Chapter – V

Family Relationships

Traditionally, the institution of the family has been viewed as a unit with several functions, notably legitimate sexual outlet for the partners, procreation, socialization of children, and in some cases, production . . . [to feminists], the family is an unequal institution in terms of income distribution, the power to make decisions, the giving and receiving of services. They have located the structural origins of women’s oppression in the family by pointing to male control of female sexuality, male rights to female servicing and the non-enforcement of male responsibility to provide financially for the family. . . . The family is often not the cosy haven that it is sometimes depicted to be. According to the Frankfurt School, it tends to produce authoritarian personalities who tend towards Fascism; According to Laing and the anti-psychiatrists, it produces schizophrenia; and feminists have shown that violence is prevalent in the family, in the form of wife-battering and sexual abuse of children. Marxists see the family as integral to capitalism in its role of socializing future generations of docile workers. (Encyc.of Sociology 125-126)

Parsi familial life is marked by late marriages, low-birth rate, growing divorce rate, illness and ageing. As the chroniclers of Parsi lives, both Sidhwa and Mistry have delved deep into the Parsi families and have come out parading a plethora of issues which plague them.

Bapsi Sidhwa attempts to develop a philosophical conception of history. This point of view, used as a literary strategy assumes great
significance. Sidhwa avoids omniscient narration in *Ice–Candy Man*. The novel marks a new phase in her creative writing, especially in the use of narrative voice. Sidhwa employs the two narrative voices for rendering an account of Partition: the first is that of Lenny, a child and the other is that of the omniscient authorial narrative voice.

Lenny’s rendering is through her dreams and nightmares. It is a subjective view and as a child is not enlightened about the consequences of events. Sidhwa’s narrative illustrates the horrors of the Partition and is noteworthy for its dramatic use of language.

Lenny tries to interpret the actions and events connected with the Partition. But she is too young to accomplish it. Lenny is a victim of polio whereas Brit is an invalid by birth. Lenny’s predicament is also qualitatively different from that of Brit in that she is a girl.

Lenny and the Ayah despite their intense struggle, fail to acquire an identity of their own. Through Lenny’s perceptions, Sidhwa demonstrates how absurd it is to break a country.

*Ice-Candy-Man* is considered to be the record of Lenny’s education in the crucible of life. Lenny’s growth of consciousness takes place against the backdrop of the Partition. The process follows a parallel time order.

The story is narrated by the Parsi girl and she picturizes different types of the Parsis living in the Lahore of 1940’s. This framework permits for a life of seclusion rather than the active engagement with politics. The child-narrator serves as a creative/critical purpose. Lenny, being a child is ingenuous in her reactions. This facilitates an emotional expression of
events and makes for a more thorough exposure of the human tragedy that was to be a blot in the Post-Independence Sub-continent.

In the novel, the author and the narrator intersect at various points. Lenny is a victim of polio. She is from a Parsi family and was a young girl at the time of the Partition, very much like the author. The author herself was aware of the dangers of a close identification between narrator and author and has achieved a fine balance between herself and Lennie.

In a very didactic moment, the novel contends that Jinnah is incapable of harsh compliments. The gullibility and innocence of Lenny is seen in the manner in which she allows herself to be manipulated by her cousin. The novel is specifically about a Parsi family that from the beginning chooses to be aloof from religious feuds. The religious differences of Sikh-Hindu-Muslim have no bearing on the Parsis.

The role played by Lenny’s mother and grandmother is mainly to find ways of rehabilitating the women who have been abused. The novel makes the issue of women a central theme in the narrative structure. The violence that is done to women lies beyond indeterminacy. The novel also stresses the open-endedness of artifice.

In her novels, Sidhwa emphasises women-related issues. She projects a women-to-women bonding. The question of female-child education gains significance in this novel.

When Lenny’s god mother learns about Ayah’s presence in the Hira mandi, she swings into action to gather the rescued. First, she calls Ice-Candy man to her house. She herself visits Ayah. She also tries to comfort and console her. Lenny’s family helps everyone who is in distress. Lenny’s
world is considered to be very small, but it is full of colour and variety. Only Ayah, who is always with her has friends and admirers of all races and faiths. Lenny’s mother and god mother do all they can for the riot – victims.

The Ice – Candy man forces Ayah to embrace Islam and marries her. But she has not even an iota of love for him. When Lenny’s God mother visits her, she only entreats her to get away from him. The God mother rescues her and gets her sent to her family in Amritsar.

Hamida is another victim of men’s atrocities. Hamida gets employed as a nursemaid by Lenny’s mother. Sidhwa portrays men as ruthless victimizers and women as compassionate and victimized. This conforms to Sidhwa’s feminine perspective on the Partition.

The novel deals with many stories; some more compelling than others. But all are narrated in a way that does not privilege one over another. The novel has to be read only as national allegory like the model of Frederic Jameson. It is also more than just an allegorical tale about the Partition. It focuses on a Parsi family that from the beginning chooses to be aloof from religious feuds and in unity with all segments of society. The historical episodes present the migration of the Parsis from Persia, their initial rejection by the Indian ruler and the address by the doctor at a community meeting in which he advocates neutrality. This is a significant pointer to the role that the Parsis chose to play at times of crises.

Feroza belongs to the Parsi community living in the conservative Pakistan. As a youngster, she has been influenced by the orthodox air around. Hence, she does not want her mother to wear a sleeveless sari-
blouse. Feroza says: “Mummy, please don’t come to school dressed like that” \textit{(AB,10)} she doesn’t like to attend phone calls for fear of having to talk to some unknown person. She displays conservative tendencies with regard to man–woman relationships, clothing, eating, dueling etc.

Zareen wants her daughter to grow and expand. So she tells Cyrus her husband that Feroza must go to America for three or four months as “travel will broaden her outlook, get this puritanical rubbish out of her head” \textit{(AB,14)}. Initially Cyrus protests, but later he accepts the proposal. Zareen contacts her brother Maneck studying in America. He also agrees to co-operate: “I’ll look after her, don’t worry, just send her” \textit{(AB,26)}.

Feroza too is happy to have this change as she says to herself, “I’m going to America, I am going to America” \textit{(AB,27)}.

Ultimately after the ‘blessing’ and ‘hugging’ Ceremony \textit{(46)} and doses of instructions from her grannies, mother and aunts, Feroza boards the plane for New York. Feroza has different phases of experience in the brave new world of America in general and particularly in the company of Maneck, her uncle at the YMCA in New York.

Sidhwa in her novels deals with the past and present history and seeks to feminise it in the above fashion with an active interrogation of the woman’s position in that historical / political situation.

An \textit{American Brat} explains the increasing feeling of unease that the Parsi community feels in Pakistan. Sidhwa sees how there is a general descent into authoritarianism in the name of religion. The non–Islamic communities like the Parsis were affected by increasing fundamentalism. Zareen too complains about her daughter’s attitudes being affected by the
laws. She says: “When I was her age, I wore frocks and cycled to Kinnaird college. And that was in ‘59 and ‘60 fifteen year after Partition. Can she wear frocks? … If everything corrupts their pious little minds so easily, then the Mullahs should wear barqas and stay within the four walls of their houses. (AB,10).

Women are most affected by the dictates of narrow religious sanctions which propagate gender segregation. The narrator goes on to add that their most trivial conversations taking a political turn was not surprising. In Pakistan, politics with its special brew of marital law and religion influenced every aspect of day-to-day living(11).

In *The American Brat*, Feroza’s journey to America serves the novel in two ways. It is her journey toward self – discovery and also serves to give the author / protagonist precious objectivity. This enables only a genuine evaluation of both the societies that she is affiliated to: her separation from home and family results from her move to America and has a salutary effect on her mind.

Maneck receives Feroza at Kennedy Airport and frees her from the unhappy situation created by the immigration officer and makes her aware of the fact, “You’ll have to learn to stand a lot of things in this world” (AB,66).

Feroza’s stay with Manek forms the first phase. Maneck makes her undergo adventures. He also teaches her manners and helps her cope with all sorts of unexpected situations(*AB,135).* He too desires her to join a junior college. This would really ease her assimilation in American way of life.
The college was ready to offer a stipend. Her parents also permitted her “to study in America” (AB,139). Feroza was timid, tense and complex-ridden. She joins the University of Denver for the Hotel Management course. The third phase of her American sojourn begins only here. The new setup makes her think that “she was in the right place and that her life would develop in unexpected and substantial ways” (AB,212).

Shashi was a year ahead of her in the Hotel Management Program. He made a magnetic impact on her. He introduced his black and white friends from different countries to her. For Feroza, it was like stepping through Alice’s wonderful mirror. Shashi’s entry opened up something which was locked within Feroza and allowed “her access to happier places within herself.” (AB,215).

In the fourth phase, Feroza meets David Press to buy his second-hand car. She submits herself and surrenders fully to David. Her mother comes to America to dissuade Feroza from this inter-faith marriage. Feroza firmly and boldly tells her mother: “We’re having a civil marriage in any case, a judge will marry us. Of course you know David and I are Unitarians” (AB,278).

Her mother’s efforts end in failure since Feroza is strong and firm in her decision of marrying David. So Zareen makes an effort in dissuading David from this marriage. The marriage matter ends without paralysing Feroza’s onward march. She applies for a graduate program in Anthropology in the University of Arizona. Later, she ruminates: “There would never be another David but there would be other men and who knew perhaps someday she might like someone enough to marry him. It wouldn’t
matter if he was a Parsee or of other faith. She would be more sure of herself and she would not let anyone interfere” (AB, 317).

The places Feroza visits (the museums, the city streets, Twin Falls, Denver) the people she meets (Maneck, Jo, Shashi and David) and the books she reads (Psychology, philosophy, literature and anthropology) help her mind expand. Her mind does not fluctuate. This continuous expansion leads to a self-contained state and happiness.

Mistry too analyzes familial relationships at various levels in his fiction. *Such a Long Journey* (1991) is a novel that heralds Mistry’s arrival as a gifted writer. It is set against the background of the Indo–Pakistan War of 1971. It deals with the predicament of Gustad Noble, the central character.

Gustad is presented as an individual classical tragic hero who passes from ‘happiness to misery.’ He has to struggle against heavy odds which he tackles with placid serenity. Many things do not escape the novelist’s serious concern. He also cherishes the values of friendship, condemns the scourge of war and also denounces the hypocritical political leaders who have eaten the vitals of the nation.

In a post–modernist tone, he refrains from becoming a political propagandist. He exposes the political and social ills in India. The novel conveys Mistry’s opposition to social and class distinctions.

The title ‘*Such a Long Journey*’ has a symbolic significance and refers to the life of Gustad Noble, the central character of the story. Gustad was a bank employee and a father of three children: two sons – Sohrab and Darius and a daughter Roshan. As the novel progresses, Gustad’s hopes,
dreams and aspirations go contrary to his likings. The frowns of fortune render him helpless. Major Billimoria is a loving brother to Gustad. He is almost a ‘second father’ to Gustad’s children. Gustad’s son Sohrab’s refusal to enroll himself as an IIT student troubles him. The protracted illness of Roshan (a complicated case of diarrhoea), and also Gustad’s receipt of a package from Major Billimoria troubles him a lot.

Along with these, Gustad’s close friend Dinshawji’s illness and his eventual death, and the death of Tehmul Lungraa, a retarded child, another inmate of the Khodadad building, finally the destruction of Gustad’s sacred wall by the municipal authorities simply wreck him.

Dilnavaz is asked to perform some magic rites for a few days before the setting of the sun. Due to this process, the trial goes on, but the results are far from satisfactory. Sohrab drinks some lime juice prepared by is mother who does some magic rituals to regain her son’s lost interest. Success is not attained, since somebody has to drink a juice mixed with lime juice to transfer the spell from Sohrab to the second person. Tehmul becomes the target. There is little effect on Soharb’s mind. Sohrab also revolts and leaves home and Roshan’s illness becomes a matter of great concern. Miss Kuptitia maintains that Roshan’s illness is caused by the evil eye cast on her.

This does not relieve Roshan of her illness. According to Kuptitia, it is both evil eye and some dark force that are responsible for the continuous illness. Finally, she suggests to Dilnavaz that Mr.Rabadi is the man behind the misfortune.
The central character is Gustad Noble in whose life and suffering, a large rhythm of universal pattern is carved out. Gustad’s suffering is no suffering in abstraction. Through this novel, Mistry hints that no happiness will exist for ever.

Above everything, it is only destiny that Gustad finds at the helm of affairs. Like Oedipus, he surrenders to the will of Providence. His dignity and greatness help him to withstand the tortures heaped on him.

The arrest of Major Billimoria on charges of corruption is published in the paper. Gustad’s horizon is completely darkened with fear and uncertainty. Ghulam Mohammed asks Gustad in a semi-threatening tone to return the whole amount in one month’s time to save Billimoria’s life. At that time, Roshan’s illness worsens. When Gustad visits Dr. Paymaster to report to him on Roshan’s continuous illness, he is taunted by the doctor who thinks that he has modified the prescription. The illness assumes an unexpected proportion. Poverty haunts Gustad who cannot make both ends meet. He sells his camera and his wife’s two gold bangles.

Dinshawji is hospitalised after a sudden collapse in the office. The first great blow in Gustad’s life comes in the form of the death of Dinshawji despite his prayer for the lives and recovery of both Roshan and Dinshawji at Mount Mary.

Gustad makes a trip to Delhi to meet Major Billimoria who wants to tell him all that had happened. It is also a big fraud of sixty lakhs rupees in which the Prime Minister’s office gets directly involved. Bilimoria is asked to get the money from the SBI Director on an emergency basis to
finance guerilla training, pending official sanction by impersonating the
Prime Minister’s voice on Telephone.

Gustad comes out of himself to be one with death and one with life.
He prays for all the lives: for him, for Tehmul, for Jimmy, for Dinshawji,
for his papa and mama, for grandpa and grandma “all who had to wait for
so long” (SLJ, 337). He prays for the mercy of God on all souls.

Only out of this vast vacuum, there emerges a profound meaning
that signifies the archetypal cycle of birth, death and rebirth. He also
accepts the return of his prodigal son. It is only in complete surrender that
the father and son lose their personalities. Now they reach out to each
other: "Gustad turned around. He saw his sons standing in the door way,
and each held the other’s eyes…." (337).

The novel represents the larger rhythm with universal significance
and also tries to bring in other smaller rhythms within its fold.

The misfortunes that befall Gustad’s family are also interpreted by
Miss Kutpitia from her own ideological point of view. It is rooted in
beliefs and superstitions, culturally accepted and transmitted from
generation to generation.

In Such a Long Journey, Mistry comes out as a critical realist so far
as the treatment of social reality is concerned. With the help of this method,
his ideology comes out to project the kind of society he wants to be a part
of.

The novelist’s departure from the emphasis on the representation of
the psychic being of the character reveals the inadequacy of the novel form
in the post modernist period. This novel is a successful work of art in which a variety of values crowd generating a classical structure par excellence.

Gustad’s devotion to his family, loyalty to his friends and love for his Parsi community are continually tested through a series of events and situations. Ultimately, loyalty and journeying constitute two major contrasting patterns in his life.

The novel is more than a tale of one individual’s life. It is the microcosm of a community that is an image of a ‘tribe’ invented through the imagination of the story teller.

The novel narrates and renarrates stories of the country, culture and community woven around certain points of time and place. Characters like Gustad, Dinshawji and Billimoria are vehicles for conveying ethnic, communal and national consciousness.

This novel appears to be a story of journey of Gustad who along with his wife, two sons and a daughter tries to rephrase epigraphical excerpts of the novel “to live free of care during the days of the heroic labours, undertaking a challenging journey in a ‘new’ country where ‘old tracks are lost’. Mistry’s novel deals with the Parsi community and its identity especially with its national consciousness and also with its identity in the world. The novel also traces the history and the proud heritage of the Parsi Community in India.

To quote from the novel: “This may be but our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of God was even born, a thousand years before the Buddha, two hundred years before
Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam” (SLJ, 24).

Also, this novel sums up the fears and anxieties of the Parsi community. As a community, Parsis have not only lived peacefully in India but also contributed to its development in their own way.

Gustad feels that minorities have no future in India. He says: “No future for minorities with all these Fascist Shivsena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the Black people in America twice as good as the white man to get half as much. How could the mute Sohrab understand this” (SLJ, 55).

Various other characters belonging to the Parsi community in the novel also express their anguish at the changing pattern of communal relationships and the increasing intolerance. This enriches the ideational intent of the novel.

The racist and communal forces lead agitations finally resulting in massive violence. The individual traits of the Parsi community are given authentic expression through minute descriptions of rituals, and their impact are interpreted by individual characters. Mistry, with almost a caricaturing instinct dwells on individual idiosyncrasies and habits of speech. The Parsi – Gujarati words interspersed throughout the novel also give colour and substance to Mistry’s portrayal of Parsi life. The Parsi community is intensely conscious of its distinctive private identity and also aware of its place in the Indian national scene.
Mistry has exploited some historical highlights of post-independence era to record the way his community reacted to them or were affected by them.

In the novel, the sudden and uncalled-for rebuff of Sohrab not only shatters all hopes of Gustad but also makes a surprising turn in the later course of the novel. There appears the theme of father-son hostility.

Mistry has earned critical appreciation for his vivid and realistic portrayal of Indian society especially the Parsi community. The microcosm of Indian society that Mistry writes about in his fiction is often in conflict at an individual as well as a larger level. Mistry’s fiction traces the inextricable patterns of behavior of various Parsi individuals who struggle to find space and roots in the main stream.

*A Fine Balance* is considered a socio-political, cultural, historical novel more in the nature of a documentary about the situation and lives of the people that inhabit the novel. Mistry exposes the lives of the four main protagonists to focus on the mechanism of political governance that prevails in modern India and its impact on individual lives.

The novel is filled with brutality, discrimination, injustice, lack of opportunity suffered by the average citizen and the despair and revulsion they cause in the minds of people who find expectations and hopes belied amidst heaps of fresh promises clothed in rhetorical but empty phrases. The novel offers a realistic, if painful documentation of India.

The novel’s four protagonists represent the commonest of the commons in India. The novel is basically a study about human endeavor for
dignity and the endless struggle of human beings to strike a fine balance between their own desires, performance and fulfillment.

Mistry traces the story of the lives of these people against the socio-political background. Each of the four protagonists is a victim of his social, familial and communal conditioning. Each aspires to improve and change his lot but finds himself pulled down by hostile circumstances.

The protagonists view life according to their own experiences. As a diasporic writer and Parsi, Mistry is sensitive to the plight of those who do not belong to the main stream.

The story in *A Fine Balance* revolves around a widow who is living alone in the city of Bombay. Maneck Kohlah, a sensitive Parsi boy, a student from a hillside town in the shadow of the Himalayas, whose family had lost all its wealth in the Partition of India is a paying guest with Dina.

The two untouchables, Ishvar Darji and his nephew Om Prakash, the tailors employed by Dina, struggle to rise above their designated caste roles. They also have to endure the atrocities of the so-called high class people. They offer a glimpse of rural India.

Ishvar and Om decide to migrate to Bombay and become exiles by choice, since their entire family had been mercilessly murdered. They also feel that the migration would really transform their lives. Their life in Bombay does not meet their own expectations. They are mistaken for beggars. The novelist also describes their inability to adjust in an alien town after leaving their village. They really become beggars in the end, felled by the hostile socio-political climate engendered by the Internal Emergency. ‘Beautification’ wrecks them.
Dina also decides to be displaced from her home, since she desires to assert her self and individuality. She seeks to restructure her life, refusing to be a dependent on anyone economically. Her life is a series of emotional upheavals. Maneck also becomes a victim of displacement. He is uprooted from the protective environment of his home among the hills.

Emergency is the cause of the failure of both Dina and Maneck. Beggars are made slaves in labour-camps. Three sisters born in a poor family hang themselves to spare their parents the shame of having unmarried daughters. Thus, the characters suffer for survival in a cruel world that trudge along in the so-called ‘welfare policy’ forgetting that one cannot legislate welfare and happiness.

Social circumstances and a sense of isolation paradoxically bring them together, providing a link to survive. Their miseries, joys and sorrows make them feel that life is only a fine balance between hope and despair.

The rich and varied character gallery of this novel portrays the plight of the poor from the Parsi community. The novel presents the pain and suffering of the poorest among India’s teeming millions. Mistry narrates the story with rhetorical flourishes and Freudian insights. Human experience is anatomized as put under an ironic microscope.

According to Pascal, “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” (http://www.brainyquote.com/). Mistry shows how many social injustices have religious backing. Social crimes go under the pontifical ‘religious’ banner. Mistry highlights many such events. The misery of the tailors depicts the tyranny of the caste system in rural India. The following is a
Poverty drives the untouchables to depend upon the higher castes to feed their family. The Thakurs obtain cheap labour from the lower caste villagers.

Again, Dukhi Mochi accepts to powder one sack full of chilies alone, for a meager wage though the Thakur asks him “Can you finish that by sunset”? or may be I should call two men.”(AFB, 103)

Dukhi violates caste-rules by making his sons tailors. This shows impulsive courage shown by a man, conditioned into accepting his position in the caste hierarchy. Dukhi decides to send Narayan and Ishvar as apprentices of Ashraf’s tailor shop in a nearby town and master a new vocation. The boys find a sea change in their own life style after joining in Muzzafar Tailoring Company. Thus, they turn from cobblers to tailors. Dukhi says: “if some one asks your name, don’t say Ishvar Mochi or Narayan Mochi, from now on you are Ishvar Darji and Narayan Darji (AFB, 114).

Dukhi’s family deserves special punishment according to the Thakur. Because of this heartless upper caste-attitude, the entire family of Narayan Darji and his companions become victims. The untouchables lose their identities because of mistaken beliefs. According to their naive/popular belief, untouchability is nothing but the result of Karma.

In the city, Ishvar and Om make progress as tailors. The Parsi widow, Dina Dalal, gives shelter to them. They are allowed to sleep in her
verandah. She too cannot afford to lose their services. When Ishvar and Om go to their village to celebrate Om’s marriage and Maneck returns home to leave for Dubai, loneliness returns to the house of Dina.

Dina’s brother Nusswan personifies the difference between the cultural patterns of the Hindu and Parsi community at the time when she is instructed to remarry. Remarriage is generally prohibited in Parsi community. Male hegemony is part of Parsi values. Dina’s brother treats her cruelly and he does not permit her to visit her friends.

Nusswan also insists Dina to remarry a person of his choice. But she refuses and asserts her individuality. She marries Dalal, whom she loves intensely. Dina becomes the symbol of a new woman who violates the stereotypical feminine role. She emerges as a strong and independent woman.

Fearing sad displacement and deracination, Dukhi Mochi refuses to migrate with his family to the town though he has been advised by his friend Ashraf, a Muslim with interests in Dukhi’s development. This novel depicts the scenario of a fast changing India on account of Westernisation and questions the non-acceptance of the traditional role models or situations. At bottom, the novel focuses on the inherent meanness of human nature.

Two of the protagonists are Parsis while the other two belong to the lower class of untouchables. One of these protagonists is a widow and so is a twice-marginalized character.

Dina Dalal, like Maneck Kohlah belongs to the Parsi community. Widowed at the age of twenty two, she is a lonely figure in the novel. She
is estranged from her parental family that leads to a monotonous existence. Her life has been a cyclic pattern for her that began in her brother’s house. Dina Dalal accepts the emotional subjugation of the patriarchal system that her brother Nusswan symbolizes.

Failing health and poor eyesight make Dina emotionally and physically drained. Dina’s brother resents her departure from the accepted norms of the family and society. She also desires to educate herself. She refuses to follow tradition and be acquiescent and submissive. Her endless struggle is to lead a life with dignity. Dina finds herself emotionally and physically vulnerable in keeping her spirit and selfhood intact.

Dina also takes a long time to get over her apprehensions about Om and Ishvar’s antecedents and intentions. Only after analyzing the personal tragedies of their lives, does she take the initiative to have them as inmates.

The day-to-day struggle for survival of these characters explores the possibility of an answer to their existential crises.

The four individuals in the apartment finally function like one family unit. They too start conversing on politics and political news. This dialogue helps them to derive solace and comfort from each other. Only human love becomes the basis for the unity among these characters.

This novel is about the quintessential spirit of modern India that stands for the realization of the dream of ‘Ram Rajya’ that inspired people in the struggle for their country’s freedom. It lies deep within the heart of every citizen.

Moreover, the common man dreams of overcoming the suffering, degradation and pain to the maximum extent. He longs for
Justice, equality and a dignified existence for himself. Mistry hopes for the best in this dismal situation. The four protagonists in the novel reaffirm the great human spirit that is like the great Indian spirit, immortal but invisible.

Mistry’s characters are in any way able to change the power balance that made their marginalisation and silencing. They also maintain the fine balance between the exploiter and the exploited.

In *A Fine Balance* the journeys are not restricted just to the Parsis’ diasporic peregrinations. The novel opens with Maneck Kohlah’s journey from the mountain village to the city by the sea. Maneck’s Parsi Zoroastrian ethno-religious status becomes a significant safeguard in this locale. Dina Dalal moves from protected girlhood under the indulgent care of the doctor-father to the harsh reality of reductive femaleness under the hegemony of her brother Nusswan.

Dina’s happiness is short – lived as Rustom is killed in an accident. This shock makes her accept Nusswan’s offer to live with him and his family. Very soon her sympathy for Nusswan wears off and then the brother and sister indulge in a typical Parsi exchange of invectives and insults.

Dina’s journey back to her husband’s flat and her work for the Au Revoir Fashion House brings Ishvar and Omprakash into her life. But this soon comes to an end when Maneck leaves for a job in the Gulf and the tailors go on a visit to their village. So Dina is forced to go back to Nusswan’s home. Thus her cycle of journeys comes to an end.
Dina’s life as the pampered daughter of Dr. Shroff comes to an end with the death of her father. Patriarchy in the form of Nusswan tries to crush all that is bright and fine in her.

Mistry’s Dina Dalal and Maneck Kohlah ring time as did other Parsi characters in his earlier novels. Mistry has to be admired for trying to magnify the shape of his narratives. *A Fine Balance* is a very significant text in the newly emerging canon of Indian literature in English. The novel chronicles the India of its times. Nusswan, Dina’s brother personifies the difference between the cultural pattern of the Hindu and Parsi communities. The language of Mistry clearly reflects Indian culture. Dina represents a kind of urban sophistication. She survives on her meagre income. She is also ready to help Ishvar Darji and Om Prakash.

The novel opens with a train journey and ends with ‘Epilogue: 1984’ after Dina finishes her journey of emancipation and self-realization. But Ishvar and Om have their own dreams and are still on their journey.

A member of the privileged middle class, Maneck loses out in the struggle to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair”. The upper class people notice a semblance of order during the time of emergency. Emergency means, “No more strikes and marches and silly disturbances” (*AFB*, 73).

Nusswan is shocked at the plan of eliminating two hundred million surplus people in the country. He proclaims: “With the emergency, people can freely speak their minds. That’s a good thing about it” (*AFB*, 373).

Mistry also deals with Emergency’s excesses. “Have n’t seen you for some time … there’s even a new law called MISA to simplify the
whole procedure”\textit{(AFB, 294-295)} is a chilling reminder of the socio-political situation that prevailed then.

Mistry also considers the community as the pivot of all social changes. As social humanist, he looks forward to create a society based on a common identity namely humanity. Mistry subscribes to humanism and take a firm stand against exploitation of all kinds.

The secret longings of the poor end their pursuits in trying to build a new life for themselves is the focus of the novel. Mistry’s novel springs from a lively imagination. It takes a detached look at the oriental background, and is contributed to by a willing self-deception.

The novel presents the problems of caste and communalism, the humiliations that the downtrodden have to go through.

\textit{A Fine Balance} is considered to be a novel with a humane vision. All the events and the images are brought together skillfully through the two tailors and their lives. The actions of Dina, and her tears arouses pity for all the evils of humanity. Back home, these characters have an identity of their own. Yet, they have to struggle in an indifferent city to carve a new identity. But the novel ends certainly on an optimistic and hopeful note.

Mistry does not stop with caste discrimination; he also discusses gender discrimination. He asserts that women are relegated to a subordinate status in the family and in the society. Even upper caste women are not exempted from oppression. Mistry truthfully presents this shameful aspect of Indian society. He also points out the injustices done to women
and interrogates the marginalization of women in a male-dominated society.

*A Fine Balance* is basically a realistic tragedy that portrays the humble dreams and aspirations of the common people. The message is also implied that characters good at heart, meet an undeserved doom. Mistry’s characters are filled with noble sentiments. Only Nusswan and his wife are to be considered snobs.

Pauperisation both financial and emotional, is a hard fact of life for characters in *A Fine Balance*. The novel is a caustic and artistic comment on a futile search for stability and meaning in the given context.

As a chronicler of the Parsi community, Mistry is keenly aware of his community’s peculiar predicament that is referred to as ‘ethnic atrophy’.

*A Fine Balance* is a richly detailed human narrative of the intertwined fates of the characters. Mistry is not a pessimist at heart and does not despair of life. He conveys the message of life beyond life and of a meaningful earthly existence.

Dina Dalal’s past underlines the sense of squalor and failure that middle classes face especially in the under developed nation. Dina’s life is a series of emotional upheavals. The novel is not to be considered a political document. It may be read as an effort at interweaving national history with the personal lives of the protagonists. This novel needs to be read as an expression of the predicament of self in the Indian Urban / Rural context. It succeeds in recreating the Parsi ambience. The rich culture,
customs and traditions of the marginalized. Parsi community are foregrounded especially in explaining Parsi beliefs and rituals.

The plot of Family Matters revolves around only lower middle class Parsi family of Bombay. Nariman Vakeel, a retired professor of English literature in his seventies suffers from Parkinson’s disease. His step daughter Coomy is more concerned than his step son Jal. He lives with them in a building called ‘Chateau Felicity.’ They are the children of Palonji Contractor, the former deceased husband of his wife Yasmin who too is no more.

Mistry presents the different perspectives and attitudes of parents and children. A mother takes care of her unborn child in her womb for many months. After the birth of the child, parents bear all the hardships of bringing it up with pleasure. But generally the world undergoes a sea change of the time when the children have to look after their aged parents.

Mistry highlights in this novel the misery and travails of parents in old age and also the heartlessness of children. The problems of the aged parents is pictured clearly through the protagonist, the seventy nine year old Professor Nariman Vakeel.

Despite suffering from Parkinson’s disease and protestations of his step – children, Vakeel insists on his vesperal walk. When Coomy asks him: “How many people with Parkinson’s do what you do” (FM,3) he shrugs off her fears by saying “I’m not going trekking in Nepal. A little stroll down the lane, that’s all” (FM,3).
Nariman realizes that dangers occur indoors as well as outdoors. Nariman longs for fresh air and life out side the ambit of his step –chiledren. This is clearly symbolised by the picture of an old Parsi in a trade – mark solar topee. Standing with his back to the camera, gazing out at the sea. Nariman has a fall while crossing the lane outside Chateau Felicity. So Coomy accuses Nariman for his irresponsible behaviour.

Nariman retorts: “In my youth, my parents controlled me and destroyed those years. Thanks to them, I married your mother and wrecked my middle years. Now you want to torment my old age. I wont’ allow it” (FM,7)

At this Coomy flares up and retaliates with, “you ruined Mama’s life and mine and Tal’s. I will not tolerate a word against her”(FM,7). Mistry points to the fact that parents are considered a burden. Coomy’s resentment is also heightened that it is the ‘second class’ children like her and Jal who have to bear this responsibility. But the ‘flesh and blood daughter Roxana’ has escaped hers by virtue of her married status.

In his youth, Nariman had an affair with a Goan girl, Lucy Braganza. Thirty six years ago, he ended his relations with Lucy. But he had a suitable replacement in the form of Yasmin Contractor, a widow with two children. “And that’s the best you can expect sister with your history”(FM,15). So he becomes the husband of Yasmin Contractor and the father of Jal and Coomy.

At the time of Nariman’s seventy ninth birthday celebrations, Nariman and his family are more or less happy. Coomy warns Nariman that he should not go out because of his serious fall. She also insists “she
and Jal would deliver him straight away to the Cheney Residence (*FM,35*). Yezad rejects it by saying “The chief is welcome, just make sure you bring one of your extra rooms. We live in a two room flat not a seven room palace like this one” (*FM,35*).

The boys question their parents on their way back home. Mistry explains the situation prevailing among the contemporary Parsis in accepting inter-communal marriages. Yezad and Ravana try to explain the problem Nariman’s parents had with inter-religious marriages.

A confused Jahangir questions: “If there was Kul against some one for marrying who was not a Parsi. His father says: “Yes, the law of bigotry” (*FM,42*).

There is also a dramatic irony in Yezad’s response towards the end of the novel when opposes his elder son Murad’s relationship with a non-Parsi girl.

Nariman has a fall after his birth day party. The second fall results in serious damage and he is admitted in the Parsi General Hospital. Nariman is diagnosed by Dr. Tarapore. He has suffered a fracture in his left ankle. He is discharged after two days in hospital.

Coomy and Jal leave Nariman at Roxana’s home. Nariman feels that he has no right to refuse or even say, “This flat is my home, and I part it in your names because I did not differentiate between you and Roxana. Would you now throw me out in my helplessness? That they would probably laugh that I was getting dramatic” (*FM,87*). Nariman says: “lying in bed here or there is all the same to me. But it will be difficult for them in such a small flat (*FM,87*).
Mistry stresses one of the major themes of the novel that paucity of accommodation is the bane of the majority of the family units in the congested city of Bombay. This also has ruined the happiness of many families. Nariman manages and reconciles himself to his helpless situation. His sudden arrival at Roxana’s little flat, hits the pleasant villa of Roxana also. She bends down to him. But his pungent odour repelled her. But she fought the impulse to move away. She also wondered how well they had been looking after him (FM,105-106).

Roxana loves her father but the problem is only with their small one bed room flat. So, Nariman moves to Coomy. To what extent children can avoid the responsibility of parents is revealed through the behaviour of Coomy.

Coomy refuses to take her father back until the flat is perfect in shape again. The bitter quarrel with Roxana over money strains Yezad’s patience and he also blames Coomy for not caring for the family. He charges Coomy: “Family does not matter to you! You keep nursing your bitterness instead of nursing papa”(FM,193). Roxana too protests: “Papa is not football…. If you force papa out, you may as well throw me out at the same time”(FM,195)

Sometimes Nariman’s presence irritates his son –in-law Yezad who has to eat his breakfast in awkward situations. This experience is common in many families in Bombay.

The Chenoy family struggles very much to care for Nariman though the monthly budget gets more and more strained. Roxana tries her level best to manage her monthly budget. Even her elder son Muhrad
contributes to the family budget. He walks home from school and slips the saved bus fare into his mother’s envelopes. Roxana and Yezad insist that Coomy keeps her side of the bargain and take her step father back after the stipulated three weeks.

Later in the novel, Coomy dies. Yezad’s idealistic employer Mr. Kapur is killed by Shivasena goons and his pragmatic widow dispenses with the services of Yezad. The Chenoy family faces real poverty with the loss of Yezad’s regular income. They are saved by Jal who suggests the plan of selling the Chenoy’s flat. They also decide to move in together into Nariman’s larger flat. The Chenoy flat would really fetch a handsome price. They may repair the larger flat and live on the balance money. Yezad also hates his son’s association with non-Parsi girls with the same fervour once displayed by Nariman’s father. This shows the fact that history repeats itself.

*Family Matters* seems to be all about financial matters which condition the familial relationships. The best known family value in India is the respect for elders. In the novel, we observe a tug-of-war between Coomy and Roxana over the issue of looking after their indisposed father. Even God is falsely blamed for what has been done to the roof above their heads by Jal and Coomy themselves (184).

Nariman repressed his desires which stage a comeback in his dreams. Nariman’s children never excused their father / step father for the pain that he inflicted on Yasmin through his belated chivalry.

Spiritual values provide sustenance to man in troubled times. But human selfishness proves a stumbling block. This is expressed in Coomy’s
character. She is faced with the unwelcome prospect of hosting her ailing father. She invents the excuse of a leaking roof. “An act of God is no one’s fault. Jal is prevailed upon to cooperate but is reported to be uncomfortable with casting God in a supportive role in the deceitful drama” (FM, 184).

For Roxana, “belief is not essential, the prayer sound itself will bring him peace and tranquility” (FM, 445) The pictures of different apostles and prophets Sai Baba, Virgin Mary, Christian Cross, Buddha belonging to different faiths and also several Zarathustras used to decorate the walls of the flat in Chateau Felicity. Most Parsis like to keep these tokens of different religions in their homes.

In Family Matters, Mistry has based the central action on the situation arising out of the Shivsena agitation for the so-called sons of the soil in Bombay. This is really an act of political bugling which represents a stumbling block in the way of the Parsis’ healthy adjustment to the Indian society.

The theme of Family Matters reminds one of Eliot’s play The Family Reunion. The similarity lies with the title and the theme. The central character in Eliot’s play is haunted by his guilty conscience. For his desire to kill his wife. Family Matters presents an ideal study of the fluctuating commitment to values in the face of odds of different kinds. Economic constraints play a great role in diluting dedication to family values or understanding moral and social values. Of all the characters in Family Matters, Yezad is the one whose professional life has been depicted in detail.
In Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* the focus of the novel is with the father-son relationship of Gustad and Sohrab. The relationship takes a nasty turn, when Sohrab refuses to join IIT in favour of an ordinary B.A..

Regarding Gustad, he relies on academic excellence and financial social superiority. He too considers that these are the only possible means of acquiring an elite status and a distinct identity.

The relationship between father and son can be considered as one of the many casualities of modernity. The tradition and individualism are in perpetual conflict. In the eyes of Gustad: “This was the bloody problem with modern education. In the name of progress, they discarded seemingly unimportant things without knowing that they were chucking out of the window of modernity, was tradition and if tradition was lost, then the loss of respect for those who respected and loved tradition always followed” (*SLJ*, 61).

Gustad feels that a coherent self is possible only through tradition. For his son, a unified identity from birth to death is no longer possible.

Sohrab, his son agrees with the concept that identity continues to be reformed as one comes closer with hybrid cultural, political and social systems.

In Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* too, Maneck Kohlah realises the agonies of father-son conflict. This idea is characterised by the unwillingness of his father to read the writing on the wall.

Rustom Kohlah, Maneck’s father runs the family business in the idyllic hills of North India. Maneck advises his father to follow new technologies, but to no avail. Modernisation, like death is a great leveller.
Here it is survival of the fittest. The arrival of giant business establishments kill the business of the Kohlahs. To quote from the novel: “But the giant corporation had targeted the hills, … pack up your machines sign over all rights…. Come grow with us and prosper” (AFB,220).

The foot paths, the slums, the teeming offices, the tenements, the Parsi enclaves are all created and then recreated in the fiction of Mistry as they proceed to form and reform in reality. Such a Long Journey has its setting, the exclusive enclave of Khodadad building home to the family of Gustad Noble, an aging Parsi Patriarch.

Mistry’s Family Matters is considered as Bombay epic. It can also be treated as a mourning for the decline of the Parsi faith. Here, Mistry makes us realise the negative effects of the Parsis’ insistence on keeping blood lines pure. An accident, one of those common things of old age lands Nariman in plaster, bedridden, helpless at the mercy of his children. Roxana, his own child will react to her father’s changed position from benign sorrowing patriarch. It also leads to unwanted burden.

In all the three novels of Mistry, a coherent concern for stability is visible, running as a unifying thread with the tangled lives and concerns of their Parsi protagonists. These three novels form a Bombay Trilogy.

Family Matters ends with an epilogue in Jehangir’s voice. Jehangir is a narrator in his teens. Nariman’s tragedy can be repeated in his grand children’s lives. Religious fundamentalism destroys the new generation’s chances of happiness.

Thus, Sidhwa’s and Mistry’s fiction give a sensitive portrayal of the Parsi families in India and Pakistan. Their novels have effectively dealt
with familial relationships at various levels between—man and woman, parents and children and among siblings as issues involving domestic harmony/disharmony, generational clash and sibling rivalry.