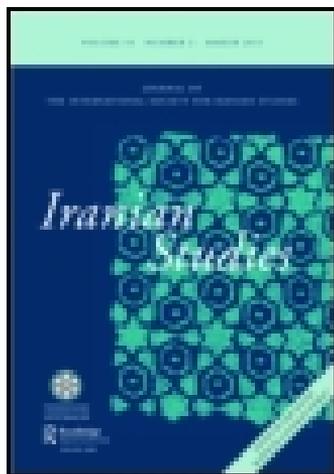


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## Charity as a Means of Zoroastrian Self-Preservation

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Rashna Writer

## Charity as a Means of Zoroastrian Self-Preservation

*Zoroastrian theology's emphasis on living the good life; the encouragement to create material wealth with the accompanying social obligations to put it to good use, explains the immensely extensive welfare system put in place by the Parsi community in India. Following the Arab conquest of Iran, the diminution in numbers and stature of the Zoroastrians in the ancestral land and the subsequent Parsi settlement in India, meant the marginalization of a people whose forebears once ruled a mighty empire. Once the Parsis acquired financial success, they put in place a community-wide network of benevolent institutions. This was followed by extending a muscular benevolence to the Zoroastrians of Iran, which evolved into a highly structured undertaking to ensure the safeguarding of the community from virtual extinction. Thus, Zoroastrian philanthropy was as much a reaffirmation of religious traditions as it was a means of self-preservation.*

**Keywords:** Zoroastrian Philanthropy; Self-help as Survival Mechanism; Preservation of Community Identity; Muscular Benevolence; Wealth Creation; Welfare Institutions; Marginal Status

The teachings of Zarathustra have endured for millennia. They provide a robust set of ideas to their adherents based on affirming the importance of life as it is really lived, rather than encouraging self-denial or asceticism as routes to the divine. These teachings underpinned the Zoroastrian response to their straitened circumstances following the Arab conquest of Iran. Their relegation to the position of an inconsequential minority in both their mother country and their adopted home, India, meant that self-help became a vital survival mechanism. Once the Parsis domiciled on the Indian subcontinent achieved financial success, they would put their considerable economic muscle behind building recognizable community infrastructure, which would ultimately include a community-wide network of benevolent institutions. The immense scale of Zoroastrian charity represented both a means of preservation of collective identity and self-help as a survival mechanism. Equally, the Parsis' awareness of the magnitude of the suffering of their co-religionists in Islamic Iran led to a determination to relieve the suffering of Iranian Zoroastrians. What might have begun

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as a modest exercise in generosity to their kinsmen evolved into a coordinated and highly structured undertaking working assiduously on their behalf, to ensure the safeguarding of a community on the edge of extinction. Zoroastrian philanthropy was as much a reaffirmation of the community's religious traditions as it was a means of self-preservation, as the following pages will substantiate by reference to case studies of both Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians.

"Those who make the world prosperous through good thoughts and honest endeavours are those who live a virtuous life in good thought."<sup>1</sup> In this sense, Zoroastrian theology is "life-enhancing." Zarathustra identified all that was good as emanating from Ahura Mazda, the one uncreated God. Two principles coexisting from the beginning were paired as the two *mainyus*—motivating forces—confronting humankind on earth: one was *Spenta* ("beneficent"), which adheres to Ahura Mazda; the other is evil, or *Angra* ("hostile," "inimical"). They are diametrically opposed in Thought, Word and Action—the pivotal ethical triad of Zarathustra's teachings: *humata, hukhta, huvareshhta* (good thoughts, good words, good deeds). The Prophet is very careful to stress the complete antithesis between *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angra Mainyu*. He offers a cautionary allegory in which one communicates to the other thus: "Neither our words nor our deeds, neither our thoughts nor our teachings, neither our beings nor our souls shall ever agree."<sup>2</sup> One is the author of life and progress, the other of non-life and regression. All the bad in the world is attributed to evil, which temporarily opposes goodness. The ethical message of Zarathustra is that the whole Good Creation should unite to remove evil from the world.

There is thus no possibility of compromise with *Angra Mainyu* in the Zoroastrian tradition. However, *Angra Mainyu*, while being wholly evil, is finite in time. Ahura Mazda is assisted in the task of overcoming evil by a heptad of *Amesha Spentas* ("bounteous immortals") and *yazatas* ("those worthy of reverence"). Man and the other creations of Ahura Mazda—the physical manifestations of the *Amesha Spentas*: sky, water, earth, animals, plants and fire—are to work in harmony, thereby linking the material and spiritual worlds. Man's role in this scheme of things is pivotal, because he is given free will. In Yasna 30.2, we are told: "Listen with your ears to the best things. Reflect with a clear mind—man by man for himself—upon the two choices of decision, being aware to declare himself to Him before the great retribution."<sup>3</sup>

Here, perhaps, lies the key to understanding the historical robustness of the Zoroastrian credo: the centrality of man in making the right choices to work towards the final victory of good, thereby reducing and ultimately defeating *Angra Mainyu*, argues for man's active participation in life itself. Accordingly, Middle Persian texts, and the immensely important *Dēnkard VI*, attributed to Aturpāt-i Ēmētān, highlight wisdom (*xrad*) and knowledge (*dānāgīh*) as "part of a complete religious system," while "wisdom should be turned towards action, and must be supplemented and restrained by goodness."<sup>4</sup> Man makes a vital contribution to the victory of good by working; thus we are reminded that "[t]he industrious man who assisted mankind, aspires to a place in heaven."<sup>5</sup> The Zoroastrian value system lauds commerce, and enjoins that, "[i]n the progress of business, energy is good, for everyone to become confident therein, steadfastness is good, and for coming of benefit there to, thankfulness is

good.”<sup>6</sup> An innate belief in an active approach to life, cherishing work and the enjoyment of life, is part and parcel of being a Zoroastrian in the truest sense. One practitioner stresses that “Zoroastrianism means ... work, duty, business, industry.”<sup>7</sup> If work is applauded, sloth is most emphatically condemned: “Idleness should be swept out of the world.”<sup>8</sup>

The Zoroastrian ethical system demands an active life that abjures asceticism; indeed, there are those who would argue that “the affirmation of life and the appeal to be active in shaping the world are expressed in no other religion as clearly as in Parsism [Zoroastrianism].”<sup>9</sup> The Visperad confirms that Zoroastrians “praise industry and courage.”<sup>10</sup> Poverty is not eulogized, and asceticism is rejected—although there is a moral imperative to conduct business with integrity:

42.2 When [a trader] buys for four drachms a single piece of clothing which is worth four drachms in one town, and he takes it to another town, and [in] the place where he takes it it is worth ten drachms, he sells it for ten drachms, and takes out of it wages and daily sustenance for himself and his horse, and he gives away what remains [of it] as a righteous gift, it is a [work of] great merit.

42.4 This [question]: for him who requires the wealth for a good livelihood, it is permitted to acquire up to 300 [drachms] for good livelihood; if the profit which comes to him [is] more than that [amount], let him give what remains, apart from his own expenses, as a righteous gift.

42.5 Even if his wealth is very great, even then it is proper; and this [also] at that time when people, to his knowledge, have not come in need of food, until [that time] when people have come in need of food, then he ought to make good use of his capital and profit.<sup>11</sup>

“Good works” thus become a means of achieving salvation.

While hard work and wealth-creation are encouraged, wealth brings with it social obligations: not just token gestures towards those worse off than oneself, but, rather, serious commitment to assist others. That is the trade-off. Max Weber’s conceptualization of “economic ethics” as “the practical incentives for human actions which are derived from the psychological and pragmatic dimensions of a religion” is apposite.<sup>12</sup> There is a dynamism implicit in Zoroastrianism’s economic ethics that helps explain the establishment of an extensive community welfare system and Parsi charities.<sup>13</sup> Equally, the particular trajectory of Zoroastrian history has perhaps increased the community’s need for self-reliance.

### *The Parsi Experience in India*

Loss of country—the reality of the Arab conquest of Iran, the subsequent Islamization of the country, combined with the diminution in numbers and stature of the Zoroastrians of Iran and the corresponding evolution of the Parsi community in India—meant the marginalization of a people whose forebears had once ruled a mighty

empire. This enormous loss of authority and self-government would engender a corresponding fearfulness—for one's life and property as much as for an immensely valued belief system rooted in the ancestral faith, now denigrated in the home country as mere pagan worship. It was the good fortune of the Parsi community to find itself in the more hospitable Hindu Indian environment, where it was allowed freedom of religion and was able to pursue its distinctive way of life. Under British rule, the elevation of the Parsi community as the mercantile elite of Asia, and the corresponding financial muscle developed by individual Parsis, provided impetus for the wide-ranging community welfare structures that came to be established.

Nevertheless, although the Parsi community had acquired the trappings of success, they remained a marginal group among India's teeming population, and their small numbers reinforced this position. Hence, Stonequist's definition of the "marginal personality," which he notes is "most clearly portrayed in those individuals who are unwittingly initiated into two or more historic traditions, languages, political loyalties, moral codes and religions"<sup>14</sup>—though it demands a certain refinement, given that the Parsi community was not "unwittingly initiated" into another culture—speaks to the Parsi experience, and helps explain the underlying imperative towards self-help. Despite their acceptance by the majority Hindu community among which they came to live, and the subsequent mercantile successes they gained under British rule, the Parsis were always peripheral to Indian society. In response to the mores of their Hindu hosts, they adjusted to the caste structure, using this complex social mechanism to erect insuperable barriers around their community as a safeguard against absorption. Equally, the underpinnings of the Hindu caste system meant that these Zoroastrian migrants were, by definition, outsiders. Within the confines of their newly erected caste edifice, they continued in the religious practices of their forebears and, over time, acquiesced to certain Hindu social mores—just as, in later centuries, they were to adopt certain English customs, habits and values, without thereby becoming Englishmen. Indeed, the colonial power was not prepared to accept the Parsi as an equal.

The Parsis' awareness of their marginal status in British India coincided with their elevation as the mercantile elite, and called for longer-term survival mechanisms that might in turn reinforce their group identity. There was—and remains—an intrinsic value in their *Parsi-panu* ("Parsi-ness"). The post-conquest experience of minority status in Iran, and then in India—that of being "a most minuscule minority"<sup>15</sup>—helped reinforce a sense of group solidarity, and strengthened Parsi resolve to institutionalize mechanisms of self-help, so that hardly any of the small number of immensely wealthy Parsi families attempted to evade their social obligations, cognizant as they were of the scriptural injunction that Ahura Mazda "shall make mankind quite zealous for doing good works, the reward of the good works is also made liberal for mankind ... because the producer of the origin is also producer of the result."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the emphasis of Zoroastrian theology on living the good life—combining an encouragement to create material wealth with a social obligation to put it to good use—explains the immensely extensive welfare system established by the affluent

members of the Parsi community in India. There are two possible further explanations for the development of this wide-ranging welfare system: one is the desire to preserve community identity, underpinned by the injunction that “the industrious man who [has] assisted mankind, aspires to a place in heaven”;<sup>17</sup> another would have been the calculation that self-help represented a vital survival mechanism. The small number of wealthy Zoroastrians would thus have argued that they were under a moral obligation to utilize a part of their wealth for the benefit of their peoples, since the community’s very small size meant that collective dependence on the largesse of the local authorities would have been futile.

The Parsis, who had migrated to India, had no fixed written code of laws at their disposal that would have determined the internal structures of their community. In relation to criminal law and property law, they were therefore subject to the jurisdiction of their respective rulers. But the regulation of internal civil and religious disputes was left to the Parsis themselves, and the administration of justice thus lay, for centuries, in the hands of the clergy. The arrival of the British on the subcontinent, and the East India Company’s administration of Bombay, which became a British possession in 1661 and afforded religious freedom to the various “nations” that chose to live and work there, led to a steady migration of Parsis to the growing metropolis from the towns and villages of Gujarat. The “nations” now domiciled in Bombay were encouraged to manage their internal affairs through their own representatives, so that communal assemblies or *panchayats* were created, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) being constituted in 1728. Despite the Indian nomenclature, the newly formed assembly was essentially the traditional Zoroastrian council of elders.<sup>18</sup> The lay and ecclesiastical affairs of the community were controlled by the trustees. As Bombay’s importance grew under British rule, and the Parsi population of the metropolis increased, the BPP played a central role in community affairs, its *de facto* remit extending beyond the city’s limits.

In 1823, a significant facet of the Panchayat’s work was introduced with the appointment of four of its members as trustees to administer its growing charitable funds. These helped maintain the *dakhmas* (towers of silence); organized *gahambar* feasts (on holy days of obligation), which continued to be attended by rich and poor alike; provided for the sick and destitute, as well as for widows and orphans; and funded soul-ceremonies for the poor. The development of Zoroastrian *baughs* (residential complexes) has been an aspect of the community’s infrastructure in several of the newer conurbations where they have found themselves. The dynamic economic conditions and trading opportunities afforded to the Parsis in British India saw them move from the more rural settings in Gujarat, initially to the pre-eminent port city of Surat. From there they would venture further afield—to Bombay, Karachi, Calcutta, Madras, and other smaller towns the length and breadth of the subcontinent. Here they would, over time, build their *baughs*: in areas of greater population density, as in Bombay, housing developments would be more numerous. Even today, the Zoroastrian *baughs* of India and Pakistan are an integral feature of the Parsis’ community infrastructure, which is replicated even in Tehran. These familiar residential enclaves were bastions of traditional Zoroastrianism.

Ever since they settled in India, the survival of the Parsis as a minority has only been assured by their being punctiliously loyal to every ruling authority. The only condition for their fealty to the state was that they could continue to observe their religion unhindered. Despite their attitude of detachment from the emerging Indian nation, the Parsis were accepted as members of this polity; in 1939 even V. Savarkar, chairman of the communalistic Hindu Mahasabha, promised the Parsis equal rights in an independent India,<sup>19</sup> no doubt owing to their leading role in the early phase of the nationalist movement. Parsi contributions to social reform, education and economic development in India, and their well-known generosity, often benefited non-Parsis in India and abroad, and this in turn reinforced their acceptance by fellow Indians. Among the well-known Parsi philanthropists, one could list most of the “Parsi aristocracy,” with their charitable donations to schools, libraries, colleges and hospitals, and relief assistance for victims of flood and famine.

Despite their very small number, the Parsis succeeded in making their mark on the economic development of Bombay, and of India as a whole. The seed capital for early industrial enterprises was raised entirely by relatives of their founders acting as guarantors for these enterprises. Middle-class Parsis volunteered to buy shares in Parsi firms, confirming the strong family and community awareness of the Parsis that had ensured the community’s economic prosperity.<sup>20</sup> Having established businesses that would go on to become thriving enterprises, families such as the Jeejeebhoy, Tatas, Camas, Masenas, Jehangirs and Petits all funded charitable institutions. What is less well known are their acts of generosity throughout India. Parsi donations to the Muslim Khilafat movement of the early 1920s was proportionally higher than from the Muslims themselves.<sup>21</sup> As Hinnells observes, “benevolence is a fundamental Zoroastrian virtue and has characterized the community wherever it has been, in Iran, India, or the diaspora.”<sup>22</sup>

The Parsis domiciled in India wished to retain their distinctive religious and ethnic identity, despite their status as “a most minuscule minority” among the subcontinent’s vast population. Drawing on their Zoroastrian faith, they deployed their considerable wealth to create a network of community-wide benevolent institutions as a means of safeguarding their Parsi Zoroastrian identity.

### *The Benevolence of Edulji Olpadvala of Calcutta*

The story of Parsi affluence and the vast charitable foundations deriving from it is so well documented that it hardly needs retelling. However, the story of the late Edulji Olpadvala of Calcutta is a little-known act of pure generosity in the service of his local community that deserves to be told.<sup>23</sup> The first Parsi in Calcutta was a certain Dadabhai Behramji Banaji, who arrived in 1767 from Surat and gradually made his mark in the city’s commercial and industrial life, coming to be affectionately known thereafter as “Banaji Seth.” In 1812, Seth Rustamji Kawasji Banaji (a relative of Dadabhai Behramji Banaji) came to Calcutta and took over his predecessor’s work. Known widely as “Rustamji Babu” (an affectionate Bengali term) he, in turn, came to be highly

regarded. Rustamji, in partnership with an Englishman named Turner, established the firm of Rustomji Turner & Co., founded the Sun Insurance office, bought the Calcutta Docking Company, based at the city's famous Kidderpore Dock, and established a paper mill and a cotton gin. He owned 27 ships, some of which he leased to the British government, and was one of the 12 Justices of the Peace created in 1835. Like other eminent Parsis, "Rustamji Babu" put his wealth at the service of various social and philanthropic causes. He built "pukka" (properly constructed) houses for the poor, as well as hospitals, tanks, canals and roads, and was the founder or chief benefactor of several institutions, including the Mayo Hospital, the Medical College Hospital and many others. He founded the first fire temple in Calcutta, on Ezra Street, in 1839, and it came to be known to the local Parsis as the "Banaji Agiary" (the other being the "Mehta Agiary"—probably the fire temple at which the majority of Calcutta Parsis would have worshipped).

The community's association with the city that was once the capital of British India is thus impressive, though it was numerically insignificant in this teeming city of millions. Thirty years ago, there were approximately 4,000 Parsis in Calcutta; today, there are 550.<sup>24</sup> A little-known fact about the community in Calcutta, according to Bahadur Postwalla, is that it does not have an "Anjuman as such," as do other Indian conurbations. In 1867, a Trust Deed was established with a "small capital"; trustees were nominated, and they were expected to "use the funds available for charitable purposes such as Medicals, Housing and Education for the community." The funds have grown over the years, as the various benefactors have created separate Trust Deeds. Thus, the donor specified that the "Khorshed Mansion Trust Deed," although a separate fund, was to be administered by the trustees of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community and Religious Charity Fund, making the Khorshed Mansion part of the Calcutta Anjuman Social Housing Complex. Located at 84 Dharamtolla Street (now referred to as Lenin Sarani), in central Calcutta, the trustees have in recent years bought the adjacent No. 83, an "old decrepit building complex," with "ambitious plans of rebuilding a modern complex," once the Calcutta Corporation grants planning permission—although the "Kolkata Corporation normally takes its own time [granting] Sanctions." Equally significant is the "Dharamsala Trust Deed," which helped to establish a lodging house for Parsi travelers. Indeed, the Parsis of Calcutta have access to a thoroughgoing community infrastructure, which includes its fire temple, a *dakhma*, the Calcutta Parsi Club, and a recreational meeting place in Calcutta's *maidan* (open green space), with tennis, basketball and badminton courts, as well as table tennis facilities and a cricket pitch. Especially beloved of the local Parsis is the Calcutta Parsi Amateur Dramatic Society, which recently celebrated its 75th anniversary, and continues to prepare all year for the annual "Parsi natak" ("drama"), performed at no charge for the entire community on the Parsi New Year. It is a major event in the local calendar, and is eagerly anticipated by young and old alike.

Edulji Olpadvala was a local businessman whose active generosity was essentially Zoroastrian in spirit. Through a Trust Deed, Olpadvala and his wife, who were childless, gifted their bungalow and the "entire premises" on 52 Chowringhee—Calcutta's

prestigious thoroughfare—to the Parsi community of Calcutta, on condition that during their lifetime they should be allowed to live there upon payment of a nominal rent. The only condition for the bequest was that an auditorium should be constructed and used—at no charge to local Parsis—for celebrations such as weddings, *navjotes* (initiation ceremonies) and other community occasions. Following the couple's deaths, the trustees converted their original bungalow into office premises, which have been rented out to a local company.<sup>25</sup> In the gardens of the Olpadvala property, the trustees constructed the Olpadvala Memorial Hall, with “a five-storied commercial complex” above it. The rental income from the office premises is now a major source of finance, and the Calcutta community's annual income from both the Hall and premises is “in excess of Rs.100 lakhs or Rs.10 million”—a “staggering amount” that enables the trustees to disburse monies to various causes, including a monthly stipend of Rs.3,500 for all Calcutta Parsis over the age of sixty-five. In a country without universal welfare provision, Edulji Olpadvala's far-sighted benefaction to his community bears the hallmarks of an essentially Zoroastrian ethos.

Olpadvala's legacy stands as an act of generosity for future generations of Calcutta Parsis whose collective inheritance includes a property that will continue to hold, if not enhance, its value for years to come, thus making the tiny community financially secure. I would argue that this subliminally indicated Edulji's commitment to “economic ethics” in action. The Olpadvala Hall, now a venue for community gatherings, is a little-remarked example of an act of giving: an attempt to preserve community identity that is significant in itself, given the local community's diminishing numbers in a metropolis of some 20 million souls.

### *The Amelioration Society: Safeguarding Iran's Zoroastrian Community*

Equally indicative of the Parsi mindset at the height of their financial power was that they were prepared to place their wealth at the service of their Iranian kinsmen suffering under repressive Muslim regimes. There can be no doubt of the severe hardships suffered by the Zoroastrians of Iran from the inception of Islamic rule in that country. Though there was only the most limited contact between the Zoroastrians of Iran and India (notably the exchange of treatises between 1478 and 1768, and Dastur Jamasp-i Vilayati of Kerman's visit to Surat in 1720), once the Parsis began to flourish in British India, they turned their attention to their kinsmen in Iran. One event that served as a catalyst in these relations was the marriage of the beautiful Iranian Zoroastrian lady Gulistan to the Parsi Framji Bhikaji Panday. Gulistan's reminiscences of the suffering of her people in Iran inspired her husband Framji to aid “with body, mind and money” those Zoroastrians who came to Bombay from Iran, and it is said that he earned the title of “father of the Irani Parsis.”<sup>26</sup> Their eldest son Burjor loosely established a fund to assist Iranian Zoroastrian refugees, and in 1854 another son, Mehrwan, established a more formal fund for the same purpose, which came in turn to be known as the “Society for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Zoroastrians in Persia” (henceforth, the Amelioration Society). In 1854, Manekji Limji Hataria became the first and

most outstanding emissary to be sent by the Amelioration Society to Iran, to assess and report back to Bombay on the condition of the Zoroastrians. This event opened another chapter in Zoroastrian history—one that testifies to the determination of these people to overcome odds stacked against their survival through mutual assistance, with those better off within the community coming to the aid of their less fortunate brethren.

What would have struck Manekji most forcefully would have been the cumulative denigration and dangerous marginalization of the Iranian Zoroastrians. He notified the Amelioration Society in Bombay of the existence of the Zoroastrian population of Iran in 1854: Yazd and its surroundings had a total of 6,658, Kerman had 450 and in Tehran there were fifty Zoroastrians. A few families in Shiraz were also noted.<sup>27</sup> Manekji applied himself to the religious and sociopolitical needs of his Iranian brethren. Their miserable conditions and poverty must have astonished him, coming as he did from the affluent Indian stronghold of Zoroastrianism in Bombay. He undertook the repair of the Atash Bahram building in Yazd in 1855; in 1857, the Atash Bahram at Kerman was rebuilt, through the agency of Hataria and the

help of the charitable gift of those endowed with liberality, the community of the Zoroastrians of India, who are of the race of the ancient Persians of Iran, by the agency and efforts of the behdin [“those of good religion,” i.e. Zoroastrians] of lauded conduct, Manekji, son of the late blessed Limji Hushang Hataria of India, by race a Persian.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, Hataria had repaired the village *adurans* at Qanat-ghesan, near Kerman, and at Khorramshah, outside Yazd. By 1864, he also had new *dakhmas* built at Yazd and Kerman, and by 1865 at Sharifabad, a small *dakhma* at Qanat-ghesan.<sup>29</sup> The upholding of religious traditions was thereby boosted by these efforts, which were funded by the Amelioration Society in Bombay, reinforcing community identity in a hostile environment.

The Amelioration Society worked simultaneously on several fronts to improve the lot of their co-religionists in Iran. From 1857, schools began to be established for the education of Zoroastrian children. An annual contribution of Rs.600 went towards maintaining schools in eleven villages in the Yazd and Kerman provinces. Further funds from individual Parsis—Rs.500 per annum from the trustees of the Nasarvanji Mancherji Cama fund, an undisclosed amount from Palanji Patel, and so on—resulted in the opening of a boarding school in Tehran in 1866.<sup>30</sup> The education received by the youth was to help their economic advancement in the years to come. Indeed, in those early decades of Zoroastrian education, sons of poor parents, having acquired a basic knowledge of “reading, writing and arithmetic,” were able to help change the living conditions of their families. The society’s emphasis on education, under Hataria’s stewardship, was intended to significantly ameliorate the condition of Iranian Zoroastrians. Education had been forbidden to them, and the vast majority

were consequently illiterate. Hataria's accomplishment in establishing boys' schools in both Yazd and Kerman by 1857, just three years after his arrival in Iran, was thus no mean achievement—won despite considerable resentment among local Muslims, who considered it an irrelevance to educate the *gabr* (“infidel”).

Arbab Keikhosrow Jehanyan started a school for one hundred girls in Yazd, having set aside a substantial amount in trust for its maintenance.<sup>31</sup> Thereafter, a school was opened in Kerman, and yet another in Tehran. Indeed, the Muslims of Tehran appeared impressed by the education provided for Zoroastrian girls in the capital, and among the higher echelons of their society there was an eagerness to allow their daughters to attend the Zoroastrian girls' school.<sup>32</sup> By 1930, the intake of the Tehran girls' school had grown to 152, of whom 101 were Zoroastrians. The Zoroastrian students received a free education, while the Muslim girls were required to pay fees ranging from Rs.3 to Rs.12 a month. The Zoroastrians of Tehran contributed a “voluntary tax” that went towards the maintenance of their school.<sup>33</sup> The Amelioration Society was equally aware of the danger of the abduction of young Zoroastrian women by Muslims, and therefore set aside an amount of money providing for orphan girls of marriageable age to be “settled in life.”<sup>34</sup> In this manner, more than one hundred girls were given in marriage to Zoroastrian men, with the society bearing the cost of the marriage ceremonies.

Manekji Limji Hataria is immortalized in modern Zoroastrian history as the prime instigator of the abolition of the hated *jizya*, or poll-tax. All “unbelievers”—or non-Muslims—were required to pay the tax. Hataria discerned at an early stage that it was payment of the *jizya* that was the single most severe imposition upon the Zoroastrian population of Iran, and had become the chief instrument of their oppression. The capitation tax on the community amounted to 667 tomans levied annually, according to imperial orders. The tax collectors would add an arbitrary amount for their commission, and the subsequent final demand placed upon the poverty-stricken Zoroastrians would often be in the region of 2,000 tomans.<sup>35</sup> Karaka informs us that around a thousand adult Zoroastrians had been assessed for the payment of the tax. Of these, “200 were able to bear the burden without difficulty, 400 paid it with great inconvenience, while the rest were unable to do so at all, even at the point of the sword.”<sup>36</sup>

While negotiating for the removal of the *jizya*, over a period of twenty-five years the managers of the Amelioration Society contributed Rs.109,654 in assistance towards payment of the poll-tax for the poorest of the Iranian Zoroastrians.<sup>37</sup> It is not surprising that Hataria's main preoccupation in his illustrious career in Iran was to achieve the complete abolition of the *jizya* for the Zoroastrian community. This proved to be no easy undertaking. Hataria and the influential Parsi backers of the Amelioration Society in Bombay brought their influence to bear on the British, who were in turn prepared to urge the shah to review the case for the Zoroastrians in his land. Hataria was duly presented to the ruler of Iran under the auspices of the British ambassador in Tehran, Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, when the subject was raised. An immediate reduction in the amount of tax payable was achieved—namely, the sum of 100 tomans, for a total claim for that year of 920 tomans, the

joint annual contribution of Yazd and Kerman.<sup>38</sup> When “His Persian majesty” visited England in 1873, a deputation of Parsis, led by Dadabhai Naoroji and supported by Sir Henry Rawlinson and E. B. Eastwick, MP, approached him with a petition to abolish the *jizya* “by way of a propitiatory offering designed to ward off evil from his most royal person.”<sup>39</sup> The Parsis continued to press their case to Tehran, through the good offices of the British government. The grievances brought to the notice of the shah were

that the Persian Zoroastrians were liable to forcible conversion; that property belonging to a Zoroastrian family was confiscated wholesale for the use and benefit of individual proselytes, notwithstanding the existence of prior claims of lawful heirs; that property newly purchased was liable to be taxed for the benefit of the *mullahs* to the extent of a fifth of its value; that new houses were forbidden to be erected and old ones to be repaired ... such of them as were engaged in trade were subjected to extortionate demands under pretence of enforcing government custom dues.<sup>40</sup>

On 27 September 1882, the royal *firman* decreeing the immediate abolition of the *jizya* was finally received by the Amelioration Society in Bombay. It read:

The Zoroastrians, residing at Yazd and Kerman, who are the descendants of the ancient population and nobles of Persia, and whose peace and comfort it is our Royal desire now to render more complete than heretofore.

Therefore, by the issue of this Royal firman, we order and command that the same taxes, assessments, revenues, and all other Government imposts, trading dues etc. which are taken from our Mahomedan subjects residing in the town and villages of Yazd and Kerman, shall be taken in like manner from the Zoroastrians who also reside there, and nothing more nor less ...

The present and future Governors of these provinces are to consider the claim for the payment of this tribute as now surrendered forever.<sup>41</sup>

Manekji Limji Hataria’s mission in Iran had been a remarkable achievement by any standard. To a casual observer, it would appear as though this great and tireless man had single-handedly achieved the removal of obstacles from the life of Iran’s Zoroastrians. In large measure this is, in fact, true. Nevertheless, influential Parsis in India and Britain had persisted in pressurizing the Iranian authorities on behalf of their co-religionists, and individual Parsis, too, had continued to contribute to the Amelioration Society in its work among Iranian Zoroastrians. The close cooperation between the more affluent Indian Zoroastrians and their depressed Iranian brethren is a remarkable chapter in the immensely long history of the Zoroastrians, in which faithfulness to the memory of their collective ancestry had been kept alive, and the struggle for a better life for those less fortunate among them had continued until it was achieved.

What might have begun as an exercise in generosity on the part of one's brethren evolved into a calculated, highly structured undertaking to work assiduously to ensure the safeguarding of the Iranian Zoroastrian community from virtual extinction—an attempt to arrest the attrition rate of the dwindling community, which numbered, as Manekji noted in 1854, a mere 7,160 souls. The poor visibility and representation of the community in Iran—part and parcel of successive Iranian ruling elites' policy in relation to the Zoroastrians—would not be overturned. The Amelioration Society would have grasped this fact on early acquaintance with the situation in Iran. The altruistic motive operated as the strategic backdrop to the hard-headed objective of reinforcing community identity; community self-preservation would have been among the major considerations of the Amelioration Society's benefactors.

Regardless of Manekji's achievements, there was no guarantee of security for Zoroastrians in Iran, despite glacially slow changes in the living conditions of the community that had taken place under the Qajar (1796–1925) and Pahlavi dynasties (1925–79). Two Zoroastrians—Jamshid Jamshidian and Keikhosrow Shahrokh—were instrumental in improving the conditions of the Zoroastrians in twentieth-century Iran. Each man, in his turn, established a position of trust within the Iranian ruling elite, and used his influence to induce in the rulers a re-evaluation of the traditional denigration of the Zoroastrians. It was as though the baton of community service through charitable works had passed from the Amelioration Society to the newly emerging Zoroastrian elite of Iran. The Zoroastrian attrition rate in Islamic Iran may have been stemmed somewhat by the efforts of the Indian Parsis, but the threats to their survival had by no means disappeared.

Jamshid Jamshidian rose to become one of the wealthiest and most influential merchant bankers in Iran. Having begun his career as a contractor, he went on to establish close contacts with the Qajar court, and the influential Mirza Ali Asghar Khan Atabak Azam's personal recommendations helped the Zoroastrian merchant expand his business ventures. He obtained the main contract to supply the Qajar army with provisions—a monopoly that enabled his financial prosperity. He went on to become the most prominent banker in Iran. The government would pay for the provisions in installments, through the collection of taxes. These promissory notes were lodged with Jamshid, who became, in effect, banker to the government of Iran—in itself a striking achievement, since the main banks in Qajar Iran were controlled by the British and Russians. Zoroastrian entrepreneurs and merchants considered it part of their civic duty to employ their co-religionists, and in his vast commercial enterprises Jamshid employed between 150 and 200 Zoroastrians.<sup>42</sup> By all accounts, Jamshidian, who “had a Zoroastrian love of justice,” worked not just for his own people but, having joined the movement for constitutional reform, was among the first members to be elected in 1906, when the Majles was formed.<sup>43</sup> As Boyce observes, “after 1000 years a Zoroastrian voice was heard again in the councils of Iran.”<sup>44</sup> His special contribution to his people, of great long-term significance, was having employed them in large numbers. Equally, Jamshidian had the ability to engender a sense of ethnic identity and group loyalty among the community newly domiciled

in Tehran, where a small number—some 325 by 1900—had migrated from Yazd and Kerman, in what to them would have been a strange environment. Jamshidian was unquestionably not just the pre-eminent Iranian merchant banker, but a community leader of stature.

One of Jamshidian's employees was Keikhosrow Shahrokh, arguably the most outstanding Iranian Zoroastrian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whose career under the late Qajar shahs and Reza Pahlavi, founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, placed him at the very heart of the Iranian establishment. Even as Iran was being transformed—and as contact with, and exploitation by, the western powers heightened national consciousness, and Iranian intellectuals began to redefine their identity, taking their lead from the exceptional figures of Keikhosrow Shahrokh and Jamshid Jamshidian; the wider Zoroastrian community did not participate in the momentous events sweeping the land. While Zoroastrians attempted to keep themselves at some distance from their neighbors, they could not avoid discrimination. The catalogue of restrictions placed upon them remained lengthy. The two tools of denigration persisted: the Zoroastrian continued to be chastised as *atash-parast*, a "fire-worshipper," and condemned as *najes*, unclean by the very fact of being born a Zoroastrian. The former pejorative—while fundamentally inaccurate—rationalized Zoroastrians' denigration as "unbelievers" and "infidels," unworthy of religious tolerance, and consequently without the full protection of the legal apparatus of the state. Reference to Zoroastrians as *najes* helped to consolidate the impression of the untouchability of people who were debarred from participating fully in the socio-economic spheres of national life.

Keikhosrow Shahrokh's *Memoirs*<sup>45</sup> are an invaluable first-hand account of Iran at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Here was a man who, as a member of a despised community, and himself from humble beginnings, rose to prominence as an adviser to the shahs of both the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties, while simultaneously representing his people in the Majles. Yet his assessment was stark: "There can be no doubt that with the growth in influence of Islam in Iran, the condition of the Zoroastrians deteriorated day by day. There was no peace and security for the community."<sup>46</sup> Among the litany of suffering, he cites the occasion when the governor of Kerman's servant killed the Zoroastrian Dinyar Mehraban for his money.<sup>47</sup> Kerman endured a level of controlled anarchy which meant that, in the absence of such paternal and no doubt influential figures as Shahrokh, the Zoroastrian populace lived in fear for their lives and property. Qajar Iran's inadequate governance was felt most acutely in the provinces, among its Zoroastrian subjects.

Despite the lack of legal structures, inter-community affairs were handled by the *anjomans*: "Keikhosrow Kahn Saheb Tirandaz Kucheh Biouki, the representative of the Amelioration Society, a highly educated and cultured man, founded the Tehran, Yazd and Kerman *Anjomans*, based on a specially drafted constitution."<sup>48</sup> Establishing organs of self-government did not guarantee much, however. According to Shahrokh, "Bahman Khosrowshah from Yazd, a good-natured and courageous merchant, was attacked and killed in his garden one night. Although the assassins were known, they were never brought to justice."<sup>49</sup>

The first couple of decades of the twentieth century witnessed profound change in the condition of the Zoroastrians. This period coincided with Keikhosrow's dynamic career—not just as the Zoroastrian member of the Majles, a position he held from 1909 until his death in 1940, but also in his capacity as a social reformer. In a very real sense, the Zoroastrians of Iran had been relegated to the margins of society, and the vast majority were left to scratch a living. Their regeneration would have to be thoroughgoing if it was to bear fruit. Health, education, employment and the legal protection of life and property all demanded attention. The Amelioration Society had concentrated on laying the foundations, yet much remained to be done. Every step required adroit maneuvers, given the authorities' disdain of the community. This explains why figures such as Manekji Hataria, Jamshid Jamshidian and Keikhosrow Shahrokh, who enjoyed influence at the very heart of government, were crucial to Zoroastrian emancipation, and managed—almost miraculously—to overturn an otherwise hopeless situation. Equally, as had been true for the Parsis in India, the philosophy behind Iranian Zoroastrian advancement was based on a strong belief in self-help.

Thus, when establishing a school in Tehran,

as no fees were charged, it was arranged with some of the [Zoroastrian] merchants that they would contribute a certain amount from the entrance and exit of every bale which passed through their business premises ... It was decided to ask Arbab Jamshid [Jamshidian] to donate the building for the school. One night when I was playing backgammon with the Arbab at his estate, Jamshid-Abad, I decided to make a bet with him. It was our normal practice to play for fun, but on this particular night the Arbab was in good spirits and I got the idea of a wager. If I won he would have to donate the building to the school; and if I lost, I would never again broach the subject of the school with him. Fortunately I won, and the following day he transferred the Deeds to the School. Some time later, on the occasion of his son's *sedreh-pushbi* [initiation ceremony] I took the opportunity of asking him to donate the ground adjacent to the school, to which he agreed. The school was known henceforth as "Jamshid-e Djam."<sup>50</sup>

Shahrokh was a fundraiser without parallel:

In 1931, Bahram Bikaji [an elderly "benevolent Parsi gentleman" from Bombay] once again visited Tehran. In the course of our discussions, I learnt that he had one daughter and a son, Firoze, who had been educated in England. Unfortunately, in 1916, during World War I, the ship in which Firoze was travelling was torpedoed in the Mediterranean. I asked Bikaji whether he had made any donations in memory of his son. He had not done so to date ... If he were to give me 20,000 rupees, I could build a school in Tehran. He agreed ... Bahramji ... may God rest his soul in peace, donated a further sum of 50,000 rupees, and the building was thus completed and named the Firooz Bahram High School [after his son], and was opened in 1932.<sup>51</sup>

This school, originally established to give the Zoroastrians a basic education, had, by the 1970s, earned the reputation of being one of the finest schools in Iran. Even in the western Zoroastrian diaspora, alumni of the school continue to speak of it with pride and affection. Eminent Muslim Iranians too, were educated at the Firooz Bahram, including one of the sons of Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Arguably, the *raison d'être* of the Parsi community in India was to maintain their distinctiveness among India's multitude. Here they had encountered a benign environment that enabled them to do so. What Manekji Limji Hataria encountered in Iran was a malign environment from a Zoroastrian perspective. The muscular attitude and policies of the Amelioration Society was as much a reaffirmation of the community's religious traditions—witness the repair of village *adurans*, *atash bahrams* and *dakhmas*—as of their distinct cultural identity. This was demonstrated in the establishment of Zoroastrian schools, and the giving of orphan Zoroastrian girls in marriage to Zoroastrian men. Indeed, by the mid-nineteenth century, when the Amelioration Society began work on behalf of the Iranian Zoroastrians, it would have seemed to be an eleventh-hour operation—a last-ditch attempt to prevent the Zoroastrians of Iran from being swamped by the majority Muslim population. This, then, became a central duty that the affluent Parsis of India could not turn their backs on: safeguarding the community in Iran, which in turn helped reinforce community identity in the mother country.

### *Extending a Helping Hand to Iranian Zoroastrian Refugees*

Some 125 years after Manekji Limji Hataria had arrived in Iran to work on behalf of the Zoroastrians, the country was convulsed by the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This event reinforced the marginal and somewhat precarious status of the community. The *raison d'être* of the present Iranian state is fundamentalist Shi'ite Islamic philosophy—and the Zoroastrian population who, by definition, are not an Islamic people, are therefore subject to various social and economic pressures. A fundamentalist Islamic state is clearly antithetical to their interests. The prospect of a bleak and uncertain future has led some Zoroastrians to seek to distance themselves from their country. While this author was engaged on fieldwork on the Indian subcontinent in the winter of 1988, she was able to investigate at first-hand the situation of Zoroastrian refugees—some twenty-one youths who had made the hazardous journey overland from Iran to a major city on the subcontinent.<sup>52</sup> The picture that emerged provided a snapshot of conditions on the ground for Iran's Zoroastrians in the first decade of the Islamic Republic. It offered a clear view of the structured response of the Parsis of that city in safeguarding the young refugees in their midst, and of the community's sense of responsibility for their Iranian co-religionists.

What was most notable was that the group comprised young males, all of whom had left behind them parents, brothers, sisters and other kinfolk. The most striking fact was the refugees' choice of first port of call: a major city on the subcontinent with a Parsi population. Individual wealthy Parsis of the town had worked out a

method of accommodating these young people. The first step was the verification of each refugee as a bona fide Zoroastrian, which was achieved by a rough-and-ready method: the youth was to show proof of his identity by displaying on his person the two symbols of the Zoroastrian faith, the badges of membership of the Zoroastrian fraternity—the *sudre* and *kusti*. He was then asked to recite some of the elementary Zoroastrian prayers, the *Ashem Vohu* and the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*. The youths would often carry with them an “identity card” issued by the Tehran Anjoman, verifying that he was indeed a Zoroastrian. Once the verification process was complete, the Zoroastrian refugees were automatically given accommodation, in groups of three or more, depending on the available space and current number of refugees. Individual Parsis undertook to provide a stipend of Rs.800 per month per person. The refugees were encouraged to study English and registered for the relevant courses, with the fees being paid by individual Parsis. Without acquiring a working knowledge of the English language, their prospects for settlement in any western nation—the Zoroastrian refugees’ ultimate goal—would be severely limited. The local Parsi community undertook to assist the youths in finding employment—providing such employment in their own private business enterprises, or using their good offices to help secure work for the duration of the refugees’ stay.

It must be acknowledged that substantial cultural and socio-religious differences have developed over the millennial separation between the Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians—differences that were recognized by both the Parsi hosts and the small group of Iranians. Despite the differences, the Parsis had gone to extraordinary lengths to accommodate the refugees. The group of Iranians the author encountered displayed immense gratitude to their hosts. Indeed, the Iranians insisted that, in spite of the cultural differences, they saw the Parsis as being “one with themselves.” This brief outline of a more recent event in Zoroastrian affairs underlines the willingness of the Parsis to employ a practical altruism to relieve Iranian Zoroastrian suffering. Given the harsh conditions endured by the Zoroastrians in Iran, it was deemed incumbent on the more affluent Parsis to seek a better future for them. This was not Parsi charity, but a conscious act of community self-preservation.

Over the three decades since the Islamic Revolution, Zoroastrian refugees from Iran have arrived in large numbers in the West, where they have sought assistance from their co-religionists already domiciled in these countries. Among the refugees’ favored destinations are the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Whereas on the Indian subcontinent long-established community infrastructure enabled a more institutional approach to the refugees’ needs, in the West, a more ad hoc response can perhaps be noted. Yet the underlying ethos—the imperative of self-help—characterizes both destinations.

The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe is the representative body for the community domiciled in the United Kingdom. In North America, given the community’s dispersal across the vast continent, Zoroastrian associations have been established in all the major conurbations, with the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America acting as the overarching federal structure tying the community together. Given the continuing sensitivity surrounding the resettlement of Iranian Zoroastrian

refugees, the procedure followed in the West is that a newly arrived individual will seek the assistance of a family member, friend or acquaintance from the old country to help establish themselves in their new homes. Indeed, the very act of being granted refugee status or permanent leave to remain in the USA, Canada or the UK is the first and biggest hurdle for the newcomer. Equally, the new arrival is helped initially with accommodation and in securing employment, where possible, by their individual Zoroastrian contact in the new country.

When a refugee has no acquaintance from the old country, they have been known to call on the representative body with a request to act on their behalf. In such cases, the success of the application depends on the apparent strength or weakness of the individual refugee's case. As a rule, the Zoroastrian representative body is unwilling to divulge the details of a case it might have taken up with the relevant authorities—almost by definition, such requests are handled with a degree of discretion. But one such case was brought to the attention of the author.<sup>53</sup> In 2004, the president of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, in correspondence with the UK Office for Asylum Applications, took up the case of a certain Mrs. Bina Kalantari for refugee status, arguing that she “is a Zoroastrian by birth and practice. She however, married a Muslim gentleman. Under Sharia Law in Iran, marriage to a Muslim is meant to be conversion to Islam.” Since the breakdown of the marriage and Ms. Kalantari's arrival in the United Kingdom, where she wished to remain, and once again “follow the Zoroastrian religion of her birth,” a return to Iran for the apostate would have put her “at great risk.” But the ZTFE's application on her behalf was unsuccessful, and the petitioner's plea for asylum was dismissed.

There are essentially two challenges for both the refugee and the Zoroastrian community domiciled in the West in dealing with the resettlement of a co-religionist. The first hurdle is for the individual refugee to gain entry to the western country of their choice; and the second is for the western Zoroastrian representative body to champion each individual case, which will be dealt with by the authorities on its merits. Thus, whereas the willingness to help remains as robust in the new countries as it does in the old countries, the lack of urgency in granting asylum to Zoroastrians from the point of view of Washington, Ottawa or London can impede applications. It can be argued that, whereas the Parsis of India felt a certain imperative to establish an extensive welfare system for which the government made little or no provision, in the western environment, where an extensive welfare infrastructure can be called upon by the citizen, Zoroastrians have yet to create a community network of benevolent institutions.

### *Conclusion*

I have outlined some recent cases of active giving in the Zoroastrian world, which confirm the impression of an entrenched and widespread culture of service among the better-off Zoroastrians. The establishment of social infrastructure in India once the Parsis gained material prosperity was underpinned by the community's conviction that self-help was a means of preservation of their community identity.

The benevolence of Edulji Olpadvala, who bequeathed his entire estate to the Calcutta Parsis, the proceeds of which have secured the community's financial future, would have been undertaken as a means of ensuring this minuscule community's survival as a distinct group in this teeming metropolis. Equally, the calculation of the trustees of the Amelioration Society as they negotiated with the recalcitrant Qajars to ameliorate the living conditions of Iran's oppressed Zoroastrians related to the urgency of their struggle for survival: without their intervention—both financial and diplomatic—the level of attrition of Iran's Zoroastrians might have been even more severe. The establishment in 1979 of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the resulting arrival of Zoroastrian refugees on the Indian subcontinent, provoked a vigorous response from the Parsi community, aimed at ensuring the safety and future of Zoroastrian youth. What would have appeared an act of charity was just as much an act of self-preservation.

The cases outlined above demonstrate the continuation of an established practice that is embedded in the Zoroastrian ethos: "Prosperity and virtue were seen as two aspects of an essentially unitary system, and the spiritual and material sides of the good creation, the whole being subordinate to the good government of the king of kings."<sup>54</sup> Loss of the overarching protective umbrella of the "king of kings" and the underpinnings of a state mechanism, coupled with the subsequent marginalization of the Zoroastrian communities in both the ancestral land and their adopted countries, have helped to underline the need to harness the growing prosperity in the community—both as a means of securing the future in the more benign environment of India, and to help minimize the severe erosion of the community in Iran. The welfare institutions established by both the Parsis of the Indian subcontinent and the Zoroastrians of Iran have worked towards these primary goals. In the process, they have helped to consolidate the bond of belonging of a people who, despite their pride in a glorious past, have had to come to terms with being a tiny, often inconsequential minority. The cliché "Parsi, thy name is charity" is as much about self-preservation as it is about benevolence.

### Notes

1. Yasna 46.12, quoted in Korwal and Boyd, *Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion*, 99.
2. Yasna 45.2, quoted in Davoud, *Introduction to the Holy Gathas*, 48.
3. Insler, "Gathas of Zarathustra," 33.
4. Yarshater, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, xxiv, xxvi.
5. Dang-i Shayagan 13, quoted in Buch, *Zoroastrian Ethics*, 86.
6. Dina-i Mainog-i Khirad II, 70–2, quoted from West, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 24, 13.
7. Jhabvala, *Man According to Zoroastrianism*, 14.
8. *Dēnkard* XII, 47, quoted in Buch, *Zoroastrian Ethics*, 88.
9. Kulke, *Parsees in India*, 253.
10. Visperad 7.1 in Korwal and Boyd, *Guide To the Zoroastrian Religion*, 99.
11. Williams, *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Part II, 69–70. See also *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dadestan-i Dinik*, in Tavadia, "Pahlavi Text on Communism," 478.
12. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, 238, as translated in Kulke, *Parsees in India*, 253.

13. Much has been written on this subject, notably by Professor John R. Hinnells. See, in particular, Hinnells, "Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence," 261–326. See also Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies*.
14. Stonequist, *Marginal Man*, 3.
15. Choksy, "Despite Shāhs and Mollās," 129.
16. Dēnkard IX, 50, 23, quoted in West, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 37, 316.
17. Dang-i Shayagan, 13, quoted in Buch, *Zoroastrian Ethics*, 86.
18. For an authoritative history of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat see Desai, *History of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat*. See also Karaka, *History of the Parsis*.
19. Cited in *Iran League Quarterly* IX, no. 2 (January 1939): 89.
20. Kulke, *Parsees in India*, 125.
21. *The Pioneer*, Allahabad, November 21, 1921. For a detailed exposition of Parsi charities in India, see Hinnells, "Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence," 261–326.
22. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, 79.
23. I am grateful to my father, Minoo Writer, who has over the years related the story of Edulji Olpadvala's benevolence to the Calcutta Parsi community, and it gives me special pleasure to recount this self-effacing yet great man's generosity to the Parsis in my home town.
24. I am grateful to Bahadur Postwalla and the Trustees of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Religious and Charity Fund for providing me with the details of the Parsi community in Calcutta. The following discussion relies on email correspondence with Mr. Postwalla, who notes in an email dated May 17, 2010, in connection with the current population: "we have added in our Directory the names of a further 150 non-Parsi Zoroastrian spouses and children."
25. According to Mr. Postwalla's email cited above, the trustees have been in legal dispute with the tenant, the Assam Company, for the past nine years.
26. Boyce, "Manekji Limji Hataria in Iran," 20. See also Hataria, *Ishtar-i siyahat-i Iran*.
27. Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, 55.
28. Boyce, "Fire-Temples of Kerman," 67–8. The latter is a translation of the text of the inscription of the "Dar-i Mihr-i Mahalle-yi Sahr."
29. Boyce, "Fire-Temples of Kerman," 23.
30. Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, 83.
31. Reporter, "Educational Movement," 77.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, 78.
34. Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, 84.
35. For a detailed analysis of the Amelioration Society's role in the abolition of the *jizya*, see *ibid.*, 62–83.
36. *Ibid.*, 62.
37. *Ibid.*, 81.
38. *Ibid.*, 75.
39. *Ibid.*, 75–6.
40. *Ibid.*, 78.
41. *Ibid.*, 80.
42. Reporter, "Educational Movement," 76.
43. I am indebted for detailed discussions on the subject with Dr. Rostam Sarfeh and his recollections of Jamshid Jamshidian's legacy to the Zoroastrians of Iran. See also Shahrokh and Writer, *Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh*, 20–57, and Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 219.
44. Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 219.
45. Shahrokh and Writer, *Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh*, gives a detailed account of the condition of the Iranian Zoroastrian community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
46. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
47. *Ibid.*, 41.
48. *Ibid.*, 28.
49. *Ibid.*, 29.

50. *Ibid.*, 20.  
 51. *Ibid.*, 22–3.  
 52. For further detail, see *Writer*, *Contemporary Zoroastrians*, 185–98.  
 53. Correspondence from the Office of the President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe Inc. (London), July 23, 2004.  
 54. Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, 285.

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