to three groups of traditionalist, reformists, and modernist. The traditionalist were rooted in culture, they adopt not to bring any change. The socio-cultural and religious practices were sacred to them. At the other end the reformists had totally different views from the traditionalists though they believe in sacredness. The modernists on the other hand had less belief in sacredness. The Parsi mind had to handle two extreme positions: the teachings of religion and the ultramodern influence of western thoughts; the outcome of which was desire to change (Randeria; 1993).

Dastoor in 1993 gave detailed description of the Navjote ceremony and its importance. The book also talked about the symbolic importance of sudreh and kusti which became part of Zoroastrian’s life after the Navjote ceremony (Dastoor; 1993). In 1999, Mehta wrote a book on similar lines (Mehta; 1999). Mistry, also gave an account of Navjote ceremony and importance of Sudreh and kusti in 2002 (Mistry; 2002).

Dhalla, in 1994 gave a detailed description and explained the symbolic meaning of all the religious customs and ceremonies of Zoroastrians. Dhalla comprehensively explained the symbolic meaning of the rituals and objects used during the ceremonies (Dhalla: 1994).

Luhrmann, in 1996 talked about present Parsi community and its decline since British Raj. Luhrmann explained Parsi struggle and life pre-independence and post-independence. Luhrmann talks about the settlement of Parsis in Mumbai, popularity among British and the present community. Luhrmann described the factors which made Parsis famous among the British. How it was easy for them to adapt to manners and customs of British and the benefits they got with their friendship with British, e.g. high level financial and bureaucratic posts. As the community was famous among British, they dominated Bombay for more than a century. This led to financial raise of Parsis as a community as compared to other Indian communities. Luhrmann also talked about the present community and comprehensive described the present community from anthropological perspective and its relation to the British. Luhrmann talked about dilemmas faced by Parsi community and bring insights into communal and individual
identity crisis, where she talks about the Parsi way of life and how they felt alienated from rest of Indian society. The factors which either led them to feed on their glorious past with British or to migrate to other places like US, UK etc. her psychographic analysis of the community has helped in clear understanding is colonial elite. Luhrmann concentrated on rich of the community and somewhere overlooked the poor, which reflected Parsis as ‘rich’ people (Luhrmann; 1996).

In 1996, Manekshaw wrote a book which was divided into two sections. The first section gave a brief description of Parsi customs and rituals. The second section consisted of the famous Parsi food and details of recipes were given (Manekshow; 1996).

In 1997, Manek, talked about the Zoroastrians in Iran and India and the changes which took place in India. The book started with history of Parsis and their settlement in India. The religious and socio-cultural changes took place in the course of time and the formation of Parsi identity. The book showed how the Parsi identity is formulated in terms of religious identity which was affected by the religious communities surrounding them. The impact of Hinduism led them to marry within the community, like Hindu caste system. Islam impacted them in the area or theology, in terms of the doctrine. In conclusion Manek wrote that Parsis were never a static community, they continuously changed in economic, social, and religious facet. Amongst the people surrounding them, the Parsis defined themselves as separate community. In India, Hinduism had great influence on social and religious practices of Parsis. Caste exercised tremendous influence of the Parsi community which led to complete assimilation to the effect they avoided inter-dining and intermarriage outside the community. The Priests tried to form an endogamous caste in itself but were unsuccessful due to the economic power that was in hands of other section of the community. This led to conflict in the community, priests were the leaders, but with economic power in the hands of merchants, they wanted to be leaders. Initially they achieved this by seeking opinion from Zoroastrians of Iran, but when priests turned out to be more powerful, they turned to Islamism and later Christianity. These transformations led to the formation of Zoroastrian Identity (Manek; 1997).
Rangoonwala 1997 talked about everything that had to do with *agyari* visit. Rangoonwala dealt with all the frequently asked questions which come to the Parsi mind, the answers were based on religious text and each point is elaborately explained. Rangoonwala talked about all the do’s and don’ts in religious life and man should always follow the righteous path by following religion to its perfection. Rangoonwala also threw light on the daily *agyari* visit and what a Zoroastrian is expected to do. It told all the important days when a Zoroastrian must visit the *agyari*, the dress code observed in *agyari*, importance of prayer cap and the prayers. Rangoonwala also stated, if something wrong happened during the prayers then how to improve it to maintain the sanctity of the *agyari*. Rangoonwala says that prayers were one way to nourish the soul and should be performed carefully (Rangoonwala; 1997).

Mody, in 1998 wrote a collection of papers which talked about the contributions of Parsis between 1818 and 1920; it talked about eminent Parsis and the way they had left their mark in almost every field. The papers talked about Parsis like, B.M. Malabari, Madame Bhikhaiji R. Cama, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Jeejebhoy Dadabhoy, Homi wadia, Jamshedji F. Madan, Zubin Mehta and Fredie Mehta. It talked about the role played by this small community in national development, which focused on education and social reform which contributed in the growth of the country. It talked about the reform moment by B.M. Malabari which cumulated in the passing of the Age of Consent Bill into law. The schemes Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy formulated for poor of all communities and establishment of institutions. It also talked about the role played by Parsis in trade and commerce. One section focuses on the role played by Parsis in literature, linguistics, and journalism. Another section focuses on theatre, music, and films (Mody; 1998).

In 1998 Clark talked about the living religion. Clark started with the description of the faith and talked about the prophet and the sacred text. Later Clark gave description of the ceremonies and practices by Zoroastrians in India and at the end Clark discussed the contemporary issues like conversion and intercommunity marriages in the community (Clark; 1998).

Sharma and Sharma in 1999 collaborated papers written by various researchers on different topics related to Parsis. It has papers on history of Zoroastrians, the prophet,
ceremonies and customs, marriage, law, economics and religion (Sharma and Sharma; 1999).

Hinnells in 2000 collaborated papers on Parsis. The book was divided into five sections which talk about different aspect of Parsis. The first section was on Theory and method in Zoroastrian studies, in which Hinnells talked about application and influence of post-modernism in different researches done on Zoroastrians, author had given various examples in which Hinnells has shown the movement towards post-modernism, one such example from Luhrmann’s book ‘The good Parsi’ which is also based on Post-modernist approach. The second section on Zoroastrian Influence on Biblical Imagery, focused on the effect of Zoroastrianism on monotheistic religions of the west like Christianity and Judaism. Third section focused on Parsi history in which Hinnells talked about the Parsi history post-independence and their relation to British. This section also consists of paper on changes which came in the community in 20th century. The forth one on contemporary Zoroastrians and Parsis, it talks about the contemporary Zoroastrian philosophy and charity. The last chapter is on Parsi Diaspora, which talks about the traditional Zoroastrianism and modern Zoroastrian beliefs. Hinnells has written about comparative religion and the reason comparison was done was to prove superiority over other religions (Hinnells; 2000).

Palsetia in 2001 traced the development of Parsis, their transition from Iran to India and emergence as distinct community in India. Palsetia talked about the history of Parsis and their ability to preserve and maintain their distinct identity in India. Palsetia focused on colonial settings in Bombay and gave details about contemporary Parsi life. Palsetia gave comprehensive details about their evolution from minority group to community of pluralistic outlook. Palsetia broadened knowledge about British India and the significant role Parsis played in various domains like, education, commercial etc, in that era. Palsetia focused on various issues which arose in the community and challenged their identity, and dilemma Parsis faced and the way they overcome these issues to maintain the identity. There was brief description of ways economics gave identity to the community and the idea of charity among Parsis and its influence on society. Palsetia also talked about leadership changes from rich wealthy Parsis to internal political system, Bombay Parsi Panchayat, which was to safeguard and preserve identity in the community.
Palsetia also focuses on the way Panchayat failed and other measures were taken to safeguard identity, e.g. legal and legislative channels. Palsetia also talked about some cases which gave rise to conflict in the community and how community resolved those conflicts (Palsetia; 2001).

Luhrmann in another paper in 2002 brought the role of interpretation in time with reference to texts that was believed to be important to the Zoroastrian religion. Luhrmann discussed how the role of changing Parsi Zoroastrian interpreters induces change in the meaning of these texts in the South Asian Parsi community. Luhrmann shared various dimensions to the ‘story’. Through citations of popular literature which brings about a ‘centrifugal’ model that depicts how the Parsi community had linked itself to the British much before the latter’s advent into the South Asian heartland – India. In what the author calls the ‘centripetal impulse’, the author brought about how antagonistically the community struggled to differentiate itself from the colonizers in later times. Luhrmann believed that unlike the centrifugal impulse, which was quite popular amongst the youth, the centripetal impulse was not well received as there is no scope for deviants to get back home. Luhrmann pointed out at a somewhat ‘renaissancical’ approach of the latter. Luhrmann’s paper discussed the role of texts and their interpretations which drove these two impulses in a chronological story-like manner. Luhrmann brings about how relating Zoroastrianism to the modern British society had benefited the community in an alien land and then how this very boon transformed into a curse when it became a threat to the existence of the religion itself. This is when the need to ‘go back to the roots’ was realized and the centripetal impulse came into existence. Luhrmann succeeded in ‘narrating the story’ of how interpretations of texts played a vital role in both the movements. The author does so with ease and cites anthropological texts to support argument (Luhrmann; 2002).

Stausberg in 2004 collaborated papers on Zoroastrian rituals, written by various researchers in English and French. The papers consisted of historical and modern way of practicing rituals. The book was divided into six sections. The first section talked about the Zoroastrian rituals in which the author had analyzed works of various researchers and talked about religious history of Zoroastrianism. Second section consisted of articles on theoretical approaches in Zoroastrian studies. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth section
consisted of the papers on various rituals and religious practices of the past and comparison drawn with the present. The last section had papers which show archeological evidence of Zarathushtra and change in rituals in the present community (Stausberg; 2004).

In 2004 Taraporevala, with the help of photographs had given a beautiful cultural spectrum of Parsis. It showed the present Parsi culture along with rites de passage of the community (Taraporevala; 2004).

Hinnells, in 2005 talked about history of Zoroastrian Settlements, from Iran to the latest Australia. The different stages Parsis went through in each settlement and their present situation. In every settlement there was a trade concern which led to settlements with religious facilities, and families developed their own traditions living within the community framework. In Africa, Parsi population was aging and dying, though Parsi community was divided over the question of intercommunity marriage but religious beliefs and practices were strong among the Parsis. In Karachi, Parsis had seen various phases, presently the numbers are reducing because the young Parsis were migrating to west and old Parsis were dying, which impacted social structure of the Parsis. In Hongkong the community was shifting from business to professional profile, and no religious education was given to the children. There were some scattered settlements in Europe, where Parsis tend to go more for intercommunity marriages. In America Parsis are scattered and were more oriented towards education than religion. Rituals of navjots, marriage, and death were occasions for community get-togethers. In India, religion played a major role in community structure and function. The youngest Diaspora was of Australia where Parsis were well-educated and middle class professionals, who did not want religious favor and were open to intercommunity marriages (Hinnells; 2005).

Asha, in 2005 gave a detailed description of sudreh-kusti worn by the Zoroastrians and talks about its symbolic importance (Asha; 2005).
Contemporary Issues

Demographics – Dwindling Numbers

Parsis are the only community in India which has shown major dwindling in numbers. This became a matter of concern especially to demographers. Many researches are carried out in field of demography on Parsis. The papers, books and magazines, which were related to the research, are discussed hereunder.

Visaria in 1974 clearly showed the way change in age structure of Parsi population reflected declining fertility. The proportion of the young was decreasing and aged was going up which was leading to dependency issues, which lead to decline in fertility by postponement of marriage. This reduction of fertility leads to small proportion of children because the number of children tends to be smaller than that of the current generation of parents, who in turn are fewer than their parents (Visaria; 1974).

Axelrod, in 1990 talked about the cultural perceptions which shaped patterns of low fertility of Parsi community. In order to identify the relative effects of urban-rural migration, education, and economic success; along with Parsis, ethnographic study of two other communities were done, Saraswat Brahmins and Jains. Despite their social structure and demographic similarities, these two groups had adapted to life in Mumbai differently. Age of marriage, emigration and out-marriage; and fertility decline, were the causes of low nuptiality. These causes could be linked to a set of values which Parsis had adopted. Their dispositions worked well during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, which made them reliable partners in economic enterprise of local rulers. Parsi aspirations and goals for distinctive lifestyle continued in the face of diminishing opportunities leading to declining nuptiality and low fertility: marriage and child rearing were perceived as less important than achieving a Western standard of living. Fertility decline that relied on trans-communal socio-economic indicators related to the clusters of variables often associated with modernization and economic development treated cultural values as a residual category. Parsis chose to delay marriages, remain celibate, and have fewer children in order to achieve goals which were specific to their community. These values also lead to unusually high levels of emigration and out-marriage which contributed to population decline. The paper did not say that factors like education,
income and urbanization did not contribute in declining population. Rather it focused on the socio-economic factors as cause of lower fertility. Axelrod says, “The distinctive nature of the population decline of the Parsis and the role of community specific values in causing that decline point both to the manner in which culture contributes to demographic processes, even in the face of economics wealth, education attainment and urbanization, and so the importance of making cultural values a consideration on the search for models of fertility reduction and demographic change” (Axelrod; 1990: 419).

Barucha, in 1992 conducted research in which he had taken a sample of 25 pairs of father and sons (Educated and employed) and interviewed them using a schedule. The results were tested using statistical tests, 2X2 T and Paired T-tests. In conclusion, Barucha stated that Old men wanted a homemaker wife, whereas youth wanted a working wife. Youth was more progressive in their outlook. Both generations were liberal on their views on widow remarriage. Inter-religious marriages are not accepted by anyone because they wanted to preserve their racial purity. Youth was found more liberal in accepting children from non-parsi spouses into their religious fold. Both the generations maintained that inter-religious marriages were the culprit for dwindling numbers. Moreover bad housing facility was also one of the major factors for less fertility (Barucha; 1992).

Singh and Gown in 2000 talked about the decline of Parsi population and had also talked about the factors responsible for the decline. The major reason for decline is marriage outside the community. Many Parsis remained single or opted for late marriages because of various reasons like – strong community bonds decreases the insecurity of old age; economic instability; inability to find appropriate match; and cultural acceptance of non-marriage. At the end Singh and Gown gave some suggestions to Bombay Parsi Panchayat, so that they could help reducing the numbers of mix marriages (Singh and Gown; 2000).

In August, 2001, Times of India article talked about the dwindling number of Parsis. It started with description of a 40-bed maternity home which was clearly a white elephant in a community which sees barely 300 births a year. The number of Parsis in India was falling is fairly well known. Tracing statistics from 1955, the newsletter showed that while the death rate remained high, the birth rate was plummeting. In 1999, for example,
there were 928 deaths and just 276 births in the community. Compared this to the
statistics of 1979 1,084 deaths and 646 births and the swing becomes apparent. It was
feared that by the year 2020 by which time India was likely to be the most populous
country in the world the number of Parsis will tumble to 23,000. Sooni Taraporevala in
‘Parsis: the Zoroastrians of India’ writes, ‘a fact which obsesses us whether we fear our
demise or deny it whether we are optimistic and believe we have survived for so many
centuries and will continue to do so, or whether we are orthodox and believe it is better
to go down guns blazing, with our laws of exclusivity intact.’ The decline started due to
late marriages; progressive attitudes towards women; emigration to countries and
marriages outside the community. This last factor had generated enormous controversy in
the miniscule but argumentative community. The liberal faction, for example, decries the
‘ridiculous rules’ which debar children of Parsi mothers and non-parsi fathers from
entering the fold. This stand was attacked by traditionalists, who maintained that a Parsi
Zoroastrian is strictly someone whose parents were both Parsi Zoroastrians. In an attempt
to boost numbers in Mumbai, the panchayat was toying with the idea of reservations in
employment and education. ‘Holiday Programs’ were being conducted to bring
youngsters together and some friendships had culminated in marriage. Young couples
were being allotted houses as quickly as possible, while those with a third child were
being given an incentive of Rs. 1,000 per month (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/2079473290.cms).

In October, 2001, an article in Times of India, revealed that it was not just the dwindling
numbers which caused anxiety to the Parsis. It was also the concern about general health
standards in this micro-minority community that has been nagging them. The
community's population in India was decreasing at 10 per cent in each decade. Besides
demographic statistics which gave an outline of the community's numbers, the studies
also indicated ‘medical paradoxes’ related to the general health of the Parsis. A highly
urbanized and modern community had the highest ageing rate in world besotted with
urban medical problems like cancer, neurological disorders, and eye problems affecting
the small number of population. The other issues related to dwindling population were
late marriages, no marriage, single parent families, infertility, foetal loss, neonatal and
infant mortality, and a large ageing population. The Mumbai-based Parsi general hospital,
the TATA institute of social sciences (TISS) and the national census commissioner jointly are working for documenting the health profile of the community ranging from socio-economic and physiological makeup to its cellular and genetic aspects. As per the 1991 census the demographic profile of the community was alarming. The ageing was at 23% compared to the national average of 7.7%. The age group of children below 15 years was 10 to 12.5% as compared to 33%. The ageing rate was rapid even compared to most advanced countries where Canada had 9.5%, USA 11.5% and 15.1% in United Kingdom. Moreover, the replacement level of ageing population with the younger persons was merely 1.1%. Besides the community had an inverted triangle of fewer births at 12 per thousand as compared to deaths which is 22.6 per thousand. The geographical spread of Parsis was also limited to western part of the country. Out of an estimated population of 76,000 Parsis in India, 65,000 reside in Mumbai, another 6,000 in Navsari, 1,400 in Surat, 2,000 in Ahmedabad 2000, 600 in delhi and one each in Darjeeling and Dharamshala. 85 per cent of Parsi population lives in Mumbai the community has large land holdings in Gujarat, mainly Surat-Navsari belt (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1440137447.cms).

In December 2003, an article of Times of India, talked about dwindling numbers. Young Parsis visit the fire temple in much larger numbers and more often than they did 30 years ago. For Zoroastrians, a community which was likely to be wiped out in less than 100 years at its present rate of growth, this simple act assumed significance because young Zoroastrians understood the meaning of religion; they were more likely to marry inside the fold. However, a number of young Parsis who spoke to TNN on condition of anonymity said they would rather marry outside the community than fade away for lack of a suitable partner within the community. They feel that if ‘conversion’ of non-parsi spouses is not allowed, at least ‘inclusion’ of children of Parsi women marrying non-paris should be allowed to help increase their numbers. Like Hinduism and Judaism, Zoroastrianism is a non-proselytising classical religion. Instead, it is more important to encourage early marriages and more children. One of the major concerns of the Parsi community was that about one-third of its population remained unmarried, one-third married outside the community and one third married late — after 30-35 years. What’s worse, the divorce rate in the community was very high — 10.5 per cent. This results in
less number of children (about 1.2 per couple in India) and an inverted demographic structure where over 50 per cent of the community is on the wrong side of 50. According to the last census (1991), there are 76,342 Parsis in India and they are expected to be down to less than 70,000 now. Mumbai, which has the largest Parsi population in India (around 56,000), registers 300 births for 900 deaths every year, resulting in a net reduction of 600 people in the community, according to Dinshaw Tamboly, president of the World Zoroastrian Organization and trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. If the existing birth rate continues, then, 25 years down the line, there may not be more than 25,000 Parsis left in India. In fact, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat undertakes to pay the tuition fees for the third child of a Parsi couple till the child is 18 years old. The community also organized number of social events for its young so that they got an opportunity to mingle with each other and hope that “nature takes its own course”!

Meanwhile, the World Youth Congress aimed to make every young Parsi recognize that he/she owes a responsibility towards the community (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/388212.cms).

In December 2004 article in Times of India talked about the issues discussed by Parsi community convened by the National Minorities Commission. Marriages at the right age, fertility clinics for couples who need help and financial aid for families with more than two children were some of the solutions to combat the declining growth rate figures of the Parsi community and reservations in educational institutions were some of the issues discussed. The meeting was held to dispel any doubts raised by the national census figures. The Panchayat already had a scheme for financing couples to go beyond the two children norm and was even encouraging couples to have four children. They pointed out that there were many late marriages as well as individuals who didn’t get married. Others choose to marry outside the community (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/947652.cms).

In February, 2005, an article in Times of India talked about the dwindling numbers and conversion as one of the measures taken by Parsis abroad, to boost the population. A large number of Indian Parsis had said a resounding ‘no’ to taking ‘outsiders’ into their fold, arguing that conversion goes against the tenets of the religion. And they are a strong voice, since over 69,000 of the estimated 1.25-lakh strong community lived in India.
Concerned about the news of conversions pouring in from various parts of the world, a number of Parsi leaders decided to meet at Bardoli to discuss the issue. High priests of the Parsi community came out against the decision. In September 2004, seven high priests in India wrote to the FPZAI that the proposed body that encouraged conversions did not have their sanction. They opined that the move was unacceptable to them as the body would have ‘self proclaimed converts’ who could not be accepted into the fold (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1031382.cms).

In 2007, March edition of Parsiana showed the increase in of Interfaith marriages from 2005 to 2006, with the help of statistics data. It also talked about the birth and death rate in the community. Interfaith marriage figure for Bombay rose to 32% in 2006 from 31% in 2005. There were 79 interfaith marriages as versus 168 marriages between Parsis. Out of 79 married outside the community, 37 were males and 42 were females. The average age of bride and bridegroom had also decreased. The life expectancy increased to a year. The number of deaths remained almost constant but the number of people opting for cremation increased (Parsiana; 2007).

In March 2008, an article by T. Mehta in Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly, the writer made a analogy between Parsis and dinosaurs, saying that like dinosaurs if Parsis did not change and adapt to the current circumstances, they would be extinct. The writer also talked about the dwindling numbers due to intercommunity marriages and gender difference of accepting children of non-parsi mothers but not of non-parsi fathers. At the end of the article Mehta suggested change to survive (Jam-e-Jamshed; 2008).

In June 2008, an article in Parsi Khabar, talked about the fast shrinking rate of Parsi community. The falling numbers had created an increasingly heated debate within the Parsi community on how best to tackle the problem. The debate, which had led to name-calling and accusations of racism and sexism between the traditionalists and the reformists, has included religious, social, and legal issues. The arguments were only likely to get hotter and more aggressive. More prosperous and better educated than most Indians, Parsis typically marry late and have few children. But such habits had helped create the Parsis’ numbers problem. Despite initiatives such as paying 1,000 rupees a month to any Parsi family that had a third child, the death rate in Mumbai stood at about
1,000 Parsis a year; there were only about 200 new births. A key issue was that of conversion. Traditionalists say it was impossible for anyone born outside of the Parsi community to join the religion. They also insisted that while the children of a Parsi man who married outside the religion were recognized as Parsis that did not apply to a Parsi woman who married outside of the community. The reformists wanted to open the doors. Among those pushing for a more liberal, tolerant approach are the brothers Kerssie and Vispy Wadia. The brothers insisted their opponents are less interested in religion than they are with the ethnic purity of the Parsi community (http://Parsikhabar.net/doomed-by-faith/).

June 2008, an article in *Parsi Khabar*, showed its concerns about the dwindling numbers and suggestions of National Commission for Minorities. It has come up with a religious concoction containing a heavy dose of morality to reverse the trend: timely marriages, joint family life, and a big no to family planning. It came into consideration from a survey that showed, the average number of births per year in the Parsi community has never crossed 200 since 2001. If it was 223 in 2001, it came down to 174 in 2006, putting the Parsi population at a mere 60,000. Those under 14 in the community are only 12% while those above 60 are 30%. The root cause of this fall in birth rate, is ‘late and no marriages’. The increasing incidence of separation and divorces is also a reason behind the fall in fertility rate in the Parsi community. Increasing urbanization, westernization, economic independence and emancipation of women are the reasons for this phenomenon (http://Parsikhabar.net/no-family-planning-for-Parsis/).

Narayan in 2009 carried out a pan-India study over four years. The 761 youth surveyed were between 20 to 35 years and included home-makers, doctors, architects, priests, and other professionals. She found out that reservation in higher education was not as emotive as other issues like dwindling population. While some youngsters felt accepting children of mixed marriages was a solution, others said marrying Parsis, and having many children was the only way out. Parsi youth from Delhi were inclined to be more liberal; those from Gujarat were more orthodox, while Mumbai had a mix (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Mumbai/Inside_the_young_Parsi_mind/articleshow/4013783.cms).
Unisa, Bhagat, and Roy in the paper written for “International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India” examined the 2001 census and predicted population of Parsis up to the year 2051. The major issues of population decline are under-enumeration, fertility declined and emigration. They had shown that prime contributor to its declining population size is the extraordinary fall in fertility among Parsis. Low birth rate has also resulted from late marriage, voluntary and involuntary childlessness. Projected figures for the future clearly showed decline in population (http://iussp2009.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=91429).

Inter-religious Marriages

In 1955, a thesis was submitted by G. H. Sahir to Bombay University on Parsis. The thesis was divided into two parts, the first part talked about their history in Iran, exodus of Parsis and travel and settlement in India. The impact they had by Hindus and Europeans. The second part talked about the current community with emphasis on domestic and economic life, marriage, family, domestic ceremonies, the panchayat system, and religious life. It gave comprehensive account of the society, their day to day activities. It talked about the problems which led to future development. The impact of education on Parsis and the way it leads to changed in structure of marriage and divorce. At the end Sahir writes, "A small community like the Parsis can escape process of decadence and degeneration, if it has the art of rejuvenating itself from within. One great advantage with the Parsi community is that it is comparatively highly educated and is also very adaptive. This character must stand in good stead to the community to rejuvenate itself. The community must awake ere the shadows thicken. However, the awareness of the possibility of extinction is an indication of the possibility of transcending that extinction” (Sahir; 1955:484).

Cabinetmaker in 1991 talked about population dynamics of Parsis with respect to marriage. Cabinetmaker had done research in which the researcher had prepared a schedule and asked yes/no questions. These questions were statistically analyzed by Cabinetmaker. The book discussed the attitude of younger generation and stated factors
like good education, better occupations, High income and no housing facilities were some reasons why Parsis delay marriage and at time do not get married (Cabinetmaker; 1991).

Davar in 2005 had clearly stated that inter-community marriage was the direct step towards racial suicide. Davar claimed the reason behind inter-community marriages as high education of Parsi girls, their higher standards of education and individualistic attitude. Moreover Davar also said that when men started marrying outside the community, community started accepting their children, which was an ill-practice which Parsi girls also followed. At the end Davar says, “We maintain that mixed marriages are condemnable for Parsis, calamitous to the very existence of our community, and detrimental to the interest of the Parsi girl, who thoughtlessly embarks on the perilous voyage”. Davar claimed, unity is impossible through mix marriages (Davar; 2005:5).

Conversion

Mirza in 1971, wrote on a controversial issue of conversion. The book explained conversion and started by explaining the readers that it was a serious issue in the community. Mirza talked about conversion from view points of various scholars like Eduljee, Taraporewala etc. and also taken abstracts from various sources like Jam-e-Jamshed and Parsiana. Mirza showed that the early scholars were not confident while defining conversion and showed that conversion was not good for the community. With the help of religious text Mirza had addressed the issue of conversion. Mirza had taken abstracts from Avesta, Mirza had explained yasna 31.3 and proved that it did not preach conversion. Evidence from the Phalavi literature also shows that Zoroastrianism does not preach conversion. Mirza has given evidence from history which shows that people were converted to Christianity and Islamism but not Zoroastrianism (Mirza; 1971).

Mirza in 1980 talked about the issues prevalent in the community and the reasons behind those issues. The book starts with the history of Zoroastrians and introduction of Zoroastrianism. Then brief account of travel to India is given. Then author had discussed the issues of Dwindling numbers for which author sited various reasons like, low birth rate, aging population, late marriages, family planning, celibacy, shortage of housing, emigration, and intercommunity marriages. From the above reasons Mirza claimed that
inter-community marriages was the main cause of dwindling population and should be disfavored by the community. Mirza then discussed the reason why Parsis had gone pro-conversion, it had happened because of better education, freedom of thought, individualism, working conditions and independent incomes which led to ignorance of religion and Parsis have gone pro-conversion. Then Mirza discussed about the problems of priest class. Faith on religious leaders had lessened over the years because priests were inadequately educated and there were no religious ideals. Moreover institutions to educate priests were not adequate in numbers and even if someone opted to be a priest, the person did not decent income and economic condition of the family becomes bad. At the end of the book Mirza discussed about the issue of disposal of dead. With the help of religious text Mirza had shown why burial and cremation were not acceptable in the community. Though Parsis did not have any option where there were no tower of silence, Parsis have opted for cremation. The number of vultures is going less due to which bodies are disposed off late, the alternative taken is that the bodies are exposed to sun so that they degenerate faster (Mirza; 1980).

In 1983, a book was reprinted from 9th and 10th issues of Jam-e-Jamshed by Mirza, Damaspasa and Kotwal, titled. The article was written against a Navjote performed of 27 year old Christian, Mr. Peterson, in America. The article criticizes the even end states that conversion is against Zoroastrian religion, tradition and practices. The authors say that Navjote conducted was a mockery because that person cannot be a Zoroastrian. The proponents of conversion quote the quotation of Yasna 30.2 which said that religion granted freedom of choice but it does not talk of conversion. The authors say that religion also preaches to differentiate between good and evil and follow the right path. They said that from religious point of view, conversion is not allowed. Text from Bhagwat Geeta is also given to prove that even in Hinduism conversion is not acceptable. They had given accounts of Persian Rivayats and clearly shown that these rivayats were misinterpreted and conversion was not allowed in Zoroastrianism (Mirza; 1983).

Davar, in 1983, talked about the present society in which non-zoroastrians were not allowed in the community. Davar had given evidence from the religious text, post-gathic writings, Gathas and Yasnas, which clearly shows that conversion, should not be allowed. Davar has mentioned some pre and post Zarathushtra practices and proved that
Zoroastrians are pure Aryans, which is Anthropological truth; therefore, the community is against conversion to maintain purity of the race. This fact should be ingrained in children from their parents so that they did not do anything that will make the race impure (Davar; 1983).

Irani in 1985 wrote that nothing was mentioned about conversion in religious text. Irani has briefly examined the religious text, *Avesta, phallavi* and *Gathas* and *Yasna* 30.1 and 30.2. With the help of the translations Irani had clearly shown that people had misinterpreted the text and there was no concept of conversion in Zoroastrian religion. Irani criticized mix-marriages and said that mix-marriage was the first cousin of conversion because it started from there. In order to stop conversion, mix-marriage should be stopped (Irani; 1985).

Writer in 1994 talked about the struggle of Parsis as a religious minority community. The book consisted of the history of Parsis and their arrival in India. The struggle of Parsis in history and the way they adapted themselves for survival. It talked about history of Zoroastrians in Iran and compared the contemporary Zoroastrians of Iran and India. It talked about the most important issues in the community which lead to number of debates on intermarriages and conversion. These two debates often addressed the preservation and identity issues which Parsis had carried since ages. Earlier, Zoroastrians marrying outside the fold had to leave the community which did not happen today. This leads to the conversion problem, though many Zoroastrians argue that Zarathushtra himself converted his followers so conversion should be allowed. Towards the end writer writes, these issues will shape the future of the community (Writer; 1994).

Daboo in 2008 an article in *Jame-e-jamshed* weekly, talked about the beauty of Zoroastrian religion and stated views against conversion. Daboo said if someone had to follow religious tenets; the person could do that without conversion. Conversion was not a way to increase numbers because if one is not faithful to the religion he is born into, one cannot be faithful to the religion he is converted to. In writers’ words, “who is dying out? The Parsi race or Zoroastrian religion?” According to him, conversion and accepting children of intercommunity marriages was not the answer to dwindling
numbers. It is fine if the Parsis are dying out but Zoroastrian religion will never die (Daboo; 2008).

Dhokmenishini System

Dhalla in 1999, wrote in detail about the system of disposal of dead. Dhalla showed the structure of tower of silence and the rituals that were done to consecrate the tower of silence. With the help of religious text Dhalla explained the rituals and practices related to disposal of dead. Dhalla had compared Zoroastrian disposal of dead with other methods of disposal. Dhalla scientifically and religiously proved why Zoroastrian method was the best way of disposing the dead (Dhalla; 1999).

Aims and objectives

‘Aims and Objectives’ is the criterion that defines a piece of Social research. It is important in any piece of Social research because it helps in organizing and giving directions to the course of research. On the basis of above review, the following ‘Aims and Objectives’ have been set forth:

• To relate the myths, beliefs and rituals of the community to the theory of everyday life.

• To study the impact of religion on demography, especially with regard to birth, death and marriage practices (with respect to orthodox or reformist or both).

• To study how the difference between ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’ elements of the community (as defined by Emile Durkheim) impact the religion and its effect on the structure of the community (based on structural-functional theoretical concepts).

• To show how the ‘deviant’ aspects of religion create an impact on ethnicity, identity, boundary-making mechanisms and excommunication.
Such a study does not involve a hypothesis-testing approach. As a result no formal hypothesis has been proposed. However, a certain viewpoint and a perspective has been employed which has been described above.