

PARSI COMMUNITY

There are various reasons behind the migration of communities from one region to another and are known as the Diaspora in the region they finally settle. One of the prime reasons is to protect themselves from persecution. The Parsi community in India is the second smallest religious minority after Jews, constituting about nearly 70,000 is one example of such migration that forced them to leave their motherland i.e Persia (Iran). The newly formed Islamic forces were acting as threat towards one of the oldest civilization. The aim was to transform the majority of population into Shia Muslim, sect of Islam from the Zoroastrianism. In India, these Zoroastrians are called Parsis as they are immigrants from Persia. They are followers of Zarathustra and worship fire as symbol of purity. Thus because of the threat of persecution, many of them refused to convert and migrated to India. It was mainly because of the reason that the two nations had very cordial relations in field of trade since ages. They landed in Gujarat and sought refuge. One can find their narrative of migration in India in the Qissa-i Sanjan or Kisse-i Sanjan (story of Sanjan), although it was much after their arrival. This narrative provides an insight about how they came to Gujarat and sought refuge from local ruler Jadi Rana and how Jadi Rana's gesture of sending a glass full of milk symbolized that his state is not able to support more population in which a elder Parsi mix the sugar symbolizing that the Parsis will get mixed in the local population like sugar in milk. After this incident Rana permitted them to reside in his territory, but he asked them to promise certain things. For example, they will never bear arms, will never practice their religious rituals and practices in front of others, will not try to convert locals into their religion, they should learn Gujarati and their women and men should accept local dressings. Parsis followed all of the conditions and even today. They have established themselves as successful business and trading community in a short span of time concentrated in Gujarat and Mumbai. They achieved a lot of success and prosperity during the British regimes. Many of them established as successful trading firms across the Asia. They also contributed significantly to the Indian intellectual and professional classes. Parsis like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroza Shah Mehta and Bhikaiji Cama played a very crucial role in Indian freedom struggle. Similarly, the industrial houses like Tata, really worked hard to establish as an indigenous industrial base of the nation. Even after independence they continued to play major role in all walks of life in India. Although they are the smallest religious group they have the distinction to produce chiefs of all three armed forces and legendary Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw was also a Parsi. Parsis believe in

concept of philanthropy, humanity, generosity, compassion and resulting various charity institutions were got established by them all over India. Parsis are very close and attached to their culture and religion; following it very strictly. Their number is presently declining because of low birth rate and restrictions to marry a person from another religion. In recent years, government is trying to protect their heritage and has launched program like Jiye Parsi to stabilize the declining population of Parsis. Here it is very important to note that although they have their origin back in Persia but they accept India as their motherland with deep regard towards it and contributes a lot for the betterment of same, despite of their limited number.