I

The aim of this thesis is to make a comparative study of the two Parsi writers - Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry in relation to the ethnic anxieties reflected in their fictional worlds. Both differ from each other as they belong to two different geographical locations, Pakistan and India respectively. However, both are now settled in Canada. Since they belong to the sub-continental countries which were once united before acquiring their status as independent states, they share the common element of religion and culture. Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry are the two crucial Parsi writers who focus the problems of their microscopic community. They highlight the problems of survival in the cultural milieu they live in. Bapsi Sidhwa confronts the Muslim society in Pakistan and Rohinton Mistry experiences the Hindu ethos in India. The discussion here is aimed at the vivid facets of their skills as writers and the issues they deal with. Both the writers write about their community at a different point in time. So the problems faced by them are also rather different, though not completely.

Every creative genius has his/her own world-view which is reflected in his/her works. The artist deals with his socio-religious, cultural, political, economical and environmental aspects of his/her contemporary society, because all these factors are sources of development of his/her imaginary world. Such factors contribute to the writer’s mindset and externalization of his internal conflict in his fictional work. An artist’s vision of life helps him to perceive the things or incidents s/he faces in his/her life. Their treatment may vary concerning the same problems. So this creation of the particular atmosphere is also very crucial point in the making of their world view. The thematic of the work can be treated in multiple ways. The narration of the subject can either be in a tragic or a comic way. It is influenced by the writer’s sense of survival in a hostile
environment and identification with the problems and issues following the hostility. At the same time a writer is concerned about the way in which others recognize him/her and place himself/herself in a particular socio-cultural context. So the characters created by the writer are fictional realities. If the writer belongs to a minority ethnic group living on the edge, certainly his/her imaginary world is obviously occupied with the problems that his/her ethnic group faces. S/He deals with the subsequent anxieties of his ethnic group and obviously demonstrates the need for the continuation of the race of that ethnic group. Here the discussion is focused on two Parsi writers. So their world view obviously reflects the Parsi community. It deals with the various anxieties --- psychological and existential that Parsi community suffers.

As the world is celebrating the concept of global village, it has become more rigid and retreated to its primitive nature of group, tribal, racial and ethnic modes of behavior what Harold R. Isaacs refers to the ‘House of Mumbi’ [1971], the name of the progenital mother of the KIKUYU tribe of Kenya. It is exactly what Nilufer Bharucha calls:

**The current explosion of ethno-religious politics in the Indian sub-continent... has forced the recognition that racial/religious identities cannot be easily subordinated to indices of ‘secular’ modernity or postmodernist, post nationalisms. In the face of global market-economies and the cultural hegemony of satellite communication, [and mass media,] ‘ethnicity is often the last refuge into which great masses all over the world are retreating.’ [2003:47]**

Samuel P. Huntington [1996:21] has said that ethnic identities are very dangerous and have led to major military conflicts today. He emphasizes that cultural preferences, commonalities and differences are also important in shaping the behavior of nations. He has identified nine major civilizations in the world in the post cold war period- Western, Latin American, African, Sinic, Islamic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist and
Japanese. He feels that the real danger to world peace today is not clashes between nations but clashes between civilizations. The terrorist attack on New York’s Trade Center Twin Towers, has also been seen as a civilization clash. President Bush of the USA, called it ‘an attack on civilization’, more precisely on the Western Civilization by Islamic Civilization. In India too there are clashes between Hindu and Islamic civilizations (Babri Mosque demolition, Godhra killings). Similarly, ethnic and racial problems have led to the conflicts between LTTE and Sri Lankan Govt. Kurds, Berbers, Lankan Tamils, Sikhs, Kashmiris, Palestinians, Tibetans, Crimean Tartars, African Sudanese, Basques, Saharwais are the ethnic groups who have always been in conflict with the government for its refusal to acknowledge its separate existence as an ethnic entity.

Ethnicity is one of the major issues emerging in contemporary discourses. The plethora of issues that have cropped up in the area of cultural studies needs to be closely evaluated. Hence a close look at the ethnic-related issues would serve the purpose better. According to CHAMBERS 21st century Dictionary the term Ethnic is: “Relating to or having common race or cultural tradition.” It also defines an ethnic group as: “Associated with or resembling an exotic, especially non-European, racial or tribal group.” Ethnicity is considered as: “Racial status or distinctiveness.” The word “ethnic” was derived in 14th century as a noun and in 15th century as an adjective meaning heathen; from Greek word “ethnos” (nation). CHAMBERS 21st century Dictionary describes the term Ethnocentric as: “relating to or holding the belief that one’s own cultural tradition or racial group is superior to all others.” According to OXFORD Advanced Learner’s Dictionary the term Ethnic, means:

1. A) of or involving a nation, race, or tribe that has a common cultural tradition.
B) [Of a person] belonging to the specified country/area by birth or family history rather than by NATIONALITY.

2. Typical of a particular cultural group esp one from outside Europe or the USA.

It defines the term Ethnocentric as: “making judgment about another race or culture using the standards of one’s own.”

To sum up, all these definitions reflect the aspects of ethnicity which talk about the similarity or oneness or commonness of culture, traditions, and race. The reference to the particular cultural group as “One from outside Europe or the USA”, suggests that it is a European slang for the non-Europeans. It also connotes the cultural, racial, and spatial difference resulting into Orientalism. Further, it suggests that Western/Occidental (European and American) culture is superior to Eastern/Oriental culture and raises doubts about cultural identities. The word tribal connotes primitiveness which suggests the unrefined, uncivilized, violent, harsh and coarse patterns of behavior. It is exotic suggesting the grandeur of cultural or racial traditions or social mores of one’s ethnic group. Tracing the origin of the term as an adjective, it means heathen, implying the pre-Christian pagan people. It also connotes the inferiority in a derogatory sense. In Greek, ethnos nation suggests the national aspect of identity and existence. It emphasizes on “[of a person] belonging to the specified country/area by birth or family history rather than by NATIONALITY”, suggesting the importance of space where one is born, and ancestry one belongs to. It also shows the superiority of one’s own culture or race over others which germinate into the existence or survival or identity struggle which results into ethnic anxiety.

Bill Ashcroft and others have given detailed analysis of the term ethnicity. They have distinguished between the term ethnicity and race:

Ethnicity is a term that has been used increasingly since the 1960s to account for human variation in
terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry, rather than the discredited generalizations of race with its assumption of a humanity divided into fixed, genetically determined biological types. ....race emerged as a way of establishing a hierarchical division between Europe and its ‘others’. [2004:80]

Schemerhorn has referred ethnicity as: “the fusion of many traits that belong to the nature of any ethnic group: a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviors, experiences, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties” [1974:2]. Bill Ashcroft and others have argued that “... both ethnicity and its components are relative to time and place, and, like any social phenomenon, they are dynamic and prone to change” [2004:81]. An ethnic group is described as:

A group that is socially distinguished or set apart, by others and/or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or national characteristics. [Ibid, 81]

According to them the first use of ethnic group in terms of national origin developed in the period of profound migration from Southern and Eastern European nations to the USA in the early twentieth century. The name by which an ethnic group understands itself is still most often the name of an originating nation, whether that nation still exists or not (e.g. Armenia). The term ‘ethnicity’, however, gets wide prevalence:

...when these ‘national’ groups find themselves as minorities within a larger national groupings, as occurs in the aftermath of colonization, …or by the migration of colonized peoples to the colonizing centre. One further consequence of this movement is that older European nations can no longer claim to be coterminous with a particular ethnic group but are themselves the heterogeneous and, in time hybridized, mixture of immigrant groups. [Ibid, 81]
The phenomenon of migration has added another dimension to ethnicity. Nowadays immigrants are considered as ‘ethnic’. Isajaw describes ‘ethnicity’ in its current context of immigration as:

...a group or category of persons who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits, who have a sense of peoplehood and of group belonging, who are of immigrant background and have either minority or majority status within a larger society. [Isajaw 1974:118]

Politically ethnicity has a very crucial aspect. Bill Ashcroft and others traced the political aspect of ethnicity as follows:

...ethnic groups are not necessarily marginalized cultural groups, but that all ethnic groupings, and indeed the concept of ethnicity itself, have come to exert a powerful political function... ethnicity is a key strategy in the furtherance of group political interests... a favored solution to individual powerlessness, the ethnic group is a salient formation in the bid for political power within a society. [2004:83]

So it is clear that ethnic revolution is a direct result of the use of cultural identity and the affirmation of ethnicity in political conflict. Schermerhorn’s definition of ethnicity encompasses all its aspects:

A collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry (that is, memories of a shared historical past whether of origins or of historical experiences such as colonization, immigration, invasion, or slavery); a shared consciousness of a separate, named, group identity; and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. These features will always be in dynamic combination, relative to the particular time and place in which they are experienced and operate consciously or unconsciously for the political advancement of the group. [1970:12]
The main characteristic of this definition is the usefulness of those ‘symbolic elements’ [Ibid, 12] that may provide a sense of ethnic belongings. Such symbolic elements are association patterns, physical contiguity, religious association, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, physical features, cultural values, and cultural practices such as art, literature, and music. Various combinations of these elements (‘one or more’) [Ibid, 12] may be privileged at different times and places to provide a sense of ethnicity.

Thus ethnic identities continue beyond cultural assimilation into the wider society and the determination of ethnic identity is not essentially related to the continuation of traditional cultures:

No ethnic group is completely unified or in complete agreement about its own ethnicity and no one essential feature can ever be found in every member of the group. Nevertheless, this dynamic interweaving of identifying features has come to function as an increasingly potent locus of identity in an increasingly migratory, globalized and hybridized world. [Ashcroft 2004:84]

In the United States the collectivity of immigrants from a region of the world and their descendants are called ethnic groups. Immigrants are socialized into identifying as a member of one of the list of ethnic groups. Such groups have an appeal to some notion of the past. Thus Mexican nationals, upon crossing the border, become Hispanic ethnics. In the West, the notion of ethnicity, like race, and nation, developed in the context of European colonial expansion, when mercantilism and capitalism were cheering global movements at the same time when state boundaries were being more obviously and strictly defined. In the nineteenth century, modern states generally required authenticity through their claim to represent nations. Nation-states, however, always embrace native populations that were expelled from the nation-building project and such people typically constitute ethnic groups. Members of ethnic groups,
thus, often understand their own identity in terms of something outside of the history of the nation-state-- either an alternate history, or in historical terms, or in terms of a connection to another nation-state. The status of these people can be defined in Linda Hutcheon’s words as ‘ex-centric’ or in Derridian terminology ‘outside’ the margin. The biological race too, is frequently considered, and some believe it as a basic policy on which cultural heritage can be preserved and sustained via genetical persistence. This concept is however proposed by those who believe that the ethnic group can be accessed also by spontaneous choice or more- commonly-marriage (exogamy), and is not closed to a new member. Political connotations result into ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is the form of nationalism in which the state obtains political legitimacy from historical, cultural or traditional groupings or ethnicities; the underlying assumption is that ethnicities should be politically discrete. It was developed by Johann Gottfried von Herder, who introduced the concept of the Volk (German for folk). Anthony Smith uses this term to classify non-Western concepts of nationalism as opposed to western views of a nation mainly being defined by its geographical territory. Romantic nationalism is a form of ethnic nationalism infused with romanticism such as Nazism. The concepts homelands, fatherlands, and motherlands are often used as an ethnic nationalist concept. The concept of Ethnic Origin is an effort to organize people, not according to their existing ethnicity, but according to the place from where their ancestors arrived. Some common features are responsible for growing anxieties resulting out of ethnicities which challenge each other in cultural, political, social or any other way. The ethnic pointer generally indicates the marginal or the subaltern. The politics of ethnicity also operates within post-colonial spaces. In post-colonial societies, the dominant group develops into the norm and the ethnic minorities become noticeable. The Muslims in India have always had a strong sense of ethno-religious identity. Current ethno-
religious discourse in India has gained foothold due to its increasing conflict with Hindu fundamentalism. In this reference some problems are posed as Sander L. Gilman points out: “Can successful ethnics still be ethnic? Do ethnics have to be Subaltern? Or can they be good bourgeois...?” [1998:23]. Nilufer Bharucha also highlights these issues with reference to Parsis as below:

Can Parsis claim ethnic identity? If being ethnic means being oppressed, means living within the culture of victims, can Parsis be called an ethnic minority? [2003:54-55]

Considering above assumptions, it is obvious that Parsis in India, Pakistan and residing in the Western countries are in minorities as per their demographic decline as well as they are ethnic due to their subjugation by the dominant cultures like Hindu, Islam and Christian respectively. Thus Parsis claim to be ‘an ethnic minority’ [Ibid, 54]. Bharucha also raises some other questions as Parsis of post-Raj India migrated to West to merge into the mainstream white-masters:

Then again can a successful minority like Parsis in India be ethnocentric in that country but try to ‘pass’ in the West as part of the white mainstream? Can ethnicity be flaunted in one context and denied/hidden in another? Can the same people occupy ethnic space in postcolonial India and transcend ethnicity/nationality in the west? Can ethnicity and transnationalism co-exist? [2003:54-55]

These comments by Bharucha are apt with reference to the Parsi ethnic group, which is reduced to a minority ethnic group in post-colonial India, and favored the migration to the west but there too; they are clubbed together with other ‘colored’ people. Bhabha has related the dislocation while thinking about the identity, location, and culture of an ethnic group as: “specific conjecture of identity, location, and locution that most commonly defines the particularity of an ethnic culture” [1998:34]. Further, Bhabha comments:
…the anxiety of displacement that troubles national rootedness transforms ethnicity or cultural difference into an ethical relation that serves as a subtle corrective to a valiant attempt to achieve representativeness and moral equivalence in the matter of minorities. For too often these efforts result in hyphenated attempts to include all multiple subject positions -race, gender, class, geographical location, generation- in an overburdened juggernaut that rides roughshod over the singularities and individualization of difference. [1998:34]

Whenever any culture or ethnic group or civilization has an advantage over all others, whether culturally or politically, their programs of self-glorification have usually directed to destruction of not just that ethnic group or civilization but also that of the other who have been drawn into that whirlpool of mass obliteration. Ethnic attachments often show the way to the gateways of cruelty and even bestiality. The psyche actively guides towards the self destruction. Extreme attention on ethnic identity can dictate to fetishisation and essentialisation of identity. So these identities should maneuver in ever-widening spheres of belonging. Bharucha points out that, “Assertions of ethnicity come within the ambit of the first/primary circle and are only one of the parameters of identitarian consciousness. [2003:58]. The Nationalist identity operates with the wider transnational identity. These identities are such “...that the former and present lives do not match, they quarrel, even contradict, cancel each other out” [Kuortti 1998:62]. As ours is not the perfect world, these different identities could come in conflict with one another and could be placed within private and public spaces. There could be overlaps within these spaces and private and public histories could clash as Mudimbe said:

**Historical deconstruction certainly robs identity based on ethnicity of the mythic sense of timelessness on which it thrives, but to say that ethnicity is artificially constructed does not give us license to dismiss it as illegitimate. Dismissal only**
begs the question of how far back in time we have to go in order to satisfy criteria of ‘genuineness’. [Mudimbe 1988]

Ethnic anxieties arise in the exercise of power. It is a clash of two different constructions, usually more ethnicities to be defined against each other. Silverman noted this as: “A group is ethnic only if there are ‘outsiders’ and if it exists within a wider political field” [Eds.Varma Sushma J. and Seshan Radhika 2003:127-128]. Thus, ethnic politics is the politics of marginality. Certainly, ethnicity materializes into being most regularly in just such instances when individuals differentiate a need to verify a communal sense of identity in the face of threatening economic, political or other social forces. It is aptly said that:

…ethnic politics … by its very definition attributes to marginality and relative weakness, though under certain circumstances weakness can be transformed into powerful strength. Ethnicity, then, is a relational concept one in which the dominant are able to define the subordinate. [Brass 1990]

Thus various facets are responsible for the conflict of two different ethnic groups which cause ethnic anxieties. As Chandra says:

Ethnic anxieties arise out of sense of … ethnic identity. Such identity may be religious or secular. Anxieties, however, are compounded when the secular interest of two differing identities are seen to be divergent or threatening to one another. The threatening aspect of the ‘other’ or majority community becomes more pronounced in the case of economic or social backwardness. [1989:398]

Such threats to economic or social existence may lead to insecure religious identity. Thus ethnic anxiety and its ramifications should be taken into consideration. Parsis migrated to India after the Arab onslaught in search of a safer place to reside. But in India, they were given conditional refuge which was ‘cultural onslaught’ on the Parsis and being a minority group they agreed on all the conditions. So they have to face the related
issues of migration and adjustment with the new land. Culture is a means of creating its separateness from and defiance to other communities. Issues like exile, rootlessness, and cultural differences arise due to migration. Minority discourse leads to and simplifies the diasporic tendencies. Thus, diaspora has wider implication and is located within the discourse of ethno-cultural studies. Diaspora can be described as “practically any population that is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’” [Vertovec 1997:277]. It is clear that geographically, “diaspora involves a radical... redefinition of place” [Stewart 2001:13]. Migration can be defined when there is an ethnic awareness, an active associative life and links with the land of origin in diverse forms, real or imaginary. Diaspora deals with the formation of new identities, spaces for development, resolution, clash and a new culture, either merged or plural. In lexical terms, the word ‘Diaspora’, with capital ‘D’, refers only to the dispersal of the Jews after 538 BC. Etymologically, it is derived from the Greek meaning ‘scattering’. Migration brings the loss of “roots”, “language”, and “social norms” [IH 1991:429]. Landing on a new shore brings the question of assimilation. For this, La Framboise and others [1993:401] have given the models including assimilation, acculturation, alternation, and multiculturalism. Assimilation is the likeness of melting pot. It suggests the creation of a new culture by abandoning the past culture. Here the member of one culture loses his/her original cultural identity by acquiring a new identity in the second culture. On the other hand, Acculturation encourages the idea of belonging to two cultures at the same time. It implies that the individual, while becoming a capable participant in the majority culture, will always be identified as a member of the minority culture. Alternation highlights the sense of presence in two cultures. The individual has a sense of belonging to two cultures without compromising his or her sense of cultural identity and is capable of alternating his/her behavior according to the needs of a situation. In contrast,
Multiculturalism promotes a pluralistic approach and offers the possibility of cultures maintaining different identities. In it, the individual maintains a positive identity as a member of his/her culture of origin while at the same time developing a positive identity by engaging in complex institutional sharing with the larger political entity comprised of other groups. It has been more often used, to create a sense of the equal importance of all cultures. Lastly, the fusion represents the assumptions of the melting pot theory. It suggests that cultures sharing an economic, political or geographical space will fuse together until they are indistinguishable to form a new culture. Thus, individuals and families who live at the juncture of two cultures can claim the possession of both the cultures. Yet for the reasons of being born into one culture and living in the second, they are considered as marginal people, very different to the norm set by the majority. Such marginality leads to the psychological conflicts of a divided self. The problem for these marginal people (migrants) is that Center does not accept them. They are always treated as Mohajir. Marginalization in any culture is an issue associated with what is not major, not central, and not powerful- in short, everything that is subordinate. Edward Said aptly described it as an “alternative” [Said 1994:392] in all the segments and facets of life. This loss of the self and fragmentation makes them subaltern. Thus, Diasporic discourse deals with ‘minority’ and marginal aspect. Thus, diaspora deals with various issues related with migration. One of the issues is cultural encounters. Since this thesis deals with the ethnic angst of Parsis, it is necessary to find out the notion of culture in the present scenario. The word ‘culture’ acquired a new meaning in the 1960s and 1970s. Prior to that culture was associated with art, literature, and classical music. To have culture was to possess a certain taste for particular kinds of artistic endeavor. Gloria Anzaldúa defined culture as:

Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant
paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power. [1987:888]

The main dilemma with this idea of culture is that it brings about not only admiring one’s own culture but also thinking of it as in some way separated from the daily world. Cultural structures are hybrid, mixed, impure too. Rushdie expresses his idea of culture and his notion of ‘translated’ individuality as he says:

The word “translation” comes, etymologically, from the Latin for “bearing across”. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained. [IH 1991:16]

In such a perspective, transculturalism can be defined as a process of translation. It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins. It is impossible to acquire a clean and pure ethnic identity. It is only possible through death: “The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, “ethnically cleansed” national identity can only be achieved through death” [Literary Theory 1998:936]. Thus, one has to accept transculturalism as one of the very basic and important factor of diaspora.

Another problem migrant group suffers is that of nationality and national identity. The word ‘Parsis’ suggest the place Pars/Fars and people who migrated and adopted India as their Nation. The ‘nation’ is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and unformulated - the nation - a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging. The British cultural historian, Raymond Williams highlights:

‘Nation’ as a term is radically connected with ‘native’. We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary
and ‘placeable’ bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial. [Raymond 1983]

As Parsis left their native land of ‘Pars’ and came in search of new secure land in India, they became transnational. The process of transnationalization is described as: “an appeal for increasingly similar, ecumenical and universal values, or, to use the terms of Brezinski, ‘a new planetary consciousness’, a new ‘harmony’, a ‘new world unity’ and a new ‘consensus’” [Mattelart 1983:57]. In its European origins, nationalism was also messianic, modeled on patterns of Judeo-Christianity. According to Kohn Hans, modern nationalism took three concepts from Old Testament mythology: “the idea of a chosen people, the emphasis on a common stock memory of the past and of hopes of future, and finally national messianism” [Kohn 1965:11]. Here Parsis were not ‘chosen people’ in Indian national milieu. They were forced to take refuge in India as a result of religious fanaticism of Arabs. So Parsis became underdogs in their own nation i.e. Persia as well as their adopted nation i.e. India. But they never shared the memory of common past and hope for future in Indian socio-political atmosphere. Their minds were fixed into the deep roots of their primary roots, Persia/Iran. So, in real sense Parsi as an ethnic group became a stateless nation because ethnic groups are also generally defined as a Stateless nation not represented by its own unique, coterminous state. The concept has historically been notorious, and led to a abundance of wars, conflicts, and mass bereavement through history. This vague status of nationality can be described as:

The primary characteristic of the cyborg is that of a creature who transcends, confuses, or destroys boundaries... as the production of the intermixing...cannot claim racial or cultural purity. Their neither/nor racial status, their unclear genealogical relationship to the history of
oppression… and their ambiguous national identity. 
[Haraway 1990:190-233]

This ambiguity of the national identity is the outcome of the migration. This continuous travel from one geographical locale to other causes the problems of adoption. This translation results into the transnationality, or transnationalism. Vertovec highlights on this as:

‘Transnational’ generally implies migration of people across the borders of one or more nations. It also refers to the deterritorialisation of population along with their material and non-material cultural commodities. [1999: xx]

The terms ‘transnational network’, ‘transnational communities’ and ‘diaspora’ are often used interchangeably. Transnational networks form a precondition to the emergence of transnational communities and the process of this transformation is generally selected by ‘transnationalism’ as Basch says:

…process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes ‘transnationalism’ especially to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders. [1994]

These transnational communities mould themselves according to the culture of the host country as these communities behave like chameleon. In this way this process of transcending the boundaries of nations, cultures results into multiplicity, hybridity and complete loss of self identity.

Time and again Parsis experienced trauma of uprootedness, loss of homeland/nation, cultural erasure, experience of ‘othering’, being ‘other’. Their subaltern, minority status forms the mental setup and related behavioral pattern which is an important factor to identify them as an ‘ethnic group’ or ‘ethnic identity’. So it is necessary to see some of the important issues focusing ‘experience’ as the source of ‘identity
formation’. Experiences are the crucial factors in creating the identity in the context of the space and time. Any experience can contradict itself in a particular space and time. Hurston talks about her identity as a “colored” person. Her colored identity comes alive when she is thrown against a white background:

It is that sharp, white background or “whiteness”, then, that mandates in African American (US) or other sharply polarized, racially defined contexts, the tactical assertion of Blackness. [Hurston 1979:152-55]

Real identities are located in the locations in which experience and perception occur and individual acts. Robert Gooding-Williams proposes that “being racially classified as black- person” [1998:23] is not enough to be hailed as black by others alone. For him “one becomes a black person only if, (1), one begins to identity (to classify) oneself as black and, (2), one begins to make choices, to formulate plans, to express concerns, etc., in light of one’s identification of oneself as black” [1998:23] (italics original). This definition highlights the individuals’ negotiation and their subjectivity. That is, black identity includes both a public self and lived experience, which means that it is produced out of the modes of description made possible in a given culture. It is also dependent on any given individual’s active self-understanding. Identity is used not only to talk about how one is identified but also how one identifies oneself with something. Yet it is one that recognizes the social categories of identity that often helpfully name the specific social locations from which individuals engages in. Identity categories are neither stable nor personally homogenous. Identity categories offer way of expression and scrutinize important relationship between lived experience and social location, as reflected in the poem:

Going by my passport / They call me Indian abroad
But in my own land / I don’t know who I am.
In South Africa I’m colored/ In the U.S.A. I’m minus red
I still don’t know who I am./ Beyond the Vindhyas
I’m a southe/ Or more often a Madrasi/In Madras I am a Malayee
Does anyone know who I am? / To the Muslims I am a Hindu
To the Hindus I’m a Brahmin / Or some other caste name
Do tell me who I am / If I am to be known by language
Or worse by religion and caste / Sometimes even by my race
Who can say who I am? [V.S. Kumar 1996:171-172]

Identity has various aspects. It is not totally cognizant or unaware, although, at times, it seems to be utterly the one or the other. At some place it is “referred to as a conscious sense of individual uniqueness, …to an unconscious striving for continuity of experience, and at yet other places as a sense of solidarity with a group’s ideal” [Sudhir Kakar 1991:16]. Therefore, it is a cognitive or physical anxiety of identity which comes through experience. That’s why, it is essential to see the ‘Experience’ as a source of identity formation. Moraga proposes people to “deal with the primary source of [their] own oppression... [and] to emotionally come to terms with what it feels like to be a victim” [Moraga 1983:30]. Central to Moraga’s understanding of oppression is that it is a physical, material, psychological, and/or rhetorical illustration of the appealing relations of domination that comprise our communal world. So the object of oppression is the body or “the flesh” [Moraga 1983: xviii-xix], where oppression is experienced and through a process of understanding, it is theorized, understood, and eventually tackled. The different social facts - such as gender, race, class, and sexuality- form an individual’s social location. These social locations are pertinent for the experiences. So the space and time are very important factors regarding individual’s identity formation.
Thus this part of the thesis has highlighted on various critical imperatives regarding the ethnicity, ethnic group, migration, culture, nation, trans-culturalism, trans-nationalism and subsequent problem of adoption and identity crisis and experience and social location as the source of identity formation.

II

I

This section of the thesis attempts to trace out the ethnic issues related with Parsi Zoroastrians in general, and India in particular. Zoroastrianism is a beleaguered faith. In the process of modernization and extreme individualism, this tiny community is on the verge of extinction. Though less in number, Parsis have made significant contribution in all walks of life. They become pioneers in diverse fields like banking, shipping, atomic physics or Art. It is a triumph of their will power, an ability to rise above the limitation of numbers and enrich the life of the nations they reside in. The Parsis in India display a wonderful capacity for assimilation on the one hand while their identity remains unbroken. There is a sense of gradual change of identity within and outside the community. To the majority of the Indians, they are known for their philanthropy or for their comic appearance in some Bollywood films with their peculiar costumes or odd Hindi pronunciation. They are considered as the crazy community of Bawaji’s. For many others, they are people of plenty, engrossed in the luxury and extreme individualism. Such isolation of India’s Parsi Zoroastrians has resulted in their cocooned existence. Nani Palkhiwala writes about his community with pride:

History affords no parallel to the role of Parsis in India. There is no record of any other community so infinitesimally small as Parsis, playing such a significant role in the life of a country so large. [1994:317]
Thus, it would be interesting to unveil the façade of this close and mysterious community.

II

It is believed that the Parsis of India are the only surviving Zoroastrians of the Common Era. The earliest Zoroastrians were just Indo-Iranians who hugged the ideas of Zarathustra. The conventional Indo-Iranian’s religion was polytheistic. Zoroaster wanted its revision and reform, claiming that there is one supreme deity, Ahura Mazda, whose nature and will required modification in men’s thought, worship, and manner of life. Once initiated, the renovation made its way slowly across Iran to become finally, as the good Mazdayasnian religion, the official faith of the late Achaemenid kings. The triumphant Muslim invasion in the seventh century was not instantaneously disastrous for the followers of Zoroaster, but for the centuries their position was to be that of second-class subject, occasionally tolerated, frequently persecuted, and almost all the time harassed by Muslims seeking their conversion. A few thousands endured by gathering together in far-flung areas where weather was cruel and life anxious. But they espoused emigration as a more beneficial strategy to survive. The thousands who found shelter in Gujarat and flourished, and then in increasing numbers gravitated to Bombay (now Mumbai) where they found favor with the English administration, were called Parsis - after the region which has provided an alternate name for Iran itself. It is their descendants who today represent the great majority of the Zoroastrian fold. They have established mainly during the 20th century self-conscious communities not only in several other Indian cities but also elsewhere in Asia, in Africa, and in almost every country of the English-speaking world.

The Arab invasion on Iran was completely against teachings of the Prophet and the Koran. In Koran, there are codes of conduct for every
person who believes in Islam. Entering into anybody’s house without
permission is prohibited:

Fa- illam tajidu fi-ha ahadan falatad quluhaa hatta
yujana lakum wa-in qeela lakumu ji- farji-u huwa
ajka lakum, wallaahu bima tahmaluna allem.
[Koran: Chapter 10: Sura 9 “Al Tauba”, Verse 28]

Translated it reads:

Seek permission before entering, anybody’s house,
if not given permission return back. It is for your
own goodness. Surely, whatever you do, God knows
everything.

It indicates that Arabs didn’t follow teachings of the Koran. They
misunderstood teachings of the Prophet. Their behavior was contradictory
to the verses in Koran.

Chapter 10, Sura 9 “Al Tauba” Verse 5 says:

Fa-ijan Salaqal Ashhurul Hurumoo Faqṭulul
Mushrikina haisu wajattumuhom waqujuhom
wahsuruhom waqudu lahum kullamarsadin
fa-in taabu wa-aqaqmus salaata wa-atuj zakaata
fa-qallu sabilahom innal-aaaha gafurrur rahim.

Translated it reads:

If non-believers believe in the oneness of God
and start paying Zakkat, you should hail them.
Otherwise, it is your duty to show them the right
way.

Zoroastrian do believe in oneness of God i.e. Ahura Mazda. They do
believe in Charity. They help people who are in need of something.
Zoroastrian never worshipped any idol. They profess faith in God. But still
Arab attacked Iran which was cruel and brutal and against God’s wish. As
Koran says:

Ya ayyuhal lajina aamanu qaatilul lajina
yalunakum minal kuffaari wal yajidu fikum ghiliya
waatamu annal laaha maa-aaal muttaqun.
[Chapter 10: Sura 9 “Al Tauba”: Verse 123]
Translated it reads:

**O believers! fight with the disbeliever. Remember, God is with those people who profess faith. (Try to show them the right way since they are ignorant)**

In Iran, Arabs didn’t own anything. But they invaded Iran. It was their paradoxical behavior. As Koran says:

*Laisa alaikum junahun antad qulu buyutan gairaa maskunatin fiha mata-ul lakum, wallaahu yaahlamu maatubaduna wama taktumoon.*

[Chapter 10: Sura 9 “Al Tauba”, Verse 29]

Translated it reads:

**You are allowed to enter any house if it contains your thing. Surely, God knows what you pretend and what you hide.**

Overall we can see this Arab invasion was against Islam and contradictory to Prophet’s teachings. But they destroyed Iran. Arab leaders set fire to every written document that they could reach and also they banned Iranians from speaking in Farsi, because they wanted to eliminate Iranian culture, and make them subordinate to Arab language and finally to Arab culture. Commander Saad Ibn-e-Abi Vagas wrote to Calipha Omar concerning the books at Ctesiphon. Omar wrote back:

**If the books contradict the Koran, they are blasphemous, on the other hand, if they are in agreement, they are not needed.**

[Dr. Kevala 2004:01]

All the books were thrown into the Euphrate. Luckily, before Iranian language could gradually disappear, Firdosi, the great Iranian poet of all times, caused its endurance by his extraordinary literary work of Shahnameh. Arab leader imposed Islam forcefully over Iranians. In this regard, they committed genocide of Zoroastrians. This persecution continued up until Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Great, came to power and ended
such a cruelty to Zoroastrians and also other religious minorities. After the Arabs overran the whole of Iran, a small group of Zoroastrians left that country and came to India to seek asylum. They landed at Sanjan, a place in Gujarat around 900 CE and have lived in India ever since. At Sanjan, King Jadav Rana gave them refuge. At first the king was doubtful about giving shelter to the refugees from Persia. The King sent Zoroastrian refugees a messenger with a glass of milk, symptomatic of homogenous mixture that should not be tampered with. In reply, the Parsis dropped a lump of sugar in the milk, saying that they would merge in easily and make the culture sweeter. It followed that they were granted a home in India because Parsis neither proselytized nor entered into politics. Parsis were given shelter on following conditions:
1. The high priest of the Zoroastrian would have to explain their religious belief to the king.
2. To adapt the Gujarati language.
3. The women would wear the sari.
4. Men should handover their weapons.
5. Venerate the cow.
6. The marriage ceremonies shall be performed at night only. No marriage with local people.

Parsis adapted Gujarati language loyally, forgetting their conventional language and in all modern day census reports specify Gujarati as their mother tongue. But they accepted it maintaining their distinctiveness as it is said: “Though, the Gujarati spoken by Parsis is an idiosyncratic variant of the language. This is highly typical of the Parsi tendency to adapt but without surrender of their distinctiveness” [New Society, *Parsis: The Jews of India: 22/01/1988*]. Parsi women adopted Sari as the dress of the community. This sartorial norm has also been devotedly followed. Parsis have a high regard for cow and due to this practice, Parsis still do not eat beef, though there are no religious prohibition against eating
the beef. Parsis performed their ceremonies in the night. This condition
was imposed so that the local populace is not captivated by such
ceremonies and therefore the threat of conversion is reduced. Parsis do not
allow outsiders in their Fire Temples, which is a further guarantee that they
will not attempt any conversions to their religion. They do not allow
insular marriage. The wedding ceremony is carried out even today after
sunset, and at least a part of ceremony is reiterated in Sanskrit. Fidelity to
the ruler of the day was a strong trait among the Parsis. They could
safeguard their faith due to the liberal attitude of the Hindus, and they
could sustain their identity because Hindu caste system banned insular-
marriage.

The Dastoor on behalf of the whole Parsi community promised to
the King Jadav Rana in following words: “Hame hinustan rayr bashim.”
Translated it reads: “We shall be the friends of all India.”

[Dipanjali, June-December, 1996:11]

While accepting these conditions, the high priest is said to have
replied by reciting 16 Sanskrit ‘slokas’ or stanzas pledging loyalty to
Hindu King. These conditions have supreme impact on the Parsi psyche
ensuing into ethnic anxieties even today, after 1300 years of their arrival in
India. In this regard, it is also necessary to see the tenets of Zoroastrian
faith.

Zarathustra developed his beliefs from the old Polytheism of Iran.
The ultimate innovation he made in religious deliberation was to recognize
Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Essentially, Zarathustra’s religion was
the product of conscious rebellion against the pre-existing polytheistic
religion. The principal characteristics of the religion taught by Zarathustra
are: its emphasis on ethics, its positive approach towards life, optimism
about the future of the world, its stress on free choice and its catholicity. It
is described as:

O Mazda, You placed life in the physical body and
gave mankind the power to act, speak and guide.
You wished that everyone should choose his or her own faith and path freely.
[Yasna 31, verse 11, translated from the Avestan language.]

The significance of the verse is that having been given the abilities to make the right or free choice, mankind must accept the consequence of that choice. Zarathustra was sure that all events of the world are based on cause and effects. He has, for that reason, based his teachings on three principles: Good reflection, Good word and Good deed. He was wise to recognize that all the motives of human beings are based on action and reaction. The recipient of every good deed in this world will respond accordingly with good behavior. It is highlighted as:

He who continues causing pain to the righteous, his end is: Destruction in the future, long duration of darkness and Badly flowing speech, pursuing unworthy ends...The result of his own actions. [Yasna 31.20]
I recognize Thee as the First at the birth of life; for Thou hast ordained that all acts and all words Shall bear fruit-evil to evil and good blessings to the good. [Yasna 43.5]

Zarathustra’s God is not a bribe taker, a trader, a customer nor a vendor, and does not need to be flattered by his creatures. The almighty God of Zarathustra is the initiator of justice, kindness, and truthfulness and guides his creatures to the same values. That is why, Zarathustra, has established his philosophy on good reflection, good word, and good deed. Hence the followers of Zoroastrianism should lead each other to the transmission of science and education. In this manner, Zoroastrianism becomes the herald of knowledge and enlightenment. He pointed out that in each of us there is a divine spark. Man should recognize this divine spark to comprehend its potential to reach the state of perfection. As a handy guide in daily life, his recommendation was very simple:

1. Think good thoughts/reflections (Humata).
2. Speak good words (Hukta).
3. Do good deeds (Huvarshta/Manashi).

He also taught that one should be tolerant in thinking and should respect all that is good, true and beautiful. Every religion focuses on one or the other important aspects. It is important to know the values stressed in Zoroastrianism because these values influence the daily life of the Zoroastrians. **Truth** is the key stress in Zoroastrianism. The first prayer a Zoroastrian child learns is devoted to truth. A free translation of the prayer- called Ashem Vohu -- is “Truth is the greatest virtue. It is happiness. Happy is who is truthful for the sake of truth.” It is, therefore, not startling that the Parsis in India and the Zoroastrians of Iran have earned a reputation for honesty. Herodotus has mentioned “truthfulness” [Book One: Section 136] as an integral part of Zoroastrian life. Herodotus continues:

**Iranians do not use harsh words and to them lying is considered the worst sin. Next to lying is borrowing money. Because, when a person is debtor, sometimes he is compelled to tell lie.** [Herodotus: Book One: Section 138]

Therefore, if any of the Zarathustra’s saying is against the current knowledge of the people, they are allowed to ignore it. It shows the flexibility in religious behavior. **Charity** is another virtue of the Zoroastrians. In the very second prayer a Zoroastrian child learns-- the *Yatha Ahu Vairya*- there is a line which says: “He who gives assistance to the poor acknowledges the kingdom of God.” There is so much stress on charity in the Zoroastrian way of life that in India there is a saying: “**Parsi, thy name is charity**”. Parsi charity always begins at home. Zoroastrian religion has always approved communal assistance. This tradition is also to be found in Iran. **Purity** is considered as religion. It is purity of the body as well as that of the mind. Cleanliness of water, land, air, and fire is one of the principal features of Zoroastrianism and particularly, Herodotus has
mentioned the cleanliness of running water in section 138 of his first book in the ancient Iran. **Dignity of Labor** and **hard work** is important in Zoroastrianism. Laziness is denounced. Laziness and taking benefit of the products of others toil is strongly criticized as the act of coercion. Everybody should take it upon himself/herself to relieve the oppressed people from exploitation by others. Everybody should live on by the fruits of his/her own labor. There is no reference to any inhumane theory and practice of slavery in Zoroastrianism. Gatha often reprimands cruelty against animals. Sacrifice of animals by human beings is considered as criminal. Idolatry, litholatry, and human made places of worship are reproached in Zoroastrianism. God’s house cannot be made by human beings with mud and stone, it is their soul and heart. Equality between men and women are regularly referred to in Gathas. **Asha** means hope, an expectation. **Asha Vahishta** represents the divine event that is already designed in the divine scheme of things. He is the reality that continuously manifests itself through divine will. To Zoroastrian, **Fire** has various meanings as the fire of inspiration, the fire of love, the fire of righteousness, the fire of emotional compassion, the fire of devotion, the fire of life giving force in all of Ahura Mazda’s creations. Fire is used as the symbol of Asha. Fire can consume as well as transform every thing it touches. Fire thus became the earthly symbol for Asha and Zoroastrians started worshipping Him as fire. Thus, Fire has become a very central aspect of Zoroastrianism. That’s why they are often called as **Fire Worshippers**. But the Persian poet Firdausi, speaking of Zoroastrians in his famous epic, the *Shahnama* says:

\[
\text{Maa gu\i ke atash parastan budand. Parastandeh-e-pak yazdan budand.}
\]

Translated it reads:

\[
\text{Do not call them fire worshipers. For they are worshippers of Ahura Mazda through fire. [Muncherji 2001:40]}
\]
Zoroaster revealed his Weltanschauung (World view) in his Gathas. According to Prophet Zarathustra the whole universe is dominated by two primal forces, **Good & Evil**. Mankind has to choose between them. Good is represented by Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd) the Lord of Light, Wisdom of life. Evil on the other hand is represented by Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), the Hostile Spirit. All the existing scriptures advocated by Zarathustra as well as the religious writings of his followers are collectively known as the Avesta (Avesta is also the name of the language spoken in Iran at one time). The Avesta consists of two parts, the older Avesta and the later Avesta (or Khordeh Avesta). The most important part of the scripture is the Gathas or Divine songs. There are dialogues between the prophet and God, and they are credited to Zarathustra himself.

The Avesta is written in a number of languages. The Gathas were written in a language that was Pre-Avestan. Later scriptures were written in the Avesta language and in the Pahlavi and Pazand dialects. What exists today is only a fraction of the original scriptures, many of which were burned when Alexander destroyed the Persopolis. The Zoroastrians still recite their prayers in the language in which the scriptures were written. Some reformers argue that they should be recited in the language of the believer or in English so that the person offering the prayers can understand what he or she is praying. Others, who want to continue the old practice, prefer to follow tradition.

Ancient Aryans believed that the world as created by Ahura Mazda was perfect, with no evil. The first man Gayo Maretan had no disease, no illness, no hunger and thirst. Only the good creation of God existed e.g., the Dog, Cow and Bull, Horse, Cock, Birds etc. Then Ahriman, the evil one, attacked the world and caused evil to appear. There appeared disease, illness and old age. Thus, the animals and the first man started to die.

According to tradition, Fravahar is the symbol of Zoroastrians. Briefly, it can be said that Fravahar, is the spirit of human being that had
existed before his/her birth and will continue to exist after his/her death. It is important to know that Fravahar should not be confused or replaced by creator or Ahura Mazda. The Fravahar Symbol is explained as:

The Fravahar’s face resembles the face of human being and therefore, indicates its connection to mankind. There are two wings in two sides of the picture, which have three main feathers. These main feathers indicate three symbols of “good reflection”, “good words”, and “good deed” which are at the same time the motive of flight and advancement. The lower part of Fravahar consists of three parts, representing “bad reflection”, “bad words”, and “bad deed” which causes misery and misfortune for human beings. There are two loops at the two sides of the Fravahar, which represent “Sepanta Minu”, and “Ankareh Minu”. The former is directed toward the face and the latter is located at the back. This also indicates that we have to proceed toward the good turn away from bad. There is a circle in the middle of the Fravahar’s trunk. This symbol indicates that our spirit is immortal, having neither a beginning nor an end. One hand of the Fravahar, points upwards, showing that we have to struggle to thrive. The other hand holds a ring. Some interpreters consider that as the ring of covenant, representing loyalty and faithfulness which is the basis of Zarathustra’s philosophy.

[Dr. Behram Varza 2004:06]

In Zoroastrianism, the Fravahar or human spirit represents two opposites good and bad. This obviously shows Zarathustra’s philosophy that everybody must try to encourage his/her Sepanta Minu (positive force) and restrain his/her Ankareh Minu (negative force). As a result of such a spiritual struggle toward goodness and avoiding evil, everybody will be able to prosper in all walks of life. Since, the ring of covenant which was located in the center of the Fravahar’s trunk is the symbol of the immortality of the spirit; it can be their own Fravahar, more their spirit will be elevated in the other world after they pass away. For that reason ancient Iranians would never mourn at the death of their beloved ones, because
they would believe that their spirit will be promoted to a higher level in the other world. Naturally, when we consider that at the time of death, the spirit of the dead bodies would be elevated to a higher level, we have to be happy at their departure to another world of eternal bliss, though their loss may be unbearable for us. In this way, in Zoroastrianism, on the basis of one’s Fravahar, everybody is responsible for his deeds.

Parsis were cut off from their ancestral fellow citizens due to migration to India. They preserved their traditional manners and morals partly because these provided their self-identity as a community and strengthened the desires to be helpful that were essential for endurance. It was partly because a certain amount of cultural separation was helpful in reassuring native Indians that they had come neither to conquer by force nor to dominate by influence. At the same time, they may well have been at pains to stress similarities between customs and by adaptation maintaining a low profile. They preserved their ethnic distinctiveness. Their integrity and enterprise won them a respect in Indian society. It was this kind of successful adjustment that stood them in good when the British ruled India. Alone among India’s ethnic groups, they had no caste system. Free from caste taboos, they could make themselves useful to Europeans doing business in colonial India. The Parsis traditional virtues were precisely those which led to their employment. Honesty, business, good sense and sincerity towards India led them to their survival and modest prosperity. They acquired fluency in English that could fit them to become their employer’s peers. Accepting every opportunity, they were soon trusted with responsibilities offering those positions in which they could exercise power and earn their own shares of profit alongside the British. It was only one step away from entrepreneurship. They took that step and thus, during the nineteenth century, the history of west coast India became one that could not be written without account of the Parsis’s phenomenal
enterprise in the fields of business, manufacturing, building, construction, education, medicine, law, government and social welfare.

Personal ethics is also very important to Parsis. Smoking is a taboo for most Parsis because they say the smoke, mixed with the poisonous carbon dioxide of exhaled breath, pollutes fire. But relations with a cross-section of Zoroastrians of several communities offers ample opportunity to observe smoking by priests and lay members of governing anjumans as well as by laity who are Zoroastrian merely by birth and habit. Wearing the Sudreh and Kusti at Navjote merely indicates conscious affirmation of one’s identity. After all it is not what is worn but what a person desires to be and strives to do in his life that is important.

Intoxication is looked upon as unfaithful to clear thinking and right aspiration. It indicates loose moral character. On the other hand, neither legal prohibition nor self-discipline by personal choice has ever been considered as a moral imperative. Drinking in moderation is enjoyed and the means for doing so are usually made available when people entertain at home or gather communally for the ceremonies with which feasting is linked.

The sexual principles of Zoroastrians have been formed in enormous measure by their constant condemnation of asceticism and the threats to their endurance posed by historical obligation. The Avesta makes marriage a holy responsibility and parenthood the ideal state. Priests have the additional cause for marrying so that their profession became hereditary. Both polygamy and concubine were allowed from earliest times until well into this century if a man needed to go that far to have a healthy and surviving son. Parsis’s migration to India resulted in exposure to the prevailing Hindu customs and, as time passed, in making significant adjustment to them. By the 17th century “polygamy by males was.... [still] prevalent” and “child marriage quite common.” [Bulsara 1938:17]. There are many reasons of late marriages in Parsi community. The spread of
poverty is one of the reasons of late marriages or if they could avoid marriage to take pleasure in the better economic safety. Others preferred to marry outside the community, much to the disappointment of the orthodox who believe in the genetic superiority of the Parsis. Pillo Nanavutty said that “interrmarriages are becoming the norm rather than exception.” [1977:174]

Wadia claimed that the ancestors of Parsis in India “freely mingled by marriage...with the people of the land,” [Wadia P.A. 1949:140] and they “managed to survive” [Ibid, 140] because of it. He added if they could expect now to survive by “a policy of rigid exclusivism and in-breeding, by becoming a caste when the whole idea of caste was being discarded by all their neighbors.” [Ibid, 140]

The principal reason for the protection of endogamy is that Zoroastrians consider identity, both ethnic and religious, as inherited from the father. Therefore, Parsis have thought the children of non-Zoroastrian fathers as ineligible for Navjote or inclusion in the community. But it does not mean that the marriage of a Zoroastrian male to a non-Zoroastrian is desirable. It is a common belief that children receive their religious instruction from the mother in the home. Her religious commitment is frequently stronger and her practice of religion more faithful than a father’s. The result is that the inheritance of identity from the father, notwithstanding the children, is likely to be drawn to the mother’s faith. The meaning is clear; the Zoroastrian community stands to lose potential members whenever mixed marriage occurs. Dabu has firmly stated that “preservation of their blood from getting mixed with that of other races is a necessity” [1959:16]. Mixed married people are “an asset to the community” as “outcastes” [Paymaster 1975:30]. The Parsis in India had decided to maintain friendly relationship with their native supporter. They offer no threat to the peace by interfering with basic social structures, like family and native religion(s), for the right to settle after seeking refuge in
India. So Parsis steadily sheltered their ethnic purity and the reliability of their religion by endogamy and an anti-conversion policy from the time of arrival of their first ancestor in India. It is aptly reflected in following words:

The mission of Zoroaster was to rid the Mazdayasni religion of the evil of devayasni and restore it to its pristine purity. [Karkhanavala, 1971: 94-95]

Zoroastrianism is therefore simply a part of “the process of evolution within the Mazdayasni religion… Because Zoroaster did not convert, conversion of non-Mazdayasnan[s] is forbidden in the religion. That [moreover] is why marriage of Mazdayasni with a non- Mazdayasni is tabooed and is considered a grave sin...” [Karkhanavala 1971:94-95]

But modern day Parsis have some other reasons to resist the conversion. Conversion as an open-door policy would allow “a steady stream of people” to choose for the faith “not out of love, conviction or understanding, but merely to take advantage of ... [Parsi] funds or charities.” [Dhalla H.B 1971:138] Dr. Shernaz Cama, points out:

Conversion is controversial. In Zoroastrianism all are welcome- all can enter the most ancient shrines at Yazd/Kerman in Iran. In India a promise was given (condition made to Jadhav Rana) that no proselytizing will occur- hence the ban on conversion or entry into temple. It has become a very heated ethnic debate not religious... Today it has become a point of rigidity between orthodox and liberals. Even most of the Parsis cannot accept the Zoroaster openly welcomed all to join the faith. [1997:12]

Nanavutty says that an anti-conversion policy “is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Zarathustra,” pointing out that:

...every Nyaesh and every Yasht in the Khordeh Avesta, the Book of Daily Prayers, ends with... ‘May the knowledge, extent and fame of the commandments of the excellent religion of Mazda ever increase in the world, over all its seven regions.
So may it be. I must attain this goal; I must attain this goal; I must attain this goal.’ [1977:174-175]

Mr. Keki J. Gandhi, Secretary of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and editor of the Fed Newsletter, wrote in the April 1995 issue on the major consequence arising from inter-faith marriages. He raised an important question: “Does a Parsi Zoroastrian (male or female) lose the rights of a Parsi Zoroastrian merely because of marriage to a person belonging to another faith?” [1995:1]. He continued his questions regarding the debate whether a Parsi Zoroastrian ceases to be either a Parsi or a Zoroastrian because of interfaith marriage. He highlighted on the explanation of the two terms, Parsi and Zoroastrianism. Both these terms were defined in the Bombay High Court judgment delivered by Honorable Justice Daver and Honorable Justice Beaman in Suit 689 of 1906:

The word Zoroastrian simply denotes the religion of the individual and the word Parsi denotes his nationality or community and has no religious significance what ever attached to it. [Ava Khullar Parsiana: Nov. 1994: 26]

Later in the judgment Justice Daver said: “A Parsi born must always be a Parsi, no matter what other religion he or she subsequently adopts and profess” [Ava Khullar, 1994:26-28]. The orthodox section of the community denied to accept such legal points and have withdrawn behind the protection of the sentiment aptly expressed by Ava Khullar: “Ahura Mazda (the Creator) has looked after us for 3,500 years and will continue to do so” [Ibid, 26]. The division between the orthodox and the reformists has resulted into a generation gap in attitudes to marriage and life. Ava Khullar in her article in the Parsiana of Nov. 1994 highlights this change as:

From the mid 60s what was apparent was that in their individual capacities, Parsis were adapting to a changing socio-economic situation for their economic and emotional satisfaction by seeking educational and occupational opportunities abroad,
marrying outside the community when suitable partners could not be found etc. [Parsiana: Nov.1994:26]

Lovji Cama doubts that: “the progeny of interfaith marriages have either the religion of the other faith or have no religion at all” [Parsiana: Nov.1994:42]. But this unwillingness to change with time is harmful to this tiny community. Nargis Dalal slams this Parsi tendency of genetical purity:

To claim that after nearly 1,200 years in India, Parsis are ethnically pure is absurd... Only small groups escaped to India after the conquest of Persia by Islam and the forced Islamization of the people. Through the centuries Parsis have intermarried with the natives of India with or without the approval of the priests. Therefore, the concept of ethnic purity is a myth. [Times of India: 24/01/1995]

Farrukh Dhondy in Bombay Duck gives the pungent blow when he writes:

There is evidence to show that the first settlers had no woman with them and must have inter-married with the natives, the Hindus, so the first claim of the Parsees to be racially pure is suspect. [1991:190-91]

Such voices clearly reflect the modern Parsi psyche that distrusts the original story of racial purity, an excuse to cancel out the inter-religious marriages. Ava Khullar analyzed that “the liberal-minded young felt that their personal advancement was crucial and so what if the community dies.” [1994:26-28]

According to a notification of the trustees of Parsi Punchayet that declared their policies regarding this issue:

We, the undersigned trustees of funds and properties of the Parsi Punchayet, do hereby notify for the information of the public that we are advised by the learned counsel that the funds and religious properties under our charge- such as Towers of Silence, dharamshalas, masakhanas, fire-temples, etc. are held by us for the benefit of those only, who
are Parsis by birth and at the same time Zoroastrians by religion. Such only are entitled to the benefit of the funds and properties. The benefit of the funds and above said properties, in our charge, cannot be given to those who are not Parsi Zoroastrian as described above. [February 9, 1905]

It is pathetic that with the madness of racial purity, learned people, anjumans, punchayets are not ready to see the possibility of extinction of their ancient religion and culture for the ethnic purity. This is what Pangborn expresses rightly:

**In any case, the concern of the traditionalists is that the name could be saved but the substance of their religion lost.** [Pangborn 1982:146]

These were the controversies regarding the conversion, inter-faith marriage depending on social, financial, and religious grounds. There are other issues which have given rise to the controversies i.e. dokhma, recitation of prayers in its original language as composed by the prophet. Zoroastrian traditionalist had acknowledged the futility in ancient rituals and rites. But with certain rituals like prayers they firmly follow them. The major orthodox group insists on the Avestan prayers and recitation in the original language. As Jal Rustamji Vimadalal expresses it:

**These Manthras are a protection ... from superphysical evil influence... also from any physical evil or misfortune or difficulty in this mundane world... they forget the power of sound, they forget that these prayers were composed not by ordinary men... but by seers and sages to whose vision the effect of these Manthras was open... any attempt to substitute Gujarati must be nipped in the bud... it would toll the knell of our age-long connection with our ancient traditions, our glories and our ancestors, our religious rites, ceremonies and prayers.** [1971: 6-8]
According to Dabu, Parsis must use the words of the prophet exactly because “...these are considered to be sacred and powerful incantations, used by Magi, who knew the art of composing potent spells.” [1959:174]

The problem of disposing the dead is also very serious. A Zoroastrian scholar, Dr. Shernaz Cama in her letter to the editor informs:

In Iran too burial is common as in Delhi etc. Theologically and environmentally the Dokhma was the best system. First, because it was the last good deed performed even your very flesh fed birds of carrion. Second, there is no pollution of earth and it does not involve using up of valuable good earth for burial - so environmentally sound. Today, logic has lost out in Iran. Logically burial is done because of lack of carrion birds in cities and towns. Here it has become an ego issue. [1997:9-10]

Tremendous decline in the numbers of vultures is another blow on Zoroastrianism. The lack of these birds has bereft the final rites. In India and Pakistan vultures are dying due to their eating habits of dead animals. These birds are mainly facing death because of kidney problem. Maharashtra Times reports that in “India three species of these birds have declined by 90%” [23 April, 2005]. With the decline in the number of vultures, Bombay Parsi panchyet has taken a scientific step by installing giant solar reflectors to hasten the process of decomposition of corpses.

Under Muslim rule, Zoroastrians became a disadvantaged minority. In India they are still a minority. This minority status was shaped by their sieged mentality. Under such conditions, energies are exhausted in struggling only to survive, and no investment in the task of re-shaping the world. But with the first chance under the British rule they flourished economically. It was resulted in greatest visibility of the many institutions which Parsi philanthropists have built and funded. There are schools, colleges, and institutions for students at all educational levels, hospitals both general and specialized, housing colonies for co-religionists who might otherwise not find decent homes available or reasonable, the
compounds for festival rites and ceremonies, and the grounds, bunglis, and dokhmas for the dead and the obsequies performed by those who lament the dead. But in post-colonial period their status was degraded under independent India’s Hindu majority. The economic fitness of the Parsis had been in decline well before it was noticed that the community was dwindling. K.D. Umrigar summarized many a Parsi grievance about their flourished business, industries of previous century, were “getting smaller year after year” [1971:35]. Instead of a spirit of entrepreneurship, there is acute unemployment afflicting the community, and a lack of professional diversification pointing to their decline and rising of middle class white-collar workers. Wadia P.A. wrote about increasing poverty in Parsi community:

...poverty is not only an economic phenomenon but has become a general social phenomenon, affecting a substantial majority of families within the community. [1949:9]

Searching the explanation in the decline still continuing after forty years, Minchoer concluded: “the rich of yester years became the upper-middle class traders of today; the upper-middle class became the middle-class fixed income earners; and the lower-middle class became the new poor of the community.” [Minocher H.H.B 1978: xii]

The housing condition had given another catalogue of slow destruction in the quality of life. The first housing colonies were built with the help of communal funds around the turn of the century for the poor Parsis. Now those colonies had become slums. New construction, however, has never kept up with the requirement of single persons and families who have been priced out of the personal housing market. As a result, overcrowding, over-burdened facilities, and deterioration for lack of proper maintenance have been great problems. These colonies had become “a breeding ground of organized beggary and hooliganism” [Wadia P.A. 1949:33] for the children, especially boys. Parsi funds have not published
audited accounts or annual reports. At present time an applicant either for relief or educational assistance may go from one trust to another getting a little or a lot from either. This has created the new class of the “professional applicant” and “professional beggars” [Parsiana, Welfare, Feb.2004]. The Parsiana report highlights this as:

This indiscriminate, unscientific, beggar-producing-charity is the worst. It is obviously of the greatest importance that the children of those receiving charity should not grow up in turn into the ‘application complex’. [Parsiana, Welfare, Feb.2004]

Thus, one can see the downgraded conditions of Parsis in India. The community once well-known for prosperity and charity is trapped in financial crisis and corruption.

The centuries-long segregation of Zoroastrians from the political procedure after the Muslim invasion habituated them to political passivism. Parsi immigrants in India found this suitable attitude for survival. They were given their status as unwanted refugees completely dependent upon the kindness of Indian rulers for the survival. But with English rule Parsi became known for some connection with political order. Their classification with the British and the opulence set them apart from most Indians whose increasingly ardent desire was for independence. National Independence in 1947 gave the great Hindu (in case of India) and Muslim (in case of Pakistan) its first opportunity in centuries to exchange the role of servant for that of master and thus at last to dominate the political arena. It reinforced the minority status and apolitical consciousness on Parsis. Elite consciousness and its preservation by Parsis helped to “forget the actual dangers to the community’s future” [Kulke 1974:268]. There is no Zoroastrian theory of the just war for example, or of the rights of the states vs. the rights of its citizens or even of the nature of the relationship like religious institution and state. In Iran, political
impotence was a cost willingly paid for whatever peace and security the ruling Muslim would allow to a religious minority if it kept a low profile.

Kulke has concluded that the necessary substance of the Zoroastrian’s political belief has been “strict loyalty to the ruling authority in the interest of survival.” [Kulke 1974:133-134]. After the Arab assault, the fears of total annihilation of the Zoroastrian religion were at last eased only by the flight to India. In India they enjoyed toleration and equal status with native ethnic groups. Freedom, conjoined with strong character and ambition, provided the favorable climate for the achievement. Subsequently, the prospering community shook off the siege mentality that oppression had fostered and began to attain glory in its capacity to survive in hardships and rise again. In this attitude they avoided the problems within the community. This issue was posed briefly by a Pakistani Parsi in the 1970s:

...so blinded ourselves with our self-woven cocoon of past glory, that we are unable to make a rational judgment on our own degeneration... because we... survived Alexander and the Arabs, we [think we] shall survive into the distant future by the Grace of Ahura Mazda, even if we sit with folded arms, and do nothing... [Minocher H.B.H. 1978: x]

As a result of negligence towards the demographic decline and internal controversies, Parsis are suffering from the sheer survival problem. Nani A. Palkhiwala observes about the population extinction:

A hundred years ago the fertility rate among Parsis was the highest in India. The highest figure of the Parsi population in India was the 1, 14,890 recorded in the Census of 1941. But over the last fifty years the number has been dwindling. Today the total number of Parsis throughout the world is estimated to be a little over 1, 00,000. Of this number about 70,000 live in India, 18,000 in Iran, a little over 3,000 in Pakistan, and another 15,000 are scattered over Europe, America, Africa and the Far East. [1994:317]
The Register General and census commissioner of India J.K. Banthia sounded the warning of a momentous demographic decline at both the PARZOR meet Bombay in October and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI): “The time may come when the birth of a Parsi child will be a cause for national celebration.” [Parsiana, Feb. 2004]. Zoroastrians suffer from the gravest of their numerical shrinkage. The demography of Zoroastrians all over the world was increased as late as 1941. But such development was stopped:

Twenty years later, their number had diminished by nearly 14%, and after another ten years, by 9% leaving a total of 91,266. [Marshall R.R. 1977:28]

The reasons for decline in Parsi demography are various and difference in decline is vast as given in the report: “In …Bombay where nearly two-thirds of the Parsis live, deaths exceeded births by 101 in 1961. By 1970, the difference had increased to 385, with deaths on the increase and births decreasing. The principal causes of death over the last half of the decade were accidents, cancer, cardiac failure, haemorrhage, influenza-pneumonia, old age, senile debility, and uremia” [Report 1970:21-23]. From 1940-1990 the Parsi/Irani population in India has declined from a peak of 1,14,890 in 1940 to 76,382 in 1990, a loss of around 38,500. The 2001 figures will be less than 70,000 [Parsiana, Feb. 2004]. Desai mentioned the diseases among Parsi causing increased death rate. His focus had been on types of life-shortening illnesses tending to be hereditary or traceable to syndromes of living surroundings in terrible housing. Thus, tuberculosis, respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental illness, and retardation were special foci for his concern. The next real prospect of their extinction is always in their consciousness, intensifying the poignancy and urgency of each individual concern.

In spite of being a tiny ethnic minority community, they have contributed much to the growth of India. Though they are one of the fast
retreating communities of the world, yet they encounter their marginalization with their ability to laugh at cruel complexities of life. The Parsi writers are also very sensitive to the various anxieties experienced by their community. Their works endorse the anxieties and aspirations, fears and disillusionment of their community, its scrutiny of human position in a family, in a country, and in the Indian-sub-continent.

Thus this thesis aims at investigating the ethnic anxieties in the fictional worlds of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry. Both writers belong to countries which were one before Partition. Being Parsis, a minority in both countries, they suffer ethnic anxieties. The Parsi-Zoroastrian is a Ethno-religious/Minority. Dharan has aptly described the portrayal of this tiny community by Parsi writers regarding various problems their community suffers at present. He says:

**Obviously then, their literature is characterized by both ethnocentric and minority discourse features. It depicts all the concerns of the modern-day Parsis. Being the minuscule minority in India, the Parsis do experience ethnic anxieties. They feel insecure, experience identity crisis and feel threatened by possible submersion in the dominant Hindu culture… The factors which contribute to … ethnic atrophy are the Parsis’s single-minded pursuit of prosperity, extreme individualism, craze for urbanization, late marriages, low birth rate, the rather high incidence of cancer, Alzheimers disease, osteoporosis, mental illness, and low fertility rate.** [Dharan 2001:100-101]

In this way both the writers have portrayed the various anxieties their community face in a marginal existence. Bapsi Sidhwa, infact, portrays the undivided India in her two novels- The Crow Eaters and Ice Candy Man. Her depiction of Western part of India (now independent Pakistan) is the picturization of composite cultures which was undivided India and the vital role played by her community as ‘mode of social change’ [Kulke 1978]. Though, both independent nations have different
political ideologies and religious majorities, Parsi community of Mistry and Sidhwa always categorized as a minority. In Mistry’s fictional world, Muslims are aligned with Parsis as a minority. These writers have dealt with different periods, and locales but the central focus of their discourse is their tiny community and various ‘ethnic anxieties’ it suffers in the course of changing time. Parsi community suffers from the problems of ethnic anxieties due to marginalization, subaltern position, and cultural hybridity. It faces the troubles of decline in membership, some of the religious rigidities like – ban of conversion, inter-faith marriages, problems regarding their final rites as there is decline in the populations of vultures, and unavailability of Tower of Silence in the various parts of both the countries. It has raised the debates for the reformations in the community. These facets of Parsi ethnicity will be traced in this research study by studying these two writers and the way they have dealt with these issues and priorities they attempted to give as a member of minority community in their nations (though both the writer are not living in their countries, their engagement with the country is that of diasporic writers, but one can’t deny the authenticity and realities community faces in their fictional world.) In such way their community has emerged as the protagonist who, against all odds, is desperately trying to survive in the coming millennium. A.K. Singh points out, “Their works exhibit consciousness of their community in such a way that the community emerges as a protagonist from their works though on the surface these works deal with their human protagonists” [1997:66]. The rapid possibility of their extinction gives the sense that the works of all these Parsi writers would serve the need of future generation so that they can understand this great religious heritage through their fictional works as in an interview, Rohinton Mistry said that his fiction will “preserve a record of how they lived to some extent,” [Lakhani: 25] when the Parsis will disappear from the earth. It is a genuine remark Mistry has made as all the Parsi writers are portraying their
community as a protagonist. Writers like Perin Bharucha, Nargis Dalal, Boman Desai, Ardashir Vakil, Farrukh Dhondy, Dina Mehta, Firdaus Kanga, Sohrab Homi Fracis, Thrity Umrigar, and Meher Pestonji who are constantly portraying the predicament of their tiny community.

III

This section deals with the historical perspective of Indian, Pakistani and Parsi fiction in English in brief.

I

Indian Fiction in English

Introduction of English education in India paved the way to new thinking. It opened up new avenues of thought and culture, art and literature, science and technology. European literature came through the channels of English education. Indians started to write about their culture, society, religion and politics through the creative activities of fiction. The first Indian novel in English was serialized by Calcutta Weekly that was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Rajmohan’s Wife (1864), portraying the trials of a typical Indian and long suffering wife from Bengal. There are other noticeable writers from other regions of India like Sirdar Jogendra Singh highlights on the decadence of aristocratic life in North India in Nasrin: An Indian Medley (1911). A. Madhavia’s Thillai Govindan (1916) deals with the mental development of a south Indian Brahmin youth. The appearance of the Great trio on the horizon of Indian English Fiction was the most significant event in the history of Indian English Fiction in the nineteen thirties - Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Each was typical in his own way leading the Indian fiction towards new heights. Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) is often hailed as the champion of the down trodden. His novels are sociological treaties on contemporary Indian society depicting the class and caste struggle and exploitation inherent in Indian society. His novel Untouchable (1935)
presents an archetypal tension between individual and society from the point of view of a protagonist drawn from the down-trodden classes. **R.K. Narayan’s (1906-2001)** fictions portray the predicament of ordinary men and women of Malgudi with ironic humor. His *The Guide* (1958), deals with Raju a tourist Guide, a lover, a prisoner turned into a spiritual Guide, a holy man. Narayan never made an attempt to criticize social evils or deal with the plight of the under dog. He sketched the authentic picture of the middle class in a simple language. **Raja Rao (1909)** is different from Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand in his choice of themes. He mostly deals with metaphysical themes in his novels. His most famous novel *Kanthapura* (1938) portrays the eternal struggle between good and evil with an epic treatment, here personified by Gandhi and the Gandhians on the one hand and the British Raj on the other. These three gems of Indian Writing in English have given it new horizons and directions.

There are novelists without whom this historical perspective can not be accomplished. **Bhabani Bhattacharya’s (1906-1989)** novels depicted social problems and issues. He wrote for the social cause, dealing with contemporary social problems like poverty, corruption, ignorance, superstition, exploitation, greed, sexual perversion etc. with firm faith in life. His philosophy of life portrays the ‘assertion of life’. His most famous *So Many Hungers* (1947) deals with the theme of exploitation -political, economic and social. **Manohar Malgaonkar (1913)** wrote realistic novels with the purpose of pure entertainment. His is the male dominated world in which women seem to be little more than instruments of masculine pleasure. His novels are neatly constructed and entertainingly told narratives. *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) deals with colonial India, freedom-struggle, violence, non-violence, and horrors of the partition. **G.V. Desani** is the father of Indian English and the precursor to Salman Rushdie in language experiments what came to be called later as ‘hybridity of language’. He is also a post-modernist novelist in the real sense as his
novel *All About H.Hatterr* deals with major issues of post-modern era. It is often described as “a linguistic comedy”. **Arun Joshi’s (1939)** recurrent theme is alienation in its various facets, and his heroes are highly self-centered persons opened to self-pity and escapism. In spite of their weaknesses, they strive for purpose and self-fulfillment of life. *The Foreigner* (1968) is about ‘detachment’ and ‘commitment’. The search for identity is the theme of his *The Strange case of Billy Biswas* (1971). *The Apprentice* (1974) deals with the significance of human acts. His serious themes are told in colloquial languages tinged by slight humor. Women’s emancipation or liberation has paved a way in literature. Women are considered as ‘Second Sex’. So, the conflicts and contrasts between first sex and second sex are also reflected in literature. Women writers have vividly portrayed the predicament of feminine conditions and their psyche on the pages. **Kamala Markandaya (1923)**, nee Purnaiah Taylor, is an insider-outsider. Her fiction has a much broader range and offers a greater variety of setting, character and effect. Her themes are East-West encounter, and woman in different roles. Her first novel *Nectar In a Sieve* (1954) is a tragedy caused by economics. The impact of new economic and political ideas on traditional Indian society is the main theme of her various novels. *Two Virgins* (1973) marks a radical change, showing a much more experimental style and a more positive view of modernization. **Nayantara Sahgal (1927)** is usually regarded as an exponent of the political novel. But along with the political theme, her fiction is also preoccupied with the modern Indian woman’s search for sexual freedom and self-realization. Her novel *A Time To be Happy* (1958) deals with Maya married to Harish, a sterile, who seeks escape into extra-marital arms. **Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (1927)** has portrayed the various dilemmas of feminine mind. Her works reveal inwardness in her picture of certain segments of Indian social life. Her *Heat and Dust* (1975) deals with Olivia’s love for an Indian prince and subsequent crisis in her life. **Anita**
Desai (1937) deals with the interior landscape of the mind. Her protagonists are mostly women who are all fragile and trapped in their own skins. Their emotional traumas sometimes lead to a violent death in the end. In Cry the Peacock (1963), Maya an isolated wife, whose husband is twice her age and unsentimental, murders him in a fit of fury. Attia Hosain’s (1913) fame rests on Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961) It deals with Laila’s various experiences as a woman from an orphan girl, married woman to a mother and widow. There is valuable social and political documentation in the novel, and Attia Hosain writes with a feeling of places, events and words.

Historical fiction can represent a wide spectrum of historical interests. Partition of the Indian subcontinent has provided the ready material to novelists for the next generation. Some novelists have experienced this event. They wrote to share their suffering or traumatic experience with the next generation, through writing. And that’s why we have comprehensive array of historical novels dealing with partition. Writers have portrayed the traumatic, bloody partition with different perspectives or dimensions or style. Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan (1956) provides an account of India and Pakistan’s bloody partition, through the eyes of the inhabitants of a tiny village in Western portions of India’s Punjab state, on the frontier between India and Pakistan. After Partition, the village finds itself surrounded in the flames of religious fire, which begins when a train from Pakistan arrives at the village railway station, carrying dead Sikh refugees. The novel gathers steam with the forced deportation of the town’s Muslim population. In addition, prominent members of the Sikh and Hindu communities plot revenge to slaughter the next train of Muslim refugees fleeing from India into Pakistan will be slaughtered. Entangled in this violence is a love affair between a Sikh thief, Jugga, and a Muslim girl, Nooran. To save Nooran, Jugga sacrifices his life to let the train go to Pakistan. The Muslim
presence is projected as the ‘other’. Chaman Nahal’s Azadi (1975) has portrayed both Hindu and Muslim sides very well. But the novel depicts the tortures havoccked by Muslim fanatics on Hindus and Muslims who helped Hindus. Women like Sunanda, Isher Kaur and others were molested by Muslims. They were insulted in parades. It shows that drawing lines on a map is easy but uprooting men from their homes is difficult. Lala Kashi Ram remembers his childhood passion for eating earth. While leaving from Sialkot, the same urge of eating the earth overcomes in him. Bhisham Sahani’s Tamas (The Darkness, 1988) sketches the objective portrayal of the partition. He has not shown the hatred either for Hindus or Muslims. Amitav Ghosh’s Shadow Lines (1988) indicates the inability of people who have been uprooted from their homes. It raises the question and authenticities of geographical boundaries marked by the politicians. Mukul Kesavan’s Looking through the Glass (1995) shows that Partition as an accomplished fact was a vague achievement. Shauna Singh Baldwin’s What the Body Remembers tells the story of Partition from Sikh point of view. It highlights that during partition apart from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh another community suffered brutally and that was ‘woman’. Revenges were taken on woman’s body and this is what the body remembers. Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice Candy Man (1988) echoes the same vein. The novel has feminist undercurrents. It is seen through the eyes of a Parsi, child narrator. It gives Parsi perception of the partition. Other well-known novels worth mentioning about partition are Manohar Malgaonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges (1964), Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981).

Nowadays, ‘diasporic studies’ are in vogue. These studies have integrated themselves into postcolonial approaches. Diasporic writers have raised the various questions of exile, adjustment and assimilation in new homeland as well as hybridity, fragmentation and reconstruction of identity. They dealt with the questions of race, culture, nation, language,
history etc. Diasporic writing raises questions regarding the definitions of ‘home’ and ‘nation’. Schizophrenia, nostalgia and memory are other preoccupations of these writers as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. It becomes very necessary how these writers handle these issues particularly when related to their country of origin.


The nineteen nineties has been the most momentous decade for the Indian novel written in English, an avant-garde decade which brought
about significant changes in literary discourses in spite of the survival of the old and the classical. They set new trends in literary tradition. They are pointers to the future in the matter of technique, thematics, and the use of English in its decolonized avatar. There are complications of postcoloniality, postmodernism, gender issues, the forbidden issues like ‘incest’, the imaging of the nation and narrating history. This section deals with the fresh crop of literary generation who made their presence felt by their stunning debuts. They are most promising, and capable of carrying the responsibilities on their shoulders.

Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things (1997) has given new glamour to Indian English Fiction after winning the prestigious Booker Prize. It is the story of love, relationships, politics, religion, and the Indian class, and caste system. The novel is an experiment with language. Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters (1998) is a family story at the core of which is the deviation of Virmati, the difficult daughter, from family code of conduct and traditional sexual norms. Pride Woman portrays the lesbian relationship of Astha, a happy housewife with familial comforts, and Pipee, a younger woman, the widow of a political activist. She risks her family and social status. Kiran Desai’s (1972) Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard proves that India’s encounter with the English language continues to attract the world. She has received the prestigious Booker Prize for her latest novel ‘Inheritance of the Loss’ in 2006. It explores international issues like globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Raj Kamal Jha’s The Blue Bedspread has explored the incestuous relationship. The blue bed-spread is the metaphor of unrestricted imagination and freedom. Sunny Singh like Shashi Tharoor has used eternal presence of the past, made a creative use of myths, legends and traditions. Sammy, the narrator of the Nani’s book of Suicide believes that all the values and ideals of her Nani lead to self-destruction. Pankaj Mishra’s The Romantics is primarily about the inner
turmoil of the youth forced to adjust in an ever-changing world. Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies has won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. It reflects a personal view of life in the USA and the Indian sub-continent. Lahiri has also focused on the communication breakdown between second generation Asian people and the countries from where their families originated.

II

Pakistani Fiction in English

Indian novelists writing in English are hot commodities these days. They enjoy the privilege of being an Indian enjoying the status in world literature in English. In such an atmosphere literature of Pakistan written in English is neglected. Very few writers have emerged from Pakistan but those are eclipsed by, or lumped together with, their Indian counterparts. Though their voices are distinct, many Pakistani and Indian writers do share a concern for the defining moment in their nations’ histories; the partition of the subcontinent in 1947.

In coming time Pakistani English literature will acquire its own identity as a separate species of English literature as more and more writers from Pakistan make their presence felt. The majority of Pakistani English writers of fiction live into diaspora. One can trace the origin of Pakistani Fiction in English in 1947. Pakistan already had a small number of established English language writers. Ahmed Ali (1908-1994) had published South Asia’s first major, international Muslim novel in English, Twilight in Delhi. In 1967, the expatriate Zulfikar Ghose published The Murder of Aziz Khan the first organized Pakistani novel written in modern English. His historical trilogy Incredible Brazilian (1972-79) received great acclaim. His last novel Triple Mirror of the Self (1992) is complex exploration of exile across three continents. These two are considered as the fathers of Pakistani English literature. Bapsi Sidhwa is the first Pakistani novelist who received international recognition. Her Pakistani
by the Sea (1998) depicts the experience of an eleven year old boy in a
time of political turmoil. Salt and Saffron (2000) is about a family
wounded by its myths and divided by class and by Partition. Qaisra
Shahraz has shown her courage to talk on the religious themes like
marriage with Koran. Her novel The Holy Woman (2000) portrays the life
of Zarri-Bano who is married to Koran and became Shazadi-Ibadat- the
Holy woman. She is imposed to lead the life of celibacy by denying all
worldly pleasures.

The new generation of Pakistani English novelists is about to mark
their presence in English literature. They include Sehba Sarwar (Black
Wings), Sorayya Y. Khan (In the Shadow of the Margalla Hills), Moazzam
Sheikh Sarwar, Humair Yusuf and Umaid Rahman and others.

III

Parsi Fiction in English

This section deals with the English fiction written by Parsis. In
recent novels by Parsis there is more stress on the Parsi identity as a
distinct ethno-religious minority in India. Perin Bhraucha’s The Fire
Worshippers (1968) highlights the dilemma of insular marriage. Pestonji
objects to such marriage as it would bring the disintegration of the
community. Nargis Dalal’s ‘The Sisters’ exemplifies the ‘Parsi paradox’
to explore attitudes to marriage and social relationship. Bapsi Sidhwa’s
The Crow Eaters (1978) opened all the doors and all the windows of Parsi
world to the readers. She has created an array of delightful, idiosyncratic
Parsis. Parsi death rites, insular-marriage issue, neutrality towards Indian
freedom movement, loyalty to rulers, and future of minority problems are
discussed. Ice-Candy-Man (1988) portrays the horrible story of partition
through a Parsi perspective. An American Brat (1994) deals with the
problem of insular marriage of Feroza and David Press. It underscores that
cultural differences does matter. It also consciously or unconsciously talks
for the favorable changes if community wants to survive. Rohinton
Mistry in his story collection *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1987) focused all the problems of Parsi community. The problem of identity crisis degraded social status in post-independence India, uprootedness, and problems of extinction of the community. *Such a Long Journey* (1991) deals with Parsi beliefs, death rites, identity crises, Nagarwalla Case through the fictitious character of Jimmy Billimoria. It problematizes the ethnic anxieties of his minority community in Hindu majority. *Family Matters* depicts the problems of insular-marriage and Parsi social-status in post-Ayodhya India. Boman Desai’s *The Memory Of the Elephants* (1992) is an honest introspection into the strengths and eccentricities of the Parsis. It is thus a culturally rooted fantasy with a strong desire to record the history of the Parsi-exodus and to restore it from the cultural memory. It raises the questions of Parsi identities. Farrukh Dhondy’s *Poona Company* (1980), a short story collection, focuses the Poona Parsi milieu in Poona. The Parsis in these stories are from the lower middle class who are better integrated into the Indian context. They are the Parsi bookies, conmen and even ‘khandian’, the Parsi corpse-bearers. Their Parsi identity has not been threatened and hence does not have to be overtly affirmed. The Parsi nostalgia for the British Raj is noted as are the Parsi death rites. His *Bombay Duck* (1990) celebrates the bi-cultural identity of expatriates and moves between the two worlds of Bombay and London. It is a novel of fitting in, of the breaking down of cultural boundaries. Firdaus Kanga’s *Trying to Grow* (1990) portrays the Parsis from upper-middle class from Bombay. It asserts the Parsi identity and the clash between this identity and encroaching Hindu spiritualism, which contemporary Parsis, in spite of their elite consciousness, find it very attractive. It highlights the nostalgia for Raj, ‘anglophillia’, and gay relationship of Brit and Cyrus. It also deals the insular marriage. Dina Mehta’s *And Some Take a Lover* delineates the Parsis’s apprehensions and political crises in the wake of the Quit India Movement and the Naval Rating Mutiny. This novel also deals with the
insular marriage theme. There is dilemma of the minority community and its identity crisis. Parsi, understandably an anglicized community, would find it extremely difficult to identify with other Indian communities. 

**Ardashir Vakil’s** *Beach Boy* deals with Cyrus Readymoney, a Parsi and his fostered Hindu family. It highlights the cultural and religious differences. **Meher Pestonji’s** *Mixed Marriages (1999)* deals with the various issues regarding Parsi identity. It highlights the insular marriage problems and subsequently Parsi alienation in Indian milieu. **Sohrab Homi Fracis’s** first story-collection *Ticket to Minto (2001)* is most apparent in the specifically Parsi stories of collection. The Parsis of his stories are doubly alien, both within the explicitly Western realm and within the predominantly Hindu and Muslim landscape of India. They remain a small, intermarried minority in both US and India, fighting for survival, which is the subject matter of a number of pieces. The title story *Ticket to Minto* illustrates how alien-ness can be found within a country, as well as without. These stories are about being “Other”, being an alien, an outsider. **Thrity Umrigar’s** *Bombay Time (2002)* traces the ambition and disappointment in the lives of several inhabitants of a Parsi neighborhood in Bombay (Mumbai). It deals with characters having a love-hate relationship with Bombay and India in general as it is pronounced in the Parsi community. There is a segment within this community that has never quite reconciled to thinking of itself as 100% Indian which adds to their ambivalent attitude.

The study therefore has four more chapters.

**Chapter II** highlights the Parsi predicament in the fictional world of Bapsi Sidhwa. Her novel, *The Crow Eaters* portrays the Parsi community as prosperous during colonial period. Parsi ceremonies, customs and rites are vividly described in this novel. In *Ice Candy Man*, Sidhwa portrays the effect of the partition of India on Parsi community. It shows the loyalty of the Parsis towards the British. *An American Brat* depicts Pakistani girl’s
new experiences in USA as well as her Americanization. The novel also deals with the insular marriage that is forbidden in Parsi community. Sidhwa, thereby, suggests reforms in Parsi laws.

Chapter III traces the ethnic anxieties as reflected in the novels of Rohinton Mistry. Mistry’s Tales from Firozsha Baag deals with the Parsi housing complex in Mumbai and its habitants. Mistry has bitterly and satirically commented on the ethos and paradoxes of the community. He focuses the themes of migration, inter-faith marriage, Parsi trusts and funds, poverty in the community, and unhygienic conditions of the Parsi colonies. Such a Long Journey explores the loss of innocence of the protagonist, Gustad Noble, as he attempts to define himself in relation to his family and his country during the chaotic times of 1971 India, during which India and Pakistan went on war over the liberation of the East Pakistan, or Bangladesh. He gives details of the lives of Gustad Noble and his family which serves as a contrast to outside world that disrupts the family order. Mistry presents the outside world as a rotten and corrupting force on even the most descent members of the inner sphere. It highlights various problems regarding the traditional dokhma, decline in vulture population and other important issues of Parsi community. A Fine Balance gives intense description of extreme poverty, and shows the bond that develops between four main characters, despite the barriers created by their differences in religion and social status. It shows the struggle of Parsi as well as other subaltern ethnic groups for their identity and survival. Family Matters portrays the Nariman Vakil, 79 year old Parsi patriarch and his family in overcrowded and politically corrupt Bombay. It is the comment on post-Babri Mumbai, where existence of minorities and Non-Maharashtrians is under threat. It also comments on the inter-faith marriage issues of the Parsis. Other Parsi customs, ceremonies, beliefs are also focused. It highlights the Parsi presence in Mumbai as other.
Chapter IV compares these two writers in terms of their vision of community, treatment of its problems and modes of narrative. Sidhwa deals with the Parsi community in Pakistan. She portrays the rich progressive, business Parsi families in her novels. She is a critique of Pakistani Parsi community. Sidhwa deals with three different phases: Pre-independent India, India on the verge of partition and independent Pakistan. Rohinton Mistry portrays the Parsi community in India. He shows the middle-class, working Parsi families in his fictions. He is predominantly a critique of Indian political situation and its adverse effect on his minority community. His novels mainly deal with a specific political period in Indian history.

Chapter V is conclusion. It highlights the predicaments of Parsi community in general and in the novels of Sidhwa and Mistry in particular.