A UNIQUE MEDLEY OF IDENTITIES: A READING OF THREE PARSI NOVELISTS, ROHINTON MISTRY, BAPSI SIDHWA, AND FIRDAUS KANGA

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut

for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

MONCY MATHEW

RESEARCH & POSTGRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

DEVAGIRI CALICUT

(Affiliated to the University of Calicut)

2015

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, "**A Unique Medley of Identities: A Reading of Three Parsi Novelists, Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Firdaus Kanga**" submitted to the University of Calicut, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bona fide research carried out by **Mr. Moncy Mathew**, under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

Place: .....

Date:.....

Dr. S Nagesh

Associate Professor & Head

Research & Postgraduate department of English

St. Joseph's College (Autonomous)

Devagiri, Calicut.

DECLARATION

I, Moncy Mathew, hereby declare that the thesis entitled "**A Unique Medley of Identities: A Reading of Three Parsi Novelists, Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Firdaus Kanga**" which is submitted to the University of Calicut, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bona fide record of research carried out by me, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Place:..... **Moncy Mathew**

Date:.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I sincerely and whole heartedly express my gratitude to my supervisor, **Dr. S Nagesh**, Head, Research & Postgraduate department of English, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri, Calicut for his exceptional guidance, constant moral support, motivation and extraordinary kindness. He has been a mentor, a well meaning critic and a kind teacher. I consider myself rather fortunate that I got the opportunity to work under him.

I express my sincere gratitude to **Mr. Philip C.M**., former head, Research & Postgraduate department of English, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri, Calicut, for his support and encouragement.

Mere words cannot express the wealth of gratitude I owe my friend **Dr. M N Parasuraman**, Assistant Professor, department of English, Govt. Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram, for his unfailing encouragement, and willingness to go through my thesis.

I am also grateful to **Dr. K Arunlal**, for his invaluable advice and comments. I would like to thank my fellow researchers, **Mrs. Mayadevi, Ms. Reshma K.R and Mrs. Shahina K**, for their support and encouragement.

Last but not the least, my gratitude goes to my family members for their unending support.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the numerous ramifications of the opening up of literary canons across the world has been a concern with the narratives of ethnic minorities, among other long marginalized or underrepresented groups. The past half-century has been witness to a rise in the academia in the writings of people belonging to ethnic minorities. US campuses in the 1980's erupted with colourful movements of ethnic and minority self-assertion that were expressed in resentment against having to study the writings of DWEMS (Dead White European Males) and WASPS (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) alone. Slogans such as, "Hey Ho! Hey ho! Western Culture Gotta Go!" sound faintly amusing to our twenty first century ears, but it is worth noting that this very amusement is a product of the agitations of yesteryear, for opening up the canon, not just on the grounds of aesthetic and epistemic justice, but also on the basis of the need to take into account the localities and the particularities of non-dominant group experiences and histories. In literary theoretical activity this change is best expressed in the writings that come under the rubric of Postcolonial and Postmodern theory with the highly empowering notions of de-centering discourses and subverting master-narratives or at least offering counterpoints to them.

In India we have registered this phenomenon in the increase in courses relating to Gender Studies and Minority Studies, in some universities even at the undergraduate level. Indian publishing in the past three decades has evinced a rising interest in the narratives of writers from groups such as women, Dalits, Tribals and Religious Minorities, often moving ahead of the academia.

All this underlines the one reality with which a modern student of Literature or exponent of English Studies has to engage –the nation can no longer be understood or

narrated through a single, still, all-subsuming frame, but rather, has to be seen through a fluid continuum of evolving lenses. It is as a small part of such an act of seeing and narrating that this research undertakes to study the rise and evolution of the Parsi Ethnic Identity as expressed in the novels of three well-acknowledged Parsi English writers –Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga.

Identity is a very complex and tricky concept that defies definitions. On the one hand is the discursive approach to identity which emphasize the constructed and fluid nature of identity and on the other is the Cultural identity claimed on the basis of common ancestry that assert solidity and stability. Both these approaches to a large extent accept identity to be a process that is never complete even though there is a relative difference with regard to the extent to which this process is controlled by collective forces like community membership. However, identities as Stuart Hall argues "are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions" (4). The Parsis are a perfect example of how an ethnic community constantly subjects itself to the process of historicisation and changes and transforms in response to the outside.

The present study examines the multiplicity, and plurality of Parsi ethnic identity, which overlaps with many other identities, creating a medley of identities, in the select novels of three Parsi writers Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga. The medley of identities that the Parsis are condemned to live with today is the result of the specific history that shaped their present. This has been analyzed in this thesis at three important stages-the pre-colonial identity and colonial identity, the transitional identity during and immediately after independence and the present identity with reference to three different authors who document these identities in

their novels. The Thesis argues that the Parsis who came from Persia and settled in India fearing religious persecution adopted the identity of an agricultural community during the pre-colonial period and after their encounter with the Europeans they reconstructed their identity as a business community and became the most Westernized, modernized and Anglicized community in India separated from the colonial masters only on the point of religion. During and immediately after independence there was an inability to understand their position in the new nations (Pakistan and India) and their obvious colonial identity led to a conflict with the natives (Hindus in India and Muslims in Pakistan). In the last quarter of the twentieth century there is an attempt by the members to accept and survive with the identity of a less significant minority community in India.

The present introductory chapter shall briefly survey theories dealing with issues of ethnicity and ethnic identity that have largely been taken from the field of Anthropology. Theories that have been found to be appropriate to this study have been chosen and due to constraints of time and space and the imperative to maintain the focus on the literary texts themselves, the theoretical discussion has been kept to a minimum. This theoretical section shall be followed by a broad discussion on the history and formation of the Parsi Community identity in India and the vicissitudes undergone by the community during and after British rule. Chapter Three of this dissertation shall deal with three of the five novels written by Bapsi Sidhwa (b.1938), namely, *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *Ice-Candy-Man* (*Cracking Earth* in the US, 1988) and *An American Brat* (1993).This chapter undertakes to locate the colonial identity of the Parsis in sharp contrast to the pre-colonial identity in a specific historical milieu created by the colonizer providing the Parsis the necessary rewards for the identity transformation. This section will discuss how the Parsis became trapped in the

colonial project of a short term gain. Chapter Four deals with the fiction of Rohinton Mistry (b. 1952) which includes a collection of short stories titled *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1987) and three novels-*Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002). All these books deal with the conflict that the Parsis had with the host society in Post-Independence India because of the markedly Anglophile identity they developed during the colonial period, which often entailed a conscious distancing from other Indian communities, who did not fancy such a conspicuous proximity to the foreign power. Chapter Five examines the reduction of the Parsi community into a political and social spent force or non-entity. This came out of their conflicts and distancing from the majority communities of India before, during and after independence. This distancing worked to their social and political disadvantage in the changed political context of a nation in which demographic power translated seamlessly into political and social clout. There is an attempt in this chapter to show how the Parsis are reduced to the status of a powerless minority community represented in literature through the metaphor of decay and disease. There is a medley of identity that the Parsis grapple with in order to live in the post-independence period. This phenomenon is viewed through the prism constituted by the lone Parsi-themed novel, *Trying to Grow* (1990) of Firdaus Kanga (1960).

It is argued in the next and concluding chapter that throughout their history in this country –through and after their business encounters with Europeans and during the subsequent British Rule –they tried to construct their identity in exotic terms, initially as a Persian community and then as an Anglophile, veritable European community, separated from the colonial masters only on the point of religion. In the Postcolonial period such identification did not really endear them to Hindus and Muslims and by and by they were forced to confront their irrelevance in the present

context and try and salvage their ties with other Indians by actually playing down what they had long gloated over.The titles of chapters mirror the chapter titles in Tanya Luhrmann's *The Good Parsi:The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* because the case of the Parsi ethnic identity is an examplary illustration of Luhrmanns classification of the trajectory of the changes in Parsi identity formation.

Central to the rise of the Parsi community is the concept of ethnicity. After a long period of relative insignificance of about eight centuries, the Parsi community rose to prominence in the last three centuries. The community started asserting its identity along ethnic lines only in this period. This ethnic resurgence has to be understood against various factors arising from within and outside the community. Ethnicity itself is a very vague and relational entity. The factors involved in the birth and rise of ethnicity may be studied using the theories of major social scientists, who have undertaken detailed researche into the rise of ethnicity as a worldwide phenomenon. The study of Parsi ethnicity is informed by the theories of ethnicity proposed by important social scientists like Frederick Barth, Edward Shils, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Eric P Kauffman, Will Kymlicka, A D Smith Horowitz and others. There is no doubt that the rise of the Parsi community is not the story of the rise of a few enterprising individuals. It is the story of the rise of a community. The rise was marked by the conscious development of a particular identity which can easily be termed as ethnic. In common usage the Parsi community is very easily classified as an ethnic group, even though there is a conscious attempt by some ethno historians like Dosabhai Framji Karaka to refer to the Parsi community as a race.

The term 'ethnicity' has been defined variously by scholars with varying importance on different elements of group behavior. The earliest dictionary appearance of the term in its modern sense was in 1972 in the Oxford English

Dictionary (Eriksen 4). The term found its place in the 1973 edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary*. The term ethnic derives from its Greek origin 'ethnos' meaning pagan or non Greek. The Greeks used the term to denote various types of groups like friends, tribes, a swarm of bees, a caste of heralds, and so on. However they generally used the term to refer to the non-Greek barbarian groups that occupied the margins of the Greek empire as opposed to the Greek citizens who referred to themselves as *genos Hellenon* in the same way as the Romans used the term 'natio' to refer to the distant barbarians while reserving the term *populas* for themselves (Hutchinson and Smith 4). But in the contemporary discourses the term is not used in any specific sense and as Hutchinson and Smith observe, the term is "applied to majorities and minorities, host and immigrant communities, alike" (Introduction 5).

Despite the lack of consensus among scholars on the definition of ethnicity and the specific dynamics of ethnic groups, certain generalities may be deduced from the discussions on ethnicity worldwide. Ethnicity, more than anything else, is a way of identifying the outsiders or non group members. As Zygmunt Bauman says "All societies produce strangers, but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way". According to Bauman the making of strangers, is part of the project of modernity and he argues that the order building urge of modernism inevitably identifies the other and in some cases turns some of the inhabitants of a group into strangers. Ethnicity is a process of building in-group solidarity based on cultural similarities and marking off the boundaries with non members of the group. Most scholars underscore the importance of two components in the construction of ethnic groups –common culture and common descent (Smith, Erikson, Van Den Berghe, Geertz, Mann, et al). In his analysis of the history, causes and the consequences of ethnic cleansing, Mann defines ethnicity as "a

group that defines itself or is defined by others as sharing common descent and culture" (10). John V.A. Fine, Jr., in his work on ethnic identity in the Balkans gives a broader definition of ethnicity. He defines an ethnic as "one who feels that he belongs to a community with others of his kind, and believes that he and these others are truly members of a community", and further states that the members of an ethnic group should be "bound by common ingredients, usually common language, territory, history, and a feeling that those who share this history, language, and other valued ingredients are somehow related and members of a larger common family" (2). Though Fine's definition is specific to Croats, it is a definition that effectively envisages all the important elements of ethnicity. He argues that an ethnic group should have sufficient community feeling to transcend state borders; the change of rule and rulers in such cases should not result in switching loyalties.

Eric P Kauffman, in his definition of an ethnic group, highlights the attachment of the members of an ethnic group to ancestral homeland along with shared ancestry and cultural boundary markers: "Ethnic groups refer to communities of (supposedly) shared ancestry, almost always accompanied by notions of an ancestral homeland and cultural boundary markers"(2).

The term was initially used as a substitute for race. However the unscientificity of the term *race* encouraged social scientists to increasingly use the term *ethnie*. Thomas Hyland Eriksen gives two reasons for not using the term race in contemporary discourses of classifying humans: "First, there has always been so much interbreeding between human populations that it would be meaningless to talk of fixed boundaries between races. Second, the distribution of hereditary physical traits does not follow clear boundaries" (6). Eriksen also thinks that hereditary characteristics fail to explain cultural variations. Ethnicity replaces the emphasis on

genetic determinants with one on cultural variations. Social scientists like Pierre Van den Berghe consider race as a subcategory of ethnicity where cultural variations may be explained by real or assumed variations in genetic or hereditary patterns. The hesitation of the social scientists to use the term 'race' should also be understood against the backdrop of the negative social reference the term carries in the twentieth century. As Michael Wieviorka says, "throughout the world, the old vocabulary of racism has become unacceptable, or almost so" and "the 1960's and 1970's were dominated by an anti-racist attitude of suspicion, by the idea that racism has to be hunted down not only in its most obvious and most blatant expressions but also where it was disguised and concealed in institutional workings" (140). He further claims that even though a sub stratum of racial concepts still underlies contemporary classificatory concepts like nation, tradition, religion and ethnicity, the focus is more on culture than nature. Tariq Modood also arrives at a similar conclusion in his study on the new racist trends in post-1980's Britain, where, according to him, cultural racism is rooted in cultural factors rather than biological features. 'Ethnicity' is used as a positive term (Eriksen 6), whereas race denotes an 'us' versus 'them' relationship. Ethnicity denotes a positive identification of the laudable qualities of the group and a belief in group solidarity which results in benefits not only to its members but also to outsiders. In the Indian context, a well-known example of such a laudable ethnic-group quality benefiting people both within and without the ethnie is the charity of the Parsis. The Parsis consider charity as a key ethnic trait and encourage their community members to develop philanthropic interests.

However not all social scientists agree on the positive connotations or neutral denotation of the term ethnicity. This is quite comprehensible because, by manipulating myths of common origin, and tracing the origin of ethnic groups to a

common mythological or historical person, most ethnic groups create specific ethnic versions of their history, leading to an element of antagonism against other ethnic groups. Such antagonism would then be justified by a new interpretation of ethnic history by ethno historians. A discussion on ethnicity requires that a clear distinction be made between the terms ethnicity and race. The term ethnic is now used to refer to a wide range of groups previously referred to by various classificatory terms like race, culture, tribe, linguistic groups, et cetera. All the above labels used to classify people, are the products of specific times and geographies. They are closely connected to social and economic factors. The emphasis on race as an important marker is a nineteenth century phenomenon. The nineteenth century attitude to the process of classifying human groups may broadly be placed within two traditions (Sian Jones 41). One laid great emphasis on human anatomy –that is classification was based on anatomical and physiological differences, leading to theories of polygenism, which in its rigid form, challenged the Biblical notions of the essential unity of mankind. This tradition directly linked cultural and mental characteristics to physical structure. The other tradition placed its emphasis on philology and national genealogy, leading to monogenistic theory, which analyzed language to arrive at the origin of various races. This theory, encouraged by the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century, argued for the common origin of mankind. And all variations were explained away in terms of environmental differences and adaptability factors. Even though Darwinist theories continued the monogenistic conception of human origin, they gave a lot of importance to the hierarchical nature of human development, thereby giving way to rigid notions of race, in some cases, as in Galton, to eugenics. In summary it may be said that the concept of race underlined the thought process of the nineteenth century in various forms. Sian Jones aptly remarks (44) that despite evidences to the contrary, in the

twentieth century, the term race, with all its pejorative associations, was still in currency till the 1960's and the 70's. He cites colonialism, nationalism and class unrest as reasons for the continued dependence on the notion of race in the first half of the twentieth century. In the latter half of the twentieth century there was a shift away from the notion of race to that of culture. There were serious attempts to understand the dynamics of culture and "the concept of culture emerged as a liberal alternative to racist classifications of human diversity" (Jones 48). Soon ethnicity became a very useful term to structure discussions on the cultural aspects of human societies. But the perception in contemporary scientific discussions that the very term 'culture' is an ideological system of classification rooted in specific historical contexts, has undermined the reliability of culture as a useful unit of classification. As Hans-Rudolf Wicker points out, critics of culture view culture as a continuation of older concepts of race and "propose to remove both race and culture from the list of useful analytical categories" (33). These critics stress the unreliability of both race and cultural signs which escape proper scientific definition and highlight how these terms are used by powerful political systems to construe order through the "process of integration and marginalization" (33-34). This study treats race as a term that gives more importance to biological aspects of group identity and ethnicity as a term that places greater emphasis on the cultural aspects of group identity.

In contemporary discourses the term 'race' is not used to refer to any fixed biological traits. Instead it is used as a tool by the cultural groups to enhance their boundedness and closed nature. Despite the lack of a scientific of basis, the term race is still used by ethnic communities to suggest biological traits shared by their members. Race as an objective term is not considered useful with regard to group beliefs about shared biological traits. For example the Parsis consider themselves to

be an endogamous, pure racial group, but researches have suggested that there has been considerable interbreeding (Dhalla). Despite the lack of reliable historical records of the life and occupation of the Parsis since their arrival in India in the ninth century to the seventeenth century, the Parsi community maintains that they have observed purity during their long stay in India. After discussing the various legal battles fought by the orthodox section of the Parsi community in the nineteenth century, John Hinnells documents how the Parsis created an image for themselves as a community that maintained racial purity despite evidences to the contrary. Hinnells, who quotes the judgement of Mr. Justice Beaman to emphasize the importance of lineage in Parsi community, says:

> [. . .] the Parsi community consists of the Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants, and who are born of Zoroastrian parents, and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, who came to India either temporarily or permanently and the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion (Hinnells 120).

The above passage points to the fact that what matters in the case of group belief is not the empirically verifiable aspects of belief system, but whether the belief system itself is empirically verifiable. This is so in the case of most ethnic communities. The visible aspect of physical similarity only increases the bond. As Eriksen argues, ethnic communities are durable even in the absence of the Pure Race myth and the myth of the Shared Biological Traits. The irrationality of biological similarity can be further explained by the ‘one drop principle’ used by the American social scientists to define White racial purity (This absurd principle argues that if you have as much as a single drop of Colored blood, you disqualify to be a White. What

would happen if Coloreds apply this principle is a question deemed unworthy of consideration!)

Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan refer to the sudden increase in the currency accorded to the concept of ethnicity in the twentieth century: "[. . .] there has been pronounced and sudden increase in tendencies by people in many countries and in many circumstances to insist on the significance of their group distinctiveness and identity and on new rights that derive from this group character" (Glazer and Moynihan 3).

The theories of ethnicity may be broadly classified into Primordial theories of ethnicity and Instrumental theories of ethnicity. The Primordial approach to ethnicity, advocated by Edward Shils, Clifford Geertz and Isaacs, treats ethnicity as an ascribed identity, while in the Instrumentalist approach, ethnic identity is something that has to be achieved. The Primordial approach to ethnicity constructs notions of ethnicity as natural and as existing prior to any conscious manipulation by the members of a group. It does not take into account the major socio-economic factors constructing ethnic identity. Mass movements of populations, colonization, intermarriages, and globalization do not seriously affect the nature of the ethnic bond. Social scientists like Van den Berghe attribute biological affinity to members of the same ethnic group whereas Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz argue for the construction of ethnic groups based on givens like blood, speech, custom, religion, territory, etc. In short, primordialists view ethnicity as an identity assumed by or ascribed to an individual as a fixed identity based on common ancestry and common biological characteristics (M N Dasan). Membership to ethnic groups is decided by birth and is maintained by a process of socialization within the group. Group solidarity and deep emotional attachment to the group stem from the relatively fixed identity of its members as a

result of being born into the community. It is a group identity formed out of primordial affinities and relationships. Isaacs uses the phrase ‘basic group identity’ to describe this attachment.

Primordial theories of ethnicity claim some kind of biological similarities among the members of a group as the basis of their ethnic solidarity. This genetic or phenotypical foundation of ethnic solidarity may be real or putative, but is invariably one that the community members believe to be real. This assumption ascribes identity to the members of a group whose group membership is a result of their common ancestry (Geertz, Berghe, Weber, and Shils). The primordial bonds of the members create a strong relationship among them. Extreme primordialist theorists like van den Berghe equate an ethnic group to a super family where all the members are related to each other by ties of blood. Modern studies on genetic purity have soundly refuted all claims of pure race. There has been considerable mixing of the various races across the world. This has discredited all those pioneers who used race as a factor in uniting members of communities for certain specific purposes. This vacuum left by the academic refutation of race as a unifying factor has been filled by the advocates of ethnic theories. Ethnic theories, unlike race theories, do not directly endorse a pseudo-scientific notion of the phenotypical or genetic similarities of the members of the group, but they successfully incorporate elements from race theories into their agenda to manufacture the feeling of oneness based on real or imagined blood ties. So primordial theories of ethnicity study how supposed or real notions of it effectively create a sense of pride in ancestry among the members of a group. The leaders of ethnic groups effectively redraw, recreate and manipulate the history of a group, very often tracing the origin to a common ancestor, in order to propose a theory of the genesis of the group. This process may be facilitated by both external and internal

factors. Threats from outside, real or imagined, the size of the community, feelings of being alienated from the neighbourhood and common issues faced by the members of a group can trigger the feeling of oneness, justified by the idea of having the same lineage. All discussions of Primordial theories basically stress two aspects of ethnicity to varying extents –the role of the immutable boundaries that constantly separate the insider from the outsider, and the nature of membership in an ethnic community that comes with birth and cannot be claimed by deeds or assimilation. In literature that stresses the significance of blood ties, the argument is always along primordial assumptions. The boundaries of 'us' and 'them' is most importantly stressed through supposed genetic and phenotypical features. This is supplemented by a stress on the real cultural similarities that the group shares. Such ethnic groups that are bound together by claims of common ancestral origins, blood relationship and cultural similarities are often characterised by endogamy and vigilant boundary maintenance. For example Muriel D Schein defines ethnic groups as "named endogamous, bounded units of people who identify themselves and others as different" (Channa 280).The stress here is on the creation of boundaries that help people to identify themselves as different from others. Ethnic groups and migrant communities find it very useful to mark themselves off from the rest of the population by identifying themselves with the country of their origin, but at the same time they show their loyalty to the host nation in ways that do not contradict their original identity. Such identifications facilitated by the boundaries maintained by the ethnic groups and recognised by the outside population, are useful both for the ethnic groups and for the host society. For the ethnic group, such an identity helps reduce the alienation and the anxiety resulting from the dislocation from the old homeland and the newness of the new place. For the host society such a labeling helps identify the immigrant group for practical reasons

like using them in industries and in framing welfare policies. Hence ethnic labels are endorsed both from within the group and from the outside.

On the other hand, the Instrumentalist approach questions the given, fixed, durable and the imperative status of the members of an ethnic group. The approach treats ethnicity as a response to functional and organizational requirements. Instrumental theories provide structural explanations for ethnic identity and conflict. They treat ethnicity as an artificial and constructed modern phenomenon. Abner Cohen defines ethnicity "as a particular form of informal political organization where cultural boundaries are invoked so that the group's resources or 'symbolic capital' can be secured" (Eriksen 63). Such definitions shift the emphasis to contemporary social, economic and political conditions as the most important factors in creating and sustaining ethnic groups. The Instrumental theory of ethnicity argues for the role played by the ethnic elite in constructing ethnic identity by manipulating modern factors like the media. The ethnic elite construct an identity for their respective groups. Ernest Gellner's Instrumentalist theories of nationalism argue for the artificiality of both nationalism and ethnicity. For him the modern resurrection of ethnic groups and conflicts are the direct result of conscious manipulation by the ethnic elite who have material advantages as motivation. Nira Yuval-Davis also highlights the role of advantages that motivate collectivities to organize themselves into ethnic groups based on "myths of common origin and/or common destiny". "These are aimed," she says, "from specific positioning within the collectivities, at promoting the collectivity or perpetuating its advantages by means of access to state and civil society powers" (194). She emphasizes the significance of the political power sharing process which constructs and sustains ethnic collectivities. Pnina Webner, in his discussion on race and ethnicity, points at how ethnicity is

situationally constructed or manipulated for specific goals and discusses the ways in which members of ethnic groups evoke ethnicity situationally, "depending on the source and purpose of funding …," and, "in their negotiation with the local state, ethnic identities are highlighted pragmatically and objectified relationally and congruently" (241). Smith refers to situational ethnicity as "a matter of attitudes, perceptions and sentiments that are necessarily fleeting and mutable, varying with the particular situation of the subject". He characterizes situational ethnicity as the ability of an individual to shift the importance that he gives to one particular identity in one situation and to another identity in a different context. Modernization is an important factor in the emergence of ethnic identity. Modernism with its various factors necessitating the interaction among ethnic communities provides an opportunity for every group to identify, assert and encourage group identity in terms of in-group similarity and intergroup difference. The media works actively in the construction of ethnic groups by its discussions on the relative share every community has in the economic resource allocation of a particular nation. Plural societies dominated by two or more ethnic groups unequally share the economic resources of the country. This results in a competition for the resources of the country, forcing the dominated ethnic groups to forge a sense of group solidarity in order to survive and compete with the dominant ethnic groups. In such cases, the ethnic elite of each group would mobilize the group by manipulating ethnic sentiments and myths of common origin. This suggests that the ethnic bond is not an *a priori* entity. It is created at certain crucial historical moments to compete for resources. This explains the sudden emergence of certain ethnic groups. Stressing the role played by the ethnic elites in constructing and manipulating ethnicity, Paul Brass states:

> Ethnicity and nationalism are the political constructions. They are creations of elites who draw upon, distort and sometime fabricate material from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for these groups as well as for themselves (Brass 111).

In his study of ethnicity and conflicts in the Soviet Union before and after its disintegration, Valerii Aleksandrovich Tishkov refers to the significant role played by the ethnic elites and points out the importance given to the role of elites in the instrumental theories of ethnicity: "[. . .] instrumentalist approach sees a collectivity's claims to ethnicity and to ethnic status as being based on academic and political myths that are created, propagated, and often manipulated by elites seeking recognition and power"(11). He further states how literature and other written texts are used by groups to justify the permanence and historical rootedness of the particular ethnic collectivity. "[. . .] written texts and speeches contain historical reconstructions which are used to justify the authenticity and the continuity of one or another ethnic identity" (11). Even though his observations are specific to the case of Russia, many of his observations, especially the ones concerning how the Russians recreated their past in the present, are useful in the analysis of ethnic groups in general.

Another significant factor that has contributed to the growth of increased ethnic consciousness in the twentieth century is the movement of large numbers into urban areas of groups which have remained insulated for centuries from serious contact and competition with other groups. Such groups suddenly found themselves competing for resources in an alien space because of demographic displacements. This new phenomenon of transactions with other ethnic groups made visible those invisible or less visible boundaries which guarded an ethnic group in a rural setting.

Many social scientists highlight the role of urbanization and mass population movements into cities as a major factor in the creation of ethnic consciousness and ethnic groups.

A different approach to ethnicity, developed by John Armstrong, John Hutchinson, and Anthony D Smith may be called the ethno symbolist school of ethnicity or to use the label popularized by Anthony D Smith, 'historical ethno symbolism'(Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* 10). This approach views ethnic group as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith 11). This school studies the potency of symbols and myths in the construction of ethnic identities. Anthony D Smith lays down the following six features as the defining aspects of an ethnic community:

1. An identifying name or emblem
2. A myth of common ancestry
3. Shared historical memories and traditions
4. One or more elements of common culture
5. A link with an historic territory or 'homeland'
6. A measure of solidarity, at least among the elites (Smith 13)

The ethno-symbolists associate the emergence of ethnic consciousness with those symbols, myths and cultural values of the given ethnic group which existed throughout the history of the group. The historical continuity of the group is provided by symbols and myths. John Armstrong considers symbols as crucial to the "survival of ethnic identification because they act as 'border guards' distinguishing 'us' from

'them' "(Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* 182). Armstrong was heavily influenced by Barth and his transactionism which focuses on the boundaries that mark off different communities. But at the same time, as Smith points out, Armstrong's emphasis on myths, symbols and patterns of communication underplays Barth's stress on cultural borders foregrounding instead the cultural stuff that is enclosed within the borders. Smith considers the myths and symbols of every community as collectively constituting its distinctive feature. "Symbols represent to particular human groups distinctive shared experiences and values, while myths explain to them the meanings of those experiences and exemplify and illuminate those values"(Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* 186). For Smith, the symbols are active elements of culture and are that part of the heritage and tradition of a group that helps to unite them. However it is not to be forgotten that ethnicity is definitely a phenomenon of group interaction. The awareness of difference and the resultant ethnic consciousness come about as a result of contact with other ethnic groups. Even ethno-symbolists would agree that ethnicity is essentially an aspect of interaction but the ethno-symbolic factors are manipulated in such contexts to highlight ethnic difference. As Eriksen observes, "Ethnicity is thus constituted through social contact" (23). Even though ethnicity is an essentially boundary marking process, the identity of the members is far from being fixed and the boundaries themselves are not solid stone wall constructions. Rather, they exhibit a fluid character and are negotiable in many cases. But this fluid quality and the fuzzy nature of ethnic boundaries do not suggest a decline in the ethnic consciousness of the participating groups. Studies have revealed that despite the prediction of many social scientists like Max Weber, of an eventual wiping out of ethnicity due to the agents of modernization, ethnicity has asserted its resilience and continuity. Frederick Barth studied the phenomenon of ethnicity from the perspective of the boundaries that limit

the interactions between and among cultural groups. Barth's transactionism focuses on the persistence of ethnic boundaries despite the flow of personal and cultural elements across the boundaries. Ethnic communities do not maintain their group identity by isolating themselves. On the contrary, boundaries are drawn and maintained as part of long term social interaction. When groups come into contact with each other, instead of the disappearance of these boundaries, the members become conscious of these boundaries and they are maintained throughout the inter group interaction. Even though the ethnic values that decide the boundaries may change over time, boundaries themselves do not change; instead they get strengthened. It is very difficult to make a pronouncement with certainty about ethnic groups as to *which* cultural aspects constitute ethnic identity. The 'we' feeling is not entirely based on similarities of cultural patterns of behavior. But ethnic behavior essentially exhibits cultural contents sufficient to induce the groups to distance themselves from other groups and identify differences with them. For example, a casual visitor to India may not find any significant difference between a Parsi and a non Parsi. They may easily be called Indian Hindu or Muslim and a westerner normally does classify them as Indians. However, in spite of limitations such as these, the Barthian model has been very influential for many decades in the analysis of the construction and maintenance of ethnicity.

The Transactionist Theory of Fredrik Barth which analyses ethnicity as essentially a group phenomenon constructed through and during interactions is considered to be a variant of the constructivist school of thought. The boundaries that mark ethnic groups are maintained and strengthened during the interactions that take place across them. Contrary to the traditional belief that ethnic collectivities maintain the cultural stuff that the boundaries enclose in isolation from other communities,

Barth shows us how "boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them" (Barth 9). 'Personnel' here refers to people in interaction. He questions the assumption that boundary maintenance is unproblematic and follows from the isolation of cultural groups. He argues that in interactions involving persons of different cultures the differences *may not* be reduced in course of the interaction because of the specific structure of the interaction which understands and accommodates differences (16). This approach to the study of ethnicity is used in understanding the specific identity of the Parsi character Feroza in Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*.

Ethno-symbolists posit that every ethnic group communicates its difference to the outside in terms of cultural codes or symbols which may not be hostile but necessarily capable of invoking antagonistic feelings. But these codes are not sufficient to foster an in-group brotherhood. This brotherhood or the 'we' feeling is created through the ethnic symbols borrowed from its cultural and historic past. The members should also participate in this historic or cultural past. This awakening of the group members is achieved by the ethnic elite who might do it to serve various ends including political and economic resource sharing. As the move towards ethnic consciousness gathers pace, the emphasis on the purity of a group's distinct cultural and historical past also gather pace, sometimes resulting in ethno-centric versions of their history or histories. Such versions of histories are marked by a strong sense of ethno centrism. Karaka's version of Parsi history may be treated as one such attempt. Ethno-histories are not objectively verifiable and are subject to change from time to time depending on the factors that would help mobilize the community. History/ histories are very essential in constructing a unique identity for any community. In the absence of a well documented and verifiable record of history, ethnic groups indulge

in the creation of history. Some ethnic communities are unfortunate in the sense that they do not have strong documentary evidence to support their long traditions. This is the case of the Parsis in India. For various reasons that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, the Parsis –who were initially an agricultural people –did not leave a record of their life and achievements to posterity. But with the arrival of the British, the Parsi community started constructing its history. This constructed history is largely ethnocentric and is meant to create a strong sense of ethnic consciousness. History and myths provide a sense of security, rooted in collective identity to communities living in exile. A D Smith attributes this search for and creation of history and myth to a community's quest for meaning and consistency (A D Smith 61). Myths provide the basis for kinship among the members of a community and solidly place the present generation in a long chain of generations, tracing the origin of the community to a common ancestor. Such metaphors of family ties consciously created and disseminated among the members of a community allow them, who were otherwise dispersed and scattered geographically, to come together and forge a common way of life leading to mutual dependence and sharing of resources. Such group solidarity eventually constructs a unique identity by sharpening the boundaries between people of the group and outsiders.

In the age of information, identities and ethnic affiliations are constantly under modification. The quantity of information received and processed exceeds that of any earlier era. The global communication networks connect people and transform inter-group and in-group relations. Individuals have to negotiate their multiple group memberships. The old foundations of solid identity are no longer accepted unquestionably. As Alberto Melucci observes, "The traditional co-ordinates of personal identity (family, church, party, race, class) weaken. It becomes difficult to

state with certainty who we are. The question *Who am I?* constantly presses for an answer." (61). What this has done to the individual is that it forced the individual to make decisions on his own and be responsible for his decisions. In the traditional social systems where the individual's actions were interpreted against his family, tribe, ethnic community, etc, the present day information systems have made it necessary for the individual to define himself by making conscious choices. The individuals have access to greater resources with which they can create an identity which may not be absolute but workable. The choice that Feroza, the central character of *An American Brat* by Bapsi Sidhwa, makes towards the end of the novel is one such decision. She has access to the knowledge of both the oriental and the western systems of the self and she chooses very wisely to define and decide what is best for her. Identity and the self of the individual become a dynamic process that shapes and reshapes itself ever so continuously. The process is never complete at any given point of time. Even though family, kinship, ethnicity, etc, can give stability, identity is never fixed. Identity is a choice to the extent that it is constructed within the boundaries of opportunities and constraints set by society.

Immigration has created a different set of problems and solutions in terms of creating identities and maintaining them. The ethnification of the immigrant communities with strong roots in the country they left behind, has forced the host countries to identify them as a different collectivity within their own societies. Such groups on the move have, instead of making the world an unproblematic multicultural space, made the world a more closed transactional space by drawing their boundaries thick, enclosing their members within strict ethnic markers. This they do by going back to their roots. So the modernist claim of a post ethnic world brought into being by the increased movement of populations across continents and nations has not

happened. Instead these populations on the move have withstood the factors of modernism and continue to exist as powerful forces that disrupt and threaten the organizational possibilities of the migrated countries. Attempts by the governments to force these communities to give up their roots and to accept hybridity have not been very successful. Modern nation states have reoriented their efforts from assimilation to multiculturalism, empowering the ethnic communities which have come and settled in the host nation for various reasons.

CHAPTER II

WE ARE NOT WHAT WE WERE

The Parsis are a small ethnic community who settled in India around the eighth century AD. They prospered into a major economic force during the British rule. Persia –the original homeland of the Parsis from where they were displaced by the Muslim invaders during the seventh century –has only a small population of Parsis today, numbering around six thousand. Even though the Parsis migrated from India to various parts of the world in search of better economic opportunities during and after British rule, resulting in the formation of significant diasporas, the vast majority lives in India. The most important Parsi diasporas are found in Canada, USA, Pakistan and South Africa. For the purpose of clarity in identifying the Zoroastrians of India and distinguishing them from those in Iran, this study reserves the term *Parsis* to the segment of the Zoroastrians who settled in India and migrated to various other places *from* India. The term *Zoroastrians* is applied strictly to the people who still live and practice Zoroastrianism in Iran. The reasons that lead to the Parsi exodus to India from Iran are largely religious and political. The Parsis constituted a powerful civilization that flourished in Iran and continued till the seventh century AD. Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism, lived 1300 years before Christ (some accounts say 1500 years). He was a wise man, and he very quickly found favour with the then King of Persia, Gushtasp (BC 1300) of the Kayanian dynasty, whom he convinced of the greatness of his new religion. The Persian Empire reached its zenith during the rule of Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes during the sixth century BC. The Islamic invasion of Persia which began in 633 AD by the order of Khalif Omar resulted in the complete defeat of Persian emperor Yazdezard in 641 AD at the Battle of Nahavand. The Battle of Nahavand once and for all put an end to the great civilization of the Zoroastrians. “The carnage of Nahavand passed the empire from

the followers of Zerdusht to those of Muhammad" (Briggs 6). The whole of Persia was converted to Islam with the exception of a small minority of Zoroastrians who refused to embrace Islam. Parsi historians very faithfully document the details of religious persecution by the Mohammedan rulers for succeeding generations. The small group of Zoroastrians who refused to embrace Islam abandoned their homes to take shelter in the mountainous areas of Khorassan, where they remained for over 100 years, practising their religion. But when they realised that they were far from being safe at Khorassan, they decided to leave their homeland forever and travelled to the Land of the Sindhu (which they pronounced 'Hindu') from the island of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf. The exact reason for choosing India as their destination cannot be established. However the Persian connection with Hindustan is very old dating back to the time of Zoroaster (Karaka, Hodivala). Firdausi's story of Prince Isfandiyar, the son of Gushtasp, the first Persian king to embrace Zoroastrianism, tells us of his efforts to persuade the Indian emperor to adopt fire worship. It is also said that in historic times the Punjab was part of the Persian dominions conquered by Darius Hystaspes (510 BC). The volume and the nature of the Parsi exodus to India cannot be established with any amount of certainty. The Parsis may have come to India in many waves or in one single band. Most of the speculations about their arrival are based on the account available in a sixteenth century work titled *Kissah-i-Sanjan* by Behman Kaikobad Sanjana. According to *Kissah-i-Sanjan* the Parsis first came and settled in Diu and remained there for nineteen years. Then they moved to Sanjan and were allowed to settle there by the then Hindu King Jadi Rana under a few conditions. These conditions are discussed in the subsequent chapters as they play a vital role in the construction of the Parsi identity and ethnic formation. It must be noted that the

Parsis lived in India ever since, abiding by the conditions they agreed upon at this point of time in their history.

Kissah-i-Sanjan is the only available text which records the details of Parsi arrival in India and their subsequent prosperity. Hodivala succinctly refers to the significance of this text, "It is fairly well known that almost the only source of our knowledge of the early history of the Indian Parsis is the *Kissah-i-Sanjan*, a narrative in Persian verse written by Bahman Kaikobad Hamjiar Padam Sanjana in 969 A.Y. (1600 A.C)". (*Studies in Parsi History* 67). *Kissah-i-Sanjan* written in seventeenth century gives us details about the social, religious and the economic life of the Parsis till their encounter with European traders.

Hardly anything is known about their civilisation, religion, and literature from the period following their settlement at Sanjan, till the early sixteenth century, when they came into contact with the European traders, except the fact that they were agriculturists and that they did not occupy a very high social profile. However during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar, a Parsi priest was invited by the emperor to explain the basic tenets of the religion and it is said or deduced from the Parsi narratives that the emperor was impressed by the 'dastur' who explained the tenets of Zoroastrianism to him. The Parsis lived peacefully during this period with other Indian communities and their uneventful history doesn't find mention in any work of significance except for the one event mentioned in the *Kissah-i-Sanjan* of the Parsi war with a Muslim ruler in favour of a Hindu king, in which the Parsis were thoroughly routed. This period of relative insignificance and anonymity, has allowed them to construct their religious and social identity during the colonial period. Lack of documentary evidence on their ways of life and relationship with other Indian communities gave them an opportunity to reconstruct their history in ways that helped

them claim a distinct ethnic identity during the colonial period. Most of their current practices were derived during this period. They must have really struggled to maintain their ethnic purity and identity. A close examination of their cultural and religious practices shows a lot of Hindu influences. Ever since their rise to prominence under circumstances provided by the British, the Parsis have tried to purify themselves of some of these native influences and adopt some of the practices of the Europeans. The Parsis did not enter politics during this period. They remained loyal to whichever king ruled them. They did not proselytise the Indian population. Conversion to and from Zoroastrianism remained a taboo practice for the Parsis. They excelled in agriculture. During this pre-European period they did not maintain consistent contact with their co-religionists in Persia though the deplorable condition of those co-religionists under Mohammedan rule were, according to Karaka, a cause of constant worry for them. They tried hard to maintain a link with Persia and the Zoroastrians there. They sent their emissaries to Persia in order to obtain clarifications and information about their religion from time to time. These communications from Persia known as *rivayats* helped the Parsis to maintain their religious purity. But their cultural and religious practices, peculiar as they were, did not antagonise the native Hindus. While commenting on the relative peace and harmony of this period Karaka states, "They seemed to have lived amicably with the Hindus, for during this period of five hundred years no misunderstanding between them and the children of the soil is ever mentioned" (Vol.1 43).

Their co-religionists in Persia however were subjected to incomparable sufferings under the successive Mohammedan rulers. Even in cases where the insignificant number of Parsis in Kerman and elsewhere helped the Persian Kings against Afghan invasions their condition did no improve. The prolonged prosecution

of the Parsis in Persia has decreased their numbers greatly; most of them converted to Islam. Their religious texts were destroyed. The Zoroastrians (of Persia), in the absence of religious texts and other valuable documents, found it difficult to guide Parsis(Indian) whenever help was sought in religious matters. As Karaka rightly remarks in the context of Indian Zoroastrians seeking help on religious matters from their Persian brethren, "they showed that instead of being in a position to impart knowledge, the Zoroastrians of the fatherland needed advise and instruction from those in India" (Karaka Vol.1 16).

The Parsis of India have done everything within their powers to ameliorate the condition of the Zoroastrians in Persia during the Colonial period through the agency of various European powers. One achievement of theirs in this regard was in securing the abolition of Jazia. The Parsis, very consciously and sincerely maintained their contacts with their homeland. However nostalgic the Parsis are about their homeland they don't seem to entertain ideas of going back to Iran.

During the pre-European period Parsis did not occupy any high position in society. As Arun Singh observes, "The Parsis settled as farmers, horticulturalists, toddy planters, carpenters and weavers. The weavers gave India three of her most ancient crafts, namely the Surtighat, a very fine and strong silk like the Surat mountain; the garo, a fine silk with Chinese embroidery and the tanchori, a fine, silk brocade with floral designs" (26).

They lived an agrarian artisan and small scale mercantile existence, in relative peace and security, until the arrival of European trading powers in the seventeenth century. First came the Portughese, and the Dutch, and finally the British; with this

new wave, the Parsis moved from their traditional roles to participate increasingly in international trade and shipping (Hinnells 1).

The Europeans were fascinated by this community. By around eleventh century A D Parsis had settled in the coastal part of Gujarat. But the majority of the Parsis were still agriculturalist. This small number that had settled along the coastal areas of Gujarat, Cambay, Broach and Surat traded with the Hindu merchants. By the thirteenth century Gujarat was a major trading centre of India, dealing in the export of salt, corn, wheat and cotton. The Portuguese, who had contempt for the natives of this country, were however compelled to depend on the knowledge of the natives, especially the Vanias and the Parsis. Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Parsis started dominating the trade in Gujarat as the agents of European companies. Referring to this new rise of Parsi traders Mani P Kamerkar says, "By 1850, the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English companies all appointed Parsis as agents and this increased their economic viability in the financial and political spheres. The Europeans, in search of direct contact with producers, found the Parsis excellent brokers and also politically useful as intermediaries with the established authorities" (131). The economic prosperity of the Parsis increased so quickly that they could lend money to the Nawab and the Europeans. Mani P Kamerkar gives the following statistics about the volume of capital they possessed: "It is said that the Parsi community had amongst themselves twenty to thirty lakh rupees as capital and acted as moneylenders to the Nawab and the Europeans. According to early records, they lent rupees fourteen lakhs to the East India company and rupees five and half lakhs to other European companies"(131). Referring to the enviable position occupied by the Parsis, Mani Kamerkar further states that, "the financial power of the Parsis in Gujarat seemed to have evoked fear in the English mind and made them feel that "the Parsee

sway makes our credit subservient to theirs and gives them a power too dangerous to our own trade". With the emergence of Bombay as the most important British port in Western India, the Parsee exodus to Bombay began. Jesse S Palsetia documents the arrival of the Parsis to Bombay as a turning point in their economic prosperity and community leadership. The leadership of the community shifted from Priests to the materially prosperous members of the community.

Many of the first Parsis who came to Bombay in search of wealth and name were the founders of great families and they are closely connected with the development of the Parsi community. These Parsis who would be honoured with titles and emoluments from the British encouraged the arrival of more Parsis to Bombay. They would come to be regarded as the natural leaders of this incipient community and they derived their prestige partly from their treatment of their less well-off brethren, providing employment, welfare and leadership, while benefiting from the labour of those they employed in addition to the respect due to a benefactor. Whereas two generations previously the leaders of the Parsi community in provincial Gujarat had been priests, the exigencies of the new setting worked to elevate those with material resources and contacts to the status of leaders (Palsetia 36).

The Parsis were active in Bombay as businessmen even before Bombay became the commercial capital of India. As Bombay got transferred to East India Company, the company announced many concessions for promoting trade in Bombay which before that was a neglected port. The Parsi maritime traders of Bombay, realizing great commercial potential in Bombay, brought more and more of their brethren from various places in Gujarat. It is not a story of the growth of independent Parsi entrepreneurs; it is the story of the growth of a whole community. The Parsis began to emerge as a powerful business community in India. Karaka documents this

period in the following words. “Parsi prosperity may be said to date from the first connection with the English and still more precisely from the time of settlement in Bombay” (Vol. 1. XVII).

Kamerkar mentions Dorabji Nana Bhai Patel as the first Parsi to settle in Bombay. He arrived in Bombay in 1640 and worked as the agent for the Portuguese. But the Parsi fame came as the ship builders when Lowji Wadia settled in Bombay in 1736 as the master builder of Bombay. They were soon followed by the Readymoneys. The Parsis dominated the opium and cotton trade with China. The enormous wealth they accumulated raised their social position and they adopted a European lifestyle and mixed freely with the Europeans. The Parsi growth reached its zenith in the nineteenth century. Hinnells records the peak point of Parsi growth:

> [. . .] the climax of Parsi political, social and economic power was in the late nineteenth century, with major leaders in Bombay, the rest of India and even with a Member of Parliament in London—Dadabhoy Naoroji in 1892. The Jijibhoys, the Wadias, the Petits and the Tatas were industrial giants in India. Parsis were prominent in the field of social reform, notably female education (SS Bengali) and in law. Perhaps the year at which they felt at their most powerful was 1905-6. Dadabhay Naoroji . . . was the only person who . . . was invited for a unique third time to preside at the annual Congress [of the Indian National Congress] in Calcutta (Hinnells and Williams 255).

The Parsis contributed significantly to the cause of Indian independence under the leadership of stalwarts like Dadabhoy Naoroji, Sir Dinshah Wacha, Pherozeshah Mehta and Shapurji Saklatvala. Saklatvala, who was elected a Labour Party MP of the

House of Commons in 1922, with his radical ideas, opposed Gandhi and almost divided the Parsi community. Gandhi was admired and followed by a section of the Parsis that included Rustomji, Frene Ginwalla, the granddaughters of Naoroji Khurshed Nariman and Feroze Gandhi. At a later stage however, certain differences began to surface. Hinnells observes that Nariman did not rise to the position of the leader of the Congress Legislative Party for criticising Gandhi's views on bringing religion on to the political scene. Instead, it was Feroze Gandhi who rose to the position of the most important Parsi politician during and after Independence. Feroze married Indira in 1942 and was later elected MP in 1952. But his persistent fight against corruption led to the resignation of a couple of MPs who were close to Nehru brought and this brought about his downfall. Even though Feroze Gandhi and Indira never divorced, their relationship was not cordial. The Parsi ascendant on the Indian political scene ended with Feroze's death of a heart attack in 1960. His sons did not identify themselves as Parsi, "Since India is a patrilineal society, technically in Indian law their sons, Sanjay and Rajiv were Parsis, but although they were sympathetic to the community, especially Rajiv, they did not identify themselves as Parsis"(Hinnells 257).

The Tatas and the Godrejes were the leading industrialists of India at the end of the nineteenth century. These two companies are also known for their charitable work for people of all communities. The Parsis have contributed to the development of various sections of Indian society even though, according to many, their influence has declined in the twentieth century. This may largely be due to the marginalisation of this community after Independence, the reasons for which are discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters. However it may be said in brief that Westernization and Anglicization of this community during British rule estranged them from mainstream

Indian society. The Parsi position with regard to the freedom struggle is an important aspect of their ethnic identity in relation to India. There were many instances during the first half of the twentieth century when the Parsis directly opposed the Congress party by showing its loyalty to the British. In 1921 despite the Congress call for the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to India, six thousand Parsis gathered in Bombay to welcome the Prince. Referring to their gradual alienation from the other Indians Bhavna Kale says:

> The Parsi community has co-existed peacefully in India since the seventeenth century AD. By adopting the Indian dress and language, the Parsis have managed to preserve their religious identity without being viewed as a potential threat to the predominantly Hindu society. However, with the advent of the British, the community oriented itself towards the politically dominant reference group –its manners, language and the value system. The obsequious behaviour towards the British and highbrow elitism of many Parsis, marginalised them from other Indians (sic) . . . The Parsi community gradually began to be seen as a counter-force rather than a subculture (162).

The Parsis could not claim a very distinct cultural and linguistic tradition during the pre-colonial period because they had been culturally assimilated into Indian society. There was no attempt to resist cultural assimilation. Very few claims may be made in terms of definitely distinguishable cultural and linguistic peculiarities. Hence most of their claims for a difference from Indian society during and after colonial period were made in terms of religious differences and endogamy. Their knowledge of religion was very poor till their encounter with the Europeans. There was a sudden renaissance in the community during the colonial period and they tried to define their religious practices and made whole hearted efforts at resurrecting

their ancient religious and ritualistic practices. As Henry George Brigs observed in 1852, "Whatever may be urged by individual members of the community –as a body, the Parsis neither study their faith, nor do they much regard its practice" (33). James Hope Moulton who came to India for evangelical work also shares similar opinion on the Parsi knowledge of their religion in 1917, when he says that there is no system or provision available among the Parsis for religious education (171). Here they had to very quickly efface their past wherever their claims for genetic purity and endogamy contradicted historical facts. And in religion they effected a thorough reformation with the objective of purifying their faith from the influences of Hinduism. These efforts at purification undertaken by cultural groups, ethnic groups or nations are quite natural and are not exceptions. Smith refers to the efforts of nationalist intelligentsias, who, for reasons of authenticity and cultural purity, purge themselves of alien influences (*Myths and Memories of the Nation* 15). It is natural for a person studying Parsi ethnicity to wonder how this small community which adopted the culture of the neighbouring communities in many aspects of their life could still maintain its distinctive identity for more than ten centuries. The observation of Anthony P Cohen in his work *The Symbolic Construction of Community* is very relevant here. He says that, "[. . .] the adoption by a community of the structural forms originating from outside . . . are transformed in the process of importation and fundamentally reconstituted with indigenous meaning . . ." (46). The basic structure of ethnicity is such that the cultural borrowings from outside will be transformed in the process of borrowing and the elements would be infused with native meanings. "In the act of importation," Cohen says the cultural elements "were transformed by syncretism –by a process in which new and old were syncretised into an idiom more consonant with indigenous culture" (37). This explains why the Parsis, despite a long period of

assimilation and cultural borrowing from Hinduism and Islam, remained sufficiently distinctive at the time of the arrival of the Europeans to India.

In the case of the Parsis, lots of histories and literature had to be produced in order to establish their original religious practices. Their efforts at establishing "authentic" practices as opposed to actual, performed practices were helped by many Western scholars, who found the monotheistic elements of the Parsi faith suited to their purpose. With great effort the Parsis were mostly successful in refuting all charges of dualism in their religion. All their scholarship was directed at understanding the original Zoroastrian practices as given to them by their prophet. Stories recounting the various details of their arrival were narrated to the younger generation and an ethnic resurgence was affected through a careful manipulation of the primordial ties that existed among the members in a less visible way. The histories always connected them to their Persian past prior to the Islamization of Iran, which took place after the defeat of Yazdezard at the battle of Nahavand in AD 641, and not to a point in time after their arrival in India. This attempt at tracing the history to a common ancestor or a common historical past is a significant feature of most ethnic communities. Smith tells us how Helen served this purpose for ancient Greeks, Abraham for Jews, Arminius for the Germans and Orghuz Khan for the Turks (*Myths and Memories of the Nation* 64).

Another school of ethnicity that underscores the durability of myths of common origins and ethnic symbols is the ethno-symbolic school of John Armstrong, Anthony D Smith and John Hutchinson. In his book titled *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Smith explores the 'ethnic basis of nations' and analyses the power of myths, memories, traditions and symbols in reconstructing nations and ethnic groups. For him "History and culture provide the motives for conflict as well as solidarity" (9).

The myths, collective ethnic memories and ethnic symbols constitute the fabric of ethnies and nations, shaping the culture, visions and ideologies of their members. Ethno-symbolists stress the importance of shared memories in shaping the destinies of collective identities: "[. . .] memory, almost by definition is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities" (10).The ethno-symbolist school offers critiques of some assumptions of the Primordialist theories; the primordial school fails to explain the effects of migration, colonisation and intermarriage in the composition of ethnic groups and it also does not explain why ethnic resurgence is limited only to a few ethnies. Here ethno-symbolism offers a very simplified definition of the continuing influence of the past upon the present. Ethno-symbolism places symbols, myths, and memories at the centre of the ethnic bond and highlights the role of intelligentsia in the resurgence of the 'golden age' which is a time frame in the mythical past that is part of the collective psyche of the community like the Ramarajya of the Hindus. These ethnic symbols and memories of the golden age act as unifying factors that not only connect people of the community together, but also connect the ethnic past with the present. The role of the intelligentsia may also be performed by writers, musicians, politicians and others who could use myths of a common origin and a golden past for the resurgence of ethnic ties, thereby connecting the past with the present by papering over the ruptures that had happened in ethnic histories.

Smith also introduces the notion of 'covenantal election myths' that 'set the chosen people' apart from the neighbours (16). In such instances the ethnies claim their differences from the neighbouring communities on the basis of a special covenant made between themselves and the deity who would give them superiority over other communities in return of their loyalty to him. The most obvious example of

such a covenant is the one between the Israelites and Jehovah (16). A similar but not identical purpose is achieved in case of the Parsis by their reiteration of the sacred covenant between themselves and Jadi Rana, who was the king of Gujarat when they first landed in India. This promise forms the basis of all their interactions with the Indian communities especially after their encounter with the British. There has been a sudden and unexplainable significance attached to this covenant in the post European phase of their history. Claims and justifications of endogamy and racial purity rest mainly on this agreement which is said to have taken place as per Parsi sources of history between the Sanjan king of the nineth century AD and the Persian refugees running for their life.

Well documented, rich and eventful histories aid the process of ethnic resurgence; but unlike the Slovaks and the Estonians (Smith *Myths and Memories of the Nation* 17) Parsis do not have a well documented history (Karaka 1: 214). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they felt the need for creating ethno-histories. These histories were not meant to be very objective: their purpose was to enhance the prestige of the community and create a fellow feeling among its members by "reviving" their myths, memories and symbols. These objectives were to a large extent accomplished. *History of the Parsis* by Karaka is a very good example of a work of ethno-history. It has all the weaknesses of ethno-history; it is multi-stranded, contested and is subject to change (Smith 16). Many of Karaka's observations are subjective and ethnocentric. However his history gave the Parsis a tradition and a ground for belief in a common origin and ethnic superiority. Smith emphatically says that spokespersons of every community since the French revolution have made use of ancestry myths and where there were none, created new ones (60). So it may safely be

assumed that ethno-histories such as the one created by Karaka are common to the revival of ethnic communities.

Parsis do not wear any symbols or ethnic markers in such an obvious way to be identified as Parsis. Even though they do wear the *sudreh* and the *Kusti*, the formal markers of their initiation into the faith, these markers are not easily visible to an outsider unlike the turban worn by the Sikhs. However Parsi literature uses these markers very effectively to project their ethnic identity as separate from that of mainstream Indians. Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga like most Parsi novelists, frequently refer to these markers in their novels. References to Kusti and Sudreh carry a detailed description of Parsi religious ceremonies and the cultural elements associated with them. In Smith's terminology these markers act as ethnic symbols which create a powerful emotional bond among the community members who wear them and on occasion, they can be used to arouse group identity and collective action (57).

Smith catalogues six major components of ethnic myths which are, first, a myth of temporal origins or *when we were begotten*, second, a myth of location and migration, or *where we came from and how we got here*, third, a myth of ancestry or *who begot us and how we developed*, fourth, a myth of the heroic age or *how we were freed and became glorious*, fifth, a myth of decline or *how we fell into a state of decay* and lastly, a myth of regeneration or *how to restore the golden age and renew our community as in the days of old* (62-68). These are fundamental to most ethnic myths including that of the Parsis. The linear history of the ethnic group traced back to the point of origin helps the community fight meaninglessness and chaos. The Parsis faced the identity crisis created by the coming of British rule and the assertion of Hindu and Muslim identities in their environs by embarking on a project of linear

history that connects them to their Prophet Zoroaster's time. Similarly, 'spatial origins' legitimise the myths of origin for which communities use all available tools like philology, archaeology, history and so on. Attempts were made to locate the Parsi origin to specific geographical expansions in Persia to lend authenticity to their claims of being the inheritors of the great empire of the past. An ethnic family is constructed on the assumption that all the present members and the past members are part of the same mythical parents. This 'metaphor of family' affords a "means of rooting and classifying the uprooted and declassified" (65). This is especially comforting to those collectivities which, like the Parsis, have migrated to alien soils. Ethnic communities need stories of heroism and heroes to inspire them and create a sense of belief in their ability to do well, especially in times of total oppression and a mood of defeatism. This explains why stories of Cyrus, Darius, Ardeshir, Merji Rana, Changa Asa, et al, occupy a regular place in Parsi narratives. Such eulogies of great heroes normally accompany descriptions of how they defeated their enemies, freed themselves from foreign rule, prospered, and established a heroic age. Indira Bhatt observes the obsession on the part of Parsi writers to resurrect tales of heroism from their past in their contemporary novels: "There appears especially among the Parsi novelists a deep sensitivity to affirm and to bring back to life the glorious past of bravery, valour and courage, of the wars, warriors and the kings." And as she further states there is an attempt to record their past glory in order to create a feeling of racial superiority by affirming that, "they too are a warrior race and not a community that accepts injustice or indifference easily" (133). These glorifications of the heroic age and the heroes would be followed by intense descriptions of the decline and fall of the community due to internal and external reasons. The detailed and painful rendering of the fall of the great Persian Empire by Karaka and other ethno-historians provide the necessary

emotional charge needed to cultivate personal qualities like courage, sacrifice and determination to rebuild the golden age. Karaka very carefully arranges the details of the sufferings of the sons of the once mighty Empire of the Parsis after their fall (Karaka 1 1-71). Such descriptions focus on the deterioration of the old virtues, decline in the moral character of the community, indulgence in pleasures, destruction of hierarchies and lack of sacrifice (Smith 67).This circle becomes complete with the list of practical decisions to be taken by the community in the immediate present which Smith calls 'required action'. Such decisions are normally agreed upon by the members of the community because they carry the backing of a tradition. An institutional structure is given to them so that they are executed properly. The establishment of the Parsi Panchayet with overriding powers is an example of the institutionalization of a community's desire to reforge its link with the past and move forward.

This is how the ethno-symbolist school would analyse the resurgence of an ethnic group around the six major components discussed above. This school of thought remains very effective and has not been criticised seriously. The insights of this school are very much in tune with the resurrection of the Parsi ethnic identity as it happened in the post British phase of their history. The stress that Bapsi Sidhwa places on some of these components readily yields to the interpretation offered by this school. However this study has not relied heavily on the insights provided by this school of ethnicity alone because other important interpretations offered by contemporary schools like the instrumental school and the constructivist schools of ethnicity are also effectively incorporated.

The constructivist school, as the name indicates, considers ethnicity as an entity that is entirely constructed in order to meet shared economic needs and

aspirations. They do not consider ethnic boundaries to be stable or identities to be very rigid. They believe ethnic identities to be fluid and dynamic, configured from time to time in response to the changes outside. The Chicago school argued that "[. . .] ethnic relations were fluid and negotiable; that their importance varies situationally; and that, for all their claims to primordiality and cultural roots, ethnic identities can be consciously manipulated and invested in economic competition in modern societies" (Eriksen 26).

Constructivist arguments view ethnic identity as one of the many identities available to men, which are constructed for social, political and economic gains. Abner Cohen takes a very radical position regarding the constructivist nature of ethnic identities saying that ethnicity is an informal political organization that makes use of cultural material for the symbolic capital that such material offers in organising and strengthening ethnic ties for practical ends (Eriksen 64). Some observers of the ethnic phenomenon underscore the situational selection element of ethnicity, which refers to the ability of the members of an ethny to choose their ethnicity. This doesn't mean that the members can choose any identity that they feel comfortable with. Rather, it allows them to under- or over-communicate their ethnic identity according to the situations they find themselves in. In places and at times where a particular ethnic identity would harm their chances of growth or even pose serious threats to their survival chances, the members hide their ethnic identity. During the riots that followed the Partition of India, religious and ethnic identities of many groups and members had to be under or over communicated to escape violence. The relevance of the situational element of ethnic identity in Parsi novels will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

Parsi identity as this study argues is a medley of identities. Even though they specifically present the case of the Parsi community in India in the twentieth century, these three novels are valuable for the insights they provide into the mechanism of the resurgence, rise and decline of ethnicity in general. The Parsis provide a peculiar case of a diasporic group who have stayed in a country for over 1200 years and still do not fully consider themselves as belonging to the country. The great twentieth century scholars on Parsi culture, John R Hinnells and Allan Williams observe that the Parsis perceive themselves and are perceived by outsiders as being different from the greater Indian community (2).They also feel that the Indian Parsis do not "fit neatly into either the mainstream Iranian or Indian world". This perception has continued well into the twentieth century; there were very serious debates during the course of the independence movement as to whether Parsis were really Indians and questions were raised about their loyalty, especially during the second part of the eighteenth century, when some Parsis like Malabari spearheaded a social reformation, questioning the relevance of some of the age old practices of Hinduism. Bharucha makes this point very clear when she says that being Parsi and being the closest allies of the British in India made it very difficult for many Parsi reformers to criticise Hindu traditions with impunity even though a segment of the Hindu reformers supported such efforts. She cites the remark of Kulke to suggest that the Parsis were considered a group marginal to Indian society and worked as outsiders to bring about changes in Indian society. But from the perspective of the Parsis, their loyalty to India was firmly stated and clearly articulated. Bharucha feels that a distinct articulation of the Parsi identity is a rather recent phenomenon which only begins with the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa. According to her, the Parsi writers of the period previous to the twentieth century did not centre stage "their ethno-religious Parsi Zoroastrian identities". She says that "it is

only in the dying years of this century that we have a spate of Parsi creative writing which is focused on Parsi identity" (Mody 173). Bharucha's argument suggests that the Parsi community did not perceive itself as different from the mainstream Indian society and it was only from the dominant segment of India that such perceptions were forced upon the Parsis. However, anyone who reads *History of the Parsis* by Karaka would not fail to notice the ethnocentric image projected by the Parsis during the nineteenth century. Tanya Luhrmann shows how Karaka's two volume history of the Parsis projected a non Hindu, non Muslim, and non Indian but Persian identity. Karaka's stress on the pure Persian origin of the Parsis almost went to the extent of calling the natives barbaric (97). Tanya Luhrmann also points out how the Parsis consciously cultivated a cluster of attributes like rationality, progressiveness and masculinity which were rooted in Zoroastrianism but were not part of the Parsi self image during the pre-colonial period (96). There were attempts by the Parsis in the nineteenth century to get a legal sanction from the British to the effect that they may not be treated as Hindus or Muslims. The British in the early part of the nineteenth century had brought out a charter declaring that in all legal disputes involving the Muslims and the Hindus the judgement should be given on the basis of the customs, laws and usages of these faiths. The Parsis very quickly responded to this charter saying that since the "Parsis were neither Hindus nor Muhammadans", their disputes be determined according to English law (Briggs 62). By clearly defining themselves as non Hindus and non Muslims, the Parsis were trying to distance themselves from the outsiders. Ethnic groups depend on such differences to construct their image differently from that of the rest of the population. Karaka's stress on the Persian origin of the Parsis and their visible differences from the natives (1:2), their superior military skill (1:5), their traditional enmity with "the haughty and bigoted believers in

the Koran" (1:22), their luxurious lifestyle (1:103), the superiority of Parsi women over the native women (1:127), his criticism of certain Hindu rituals (1:191), and even the argument that "the Parsis are the most intelligent and persevering of all races inhabiting India"(1:285), have been advanced to showcase an identity that was different from and superior to the rest of the population. This stand of Parsi historiography gave them a material advantage during the British period, but alienated them from the host nation.

There were attempts to establish a date to the Persian presence in India earlier than the usually accepted nineth century A.D. arrival. Ethno-historians like Hodivala argued, citing the findings of Dr. Spooner's research (which itself rests on very thin archaeological evidence), that there was a considerable Persian presence during the Mauryan rule. Hodivala's research has significantly contributed to the idea that the Parsis lived in India during ancient periods either as subjects of the rulers or as local kings. There is an attempt to trace the Persian influence in Indian art, architecture and literature during the period since the Mauryas. He very painfully accumulates information from various sources to reconstruct Parsi history, which is almost nonexistent from the period of their settlement in Sanjan to the arrival of the Europeans. There were many European scholars who tried to write the history of the Parsis mostly appreciating their ability to emulate British culture and life styles (Briggs, Moulton, et al).

So a combination of European accounts of the Parsis, which were written to create ideal subjects in the colonies, and ethno-histories by the Parsis themselves, created a distinct identity in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. As Tanya Luhrmann argues, though this identity was largely supported by the traditional Zoroastrian belief system, it was situationally evolved. An overall restructuring was

effected. Everything that contributed to this new identity was not made up or hastily summoned from the darkness of the past. The myths and legends that they resurrected were part of their history. But such myths hitherto were part of an oral tradition (Kreyenbroek and Neville) and were not frequently used to evoke a distinct identity in the past. One important text that the Parsis elevated to epic status was the *Kissa-e-Sanjan*, a semi historical work written in the sixteenth century. The basis of the myths of their origin and arrival in India is derived from this text and the myths are cited and used in Sidhwa's novels. Despite the inconsistencies and factual errors in it, it captured the popular imagination of the Parsis and plays an important role in determining the Parsis' own concept of their roots. This work by Kaikobad Sanjana was written six centuries after the arrival of the Parsis in India and most of the facts referred to in it cannot be established with any amount of certainty. But it refers to a few key events in the history of Parsis like their religious persecution by the Muslims in Persia, arrival in India, meeting with the local king, slow rise and prosperity, the meeting between Emperor Akbar and Dastur Meherji Rana, and the Parsi battle with the Muslim king on behalf of the local Hindu king. These events have occupied a very significant place in shaping the subsequent history and identity of the Parsis. Most Parsi historians use this text to validate their various claims about Parsi history. S H Hodiavala says that "It is fairly well known that almost the only source of our knowledge of the early history of the Indian Parsis is the *Kissah-i-Sanjan. . . .*" (67). S .K Hodivala, another scholar of Parsi history, maintains that in spite of the inaccuracies of the text, the most important events mentioned in the book may be accepted for constructing the history of the Parsis (31). Mary Boyce's account of the early history of the Parsis depends almost completely on the translation of *Kissah-i-Sanjan* by Hodivala (166-175). Karaka's very influential history of the Parsis is also

based on *Kissah-i-Sanjan*, which he considers to be the only text which one can rely on to some extent for the early history of the Parsis. This emphasis on the book, which it doesn't really deserve, is because of the specific need that the community felt for generating myths that could yield them some amount of documentary evidence to their distinctive yet rich cultural heritage. Kreyenbroek and Neville summarise the reluctance of scholars to accept the text as a valuable historical document:

> Chronicles of this kind usually represent history as the community has remembered it for centuries, stressing events that seemed important to generations of Parsis but paying scant attention to factual details which were of lesser interest. The Qisse-ye Sanjan is therefore most valuable as a guide to the collective memory of the Parsis of an early age and as the basis of modern Parsis' understanding of their own past, but not always reliable as a historical document in the western sense (44).

The Parsis needed myths that could serve two major purposes; the first one was to create a historical and mythical frame which could generate and sustain group solidarity in an age of rapid transitions and industrialisation; the second one was to create a platform for their claim that they were non Indians and hence superior to the native Indians, by referring to their Persian origins. The second purpose was very important and strategic to their rise under the British. According to some scholars the Parsis were not treated as an Indian community from the very beginning because of the complex caste system: "It can be assumed that the Indian caste system made it relatively easy for the Parsis to survive as a separate group with its own identity, traditions, and religion" (Kreyenbroek and Neville 44).But there is no reason to assume that they in any way tried to assert a superior identity for themselves during the pre-colonial period. *Kissah-i-Sanjan* forms the foundation for the identity that the

Parsis created in the twentieth century. Alan Williams has very clearly brought out the connection between this work and the identity of the Parsis. He says that the work composed in Persian by a native Parsi whose mother tongue was Guajarati was not clearly read and understood by most Parsis for centuries. But the stories and the events referred to in it were known to most Parsis through "oral tradition, including colourful variations, elaborations and additions" (2) and became "the popular narrative which informs collective and personal modern Parsi identity" (2). He feels that the author had written the work mainly to celebrate "his own distinguished lineage, and indeed his own personal standing in his community for posterity" (4). It was not meant to be a historical work. It tells us how "the Zoroastrians of Iran became the Persians of India, the Parsis" and the story of "Zoroastrian self transformation, necessitated by a disastrous fate, and their having to leave the past behind, to salvage something on which to build a future" (5).This work, which was written either for personal glory, or for exhibiting the author's skill in writing poetry, became the most important text for the Parsis for reasons other than its original objective. The text being the only work in early Parsi history was used as a historical chronicle to link the present of the community with its past. It also served as the storehouse of myths and stories which continue to be part of Parsi ethno history although they have no genuine historical significance. Quasi historical works like this provide a genealogy for the community. As Abner Cohen says, a "genealogy of this type is a charter for action and not a historical document". He further explains the significance of myths of descent: "Its symbols are continuously manipulated in order to adjust it to changing demographic, political and economic conditions" (*Two Dimensional Man* 69).This explains why this text became central to the ethnic resurgence of the Parsis. It provided them with a set of myths and symbols and gave the necessary connection

with the lost homeland. The text works as the storehouse of the Parsi past, or, in other words, the collective memory of the community. The quasi historical nature of the text allows the members of the community to manipulate its content according to the changing needs of time. Anthony D.Smith tells us how memory is important for creating ethnic identities: "Indeed, a central theme of historical ethno-symbolism is the relationship of shared memories to collective cultural identities: memory, almost by definition, is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities" (*Myths and Memories of the Nation* 10).

These memories which are carried across generations through symbols and myths can help the intelligentsia bring about an ethnic resurgence. In the case of the Parsis, the term 'resurgence' is very significant. The resurgence here is that of a group bond which existed long back, before the Parsis spread out from Sanjan and nearby areas to various other places in Gujarat and later to Bombay. It would have been easier during the initial centuries of their settlement in India to have stayed together as a group because of geographic proximity and the freshness of the memory of exodus from Iran. But as time went by, the Parsis must have spread to larger geographic areas making it difficult for the group to maintain previous levels of bonding among members. But this being the case, there was possibly no need for an ethnic solidarity for the Parsis. On the contrary, they may have been safe from the Muslim rulers of areas close to wherever they had settled by not maintaining an ethnic group identity. But as the Europeans arrived in India, the Parsis felt safe and wanted a unique identity for reasons discussed above. Now this resurgence was made possible by the intervention of powerful men in the community like Changa Asa in the seventeenth century and many others like Lowji Wadia, the Petits, and Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These leaders are instrumental in the revival of old myths, symbols and histories. This is why a historically inaccurate and not so important religious text like the *Kissa-i Sanjan* suddenly becomes a foundational text for the Parsi discourse in India. The text, as Alan Williams describes it, is "a story of defeat and victory, leaving and arriving, revenge and reconciliation" (5). This text explains all the six components of ethnic myths that Smith refers to in *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. These myths are to be reinforced in the community psyche from time to time to strengthen ethnic bonds. Ethnic literature serves this purpose as effectively as other cultural and formal institutions.

Werner Sollors also refers to the conscious construction of specific kinds of ethnic identity by its members under certain circumstances. Sollors refers to how ethnicity is invented by the community He argues that ethnicity is continually reinvented by collectivities whenever there is a need for it. And adds that the "invention of nationalisms and ethnicities must have been peaking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in a period of dramatic changes". Ethnicity for Sollors is a rather modern and constructed cultural entity. He criticises the traditional method of looking at ethnicities as relatively fixed, "natural, real, eternal, stable and static units" (introd. xiii-xiv) and raises some fundamental questions about the nature of ethnicity: "Though they may pretend to be eternal and essential, are they not of rather recent origin and eminently pliable and unstable? Is not modernism an important source of ethnicity? Do not new ethnic groups continually emerge? Even where they exist over long time spans, do not ethnic groups constantly change and redefine themselves?" (introd. xiii-xiv). He answers these questions by referring to recent researches into the ethnic phenomenon and states that ethnicity is not "an ancient and deep-seated force surviving from the historical past, but rather the modern and modernizing feature of a

contrast-building strategy that may be shared far beyond the boundaries within which it is claimed" (introd. xiii-xiv). Modern ethnic communities mobilise the kinship symbolism of their community's past for organising and regulating membership of it. However, Sollors makes it clear that the invented nature of ethnic communities does not undermine the strength and intensity of ethnic bonding; "It also does not suggest that ethnic consciousness is weak because there is much interaction and syncretistic borrowing at its core" (introd. xiii-xv). These arguments point at the fluid nature of ethnic identities. Sometimes changes in ethnic identity can be so obvious and so drastic that one wonders how it is possible for ethnies to change their identities and what the motives for such redefinitions of identity are. For example, Bapsi Sidhwa was very intrigued by the post-Partition camaraderie between Sikhs and Muslims across the border. The violence inflicted on each other during the Partition was forgotten soon and "there was a kinship between them". There was . . . a strong anti-Sikh feeling when I was growing up. But there came a time when this hatred of the Sikhs suddenly disappeared" (Bhalla 234).These questions were increasingly asked since the 1970s and the primordialist school which emphasised the 'givens' failed to answer these questions effectively. Ethnic communities were seen changing their identities in response to the changing social environment and thus hitherto rigid ethnic boundaries appeared not so rigid. Ethnic communities stress their group identity as long as it gives them the necessary difference from other communities and identity in the society, which is to say that ethnic identity is a constructed one. The social dynamics keep changing and there are a lot of internal rearrangements taking place in every society. Ethnic communities have to make changes within themselves to retain their importance. Abner Cohen attributes the significance of ethnic communities to the intense struggle that takes place within a state for sharing resources. Ethnicity is

the result of the "intensive struggle between groups over new strategic positions of power within the structure of the new state: places of employment, taxation, funds for development, education, political positions and so on" (*Two Dimensional Man* 96). In the process of mobilising the groups, the leaders, according to Cohen, place a new emphasis on "parts of their traditional culture", creating an impression among the members of the group that there is a return to the ethnic tradition" of the past. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of rapid changes taking place within the Parsi community. The expansion of the community necessitated new settlements outside Gujarat. It was easy for the community to remain insulated from outside influences as long as it was a small community confined to a small geographical area. They did not have a strong institutional structure to govern their life and were largely controlled by the influential members and the Dasturs. But the settlements outside Gujarat like in Bombay and in the far away diasporas outside India, forced the community to institutionalise its structures. The most important attempt at giving a formal structure to the community was the establishment of the Parsi Panchayet. Very loosely held Panchayets in the model of the Hindu Panchayet regulated Parsi community life from the very early days in Gujarat. The lack of historical records make it difficult to prove with certainty the dates of such Panchayets and the nature of their functions. But they followed the model of the Hindu Panchayets and arbitrated local issues and disputes. A well structured Panchayet was established only after the Parsi relocation to Bombay in the eighteenth century (Karaka, Hinnells).The Panchayet exercised a considerable amount of influence on the Parsis of Bombay and Gujarat. "The Panchayet was the court of justice, and its decisions, being invariably given after great deliberation, and without fear, were never disputed by the contending parties" (Karaka 1; 218). And the Panchayet could enforce its decisions on the

members of using the threat of excommunication, prohibition on attending communal or family gatherings and refusal of access to places of worship. But as time went by, the power of the Panchayet waned and it had to request the British government to grant it authority over the members, which was readily given in the year 1778. This again made the Panchayet a very powerful formal institution. But despite the power that the Panchayet enjoyed from time to time, cases were passed over their heads and were referred to the courts. This necessitated the interference of the British in the activities of the community. Such interventions were the result of the lack of a recorded code of conduct and rules governing the lives of members of Parsi community. The community did not have a set of rules or codified traditions to fall back on in case of a dispute. We may safely assume that the community had to create codes of conduct in response to the new situations and in tune with the practices of the times. There were influences on their laws from the elite and the rich segment of the community, the British, the newly educated members of the community, and the neighbouring communities. The Bombay Parsi Panchayet had a definitive role in creating the identity of the community. During the interventions in settling disputes in the Parsi community, the British suggested certain remedies as desirable, but later, when they found the Parsi community to be completely lacking in any solid traditional system based on which a code of behaviour could be framed, asked the leaders of the community to create a system. In certain cases the British completely disagreed with the modus operandi of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP). One such instance was the opinion of the commission appointed in 1777 to settle a dispute within the community, comprising of three European gentlemen, regarding the punishment given by the BPP to its offenders. One of the popular modes of punishment given to the offenders in the community was to beat them with a shoe.

The above commission objected to such punishments and the Parsis had to make necessary changes to their penal system (Karaka 1; 222). The government directed the community to constitute a formal body which could settle disputes within the community and in 1787 a formal committee was formed with 12 members. This was a powerful body of prominent men of the community and they were duly backed by the British. A lot of credit must be given to this formal body for creating the specific identity that the Parsis formed during colonial rule. The newly constituted Panchayet regulated all aspects of Parsi life. New laws were created to regulate the behaviour of the members and most of these were well in tune with the requirements of colonial rule. Some of the practices that the committee tried to strictly put an end to were bigamy, making vows and offerings to Hindu and Muslim Gods, wearing amulets and threads, and so on (Karaka 1; 229-233, Briggs 60-61). These reforms shaped the ethnic identity of the Parsis who had been to a great extent assimilated into Indian society and were governed by the beliefs and practices of their neighbouring communities. Some of these practices, which the Parsis had borrowed from the Hindus and practiced for centuries, were suddenly looked down upon as heinous offences. Bigamy and child marriage were now seen as exclusively Hindu practices and were strictly prohibited by the Panchayet (Briggs 74).There was a conscious attempt at creating a new identity for the community. Most Parsi novels refer to how deeply Hindu and Muslim practices and belief systems have affected the community. Centuries of living on Indian soil and interacting with the Indian communities changed whatever distinctiveness the Parsis may have had when they landed in India. But then the Parsis realised the need to purge themselves from these influences to become the ideal subjects of the British. The Parsi Panchayet in the nineteenth century effectively directed the process of creating an identity which could claim purity for

the Parsis. Karaka observes that "the Panchayet punished the offenders against caste rules and social laws" and it attempted "to eradicate from the people's minds the pernicious and superstitious customs which had taken root among them through their contact with the other races of India" (Karaka 1; 230). Karaka notices that the Panchayet conducted numerous meetings with the objective of purifying the community of outside influences. The Parsis were obviously doing this with the objective of getting closer to the British and raising their status above that of the neighbouring communities. This is, as the constructivist school of ethnic theories shows, quite natural to ethnic communities. Identity is shaped in response to the outside forces. Developing this idea further, the instrumental school of ethnicity claims that ethnic identity is used to maximise economic and other benefits. The institutionalisation of the Parsi Panchayet allowed the Parsis to structure and articulate their identity very effectively and visibly to the outside world.

The Panchayet also worked towards maintaining the unity and solidarity of the community; in the absence of such a central regulating body of prominent members of the community the members would drift away from the community. Briggs attributes such functions to the Panchayet: "Peace, unanimity of purpose, and justice, appear to have been the intentions of such an institution" (60).The rules made by the Panchayet were binding on all its members even though not every member agreed on the wisdom of these rules. For example the 1818 manifesto of the Panchayet which provided a blueprint for the election of its members, the functions of the members and the authority of the Panchayet over its members concluded with the declaration: "Although this is signed by some , and not by others, it is binding on all now living in Bombay wearing 'the badge of Zerdusht' and those who may hereafter arrive and settle here, and those who shall not conform to the above rules, shall be punished by

the Panchayat as aforesaid" (Briggs 72).These reformations may plainly be seen as attempts to please the British on whose goodwill stood the prosperity of the community. The British encouraged the Panchayet to exercise its own authority over its members but when the community itself slowly started losing faith in the Panchayet, this authority was transferred to the British legal system. Briggs observes the slow drift of the Parsis towards the British legal system thus: "To the letter of the British Law do the Parsis now turn in every instance where justice is sought, and freedom from ancient and unseemly fetters is thus shown;" (80).The absence of a well recorded code of behaviour made it easy for the Parsis to reshape their identity according to the needs of the times. Even a very strong institutional structure created to safeguard the ancient practices of the community fell prey to the social and economic allurements offered by the coloniser. There are periodic attempts by Parsis to resurrect the BPP and make it a more powerful regulating institution. But with the loss of political, economic and social significance in the twentieth century, the Parsis prefer to accept a lesser visible identity as would be argued in the last chapter on Firdaus Kanga. Today the BPP has been reduced to the status of a fund dispensing authority.

Even though the Parsi contribution to Indian social, economic, political and cultural development has been very significant their contribution to literature is not very momentous. Parsi literature is a recent phenomenon. Apart from *Kissah-i-Sanjan* hardly any work written by and about the Parsis is available till the nineteenth century even though a few references to the Parsis occur in the writings of European historians. Nilufer Bharucha (164-165) gives two reasons for the lack of Parsi presence in literature till the colonial period:

> [. . .] it could be viewed as a natural diaspora phenomenon –where the displaced community has to first come to terms with its new environment, create a space for itself, safeguard its continued existence and only then is it able to turn its attention to creative expressions. This Parsi silence could also be explained as a self preservation device –a wise decision on the part of a minuscule group not to in any way earn the ire of its hosts (Bharucha 164-165).

More than displeasing the host Hindu community by announcing Parsi uniqueness, it could have been an attempt by the Parsi community not to let their presence become known to the Islamic world, whose persecution they suffered for many years. Another explanation commonly provided is the need to come to terms with the nuances of the local language and culture, which they adopted, *in toto* and quite substantially respectively. These are the reasons commonly given to account for the long hiatus or period of "hibernation" between their arrival in India and their ethnic "coming out" after the arrival of the Europeans. Their rise to prominence under British rule gave them the confidence to express themselves in writing. The serious Parsi contribution to literature started with Behramji Malabari (1853 – 1912), a poet who wrote in Gujarati and English, and Cornelia Sorabji (1866 – 1954).

Malabari earned the reputation of being the first Parsi poet in Gujarat after publishing his *Nitivinod* (1875), a collection of verses. His verses were appreciated for their faultless prosody and pure Gujarati expressions. He travelled extensively and wrote about his experiences in England. He was essentially an Indian in his writings. Nilufer E Bharucha has the following to say about his writings about England and the English:

> Malabari's 'Gaze' is that of the colonized viewing the coloniser's home. Though in a subject position, Malabari's discourse does not flinch from recording what he observed to be the shortcomings of the master race. His reformist heart was particularly wrenched by the poverty of the working class in the East End of London, Glasgow and other industrial cities of Britain (172).

Malabari was a reformist. He wanted to reform Indian society. But as Bharucha says, "Malabari's position as a Parsi was however peculiarly unfavourable to his cherished cause. He could not critique with impunity the ancient traditions of another community" (173).To be a Parsi in India was beginning to be very difficult as the nineteenth Century came to a close. The Parsis had to voice their identity publicly to be admitted and heard in Indian society. Malabari also had to declare his Indianness, "If my Hindu friends take this line of argument –that I am "only a Parsi", I will be forced to reply that I am as good a Hindu as any of them, that India is as much my country as theirs, and that if they do not give a *locus standi* in the case, I will take my stand on the higher ground of humanity" (Bharucha174).

Cornelia Sorabji wrote very delightful short stories. K R Srinivasa Iyengar documents the contribution of Sorabji thus:

> Her best work was collected in *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Son Babies: Studies in the Child life of India*(1904) and *Between the Twilights* (1908). Coming from a Parsi Christian background, in her most successful work Miss Sorabji tried to tried to penetrate the silken curtain of the 'purdah' and reveal the nuances of femineity (437).

Yet another Parsi writer K Kabraji's *Minor Georgian's Swan Song* contains songs that celebrate the spirit of nationalism. Other Parsi writers working before and soon after Independence who find mention in the larger histories of Indian English Literature are A F Khaberdar, Jamshedji N Petit, Jehangir B Marzban, C S Nazir, D Wadia and P P Mehrjee. But interestingly, although the Parsi community was in the process of asserting its ethno-religious identity, none of the writers mentioned above cared to do so. They were preoccupied with concerns perceived as being common to *all the communities* in this country and they advocated reform which they invariably saw as being the need of the hour of *all Indians*, and as being potentially beneficial to *all Indians*. In the poignant words of Nilufer Bharucha:

> It is only in the dying years of this century that we have a spate of Parsi creative writing which is focused on Parsi identity. Beginning with Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters* (1978) and followed by Farrukh Dhondy's *Poona Company* (1980) and *Bombay Duck* (1990), Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), and *A Fine Balance* (1996), Boman Desai's *Memory of Elephants* (1988) and Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990) (178).

This new identity that the Parsi writers of the last quarter of the twentieth century constructed through their narratives is the result of many factors-sociological, economic, political and religious. The various ways in which the specific Parsi identity of this period has been constructed by Sidhwa, Mistry, and Kanga have been analyzed in this dissertation using important theories of ethnicity.

This chapter of the present dissertation has attempted at the outset to survey theories about the construction of ethnic identity in general. Such a survey was

followed up with a brief history of the Parsi ethnic community in India with a focus on the early stages of the process of their ethnic self- identification and representation before the larger world of pluralistic India under foreign rule. The chapter that follows will attempt to take the story to the next stage in Parsi self-identification, with this engaging process being viewed through the prism of fiction by writers of the community that is fraught with the various issues underlying the process.

CHAPTER III

THE POWER AND THE GLORY

The Lahore born, Pakistani - Punjabi Parsi writer Bapsi Sidhwa is credited with popularising the new genre of English fiction called the Parsi English Novel. Sidhwa has given a new and refreshing presence to the Parsi community in the mindscape of the Indian English Reader. She has also lent a very significant voice to the present condition of the community which, according to demographic predictions, is soon going to be extinct. Three of her five novels directly deal with the life of Parsi community before, during and after Independence. Her first novel, *The Crow Eaters* was self published in 1978 amidst threats and protests by sections of her own community, allegedly for the caricatured representation of it. However, the controversy turned out to be based on misunderstandings and it not only died out, it also established her reputation as the most important Parsi writer of the contemporary world. Her second published novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, (1983) which deals with non-Parsi subject matter, was chronologically her first written novel. Her third novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) deals with the Partition of India narrated from the perspective of a Parsi girl. Her fourth novel, *An American Brat*, again foregrounds the Parsi theme. Her last novel *Water* (2006) is a fictional rendering of the movie of the same name by Deepa Mehta. Even though she has written two novels dealing with non Parsi themes, *Pakistani Bride* and *Water*, she is identified mainly as a Parsi writer. There is a definite attempt, in her novels, at portraying the community in certain stereotypical ways. The objective, as the following discussion suggests, was to give her community an identity along ethnic lines. She realises a clear need for highlighting the ethnic identity of her small community and does it quite successfully. This chapter analyses how Sidhwa projects the unique Parsi identity through her novels.

Three of her Parsi novels, *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* are set against the milieu of pre-independence and post-Independence Pakistan, which has a small Parsi community that had come and settled there during the British rule primarily for trading purposes. During the British rule, the Parsis of Pakistan who had settled primarily in Karachi, a thriving port then, felt safe and secure and carried out their trade very successfully. But with the independence of India and the formation of Pakistan, the Parsis lost the advantage they once had in trade and became an insignificant minority in Pakistan. The early rulers of Pakistan (up to Gen. Zia-ul-Haq) including its founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah, "refused to base the Pakistan Constitution on Islamic principles, and assured Hindus, Sikhs and others that the creation of a Muslim state would not mean the establishment of religious rule"(Hinnells 197). But during the rule of President Zia, an Islamic system of administration was introduced in Pakistan. "In December 1982, in the course of a speech celebrating the birth anniversary of the Prophet, Zia emphasized the need to direct Pakistani life in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah" (Ziring 171). Zia introduced separate electorates for religious minorities and thereby marginalised them. The Parsi community was reserved one seat in the National Assembly (Ghosh, Gabbay and Siddique). In order to appease the orthodox elements of Pakistani society Zia systematically marginalised the minorities. Sidhwa reflects on some of the difficulties faced by the minorities in general and the Parsis in particular in her fiction. The community is at the centre of Sidhwa's fiction even though her novels deal with diverse themes. As she claims in the Authors Note of *The Crow Eaters,* the novel was written out of a "deep rooted admiration" for her "diminishing community –and an enormous affection for it". All her novels dealing with the Parsi theme invariably stress the centrality of ethnic identity to the community and her

unquestionable love for it. In the process of writing novels she has explored issues of identity, status, the problems faced by her community and the possible future of her community which, she realises, is seriously under threat. For Sidhwa writing is an attempt at creating an identity for her community and presenting it to the world at large. *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* in particular, are three novels that discuss in detail the various factors involved in the construction of the present Parsi ethnic identity and the difficulties posed by such an ethnic identity after the Partition in 1947. The three novels dealing with Parsi life document three different phases of Parsi history in the Indian subcontinent. They record the zenith of Parsi glory after migrating to India, the period of transformation, indecision, and passage to a relatively insignificant and subordinate role, and the conflict within and the threats from outside after the withdrawal of the British from the Indian subcontinent. The first phase is picturesquely drawn in *The Crow Eaters*, which is set in pre-Partition India and presents the zenith of Parsi success in India. The second novel dealing with Parsi life, *Ice-Candy-Man*, discusses the transformational phase of the Parsi identity in India, as the community was forced to choose between India and Pakistan during Partition. The novel incorporates the turmoil within the Parsi community, regarding the choices they needed to make as the country was preparing itself for the post British period. And the third Parsi novel, *An American Brat*, positions the Parsi identity in the contemporary world where, the community, recovering from the loss of social prestige in the post-Independence phase, is trying to remap its priorities and situationally assimilate into the host society. The novel is set in the 1980s, "the period of greatest migration activity among Parsis from India, Pakistan and East Africa" (Hinnells 10). Deploying theories pertaining to ethnic identity, its definition and its

formation, this chapter attempts to draw certain specific conclusions regarding the nature of Parsi identity after their arrival in India.

Parsis, as mentioned in detail in the introduction, came to India from Persia, fearing forced religious conversion and extinction under the Muslim rulers of Persia during the nineth century AD. They remained largely unnoticed in India and adopted Indian ways of life to the extent that was necessary for them to be in harmony with the host society while retaining customs and practices that were fundamental to their Persian and Zoroastrian identity. The insignificance of their presence in India (despite the memories of their great ancestral achievements and martial traits) could be explained by their small numbers or the possibility of being visible to the enemies who once had dispossessed them of their homeland. The Parsis remained rather invisible till the arrival of the British (Hodivala 52, Briggs 6, Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville 45). However invisible the Parsis were in the political, economic and social life of India, they prospered and increased in numbers. They took to many professions, chiefly agriculture and small scale trading. They were not part of the rigid Indian caste system but were well equipped to handle the social and economic hierarchies of India. The road to the Parsi identity that Bapsi Sidhwa portrays in her first novel is however a phenomenon of the colonial period. This is an identity rooted in the commercial success of the Parsis after they were given special preferences by the Europeans. By the 1930s the Parsi community had risen to such significant social, economic and religious heights that they had become very visible as a community. During the early centuries of colonial rule they realised the possibilities offered by a distinct ethnic identity and actively involved themselves in the construction of such an identity. What we have attempted to try and establish in the arguments that follow is that this constructed identity created a new ethnic community, which, despite all

claims to be a resurrection of the old one, turned out to be far removed from what the ancient Zoroastrian one ever was. This new community and the foundations of its ethnic solidarity were constructed situationally by manipulating certain primordial associations. Hence to interrogate the Parsi ethnic identity using one theory alone would not adequately explain all the factors involved in such a construct. This study uses primordial theories, constructivist theories, ethno symbolist theories and a synthesis of two or more of these in the analysis of the Parsi ethnic identity.

Parsi ethnic resurrection coincided with their rise in economic, political and social significance. They felt the need for a visible and powerful ethnic identity to advance their interests, especially in commerce. This drove them to look back at their past and construct a history which, in spite of many oppositions and debates within the community regarding the authenticity of various past and present practices, helped to project an ethnically distinct identity. As Eriksen points out, "knowledge of one's own history (whether fabricated or not) can be highly important in the fashioning of ethnic identity" (85). Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville draw the attention of readers to the relatively unreliable historical documents on which Parsi history is constructed: "A description of the earliest phases of Parsi history would in any case be a hazardous undertaking, since very few reliable sources are available at present" (44). Primordial myths and blood ties seemed to suddenly get an emphasis in their literature and debates. They refused to admit new converts into their fold and endogamy became central to their religious and social practice. Throughout colonial rule, they drifted away from mainstream Indian society. The assimilation that had characterised this community was looked down upon as a weak strategy. And by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Parsis were definitely a few removes from their original and secondary identities. Their original identity was the one that they carried when they

came to India, which they renounced in order to be part of Indian society in places where they settled. Their secondary identity was the new one that they assumed and lived with from the time of their settling down in India till their encounter with the British. These two identities were not compatible: they had to choose one to remain safe in India. When they agreed to discard the original identity as the Persian Zoroastrian community it was an act of sudden transformation forced by circumstances. They had to assure the local raja who gave them asylum that the community would live by the law of the land. This commitment was not only a political act, accepting the sovereignty of a local Hindu king over their life, but it also carried cultural and religious implications. They agreed not to project a visible cultural and religious life. This promise, according to Parsi historiography, was kept under all the rulers who ruled them till the arrival of the British. There was hardly any effort to keep their religious, cultural and political heritage intact. This martial race, that once fought the Greeks as they claim, never seriously tried to celebrate their heroes and warlike traits. Despite one or two instances to the contrary, they celebrated peace as the visible trait of the community. The patronage of the European powers changed all this. History became very important to them both in the aftermath of serious attempts at conversion by the European missionaries, and as an internal dynamic towards gaining respectability from the colonial masters. A new ethnic identity was constructed and a new history was created to champion the new claims of the community. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville rightly observe:

> For a long time, it seems, the religious life of Zoroastrian communities was such that this caused few problems. For the Parsis this changed in the early nineteenth century, when confrontations with Christianity and challenges posed by western religious concepts and attitudes had the effect of calling into

question the validity of traditional religion generally, and priestly learning in particular" (Preface viii).

A lot of money that their new economic prosperity brought them was used to create and sustain this new identity. New schools for religious education were founded, the pay for the clergy was increased, schools that encouraged a western system of education were funded and a lot of charity acts were done. This definitely had the intended effect, namely, to raise the status of the community in society. Even though they were always loyal to the British, they used constitutional means of gaining political power within and outside India. By the turn of the twentieth century they were no doubt one of the most important economic and political powers in India. It is this identity that Sidhwa celebrates in her first published novel *The Crow Eaters*.

The central character of *The Crow Eaters*, Freddy starts off as a very poor Parsi with the ambition of becoming successful; he leaves his ancestral village in central India and travels to the 'Septa Sindhu' which according to Vendidad, a 4000 year old Parsi text, is one of the 16 lands created by Ahura Mazda the Parsi God. He sets up his small shop in Lahore which doesn't prosper as he expects. He is caught up in debt and domestic misery caused by the irritating presence of his mother-in Law. He arranges for a fire at his shop with the intention of killing his mother-in-law and claiming the insurance money. With the help of his Parsi friends he successfully hides his crime and gets the insurance money, even though he fails to kill his mother-in-law. From there on he never looks back and he becomes a very successful businessman by opening stores in Delhi, Peshawar and Amritsar. The Parsis of Pakistan had made a lot of fortune during the Afghan Wars as suppliers of liquor, clothes, general supplies and beds to the British forces (Hinnells). Sidhwa very vaguely refers to these trades in the novel with Freddy engaging in trades supplying necessary goods to the British.

Freddy's efforts at gaining public acceptance don't stop even after becoming very rich and influential. He keeps striving to raise his own status and that of his community. He very cleverly discloses some of the tactics he used to work his way to success. He admits that it is not humiliating for the Parsis to bow their head before the powerful ones like their forefathers did before Jadi Rana. He doesn't think it below their dignity to accept the British as their masters. The Parsi self-image of a superior ethnic community in India is only a recent phenomenon. As M F Salat points out, the "major concern of the Parsis has always been one of self-preservation and to that end they have always been accommodative and submissive" (99). Freddy readily acts as a pimp for the English Civil servant Mr. Charles Allen who could get him very important trade contracts. He also does token charity work in order to enhance his reputation; "I donated towards the construction of an orphanage and a hospital. I installed a water pump with a stone plaque dedicating it to my friend, Mr Charles P. Allen" (10). Charity work is a very important aspect of Parsi identity in India. They used charity work to gain social acceptance and the respect of the British. Jesse Palsetia, a renowned scholar in Parsi history unravels the selfish motives of the nineteenth century influential Parsi businessman and philanthropist Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in initiating charity work in Bombay in his very scholarly essay "Partner in Empire: Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and the Public Culture of nineteenth-century Bombay" (Hinnels and Williams: 81-99). Palsetia argues that the purpose of Parsi charity was to enhance their prestige and status in society. It also promotes business and reduces the hostility of the neighbouring communities. Freddy is a clever businessman who makes no secret of the 'ulterior motives' involved in the friendships that he has made with the British.

Freddy respects the laws of his community and consciously attempts to cultivate these qualities in the younger generation especially his children. The novel is rich in its descriptions of the laudable qualities of this community especially the fellow feeling among its members; "An endearing feature of this microscopic merchant community was its compelling sense of duty and obligation towards other Parsis" (21). The community also boasts of not having a single beggar in a 'country abounding in beggars', which is primarily because of the charity work of the successful members of the community.

Freddy's growth from a small town trader to a big businessman is helped by the goodwill of his community, the support given by the four Parsi families who had settled in Lahore before Freddy's arrival and his clever manipulation of the contacts and friendships that he had with the British officers. Freddy is the epitome of all successful Parsis who have made name and fame under British rule. Freddy very frequently recollects his debt and gratitude to Ahura Mazda; he is a scholar in Parsi religion and even enlightens his fellow men on religious issues. He spends his old age peacefully knowing that his business is taken care of well by his son Behram. Behram multiplies his father's wealth but his social quotient is not very high. He is very parsimonious and doesn't enjoy the great respect that his father has in social circles. But he does signal the change of attitude among the new generation of Parsis who are to live most of their life during the post-Independence period. Behram refuses to marry the girl chosen by his parents and very tactfully forces his parents to arrange his marriage with the sister of the girl he was arranged to marry. Even though he does choose a girl from within his community, he does not blindly follow the commands of his family. Like Manek in *An American Brat,* Behram is also clever, diplomatic and is not conservative like the previous generation of Parsis.

The novel narrates the Parsi story up to the point of independence. The event of Independence is hinted at in the novel by the mystic Gopal Krishan. The peak of Parsi success and their feeling of superiority are well brought out in the episode of Freddy's sojourn at London at the house of Mr. Allen, where his mother-in-law humiliates Allen's wife. The Parsi image of not only being the friends of the British, but having pretensions to superiority to them is highlighted in the way Jerbanoo, Freddy's mother-in-law mistreats Mary Allen.

All other Parsi characters in the novel like the Toddywalas, the Bankwallas, the Chaiwallas and the Easymoneys revolve around Freddy, adding to the various aspects of Parsi life and identity. An important Parsi family that the author introduces is the Easymoneys, settled in Bombay. Despite their humble origin, the family has become very rich and influential in Bombay. Mr Easymoney, knighted by the British, is another icon of the successful Parsi who has served the British well. The novel narrates the story of two generations of Parsis, even though it is essentially the story of the first generation of successful Parsis, who transfer their wealth to offspring who are more than capable of managing the wealth. But both these generations are shaped by colonial social, religious and economic conditions. These success stories of the Freddys and the Easymoneys point at the possibilities of the sudden resurgence of ethnic collectivities under favourable circumstances. Sidhwa's *The Crow* Eaters is a fine exposition of how the community was constantly reconfigured by these successful men of commerce for their growth and the growth of the community itself.

The Crow Eaters for the most part is a record of Parsi life and identity during the colonial period, although the last part of the novel maps the transition towards the new postcolonial identity by projecting the ordinariness of the British in their own land. The colonial masters are stripped of their royal splendour and portrayed as

powerless insignificant commoners. Freddy, Jerbanoo and Putli landed in England expecting “elegant lords in all tall hats and tails, strolling with languid ladies who swept spotless waterfront promenades with trailing gowns” and instead find “seedy looking Englishmen sweep roads, clean windows and cart garbage” and “they realised in a flash that the superiority the British displayed in India was assumed, acquired from the exotic setting, like their tan” (252-253).The insignificance of the British in world politics and in their own life prepares them for a new identity that they reluctantly assume in the next novel, *Ice-Candy-Man*.

The novel begins with Freddy’s journey from the village in central India to Lahore as a man in search of a job and a destiny, and ends with the success of Freddy as a business man and the appearance of his name in the Zarathusti calendar of the Parsis. The journey at the beginning of the novel immediately works as an act of leaving the past behind in order to come back to it later. The past that is left behind by the Parsi protagonist metaphorically is the past that the Parsis, as a group left behind with the arrival of the British, in order to create a new identity for themselves. The central character who immediately establishes his reputation for honesty, hard work and commercial skills, turns to oblivion his rural past. The insignificant past that the protagonist leaves behind is analogous to the collective act by the Parsis of severing their ties with their past. When the young Parsi Faredoon is welcomed to the unlimited possibilities of Lahore by the small Lahore Parsi community, the readers are reminded that the surname carried by the Parsis of Lahore do not actually suggest their family occupation. The Toddywallas, the Bankwallas , the Bottliwallas and the Chaiwallas do not practice the trades suggested by their surnames. Many Parsi names including the above names do not suggest the community’s claim for a past which is connected to trade and commerce. Even though ethnic communities claim their

present to be a continuation of the past, the past itself is reconstructed for meeting the challenges of the present. As Anthony P Cohen states, ethnic groups indulge in "selective construction of the past which resonates with contemporary influences" (99) The community very effectively rearranged its history and past to maximise the advantages under the British. Bapsi Sidhwa is so conscious of this shift in identity that she admits in an interview with Alok Bhalla that the Parsis were successful businessmen only during British rule and "before that they were peasants and farmers" (Bhalla 232).

Ethnic communities need a strong sense of history to unite their members and to give them some pride in their ancestry. As Schermerhorn characterises an ethnic group, "[. . .] an ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestors, memories of a shared historical past, and cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people hood" (Qtd in Hutchinson and Smith 6).

This vital construction of a proud Parsi history is done in the very first page of *The Crow Eaters* in the form of the 'Zarathusti Calendar of Great Men and Women' which connects the protagonist of the novel with the 'ancient Persian Kings and saints'(9). The novel, as the author clearly states, is the story of her community and she rightly starts the narration with a brief history of the Parsis by Faredoon Junglewalla to the younger generation. This narration includes a recounting of the greatness of their ancestors, the difficulties they suffered, the shrewdness they used to gain important official positions under the British and a few wise words on how to succeed. There is an obvious attempt at preserving their precious history and creating an ethnic consciousness among the youth. While discussing the importance of ancient symbols, practices and rituals of the Parsis, Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville opine

that “an awareness of the glories of the ancient Zoroastrian empires and civilisations contributes to many Parsis’ sense of pride in their religious and communal identity” (3). The novel presents many such instances of how this deliberately constructed history gave them a superior standing during colonial rule, which the constructivist theories would argue as evidence of the fluid nature of ethnic communities

Ethnic communities do not spring up from void: they need an already existing core around which the resurrection can take place. As Anthony D Smith argues: “Myths of ethnic descent generally contain a kernel of factual truth, but they typically elaborate, exaggerate and idealise that kernel in a one-sided fashion” (Qtd in Smith 149).The biological and cultural elements shared by the members are exaggerated and distorted so much that they constitute a one-sided narration. But such distortions should have the potential to be convincing to the members of the community; this job is undertaken by the leaders of an ethnic group. These leaders themselves in many cases assume the role of epic heroes and guide the community. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced great Parsis like the Wadia family, Jeejebhoy, Dadabhoy and the Readymoneys. *The Crow Eaters* is also a story of such a Parsi who plays up the reputation of his community and his contacts with the British to become a very successful businessman in Lahore. The protagonist, his pregnant wife, his infant daughter and his mother-in –law reach Lahore in search of better employment and prosperity. The journey motif recurs in Parsi fiction frequently and the recurrences have a metaphorical connection with the Parsi exodus to India in the nineth century. As Urvashi Bharat observes in her discussion on the journey motif in the Parsi novel, “This old story of the archetypal Parsi journey from forcible assimilation to security and identity in a strange land is a recurrent motif in Parsi writings . . .” (53).The journey is very important in the construction and continuation

of ethnic identity. Journeys and shared memories of a homeland are unifying factors of ethnic communities. After the journey which is filled with great difficulties but narrated with humour, the Junglewalla family sets up a shop at Lahore. The novel is more about the community than the central character Faredoon Junglewalla. The Parsi sense of community and ethnic bond is highlighted in the reception Freddy gets on his arrival in Lahore and his rise to prosperity has a great deal to do with encouragement and assistance from the members of this community. "An endearing feature of this microscopic merchant community was its compelling sense of duty and obligation towards other Parsis. Like one large, close-knit family, they assisted each other sharing success and rallying to support failure" (*The Crow Eaters* 21). The sense of oneness is central to ethnic solidarity. The sense of a super family is created by a careful construction of ethnic history around aspects like a shared sense of history, migration, suffering, threat from the outside and so on. Geertz also emphasises the role of these primordial notions of blood ties to the construction of ethnic identity, which he assumes would satisfy the urge of an individual to be recognised favourably in society (260,262). But unlike Van Den Berghe, the stress is more on cultural givens in the discourses of Geertz and Shils.

As discussed in the introductory chapter ethnic communities try to trace their origin to a common ancestor in order to establish a huge super family. The link with the super family is established and continued through the repetition of myths in the ethnic community. While advising his son Yazdi against marrying Rosy Watson, an Anglo-Indian girl, with whom he is in love, Freddy says, "I believe in some kind of a tiny spark that is carried from parent to child, on through generations . . . a kind of inherited memory of wisdom and righteousness, reaching back to the times of Zarathustra, the Magi, the Mazdiasnians. It is a tenderly nurtured conscience evolving

towards perfection" (*The Crow Eaters* 128). And later in the novel the author connects Freddy to the Magi, the Zoroastrian priests of ancient Iran: "The word 'magic' comes from Magi and Faredoon was a descendant of the Magi; the wise men of antiquity initiated into the mysteries of medicine, astrology, mysticism and astronomy the disciples of Zarathustra" (159). And while Freddy tells his young audience the familiar story of how the Parsis, booted out of Persia 1300 years ago, came to India, settled and prospered while maintaining their identity, makes sure he concludes the story with the message "To this day we do not allow conversion to our faith –or mixed marriages"(11). This attempt at tracing the origin of a community to a mythical hero/past also attempts at refuting all subsequent histories and associations bordering on a tendency towards eugenics. Freddy is here conceptualising the community in terms of an endogamous super family which is pure, and being Persian, superior to the neighbouring cultures. Now, it is not the authenticity of these primordial ties that matter for the community, but a collective belief in such ties. Collective fictions can bind the members of the community together and foster strong bonds.

The Parsis are demographically a very small community but came to prominence in the social, political and economic life of India in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the specific response of this community to the demands of the times. They were treated as an ally by the British during the colonial period. As Freddy proudly declares "next to the nawabs, rajas and princelings, we are the greatest toadies of the British empire!" (*The Crow Eaters* 12). He goes on to add how this prosperity was achieved: with the benevolence of the British, hard work, honesty, and the blessings of Ahura Mazda (12). And he reminds his young audience that if they did not prosper their status would have been as low as the untouchables

that clean out the gutters and they were too small a community to be noticed in the heterogeneous multitude of India. The Parsis clearly understand the complex nature of Indian society where, unless they are too prominent, they would be completely forgotten. So there is a constant attempt at getting recognised in Indian society.

Sidhwa's second important Parsi novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* (titled *Cracking India* in America) is more about the great catastrophe that accompanied Indian independence, Partition and the murder of millions of people on both sides of the newly created border. But the Parsi community is very important to the novel as the whole catastrophe is filtered through the consciousness of Parsi characters and especially through the consciousness of the eight year old narrator Lenny. From the perspective of the community, this story is not another success tale; on the contrary it is the story of the beginning of the decline of the community. The Parsis are on the verge of losing the advantages of the identity that they carefully constructed during the British rule. They painfully realise the alienation of their community from the surroundings which, in the past, helped them gain significant concessions from the British. It is not the Partition that affects them as much as the withdrawal of the British from India. They hastily prepare themselves for the reduced role they are sure to play in the post-Independence period. The handicap of the narrator, which cannot be cured by even the best doctors among the Parsis, metaphorically predicts the handicaps of the community in the new era. Characters like Colonel Bharucha and the Godmother, who represent the old generation influential Parsis, are succeeded by the new generation Parsis represented by the parents of Lenny, who can only hope that the reputation of their ancestors would help them cope with the new scenario.

The novel set in 1940s Lahore begins with the treatment of the narrator Lenny, who has a foot deformed by Polio. Despite the best efforts of the Parsi doctor

Bharucha, it cannot be cured and she has to live with her deformed foot for the rest of her life. Shanta, the ayah, whose main responsibility is to look after Lenny, provides the narrator with enough opportunities to observe the world around with its changing political and religious contours, and to mingle with different characters representing various faiths. The novelist, in an interview with Bhalla, explains her attempt at portraying the communal composition of Lahore, a city which she calls "a sort of mosaic of different religious communities" and the character of Ayah who has Sikh, Afghan, Muslim and Hindu admirers, provides the perfect opportunity to sketch the "complex social and cultural mosaic" of Lahore".The various communities of Lahore lived in their own *mohallas* before Partition "but the boundaries drawn around them were never rigid. People had learnt to coexist. There was a lot of intermingling and exchange" (Bhalla 225). But Partition changes everything. Lenny witnesses the sudden change of Lahore from a very peaceful city to a place where the Sikhs, Hindus and the Muslims fight for selfish reasons patronised by their political and religious leaders. As the Partition mania grips the nation, violence becomes commonplace and corpses lie unburied all over Lahore. Just like Lenny and her dazed Parsi community of Lahore, most people are too shocked to understand the reason for such a sudden resurgence of violence. Deep rooted ethnic loyalties, in combination with the greed for the spoils of riots, erased the strong inter-ethnic bonds that existed among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs for centuries. "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols" (93).The stories of mass murder, rape and looting are narrated from the Pakistani perspective as the author admits in an interview with David Montenegro (Kanal 39). Even though the Parsis rightly fear long term problems, Partition doesn't hurt them immediately as much as it hurts the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. Being a

non Hindu, non Muslim community benefits them. But the Parsi meeting called to discuss the issues of Partition does bring out the fear of the Parsis that they will no longer be the successful community they were till date. Contrary to what scholars like Hinnells argue, there was definitely an atmosphere of fear among the Parsis as they got closer to the reality of Partition. Like most minorities the Parsis also felt insecure and helpless. "The young states of India and Pakistan were born in an atmosphere of mutual suspicions and disputes over boundaries, assets, and the future status of religious minorities left on both sides"(Malik 129). They realised that in the scramble for power they would be the losers. In the midst of the chaos and brutality created by Partition, the Parsis tried to help the victims of rioting, irrespective of their religion. The family of Lenny painfully collects all the petrol they can to transport the victims to places of safety. Godmother emerges as the most powerful character during the last quarter of the novel. She uses her influence to rescue Ayah from Hira Mandi and send her to her family in Amritsar.

Thus, Sidhwa has captured the transitional phase of the Parsi community identity from its golden age to its relative insignificance with humour. The author very effectively questions some of the fundamental notions of ethnicity, its resurgence at crucial historical moments like the Partition, and the durability of ethnic rivalry despite long traditions of friendship, cooperation and interactions.

Sidhwa's third important Parsi novel, *An American Brat* is her most recent statement on the Parsi ethnic identity and the crossroads at which the community finds itself towards the end of the twentieth century. There is a bemoaning of the loss of Parsi prestige, significance and identity in the Pakistan of the post-Independence era. Autobiographical in many respects, the novel records the influence of Muslim culture and religion on the young Parsi girl Feroza Ginwalla, who is sent to America

to save her from the adverse effect of these influences. Uprooted and placed in the multicultural America, Feroza goes through various phases and influences. She goes on eventually to realise the significance of her own religion and stock, and realises how difficult it is for her to escape from her roots. Feroza's interactions with various communities in America, instead of erasing her ethnic consciousness, only increase it. The insights of Fredrik Barth on how transactions across borders contribute to the maintenance of ethnic boundaries rather than their disappearance help us understand the changes in Feroza's attitude towards her own ethnicity.

An American Brat is a very clear statement on how ethnic ties get strengthened rather than attenuated in situations of intercultural and multicultural interactions. The novel is a sequel to *The Crow Eaters* which is set in pre independence India. *An American Brat* on the one hand deals with the conflict between the generations and on the other hand explores the relevance of the colonial ethic identity of the Parsis in the post colonial times. The novel is also a bildungsroman that traces the growth of the young Parsi girl Feroza, who is seventeen at the beginning of the novel and is twenty one at the end of it. Feroza and her affluent Parsi family live in Lahore, lead a very comfortable life and regularly get involved in social issues. Her mother Zereen is very active with the feminist organisations and selflessly works to help women in need. She is very concerned about her daughter's conservative ways which she thinks are not good for her future. She is really worried about the influence of Islam on her daughters' behaviour. So in order to reform her manners, Zereen sends her to America where her brother is studying at the MIT.

Once in America, away from the conservative Lahore society, Feroza's consciousness develops in various ways. She learns the tricks of living in the exploitative American society and begins to enjoy her life in America. On her uncle's

advice, she decides to stay back in America to do a course in hotel management initially at the junior college in Twin Falls, Idaho and later at the very liberal University of Denver. She makes friends with many white Americans and Afro-Americans including her room mates Jo, Gwen and Rhonda. These friends initiate her in to the nuances of American life. She mixes with people of different backgrounds and ethnic communities. Her short lived romance with Shashi, her senior at her college, doesn't really change the trajectory of her life. But later when she falls in love with David Press, an American Jew and an ambitious student, her life takes a different turn. She decides to marry him and sends a letter to her parents requesting their permission to marry him, knowing well that they will not agree to this. Her shocked family and community send her mother Zereen to America with the mission of persuading her away from this marriage. Zereen arrives in Denver determined to bribe David, if needed, to walk away from the marriage. However, once in Denver, she understands that David is not a bad boy as they thought, but painfully realises that even if he is a very good boy he cannot marry Feroza because he is a Jew. Knowing well that if her daughter marries a non Parsi she will be permanently excommunicated from her community, Zereen tries hard to convince both Feroza and David of the issues and difficulties involved in such an alliance. But Feroza and David refuse to budge; eventually Zereen tells them that they may marry if they really want to, but they have to marry according to Parsi customs and rituals. She elaborates the Parsi marriage rituals in great detail and David gets scared of the real cultural difference that existed between Feroza and him. David withdraws from the marriage and Feroza accepts this with great pain. The novel ends with Feroza's decision to join for a graduate course in Anthropology.

The novel begins with Zereen's frustration over Feroza's behaviour the previous day when she had gone to meet her at the school. She narrates the whole incident to her husband Cyrus, "In the car she said: 'Mummy, please don't come to school dressed like that.' She objected to my sleeveless sari-blouse! Really this narrow minded attitude touted by General Zia is infecting her, too" (10). The fear expressed by Zereen is not only about Feroza's backwardness and orthodoxy but also about her daughter's inability to understand Parsi cultural differences from the neighbours, however subtle and trivial they may be. She expresses this anxiety in the same conversation: "Look, we're Parsee, everybody knows we dress differently" (10). She goes on to catalogue the various reforms brought about by the General Zia regime in Pakistan, especially the ones regarding women, which she thinks, is cultivating a "*mullah*-ish mentality" (13). And these reforms she thinks are affecting her daughter badly. Even Cyrus agrees with his wife and says that everyone is frustrated by the new changes brought about by Zia. Even though the conversation criticises Zia's reforms in general, their concerns are specifically ethnic. Zereen thinks that due to these reforms, "Parsee children in Lahore won't know how to mix with Parsee kids in Karachi or Bombay" (11). Lahore, which doesn't have a significant Parsi population like Karachi, does form the ideal back ground to the problems that Sidhwa wants to highlight; that of religious and cultural isolation and a higher threat of assimilation. In an interview with Feroza Jussawalla, Sidhwa admits the importance of Lahore in her novels: "There were only one hundred and fifty Parsis in Lahore which now has about five million people. And there were only three or four Parsi girls of my age and so mainly my friends were of the Christian and Muslim communities" and in the same interview she states that her experience would have been different had she been brought up in Karachi; "If I were brought up in Karachi which is again very much part

of Pakistan, my experience as a child would have been totally different. I would have been brought up among the Parsis" (207). There is the fear that the younger generation is drifting away from the ethnic identity that once gave them superiority over the neighbouring communities by getting assimilated into it. Bapsi Sidhwa admits that like all other religions "the Parsis too had their fears. Their biggest fear was that Parsi girls would marry Muslim boys" (Bhalla 224). The Parsis being a minority community in Lahore, the younger members of the community feel the need to conform to the culture of the neighbourhood. Cyrus makes this observation about Feroza: "She probably feels she has to conform, be like her Muslim friends"(12). The only way out of this problem that the anxious parents of Feroza could think of is to send her to America so that she escapes from the conservative influences of the Muslim culture of Lahore. Zereen thinks that, "Travel will broaden her outlook, get this puritanical rubbish out of her head"(14). This decision is not without its problems; Feroza's grandmother Khutlibai warns Zereen of the risks involved in sending Feroza to America. Her own understanding of America is quite different from that of Feroza and Zereen; she considers America to be a land of sexual license, alcohol and drugs. However Zereen insists on sending her to America and Khutlibai had to agree to this when she was told that Feroza will be looked after by Feroza's uncle and her son Manek.

Ethnic identity does not require all the elements that it encloses to be asserted in every situation. Zereen is very conscious about her ethnic identity as a Parsi Zoroastrian but has no problem visiting the shrine of the Sufi saint Data Gunj Baksh. What is more striking is that she offers her prayers to Sariosh Ejud, the Zoroastrian "Angel of Success who Protects Mankind with Effective Weapons", at the shrine of the Sufi saint (80). She doesn't feel that she is switching from one religion to the

other. It is rather normal for most of the people in India and Pakistan to visit the holy places of other religions and offer prayers. The fact of Zereen and Feroza being Parsis do not stop them from believing in other faiths; but such crossovers do not reduce their intensity and fervour for their own religion. In multicultural societies people maintain their cultural, religious and ethnic affiliations not by negating the neighbouring religions but instead by an act of constant interaction and positive assertion of their faith. Barth explains this assertion in terms of the boundaries that separate the cultures and ethnic groups and not in terms of the "cultural stuff it encloses". He says that "ethnic categories provide an organizational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems" and a complete conformity to all the aspects of the cultural content of the ethnic group is not necessary for the assertion and maintenance of the ethnic identity. These cultural and religious elements that make up the distinctive pattern of the ethnic group may not be expressed in all situations and he also emphasises that the principles that govern the behaviour of the ethnic groups "may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity" (14). He gives a lot of significance to the activity or performance of the members of ethnic groups and calls them 'actors'. Ethnicity being a mode of identity requires most importantly the visibility of the borders that separate communities. A Parsi woman offering prayers to a Parsi angel at the shrine of a Sufi saint doesn't dilute or erase her identity as a member of the Parsi collectivity in Pakistan or India, where the act of going to the holy place or being seen in the holy place of another religion is not a marker of ethnic identity. But as Zereen's anxiety plainly shows, a dress code which is in tune with the Islamic culture of Pakistan or being very conservative in Pakistan, could be significant markers that erase the ethnic distinctions between the Muslim cultural identity and the Parsi cultural identity. This

is why Zereen, who doesn't find anything strange or weird about visiting the shrine of the Sufi saint, finds her daughter's dress code and conservatism quite offending. The markers that highlight the differences are decided by various factors that contribute to and partake of the process of interaction among the specific cultures that inhabit the geographical space. Hans Rudolf Wicker, in his discussion on how, in the contemporary world, culture is conceived outside territorial borders, argues that "country-to-city migration and international migration generate interactions between people from fundamentally different backgrounds and carry with them the seed of modification and change at the expense of time-honoured loyalties"(36). This de-territorialisation of cultures that Arjun Appadurai speaks of, leads to a different understanding of ethnic identities by members involving modifications of their traditional cultural practices.

Manek calls Feroza a third world Paki when she talks to him over the phone loudly: "Why do you third world Pakis shout so much?" (26) and a couple of days after she lands in America, Manek calls her a desi because she was not in the habit of using deodorant: "I bet there's an Indian or Paki in the room. One can smell a native from a mile" (73). The factors that give her identity in America are quite different even though she did not realise until she was in America that these were important cultural markers. She realises that her light skin, of which she was very proud, was not light enough to make her feel comfortable among the fellow white students in America and she feels a sense of foreignness because of the colour of her skin: "She sensed that she was not accepted as one of them. Dismayed by her own brown skin, the emblem of her foreignness she felt inferior to the gleaming white skin in the washrooms and the roseate faces in the classrooms" (153). Her light skin did not give her a membership in the white community of America. In the multicultural American

society, she realises, how very trivial factors could become very important in establishing the ethnic identity of people. Her interaction with people of various cultures and racial groups help her to understand a sense of her own ethnic identity and she realises how important to her is her ethnic identity. She shares a room with students from various ethnic groups: Jo whose father traces his lineage "to a stock of sturdy English farmers from the Midlands", Gwen 'a young black woman' from Atlanta and Rhonda a WASP. She was introduced to students from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Pakistan, India, Middle East and Far East by her senior at college, Shashi. She realises that it is not easy to identify the ethnicity of a fellow student unless one is trained to do so or brought up in the country where these distinctions among the communities are made. Rhonda, a WASP tries to help Feroza identify another WASP mysteriously referred to as "J.M." by Gwen but fails to teach her the distinction between WASP and other white men. "J.M. Rhonda, herself a WASP, helped a curious and intrigued Feroza recognize the species, but it took a WASP to recognize a WASP, and Feroza wondered if she'd ever be able to tell them apart from other whites"(226).

The differences and similarities of ethnicity are relevant only in certain contexts and hence as Barth says, only those attributes that are necessary to bring out the 'us' versus 'them' relationship get stressed in the behaviour of the individuals. Even among the Zoroastrians there is a debate as to who is are the real Zoroastrians; even though the Iranian Zoroastrians are demographically less visible and are far lesser influential than the Indian Parsis, they "wish to assert their unique identity as the 'real', 'true' Iranians/Persians" (Hinnells 6). All the Zoroastrians from the outside are viewed "as part of the South Asian diaspora" even though many Indian and Iranian Zoroastrians refuse to be identified as part of the Asian diaspora (Hinnells 6).

This explains how identity is the creation of factors other than what are intrinsic to any community. The ascription by outsiders also defines ethnic communities in society; for example Eriksen notes that in Britain, all peoples from the Caribbean islands are referred to as West Indians by the British, although Guyanese, Trinidadians, Jamaicans and Barbadians regard themselves as members of different groups. The outside world also ascribes identities to ethnic groups because ethnicity is primarily an identification criterion. Feroza makes friends with people of various ethnic backgrounds and feels comfortable moving around eating, drinking and socialising with them and yet, one day, when she smokes at the insistence of Jo's guitarist boy friend, she feels very guilty. That night she says her kusti prayers and begs divine forgiveness and what is more significant is that Jo, who encourages Feroza to try many aspects of her own culture, scolds her boyfriend for encouraging her to smoke saying, "Lay off. It's against her religion to smoke. She worships fire" (164). Jo, as a white American, feels that fire is very sacred to Feroza's religion, whereas forcing Feroza to drink wine or to wear a revealing dress do not account to offending her faith. Such choices of cultural elements to mark off the boundaries of ethnic identity is not very uncommon. Feroza did not respond to all acts of guilt that she permits herself to indulge in after coming to America in the same way as she responds to the above act, even though she knows that most of those indulgences won't be acceptable to her community back home. She realises that she has committed a very serious offence when she smokes and hence begs divine forgiveness. "After performing the kusti ritual, Feroza bowed her penitent's head to beg divine forgiveness for desecrating the holy fire-the symbol of Ahura mazda-by permitting it such intimate contact with her unclean mouth"(165). Such selective emphasis aids the process of interaction by not blocking every transaction with other

communities (in which case there would be a complete cultural closure). In the modern world where various ethnic groups inhabit the same space, it is necessary that each group culturally keeps itself sufficiently open to interaction but at the same time does not allow the boundaries to disappear altogether (which would lead to its extinction).

When Feroza decides to marry David Press, an American Jew, the most crucial encounter of cultural factors takes place. They were in love and wanted to get married. They knew that the marriage won't be acceptable to Feroza's parents because mixed marriages are not permitted in her community. Right from the moment of their decision to marry, the entire focus of the novel is on the response of her family to their marriage. As expected the response of her family and community is one of shock initially and outright condemnation of it later. They arranged a meeting to discuss Feroza's marriage with David. Most members present in the meeting oppose Feroza's decision to marry a Jew, or any non Parsi boy, even though a few young members hesitantly support the marriage and were quickly silenced by the elders. The rigid laws about conversion to the Parsi faith make it almost impossible for the female members of the community to marry out of it. When Parsi women marry out, they are excommunicated from the faith, which practically means that they won't be allowed to enter Parsi places of worship and burial. Later while trying to convince Feroza of the consequences of her decision to marry a Jew, Zereen gives many examples of how Parsi women who married out, however religious they were, were denied permission to enter 'atesh' and 'Dokhma'. Parsis definitely show a gender bias when it comes to marrying a non Parsi (Nutan Chotai). Men are advised not to marry a non Parsi girl but if for some inevitable reason such a marriage does take place, with due rituals, the wife is admitted to the religion and the children in

such alliances are considered Parsi. The case of Mrs Gandhi is a fine example: the Parsis consider Rajiv and Sanjay as Parsis since their father was Parsi even though the children are brought up according to their mother's faith (Hinnells 58). Nira Yuval-Davis analyses the special role of women in forging and maintaining ethnic groups; she argues that "women are often the ones chosen to be the intergenerational transmitters of cultural traditions, customs, songs, and cuisine and, of course, the mother tongue". She says that the role of women among immigrant communities especially in multicultural societies is very significant because they act as "the primary bearers of a distinctive 'home' culture". This is one of the main reasons that stronger social control is likely to be exercised on girls than boys, especially among the children of immigrants" (196-197).

Feroza being a woman would be denied the opportunity to retain her religion and ethnic identity if she marries David Press. The significance of marriage is taught to the Parsi girls at a very young age and is reinforced in every meeting that is convened to discuss the problems involved in mixed marriages whenever there is a case of mixed marriage in the community. "These performances for the edification of the youngsters were staged with such regularity that the behaviour of both the young and the old was almost automatic, entailing no untoward effort" (270). Feroza revolted against all this tutoring and 'edification' as a result of her four year stay in the United States. She is quite confident that the path she has chosen, which was to become a Unitarian and to have a civil marriage, was correct. This way she can keep her religion and marry David. But the roots of her own ethnic ties were deeper than she thought. David and Feroza overcome most of the obstacles posed by Zereen and convince her that they are determined to get married irrespective of the threats of the community. But the final discussion that Zereen holds with David changes

everything. Zereen agrees to their marriage on one condition which is that the marriage should be performed according to the Parsi customs and she explains every ritual in great detail. David gets shocked to know the peculiarities of the rituals that she describes and he was not prepared for this. He had never before thought that there was such a lot of difference between their customs and cultures. He starts thinking about his own culture and the tradition of his Jewish faith, which he was ready to sacrifice by becoming a Unitarian. "He realized Zereen's offensive was not personal but communal. He knew that a Jewish wedding would be an equally elaborate affair, and though he didn't want to go through that either, he felt compelled to defend his position" (298). He feels compelled to interrogate the need to defend his own faith and angrily tells Zereen that "I belong to an old tradition too". He was not very serious about his own traditions regarding marriage and only wanted to convince Zereen and her Parsi community that those cultural differences are not important to them either. But the discussion between Zereen acts as an eye opener for him too about the value and greatness of his tradition. He passionately defends his faith. He realises how indifferently he had brushed aside his parents' faith and their right to see him get married according to their faith and community customs. He hits back at Zereen saying that "My parents aren't happy about the marriage, either. It's lucky they're Reform Jews, otherwise they'd go into mourning and pretend I was dead". In a very subtle way he implies that Zereen's Parsi community has to reform itself, a point which he emphasises again in a later conversation where he calls Zereen a witch. The conversation allows him to explore his own traditions and underlying ethnic feelings: "We have Jewish customs, you know. My family will miss my getting married under a canopy by our rabbi" (298). This conversation was important to Zereen and Feroza also in many ways; Feroza realizes how difficult it is for her to

explain her unique customs to him. In her attempt to explain the power and influence of her grandmother in her community she refers to her grandmother as a tribal chief which was shocking to Zereen. "Using the closest example she could think of, Feroza explained, 'Grandmother's like a tribal chief' ". Zereen was shocked at this likening of her mother to a tribal chief: "As far as she was aware, tribesmen inhabited jungles and mountain wilderness, observed primitive codes of honour, and carried out vendettas" (299). John Hinnells makes a very pertinent observation in this regard. He says that members of the diasporic groups very often become the interpreters of their religion to the outside world and also work as "the filters through which other religions are viewed by many of their own community". There is an attempt by the members of the diasporic groups to explain their religion in "easily comprehensible terms, leaving out the beliefs, practices and attitudes which others may find alien". In Hinnells words, Feroza gives David a "sanitized anodyne or universalist account" of her religion (17). David's own understanding of the Parsi religious practices was tempered by Feroza's account of her religion in a communicable and negotiable language. But Zereen tries to break this easy interaction between the two cultures by consciously highlighting elements of her culture which were inaccessible, incomprehensible and shocking to David. This conversation is a fine example of an inter-ethnic transaction that leads to widening the gap between the two. Instead of helping the boundaries to disappear such interactions only reassert the boundaries by making visible the normally invisible boundaries. The sometimes forceful assertion of the cultural identity by the diasporic communities in a multicultural society is illustrative of the border maintenance mechanism of the ethnic groups involved in interaction. The argument of James Clifford about the behavioural pattern of the diasporic groups is very relevant here. He notes that diasporic groups tend to resist

assimilation; “Indeed some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations” (307). David Press who thought Zereen to be a “hedonistic shopper, the model swirling girlishly in the kitchen, the enthusiastic tourist and giver of gifts” was surprised to see her transformation into an “aggressive sage” when it came to defending her community (290).

Each of the three people involved in this conversation comes out more enlightened about the strength and intensity of his/her respective ethnic consciousness and that of the difference between his/her ethnicity with that of the other. Zereen could only wish that her community one day will be broad minded enough to accept mixed marriages whereas David and Feroza, despite their love for each other, realise that the differences between their ethnic communities in terms of customs and cultural practices are too significant to be easily negotiated. In Feroza’s final decision not to marry David and to stay back in America in order to study anthropology, is an implication that she would like to learn more about her own ethnicity. She decides to cling on to the comfort and security provided by her feeling of belonging to Parsi community. She had not been saying her kusti prayers for long: so she digs out her sudra and kusti which were “hibernating for the longest time” and offers her prayers. There is an obvious stress on the cultural markers like the sudreh and kusti whenever a member of the Parsi faith is in self doubt or her ethnic sentiment is called into question. This is a common and positive tactic used by ethnic communities to reinforce the ethnic sentiment and thereby to increase the survival chances. Far away from their homeland ethnic communities need the comfort of the symbolic markers that connect them to their larger communities. As James Clifford notes, “Permanent conditions of relative powerlessness and minority status justify and render relatively harmless ethnocentric survival tactics-for example, imposing marks of distinction on

the body (circumcision), or restricting charity and community self-help to "our people"(322). Feroza decides not to let anybody interfere in her life and is not completely averse to marrying a non Parsi if she happens to come across a good non Parsi boy that she likes in the future. She is very clear that, "As for her religion, no one could take it away from her; she carried its fire in her heart." She is even ready to defy the priests because she thinks that her faith is part of her being: "If the priests in Lahore and Karachi did not let her enter the fire temple, she would go to one in Bombay where there were so many Parsees that no one would know if she was married to a Parsi or a non" (317).

Sidhwa is aware of the influence of the Parsi diaspora settled in the New World on the Parsis of India and Pakistan. The questions raised by Zereen and Feroza on the relevance of those traditional practices of the community that dictated their religious and social life during the colonial period are the questions that very frequently appear in the debates of the diasporas in the new world. "At the turn of the millennium, diaspora Zoroastrians are having a substantial impact on religious debates in India and Iran, just as diasporic funding continues to support long-treasured Parsi institutions in India" (Hinnells 2).The ethnic sentiment of the Parsis settled in America are not becoming less intense, even though there is an attempt at defining their ethnic markers in a different way, as Feroza does. "Many younger members of the international communities no longer wish to be known by what they see as purely ethnic markers, namely Parsis and Iranians, but simply as Zoroastrians" (Hinnells 4). Like Feroza most of the younger Parsis hold their traditions and ethnicity close to their heart and practice them albeit not in the same way as their fore fathers did during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Hinnells observes, the Zoroastrians in America are very keen on maintaining the community records, a

practice which clearly shows the commitment of the members to preserving their history (5). However, there is a serious debate taking place within the community regarding the need for reforms including the ones relating to mixed marriages. The conservative section of the community still believes that mixed marriages lead to genetic impurity and hence should be forbidden at all costs. The pamphlets that Zereen gets from the Parsee Priests' Association in Bombay and Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee quite clearly state that if a Parsi girl marries outside, she would be treated like an adulteress. Zereen was hoping that the reforms taking place inside her community might eventually permit mixed marriages. But the pamphlet typed in capital letters very clearly states that "THE LAWS OF THE PURITY OF THE ZOROASTRIAN FAITH FORBID INTERMARRIAGES, AS MIXING PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL GENES IS CONSIDERED A CARDINAL CRIME AGAINST NATURE. HENCE HE OR SHE DOES NOT HAVE ANY COMMUNAL OR RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OR PRIVILEGES" (305). The stress here is on the genetic aspects of ethnicity as much as it is on cultural and spiritual components. Zereen was expecting some reforms in the community as a result of the discussions and debates taking place at Bombay and elsewhere in the various Anjumans. But after reading the pamphlets she realises that despite all debates and discussions on introducing reforms, the community upholds traditional norms. She was aware of the "controversy raging round these issues in Bombay, as well as in Britain, Canada, and America, where the Parsees had migrated in droves in the past few years", and hoped that the Zoroastrian Anjuman in Karachi and Bombay moved with the times. She was not averse to mixed marriages and other minor changes in her community; "The various Anjumans would have to introduce minor reforms if they wished their tiny community to survive" (288).This disappointment that she expresses is representative of the general disappointment felt by the majority Parsis who supported the reformist section of the community represented by the CER (Committee

for Electoral Rights) against the CUZ (Committee of United Zoroastrians) in the 1981 election held to elect members to the major offices of the BPP (Bombay Parsi Panchayet). The election was won by the reformist section (CER) by a large majority. But the reforms announced by the CER before the election did not take place. The pamphlet against intermarriage that Zereen received from Lahore was brought out by the Parsee Priest's Association headed by Dastur Feroze Kotwal, who was a candidate of the CUZ in the election. Bapsi Sidhwa does refer to some of the real issues and debates taking place in the Parsi community and uses names of people involved in these debates in her novel to lend authenticity to her story. The issue of intermarriage has been dealt with by most writers dealing with Parsi history. One of the most reliable and well researched accounts of discussions on this issue is provided by John Hinnells. It focuses on the debates about intermarriage in the Parsi community at Bombay and their impact on diaspora groups. He notes that conversion to the Parsi faith was permitted in many cases even though such conversions, even when performed by priests as per Parsi traditions, did not enjoy the approval of the majority of Parsis and in many cases were taken to court. He refers to the debate that took place in the community about the marriage of JRD Tata, who married a French woman Suzanne Briere in 1903.She was properly initiated into the Parsi faith and her navjote was performed. But later when the couple claimed the right to Parsi places of worship and to a funeral in a Tower of Silence, the issue was initially referred to a subcommittee which gave a report in favour of the couple, but the main committee refused to accept the report. Subsequently the issue was taken to court and an orthodox Parsi judge Justice Davar along with an English judge Justice Beaman returned a verdict against the couple on two different grounds; even though Zoroastrianism practised conversion, such a practice is not part of the Parsi tradition

in India and also that the "Parsis had become a caste and that within Indian society, people could not be converted from one caste to another" (Hinnells 120). In another popular case Bella, a girl of non Parsi father and Parsi mother from Rangoon, was initiated to the Parsi faith and was allowed to enter the temple after her navjote was performed. The issue was taken to the court and the Burma court ruled in favour of Bella, but the verdict was overturned by the Privy Council in London. "In 1882 in Mazgaon eleven people, children and adults, were initiated, all nine elders having married out." and in 1942, "seventy seven people, aged between 7 and 60, all with Parsi fathers who had married out", were initiated into the faith despite massive public protest (Hinnells 121-122). The intensity of the debate about intermarriage has intensified in the post-Independence period. The Cama Baug episode in 1978 was a very widely discussed case involving a Parsi male who was refused permission for his daughter's initiation on grounds that he had married out. The Adoption of Child Bill, which legally permitted anybody to adopt a child of any caste or religion and conferred all the privileges of the adoptive father to the child, introduced by Indira Gandhi in 1980, was widely criticised in Parsi circles. The orthodox section of the community eventually convinced the Prime Minister and got exempted from it. All these instances shed light on the closed nature of ethnic communities and their belief in ethnic purity.

Another inter ethnic conflict occasioned by marriage is dealt in detail in Sidhwa's first written novel *Pakistani Bride* (1983*)*.The tribal Qasim marries off his adopted daughter Zaitoon, who was brought up in the plains, to a man from his tribe in the mountains. Even though Zaitoon was brought up by Qasim, she was not familiar with the tribal customs and codes of honour; she was treated very badly by her new tribal husband, which was acceptable by tribal norms. She tries to run away

from the mountains and at the end of the hunt arranged by the tribals for her, she escapes with the help of an army officer. The novel is a classic example of how different codes of living can lead to violence during interaction and how difficult it is to change ethnic identities and accept new cultural paradigms because of extremely subjective notions of right and wrong. The tribals in the novel are governed by a "rigorous code of honour", which appears to be absurd to people in the plains, and the extremely ethnocentric nature of the tribal breaks down the process of interaction (7). The novel also details the rigid nature of ethnic groups, which largely maintain their distinction by being geographically secluded from other groups and are hostile to all groups outside their own. Since the novel does not deal with Parsi characters, an in-depth analysis has not been undertaken in this thesis.

The debates about intermarriage and reformation within ethnic communities may not lead to substantial changes in the traditional practices of the community. Instead they might actually strengthen the traditional customs and values. On her flight back to Lahore, Zereen painfully realises that "the debate, instead of bringing about the reforms she had thought were inevitable, had only entrenched traditional norms" (*An American Brat* 305).

The Crow Eaters, Ice-Candy Man and *An American Brat* –all these works reinforce the myths that the community considers basic to its existence. By telling the stories of their ancestors, Sidhwa is preserving the myth that was part of the community memory. By the time Sidhwa published her novels these stories which once needed validation from the historians and scholars were already accepted as part of Parsi history and mythology. Sidhwa is also not attempting to examine the veracity of these myths and quasi-histories because for her, these stories, whether true or not, carry the potential to bind members of the community together. The tone with which

she narrates the stories that are part of her community's collective memory is not one of high seriousness but one of reminiscence that is, at places, mocking. In the opening pages of *The Crow Eaters* Freddy narrates the all too familiar story of the arrival and settlement of the Parsis as given in the *Kissah-i- Sanjan* with pride and seriousness. A few pages later he refers to the Parsi ritual of sacrificing the cock in order to thank the Almighty for saving his mother-in-law. However, this whole episode is narrated in a very humorous way. He turns the thanksgiving ritual into a mocking scene. This suggests that at some level, the author does see the meaninglessness of the myths and rituals that the members of her community manipulate according to their convenience, but she does not, by that token, consider them insignificant. However irrational they may be, myths have their purpose and role in reifying the community for outsiders. The novel becomes a catalogue of various cultural fragments that constitute Parsi ethnicity. This catalogue defines the community to outsiders in terms of differences and juxtapositions.

The attempt to highlight differences is not always achieved by projecting a totally different set of cultural attributes the community is made of. The community doesn't achieve its ethnic identity by being different from its neighbouring communities or being remote from other communities. There has to be an interaction between and among communities, not necessarily based on terms of hostility and antagonism, but also on terms of similarity, which would provide an opportunity to showcase differences. The secular guise of the Parsis is one such trope which helps in defining the outsiders. On arriving in Lahore Freddy visits a Hindu temple, a mosque and a Sikh temple before he starts his business venture. This is an act of listing various communities, which, despite being respectful, does not indicate an attempt by the protagonist to transcend the narrow confines of his ethnic enclosures. This rather

subtle gesture from Freddy highlights his faith as different from that of the communities listed above rather than his belief in other faiths. Such token multicultural gestures acknowledge Freddy's awareness of the rules and demands of a multicultural society. Freddy does not seem to greatly value other religions; his knowledge and awareness of other religious texts is like the academic books that he reads for his business promotion. The *Book of Famous English Proverbs* is kept between the Bible and the Bhagawad-Gita on the same shelf on which he has kept "a translation of the Holy Quran and Avesta (the holy book of the Parsis), the complete works of Shakespeare, Aesop's Fables, Das Kapital and books representing the Sikh, Jain and Buddhist faiths"(52). On the one hand, the above listing process succeeds in projecting the academic interest of the protagonist in all faiths and his tolerance of them. On the other, the seminal text of his own religion, which he knows is not known to most readers, a fact indicated by the description of the book in the bracket, is elevated to the status of other texts on the shelf. This show of "his reverence for all faiths" is a platform which allows the protagonist to project the greatness of his own tradition which he does in the succeeding paragraphs. Right beneath the shelf that holds books of representing all faiths is the prayer table and the holy lamp "with a likeness of the Prophet Zarathustra stamped on its glass shade. The prophet held aloft his finger to remind his followers of the one and only God". What follows after this is a long description highlighting the greatness of the Zoroastrian "tradition dating back 2500 years to the Persian kings, Darius and Cyrus the Great, who not only encouraged religious tolerance, but having freed the Jews held captive by the Babylonians, rebuilt their temple." The description ends with his concluding remark which is quoted from an unmentioned Hindu scholar that, "Zoroastrianism lies, thus, at the centre of all the great religions of the world, Aryan and Semitic . . ." Freddy's acknowledgement of

the greatness of all religions is the result of his ability to see the influence of his own religion on others. The "photographs of Virgin Mary, Goddess Laxmi, Buddha, Christ, and Indian saints crowded his table". His prayer table is the microcosm of the multicultural and multireligious society that he lives in. He interacts with the members of all these communities. He helps Charles Allen to get "his prick up"(11) as much as he helps the Sikh police officer Sunder Singh sahib to get admission for his son at the St. Anthony's school (118). He constantly involves himself with the issues of his neighbours. But these interactions instead of reducing his religious prejudices only highlight them. The transactions with other communities sharpen the boundaries of his own ethnic closures. The rigid enclosures of his Parsi ethnicity become very evident in the episode involving his son Yazdi's affair with the Anglo-Indian girl Rosy Watson. Freddy, who had never struck any of his sons before, slaps Yazdi when he tells him that Rosy Watson is Anglo-Indian and not Parsi –it is an almost spontaneous response from Freddy. The long advice that he gives to his son indicates how despite his professed multicultural and secular outlook he is very ethno centric and stereotyped in his perceptions. To be diplomatic he says that the spiritual spark that the Parsis have which is derived from their prophet Zoroaster is also found in every religion but that a mixing up of these divine sparks will destroy it. Inter marriage according to him is a mixture of the divine spark which is delicately nurtured and safely preserved across generations by each religious community.

> 'I am not saying only we have the spark. Other people have it too: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists . . .they too have developed pure strains through generations. But what happens if you marry outside our kind? The spark so delicately nurtured, so subtly balanced, meets something totally alien and

unmatched. Its precise balance is scrambled. It reverts to the primitive' (128-129).

This advice is a well disguised exposition of the ideology of eugenics. And in the next paragraph he describes the effect of such a marriage on the children of mixed marriages. This is an aspect of ethnicity that many believe to be very significant in creating the closure required for every ethnic community –the claim for genetic purity. Albeit in a mellow tone Freddy is conveying the dangers of racial mixtures or supposed genetic degradation. The attempt here is to negate a whole history of conversions to and from the Parsi faith. As Dhalla indicates in his *History of Zoroastrianism,* there was no serous taboo on conversion till very recently. Hinnells also observes that there were many instances of proper conversion to the Parsi faith of the non Parsi spouses married to Parsis and even totally non Parsi males, as in the case of Joseph Peterson, a Jewish American of Christian background, who converted to the Parsi faith and got his *navjote* performed by a Parsi priest in 1983 at New York. But one important aspect of the present day Parsi identity is its claim to genetic purity. The Parsi discourse on preserving genetic purity by forbidding intermarriages very often takes racist dimensions. The language and the analogies used in such discourses tend to be very aggressive, bordering on a violent assertion of racist supremacy. For example, a prominent Parsi lawyer of the Supreme Court, Homi P Ranina uses the example of breeding animals of similar species for maintaining pedigree, "Nobody would ever suggest mating a champion Dobermann Pinscher with a champion Alsatian, though both are dogs, both are German and both are champions. If anybody is foolish enough to cross-breed, the offspring would neither turn out to be a Dobermann Pinscher nor an Alsatian, but would turn out to be a degenerated specimen" (Homi P Ranina). He argues that "inbreeding preserves the hereditary

characteristics and that cross breeding leads to degeneration" and hence mixed marriages also have the same effect. Another Parsi website, (www.tenets.zoroastrianism.com) claims that ancient religions like Judaism did not convert other people into their religion and similarly Zoroastrianism also did not believe in conversion. The website further states that "we believe that our religion is part and parcel of our ethnic identity i.e. race." Geetanjali Patole writes in the *Times of India* dated April 3, 2004, that the Parsi priests have decided to suspend the right of priests to perform the 'Navjote' ceremony on children from mixed marriages in order to preserve the "unique identity of the race in its purest form" The stress of all the above arguments is on the racial or genetic purity of the Parsis in India. These declarations of the orthodox section of the Parsis are not only limited to debates within the community; there are instances of the Parsis demanding legal exemptions based on these arguments of genetic purity. For example in the letter that the Parsis sent to Indira Gandhi to obtain exemption from the proposed Adoption of Children Bill they highlighted how genetic purity has been fundamental to the Parsi faith. "Racial and genetic purity is a command of religion. Parsis left Iran to preserve their spiritual institutions like Sudreh-Kushti . . . Fire Temples, Dokhmas, Death Ceremonies –and above all the genetic purity, which is the very foundation of the Parsi life" (Hinnells 123). Instead of drawing on authentic history and facts, members of ethnic communities depend on myths of descent to validate their claims of pure blood. Abner Cohen makes a very pertinent observation in this regard: "A principle of descent is usually supported by such genetic 'theories' as that blood is inherited in a certain line, that the whole lineage has 'one blood' or that the members are from one 'womb', 'sinew', or 'stock' " (*Two Dimensional Man* 69). He further states that, "the symbolism of descent has been particularly evident in the articulation of the

organisation of small groups" (70). The Parsis being a small group helps this myth of 'one blood' to be accepted easily. Genetic purity and shared physical features are very powerful markers of an ethnic community distinguishing one ethny from another very easily. Endogamy helps to maintain these racial and ethnic markers. Van Den Berghe stresses the importance of endogamy in the survival of ethnic communities in his essay "Does Race Matter?": "Three or four generations of 25 per cent or more exogamy typically erode both racial and ethnic boundaries, and lead to the formation of new ethnic groups. Both race and ethnicity are not immutable, but their mutability is a function of exogamy over several generations" (Hutchinson and Smith 58). This explains why members of ethnic groups insist on endogamy as central to their notion of identity. Geertz also refers to the significance of blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom in the formation of ethnic bond. He observes that Nehru also believed in the dominance of primordial factors in deciding the loyalty of the citizens of a modernizing state where the "tradition of civil politics is weak". "Primordial attachments tend, as Nehru discovered, to be repeatedly, in some cases almost continually, proposed and widely acclaimed as preferred bases for the demarcation of autonomous political units" (Hutchinson and Smith 42).Geertz argues that the need for people to be identified in a multireligious and multicultural world is better served by ethnic identities based on primordial factors like blood ties which help the individual to resist the "absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass"(Hutchinson and Smith 41). A minuscule community like the Parsis always fear getting assimilated into the host population and thus losing their identity and even chance to exact special concessions from the state. They have to identify themselves as separate from the rest of the population and one of the best ways of doing so is to claim their distinctiveness on the basis of blood ties and peculiar customs: "These

congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves" (Hutchinson and Smith 42).

Freddy expects his son to understand the dynamics of ethnic identity and the need for it to progress further. But brought up in the multicultural Lahore of pre-independence India amidst Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and other religious communities, Yazdi finds it difficult to understand his father's aversion to mixed marriages. At the end of the conversation Yazdi realises that his father is not very different from the rest of the members of his community, which he thought was the case. Freddy tries to appear reasonable by appealing to Yazdi's intelligence and rationality by using logical arguments. But the very foundation of his argument is ethnic sentiment which is irrational and which appeals more to emotions than to reason. Yazdi responds to Freddy's logic with contempt: " 'You are as ignorant and biased as others,' he [Yazdi] said, voicing his disappointment. His face was drawn and contemptuous. 'I will never swallow such disgusting beliefs' " (129). All the other children of Freddy understand the logic of ethnic loyalties and obediently choose endogamy. The easiest way for ethnic communities to force their members to follow group norms is to excommunicate those members who refuse to respect ethnic practices. Yazdi realises the impossibility of getting his father's consent to marry outside his faith and chooses to become an outsider. He indulges in extravagant charity acts and leaves his home. Even though birth ascribes ethnic identity to its members, the maintenance of it is not automatic and it depends on the acceptance of ethnic values and practices. It is an identity that has to be reinforced continually through social behaviour. The reinforcement of ethnic identity is achieved through the emphasis on the boundary markers which separate ethnic communities from one another. Manning Nash in his article "The Core Elements of Ethnicity", refers to three important ethnic markers as

central to any ethnic group; kinship, commensality and common cult. At various places in the novel, Sidhwa has referred to these markers in considerable detail. And in fact, these markers, being so central to ethnic identity, recur in all the three novels on Parsi ethnicity. Kinship according to Manning Nash "is the presumed biological and descent unity of the group implying a stuff or substance continuity each group member has and outsiders do not" (Hutchinson and Smith 25). In his futile attempt at convincing his son about the damages of mixed marriages, Freddy is trying to explain the concept of kinship and the significance of it to every group through the metaphor of the spark which he says is carried through generations from Zarathustra to the present. The Parsis of Lahore frequently gather at the house of one of the members, dine together and discuss various aspects of the issues relating to their family and community. Such acts create a fellow feeling among the members of a community and strengthen the ethnic bond. 'Common cult' which Manning defines as "a value system beyond time and empirical system, sacred symbols and attachments coming from *illo tempore*" is also a characteristic of the ethnic behaviour of the Parsi community. Manning also maintains that if these boundary mechanisms are breached regularly, ethnic communities cease to exist (25). These primary or core ethnic markers may not be visible or obvious to other group members in social interactions. These three markers provide the deep or basic structure of ethic group differentiation (25). In order to help the process of identification in social interactions, ethnic groups may depend on certain surface pointers like dress, language and (culturally denoted) physical features. In the case of the Parsis this includes the sudreh, Kushti, the traditional dress, and the Gujarati language. The novel also catalogues a list of ethnic markers and cultural practices like the Navjote ceremony (124), the veneration for fire (49), burial rituals (45), the details of how to wear the sudreh and kusti (23), the

practice of confining menstruating women to the 'other room'(70), and other such ethnic customs. These practices keep recurring in every novel and quite frequently in the same novel. The stress on these surface pointers in actual practice, or in writing, helps to differentiate the Parsis from the other Indian groups. Symbolic performatives are very important in giving stability to collectivities because social systems and perceptions keep changing. Abner Cohen rightly observes: "Change is endemic even in the relatively stable socio-cultural systems. The stability of the system is in effect maintained by repetitive symbolic activities which continuously create and recreate the system" (*Two Dimensional Man* 135). He further says that people engage in these symbolic acts including rituals and ceremonies in order to "derive comfort, perform a social obligation, achieve recreation, discover their identity, pass the time, be with others", and for many other reasons (136-137).Cohen's analysis points at the functions performed by rituals and ceremonies; they give comfort to members who perform these acts by giving them a feeling of group security and also shape their identity, which gives them respect and honour in the society. Society is where communities interact and establish their identity and this identity has no significance outside society. The need for being identified in society is not merely a psychological need, boosting the confidence of the individual. It also has a practical dimension that helps community members get economic and political benefits.

The Parsis maintained a distinct religious and social identity throughout the period of their stay in India but the specific nature of their collective identity prior to the seventeenth century cannot be established as there aren't enough historical documents. The claim of the community in the nineteenth and twentieth century that they are a non Indian group with Persian origins, who survived in India without getting assimilated into Indian society, is very difficult to establish. Such claims

advanced by Karaka and other Parsi historians (Modi, SK Hodivala, SH Hodivala) are more in the nature of ethnic propaganda for a distinctive identity than of truth. The identity that Sidhwa ascribes to her Parsi characters in *The Crow Eaters* seems fixed and stable. These characters seem to behave according to the rules of ethnic group behaviour exhibiting qualities which appear to be natural to the group. Their physical features and socio-cultural characteristics seem to correspond well to the established identity of the Parsis. As she claims, the novel is a record of the Parsis as they existed during the early part of the twentieth century. But this identity which the Parsis thought to be very solid and natural to their community became unstable during the 1940s. As India was preparing itself for the post colonial period, the Parsis became very conscious about the problems involved in such an identity. This crisis is well documented in her next important novel dealing with the Parsi characters (*Ice-Candy-Man*). There is relatively less space occupied by the Parsi story in the narrative indicating the insignificance of her community in the larger politics of India. The mythical status of the Parsi characters like Freddy is occupied by ordinary Parsi characters like Dr.Bharucha, Godmother, Dr. Modi, and Lenny's father and mother who despite being still influential, are not in control of their lives. These characters are the first representatives of the postcolonial Parsis. They are not sure about the course their life should take, their loyalties and their futures. They are as helpless as their forefathers were centuries earlier, when they landed in India seeking asylum.

The declaration of Independence was a huge event in the history of the Parsis in India. A small group of Parsis was active in the freedom movement, but like Freddy in *The Crow Eaters*, most Parsis were against the British granting freedom to India. Prior to Independence, the Parsis were divided over the political future: they were worried about their position in a land that had been divided over riligion.The

discussion among the prominent Parsis in the meeting –that follows the Jashan prayer held by the Parsis of Lahore for celebrating the victory of the British in the Second World War –is a record of the Parsi conflict and confusion during the time of Indian independence and Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa, very delicately, had portrayed the identity of the Parsis before Independence in the words of Sir Easymoney: "One leg in India and one leg in England. We are citizens of the world." (*The Crow Eaters 222*).The Parsis were free to choose their identity as Indians with a declared loyalty to the British and felt secure as the citizens of the world under the protection of the British crown. But as the metaphor used by Sir Easymoney implies, their loyalty was divided and their condition was safe only so long as the British stayed in India. With the departure of the British, the carefully maintained balance was lost. The Parsis started questioning the wisdom of many of the decisions of their forefathers. They question the very logic of their forefathers' decision to sail towards India after abandoning their homeland; they criticise the British, who were held in great respect by their previous generations, for bringing polio (16) and syphilis (61) to India. The Parsees of Lahore hastily attempt to reconfigure their identity to remain in India after Independence. They consider the option of migrating to England but soon realise the folly of such a move: " 'And what do we do?' he asks, 'when the English king's Vazir stands before us with a glass full of milk? Tell him we are brown Englishmen, come to sweeten their lives with a dash of color?' " (40). The Parsis who boasted of themselves that they were the greatest toadies of the British (*The Crow Eaters*12) realise that they cannot migrate to England even though they are the subjects of the British queen. They hastily draw up plans for the future. From the superior sounding Parsi characters of her previous novel there is sudden transition to the helpless and frustrated characters in this novel. They understand their precarious position once

Independence becomes a reality and having nowhere else to go, they have to resign themselves to the lesser role they would have to play in the new nation. The Parsis realise the danger of having travelled far from their Indian identity during the colonial period and are now in no position to assert their Indianness. They are to live as strangers in a land where they lived for more than thousand years. They will once again be ruled by the communities that they once considered inferior in all respects. They realize that they don't have many options. They can neither remain loyal to the British nor to any single community of India which would invite the displeasure of other communities. The option of not getting involved in the developments taking place outside is also a difficult choice as that might send wrong messages about their loyalty: "I don't see how we can remain uninvolved,' says Dr Mody . . . 'Our neighbours will think we are betraying them and siding with the English' " (37). Dr. Bharucha, the President of the Parsi community at Lahore, reminds them that the Parsis must be very careful not to involve themselves in the post British struggle for power among the Muslims, Hindus and the Sikhs. " 'Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!' "(36). The ethnocentric pride of the Parsis seems to have been drained out of their systems; Bharucha calls them "jokers" with no power and pride to hang on to. The criticism of the Parsis regarding their loyalty has roots in the Parsi dilemma of choosing a consistent ideological and political position during the freedom struggle. While discussing *Ice-Candy-Man*, Novy Kapadia argues that the Parsis have no fixed ideological commitment: "Ideological concerns are limited and the only concern is to preserve the status quo that class interests remain unaffected". He criticises Bapsi Sidhwa and Dina Mehta for presenting Parsi characters whose only concern is the survival of the community. According to him, Bapsi Sidhwa

shows in her novels, that "for most Parsis the primary concern about major upheavals is how changing political events will affect their business and class interests" (76). This lack of ideological concern is very evident in the meeting where most Parsi characters decide to stick to a neutral political stance. Sidhwa admits in an interview given to Feroza Jussawalla that by employing a Parsi narrator she could be objective by not being one of the affected parties, and the Parsis, as she understood them, "made the best of things. If they were in India they became patriotic Indians. Those that were left in Pakistan remained there and were loyal to Pakistanis" (201). Sangeeta Ray also thinks that by using the Parsi narrator the author provides a "sidelong, yet penetrating look at the events leading up to the partition" from a Parsi perspective, rather than from the usual Hindu or Muslim narrations (131). In her preference for Jinnah over Nehru and Gandhi, Sidhwa is reasserting her identity as a Pakistani chronicler who rectifies the injustice of the Indian and western historians through her novels, by portraying the father of Pakistan as a liberal man who advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. She states that she was aware of the sympathy of the Parsis of Lahore for Jinnah as they considered him a "protégé of Dadabhai Naoroji" and being the husband of a Parsi girl, very secular (Bhalla 229-231). Sidhwa traces the transition of the Parsi attitude from the doubtless and firm loyalty to the British seen in *The Crow Eaters,* to the acceptance of the Swaraj and the rule of the natives in *Ice-Candy-Man.* What is enlightening from the perspective of the ethnic understanding of a community is that when circumstances change, the communities can adapt themselves very quickly. Dr.Bharucha is asking the Parsis, many of whom are still not ready to accept the loss of their glory, to understand and adapt to the new situation arising out of the British decision to declare independence to India. This adaptation involves a restructuring of the present ethnic identity and a partial or complete rejection of many

attributes which the community holds in great respect at present. Dr. Bharucha, who is so well respected within and outside the community, knows that the time has come for the community to prepare for the transition. Dr. Bharucha, who had earlier in the novel sharply admonished a Muslim man and wife for not bringing a sick child to him earlier than they did, in the following words, "And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don't know what goes on in your own house?" (12), has to come to terms with the reality that he is going to live in a country ruled by these people whom he had despised. As the reconfiguration of community's perceptions and definitions of friend and foe becomes a necessity, the leaders analyse the options available to them. They discuss *which* community they should choose to be friends with in the new political scenario: " 'if we're stuck with the Hindus they'll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain: if we're stuck with the Muslims they will convert us by the sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs!' " (37). This fear of the Parsis expressed by a member in the meeting defines the Parsi ethnic identity in opposition to all the three major religions of India. The Parsi community which had no history of religious persecution in India, as Karaka himself says (1: xviii) is beginning to sense the possibility of religious conflicts in the future. Adversity is an important factor in defining and uniting ethnic groups (Sarna). Threats from outside, real or imagined, can serve to unite the members of a group. The above conversation articulates the sense of hostility the Parsi community feels towards the Muslims and the Hindus, not only in terms of the present but also in terms of the past. The Parsi community psyche keeps the wounds of the past alive in order to generate a level of antagonism which would suffice to create a sense of ethnic unity. The reference to the Muslims as a community that would "convert them by the sword" has roots in the events that led to their exodus

from Iran thirteen centuries ago. Their long stay in India hasn't erased the memories of the genocide in the sixth century AD. Ethnic communities keep such stories of mythical and historical hostility alive as part of their racial memory. Sidhwa says in an interview with Bhalla that the Parsis have "memories of what happened to them thirteen hundred years ago still deeply embedded in their psyches. They can't forget the Arab invasion of Persia. It is part of their mythologies." The logic that it happened long back and is not relevant to contemporary communal equations and relations does not help the present generation forget those painful memories, a fact which Sidhwa admits: "It doesn't help if the young men protest and say that they weren't even alive thirteen hundred years ago and that past has nothing to do with them". Personal memories fade easily but "historical memories of atrocities refuse to fade away" (Bhalla 238). And the Parsi commercial rivalry with some of the Hindu communities like the Vanias is very old. By invoking the historical memories of the community at the crucial juncture of Partition, the community is grouping together again. For example *An American Brat* shows how the possibility of a mixed marriage is treated as a threat to the very existence of the community –"Parsees were a gravely endangered species" (268). By finding a potential threat in the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs, the Parsis are trying to group together despite knowing that they cannot resist or match the power of these neighbouring communities. Hence they summarise their plan of action to stay in independent India –"we must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare" (16). The same meeting provides the occasion for redefining the myths of arrival in India and the subsequent interaction with Indian communities. In the previous novel *The Crow Eaters,* Freddy recollects the Parsi household version of the history of their arrival in India and the benevolence of the local raja and the subsequent prosperity of the Parsis. But the stress of the story falls on its concluding

line: “To this day we do not allow conversion to our faith –or mixed marriages” (11). There is an obvious attempt in the story narrated by Freddy to emphasise how Parsis have maintained their ethnic identity without getting assimilated into the host nation. This ethnic purity that they maintained was hall mark of their superiority over the Indians during the British rule. In the second novel *Ice-Candy-Man* the same story of the Parsi arrival is ritualistically recounted but with a stress on a different aspect of their identity. The story in Dr. Bharucha’s version ends with the very popular Parsi myth of how the local raja symbolically indicated his refusal to accept the Parsi refugees into his kingdom by sending a bowl filled with milk –suggesting that there is no space for the refugees –to which the Parsi Dasturs responded by stirring a teaspoon of sugar into the milk, indicating that they would assimilate into the host society and sweeten their lives (39). This stress on the act of stirring a teaspoon of sugar into the milk is prompted by circumstances that demand that the community re-emphasise its ability to assimilate with the populations, rather than underline its supposed cultural and genetic exclusivity. When Partition was imminent the Parsis once again needed to project an image of a community which is loyal to the rulers of the land. “Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land!” says Dr.Bharucha. The use of the word ‘their’ by Dr. Bharucha constitutes a tacit admission of the reality that Parsis are going to be strangers in the new nation. The Parsis have, for various reasons, found it difficult to consider themselves Indians. They fear getting absorbed into Indian society. This fear could be the result of losing their identity. As Freddy puts it in a remarkably striking metaphor, they fear being “a dispersed pinch of snuff sneezed from the heterogeneous nostrils of India!”(*The Crow Eaters* 12). The ‘us’ versus ‘them’ opposition, which is very fundamental to the survival of ethnic communities, is strengthened in every discourse. Novy Kapadia

summarises the fear expressed by the Parsis in the meeting thus, "[. . .] through this animated conversation, Bapsi Sidhwa reveals the implicit, lurking fear of the Parsis, a vulnerable minority losing their identity and getting swamped by the majority communities –either Hindus in India or Muslims in Pakistan" (94). The narrative of the novel sidelines the Parsi story, but strangely interweaves the story of the Parsi contribution during the Partition. If there is any guilty feeling within the community and a feeling of betrayal towards the Parsis by Pakistan and India, Sidhwa gives them enough reason to remember the contribution of this community in terms of the help rendered by them in taking the victims to places of safety, risking their lives.

Ice-Candy-Man is also a fine example of an ethnic writing that shows how identities are circumstantial and hence fluid. We have already analysed how the Parsis constructed a new image for themselves as merchants during the British rule. They reconfigured their identity by stressing the qualities like honesty, intelligence, etc (*The Crow Eaters*) in place of their previous ethnic traits like military skill and agricultural intelligence. Identities can also be situational; that is, members of ethnic groups can for various reasons adopt identities of other groups under certain situations. For example, in *Ice-Candy-Man,* Moti and Papoo convert to Christianity and Hari becomes a Muslim and changes his name to Himat Ali in order to escape from the violence of the Muslim mob; many Muslim families escaped from the attacks of the Sikhs disguised as Hindus and Sikhs. Dost Muhammad, realising that he would be killed by the violent Sikh mob pleads with the mob to convert his son to Sikhism if they so desire and spare his life: " 'I beg you in the name of all you hold sacred, don't kill the little ones,' Ranna heard his father plead. 'Make them Sikhs . . . Let them live . . . they are so little . . .' " (*Ice-Candy-Man 201)*. In *The Crow Eaters* Sir Easymoney narrates the story of how he and his soldiers escaped from the Arabs

by shouting "Allah-ho-Akbar!" in the same manner as Muslims. Groups and members of groups can resort to various survival tactics in order to endure adverse situations including hiding, projecting and disguising their ethnic identities. What is illuminating from the perspective of ethnicity is that ethnic identities are flexible enough to accommodate situational changes quite easily. In *An American Brat*, the Parsi character Manek, who could not manage his studies with the money sent by his mother from Pakistan, assumes the identity of a Christian in order to sell copies of the Bible: "Why else would he, who was considered a heathen in the Bible belt, sell Bibles? Perjure his soul by lying that he was a Christian?" (199). When Manek narrates the whole incident to his family members back in Pakistan they do not find anything wrong in his actions either; they very sympathetically listen to his stories.

Regulating institutions of ethnic communities can control and guide the identity of its members. The role of Bombay Parsi Panchayet in constructing and regulating the identity of the Parsis in India has been discussed in the second chapter. Due to the refusal of the British to grant legal authority to BPP and because of the internal opposition from a few influential members of the community, the Panchayet became powerless. Today the Panchayet mostly functions to distribute the charity money to the deserving in the community. This has created a vacuum in the hierarchy of Parsi institutional structure and many Parsi novels mention the great role played by the BPP in the past and how its influence was very crucial in the construction of Parsi identity. Despite its minimal influence in the post-Independence period, the advice of the Panchayet is still sought in many important issues in the community as *An American Brat* shows. Feroza, in *An American Brat*, was sent to America to spend a vacation there so that she could be removed from the influence of Islamic Pakistan. She falls in love with David Pres, an American Jew and informs her family of her

decision to marry him. Her family, shocked at her decision to marry a Jew, sends her mother Zereen to America to persuade her away from marrying the Jew. Even though she disapproves her daughter's match with David, Zereen realises that he was a good boy and even thinks that he would make a good husband to Feroza. But the notice issued by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet reminds her that if the girl marries outside the community she will be excommunicated. She realises the threat implied in the notice regarding mixed marriages and decides that it is not good for her daughter to marry David. This indicates the influence of the Bombay Panchayet even in the post-Independence period on the Parsis who are outside Bombay. But it must be admitted that the power this community body once enjoyed is no longer there. The Panchayet had lost its power and influence much before Indian independence. The functioning of the Panchayet gives us valuable insights into the changing pattern of Parsi identity and brings to the limelight the flexibility of any ethnic community in incorporating new customs, practices and tenets.

The development of Parsi collective ethnic identity may be seen as passing through various stages or phases. Depending on the nature of the internal solidarity and bond these phases may be divided into the four stages as suggested by Don Handelman in his very influential paper titled "The Organization of Ethnicity". In this paper Handelman traces four stages of ethnic affiliation in the ascending order of "the degree of incorporation of ethnicity" (189).

The first stage is what he calls 'the ethnic category'; at this level the group is a loosely held collectivity which helps the members to identify themselves in contrast to other members based on "the elements of corporate history in time and space: a history which offers some explanation for their common membership, why they are members, where they originated, and why the existence of the category is substantial

and legitimate" (190). Membership in an ethnic category gives its members social identity and helps them to orient themselves to other members of society "either as fellow members or other kinds of persons".

The second level of ethnic incorporation is called the ethnic network which involves regular interaction among the members and the members should "explicitly or implicitly, verify their choice of membership" (195). The interaction among the members would contain visible levels of ethnic flavour in the "forms of speech, style of interaction and setting of interaction itself" (195). But the crucial difference between ethnic category and ethnic network is that the latter "will constrict a person's chances to reconstruct his identity in other than ethnic terms" (196).The boundaries that separate the ethnic groups will be drawn more clearly and seriously in the second level of ethnic incorporation. The Parsi identity must have changed from the first level of incorporation to the second after their encounter with the British. They tried to define themselves in contrast to and as superior to Indian communities. The Parsis during most of the period of their stay in India before the arrival of the Europeans must have maintained their identity at the level of ethnic category. The British policy of finding and creating loyal and local ethnic groups in order to effectively rule the natives allowed the Parsis to forcefully communicate their ethnic identity and increase the level of interaction and dependence on the members of their own group. The ethnic network definitely helped the Parsis to advance their economic interests. From a dormant 'ethnic group feeling' the Parsis suddenly created and articulated a powerful ethnic voice helped by the patronage of the Europeans and the economic opportunities provided by them. Ethnic networks are characterised by the ability to "distribute resources among group members" (Eriksen 50). The Parsis from the earliest period of their commercial success are known for their charitable work. As

Freddy in *The Crow Eaters* comments when a Parsi makes wealth he shares it among his fellow members. The Parsis even today are known for their commitment to their community in terms of helping the needy members by sharing the resources.

The third level of ethnic affiliation is named the ethnic association. An ethnic association is a collectivity of ethnic members who feel that "they hold common interests which only they can express together". One of the crucial components of an ethnic association is that there should be some kind of a formal structure to it which allows the members to meet "in some commonly agreed upon location" (196). This adds a territorial or spatial dimension to the ethnic group allowing greater and closer interaction that facilitates more successful planning and execution of demands that benefit the group. "The intersection of corporation and semi-fixed space connects categorical knowledge, group membership, and claims to territory in a manner which substantially anchors the categories of the ethnic set to boundaries that are comparatively more visible, and which demarcate more clearly "we" and "they" (197). At the third level of group incorporation the ethnic communities become visible as political, economic and social groups and articulate their needs in a more organised and institutional way. For most ethnic groups working within a nation, this is the maximum visibility that they can seek without questioning the sovereignty of the nation in which they live. The Parsis transformed themselves into an ethnic association during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the association took a definite shape with the establishment of the Panchayet. In varying degrees of visibility they maintained their incorporation in this form till the departure of the British.

The ethnic association is ever engaged in the process of maximising the benefits that are available to the ethnic group under the rule of the authority that controls the political power of the nation. The Parsis continuously attempted to

negotiate with the British for special benefits which would improve their social and economic condition. While negotiating for such benefits the Parsis had to highlight their difference from other Indian communities. For example Karaka claimed emphatically that "the Parsis are the most intelligent and persevering of all the races inhabiting India . . ." (1; 285). The motivation for such a visible articulation of difference from the mainstream society which comprised of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, is that such distancing definitely brought social and economic benefits to the Parsis. In retrospect it may be said that the Parsis indulged in such reckless acts of "we" and "them" contrasts to maximise their advantage which eventually led to their downfall. *The Crow Eaters* can be better understood if we understand this aspect of their collective identity. Freddy indulges in very clear strategies of bringing in this difference very forcefully to advance his economic interests. He makes use of his friendship within the community and the good reputation of the greater community for developing his commercial ventures. He uses his friendship with Mr. Bankwalla, Mr. Toddywalla and Mr. Chaiwalla to pressurise Mr. Adenwalla, the insurance officer to claim his insurance for the fake fire accident that he had masterminded. Mr.Adenwalla, himself a Parsi, had earlier used his Parsi identity to sell his insurance policies to the above mentioned Parsis. But he had to succumb to the pressure of his community, fearing that, if he failed to grant Freddy the insurance money he had claimed, he would lose all the Parsi clients. Ethnic sentiment is very powerful and it helps its members get additional benefits. The role of good reputation that the Parsi community enjoyed in the success of Freddy is also well documented; after describing the qualities that made Freddy a successful trader like his "manly bearing", "soft spoken manners", complexion which was "light and glowing", "longish, nobly-contoured, firm-chinned face" it is said, "All this, combined with the fact that he was

a Parsi- whose reputation for honesty and propriety is a byword- made him a man of consequence in the locality"(23). It is the necessity of the members of the collectivity that the community enjoys a good reputation, because the success of its members depends on the reputation of the community. And Freddy knew this better than anybody else. He was "renowned for his loyalty to his community and friends" (150). His loyalty was not confined to small acts of charity or benevolence; he used all his resources for the benefit of the members of his community, as in the case of Mr. Adi Sodawalla. Mr. Polly Sodawalla, brother of Mr. Adi Sodawalla, who was arrested by the British police on charges of smuggling opium into England, was saved by Freddy for protecting the reputation of the Parsis. " 'Something will have to be done', he (Freddy) agreed. Not for that indolent bastard's sake, but for the good name of our community. We can't let it get around that a Parsi is in jail for smuggling opium!' " (152). Interestingly Freddy is not honest in his business and he doesn't care to be very straightforward. He made money by brilliantly causing a fire explosion on a newly insured shop. His initial anger at Mr. Polly Sodawalla's arrest was not that Sodawalla traded opium, which was illegal, but that he was not careful. Ethnic incorporation, at the level of ethnic association, protects its members and helps them to obtain important economic benefits, which motivates the members to associate closely with the group.

In the meeting that the Parsis held after the jashan prayer to celebrate the British victory in the Second World War the nature of ethnic association becomes very clear. The Parsis discuss various issues that the community faces as Partition and independence become realities and the options that they would have once independence is granted. It is a collective decision making process and the identity that they discuss and agree to maintain is one for the community as a whole. They

discuss the economic and social implications of independence and decide that the best option for the Parsis is to keep away from the turmoil during the transfer of power and to be loyal to any community that rules India after independence. Such meetings of - the members of the community give more concreteness to the ethnic sentiment. *The Crow Eaters* and *Ice-Candy-Man* show the transition of the community in terms of its structural organisation –from a very strong association moving towards a loosely knit ethnic network –being forced by the outside circumstances. Even though there is regular interaction among the members of the community in the post-Independence era, there doesn't seem to be a clear and concrete structure regulating the interaction among the members as is implied in *An American Brat*. Despite the frustration of the old generation Parsis like Zereen and other members of her community, the new generation opts to follow the customs and traditions of the land, less visibly projecting their ethnic identity even though their commitment to their community and the intensity with which they defend their faith is no less than that of their forefathers.

The fourth level of ethnic incorporation that Handelman discusses is the 'Ethnic Community', which in addition to all the attributes of ethnic association, also has a fixed territorial dimension to it. The "ethnic attributes of this territory become all encompassing, and ethnic identity is attributed generally to all persons who reside within the territory" (Handelman 198).The fourth level of ethnic collectivity is not significant for the Parsis as their very small number can never really claim the control of any territory even though there were once discussions on the possibility of a separate place for the Parsis.

These levels or types of ethnic belonging decide the attitude of the community towards the neighbouring communities. At each stage the community will try to maximise the benefit available through collective effort and make necessary changes

within the group to optimise the resource sharing process of the country of their residence.

The new generation Parsis of the post-Independence period assert their ethnic identity, but not in the same way their forefathers did. Madhumalati Adhikari summarises the Parsi predicament in the post-Independence period in the following words: "The social safety and prosperity earned during the Raj period has negatively reacted and put them today in the other category -an ego destroying situation" (50).The dynamics of interaction with the host society have changed and the younger generation realises the folly of the needless assertion of many ethnic practices. The practices they find unnecessary or unfit to the contemporary times are rejected and new paradigms are created. *An American Brat* is a statement of the contemporary Parsi attitude to ethnicity and religion especially from the perspective of the diasporic Zoroastrians settled in the New World.

The Partition of India affected the Parsis as much as it affected other Indian communities. Though they were not directly affected by the violence that led to the murder of thousands of Hindus and Muslims during the partition, their tiny community was also divided between India and Pakistan with the majority staying back in Bombay. The small Parsi group that settled in Lahore and Karachi did not move from the newly created Pakistan opting to be loyal to the new dispensation. They do not seem to be ill treated by their new masters, which was a fear that the Parsis debated during the Partition. The Parsis had used their ancient hostility with the Muslims during the British rule to create an identity for themselves. As Karaka says the Parsis did not consider the rule of Muslims anywhere in the world to be very favourable to their chances of growth. However, the Parsis, as Sidhwa has stated on numerous occasions, did not face any hostile treatment from the Muslims during

Partition or after independence in Pakistan. And there is no reason to believe that the Parsis were ill-treated by the Indians in the post-Independence period. But as Parsi writers like Kanga and Mistry indicate, there were conflicts with the native communities which deprived them of the advantages that they enjoyed during colonial rule. The Shiv Sena in Bombay and the Zia regime in Pakistan have forced the Parsis to reconsider their relationship with the host communities. There is obviously a mounting pressure on the Parsis to assimilate.

An American Brat examines the pressure faced by the Parsi community to assimilate into the social, legal and cultural life of Pakistani society. Sidhwa records and analyses the response of the ethnic communities when they are faced by the threat of assimilation with reference to the post-Independence Parsi community in Pakistan. The Parsi community in Pakistan feels threatened by the possibility of their children getting assimilated into the host society and this feeling of threat has led to an increased degree of ethnic bonding among the members in Pakistan. Hinnells in his study of the Parsi diasporas comes to the conclusion that the Parsi community in Islamic countries, which includes two major diasporas-the Iranian Zoroastrian diaspora and the Pakistani diaspora, show stronger ethnic ties than other diasporas primarily because of the threat they face from Islamic societies (664). Ethnic feelings become very intense in the face of threat and danger. Hinnells observes that "the prominence given to Islam in the wider society affected the priority given to religion by the Zoroastrians and the comparatively high level of religious education there in comparison with Parsis in Bombay" (664).The older generation Parsis who were used to the ways of colonial life find it difficult to accommodate the changes taking place in Pakistan. Zereen, Cyrus, Khutlibhai, Soonamai, and other older generation of Parsis still live in the old colonial India and are not prepared to accept the changes brought

about by independence and the resultant loss of status of the Parsis. The new generation Parsis represented by the central character suggested in the title and other characters like Bunny are growing up under the increased threat of assimilation. They are not very keen on continuing the extremely anglicised life style of the older generation Parsis. The older generation continues to maintain the colonial identity and are still unaware of the alienation that such an identity creates for the new generation from the host society.

The novel, even though, at the surface level, appears to be the story of a simple Parsi girl trying to learn and live in a different culture from the one she was brought up in, is more significantly about the ways in which ethnicity creates, regulates and eventually decides one's identity. The collective identity of the community to which the individual belongs shapes the interaction with the environment and the interaction in turn structures the identity of the community and the individual. Ethnic identity is more enduring than other identities; it is an individual's primary identity and is most often ascribed at birth. This identity strengthens as the individual grows up by feeding on the energy provided by the "us" versus "them" opposition in the society. The individual perceives others in the society as either belonging to his group or as not belonging to his group. Ethnic bonding is not maintained by the relative isolation of the collectivities and instead through ever active interactions with the other communities which increase the visibility of the borders between or among the communities involved in the interaction. Eriksen states that "for ethnicity to come about the groups must have a minimum of contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves". For him ethnicity is essentially "an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group" (16). Fredrik Barth questions the simplistic view that "each tribe

and people has maintained its culture through a bellicose ignorance of its neighbours" (9). Ethnic groups *do not* maintain their distinction by not interacting with the neighbouring communities –especially in the twentieth century, with the media helping and necessitating the interaction among various communities. Boundaries that divide the communities persist despite the flow of personnel across them. As Barth further declares, "categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social process of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories" (9-10). In their influential study on the experience of the diasporic Jews who, as they claim, maintained their cultural uniqueness despite fully participating in the cultural life of their surroundings, Boyarin and Boyarin observe that the, "Diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from "mixing" but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing. Cultures, as well as identities, are constantly being remade" (721). We agree at the outset that ethnic categories try to be exclusive and the membership to the group is normally by birth: but it is not easy to maintain their distinction from other communities because there is always a danger of getting assimilated into the neighbouring majority communities. For ethnic groups to exist they should be recognised by other communities and their members should have a sufficient number of similarities among them. At the very least, the similarities among the members of a group should be greater than the similarities that exist between a member and a non member.

There are different ways in which similarities among group members is established. One of the easiest and commonest ways of establishing similarity is to project the physical features including hair type, skin colour or complexion, facial

attributes and other visible features. The emphasis on biological attributes has been discredited due to the critiques of pure race categories in the twentieth century. An overemphasis on the genetic component as a unifying factor in ethnic relations has not been seriously endorsed by social scientists in the twentieth century, even though biological similarities can definitely aid the construction of ethnic solidarity. For example, Parsi writers frequently stress the importance of skin colour in identifying Parsis; light skin is greatly appreciated by Parsis. In *The Crow Eaters* Freddy prefers light skinned Solly to dark skinned Behram; Ayah in *Ice-Candy-Man* is "so proud of Adi's paucity of pigment"(25) and Feroza in *An American Brat* boasts about her light skin. Another important factor used in the construction of ethnic identity is comprised of the common cultural factors shared by the members. There is a feeling that the members of an ethnic group share similar cultural behaviour which allows outsiders to recognise them as belonging to a particular group. Van den Berghe makes a very relevant observation in this regard. He says that the members of an ethnic group maintain their collective identity when they believe that they share similar biological characteristics. This belief may be real or putative, but the belief in the myth of common origin and biological similarities is important for sustaining group solidarity. But he concedes that due to intermarriage among people living in a specific geographic area, distinctions in physical/biological markers tend to lose importance. Ethnic groups under such circumstances resort to cultural markers as the basis of ethnic difference; cultural markers reinforce the solidarity of ethnic incorporation by stressing the similarities in the cultural behaviour of the members (Hutchinson and Smith 58-59).The biological and cultural similarities on which ethnic groups thrive should be constantly reinforced in group interactions. So to restate Fredrik Barth "ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance,

but are quite to the contrary, often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built" (Ethnic Groups and Boundaries 10).

Bapsi Sidhwa in her three Parsi novels has explored the three stages of Parsi identity and has effectively delineated various dimensions of Parsi ethnicity- their growth under the British and their commercial success, their fears and anxiety during and after independence and the possible future trajectories for Parsis in the subcontinent and in the lands to which they migrated. The first two Parsi novels, as Nilufer Bharucha says, focus on "ethnic details, racial identity and self esteem of the Parsees" (*Parsee Voices in Indian Fiction in English* 6) The third and latest Parsi novel deals with the fear of the loss of ethnic identity and self esteem, fear of economic and social marginalisation from majority communalities and the anxiety of extinction in the postcolonial period, with a special emphasis on the younger generation, diasporic Parsis. The last novel, as Sunita Sinha points out, is the "logical extension of the interest in displacement and the clashes between communities which is present in all her previous . . . novels" (251).The Parsis have lost their colonial ethnic and national identity in the postcolonial period and are facing the anxiety of traversing trans-national and post-ethnic spaces. In the process of adapting to the challenges of the new times, they exhibit a medley of identities. Like Manek and Feroza, they prioritise survival over ethnic identity, but in their own ways they preserve their ethnic identity. There is an attempt by postcolonial Parsi writers to go beyond ethnocentric narcissism towards a multicultural, secular and diasporic identity. This attempt will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, which deals with the conflict of the Parsis with the mainstream Indian society, their marginalisation and the possibility of their adoption of the new, multicultural paradigm. As Nilufer Bharucha argues, the Parsis can maintain the multilayered nature of their identity,

which is arranged in the descending order of importance, from the Zoroastrian religious identity, through national identity, to a wider transnational identity, without having to sacrifice any of these.

CHAPTER IV

UNCOMFORTABLE REALITIES

Mistry was born in Bombay in 1952 and migrated to Canada in 1975, as he recollects in an interview with Adil Jussawalla, to become famous in the music world (Bharucha 73). He is a representative of the young Parsis of the post-Independence period who migrated to the richer countries in search of better opportunities. This generation of Parsis was dissatisfied with the country of their birth and ancestry and felt marginalised by the majoritarian politics of the period. In all his four major works, which include his collection of short stories titled *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), and three novels, *Such a Long Journey (1991), A Fine Balance (1996)* and *Family Matters (2002).* Mistry powerfully voices what he perceives as the oppression of his miniscule community by the majority communities both at the national level and at the regional levels, especially in Bombay, where the majority of the Parsis live. There is a direct engagement with the policies of regional parties like the Shiv Sena and national parties like the Indian National Congress in his novels, and with the treatment of minority communities in general and the Parsis in particular by these parties. He criticises the failure of political leaders like Nehru and Mrs Gandhi in dealing with the problems arising out of the multicultural nature of Indian society. The central theme of all his works is the almost certain failure of the community's desperate attempts at preserving its lost past glory and ethnic uniqueness in an increasingly hostile contemporary Indian society which is organised along communal lines. In this chapter an attempt is made to probe into the factors responsible for the Parsi confrontation with mainstream Indian society and the decreasing acceptance of the Parsis by the 'sons of the soil' who consider themselves to be the true citizens of India: it also tries to analyse how the Parsis responded to this antagonism from their once "inferior" neighbours. Mistry firmly situates his novels in the historical context of post-

Independence India especially against the backdrop of specific historical events like the Indo Pak Wars, the Bangladesh refugee crisis and the declaration of Emergency. His attempt is to capture vignettes of the life of the Parsis in the post-Independence period at appropriate intervals, in order to study them and comment on them so that the novels work as historical documents and reference points for assessing the Parsi predicament.

As has already been said, Mistry's novels are borne out of the pessimism prevailing in the community and the bitterness of the loss of Parsi importance in Indian social and economic life. Added to this loss of significance is the conflict that the community is forced to engage in with neighbouring communities. This has led to a withdrawal of the community from any active participation in the larger socio-economic activities of the country as reflected in the ghettoed existence of the Parsis in his first collection of short stories titled *Tales from Firozsha Baag.* Ethnic conflict forms the background of many of the short stories in the collection including the first story titled "Auspicious Occasion". In all his works except *A Fine Balance,* the author territorially secludes and confines the Parsi characters to a building close to the larger society, but sufficiently walled off from the outside. There is a clear inside/outside relationship in terms of conflict and withdrawal hinted at in the metaphorical enclosures in the novels, even though it may be countered with the objection that the Parsis traditionally choose to stay close to each other. Ethnic conflict is a feature of most countries in the world both in the west and in the east. This is directly related to the multiculturalism practised in these countries. As Adeno Addis observes, most countries in the world are multiethnic and multicultural: "There are about 8000 distinct cultural groups inhabiting the more than 180 independent countries that are currently members of the United Nations" (112). This makes ethnic conflict an

international issue and even though every nation has a different way of managing its ethnic composition, many general observations may be made about the common nature of Ethnic conflict. “Ethnic conflict is a worldwide phenomenon” (3) says one of the leading scholars (Donald L Horowitz) in the field of ethnic conflict research. He mentions a long list of countries which experience ethnic conflict including Northern Ireland, Burma, Bangladesh, Sudan, Nigeria, Iraq, Uganda, Syria, India, Pakistan, Burundi, Indonesia, Malaysia, Zaire and Guyana. He also attributes reasons of various kinds to ethnic conflicts behind the Somali invasion of Ethiopia, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, Sikh separatism, Basque separatism, Corsican separatism, Palestinian separatism, the expulsion of the Chinese from Vietnam, of the Arakanese Muslims from Burma, of Asians from Uganda, of Beninese from the Ivory Coast and Gabon and so on. The issue of ethnic conflict leading to violence has intrigued researchers around the world. The attempt to find a pattern in ethnic conflict met with some success in the work of thinkers like Horowitz, Chandran Kakuthas, Ilan Peleg, Stanley Tambiah, and Paul Brass, who have attempted to frame a theory to explain the concept of ethnic conflicts across the world. There is a special attention paid to the case of newly formed nation states with regard to their ethnic composition and conflict, as there is observable data available on these nations.

Andreas Wimmer in his influential work *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* classifies the existing models of interpretation and analysis of ethnicity into four categories: 1)The first approach called the Rational Choice Theory believes that “ethnicity is politicised whenever this allows the actors to maximise political alliances or protection from violence under prevailing incentive structures”(51-52) The second approach called the Neo-Romanticism, of thinkers such as Anthony Smith, believes that “ethnicity constitutes a basic factor of social

life, ever present across time and space . . .” (46).This approach assumes that ethnicity shapes and sustains modern institutions and even nation itself. The third approach “understands the rise of ethnic and nationalist politics as the birth pains of modern society, as a transitional phenomenon on the road to modernity” (51) and analyses ethnicity in terms of the disparities in the resource sharing process that ethnic communities in the postcolonial nations face and the resulting mobilisations based on ethnic sentiments for greater shares. This approach discusses how modernising forces led to greater dependence on ethnic groupings rather than the disappearance of such associations, because of the uneven distribution of wealth. The fourth approach “holds that the politicisation of ethnicity and nationhood constitutes a basic characteristic of, or the functional prerequisite for, modern society”(52) and Wimmer further observes that “modernity itself is cast in nationalist and ethnicised forms”(52).

According to Wimmer, when the nationalist elite fail to marshal enough support for their project of nation building either by an inclusive policy or by projecting the interest of a particular ethnic group with that of the nation, ethnic conflicts begin in order to establish the ownership of the nation among the various ethnies. The ethnic composition and governmental structure in these countries are decisive factors in the extent to which the dissatisfaction of the oppressed ethnies turns into visible conflict and violence. In countries where the elite fail to muster enough support from the members of all ethnic groups, the government gets centred around one or two dominant ethnic groups and this signals a long term divide between the ethnic group in power and the rest of the ethnic groups, some of whom would be forced to surrender the share of supremacy they had before the new nation came into being. These dissatisfied ethnic groups would feel that they are deprived of what they legitimately deserve. If these ethnic groups are sufficiently large, they can precipitate

organised ethnic conflicts and violence. If they are too small, they may face the threat of extinction (as in the case of Parsis). In such cases, the social closure as Wimmer observes, "proceeds along many ethnic lines instead of one national line" (91). This politicisation of ethnic difference would eventually lead to the politicisation of ethnic difference in all sectors including bureaucracy, where those in power begin to favour their own ethnic groups to the dissatisfaction of other ethnic groups. This not only leads to a disproportionate distribution of resources but also to the breakdown of a system where citizens can represent their grievances. To further accelerate ethnic conflict, there are leftovers of the colonial policy of divide and rule. Privileged members of English educated minorities like the Ibo in Nigeria, Baanda in Uganda, Parsis in India, and Tutsi in Burundi –who were given preference by the colonial rulers but found themselves facing rising competition and antagonism from the members of other ethnic groups looking for better share in the new government –often find themselves at the receiving end in such conflicts. Beverly Crawford discusses how cultural identities become politicised and the ways in which cultural identities are transformed into political identities. He identifies the policies followed by the colonial rulers as one important source of this identity transformation: the case of Sikhs in India, he thinks, is a perfect example of this kind of identity transformation. The Sikhs were given preferential treatment by the British and the manipulative policy of divide and rule led to the politicisation of their religious-cultural identity. The same may be said about the Parsis in India also.

The role played by state institutions is also crucial in sustaining politicised identities –these institutions do this by way of defining the "rules of political membership, representation, and resource allocation" (Crawford 520). The process of decolonisation and the resultant permutations of it to ethnic groups in postcolonial

context have been well analysed by Horowitz. He discusses some of the possible reasons for the escalation of ethnic conflicts across the world. He lists factors such as the international environment, specifically the war time alliances during the first and second world wars, the complicated rearrangement of ethnic orders after the decolonisation process, and the emergence of certain key ideological concepts like equality and its impact on subordinated ethnic groups as the few most important reasons for the rise of ethnic conflicts. This chapter will look closely into the relevance of some of the observations of Horowitz at a later stage in the specific context of India.

The ethnic composition of any multi-ethnic society may be analysed along two models namely the Exclusivist model and the Accommodationist model. Exclusivist models tend to advantage one ethnic group over others and this leads to tension and conflict among ethnic groups. In such states political membership depends on, "intrinsic identities and cultural attributes of race, religion, or language . . ." (Crawford 518). The dissatisfaction of the communities excluded from political membership of the nation has been well discussed by Crawford:

> Exclusive nationalism, in contrast, restricts membership in the nation to persons of a particular cultural origin, making descent the principle of incorporation into the political community. Often, when groups are excluded from membership in the political community because of their cultural origins, they organize to fight for inclusion or autonomy. The resulting struggles have historically led to cultural conflict (519).

This implies that one of the latent forces of conflict along ethnic lines is the exclusivist policies practised by the states. Crawford cites the example of Germany

and Croatia where the rise in violence against the foreigners is due to the exclusivist policy practised by the respective states. On the other hand, states that practice inclusive nationalism consider civic behaviour as the criterion for membership and do not take cultural differences into any serious consideration while deciding membership. States like England, America and India practice inclusive nationalism. "Inclusive nationalism is based on the principle of individual incorporation; membership is open to any individual, and acceptance into the nation is open to all, regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief. Inclusive nationalism is associated with secular states" (Crawford 518).

There is a general tendency in ethnic studies to assume that ethnic relations involve superior and subordinate status among the ethnic groups involved in any interaction. Even though it is true that many ethnic groups are beyond dispute subordinated and oppressed, the case may not be true of all the ethnic communities in the world. (Horowitz). The baffling case of the Parsis in India shows how the members of the group considered themselves superior to others, and this feeling was endorsed by the British for administrative convenience but neither of these things prevented them from being marginalised on the basis of numbers. The Parsis are only a *numerical* minority; in terms of economic affluence the community is the richest ethnic group in India. The Parsi resistance to majoritarian politics in the post-Independence period is not really the result of a subordinated ethnic group trying to defend itself from superior ethnic groups; instead it is the result of the inability of the Parsis to understand their new position in the radically rearranged social and economic hierarchy of India. This hierarchy, it must be admitted, is ordered broadly along the lines of ethnicity, which in India very often takes the form of caste hierarchies also. The post-Independence Indian context has been increasingly hostile

to the Parsis as this study clearly establishes. There are numerous reasons for this antagonism and most of them tend to be the result of the general atmosphere of mobilising mass support by political parties along ethnic and religious lines. Mistry's novels explore the complicated identity of the Parsis after independence and how this identity is forced upon them by the hostility of the rising communal elements and their own inability to understand the new social, political and economic equations. Mistry's novels interrogate the issues of ethnic persecution that the Parsis are facing in the post-Independence scenario in India and especially Bombay. His engagement with the issue of Parsi ethnic identity in the post-Independence India began with his collection of short stories titled *Tales from Firozshah Baag* alternatively titled *Swimming Lessons*, after the last short story in the collection. Many stories in the collection deal directly with the problems of Parsi ethnic identity and the resultant crisis. However it is his first novel titled *Such a Long Journey* (1991) that clearly established his reputation as a Parsi writer. He consistently criticised the policies of governments since Independence, especially the Congress government at the centre, whose policies of appeasement of the majority led to the decline of his community. His engagement with these issues deepens and intensifies in his second novel *A Fine Balance (*1996) that can be treated as a scathing critique of the policies of the Congress government. The novel exposes the dirty political games played by Mrs Gandhi's government in order to capture and maintain power. The plight of the Parsi community has been foregrounded using the Parsi narrator Dina Dalal, whose story is interwoven with the story of violence inflicted on the other minorities and subaltern communities of India by Mrs Gandhi's government. His third and final novel *Family Matters* (2002) is in many ways a withdrawal from direct engagement with the hostile policies of the central government and deals more with the oppressive rule of

the BJP and Shiv Sena coalition in Maharashtra where the majority of his community lives.

Mistry shot into prominence with his first collection of eleven short stories titled *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) published from Canada, even though these short stories largely deal with Parsi life in Bombay. The characters of these stories are people living in an apartment in Bombay and they exhibit different shades of Parsi life in post-Independence India. Even though they present various aspects of Parsi life, the attempt is obviously to portray the decline of Parsi prominence since independence. There is also a conscious attempt at tracing the reasons for the Parsi withdrawal from the mainstream of Indian social, economic and political life and attributing it to the hostile attitude of the outside society in Bombay. Many stories in the collection discuss the humiliation and violence suffered by the Parsis in Maharashtra as a result of the communal organisation of political parties. The first story in the collection "Auspicious Occasion" is a perfect illustration of this point. The story describes how the central character Rustomji, a Parsi in his fifties, was brutally attacked by a mob and how he saves his life by playing the clown. In one spectacular clownish act Rustomji destroys the heroism that his fore fathers of the last few centuries had so painfully constructed. "Rustomji the clown was triumphant" (21). The whole incident leading to Rustomji's total humiliation began when somebody unintentionally spat pan on the white dunglee of Rustomji who was on his way to the fire temple. The furious Parsi old man abused the men gathered around him, who enjoyed the pathetic condition of Rustomji, calling them 'Ghatis' a name used by the non-Maharashtrians for the Maharashtrians. This enraged the mob, which initially had no intention of harming Rustomji, and it turned violent and was about to attack him. Realising that he has no chance of defending himself, Rustomji removes his dentures and appeals to the

mercy of the mob, which, seeing his pathetic condition, leaves him unharmed. The clownish bawaji character who presents a stark contrast to the dominant colonial narrative of the masculine Parsi is a consistent image that Mistry brings into his works. Dinshawji, Rabadi, Tehmul Lungra, et al, in his first novel *Such a Long Journey*, are such clownish characters. In a very striking passage in *Such a Long Journey* the central character Gustad's son Sohrab says how his friends make fun of the bawaji newspapers. And this study argues that such consistent portrayal of clownish characters is a deliberate attempt at projecting the defensive and submissive identity adopted by the Parsis in the post-Independence era in order not to get involved in violent ethnic conflicts. The conflict is not only with the outside world; there is a growing conflict within the community itself. The great community feeling which once helped the Parsis become successful vanished in the post-Independence era. Rustomji, who occupies a flat in the Parsi apartment, refuses to contribute to the renovation of his building due to his difference of opinion with the Parsi Panchayet. Only his house is left unpainted in the baag. This conflict within and without is a direct outcome of the relative insignificance of the community and the poor leadership within the community.

Like most other Parsi writers, Rohinton Mistry takes special care to archive the past of the Parsis in great detail. There is disappointment, frustration, anger and sometimes an indifference with which he handles the disappearance of the Parsi heroism and greatness of the past. Like the young man in his story titled "Condolence Visit", who visits Daulat, a recently widowed lady, in order to get her husband's pugree, which he wants to wear at his wedding ceremony in order to make it look very traditional, Mistry himself becomes a collector, an 'archiver' of Parsi past. The collector's image becomes the dominant metaphor of his short story "The Collectors."

The solid and well defined ethnic traits of the Parsi community are sharply contrasted with the rising sense of identity among the other communities of India, which was not visible for the Parsis for a long time. Rustomji fails to see the implication of his word 'ghati (which has the connotations 'uncivilised and uncultured') when he uses it to abuse a community which for long was taken for granted by the Parsis to be the powerless outside. The outside has organised itself politically, socially and economically while the Parsis themselves were now treated as an alien and powerless yet stubborn community by the 'ghatis'.

Rohinton Mistry, like most Parsis of his generation, doesn't think that there is going to be any end to their steady decline and expects no better future in India. Like himself, his characters try to migrate to America and the European countries in search of better prospects. The present generation of Parsis is brought up on pieces of advice like the one given by Daddy, a character in "Of White hairs and Cricket": "And one day you must go too, to America. No future here" (136). This is the obvious result of the ethnic anxiety that developed during the post-Independence period; the Parsis are contemplating migration as the only possibility of surviving. The dynamics of a multicultural democratic country haven't really benefited them. Mistry uses the metaphor of cricket –a sport which allowed the Parsis a close friendship with their colonial masters –very frequently in his works, as a way of reaching back to the past which is lost to them. He has precious little to say about building a glorious future or even constructively salvaging some of that past glory through pragmatic social strategies. He is a realist and drives home the point very clearly in his works that Parsi glory is a thing of the past. The Parsis had to settle for a middle class economic life in general, which for them is an indication of the fall from the upper class life they lived during the British rule. Mistry focuses more on the trials and tribulations of middle

class Parsis and hence is able to understand the policies of the government better, as every policy has a direct impact on their life. Like Boman, a character in "The Paying guests" observes: " 'There are laws to protect the poor . . . and laws to protect the rich. But middle-class people like us get the bamboo, all the way' " (162). The distrust and anger is not only directed against the outside in Mistry's novels; there is also an unsuppressable rage that he feels against the decay of the high ethical standards according to which the community lived in the past. The unity which the community boasted of in the past has disappeared; as some of the short stories in *Tales from Firozshah Baag* make it clear, the Parsis have started fighting each other even on minor issues and there is no effective community leadership which could prevent this. The murder of Parsi Dustoor by the Parsi Chasniwalla in "Auspicious Occasion" recurs throughout the collection as a symbolic act reminding the Parsis of the Baag that their own kind cannot be trusted: However a few characters still cling to the old myth of ethnic brotherhood like Boman –who initially contemplates requesting the help of the Muslim neighbour against a Parsi paying guest who refuses to vacate – shows. "There was someone who would be willing to speak in court, Boman knew: the Muslim who lived in the next flat. But desperate as Boman was, he would not stoop to that, to ask him to testify against a fellow Parsi" (168).

The last short story in the collection, "Swimming Lessons" again presents the issue of ethnic conflict in a direct manner. There is no attempt at being vague about author's attitude to the ruthless policies of the Shiv Sena leaders in Maharashtra. Mistry very daringly states how Shiv Sena has been in the fore front of the ethnic conflicts and the resultant violence in Maharashtra: the narrator's mother in "Swimming Lessons", frustrated by what is happening in Maharashtra, criticises the "Shiv Sena agitation about Maharashtra for Maharashtrians, threatening strikes and

Bombay bundh all the time, with no respect for the public" (278). The conflict has affected normal life in Bombay with the bus drivers and conductors behaving rudely with the passengers. Mistry presents the ugly side of Bombay, torn apart by ethnic conflict and violence, very realistically. Mistry uses contrast as an effective trope to project the corruption and economic crime in India by juxtaposing the Canadian and Indian contexts. The narrator who is settled in Canada assures his parents that he is fine and there is no need to worry about him and hopes that everything is "okay at home". This formal greeting and his casual comments about Bombay irritate his old father who retorts saying, "[. . .] what does he think we worry about, his health, in that country everyone eats well whether they work or not, he should be worrying about us with all the black market and rationing, has he forgotten already how he used to go to the ration-shop and wait in line every week?" (279). Mistry is a realist and there is no illusion that he wants to entertain in his fiction. He knows the pulse of the city that he describes because he has lived long in Bombay. But like the father in the last story one might ask Mistry why he has described the suffering, decaying and insignificance of his community without writing anything positive about it; the Parsis are not surely the poor or middle class that he describes in his stories. They are, as the father recollects "the richest, most advanced and philanthropic community in India" (296). That Mistry chooses to narrate only the poor or middle class Parsi life itself is an indication that he doesn't want to believe with many in his community and nation that things are okay with his community and nation. The story also claims that it provides an immigrant's point of view of his community and his nation. Mistry's diasporic imagination magnifies everything that he saw before his migration and awakens the writer in him. But in the process he also transforms himself into a prophet who sees

the sad end of his community which is weakened by conflicts within and threats from outside.

As Anjali Gera Roy and Meena T Pillai rightly observe, Mistry's works critique the way in which a " dominant caste, class and ethnic majority arrogates the right to speak for the people by occluding subaltern and minority histories that include women, ethno-religious minorities and the backward classes" (21). The dominant groups which lay claim to the nation on the basis of being the sons of the soil trigger conflicts which are far more serious than is assumed. Mistry is narrating the untold story of Parsi suffering and ethnic violence which demand answers from the rulers of the land. Nilufer E Bharucha also agrees with the perception that "ethnic minorities in India have been subjected to increasing domination by the Hindu majority" (51).

The short stories do not foreground the ethnic anxiety which become the central concern of his novels like *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*. But he hints at the uneasiness that the community feels in Bombay and in passing, mentions the riot involving the Shiv Sena in the story "Collectors": "[. . .] Dr Mody would be dead by the time of the Shiv Sena riots, the tenants would remember him for the gate which would keep out the rampaging mobs" (*Tales from Firozshah Baag* 98). Mistry appears to be preparing his ground for the serious discussions that he intends in the future works. But a careful reader can easily discern the anticipated threat from outside forces like the Shiv Sena. What is more interesting in the writings of Mistry is that there is an increasing identification of the Parsis with the other subaltern communities of Post-Independence India like the poor, the homeless and the lower castes. There is an attempt to intertwine the narrative of the unjust treatment of these segments by the government with the depiction of Parsi suffering. There is a serious criticism of the policies of the Congress government in stories like the "Collectors":

"The Bombay police in a misinterpretation of the nations mandate: *garibi hatao* – eradicate poverty, conducted periodic round ups of pavement dwellers, sweeping into their vans beggars and street vendors, cripples and alcoholics, the homeless and the hungry, and dumped them somewhere outside the city limits;" (119). The pioneers of the ethnic conflict theories have seriously analysed the various aspects of ethnic relations and the possibility of conflict among ethnic groups during the process of nation building. The principle on which the new state has to be built is a very slippery ground. Some of the new programmes that the Congress government implemented as part of the nation building venture were not very favourable to certain sections of the society; even though there is no reason to believe that these were directed against the Parsis, the perception of the majority of the Parsis was that these policies were harmful to their community. Mistry takes up these issues on a larger canvas in his novel *A Fine Balance*. The pages that follow will examine the various dimensions of the author's attitude to the problem of ethnic conflict as seen in his novels *Such a Long journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*.

His first novel *Such a Long Journey* is in many ways a sequel to his short story collection. Even though the characters do not reappear in the novel, the setting, and the issues introduced in many of the short stories recur and there is more time and space given to these issues. The novel is set in Bombay and it describes the life of the Parsi characters living in Khodadad building. The isolated Parsi community living inside the building provides a different perspective on the major political events of the post-Independence period like the 1948 Pak invasion of Kashmir, Indo-China war in 1962, Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971, the birth of Bangladesh, the nationalisation of banks, the Nagarwala case, the alleged manipulations during the election by Mrs Indira Gandhi and so on. Mistry is very sensitive to the political events in India as

they directly relate to the survival of his small community which is fighting a battle for its very existence both from within and from outside. As Jaydipsinh Dodiya rightly remarks the community is the protagonist in his novels, (Dodiya 99). Gustad Noble, the central character of the novel, has to fight both his personal battle and the battle of his community before experiencing enlightenment. It is basically his journey and however seriously it is connected with the story of the nation and his community, the solutions are rather personal. The three epigraphs of the novel, chosen from Firdausi's *Shah-Nama* , Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" and Tagore's *Gitanjali,* illuminate the path travelled by the protagonist:

> He assembled the aged priests and put questions to them concerning the kings who had once possessed the world. 'How did they', he inquired, 'hold the world in the beginning, and why is it that it has been left to us in such a sorry state? And how was it that they were able to live free of care during the days of their heroic labours?'
>
> Firdausi, Shah-Nama

> A cold coming we had of it,
> Just the worst time of the year
> For a journey, and such a long journey . . .
>
> T.S Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi'

> And when old words die out on the tongue, new
> melodies break forth from the heart; and where the
> old tracks are lost, new countries revealed with its wonders.
>
> Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*

Gustad Noble understands sadly that the world that he lives in is in a 'sorry state, but decides to navigate the distance knowing well that it is "such a long

journey" and that it is "just the worst time of the year" and finally reaches the 'new country' which is 'revealed with its wonders'. The new country is as much spiritual as it is economic, political and social –it is the new country the Parsis have to assimilate into in the post-Independence India. As has already been discussed in the previous chapters, the journey is a familiar motif in Parsi novels. How journeys to and sufferings in alien countries have been significant factors in shaping ethnic identity and fostering ethnic unity has also been discussed in detail in the previous chapters. In *Such a Long Journey* also the journey motif plays a significant role in uniting the Parsis through suffering in a land which, despite having been their homeland for centuries, has suddenly turned out to be antagonistic in the post-Independence period. The actual journey that Gustad Noble undertakes in the novel helps him restore the lost friendship with Bilimoria and brings him closer to his community. The journeys in the novel sharpen the boundaries between the community and the outside, leading to the final understanding of the real enemy of the community in the confessions of Bilimoria.

The novel deals with the story of three generations –Gustad Noble's father's generation, when the Parsis enjoyed great affluence and respect in society, Gustad Noble's generation which has lost the prestige and glory of its previous generations and lives on the dreams of its great ancestors, and the generation of his son Sohrab that has completely left behind the success tales of its ancestors and tries to live a new life with new trajectories. However the central narrative of the novel is the story of Gustad Noble who keeps lapsing into the dreams of his forefathers' glory but is realistic enough to understand his present insignificant existence. He tries hard through his sons to resurrect the great Parsi past. The novel presents many instances of Gustad drifting into his dreams of the happy days of the past: "Mixing memory and

sorrow, he thought fondly of the old days."(61) His physique and health are greatly envied by his neighbours, but he doesn't have the confidence of his father who used to go to the market "always accompanied by at least one servant, arriving and leaving by taxi; Gustad alone, with his meagre wallet . . ." (21). The contrast and comparison among the generations is central to the novel and it sheds light on the present identity of the Parsis. The novel also narrates the story of Gustad Noble's family and his friend Major Bilimoria a retired Parsi army officer living in the same building. The initial pages of the novel are preoccupied with events of national significance like the Indo-China war and the Bangladeshi refugee crisis, which dwarf even significant events in the family, like Sohrab qualifying the entrance test to IIT. Mistry's criticism of corruption, unpopular policies of the government, crime in society and betrayal of the ideals of Independence Movement –which had figured in his collection of short stories –takes a more concrete form in this novel.

Mistry criticises Nehru and Indira Gandhi personally and their policies which were directed at maintaining their rule rather than fulfilling the dreams of the citizens. Even though there is a veiled criticism of Nehru's lack of political and military vision that resulted in the Indo-China war, Mistry's focus is more on the indictment of Nehru's post Indo-China war period. Nehru, after losing the war with China turns 'bitter and rancorous'; "with his appetite for philosophy and dreams lost forever, he resigned himself to political intrigues and internal squabbles, although signs of his tyrannical ill temper and petulance had emerged even before the China war" (11). The Parsi relationship with Nehru family was greatly affected by the feud between Feroze Gandhi and Nehru. Feroze Gandhi, a young and influential Parsi boy and very much loved by Mahatma Gandhi, married Indira, Nehru's daughter. The relationship between Nehru and his son-in-law was far from being smooth: "Nehru never forgave

Feroze Gandhi for exposing scandals in the government" (11). Indira's relationship with Feroze was also very strained and after Feroze's death, Mrs Gandhi brought her children up as Hindus rather than Parsis. Obviously certain sections of the Parsi community were very unhappy about this even though Indira maintained a very good relationship with the Parsi community throughout her life. Dilnavaz airs the popular Parsi rumour about Feroze's death in the novel: "And before that, when her father was still alive, there was poor Feroze Gandhi. Nehru never liked him from the beginning . . . Even today, people say Feroze's heart attack was not really a heart attack" (197). Mistry accuses Nehru of his monomaniacal obsession with Indira during the post Indo-China war period and how he neglected the good of the nation and indulged in political games to make sure that Indira became the next Prime Minister. "His one overwhelming obsession now was, how to ensure that his darling daughter Indira, the only one, he claimed, who loved him truly, who had even abandoned her worthless husband in order to be with her father –how to ensure that she would become Prime Minister after him"(11). Mistry presents the version of the Feroze and Nehru relationship that was popular among the members of the community –Feroze, the undying champion of truth and honesty and Nehru, the compromising politician who did not deal with the unscrupulous elements in Congress with the courage that was expected of him: "[. . .] he no longer had any use for the defenders of the downtrodden and champions of the poor, roles he had himself once played with great gusto and tremendous success" (11). In the conflict between Nehru and Feroze, Mistry traces the earliest instance of political and ideological conflict between his community and the larger outside that now claimed the right to rule. The nation, Mistry understands, is going to be built by leaders who no longer believed in the Gandhian principles of honesty and respect for the marginalised sections of the

society among which his community was also going to be counted. Mistry even questions the very concept of democracy itself and its relevance to Third World countries like India, where it only helps further the exploitation of the poor and the weak. Sohrab points out at the anger of Bilimoria: "only two choices: communism or military dictatorship, if you want to get rid of these Congress Party crooks. Forget democracy for a few years, not meant for a starving country" (68). This observation of Bilimoria has to be understood in the context of the domination of democracy by the majority whose vote decides the fate of the minorities who have almost no role to play in the running of the government.

At times Mistry's criticism of Mrs Gandhi becomes more specific and direct. He accuses her of destroying Parsi business and affluence by nationalising banks. There was frustration and disappointment among the Parsi community when Indira nationalised banks because the Parsis were the pioneers in banking and money lending in India during the colonial period (the Parsi contribution to banking has been discussed in the previous chapters). Mistry has chosen the profession of his character Gustad Noble very carefully and made him a clerk in a bank. This allows the author to narrate the story of Parsi decline in banking more reliably. The discussion with a fellow Parsi clerk Dinshawji brings out the bitter feeling of the Parsis against Indira for nationalising banks: "Parsis were the kings of banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that Indira nationalised banks" (38). Mistry's criticism of the Nehru family extends to the third generation when he accuses Sanjay Gandhi of misusing his mother's official power to make money. Sohrab, who is also very sensitive to the political events of the country, sarcastically asks: "But what about the leaders who do wrong? Like the car manufacturing license going to Indira's son? He said mummy I want to make

motorcars. And right away he got the license. He has already made a fortune from it, without producing a single Maruti. Hidden in Swiss bank accounts" (68). He holds Indira responsible for the ethnic conflicts in the country, especially in Maharashtra as soon as she became the president of Congress Party: "At once she began encouraging the demands for a separate Maharashtra. How much bloodshed, how much rioting she caused. And today we have that bloody Shiv Sena, wanting to make the rest of us into second class citizens. Don't forget, she started it all by supporting the racist buggers" (39). The novel also discusses the election manipulations of Mrs Gandhi, the rumours about "chemically treated ballots, and crosses appearing and disappearing automatically" (93) and how she used RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) "like a private police force, to do all her dirty work including spying on opposition parties and also to start violence so that police can interfere" (93).

However the most important charge that Mistry brings against Mrs Gandhi is the Nagarwala case. This is central to the narrative of the novel. The Nagarwala case is generally assumed to be the greatest incident of crime in post-Independence India involving a Parsi. Rustom Sohrab Nagarwala, a former Parsi army man and an intelligence officer was paid a sum of six million rupees by Ved Prakash Malhotra, chief cashier of State Bank of India's Parliament Street branch in New Delhi on the supposed instruction of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (on May 24, 1971). No cheque was presented and no receipt was provided for the money. Later when Ved Prakash Malhotra approached the Prime Minister's residence for a receipt, he was told that there was no instruction from the Prime Minister's office for transferring the said sum. Later the money was retrieved, Nagarwala tried and found guilty and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. He died in the prison. The mystery surrounding the crime was never solved. The investigating officer DK Kashyap died

in an accident. The opposition accused the Prime Minister of corruption. Later when the Janata Party came to power, a fresh investigation was announced under Justice Jaganmohan Reddy and considering the extremely complicated nature of the case and the lack of evidence, Justice Reddy refused to make any specific comments on the nature of the crime. In the sub plot of the novel, Mistry takes up this mysterious crime case involving a Parsi. The Nagarwala case surely hurt the reputation of the Parsis in India and a large portion of the community considered it to be masterminded by Indira. In the character of Bilimoria, Mistry recreates the Nagarwala incident and tries to accuse Indira for having framed an innocent Parsi in a crime. This study does not intend to go into the details of the incident and neither does it attempt to research the truth behind the allegations against Indira by the Parsis and the opposition Parties. This study only analyses Nagarwala incident as a major post-Independence crime involving a Parsi and how this crime according to many Parsis tarnished the reputation of a community that for long had been considered honest. The novelist keeps close to the commonly accepted details of the incident: "Some months ago in New Delhi, Mr. Bilimoria, impersonating the Prime Minister's voice, telephoned the state Bank of India and identified himself as Indira Gandhi. He instructed the Chief Cashier to withdraw sixty lakh rupees from the bank's reserves for delivery to a man who would identify himself as the Bangladeshi Babu." And the rest of the details in the novel, like the arrest of Bilimoria and his trial and death in jail, closely follow the popular versions of the Nagarwala case. In the last quarter of the novel, Mistry presents the community version of the crime in the confession of Bilimoria on his death bed, which exposes the corruption of Indira's government and her political manipulations and also how Bilimoria was made a scapegoat by Indira. The tone is sharply antagonistic. Bilimoria clearly states the reason for his confession to Gustad:

"[. . .] I did not call you here to make you worry . . . feel sorry for me. What has happened has happened. I just wanted to talk to you. To make sure you don't think I tried to trick you. . . . But I was hoping . . . you will forgive me now" (280). The personal absolution becomes an act of getting the community rid of a serious charge which has become a historical necessity. Mistry's telling is coloured more by the ethnic association of this incident and it works to undermine the official versions of the incident with a view to restoring community prestige. From this perspective the novel itself becomes a historical document written on behalf of his community. Elsewhere Mistry *does* acknowledge that the motivation behind writing novels is to chronicle the community for the future generations. He becomes a community story teller whose purpose of writing is to lift the prestige of his ethnic group. This study doesn't background the literary value of the novel nor does it attempt to reduce the various other significances of the work, but only tries to suggest that the ethnic feeling of the writer is ever present in his tale. "It was not very often that a Parsi made the newspapers for a crime. The last sensation had been more than a decade ago, when a naval commander had shot and killed his wife's lover" (207). The novelist is reinforcing an already established identity marker of the community-honesty and lack of criminal record.

Ethnic animosity, carefully manufactured by political parties during the nation building process after Independence, is a normal way of gaining political power by rallying mass support against the once powerful ethnic elites who are reduced to insignificant numbers in the new nation. The attacks against elite minorities are easier because of their small numbers and the political gains of such attacks are very rich. The Parsis, the richest community in India, had been treated as a middle man minority community ever since their alliance with the British during the colonial period. The

various dynamics of the relationship between a middleman minority community and the outside has been discussed in the previous chapters. Conflict, which the study has recognised in the previous chapter as a natural outcome of such an identity, is made very clear in Mistry's novels. There are instances in the novel when the ethnic fellow feeling overrides one's patriotism. Nations use all possible resources of generating patriotism and loyalty to the nation after Independence and such efforts are also aimed at assimilating minority ethnic groups. Such propaganda does have an impact on the population at large, including the minorities. But during times of ethnic conflict and danger to one's own community, more often than not, it is the ethnic identity that gets asserted. For example in *Such a long journey* there were direct attacks against the Parsis by the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra: " 'In the bank we thought our innings were over when those *goondas* broke the windows, even the thick glass of the main entrance. There goes our bonus, I thought. They were shouting, 'Parsi crow eaters, we'll show you who is the boss!' " (39). This specific slogan of the Shiv Sena rioters has two dimensions to it –one specifically ethnic identification of a community by the outsiders and its cultural uniqueness, another and the conflict over ownership of resources in the economy. In calling the employees of the bank as Parsis and associating the almost ethnic phrase 'crow eaters' the goondas of the Shiv Sena are making a statement of ethnic rivalry. The idea is to identify an alien ethnic group in negative terms. The ethnic conflict, as some of the theories discussed in the introduction to this chapter make clear, is driven by material benefits, which in many cases involve the ownership of the state itself. The rioters are trying to establish their ownership of the state and its economic resources including banks which have been the monopoly of the Parsis for a long time. Mistry draws the attention of readers to this aspect of the ethnic conflict by describing how many of the organised riots and

shows of patriotism by the Shiv Sena were aimed at robbery, theft and personal vendetta. The ownership debate in the novel is carried forward in another conversation that a character in the novel called Dinshawji has with Gustad, where he says that the ethnic conflict is driven by an urge to own the land –to territorially establish their ownership and alienate the non Maharashtrians. " 'He [the leader of the Shiv Sena] and his "Maharashtra for Maharashtrians" nonsense. They won't stop till they have complete Maratha Raj.' " says Dinshawji (73). The slogan of 'Maratha Raj' is one that territorially walls out minority communities like the Parsis.

The rise of Shiv Sena as a powerful political party in India provides interesting insights into the way political parties manipulate ancient rivalries when they are found useful and discard them in situations where they are irrelevant. In his influential work on ethnic conflicts Horowitz refers to the situational manipulations of the legend of Shivaji, a folk hero of Maharashtra who led the battle against Muslims in the seventeenth century. The legend of Shivaji was "invoked once again in the twentieth century in the form of the Shiv Sena (Army of Shivaji). However, "this militant Maharashtrian movement directed its animus mainly against recently arrived migrants to Bombay-not Muslims except secondarily, but South Indian Hindus". Horowitz considers this as "an adaptation of historical memory to fit a wholly new conflict" (99). He draws our attention to how political parties and ethnic groups can forget the stories of the past and the enemies related to by these stories. In order to be effective in the present, groups can find new outsiders and different enemies. Mistry in his fiction refers to the legend of Shivaji and the ethnic manipulations of this legend.

Later on in the same conversation, Dinshawji expresses his resentment at the change of place and street names in Bombay which was done with the idea of erasing the colonial feel of the city by the new local governments. These token gestures of the

democratically elected governments were met with hostility by the minorities like the Parsis who enjoyed the pre-Independence feel of these places. This thesis consistently argues how Parsis found it so difficult to settle in to the changes outside due to the colonial identity that they adopted during the British period. Their very existence was centred on a colonial self. While most communities found it easy to redefine their role and status in the post-Independence period, the Parsis, due to their conspicuous identification with the white culture, refused to adapt easily. When Gustad politely enquires as to why he feels so angered by the change of names Dinshawji replies:

> Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place is Dadasaheb Badkhamkar Marg . . . 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 a second chance to live it all again with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out, just like that? (74).

The argument here is that ethnic conflict is also the result of a reciprocal relationship –not only does the outside recognise the community as an alien group, but the community itself has to perceive the outside as an enemy, or at least, the other. The Parsis, who were once the builders of the city that they live in today, command no respect and are treated with hostility by the people of Bombay. The new nation that is being built is not perceived as favourable to the community by the Parsis because of their refusal to a shed a predominantly colonial identity. Mistry constructs a discourse that involves the recognition of the Parsis themselves as non-Maharashtrians and non natives. This thesis argues that such a construction reflects the inability of the community members to discard the colonial construction of themselves in those very terms.

The question of how the Parsis construct outsiders in relation to their community is also central to their conflict with the local communities. The superiority of the colonial Parsi psyche always constructs an inferior other which resists a sociable perception of the indigenous communities. For instance Dinshawji recollects an incident during his discussion with Gustad Noble about a bus journey he had and the unrefined behaviour of a fellow traveller: "What to do with such low class people? No manners, no sense, nothing" (73). The total stranger who wets Dinshawji's shirt with his sweat and drives him mad is immediately perceived as a member of a community and an enemy and his actions are given community colours. As the rest of the conversation makes clear, he identifies the offender with the Shiv Sena and the hatred is turned towards a community rather than to an individual. "You know who is responsible for this attitude –that bastard Shiv Sena leader who worships Hitler and Mussolini" (73). The above conversation is a specimen of ethnic thinking and hatred in the sense that the behaviour of the local traveller is seen through the lens of Dinshawji's own feeling of superiority and intolerance of manners and behaviour at variance with his standards. Any deviation from his norms is deemed intolerant and the offence is immediately responded to with hostility, in the language of hatred. The 'such low class people' is not a term that denotes an economic class, but instead to an ethnic group, as the later reference to the Shiv Sena makes plain. Moreover, the reference to Hitler brings to mind the images of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Mistry also mocks the meaningless show of patriotism during the Indo-China war by political leaders and the masses. The fund-raising attempts by the political leaders with their rhetoric of patriotism are contrasted with the genuine show of patriotism by the Indian soldiers fighting the hardships of Himalayan snow defending their country. People turned the call for fund raising for the war into a competition

and a festival; “In some wealthy localities, the collection drive turned into a competition, with neighbours trying to outdo one another in their attempts to simultaneously seem rich, patriotic and compassionate” (10). Mistry ironically comments how, “some of the donated goods had turned up for sale in Chor Bazaar and Nul Bazaar and the stalls of roadside hawkers everywhere. . .” (10). Mistry almost casually mentions how high patriotic fever can turn people blind to the exploitation that accompanies such events as war. Mistry also brings in the problem of the lack of security and a sense of anxiety that existed among people following regular military unrest between India and Pakistan and China. Gustad Noble, in an act of protest, left his blackout paper undisturbed even after the war despite Dilnavaz, his wife’s regular protests against it. The black out paper keeps the house in the dark which forces the comment ‘in this house, the morning never seems to come’ from Dilnavaz. The blackout paper on Gustad Noble’s windows metaphorically shields his community from the outside by withdrawing to an invisible presence.

Mistry discusses the presence of corruption in post-Independence India in great detail; it’s not only the corruption at the national level, but also the perceptible presence of corruption in the day to day life of every Indian. From the milkman who mixes water with the milk to the inability of the municipality authorities to keep the roads and the premises close to their building clean: “With the road noise and nuisance so much closer. The flies, the mosquitoes, the horrible stink, with bloody shameless people pissing, squatting alongside the wall” (16). There is also a denunciation of governments policy of buying land at a cheaper rate; “It was hard to find anything these days more unfair than the government’s fair market value” (16).

Mistry attempts to dissect the multicultural nature of Indian society in order to analyse the reasons for the recent escalation of ethnic rivalry in India in general and

Bombay in particular. Sometimes he handles these conflicts in a lighthearted way and sometimes very seriously. For example, while describing his trip to the Crawford market to buy live chicken, he contemplates the possibility of the live chicken in the bag stirring a Hindu-Muslim riot: "Throughout the trip he felt anxious and guilty –felt that in his basket was something deadlier than a bomb. For was he not carrying the potential source of Hindu-Muslim riots? Riots which often started due to offences of the flesh, usually of porcine or bovine origins? " (21). Through the character of Gustad's Anglo-Indian Christian friend, Malcolm, Mistry generalises the fate and anxieties of the minorities; Malcom takes Gustad to the Church, which allows Gustad to contemplate his own multicultural and secular views. The Parsis are brought up from childhood according to strict religious observances. While they do understand that they are living in a multicultural society and that they have to appreciate the values of a multicultural society, they also realize how important it is to preserve their unique identity. Parsi uniqueness has been deeply ingrained in the Parsi mind of which Gustad says the following: "All religions were equal he was taught; nevertheless, one has to remain true to one's own because religions were not like garment styles that could be changed at whim or to follow fashion. His parents had been painstaking on this point, conversion and apostasy being as rife as it was, and rooted in the very history of the land" (24).

Secularism and multiculturalism are not to be taken as substitutes for one's deeply rooted religious affiliations and cultural uniqueness. There are instances in the novel where the Parsis working in the bank indulge in harmless jokes about neighbouring ethno-linguistic groups and their own community. There are the Sikh Jokes about the silliness of the Sikhs, the Madrasi and Guju jokes mimicking Gujarati and South Indian English pronunciation, Pathani jokes about Pathan's 'supposed

penchant for rear entry' and jokes about the vast reputation of the Parsi proboscis. "No ethnic or linguistic group was spared; perfect equality prevailed in the canteen when it came to jokes" (71). Although these discussions are only meant for amusement they do highlight the awareness of a multicultural social condition. They also point at how each community constructs itself and the other communities around in day today discourses. Throughout the novel Gustad Noble struggles to understand the nature of secularism and his attempts at assimilation are hampered by the unique Parsi cultural and religious background. Although playfully, the discussion between Malcolm and Gustad about the antiquity of their respective religions brings out how passionate Gustad Noble is about his religion; Noble forces Malcolm to give up when he claims that ' "Prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?' " (24). In a very jocular way Gustad Noble traces the history and superiority of his religion over all the major religions of the world. This is a basic component of ethnic identity –the feeling of superiority of one's own religious and cultural loyalties. This sense of ethnic identity based on superiority sustained during one period leads to conflict when the power structures that allowed the perpetration of this superiority disappear as it happened in case of the Parsis. The radical rearrangement of power structures does not easily translate immediately into new permutations of relationship among the previously ruled and the ruler. A period of conflict follows which in most cases, because of the existence of a majority government's effective interference, does not escalate, but plateaus down to settle at the radical loss of power and prestige of one group. At such rapid loss of prestige and power of the community, the members sound confused and are not sure of the values

to be followed to retain the best they could from the debris of the past. Gustad, as we realise during the course of the novel, tries his best to assimilate into the new society while trying to retain his Parsi identity.

It is through his son Sohrab that Gustad tries to structure his future. His son holds the key to his success in the new world that has no scope for the minorities. He has to see his son toil hard to get admission into the IIT and thereby access the only possibility of success in India for minorities. "And the Indian Institute of Technology became the promised land. It was El Dorado and Shangri-La, it was Atlantis and Camelot, it was Xanadu and Oz. It was the home of the Holy Grail" (66). When his son refuses to join the IIT after getting admission, Gustad's dreams are shattered. The Parsis are known for their enterprising qualities especially in business. But with the ethnic conflict forcing them to take a backseat, the only career option left to the them is to assimilate well into Indian society and hope for success through agencies that allow some success for middle class minorities, like the IIT. The knowledge that one belongs to a minority community in a country that is getting increasingly organised along communal lines creates anxiety. The Parsis were turned into aliens in less than fifty years in a land they thought was theirs for the last ten centuries. Sohrab was the saviour and the purpose of Gustad's life and in his refusal to join IIT, Gustad finds the total collapse of his hopes. "What kind of life was Sohrab going to look forward to? No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like black people in America –twice as good as the white man to get half as much" (55).The comparison of the Parsi fate with that of the Afro-Americans is very illuminating. There is a serious implication that the Parsis have been reduced to the status of a powerless minority outsider community in India.

Another source of ethnic conflict in a multicultural society is the differences in cultural practices that sometimes create unpleasantness among communities. The Government's efforts at instilling the values of multiculturalism may not always become successful. The unique cultural practices of the Parsis have at times been the reason for conflicts with the non-Parsis. One such instance is the rumours that vultures have dropped remains of the dead during their flight after feeding from the Tower of Silence where the Parsis leave their dead for the vultures to eat. There were serious complaints about this from people living close to the doongerwadi (Tower of Silence). The orthodox section of the community defended this illustrating how this is only a baseless accusation. Mistry does document this incident in his novel: " 'you vultures!' the tenants complained. 'Control your vultures! Throwing rubbish on our balconies!' " (317). Even though Mistry does not get into the details of ethnic ramifications of this blame, he does hint at the delicate balance that minority communities should maintain in a multicultural society. The majority is closely monitoring the practices of minority groups and the culturally unique practices of such groups are looked at with suspicion and revulsion if not with out-and-out hostility. This cultural surveillance by the majority creates ethnic anxiety in the minority communities. Dodiya calls *Such a Long Journey* "a tale of a minority community and its fears, anxieties and sense of powerlessness" (45). While there is an objection to the system of disposing of the dead among the Parsis by the outsiders, there is also a feeling of discomfort among the Parsis about the cremation of the Hindus. Mistry does comment on the uneasiness of the Parsis about the practice of cremation among the Hindus. Dina, the central character of Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* who attends the funeral of the beggar Shankar innocently tells the Beggarmaster " 'Neither Maneck nor I have ever been to a Hindu funeral', she

confessed." and she asks him " 'what should we do when we get there?' ". When she was told about the cremation she gets upset and asks: " 'Is it hard to watch? Someone told me there is a very strong smell. Can you actually see the flesh burning?' " (505). Inter ethnic exchanges involve the act of turning the familiar into unfamiliar and making the process of communication itself an act of asserting the borders across which transactions are made. This point has been discussed in the third chapter (on Bapsi Sidhwa). However these assertions which declare identity on the basis of differences delay the process of assimilation, thereby leading to conflicts. What is also important in the case of the Parsi method of disposing the dead is the debate within the community itself between the reformist and the orthodox sections. The reformists believe that they should adopt the practice of the larger society which is cremation and they think that the ancient practice is damaging the reputation of the community. "Such a ghoulish system . . . ill became a community with a progressive reputation and forward-thinking attitude" (317). The orthodox section would have none of these moves towards reform. There is an attempt to project the need for change in identity and this change is necessitated by the urge for assimilating into a multicultural society and other external factors. One of the most important external factors is the increase in the migration of Parsis to foreign lands where they do not have access to Towers of Silence and are forced to cremate their dead. In the previous chapter on Bapsi Sidhwa this study has analysed how Feroza and the new generation Pakistani Parsis were attempting to assimilate into the larger society in order to avoid conflict, thereby pushing the argument within the community for a different identity. This is a debate which shows how the transformation of identity would happen under circumstances that demand it. This challenges the views of the primordialist theorists who argue that ethnic identities are fixed.

Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* is an epic narrative on the misery and political manipulations during the Emergency period recounted from the perspective of two untouchable characters Om and Ishwar and a middle class Parsi woman, Dina Dalal. The novel is set in 1975 against the backdrop of the declaration of emergency by Indira Gandhi. Dina Shroff (later Dina Dalal) was born into a very respectable Parsi family whose father had been a doctor with a modest practice. He did not make much of a fortune because of his philanthropic orientation. He dies in a remote village of snake bite while attending a medical camp leaving Dina and Nusswan to be taken care of by his wife. Nusswan very soon takes charge of the family and sets up a moderately profitable business. His arrogant mistreatment forces Dina to stop her studies and confine herself to domestic chores. Later she meets a young Parsi and gets married to him. But after his death in an accident she is forced to find a living by stitching clothes. When her doctor advices her to stop stitching in order to save her eyes from blindness she goes in search of tailors who could stitch clothes for her. After many difficulties she finds two Chamars turned tailors and they start stitching in her flat hidden from her landlord's eyes. The Chamars, Omprakash and his uncle Ishwar were victims of upper caste oppression in their village. Ishwar's father Dukhi had sent his children Narayan and Ishwar to his friend Ashraf as apprentices in his tailoring shop in order to escape the oppression of the caste system. Later on Ishwar's family was burnt alive by the upper castes; Narayan and all his family members die except Ishwar and Narayan's son Omprakash. Omprakash and Ishwar become skilled tailors but factories deny them job and they are forced to take up employment at Dina Dalal's flat. But with the declaration of emergency misfortunes descend upon them and they lose their jobs and become victims of the Government's forced Family Planning Programme (FPP). Upper caste Thakur Dharamsi, in charge of the FPP takes

revenge on Omprakash by removing his testicles. The tailors with no job and nowhere to go become beggars in the city. Dina who loses her flat and her Chamar employees takes shelter in her brother Nusswan's flat. He accepts her to show his generosity but uses her as a servant in the family. The novel also narrates the story of Manek Kohlah, a young Parsi student from the hills who tries to understand the complicated ways of city life and eventually commits suicide, and Avinash , leader of the student union of the hostel where Manek studies, found dead under very suspicious circumstances. One event that unites all these characters is the declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi. The novel is very gloomy and depressing, a fact Mistry hints at, in the epigraph to the novel. The novel narrates many important events in post-Independence India that have direct bearing upon the minorities and lower castes from partition to the declaration of emergency. The ethnic issues that Mistry discussed in the first novel are treated on a larger canvass in this novel even though it is not strictly a Parsi novel. It is a critique of the Emergency period and its impact on the minorities and the lower castes.

Even though the novel seems to have dwarfed the Parsi story by choosing to magnify the larger picture of the social, economic and political life of the nation, the lens through which it is magnified is that of the Parsi one, which merges frequently with that of the subaltern. The story of the Chamars and that of the Muslims (narrated through the character Ashraf) provide a platform for the novelist to present the conflicting relationship of his own community with the powerful communities of India in the post-Independence period. Even though a large portion of the novel discusses the story of the untouchables in post-Independence India and the declaration of the Emergency, these issues are not discussed for the simple reason that the caste

issues fall beyond the scope of this study and the Emergency is already dealt with in sufficient detail in the first novel.

The Parsi conflict in the novel is presented from three different perspectives – the first deals with the problems of a Parsi widow trying to make a living in the post-Independence patriarchal society, which has grown increasingly hostile towards its weaker segments. The second deals with the attempts of a young Parsi boy who was born into the shambles of his ancestor's greatness, trying to grapple with the complexity of post-Independence India which ends in his suicide. And the third deals with the theme of the successful post-Independence Parsi businessman. All the three attempts at tracing the various dimensions of Parsi conflicts with the post-Independence Indian society unravel the myriad dimensions of the Parsi identity. Dina's interactions with the two Chamars help her understand the complex nature of the Indian caste system and the exploitation, domination and the violence of the upper caste rich people. Her conflicts happen at two levels –with her own community and the outside. The patriarchal nature of her community denies her an equal treatment with her brother and makes her a save in her own family. Her Parsi ethnic identity does not fall within the caste hierarchy of India. Even though Parsis are an affluent community and claim ethnic superiority they do not believe in a caste system. This helps her accept the lower castes (Chamars) as equals. She easily identifies her suffering with that of the Chamars. It is her Parsi ethnic identity that helps her easily strike a friendship with the lower caste chamars. Dina has no problems accommodating the tailors in her house even though initially she is suspicious of their hygiene and toilet habits. Her own ethnic identity becomes known to her through her interaction with the Chamars. Her self-knowledge helps her understand the position of her own community and that of the other subaltern communities in relation to the

powerful locals of Bombay represented by the Shiv Sena. She realises how powerful the outsider is and how antagonistic they can get towards even a relatively harmless middle aged widow like her. She approaches the legal system and various powerful individuals for help. She gets help from none. Her sympathies with the powerless only further marginalise her. Horowitz has argued that in societies where there is domination by one group the marginalised groups "may align politically with-or even attempt to forge a common ethnic identity with- a parallel group so as to escape domination by superordinates". He cites the example of how "Sikh Harijans have periodically aligned with the Hindus to avoid domination by the Sikh Jats in Punjab" (36). Mistry in this novel is opening up a new possibility for the Parsis by trying to forge a common ethnic identity with subaltern and minority communities.

Dina turns to her family in the end and she realises that her destiny is trapped in her ethnicity. She can't go anywhere and neither can she live an independent life. She has to hide her individuality and selfhood within the ethnic enclosures of her community. In the end one might be tempted to think that Dina's tragedy is the result of the Emergency, which denied her legal protection from the landlord and destroyed her tailoring business with the mutilation of her employees by the guardians of the Emergency. Like many others she also thought that the Emergency was another political game that doesn't affect the life of ordinary people: "Government problems – games played by people in power. It doesn't affect ordinary people like us" (75). But soon she finds her life destroyed by the Emergency. However her tragedy is also the result of the failing of her ethnic identity which fails to adapt like her brother Nusswan's. Mistry tries to build a fraternity of the oppressed by bringing together the Muslims, the lower castes and the Parsis in this novel. There is a bonding among the

Parsis, Muslims and the Chamars in the novel; they are all victims of upper caste oppression.

The novel in a flash back refers to the attempts by upper caste Hindus to unite all people of all castes under one banner by creating common enemies in Muslims and other minorities. Mistry narrates the story of Dukhi, the father of Chamar brothers Omprakash and Narayan, who could not be persuaded by the rhetoric of upper caste Hindus during the partition. Attempts of Hindu upper castes at uniting all Hindus under one banner fails during the Partition because the lower castes do not identify themselves with the oppressor. Their sympathies are more with the Muslims. For instance Dukhi observes that "at least his Muslim friend treated him better than his Hindu brothers" (116). This suggests that identities are very complex and sometimes the myth of common origin or religion (here Hinduism) fail to unite all members.

Mistry and Bapsi Sidhwa both view Partition violence as the result of the greed of certain sections of religious groups. They both identify their Parsi characters with the victims during the Partition. Even though there was no case of specific persecution of the Parsis during the Partition as has already been discussed in the second and third chapters, the Parsis suffered economic and political losses. The Partition downgraded them from the status of a powerful British ally to the status of victims. Maneck Kohlah's family is a perfect illustration of the damage suffered by the Parsis during partition –his family lost all its property except a small grocery shop and they never really recovered from it. The Kohlahs formed their identity and existence in response to this terrible loss of wealth and prestige. Maneck's father Farokh Kohlah was an extremely rich Parsi who had fields of grain, orchards of apple and peach, and a business contract with the army. But the Partition destroyed all his wealth: "A foreigner drew a magic line on a map and called it the new border; it

became a river of blood upon the earth. And the orchards, fields, factories, business, all on the wrong side of that line, vanished with a wave of the pale conjuror's wand" (205). It is not the violence that accompanied Partition that hurt the Parsis but the loss of wealth and business. The Government's promise of compensation to the people affected by the Partition did not materialise and the tedious process of treading the bureaucratic path to get the compensation turned to frustration. "Ten years later, when Maneck was born, Farokh Kohlah, trapped by history, was still travelling regularly to court houses in the capital, snared in the coils of the government's compensation scheme, while files were shuffled and diplomats shuttled from this country to the other"(205). The Parsis perhaps did not understand the new bureaucratic system or they failed to exert enough influence at the highest level to get things done their way after independence. The shock of the Partition was accompanied by a period of conflict with the new government and the new communities in charge of the new nation saw the rapid decline of the Parsis. The glory, shock and decline of the Kohlah family represent the story of the Parsis in India. It is an oft repeated theme in the Parsi novel. Farokh Kohlah's attempts at trying to rebuild his family fortune receive periodical blows from the government in the form of reforms and nation building. The only source of income that was left of the Kohlah family was the shop which loses its business when in the name of reform and modernisation, the hill where it was located was taken over by government construction paving the way for multinational companies. Farokh Kohlah dies realising that there is no future for the Parsis in India. His last attempt towards preparing himself and his family against the certain doom was to equip his son Maneck to face the challenges of the new nation. But Maneck being a very sensitive person cast in the mould of his philanthropic Parsi ancestors, commits suicide unable to bear the violence of the world despite his personal success

at his job. The Kohlahs fail in their business due to lack of adaptability and a resistance to change their ethics to suit the needs of the future. It is surprising that a community known for its westernisation, modernisation and Anglicisation fails to adopt new business ethics in the post-Independence era. The Kohlahs criticise the British for leaving the country in a mess and the leaders of the new nation for lacking political vision:

> Mr. Kohlah watched helplessly as the asphalting began, changing the brown rivers into black, completing the transmogrification of his beloved birthplace where his forefathers had lived as in paradise. He watched powerlessly while, for the second time, lines on paper ruined the life of the Kohlah family. Only this time it was an indigenous surveyor's cartogram, not a foreigner's imperial map (216).

Farokh Kohlah realises that they are heading towards troubled times in the country of their birth and decides to send his son abroad for job. His business is destroyed by the multinational companies; it is sometimes surprising to see how the Parsis failed in their business after the departure of the British. The Kohlah's were slow to modernise themselves and as Farokh Kohlah says rightly: " 'The slow coach gets left behind . . . And I don't want the same thing to happen to Maneck' "(221). There is also the fact that the agents of modernisation are too powerful for ethnic groups to resist and succeed. The magic formula that made the cola at the Kohlah shop so successful for generations fails against the advertising campaigns of the new cola companies. Maneck belongs to a generation of the Parsis that has, in Arnold's phrase, been caught between two worlds –one dead, the other powerless to be born. The novelist very effectively phrases their predicament: "[. . .] when Mr. Kohlah's turn came he told of his family's glory days, not from self pity or notions of false

grandeur, nor to sing his own achievements in the present, but as a lesson in living life on the borderline –modern maps could ruin him, but they could not displace his dreams for his family" (208). He is living on the borderlines of survival and extinction, familiarity and rootlessness. The Kohlah family anticipates ethnic conflicts in the future and warns Maneck: "All your life here, we never once discouraged your friendly nature. Whether your companions were rich or poor, and whatever caste or religion –those differences were not important. But now you are facing the most crucial difference of all, by leaving here for the city. You must be very careful" (224). The sudden turn of events around the middle of this century left the Parsis in a state of utter confusion. Beneath their feet sands were shifting rapidly. Their ethno-national identities were to be re-examined in the wake of the new nation. They had no option but to show their loyalties to the new nation and its leaders. The rhetoric of patriotism involves the use of power and violence to make it effective. There is an instance in the novel when Maneck and his Chamar friends along with hundreds of others, who had come to watch the movie, were forced by the members of Shiv Sena to show their patriotism when the national anthem was sung. "No one was allowed to leave till the flag faded on the screen and the lights came on" (281). Om and Maneck respond sharply to this extraction of patriotism-" 'why is patriotism a sacred duty?' laughed Om. They need to frighten people to be patriotic?' These idiots can't even spell sacred, and they are telling us what to do,' said Maneck" (282). The minorities are forced to assimilate into the mainstream by the majority and the ruling communities of the nation. This will lead to conflict even though such conflicts are easily overcome by the government with its machinery of subjugation. The Parsis felt their weakest in these times. As the study has already mentioned, this transition period that saw the conflict and identity crisis of the Parsis finds mention in most of the Parsi novels. The

Kohlahs are reduced to small traders and the next generation represented by Maneck decides to migrate to the Gulf countries in search of better employment. Being rootless in the new land they do not feel happy. Maneck also realises like Gustad Noble that "it's such a long journey" a phrase that Mistry repeats in his second novel. Identities are very crucial to one's survival because they allow an individual to root himself to a place, a group and a cultural tradition. Uprooted from all this Maneck has no other choice but to commit suicide throwing himself in front of a train.

While some like Maneck thought that "life seemed so hopeless, with nothing but misery for everyone . . ." (271) many others in his community were determined to fight the battle of survival; Mistry does agree that the Parsis are a community that weathered many adverse storms before, to be where they are now. Their much praised adaptive flexibility is not completely lost. Nusswan represents that section of the Parsis that will succeed in post-Independence India. He is a very successful businessman who admires Indira and sides with the powerful forces around that can aid his success. He understands the trappings of ethnicity and manages to please his family and community. He is not a philanthropist like his father and hence can easily adapt himself to the demands of the times. Mistry advises the Parsis to adapt to changes: "Please always remember, the secret of survival is to embrace change, and to adapt" (230). Nusswan is the only successful Parsi in the novel because he accepts change and transforms his life and switches his loyalties without any scruples. Both Maneck and Dina find it impossible to overcome the nostalgia for the old days and perpetually slip into reminiscences of the glorious days before Independence. Maneck is shattered by the destruction of the beautiful hill and the warmth of relationships before modernisation distorted his hill and his personal world. Dina whiles away her life brooding over the changes that had come in the city and the loss of her personal

world with the death of her father: “yes, she said, in those days the city was still beautiful, the footpaths were clean, not yet taken over by the pavement-dwellers, and, yes, the stars were visible in the sky, . .”(336).

Mistry again turns to the Parsi theme in his third novel *Family Matters*. He faithfully records the reality of many Parsi families that face the problem of taking care of the elderly and the diseased. Nariman Vakeel, a retired college professor suffering from Parkinson’s disease is being taken care of by his two step children Jal and Coomy initially and later by his daughter Roxana and son-in Law Yezad Chenoy. The novelist chronicles the financial difficulties of the Yezad family whose financial stability is affected by the arrival of Nariman. The medical expenses of Nariman strain the delicately balanced budget of the Yezad family. Yezad loses his job when a couple of Shiv Sena workers killed Mr. Kapur the owner of the shop where he worked. Yezad who did not take his religion seriously turns to the consolation offered by religion after losing his job. He soon becomes very religious and intolerant of everything that conflicted with his faith. Mistry continues to portray the oppressive and fascist rule of Shiv Sena in this novel through the encounters of Mr. Kapur, a Punjabi Hindu and Yezad with Shiv Sena. Both Yezad and Kapur are nostalgic about the Bombay of the past and are very anxious about the rise of religious fascism led by Shiv Sena in Bombay. Unlike his two previous novels, Mistry confines his deliberations to Bombay and the Parsi community. There is no attempt at discussing events of national significance like he did in the previous three works. The ambiguous title which suggests that it is a family saga also underscores the role of family and tradition in rooting a person’s identity. If the novel attempts any specific conclusion towards the end, it is that one’s ethnic identity is very powerful and it helps a person manage his crisis in a multicultural society. This also opens up the discussion on how

ethnic identity is also the construct of hostility and adverse treatment by the outsiders. Zygmunt Bauman's insights into the construction of strangers by every society is very useful in understanding how every society produces strangers but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers. He views this as the inevitable result of modernism which constantly tries to identify 'others' in society and in some cases turns some of the inhabitants of a group into strangers. This aspect has been discussed in the first chapter. The growing threat of the Shiv sena and the lack of opportunities in Bombay forces Yezad to reconsider his own identity and he eventually becomes a very orthodox Parsi advocating the need for maintaining ethnic purity to his children.

The sub plot of the novel deals with the story of Nariman Vakeel, who could not marry his girl friend Lucy, a Goan girl because she was a non Parsi and ends up marrying a Parsi widow Yasmin. The sub plot discusses the various debates within the community about the maariage of Parsis with non Parsis. Despite Nariman's sincere and honest attempt to marry Lucy he fails because of the strong ethnic identity of Parsis as a closed and pure ethnic group. Nariman challenges this claim and refuses to be a religious Parsi. He stops going to the Fire temple. His marriage is a failure and it ends with the accidental death of Lucy and his wife Yasmin. The subplot effectively sets the tone for the main plot which repeats the issues of the sub plot. The theme of Parsi identity is examined by contrasting the two important Parsi characters of the novel -Nariman who is a flat character and Yezad, whose identity moves from one extreme to the other. He starts of as a Parsi only by birth and passes through a phase of transition during which period he questions, criticises and even mocks his faith and eventually learns the greatness of his ethnic tradition and decides to spend the rest of his life for his community and prayers. From the perspective of ethnic studies the novel is a bildungsroman on the growth of Yezad's ethnic consciousness. The most

important factor that shapes his ethnic identity is the hostility of the outside world especially the Shiv Sena. His dreams of living peacefully in a multicultural society is shattered when he realises that Bombay is going to be taken over by fascist forces and middle class minorities like him have no place in it. He sees the murder of Mr. Kapur, a Punjabi who had moved to Bombay many years back and set up a sports shop, as a warning to all minorities living in Bombay. Mr. Kapur considered himself as belonging to Bombay but with the rise of the BJP and Shiv Sena realises that he is not accepted as an insider. The discussions between Yezad and his employer Kapur reveal the anxiety of both regarding the disappearance of peace and tolerance from Bombay, a city which once accommodated people of all religions and ethnic groups. Bharucha discusses the anxiety felt by the minorities in India with the rise of BJP: "They (minorities) feel threatened by the militant Hinduism of the BJP and even though they are currently not the targets of their anger, they do feel disturbed by their slogans of Hindu India and their anti-Muslim rhetoric" (53). There is terrible anxiety among the minorities and south Indians regarding the fanatic attitude of Shiv sena too. Dr. Rangarajan who treats Nariman says: "These days you never can tell who might be a Shiv Sena fanatic, or a member of their Name Police" (52). While the Yezad's were returning home after attending Nariman's birthday party a few drunken ruffians who identified themselves as Shiv Sena people insulted Roxana and threatened them of the consequences if they reacted: " 'Don't tingle-tangle with us bavaji! We are Shiv Sena people, we are invincible' " (44). There are many instances in the novel where harmless innocent people belonging to minority communities were harassed by Shiv Sena. Mistry's negative portrayal of the Shiv Sena becomes more specific in *Family Matters* even though he has discussed the fascist attitude of the Shiv Sena in his earlier novels also. Nariman recollects how an old Parsi couple was killed inside their

house by the Shiv Sena people mistaking them for Muslims and how an old Parsi lady was killed in her house in Firozshah Bag. Yezad finds Bombay an 'uncivilized jungle' where anarchy is consciously created by the ruling coalition government (the BJP and the Shiv Sena) by creating hatred among the inhabitants of Bombay-" 'South Indians are anti-Bombay, valentine's day is anti-Hindustan, film stars born before 1947 in the Pakistani part of Punjab are traitors to the country' " (32). The novel very frequently refers to the atrocities of Shiv Sena. Mistry continues the strategy of mixing the narrative of non Parsi oppressed groups along with that of his own community in this novel also. In place of the brutalities faced by the Chamars in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry narrates the harassment of Mr Kapur, a Punjabi born Hindu doing his business in Bombay. He also refers to the story of the Muslim peon at the shop Hussain who lost his wife and children during the Babri Mosque riots. Mistry's attempt here is to project the Parsi tale but he does not want to isolate his community as the only one community that faces hostility in the post-Independence period. He turns it into a national issue by finding allies in other oppressed subaltern and minority communities. The Sikhs, the South Indians, the lower castes, the Muslims-they all are fellow sufferers. The Parsi characters show sufficient flexibility in their identity to create a common brotherhood of the oppressed. This is a radical shift in Parsis identity from their ones known position of identifying with the oppressor during the British rule.

The long and frequent discussions of Yezad with Mr. Kapur bring out another dimension of the Parsi identity and the need for repeating the tales of suffering. Mistry possibly anticipates the objection from readers of Parsi fiction that there is almost a monotonous repetition of the story of suffering, in his novels and in that of many other Parsi novels. In order to counter this objection and stress the centrality of

stories of suffering to ethnic writing, Mistry turns Yezad into his mouth piece and through his sympathetic comment on Mr. Kapur's recounting of the atrocities suffered by the Sikhs during partition justifies his own tales of suffering."He knew they had to keep telling their story, just like Jews had to theirs, about the Holocaust, writing and remembering and having nightmares about the concentration camps and gas chambers and ovens, about the evil committed by ordinary people, by friends and neighbours, the evil that decades later, was still incomprehensible" (151). There is almost a mythical identification of the sufferings of his own community and that of other minorities like the Sikhs with that of the Jews. There a strong identification of his community with the persecuted and the oppressed. Yezad understands that ethnic communities have to repeat the tales of suffering in order to survive its shock: "What choice was there, except to speak about it, again and again, and yet again?" (151). In many ways by repeating the same story of Parsi suffering and by repeating them so frequently he is establishing an identity shift in the post-Independence period.

But Mistry makes it very clear in his novels that this identity shift does not change the core values of his community like honesty, willingness to work hard, loyalty to the employer, patriotism etc. Yezad's suffering is also because of his refusal to shed these qualities. He is offered bribes by many sports dealers to manipulate accounts in the sports shop where he works but he stubbornly refuses to accept it because he still clings to the greatness of the values his community cherished once and is scared to spoil the community reputation. Mistry voices the popular view about Parsi commitment to age old values through Kapur-"I don't need to worry about cash sticking to the lining of your trousers. If only there were more communities like yours" and when Yezad expresses his embarrassment at this generous compliment from his employer Mr. Kapur further expresses his admiration: "Oh don't be modest,

the Parsi reputation for honesty is well known. And even if it's a myth-there is no myth without truth, no smoke without fire" (156).This subject is again discussed in Yezad's conversation with his friend Vilas Rane in order to highlight the myth of the Parsi reputation for honesty and integrity. Vilas tells Yezad that he is "not qualified in this culture of crookedness" and when Yezad asks why he said so Vilas states, "because of your upbringing, your belief in integrity and fair play". This kind of stereotyping the laudable qualities of one's own community in his fiction is understandable if one realises the objectives of a ethnic writing. The story of the honest Parsi is repeated later when Yezad narrates to his children the account of how his father's honesty and courage were appreciated by the chairman of his bank for safely carrying a sum of rupees five lakhs facing great threats: "And in the bank, they realised how brave my father had been, how determined and, above all, honest" (234). The writer is an advocate of the community's image and greatness. It is his job to perpetuate the myths about the community and to keep it alive in adverse situations. He knows the role of myths in sustaining a community's resistance to assimilation. Vilas speaks for the novelist: "myths create the reality. Point is, there was a time when living according to certain myths served your community well" (212). But the ethnic writer, being the bard of the community, has the responsibility of leading the transformation that is required to prosper. "With the present state of society, those same myths can make misfits of men. Even the British knew when to observe their myth of 'not cricket old chap' and when to hit below the belt, kick you in the balls, poke you in the eyes" (213). However the conversation ends with the warning of Vilas to Yezad that he cannot change his ways so easily because they are deeply ingrained in his ethnic self-"you won't be able to. Try it if you like-you'll always be a cricketer" (213). Mistry hints at the difficulty of erasing aspects of one's previous

identity in order to successfully deal with a new situation. Identities may be flexible but they are not as flexible as the instrumental theories would argue.

There is also the less stated aspect of exploitation to the relationship between Mr. Kapur and Yezad. Despite his friendly and sympathetic treatment of Yezad, Mr. Kapur is the exploiter. He doesn't pay Yezad well and after his death his wife throws him out forcing Yezad to think that he was unjustly treated by his employer. The Parsis who once were employers, builders, owners of factories and financiers to East India Company are reduced to the status of middle class working community. Whether the status of Parsis have declined so much in the post-Independence India is a matter of deliberation and there are some surveys which suggest that the Parsis still are economically the richest community in India. For example Bharucha thinks that "there is some real poverty" among the Parsis today "even though there is still the cushion of very substantial Trust Funds"(54). The reality of the Parsi position in India has been discussed in the second chapter. However Mistry like many Parsis of post-Independence period believes that there is a decline in the position of the Parsis in India.

The growth of Yezad's consciousness takes a definite and sudden turn when he loses his job. He starts visiting the fire temple which offers him peace and hope. But these visits completely transform his life and he starts airing the beliefs of the orthodox section of the Parsis. He starts believing that every Parsi has to conform to the sacred laws of his religion and there is an increasing distancing from his earlier advocacy of ethnic tolerance and opinions about multiculturalism. His own children are surprised by his rigid views of religion and rituals. The same Yezad who made fun of the orthodox section of Parsis for objecting to Nariman's marriage with the Goan girl Lucy could not tolerate his son's friendship with the non Parsi girl Anjali. He

repeats the regular Parsi objection to intermarriages by saying that it destroys the purity of the Persian race. When his son Murad demands an explanation for his bitter objection to intermarriages Yezad says: "Because we are a pure Persian race, a unique contribution to this planet, and mixed marriages will destroy it" (482). Murad is shocked by the change in his father's attitude and his open declaration of ethnic superiority. Murad calls him Hitler. The reference to Hitler brings to mind the violence and monstrous behaviour of the Nazis who also claimed racial purity. Yezad is angry to have been called Hitler whom he considers as a monster but he fails to see the obvious similarity between his own rigid assertion of ethnic purity and that of the Nazi Germans.Yezad is very hostile to Anjali even to the extent of surprising his own children. He tries to compare the modesty of a Parsi girl with that of Anjali and observes that had Anjali been a Parsi girl she would never have kissed Murad, which, Jehangir, the younger son knows to be a mistake because Farah Arjani, a Parsi girl living in the same building had tried flirting with him. Ethnicity thrives on hostility towards outgroups (Horowitz). Murad tells Yezad that he is becoming fanatical and that there is a need for self introspection: " 'you're becoming more and more fanatical' " says Murad. " 'I don't understand what's changing you, daddy' " (486). Later inadvertently he calls his father a lunatic for airing views of ethnic purity. Yezad tells his son that one day when he becomes old enough he will understand his father's change; the fact that his ethnic identity is shaped in response to outside events and hostility is hinted here. Ethic loyalties are unmistakably racist and they tend to stress the superiority and purity of one group over the other. This point has already been discussed in the first and second chapter. The discussion has been brought here to shed light on another aspect of ethnic behaviour, that is, how ethnic identity becomes very important in times of conflict and suffering. Yezad was steadily driven

towards asserting his ethnic identity by the hostility of the outside world especially the Shiv Sena. His assertion of ethnic identity is also the result of the outside's violent identification of him as the other. "He yearned for the peace of the fire-temple. How fortunate that in the harsh desert this city had become, his oasis was so close by" (364). In a multicultural society identity is a result of one's interaction with the outside and the outside's acceptance of difference in a positive or negative manner. But when difference becomes a reason for suppression and humiliation, the members of the suppressed ethnic group form a brotherhood made stronger by the hatred of the outside. Even in cases where there seems to be a friendly and peaceful relationship among communities living close to each other, there can be a violent assertion of ethnic identity when it comes to the core aspects of identity like marriage. Yezad makes this point very clear: "you can have any friends you like, any race or religion, but for a serious relationship, for marriage, the rules are different" (482). Ethnic identity unlike many other identities is not superficial. It's deeply embedded in the psyche of the member and comes out during ethnic conflicts. The stronger the residue of identity the harder the resistance to accepting any change.

All the works of Mistry deal with the issues of Middle class Parsi identity which is different from that of the rich Parsis. Ethnicity does not always erase all other kinds of identities especially class identities as Horowitz rightly observes. There are instances in his work where he clearly brings out class identity as different from ethnic identity. Most of the characters in *Tales from Firozshah Baag*, Gustad Noble and Dinshawji in *Such a Long Journey*, Dina Dalal and Maneck in *A Fine Balance* and the Yezads and the Narimans in *Family Matters* all identify themselves over and above their ethnic affiliation as belonging to a class. And as a class they find themselves a different group from the rich Parsis. In *Such a Long Journey* Cavasji, an

old Parsi who is always unhappy about 'the Almighty's grossly inequitable way of running the universe' complains-" To the Tatas you give so much! And nothing for me?" (87). The overarching ethnic identity accommodates various other types of loyalties and identities also. So ethnic conflict is sometimes restricted to certain classes within the community. The confusing relationship between class conflict and ethnic conflict is too broad a subject to be discussed here. However it may be said that ethnic conflict and class conflict coincide where ethnicity and class coincide (Horowitz). In case of the Parsis the class identity and ethnic identity coincided during the pre-Independence period but in the second half of the post-Independence period class conflict does not always coincide with ethnic conflict. The conflict that is seen during the post-Independence period is the result of the continued class identification of the Parsi ethnic identity from the previous period. The reduction of the Parsis to middle class should reduce the class hostility that accompanied the ethnic hostility. Horowitz in his analysis of Indian society considers India to be system of ranked hierarchies where different ethnic and caste groups occupy different positions in relation to the prestige and affluence enjoyed by these communities. He notices a significant change in the post independence period where the previously subordinate ethnic and caste groups are trying to compete with the elites and this competition has resulted in the slow decline of the hierarchies which he refers to as the 'horizontalization of previously vertical relationships'. The horizontalisation process will eventually lead to a social condition where there won't be a hierarchy (34-35). In the Parsi case this implies an acceptance of a lower social status by the Parsis compared to what they enjoyed under the British. But ethnic conflict will be reduced and the differences in identity may be accepted without discriminatory or hostile

treatment. This aspect has been discussed in the next chapter with reference to the novel by Firdaus Kanga.

CHAPTER V

REPOSITIONINGS

After discussing the ways in which the Parsi identity was constructed following the encounter with the Europeans in the third chapter and the conflicts which such an ethnic identity led to in the fourth chapter it is logical to examine how the Parsi community is trying to cope with their degraded social, economic and political role in the Post-Independence India close to the twentieth century. This chapter examines the response of the Parsi community to their lost glory and prominence in the post-Independence period from the perspective of colonial elite which played the role of a middleman community under the British rule with reference to Firdaus Kanga's novel *Trying to Grow.* Kanga was born in Bombay in 1960 in a westernized Parsi family. He was born with a disease known as brittle bone disease (Osteogenesis Imperfecta). Because of this disease he was forced to spend most of his childhood in an apartment in Bombay. His semi autobiographical novel *Trying to Grow* narrates the story of Darius, nicknamed Brit (which refers to both brittle bone and his Anglicised rearing). Darius suffers from brittle bone disease like Kanga and is confined to a wheel chair. "[. . .] the setting of the story is limited to a one square mile area of the city. Most of the action is interior . . ." (Hawley 118). The novel explores Darius' homosexual love for his friend Cyrus and his heterosexual love for Amy. His father Sam and mother Sera are dedicated to taking care of their invalid child even though both of them are very sad and disappointed to have a brittle boned child. His sister Dolly marries a Muslim and moves to America. Sam and Sera die in separate accidents leaving Brit to take care of himself. The novel is a bildungsroman like *An American Brat* dealing with the growth of an Anglicised Parsi boy with brittle bone disease. Kanga sketches the experience of being a thrice marginalized writer- as a Parsi, as a homo-sexual and as a physically challenged

person. Even though sexual orientation and physical disability are very crucial to understanding the identity of Darius, this study does not intend to discuss these aspects in detail for the obvious reason that the focus of this study is on Parsi group identity.

It is quite natural for the colonial elites (like the Parsis) to experience a transitional phase after the transfer of power from the colonial masters during which period there is a rapid reordering of ethnic hierarchies in the society. Every community repositions itself in the postcolonial period. The new social hierarchy constructs a new relationship between the existing ethnic groups in terms of dominant and minority ethnic groups with the former completely in charge of the destiny of the nation.

The hierarchies that characterize human societies are well studied by Pierre Van Den Berghe from the ethnic perspective. He discusses how hierarchies are natural even to animals and birds, which form 'dominance orders' and 'pecking orders'. Even though it is difficult to measure these hierarchies among animals and birds, ethologists use criterion like access to resources like food and mating partner, rituals of submission and dominance, 'displacement behavior' and 'attention structure' as the most important criterion to decide the hierarchies (Pierre L Van den Berghe 58). Animals maintain dominance through coercion by using speed and deceit. Humans also form hierarchies but these hierarchies are vastly more complex than that of animals. One of the ways in which these hierarchies are formed in human society is on the basis of supposed or real ties of blood that result in ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are endogamous communities with a shared sense of history, culture and belief system. Ethnic communities, depending on their political, social, cultural and economic dominance in a nation, may be divided into dominant and subordinate

groups. Eric Kaufmann defines dominant ethnicity as a "phenomenon whereby a particular ethnic group exercises dominance within a nation and or state" (2).The relationship between the dominant and subordinate ethnic groups is not permanently fixed and is subject to change. Though the role reversal between the two is possible, at any given point of time the dominant ethnic group of a nation has disproportionate access to the resources of its nation and dominates the subordinate ethnic groups. The dominant ethnic group may not always be a demographic majority even though in most cases it is. Dominant ethnic groups may or may not form nations. When the dominant ethnic group or in Anthony Smith's phrase 'core ethnie' (*Ethnic Origins of Nations*) does form a nation, the cultural symbols and political and economic structures will be determined and regulated by the dominant groups. Smith argues that the dominant ethnic group of a nation claims its natural right to rule the country on the idea that "This is our country and we deserve to control its politics". This attitude of the dominant ethny to equate nation with itself will cause serious conflicts unless regulated properly. There has to be an effective mechanism to involve all the ethnic groups of a nation in the resource sharing process of the country. Minorities are at great disadvantage in competing directly with the core ethnic groups for resources because of their insignificant numbers. The exclusionary practices of a nation can result in the immigration of its minority ethnic groups, their integration, their resistance, or their extinction, or a mixture of all these. The dominant groups may use various means to maintain their dominance including deceit in the form of ideology "Ideology will be treated as a form of organized collective deceit whereby parasitism is disguised-usually as either kin selection or reciprocity" (Pierre L Van den Berghe 61) The claim of a despot as a fatherly figure is one example of ideology being used

for the purpose of dominance through deceit. Dominant ethnic groups consciously exploit kin relationships for the purpose of gaining political power.

Van Den Berghe claims that Paternalism and democracy are two important ways through which the dominant group maintains its dominance in society. In fact, he states that modern states are created for the exploitation of the subordinate groups by the dominant ethnic groups. The control of power by dominant ethnic groups in multi ethnic states, unlike in nation states where rule is legitimized on the claim of common descent, leads to conflict. He says that ethnic groups prefer self rule to rule by foreign people most importantly because it doesn't hurt their reproductive fitness. Conquest and rule by foreign powers eventually threaten the survival of the conquered even where the conquest is mild and does not involve an overtly hostile attitude towards the conquered. So it is very essential that the state legitimizes its rule based on the principles of inclusive practices to avoid conflicts in plural societies. The process of legitimizing rule and conflict management in such societies varies according to the specific ways in which power is exercised. Consociational or proportional democracies like Switzerland have a totally different relationship among the ethnic communities that share political power, compared to Rwanda, where one ethnic group single handedly monopolizes power. But in most countries of the world, one ethny or a small coalition of ethnic groups controls the political power of the country with a willingness to share power with other groups. In such states, the state recognizes different groups which constitute the nation and provides different sets of rights and obligations to each group. This differential incorporation is a feature of most colonial or postcolonial societies including India.

A Country like India with a history of colonialism has a complex social and administrative system which is hierarchised according to caste and ethnicity. As Chetan Bhatt rightly observes:

> [. . .] the complexities are further compounded in attempts to conceive of Indian histories, social formations, civil societies, polity, national ,federal, and district state formations and Indian nationalism in the languages of 'ethnicity', 'majority', or 'minority'. The formation of the Indian nation state and much of the content of pre-and post-independence Indian politics, were partially the result of institutionally embedded, deeply politicized logics set in motion from the 1870s, and based on modernist enumerative reasoning, statistically defined population blocs, group calculus and an arithmetic (zero sum) conception of political and civil power dependent on ascribed and hermetic group identities (176).

Colonialism is a mode of long distance imperialism where the conquered population is mostly administered through the assistance of native chiefs who are the local elites. Such a group of local elites, wherever they exist, are given a share of the colonial spoil in exchange of their loyalty. They are created in countries where no such groups exist prior to the arrival of the colonial power. The local elites are to some extent encouraged to adopt the culture of the colonizer. These local elites in course of time become dominant ethnic groups in colonial societies because of their proximity to the colonizer and the material, social and political advantages this brings. These auxiliaries of the imperial regime that receive the patronage of the colonizer are normally demographic minorities, the loyalty of whom can be bought easily by the colonizer. Van Den Berghe stresses the fact that in colonial societies such dominant minorities are numerical minorities even though in liberal democracies such dominant

ethnic groups are numerical majorities. After the shift in the political power centers during the withdrawal of the imperial administration from the colonies, the numerically dominant majorities take over the control of the state and rule according to the principles of liberal democracy. The numerical majority legitimizes its rule not by claiming political exclusivity, but by the tenets of liberal democracy, leaving no option for the erstwhile dominant minorities but to assimilate (Van Den Berghe).

Van Den Berghe's discussion and analysis of the system of colonialism is useful in understanding how Colonialism carried with it the system of classifying populations on the basis of ethnic affiliation. In the first place the colonizer distinguishes his people from the native population on the basis of biological superiority which gets internalized in the colonial mentality through statements like "The Indian is the animal which most closely resembles man" (Van Den Berghe 86). In settler colonies like Australia even though exploitation is involved it is carried out in a mild way because the colonies are recognized as an extension of colonial ethnicity. Whereas in the relationship between the colonizer and the natives no such assimilative notion is involved and there is no attempt to hide the brutality of the colonial machine. In most tropical and sub tropical regions, where the colonizer's biological fitness is not sufficient to fight the adverse weather and the endemic diseases, the colonizers are forced to create and depend on a group of native people, who are treated as a superior ethnic group, drawing a clear line of differentiation between them and the other local ethnic groups. This helps the Colonizer to further classify the colonies on the basis of racial and ethnic groups.

In the case of India it is not possible to reduce the hierarchies into simple ethnic relations. Indian society is more complex than what can be described in terms of an easy ethnic classification that fits into the colonial model of the colonizer at the

top and the most disadvantaged ethnic group at the bottom. The existence of innumerable caste groups, religions, tribes, linguistic and ethnic minorities, and regional variations in the numbers and status of all the foregoing, make the simple ordering of Indian society impossible. At the outset it may be stated that the dominant Hindu majority of India cannot be studied using the academic tools made available by the studies in ethnicity, even though such attempts were consciously worked out since the 1870's as part of the Indian freedom movement. "Hindu nationalist claims are frequently mobilized using the same kinds of taxonomic framework as are employed in some academic characterizations of ethnicity (typically related to shared myths, histories, culture, kinship and homeland). . ." (Chetan Bhatt 179). Similarly, to conceive of Indian nationalism in terms of the resurgence of a dominant ethnic group is also a problematic notion, and is outside the scope of the present study. However, it is in the interest of this study, to state emphatically that diverse attempts, academic and non academic, have been made to classify Indian society and analyse the relationship between the dominant and the minority groups during colonial and postcolonial periods. As already stated above, in non-settler countries the colonizers had to depend on the services of the native elites who had the knowledge of the local conditions 'to squeeze the colonial orange dry'. The native chiefs were happy, because along with a share in political power, they were allowed to practice their culture and religion. There was no serious interference from the colonizer in the religious activities of the local populations especially by Protestant colonizers like England, Holland, Germany, etcetera, who were not assimilationist like their Catholic counterparts. Even though they were more openly racist, they did not "impose their language and culture, and tended to rule more pragmatically, according to local conditions" (Van Den Berghe 94). This feature of the British allowed the existing

native elite to retain some of their influence and gave new ethnic groups like the Parsis a chance to dominate certain areas that were not covered by the local elites, like trade, commerce, skilled jobs and so on, for which there was no ready human resource available. Parsis were tailor made for such a role with their distinct ethnic identity and freedom from some of the caste restrictions faced by the native groups.

The growth and prosperity of the Parsi culture is directly related to their contact with the western culture. As already mentioned in the second chapter, their transformation from an insignificant farming community to an advanced urban community is the result of embracing Western culture. All aspects of Parsi life have been transformed by Western influence, particularly by English influence. Their initial encounter with the West came in the form of the assistance they provided to the Portuguese traders. Soon they became the trusted middlemen of the Dutch, the French and finally the British. Parsis being free from the restrictions of the rigid Indian caste system could go to whichever destination their destiny led them. They very quickly realized the benefits of embracing Western education and soon they were reaping the benefits of the Western technological advancement. Their entrepreneurial skills soon found enough opportunities in the growing jute, cotton and steel industries. Under the benevolent patronage of the British they started trade with China, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and the Arab countries. The Parsi community which had forfeited much of its cultural distinctiveness in exchange for shelter, peace and religion during the centuries following its settlement in Gujarat, adopted Western culture with great enthusiasm. The sudden growth of the community under the British may be explained in terms of the strong desire of a minority community to be recognized in the host society. Minorities kept out of the politics of the country for long will naturally grab an opportunity that comes their way and struggle hard to gain recognition of the

members of other communities. “National and religious minorities which are in a position of subordination to a group of rulers are likely, through their voluntary or involuntary exclusion from positions of political influence, to be driven with peculiar force into economic activity”(Max Weber 6). The Parsis did not occupy any serious administrative position under the British initially. It is only after they established their reputation as a trading people that they began to be employed by the British in administration. Writing about the Parsi occupational structure in the 1850’s Henry George Briggs observes:

> To their unwarlike character must be attributed that pursuit of traffic which had engrossed their attention for centuries since their landing in Hindustan: and as has already been observed, the bent of the mind is still “purely commercial” It is only of late years that they have betaken themselves to employment under government, and other avocations (82-83).

The real Parsi growth began with their migration to Bombay from Gujarat. Bombay till today remains the centre of Parsi community and they have contributed significantly to the growth of Bombay. However, changing political and economic conditions have necessitated the Parsi community to rethink the option of staying in Bombay which has increasingly grown hostile to the Parsi community in the Post-Independence era.

Firdaus Kanga’s novel *Trying to Grow* recollects a frequent theme of the Parsi novels, the lost glory of the community, with nostalgia, frustration, anger and humour. The story almost melodramatically sketches the ‘fate of the colonial elite’, to use a phrase from Tanya Luhrmann, in the post colonial world. The Parsi community rose to prominence making use of the favourable circumstances provided by colonial rule

and became an elite community by the turn of the century. The complete transformation undergone by this community in order to prosper under the British, had reached ridiculous proportions by the time India achieved its Independence.

> Elite Indians, of whom Parsis are only one (though remarkable) example, shaped their ideals and sensibilities and the ideals and sensibilities of their children upon the canons of English colonial culture: its literature, its sociability, its competitive athletics, its pianos and lace and fitted suits, but also its dismissal of their countrymen as effeminate, traditional, and lowly (Luhrmann 9).

Much of the humour of the novel *Trying to Grow* directly derives from the comparative perspective of the novelist on the changes that have come about in Bombay and the complacency/ignorance of the Parsis of this change. There is an attempt, on the one hand, at capturing Parsi life during the years of the Raj and on the other, its total insignificance in the contemporary social scenario of India. He mocks the Parsis for being blissfully ignorant of the changes that took place in India after the departure of the British. "Jokes about colonial nostalgia are exceedingly common, as pictures of royalty, English objects, desire for things English; . . ." (Luhrmann 22).

The novel is set in Bombay, the city the community believes, was built by their forefathers. It is in this city that the community flourished and achieved its phenomenal prosperity albeit with the British patronage. After settling in Bombay the Parsis shed the rural agrarian life that they led in Gujarat and became a highly westernized and anglicized urban people. Bombay has a distinct British air. As Salman Rushdie in his popular essay "Imaginary Homelands" records:

> In common with many Bombay-raised middle class children of my generation, I grew up with an intimate knowledge of, and even sense of friendship with, a certain kind of England: a dream England composed of test Matches at Lord's presided over by the voice of John Arlott, at which Freddie Trueman bowled unceasingly and without success at Polly Umrigar; of Enid Blyton and Billy Bunter, in which we were even prepared to smile indulgently at portraits such as 'Hurree Jamset Ram Singh' , 'the dusky nabob of Bhanipur' (18).

Cricket was as much a part of Bombay as its distinct British clubs and commerce. Parsis were the first Indian community to join the British in playing cricket and certainly dominated the game for a long time. "The reason behind this early patronage of cricket by the Parsis, an educated, prosperous and westernized community according to Mankasji Kavasji Patel, an early observer of Parsi cricket, was the desire of the newly emerging Parsi bourgeoisie to strengthen ties with the rulers" (outlookindia.com). Even Ramachandra Guha refers to the fascination of the Parsis for this sport. Mihir Gose also points out the cosmopolitan nature of Bombay, its Parsi population and cricket. "Mumbai's cricket team reflected the cosmopolitan nature of Mumbai society. The great Mumbai cricketer and captain was Polly Umrigar. Faroukh Engineer, another Parsee, kept wicket and one of Mumbai's leading players was Gulbhai Ramchand, a Sindhi. Maharashtrians formed part of the team, but did not run it or control it" (Bose 192).

It was not only cricket that fascinated the Parsis. They admired and imitated everything that was Western. Brit, the central character of Kanga's novel *Trying to Grow* (1990), who is addicted to Western music, contemptuously states that listening to Indian classical music makes him puke. The admiration for Western culture was very often accompanied by contempt for native traditions. In less than one hundred

years since their arrival in Bombay they were undoubtedly the most anglicized community of India. Even though their imitation of the Western culture, lifestyle, education and language helped them get closer to the British and increased their prestige and economic status, it carried them away from the host society, the culture of which they internalized for more than seven centuries since their arrival in India.

The Parsi community of Kanga's generation grew up with an intimate knowledge of and admiration for English culture which forms the outer layer of the contemporary Parsi self, covering the deeper Zoroastrian and Hindu layers. Sera and Sam of *Trying to Grow* still live in an illusory past which is the case of many Parsis. It is only Brit who makes them feel every now and then the reality around them. Despite growing up with all the prejudices and illusions of the Parsis, Brit can see the hollowness of the Parsi glory. The community had once produced towering personalities like Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the first Indian to be knighted by the British and an inspiration and model for the succeeding generation of Parsis. But the twentieth century is the age of dwarfs like Brit. The over westernized Parsi community finds it difficult to position itself in the second half of the twentieth century and struggles to relocate itself in the contemporary Indian society. Brit knows that like himself, his own community is neither Western nor Indian enough to fit into either culture. Brit becomes the metaphor of his community's sickness and brittleness. He feels angry at how ill prepared his 'almost the same but not white' community was for the period after the transfer of power from the British. Kanga's story is not so much about the brittle boned Darius who never knows when he is going to break his next bone, but more about a community which suffers from a greater disease –the threat of extinction. In sympathizing with the painful existence of Brit the readers are sympathizing with the community itself. In Sam's apprehension that his son may not

be able to compete with the young men bursting with energy, is the painful admission of the community's own handicaps in Postcolonial India, where they have to compete with the majority Hindus and Muslims for political and economic positions. Western culture and education had given them an identity and prominence that the Parsis find difficult to give up in the Post-Independence era. Everything around them has changed; the pomp and the glory of the Parsis during the British Raj has become a thing of the past. As Bhavna Kale points out, "However, after independence, this ethno-religious minority experienced a major setback. What was once a community of adventurous businessmen, entrepreneurs, was gradually reduced largely to a community of job-seekers with a marked decline in their financial status" (161). The Parsis of the present generation are finding it difficult to wake up to this decline in the social standing of the community. Kanga gets to the core of this Parsi problem through his central character, Brit Kotwal, whose western nickname hides his really humiliating Parsi self. Neither he nor his sister wants to be called by their Parsi names. Kanga's bitter self mockery pierces through the false façades of the community. The community's inability to come out of the illusory world is made fun of by the author and the Parsi struggle for a new identity is sympathetically described by the author. It is a common phenomenon with the minorities in a country to experience uncertainty and conflicts of identity during the phase that follows a reordering of society and ethnic hierarchy. The ambiguity of their own identity and the necessity to conform to the new value system will eventually be resolved by successful ethnic groups. Marginalization of such minorities during transitional periods is marked by an internal reformation and an acceptance of new values without really coming to terms with them. Saul Bellow's comment, though made in a different context, may well summarize the Parsi predicament in the Post-Independence India:

"The old forms of existence have worn out, so to speak, and the new ones have not yet appeared and people are prospecting as it were in the desert for new forms" (Cronin and Siegel 226). It could safely be said that the Post-Independence Parsis have identified themselves more closely with the Indians than their Pre-Independence anglophile forefathers: "With the end of British colonial rule, the identification of the Parsis with India has certainly increased, both politically and culturally" (Jacobson 50). They are trying to stress their Indian identity more often than before. Unlike Mistry, Kanga does not directly discuss politics in his novels. Neither does he find it necessary to present the element of hostility of other Indian communities towards Parsis as a serious issue that threatens the existence of the Parsis in India. For him the decline and the decay is a disease within and it is closely related to an identity that the Parsis still showcase with great effort. He amplifies the problems from within.

Kanga's fiction opens up an area of the Parsi identity which most writers either just hint at or leave out completely considering the rigid social structure of India, the issue of homosexuality. What is unique about the novel is that it revolves around the homosexual identity of the central character who also is disabled by osteogenesis imperfecta. His movements and social contacts are limited by his disability. He moves within the small Parsi community of Bombay and he faithfully captures the life that he sees around. Being Parsi, disabled and homosexual he provides a unique insight into the composition of the Parsi life. His restricted movements help him zoom in on the day-to-day details of Parsi family and social life. The notorious Parsi fetish for Western goods is humorously treated by the author. The Western identity that the Parsis showcased so proudly during the Pre-Independence period has become a curse that the community struggles to overcome. The extent of Parsi identification with the British may be summarized in the words of the Governor

of Bombay, Sir J.R Carnac who according to a website (www.the-south-asian.com) declared in 1877: "Then, gentlemen Parsis, I would ask you to remember that you have what is called the very bluest blood in Asia".

It is quite surprising to see the adaptability of this community to new soil and circumstances. Herodotus attests to the adaptive nature of this great civilization of the past: "There is no nation which so readily adopts foreign customs as the Persians. Thus, they have taken the dress of the Medes, considering it superior to their own; and in war they wear the Egyptian breastplate" (George Rawlinson). The Parsis, when they landed on the shores of Gujarat in the 9th century, were a culturally distinctive community with hardly any knowledge of the local geographical, cultural and socio-economic conditions. But they agreed to live by the law of the land and accepted all the conditions lay down by the local raja. Tradition has it that they even tried to please the local raja by citing similarities between their culture and the host culture in order to get shelter. They agreed to shed most of their cultural distinctiveness and assimilate into Indian society. The oft quoted metaphor of the sugar dissolving in the bowl of milk highlights the eagerness of this community for assimilation. Yet they remained distinct enough to be recognized by Indians and outsiders alike as a different community outside the Indian caste system and culture. How this distinctiveness was preserved and maintained through history is a very intriguing and debated issue. The crisis that the Parsis face today is quite uncharacteristic of the reputation that they have earned in history of a very high level of adaptability. It might well be argued that the Parsi identity which remained quite flexible till the encounter with the West became very rigid in the centuries following their meeting with the West. Under the safe patronage of the British they tried to purify their culture of all traces of Indian influence as much as they could. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries proved very

crucial in the construction of the present Parsi identity. As Jesse S Palsetia aptly remarks, "From the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries the Parsis passed through key phases, emerging from being an insular group to a highly westernized community of pluralistic outlook. By the nineteenth century, the Parsis were a most socially adaptive community safeguarding an orthodox faith" (81).

But once this process of westernization was set in motion, strongly assisted by western education, the Parsis had to assume a western identity which unfortunately reconfigured their identity at the root level. It was the blind belief in the continuance of the British rule in India that motivated them to adapt more and more to Western ways of living. The departure of the British happened at the wrong time for the Parsis. The fact that they were not ready for this departure is very evident in many of the conversations in Kanga's novel. The characters are to be constantly reminded, even though mockingly, that the British are no longer ruling India. In the following semi-serious discussion between Sera and Sam the former had to be told that the times have changed:

> " 'We will bargain for our freedom with this', she declared. 'And who will dare deny the value of British Guineas?'
>
> 'Those days are gone, darling', said Father. 'No one cares for Britain any more'
>
> 'Such disloyalty,' sniffed Sera. 'If you'd only been a Boy Scout you wouldn't talk like that. I took an oath with the Guides which I intend to keep; an oath to King and country' " (Kanga 11).

Even though the whole conversation takes place in a very light hearted mood, it does suggest the deep loyalty of the Parsis to the British rule and also their inability to come to terms with the Post British period. The influence of the West on Parsi family values, visible in phenomena like late marriages, preference for choosing their partners rather than traditional arranged marriage, nuclear families, etc, get exaggerated in the novel because of the focus on the family in the novel.

While Sidhwa betrays her community's disappointment with the ordinariness of the British in their own land, Kanga doesn't delve into the real state of affairs of England critically; instead he discusses England only as it exists in the mind of his community. Kanga does detail us on his impressions of England in his work *Heaven on Wheels*. Brit mocks the inability of the Parsi community to initiate the transition required for the successful adaptation of the community to the new world around it. The British raj doesn't just exist as a golden period for the Parsis; it colors and shapes their present identity as well. Their daily life is so conditioned by English culture that they feel uncomfortable getting used to or even thinking about alternative life styles in the new postcolonial era as Sam finds out. " 'That's one of my suits, dear. I'd never dream of going to the bank without one'.'The days when you had to wear a suit to work are gone, Sam. The British left twenty five years ago' " (Kanga 13).

Western education, which propelled the community to the status of the most technologically advanced community of India, also had its negative impacts. The disruptive effect of Western education may be seen in the rigorous questioning of some of the basic tenets of Parsi religion. Western educated Parsis demanded a thorough reformation within the religion. This reformation was led by Western educated Parsis like K R Cama and Maneckji N. Dhalla, who encouraged critical thinking. The Parsi community, which for many centuries was shielded from serious

attacks by scholars of other religions by its relatively insignificant number, had grown complacent with regard to the knowledge concerning its ancient practices. When the Christian missionaries ruthlessly exposed certain incompatibilities of the present generation practices with those of the ancient Parsis, the community had to seriously introspect on issues that made the religion vulnerable to Western attack. Moulton very clearly brings out the Parsi ignorance of their religious practices which enabled Western missionary scholars like Wilson to expose the weak links in the Parsi belief system. One particular area that needed serious attention was the status and competence of Parsi priests. Unlike in some other religions, Parsi Priests are not well educated and they do not command great respect in the community. The Dasturs or the Mobeds are not well paid and do not receive adequate training. There is no agreement regarding many practices among the priests of various centers. In the aftermath of the attention the community received worldwide in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they had to take up the case of priesthood seriously. Madresas were opened in many parts of Bombay and the pay for the priests was made to look attractive. Many among the new generation of priests were sent to England for higher studies. They came back with Western ideas and initiated a reformation. They questioned and opposed many practices which they thought were alien to Zoroastrianism. Religious texts were subjected to serious scrutiny. Despite the good results this yielded, the community was pushed closer to a split. There was a serious conflict between the radical and the conservative sections of the Parsi community. Another enduring damage caused by these debates and criticisms of the religion was that a large section of Western educated Parsis grew skeptical about their religion and they slowly lost faith in it. An identity crisis was beginning to haunt the twentieth century Parsis. Seeing their religious leaders indulge in hostile debates exposing the

weak links of their religion, the younger generation drifted away from the fold of their religion. Religion in many Parsi families has been reduced to compulsory rituals and 'stylish clothes' on festival days. "We Parsees don't take our religion too seriously; those who do are considered downright dangerous and a little mad" (Kanga 17). One of the serious debates that Parsi community seems to be obsessed with is the issue of burial at the Towers of Silence or the *dokhmenashini*. It is a unique practice followed by the Parsis; they do not bury their dead nor cremate them. They expose their dead to vultures on top of large stone constructions called towers of silence. Due to various factors discussed elsewhere, the dokhma system of burial is not very popular among Parsis in the twentieth century even in the land of its birth. Alternative methods of burial suggested are not acceptable to the conservative section of the Parsis. Burial rituals, like marriage ceremony and *navjot* are central to Parsi life. Burial at the Tower of silence accompanied by appropriate rituals and prayers see the passage of the soul to its ultimate destination. Sociologically the burial ceremony is one way the Parsi community controls its members from marrying out of the fold and converting to other faiths. Anybody who breaks the basic practices of Zoroastrianism will be excommunicated and that implies a prohibition against burial at the Towers of Silence. This ceremony is also a process of marking out outsiders. Douglas E. Haynes emphasizes the role of fire worship and burial rituals in creating a distinctive identity for the Parsi community. "To European observers, its most exceptional features were the special place of fire in religious observance (usually mistaken for fire worship) and the practice of leaving the dead in dokhmas –open towers exposed to the elements and to scavenging birds –practices which had no parallel elsewhere on the subcontinent" (77).

Ethnic identity and uniqueness are constructed through practices like this. Even today Parsis are known for their peculiar customs though such rituals are no longer widely practiced. Parsi novels generally highlight the centrality of the border marking process of the Parsi burial ceremony. Kanga, who unlike most other Parsi novelists, doesn't go into the minute details of Parsi burial rituals, however observes the following about the colleagues of Sam who have come to attend the *uthamna*: "The next day, we had the uthmna in the hall of the squat-domed fire-temple that guarded the Parsee colony across the street like a fat white Buddha. Which was sad because most of Sam's colleagues from the bank had to stand outside. They weren't Parsee. Their presence would have defiled the fire temple" (196).

Here Brit is problematising the age old Parsi tradition of not allowing outsiders into the fire temple. His Western education resists such an obvious way of identifying outsiders. This is an issue with most Parsis today. They find it difficult to articulate their ethnic identity within the framework of the secular self. The secular self they try to project is an important aspect of their post-Independence identity and it is very important, as they live in the emphatically plural society of Bombay. Being a very small minority they can't afford to invite the hostility of other Indian communities. Under British patronage it was a different paradigm altogether. They could easily claim their distinctive identity without fearing the antagonism of the Indian communities. The Parsis after independence had debated the possibility of availing special minority status in India in order to preserve their rights but eventually decided that they "should and could stand or fall by their merits and not seek any privileged status" (Hinnells 34). But numerically the Parsis anywhere in the world are minorities as M.F.Salat points out: "To be a Parsi is to be a part of a minority culture group anywhere in the world" (98). However, it must be noted that the Parsi identity

in India throughout the centuries preceding the arrival of the Western powers, and after their arrival, was not mainly formed in defense of the antagonism of the host society. This is also the case of the Jews in India, whose identity in Europe was formed as a defense to external threats, unlike in India, where there is an absence of anti-Semitism. The Parsis do not have a history of ethnic persecution in India. They were largely invisible in the multi ethnic fabric of India due to their small numbers and their conscious adaptation of Indian culture in their public life. They did not exercise any political power in India prior to the arrival of the Europeans and are largely recorded in history as a peace loving people. It is only in the twentieth century that communal violence has forced them to adapt more defensive strategies and redefine their identities. This particular issue has been discussed in detail in analyzing the novels of Rohinton Mistry. Kanga's novel is blissfully ignorant of the growing enmity towards the Parsis. His characters still rejoice flaunting their superiority and are dismissive of the significance of the growing interference of the dominant communities in Bombay. Brit sees the world from within the community and the narrative throws light on the problem within rather than in relation to other communities. His physical disability does not allow him to develop an outsider's viewpoint of his decadent community.

The notion of Parsi dominance was ingrained in the Parsi generation of the early twentieth century. They grew up listening to the stories of the great work done by their forefathers, especially the charity work of their previous generations that was recognized even by the British Queen. Parsi wealth could liberally dispense large sums for charity work to all communities and thereby earn the respect and love of other communities. As Palsetia observes "Parsi charity functioned to foster internal community bonds and acted as a lubricant of good inter-community relations"

(Palsetia, in Hinnells 86) With the decline in the prosperity of the community the funds spent on charity also dwindled and at present, most Parsi charity funds are used for the welfare of members of their own community. Hence, in Post-Independence India they need a well stated secular attitude to survive. Madhumalathi Adhikari observes the difference in the attitude of the old generation and the present generation Parsis particularly with reference to the religion: "Religious orthodoxy is viewed from two opposing angles: to the veterans, it is the symbol of superiority and authority; to the young, it is an instrument of exploitation and oppression" (48). The dominance they once maintained cannot be kept up with the policy of pleasing neighboring communities in the post-Independence period through charity work. With the Indian political scenario being increasingly influenced by communal forces, this minuscule community has to be very cautious in projecting its distinctive religious and ethnic identity. Kanga brings out the need for a secular identity through Brit, who does not seem to be overly addicted to the vow of glorifying the Parsi religious distinctiveness even though other characters like Sam and Sera cannot always successfully project their secular self. By giving us glimpses of their family life and private thoughts, Kanga does a thorough probe of the conflict-ridden Parsi self.

Kanga's critical engagement with the ongoing Parsi project of decolonization renders humour and pathos to the novel. There is a sure attempt by the Parsis to introspect their identification with British culture and the ways in which they should overcome this proximity that distances them from the Indians. While admitting the fact that the British have left India for sure, Brit is guilty of addiction to Western culture. Even a very casual glimpse at his everyday routine would indicate his dependence on a Western life style which reminds us of the life style of the Parsis during the colonial period. His disability has, to a great extent, curtailed his choices.

His daily life is an extension of his parents' daily life. It is natural for Brit to grow up with some his community's stereotypes. Despite his spatial confinement he understands and criticizes community stereotypes that are out of tune with contemporary times.

In his second book, *Heaven on Wheels* which is a firsthand narration of his impressions of England on a wheel chair, Kanga records his thoughts on the land of the colonizer. But his novel's only encounter with the West comes in the form of Brit's tour to America. Contrary to what readers would expect from an ardent anglophile , the author does not paint the glittering side of America. Instead, he writes about the gloomy side of American life, one in which people do not seem to be very happy. Particularly one event he narrates sets the tone of his impressions. After referring to the shady side of American life with dope pushers and beggars, he refers to the spectacle of a girl suffocating herself to death. This, along with reflections on a few other gloomy aspects of the American life, provides the typical new generation attitude of the Parsis towards the once revered Western society and culture. Anglophiles like Kanga could not come to terms with the poverty that co-existed with the pomp of the West. The fantastical West of the Parsi mind remains alive to slow down the process of assimilation and the formation of a new identity. It still shapes their day-to-day life. But the realization that the sooner they reclaim their Indian identity the better, has started to dominate their social, political, economic and cultural life.

The typical Parsi problem of being twice removed from their homeland, the first a geographical and cultural dislocation and the second, purely a cultural one, keeps getting focused by the Parsi writers. Their initial translocation from Persia and the later adaptation of the Hindu way of life gave them an identity which was neither

pure Persian nor Hindu. Numerous accounts from history may be cited to show that the majority community never accepted the Parsis as another Indian community. The Parsis have occasionally attempted to assert their loyalty to India by declaring themselves part of Hindu society. But this was never enough to help the process of assimilation into Indian society. Despite the segmentation of Indian society, the identification of the 'other' was fairly uncomplicated. The Indian caste system was rigid enough to mark boundaries with other communities. Assimilation into such a complex social pattern was not easy and the Parsis were not really forced to assimilate. As Kreyenbroek and Neville suggest, because of the rigid caste system the Parsis must have remained as outsiders during the earlier centuries of their stay in India (44).Their place in Indian society was always a problematic one. There were layers of the Indian self imposed on their unique community identity which was marked less by an easily identifiable closeness to the culture and the land they once left behind, and more by differences with the host culture. The presence of rivayets does clearly suggest the alienation of the Indian Parsis from their home culture. It is difficult to clearly understand the extent of their assimilation, but their language, dress, and ways of life sans religious life were very close to those of their host society. They did not try to relive their Persian life style and their awareness of it is not easy to prove. Their diasporic identity remained almost suspended till the arrival of the British and the shift the community experienced in their identity after their encounter with the West was not a result of the erasure of an already well formed group identity. Instead their Westernization replaced an identity that was situationally accepted and conditionally constructed under the various influences that they were exposed to since their arrival in India.

Western influence allowed the Parsis to reinvent their ethnic identity, which was the task of the elites of the group. But the elite of the community were guilty of over westernization and hence could not go back to a blind reconstruction of the past. In the absence of reliable religious texts, this anglicized community could not invent fictions and get them approved by the members who were well educated. And hence this community had to rely on a system of rationality and critical thinking in constructing the foundational tenets of their community in order to satisfy many of its members. In this sense the influence of the West may be considered two faced. It helped the community to find its past and at the same time it necessitated that search to be guided by Western rational principles. Much that was removed from the community practice was a portion of the community belief system which could not satisfy Western rational thinking. Writing towards in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Moulton points out the role of reason in Parsi reformation, "The general principle of the reformers has been the desire to cut out of Zoroastrianism all that could not stand the rigid tests of pure reason" (173). By the beginning of the twentieth century this new ethnic identity formation reached its present position. And in this position the Parsi identity stood at a few removes from its Persian past. But what damaged the community's chances in the Post-Independence period was its remoteness not from the Persian past, but from the socio-cultural milieu of India. At the threshold of Independence, the Parsi community stood closest to the British and possibly at its worst relationship with other communities of India.

A segment of the Indian Independence Movement was no doubt spearheaded by the Parsi elites. But the general Parsi feeling towards Indian Independence was far from being affirmative. The *Manchester Guardian* in 1930 reports with a bit of surprise on the Parsi procession in Bombay in support of Gandhi, "The procession is

remarkable in that it is the first time that the Parsis as a community have demonstrated their sympathy with Mr. Gandhi" (Qtd in Jacobson 40). The Parsis were very reluctant to be part of the protest movements against the British. They were far too short sighted to see the consequences of the disadvantages of the alliance with the British after their departure. Their hybrid identity was not easy to discard because its roots went deeper than even what they wanted to achieve by imitating the British. The influences of the West stunted their cultural growth. Just like Sera and Sam –who take pride in comparing their robust physical features to Betty Gable and Gregory Peck – have to accept a son like Brit with arrested growth, the Parsis of the present generation have to accept the diminished stature of the community. The presence of the past has paralyzed the community's growth.

Identities are circumstantial, feeding on the opportunities presented by the changing times. But in some cases the transformation required from one established identity to another one, necessitated by a change in the socio, cultural and economic circumstances takes a long time. Dominant minorities like the Parsi community find it difficult to accept a new identity which gives them lesser role to play in society. Kanga's characters are situated within this ambit of transformation. The favourable conditions that created the present identity have suddenly disappeared and the shock experienced by the community has to come down to a manageable proportion to really enable the community to adapt to the new circumstances. There are a few factors that made this transition a difficult one. First of all, the present identity has placed them on the world map as one of the most prosperous communities and to lose this recognition on the global level is painful for the community. Secondly, reading the fiction by Parsi writers, one strongly feels that the Parsis were not expecting this decline in their status resulting from the departure of the British. It came so suddenly

that even fifty years after Independence they are still finding it difficult to believe this hard truth. Third, their present identity was achieved by a modification of some of the important doctrines of the community, a reversal is almost impossible and the creation of a new one requires time. As Ashish Nandy point out:

> This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all. In the process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds (*The Intimate Enemy* 11).

Colonialism alters cultural practices of the community in such a way that the colonized struggle in the period after the departure of their colonizers to free themselves of these influences. In the contemporary world, where 'westernization', Nandy claims, has become a pejorative word, the Parsis are forced to begin a process that would rid them of the cultural stigma of being westernized. This process has begun for the Parsis and is moving towards the right destination. The bitter irony that marked their expressions about Indian communities is giving way to an acknowledgement of the inevitable reality of having to accept their relative insignificance in Independent India.

The discussion among the family members of Brit on the marriage of Dolly to a Muslim boy begins in an atmosphere of hostility, but eventually, her parents accept it, knowing that they have to move with the times. Marriage as in all important Parsi novels is one of the central concerns of the narrative. There are two major subcategories to the discussion on marriage. The first and foremost is the issue of

marriage alliances between the Parsis and non-Parsis and the status of non Parsis after their marriage with the Parsis. This discussion is very significant because marriage with non-Parsis is not only a religious and cultural affair. It also involves economic dimensions. The second is the question of the appropriate age for marriage and the discussion on the issues of fertility, low birth rate and the possibility of extinction. Kanga customarily refers to all these concerns that threaten the Parsi community. But marriage is not the most important of Kanga's worries and his approach to it is very bold, progressive and unhesitatingly radical. Novy Kapadia observes that the theme of marriage is only a subtext in the novel and summarises the treatment of the theme of marriage in the novel in the following words: "So in fictional form, with deft use of irony, wit, repartee and caricature Kanga reflects the continuous issue of interfaith marriages for the rapidly dwindling Parsi community which still yarns to preserve [its] ethnic purity" (117). Darius and Sam do not object to the marriage of Dolly. However Dolly has to threaten her mother with a fast unto death to force her to accept her marriage with a Muslim boy. This change in the attitude of the Parsis towards mixed marriages has also been discussed by novelists like B. K. Karanjia. Karanjia advocates mixed marriages as a solution to many of the problems faced by the Parsis in the second half of the twentieth century in *More of an Indian*. VLVN Narendera Kumar observes the following about this change in the Parsi attitude to marriage:

> However there is a notable change in the attitude of the Parsees of recent times. Lunacy which has resulted from in-breeding in the Zoroastrian community and dearth of suitable boys and girls in the community are (sic) forcing Parsees to opt for mixed marriages. This problem is dealt with in Karanjia's *More of an Indian*. What Karanjia advocates is a synthesis, a fusion

> of the Hindu and the Zoroastrian cultures. The narrative is an effective fictional rendering of a progressive Zoroastrian vision (122).

This flexibility or adaptability of an ethnic community is stressed by the advocates of the instrumental approach to ethnicity. Depending on the circumstances in which a particular ethnic community finds itself, it can modify old practices or create new cultural paradigms. But endogamy, being a very basic and definitive aspect of the Parsi community, may not be easy to do away with. But healthy (and sometimes unhealthy) discussions taking place within the community have stressed the need for changes in the rigid patterns of marriage. Kanga does not deal with the issue of marriage in great detail, probably because it is an issue already discussed copiously in Parsi novels. However the couple of pages devoted to the issue of Dolly's marriage very tactically and effectively present the full spectrum of the Parsi attitude to marriage. The notion of Muslims as the traditional enemies of the Parsis and as a filthy race, who turned them into refugees few centuries ago, gets repeated in *Trying to Grow*. The Parsi co-existence with the Hindus and the Muslims for over ten centuries hasn't really changed their perception of the Muslims as a barbaric race. Ethnic bonds thrive on such enmity which is not rational and is totally irrelevant in the contemporary social scenario. There has not been any serious record of a Parsi-Muslim conflict after their arrival in India except for the one event mentioned in the *Kissah-i-Sanjan*. The discussion about Dolly's marriage, unlike Freddy's fierce admonition of his son's decision to marry an Anglo Indian girl in *The Crow Eaters,* is tempered with humour. But the deeper layers of the Parsi self still keeps the wounds received from the Muslims fresh in order to foster a sense of togetherness and identity. Sera yields to the pressure of her daughter but not before she uses all her limited knowledge of the Parsi household version of history to dissuade Dolly from

marrying Salim. " 'She', sobbed Sera, 'wants to marry a filthy Mussalman', Dolly screamed. 'Don't you call Salim filthy, he bathes twice a day.' 'They stink,' howled Sera, 'all of them. You saw what happened to Tina. You will end up in a bawdy house in Brooklyn, just like her' " (Kanga 164).

But in Kanga such an open hostility is carefully balanced by the secularism of other characters. It is not only the Muslim community that appears to invite all the ridicule of the author. Hindus and Christians are also not presented as communities worth entering in marital alliances with. However, in their case there is less bitterness and fewer historical events are quoted in support of the community antagonism. While a Muslim is criticized on grounds of being filthy and Islam is attacked for being a religion that allows a man to take four husbands, Hindu husbands are ridiculed for their mistreatment of their women, as the following conversation between Sam and Sera shows. After playfully admonishing Sera for making fun of Hindu holy man Wagh Baba, Sam says, " 'If I were a Hindu husband , I would have thrashed you just now' " (Kanga 7). Such juxtapositions and contrasts are essential to highlight the uniqueness and the difference in terms of the superiority of ethnic communities. These juxtapositions are a part of ethnic stereotypes. And these stereotypes continue despite very warm relationships between communities and the absence of authentic records of past hostilities. This survival tactics used by the ethnic communities can sometimes (though not necessarily always) lead to open hostility. Co-existence doesn't presuppose absence of differences or acceptance of differences. They exist within a hierarchy of values. Each culture constructs its own hierarchy of values and the justification is extracted from its own historical and cultural past –real or constructed. These stereotypes exist alongside the knowledge that they are irrational. Dolly responds very quickly to Sam's prejudice about the Hindu husband

by saying, " 'My God!' howled Dolly. 'Such shameful prejudice! Imagine saying that about Hindus. It's a scandal! You haven't learnt a thing from the National Integration Campaign, have you? You went to sleep in 1947 and never woke up' " (Kanga 7). Even though the conversation is not a very serious one it does betray the deep rooted prejudice of the Parsis.

The present generation of Parsis has been through assimilation programmes like the National Integration Programme and they realize that certain Parsi prejudices are scandalous in public. They have been initiated into new social and national realities. Their articulation of their ethnic identity has to take place against the background of a new socio cultural atmosphere. The novel very frequently foregrounds the generational conflict and the atmosphere of changing perceptions about identities.

The community seems to be heading in the direction of making the changes necessary to fit into multicultural Post-Independence Indian society and accepting the norms of a plural society. Sam and Brit help Dolly convince Sera about the inevitability of accepting the norms of the future society. Even in her consent Sera doesn't forget to highlight Salim's Parsi looks and Western lifestyle. This decision of Dolly to marry out is also significant in terms of the survival of the family which stands for the community itself. In the family's permission to let Dolly marry the Muslim boy lies the future of the family, which would have perished had they not agreed to the marriage. The future for the community seems to lie in the immediate and radical reform of the marriage laws. Parsi indifference to marriage and their postponement of marriage till a very late age are issues which Kanga mentions, though he doesn't turn them into the central motifs of his novel. Parsis do not have more than two kids. Though they are very dutiful towards their kids they are not very

eager to have many. Socio-economic reasons could be the most important reasons for such an indifference to marriage. Kanga very ironically points at this aspect of Parsi family life. “I don’t know how it works for people who have more than two kids because Parsees almost never do. They feel it’s some sort of extravagance, like having a television in the bedroom” (Kanga 168).

Lack of employment opportunities and housing problems haunt middle class Parsis. Even though the changing perceptions of the Parsis regarding marriage are carefully documented, the writer has not forgotten to represent the conservative attitude still prevalent in many Parsi families. Defarge, Jeroo and others represent this uncompromising Parsi stiffness. The narrative voice of Brit greatly helps to negotiate the most complicated aspects of his own identity crisis and that of his community. His attempt at trying to find his own means of dealing with his cripple personality is a liberating experience. He allows Dolly to marry and Sera to die peacefully. His deepest conflicts are amplified by the community’s way of perceiving them. By methodically severing his contacts with the community he is trying to find his own position and living in the society. No community is proud of its handicapped/disabled population. The most charitable of communities, the Parsis, are no exception to this sad rule. Through Brit, the author introduces the significant discourse within the community regarding the decay and the degeneration that have set into it in Post-Independence India. Very often there is an attempt at reifying this through metaphors of illness both mental and physical. The Parsis feel that their youth lack the physical vigor that the community boasted of in the. The carefully constructed colonial image of the hyper- masculine Parsi who was second only to the British in his physical features is no longer attributed to the present generation of Parsis. “The important and interesting consequence of this need to adapt seems to be that modern Parsi culture

speaks a discourse of decay, in which Parsis attack themselves as inadequate – inadequate as Englishmen, inadequate as Indians, in-adequate as effective, socially appropriate human beings" (Luhrmann 14).

Parsi youth today are described in the same way that Parsis described the natives during the colonial period –as effeminate and emasculated. These images of emasculated, effeminate and impotent youth are projected on to the central character of the novel who tries hard to dispel these images. Cyrus on the other hand stands for everything the community aspires for in its youth –a flawless personality that makes even Brit wish that his own parents should have had someone like him as their son. By isolating himself from his community Brit achieves an independence which will let him establish himself as he is without having to conform to the norms of his community. For Brit it is quite natural because he escapes all the community impositions by virtue of being physically challenged and not having to express his token membership to his community, at least not as frequently as most other members have to do. A disabled person like him is an inside outsider who can view the nature of ethnic dynamics of the group from within but is still outside it. He is an outsider to the extent that he is neither considered an adult nor one strongly assimilated into the community by his parents. The usual rituals of initiation and growth necessary to become a full member of the community like the navjot and the marriage ceremonies are either not performed on him or not mentioned as the author does not find them worth mentioning because of their insignificance to the central character. His exemption from full membership of the community allows the narrator to be critical of the community not with hatred, but with love and sincerity.

The Parsi decline in the twentieth century may also be discussed from the perspective of the "middleman minority" role they played under the British.

"Middleman minority" is a term first used by Blalok, to refer to communities that mediate between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups. Alternative terms used for middleman minority communities are 'middleman trading peoples', 'migrant intermediation', 'marginal trading people' and 'permanent minorities'. Pierre Van Den Berghe defines a middleman minority as an "ethnically distinct group that specializes in the selling of goods or skills" This definition however does not clearly explain the role played by the community, its status in a society and its relationship with other ethnic communities around. Broadly speaking, these ethnic groups are immigrants who come and settle in the host society for a variety of reasons, the most important of which is the prevalence of adverse conditions back at home. They become an important part of the host society even though they never assimilate sufficiently well to share the socio cultural life of the country of residence. Middleman minority groups are found across the world at various times. Various ethnic groups perform the functions of middleman minorities in different parts of the world. Edna Bonacich in his very popular work "A Theory of Middleman Minorities", mentions a few of the important middleman minority groups in the world like the Jews in Europe, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, Asians in East Africa, Armenians in Turkey, Syrians in West Africa, Japanese and Greeks in the United States and the Parsis in India. Such groups occupy an intermediate position in the country of residence concentrating on certain occupations like trade, commerce, agent, labor contractor, rent collector, money lender, skilled-craftsman, broker and so on. Even if all the members of the group are not found in such occupations, the visibility of the members involved in such occupations extends the stereotypes and qualities to all the members. These groups are not indigenous to the country of residence. They do not belong to the already set social pattern of the host society. They are in most cases

voluntary immigrants who have chosen to stay in the country of residence mostly because of the adverse conditions back at home. They generally tend to entertain thoughts of going back to their homelands. Whether they do go back to their home country is determined by a combination of very complex factors but there is a mental longing to go back to their homeland. Hence Bonacich calls them sojourners, "[. . .] they begin as sojourners in the territories to which they move. They are immigrants who do not plan to settle permanently" (584). This connection with the homeland is one of the important factors that holds the members together and fosters group solidarity. Bonacich refers to this desire of the Jews, Armenians and the Parsis: "But in all the three cases there is an unusual attachment to an ancestral homeland; in the Jewish case, to Palestine. Styker (1959; 350) refers to the "continued attachment of the Parsis for their ancestral Persian home, for example" (585).

By virtue of not being caught up in status hang-ups and being foreign and hence objective, these communities easily occupy the tier between the elites and the lower strata of the society. In colonial societies such ethnic groups act as a buffer for the imperial powers, bearing the brunt of the hostility of the natives. The hostility of the surrounding population increases dependence on members of the same ethnic community and hence creates a strong ethnic bond. The relatively small proportion of middleman communities to the total population of the host country –usually less than 5%-10% of the host population (Van Den Berghe), also compels them to stick together or live in urban ghettoes fearing attacks or persecution by the natives of the land whose economic condition is lower than theirs. These groups are characterized by strong patriarchal and patrilocal family structures across the world. There is an over dependence on the work of the family members which most often is either unpaid or very cheap. Usually, extended families with large numbers of members are

housed in the same building close to the work place, and services of all the members are called upon when needed. The families of such an ethnic group come together and stay in a particular place in order to help each other and expand their trade, leading to the formation of a ghetto. By depending on the labor of the members of the family, these communities can effectively cut down the cost involved in the form of production or labour they undertake. This enables them to compete with local ethnic groups. These communities thrive on their knowledge of the trade, services of the members of the family and a strong ethnic bond. They seldom admit the members of outside ethnic groups into their trade unless the trade grows beyond what can be effectively managed by the members of their own group. This, in the course of time, isolates such communities from the neighboring ethnic groups and leads to very serious negative stereotyping of the community. The identity, under such circumstances, forced upon them, would allow them to occupy the economic and social niche in the host society as perfect outsider trading middleman minorities and prevent the possibility of their assimilating into the host society.

The predicament of the middleman minority groups in a society can be approached from two different perspectives; from the perspective of the host society and from the perspective of the middleman ethnic groups. The host society where the middleman minorities prosper are normally plural societies characterized by complex social stratification where there is a significant social and economic status gap between the dominant /elite groups and the subordinate groups. The middleman communities occupy an intermediate position by acting as a link between the two. They are economically poorer than the native ruling ethnic groups or the colonizers in colonial societies and richer than the mass of natives. Even though it may be said that such intermediate groups benefit both the dominant and subordinate groups, they are

treated with hostility by both groups. They perform roles that the ruling class does not want to perform and for which the subordinate groups lack skills (Van Den Berghe 142). Even though the middleman minority communities can successfully flourish in all kinds of societies, they normally find very good prospects in countries ruled by alien ethnic groups like Imperialist powers. Van Den Berghe cites various reasons for colonizers to welcome these groups. They normally extend the markets beyond the urban areas and provide markets for manufactured goods, a feature highly appreciated by the colonizers. They help modernize transport, and stimulate the economy by increasing the dependence of the natives on the rulers and they also provide cheap staff for the lower ranks of colonial officialdom. And their chief function is to deflect the hostility of the subject population from the rulers. The middleman minorities are seen as the exploiters by the natives even though they are only an agency through which the colonial powers exploit the masses. Very successful middleman minorities can be envied even by the rulers as was the case of the Parsis in the seventeenth century, when they controlled a very large portion of the trade. "The financial power of the Parsis in Gujarat seemed to have evoked a fear in the English mind and made them feel that the Parsee sway makes our credit subservient to theirs and gives them a power too dangerous to our trade" (Kamerkar 132). But normally, rulers who are firmly in control of the political power of the nation can regulate the growth of the middleman communities very easily. Hence, a direct conflict between the rulers and the middleman minorities is seldom seen unless the ruling community is a postcolonial group formed after Independence from colonial rule. Hostility is normally a feature of their relationship with the host society and not with ruling class.

The middleman communities are blamed for their lack of loyalty to the host nation and are considered parasite populations that steal the food and money of the

natives with cleverness and bribery. These communities, because of their relative insignificant number and lack of political power, are often forced to indulge in practices like bribery to survive stiff competition. They cannot directly indulge in visible practices that antagonize the host populations. They use the loopholes in the legal machinery to their advantage to boost their economic position. They have very few options to reduce the envy and hostility of the native population. If they try to assimilate they will be called opportunists and will have to continuously prove their loyalty to the host nation. On the other hand if they decide not to assimilate they will be branded as outsiders and will be treated as pariah capitalists. Bonacich and Van Den Berghe have described the difficulties faced by the middleman minority communities especially during the initial stages of their settlement in the country of immigration. They have to adapt to local climate, learn new languages and earn the trust of the suspicious natives and the dominant ruling groups and understand the dynamics of the market. Even after they find their niche in the society they have to live under the shadow of a possible overthrow by the natives. Their attempt at negotiating the fear of the natives, submissiveness to the rulers and adaptation to local conditions earn them "the reputation for stinginess, dishonesty, clannishness, deviousness, disloyalty and unassimibilty" (Van Den Berghe 146).

The traits that Bonacich finds in the middleman minority communities are typical of the Parsi community in India:

> Middleman minorities typically evince the following traits: a resistance to out marriage, residential self segregation, the establishment of language and cultural schools for their children, the maintenance of distinctive cultural traits (including often a distinctive religion) and a tendency to avoid involvement in

> local politics except in affairs that directly affect their group. They form highly organized communities which resist assimilation (586).

The Parsis did not perform the role of middlemen minority communities in the first few centuries following their arrival in India. This luxury loving band of Persians settled in India as agriculturists and prospered under various rulers. Even though, as Kreyenbroek and Neville point out, they must have indulged in small scale trading, their primary occupation must have been agriculture (45).They must have closely identified themselves with the Indians in costumes, customs and language. The rules regarding marrying out seem to have been less rigid as there is hardly any proscription regarding conversion and marrying out in the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism. However this community had not completely assimilated into Indian society and retained its ethnic distinctiveness. The encounter with the British changed the nature of their occupational pattern in the sixteenth century. Even though it is possible that a small group of Parsis was involved in trade in the coastal ports of Gujarat, Cambay, Broach and Surat as early as the eleventh century, their numbers must have been very small and the volume of trade that they controlled was definitely negligible. The success of the Parsis in commerce and trade can hardly be attributed to the past reputation of the community. They were agriculturalists who displayed special skills in some other professions like toddy brewing (Hinnells 46). Their success in commerce is a purely colonial phenomenon. Studies on the relative dominance of certain communities in certain occupations have not yielded any satisfactory conclusions in terms of a definite connection between ethnic traits and success in the respective occupations (Weber). So it is irrelevant to link Parsi commercial success to any inherent biological or mental attributes. It must be pointed out that they transformed themselves into a business community projecting an identity which is based on the traits that made them

successful in business. As Montesquieu said about the English that they "had progressed the farthest of all peoples of the world in three important things: in piety, in commerce, and in freedom" (qtd. in Weber 11), the Parsis too combined commerce, ethnic distinctiveness and freedom to carve their niche in Post European Indian society. With the arrival of the Portuguese, the Parsi role in trade increased, even though trade in Gujarat was still dominated by the Vanias. By the end of the sixteenth century the Portuguese, the Dutch, French and English companies employed Parsis as their agents and their role in trade with the West became very visible. As Mani P Kamerkar records: "The Europeans in search of direct contact with producers, found the Parsis excellent brokers and also politically useful as intermediaries with the established authorities" (131). Kamrekar's claim that the Parsis acted as money lenders to the Nawab and the Europeans including the East India Company, shows the prosperity of this community. They assumed their middleman minority status seriously after the exodus to Bomabay where they completely shed their agrarian rural life style and indulged freely and fully in trade.

> The major group to migrate in rapidly growing numbers from the end of the seventeenth century were the Parsis from Surat and other ports and cities of Gujarat. They were the first indigenous group to adjust to the new circumstances and align themselves with the new political structure and therefore came up foremost during the next two centuries (Kamerkar 133).

The Parsis initially helped the English collect revenue and acted as middlemen between the British and the local population. Soon they earned the trust of the British and were given more responsible positions in administration and trade contracts. But the real fame of the Parsis came as ship builders in Bombay. The Lowji Wadia family of Surat, well known for its skills in ship building, was invited by the British to come

and settle in Bombay. From here on the Parsi growth is one that would surprise every historian. They became the wealthiest community in Bombay and owned more private ships than any other community. They established their own private trading companies and acted as chief brokers for British firms. By the end of the nineteenth century they became a very prominent player on the stage of Indian political and economic life. They had amassed a huge amount of wealth which they thought would give them enough security to weather the storms that they might have to face in Post-Independence India. But as it happened with all the middleman minority communities of the world, the "cheap money", as it is often called, did not assure them a safe living and peaceful negotiation of differences and hostility in Indian society. They are today accused of being opportunists and their loyalty to India is questioned. The Indians in South Africa who performed a similar role during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also met with similar fate. They opened their trading network in South Africa under the rule of the imperial powers and were very successful. The racially stratified society of South Africa under the Colonial powers helped the Indians to flourish by becoming the middlemen trading communities. The three tier racial structure of African society with the Europeans at the top and the Africans at the bottom allowed the Asian population to act as intermediaries between the two in trade. These trading communities from India mainly depended on their families and community members to work in the trade. They formed small Asian ghettos within the African cities living close to their shops depending on the labour provided by their family members. Racially they assumed a superior position to the native Africans which resisted any possibility of these communities identifying with the native population or assimilating into the host society. Everything went well for these communities as long as colonial rule controlled the social, political and economic life

of Africa. But once it became quite evident that the colonial powers should eventually leave their African colonies, these Asian communities were slowly made the target of attack by the natives. There was a very strong sense of hostility towards the Asians in Africa. They were seen as the agents of exploitation and racial discrimination. Even though most of these communities decided to stay back in Africa after the country became independent, refusing to accept the citizenship of their homelands, their loyalty was questioned and they were persecuted by the natives. This hostility was attributed to the practice of racial discrimination by the Asians during and after the colonial rule and also to their exploitative mentality. But a very close examination of these communities would reveal the fact that they were not responsible for the exploitation and discrimination they are accused of. They were only a link in the colonial chain of exploitation. But by virtue of being the intermediaries they had to absorb the rage of the natives against exploitation. These middleman communities were the visible agency through which exploitation was carried out and hence they became the targets for political parties to get the sympathy and support of the masses in their campaign for power. These communities were marginalized in postcolonial African societies. Their loyalty was questioned even though some of these communities did everything to vouch for their loyalty to the new governments. The decline and extinction of middleman communities is almost always a sudden process following the freedom of the colonized from the European rulers. One of the best examples is that of Uganda where within ten years of country's independence, Asians had to leave the country on the orders issued by the then President Idi Amin. The Asian community in Uganda, which was comprised mainly of Indians and Pakistanis, was given 90 days to leave the country. Even though Idi Amin justified the action of expelling the Asians to a dream he had, it is beyond any doubt that his priorities were

economic as his following statement proves. “Some members of your community have no interest in this country beyond the aim of making as much profit as possible, and at all costs” (Qtd. in Bonacich 590). A few of the members who had opted for Ugandan citizenship suffered more because they were given only 30 days to leave the country. So a show of loyalty to the country of residence is not enough to reduce the antagonism of the host population. Bonacich has studied the fate of the Asian communities in Africa in depth and has come to the conclusion that the middleman minorities will not be accepted into the host society as its citizens; all their actions will be viewed with suspicion and hence they remain strangers for ever: “Lacking numbers and political power, in the long run they are likely to lose in their conflict with the host society” (593). The conclusions that he drew about the Indian communities are very relevant to the case of the Parsis, who, like the Indians in South Africa, lost their significance in the postcolonial Indian society. The Parsis are seen as strangers by Indians by virtue of their Persian background, which the community tried to foreground during British rule. Strangers are always treated with suspicion and their loyalties questioned. Simmel discusses this aspect of the strangers when he says:

> The stranger is thus being discussed here, not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going (Wolf 402).

The stranger is someone who is potentially a stranger even though he has been staying long enough to be part of the country of his sojourn. He is thought of by the host population as somebody who has not overcome the freedom moving on. Simmel further states that one of the chief attributes of the stranger is that he is mobile and is

not fixed to the soil. He is by nature “no owner of the soil”. He comes in contact with the people of the land “but is not organically connected, through established ties of kinship, locality, and occupation, with any single one” (404). This mobility and lack of organic ties with the soil allows him to be a successful trader. He makes a living as the trader or middleman precisely because of his position as the stranger in the society: “Throughout the history of economics the stranger everywhere appears as the trader or the trader as the stranger” (405). This dimension of the Parsi relationship to Indian society became very visible during the British rule; their status as the outsiders/ strangers allowed them to flourish as traders and this increased their estrangement from the host society. The effort of some of their leaders in showing token loyalty to India, especially during the later stages of the freedom movement, did not help much in reducing the antagonism of other Indians towards them. Their bargaining power in the Independent India was very limited because of their insignificant demographic volume. Even though the Parsis did not have to face the persecution the Indians suffered in Uganda, they do not enjoy their previous privileges as the most westernized community (hence the closest to the British) and the bluest blood in India.

In conclusion it may be said that the present Parsi decline and alienation from Indian social milieu is the direct result of their adoption of eighteenth and nineteenth century British culture.They whole heartedly embraced Western culture believing in the continuance of the empire and the moral rightness of the British. Tanya Luhrmann aptly summarizes the fate of the Parsis in the Post-Independence era as the “agony of the long delayed recognition of the emptiness of this promise”. Parsis are not the only colonial elite to suffer this agony in the world. It has happened in many other parts of the world as Tanya Luhrmann points out; the Christianized British after the departure

of the Romans, Jews in Tunisia, Muslims in South India after the decline in Arab power, Indians in East and South Africa, Russians in the new Union, all have suffered this agony. Kanga has very effectively captured the decayed and diseased life of the Parsis of Bombay in the Post-Independence period. The Parsis don't have much to look forward to; they live largely on the charity of their forefathers and the lost glory of the past. But the title of the novel, as Avdhesh Kumar Singh argues, shows the attempt by the community to grow despite the handicaps suffered by them in the post-Independence India: "But to me Brit is also a fitting symbol of his community that tries to grow in spite of its introvert nature and multiple external odds" (69).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As Stuart Hall has stated “there has been a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of ‘identity’, at the same moment as it has been subjected to a searching critique” (*Questions of Cultural Identity* 1). Academia has witnessed in the past 2-3 decades, a sudden rise in interest in the concept of identity, especially following the deconstruction of “the notion of an integral, originary, and unified identity.” The destabilising of a ‘unified identity’ has met with resistance from ethnic, racial, national and other notions of identity that are routinely characterized as being ‘essentialist’. Though the construction of ethnicity is complex and difficult to define, ethnic identities (despite being a ‘social construct’) are claimed to be more stable and enduring than religious or nationalist identities since they revolve around factors like common origin and a belief in ‘superfamily’. The ethnic subject-position superimposes multiple layers of identities on ethnic identity, making the core stable enough to provide the subject a ground for necessary and adequate self-definitions. This denomination of ethnic identity powering all other kinds of identities is emphasized by critics like Nilufer Bharucha. In Bharucha's discussion on Parsi identity, she observes: “Ethnic identity is fundamental and primordial. All other identities are acquired later. It is an identity that cannot be shrugged off like that of religion or nationality, both of which can be changed” (Bharucha 49). Ethnic identity is also a function of the forces of historicisation --thus becoming a ‘contested site’ even as it is an indelible subject-trait. Identities are “subject to a radical historicisation”, and “are constantly in the process of change and transformation”, states Hall in "Who Needs Identity?". Consequently Hall argues that identity is a process of ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’ even if it involves a regular correspondence with a common past that binds its members together. This innate paradox of ethnic

existence--on the one hand there are highly durable ethnic groups, and on the other hand the nature of ethnic identities keep changing--results naturally in ethnic groups exhibiting a multiple identity, "[. . .] which includes not only the many different affiliations of individuals with other kinds of grouping such as gender, region, class, religion and the like, but also the many shifting identifications between different ethnies or ethnic categories" (Smith and Hutchinson 7).

This study examined these notions with reference to the construction and the remodellings of Parsi identity in India both diachronically and synchronically. In order to establish the continuity and interruptions of Parsi historical identity and to study them this study took for its focus the representation of these identities in the works of three Parsi novelists –Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga. Three important phases in the development of these identities were mapped out -the colonial identity, the transitional identity and the contemporary identity. One author (who represents a particular phase better than the other two in his works) is assigned to each phase. As Sidhwa and Mistry have authored more than one novel, there occurs an overlapping of ideas about identities in their different novels and there arises a difficulty in exclusively assigning one author for one phase of identity. None of them is passionately exhaustive in his/her treatment of the theme, nor are they non-sensitive to the other. The section on Bapsi Sidhwa devoted to discussing the colonial identity of the Parsis is a case in point. While her first Parsi novel *Crow Eaters* is a powerful explication of the specific nature of the layered traits of colonial intervention posited on the community-identity, her second novel *Ice-Candy-Man* narrates the violence and chaos during the Partition from a Parsi perspective. The focus of the novel is on the Partition rather than Parsi life itself, and it also details the anxiety of the transitional phase of Parsi identity, a phase which can be seen in the novels of

Rohinton Mistry. Her third significant work *An American Brat* discusses the post-Independence revisions in the identity of the new generation of Parsis. This aspect of the Parsi identity has been effectively shown in the fifth chapter with reference to the novels of Firdaus Kanga. All the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry cannot be placed within one time frame. Firdaus Kanga, who has written only one novel, can be placed within the Post Independence frame. The three novelists here present a medley of identities that have been discussed contextually.

The multiplicity of identities that the Parsis are fated to live with is the result of choosing the "resources of history, language and culture" in order to successfully negotiate their relationship with outside communities. Key theories of ethnicity like Primordialist and Instrumentalist theories, Ethno-symbolist theory, Rational Choice theory and Transactionist theories reveal the complexity of the nature of ethnic identity, the relationship of ethnic groups to outside groups –both in terms of positive interaction in a multicultural milieu and the negative identification of the 'other', leading to hostility. This study has not attempted to simplify the nature of Parsi identity. It started rather from the study of the 'dominant' identities (as well as the corresponding oppositional stances) that the Parsis attempted to project at each period in their history.

The Introductory chapter scanned the salient features of some of the very important theories of ethnicity. Due to the enormous volume of literature available on ethnic theories which relate to the specific questions of ethnicity in different parts of the world, this study had to be selective and discussions which were not found relevant to the Parsi ethnic identity are partially or completely omitted.

In the second chapter, the history of the Parsis from the times of Zoroaster to the present is discussed briefly in order to establish the trajectory of the Parsi identity from a historical perspective. The discussion of Parsi history from the period of Zoroaster to the sixth century A.D. has been kept to a minimum because it is not wholly or directly related to this study. The low availability of verifiable/ reliable historical records about the life, achievements and culture of the Parsis during the period from their arrival in India in the ninth century to the sixteenth century has precluded a lengthy discussion of this period. The discussion of the Parsi ethnic identity from the sixteenth century to the present has been structured keeping in mind the requirements of this study rather than with the objective of providing information about Parsi life. It is thus selective and analytical. Histories by both ethnic historians and others have been used as source material to comment on the nature of Parsi identity.

A dominant Parsi identity was constructed during the colonial period in order to appease the coloniser and reap material benefits. This identity completely transformed the Parsi attitude to other Indian communities, whom they began to view as inferior and effeminate. Their unquestioned loyalty to the British helped them prosper as a merchant community. They were patronised by the British. Myths of Persian origin were invoked frequently in their discourses and ethnic purity became an obsession for most of their historians. They identified themselves with the coloniser except in areas relating to religion. There was a revival of studies in Persian history, myths and legends in order to establish the Parsi link with the glorious Persian empire of the past. Most of the Parsi novels refer to the attempts of the older generation to educate their children of the long history of the Parsis and the tales of heroes from their epics. In order to distance themselves from their neighbouring

communities, physical and cultural markers like skin colour, masculine physique , sudreh and kusti, religious and cultural rituals, prohibition on intermarriages and heavy punishments for conversions were effectively incorporated into their discourses. Skin pigmentation becomes a very important ethnic marker in Parsi novels. They encouraged a western education and a western lifestyle, and purified themselves of all the cultural and religious influences of Hinduism. They even encouraged a colonial sport like cricket in order to get closer to the coloniser. Most Parsi novels reveal how a love of cricket was part of the Parsi lifestyle. Characters like Tanya and her father Sir Easymoney in *Crow Eaters*, Zereen in *An American Brat*, Colonel Bharucha in *Ice-Candy-Man*, Nariman Vakeel in *Family Matters*, Sera, Sam and Darius in *Trying to Grow* represent the over-Anglicised Parsi during and after the colonial period. The stress on ethnic purity and western culture very quickly distanced the Parsis from Indian communities even though there were not many cases of direct conflict with the native populations. (However a few minor cases of the Parsi conflict with local populations as result of their extreme loyalty to the British have been mentioned here). The insights of Primordialist theorists regarding the durability of ethnic ties, kinship and common descent were used to understand the phenomenon of the sudden rise of Parsi ethnic consciousness during the colonial period. The constructivist notions of ethnicity as a "manipulable, variable, situationally expressed, subjectively defined" (Van den Berghe) identity have been used to interrogate the mysterious case of the new Parsi identity, that was constructed mainly to extract material benefits such as rich trade contracts from the British.

The Third chapter brings out the features of the Parsi colonial identity in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, especially with reference to the three Parsi novels centring on the community –*Crow Eaters, Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat*. The section on

Crow Eaters discusses how Freddy, the central character of the novel, represents the successful Parsi who uses the resources of his ethnic identity to become a 'toady' of the British. He does not mind stooping to the position of a pimp to please the British ICS officer Mr. Charles P. Allen and rises to the position of the leader of his community using his influence with the British. His ability to adapt to the demands of the external world helps him become a rich and successful Parsi. His success has been analysed from the perspective of Primordialist and Constructivist theories. *Ice-Candy-Man* narrates the anxiety felt by the Parsis during the Partition as they prepare themselves for a new identity after Independence. Col. Bharucha's advice to his fellow Parsis is to adapt to the needs of the new times while retaining the most important aspects of their traditional ethnic and religious identity. The Parsi community of Lahore portrayed in *Ice-Candy-Man* is not attacked by Muslims or Hindus during the Partition violence. This illustrates the respect enjoyed by the Parsis due to their charity work and their sympathetic treatment of their neighbours. Despite the dominant colonial favour and respective subject-position which the Parsis achieved by distancing themselves from the native communities, they were not subjected to violence (as an ethnic group) during the Partition. *An American Brat* deals with the post-Independence fate of the Parsis in Lahore where they are forced to assimilate into the mainstream society. Feroza was sent to America in order to escape the influences of conservative Lahore. This choice is significant because Feroza's parents prefer western influence on their daughter to the Muslim influence of Pakistan. Ethnic groups are prepared to accept outside influences but are very selective about those choices which involve the direct reconfiguring of identity. Many Parsi characters in the novels chosen for this study have shown an inclination to migrate to the west in order to escape the influence of Post Independence India and

Pakistan—hinting at their inability to successfully cope with the changes in the post-Independence era. Feroza's experiences in the multicultural environment of America help her understand the significance of her Parsi ethnic identity. Frederick Barth's theory of Transactionism has been used to explain the permanence of the core ethnic identity in a multicultural environment.

The colonial identity which made the Parsis very successful during the pre-Independence period led to a serious conflict with the natives during the Independence movement and after Independence. Even though a section of the Parsis led by great freedom fighters like Dadabhoy Naoroji, Sir Dinshah Wacha, Pherozeshah Mehta, Shapurji Saklatvala and Feroze Gandhi were in the forefront of the Freedom Movement, the majority of the Parsis were against Independence. Partition and Independence were two shocking events for the Parsis from which they have not recovered. Independence forced them to switch their loyalties from the British to the Indians and Partition offered them an anxious choice of either staying in India or Pakistan or migrating to the west. The conflicts that the Parsi community faced in the post Independence period are caught sensitively in the novels of Rohinton Mistry. Mistry is settled in Canada but his works are largely set in Bombay. He writes about the growing communal politics of Bombay and how the rise of the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra created an anxiety among the minorities in Bombay, especially among the Parsis. All the three novels and a collection of short stories have made frequent references to the violence unleashed on the minorities and the South Indians by the BJP-Shiv Sena coalition. Mistry's first novel, *Such a Long Journey* and his second, *A Fine Balance* criticise the corruption and inefficiency of the Congress government at the centre, especially the policies of Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The Parsi relationship with the Nehru family is well known, especially the conflicts between Nehru and his

Parsi son-in law. Mistry narrates the antagonistic relationship between Feroze Gandhi and Nehru from a Parsi perspective. Mistry also discusses the Nagarwalla case that spoiled the relationship between the Parsi community and Mrs Gandhi. The conflicts with the central and state governments, conflicts with communal parties like the Shiv Sena and the loss of social, economic and political status in the post-Independence era has reduced the community to a middle class minority. The Parsis could not switch loyalties immediately after independence. They had conflicts with the local communities on account of their westernisation which led to cultural alienation. Along with the inter community conflicts the Parsis had to come to terms with the intra community conflicts triggered by the resistance of the younger generation of Parsis to the orthodoxy of their parents, with their increasing demand for flexibility in areas relating to intermarriages and conversions. During periods of conflicts, members of an ethnic group take shelter in the comfort provided by their community. There is a withdrawal from their interaction with the outside into the comfort of their community enclosures. These enclosures are metaphorically represented in Mistry's novels in the form of the Parsi ghettoes where his characters live sufficiently away from the outside. His last novel, *Family Matters* shows the effect of ethnic conflict upon the central character Yezad who, from being a cynic at the beginning of the story, becomes a very religious person towards the end of it. Horowitz has analysed the phenomenon of ethnic conflicts around the world and his insights have been used to understand the dynamics of ethnic identity during conflict.

The gradual withdrawal of the Parsis from the mainstream of Indian social, economic and the political life reaches its apogee in Firdaus Kanga's work. His lone novel *Trying to Grow* discusses the decay and disease of the Parsi community. The dominant colonial identity of the Parsis has been replaced by a subordinate minority

identity and the characters show a willingness to assimilate into the Indian society by tying to understand their new and reduced standing in the society. The ever present anxiety of extinction due to rapid decline in Parsi population colours many discussions in the novel. There is a real possibility of the very extinction of the community due to infertility, late marriages, diseases, intermarriages, housing problems and migrations, leading to a preoccupation with these issues in the novels of this period. The withdrawal from the outside has resulted in the second period of invisibility in their history; the first being the period immediately after their arrival in India to the 16th century. This invisibility may well be a community mechanism of self preservation. The fate of the colonial elite has been drawn out from the perspective of the middleman minority community, a concept effectively studied by Edna Bonacich. Tanya Lurmann's well researched work *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* was also very useful in bringing out the new identity of the Parsis.

Parsis are an example of a community that changed identity frequently in the last three centuries. Parsis, like many communities across the world, show the transition of identity from being a colonial elite to a minority subordinate community.

The novel as a social realist genre especially associated with the colonial era, is a site wherein we can view the construction of such identities. Those changes of identity can be most impressively seen in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, which were written 'for the love of the community', Rohinton Mistry, written to 'record the life of the Parsis for the future generations' and Firdaus Kanga, written to advise the new generation Parsis to 'come to terms with the present realities'.

The broader significance of this research lies in the fact that identity politics and the majoritarian "mainstream" backlash against such politics are still on their ascendant in India today. They continue to be the cause of much conflict and misery in society. Yet they cannot be simply discarded or ignored. They have to be negotiated with, especially in our post-liberralization and globalization era, where people of different ethnicities, affiliations and self-images are being brought by economic forces into greater and greater physical proximity. Fictions, and the discourses revolving around them, provide young people with a safe space to imaginatively live out and think about the burning questions of identity and identity-based conflict. Ultimately, this study hopes to provoke people to think about these questions at a deeper level, with a measure of self-reflexivity, and then, in their own lives, act with a maturity that successfully meets the challenge of living in a well-integrated but nevertheless, irrepressibly pluralistic modern nation.

Works Cited

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Kanga, Firdaus. *Trying to Grow*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2008. Print.

Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. Print.

---. *Family Matters*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. Print.

---. *Such a Long Journey*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009. Print.

---. *Tales from Firozshah Baag*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. Print.

Sidhwa, Bapsi. *An American Brat*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1994. Print.

---. *Ice-Candy-Man*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1989. Print.

---. *The Crow Eaters*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001. Print.

---. *The Pakistani Bride*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1990. Print.

---. *Water: A Novel Based on the Film by Deepa Mehta*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2006. Print.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Addis, Adeno. "On Human Diversity and Limits of Toleration." *Ethnicity and Group Rights*. Ed. Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka. New York: New York UP, 1997. 112-53. Print.

Adhikari, Madhumalati. "Mirroring the Parsi Psyche." *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 42-52. Print.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. *History of Partition of India: Origin and Development of the Idea of Pakistan*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 1988. Print.

Barat, Urbashi. "The Journey as Motif and Metaphor in Parsi Novel." *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 53-65. Print.

Barth, Fredrik . Introduction. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences*. Ed. Fredrik Barth. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969. 9-38. Print.

Barth, Fredrik. "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 75-82. Print.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "The Making And Unmaking of Strangers." *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. Ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood. London: Zed, 1997. 46-57. Print.

Bennett, David. *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

Besant, Annie. *Zoroastrianism*. Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Pub. House, 1963. Print.

Bettany, G. T. *The Inhabitants of Asia: The History of Existing and Extinct Nations, Their Ethnology, Manners, and Customs*. New Delhi: Vishvabharti Publications, 2006. Print.

Bhalla, Alok. *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Bharucha , Nilufer E. "Foregrounding Ethnicity and Post Colonial Marginality: Contemporary Literature." *Parsee Voices in Indian Fiction in English*. Ed. Vandana Pathak, Urmila Dabir, and Shubha Mishra. Nagpur: Dattsons, 2012. 1-14. Print.

---. *Indian-English Fiction 1980-1990: An Assessment*. Delhi: B.R. Corporation, 1994. Print.

---. *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces.* Jaipur and Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2003. Print .

---."Repossessing the Master Tongue, Subverting the Master Narratives and Challenging the Metanarrative of History: Rohinton Mistry's Fiction." *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Ed. Anjali Gera. Roy and Meena T. Pillai. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2007. 40-54. Print.

---."The Raising of the Parsi Voice: Contribution of Parsis to Literature and Journalism in Western India from 1818-1919." *The Parsis in Western India, 1818 to 1920*. Ed. Nawaz B. Mody. Bombay: Allied, 1998. 164-81. Print.

---."The Parsi contribution to Indian literatures and Linguisics". *The Parsis in Western India: 1818 to 1920.* Ed. Nawaz b. Mody.Bombay:Allied Publishers Ltd,1998. Print.

Bhatt, Chetan. "Majority ethnic claims and authoritarian nationalism." *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*. Ed. Eric P Kaufmann. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Bhatt, Indira. "Ethnic Anxiety or Collective Consciousness: Boman Desai's the *Memory of Elephants*." *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 132-39. Print.

Bhautoo-Dewnarain, Nandini. *Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction*. Delhi: Foundation, 2007. Print.

Bonacich, Edna. "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market." *American Sociological Review* 37.5 (1972): 547. Web.

---. "A Theory of Middleman Minorities." *American Sociological Review* 38 (1973): 583-94. Print.

Bose, Mihir.*The Magic of Indian Cricket and Society in India*. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group,2006.e-copy.

Boyarin, Daniel, and Jonathan Boyarin. "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity." Critical Inquiry 19.4 (1993): 693-725. Print.

Boyce, Mary. *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Leiden: Brill, 1975. Print.

Brass, Paul R. *Ethnicity and Nationalism:Theory and Comparison*. London: Sage, 1991.Print.

---."The Politics of Ethnicity in India." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 301-04. Print.

Brettel, Caroline B., ed. *Constructing Boarders Crossing Boarders: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration*. Plymouth: Lexington, 2008. Print.

Briggs, Henry George. *The Parsis or Modern Zoroastrians a Sketch*. N.p.: Forgotten, 2012. *Www.forgottenbooks.org*. Forgotten Books. Web.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Modernity and Ethnicity in India." *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity*. Ed. David Bennett. London: Routledge, 1998. 91-110. Print.

Chandra, K. "What Is an Ethnic Party?" *Party Politics* 17.2 (2011): 151-69. Web.

Channa, Subhadra. *Ethnicity and Identity: An Anthropological Viewpoint*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1998. Print.

Chotai,Nutan. "Tradition and Modernity-the Dichotomy in the Parsee Psyche As Seen in Bapsi Sidhwas' *The Crow Eaters* and *An American Brat.*" *Parsee Voices in Indian Fiction in English.* Ed.Vandana Pathak,Urmila Dabir and Shubha Mishra. Nagpur: Dattsons, 2012. 66-74.Print.

Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-38. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 June 2009.

Cohen, Abner. "Ethnicity and Politics." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 83-85. Print.

---. *Two-dimensional Man: an Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*. Berkeley: U of California, 1974. Print.

Cohen, Anthony P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge, 2001. Web.

Crawford, Beverley. "The Causes of Cultural Conflict: An Institutional Approach." The Myth of "Ethnic Conflict": Politics, Economics, and "Cultural" Violence.

Ed. Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz. Berkeley: International and Area Studies, U of California at Berkeley, 1998. 3-43. Print.

Cronin, Gloria L., and Ben Siegel, eds. *Conversations with Saul Bellow*. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 1994. Print.

Dalal, Roshen F. "Ethnic Anxieties, the Parsis and Zoroastrianism with Refrence to the Writings of Nergis Dalal." *The Parsis Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 107-14. Print.

Dasan, M. Introduction. *Ethnicity and Identity: India and Canada*. Ed. Dasan. New Delhi: Creative, 2009. 11-21. Print.

Davis, Nira Yuval-. "Ethnicity,Gender Relations and Multiculturalism." *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. Ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood. London: Zed, 1997. 193-208. Print.

Deshmukh, Pradnya. *Nationalism, Transnationalism: Diasporic Experience in Bapsi Sidhwa and Chitra Banerjee*. New Delhi: Discovery Pub. House, 2013. Print.

Dhalla, Maneckji Nusservanji. *History of Zoroastrianism*. New York: AMS, 1977. Print.

---. *Zoroastrian Civilization: From the Earliest times to the Downfall of the Last Zoroastrian Empire, 651 A.D.* New York: Oxford UP, 1922. Print.

Dhawan, R. K. *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1996. Print.

Dobbin, Christine. "The Parsi Panchayat in Bombay City in the Nineteenth Century." *Mod. Asian Stud. Modern Asian Studies* 4.02 (1970): 149. Web.

Dodiya, Jayadipsinh . *Perspectives on the Novels of Rohinton Mistry*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006. Print.

---. *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1998. Print.

---. "The Parsi Community in *Such a Long Journey*." *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*. Ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya. New Delhi: Prestige, 1998. 93-95. Print.

Dubey, Amit Kumar. *The Fictional World of Bapsi Sidhwa: Gender, Community and History*. New Delhi: Creative, 2013. Print.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. 3rd ed. London: Pluto, 2010. Print.

---."Ethnicity, race, class and Nation." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 28-31. Print.

Feng, Pin Chia. *Chang Gung Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4.2 (2011): 225-40. Print.

Fine, John Van Antwerp. *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-modern Periods*. Ann Arbor (Mich.): University of Michigan, 2006. Print.

Fraser, Nancy. "From Redistribution to Recognition. Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-Socialist" Age." *Theorizing Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate*. Ed. Cynthia Willett. Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1998. 19-49. Print.

Gambhir, Ram. "Negotiating Ethnicity: Situational Manipulation of Ethnic Identity in the Political Arena." *Ethnicity and Identity: India and Canada*. Ed. M. Dasan. New Delhi: Creative, 2009. 23-50. Print.

Geertz, Clifford. "Primordial Ties." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 35-40. Print.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983. Print.

Ghosh, R. N., Rony Gabbay, and Abu Siddique. *Good Governance Issues and Sustainable Development: The Indian Ocean Region*. New Delhi: Atlantic and Distributors, 1999. Print.

Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel P. Moynihan. Introduction. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*. Ed. Nathan Glazer, Daniel P. Moynihan, and Corinne Saposs Schelling. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975. 1-26. Print.

Glazer, Nathan, Daniel P. Moynihan, and Corinne Saposs Schelling, eds. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975. Print.

Golwalkar, Madhav Sadashiv. *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1945. Print.

Hall, Donald E. *Subjectivity*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Hall,Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Diffrerence*.Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart Limited, 1990.Print.

---. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage in Association with the Open U, 1997. Print.

Hall, Stuart, and Paul Du Gay. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, 1996. Print.

Hall, Stuart, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

Handelman, Don. "The Organisation of Ethnicity." *Etnic Groups* 1.3 (1977): 187-200. Print.

Hansen, Thomas Bloom. *The Saffron Wave Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.

Haug, Martin, and Edward William West. *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis*. London: Tru□bner, 1878. Print.

Hawley, John C. "Firdaus Kanga." *South Asian Novelists in English: An A-to-Z Guide*. Ed. Jaina C. Sanga. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2003. 118-21. Print

Haynes, Douglas E. *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City 1852-1928*. Berkeley: U of California, 1991. Print.

Hinnells, John R. "Changing Perceptions of Authority Among Parsis in British India." *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. Ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams. London: Routledge, 2007. 100-118. Web.

---. *The Zoroastrian Diaspora Religion and Migration*. New York: OUP,2005.Print.

---. *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration: The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures, the Oriental Faculty, Oxford 1985*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

Hinnells, John R., and Alan Williams, eds. *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. London: Routledge, 2007. Web.

Hinnells, John R., and Alan Williams. Introduction. *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. Ed. Hinnells and Williams. London: Routledge, 2007. 1-11. Web.

Hodivala, Shahpurshah Hormasji. *Studies in Parsi History*. Bombay: n.p., n.d. Web.

Horowitz, Donald L. "Ethnic Identity." *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*. By Nathan Glazer, Daniel P. Moynihan, and Corinne Saposs. Schelling. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975. 111-40. Print.

Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: U of California, 1985. Print.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Print.

Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith, eds. *Ethnicity*. Oxford: OUP, 1996. Print.

Hutchinson, John. "Ethnicity and Multiculturalism in Immigrant Societies." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 374-77. Print.

Isaacs ,Harold R ."Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe." *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*. By Nathan Glazer, Daniel P. Moynihan, and Corinne Saposs. Schelling. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975. 29-52. Print.

---. *Idols of the Tribe Group Identity and political Change.* New York*:* Harper and Row,1975. Print.

Jacobson, E.W.(Liesbeth) Rosen. “We Must Hunt with the Hounds and Run with the Hare: The Changing Identity of Parsis in India and Abroad” Diss. U of Leiden.2012. Print.

Jain, Jasbir, and Amina Amin, eds. *Margins of Erasure: Purdah in the Subcontinental Novel in English*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1995. Print.

Jones, Sian. *The Archaeology of Ethnicity Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Jussawalla, Feroza F., and Reed Way. Dasenbrock. *Interviews with Writers of the Post-colonial World*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1992. Print.

Kale, Bhavna. "Ethnicity and Post-independence Dilemma of the Parsis in *Doongaji House*." *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 160-65. Print.

Kamerkar, Mani P. "Parsis in Maritime Trade on the Western Coast of India From the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century." *The Parsis in Western India, 1818 to 1920*. Ed. Nawaz B. Mody. Bombay: Allied, 1998. 129-41. Print.

Kanal, Leela. "The Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man and Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey as Novels of Memory and Historical Consciousness." *Parsee Voices in Indian Fiction in English*. Ed. Vandana Pathak, Urmila Dabir, and Shubha Mishra. Nagpur: Dattsons, 2012. 35-52. Print.

Kapadia, Novy. "Attitudes Towards Marriage of the Girl Child in Parsi Fiction." *The Girl Child in 20th Century Indian Literature*. Ed. Viney Kirpal. New Delhi: Sterling, 1992. 169-78. Print.

---. "A Suitable Parsi Boy" *The Parsi Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 115-26. Print.

Kapadia, Novy, and A. G. Khan, eds. *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. Print.

Karaka, Dosabhai Framji. *History of the Parsis: Including Their Manners, Customs, Religion, and Present Position*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1999. Print.

---. *History of the Parsis: Including Their Manners, Customs, Religion, and Present Position*. Vol. 2. , New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1999. Print.

Kaufmann, Eric P, ed. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*. London: Routledge, 2004. Web.

---. "The Decline of the WASP in the United States and Canada." *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*. Ed. Eric P. Kaufmann. New York: Routledge, 2005. 54-73. Print.

Kim, Sue J. *Critiquing Postmodernism in Contemporary Discourses of Race*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Kreyenbroek, Philip G., and Shehnaz Neville. Munshi. *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about Their Religion*. Richmond: Curzon, 2001. Print.

Kukathas, Chandran. "Cultural Toleration." *Ethnicity and Group Rights*. Ed. Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka. New York: New York UP, 1997. 69-104. Print.

Kumar, Narendra V.L.V.N. “Firdaus Kanga’s *Trying to Grow* as a Bildungsroman”. *New Perspectives on Indian Writing.* Ed.V.L.V.N Narendra Kumar. New Delhi: Prestige, 1997.Print.

---. *New Perspectives on Indian Writing*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1997. Print.

Luhrmann, T. M. *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996. Print.

Malik, Iftikhar Haider. *The History of Pakistan*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008. Print.

Mann, Michael. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

Melucci, Alberto . “Identity and Difference in a Globalized World.” *Debating Cultural Hybridity Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism.* Ed. Pnina Webner and Tariq Modood. London.Zed Books,1997.Print.

---. "The Post-modern Revival of Ethnicity." *Ethnicity.* Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 367-69. Print.

Mishra, Vijay. *Literature of the Indian Diaspora Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Mitra, Reena. *Critical Response to Literatures in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic & Distributors, 2005. Print.

Modood, Tariq. "'Difference' , Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism." *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. Ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood. London: Zed, 1997. 154-72. Print.

Mody, Nawaz B., ed. *The Parsis in Western India, 1818 to 1920*. Bombay: Allied, 1998. Print.

Moerman, Michael. *Ethnic Identification in a Complex Civilization: Who Are the Lue?* Berkeley, CA: Center for Southeast Asia Studies, Institute of International Studies, U of California, 1965. Print.

Mondal, Anshuman A. *Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity Culture and Ideology in India and Egypt*. London: Routledge, 2003. Print

Morey, Peter. *Rohinton Mistry*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004. Print.

Moulton, James Hope. *The Treasure of the Magi:A Study of Modern Zoroastrianism*. London: Oxford UP, 1917. Print.

Moulton, James Hope, John Nicol Farquhar, and Hervey De Witt Griswold. *The Religious Quest of India*. London: Oxford U, 1917. Print.

Nash, Manning. "The Core Elements of Ethnicity." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 24-28. Print.

Nasta, Susheila, ed. *Writing across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Palsetia, Jesse S. "Partner in Empire: Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and The Public Culture of nineteenth-century Bombay." *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. Ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams. London: Routledge, 2007. 81-99. Web.

---. *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*. Leiden: Brill, 2001. Print.

Pandey, Abha. *Indian Diasporic Literature*. New Delhi: Creative, 2008. Print.

Parekh,Bhikhu. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural diversity and Political Theory*. Houndmills: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2003. Print.

Pathak, Vandana, Urmila Dabir, and Shubha Mishra. *Parsee Voices in Indian Fiction in English*. Nagpur: Dattsons, 2012. Print.

Prato, Giuliana B., ed. *Beyond Multicultralism Views from Anthropology*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. Print.

Procter, James. *Stuart Hall*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Rajeshwar, M., and Alessandro Monti. *Commonwealth Fiction: Twenty-first Century Readings*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2002. Print.

Ranina, Homi P. "Excellent Reasons against Mixed Marriages." *By Homi P. Ranina*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 May 2013. <http://tenets.parsizoroastrianism.com/nomixmarr33.html>.

Rastegar, Kamran. "Trauma and Maturation in Women's War Narratives: The Eye of the Mirror and Cracking India." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2.3 (2006): 22-47. Web.

Ray, Sangeeta. *En-gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000. Print.

---. "New Women, New Nations." *Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives En-Gendering India* (2000): 126-47. Print.

Roy, Anjali Gera., and Meena T. Pillai. *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2007. Print.

Roy, Anjali Gera., and Nandi Bhatia. *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement, and Resettlement*. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India), 2008. Print.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*. London: Granta, 1991. Print.

Rutherford, Jonathan. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile: And Other Essays*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001. Print.

Salat, M. F. "Magic Writings of Bapsi Sidhwa." *The Parsis: Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 98-106. Print.

Sarna, Jonathan D. "From Immigrants to Ethnics: Toward a New Theory of "Ethnicization."" *Ethnicity* 5.4 (1978): 370-78. *Http://www.brandeis.edu*. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.

Shapiro, Ian, and Will Kymlicka. *Ethnicity and Group Rights*. New York: New York UP, 1997. Print.

Sharma, I. D. *Bapsi Sidhwa Ice-Candy-Man A Study*. Bareilly: Prakash Book, 2012. Print.

Sharma, K. K., and B. K. Johri. *The Partition in Indian-English Novels*. Ghaziabad: Vimal, 1984. Print.

Sharma, Krishna Dayal. *Protest in Post-independence Indian English Fiction*. Jaipur: Bohra Prakashan, 1995. Print.

Shils, Edward. "Primordial,Personal,Sacred and Civil Ties." British Journal of Sociology 8(1957):130-145.Print.

Sidhwa, Bapsi, ed. *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2005. Print.

Simmel, Georg, and Kurt H. Wolff. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel: Georg Simmel*. New York: Free, 1950. Print.

Singh, Arun. "The Parsis:the Faith and the People." *The Parsis Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 14-41. Print.

Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. "Community in the Parsi Novels in English." *The Parsis Madyan to Sanjan: An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties Reflected in Literature*. Ed. Novy Kapadia and A. G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 66-75. Print.

Singh, Randhir Pratap. *Bapsi Sidhwa*. Delhi: Ivy House, 2005. Print.

Sinha, Sunita. *Post-colonial Women Writers: New Perspectives*. New Delhi: Atlantic & Distributors, 2008. Print.

Smith, Anthony D. "Chosen Peoples." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 189-96. Print.

---. "Ethnic Cores and Dominant Ethnies." *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*. Ed. Eric P. Kaufmann. London: Routledge, 2004. 15-26. Print.

---. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.

---. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

Sollors, Werner. Introduction. *The Invention of Ethnicity*. New York: Oxford UP, 1989. IX-XX. Print.

Suárez, Ramón Maíz, and Ferran Requejo Coll, eds. *Democracy, Nationalism and Multiculturalism*. London: Frank Cass, 2005. Print.

Tishkov, V. A. *Chechnya: Life in a War-torn Society*. Berkeley: U of California, 2004. Print.

---. Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame. London: Sage, 1997. Print.

Van Den Berghe, Pierre. L . "Does Race Matter." *Ethnicity*. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 57-62. Print.

---. *The Ethnic phenomenon.* Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1981. Print.

Varshney, Ashutosh. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2002. Print.

Wadia, Rusheed R. "Bombay Parsi Merchants in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. Ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams. London: Routledge, 2007. 119-135. Web.

Weber, Max . *Economy and Society*. New York: Bedminster,1968.Print.

---. "The Origins of Ethnic Groups." Ethnicity. Ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 35-40. Print.

---. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Webster, Roger. *Expanding Suburbia: Reviewing Suburban Narratives*. New York: Berghahn, 2000. Print.

Werbner, Pnina. "Essentialising Essentialism, Essentialising Silence:Ambivalence and Multiplicity in the Constructions of Racism and Ethnicity." *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. Ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood. London: Zed, 1997. 226-54. Print.

Werbner, Pnina, and Tariq Modood, eds. *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. London: Zed, 1997. Print.

Whitehurst, James Emerson. "The Zoroastrian Response to Westernization: A Case Study of the Parsis of Bombay." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion J Am Acad Relig* XXXVII.3 (1969): 224-36. *INFLIBNET N List Project*. Web. 01 Jan. 2011.

Wicker, Hans Rudolf. "From Complex Culture to Cultural Complexity." *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. Ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood. London: Zed, 1997. 29-45. Print.

Wieviorka, Michel. *The Making of Terrorism*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1993. Print.

Willett,Cynthia.ed. *Theorising Multiculturalism A guide to the Current Debate*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. Print.

Williams, Alan. "The Structure, Significance and Poetic Integrity of the Qesse-ye Sanjan." *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. Ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams. London: Routledge, 2007. 15-34. Web.

---. *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora: Text, Translation and Analysis of the 16th Century Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjan 'The Story of Sanjan'* Leiden: Brill, 2009. Print.

Wimmer, Andreas. "Dominant Ethnicity and Dominant Nationhood."*Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 35-51. Print.

---. *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

Yadav, Jyoti. *Ethnic Anxiety and Cultural Adaptability: A Critical Study of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry*. New Delhi: Creative, 2011. Print.

Zaman, Niaz. *A Divided Legacy: The Partition in Selected Novels of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh*. Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Zhang, Benzi. *Asian Diaspora Poetry in North America*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Ziring, Lawrence. *Pakistan: At the Crosscurrent of History*. Oxford, England: Oneworld, 2003. Print.