

HISTORY OF THE PARSI MIGRATION TO INDIA

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 20, 2020

The Arabs conquered Iran in 642 A.D. And Yazdegard was killed in 657 A.D. and the year Parsis landed at Sanjan is often placed at 716 A.D. *Kisseh-i-Sanjan* was compiled by Bahman Kaikobad, a Sanjana priest, almost 880 years later. Even though he was more or less a contemporary of such illustrious figures as Dasturji Meherjirana or Naryosand Dhaval or Nariman Hoshang who pioneered the Rivayat tradition and even mentioned his (Kaikobad's) close relatives in the Rivayats, Kaikobad does not allude to them at all and is often suspected of favoring the Sanjana over the Bhagaria view-front in their long-lasting feud which becomes quite apparent in Eduljee's narration (pp. 90-99). *Kisseh-i-Sanjan* is therefore often viewed as suspect, more so as it takes upon the almost impossible task of relaying events that took place more than 800 years ago, simply from folklore and mythical legends and folk memory and not from any written material which of course apparently did not exist then or any time thereafter. Although Dasturs were able writers the *Kisseh* author seems to adopt, simulate, or borrow the language and verse of the *Shah-nama* so often for narrating the *Kisseh* that one feels rather transported to Firdausi's *Shah-nama*, which evidently casts further doubt on the veracity of the *Kisseh*. Nevertheless, it is the oldest book on the Parsi migration to Gujarat and deserves our attention. So I would like to review what various researchers have to say about the *Kisseh* and add my own comments as needed to expound and buttress my hypothesis, one could even call it theory, that the millennial long history of trading with India in many ways led some Parsis to find safe haven in Gujarat, albeit some would have already settled there, as somehow the strict ban on sea voyage would not have inspired and enabled others to do so. They managed to get Iranshah or the *Alaat*¹ for establishing Iranshah by land route and it had to be accompanied and serviced by priests. Of course, such a hypothesis is in conflict with the *Kisseh's* story of Dastur Neriosand Dhaval accompanying them, but this itself becomes debatable by the existence of the same namesake, well-known Dastur, existing centuries later as pointed out by almost all writers on this subject.

A Review of S.K. Hodivala's Findings

S.K. Hodivala's research indicates that there is evidence of Parsis in

1 Ritual implements.

southern India, at least in 850, when some of them engraved their signature in Pahlavi language as witnesses to a copperplate grant. (See *1251st Anniversary of Installation of Sacred Iranshah Atash Behram*, R.M.D.C. Press, Bombay, edited by N.A. Turel. The following data are taken from Hodivala's above research.) As per the *Shkand Gumanik Vijar*, chapter X-44, its author Mardan Farokh visited India before the end of the ninth century to make investigations about religious topics. He may have visited Sindh which is known then to have a large Zoroastrian population. Circa 916, the famous Arab writer Masudi reported that Zoroastrians were settled in Iraq, Kerman, Sedjestan, Khorasan, Tabaristan, Djebat, Azerbaijan, Iran, India, Sindh, and China. I have devoted a separate paper for detailing the spread of Zoroastrians in China at the time. If so, it lends support to the hypothesis that mostly those Khorasanis who traded with India for many centuries must have migrated to India, both before and after 916 A.D., when they gave up on any chances for their survival and safety in Iran. This may also explain why the Irani Zoroastrians did not know for long of the Parsis in India.

So far, there is scant reference to the settlement of Parsis in Gujarat, but there are some references to it up to the tenth century in Sindh. Mardan Farokh may have most likely visited the Zoroastrian colonists in Sindh (or Punjab), where as shown later, Humbback and Duchesne-Guillemin have revealed that Mithra-worshipping Magis abounded before being assimilated into Hinduism.

There is evidence from Arab travelers about the existence of Parsis in Chaul, near Cambay, around 950 A.D. Some Pahlavi texts were "written" in Pahlavi around 955 A.D. in Bharuch but some scholars place it 300 years later.

Two Pahlavi inscriptions dated 1009, are found in the Kanheri Caves near Mumbai as also one dated 1021 A.D.

In 1030 A.D. Alberuni mentioned the existence of Zoroastrians, called Maga in India and a mention is made of an attack on them at Dehradun by Ibrahim the Gaznavid in 1079. But this account does not seem to be reliable as all the facts mentioned therein do not check out with reality such as a big river flowing through Dehradun.

There is a puzzling reference to a grant in 1081 A.D. By the ruler of Konkan to the Khorasan Mandali, which may refer to the Sanjan colony of Parsi settlers who hailed from Khorasan or to a more recent group of Khorasani traders settled near the Konkan coast, who may well have been the authors of the Kanheri inscriptions, being still conversant with Pahlavi. However, Eduljee notes that the word Khorasani was misread by previous researchers.

The fact that a copy of Pahlavi Vendidad was copied in Sistan in

1025 A.D. for an Indian Mobed in Auchak (Uhh) in Sindh proves the existence of a Parsi settlement in north India too, at least until then. Moreover, the fact that the Parsis carried out intercalation in or around 1129 A.D., while the Iranian Zoroastrians did not suggest that the Parsis had retained awareness of this tradition through these contacts. Likewise, a mention was made of Parsis helping the Hindu king of Chittod by fighting against the invading army of Alauddin Khilji in 1301 A.D., which suggests that Parsis had by then also settled in areas other than Sanjan, though I am surprised that they spread so far up to Chittod. This is further supported by the fact that a Dakhma was built in Bharuch in 1309 A.D. and two Christian missionaries even mention a stronghold of Parsis in Thana in 1322 A.D. and 1323 A.D. respectively. Even some of the Pahlavi manuscripts were written in Thana for the use of Chalal Sang of Cambay. Moreover, a Mobed went to Navsari from Bharuch in 1214 A.D. In 1269 A.D. an Iranian Mobed came to India and copied a *Visparad* at Ankleswar in 1278 A.D. There is evidence that Chaul near Cambay was inhabited by a number of Parsis in the 13th century A.D.

Some Parsi and even Nawaya Muslim refugees migrated to Gujarat, circa 1250, following Khulagu Khan's devastation of Iran, according to Dr. G.A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. IX, Part II, p. 324. While it is unlikely that they settled in Sanjan, but as already noted, there is evidence of Magian settlement near Uhh in Punjab (and even Sistan), since a Mobed, Mahyar Mahmeher is known to have returned to Uhh, circa 1221 A.D., with a copy of Pahlavi *Vendidad* after residing six years in Sistan, apparently for ecclesiastical studies. Uhh is located near river Indus in the Bhawalpur district in Pakistan. This fact bears out Masudi's statement that Zoroastrians had spread out, *inter alia*, in Sindh.

A Review of Duchesne-Guillemin's Findings

As J. Duchesne-Guillemin observes, Zoroastrianism reached India under the Kushan rulers, "perhaps earlier" and "We have archaeological, onomastic and literary evidence of this." A Zoroastrian fire-temple has been found at Taxila, but "we do not know exactly under what form the Iranian religion reached these parts." (p. 168). The spread of the Mithra cult "is profusely attested in Sanskrit. According to the *Bhavishyapurana*, the solar cult was introduced into India by the Magas (Magis), who wore Kusti, Padaan (mouth-veil) and used Baresman. Two of the eight companions of Mihira (Mithra) were Rashna and Sraosh. Many temples to Meher existed in India from the fifth century onward, from Ultan to Gujarat, according to archaeological evidence or Sanskrit, Chinese (Hiuen-Tsang) and Arabic (Beruni, etc.) sources. All scholars concur that the Magas (Magi) came from the land

of the Sakas, but their cult was assimilated into or fused with the Hindu Saura (Surya or Sun-worshipping) sect, a process which seems to have begun already in the time of the early Kushans as evidenced by the Hindu and Buddhist traits on the early Kushans coins: (Religion of Ancient Iran, English Translation, Tata Press Ltd., Bombay, 1973, pp. 168-9).

The presence in India of Meher, the Sun of Saviour (Messiah), leads to "the question of what was the connection between India and Iran in the development of Buddhism", especially in the development of a "compassionate Messiah (Maitreya) besides the transcendent Buddha", asked Duchesne-Guillemin, which is of course beyond the purview of our present concern, but he explains it well, (p. 169), as does Boyce in her *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. I.

"But," he observes, "all this surely dates from after the Parsi migration into India", (p. 168), which he, following S.H. Hodivala, calculates as taking place in 936, and not in the date of the last failed struggle for re-establishing a Zoroastrian State during 921-931 (p. 238).

He determines the date of Alp Khan's conquest of Sanjan as 1490; hence the Parsis settled in Navsari, and "later at Surat" (p.245), after 1490. Even if the Sakas came to India after the Parsis migrated there, which is questionable, that does not concern us here as the Sakas came from the easternmost part of Iran to conquer India, whereas the Parsis came to India for refuge from the westernmost part of Iran and most likely had little communication with them at the time.

Thirty Zoroastrians from Ispahan moved to Kerman in 642 A.D. Because of the Arab invasion, which is often regarded as a prelude to the Parsis sailing away to India later on or the Zoroastrians moving to Khorasan and hiding in the mountains of Kohistan. I am afraid this kind of generalization has led us astray as those that migrated to Gujarat were a very small group of Zoroastrians trading with India for centuries instead of the general population of Zoroastrians who were prohibited by their religion, according to Duchesne-Guillemin, to travel by sea. Celebrations of Meherangan and the bonfires of Jashane Sadeh were still extant in 935 and in the district of Ispahan. Even in 943, fire-temples were visible at some places such as Shiz in Azerbaijan ("the land of the fires"). Religion survived for a long time in the Caspian area which was ruled then by the Kings of Dailamite dynasty and the Dinkard seems to urge them to maintain the religion and keep it alive.

J. Duchesne-Guillemin, relying on Erdman, cites Istaxri as writing in the middle of the tenth century: "There is hardly a town or district in Persia from which a fire-temple is absent," and "there was no country to equal her, the ancient citadel of their temporal power, religion and literature." There is an evidence for a temporary Zoroastrian

renaissance during the ninth and tenth centuries when all major Pahlavi texts were written to combat the influence of Islam, inspiring the hope of overthrowing the rule of the Caliphs and even leading to an uprising by the Zoroastrians of Shiraz in 979. "Its suppression", notes Duchesne-Guillemin, "only underlines the general defeat of the ancient religion." He also notes that the exodus of the Parsis to India started precisely from this period "since the date has been re-determined by S.H. Hodivala as 936, instead of 717." It must, however, be noted that Eduljee, pp. 12-18), as seen later, has serious questions about S.H. Hodivala's calculations on which this date is based, though it seems quite plausible that more Zoroastrians may have seen the need then to seek security in India, if they were familiar with the wherewithals and knowledge of it in those days, which perhaps mostly traders have had.

He also explains that Zoroastrian revival was tolerated if it did not affect the Arab rule politically, but for how long is a question mark in view of the might of the Caliphs. "However, during the course of the same century, the movement of national resurgence was diverted and monopolized by dynasties of foreign origin, the Ghaznavids and Seljuks, who had nothing in common with Zoroastrianism. These Turks, who were new comers, championed the Sunni orthodoxy against both the Shi'ite heresy and Zoroastrianism. Indeed, they were forced to, for Shi'ism and Zoroastrianism aimed at restoring a Sasanian rule, that is to say, strictly Persian rule, with which the Duodecimans expressly connected the line of Imams. It was a master stroke on the part of the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks to appropriate the Iranian Renaissance, begun under their predecessors, the Samanids, by integrating it with orthodox Isma. This guaranteed the ruin of Mazdeanism: the life force of the nation flowing in the double epical and mystical tradition – the first represented by Rudaki, Daqiqi, and Firdausi, the second by diverse movements was annexed to and absorbed into Islam. The glories of the past and the literary force of the epic were brought under the banner of Islam. Mazdeanism, whose literature was too exclusively priestly and without charm, was left with little with which to combat the new literary wonders."

Zoroastrianism survived in Iran for a while after the Arab conquest as can be seen from my essay on the Shi'ubia movement and also from the efforts of Beh-afrid, Abu Muslim and his followers Sunpadh and Ishaq (who in 755 proclaimed that Abu Muslim was the emissary of Zarathustra and would come himself to restore Zoroastrianism in Iran), Ustadsis (who in 767 rallied to himself the Zoroastrians of Sistan, Herat and adjoining region) and Papek, (The leader of the Huramite revolt of 817 to 838, who even received the support of the Byzantines, but was executed in 838 in Baghdad, though his movement survived in Azerbaijan, Ispahan and Khorasan until 975 and left its mark on Shi'ite

beliefs regarding the Imams). Thus the ancestors of the Parsis may have felt all the more need to leave Iran for their religious survival around 916, which is also the date suggested by S.H. Hodivala, though despite finding flaws in his calculations of this date, our hypothesis is here based only on the internal situation in Iran.

A Review of M.M. Marzban's Findings

After writing the above, I read M.M. Marzban's book (Volume One, *The Parsis in India, Being an enlarged and copiously announced up to date English Edition of Mlle. Delphine Menant's LES PARSIS, 1918*) which was lying in my own library, only to find that more of the evidence presented here are also mentioned by him. He quotes various authors and the Iranian association, which protested to the Sanjan Memorial Column Committee for stating that the Parsis had "landed at the once famous port of Sanjan", when "there was no convincing evidence" "in writing" to prove it. (p. xviii).

It is not clear if it was Mahmood Begda or Alauddin Khilji or his chieftain, Alafkhan, who invaded Sanjan. According to Marzban and many other authors, it is hard to assume that the Parsis first settled in Sanjan when there is evidence of their presence, for instance, in Bharuch, before the Moslem invasion of Sanjan. (This is explained by the *Kisseh* saying that the Parsis dispersed to areas north of Sanjan 300 years after landing at Sanjan). The etymology of Navsari, New Sari, suggest that the town was named after a town in Iran from where they migrated, but such a memory of the ancient town most likely would have faded away after the fall of Sanjan, if they migrated to Navsari then, or even 300 years after landing at Sanjan as per the *Kisseh-i-Sanjan*.

Therefore in view of my findings of the trade relations between Iran and western Indian coast over millennia, those Zoroastrians who engaged in it along with their friends and relatives, may have found it convenient, as they had to be conversant with India, to migrate to the western coast of India in small numbers after the fall of the Sasanian Empire. Even if a rather small number of Parsis had migrated to India in the tenth century or of course earlier, by the twenty-first century their number would be significantly bigger than what it is today if we assume a very conservative estimate of 4 or 5 children per generation, though quite often it was much more than that until the mid-twentieth century. No wonder therefore that the Zoroastrians in Iran did not even know about the existence of their brethren in India, according to the *Rivayats*, as only the few who traded with India could even conceive of migrating to India of all places and knew how to go about it.

If the Parsis were already established in the town of Bharuch in 1258

(as per Marzban p.506) before the fall of Sanjan it clearly challenges the view that the Parsis first settled in Sanjan after Div or Cambay, unless we accept the *Kisseh's* version that the Parsis settled north of Sanjan 300 years after landing there. Even as I am venturing as quite a novice in this area, as it is not my forte, it becomes quite apparent that this subject is so very complex. Even S.H. Hodivala admits that this topic "is perhaps the most hopelessly insoluble" in the *Journal of the Cama Oriental Institute*, Bombay, No. 8, 1926, p. 68, even after claiming the date of landing at Sanjan as 936 in his book, *Studies in Parsi History*, Bombay, 1920, p. 70, which however was challenged by S.K. Hodivala, *Parsis of Ancient India*, Bombay, 1920. J.C. Tavadia and some Parsi scholars are in agreement with the former's calculation of the date of 936, but it has many loopholes unfortunately. However, no one seems to have noted the significance of the common surname of both these authors, that is, Hodivala, "ship owners", which adds some credence to the Parsis continuing their maritime trade even after migrating to India, a subject which lends itself to a separate chapter and investigation. S.K. Hodivala assigned an earlier date to the Parsis' migration to India because of the earlier evidence of their existence on the west coast of India, which however, as we have seen, may have been due to this maritime commerce with India.

A Review of M.M. Marzban's Findings

Marzban also mentions that Zoroastrians resided in "hind and Sind" in the tenth century according to *Ousley's Oriental Geography* of Ebn Haukal, who died in 968, as also the fact that the Parsis of Cambay were in possession of some copies of the *Vendidad* Mahyaz brought from Sistan to Uchh, Sindh, (which he locates in Punjab) in 1184, which suggests that the Zoroastrians of both these places were in communication with each other. Marzban believes that after the destruction of Uchh in 1223, the Parsis of Uchh must have migrated to Gujarat. He too finds it hard to abide totally by what the *Kisseh-i-Sanjan* narrates and does not rule out the possibility that the Parsis migrated by the land route, which, however, is not supported by the fact that the Parsis were found exclusively along the coastline of Gujarat, until the advent of the British. He finds it very hard to believe that the Parsi immigrants sailed to India without having any knowledge of some Zoroastrian colonies already there, (with which I fully agree) and rules out the age-old belief that just the Providence brought them to Div or Sanjan. He also finds it very hard to believe that the Zoroastrians in Iran did not even know that such Parsi migrations had ever taken place in the past, which however may be explained by the fact that *only* the traders migrated to India and not the general population. As there was a flourishing Zoroastrian community with a fire-temple and a seminary

by 943 in Bharuch and not after 1090 as stated by the *Kisseh-i-Sanjan*, and as there is no mention of a Jadi Rana or of Mahmood Begda conquering Sanjan in any authentic history of Gujarat, Marzban doubts the veracity of *Kisseh-i-Sanjan* and gives twelve reasons for it all. However, most of his concerns could be well taken care of by my hypothesis that some Parsis had already settled on the Gujarat coastline long before the Arab conquest of Iran for maritime commerce and when they realized there was no chance at all of their religious survival in Moslem Iran, say by 946 as reviewed earlier, and as by then the Arabs may have also come to replace or displace them in maritime trade which eventually they did anyway, they decided to settle on the Gujarat coastline permanently and encouraged all those related with them to do so too especially as by then they must have come to appreciate the tolerant and kind nature of the Hindus *vis-a-vis* their alien rulers. But their numbers must have been very small – even 2000 immigrants almost 1100 years ago statistically would have perhaps multiplied into more than 100,000 by now, but I leave the mathematics to others, though I remember reading an article long ago by Dasturji Dr. Hormazdiar Mirza, asserting more or less the same, though re-attributed out small numbers to Parsis not being fertile, but quite sterile which was however not true until the last century. Eduljee cites several European travelers who report: “They increase in numbers from day to day and have built and inhabited many entire wards in the suburbs of Surat.” (p. 117), plus, “they have increased considerably in this country in contrast to their co-religionists in Persia.” (p. 196), which also rules out Mirza’s hypothesis.

Marzban’s idea of the land route from Iran to India being safe is however, endorsed by the fact that the Alaaf for the Iranshah was brought by priests to Sanjan by the land route, but that is also because it could not all be transported over sea as per the strict Zoroastrian purity laws, which I have explained at length on my tractate on the purity laws. But this only compounds the problem because the purity laws vehemently prohibit travel by sea and even prohibits the priests from performing higher category of rituals through the rest of their life if they do. So one wonders, could some priests have also come by land? Parsis were aware of this restriction even in (or around 1709 per Eduljee’s evidence (p. 150 and 153) and also, our own times: when Sir J.J. Modi and later on all the priests who went to Aden by sea to install an Agiary there were barred from performing *Yozdathregiri* (higher category of priestly services) forever. But this fact may further confirm our hypothesis that only those Zoroastrians who traded with India sailed there and had the wherewithal to sail there or may have already settled there.

Moreover, the Zoroastrian population in north India that Marzban

refers to ultimately ceased to exist for various reasons and it is hard to explain why the Parsi population was found only along the coastline of Gujarat if they came by land and not by sea. The sea route might actually have been safer than the land route then, as it would have been difficult to convert the sailors to Islam soon after the Arab invasion as they spent most of their time on the sea and little on the land. An Iranian scholar, Dr. Ali Jafary told me that these sailors maintained and venerated "hearth" fire in their ships long after the Arab conquest and they had to be Zoroastrian themselves (the Muslim sailors may not have cooperated in such a rescue mission with whom they considered as Kafirs), for being trusted by the Parsi immigrants for a secretive and safe sailing to a far-off land. This is perhaps all the more true if the Parsis migrated much earlier than 936. Marzban also observes: "Throughout these verses (sixteen slokas), the writer has thought it fit to make comparisons with the existing Hindu customs, so as to draw the sympathy of the king." (p. 94). This becomes quite apparent from Sloka V which compares the end of the Kusti with the mouth of snake even though hitherto never conceived or even conceivable as such and even though Yasna IX.11, etc., regard it as an Ahrimanic creature, as also from the references to the menstruation rules of the Hindus in Sloka IX, the Shraadh ceremony of the Hindus in Sloka X, the use of the word "caste" in Sloka XI, reference to the performing of ablution in the Ganges river in Sloka XIII and to Pancha-gavya penance (which seems to be rather un-Zoroastrian in spirit) in Sloka XIV. The immigrant Parsis would hardly have been as conversant with the contents of these Slokas as to write about them right on their arrival, which had to be therefore a much later innovation made after generations of contact and familiarity with Hinduism. More strikingly, these Slokas seem to be too interested in drawing comparison between the customs of the two races to offer a gist of the immigrants' basic faith which is quite surprising as the Zoroastrian priests were heavily engaged during the same period, as revealed in the various Pahlavi texts, in defining and defending their religion to the Christians, Jews and Arabs in Iran in order to prove its superiority. As Marzban observes, "It is interesting to notice that, at this juncture, the Zoroastrians showed themselves singularly skillful and shrewd, avoiding all mention of the true basis of their religion and only setting forth certain ceremonies, of little importance, but which seemed of a nature likely to win the goodwill of the Rana," (p. 47), which as we have seen, was not in keeping with the very spirit of Hinduism's universal acceptance and tolerance. The Rana would have never contemplated sending the Parsis back to their torturers in any circumstance. Even Marzban admits: "The Hindus, far, far from opposing this, helped to build the temple" of Iranshah. (p. 48). See also Eduljee (pp. 136, 152, 166, and 169) about "the charitable Indians, and inhabitants, who compassionated their distress", etc.

There can hardly be any validity to the story that the Parsi immigrants at Sanjan promised its king they will not convert others to their faith as the very concept of conversion was alien to the Hindus then and as Marzban remarks: "Even supposing that the religion enjoined proselytism, still it is difficult to believe that the Iranians could have thought of (being able to) convert aliens, soon after their overthrow by the Arabs." (pp. 98-99). It seems to me that the need to convince the Indian ruler by the contrivance of these sixteen Slokas for granting refuge to the Parsi immigrants is an insult to the exceptionally tolerant spirit of Hinduism. This impression becomes quite apparent from what Marzban (and many others) quote Rev. George Streynsham Master as saying in his letter of January, 1671 that when the Parsi immigrants were cast upon the Coast of India at Navsari "near the same place where the first English ship that arrived in India was also cast away, where escaping to the shore with life, the Indians not used to such guests, yet being as obliging people and strangers as any nation under heaven (as the English found them when the Sun, the first ship we had in these parts case away at or near the same place." (pp. 77-78). But Marzban does not realize its significance for countering the *Kisseh-i-Sanjan* story of the king of Sanjan initially refusing refuge to the Parsis, which has no parallel in Hinduism though so sweet indeed in hindsight that its inventor has struck an eternal note about the Parsis in it. However, such a story is not conceivable without its author being well conversant with Hindus and Hindu culture and is certainly implausible at the very instance of landing in India.

For instance, as per S.K. Hodivala (op. Cit., p. 78), the wedding blessings (*Ashirwads*) in Sanskrit was translated from the Pahlavi language by Dinidaru Bahman, according to a manuscript written in A.Y. 784 and another manuscript containing Sanskrit translation was written after A.D. 1344, that is long after the migration of the Parsis to India and therefore it may not be in response to the dictates of the supposed Jadi Rana king but realistically in response to the cultural needs of the day when Sanskrit or Prakrit was more familiar to the Parsi's Pahlavi. I remember Dasturji Dabu often telling us students in the late 1940s at the Cama Athoraman Institute that the Parsis had to adopt Prakrit language first as the Gujjars and Gujarati language did not yet exist when they landed in India. Hence, the need for the Sanskrit *Ashirwad*.

Another puzzle that needs to be resolved is why Khorasani Zoroastrians who hailed from the land-locked province of Khorasan came to be uniformly known as Parsis, that is, people from the province of Pars, even though, as already seen, there is a reference, if true, to their association as Khorasani Mandal in Konkan in 1081 A.D. Even if the latter is not true, the involvement of the Khorasani in the trade with

India (as well as with China) is so clear-cut. In that case, did the Indians group them all together under the name of Parsis as most of their trade with India passed through the ports, ships and sailors of Pars, though Khorasanis may have engaged in or even dominated this trade. There are more questions than answers still baffling us on this subject, and I confess, there are no clear answers yet on the horizon.

A Review of H.E. Eduljee's Findings

I want it to be clear I do not have all the resources of an academician, but after I wrote so far, I luckily ran into H.E. Eduljee's excellent work, *Kisseh-i-Sanjan*, (K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1996). He abides by the *Kisseh's* version and regards 781 A.D. As the year of Parsis landing at Sanjan. References to Parsis in three copper-plated grants in Sanskrit during the first decade of the seventh century A.D., that is circa 610 A.D. as discovered by S.K. Hodivala, however, may refer to the Parsi traders historically engaging in India-Iran as the ultimate migration does not seem to be plausible for various reasons, already stated, so soon after King Yazdegard's defeat in 657 A.D., Eduljee holds that only a small number of Parsis – about 2000 – emigrated to India in 781 A.D. When religious persecution had not started *en masse* but when it did start during the later Abbasid period and the Mongol invasions of 1218 and 1251-6 A.D., more Zoroastrians sailed to the coast of Gujarat and shared their experience of religious persecution with the immigrants who had come to Gujarat earlier. He cites some evidence from European travelers to confirm this *assumption*, which unfortunately is the term into which all our research efforts ultimately collapse and Eduljee too seems to feel no differently: (p. 39). However, we can obtain some clue from the situation prevailing in Iran at the time of Shuubia, White Rainment and similar movements in Khorasan which arose in reaction and resentment against the atrocious Arab rule, in which Zoroastrians often seemed to have joined hard overtly or covertly or both at times as well as from the disastrous and dismal situation created by their brutal suppression by the fanatic rulers, which may have left but no choice to those who can to migrate to India. But that is too long a saga to be included here and therefore is detailed in another thesis, but the two seem to be at least inter-connected.

Eduljee rightly maintains that the *Kisseh* does not say that all Zoroastrians moved to Gujarat. "Actually, what the *Kisseh* says is that all who fled to Kohistan then went to Hormuz" (p. 41), but their number would not be significantly greater than 2000. While this number seems quite plausible, even correct, the number of all those who fled to Kohistan and then went to Hormuz must be considerably bigger than 2000 and so there is a need for another hypothesis. However, any

arithmetical calculation would not possibly reveal a figure in excess of 2000 for explaining our total present population which could readily be explained in terms of only Zoroastrian traders and their families and friends choosing to settle in Gujarat in view of the events in Iran. Obviously there were many more migrations to Gujarat later on especially during the later Abbasid period, which fits in with my thesis, but that could not have led to migration in very large numbers as the Parsi population at any time does not reflect it. And the Mongol invasion of Iran initially adversely affected not only Zoroastrians but also Muslim, (as the Mongols were at first not Muslim) and both are known to have migrated to northern Gujarat then by sea, as already noted, though not in large numbers and not because of religious persecution as much as oppression, hardship and suffering. However, the evidence of later migrations clearly envisages suggests some linkage or contact with the earlier settlers, among themselves which could have possibly existed mainly because of the trade.

Eduljee rightly regards the allegation of *Kisseh-i-Sanjan* being “a palpable falsehood” as “puerile criticism” (p. 39), but Marzban finds some justification in the objection raised by the Bombay Iranis against the erection of the Sanjan memorial which he asserts was first suggested to the Parsis by Miss Delphine Menant (p. 88) and not by Sir Jivanji Modi as noted by Eduljee (p. 39) though Modi was the one who readily responded to her suggestion and acted on it. This is not surprising in view of Eduljee somehow choosing not to refer to Marzban or not being aware of his work. It seems to me that to all Iranians, Zoroastrian or Muslim alike, the idea of leaving the country under siege suggests lack of patriotism or at least resorting to an easy way out: the Iranian Muslims in the U.S.A. have often told me so in my face and even faulted us for it.

A Review of Rashid Shahmardani's Views

Rashid Shahmardani Irani made a strong case in Parsiana, February 1970, that Zoroastrians survived quite well for 200-300 years after the Arab conquest and therefore, “the theory of persecution and consequent emigration of Zoroastrian population from Iran to India does not seem plausible.” From statistical calculations he posits that thirteen centuries ago the number of Zoroastrian immigrants to India “might be at the most two thousand. This very number by common sense tells us that there was no mass persecution then”, which, however, is debatable. I have shown in my tractate, “Moslem Conquest of Persian Iran and Its Consequences” (unpublished) that oppression by Arabs started right after they conquered Iraq, that is, even before they reached Iranian territory. As noted by M.G. Morony (Iraq, After the Moslem Conquest, Princetown University Press, 1984), the Arabs reduced the population

of Persians in Iraq due to death, captivity, conversion, transfers of captives and women to Madina enslavement, flight of Persians to other places, etc. The immediate consequences of the defeat, says Morony, was the physical removal of a large number of Persian women and children to Madina. Enslaved by their captors, their children by Arab fathers became the largest group of Mawali (converts) at Kufa twenty years later and fought for the Arabs at the battle of Siffin circa 657. Most of the prisoners the Arab armies captured after conquering Iran were sold in the slave markets in Basra and Kufa. By 700, the Dahaqin were supplemented by Muslim Arabs and Mawali armies ceased to exist and by 700 the surviving elements of the Sasanians were integrated into a new Islamic civilization. It is thus difficult to deny persecution by Arabs initially at least.

Rustom Shahmardani seems to harbor the Iranian view and is quite puzzled by the Parsis' migration to India as the Zoroastrians were then putting up a brave front to the Arabs, which only supports my thesis, though indirectly. The puzzle, however, could be solved by realizing that a very limited number who were engaged in trade with India for centuries and their near and dear ones found it convenient to move to India and may have been used to travel by sea despite injunctions against it. They possibly continued trading with Iran at least for a while which may explain their large number, 100,000 by most estimations in Surat (see Eduljee, p. 177), and their domination of trade there as reported by European travelers per Eduljee and Marzban and many others. This may also explain the existence of an Agiary in Bharuch in 955 A.D. To presume that fire-temples existed south of Sindh during the Achaemenian rule as Eduljee presumes (p. 41) is rather difficult since the Achaemenians ruled only in the northern India and little is known of the structure of their fire-temples, if they existed at all besides their fire-altars which are visible in their rock inscriptions.

A research paper I am currently writing on Atashkadehs reveals that the Atashkadeh as we know now did not exist in the Achaemenian times. Their temples dedicated to Anahita, however, were well known throughout their western empire but their purpose was rather different – to supplant the worship of alien goddesses. See my article about it in the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Journal, Bombay, 1995, pp. 59-65. If the *Kisseh* dates Parsis spreading to the north of Sanjan 300 years after the landing per Eduljee. Bharuch being a major trading center, Parsis must have settled there in all likelihood even landing at Sanjan or certainly soon after.

Whether the Achaemenians were Zoroastrians is often debated by scholars, but I have asserted that the Achaemenians were Zoroastrians in my paper presented at the V Conference of the Societas Iranologica, Europe at Ravenna, Italy, October 6-11, 2003 and in my forthcoming

book on this subject. Nevertheless, even if their fire-temples existed in India, as claimed by Eduljee, they may not have existed south of Sindh.

Conclusion

Although I am not aware if I missed reviewing any other material available on this subject, I have tried to study and include as many references as I possibly could collect that would be necessary for my project. To my knowledge few researchers have studied them all and so my effort should at least prove worthwhile for future historians. No author has been fully confident in all their conclusions and regrettably I too must join their rank. No two authors agree fully with each other as Eduljee's work has shown as also my own disagreements with various authors may suggest and there is little hope of this sad situation changing in the future unless we are fortunate enough to discover some relics, inscriptions, etc., that can illuminate us regarding the arrival of the Parsi pilgrims to Gujarat. However, many, if not most, writers agree that there may not have been only one landing, that is, at Sanjan alone, but also at various other places on the coast of Gujarat at various times – from even before the Arab conquest thanks to the extensive maritime trade lasting over a millennium and lasting apparently at least a couple of centuries after it. It will be difficult, otherwise, to explain a Parsi population of nearly one hundred thousand in Surat itself, besides many thousands in nearby towns, before it shifted to Bombay and other places in the British times. The pattern of the Parsi migration to India is variegated and complex, and to be fore sure, it is not as simple and clear-cut as suggested by *Kisseh*, which raises more questions than provides answers. Some of its version is pure drama such as the Sixteen Slokas and the initial denial of asylum by the Rana, as brought out by Marzban. And yet it is not only the only book written, though much later about the Parsi migration to India, but it is also the oldest book written by a Parsi (Marzban, p. 42), which indeed is not so much about the Parsi migration as about the Iranshah, the perennially inspiring center of our communal and religious existence, replacing the Shahs we sadly lost forever, with an eternal, spiritual kind. This, thus, is the real essence of the *Kisseh* but history is not its real forte. It is even doubtful if its author was as much interested in writing it from a purely historical perspective as much as from a religious perspective as the inspirational story of Iranshah which is all we are left with for our spiritual solace, survival and guidance. Interpreting it as a purely historical text therefore is apt to mislead us for no fault of the author but our own.

The hypothesis presented here may hopefully clear many issues on this subject that have eluded us so far. The detailed history of the Persians engaging vigorously and continuously for over a millennium in the East-West trade and also maritime trade, even leading to wars with

the Romans whenever they tried to take it over from them as chronicled by me elsewhere has significant ramifications for the Persian maritime traders choosing to settle in India, a very tolerant and hospital country they were familiar with for long, when adhering to their faith in Iran seemed well-nigh impossible. But very few of the Persians were traders and so the option or perhaps even the very idea or possibility was unfortunately not open to all Zoroastrians and therefore, the idea of sailing to India may not have occurred to all, especially those living away in the hinterland. Moreover, the Iranians seem to be guided by a latent or not so latent tendency, reinforced by centuries of wars and invasions, not to give in to enemies, and consequently may not have generally thought it proper to migrate to India or elsewhere except to China where they sought military help to defeat and drive away the Arabs from Iran. This explains why only 2000 or so souls were able to settle in India because of their age-old connections with India. It also explains why Zoroastrians in Iran did not even know about them until the fifteenth century thanks to the Parsis connecting with them through their intermediaries for Rivayats. Our hypothesis thus accommodates conflicting views and tends to reconcile them by offering resolutions for them as it does not relate to a fixed time or place as the *Kisseh* does but is quite accommodating and is flexible. For instance, as per this theory, it does not matter whether it was Alauddin Khilji, or Mahmood Bega, or Alp Khan who invaded Sanjan or whether Bahrot was a Buddhist cave as Eduljee suggests or whether it was even a safe place for the Iran Shah as it was too close to Sanjan. These are just a few examples. And yet this suggestion to the best of my knowledge has not been offered or even thought of seriously so far, as the facts regarding it have emerged lately. But now that we know them, we may benefit by them and may re-think our old notions and assumptions about them based solely on the *Kisseh* in light of these emerging new facts.