
Introduction: Key Issues for This Book

The Zoroastrian Perspective

Studies of Zoroastrianism have commonly focused on the ancient religion in the old country. Zaehner, notoriously, entitled his classic work *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*,¹ with the twilight being the end of the Sasanian era in the seventh century CE. There have been some studies of Zoroastrians in Islamic Iran,² and a number of the Parsis in India.³ Only Boyce has written on both Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis.⁴ The only scholar to undertake a comparative study of the Parsi diaspora has been my friend, and former student, Rashna Writer, who looked at Zoroastrians in Britain, America, Canada and Pakistan;⁵ otherwise there is only my own *Zoroastrians in Britain*.⁶ The point is that the Zoroastrian diaspora has been mostly ignored by scholars. The central conviction behind this book is that the diaspora groups have made a significant role in the development of the community and the religion in the old country. Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy is famous for both his communal and his cosmopolitan charities, notably in education and religion, but he was only able to do this because of the fortune he made in China. Similarly, the Cowasji Dinshaws were able to undertake such vast philanthropic work because of their business success in Aden and East Africa. Dadabhai Naoroji

¹ London, 1961.

² In the chronological order of their subject matter: J. K. Choksey, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society*, Columbia, 1997; M. Boyce, *Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford, 1977; J. Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran: Conversion, Assimilation, or Persistence*, New York, 1990.

³ For a bibliographical survey see Hinnells, 'The Parsis: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, 3, 1980, pp. 100–49. The 'standard' work on the Parsis is E. Kulke, *The Parsees in India: A Minority as Agents of Social Change*, Munich, 1974. Unfortunately he ignores the religion of the Parsis.

⁴ *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London, repr. 2000.

⁵ *Zoroastrians: An Unstructured Nation*, Lanham, 1994. ⁶ Oxford, 1996.

was a key political figure in the Indian National Congress, but much of that role owed a great deal to his work in Britain, in particular his role as MP in the Westminster Parliament. Parsis are justly proud of two prominent (and contrasting) musicians, Zubin Mehta and Freddie Mercury, whose fame and fortunes were made in the diaspora. The diaspora communities are also important in their own right, not least because of the contributions each has made to its 'new country'. For example, it was a Parsi who took the crucial steps to build the University of Hong Kong. Parsis were crucial in the development of Zanzibar's port as a diversified market place, and in building the town into a modern 'city'. At the turn of the millennium, diaspora Zoroastrians are having a substantial impact on religious debates in India and Iran, just as diasporic funding continues to support long-treasured Parsi Institutions in India.⁷ Similarly, the moves for a world body have been led from the diaspora.⁸ What happens in one Zoroastrian community, in times of globalization, affects others. Unquestionably the study of the ancient religion in the old country is important, but to understand Zoroastrianism in the modern world, even in the nineteenth century, it is essential to study diasporic groups. Many Zoroastrians believe that with the demographic decline in the Parsi community in India, the future of the world's oldest prophetic/revealed religion lies in the New World.

This is the first book to undertake a study of Zoroastrians not only in Independent India but also in the 'old' nineteenth-century diaspora in China; in the province formerly known as Sind; in East Africa and London; as well as in the newer communities in Germany, France, Canada, the USA and Australia. The pattern of research behind each chapter has been to visit the countries named to study the archives there, to stay with Zoroastrian families in order to see or 'feel' the diaspora groups from within. A global survey was undertaken which yielded 1,840 responses to questions on demographic issues (age, gender, composition, length of residence, second-generation responses), religious beliefs and practices, and secular culture (language, food, music, etc.) In part,

⁷ The obvious example of this is the substantial funds donated by the Jokhi Trusts in Hong Kong to the Parsee General Hospital in Mumbai; see *Parsiana*, Feb.–Mar. 1995, pp. 92–100 and Apr. 2002, pp. 18–22.

⁸ The World Zoroastrian Organization (discussed in Ch. 10) was started in London; the key moves for another international federation have been led from America.

therefore, this book is a historical work involving archival sources; it has involved anthropological participant observation and sociological data analysis. In addition, I believe that I have read all the books published by Parsis in the last thirty years, both in the old country and the diaspora. My aim has been to document the remarkable histories and achievements of the various Zoroastrian communities around the world. It has also been to compare the different experiences, strategies, hopes and fears in the various countries. One of the basic questions asked is, how different is it being a Zoroastrian in, say, Hong Kong and Australia, or in Los Angeles and London? How do different immigration and race policies impact upon a religious minority? The study has also compared the experiences of Zoroastrians in large centres such as Toronto, where there are 3,000–4,000 Zoroastrians with a well-established ‘centre’ or building, and in small, scattered groups with few community networks and even fewer resources, such as the groups in Germany and France. It is important also to compare communities within countries, because it cannot be taken for granted that different cities in the same country are of a single ‘type’. In America, for example, there are important differences between the communities in Houston and in Chicago, as there are between those in Sydney and Melbourne in Australia.

In much contemporary scholarly writing, for example in anthropology and on religion, it has become common for scholars to ‘locate’ themselves, to identify their biases, presuppositions, and relations with the arena where they study. In my case this is essential, because while I seek never to take sides in community disputes, I am nevertheless conscious of a bias in my approach and use of sources. Numerous Parsis in many countries have become close personal friends in the course of my stays in different places. Many of the names referred to in this book are those of people for whom I have a deep respect and affection. I have stayed with them at times of celebrations such as initiations and weddings, and shared their grief as deaths have occurred in the homes while I have been staying there, just as they shared my grief when my wife died. I have acted as confidant to a number, and they have been my confidants at crucial moments. Sometimes, people I consider to be close friends have been vigorous opponents, in some cases even taking each other to court. I have been present at many of the bitter disputes referred to in the book. Writing the scholarly ‘neutral’

or ‘objective’ account has been a difficult task. Most of my close friends are naturally people of my generation. Although I hope I have sought carefully to pay attention to the views and concerns of the youth, it is perhaps inevitable that my writing commonly reflects the view of people of my own age. Because many of my friends, especially in Mumbai, come from the Orthodox or traditional wing of the community, there is an obvious danger that I may not give a balanced account of bitter community debates. The biggest bias, or imbalance of sources, and the one which I most regret, is that contacts with the Iranian Zoroastrian community are not as close as they are with Parsis. In the 1970s I visited Iran many times, but that has not been possible since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Although Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis have preserved much of their common ancient heritage, there are nevertheless differences, some substantial, not only in secular culture (notably language, food, and music) but also in religion. Perhaps it is inevitable that immersing oneself in either group will inevitably result in a less deep understanding of the other. Of course, I have many Iranian Zoroastrian friends in various countries and I have sought to represent their concerns also, but this book leaves a gap, which it is to be hoped another scholar will fill by undertaking an international comparative study of Iranian Zoroastrians around the world. I considered using the word ‘Parsi’ in the title of the book because of my awareness of my contacts. But because of the number of my Iranian friends, especially in Vancouver, California, Germany and London, and the importance and impact of Iranian Zoroastrians in the diaspora, it would have been wrong to exclude them. There is a further important factor. Many younger members of the international communities no longer wish to be known by what they see as purely ethnic markers, namely Parsis and Iranians, but simply as Zoroastrians; so that is the title I have used in the book.

Communities around the world have trusted me with unrivalled access to their archives. In centres as far apart as Toronto, London and Hong Kong I have been given open access to any of the files I have asked to read. They have all been willing to discuss any question I raised. Inevitably, not everyone in every community is a saint, and I do know of some scandals, but I have rarely referred to them. Each chapter has been sent to at least one member, usually more, of the communities I am writing about, to ensure

that the text is accurate. In discussing disputes I have sought to depersonalize them and have used as bland a style of writing as possible. Some of my academic colleagues will consider this a failure of objective, neutral, factual historical writing. However, I also believe an academic has to be sensitive to the consequences of his/her work. We are not remote and distant from what we study; we do not live in a vacuum. Generally I have sought to respect the feelings of individuals, but this cannot always be done. What we write does, for better or for worse, influence the people we write about. After the publication of my *Zoroastrians in Britain* I found that I had unwittingly caused distress and offence to one person because I had expressed my gratitude for help given in a footnote where I had used the material and not in the preface where it was felt it would have been more prominent. In this book, as in the first, I have acknowledged help at the point in the text where the material relates to the specific help given. Some people have given me help over many years and in a broad rather than a specific manner. I have acknowledged their help in the general introduction because it is not possible to say they helped me with a precise detail. I do not intend discourtesy to anyone by thanking him or her in a relevant footnote. It is certainly my earnest hope that my writing never causes offence.

In each chapter I have identified the nature and potential bias in my sources. Records such as minutes of meetings have the appearance of primary sources, but they may reflect only one perspective on the issues discussed and they are frequently bland. Wherever possible I have consulted the views of different participants in the debates. However, fortunately for the historian, Parsi diasporic communities have a strong tradition of making and keeping community records, so that the sources are therefore often extensive. Many Parsis are eager to learn, and to write about, their own community. Their results are not always published, but typed and circulated. A number of such writers have generously given me copies of their writings. I am grateful to all of them, because their works have nuggets of historical gold in them that would never have otherwise been known. I have, of course, acknowledged these sources in the relevant footnotes.

Whatever the problems of this study, and the joys, it is—from a Zoroastrian studies perspective—an attempt to document and analyse the global spread of the religion. There is no reliable

information on the global Zoroastrian population. Government figures in Iran suggest a far more numerous following there than was thought; the latest published figures claim there are more than 100,000 in the mother country. The number of Parsis in India is declining. The 1991 census showed a slight increase, and some in India insist that because of migration the total population remains reasonably constant around 100,000 to 120,000 (excluding an unknown number in Iran). The figures for deaths so regularly exceed the number of births in India, that the figure in the old country can be expected to continue to decline.⁹ In the diaspora, by contrast, the numbers can be expected to increase, because it is mainly young people who have migrated and so the number of births can be expected to exceed deaths over the next two or three decades. But whatever the numerical total of Zoroastrians globally, there can be no doubt that Zoroastrians are now found in more countries around the world than at any previous time in the history of this ancient and noble religion. There have been Zoroastrian diasporas before: during the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian eras (from the sixth century BCE to the seventh century CE), Zoroastrians travelled for conquest and trade, but they did not go to such distant climes as America and Australia, though they did go to China. As Zoroastrians are now spread around more countries than ever before, and as the numbers, in the case of the Parsis at least, appear to be declining, the study of those migrations, their achievements, patterns of settlements, and the consequences of migration become matters of great significance for the study of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrians typically do not consider themselves part of the (South) Asian diaspora. Parsis see themselves as generally being on good terms with other people from India or Pakistan; some would identify themselves as Indians. Iranian Zoroastrians generally see themselves as distinct from Iranian Muslims, even though on occasions they share festivals. Zoroastrians wish to assert their own unique identity as Zoroastrians, or the 'real', 'true' Iranians/Persians. But viewed from the outside they are seen as part of the South Asian diaspora, and Iranian Zoroastrians part of the Iranian exodus. They have been subject to the same

⁹ The internationally read Parsi magazine, *Parsiiana*, gives in each issue the details of the recorded births, marriages and deaths. Its figures for Mumbai may not be completely accurate, but they are undoubtedly substantially correct.

immigration and race relations law; they have generally migrated at the same time and were subject to similar problems, for example, racial discrimination. In an ideal world it would have been good to consider other South Asian and Iranian groups in each of the countries studied. While this can be done to great advantage with one destination, as Baumann has done with Southall in London,¹⁰ it is simply impossible in one lifetime to undertake such comparative work in every location discussed in this book. Nevertheless I have tried to read studies of other communities in each country with a view to being able to identify what is a common diasporic experience and what is distinctly Zoroastrian.

A Question of Scale

One problem in writing this book has been the question of scale. The study covers eleven countries and has involved living in and reading the records in twenty-four cities around the world. This has involved seeking to understand the context of the Zoroastrian communities in very diverse historical, political and cultural settings. In covering such a range of countries and topics it was important to be ruthless in focusing directly on what was relevant to my subject. I am conscious of curtailing discussion of many interesting topics, of some important theoretical issues or of contemporary historical external events. Attention has been focused directly on what I judged to be essential to the Zoroastrian community. It was, for example, not possible to write about Parsis in Karachi without studying the history of Pakistan, or in Hong Kong without studying Sino-British relations, or Zanzibar without reading East African history, or in America without studying the history of immigration and multicultural policies. In writing the relevant chapters it has been necessary to set out that context, but because of the huge libraries of reading that could have been undertaken, it has been essential to be selective and focus on only those issues that impacted on the Zoroastrian communities. For example, while reading and writing on Karachi Parsis I paid little attention to the war which saw the birth of Bangladesh. While of

¹⁰ M. Baumann, *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic*, Cambridge, 1996.

huge importance in the history of Pakistan, it had relatively little impact on the Parsis. (Apart from the fact that there were Parsi generals on both sides; indeed, the Parsi Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw commanded the Indian army!) But other than providing heroes, that war did not have a direct or significant effect on the Parsi communities in either country.

While writing about Parsis in India I have focused mainly on Bombay. This choice is logical in that Bombay/Mumbai is the main centre of Indian Parsis, where all the major institutions are located with which diasporic leaders engage, and it is the city from which most Parsis have migrated. That leaves out Parsis in Calcutta, Pune, Madras and Bangalore, not to mention the historically important communities in Gujarat. There are several other diaspora groups I would dearly have liked to study, notably those in Aden, Singapore¹¹ and South Africa among the 'older' settlements, the Gulf States and New Zealand among more recent groupings. I hope the opportunity will come for me to research those communities also. There is another topic which I considered including. Since the 1960s a number of groups from Central Asia have claimed Zoroastrian ancestry. The first time I came across them was in Tehran in the early 1970s when a number of

¹¹ Mary Clemmey kindly lent me a file of papers concerning her family history. The first Parsi known to have moved to Singapore was a convict. It was his approaching death that prompted others who had settled there to obtain land for a cemetery in 1827. More Parsis settled in 1829. One of the early leading figures among the Parsis was Framruze Sorabjee Sattana, who started business in Singapore in 1840. He was the only non-European among the first shareholders to fund a library in 1844. He became a prominent Freemason. His son, Cursetjee Frommurze, entered a business partnership with John M. Little in 1845 as Auctioneers and Commission Agents. In 1862 Cursetjee married out of the community, to an English woman, Maryanne. This was the marriage from which Mary is descended and the reason for her search for her family history. Little took over the business and it eventually became a famous departmental store (Robinsons). In the mid-19th c. another eminent Parsi was Dhunjibhoy Hormusji, who became a member of the Grand Jury. A family member of the firm Byramjee Hormusji Cama & Co started a free school for Chinese children. Another major Parsi of the 19th c. was Edaljee Khory, a lawyer, who had a Masonic Lodge named after him in 1891. In 1903 Navroji Mistri settled in Singapore and started an aerated water company before venturing into real estate and the restaurant business. The road next to his factory was named Navroji Road after him. He brought other Parsis to the island. Numbers were small but several of them became prominent citizens. More arrived in the 1960s, several with Singapore Airlines; others were executives in industry, factories, insurance, finance and medicine. To my knowledge no one has written a history of Singapore Parsis and I am grateful to Mary Clemmey for sharing her discoveries with me. She in turn is indebted to Mr Rutton M. H. Patel in Singapore.

Kurds approached the Imperial Court for recognition as Zoroastrians.¹² Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, other groups from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have claimed Zoroastrian ancestry and sought support from Zoroastrians in India and the West.¹³ The response has been mixed, but mainly cautious. However, as I have only talked to one such claimant directly, I cannot claim first-hand knowledge and have therefore decided to omit this interesting topic. Potentially it is a major issue: if several million people are recognized as Zoroastrians, whose knowledge of doctrine, practice and history is typically rather hazy, where would the leadership lie, and how would resources from a community of 120,000-plus be utilized?

This book studies the older settlements of Karachi, Hong Kong, Zanzibar and London, and the newer ones in Canada, USA, Australia, France and Germany so that there is a balance between the old and the new diasporas. How to deal with Bombay was a problem. Eventually I focused on the post-Independence period only, despite the fact that in other chapters the history of the old diasporas is taken back to the nineteenth century. The reasoning was that my next book, written jointly with Dastur JamaspAsa, is on ‘The History and Religion of the Parsis in Bombay Presidency (1662–1947)’. A brief introduction here on the earlier period

¹² Two groups of Kurds are the Yezidis and Ahl-i Haqq, rather loosely linked with Muslim groups and preserving some ancient Iranian beliefs and practices. See the articles under those titles by P. Kreyenbroek, in Hinnells (ed.), *The New Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, Harmondsworth, 1997, and the bibliography on pp. 633 ff. For a Parsi response rejecting their Zoroastrian ancestry, see Dadrawala ‘The Yezidis of Kurdistan—are they really Zoroastrians???’ at www.members.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/deen33f.html. Such groups are viewed in a different light by the Zarathushtrian Assembly discussed in Ch. 10, with a number of western converts to Zoroastrianism who see these Central Asian groups as ‘lost’ Zoroastrians. On a meeting of Russian Zoroastrians in St Petersburg, 28 May 2000, see Ervad Burzin E. Aytashband’s account of his visit in the Karachi magazine *Ushao*, Oct.–Nov. 2000, pp. 11–18. On ‘Zoroastrian’ Kurds in Germany, see A. Bana, ‘Faith without Fetters’ in *Hamazor*, May 2000, pp. 30–2, p. 45 of the same issue on St Petersburg and p. 51 for Uzbekistan. Dolly Dastoor, ‘Many Faces of Zarathushtis’, *Hamazor*, issue 3, 2002, pp. 39–43, gives a fascinating account of her visit in 2001 to Zoroastrian groups in Moscow, St Petersburg, Sweden; she met others from Tajikistan, Belarus and Ukraine.

¹³ On the visit of Tajik leaders to Mumbai, see *Parsiana*, May 1992, pp. 26–9 and June 1992, pp. 25–30, which relates a sympathetic hearing for them from the Parsi establishment. They are also supported by some of the more ‘occult’ branches of Zoroastrianism in Mumbai, notably Dr Meher Master Moos, whose work will be discussed in the next chapter. Briefly, she claims that much of the religious authority for her teaching derives from otherwise secret Zoroastrians in Iran and Central Asia.

would inevitably have been superficial. Furthermore, there have been accounts of the Parsis in British India, notably that of Kulke and the excellent recent publication by Palsetia, which unlike Kulke deals with questions of religion.¹⁴ There has been virtually nothing published on Zoroastrians in the other settlements. However, there has also been almost nothing published on Bombay Parsis since Indian Independence.¹⁵ It was important to provide a reasonably substantial account of Parsis in modern Bombay/Mumbai because one of the key themes in this book is the interaction between the diaspora communities and those in the old country. Their interaction is crucial for an understanding of the Parsi diaspora. (The impossibility of a comparable study of interaction with Iran has already been noted, with regret.)

The tight focus of this book is on the period from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s, the period of the greatest migration activity among Parsis from India, Pakistan and East Africa; it covers the fall of the Shah and the departure of many Iranian Zoroastrians from the old country. It was also the period when a world body was formed. The global survey undertaken for this book provides a picture at the end of that period of intense activity and a basis for an analysis of trends. With the older diasporas it was essential to give the earlier historical context, since the only single book on these Zoroastrian diasporas is my *Zoroastrians in Britain*. The publishers were, however, keen that I include Britain in this book also, so that it is reasonably comprehensive. In order to avoid mere repetition and summary, France and Germany are included (as the British-based body is known as the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe). The section on Mancherjee Bhownagree has been revised in the light of John Mcleod's fine research, not yet published, on this Tory MP. Material has also been included relating the last years of the twentieth century, events which occurred after I wrote my earlier book. Because the extent of the fieldwork, reading and data analysis took me a further decade I have included 'end pictures', as it were, to look at how the various communities have emerged from those decades of intense migratory activity. The 'final end note' is the Seventh World (Millennium) Congress in Texas; this was the first time such a world congress had taken place in the diaspora, and it

¹⁴ J. S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*, Leiden, 2001.

¹⁵ Palsetia has a good epilogue on the debates on intermarriage, pp. 320–37.

was an event of significance for many diaspora Zoroastrians in their relations with the old country. Most chapters follow a similar pattern. After looking at the relevant history of the region being studied, a brief depiction of the Zoroastrian community in that region based on my survey is given, followed by a discussion of how that community has grown, and the chapter ends with a consideration of events in the 1990s.

It has been difficult to be consistent on the spelling of Parsi names. It is common for modern western writers to replace the 'ee' in various names with an 'i', for example Parsee becomes Parsi, Jeejeebhoy becomes Jijibhoy. There is a case for spelling names how the person referred to spelt it, for example 'Bhownaggee' not 'Bhownagree', but that can look odd in the context of widespread contemporary spelling. Where a person has left substantial personal records I have generally followed that spelling, even though it leads to inconsistencies in spelling the same name used by different people. Even here it is difficult to be consistent, for Parsis themselves do not strictly follow one spelling of their name for example with the common suffix 'walla' or 'wala'. Some of the non-Parsi sources, for example the Jardine Archive in Cambridge used in Chapter 4 on China, used idiosyncratic spelling, often not recognizing the difference between personal and family names. There is another problem of consistency. Parsis use a person's father's name as their middle name, but this is not always available in the sources used. It has been included where possible. I have included, usually in footnotes, the names of early traders and migrants, for example in Canton, Hong Kong and East Africa, in the hope of tracing family and trading connections.

The Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Many of the terms used in this book raise questions of theory and method in the wider field of religious, sociological and anthropological studies.¹⁶ Words commonly used in the following chapters

¹⁶ I wish to record my thanks to Prof. Kim Knott of Leeds for reading through this section for me, and not only saving me from some errors, but also improving the structure of the discussion significantly. Any faults which remain are, of course, my own responsibility.

ideally require detailed discussion, notably what is meant by ‘community’, ‘culture’, ‘tradition’, ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’. In *Zoroastrians in Britain* (pp. 44–9) I discussed my use of many of these terms; they are used in the same sense here to avoid confusion for anyone looking at both books. But there are terms that need to be used here which were not discussed in that book. In my opinion, terming the new place of settlement ‘the host society’ is inappropriate. Many western societies have either not been good hosts, or have largely ignored any duty to the settlers. It is commonly the communities, in this case Zoroastrians, who have acted as hosts to the ‘newcomers’. Throughout this book, therefore, I have used the phrases ‘old country’ and ‘new country’ as advised by Rashna Writer. ‘Homeland’ I have generally used to refer to Iran, the ‘real’ homeland for most Zoroastrians, even if the ancestors of most diasporic Zoroastrians have lived on the Indian subcontinent for a millennium.

Some place names

A brief note is necessary on the use of the terms ‘Iran’ and ‘Persia’. Technically, the former is the correct name for the country throughout its history, because Persia is only a province in the south-west of the country. For much of Iranian history Persia was the province from which the ruling dynasties came, for example, during the Achaemenid and Sasanian times. For those eras the name ‘Persia’ is a reasonable name for the whole. However, many diaspora Zoroastrians in the New World prefer to use the term ‘Persia’ rather than the current official name of the country, ‘Iran’, in order to evoke the memories of pre-Islamic Iran. In what follows, Iran will be used in a secular context, but ‘Persia’ when referring to the Zoroastrian perceptions of their homeland.

An explanation is also due of the terms ‘West’ and ‘New World’. It is illogical to include Australia under the term ‘West’; as seen from the Indian, Pakistan and Iranian perspectives it is to the east. ‘The West’ is a common expression in the media generally, and in Zoroastrian writing, to refer to the countries which are historically derived from European, mostly British, legal and administrative origins. The term ‘New World’ is also illogical in view of the extremely long history of the Inuit and other North American traditions, which the invaders drove into small settlements. But

again, it is a common expression in the media and in Zoroastrian literature. In this context the ‘New World’ includes Australia as part of the West. As part of the drive to change British street and town names and invoke ancient Indian forms in the 1990s, Bombay was officially changed to Mumbai. Generally I have tried to use Bombay when referring to the pre-1990s and Mumbai thereafter. It was sometimes difficult to be consistent in this.

‘Culture’

‘Culture’ is a highly contested term in religious, social and anthropological fields. It is the subject of countless books and articles. One basic question is whether religion is part of culture or culture part of religion. But the debates are far more complex than this simple point.¹⁷ In this context, I intend to point to what Zoroastrians themselves commonly see as their ‘culture’, that which marks them off as distinctive from other religious or racial communities. For many this would include religion, but not for all, because there are atheists who would wish to identify themselves as Zoroastrians. For them their ‘culture’ can indicate food, music, language, or personal and social values, notably family connections and responsibilities, charitable work, the much-quoted ethical triad of Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds, and above all, perhaps, their history. It could also include humour and for the older generation of Parsis traditional dramas (*nataks*). Iranian Zoroastrian ‘culture’ is commonly seen as being somewhat different, albeit the two worlds overlap considerably. Language is yet more important to Iranians than to Parsis, as is (Iranian) music. There is particular Iranian enjoyment of certain festivals (the *gahambars*). For some the bonds of ‘Iranian-ness’ can mean links with other Iranians, including Muslims, rather than Parsis, especially in the New Year celebration, No Ruz. Nationality and culture are closely linked for Iranian Zoroastrians who have felt compelled to leave their homeland. Different Zoroastrians would

¹⁷ It may be dangerous to point to any specific articles, because of the risk of giving an unrepresentative perspective on the debate. But for anyone wishing to gain an impression of the complexity of the discussions, a reasonable starting point is R. Williams, *Culture and Society, 1750–1950*, New York, 1958. Two useful overviews of the debates are T. Masuzawa, ‘Culture’, in M. C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago, 1998, pp. 70–93 and M. Hulsether, ‘Religion and Culture’, in Hinnells (ed.), *Companion to the Study of Religion* (forthcoming).

have a slightly different ‘mix’ of ingredients for their Zoroastrian culture, but the above list includes what most would value.

Community

In *Zoroastrians in Britain*, I commented on the problems with the term ‘community’, because the word does not refer to any clearly definable formal body; therefore, ‘In a real sense there is no Zoroastrian community in Britain.’ There is a diversity of groupings, and the term community generally refers to ‘we Zoroastrians’ as opposed to ‘them’, the non-Zoroastrians. In a discussion of the international scene that is even more the case. Zoroastrians and commentators use the term ‘the community’ to refer to the global Zoroastrian diaspora as well as a small local group, which may not even be formally established. It is worth repeating the argument that ‘Even if the historian considers this entity to be mythical, it is nevertheless a powerful myth, which affects the sense of self-identity among Zoroastrians. The term therefore has value, even if the above qualification is necessary.’ I still hold to that value of the myth, and am relieved to find that other scholars find the term ‘community’ useful, even if it and the group are vague and in flux.¹⁸

Boundaries

Various scholars have drawn attention to the importance of boundaries for communities: who ‘patrols’ them, why and how?¹⁹ There are differing perceptions of how people reach out beyond those boundaries to the wider society. In the 1980s these discussions focused on the second and third generation being ‘caught between cultures’.²⁰ However, an important contributor to that

¹⁸ Two books which I have found useful in reflections on this topic are A. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Manchester, 1985, and G. Baumann, *Contesting Culture*. Cambridge, 1996. Pages 189–203 are particularly relevant to my reflections on Zoroastrians, especially his comments on ‘members of *communities* drawing upon some shared values and compatible versions of their history that distinguished them from selected others’. His later comment on ‘the shared heritage that each ethnic *community* equates with its *culture* [emphasis original]’ (p. 190), are particularly relevant to how I understand the use of these terms among Zoroastrians.

¹⁹ See A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London, 1996, p. 199. For a discussion of ‘assimilation’ see R. Brubaker, ‘The Return of Assimilation? Changing perspectives or immigration and its sequels in France, Germany and the United States’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24 (4), 2001, pp. 531–48.

²⁰ See, e.g. J. L. Watson, *Between Two Cultures*, Oxford, 1977.

discussion, Roger Ballard, now argues that the young are commonly ‘skilled cultural navigators’ moving between cultures with as little sense of clash as truly bilingual people experience moving between languages. Ballard also stresses that diasporic members adapt to wider society on their own terms.²¹ He emphasizes that the second and third generation are not mere pawns in the control of outsiders. While not wanting to dispute this point totally, Vertovec offers the counter argument that this can sound too much like ‘rational choice theory, and that people are ever aware of what they are doing and are selecting paths which will give them what they seek’.²² These are issues which will be considered with reference to Zoroastrians in the Conclusion.

Tradition

One reviewer of *Zoroastrians in Britain* questioned my use of the term ‘tradition’, especially in the singular, for example when writing about the ‘transmission of tradition’. Obviously there are a variety of traditions, Parsi, Iranian, Orthodox, Liberal, etc. However, it is my contention that any one person at any one time adheres to a particular tradition. That tradition, of course, may be recast in a different situation or over time. Traditions are not static; even those thought of as ancient have been reformulated, recast, revised.²³ Similarly as ‘traditions’ change, so does ‘ethnicity’. Hastings writes about the ‘real’ genetic and the mythic genetic origins of ethnicity.²⁴ The fact that there are many and changing traditions or ethnicities does not preclude the use of the singular when referring to a specific instance or process.

Multiculturalism

An area which has been sadly neglected in the study of religions is the impact of multiculturalism on participants in multicultural

²¹ R. Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, London, 1994, pp. 29–33.

²² S. Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns*, London, 2000, pp. 156 ff.

²³ See E. Hobsbawn, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983, repr. 1996, pp. 1–14.

²⁴ A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 173 ff.

events. Baumann is one of the few scholars to address this question directly.²⁵ It is essential to be precise concerning what is, and what is not, being discussed. There is clearly a huge body of literature on inter-faith dialogue circling round such issues as how a believer in the truth of one religion can hold a dialogue with someone with a different belief system.²⁶ The point here is perhaps a more phenomenological one: what is the impact of religious minorities engaging in dialogue with established Christian denominations? How does it affect their own beliefs and practices? For some participants, 'inter-faith dialogue' is looking for common patterns, or shared beliefs, maybe even moving towards a universalist faith. Multiculturalism is a liberal concern to aid understanding between religious groups, i.e. the aim is not to change people's religion, but to operate with the conviction that if each knows more about the other, the result will be greater understanding and tolerance. (Rarely does it address the possibility that if people know more about another religion, they may reject it more vigorously.) What is the impact of inviting people from another religion into one's own temple? This is especially important for Zoroastrians because in India only Parsis can enter the temples. How does having other religious groups coming to observe worship affect the Zoroastrian experience? In speaking to each other there is a tendency for religious minorities to explain things in Christian terms, referring for example to Diwali as 'our Christmas', or describing Muslim and Sikh leaders as priests. What are the consequences of, say, Hindus having a Christmas tree and exchanging Christmas presents? Various writers point to the tendency for diasporic communities to be influenced by the idea of Sunday as the temple or gurdwara, etc. day, something preserved for set days and for major festivals and rites of passage, rather than as part of the very fabric of daily

²⁵ *Contesting Culture*, pp. 173–87. Vertovec has looked at the problems caused by the notion of multiculturalism in regard to political issues, see his 'Multiculturalism, Culturalism and Public Incorporation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 1, 1996, pp. 49–69 with a substantial bibliography.

²⁶ The obvious example of people in this dialogue is John Hick in e.g. *God and the Universe of Faiths*, London, 1977; *God has Many Names*, London, 1980; and *An Interpretation of Religion*, Basingstoke, 1989. See also G. D'Costa, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation*, Lanham, 1987; M. Barnes, *Religions in Conversation: Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*, London, 1989.

life.²⁷ Baumann notes that the non-Christian groups engaged in dialogue tend to be represented by the smaller groups within a religion, such as the Ahmaddiya, or Ramgarhia Sikhs from East Africa, or the smaller religions such as the Baha'i. From the Christian side it tends to be the more 'liberal' groups of the establishment who are represented rather than, say, fundamentalists (unless they are seeking to convert). What are the consequences of people from the various religions taking part in a 'multi-faith' act of worship? Do the participants carry this liberal, perhaps unrepresentative, image of the other religions back into their own community? It is not uncommon to find that the representatives of the diasporic religious groups become the 'gate keepers' of their religion in their region; the interpreters of their religion to the outside world and the filters through which the other religions are viewed by many of their own community. It is common for them to formulate an account of their religion designed to stimulate respect from others, to explain things in easily comprehensible terms, leaving out the beliefs, practices and attitudes which others may find alien. A sanitized, anodyne or universalist account is often given, which may in fact gain credence within their own community. Representing one's community in multi-faith activities gives status to those who represent the group, especially if this involves meeting such people as British royalty, the President of the USA, the Pope or the Dalai Lama.

Diaspora

The term and concept requiring most discussion here is 'diaspora'. It is a much-used and debated term. It is important not simply because the word is used in the title of the book (though as we shall see some scholars have denied that the Parsis are a diaspora), but even more because seeing Zoroastrians as a diaspora comparable to other groups, such as Sikhs, Hindus, etc., enables comparisons that I am convinced help in the understanding of contexts and patterns, strategies, and above all distinctive features of Zoroastrians (or their ancestors) who have migrated.

²⁷ See e.g. K. Knott, *Hinduism in Leeds: A Study of Religious Practice in the Hindu Community and Hindu-Related Groups*, Leeds, 1986, p. 46. Gillespie refers to the pattern of present exchange, television viewing and celebratory family meals, 'but not the Turkey type Christmas'. *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, London, 1995, p. 107. See also Vertovec, *Hindu Diaspora*, pp. 40 ff.

What is a diaspora?

In seeking to identify through comparative studies which are the distinctively Zoroastrian and which the common diasporic experiences, a consideration of what is meant by diaspora is essential. It is also important because of the extent of debate on this subject, and the fact that the only two publications I have found which refer to the Parsis reject the notion of a Parsi diaspora. There are eleven journals devoted to diaspora and countless others in which important relevant articles appear.²⁸ The term was originally used in Jewish²⁹ and Greek studies but has been found useful by many scholars concerned with migration, immigration and race relations. The first academic to press for the value of studying religious diasporas in the modern world was Ninian Smart.³⁰ He raised various issues which have later become matters of debate beyond the field of Religious Studies, for example the relations of diasporas with their old countries. He drew attention to the fact that, contrary to external perception, diasporic communities are not always ‘westernized’ and ‘liberal’; some incline to be no less orthodox than those in the old country. Further, he drew attention to the practice of constructing a universalist picture of the religion and pointed to the patterns of religious transformation common in many diaspora communities. His article did not include an extensive discussion of what is meant by ‘diaspora’ other than noting that in ‘many diasporas there is an element of exile’. Other Religious Studies scholars have used the term without debating meaning and patterns.³¹ Outside Religious Studies,

²⁸ They are: *Diaspora; International Migration Review; International Migration; New Community; Journal of Racial and Ethnic Relations; Immigrants and Minorities; Revue européenne des migrations internationales; Immigration and Nationality Law Practice; Immigrants and Minorities; Asian and Pacific Migration Journal; Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. There are several journals which have a specifically national focus but often include articles on migrants, e.g. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* and the *Journal of Australian Studies*. There are also journals on law, politics, sociology, urban studies which include relevant material.

²⁹ See M. Baumann, ‘Conceptualizing Diaspora: The Preservation of Religious Identity in Foreign Parts Exemplified by Hindu Communities outside India’, *Temenos*, 31, 1995, pp. 19–35.

³⁰ ‘The Importance of Diasporas’, in S. Shaked, D. Shulman and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, Leiden, 1987, pp. 288–97. The scholar widely accepted as the pioneer in the study of diasporas is P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, London, 1993.

³¹ e.g. M. Nye, *A Place For Our Gods: The Construction of an Edinburgh Hindu Temple Community*, London, 1995, p. 22.

however, there has been much debate on what combination of features is necessary for a group to be called a diaspora. Tölölyan, who launched the journal *Diaspora*, produced an interesting overview of the movement of the subject in the early years of the journal's life.³² He points to six overlapping concepts: diaspora, ethnicity, nationalism, transnational links, globalization and 'post-coloniality'. He comments that whereas 'diaspora' was 'a term once saturated with meanings of loss, dislocation, powerlessness and plain pain' before it became a useful way of describing dispersions, it has now become 'a synonym for related phenomena recently covered by distinct terms like expatriate, exile, ethnic minority, refugee, migrant, sojourner and overseas community' (pp. 9 f.) When authors sought 'an ideal type' of 'diaspora' following the Jewish model, the key features were seen to be coercion, which led to uprooting and resettlement, a clear concept and collective memory of the homeland, a yearning for a return to that homeland, and community 'patrolling its boundaries'. Diasporas, Tölölyan said, keep contact with the homeland, either with the 'mythicized idea of homeland' or with its physical place of origin. (p. 14).

S. Vertovec, in a substantial review of literature about and theories of 'diaspora', identifies three discernible meanings in the concept 'diaspora' in recent (1997) writing on the subject.³³ These are:

1. *Diaspora as social form*, notably specific social relationships cemented by special ties to history and geography, created as a result of voluntary or forced migration to at least two other countries; collective identities being sustained by reference to an ethnic myth of common origin and a tie to a special place; the institutionalizing of networks of exchange and communication; the maintenance of explicit and implicit ties with the homelands; solidarity with co-ethnic members in countries of settlement; a sense of not being fully accepted, alienation or exclusion by the 'host society'. The second set of discernible meanings, he says, are the tensions of political orientations, with divided loyalties

³² 'Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment', *Diaspora*, 5:1, 1996, pp. 3–36.

³³ 'Three Meanings of "Diaspora," Exemplified among South Asian Religions', *Diaspora*, 6:3, 1997, pp. 277–99. A version of this paper appears as chapter 7 in *The Hindu Diaspora*.

to homelands and host countries; and the third are economic strategies which are important in international finance and commerce, through the pooling of economic resources among ethnic members. Writers also emphasize the ‘triadic’ relationships: the global ethnic dispersion, the places where they live, and the homeland states.

2. *Diaspora as a type of consciousness.* Other writers, he notes, emphasize the variety of experiences, states of mind and a sense of identity. Two key factors are the negative experience of discrimination and exclusion and a positive link to their historical heritage. The awareness of ‘multi-locality’ gives a sense of both ‘here’ and ‘there’, a sense of roots and routes. Some emphasize diasporas leaving a trail of collective memory, and creating new ‘maps of desire and attachment’. Others emphasize the self-questioning stimulated in the diaspora, for example ‘routine habitual religious practice, rote learning and “blind faith” are no longer operational.’ A further aspect of diaspora as a type of consciousness is the number of diasporic persons continuing to visit the subcontinent on pilgrimage. Vertovec points to Baumann’s assertion that ‘whatever one does and thinks is intrinsically and distinctively *culture* bound.’³⁴ However, he also draws attention to Knott and Khokhers’ study, which notes how some young Muslim women distinguished between the ‘culture’ of their parents, who conformed to ethnic traditions emblematic of religion, e.g. dress, and the culture of the young, who wished to adopt a simple Muslim identity.

3. *Diaspora as a mode of cultural production.* Viewing diaspora communities in the context of globalization, various writers emphasize the fluid identities among diasporic people, or the hybrid mixing of identities in different contexts, not least among the youth, whose socialization has taken place in different cultural contexts. This may include the ‘retraditionization’ of key concepts and their different understanding of tradition.

Typologies of diasporas

Several scholars have sought to produce typologies of diasporas. The study that discusses this in most detail is Cohen.³⁵ He tried to

³⁴ Baumann, *Contesting Cultures*, p. 107.

³⁵ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London, 1997. See also C. Tilly, ‘Transplanting Networks’ in V. Yans-McLaughlin (ed.), *Immigration Reconsidered*, New York,

find a means of typologizing various diasporas, not by ignoring what they share in common, but by highlighting their most important characteristics' (p. 29). He identifies the following types and illustrates them by specific examples: victim (Jewish and Armenian), labour (Indian), trade (Chinese), imperial (British) and cultural (Afro-Caribbean). He acknowledges that these types can change in the course of time, and that some diaspora groups fit more than one typology. For a group to be identified as a type of diaspora he lists the following necessary common features:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions.
2. An expansion from a homeland (in search of work or for colonial ambitions).
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements.
4. An idealization of the putative homeland and collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation.
5. The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation.
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate.
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group.
8. A sense of empathy or solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement.
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (p. 26).

Words mean what we want them to, and their meanings change over time. It is important to specify what one means by a term. Clifford writes:

We should be wary of constructing our working definition on a term like *diaspora* by recourse to an 'ideal type' . . . the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or

symbolic homeland . . . Decentred, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return and a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation or resistance maybe as important as the projection of a specific origin.³⁶

For Clifford there are other key factors involved in diaspora ‘constituting homes away from home’ and ‘separate places become effectively a single community through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods and information’ (pp. 302 f.). He argues that none of the ‘diasporas’ fully conforms to the ‘ideal type’ of the Jewish diaspora, and stresses that there is a danger of defining an ideal type, noting that not all the Jews have wanted to return (p. 305).

Various scholars question Cohen’s assertion that a myth of return to the old country is a necessary quality of a diasporic community. Tölölyan, for example, says:

A repeated turning to the concept and/or the reality of the homeland and other diaspora kin, through memory, written and visual texts, travel, gifts and assistance etcetera. The orientation towards the homeland center can be a symbolic ritual . . . It may manifest itself in philanthropic concern . . . an ethnic community differs from a diaspora by the extent to which that latter’s commitment to maintain connections with its homeland and its kin in others states is absent, weak or at best intermittent, and manifested by individuals rather than the community as a whole. For example, Italian Americans can be classified as ethnics; their links are associated in a fragmentary way with food, music and special occasions.³⁷

Tölölyan acknowledges that the nature of groups can change from ethnic to diasporic, or the reverse, according to circumstances.

Brah also questions the importance of the ‘return motif’:

Where is ‘home?’ On the one hand ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’. . . . The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings.³⁸

³⁶ J. Clifford, ‘Diasporas’, *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 (3), 1994, pp. 302–38 at p. 306.

³⁷ ‘Rethinking Diasporas’, pp. 14–16.

³⁸ A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp. 192 f.

F. Anthias offers a different definition:

‘Diaspora’ references a connection between groups across different nation states whose commonality derives from an original but maybe removed homeland; a new identity becomes constructed on a world scale, which crosses national borders and boundaries.

She rejects the label ‘ethnic minority’ because it assumes the dominant group does not have an ethnicity, but also argues that diaspora studies have neglected crucial questions of class and gender.³⁹

My own position is that it is mistaken to define ‘diaspora’ wholly based on an image of the Jewish phenomenon. However, there has to be a powerful emotional bond to an actual or idealized homeland, distant from the new home. The key factors are a sense of a historical relationship with that place of perceived origin, and an international network of co-ethnics, or co-religionists. To posit a sense of hostility in the place of the new home is also giving dominance to the ‘ideal Jewish type’, but a sense of difference, which may or may not include hostility, is a key factor. The need to reconceptualize the heritage (religious or secular) is common, but that process can take many forms: mostly there is a universalizing of the tradition, but there may equally be a reassertion of ‘orthodoxy’. In whatever form the tradition is preserved, there is a common pattern of the younger generation identifying their religion as a key feature of their identity.

Two scholars assert that the Parsis do not constitute a diasporic community. Their objections require immediate attention if the title of this book is to be thought to have any legitimacy. W. Safran wrote:

The diaspora of the Parsis is in several respects comparable to that of the Jews: its members have been held together by a common religion and they have engaged in commerce and free professions, have been pioneers in industrial innovation and have performed various useful services to the ruling class. Like the Jews, the Parsis have been loyal to the government. But unlike the Jews, they are not widely dispersed but concentrated in a single area—the Bombay region of India. Moreover they have no myth of a return to their original homeland, Iran, whence they migrated in the eighth century. The weakness of the Parsi ‘homeland’ consciousness can be attributed in part to the caste system of India

³⁹ ‘Evaluating “Diaspora”: Beyond Ethnicity’, *Sociology*, 32 (3), 1998, pp. 557–80 at pp. 558 f.

and the relatively tolerant attitude of Hinduism, both of which made for a greater acceptance of social and ethnocultural segmentation, and made Parsis feel less exceptional.⁴⁰

Similarly, Cohen writes of the Parsis:

They are not so much a travelling nation . . . as a travelling religion. However, this aspect of Zoroastrianism also limits the extent to which we can call Parsees a diaspora: they do not seek to return to, or to recreate a homeland. . . .

In general I would argue that religions provide additional cement to bind a diasporic consciousness, but they do not constitute diasporas in and of themselves . . . The myth and idealization of a homeland and a return movement are also conspicuously absent in the case of world religions.⁴¹

The contention behind this book is that both of these judgments are mistaken. I trust that this study of Parsis in eleven countries establishes that Safran is factually incorrect to say that they have only one base, the Bombay region. The argument of both Safran and Cohen that Parsis do not constitute a diaspora because there is no wish to return to, or recreate, a homeland is equally factually incorrect. As we shall see, Parsis, like Iranian Zoroastrians, have a strong concept of the homeland, which is why Parsis say they are not Indians but Persians. Books about Iran, ancient Iranian artefacts and Iranian symbols decorate all the Zoroastrian homes I have lived in, and in recent years Zoroastrians from India, Pakistan, Australia, Britain, Canada and America have undertaken organized religious tours of the homeland. It is not feasible in the contemporary political situation in Iran for them to envisage a return to settle in the homeland, in view of the policies of the Islamic Republic which is in power. But in the 1970s when the Shah was in power, many contemplated, and some actually did, return to Iran. While I was visiting India and Iran regularly in the 1970s, numerous Parsis asked me whether I thought it was safe, and whether they should return to Iran. During the World Zoroastrian Congress in Iran in 1996 Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians alike visited the homeland and deeply appreciated the assurances of the Islamic leaders that they respected

⁴⁰ W. Safran, 'Diasporas on Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, Spring 1991, pp. 883–99 at p. 89.

⁴¹ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, pp. 188 ff.

Zoroastrianism as the original prophetic religion of the country.⁴² To say that the Parsis do not wish to return to the homeland is simply incorrect. Many of them in practice do not anticipate returning to Iran to live, just as countless Jews over the centuries drink to the toast ‘next year in Jerusalem’, but neither in medieval times nor in contemporary America have most Jews envisaged returning to live in Israel. Similarly most Hindus living in the West, for all their attachment to the homeland and periodic visits to India, do not envisage moving from London or Toronto to settle in India. The idealization and powerful emotional attachment of diaspora Zoroastrians to the homeland is encapsulated in a video made by a team of young American Zoroastrian professionals recording their pilgrimage to Iran.⁴³ The video is appropriately named ‘In the Footsteps of our Forefathers’. This is but one example of many that demonstrate a love for Persia. Indeed, many second- and third-generation Parsis in America see Persia rather than India as their homeland.

Cohen’s arguments about world religions also need to be questioned. What is a ‘world religion’? The logical argument is that a world religion is one that is open to anyone in the world. In that sense Zoroastrianism is not a world religion because of its attitudes to conversion, just as Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism are not world religions. If Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism are world religions because they are found in countries around the world, then so is Zoroastrianism.⁴⁴ I also find it difficult to see Cohen’s reasons for stating that a religion cannot be a diaspora when that religion clearly involves an image of a religious homeland.

⁴² There is an account of the Congress and its debates in *Parsiana*, July–Aug. 1996, pp. 58–71. Audiences were granted by IRI Leader Imam Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. This account, naturally from a Parsi perspective given the place where the account was published, emphasizes the Parsis’ Persian heritage. This was reportedly recognized by the Iranian leaders. For example, Khomeini referred to ‘Iran, the land of the divine Prophet Zarathushtra . . . your land’ (op. cit. p. 68).

⁴³ Produced by Tenaz H. Dubash, 2000. This has been shown at the Millennium Congress in Houston, in a World Zoroastrian Organization function in 2002, and at a communal function in Sydney, as well as in many homes. A similar point is made differently in a video, ‘Paradise’, produced by two young Zoroastrians in British Columbia, Shajriar Shahriari and Shervin Shahriari, 1997, where they are transported back in time and are taught by the Prophet and seek guidance from such major historical figures as Cyrus the Great.

⁴⁴ Vertovec argues that Hinduism is an exceptional case as a religion that is racially bounded but still merits consideration as a diasporic phenomenon. *The Hindu Diaspora*, pp. 1 f. If Hinduism is an exception, and he implies Judaism and Sikhism are also, then Zoroastrianism is equally an exception. It is a rule with many exceptions!

Patterns in diasporas

A number of scholars have identified the key factors in diasporic settlement. Knott identified five key factors, which in *Zoroastrians in Britain I* extended into ten.⁴⁵ Vertovec, Clarke and Peach proposed seventeen factors grouped under four rubrics.⁴⁶ Different factors affect different diasporas: for example, caste is a bigger factor for Hindus and Sikhs than it is for Zoroastrians. There are several common themes in these lists. One important factor is the old country—where people come from, the nation and the rural or urban setting; the extent and nature of links with the old country, and contemporary events in the old country. A second feature is the nature of the migration—whether it was to escape oppression or seek better educational and career opportunities, and whether it was undertaken alone or as part of a family network. A third group of factors is to do with relations with the new country—perceptions of it, the experience of racism or of pluralism and also the nature of ‘their’ community in the new land (for example, whether there is a formal organization and a building of their own in which to meet). To these common factors my own studies added the nature and level of education, employment and

⁴⁵ K. Knott, ‘Religion and Identity, and the Study of Ethnic Minority Religions in Britain’, in V. Hayes (ed.), *Identity Issues and World Religions*, Sydney, 1986. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 305–7 and Hinnells (ed.), *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, Harmondsworth, 1997, pp. 821–6. These were: 1. Which country people migrated from, and whether they came from an urban or rural background; 2. People’s perception of the new country; 3. The nature of the migration process; 4. What people were (e.g. education levels) prior to migration; 5. When people migrated (both their age at migration and which decade they migrated in); 6. Who people migrated with (alone or in an extended family); 7. Where people migrated to—both which new country and whether people joined an established Zoroastrian group or not; 8. What people did post-migration e.g. education and career; 9. Who people are—gender and career; 10. External events either in the old or new countries. I followed Knott’s seven areas of maturation, namely: 1. language; 2. Patterns of transmitting the tradition(s); 3. Perceptions of self-identity; 4. Patterns of group identity; 5. Leadership; 6. Universalization; 7. The impact of western ideas.

⁴⁶ C. Clarke, C. Peach and S. Vertovec, *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 5–7, reproduced in Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora*, pp. 21–3. They are: 1. *Migration processes and factors of settlement* (a) Type of migration; (b) Extent of ties with South Asia; (c) Economic activity in the new context; (d) Geographic features of settlement; (e) Infrastructure of ‘host’ society. 2. *Cultural composition* (a) Religion; (b) Language; (c) Region of origin; (d) Caste; (e) Degree of ‘cultural homogenization’. 3. *Social structure and political power* (a) Extent and nature of racial and ethnic pluralism; (b) Class composition; (c) Degree of ‘institutionalized’ racism. 4. *Community Development* (a) Organizations; (b) Leadership; (c) Ethnic convergence or conflict.

gender. Clarke *et al.* added economic activity in the new country, language and class composition.⁴⁷ All three works cited also pointed to the importance and nature of leadership; universalization; patterns of asserting self and group identity. Anthias also stresses the importance of studying the role of women in the transmission of culture, and of class differences. She asks what the commonalities are between a north Indian, upper class, Oxbridge-educated university teacher and a Pakistani waiter or grocer.⁴⁸

Various other studies have drawn attention to other factors in settlement patterns. One study by Naficy, which relates specifically to patterns of Iranian settlement in the United States, is especially appropriate to this study and merits particular attention here. In the course of this book there are various references to the powerful sense of Iranian Zoroastrians being the ‘real’ Iranians (or sometimes Persians, to evoke the image of the ancient culture). Naficy’s comments on the preservation of Iranian-ness in America are particularly relevant here. However, the points that he makes about Iranians are, in my opinion, appropriate to other diaspora groups and his work merits more attention than it has received. Naficy studied ‘Iranian nostalgia’ as evidenced by American-produced Iranian television, music and videos.⁴⁹ The theme of his article is the (re)creation of the image of Iran and of the experience of exile. Naficy uses ‘exile’ to express the concept that the other authors cited would have termed ‘diaspora’. He writes: ‘The “glorious return,” the operative engine of actively maintained exile must remain unrealized; in the words of Rumi, the exile must roam and pant to return but never actually achieve it’ (p. 288). He continues later:

However, this nostalgic past is itself ideological in that, as Said writes in *Orientalism* (p. 55), it has become an ‘imaginary geography,’ a construction created by exilic narratives. But this construction is not hermetic, since the ‘real’ past threatens to reproduce itself as a lack or loss; it is against

⁴⁷ Clarke *et al.* added religion, which I did not separate as I was writing about a religious group, and caste, which does not have a place in the Zoroastrian community unless one interprets their attitudes to intermarriage as a caste-like feature.

⁴⁸ ‘Evaluating “Diasporas”’, pp. 570 f.

⁴⁹ H. Naficy, ‘The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile’, in *Diaspora*, 1:3, 1991, pp. 285–302.

the threat of such a loss that the nostalgic past must be turned into a series of nostalgic objects, into fetish souvenirs that can be displayed and consumed repeatedly. Photo albums, letters, diaries, and telephones.

. . . The exiles construct their difference through not just what they see and hear but through their senses of smell, taste and touch. (pp. 288 f.)

He points out that musicians and artists are often opposed to the current Islamic regime because it forbids music and the arts. Iranians appeal to symbolism that pre-dates the factions, and this can mean that they glance to the pre-Islamic past: 'The past that [Iranian] exile television has found suitable as its reference point is chiefly the pre-Islamic past, in whose fetishes are encoded the values of Iranian antiquity, historicity, national chauvinism, patriotism and superiority, and which are repeatedly circulated within exile television's political economy' (p. 297).⁵⁰

Naficy argues that the boundaries of the group are largely symbolically constructed, and sometimes imperceptible to outsiders. The boundaries can be reconstructed by members of the community itself and are maintained through the use and interpretation of symbols (p. 295). He emphasizes the importance of rituals for heightening the consciousness of communal boundaries, which are particularly reinforced at times of celebration such as marriage or festivals in the calendar. Such rituals, he continues, acquire particular prominence when boundaries are being blurred, undermined or weakened. He concludes with the perception of the past, and in particular the different constructions of that past, held by the exiles and those back in the old country: 'there are different versions of history: official versions and those held in popular memory. At home [Iran] the official history is promulgated by mainline media; in Iranian exile, a kind of official history is propagated by largely royalist producers and consumers' (p. 299).

Other scholars have also drawn attention to many themes that commonly recur in various diaspora groups. Van der Veer emphasizes the romanticizing of the old country, and the tendency to

⁵⁰ A similar point is made with reference to the Hindu community by Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora*, p. 20 with regard to the use of the *Ramayana* in the diaspora. See also Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, who explains the text's popularity: 'the theme of exile, suffering, struggle and eventual return', p. 64. There is a fascinating study by Gillespie of the importance of videos, etc. among Hindus: Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*. R. Jackson and E. Nesbitt note the importance of traditional art in transmitting the tradition to children among Hindus in Coventry, *Hindu Children in Britain*, Stoke on Trent, 1993.

become more Indian after migration than before.⁵¹ Similarly, Clifford notes that ‘some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations’.⁵² Transnational groups seek to assert links with home in the old country and in the new by, as Clifford puts it, ‘constructing homes away from home’ (p. 302). A phrase several authors use is that people in the diaspora are affected both ‘by their roots, and their routes [of migration]’. A number of scholars also rightly emphasize the pathways of globalization—the links between the diaspora groups, and not only with the old country.⁵³ This range of interaction is facilitated by modern communications and ease of travel, and also by transnational or multinational companies, which move both people and capital around the globe. Cohen points to the importance of what he terms ‘global cities’. He lists Tokyo, London and New York, to which, especially for the purposes of this book, one might add Hong Kong and Toronto.

Who migrates and why?

Brah emphasizes a different dimension of diasporas. She writes:

At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as a diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots elsewhere . . . The question is not simply about *who travels*, but *when, how, and under what circumstances* [emphasis in the original].⁵⁴

This raises a theme studied by relatively few scholars, but clearly of importance, namely the difficulties faced in the process of migration, the complexity of the issues which lead people to migrate.⁵⁵ Who is it that migrates? Faist expresses the problem well: ‘Why are there so few migrants from most places? And why

⁵¹ P. van der Veer (ed.), *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*, Philadelphia, 1995, p. 7. Cohen likewise comments that the British in imperial times were more British in their diaspora, with their tea parties and clubs, than they were at home.

⁵² ‘Diaspora’, p. 307.

⁵³ See particularly Cohen, ch. 7, ‘Diasporas in the Age of Globalization’.

⁵⁴ *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 182.

⁵⁵ See esp. E. R. Barkan, *Asian and Pacific Islander Migration to the United States*, Westport, Conn., pp. 10–39.

are there so many from only a few places?’ He continues: ‘In most cases the number of potential movement participants is much higher than the number of those actually participating in events. Crucially the question is how potential participants in social movements and migration networks turn into actual ones.’⁵⁶ Brah expresses a similar point differently: ‘The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings.’⁵⁷ So to her earlier question might be added others: who sees themselves as benefiting from the huge step of migration, what benefits do they anticipate and how do they fare? In the course of this book it will be important to consider the different patterns of settlement of people who migrated for different reasons, e.g. Iranian refugees after 1979, or young single people travelling for education, or elders joining their young families in the diaspora.

Political issues and diasporic communities

It is remarkable in the study of diasporas how little attention has been paid to comparative studies of immigration and race relations laws and their impacts. Authors refer to them in their accounts of when, and sometimes why, migrations happened when they did. For example, in Britain in the 1960s, the South Asians feared that racist concerns about ‘this island race being swamped by immigrants’ would lead to the closing of doors on immigration. Many men, therefore, brought their wives and families to Britain, with the result that the numbers of South Asians increased significantly.⁵⁸ What has rarely, if ever, been attempted is a comparative study of the impact of race and immigration laws on the religions within western countries. The nearest attempt is by Christian Joppke, who studies first the immigration laws and their motives in the United States, Germany and Great Britain, and then the race relations laws and policies in those three countries.⁵⁹ His

⁵⁶ T. Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 4–6.

⁵⁷ *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 193.

⁵⁸ C. Holmes, *John Bull’s Island: Immigration and British Society 1871–1971*, London, 1988, and S. Sagar, *Race and Politics in Britain*, London, 1992. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, pp. 27–37.

⁵⁹ *Immigrations and the Nation-State*, Oxford, 1999.

study is fascinating, but it is not part of his brief to look at the impact of these policies on the religious groups of those countries.⁶⁰ It would be interesting to see studies of, for example, the impact on religious groups of the German policy on guest workers, who (until the new millennium) could not become citizens, even if their parents were born in Germany, compared with the French and American policies of encouraging early acceptance of citizenship. There have been comparative studies of American, Canadian and Australian policies, as we shall see in Chapters 8 and 9, but again there has been little attention paid to the impact of these policies on the respective religions. The comparisons are of a historical nature because of the interactions of the governments. The nearest study of this kind is Nye's work on the impact of planning laws on the building of a Hindu temple in Britain, but again this is (reasonably) focused on a specific sequence of events and does not discuss the impact of the policies on religion.⁶¹

Conclusion

This book is aimed at two audiences: (a) those interested in Zoroastrianism; it is the first book to consider the modern diaspora, and it has been a cause of excitement to fly into a country knowing that no one has written on this subject before; (b) those scholars who engage in debate on diaspora communities, or on migration, be they concerned with Religious Studies or not. I hope the book has value as an attempt to compare the experiences and networks around the globe of one religious/ethnic minority. In one sense, the Zoroastrians are a peg on to which is hung a wider debate. The two dimensions of this book support each other. By viewing Zoroastrians in the broader field of diaspora studies one is provoked to question or to look for trends that one might otherwise overlook. It also facilitates an understanding of what is and what

⁶⁰ One criticism I have of his book is that he writes as though the 'closed door' policy of successive British governments has been watertight. In fact there has been some limited inward migration since the 1970s, partly of spouses when a British Asian finds a spouse in South Asia, and partly as a result of a policy of international recruitment in specific areas where there is a lack of suitably trained people in Britain, e.g. doctors, nurses and teachers. The door is not as watertight as Joppke (or the Government) assert.

⁶¹ M. Nye, *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain: Krishna Consciousness, Religious Freedom and the Politics of Location*, London, 2001.

is not distinctive about the Zoroastrian diaspora. The Zoroastrians are, in my opinion, an excellent ‘test case’ for theories and analysis of transnational, diasporic cultures, and of migration studies, precisely because their numbers are so small. One can come to know personally a substantial proportion of the communities around the world, or as one person put it to me, I have written two words for every Zoroastrian living outside Iran!

*The Global Zoroastrian Diaspora**Introduction: the Survey*

In the years 1983–7 I undertook a survey of Zoroastrian communities around the world, specifically in Britain, Hong Kong, America, Canada, Australia and Kenya. The text of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 3. In Karachi, I sent out what had been intended only as a trial questionnaire for a wider study of Parsis; since that data proved so interesting, and the database was larger than for most trial runs, the data is included here. It may, however, be judicious to treat Karachi data cautiously because of the real possibility of a skewed sample. For that reason the data is not discussed in a separate section in the chapter on Karachi. Nor is there a section on the survey in the chapter on East Africa, because the communities there are so small. Looking back over the recent history of the Parsi diaspora, this was a fortuitous moment to have undertaken such a study. The 1980s were crucial years in various ways for the different communities: it was a period of consolidation in Britain, of growth and development in Canada and the USA, and the beginning of the growth period in Australia. In Kenya, by contrast, it was a period of decline, and a similar process was then developing in Pakistan. Hong Kong was awaiting the handover of rule from Britain to China. By the 1980s the East African Parsis were making their presence felt, especially in Britain, and also in this period Iranian Zoroastrians were settling in western countries. It was therefore a decade of significant change. Freezing such a moment in time to take a snapshot of the community has historical value. It would be fascinating to undertake another such survey to provide a longitudinal study. The survey was undertaken with the help of the Associations in the various centres: in Canada and the USA this was organized by Perviz and Hushtasp Bhumghara. Respondents were encouraged to pass forms on to fellow Zoroastrians whom

they knew who were not members of Associations, a snowball effect that yielded a wide range of respondents. Ideally, of course, one would wish to ensure a balanced sample, but because there is no known universe, no central lists of all Parsis, and because there is no obvious Zoroastrian family name, unlike Singh among Sikhs, checking electoral registers or telephone directories is pointless. The response rate varied from 25% in Britain to 90% of the then known membership in Sydney and Melbourne. The data was put onto the computer and analysed by Gillian Mehta and her family. Without them the work could not have been undertaken.¹

The data will be used in the chapters on the various countries, and in the Conclusion it will be analysed not by region but by 'type' (gender, age, education, etc.). Prior to studying the history of the growth and development of the various diaspora communities around the world, it will be helpful to give a broad overview of the population of the diaspora, as indicated by the frequency-distribution of the data, in order to give a broad picture of the global Zoroastrian population so that the distinctive features of the various Associations become clear.

I must stress that I am not trained in quantitative survey work,² but it has proved to be a valuable aid to this multifaceted study of the Zoroastrian diaspora, alongside the archival and fieldwork that have gone into this study. The 1,840 responses to a questionnaire with over 170 variables provided a substantial, and so far unique, set of data on living Zoroastrians.

Some Demographic Patterns

One-fifth of my respondents had migrated before 1965, so that there was a significant proportion of long-established people in the diaspora. Of the respondents, 53% were male, 47% female.³ Most (46%) were in the age bracket 30–50, but 15% were over 60 and 6% were under 20 years of age. The great majority

¹ It is also important to acknowledge the considerable help of the Regional Computing Centre at Manchester, for much of the work was done during my time at that University.

² I am indebted to my former colleague at Manchester, Prof. Peter Halfpenny, for his guidance on this aspect of my work.

³ Percentages are nearly always rounded up to the nearest whole number, except where the proportion represents less than 0.5%.

(70%) were married, with 22% single, 5% widowed, and only 3% divorced or separated; 14% of respondents had married out of the community. Of the 1,076 respondents with children, most had families with two children (44%); only 2% had four or more children. So although most people were married with children, globally the diaspora community was not at reproduction level. Unlike many South Asian groups in the 'West', only a quarter (24%) were part of an extended family network; 63% belonged to a nuclear family and 14% were single.

Language and education

Although only 21% said that they considered English their mother tongue,⁴ more people could read and write only in English (38%), than could in Gujarati (32%) or Persian (5%). This reflects partly the westernized nature of the Parsi community in the old country, and the very high levels of education among diaspora Zoroastrians. Only 4% of respondents completed their education by the age of 16; 46% studied for a degree, and a further 30% for a higher degree, 48% of them in the West. Globally, there was a roughly equal proportion of arts and science graduates (34% and 31%), but, as we shall see, there are different patterns in the various western countries.

Questions of identity and networks

Networking in the 'global community' was strong, with 64% keeping in regular contact with Zoroastrians in other countries, and 73% in such contact within their country of residence. But more than half of respondents (57%) did not read any Zoroastrian papers or magazines; by far the most widely read was *Parsiana* (by 12% of respondents). Approximately one in three respondents said that they attended a Zoroastrian centre in their country regularly for religious, social or communal functions, and a further 40% did so sometimes. Only 11% said that they never visited a centre, and in most cases that was because there was no centre near them. Generally, their perception of community relations was good, with only 15% saying relations were poor between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis (compared with 39% who said they were good/excellent); 5% said they were poor/bad among

⁴ 13% simply recorded English as their mother tongue, 8% both English and Gujarati.

Parsis (compared with 64% saying they were good/excellent). Very few said that they had received financial help, or help with employment, when they arrived, though a number said that they received considerable or reasonable help with accommodation (34%) or personal support (50%).

Generally, respondents believed that they had good/excellent relations with the wider society in their new country (65%, only 3% saying relations were poor/bad). But globally, 36% said that they believed that they had been discriminated against because of their ethnicity, 24% specifying colour. This was mostly felt at work (28%), but for some it was in housing, education, police and in politics (10–13% in each). As far as community relations in the old country were concerned, 73% thought that they had good/excellent relations with the British (in India or East Africa) and 72% with the Hindus. Relations with Muslims were thought to be good/excellent by only 60%, and only 25% thought relations with Black Africans in East Africa were good/excellent.

The question of personal identity is a complicated one. Although most identified ‘the old country’ as their mother country,⁵ when asked to define their citizenship, nearly half emphasized their Zoroastrian-ness, 31% stressed the country of residence and 26% the country of birth. The great majority (84%) said that they ate Indian or Iranian food often (less than 1% said that they never ate such food); relatively few (20%) said that they wore Indian or Iranian dress often. In part, the latter figure is explained by the fact that there is no obvious Iranian dress for men, and the sari is far more popular among Parsi women than any Iranian garments are for Iranian Zoroastrians. Male Parsi dress is for communal functions only. When asked what in their heritage was worth preserving, most (90%) said religion, 74% said food, and 67% said their language. Art, music and dress were not valued by so many.⁶

Religious belief and practice

The majority of diaspora Zoroastrians had received little or no religious education—54% had not been taught the meaning of the prayers; 60% had never attended classes in Zoroastrianism.

⁵ India 61%; Pakistan 10%, Iran 8%; only 8% said a western country.

⁶ 47%, 39% and 39% respectively.

But the level of religious activity was high: 70% said that they prayed daily, mostly (65%) wholly in Avestan. Sixty-eight per cent said that they always wore the sudre and kusti; only 12% said that they never wore these religious garments. Only 8% said that they did not practise any of the religious traditions,⁷ and most observed several (29%). Not all of the religious practice was strictly Zoroastrian, so 14% said that they venerated Sai Baba, and 3% also venerated Jalaram Bapa and St Francis Xavier. Most parents (69%) said that they had taught their children the traditional Avestan prayers, or would do so. Only 6% expressed any doubts about having their children's *naujotes* performed. The majority of respondents described themselves religiously as Liberals (52%); the term 'Reformist' was used by far fewer (6%). Although only 1% said that they were involved in Theosophy or Ilm-i Khshnoom, 12% of respondents identified themselves as Orthodox. One hundred and seventy-five or 10% of respondents described themselves as 'non-practising'. In terms of key issues debated in Mumbai, globally the Zoroastrians tend to express Liberal views; only 19% said that they wanted a funeral at a Tower of Silence, compared with 47% who preferred cremation. Only 8% preferred burial. The majority (68%) expressed various levels of acceptance of intermarriage, whereas 29% expressed their opposition to it, and most of those (13%) recorded that they would accept it under protest. Only 16% said that they would restrict initiation to the child of a Parsi father, most (70%) accepting the child of any intermarried Zoroastrian; indeed, 60% would accept the *naujote* of an intermarried spouse and 56% the initiation of any committed Zoroastrian who was not of Zoroastrian ancestry. But only 12% thought that Zoroastrians should seek converts. Only a minority would exclude non-Zoroastrians from religious places in India (36%), never mind prayer rooms in the West (17%), but 42% would restrict access either to times when there was no ceremony or to serious students of the religion. Of those who believed in a life after death, most (64%) said they believed in the immortality of the soul, 48% in a heaven and hell, 40% in reincarnation and only 12% in bodily resurrection. Very few thought that prayers for the dead were meaningless (3%).

⁷ Specified for the purpose of this question as celebrating Pateti/No Ruz, the *gahambar*s and lighting a *divo*, or a combination of these.

Many (35%) asserted that they were essential, 22% thought they benefited the dead, 17% asserted a 'humanist' view that they benefited the living, 10% believed that they benefit both the living and the dead. This may be thought to be a high level of belief in rites that are particularly focused on temples in the old country.

Most people thought that their beliefs and practices had changed little after migration, though more thought that their practices had changed considerably or a lot (29%) in comparison with their beliefs (17%).⁸ An important question for a new country is where authority lies in settling (religious) disputes. Only 11% looked to India, 1% to Iran,⁹ 9% to local leaders, more (24%) to specially convened meetings; but most (30%) thought that the individual's own conscience was the real authority. Looking to the future, the two main dangers foreseen were declining numbers (71%), and the youth not following the religion (52%).¹⁰ The main hope for the future lay in the strength of the community's ethical values (85%), Zoroastrianism's track record of survival (79%), a worldwide movement to unite Zoroastrians (79%), and the youth (69%). Only 22% looked to the work of a future saviour.

Conclusion

The global Zoroastrian diasporic population, therefore, consisted in the 1980s predominantly of young married people, though with a number of young single people (future chapters will show they were mostly students), with small families. Most were not part of an extended family network, though some had siblings or parents in the new country. The incidence of separation and divorce was low, but more than one in ten were married out. They were highly educated: more people had undertaken postgraduate study than completed their education at school level. Links with fellow Zoroastrians, both within their country and abroad, were strong, but there was relatively little reading of Zoroastrian literature.

⁸ The figures for assertions that there had been little or no change: in terms of practices 65%, beliefs 77%.

⁹ In both countries it was the priests rather than the Panchayet or Anjuman to whom people would turn.

¹⁰ Others were: conversion to another religion 24% and persecution 9%.

Few had received much religious education before emigrating. Their perception of internal community relations was positive, as was their perception of external relations, despite the fact that over a third believed they had faced racial discrimination. Although the old country remained part of self-identity for many, most wished to assert both their Zoroastrian identity and citizenship of the new country. The Zoroastrian love of food was not weakened by diaspora life, and almost all asserted that the religion should be maintained. Some levels of practice were high, especially in comparison to the wider western society, notably the practice of prayer, the wearing of *sudre* and *kusti* and participation in the festivals. Belief in the traditional prayers for the dead also remained strong. But the diasporic population did not share the views of co-religionists in Mumbai about the importance of *dokhmas*, and was more open to the idea of intermarriage than are people in any of the old countries. Most saw themselves as being liberal in the religion, but the Orthodox voice was present. Very few believed that the priestly or secular leaders in the old country had any authority over them, nor did many recognize the authority of their own local leaders, but rather preferred to follow their own conscience. Yet most asserted that they had changed their beliefs and practices relatively little in the new environment. The great majority recognized the problem of declining numbers, yet most saw reason to hope for the future of the religion.

That was the broad global picture drawn from the survey. Chapters 4–9 will look at how the various communities around the world grew and developed, and at the common and distinctive features of Associations as far apart as China and England, Australia and Africa, America and Pakistan. Chapter 10 considers again the global perspective, of how different groups of people, the highly educated, the scientists, men and women, and people from different ‘sending’ countries, notably India, Pakistan, East Africa or Iran, have settled overseas. As well as global patterns it will look at issues of globalization such as a World Body and the Internet. First, however, it is important to see how the various regional groups started and evolved and what their distinctive features are.