



Compendium

Seminar on Parsis in Modern India: Navigating Cultural and Socio-Economic Pathways

9th May, 2026 | Mumbai



Preface

The Parsi community, though numerically one of the smallest minority communities in India, has made an extraordinary contribution to the nation's social, economic, industrial and cultural development. This compendium emerges from the deliberations of the National Seminar on "Parsis in Modern India: Navigating Cultural and Socio-Economic Pathways", organised by the National Commission for Minorities with TISS-Parzor Foundation as knowledge-partner, to reflect upon the achievements, concerns and future pathways of this remarkable community.

The discussions underscored the enduring legacy of Parsis in nation-building through pioneering contributions in industry, science, healthcare, philanthropy, arts and public life. Eminent speakers highlighted the role of visionary institutions and individuals whose commitment to integrity, public service and social responsibility has strengthened India's pluralistic ethos.

At the same time, the seminar brought attention to pressing concerns confronting the community, including demographic decline, ageing population, low fertility rates, preservation of religious institutions and safeguarding of cultural heritage. Deliberations also emphasized the importance of initiatives such as the Jiyo Parsi programme, community engagement, youth participation and institutional collaboration to address emerging challenges.

This compendium seeks to document these reflections and recommendations, reaffirming a collective commitment to preserving the rich heritage, identity and enduring legacy of the Parsi community for future generations.



Inaugural Session

The programme commenced with registration followed by light refreshments and the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by dignitaries.

Holy Prayer by Parsi Head Priest, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor of Udvada

The inaugural prayer was offered by Parsi Head Priest, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor of Udvada. In his address, he reflected upon the enduring values of the Zoroastrian faith, emphasizing truth, righteousness, service, progress as guiding principles of the community. He remarked that progress had always remained the defining spirit of the Zoroastrian tradition and observed that the history of the Parsis in India stands as a testimony to integrity, faith, learning, compassion, service.



He highlighted the substantial contribution of the Parsi community to commerce, industry, education, science, philanthropy, arts, law, public life. He also underlined the importance of preserving cultural heritage while adapting to changing social realities. Calling upon younger generations to cultivate knowledge, enterprise, creativity, compassion, he emphasized the need to uphold the community's legacy of ethical conduct and public service.

He concluded by invoking blessings for the community, the nation, successful deliberations of the seminar.

Welcome Address by Smt. Alka Upadhyaya

Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, National Commission for Minorities welcomed dignitaries, scholars, media representatives, members of the Parsi community, participants present at the seminar. She stated that the seminar had been organized in collaboration with the TISS-Parzor Foundation and acknowledged the contribution of Professor Shernaz Cama along with the TISS-Parzor team in conceptualizing and organizing the programme.



She observed that the seminar sought to engage deeply with the journey of the Parsi community and its invaluable contribution towards building modern India. She remarked that although the community constituted a small demographic group, its contribution to national development had been extraordinary. Referring to Mumbai as a city intrinsically associated with the Parsi community, she stated that its spirit, aspirations, identity made it an appropriate venue for the seminar. She highlighted the contribution of Parsis to industry, science, philanthropy, culture, public life, mentioning eminent personalities such as Sir Jamsetji Tata, Shri Ratan Tata, Cyrus Poonawalla, Persis Khambatta, Zubin Mehta. She remarked that the values of integrity, philanthropy, social responsibility associated with the community reflected India's pluralistic ethos.

Smt. Upadhyaya also referred to demographic concerns faced by the community and highlighted the Jiyo Parsi Scheme initiated by the Government of India to address these challenges. She noted that the National Commission for Minorities had consistently engaged with issues concerning preservation of cultural heritage, demographic concerns, welfare measures for the Parsi community. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of preserving heritage while embracing new opportunities for growth and expressed hope that the seminar, technical sessions would generate meaningful discussions and constructive recommendations. A short film on the Parsi community was screened thereafter.

*- Smt. Alka Upadhyaya,
Secretary, National Commission
for Minorities (NCM)*

Address by Shri Hormazd Godrej

Shri Hormazd Godrej, Manager, Godrej Agrovet Limited thanked the Government of India and the National Commission for Minorities for organizing the seminar. He reflected upon India's economic growth trajectory and highlighted the importance of research, innovation, agriculture, artificial intelligence in strengthening the country's economic future.

He observed that despite constituting only a very small percentage of India's population, the Parsi community had made a disproportionately large contribution to the country's economic, industrial, social development. Referring to the "Parsi Paradox," he remarked that a community numbering approximately fifty to sixty thousand had left an enduring imprint upon India's economy and institutional infrastructure.



He highlighted industrial and business groups established by Parsis including Tata Group, Shapoorji Pallonji Group, Serum Institute, Thermax, Wadia Group, Godrej Group. He also referred to philanthropic contributions reflected through institutions such as Tata Memorial Hospital and the Indian Institute of Science.

Reflecting upon the life of Ardeshir Godrej, Shri Godrej described how a commitment to ethics, innovation, self-reliance shaped the Godrej legacy. He also discussed challenges facing the community including demographic decline, delayed marriages, fertility concerns, hidden poverty, healthcare requirements.

Appreciating the positive impact of the Jiyo Parsi Scheme, he emphasized the need to preserve Parsi rituals, heritage, language, temples, traditions, cuisine through youth participation, mentorship, education, entrepreneurship, institutional collaboration.

**- Shri Hormazd Godrej,
Manager, Godrej Agrovet
Limited**

Message of Professor Shernaz Cama

As Professor Shernaz Cama was unable to attend the seminar, her message was read by Shri Berjis Desai, Member, National Commission for Minorities.

In her message, Professor Cama observed that the Parsis represent a Bronze Age civilization that has survived for nearly three millennia, largely because of the shelter, acceptance, protection received in India. She remarked that preservation of culture and heritage in an increasingly monocultural world had emerged as a major challenge for communities globally, particularly in the context of demographic decline.

Referring to the UNESCO Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage initiated in 1999, she highlighted the work undertaken by Parzor in documentation, manuscript preservation, revival of crafts, oral traditions, demographic research, educational outreach, awareness generation.

She emphasized the need to strengthen and revive the Jiyo Parsi Programme through dedicated outreach, greater advocacy, personalized engagement. She also highlighted promising pathways for socio-cultural development through the preservation of Parsi textiles, museums, heritage tourism, cultural institutions, academic programmes.

Professor Cama referred to the work undertaken through the Framji Dadabhoy Alpaiwalla Museum along with contributions made by Pheroza Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree with the support of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. She proposed the development of Parsi heritage tourism circuits and expansion of educational initiatives through TISS-Parzor academic programmes.

*- Professor Shernaz Cama
Director of the UNESCO ParZor Project for
the Preservation and Promotion of Parsi
Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage*



Address by Shri Berjis Desai

In his address, Shri Berjis Desai, Member, National Commission for Minorities highlighted the unique position of the Parsi community as India's smallest yet deeply integrated religious minority, which has preserved its distinct identity while contributing significantly to the nation's progress. Expressing concern over the continuing demographic decline of the community, he underscored the importance of revitalizing the Jiyo Parsi programme through collaborative efforts involving the Government, community institutions, NGOs and experts, emphasizing that "every Parsi matters."



He drew attention to the challenges faced by several Parsi Fire Temples, including declining congregations, shortage of priests and financial constraints affecting their upkeep and stressed the need for sustainable, long-term solutions. He also referred to ongoing legal and social discussions concerning gender equality and marriage within the community, noting that related matters are under consideration before the Supreme Court.

Clarifying the mandate of the National Commission for Minorities, Shri Desai stated that the Commission primarily addresses issues of discrimination against minorities rather than routine civil disputes. He praised India's inclusive ethos for enabling Parsis to flourish without seeking special privileges and described the community as a "model minority," rooted in philanthropy, public service and an enduring commitment to the spirit of "India First."

*- Shri Berjis Desai,
Member, National Commission for Minorities*

Address by Smt. S. Munawari Begum

Smt. S. Munawari Begum, Member, National Commission for Minorities appreciated the immense contribution of the Parsi community to India in the fields of charity, healthcare, education, nation building. She observed that although the community's population remained relatively small, its contribution to society had been exceptionally significant. She referred to initiatives undertaken by the Government of India and the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the welfare of minority communities, particularly the Jiyo Parsi Programme, aimed at addressing demographic decline within the Parsi community. She encouraged members of the community to effectively utilize welfare schemes and institutional support extended by the Government.



Smt. Begum also appreciated the role of the Parsi community in enriching India's social, cultural fabric and expressed confidence that younger generations would continue to uphold the legacy of service, ethical responsibility, nation building associated with the community.

*- Smt. S. Munawari Begum,
Member, National Commission for Minorities*

Address by Shri Pyare Jiya Khan

Shri Pyare Jiya Khan, Chairman, State Minorities Commission, Maharashtra highlighted constitutional safeguards available to minority communities under Articles 15, 21A, 29, 30 of the Constitution of India. He stated that constitutional rights and welfare measures intended for minority communities extended equally to all minority groups, including Parsis.

He observed that the Parsi community had consistently contributed towards society and nation building, noting that members of the community had historically been recognized more for giving to society than seeking assistance. He acknowledged the community's contribution to philanthropy, education, public welfare, social development.



He also elaborated upon the mandate, functions of the Maharashtra State Minorities Commission in addressing grievances, protecting minority rights, promoting inclusive development. Encouraging members of the Parsi community to approach the Commission whenever required, he reiterated the institution's commitment towards safeguarding minority welfare.

*- Shri Pyare Jiya Khan,
Chairman, State Minorities Commission,
Maharashtra*

Address by Shri George Kurian

Shri George Kurian, Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs appreciated the remarkable contribution of the Parsi community to India despite its limited demographic strength. He observed that although the community constituted only a very small proportion of India's population, its contribution to the economy, taxation, industry, nation building had been exceptionally significant.



He appreciated the efforts of the National Commission for Minorities in organizing seminars highlighting the contribution of minority communities towards India's growth and development. Referring to the Zoroastrian ideals of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds," he remarked that these guiding principles had played an important role in shaping the success and contribution of the Parsi community.

Shri Kurian referred to eminent personalities from the community including Homi Bhabha, Dadabhai Naoroji, Bhikaji Cama, Nani Palkhivala, Soli Sorabjee, along with leaders of industrial groups such as Tata, Godrej, Wadia, Poonawalla. He also highlighted the contribution of Parsis in education, philanthropy, sports, scientific advancement.

He observed that India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047 would require the continued contribution of communities such as the Parsis and expressed gratitude towards the community for its role in India's progress.

*- Shri George Kurian,
Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs*

Unveiling of Coffee Table Book

A coffee table book on the Parsi community, published by the National Commission for Minorities, was unveiled by dignitaries during the seminar.

The publication documented the rich legacy, achievements, contribution of the Parsi community to India in fields such as industry, education, philanthropy, science, defence, public service. It also highlighted cultural traditions, institutions, Government initiatives including the Jiyo Parsi Scheme, reflecting the enduring contribution of the community to India's national life.



Keynote Address by Shri Kiren Rijiju

Shri Kiren Rijiju, Hon'ble Union Minister of Minority Affairs stated that the subject of the seminar held significance not only for the Parsi community but for the nation as a whole. He observed that while the numerical strength of the community remained limited, its contribution to India had been exceptionally significant.



He appreciated the contribution of the Parsi community to industry, philanthropy, science, public life, nation building. He acknowledged the role played by Parsis in shaping India's economic, cultural landscape and reaffirmed the Government's commitment towards supporting minority communities while preserving India's pluralistic heritage.

Shri Rijiju remarked that India's diversity and inclusiveness represented among the country's greatest strengths and observed that the Parsi community stood as an example of cultural preservation combined with national contribution. Appreciating the discipline, values, spirit of service associated with the community, he assured continued Government support for initiatives aimed at heritage preservation and minority welfare.

*- Shri Kiren Rijiju,
Hon'ble Union Minister of Minority Affairs*

Vote of Thanks by Dr. Atya Nand

Dr. Atya Nand, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities delivered the vote of thanks at the conclusion of the inaugural session. He expressed gratitude to Shri Kiren Rijju, Hon'ble Union Minister of Minority Affairs, for delivering the keynote address and unveiling the coffee table book on the Parsi community. He also thanked Shri George Kurian, Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Shri Pyare Jiya Khan, both members of the National Commission for Minorities and distinguished dignitaries for their presence, support.



He appreciated the contribution of TISS-Parzor, Professor Shernaz Cama, Shri Hormazd Godrej, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor, organizing teams for ensuring the successful conduct of the seminar. He observed that the seminar reflected the spirit of diversity, inclusion, nation building associated with the Parsi community and thanked delegates, scholars, participants for their valuable engagement.

He concluded by inviting everyone to join in singing Vande Mataram followed by the National Anthem.

*- Dr. Atya Nand,
Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities*

Technical Session – I

Cultural Identity and Preservation Among Parsis in Modern India

The session deliberated extensively on the theme of Cultural Identity and Preservation Among Parsis in Modern India, emphasizing the need to safeguard the community's unique religious, linguistic and cultural heritage amid demographic decline and social change. Discussions highlighted the preservation of Parsi traditions, fire temples, rituals, cuisine, language, manuscripts and crafts, while stressing the importance of youth engagement, heritage education, institutional support and initiatives such as the TISS-Parzor Foundation in ensuring cultural continuity.

The seminar session on Cultural Identity and Preservation Among Parsis in Modern India, moderated by **Shri Yazdi Tantra, Trustee, Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust, Mumbai**



Opening Remarks by Shri Yazdi Tantra - Moderator

In his opening remarks, Shri Yazdi Tantra welcomed participants to the technical session on “Cultural Identity and Preservation Among Parsis in Modern India.” He observed that although the Parsi community was small in number, its contribution to India and the wider world had been profound. He emphasized that preservation of culture required conscious effort, sustained commitment, inter-generational transmission of values and traditions.



He stated that the session aimed to explore ways in which the Parsi community could preserve its ancient identity while adapting to changing social realities. He highlighted important themes such as preservation of heritage through museums, archives, textiles, language, scriptures and digital platforms. He also emphasized the growing importance of digital initiatives in connecting younger generations of Parsis across the world with their cultural and spiritual heritage.

Introducing the panelists, Shri Tantra expressed hope that the deliberations would generate meaningful discussions on preservation, continuity and revitalization of Parsi cultural identity.

*- Shri Yazdi Tantra, Trustee,
Global Council of Zoroastrians
Trust, Mumbai*

Address by Ervad Kerman Fatakia - Speaker

Ervad Kerman Fatakia spoke on the role of the Framji Dadabhoy Alpaiwalla Museum in preserving and showcasing the history, culture and heritage of the Parsi-Zoroastrian community. He highlighted that the museum houses rare artefacts, manuscripts, textiles, porcelain collections and archaeological objects dating back to ancient Iranian civilizations as well as the Zoroastrian period.



He emphasized that the museum serves as an important institution for preserving cultural memory while educating younger generations as well as non-Zoroastrians about Parsi traditions, rituals and heritage. He also stressed the emotional and historical significance attached to community artefacts and appealed to members of the community to preserve valuable family heirlooms and contribute them to museums for future generations.

Ervad Fatakia further emphasized the importance of digital outreach, heritage tourism, Government support for museums and cultural institutions. He suggested the creation of virtual museum platforms and Parsi heritage tourism networks to strengthen preservation efforts while promoting Parsi heritage at national and international levels.

- Ervad Kerman Fatakia
Curator, Framji Dadabhoy
Alpaiwalla Museum

Address by Ms. Tinaz Nooshian - Speaker

Ms. Tinaz Nooshian spoke on the rich textile and material heritage of the Parsi community, highlighting the community's significant contribution to Gujarat's weaving, embroidery and textile traditions. She explained that Parsi textiles reflected a unique synthesis of Persian, Gujarati, Chinese and European influences, making them enduring symbols of cultural assimilation and heritage preservation.



She elaborated upon the historical evolution of iconic textiles such as the Parsi Gara, Tanchoi, Ghatnu Kapdu and Bakhta of Bharuch, discussing the role of Parsi merchants, weavers and philanthropists in sustaining these traditions through trade and patronage. She also highlighted the incorporation of Indian and Chinese embroidery techniques within Parsi garments and textiles.

Expressing concern over the decline of traditional artisanship, loss of skilled craftspeople and increasing commercialization through machine-made reproductions, Ms. Nooshian emphasized the need to preserve authenticity while adapting traditions to contemporary relevance.

She appealed for Government support towards research, documentation, publication, digital preservation and inclusion of Parsi embroidery and textile traditions within India's national craft and intangible cultural heritage framework. She concluded by observing that Parsi textile traditions constitute an integral part of India's cultural heritage and deserve greater national recognition.

- Ms. Tinaz Nooshian
Cultural Researcher and Former
Editor-in-Chief, Mid-Day

Address by Dr. Meher Mistry - Speaker

Dr. Meher Mistry presented a historical overview of the Parsi community in India, tracing their migration from Iran to Gujarat and subsequently to Mumbai. She explained how the Parsis successfully assimilated into Indian society through the adoption of local language, dress and customs while preserving their distinct religious identity and cultural traditions. She highlighted the role of Parsis as traders, craftsmen, entrepreneurs and industrial pioneers who contributed significantly to India's economic development. Referring to prominent individuals and families such as the Wadias, Jeejeebhoy, Tatas, Godrejs and the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, she emphasized their contribution to shipbuilding, textile production, steel, banking and industry.



Dr. Mistry also underlined the contribution of Parsis in philanthropy, education, social reform, women's empowerment, science, cinema, journalism and the freedom movement. She observed that the community's emphasis upon education, integrity and hard work enabled Parsis to excel across multiple fields.

Expressing concern over the gradual disappearance of the community from mainstream historical narratives, she suggested greater Government support for research, documentation, publications, educational programmes and preservation of Parsi heritage and knowledge systems.

- Dr. Meher Mistry
Head, Department of History, R.J.
College, Mumbai

Address by Dr. Kerman Daruwalla - Speaker

Dr. Kerman Daruwalla spoke on the theme “Preservation and Revival through Education” and emphasized the importance of preserving both tangible and intangible heritage of the Parsi-Zoroastrian community. He highlighted the need to safeguard the Avestan language, Zoroastrian scriptures such as the Gathas, oral traditions and ritual practices transmitted across centuries.

He explained the linguistic and cultural relationship between Avestan and Sanskrit, observing that the teachings of the Gathas embody universal values such as truth, free will and environmental consciousness that remain highly relevant in contemporary times. He expressed concern regarding the declining number of individuals trained in traditional priestly practices and the risk of losing valuable linguistic and ritual knowledge.



Dr. Daruwalla highlighted initiatives undertaken through the TISS-Parzor Academic Programme, including the Certificate Programme in Zoroastrian Culture and Civilization, launched in 2024. He also discussed proposals for dedicated academic centres, research programmes and digital archives aimed at preserving and disseminating Parsi heritage. He emphasized collaboration with universities, libraries and international institutions to strengthen academic research and opportunities in Avestan and Zoroastrian studies. He concluded by underscoring the importance of Government support for preserving the educational, cultural and intellectual heritage of the Parsi community.

- Dr. Kerman Daruwalla
Project Coordinator, TISS-Parzor
Academic Programme, Mumbai

Concluding Remarks by the Moderator

In his concluding remarks, Shri Yazdi Tantra observed that the session had highlighted not merely the history and heritage of the Parsi community but also the values, resilience and spirit that enabled the community to preserve its identity across generations. He remarked that the discussions reflected the depth of the community's contribution in areas such as culture, heritage, civic institutions, education and faith traditions.

He emphasized that preservation of culture required sustained effort and conscious participation by every generation. Referring to the deliberations of the session, he identified three guiding principles for the future of the community: preserving heritage with intention, transmitting traditions with creativity and engaging meaningfully with the wider world.

He further observed that the continuity of the Parsi community depended not solely upon institutions and archives but equally upon the commitment of individuals to sustain and transmit the cultural and spiritual legacy of the community to future generations.



Technical Session – II

Socio-Economic Status and Challenges of Parsis in Contemporary India

The second technical session on “Socio-Economic Status and Challenges of Parsis in Contemporary India” was moderated by Yazdi Tantra. The session deliberated upon demographic decline, ageing population, socio-economic vulnerabilities and future sustainability of the Parsi community in contemporary India. At the outset, Dr. Atya Nand, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities, felicitated the moderator and speakers in recognition of their valuable contribution to the seminar.

The Session II moderated by **Shri Yazdi Tantra, Trustee, Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust, Mumbai**



Opening Remarks by Shri Yazdi Tantra - Moderator

Shri Yazdi Tantra emphasized the close interconnection between cultural identity, heritage and socio-economic well-being. He observed that despite their small numbers, Parsis had contributed immensely to India's economy, philanthropy, education and public life. Highlighting concerns such as population decline, ageing demographics, changing family structures and caregiving burdens, he stressed the need to revisit traditional welfare mechanisms.

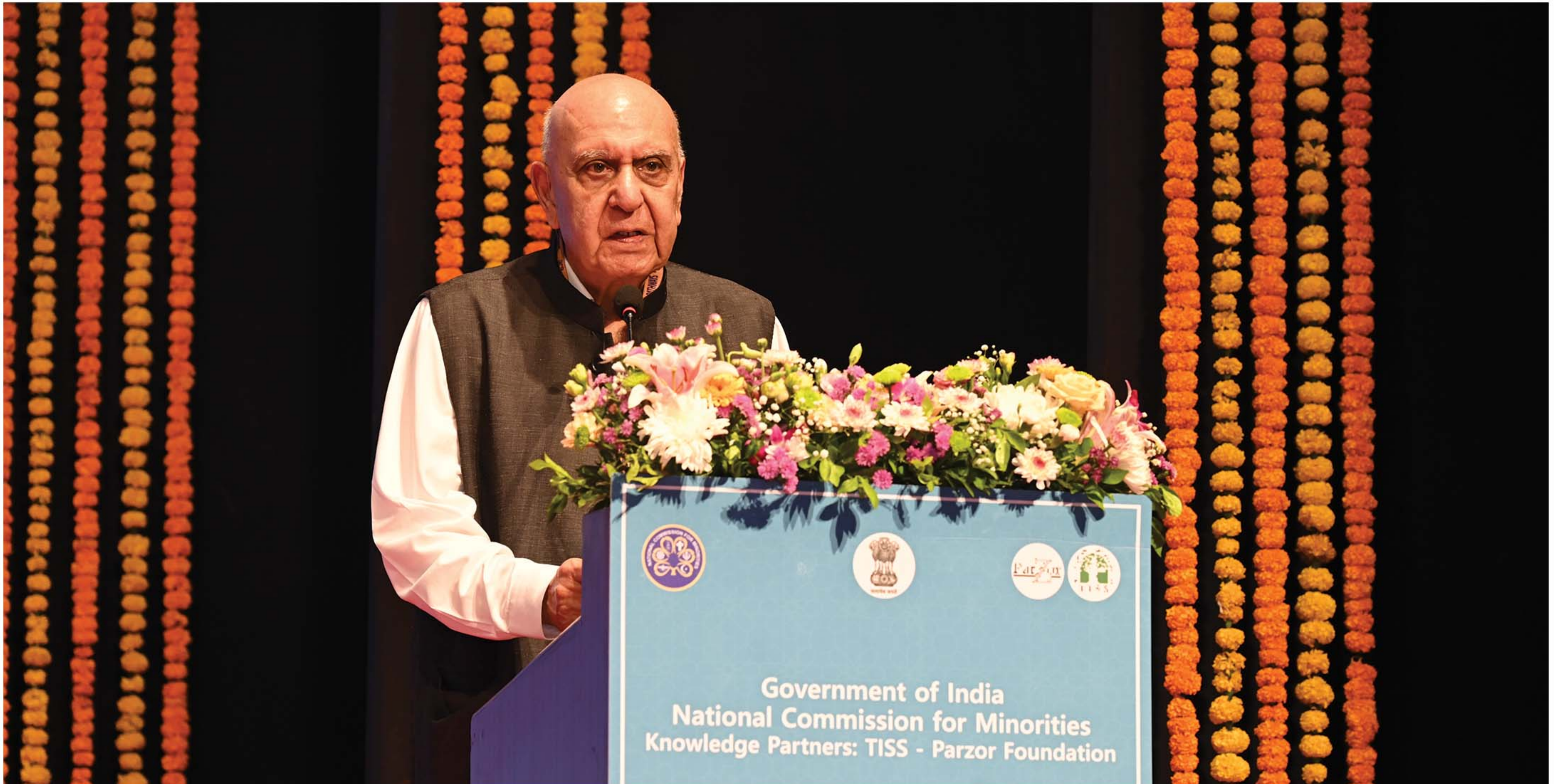


He underlined the importance of initiatives such as the Jiyo Parsi Scheme and called for stronger institutional support and community participation. He stated that the objective of the session was not merely to identify challenges but to explore constructive policy responses for the long-term sustainability of the Parsi community.

**- Shri Yazdi Tantra, Trustee,
Global Council of Zoroastrians
Trust, Mumbai**

Address by Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly - Speaker

Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly discussed the demographic and socio-economic challenges confronting the Parsi community, highlighting the continuous population decline since 1941 and concerns relating to ageing demographics, shrinking reproductive-age population and rising dependency ratios.



He observed that despite perceptions of affluence, socio-economic studies revealed growing financial vulnerability among sections of the community due to unemployment and health-related challenges. He stressed the need for greater coordination among charitable trusts, updated socio-economic surveys and strengthened welfare mechanisms, especially for rural Parsis. He also proposed revitalizing the Jiyo Parsi Scheme through a high-powered community committee supported by the National Commission for Minorities.

*- Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly,
Chairman, WZO Trusts,
Mumbai*

Presentation by Prof. Shalini Bharat - Speaker

Prof. Shalini Bharat presented findings from a pan-India study conducted by TISS in collaboration with the Parzor Foundation, highlighting delayed marriages, rising singlehood, low fertility and ageing demographics as major causes of demographic decline. She observed that preferences for endogamous marriages often resulted in delayed unions due to a limited pool of partners.



She also discussed inter-community marriages and concerns regarding exclusion of intermarried Parsi women and children from certain religious and community rights. Stressing the broader socio-economic and mental health implications of demographic decline, she emphasized the importance of timely marriages, early childbearing, inclusion and mental health support for long-term demographic sustainability.

**- Prof. Shalini Bharat,
Former VC, TISS, Mumbai**

Address by Prof. Nasreen Rustomfram - Speaker

Prof. Nasreen Rustomfram focused on mental health and well-being among elderly Parsis, emphasizing that ageing demographics, migration of younger generations and shrinking family structures had increased loneliness and dependency. She highlighted depression, anxiety and dementia as common but often overlooked challenges among senior citizens, particularly affecting elderly women, widows and those living alone.



She stressed the need for targeted mental health support, caregiver training, welfare outreach and companionship programmes. She also advocated for strengthening elderly welfare under the Jiyo Parsi Scheme and reducing stigma surrounding mental health to ensure dignified and inclusive care for senior citizens.

**- Prof. Nasreen Rustomfram,
Former Chairperson, Centre for
Lifelong Learning, TISS, Mumbai**

Address by Ms. Pearl Mistry - Speaker

Ms. Pearl Mistry shared practical insights from her experience as a former Jiyo Parsi counselor and highlighted socio-economic pressures faced by urban Parsi families, including rising living costs, housing constraints, educational expenses and caregiving burdens.



She observed that delayed marriages and professional pressures often discouraged young couples from starting families. Appreciating the support extended through the Jiyo Parsi Scheme, she stressed the need for continuity in financial assistance, counseling and welfare support. She proposed measures including educational assistance, housing support, awareness campaigns and a future “Jiyo Parsi 2.0” initiative to encourage sustainable demographic growth.

**- Ms. Pearl Mistry, Former
Jiyo Parsi Counsellor, Mumbai**

Concluding Remarks by Shri Yazdi Tantra

Shri Yazdi Tantra observed that the challenges facing the Parsi community extended beyond demographic decline to include psychosocial, economic and inter-generational concerns. He emphasized that ageing population, youth engagement and community welfare required coordinated action between Government institutions and community organizations. Stressing the importance of balancing cultural preservation with changing realities, he advocated strengthening internal support systems and aligning community initiatives with broader policy frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability and vitality of the Parsi community.



Valedictory Session

The valedictory session of the seminar on the Parsi community marked the culmination of insightful deliberations on cultural preservation, demographic concerns and socio-economic challenges confronting the community. The session acknowledged the valuable contributions of scholars, community representatives and institutions such as TISS-Parzor in enriching the discourse. It also reaffirmed the commitment of the National Commission for Minorities and the Ministry of Minority Affairs to take forward key recommendations, including proposals aimed at strengthening future community welfare initiatives.



Remarks by Smt. Alka Upadhyaya

Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, National Commission for Minorities appreciated the contributions of participants, scholars and organizers in making the seminar meaningful and insightful. She observed that discussions had moved beyond demographic concerns to include heritage preservation, museums, textiles, education and socio-economic welfare.



She acknowledged the role of TISS-Parzor, Professor Shernaz Cama and officials of the National Commission for Minorities in organizing the seminar. She informed that a compendium and key takeaways from the seminar would be prepared, and assured participants that recommendations, including proposals relating to “Jiyo Parsi 2.0”, would be taken forward under the guidance of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

*- Smt. Alka Upadhyaya,
Secretary, National Commission for Minorities*

Concluding Remarks by Shri George Kurian

Shri George Kurian, Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs acknowledged the demographic and social challenges faced by the Parsi community, noting similarities with concerns affecting other communities such as delayed marriages, migration and declining populations. Drawing from experiences of his own community in Kerala, he observed that these issues were increasingly common across India.



He assured participants that the concerns and recommendations emerging from the seminar had been duly noted and stated that the Government would examine suitable schemes and policy responses based on the deliberations.

*- Shri George Kurian,
Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs*

Vote of Thanks by Shri Harish Kumar

Shri Harish Kumar, Deputy Secretary, NCM delivered the formal vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to dignitaries, speakers, delegates and organizers for contributing to the seminar's success. He thanked Kiren Rijju for delivering the keynote address and unveiling the coffee table book on the Parsi community and acknowledged George Kurian for his support towards minority welfare.



He further appreciated the contributions of Berjis Desai, Alka Upadhyaya, Atya Nand, scholars, community representatives and TISS-Parzor Foundation. He concluded by thanking delegates, media representatives and members of the Parsi community for making the deliberations meaningful and successful.

*- Shri Harish Kumar,
Deputy Secretary, NCM*

Key Takeaways

1. Need for Revision of Income Eligibility Criteria for Overseas Education Support

It was suggested that the existing annual family income cap under minority overseas education schemes may not adequately address the realities faced by middle-class Parsi families, particularly in urban areas with higher living costs.

2. Consideration of a Tiered or Middle-Income Support Framework

A recommendation emerged for introducing a revised or tiered income slab, particularly for overseas education schemes, to enable meritorious students from middle-income families to access financial assistance and interest subsidies for higher studies abroad.

3. Promotion of Educational Mobility and Global Skill Development

Greater institutional support for overseas education was considered important to enable Parsi youth to acquire global expertise and contribute meaningfully to India's academic, scientific and professional advancement.

4. Recognition of Religious and Cultural Rights of Global Zoroastrian Communities

Concerns were raised regarding difficulties faced by Parsis from neighbouring countries, particularly Iran and Pakistan, in visiting sacred Zoroastrian religious sites in India.

5. Proposal for a Dedicated Parsi Pilgrim Visa Facilitation Mechanism

It was recommended that the Government explore the possibility of a streamlined or fast-tracked visa framework for verified Parsi pilgrims, similar to arrangements available for certain religious groups, to facilitate access to important religious institutions in India.

6. Strengthening India's Role as the Spiritual Centre of Zoroastrianism

Facilitating religious access to Atash Behrams and sacred heritage sites was viewed as an important measure for preserving spiritual continuity and strengthening India's role as a custodian of global Zoroastrian heritage.

7. Need for Continued Consultation with Community Stakeholders

Participants emphasized the importance of sustained dialogue among Government agencies, community organizations and subject experts to ensure inclusive and responsive policy interventions for the long-term welfare and cultural preservation of the Parsi community.





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