CHAPTER TWO

Fundamentalism and Religion in M. G. Vassanji's *The Assassin’s Song*, Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters* and Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers*

This chapter explores the issue of fundamentalism and its dominance in recent times. It proposes that fundamentalism gives rise to violence and explores how the term can be used in a suitable way so that it does not become simply a label. The chapter is divided into four sections. The novels analysed are as follows: M.G. Vassanji’s, *The Assassin’s Song* (2007), Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters* (2002) and Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps For Lost Lovers* (2004).

The first section, *The Concept and Meaning of Fundamentalism* (2.1) analyses the different definitions of fundamentalism. It elicits how the expression ‘fundamentalism’ was historically initiated and investigates the characteristics of fundamentalism. It locates features like rigidity in following the traditions and conventions of the sacred past, glorification and reinterpretation of the past, abhorrence of deviation, rigid, exclusionary practices and other traits that characterize fundamentalist practices. It considers why fundamentalism is found attractive by adherents. The segment examines fundamentalism as a complex social phenomenon that can be looked at in various ways.

The second section is *Fundamentalism and Religion in M. G. Vassanji’s The Assassin's Song* (2.2). This section examines the outcome of a neutral standpoint. It demonstrates how Vassanji presents that the refusal to take sides is disadvantageous and does not help the protagonist and his family. The events in the state of Gujarat (in which the narrative is largely set) and the fundamentalist practices and the consequent violence will not permit such neutrality. It expresses that the option of neutrality too ceases to exist in the difficult time of the rise of fundamentalism.
The third section, **Fundamentalism and Religion in Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters* (2.3)** examines the growth of fundamentalist practices in the character of Yezad and the way in which this impacts his entire family. It explores the various social and psychological consequences that the change in personality entails. The section illustrates Yezad’s obsession with religion, which is repeatedly reinforced.

The fourth and the final section, **Fundamentalism and Religion in Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2.4)** considers the fundamentalist practices that are depicted in this novel. The strict observance of the prescribed doctrines, which is the norm for the followers in their native country, is carried forward even to the diasporic location of England. This section demonstrates that no area of existence, no relationship however private and sacrosanct, is left untouched by the consciousness of the fundamentalist doctrines on the matter. Finally, it observes that there are moderate elements, whether individuals or ideologies within the same belief system, that are considered to be in opposition by extremists and are sought to be silenced.

Fundamentalism of all types is increasingly under discussion following contemporary world events like the assassination of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in 1984, the rise of the Taliban to power in Afganistan in the year 1996, the abortion clinic bombings in Alabama and Georgia in 1997 in America, the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001, the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 2001, the siege of Lal Masjid in Pakistan (2006), the bombing of a freight train in Dagestan, Chechnya (2010), the car bomb on the United Nations building in Nigeria's capital of Abuja (2011) and violence Between Han Chinese and Muslim Uighurs in China (2011). An effort to understand the concept of fundamentalism is important because of the dangerous potential in our society for increasing kinds of violence that may be ascribed to fundamentalist thought. A number of issues related to fundamentalism need to be explored, discourse on fundamentalism often lacks precision, leaving unexamined the implications of fundamentalist practices. The matter that needs interrrogation is how the term can be used so that it
indicates a logical denotation and does not remain just a label by self-proclaimed non-fundamentalists.

2.1 The Concept and Meaning of Fundamentalism

The term ‘fundamentalism’ was first used in Protestantism, a religious movement that arose among conservative members of the Protestant Evangelical denomination early in the twentieth century with the object of maintaining traditional interpretations of the Bible and of the doctrines of the Christian faith in the face of Darwinian evolution, secularism, and the emergence of liberal theology. It was used in reaction to the increasing influence of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. Malise Ruthven in *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction* (2004) reports that from the year 1910 to 1915 a series of pamphlets entitled ‘The Fundamentals: A testimony of Truth’ were distributed to assert the inerrancy of the Bible and prevent the erosion of the fundamental beliefs of Protestant Christianity. Ruthven notes: “Although the word has acquired negative connotations in much of the world, it did not begin as a term of abuse or even criticism” (7). The origin of the word implied affirmative actions that were intended to maintain belief in the scriptures. In view of this, the next section examines some ways in which the term fundamentalism has changed and evolved.

As an expression, fundamentalism, is a societal composition and is accompanied by the ambivalence that goes with any such type of term. The meaning of the word is not only functionally indefinite but also yields to a theoretical ambiguity. Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2004) defines fundamentalism as “the strict following of the fundamental doctrines of any religion or system of thought” (366). Fundamentalism, according to this definition is concerned with literality and rigorosity in the matter of a text, religious or otherwise. It is a strict maintenance of traditional beliefs. *The Britannica Ready Reference Encyclopedia* (2005) describes it as: (1) Conservative Protestant movement that arose out of 19th century Millennialism in the U.S. It emphasized as fundamental the literal truth of the Bible and (2) Conservative religious movement that seeks a return to Islamic values and Islamic law in the face of Western modernism which is seen as corrupt and atheistic (107). This definition narrows the scope of fundamentalism to religious traditionalism and revival. The
term, however, is not easy to define, nor is it limited to religious contexts. Carol Schick, JoAnn Jaffe and Ailsa Watkinson in *Contesting Fundamentalisms* (2006), observe that the term “fundamentalism” is most frequently used when referring to systems of religious thought such as are found in types of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. According to them, “Fundamentalism can also be used to describe particular types of national pride, cultural exclusion, xenophobia, economic theory and other systems characterized by strongly held beliefs, group formation, boundary development and prescriptive practices” (2006). Certainty, essentialism and a predestined status are a few of the cornerstones of fundamentalist belief systems.

The word fundamentalism which was first used to distinguish a religious movement is now used more broadly. This point is clarified by Santosh Saha and Thomas Carr in *Religious Fundamentalism in Developing Countries* (2004): “Currently "fundamentalism" is seen to define a range of movements either religious or socio political (but more often both), in all regions of the world which aim to impose specific traditions—whether religious, national, cultural, or ethnic—on societies thought to be in danger of straying from the "fundamentals" that hold them together" (2). Fundamentalism thus gets linked to the imposition of conventional practices in order that the existing way of life continues without the danger of disintegration. They continue: “What makes these movements "fundamentalist" is that their adherents seek to raise themselves and their beliefs above the political by appealing explicitly to some one or other supreme authority, moral code or philosophy that cannot be questioned” (1, 2). This explains why fundamentalist factions are not open to discussion, debate or difference of opinion, they deem themselves to be guided by a superior power that cannot be subjected to ordinary investigation. Anson Shupe and Jeffrey Hadden define fundamentalism as, “a proclamation of reclaimed authority over a sacred tradition which is to be reinstated as an antidote for a society that has strayed from its cultural moorings” (110, 111). This situates fundamentalism as a movement in favour of a venerable convention in opposition to modernity.
Fundamentalism has been defined differently by various theorists and the connotations that the term takes on have changed according to shifting occasions and perspectives. This is recorded by Girja Kumar in *The Book on Trial, Fundamentalism and Censorship in India* (1997). He acknowledges: “Admittedly the fundamentalist ideology has not been stationary. It gets defined differently in different contexts” (16). The varying applications of the term are mentioned by Anne Sofie Roald in *Women in Islam, The Western Experience* (2001), she observes: “There has been a tendency by the western media and some academic researchers to describe Islamic activism in terms of 'fundamentalism'. However, the discussion of 'fundamentalism' has been oversimplified in the western context in a way that has generated religious stereotypes” (23, 24). Other researchers too use the word fundamental as referring to religious fundamentalism. Roald continues, “In the media, 'fundamentalism' has come to denote the activities of religious groups and it is particularly associated with violent or aggressive practices” (24). This gives rise to a generalised concept of fundamentalism as religious activism or a strict interpretation of religious scriptures. She notes that R. S. Appleby and M. E. Marty in their 5 volume series, *The Fundamentalist Project* (1991-1995) too use the term in this sense. The fact that the term 'fundamentalism' came to be applied to Islamic movements is noted by Hjape also. According to his view there are comparisons between Christian fundamentals and politically active Muslims as both are believed to pursue political aims. Anne Roald translates Hjape's terminology thus:

This implies that when one compared [Christian fundamentalism] with movements in the Muslim world, it was not the hermeneutics, the interpretation of the text, or the degree of 'literalism' which was the issue. It was rather the similarity in view of the *function* of religion, the view that religion is an instrument for the legislation and administration of the state, the objectification of religion as a societal system, separated from the individual's belief and understanding. (25)

Roald's argument is that the expression fundamentalism has been transformed from its original meaning to become a label of religious political activism, that is, it refers to a view of a sacred scripture as inerrant. Fundamentalism can be seen,
Fundamentalism is an indefinite term that defies definite boundaries. While an accurate definition of the term seems impossible and a matter of equivocation, Van der Vyver suggests in *Religious Fundamentalism and Human Rights* (1996) that “fundamentalism is associated with certain trends within a particular religious community” (1). Further, because fundamentalism can signify dissimilar things to diverse people, it has many variations. While the term has been applied most frequently to religious groups, it can also refer to national and social movements. These variants make the term difficult to delineate conclusively. However, although deciding what fundamentalism is essentially is a challenge, it can be said that a fundamentalist structure comprises certain widespread applications. Foremost among these is that the past is venerated and the correctness and superiority of the ancient times is accepted unquestioningly. Besides this, there is a segregation of those within and those outside the ambit of the preferred way of thinking. Fundamentalists often see themselves as separate from and a corrective to mainstream practice. Fundamentalism is also a social process that produces both those who are named and those doing the naming. Indeed, fundamentalism is rarely used as a term of self-identification and is almost always applied to by those on the outside who take issue with it. Martin Marty in his conclusion to *Religious Fundamentalism in Developing countries* (2001) states: “None of the movements… would call itself "fundamentalist" if it had the naming game to itself” (202). All but the most militant movements do not necessarily acknowledge that their beliefs are what outsiders might call as “fundamentalist”. In this way, despite many different aims and fervently held beliefs, movements termed fundamentalist, still bear a strong resemblance to each other.

Finally, it would be pertinent to refer to Jay Harris' work here. Harris illustrates in “Fundamentalism: Objections from a Modern Jewish Historian” (1994) that the marker ‘fundamentalism’ must be used with care. He advocates that a ‘careful and nuanced’ approach is required towards groups that seem to resemble one another from a fundamentalist perspective. Such an approach is...
useful, even necessary so as not to misunderstand and misrepresent the connotations of the term fundamentalism and related terms like fundamentalist, etc. Martin Marty elucidates: “In our own five volume project, we settled for speaking of "fundamentalism", "fundamentalist-like movements" or "movements bearing family-resemblances to fundamentalisms"” (201, 2001) However, despite this concern, the term is nevertheless helpful across movements, which although they may have different aims, still bear a strong family resemblance. Marty maintains: “For make no mistake: there is some sort of genus here, a body of classifiable options that transcend national and sectarian boundaries” (201). Despite the differences and ambiguity, however there is a variety of factions and activities that can be said to fit the description of the family name, fundamentalism. However when the term, 'fundamentalism' is applied there is a need for caution not only in the interest of accuracy but also so as not to obscure important differences between groups who might seem to resemble each other, the term fundamentalism needs to be used with care as also with due attention to the fine distinctions between the various groups.

Although the nomenclature ‘fundamentalism’ is imprecise and somewhat overworked, it is helpful to articulate rigorous ideological positions of various social and cultural movements. It can be used to denote certain common features among these. Fundamentalism can be said to include various common practices. These are enumerated by Girja Kumar:

There are however, three points of agreement between all forms of fundamentalisms, proliferating all over the world, they yearn for the past, are intolerant of dissent and creativity and hide their real intention of capturing state power under the garb of religious expansion. Fundamentalism also operates beyond the confines of its territory through caste, class and other social institutions and organisations. All types of fundamentalism are however birds of the same flock flying together. (21, 1997)

In accordance with this observation, first, fundamentalisms claim the authority of the past as an unchanging reality, while reinterpreting precepts in a way that is new and unprecedented. A fundamentalist structure is committed to basic
principles believed to be everlasting and indisputable, the past is revered and glorified. Girja Kumar continues, “the fundamentalists measure everything by standards of eternal and unalterable truth” (24, 1997). This conviction leads to a rejection of other points of view, therefore different or innovative viewpoints are stifled in the cause of one timeless entity. The code of an earlier tradition, described by fundamentalists through myth and nostalgia, becomes the social prescription for national rejuvenation, and its practice reinforces boundaries and behaviour. The narratives are particularistic and prescriptive, as are national narratives. Each represents a selective history, and a selective theology, to explain and glorify the past and to chart the future through practices in the present. Fundamentalist groups see themselves as victims fighting for survival, but ultimately what is at stake is control and influence.

Besides, a fundamentalist stance separates itself from those not in the creed. Solidarity is promoted through a sense of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. There is a redefinition of the fundamentalist community with respect to non-adherents, as well as a narrowing of acceptable belief and behaviour among adherents. Fundamentalism is antithetical to plurality, to tolerance and to differences. Joyce Green states in “Cultural and Ethnic Fundamentalism: Identity, Liberation and Oppression” (2006), “It is my contention that fundamentalism leads to rigid, exclusionary political processes that are likely to violate human rights...ultimately, fundamental conceptions of liberation are oppressive and potentially place governments outside of the community of nations that subscribe to the collective discipline of human rights and international law” (19, 2006). Fundamentalist movements tend toward self-separation or exclusivity as well as prescriptive distinctions that mark adherents from outsiders. A fundamentalist system—whether it is religious, social or economic—depends on an incontrovertible belief in itself regardless of the alterations the structure may have undergone to keep itself together.

The doctrine of fundamentalism is prescriptive and must be enforced dutifully, and by definition, is not open to interpretation or critique. The slogan of fundamentalism can be misused to keep people from expressing their true opinion,
to dismiss or marginalize them. Used as a label, the word fundamentalism has served to justify prejudice and counter-violence. James Warner Bjorkman in *Fundamentalism Revivalists and Violence in South Asia* (1988) elaborates on this, “fundamentalism is characterized by a comprehensive and absolutist belief system capable of generating intense aspirations and total commitment to precepts. It involves a totalistic definition of reality in order to revitalize authentic values; usually by restoring the spirit and commitment of a past era” (2). In addition to these, other characteristics are in evidence. Fundamentalism is a cause not always against outsiders but sometimes involves a hatred of those of the same faith. James Warner Bjorkman elaborates further: “In order to maintain coherence and momentum, fundamentalists require an enemy—or rather two enemies: one within their ranks, the other outside, since the internal enemy might betray the "cause", periodic purges and purifications of members become necessary; since the external enemy threatens to destroy the "cause" ranks must consolidate” (3, 1988).

Fundamentalist movements profess to uphold some kind of orthodoxy or right practice and regard themselves as instrumental in preserving the tradition from erosion. This leads to rigidity in following the traditions and conventions of the sacred past as understood by those who profess to uphold the practice. Any deviation from this is abhorred and the practitioners of the faith are found to be more despicable than the infidels who pledge to another loyalty. Being impervious to the various social persuasions, there is less of an attempt to regulate the behaviour and habits of those on the external region than there is to guard the hearts and minds of committed insiders who may be susceptible to the influence and pressure of an outside authority.

Fundamentalist systems require ideological control over their elect insiders and, simultaneously, repudiation of outside others. The penalty for deviation is harsh and swift, an unquestioning conformity is an obligation. Yet one might ask why fundamentalism of any kind is found attractive by people. Is it that those attracted to fundamentalism have been deceived or coerced in some way? In response to such queries F. Volker Greifenhagen proposes in *Islamic Fundamentalism(s): More than a Pejorative Epithet?* (2006) that fundamentalism offers some rewards. Borrowing an analogy from economics, he talks about a
fundamentalist dividend. This can be defined as the benefits and competitive advantages that may be gained by being part of a fundamentalist group. This dividend appeals to the human need for security and well-being. According to him embedded in all fundamentalisms, are “utopic impulses that resonate with universal values, despite blatantly exclusive ideologies, and engender strong bonds of human solidarity” (74). Solidarity is promoted through the means of a sense of superiority and uprightness that separates the adherents from non-adherents who are perceived as low-grade. Thus, Fundamentalism may emerge as a movement, but it is also a set of strategies that are about power.

Another reason for the attraction of fundamentalist ideology is the prospect of an ideal world in the future. The attempt is to re-establish on earth a society which reflects the virtues and values the followers believe have been lost or which await them in the afterlife. Girja Kumar articulates this, “In the ultimate analysis, fundamental movements consist of a configuration of the following fundamentals (1) The Truth, (2) The Messenger, (3) The Community and (4) The Destiny. The Destiny is what beckons the faithful to a never ending utopia, a destiny that impels everyone in a pre-designed, compelling and unipolar destiny. After the Parlai or last judgement, the faithful shall come marching to their utopian future divested of all earthly concomitants” (20, 1997). This faith of the supporters of the creed in a future of everlasting bliss explains the appeal that fundamentalism has for the faithful. Girja Kumar elaborates: “The Truth or certitude is the very foundation of fundamentalist ideology, backed by charismatic ‘The Enlightened One’ mesmerizing the populace to total submission, backed in turn by the select and special or collective and corporate community. The last of the gaps is filled by the concept of utopian future sustained by The Doctrine” (20). This abode based on ideology, the compelling attractiveness and charm of the divinely conferred power can inspire devotion in others, coupled with the promise of the imminent golden era, it draws the ordinary beings to their fold. This is corroborated and taken a step further by O.P. Jaggi in Religion, Practice and Science of Nonviolence, (1974). He asserts: “In the name of religion, we indulged in violence rather than nonviolence; those who did so, thought they were earning a place for themselves in heaven” (viii). The desire to attain membership in a paradise of bliss and ecstasy, not
possible in the human world draws religiously motivated persons to take up not just a position of unwavering attachment to a set of irreducible beliefs but also urges them towards a militant stance in an effort to protect the faith and secure a permanent dwelling in heaven.

Fundamentalism is a complex social phenomenon that can be looked at in various ways. Fundamentalism, in one commonly accepted sense means literal reading. In Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy (2009), Brian Forst speaks about fundamentalism in relation to religion. According to him: “In the domain of comparative religion fundamentalism refers to the strict, literal interpretation of sacred texts” (130). The acceptance of this meaning of stringent adherence and literality raises related matters. This approach supposes that meaning is transparent and clear, that there is no problem of interpretation, construal translation or symbolism in the construction of meaning. It implies that one can find a determinate reading that can endure throughout history. Fundamentalism can also mean an emphasis on the traditional or fundamental. In this sense, fundamentalism implies an approach to the past-an imagined past-that is nostalgic and simplified. Joyce Green observes, “Fundamentalism is characterized by nostalgia for a mythical time of goodness in an earlier order, which can be reacquired by adhering to fundamentalists’ representation of the code of that tradition” (19, 2006). At the level of this view, reality reveals itself in totality, that no effort to comprehend or to negotiate meaning is necessary. This could be said to be a simplistic outlook, for according to this, the issue of which understanding of tradition is accepted remains unproblematicised. Which evaluation as to what is fundamental and is allowed to be decisive is an important matter for in actuality meaning does not yield itself in an undemanding, uni-dimensional manner. Operationally, however, fundamentalism is a concept with analytical and explanatory command and has the potential to go beyond stereotypes. Here, it also needs to be noted that when deciding to form a definite view of the nature of fundamentalism, there is an inability to establish the solid borders on which fundamentalist identities and discourses depend.
It is also true that fundamentalism exists as a contradiction on many fronts, values and principles and the notion of a fixed and unchanging social identification. Indeed, with a precisely defined exclusionary positioning, an exclusive fundamentalist identity can only recognize itself in relation to the presence of a highly visible, excluded outsider. Carol Schick in *Contesting Fundamentalisms* (2006) argues: “Fundamentalism is produced, on the one hand, through eschewing universalism and human rights norms and on the other hand, through a construction of otherness and alterity against which the insider fundamentalist can know herself” (153). The fundamentalist methodology involves re-imagining the past and invoking an authentic community with deterministic social characteristics. In so doing, it produces a paradox, the fundamentalist simultaneously engages in nostalgia for the past while displaying historical amnesia about a system of living that never existed. The question of what is traditional or fundamental could also be related to the subject of power—whose reading or interpretation is bestowed with credence and authority. Fundamentalism, thus, needs hierarchy in order to exist. It may also need insecurity to thrive, as people seize their privilege or simply try to stabilize or defend their position by freezing or rolling back social relations where they might. Fundamentalism is an absolutist impulse, a set of common practices that are most about defining and controlling relations amongst people. It is totalizing in its approach to past, present and future society. It is against creativity and anti-democratic. It defines identities of those on the inside and outside. Fundamentalism can also be said to be reactive and reactionary.

It is also useful to make a distinction between fundamentalism as an ideology and fundamentalism as a manner of action. The philosophy of fundamentalist consideration by itself may not be a negative label but the practice of such thinking with the associated exploits may bear harmful connotations. Adherents to fundamentalist structures, as a consequence of continually anticipated, real or imagined injury to their system of life adopt a militant stance that damages society. It is the authoritarian observance of the prescribed regulations that result in the closed systems of thought, the resistance to scrutiny and the unassailable logic. Reflection is stifled by convincing insiders that they
are imperilled by outsiders who are essentially unlike them and this leads to unconstructive or harmful activity, although, theoretically the system may not be be destructive. Related to this is the reality that fundamentalism gets linked to other social and cultural practices like religion to produce an entity that may produce confrontation with others. Several authors have recreated the growth of fundamentalism in their novels and the way in which it can be used to cause violent behaviour. The next section examines the link between the rise of fundamentalism and violence in one such work of fiction, M. G. Vassanji's *The Assassin's Song*.

### 2.2 Fundamentalism and Religion and in M. G. Vassanji's *The Assassin's Song*

*The Assassin's Song* (2007) is the coming-of-age story of Karsan Dargawalla. It is set against the horrific real-life communal killings that shook the state of Gujarat in 2002. Some part of the action also takes place in Canada. Karsan is a boy who wants be normal. He is however, the ‘gaadi varas,’ the chosen successor to Pirbaag shrine and is expected by tradition to take over the preservation of the shrine from his father. Pirbaag traces its roots to an ancient Sufi saint, Nur Fazal, who came to India centuries ago and made the land his home. Nur Fazal’s teachings about the Atmaan, the Holy Spirit, are not founded in any one religion but instead freely borrow from both Islam and Hinduism, an attribute of the mystical Sufi order. Despite this, he manages to migrate to Canada for some time, gets married and fathers a child. After tragedy strikes, both in Canada and Pirbaag, Karsan is drawn back across thirty years of silence and separation to discover what, if anything, is left for him in India. When he returns eventually, Pirbaag is no longer standing, it has fallen victim to the riots, and so has his father. Besides, he finds that his sibling Mansoor has taken to a more rigid and extreme form of religion, he has accepted Islam.

It is significant to note here that the author of the novel, M.G. Vassanji, also traces his ancestry to Gujarat. In his travelogue *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*, (2008) Vassanji writes about his anticipation prior to his visit
to Gujarat, “I am going to the state of my ancestors Gujarat, where people speak a language I speak” (31). However, the eagerness is also tempered with melancholy. Vassanji visited India during the riots consequent to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. He writes “sympathy is offered me for the discomfort of train travel. No mention of the recent disturbances here, in the wake of the Mosque demolition in Ayodhya” (536, 2008). While Vassanji is captivated by the sights and sounds of the country of his ancestral family, he is also disturbed and pained by the events in the country. He registers his unease: “And so, somewhere, the 'disturbance' or 'the communal violence' goes on, the fire rages. Once more a glimpse of the dark side behind the warm embrace, the familiarity. An unease descends upon the soul, there is real mystery to these mob violences, something truly unfathomable” (18). Therefore it can be said that the novel is Vassanji’s response to the pain and trauma that he felt on seeing the divisive forces and violence in India. He articulates his anguish, “And so, in spite of my euphoria, I feel a trauma after all” (31). Writing about the violence is Vassanji’s way of dealing with the trauma of violence.

Throughout the novel, characters can be seen resorting to fundamentalist practices. This provides evidence for the rise of fundamentalism. By relating the novel in the voice of Karsan Dargawalla, Vassanji ensures a neutral standpoint. Karsan is neither Muslim nor Hindu but rather a Sufi. Sufis are universal pantheists, Sufism is an ideology that believes in the all-inclusive brotherhood of mankind. Sufism is not considered to be a religious cult that connects to one religion. Robert Graves explains in his introduction to The Sufis (1977), “being bound by no religious dogma however tenuous and using no place of worship. They have no sacred city … They even dislike being given any inclusive name which might force them into doctrinal conformity” (ix). Sufis do not consider propaganda desirable; in fact the stress is on lack of restrictions and self-determination. Doris Lessing, in her introduction to Learning How to Learn Psychology and Spirituality in the Sufi Way (1978) explains, “then, as now, Sufi teachers were concerned about freeing people from social and religious indoctrinations” (10). Their views are progressive. She also says “Sufism is not the study of the past, or the worship of medieval saints; it is always, has ever been
evolutionary in spirit and action” (8). Thus, by making a Sufi the narrator, Vassanji ensures that he speaks about both Hindu and Islamic fundamentalism from a neutral position.

This also ensures that the treatment meted out to moderate factions is highlighted. Girja Kumar explicates: “The Sufi tradition which is very strong in India respects different faiths to access the divinity” (41, 1997). Being moderate, Sufis too have been subjected to persecution. Some Sufi masters who faced harassment were Bulleh Shah, Dara Shikoh, Sarmad Shaheed among others. Kartar Singh Duggal in Bulleh Shah, Saint, the Mystic Muse (1993) elaborates on this: “Bulleh Shah (1680-1757) the Sufi saint-poet of Punjab was one of the foremost to be targeted for persecution. His battle cry was "I find that I am neither Hindu nor Turk" ” (61). Bulleh Shah refused to be on a single side preferring to identify with both Hindus and Muslims. He further asserted “God is neither in the mosque not at Kaaba, Neither is He in the Quran nor in prayers” (61). This was seen as blasphemous and offended Shah’s adversaries but none of this bothered Shah who continued to sing his way into the heart of the populace. Coming from such a background of love for all and prejudice towards none, the narrator relates the account of the events in the novel, the Hindu-Muslim riots, the killings, the attitude of distrust between the two sides, in an objective manner. Vassanji and the narrator’s family share certain essential aspects of life. Both belong to the the Khoja community which includes elements of Hinduism with the teachings of Islam. Vassanji continues: “I was brought up in an Indian mystical tradition or bhakti tradition” (250). The Khojas cannot be categorized in a simple way, they call themselves neither Hindu nor Muslim. Vassanji ponders, “Were we Hindu or Muslim? I believe both; some would say neither” (250). He continues, “In Gujarat we have been traditionally called the Khojas” (250). The questions facing the narrator and his family are close to their creator’s heart as well.

2.2.1 Background of the Violence and Intolerance in the State of Gujarat

Hailing from the state of Gujarat, Karsan’s family looks after the shrine of Pir Bawa, a Sufi saint. Vassanji gives evidence of the non-partisan status of the
narrator’s family all through. This stance does not help them as the events in the state of Gujarat, the fundamentalist practices and the consequent violence will not permit such neutrality. Hindu-Muslim riots are not uncommon in India, but the state of Gujarat has acquired a reputation for being particularly sensitive to communal violence. Ashutosh Varshney in “Understanding Gujarat Violence” (2004) gives his opinion on this matter: “In one respect, the violence in Gujarat followed a highly predictable pattern. A recent time-series constructed on Hindu-Muslim violence had already identified Gujarat as the worst state, much worse than the states of North India often associated with awful Hindu-Muslim relations in popular perceptions”. In Gujarat, since pre-partition times, there have been serious communal disturbances, sometimes triggered by petty and minor incidents relating to kite flying or a cricket match. Before partition, communal riots broke out in 1941. The Justice Reddy Commission identified as many as 2938 instances of communal violence in the state between 1960 and 1969. Two major communal incidents took place in 1969 and 1985. In September 1969, Gujarat plunged into one of the severest riots after Partition. The disturbances in 1985 were spread over a period of five months from February 1985 to July 1985. In addition there were riots in the years 1980, 1982, 1985, and 1990 <http://www.gujaratriots.com/32/gujarats-bloody-history-of-violence>. In December 1992, the Babri Masjid was destroyed. In the riots that followed the demolition, hundreds of people were killed or rendered homeless. The atrocities that the novel refers to were a result of the 1992 clashes, ten years later, the Godhra train incident took place. Vassanji himself, speaking about the demolition of the masjid states, “What followed the Godhra train incident, ten year later, was a state wide orgy of violence perpetrated upon any Muslim in sight by fanatical Hindu mobs” (220, 2008).

While it is a fact that violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims have been endemic in India as a whole, the situation in the state of Gujarat is quite complex and this state has seen some of the worst episodes of violence and brutality. Clemens Six in Spectacular Politics, Performative Nation building and Religion in Modern India (2010) elaborates on the violence in the Indian subcontinent: “One of the decisive factors and also the cause of religious violence
in South Asia is the historical legacy of statehood, i.e., the varying formations of the post-colonial states in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This not only affects relations between these states but also relations between religious majorities and minorities, in other words, mainly between Hindus and Muslims” (186). Events in the past have reverberations on the lives of the characters. This serves as a backdrop for the action of the novel and it is hardly surprising that nobody is allowed the comfort of choice, rather, a singular option is obligatory. This is a position that is understood and accepted by Mansoor, the narrator's brother and his uncle, both of them choose their location and convert to Islam. Girja Kumar spells out: Sufi saints of medieval India were the foremost protagonists of the concept of pluralist society in India; thereby they were to invite the hostility of the fundamentalist elite represented by political rulers, mullahs, qazis and muftis (29, 1997). This is what happens to the Sufi in the story, the one who does not choose a single identity but tries to be associated with both Muslims and Hindus finds that both shun him and he is left friendless. Amartya Sen, in his discussion about a choice of identity in Identity and Violence, The illusion of destiny (2006) asserts, “However, even when we are clear about how we want to see ourselves, we may have difficulty in being able to persuade others to see us just that way” (6). This is the case in Vassanji’s account; the Sufi Saheb is certain of his unitedness with multiple sections of society but has trouble in convincing others. Sen continues, “Quite often ascription goes with denigration, which is used to incite violence against the vilified person” (7). Events that take place subsequently in the novel prove Sen’s assertions as a single identity is attributed to the Sufi by the mob and he is made to pay with his life for his insistence on neutrality.

Referring to the story of Deval, a princess of Gujarat, the narrator reveals that this story has more than one version. The accounts about Rupa Devi and Nur Fazal are different according to the place of their origin. In the Sufi shrine, Nur Fazal is the protagonist while in the temple, it is Rupa Devi. The author notes: “The blatancy of these inventions is quite astounding, reflecting no doubt the political currency of the times” (365). Yet he recalls “what's surprising is that, old as it is, and historically vague, the story carries a bitter potency for the nationalist fanatics of today, shames their modern manhood, goads them into states of rage
and hatred” (74). Wrongs of the ancient times are used to justify present-day actions of violence and hatred, this being an important method of those in authority to silence and instigate youngsters to avenge the wrongs done to their past, their ancestors, their revered forefathers. V.D. Chopra in Religious Fundamentalism in Asia (1994) speaking about the effect of religion on human consciousness postulates: “The recent developments in India have focussed on the interaction of religion on politics and vice versa” (2). This is seen in the present novel as well. Religion and politics are entwined in the situation prevailing in the country with violence as a natural consequence. Throughout its history, religion has been an important part of the country’s culture. The use of religion in Indian politics can be linked to the country’s pre-independence era. Brian Forst expounds: “The partitioning of Pakistan from India in 1947 was justified principally on religious grounds, to give Muslims their own sovereign nation in what has been the western part of India. Tension continues today” (119, 2009). The mistrust between Hindus and Muslims has a long history and the religious-political tensions it engenders are an important part of the story that Vassanji relates in the novel. This is expressed when the narrator reads his father’s letter:

I write this as we reel from the news that a railway bogey in a train full of pilgrims returning from Ayodhya was set on fire outside Godhra. Those inside were trapped and all perished, including children, what a ghastly and thoughtless crime. Now blood will pay for blood, and all madness will be set loose upon this land. Here in Haripir we must struggle to maintain the peace as we have done during past troubles. (335)

This is a reference to the year 2002 in Gujarat. The violence described is the burning of the train in Godhra and resulting communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. “On 27 February 2002 at Godhra City in the state of Gujarat, the Sabarmati Express train was forcibly stopped and attacked by a large Muslim mob. As a result, 58 Hindu pilgrims — mostly women, children and seniors returning from the holy city of Ayodhya — were burned alive. The attack prompted retaliatory massacres against Muslims on a large scale, in which 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed. 223 more people were reported missing”. <http://nishadraj.blogspot.com/2011/03/godhra-kand-2002.html>. Godhra is
widely known in India and internationally for being the eye of the storm, the incident set off days of rioting in Gujarat state in which at least 1,000 people died. “The nature of the events remains politically controversial in India. Some commentators have characterized the massacres of Muslims as a genocide in which the state was complicit, while some government sources have countered that the Muslim dead were victims of mere "riots" or "disturbances"”<http://nishadraj.blogspot.com/2011/03/godhra-kand-2002.html>. Whatever view one may take of this debate, this serves to show the cycles of violence that are set off. The Sabarmati Express was carrying cadres of Hindu karsevaks from Ayodhya, where they had gone to express support for building a Ram temple at a disputed site. Clemens Six expounds his views on the matter, “Ayodhya is a highly sensitive and symbolically laden place which now stands for the increasing strength of radical Hinduism and hostilities against Muslims” (197, 2010). This gives Muslims a justification to indulge in violence against Hindus and vice versa. Violence by one faction is used as a validation for more violence in order to teach the opponents a lesson. Brian Forst maintains: “These justifications for violence get played out from time to time on the ground. Hostility between Hindus and Muslims has simmered for centuries, occasionally exploding in violence” (119, 2009). The series of violent actions continue as both sides are unforgiving of the other.

In the violence in India there are two differing trends or developments which are interrelated in specific ways. This gives rise is to cycles of violence in retaliation for past actions that are countered with more and extreme forms of violence and result in the continuation of hostility on both sides. Clemens Six continues: “Both these trends-the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India, on the one hand, and the increased political significance of Islamist terror, on the other-not only exist alongside each other, but they also interact” (196, 2010). The fears expressed by the narrator’s father in his letter to his son are also a validation of this observation. The misgivings of both pertaining to the younger son are also part of this contention which the following section examines.
2.2.2 Ineffectiveness of Neutrality: Mansoor Makes his Choice

The author is worried about his brother, Mansoor/Omar’s new found belief in Islam, he asks, “Is it faith or bitter reaction he's expressing” (77). The narrator's father is troubled by similar concerns, seeing his younger son become a practising Muslim, who observes namaz regularly, he writes “It pleases me, this spiritual commitment and yet it worries me too, if it comes purely out of resentment of Hindus” (336). Witnessing a member of their family turn to Islam, the worries of the father-son duo are identical. Both contemplate the same point. Earlier the news of the murder of Salim Buckle, a Muslim has been made known: “Salim met a "ghastly fate" ” (71). He was murdered for being a Muslim. The narrator and his father, therefore wonder whether Mansoor is truly convinced about the system of belief that is Islam or only reacting to the news of Salim’s murder by turning his back to the Hindu elements of his “syncretistic (nominally Hindu)” (207, 2008) upbringing (as Vassanji himself explains it in his memoir). The agents of this religion, the Hindus are the perceived killers of Salim, Mansoor therefore is conceivably seeking safety by expressing his confidence in a certainty that he considers better equipped to defend him, he does not feel safe in the ambiguity of his family’s position. In a situation of fear, people are compelled to take sides or perish. This gives rise to fundamentalist-like revivals. This is authenticated in the father’s later utterance. Referring to the rise of fundamentalism, he mentions, “this new madness in our country” (336). Feelings on both sides are so intense that they can only be described as madness. The choices made by Mansoor, the narrator’s own brother and the Sufi Saheb’s younger son, his rejection of Sufism and the adoption of Islam reinforce the conditions of insanity that will not tolerate multiple identities.

The reminiscences of the narrator’s father about their ‘parampara’, their tradition in which the Saheb’s family has no choice but to follow the ancient norms can also be called a type of fundamentalist-like pratice. Although this may not be violent or destructive, this also is a version of fundamentalism in the sense that there is no alternative life for an individual born in this system. Girja Kumar explicates: “Religious fundamentalism appeals to the scripture in the literal sense.
It identifies itself by its "aggressive assertion of self-superiority", emphasis on adherence to ritualistic norms and by involuntarily crossing into the province of secular affairs of individuals and collectivities” (19, 1997). This happens to the narrator’s family. Both, he and his brother, would like to exercise options but this is not given to them. The narrator wants to play cricket and Mansoor too has his own preferences, but even these worldly pursuits are encroached upon by the greater purpose of the tradition they are born into and which must be upheld at all costs. Mansoor talks about, “the repressive lifestyle. The ancient mumbo-jumbo” (345), referring to his father and their childhood. The Sufi customs have to be followed by all in every situation and follow the narrator abroad too, in spite of his efforts to break free and adopt a modern lifestyle. Moreover, the mother is not exempt, she suffers in her own way due to these regulations. Even in times of religious and communal violence, stringent obedience of the norms is necessary as the actions of the father reveal.

The father is aware of the hazards of adherence to the customs that he is born into. Referring to the fundamentalist violence in Gujarat, (346, 347), the Sufi Saheb says: “Taking comfort behind the statement that we are neither Hindus nor Muslims, however is not correct. And so I have let it be known that the shrine of Pir Bawa is open to all those who will come to seek refuge, Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh. This way their lives may be saved” (347). The father’s proposition of opening Pir Bawa’s shrine to members of all faiths seems to be a rational choice amidst the chaotic irrationality of single-faithed fundamentalism. This is also considered by the narrator’s father to be a positive solution, one that will save the lives of people caught in the wrong faith. Vassanji had apprehended this danger, he verbalizes, “I realize that whatever community you come from the fear of being found in the wrong place at the wrong time is too palpable” (229, 2008). The call to make the shrine a common place is taken up by the people too and they throng to take refuge in this sanctuary bringing additional problems for the Saheb, who continues: “Our beloved shrine, the house of Pir Bawa, is beginning to fill with people terrified of the news and rumours that they have heard, there are reports of gangs approaching Haripir… And rumours that Pirbaag will not be spared, so what to tell the people who are coming here?” (147). The Pir
Bawa’s association with all faiths poses danger to him. He is targeted by those who believe in being part of a single alliance.

The rumours bringing the news of gangs destructively approaching Haripir in search of more victims create a sense of danger. A sense of anxiety and insecurity pervades around the shrine of Pirbaag despite the presence of followers of all faiths. This suggests that there is no safe haven in this situation of escalating violence. The notion of ideology as an impartial power is dispensed with. Thus the neutrality of Sufism too gets automatically rejected. Amartya Sen observes, “In the downplaying of political and social identities as opposed to religious identity, it is civil society that has been the loser, precisely at a time when there is a great need to strengthen it” (83). Sen’s observations are employable in Vasanji’s narrative to the Saheb’s family. For them, there is the requirement to take on a single religious identity, a singular affiliation or face the consequences. “Religion is not, and cannot be, a persons all-encompassing identity” (83, 2006) Sen continues but Sen’s assertion is not permitted to the Saheb or his family, their neutrality is ineffective as further events reveal.

2.2.3 Cycles of Violence

Additionally, the violent events in the state of Gujarat do have their effect on the narrator (the Saheb’s younger son) too: “The killings in Gujarat have taken away my own certainty. I simply cling to my beliefs due to a certain obstinacy, a residual blind faith in our society, that it would never allow premeditated, government sponsored programs” (78). A sense of fear causes uncertainty about his convictions in Karsan, the narrator, whose internal strength also is shaken and it is only out of habit and orientation that he continues to believe in his existing identity which his brother and uncle have already rejected. This shows the important fact that violence begets violence. If one side rejects peace and resorts to acts of violence or people are lead to believe in the harm caused to them by the others, they too are instigated to plan and execute something that will affect their opponents. This is an exemplification of “the threads of revenge and reconciliation” (xi, 1999) that Rajmohan Gandhi elucidates. The effect of violence
causes more violence from the other side and this cause and effect reaction results in an endless succession of violent events.

The further conversation between the narrator and his brother reveals the motive of retaliation: "You know, Brother-when we reply sticks for sticks and swords for swords, we are always cut down because we are few and unorganized. It's the big thing that makes the difference-makes them scared" (78). This is perhaps the reason for the escalation of violence due to fundamentalism. The degree of violence is perforce increased to shock the other side and create panic in them. James Warner Bjorkman in *Fundamentalism Revivalists and Violence in South Asia* (1988) makes a pertinent point about religion in the Indian subcontinent. He speaks about, “an entire sub-continent in ferment as religious militancy under the facade of orthodoxy, rises on all sides” (1). He says additionally “Tragically, a cyclic action-reaction is underway which feeds upon itself. In the wake of terrorist acts, the victims lose faith in government to maintain lawful order and begin to arm themselves in self-defense” (1). In the novel, the violence then gets converted into organized acts of terrorism, the ‘big thing’ as Mansoor calls it. This also intensifies the distinction between “we and them,” thus reinforcing that there can be no refusal to take sides, that no one can claim detachment from this turmoil as the conversation between the two brothers reveals: "Who’s "we"? The world does not divide so neatly into 'we' and 'them', Mansoor, there was no such thing when we were growing up! 'There is now’ ” (79). Further events show up the impracticality of the narrator’s quest for objectivity, his refusal to take sides, the brothers reach the site of the martyrdom of the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur by the Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb. The words on the plaque outside read: “The old wounds, the old battles. They and we, and no place in the middle” (79). This is a clear reference connecting the rise of fundamentalism in contemporary times to the events that have taken place in the past. Earlier, such distinctiveness was not part of the psyche of the narrator’s family, the communal identity was not part of their consciousness during their growing up years but as grown up adults they are directly confronted with the question of the ‘we’ identity against the ‘them’ identity. ‘We’ in opposition to ‘them.’ This lucidly clarifies the absence of a tolerant position and serves to
emphasize the rising of fundamentalist tendencies: that there is no place for neutrality, of the middle path in this situation.

Every individual necessarily has to choose sides. Some even change loyalties as is the case with Mansoor, the narrator’s brother who was a loyalist, proud of his Indian nationality earlier. This fact becomes evident from the narrator’s revelation that at the time of the Indo-China War, it was Mansoor who gave away his mother’s bangle (86) to defend India. However, in the changed circumstances, perceiving the chaotic events around, Mansoor takes no time in deserting his native country and faith in exchange for a different trust and conviction in the hope of survival. James Warner Bjorkman elaborates “Against this backdrop of military and religious intolerance, new political forces are emerging amidst dangerous scenarios of hate and bigotry” (1, 1988). This is depicted by Vassanji in the fictional world of the novel. The character of Pradhan Shastri, an agent of the NAPYP-National Patriotic Youth Party is introduced. (108) The succeeding section examines the outcome of this appearance on events in the novel.

2.2.4 Pradhan Shastri: The Face of Hindu Revivalism

Pradhan Shastri materializes soon after the Indo-China War (1962). The narrator tells readers: “Our sanskriti-our traditional ways-were being corrupted, Pradhan Shastri declared, sitting with my father in the pavilion. He listed the events that had befallen us, one by one. Films and their loose morality, rock and roll, the twist, and Elvis-belvis, immoral books” (108). Pradhan Shastri shows his concern for the erosion of the traditions and customs of Hinduism. He exhorts the narrator’s father: “'Spineless politicians!' … 'We have to bring back the Golden Age, Saheb-ji’ ” (108). Here, Pradhan Shastri is expressing a typically painful response by commenting on the changing scenario in the socio-cultural world. Brian Forst’s comments on the postures assumed by fundamentalists, “generally, fundamentalists who read the text literally take strong position against modernism” (130, 2009) are applicable to Vassanji’s narrative. In the story, Shastri is one such anti-modernist. For Shastri, any deviation from longstanding
practice is tantamount to decadence, the scriptures have to be followed exactly. The changing environment, the liberties and freedoms enjoyed by the youth are unpalatable to him. The preferences of youngsters expressed through fashion, films and music lead to the dilution of cultural values and ancient wisdom according to this perspective. In his outlook, this cannot be allowed to go on, it must be stopped and turned around. The character of Pradhan Shastri and the ideas he embodies reinforce the revivalism in Hinduism. According to Pradhan Shastri’s views, the country and its soil also need protection especially after the Indo-China war: “He concluded, saheb-ji, the humiliating war with China-in which we were betrayed by our leaders…showed us that our beloved nation too needs protection. ‘Our soil is our mother’ ” (110). Equating the country to the mother is a favourite ploy utilized by purists to provoke aggression and hostility in otherwise peaceful fellow-citizens.

For Pradhan Shastri, the country needs to be protected not just from neighbouring enemies like China but from other kinds of threats also. Malise Ruthven, exploring the features of Fundamentalism claims, “the fundamentalist impulse in many traditions has been a reaction to the invasive quality of film and television, which exposes sacred areas like sexual relations to the public gaze, bringing transgressive images into the home” (129, 2004). So, in the thinking of Shastri, the images of women on television and the widespread accessibility of books become a source of corruption for society that calls for urgent rectification: “Women appear in films in knickers’ continued Shastri enthusiastically, condemning the West ’and their books are even more dangerous—I know what I am talking about, Saheb-ji, in the cities boys and girls pass them around in secret to each other and learn all sorts of dirty habits. Have you heard of the infamous book Lady Chatterley’s Lover?’ ” (109). Pradhan Shastri’s objections to the influence of western ideas is typical of a fundamentalist attitude. His mission is to maintain a separate religious identity and keep it distinct from the corrupting influence of westernization. An influence where women have more freedom and equality and a better status than the traditional role of the subjugated gender represents a threat to a religious way of life. “Fundamentalism is therefore a movement through which the adherents attempt to rescue religious identity from absorption into modern,
Western culture, where this absorption appears to the enclave to have made irreversible progress in the wider religious community, necessitating the assertion of a separate identity based upon the fundamental or founding principles of the religion” <http://www.indopedia.org/index.php?title=Fundamentalism>. Condemning the western impact as the source of evil, causing and paving the way for reactionary changes in society happens to be one easy way out for the nativist minds represented by Pradhan Shastri.

Also, it is pertinent to note that here, the recipient of this vocalization is the narrator’s father, a Sufi and not a hard core Hindu. N.K. Ganguly postulates: “Hindu orthodoxy never acted barring...as sanguinary annihilator of all other beliefs as has been the case with Semitic religions” (7). Ganguly’s proposition made in the context of the real world is pertinent to the account of Vassanji. This can be deduced from the fact that Pradhan Shastri approaches the narrator’s father, a well-known Sufi saheb and asks for his support by inviting the narrator to join his school of training “This day Pradhan Shastri had come on a mission, He wanted something from Bapu-ji: an endorsement in the form of my participation in his pet project” (109). Shastri’s activities are a contribution to the beginning of Hindu revivalism. However the Hindu resurgence, at this point, includes others like the narrator and his father who believe in and have respect for both Hinduism and Islam. At the same time the Muslims, treated as ‘them’ are smoothly excluded from any hope of inclusion in the benevolent convictions of preservation of their self and their nation. This makes Shastri’s movement inclusive towards only specifically selected persons and faiths even as it leaves out other people not considered worthy of inclusion.

Pradhan Shastri proposes to train a chosen section of young people ‘good values’, discipline and the use of lathis for self defence. The seemingly harmless training that he intends to impart to youngsters is in actual fact a sort of militant reaction to the perceived threat to the nation. As Vassanji himself indicates: “About him was the urgency of a man who would save India from herself, though he spoke with an easy sincerity and deference, the fire in his message revealed only by a glint in his dark black eyes and a slightly heightened tone to his voice”
Vassanji’s observation and verbalization of Pradhan Shastri’s body language recounts the missionary spirit of activism for his convictions and his effort at regulation. James Warner Bjorkman states: “Private armies are organized in order to protect religions which otherwise preach love, compassion, harmony, concern, commitment, and detachment” (1, 1988). The truth of Bjorkman’s assertion is validated in the narrative account when related to Pradhan Shastri’s missionary spirit. Through his training programme the seeds of future violence can be seen to be germinating. At this stage, Pradhan Shastri’s conduct and the training he imparts may not be equivalent to a service to violent means but, it is the beginning of an ideology that endorses violence. As the narrator himself informs readers about Pradhan Shastri: “Ever since his arrival some weeks before, Haripir had become a louder, indeed a little raucous place” (109). Later events in the novel endorse Bjorkman’s assertion further as the movement which is now conservative and orthodox, becomes increasingly fanatic, fundamentalist and violent.

Three kinds of ideologies get mentioned at this juncture: “At dawn, just as the ultimate notes of the Muslim azan and the Pirbaag ginans had vanished into thin air, there would come from a crackling loudspeaker the recitation of Sanskrit slokas, as if to welcome by their hard, formal sounds the actual bustle of the day. They were repeated in the evening. During the day passersby might catch parts of a patriotic speech or tape or receive a political pamphlet” (109). All three co-exist at this stage and each proclaims its existence through the loud public assertion of their thoughts and ideas. The amalgamation of religion, politics and patriotism is consciously practised by Shastri and the NAPYP participating in training programmes, ritualistic speeches and the chanting of Sanskrit shlokas. Shastri justifies the martial training that he imparts as training for the body “to protect itself from attack” (110). This explanation is further augmented by Shastri’s anti-western attitude rationalizing the necessity of mental and physical alertness for self-protection as well as cultural survival.

Pradhan Shastri sets forth his plan to rein in the western impact: “We have to compete against the Americans and Russians, Saheb,’ he explained. ’We must understand them, then using our own ancient science and technology as a
ladder or a pole, we must stop these westerners’” (111). He also wants the Saheb to join the advisory board of NAPYP; he asserts, “many eminent gurus who were concerned about the nations Sanskriti had joined” (111). Robert Eric Frykenberg theorizes some aspects of a fundamentalist movement:

Occasionally both reformist and revivalist features might be found in a socio-religious movement. More often, the two become one and the same when that which is being "recreated" from the past (and thus reactionary) is just as radical as that which is being made entirely from scratch and hence truly and entirely new. Revivalists will often say they are bringing back what once existed; but in fact they too may be creating something which is altogether new as what utopian radicals claim they are trying to create. (27, 1977)

Frykenberg’s assertions about revivals can be observed in Vassanji’s narrative. The activities and proclamations of Shastri confirm Frykenberg’s statement. Fundamentalists believe their cause to have grave and even cosmic importance. They see themselves as protecting not only a distinctive doctrine, but also a vital principle, a way of life and a path of salvation. Community, comprehensively centered upon a clearly defined religious way of life in all of its aspects, is the promise of fundamentalist movements, and it therefore appeals to those adherents of religion who find little that is distinctive, or authentically vital in their previous religious identity. The narrator recounts Shastri’s declarations to his students for the benefit of readers:

We learned of our nation’s glorious history, which began thousands of years ago, before any of the invaders came. There had been the glorious civilization at Ayodhya; its prince was the perfect man-god Rama, whose wife was the flawlessly virtuous and beautiful Sita, daughter of Janaka. We learned about the great sages of yore and their wisdom. All the science that the western countries now boasted had already been revealed to our sages in the Vedas. China and Iran had received their civilizations from us, when the Europeans were still living in trees. Our civilization had possessed rockets and nuclear bombs thousands of years ago. What was
Shiva's trishul but a missile; Vishnu’s garuda but a rocket? That had been our golden Age. Everything was in equilibrium; dharma meant duty to parents, the law, the guru, the nation, everybody knew his place. But then the Indian man and woman became weak and soft, and the invaders came and raped the nation one by one.

(113)

It can be seen clearly here that the orator of this speech is not simply telling the receivers about the past glory of the country but by subsequently bringing up the weakness of the people of the nation, his intention is made clear. He wants to reform the citizens of his country and also create a militant and aggressive group of activists. The author’s additional account of Shastri’s vocalizations makes this even more apparent: “Pradhan Shastri, declaiming in his dry voice, stirred our young blood. How could we Indians have let such glory waste away? How could we have allowed that evil Afghan Mahmoud of Ghazna to destroy and plunder the temple of Somnath not once but several times” (113). Pradhan Shastri’s speech is not simply a proud loyalist argument about the rich culture of ancient India versus the claims of western civilization but it is a strongly worded anti-colonial voice, seeking the stimulation of the revivalist and reformist approach. His petition to reinstate what existed in the past includes the creation of an inventive earlier period. Further, this also serves to confirm the reality that Shastri uses the rhetorics of instigation in an effort to arouse the heat of reactionary responses.

Vassanji refers to the discipline which was strict and any transgression was punished with a humiliating drill or cane strokes to ensure proper training. Sometimes there was dismissal too which was even more shameful and humiliating. The training was military “After an hour of heart-stirring history and rousing patriotism, in our shoes again we marched military fashion in twos to a playing field, singing patriotic songs” (113). Creating the pressures of militant punishment for noncompliance or defiance, the training school typically follows the terrorizing methods associated with uncompromising fervor. Although Pradhan Shastri wants the narrator to be part of his Hanuman army, before long, the difference or the neutrality of the narrator's predecessors and by extension
of the narrator himself is not allowed to pass without mention. N.K. Ganguly makes an observation about intensities of conviction: “However, there are various levels of the depth of human beliefs which are not easy to define-conservative, orthodox, dogmatic, bigoted, fanatic, fundamentalist. These various shades colour a man's weltanschauung” (31, 32). This is witnessed in the actions of Pradhan Shastri as part of the story. The narrator tells the reader that his not being a hard-core Hindu, but rather a Sufi, one who respects both religions equally is a matter of distaste for Pradhan Shastri. This fact gets borne out when Pradhan Shastri calls the narrator by his full name one day: “'Nur KARSAN!'…'Musalman nu nam laage chhe,' 'sounds Muslim, he said, distaste all over his face’ ” (114). The narrator’s assertion “'Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Sikh are all the same to him!' ” (114) results in more prejudice from Pradhan Shastri.

Pradhan Shastri is admired as a nationalist whose devotion to and zeal for the country are remarkable, his deeds are recounted in detail. The narrator tells readers about the pamphlets distributed by him in the village through his students (126). However, the fact that Pradhan Shastri respects neither Jawaharlal Nehru nor Gandhiji, although he describes himself as a patriot is mentioned. The narrator reveals: “So, what did the patriot Pradhan Shastri have against Gandhiji and Nehru Chacha? why did he deny them a place in his pantheon? The answer could be found in the issues of Hindu Pride: Gandhi had apparently appeased the Muslims, almost given the country away to them; and Nehru had denied the Hindu nature of our country instead for a secular nation at independence” (126). These particulars leave no doubt that Pradhan Shastri’s movement and mobilization of the youth is a Hindu fundamentalist revival. In order to support the readers’ deduction, the narrator’s feelings are revealed:

'I began to feel uneasy about Shastri and NAPYP; their message contained hate and exclusion. Each time we returned from our exercises on the field, marching proudly with our stores, singing patriotic songs, we could hardly be unaware of the poorer boys who had not made it into our corps, staring silently at us. Among them, outside their immense gate, were the Muslims, including the
two sons of the murdered Salim Buckle, one of them Mukhtiar (126, 127).
The narrator’s troubled state and his disillusionment with Pradhan Shastri’s behaviour discloses the true nature of the movement. Also, being a Sufi, although neutral, this disenchantment inclines his sympathies towards others, less fortunate than them, like the Muslim children whose father was murdered.

2.2.5 The Indo-Pak War

Later, when war (1971) breaks out between India and Pakistan, the author comments on Pradhan Shastri’s style. The words are revealing: “You don’t have the stock responses of Pradhan Shastri, not the invectives, not the venom and the pure hatred” (143). This is the narrator’s way of revealing the hatred and antagonism of Pradhan Shastri’s poisonous verbal behaviour and by extension of his fundamentalist philosophy. This way of thinking believes in the practice of exclusion and hatred for those outside the ambit of the hallowed circle, the holy group who are superior by virtue of being part of the exclusive assembly. Here again the mixture of politics with religion is in evidence. Brian Forst’s assertion about the amalgamation of religion and politics can be noted here: “As in other major religions, it can be extremely difficult to distinguish religious disputes from political ones, and this is certainly the case with Hinduism and the politics of India” (119, 2009). During the Indo-Pak War, religious sentiments run parallel to the political events of war and hostility between two nations. Political hostility is converted into animosity between followers of different religions. This is revealed when thoughts of the narrator’s father get articulated. Referring to his brother’s family he says: “They did not emigrate to become our enemies' ” (144). “They went to become Muslims and for a better life’ ” (144). The rejection of the neutrality of Sufism by the narrator’s own uncle and brother is a matter of discussion and deliberation for the family. “Your uncle has repudiated the past. To him our way of life was all lies and superstition. He calls it Hindu' ” (144). This conversation shows that according to the narrator's uncle 'Hindu' is synonymous with falsehood and superstition.
The uncle’s opinions are counterbalanced with Pradhan Shastri's views of Hindu superiority and Muslim inferiority and backwardness. Joyce Green emphasizes: “The desire to belong is a common human need, and nationalism and related forms of collective identity formation and celebration are expressions of that need. The search for belonging affects those whose socio-political context is bereft of significant community. Belonging seems to be most meaningful when it affirms one’s origins, identity, values and relationships” (23, 2006). The strength of the fundamentalist identity may easily lead to a type of nationalism or contribute to the growth of nationalism where religion and nation coincide. This can be witnessed in the postulations of both the uncle and Pradhan Shastri. The uncle’s yearning to belong push him to take on membership of an absolute Muslim identity and citizenship of Pakistan together with the concomitant anti Hindu and anti India characteristics. Pradhan Shastrti’s actions are comparable but show their allegiance to another set of beliefs and another country. This explicates the insistent pressures that the elements on both sides bring to bear on the Sufi saheb and his followers. The impossibility of neutrality is again emphasized when the narrator's response is disclosed: “'Are we more Hindus than Muslims, Bapu-ji? We must choose, no?'” (144) and further “In the current mood in our country, it was clearly better to call yourself a Hindu; and I guessed my uncle would have little scope for ambiguity in his country of adoption” (144). Later there is mention of “War-filled insecurity and rhetoric that was currently in the wind” (145). This reference to the insecurity of violence, of the war going on is made use of by fundamentalist forces to compel people to take sides and to avoid neutrality and respect for all. Further, these forces coerce people to exclude others, to take on a unidimensional identity, so that all of this can be made use of to perpetuate violence and humiliation on the others, the outsiders.

The extent of the brotherhood and unified relationship between the two faiths of Hinduism and Islam can be discerned from the information the author provides about the Balak Shah Mosque. Balak Shah, the child Imam is the grandson of Pir Bawa, the narrator's ancestor, who is a Sufi. Balak Shah's descendents consider themselves Muslims. However this unique bond that has been upheld since ages cannot withstand the ravages of the present time. So strong
is the fundamentalist sentiment that the episode which the narrator describes of his little brother's illness and their father's seeking for help from the Balak Shah Mosque elicits the remark from the narrator, “by seeking help elsewhere, especially at a mosque, he had revealed a crack in his image. It would come to be used against him” (149). This usage of the device of foreshadowing serves to reveal the fictional truth reserved for another part in the story and reinforces the extent of the antithesis between the two sides.

The strength of the fundamentalists is seen elsewhere too. When the war with Pakistan ends in cease-fire and the average person heaved a sigh of relief: “Only Pradhan Shastri could be heard regretting the outcome, ranting outside the village store-'we could have crushed them like cockroaches! If our leaders had not been the eunuchs they are, Lahore would be dust! We have been bullied by the world’ ” (149, 150). Peace is not the natural objective of such militant systems but rather destruction of the perceived enemy, the other, who is somehow different from them, is the better alternative for this manner of thinking. Girja Kumar observes: “It is however never a walkover for the fundamentalist forces. They feel insecure all the time at the bottom of their heart. Rationality is not met with rationality and logic is not matched with logic” (17). Pradhan Shastri’s illogical attitude, his preference for the continuation of warfare rather than the establishment of harmony reveals the apprehension that fundamentalists carry in their mind about the perceived threat to their cause from independent or secular influences.

2.2.6 The Difficulties and Demands on the Saheb’s Family

The pressures and persuasions of a fundamentalist stance seen in the previous section are strong and the narrator's maternal family is not immune to such revivalist ideologies. As he informs readers “I had been to Jamnagar only once with my mother, years before when I had met my grandparents, the visit was not a happy one for me, for…My status as the son of Pirbaag also put me in an awkward situation, for my mother’s family had come under the influence of some purist priests of an orthodox temple. The family never visited us, and my father
never spoke of them” (150). This mention of the rigid conformist stance of the narrator’s maternal grandparents further clarifies the disparity in the relationship within the family caused by the forces of fundamentalism. Once again the narrator leaps across years to the time after his father’s death. He tells readers about his uncle’s views. His uncle writes in a letter: “The destruction of Pirbaag was a punishment from the Almighty, because idolatry is sin. I should change my name appropriately—he suggests the name Kassim—accept the right faith, and make the move that my Dada should have made fifty years before” (165, 166). This narration divulges the uncle’s rigid, almost fanatic belief in his standpoint as he does not feel any sorrow or regret for his brother’s death, rather his regret is for the dead brother’s past action of refusal to accept Islam and migrate to Pakistan. The uncle’s deviated convictions afford him the certainty of the definition of the right religion, which according to him is Islam. For the uncle, then there is no room for the writer’s ambivalence which originates in the history of the hitherto followed conventions of respect for all religions or secularism. However, after the death of his father, and other abhorrent experiences, the story teller who considered himself to be an ordinary secular Indian studying in America posits the question “Truth as it was then, in some respects unfair and naive—what is an ordinary, secular Indian, after all? Is such an entity possible? Haven’t recent events in my home state disproved even the ideal of such a notion?” (260). In his introspective mood, the writer appropriately questions the possibility of realizing the ideals of secularism in the context of present-day India. Significantly, the chapter ends with the question unanswered.

In the next chapter (chapter 30), in one more leap across time, the author takes the novel thirty years forward: He begins “March 15, 2002. Kali Yuga. The Destruction. Pirbaag, Gujarat” (261). He continues with the reconstruction of the scene that awaits him: “I was back in the old grounds, the prodigal returned…and I stood in the midst of a destruction so absolute…result of the recent communal riot or program or mass revenge, call it what you will—a catastrophe so complete, I could only gasp, and then gasp and staggered towards the edge of the old pavilion and sat down” (261). Amartya Sen states, “those who foment global confrontations on local sectarian violence try to impose a pre-chosen single and
divisive identity on people” (57, 2006). The narrator’s father and the shrine of Pirbaag have fallen prey to the imposition of this pre-chosen single identity in the fictional realm of Vassanji’s creation. The author gives more descriptions of the destruction and violence: “An angry storm had passed here: shreds of cotton chaddar, dry petals in the dust, the lattice barrier broken and fallen, the grave naked and soiled, bereft of its crown” (261, 262). The contrivance of passing over a considerable amount of time and the repeated sketches of the devastation he sees is perhaps the chronicler’s way of answering the query left unreplied previously. His thoughts on seeing all this reveal much more, “Or is this symbol of a cynical political system that seasonally lubricates itself with the blood of victims?” (262). The consequences of the unabashed violence and destructive actions can only lead to divisive tendencies as a result.

The rise of Hindu fundamentalism is seen also when: “Sadhus in orange robes waited outside the gates of the new temple, partly inside the area which had been our front yard. Across the road, the old shop had become a full garage; the man inside was sizing me up—was that Harish?” (265). The reality that there is no place for neutrality when fundamentalism is widespread is reinforced once again when the narrator reveals about his desire to meet his brother: “I hoped he was all right. From him I expected to find out what had happened here, why this ancient place that was a neutral haven got attacked, how our father died” (267). Here, the anxiety and concern of the raconteur for his brother and his sorrow at his father’s death is equal to that of his anguish at the knowledge that the neutral haven of Pirbaag was targeted by the fixations of communal violence. Later there is a reference to the mindset prior to the Godhra riots of 2002. A letter by the narrator's father is reproduced:

My son, I have this one wish of you: that you return to Pirbaag once and let your father set his eyes on you again. Will you come? Let me know. But right now is not a good time to come; we are going through bestial times yet again; demons are on the roam feeding on blood and the screams of the innocent. But here in Haripir and Pirbaag we will manage, as we have always done; our
people can be made to see reason. This madness will soon be over, and I will inform you when it is safe to return. (304)

These words written in a letter from father to son lay bare the extent of the militancy that has taken over the people. The confidence and assurance of the writer’s father, his faith in his neighbours and his own neutrality are seen to be misplaced by the readers; as by now they are acquainted with the fate of the writer of the letter and the shrine that he looks after. In the previous pages, the author’s revelations about the utter destruction of his shrine and his father’s death have already been conveyed to the readers. Being purview to his information, the readers know in advance what has befallen the letter writer and are therefore in a position to gauge the nature of the events that are taking place in India at the time of the novel i.e. ten years after the mosque at Ayodhya was destroyed. The events in the author’s home state, Gujarat are described in detail, the actual events as historians would note them are recounted and the words of the chief Minister of Gujarat are paraphrased: “to every action there is a reaction, thus apparently fuelling the carnage” (305). Here, the cyclic nature of violence that Rajmoham Gandhi speaks about is evident. The justification given by the political persons in charge helps readers distinguish the promises of reprisal and planning for more violence that are a regular practice.

Soon the narrator makes his inner feelings known: “Descriptions of the personal violence make the blood curdle, make one wonder what it means to be human after all, that the most ghastly violence imaginable, perpetrated on women and children, could occur in the state of Gandhi makes one wonder too how aberrant was the Mahatma; was he real, after all?” (308). This brooding over the past, the greatness of the Father of the Nation, Gandhiji, the quandary over the validity of his prominence, indeed about the truth of his authenticity, these remarks by the narrator reveal the agonized state of his mind due to the extreme actions of fanatics and therefore serves to let readers perceive the effect of the violence on the human mind. As an auxiliary to these worrying thoughts, the narrator continues: “The ‘riot’ is a euphemism for intercommunal murder; it allows the perpetrators to go free, for rioters need not be charged, murderers must. And so they are back again during the next conflict with their swords and their knives.
to feed once more on the blood of the innocents” (308). Here, the narrative voice is split—the narrator’s utterance is present but there are authorial comments too.

Vassanji reveals his interest in the way of life that is common to his family and that of the narrator of his tale: “I am, of course, extremely curious to know more about this duality of beliefs in the family; the syncretism, what it was like” (189, 2008). The neutrality although interesting is disallowed by the forces of revivalism and intolerance as Vassanji himself admits, “But this is the kind of information that gets obscured as people move on to the more rigid identities of modern times” (189, 2008). This musing is also an authorial comment on mob violence and human cruelty. It outlines the absence of morality during times of frenzy. The insanity that takes over needs pacification in the form of the devastation of the other. The psychosis at the time is such that the agent of this conflagration is not perceived as a criminal but rather a champion of his cause. So severe is the atmosphere of terror that the writer starts to have apprehensions about his own way of life: “Bapu-ji had always told me that our path was the middle one, between the two? Our path was spiritual; outward forms of prayers and rituals didn't matter…It always troubled me, this ideal of Pirbaag, it made us so different from the rest of the world, which required clean spiritual boundaries” (309, 310). The Sufi principle of mediating through extremes of ritualistic religions turn out to be neither acceptable nor fit for a society grounded in radical excess. Steve Bruce: in *Politics and Religion* (2007) shows the influence of religious conviction in segregating people along religious and communal lines: “One very simple way of recognizing the divisive and defining power of religion is to contrast it with that other common boundary-marker: language…Bi-linguism is commonplace, but very, very few families will raise their children to adhere simultaneously to two competing religions” (3). The basic code of Sufism—pantheism or the universal brotherhood of man is not upholdable in a situation where enemyhood is the norm and occupies the space of religion. In this state of affairs, one needs the form of the religious practices and the outer dimension of the religion. Outer spiritual rites are compulsory as these are the illustrations of one’s religious orientation.
The writer himself articulates this in his conversation with his dead father: “dear Bapu-ji, we will not be left alone until we choose; the choice will be made for us-as it was, recently, wasn't it Bapuji. A choice was made for us and we paid a price. You paid with your life?” (310). This is more evidence of the unacceptability of neutrality. If a person does not make the choice for himself, the choice, the decision is made by others and appropriate treatment is meted out to them as happens in the case of the narrator’s family. The father of the narrator whose ancestral legacy incapacitates him from making an unambiguous selection in this matter falls victim to the new forces of doubtless conviction. Finally he encounters a choiceless destruction, not eligible to be supported by any communal group. “Your Dada had no intention of throwing in his lot with anybody, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian.” (323). The readers learn this information and it is not very difficult to determine why there was no one to protect them. His father verbalizes this thus: “There’s nothing to choose, Karsan, we have been shown our path, in which there is neither Hindu nor Muslim, nor Christian nor Sikh, just the One. Brahman, the Absolute, Ishvar, Allah, God” (310). But such respect for all gods is unacceptable as the god one wishes to bow to has to be chosen categorically by the rejection of other gods. Vassanji too shares the disquiet of the Saheb, he articulates his feelings, “I always cringe at the term 'Hindu' and Muslim', they are so final, so unequivocal” (72, 2008). The prevalent tendency is to essentialize and therefore to exclude. Identity intervenes not in human existence but also the categorization of divinity as Ishvar, Allah, god among which the human identity thrives by choosing any one deity.

Gandhiji too believes in the neutrality of Indian ideology “I have said I would give my life to keep this motherland together. But if we do give up a part of it, I can assure you that what will remain will be God's country-but not the God of only the Hindu or only the Muslim or the Sikh or the Issai. For as you well know in your life and practices at Pirbaag, there is only the God. Bhagwan and Allah are the same; Rama and Rehman are the same” (325). Gandhiji’s words and thoughts thus articulated to the father leave a crucial impression. The impact of Gandhian idealism on the father’s mind makes the world seem like a utopian sphere of harmony. The readers however know the improbablity of this
philosophy for which Gandhiji, the Father of the Nation too had to pay with his life. This position can be explained in the words of Girja Kumar: “The basic assumption of religious fundamentalism has been the denial of diversity among different faiths or possibility of convergence between them in the spirit of true pluralism” (18, 1997). In the scenario that prevails, there can be no brotherhood or union on the grounds of nationality or cultural cohesiveness. Perhaps this impels the Saheb’s brother to take sides, Rajpal becomes Iqbal. His younger son Mansoor too becomes Omar. Only the elder son and he himself resolutely refuse to take sides, preferring the neutrality of Sufism but that option too ceases to exist in the difficult time of the rise of fundamentalism. The next section relates to the rise of fundamentalism in another religion.

2.3 Fundamentalism and Religion in Rohinton Mistry’s Family Matters

This part examines Zoroastrianism and its association with fundamentalism as depicted in Rohinton Mistry’s Family Matters (2002). This novel relates the tale of a Parsi family and their trials and tribulations. Family Matters is not only a captivating story of a family’s affairs but also an account of the gradual alteration of the mind. There is an undercurrent of violence in this novel and there are constant reminders of it. True to the overall style of the novel which is indirect; the violence of the times is depicted in an oblique manner and Mistry’s disapproval of the same comes through especially in the character of Hussein and what happened to him after his family was burnt in the riots that broke out after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Hussain still feels sick on certain days when the memory of that brutality comes back to him and needs to be cheered up by the kind Mr. Kapur and Yezad. There are numerous and constant reminders of the violence that is prevalent everywhere. In the first chapter itself when we are introduced to Nariman and his step-children, Nariman refers to the “Babri Mosque riots” (4). He further goes on to ask Coomy if she remembers “The goondas who assumed Muslims were hiding in Dalal Estate and set fire to it?” (4). Coomy refers to “a mosque in Ayodhya” turning “people into savages in Bombay?” She further asks, “Are you certain the world has not become a
dangerous place?” (5). Such references to acts of violence especially in India and the city of Mumbai abound in the novel and many characters, major and minor refer to them in such a way that the readers cannot forget this undercurrent and this serves to highlight the fact that the world that is increasingly becoming violent and there is increasing uncertainty about personal safety. In such a city as Jal says “lawlessness is the one certainty in the streets of Bombay” (3). Disorder creates anxiety and obliges people to seek solace; often this leads people towards religion. B.P.R. Vithal in “Roots of Hindu Fundamentalism” (1998) makes a point: “Fundamentalism arises out of insecurity and not assurance. There is an outburst of fundamentalism in all religions today because we have entered an age of a new insecurity” (337). Yezad’s actions in the novel and the change he undergoes in the course of the narrative can be explained by Vithal’s remarks. The disorder and consequent uncertainty of the time and place drives him in the direction of solace in an extreme kind of faith. This also throws light on the way in which the action of the novel unfolds.

2.3.1 Structure of the Novel: the Epilogue

The structure of the novel is unique in that it is divided into two sections set in two different time frames. The actual novel runs into 460 pages. These are divided into chapters and sub-sections of chapters set at the time when Nariman is still able to move around independently but has a fall and becomes invalid and dependant soon enough. Of course, there are flashbacks to the past so that the readers become aware of his past life too. After this comes the epilogue (461-500). This is set at a time five years later i.e. after the death of Nariman. The two boys, his grandsons have now grown up into young men. Also, while the reporter of the actual novel is the omniscient narrator, the epilogue is narrated in the voice of Jehangir, Nariman’s younger grandson and in many ways the articulator of the author’s viewpoint. Besides, it is in the epilogue that the readers learn many of Mistry’s views about society, care of the infirm and aged and especially about religious bigotry and fundamentalism that has become prevalent in the present times. The epilogue, although part of the novel stands apart from it in many ways and is a kind of indirect commentary by Mistry, himself a Parsi, on the novel. It is
also noteworthy that Mistry has been concerned with matters of religious prejudice in his earlier novels also. In *Such A Long Journey*, he depicts a violent incident that takes place due to religion. The earlier concern is developed in this novel and this section analyses this aspect of the account. Since the rise of fundamentalism is depicted mainly in the epilogue, this project has therefore taken up this part of the novel for study.

2.3.2 Background and Setting

The family moves into a new house towards the end of the novel. Here, Mistry describes the fundamentalist practices of one character, Yezad. The unfolding saga of the quest for solace in religion and revival by a human is in evidence in this part i.e. the epilogue. Yezad’s mind with its emotional bondages to his family during difficult times moves towards liberation which he finds in a period that is financially better for his family. There is a sense of thankfulness, perhaps, for the improvement in the family’s condition but the overall environment of uncertainty leads him to religion. Mistry outlines the course of Yezad’s development into the depths of his belief. It follows from the stage of a firm believer proud of his lineage, into the dimness of religious intolerance and soon descends to the darkness of bigotry. Girja Kumar in his discussion of fundamentalism states: “There is an excessive emphasis on the purity of doctrine minus scepticism, which is the very foundation of secular rationality” (19). Yezad’s extreme and illogical dependence on religion and his stress on following the doctrines of his faith strictly serves to enlighten readers about the absence of secularity and reasonableness in his attitude of religious bigotry.

By making Jehangir the narrator of the epilogue, Mistry achieves multiple purposes. While the entire novel is in the omniscient narrator’s tone, granting just one section to another relator makes the content of the final section immediate and impartial. Since Jehangir, the youngest son of the family is also a vital character in the novel, the use of this device brings the action of the epilogue in close proximity to the reader. Besides this, Jehangir is a fourteen year old school going adolescent at the time. Being a part the family, he is inside the discipline of the
religion that his family upholds but not being an adult and being, moreover, the youngest member he is also outside the experience. This assigns him an independent status. He is able to appreciate the religious tradition from within its own framework and he is also in the position of an uninvolved spectator due to his age and rank in the family hierarchy. In this way, Mistry also ensures that his own voice is heard through the words of Jehangir, for Mistry too is a Parsi, an insider to the beliefs and practices of the faith and the outlook that translates these beliefs and practices into everyday experiences. Both are privy to the world view that encompasses the totality of the experience that stresses the cultural aspect of religion. On the other hand, the two articulators are dissimilar in that Mistry’s reportage is not representative of an uncritical insider’s voice whereas Jehangir is too young to harbour misgivings about the exclusivity and rigid boundaries that the ethnic religious follower feels compelled to impose upon himself/herself. He simply states the facts that he sees around him. In this way, the author, Rohinton Mistry also makes his own views in the matter known that religious revival and fundamentalism leads to unhappiness and discord.

2.3.3 Going Backward and Forward

At the outset, Jehangir mentions a fight, albeit a small one within the family, the quarrel is between father and son over a haircut. The mention of this family quarrel sets the tone for the rest of the events in the life of the protagonist family, which are filled with intolerance and prejudice due to the fundamentalist stance adopted by the father, the head of the family. The minor quarrel involving two constituents of the family signifies the cracks in the relationship of the filial unit caused by the radically changing stance of the individuals involved. Yezad is going backwards towards closed structures and set ideas in society, Murad on the other hand is open-minded and modern in his outlook. The point made about fundamentalist attitudes is relevant here, “the fundamentalist "wall of virtue", which protects their identity, is erected against not only alien religions, but also against the modernized, compromised, nominal version of their own religion”. <http://www.isbsacramento.org/faith_summary_fun.html>. Yezad’s outlook is set
against his own flesh and blood, his family and especially his own elder son, Murad and the modern approach to their faith.

Soon enough, there is a reference to the father’s attitude. The family difference rapidly escalates and turns into a heightened conflict. It becomes representative of two differing viewpoints. Yezad erects an invisible ‘wall of virtue’ which no one may transgress. Readers learn that the source of friction now is the fact that the son, Murad goes too near a sacred area that the father uses for his prayers. Everybody has to keep at least fifteen feet away from this sacred space, fifteen feet being the minimum distance, Jehangir explains: “Here, set up on a cabinet, are framed pictures of Zarathusta and the Udvada fire-temple, along with a silver model of the Asho Farhovar, photographs of the ancient remnants of the Persian Empire, the ruins at Persepolis, palaces, fire altars, and royal tombs of the Achaemenian and Sassanian dynasties” (461). All members of the family are required to stay away from the sacred area unless they are clean and pure. This points to the rise of religious fundamentalism in the Parsi community too. The character, Yezad is normal throughout the novel but in the epilogue he changes, starts believing in a strict form of religion according to which an impure person is not allowed to go near a sacred place. Girja Kumar adds to his earlier statement about fundamentalism: “Along with this comes the rejection of modernity, but not in its entirety, for obvious tactical reasons” (19). Yezad, adopting a rigid traditional interpretation of his faith considers all substances leaving the body ritually impure and polluting. Thus Murad is regarded to be unclean by virtue of his just having had a haircut: “After a haircut, you are unclean till you shower and wash your head” (462). His chauvinist father declares, therefore Murad has to stay away from the holy space. However, even before this dispute is resolved, another crops up. This serves to show the extent of the intensity and the need to conform to the perceived form of religiousness. Mistry further shows Yezad; objecting to his son’s use of the word Zoroaster to refer to the founder of their religion. In his own words: “Don't use Zoroaster, that's a Greek perversion of our prophets' name, say Zarathustra” (463). For in such extreme forms of belief in a system even the names have to be pure, not modern versions but the original pure forms, as mentioned in the scriptures.
2.3.4 Yezad’s Obsession and the Intensity of his Actions

Yezad’s obsession with religion is reinforced again when Jehangir adds for good measure “For the last few years, ever since we left Pleasant Villa, Daddy had been reading nothing but religious books, as though making up for lost time. In addition to the holy cabinet, my parents’ bedroom has been filled up with volumes about Parsi history and Zoroastrianism, various translations of the Zend-Avesta, interpretations of the Gathas, commentaries, books by Zaehner, Spiegel, Darukhanawala, Dabu, Boyce, Dhalla, Hinnells, Karaka and many more” (463). This reflects Yezad’s all consuming obsession with religion and the past. He needs this now to feed his spirit, his higher self, his true character. For him, these are tokens of religious scripture and are basic needs. His wife, Roxana’s suggestion that he could use the services of libraries does not find favour with Yezad. Jehangir tells readers: “She gave in because he kept complaining his spirit was being denied basic bread and water” (463). Yezad’s equating physical needs with his psychological dependence on reading the scriptures reflects the level of his motivation. It shows his dependence on religion and also that religion now is the fundamental authority in his life.

The power of religion over Yezad is so absolute that he does not even work, his whole day is spent in the service of his religious conviction. This all consuming passion is welcomed by his wife: “she doesn't mind that Daddy isn't working” (464). Also: “By and large, his fervent embrace of religion makes her happy, she agrees with him that the entire chain of events, starting with Grandpa’s accident and ending with Mr. Kapur’s murder, was God’s way of bringing him to prayer” (464). So complete is the belief in the faith, that the choices made are also ascribed to god. Girja Kumar makes another observation, “Since mere affirmation of faith in the inviolability of the doctrine is not considered enough, resort is taken in affirming 'revelation' as the last word” (19, 1997). This assertion is evident in the novel in Yezad’s belief and by extension that of his wife, Roxana’s that his disproportionate interest in the scriptural system is a heavenly act. The excessive ritualism is considered as destined, enjoined by a divine scheme. The strictness of
the norms of purity are intense too and this is revealed to the readers when they
are told about Yezad: “He bewailed the fact that in his anger he had grabbed that
saitan’s arm, the contact had made him unclean in the bargain. Now he too would
need a full shower” (465). The unclean state of one individual passes on instantly
to another simply by contact, this shows the ridiculous extent of religious
fanaticism, bordering on the ludicrous that Yezad believes in. Within his frenzied
state, the obsession with the concept of ritualistic purity causes sightlessness in
Yezad and failure to perceive reality as normal people would do.

The fervour of Yezad’s religious beliefs is matched by the intensity of his
actions when he is performing his religious rituals: “His expression is always very
intense when he prays” (465). The wooden chair in which he sits for his prayers is
forbidden for use by others. “He sits as though he is carrying a secret burden,
whose weight is crushing him” (465). Jehangir tells the readers. Then again: “He
frowns a lot, his face contorting in pain. He doesn’t just close his eyes, he clenches
the eyelids shut, the cheeks rising, the brows pressing downward to squeeze out
whatever it is that haunts him. His Avesta recitations-are like a rebuttal, a protest-
He is locked in a struggle” (465). These intricate physical descriptions by the
author have a definite function. The distorted corporal postures and expressions
are portrayed to bring up the psychological perversions suggestively through
Jehangir’s words. The religiosity is serious business and this shows in Yezad's
behaviour, going backwards is not easy and is akin to a struggle as the narrator’s
words testify. Girja Kumar continues: “Nothing exists beyond revelation than the
spectre of blasphemy, and in the end, perpetual hell fire for physical bodies and
spiritual souls” (19, 1997). Once the celestial message is revealed, it becomes the
compulsory duty of the chosen one to follow the path strictly or face the
consequences of divine wrath. Yezad believes that his actions are necessary to
save him and his community from torture. His actions take on a new and deep
meaning and his passion for the rituals he follows assumes a greater significance.
This is evident in the narrator’s further disclosures.
2.3.5 The Effect of Fundamentalism on Personal Matters

For Yezad continuous prayer is a way of life now. Relaxation or entertainment of any kind is taboo. The gravity of religious conviction is reflected in Yezad's seriousness. He has transformed into a more stern and sombre person as shown up by the narrator’s subsequent words: “Seeing my father like this, I think of him as he used to be, so jovial. Nowadays he hardly smiles, let alone laughs. And he never whistles, never joins in with songs on the radio…And the radio is seldom played – only while Daddy is out of the house. When he is home, he's either praying or reading, and says the music disturbs him” (465). Yezad’s cheerful temperament has vanished with his innate ability to enjoy the ordinary pleasures of life. This is replaced by his grim disposition filled with irritation and agitation due to his obsession with religion which requires absolute compliance on all counts. Jehangir continues: “The house work, the servant’s comings and goings all revolve around Daddy’s prayer schedule” (465). Yezad’s faith and belief in the chosen system is steadfast and unwavering all the way through and his wife, Roxana’s was too upto this point. However, after the consequences this has on the family’s life, the determined persistence creates some reservations for Roxana also. Martin E. Marty elaborates in “Explaining the Rise of Fundamentalism” (1993):

There really are monsters out there in fundamentalist groups, as in so many other religious and political movements. But there are also fearful, law-abiding, well-intending citizens in many societies whose own cries of pain and shouts of resentment deserve a hearing. Often their religion provides them with their only way of dealing with erosive forces-intrusive mass media, education that subverts their families, forbidden sexual activities that lure their young, political patterns that make no room for them—that would overwhelm the poor and the displaced. (8)

In Family Matters, both these kinds of individuals are found in the same family. Yezad represents the former while his simple wife, Roxana with her well meaning actions, left clueless about her husband’s behaviour corresponds to the individuals who are dealing with the changes around them. Surely, Roxana too is unhappy with the developments around her but her worries for her family remain subsumed
under Yezad’s larger plans. She has her moments of doubt, when she sees Yezad’s extreme behaviour. She articulates “Why must prayer and religion lead to so many fights between father and son? Is that His will?” (466). This shows that although Roxana is also a firm believer in God’s command, Yezad’s unreasonable and severe conduct creates misgivings in her and she begins to question the authority of god and religion. This suggests that stringent and excessive conformity to religious norms produces a contrary impact on those affected by the behaviour. However, in all this, she ultimately has to take recourse in the same religion. Amidst her concern for her husband is Roxana’s conviction about their religion: “But she'll never be able to bring herself to say he should pray less. That, to her, would be blasphemous” (466). She is a believer of the sacrosanct scriptures and the revered figures of the same religion, she too has respect for her faith but the difference is that she is not a fanatic, her attitude is not aggressive and militant. This serves to explain that religion is not essentially belligerent or confrontational.

2.3.6 The Effect of Fundamentalism on Social Matters

Yezad attends the the weekly meetings of ‘The League of Orthodox Parsees and the Association for Zarathustrian Education’. At these congregations, petitions are circulated and injunctions filed. Additionally, decisions are taken about films or publications that have offended the community and whether campaigns against them are to be waged (466). It is significant to note that Yezad takes up all this activity voluntarily in the cause of his unqualified conviction in the preservation of the respect of his belief system. Clemens Six expounds: “This fundamentalist perspective is by no means oriented only to the afterlife, rather its primary battle arena is this world itself in which the eschatological reign of God has to be established” (191, 2010). Apart from the concerns for eternal life in the next world, Yezad as a member of ‘The League of Orthodox Parsees’ and the ‘Association for Zarathustrian Education’ is also concerned about the immediate world and the betterment of the status of his creed. However, as part of this he himself is not a very happy person, this becomes evident when in answer to Roxana’s enquiry about his happiness, he replies that he is: “As happy as a soldier of Dada Ormuzd can be fighting against Ahirman” (466). The newfound mantle of
religion that he has enlisted into for his fulfilment does not give Yezad any pleasure or contentment but rather leads him to a combative position in the struggle against the adversary. The ‘League of Orthodox Parsees’, as part of its activities, also holds discussions of cases in which members of the community have been excommunicated for crimes like bigamy and the like. This League, as the name suggests is an orthodox organization, they are against reform and progressive ideas. As Yezad explains to his family, “Our committee members have agreed unanimously to challenge the Reformist propaganda – we will campaign to reintroduce a strict policy of excommunication. Parsee men and women who have relations with non-Parsees, in or out of marriage, will suffer the consequences” (467). The punishments are rigorous and humiliating.

Yezad cites one case to support himself. In one particular instance, a bigamist’s father was asked to disown his son or face the prospect of being excommunicated himself. Later, due to the aggravating situation, the bigamist solicits an opportunity to apologize formally: “An Anjuman was called, where he had to confess his crime and humiliate himself by taking a pair of shoes, one in each hand, and striking his head five times with them. Right before the assembly” (467). Only such degradation and disgrace of oneself can bring about amnesty for the wrongdoer in the charged atmosphere. Ex-communication and humiliation for non-conformity is common to many religions. N. K. Ganguly elaborating on the dynamics of ideology states: “The Fundamentalists’ demand is for the surrender of individual conscience to the collective will” (40, 1997). The example above illustrates this forced surrender in the account, which seems to be a preferred strategy for ensuring submission and bringing about uniformity. It is significant to note here that the illustration cited happens in the year 1818. This shows how far back in time the orthodox community would like to go. Strategies like denouncing and debarring persons from a given ideology are also means to defend the philosophy against contamination by developmental factors. This is borne out when Yezad asserts: “Purity and pollution is not a laughing matter” (467). This statement is only a prologue, other serious actions are planned which are the natural consequence of strict adherence to religious norms as perceived by them. Again the change in Yezad is stressed. This strategy brings out the utilization of
fundamentalist views by him, for the narrator Jehangir informs the readers that earlier his father too used to revel in laughing at people who displayed extremist behaviour. In addition to this: “And I also remember conversations Daddy and grandpa would have, about the silliness of slavishly following conventions and traditions” (468). Now, the same person, Yezad, in an effort to pursue the goal of preserving the purity of the religion he is born into is doing what he found inane previously. With his changed convictions, he is mindlessly following the unchanged conventions that he found amusing in a different time.

Later, when Yezad catches Murad kissing a girl in the staircase, his main concern is not the son’s or the girl’s reputation but that the girl belongs to another doctrine: “She is a non-Parsi” (481), Yezad pronounces, for him the end of the world is in sight. It is worth noting here that in spite of his anger and disgust at his son, Yezad does not reprimand Murad immediately as he would normally do. The reason for this is: “I would not give a parjaat girl the satisfaction of seeing me argue with my son...But just wait till he's home” (481). Parjaat means belonging to another community. This is one more typical manifestation of creed based rejection of people not belonging to the same religious ideology. So intense is Yezad’s repulsion and antipathy for people outside his religion that being a non-Parsi, this girl does not deserve even his contempt or to be privy to his feelings for her and his son’s conduct. Anjali, the girl belonging to another community is unacceptable to Yezad as she is a Maharashtrian: “I'm warning you, in this there can be no compromise. The rules, the laws of our religion are absolute, This Maharashtrian cannot be you girlfriend” (482). This amounts to glorification of self, one’s own grouping which also involves alienation of the ‘other,’ the one who is not part of the hallowed circle, a process of othering, of separation and hostility for those who are not born into the system. This information also brings out the fact that the gap in views is not the usual disagreement due to generational differences.

Yezad’s rigidity is not brought about by occurrence of growing old nor can Murad’s conduct be described as the rebelliousness of youth versus maturity. The differences are a mark of different interpretations of their system of belief.
Also, in between the two outlying positions is a more moderate one, that of Roxana. She is a believer in the valuableness of tradition but her views are too moderate to equal her husband’s zeal as mentioned earlier. Even as hers is a more rational, less ritualistic view of the religious tradition, at the same time, her temperate perspective does not reject Yezad’s severe conviction. Thus she does not discourage her husband from his intense prayer programme although she does not subscribe to it in totality but she also does not disapprove of Murad’s actions wholly. This puts her in a problematical position between the two men, their unresolved antagonism requires her to choose sides, so that whatever she selects she is sure to let down one of them, there is no middle ground. “Faith cannot be questioned. It always stays beyond the reach of reason and inquiry” (40, 1997), asserts N.K. Ganguly. Thus, according to a fundamentalist stance laws are rigid and have to be obeyed, there is no flexibility in such serious matters as marriage and Yezad’s words reveal this further: “You can have any friends you like, any race or religion, but for serious matters a serious relationship, for marriage, the rules are different” (482). For revivalists like Yezad, such a stance is not simply a matter of prejudice but rather it is related to notions of purity, the pure form of the followers of the religion. In matters of religion, purity is to be maintained at all costs.

He explains this to his son, Murad: “Because we are a pure Persian race, a unique contribution to this planet, and mixed marriages will destroy that” (482). A marriage with an outsider will contaminate the cleanliness of the chosen few: “Inferior or superior is not the question. Purity is a virtue worth preserving” (482). Yezad’s words may suggest that he does not consider his religion superior, but purity and its preservation necessarily implies some sort of difference, a flawlessness that needs to be safeguarded against the corrupting influences of modernity. Martin Marty in his conclusion to Religious Fundamentalism in Developing Countries (2001) observes about religious fundamentalists: “Under whatever terms and whatever features, they are all somehow reactive against modernity and modernization—even as they ingeniously and often reflexively put to work many of at least the external features associated with modernity” (202). The author too suggests this in his storyline as Murad compares his father’s ideas
to those of Hitler and his attitude towards the Jews. Besides, Yezad believes that a Parsi girl would not behave in such a manner, while the narrator knows otherwise (483). Here, Yezad’s behaviour is like that of a religious bigot, he acts like a fanatic, what he calls spiritual evolution is actually more like fantacism and can be seen from the fact that he claims that if the girl, Anjali stays for dinner on his son’s, birthday, he will vomit on the dining table itself. His obsession with purity is excessive and intense and in today’s world it reveals the role that religion can play in peoples’ lives.

Although the Parsi religion is based on the purity of their practice, it is a religion that is tolerant and in fact respectful of all religions. Mistry makes sure he informs readers about this fact for there is an episode, after Nariman’s death, when Jal finds a stack of holy pictures of all religions in a cupboard. He tells the rest of his family that as far as he remembers these were put up in their house “You know how, in those days, it was usual for most Parsis to keep tokens of every religion” (485). This amply demonstrates the true nature of the original Parsi religion that had a healthy reverence for other ways of life, of attaining the true self as opposed to Yezad’s form of religion which borders on the structure of vehement fervour. This is evident from Yezad’s decision at the discovery of the pictures. Having turned into a kind of extremist, Yezad decides that of the pictures found, only the ones having Zoroastrian images can be preserved, all the others have to be discarded since in a Zoroastrian home, they interfere with the vibrations of the Avestha prayers. Obviously, it is his orthodox friends and advisors, who have told him about this, as far as he is considered, he admits the Zoroastrian tradition of respect for all religions: “He said that they should be disposed off properly, in keeping with the Zoroastrian tradition of respect for all religions, which he explained to me, went way back to Cyrus, the Great, the founder of Achaemenian dynasty, who set the example when he conquered Babylon, liberated the Jews who were in their captivity, and even helped them rebuild their Temple, earning him the title of God’s Anointed in the Hebrew Bible” (491). But such tolerance and respect for all which is the hallmark of his religion is unacceptable to the extremist viewpoint to which Yezad has now begun to subscribe. For him now, these pictures are the source of discord within his
family and according to him, once they are gone, the cause of the inefficiousness of his prayers will withdraw too and the flawed relationship between the family members will be set right as well. Accordingly the pictures are immersed in the sea with due respect, upholding the long-established rituals.

2.3.7 The Strict Confines of Womanhood within the Fundamentalist Religious Code

However, this is not all, Yezad wants more rules to be followed. Anissa Helie in “Women and Muslim Fundamentalism” (1993) states, “the crucial position of women with regard to the symbolic identity of any society or community may explain why all fundamentalisms target women in the name of identity and moral order” (2455). Yezad decrees unclean states for women, these pertain to their monthly cycle or menstruation. Not only is the lady of the house, his wife to follow these commands but the servant woman, Sunita too is not exempt, although she is only a part time maid. Referring to the study of Choksey about the Parsi community, K. H. Gould points out in “Outside the Discipline, Inside the experience: Women in Zoroastrianism” (1997), “the decline in observance of beliefs and practices relating to purity and pollution. Undoubtedly, the elaborate, scripturally prescribed rituals connected with women’s status-mesutration and parturition-are not adhered to as strictly today, and the practice of complete seclusion of women during these periods is definitely on the decline” (180). However, Yezad in his new found passion for the preservation of purity and eradication of polluting elements in his house expects the injunctions to be followed: “The decree states that mummy must not enter the drawing room at all when she has her period. She will sleep in the spare bedroom on those days, and avoid the kitchen. The cook will take her meals to her…The servant, Sunita…will not enter the house during her time of the month” (493). These customs which were practised in Roxana’s maternal household have never been a part of her marital life with Yezad. But now, he wants his family to observe these ancient traditions strictly. Informs K. H. Gould: “The notion that menstrual blood is dangerous is widespread among many cultures and religions” (152, 1997). This shows that this is a common practice in most religions of the world where women
receive a typical excuse for their apologetic existence and condemnation for being impure and a source of pollution. Helie adds: “To conform to the strict confines of womanhood within the fundamentalist religious code is a precondition for maintaining and reproducing the fundamentalist version of society” (2455, 1993). The forces of gender, patriarchy and fundamentalism conjoin to prescribe stringent restrictions on women, especially in a society with deep-seated traditional thinking.

Jehangir, the narrator informs the readers about Yezad’s further threats, his uncompromising attitude. Due to Yezad’s attitude, there is, “ceaseless quarrelling and bitterness” (494) in the family. He is impervious to the unhappiness and distress of his family, all he cares for is the service to the religion. Clemens Six observes about the objectives of fundamentalism: “The long-term goal is the return to the ‘golden age’ which will not simply be re-established, but will be realized anew in the principles of its inner functioning with modern technological and scientific means” (212, 2010). Yezad’s service to his religion is paramount, for him, the establishment of an era of lost greatness is his sole purpose in life and his family misses his real self. The real Yezad has been lost to the world, this prompts Jehangir to say: “I think of Daddy, who makes me feel that my real father is gone replaced by this non-stop-praying stranger” (500). Such interpolations by the narrator show also how the religious revivalist tendencies change people, children too suffer due to the stance of the parents as the narrator surely does in several places in the epilogue. Yezad may not introspect about this, but thinking readers see visibly the disparity between expectation and reality. Intellect discerns a sense of failure in Yezad’s existence especially his treatment of his family, his compulsions will not allow him to adopt a more reasonable attitude towards his family members causing distress to both.

In this new avatar, Yezad does the right things as prescribed by the orthodox system of belief he has started to follow. All his actions are consistent with a strict interpretation of the scriptures in keeping with the version of the League of Orthodox Parsis, yet he comes across as a very unsympathetic character. At this point in the novel, he ceases to enjoy the sympathy of readers.
the earlier part of the novel, when he led a more normal life, Yezad does some things that may be considered unethical or wrong for instance, he deceives and plays matka to earn money. But, despite this readers’ understanding of his actions persist because his conduct is motivated by concern for his family since it is a time of financial difficulty for the entire family unit. However, when he does not gamble, is not dishonest and follows the religious laws strictly, the compassion of the readers comes to a close. This time Yezad’s motive is not so naive, his actions now imply religious bigotry. Due to his belief in the purity and superiority of his religion and those born to it, his behaviour displays intolerance and prejudice towards those outside the sphere of his creed. This leads to a revision in the response of readers for this character. This can also be construed as Mistry’s way of showing his disapproval of such severe practices. The next section undertakes to analyse the effects of fundamentalism in one more work of fiction.

2.4 Fundamentalism and Religion in Nadeem Aslam’s Maps For Lost Lovers

Maps For Lost Lovers (2004) traces the lives of a diasporic Pakistani community in England. Again, Aslam, a Muslim himself writes about Islam and fundamentalist practices that have become endemic to some interpretations of the religion. However, it needs to be noted that he also depicts the positive facets of the religious conviction. The author portrays the contrast between Shamas and his wife, Kaukab; this represents the contrast between the two forms of Islam. Shamas refuses to condone the extreme practices espoused by some traditionalists. His interpretation of his religion is modernist and moderate; he belongs to the liberal humanitarian side of Islam. His wife Kaukab, on the other hand clings to an extremist form of Islam. She refuses to understand the free-thinking of her husband and children. This serves to show the author’s neutrality. Islam is also a religion of love. God is merciful and benevolent according to this interpretation of the religion and this too is alluded to in the novel. This constitutes Aslam’s impartial stance. So, while he depicts Islamic extremism, he does not leave out the reverse side.
In addition, the novel illustrates the way in which the patriarchal system combines with the forces of religious fundamentalism to oppress women and children by imposing absurd laws of purity on them. While the men are endowed with unrestricted power to live their lives unbridled by concern for their female family members, the women undergo unending restrictions and violence. The violence against the female gender and young children, especially girls is extensive and brutal. However, in the novel, it is organized religion in the form of an extremist perspective that is the cause of repressive tendencies. Religion in its entirety is not a negative entity. The liberal humanist views of characters like Shamas and his family are distinct from the dutiful fanaticism of his wife and others like the clerics. The effort in the first section is to understand the moderate side of Islam as represented by Aslam in the novel.

2.4.1 Fundamentalism and Moderation

There are several references in Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers (2004) to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Shamas, the judicious visage of Islam in the novel is quite conscious of the fundamentalist practices of his religion. Francis Fukuyama in The End of History and the Last Man (2006) observes: “Liberalism has attracted numerous and powerful Muslim adherents over the past century and a half” (46). Shamas is one such liberal and he is aware that as a moderate he has a certain responsibility towards the society that he is part of. This motivates him to speak up and address incorrect behaviour when he sees it. He thinks: “Has there been a time when I failed to condemn the pernicious excesses of the wicked, the unjust, the exploiters, robustly enough in the past? Was I unaware of their lethal nature because I myself had not been unduly affected by them yet, the way I am now that Chanda and Jugnu have been murdered” (211). This introduces the central act of the novel, the murder of Chanda and Jugnu, the couple who have been living together without the bond of marriage. This act is considered so irreligious, unIslamic and offensive that both pay with their life for their sin of being in a live-in relationship. Chanda's family too disapproves of her actions. Furthermore, Chanda is talked about in the community as an 'immoral', 'deviant' and 'despicable' girl, “who was nothing less
than a wanton whore in most people's eyes-as she was in Allah's-for setting up home with a man she wasn't married to” (15). Also her father has to step down as the head of the mosque due to gossip about his daughter. Earlier Jugnu too was popular and women were pleased to see their children spend time with him, “he whom they had all loved from the beginning, encouraging their children to seek his company because he was educated and they had wanted some of his intelligence to rub off on them; Jugnu who had lived in Russia and in the United states and had gone on butterfly collecting trips to Western China, India, Peru and Iran” (46, 47). The omniscient narrator himself makes this clear: “That was, of course, before he was seen with white women, long long before he began living openly in sin with that shopkeeper's daughter, Chanda” (47). Jugnu, with his western education and successful professional life is a model to be emulated but when he adopts the westernized morals and lifestyle the admiration turns to antagonism. Francis Fukuyama explains the reasons for the resurgence of fundamentalist thinking, he continues: “Part of the reason for the current, fundamentalist revival is the strength of the perceived threat from liberal, western values to traditional Islamic societies” (216, 2006). Jugnu’s freethinking and liberalized way of life seems to be a danger for the traditionalists who fear that their offspring too may adopt these practices. Additionally, Kaukab tells Mah-Jabin about the graffiti scrawled on Jugnu's house: “They lived the life of sin and died the death of sinners and They have been burning in the Fire now for over six months but remember that Eternity minus six months is still Eternity” (102). Now he is gossiped about and shunned even by Kaukab, his sister-in-law for his profane activities. Indeed, it is Kaukab's telephone call to Pakistan which forces the couple, Chanda and Jugnu to return to England earlier than expected, “they had been asked to leave” (59). This is probably the cause of their murder.

The narrator’s lengthy explanations about the reason for the couple’s decision to be in a live-in relationship serve to disclose the rigidity of the fundamentalist interpretations. Chanda's second husband, an immigrant disappears as soon as he gets legal status in England. Chanda remained married to him because there had been no divorce. “Jugnu had said he would marry Chanda but since she had not been divorced by her previous husband, Islam forbade another
marriage for several years—the number differing from sect to sect, four, five, six” (55). It is this state of affairs that forces the two lovers to go into a liaison without a proper marriage. The role of religion here appears to be not only of the dictator of Chanda’s marital life, but also the source of the couple’s predicament and compulsion to live together without the sanction of marriage. The couple actually intend to marry but the marriage cannot be sanctioned without Chanda’s divorce from her previous husband. Ironically the divorce too is not allowed since the other party is absent and the religion in such a case recommends a waiting period of an uncertain number of years. Girja Kumar remarks: “Fundamentalism rejects the basic principle of reason and rationality much less it is prepared to leave any scope for scepticism in concerns of religious rituals and policies” (21, 1997). Kumar’s remarks about the nature of fundamentalism are pertinent in the novel. Since religious norms do not allow Chanda and Jugnu to get married respectably despite their intentions and it is religion again that does not allow them to live together. This situation is akin to a trap for individuals like them. It is also a vicious circle of religion forcing them to commit the sin and then punishing them for the same. Despite their honest intentions, their personal integrity is not taken into consideration, stringent and irrational observance of the religious ideology takes precedence over everything.

One more piece of evidence that reveals the rivalry between fundamentalism and moderation is the treatment meted to more moderate forms of religion, notably, Sufism. Aslam tells the readers that Sufism is considered to be ‘the opposition party of Islam’ (191). Sufism is a more mild and humane form of religion, the tolerant approach it has towards other religions and the middle path it tries to occupy ensures that it is viewed as a contrasting aspect. Nayyar Javed elaborates in “Sifting Islam from Fundamentalism: Muslim Feminists Struggle” (2006), “Islamic mysticism, most popularly known as Sufism, promotes diversity of thoughts, rejects hierarchies and espouses egalitarian ethics. Sufism is built upon the principle of fundamental equality for all human beings and therefore assumes the inherent value of each individual, such supremacy of individual autonomy is the opposite of what fundamentalism espouses, Not surprisingly, Islamists ignore Sufism and other more liberal versions of Islam” (77). Those who
do not endorse a strict reading of Islamic scriptures are disregard as infidels and disbelievers. They are shunned for their irreverence and persecuted for their blasphemous views. Brian Forst attaches more credence to the opposition: “some sects within Islam strongly discourage the use of violence and focus instead on elements of the Quran that emphasize the loving and peaceful side of Allah. Perhaps the best known of these is the Sufi sect.” (115). Since Sufism has no use for the violence and hostility that fundamentalism endorses, it remains in the marginalized area.

2.4.2 The Impact of the West

In the diasporic space of a western country, secular laws govern the characters. However these are disregarded by many in the Pakistani community of the novel who do not consider the law of the land worthy of being followed. In fact, so strong is the regard for religious traditions that not just laws but family ties as well are nullified because of it. This reality is exposed when readers learn that Chanda’s own brothers murder her cruelly for her actions. The brothers are so obsessed with the religious norms for personal life that they they consider themselves as the judges of their sister’s life and discount even the legal verdict announced. Brian Forst’s observations about laws of religion and secular authorities are relatable to the situation of the novel: “In the West and in other places where the laws of the state conflict with Islamic law ("sharia"), Muslims sometimes organize so as to resolve the conflicts, operating in the spirit of Islamic community ("ummah")” (128, 2009). The truth of this observation needs no stressing in the situation present in Aslam’s fictional world. Chanda is killed by her brothers to uphold the tenets of their religion because they know that the secular powers of the court find nothing objectionable in her conduct.

Moreover, when Chanda’s brothers are convicted of her killing, Shamas knows, “Their religion and background assured them that, yes they were murderers but that they had murdered only sinners. The judge said that Chanda and Jugnu had done nothing illegal in deciding to live together but, Shamas knows, that the two brothers feel the fact that an act is legal does not mean it's
right” (278). This further exposes the opposition between religion and western secular law as the keepers of the community conscience take it upon themselves to protect the religion from defiant sinners. Brian Forst continues: “The killing is often justified by references to sacred text, typically involving literal interpretations of passages that are often invoked out of context, separated from the larger meaning of the surrounding text” (129, 2009). The brothers are blinded not simply by their fundamentalist attitude but are directed by the staunch norms of religion, which are considered unbreakable like the high walls of a penal complex. Shamas himself says next “I did warn: the prison out there has been expanding slowly, and now its walls have almost reached your own garden” (211). This is an allusion to the forces of fundamentalism that are slowly but surely growing and spreading wide, so that those like Shamas who are moderate in their views too have started to feel that they are in the captivity of extreme opinions and the circle of dogmatic rigidity is tightening around them. This type of personal response clarifies that the religion in its fundamentalist form proves suffocating for moderate individuals.

Further when Suraya introspects about her own ignorance and her education in a religious school during her formative years “I was corralled up in that wretched third-rate Islamic school for most of my learning years, committing to memory the names of all of the Prophet’s wives. I know how pedestrian my intellect and my understanding of life really are, how basic and limited my knowledge of life is” (225). Immediately she realizes her mistake and Nadeem Aslam writes: “And then she says suddenly, ’My Allah, Shamas, why didn’t you stop me just now when I was talking so disrespectfully of Islam?’ ” (226). Being aware of the inadequacies of the religious education of one's childhood and articulating it is considered to be blasphemy according to such fundamentalist like attitudes, even an educated woman like Suraya is not immune to this. Nayyar Javed has made a significant point about the issue of conflict between religion and cultural values: “This tension between religious versus cultural allegiance exists everywhere but gains an enormous salience in the lives of millions of Muslim women who have immigrated to the West” (77, 2006). Suraya with her exposure to the western model of education and an emancipated life in the country that she
has immigrated to faces the predicament of her liberated thoughts and the conditioning of her religion. “‘What would Allah think of my disrespectful talk?’” (226), she asks. This highlights her dilemma further.

Aslam’s idea of letting readers see that religion is not inherently offensive through westerized characters like Shamas who are Muslims but are modern and have moderate and tolerant attitudes is continued further. Shamas's next words to Suraya support this: “‘I won't marry you on principle: one of the things I find repulsive about Islam is the idea of a man being allowed four wives’” (226). And Suraya replies: “‘Please don't say such a thing about Islam. Do you want to go to Hell?’” (226). A man can be banished to the eternal fire of Hell for merely questioning the tenets of his religion, which is in fact grossly unfair to women. Later Suraya also talks about her experience as a receptionist in a hotel, she commits the crime of shaking hands with a male guest and is fired by the hotel manager. Due to her western influences, she is not aware of the strict rules governing physical contact between the sexes. Later, she quotes the words of Prophet Mohammed: “He who touches the palm of a woman not legally belonging to him will have red-hot embers put in the palm of his hand on Judgement Day” (227). In the regulations of fundamentalist Islam the mere act of two persons of the opposite sex touching without the sanction of matrimony is taboo and has to be punished severely. This is not exceptional to the universal religious norms: physicality occupies all space of moral and social norms and overrules purity of mind or spirit.

2.4.3 The Vice-like Grip of Religion

There are other instances of individual behavioural changes that are scrutinized from the fundamentalist angles in the novel. In one instance Suraya thinks about “the Sylhet family…the young son had walked out of university where he was training to be a doctor and has taken up radical Islam, grown a beard and proclaimed everything from democracy to shaving cream unIslamic” (211). In fact so strong is the hold of religion on the populace that when Shamas catches a cleric in the mosque red-handed committing an act of sodomy; the
matter is sought to be hushed up for the sake of maintaining the status of the religion. The ordinary people are told that if the matter comes out in the open, “the Hindus and the Jews and the Christians would rejoice at seeing Islam being dragged through the mud” (235). This argument is enough to silence opponents who want some action against the cleric. The police too confirms the terrible assaults. Even the fact that the assault is not an isolated case but has been going on for some time is not sufficient cause to take action, the reputation of the religion takes precedence over everything else. As the situation shows, Aslam is deploying this for the benefit of his readers because this shows the importance of religion and its representatives, that is, the clerics, for the followers so much so that even their serious transgressions have to be overlooked and kept secret from the outsiders, the followers of other religions.

Additionally, about Suraya who has to degrade herself with Shamas in order to be united with her son, Aslam writes: “She of course regretted the first thing, not the second: a system conditions people into thinking that It is never to blame, is never to be questioned. We have to beg, say the beggars, the accursed belly demands food: it is the fault of the belly, not the unjust world that doesn't allow enough sustenance to reach the bellies of everyone through dignified means” (236). The author’s views are being expressed here. These work as an observer’s points of view calling attention to the discrepancies of religious rules versus physical needs for survival. Unfortunately the collective vision falls prey to the religious conviction so sightlessly that the upholders of the faith fail to see any positions of individual existence.

Further, the omniscient narrator reveals more fundamentalist activities in the form of a secret organization that helps in upholding strict religious customs. This organization specializes in bringing errant children and wives back to their families as good and god-fearing persons should do. In such a scheme of things, a person does not have any choice or agency in charting the course of his own action, his own future, every one has to abide by the prescribed behaviour according to religious norms. Bhiku Parikh’s assertion in A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World is applicable to the
novel: “The fundamentalist project of reconstituting society on a religious basis obviously involves considerable violence. At one level, it is no different from the violence to be found in all revolutionary struggles. It is a ‘military necessity’ and intended to defend the theo-political project against its enemies” (147, 2008). The secret organization does this important work for the followers who cannot take recourse to legal means that employ secular principles; their mission is to structure the social framework according to religious standards.

The methods of this organization and their secret but violent ways are also an important consideration and the author makes this clear to the readers in the way in which they learn about it. A stranger accosts Shamas on his way home one day and offers to help him in his 'difficult time' (248). The difficulty relates to the information that his two children have opted to stay away from home. “We know these are delicate matters but we feel we have to offer you our services. We are aware that the girl and the boy have left home, the girl has cut off her hair and wears western clothing now’ ” (249), says the stranger to Shamas. Sensing the disbelief in Shamas the man explains: “What I mean to say is that we can bring your children back. We run a small discreet operation: no one official will ever know about us-we have been so quiet even you hadn't heard of us until now’ ” (249). Shamas who does not subscribe to such views retorts: “I don't need anyone to kidnap my children’…'Kidnap? Shamas-ji that is how white people would see it. They of course don't understand our culture. The children and runaway wives have to be brought back' ” (250). This suggests the difference in awareness depending upon the side one is on. Kidnap is a word in the language of the white hosts whereas for certain Pakistani immigrants, this is not perceived as kidnapping but a cultural requirement, leaving home is equivalent to being a runaway as the words of Shamas reveal: “I don't need my children brought back from anywhere. They are not runaways’ ” (250). Shamas’ own temperate views offer a contrast to the outlook of the members of the secret group.

He is the director of the Community Relations Council. “Shamas is the person the neighbourhood turns to when unable to negotiate the white world on its own” (15). Thus his reflections about his own approach are revealatory: “when
people come to the office asking for help because a daughter has left home or a son, they are told plainly that since the children are of age there is nothing legal that can be done” (251). Shamas here seems to be once again the affirmative voice for Nadeem Aslam’s rational views contrasted with the predetermined notions of collective ethics. But so strong is the grip of religion that he is not allowed to live according to his moderation, the fundamentalist organization tries to coerce him into accepting their ways. This collective group service is functioning methodically like detectives, tracking down noncompliant members of the community so that the people who face their encounters feel terrified. The stranger not only knows the names of the 'runaway children' but promises to be gentle. He also informs Shamas about his wife's unhappiness with the behaviour of her two children. The fact that the man has a lot of information about Shamas and his children, including their names is sinister by itself but things get more disturbing.

Soon, other members of the gang join the first one and the situation becomes threatening for Shamas. A significant observation is made by Akbar Ahmed in Islam Under Siege, Living Dangerously in a Post-Honor World (2003), “those who believe in exclusion also draw their inspiration from their faith. However they interpret their faith in a literalist and narrow manner; those who are not like them are beyond the pale. They are prepared to reject—often with violence—those who do not share their way of thinking. Their wrath, however is not confined to those of other faiths; it is aimed also at members of their own community who think differently” (123). This finds meaning in the case of the members of this secret organization in the novel. Shamas who has dissimilar thoughts, although a co-religionist is looked upon as an adversary. The men try to dissuade him from preventing others from using their service. Shamas had earlier got information about this group and initiated inquiries in an effort to collect information about them prior to going to the police. When the men find their efforts at persuasion unsuccessful, they try another course.

One of them tells Shamas: “We are but humble slaves of our community” (253). They not only do not consider their actions unauthorized or overbearing but
deem themselves useful in satisfying the rigid morality of their co-religionists and they believe they are justified in the violent path because they have sanction from the religion. As said by Girja Kumar: “Populism comes in handy for the enforcement of taboos and religious practices. There is always the threat of physical force lurking behind the corner. Psychological pressures backed by modern system of communications work wonders for enforcing, ‘the religious curfew’ ” (20, 1997). The prohibitions of religious doctrine on people and accepted ways of behaviour are enforced through the use of physically violent actions by taking recourse to modern techniques of surveillance. When Shamas is unrelenting they start hitting him. Aslam describes the scene: “The blows came harder and faster but then, as though he is being hit by a single person, they begin to come after measured pauses, the men deciding, calculating carefully where to hit him before doing so—they are obviously people who understand the reality of violence and inflicting pain” (253). Their awareness of the accurate use physical violence and male and female parts of body to be or not to be violated is revealed by their actions. This again, is a part of criminal psychology, in collective form so much that even readers are stunned and benumbed. However according to them this is just a ‘mild warning’. They leave Shamas bleeding and grievously hurt after more such threats and lewd remarks. Their beating is so severe that Shamas is hospitalized for a month: “Shamas is bruised everywhere on the surface and there are innumerable internal injuries, the doctors saying he is lucky to be alive” (259). The wounds of Shamas only speak out the horror created by the fundamentalist representatives of religion.

2.4.4 Chakor or Deepak: The Selection of an Identity

The chronicle of Shamas' father Deepak or Chakor is interesting too and helps to expose further the grip of religion on people's lives. Deepak was born a Hindu; he was lost when he got caught in the violence for India's independence in year 1919. A year later, he found himself in a Muslim shrine where he was given the name Chakor. He lived like a Muslim, having forgotten his earlier religion and married a Muslim girl, Mahtab in 1922. When later on in life, Chakor learns of his original religion, he wants to be cremated like a Hindu. Soon thereafter, he is
diagnosed as suffering from pancreatic cancer and when he is near death, he realizes that his wishes may not be fulfilled by his family, he decides to cremate himself inside the ruins of a Hindu Temple. Bhiku Parikh in *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World* (2008) remarks: “Identity involves choice in the sense that we deliberate and decide whether to define ourselves as, and seek to become, this or that kind of person” (11). Here, Chakor is faced with a choice about his identity, his unique position in life, being born a Hindu but brought up a Muslim places him in a situation he is not responsible for but rather than take a non religious route to this conundrum, he lets his religious identity take precedence. He cuts off his tongue, so that he cannot shout for help and sets himself on fire (84). In this way he accepts an excruciating live cremation. These details about her father-in-law induce Kaukab to think: “Her parents were responsible for marrying her to an infidel. Her in-laws were Godless...She finally accused Shamas of not being Muslim at all, the son of a Hindu, whose filthy infidel’s corpse was spat out repeatedly by the earth no matter how deep they buried it the next day” (59). The laws of cremation or burial are followed according to the religion of the dead person while Chakor discovered as a Hindu yet buried like a Muslim is thrice dug out in the form of dead-body by the unknown fundamentalist secret agents only to reinforce the obsessive religious practices.

This inadvertent history of the father has consequences for the whole family. Shamas tells Suraya that he faced terrible persecution in Pakistan because his father was perceived as a Hindu. Shamas and Jugnu’s elder brother too helps to swell the numbers of the fundamentalists: “He had become increasingly religious in his forties and the news that his father was a Hindu had devastated him. He had accused the man of betraying them all by concealing the secret from them, prolonging the sin he was committing by living with a Muslim woman” (83). Besides this, at a mosque he meets people who lead him towards the austere and volatile form of faith that was alien to his parents and brothers (83). After his father's origins became known, he “wrote and talked to some friends and scholars he himself trusted, and the news they gave him nearly pushed him over the edge-the children of the union between Mahtab and Chakor were all illegitimate” (83).
Bhiku Parikh continues with the words: “The scriptural literalist represents a classic case of someone for whom religious identity more or less transcends reason and is not amenable to rational investigation, or criticism” (131, 2008). The elder brother’s dogmatic posturing towards his father is one more instance of the practices of fundamentalism. The shock of the son caused by his father’s forgotten and re-discovered identity speaks of the religious convictions stifling the children’s lives through the parent’s actions. There is no response based on reason and only emotion and blind reliance on the views of those like himself.

The son’s actions advance further: “He smashed the furniture on the veranda and hurled the water pitcher against the wall when he heard that Chakor wanted to be cremated. He shouted that Chakor should not have produced children if he was not sure about his religious standing, that on Judgement Day he would be hauled in front of his children in chains to ask for mercy from them” (84). He does not even realize that his hatred for his father’s actions caused by his religious perceptions is tantamount to being inhuman to the extent that it overrides the compassion for a suffering patient on his death-bed. “He said the cancer of the pancreas was Allah's punishment and stood over the dying man while he coughed up blood and asked him to beg forgiveness from his wife and children and from Allah, 'Only then would Allah stop the pain' ” (84). The sadism of the son towards his dying father reaches its heights when he demands the father’s remorse in place of sympathising with his pain and suffering. This is not all, the elder brother’s little son too is not exempt from the fundamental views. Aslam tells readers about the elder brother, “beating his son almost unconscious for flying a kite which he considered unIslamic, or for blowing on his whistle or dribbling a ball in the courtyard” (84). In this scheme a child cannot be a child and play innocently, a child too has to play in accordance with the tenets of the religion.

2.4.5 Fundamentalism Invades All Quarters of Society

Ujala is born just a few days before the Muslim month of Ramadan began. He is one of those rare boys born without a foreskin and Muslims believe that such children are blessed and destined to be especially pious Muslims (139).
Many people come to visit the holy baby believing that he had been marked by Allah for an exemplary virtuous existence in the world. Girja Kumar notes: “The reach of fundamentalists is limitless, they are always scourging for real or imaginary victims.” (35, 1997). In the story bound world of the narrative, the accuracy of Kumar’s statement is substantiated, Fundamentalism ensnares the newborn baby as well. A son just born to the mother becomes a victim of the mother’s extreme beliefs. Kaukab as a firm believer is proud of this. However, Shamas observes about his son: “his health began to deteriorate after about a week: he became increasingly irresponsive to noise and other sensations, and seemed deficient in strength, so much so that eventually, even the act of crying seemed to defeat him” (140). Further revelations are even more forceful: “As the days passed he lost weight despite regular breast-feeds and the minor infections he had developed began to give the doctors cause for concern despite the medicines prescribed” (140). Later Shamas discovers that the mother has not been feeding the baby as she has been making the holy baby observe the fast of Ramadan. Kaukab, the mother continues to do this although the baby is unwell and in addition does not give the newborn his medicines, when all the while she continues to let the father, Shamas think that the infant is being fed regularly.

When Shamas confronts her with his discovery that she has been starving her son during the daylight hours, Kaukab does not appreciate his concern or her own folly. According to the mother, “it’s because he himself insists on it. He refuses to let anything pass his lips during the daylight hours. And don’t make light of my beliefs. Must you talk like a heretic in this house?” (141) she tells Shamas. The reach of fundamentalism is so great that a mother is induced to starve her baby to satisfy the supremacy of her religious conviction.

As if this is not enough indication of the pervasiveness of fundamentalist attitudes, there is more evidence of a similar mindset when Shamas insists she feed the baby, she says: “’No I won't come, It's my milk. He and I will break our fast at sunset. It's just a matter of changing the routine: I give him everything he needs during the night’” (141). This results in a major quarrel between the parents and they do not speak to each other for six months at the end of which too Kaukab is unrepentant and steadfast in her beliefs. Kaukab’s overshadowed motherhood
does not seem to notice the starvation of her baby, on the contrary her proud feeling of having the holy baby, restrains her from any remorse even after the weakness the starved baby suffers. She refuses to take up the responsibility of a caring mother only to justify the Ramadan rituals and rejects Shamas’s genuine and reasonable concern for the baby. Finally matters reach such an extreme condition that Shamas has to leave the house. This conduct on the mother’s part cannot be construed as Kaukab’s obstinacy but her religious fervour which remains her primary behaviour: so apparent in all her actions for the whole of her life. For her, the suggestion of her incorrect actions concerning the baby is outrageous as this goes against her sacred convictions so that she refuses to think of mending her ways and finally Shamas moves out. Thus her duties as a wife too are overruled by her commitment to her religious fervour which stays supreme.

For adherents like Kaukab, the path is strict; no thinking or reflection is permitted. Bassam Tibi states in *Religious Fundamentalism, Ethnicity And The Nation – State In The Middle East* (1997): “For Islamic fundamentalists, God has not only created the universe, but also governs it with His will as expressed in the Qu’ran” (203). Kaukab's belief is absolute: “who'll live, who'll die, who'll lose happiness, who'll find love-Allah dictates it” (43). There is no scope for human agency in all of this. Everything is prescribed by god, as Kaukab's thoughts reveal further: “Allah gave her everything, so how can she not be thankful to Him every minute of the day when He had given her everything she had, how could she have not tried to make sure that her children grew up to be Allah's servants, and how could she have approved of Jugnu marrying the white woman, or later, approve of him living in sin with Chanda? For the people in the West, an offence that did no harm to another human or to the wider society was no offence at all, but to her-to all Muslims-there was always another party involved-Allah. He was getting hurt by Chanda’s and Jugnu’s actions” (43). According to this belief, people who believe in the omniscient and omnipresent Allah also believe that he is the director, provider and ever-watchful judge of all human actions and the humans therefore have to worry about His designs for them at every moment of life. In this way according to the fundamentalist thinking Allah is more a ruling force than a spiritual one.
2.4.6 Outside the System of Belief

Another observation about fundamentalist attitudes comes when Shamas’
neighbour, Kiran is introduced by the author. Kiran, a Sikh was in love with
Kaukab's brother, a Muslim migrant worker in England. During a visit to Pakistan
he told his family of his intentions to marry Kiran. They were appalled and
refused to allow him to return to England. When Kiran goes to Pakistan, she is
categorically told by her lover's brother who has intercepted her telegram, to go
back to England. He labels “any reunion or union between his brother and her an
impossibility” (7). To make sure that the two lovers whose unification is not
acceptable due to difference in religion do not reunite, the young man is married
off in a rushed wedding ceremony. Moreover, when told about Kiran, Suraya who
is herself a victim of religious fundamentalism approves of the actions of the
man's family “imagine marrying a non-Muslim?” (203) she thinks. This adds
strength to the already aggravated conditions of victims of the rigid upholders of
the faith. F. Volker Greifenhagen throws light on this attitude. “A stark line is
drawn between true believers and infidels. The discourse of these groups contains
a sharp dichotomy between us and them, based on an underlying binary of God
versus Satan” (70, 2006). The dividing line between those on the same and
opposite sides is distinct; those who do not belong to the same faith are heretics
and ought to be steered clear of. The indoctrination is so absolute that the ill-
treated individuals too yield to the same influence and share the notions of the
very structure that is the source of their oppression. Suraya herself has been so
long a victim of the collective ideology, yet at this juncture she subscribes to the
view of her oppressors. The dividing line between victim and victimizer is blurred
in the personal and the other consciousness.

So important is it to follow the religious norms strictly that readers are
told by Nadeem Aslam of the cleric in the mosque in London who receives calls
from followers of Islam in cold countries like Norway asking him if a small glass
of alcohol to keep the blood warm would be allowed, keeping in mind that
Norway is an extremely cold country, “the cleric told him to desist from his sinful
practice, thundering Allah forbade humans from drinking alcohol; why, the cleric asked, couldn't he simply carry a basket of burning maple leaves under his overcoat the way the good Muslims of freezing Kashmir do to keep themselves warm?” (9). Along with the seekers of advice, the cleric also considers himself as the interpreter of Allah’s words on all matters, big and small, including whether to drink alcohol in cold weather or other matters. Allah’s commandments have to be followed in all conditions however improbable.

In addition to all this, the use of contraceptives is a taboo (110). A man tells his wife that if he allows the use of modern contraceptive methods, his unborn children will point to him on Judgement Day and say to Allah. “That man is the one who did not allow us to be born and swell the numbers of the faithful!” (110). Also, according to religion, intercourse is so dirty that the body had to be made pure afterwards by bathing (120). This fact emerges when Charag remembers his childhood indoctrination into religion. Pieces of information like these confirm what readers have already recognized, that no area of existence, no relationship however private and sacrosanct is left untouched by the consciousness of what religion has to offer on the matter.

2.4.7 Patriarchy as Fundamentalism

Most definitions of fundamentalism focus on the strict interpretation of a religious doctrine. If fundamentalism is understood as referring to a set of ideas, a doctrine, an ideology or a set of principles that can described as a social movement, then it is possible to argue that some forms of patriarchy can be stated as being fundamentalist. In such a societal construction, masculinity promotes, articulates and benefits from the existence of fundamentalist beliefs and ideologies. This is true of certain religions. Anne Roald asserts “I have discovered during research into Islamic sources, Islamist literature and Islamic scholars’ opinions, that the sources have often been interpreted both by historical and, contemporary scholars from a male perspective” (xi, 2001). According to this standpoint women are disempowered and lead confined lives upholding a fundamentalist ideology. This variety of fundamentalism is depicted in Maps For
Lost Lovers in the stories of the women characters. Steve Bruce agrees with Roald’s views: “fundamentalist movements have in common a desire to curtail the autonomy that women acquired during the westernizing period of secular nationalism This is defended as a return to the shariah” (88, 2007). In Maps for Lost Lovers, religion seems to be the source and canvas for operating the lives and relationships of the Pakistani community in terms of women, and the violence happening to them. It is observed in multiple cases that the cause and source of women’s oppression finally emerges as one or the other belief or principle of religion. This results in various forms of patriarchal domination and violence for the women inhabitants of the novel.

In this account, religion in the diasporic location too continues to be the all encompassing entity for the immigrants as it is for followers in the homeland. This affects the women most. This is demonstrated by Mah-Jabin who tells her mother: “Here we have proof that Chanda was murdered by her brothers, that a family can kill one of its own” (114). She adds: “My god, for all of you she probably didn't die hard enough: you would like to dig her up piece by piece, put her back together, and kill her once more for going against your laws and codes, the so-called traditions that you have dragged into this country with you” (114). The shifting of place or change of location does not make any difference to the views of fundamentalist agents. Elucidating on the diaspora members of Pakistan, Aslam writes that as they have migrated to several countries, the cleric in the mosque in London gets calls from other countries: “A telephone call would also come in the middle of the night from Australia, a despondent father asking the cleric to fly immediately to Sydney all-expenses paid and exorcise the djinn that had taken possession of his teenaged daughter soon after an end was put to her love for a white schoolmate and she was married to a cousin brought hurriedly over from Pakistan” (9, 10). In traditional Pakistani society, a young girl is not allowed any choice in the matter of her marriage and if a girl falls in love with a white boy, which is quite likely in a diasporic situation, she is mercilessly persecuted; only a first cousin from Pakistan is suitable to marry a Pakistani girl. The impact of ideology and culture upon the mindset of the natives does not change even in the context of diasporic lives and space. Wherever the national factions may live in
the world, they carry the fundamentalist and male-oriented views of their original country with them to be followed in their lives.

This confirms the position of women in the backdrop of Pakistani communities. Not simply the moral and socio-cultural order of ideas but even the nationalist identity is strictly inscribed in their minds particularly regarding women so much so that women are supposed to completely represent their nationality in all conditions. Lena Dominelli in *Women And Community Action* explains this: “Women’s subjugated identity within the binary dyad of men and women has been used to uphold the interests of men within ethnic or national groupings where the identity of the nation has been inscribed on women's bodies” (6, 2006). In the novel, Nadeem Aslam shows that even a diasporic location does not afford breathing space to the women who are still expected to fit in with the traditional notions as followed in the home country. Dominelli carries on: “In these, differences between men and women have been configured as a timeless feature of a given community and women are expected to represent their broader community rather than their own personal interests” (6). Personal, communal and cultural identity begins with place and region, accentuating further the complexity of a viable identity for the female gender in a setup where they are exposed to the freedoms and liberties of the modern western world but are expected to adhere to the widely divergent attitudes of a social and religious structure that prevails in a different world. Dominelli adds, “women symbolically represent the nation. This often involves the idealization of their strengths as women rather than as people” (6). The expectation from women is that they will go home to Pakistan to get married to a first cousin as soon as the earliest opportunity presents itself to uphold their identity as girls from the mother country. “Sanctions can be imposed on women who challenge radicalised configurations of their identity” (6, 2006), Dominelli concludes. This leads to problems for the suppressed girls. In the narrative, daughters being possessed by a djinn is a common occurrence as Chanda’s parents refer to a girl from Faiz street whose family has a holy man summoned from Muridke to come and exorcise their daughter of the djinns since she is not behaving appropriately towards her family and husband. Additionally they also wonder if their own daughter is possessed by a djinn as well because she
to has revolted against the harsh regulations laid down for women (170). Women are thus trapped through religion and tradition only to be dictated to by men.

Mah-Jabin’s story does not vary substantially from that of other women. At sixteen, she is sent to Pakistan to marry a first cousin but divorces him after two years. Readers learn of her divorce first: “Her decision to divorce him had devastated – and enraged – her mother” (91) who wants her to go back to her husband. This is evident in Kaukab’s words to her daughter: “Yes, I do want you to go back, because in the eyes of Allah you are still married to him, you may have divorced him under British law, but haven’t done so in a Muslim court. My religion is not the British legal system, it’s Islam” (115). The irrational following of convictions defying the state-norms that are easily replaced by the native cultural and religious bindings expose the opposition to modern and secular principles. The importance of Kamala Bhasin’s assertion in Exploring Masculinity (2004) is evident at this juncture: “All religions have laws relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, guardianship, and so on, and in countries where secular, civil laws do not prevail, religious laws institutionalize inequality between men and women” (20). For adherents like Kaukab, living in Britain, the secular laws of the country do not hold value because they go against the tenets of their religion. So, for them the laws of their religion are paramount even though they may be opposed to the laws of the land of residence.

Only later does Aslam acquaint readers with Mah-Jabin’s full story. At the age of fourteen, Mah-Jabin had fallen in love with a Pakistani boy but “her silent and extravagant fantasy, misguided, innocent and unbounded” (120) is not reciprocated by the boy, who gets married to his cousin from Pakistan as custom dictates. This devastates Mah-Jabin, as she cannot bear the thought of seeing him married to another woman. And “Kaukab’s belief in destiny is strengthened when Mah-Jabin unexpectedly agrees to marry her uncle’s son, Kaukab’s widower brother-in-law, loved and respected like a blood brother” (120) whose wife has died providentially leaving behind her husband and son. Furthermore, Mah-Jabin is referred to as ‘the girl’, (113, 114) and simply as ‘she’ (117) which
universalizes her condition and implies that the common noun ‘girl’ and the pronoun ‘she’ could be used to stand for any girl in this background and the upshot would still be the same. In addition, the order in which the information is made known becomes important as the situation given with details recurs once again and the outcome was a foregone conclusion. The frequency of Nadeem Aslam’s use of this strategy is to demonstrate and stress the similarity of condition of women’s predestined lives in the social, familial and communal context.

Moreover, Mah-Jabin had not been “allowed to see a gynaecologist when she had hormonal problems at twelve, not even a female one” (107). And this is the case with other girls too, who also have chin hair due to hormonal problems (107). Also, Mah-Jabin’s clothes are monitored closely and she is not allowed to wear anything revealing or that which calls attention to the chest, etc. Skirts are allowed due to their similarity to a ghagra – Western clothes are allowed only if they look like salwar kameez (92, 93). Besides this: “There is so much outside the house that may be brought into the house, and the mother is quick to construe any voicing of opinion or expression of independent thought by the girl as a direct challenge to her authority” (93). Tampons too are not allowed as they have to be inserted inside the body. A girl could be ‘ruined for life’ due to such usage (109). The fear of parents for protection of a girl’s virginity is one of the obsessions that dominate their typical control and closure of their daughter’s access to the external world and the conveniences it offers. Kamala Bhasin continues to shed light on this: “There is a clear connection between gender, masculinity and religion. At the level of culture religion plays a very important role in constructing gender by constructing and informing our understanding of family, marriage, sexuality; by prescribing normative behavior and roles for women and men; and by determining the status, rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives, sons and daughters” (20, 2004). Religion prescribes a strict code of behaviour for women and young girls. Also, it sanctions violence against them as the case of Mah-Jabin illustrates.

Physical violence in Mah-Jabin’s life is extensive. Mah-Jabin’s husband burns her flesh with cigarette butts and pricks her thighs with sewing needles to make her realize the torments undergone by non-believers: “The believers said we
will believe even if they kill us, even if they burn our buttocks with live coal. (Remember the tip of my cigarette on your skin, Mah-Jabin? Keep that fire in mind. The fires of Hell are a thousand times hotter)” (306). And only reminding her of fire is not enough, more sadism is in store for her if she dares to question the tenets of the religion she is born into: “This is the punishment for those who resisted the truth. They’ll have spikes in their flesh. (Remember the sewing needles in your thighs, Mah-Jabin?)” (307). Once again, religion plays a crucial role in reinforcing cruel attitudes to women that include mortification of the flesh deemed religious and more appropriate to the female. Confirmation of this attitude comes from the detail that Mah-Jabin’s husband himself is the narrator of the cruelty he metes out to his wife. Also Charag, “heard his mother slap the thirteen-year-old Mah-Jabin in the kitchen” (123). Parents as well have no regrets in using force on their own daughters if they refuse to obey the commands as dictated by their religion.

Suraya’s story adds more evidence to the discriminations practiced against women. Notably, Suraya’s predicament starts when she tries to help a young girl in trouble. A girl living nearby is caught in an excessively unjust situation; she is being repeatedly raped by her uncle. Due to her diasporic upbringing and consequent confidence, Suraya decides to redress this grossly unfair situation, she undertakes to get justice and compassion for the unfortunate girl. She is aware of the feud between the two families (her own and the girl’s) but with her background in England and her exposure to another, more equitable, lifestyle she thinks she can be credible enough to set matters right. Therefore, she goes to the unnamed girl’s house one day. The way she is treated in the enemy courtyard is a comment on the situation in a country like Pakistan: “The men of the house clustered around her and barred her way when she attempted to leave” (158). Suraya begins to feel intimidated and fears for her own self; the plight of the brutalized girl is forgotten. Akbar Ahmed considers the connection between rape and honour, “women are humiliated and even raped to assert honor” (59, 2003). The men cannot let a woman belonging to the enemy camp go away unharmed without depletion of their manliness. She pretends to have lost her way in the fog. It is her good fortune that she is allowed to leave “with her virtue intact” (158).
However the men from the 'other side', inform her that in order to avoid casting “a mark on their honour and their name and their manhood if people thought they had had a woman from the other side of the battle-line in their midst and hadn't taken full and appropriate advantage of the opportunity” (158), they were going to tell everyone that they *had* indeed raped her. Akbar Ahmed continues: “To dishonour the women of the enemy is to dishonour the enemy” (115, 2003). It is an accepted practice for men of feuding families to settle scores by raping and dishonouring the women of the other side. This is akin to punishing the innocent but in the realm of the code of honour observed by the men, it is a legitimate function. But for the women who suffer, this indignity is weighed down on them simply because of their gender and belonging.

More telling is the comment that the author makes subsequently: “As it turned out, it was as bad as if they had raped her” (158). For, in such matters it is not what the truth as one knows it is important but what others believe to be the truth that is important. Although Suraya's husband and in-laws believe her word, this fact becomes worthless for all concerned. Akbar Ahmed continues with his observations about rape: “The woman is twice punished: by the brutality of the act and by the horror of her family. Notions of modesty and motherhood are violated. Rape strikes families at their most vulnerable point” (121, 2003). Suraya’s family also cannot remain unaffected by the dishonour of the rumours that are circulated about her. Finally, it is this incident that pushes her husband, “over the edge” (158). Due to the barbed comments of the people outside, he is driven further and further to seek succor in drinking, which results in more violence for Suraya. At last, one day: “He said the word *talaq* thee times: I divorce thee, I divorce thee, I divorce thee” (159). The system and the religious tenets join forces to produce codes of law, hostile to the women. The husband has spoken the words in a drunken stupor, he does not even remember uttering the 'deadly' word but the speech act is considered final and complete. “There were no witnesses but even then they couldn't ignore what had happened: Allah had witnessed” (159). However unfair, the law has to be obeyed and it becomes incumbent upon Suraya to marry another man, get a divorce from him and re-marry her former husband in order to be near her son. Here again the irrationality of a fundamentalist viewpoint
is seen for the misdeed is committed by the husband but according to scripture, it is the wife who has to make amends for the couple to be reunited. Javed Nayyar remarks “Fundamentalists have focused on literal meanings of the text, highlighting the rituals and repression that promote intolerance” (77, 2006). Thus here a literal meaning is used to separate husband and wife and keep the mother away from her little son. For again according to the tenets of religion, the custody of the children goes to the father, who is considered to be the natural guardian.

The only recourse that Suraya has to redress her situation is also undeserved by her. The author makes this clear through the reproduction of Suraya’s thoughts: “Dear Allah, why can’t I understand the reasons behind your laws? It's the man who deserves to be punished if he has uttered the word divorce as idle threat, in anger or while intoxicated, and, yes, the punishment for him is that he has to see his wife briefly become another man’s property, being used by him. But why must the divorced wife be punished?” (166). The woman would not like to be married to another man however briefly, but Suraya has to accept this undesirable situation; let another man touch her. Nadia Butt in “Between Orthodoxy and Modernity: Mapping the Transcultural Predicaments of Pakistani Immigrants in Multi-Ethnic Britain in Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers (2004)” (2008) makes some remarks about Nadeem Aslam, she says “By discussing the dogmatic version of Islam as a closed cultural system, he postulates that the strife of orthodox Islam with modernity in the novel not only reflects religious fundamentalism among an isolated group of Pakistani immigrants, but also tension and conflicts between individuals and families within various ethnic groups” (154). Suraya, a modern woman has to accept the rigid rules of her religion by virtue of being born into it. But she also cannot help thinking like an open-minded person and the conflict between the two perspectives is revealed. She thinks further: “This is her punishment: a punishment she deserves, perhaps, because she did not know how to teach her husband to be a good man, how to teach him to control his anger and be a good Muslim, stay away from alcohol?” (166). So, if the man is transgressing the laws of religion, which forbid the intake of alcohol, it is the woman's fault. The man's punishment automatically includes
the woman's retribution and like a good wife and mother she has to abide by the prevailing socio-religious norms.

Speaking about the few concessions enjoyed by educated Muslim women by virtue of living in the West, Javed Nayyar mentions: “The pressures of faith and allegiance to culture itself-for the purpose of strengthening religious identity-can mean giving up this freedom, however restricted it may be” (77, 2006). Thus, Suraya, being a woman, takes on the mantle of suffering, even though she is not at fault. She is not fully convinced by the norms spelt out in the scriptures but in the interest of her culture and her faith, she accepts the prescribed principles. Nadeem Aslam spells out the subservient status of women further when he reveals that the husband, “was the only one in a Muslim marriage with the right to divorce” (159). The women in such a social order are meek victims, only men have the freedom to act independently. So, only the man has the power to divorce while the woman can only be at the receiving end of whatever the man wishes to dole out.

Moreover, even though the husband is at fault for Suraya’s torment, it is still he who is in command. He decides that Suraya should remain in England rather than in Pakistan, near her son where she would like to be. “ 'Marry and divorce someone there, and then come back. I’d feel humiliated if you married someone here, because I don’t want to see another man touch my wife, the woman I love’ ” (150). Thus, despite her initial resistance, Suraya is forced to live alone in her mother’s house in London after the latter’s death (150). Using his male privileges, the man/husband exercises control over and possession of the woman/his wife even after the termination of the marital contract as recognized by the very laws that he identifies with. Not finding a temporary husband is bad enough but then her former husband informs her that his mother is looking out for another bride for him. “ 'How long is he supposed to wait for you?' ” (187) the old woman asks Suraya. After all, a man is allowed four wives according to Islam, she reminds Suraya. Of course, Suraya is dismayed and saddened but being a woman, she hardly has any power in the matter.
Akbar Ahmed articulates his views about the custom of taking four wives: “Polygamy itself has become a distorted practice. In Islam, a man can take another wife only under certain circumstances. The Quran made provision for a man to "marry as many women as you wish, two, three or four" (Surah 4: verse 3). This made sense at a time of war, when there were many widowed women and sometimes they fell on hard times” (118, 2003). This tradition which was initiated as a mechanism to protect defenceless women and also to continue the race so that men with barren wives could marry again has now been reduced to a licence for every man to take four wives, contrary to the original intention. Akbar Ahmed continues “The Quran clearly states, and many religious scholars have argued, that polygamy itself may not be feasible. This is because the Quran insists that if a man marries more than one wife, he must treat the wives exactly alike: "If you fear not to treat them equally, marry only one," it warns, "Indeed, you will not be able to be just between your wives, even if you try" (ibid)” (118, 2003). By showing how the system is now used to suppress women, Aslam is making his views on the matter known.

From the above events, it can be seen that the man continues to wield his authority over the woman but the woman is rendered helpless by the joint forces of patriarchy and religion, which decree that the little son remains with the father. So, custody of the child is used to keep a woman in check, intimidate her and maintain power over her. Here, the author implicitly conveys the standing of women wedged under the twin forces of religion and patriarchy, where both work in tandem for the continuation of the prevailing male hegemony. The unequal hierarchy ensures that for Suraya, a woman there is no other avenue but to trust in the benovelence and influence of a supernatural being and to live in apprehension of the consequences of their failure. She is caught up in chains made up of her own feelings of motherliness, her love for her son, her concern for him and her subsequent distress of his feelings for her taking a negative twist. Suraya finally marries a man who is obsessed with the idea of having a son (365). Another girl who was not allowed to marry her Hindu lover was married to this same man, before her parents and he decided to exorcise the djinn that according to them had
entered her body. Conspicuously, this comes towards the last part of the novel. Thus, readers are left in uncertainty about Suraya’s fate.

2.4.8 The Unnamed Muslim Girl in Love with a Hindu Boy

Fundamentalist attitudes that result in physical violence can be witnessed in the account of the nameless Muslim girl in love with a Hindu boy. Marriage to a Hindu boy is unacceptable; she is forcibly married by her parents to a boy from her own community whom she does not love. Nadia Butt, in her discussion of the novel as a contest between orthodoxy and modernity comments: “As the plot progresses, we notice that this religious and ethnic tension eventually leads to inhuman social practices such as ‘honour killing’ and ‘forced marriages’ in ‘the name of keeping the indigenous cultural identity’ intact” (154, 2008). Readers are first introduced to this character consorting with her Hindu lover. Later, the girl’s story is told. “In love with a Hindu, she was married off against her will to a cousin brought over from Pakistan, but the couple divorced because she remained distant from him – the cousin moved out as soon as he got his British nationality, no longer having to put up with her” (87). This inverted sequence is used by Aslam once again. It is the author’s way of foretelling the fate of the girl in the forced marriage, a device that he uses to chronicle other lives too. Again, this is a marriage of convenience. The boy gets married to this girl only to acquire British nationality and the girl has been forced to marry a boy she does not want to marry. Naturally, this doomed union falls apart as both sides are unwilling participants but the girl’s parents do not think it necessary to take cognizance of this fact, they just have to prevent their daughter from marrying someone of her own choice. For them, any boy from their own community, however unsuitable, is better than a boy from another community and religion. The girl is not able to marry again despite her youth as her non-virgin status stands in the way. “Why not marry a blue-eyed English blonde if virginity is not an issue?” (88). So, her parents marry her off, again, this time to an even more unsuitable older man who already has three wives but wants a son. More important is the information given by the novelist later. “When her mother discovered that she had refused to consummate the marriage with her cousin after sharing a bed for almost a week, she took the
bridegroom aside and told him in a whisper, "Rape her tonight" " (88). Javed Nayyar articulates her thoughts on the role that women themselves play in the repression of their own sex: “It is appalling to see mothers turning against their own daughters” (83, 2006). In the context of the novel, Nayyar’s perception gets illustrated most noticeably when the girl’s mother herself demands that her husband rape her in order to assert his right over her. Nayyar’s reaction notwithstanding, readers of the novel do not have much difficulty in understanding how the motherly instinct gets so twisted for they know that the notions of honour and respect for the doctrine is so great that these overpower feelings of love and affection that a mother would otherwise feel. This attitude on the part of a mother against her own daughter reinforces the dominant ideology of patriarchal fundamentalism and the roles women play in adding force to such attitudes by conforming to prevailing dogmatic norms.

When force does not work with the spirited girl, readers are made privy to Shamas’ thoughts: “Kaukab says that the girl’s mother is convinced that she has become possessed by the djinns – that is why she won’t accept her new husband” (134). The capacity for autonomous action shown by the girl is unimaginable for her parents. Akbar Ahmed points out in his dicussion of the rights of Muslim women: “A woman demanding rights or insisting on her own career could be in trouble” (117, 2003). For, in such a system, the notion of a girl who displays some self-governing deeds, refusing to endure her fate quietly and suffering stoically the outcome of her family’s notions of respectability and propriety is unimaginable. A girl who refuses victimhood, tries to make use of her agency, to do what her heart desires, is unthinkable. Ahmed’s words uttered in a general context prove to be accurate in the milieu of the novel; it is taken as if some evil djinn is making the girl exercise her free will. Further the exorcising of the djinn is picturised and the omniscient narrator tells the audience about “the helpless girl who had died so brutally. She was killed during the exorcism arranged by the parents with her husband’s approval” (185). The parents believe the holy man who assures them that if reasonable force is used, only the djinn would be affected, also that the only way to get rid of the djinn was to beat the body that it had entered. “The girl was taken into the cellar and the beatings lasted several days with the mother and
father in the room directly above reading the Koran out loud” (185). The violence of the superstitious convictions of the parents finds its resolution in the reading of the Koran as not only a compensation for guilt but suppression of the awareness of what is going on with their daughter. “She was not fed or given water for the duration and wasn't allowed to fall asleep even for five minutes and when she soiled herself she was taken upstairs to the bathroom by her mother to be cleaned and brought back down for the beating to continue. The holy man heated a metal tray until it was red hot and forced her to stand on it” (185, 186). This physical injury is inflicted on the young girl for loving a boy from another faith. As if this is not enough, Nadeem Aslam informs further: “According to the report in The Afternoon the Coroner found the arms and legs broken by a cricket bat, the front of the chest had caved in as though she had been jumped on repeatedly” (186). These are the atrocities that the girl is subjected to for not obeying her parents wishes and not submitting to her husband and for loving a boy outside her religion. Javed Nayyar's comments are relevant again, “in extreme cases, we may find mothers playing a prominent role in the murder of their daughters who are accused of violating family honour” (83, 2006). In this way of thinking, parents themselves become complicit in the matter of inflicting physical abuse and even death on their feminine offspring.

Shamas’ thoughts reveal the general situation of women. “‘A Pakistani man mounted the footpath and ran over his sister-in-law – reportedly in broad daylight – because he suspected she was cheating on his brother. I only fear that by dying you will pollute the dead just as your life pollutes the living’ ” (136). If this had happened in Pakistan, it could be understood as the offshoot of the expectation of leniency in the country in dealing with such acts but the omniscient narrator further reveals Shamas’ thoughts “This was here in England” (136). In the secular space of England this can only be construed as strict adherence to the orthodoxy and fundamentalism of the home country. Nadia Butt has made an observation about the novel: “Nevertheless, in the fictional realm of Maps, the orthodox Pakistanis try to reject the dialectics of having many identities, which is a direct consequence of travelling cultures, in order to restore their much loved
'native persona'. Hence, they refuse cultural translation and stick to the primitive notions of a singular culture and identity, which are alien to the processes of globalised modernity” (157, 2008). As rightly pointed out by Butt, the characters reject multiple or even plural identities and stand by only a single identity, that of their native region, thus perpetrating the strict interpretations of the religious codes with ever increasing intensity.

The attitude and values of Chanda’s father too are revealing. According to him, the only crime that he and his family can be accused of is against Jugnu. As for Chanda, she was their own offspring “the girl – the daughter of the parents, the sister of the brothers – belonged to him, to them, to do as they pleased” (138). Issues of ownership surface one more time. Hina Jilani and Eman Ahmed in “Violence against Women: The Legal System and Institutional Responses in Pakistan” (2004) affirm: “The traditional concept of honour killings is rooted in the perception of women being the property of male members of the family. It is, thus their ‘honour’ which is affected if women violate cultural codes or social norms, or their ‘goods’ are defiled” (152, 153). This can be observed in the narrative, a girl, a daughter is the property of her male relatives, her father and brothers before marriage after which her husband takes over, if she lives past his life, the male heir, the son inherits the rights from his father. Suffice it to be said that the woman is never in possession of her own self. The men have the right to kill the women in their family without feeling any guilt since it is ‘their’ reputation that is being discredited. Besides, if the mother grieves for her murdered daughter, this may be construed as disloyalty to her sons, who have killed their sister.

Besides this, Kaukab and other women wear veils (42). Furthermore, the author establishes Kaukab’s knowledge of Pakistani women, “who were drenched in patience and were grateful that they had found a man no matter what his behaviour – to cover all women” (128). Kaukab does not even know an alternative to this situation. According to Nadia Butt: “Women in the novel like Kaukab and Suraya are self-inflicted victims of the orthodox Islamic cultural system, whereas women from the new generation like Mah-Jabin, Kiran and Chanda are victims as
well as rebels” (159, 2008). Therefore, for her, a man, protector is mandatory for a woman and however ill bred or ill behaved, a woman should be thankful if she finds such a protector in her life (128). This is strengthened when Kaukab wants to find another husband for Mah-Jabin, this time a better one, “tell her that the next husband I find for her would be decent” (326). Even after Kaukab discovers the real truth about Mah-Jabin’s husband, the reality about his sadistic acts against her daughter in the name of religion, she still wants to find another husband for her as she is incapable of visualizing a self-sufficient life, with no control by a male for a woman. In addition to this, at the concert of Nusrat Fateh Ali, historical experiences of the women who face the intolerance and oppression of their times underline that injustice against women is not new.(191, 192). At the burial of the dead girl who was in love with a Hindu boy, women are referred to as: “Women and infidels: ministers of Satan both!” (194). In this way, women are equated to the agents of Satan. They can never be pious and good. Also, for women under Islam “’a woman should choose the poison being offered by her husband over the milk and honey of strangers’” (250).

Further evidence of the status of women comes when Aslam tells readers details about the codes followed by women. A woman is expected to be ready whenever her husband wants to copulate (259) or face the wrath of the heavenly beings. A woman’s status is equal to that of a slave and that of her husband to a master, “if you are a slave, a servant or a wife and, your master, employer, or husband is a strict man” (261). The discrimination extends beyond this life to the after life as well. So while a man has 72 houri wives waiting for him up there in Paradise (259), for the woman, there are no such pleasures, “the pious woman would be happy just to be given an eternal place by her earth-husband’s side after Judgement Day” (266, 267). And finally, there is a reference to “one of the many 'honour killings' that take place over there every year” (273) indicating that honour killings are a common occurrence and many lovers die in this way. Akbar Ahmed asserts: “We can thus distinguish between honor as an idealistic and humane goal and as an exaggerated expression of group loyalty defined though violence against the other” (57, 2003). This is the form that honour assumes in the novel, honour is not an optimistic objective but rather a way of adopting a single,
exclusive identity that can be proved only by elimination of others who do not pledge themselves to a similar way of thinking. This explains the response of parents who turn against their own children in order to maintain the honour of the declared system of belief.

**Conclusion: The Possibility of Harmony through the Constructive and Benevolent Aspect of Religion**

In *The Assassin's Song*, the author examines the forces of neutrality and respect for all faiths displayed by the narrator’s family against prejudice and intolerance displayed by characters like Pradhan Shastri. By depicting the possibility of duality, he offers an alternative to the adoption of a single, separate identity. Vassanji has expressed his wonder for the tradition of respect for both sides of the Hindu-Muslim divide: He states about Sufism: “However widely superstitious this looks, for me it is a marvel to witness yet again the persistence of old indigenous Indian traditions away from the eyes of stern orthodoxy, or divisive modern ideology” (301, 2008). True, in this novel, the Sufi shrine, symbolic of neutrality is nearly destroyed. The narrator and his family witness the harm to their ancestral haven as they refuse to take sides, preferring the worth of their traditional neutrality over that of a new way of life where bias and preconceived notions are a pervasive influence. “This centuries-old sanctuary had now been marked as a Muslim abode to wreak vengeance on” (359). The narrator declares emphasizing the refusal of the fundamentalists in the novel to grant them the fulfilment of a neutral stance. Also, the author stresses that such acts of intolerance are not isolated: “Accounts of such violence fill the newspapers every time, eventually make their way into the archives” (359). In the final chapter, this does seem to be a bleak situation. After the whole historical sweep of fundamentalist encounters leading to the ruinous nothingness in Pirbaag, however, the narrator anxiously initiates feeble efforts to rehabilitate the Sufi shrine that represents the strain of convictions and practices embodying the inclusiveness of religions. In this effort, the few disciples remaining come forward with their help, bringing renewed hope and optimism. Steve Bruce explicates: “There are also constraints on fundamentalism that stem from religion being in competition with
other sources of social identity” (91, 2003). This assertion builds hope in the world of the novel that others who sympathize with the narrator’s family will be forthcoming with their support as well. This acts as a hint of the revival of inclusiveness. Restoration of the place of worship, though incomplete is in progress and the Sufi shrine is not in such a state of ruin and disrepair that is cannot be rebuilt, in fact efforts to rehabilitate it are continuing as the novel ends. This indicates that there is hope yet that a detached and impartial stance is still a possibility.

*Family Matters*, which looks at the regulations and practices in a Parsi household shows the effects of the violence and consequent anxiety on the mind of Yezad. Nevertheless the denouement sees the family in a somewhat happier mood although Yezad remains still in the in the grip of orthodoxy. Besides, in the final scenes Mistry depicts the coming of age of Murad, he turns eighteen and there is a celebration in the family, which includes his father, Yezad. Murad stands for the modern and moderate expression of the religious ideology of his family. This spells hope as the moderate side has reached adulthood and is no longer under the purview of the parents’ authority. The optimism indicated is that the moderate base of the religion too will grow up and be able to hold its own. As Carol Schick, JoAnn Jaffe and Ailsa Watkinson point out: “It requires courage and intense honesty to speak critically from an insider position about that to which one is still attached” (4, 2006). Mistry musters up the required qualities to speak about his religion because of his feelings for it. Mistry’s delineation of the fissiparous tendencies of the orthodox cause, the internecine squabbles and wrangles show him as a heterodox thinker, genuinely interested in the betterment of the religious cause, religious thinking and practice indicating an attitude of anticipation and belief for the future.

In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Aslam shows both sides of Islam especially in the way Kaukab and Shamas interpret their faith. Kaukab’s may be the severe and rigorous version but Aslam makes sure to acquaint readers with the moderate and humane face as well. Nadia Butt writes “the uniqueness of the novel does not merely lie in charting 'a clash of civilizations' in fiction between the West and
Islam but between Islamic fundamentalism and secular Muslims within one ethnic group” (155, 2008). By doing this, Aslam shows his hopeful standpoint. His objective does not seem to be to depict the harshness of the customs and traditions followed and the atrocities committed but rather that Islam has a benevolent and moderate side too. This aspect which is represented by Shamas is in opposition with the conservative part. Nadia Butt continues: “Hence the novel does not criticize Islam as a state religion but rather Islamic fundamentalists who harass liberal Muslims and hate non-believers” (155, 2008). Insistently and provocatively Aslam depicts the violence due to religion but his criticism is not of Islam per se but the extremist interpretation that many characters take up. The final communication from Aslam then is that certain practices of the religion are inexcusable but the religion itself is not wrong.

In this chapter, finally, it can be said that despite the conditions portrayed realistically, the confidence of the novelists in humankind is alive. Grouped together, the three writers offer varied and interesting perspectives on the association between fundamentalism, religion and violence. Concurrently, all three have examined the tradition of religion from dual aspects as being both destructive and malvolent as well as constructive and benevolent. They reveal the underlying ambiguity and contradiction of the issue of interpretations. Prejudiced elucidations like that of traditionalists who believe in a severe form of religion that create an environment of intolerance and divisiveness, are emphasized at the same time as other moderate interpretations calling attention to the positive aspects of the same doctrine are underlined as well. This quality enriches the readers’ concept of the complexities and challenges inherent in such a lineage and the need to understand, appreciate and adopt the codes of affirmative variants. In this way, the writing of the three authorial voices provides readers with thoughtfulness of their role as members of society and despite certain variables, shares an affinity for the approaches that highlight the course that tries tolerance and counters intolerance.