CHAPTER II

Parsi-Ethnicity and Multiculturalism
This chapter is devoted to the study of ethnicity and multiculturalism prevalent among the Parsi community. There are a number of dimensions to the term ‘Ethnicity’.

*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines the term ‘Ethnicity’ as:

*The fact of belonging to a particular race.*

(Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

Wikipedia, free Encyclopedia defines it as:

*An Ethnic group or Ethnicity is a population of human beings whose members identify with each other, either on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry or recognition by others as a direct a distinct group, or by common cultural, linguistic, religious, or physical traits.*

(http://en.wikipedia.org/)

Ethnicity represents social groups with a shared history, sense of identity, geography and cultural roots which, may occur despite racial difference.

The Parsis form an ethno-religious minority in India. Forming a miniscule community, the Parsis represent less than 0.016% of India’s population. In spite of their infinitesimally small number, there has been no looking back for them. They have gone ahead and occupied extraordinary position in the annals of Indian history. The Parsis have had an impact and greatly influenced the socio/political scenes of the country. Some eminent Parsis went on to become towering personalities of the Indian freedom struggle. They have contributed significantly in the economic, social, literary, cultural and political spheres. One cannot
forget the great role that they have played in the awakening and reconstruction of our country.

Nani A. Palkhiwala observes:

*History affords no parallel to the role of Parsis in India. There is no record of any other community as infinitesimally small as Parsis, playing such a significant role in the life of a country so large.*

(Palkhiwala 318)

How right was Mahatma Gandhi when he stated that although the Parsis are beneath contempt in number, they go beyond compare in contribution.

In spite of this, the truth is that the Parsis have been neglected. D.B. Karka *History of the Parsis* states:

*Insignificantly as they may thus seem to be in point of numbers, they occupy, none the less, one of the foremost places among Indian nationalities, their peculiar position and foreign designation are apt to strike strangers on their first visit to India, and interest and curiosity.........*

(Karka 02)

What are the characteristic features of the Parsi community? What is it that they wrestle with? The osmosis of identity they face, their appearance, their pronunciation, their cocooned existence and many other
things stand them apart from the rest. This is very aptly and significantly stated by Novy Kapadia and A.G. Khan in an article “Ashem Vahu-Blessed is Virtue (Parsi Psyche Reflected in IWE)”:

Little about them is known to the people of other religions, even less about their faith or about their customs and rituals. Neither the history of the people nor their predicament today is known. What are the problems they are wrestling with in a fast changing, highly competitive world? That there is a sense of “Osmosis of Identity” within and outside the community is not known to many. To several Indians they are known for philanthropy or for their cosmic appearance in some Bombay films with the peculiar costumes or odd Hindi pronunciations. For many others they are people of plenty, immersed in the luxury of posh hotels and foreign visits—a world far removed from those who die in Parsi General Charity Hospital alone and destitute such isolation of India’s Parsi Zoroastrians has resulted in a cocooned existence.

(Kapadia and Khan 03)

The term Parsi is derived from the word ‘Pars’ or ‘Fars’ which is an ancient Persian province in present Southern Iran. This was home of the Parsis. Persepolis is the Greek word for this province. The term/places Iran, Persia and Persian are significantly related to the Parsis. This is well
explained by Dastur Dr. Hormasdyar Kayoji Mirza in his book *Outlines Zoroastrian Religion and Ancient Iranian Art*. It is important and worthwhile to look at these terms and understand their significance.

II:i:i Iran:

Home of the Iranian people, the name of this country was airya, airyana, airyana vaejah (as mentioned in the Avesta). These ancient names were applied to all those Iranians migrated to in their long chequered history. The term airyana appears as Eran, Iran in later times. Therefore the country came to be known as Iran.

II:i:ii Persia:

The ancient Greek writers recognized the residents of the South Western province of Pars in Iran as the ‘Persis’. It was during the 6th century B.C., that an eminent resident of Pars shot to fame and power in his home-province and later extended his sovereignty over entire Iran. Since then the term ‘Parsis’ was applied to the whole of the country. From this term ‘Parsis’ came about the English version such as ‘Persia’ and ‘Persian’ and the other corresponding terms in European languages.

‘Persis’ now indicate the entire country and its people and so the derivative terms ‘Persia’ and ‘Persian’ were generally used for the whole country of Iran and the Iranian people respectively.

It was however in 1933 that his Late Imperial Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, declared that the country be named ‘Iran’. The ancient name was revived and the new name came about officially.

II:i:iii Persian:

Iran was invaded and conquered by the Arabs during the middle of the Seventh century A.D. The language of the Iranians was prescribed;
and there after Arabic became the official language of Iran. The fusion of the language of the Iranians and the Arabs went on to form a new language. This new language thus went onto be known as ‘Persian’ or ‘Modern Persian’. The language flourished during the 9th and 10th centuries. The Arabs not being able to pronounce ‘P’ changed to ‘F’. Gradually the term ‘Pars’ became ‘Fars’ and ‘Parsi’ as ‘Farsi’.

**II:iv Parsi:**

The term ‘Parsi’ seek its roots from the word ‘ Parsa’ the Old Persian form of the name of a province in south-western Iran during the ancient times. The same name being used for the people of the province, the word ‘Parsik’ was as well used for the people as well as the language of the province of Pars. The term ‘Parsik’ became ‘Parsi’ therefore literally means ‘one belonging to Pars’. The word ‘Parsi’ originally being an ethnic term was generally applied to the people of Pars. However, later, the term acquired a religious connotation and was applied for the Zoroastrian residents of Pars.

It is believed that during the very ancient times, the homeland of the Iranians was situated near the North Pole or in the Arctic Circle. The place was known as Airyana or Airyana Varjah and later as Erancej. A critical survey shows that this region happens to be the country and the homeland of king Jamshed and other kings of the Pishdadian dynasty.

However, somewhere around 9000 B.C. the Iranians left their homeland and moved southward-all this on account of glaciations. Around the 7th millennium B.C. they were living on the banks of the river Oxus, the Taxartes in Central Asia and in ancient Chorasmia around modern Khiva. This was the kingdom of king Vishtasp and other kings of the Kayanian dynasty. This land also belonged to Zoroaster and the
Avesta people, around 6000 B.C. This new homeland was known by the same ancient name Airyana or Airyana Vaejah.

During the later years, the Iranians migrated further down i.e. towards the south and southwest and occupied the present countries of Afghanistan and Iran. This became home for the Iranians around the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. Their power spread a wide and they ruled over these countries around the 8th century B.C. They spread out in various provinces as groups. Some of the provinces were the Medians (North-west), The Achaemenians (South-west), the Parthians (North-east) and the Sasanians (south-west). Similarly, from the ancient Airyana was derived the terms Eran and Iran.

**II:ii:i The Median Empire:**

Media stands as an ancient province in the North-Western Iran. However, there are no relics of the Median people or their empire and it stands forgotten in the Iranian tradition. However, the existence of the Medians is proved through the historical records of the 9th century B.C. The Jewish, Old Persian and Greek records also stand witness to this.

Historical records make a mention about the four Median kings.

Deioces ruled around the 7th century and was predecessor to Cyaxares, who was later succeeded by Astyages (the last Median king).

It was during the middle of the 6th century B.C. that the Median sovereignty was overthrown by Cyrus. He later went on to establish the first Parsi empire of the Achaemenians.

**II:ii:ii The Achaemenians (559-330 B.C.):**

The Achaemenians (559-330 B.C.) founded by the Cyrus II, around 559 B.C., the Achaemenia is the first Parsi empire. However, the Royal dynasty was founded by the ancestors of Cyrus.
Achaemenes was the first king of the dynasty and was succeeded by his son, Teispes. Thereafter the Achaemenians were bifurcated into two groups. The sons of Teispes namely Cyrus I and Aryaramnes founded the two lines of kingship, namely Anshan and Aryaramnes in Persa.

II:ii:iii Cyrus II, the Great:

Cyrus II, the Great succeeded his father, Cambyses I. He overthrew the Median supremacy by defeating Astyages and became an independent king around 547 BC. He united and brought the people of Pars, Media and the other province of Iran under one rule and founded the first Parsi empire.

It is under Cyrus, the Great that Zoroastrianism entered the annals of history. As relics of the ancient Zoroastrianism, fire-holders were first found in his capital, Pasargadae, in Persia.

It was presumed that the Great king should pray at a fire hearth, and so for the first time, fire was raised up in a special urn (container). The outward shape of it resembled the altars (those used among the Persian subjects). However, slight variations were made. Instead of the flat or concave top, the bowl was deep enough to hold the bed of hot ashes needed to keep the fire continually burning.

II:ii:iv Darius, the Great (521-486 B.C.):

Cyrus II was succeeded by his son Cambyses. During his rule, Gaumata, who claimed to be the son of Cyrus, rebelled against Cambyses. He seized power in Pars, Media and the neighbouring provinces. Cambyses died in 521 BC, when on his way to Pars. Cambyses, however, had no direct descendent and so Darius, the Great although successor of the other line of kingship, courageously answered
the call of the other line too. He now consolidated and established the empire on firmer basis.

A number of inscriptions, mainly in three languages: Old Persian, Elanuite and Babylonian were left by Darius, the Great.

Dastur Dr. Hormasdyar Koyaji Mirza in his Outline of Parsi History, Zoroasterian Religion and Ancient Iranian Art states:

A number of inscriptions left by Darius have shed important light on ancient Parsi history. In his inscriptions, Darius proudly records his Parsi ancestry in the following words:

adam darayavaush khshayathiya vazaraka
khshayathiya khshayathiyaam………
parsa parsahya puthra ariya ariyachithra.

“I, Darius, the Great king, the kings of kings………a Parsi, the son of a Parsi, an Aryan, of Aryan family.”

(Mirza 32)

Darious was proud of being a Parsi and was also a great believer in God, the Almighty attributing all his worldly successes to the will of Ahura Mazda, he declared:

A Great God is Ahura Mazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man.
The Achaemenian Empire ended in 330 B.C. with the role of Darius III.

II:ii:v The Parthians (The Arshkanian):

After the fall of the Achaemenian Empire, Iran was ruled for about 80 years by the Macedonian generals of the Selcucid dynasty. The new Iranian kingdom that came into being was founded by Arsaces or Arshak, a resident of the province of Parthia in North-Eastern Iran came into existence. The empire that came into being was ‘Arsacide’ or ‘Arshkanian/Ashkanian’ after the founder. Another name for it was ‘Parthian’ as Parthia was the home-province of the founder. This empire lasted for about 476 years i.e. from about 250 B.C.-226 A.D. This dynasty proved to be a check and a counterpoise to the Roman Empire.

II:ii:vi The Sasanian Empire (226-641 A.D.):

The Sasanian Empire was founded by Artakhsir Papakan who later came to be known as Ardashir. He was the son of Sasan, who was in the service of Papak, the king of Pars. When Papak realized that Sasan was a descendent of the ancient royal family of Pars, he elevated himself to a high position in the court and married his daughter to him.

II:ii:vii Artakhshir (Ardashir):

He was the founder of the second Parsi empire. Son of Sasan, he defeated Ardavan and founded the independent kingdom. After Artakhshir, his son Shapur-I ascended the throne, who mainly engaged himself in wars with the Romans. His successors were Shapur II and Yazdgard I.

Yazdgard III (632-641) was the last Sasanian emperor. He ascended the throne at the time of internecine strife in the family.
II:ii:viii Arab Unity and Strife in Iran:

The Arab tribes which were organized as a nation under the religious leadership rose unitedly for propagating Islam. At this time the Romans and the Iranians were busy waging wars thereby exhausting their resources and man power. Strife, religious zeal and fanaticism were in the air, and during this time Yazdgard III, the last in the Sasanian line, ascended the throne. However, his defeat in the battle of Nihavand (614 A.D.) followed by his murder in 652 A.D. ended the glorious Parsi empire.

II:ii:ix Contribution:

The Sasanian period was undoubtedly the greatest in terms of its achievements and contributions.

The Zoroastrian church which was immensely wealthy and powerful was well endowed with fire temples. The holiest Persian fire was Adur Farnbug, the third great sacred fire of the Zoroastrians.

The most significant task undertaken during this age was the writing down the sacred Avestan Texts, in specially devised phonetic alphabets of forty-four characters. This made it possible to record it exactly.

They were accompanied by translations with commentaries in Middle Persian, which came to be known as Zand (interpretation). Hence the name Zand-ud-Abestag later came to be known as the Zand-Avesta.

(Zoroastrian Tapestry 59)
II:iii Parsis in Iran after the Arab Conquest:

The Arabs invaded and conquered Iran with the sole purpose of propagating Islam. They looked upon the war that they fought with Iran as ‘the holy war’. What motivated and led to the war was a religious zeal and fanaticism Non-Arabs and non-Muslims were forcibly converted to Islam. The entire nation was proselytized either by persuasion or force and sometimes a combination of both.

The death of Caliph Umar in (644 A.D.) saw the Arabs fighting for power, supremacy and wealth amongst themselves. This gave rise to a lot of cruelty, fury, intrigue and treachery.

Claiming racial superiority over the subject nations (non-Muslims and non-Arab Muslims), the Arabs began ill-treating, despising and molesting them. Heavy taxes were imposed; and even those converted to Islam were forced to pay the Jaziya tax.

However, the followers of Zoroaster who practiced the monotheistic religion obeyed the dictates of their conscience. They preferred to free themselves from all the persecution and oppression of the rulers and there by abandoned their homeland and fled to the mountainous districts of Khorassan. A few years were spent in successfully trying to evade the pursuits of their terrible foe for about a 100 years they remained in Khorassan and practiced their religion in the truest form of sense (i.e. uncorrupted and unmolested). However, they could not remain peaceful for long, and slowly but surely persecution reached them even in those remote areas. They were once again forced to flee from their enemies. A considerable number immigrated to the Persian Gulf.

Describing this particular exodus Dasobhoy Framjee in his book *The Parsees’* states:
Their stay at this retreat was, however, but of short duration. They were yet within the reach of their cruel persecutors, and rather than fall into hands of the fanatic, impious devs (devils) they at last determined to relinquish for ever the land of their forefathers, and to remove to a country where they might hope to live in tranquility, and in the enjoyment of their social and religious rights.

(Framjee 06)

II:iv The Migration to India:

II:iv:i The General background and relation between Iran and India before migration:

During the ancient times, Iran got into political, cultural and trade relations with all the nations of the ancient world including India. The Iranians lived in alien lands since ancient times. There is a mention of the hindav-sindh, and hapta hindav-the land of the seven tributaries of the Indus, Punjab in the Avesta. During the Sasanian period, the Zoroastrians lived in China and Central Asia.

II:iv:ii The Migration:

The circumstances under which migration took place, the number of Parsis who left the shore of the Gulf, the forced conversion to Islam followed by persecution, is all based on the chronicle was complied in the year 1600 by a Zoroasterian priest named Behman Kaikobad Sanjana, who resided at Navsari, a town situated about 20 miles south of Surat.
Although this chronicle is based on verbal transmission, the fact still remains, without doubt, that it is an extremely informative document for Parsi historiography.

The *Kissah-i-Sanjan* records that after the Arab conquest of Iran; the Parsis fled and took refuge in the mountainous districts of Kohistan in Khorasan. After living there for 100 years, they proceeded to Hormazd, a city on the southern coast of Iran and stayed there for 15 years. They then left Iran and sailed for Mormazd and by the sea-route reached India, and landed on the island of Diu, to the south of Saurashtra. It is here that they disembarked and resided there for a period of 19 years. After this they moved on in search of another place. However, what motivated this migration is not satisfactorily explained in any chronicle. However, in all probability the reason behind this movement could have been the growing threat of the Arab invasion. Leaving Diu they moved on to Gujarat, on the west-coast of India to a place called Sanjan, situated about 145 km north of Bombay.

The sorry plight of the Parsis caused during migration in aptly stated by D.B. Karka. He says:

*Rather than abandon the faith they had inherited from their fathers, they had voluntarily made themselves exiles for ever from the land that gave them birth. Their later experience had been equally hard. Refusing to be depended upon strangers for home, they were not at the mercy of the treacherous deep. What wonder, then, that this little band confused and in despair, were ready to believe that they were the sports of a merciless and irresistible fate.*
The purpose of the Parsis movement to India has been brought out through the words of V.L.V.N. Narendra Kumar, who states:

*They came to India as fugitives in the 8th century, seeking freedom to practice their faith.*

(Narendra Kumar 09)

More about the cause and the after effects of the migration is brought out by M.F. Salat in an article “Magic Writings of Bapsi Sidhwa” in the book *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan.* Ed. Kapadia Novy and A.G. Khan where he states:

*To escape persecution of their faith and enforced conversion to Islam at the hands of invading Muslim Arabs, a small band of Zoroastrians, following the ancient religion Zoroastrianism founded by their prophet Zarashutra, fled their mother country Persia (now Iran) and came to Gujarat in India some 1300 years ago. In their adopted country India, they came to be known as Parsis-people of Persia.*

(Salat 98)

**II:iv:iii  Date of Migration:**

The date of arrival of Parsis in India varies in different sources. The Hindu and Pars days do not correspond.

The traditional date is given in *Outline of Parsi History* as
Eckehard Kulke in *The Parsis of India* states the controversy related to the exact date as follows:

*The question of the exact year of migration, a subject of decades of controversy, should only be raised……...first fall, it is not clear whether the author of the chronicle considers the year of the fall of the Sasanian Dynasty to be that of the devastating battle of Nehavend 641 A.D.) or that of the death of the last Sasanian ruler Yazdagard III (651 A.D.). J.J. Modi (A Few events in the early History of the Parsis and their Dates (Bombay, 1905)) starts with the letter and so arrives at the year of settlement in Sanjan being 985 A.D. (655+100+15+19). Independent of the chronology of the Kissah-i-Sanjan some authors (K.N. Seervai and K.B.Patel, Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, ed. J.M. Campbell (Bombay, 1899), IX, Part II P. 185) S.K. Hodivala, Parsis in Ancient India, D.F. Karka, History of the Parsis (London 1884)) refer to a pamphlet written in 1826 at Broach by a Dastur A. Kamdini in connection with the Shehenshahi-kadmi controversy (Dastur Aspandiarji Kem tarib Parsieni Kesar (Broach, 1826), in which the year
716 AD (The Hindu year Samavat 772) was given as the year of settlement in Sanjan. S.K. Hodivala (Jadi Rana and Kissah-i-Sanjan, JBBRAS, Vol. XXIII) on the other hand, is of the opinion that the year Samavat 772 written in Davnagari should be read as Samavat 992 due to Similarity of the number 7 and 9, which, after a corresponding conversion, would be equal to the year 936 A.D.

(Kulke 26-27)

II:iv:iv Adoption:

The territory of Sanjan, at the time of the Parsi migration, was ruled by Jadi Rana (Jadhav Rana). It was Jadi Rana who granted asylum to the Parsis in India (setting forth some terms and conditions to the Parsis regarding their stay at Sanjan). The Dastur (high priest) of the Parsis was first sent to the Rana, with gifts in order to appease him and seek permission from him to reside there. The Dastur was an old venerable man and on approaching the Rana blessed him. He explained to the Rana the reasons which caused the Parsis to relinquish their native land. He explained at length the vicissitudes and sufferings that they underwent; and sought permission on behalf of his community to be allowed to reside in Sanjan.

The Dastur Pledged:

“Home Hindustan ra yar bashim”

(Deepanjali: June-Dec. 1996, 11)
II:iv:v Symbolic Gestures:

It is believed that initially, Jadi Rana was a little apprehensive about sheltering the refugees. Their war-like and hardy appearance made him a little suspicious. The Dastur wanted to convince him of their noble intention and requested for an urn filled with milk to the brim. He took of his ruby studded gold ring and dropped it into the urn. This symbolic gesture suggested that the contents of the urn become precious and rich by the presence of the gold ring. Similarly the presence of the Parsi Zoroastrians in Sanjan would further make the place prosperous and peaceful. Jadi Rana was convinced and happy too. He granted them permission to stay back.

The Dastur being very pleased made another symbolic gesture. He stirred a spoonful of sugar into the urn containing milk and said, “We shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness”. This was to assure the king of their loyalty and diligence.

II:iv:vi Jadi Rana’s Conditions:

1. The Parsi high priests were supposed to explain their religion to the king.
2. The Parsis would have to take up the local language, thereby giving up their native language.
3. Similarly, the women would have to give up their traditional Persian outfit for the customary dress of the country.
4. The men should lay down their weapons.
5. The wedding processions of the Parsis should be held only in the dark.
The Parsis had only two alternatives before them. One was to accept the terms and conditions of the Rana; or return to their ships and seek shelter elsewhere. However, not wanting to live merely by the status of a wanderer, they chose the rules lay down and settled in the land.

Taking about the terms and restrictions laid down by Jadi Rana, the adopting of the local language, customs and costumes, the non-proselyte factor and the feeling of alienation among the Parsis (within the community), Nilufer Bharucha asserts:

*These unequal conditions provided fertile breeding ground for feeling of ambivalence and alienation became the host country. This ambivalence and alienation became exacerbated during the colonial period, when the Parsis were among the first to embrace English language education and became the most westernized Indian community.*

(Bharucha 358)

The first condition was fulfilled by the priest Neryosagh (R.B. Paymaster, Early History of the Parsis in India). He prepared 16 Sanskrit shlokas describing the tenets of their religion and the mode of worship. *Kissah-i-sanjan* doesn’t mention the 16 Sanskrit shlokas, but they have been preserved in various Gujarati and Sanskrit manuscripts.

The abstract of the 16 Sanskrit shlokas can be summed up as follows:

1. We are worshippers of Hormuzd (Supreme Being) and the Sun and Fire elements.
2. We observe silence while bathing, praying, making offerings to fire and eating.

3. We use incense, perfumes, and flowers in our religious ceremonies.

4. We are worshippers of the cow.

5. We wear the sacred garment, the sadra or shirt, the kusti or cincture for the loins and the cap of two folds.

6. We rejoice in songs and instruments of music on the occasion of our marriages.

7. We ornament and perfume our wives.

8. We are enjoined to be liberal in our charities, and especially in excavating tanks and wells.

9. We are enjoined to extend our sympathized towards males as well as females.

10. We practice ablutions with gaomutra, one of the products of the cow.

11. We wear the sacred griddle when praying and eating.

12. We feed the sacred flame with incense.

13. We practice devotion five times a day.

14. We are careful observers of conjugal fidelity and purity.

15. We perform annual religious ceremonies on behalf of our ancestors.

16. We place great restraints on our women after their confinements.

Eckehard Kulke states:

*In the field of both of language and of clothing, two essential channels and indicators of socio-cultural change, the Parsee proved themselves equally adaptive.*

(Kulke 28)
Fire Temple:

The Parsis settled down peacefully in Sanjan. After a period of 5 years, a request was made to King Jadi Rana regarding permission to build a fire temple. The Rana granted a secluded piece of land, and the Parsees built their first fire temple (Atash-Behram) on the Indian soil.

Towards the end of the 10th century, the Parsis began to settle in parts of Gujarat, such as Broach, Ankleshwar, Vankaner, Variav, Cambay and Navsari.

The Kissah-i- Sajan states that in 1465, the Muslim army headed by Sultan Mahawd and his commander Alafkhan, attacked Sajan. Ardeshir, the Parsi commander fully supported the Hindu Prince with a troop of 1400 fighting men. However, the king’s army faced defeat and around the end of the 14th century, the city of Sajan was totally destroyed.

The remaining Parsees left Sanjan and fled to other settlements. They carried the Holy fire with them and this was installed at the nearby mountain of Bahrot. It remained there for about 12 years, after which it was transferred to Navsari around 1419-1416.

Navsari was home for the Holy fire for about 320 years. On account of the political instability, it was carried to Surat. Then followed the quarrels between Bhagaria and Sanjan priests, which resulted in the shifting of the Holy Fire – in 1740 to Bulsar, and in 1742 to Udvada (all within the territorial jurisdiction of the Sanjan priests).

Migration to Bombay:

Gujarat was affected by three severe famines in 1790. This caused the first group of the Parsees to migrate to Bombay. The reason for the second group’s migration was due to a severe fire in Surat during the year 1837. However, there are other reasons attributed to the migration. The
lure of Bombay forced the (people) Parsis to abandon the underdeveloped Gujarat. Bombay had already become significant as an important port and a centre for economic, cultural and administrative interaction.

Survey of 1961 shows that in 1961, the total population of the Parsis in India was 1,00,772; out of this about 77,542 Parsi population stayed in Bombay.

Table showing Parsis in Indian states in 1951 and 1961

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<td>Pepsu</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Total</td>
<td>761</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajmer</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>1258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andaman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**II:vii Urbanization:**

**Table Showing Degree of Urbanization of Different Communities in India in 1961**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Urbanization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parses</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
India Total 17.9%

(Census of India, Religion Paper No. 1 of 1963)

It is clearly seen from the table that the Parsis were the most urbanized community among other communities on the Indian subcontinent.

**Literacy Rate of Different Communities in 1931**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>% of literate persons over 5 yrs. age</th>
<th>% of literate men</th>
<th>% of literate women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsees</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribals</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (India)</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Parsi urbanization was not limited to Bombay, but it also prevails in A.P., Bihar, M.P., T.N., Delhi, W.B. and Rajasthan.

Only in Gujarat, the original settlement area of the Parsis, still show high percentage of rural Parsis (83.1%) out of 5789 total rural Parsis in India.
Urban and Rural Parsi Population in different Indian States (1965)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (India)</td>
<td>1,00,772</td>
<td>5789</td>
<td>94,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.P.</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>17,714</td>
<td>4813</td>
<td>12901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerla</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.P.</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>77,542</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>78856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.B.</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andamans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trupura</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dadra and Nagar</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haveli</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Regular Public Census began in India in 1872 according to Census Act, 11 of 1863. Thus we do not have authentic and particular numerical
information of the Parsis in India before 1872. Following table gives the figures of the Parsis in India from 1872 to 1991.

### II:viii Parsi Population:

#### II:viii:i Increase of the Parsi Population in India 1872-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parsis in India</th>
<th>Bombay Parsis</th>
<th>% of Parsis in Bombay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>44,091</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>85,397</td>
<td>48,597</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>89,887</td>
<td>47,458</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>93,952</td>
<td>46,231</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,00,096</td>
<td>50,931</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,01,778</td>
<td>52,234</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1,11,853</td>
<td>57,765</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1,14,890</td>
<td>59,813</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,11,791</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,00,772</td>
<td>70,065</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>91,266</td>
<td>64,000</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>71,630</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>76,383</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>69,601</td>
<td>46,557</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>43,241</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010 projected</strong></td>
<td>39,925</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

na= Not available

(Kulke, Eckehard. *The Parsis of India, A Minority Agent of Social Change and Parsiana, August 7, 2007*)
Novy Kapadia, Jaydipsinh Dodiya and R.K. Dhawan in an Introduction to *Parsi Fiction, Vol. I* quote population of the Parsis in India in 1997 as follows:

*In the 1997 census by the Govt. of India, the Parsis were only about 75-80,000 in number, 0.016% of the total population of India.*

(Kapadia 10)

Jaydipsinh Dodiya in *Parsi Fiction* provides statistics of recent population of India. He records:

*According to a recent survey done by NDTV.Com, there are about 69,601 Parsis living in India. The rate at which their number is declining, they may soon be reduced to the status of a tribe, as this number is likely to drop down to about 20,000 in the next twenty years.*

(Dodiya 02)

II:viii:ii  Number of Births and Deaths among Bombay Parsis (1955-1964)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>10,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One notable thing is seen after a careful study of the table presenting the statistical data of the Parsi population is that there is a sharp decline in the number of the Parsi population.

Sooni Taraporewala laments the decrease in the population by saying:

*Demographically, we are a dying community- our deaths outweigh our births.*

(Parsiana, June 7, 2007 and September 21, 2007)
Madhavankutty Pillai in an article in Asian Age of 13th May, 1997 quotes a Parsi demographer Kersi Limathwala about the declining population of the community.

_Though there are no definite figures available at present, a rough estimate is that in a year there are 1000 deaths and 500 births._

(Pillai Asian Age, 13th May, 1997)

Alarming at the declining population Novy Kapadia and A.G. Khan write:

_Given these conditions and factors the laws of statistics dictate the eventual annihilation of this race. If attitude do not change, it seems unlikely the Parsis will see another millennium change. Under these circumstances, as Rohinton Mistry has indicated in a recent interview fiction such as this will record the history of the Parsis for the ages to come._

(Khan XIV-XV)

**II:ix Causes of Decline in Population:**

There are many factors responsible for the decline in the number of the Parsi population. These reasons may be attributed to biological, social, economic and psychological factors. At one hand the population of India is not only increasing but exploding and at other hand the Parsi population is sharply declining. There are various other factors
contributing to the decline in population. Some of them are extreme westernization, decrease in marriages, high marital age, nuclear family system, non-acceptance of inter-community marriages, overseas immigration, etc.

II:x **Zoroastrianism:**


>Zoroastrianism is the religious doctrine attributed to Zoroaster which gradually became the prevalent religion of Iran and notably was the state religion under the Sasanian dynasty (AD 211-640). It is still professed by the Parsis of Bombay and some sporadic communities in Persia. Zoroastrianism is one of the most interesting religions of the world. Its doctrines and rites are well known to either in their present form or as they are to be found in the Pahlavi books and in the Avesta.

(Hastings 862)

Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (21st Century Edition) defines Zoroastrianism as:

>Zoroastrianism is the dualistic religion founded by the Persian prophet Zoroaster in
the later 7th or early 6th century B.C. and set forth in the sacred writings of the Zend-Avesta. It is based on the concept of a continuous struggle between Ormazd (or Ahura Mazda), the God of creation, light, and goodness, and his archenemy, Ahriman, the spirit of evil and darkness.

(Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (21st Century Edition) 1937)

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia defines it as:

Zoroastrianism is the religion and philosophy based on the teachings ascribed to the Prophet Zoroaster (Zarathustra, Zartosht). Mazdaism is the religion that acknowledges the divine authority of Ahura Mazda, proclaimed by Zoroaster to be the one uncreated creator of all (God).

(http://en.wikipedia.org)

II:x:i Prophet Zorathushtra:

The term ‘Prophet’ refers to a divinely inspired and divinely appointed teacher, who brings home the message of religion, reveals and interprets God’s commandments, and instructs men as to the conduct of life in this world.

The Avesta word for Prophet is ashta, asta. Avesta mentions Zorathushtra as the divinely appointed and divinely inspired prophet.
II:x:ii Various Opinions Regarding Date of Prophet Zorathushtra:

No scripture including Avesta provide any direct evidence about the age in which Prophet Zorathushtra lived. Thus, calculations are made from various other indirect sources based on historical, literary, linguistic, astronomical, geological and archaeological evidences. On the basis of this three existing general opinions of the scholars regarding date of Prophet Zorathushtra are:

1. About 6500 B.C.
2. Between 900 B.C. and 1400 B.C.
3. About 630 B.C.

II:x:iii Personal and Family Names:

According to Avesta the personal name of the Prophet appears as Zorathushtra where as according to Pahlavi it is Zartusht. In Modern Persian and other languages it comes about in various forms, but generally as Zardusht. The most frequent form is Zoroaster which is generally used in English and other languages. The meanings of Zoroaster are “one possessing a golden (coloured) camel” and “the golden star”.

The family name of the Prophet Zoroaster is Spitama which means ‘whitest, purest’.

II:x:iv Birth of the Prophet:

The names of the father and mother were Pourushaspa which means one possessing gray horse and Dughora that is one who milks. It is believed that Zoroaster had smiled at his birth because of the presence of the Divine Beings. The good creations of Ahura Mazda beamed and welcomed the divine Light.
II:x:v Divine Revelation:

At the age of twenty, Zoroaster was divinely guided to a secluded place on the Mount Ushidarena (the Mount of Divine Intellect). He stayed on the mountain for a period of ten years and spent time and energy in prayer, meditation and spiritual communion with Divine Beings. Here he was divinely inspired by the Divinely Beings, particularly Vahu Manah and Sarosha on religion and other values.

At the age of thirty, Zoroaster returned to the country, preached the religion in the court of the king Vishtasp. He was blessed by the grace of Ahura Mazda. The son of Arastya Maidyoimaongha became his first disciple. Later, the religion spread and was accepted by the Iranian people.

It appears from the Gathas that Prophet Zoroaster had formed a religious brotherhood of his immediate disciples which was known as maga in Avesta. From Avesta word maga, Pahlavi word is magav (a priest) and the modern Persian mobbed (Zoroasterian priest).

II:x:vi Passing Away:

Nothing has been mentioned in the Avesta about the death of the Prophet Zoroaster. Pahlavi uses special term for passing away of the prophet Vihez I Zartust (rising up of Zartust, ascension).

A traditional account informs that Zoroaster lived for seventy seven years and eleven days. Gujarati calls the day of passing away of the Prophet as Zarthosht no diso. The death day is observed at present as Cin Roz Knorshed Ma Dae.

II:x:vii Teaching of Zoroaster:

Zoroaster refers to the supreme God, Ahura Mazda, as the Lord of wisdom. Zarathushtra proclaimed monotheism.
Zoroastrianism provides us with a comprehensive view of life regarding the unity of one God and His Creation promoting the welfare of human kind and all the things created by nature was his ethic.

Zarathushtra conveyed totality through a number of poetic Hymns called the Gathas, which he composed and contain a well-formed theology. Zoroaster originally recited the Gathas in the ancient Avestian language, transmitted in an oral tradition for long span. At about 4th century AA, they were first put down in Pahlavi script and then transcribed to the Avestian script in 6th century A.D.

- Zoroaster encompassed not only the spiritual aspect alone but our day-to-day living and physical activities. He did not advocate isolation or solitude.
- He believed and upheld the principle “world can be saved only if man responds to the needs and sufferings of his fellow-men” with determination and in spirit.
- Man can both serve and honour God more meaningfully in the enactment of the lordly principles of Truth and good feeling among his fellow-men. He called for an awesome reverence based up on fear and dread.
- Emphasis should always be laid ethical or moral aspect of existence.
- Man is the only creature created by the God with the greatest gift ever, that is, the faculty of ‘Reason’ or a rational mind. Other creatures have been given the gift of ‘instinct’.
- God is omniscient and just.
- Man must work with honesty and determination using the faculty of reason. Thus:

  Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds.
II:xi  Ahura Mazda:

The Religion of Prophet Zoroaster recognizes Ahura Mazda (the Lord Omniscient) as the sole creator and absolute ruler of the Universe. The Avesta word Ahura means ‘the lord of life’, and Mazda means ‘all-knowing (Omniscient).

Ahura Mazda is known to be the creator of the spiritual and material worlds and Lord of all creations therein. He has fixed the laws of nature, and the entire creation works according to these laws. He is the beneficent spirit, and by His thought-force, He first filled heavenly realms with light. He is full of light, lusture and glory. The most beautiful emblem of Ahura Mazda is thought to be the blazing sun. The red, blazing fire is the ‘Sun’ or representative of Ahura Mazda.

It is believed that Ahura Mazda is undecievable. He is most mindful of the human plans-thoughts, words and deeds. He is the supreme judge of the actions done by man in this worldly life.

II:xii  Amesha Spentas:

Amesha Spentas are immortal spiritual Beings created by Ahura Mazda. He is their father and preceptor. They are seven in number and preside over spiritual powers, virtues and qualities and also over material creations. Pahlavi refers to Amesha Spentas as ‘amashpand’.

II:xii  Zoroastrian Worship:

The Zoroastrian temples contain the urn in which the holy fire burns. Over it perfumes is sprinkled from time to time. Five times a day amobed, ‘priest’, enters the room. The lower part of his face is covered with a veil thus preventing his breath from polluting the sacred fire, and his hands are gloved. He lays down a log of sandal-wood and recites three times the words duzhmata, duzhukhtm, duzhvarshta, to repel ‘evil
thoughts, evil words and evil deeds,. Every Zoroastrian has, moreover, a sacred fire in his own house.

II:xiii  Status of Sacred and Reverent Fire in Zoroastrianism:

Fire forms an inevitable part of religion in the Zoroastrians. The Avesta term for fire is ‘Atar’. The ancient Iranians of the Pre-Zoroastrian time regarded fire as the holy emblem of God. To Zoroaster himself, the fire was the sustaining and the purifying divine power of Almighty God, thus making it worthy of man’s devotion, veneration and homage. There are various traditional accounts of the first production of fire in the world. But Yasna 19.2, 4 informs that Ahura Mazda, the almighty Lord, and created fire before He created human beings and while there are other interesting theories on the source, it is firmly established that the fire is indeed of divine origin, as preserved in the ancient writings of the Zoroastrians.

II:xiii:i  Kinds of Fire:

Yasna Ha 17 mentions and describes five fires in the Bundahishn chapter 17 and appendix ch. II as follows:

1. Atar Berezi-Savanagh, which shoots up before Ahura Mazda, is the glory or khorch in the sky, earth and mountains. It protects the world and helps man to struggle against the evil forces and darkness.

2. Atar Spenisht is the fire burning on this earth and kept for worldly use. It consumes food and not water.

3. Atar Urvaziht is the fire in plants which produces fragrance, blooms and fruits. It lives on water and not food.
4. Atar Vohu Fryan is in the bodies of men and animals which gives brightness to the eyes and sleep to the body. It consumes both water and food.

5. Atar Vazisht is in the clouds and lightening. It consumes neither food nor water.

In the Avesta, Adar is the Yazata (inspired being) in charge of the worldly visible fire. So when a Zoroasterian offers his prayers to Adar, he offers them in actually to the Spiritual Being prevailing and presiding over the physical fire and through this spiritual being, a Zoroastrian offers his prayers to the creator, Ahura Mazda, who himself is described as ‘full of lusture, full of glory’ and hence His luminous creations- the sun, the stars and the fire- are specially regarded as His appropriate emblems. The Avesta calls the sun the most beautiful visible form of Ahura Mazda. Holy hymns are found in Gatha about the veneration of fire. It is believed that there is fire in human body, a glow of light which is sparkled through the soul. The fuel required for this fire is Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. Thus the mental and physical purity is the first principle of Zoroastrianism.

Fire plays an important role in religious ceremonies, the divine judgments, etc.

**II:xiii:ii Historical References:**

The consecrated sacred fires were installed in ancient Iran in Pre-Zoroastrian times. It is recorded that there were three celebrated fires and they were: Adar Farnbagh, Adar Gushnasp, and Adar Burzin-Mihr.

Darius I (521-486 BC) worshipped fire. The fire restored during the Sasanian period commemorated their victories in battle. The founder of the Sasanian dynasty, Artakhshir established holy fire at various places.
II:xiv Parsi Sects:

In 1930, following a controversy on the correct chronological time of the New Years festival, the Indian Parsees distinguished themselves into two sects: *The Shehenshahis* (93% Parsees) and *the Kadmis* (7%). Although the difference between two groups is limited to the one month’s difference between the two New Year’s festivals (for the Khadmis on the 19th of August, for the Shehenshahis on the 19th of September) and does not involve any essential dogmatic question, serious tension arose at times in the 18th and early 19th centuries between them. Today, however, the cleft is barely ascertainable. Recently, the third group, *the Faslis* arose which celebrates the New Year festival of modern Iran.

II:xv Religious Literature (Scriptures):

II:xv:i Avesta:

The old scripture of the Parseis is known as ‘Avesta’. The Avesta belongs to the East Iranian group of languages. The ancient homeland of the Avesta people was situated in the land of the two rivers Oxus and Jaxurtes, more particularly in the ancient province of Corasmia, in the north-east of modern Iran.

The term ‘Avesta’ does not occur in the Avesta scriptures. The term apastak occurs in the Pahlavi literature of the Sasanian and post-Sasanian times, and is applied to the earliest scripture of the Parseis. The same term is also used in the general sense of ‘scripture, sacred text’. From this Pahlavi word is derived the term ‘Avesta’.

The Avesta scriptures, as they exist at present, consist of compositions of Prophet Zoroaster himself, along with the compositions of the immediate disciples of the prophet. The Avesta scriptures may be divided in to the following parts:

1. The Yasna(includeing Gathas)
2. The Visparat
3. The Videvdat(Vandidat)
4. The Yashts
5. The Khordeh Avesta

1. The Yasna (including Gathas):

The Avesta word Yasna is used as Yazishn in Pahlavi and Ijasni in Sanskrit. It generally signifies worship with ceremony and offerings. The Avesta text of Yasna consists of 72 chapters, known as Haiti. The 72 chapters of the Yasna include 17 cantos of the Gathas. The Avesta word Gatha means ‘a song, a hymn, a divine song’. As the name implies, the Gathas are the divine songs and metrical chants of Prophet Zoroaster himself which are five in number.

2. The Visparat:

The Pahlavi word for The Visparat is derived from Avesta word Vispe ratavo meaning ‘all Ratus, spiritual lords’. The Visparat consists of 23 chapters called Karde section, division. It is composed in honour of the celestial Lords presiding over spiritual and material creations.

3. The Videvdat (Vandidad):

The Pahlavi word Vadevdat corresponds to the Avesta word Vidaeva data ‘the law against the demons’. It is one of the 21 Nasks of the Sasanian times, and in the present condition it has 22 chapters, called Frakart in Pahlavi and Pargarad in Parsi-Gujarati. Vendidad is the religious law-book and contains religious laws against visible and invisible impurities or evil forces.

4. The Yashts:
The Pahlavi word Yasht is derived from Avesta Yeshti which means ‘worship’. They were composed individually in honour and worship of Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas and Yazatas.

5. The Khordeh Avesta:

This means the smaller Avesta. It is the book of daily prayers of the Zoroastrians.

II:xv:ii Zand:

There were commentaries in the Avesta language on the ancient Avesta prayers which were known as azainti which signifies knowledge, explanation and commentary. From this Avesta word is derived. The Pahlavi word Zend which refer to the Pahlavi translations and commentaries of Avesta. Yasna ha 19, 20 and 21 are Avesta commentaries on the prayers *Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu* and *Yenghe Hatam* respectively.

II:xvi Religious Status of a Zoroastrian:

Several terms are used to designate the religious status of a Zoroastrian. The following terms are used in general parlance in the religious ceremonies.

1. Athorman: He is a priest, a fire-priest, a member of the priestly class.

2. Behdin: He is member of the Zoroastrian laity. Behdin is one who belongs to the good religion. In later times, particularly in India, the term was used to distinguish a Zoroastrian layman from a Zoroastrian priest.

3. Khurd (Khud): It means small or minor. It is applied to a male or female child of Zoroastrian parents, before the Navjote ceremony of a child.
4. **Osta/Oshta:** It means ‘a religious disciple, a candidate for priesthood. It is applied to a male child after the Navjote ceremony.

5. **Ervar:** Ervar is a priestly teacher, a religious preceptor who is authorized to reform ordinary ceremonies.

6. **Mobed:** He is ‘officiating priest’. The title is used for a priest who is fully qualified for performing all ceremonies.

7. **Dastur/Dastoor:** He is a priest, a chief priest. He is one who holds the hand, a guide, one possessing knowledge, one having authority, etc. At present Dastur indicates an authorized heads of the priests belonging to a particular congregation or a particular fire temple.

**II:xvii The Role of Parsis in the Development of India:**

During the early period of their settlement of India, the Parsis led a secluded life as farmers, small scale-traders and artisans in rural regions and small sea-port towns of Gujarat. But with the arrival of the British, the Parsis in the sea-port towns on India’s west coast were elevated to the role of agents, mediators and intermediaries, thus opened up a field of economic activity which within a few generations transformed the entire community. They were exposed also to European influences much earlier and more intensively than any other Indian community. Hence the immediate result of the Parsees’ response to the growing British supremacy was migration and urbanization, horizontal as well as vertical mobility, dissociation from traditionalities in Rural Gujarat as well as a change in the occupational structure.

The Parsis provided a large number of examples of eminent personalities with their innovative behaviour. B.M. Malabari, the Kama family, Dadabhai Naoroji, Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy are a few names prominently included in the list of social reformers in India.
Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozesha Mehta, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, Naoroji Furdoonji, S.S. Bengalee, S.D. Sakatwala, B.P. Wadia, K. P. Wadia, K. F. Nariman were attached with their close political tie during the national movement.

Bhikaji Kama and R. J. Chorkhadu are remembered as ardent patriots.

J. N. Tata, the Wadia family, Framjee C. Banerjee, the Petits, the Jehangirs, the Tatas, the Jeejeeboys, the Godrejs stand out prominently as the pioneers of the ship building industry, the textile industry, iron and steel industry, hydroelectric industry and banking field. Sir D.F. Mulla and Mr. Nani Palkhiwala are famous in legal profession.

Dr. Homi Bhabha, Dr. D.N. Wadia, Dr. Homi Sethna, Dr. Jal Paymaster, Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil, Dr. Adarbad Irani, Dr. B. P. Shroff are some names who have niched their names in the spheres of science and medicine.

Ardashir Devierwala and Piloo Pochkhanawala are famous sculptors. Zubin Mehta is an international musician.

Moreover, Parsis are widely known for development in the field of cinema, literature and journalism.

**II:xviii The Costume of the Parsis:**

The dress of a child, till the age of seven consists of a single piece of a garment called the ‘jubhla’. It extends from the neck to the ankles. It is a sort of a loose shirt, with openings for the head and arms. The skull-cap covers the head. The garment is embroidered with China silks, or gold and silver lace.

The ‘jubhla’ is discarded, and the ‘sudra’ and ‘kusti’ are put on after the Navjote ceremony. After washing and undergoing certain ceremonies, the child is seated before the dastoor (high priest) and those
who are invited to witness the ceremony. The dastoor then pronounces a benediction, and with due reverence the emblems of Zoroastrianism are put on. The ‘sudra’ is made up of linen or linen gauze or net, while the ‘kusti’ is a thin woolen cord of seventy two threads. The ‘kusti’ is passed round the waist three times and tied with four knots.

The costume of home worn by the Parsis consist of a long muslin shirt (sudrs) and griddle with a waist-coat of white cloth, loose trousers of cotton, slippers, and a skull-cap of China silks.

The rich wear silk trousers, stocking and English shoes. In addition to this, the full-dress of a Parsee consists of a ‘jama’ of white linen and a ‘pichoree’.

The dress of the ‘Kudmi’ as well as the ‘Rushmis’ is the same. The Parsee priests generally adopt the same dress as laymen, with the exception of the turban, which is of folded white cloth.

The Parsee women gather hair into a bun at the back of the head, and tie with the ends of the ‘mathahana’. Like men they put on the shirt and the kusti and wear silk trousers. Their sarees or outer dress are several yards in length, and are generally of bright coloured silks or satins, embroidered with fanciful design or fringed with deep gold lace, for great occasion. This dress is first folded round the waist, covering the limbs, and the reminder is thrown over the head, from which it falls upon the right arm. Under the saree they wear a silk vest, with short sleeves, called the ‘kanchri’ or ‘choli’. Parsee women are fond of ornaments. They possess necklace, the ear ring, pedant, pearl bangles, etc.

The dress of the modern Parsis in India differs from that worn by their ancestors in Persia and by their co-religionist in that country. Their present costume is in accordance with their agreement with the Hindu King Jadi Rana who received them in India on the coast of Gujarat. There
is a great resemblance of the ‘angrakha’ and ‘turban’ of the men and the ‘saree’ of the women to the dress of the Hindus of Gujarat.

II:xix Ceremonies, Rituals and Festivals:

II:xix:i Festivals:

The Iranian word ‘Jashan’ means festival. It is derived from Avesta word yasna ((religious) ceremony). The Zoroastrians of India also use the word ‘parabh’ which is derived from the Gujarati word parav which means ‘festival, holiday’.

II:xix:ii New Year Day (Pateti):

Among the festivals observed by the Parsis, the first and universally kept is the Pappeti or New Year Festival. This day is celebrated in the honour of Yezdezerd, the last king of the Sassanide dynasty, who was dethroned by Khalif Omar about 640 A.D. The ancient Persians reckoned a new era from the accession of each successive monarch and as Yezdezerd had no successor, the date of his accession to the throne has been brought down the present time, thus making their current year 1227. On this day the Parsis rise early, and dress up in new suits of cloths. Some piously disposed say their prayers in their private residences, or attend the fire-temples, where the large congregation gathers. After prayers the Parsis visit their friends and relatives, when the ‘Hammai-i-jour’ or ‘joining of hands’, is performed. This ceremony is a sort of greeting. This corresponds to the European fashion of wishing each other a happy new year. Friends and relatives are invited for refreshment. The morning being thus occupied, they spend the rest of the day in their country houses and clubs, where feasting, rejoicing and nautch-parties are kept up till late hours. Alms are also given to the poor in the course of the day, and new cloths are presented to servants.
II:xix:iii Khoradad-Sal:

Khordad-Sal is the anniversary of the birth of their prophet Zoroaster, who was born in the city of Rai, in the north of Persia, in the reign of Darius Hystaspis, about 520 years before Christ, according to Greek writers.

II:xix:iv Amardad-Sal:

This holiday, which falls on the day immediately after the preceding festival, appears to have an origin in the books of the Parsis. This is merely kept up as a continuation of the ‘Khordad-Sal’, no religious ceremonies are required, and the day is always spent in the enjoyment of pleasures.

II:xix:v Furrohurdin Jasan:

‘Farrohur’ means ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’. This day is set apart for the performance of ceremonies of the dead. This day is kept with some slight variations in different parts of India. The Parsis perform this annual religious ceremony to preserve the memory of their dead friends who die on long voyage or in unknown places, and the date of whose death cannot be positively ascertained are, according to the forms of their religion, honoured by sacred rites on this day.

II:xix:vi Ardibehest Jasan:

This is the festival in the honour of Ardibehest Amsaspund, the controlling angel over the sacred fire. Fire is an element and symbol of worship. The fire temples are crowded this day, and prayers are offered to the supreme deity.

II:xix:vii The Nowroz:
The Nowroz is also called as the Nowroz-i-jumshid or the Nowroz-i-Sultan, the king’s day. This festival falls generally on the 21st day of March. This day is observed by the modern Persians, the Arabs, the Turks, and several other Asiatic nations, for the computation of the solar year, and for state purposes, such as the collection of revenue, and the arrangements for the agricultural operations of the year.

II:xix:viii Ava Arduisur Jasan:

According to the Zend text, Ava is the angel who presides over the sea, this jasan or festival is held in the honour of Ava. The Parsis, on this day, approach the sea-shore, or any stream of water, and chant prayers which are written in Zend. They also offer sugar, coconut and flowers to the sea. However, owing to their long residence in this country, they have borrowed many Hindu rites in the observance of this holiday. The intellectual portion of the community, however, does not join with their brethren as they consider it a superstitious act. In Bombay a fair is held on the Esplandsde to mark this festival.

II:xix:ix Addar Jasan:

Addar is synonym for fire. It is the name by which the ninth month of the Parsee year is called. This is the most religious of the twelve months, and the ninth day of that month is held in great reverence and sanctity. On this day the fire temples are frequented by the Parsis and offerings of sandal-wood are made to the sacred flame, and money distributed among the priests.

II:xix:x The Mooktad:

This is the ceremony performed at the end of the Parsi year in the honour and reverence of the dead. A pile of brass and silver vases filled
with water is raised above the ground on iron stools. Flowers and fruits are placed there and religious ceremonies and rites are duly performed before the Mooktad.

Besides the above, the festivals of the Parsis are the Meher Jasan, the Boman Jasan and few others.

II:xx Ceremonies:
II:xx:i Navjote:

Navjote ceremony marks the confrontation of a child into the Zoroastrian religion. This ceremony is performed, however, before puberty that is between the ages for seven and nine for, both boys and girls. It is the first time that the child wears the ‘armour of the religion’: the sadro, kusti, which should be worn every day for the rest of life. Zoroastrianism believes that children cannot tell the difference between right and wrong, and therefore cannot sin. But once children freely choose to be initiated, they become responsible for their own thoughts, words, deeds which will determine the fate of their soul on judgment day.

Sadro (the sacred shirt) and Kushti (the sacred girdle) are the religious armour of the Zoroastrians. It is believed that it has a magnetic effect and circuit around the physical body which if properly kept, protects one from evil forces, and leads one to the path of piety and duty. The Avesta scriptures like Yasna 30.5 and Yasna 9.25 mention the divine garment and divine belt of the spiritual beings, and the Sadro and Kusti represent these spiritual garment and belt. In the Avesta scriptures, the word used for Sadro is *Vastra* and for Kusti it is *aiwyaonghana*.

II:xx:ii The Sadro:

Nine pieces of white cloth in particular shape with a bag in front, which is known as kiss-i-kerfe (the bag of merit) makes up the Sadro. It is
this bag which shall accompany the soul after a Zoroastrian passes away. Hence, it is the duty of every Zoroastrian to be diligent throughout his life and symbolically fill up the bag of merit in the world. The sadro is an emblem of purity and virtue. It indicates the path of Asha, which is the religious path of life of a Zoroastrian.

II:xx:iii  The Kusti:

It is made of 72 filaments of wool, interwoven together to form a belt. It passes round the waist thrice with four knots, two in the front and two at the back. According to the Pahlavi text Bundahishn, the three circles round the waist represent the three principles of humat, hukht and hvarsht and four knots represent four essence of humanity. ‘Kusti’ means ‘boundary’ and it reminds one to restrict and keep oneself within the boundary of religious duty. The circles around the waist represent kasha (boundary lines) around the body.

II:xx:iv  The Kusti Ritual:

This is the ritual of washing the uncovered parts of the body, and untying and retying the kusti over the sadro while reciting the requisite prayers. This is called Pasyap-kusti. Padyap means ‘washing and purifying by prayer. This basic ritual is a must before beginning any other ritual or ceremonial activity by a Zoroastrian. It is also one of the pre-requisite conditions for a Zoroastrian before he or she enters a fire temple or attends other Zoroastrian ceremonies. This symbolizes the significance given to the aspect of purity.

The Zoroastrian ceremonies are based on the principle of Yoazda (ritual purity) and khvarnah (human magnetism). There are certain ceremonies which can be performed in a Zoroastrian house if there are
facilities for the same. However, certain ceremonies of high orders must be performed in the ritually purified places.

The Zoroastrian ceremonies generally performed at present can be categorized into the following five groups:

1. Purificatory ceremonies.
2. Initiation and marriage ceremonies.
3. Thanks giving, invocatory and dedicatory ceremonies.
4. Ceremonies for the departed person:
   a) Disposal of the dead body.
   b) For the soul and fravashi.
5. Ceremonies for consecration.

II:xx:v Ritual Purity:

All Zoroastrian fire temples and places of worship are ritually purified and consecrated places, and hence they are meant only for the Zoroastrians.

Zoroastrians both, males and females, priests and laymen- have to abide by certain rules for ritual purification in their lives. The rules of ritual purity are observed in accordance with the principles of Asha and Khvarnah. Before entering a fire-temple or attending a ceremony, a Zoroastrian must observe rules of purity like taking bath, putting on proper dress, and performing the kusti ceremony.

The Zoroastrian fire temples and places of worship are specially built with various boundary lines, known as karsha in the Avesta, kash in Pahlavi and Pavi is Parsi Gujarati. The boundary lines are furrows or channels, marked on the ground or constructed in the floor, to mark and enclose ritually purified place for consecrated Holy fire or for performing the ceremonies of high order. When ritually the purified place is in use,
the boundary line must not be crossed by anybody or else the ritual purity is vitiated.

The consecrated Holy Fire is kept in a sanctum, in utmost ritual purity. It is kept in a specially constructed chamber, enclosed by walls, and set apart by the boundary lines. Only the priests having physical, mental, spiritual and moral qualifications are authorized to enter the sanctum.

II:xx:vi Marriage:

According to Zoroastrianism, wedding is a pious duty and a married life is preferable to an unmarried life. It is indicated by Prophet Zoroaster in Yasna 53.4. Virtue, duty and devotion to each other are the ingredients of a happy married life.

According to the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, marriage is divinely blessed. Since marriage is regarded as almost a religious activity, Zoroastrians consider and uphold it as a meritorious act. They even help their co-religionists to enter the wedded state, and such assistance may even serve to atone for sin.

The Parsi community in India has passed through so many vicissitudes that it is difficult to ascertain and determine, which of the various marriage customs of the Parsis were originally Zoroastrian, although it appears to be practically certain that the strictly religious portion comes under this category.

According to the Avesta, both manhood and womanhood are attained at the age of 15 (Ys. ix 5; Yt. viii. Bf, xiv. 17; Vend xiv. 15; Bundahism, iii, 19) It appears that child-marriages were not practised since in the Avesta we find maidens praying for suitable husbands. The rituals recited at the marriage ceremony, bidding the pair to express their consent after ‘truthful’ consideration, points in the same direction. The
present Parsi Marriage Act enjoins the age of 21 for male and 18 for females; if the contracting pair are below that age, the marriage certificate must be signed by their parents which stands proof of their consent.

The ceremony is marked by several other rites. When the match is arranged, an auspicious day is fixed for the betrothal, such as the day of new moon, or the first or twentieth day of the Parsi month. At times, especially in Mofussil (provincial) towns Hindu astrologers are consulted for the proper day and time. They name one or more auspicious days for the marriage. The match is usually arranged by the parents with the consent of their children; but changing time sees the concerned two making their decision and choices with of course the approval of their parents.

On the day of marriage/betrothal the women of the groom’s family visit the house of the bride and present silver coins to her, and the groom receives similar presents from the women of the bride’s family. The older term for this ceremony, now called *adravvun was nam padvun* (to name) (from pers. *namzad shudan*). Betrothal is regarded as a solemn part of the marriage ceremony, the ‘pledge of the magnitude of a man’ is being considered by the Rivaynts to mean a promise of marriage.

The betrothal is followed by the Divo, when a lamp (divo) is lit early in the morning, and the women of the families interchange visits and gifts. This day is regarded as more important than the betrothal proper, because on this day the dresses and wedding rings are usually presented. The Divo is followed by the Adarni, when the dowry given by the bride’s father is presented to the groom’s family. Presents are exchanged chiefly, from the bride’s family, on several other days between betrothal and marriage.

In the morning or afternoon of the marriage day the bride and groom take a sacred bath. The rest of the religious rituals of the wedding
are usually performed shortly after the sun set; perhaps to symbolize that just as day and night unite and blend to form one whole, so also wedded pair should be united in weal and woe through thick and then.

The marriage is generally celebrated with much pomp and fervour. The groom, wearing a white ceremonial robe and holding a shawl in his hand, sits among friends and relatives of his own sex in the compound. Around his neck he has a garland of flowers, and on his forehead a vertical red line of kumkum. The red colour is held by same to represent in India an earlier custom of the sacrifice of animal life, and in shape to symbolize the brilliant and fructifying sun, where as the round kumkum of the bride is supposed to symbolize the moon, which absorbs the rays of the sun.

A little before the marriage, a procession headed by the officiating priests, and often by a band of music, goes to the house of bride, where the ceremony generally takes place. The men seat themselves the compound, and the women in the house. The door is marked with turmeric (whose yellow colour is held to symbolize the sun and hence abundance and fertility). The groom is welcomed by his would be mother-in-law with a fresh mark of kumkum on his forehead, and rice made to adhere to it, some rice is also thrown over his head.

During the marriage ceremony and the recital the officiating priest again sprinkles rice over the bride and groom; showers of blessings are followed when they throw a handful of rice on each other, some mothers make the couple to eat a few grains of rice thus thrown.

An egg, a coconut, and a little tray of water are now passed three times round the groom’s head and cast away in a ritualistic manner and in the course of the evening the women of the bride’s family make the groom dip his hand in a water-jar, in which he leaves for them a silver coin. Formerly it was also the custom for the feet of the bride and groom
to be washed after the marriage ceremony. However, the adoption of English foot-gear has caused this to survive only in washing the tip of the boots.

After the groom has been thus welcomed at the door, he is made to cross the threshold without touching it and with his feet right foot first. These precautions stand good and are observed also by the bride when she first enters her husband’s house. Having entered the house, the groom awaits the bride, who sits on his left, the chairs being placed in the centre of the apartment. On stands beside the chairs are trays of rice to be thrown over the pair, and lighted candles, while beside the bride is a small vessel of *Ghee and molasses*. A servant stands before the pair, holding a burning censer in one hand and a little frankincense in the other. Beside each of the contracting parties stands a witness, usually the nearest kin, and generally married person.

The following requisites are necessary for a regular marriage: 1. The marriage must be celebrated before an assembly of at least five persons who have been summoned for this special occasion; 2. the contracting parties are asked by the officiating priest for the consent to be united in wedlock; 3. the hands of bride and groom are joined; 4. the actual marriage ceremony is followed by a benediction accompanied by sprinkling rice, etc.

Before being seated by side by side, the bride and groom are made to sit opposite each other, separated by a piece of cloth as a curtain. The senior officiating priest now joins the right hands of the pair, and with the recital of the *yatha ahu viaryo* a piece of cloth is passed round the chairs of both so as to form a circle, the ends of the cloth which are tied together. The right hands are then fastened with twists of raw yarn, which is passed round the hands seven times, then several times round the bridal pair, and finally, an enriching cloth. When curtains are dropped, bride and
groom throw rice on each other. The one who throws the first is said to ‘win’. They are now seated side by side.

Then the most solemn part of the religious ceremony follows. Two priests stand before the pair, bless them and consent to marriage. Then a series of benedictions follows in which Ahura Mazda is besought to grant to the wedded pair the mortal and social virtues. Prayers are also made for other blessings.

**II:xxi  The Concept of ‘Death’:**

In the Avesta, the first human being that appeared on the earth is called *gaya maretan* (one having mortal life). Thus, every human being is mortal, and death is predestined for all. But death is not mere destruction, it is a transformation. Human personality is a combination of physical, ethereal and spiritual elements. The human body is composed of physical, earthly-elements, and in this earthly-body the spiritual elements are embodied. It is on account of the spiritual elements that man lives in this physical world. When the spiritual elements leave the human body, men dies.

**II:xxi:i  Before Death:**

When death approaches a person, one or two priests are summoned to make the dying person confess his sins. According to the *Sad Dar*, the man who accomplishes repentance does not go to hell but, having received his punishment at the end of the *Chinvat* bridge, secures a place in heaven.

**II:xxi:ii  Death:**

According to *Vend. V. 10*, the ancient Zoroastrians had a special chamber/building for the dead—one for men, one for women, and one for
children-in every house or in every village. The common mortuary still exists among the Zoroastrians of Persia and in the Mofusisil town of Gujarat. In Bombay and other parts of India a special place in the house is prepared beforehand and washed clean in order to receive the dead body. The body is bathed all over and covered with a clean (but worn-out), white suit of cotton clothes, which must be destroyed and never used again. Relative grids the sacred cord round the body, reciting the Ahura Mazda khudai, a short prayer in Pazand. The corpse is placed on the ground on a clean white sheet. An Ashem-Vohu is recited close to the dead man’s ear. Funeral-servants prepare themselves and cover the body with cloths except the face. However, in some parts of Gujarat the face is also covered with a padan (a piece of white cotton stuff), which the Parsi priest holds before his nose and mouth. Then the body is lifted, placed on the stone slab in the corner, arms are folded across the chest. The face must be turned towards the north as it is believed that the demons proceed form here. Either a four-eyed or a dog with two eye like spots above the eyes is brought near the corpse in order to frighten the druj by his look. The sag-did, that is the demon-killing fire is brought in the room and fed with sandal wood. The dead body is removed from the house in the day time, in order to expose it to sun.

During the removal of the body from the house corpse-bearer read the srosh-baj and lifts the body on the iron bier. The priest turns to the corpse and finishes the Gatha. Then friends and relatives take a last look and the body is covered.

The body is then carried out of the house and taken to the ‘tower of silence’. Two priests walk in front of the procession, at a distance of thirty paces after the bier, accompanied by relatives and friends, two abreast, clothed in white and making Paivand. In Persia, the procession is led by a man bearing a vase or pot containing fire.
At the tower of silence, the face is uncovered again for last homage. Then two *nasa-salars* in the clothes of dakhma carry it into the tower, place the body, with the head towards the south, on a bedlike made of stones arranged in concentric circles, rising like an amphitheatre, which is intended for receiving the bodies. These circles are separated by canals. They remove the clothes from the corpse, leaving it naked and cast it into the central well, forming the middle of the tower. The naked corpse may be left on the earth, on clay, brick and stone and mortar. The vultures, ‘nature’s scavengers’ are already waiting, and in a couple of hours devour all that is corruptible of the body.

**II:xxi:iii  Dakhmas:**

Dakhamas are special constructions or towers for exposing the corpses. They are well known to the Avesta. They constitute the most awful and impure spots on the earth.

The procession disperses with homage to the dead.

Back home again the urine of the cow is sprinkled over the slabs of stone on which the corpse was placed in order to purify it.

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**II:xxii  The Concept of Multiculturalism:**

To understand the concept of multiculturalism, it is necessary to understand what culture is, as multiculturalism begins from the premise of culture as an assemblage of definitive characteristics.

**II:xxiii  Culture:**

The term ‘Culture’ refers to a system of beliefs and practices. Human beings have their own views and beliefs regarding the
significance and meaning of human life and its activities. The various practices that structure and regulate the individual and collective lives also refer back to the term culture.

The term ‘Culture’ is very aptly and suggestively stated by Bikhu Parekh. In *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity of Political Theory*, he defines Culture in the following words:

*Culture is a historically created system of meaning and significance or, what comes to the same thing, a system of beliefs and practices, in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life.*

(Parekh 143)

Culture articulates at several levels of such as art, music, language, literature both oral and written, moral life, ideals of excellence and the vision of good life through the life of exemplary individuals.

In addition to this, it also articulates through the rules and norms that govern basic activities and social relations.

It is seen that culture develops overtime. It remains a complex and unsystematized whole since it has no coordinating authority. Moral life is shaped and structured through culture. Cultural embeddedness of morality is evident in the way customs and rituals, ceremonies and rites of a culture embody and give meaning of its moral values.

Culture is further associated and concerned with the meaning of significance of human life and activities and their relationships at large. Society and culture are two inseparable wholes, in the sense there is no society without a culture and culture cannot exist without a society.
The culture of any society depends upon various factors like its economic, political and other institutions. It is not merely a passive inheritance but an active process by which meaning is created. It is something constantly redefined and reconstructed. The structure of its range and the new meanings associated with it is relatively loose and alterable. No doubt certain factors such as technology, war and its aftermath, natural calamities etc alter and change the concept of culture.

Every culture tends to have its ethnic basis. It may also have its creator and historical bearers, which forms a system of regulations. It approves or disapproves certain patterns of behaviour and ways of life; prescribes certain rules and norms which govern human relations and activities. It also enforces all this by means of reward and punishment.

**II:xxi:iv Multiculturalism:**

Multiculturalism is a set of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of people understand them and the world at large, thereby organizing their individual and collective lives.

C.W. Watson pointing out the confusion arising from the different range of reference of the two terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘multiculturalism’ says:

*Multicultural points to the visible and universally accessible products of cultural diversity-food, clothes, music, theatre and sometimes specialist occupations-and on the whole it has been very positive resonance: we are all happy to live in multicultural societies which add to the variety and colour of life styles available to us, increasing the breadth of our choices as consumers.*
Multiculturalism, on the other hand, when it is not simply the noun form of ‘multicultural’ direct our attention away from these purely visible aspects of diversity, to the deeper historical and political implications of the co-existence of different orientations to engagement with the world, and the way in which those differences jostle for recognition within national and global boundaries, sometimes in relative harmony with each other, sometimes in real conflict.

(Watson 106-07)

The term ‘Multiculturalism’ has various dimensions to it. Throwing light on the term Multiculturalism and multicultural society, Bikhu Parekh states:

The term ‘Multicultural society’ and ‘Multiculturalism’ are generally used to refer to a society that generally exhibits sub cultural, perspectival and communal diversities.

(Parekh 4)

The term Multiculturalism is also aptly stated by Veena Jain in an article “Enclaves of Therness within Larger Cultures; Lee Langley’s A House in Pondicherry”. Jain, Jasbir. (ed.) Dislocations and Multiculturalisms. She says:

The term Multiculturalism, basically a by-product of globalization or global commodification was
initially used as a resistant force to decentre
discrimination against minority cultures in
Europe and America.

(Jain 215)

Multiculturalism is also a tool and device used to avert and
dislodge antagonism brewing inside minority cultures because of
discriminatory practices.

The phenomena of Multiculturalism can be described by using
terms such as plural societies, cosmopolitan societies, multiethnic,
polyethnic etc. Multiculturalism also refers to the cultural diversity and
culturally embedded difference. It also refers to all the facts related to
cultural diversity. However, a multicultural society cannot be stable and
last for a long time without a common sense of belonging among its
citizens.

This sense of belonging cannot be ethnic or be based on shared
cultural, ethnic features. Although a multicultural society is diverse, it is
seen to be political in nature and based on a shared commitment to the
political community. Multiculturalism acknowledges the existence of
diverse communities, but what is more important is that it accords
positive value to the collective identities of all ethnic communities. It
pictures a society which is characterized not by multiple cultural solitudes
or endemic cultural strife, but by communities living together and
participating as equal partners in national political life. It cherishes
cultural diversity and envisions a society in which different communities
forge a common identity while retaining their cultural provenance. When
modern democratic societies embrace multiculturalism they demonstrate
a deeper and more profound egalitarian impulse within them than the
mere presence of plural cultures. Multiculturalism acknowledges the
existence of diverse communities, but what is more important is that it accords positive value to the collective identities of all ethnic communities. It pictures a society which is characterized not by multiple cultural solitudes or endemic cultural strife, but by communities living together and participating as equal partners in national political life. Multiculturalism endeavours to initiate policies that allow citizens to maintain their cultural distinctiveness. It sustains cultural diversity and helps in the forward movement of societies by engendering a broad-based acquiescence which is not thwarted or prejudiced by religious or cultural intolerance.

II:xxi:v  Multiculturalism, India and Parsis:

In India, the advent of democracy also brought along with it multiculturalism. The democratic India being unique, along with the great foresight of the constitution allowed for the universal adult franchise. Along with this it also provided discrimination for those deprived historically. Emphasis was set for the inter-group equality with special consideration for the minorities and the segregated communities. Multiculturalism is not merely the relations between inter groups, but also the relations with in the community. It is indeed Multiculturalism that gives democracy its due health, vigour and vitality.

The Multicultural perspective cherishes and looks for unity within the diversity. A healthy and creative dialogue is encouraged between the different cultures and their moral visions. Each member’s right to his culture and his range of choice is revered. This on the other hand increases their power of self-criticism, self-determination, imagination, intellectual being and moral sympathy which contributes positively to the progress and development of their well being.
The fundamental belief of Multiculturalism or cultural pluralism is that all citizens are equal. It also helps ensure all sense of belonging take pride in their ancestry. The citizens are ensured a sense of self-confidence and security. This makes them more open and susceptible to diverse cultures. The aspect of cultural pluralism or diverse cultures is being accepted by India, both in policy and practice.

The Indian constitution with its numerous state policies is rightly the basic Multicultural document. It provides for the political and institutional recognition and accommodation of the country’s diversity. Further the Indian constitution provides for a dual policy of rights. Cultural diversity is one of the most prime social and economic attributes of India.

Multiculturalism recognizes the potentials and attributes of every single individual thereby encouraging them to assimilate and become one with the society. This helps positively as the citizens begin to take an active part in the country’s social, cultural economic and political affairs.

India has been a Multicultural country since time immemorial. The diversity that we possess is our unique feature and the unity in diversity reflects our greatest national asset. India accommodates the entire globe within its border and thereby goes on to change the term ‘global’ to ‘glocal’.

Multiculturalism is therefore neither a political doctrine nor a philosophical school; but it is a perspective or a way of viewing human life in all its variety and diversity.

India constitutes of three central insights:

1. Human beings are ‘culturally embedded’ that is every man is born, grow up and live within a culturally structured world. Their lives and social relations are also organized within this framework.
2. Different cultures represent different systems and visions of life. Every culture realizes and accepts a limited range of human capacity, capacities and emotions and accepts only a part of the totality of human existence. To understand the other or the remaining part of this totality it needs the help of other cultures. The merging of cultures help better comprehensibility, intellectual expansion, extending the moral horizons and a thorough imaginative exercise.

3. Every culture is internally plural and this helps a continuous conversation between the various different traditions and strands of thoughts (within a single culture).

Parsis have always attempted at asserting their ethnic identity. This has no doubt raised a number of questions regarding the awareness of ethnicity and its assimilation into the Indian context. The origin of the Parsis in India dates back to more than 1,000 years, when Persian Zoroastrians fled Arab-conquered Iran. Settling on the west coast of India they adopted the local language and costumes and agreed to abide by all the terms and conditions set forth by Jadi Rana.

During this time and the advent of the British regime in India, the Parsis led very peaceful life. The Parsis during the British Raj in India were unhampered by the doings of the main stream Hindus with their taboos regarding the evils of casteism on the one hand, and the isolationism of the Muslim community on the other. With all their education and intellectualism they marched ahead and went on to be recognized as the most dynamic and westernized community of all Indian communities. Time and again, even in the recent years, Parsi community is trying to assert its glorious past.
Eckehard Kulke states:

*The Parsi identity, its essential sameness, encompasses its religion, its ethnicity, its history and its consciousness of an elite status.*

(Kulke 232)

The 1300 years on the adopted land has in no way dented the spirit of the Parsis and to this day they have retained their ethnicity, racial superiority and separateness. Their traditional hereditary being exclusive served them well in India. The host country faced no threat from the Parsi community and this was due to the non-proselytizing aspect and the fact that they accepted no converts into their community.

Barriers to inter-community marriage along with the above aspects helped the Parsis retain their ethnic identity; else they would have been long lost into the vast ocean of the Hindu population.

The Parsis being taller and fairer-skinned (like their Iranian ancestors) than their Indian counterparts are physically distant.

What makes up the Parsi identity?

It is their religious exclusivity, ethnicity, common history and elitism. All these features brought them into conflict with the Indian identity time and again. Some of them joined the mainstream, but the majority rest sought a recognition and identity outside the Indian society. This was chiefly due to the fact that the element of alienation and identity crisis kept torturing them endless. However, although the independence of India came about like a blessing, it proved to be a bane for the Parsis. The
disappearance of the British Raj eroded the status of the Parsis, and the Parsis more than ever before had been marginalized.

Commenting on this situation Nilufer Bharucha in her article “The Parsi Voice in Recent Indian English Fiction: An Assessemement of Ethnic Identity” aptly writes as follows:

\[
\text{Parsis are today trying to reorient themselves to the new much reduced role. Some seek to assimilate themselves into the Indian mainstream by adopting Indian culture and jettisoning their Parsi identity. Others in a bid to escape this new, not welcome, change of status, move to the west. They too abandon their Parsi identity. \ldots \ldots \ldots they hold no unique position. They are lumped together with the Brown races/the Asiatics. This is an identity they have never considered. This then delays their assimilation into the new expatriate milieu.}
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(Bharucha 75-76)

II:xxi:vi Conclusion:

The Parsi community all throughout has struggled to create their own space and has carved an identity for themselves. The struggle had been harder than expected, especially with hegemonic forces of the dominant community. Somewhere deep within them lies the intense urge and hope for the return of the glorious era. The religious superiority complex is something that the Parsis always carry along. The fall of the British-Raj resulted in the loss of the political patronage that the Parsis
enjoyed since long. The thought of being reduced to mere second class citizens frightened them to the core. This fear of insecurity was something which always haunted them. This feeling of insecurity is something which they face not only in India, but anywhere in the world, and the reason for this because they are a miniscule community.

The Parsis who are a remnant of the ancient Persian Zoroastrians have tried their maximum to assimilate with the mainstream, this in spite of the fact they have faced alienation at every stage in their lives.
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