

# The Parsees: The Oldest Unreached People in the World

**P**arseeism was founded before 3000 BC in Persia by Zoroaster. The kings of the ancient Persian empire, including Cyrus and Darius of the Bible, were followers of this religion. Parsees revel in the past splendor of the former Persian empire and strongly consider themselves to be of a royal race.

This clinging to their past was perhaps brought about by the brutal and ruthless slaughter of this people by Alexander the Great and then more severely by the invading Arab Muslims some 1000 years later. Like the Jewish people after Hitler, the Parsees bear scars which only the blood and wounds of the Messiah Jesus can heal. Zoroastrian Parsees believe that fire is their principal god. They also fervently worship and pray to angels and to the elements of nature.

## **Fire God**

Fire is called the son of god and occupies the highest place of worship and adoration. No religious ritual is done without the presence of a burning fire. Marriages, initiation into the religion, purification of souls, and rituals for the deceased are all done in the presence of fires fueled by sandalwood and oil.

At the fire temple, these fires are never allowed to go out. Parsees pray and often prostrate themselves before the fire. A Parsee home will typically have a fire burning at all times.

## **The Creator and Angels**

Parsees profess to believe in and call on what they name the All-Wise Creator or Wise One. Wisdom is the most significant attribute they assign to this god they call Creator.

Parsees also believe in and invoke angels, especially guardian angels

of various elements of nature. The primary archangel is the angel of conscience. He holds almost as much prominence as fire. Parsees call on angels to do whatever they wish; i.e., there is no real concept of Lordship.

## **Ethics**

A typical Parsee is proud of the tenets of his religion. The Gathas, their supreme scriptures, specifically instruct every individual to do what he thinks is the most rightful thing to do. "Reflect with a clear mind, man by man for himself," wrote Zoroaster in the Gathas. Another of their books holds the tenet of Good thoughts, good words, good deeds, as preeminent; however, few Parsees really strive for that.

In their homes Parsees display pictures of deceased relatives, friends, and leaders. They pray to the spirits of these people, facing the pictures, and at times kneeling before them. Some of them even have demonic spirits manifesting themselves in the likeness of their loved ones.

## **Resurrection**

Mainline Parsees do not believe in reincarnation, though they do consider theirs the supreme religion and race. They definitely believe in resurrection. Salvation is by grace of the Wise Creator. They like to believe their deceased relatives have made it to heaven and have escaped hell.

Ten days in August, the end of their calendar year, are dedicated to the spirits of their deceased loved ones and leaders. At that time, Parsees all over the world invoke spirits of the deceased to join them. Worship of these spirits starts early in the morning and proceeds through out the day. Christians are requested to ESPECIALLY fast

and pray in the month of August for the Parsee People. (See Special Alert which follows.)

## **Major Influences**

Parsees have typically won a place in the heart of the general population of India, Pakistan and Iran due to their kindness, their gentleness, their honesty and primarily for their many charities which are available to all peoples without distinction. Parsees are generally business men and professionals. Parsee families like the Tata, Wadia, Cama and Godrej in India, and Avary, Cowasjee, Minwalla, and Eduljee Dinshaw in Pakistan have been gracious employers to tens of thousands of non-Parsees.

Parsees also occupy high places in the Government, Judiciary and the Armed Forces. Parsees have also shaped the history of nations from behind the scene. Zubin Mehta, the renowned musician, is a Parsee. The two highest leaders of the Shiite Muslims are Ali and Imam Hussain. Hussain was married to a Parsee. The wife of the founding father of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was a Parsee. The late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India was married to a Parsee. The founder of Nuclear energy in India was Bhabha, a Parsee.

The Bible teacher of the Islamic leader prophet Mohammad himself was Salman Farsi, who was a Parsee high priest. Parseeism in a real sense is the very root of Islam. In the Old Testament while the Babylonians destroyed the Temple of God, it was the Parsees who rebuilt it. Persian kings Cyrus and Darius were Zoroastrian Parsee kings.

According to the Bible, Cyrus, a Parsee, is the only gentile in the Bible that the Lord called his anointed. You

## The Parsee People

would be hard pressed to find any one who has known a Parsee and not been influenced to some degree by him positively.

Perhaps for self-preservation, the Parsees have striven to excel in areas of business and professions. In India and Pakistan, they are among the most successful business men, hoteliers, shipping company owners, and doctors. Parsees have also occupied high government positions in the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary arms of government. In the USA and the Western world, Parsees are prominent in business and technology. Also for self-preservation, Parsees are normally very close knit. In India and Pakistan they live in colonies. They typically take over a large tract of land and then allot pieces of the land only to other Parsees.

In the USA and UK, they meet regularly as a community and have formed associations. All the associations in North America have joined together to form a federation, as have the Parsee associations in other parts of the world.

### Closed Membership

Typically only the child of a Parsee father can become a Parsee. To become a legitimate Parsee, one has to go through a blood covenant ritual performed by Parsee priests.

A Parsee woman who marries a non-Parsee is stripped of her membership and Parsee privileges. She and her family, like other non-Parsees, are not allowed in the fire temple or allowed to participate in other major rituals. Her children may never become Parsee unless through initiation by an unauthorized rebel priest. Even if the child of a non-Parsee father manages to convert into the Parsee fold he/she is generally not accepted by the community.

### Blood Covenant

Before the age of puberty, a child born of a Parsee father is led through a ritual of blood covenant with their gods.

The child is first purified with a bath by older women; then he goes through a short ritual with the priest, who is present by the bathroom. In this ritual, he is given urine of a bull to drink in order to firmly establish his covenant with the gods. The concept is that the blood of their god enters the child, bringing his soul into oneness with the god.

His soul having been offered for possession and surrender to the god, the child is then escorted to an open arena, where he is cloaked with the pure white cotton shirt of righteousness. Then a covenant band is tied around his waist in a certain ritualistic way. The child is to wear the shirt and the band at all times. He is expected to renew his vows before the god several times a day in a ritual of untying and tying the covenant band. Most modern-day Parsees do it only once a day, finding the whole thing unfulfilling and empty.

### Obstacles to Conversion

Parsees are very close knit, bonded, greedy for wealth, power hungry, sensual, and self righteous. On the other hand they are also honest, generous to the poor, and merciful to the needy.

A great obstacle to their conversion is due to the fact that when Parsees turn to Christ they cannot find the kind of community support and bonding from the Body of Christ that they once found in the Parsee brethren community. Hence, they easily revert back to Zoroastrianism. Their high level of honesty and generous giving to the poor give them false assurance of their right standing with God.

Their descent from the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius gives them a sense of superiority over others. This is a major reason that they do not allow conversions or marriages with those of other religions. Also it is a major reason that they do not want to leave their faith and religion.

The main strongholds that control the Parsees are the spirits of Antichrist,

witchcraft, deception, and idolatry. Satan accuses them of rebelling against God whenever they move towards Christ Jesus.

### Evangelization

They respect all gods and religions. They will typically not throw away a Bible or other gospel material, due to its religious content.

Many respect Christ. In fact, a leading Parsee teacher of India recognizes Christ as a major Messiah.

Recently in Texas, I visited the home of a Parsee high priest for friendship evangelism. Among the many idols and pictures in his room, the picture of Jesus was notably the largest and occupied the most prominent place.

Where Parsees live together in clusters of 100 or so families, it is easy and fast to reach them all in concerted evangelical efforts with specialized gospel literature, etc. More than 90 % of Parsees are literate in English.

There are many sicknesses among the Parsee people. Faith healers are invited there every now and then. Cancer and heart disease are common killers.

Parsees in India and Pakistan generally like the American people and things that come from America and Europe.

This article has been written by a born-again Parsee Christian who is currently a member of a Full Gospel Fellowship of Churches and Ministers International of this church. The author was born and raised in a Parsee home, and was educated in a Parsee school. Before his conversion to Christ, he taught Parsee classes in his home for Parsee adults, and served on two committees of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. In 1992, the Holy Spirit started befriending the author and after four months of "friendship evangelism" the Holy Spirit led him to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. In like fashion, the Lord Jesus physically appeared to the author's

father. His parents and family still need to give their hearts to Jesus. Please pray that very soon God save every Parsee worldwide with gentleness, mercy and grace.

### Prayer Concerns

1. Promote awareness and a passionate burden in Christian ministries to actively pursue fasting and intercession, servant-evangelism and discipleship of Parsee People, with the goal of church planting among the Parsee.

2. Send teams of Christian intercessors to the areas where Parsees live, to intercede on-site for the Parsees.

3. Pray that Bible studies with sound doctrine take place in all Parsee homes.

4. Send born-again Parsees to the pagan Parsees to reveal the Messiah to them with wisdom and understanding, goodness and love, with comfort and compassion.

5. Pray that Life-giving indigenous churches may be planted among the Parsees, where sound Bible doctrine is taught, and Jesus is worshipped as the only Lord and Savior.

6. Be involved in spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is real and intense among the Parsee People.

7. Pray that born-again Christian Parsees and their families may remain faithful and be preserved and grow in their faith and knowledge and service unto Jesus Christ.

8. Pray for wisdom and knowledge, strategy and skill, Divine Authority, Anointing, Adequate Provision and Resources, and Prayer partners for ministry to the Parsees (Neh 2:7-9).

9. Pray for wise and skillful, humble and submissive helpers in outreach ministry to the Parsees.

10. Pray for open doors and Divine connections, and God's favor with Christian leaders, in doing ministry (Neh 1:11b, 2:8b ). Pray for enhancement

of existing ministry partnerships and godly relationships.

11. Pray for favor with government, civil, and religious authorities.

12. Pray for the Lords protection, safety, and healing for the author and his family. Please also pray against strife of tongues. His mother (born-again, who lives in Asia) needs protection and safety. His parents need encouragement, peace strength, and lots of care and love.

### Prayer Alert

Few Christians know of the heightened spiritual activity worldwide in August as the adherents of the Parsee religion mark their high holy days. During this time Parsees everywhere, even in North America and the United Kingdom, will celebrate Satan, exalt fire, and invoke devils.

Most members of the sect are concentrated in India, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. However, large numbers live in the West, many of them professionals in business and technology. Parsees worship fire, angels, and elements of nature. The yearly observance begins with the ten days of Muktaad. During Muktaad, Parsees gather each day at dawn to begin calling on the spirits of dead relatives and leaders. Through the remainder of the day, families worship the spirits of their deceased loved ones, including in elaborate rituals at their fire temples and at rivers, seas, and other places of nature. Demons sometimes manifest themselves to the devotees, usually in the likeness of some departed loved one or leader.

Pateti (August 21 this year by the Lunar calendar) is the tenth day of Muktaad, and the Parsee's New Years eve. On this day, the Parsee People spend much time in introspection, asking their gods to forgive the sins committed the preceding year. They go to wells and to their fire temples, or even before a fire lit at home, and repent of past sins.

August 22 brings the great festivities called Shahenshahi Navroz (New Years day) meaning "New Day," to rejoice in newness of life and their "freedom" or "salvation." The annual cycle ends August 27 with Khordad Saal. At that time, fervent celebrations commemorate the birthday of Zoroaster, who brought their ancient religion to prominence in about 3000 B.C.

Due to this festive season, July-August is a traditional time for families to initiate their children into Zoroastrianism. Parents bring young boys and girls into blood covenants with their gods through elaborate rituals which include drinking bull's urine. Each child who is thus handed over to Satan's possession receives a special sash and undergarment. He or she wears these as tokens of faithfulness throughout life.

On August 21 and 22, Parsees will be repenting of their sins and seeking divine favor. Please pray the Lord put a passionate burden on Christians worldwide to be in special intercession and fasting at that time, for the Parsees to find the true and living God.

Please consider asking your fellowship and ministry to fast during these ten days and to pray that the Lord Jesus do a sovereign work in the hearts of the Parsees, bringing them out of darkness into salvation in Christ the Lord.

*For more information for praying and getting involved in reaching the Parsee People contact the editor: IJFM, 321 West Rio Grande, El Paso, TX 79902. Tel: 915-533-4975. Fax: 915-532-0990. His Email: 103121.2610@CompuServe.com*