Chapter – I

Introduction

The colourful Parsi community has had a tumultuous history. The Parsis originally hailed from a place called ‘Pars’ in ancient Persia (the modern Iran). The community boasts of great teachers like Zarathustra who gave the sacred text of Zend-Avesta, to the community. The mighty Persian Empire had its salad days with great emperors like Darius I, II and III. Darius the III was humbled by Alexander the Great, marking the end of the Persian Empire. To make matters worse, the Islamic conquest of Persia during the 8th century resulted in a Parsi diaspora. A great number of Parsis reached the West Coast of India and were given asylum by Yadav Rana, the native ruler of a Gujarati Province on conditions like: they have to explain their religion to the King; they have to give up their native Persian language, and take on the languages of India; their women should wear the traditional dress of India; the men should lay down their weapons, and they should hold their wedding processions only in the dark (Kulke,28).

The Parsis accepted these conditions and settled on Indian soil. They later moved to cities like Bombay and Lahore.

During the British reign, the Parsis enjoyed good rapport with their English Masters. Apart from maintaining their religious practices intact, they readily imitated the western ways of living and built up their fortunes.
When India got independence, the Parsis were on the cross roads. They got trapped in both the Indian and Pakistan territories during the Partition. But they took the pragmatic decision of settling where they were.

For a minority community, the Parsis have made impressive contributions in all walks of Indian life. Jamshedji Tata built up an industrial Empire. Homi Jehangir Babha headed Indian Nuclear research. Sam Maneckshaw went on to become one of the celebrated generals of the Indian Army. Madam Bikaji Cama and Dadabhai Naoroji are celebrated Indian patriots. Zubin Metha has become a world-famous conductor of Orchestras; Freddie Mercury is a celebrated Western Singer. Homy K. Babha is a noted theoretician on cultural issues and a scholarly analyst of diasporic consciousness.

On the negative side, the Parsi community suffers from various issues like: late marriages, low birth rate, increasing divorce rate, illness, ageing, growing inter-community marriages etc. More importantly, the community has numerically remained a minority in both India and Pakistan a fact which has put them under a lot of psychological pressure.

The Parsis are a self-obsessed minority community. Due to the rise of communal forces, the minority communities have become self-conscious. This determines the quality of their association with other communities in the country. In moments of national crises, these communities transcend their community consciousness and this awareness
of being a minority never has come into conflict with their national consciousness.

In the changing scenario, the relationships within the family and community have also been marked by cordiality. The younger generation of Parsis are often against the old generation’s ideas of ethnic purity.

Nilufer E. Bharucha in her essay “Resisting Colonial and Postcolonial Hegemonies, Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ethno – Religious Discourse” describes ethnic identity and ethnicity. Generally ethnicity is defined as a condition of belonging to a particular group often with the feeling of pride that is engendered by such belonging.

“Western sociologists have viewed ethnicity not just as a categoric marker but as a pejorative construct” (Connor, 319). Ethnic identity cannot be subordinated to secular modernity. Most human beings finally live in tribal mansions. Ethnic identity has its own merits though western theorists consider ethnocentricism as a form of bias. They interpret cultures and histories in terms of the values of Western modernism. In fact, the greater the opposition faced by ethnic identities, the greater is their growth and intensity.

Parsi Zoroastrians have rediscovered their ethnic identity only in hegemonic forces. These hegemonic forces are western and of external origin. When one group identity clashes with that of another, the politics and history of ethnic clashes is born.

The vast majority of Parsi literature is concerned with ethnocentricism. The Parsis are distinguished by race and religion. Generally ethnicity includes race, religion, language, nationality and state.
The Parsis gain self-esteem and self-respect from an awareness of their glorious historical past from the great Persian Empire and pride from their own religion. They have contributed significantly to the texture of socio-economic fabric of colonial and post-colonial India.

Parsis established themselves in trade and business, and rose to social eminence and economic prosperity. They were also elevated to fame among the colonists by just ‘being a Parsi’.

The sociologist Kulke has described Parsiness “as being composed of we-consciousness that encompasses religion, ethnicity history and an elite status” (Kulke,2).

Bapsi Sidhwa in her novels probes the Indian and colonial identities and their ultimate impact on the Parsi minority community. Unlike the Muslims, the Parsis didn’t have the numerical strength to visualize a homeland separate from the Hindu majority territories. By the end of the 1930’s the Parsis had adopted the neutrality principle. In Sidhwa’s The Crow Eaters, Freddy puts it: “Let Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or whoever rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise and to set in their arses”(283).

The identity of the Parsis was threatened by the end of the British Empire. They were also apprehensive of their future in decolonized India. Bapsi Sidhwa’s The Ice–Candy Man and The Crow Eaters deal with ethnicity and identity crisis.
The Lahore Parsis withdrew themselves into self-defensive isolation, since they were unable to ignore the holocaust that followed the forced tearing out of Pakistan from the rib of India.

Generally Parsis were threatened by decolonization. A fund of good will was created by the Parsi Nationalists. In Pakistan, Parsi neutrality in the Partition riots stood them in good stead. The Parsis became a respected minority community. The body politic of Pakistan had an impact on most Parsis especially the women.

The Parsi predicament is well-documented by creative writers. In fact, the Parsi community has thrown up quite a few creative writers who have chronicled the Parsi destiny in varied hues. Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Faruk Dhondy, Ardhashir Vakil, Boman Desai and other Parsi writers have attained global acclaim. Kanga's Trying to Grow (1990), Farukh Dhondy's Bombay Duck (1990), Bapsi Sidhwa's The Crow Eaters (1990), Rohinton Mistry's Tales from Firozsha Baag (1977), Such a Long Journey (1991), A Fine Balance (1996) and Family Matters (2002) are all Parsi classics. These Parsi writers have articulated in their works their community's anxieties and aspirations, identity crisis, moments of agony and ecstasy, and its struggle for survival.

This thesis focusses on the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani writer and is settled at present in the USA. She was born in Karachi in 1939. She was brought up and educated in Lahore. She graduated in Kinnaird’s College for Women in Lahore. Her
marriage with a Bombay business man did not last long. So she settled with her daughter, and was compelled to leave India. At the age of twenty five, she married Noshir, twelve years her senior.


Bapsi Sidhwa has won international acclaim for her work. Her works have been translated into French and German. In American Universities, her works are taught as part of the curriculum. Pakistan and America have honoured her for her writings. She received in 1991, the Sitare-I-Imtiaz award. This is the highest honour in the arts bestowed on a citizen in Pakistan.

*Cracking India* was named one of the notable books of 1991 by The New York Times and won the Literature Prize in the Frankfurt Book Fair. Bapsi Sidhwa received the Lila Wallace Readers Digest Fund, an award of US $ 105,000 in 1993. This is one of the largest grants in the U.S., for writers..

As a social worker, Sidhwa represented Pakistan at the Asian Women’s congress in 1975. She also taught creative writing at Rice university in Texas and the University of Houston.

When she was at Radcliffe College-Harvard, she wrote her novel *Ice – Candy Man* (also known as *Cracking India*). In the early nineteen eighties, she and her husband Noshir went to the US and settled in Houston.
in 1984. The theme of immigration is quite prominent in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*. In an interview to Naila Hussain, Sidhwa says: “The book deals with the subject of the culture shock young people have to contend with when they choose to study abroad”(19).

The first three novels of Bapsi Sidhwa are works set in the Indian subcontinent. But her fourth novel, *The American Brat* is set partly in Pakistan and partly in the USA. Sidhwa is considered Pakistan’s best known and the most successful English language novelist. She is unique because of her humour and wit.

Sidhwa first published *The Crow Eaters* in Pakistan, where English language publications are highly restricted. Thanks to its unflattering portrayal of the Parsi community, this novel made her the Parsi whom other Parsis loved to hate.

*The Crow Eaters* is a controversial novel and it describes the hilarious saga of a Parsi family. In the novel, Bapsi Sidhwa revealed the community’s secrets to the whole world. She decided to write on her own community having been advised to do so instead of picking up dark and sombre themes. The book was self-published and Sidhwa found it difficult to take it to audience. To quote her own words: “It was very frustrating to peddle your own books. . . I would go from book store to book store, saying, “Please read the *Crow Eaters*”(*Kazmi, net article*).

*The Crow Eaters* is a fictional saga of a Parsi family and represents the social milieu. The novel presents the workings of the Parsi mind, their social behaviour, value systems and customs. Within one generation, the Jungle Wallah family increased their business from a single General
Merchant store in Lahore to a chain of stores in several North Indian cities. This novel also traces clearly the Parsis’ migration from the west coast and their settlement in North Indian cities.

The authenticity of Bapsi Sidhwa’s work is evident. Sidhwa turns autobiography into art by her clever use of irony. The author writes about her own community, both its shortcomings and achievements. Irony is also a mode of acceptance, a type of philosophy. *The Crow Eaters* is a very compact novel and though it shows a network of human relationships and the reality of a whole family, there are no loose ends in the plot.

In the novel, Freddy takes every opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to the British. Self preservation is of primary concern to the Parsis. The Parsi psyche with a curious attitude towards their women, codifies female behaviour through a characteristic paradox.

The novel aptly reveals the Parsi milieu in the throes of change. Still, this is not a novel particularly about Parsis; instead, it is a novel where characters happen to be Parsis. The characters could well have been Hindu or Muslims and a good deal of satire would still have carried. Each ethnic group after all, has its peculiarities and absurdities.

The foreign edition of the novel was published in September 1980. It was published by Jonathan cape. This novel has received rave reviews and also pleasant accolades from the critical British media.

The great Urdu poet of the subcontinent, Faiz Ahmed praised her racy style, genial comedy and shrewd observations on human behaviour. Faiz compared her to V.S. Naipaul and R.K. Narayan(*Review, Net*).
Sidhwa’s works have aroused a variety of reactions. She cannot be easily categorised as just a comic writer or a Parsi novelist. In her novels, she presents various issues prevailing in the Parsi milieu like the Partition crises, expatriate experience, social idiosyncrasies, the themes of marriage, women’s problems and patterns of migration. Sidhwa is undoubtedly Pakistan’s finest English language novelist. Ahmed Ali and Zulifkar Ghose are the only other Pakistani novelists of International repute.

The depiction of the fluid state in Parsi community lies at the heart of Bapsi Sidhwa’s four novels. Although Sidhwa is not the only Pakistani to write fiction in English she has maintained a consistent publication record and gained the widest reputation abroad.

Bapsi Sidhwa has been largely responsible for the invention of Pakistani fiction in English. When she started writing in the late 1970’s there was no established national tradition on which she could draw unlike her counterparts in India and Africa. After all, Pakistan is a rare post-colonial nation with no colonial past.

Sidhwa’s novels are grounded in Pakistan in the larger community than in the smaller communities that form the entirety. Her most recent novel, *The American Brat* moves back and forth between Pakistan and the United States. By placing Pakistan on the international literary map, Sidhwa has explored another way of saving her community.

Sidhwa spent her first few years in India. Later, she found her larger community called Pakistan, a nation created amidst the storm of Partition. Her native city of Lahore was transformed over night, when millions were uprooted and their lives destroyed. As a child, she witnessed
great historical movements, the elation over independence followed by the bloodshed of the Partition. It can also be argued that Sidhwa’s position as an outsider, as a Parsi woman in the Islamic world worked in her favour. Sidhwa has drawn extensively on her communal heritage. She has once again enlarged her community and this expansion serves her well in her novel *An American Brat*.

The community is shown disintegrated in her novels, *The Bride* and *Ice Candy Man*. Her fiction speaks much less specifically about patriarchy and the traditions governing male-female relationships.

*Ice Candy Man* in its opening passages draws a picture of variegated Asian life and takes the same delight in the comic spectacle of human kind. It also stresses the inter-play of several communities.

As the novel opens, each group is affected by the Partition. The historical change encroaches on the lives of men. They have no control over their development. Lenny’s family moves apart. Ayah’s circle of admirers also disintegrates. The Hindu neighbours flee to India. The Muslim villagers are massacred. The tearing apart of each community is depicted in the novel.

In *The Crow Eaters*, life goes on simply because community is fluid and it can be re-formed again. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Lenny’s household resumes its routine activities. Ayah, the innocent is possibly restored. In Sidhwa’s quest for community, even the destroyers are spared. The narrator watches Ice Candy man in his disgraceful avtar as an opportunist.
History stems from the people and its pieces come from the communities they form. The circle enlarges with the Hindus, Christians Jews, Black, White, Male, Female, indeed all the polarities that divide and destroy. The larger community will attain the oneness of the smaller community. This is the vision of Ice Candy man. This vision emerges from Sidhwa’s skill as a novelist. She enlarges and interprets the moral vision of the community that permeates the novel.

Sidhwa’s An American Brat describes clearly another aspect of community, the immigrant experience. With the novel, Sidhwa has created an admirable contribution to the literature of the Diaspora that seems to expand in the years ahead. The immigrant being pulled by the past and present faces a conflict. This conflict forms ready made fiction, Sidhwa follows the family Saga she started in The Crow Eaters on the eve of Partition. This flowed through Ice Candy Man also. An American Brat succeeds in explaining the American experience first as the character Feroza views it, then as her mother reacts to it. Sidhwa also admits that it is not easy to portray the nuances of a culture one is not born into.

The novel gains richness of texture linking with the outward differences that the characters face in their old and new worlds. The comic streak visible in Sidhwa’s previous accounts of the Parsis is evident here too.

Sidhwa in all her four novels has charted a course that will lead to the certainties for which the narrator of V.S. Napaul’s A Bend in the River longs. Her characters will find solidity in a personal vision of community, a vision that remains certain.
In the novels of Sidhwa, the Partition figures as a broiling background. It forms the tail of *The Crow Eaters*, the head of the *Pakistani Bride* and the main body of the *Ice–Candy Man*. The majority of the Parsis adopted a discreet politically naïve profile. They directed all their efforts towards achieving success in their personal lives. But within the next four years, the Freedom Movement gathered such momentum that some Parsis like Dr. Manek Mody of the *Ice–Candy Man* found it difficult to remain uninvolved.

In fact, Sidhwa was not happy with the literature on the theme of Partition written by British and Indian writers. She was also not happy with the film ‘Gandhi’ because she thought they had glorified Gandhi, Nehru and Mountbatten. Jinnah was portrayed as a monster. In the *Ice-Candy Man*, she tries to balance the account of the Partition riots by showing both Muslims and Sikhs indulging in violence.

Most of the political heavy weights of the time-Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Iqbal, Patel, Bose, Master Tare Singh, Lord Mountbatten – figure in *Ice–Candy Man* in some context or the other. The Hindu leaders have been presented in an unfavorable manner. The portrayal of Jinnah evokes admiration and sympathy.

Gandhi is venerated throughout the world but in *Ice – Candy Man*, he has been described as a cunning politician. A police man describes him, “as an expert on fasting unto death without dying. . . . ”

Every country or community has a distinct culture and often within it there are divergent cultural mores. Cultural diversity becomes vital to the
human world. It also divides people into numerous groups and subgroups having little in common with one another. This proves a great barrier to human relationships. Bapsi Sidhwa treats issues of cultural difference and the problems arising out of it.

Like her favourite author Charles Dickens, Bapsi Sidhwa had an unhappy childhood. Whereas Dickens was hit hard by penury, Sidhwa was afflicted with polio. Her sensitivity found solace in the company of books. She started writing since she read avidly and this extensive reading was a great help to her.

Her novels can be regarded in the picaresque tradition. Journey provides the framework to her plots. Characters like Faredoon, Zaitoon, Carol, Lenny and Feroza move from one place to another. They also have diverse experiences and gain self–knowledge.

In her novels, she tells stories in a natural manner and in a way creates the maximum amount of interest at every stage. The reader’s curiosity is kept alive throughout and even at the end of the novel.

Sidhwa seems to follow the course of real life but like Jane Austen, she confines herself within the field of her own first hand intercourse with the world.

Being a Parsi herself, she depicts Parsi life in all her novels except The Pakistani Bride, where there is only a casual mention of a Parsi doctor in the novel. The Crow Eaters has influenced not only new generation of Parsi writers but also many Indian and Pakistan writers who are introducing Parsi characters in their works more freely. Sidhwa’s novel has made the non-Parsi world familiar with the Parsis.
In this context, Faiz Ahmed Faiz has rightly observed: “The Parsees have always been flamboyantly prominent in public life. What goes on behind this facade has been, for most of us as remote and mysterious as the underworld. Bapsi Sidhwa has opened for us all the doors and all the windows of this world’s inmost recesses” (Review, Net).

Sidhwa’s novels have been translated into several languages and published in numerous European and Asian countries. That shows her popularity across the world and also the adaptability of her art. In spite of her meagre literary output, her place as an English language novelist in the history of the Commonwealth fiction is assured. She is leading an active life. Many more novels are expected from her.

Sidhwa’s narratives are fresh and remarkable for their characters. She has presented men, women, and children of many different times. Her male characters are mostly tall, handsome, domineering and possessive. Her women characters are intelligent, beautiful, curvaceous and strong willed. Her child characters are highly sensitive. Foreign nationals too figure in her novels. Sidhwa is essentially a comprehensive novelist. She portrays all classes of society. The World she creates is a world with all the variety of the actual world.

Though she stands by women she is never anti male. The Ice-Candy Man and Sakhi do villainous things but Sidhwa does not portray them as villains. There is always an element of sympathy in her portrayal of characters. Her characterisation is indirect and dramatic. Her characters reveal themselves through their dialogue and actions.
She refrains from giving unnecessary details. She also avoids passing judgements on her characters. Her characters become real living beings due to keen observation of the workings of the human heart.

The dialogue in Sidhwa’s novel is precise and dramatic. It is always in keeping with the personality of the speaker. Her novels excel in verbal and physical humour. Sidhwa is strong in evolving pathos. Sidhwa’s view of life is optimistic. She likes life in spite of all its ugliness, brutality and horror. In the original story on which *The Pakistani Bride* is based, the girl is murdered. But Sidhwa makes Zaitoon survive, she seems to give a message to women that life must be preserved at all costs. One can fight oppression only when one is alive. It is to be observed that no woman character dies in any of Sidhwa’s novels.

Sidhwa indirectly tells women to fight against injustice, exploitation and oppression with full force. She is not a didactic writer. She does not preach anything, but she is a great moralist. Sidhwa is preoccupied with the future of the Parsi religion and is concerned with the constant fear of extinction that Parsis suffer due to religion and its high-priests.

The theme of immigration is quite prominent in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*. According to Bapsi Sidhwa, the book deals with the subject of the culture shock. Young people from the sub-continent have to contend with when they choose to study abroad. It also delineates the clashes the divergent cultures generate between the families back home and their transformed and transgressing progeny bravely groping their way in the New World.
In *An American Brat*, the heroine of the novel Feroza, a sixteen year old girl has been carefully brought up in the small but prosperous Parsi community in Lahore. Her parents feel that she is ruined by the conservative air in Pakistan and send her for a short trip to America, the land of freedom.

Through Feroza, Sidhwa describes clearly the impressions, a new arrival has of the modern America. Adem L.Penenberg rightly calls the novel, “a sensitive, portrait of how America appears to a new arrival”(*Review, NYT*).

Sidhwa is a keen observer of the differences in the life style of the Americans and Pakistanis. Most Parsi writers feel helpless or isolated and over-conscious of their identity. During the British Raj, they identified themselves with the Britishers and considered themselves as different from Indians. Both the Parsis who went west and the stay-at-home Parsis experienced severe identity confusion. In the west, the Parsis found themselves being lumped together with other sub continental Asians – an identity they were trying to escape in India. In Pakistan too they came up against the hegemonic community.

The Changing social milieu and identity crisis which Sidhwa accordingly depicts was visible among Parsees in British India. It is a social problem for many of the community even in contemporary India and Pakistan.

The Parsees owed their secured status as a minority, their economic and social prosperity to British Rule. The paranoid feeling of being a minority is the motivating factor for the behavioural pattern of the Parsees
ranging from quest for excellence to eccentricity. A perusal of Social History reveals the causes for this insecurity especially the alienation of many members of the community. For purposes of trade and business, the British granted the Parsees a special status as brokers and reliable trading partners. The quick social mobility among the Parsee community led to a conscious group desire. The also identified themselves with the English themselves. The English denied to consider Parsees as their own kind even if they were equally educated and extensively anglicized.

In the prevailing social milieu, Parsis developed an aversion to identity themselves with other Indian communities. Mental estrangement forms the crisis for many Parsees. Many Parsees find an identity of their own free of both the English and other Indian identities. As a keen observer of human fallibility, Bapsi Sidhwa reflects this identity search in several situations and aspects in her novels.

Most Parsees in the move are considered as cultural hybrids. Many of them, also live and share intimately in the cultural life, traditions, languages, moral codes and political loyalties of two distinct peoples that never completely penetrated and fused.

Through literary devices like allegory, Bapsi Sidhwa reflects the trauma of Partition. The child narrator Lenny is affected by the violence at Lahore. “The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot. I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. I start screaming hysterically sobbing”(ICM,137).

Lenny’s experience is an apt allegory on the mindless violence of the Partition. Sidhwa reveals how the violence of the Partition has
segregated people of different communities irrespective of ideology, friendship and rational ideas. Sidhwa’s depiction of the horror is evocative of the gloom in William Golding’s *The Lord of the Flies*.

Sidhwa explains that there are no winners in the communal holocausts of the Partition. In the vitiaed communal atmosphere, insanity is rampant, since ordinary men lose their identity. Such a degradation is best exemplified in the rage of the Ice – Candy – Man who says: “I’ll tell you to your face – I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from Gurdaspur…. that night I went mad. I tell you. I lobbed grenades though the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I’d known all my life. I hated their guts”(156).

Rohinton Mistry is another prominent writer who has captured Parsi-life in all its hues. Born in India in 1952, Mistry grew up in Bombay and received a Degree from the University of Bombay in Mathematics and Economics. Only in 1975, he immigrated to Canada, working in a bank. This helped him to study English and Philosophy at the University of Toronto.

Mistry was an immigrant, an outsider in Canadian society and he realised that he belonged to the Parsi Community. He started writing stories and gained attention, receiving two Hart House literary prizes and Canadian fiction Magazine’s annual contributor’s prize in 1985.

Post – Independence Parsi writing in English is highly ethnocentric. According to Nilufer E.Bharucha, “The Parsis are the single largest group of ethno-religious / Minority discourse practitioners among Indian English Writers.” Obviously then, their literature is characterised by
both ethnocentric and minority discourse features. As a chronicler of Parsi community, Mistry observes keenly and very much conscious of his community’s predicament that is referred to as ethnicity or ethnic atrophy. His fiction is culture specific.

The factors that are responsible for ethnic atrophy are the Parsi’s single-m minded pursuit of prosperity, extreme individualism, craze for urbanization, late marriages, low birth rate, etc.

In Mistry’s novels all these ethnic atrophy syndromes are clearly depicted. They are rightly regarded as a domestic, social and political commentary concerning the Parsis. They throw a clear vision on the dwindling community in India to which Mistry himself belongs. They depict authentic accounts of the life styles, customs and traditions of the Parsis.

Tales from Firozsha Baag is Mistry’s first collection of short stories. The stories are ethnocentric and they present the idiosyncrasies of the Parsi community in Bombay. Mistry explains the sense of religious superiority complex when he exposes a common belief among the rigid Parsi traditionalists in the words. “Parsi Prayers are so powerful. Only a Parsi can listen to them. Every one else can be badly damaged inside their soul if they listen” (AFB, 354).

Such a Long Journey, Mistry’s first novel is a moving domestic tragi-comedy that introduces the readers to Gustad Noble, a devout Parsi and a dedicated family man who becomes enmeshed especially in the political turmoils of Parsi and Indian culture. Mistry creates a middle class Parsi Man in Gustad Noble.
A Fine Balance, the second novel of Mistry highlights the sufferings of outcasts and innocents, trying to survive in the state of Internal emergency of the 1970’s. Mistry is considered to be an accomplished fictionist. In his fiction, he deals with the life of the Indian middle class in Bombay comprising several communities. Mistry’s novels portray the interaction of the Parsis with the other communities. Given to nostalgia, Gustad Noble in Such a Long Journey expresses his desire to get back to Iran, the Parsis’s primary space. Commenting on the Predicament of the Parsis in Bombay, he says: “No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the Black people in America – twice as good as the white men to get half as much”. (SLJ, 73)

Mistry’s fame as an outstanding story – teller rests on his appeal to a world – wide readership. Mistry is sensitive to the threats to his society. The fate of his characters is interwoven with the fate of his community. Mistry in his literary works makes an effort to revision the history of his homeland. He also defines his ethnic identity and sense of self.

Mistry is an expatriate Indian – Parsi writer living in Canada. As a Parsi and then as an immigrant in Canada, he considers himself as a symbol of double displacement. This sense of displacement becomes the major theme in his literary works. His historical background involves with the new identity in the nation that he has migrated especially with the political and cultural history of the nation. Mistry when asked in an interview why India persistently occurs in his works, said: “It’s very naïve to assume that you go to a new country and you start a new life and its new chapter. It’s
not. Canada is the middle of the book. At some point you have to write the beginning”. And the beginning for Mistry has been India. *(Mistry, Sunday Times of India, 1996).*

Mistry’s diasporic consciousness and sense of displacement is clearly explained in *A Fine Balance* and three stories from *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. Mistry expresses the ambivalent space between the old culture of India and the new Canada. His characters are engaged in defining their own hybridity.

Mistry presents a parallel between the Indian and Canadian cultures where old people are respected and cared for. For example, in *Family Matters*, the old man’s daughter does not mingle and talk with anyone in the building. But she takes great care of his grandfather. She feels that the blessings of the old are the most valuable and potent of all.

Mistry’s presentation of oppositions and parallels between cultures, forms and geographical locales construct an identity that centres on the ambivalent position of the victims of diaspora.

All the stories of Mistry are about Bombay. He also remembers every little thing about his childhood, he is thinking about it all the time though he is miles away. He does not write any stories from Canada, because he has not been able to assimilate in the new atmosphere.

In the depiction of the Parsis, Mistry shows that all the Parsi families are poor or middle class. His description of the Parsis is authentic. He achieves this authenticity by emigrating to Canada. Mistry also explains the Canadian weather. He points out that the expatriates are quite sensitive to it.
Mistry describes the socio-economic conditions of the two countries. He presents the wealthy condition of Canada and comments on the poverty and corruption in India, the black market and people who wait at the ration shops. *A Fine Balance* gives a vivid picture of India during the colonial and postcolonial period and it appears that geographical distance is cancelled in the cartography of his mind. Moreover his migration to a foreign land is at certain level, more a home coming than an act of expatriation.

Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* is a significant contribution especially to the corpus of the Parsee novel in English. The narrative is significantly set against the milieu of India during the seventies, mainly at the time of the birth of Bangladesh. He demonstrates the crisis of the Indian mind in general and of the Parsee mind in particular.

Mistry analyses the Indian society from the perspective of an ethnic community. He places his protagonist in a marginalized community in Bombay in the tradition of postcolonial literature. Arun Mukherjee argues that “*Such A Long Journey* attempts to ‘make sense of actual historical events by narrativising them’”. According to her, Mistry’s choice of an event from the contemporary Indian history is deliberate (83). In *Such a Long Journey*, the Zoroastrian world view constitutes the controlling point. The progression of the Parsee mind in Gustad becomes central to the narrative.

Mistry’s narrative is a blend of history and fabulation. It examines Indian society from the perspective of an ethnic community. Mistry
presents his protagonist as one from a marginalised community in Bombay, true to the tradition of postcolonial literature.

Meenakshi Mukherjee in her study of the major themes and techniques in Indian novel in English observes that Indian novelists in English employ myths in two ways, conscious and unconscious”(132-33). Mistry makes a judicious use of the same. His putting a scene of metaphysical speculation from Firdausi’s Shah Nama as an epigraph to Such a Long Journey is an example for this.

A significant feature of Mistry’s narrative is his use of images and symbols. The image of the book-case becomes a metaphor for Gustad’s unfulfilled aspiration in life as revealed in his outburst. “And my pleas for the book case turned to dust like everything else”(SLJ,129).

Some of the situations and events have really symbolic significance. The central symbol employed by Mistry is the ‘Journey’. Gustad’s visit to Delhi is an act that is invested with symbolic significance. He is a little apprehensive and so he sets out: “Would this journey be worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble?”(SLJ,259).

The Zorastrian world view constitutes itself the nucleus of the narrative. Gustad selects the path of Asha that requires a life of strict discipline and self-control. Speaking of the dualism inherent in man, Dr.S.Radhakrishnan writes:“The dualism is within one’s own nature. The evil forces are within men and not outside…. That Zarathustra overcame the evil one means that he did not succumb to these forces. His conduct demonstrates that man’s own self determines his destiny”(112).
For a minority community, the Parsis contributed to the well-being of the Indian Nation in myriad ways. To quote Mistry:

The great Tatas and their contribution to the steel Industry, the role of Sir Dinshaw Petit in the Textile Industry who made Bombay the Manchester of the East or the role played by Dadabhai Naoroji in the Freedom movement; where he was the first to use the word ‘Swaraj’; the first to be elected to the British parliament where he carried on his campaign…. In reality it was the richest Parsis who had – reputation for being generous and family oriented’ *(SLJ, 245)*

Mistry gives an ironic portrayal of Parsi customs and traditions. At one stage Mistry explains the experience of being a Parsi in India. But in some other stages, he deals clearly and stresses the class hierarchies, patriarchal power and also other patterns of empowerment within this Parsi world.

Salman Rushdie has made some insightful remarks on the pictures of the homeland offered by the diasporic writers and artists. These pictures are a fusion of fact and fiction. They are simply the traces of the writer’s consciousness. The homeland that is created by him in his works is not actual places but fictional ones. The Khodadad building in *Such a Long Journey* or *The Tales from Firozha Baag* are nothing but only considered to be the imaginary locations reflecting the factual Parsi ethos.

Mistry evokes a sense of loss and nostalgia in the immigrant’s experience and also the alienation of Parsis in India. He also depicts the hope of a Diaspora person of merging in the culture of the adopted land. He longs to express his concealed desires to go back to the native land.

The post colonial concern for Parsi writers like Mistry is not only to fight for a cultural territory but also to create a distinct identity of their own. Mistry’s characters are chosen only from the middle class Parsi
background and are shown as resisting their own power in idiosyncratic ways.

Terms like ‘power’ and ‘Resistance’ are main and central to the study of any issue in the postcolonial context. They are operative in all fields especially in social, economic and cultural situations. Mistry deploys some of the categories in this novel not only to reveal their operation in hierarchical structures, but also to expose established hegemonies.

Political power and corruption form the third most vital pattern of empowerment in Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*.

Mistry’s use of typical Parsi idioms in addition to the other Indian ones differentiates his discourse from those of other writers of the community. Nilufer E. Bharucha points out, “In common with other post–colonial writing, Mistry’s fiction is fashioned in the form of alternative narrative and employs antirealist mode of narration. This not only challenges elitist Master-narrative but privileges the marginal and provides resistance to the Western hegemony”(*Old Tracks, 59*)

Mistry being an ethnically conscious writer, has focussed on the Parsi life, religious ceremonies and rituals in much of his fiction. The permanent link between man and nature is assured and renewed each day. This is really a archetypal myth; it is essential for human beings to remember their origins through such devices.

Mistry’s assertion of ethnicity is to be analysed in the context of multicultural nation states. Mistry is infact celebrating multiculturalism by virtue of which *Family Matters* transcends the label of ethnocentrism. It is considered to be an example of world literature.
Living in diaspora means living in forced or voluntary exile. Living in exile leads to severe identity crises, living simultaneously alienated from the old and new cultures and homelands.

Mistry as a writer has enjoyed his craft very well, that is to say, an exceptional start. When he was asked by Geoff Hancock in 1989, on how he reacted to reviews, he replied, “In all modesty, I must admit that so far, I have only received positive review” (47).

Hancock stresses the fact that Mistry has established himself as a creative artist in a short time and proposes, “Is writing a gift, you have?” Mistry counters the question by asking “Is it a gift?” When Mistry is asked about his sense of audience’ Mistry answers very grandly by responding “I suppose the world is my audience” then qualifies the claim by adding, “At least I wish it” (ibid). To Mistry, the English speaking world has become his audience. Mistry’s fiction is set in the milieu of a minority religious community. It focused on Indian political events and also raise some questions.

The Parsi people as a minority group have found the economy and also the living conditions in India not favourable to them. They emigrate to other countries thinking that their new country might be more favourable to them. Due to sudden emigration to an alien land, it leads to a conflict in their identity. Mistry left for Canada to seek good fortune. Savita Goel comments on this:

As a Parsi and then as an immigrant in Canada, he (Mistry) sees himself as a symbol of double displacement and this sense of double displacement is a recurrent theme in his literary works. His historical situation involves construction of a new identity in
tribulations of the Parsis. Commenting on his short stories, Silvia Albertazzi says:

A born story teller, in his tales Mistry depicts middle class life among the Parsi community as he sees it from abroad. All his eleven intersecting stories are set in an apartment block in Bombay where a number of Parsi families live, all the people who live there are in turn, the protagonists of one or more short stories. The author himself tells the last one, thus revealing that he comes from Firozsha Baag, too. In this way, Mistry can describe daily life among the Parsis of Bombay, touching at the sametime, meaningful themes and significant issues of contemporary multicultural and migrant realities (276).

Mistry’s soulful blending of the characters’ personal affair with communal concerns situates them significant as social beings. Mistry’s strategy aims at creating characters ex masse, that is the tone and texture of the narrative expresses a design. The discourse can evolve effortlessly and interchangeably. The vehicle also moves from ethnic to national, and local to universal.
Exaggeration has been used as a comic device by Mistry. He believed in situations and facts beyond all reason. For mirth sake, Mistry employs ambiguous speech and word play, especially towards using puns.

His language is mixed and makes liberal use of Hindi words and Indian expressions. In discussing the Emergency and oppression, Mistry’s language is far from being oppressive. Mistry’s use of such a language serves many fictional purposes. Mistry too makes use of many clichés in his novel. He has moreover rejuvenated worn-out expressions in order to fashion new phases.

There is a great amount of pure good – natured comedy in Mistry. There is the lightness of his touch, and urbanity. Mistry can be said to be a spiritual relative of the eminent comic masters like R.K.Narayan, P.G.Woodhouse and A.P Herbert.

Mistry’s creative writing has gained a large number of awards and media recognition. Each new novel by the reclusive writer is consumed by its readers. Mistry’s texts who focus on the Bombay- Parsis and their ethnic selves are also books that have a wider appeal.

Above all, Mistry is a humanist. In fact, a display of existential humanism is found in his fiction. His realistic pictures of life “widen our sympathies, our sense of proportion and educated our moral judgment’.

Mistry’s representation of community and social balance in Indian society raise his novels to a higher literary status.

Mistry’s novels depict the patterns of empowerment operating in a world which deny individual voices. Moreover his novels treat themes such as parental authority, class hierarchies, personal betrayal, political
machinations and corruption. His fiction presents superstition and physical as well as mental limitations. Mistry deals with the major problems of the untouchables, the poor people who are at the bottom of the society and their suppression by the privileged classes.

Mistry as a post-independent Parsi writer in English, is ethnocentric and community specific. His text is ethnic but the content and ambience is a multicultural one. Mistry expresses ethnic anxieties and is deeply concerned about the decline of the Parsi population. He foregrounds the marginalization of the Parsis. Mistry’s views are, however revealed as a shared space in his initial work especially in his short stories.

Many readers like Mistry’s books for their realistic and humorous portrayal of Parsi life in Bombay. A search for the social identity is seen in Mistry, even amidst their Indianness. Mistry’s writings clearly hold a mirror up to Indian society and culture.

The difference between Mistry’s locales and his location in Canada and his fictional engagement with the Parsi community make us consider him as both Parsi and Canadian.

Meenakshi Mukherjee while speaking of immigrant writers, remarks:”These novelists cannot be discussed in terms of one nationality alone. Whether they are ‘peregrine’ writers stationary, their apprehension of reality has been affected by the experience of more than one country and conditioned by exposure to more than one culture”("Inside the Outsider",86).

But Mistry’s reality is based on his Indian heritage. As in Mulk Raj Anand. Mistry’s theme, language, style and characters suggest that he is a realist in his craft. The major theme of his fiction lies in the search for
individual identity that is advocated by factors such as casteism, ethnic conflicts social and cultural anarchy etc. The theme of quest for identity acquires a global dimension in the novels of Mistry. Mistry’s works have become a tool after Mulk Raj Anand to advance the cause of democratic revolution led by the Bourgeoisie.

Mistry emerges only as an Indian writer, since his characters, language, and locales reflect the typical Indian culture. He narrates the miseries of the Parsi community through his characters. The individual’s fate is bound up with the fate of his community; their stories naturally tend to be the stories of their community.

Mistry’s focus also centres on ethnic or racial diversity. Linguistic diversity, cultural diversity and religious diversity become significant in his novels. Mistry’s characters move slowly from ‘distress to friendship’ and from ‘friendship to love’.

He do stresses the tension between modernity and tradition. He is a conscientious writer who analyses vividly on social identities, anonymities and also social imbalances created by tilting forces like casteism, class, cultural anarchy and ethnic conflict.

To Mistry, a society can reconstruct and restructure itself on the basis of humanism. Rohinton Mistry’s text is ethnic in a multicultural context. The cultural difference makes ethnicity an issue. The acceptance of differences is multiculturalism.

Like Mulk Raj Anand, Mistry’s art poses fundamental social questions. Mistry rejects the bitterness of strife. His stress is on the
projections of the human predicament and the eccentricities of individual characters.

There are only a few Indian English novelists who have projected the post-independence dilemma of minorities like the Parsis as authentically as Mistry. Mistry portrays human elements in their pristine forms and raises the novel to classical standards. The universal principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are strictly followed.

Mistry’s characters are also mentally aggressive like Anand’s characters. Some characters are humiliated. Mistry also discusses on gender discrimination with gusto. He portrays the injustices done to women and also interrogates the marginalization of women in the male-dominated society.

Mistry handles his material with confidence and dexterity. Mistry’s secret success as the best story-teller relates to his intimate relationships, experiences and situations he handles in his works. ‘To write well ‘Mistry says to Geoff Hancock, ‘ I must write about what I know best. In that way, I automatically speak for my tribe” (26)

Mistry makes use of characters and environment productively to introduce the important themes of the nature of faith. Mistry’s representation of the Parsi community and also their rituals is far from idealistic. Mistry’s socialist sympathy with the poor, the down trodden and the out cast finds larger place in A Fine Balance. Mistry denies to limit his canvas to the middle class.

Nostalgia is a recurrent theme in Mistry’s fiction. This nostalgia is generally for a past way of life forever lost to the main characters. It is
occasionally manifest in the idealization of some religious rituals. The nostalgia is echoed by many characters in the novels of Mistry.

The nostalgia for the bygone days has an echo in the presentation of many characters in the novels. Most of Mistry’s heroes such as Gustad and Yezad inhabit the two realms simultaneously. Age becomes a central theme in Mistry’s fiction and so are the relationships across generations. They become major concern in the discussion of private realm of the family and the household.

Mistry presents the Indian Parsis in the process of redefining the limitations of nationhood especially in the representation of the nation. Mistry’s works clearly exhibit multiple histories of the nation. He tries to redefine the role of the Parsi community in his Tales From Firozsha Baag and Such a Long Journey.

Mistry’s fiction centres around the resilience of tradition against the powerful forces of modernity and change. The Parsi identity could be observed as ‘otherness’. Mistry highlights his familiar characters such as Mehroo in Auspicious Occasions and Roxana in Family Matters especially to traditional rituals. The embracing of ethnic identity is considered to be a weapon to protest against the universal identity that has been forced upon them in the Indian context.

Religious beliefs exist as a social reality. Mistry’s representation of the Parsi community and their rituals become highly idealistic. Mistry stresses on various aspects of Parsi belief. Mistry’s fictions depict a record of Parsi culture too in view of the diminishing Parsi population.
A concern for a progressive community in dealing with the Parsi culture and lifestyle finds a place in Mistry’s fiction. His characters represent the Parsi community whose identity has been historically problematised. The Parsis are living in the world that is different from the common Indian way of life. The Babri demolition episode has unnerved many Parsis too. Nilufer Bharucha aptly remarks: “In decolonised India, the exalted position enjoyed by the Parsis during the Raj has been eroded and increasing dominance by the majority Hindu community has marginalised them. Parsis today are trying to reorient themselves to this new much reduced role” (Bharucha, Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures, 42) One of the major issues in Mistry is self-representation. As a post modern writer, Mistry’s imagination has taken new connotations. One hears of voluntary immigration, diaspora and mixed identities. The post-modernist identity dislocates a ‘mature modernist identity’.

The Parsis left the shores of ancient Persia for the sake of religion. They also maintained and sustained their individual identity on that basis.

Mistry’s total engagement with the identity problem is explained only by the historical experience of his community. The Parsi exodus from Iran and the settlement of Parsis in Gujarat established their cultural identity. The portrayal of Parsis by Mistry reveals a feeling of insecurity as far as their identity is concerned.

Mistry lays emphasis on the relationship of the Indian Parsis with the outside world. Mistry widens his area of sociological study in insisting of a Parsi diaspora in Canada.
The story ‘Auspicious Occasion’ presents the relationship between the Parsi community and other communities.

Exaggeration is employed as a special comic device by Mistry. He relies on augmenting exaggerating situations. He lays stress on facts beyond all reason until the results are ridiculously comic. Mistry makes use of various forms of ambiguous speech. Word play becomes a source of mirth. He makes use of Puns in abundance.

Mistry is friendly and mischievous with the reader while talking about the Emergency and oppression. His language is far from being oppressive. Some expressions like ‘a cup of chai’ creates the ambience whereas ‘a cup of tea’ creates distance. Mistry makes use of his language for two purposes: English was a sign of linguistic imperialism. Hinglish has to survive in India. Hinglish is a marriage of Indian culture and a Western language. Mistry has made use of this language in *A Fine Balance*.

One of the most promising aspects of Mistry’s fiction is its ethnocentric social matrix. It is the Parsi community in which he locates his tales of human survival. Mistry has written exclusively about Indian life. He does so realistically with considerable feeling. Mistry said: “Writers write best about what they know. All fiction is autobiographical imagination ground through the mill of memory. It is impossible to separate the two ingredients (*The Guardian profile. Rohinton Mistry Online*).

Mistry chooses to write about humble anonymous folk who like most average Indians must struggle to survive in the difficult environs of the metropolis. It would be wrong to assume the fact that the concerns of
Parsi diaspora or alienation are central to Mistry’s writing. Mistry’s fiction will be side of the mark. His fiction is almost exclusively of Parsis in Mumbai. Many are of the opinion that the fiction of Mistry lays emphasis on his own community.

Mistry’s essential concern in his fiction is with the archetypal human problems which are common to other communities also.

The recurring patterns of Mistry’s fictions especially in images, situations and characters have led critics to consider Mistry’s three novels as a trilogy, as a coherent whole. Nilanjana Roy for instance said:

“… it was impossible to read *Family Matters* without being reminded repeatedly of the two novels, that preceded it and I found it hard not to think of Mistry’s three novels as a coherent entity… In brief even though Mistry may not have intended to write his three novels this way they form a Bombay Trilogy (*Such a Long Book, Family Matters Bibilio: A Review of Books, 2002,*).

The three novels, however cannot be regarded a trilogy, inspite of several recurring themes. Each novel, focuses on varying themes. Moreover, the continuities that are normal to trilogies are not visible here.

Mistry’s essential concern in his fiction is with the archetypal human problems that are common to other communities also. The Parsi community as well as the ‘historical context’ in Mistry’s fiction furnishes the setting, the time and the place.

He wrote mainly about common anonymous middle class Parsis and also avoided glorifying the achievements of the community since they represented the microcosmic LCD man in India.

In his review of *Family Matters* Prasanna Rajan rightly observes:

“… the social is a non–intrusive adjective to the human in which Mistry
nascerates the mundane to achieve slow fission on the page. In the
lengthening narrative of India Anagrammatised he is the old fashioned
story teller, a loner, never astonishing but always engaging (India Today, 69)

One of the important aspects that stands out in Mistry’s fiction is
the urban setting. Mistry’s novels are ‘literary constructs’. .. part wishful
thinking, part imagination and part truth (Guardian profile, Rohinton
Mistry, online). Mistry’s Mumbai is the familiar Indian urban reality, a
kind of sordid, dreary reality, Mistry displays an uncommon insight into the
complex factors that condition life in India. Critics like Bharucha look
upon Mistry’s characters as mere card board figures and regard their
experience as the urban, westernized Indian’s constructs.

As a member of the Parsi minority community, Mistry is accorded
the unique position of offering a perspective on the multiple
accommodations involved in the constitution of identities. There lies the
collective Parsi identity that had been transposed from Iran to India.

Mistry’s narratives are structured upon a search by his characters
for a pattern in the chaos of a dislocated life and this is a characteristic of
diaspora writing. Mistry’s work provides a perspective on the postcolonial
nation of India from the margins so to speak. His technique of story telling
offers examples on his skill at manipulating language. This often brings out
the fundamental gap between appearance and reality.

As per Psychological wisdom, a person who pretends to an identity
that he does not possess becomes neurotic even schizophrenic.
Postmodernism dislocates the so-called mature modernist identity. Multiple
identities in post-modern times lead to more internal conflicts and divided loyalties.

The religious components of identity are significant for the Parsis. One of the standard sociological definitions of ethnicity is a collectivity within a larger society that deals with the group’s identity. Ethnic identity is fundamental. All other identities are obtained only later. It is an identity that of religion or nationality that can be changed. The politics of ethnicity also operates within postcolonial spaces.

Identities should normally and ideally operate in ever –widening circles of belonging. The fact of being a Parsi Zoroastrian is a racial and religious identity. Apart from offering ethnic discourse, Mistry’s novels address racial and subaltern issues too.

Mistry, when asked in an interview about racism replied that he found racism in Bombay. Mistry is a Parsi writer who writes from the west. He went into a Canadian diaspora in the 1970’s when he was in his 20’s. What agitates Mistry is nothing but only the genesis of the modern Indian Nation. Moreover the rise of dictatorship and the flowering of power politics, and India’s declaration of emergency profoundly affected Mistry. For the government, the situation was a threat to the security of the nation but for Mistry, there is a real threat to the liberal traditions of the country.

The ethno- religious details of the novels of Mistry would really put them in the ‘last witness category.’ As Mistry has said, when the Parsis have disappeared from the face of the earth, his writing will present and maintain a record of how they lived.
Mistry pictures racial and religious characteristics through the protagonists. Some of his protagonists are prisoners of their ethnicities or religion. Mistry bears a witness to the last grand stand of the Parsi Zoroastrians in India. He observes their rites, rituals and their eccentricities. He also extends his writings to the old myths and legends of ancient Iran. Nariman Vakeel, his hero in *A Fine Balance* becomes the story teller and he tells his tales about ancient Iran.

Mistry lays emphasis on the link between Man and Nature that is renewed everyday. This is generally an archetypal myth-making. Mistry makes it very clear that it is significant for human beings to remember their origins through such devices.

The novels of Bapsi Sidhwa have elicited an impressive range of critical responses. Makarand R Paranjpe in his article “The Early Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa” depicts Sidhwa’s as an important voice in the world of Commonwealth fiction. With the publication of *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1983) and *The Ice-Candy man*, she has shown considerable accomplishment as well as promise.

The first striking feature of Sidhwa’s art is its breadth and diversity. Her novels are remarkably different from each other in both subject and treatment. Bapsi Sidhwa’s range of settings, plots, themes and characters makes her one of the most exciting of the recent Commonwealth novelists.

Bapsi Sidhwa in her article “Why Do I Write?” discusses on her novel *The Bride.* She says:

The girl’s story haunted me. It reflected the hapless condition of many women not only in Pakistan but in the Indian subcontinent. In *The Bride*, I wrote about the harsh
lives of handsome people hidden away in the granite folds of the Karakoroms. In *The Crow Eaters*, a novel about my own community, the Parsis, I wanted to tell the story of a resourceful and accommodating community tucked away in the forgotten crevices of history. The quintessentially Parsi humour served me well in *Ice-Candy Man*. Without it, the horror of what people did to each other during the Partition riots would have been almost intolerable (Dhawan, 27-34).

Robert L. Ross in his article, “The Search for Community in Bapsi Sidhwa’s Novels” depicts the community in its fluid state that lies at the heart of Bapsi Sidhwa’s four novels, *The Crow Eaters, The Bride, Ice-Candy Man* and *An American Brat*.

Sidhwa’s first three novels are firmly grounded in Pakistan in the larger community than in the smaller communities that form the entirety.

By focusing Pakistan on the international literary map, Sidhwa has made her Parish (another way of saying community) better known indeed, made it universal. The inhabitants of this cozy Parsi world, anglicised to a greater degree than most of their neighbours, fear that Independence and the subsequent departure of the British might leave them stranded in a line selling their community in tatters. In Sidhwa’s world, the instinct for community remains so strong that they appreciate its fluidity.

Inspite of their fluid lives and the fluidity of the communities in which they live, Sidhwa’s characters still find solidity in a personal vision of community, a vision that remains certain.

Novy Kapadia in his article “The Parsi Paradox in *The Crow Eaters*” portrays the Parsis as an ethno-religious minority in India, living mostly on the West coast of the subcontinent especially in Bombay. Sidhwa turns autobiography into art by her clever use of irony. The view of
life of Sidhwa is expansive. Sidhwa presents the hilarious saga of a Parsi family which is not just the social mobility and value system of a man and his family but the movement of the times. Sidhwa’s perceptive insights are in presenting the marginal personality aspect within the Parsi milieu.

Parsis in her novels are cultural hybrids, living and sharing closely in the cultural lift, traditions, languages, moral codes and political loyalties of two distinct peoples, that never completely interpenetrated and fused.

Novy Kapadia in his article “Ethnic Identity in Bapsi Sidhwa’s The Crow Eaters” discusses the role of marginal ethnic groups in developing multi-racial societies.

The Parsis, an ethnic minority in undivided India had acquired economic and social prosperity during the British rule. In the changing political milieu, the Junglewalla family in The Crow Eaters has to face an identity crisis. They also adapt to a new socio-cultural and political environment. The Parsis are an ethno-religious minority living in India mostly on the west coast. Bapsi Sidhwa clearly explains some of the motivating factors that makes this smallest religious minority in the world, strive for excellence.

Nilufer E. Bharucha in her article “A Feminist Reading of Three Novels” deals with the Parsi traditions that are rooted in the patriarchal society of ancient Iran.

Novy Kapadia in his article “Communal Frenzy and Partition” explains the ambivalent attitude towards Partition and Independence emerged as an anti-colonial movement and nationalist agitation. The
Parsees also traced their secured status as a prosperous minority to British Rule.

Bapsi Sidhwa clearly shows how the Parsees are captives of circumstances in the upheaval of Partition. She presents the sensitive theme of the Partition through subtle insinuations, images and gestures.

Feroza Jussawalla’s article about Bapsi Sidhwa presents Sidwa’s contribution to literature. Sidhwa has become a canonical writer within the canon of multicultural writers from different parts of the world writing in English.

The Major theme of Sidhwa’s work concentrates on the Parsis interact with the rest of the populace around them whether in India, in Britain or as in the case of American Brat in the United States.

Post coloniality is a major theme and preoccupation in Bapsi Sidhwa’s novels. G.D.Barche in “Bapsi Sdihwa’s An American Brat: A Psychological Study” stresses Feroza’s vision of life. The process of expansion and transformation reaches its climax in the fourth phase in Feroza’s character.

Chelva kanakanayakam is his article “Allegory and Ambivalence in Bapsi Sidhwa’s Cracking India” has explored the allegorical and ambivalent nature of the work.

Apart from being a much-decorated author, Rohinton Mistry has garnered much critical attention. A.K. Singh discusses Mistry’s Such a Long Journey as a major departure in the literary tradition of Indian fiction in English. It is also a special attempt at fiction based on fact. Such a Long Journey denies many existing narratives about post – Independence
historical protagonists. The events also form a fusion of fact and fiction, humour and gossip, myth and fantasy.

Mistry’s fiction centres on the Parsi community and its identity with its national consciousness and with its identity with the world. Mistry’s fiction concentrates on the fears and anxieties of a passive community that is active in articulation. Individual traits of the Parsi community and the individuals are given an authentic expression with their characteristics and idiosyncrasies.

Amin Malak (in the Journal of Commonwealth Literature) in his “A Critical Response to Mistry’s Art of Story – Telling” opines that Mistry’s handling of characters’ personal affairs with communal concern lends them significance as social beings.

M.Manj Meitei singles out Such a Long Journey for its critical realism. This novel derives its form from the classical literary tradition. The novelist’s predilection for the great tradition deals with the modernist method of fictional experimentation. Mistry desires to emphasise the problem of human loneliness in the modern world. Mistry as a critical realist considers the social reality. His ideology stresses the social and political aspects of a particular historical period. He achieves success with the predicament of modern life and variety of values generating a classical structure.

Pratibha Nagpal in her article presents a critical report on Mistry’s A Fine Balance. Mistry has earned critical appreciation for his clear portrayal of Indian society and its Parsi community. Mistry himself is committed towards the cultural roots. It provides him great sensitivity and
truthfulness. This novel too focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of India. Ultimately, the novel is the exploration of the Indian experience through the eyes of a diaspora writer.

Nilufer E.Bharucha in her article “When old tracks are lost” discusses Mistry’s fiction as Diasporic Discourse. As a Parsi, Mistry is in yet another Diaspora, a much older one. In pre-colonial India, Parsis were allowed to practise their ancient monotheistic religion. Mistry’s discourse does revolve around the detailing of Parsi identity. As a Parsi, Mistry is on the periphery even in India; so his discourse also challenges and resists the totalisation of the dominant culture within India itself.

Jagroop S.Biring in his article “Mistry’s Family matters: A Critique of Ethnic Discourse” focuses on ethnic studies. Mistry’s texts articulate the ethno-religious commonalities and differences. His *Family Matters* is a bold attempt to secure a distinct space for the Parsi Zoroastrians within the dominant Indian cultural space. Mistry as a conscious writer has discoursed on Parsi life, religious ceremonies and rituals in many of his works.

Ragini Ramachandra in her article “Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*: Some First Impressions” describes Mistry’s distinction in making his hero’s long journey finally worthwhile for the character and the reader. Rohinton Mistry uses the language of the urban middle and lower middle class as well as that of the poor and the working class.

Avadesh Kumar Singh in his article “The Sense of Community in the Parsi Novels” deals with Mistry’s portrayal of the existing threats to the Parsi family, the immense ability to respond to the community through different narratives of his characters that invariably express their concern
for their community and the changes that will affect their community as well as themselves.

N.S. Dharan in “Ethnic Atrophy Syndrome in Rohinton Mistry’s Fiction” stresses issues that find expression in the post – independence Parsi Writing in English.

As a chronicler of the Parsi community, Mistry is keenly aware of his community’s predicament. The factors that contribute to this ethnic atrophy are the Parsis’s single – minded pursuit of prosperity, extreme individualism etc., Mistry records in his fiction the ethnic atrophy that has set in his community.

Savita Goel in her article “Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Displacement in the Selected Works of Rohinton Mistry” discusses Mistry as an expatriate Indian Parsi writer living in Canada.

Mistry intermingles history with the personal lives of the characters which is characteristic of an immigrant writer. Charuchandra Mishra in “Modes of Resistance in Mistry’s Such a Long Journey” explains the post-colonial concern for Parsi writers like Rohinton Mistry. The power and Resistance are central to the study of any race in the post colonial context.

Twinkle Manavar in his article “Mistry’s Such a Long Journey: A Thematic Study” emphasises on the series of political events touching on various issues such as corruption in high places, minority complexes etc.,

Puri V. Upadhyay in his article “Such a Long Journey: the journey as Motif and Metaphor” points out the presentation of the communal life of the Parsis in post-Independent India. The Journey of Gustad is in fact the
human one from past to present, from innocence to experience, a universal journey.

Sudha P. Pandya in her article on Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* deals with postcolonial engagements with nationalism and national history.

Ramesh Misra in his article “Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*: India during emergency” makes a survey on Mistry’s deft handling of Internal Emergency during 1975-77. It provides a vivid and graphic picture of the turbulent times also.

Jaydipsinh Dodiya in his article “Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* as a Diasporic novel” explains the lives of four unlikely people. The article reveals Mistry’s sound knowledge of India’s history.

“Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*: An Overview” by Pradeep Trikha deals with the self-esteem, images, their sufferings and national pride of common people in India.

Caroline Herbert in the article “Dishonorably Post-national: The Politics of Migrancy and Cosmopolitanism in Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*” explores the tensions between the politically distanced cosmopolitan migrant and the socially committed local activist.

Mistry also establishes a tension between his representation of the migrant and his negotiation of his own migrant position through his fiction. In *A Fine Balance* Mistry recognises and engages with a political and imaginative responsibility towards his homeland.

K. Damodar Rao in his article “Ordinariness of Dreams, longevity of the journey, story statement and allegory in Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*” discusses on the communal life of the Parsis in Post – Independent India.
This research has been conducted to make an indepth study of the variegated predicament of Parsis as portrayed in the selected novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry. Both these creative writers are Parsis; as ‘insiders’, they have a thorough knowledge of the Parsi-life. While Sidhwa deals with the fortunes of the Parsis in Pakistan and elsewhere, Mistry deals with the Parsis of Bombay. To get a comprehensive picture of the predicament of the Parsis is the objective of this research.

Apart from the Introductory and Conclusive chapters, this research work has four more chapters.

The Introductory chapter starts introducing the Parsi Community; the exodus of the Parsis to the Indian subcontinent and the watershed moments of the Parsi fortunes there are described. Critical Biographies of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry, the critically acclaimed Parsi writers have been offered. The chapter introduces the Research Topic and a review of literature.

The second chapter entitled “The Parsi Nostalgia” deals with the community’s memories of the past. The nostalgia surrounding a bygone community fills the novels that offer a rich tapestry of Asian life through recreation of the smell and taste of food, the colours and textures of clothing. Moreover, the sights of crowded streets and over-peopled houses also gain significance.

The third chapter entitled, “The Predicament of the Parsis in the multicultural societies”, focuses on the quest for identity by the Parsis and other marginal ethnic groups in multicultural societies.
The fourth chapter entitled, “The Parsis’ Response to Socio-Political Upheavals” highlights on political upheavals like the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent, the Emergency Years in India; how they affected the common citizens and the Parsis’ response to these catastrophic events.

In the fifth chapter entitled “Family Relationships”, a study has been made on the relationships between husband-wife, parents—children and among siblings. This relationship also suggests the humanistic premise that “the universal lies in the ordinary”.

The sixth chapter sums up the various issues related to the Parsi-predicament discussed in previous chapters. Avenues for further research have been suggested.