The Journey from Filiations to New Affiliations: Parsi Ethnicity in Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey

Chapter Four
The Journey from Filiations to New Affiliations:
Parsi Ethnicity in Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey

The Parsi presence in the Indo-Anglian literary scenario could be traced as early as the publication of Behram Malbari's collection of poems titled, The Indian Muse in English Garb in 1876. Malbari was however one of the earliest Indo-Anglian writers. Apart from poetry he published essays, which were partly fictional in nature. The other early Parsi writers in India who wrote in English include Cornelia Sorabji, and D. F. Karaka who published novels in the 1940s and 50s. The early Parsi writers mostly did not give much stress on the question of Parsi identity, that they did not highlight the identity of Parsis in India as a distinct ethno-religious minority. It was however the later Parsi novelists like Bapsy Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Farukh Dhondy and Boman Desai who asserted the ethnic identity of Parsis in their novels (Barucha 73-74).

These writers can be categorised as post-independence Parsi writers in India. Their works are characterized by a strong ethnocentrism and an axiomatic tone of minority discourse. They generally portray the predicament of modern day Parsis living in India who bear the agony of being felt, or most often made to feel, like a cultural outsider and who undergo a severe feeling of insecurity, and the fear of a possible merging with the dominant culture. Besides, there are disturbing ethnic features such as their declining population, late-marriages, urban-craze, high rate of divorce, migration of the young generation to countries like Canada and Australia. However, these features make the existence of Parsis in India problematic, and this problematic existence is a dominant motif in their writing.
The strange traits that the Parsi characters display in the works written by Parsi writers can also be approached as emblematic of what Dharan refers to as "ethnic atrophy syndrome." (7) As in the case of most of the fictional writings of ethnic minority writers, the community as such is the protagonist in many of the Parsi writings. To a great extent this is true about the major fictional works of the post-independence Parsi fictional works like Boman Desai’s *The Memory of Elephants* (1988), Firdaus Kanga’s *Trying to Grow* (1990), Farukh Dhondy’s *Bombay Duck* (1990), Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Crow Eaters* (1990), Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1977), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002). All these Parsi expressions concern primarily with the question of Parsi identity on the one hand and discussing how individuals become racialized social subjects on the other, making deliberations on their community’s hopes and fears, aspirations and frustrations, and strategies for the continued survival in India. The focus of this chapter is on the Parsi ethnicity and the construction of identity as presented in the works of Rohinton Mistry, especially in his first novel, *Such a Long Journey*, which was published in 1991.

Rohinton Mistry was born in a Parsi family in Bombay in 1952, and he has lived in Canada since 1975. He published three novels and a collection of short stories. The first work, a collection of short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* appeared in the year 1977. After a break of about 14 years his celebrated first novel, *Such a Long Journey* came out in 1991, which was followed by two other novels, *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2003). *Such a Long Journey* secured the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best book, the Governor General’s award and was shortlisted for Booker Prize. His other novels were also...
short listed for the Booker Prize. All through his literary career, Mistry showed
tremendous commitment to representing the community of his origin. That is all
his works directly or indirectly deal with the Parsi community in India. Excepting
*A Fine Balance*, which is only partially devoted to representing his community, all
other books are completely taking up the task of orienting on the community
discussing the lives of Parsis living in India, especially in Bombay (or Mumbai),
their stronghold in India. Before proceeding with the discussion of Mistry’s
works, especially *Such a Long Journey*, some fundamentals about the Parsi
community are added in the present chapter, which would be useful for the
clearer understanding of the novels under study.

The Parsis are an infinitesimally small ethno-religious minority in India,
living in the west coast of the subcontinent, especially in Bombay. In spite of their
small number, Parsis occupy a pivotal position in India's social, cultural, political
and economic history. "Their past and present role in the economic, social and
political spheres makes them one of the most interesting of India’s ethnic
groups." (Kulke 13) The name "Parsis" or "Parsees" (both the spelling could be
seen used by different writers, and I also used both interchangeably) refers to one
of the places of their origin, in the Persian province called "Fars," which they left
over about 1200 years ago, to escape from the persecution of the invading Arabs,
and to save the teachings of Zoroaster from being Islamised by the Arabians
(Kulke 13). "The epoch of Persian history", which is still relevant for the Parsees
of present day, "begins in the 6th century B.C. and ends with the conquest of
Persia by the Muslims in the 7th century A.D." (Kulke 13) The beginning of this
epoch is characterized by the appearance of two personalities - Cyrus I and
Zoroaster - who became determining factors in the Persian political and religious development. "With these two names, Iran enters a period of history characterized in Greece, Israel, India and China by an extraordinary intellectual upheaval" (Kulke 14). Kulke observes:

Iran is located geographically between two diametrically opposed poles: the ancient Mesopotamian high cultures of Sumeria, Elam, Babylonia and Assyria on the one side and the Turanian steppes of central Asia sparingly populated by nomads on the other side. These two political and cultural poles are symbolized by Cyrus and Zoroaster. While the Persian polity originated in western Iran under the Archaemenidian Cyrus, the teachings of Zoroaster were conceived in the east in direct confrontation with the nomadic culture on the threshold of myth and history. The dichotomy represents the two basic principles of Iranian history: the call to establish a universal political order and the divine mission of Ahura Mazda (14).

Historians have different opinions concerning the time of Zoroaster's actual historical appearance. While western Iranists date Zoroaster's activity mainly in the fifth - sixth centuries BC, Greek historiographers and the present-day Parsees in India widely held that Zoroaster lived and taught between 4000 and 6000 BC. Zoroaster's greatness is based on the ethical rebellion against a number of false deities, and for the "transcendence of one god against the demons that do not exist" (Kulke 15). Zoroaster focussed his attention "on man's behaviour and its moral drives, largely disregarding the ritualism of the worship
of God." (Kulke 15) Unlike the primitive religions that “tried to keep men [and women] bound with external observances, Zoroaster was the greatest of all pioneers who showed the path to freedom to man, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from the blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, the freedom from the multiplicity of shrines...” (Kulke 15) In its original form the religion founded by Zoroaster is monotheism. Zoroaster proclaimed the absolute omnipotent, eternal God, Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord), in contrast to the innumerable gods and demons of his time. Kulke explains:

Ahura Mazda is the creator as well as the judge on the day of the last judgement... Ahura Mazda rules in this world as the ultimate supreme lord of eternity over the good spirits (Spenta Mainyu) created by him. These Spenta Mainyu as the power of light and of good are opposed in this world by the evil spirits (Angra Mainyu)... The antagonism between two antipodes makes this world a battlefield between good and evil. The good will of course prove its supremacy at the end of time, but it will be able to do so only by the complete mobilisation of all the powers of this world. Every individual human being is called upon in this dispute to stand up on his own free will for the good and to defend actively. Should he fail to side with the good he will have to share the fate of the evil (19).

The Avesta is the holy book of Parsis. It plays a central role in Zoroaster's religion. The Avesta is attributed to Zoroaster and first written down during the time of Arsacids. It is originally supposed to have contained twenty-one books,
but today it consists of only four books. Zoroaster taught "man can only attain salvation through his behaviour, not so much, however, though prayers and atonement." (Kulke, 19) Most important of the Parsi rites are purification ceremonies. Zoroaster asked his followers to take great care in keeping the body and the natural elements pure from defilement, especially though dead matter. "This explains the functions of the Tower of Silence (Dakhnas), upon which the deceased Zoroastrians are thrown to the vultures because otherwise earth, fire or water... would be defiled by them." (Kulke 19) According to Zoroastrian belief, one must undergo careful and very complex purification rites if he/she has come into contact in some way with a dead body or something impure. Most important of these rites is called Bareshnum, which lasts nine nights (Modi 137). Fire is very important in Zoroastrians cult; "no ceremony can take place without fire being present." (Kulke 20) Fire is the "symbol of Ahura Mazda, the light and the truth" (Kulke 20). For Parsis "the world is far from being perfect or complete but is rather a battlefield for the confrontation of Ahura Mazda and the Ahriman," and "in this battle man is called up of his own free will for the good principle, to help the good to its final victory." (Kulke 253) They believed that, in order to become victorious in the battle against evil man is invested as the highest living being with certain intellectual and spiritual qualities. "Man makes an essential contribution to the victory of the good by working, whereby great importance is attached to self reliance and self-help." (254)

It is during the period of Sassanians' rule over Persia (226-651 A.D.) that Zoroastrianism became a state religion for the first time in history. This Iranian-Zoroastrian empire came to an end with the conquest of Iran by the Islamic
Arabians in the 7th century, and this has led to the exodus of the Parsees. The Parsees living in India are the descendants of a group of Persians emigrated to India after the conquest of Persia by the Arabians. However, there is no agreement among historians on the exact date of Parsee immigrations to India. "These emigrants were not, however, the first Persians on Indian soil. The pre-Islamic Persian Empires had already left their marks on the northern India" (Kulke 23). The details of the early Persian connection could be found in the early Hindu literatures. The Parasikas in the Mahabharata and the Puranas are believed to be referring to the Persians. "Inscriptions in Gîrnar Karli, and Nasik speak of Pahlavas, Persian emigrants who were later to establish (as Hinduized Pallavas) one of the most important south Indian empires." (Kulke 23) Any way it was almost certain that Persian emigrants and influences could be found long before the arrival of Parsee refugees in India. As the early Persian emigrants were integrated to the Indian culture the greatest possibility was that the Parsees of present day India are descendants of the Persian Zoroastrians who emigrated to India after the Islamization of Persia. The prevailing assumptions of the circumstances and stages of the migrations of Parsis from Persia are mostly based on the chronicle "Kissah-i-Sanjan", written by the Parsee priest, Behaman Kaikobad Sanjana in Nausari. "According to this chronicle those Persians who clung unflinchingly to the beliefs of Zoroaster were forced by the religious persecution of the Muslims to leave their homeland and flee, to begin with, to the remote and mountainous region of Khurasan." (Kulke 25) Not many details are available on the extent to which the Zoroastrians were persecuted by the Muslims. Parsi historians like G.K. Nariman rejects the religious persecution
theory calling it purely mythical and opines that a poll tax imposed on Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews was the major factor that made them flee, and otherwise they were untouched (Cited in Kulke 25). Although there are controversies regarding the credibility of its contents among historians, Kulke wrote citing different sources that:

It can be gathered from the Kissah-i-Sanjan that the ancestor of the Indian Parsees first sought refuge in the remote regions of Khurasan from where 100 years after the fall of the Sassanian Empire, they shifted to Hormuz on the Persian Gulf. There they stayed for 15 years in order then to move on by sea in seven ships to India... They landed at Diu (Gujarat) and were given refuge after a further 19 years by a Hindu Raja, Jadi Rana, in Sanjan where they settled for the time being. (26)

The king of Sanjan, Jadi Rana allowed Parsees to settle in Sanjan, and he imposed certain conditions on them like, they have to explain their religion to the king; they have to give up their native Persian language, and take on the languages of India; their women should wear traditional dress of India; the men should lay down their weapons, and they should hold their wedding processions only in the dark. The Parsees fulfilled the first few of these conditions. Gujarati became the native language of the community and sari, the traditional garment of Parsee women. Anyhow, the Parsees managed to "Clothe their cultural concessions to their Indian environment" (Kulke 29). It must have been their decision to give up some of their old customs, while strictly adhering to tradition, that enabled the community survive in India as a minority for more than 1200 years. According to
the available historical evidence the Parsis built their first fire temple on Indian soil after five years of their settlement in Snjan, “which was to shelter from then on their holy fire (Iran Shah) rescued from Iran. With this the Parsis had a new religious centre which contributed to their close attachment to their newly chosen homeland.” (Kulke 29) In an important historical development in the history of the community, when Akbar, the Mogul emperor conquered Gujarat in 1573, he got interested in the Parsi faith and held religious discussions with the Parsi priest, Dastur Meherji Rana. When Akbar conducted religious disputes in Fatehpur Sikri Meherji Rana was invited to represent Parsees. “After 1582, Akbar and part of his court became followers of a syncretistic monotheism (tauhid-i-ilahi) developed by himself and assimilating Sufism and Zoroastrianism.” (Kulke 31) The Parsees began to settle in other parts of Gujarat towards the end of 10th century. Later they moved to the other parts of the country especially, Bombay. The Parsis had settled in Bombay before the Portuguese period. But Parsis came to Bombay in larger numbers when the British developed Bombay into an important trading centre. The first to come to Bombay were Parsis who had already settled in places like Surat, but later Parsis from all other scattered settlements moved to Bombay in large numbers. During the colonial period the Parsis could skilfully mediate between different European powers and Indian rulers like the Nawab of Surat, the English East India Company and the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa, and thus got their own interests attended to as merchants. As Kulke has noted, “The Parsees as a minority, got into an extremely exposed position in this in this mediation function. Close contact with the Europeans gave the Parsees the ‘know-how’ of European trade and business
organization and so laid the foundation for their subsequent economic and social rise under English rule. In addition this mediation role is the root...in Parsee identity crisis and social reorientation.” (33) Parsi migration to Bombay started first when the British developed Bombay as a trading centre and they were believed to have been encouraged to migrate by the British. The British provided them with a piece of land in Malabar Hill to establish the first Dakhma (Tower of Silence) in Bombay. Today more than 70 per cent of the Indian Parsis are living in Bombay. Migration to Bombay was also enhanced initially due to a famine in Gujarat in 1790 and subsequently a big fire in Surat in 1837 (Kulke 36). Apart from all these Bombay’s attractiveness and the underdeveloped state economy of Gujarat brought the Parsis to Bombay. Now there are about 200,000 Parsis throughout the world, out of which 100,000 are living in India.

The cooperation between Parsis and the colonial powers improved the status of the community in India. “Parsis were the first Indian community in India to enter into close commercial and intellectual contact with the British.” (Kulke 240) in fact, the peripheral position of the Parsis in India before the British arrival was changed by their adoption of British value system and English education. The Parsees only partially supported and worked for India’s independence. “While the congress Parsees had reached the goal for which they had fought for years, the majority of the community, which up till then, had kept its distance from the national movement, saw itself forced to reinterpret its position in Indian society.” (Kulke 263). It was however their ability to adapt with the changing social patters, that the community had learned long back, that helped them here. They achieved this by clinging to their faith even in the midst
of their being made fun of the distinct practices of the community, by some of the mainstream groups. But the community was all the more endangered from within itself owing to problems like the decreasing number of population caused by low fertility rate, high marital age, mixed marriages and emigration; the impoverished state of the middle class in the community and the excessive dependence on charitable institutions. Apart from this westernisation and urbanization started much earlier, which was not affected by the departure of the British also worked as a hindrance to the complete indianization and acceptance of the Indian realities. This has created a feeling of being outsiders in the community, in spite of their more than thousand years' history in India. Taking into account the pictures of Parsis brought about by the Parsi writers one could see graver problems, along with the above discussed ones, as disturbing the community. Thus, during the course of history, on several occasions the community faced threats of cleansing and brutal subjection, and psychological harassment from some sections of the dominant community. The anxieties faced by the community during such crises, along with the problems emanating from within its own fold, form the thematic core of most of the Parsi writings in India. As members of an ethnic minority in India, Parsis closely watched the complex political aftermath of India's independence, and when required, they reacted to socio-political issues such as the partition, the emergency and so on, providing a Parsi view of things. Bapsi Sidhwa, for example, in her novel *Ice-Candy Man* brings out a Parsi view of the partition through the narrative of a Parsi girl, Lenny. The Parsi novels most importantly viewed socio-political changes from a minority perspective, and attempted to bring out the predicament of minorities in
India. In general, a concern for the minorities is a driving force in Parsi writing. In the course of time the Parsis, however, acquired a unique willingness to comprehend and adjust to the changing realities. The continuing aggression of the dominant, host cultures made some of them sacrifice their traditions and convictions. Occurrences that questioned the ethnic purity of the community are seen in some of their novels. In Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990), for example, Brit's family permits a sister to marry a Muslim named Salim, even though Muslims are the archetypal enemies of the Parsis. Mistry's works also give expression to these issues in detail.

The community is found to be the first priority for Mistry as a writer. That is, his creativity is closely linked to his cultural or ethnic identity or more precisely with his membership in an ethnic minority in India. Thus, more than the individual subjectivity, one should talk about the collective subjectivity of the Parsi community in India that works as the driving force in his creative works. (This is in spite of his emigration to Canada about 30 years ago; one can see that he still retains the symptoms of his cultural memory as a member of an ethnic minority in India). This is probably true about all ethnic minority writers. Therefore, their novels are imaginations of their own community that may include the current reality and the aspirations that the individual members retain in their collective consciousness. All communities, to Benedict Anderson, are in some sense "imagined." Even the members of a small group or a family relate to each other with "an element of fond imagining," and any political unit necessarily requires its constituents or members to partake in a collective identity which is irreducible to a face-to-face encounter (154). Here, in the case
of creative writers like Mistry, apart from being part of a collective identity, they use their imagination to carry out the twin role of representation and recreation. While writing with imaginary fulfilment of representing the community’s vantage point, invoking its history and fragments from the cultural memory, and current crises that it has to resolve, these writers also recreate the community from the represented variants of them in the others’ imagination, in order to correct or provide alternative and authentic pictures, of their community, and thus to escape branding them as a type, with fixed characteristics. In other words they resist all sorts of stereotyping through their creative enterprises. According to Carrie Tirado Bramen “One of the most difficult challenges confronting writers, and particularly minority writers, is how to represent ethnic and racialized characters without resorting to stereotypes.” (124) They have to be careful not to include too many signs of, say Parsi culture that would make them seem clichéd. “The writer, moreover, needs to walk a fine line between the familiar and the over familiar, between the recognizable and the excessively visible.” (Bramen 124) although “identity tropes are necessary to give an ethnic group a degree of cultural and textual visibility and internal coherence...an excess of identity tropes can cross the line into tiresome predictability.” (Bramen 124)

The works of Mistry are to understood with reference to his membership to the Parsi ethnicity, and thus the points of views that he expresses are related to the ideological groundings and strategies of survival that the community adopted in its more than 1200 years long stint in India as a minority community. Basically he deals with the lives of Parsis, with focus on their
pertinent problems like the high rate of migration, degenerating population, external threats, internal problems, faith, and so on. At a deeper level creative works for them are ways to solve what Tracey Sedinger calls elsewhere as the "trauma of subjectivization" that "persists within the subject's psyche as a sort of primal scene" (47). According to Sedinger, "[in Fanon's version of this scene, the installation of racial/ethnic identity occurs within a representational structure that resolves the trauma of interpellation in a specifically imaginary way." (47) Thus writing is a way to escape from all sorts of interpellations and cultural overruling, as writing provides the writer with a chance to delve into his/her imaginary world, where his/her particular point of view is fearlessly expressed. Moreover, fictional writing makes possible what is otherwise impossible, in the sense that the writer can make political statements against dominating forces by the creation of characters like Major Bilimoria in Such a Long Journey who in fact is a fictional version of Nagarwala of the 1970s. In the case of Mistry again he invokes a lot of factual details and figures from history in his works. Perhaps this is a strategy found in many other ethnic minority and other writers like Arundhati Roy, Allan Sealy and Khushwant Singh.

Mistry carries out the mission of giving voice to the community in all his works. His fictional works are set in the closely-knit and isolated Parsi community in India. In his first work, a collection of short stories entitled, Tales from Firozsha Baag Mistry addresses the position of Parsis, and a sense of unease that they felt in postcolonial India, through the multidimensional portrayal of the lives of Parsis living in an apartment complex in Bombay, named 'Firozsha Baag'. It is probably the sense of unease that make them choose to migrate to
countries like Canada. The inmates of Firozsha Baag are representatives of the aging community; their flabbergasted faces talk volumes about the sense of dejection that has captured the life of the community. As in the case of Yezad in Mistry’s own *Family Matters* and Gustad Noble of *Such a Long Journey*, something or the other that affects the routine course of their existence almost always disturbs the inmates of Firozsha Baag. They, however, sail against the inclement conditions with the hope of a better future, to avoid the ensuing journey. The first story in the collection, ‘Auspicious Occasion’ metaphorically projects through the events taking place in the house Rustomji, the struggle for peaceful survival of a minority community amidst problems that come from within and outside. Rustomji and his wife Mehroo prepare to celebrate *Behram Roje*, a Parsi auspicious day, but the day is getting spoilt by problems ranging from a leaking lavatory to the murder of Parsi priest, *Dustoor* Dunshija allegedly by a Chasniwalla employed at the fire temple. The story also tells us how the customs and rituals of the community get lost in the long run of time. In Rustomji’s house it was his wife Mehroo who decide to celebrate *Behram Roje* in a befitting manner. For Rustomji these customs were dead and meaningless while people like Mehroo (and women in general) try to continue this tradition of the community undisturbed. Most of the characters in the stories are old or middle aged, excepting some like Jehangir in ‘Exercises’ and the other young boys who assemble to listen Nariman’s stories in ‘Squatter’. The young ones of most of the families, after their marriage, immigrated to Canada, leaving their parents to the memory of the good old days of the community. The parents lead a secluded life, without anyone to take care of them in their old age, not
even at the time of their death. In ‘Condolence Visit’ for example Minocher did not have his son near him when he died after a prolonged illness; his wife, Daulat, alone had to take care of everything. Even boys like Kersi and Vivat in ‘Squatter’ talk a lot about their dream countries, America and Canada. They even send letters of enquiry to the high commission offices of these countries seeking details of migration. The aged couple in ‘Swimming Lessons’ eagerly await letters from their son in Canada although most of the letters are mechanical and they do not convey anything of filial bond. Fear of an onslaught from outside is seen lingering in the minds of most of the Parsi characters. In ‘Swimming Lessons’ for example the parents who wait for letters from Canada even think that the postmen may destroy their letters if they antagonise them in any way because it was the time of Shiv Sena agitation about Maharashtra for Maharashtrians. In Such a Long Journey he presents the life of a middle class Parsi, whose peaceful life is disturbed by a series of incidents. The central character of this novel can be taken as symbolic of the community itself. I have attempted a detailed enquiry into the novel later in this chapter. Mistry’s second novel, A Fine Balance, is like an open political statement on the condition of India during the 1970s, in the wide perspective of the notorious Internal Emergency declared by the Indira Gandhi government. Like the people queuing up in front of the government offices for various services, like getting a Ration Card, registering for Family planning certificate etc., in the novel do, Mistry laughs hysterically at the “bureaucratic absurdities” take place in India, during the 1970s (178) He presents instances of gross violation of human rights in the dislocation of people in the name of slum
clearance, forced castration in sterilization camps, casteist violence and political anarchy, communal tension, and so on invoking factual details. Here, Mistry presumably works out a Parsi, and some times an outsider’s point of view to look at the gross violation of human rights, as in the case of mass clearing of slum dwellers in the cities, and forced sterilization of people narrated to have carried out by the government in India during the emergency; the ugly face of casteism; the disintegrated political climate in India and so on. There is a penchant to look for others in the same boat of his community, and share their problems in equal terms with his own community’s. His presentation of the terrible experiences of the members of the Chamaar community, who were basically tanners and leather workers, in the hands of the upper class Thakurs, because they took deviant professions like tailoring, and because they asserted their rights, is an example for this. Narayan, the Chamaar turned tailor, and two others were brutally killed and hanged in a public place by the goondas of upper classes under the leadership of by Thakur Dharmasi (146). He appears to have cultivated a dream of the retreat from the marginalized communities in India to keep the hazardous effects of caste based value system of the dominant Hindu community at bay from the minorities. In A Fine Balance he makes the children of Dukhi Mochi belonging to the Chamaar community of tanners and leather workers take up tailoring as their profession. Dukhi Mochi, by sending his young son’s to be apprenticed in tailoring to his friend Ashraf, a Muslim, “dared to break the timeless chain of caste” (95), although his family had to pay the penalty by being severely attacked by the members of the upper classes. Similar incidents could be seen in other works as well. In all these he also
promotes an empathetic attitude to the ‘victims’ of majoritarian violence and physical and psychological suppression. It seems as if the writer foresees a future for minorities in India, including his own community, by developing bonhomie of all minorities. The writer’s dream of the coordination of the minorities to ease the fear psychosis common to almost all minorities is what seems to have reflected in the efforts taken by Ashraf, a tailor, to uplift the poor tanners like Narayan and Om prakash in *A Fine Balance*. He helps them learn tailoring and later assist them to escape from the place, in view of the jealousy and violence of the upper classes. Although there is an archetypal rivalry between Muslims and Parsis, Mistry displays a strange but desirable amity as existing between them in India. Probably this is part of a conditioning underwent by both communities to counter a common enemy in the sphere of their operation. The portrayal of Hussain Miyan, a Muslim victim of post-Babri Masjid-demolition riots in Bombay, in *A Fine Balance* is perhaps part of this mission. Hussain explains the atrocities committed against him and his family in the riots: “[I]n those riots the police were behaving like gangsters. In Muslim mohallas they were shooting their guns at innocent people. Houses were burning, neighbours came out to throw water. And the police? Firing bullets like target practice. These guardians of law were murdering everybody! And my poor wife and children...I couldn’t even recognize them.” (155) Mistry’s third novel *Family Matters*, again is a novel that deals with the Parsi community. The novel reiterates almost all the issues the community encounter in India as a minority community that Mistry has discussed in *Such a Long Journey*. However the novel bears indications of the ageing of the community,
where the glories of the past seem to be disappearing slowly. The central figure in the novel, Nariman Vakeel, a seventy-nine year old Parsi widower, suffering from Parkinson's disease is probably symbolic of the ageing community itself, like the characters in Tales From Firozsha Baag. When Nariman's old age and Parkinson's disease were coupled with a broken anklebone, he becomes a burden for his daughter, Roxana and son-in-law Yezad, and their two young sons. Like Gustad Noble of Such a Long Journey Yezad's is a middle-class Parsi living in Bombay who is affected by a lot of difficulties, and problems, some of which are common worries of all Parsis of his time in Bombay. Thus all his works were carrying out a certain ideological function that is closely linked to his community and its position in India.

Coming to focus on Such a Long Journey, the novel takes its title from T.S. Eliot’s poem, 'Journey of the Magi', which deals with something related to the biblical story of the exodus. The writer uses the lines, "A cold coming we had of it, / Just the worst time of the year / For a journey and such a long journey..." from the poem as an epitaph to the novel, along with two other quotations. It is quite clear that the novelist hints at the metaphor of journey which is significant in the novel, as referring both to the predicament of the central character and the history of the community (considering the historical exodus of the ancestors of the community from Iran long ago). According to Anjana Desai, journey referred to in the novel “is the journey of a nation, of a city and of an ethnic minority, and of an individual man of this community." (134). Journey is important in Mistry as long as it talks about the predicament of a community. The Parsis, it seems, still carry the memory of their ancestors' historical exodus from Iran to India. And
this archetypal memory recurs in the form of a sense of unease in India, which
obviously is multiplied by the problems from outside the community that make
them think of further journeys. Journey for the Parsis are a continuous thing that
their predicament is to prolong the journey that also gives them their identity.
Mistry has a personal history of journeying. He migrated to Canada when he was
twenty-three years old. In an interview with Mclay he said, "having lived in
Bombay for twenty three years I felt something in me was incomplete...However,
having arrived in the West this sense of incompleteness turned around and I
became aware of the loss of my home." (199-200). Mistry meant to say that
wherever they go they felt a sense of incompleteness, and thus indirectly
suggesting the loss of their motherland or fatherland long ago.

Mistry constructs or rather reconstructs from the memories of the past the
real life of Parsis in India. While remembering the past he is trying to preserve it.
He fears that his memory of the community has be neglected by himself although
he remembered things of past, especially relate to his, and his community’s life in
Bombay. In his interview with Mclay he said:

[T]here is a great difference between remembering the past, which
is creative and life enhancing, and trying to preserve it, which is
detrimental and debilitating. I am thinking of Sohrab’s collection of
butterflies in Such a Long Journey, Jehangir’s stamp collection from
Tales from Firozsha Baag and Rustom’s violin in A Fine Balance. All
these things become useless through lack of use and loving
attention, which after all is what memory is. And also it is
sometimes not to be compelled to preserve the past, especially when the present is so painful. (200)

The sense of separation is probably what makes room for recollection and preservation of the past. That is, taking into serious account of the kind of separation that characters like Gustad Noble in *Such a Long Journey* and almost all of them in *A Fine Balance* display, it could be held that the Parsis suffer from a great sense of loss, loss of surroundings, loss of the country of origin, and so on. Paradoxically, often journeying from one place to another, which for Parsis is part of their existence, causes the sense of loss in them. Sometimes the members of the community are greatly bothered by the fear of the loss of values. All these are to be taken as prerequisites to the understanding of *Such a Long Journey*. In this novel Mistry suggests the filial bond is what that makes Parsis close to their community.

Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* views India of the 1970s through the vantage point of Gustad Noble, a devout Parsi, living in Bombay. The novel showcases the predicament of Parsis in modern India who experience the agony of a cultural outsider owing to their members in an ethnic minority. The novel is set against the background of the Indo-Pak war of 1971. Like Salim Sinai, the central character in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, Gustad Noble, the protagonist of the novel passes through heavy odds amidst a series of political and social turmoil that India underwent during the 1970s under Indira Gandhi. The novel, like most stories in its predecessor work, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1977), is set in Bombay, and the story revolves around a residential complex named Khodadad Building, mostly inhabited by middle class Parsis. The novel has definite community
connections, as it exemplifies the thesis that community is prioritised over the other concerns in Mistry. It begins in the fashion of a Parsi starting his day, with a prayer to Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, with a reference to the beginning of a day in the central character, Gustad’s life:

The first light of the day barely illuminating the sky as Gustad Noble faced eastward to offer his orisons to Ahura Mazda. The hour was approaching six, and up in the compound’s solitary tree the sparrows began to call. Gustad listened to their chirping every morning while reciting his kusti prayers. There was something reassuring about it. Always the sparrows were first; the cawing of crow came later. (1)

Gustad Noble was a pious Parsi, working as a clerk in a bank. He was “tall and broad-shouldered” and was the “envy and admiration of friends and relatives whenever health and sickness was being discussed.” (1) He had survived an accident that gave him a slight limp. He was living in the Khodadad Building, which was mostly occupied by middle-class Parsis, with his wife Dilnawaz and three children, two sons, Sohrab and Rustom, and a daughter named Roshan.

His devotion to his family, his faith in Zoroastrianism and his love for his friends and his community are continually tested through a series of adverse circumstances. “Loyalty and journeying constitute two major contrasting patterns in his life: the first entails constancy and commitment; the second, mutations and metamorphosis.” (Malak 108) The sad predicament of Gustad evokes pity in the readers as the experience, fears, traumas and frustrations that he undergoes are
those of a minority community, and in a wider sense, of all ethnic minority communities. Problems that come one after another dim his aspirations, and make him distraught and helpless and so, he displays a strange fear that he and his community are always targeted by others, which seems to be symptomatic of a syndrome. He observes the complex political cauldron of India with suspicion, and the anti-minority attitude of a section of the dominant community raises in him fears of an impending, disastrous ethnic cleansing awaiting his community. What is narrated in the novel however, are the fragmented pictures of what the community experienced in India during the 1970s, coming from the memory of the author. The situation, the political climate of Bombay obviously has changed now. However, even after the 1970s, there were many instances of communal tension and violence in Bombay that threatened the lives of the minorities. And therefore the novel has relevance even to the Parsis of present day Bombay. Moreover, the writer has focussed also on the mental make up of the modern day Parsi, who keeps comparing the grim present with the bright past. Past like many other minorities is the last source of happiness as far as community experiences were concerned. Through the analysis of the troublesome life of his Parsi hero, Mistry however deconstructs the myth of secularity adorned to Bombay as well as India. His portrayal thus is to show the hidden corridors of activities that makes cracks in the constitution and maintenance of secularism in India.

Disappearance of Major Jimmy Bilimoria from Khodadad building, and the complex episodes of events that followed Gustad’s receiving a parcel despatched by Major Bilimoria containing ten lakh rupees was the first blow that Gustad felt. Bilimoria had been a loving brother for him and Gustad considered
him as “a second father” to his children (14). The second thing that deeply affected his already disturbed mind was his first son, Sohrab's refusal to join IIT in spite of being qualified with high rank in the entrance test, and his bad manners at the birthday party of Roshan, both of which culminated in Sohrab's desertion from his home. Roshan's enervating diarrhoea; his bosom crony, Dinshawji's illness and eventual death; the destruction of Gustad’s sacred wall by the city authorities and the death of Tehmul Lungra, a juvenile delinquent inmate of Khododad building during the operation to demolish the wall - all these and more conspired against the normal course of events in his life. Although these things might happen to anyone, Gustad was affected much more than it might have affected the others, because he was already feeling a sense of insecurity, that obviously is rooted in his membership in Parsi ethnicity. He imagines his problems to be unique, and thinks that such crises are prone mainly to people like him who are struggling feel at home in a host culture. This is to be approached both as a psychological complexity that most of the minorities experience, and as the effect of an ideological conditioning of a geographical, or cultural location by the programmes and agendas of a dominant system that operate not only in the dominant activities, but also in the minds of the sidelined classes or minorities. However, through Gustad, Mistry offers a deviant picture of Parsis that again is not in favour of the common notion that Parsis are well to do classes without affected by the worries of existence.

Major Bilimoria's disappearance, and the parcel that he had despatched, however, caused considerable havoc in Gustad's small world. It had wounded him more than anyone could see (14), as the arrest of Bilimoria on charges of
impersonating PM's voice over phone and receiving a large amount of money to the tune of 10 lakh rupees, had been part of a major political conspiracy. In fact, Major Bilimoria became a prey in the hands of political schemers in a fraudulent political conspiracy in which the Prime Minister herself was directly involved. When Bilimoria was arrested, jailed and tortured, he summoned Gustad to Delhi to tell him all that happened. Indira Gandhi asked Bilimoria to get sixty lakh rupees from the SBI director, by impersonating the PM's voice on the telephone, on an emergency basis to finance guerrilla (Mukti Bhahini) training. Major Bilimoria was also asked to write a confession, which he did without any second thought. Before the money was used for the original purpose the PM's office intercepted the money. Knowing this, Bilimoria kept 10 lakh rupees to be distributed among his friends. It was this money that he had sent to Gustad to be deposited in a bank in Bombay. But as the process went on, Bilimoria was arrested, kept under detention and brutally tortured until he returned the money.

The Major Bilimoria case narrated by Mistry was based on an actual incident, popularly known as Nagarwala case which was the top story in all the leading Indian newspapers during the winter of 1971. The resemblance in both the cases is that, the persons involved were Parsis. The papers reported that "the head cashier of SBI in Delhi had given six million rupees to Mr. Nagarwala on the basis of a phone call from Mrs. Gandhi" (Quoted in Mukherjee 83). A reviewer summarised the incident involving Nagarwala thus:

In May 1971, the chief cashier of the Parliament Street branch of State Bank of India in New Delhi received a telephone call ostensibly by from Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, instructing
him to hand over 60 lakhs which were urgently needed to fund a secret operation in Bangladesh, to a courier, Sohrab Nagarwala. The chief cashier complied but in a chain of events which still defies a satisfactory explanation, Nagarwala was arrested, tried in a highly dubious fashion and sentenced to four years in prison, where he died the following year. (Quoted in Desai 131)

Nagarwala claimed that Mrs. Gandhi "had asked him to take this great risk in the name of Mother India. After he had delivered the cash to Mr. Nagarwala in a pre-assigned place the head clerk had doubts about his act and went to the police"; Mrs. Gandhi categorically denied any such telephone call and the head clerk was suspended. After a few days, Nagarwala was arrested and confessed that he had mimicked Mrs. Gandhi's voice (Mukherjee 83). The story of Nagarwala that lived in the popular imagination for a long time is retold by Mistry from the point of view of a minority community, because Nagarwala was a Parsi. "Mistry's version [of the Major Bilimoria or Nagarwala episode] like many other versions...finds Mrs. Gandhi guilty. He tells the tale from the perspective of Nagarwala who is cast as major Bilimoria. He places him in the Parsi community in Bombay and weaves a tale "which is both history and fabulation." (Mukherjee 84) Gustad felt as if he and his community were trapped by traitors of various types, as what has happened to a loyal Parsi, Billimoria could happen to any other minorities.

His first son, Sohrab's refusal to join IIT and his unprecedented behaviour at home and at the birthday party of Roshan disturbed Gustad a lot. He was forced to send the boy out of his house because his son's behaviour was an added crisis to his already increasing worries. Primarily Sohrab's attitude signified the clash
between generations that disturbed the orthodox Parsis a lot. However, Mistry presents the problem of the clash of father and son in all his novels. Most of these clashes, interestingly, take place on birthday parties. Like Sohrab in *Such a Long Journey*, in *A Fine Balance* Nusswan openly declares his unwillingness to proceed with his fathers wishes on his education and career, by declining to be a doctor like his father on his sixteenth birthday. Dr. Shroff like Gustad was terribly upset at this, although he did not show it outside, and this incident has become a turning point in the father-son relationship (*A Fine Balance* 16). Similarly, Murad quarrels with his father, Yezad on inviting his girl friend for his birthday party in *Family Matters*. Moreover, he makes fun of his father reading from their Holy Scriptures, when he is asked to read from it he says, “I don’t have the leisure to read all this interesting stuff” (463). Yezad was quite unhappy that his son who always uses Zoroaster, instead of Zarathustra, didn’t even know that Zoroaster is a “Greek perversion of our prophet’s name,” Zarathustra (463). Murad and Yezad quarrelled almost every day on matters like hairstyle, girl friend and so on. In all these cases, the fathers, who uphold the tradition and value system of the community, find their children not conforming to the wishes of their parents, disregard and sometimes digress from their tradition and values, being attracted to modern system of life. This clash between generations can be considered as dominant theme in the works of ethnic minority writers. Gustad had great expectation in his son, “Sohrab will make a name for himself”, said Gustad “with a father’s just pride,” and he expected that “[a]lt last our sacrifices will prove worthwhile.” (3) But he becomes terribly upset when he understood that his son lacked the fighting spirit and strategies of survival that he acquired from his
experiences in living in India as a Parsi, as he heard his son saying "I'm sick and
tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time. I'm not interested in it, I'm not a jolly good fellow
about it, and I'm not going there." (48) The reason behind Gustad's bewilderment
and anger was intensified when he thought that he sacrificed a lot for a future for
his son.

Apart from the purely personal worries like the aftermath of the incidents
related to Major Bilimoria, his son's misconduct, and Roshan's prolonged
diarrhoea, Mistry's mind was preoccupied by certain other worries, mostly
related to the activities of Shiv Sena in Bombay, which he thought was giving
wrong signal to the Parsis as a minority community in Bombay. For him Shiv
Sena was the epitome of majority's violence against minorities. When Sohrab
refused to join IIT he says, "What kind of life Sohrab going to look forward to? No
future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Maharashtra
language non-sense. It was going to be like the black people in America twice as
good as the white men to get half as much" (55).

Gustad's friend, Malcolm used to remind him that "we are minorities in a
nation of Hindus" (23). And in his opinion, the existence of minorities completely
depends on the Hindus, although cow, the sacred animal of the Hindus, is the
source of protein for the minorities. The fear psychosis that emanated from the
growing Hindu fundamentalism and sectarianism, and attempts towards the
claim of cultural nationalism, that gained momentum during the 1970s looms
large in Gustad's mind. He finds it hard to deal with the hostile environment, that
tortured him amidst his personal problems. However, in spite of all these,
Gustad remains true to himself and to his faith. Religions for him "were not like
garment styles that could be changed at whim or to follow fashion", and he strongly believed that "all religions were equal... nevertheless one had to remain true to one's own." (24) Through the characterisation of Gustad Mistry probably hints at the relentless courage and patience that minorities like Parsis had needed during their troubled times. Gustad defended his religion against the general cynicism prevailing in India about its rituals and practices such as the function of the Tower of Silence upon which the dead Zoroastrians are thrown to the vultures. He uncompromisingly "preferred the sense of peaceful mystery and undivided serenity that prevailed in the fire temple" (24). Gustad held that his religion had a superior claim over Christianity and Islam. Malcolm used to tease him often by saying that it is Christianity that had come first to India before Parsis came from Persia running away from Muslims. But Gustad was never ready to bear with any belittling of the importance of his religion. "Our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of god was even born; a thousand years before Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam" (24).

Gustad identified Shiv Sena and Indira Gandhi's authoritarian politics and anti-minority policies as two major threats that his community had to deal with. Shiv Sena's fascist model onslaught on minorities was perhaps the most disturbing problem for Gustad. He heard goondas shouting, "Parsi crow-eaters we'll show you who is the boss." (39) Gustad and his friend Dinshawji were unhappy with Indira Gandhi, mainly because she nationalised banks which adversely affected Parsi hold on the banking industry. Dinshawji recalls that,
"Parsis were the kings of banking in those days, such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere has been spoiled. Ever since Indira nationalized banks." (38) Probably Gustad replicated the Parsi attitude to Pandit Nehru after the China war, when he said, "[w]ith his philosophy and dreams lost for ever, he resigned himself to political intrigues and internal squabbles, although the signs of his ill temper and petulance had emerged even before the china war." (11). The Parsis were unhappy over Nehru for another reason, that is, his feud with his son-in-law, Feroz Gandhi, a Parsi, "for espousing scandals in the government..." (11) They felt that Nehru no longer needed "defenders of the downtrodden and champions of the poor..." (11) They also found fault with Nehru's "overwhelming obsession" with his darling daughter, Indira "who abandoned her worthless husband in order to be with her father," a way that Nehru found to make her his follower to the post of Prime Minister (11). They were also unhappy with Indira Gandhi for her support for a separate Maharashtra. Both the Congress and the Shiv Sena, therefore, were troublemakers as far as Parsis were concerned: "Remember when her puppy [Nehru] was Prime Minister and he made her president of Congress Party. At once she began encouraging the demands for a separate Maharashtra. How much blood shed, how much rioting she caused. And today we have that bloody Shiv Sena waiting to make the rest of us into second-class citizens. Don't forget she started it all by supporting the racist buggers." (39) The novelist clearly depicted the dissent of the minorities at campaigns like Maratha agitation. The Parsis feared that once the Marathas take over Bombay, there will be a lot of changes like the changing of names, which was already on, goondaism and so on. Dinshawji who was really disturbed by
the drive to change names says, "Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real gandoo Raj." (73) For him:

Names are important. I grew up in Lamington Road. But it has disappeared; in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now it's suddenly on Lokamanya Thilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out just like that? Tell me! (73)

Dinshawji's emotion contains the worry of a whole community, the fear of being erased from the history. As for the Parsis, their history is closely linked to the places in Bombay. When place names are changed it is like pushing certain things out of it, and finally only the desired remain in the picture. The Parsis also might have felt that the extremist elements by 'Indianising' or rather 'Marathaising' everything, was denying the place of the so-called outsiders, thus confirming the minority's outcaste status. When the pro-Maratha rioters attacked the bank in which they were working, Dinshawji thought that it was the end of their innings in his life (39). Mistry's strong indignation to these activities initiated by the proprietors of cultural nationalism can be seen reflected all through his works. In Family Matters for example, Mr. Kapur had to pay a tax to some organisations for retaining 'Bombay' (instead of Mumbai) in the name of his shop. And ultimately he had to give his life for that.
The accounts of the political turmoil and the resultant subjection of the minorities referred to in the novel are not to be delimited to the mere fictionality of the novel. Rather, as Mistry is writing from the cultural sphere of an ethnic minority, these accounts are to be approached as resulting, from the writer's interest and participation in the socio-political scenario of the country in the post-independence era. Mistry foresaw the emergence of extremist forces that wage war against the cultural pluralism of Indian society. He understood the immediate threats posed by extremist organizations like Shiv Sena directly against the multicultural, multiethnic character of Indian society; the overwhelming racism and so forth. The threat of violence unleashed by the majority develops a recurring fear in Gustad's mind that eventually makes him a paranoid. Shiv Sena was the target of Gustad's contemptuous verbal onslaught as well. He calls Shiv Sena leader worshiper of Hitler and Mussolini (73). In his view, what Shiv Sena knows was to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout slogans, mark threats and change road names. Tehmul-Lungraa was recruited once by Shiv Sena to distribute racist pamphlets against minorities in Bombay (89). During the Indo-Pak war when the streets of Bombay were blacked out at night in view of Pakistani air raids, Shiv Sena activists roamed the city streets throwing stones at windows, beating up their enemies and robbing houses (298).

As a mouthpiece of the minorities in India, Gustad vehemently attacks the Indira regime. Most of the incidents that Mistry narrated in the novel are fictional versions of real incidents happened during Indira Gandhi's tenure in office as Prime Minister. Gustad's contempt of Indira Gandhi is on two grounds. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, her policies like nationalisation of banks. Secondly, and more
importantly, the events connected to Bilimoria in which Indira Gandhi was a party.

The 1971 war between India and Pakistan and the political climate that existed during the period gets critical attention in *Such a Long Journey*. The novelist spells out voices of dissent when he talks about the war. As a preparation for the war threnodic siren had been wailing every morning at exactly ten o’clock: a full three minute warning, followed by the monotonic all clear (143). All houses were blacked out. Gustad had already pasted papers on the windows as early as during the Indo-China war of 1967. He suggests that wars had become a political ritual that occurs every now and then, which isolates people confining them to black out houses. He also suggests the discouragement from the part of the dominant, ruling forces for the initiatives taken by the members of the minority communities for the improvement of material conditions and for cultivating amity among the various communities. The demolition of Gustad’s sacred wall by the city authorities exemplifies this. Gustard made the pavement artist to draw pictures of saints and prophets of different religions on the compound wall of his apartment complex, that he though would stop the people from urinating there, and will develop communal harmony. But as if they are unhappy with the secular drives initiated by the marginalized sections, the city authorities demolished the wall, during which Tehmul Lungraa was killed.

A major concern in minority discourse and subaltern writing, whether it is fiction or non-fiction, is its interest in the socio-political conditions in which it is produced and located. Subaltern literature, as I have previously pointed out, therefore, is not a formalist enterprise aimed at producing purely aesthetic
expressions sans reality. However, the interest in the formal properties in literature is part of the bourgeois majoritarian culture and its discourses in which literature is divorced from the social. In India, the dominant form of expression was characterized by the presentations of the idealised Indian self which is defined in terms of what Romila Thapar called "Syndicated Hinduism" (Quoted in Ahmed 15-6). Mistry develops his story from the subaltern perspective, thus offering a counter narrative that subverts the predominant tendency of weaving narratives around the idealised Indian Hindu self. Writing from the margins, and representing the voice of the subaltern, Mistry tries to escape the possibilities of replicating the procedures of the national literatures the premises and the European bourgeoisie, as Aijas Ahmed pointed out elsewhere, formulated contours of which, in the period of their class hegemony and colonial expansion (15). What we come across in the general matrix of the mainstream Indian literature, according to Aijas Ahmed, is an unfinished bourgeois project which determined:

The notion of canonicity in tandem with the bourgeois, upper caste dominance of the nation state; a notion of classicism part Brahminical part borrowed from Europe; the ongoing subsumptions of literary utterances and cultures by print capitalism, accommodation with regional languages but preoccupations with constructing a supra-linguistic Indian literature based on an idealised Indian self.... textual attitude to lived histories; notions of literary history so conventional as to be not even properly bourgeois. (15-16).
The subaltern's agony as a cultural outsider has spiritual implications in the novel. The pangs of growth that Gustad experiences due to his being thrown to the margins in adverse conditions appear to be a spiritual test in which he succeeds. Gustad's quest ends in reconciliation and peace. He makes peace with his son, when they understand each other, and when they understand the necessity to be together. He removes the black papers from his windows letting the rays of hope peep into his room. Although the agony gets no final solution, he had the feeling of temporarily resolving it as an outsider. He shows that personal integrity and right approaches (as taught by his own religion) can make man survive even in the inclement condition. He had nowhere else to migrate to other than his own ethnicity. His ordeal that resembled an epic struggle involved physical and mental torture. Gustad's ultimate escape as the representative of an ethnic minority from the tyranny of time and circumstances culminated with a feeling of reconciliation, although he had to part with some of his best-loved friends. His survival was a morale booster to all minority struggles. The novel is one that articulates resistance in general. Resistance is both political and psychological. Firstly, resistance here is the way the politically oppressed, Parsis fight back (through the discourse) against the powers that oppresses them or against the conditions that make them feel unease. As Davis has pointed out elsewhere, "Resistance can be armed or passive - both indicate the rejection of the power of the political over structure and a sense of group solidarity against that structure." (12) The psychological resistance on the other hand is a kind opposition to all those forces within a person (the patient) which hinders his/her associations and activities. According to Davis "there is an inverse relationship
between the political sense of resistance and the psychoanalytic one. In the case of
the political, resistance aims at change...in the case of psychoanalytical, the
resistance is defensive reluctance or the blockage of change.” (12) Both types of
resistance can be found in Such a Long Journey. By unleashing an open onslaught
on the entire gamut of political activities in the country hiding behind the screen
of fiction the novelist portrays the resistance of a community, and by clinging to
the age-old tradition of the community and thus declining to change, he sketches
his community’s psychological resistance. The novel, on the whole justifies the
notion that his community is the first priority for Rohinton Mistry.

Works Cited


Barucha, Nilofer E. “The Parsi Voice in Recent Indian English Fiction.” Indian

Bramen, Carrie Tirado. “Speaking In Typeface: Characterizing Stereotypes In
124-154

Davis, Lennard J. Ideology and Fiction: Resisting Novels. London and New York:

Desai, Anjana. ‘‘Was I There’ Rohinton Mistry’s Such a Long Journey.” Indian


