

Zoroastrians in Mughal Court: A short study of Parsis and their rise in Mughal India

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Brief Introduction of Zoroastrians:

Zoroastrianism has its own religious doctrine which had been shaped around 3200 years before in Iran under the message and preaching of Zarathustra or Zoroaster. While rejecting the existing religions of that time he gave the concept of two opposing forces like Spenta Mainyu (progressive mentality) and Angra Mainyu (destructive mentality) under one God, Ahura Mazda. The people of that time believed that just rituals and sacrifices could satisfy angry deities. He rejected this idea while saying that good deeds of the people were more valuable than customs and sacrifices in the court of Ahura Mazda. The message of Zoroaster has been saved in Avesta, the religious book of Zoroastrians. (1) The Parsis are the descendants of ancient Iranians whose link can be traced in Aryans. When the Zoroaster appeared in Iran these peoples accepted his religion and then Zoroastrianism became the royal faith under the Sassanid Empire. Not only the Sassanid had canonized the existing religious texts but also developed the rituals of Zoroastrianism. While travelling to India the Indian Parsis brought these rituals and customs to India and succeeded in following the religious doctrine of Zoroastrianism as part of their religious heritage. The Indian Zoroastrians got popularity as Parsis or Persians in Indian subcontinent. The Parsis are also known as Zarathustra's, Zarthostis, and Mazdayasnans. By this way they want to express that they are the followers of Zarathustra and devotees of Ahura Mazda. After the arrival in India Parsis became a rich and powerful community. (2) Although this religion appeared in the world in ancient times yet its followers are very few in the world. Today there are about 200,000 Zoroastrians in the world. In spite of their limited man power, the Zoroastrians are working day and night to keep their faith active and strong. The Zarathushtis have established themselves in every direction of the world. Nearly thirty thousand Zoroastrians are still living in Iran and seventy thousand Zoroastrians have selected India as their homeland, in the same way five thousand Zoroastrians are flourishing in Pakistan where they are famous as Parsis. The Zoroastrians also established themselves in Australia, New Zealand, England, Singapore, Germany and

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other developed states. In North America twenty thousand Zoroastrians are residing and about thirty thousand Parsis live in Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore. While leaving their ancient homeland they travelled in different directions of the world in groups. One of such groups reached in India from Iran and settled in the southern India. (3)

Description about the arrival of Zoroastrians to India:

The information about the arrival of Parsis into Hindustan had been shared in Qisseh-i Sanjan or story of Sanjan and Qisseh-i Zartustian-i Hindustan, the former story was written by Parsi priest Behman Kaikobad Sanjana in 1599 and the later was written by Shapurji Maneckji Sanjana in Navsari between 1765 and 1805. When Muslims entered in Iran after defeating Yazdagird 111 at the battle of Nihavand in 642 and the companions (Sahabah) of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) expanded preaching work in Iran. Then while attaching with their old beliefs a small group of Parsis abandoned its old home and travelled to Khurasan, where they stayed 100 years and then they proceeded to the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, where they stayed 15 years. For next nineteen years that selected Diu as their residence in southern India, they then reached on the western coast of India and settled in the Gujarat town of Sanjan. (4) On arriving in India they were received by Jadi Rana a ruler of Gujarat and they then under some terms were allowed to settle in the territory of the said Raja. According to the agreement the Parsis could not keep weapons and were forced to adopt local language and dress. Ceremonies and festivals were allowed to celebrate but after the sunset. On this occasion the Zoroastrians priests also availed a chance to explain the religious doctrine of Zoroastrianism to the said Raja and his courtiers. With the passage of time the above mentioned terms were relaxed by raja. While promoting relations with other communities, they developed their trade and commerce in India. In the same way they also tried to promote fire worshiping in India. (5) Towards the end of eleventh century the Parsis of Variav became powerful due to their financial resources. Then they refused to pay the tribute to the ruling Raja of that area. The Raj put prince then sent an army but the state army defeated by the Parsis. Another attempt was made to force the Parsis to pay tribute. On this occasion the Parsis men were busy in a marriage ceremony outside the town, at the other hand the women of the Parsis took the field but defeated by Raj put army. (6) The Indian Parsis also took part in local politics and remained loyal to different dynasties like Hindu raj, Mughal Empire and British Raj. Parsis sometimes had to suffer hardships due to their support to local authorities rather than the conquering rulers. In 1297 the Parsis of Cambay had to suffer a lot of hardships during the expeditions commanded by Delhi Sultans towards Gujarat. In Mughal

period sometimes they also faced hardships by local Mughal officers. During seventeenth century a Parsi weaver, who was residing at Broach named Vamaji Homaji, killed by Ahmad Beg a noble of Broach under some allegations. The Parsis of India got a high political status when the Parsi priest Dastur Meherji Rana (1510-91) of Navsari was summoned to the court of Akbar for religious discussion and then he joined the royal service. In later period another Parsi family named dordi, also joined the service of Jahangir. After the arrival of Europeans the Parsis took part in trade as middle men. (7) In the same way the Europeans also have mentioned about Parsis in their writings: "In 1322, the first European account of the Parsis was made by the French missionary Jordan us, who noted the race of pagans that worshipped the fire and exposed their dead in roofless towers, Jordan us described the Parsis of Broach. In 1323, the Italian monk Odoric, noted practices by Parsis of Thana similar to those observed by Jordan us in Broach. From the sixteenth century, more accounts of the Parsis appear, starting with those of the Portuguese. In 1615, Edward Terry, chaplain to Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador to the Mogul Emperor Jahangir from 1615 to 1618, offered the first British account of the Parsis. Terry noted the race of heathens called Parsis, living among the Hindus, but in many ways differing from them. Terry would be the one of the first Europeans to note the similarity of the Parsis to the other Indians around them, for example, in their occupations and livelihood. At the same time, he noted the unique religion of the Parsis; "For those Parsees, further, they believe that there is but one god, who made all things and hath a sovereign power over all." From his observations of the religious beliefs and customs of the Parsis, it also appears that Terry was one of the first Europeans to directly converse with the Parsis and have their traditions explained to him. The need the Parsis felt to explain their religion and culture in a favorable way to outsiders to the community was measure of their conciliatory and adaptive nature," (8)

Construction of Fire temples and dakhmas in India:

According to Parsis there are three grades of sacred fire, named Atash Bahram, Atash Adaran and Atash Dadgah which signifying the primacy of fire. The Atash Bahram is entertained as the highest sacred fire which is collected and consecrated from 16 kinds of fire and maintained by high priests. The Atash Adaran is consecrated from 4 kinds of fire and looked after by the priests of lower grades. Atash Dadgah entertained as the fire of household and is not given any special attention. The Parsis succeeded in safeguarding their religious rituals and did not allow the Hindu customs to enter in their religion. Not only had the Parsis reserved the fire-temples for the use of Zoroastrians but also constructed the fire-temples

across Gujarat and India. (9) The Parsis of India followed the Iranian customs for fire worshipping or feeding to the fire, famous as the Bui ritual, associated by Atash Niyayesh or supplication 'prayer to fire' performed 5 times a day by the Parsi priest. To feed the fire the Parsis often use sandalwood and other fragrant materials. It is not necessary to perform the marriage and other religious ceremonies in fire temples, these ceremonies can be celebrated at other places. As the Parsi community developed in Sanjan which was the first residing place of Parsis, a major portion of this community then shifted to the coast of Gujarat and its provincial centre as well as succeeded in constructing their colonies in adjoining towns and cities. So during twelfth century the Parsis had settled in Vandanir in Kathiawar, Broach, Variav, Anklesvar, Cambay and Navsari. The first dakhma or Tower of Silence was built in Broach and then in later periods two brick towers were built in the same town to fulfill the religious needs of local Parsis. (10) When the Parsis sufficiently settled in India in late thirteenth century the priests divided the colonies of Parsis into five ecclesiastical sections. Accordingly five districts like Sanjan, Navsari, Anklesvar, Broach and Combay were become the principal towns of Parsism and had gotten popularity as Bhagaria (Navsari), Bharucha, Godavra (Surat), Khambatta and Sanjanas. (11) With the passage of time Navsari became the centre of Parsism because a lot of reputed Parsi priests shifted to Navsari from Sanjan. Kamdin was the first Parsi priest who reached at Navsari from Sanjan in 1142 to provide religious guidance to the growing Parsi population. A story also has been mentioned by the historians about the shifting of Parsi priests from Sanjan to Navsari. According to detail Changa Asa (1450 to 1512) of Navsari was a great man of Parsi history of India. The Parsi writers gave him high status and awarded to him the Iranian title of dahyuvad, or lord of the land. While the pilgrimage to Bansda he provided Sudra or kusti to needy Parsis and observed a lot of difficulties in this journey. Then he called a meeting of the Navsari people and proposed them that they should invite the Sanjan priests and should request to them to bring the sacred fire to Navsari. The Sanjanas accepted this request and Bhagaria priests of Navsari built a fire-temple in the town. (12) Then Navsari got popularity as the centre of Parsi faith. The leading priests of two great panths started to live there for religious guidance and affairs of the Parsis were managed by Changa Asa and a stone dakhma also was built in this town by the said noble. After the arrival of Europeans to India the Surat appeared as a trading centre in southern India and a large portion of Parsi community shifted there for trade and business purposes. To fulfill religious needs, the Parsis built the first dakhma in 1600 at Surat and another dakhma was built by Nanabhoy Poojia Modi (died 1667) in

1647 at the same town. About shifting of Parsis to Navsari, another story also has been shared in history. It is said that during the year 1400 some differences appeared among the Hindu empire of Sanjan and the Muslims and then the Muslims attacked at the north portion of Gujarat. On this occasion Parsis supported the raja of Sanjan with 1400 men under the command of Aredshir and the joint armies defeated the Muslim attackers. But the Muslims returned with a heavy force and not only defeated the two armies yet also destroyed the town of Sanjan and Parsi colonies. On this occasion the Parsis shifted the Iranshah fire to the nearby mountain forest called Bahrot. The Fire remained there for 12 years and then was brought to Bansda where it remained for another 14 years. Then on the invitation of the Navsari Priests the Fire was brought to Navsari. Then an agreement was signed by the Sanjana priests and Bhagaria priests of Navsari that the Sanjana priests would only take care of the Iranshah fire and would not perform priestly services for the Navsari Parsis like the functioning of Navjote, Jashans etc. Iran shah fire provided spiritual services for 320 year to the people of Navsari except 3 years (1733-1736) when the fire had to shift to Surat due to bad political situation in Navsari. In 1740 Iran Shah was brought to Bulsar and then in 1742 moved to Udvada, back in the supervision of the Sanjana priests. And there it continues to this day. (13) The Bhagarias priests of Navsari got their own Atash Bahram in 1765. Then 5 priests of the Bhagarias established a new sect called the Minochheher Homji or the Kakalia sect, which fought with Bhagarias about ritual matters. After some years a peace agreement was signed by the two fighting sects of Navsari in 1790 and accordingly the Bhagarias were given the right to perform the duties of livings and the Kakalias were assigned to perform the duties of dead. Although a lot of efforts were made to remove the differences of two sects but still no durable peace was restored. And in 1972 the Parsis celebrated anniversary of the installation of the sacred fire Atash Bakram (Iran Shah) in India. (14)

Parsi Rivayats:

During fifteenth century the Indian Parsi priests felt that they were losing the religious knowledge and rituals. So they decided to send some representatives to Iran to find out the differences of Iranian Zoroastrianism and Indian Zoroastrianism. During the period from 1478 to 1773 twenty six representatives of Indian Parsis were sent to Iranian priests with religious questions who came back to India with answers and interpretations, which are known as Rivayats. In this exchange of thoughts, manuscripts of Avesta and Pahelvi texts were brought to India and the priests of both sides received information of rituals and customs of two schools. Such questions were raised by the Navsari priests and were answered by Iranian priests of

Kerman, Isfahan, Sharafabad, Turkabak, and Yazd. The first person who was sent to Iran for this purpose was Nariman Hoshang, who came back to India with the first Rivayat. The voyage expenses for Nariman Hoshang were paid up by Changa Asa. (15) According to detail Nariman Hoshang was sent as envoy to Iran who sailed from Broach to the Persian Gulf and reached at Yazd, from where he was taken to the Dasturan dastur in Turkabad. He was warmly welcomed and lived there for a year and received instructions. In 1478 he returned to India with two copies of Pazand manuscripts and a detailed letter for the Parsis of India. By this correspondence the differences of two schools of thoughts were removed and the Indian Parsis started to follow the principles of Iranian school.(16)

Parsis in Mughal India:

In sixteenth century Portuguese became a serious trouble for the people of Gujarat. The Portuguese were searching new basis for trade in southern India. In 1511 Mohammad Begada died and after his death his descendants had no power to counter the growing power of Portuguese. In 1526 Babur became the ruler of northern India and after his death his son Humayun was raised to the throne. Humayun wanted to conquer Gujarat, so he attacked into the territories of Gujarat in 1534 and on this occasion the ruler of Gujarat had no sufficient power to counter the Mughal army. Sultan requested to Portuguese viceroy for help which was agreed but under some terms. According to the agreement the Sultan was agreed to give the port of Bassein and its islands to Portuguese. He also made promise that all the ships of Gujarat would pay dues to them while leaving the ports. In the return of such concessions the Portuguese provided a little help to Sultan. The Mughal emperor Humayan succeeded in destroying Broach and Surat and on this occasion the Parsi colonies also were destroyed by the imperial army. This attack destroyed the power of Gujarat and Portuguese also got a chance to promote their political and military power. So in 1547 not only had the Portuguese attacked into the territory of Broach and killed a lot of inhabitants of the said town but also got more territorial concessions and got possession of Sanjan from Sultan. Portuguese tried to convert the local people to Christianity. In 1572 Akbar attacked into the territories of Gujarat and within a year he became the ruler of whole Gujarat. During the siege of Surat he met some Parsis and treated them well. Then a mark of prosperity started for Parsis of Gujarat under Mughal patronage. (17) The Parsis were mostly artisans, merchants, revenue collectors, commercial traders and shipbuilders in their residing towns. During nineteenth century Bombay became the principal city of Parsi community. (18)

Akbar's Interest towards Zoroastrianism:

Akbar was the student of comparative study of different religions and wanted to understand the philosophies of Indian religions. For this purpose not only had he constructed a grand building under the name of 'Ebadat Khana' but also invited Jain monks, Zoroastrian priests, Jesuit Fathers, Muslim theologians and Hindu pundits for religious discussions. Through

these discussions he tried to understand the doctrines of different religions. Although he took a keen interest in such discussions and followed some rituals and customs of different religions but he never converted to any one of them and died as a Muslim. By this way he gained some political advantages and favors from non Muslims. He succeeded in developing a society in which everyone had complete freedom to follow the religion of his own choice. Here it is necessary to share that how he got information about the presence of a tiny community of Parsis in Gujarat. It is said that the Emperor had interest in different religions which encouraged him to invite theologians of different religions, so doctors of Parsi faith also reached in the court along with other scholars of different religions. Some historians say that the relations of Iran and Mughal Empire also gave a chance to Parsis to reach in court which had been developed in early history of Mughals. Under the influence of these relations not only had the Mughals appointed a lot of Iranians as chief advisors in their courts but also invited several painters and philosophers from Persia in the court. This link also provided a chance to Akbar to develop relations with Parsis of India. It is also said that the Emperor was informed about Parsis during an expedition when he encamped near Gujarat. Whatever was the reason it is clear that he got information about Zoroastrianism from Parsi priests of Sanjan. He also tried to develop religious harmony while establishing "Din-I Elahi" in which he tried to gather characteristics of Islam, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism as Badauni a Mughal noble and the writer of *Dabistan-i Mazahib* as well as some Europeans have claimed. Although the European writers had tried to prove Din-i Elahi as a religion or a Din yet it was not a Din. Religious text, worshiping place and the religious doctrine are very important for a Din but in the case of Din-i Elahi there is no book, no building for worship and even no religious leader. The Henry Blockmann was the first man in Europe who gave it the name of Din-i Elahi while translating the *Ain-i Akbari* and in later periods followed by all the European writers. Its official name was *Tauhid-i-Ilahi* or divine monotheism. This was a social order rather than a religion or Din. Some greeting rituals along with ceremonies were introduced in this order. The member of this order had to express love and loyalty to Akbar as well as their sign of brotherhood was Akbar likeness. It is true that Akbar laid down some rules of life for his devotees but it would be a mistake to entertain the order as a religion or Din. But this order could not get popularity in his court and only eighteen persons entered in this order. The high Hindu officials like Man Singh and other Hindu nobles of court refused to accept it. Birbal was only Hindu who accepted this order in the whole of Hindu community. This social order was rejected by Jainas and Parsi priests. Out

of eighteen members of this order seventeen were Muslims. (19) The emperor's interest towards Zoroastrianism can be seen in Iranian calendar which was introduced by him under the name of *Tarikh-i Ilahi*, in which the names of months and days had been taken from Zoroastrian philosophy and after passing twelve years a new cycle was began with the name of the first month. He also showed great interest in apocalyptic ideas of Zoroastrianism; during his period three concepts for this purpose were popular which had been given by Islam, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. According to the thoughts of three religions, the time of existing world was near to its end and soon a new period would begin. In this matter the majority of Muslims had entertained Shi'ite ideas. According to Shi'as a hidden twelfth Imam would soon appear and would remove the evils from the world and would convert the world towards the right path. Soon after this the existing world would be destroyed and this would be the end of the existing world. The Hindus said that the time of the world was about to close and soon a new and better world would appear. The idea of Zoroastrians has been discussed in these words by Sven S. Hartman, the writer of *Parsism*: "And we possess New Persian versions of apocalyptic Pahlavi writings found in the rivayat texts which circulated in India in the time of Akbar. In these one reckons with millennia and the last millennium is characterized by the Arab supremacy. After this the Saosvant the eschatological savior was to come. Akbar must thus have changed time computation after having considered the old period as ended. The circumstance that he in this connection resumed the Zoroastrian names for months and days shows that he believed in the assertions of the Zoroastrian apocalypse about the Arab supremacy during the last millennium but no longer. Then the Arab supremacy, as well as Islam, would come to an end and a new religion would arise, and this new religion had its own time computation just like the other religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism)". (20) Professor Vincent Smith says that Akbar invited fire-worshippers and sun-worshippers to his court and from Navsari the Parsi priest Dastur Maherji rana arrived in the court with his companions. After getting instructions from the Parsis the Emperor started to wear the Zoroastrian Kusti and the sacred cord around his waist. According to Zoroastrian custom this cord must be tied and untied many times in a day and one should then always recite some specific prayers and must turn towards the sun or fire. (21) According to Blockmann, the translator of *Ain-i Akbari*: "They called the fire worship 'the great worship' and impressed the emperor so favorably that he learned from them the religious terms and rites of the old Parsis and to make arrangements that sacred fire should be kept burning at court by day and by night, according to the

customs of the ancient Persian kings, in whom fire temples it had been continuously burning, for fire was one of the manifestation of God and a ray of his rays. His majesty from his youth had been accustomed to celebrate the Hom (a kind of fire worship) from the affection towards the Hindu princess of the Harem.” (22) On this occasion Akbar abolished the Jizya from Parsi community and gave equal citizen status to Zoroastrians while stopping pilgrimage tax collection from this community. (23) Some historians claim about the conversion of Akbar towards Zoroastrianism but it is not true. (24) Akbar paid respect to the sun. Vincent Arthur says: “The Parsis propaganda was supported by the zeal of the Hindu Raja Birbal, an ardent sun worshiper from another point of view, and it also filled in well in the practices by the Hindu ladies in the zanana who had their burnt offering (hom), after the Brahmanical fashion. A few years later (1589) Akbar carried further his compliance with Parsis ritual by adopting the Persian names for the months and days, and celebrating the fourteen Persian festivals. But he stopped without ever reaching the point of definitely becoming a Zoroastrian. He acted in the same way with regard to Hinduism, Jainism, and christinity. He went so far in relation to each religion that different people had reasonable ground for affirming him to be Zoroastrian, a Hindu, a Jain, or a Christian.” (25) The emperor was informed about the said Parsi priest in 1573 when the royal troops were encamped at kankana khari near Surat. It is not clear whether dustur came to Fateh Purr Sikri on the return of imperial army or he came in later. But it is clear that he took part in religious discussions in 1578 and he returned Navsari in 1579. Parsis’ books of eighteenth century gave him an honorable status to Dastur Maherji Rana and use to remember as a great well-wisher of Zoroastrianism. The emperor gave him 200 bighas of land to fulfill the needs of this learned man. After the Dastur death in 1591 the emperor increased the grant to 300 bighas in favor of his son who paid a visit to the emperor (26) In 1580 Akbar gave reverence to sun and fire. Every evening when the lamps and candles lighted, the courtiers were used to rise to pay respect. (27) Akbar also invited Ardshir a Persian scholar to his court at Lahore. Ardshir who was sent by Shah Abbas, came of the sole purpose of helping Mir Jamal-ud-din in the completion of a dictionary of old Persian, which appeared in 1608-9 after Akbar death under the title of Farhang-i Jahangiri. (28) It is said that along with the dustur two other Parsi priests named Meherji Vacha and Mehervaid also reached in the court of Akbar to take part in religious discussions. Both the priests were the learned man of the age. (29) As mentioned above for maintaining fire in imperial palace a permanent lamp lighter was appointed by Abu Fazl. In 1603 the Emperor usually took rest in his room afternoon. One evening he came earlier as

previous routine when he came near the throne and couch. He saw that the lamp lighter was sleeping and it became the reason of Akbar enrage and the lamp lighter was then thrown from the top of the palace. (30) The mysticism of Parsis also developed in Akbar period. Sven S. Hartman says about the mysticism of Parsis: “This tolerance of faith finds many different kinds of expression. One example of this is the well-known and highly esteemed Dastur Khurshed S. Dadu of Bombay. In his creed one can detect influences from many different quarters, perhaps especially from theosophy. He believes in metempsychosis and in the idea that several Zoroasters have existed through the ages. He also has points in common with Sufism and with Indian asceticism. As a matter of fact, he represents a continuation of a kind of Parsi mysticism that began during the times of Emperor Akbar with Dastur Azar Kaiwan (1533-1618) as a leader of a sect that called itself Yazdaniyan, the adherents of Yazdan (God). They possessed their own writings like the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*”. (31) In the reign of Jahangir the Parsis also had some influence in the imperial court. This influence can be seen in the Persian names which were given by Emperor to his sons like Khusrau, Khurram, Jahandar, Shahrayar and Hoshand. During the reign of Jahangir they tried to establish their empire of trade in southern India and had done a lot of efforts to promote their agriculture. Like his father Jahangir also bestowed land to the Parsi priests like Meherji Kamdina and Hoshang Ranji. In the reign of Aurangzeb a book ‘*Dabistan-i Mazahid*’ was written by a Parsi writer named Muhsin Fani, in which the detail information had been given about the religions of Hindustan. (32)

Land grants to all Communities:

The emperor Akbar was informed about the violation in tax-exempted lands of state. He also discovered that most portion of such land was illegally occupied by the Muslims doctors and learned men. A big portion of land was under control of Afghans who had obtained their holdings from the Sur or the Lodi rulers. In 1578 Akbar decided to take steps to stop such violations. So a whole sale scrutiny was launched for this purpose. All such lands without losing time were resumed. Thereafter he sharply constricted the area and number of grants and strictly prohibited the practice of unchallenged inheritance. After the death of a doctor, the allotted land was taken away by the state. On this occasion the heirs had to apply for the extension of allotment, their request might be granted or more likely not. Not only had the tax-exempted lands given to Muslim scholars but also issued for the priests and theologians of other religions. Yogis living in monasteries (maths) received lands. Zoroastrian priests also received the land from the state. In this way Brahmin priests and pundits also were enjoyed by Akbar’s patronage. (33)

Influence of Parsis in Trade:

These relations with the Mughal Court gave a chance to the Parsis to develop their trade and commerce and then a lot of influential Parsi business men appeared in the history of India. During Humayun rule the Parsis were described by the Portuguese physician Garcia da Orta when he visited to Bombay. Rustam Manak (1635-1721) was a noble business in Surat who took part in the series of wars which broke out in the late seventeenth century among Marahatas and Mughals. This noble man also had done a lot of social works and according to the Qissa-i Manek he built several roads, bridges and public wells and on many occasions paid the jizya at the request of poor Hindus and Parsis and saved them from the tax-gatherers harsh treatment. This noble also visited to the court of Aurangzeb.(34) Another Parsi whose name has been handed down in history was Kharshedji Pocaji, who in 1664 held the contract for building the Bombay fortifications. They formed the vanguard of that large company of Parsi merchants who helped to lay the foundation of Bombay's commercial importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. (35) The Parsis developed their relations with other communities and established trading points in several towns and cities. To maintain their business accounts they employed a lot of Hindu accountants. The Parsis also put attention in constructing of religious buildings. Mary Boyce says: "The growing prosperity of such prominent Parsi meant that they mingled more with people of other communities and employed more Hindu servants. Their houses were thus less secure strongholds of Zoroastrian purity; and perhaps because of this, perhaps also because of the urgings of their co-religionists in Iran, they began to found lesser sacred fires locally. The first of these was probably established in Surat, but (because Surat was so often destroyed by fire and flood) the fullest records come from what was to be the rival port of Bombay. This had become a British possession in 1661 and was entrusted to the East India Company to administer from Surat. The Company set out to make it the flourishing port in India, and as one means of achieving this proclaimed complete religious freedom there. This brought a steady flow to the island of Hindu and Parsi settlers, eager to escape harassment by Mughal and Portuguese. In 1671 Hirji Vaccha built a Dar-i Mihr there, and soon afterwards a dakhma; and in 1709 a Atash-I Adaran was consecrated. From this time on, records usually distinguish between three types of Parsi sacred foundations: the Dar-I Mihr without an ever burning fire (into which fire was brought, usually from a priest's house, for rituals); the Dar-I Mihr with a Dadgah fire; and the Dar-I Mihr with an Adaran, In common parlance, however, all three might be referred to by the Gujarati term 'agiary' or place of fire.....but that in 1672, the tumultuous rabble of the zealot Moors destroyed and took it from them." (36)

Parsi Religious Disputes during Eighteenth Century:

In the early period of their advent there was only one Atash Bahram, the Sanjana fire in Navsari. The Sanjana priests and Bhagarias lived with peace and harmony for many generations but as soon as the population grew the differences started to appear. As the trouble was increased in seventeenth century, the matter was taken to the Hindu Court and then got a decree that the Sanjanas must keep to their original agreement to serve the fire only and the other group serve the community. In 1741 the Sanjanas decided to shift the fire, so they taken Atash Bahram with them. A year later they installed it in a new temple at the village of Udvada on the coast a little to the south of Sanjan where it burns to this day. A wave of distress spread in the colonies of Bhagarias, to remove the distress then the Bhagarias consulted to the Pazand, Pahlavi and Persian manuscripts and in 1765 the new King of fires was enthroned. (37) There are three grades of Parsi priesthood under the name the dastur, the mobad, and the herbad or erva, which have been maintained according to religious ritual duties. The five panthaks like Sanjan, Navsari, Anklavar, Broach, and Combay had administrative and economic power from thirteenth century. The panthaks heads used to collect wealth by collecting fee from lower districts. The priests also get money on the occasions of religious ceremonies which is the main source of their wealth. The Parsi priestly issues were settled by the anjumans or special conclaves of priests. When the local Parsis could not settle the matter then the case was taken to non parsi authority. (38)

Parsi Panchayet:

When the Parsi community extended in Gujarat, then the Parsi leaders decided to share the power within the community. To safeguard their identity the Parsi leaders organized the social institution inside their own community and environment. Then Parsi Panchayet or council of elder's was introduced. The punchayet organization was first time introduced by the Indian Parsis and unknown to the Zoroastrians of Iran. The punchayet was also responsible to fulfill the requirements of the community. Through punchayets the disputes and issues were settled. The Parsis selected the members of punchayet after seeing their background, character and service to the community. Although the Parsis were under the Muslim or Hindu authority but criminal or civil matters and issues were mostly settled down by punchayets. The punchayet was bound to settle the matters under their regular rules. In 1642 the Parsis of Navsari established a Punchayet, which was joined by local priests and influential persons. In Surat a pancheyet also established to settle the disputes of commercial nature. After getting progress in trade and commerce a new class came to control the affair of the community known as the shetias. The Parsi shetias not only succeeded in looking after the matters of priests but also became the centre of authority

and leadership among the Parsis. This class of Parsis got the height status in Bombay, where they established the punchayet and developed relations with the British to assume authority over the Parsi community. In 1787, the British officially recognized the punchayet in Bombay as the internal government of the Parsis. Then in later periods this Parsi Punchayet developed its influence over the whole of the Parsi community of Western India. (39)

Parsi Language:

Although the Parsis after arriving into India started to live in Gujarat and adopted Gujarati language and manners but they preferred to use Old Iranian language in their writings. They translated a lot of Persian Rivayats in Gujarati language. During nineteenth century they converted Avesta, based on the Pahlavi, Sanskrit and Persian versions into Gujarati language. Many Persian texts were also translated into Gujarati like Zartust-namah, Jamaspi-namah, and Arda Viraf-namah. In later periods a lot of books were published in Gujarati like liturgical instructions, prayer books, edifying literature, etc. Even Parsi newspapers also printed in Gujarati. The first newspaper named Bombay Samachar was printed in 1822. Parsis also wrote their literature in English. (40)

Nou Ruz celebration in Mughal Court:

The Iranians celebrated Nou Ruz on March 20 or 21 from ancient times and this festival also celebrated by Sassanid rulers. This religious festival was attached with the teaching of Zoroaster (628-551) BC. With the arrival of new year and spring, not only had the Nur Ruz reminded the precious past but also a promise that good days were about to come. On this day in Sassanid's (524-651) period common people used to give gifts to one another and wore new cloths. This was also celebrated in the rule of Safavid under royal patronage. Although Babur had good relation with Iranian government but he refused to celebrate this festival because according to him there was not permission to celebrate in Islamic Law. Humayun celebrated Nau Ruz in 1544 while he was in Iran but he stopped to hold spring festival in later period. This festival of 1546 coincided with the circumcision ceremony of the child Akbar. The emperor Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who established the celebration of Nav Ruz in such a way that was followed by his successors for seventy five years. Abdul-Qadir Badauni a noble of Akbar court said that the Nau Ruz was celebrated in Ajmer on 21 Mar 1574, which was lasted during 6 days by Akbar. He decided to make is a grand official festival of Mughal Empire. In 1578 he also celebrated this festival in Fatehpur Sikri, the Parsis scholars were then residing in the court who also respect the sun like Birbal. On this occasion Akbar also prostrated himself before the sun and before the fire in public and in the evening the whole court had to rise up respectfully when the lamps and candles were lighted. (41)

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