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# **A Study Of Parsi Culture**

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## **AUTHOR'S MANIFESTO**

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## A STUDY OF PARSI CULTURE

Several writers of Diaspora from various countries are twice removed. Migrations are no longer one to one. Once began they have a tendency to continue. The Indian Diaspora during the colonial period when the British Empire had spread its tentacles round the globe and the red stain of Imperialism had leaked into diverse land masses, Indian labourers and then entrepreneurs followed the Union Jack from the Caribbean islands to Fiji and from Canada to South Africa.

Diasporic writers suffer from severe identity confusion and alienation from homelands. Thus the writers of this kind show a keen desire to assimilate and belong to their present place of abode. Among the Diasporic group of Indian writers, there are some like Rohinton Mistry who have to grapple with not just one Diasporic displacement but multiple displacements. A Parsi Zoroastrian Mistry immigrated to Canada from Bombay, but in racial terms, this was not his first Diasporic experience. His people had first become

Diasporic when they had left Iran around the time of the Islamic conquest of the Persian Empire and arriving with their sacred fires hand sought refuge in India- refuge that had seen highs and lows of the Islamic incursions into Gujarat.

Rohinton Mistry's birth and upbringing in Bombay makes him an eminently suitable writer for witnessing the last bright sparks of the existence of the Parsis in India, Mistry was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1952 to Behram Mistry and Freny Jhaveri Mistry. He was the middle son of three and he also has younger sister. The one man proved a catalytic agent for Rohinton Mistry is his younger brother Cyrus - himself a playwright and story-writer. It was he who prompted and encouraged him to study English classics specially fiction writers who were to prove a great shaping force for Rohinton Mistry. The playwright and short-story writer Cyrus Mistry is his younger brother. His father worked in the field of advertising, while his mother was the home-maker. As Mistry has told about her, "she

was happy in that role doing the miracle that all mothers perform of making what was barely enough seemed like abundance. We did not have new clothes and shoes as often as we might have liked but we were certainly better off than half the population. (Interview with Angela Lambert)

The relative prosperity can be corroborated by the fact that he went to two very good schools in Bombay-first to the Villa Theresa Primary School and then to the St. Xavier's High School. He also did not live in a Parsi Baag-housing estate in Bombay but, "I had friends who inhabited these places and I had the opportunity to observe a little bit of it." (Interview with Ali Lakhani)

When Mistry was in the fifth standard, he wrote a story about a cricket bat- the autobiography of a cricket bat. However, as he has admitted this was as far as his youthful literary efforts went. He grew up in Bombay, where his father worked for an advertising agency with no early liking that he would write, "I used to enjoy reading always, and I enjoyed the writing assignments, the compositions that

we used to do in school. The autobiography of a Cricket Bat; things like that but I never ever thought of it as a career." (Stephen Smith 1)

Both he and the woman he later married, Freny Elavia, graduated, from the St. Xavier's college in Bombay. As an Arts degree and especially one in English Literature was thought to be an indulgence for boys in those days as today in India, Mistry enrolled for a more worthwhile course in Mathematics and completed his degree in Science in the year 1974. Mistry's father was not wealthy-he made decent living as a copy writer and account manager with an advertising agency- but Rohinton was raised with servants, spoke as much English as Gujarati or Hindi at the dinner table and attended pluralistic private school run like James Joyce's by the Jesuits. While Mistry came into the family pressure to get a useful degree at university, he had a sideline in the club as the, "Bob Dylan of Bombay," accompanying himself on the guitar and harmonica with version of, "Red river valley" and, "Blowin in Wind." He admits in an interview "it was more trying to

be like Bob Dylan than to express anything original.” (Interview with Stacey Gibson)

By the time he graduated, he figured he had few professional opportunities for a music career in India and he knew he was going for Western books records. Instead he and Freny decided to immigrated to a land where the turn of a dial. “The separation had something to do with making me a writer. Though I am not sure exactly how it worked. And the same separation influenced choice of material”.

Before this time he was already involved in the music scene in Bombay, gave performance and was seriously contemplating a career as a folk singer. Freny who did not have the distractions that he had, had graduated a year earlier and decided to emigrate to Canada, where she had relatives. Mistry followed her a year later in 1975 and they got married there in that same year.

The Mistry lived in Brampton, a superb of Toronto, for twenty years, where they had in relation to Bombay, a materialistically comfortable existence. A very private and

reticent man, Mistry and his wife have led a quite existence in Canada and have no children. This way of life has continued even after his novels had gained International recognition. Visit to Bombay have been few for in-between and private again.

Mistry; there were early, disheartening moments. He initially got nowhere applying for jobs for which he thought his academic background had prepared him. And when no bank or insurance company showed any interest, he applied to McDonald’s. “They said I had to shave off my beard to get a job. I said sure, if I get the job, I will shave it off, but I never got the job.” (Smith Stephen 3)

When after three months, an opportunity did come into view- The Canadian Imperial bank of Commerce had an opening for clerk in the accounting department he was allowed to keep his beard, but has to write two tests. One was in addition and multiplication, the other in English. Both of them he passed. In Toronto, however the teacher at the music school, which he had joined bracketed him with absolute newcomers and this

meant the end of this musical dreams. Ferny already had a job there as a secretary and then as school teacher, Mistry too took up a position as a clerk and accountant in the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, where he stayed from 1975 to 1985. He worked his way up from being a clerk to being the supervisor of the customer service department.

After some time he realized that the bank was not going to sustain him, spiritually and intellectually in 1978, seeking sustenance, he started taking night classes in English Literature at the University of Toronto. Of course, he was so tired that he slept through most of the evening classes. But the syllabus did point him to the book he should have read. He figured out that that's what he enjoyed doing most- reading books. The writers he was reading at that time were Joyce and Chekhov and Malamud, Bellow, Turgenev and he set himself that dream of trying to write like those people, that wonderful stuff. One day in 1982, his wife drew his attention to a literary contest advertisement in a campus newspaper and she urged him on. Mistry tells,

“She said, “You keep saying you want to write. It would be great to be a writer, so why don't you try it”. (Smith Stephen 3)

He tried and he won \$250. The next year he entered again and again, won. That year, Mavis Gallant was on the jury and liked Mistry's story enough to recommend its writer to John Metcalf and Leon Rooke, who were then assembling an anthology to announce the arrival of a select group of Canadian writers. Mistry joined the likes of Douglas Glavour, Patrick Rescos, Linda Svendsem and Keath Fraser in the anthology. He felt he had to keep writing might be he was good at it. He got a grant and with it, the courage to leave the bank. He had always been reading books all though his child hood and adolescence but, “Suddenly, though, I am sure, it's not really sudden - I began reading and wishing I could write such things, such things as the Dubliners and Bernard, Malamud and Chekhov and Turgenev.” (Interview with Paul Wilson)

Mistry had to prepare himself before writing. Before writing anything he thought, he

should read for sheer pleasure of it. It was perfectly legitimate just to read for the sheer enjoyment that the book offers. But then he was thinking like a writer and when a writer reads, he or she might not have a choice any more in the way they read. In that way perhaps one sacrifices the pure pleasure of reading because other concerns are always flickering around the act of reading. Mistry supported he was looking at how things fit together and how they work and wishing he could do that, “reading for sheer pleasure, I suppose it’s the shallowest level of reading, though perhaps it is not right to call it, shallow - I suppose. I began asking myself what it was that made these books so great, and why was I wishing I could write like this?” (Interview with Paul Wilson)

At that very early stage, it seemed like wishful to him. And then he supposed that he must have kept on wishing and saying that, up to the point, when this competition was announced, in the fall of 28. At that point his wife Freny suggested him why he did not try to write for that. Mistry submitted a story called “One

Sunday” about an incident in an anonymous apartment building in an anonymous Indian city. Mistry said that he wrote this story because a friend rang and told him about the Hart House Literary prize and there would be the University of Toronto. It won first prize. One of the judges was the then writer in residence at the University of Toronto, Mavis Gallant, who is said to have remarked, “There is only one writer in this contest, but he’s a real writer.”

As a Parsi, Mistry is a member of India’s tiny Zoroastrian community that traces its origins to pre Islamic Persia (Now Iran). When Mistry started writing, he thought he would just share his stories with his friends, may be send them out to some magazine or periodical, he found at the library in the self half books on how to succeed as a writer.

Mistry’s relation shows to Indian culture and the impact of Indian visits upon his writings. Mistry says that he can never forget a dismiss India from the plots and stories of his novels. Mistry and his wife, Freny, now live in Brampton,

northwest of city. Mistry said recently in Toronto, the city to which he emigrated in 1975.

Going to Canada, faced with the reality of earning a living and realizing that although I had, up to that point in my life, read books and listened to music that came from the west, there was a lot more involved in living in the west. I felt very comfortable with the books and the music, but actually living in the west made that same music seem much less relevant. It suddenly brought home to me very clearly the fact that I was imitating something that was not mine, that made no sense in terms of my own life, my own reality. (Dewnarian, 3)

Rohinton Mistry is interesting as a writer if he assumes a significant niche to enable the exploration of the core areas of critical concern in this study. Mistry needs to be read not just as a postcolonial Indian writer, or as a Diasporic Indian writer, he needs to be deconstructed as a Parsi writer too.

Mistry's admiring readers are spread across a variety of age groups and nationalities. His wide ranging appeal could be attributed to the fact that he is interested in human beings, "I am interested in what makes human beings, and I don't have agenda that I start out and all I want to do is tell a darn good story." The most important thing to keep in mind about Rohinton Mistry is that he is a Parsi writer who has written extensively about India and the Parsi Community in almost all his literary works. In which he deals with Indian characters from all walks of life, his works have Parsis as main characters. The way in which the Parsis lead their life in post Independence India and abroad takes precedence over the plain Indian experience of such a literary novelists aim to depict. To understand the significance of such a literary endeavor one has to know more about the Parsi community in India.

The Parsis are an ethno-religious minority in India, living mostly in Mumbai. In Pakistan, most Parsis reside in Karachi and Lahore. The word Parsi means a native of "Pars"

or “Fars” an ancient Persian province, now in southern Iran. The Greek word for this province was Persepolis. The Parsis left homeland over twelve hundred years ago to save their religion, the teaching of Zoroaster, from being Islamized by the invading Islamic Arabians in the seventh century A.D. The Parsis are followers of Prophet Zarathustra. Their religion known as Zoroastrianism was founded around 2000 B.C.

Several history books dealing with the exodus of Parsi Zoroastrians to India have stated that after fleeing for Madyan in Iran, they first arrived at the Port of Diu in eighth century A.D. After their stay for about 19 years, they set sails towards the south and landed at the port of Sanjan in Gujarat around 785 A.D. Sanjan was then ruled by the liberal King Jadhav Rana.

The Dastur (Priest) who was heading these refugees approached King Jadhav Rana, narrated their tales of woe and sought permission to settle down in Sanjan. At a public assembly in an open maidan, the Dastur gave details of the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism in sixteen Sanskrit Shlokas. It is learnt that initially Jadhav Rana

was hesitant about giving shelter to the refugees from Persia, as he was uncertain about of his own citizens. The king’s forts response was a sorrowful inability to accommodate the Zoroastrians on a permanent basis at Sanjan due to inadequacy of space.

Moved by the reasoning of this pious priest, King Jadhav Rana asked the Dastur to narrate their actual requirements. The Dastur replied that they desired freedom of worship, freedom to bring up young children in their own traditions, and land for cultivation so that they might become self- sufficient. Jadhav Rana agreed to these demands but imposed five preconditions for allowing the Zoroastrians to settle in Sanjan. The five stipulations were:

- 1- To adopt the Gujarati language. (The Parsis have adopted this language faithfully, have forgotten their traditional dialects and in all modern day census day reports indicate Gujarati as mother tongue).
- 2- The women would wear the Sari. (This sartorial custom has also been faithfully

followed and the Parsis in India have adopted sari as the dress of the community. Traditional Parsi women wear the 'Sidhi' sari in the Gujarati fashion, draped over the right shoulder, with one end tucked at the back and the other end falls in the front).

- 3- Men should handover their weapons.
- 4- Venerate the cow. (Due to this condition, traditional Parsis still do not eat beef, through there are no religious taboos against eating beef).
- 5- The marriage ceremonies shall be performed at night only. (This condition was imposed so that the local population is not attracted by such a ceremony and hence the danger of conversion is minimized. The Parsis in the subcontinent still follow this tradition and do not allow outsiders in their Fire Temples, which is a further guarantee that they will not attempt any conversions to their religion).

After accepting these stipulations, the fragile but learned Dastur made one more symbolic gesture to assure the king of their loyalty and diligence. He stirred a spoonful of sugar in a brass bowl full of milk and said, "we shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness". Emotionally moved by such sincere commitment, King Jadhav Rana granted asylum to the refugees in Sanjan. The Dastur then appeared before the king and on behalf of the community pledged these words:

Hame Hindustan rayr bashim.

We shall be the friends of all Indian.  
(adi,sahukar)

The words of the Dastur remained the basic perspective or article of faith for Parsi Zoroastrians throughout their stay in India. It also reflects the characteristic spirit of adaptability of this minority community which enabled it to thrive in country of such diverse cultures and religion.

The religion founded by Zarathustra or Zoroaster (the more commonly used Greek form

of his name) is in its original form, monotheism.

Zarathustra was born in the city of Arak, in Azerbaijan. At the age of fifteen, Zarathustra turned away from all worldly pleasures and devoted himself day and night to the worship of Ahura Mazda. When he was twenty years old, he bade farewell to his parents and went to meditate in a cave.

According to historical legends, Zarathustra lived alone in a cave, high on mount Ushidaren eating roots and berries and drinking goat's milk. Zarathustra received enlightenment and conversed with Ahura Mazda in a vision. At the age of thirty, Zarathustra went back to the world of men and taught them the wisdom he had learnt. After many trials and tribulation, he first succeeded in the small kingdom of Bactria in Eastern Iran. His missionary labours continued for thirty years, after which he settled at Balkh the capital of Bactria, the Greek name Afghanistan. Eminent Parsi historian Pilo Nanavutty's book *The Parsis* (1977) gives detailed information on the life of Zarathustra and his teachings. According to her, Zarathustra

was killed when he was seventy seven years old.

The prophet was stabbed in the back, whilst praying at the Fire Temple at Balkh, by Turbara-Tur, leader of the Turanians, a tribe hostile to the concept of monotheism.

Zarathustra preached the monotheistic religion of the one Supreme God, Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord). His message is a positive, affirming, active one, which demands not so much belief, as reason and action on the part of every individual. According to the prophet Zarathustra, the whole universe is dominated by two primal forces, Good and Evil. The task of mankind is to choose between them. Spenta Mainyu the power of light and good are the good spirits opposed in this world by the evil spirits Angra Mainyu. The supreme God Ahura Mazda thus combines with Spenta Mainyu to become the principle of good represented as Ohrmazd. The personified evil spirit is Ahriman. Life is seen as a classless struggle between the forces of good and evil. There is no concept of earthly renunciation or asceticism. The moral demands of Parsi-Zoroastrians are 'Hvarshta' (Good

Deds), 'Hukhta' (Good Words) and 'Humata' (Good Thoughts) The conflict between good and evil will continue until Evil is routed. After the destruction of the Evil, according to Zarathushtra's teaching, there will be a resurrection, a final judgment and then an endless era of universal peace.

The religious texts of the Parsis are collectively none as the Avesta. The religion can be found in the five Gathas or divine songs of Zarathustra. The Gathas are basically Zarathusharta the prophet's dialogue of God which reveals the ethical nature of the gospel. Other religious texts are The Yasna, a collection of seventy-two psalms which forms the chief liturgical work in the Avesta and Vendidad which is a code of conduct, with laws on purity and behavior in twenty-two chapters.

The religion of the Parsi is Zoroastrianism. The word Parsi is really an ethnic term or identity for this minority community. They should really be called Parsi-Zoroastrians. Present day Zoroastrian who have migrated to USA or Canada or Britain can be

distinguished in two groups. Those who have migrated from the Indian subcontinent are referred to as Parsi-Zoroastrian whereas others who have come from Iran are known as Iranian Zoroastrians. The scriptures of religious texts of the Parsis are written in the ancient Avestan language or the Pahlavi script. However these languages are now extinct and are used only by priests for prayers.

Rohinton Mistry's works also are not an exception. He an Indian Parsi settled in Canada he projects the life style and the religio-ethical value system of his community. The locale is by the large the city of Bombay where he was born and brought up till his emigration to Canada. Zoroastrianism is as it were the life blood of his fiction. In the Zoroastrians story of creation, Ahura Mazda created humanity as part of the struggle between good and evil. The power of humanity lies in the free and conscious choice to follow either good or evil in life, and thereby influence one's individual fate as well as the fate of all humanity. Early Zoroastrianism held human nature to be essentially good, breaking

with old Middle East tradition regarding inherent baseness of humanity. Zoroastrianism continues to summarize the duty of humans to follow the path of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

On the cultural plan, the Zoroastrian world view advocates synthesis or a creative fusion. The Parsis enjoyed a marginal position in the Indian society during the British era. The influence of religion on their social life has been fairly strong. Beneficiaries of Westernization, the Parsee community in India never allowed the alien culture to influence their attitude towards life which is, quite essentially Zoroastrian. For instance monogamy is still held an ideal by the Parsees. The process of Westernization brought about a radical change, however outwardly, in Parsee life. Though some cultural institutions underwent change, the Zoroastrian religion remained singularly unaffected. Thus a curious phenomenon began. The Parsees dressed like the Europeans, smoked, drank, played cricket and pursued English education but the inner Parsee life remained unchanged. Parsees in general, and

Parsee woman in particular, continued to wear tradition dress, celebrate important events like prophet Zoroaster's birth day and New Year's Day. English education to a great extent modified their attitude in the twentieth century.

Certain rituals are central to Parsee life since they are invested with symbolic significance; for example Navjote ceremony is the most significant one. Between seven and fifteen years of age a Parsee boy or girls has to pass through this rite of initiation formally embracing the religion of Zarathustra. This and other rites, and rituals have been thought and thought graphically described in Mistry's fiction and give it a distinctly Parsee coloring.

Another aspect which deserved attention is the relationship of the individual to a community and the manner in which communities, join together through social rituals and practices. Communities often struggle to maintain an identity of their own through 'ethnic' practices and rites. This aspect gets, heightened in a Diasporic community in its struggle to return its distinctive identity.

Now that we have a reasonable insight about the Parsi community, let us try and minority in the world strive for identity and behave in a particular manner to understand the motivating factors even better, it is important to get some knowledge about the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism.

“I PREFER”, says Ahura Mazda in the Vendidad,” a person with children to one without children”. Even the soil feels happy where a man with children lives. This conviction makes the advent of a child doubly welcome on a Zoroastrian home. We do not find in the Avesta any reference to pregnancy rites. In the later Pahlavi and Persian books however, we find reference to certain rites. For instance, the sayast la sayst directs that during the days of pregnancy a fire may be maintained most carefully in the house. According to the Vendidad, the place for delivery must be very clean, dry, and least frequented by others. After delivery must mother should avoid contact with fire, water, and the bares man (i.e. the sacred ceremonial apparatus) of the house. It enjoins a

period of twelve days for such isolation in the case of still-born child.

It is well accepted that marriage within the community has many advantages and should be encouraged, since it brings together couples brought up in the same environments and tradition of a common religion, culture and way of life. However, inter-caste marriages primarily of Parsi women marrying outside the community is the main cause of continuing reduction of Parsi tradition. Old rituals and customs must undergo a change with the advance of time and should, where required, be discarded for the survival of the community. It is the crucial issue whether children of a Parsi woman married outside the community can be considered Zoroastrians. Bombay Parsi Panchayat has not yet given its unequivocal approval to recognition of such children as Zoroastrians. The irony of fate is that children of a non -Parsi woman who marries a Parsi are not subject to any such bar in the matter. It may be unequivocally emphasized here that just as children of a non – Parsi woman married to a Parsi are considered Zoroastrians by

performing their 'Navjote' ceremony, similarly children of a Parsi woman married to a non-Parsi should also be considered Zoroastrians by performing their 'Navjote' ceremony with the consent of the parents. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure the survival of the small, but still unique, ethnic group of Parsi Zoroastrians in India by recognizing such children as Zoroastrians.

After prolonged contact with the Hindus in India, the present day follows of Zarathustra have adopted several Hindu marriage customs and ceremonies, but the strictly religious part of the ceremony, as performed by the officiating priests, is more or less orthodox Iranian and is conducted mainly in the later Pāzand language. It consists of:

Preliminary benedictions.

Questions to the marrying couple and the witness on either side.

Joint address by the two officiating priests.

The senior priest blesses the couple in their words; "May the creator, the omniscient

lord, grant you a progeny of sons and grandsons, plenty of means to provide your selves, abiding, love, bodily strength, and long life for a hundred and fifty years." Funeral ceremonies will be convenient to treat the funeral ceremonies and observances under the following two heads:

To maintain fire, air, water and earth pure and undefiled is a cardinal principle of the Zoroastrian creed. It is enjoined that the body of a person, after the soul has left it should with due respect to the deceased be disposed of in such a manner as not to defile these elements or to injure the living. Accordingly, the followers of the creed do not burn or bury their dead, or consign them to the water. They merely expose the dead on the top of a high hill, to the heat of the sun, there to be devoured by carnivorous birds. Their funeral ceremonies are likewise based on the ancient Zoroastrian ideas of sanitation, segregation and purification. All the ceremonies of the order appear to have anticipated the prophylactic measures taken in modern times for living with the real or supposed center of precaution all cases of death are treated as

infection and the followers of the faith are warned that they should bring themselves, as little as possible into contact with dead bodies.

As a writer who lives and writes from Canada, Mistry's writings focus mainly on India. Like many expatriate writers, he continues relationship with his country in his writings and has enriched his reader's understanding of it. As a member of Parsis community, Mistry writes about the state of Parsi community within the boundary of India. In an interview with Geoff Hancock, Mistry states that his purpose of writing is neither for an audience nor with a message in mind, he writes for the record of the distinct identity of a small group of people to which he belongs. He claims, "Politics and religion come in a second way".

Thus as a born Zoroastrian, Mistry's fictional discourse reflects his concern for the existence of his community. The Parsis are an ethno-religious community in India. The population of the Parsi community is diminishing due to its unwillingness to accept conversation to the faith, the low rate of birth as

well as the high rate of death, late marriages, desire to have a small family and Parsi girl's marriage with non-Parsi. In an interview by Ali Lakhani with Rohinton Mistry at the Nancouver international writers' festival, Mistry says about the disappearance of the Parsis on the face of the earth that his writing will, "Preserve a record of how they lived, to some extent."(Interview with Ali lakhani)

This community may disappear from the earth in future but the writings of Parsi like Rohinton Mistry will certainly retain their ethnic identity in ages to come. "

However as is evident in Parsi literature, both the Parsis who sought greener pastures in the west and those who stayed on in India have experienced identity crises and confusion. In the west, the Parsis face the dilemma of being branded as just another community of sub-continental Asians, an identity they sought to escape. In India, as is reflected in the works of Rohinton Mistry, dina Mehta, Firdaus Kanga, Boman Desai and Bapsi Sidhwa ,this minority community has to cope with the hegemonic

forces of the dominant community. The struggle to create their own space in the west as well as in India and the identity struggle of what it means to be a Parsi Zoroastrian and all the major problems, aspirations, hopes, ambitions and prejudices of the community are reflected in Parsi literature. D.F.Karaka's novels written during the colonial era are either sentimental or didactic. Better known as a historian in the Parsi community, he is a westernized Parsi whose scintillating journalistic prose captured the imagination of the intelligentsia in the pre-independence era. In his case, the East- West encounter did not result in any tension, creative or otherwise. He wrote as if a West-oriented value system alone could sustain his vision of life. *Just Flesh*, his first novel, is a novel of English life which undoubtedly displays his intimate knowledge of English milieu and life. It is perhaps the first Indian novel set in England in which the characters are British. There lay the city Karaka's second novel, vividly recreates a by-gone era. The narrative is set in Bombay in the first years of World War I. Death, mutilation

and suffering are the constant refrains in the novel, a tendency discernible in all war-novels. Karaka's third novel, *We Never Die*, is idealistic in conception and execution. The narrative dramatizes the upsurge of nationalism in a remote Indian village. Karaka's easy optimism is reflected in the ending of the novel. The wedding of Ayesha and Ramachandra is a symbolic one which is suggestive of the birth of true India.

Karaka's solution, suggested at the end of the novel is too facile to be considered since the narrative is far removed from the real predicament of rural India. Nergis Dalal is another women novelist in Parsi fiction in English who, like Shobhaa De, turned to fiction after attaining success in journalism. Her first novel *Minari* does not deal exclusively with Parsi life, although there are vivid sketches of an elderly Parsi couple and their bouncy young son Ferdie. It offers an account of the high class life at a hill station in Rajasthan with stock situations. Her second novel, *The Sisters*, which evokes comparison with Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins*, is a contrastive study of the twins,

Rita and Nima. Lalitha and Saroja, the two sisters in Markandaya's work, journey from innocence to experience whereas Rita and Nima are poles apart, both physically and emotionally. Their attitude towards marriage is central to the thematic purpose of the narrative. Dalal effectively depicts their dilemma and ambivalence which is typical of the Parsi community today. The novel reveals a characteristic paradox in the contemporary Parsi life. Rita, like Dolly in Kanga's *Trying to Grow* opts for mixed marriage, since she is painfully aware of the prejudice against the dark-complexioned girls in the Parsi community. (Incidentally, Sidhwa) too refers to this aspect to Parsi life in *Ice Candy-Man*. Nima, her sister, on the other hand, is a westernized girl, through and through, who is culturally alienated from traditional beliefs and ways of life.

Dalal's third novel, *The Inner Door*, like Narayan's *The Guide* deals with the theme of enforced sainthood. While Narayan succeeds in portraying Raju's progression from duplicity to sainthood without attributing to him the ability to

work miracles or showing him indulging in esoteric practices. Dalal sets the narrative in Rishikesh where Rahul, a fake guru fed with comfort and sex, manages to achieve self-transcendence and attain true sainthood. He seeks moksha primarily as a means of escape from psychic anxieties originating in his unequal relation with powerful personalities. *The Girls from Overseas* crudely deals with the stock theme of East-West encounter. Dalal's failure to emerge as a major Parsi novelist in English is largely due to her inability to give expression to Parsi ethos.

Saros Cowasjee, like D.F. Karaka, is Parsi whose sensibilities were conditioned by the East-West confrontation. He is an expatriate writer who gives expression to the predicament of an Anglo-Indian exile in his first novel, *Goodbye to Elan*. Tristan, the protagonist of this narrative, is a rootless misfit who represents the "Other". Through him, the agony of a highly marginalized community speaks. Tristan is a complex character who nurses an illusion and is ultimately disillusioned. A bundle of

contradictions, he lacks the moral strength to face life squarely. Tristan's existence in an alien land is a reverse odyssey from order to chaos, from certitude to uncertainty, and from freedom to bondage. He is a stranger in strange land, possessing abnormal consciousness. By connecting Tristan's neurosis to marriage, Cowasjee transforms the story into a study of an exile's psyche. Cowasjee's second novel, *Suffer Little Children*, is a sequel to *Goodbye to Elsa*. Tristan is a victim of pedophilia whose gestures are a sort of vengeance against a sick society. In this highly disturbing novel, Cowasjee raises the issue of indifference of the world to the suffering children. Tristan's concern for the hapless children is genuine as also Cowasjee's treatment of this motif is sympathetic to a considerable degree.

Gustasp Irani's *Once Upon a Raj*, dramatizes the (mis) adventures of Prince Vir, the blue blue-blooded protagonist. Written in a lighter vein, the narrative spoofs the British manners and machination of a royal family in India. Prince Vir and Sidhwa's Freddie and

kindred soul, for both stoop to conquer but their rascality is charming. Irani's narrative mode is overtly ironic. Prince Vir is 'type', to borrow E.M.Forster's expression, who is built around 'a single idea or quality'.

Thus the novels of Karaka, Dalal, Cowasjee and Irani are not forceful expressions of Parsi ethos and culture. They do not deal with the themes and issues related to contemporary Parsi life which is in a state of transition. The distinctive ethnicity, typical of Parsi life, is not depicted exhaustively in their works. The pangs of dislocation, the quest for an identity in an alien land or the consequences of westernization of Parsi if are not dealt with in their novels. Crucial issues confronting the minuscule community of the Parsis such as mixed marriage are not handled in their novels.

Parsi novel in English, i.e. novel portraying Parsi life, is a potent index of the Zoroastrian ethos. It voices the ambivalence, the nostalgia and the dilemma of the endangered Parsi community. In Parsi novel in English, the 'operative sensibility' is Zoroastrian. The Parsi

novelists have forged a dialect which has a distinct ethnic character. The tempo of Paris life is fused into their English expression just as the tempo of Jewish life has gone into the best work of Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud. The triumph of the Parsi novelists in the use of English language is largely due to westernization and exposure to English culture. Their prose is interspersed with Persian words and Gujarati expression. Besides being innovative, the Parsi novelists describe in detail, the esoteric rituals and the Zoroastrians customs such as 'Navjote'. Thus Parsi novel in English gives us a peep into the turbulent Parsi mind of today. Mistry's fiction much focuses on the Parsi identity. It also reveals how Parsis are learning to cope with the reality of postcolonial India and how they are coming to terms with their new lives in the west. Mistry's stories are awash with references to both eastern and western culture and modes of behavior. Mistry as a Parsi, a member of religious minority in India which traces cultural roots from back to pre-Islamic Persia. Mistry, in an effort to reveal diversity within India's

national borders, now turns his attention more specifically to Parsi customs and traditions.

In Rohinton Mistry's novels Parsi community appears as a protagonist. He presents his community through the narratives of his characters. These characters express their concern for their community and changes that affect it. Mistry's fiction focuses on the Parsi identity and Parsi tradition. It also reveals how Parsis are learning to cope with the reality of post-colonial India. Mistry's collection of eleven short stories "Tales from Firozsha Baag", re-creates the Parsi world of his childhood and youth, closing with a story in which one of the protagonist has immigrated to Toronto.

In his first book Tales of Firozsha Baag, Mistry presents his Parsi world, the Zoroastrian faith, a shared history of flight from Iran and refuge in India, the Zoroastrian religion, the Fire-temple, the Parsi priests, the Parsi calendar, Parsi cuisine. This is nowhere more clearly than in the very first story in collection.

“Auspicious Occasion” is “Behram roje”. The Parsee community of Bombay is the focus of attention and the husband and wife Rustomji and Mehroo are analyzed with keen insight. The husband, twenty years older than the wife, after many years of marriage and in spite of his “toothless gummy mouth” glances salaciously at the young charwoman Gajara surreptitiously peeking from behind the newspaper- The times of which serves a useful purpose-hoping for his wife to be away so that he can be a little more bold or a little inhibited in his ogling adventures at home.

Mehroo goes to prayer meeting on the ‘auspicious occasion ‘of the title of the story, discovers that the old man has been murdered and returns home. Meanwhile, Rustomji who stirs out in his gleaming white sees red. “His starchy whiteness aroused in him feeling of resplendence and invincibility.”(TFB, 19)

In *Auspicious Occasion*, Rustomji is as eccentric and bloody-minded as a Parsi. His wife, Mehroo, is pious and given to much praying and agiary-going. India is firmly kept

out of their Parsi world and about the only contact they have with non-Parsis is through their servants. Rustomji and Mehroo are almost stereotypical Parsis and what saves them and the story from becoming banal is Mistry’s deft introduction of two incidents –one where Rustomji is spat upon by a paan-chewer and the second where Mehroo is shocked by the murder of the Parsi priest, the dastoorji. These events clearly indicate the sense of unease Parsis experience in post-colonial India. Rustomji’s elite consciousness suffers a severe denting when a ghaati lets loose a stream of paan-spittle on him, soiling his crisp white coat, the dugli. This wasn’t done deliberately but Rustomji takes it a personal slight. His self-esteem is further damaged when instead of being intimidated by his ravings and rantings, the ghaatis get together and almost beat him up. He escapes only by playing the clown- ‘his desperate search for a way out was rewarded - a sudden inspiration which just might work. He reached his fingers into his mouth, dislodged the dentures, and spat them out onto his palm.... The collapsed mouth

and flapping lips appeased everyone. A general tittering spread through the assembly. Rustomji the clown was triumphant” (TFB 21). This is a sad but true reflection of how Parsi image has been down-graded in decolonized India. At another level, his wife Mehroo is shocked that the Parsi priest has been murdered by his own Parsi servant. This threatens the support-system, the closing-of-ranks syndrome, which has helped preserve the Parsi identity for over a thousand year’s even in-embracing, all-encompassing ethos of Hinduism. One Sunday introduces us to a few characters connected with Firozsha Baag and to the neighboring Tar Gully life. Apart from the boys of the Baag, Kersi and Percy, we are introduced to the outsider, odd job man-thief, Francis. Najamai’s Sunday outing from the Baag to visit her sister’s family at Bandra proves quite eventful. The neighbours of the Baag, Tehmina and the Boyce add to the ‘local colour’. The eroticism that runs through the narratives of Mistry appear here too. Of White and Cricket is a sort of autobiographical reminiscences from boyhood a form of recollection, not entirely in

tranquility. The narrator is a fourteen year old boy. He remembers his father, mother and grandmother-mamaji. A Sunday in Firozsha Baag is reconstructed presented in bits and pieces while the boy is uprooting the signposts of mortality, while his humble fingers are wielding the tweezers pulling out the white hair from his daddy’s scalp. The Sunday in Firozsha Baag is looked at in terms of the other residents too reinforcing the local colour.

“Lend me Your Light” is one of the stories of short story based book Tales from Firozsha Baag. As the story’s name suggests, it is a philosophical enquiry into human existence the way writers like Rabindranath Tagore did, in a humanistic manner that tethered on concepts like universal brotherhood. In this story Kersi is a brooding youngster analyzing his decision to migrate to Canada. The other two major figures in the story are Percy, his brother and Jamshed, Percy’s friend. Percy decided to stay in India and dedicated his life to social work in Indian villages. Jamshed, who had already migrated to the U.S and made a good fortune there, is anti

Indian to the core. Kersi is ambivalent regarding his relationship with India, but he cannot afford to hate India the way Jamshed does. He opts for the easier way out, to migrate to Canada, instead of toiling in Indian villages like Percy. The fact that Percy's friend and co-worker Novjot gets killed by money lenders makes Jamshed disapprove of his work as futile, but Kersi is more concerned about the work his brother does and is disturbed better life in Canada. In other story- lend me your light Kersi's brother Percy and Jamshed were friends when they were at school, but later their paths had diverged, when Jamshed's obsession with all things western, had led him to migrate to the U.S., while Percy had sought greater assimilation within the Indian Diasporic situation through work in the Indian villages. This story also presents the Parsis who have totally identified themselves with postcolonial India. Such Parsis are in a minority and generally frowned upon by their co-religionists. The narrator's brother Percy is such a man. He is actively involved in work at grass-root level in a village and feels little kinship with

his family and even less with his childhood friend Jamshed, who is totally westernized and now lives in New York.

Tales from Firozsha Baag chronicles the experiences of the residents of a Bombay apartment complex known as Firozsha Baag. In this collection of stories, the residents focus on the cultural identity and challenges of faith. Several characters in this collection reject Parsi tradition and embrace secular, more modern customs, as in 'the exerciser' and 'the condolence visit'. In 'the exercise' the young protagonist defies his parents and their spiritual advisor by dating with a woman who is not a Parsi, while Daulat of 'the condolence visit' shocks her neighbours by departing from religious customs and refusing to mourn her husband according to the Parsi traditions.

'Of white hairs and cricket' is a story that weaves with him itself recurring motifs in the collection. First of all is the motif of the Parsis as an ageing and dying race, the remembered past leads to alienation from postcolonial India, this in turn leads to

immigration to the west, this immigration mainly by the young leaves behind old parents. Loneliness and age is thus the other motif, related to this loneliness of the old Parsis in India, is the loneliness and lack of acceptance of the Parsis in the west.

The ghost of Firozsha Baag has a sexual relationship with a spirit, while a mentally unbalanced woman imprisons her neighbour's child in a bird cage in the paying guest. A few stories in the collection, Mistry explores a community turn between the old and new ways.

The last story in this collection swimming lessons is the only one set fully in Canada. However, even here Canadian word is juxtaposed with Indian memories. In this story one of the children mentioned in an earlier story, Kersi, has grown up and immigrated to Canada. Kersi has trouble adjusting to his new life in Canada, he feels dislocated from his Indian heritage as well as from the modern Canadian culture around him. He has written a book of stories about his childhood in Firozsha Baag. When he sends his book back home, his parents

are upset by his perspective on Indian life and worry that he is not happy in Canada. Infect Kersi is lonely, reminiscing about his childhood and having sexual fantasies about the woman taking swimming lessons with him at an indoor pool.

The religious detailing in this collection of stories, which began Behram-roj and visit to Agiaris is extended to funeral rites in the story of condolence visit. The main protagonist, the newly widowed Daulat mirza, Following the Parsi custom, friends and relations were expected to pay a condolence visit to the bereaved family .These visits in the time honoured manner would be after the dushmoo or the tenth day ceremonies in honour of the departed soul. Some more tactful persons would hold back till after the massiso or the first month anniversary. However, the majority would start streaming in after the dushmoo. So Daulat in a very pragmatic fashion begins to prepare her to the thousands of questions the visitors would ask and the pain she would have to endure. With bitter cynicism she half jocularly wishes that she

accepted Sid's gift as she could have then taped the story and played it to the visitors whenever they asked for the details of Minocher's illness and death.

The theme of loneliness and despair is highlighted in the story of the paying guest. Here Mistry describes the situation of old parents who are reduced to almost poverty, after having scrimped and saved to send their son to the west. In the story, Khorshedbai descends into insanity and bizarre behavior consists in the ritual scattering of garbage and excreta outside her landlady

Kashmira's door and in the evening winding up her old gramophone and playing her one and only record Sukhi Sooraj- a paean to the rising sun. Between the littering and the loud playing of Sukhi Sooraj, Kashmira and Boman get little help. They also soon find out that while their neighbours sympathized with their predicament, they were not willing to go to court and testify against Khorshedbai. Boman is desperate and wants the flat to be expatriated. He knows that the only person who would speak up

in court was the Muslim who lived in the next flat. But desperate as Boman was, he would not stoop to that, to ask him to testify against a fellow Parsi.

The whole text of the Tales from Firozsha Baag is studded with Persian-Zoroastrian festivals, and rituals-Behram roje, Navroje, Parsi temple, the tower of silence, the Parsi calendar; Parsi customs- charam (fourth day ceremony), Dushmoo (tenth day ceremony), musra [first month ceremony], Parsi costumes – dugli (coat), phetyoe (head gear), Kusti (the sacred thread worn by Parsi)- mathbanoo (head scarf worn by Parsi ladies), Parsi cuisine- dhansak masala, Sali boti etc. The Parsis in Firozsha Baag are middle class and like other middle class persons in Bombay have to engage in daily battle with intermittent water –supply, dilapidated homes, peeling paint, falling plaster and leaking wcs. Mistry's protagonists display all the ethno-religious details of Navjote, Behram-roj, celebrations, agiary going Kusti wearings, etc.

*Such a Long Journey* is a story of a few middle-class characters in the contemporary India. It focuses on the basic and serious issues of life. The writer depicts a pathetic and rather depressing story of Gustad, the protagonist of the text, who is a middle class man working as a teller in a bank. Despite the fact that he has to confront hardships in life, he has some dreams about the future prosperity of his family. Gustad Noble is a father of three children, two sons Sohrab, Darius, and Roshan, the daughter. He lives at Khodadad Building with his wife Dilnavaz and three children contentedly. He has two faithful friends- major Jimmy Bilimoria and Dinshawji who also live in the same building. Gustad Noble's dreams and aspirations are pretty humble, and when situation conspire to deny him even these modest expectations, he finds it tough to accept the fact that things are beyond his power. As the novel unfolds, he realizes that there are other forces at play, which he cannot handle successfully. Some strange events take place in Gustad Noble's life. First of all, the sudden disappearance of Major Jimmy Bilimoria

from Khodadad Building shocks him greatly because he is his friend, philosopher and guide. Only Dilnavaz can sense the profundity of his pain because of unexpected departure of his dear friend. Gustad feels sorry for what Major Bilimoria has done all his works highlights both the community-centered existence of the Parsis and their involvement with the wider national framework. His works deal with the experience of the Parsi in India. Mistry, re-narrates the history of his community and country as it has been in the post Independence era. He depicts consciousness of anxieties and ambitions, threats and problems of existence of individual, communal and national issues. His novels presents the relationships among self and community, cultural differences, alienation, ethnic/national identity, struggle of community for the survival, struggle for meaning and loss.

In my analysis, I would like to investigate all these issues which build the fictional world of Rohinton Mistry. Both history and politics form a major part of the theme of *Such a Long Journey*. This will lead to a

discussion of how all these issues are rendered in Mistry's novel and build the major thematic concerns.

Mistry is a great storyteller of contemporary social and political life. The most remarkable feature of his fiction is that it captures the crowded throbbing life, especially Parsi (marginalized), of India. *Such a Long Journey*, apart from many other things, presents a realistic picture of Indian society. The author has voiced his best to cover almost all the details of social setting so that the readers may be able to accustom with the pattern of living, daily routine, rites, customs, rituals and habits of community. Mistry presents a vivid picture of India through sharp demonstrative sketches of Parsi family life. This novel portrays assorted facets of Indian socio-economic life as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs, rituals and religion Mistry's works are concerned with difference as community difference.

The community Mistry deals with, in greater detail in *Such a Long Journey*, is his own, the Zoroastrian Parsi community. It will

become evident that the postcolonial implications of *Such a Long Journey* center on the responsibility Mistry takes on as representative and mouthpiece of the Parsi community. To realize how the postcolonial condition affects the community's ethnic identity, the central aspects of Parsi identity have to be clarified. Apart from religion, the major factor shaping the collective identity of the Parsi community is its historical awareness.

Novel spans over twenty-two chapters, which further contain sub-parts to them. The story is not narrated in a linear way, to a certain extent it moves backwards and forwards, with flashbacks and memories going back into time and space. On the other hand, the structure does have a unity of tone and purpose, because the novel shows succession in terms the shifting lives of characters, in particular, the central figure, Gustad Noble and his immediate family. The story is also connected with historical and political facts about important events such as the China war, the Indo- Pak war, the war of Bangladesh liberation, the creation of new states

political corruption, etc. Contemporary events in post-independence Indian history are placed as the background to personal life and small incidents. This how Mistry is able to balance the personal with the public/national changes. *Such a Long Journey* opens in 1971, but the main character Gustad is reflecting about another time and another war—India’s war with China in 1962—when he puts blackout paper over his window panes for protection. The novel begins at the daybreak of a typical day with all its familiar sounds and smells, while Gustad turns eastwards to the rising sun to offer his ‘Orisons to Ahura Mazda’. The milkman is selling ‘diluted’ milk to women in the early hours, perhaps the first suggestion of infectivity and corruption that is to take on greater consideration in the story. Reality, like milk, is itself contaminated. The next is the restricted water supply – another recurrent Bombay problem with its growing population.

All together it symbolizes how Gustard and his family have to struggle survival in this contaminated world. This is what creates

problems for him, problems of adjustment and space that are necessary in this world. Just as Gustad connects the blackout paper to the blackened spirit of Nehru after the betrayal of China’s Chou En-lai (SLJ, 9), it also connects to his blackening out of truth his simplicity about what is happening outside the covered windows. His “the paper collected dust and was difficult to clean; it gave spiders ideal places to spin their webs; it provided perfect cover for cockroaches to lay their eggs; and it made the whole house dark and depressing. Weeks went by, then months, with paper restricting the ingress of all forms of light, earthly and celestial.”

The everyday reality of 1971, together with the psychological reality of his strain, is distasteful and threatening for the protagonist of Mistry’s novel. In the midst of the chaotic times in connection to his personal uncertainties and problems, Gustard was doubly distressed when he thought about the position of minorities in India. As a conscientious Parsi, he was aware of the depressing future that awaited minorities in India in general, and Parsis in particular. For him

Shiv Sena was the epitome of majority's violence against minorities. Mistry's concern for Parsi community records prominently in *Such a Long Journey*. The residents of Khodadad Building are representatives of middle class Parsis expressing all the angularities of the declining community. The novel also highlights some customs and rituals of the Parsi community. Mistry presents that Indian national identity construction depends on a strategy of Othering that threatens to discriminate the Parsis. The Shiv Sena in *Such a Long Journey* is presented by the characters as a very real threat to a distinct Parsi identity. Dinshawji, the protagonist's confidante, worries that the Shiv Sena "won't stop till they have complete Maratha Raj" with their "Maratha for the Maharashtrians nonsense." (SLJ, 76) Remembering how followers of the Shiv Sena abused members of the Parsi community as "Parsi crow-eaters" (SLJ, 39), thereby mocking the community's burial rites, Dinshawji fears that the Parsis might become "second-class citizens" (SLJ, 39) in the near future.

The novel highlights some customs and rituals of the Parsi community. The Parsis also feel a sense of uncertainty because of growing fundamentalism in Mumbai. Most scented of the minority approach is the physical space of the Khodadad Building itself. For them this space, somehow, serves as a sense of security which preserves their distinct ethnic identity. It is a Parsi enclave in the heart of Bombay, almost a ghetto, with all the attendant paranoia that such an environment suggests. At one point, the complex is likened to a museum, and it is no coincidence that many domestic items in Gustad's apartment seem to be in a state of atrophy and decay too. In this atmosphere, municipal proposals to demolish the wall surrounding the compound as part of a road widening programmed take on the qualities of a threatened invasion, further underlining the community's sense of being at siege. The wall keeps the hectic, disordered world out. Yet even this space cannot be maintained in its purity: it is used as a public latrine by passers-by, like dogs marking their territory, and as events unfold,

Gustad's worries start 'walling him in, threatening to crush him' (SLJ,177).

Gustard, as a representative of the minorities in India, powerfully attacks the Indira administration. Most of the incidents that Mistry narrates in the text are fictional versions of actual incidents happened in Indira Gandhi's era. Gustard's disapproval of Indira Gandhi is on two reasons. Firstly, as I mentioned earlier her policies such as nationalization of banks, Secondly and more significantly, the events associated with Bilimoria in which Indira Gandhi was a party. In fact, Major Bilimoria became a victim in the hands of political schemers in a deceptive political conspiracy in which the Prime Minister herself was directly concerned. When Bilimoria was arrested, jailed and tormented, he summoned Gustard to Delhi to tell him all that happened. Indira Gandhi asked Bilimoria to get sixty lakh rupees from the SBI director, by impersonating the PM's voice on the telephone, on an urgent situation basis to finance guerrilla (Mukti Bhaini) training. Major Bilimoria was also asked to write a declaration

which he did without any second thought. Before the money was used for the original purpose the PM's office intercepted the money. Knowing this, Bilimoria kept 10 lakh rupees to be scattered among his friends. It was this money that he had sent to Gustard to be deposited in a bank in Bombay. But as the procedure went on, Bilimoria was arrested, kept under custody and brutally tortured until he returned the money.

All through the work Mistry portrays the agony of a cultural outsider who is living multiple subject positions, as an Indian citizen of Parsi ethnicity. Gustard's world was full of duplicity and cruelty and despotism. This adds to his being fascinated between multiple subject positions. The social evils and the human circumstance are presented with utter clarity and resemblance to reality: The society which is depicted is completely deprived of resilience. Mistry's shock at the sight of stinking human condition and rampant corruption turns him into being a realist who is obliged to expose the world around him.

The Zoroastrian faith in *Such a Long Journey* becomes an integral part of Mistry's grounding in a postcolonial frame of reference. The postcolonial Agenda of the novel relies on religion in regard with a process of Community construction. Mistry does not comment on the difficult aspects of Zoroastrianism in the text (as he does, for example, in *Family Matters*). Telling a story formerly untold in (Canadian) literature, his recounting is motivated by elevating his readers' collective memory. Since the Parsi community is on the margin of extinction, the Zoroastrian faith is in threat, too. This means that with respect to Zoroastrianism memory and illustration rather than critique and deconstruction are of central significance. The ethnographic force of the novel is closely associated with the writing of the other. Religion becomes significant in this context as an instance of the text's dedication of cultural difference. For the moment, suffice it to say that religion, like language and history, is an essential marker of identity that Mistry inscribes into his work in

order to highlight a concern with cultural difference.

The economic failure sees Gustad's family at the receiving end of fate's whims. *Such a Long Journey* explores how the vagaries of life can upset positions of control. This is corroborated by the idea of 'clutching' that the text refers to. The verb 'to clutch' indicates not only a holding firm; it also plays off Connotations of power, control and pressure over things and persons. For that reason, Mistry's debut novel can still be read as a romance of family evolution, provided one is willing to disclose that it is the son, rather than the father, who defines its terms. Was doing to his father, who had made the success of his son's life the purpose of his own? Sohrab had snatched away that purpose, like a crutch from a cripple." (SLJ, 55) However, the appropriation of the Vocabulary 'crutch' is particularly interesting in this regard because Gustad's Choice of words declares that he is irritated at his son for self-centered reasons allegorically speaking, Gustad's injury becomes more distinct once he is robbed

of his 'crutch'. He does not mainly want the best for Sohrab by sending Him to IIT; rather Gustad wants Sohrab to attend IIT because he has dreamt of such a career himself. Hence, Gustad Noble betrays problematic motives when he reasons: "All I wanted was for him to have a chance at a good career. The chance wrenched away from me" (SLJ,178). Gustad Noble does not generously complain that Sohrab is underprivileged of a unique chance in life; he rather feels betrayed because he himself is deprived of a source of meaning.

The last section has outlined how difference in *Such a Long Journey* is created through mechanisms of exclusion. Inclusion as a preparation for the politics of identity as well as the problem of making meaning is chiefly argued along metaphorical lines, too. The novel refers to the ancient tradition of life as a journey. The relationship between life and journey can be marked by two aspects: Journey and life can both be understood as, first of all, entailing a linear movement towards a destination. The idea of life as journey secondly indicates continuous

change. Both the notion of the journey as course and of journey as change can be made productive for the novel's obsession with the problem of making meaning on the one hand and the problem of cultural identity on the other.

Factually there is no considerable journey in the novel except the journey to Dinshawji's funeral which is followed by the journey to Delhi to see Major Bilimoria. With the death of Dinshawji the recognition comes to Gustad that although Dinshawji was suffering from cancer, he had never revealed his pain and had retained a mask of outward disruptiveness. He also learnt that the crucial need for a philosophical recognition of the finality of life. This final reunion between the son and the father comes at a time when Gusad has 'seen' everything – relations, love, hatred, separation, friendship, betrayal, death and recognized that practicality and acceptance are perhaps the only ways to deal with life's imponderables. That is perhaps the way to negotiate the 'Long Journey' that existence is. The morcha, in the meantime, has

melted away. Malcolm orders his workers to initiate the demolition of the wall. The pavement artist is submissive about the demolition of the wall, packs up things and prepares to begin a new journey, without mattering where he will go. The text ends on a note of 'journeying', and also on being rooted. Gustad chooses to stay; by pulling down blackout papers from windows, he lets the light in, to make a new commencement in a world which is incessantly changing, and demands several levels of adjustments.

*Such a Long Journey* examines, among other issues, the questions of Parsi identity and its Diasporas. The theme of *Such a Long Journey* revolves around history, politics and the common anxiety of a middle-class man, Gustad Noble despite the fact that Gustad has to face numerous difficulties; he survives without succumbing to any extended despair or bitterness, still in possession of his essential human dignity. With this final comment, which refers back to what has been discussed in the chapter; I would like to conclude my analyses.

In the novel *A Fine Balance*, Mistry intermingles history with the personal lives of the characters which is characteristic of an immigrant writer. While dealing with the lives of common people in India, the novel deal with its socio-political turmoil and the four worlds are woven together in the fabric of the novel. The first is the middle class, urban world of Dina Dalal, a pretty widow in her forties. Then, there is a glimpse into rural India provided by Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash. There is another world symbolized by Maneck Kohlah, a sensitive Parsi boy. Ishvar Darji and OM, two rural untouchable from a family of tanners struggle to rise above their designated cater roles and better themselves by becoming tailors. They have to endure the atrocities of the so-called high class people and their future is bleak.

In order to ameliorate their plight, their family members shift into the more venerable profession of tailoring. They are symbolic of those myriad under-privileged Indians, who due to economic, and social reasons, are displeased from their familiar world. Even after they

become fully qualified tailors and return to their village, they are deeply conscious of their own roofs in the society. After their entire family is ruthlessly murdered, pressured by joblessness and hunger, Ishvar and Om decide to migrate to Bombay and become exiles by choice like Rajaram who says, “Thousands and thousands are coming to the city because of bad times in their native place. I came for the same reason.”(AFB,16)

Although, they are aware of the pain and disorientation in migration they think that displacement would metamorphose their lives. It would be a liberating and positive experience for them; one of the ways of seeking freedom from the atrocities of the village lords. Their life in Bombay is country to their expectation and symbolizes the anguish, anxiety, pain and restlessness of people cut off from their native villages. Like Nomads, they move from Nawaz’s awning to their slum dwelling, then to the railway platform, then to the entrance of a chemist’s shop where they are mistaken for baggers, compelled to slog as labourers and

finally released from the inviolable hell by the beggermaster. The writer’s description of their inability to adjust in an alien land after leaving their village and their failure to find a home, despite numerous efforts, is pathetic.

Mistry's latest novel, *Family Matters* (2002), is located in Bombay once more whereas his first two novels were set in the 1970s and were essentially Historical fictions, his novel depicts contemporary Bombay and is set in the 1990s. It is a notable and masterful novel. It is sweeping scope (covering Almost five hundred pages), yet closely detailed in its description of family apartment living in Bombay. The pace was at first ponderous, and we had to remind ourselves of great Asian films, especially Indian, whose rhythms are slower than the instant hit of Western films. But we soon became caught up in the lives of the wonderful characters in the story. Nariman Vakeel is a seventy-nine- year-old widower who is stricken with Parkinson's disease and who lives with his two stepchildren - middle-aged spinster Coomey and bachelor Jal-

in a once-elegant, seven-room flat. His younger, blood daughter, Roxana, lives in a small, two-room apartment with her husband, Yezad, and their two youngsons. Nariman breaks an ankle on his daily walk, requiring a full leg cast and bed rest for three weeks. The story is reminiscent of King Lear-which Nariman taught as an English professor-as it becomes a saga of "who will take care of Pappa." Torn between familial bonds, religious obligations stemming from their Parsi background, and bitter memories revolving around the death of their mother, the stepchildren (mainly Coomey) conspire to send Pappa in an ambulance to Roxana's already-crowded apartment. Three weeks extend to four months, during which time we learn-memory by memory, in flashback-of Pappa's love affair with Catholic Lucy, his arranged marriage to Yasmin, the widowed mother of Coomey and Jal, and the horrific accident that ended her life. Meanwhile, Roxana's family suffers from lack of space and privacy and from the onset of poverty as Pappa's medical expenses tip their budget over the edge. How these characters deal with this family

obligation is brilliantly drawn. They are alive and passionate, tragic and comic, cruel and compassionate. Yezad's transformation (two times) is profoundly moving, yet finally ironic. The theme of belonging and unbelongingness, representation of history, political chaos, alienation, cultural conflicts and struggle for meaning seem prevail in the pages of novel. Mistry's books have won many literary prizes, including the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book and Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Fiction. His books have been shortlisted for the Booker, The International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, and the Irish Times International Fiction Prize.

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