

Research Project Report on
All India Birth Rate of Parsi - Zoroastrians
from 2001 till 15th August, 2007

Sponsored by:

National Commission for Minorities

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New Delhi

Research Project Report on
All India Birth Rate of Parsi - Zoroastrians
from 2001 till 15th August, 2007

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Given the uniqueness of the demographic trend of the Parsi community there is a need to conduct scientific studies on various issues related to the community. In this context the present study of all India birth rate of Parsi Zoroastrian from 2001 till 15th August, 2007 is very important. Several people have contributed in various capacities for the successful completion of this national level project. My sincere thanks and deepest gratitude to all of them, especially,

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Within the constrain of the time-frame of three months, it was difficult to reach out to all Parsis scattered in every nook and corner of the country. It was also observed that two to three reminders only could make the community react to the seriousness of the problem. The responses were not as quick as desired and some are still trickling in. However, these late responses only serve to strengthen the earlier observed and noted trends. In some cases, because of the wide network of distribution, duplication had to be sorted out, to make the study authentic and accurate. In the nature of things, such a Report cannot be expected to be the last word on the subject.

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* The Commission is not responsible for the views expressed in the study.

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CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

India - a nation of one billion plus has tried just about every population disincentive known to man including paying people to stop having children. So how can one explain that the Parsi community in India is paying couples to have children? Call it a sign of demographic desperation? In fact here lies a paradox within the country itself wherein as per the crude birth rates available one of the most distinguished communities that of the Parsis, appears to be declining. It is important to note at the outset that "real birth rates" have not been established in India. This has been compounded by self identification problems in census records where the community identifies itself under various nomenclatures of Parsi, Irani, Parsi Zoroastrian, Parsi Zarthoshti, Parsi Irani Jarthoshti, Iranian Parsis, Irani, etc. all these create computer oriented confusion which derails accuracy in data collection. The fact is that community members are not mandated to register births at a central Registry either under the aegis of the government or under that of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat the apex body of the community. It is suggested that such a protocol if established, could afford comparative data and make available 'real birth' statistics which could then be compared to the statistics available with the census. In addition, a classic apathy within the community makes the maintenance of accurate records difficult, despite there being various community organizations and associations.

The Parsis, the followers of Spitaman Zarathushtra, are the original descendants of the ancient Persians who immigrated to India after the conquest of Iran by the Bedouin Arabs. They arrived on the Indian subcontinent where the Hindu ruler Jadav Rana received them hospitably. Nothing is known regarding the number of people who arrived or about their growth during the subsequent centuries. They rose to prominence during the rise of British power in India.

Title of the Problem:

A survey of births among Parsis (Zoroastrians) from 2001 to 15th August, 2007 to find out whether the birth rate is dwindling each year.

Objectives

- 1) To find the total number of births during 2001 till 15th August, 2007.
- 2) To find the trend of birth rate during 2001 till 15th August, 2007.

Need of the Study :

Zoroastrianism, the world's oldest revealed religion has survived from pre-history with its core beliefs still intact, a driving force that impels its followers to excel in all fields of human endeavour and contribute vastly for the benefit of humankind. In India, the Parsi community has contributed enormously to public life. India is richer today due to the diverse contributions made by members of this community in all spheres. For e.g.: the Tatas, Godrejs, the Wadias and various others who are household names, are from this very distinguished community.

Never large in numbers, this very distinguished and dynamic community have demographically never been more than 115000 (see 1941 census) of 1,14, 890 by most accounts. As a result they have been a subject of interest to demographers, sociologists and policy-makers. A number of studies have documented the demographic basis of the apparent population decline and a few have advanced hypotheses about its underlying causes. **But it has to be borne in mind that all hypothecation of population increase and decrease have been as per crude birth rate figures and guess estimates made as no accurate data is available on Parsi births.**

India is seen as the bastion of Zoroastrianism where the religion and its traditions and practices have survived for more than a millennium. In many ways it is a tribute to India as a nation, that it is the only country in the world where the largest number of sacred fire temples of the Zoroastrian faith has survived. India is home to the largest collection of Parsi manuscripts and the only established Parsi Zoroastrian priestly seminaries in the world exist in Mumbai. It is in Mumbai that all the sacred rituals of the faith have been preserved and continue to be practised. Parsi numbers, always small, are now said to be diminishing. The Government of India recognizes them as one of the five minorities. Mahatma Gandhi once said of them, *“Strikingly over 1000 years, the Hindus never violently harassed the Parsis, though Hindu-Muslim civil strife is common in India. The Parsis remain grateful to the Hindus for refuge, just as many Jews greatly appreciate the security provided by America.”* But today a debate is raging over the best way to preserve a group that survived domination by Muslims in Persia and migration to India. International media prone to seeking new stories have conversely noted the danger of one of the world’s oldest religions being cast into oblivion: *“Zoroastrianism” The Fastest - Shrinking Religion,* *“Are Parsis on a path to self-destruction?”* are some of the headings used.

Thus, there are two view points: there are those who believe that as the ‘crude birth rates’ show the Parsis are dwindling, with each succeeding year and the race which survived through all harsh times may well see its extinction by the end of this century. A growing number of Parsis on the other hand believe that the community population has at best reached a plateau, that deaths are declining and crude birth rates are no real indication of declining numbers especially, as out migration is not accounted for in the decline of numbers and that the world wide Parsi population has remained steady at a 125,000 for over 80 years. Therefore, this project is undertaken to bring to light, the factors, which account for the present population trend of the community and to provide a ready platform for various interested stakeholders to implement an action plan to improve birth rates in the community.

Conceptual Framework:

To start with we will first identify the important causes for the decline in birth rates of this minority community some of which are as follows:

1. **Late and non-marriages** - There is a marked tendency of people marrying late in the community and this is not a new phenomenon for the Parsis. In fact Eckhard Kulke in his book, "The Parsis in India, A minority as Agent of Social Change", remarks about the "constantly climbing average marital age" (pg.44). Developments of this trend can be traced to the last two decades of 19th century. In 1881, 37.25% marriages took place before the age of 15years and 48.44% occurred between 16-50 years. By 1930 mean age of marriage for women exceeded 24years and after that, between 26-27years for females and 31years for males which is also the current level. Therefore, there has been no significant increase or decrease in the mean age for marriage since 1931. The nuptial patterns among the rural Parsis are the same as those among the urban Parsis. Though non-marriage is not always a direct result of late marriages but in the case of Parsis it seems to be so. Proportion of those who never marry is highest amongst the Parsis, especially among Parsi females.

The reasons for late marriage and non-marriage are best within the context of increasing urbanization, education, westernization and economic independence and emancipation of women that began earlier than in other communities. Chief reasons for males remaining unmarried or delaying their marriage are low income, lack of accommodation, not able to find a suitable match, while women responses, are that of increasing independence, a dislike towards marriages, low-income among men and an inability to find a suitable partner. While these responses are indeed pertinent, these are only suggestive of the reasons for low nuptiality.

Some understanding of the historical context, in which these uniquely Parsi cultural perceptions have emerged, is needed. Before

the rise of the British in India, Parsis were concentrated in villages and towns of western Gujarat and were either skilled craftsmen, traders or agriculturists. But their lives changed when the British came to India as they migrated from the villages in western Gujarat to Mumbai and other towns and adopted more business activities. They capitalized upon the opportunities offered under the colonial dispensation. Westernization affected Parsi social structure and cultural values in a myriad ways. Patterns influenced by shift from arranged to love marriages and other such western mores affected the community. Parsis especially young ones preferred to find their own match and live neo-locally. The desire for love-marriages is also associated with preference for extended family-living that is widespread in the community and directly connected with the high value that Parsis place on the adopted western social patterns. This is especially true of young Parsis and the changing role of women in the community through education which is an extension of the same. By 1940, love-marriages were becoming a norm in the community. This was more prevalent among the wealthier, less orthodox Parsis born in Bombay. It's facile simply to assert that love-marriages in the community are a function of variables associated with modernity. However, finding a suitable partner of one's choice is not an easy task. Parental and familial obligations and constraints are still formidable in the community and create contradictions which are difficult to overcome. This is more so with Parsi women as they are as well educated as their male counterparts and thus suitable partners according to their choice is not always available specially as a large number of males leave India for higher education and seldom return, leaving the pool of males available in India much smaller than it actually is. Even when women marry late, they end up having fewer children or they tend to be past their fertility age. In this regard as rightly pointed out by the editor of a Parsi magazine, "the Parsi decline is the price the community is paying for its women's education." In sum, late marriages are also the complex product of perceived disparity between expectations about economic and social life and the community's ability to achieve this in India and the extensive out migrations of highly educated men of marriageable

age, resulting in a diminishing number of “eligible males” in India. Celibacy seems to be an extension of the reasons for late marriage.

2. **Fertility Decline** - The 2001 census puts the total number of Parsis at just 69,601 that’s even less than 1% of the Indian population. Within the community, numbers under 14 are only 12% while over 60 are 30% which is quite an astonishing fact. Furthermore the number of Parsi women in the age-group 15-44 who got married has been steadily falling. Between 1961-1999, it’s come down to 35%. The same is also true of Parsi men. 20% reach the age of 50 without getting married and all this adds to one simple conclusion: Parsi fertility rates have fallen sharply. In 1999, the Parsi fertility rate was down to 0.94 and this cannot be compared to the rest of India as the Parsis are highly urbanized and their group needs to be evaluated with other groups sharing similar urban, economic and education levels. Therefore in Kerala where education levels are high there has been a similar decrease in birth rates. While the census data documents the low marital fertility in the Parsi community, they tell us little about how and why it was achieved. A number of different indicators point to low marital fertility for the Parsis.

There is a great deal of speculation both inside and outside the community about the causes of low fertility. The widespread use of birth control reported by Parsis suggests that family planning is indeed practised perhaps more than in their communities. It is commonly believed both outside and inside the community that the Parsi fertility decline is partially due to subfecundity, perhaps as a result of their preference for cousin marriages. However this belief was proved wrong by one of the studies which rightly proved that Parsi women are not subfecund and once married, are able to bear children quickly and without difficulty. Presumably late marriage is one of the motivating factors for the relatively short interval between marriage and first pregnancy. Indeed, there is an inverse relationship between age at marriage and interval between marriage and first birth in the Parsi community. However, the interval between the first and second birth is 3.62 years which suggest that intentional spacing is widely practised among the Parsi, and other middle-class, communities. In fact, most Parsis who practiced family planning

cited spacing, rather than pregnancy avoidance, as the most important reason for the practise. The health and freedom of the mother were also frequently cited as the primary reason for this. Thus the Parsis offer a contrast to the Irish, who marry late, but among whom age-specific birth rates after marriages are quite high. There exists an erroneous assumption that subfecundity exists in the community and it has been suggested that it is as a result of extensive in-breeding. Dr. Anahita Pandole a fertility expert presently helping with the BPP fertility programme refutes this and says subfecundity is not endemic in the community. Nor is breast cancer rates more prevalent. The record of "Deaths through Infectious and other Diseases" in the Parsi community, tabulated from April 2006 to March 2007 shows 44 deaths due to cancer and in contrast 355 deaths due to cardiac and respiratory failure and 48 deaths due to diabetes showing that Parsis are more or less prone to certain diseases than the urban affluent of other communities. There is also a myth about high levels of mental retardation but this has not been statistically proved. The Zoroastrian community in Iran for example has had a population of around 25,000 for over 50 years and despite more than 98% marrying within the community there is no record of subfecundity, mental retardation, cancer or any other diseases being prevalent more than the norm. In fact G-6 PD, a deficiency said to be prevalent among Parsis is not common among their Iranian cousins.

The first drop in fertility seems to have occurred at the end of the 19th century and was connected with many of the same events and values that brought about low nuptiality. The tremendous push for girl's education in the community after 1870, already described in the discussion on low nuptiality, is symptomatic of the changes that took place in the community at the end of the 19th century--educated women in Bombay, at that time were predominantly Parsis. The pursuit of education for Parsi women had more profound effects on fertility than merely delaying marriage for a few years. Educated Parsi women after completion of education were pioneers in seeking employment outside the home, which often postponed childbearing. Educated women were better informed about the practice of family planning, and their economic aspirations for their own children and a

desire to maintain high standard of living further motivated them to have small families. But education by itself cannot be seen as the cause of low-fertility among the Parsis. It has to be seen in the context of the larger pattern of values and adaptation during the 19th century. Education, for example, is directly connected with the uniformly high value on maintaining a standard of living consistent with Parsi expectations about their position in Indian society. Indeed, this is cited as a primary motivating force for having few children. This, more than an ordinary desire to improve one's lot in life; it is tied to the Parsi-self perception based on the western model. This led to late marriages and fewer children. Indeed, there is vast literature which suggests direct connection between specific socio-economic variables such as income, education and urbanization and fertility patterns. Thus, low fertility is a contributory component of the Parsi population decline and has to be seen in the context of community-specific values. Though the Parsis resemble other relatively wealthy, educated and urban communities in so far as their crude birth rates show a decline, this decline is distinct in that it took place earlier and is associated with a distinctive perception of events that occurred during the late 19th century and early 20th centuries in Bombay.

3. **Emigration** - Many Parsis believe that emigration is a major factor for decline of Parsi numbers in India. In support of their view, they point out towards huge waves of migration which began in the 1960s and 1970s to UK and USA. Out migration trends continued in the 1980s and more so in 1990s due to the technology boom. However, the approximate number of Parsis presently abroad totals to approximately 24000+ Parsis living abroad not including Parsis living in Pakistan, Iran and India. A large percentage almost 52-58% of these originally migrated from India therefore its precise impact is not difficult to calculate. The factor of outward migration still has to be considered, as it's an important factor in the study but only projections of it with no references are available with the census.

4. **Out-marriages** - Like in the case of emigration, conservative Parsis consider out-marriages to be an important factor responsible for their population decline and is also a source of controversy. Genealogies

show that this has been on rise with each succeeding generation. Recent estimates indicate that the rate of out-marriages has increased substantially. The relatively high incidence of out-marriage in the Parsi community is not at all surprising in view of the attitudes and values about marriages described thus far. Further such values and attitudes have enhanced the likelihood of love marriages. Parsis consider themselves cosmopolitan and western in their outlook and since many Parsi women are employed outside the home, the chance to meet men of other communities has increased. In fact, in many cases the entire debate on declining population has focused only on this topic - interfaith marriages and their acceptance within the community. Marriage outside the community is not encouraged and those priests who take the step to perform inter-caste marriage are disapproved by Parsi Priests in general, and High priests in particular.

One reason for increasing number of such out-marriages as advanced by younger Parsi generation is that they are unable to find suitable matches within the community for which they have attributed various reasons too. In fact, lying below the issue of out-marriage is the controversy that rages between traditionalists and reformists within the community. Among the Parsi community, no issue is more controversial than the exclusion of offspring of a "mixed marriage", that is where one parent is a Parsi and the other is not. This question has divided the Parsi community. The liberals argue that not reforming will simply ensure the community's extinction while the orthodox believe that accepting children of girls married out will not increase the Parsi community as one is born a Parsi. At its core, the conflict is a manifestation of centuries-old anxieties and fears of assimilation and the loss of identity which is of great importance to a small community.

5. Separation and Divorces - Another trend which is noticeable, since last few years, is increasing number of separation and divorces. During the joint family system, this was unheard of. But times have changed. Every couple marrying, insist on having a separate home and thereby adding to more responsibilities in married life. Since

both partners are educated and employed, they need to manage the household chores by themselves, or depend on servants. With no elders in the family, they are scared to have children and usually space them out depending on how best they can rear them. This obviously leads to marital disharmony.

To add to it, since both are economically independent, the materialistic mind-set is difficult to change after marriage and each one seeks his/her pleasure without understanding the consequences. In such circumstances, the birth of a child seems more of a burden than the joy that should be experienced by the couple. The result is obvious. One or two children is the basic norm, beyond which they cannot afford to sacrifice their leisured life. This causes the main strife and in no time severe quarrels start, first leading separate lives within the home and later, as it becomes intolerable, separation is the ultimate end. In some serious cases, divorces are desired. The increase in the number of cases in the Parsi-Matrimonial courts is its clear indication. This has also been a cause of anxiety among Parsis and a definite reason for low birth-rates.

Significance:

Today, Zoroastrianism finds itself confronted with the issue of numbers more so than in any other time. Such concern for the waning number of active practitioners has led to many a debate and controversy in modern Zoroastrianism over how best to remedy the situation. Arguing groups range from steadfast orthodox or traditionalists who hold the belief that pure adherence to the status quo will maintain the faith, to ultra-radical reformers who insist that only change in compliance with the times can assure the religion's future. The concern of the orthodox centres around preservation of the race and the ethno-religious identity of the community and the reformist merely concentrate on increasing the number of adherents. The debate covers the scale of all major issues within Zoroastrianism, such as endogamy vs. exogamy in marriage and the permissibility of conversion to the religion. To curb this criticism, a proper factual

study on scientific lines needs to be taken, and actual, real birth rates of the community need to be established.

These concerns about demographic shifts have fanned fierce debate about the Parsi community's future. While the conservatives contend that there is nothing wrong with Parsi genes and that emigration accounts for the shrinking numbers in India. Liberals argue that the community would be better served by welcoming all children of mixed marriages and recognizing converts too.

The liberals in the Parsi community favour interfaith marriages and conversion and see it as a way to stem the declining numbers. The argument that they give is that the best way to ensure the religion's survival in India, is to welcome people into it, particularly those who marry in – at least not to exclude the children of such marriages. In support of intermarriages they say, that though such marriages were heavily frowned upon for many years but today, it is the only means of saving a vibrant group of people from dying out on us. Liberals further want that children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers also to be included within the fold which is however vehemently opposed by the conservatives who see it as an act of conversion. However, it is not uncommon for children from mixed marriages to have their initiation (Navjote) ceremonies done especially when their parents live abroad. The liberals are of the opinion that nothing prevents a Parsi man or woman who marries out of the community from continuing to practice the religion in his or her private capacity.

According to the traditional members of the community, if the trend of intermarriage continues then the community's identity will be diluted and the ethno-historical identity of the Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians will subsequently be wiped out. The traditionalists believe, that the only reason the community has survived in India for over a 1000 years with its identity and religious practices intact is because they did not intermarry. If the Parsis had encouraged intermarriage they would have been absorbed in the vast ocean of Hindus and Muslims. Lying below is the delicate issue of Parsis seeing themselves as an ethnic group as well as a religion, and many

orthodox argue that they have a religious duty to preserve what one priest called their “genetic distinctness”. “If the trend (i.e. out-marriages) continues, you won’t be able to recognize a Parsi.” According to them intermarriage goes against the very grain of being a Parsi and is in fact a wrong trend. The conservatives hold the view that intermarriage is not a solution for increasing the numbers of the community. According to them such neo-converts may call themselves Zoroastrians, but surely they are not Parsis.

What the liberals don’t understand is that even if we take in children with Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers, it does not solve their concern about declining Parsi numbers. We may increase the religion but not the community and until now both the ethnic and religious identity has been seen as part of an indistinguished whole identity.

Outside India and Iran, conversion is a less weighty issue because many Zoroastrian centres acknowledge the incidence of marriage between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians and have religiously confirmed the children of such marriages into Zoroastrianism - although the conversion of spouses is not practised.

The traditionalists have posed two questions to the liberals:

(1) In the last 1000 years during which time the Parsis have stayed in India, have the numbers ever declined drastically?

(2) If not, what is the secret of the tiny Parsi community surviving and prospering in a vast ocean of humanity for over a thousand years?

Conservatives have pointed out that the numbers, as per records available have never exceeded one hundred and fifteen thousand and the two factors that have affected population figures, are migration which has caused a redistribution of the population world-wide and inter-caste marriage. They hold a view that throughout the thousand years Parsi population figures in India have fluctuated, there have been highs and lows but there has never been, nor ever will be, a

vacuum, for nature abhors vacuum and always maintains a balance. To conclude, in their view “if pessimists and agnostics in our community, with their justification of mixed marriages and conversions, have their day, we shall be foolishly committing racial hara-kiri. Natural death is always preferred by wise men”.

The present debates show little promise of reaching a solution any time in the near future. Reformists and traditionalist segments remain unwilling to compromise on their fundamental beliefs over the future of the community. Identity politics and the desire to stick to one’s own opinion to the exclusion of others remain as evident among Zoroastrians as among any other community, in today’s world. To mere observers this seems unfortunate because both sides have historically played and continue to play a vital role in the disposition of Zoroastrians and the future of Zoroastrian communities. In the past Zoroastrianism has faced decline through persecution during the era of Muslim conquest – but emerged alive and healthy. In the present the faith faces decline not through persecution but through the changes of modernity, out marriages and internal schisms. These forces, ironically, seem to be more threatening to the health of the religion and the community than any past persecution has been.

Scope and Limitations:

The present study contemplates to cover Parsis settled all over India through various sources like anjumans (affiliated to federation) welfare centres, associations and various groups of the community.

The present approach is only through postal inquiry as the data had to be collected within just two months. The scope is restricted merely to birth-rate of Parsi- Zoroastrian child.

The study is limited to the anjumans established under all-India Federation of Zoroastrians. Therefore data is limited and can’t be accepted as all- India comprehensive survey of Parsi- Zoroastrian. No personal comments or forecasts on the future- birth rate are made. The study, therefore, can be used only to the extent of the data

presented by the Parsi anjumans all over India and has no significant implications for the community.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Earlier Studies made with the Statistics:

Since they are a non-Hindu religious minority and one that has achieved renown in Bombay for their substantial economic and cultural contributions to the growth of the city, the Parsis have been enumerated separately since the first public census in 1872. During 60 years between 1881 and 1941 there was slow but steady increase in the Parsi population. The Parsi population of India had a positive growth rate during 1931-41. While census figures for 1881 gave a count of 85,400 Parsis in India, the 1941 census reported nearly 114,900. The total world Zoroastrian population was likely no more than 135,000 in the same period. Since then statistical figures based on crude birth rates indicate that Parsi population has decreased. According to 2001 census their number is just 69,601. The latest census of 2001 has come at a very opportune time for the Parsi community, because for the first time the Census has analyzed the data on religious communities in India with their demographic details regarding different age-groups, crude birth and death rate figures, male-female ratio as well as literacy and working population figures.

The following statistics from 2001 census pertaining to Parsis stand out in stark contrast to the demographic characteristics of the general population of India which in reality is an unequal comparison because Parsi demographic features are closer in comparison to those prevailing in the developed countries than what is found in India.

1. **Total Count** - Parsis in India reached their highest ever census count in 1941 of 114,890 and since then, every decennial census has shown nearly a 10% decrease. In 1991 census, there were 76,382 and in 2001 its 69,601 a decline of 9% from 1991 and 40% decrease in past 60 years. [However many unexplained anomalies exist. [See point 5 - Crude Birth and Death Rates].

2. **Growth Rate** - Whilst among the general population the growth rate is 21% amongst the Parsis there is no growth but a decline of 8.88%.

3. **Male-Female Ratio** - While the general population sex ratio has gone up to 933, among the Parsis it is 1,050 which is highest amongst the minorities in India.

4. **Age Composition** - This reveals an inverted pyramid. In 0-6 age group their population is mere 4.7% while in general population its 15%. [However these numbers are questionable because of there being no real birth rates available]. In 1901 percentage of Parsi children in this age group was 9.5% which means that in one century we have lost 4.8% implying 100% loss which determines the demographic profile for other ages. While in aged segment Parsis over 60 years make up for 31% of the community while national average is 7%. All these figures are dependent on verification of real birth rates, which have never been calculated or taken into account when calculating Parsi population figures.

5. **Crude Birth and Death Rates** - According to 2001 census, Parsi crude birth rate is 6-6 per thousand and death rate is 16-18 per thousand. This implies that Parsis lose 10 persons per year which for a population of 69,000 amounts to 690 annually or a loss of 6,900 in a decade. However in 1981 the census figure shows 71,630 Parsis and in 1991 it was 76,382. If there is meant to be a 10% decline every decennial period, how does one account for a 9% increase in population, i.e. an increase of 4,752 Parsis, while death rates being constant. Similarly, it must be noted that 10 years later in 2001 there is once more a decrease of 6,781 Parsis. This is indicative of either

1991 figure being wrong or the community has reached a plateau in its population since 1981. Additionally the out-migration of 5,000 to 6,000 Parsis has not been featured. Interestingly in the 20 year period from 1981 to 2001 the decline in actual numbers is only 2,029 as per census figures and this makes it a 3% decline so it is difficult to say with certainty which figures are correct.

6. Literacy Rate - Parsis have highest literacy rate which is 97.9%. According to 2001 census for any community in India while national average is 64.8%.

7. Working Population - This is 35% which is even lower than the national average of 39.3% the reason being, large percentage of retired persons and thus dependent upon younger generation.

8. Population Distribution - Parsis are a highly urbanized community and 96.1% reside in urban areas while national average is 27.8%.

9. Fertility Rate - Fertility as reflected in annual numbers of births seems to have declined whatever may be the reasons whether direct or indirect. Child Woman Ratio (CWR) 0-4 / 5 - 9 is an excellent indirect measure of fertility.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Methodology: A quantitative approach was used for the study. A large scale national level survey was conducted among the Parsi families living in both the urban and rural areas.

Sample: It covers all states of India and wherever Parsis have settled in the remotest corners of India. The proformas along with appeal letter from the commission were sent to 136 Parsi anjumans, 11 welfare centres, 16 youth associations, 2 research assistants, 9 miscellaneous trusts, 24 health officers of Mumbai Municipal corporation, 20 prominent social workers, 7 municipal commissioners, 5 Parsi Zoroastrian clubs in Kolkata, 15 state minorities' commissions, Nursery and Primary schools in Mumbai and 4 Maternity hospitals. Door-to-door distribution of about 10,000 proformas was done in various Parsi Colonies and Baughs.

Tool: A proforma with the appeal letter was sent three times to different anjumans, individuals, municipalities, Parsi baugs and all concerned. The proforma comprised of the following information:

1. Name of the child
2. Date of birth
3. Place of birth
4. Father's name
5. Mother's name
6. Mother's maiden name
7. Registration authority
8. Listing in the govt. census report
9. Voting rights
10. First born
11. Number of siblings
12. Any other information

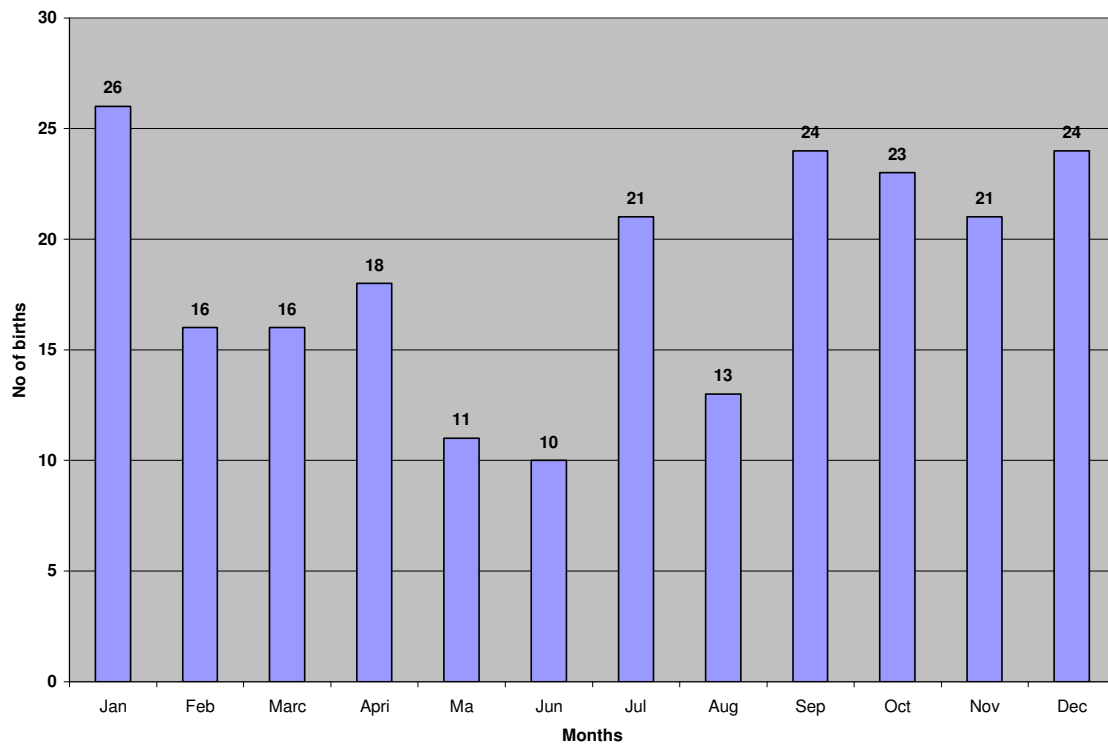
Analysis of the Data:

The data is tabulated month-wise and year-wise. The graphical representation is also presented..

CHAPTER 4**ANALYSIS OF THE DATA:****1. Census of Zoroastrian infants with month-wise distribution per year.**

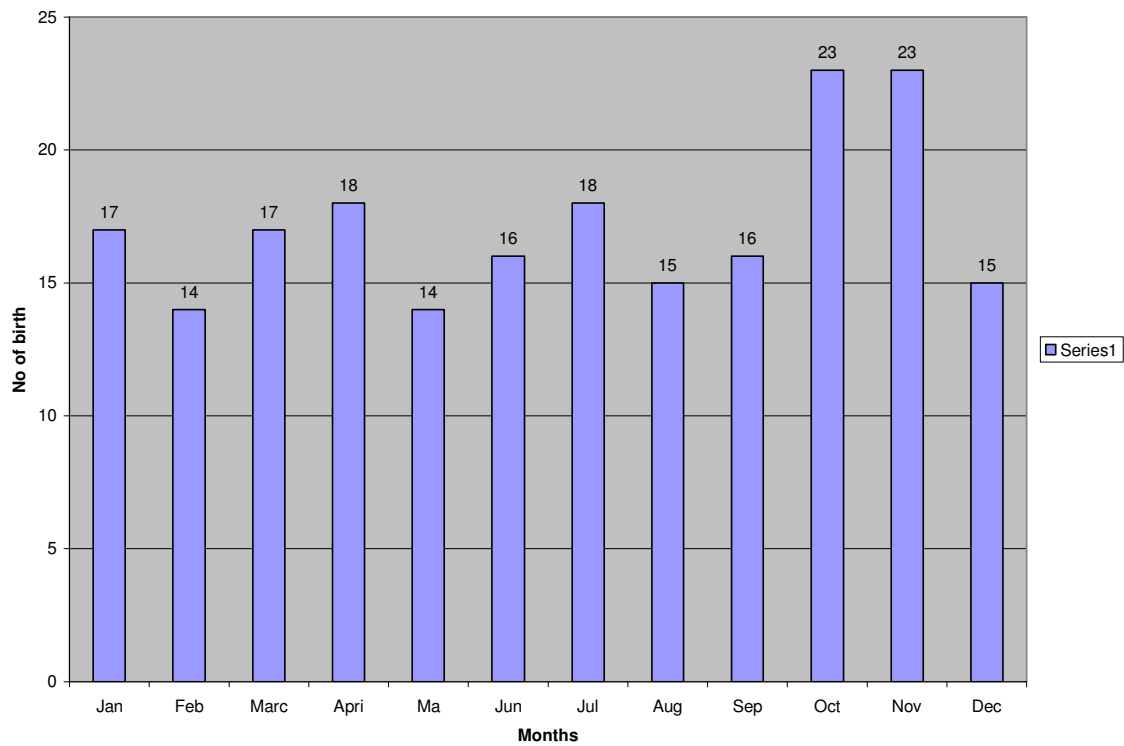
Month Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Ma	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2001	26	16	16	18	11	10	21	13	24	23	21	24	223
2002	17	14	17	18	14	16	18	15	16	23	23	15	206
2003	10	15	16	10	14	10	18	11	15	19	18	21	177
2004	18	10	13	15	16	17	15	13	15	23	14	20	189
2005	12	15	16	13	16	9	15	10	14	7	24	20	171
2006	17	9	10	16	13	20	17	9	17	20	13	13	174
Up to 15 th Aug, 2007	8	11	12	14	9	20	12	13					99

Fig. 1 Month-wise number of births in 2001



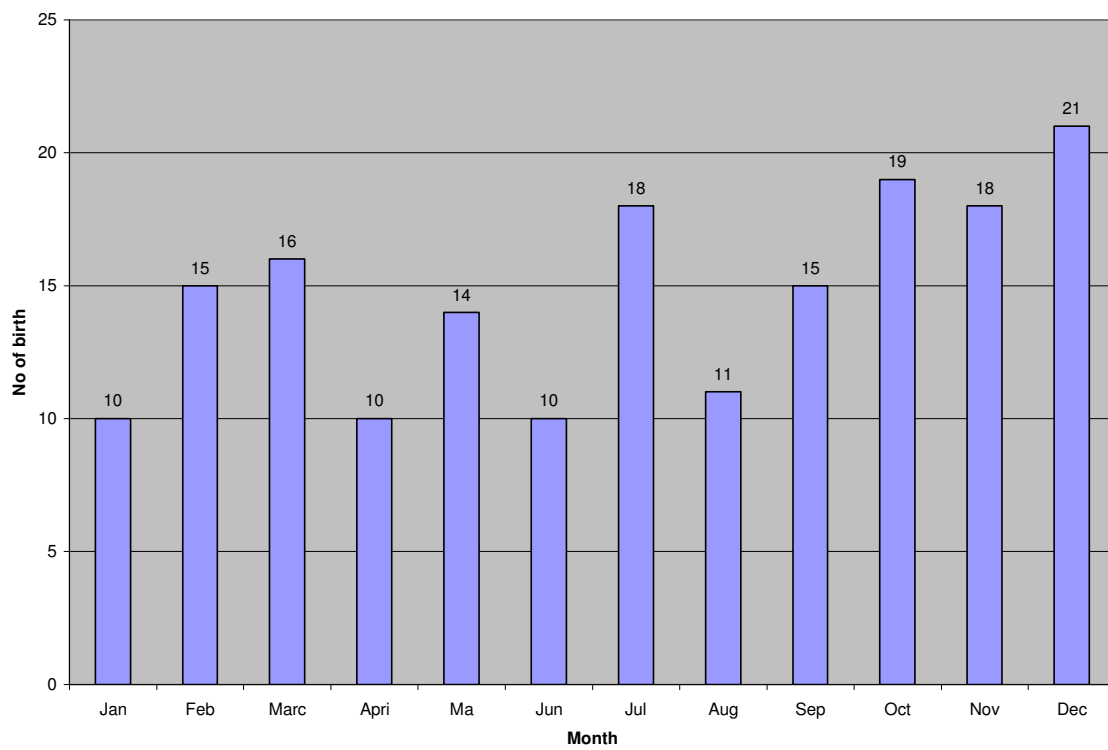
It was observed that births were maximum in 2001 among the years 2001 to 2007 (till 15th Aug.)

Fig. 2 Month-wise number of births in 2002



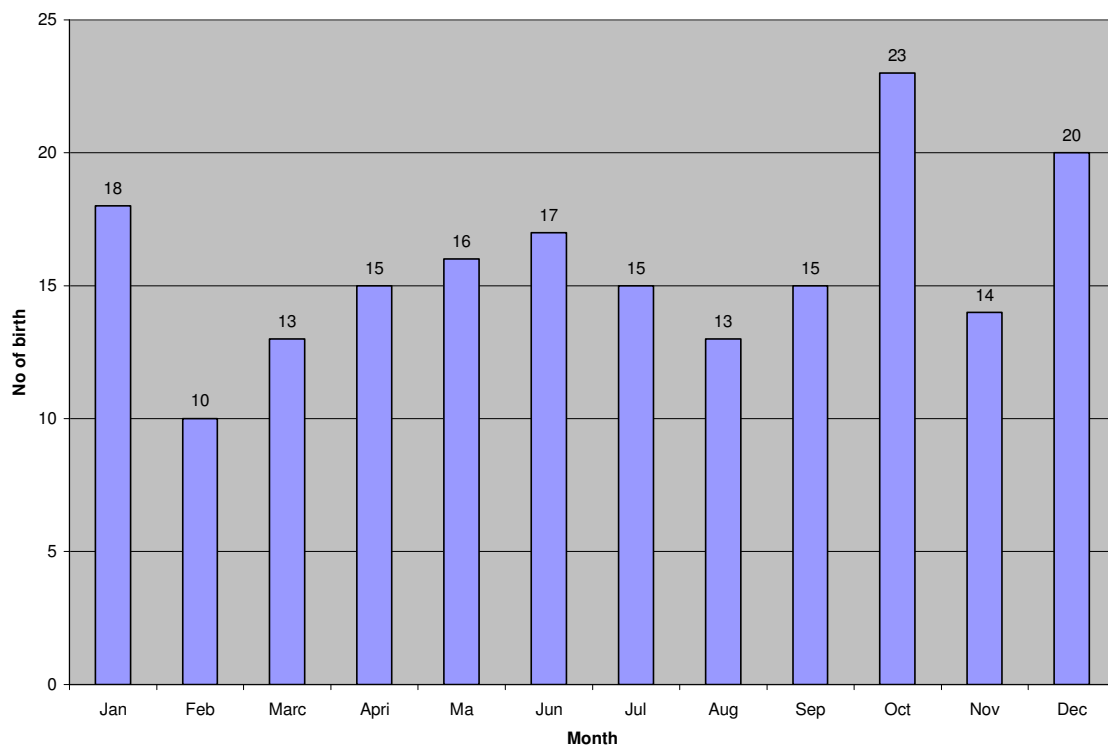
It was observed that births were little less than 2001 among the years 2001 to 2007 (till Aug)

Fig. 3 Month-wise number of births in 2003



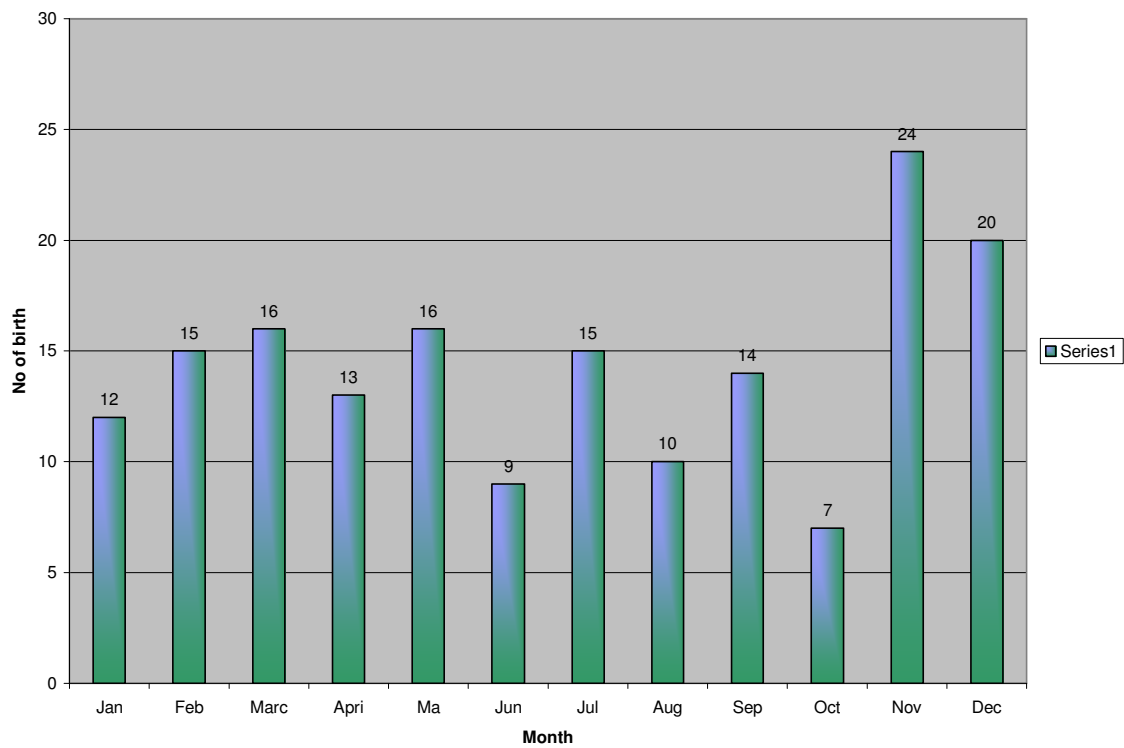
It was observed that from 2003 the birth rate showed consistent results.

Fig. 4 Month-wise number of births in 2004



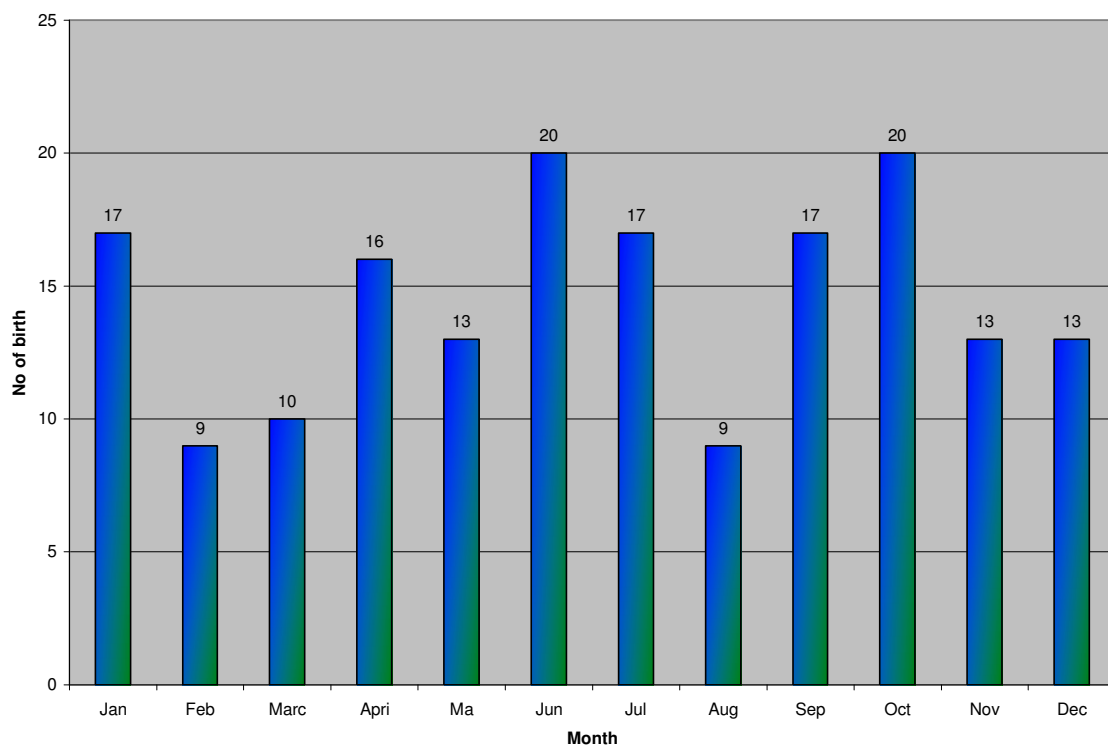
The maximum birth-rate is in the month of October as against rather low birth-rate in the month of February. However, the consistency is well-defined.

Fig. 5 Month-wise number of births in 2005



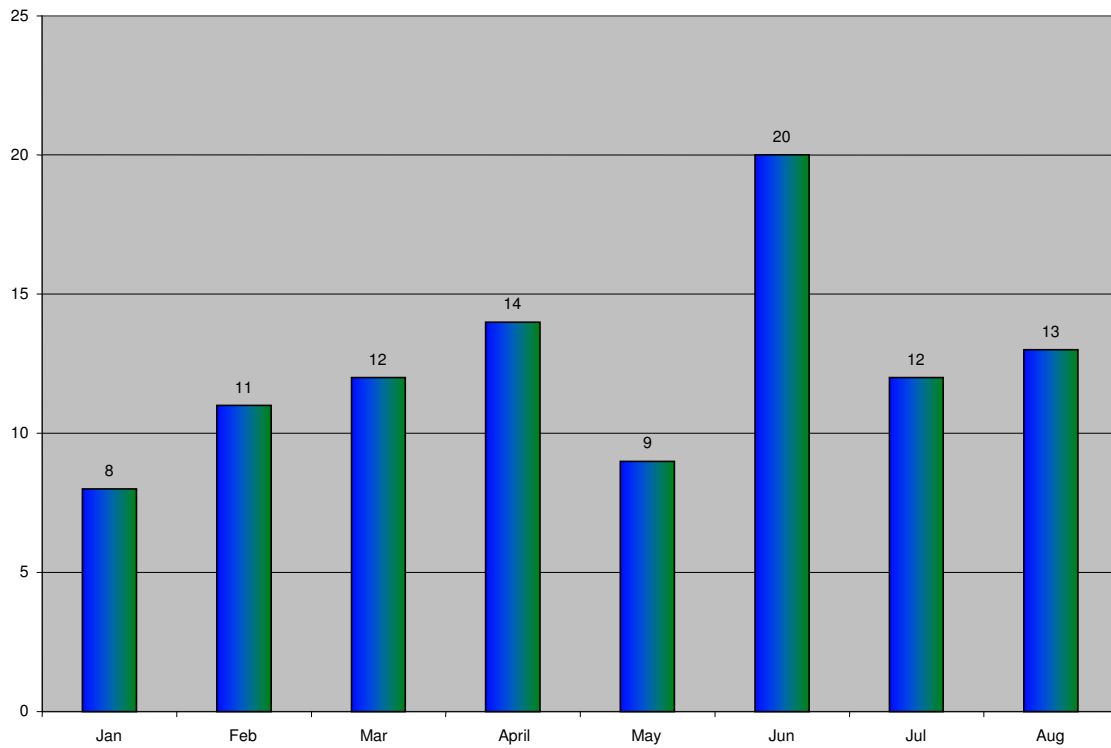
The month of November shows the highest birth-rate of 24 followed by December 20. However, the months of June and October show very low birth-rates.

Fig. 6 Month-wise number of births in 2006



The favourable months seem to be January, June and October when the birth-rates are much higher compared to other months.

ig. 7 Month-wise number of births in 2007 (till 15th August)

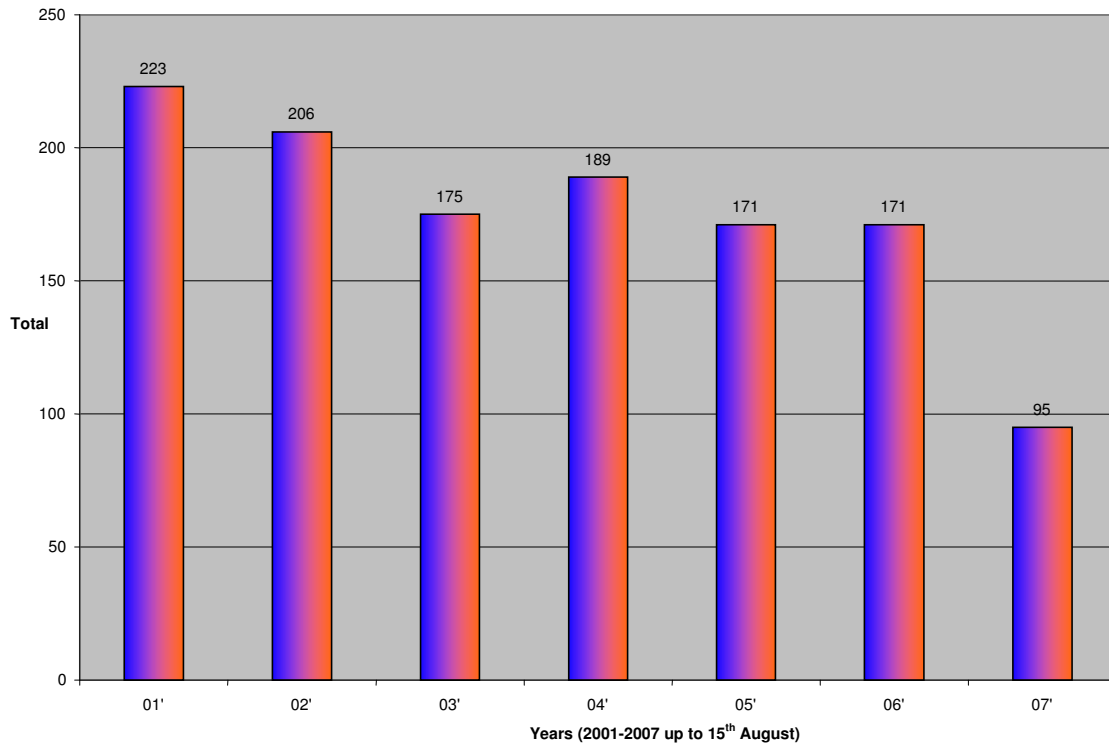


The month of June shows the maximum birth-rate of 20 as compared to months of January and May which seem to have fewer births.

Table 2. Total number of births year-wise

Year	Total
2001	223
2002	206
2003	177
2004	189
2005	171
2006	174
2007(up to 15 th August)	99

Fig. 8 Total number of Births Year-wise



It shows consistent trend in the birth rate except for the years 2001 and 2002.

CHAPTER 5

Summary & Conclusion

It has to be borne in mind that all hypothecation of population increase and decrease have been as per crude birth rate figures and guess-estimates made as no accurate data is available on Parsi births. There are two view points: there are those who believe that as the 'crude birth rates' show the Parsis are dwindling, with each succeeding year and the race which survived through all harsh times may well see its extinction by the end of this century. A growing number of Parsis on the other hand believe that the community population has at best reached a plateau, that deaths are declining and crude birth rates are no real indication of declining numbers, especially as out-migration is not accounted for in the decline of numbers and that the world wide Parsi population has remained steady at a 125,000 for over 80 years. Therefore, this project is undertaken to bring to light the factors which account for the present population trend of the community and to provide a ready platform for various interested stakeholders to implement an action plan to improve birth rates in the community.

A quantitative approach was used. A large scale national level sample survey was conducted. 10,000 forms were distributed to various agencies (List in the Appendix) to collect data. Three times the reminders were sent.

The data was tabulated month-wise and year-wise. The data was also represented graphically in the form of bar graphs.

Conclusion

- 1) To find the total number of births during 2001 to 15th August 2007.
- 2) To find the trend of birth rate during 2001 to 15th August 2007.

Keeping in mind the above objectives it was found that birth- rate from 2001 to date is showing consistent trend.

The above study will be worth its value, if Parsi Community Leaders get together to resolve the problems enumerated which cause the birth rate to slow down, namely, Late and non-marriages, Fertility decline, Emigration, Out-marriages and Separation--divorces.

All these causes are well known and some steps are taken to reverse the trend, but not enough is done, as seen from the Project Report. The important factor is the confidence and consciousness among Parsi Youth to be aroused, to remain bonded together. The Parsis have all the resources at their command and also endowed abilities to rise above the situation. What is lacking, is the zeal of entrepreneurship, early employment and strengthened family ties to live together and lead the Zoroastrian way of life knitted in good thoughts, good words and good deeds, in this materialistic and glamorous world. Youth and parental counselling are absolutely essential (in the myriad opportunities and teeming millions around) to keep their goals well defined and strive to live up to the expectations of ancestral goodwill and heritage of which, they are the proud beneficiaries.

May Ahura Mazda, bless the community and may it increase from strength to strength in peace, prosperity and happiness.

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APPENDIX

Names of the Agencies to whom the forms were distributed:

1. All Anjumans Affiliated to the Federation
2. Welfare Centres and Youth Associations in Mumbai and Suburbs
3. Community Baughs and Parsi colonies
4. Parsi daily Newspapers/ Weekly/ Magazines
5. Hospitals with Maternity wards.
6. Zoroastrian managed schools in Mumbai.
7. Zoroastrian managed nursery schools
8. Additional list of Trusts
9. Zoroastrian Students' - Teachers' Association.
10. Prominent Parsis in Mumbai.
11. Prominent Parsis in Gujarat.
12. Health Officers of the Greater Mumbai Municipal wards.
13. Parsi Establishments in Kolkata.
14. State Minorities Commissions all over India.
15. Additional list of all communities associated with Parsis.

APPENDIX (i) continued

Meetings of Parsi Zoroastrians addressed (forms distributed)

18 th June	Bardoli - Pali- Sigapore (Gujarat State)
4 th July	Chennai Zoroastrian Association (Madras)
8 th July	Albless Baug - Jashan Committee (Mumbai)
10 th July	Dadar Agiary - Jashan Ceremony (Mumbai)
27 th July	Thane- Mumbra - Kalyan (Maharashtra)
30 th July	Pune Zoroastrian Association (Maharashtra)

Appendix (ii)

National Commission for Minorities Research Project on Birth Rate Among Parsis-Irani (Zoroastrians) 2001 - till Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

You will agree with me that at present we do not have an authentic study of registered Parsis-Irani births except for the government census. The community is constantly made to believe that if some drastic steps are not taken, it will face extinction in the next 25 years, hence the urgency for complete factual data on the same.

Your Anjuman/Association can help in a big way to collect the data in the proforma attached herein. I am aware of the fact that it is an onerous task but if done with community zeal and enthusiasm, the information can be compiled in a scientific manner and presented. It will also rest aside the anxiety felt in the community that we are moving towards doomsday, quite fast.

If you know of any other source of information to make the data more scientific and complete, do write to me either on Delhi or Mumbai address. Kindly make all efforts at your end in the remotest areas around you to collect the information and oblige personally.

In your cooperation, lies our strength.

Thanking you,

Yours truly,

Mehroo Bengalee

Appendix (iii)

PROFORMA (Use one form per child born in 2001 till date)

1. Name of the child: _____
2. Date of birth: _____
3. Place of birth : _____
4. Father's name (in full): _____
5. Mother's name (in full) : _____
6. Mother's maiden name (in full): _____
7. Whether registered with Municipality,
Gram Panchayat, Parsi Anjuman (State specifically) _____
8. Whether the family is listed in the
Govt Census Report of the year: _____
9. Whether the family has voting rights(Yes / No): _____
10. Is the child first born (Yes/No): _____
11. Any other children in the family
(state their dates of birth): _____
12. Any other information important for the
study: _____

N.B: Please Xerox the number of forms required at your end and return the same within a fortnight or earlier to Mumbai or Delhi address. Your cooperation in this effort is vital within the time-bound period. Do feel free to forward any other source of collection of data to make the study a truly complete and comprehensive. May your efforts be blessed by AHURA MAZDA.

Appendix (iv)

**National Commission for Minorities Research Project on
Birth-rate among Parsi-Irani Zoroastrians : 2001 to date.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

If you are a proud parent of a child/ children born between 2001 to 2007, kindly fill the following details to help us to collect the data of Birth-rate among Parsi-Irani Zoroastrians.

Use one form per child.

1. Name of the Child
2. Date of Birth
3. Place of Birth
4. Father's name (in full)
5. Mother's name (in full)
6. Mother's maiden name (in full)
7. Residential address.

Kindly forward the same to Mumbai or Delhi Address, at your earliest.

Thanking you,

Yours truly,
M. Bengalee