CHAPTER - III

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE PARSIS
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SOCIAL LIFE OF PARSIS

a) SOCIAL LIFE OF THE PARSI COMMUNITY:

Evan Pritchard (1960:262) while observing the social structure of Nuer, restricted his study of social structure to the inter relationship of groups, explicity excluding inter personal relation. According to the definition given in the Notes and Queriles on Anthropology (1960:63), social structure is the "whole net work of social relation in which are involved the members of a given community at a particular time."

Malinowski (1951:73) states, while defining the social organisation of a savage society, that "I have started with the description of the ordinary, not the singular; of the law obeyed and not the law broken", of the permanent Currents and Tides in their social life and not adventitious storms. From the account given, I have been able to conclude that contrary to most established views civil law on its savage equivalent is extremely well developed, and that it rules all aspects of social organisation."

Contemporary sociologists like Kingsley Davis (1964),
regard, community as the smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of social life. According to Robert Park (1929), community in the broadest sense of the term, has a spatial and geographical connotation. Every community has a location and the individuals who compose it have a place of residence within the territory which the community occupies. Talcott Parsons (1951) holds that a community is that share a common territorial area as their base of operations for daily activities.

According to Lowie the study of social organisation of a community deals primarily with the significant grouping of individuals. Man does not live alone and at the same time he has to meet his basic needs like food, shelter and social needs like companionship, religious activities and etc. Therefore, he forms different groups with the help of other men and builds up certain institution. According to Firth social organisation means the systematic ordering of social relations by act of choice and decision. It is a changing system of human actions. It explains different groups that people form and how they carry out their relationship through institutions over a period of time. It helps us in the understanding the change and continuity (Firth, 1956).

The Parsis are an ethno religious minority in India,
living on the west coast of the sub-continent, specially, however in Bombay. They are several parts in India where Parsis are residing. After 1,200 years migration in India they have made themselves as a minority group in India though their real home land is Persia but they have kept their uniqueness and separate identity as a group in India.

Very briefly the "Sahnamah" written by Firdowsi, can hardly be over-estimated in its importance from the Indian Parsis consciousness of tradition. It supplies them with the historical genesis of the Persian nation, running continuously from mythical antiquity up to the late sassanians, of the nation of which they even now still feel themselves to be a part inspite of their 1,200 years life in Indian exile. The Parsis led a secluded life without environmental conflicts as farmers, small scale traders and artisans in rural regions and small sea port town of Gujarat during the first 1000 years of exile in India. They lived similar to the Indian Muslims, on the periphery of the Hindu society as a religious minorities.

The role which a minority is able to play in society, not only depends on the minority itself, but to a greater extent on the structure and attitudes of the majority as well. Due to the compartmentalization, of the Hindu society into a large number of castes, minorities in India
confronted with one uniform society which could endanger their community existence. The Parsis were able to live within their environment without conflicts as both they and their environment did not attempt any assimilation or mutual conversion, which prevented them from the very beginning, any aggressive reactions on frustrations, which might have resulted from a rejection on the part of minority or the majority. No comparable points of contact or frictions existed however, between the religious systems of the Parsism and Hinduism.

In respect of language, however, the Parsis demonstrated such a great adaptability that they have forgotten their traditional language (Pahlavi) in contrast to the Jews, whose linguistic adaptation is usually carried out only half way.

b) SOME DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARSI COMMUNITY

There is heated disagreement on the exact number of Parsis world wide. But a generally accepted estimate is 1.2 lakhs, of whom more than 71,000 live in India - (Indian Express, 1991) and with the exception of some ten thousand in Iran (The Gazeteer of India, 1973).

In 1780, Bombay was inhabited by 33,444 persons, 3,087 (9.2%) of whom were Parsis (Gazetter of Bombay city
and Island, 1909). By 1812, the number of Parsis had already quadrupled (13,156). The biggest influx of Parsis started in the 19th century. The total population of the Parsis in India was 16% of the total population of India in 1971. Today more than 70% of all Indian Parsis, are living in the city of Bombay, at the same time, however, dispersal of Parsis over the whole of India can be observed. The census of which was taken in 1872 and every 10 years since 1881 supplied the following figures of the Parsis in India as well as in Bombay - Table No.4 (Desai, 1945).

**TABLE - 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PARSIS IN INDIA</th>
<th>BOMBAY PARSIS</th>
<th>% OF PEOPLE IN BOMBAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>44091</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>85397</td>
<td>48597</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>89887</td>
<td>47458</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>93952</td>
<td>46231</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>100096</td>
<td>50931</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>101778</td>
<td>52234</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>111853</td>
<td>57765</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>114890</td>
<td>59813</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>111791</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>100772</td>
<td>70065</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>91266</td>
<td>64000</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>143260</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


n.a: not available.
INCREASE OF POPULATION OF PARSIS IN INDIA:

Increase of Parsis population in India from 1872 upto 1981 it has been shown in table No.4. In 1872 Parsis in Bombay are 44,091 person whereas after a hundred year it has increased in 64,000 person. In 1961 there are 100,772 Parsis in India and 70,065 of them are living in Bombay. From 1961 to 1971 for a period of one decade the Parsis population in India had increased but among these today 70% of all Indian Parsis are living in the city of Bombay. At the same time, however a dispersal of Parsis over the whole of India can be observed.

TABLE - 5

DECREASE OF PARSIS POPULATION IN GUJARAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARSIS IN</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Baroda</td>
<td>8,409</td>
<td>7,955</td>
<td>7,530</td>
<td>7,127</td>
<td>6,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Broach</td>
<td>3,127</td>
<td>2,770</td>
<td>2,221</td>
<td>2,090</td>
<td>2,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Surat</td>
<td>12,516</td>
<td>11,783</td>
<td>11,057</td>
<td>10,547</td>
<td>9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Thana</td>
<td>5,238</td>
<td>5,105</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td>3,020</td>
<td>2,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other parts n.a</td>
<td>2,585</td>
<td>2,543</td>
<td>2,335</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE : (PITHAWALA, 1945:102).

n.a : not available.
These graphs depict the Parsis population. The graphs particularly indicate the decrease of the population as the days advances. It clearly shows that in 1901 to 1911 there is a definite fall in Parsis population in Baroda. This is also repeated from 1921 to 1931. So also 1931 to 1941.

The same pattern was followed in Broach also.

In Surat also observed the decrease in Parsis population. The same pattern was observed in Thana.

Other States of Gujarat observed the same decline of Parsis population with the advancement of age.

We conclude that the decline in Parsis population is due to the migration to the other parts of India and abroad and is due to the financial and better job opportunities.
Decrease of Parsis population in Baroda (Gujarat).
Decrease of Parsis population in Broach (Gujarat.)
Decrease of Parsis population in Surat (Gujarat).

Population.
Decrease of Parsis population in Thana. (Gujarat.)
Decrease of Parsis population in other parts of Gujarat. n.a.state.
DECREASE OF POPULATION OF PARSIS IN GUJARAT:

More than 150 years Parsis poured out of Gujarat to Bombay to the same extent that Bombay became more important as a Sea port and economic, administrative and cultural centre. The first wave of Parsis had already moved to Bombay in 1970, due to a famine in Gujarat (Gazetter of the Bombay presidency, 1899). In 1937, a second group of Parsis followed after a big fire in Surat. Both Bombay's attractiveness and the under developed economy of Gujarat brought the Parsis to Bombay. The migration of Parsis to Bombay. The migration of Parsis applied both to the rural settlements of Gujarat and to the cities traditionally inhabited by Parsis (Table 5).

TABLE - 6
ZOROASTRIAN POPULATION IN IRAN (1960)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF THE PLACE</th>
<th>NO. OF ZOROASTRIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tehran</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Yezd</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kerman</td>
<td>3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Shiraz</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Isfahan</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ahvaz</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Abadan</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: (SPULER, 1960).
PAI daigram showing Zoroastrian Population in Iran. The richest Population of Zoroastrians is found in the city of Yezd. The second highest is found in Tehran. The third place goes to the Kerman and in decreasing order we found the city of Abadan, Shiraz, Ahvaz, and lastly in Isfahan in the year 1960.

At present it is found that the population of Zoroastrians in the Islamic Republic of Iran is 1% of the total population of the country.
PAI DAIGRAM SHOWING ZOROASTRAIN POPULATION IN IRAN(1960)
Table 6 indicates Zoroastrian population in Iran in 1960. The total population of Zoroastrian are 18,000 persons (Katrak, 1965). The majority of Zoroastrians are staying in the cities of Yezd (7000) and Tehran (6500). However, the dispersal of Zoroastrians all over Iran can be observed. Spuler gives the figure of 16,800 Zoroastrians in Iran for the year 1938 (Spuler, 1952). At present (1985) the zoroastrians comprise 1% of the total population of Iran.

The Zoroastrians of Persia are to be chiefly at Kerman and Yazd. Their numbers may be stated at from Ten to Twenty thousand (Wilson, 1989).

Table 7 and 8 indicate Parsis sex and population which were surveyed. As per the researcher's survey, the total population was 351 in Iran. The males are 178 and females are 173. The total population which were surveyed in India are 359. The males are 186 and females are 173. The below tables indicate that almost the ratio of males and females of Parsi population in Iran and in India is 1:1.
TABLE - 7
SEX AND POPULATION OF ZOROASTRIAN IN IRAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE - 8
SEX AND POPULATION OF PARSIS IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) THE PARSIS OCCUPATIONS:

The occupational diversity within the Parsis community is partially reflected in the surnames which the Parsis had been giving themselves since the 19th century in India. Previously every Parsis had been called by his own first name and that of his father surnames, that could be traced back over generations which had not existed. In Iran the Parsis are called by their own first name and that
of their father's surnames. In case of woman, surname will not be changed after her marriage. The new names of Parsis in India are of Gujarati and partially of English origin like Unwala (Wool dealer), Kapadia (Cloth dealing merchant), Jhavari (Jeweller), Motiwa...
2. The urban Parsis in the cities of Gujarat are living from trade and handicraft.

Surat and (since 1750), Bombay attracted, however, more and more Parsis out of the small towns and rural regions of Gujarat into the centre of economic and political power, where they became so specialised in one particular economic sector that the 1931 Census of India speaks of trade as the traditional occupation of the Parsis similar to the way in which a number of Hindu castes practice traditional occupations (Census of India, 1931). The Parsis are not to be sure, bound to certain activities (manual work, for example) by religious norms and taboos like certain castes (Brahmins), but inner dynamics, their willingness, to learn and, consequently, a high level of education led the Parsis primarily into higher professions and governmental posts.

The early Iranian society was according to Yasna 19; 17, similar to Indians Vedic Society, divided into four socio-economic classes.

1. Clergy (Athravans) means guardians of fire like the Hindu Brahmin.
   2. Warriors (Rathaoshtars) means he who is standing on a war, like Hindu Kshatriyas.
3. Peasants (Vactrya), he who cultivates the lands corresponding to Vaishyas.
4. Artisans (Huiti), who produces objects corresponding to Shudras.

The division of the Avesta society according to occupational classes did not, however, lead to the formation of a caste-system. There was no socio religious taboos that would built up caste barriers of pure and impure, of commonsality and connubium.

The social structure of the Indian Parsi Community has remained relatively uneffected by influences from its caste system of Hindu environment in the course of its 1200 year old history. As a contrast, Caste consciousness and caste structures have partially been maintained or accepted by Indian Muslims and Christians. There have been no occupational classes among the Indian Parsis with hereditary occupations, with the exception of the clergy and caste like group of the Corpse bearevers (Nasasalaris). This minority group did not accept the caste systems as they were small in number and they did not allow conversion to a great extent.

As far as the British recruited Indians for white collar administrative tasks starting at the middle of the
19th century, the Parsis were the first in the area of the Bombay Presidency to offer them their services like Assistant Collectors at Courts, Sub-Assistant Surgeons and Post Masters everywhere. Where new professions were to be made accessible to Indians, Parsis appeared immediately in above average numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARSIS</th>
<th>% OF THE PARSIS COMMUNITY</th>
<th>TOTAL IN BOMBAY</th>
<th>% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OF BOMBAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Auctioneer</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1,243</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Banking, Wholesale trade broker</td>
<td>6,149</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>35,828</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Government Service, Lawyer</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Money Changer</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>3,636</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Military, Government, Pensioners.</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8,777</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Priest</td>
<td>3,580</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7,320</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Police, Watchman, Postman</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>16,203</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Real estate house owner</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>13,632</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey of the occupational structure of the individual communities which was reclassified and limited to the Parsis, have been shown in table No.9. These statistics result in the following picture (Census of the (Island of Bombay, 1964): Occupations of the Bombay Parsis in 1864 indicates that from the total of 7,320 priests in Bombay, 3,580 are Parsis, and it shows the percentage of the total population of Bombay (0.90). In Banking, whole sale trade, broker out of 35,828 number in Bombay 6,149 are Parsis. 3,636 are money changers and 639 out of them are Parsis and indicated the percentage of 9.45 of the total popilation of Bombay. Out of 1,243 Auctioner, Parsis are 107. Among 15,632 house owner and Real estate, it shows that 3,117 are Parsis. Parsis also are engaged in jobs like Government services, Lawyers, Navy, Air Force, the Police Department, other security agencies and Military pensioners.

FAMILY AND OCCUPATION OF THE ZOROASTRIANS IN IRAN:

Table 10 shows the survey of the occupational structure of the Zoroastrian families in Iran who are engaged in various occupations like Priests, Agriculturists, doctors, Teachers. Researcher has noticed that the majority of Zoroastrians are engaged in Trade, Commerce and Industries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NO. OF ZOROASTRIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculturist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Artistic work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Driver</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Doctor, Lawyer and Nurse (Professional)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Employed in government and private service</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Engineering and Constructions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hotel Manager, Public Bathroom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Labour</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Laundry, Cook, Peon Servant, Barber, Beauty Parlour</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Priest</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Retired</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Trade, Commerce and Industrialist</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Teachers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE - 11
FAMILY AND OCCUPATION OF THE PARSIS IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NO. OF PARSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Business</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bank Officer and Custom Officer</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Doctor, Nurse, Chemist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Engineer, Technician Telephone Operator and</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Priest</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Restaurant Owner, Hotel Manager and Theatre Owner</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Retired</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Service and Clerical Post, Postman.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Shop, Jewellery, Gallary, Painter, Money lender,</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teachers and Masters</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No.11 indicates the various occupations of Parsis in India. Majority of Parsis whom researcher had interviewed are engaged in jobs like Restaurant owners.
Parsis in India are also engaged in occupations like Doctors, Nurses, Engineers, Teachers, Government services, Priests, Shop-keepers, Money lenders, etc.

LITERACY AND SEX AMONG PARSIS OF IRAN AND INDIA:

Table No.12 indicates the literacy and sex among Parsis of Iran and India. Higher education have moved Parsis into key economic, cultural and even political positions in India. Parsis enjoy a privileged monopoly in several of the higher academic and technical professions in both the country of Iran and India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary 1-6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 7-12</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLES : (710).
d) RELIGION OF THE PARSIS:

Every known society is found to have some ideology or system of beliefs about itself, the universe of which it is apart and their relations. Religion which can be considered as a part of this ideology is a system of beliefs and practices. Anthropologists and Sociologists have been investigating this phenomenon of Religion with various theoretical perspectives. The early Anthropologists under the influence of 'evolutionism' were mainly concerned with the origin of religion (Smelser, 1970). The study of relationship between religious beliefs and practices of the people and environment throws light on the general process and adaptation and on the causes of variations in the sub-culture.

Religion may be defined subjectively as well as objectively. Subjectively, it is the knowledge and consciousness of dependence upon one or more transcendental personal powers to which man stands in reciprocal relations. Objectively it is the sum of outward actions expressed and manifested as prayers, sacrifices, sacraments, active practices and so on. In these are included the beliefs entertained by men regarding the divine or supernatural powers, which are expressed by words in form of prayers and praise of by act in the form of ritual and sacrifice (Iyer, 1935).
It is supposed that early man's first contact with his surroundings gave him the idea of a number of influences, powers, tendencies and forces other than himself which affected him in various ways. In that early stage of mental development if man had not attributed himself which made for his comfort or the reverse; had he not entertained such ideas, it would have preceded in development of what we call religion (Risely, 1915).

The Parsis are regarding themselves as Zoroastrians. All their religious rites and rituals (ceremonies) are in specific form and they are more or less same as Zoroastrians in Iran.

In the early days of the old Persian Empire, Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion in West Asia and in the form of Mithraism it spread over vast areas of the Roman Empire even as far as Britain. The term Zoroastrianism has come to be popularly used by Western Scholars as derived from Zoroaster, the Greek form of the original name Zarathushtra, the great prophet of Iran and implies the worship of Ahura Mazda "the one and only God".

ZARATHUSHTRA, HIS RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY:

The period in which this reformer of the ancient religion, lived is not known with certainty. Pythagores
(580-500 B.C) had indicated that existence of Zarathushtra was a reality and not legendary as many people say. He was a very generous, kind and merciful person. He revolted against the miserable conditions of the people in that age. His name Zarathushtra in Zend language had many interpretations. In one it means "Brilliant Light". The word Zarathushtra is composed of 'Zarath', golden and 'Ushtra' light, so Zarathushtra means "He is the golden light".

The accurate details of Zarathustra's life, nativity and parentage are not available. Since almost the entire religious and cultural literature of ancient Iran was destroyed when Alexander of Macedon (356-328, B.C), burnt down the imperial library in persepolis which is called Takht-e-Jamshed by the modern Persians. But Iranians were very careful of the Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrian and they transmitted it from generation to generation. And at the time of Balash Askani, the sacred book Avesta was recollected and written in the Avestai language. Zarathushtra had confirmed that Avesta was revelation from God. And he maintained the worship of fire in honour of ancient mazdeism. The fire was symbol of Great light. The place of fire, is even today called 'Atashgah', (Fire Temple).

The Holy Prophet Zarathushtra is said to have lived
about 600 B.C., according to Pahlvi and ancient Persian traditions. Zarathushtra is said to have been born probably in the place called Rae near Tehrran in Iran. His father Puroshasb and mother Daghdovya and were from the Sepntman family, therefore he was called as Zarathust Sepntman. He went up to the mountains of that province for meditation and preached his faith for many years among hostile tribes, till he came to the court of KAVA'VISHTASPA king of Bactria in the north-east of Iran which is today BALKH in Afghanistan. Tradition says that Zarathushtra laughed when born in contrast to children who cry. Nature rejoiced in that, he was born to conquer evil and teach mankind the way to righteousness and happiness. He attained martyrdom in the city of BALK at the age of seventy seven while fighting in self defence against the Toorarian hordes who desecrated the Fire Temple there and while, he was offering his prayers. Zarathushtra's message to humanity was classified as under:

1. Mysticism:  
   i) His religion was based on belief in Ahura Mazda the wise God.  
   ii) Immortality of the soul that is life after death.

2. Philosophy:  
   i) The significance of Good and Evil in this world.  
   ii) Life is an eternal struggle between the forces of Good and Evil.
3. Ethics and Morals

They believed in the holy trial of:

i) Righteous though (HU-MATA)

ii) Righteous words (HU-UKTA)

iii) Righteous deeds (HU-VRASTA).

The life of the Zarathushtra was itself of a wander. He used to preach that the good and bad are against each other. It is said once he cured the king's horses, whatever it is, it was Zarathushtra who was first to teach monothesism in the whole world. He preached about good thoughts and good deeds and good words.

Ahura Mazda is revealed as the one personal supreme being, as the creator and the absolute ruler of all, ruling according to his supreme will or law. Ahura Mazda is all goodness without any evil, good in himself and good to us and to all his creatures. He is the most bountiful spirit, the holy creator of all the corporeal worlds. He created all good spiritual beings such as the Ameshaspertas (Archàrgels), the Yazatas (Angels), the souls and the good frarashis (the guardian spirits) of men, animals, and all other beings, material as well as immaterial. He made them all good, he wished them all good and he gave them all good for their preservation, maintenance and development. Zoroastrianism tells us that God, Ahura Mazda, is purely and solely the highest spirit of spirits. Zarathushtra gave the name Ahura Mazda, the wise Lord, by changing the Aryan name for the Lord. Asura as is even known in the
Vedas of the Hindus as Suras into Ahura by adding Mazd, the All-knowing. Ahura Mazda is closely associated with the powers of the nature. But there is no suggestion of pantheism in it. The Lord of creation is above human as well as natural forces creating, directing and controlling them. He is the one creator, the Lord omnipotent. In Yasna 44, Zarathushtra sings about the omnipotence and the omnipresence and the unity of providence in a beautiful and poetic manner.

He says:

"O Ahura Mazda, I have come to this perfect realization through thy Holy and Divine wisdom that thou art the Creator of all".

Ahura Mazda is the one unique creator, the one source of existence of the spiritual and material world. He is the fountain source of all things good and beautiful. In opposition to him, there is no creator of evil in existence. Angra-Mainyo, meaning the evil-mind, which in the course of time came to be known as "Ahriman" to which all evil in the world was ascribed, is never put as the equal of Ahura Mazda. Rather he is the opposing twin of goodness.

The material world is a mixture of good and evil.
Black is linked to darkness and whiteness to light. As all misery, evil and harm which befall on man in his passing through life, cannot be attributed to the divine and holy. Essence of Ahura Mazda, whatever of things ugly and evil found in the world, was linked to the spirit of evil, Angra-Mainyo in opposition to the spirit of Goodness, Spenta-Mainyo.

The modern Avesta (the Sacred Book of the Zoroastrians) comprises four portions, namely; Yasna, Visparad, Yashts and the Khordeh Avesta. The word Avesta generally means 'perception' and it is used also in the sense of 'spiritual and religious individuality, spiritual self of man, religious conscience'. The word Avesta is also used in the sense of representation of good or bad action done by man in this life. This representation of actions confront the soul after death if man's actions in this life were good, his representation of his actions cheers the soul, and if they are bad, it chides the soul. This definitely includes ethical and spiritual values of life. It teaches that life in this world is not eternal, but death is not destruction, it is not an end; and it is only transformation.

The Mazdayasna cult of Iran was closely a kin to the Vedic religion in India. In fact the most ancient Iranian
scriptures, known as Gathas were written in the Avesta language which is much closer to Rig Veda Sanskrit. Then Rig Veda Sanskrit gave rise to modern Sanskrit. Most of the Gathas were written when Holy Zarathushtra was meditating in a mountain (Ushidaren-Awakening), probably Demavand, whereas other Avesta were written, very likely by his immediate disciples, in Eastern Iran, Bactria. The renowned poet and philosopher of India, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) says: "The most important of all outstanding facts of Iranian history is the religious reform brought about the Zarathushtra. He was the first man we know, who gave a definitely moral character and direction in relation and at the same time, preached the doctrine of monotheism which offered an eternal foundation of reality to goodness as an ideal of perfection".

e) RITUALS AMONG THE PARSIS:

Significance of Fire: Parsis believe in only one God and fire is regarded as being sacred. As Zarathushtra insisted upon active good towards one's fellow men, the motto of the religion became "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds". The two great emblems of the faith are the glorious Sun and the radiant fire. God (Ahura Mazda) is said to have "the most luminous of all luminous bodies" which is "clothed the most glorious of all glorious of all lights, the SUN". Fire is called "the holy sign" of
Ahura Mazda. Just as physical fire burns up any filth flung into it, but itself remains pure and bright, even so, the Fire of thought must burn up that is in our hearts and minds, so that thought-word and deed may be dedicated to the TRUTH. Hence Zoroastrian built Fire Temples as places of worship. There are three grades of Fire Temples: Atash Behram, Atash Adaran, Agyary or Dar-e-Meher, and Atash Dadgah of the house hold fire in every Zoroastrian home.

The interior of the Fire Temple consists of a large hall. In one corner is a small room, known as the kebla. This is the place where the sacred fire burns day and night and is never allowed to be extinguished. Special prayers are offered five times every day. This is called the Bui ceremony, Bui meaning the wood set apart for this purpose.

In Parsis rituals the part of Yasna which is composed of ritual and prayers, are recited by a leading Priest and an assistant joins occasionally and meanwhile feeds the sacred fire with sandal wood and incense. In between some of the prayers; sacred bread (darun) is eaten and the consecrated Haoma juice is drunk.

Temples are for preservation of the sacred fire and Parsis insist that they do not worship the fire, but it is a symbol of God. The sacred fire is spoken of as a 'King'.
The stone on which its Urn stands is its 'Throne'. In the domed roof of the temple above the fire is a bronze 'crown', swords and maces hang on the walls of the chamber. They are placed that the rays of the Sun may never fall on it less they appear to dim its light. Only Priests can enter the sanctuary where the fire is burning. Lay Parsis come barefoot to the threshold to offer sandalwood and money and the Priest brings ashes from the fire in a ladle and applies them to the worshippers brow. The Priest cleans the room, arranges the cinders, and fills the Vase with fresh sandalwood at least five times a day. As he does this his mouth is covered with a piece of cloth to prevent his breath defiling the fire. Alone among the religions of the world, Parsism refused to allow any other religion to enter any of its sacred buildings and there is no missionary impulse. Groups of Parsis may often be seen in the Bombay's Backbay praying at the setting of the Sun; but they are not worshipping the Sun for prayers in the early morning with their backs to the sun. Devotee Parsis visit the temples daily, or atleast on four sacred days in the month. Shoes are removed at the entrance, hands and feet washed, and prayers of penitence uttered, condemning Ahriman and praising Ormuzd. Then the worshipper goes to the threshold of the sanctuary where the sacred fire is burning and receives ashes from the Priest. The Priest stands and recites Avestan prayers in his own language. He
THE SACRED VASE IN THE PARSIS FIRE TEMPLE IN IRAN
AN OLD ZOROASTRIAN LADY ALONG WITH AN IRANIAN GIRL
IN PARSIS FIRE TEMPLE (TEHRAN)
PARSI WOMAN APPLYING SACRED ASH ON FOREHEAD
IN FIRE TEMPLE AT IRAN
PRAYER OFFERINGS BY PARSI PRIESTS
prays for their special needs. Then he retires backwards, puts on his shows and goes home. Men and women can enter temples equally, and to the same places. The temples have Priests (Mobeds) and the office is strictly heredity. Sons of Priests need not take up the professions, however, they may not do so because of greater opportunities of wealth elsewhere, but a Layman of Priestly descent may wear a white turban with an ordinary dress. The high priests (Dasturs) wear beautiful shawls like stoles. Women of Priestly family spin the sacred thread, and until this Century they always married Priests.

THE FIRE-VASE:

The Fire-vase, known as Afarghan, is made of German silver and is in three pieces to allow for proper cleaning and maintenance. The main container is about four feet in diameter and on its inverted top stands the platter which holds the ash that keeps the fire burning. Only sandalwood sticks are used for the fire. The ash is collected by burning wood of the Babul tree. Only the Priest can enter the kebla. Devotees offer sandalwood sticks. There is a well near the Fire Temple for the use of consecrated water for ritual purpose.

SERMON ON FIRE:

1. The fire upwards and lifts the thoughts of a
Mazdayasni (God-worshipper) for above the filth and dress of the material Earth.

2. Fire purifies everything it touches but, itself remains pure.

3. Fire is the link between the FINITE and the INFINITE, between the ABSTRACT and the MATERIAL between the creator and creation.

4. Fire emanates light and light is Ahura Mazda. It dispels darkness and gloom, and brightens up the firmament.

5. Fire is absolutely the same in all climes, at all times.

6. Fire is impartial. It readily serves a saint or a sinner and scorches either of them if carelessly handled.

7. Civilisation began with the discovery of Fire.

f) THE SACRED SHIRT—SUDRAH AND KUSTI AND THE SACRED CAP:

SUDRAH:

The sacred shirt SUDRAH must be made up of two pieces of cloth (white cambric, symbolic of innocence and purity) sewn together on the right hand and the other on the left hand side. These two parts the front and the back - are said to be symbolic of the past and the future, both related to each other through the present. They indicate and say, "Look straight in the front, bearing in mind that
it is the past that has come up to the present and will lead to the future".

The Sudrah has a V-shaped neck at the bottom of which is a one-inch pocket with a slit. This pocket is called GREH-BAN which signifies Loyalty or faith in the religion. The gireh-ban is also called the KISSEH-I-KERICH that is the purse or the bag of righteousness, in other words - pocket of good deeds. Thus the Sudrah is symbolic of purity of life and actions of righteousness.

KUSTI:

Among the Parsis the Kusti plays a very important role. It is a kind of belt, KAMAR-BASTAN, that is to tie the waist, or to put on the belt, is a Phrase which has come to mean" to be ready for work". The putting on the kusti on the waist signifies that the Zoroastrian who puts it on, there by symbolises his readiness to serve God.

A person stands before his superior with his waist girdle (which is made of 72 threads of fine, sheep's wool), with a belt to show that he is ready to obey the orders of his master or superior. So a zoroastrian with waist girdle by the belt of a kusti shows his obedience to his Great Master. The 72 threads symbolise the 72 chapter of YASNA (Book of worship), containing the GATHAS (Divine songs),
composed by the Zarathushtra himself. Kusti are viewed by the majority of the Parsis today as a symbol of equality among the poor and the rich.

SACRED CAP:

The sacred cap is very important to members of the community and not merely as an instrument towards off evil spirit which is not very convincing to the enlightened Parsis is social and religious ceremonies and there are many who do not wear them at all. The sacred cap is in white colour. The Priest always wear the Sacred Cap. The Parsi men, while offering the prayers wear the Sacred Cap, along with a white trouser and shirt and the women in sarees or European dresses in India. In Iran the Parsis women wear a veil over European dresses.

It seems that the practice of wearing Kusti was already in Iran before Zoroastrianism, and in the Vedic rituals wearing of a girdle was practised. Figure Nos. 7,8 and 9 show the sacred shirt, belt and cap worn by Parsis all over the world.
Fig. No. 7: SUDRAH
Fig. No. 8: KUSTI
Fig. No. 9: SACRED CAP
The custom of putting on Kusti started from the time of king Jamshed of the Peshdadian dynasty and Zarathushtra continued it.

Kusti is tied round the waist dividing the body into the upper and the lower parts. It, therefore, serves as a limit which the base appetites from the lower part should not be allowed to cross and harm the upper part, which contains useful organs as the heart and the brain. In short, animal passions should not be allowed to get the upper hand on nobler characteristics.

Sudrah and Kusti are not merely symbols, they also play a vital part in the development of an overall personality. Our body constantly gives off the heat with other impurities from within. Sudrah being next to skin absorbs them. Also, surrounding our physical body there is an envelope of very subtle and tenuous material. This is so-called ethereal body which is rendered impure by the impurities given off by the physical body. As Sudrah absorbs these impurities it helps to keep the ethereal body clean.

Also, Kusti being made of Lamb's wool, is a good absorbant. It absorbs vibrations produced by the recitation of the body spells, which in turn strengthens the ethereal body. It is a sin for a Zoroastrian to move without Sudrah and Kusti.
SUDRAH CEREMONY OF THE PARSIS
KUSTI CEREMONY OF THE PARSIS
KUSTI CEREMONY OF THE PARSIS
NAVJOTE CEREMONY AMONG PARSIS
NAVJOTE CEREMONY OF THE PARSIS
g) NAVJOTE CEREMONY:

Navjote ceremony is an initiation ceremony when the Zoroastrian offers prayers. The navjote ceremony in Iran is known as NOZAD is ceremony for new born that soul is now born into a new life. The ceremony of initiation consists of the investiture of the child with the sacred shirt Sudrah or Sadrah and a sacred thread Kusti.

It is performed usually at the age of seven or nine or eleven up to fifteen years. Thereafter, the child continues to wear the Sudrah and Kusti with the prescribed prayers throughout their life. It is only after this ceremony that a Parsi child is considered a genuine Parsi, a true Zoroastrian.

The occasion of initiation into the Zoroastrian religion is considered as a very important stage in the life of a child and it is, therefore, looked upon with all solemnity. Earlier to the proper ceremony, the child is made to go through a sacred bath, a kind of purification, known as 'Nahan'.

During the ceremony of the investiture, the officiating Priest places in the hands of the child seated wearing the sacred shirt with which he or she is shortly to be invested. After certain prayers have been recited, the
child is asked to make a declaration of faith, and at the end of which, the officiating Priest puts the sacred shirt on the child. The Priest now stands behind the child, and they both recite a short prayer, the Priest invests the child with the sacred thread around the waist of the child and at which stage they both announce the conditions or principles of the Zoroastrian faith. Incidentally, the most important part of the Articles of Faith is that the child is made to believe in the efficacy of one's own good thoughts, good words and good deeds. A Parsi has to believe that for the salvation of his soul, he has to look after himself. The pivot on which the entire moral structure of Zoroastrianism turns, rests upon the trial of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

h) MARRIAGE CEREMONY OF THE PARSIS:

After the Navjote ceremony, the next most important ceremony in the life of a Zoroastrian is usually that of marriage. Marriage is honoured, Priests marry and Zarathushtra himself is said to have had sons and daughters. There is complete freedom among the young persons to marry or not to marry. In the marriage ceremony, three times over and over the officiating Priest enquires, first the groom and then the bride "Pasandeh Kardam"? Meaning, do you accept this woman/man? If the bride or bridegroom even shakes the head negatively, the
ceremony is broken up there and then, and no Preist dare to conduct the marriage of that particular couple against their wish. During the time of marriage there are seven members as a witness of marriage.

Next follows some beautiful admonitions and benedictions in Pazand and Avesta. The entire ceremony is recited in Sanskrit, recalling the early days of the Parsis settlers in India, when Sanskrit was the language of educated Hindus. While reciting these benedictions, the Priests throw grains of rice on the couple to symbolise prosperity and plenty. The Ceremony concludes with a final blessing. The Priests are then presented with beautiful kashmir shawls and some cash. After embracing their parents, the couple leave and go to the Fire Temple to pay their homage to Sacred fire, and the prayer Atash Nyaesh is recited. Thereafter it will be a get together for the guests.

During the time of marriage in Iran and in India, a round gold ring will be exchanged between the groom and bride. It may be some addition of gold and other kinds of gifts but it is not compulsory for them. In Iran and India they distribute sweets after the prayers have concluded.
WEDDING CEREMONY OF PARSIS IN INDIA
PARSIS WEDDING CEREMONY
WEDDING MEAL OF PARSIS IN INDIA
DISTRIBUTION OF SWEETS BY A PARSI BRIDEGROOM
WEDDING PARTY OF PARSIS IN INDIA
SOCIAL ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE AMONG THE PARSIS IN IRAN AND IN INDIA:

Zarathushtra was against the concept of marrying relatives besides he had not practised the same in his family because he was aware of the bad effects of in-breeding or inter marriage. There is example of his own daughter Purochista marriage with Jamasp the well known Scientists, which Zarathushtra himself has attained and even Zarathushtra has given some teachings for the youths which were attained in the marriage.

The rule regarding marriage among the Parsis in the Iran and in India is as the same rule even hundred years before Zarathushtra time. Monogamy is practised among them. Each Zoroastrian can marry only once and if one of the couples die one year's mourning is observed, thereafter either person can remarry. Marriage is prohibited between these family members, with mother, sister, daughter, sister's daughter, brother's daughter, father's sister, mother's sister, nurse who have nursed the child from infancy and any adopted daughter whether relatives or not relatives from birth.

Divorce is not practised only under these conditions:
1. Adultery by women which it should be openly proved by her husband.
2. Uncurable disease.
3. Mental disability of man or women and etc.

TYPES OF MARRIAGE:

In Zoroastrian religion there are five types of marriage which the first one is more prominent among them. At the time of marriage, the types of marriage will be registered:

i) Padeshah Zani (Arranged marriage)

In this kind of marriage the girl and boy for the first time with the consent of their parents get married. This kind of marriage is called as Padeshah Zani and is more popular.

Whereas, in India this type of marriage is called as an arranged marriage.

ii) Ivak Zani:

The second type of marriage is called Ivak Zani means if a man wants to marry with the girl which is the only daughter. Because, the girl cannot take the father's property in husband house after her father's death, then the first child of the girl which should be a boy after his birth it will be called the father's name and it will be called as father's son and this will help for retaining the property of the girl's father. This kind of marriage was
practised in the Sassanian time (225-651 AD), but today it
is abolished.

iii) Setar Zani:

If a son before marriage dies one of his sister
after marriage, her first son will be called as his name
and it will be called as his son and all his property goes
in the new child born. This kind of marriage was practised
in the time of Sassanian and today it is not practised.

iv) Chakar Zani:

In case of Padeshah Zani, if they do not get
children or if the woman is insane or handicapped, in this
case man can remarry with his first wife's permission; this
is called the Chakar the second wife means the obedience.

The first wife's status is higher and the second
wife is called only a Chakar. The second wife's position
is socially low.

v) Khod Sari (Love marriage)

If a boy and girl without the parents concern get
married after the age of 21 years, this kind of marriage is
called Khod Sari and from the religious point of view there
is no objection, but only they cannot get their parents
property. This kind of marriage is called love marriage in
other cultures.
The intracommunity marriage among the Zoroastrians in Iran is almost unsuccessful and it is not welcome among them. If a Paris man marries a Hindu lady in India, the children are taken into the Community of the Parsis, but not the lady. And if a Parsi girl marries to a Hindu man, the woman is ex-communicated and she becomes part of the Hindu community.

Marital status of Parsis in Iran and India have been shown in Table No.13. In the total population survey (351) in Iran the number of married men are 102 as well as married women. The number of single men are more (43) than spinster women. Remarrying men and women is allowed after one year from the death of the husband or wife. There was a man whose wife had died on account of an accident and he married again. Divorces have been seen among them (2).

In India marriage is very important among the Parsis. The ratio is 103 (male and 105 females in total population of 359). Remarrying and divorce was not noticed in this research survey. The number of single men are 43 whereas spinster women are 24. The remaining were included the children and the persons below 18 and 21 years.
TABLE - 13

MARITAL STATUS OF THE PARSIS IN IRAN AND IN INDIA
(100 Families in Iran and 100 families in India excluding children).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted or Divorce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed or Widower</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usually Parsis in both the countries get ready for marriage after the legal age of 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. The reasons for the unmarried men and women in both the countries are:

1) Any number of cases where couples who have known each other for years, have not married owing to the shortage of housing, income problems within the community;
2) A preference among Parsis professionals to emigrate and seek their fortunes abroad;
3) A tendency to marry late and have a few children and lastly the difficulties in match making are the reasons for remaining unmarried.

GENETIC PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE AMONG THE PARSIS:

The social regulation of marriage has enabled the human species to contain several overlapping groups and subgroups conditioned by geographic, linguistic, religious and national variables. One such group, the Parsi Community is a system of individuals united by mating and percentage bounds and shares a common gene pool from which the genes of individuals spring and to which they usually return. The mutation process constantly and unremittingly generated new hereditary variants that is gene mutation, these variants accumulate in sexually reproducing population and form stores of potential variability mostly concealed as a mass of recessive gene carried in the heterozygous condition.

Though the majority of mutations produced deterioration of variability hereditary disease and monstrousitious their storage though harmful in the existing environment was a guarantee of survival should the environment change.
In a large population when these genetic variation are not necessary for adaptation, a process of stabilising selection occurs by which the deleterious effects of the mutant genes are suppressed by their superior or neutral alleles, making the mutant genes recessive and harmless. However, restriction of the population size which renders the breeding population very small (as among Parsis) leads to a depletion of the supply of hereditary variables, and fixation of the deleterious genes in a homozygous form, since there are not sufficient neutral or superior alleles to render them ineffective. This is a way to deterioration of the quality of life and gradual extinction of the group.

While plants and animals achieve the adaptation to their environment by changing their genotype, man alone responds to the challenges of environment chiefly through discovery, invention and forms of behaviour. Hence, the fitness of individuals and population is to a considerable extent determined by educability that is the aptitude to learn from experience and to modify one's behaviour accordingly. Educability has had and continues to have a high adaptive value in human cultures (Dobzhansky, 1964).

Contrary to the prevalent belief among some that mental deterioration is the result of a cousin marriage (Consanguinity) or marriage within a small community
(inbreeding). If the common genes favour an ability to learn, there is a definite advantage in the group ability to adopt, survive and prosper. At the same time the lowering of religious barriers to marriage with members of the socially advanced non-zoroastrian denominations, would by providing an endless diversity of human personalities of high educability only add to the quality of life of the children of those marriage such children would be a valuable asset to the community.

It is not possible to go into the details of the extensive work done in identifying the prevalence of common and uncommon heredity diseases from which the Parsi community suffers as the result of recessive gene coming together in the homozygous state.

To quote just one example, among Parsis women breast cancer accounts, for 49% of cancers which is more than double the incidence in any other community in any part of the world, because they have lost the genes which provide ability to combat the cancer. In this connection Domachowski (1972) has said, "the Parsis are considered one of the world's most inbred populations. It takes at least 25 generations in mice to obtain inbred strains with similar loss of genetic immunological ability to resist cancer, and at least 600 years (approx. 25 generations) in
terms of human life". The Parsis of India have completed more than 50 generations over a period 1300 years. Sufficient time one could think to have created enough damage already.

CONVERSION BY PARSIS:

Till 1949, only 15.4 percent of Parsi marriages were mixed. Since 1970, the number has gone up to 65.9 percent. According to a survey, the number of females marrying outside the community is higher (Pastakia, 1980). The custom of converting the children of Parsi fathers by Hindu mothers had continued through centuries. But in the last hundred years the Parsis became hostile to the idea of admitting any one to their faith unless both the parents were Parsis or Iranian Zoroastrians.

Feelings ran high in the early years of this century and a particular case of conversion had to go to the Bombay High Court. The case was led by a Parsi Judge and he decided that children of a Parsi father had the right to be admitted as Zoroastrians, even the mother was a non-Parsi. The breach have become much more common and the old antipathy to admitting children of non-Zoroastrian mothers to the Zoroastrian faith has almost died down. Those who are even remotely connected by blood to the Parsis should be ordained into the community through a Navjote Ceremony at any time in their life through their own free
will and choice. They ex-communicate the persons who marry the boys of other communities. In this way they have kept up their purity of blood.

EXPLANATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ASHO-FAROHAR:

The drawing is about the Holy Spirit. Avestan name ASHO FAROHAR as traditionally depicted on the Friezes of ancient Iranian Architecture, symbolizing the immortality of soul or spirit which is one of the cardinal beliefs of Mazdayasna (God worship).

The FAROHARI tail has three layers of features depicting good thoughts, good words and good deeds, by which mankind can safely make its way through the twin forces, Good (Spenta) and Bad (Angra), operating nature to evolve men towards perfection and immortality. Good (Spenta) and Bad (Angra) also mean the force generating life and the force destroying life respectively. Without the operation of these two forces of the world and all creations, there in cannot evolve. The twin forces (or mentalities) are depicted by the two curved hooks coming out of the circle in the centre depicting.

The protecting wings of the Farohar have five layers of feathers depicting the five stages of evolution through
which a soul has to pass before attaining perfection. These five stages are evolution and are expounding in the Zoroastrian religion by mean of fire. GEHS or GAHS viz; USHAHIN, HAVANI, PAPITHWIN, UZAIRIN and AIWIS RUTHREM (Fig. No.10).
i) MODES AND METHOD FOR THE DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD:

Parsis or Zoroastrians in India prefer the following three methods at the disposal of the dead bodies.

1. Tower of silence (Dokhma)
2. Burying (Aramgaha)
3. Burning (Cremation)

The disposal of the dead is chiefly done in the Tower of Silence (Dokhma). In the absence of Dokhma, burying is permitted by the Priests. The progressive Parsis prefer cremation. In Bombay, the disposal of the dead by the progressive Parsis is done by electric crematorium but not at the Burning Bhat, because the former method is considered as neat, clean and very quick.

THE TOWER OF SILENCE (DOKHMA):

The dead body is disposed of in Towers of Silence on the top of a hill. The flesh is devoured by birds of prey (vultures) and after a few days, the remaining which placed on a grill bones are fall into deep wells at the bottom of which are layers of charcoal, lime and other minerals which slowly dissolves the bones. Thus, the mortal remains of the individual are disposed of in a most hygienic manner.

Among the methods of the disposal of the dead bodies Dokhmanshin Ceremony is the most scientific method which
does not pollute any element of nature. As Parsis are nature worshippers, they do not like to pollute water, fire, air and earth. Moreover their system is economical and expeditious and it does not make any difference between rich and poor.

**BURIAL GROUND (ARAMGAHA):**

Parsis are nature worshippers. They do not like to pollute water, fire, air and earth. According to the religion, the burying method, pollutes earth and burning pollutes the fire as stated above. However, for the reasons best known to the Parsi scholars and Priests, burying is permitted in absence of the Tower of Silence but not burning (cremation). Thus in Hubli, Parsis have a burial ground. In Belgaum Parsis also have a burial ground. In Iran Parsis bury their dead and cremation is not allowed.

**CREMATICES:**

**Cremation:**

The disposal of the dead is done by an electric crematorium. According to Greek classical historians, the ancient Aryan method of the disposal of the dead was cremation. The system of disposal of bodies by cremation is contrary to the principle of Zoroastrian Religion as it pollutes fire by cremation. In Bombay the disposal
of the dead by the progressive Parsis is done by an Electric Crematorium.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES:

Some of the most beautiful prayers are connected with the funeral ceremonies of the Zoroastrians which continue for four consecutive days. Again on the tenth day after a death, certain prayers are recited both at home and in the Fire Temple. After a month, prayers are recited (specially on the first, second and sixth month) and then annually on the death anniversary.

Elaborate ceremonies take place at the time of death when a person is certified as dead, a close relative sits besides the corpse and whispers the YATHA or the ASHEM in the ear of the corpse. The prayer must continue without a break till the persons who bathes the corpse arrives. After bathing, the corpse is wrapped in torn white strips of old sandras. A wick lamp is lit and two persons who are specially trained, come, take a purificatory bath, recite the KUSTI prayers, and enter the room where the corpse is laid out. The men hold the PAIWAND between them. This is a piece of white cloth or tape which, when thus held, is believed to unite the persons holding it, giving them a spiritual power to withstand any infection or pollution emanating from the corpse.
The body is then placed on a marble slab or on a stone. The arms are folded across the chest, and the legs are fixed at the knees in the lotus posture of a Yogic ASANA or else stretched full length and tied at the ankles. The body is wrapped in a long, white cloth, the face remaining exposed.

One of the two persons now draws three circles (KASHAS), with a piece of mental round the dead body. This is to seal off the area of infection round the corpse from the living.

The 'SAGDID' is now performed. The word means "the sight of a dog". From SAG meaning dog, and DID meaning sight. A dog or a leash is brought into the room and made to look at the corpse. This custom was practised in ancient Iran among the shepherd communities, who believed that a dog knew by instinct if life was still in the body or not. Others held that the magnetic influence of the dogs sight destroys the spirit of decomposition or destruction which enters the corpse at the time of death.

According to Iranian traditions, the sound of the dead person is believed to hover near her/his home, reluctant to leave her/his families surroundings and unhappy to watch the grief of her dear ones. During this
period, the Fravashis or Farohar (Avestan name for the Holy Spirit) of the righteous, guard the young soul who is compared in her spiritual knowledge to an infant at birth. By the fourth day, the soul is said to have grown like a young man of fifteen years, fifteen being the age of maturing among the ancient Iranians. Hence, in the early hours of dawn, on the fourth day, heart warming prayers are recited. Prayers continue to be recited in the house and in Fire Temple chosen by the family of the bereaved. In the past neighbours would cook simple vegetarian meals for the family, as no flesh is to be eaten for four days.

PRAYERS AND FASTING BY PARSIS:

Special prayers are offered five times every day by a Priest in the Fire Temples at sunrise, at noon, at 4 O'clock, at 6.30 p.m. and lastly at midnight. This is called the Bui ceremony. Bui meaning the sandalwood set apart for this purpose. The religious Parsi groups they receive their prayers at home every day five times in front of the picture of Zarathushtra by lighting an oil lamp at home. Parsis never fast, they are of the impression that, one should not torment her/his body by fasting. But religious Parsis never leaves her/his prayers.

j) CASTE AMONG THE PARSIS OF IRAN AND INDIA:

The pre-Zoroastrian religion of ancient Iran was
undoubtedly that of nature worship, which involved the worship of the elements like fire, water and earth. Then the religion of the Vedas was also the religion of the ancient Iranians. The reforms introduced by Zoroastrians marked a departure from the old nature worship of vedic religion. The daily prayers of the Parsis even today exalt fire, water, earth, sun and moon, but beyond this exaltation there is the recognition of Ahura Mazda as the only God; and thus even post-Zoroastrianism bears the impression of Zarathushtra. During the decadence of Zoroastrianism, books like the Vendidad became popular and are considered sacred even today. Alexander the Great invasion of Iran led to the destruction of zoroastrian books and gave a set-back to Zoroastrianism, but it survived in a decadent from till the time of Ardeshr Babakhan the founder of the Sussanian Dynasty. Then a revival came through a collection of the remnants of old scriptures and its effects lasted until the Arab invasion of Iran, with the defeat of Yazdegerd, the last Sussanian King of Iran passed into Arab hands and Islam became the dominant religion. According to the Persian System of history it marked an era by itself. Thus the last era of Zoroastrian history is connected with the name of Yazdegerd, and hence the paradox that the Zoroastrians even today continue the Yazdegerd era which is 333 in the current year (1964 A.D). Another distinction grew in the
last two hundred years on the basis of the different ways of calculating the length of the year. In ancient Iran the length of the year was known to be 365 days and 6 hours. The difference of hours was made up once in 120 years by adding one month, known as Kabisa. This system was continued by the Zoroastrians in Iran even after the Arab conquest, but the Parsis in India, perhaps due to ignorance, did not observe the Kabisa. Having adopted the Iranian calculation and called themselves, 'Kadimi meaning, the Ancient, whole the Parsis who did not wish to change their era, came to be known as Shenshahi. Kadmi New Year is one month in advance of the Shenshahi New Year of the Late Jamshed. Naoroze which falls on 21st March has also come to be recognized as the New Year. There is no doubt that in ancient Iran Jamshed Naoroze even since the time of King Jamshed was looked upon as the real New Year and it has been observed even by the Muslims of Iran. The few Parsis who observe the Jamshedi Naoroze as the real New Year have come to be known as the Faslis. In this way Parsis in India have been divided according to these three sects, but they get marry within these three sects.

k) PARSI FESTIVALS IN IRAN AND IN INDIA:

The number of religious festivals observed by the Parsis today is comparatively small. The first day of the first month of the Zoroastrian year which actually falls on
21st March as observed by the Shenshahi now falls in the end of August and the Kadmi. New Year falls a month ahead in the beginning of August. The sixth day of the first month is known as Khordad Sal. It is traditionally the birthday of Zarathushtra. The 11th day of the 10th month of the Zoroastrian calendar is the day when Zarathushtra died. Jamshedi Naoroze which falls on 21st March is observed by all Parsis as a day of rejoicing even though only a few celebrate it as the New Year. The last ten days in the Zoroastrian year are sacred when the Parsis go to the Tower of Silence and offer prayers in memory of the dead in their families. The days of the month which correspond with the name of the months in Zoroastrian calender are particularly sacred, e.g. day in a month of 30 days is named first, third, nineth, seventeenth and twentieth, are particularly sacred when Parsis are expected to go to a Fire Temple. These days are known as Ham Karos. The first day of the month bears the name of Ahura Mazda the third and the nineth days are sacred to fire and are named Ardibehest and Adur. The seventeenth is sacred to Sarosh and the twentieth sacred to Behram Yezd. Sarosh and Behram are particularly helpful to those who involve their help.

The sense of religion among Parsis today very often goes beyond the confines of Zoroastrianism. The Parsis in India have been influenced as much by the
teachings of Christ as by the Hindu cults of Saibaba and others. It is not uncommon to find in Parsi households pictures of Zarathushtra and the Christ and of Saibaba or some other Hindu sage or Muslim pir, Parsi faith, however, is still rooted in the personality and teachings of Zarathushta. (The Gazetteer of India, 1973).

A TRADITIONAL IRANIAN NAOROZE:

Preparation for Jamshed Naoroze begins many days before 21st March among Iranian Zoroastrians, as well as Iranian Muslim in Iran, and the Parsis in India. The house receives a thorough cleaning, some even give it a new coat of paint. Wheat, soaked to grow on China plates and round earthen wave vessels, some seven to ten days in advance, in order that the sprouts are three to four inches in height by Naoroze. The table is laid with a copy of the religious book, bowl of water, with live gold fish or red fish, the plates and vessels with green sprouts, flowers, fruits, silver coins, sugar candy, boiled eggs and fresh fruits, sweets and vegetables. The table created an atmosphere of festivity, prosperity and abundance. It is essential to place on the table seven articles with their names beginning in Persian with the letter 's'. This is referred to as the "HAFT SEEN" the '7 's', some of the items beginning with the letter 's' in Persian, include vinegar, coins, apple, vegetables, and so on. Family members all
dressed in their best sit around the table and await for the exact time of the vernal equinox. This year the equinox was at 1.58'.23" Indian standard time after midnight of March 20th, 1994. The head of the family recites prayers to invoke the blessing of Ahura Mazda (In Zoroastrian family) and Muslims the Holy Kuran, and when the New Year sets in members of the family hug and kiss each other with "Naoroze Mobarak" or just "Mobarak" on their lips. Gifts are also exchanged. During the day neighbours and relatives reciprocate each other joyfully. The festivity continues for 12 days and on the 13th morning, a mass picnic is organized. It is called "Sizdeh-be-dar" or "thirteen-in-the outdoors". People sing, dance and make merry. Girls of marriagable age tie wild grass tops into knots and make a wish that the following Naoroze may find them married (Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly, 1974).

Each and every festival will be celebrated separately with great enthusiasm and joy by Iranian Zoroastrian as well as Parsis in India.

FEASTS OF MITHRA:

Meher the ancient Mithra is a Yazata. He is judge of departed soul at whose tribunal every man has to appear. Since he is Yazata of light and justice, the temples of
Parsism are called after him, Dar-i-Meher, 'door of Mithra'. It is the true name of the so-called Fire Temples. Its feast is in the autumn at the time of one of the great ancient feasts of Mithra. The two middle days of the month bear his name.

The list of important festivals of Parsis in Iran have been shown in table No.14. They are as follows: Khordad sal, Jashneh Fervardin, Jashine Mehregan, Roze Khor, Jashneh Sadeh, Tir and Taregan and Naoroze, Naoroze which it mean the new day, it will be celebrated very interestingly throughout the country of Iran. Naoroze is one of the oldest festival in Iran. Parsis in Iran celebrate all their festivals with ceremonial offerings. Offerings are water, milk, fruits, sweets and flowers. They represent different creations, and through these offerings thanks-giving is offered unto Ahura Mazda, who has produced various creations for the good of mankind. They say about the importance of water without which no sentient being can live. Fruits and flowers represent vegetable creation on which men and animal are dependent. Milk represents animal creation which is also very useful for mankind. Prophet Zarathustra's birthday and death anniversary will be celebrated with great enthusiasm by the Parsis of Iran and India.
JASON CEREMONY BEING CONDUCTED

BY A PARSIS PRIEST
ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR:

Every month has a day bearing a name identical with it. This is generally considered holy and Jashan ceremony is performed on that day. For example, Mah (month) Ardibehesht and Roz (day) Ardibehesht, Mah (month) Adar and Roz (day) of Adar etc.


Zoroastrian calendar year is generally known as "Yazdegardi sal" on the year of Yazdegard, who was the last sovereign of the Sassanian dynasty which ruled over Iran from A.D. 226 to 641. The 'Yazdegardi Sal' started from the day on which the last sovereign ascended the throne of
Iranian sovereign. Hence, 'Yazdegardi Sal' continues till today. The last sovereign of Iran was defeated by the Arabs, and subsequently arrested and murdered.

The Zoroastrian calendar year is divided into twelve months of 360 days in all. But the Zoroastrians observe a year of 365 days. The remaining five days are added to the last month spand. These are the Gatha-days. i) Ahunavad, ii) Ushtavad, iii) Spentomad, iv) Vohukhsathra and Vahishtoisht.

According to Zoroastrian teachings creations were produced at six different periods, called Gahambars, in the following order sky, water, earth, vegetation, animals and mankind. On each Gahambar festival religious ceremonies are performed and thanks-givings are offered to Ahura Mazda who created and bestowed so many bounties on human beings.

The time of the Zoroastrian calendar year which Gahambars observe and the connection of creation with them are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Gahambar</th>
<th>Mah</th>
<th>Roz</th>
<th>Creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Maidyozarem</td>
<td>Khorshed</td>
<td>Sky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ardibehesht</td>
<td>Daepameher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Maidyoshem</td>
<td>Tir</td>
<td>Khorshed</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daepameher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Paitishahem</td>
<td>Sherever</td>
<td>Ashtad</td>
<td>Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aneran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Ayathrem</td>
<td>Meher</td>
<td>Ashtad</td>
<td>Vegetation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aneran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Maidyarem</td>
<td>Dae</td>
<td>Meher</td>
<td>Animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>Hamspath</td>
<td>Spand</td>
<td>Ahunarad</td>
<td>Mankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maedem</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vahishtoishegatha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE - 14

SOME OF ZOROASTRIAN FESTIVALS IN IRAN AND IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khordad and Farvardin Mah (Roz Khordad)</td>
<td>26 March (6 Farvardin in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td>It is the Prophet Zarathustra's Birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jashne Farvardingah (Roz Farvardin)</td>
<td>8th April - (19 Farvardin in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td>In memory of the dead and Mortrays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jashne Mehregan (Roz Mehr)</td>
<td>2nd September (10 of Mah mehr in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td>It is a festival of month of mehr and festival of victory of Iranian on Zahak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roz khor</td>
<td>26 December (5th of month of Dae in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td>It is death anniversary of Prophet Zarathustra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jashne Sadeh (Tenth of Bahman in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td></td>
<td>It is festival of a Sadeh and it is on the hundred days pass from the winter season and in the memory of the discovery of fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naoroze</td>
<td>21st March (First of Farvardin Mah in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td>It is Jamshidi Naoroze and 1st day of the spring season in Iran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tir and Tiregan</td>
<td>1 July (Tenth of Mah Tir in Iran Calendar)</td>
<td>It is month of Tir festival.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PILGRIMAGES AMONG PARSIS:

Parsis travel to their sacred places for their religious fulfilment and performance. Similarly the Muslims go to Mecca. They have their places of pilgrimage in Iran. Some of the important places are as follows: Pir Naraky, Pir Sabz, Pir Harisht and Pir Banu. These places of pilgrimage are near the city of Yezd in Iran. According to Zoroastrian calendar they have certain days in a month for pilgrimage. For example, for Pir Harisht they do their pilgrimage on certain days like 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 of the month of March. They make an effort to on a pilgrimage on the proper date mentioned.

In India Parsis go to Navsari, Udvada and Surat for the pilgrimage. Their Holy Fire was brought safely to Bansda by way of Barkat 1300 years back and was then transferred to Nausari (Modi, 1905). There, the Iran Shah remained until 1740. Finally find its resting place in Udvada in 1742 due to a dispute among the Clergy at Nausari. Since then the three towns of Sanjan, Nausari and Udvada are centres of religious and cultural traditions for all members of the Community. Udvada sometimes being termed the Mecca of the Parsis (Balsara, 1963).