

**Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English  
Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels**

*Dissertation submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**  
in English*

*By*  
**ANVARSAHDATH VALIYAPARAMBATH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**December 2005**

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## DECLARATION

**Anvarsadhath Valiyaparambath,  
Lecturer in English,  
The New College,  
Chennai-14.**

I declare that the dissertation entitled **Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels** is a record of bona fide research that I conducted under the guidance and supervision of Dr. B. Sreedevi, Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Calicut. No part of the work has been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles.



(ANVARSAHDHATH VALIYAPARAMBATH)

Calicut University  
30.12.2005

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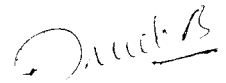
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**December 2005**

## CERTIFICATE

**Dr. B. Sreedevi,  
Professor and Head,  
Department of English,  
University of Calicut,  
Kerala, Pin. 673 635.**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels** submitted by Anvarsadhath Valiyaparambath, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is a record of bona fide research conducted by him under my supervision. The dissertation has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles.



(B. Sreedevi)  
Research Supervisor

Calicut University  
30.12.2005

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(ANVAR SADHATH VALIYAPARAMBATHI)

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Chapter One  
Introduction:  
Ethnicity and the Dialectics of Minority Discourse

The term 'Minority Discourse' gathered considerable currency in the postcolonial era as one of the novel, theoretical, and often political, articulations encompassing commonwealth literature, multiculturalism and counter canon that mainly identified and elaborated the emergent literary and cultural works from the non-mainstream, non-European writers and cultures. The widespread use of these terms particularly by the non-European academics, was directly influenced by diverse continental theoretical developments with such theoretical schools as Poststructuralism, the Frankfurt School, and Postcolonialism, and theoreticians and philosophers like Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser and Theodore Adorno, to name a few, who sought to reformulate and debate the concerns central to the Anglo-American academy. "These theoretical and thematic combinations have had the effect not only of focussing attention on particular areas of concern", says Aijaz Ahmed, "but also frequently of reformulating much older and recalcitrant issues both of minorities within these societies and of imperialism as regards the archive of Western knowledge and the question of cultural domination exercised by countries of advanced capital over imperialised societies." (2) In general, literary and cultural studies have recently, particularly during the past two or three decades, shown tremendous interest in deliberating on all minority expressions in literature and culture. This has led not only to the widespread surfacing of the voice of

the voiceless classes, but also in institutionalising or rather naming a set of identifiable traits and characteristics that are reported to be found in minority expressions, under the umbrella term, Minority Discourse. In other words, Minority discourse, in the vibrant theoretical nomenclature of theoretical developments like Colonial Discourse Theory and Cultural Studies, serves as a term that consolidates the expressions of marginality in the cultural artefacts of distinct minorities living in different parts of the world. Most of these minorities seem to have developed an intense sense of being thrown to the margins due to different historical or cultural reasons in the postcolonial period.

The theoretical framework or the mode of interpretation employed in the study of ethnic articulations in Indo-Anglian literature attempted in this dissertation is that of Minority Discourse. That is, the literary works under scrutiny here are basically treated as what is often called 'minor literatures'. In this chapter my focus is on tracing and understanding the evolution of the conceptual realm or what can be referred to as the dialectics of minority discourse with special emphasis on the concept of ethnicity as a minority position. The discussion of the theoretical parameters and cultural implications of minority discourse in general and ethnicity in particular would stand as a theoretical and conceptual background to my subsequent study, in this dissertation, of the selected Indo-Anglian novels written by the ethnic minority writers in India. The centre of attention of the present study is the distinct ethnic experiences encountered by four minority communities in India, which

are represented in novels by writers from the respective communities. Apart from looking into the multifarious general theoretical concerns in the field of ethnicity and minority discourse, there obviously is a necessity to evolve a specifically Indian way of looking at 'minor texts' considering the multicultural, multiethnic situation prevailing in India. Moreover, since my study is not on economically browbeaten classes like dalits whose very existence itself is a struggle, there apparently is a need to reformulate the theory of ethnic literature to suit their distinct problems, ways of expressing themselves and so forth. The proposed study of the dialectics of minority discourse in this chapter is divided into separate headings viz. Discourse and the Social, the Contours and Scope of Minority Discourse, Ethnicity and Literature, The Indian Literary Scenario: Cultural Nationalism and Voices of Minorities, and The Project.

### **Discourse and the Social**

A discourse in the Foucauldian sense of the term (as it is used here) "is a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known." (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 70) Viewed from a broad perspective, discourse refers to "a particular use of language in a given time and place: novels, television commercials or political speeches are not 'discourses' in this usage but instances of discourse, of ways language gets used on given topic in a particular culture and society." (Warhol and Herndl 653) Foucault used the term to mean that it is through the discourse the world is brought into being, and the subjectivity of individuals is constructed through the discourse. Discourse consists of the "complex of signs and practices which

organize social existence and social reproduction." (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 71) Literature in this sense is considered as a discourse, and "[t]o treat literature as a discourse is to see the text as mediating relationship between language users: not only the relationship of speech, but also of consciousness, roles and class. The text ceases to be an object and becomes an action or process." (Fowler 77) Considering literature as a discourse again is to recognize that it carries out a socio-linguistic function, bearing or "possessing certain institutional values and performing certain functions" (Fowler 78), and also to start looking at literature as part of the social process. The study of the intricate way in which the discourse is connected to the social is expected to serve as a foreword to the study of minority discourse. With the extensive interest in the theory of literature that gathered momentum during the second part of the twentieth century the social has become a major point of departure in discourse. It was perhaps Russian critics like Mikhail Bakhtin and Volosinov who provided with the groundwork for the association of the social and discourse. For Volosinov, for instance, "language is utterance emerging from concrete social communication" and "when viewed in its social contexts language appears not as a closed system of self-identical forms...but as a generative and continuous process, as utterances which respond to and anticipate other utterances" (Rice and Waugh 194-95). He understood that the utterances that characterize social interchange also form the arena of struggle between different social groups (Rice and Waugh 194-95) and thus they contain ideological undercurrents. Volosinov's theories were directed against the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, as he critiqued the "abstract objectivism" of Saussure's

theory of language (Rice and Waugh 195). Similarly Bakhtin was interested in the socio ideological accents of language. He approached language as plural and multiple rather than singular and monolithic, thus calling attention to what he calls its "heteroglossia," and argued that language is intimately bound up with material and social condition (Rice and Waugh 195). Bakhtin applies the idea of language as socio-ideological to study novels that "represent a dialogic interanimation of socio-ideological languages." (Rice and Waugh 195) Following Bakhtin and Volosinov, later critical and theoretical schools, like Poststructuralism, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and Cultural Studies attempted reflective studies into the relation between discourse and the social. The prominent writers who made valuable readings on this issue include Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Raymond Williams, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

It was, probably, Foucault who first made serious studies on the question of the discourse and the social. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) Foucault associated the concept of power to the discussion of knowledge in general and discourses in particular. According to Foucault "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality," (*From Order of Discourse* 221) and "in any society there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production,

accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.” (Foucault “Power...” 544) These procedures include exclusion and prohibition. “Exclusion and prohibition primarily include restriction, objection and taboos that society imposes on its individuals. But there exists in our society a division and a rejection.” (Foucault, *From Order of Discourse* 221) Foucault gives the example of a madman’s speech that mostly utters hidden truth, which is rejected as either not heard or taken for the word of truth. According to Foucault in a broader sense the procedures of the system of exclusion often control and delimit a discourse. Here discourse puts power into play. The dominant tendencies of a society isolate a group by its internal procedures of exclusion that function as “principles of classification, ordering of distribution.” (Foucault, *From Order of Discourse* 221) Similarly major narratives of a society exclude marginal ones in a way to establish their superiority and power over others. Foucault explains that there is:

Scarcely a society without its major narratives, which are recounted, repeated and varied; formulae, text and ritualised sets of discourses, which are recited in well defined circumstances. Things said once are preserved because it is suspected that behind them there is a secret or treasure. In short there is in all societies with great consistency, a kind of gradation among discourses; those which are set in the ordinary course of days and exchanges and which vanish as soon as they have been pronounced; ...In short those discourses which over and above

the formulation are said indefinitely, remains said, and are said to be said again. (*From Order of Discourse* 225-6)

The marriage of the social and discourse was richly contributed by the findings of the postcolonial critics like Edward Said who traced the unholy alliance between enlightenment and colonialism. In his *Orientalism* (1978) for example Said attacked the tradition of western enlightenment that brought into use the high cultural tradition of humanism, and thus he has inaugurated a series of critical studies in the culturally sensitive areas such as elitism, racism, religion and so forth. This has led to the mobilisation of academics from non-western countries towards locating and studying what is generally called the narratives of oppression by interpreting and debating the representation of the non-western other. Said's *Orientalism*, which serves as one of the source books in the field of cultural discourse in the post-colonial era is derived from his understanding of Antonio Gramsci's and Michel Foucault's ideas regarding the inherent properties of a culture. From Gramsci, Said learnt that "in any society certain cultural forms predominate over the others just as certain ideas are more influential than the others" and this was what Gramsci called "hegemony" (*Orientalism* 7) For Said, "no production of knowledge in human societies can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances..." (11) Said's work was greatly influenced by Foucault's assumptions pertaining to the intricate ways in which knowledge and power are conjoined together. It was perhaps from Foucault that Said understood that literature and culture are not as politically innocent as they appear to be. He found the nexus of knowledge and power creating the

'oriental' and he exposed the latent experience of such tendencies as anti-Semitism in the western discourse. These findings are seminal to the understanding of the relation between the social and discourse.

Said's studies resulted in the development of what is generally called in the field of literary theory as Colonial Discourse Theory, the idea and contours of which were further enriched by works like Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1967) and *Black Skin, White masks* (1965), Ashcroft and others' *Empire Writes Back* (1968), Said's own *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Homi K. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's celebrated essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1985) These works opened up an entire range of theoretical and political activities that upheld the task of bridging the gap between discourse and social practice. Taking colonialism as a cultural change with widespread implications and corollaries, these critics and a host of others explored the convoluted way in which cultural products and knowledge as such is constructed in the world in the interest of the European elite, by explicitly sidelining voices from the margins. They focussed on how the colonial powers managed to evolve a knowledge base with the enlightenment that enabled them to colonise the non-European countries. These conceptual realms basically presupposed the racial superiority of the white Europeans over the others. They also probed the European cultural artefacts and discourses in general to find marked expressions of colonial desire, racial, intellectual and cultural superiority of, say, the occident over the orient. The philosophical foundation of colonial discourse theory was however supplied by Poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault and Derrida, who interrogated the

fundamental pillars of European thought like logocentrism, phonocentrism and phallogentrism. It was Foucault who first problematised the politicised character of discourses as all discourses essentially carry articulations of power. Following the Foucauldian dictum of power and discourse, or more precisely the idea that 'knowledge is power', critics like Said held that "ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force or ...their configuration of power being studied" (Said *Orientalism* 327). The development of the postcolonial study of literature as a whole was embedded in the renewed understanding of the purpose and role of representation itself. "[M]odern thought", according to Said, "have taught us to be sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas in the socio-political roles of intellectuals, in the great value of the sceptical critical consciousness." (Said *Orientalism* 327)

The association of the social and discourse has obvious Marxist connections. It was the Marxist critics who seriously pondered over the twin field of culture and aesthetics. Western Marxism, according to Aijaz Ahmad, has been preoccupied with cultural superstructures and literary production in particular. And the kind of political desire that characterise the cultural and literary studies, like the works of Said, was essentially influenced by Marxist literary theory. As Ahmad has rightly pointed out, "eclecticism of theoretical and political positions is the common ground on which radical literary theory is on the whole constructed." (5) But while taking Marxist position and authorial names such as that of Gramsci, there was a tendency among theorists

to explicitly debunk the theory and history as such (Ahmad 5). Marxism's literary theory and cultural theory underwent drastic reorganisations, as the neo-Marxist thinkers like Althusser and Gramsci tried to understand the innate connection between cultural production and the economic base or other kinds of production from the purview of the new cultural and social development. Moreover although Marxism connected the cultural productions of a period with the entire political processes and with other kinds of productions, it rarely addresses the same relations "in precisely these branches of literary theory were issues of colony and empire are most lengthily addressed." (Ahmad 5)

The new Historicist and Cultural Materialist critics who emerged in the 1980s also contributed to the merger of the social and discourse. While concentrating basically on what Montrose described as a "reciprocal concern with the historicity of the text and the textuality of history," (242) these critics provided with new interpretation of to the Marxist way of looking at the text as a product of the social conditions of its production. They took as a foundation the Foucauldian assumption that "patterns of power-relations at any given era in a society constitute the concepts, oppositions and hierarchies of its discourse" and thus they "determine what will be accounted knowledge and truth, as well as what will be considered humanly normal and so serve to define and exclude what, in that era is accounted to be criminal, insane or sexually deviant" (Cited in Abrams 248-9); further, the view of Althusser that "ideology manifests itself in different ways in the discourse of each of the semi-autonomous institutions of an era" and that "ideology operated to position its readers as the 'subjects' in the discourse in a way that in fact 'subjects' them

...to the interests of the ruling classes" (Cited in Abrams 248-9). They took a "dialectical approach" in their critical works "which is conscious of its own social function" and wished to "consider the problem of literary history from the angle where literature is history, and history is an element of literary structure and aesthetic experience." (Weinman 281) New Historicists understood the social as "discursively constructed and language use is understood to be always and necessarily dialogical. Be socially and materially determined and constrained." (Montrose 240) They broke some fundamental myths concerning the interpretation of literature, the relation between literature and other discourses, the relation between cultural practices and the social, political and economic processes, and the ways and means by which subjectivity is socially constructed (Montrose 240). Rejecting the tendencies to divorce literature from the social, New Historicists held that:

Writing and reading are always historically and socially determinate events performed in the world and upon the world by gendered individuals and collective human agents. We may simultaneously acknowledge the theoretical indeterminacy of the signifying process and the historical and the historical specificity of discursive practices - acts of speaking writing and interpreting. The project of a new social historical criticism is then to analyse the interplay of culture specific discursive practices - mindful that it too is such a practice and so participates in the interplay it seeks to analyse. (Montrose 240)

As a composite form of ideas or elements commonly found in Marxism, New Historicism, Gender Studies, study of race and ethnicity, Film Theory, Popular Culture, Urban Studies and Postcolonial Studies, there emerged during the 1960s a school of thought popularly known as Cultural Theory or Cultural Studies which focussed on "Social and cultural forces that either create community or cause division and alienation." (Guerin *et al* 240) Cultural studies, like other theoretical positions concentrating on the innate relation between the social and discourse, stand in strong opposition to the power structures dominating a society, and "they question inequalities within power structures, and seek to restructure relationships among dominant and subordinated cultures. Because meaning and individual subjectivity are culturally constructed, they can thus be reconstructed." (Guerin *et al* 241) Following the Marxist tradition, Cultural Studies discussed issues relating to the means and ways by which cultural work is produced thus taking the ideological underpinnings of a literary work into consideration. It was with the intervention of cultural studies that literary studies took what Andrew Milner has called a "sociological turn" (11) that liberated literature from purely aesthetic concerns diverted from reality. "A critical cultural studies", in his view, "would be one characterized, above all by a sustained hostility to whatever slaveries that may impede the continuing cause of human emancipation." (Milner 15)

All these developments are to be perceived from the changed times when the literary studies are becoming global. As Giles Gunn has rightly observed, the last several decades have witnessed an extraordinary expansion

of the scope of literary studies, this expansion resulted in the "refiguration of the objects of literary studies." (16) The globalized world order ensured "the erasure of local differences and the integration of more and more of world's people as well as of entire sovereign states into a geopolitical system that inevitably erodes their ability to shape their own destinies." (Gunn 16) Here literary works, especially from the third world countries, faced the sweeping developments from reducing literary texts from their concern for their intertextual production, transmission and exchange, and from transferring all literary products into means of economic activity. When cultural works crossed their territories with globalisation of literary studies the question of the ideological location of the work also got problematised. While minorities have to negotiate the crucial issue of cultural erasure, as they are made part of a global totality, the study of such subjects as race ethnicity, sexism and imperialism acquired widespread attention in the era of globalisation. Here the texts are studied with reference to cultural identity represented in the text, which most often is opposed to some hegemonic principle operating in their respective spheres. Thus what is called "cultural narrativization" became a focal point in literary production as well as studies. For Stephen Greenblatt, cultural narativization seemed "progressive rather than reactionary ends that they derive from desire by most groups to take responsibility for their pasts, shape their destinies and transmit their legacies to future generations." (Cited in Gunn 22)

### **The Contours and Scope of Minority Discourse**

With decolonisation, (which was “quite simply the replacing of a certain species of men by another species of men” and that resulted “in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up” as Frantz Fanon wrote in his *The Wretched of the Earth* [1]), literary and other cultural discourses showed tremendous interest in putting across the subaltern consciousness. Thus postcolonial literature celebrated the minority’s propensity to speak in an attempt to make him/her heard, and thus establishing his/her unique place in the world. The entire intellectual landscape of the postcolonial era has been characterized by an overt political consciousness of the relation between such binary polarities as coloniser and colonised, self and other, centre and margin and so on, that sounded out the emergence of counter cultural discourses mainly from the colonised societies which essentially affirmed the identity of all the suppressed classes and silenced voices. The general characteristic of all these new developments was perhaps a penchant to evolve a politics rooted in otherness, the most influential principle of which is the political struggle of the colonised societies against being treated as what Fanon calls the ‘wretched of the earth’. Fanon held that colonialism and the resultant violent struggle for decolonisation, produced an array of cultural expressions and intellectual responses that gave “new values to the native culture within the framework of colonial domination”, and which arrived at a seemingly paradoxical proposition that “in a colonised country the most elementary, most savage and the most undifferentiated nationalism is the most fervent and efficient means of defending national culture.” (*The Wretched* 196) Thus the cultural expressions of decolonisation from colonised countries were rooted in a desire to define and

defend national cultures. He understood culture as “the first expression of its preferences of its taboos and of its patterns...A national culture is the sum total of all the appraisals; it is the result of internal and external extensions exerted over society as a whole and also at every level of that society.” (Fanon 196)

Fanon found that it is the nation that ensures the conditions necessary to culture, and gathers together the various indispensable elements required for the creation of culture (197). For him reestablishment of the nation is the first prerequisite for a national culture in so far as “[a] non-existent culture can hardly be expected to have bearing on reality or to influence reality.” (197)

Fanon found that colonial powers effected repercussions on their cultural plane by encouraging only those modes of expressions that made their existence in power possible. While at the beginning the native intellectuals produced their works to be read by the oppressor, the scenario in developed societies is that “now the native writer takes on the habit of addressing his [or her] own people.” (*The Wretched* 193) This is the occasion of the subalterns’ freedom to express themselves making themselves the subject matter of the book. Fanon calls the literature with typically nationalist character as ‘combat literature’, “in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. Literature of combat is called so because it moulds the national consciousness giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; “it assumes responsibility, and it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space.” (Fanon *The Wretched* 193) The emergence of the literature of one’s own with decolonisation also helped to reformulate certain stereotyped pictures of the native from the psyche of the

general public. The storytellers from these societies replaced the vein and accepted formulae of story telling that may read, "[t]his all happened long ago" with that of "what we are going to speak of happened somewhere else but it might well have happened here today and it might happen tomorrow." (Fanon *The Wretched* 193), thus changing the method as well as the content of their stories. These developments have immense relevance considering the change of attitude in the people of the colonized countries it spoke of and represented. According to Fanon, "[t]he emergence of imagination and of the creative urge in the songs and epic stories of a colonized country is worth following. The story teller replies to the expectant people by successive approximation, and makes his way apparently along but in fact helped on by his public towards the seeking out of new patterns that is to say national patterns." (*The Wretched* 194)

If this was the general case of the awakening of the national consciousness in the domain of literature and culture, there of course is something more interesting: the awakening of the smaller minorities within these societies. Not unlike the pre-colonial societies, the post-colonial societies are also not very much homogenous. There were and are innumerable number of fractions in these societies with their selected attributes and characteristics. These minorities include women, children, dalits and the ethnic minorities. In spite of their countries' major victory against the colonial centre, these minorities had to fight for social justice and equality in their own countries, as they were doubly suppressed owing to their backwardness or marginalized disposition. The literature of these groups thus form a second but more problematical and important layer in the minority discourse.

The discussion of the dialectics of minority discourse takes up another current area of enquiry viz., nation and narration. The minorities represent their concept of nation through their narratives, amid repercussions of a lack of 'space' in a country dominated by a majority. According to Homi K. Bhabha, "nation, like narratives, lose their origins in the myth of time. And only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye." (*Nation and Narration* 1) He finds that, a particular ambivalence is haunting the idea of nation. The ambivalence is between the language of those who write it and the lives of those who live it." (1) The idea of nation is also taken as a symbolic force according to which nation as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity, emphasises the instability of knowledge. Thus the idea of nation or a national idea expressed in a literary work is also expressive of the ambivalence in defining the 'society' of a nation. The modern nation, according to Hannah Arendts, is the "curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance, and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other like waves in the never-ending stream of the life process itself." (Cited in Bhabha *Nation and...* 2) The ambivalent figure of the nation and its "conceptual indeterminacy" has an effect on its narratives. The narratives of a nation uphold a sense of "nationness", which gives the writer a "comfort" of social belonging, a sense of justice, law, sexuality and so on (Bhabha *Nation...* 3). Bhabha approaches nation as a narration, in an attempt to fathom the 'Janus-faced' ambivalence of language itself, which constructs the "Janus-faced" discourse of the nation (Bhabha *Nation...* 3). Evoking the margin of the nation space, Bhabha contests

to the claim of cultural supremacy. Thus he undermines the fact that marginalization results from rationalising the authoritarian tendencies within culture, in the name of National interest. In this respect, "the antagonistic perspective of nation and narration will establish the cultural boundaries of nation so that they must be acknowledged as containing thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production." (Bhabha *Nation...4*)

The concept of "minor literature," which Deleuze and Guattari elaborated in their *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, may possibly be helpful in the discussion of minority discourse in general and the aesthetics of ethnicity in particular. Deleuze and Guattari bring out three characteristics of minor literature: "in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (16); "everything in [a minor literature] is political" (16); and "in it everything takes on a collective value." (16) In the first characteristic the concept of minor literature deals with the "language question," which although has been at the center of many discussions of postcolonial literature, is not to be elaborated here as it is not that relevant to the present study. However, Kafka's situation with regard to the selection of language, as Ronald Bogue has pointed out, "is analogous to that of Indian writers who must choose between their regional, Indian tongues and a pan-Indian, bureaucratic English, or African writers who must decide whether to communicate widely through the colonizer's tongue or reach a more limited audience through a specific tribal language." (105) The second and third characteristics of minor

literature are relevant to discussions of minorities in general, and here, of ethnic minorities in India, in that there is a stress on the “inseparability of the personal and the political as well as the unavoidably collective dimension of any individual effort by members of a marginalized group” in minor literature (Bogue 105). According to Bogue:

One of the original features of the concept of “minor literature” is its rapprochement of three distinct categories of literature: *secondary literature*, whether it be that of a minor nation or linguistic group in relation to a major tradition, or that of a humble, minor movement or tendency (e.g., American local colourists) within a larger tradition; *marginal literature*, or the literature of minorities; and *experimental literature*, which “minorizes” a major language.... By treating Kafka as a minor writer, Deleuze and Guattari call attention to his status as a member of an ethnic minority and citizen of a minor region/proto-nation within a foreign-based empire, while insisting that his formal and thematic innovations in literature have direct social and political implications. (105)

Minority discourse as discussed by cultural critics like Bhabha take up issues relating to canon formation that starts from the basic questions, what constitutes a culture? Do the constituent elements of a culture include ethnic and racial minorities? It interrogates the incorporation into mainstream of some texts and excluding some others from it (Guerin 255). Perhaps, since the 1960s

onwards enquiries pertaining to “who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances?” (Said *Reflections* 118) have been widely discussed. To Said the answers to these questions provide us with the basic presumptions for a politics of interpretation. (*Reflections* 118) As the present study concentrates on the ethnic minorities these questions also lead to further questions like “In a culture of victims does being ethnics mean being oppressed? Can successful ethnics still be ethnics? Do ethnics have to be subalterns?” (Gilman 23)

One of the first noted instances of minority discourse in the field of literature was from the writers belonging to the various small groups of African and Afro-American cultures. These works mainly discussed the question of race and they mostly ponder over multiculturalism, and multiracialism, and the trend of interracial marriages that, although was aimed at diminishing the problem of racism, seemed to have posed threat to the purity of each race. Among the Afro-Americans writers like Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker and Ralph Ellison are the ones who expressed the angst of the black minority and brought into the limelight the need to thwart the privileges existing in the American society on racial, cultural, and gender grounds. African American writing in general “displays a folkloric conception of humankind; an ambivalent consciousness arising from bicultural identity; irony, parody, and sometimes bitter comedy in negotiating this ambivalence...” (Guerin *et al* 257) It tries to instil a definition of reality from the point of view of the blacks, rather than allowing the accepted ideal of reality to dominate. Bernard Bell argues that:

Traditional white American values emanate from a providential vision of History of Euro-Americans as a chosen people, a vision that sanctions their individual and collective freedom in the pursuit of property, profit and happiness. Radical Protestantism, constitutional democracy, and industrial capitalism are the white American trinity of values. In contrast, black American values emanate from a cyclical Judeo-Christian vision of history and of Afro-Americans as a disinherited colonized people, a vision that sanctions their resilience of spirit and pursuit of social justice. (Quoted in Guerin *et al* 257)

What rings in the entire Afro-American consciousness is their concern with and memories of “Africa, the transatlantic or middle passage, southern plantation tradition, emancipation reconstruction, post-reconstruction, northern migration, urbanisation and racism.” (Cited from Bell in Guerin *et al* 257)

The Harlem renaissance with writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale, Countee Cullen and Alice Walker celebrated the folkloric tradition of Afro-American culture and affected black culture. The other major minority writers who also contributed to the identification and expression of minority consciousness in America belonged to groups like Hispanic, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Chicano, American Indian and Asian American, The so-described Latina/Latino writers (belonging to Hispanic, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American and Chicano) gave expression to their distinctive ethnicity of the Spanish speaking people of the United States. A sense of living two cultures and two languages – Spanish

and English – but without being able to be completely at home in either of them, is probably the strongest motif in the writings of these groups. The literary works of American Indians mostly encounter such accepted misconceptions about them, as they are a primitive tribe. They carry the tradition of Oratory, tales and songs composed in tribal languages and performed for tribal audiences that have existed amongst the American Indians for centuries (Guerin *et al* 264). All these minority literary expressions emanated from a feeling of revival that made them delve deep into the question of identity faced by the respective groups. As in the case of African American writers, their works presented the complex relationship between the African culture and their adopted culture. As Ashcroft and others pointed out, “The fact that the bulk of African peoples shipped under condition of slavery makes the relationship between that institutions and the wider practice of imperialism central to the understanding of the origins of African American culture.” (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 7)

Yet another major development in minority discourse was the emergence of writings from and about aboriginal and indigenous people mainly from the settler colonies like Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The term ‘aboriginal’ refers to the original inhabitants the Indian subcontinent, the earliest inhabitants in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. The literatures of these people, like any other third world, postcolonial literatures, were characterized by a national or regional consciousness. Besides, they assert their difference from the imperial centre, the writings of which is in the language of the literate elite. However, the first works from the indigenous people, mainly

by the representatives of the imperial powers in the colonies, were in the language of the coloniser and they mostly glorified the settlers (Ashcroft *et al Readings on 5*). It is true about the literary works produced from the colonized Australia and India. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin debate that:

Such texts can never form the basis for indigenous culture nor can they be integrated in any way with the culture, which already exists in the countries invaded. Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom and language, they inevitably privilege the centre, emphasising the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial' and so forth. At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created. (Ashcroft *et al Readings on 5*)

The literature produced in these countries during the nineteenth century showed yet another tendency, the procedures of which "signify, by the very fact of writing in the language of the dominant culture, that they have temporarily or permanently entered a specific and privileged class endowed with the language education and leisure necessary to produce such works." (Ashcroft *et al Readings on 5*) The prose and poems written by the English educated Indian upper class, and the African missionary literature are examples. The emergent minority literatures from these cultures had to encounter these problems so as to develop an independent literature appropriating language with distinctive usages. It is understood that "the institution of literature in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial

ruling class who alone licence the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work." (Ashcroft *et al Readings on* 5) So texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system, which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective. Moreover, "indigenous groups have so often fallen into the political trap of essentialism set for them by imperial discourse." (Ashcroft *et al Post-colonial Studies* 213) According to Ashcroft and others "imperial narratives such as that of anthropology in their project of *naming* and thus *knowing* indigenous groups have imported a notion of aboriginality, of cultural authenticity, which proves difficult to displace." (*Post-colonial Studies* 214) This resulted in the "positioning of the indigenous people as the ultimately marginalized, a concept which reinscribes the binarism of centre/margin and prevents their engagement with subtle processes of imperialism by locking them into a locally strategic but ultimately self defeating essentialism." (Ashcroft *et al Post-colonial Studies* 213)

The postcolonial literature has still more complicated issues when we consider indigenous literature, as liberated from the clutches of a colonizing centre. We must also understand that the indigenous cultures were also thrown into separate groups, where indigenous elite has upper hand in the discourses of the society and over innumerable small groups. The literature produced by the small minorities within the postcolonial countries like India thus contains tales of a two-fold marginalization. Here the case of the minorities or marginalized groups within a minority is still worse as several layers of marginalization had to be encountered by them. Each of the small groups in

the post-colonial countries has their different problems to narrate. As for the dalit and the most backward sections of the Indian subcontinent, they still undergo the enigmatic experience of being treated as untouchables by the members of the dominant community. Casteism, caste violence, and various other methods of antagonism practiced by the dominant classes, loss of their folklore traditions, and exploitation of the local, national and global forces with the emergence of globalisation and consumer culture and so on are issues of immediate concern for them. The case of ethnic minorities in most of the countries is similar. Basically most of the ethnic minorities have to resist erasure of identity, and more importantly the attitude of the dominant community towards them.

In general, the most important factor that works behind the minority discourse is the minority's access to the centre of power. The centre may differ from group to group, as each group is placed in the margins of a particular centre in the dominant discourse. It may be created by patriarchy, ethnocentrism or imperialism. The claims of cultural nationalism raised in India by the dominant majority, for example, work as a homogenising principle, where innumerable number of minorities is thrown to the margins owing to their insistence on continuing in the community of their origin, and thus their desire to pursue a distinct community experience and geographical space are either denied or disturbed. In this way marginality of all sorts "unintentionally reifies centrality because it is the centre that creates the condition of marginality." (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 135) The inaccessibility of the minorities to the centre of power creates the handicap of being the

subjects of the dominant system's coercive power that operates in tandem with the social status that the community is exercising in the society. In the case of the minorities selected for analysis in the present dissertation, they are mostly not always targeted like the downtrodden classes, owing especially to their economic status in India. But at the same time, a pal of suspicion often falls on them, as the majority suspects the chances of the minority's involvement in disruptive activities to disturb the present social order. For example the Sikhs are looked at as potential terrorists, after the murder of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, and they were brutally attacked in Delhi by the extremists. Sometimes a certain element in a community is at loggerheads with the system of power, as seen in the case of the Sikhs. But for this the whole community is put on the receiving end, taking undue advantage of their minority position.

### **Ethnicity and Literature**

The term 'ethnicity' gathered remarkable currency by the end of twentieth century. It is today a major topic of interest to scholars in many disciplines not excluding literature. It has been increasingly used since the 1960s to refer to "human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry." (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 80) Ethnicity is different from more generalized terms like race as the latter carries the assumptions of humanity divided into fixed determined biological types or categories. Ethnic group of a person is a powerful identifier in so far as he or she chooses to remain in it, and it is an undeniable identity that cannot be rejected or taken away by others. "Whereas race emerged as a way of

establishing hierarchical division between Europe and its 'others' identifying people according to fixed genetic criteria, ethnicity is deployed as an expression of positive self perception that offers certain advantages to its members." (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 80) Ethnic groups are distinguished on the basis of cultural criteria, and so the defining characteristics of an ethnicity usually depends upon the various purposes for which the group has been identified.

As social anthropologist, Thomas Hylland Eriksen observed, "Ethnicity emerges and is made relevant through social situations and encounters, and through people's ways of coping with the demands and challenges of life." (1) Anthropologists of late twentieth century showed enormous interest in ethnicity. An important reason for this academic interest is the political relevance of ethnicity, especially as it has been inseparably linked to the world politics since the Second World War (Eriksen 2). The violent racial conflicts in countries like Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Canada, and North America are plausibly described as ethnic conflicts. Ethnicity is often discussed along with nationalism race and tribe. The term 'ethnicity' was first used to refer to the heathen or the pagan. This meaning of ethnicity continued until the mid-nineteenth century, when it began to refer to racial characteristics. "In the United States 'Ethnics' came to be used around the Second World War as a polite term for referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely British descent." (Eriksen 4) Since the 1960s anthropologists brought a number of approaches to bear upon ethnicity all of which "agree that ethnicity has something to do with the classification of

people and group relationships.” (Eriksen 4) Although the word still has a ring of minority issues and race relations anthropologists refer to “aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others as being culturally distinctive.” (Eriksen 4)

All ethnic groups do not possess defining traits and characteristics; rather they vary at different levels. “Ethnicity and its component are relative to time and place, and like any social phenomenon, they are dynamic and prone to change.” (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 81) Taking these factors into consideration, critics tended to narrow down their definitions of an ethnic group. Ashcroft Griffith and Tiffin, for instance, defined ethnic group as “a group that is socially distinguished or set apart by others and/or by itself primarily on the basis of cultural or national characteristics.” (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 81) Ethnicity acquired wider currency in the aftermath of colonialism, when colonial, national or ethnic groups were identified as minorities within a larger national grouping. These groups are mostly migrants or settlers who left their counties as a result of the large scale reshuffling or cleansing that occurred during colonialism and decolonisation.

Ethnic groups are not normally identified with “the national mythology”; thus Anglo-Saxon group in Europe is not considered as an ethnic group because “its ethnicity has constructed the mythology of national identity.” (Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 82) In the cultural context of immigration, the definition of ethnicity is to be further narrowed down. Isajaw defines ethnicity as “a group or category of persons who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits, who have a sense of peoplehood

and of group belonging, who are of immigrant background and have either majority or minority status within a larger society.” (Cited in Ashcroft *et al*, *Key Concepts* 82)

The concept of ethnicity varies from writer to writer, country to country. While some writers focus on ethnicity as of national or geographical origin, some others defined it considering it on the basis of religion, race and physical characteristics. All these orientations are factual making an allowance for the bewildering variety of ethnicity. For example, the ethnic minorities like Parsis, Jews and Sikhs in India are groups in which religion has the greatest influence in the way its members see its character.

Scrutinizing the social context, Eriksen categorises the typical empirical ethnic studies under four heads - urban ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, proto-nations and ethnic groups in plural societies. In his view, the first category includes immigrants in European cities and Hispanics in the United States. The major problem of this ethnicity is the discrimination of the host society, racism and issues related to identity. These ethnic groups rarely demand political independence or statehood, and they are as a rule integrated into a capitalist system of production. The indigenous people are the aboriginal people of a territory who are politically powerless and they are not fully integrated into the dominant nation state. The third category, proto-nations or ethno nationalist movements like Sikhs, Palestinians, Kurds and Sri Lankan Tamils are groups who claim that they are entitled to a nation state of their own, and they should not be ruled by others. “These groups short of having a nation state may be said to have more substantial characteristics in common

with nations.” (Eriksen 13-4) The fourth group, ethnic groups in the plural societies are people usually designated or created by colonialism with culturally heterogeneous population. Kenya, Indonesia, and Jamaica are examples (see Eriksen 13-4).

The terms race and ethnicity, although they have some similarities and used interchangeably, do not mean the same thing. With some exceptions, a race is sustained of several ethnic groups. African-Americans are a good example. Afro-Americans is a racial group, and it is consisted of a number of ethnicities. John McLeod distinguishes the two terms with reference to the ways in which they are used in contemporary world:

[I]t is important to realise that all constructions of racial difference are based upon human invention and not biological fact. There exist no objective criteria by which human beings can be neatly grouped into separate races, each fundamentally different from the other. Racial differences are best thought of political constructions, which serve the interests of certain groups of people. Theories of racial difference are often highly selective in choosing certain biological facts in making distinctions. Skin colour has often been the primary sign of racial difference and a frequent target of racialising discourses, often taken as evidence some form of natural difference between, say, white and black Americans...But whereas race tends to prioritise physiological features as evidence of similarity between individuals the parameters of ethnicity tend to be more wide...Ethnicity tends to

involve a variety of social practices rituals and traditions in identifying different collective groups. Although race and ethnicity are not synonymous both can be used as the grounds for discrimination. Members of particular ethnic group or races might find themselves disqualified from certain positions of power...An individual's ethnicity can provide an invaluable sense of belonging to a particular group in the present and also to a tradition or inheritance of cultural or historical tendencies. The potential use of ethnicity and racial difference are variable over time and space. (McLeod 110-11)

The evolving geopolitical situation in the postcolonial period witnessed the struggles of ethnic groups to end the long drawn practices of racist mistreatment, caste oppression and all kinds of marginalization in their attempt to achieve equality with the local ethnic majorities. Here focus of attention is turned to the question of difference in literature and culture, between the various ethnic groups in the world, and literature started projecting such issues as racial identity, inter ethnic relations, diaspora, homeland, nationhood and the like. In countries like Unites States and South Africa, because of the situation of severe racial oppression, literature came to be seen as a "privileged site for understanding the social structure, cultural codes and psychological tropes of cross cultural and inter ethnic understanding and misunderstanding." (Ryan 147) The discussions of ethnicity and production of ethnic literature have been greatly influenced by Afro Americans since World

War II, and an omission of the same in any discussion of ethnic culture would create a serious gap in our reflections.

While the world is slouching to the phase of multiculturalism and the intermingling of the varieties of humanity to the idea of a uniform totality, race and ethnicity become cultural and social categories of great importance (Ryan 148). Ethnicity and race, being the inerasable mark of a person's identity, function as the most "effective and compelling determinants of cultural difference and literary specificity." (Ryan 148) Reading Toni Morison's *Beloved* (1987), for instance, one must ask what it meant to be a black and African descendant in a largely white dominated America; what are the responsibilities borne by those who are white? How long the history of mistreatment of one social group weighs upon the present? "And it is to confront the ghost of one's own culture, the ghost of overseer and the ghost of slave as well to remember what shouldn't be forgotten." (Ryan 148) According to Michael Ryan:

Literary criticism that takes race and ethnicity as their principle concerns has helped foreground the importance of racial identification and question hitherto unquestioned ethnic norms of racially unmarked literary study. The mergence of ethnic criticism displaced the notion that universality spoke a white dialect, and it focussed attention on the bleaching out of otherness, dominant ethnic experiences by the privilege... given witness in Eurocentric and the north American Literary study. Two major consequences of this change are the recognition of

ignored ethnic experiences and literature as the reconsideration of the white discourse from an inter-racial perspective. (148)

Ethnic writers seem to represent group that have been rarely presented, or misrepresented through stereotyping in the literature of high culture. According to Sandra Gilman "Ethnicity is a lens through which literature, even Shakespeare's can be read." (25) The fascination with ethnicity in literary studies, however, was inaugurated in the United States along with the debates that took place during the 1960s regarding the "advantages and disadvantages of particularism and universalism in reading writing and teaching." (Gilman 20) These debates dealt mainly with the concept of 'melting pot', (which was derived from the title of a play by the Jewish British writer, Israel Zangwill), and the role of literature in "providing a medium for the expression and analysis of specific types of particularism." (Gilman 20) The idea of melting pot in literature led to discussions of the individuals whose presence in the society is transitory and who are referred to as by the Jewish German Sociologist, George Simmel as 'sojourners'; they also focussed on the category of the 'pariah' introduced by the German thinker, Max Weber while "examining the creativity of groups in externally imposed or self-imposed isolation from the collectivity." (Gilman 20) These models provided the literary theorists as well as the critics with new and complex ways of thinking about ethnicities and literatures.

Literature of ethnicity is an interesting site to locate the aesthetics and dialectics of minority discourse as its most noticeable quality is the representation of difference of the ethnic minority from the majority and other

classes. The representation of difference arises from the ethnic minority's identification of a history and tradition of its own, which yet survives amidst the tendencies of erasure at local, national and global levels initiated by the proprietors of totalitarianism, who are represented in all countries and cultures by the dominant, ruling classes. Apart from this the writing experience of ethnic minorities emanate from their desire for survival, being thrown into the borders of existence. However, ethnic minority's representation of difference must not altogether be read "as the reflection of ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition" as Homi K. Bhabha observed (*Location 2*). In his view:

The social articulation of difference from the minority perspective is a complex ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The right to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition to be reinscribed through the condition of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are in the minority; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, the high and low and challenge normative expectations of development and progress. (*Location 2*)

Thus the aesthetics of ethnicity is a counter cultural discursive practice that challenges or redefines the dominant tendencies in the discourses like the concept of homogenous national culture, "the contigal transmission of historical tradition" (Bhabha *Location 2*) and so on. The dominant discourses

from time to time evolved strategies for the implantation of the “ethnically cleansed national identity” which as Bhabha noted can only be achieved through the literal and figurative death “of the complex interweaving of history and the culturally contingent boundaries of modern nationhood.” (*Location 5*) In other words, this kind of nationalism leads to the interpretation of diverse phenomenon through one glossary, thus erasing specificities setting norms and limits, lopping of tangentials as Rosemary Marangoly George has pointed out (14). Thus the national unity is seen manufactured in countries with a colonial history using divisive criteria which are based on racial, ethnic or religious exclusivity, rewarding some with the authority to tap power and considering others as second class citizens who are restricted from positions of authority (McLeod 110). In this way race and ethnicity have been used historically to set the norms and limits for the nation’s imagined community (McLeod 110).

Ethnic minority writing is a location to express the anxiety of displacement which most of the ethnic minorities come across. Perhaps, lack of a determined locality of existence by which a group can explain its identity is a predominant theme in ethnic minority writing. According to Bhabha, “[t]he anxiety of displacement that troubles national rootedness transform ethnicity or cultural difference into an ethical relation that serves as a subtle corrective to variant attempts to achieve representativeness and moral equivalence in the matter of minorities.” (*On the Irremovable... 34*)

Carrie Tirado Bramen argues that “[o]ne of the most difficult challenges confronting writers, and particularly minority writers, is how to represent

ethnic and racialized characters without resorting to stereotypes.” (124) In his view, “[t]he writer...needs to walk a fine line between the familiar and the over familiar, between the recognizable and the excessively visible.” (124) For him “identity tropes are necessary to give an ethnic group a degree of cultural and textual visibility and internal coherence, yet, on the other hand, an excess of identity tropes can cross the line into tiresome predictability”. In order to escape this, he finds that, the writers of ethnicity resolves to “to avoid the issue of stereotypes altogether by turning to "real" life, by having original characters come from actual people, a strategy that reinforces the mimetic function of literary representation.” (124)

The twentieth century has also witnessed the creation of a number of what Lynda Hutcheon calls “crypto-ethnicities”, or groups with mixed identities (Italian-Canadians) due to colonialism, decolonisation, globalisation and multiculturalism (Hutcheon 28). These groups have also found a distinct voice in literature as well. When countries like Australia, Canada and New Zealand opened their doors for migrants, and when the world has moved to the phase of globalisation that erased local identities or rather facilitated free movement of individuals in the pretext of free trade, and multiculturalism, the world has created a number of encrypted and silenced groups like Italian-Canadians and Japanese-Canadians. Novels like, Michael Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion*, which tells the story of an Italian-Canadian man named David Caravaggio; Peter Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2002) which narrated the uprising of the legendary Kelly Gang from among the descendants of the decadent Irish Prisoners in Australia under the leadership of Ned Kelly; and

Kerri Sakamoto's *Electrical Field*(1998) which gives expression to the extreme loneliness and cultural alienation of the Japanese- Canadian community in Canada, vividly portray the quest for liberation and empowerment and a sense of dissidence against social odds and discrimination in particular from the ruling and dominant communities felt by the crypto-ethnic minorities in several parts of the world. Although there are marked differences in the thematic preoccupation in ethnic minority writers and crypto-ethnic minority writers, they all share some of the major tenets of minority discourse like the representation of difference and the articulation of cultural displacement.

There were some critics who were aware the distinction between ethnic cultures and minority discourse, and the political consequences of the dynamics ethnic and minority discourse. David Lloyd brings out the idea that:

[W]here an ethnic culture can be conceived as turned...towards its internal differences, complexities and debates as well as to its own tradition or histories, projects and imaginings, it is transformed into a minority culture only along the lines of its confrontation with a dominant state formation which threatens to destroy it by direct violence or by assimilation. Minority discourse is articulated along this line and at once registers the loss, actual and potential, and offers the means to a critique of dominant culture precisely in terms of its internal logic. (222)

He views that, since the ethnic culture is inassimilable, "minority discourse forms the problematic space of assimilation and the residues it throws up." (222) The majoritarian systems make use of the idea of liberal pluralism to

legitimate the assimilation of minorities. Liberal pluralism uses the method of abstracting ethnic cultural phenomena visible in food, music, literature and so on “from the material grounds of their existence and appropriating them on the model of...aesthetic culture.” (Lloyd 222) Lloyd argues that “[t]he work of pluralism in the era of late capitalism is strikingly that of fascist ideology” and for him “the that the interdisciplinary nature of Ethnic Studies is not the reflection of a recent trend but is based on the crucial recognition that cultures are inseparable from their from their material conditions.” (223)

### **The Indian Literary Scenario: Cultural Nationalism and Voices of Minorities**

A study of the dialectics of minority discourse and aesthetics of ethnicity in the Indian context requires an understanding of the various tendencies and divisions in the literature produced in India, which obviously has roots in the cultural hegemony and domination prevalent in the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. It is clear that the post-colonial Indian cultural scenario is eclipsed by the problem of cultural hegemony, which arises from the claims of cultural nationalism raised by the dominant community. It was, of course, aggravated by colonialism. The pre-colonial Indian society was never so homogeneous, that meaner pictures of cultural domination and brutalisation of the suppressed classes were its regular features. Taking these factors into consideration it can be argued that representation here has various political ramifications taking into consideration the literature produced by the various sections and sub sections of the Indian society. The minorities in India naturally have a necessity to speak out, often in outrage and protest, against their predicament of being thrown to the margins owing to their

backwardness. What we come across in the general matrix of the mainstream Indian literature, according to Aijaz Ahmed, is an unfinished bourgeois project which determined:

The notion of canonicity in tandem with the bourgeois, upper caste dominance of the nation state; a notion of classicism part Brahminical part borrowed from Europe; the ongoing subsumptions of literary utterances and cultures by print capitalism, accommodation with regional languages but preoccupations with constructing a supra-linguistic Indian literature based on an idealized Indian self defined largely in terms of what Romila Thapar has eloquently called 'Syndicated Hinduism' textual attitude to lived histories; notions of literary history so conventional as to be not even properly bourgeois. (15-6)

The place of minority writings, in the pretext of these accepted norms of canon, is important in the sense that the minority expressions were and are on the one hand serious attempts to thwart the notion of accepted canonicity and the social hierarchy and dominance on the other.

However, one fundamental question that these developments pose is, whose voice the Indian literature carries after all. One finds that most of the literary historians as well as the literary critics in India are found desperately trying to locate what is generally referred to as the 'Indianness' of Indian literature. Ever since the intervention of literary criticism, the 'Indianness' of Indian literature has been much debated quite enthusiastically involving a series of arguments and counter arguments. While the mainstream critical praxis

always sought to unbroken thematic continuity, canons and tradition, the others disagree with the so-called 'Indianness' citing instances of the dividing geographical boundaries within India, casteism, the position of the minorities, women and religious groups, to argue that these factors make it impossible to codify the expressed form of content in Indian literature to be unified in any sense. Although the need to think about a unified Indian culture and literature has political implications as to take for example Nehru's propaganda for a unified and strong India, the geopolitical and cultural reality in India, especially in the post-independence period, showed tendencies of division on class caste and gender, religious and ethnic lines, which again made the advocacy and dream of a unified Indian literature and idealist dream which can hardly be visualised. The identification of the elements of unified thematic preoccupations in Indian literature proposed by the mainstream literary historians like V.H. Gokak, S.K. Das, C.D. Narasimhaya appears to be mere rhetoric that contained references on Indian myths, culture folklore, legends and arts, and "no image can actually contain or embody this spurious myth of a single Indian literature" as Shormistha Panja puts it (4).

The tendency to find a uniform code of expression has much wider implications when we consider this tendency as an effort to impose a uniform nationalism and national culture as the 'typically Indian' and all-inclusive. Nationalism in the Indian context is to be understood as mere ideology with which the elite groups used to legitimise their narrow ambitions and to mobilise public support (Chandra 18). This biased concept of nationalism was invoked during the time of India's struggle for independence where "[t]he national

movement was merely an instrument used by the elite groups to mobilise the masses and satisfy their own interests” as Bipan Chandra argued (18). In his view, “[t]he elite groups and their needs and interests provide the origin as well as the driving force of the ideology and movement of nationalism. These groups were sometimes formed around religious or caste identities and sometimes through political connections built around patronage. But in each case these groups had a narrow selfish interest in opposing the British rule in India.” (18)

Viewed from this angle it can be argued that the tendency to find a uniform code of expression in Indian literature has been an inclination to authorise and highlight the mainstream Hindu Indian literature, and Hindu world view as the ‘Indianness’ of Indian literature. The most implicit notion confirmed in all Hindu nationalisms, According to Aijaz Ahmad, is that “the entire tradition of high textuality in India up to the Turko-Persian or (called simply ‘Islamic’) invasion expresses a Hinduism ...which elevates certain kind of Brahminical ideas to canonicity while assimilating all other cultural tendencies under its own dominance...” (261) Here all other large and small dissents of religious and not so religious kind like Buddhism and Jainism “are obscured into secondariness but also assimilated into processes of syndication.” (Ahmad 261) This is achieved by attaching a kind of sanctity and sacredness to texts which are not important in the specifically religious canon thereby privileging the ‘sacred’ texts which serve in the reconstruction of secular tradition and history of India over the ‘profane’ ones (Ahmad 261). One example of using the sacred in the literary is the fondness for employing the *Mahabharata* as a whole and in parts as a grandnarrative in literature. By the continuous reflex of the importance its basic

story, the *Mahabharata* has been projected as the epic of the nation, which can represent the make up and character of the nation as whole. Employing the sacred has two major varieties in Indo-Anglian literature. The simplest form is that the story line is employed to interpret other incidents and phenomenon as in Shashi Tharoor's *Great Indian Novel* (1988). This also includes the use of the character for comparison and for citing a model instance to explain a problem in the literary narratives, where an elementary knowledge of the story line of the epic invariably becomes a prerequisite in the reader. The second variety includes the literary and other cultural products giving expression to an exclusive cultural or political sphere, where the story is constructed in such a way as to make the impression that only the dominant community exists in that sphere. This cultural exclusiveness is created in various ways, among which use of spirituality related practices seems to be the most important. Mixing of political activity with the religious rituals as showed in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, and what can be called as spirituality syndrome, or the tendency to seek solace in the recesses of spirituality when entrapped in a quandary, in R.K. Narayan's works, are examples. Malgudi as well as *Kanthapura* in the general critical practice typify India in microcosm, but the cultural exclusiveness of these locales appears to wilfully hide the multicultural face of India. But the works of R.K. Narayan willingly or unwillingly expose serious schisms in the cultural sphere of Hinduism while showing the tendency to withdraw to spirituality in some of his characters, in a way that by going back to the recesses of spirituality the heroes like Raju (in *The Guide*) and Chandran (in *Bachelor of Arts*) run away from social responsibilities. This view is perhaps in tune to the orientalist stereotypes of Indians, which held

that the Indians are basically lethargic in nature and unable to participate or carry out the roles assigned to them, and thus escape into the inner alcoves of spirituality. Revisionist historians of present day India like K.N. Panikkar and Romila Thapar have also argued that a section of the majority community did not participate in the freedom struggle and such movements owing either to their indirect collaboration with the colonial powers as both these are the elites in their cultures, or to their interests in more exclusive and communal matters than the national liberation.

The search for a uniform Indianness as highlighted in the whole Indian literature is again easier said than done because one comes across various schools and languages including English in Indian literature. It may be difficult to find a common essence in a Khasi poet from Meghalaya and a Brahmin from Karnataka, although both of them are Indians. Moreover endeavours to locate a common essence in Indian literature as it obviously is part of the dream of a uniform concept of nation created from and by the dominant assumptions of the majoritarian culture, will be to exclude the silenced voices of the dalits and other minorities that are expressive of their secluded existence at the distant margins of the majority controlled centre. The centre is found not broad minded enough to accommodate dalits who expressed their rage against the long-drawn ill treatment of that they are facing from the upper classes who control the administrative mechanism in the country, and "women who are supposed to adhere to the model of Indian decorum, reticence and self-sacrifice not just in their lives but in also in their writings in order, as Narasimhayya puts it to keep the wheels of civilization greased." (Panja 11) For the dalit writers and writers

dealing with dalit issues, the major problem encountering them is the brute manifestations of casteism and suppression of the hegemonic groups who according to these writers are the descendants of the Aryans who came into the territories in and around the Indo-Gangetic plains roughly in the period 1500 B.C.; ever since they gained power and authority in various regions of India, subjugated the non-Aryan population, who are the indigenous people of this country (Basu XIII). The narrative of the Aryan conquest and command as, a 'superior' civilization, of an 'inferior' civilization existing in India, "frequently enabled the upper class Indians to assert a common Aryan essence with their English colonizers." (Basu XIII) The hegemonic groups at various occasions in the Indian history have shown their contempt for the 'lower' classes by constantly preventing the chances of the suppressed classes from coming on par with them in economic as well as social plains. In this context, both Ramjanmabhoomi movement and the anti-Mandal Commission agitation, key events of the 1990s, may be read as "efforts on the part of the hegemonic clusters in society (i.e. upper caste Hindus) to resist perceived attempts at social assertion on the part of the subaltern orders (i.e. Hindu lower castes and non-Hindu minority communities) or social engineering on their behalf." (Basu XI) These agitations "aimed at consolidating the Hindu national culture of India against divisive assaults from anti-Hindu anti- national forces." (Basu XII) The right wing Hindu viewpoint held that Hindu cultural nationalism must base on the concept of 'Akhand Bharat' or united India (Basu XII). Thus the hegemonic classes used communal mobilization as an antidote to caste turmoil, and it resulted from the fear of lower caste challenge to the upper caste domination. According to Uma Chakravarty,

the caste system as it is prevalent in India “comprises a series of hierarchy groups or jatis characterized by hierarchy or gradation according to ritual status.” (Basu 200) Here the basis of inequality is the use of certain evaluative standards placing some castes high and some others low. These standards of evaluation are rooted in the religio-legal texts of the Hindus, “as the system developed the high and the low were opposed to each other because of their respective associations with the notions of pure and impure. The notion of the pure high and the impure low was expressed ideologically in ritual terms.” (Chakravorty 200) Literatures produced from the point of the dalits have to simultaneously deal with the social as well as textual manifestations the ideology of caste that continues to govern the Hindu society in India. This ideology of caste is operated in the social sphere in order to sanction the unequal privileges that the upper castes enjoy. This is in spite of the constitutional guarantee of socio-political equality in India. The so-called Dalit literature that started in Maharashtra during the 1960s and 70s, and which now spread all over India has opened up the horizon of representing issues like casteism and untouchability. As many upper caste writers of nineteenth and early twentieth century like Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand and Prem Chand wrote about caste related issues, contemporary upper caste writers like Mahasweta Devi, Vijay Tendulkar, and U.R. Anandamurthy richly contributed to Dalit literature, and these writers exposed the perniciousness of untouchability and other kinds of caste discrimination. Dalit literature is to be considered as the most focussed minority expression in Indian literature as it obviously is consisting of one of the major contours of minority discourse viz. “the narrative of suffering”, as Tapan Basu calls it, of the lowest strata of Indian society (205). The writing experience of

the dalits has an obvious political and social purpose, as it helps them to effect the revolutionary social changes by the exposition, and through that seeking the alleviation, of casteist violence and untouchability practiced by the upper castes over the dalits.

Taking Dalit literature and ethnic minority writings as instances of minority discourse in India, both these can be seen sharing the commonality of being produced by those who are treated as different in a predominantly majority dominated India, it can also be found that the ideology of caste and the ideology of race work in unison in carrying out repression of the marginalized groups. According to Gail Omvedt, "caste is analogous to class in so far as like class caste is a system of expropriation of surplus labour from actual producers by owners of the means of production" but "unlike class, caste is a construct not of the methods of production in the material realm alone but of the operations of reproduction in the ideational arena." (Cited in Basu XVI) Moreover, for Omvedt "caste works using the logic of an inherited institution of division of labour within the community, sanctified by religion as well as by tradition, which frequently works in tandem with the class schisms of modern capitalist society." (Cited in Basu XVI)

Both ethnic minority writings and Dalit literature textually as well as socially and politically are set against homogenising principles and standards of Indianness introduced by the literature of cultural nationalism, and the mainstream English literature in India. Thus one major problem in Indian literature is the question of nationalism. Considering the domain of literature as historically constructed it can be argued that there has been tendency to mark a

singular civilization or national culture in Indian literary studies as well. The intervention or rather the imposition of this national culture as already discussed previously is to give legitimacy to certain practices and beliefs of the dominant group and to embody these practices and beliefs as emblems of a unified national culture. Here literature from the margins does not exist in the spectrum of national literature, as they do not conform to the so-called unified national sensibility and culture. This resulted in creating a kind of pressure in the minority writers to assimilate the 'national culture' as it becomes an essential prerequisite for survival amidst the ideological compulsions of the dominant culture. However, the minority writers, writing from the outskirts of national culture resist these ideological pressures by creating an imaginative nation of their own and by making their writing experience a location of resistance, creating a narrative of dissidence. They identify that the subaltern has to resist the homogenisation of the indigenous, into a singular totality that will be similar to the capitalist cultural sphere of the west.

Coming to an exclusive focus on Indian Writing in English, it can be found that the Indo-Anglian literature is also not without hierarchies in thematic focus and representation as a whole. As the present study concentrates on fictional works, there will not be much discussion on the sphere of poetry, drama and other writings here. Among the major tendencies in fiction a few are quite apparent. There are a number of writers who are treated forming part of the mainstream in Indo-Anglian fiction. These writers deal with themes general to India as a nation, i.e. issues of national importance and wide implications in the perspective of the complex make up of India in the post-colonial period. Writers

like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee Amit Chaudhury and many others come under this category. These writers, most of whom have found their home abroad, recreate India through memory and endeavours to represent the country as a whole giving special attention to the vicissitudes of its colonial past, the struggle for decolonization and the current and past political upheavals marked in the history of India. These writers most often willingly forget the multifarious cultural diversities and complex cultural problems that make India, by conforming themselves to the mainstream views of the elite class in India. Thus their novels are written to feel an English environment as they convincingly use English language, and are set in urban milieu with characters mostly belonging to the upper middle class. They mostly do not represent the individual communities or issues concerning to subaltern classes. Some of their works can even replace history books as they contain elaborate probes into historical incidents like freedom struggle, partition, and the emergency of the 1970s and so on. However, most of these works conform to the argument for a uniform Indianness that is raised by mainstream historians and literary critics as already mentioned.

The non-mainstream of Indian literature is constituted mainly by the minority writers, the dalit, ethnic minorities and some women writers whose works are marked by their culture's difference from the dominant community and other communities, and an inclination to give expression to the varied geo-cultural landscape from which they express. While the case of dalits is an obvious instance of minority discourse, some of the ethnic minority writers like Arundhati Roy, Khushwant Singh and Rohinton Mistry have received such wide acclaim

and international readership equal to other writers, as to make us consider them part of the mainstream. But in the close analysis it can be found that these writers also have a strong case of minority expression in so far as their writing experience stems from their being different in a majority dominated culture, and as they address issues pertaining to the existential dilemmas and alienation of their respective communities. Here, there are writers like R.K. Narayan who although write in an Indian milieu, expresses from the vantage point of an apparently dominating mainstream, cannot be included in this category. One delineating mark in the non-mainstream writers is perhaps the way in which they present their concept of nation that is clearly in opposition to the notion of nation found in the discourses of the mainstream. And secondly these writers write their community, giving voice to their perceived voicelessness, and bring out the angst that the members of the community share. The fear of cultural erasure, and homogenisation to the dominant community, as it is exemplified in the novels of Rohinton Mistry, is a dominant theme in many minority writers. There are issues like the inner problems within the community that also form the centre of their work. Arundhati Roy in her *God of Small Things* for example talks at length about the predicament of the most suppressed sections of her community, the dalit, women and children. Thus she puts into fiction the ethnicities within her ethnicity finding the right to be heard of the most suppressed of her Syrian Christian community as a powerful spectrum to place her fictional imagination. The extent to which these writers voice the subalternity is debatable in the sense that these subaltern writers write from different ideological plains and that they have different motives to express. Still the sense of being different can be seen

strongly found in almost all these writers irrespective of the community that they try to represent.

### **The Project**

The project calls attention to the ethnic variety and diversity of Indian English fiction, to establish, by revealing this variety, that India fiction in English is not still dominated by the concerns of the mainstream culture and that in recent times it has assumed interesting ethnic dimensions. It proposes to prove that, through this ethnic manifoldness the Indian fictional imagination has now begun to percolate into deeper recesses of the geocultural panorama of India as a country. The project covers four ethnic minorities, Parsis, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians and Syrian Christians. The use of the term "ethnic" is quite deliberate here. These groups are called ethnic in the sense that they possess distinct culture, tradition, social patterns and ancestry. Each of them has a composite of shared values, beliefs, tastes, and behaviours and so on that are commonly identified as characteristic of ethnicities in general. All these groups have certain agreed criteria that work as a binding force. The fictional works of writers from ethnic groups in India are found to have strong bearing on their ethnic identity, and the evocation their cultural difference in terms of tradition, ancestry, values, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties, plays a major role in their works. In other words, the ethnic minority writers in India show a penchant to prioritise the representation of their communities in their works, and thus their creativity is closely knit with their cultural identity and difference in a majority dominated country. One novel each is selected from each of the ethnic minority communities

mentioned above, although references are made to other works as well. They are Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (representing the Parsi ethnicity), Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* (representing the Sikh ethnicity), Allan Sealy's *Trotter-Nama* (representing the Anglo-Indian ethnicity) and Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* (representing the Syrian Christian ethnicity). These works are read primarily as expressive forms of diverse minority experiences, and their cultural traits, likes and dislikes, loyalties and affinities are looked into. These minority writers are not normally considered as minorities *per se* mostly owing to the economic and cultural forwardness of their respective communities, and their difference from such social outcasts like dalits, who are literally treated as the most wretched of the Indian soil; and these ethnic minorities are not as brutally oppressed as the dalits are. When an ethnicity becomes socially influential it is problematic to consider it as ethnic, and so all ethnic groups need not be subalterns. Thus it appears that the successful ethnicities need not always be subalterns in the strict sense of the term in which theoreticians use it, although they still have unresolved problems when they live in the cultural atmosphere in which another group is still more powerful and dominant. However, these groups also undergo experiences that make their existence problematic when they try to survive in a society eclipsed by the dominant concerns of a predominant society. Moreover, there are explicit traits in these groups that talk volumes about the condition from which these groups operate their sensibility, in their attempt to voice their otherness. Some noticeable trends such as a prick of being wronged, anxiety of cultural displacement and ethnic cleansing, a sense of being cut off from one's own past and history, search for national identity, and a

penchant to voice the contribution made by the community to their host cultures, and so forth are pursued in each ethnic minority discussed in the dissertation. The dissertation would also be trying to make an analysis of the difference between the various minority expressions in the concluding chapter.

Before proceeding with the discussion of the community represented in the selected novels in each chapter, relevant details about the respective communities are incorporated, in order to make the analyses more clear. These details cover the origin of the community, its history in India, and the struggles and difficulties that the community had to deal with in the course its survival in India. The writers of ethnicity are found to be aware of all these factors, and they have included factual details of the community in their fictional works. Whether through fact or fiction, they engage in a practice of discourse with an aim to represent their community. The writers seem to have incorporated their individual and their community's approach to the general political processes taking place in the country. Often they are unhappy with the policies of the major political parties in India that neglect the small minorities. The ethnic minority writers are also aware of the diverse ways that the community adopted at different historical times as strategies for survival. At times they find fault with their community owing to the prevalence of some of the perverted practices that in turn spoil the stability of their communities.

Diverse cultural problems can be seen dominating these communities. The Parsis for example bear the pressure of their exile as a cultural memory in their life and works. Journey thus becomes a strong motif in them. Their writing thus emanate from a feeling of homelessness, which leads to self-deception, and

sometimes to paranoia and schizophrenia. They encounter a hostile world, which has deprived them of their home, pushed them to perpetual pondering over the imaginary homelands that they try to create in places where they live. But often their imaginary homelands get struck with the homogenising tendencies of their host societies, and the disruptive activities of some sections of the dominant community. In spite of these inclement conditions one remarkable quality that the Parsis achieved is perseverance that is they are optimistic enough to wait for a bright future when their agonies will end and happiness will be brought into the limelight.

The search for a national identity and a desire to utter the bygone myths and legends of the community are major themes in Anglo-Indian writings. Novels like Allan Sealy's *Trotter- Nama* (1988) and G.D. Desani's *All About H. Hatter* (1972) bring out poignant accounts of the Anglo-Indian community's strategies to counter the attempts of being stereotyped; and the members of the community experience a life of cultural hybrids with the predicament of being 'neither this nor that'. Allan Sealy incorporates into his fictional imagination the personalities who shaped the Anglo-Indian history from 17th century to the present day with focus on the changes that came over the community in the long run. The community is to be understood in the different phases of its history viz., the period of the East-India Company, the era of British regime and the post-colonial age. Although the community has got acculturated into the Indian life and culture, it has been treated as what Nirad C. Choudhury calls "half caste minorities." (255)

The Sikh community has been severely wounded by the Operation Blue Star and developments like Anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984. For a long time owing to the involvement of some Sikhs in the Khalistan movement the Sikhs were under the surveillance of the system of power in India. However, in spite of all the adverse conditions the Sikhs remained true to their faith, without ever seeking to forgo their distinct cultural practices. Khushwant Singh, although is not rated as a pious Sikh, has shown tremendous interest in expressing his emotional attachment to the community. It is quite clear from his novels that Sikhism gave him a desired cultural identity that gave meaning to his existence as a writer in India. He made himself a spokesperson of the community, but the extremist Sikhs did not like his attitudes and opinions. Like all other writers of ethnic minority origin in India, Khushwant Singh also prioritised his community over everything else in his fictional works.

Arundhati Roy wrote only one novel, *The God of Small Things*. Her identity in India as an activist fighting for the rights of the suppressed classes can be seen reflected in her novel as well. She offers her filiations to her community by critiquing its caste bound structure, and establish that it is because of the caste based, patriarchal power centres within and outside the community that has led to problems that have encroached into her community. Although the community occupies a high social status equivalent to the caste Hindus, it is disturbed by a series of problems starting from ethnic dilution, migration, power struggles, anglophilia and so on. They encounter two prominent majoritarian systems in Kerala, the dominant Hindus, and the Catholic Christians who try to question the legitimacy of their faith.

In general, most of the ethnic minorities in India do not possess a well-defined system in everything. It is, however, because of the interactions with the other cultures and the influence of the dominant Hindus in India, that the ethnic minorities reached a position of having no resolve to a lot of problems. It seems that they did not get ample opportunities in India to develop structured communities, as they were forced to forgo certain of their customs and practices. The Parsis for instance have very few Towers of Silence in India that limits their religious rituals related to death. Because of the prevalence of the caste system the Syrian Christians could not assert their Christian identity, as caste status has dominated their religious consciousness. Sikhs probably are different in this case. They assert their identity by means of dressing and observing their religious rituals wherever they live or work. The organizational structure of the Anglo-Indian community in India is so weak except in places like Calcutta where they live in large numbers. All these problems find their place in their literary works. The other issues that find berth in their writing include the internal problems and power struggles within the community, fear of ethnic erasure, tendency to resist cultural nationalism, the subdued status of women in most of the communities, adoration of foreign cultures, migration, empathy for other minorities, and fear of the loss of their history.

The study undertaken in this dissertation is evidently sociological in nature, and therefore it can be categorised as largely belonging to the realm of sociocriticism. Culture is addressed through literature, with a view to finding the articulations of identity issues of the minor communities. As instances of minor literature, the ethnic minorities use their language with a difference. Theirs is a

secondary use of the language. As Bogue wrote, "Minor literature is a minor *usage* of language, one that may be practiced across a wide range of discourses, including those commonly classified as secondary, avant-garde or marginal," and therefore, "[w]hat is essential to note is that the theory of minor literature entails ontological claims about the nature of language and its relation to the world." (108) Their use of language has definite sociological purpose, as the primary focus is on representation. They are to be treated as counter narratives, which they employ as a means to contest the dominant reality and the framework of assumptions. The study here is partially ethnohistorical and ethnocritical. An ethnohistorical literary criticism is closely associated with anthropology, history and literary criticism. And this is true about the studies of literary works of the ethnic minorities in India. As ethnocriticism can only be founded on ethnohistorical descriptions of the community, one has to set out with materials of anthropological, historical and cultural materials in this enterprise (see Krupat 5).

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**Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English  
Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels**

*Dissertation submitted to the University of Calicut  
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**Doctor of Philosophy**  
in English*

*By*  
**ANVARSAHDATH VALIYAPARAMBATH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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## Chapter Two

### The Sikh Struggle for Identity and Survival in Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel*

The present chapter discusses Khushwant Singh's representation of the Sikh community as an ethnic minority in India that underwent various trials and tribulations right from the early years to the present day in his fictional works. The study focuses on the novel *Delhi* (1990), as it is the one that shares its time with the other ethnic minority novels selected for this study. References are also made to his two other novels (*Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*) to trace the thematic preoccupations commonly found in his fiction in general. All these three novels directly as well as metaphorically deal with the growth of Sikhism in India amidst a range of controversies and crises, through the juxtaposition of certain historical moments in the country. As they appear to be historical works on the country/community in disguise, details regarding the growth, development, religious system and the political history of Sikhism in India are also given as supporting details in the chapter. Moreover, most of Khushwant Singh's fictional works, especially the novels mentioned above, have definite bearing on actual events in the history of India, and therefore the approach here is not that of a mere fictional study, but one which presupposes that the fictional details in Khushwant Singh seem to form a textual matrix where various elements of textuality, fictionality and historicity coexist and provide us with an ideological attitude that the author adopts to represent his community. However, this is the case of the entire ethnic minority writers selected for study in this project. Here the way an ethnic minority forms its own aesthetics as a strategy of resistance,

incorporating in it the political standpoint of the community in the sphere of their existence, is given a considerable amount of emphasis. This kind of an analysis requires an understanding of the history of the community in India. Sikhs are an ethnic group in which religion has the greatest influence in the way its members reflect their ethnic identity. In India they are treated as an ethnic minority as well as a religious minority. They are called a religious minority on the ground that they form only about two per cent of India's population; and it is because they have a set of shared values, ways of dressing, tradition, ancestry and consciousness of kind, and such other attributes that are commonly found in ethnicities.

The word 'Sikh' is the Punjabi version of the Sanskrit word, *shishya* or the Pali *sikha* both meaning 'disciple'. The Sikh religion or Sikhism was founded in India by Guru Nanak during the 15th century A.D. The Sikhs are the disciples of ten gurus starting from Guru Nanak, and they consider the book called the *Adi Granth* or *Granth Sahib* as their holy scripture. The *Granth Sahib* is regarded as the last Guru. It was the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, who ended the personal guruship and proclaimed the *Granth Sahib* as the last Guru forever. (Sikh Missionary Centre 3)

The *Granth Sahib* is a compilation of hymns composed by the Gurus and other Indian saints, both Hindus and Muslims (Singh, R 89). The *Granth Sahib*, which consists of 1430 pages, is considered to be authentic and nobody is allowed to change anything in it. It is completely dedicated to the glory of the Almighty God, and it does not narrate the life story of the Gurus. It is believed that the teachings that the Gurus gave to the world came directly to them from

God. Being strictly monotheistic, Sikh religion requires its followers to believe in none other than one Supreme Being.

Guru Nanak, originally a Kshathriya, was born in the year 1469 at Talwandi near Lahore (now in Pakistan) and died there seventy years later. Nanak appeared himself as “a religious teacher who gave uniquely clear and attractive expression to doctrines and ideals, which had developed within the Sant tradition of northern India.” (McLeod 7) The Sant tradition is distinguished from Bhakti tradition although both shared certain common beliefs.

The historians of Sikhism refer to the way that Nanak selected for his religion as *Nanak-Panth*. Nanak taught a systematic theology through his many hymns (*bani*) infusing in them “an integrated pattern of belief and clear conception of how that belief should be applied in practice”, and he used religious songs as an effective means to communicate and reinforce the elements of a faith (McLeod 8). Sikhism as presented by Nanak is defined by himself as three nouns viz., *nam* or the divine name, *dan* or alms giving and *isnan* or pure living. These three words considering their meaning is understood as the as a formula that serves as a motto of the early Sikh community, expressing the essence of what Nanak tried to converse. While discussing the basic precincts of Sikhism, McLeod elucidates these words thus:

*Nam* or the divine name is a convenient short hand for the total bring and nature of Akal Purakh or God...If one is to secure deliverance from the cycle of transmigration one must accept the reality of *nam* and strive to bring one's own being into complete

conformity with it. This one achieves primarily through the practice of *nam simaran*, meditation on the divine name, though it is also assisted by alms giving (*dan*) and necessarily involves pure living (*isnan*). (1-2)

Towards the end of his life, Nanak settled down at Kartarpur in Punjab and started preaching his religion. He understood God as existing beyond human capacity to know, relate or understand and whose glory is manifest in the creation. Nanak's teachings are presented in a series of verses in the *Granth Sahib*. There are 974 verses in the *Granth Sahib*. Nanak met Kabir and was influenced by his teachings. Some of Kabir's songs were included in the *Granth*. Nanak's teachings that he revealed through his hymns show the influence of Hinduism and Islam on him. The teachings of Muslim Sufis like Sheik Farid, and Bhaktas like Kabir helped Nanak greatly during the formative years of his spiritual pursuit. "From Islam Nanak took its unqualified monotheism, rejection of idolatry and the caste system. From Hinduism he borrowed the metaphysics of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. He elevates reality (*sat*) to the position of the one Supreme God." (Singh R. 90) Nanak emphasized on the worship of the name of God and wanted his disciples to take on a Guru and keep company with holy men. He established the system of community hymn singing (*kirtan*) as an easy method to commune with God.

Nanak located his religion in the agrarian civilization of Punjab. Although Sikhs became the dominant majority in the divided Punjab today, the ethnic pattern of the Punjab region has changed several times when different people conquered it. Punjab has been a perpetual battlefield and first settling

ground and often the first home for all the conquerors, because of its geographical location as one of the main gateways into India. According to the available historical and archaeological findings, organized rural communities existed in Punjab since around 25000 BC, and between 2500 BC and 1500 BC cities flourished in the Sindh and Punjab areas. These cities were believed to have been destroyed by Aryans who infiltrated into Punjab and Sindh about fifteen centuries before the birth of Christ. As Khushwant Singh points out:

The Aryans who were tall and fair drove out the dark-shinned inhabitants and occupied most of Northern Hindustan. The newcomers were a pastoral people with a religion and language of their own. Both these were further developed in the land of their domicile. It was in the Punjab that Vedic Hinduism was evolved, and many of the great works of Sanskrit literature written. (*History of 11*)

The Aryans were followed by other races and conquerors, starting from the Persians under Darius (521-485 BC), who conquered northern Punjab, Alexander, the great, Mauryas, Bretrian invaders, Scythia tribes, the Guptas, the Mongoloid Huns, Vardhana and Harsh Vardhana, Mahamud Ghazni, Afghan tribes like Ghories, Tughlaks, Surs and Lodhis, the Mongols under the leadership of Taimur who was later followed by Babar and the other Mogul emperors.

When Nanak was born in 1469, the ethnic variety of Punjab was so varied that it accommodated Pathans and Baluchis (both Muslim tribes); Brahmins Kshatriyas and other Hindu sects; Jats and Rajputs, and the Negroid

descendants of the aboriginals. There were also nomadic tribes of Gypsies wandering across the plains (Singh K, *History of 13*). While the northwest of Punjab, stretching along both sides of the Indus was occupied by Pathans and Baluchis; the Northern side, along the foothills of the Himalayas was the dwelling of Hindus. The rest of Punjab countryside was mostly the domain of Jats and Rajputs, the agricultural tribes; and the cities were inhabited by Banias, Mahajans, Suds and Aroras who were mostly traders. The dark-skinned Negroid descendants of the aboriginals were found in almost all towns, cities, villages and they were treated as untouchables (Singh K, *History of 13*). It was in the midst of this geocultural panorama that Punjabi nationalism was born. "The blood of many conquering races came to mingle and many alien languages came to be spoken" in Punjab until around the fifteenth century (Singh K, *History of 13*).

The first indications of the evolution of the spirit of Punjabi nationalism was obviously rooted in the above mentioned mixture of different people out of which were born the Punjabi people and their language. According to Khushwant Singh "there existed a sense of expectancy that out of the many faiths" of the ancestors of "Punjabis would be born a new faith for the people of Punjab." (*History of 13*) The unifying 'faith' that Khushwant Singh refers to is unequivocally the Sikhism. He explains the process of Punjabi embracing of Sikhism, that he calls Punjabi nationalism:

By the end of the 15th century, the different races that who had come together in the Punjab had lost the nostalgic memories of the lands of their birth and begun to develop an attachment to the

land of their adoption. The chief factor in the growth of Punjabi consciousness was the evolution of one common tongue from a babel of languages that past. Although the Punjabi were sharply divided into Muslims and Hindus, attempt had been made to bring about a rapprochement between the two faiths and certain desire to live and let live and let live had grown among the people. It was left to Guru Nanak and his nine successors to harness the spirit of tolerance and give it a positive contact in the shape of Punjabi nationalism (*History of 14*)

The forerunners of the spirit of nationalism were the Jat peasantries. The manifestations of this sprit of nationalism, according to Khushwant Singh, appeared in Mahja, a Jat stronghold then in Punjab (*History of 14*). Jats were believed to be of Aryan stock migrated from Rajasthan into the Punjab. Being Vaisyas (workers) Jats were given a lower caste status compared to Brahmins and Kshatriyas (Singh K, *History of 14*). When Nanak introduced his new religion many Jats became its believers. These Jats are generally known today as Sikh Jats with prominent tribes like Sidhu, Sandhu, Gill, Garewall, Brar, Sekhon, Dhillon, Man, Her Bhuttar, bat Punnun, Aulak, Dhariwal, Sara, Mangat, Chahl, Rendhwa, Keng and Sohal (Singh K, *History of 14*). Jats always claimed, and often fought for, their unique identity. They held a strong spirit of freedom and equality which made them refuse to submit to Brahminical Hinduism. Although Brahmins and Kshatriyas denigrated Jat caste status, it never made Jats feel that they are in any way lower to Brahmins or Kshatriyas. The Jats estimation of Brahmins on the other hand was "a little better than a

soothsayer.” (Singh K, *History of 15*) The most important thing about the Jat was that they were born workers and warriors:

He tilled his land with his sword girded round his waist. He fought more battles for the defence of his homestead than the Kshatriya, for unlike the martial Kshatriya the Jat seldom fled from his village when the invaders came. And if the Jat was maltreated or if his women were molested by the conqueror on his way to Hindustan, he settled his score by looting the invaders' caravans on their return journey and freeing the women he was taking back. The Punjabi Jat developed an attitude of indifference to worldly possessions and an instinct for gambling with his life against odds...his band of patriotism was at once hostile towards the foreigner and benign, even contemptuous, towards his own countrymen whose fate depended so much on his courage and fortitude. (Singh K, *History of 16*)

Considering its birth in a place with a history of Hinduism and Islam, through various conquerors and rulers, Sikhism is to be understood as born out of “the wedlock between Hinduism and Islam, after they had known each other for a period of nearly nine hundred years.” (Singh K, *History of 16*) However, it developed its own personality in due course when it grew into a full-fledged faith. Thus the evolution of Sikhism has so much to do with the complex interaction between Hinduism and Islam in India. As a religion that existed before the Muslim invasions, Hinduism had to react to the challenge posed by Islam, for which it effected certain compromises to its tenets. Similarly Islam

also got domiciled in India to suit the geocultural atmosphere here. The Aryan impact that Hinduism brought on India's aboriginal people and their culture, with such characteristics as the intervention of caste system, devised by "the tall, blonde and blue eyed invaders" in order "to maintain the purity of their race" and "to reduce to servitude the dark-skinned inhabitants among whom they had come to live" (Singh K, *History of* 18-19); and the way in which the way in which the Muslim invaders created or reflected the face of their religion, necessitated, at least for some, an alternative faith for Hinduism and Islam. This might be why Nanak's new religion could run roots in the agrarian Punjab easily. Nanak's entry into the social sphere of Punjab resulted in the introduction of a new pattern of living, and he set in motion an agrarian movement the impact of which felt all over the country.

Nanak's religion was strictly based on monotheism, and he did not allow any compromise on the unity of God. Unlike the Bhaktas, he believed that God is finite and therefore "could not die to be reincarnated nor could He assume human form which was subject to decay and death. Disapproving the worship of idols on the ground that people, instead of believing idols as symbolic representations believed them as God, Nanak held that god was *sat* (both truth and reality), as opposed to *asat* (falsehood) and *mithya* (illusion)." (Singh K, *History of* 39) Khushwant Singh explains the Sikh concept of God thus:

If God is truth, to speak an untruth is to be ungodly. Untruthful conduct not only hurts one's neighbours, it is also irreligious. A good Sikh must not only believe that God is the only One,

Omnipotent, and Omniscient Reality, but also conduct himself in such a way towards his fellow beings that he does not harm them, for hurtful conduct like lying, cheating, fornication, trespass on a person or his property, does not conform to the truth that is God. (*History of* 39)

Nanak reiterated the inability of defying God, owing to the belief that God is *nirankar* (formless). However he uses a number of names for God such as *Pritam* (lover), *Khasam* (master), *Data* (giver) and so on. He also used Hindu and Muslim names for God, like *Ram*, *Govinda*, *Hari*, *Murari*, *Rab* and *Rahim* (Singh K, *History of* 40). The Guru is considered to be the pivot of Nanak's religious system. He held that there could be no salvation without the Guru. "He was the Guide who prevented mankind from the straight and narrow path of truth; he was the captain of the ship which took one across the fearful ocean of life." (Singh K, *History of* 41) Nanak propagated a life of purity among the world's impurities for his disciples. He "did not approve of ascetic isolation or torturing of the flesh as a step to enlightenment." (Singh K, *History of* 41) It might be because of this that Nanak was frequently questioned by Sufis and Hindu ascetics who lived in hermitage. Nanak's system wanted his disciples to combine the spiritual pursuits with the obligations of a householder (*grihastha dharma*) (Singh K, *History of* 42). Nanak offered the world a casteless society at a time when the Brahminical domination made even the shadow of a low caste human being causing impurity to a high class Brahmin and others. In order to reach salvation he advocated the way of *Bhakti* or the system of "laying emphasis on the worship of Name", and this was obviously different from the

three paths of salvation - action, knowledge and devotion - advocated by Hinduism" and Nanak believed that "by repetition of the *nam* one conquers the greatest of all evils, the ego because the ego also carries in it the seed of salvation which can be nurtured to fullness by *nam*." (Singh K, *History of 44*)

Apart from being a religious leader or founder of a faith, the political significance of Nanak's preaching is noteworthy. Through his active interaction in the Punjabi soil he emerged as the first leader of Punjab. It was made possible probably by his celebrated statement expressing his ideal, 'there is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman, in an age that gained notoriety over Hindu Muslim clashes. It was this ideal that worked behind the birth of Punjabi consciousness and Punjabi nationalism.

Sikhism was established as a separate religion with a well-organised system only with the fifth Guru, Arjun Dev who compiled the writings of his predecessors and put them together with his own compositions, and those of Muslim and Hindu saints, providing the Sikhs with their holy book, *Adi Granth*. Before he was arrested and jailed by the Mogul government, Arjun Dev raised a temple in Amritsar and made it a place of pilgrimage. Following him, his successors, Hargobind, his own son and Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru were also on loggerheads with Mogul government, and got punished for it. Tegh Bahadur was beheaded at Delhi in 1675. However, after his death, Gobind Singh, his son finally transformed the pacifist Sikhs into a militant fraternity which he named 'Khalsa'. The word, 'Khalsa' was derived from the Persian 'khalis' meaning 'the pure'. There onwards Khalsa became the dominant order in Sikhism. Most Sikh boys and girls undergo initiation into

Khalsa in a ceremony upon reaching puberty. Announcing the changes in the Sikh religious system in 1699 before a gathering of thousands of Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru asked five people to sacrifice themselves. He took them one by one in a tent and came out after some time with his sword smeared with and dropping blood (in fact he slew five goats instead). These five were the first batch of Khalsa. In that function several people got baptised, drinking sweetened water from a common bowl (Singh, R. 92). "They swore to observe five vows: to wear their hair and beard unshorn (Kesh) and carry a comb (Kangha) to keep them tidy; to wear the soldiers' breeches (Kucch); to wear a steel bracelet on their right wrist (Kada); and to carry a sabre (Kripan) on their person." (Singh, R. 92) This baptism is considered to be a new birth and those who got baptised were given new names. All males were asked to take 'Singh' and all women 'Kaur' as their surname. However, not all Sikhs accepted the innovation introduced by the tenth Guru. Those preferred to follow only the earlier Gurus are known as 'Shajharis' or slow adopters.

### **Sikhs in India: Struggles for Identity**

Apart from the struggles that they undertook during the formative years of the community, the Sikhs had to fight several wars and confront several enemies in modern India - in the colonial as well as in the post-colonial phases - in their attempt to register or establish their identity. The Sikhs always felt that justice is denied to them by various majoritarian systems at different historical occasions by not allowing to them what they deserve, be it a complete freedom of faith or a land of their own. There were also attempts to underestimate their role in the freedom movement and other major political

events in India. An understanding of the major factors that form the political history of Sikhism in India would definitely be a useful supplement to the study of Khushwant Singh's novels.

The history of Sikhs in India can be broadly classified into four phases. While the first phase is consisting of the birth of Sikhism, and its growth involving ten Gurus, the most important events of which are already mentioned, the later phases that mainly involve the growth of the community through the ages are the era of the Sikh Raj (1808-1849), the era of agitation in the National Movement, and the post independence era. In the first phase, Sikhism as an alternative faith to the warring Hinduism and Islam ran roots among the agricultural communities of Punjab. In the second phase the Sikhs got power to rule over the Punjab region. In the third phase, the Sikhs became part of the nationalist movement. Many Sikhs served the Indian army formed by the British. The post independence India ( the fourth phase in the history of Sikhs) witnessed agitations for a linguistically divided state for the Sikhs in Punjab, which resulted in the formation of present day Punjab in 1966, dividing the Punjab region into Haryana and Punjab with a common capital, Chandigarh, which is declared to be a union territory. In almost all these stages of their growth the Sikhs had to fight so many wars, and conduct a range of agitations, got attacked sometimes to get their demands attended to by the administrations or the majoritarian systems of power. Thousands of Sikhs lost their lives in all these, and the last incident of heavy loss of Sikh lives being the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi following the murder of Indira Gandhi.

Between the year 1733 and 1849 the Sikhs ruled over the Punjab region.

In this era, "though the Sikhs lost their heads in thousands, and though they migrated to forests and hillocks intermittently fighting battles and having skirmishes with the forces of the government and petty rulers, they had tasted the power and accomplished their dream of becoming rulers for about half a century in two spells." (Adiraju 75) In the first spell (1799-1839) Sikhs were made Nawabs with an area each to rule, and in the second they controlled a vast kingdom with Lahore as its capital, and with Maharaja Ranjith Singh as the ruler. "The 140 years from the last Guru till the end of Ranjith Singh Raj, the history recorded several stories of valiant fights, sacrifices of faithful and holy Sikhs and also the stories of treachery and corruption...suffering of terrific repression and loss of human lives in freedom struggle." (Adiraju 76) The era of Ranjith Singh was followed by the period of Banda Bairagi who killed the Nawab but later got defeated and captured by the Mogul forces. For many years after this Sikhs became a target of eradication, making the steady growth of the community at stake. There were times when awards and cash prizes were given to those who captured and killed Sikhs. "The Sikhs were caught in dozens, hundreds or even thousands daily, were taken to Lahore and subjected to torturous death...This butchery by the government forces left the Sikhs with no alternative but to flee to jungles with their families leaving their properties and the Hindu relatives behind." (Adiraju 76) However, they got themselves organized after a decade or so and became a fighting force, and the government later decided to stop killing them when realised their potential.

During the colonial rule the colonial powers understood the military value of the Sikh soldiers and they exploited them in their pursuits of power in

India. They could easily make out the Sikh psychology, that is, as D.H. Butan puts it, "The Sikhs when roused would fight like a lion but when offended - someone even jestingly referred to his beard or his brains - he would be equally roused the other way round blowing up whatever came in front of him." (Quoted in Adiraju 95) But no sooner than the colonisers understood the Sikh psyche there occurred somewhere in the first half of twentieth century, a political consciousness and a look away from the battles to the ballot paper. In spite of the large number of Sikh soldiers serving the British in the First World War, more number of Sikhs were attracted to the nationalist movement by the 1930s. The renewed political consciousness made the Sikhs aware of their sidelined disposition in India, and they resolved to fight for considering them on par with Muslims allowing them separate electorates as given to the Muslims; and later they had to fight for thirty three per cent reservations in the electorates of Punjab. The former was agreed in the First Round Table Conference held in London in 1930. The Sikhs also expressed their protest against the partition of India and made great sacrifices. "They refused to be lured by Jinnah and other Pakistani leaders into demanding a separate Sikh land, because they were convinced that a separate Sikh state would be politically unviable, economically long for a small state and impossible to guard both economically and otherwise." (Adiraju 113) The partition of free India into India and Pakistan caused great displacement and loss of lives to the Sikh community. Khushwant Singh attempts to evolve the Sikh perspective of partition in his novel, *Train to Pakistan*. Although partition opened up the claim of a separate domain for the Sikhs in the divided Punjab, it inaugurated newer

problems for them. In the pre-independence undivided Punjab, the Sikhs along with the Hindus fought against the majority Muslims. But after partition the accord between Hindus and Sikhs broke away slowly and they began distancing from each other. Thus began the anti-Sikh tendencies that gathered roots in the country which later took newer diversions. This was in spite of the repeated pleas of the leaders of the community against the erasure of the Sikh community and their identity in India. Hindu reformist movements like the Arya Samaj became aggressive and induced some Sikhs to think that this movement was Hindu communal and meant to eliminate the separate identity and entity of Sikhs (Adiraju 115). The Sikhs also felt that they were a separate and distinct community with a history and tradition of its own, and they realised that the safeguards promised to them before the partition were not being carried out. The British, during their rule also permitted the Sikhs with attractive offers including a separate independent state. However the Sikhs rejected such offers expecting a better treatment in free India. The Sikhs were also frustrated over the demand of the Arya Samaj for making the official language Hindi to be the medium of instruction in Punjab. In the wake of this the Sikhs under the leadership of Akali Dal, a leading political organization for the cause of the Sikhs, brought out the demand for a new province in the Punjab region consisting of seven Sikh dominated districts where they formed 53 per cent of the total population (Adiraju 116). But the Arya Samajists dubbed the pleadings for safeguarding Sikhs as a demand for Sikhistan, and compared the demand with that of Muslim League. The Sikhs also demanded that Punjabi should be made the medium of instruction in schools. For these

demands, the Akali Dal, under the leadership of Tara Singh, fought a long battle with the congress. Some of these agitations and Sathyagrahas caused forceful retaliation from the government. On 4 July 1955 the police raided the Golden Temple and the Shiromani Akali Dal office and arrested the priests. The pilgrims and volunteers were subjected to lathy charge and tear gas. The incident was an insult to the Sikhs as the police committed sacrilege and violated the sanctity and sacredness of the Sikh temples of worship. The Sikh demand for a separate state was contested mainly by the Hindus in the congress and outside congress who demanded for Mahapunjab with Hindi as the official language and medium of instruction. The commission appointed by the government (State Recognition Committee - SRC) also suggested the formation of Mahapunjab to the surprise of the Sikhs, when Sikhs formed 55.6 per cent of the population of the region according to the available census (Adiraju 124).

However, the congress could annul the crisis by gaining an accord with the Sikhs by which it is agreed by both sides to formulate regional committees, one for Punjabi speaking areas and another for Hindi speaking areas. As a result of this, in spite of the anger and frustration of the younger elements among Sikhs, the Sikh leaders decided to forge the demand for a separate state, and later a merger of Akali Dal with the congress, but the congress with the help of some Sikh leaders played a political game and disturbed the Dal elements not giving them ample representation in the election that followed the accord. In protest against this, Tara Singh and others resumed the Dal activities

and continued to raise the issues pertaining to the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh who spearheaded a series of movements in protest against the maltreatment of the Sikhs considered the occasion as a moment of trial to the entire community and reminded the Sikh leaders that “the Sikhs cannot be satisfied unless they rid the communal domination of Punjabi Hindus led by Arya Samajists.” (Adiraju 126) During these incidents, Tara Singh was reinstated the President of the Dal, and he directed all the well-wishers of the Panth not to join the Congress. In the meantime, Pratap Singh Khairon and other leaders remained in Congress and Khairon became the chief minister. Tara Singh aggravated his agitation for Punjabi Suba or a separate state for the Sikhs on linguistic basis. The division between the Congress Sikhs and Dal Sikhs became intense at one occasion, and there were also differences of opinion between Tara Singh and Fateh Singh, the two leaders of the Akali Dal, which later gave birth to two factions in the Dal under these two leaders, and also different demands regarding Punjab. Organizations like SGPC (Shiromani Gurudhwara Prabandak Committee) went into the hands of Congress and the Dal factions. As a result of the continuing agitations, the government finally divided Punjab into Punjab and Haryana with effect from 1 November 1966, making Chandigarh, a union territory, as the capital of both the states. But this has not brought an end to the ongoing crisis. While the Fateh Singh faction of the Dal started agitations for making Chandigarh part of Punjab, Tara Singh renewed his demands into one for an autonomous state of Punjab. The Sikhs were, in fact, made intolerant by the thoughtless recommendations of the Boundary Commission. The recommendations for a joint High Court and a joined capital

city for Haryana were the main reasons for the continued agitation of the Dal activists. "The Sikhs who have played a prominent role in the freedom struggle and the three wars in the independent India had to fight and make innumerable sacrifices for attaining their state on linguistic basis for over twenty long years, began their third battle for restoration of capital city Chandigarh to their state." (Adiraju 158) Political formulas changed several times in Punjab, several times after the formation of the state with alternative Akali and Congress governments ruling over it. In the first election, after the formation of the state, Sikhs won 61 out of 104 seats in the new house, giving rays of hope for the disillusioned lot. But Congress returned to power in 1972 with Giani Zail Singh as the chief minister. The congress return was occasioned mainly by the rift in Akali Dal. During the elections some disgruntled politicians brought out the slogan of Sikh homeland. But the first pronouncement of this has come from a former minister of Punjab, Dr. Jagjith Singh Chouhan, who at a press interview in London in 1971 raised the demand for Khalistan (Adiraju 169). He condemned the atrocities committed by Hindus and the government of India against the Sikhs. He also made some anti-Indian statements in Pakistan for which he was expelled from Akali Dal. But the followers of Chouhan in India and abroad carried forward the campaign which later produced long-standing consequences, and what Chouhan has started became a major political conflict in India. And which has later led to the death of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984.

It was Akali Dal, in a resolution passed at Anandpur in 1973 which used the expression "Sikh nation" for the first time (Adiraju 174). A paragraph in the

political resolution passed in this conference says that the fundamental policies of Shiromani Akali Dal are to seek the realisation of the birth right of the Khalsa through creation of congenial environment and a political set up, thus connoting the idea of a Sikh nation which Dr. Chouhan had already demanded. But the Akalis had to correct this resolution when they came to power in 1977 with Prakash Singh Badal as the Chief Minister. The removal of the demand for a Sikh nation of the Akalis was not liked by Sikh extremists under Dr. Chouhan and D. S. Dhillon, settled in countries like the UK, Canada and the USA. The leaders of the extremists maintained a good rapport with Pakistan President and other leaders who wanted to instigate the Sikhs against India. In Punjab the demand for a Sikh nation was popularised by the then emerged extremist leader, Bhindranwale. The Punjab government which was already weakening due to disunity among its leaders faced a major setback when Fouza Singh and seventeen followers of Bhindranwale were shot dead in 1978 allegedly by Nirankaris (a sect in Sikhism). His widow Bibi Amrit Kaur formed the Dal Khalsa, a terrorist group wedded to the idea of Khalistan, obviously with the leaders like Bhindranwale. The split in the Akali Dal on the question of Sikh nation became more and more wide and many resolved to the confrontationist attitude when the Congress came to power in 1980. In a major incident "on 20 March 1981 a group of about fifty Sikhs took out a procession at Anandpur Sahib, a religious centre, and gave public expression on the demand of Khalistan" (Adiraju 176); and in another incident "on 15 August 1981 the Dal Khalsa volunteers hoisted a flag in which a certain areas in the country including Punjab are shown as part of the proposed Khalistan." (Adiraju 176)

The Dal continued functioning amidst all this in two factions - Talwandi faction and Longwall faction - unaware of what official stand to take in this eventuality, although both the factions knew that the extremists could win the support of many people for their cause. The extremist violence continued under Bhindranwale till 4 June 1984, when Indira Gandhi used military to flush out terrorists from the Golden Temple. Right from the time the Army took position around the golden temple on 3 June 1984, till the end of the "Operation Blue Star" as it was called, the Army faced stiff resistance from the terrorists. However, the Army succeeded eventually, killing as many as 554 terrorists and other Sikhs, and injuring more than 121. Many soldiers also lost their lives. During the army actions at one stage when the army intensified its operation, Bhindranwale sent a message to Longwal, the leader of one of the factions, asking him to declare the birth of Khalistan which he did not do, may be because he was quite aware that the army will annul the terrorist activity in the Golden Temple. Government used mainly Sikh soldiers for the operation perhaps to avoid communalisation of the operation by the others. Lieut. Gen. K.S. Brar, who was the chief of the operation, was a Sikh, and it was reported that not a single Sikh soldier showed any reluctance to perform their duty. These generated crises in the community as there were attempts to ostracise the Sikh soldiers calling them as destroyers of the temple. However, Brar, while describing the incident as a sacrilege committed on the most revered shrine of the Sikhs, comments on the turns the incident had later taken, in his Book, *Operation Blue Star: The True Story*:

The twenty million strong Sikh community remained passive bystanders as they watched the sacrilege being committed on their most revered shrine. Hardly any voice was raised against the debasement taking place and the mounting number of senseless daily killings. Are we to understand or believe that the Sikh intelligentsia failed to see anything wrong in Bhindranwale's philosophy, which advocated terrorism in to achieve one's goals? Did they not realise that he was working towards a permanent Hindu Sikh divide? It is most unfortunate that after Operation Blue Star, those whose sense of piety had remained unscathed by the flagrant misuse of the temple, now turned livid with pious indignation and wrath. For this lot of people, the destroyers of the temple had all of a sudden become the 'saviours', and the soldiers who, gave their lives to cleanse the rot that had set in, were now 'destroyers'. (162-63)

The "Operation Blue Star", with all the controversies pertaining to it, deeply wounded the Sikh psyche that made many Sikhs stringent enemies of the Indira government. The Sikh community as a whole felt like cut off from the mainstream of India. Khushwant Singh was no exception. In protest against the operations he returned the Padma Bhushan award given to him by the government of India recognizing his excellence in the field of Journalism and literature. But Khushwant Singh did not at any time support the agitation for Khalistan on the principle that "any demand which does damage the country

must be opposed.” (Interview with Jacob 267) Khushwant Singh said that he felt discriminated during the Operation Blue Star and according to him, “it was a calculated slap in the face of the entire community.” (Interview with Jacob 269) Many Sikhs as well as the others felt that the government did not try to settle the issue through discussion. Some Sikhs living in countries like UK even openly threatened to kill Indira Gandhi. But she continued justifying the military action in spite of the widespread protest, for which she had to pay her price with her life at 09.12 am on 31 October 1984, when Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, the security personals of Mrs. Gandhi, sprayed bullets on her. Brutal violence and murder broke out after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi which claimed thousands of Sikh lives including women and children.

The horrendous picture of the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi later appeared in various Indian literatures. In fact, it was the latest example of the crisis that the Sikhs in India underwent. Although the incident roused a lot of intellectual energy and political protests, Sikhs did not get justice even today. The horrific face of the calamity is explained by Khushwant Singh in *Delhi*. He tells how the gangsters dealt with Budh Singh, the watchman of the apartment where the narrator in the novel lived:

The young gangsters play a cat and mouse game with him. They take turns prodding Budh Singh in the back with rods. The old fellow is getting tired. He can't fight so many men. As he pauses for breath, an iron rod crashes on his shoulder and brings him down. His *kirpan* falls out of his hand. One fellow picks its up and pocks it in his bottom. Two lads pounced on him and pin his arm

behind his back. One takes out a pair of scissors and begins to clip off Budh Singh's beard. Budh Singh spits in his face. The fellow slaps him on the face, catches him by his long hair and cuts off a hunk. They have had this fun. They get down to serious business. A boy gets a tyre, fills it's inside rim with petrol and lights it. It is a fiery garland. Two boys hold it over Budh Singh and slowly bring it down over his head to his shoulders. Budh Singh screams in agony as he crumples down to the ground. The boys laugh and give him the Sikh call of victory: 'Boley So Nihal! Sat Sri Akal'.

(391)

The instance from the Delhi riots that the narrator novelist presents could be seen as an attempt on the Sikh ethnicity by the dominant majority. The gangsters make fun of the religio-cultural and ethnic symbols on Budh Singh's body such as *Kirpan*, beard and long hair, eventually displaying the majority's contempt of these signs of cultural difference and identity, and their doing away with the religio-cultural symbols of Sikhs is probably symbolic of the erasure of the ethnic identity of the Sikhs. The gangsters go to the extent of using the Sikh call of victory to celebrate their anti-Sikh activities, and perhaps to herald the victory of the majority over the minority. Thus, burning Budh Singh alive the gangsters carry out their will to eradicate this different culture, when they got a chance.

All these issues in which the Sikh community participated either as victims or as objects of outburst and criticism from outside have great significance as far as the community is concerned. Khushwant Singh makes use

of all these factors and instances related to the Sikh community in India as materials on which to build his fictional world. Thus representation of the community of his origin, with which he identifies himself, appears to be a major motif in his creative enterprises. Approached in this way the community could be seen as the protagonist of many of his works. As an ethnic minority writer, the commitment that he keeps up in his works is not merely a display of his mere membership in it, but a declaration of his intense sense of belonging to its history and culture. Although he was against many stands that the Sikhs in general resolved to take in India at some important junctures in the history of the country, he procures materials in his works, presumably with the aim of defending and as a representative of the most politically drawn community in the country saving his sect from being sidelined in any way in the country he tried to formulate a mature attitude, points of view and perception for his community. His celebrated novel, *Delhi*, if approached with a view of the general political history of the community in the country, would reveal this specifically refined Sikh sensibility and attitude, which obviously has great implications taking into account the specialised position that the community occupies in India as an ethnic minority.

The Blue Star Operation and the killing that followed Mrs. Gandhi's assassination were the two occasions when made Khushwant Singh felt discriminated and alienated. Many Sikhs "who had nothing to do with the assassination" of Mrs. Gandhi were burnt alive...I was taken away to the Swedish Embassy. And there you felt a refuge in your own homeland." (Interview with Jacob 269-70)

This feeling of being a refugee in one's own homeland is shared by almost all ethnic minorities in India. And these situations of the community, when its members are pinpointed by others make their survival problematic and difficult. The fear psychosis that these experiences cause affect the minority's consciousness in general and they are very often reflected in most of their writings. Their works are thus replete with images of crisis, suggesting the traumatic condition of the culturally different in a majority-dominated country. The intensity of these expressions varies in accordance with the magnitude of the crisis. Khushwant Singh's narration of the touching story of Budh Singh who was burned alive during the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, Allan Sealy's presentation of the Anglo-Indian fear of deportation from the land of their birth or the lack of a sense of belonging experienced by them at the time when India got freedom, and Rohinton Mistry's description of the virtual threats of erasure that the Parsis in Bombay continued to encounter for quite some time from the extremist elements within the majority community are examples for the expressions of this crisis. However, most of these ethnic minority writers attempt to express themselves as members of ethnic minorities. Self-expression gives the writer an occasion to share and thus alleviate by means of publicising the private fears of his/her community. But self expression for these writers, as Query tells in Graham Green's novel, *A Burnt-Out Case* finds it, "is a selfish thing" which "eats everything even the self" making one find at last that "you have not even got a self to express." (47) This is perhaps true about all minority writers who write with an aim to express themselves and thus their community. Trying to express themselves to make their words impress upon

the world, making their voices get ears of reception, the minority writer gets into a phase where their identity is facing threats of complete erasure making them feel that they do not even have a self to express.

The Sikhs form about two per cent of India's population today, and they have made their unique presence felt in almost all walks of life. There are a number of factors that make them important and distinct. Basically, although they are treated as a religious minority in India along with Muslims and Christians, unlike Muslims or Christians they are not spread all over India, but mainly concentrated in one area, i.e., East Punjab, where they form a majority, consisting over eighty per cent of the population. The Sikh stronghold is one of the most sensitive frontiers of the country, the one separating India from Pakistan. It was the arena of two major wars between these two countries in 1965 and 1971, and it will remain important on military grounds as long as the clash between India and Pakistan prolongs. Unlike the other minorities in India, Sikhs in India speak one language, Punjabi, and thus claim linguistic unity among the members of the community. Sikhs have greatly contributed to the defence of the country. There was a time when about 30 per cent of the British Indian Army was Sikh, and even today about twenty per cent of India's defence personnel are Sikhs. They are regarded as the most politically conscious community in India. The Shiromani Gurudhwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) which administers the historical shrines of the community is an elected body that has many institutions under its fold; it functions like a Sikh parliament, which takes active interest in the activities of the state and central legislative bodies. The Sikhs are arguably the second most prosperous

community in India, the first being the Parsis; and they have made themselves progressive farmers and successful entrepreneurs in the industrial field. The Sikhs have greatly contributed to the development of India as a nation; their high standard in literacy, their large-scale representation in Olympics and sports make them inevitable part of India (Singh R 88). Sikhs are popularly known for their assertive and often aggressive behaviour; they are pretty confident about their place India and “no one can say that” their “faith, like that of Muslims and Christians was not brought from other lands. Nor can anyone accuse him [or her] of extra territorial loyalties.” (Singh R. 88)

The Sikhs in India are popularly referred to as by the others as ‘Sardarjis’, and this name connotes many stereotypical meanings and prejudices. The Sikhs are seen and introduced to new generations in India through innumerable ‘Sardarji jokes’ that construct the Sikhs with certain set cultural, physical and mental attributes, and generate side breaking laughter. The stereotypes of the Sikh culture could be seen apparent in the cultural artefacts like cinema, literature, drama and other performing arts produced by the dominant culture. Khushwant Singh has obviously been very much aware of the instances of his community taken for a ride by the others, and he himself has brought out collection of Sardarji jokes, collected from his surroundings. One could see that these jokes for instance are locations in which the popular imagination that lead to the formation of the signs to identify the ‘other’ in a culture works to maintain the set image of a minority community, and sometimes these are to be taken as signs, the interpretation of which would help us understand the community better.

## Representing Sikhs and Sikhism: Khushwant Singh's Novels

Khushwant Singh made his presence felt in the political, cultural and intellectual arena of Indian life in various capacities, as journalist, short story writer, novelist and historian. A born Sikh, Khushwant Singh is regarded as the most authentic Sikh scholar and historian. He was reared in Sikhism in the strict orthodox tradition till he reached about forty years, and later the grip of religion disappeared slowly from him, which was replaced by a cosmopolitan outlook. However, his emotional attachment to Sikhs and Sikhism and his soil is reflected in all his works. He has systematically studied the growth and crises of his community, and his two-volume *History of Sikhs* made him an authority in Sikhism. His close association with and interest in the vicissitudes of his community's history made his fictional works not only replete with a strong sense of history but a historical attitude, and a sense of past to everything he tried to fictionalise. His novels are thus to be treated as fictional treatises of the history of Sikhs in India. Considering Khushwant Singh as a representative fictional writer of an ethnic minority, his novels are to be looked at as endeavours of an observer from within, who expressed the uniqueness of his people, seeking from the past and history the inner furies that rocked the community in its entangled growth in a country predominantly interfered by the cultural artefacts, and the political praxis of a majoritarian system. As in most of the ethnic minority writers, there is always an attempt to gather resources from the past and history to shield the community from being sidelined on the ground that it has not much contributed to the construction of the nation of their existence now. Looked from this point of view Khushwant

Singh's celebrated *History of Sikhs* (2 Volumes) and his first three novels (*Train to Pakistan*, *I shall not Hear the Nightingale* and *Delhi*) bring out the same stuff, but through materials of different sort. While the fictional works concentrate on individual incidents that include the community some way or the other such as the partition, the National Movement, or the rule of, say, a Mogul emperor, thus developing a perspective by understanding the way the represented members of the community reacted to such historical eventualities. His history books narrate the growth of the community through time, taking a stand point that show his affinity to the community's view of what has happened.

As a writer with an ethnic minority background, Khushwant Singh appears to be aware of the manner in which the dominant system operated in different occasions to annihilate all claims of importance in the nation rising from the margins, and he tries to subvert such tendencies in order to establish the unique roles played by the minorities in building the country, in his works. The role of Muslim emperors in building Delhi, for instance, is emphasised in *Delhi*. Although Sikhs faced brutalities of the Mogul emperors to the magnitude of killing one of the ten Gurus of Sikhism, Khushwant Singh does not underestimate the place of those rulers in the history of the country. He considers Muslims similar to his own community because both these communities faced threats from the majority dominated system at different times, in spite of their contribution to the country as a whole. Thus he estimates all minorities as suffering from the same plight of Sikhs in India.

In general, all the fictional works of Khushwant Singh serve a historical purpose and as such they are attempts to re-read the history of India from a

minority, particularly Sikh, point of view. Therefore, his works are instances of minority discourse that need to be interpreted with reference to the public sphere they address to and express, or the politico cultural sphere in which they are located. Through his novels Khushwant Singh approaches certain important phases in the history of India such as the period of Muslims' rule of Delhi (which still lurks in our historical and political debates owing to the political conflicts the details of it roused following a clash of arguments between the followers of recent revivalist cultural tendencies and its opponents, mainly consisting of the Muslims and the left wing historians and thinkers); the freedom struggle where the roles played by each community, sect or political wing are debated quite earnestly by politicians, thinkers, academicians, again owing to the complaints of misrepresentation posed by some minority communities; and the partition of India that sowed seeds of communal violence, bloodshed and dislocation of people in both the sides. Apart from these, there are instances from the Mogul ages to the modern times where the community faced threats of erasure and violence that he makes use in his fiction. These instances, while focusing on the history of India's growth into a nation and its aftermath, narrate the development of Sikhism from its initial days to the time of anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984. Such historical occasions are fictionalised, it seems, to show who did what and how during these occurrences, with an obvious aim to reiterate how Sikhs reacted to these eventualities and what was their stand point. The first two novels, *Train to Pakistan* and *I shall not Hear the Nightingale*, deal with singular historical events (the partition and the national movement) with Sikhs in it and recreate or

question the meaning of the clichéd disillusioned expressions like patriotism, honesty truth and so forth as found their place in popular history and 'mythified' versions of popular history. He also shows the uselessness of these concepts to the community of people living in remote villages like Mano Majra who were forced to behave against their conscience because of the mechanism of the majority dominated power operated on them. These expositions could also be considered as anti-historical in the sense that they were aimed at revoking or rather nullifying the widespread proliferation of the predominant popular or official history, and its ways of narrating or reporting what has happened initiate by the marginalized sections. Thus these historical initiations were probably taken up to bring into history those sections of Indian society, like the Mano Majrans who do not enter the pages of history, thus throwing light on the dark avenues, gaps and silences of the prevalent popular conceptions of past recorded as history. The disillusioned historicity available to the writer disturbs him so much, that its persistence creates conflicts and schisms in him, making it complex for him to understand his own place in the order of things. It is at this stage that the author resolves to use his narrative as an alternative to history that he gathered as a member of an ethnic minority in India. At another level the writer here, while feeling alienated from the mainstream as a Sikh, is also distanced from himself and the community of his origin because of the change of outlook he had when he grew out of a strictly orthodox Sikh to a cosmopolitan citizen that freed him from the bearings of the community, but at the same time he could not free his mind from knowingly or unknowingly resisting his community from intellectual or cultural aggression

from outside. At a third level, there appears to be a conflict arising from the realisation of the lack of a practicable solution to the crises that he reported. Incidents like the partition of India and its bloody aftermath that exemplified the limitlessness of human cruelty to each other, for instance, made Khushwant Singh sad, that he declined to continue believing in the long drawn nobility of the human race:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I have believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacre known in the history of the country...I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and non-violent, that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things after the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world. I decided to try my hand at writing. (Quoted in Raizands 162)

This statement also hints at the purpose of and the way in which a person is taken to the activity of writing, the personal reasons for resolving to express oneself at a critical juncture in life, which at the same time is a moment in the history that made so many innocent people at cross roads. This union of the personal, fictional and historical, and to a remarkable extent the communal elements in the activity of writing that the writer undertook could be seen forming an ethnic minority writer. Even though the wide publicity that

Khushwant Singh enjoyed as a novelist across cultures may mislead on to consider his one among the mainstream Indo-Anglian writers. Even when he shares certain threads of thematic and narrative preoccupations of the mainstream English fiction in India, he tried to focus on the Sikh community, making his works distinct as produced by a culturally different person.

Khushwant Singh's first imaginative expression of the political crisis that attracted his attention came out with the 1956 publication of *Train to Pakistan*. The novel that fictionalised a microcosmic picture of the rural India during the partition brought him great fame in the literary world. Mano Majra, the Punjabi village where the story is set was one of the many abandoned villages in rural India the incommunicable incidents and the very life of which did not in any way upset things in at the centre. Mano Majra was like a neglected minority community with its inner furies and problems never disturbing the majority outside them. The novel was the first among a series of novels published came out from the Indian continent that dealt with the incidents and issues associated with partition. The other novels include Raj Gill's *Rape*, H.S. Gill's *Ashes and Petals*, Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead*, Attia Hussain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bent in the Ganges*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man*, and Chaman Nahal's *Azaadi*.

Mano Majra is primarily presented as a village not much affected by the communal frenzy that followed the partition in 1947. The communal riots in fact claimed the lives of nearly a million people, mainly the Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India. The novelist shows the way the power centres managed to transform a village like Mano Majra where Muslims and

Sikhs lived peacefully for generations together into a centre of communal antipathy and violence. The communal violence and hatred are shown to have come not from within the village but from forces operating on them in various ways from outside, with ulterior motives of political character. He analyses the uselessness of political changes like partition and freedom as they were not expected to bring in any change in the shabby material conditions of life in the villages, rather they inflicted deep wounds in their consciousness by inducing hatred towards the members of the other communities. Mano Majra which can be taken as a microcosm of India's culture and history, and as such the forces working on them to communally categorise them with imposed hierarchies are to be looked at as part of the major ideological forces. The novel expresses the unwillingness of the people of Mano Majra to accept the political decision imposed on them, may be because of the Sikhs in the village were unsure of the uses of the expulsion of Muslims from Mano Majra for the Sikh community themselves were a minority in the country. It must be remembered here that the Sikh community as a whole was against partition. It is an example of the neglect of the views of the minorities on issues of national importance, by the majority then represented by the Congress party.

Through various situations and characters, Khushwant Singh attains his aim of reporting the ideological standpoint that the individuals and communities adopted in dealing with the crisis presented in the novel. It appears that the most disturbing factor for the power centre at the macro level was the harmonious life of Muslims and Sikhs in Mano Majra. The novelist emphasises on this relationship by making the outlaw Jugga's (Juggut Singh)

love Nooran, a Muslim girl. The power centres operating on Mano Majra resolves to break this harmony to facilitate the evacuation of Muslims from that village. Hukum Chand tries to link the murder of the moneylender by Malli and his gang with the prevalent communal situation aroused by partition to easily make Sikhs hate Muslims. Jugga's public image as an outlaw and his noble activities contradict each other when we consider his heroic sacrifice that let the train to Pakistan without shedding further Muslim blood as intended by the anti-social elements. Perhaps, through Jugga Khushwant Singh portrays the public image and the reality of the Sikh community and its role in nation building. Jugga, as an embodiment of Sikh consciousness preconceives the dangers of fanaticism to the future of the country, and he cuts its thread by surrendering himself and his life. Khushwant Singh, while writing this novel might also was aware of the shift of Sikh attitude to Muslims take place since the 1940s when they doubted the political correctness of the anti-Muslim stand point for which Sikhs were also forced to take party. If Jugga was keen on taking revenge on the first enemies of his community, he should neither have loved Nooran nor let the train to Pakistan to cross the bridge safely. Khushwant Singh, however, was aware of the Sikhs being in the same boat of them, entitled to beg for their existence to the majority Hindus in the divided India. Thus decoding each and every instance of this kind, one should come to the conclusion that the novel is obviously political in using the historical situation to define or redefine the nobility of his outwardly militant race, the Sikhs, to prove that they could mediate successfully in such crises as partition.

Like all other ethnic minorities in the world, Sikhs also feel alienated in

the sphere of their survival. This also has found expression in his novel. The novelist endeavours to handle a two-fold alienation, firstly posed by the emotional attachment to the community of his origin, which eventually is a minority, with a distinct culture and stereotyped public image in a country dominated by a majority; secondly the iconoclasm and cosmopolitanism that he developed as a multifaceted personality in the Indian public sphere makes him see things pertaining to issues of local, religious and perhaps national importance with a feeling that he does not belong to it. However, in spite of his cosmopolitan outlook, Khushwant Singh expressed his emotional attachment to his community in several of his works including his celebrated autobiography, *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* (2002). The alienation in the writer is in a sense a reflection of the feeling of being treated as an outcaste or problem-maker felt by Sikhs, in general, in India due to anti-Sikh governmental activities. In another sense, Khushwant Singh did not support certain resolutions and policies of the Akalis. He "opposed, for instance, the Anandpur Sahib resolution which described the Sikhs as a nation apart from other Indians and thus germinating the seeds for a separate Sikh state - Khalistan" on the ground that "Khalistan would be fatal to the interest of the Sikhs and to India." (*Truth, Love* 312) This is however part of the sense of disillusionment that writers representing ethnic minorities expressed at the internal contradictions and power struggles taking place in the respective communities. Almost all ethnic minorities expressed this disillusionment in their works. While supporting their claims of identity and survival in the midst of a larger power structure operated by the dominant majority, ethnic minorities writers like

Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy, for instance, were critical about the power politics lurking within the community. All these writers appear to have felt that their community had been driven to the wrong direction that has caused the crises to fall on the course of their growth. Khushwant Singh was critical of the Akali leaders like Bhindranwale for which he has been threatened by extremist Sikhs. Anyhow, whatever he wrote Khushwant Singh attempted to carry forward a political vision, which obviously is the vision which obviously in the vision that he develops for his community. His second novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is also replete with this kind of issues.

It is probably axiomatic that the Sikhs in India, mostly because of the long-drawn history of political crises and struggles pertaining to their identity, developed a kind of ambivalence in their approach to certain incidents, and movement in the history of India. The widespread presence of Sikhs in British army, who were made use of to suppress nationalist outbursts in the country, is already discussed. The ambivalent feeling of being split in loyalties is to be treated as emanating from the experience of marginalisation and alienation, and therefore it is part of an ethnic minority's inner need to have their loyalties, likes and dislikes not conforming to that of the dominant majority. This again is an attempt to reiterate their existence, identity and importance in the domain of their domicile. The ideologically muddled and complex disposition of Buta Singh and his family in *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* is an example of the problems one encounters when facing the problem of divided loyalty. Mr. Taylor, while expressing his sympathy for Buta Singh, a loyal servant of the Raj, tells how the Sikh community has been thrown to the situation of divided

loyalty:

Well! In a way you have the history of Indo-British relationships represented by Buta Singh's family tree. His grandfather fought against us in the Sikh wars; his father served us loyally. He has continued to do so with certain reservations. His son is impatient to get rid of us. Poor Buta Singh is split between the past and the future; that is why he appears so muddled in the present. He is not as much of a humbug as he appears to be (*I Shall* 218)

Contrary to the muddled Buta Singh, his son, Sher Singh was a nationalist, in fact, a pseudo nationalist. Set in the backdrop of the quit India movement, the novel exposes the superficiality of the patriotism of the Sher Singh and his friends. Through their so-called patriotic personalities in the novel, the novelist however, suggests his contemptuous attitude to the policy of using violence for achieving political ends. The novel echoes the commonly accepted idea of turning to the Guru for guidance at all occasions of crisis, instead of resolving to surrender to methods of violence. Sabhari, the pious, illiterate mother of Sher Singh always reflects this view in the novel. The entire novel as its name suggests strikes a negative note implying that things are not going on smoothly. Khushwant Singh's expositions of the selfishness of Buta Singh who is found to be neither a loyalist nor a nationalist, his double faced nature (that is reflected in his advise to his son, "as a matter of fact, it is good to keep in with both sides - but one ought to be cautious" [25]) and his non-glorifying of the Quit India movement, ridiculing the pseudo patriotism of the nationalists, make an evaluation of the stand that he takes as a representative of

his community difficult. It is to be assumed that Khushwant Singh is reflecting here on the schisms within his own community (taking the mixed household of Buta Singh as an example). But at the same time he might be having in mind the survival tactics that the members of the community espoused at eventualities, where the past experience of overwhelming support and participation for the cause of the whole system yielding nothing other than continued maltreatment and contempt from the mainstream. The novelist however glorifies characters like Sabhari who retains the dignity of her faith inherited from her predecessors. While for people like Buta Singh the end always justified the means, Sabhari is quite unhappy about the things happening around her. Her disillusionment is clearly presented in her words that she whispered into the ears of Sher Singh towards the end of the novel, 'I shall not hear the nightingale'. The story of Buta Singh's family can be taken as a typical example of what is happening in an ethnic minority community, their loyalties, their fears and the multifarious ways its members take to survive the critical socio-political conditions that surround them. It calls for a return to the value system of the community to resolve the crises that one encounters in one's life; and it is a critique of the general; political activity with focus on how a community like Sikhs involve in it, thereby getting into a vortex of complexities and difficulties.

*Delhi* presents us with a matured Khushwant Singh in all aspects. Having dealt with the history, culture and survival of the community his fictional and historical works through the ages, he appeared to have gathered great insight into the history and past of Sikhism. *Delhi* is to be regarded as the

novel of Khushwant Singh that took Sikhs and Sikhism at the thematic and conceptual levels. His last novel, *The Company of Women* (1999) does not delve into the Sikh question at all. Although the novelist accentuates *Delhi* as “a novel” in the title itself, it appears to be a chronicle of the city of Delhi with so many historical figures in it, and Sikhs amidst all of them. Taking history and fiction as narratives, *Delhi* is read here as a narrative in which history and fiction co-exist, without identifying separately each other, as perspectives of individuals or the expressions of different subjectivities, from different religious, cultural and economic background. These expressions of distinct subjectivities appear in the form of eyewitnesses accounts dealing with different historical conditions; and along with this there is a parallel linking narration in the inter-spaced chapters named ‘Bhagmati’ that continue till the end of the novel. This linking chapters or narrations are told by the main narrator, a Sikh journalist (presumably the novelist himself), who falls in line with the other narrators from the past, and who is whoring after a hijda (hermaphrodite), Bhagmati. It is through the parallel narration that the past is linked to the present, incidentally showing the relevance of the past to the present generation of people. In his “Note from the Author” that appeared in the Penguin paperback, Khushwant Singh explains thus: “In this book I have tried to tell the story of Delhi from its earliest beginnings to the present times. I constructed it from records chronicled by eyewitnesses. Hence most of it is told in the first person. History provided me with the skeleton. I covered it with flesh and injected blood and a lot of seminal fluids into it.” (ii) In an interview with a research scholar, Khushwant Singh reiterated that the book is “really

historical” and “every chapter is based on facts of history.” (259) He further stresses that “I got memoirs about people from people I met. I read through the entire proceedings of Bahadur Shaw and took the characters from those tribes – people who appeared against him in their own defence. Then I mixed it up with poetry. They are all real people but they are also fictional because, what I added on to them is fiction. The book is entirely based on memoirs.” (Interview with Jacob 259-60)

Whatever be the way we approach the book, either as a work of history or as a fictionalised treatise of history, there obviously creeps in an attempt to bring out something quite unconventional, perhaps to serve the ideological intentions of the author. His history is not a mere individual’s account of what has happened that the individual made up from the prevalent commonsense and popular versions of incidents and people of his/her generation; rather Khushwant Singh makes it the eye-witness accounts of people from different walks of life striking not only at the elements of influence that must have worked in the formation of a person’s perspective, but on the legitimacy on the singular versions of history in a society like that of India’s; he adds a story-like setting as well for the entire enterprise. Here the writer revolutionise the very concept of history making that anyone, irrespective of the social status, can report incidents and form histories. This is probably a heralding of the change of situation taken place in the postcolonial context where the sidelined sections like the minorities and the other culturally different sections could express themselves in a way as to represent what has happened, often to counter the prevalent representations of past and history in which the minorities are either

not taken into account or their presence and functions not recorded systematically. The chronicle of the development/history of Delhi is uncovered through different real figures from history that include personalities ranging from Mogul emperors to a Sikh untouchable, Jaita Rangreta of Rikabganj, who incidentally had taken out and buried the body of the Sikh guru killed by Aurangzeb. These figures from history who occupy different positions in the ladder of their respective socio-cultural spheres are to be taken as distinct voices, and from each of them one could gather the way the mechanism of power operated and is viewed by individuals. It is these different voices that form the history/fiction nexus in the book, as long as there is an intermingling of the subjective as well as what is called historical in their narrations. Moreover these individual subjectivities formulate their own personal histories which could be compared to the seemingly more authentic and objective reportage of history by the main narrator, who in a way by the juxtaposition of past and present shows the paradoxes of history that he uses to register his own standpoint in the entire work. Like the multifarious faces of history who part with their views on what has happened in the past the main narrator, to use a phrase from Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is 'handcuffed to the history' of Delhi. Coming to Delhi gave him a sense of homecoming, and in Delhi he had someone as close as Delhi to await him, Baghmati, who serves as a metaphor for Delhi. While giving voice to the different people, minorities and majorities, the novelist most importantly represent his own community, through the vicissitudes that had come over it in and around the political chessboard of Delhi. Therefore the novel is an interesting case of ethnic

minority discourse in Indo-Anglian fiction.

In his foreword to the paperback edition of the novel, Khushwant Singh provides the reader with certain details to make the book clearer at the thematic level: "It took me twenty five years to pin together this story, spanning several centuries of history. I put in it all I had in me as a writer, love lust, sex, hate vendetta and violence – and above all tears. I did not write this novel with any audience in mind. All I wanted to do was tell my readers what I learned about the city roaming about its ancient ruins, its congested bazaars, its diplomatic corps and its cocktail parties." (v) The main narrator, as suggested earlier, is a Sikh journalist living in Delhi. Like the many eyewitnesses brought forth to recollect instances from the past, he watches Delhi through its shrines monuments, ruins and events of contemporary interest. Delhi and his mistress are of equal importance to him and he attempts to understand the true selves and mystery of both: "I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagmati when I have had my fill of whoring in foreign lands. Delhi and Bhagmati have a lot in common. Having been long misused by rough people they have learned to conceal their ugliness. It is only their lovers among whom I count myself that they reveal their true selves." (1) Making both Bhagmati and Delhi sound mysterious, the narrator expresses his confused state of being, that he detests living in Delhi and is ashamed of his liaisons with Bhagmati, but he "cannot keep away from either for too long." (2) Taking Delhi as a microcosm of India, and Bhagmati as a metaphor for Delhi (and thus for India) one can consider the narrators predicament of keeping a love hate relationship with the locale/country of his existence firstly as member of a minority community and

secondly as an iconoclastic journalist who saw Delhi and India inside out, and who is destined to report what he had seen in front of him. This main narrator's exploration in Delhi begins somewhere in the late seventies and ends with the horrendous anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984. But the history of Delhi that the writer incorporates with the explorations of the Sikh journalist begins around the time of Sultan Giazuddin Balban in Delhi and ends with the murder of Gandhiji by a Hindu extremist. These historical events that the different eyewitness accounts refer do not expose everything that had really happened. They are selective and subjective that subjectivity seems to be the locus of history (and fiction) for the writer. The voices in the text present different subject positions under different majority dominated systems and therefore they exemplify different ideological vantage points from which history is constructed. The points of view include mainly those of the Sikhs, the Muslims, the Hindus, and the British. Obviously, the writer is trying to give an edge to the Sikh point of view in comparison with those of the others. There also is a chapter spoken by an Anglo-Indian, Alice Aldwell, who was born of a Kashmiri mother and English father, and from her narration one could understand something about the Anglo-Indian ethnicity as well. The Sikh perspective is presented in the linking narrations of the main narrator as well since the narrator was a Sikh. A close look at the perspectives of the Sikh narrators would provide us with some details of the subject positions lived by Sikhs at different historical periods in India. While the chapters dealing with the history of Delhi are different from the main narrator's exploits (or rather 'sexploits') in Delhi's familiar places, in the sense that the former is direct and

straightforward while the latter, to a great extent, is figurative, metaphoric and fragmentary. But in both, history is presented as a personal experience of individuals, and they reflect on how an individual or individuals reacted to different historical conditions that they had to face. Here, one problem with narrator novelist's observation is that, although he takes a pro-Sikh stand he attempts to strike a 'neutral' note by making use of the metaphoric value (because of the neutral sex) of the hermaphrodite, Bhagmati. For him Delhi was the body and Bhagmati was the soul. Bhagmati appears to be the inner self of the author through whom he tries to seek his desired neutrality in which he probably fails. One could also consider this neutrality as showing the culturally neutral position of the country as a whole, which makes it feel unnatural, the domination of any singular cultural forms. And thus Bhagmati refers to the paradoxical position of being neither this nor that, a quality Delhi (and India) also has shown by the act of disallowing a singular cultural form to completely predominate it. One can go to the extend of thinking that by using Bhagmati as an inner self the writer is suggesting the distinct position of himself as a Sikh who does not belong to the twin forces, Hinduism and Islam, that ruled Delhi at different Delhi, and thus hinting at the identity of Sikhs as neither Hindu nor Muslim. This reading is clearer when we consider his apparent aloofness from the things happening in the country, and developing a perspective almost similar to that of an observer from outside, or of one from a different culture. Here, by presenting a Sikh in Delhi perhaps the author is trying to express the feeling of a fish out of water that Sikh might feel anywhere outside Punjab, that he feel an outsider in Delhi perhaps owing to the importance assigned to his

community in the construction of Delhi is sidelined to the optimum as compared to the roles played by the Muslims and Hindus. This feeling of aloofness has other origins as well. Firstly the long stints of the writer outside India in different capacities that make him like, say, the human quality of the British, his identity as a member of the Sikh religion the members of which fought several battles for establishing themselves as a community in India, and thirdly his birth in a place (Hadali), which is no more his, and which is not part of India at present. The writer appears to be searching his own origins (that in turn make him search his community's origin); the origin of Sikhs in Delhi, through history and finally locating that he belonged to the migrants from Hadali settled in Delhi. Thus he personalises history in order to understand it in a way as it affected him personally, and his community.

To summarise the elaborated points in this chapter, apart from the main narrator, presumably the author himself, there are about ten different voices in the text (these voices contain several other voices in the form of opinions and perspectives. The worldview of Bhagmati that appears in the author's narration is an example). Each of these voices represents different religion/class in the fictional/historical space of the novel, i.e., Delhi. The Sikh community is represented chiefly by the main narrator, and along side his narration there are Jaita Rangreta of Rikabganj, who lived as an untouchable during the regime of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb; Nihal Singh, an obedient servant of the British army, and the builders, who took several contracts in constructing modern Delhi. While seeking his own identity and roots as a Sikh by understanding the way his predecessors participated in the construction of Delhi/India, the

novelist estimates how different people and religion contributed to the complex history of Delhi. Thus the novelist puts forward the minority's right to survive in the country, as they have immensely contributed in the growth of the country, as against the claim of cultural nationalism. The novelist also makes an enquiry on how the relationships between different religions, mainly Hinduism Sikhism and Islam changed over the years due to the political changes. One can also see a kind of ambivalence existing in the main narrators attitude to the country, may be because of his feeling of being an alien, or a minority. However, apart from all these, the novel raises question on nation, history, textuality and identity.

According to Michael Green a programme of work in cultural studies will move across three areas. They are, firstly, "an historically informed analysis through theoretical accounts," that "include analysis of how national, regional or local boundaries and identities are constructed, of international and cross-national movements which they mark" (11); secondly; looking at the dominant world view which is taken for granted as natural or obvious that recurs in formal public statements and commonsense that "will engage with analysis which think about"..."domination in varied ways through concepts that cannot be straightforwardly aligned with each other - ideology, hegemony, power discourse, representation" (11-12); and thirdly this kind of a work has a "meeting point with sociology in its concern with power and the inflections of class, gender 'racial' and other divisions (11). This method of analysis is applicable to the study of ethnic minority literature in general. Similarly the novel in focus for instance provides us pointers to each of these

parameters of analysis. Through the eyewitness accounts of various individual subjectivities the novelist presents the idea that boundaries of nation as well as various communities are historically constructed. Moreover, the subject matter of the novel directly or indirectly elaborate the way communities and their interrelationships are formed with focus on the innermost structures of their social organization making the work more and more sociological in character. The novelist seems to be aware of the nexus of ideology, power, hegemony and the place of discourse in all of them that work in unison in creating and maintaining dominant practices ways of looking at the margins in different historical times.

Coming back to the representation of Sikh community in the novel, it is in the eighth chapter of the novel that the historical accounts directly relating to the Sikh community begin. The narrator of the chapter as mentioned earlier is an untouchable Sikh who lived during the regime of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb. The narrator lived at a time when the Muslim rulers treated them badly and looked down upon them. He and his Bapu were unhappy with the emperors mainly because of what they had done to the Sikh Gurus. He recalls that, "most of us untouchables of Rikabganj had attached ourselves to the lotus feet of the Guru and begun to call ourselves the Sikhs of Nanak. No one had seen Nanak or the Gurus who came after him to save us. The Badshah who had just died killed our fifth Guru, Arjun and put his son Hargobind in jail." (127) It was, however, to escape the tyranny of being an untouchable that he became a Sikh so that he could say that "[a]t least I am something - a Sikh of Guru Nanak." (127) He did not know what it means to be a Sikh "but it is better than

being nothing but a Rangreta untouchable." (127) As an untouchable entrant to Sikhism he had to pay an amount every year to the so-called agent of the Guru. He was told by the Guru's agent that "the new Guru did not like people to cut their hair or beards so I let the hair on my head grow long and wrapped a turban over it." (127) The beard gave the untouchable Rangretas a different look from the other untouchables (127). The untouchable is an example of Sikh believers in those times who continued to worship their Gurus in spite of external compulsion against doing so. He proves his nobility by being bold enough to get away with the mortal remains of the Guru murdered by Aurangzeb's government, when other Sikhs who are mainly converts from Kshatriyas and Jats were reluctant to do anything: "Most of the Guru's disciples were high born Kshatriyas and Jat peasants who boasted loudly of their bravery. They had done nothing to save their Guru. I, an untouchable, could teach these high caste fellows how a Guru's Sikh should act. It might cost me my life but I would win the respect of the world for my untouchable brethren." (134-35) He found Guru's body, which was declared to be shown to the public, in the palace premises and carried it in the cart of Lakhi Rai to Rikabganj. The greatest happiness for the untouchable was that the Guru, who performed the great miracle "had given a carrier of shit and stinking carcasses to the privilege of carrying his sacred head in his arms." (136) Through the narration of the Jaita Rangreta "the true son of the Guru" (136), as he calls himself, the novelist tries to explain the difficulties that the community took to resist from being completely erased by the Muslim emperors. We also understand about the communities which composed the Sikh community in

the formative years.

Nihal Singh was another major Sikh narrator in the novel. He also heard about the murder of his Guru by Aurangzeb. While he was serving Punjab police he was tempted to go to Delhi and join Jan Company to fight against Moguls. On his way at Ambals he came across a bald sahib named Hudson who was recruiting Sikhs to fight Muslims. Nihal Singh and his two friends were right away recruited to his Sikh army. The sahib told Nihal Singh and his friend that they “were to fight Mussalmans” and that “their gurus had told Auranga that the sahibs would come from the side of the rising sun and with the help of the Sikhs overthrow his dynasty.” (274) Although he did not hear of this prophesy from the mouth of his father, Nihal Singh believed that “what the Sahibs say must be true because the sahibs are wise people.” (274) There began his long stint with the British army killing thousands of Muslims. They fought against Bahadur Shah Zafar’s army in Delhi till they caught the emperor and captured Delhi completely. Nihal Singh is a typical example of the thousands of Sikhs who obediently served the British army against the Moguls in Delhi, and later against many other enemies in so many wars including the first and second world wars. The account of Nihal Singh’s exploits in Delhi as a British soldier opens up a vast description of how the Sikhs were ‘used’ by the British by invoking their hatred against the Muslims who murdered their Guru. This sentiment has worked very well for the British. As Khushwant Singh testifies it in the novel, the Sikhs liked the British in so many aspects. The reasons for this relationship is quite complicated; perhaps, it is the hostilities that they faced at home from the other religions that made them think of

outsiders like the British as better than the insiders. There are a number of instances in Khushwant Singh for his/his community's positive attitude towards the British. The presentation of the large heartedness of the Taylors in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*; the description of Budh Singh's idea of forming British retention league in Delhi are to be enumerated as examples for this. Incidentally, this could be compared to the Anglophile character of the members of Syrian Christian community, another ethnic minority in India. But unlike the Syrian Christians, Sikhs were taken for a ride by the British in order to make use of them for their colonial pursuits taking advantage of the complex position of Sikhs in India then. However it was the displaced position of the Sikhs that made the British take them for a ride. Although Sikhism was born in India, the attitude of dominant groups at different historical times, Muslims during the Mogul rule and the Hindus afterwards, and to an extent the British who exploited their militarism and willingness to fight, thwarted their attempts to define their 'nation' of their existence. They even felt that their existence was like that of someone who is destined to become a refuge in one's own country. This was caused by the different kinds of marginalisation in political and social levels, some presupposed notions about the legitimacy and importance of their racial stock, and some stereotypes that gained popularity on their character, that continues work in other's approach to them, and in the representation in cultural artefacts even today. In spite of the persistent attitude of cultural ostracism and repression, it is a fact that the Sikhs contributed greatly for the liberation of India from the colonial clutches. But it is goes without saying that the Sikh community in India underwent problems of defining their identity,

and at many occasions the community was at a confused state with regard to their actual position in the order of things India. Their position was like the position of Buta Singh's household in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*. Nihal Singh's character also points towards that direction. The Sikh loyalty to the British is presented much more clearly in the chapter 18 of *Delhi*, where the narrator, a Sikh builder's son talks about the placing of the colour prints of Guru Nanak and Queen Victoria on the wall of his house to which respect is paid everyday by his mother and father: "And every evening after he had retired from evening prayer and the incantation my father would stand in front of the Queen with the palms of his hands joined together and say loudly 'Lord, bless our Malika! Long may she rule over us! And bless us, her subjects! May we forever remain loyal and contended...when queen Victoria died in 1901, we had a non-stop reading of the holy Garanth and prayed that he soul find a resting place beside the lotus feet of our Guru.'" (316)

The story of the British builders, Lutyens and Baker in chapter 18, where the narrator brings out his father's role in building New Delhi, is also a justification of the British in comparison with the Indians who did to each other more wrongs than the English did to India. In reply to the taunting questions of the new generation, "what did you get out of a lifetime of licking the boots of the British" (343), he replies:

I have seen the city I helped to build and which Lutyens designed for two centuries become ruined in twenty years. We build magnificent buildings which will last for many centuries; they build shapeless, multi-storeyed offices and jerry- houses

wherever there is open space and have smothered hundreds of ancient monuments behind bazaars and markets. We laid wide roads; they make narrow lanes on which two cars cannot pass each other. We planted slow growing, long-living trees which will give shade to our great grandchildren and their great grandchildren. They plant quick growing *gul mohars* and laburnums which blossom for a fortnight or two and yield neither fruit nor shade. All they want is something to show in the shortest possible time. They have no sense of the past or future. As for licking British boots, I tell them if I was given the choice of being born in any period of Indian history I liked, I would not choose the Hindu or Muslim - not even in the short period of Sikh dominance in the north - but the British. I would re-live my days as a builder, contractor under the British Raj. (344)

The historical narration with different eye witnesses from the past ends with the chapter, 'Dispossessed' in which he talks about the migrants from Punjab to Delhi, and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. This chapter is narrated by Ram Rakha, a young Hindu from Punjab who joined RSS and participated in the conspiracy against Gandhiji, but is horrified when he witnessed the assassination. The chapter also gives us details of how the Hindus approached Gandhiji's policy of saving Muslims from the onslaught of extremists in the wake of partition.

The principal narrator's account of what he himself has 'witnessed' also is replete with information that would prove his emotional commitment to his

community. This main narrator is described on the blurb of the Penguin paperback edition of the book as “a bawdy, ageing reprobate who loves Delhi as much as he does the *hijda*...” In his journey through the history he meets a number of people from various walks of life, like poets, princes, saints, sultans, traitors, emperors and so on who participated in constructing the mystique of Delhi. At all points of the narration he tries to identify himself as a Sikh living in Delhi, probably keeping in mind what he tell us in the other sections of the novel about how history dealt with Sikhs in Delhi. In spite of his criticism of the Sikhs that “they live in the past and refuse to understand that in a civilised society you do not desecrate mosques or cut off people’s heads” (384), referring to the fiery speeches of Sikh leaders after the Blue Star Operation, he started wearing black turbans as asked by the speakers, telling that “Yes I am one of them.” (384) This emotional identification with the community is quite evident in Khushwant Singh’s writing in general. This is again in spite of his popular egalitarianism and iconoclasm and many other popular instances of his criticism of Sikh leaders’ policies. Identification with community is clearly evident in the words of the principal narrator when he describes what he felt after the Blue Star Operation: “A deep depression enters my soul. I ask myself over and over again. Am I a Sikh? I am entirely not the Bhindranwale brand, nor the gurdwara Bhai brand...I cannot remember when I last went to gurdwara. I have not prayed in fifteen years. On the morning of the 6th of June I go to the gurdwara behind my apartment there is quite a crowd. Many are in tears. Their tears bring tears in to my eyes. I am one of them.” (384) Again when the Delhi riots were on Bhagmati was asking him to cut off his beard and

hair, he was adamant that the symbols of identity would not be removed. "Nobody is going to cut off my hair or beard." (387); this reiteration of the identity happens in the midst of the roaring crowds who called "Sikh hatyaron ko khatam karo" [finish the murderous Sikhs] (387). He painfully recollects incidents involving the dishonouring and blazing the Granth Sahib taken out from a nearby gurdwara, burning alive the Bhai of he gurdwara, who pleaded the mob not to smoulder the Holy Granth, "do what you like to me but don't dishonour the holy book." (388) These instances are the specimen pieces of the horrendous experiences that a community was subjected to, and therefore these articulations radiate from the sense of insecurity and fear of repression that an ethnic minority encounters under a major culture.

The narrator seems to be quite aware of the dangerous extent to which the call for cultural nationalism raised by the extremists among the dominant class may reach, in the course of time, as it is the small minorities that will have to forgo the practices of their distinct faith and culture, and as it will pose threats of radical transformation of the multicultural and multiethnic face of the country, ones such a trend gets momentum in a country. The general assumption prevalent among the members of the dominant community about the Sikhs included one that held that "you can never trust a Sikh" as a Hindu politician was reported to have told a Sikh journalist. It seemed as if the promoters of the idea of the of cultural nationalism wanted the Sikhs to continue their long-drawn hostility to Muslims, which they did not agree, as the intention of the former was to gather one more enemy against the Muslims, it can be taken as one of the reasons for the dominant groups antagonism to the

Sikhs. The query of the Sikh journalist friend of the narrator, at one occasion, to the Hindu politician points to that direction “you can’t bear to see Sikhs and Muslims becoming friendly.” (121) This is not to deny the dominant group’s exercising of power to erase and endanger the Sikh identity in India at several occasions in the country. It is certain that the Sikhs did not like a particular perspective being imposed on them by the dominant group to suit their ideological intentions, especially when it was based on reminding a long gone incident in the history. It was the murder of a Sikh Guru by Aurangzeb that made these elements think that the Muslims are the archetypal rivals of Sikhs. This is in a way a method historically adopted by the dominant group to construct a community in the form of certain meanings and presumptions. Khushwant Singh gives examples for this historical construction of the community in *Delhi*. The Tamil lady, Kamala Gupta, introduced in the ninth chapter for instance told the narrator while visiting some monuments especially of some Muslim emperor in Delhi that “you must hate Muslims.” (140) She strongly argues with him saying “you could not possibly like someone like Aurangzeb...he destroyed Hindu temples and had one of your gurus executed. How can you like a character like that? If you ask me all our Hindu-Muslim troubles can be traced back to Aurangzeb.” (140) The narrator makes her understand that she has been “properly brainwashed!” and tells her that she had “never been told that this Aurangzeb also gave grants to build Hindu and Sikh temples.” (140)

As an ethnic minority writer, Khushwant Singh appears to give legitimacy to heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity. By the constant

reiteration of the complex cultural history of Delhi, with diverse cultures contributing to its development, Khushwant Singh tries to establish the multicultural origin of a city (and inherently a country), and his approach is apparently wide and cosmopolitan in spite of his basic rootedness in a community with confining characteristics. In this context, cosmopolitanism is to be taken as a refuge of the minority writer to secure the place of the community amidst the claims of cultural nationalism and homogeneity raised by the majority culture. According to Arnold Krupat, ethnocritical perspective as a whole, which is “an interdisciplinary mix of anthropology, history and critical theory...manifests itself in the form of multiculturalism.” (4) It recognises, and legitimate heterogeneity as the social and cultural norm. By using the methods of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism for materialising socio-political values ethnocritical perspective generally presents what Krupat calls “the polyvocal polity.” (4) *Delhi* is a perfect example of this intention on the part of a creative writer who can also be considered as an ethno historian of his community and he has presented himself a critic of the public sphere in his journalistic writings. Apart from the ideological background of or the politics of ‘polyvocal polity’ (considering the writer as a spokesperson of the community) one must also consider the general effects of this kind of a method in the society. At the surface level, this kind of politics would serve as a strategy of the ethnic minority community to survive in a country where they faced threats of erasure at several occasions. Although polyvocal polity identifies and gives legitimacy to all voices irrespective of majority or minorities, it appears to establish a communion or a tendency to get into

friendship with the other minorities by recreating the roles played by them in the history of their country. Khushwant Singh's positivist attitude to Muslims and to the contribution of Mogul rulers in the construction of Delhi, in spite the general image of Sikhs against Muslims, as I have already mentioned, is an example of this. If we analyse much more deeply, the so-described polyvocal polity and cosmopolitanism present in Khushwant Singh's Delhi creates a complex image of the writer to the readers pertaining not only to the ideological stand points but also to some contentious issues, where he appears to conform to certain positions taken by the proponents of cultural nationalism. For example, the words and expressions appear in the novel to refer to Gandhiji, (although spoken by an extremist Hindu character in the novel) conform to the ideas of the exponents of cultural nationalism and Hindu nation theory.

*Delhi* can also be treated as a novel that explores an ethnic minority's search for nation, or as an attempt of an individual from the margins to imaginatively construct a nation through discourse. Unlike Parsis the Sikhs have a legitimate claim to be part of India as their religion originated here. Still one could gather, especially considering the Sikh's aborted struggles for a separate nation, that the image of the nation in the Sikh consciousness however, exists somewhere between the multicultural panorama of India, and the desired Khalistan of the Sikh imagination. It is in this position that the Sikhs try to construct their ideal nation of imagination in their discourses. In *Delhi*, the main narrator by a close examination of the origin of the nation of his present existence with special focus on the roles played by the minorities in

general in building Delhi, and hence India, tries to locate the extent to which his own community participated in the historical process of creating this nation, and thus trying to give historical authenticity to their claim for nation here in the country. The idea of the nation that Khushwant Singh courted in the work is not that of an exclusive realm of the Sikhs as in the case of the idea of Khalistan, but that of a sphere of plural existence without ever making any element of it supersede over the others as historically more authentic or legitimate. Khushwant Singh clearly incorporates the perspectives that he evolved as a member of an ethnic minority in India and his *Delhi* contains a number of indicators to the fact that the creative faculties of an ethnic minority writer has much to do with his/her membership in such groups.

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**Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English  
Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels**

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*By*  
**ANVARSAHDATH VALIYAPARAMBATH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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### Chapter Three

#### **The Shadows of a Disinherited Life: Anglo-Indian Ethnicity and Allan Sealy's *Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle***

Irwin Allan Sealy's first novel, *The Trotter-Nama* is arguably the most poignant ethnic articulation in Indian fiction in English. More than a novel in the strict sense of the term it serves as a powerful statement on the Anglo-Indian community in India, a minority community with a complex origin and a still more complex history. While tracing the history of the community, through the extravagant narrative of the Trotter family, Sealy probes his own past as a member of the Anglo-Indian clan in India. Sealy was born in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. After schooling in Lucknow, he attended Delhi University, then studied and worked in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. He received a doctorate in English literature from the University of British Columbia. *Trotter Nama* was published in 1988. His other works are three other novels, *Hero: A Fable* (1990), *The Everest Hotel: A Calendar* (1998) and the *Brainfever Bird* (2003) and a travelogue, *From Yukon to Yucatan: A Western Journey* (1995). He now spends much of his time in Dehra Dun, India. His *Everest Hotel* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1998. Sealy did not discuss the Anglo-Indian question in his other works.

*Trotter Nama* is a fictional family chronicle, couched in the time frame of about two hundred years and it deals with two cultures. It tells the story of an Anglo-Indian family, the glorious founding father of which was a French Mercenary Officer who lived in the eighteenth century. The novel passes through time from the eighteenth century exploring the glory, growth and

degradation of the Anglo-Indian ethnicity from the grand old days to its emaciated present. The imaginative splendour that the writer displays in the novel with magic and satire, and the mixing of the apparently unmixable elements by way of deviant digressions, reminds one of the imaginative energy employed by writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Vladimir Nabokov and Rabelais.

The seventh Trotter, Eugene, a painter and forger of miniatures, narrates the extravagant literary chronicle of the Anglo-Indian Trotter family in the novel. The chronicler probes his family's (and thus the community's) past from the great Trotter, Justin Aloysius Trotter of the French descent. When the chronicle opens, the prosperous great (first) Trotter was about to fly on a hot air balloon named 'Salamandre', designed by himself, to have an aerial survey of his splendid estate of 'Sans Souci' in Nakhlau, watched closely by Sagarpaysans or the people living in the vicinity of Nakhlau. But the Great Trotter's greatest adventure in life claimed his life accidentally during his flight. The story of the Great Trotter occupies about a third of the narrative. The characterisation of the Great Trotter is believed to be modelled on the life of a French mercenary, Claus Martin, "who began his life in India first with the French and in 1763 with East India Company, but ended as a polymath and a Major General, a very real character, as large as life and at times quite distinctly larger – so much so as to seem sometimes quite implorable." (Cauto 203) There are indications in the novel that make us strongly relate Justin Aloysius Trotter to Claus Martin, who lived in Lucknow and, like Justin in the novel, held important positions in the court of the Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah, and the British

administration in India. Claus Martin's Lucknow appears as Nakhlau in the novel, where the fictional Sans Souci is located. Probably, the writer wants to give his community a strong historical foundation in the story, to slowly engage in bringing out how the Trotter family, simultaneously with the community as a whole transformed through time to reach today's stature.

As a piece of 'minor literature', it with a knack of reminding the reader of the political importance of literature, the book offers certain characteristics that could be found in minority discourse in general. On the lines in which Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'minor literature', Sealy's novel is to be categorised under "the literature of a minority written in a major language" (Harrison 102). For Deleuze and Guattari, "one of the crucial ways of conceptualising such a minority is in terms of its relation to that language" (Harrison 102). Sealy, while trying to narrate his community's history, obviously wearing the mask of an ancient narrative technique (the *nama*), links his community with English language, by not merely writing in English but rather possessing it as his mother tongue and as his language of expression. Thus unlike the other writers under study he claims the twin legitimating factors, being an Anglo-Indian as well as an Indo-Anglian, to use English language. However, more than the language to which his community cling to as the last thread linking it to its father, he is trying to tell us about the position of being caught in the crossfire of history and the ambiguous interplay of love and hate this tiny community experienced when looked down upon by both parents. As an understanding of the evolution and growth of the community is

essential for a study of the novel as an expression of ethnic identity, I sought to refer to certain details of the community before analyse the novel in detail.

The term Anglo-Indian refers to those natives of the Indian subcontinent who had a European ancestor in the male line of inheritance. The roots of the Anglo-Indian community could be traced as early as the time of the Portuguese traveller, Alphonso de Albuquerque, who followed Vasco de Gama and Bartholomew Dias, and who established Portuguese power in India. The first ancestors of the community were, however, a race of mixed Portuguese and Indian descent established by the Portuguese “variously known as *mestizos*, *mestees* or later an Indo-Portuguese or Indo-Lusitanians” (Wilson-deRoze 3). The Anglo-Indians are known by multiple names like Eurasians, Firinghees, Britasians and Indo British (Roychowdhury 30). The constitution of India in its article 366(2) defined an Anglo-Indian as “a person whose father or any of whose progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but is domiciled within the territories of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only.” (Wilson-deRoze 92) But this definition limits Anglo-Indians within the territory of India and thus excludes Anglo-Indians domiciled in Pakistan.

According to the prevalent assumptions and beliefs, it was some directives from the East India Company to its officials in Madras that became instrumental in the establishment of the Anglo-Indian race. The directive came to Madras in 1684, for instance, reads thus: “The soldier’s wives shall come to their husbands if they can find the means to satisfy or pay the owners for their

passages, and for such soldiers as are single men, prudently induce them to marry *Gentoos*, in imitation of *ye dutch politicks*, and raise from them a stock of *Protestant Mestizees*." (Quoted in Wilson-deRoze 1) There is an indication here of the existence of a mixed community of Protestant Christians formed by the Dutch. It is also to be noted that before the British and the Dutch connection with India, the Portuguese had already established themselves in India, and the race of mixed Portuguese and Indian descent is variously known as Mestees, Mestizos etc. Thus it will be historically incorrect to trace the origin of the Anglo-Indian community only in the directives of the East India Company. However, as Wilson-deRoze noted, "these digressions in to the early history of the Luso-Indian community or Dutch Mestizos as the Directors of East India Company called them, are essential to the understanding of a basic conflict within the Anglo-Indian community as its own biological origins." (7) In his view, "the question to be answered is to what extent, if at all, the directive from behind a desk in Leadenhall Street in London was instrumental in the establishment of the Anglo-Indian race" and "[h]ow far is the community composed of the offspring of s stock of British Indian *Protestant Mestee*? What happened to the thousands of Luso-Indians, Dutch *Mestee* and mixed descendants of British and other European races in India?" (Wilson-deRoze 7-8).

While discussing the origin of the mixed bloods in India one must also be aware of the background of expressions like 'mestizo' and 'mestisse', as the meaning and significance of these terms have something to do with the attitude of the Europeans towards them. Originated from Spanish and French the terms

mestizo and mestisse “schematically register the idea of a mixing of races and/or cultures” and they emerged initially “from a colonial discourse that privileged the idea of racial purity and justified racial discrimination by employing the quasi-scientific procedures of physical anthropology to create a complex and largely fictional taxonomy of racial admixtures.” (Ashcroft et al 136). These terms were mainly used in connection with the early Spanish and Portuguese settlements in the American continent. “This early settlement led to an intensive cultural and racial exchange between Spanish and Portuguese settlers and the native Indians” before the influence of black American slaves.” (Ashcroft et al 136). And these terms, according to Ashcroft and others, “have moved from a pejorative and to a positive usage as they have begun to reflect perfection in these cultures that miscegenation and interchange between different cultural diasporas have produced new and synergistic cultural forms, and that these cultural and racial exchanges might be the place where the most energised aspects of the new cultures reside.” (*Key Concepts* 137).

The question of the origin of the Anglo-Indian community is still complicated when we consider the views of historian like W. J. Wilson and Tolboys Wheeler that although the British expressed their intention to form a community of mixed bloods or ‘Protestant Mestizos’ by promoting the marriage of their soldiers with India women, historical accidents overshadowed their intention in a way that “[h]uman alchemy moved faster than the plans of parsimonious merchants”, that is there were inevitable inter marriages not between Indian women and British soldiers, but between British and Portuguese people, after such historical landmarks like the Treaty of

Madrid in 1630 that stopped commercial hostilities in between the Portuguese and the English (Cited in Wilson-deRoze 12). R. Orme noted that “[t]he European troops in the service of the colonies established in Hindustan never consist entirely of natives of that country; on the contrary one half at least was composed of men of all nations in Europe.” (Quoted in Wilson-deRoze 13).

However it is interesting to note that the intentions of each of the different European countries in forming different races here in India were mostly different. While the approach of East India Company was business-like, there is to earn more profit by using this race, the Portuguese creation of Mestizos in India “is a story of political sagacity combined with great human warmth”, which is clear in the commentaries written by the son of Albuquerque (Wilson-deRoze 3). He records that “those who desired to marry were so numerous that Alfonso [Albuquerque] could hardly grant their requests, for he did not give permission to marry except to men of approved character” (Wilson-deRoze 3). According to Eric Stracey the formation of the Anglo-Indian community by the early British settlers who came for trade had much to do with the realisation of “advantages of having a loyal and literate community of mixed bloods at their side” (3). Moreover the mixed bloods were “country born, habituated to its climate, and inured to its diseases, endowed with a skill of hand that they readily put to the hardest of jobs at difficult conditions at less than European wages, above all conditioned to give England an English a steadfast loyalty and services, this community soon became a necessary and dependable auxiliary of the British for as long as ruled India.” (Stracey 3). Another circular sent by the East India Company’s Board of

Directors to the President-in-Council, Madras as early as 8 April 1687 throws so much light on this: "The marriages of our soldiers to the native women of Fort St. George is a matter of such consequence that we shall be content to encourage it at some expenses, and have been thinking for the future to appoint a pagoda [a gold or silver coin] to be paid to the mother of any child that shall hereafter be born of such marriage upon the day the child is christened, if you think this small encouragement will increase the number of such marriages." (Quoted in Stracey 3) It is quite clear that the East India Company needed the services of some educated men whose anglicised upbringing would be "a prerequisite to their usefulness." (Stracey 3) This intention is much more explicit in their establishment of institutions like Vestry Schools and orphanages specially prepared to give Christian education to the Anglo-Indians. Stracey observes that "it was not in the interest of the community to let them [Anglo-Indians] integrate with other Indians or develop a sense of attachment to the country. Rather they were brought up oblivious of their heritage, to see the world through English eyes, to rely for a living on the company apart from and superior to other Indians, and if need be against them." (3)

Before relying too much on the community of mixed bloods in propping up their rule in India, the British in fact conditioned them, by making the church and Company join together to give the emerging community a 'proper' upbringing, suitable to the way they wanted it. The Company "ensured their loyalty by appropriate conditioning and the bestowal of a number of special but limited benefits, particularly by way of employment" while the church looked

after their spiritual well-being, taking care of their souls through baptism, education and so on (Stracey 4). The company employed them firstly in low posts like that of fifers and drummers and farriers, but later included them in slightly higher posts that came to be described "upper subordinate or non-gazetted." (Stracey 4) The government provided them with ample funds and land to establish Christian educational institutions, and introduced systems to maintain the standards of education and uniformity in curricula. It was this system that later led to the initiation of common examinations like the senior Cambridge which were open to aspiring students in the empire (Stracey 5).

Taking all these factors into consideration historians generally come to the conclusion that the community came into being by the deliberate attempts made by the British as an act of policy. The British therefore were "morally responsible for its future." (Wilson deRoze 8) However most of the historians were of the opinion that Britain had betrayed the community by not taking care of their rehabilitation in the post-independence India. The change of the British attitude that led to the racial discrimination and ghettoising of the of the Anglo-Indians probably started with the opening of the Suez Canal and Macaulay's minutes on education while the former facilitated the free flow of brides from England, the latter helped them create "an indigenous population capable of managing essential services in the language of the ruling race." (Cauto 202) This change of attitude is also explicit in the various names employed by the British to describe the Anglo-Indians. Till the early 18th century people of mixed parentage (Indian and European) were generally called Firinghees, Castees and Mustees. The terms mixed blood and half-castes came to be used since mid-eighteenth century. With

the efforts made by the east-India club in Calcutta in 1823 the Anglo-Indians came to be called East Indians and Indo-Britain. As result of the campaigns for the educational rights of the children of mixed parentage during the 1860s the terms Eurasian and domiciled European became widely used (Roychowdhury 328). However, around this time the term 'Firinghees' was again used to describe people, mainly of Portuguese descend living especially along Chittagong; "Firinghees were Eurasian who had become 'too Indian' for the authorities to allow them to attend English medium schools." (Roychowdhury 328) Until the government funded and controlled education began in 1883, the term Eurasian did not bear any legal rights; and "a Eurasian was defined as a person of European descent pure or mixed who was a permanent resident of India and retained European habits and modes of life" to determine his/her eligibility to get admitted to European schools (Roychowdhury 328). It was however, the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association, which first argued for the use of the name Anglo-Indian. Although the suggestion was rejected on the ground that in those days "people of mixed parentage" or with multiple cultural affiliations were seen as an anomaly, later Lord Hardine in 1911 agreed to use 'Anglo-Indian' as a category of distinctive people of mixed parentage in the Indian census (Roychowdhury 329). It was probably with the Montague-Chelmsford electoral reforms that the term 'Anglo-Indian' became widely used. Just before the independence some Anglo-Indians campaigned asking to be called Britasians, but the free India continued to use Anglo-Indian, and defined them in the constitution.

Discrimination and contemptuous attitude towards mixed bloods were visible in their approach in education and employment sector as well. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, “[t]here were no legal limits on the employment of half-castes in the company, or on their movement outside India.” (Roychowdhury 325) But in the late eighteenth century, under the aegis of Cornwallis’s reforms it was made that people of mixed origin “could not be employed in the upper or official cadres of the company or military except as musicians in the British army.” (Roychowdhury 326) They were also prohibited from engaging any rank in the British army. This has resulted in Anglo-Indians searching work in the services of the princely states in India. Cornwallis also prohibited the marriages of high-level civil servants and military personnel with Indian women and women of mixed parentage (Roychowdhury 325). One of the founding members of the east-India club, J.W. Rickets tabled a petition protesting the limited opportunities of employment offered to Anglo-Indians and their unclear legal status in India. He pointed out that the Anglo-Indian or East Indian “could not be employed in the ‘superior’ or ‘covenanted’ offices of the army or civil services because they were not British. They were excluded from most of the subordinate posts in the judicial, revenue and police departments and from the army or civil service because they were intended for Hindus and Muslims. They were under English common law if they lived in Calcutta, but elsewhere the legal status of their marriages, legitimacy of their children and their right of succession to property were unclear. Regional courts ruled according to Hindu or Muslim law. East Indians were largely Christian and had no courts in which to seek redress.” (Quoted in Roychowdhury 326)

However, Ricketts' petition seeking decision on these was rejected. But in the year 1833 when East India Company's charter act came into effect the problem of employment got solved. The act classified East Indians as natives of India with the same rights of employment as an Indian in the army and civil services, and later employment opportunities got expanded to the railway companies also. In fact, the "British railway officers thought that their mixed parentage gave them a greater aptitude for technology than the 'other castes'." (Roychowdhury 327) But the question of their legal status remained uncertain up to the independence. Roychowdhury wrote:

Even after the intervention of laws in the 1830s and 1860s to administer the rights of Christian converts in India, decisions of marriage laws and inheritance laws applied to people of Indian and European parentage were made on a case-by-case basis. It was difficult for them to produce documents to prove their status one way or the other because records were kept only for a few years by the different departments of the government. Baptismal records just listed an individual's religious affiliation. Often the decisions were based merely on the opinion of judges as to how Indian or European an individual appeared to be from their demeanour, accent and skin colour. (Roychowdhury 327)

The employment opportunity opened up for Anglo-Indians in the railway companies by the mid-nineteenth century was one of the important factors that changed the position of East Indians in India. They were offered posts of drivers, guards and stationmasters. Laura Roychowdhury, in her imaginative travels in

Anglo-India, presented in her *The Jadu House* traces the reasons for the formation of railway colonies to mainly house the Anglo-Indian workers. She finds that the British were mainly concerned with the morality and efficiency of their dubious relatives. She argues that “[r]ailway colonies had developed out of their bureaucratic obsession with race and morality.” (110) They were unhappy with the behaviour of Anglo-Indians who were first housed, as in the case of Calcutta, in the local bazaars in Howrah. “They would mix with Indians drinking and eating in the same crowded hotels.” (Roychowdhury 110) Moreover, they developed relationships with Indian Christian and Eurasian women that resulted in poor whites picking up “the speech pattern, dress habits and demeanour of Indians.” (Roychowdhury 110) Further, the condition of the offspring of their illicit affairs was worse that they feared the blurring of the lines that divide races. These fears and concerns were superseded by the presupposed “illusion that the British were superior in morality and efficiency.” (Roychowdhury 110) These are some of the reasons that worked behind the formation of British ostracism of the Anglo-Indians. But they were in a position in which they could not completely do away with the Anglo-Indian race, which although posed threat to the purity of the European white race, shared at least half of their racial characteristics. Thus as resolve to the question of how to deal with the Eurasians the British colonial masters built housing colonies for them, “so that they would stay on the path of moral rectitude in the corrupting environment of India.” (Roychowdhury 111) these colonies “would be isolated within the boundaries of the railway colonies and encouraged to forget that they were even in India.” (Roychowdhury 111) they chose locations away from the local towns and villages for this. In order to

confine them to the colonies, they were provided with facilities for reading, entertainment and sports. They also started English medium schools churches in these colonies to take care of the Anglo-Indian children's intellectual and moral pruning and their easy adaptation of the English culture, and to keep them away from picking up Indian habits. It is perhaps paradoxical that the English, in spite of doing all these to cut the community off from Indian culture, did not take care of their future later. This has eventually led to a sense of rootlessness or a feeling of belonging nowhere in the members of the Anglo-Indian community from which they could not escape till today.

Amidst the innumerable other problems, during the British rule the Anglo-Indians were desperately trying to get their papers regarding their origin cleared. For this they applied with bundles of documents, available with them. These applications included those which requested the Anglo-Indians to be listed as British in the railway employment hierarchy. Laura Roychowdhury explains that, "[t]hey provided the proof family anecdotes, medical certificates from doctors and private correspondence some times going back as far as the eighteenth century to persuade the bureaucrats of the truth of their origins. Raj officials close the files coldly demanding more rigorous proof. The railway bureaucrats jealously guard the right to be British and the passage back to Britain on retirement that this classification guarantees." (123)

The complexity that they faced in defining themselves and in differentiating between Anglo-Indians and Europeans is important to understand the community's plight in India. Providing proof of identity was a big problem in

so far as the people authorised to give certificates found it difficult to demarcate distinguishing marks of identity. Roychowdhury reports that:

Doctors argue that skin colour is misleading because people turn dark after years of exposure to Indian sun. The English habits can be faked. The only proof that counts as real proof is evidence of property in Britain or birth certificates and records stretching back over generations. But, whenever Anglo-Indians try to find these documents to prove that they are British in their male line they are met with the callousness of other bureaucracies who have destroyed them years ago. They have no hope of claiming their birthright. (Roychowdhury 123)

The impossibility to prove their origin looms large as an obstacle in their onward journey to a finite existence, and makes their life problematic in India. Because the documents that their fathers and ancestors submitted to the Raj officials were destroyed, the later generations found it much more difficult to prove their identity, even as Anglo-Indians. While some of them vaguely located the country of their origin, others are in complete darkness about the land of their ancestors. There are also instances of claiming superiority and more legitimacy by people of British lineage over the others. The genetic element in different Eurasian communities is difficult to assess systematically. The difficulty here is obviously to measure how much European blood exists among the different breeds of Eurasians. But it is clear that the origin or the whole mental make up and cultural traits of all the Eurasian communities could be traced in the Mestizo population. However, these issues of identity are the ones that linger all over the

Anglo-Indian discourses in general. In order to make their life meaningful, most of the Eurasians continue to preoccupy themselves with the tradition and cultural traits of their ethnicity, by way of dressing, food selection and community activities and so forth. (Choudhury 256)

Nirad C. Choudhury, in his *The Continent of Circe* (1965) categorised Anglo-Indians or Eurasians as “half-caste minorities” in India. (255) In this category he included, apart from Anglo-Indians or Eurasians, the Indian converts to Christianity. He also refers specifically about the people living in places like Mangalore and Goa with Portuguese names, who are remaining and are treated separate from the Eurasians. (255) in Choudhury’s view, the ethnic elements created by the European expansion in India produced two broad classes of half-castes viz., genetic half-castes and cultural half-castes. “The first group includes the communities in which there is an actual intermixture of European and pre-existing blood, mostly Hindu. The second is comprised of the converts to Christianity, in which intermixture is not present.” (Choudhury 254) For Choudhury the half-caste in India “is a psychological and cultural type, and not merely a zoological hybrid, though the genetic admixture has certainly played a part in predetermining and preconditioning his [or her] mental and cultural characteristics.” (254) Apart from this, they do not possess a “composite culture” and “they are not natural and healthy hybrids, racially or culturally but the genetic hybrids or converts are people who have given up their old cultures without being able to adopt a new culture except in a weak and debased form.”(254) Since they were a depressed offshoot of the conquering nations, and as they remained protégés of the European nation so long as their rule lasted, it is

their social and cultural situation in a country politically dominated by the Hindus that make their position very anomalous and dubious. (Choudhury 254-55)

According to Choudhury, the degree of "half-casteness" in the case of half-castes in India is mostly determined by the factors of their origin. That is the genetic factor plays a major role here. He explains that:

For instance, the Indian Christians do not exhibit the same degree of half-casteness as do the Eurasians. Again the Indian Christians who belonged to the higher Hindu castes before their conversion show even fewer of these attributes, compared to the converts from depressed or untouchable castes. There is a whole gamut of tones in the half-caste scale. Furthermore the position of those who are half-caste both genetically and culturally is infinitely more difficult than that of those who are so only culturally. The first of these have almost completely burnt their boats and are now looking for fords or swimming desperately to get back to the Hindu bank, while others even if they did not keep the boat-bridge standing, at least kept the boats. (255)

The products of the intermingling of British and Indian blood or the Eurasians are found all over India. However they are mainly concentrated in big cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and are also found in large numbers in important railway centres and hill stations. "By the criterion of colour the Eurasians are half-castes of British descent range from the pure European blonde to dark brown, but the community as a whole is fair." (Choudhury 256) The dark

Eurasians are not generally treated on par with the fair ones, and according to the accepted rule the fair marry only the fair ones and the dark among the dark. Because of the adherence to this rule there developed in the Eurasian community what Choudhury calls "a contrastive selective breeding" that makes the fair side fairer."(256) This difference in complexion is an issue of great importance as long as it created internal stress in the community (Choudhury 256). While assessing the position of Eurasians in general as genetic half-castes, one must consider both sides of their origin, i.e., the background of the British rule and the ancient Hindu system. "The Aryan Hindus had a horror of miscegenation especially that kind of miscegenation in which a woman of superior and dominant race married a native. They treated the offspring of such intermarriages with such contempt that even the products of these were left with a permanent sense of inferiority." (Choudhury 258) This was also natural among white colonists living amidst a native population of dark skinned people. Yet another prejudice of the ancient Hindus was that they had a "greater suspicion of the half-castes who pretended to be Aryan and tried to behave like one." (Choudhury 258) Choudhury finds that:

Contemporary Hindus have certainly not outgrown this ancient prejudice, and no Hindu can, for he remains basically genetic in his social outlook: a believer in blood and birth. Moreover he [or she] was not taught to think differently by his British rulers. They displayed, and even paraded, a good deal of the Hindu contempt for the half-castes they themselves had created. They had the same horror of miscegenation. Thus it happened that in Calcutta no

woman of pure English birth who had married a Bengali in England and come over to her husband's country could ever have any social life among the British of the city. As for a man of European origin it was virtually impossible for him to marry among the pure British. He could not mix with them on an equal footing. The British in India showed yet another similarity with the Hindus in thinking that the Eurasian who knew his place and kept to it was a better man than the Eurasian who wanted to pass as an English man. (258)

The typical Indian attitude to the Anglo-Indians that constructed the 'half-casteness' of the Anglo-Indians, could be well explained through an instance in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Mehabub Ali in the novel describes the class of Anglo-Indians in which Kim also belonged thus: "their eyes are blued and their nails are blackened with low caste blood, many of them. Sons of Mehteranees – brothers in law to the bhungi (sweeper)." (Quoted in Choudhury 259).

Although they lived an ordinary life, most of the Anglo-Indians had encountered the misery of life. During the British rule they did not understand the majority Hindus' real attitude towards them. They did not suffer much of contempt from the Hindus in those days. But they always felt "the insult of the British attitude and nursed a standing grievance" and "[t]here hung over their consciousness the shadow of a disinherited life cast by the knowledge that all their potentialities were limited by something over which they had no control, namely, their birth." (Choudhury 260) This developed a kind of resentment against the British, in the Eurasians. However they were not ready to be

completely driven by this anti-British sentiment, because they understood that their existence in India before the independence depended on the British. They fostered “a psychological dichotomy in which their resentment against the local British came to be mixed with the impulse which became a habit, to look up to the British in India as protectors and to remain abjectly depended on them.” (Choudhury 260). Eurasians’ haughty attitude to the Hindus in India was probably “derived half from the assurance of British protection, and half from the consciousness that they were partly of the ruling race, or in any case nearer to the ruling race than the Hindus.” (Choudhury 260)

The Anglo-Indian community is to be viewed as a transcultural form produced by colonization. In other words, the community was created by the hybridisation or crossbreeding of two distinct cultures. However the construction of their subjectivities after they were created as a class became complicated when the question of their racial status was raised. They were thrown to a position of ambivalence and contradiction when they could not register their cultural identity either in India or in England because they could not find a place in the hierarchies of purity prevalent in these cultures, hence their culture thus carried the burden of ‘in-betweenness’. Probably this is the case of hybrid groups in general. Although it basically signifies cross-cultural exchange, hybridity, more seriously, implied imbalance, negation and inequality in power relations. As for the Anglo-Indians whether or not the exchange is equal both the parents of the group maintained their racial difference with this group by not considering them with equal racial status.

Coming back to the novel, *Trotter-Nama* discusses and to a remarkable extent problematises almost all issues relating to the Anglo-Indian community in India, that I have already discussed in the first part of this chapter. Sealy presents them with an intimacy that occurs when a community is represented by a member of that community who could feel the central crises revolving around it. The novelist justifies everything in his book as dealing with his community, and tells us through a unique methodology, of its past. And he identifies himself as 'writer' from his community, who could not be someone more than a 'clerk' (or Cranny) in the east India Company's sense of the word. In the prologue to the book he writes: "You could say that I was a writer. Aha! The look accusative - not really work, is it? Well, I used to be a writer, but in the old East India Company sense of clerk. All Anglos were writers until the railway came, almost all soldiers and teachers too - we're still that, though there aren't very many of us left. May be a hundred thousand, might be two, counting bazaar-side Anglos. The Sikhs are two percent of the Indian population - well, we are two per cent of that." (4-5)

He distinguishes his *Nama* from the other popular *namas*, the monumental pieces of flattery of the great emperors like Akbar, Shaw, Babar, and so on. The sincerity, with which he has compiled it, not like the other *namas*, was expressive of the will to express the community, with an aim to resist being forgotten in the long run of time. The writer takes up the task of putting into order the story of his people, as they are fragmented to the core, as it awaits a situation in which one could lose the entire trace of the community from the world as long as its members went to different places, as they came from different places. The preface of the novel gives us the following details:

So, the *Trotter-Nama*. The chronicle (not history) of the Trotters as set out by the Seventh Trotter. A mixed bag, periodically illustrated as all those *namas* where, but this one by the author himself, not one lackey doing piecework at twenty rupees a page. That is the prime mover – garnering of the past. And the result, for the chronicler, a paper chase. Because we came from all over not just England, and went all over, not just to England, someone got to do it, or it will all blow away like half those chronicles that came apart and were sold page by page, so that when you ask for them in any of the world's libraries, your request slip comes stamped in violet, UNBOUND and so we forget. Past masters in the act of forgetting my people. (7)

The immediate provocation for the book is clearly indicated in the passage cited above from the prologue to the book. He seems to be sincerely worried about a complete erasure of his already dilapidated community from the world, and he pins up the scattered historical remains in the form of a family chronicle.

The novel is set in Nakhlau, where the Sans Souci, the house of the Trotters was situated. In spite of the scattering of the Anglos in various parts of the world, the writer finds a location to narrate its past in India because “most of it happened here in India, in Nakhlau. In Sans Souci – Home of the Trotters...” (7) The novelist uses the word ‘Trotters’ synonymous with Anglos, and he clears this by saying, “Trotters, Anglos same thing.” (7) Nakhlau could possibly be Lucknow, which was a stronghold and cultural centre of the Anglo-Indians. It was considered as a strategic location by the British as well, especially during the Second World War, because of the fear of bombing campaigns in Kolkata

(formerly Calcutta) by the Japanese military. A large portion of the Allied Eastern Command was moved inland and established in Lucknow to counter this threat.” (Shope 167). As Bradley Shope wrote in his article on the “role of music in creating socio-economic mobility and a distinct identity among Anglo-Indians in Lucknow” that by the time India won independence in 1947, “a number of dance halls, cinema houses, sheet music and instrument stores, and cafés were built there to cater to a growing British, Goan, and Anglo-Indian population celebrating the popular and ballroom music originating from America and Europe.” (Shope 168) All these factors support that Lucknow was the place the author had in mind. Moreover he once suggests in the book that Lucknow or ‘Lakhnau’ is the poor pronunciation of Nakhlau (24). For the Seventh Trotter, the origin of the book was resulted from the appearances and voices of his great ancestor, the Great Trotter who said to him “Eugene, write.” (9) Eugene first saw the Great Trotter “in the toilet at three in the morning. An eighteenth century Frenchman sitting there elbows on knees, chin supported, wig, stockings, buckle shoes. Face looked like myself grown old.” (9) He was compelled to paint his ancestors, and thus he became a miniature painter as well. The visitations of the past appeared to Eugene as recurrences from the cultural memory of his community that invariably worked as a platform for creative enterprises, making him portray and contrast the grand old days and the shrunken present of his community.

The incidents that get serious attention in the chronicle began in 1799, or more exactly on 21 June 1799, when the Great Trotter flew on a hot air balloon over Sans Souci. Some of the forthcoming pages will be set apart for making a

quick look at some of the major incidents took place in the life of the Trotters, to supplement the arguments regarding the presentation of the ethnicity as portrayed in the novel, and to show how each of the Trotters encountered their ideological and historical currents that rocked their locale of existence. I have arranged the discussion by relating from the life of each of the Trotters, through which the entire community's existence and problems could be imagined.

The Great Trotter (First Trotter) who is presented in no less a magnitude and importance that is ascribed to the founder of a community, is described as "a man not much above four feet, portly handsome, eighty alive and well." (19) The purpose of the Great Trotter's flight was primarily to have an aerial survey of his estate, the four Towers of *Sungum*, and secondly to carry out some meteorological investigations for fancy. But after spending quite long in the air he fell down and died. From the balloon flying very high, the great Trotter with so much satisfaction observed the achievements of his life available in various forms in his estate. He saw his fields, mangoes, trees, forest, stream, desert, plateau, gardens and the product of his art in Sans Souci (23).

The great Trotter's household consisted of four women, his four wives, the Muslim Sultana and Farida, the German Elise who was later called Jarman Begum and the Christian Rose. Apart from the four wives, he kept a number of people entrusting on each of them different duties in the estate. Among them were, learned scholars like Munshi Nishan Chand, who served as the librarian of Sans Souci. He was a "master of fourteen languages; student of the Rishi Vasudeva at Mathura...librarian to the Maharaja of Kon, the Raja of Paltan

Bazaar, the governor of Bengal and the Nawab of Tirnab; author of learned treatises in many languages..." (52)

The stature life and deeds of the Great Trotter is probably symbolic of the great times in the history of the Anglo-Indian community. His estate, its different inhabitants and the generations came and left through them, are all thus representatives of the changes, the cultural cross breeding and mixing of unusual racial elements that the community experienced. There are also clear indicators of the place of the community under different Indian and foreign rulers, Nawabs and emperors, for whom the Anglos worked in different capacities. However the worst kind of treatment that they faced was from the British, who treated them as cultural outcasts by ostracising them in all possible ways. The different rulers were bothered only about the use value of the Anglos. Even the Great Trotter served under British and Indian masters, and it was his knowledge of the new war technology that made him dear to the Nawab, under whom he served as the commander-in-chief of the army.

Sealy weaves a well-knit tale that works like a parallel history, to narrate the constitution of his community, beginning with the First Trotter, Justin Aloysius. Although the focus of the book appears to be on the magnificent personality of the Great Trotter, the novelist makes the community as the protagonist of the book. The Great Trotter was born on 21 June 1719 in a ship at Al-Qahira, Egypt as the son of Joseph Trotter, a merchant of Lirey who was from Franco-Swiss stock. His mother, Miriam, died when the ship sighted land. His father, Jean Petitot's son changed his name to Trottoire to avoid religious persecution in Geneva and later emigrated to the country of his catholic

ancestors, settling in Lirey." (113). In order to further his business interests he "married the daughter of a Coptic merchant from Alexandria with whom he had regular dealings." (113) when he was fourteen Justin determined on a career in the Italian opera that made his father unhappy. Later in a deliberate bid to join a travelling company of Florentine Castrati, he severely wounded himself. He waited his wound to be healed to get enlisted in the French force bound for Quebec (114). Justin "served in Quebec Providence and Luciana, narrowly escaping capture at the fall of Louisburg, and taking part in the joint French and Indian attack on New York during the next few years." (115) When he returned home he found his father dead and his stepsisters married. "He lives in Lirey with his dear mama", his stepmother, "measuring out her laudanum, ministering to her needs."(115) These years he spent at home is considered as "the Great Trotter's lost years."(115) After being inspired from his readings of the exploits of M. Duplex, he enlisted again and sailed away, this time to the Cape of Good Hope. His ship reached Ceylon and there they were attacked by the English. The French lost, and Justin was taken prisoner and shipped to Calcutta along with 43 other French war prisoners. Their vessel, Faith - i - Islam got miscarried near the coast of Bengal and all of them were cast into the sea. Justin managed to turn over one of the boats and saved the lives of some of his companions, who lost their hold on the mast to which they clung in the battling waves. This act of bravery of Justin impressed the English in Calcutta which helped him to gain preferment in the East India Company. As he understood that the French side in India faced severe defeat, Justin tactfully changed his name to Trotter in his letters. It was in his pursuits in the up country around Calcutta that Justin understood about the

mixed bloods, in which he himself belonged. He feared that the “English look less favourably upon alliances with native women than we [the French] in our territories, though at one time they paid a sum of one pagoda for every child brought for christening out of such a marriage so that their soldiers may be encouraged to take Indian wives.” (118) By winter that year Justin got news of his stepmother’s death which made him begin to search for a woman who should take her place. He could not find anyone among the Anglo-Indians of Calcutta, as long as he was in service in the up country. Having inducted to the service of East India Company’s Bengal army, he got his name inscribed in the rolls as Justin Aloysius Trotter. The metamorphosis of a French man to an English man was completed by this. Justin displayed matchless perfection in service that made the authorities notice it, and gave him due promotion to the position of a lieutenant within a short period of time. His accuracy in shooting and many other qualities got him a transfer to the artillery regiment, where Justin applied his theoretical knowledge in ballistics. Justin elaborates that, “[R]ound and round went the elevating screws, higher and higher flew the balls, until the enemy no longer knew where they came from...’we are aiming not at the enemy but at an ideal, at the end of the triangle isosceles which us divides’, the First Trotter explained to his commander after the enemy had surrendered...peace came but the axletree of British guns grew taller.” (119-20)

Justin got elevated “from lieutenant to captain to major, from Chnadernagar to Clutterbuckganj to Kon on the border with Tirnab.” (120) Then he escorted an envoy to Nakhlau, where in one of his rides to the gardens plains and sugar-cane fields across broad canal he found a square hill where found out

an ideal location for his abode. As he was highly attracted to the place, on returning he wrote to the commander-in-chief asking permission to get posted in Nakhlau. "The men in Calcutta agreed and the First Trotter took his coat across the river into Tirnab. He was delightfully received by the young Nawab, and the First Trotter conducted a display of rocketry and firepower that impressed the Nawab greatly. As a reward to the agility and skill displayed by colonel Trotter, the French firangi, the Nawab declared to offer the area of land spanning from Ganda Nala east to Moti Ganga to Trotter. It was in this land the Great Trotter established his Sans Souci. During the first years of his residence in Nakhlau, Colonel Trotter lived in the marquee on the Saltpetre hill, part of the land given to him by the Nawab. In the second year when the Gunpowder Court and the west tower of his house were completed, Justin moved out of the marquee and into his new house (122). The Great Trotter amassed a number of guns in his arsenal and it included different variety of guns, long and short, native and foreign, made of iron and not made of iron, gun purchased from Franco-Gaelic cook-and-deserter known as Brown Bess and many others. "The Great Trotter himself has cast a gun so terrible that it defies description. Others he has cast, which may be described are beyond number so that listing would be tedious." (123)

The Great Trotter developed an ardent appetite for the food offered by the Nawab's cooks. "As Sans Souci took shape around him Justin grew into his chateau filling out with gusto, his every surface advancing symbiotically with his house, a dome appearing there, a belly here; there a turret, here a fold; here a palpitating buttock, there a gibbous barbican." (127) His "appetite for curries deepened his taste, widened to take mint chutneys, cauliflower pickles, cucumber

salads, green mango achars, tomato kasaundis" (127) and so forth. But the First Trotter always lived in solitude. Trotter's mind used to wander thinking about his fortunes and at one occasion while counting himself "the most fortunate men, he decided to call his home 'Sans Souci'. "I will call this place Sans Souci, he breathed; and he did." (128) His solitary existence in Sans Souci with many servants and cooks made him think about marriage, and he applied the matter to the Nawab. The Nawab found a Muslim family of three daughters, all of them due to get married. The Nawab's offer was summarily rejected by the family on the ground that, the family being of the Prophet's line wanted someone from inside their sect. but Trotter's proposals continued and the got rejected all the time. Then one day without a word the second daughter of that family disappeared along with the cook-and-slave; the pair were found by Trotter's men near the Ganda Nala and taken to Sans Souci where they were given the East Tower. The family tried fruitlessly to get the daughter back. But the marriage between the Great Trotter and Sultana was solemnized, and Sultana Trotter refused to return (129). In due course a male child was born who was later named Mik. Begum Sahiba's body deteriorated as she fell ill, and subsequently she died leaving the boy motherless. For two years after the death of his wife every remedy failed to induce sleep in the Great Trotter. He thought of music or something like that as a remedy, and also understood that the boy needs a mother as he was growing up wild. He searched the Bombay papers for people suitable for both these jobs. In response to two advertisements two letters were sent and got immediate response. One letter was for a boy to be sold and another for a girl to be wed. The boy, Fonseca, offered to work as a kahani master or

storyteller, and barber. That night listening to the boy's story the Great Trotter slept as he had not slept for many years. The girl, Farida Wilkinson was daughter of one Salim Wilkinson from Jamalpur. Because of their foreign name no upstanding Muslim family was ready to marry the daughters. So he wished to give his daughter in marriage the 'European convert', Justin. Although Justin was surprised by the expression 'European convert' he got ready to marry her. But the marriage was a failure as the girl declined to be Justin's wife as he was four times of her age. But the spirit of the girl attracted Trotter and he asked the girl if she would be his son's mother if not his wife, to which she agreed. Thus the fourteen year-old Farida Wilkinson "was installed in the east tower." (148). Elise who was later called the Jarman Begum, another mistress of the Great Trotter, was sent from the Nawab's palace with Munshi Nishan Chand. The girl, whose "father, an English speaking burgher from Ceylon and was taken for a German" (185), was a mathematical prodigy. Rose, the fourth of the women was picked up by Justin from Madras, on his return after serving the British army against the Marathas. She was ascribed to be the daughter of Captain Llewellyn, "a retired old soldier, a Welshman" who "lived by teaching dancing to the officers of John Company's army..."(222) In fact, Rose was the illegitimate daughter of Justin's own son, Mik. While on Dr. Bellow's academy Mik seduced the third daughter of the Head, Poppy Bellows, who after being found pregnant, was hastily married to Captain Llewellyn (174). Among the many other people who were appointed in the Sans Souci, there were some worth a mention. They included the Tibetan plinth master and the Macedonian sculptor, Alexander, and Qaiyum-i-najum, astrologer and poet who was appointed as librarian. Alexander was dismissed later for causing

an explosion of gunpowder bellow the east tower and for teaching the Second Trotter to smoke. After the banishment the Alexander Trotters withdrew to the quarry nearby, where his daughters grew up among the rocks. In fact all these people were given the task of teaching the First Trotter's son various things. The meditating plinth master was asked to teach him wisdom after Alexander left, which he did well. However the young Second Trotter developed a strange fancy. He used to steal away from the east tower and came to meet the Alexander daughters who waited him late at night. "The giggling of a dozen girls carried up the grassed slopes from the indigo baths; they were waiting for him. There the boy and half-Macedonian nymphets would sport, thrashing about from pool to pool until they finished in the bottom row just as dawn began to stain the sky above the jungle with its unwelcome light." (153-54). The Great Trotter desperately tried to dissuade, and to reclaim the boy him from these fancies, but in vain. Meanwhile one day the boy was found missing. His teacher, the Tibetan plinth master also disappeared. The Great Trotter thought of giving notice in the papers, but "he remembered that the boy had no name." (156). Life went on in Sans Souci without Justin's son present there. The estate continued to be prosperous as he started earning lot from the indigo field and other sources. He imported ice from Quebec, in spite of Elise's suggestion that ice could be produced there itself. A ship named *Mandalay* was registered in his name to ply between Quebec or Halifax or Boston and Bengal carrying tea and indigo and spices one way and ice together with apples, pears, strawberries or any seasonal temperate fruit the other (196). The Great Trotter built his magnificent estate with all facilities, probably thinking that it is to be used by the generations to come. He

called each section of the chateau with different names that remained till lately. After his death, Elise or Jarman Begum married Yakub Khan, the chief steward of Sans Souci, and the generation came out of this relation were called Khan Trotters. Among them were people like Jacob Khan Trotter who did a lot for the community. Farida married Fonseca, and the generation followed were called Fonseca Trotters. Some among them established a series of food outlets all over the country. Rose remained unmarried till her death during the Sepoy Mutiny. But she was foster mother to the Third and Fourth Trotters.

After leaving Sans Souci, the Second Trotter (Next Trotter) and the Tibetan plinth master (who named him Mikhail after a friend of his, but the boy liked to be called Mik) who taught him five sciences, took the east road and after a long journey through villages and towns like Allahabad, Bengal, Benares and Patna, reached Calcutta. The monk admitted Mik to the Upper Military Orphanage in Howrah. But left it as the boy could not stand the attitude and behaviour of the Upper Military orphans who "called him Michael and pretended they were Sahibs." (172). Then he came back to the monk, who later decided to take the boy towards south. Before leaving for Madras the boy makes some exploits in the government buildings in the fashion of Kim's 'Great Games' in Kipling's novel, *Kim*. They left Calcutta the next morning, observing that history will not record their handiworks. On their way to Madras they made many more non-violent fires in the public offices of the Company's territories. They reached madras and there the boy was admitted to Dr. Bellows academy. "It is said they favour number over history. They make surveyors of the best boys," (175) said the monk and he left leaving the boy there. Mik passed out of the academy with second

rank and was placed in the Engineer's Institute in Bombay. Having needed money to buy a coat he was tempted to take a clerical post (Cranny) with the Company but Willy Webbe, his companion, did not permit him to proceed with it. To their surprise, they were given forty rupees a month as stipend. Mik was later sent on a survey expedition across the mountains of Persia. Through the Khyber Pass, Mik came to Isphan, and leaving Isphan he came to Turin. After completing the survey of Persia, Mik got a letter of introduction from John Malcolm, leader of the expedition and left for Naples. There through Naples he crossed Alps and entered France. He desired to have an army with him. "Having none he supposed the next best thing would be to join one directly he had concluded a tour of the fatherland." (198) He came penniless to London, and started searching a pawnshop. "There was now nothing to pawn except the locket about his neck, and Mik did so directly the shops opened" (199), which got him enough money for clothes and a fortnights lodgings. He got another letter of introduction from Sir John and he got admitted to the Military Academy. "For two years he was trained in every department of military science not excluding the gathering of intelligence. At the end of this period the cadet was given the rank of Fire worker and assigned to an artillery regiment." (200) after the completion of the training when he was about to embark for India, he was summoned for an interview by the Court of Directors in the East India Company. The board which interviewed Mik asked a few pertinent questions which the Next Trotter answered without hesitation. "Where was he born? Why was the Asia mynah? Who was his mother? Was there a laughing hyena? Was Nakhlaunice? And what was the melting point of ice? Then he was allowed to leave."

(200) The Court of Directors of the East India Company then passed a resolution (in 1791) which read, "resolved unanimously that no person, son of a Native Indian shall hence forth be appointed by this Court in employment in Civil, Military or Marine Services of the company. Standing order." (201) the order reached the Military Academy when preparations were on to join an East India man sailing for Calcutta. The major tried his best by making representations to waive the order to take Mik in the service, however on arrival in Calcutta Mik joined his regiment. He was not promoted to the rank of the lieutenant as quickly as he would have liked." (201) But in 1795 he was summarily discharged from the Army, following a command from the Governor general in Council of the East India Company that insisted, "No person the son of a European by a native mother shall serve in the Company's army as an officer. Such person's may be admitted as fifiers, drummers or farriers." (202) As it was not in his capacity "to drum or fife, and with only a foggy notion of the farrier's art Mik submitted to the latest whim of fate with a curl of the lip" (202), and left the army. The narrator supplements with the following details on the other major incidents in Mik's life.

Mik found his luggage deposited on the pavement; they had reached Cimmerii Street. The houses there were grey and peeling and streaked with moss from many monsoons; built fifty years ago by Europeans, they had lapsed to shabby genteel Anglo-Indians and been divided up into tenements. As the Next Trotter paid his fare, another Tonga arrived, rattling and jingling, and then another and another and still others from each one stepped a newly

discharged Anglo-Indian officer, a Skinner, a Powell, a Hearsay, a Gardner, a Gray. Mik was puzzled: he had imagined himself the only one. So, apparently had the others, who were standing erect in their civilian clothes and wondering what to make of it all...The next day the tongas were back and reloaded, bound for the horse market beyond the bridge. There the ex-officers bought horseflesh and wagons which would carry them across the country through jungles, over hills and across white-pebbled fords into the service of one or another of the independent Indian princes...The discharged Anglo-Indian were officers again, only the flags were different.

(202-03)

Mik sailed then to Madras, like his fellow Anglo-Indians he decided to serve one of the independent Indian princes. He arrived at the Maratha court with that intention, and he received a provisional welcome and was put to the test. There "he was given command of a handful of guns together with a supporting force whose junior officers were country-borns like himself." (219) Mik trained the unit constantly and he cast new guns out of the older ones. "He knew everyone of his men by name, and the men, gunners and cavalryman alike, responded with a loyalty rarely accorded northerners." (219) During the first year of service in the Maratha army Mik's chief duty was to collect taxes. He had to fight when the uneasy truce between Marathas and Nizam of Hyderabad led to war. They defeated Nizam's army in the war. "Mik lost a quarter of his men including six Anglo-Indian officers killed at their guns, and was himself wounded in the calf, but it was his artillery that won the day, its cannon glowing

white-hot into the night long after the enemy had fled.” (220) when Hyderabad was taken, the dominion of Nizam was used by the Marathas to attack East India Company’s Madras hinterland. The East India Company sought the help of reinforcement from Bengal, and as part of it The Great Trotter, Mik’s father, was summoned to serve as military advisor. In the war that followed the British became triumphant. Meanwhile the Governor General brought out another order, as a warning to all Anglo-Indians officers of the Maratha confederacy that said: “It has come to our notice that certain Anglo-Indian officers formerly of our army are in the military employ of certain refractory native princes. Such officers are to understand that the present state of war between the Company’s Army and these same princes renders the continuation of their services to the said princes, in whatsoever capacity, treasonous and the officer in question a traitor.” (222-23)

Mik met with an accident in the war and fell down. He was lying senseless for about six hours before he was picked up by his men. Defeat fell at a time when the British issued the new order asking the Anglo-Indians to reconsider their loyalties. The commander in chief of the Maratha army also got a copy of the printed command, and he was “threatening to use it against the careless...half-European artillery expert”, Mik, “[b]ut then word has reached him of Mik’s supposed death.” (223) Most unfortunately, Mik has lost one of his arms in that war. He was in the mercy of a hut dweller who provided him with services of an herb doctor. The company’s latest announcement was ranging in his years. “The division in himself hurt more than his shoulder, tormented as he was with doubts. Madras or Marathas: which way Mik? The question plagued his days and dogged him in his dreams. One morning he swung out of his bed, his mind made

up. He paid the villager and rewarded the old doctress, mounted his horse, and turned towards Madras, leaning to one side as he rode." (224)

Mik arrived Madras at a time of rampant Napoleon phobia. A French bible ship with about 200 missionaries was detained. Owing to his French connection Mik was also arrested, but later released considering his father's services to the company. "When will I step out of this shadow", Mike thought, and found an answer himself, "[w]hen you cast a shadow of your own." (224) Mik decided to get a son of his own to escape the shadow of his father's identity on him, and for that he wanted a wife. Madras and Calcutta did not provide him with one, and moreover he was reminded of his incompleteness as a dancing partner without one arm. Then he made up his mind to go back to Sans Souci thinking that he will get a wife from one of the Alexander sisters. He reached home to a controversy regarding the legal heir of the First Trotter. Mik claimed that "I am the first born son, born out of my father's first wife." (255) Under Viscount Lentavia and the British Resident an enquiry was conducted on the death and the bequest of Col. Justin Aloysius Trotter, which finally ruled that Mik "had an uterine nine months in which to seek out the will that declared him the sole heir." (256) However, although his "identity was established, it did not follow that Sans Souci was his. The fact of intestacy remained and there his birth dogged him: he had no right because as a country-born he had no law." (256) All these instances from Mik's experience and many more to come are pointers to understand the different problems that the Anglos encountered in the early years. The novelist infuses powerful factual blows in the novel, whether it is regarding the various orders of the Company that affected the Anglos, or the references to the lawlessness to

define an Anglo-Indian or the divided loyalty and confusion of the Anglos in general, all of which were serious issues for the community in India, especially during the colonial period. The novelist even gives examples for the clashes of interests and supremacy among the various European nations, as indicated in the English rivalry to the French, from all of which the Anglo-Indians had roots. As for Mik he was haunted by his father's French connection and he wanted get out of that to establish himself and his identity in India then. Even the Great Trotter had to rename himself to appear to be a British when he landed in British dominated India. In general the entire novel gives clear expression to the complex racial composition of the Anglo-Indian community, and the different layers of ostracism that they had to tackle in India. Probably, along with the complex racial make up and the resultant identity issues, it was the ambivalence in the community's continued loyalty to the British in spite of their overt attempts to ill-treat them, that the writer appears to highlight in the novel.

During his stay in Sans Souci Mik was more interested in training his new sword. In a short period he mastered the sword and turned to lance, for which he took a horse from the stable. He was called Gypsy Trotter at Sans Souci. In spring that year, one of the Alexander girls presented him with a child and Mik acknowledged it "his own, and pronounced the boy his heir." (265) Rose, who named the boy Charles, took care of the child's rearing. Mik drew up a will in quadruplicate in order not to jeopardise the boy's claim by adding or changing names (265). Leaving Sans Souci into Yakub's keeping, and the ice pits into Fonseca's, he rode off in a gallop. "That year Trotter served under the French adventurer, Michel Petard," (266) who was not less renowned as Patrick

Kilpatrick, Raja of Paddipore. In that mid summer Petard was send by his Maratha masters to humble the self styled Irish Rajah, Kilpatrick. In the war two foreigners were put face to face. Amongst the eight rassalehs of Petard's army one was led by Michael Trotter. Petard could not record a decisive win in the war. Mik was appointed to the cavalry instead of the artillery. Later because of the cunning moves taken by Mik, Kilpatrick was defeated twice in succession. Mik was planning to kill him but other Anglo-Indian officers like James Skinner spoke for clemency. Petard gave the power to Anglos to decided on the "Englishmen ...that treat their children very ill-used in not been admitted in to the company's service."(273) When Petard decided a larger campaign against the British some Anglo-Indian officers appealed him declaring that they would not bear arms against their father's people. Petard retaliated by dismissing all Anglo-Indian officers outright. Although Mik was of French origin he was also dismissed. Mik and other discharged country-borns rode across to British lines. They were fortunate. Other country-borns in the Maratha army elsewhere got their heads cut off, whether they were willing to serve or not. During the campaign Mik remained inactive. He was given charge of drilling irregular horses. After the war Petard was defeated Anglo-Indians were publicly warned that they must never again serve Indian princes without the Company's permission. They agreed, but asked to form a cavalry of irregular horses which the British accepted. Mik was decided commander of the force and the brigade was named Trotter's Horse. Trotter's brigade fought against Gurkhas, Pindaris and many others successfully. Putting his army to rest, Mik came home to find Sans Souci in tatters, with Yakub and Fonseca dead. He tried to set things in order, but many

areas were beyond clearing. His son became a painter of miniatures. Mik returned for fighting and when he came home after ten years of fighting, he had by then eleven other children Charles was the eldest. He married Bulbul. Many of the workers have disappeared with elephants, horses and other valuables. Mik went back to fighting and came back after ten years. The latest problem he had to encounter was the threat of nilchis or tribals working in the indigo fields. They started revolting asking payment. Mik sought the help of his own Trotter house, who are also called Rose Boys. It took several days to put down the revolt and it caused great loss to property in Sans Souci. Charles, son of Mik was killed in the campaign. He was caught in the forest by nilchis when he fell down from his horse. His wife Bulbul went mad after the incident. Charles's son, Henry was reared by Rose. Mik went back to fighting, but this time he did not fight. "Toward the end he arranged for his second son, Attila, fierce and fecund young man to assume command of the Rose Boys while he himself went in search of peace" (320). He travelled several places and finally reached the Himalayas. "Here at last peace entered his heart and he returned to civilization filled with a horror of war." (320) Reaching home Mik took off his seersucker jacket for the last time. He tried to set things on track to the maximum, but the house was already in tatters. Even while living in Sans Souci he kept on getting news from the army. Mik knew that Sepoys are "refusing to handle the new Enfield cartridge because the caps which had to be bitten off before loading were rumoured to be greased with the fat of cows, sacred to Hindus, and pigs, unclean for Muslims" (325). He wrote to the Resident in Nakhlau to do some thing urgently. The problem became intense and Sepoys started openly campaigning against the company. Mik was

called to deal with Mahavir Pandav and other Sepoys of the 93rd on 29 march 1857, speaking to them. Mik agreed but the mutiny ended in a fighting that fatally wounded Mik because of a bullet injury. Mahavir Pandav was executed ten days later on the same day Mikhail Trotter knew differently as Michael Trotter, Gulabi Trotter, Gypsy Trotter and Tartar Sahib became a martyr. The Sepoy Mutiny became intense and the inhabitants of Sans Souci had to run away leaving everything. They stayed at the resident and when it was under siege escaped hiding in a post office. During the mutiny Rose, Farida and Bulbul died. Alina of the Alexander sisters, Henry, his wife Philippa escaped. Philippa gave birth to Victoria while hiding. And she was followed by many set of victors (twins).

The Third Trotter (A-Trotter) was not as active as his father, Mik. It was father Angelico who baptised him, Charles Augustine Pote Trotter. Mik wrote his will immediately after the boy's baptism, pronouncing him his sole heir. When he was five he first lit up his first charge of gunpowder. While Charles was growing his father was away at war. "While the boy went from pap to solid foods, his father's reputation went from strength to strength across India...leading a Cavalry charge in a white seersucker jacket with a rose at his heart." (275) Charles was breast fed by Rose when the Alexander girls were chased off. "When he was three she taught him to form letters with a brush from her rough pot. He turned to drawing pictures instead." (275) Charles grew up as a lonely boy. He didn't like to play with other boys. "Unlike Farida's son ...who had a dozen playmates from the village in his thrall or Jarman Begum's son who...moved constantly with adults, Charles sat for hours alone, covering expensive paper with his

sketches." (275) Charles lost interest in everything except painting. He tried his hand on frescos, etchings, woodcuts, watercolours and even a series of miniatures and other paintings, thus contributing greatly to the Kirani School of miniature paintings which were later found out and popularised by the Seventh Trotter Eugene. His important works include illustrations for a chronicle like work by Qaiyum-i-najum. The front panel of the work was a general view of Sans Souci in colour with a balloon in the sky and his grandfather in the attached gondola. The description follows can be seen as a clear depiction of it:

It showed the various buildings of Sans Souci as the Great Trotter left them, with such otiose additions as a studio-loft in the North Tower and a small interim ice shed built beside the ice pits to correspond with the indigo shed on the other side. It showed the amphitheatre filled with dye from the indigo works to form a pond, and a reflecting pool where the rainwater had gathered on the roof of the Glacerie around a marooned Rain Room. In the distance the Sagarpaysans' encampment had grown into a village, with muddy lanes and a few brick houses; nearby, on the Saltpetre hill the Great Trotter's marquee still flapped forlornly, stained yellow towards the curry mine, indigo the other way, and a cowardly green in the middle where the two overlapped. Along the Cranny River white-scented rat-ki-rani bushes had come up, while the hanging canal that fed the indigo baths was choked in parts with reeds.

Charles married Bulbul who was reared in the Trotterpurwa by the bird-doctor's family. She was born of a foreigner but both her parents died early. Her

mother died in the delivery and the girl was taken over by a childless family. Charles, although a loner was perhaps the most romantic of the Trotters, and he lived a happy life with Bulbul till the problems with nilchis started, that led to his eventual death. They got a boy child after ten years of waiting, and the birth of the boy brought him back to his painting which he had stopped with his marriage., and completed the incomplete ones.

Thomas Henry (Fourth Trotter), son of Charles and Bulbul, was also reared by Rose as Bulbul went mad after Charles's death during the nilchis' revolt. Later the Fourth Trotter refused to believe that Bulbul was his mother. Right from his early childhood the boy showed interest in writing. Unlike his father, he did not draw any pictures. He copied something or the other from books. In fact, "[n]ature, chance and circumstances conceived to make of Thomas Henry a clerk." (313) Mik, his grandfather got him a clerkship in civil service, "since as an Anglo-Indian the boy could not apply for any covenanted post." (318) Henry, however, was one of the many Anglos who found their way to the writer's building as clerks, copyists, or what was commonly called 'Crannies'. Till he married Philippa Khan Trotter, he could concentrate well on his job. It was then the disaffection rose in the Company's army that led to the Sepoy mutiny. It was during the revolt, while hiding, that his first child, a daughter was born. Henry showed great valence during the riots. He went through the enemy thronged lanes of the city to guide the army commander, Crawly Campbell to the relief of the garrison. But the British force could not stop the fall of the Residency into the hands of the mutineers. In the meantime the entire Sans Souci was ransacked by the rioters and most of the buildings got affected in the attack.

When the British came back, the Trotters moved again to Sans Souci. After the birth of Victoria, Philippa, his wife, gave birth to a number of twins who are called the Victors. Thomas Henry stopped going to the writers' building. He got interested in scanning the past and history. Problems started peeping in to Sans Souci in various forms. Thomas Henry was always disturbed by the amassing credit at the Solomon's. During this period, Henry seriously thought of migrating to England. He was waiting for a favourable reply after submitting his papers. He also wrote a book on his adventurous experiences during the mutiny. It was during this period that the railway arrived. "Anglo-Indians went from clerks to railway men." (358) Philip Khan Trotter was the first one from Trotters to line up, and he was followed by the victors later. Thomas Henry went to England. His wife continued to give birth to twins. "She put each set of Victors, black and white into the previous Victors' clothes and planned to make clerks and writers of them; when the oldest set invented the paper clip their fortune seemed settled." (360) But the Victors got influenced by their uncle, and turned their attention to the railway. When he came back from England Henry became a celebrity. He was given an award for meritorious service and was elevated to the civil service, making him an Assistant Collector. But he always tried to live beyond his means, for which he had to pay the penalty later. He started constructing a memorial for Rose, Farida, Bulbul and the Second Trotter. He himself wanted to be buried there. But he could not pursue the project as he had to go to England with his wife. It was during his plan to go to England that Montagu, an Anglo-Indian salesman of rain gauge, came to Sans Souci. Montagu stayed as teacher to Victoria, and Henry and Philippa went abroad leaving

Montagu there in Sans Souci. Philippa died in Alexandria when she fell down from a camel, and Henry came back after some years. He came to know that his daughter, Victoria was pregnant. Understanding that Montagu was responsible for the pregnancy, he decided to arrange their marriage. Henry became more and more deaf day by day. He was asked to resign from the post of assistant collector based on a complaint lodged by Solomon and Co for cheating them by giving a void promissory note against the due payment. He wrote a number of letters and pamphlets in retaliation, to defend himself. But none of them gave him his post back. He died later while going to the Residency with Eustace, his grandson, by falling in a dry well.

Theobald Horatius Montague, who was called Anti-Trotter, also occupies considerable space in the novel although he was not counted as a Trotter in the main lineage. Montagu was a failed historian. He was a Calcutta Anglo-Indian, born in Bankugange, and was educated at the lower military orphanage in Calcutta, and at a college established by Jacob Khan Trotter after his return from England. "He was an historian by training, and until lately by profession." (370) when he found that history teachers are plenty in Calcutta he became a sales executive of rain gauge. Montagu was appointed tutor to Victoria before Thomas Henry went to England. He turned to history again at Sans Souci and sitting in the stables of the chateau he tried to write the history of Sans Souci, although many of his findings were recorded to be incorrect by Eugene, the chronicler. Montagu married Victoria and four months after the marriage their first son, Peter Augustine was born, as Victoria was pregnant before the marriage. Montagu was yet another person to witness the gradual decay of the estate, but

he sincerely tried to set things right. He brought the ice-making unit to working condition, and found the means for the survival of the family. In fact, the decline of the chateau started with the mutiny, but it went on faster in the coming years, with the subsequent Trotters unable to do the needful. Nor were there resources for renovation works. Victoria gave birth to seven more children out of which only one was male. Montagu joined the Congress party along with Alex Khan Trotter; he organized and became part of many nationalist programmes, including unlawful salt making. He was openly against the British in his views and opinions. When Illbert Bill that proposed to "allow Indians to try Europeans in court" (397) came for discussion he supported it strongly, when all others, including his wife opposed it. Montagu cultivated an egalitarian, democratic and secular outlook in his life and works. He raised the problems of the downtrodden classes and wrote books against casteism. He extended the Trotter road to create the lower Trotter road, and he resolved the mystery, suspicion revolving around Sans Souci for the outsiders, by inviting people from outside to his house. He tried to create a better impression of his community among the outsiders. Till then people of Nakhilau believed that an Anglo-Indian could not become a nationalist. His wife, Victoria disliked his bringing of Indian friends to the house, and she always contemptuously referred to it saying "bringing home Indians and all." (403) She was afraid the children would be misled if they were exposed to Indian culture. She complained to him, "is this the way the way to bring up children?" What sort of example you setting, men? What if the boy saw? (403) but he was not moved by all these. "His wife praised the English for their far flung empire whose geographical extent was unmatched in history, he would smile

mockingly and say 'you know geography is everywhere but history happens only in England'." (403) Montagu's great hero was "the eighteenth century revolutionary and enemy of Napoleon, Toussaint L' Overture whose portrait graced the Begum Kothi drawing room." (403) When Victoria put the portrait of Disraeli on the opposite wall, he expressed that the British maintained their empires by the simplest geometry of divide and rule. "That is how you encompass the world." (404) Montagu and Alex organized a major congress demonstration of defiance in Nakhla. Being a pacifist, Montagu did not support Anglo-Indians going to war to fight for the British during the First World War. For him "the war was simply another example of the barbarity of a supposedly civilized people who now wished to entangle the rest of the world." (431) When his son Young Paul became an activist fighting for the Anglos, Montagu appreciates him and expressed his strong dislike for the British rule in India; "you play off minorities against the majority and prolong an unjust rule." (433) Both Montagu and Alex were greatly influenced by Gandhiji, "[t]he small frail Indian just come from South Africa." (433) Gandhiji came to Nakhla and addressed a gathering at Aminabad Park. From the Sans Souci, only Montagu and Alex attended the rally. In response to a call made by Gandhiji, Montagu started wearing Indian clothes that provoked his wife, and because of the protest at home he stopped it. He also organized a salt-march in which many villagers participated. His activist son was not behind him in his nationalism, because his son "favoured strength over passivity." (456). Young Paul felt that "military obedience and not civil disobedience is the answer to India's crisis." (456) but as the representative of the Trotters and their Kin he wished to secure certain rights

and assurances for Anglo-Indians in the independent India. While Montagu was for India, Young Paul was for his community. That was the main difference of their political priorities. Montagu helped history students at home; his history lessons were rather expressions of his disgust against the European warmongers. And as a resolve to his continued to wish to participate in his capacity in the ongoing crises between India and Britain he continued to write history. But, "the history seemed to grow interminably: the more he wrote the more there was to write." (474) On the day of the Seventh Trotter, Eugene's entry into the world Montagu died of heatstroke and asphyxiation. He was rightly called by Eugene as Anti-Trotter, signifying his distinctiveness among the Trotters.

Peter Augustine Trotter, the Fifth Trotter was called the Lapsed Trotter. Considering the grim life he led one could see that the name is quite appropriate. He was conceived before his mother married Montagu, and he was "thin as a pencil lead" (385) when he was born. Peter is again another figure in the family who could be exemplified for the decadence of the Trotters. After schooling peter joined the seminary to become a priest. "At the seminary...Peter was beginning to have his doubts" and his interests were in music and travel; he liked to immerse himself in the great music of the European church (405). He turned to music and later to the wish of his mother left for Rome. But he did not reach Rome as he could not go beyond Naples. There he was introduced to opium and fornication. He married a girl named Lucia and stayed there till his fist child, Eustace, "swelled a little." (406). Victoria, his mother was disappointed over his marriage of an "outsider." (406) When he came back with his wife, Victoria did not consider them. They were given residence in the Japanese Tea House at the

far end of the garden. Peter, the failed priest lived on toddy and music. The narrator presents Peter thus:

Vocally a baritone, he naturally fought shy of singing and preferred to play, having lost none of his enthusiasm for organ. Since there wasn't an organ at Sans Souci he was obliged to go in search of one, and the circumstances helped him to a job. He became an organ tuner. Unwelcome at the Roman Catholic church, where his reputation preceded him, he attended the various protestant churches by rotation and might have become permanent organist at any one of them had it not been his habit of turning up drunk and making no distinction between sacred and secular music. (409)

As his name suggests he did not contribute anything, except making himself a man of music, for the development of Sans Souci and the community. After the death of his wife while giving birth to his second child, he left Sans Souci and later died in Montevideo.

Peter Augustine's son, Eustace, the Sixth Trotter, who is called by Eugene as the Fore-Trotter, was a sportsman from the Sans Souci. He won many medals in Hockey, playing for the country, and later became a policeman. Eustace was born in Naples, Italy. "Apart from being an athletic young man, Eustace knew, if partially, the curse of deafness." (428). It was while going with him to the Residency that the Fourth Trotter, Thomas Henry, fell down in a well and died. But Eustace did not disclose this to anyone. As a policeman Eustace offered matchless service to the British government in India. But when Montagu and Alex, with their followers, violated the law by making salt, he did not arrest him,

and as a result he was transferred to a remote district, on charges of “shielding his relations in the due process of law...” (456) He married Queenie, whose family originally came from Burma side. Her mother was Burmese and her grandfather was from England. The girl’s parents were long dead. They had one child, Eugene. He died on duty while trying to encounter dacoits during the Hindu Muslim riots followed by the partition.

The Seventh Trotter, Eugene Aloysius Trotter, “grew up half with Victoria, Albert and the maiden Aunts [unmarried daughters of Victoria] in the Begum Kothi, and half with Queenie and Eustace who had decided to occupy the new armoury near the Ice Gate.” (482). Eugene was a failed singer. Then put his hands on miniature painting. It was he who introduced the Kirani (derived from Cranny) school of miniature paintings to the world. He witnessed the complete decline of Sans Souci, and eventually the degeneration of the community, till it transformed into a star hotel. The Sans Souci was sold to the hotel owners by his stepfather, 2Thimothy, who married Queenie after the death of Eustace. When reaching Eugene from the time of Justin one could see the way a community lived its history, from the hay-days to the decadent period, with so many people spreading all over the country, serving in different capacities, and negotiating with different problems, that all talks volumes about the community as a whole.

As a novel that articulates an ethnicity *The Trotter-Nama* details in varied terms the culture, traditions, ancestry and social patterns and so on of the Anglo-Indian community in India. It traces the origin of the community unearthing details of the various racial elements or biological, cultural types that composed it. It also unravels the processes of transformation that took the community to its

present stature. It is important here that, as in many other ethnic articulations in fiction, there is a widespread interest in answering questions regarding identity, especially in the context of the problems existing in differentiating various sections of mixed bloods that is, dividing them on the basis of the countries of their origin. The problem of different origin, although Anglos in general them were of European descent, created schisms in the discourses of the community's status with regard to the extent of justification Anglos of different origin has to the name 'Anglo-Indian'. In order to approach this complex issue the author presents a story in which the community developed by mixing various European bloods with Asian bloods, making it difficult to trace the exact racial stock of all the individuals.

However, the Anglo-Indian community is to be understood as an offshoot or by product of the marriage of two distinct racial stocks, the European and the Asian (especially Indian), during the colonial encounter. Here mixing took place between people of different background, some of whom belonged to the so-called elite and the other to the lower classes. The community could be treated as an ethnicity on the ground that after the process of its formation, it continued to observe certain cultural traits, which obviously is indicative of the mixing of, predominantly, the Anglo-Saxon and the Indian elements. As in the case of many other ethnicities, there happened a fusion of distinct cultures in Anglo-Indians as well that resulted in the formation of a composite or shared value system, beliefs, tastes, behaviour, consciousness of kind, cultural memory and loyalty. There are also difficulties arising from this mixing, such as the difficulty in defining their loyalty. While many preferred to go to their father's land, others preferred to stay

back in India, considering India as their homeland. There are many instances in the novel exemplifying this confusion. Montagu remained a strong nationalist and completely loyal to the interests of India while his wife was very much worried about 'Indianising' of everything. Young Paul was terribly upset with the British discrimination of Anglo-Indians. When he was denied membership Nakhilau club, immediately after his return from serving the empire in the war, he responds: "When it suits them we are British...when it doesn't there is another club." (423). He was asked to go and join the club for Anglo-Indians.

The community originated, as shown in the novel, as created by the Europeans. The First Trotter himself was aware of the complex conditions that awaited this community. But he had no alternative other than joining the process of formation. It was in order to avoid his continuing boredom and loneliness that he thought of multiplying his clan. While reflecting on the collection of things of his first wife, he tells: "Nothing in its proper place - that place continually invaded by a host of ill-assorted identities." (134) This statement is also true about the state of the community in the formative years. He continues: "Each object warring with the next, yet every creature accommodating its neighbour, the substantial trafficking with the insubstantial, the contrary rubbing shoulders with the same, that which agrees seducing that which clashes, change surprised by permanence, exclusion and concurrence recurring together, effect stealing a march on cause." (134) This again is a reflection on the miraculous coexistence that worked in the survival of the community. The First Trotter was conscious of the land, in which he wanted to establish his clan's roots, and he reflects about India thus: "What is this India? Is it not a thousand shifting surfaces, which enamour

the newcomer and then swallow him up? It allows him the many titles of victory while obliging him to accept a single rigid function, that of conqueror. The very divisiveness that allows him enmeshes him. How is he to grasp what is cannot be held – what in fact holds him fast? Is this a perverse and passive strength? How is he to fire a weapon whose triggers are so numerous and interlocked?” (134)

As a French man serving English, and who essentially became an Englishman, he was worried about the future, but was confident. He believed that “[a]fter the first spoliation will come restraint, regulated pleasure, a profitable deferring of the moment – and postponement is the strictest bliss.” (135) And about the resultant offspring of the union of India and Europe he was doubtful: “But what child will come of the union?” (135)

As an ethnicity the Anglo-Indian community, considering on the lines of family pedigree given in the novel, was made up of complex elements. That is, many nationals had their bloods mixed here with the others. The First Trotter was a French man. He had with him four women, married or other, who came from different roots. The first wife sultana was a Muslim from the prophet’s line; the second, Farida Wilkinson was of Muslim and British origins; the third, Elise was of was of Ceylonese origin, and presumably of Muslim faith, the fourth, Rose Gul Bedan was of Anglo-Indian and British origin and was Christian by faith. Through the daughters of the Macedonian sculptor came the Greek roots. Fonseca, whose full name was Wilfred Ignatius Albuquerque Fonseca (91), who married Farida after the death of Justin, was apparently of Portuguese origin. Yakub Khan, who married Elise later, appeared to belong to the clan of Muslims who reached India with the Muslim invasions. Bulbul, wife of the Third Trotter,

was daughter of a 'foreigner'. Montagu who married Victoria, daughter of the Fourth Trotter, was an Anglo-Indian from Calcutta. Suchita, wife of Alex Alexander Trotter was an Indian Hindu Brahmin. Lucia, wife of Peter Augustine, the Fifth Trotter, was an Italian (from Naples). The wife of Fifth Trotter's brother, Young Paul, Belle of Bangalore, was from domiciled European community. Queenie, wife of Eustace, the Sixth Trotter, was of Burmese or Malayan origin. There are many others whose background is not clearly given in the novel. The community as it reached the Seventh Trotter and other remaining members were the sum total of all these mixings. All discussions of the identity of the members of the community, thus, must be with reference to these composite elements. However, one can see that in the long run the community has developed certain characteristics like the use of English language for communication. When the evolutionary process was about to be complete, Christianity became its accepted religion. During the early years, perhaps because of the presence of members from different religions, the faith of the members of the community was not specified strictly. It was perhaps with the Middle Trotter, orientation towards Christianity became more visible. One reason for this was that, due to incidents like the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 Anglo-Indians were treated like the Europeans, and the mutineers also targeted them during the riots. This made most of the members identify themselves with the English culture and religion. When Henry Louis Vivian Trotter, the prodigy, wrote poems Farida found them impious and "contrary to the Christian principles she had espoused." (284) Once she became a Christian, after marrying Fonseca, Farida fasted on Sundays instead of Fridays, and prayed at the chapel conveniently located at the foot of her tower. But the

whole family did not attend church services until the time of Victoria. It was Victoria who "insisted that the whole family worship in the chapel together on Sundays." (481) This is said to be the beginning of the regime of prayer; all inner Trotters being required to attend church services on Sundays (481). It seems that the Trotters followed Protestantism in Christianity. There were instances in which the priests got married. 2Thimoti who married Queenie after the death of Eustace, for example, was a priest. The Lapsed Trotter, Peter Augustine was not permitted to sing in Catholic churches. The Great Trotter also courted the dream of a separate religion for the Trotters. Thus he established his own faith called Din Havai (modelled on Akbar's 'Din Ilahi'), but he could not spread it outside himself, not even to his family members. "The Din Havai or the religion of the winds would embrace as many faiths as the number of its believers, for certainly no two members of a single faith could interpret that faith in the same way." (162) A kind of overt consciousness of ethnic purity, dress code and so on, also set in during the later years. This point shall be elaborated later in this chapter. Almost all issues common to the definition and understanding of an ethnic group could be seen involved in the case of the Anglo-Indian community presented in the novel. However Sealy wanted to bring home the perceptions existing on the controversial issues like common ancestry, which is mythical and real. While there are a number of ancestors for the Anglo-Indians, the common ancestor is collectively found in the European colonists, and more specifically, and preferably British. But it appeared from their later attitude to the community that they did not want to acknowledge this ancestry as they consider any dilution to their racial stock as creating something racially far inferior, and perhaps, inferior

to the elite in the colonised societies. They did not regard them as nothing more than “bastard sons of army officers or the offspring of temporary paper marriages...” (Roychowdhury 42) Taking into consideration the social and cultural complexity involved in the formation of the community, one needs to apply an elaborate definition of ethnicity to accommodate the Anglo-Indians. Such was the one offered by Schermerhorn in his *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research* (1970), according to which, ethnicity is:

A collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry (that is memories of the shared historical past whether of origin or of historical experiences such as colonization, immigration, invasion or slavery); a shared consciousness of a separate named group identity and a cultural focus, one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. These factors will always be in dynamic combination relative to the particular time and place in which they are experienced and operate consciously or unconsciously for the political advancement of the group. (12)

It took about two centuries for the Anglos to form their feeling of collectivity in India, although its members shared a historical past. They became conscious of themselves, their peoplehood and ‘difference’ from the British as well as the Indians, when their community had been targeted and referred to with cynical undertones. For instance, in *Trotter-Nama* when Alex was arrested for attacking the editor of *Nakhilau Nunntio*, who published an article in which Alex Khan Trotter is referred to as a “half-caste,” he becomes emotional, and

wanted his people to be "called by their proper names, which is Anglo-Indians." (401) He explains his genealogy thus: "The descendants of the Saxons and the British were called Anglo-Saxons, their descendants with the Normans were called Anglo-Normans, and we are the Anglo-Indians." (401) When he was reminded of his ancestor's French origin, and the mixing of other bloods in his family, he explained that they are called Anglo-Indians now because "they no longer speak French, Portuguese or Spanish, but English." (401) In the process of self-consciousness the community decided on its faith, food culture, and on the professions most suitable for its members, all of which in turn became identification marks or cultural characteristics by which the general character of the community is explained, and most of these are symbolic in the sense that the directions taken by the community could be well explained by interpreting these factors.

Allen Sealy's novel, for the literary critic, (or more specifically for a sociocritic), is like a segment of society for the anthropologist or ethnographer. As a ground for the study of the community the book offers everything that one needs to observe and interpret a community. The professions taken by the members of the community as detailed in the novel, for instance, serve as an indicator to the growth of the community. Interestingly, at all historical times it could be seen that the members of the Anglo-Indian clan were mostly confined to some particular profession. If we consider the present position of the community, the Anglo-Indians are mostly teachers, especially English teachers in various educational institutions. In general, they were mainly warriors and clerks till the railway came. When the railway came, they served the railways in large numbers

for a long time, and continued to serve even after the independence. The present confining of the community into the classrooms has many reasons and great significance. Firstly it was the British who started separate schools for the Anglo-Indians. As Laura Choudhury noted in her *The Jadu House*, “[t]hey were concerned by the scandal of white-skinned children running wild and going native in the bazaars, the only solution for their rootlessness, which threatened British prestige, was to scrub them down, teach them about the Pennines...moral decency, and the Norman Conquest.” (41-42) The British wanted them as Crannies in their services. However, when the British left, the Anglo-Indians were confined to schools and the railway. Apart from this there were only few other professions, like nursing, that that they took up. But Sealy’s *Trotter-Nama* gives an entirely different picture of the employment of the Anglo-Indians in the later years. He shows how the British confined them to certain professions. The first generation Anglo-Indians was mainly warriors in the East India Company’s army. The First Trotter and the Next Trotter were examples. But when the company ordered against their taking up posts in the army they had to step down, and seek employment under the Indian prices. But when the British prohibited their services to the independent Indian princes they had to come back to the company’s army but to occupy only lowly posts. When they stopped serving army they were mainly placed as Crannies or clerks and document writers, and they were confined to clerical cadres for long. The Middle Trotter, Thomas Henry served as a clerk for quite long. When the telegraph and railway came the Anglos got employed in them as well, but they were not given higher posts in these. Alex and some Victors served the Telegraph, while Khan Trotters

and many Victors became railway workers. The later generations took all sorts of jobs like police, nurse, botanist, museologist, priest, zoologist, doctor, and teachers, and so on. However, the end of the novel shows their moves largely to schools.

Anglo-Indian community as an ethnicity was formed by colonialism although Europeans willingly created them for their administrative purpose. But when their population increased uncontrollably they started to look down upon them. Thus even during colonialism the members of the community felt the specialised position of them in India. They exemplify the general belief that "racial identities are made, not born; that race is a function of culture, as opposed to nature." (Sedinger 45) After the formation of the group, those who contrived to make them treated them as a separate racial category, the Anglos were trapped by the cultural identity that they were entitled to carry all through their existence. But, in spite of the ill treatment that they faced, the community was by and large with the British. Many Trotters served the British in the world wars, and among them many have been killed and failed to return to India. Even after their death discrimination haunted them. The novelist reports that, "[a]mong those who failed to return were numerous Trotters who in the moment of their death were transformed into Britons. Their records and posthumous awards stated, concisely 'born in India.'" (432) Young Paul came back after narrow escape from bullets. After that he applied the Nakhla club, and "was back balled", saying "[t]here is another club for Anglo-Indians; go there." (432) This kind of treatment was what made Young Paul an activist, and he took initiatives for the merger of Anglo-Indian and domiciled European associations.

to ethnic purity. She was unhappy to know that her first son, Peter Augustine married Lucia, an Italian, and she snatched all ties with them when they came to settle themselves down in Sans Souci. She did not like Alex marrying an Indian. She strongly objected when her husband wore Indian clothes and brought Indian friends home. When she selected a bride for Eustace, her grandson she checked for everything that an Anglo-Indian wife required. Thus she found Queenie speaking good English (She said perspire instead of sweat); "she was a well fleshed young girl with ice-blue eyes, pinched a little on the outside..." (466) She was an Anglo-Indian born of Burmese mother, and was working as a telephonist. Most of the other later marriages took place within the community. Victoria's second son Young Paul married a girl from the Domiciled European community. They were those Anglo-Indians who no longer had any family ties with England" and kept to themselves for years (432).

Sexual relations among the members of the Trotter family were liberal. Many marriages within the clan take place after the bride becomes pregnant. Victoria for example, was married after she was pregnant for about six months. Mik, the second Trotter did not marry any one of the Alexander sisters, but he had children in them. Even the Great Trotter had sexual relations with women like Farida whom he did not formally marry. Even extramarital sex was not looked upon seriously as a sin. There was a rumour that Bulbul (who became pregnant after a long wait) was impregnated by Alexander, and not by her husband, Charles, the Third Trotter. Young Paul was a frequent visitor to Suchita's bedroom, and her husband Alex who knew it did not do anything to

However, the struggles for getting attention to the multifarious problems of the Anglos started much earlier, when Jacob Khan Trotter, son of Elise and Yakub, fought for the rights of his community. He went to England with a petition of Anglos-Indians which was discussed in the British parliament then. The petition described the Anglos as a "dispersed class of subjects of the crown of Great Britain governed by the United Company of merchants trading to the East Indies," and the community "forms a distinct class of society" in British India, who existed since the first permanent European establishments on the Indian continent (287). They are the children of the intermarriages between European men and Indian women. Although they are "closely allied with the European and native races, they are excluded from all the advantages that each respectively enjoys." (288) Their main grievance was that "a very large majority of the class to which they belong are entirely destitute of any rule of civil law...whether British, Hindu or Mohammedans" with which to regulate their marriages and make them lawful, and "there is no law to define the legitimacy or illegitimacy of their issue, there is no law which prescribes the succession to their property...the right of bequeathing by will...there is no law which declares which of their children...shall succeed in case of intestacy..."(288) The petition was discussed in the parliament but no action was taken for a long time.

It was only in the later years that the members of the community became conscious of the purity of their race. In the later years the community confined its marital ties within its fold, or within the Anglo-Indian clan, in spite of the fact that the entire community came into existence by intermarriages. In the Trotter family Victoria was the one from the later generation who gave great importance

to ethnic purity. She was unhappy to know that her first son, Peter Augustine married Lucia, an Italian, and she snatched all ties with them when they came to settle themselves down in Sans Souci. She did not like Alex marrying an Indian. She strongly objected when her husband wore Indian clothes and brought Indian friends home. When she selected a bride for Eustace, her grandson she checked for everything that an Anglo-Indian wife required. Thus she found Queenie speaking good English (She said perspire instead of sweat); "she was a well fleshed young girl with ice-blue eyes, pinched a little on the outside..." (466) She was an Anglo-Indian born of Burmese mother, and was working as a telephonist. Most of the other later marriages took place within the community. Victoria's second son Young Paul married a girl from the Domiciled European community. They were those Anglo-Indians who no longer had any family ties with England" and kept to themselves for years (432).

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stop it. One of her sons, Cedric was by Young Paul. Thus there was a haunting presence of illegitimacy in the community as presented by Allan Sealy.

Like many other ethnic minorities the Anglo-Indians also sought to argue for a nation of their own. They felt the need for a separate nation when they understood that both the native and foreign powers disowned them. Moreover, they were worried about their future when India becomes independent. However, like the Sikhs, only a small section of them supported the call for a nation of their own, while most of the others thought that they had to go to England. But neither got fulfilled. Many went to England but they returned either because they did not feel at home there, or because they were offered only menial jobs there. It was Young Paul from the Trotters who volunteered to claim the nation for Anglos. "[A]s the representative of Trotters and their kin he wished to secure certain rights and assurances for Anglo-Indians in independent India ones the British had left." (456) He suggested, "in case their guarantees didn't come through he began to look into the possibility of an independent homeland for his community." (456) He found the Nikobar Islands, down in the Bay of Bengal as the ideal location for the Anglo-Indian country. "If the government of India gave the Nikobar Islands to the Anglo-Indians, they could be transferred in a generation from a sinking scattered community to a wealthy unified one." (457) He contacted the government of India in this regard, and the government of India in turn wrote to the Commissioner at Car Nicobar. While waiting a reply Paul found some volunteers from his community "for a reconnaissance mission to the island", and some of them did go and the prospective settlers were allocated plots of jungle land. After six months one of them died of malaria, one disappeared

without trace, six of them decided to stay and the remaining came back (457). In the meantime the medical officer of the island informed the settlers of the danger of malaria on the shores, but young Paul never gave up his plan (457-58). However, the community did not make any serious campaign for a nation, as Sikhs did, even though the idea of a nation was an agenda in the consciousness of the community as a whole. The Anglo-Indian dream of a nation is not to be categorised as a primordial category as in the case of communities like Jews, with fixed or unchangeable expectations. Since the community was a product of colonialism, their concept of nation, as Anshuman A. Mondal discussed elsewhere, "is the product of specific historical moment." (15) The desire for a separate nation derived here when Anglo-Indians as a cultural community, or ethnicity became less culturally homogenous as they find a shared historical meaning to their existence. It is this shared historical meaning that binds "a people together and which ties that people to a historic territory or homeland." (Mondal 16) Thus, the nation is "a collectivity of meaning, a bond embedded in history through common myths, symbols, narrative and other cultural forms all of which enable a people to recognise itself as a commonality as opposed to others who do not have access to this fund of historical memories." (Mondal 16) The proclivity towards nationhood, in general, is found to be modern development. That is, with modernism, which could be called the era of nationalism, the communities all over the world showed a political unity, which impressed on them the idea that nation is "an ethnically homogenous culture community." (Mondal 16) The source of the nationalist feeling in the Anglos was

obviously, as mentioned earlier, their ill-defined nature, their hybrid status, and the lack of serious concern from both Indian and British sides.

The dream of a nation developed by the Anglos cannot be dismissed as an unimportant issue in the *Trotter-Nama*. Taking the presentation of the idea of a nation in it, the novel can be read on the lines of a concept of 'national allegory' introduced by Fredric Jameson in one of his essays. As a postcolonial cultural artefact, from a third world country the novel needs to be read as an allegory of colonialism on the one hand and as the allegory of the Anglo-Indian concept of nation. According to Jameson "all third world texts are...allegorical and in a very specific way they are to be read as what I will call national allegories" (Quoted in Ashcroft et al 155-56), especially when they are couched in western modes of representation like the novel. Therefore the story of the Trotters is an allegory of the embattled structure of a culture, where the writer constructs a historical consciousness for his community/culture, which gives meaning to the existence of its members. In a wider sense the novel represents India as a nation seen through the eyes of a minority community that wants its voice to be registered in the public sphere of India. What is achieved in this allegorical enterprise is informing the existence of a community with an undeniable historical past that must be added, and understood in relation to, the mainstream history.

Sealy gives ample clues for the allegorical reading of the novel. The narrations entitled "How history is made" (339) and "How the Raj is done" (560) are examples. They are expressive of the intentions of the book as a whole. It constructs the history of India and the Anglo-Indian community in the purview of the history of colonialism in India. It denotes that separate histories could be

constructed from the vantage point of different communities, expressing how colonialism affected each of them. Thus the colonial encounter of the Sikh community was distinct from that of the Parsis, Christians, Hindus or Muslims. All these communities underwent drastic reorientations owing to their forced contact with the colonial powers. In the case of the Anglo-Indians, since they were created by colonialism, their experience with them must be more intimate than the others, and therefore their versions of history are also significant. Through the two figurative expressions in the novel, 'How history is made' and 'How Raj is done' that I mentioned earlier, Sealy encapsulates the history of his community as well as the colonial encounter, adding a kind of annexure to the mainstream history of the country as a whole.

Another person who felt the need to take care of the apparently bleak future of the community in the novel was Cedric Khan Trotter, son of Alex Khan Trotter. He envisioned his community to be better lot, universally literate, "ripe for democratic citizenship within a heterogeneous state." (458) Deploring Young Paul's idea of an Anglo-Indian enclave with special rights and concessions he argued, "protection weakens a people." (458) He tried to look at the problems of his community from a broader perspective and was more pragmatic. He scribbled a number of poems in which he expressed his concerns and tried to address unanswerable questions about justice. In the place of the nationalism of Young Paul, Cedric cultivated a kind of internationalism that made him conscious of the other suppressed classes living in the other parts of the globe. "When civil war broke out in Spain, he wrote poems in solidarity with the republicans. And when his putative father died leaving him some money, he

booked a passage to Barcelona in order to see for himself." (458) Cedric also contributed to intellectually strengthen the community. When he died in New York "of dialectical capitalism" (460), he had a dozen books of essays and many poems to his credit. "They were all impassioned pleas on the condition of Anglo-Indians and on Indian self-rule." (460) In his books he reiterated his position against protection, and maintained, "Indians would prefer the worst self-government to the most benign foreign administration." (460) This idea was a sentiment few Trotters and not all Indians, would have endorsed as home rule loomed, but Cedric was ahead of his time." (460) All the dreams, struggles and petitions right from the early Trotters like Jacob Khan Trotter bore fruit later after India got independence. The Indian government seriously addressed their problems. The community was given representation in the Parliament. Marris, son of Paul represented the Trotters in the Parliament for a long time. The positive attitude of the new administrators made them forgo their dream of a nation, and nothing more was done towards this by anyone from the Trotters.

Two other important aspects of the Anglo-Indian community as could be understood from the novel are worth discussing here. Right from the formative years, the members of the Trotter family (and presumably the community as a whole) developed a love for art and music, and a cuisine of their own. Their interest in cultivating art practices, especially music and miniature and other paintings, and their developing a distinct food culture make them unique in Indian history. The First Trotter used the services of the sculptors like Alexander to decorate his chateau. His love of music made him build a music pavilion in Sans Souci. He had commissioned artists to create a series of engravings to show

the progress of Sans Souci. He appointed an astrologer and poet, Qaiyum in Sans Souci. There was a painter and suppositionist named Marazzi as well working for the construction of Sans Souci. Among the later Trotters, there were many who expressed themselves in art and literature. The third Trotter and, following him, the Seventh Trotter, were painters of miniatures, and their works form a major part of the Kirani School, a school of painting introduced by the Trotters. According to Geetha Ganapathy-Dore, "Sealy maintains a cryptic link between painting and writing" throughout the novel (75). In her view, there an attempt at and a critique of the self portrait (p 296) which serves as an intertextual allusion to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*." (76) Henry Louis Vivian Trotter and Cedric Khan Trotter were poets of great stature. Alex Khan Trotter's wife Suchita and Montagu's daughter, Pearl, showed their calibre in acting. Pearl became a Hollywood actor of great fame.

The Anglo-Indian community as represented by the Trotters right from time of Justin Aloysius Trotter developed a distinct food culture and cuisines, and offered recipes with a difference. Since the community consisted of people from different European countries and the Indian subcontinent, their food culture also acquired a hybrid status, including mixed varieties of two geocultural groups, European and Indian. The First Trotter gathered many cooks from different cultures and religions when he settled down in Sans Souci, after a prolonged military service (126-27). In the first few years in Sans Souci, enjoying delicacies of hybrid cuisines was one of the main priorities of the Great Trotter. As the forerunner of a family that has multiplied itself to become the Anglo-Indian community, Justin sowed seeds of a food culture and cuisine which his

community inherited for generations. However his love of food was enkindled by a dinner offered by the Nawab in honour of the visiting British governor general. It can be said that the trotters and as such the Anglo -Indian community was born on the dinner table of Justin Aloysius Trotter, because it was while eating lone dinners that he thought of establishing himself with a family that would annul his loneliness at dinner. The narrator explains this in rich and evocative details:

Justin was yet conscious of an unnamed anxiety that roamed the table, hovering like some disconsolate wasp. A knowledge he had been dimly aware of all along began to coat his tongue and for a moment cleft it to the roof of his mouth. Justin was bored. He was tired not of life, not of eating...but of eating alone. Justin was lonely. Not that he was ignorant of the pleasure of secret food-hoards, solitary feasts, private ruminations; nor were the giant banqueting hall meals devoid of charm, and their advantage over communal meal did not escape one who had known the privations of a regimental mess. It was simply that he could not, he knew, always and forever eat alone. On such occasions Justin would have liked to lift his head and see at the far end of the table a face, soft and contemplative, regarding him with, if not motherly devotion, wifely love. (128)

While his chateau took shape, his belly was also developing alongside the domes in his home. He developed insatiable love for curries and in the initial years he widened his taste by including "mint chutneys, cauliflower pickles,

cucumber salads, green mango achars, tomato kasaundis, lotus root, tamarind-pepper water, pastes, purees, preserves, curds, raitas, and thousand accompaniments of rich and satisfying food” in his menu (127). He wanted to make it a practice to take desert with meals, but the Indian cooks, although allowed a peppered sweet, did not normally serve sweets with meals. He changed this instilled habit of not taking sweets with meals, by introducing the true Indian dessert by mixing the kernels of pomegranate with crystal sugar, which he took following the courses of food (127). He built a dining room in Sans Souci, which was named later as ‘Glacierie’. “High backed chairs upholstered with maroon leather stood along the walls, ready to be drawn up should the occasion arise. Chandeliers cut and worked by Bohemian craftsmen hung in festoons waiting for the brilliant dinner parties that would last far into the night.” (127) There were also “tapestries depicting the revels of bygone ages in far countries; the pictures in between showed wedding scenes with wine and food in plenty and riotous guests convivially entwined.”(127-28) The First Trotter’s menu was by and large non-vegetarian, with the flesh of birds and lamb. Even when he flew on the air balloon he carried with him food items favourite to him like, Tandoori Partridge, and curried doves. It is probably true that it was the Anglo-Indians who popularised in India the habit of all the members of the family eating together on the dining table.

The First Trotter is to be regarded as the one who inaugurated the community’s love of sweets. After his insistence on sweets after every meal a series of sweet items encroached to the dining table and menus of the Trotters, which included Jelebis, vermicelli pudding, kulfi, almond burfi, gulab jamun and

so forth. However it was the Anglos who introduced most of these items to India. When he was on the aerial survey of the estate, the Great Trotter was regretful for not having carried anything sweet with him. When he remembered that it was his birthday, the absence of sweets became more poignant for him. "He felt a quivering of taste buds at the utmost tip of the tongue, an ungovernable tickling at the root, neither salt, nor sour, nor bitter. It promise of a sensation intensely pleasurable ...inviting surrender to pleasures unspeakable, to a long sweet slavery, to sweetness without end." (36) The First Trotter thus developed a relentless craving for sugar. He consumed a large quantity of carrot halva and jelebis during his hay days in Sans Souci. The arrival of Sultana added another sweet item in the Sans Souci menu, Vermicelli Pudding which she took regularly. The continued use of sweets and sugar made Justin a diabetic and then eventually sugar was forbidden to him. But the other members of the chateau proceeded with their rendezvous with sweets in the Glacerie.

Rose, the fourth woman picked up by Justin, who is always referred as Gul Bedan, did a lot to the development of the Anglo-Indian food culture narrated in the novel. It is said that "the milk and honey of two continents flowed in her veins" (314), while referring to the kind of items like Kulfi, Almond Burfi, and Malai Pan she introduced to the trotter household and to the community as a whole. While others referred the recipe books kept in the Sans Souci library, for making new food items, the intercontinental food culture of miscegenation and Diaspora was interred with her being. Sealy presents Rose as the inventor of gulab jamun, which is rated as the "king of sweets" (314). She invented gulab jamun as casually as she prepares other food items one day in 1844. "So it

happened that one afternoon in 1844, Rose, called Gul Bedan...approaching the kitchen in humility and openness, and taking cream and sugar in her scented hands, invented the gulab jamun." (314) Rose continued to influence the later generations that adorned their dining tables with sweets like gulab jamun.

The dining hall of Sans Souci was in fact an epitome of the importance the Trotters attached to food and eating. Eating was a cultural activity the style and attributes of which can be taken as signifiers for the specific characteristics of the Anglo-Indian community. The preferences at the dining table, and the ways of eating, and so on were of ritual value to the Anglo-Indian culture, as long as they tried to maintain it as a cultural practice. As members of a mixed group or hybrid class, the Anglos made their food and dining tables meeting grounds of the cultural/racial polarities that composed them. Thus, their food culture showed mixed qualities. For instance in Sans Souci, they related their lunch with India and dinner with England; that is "curries might be eaten at lunch, but at dinner never. Dinner being, for all Trotters of the blood, a formal affair. That lunch was of India (or India Britonized), while dinner was of Britain (or Britain Indianized)." (482). Lunch at Sans Souci was a heavy meal and dinner mostly light or not so heavy. For lunch they prepared unleavened bread, or chapattis, and such heavy items like parathas and rice. Lunches were adorned with curries, mostly of animal flesh. Dinner was "a strictly European affair" for most of the Anglos. Trotters have developed their own indigenous curry which is named Trotter curry. The chronicler explains how Trotter Curry is made with its detailed recipe (363). The Trotter Curry is said to be a "standard fare" (364) in the Glacerie of Sans Souci. "A whole generation of railway men grew up on it, virile and

dependable, so that there was truth in the claim that the trains of India ran to time on goat's feet." (364) Serious pursuit of curries started probably with Justin. It was curries, apart from sweets that induced his taste buds here in India. Fish and egg were also continued to be used right from the time of Justin. There was a person in charge of the eggs in Sans Souci. He found great appetite for fish items like "Goanese masala fish" (169), and "Fish Fricasse" was a favourite of Montagu and Victoria.

The community also had some basic beliefs regarding food and nutrition and so on which are constructed by the community in the long run, although some of them appear to be food fads. Eugene Trotter is said to have learned the following basic presumptions of food from his great grandmother, Victoria:

That Crumple Custard was a corruption, howsoever apt, of the cooks for caramel custard. That bed tea was an excellent invention for those who did not go to work, for afterwards one doze again or chase one's waking dreams until chhota haziri or the small breakfast, which preceded the greater breakfast as the morning star the sun. The spices in the morning were offensive, except for the nutmeg in the sugar-pot. That toast was eaten and toasts were drunk...that butter went with toast, not toast with butter, the same law applying to marmalade...that Smarmite was holy and must be applied sparingly, being English and expensive, that no Trotter household should be without a bottle. That toast must not be dipped in tea. That eggs were eggs on weekdays but on Sundays became omelettes. That fruit in the morning was gold, in the

afternoon silver, but at night lead. That stomach disorders were put right by a dose of effervescent salts in warm water taken in the morning. (482)

The beverages that frequented the dining table included specialised items like 'the mango fool', and excepting for dinners tea became a favourite of the Trotters in the later years. Mango fool was a "cooling hot-weather drink made from green mangoes, boiled, mashed, and mixed with milk and sugar." (48) Instead of milk water could also be used as a substitute, but proportionally. "Ice is frequently mixed in, but should not crowd the surface. Mango fool was one of the main beverages used during the time of Justin. Since dinner was a European affair, alcoholic beverages found their regular seat on the dinner table. For occasions like marriages, wine was served along with food, mainly rice and curries. Wine was later replaced by other alcoholic drinks like sherry. Trotters like Peter Augustine were addicted to other drinks like toddy. In the evening of his life Thomas Henry depended completely on his nightly consumption of alcohol. The over importance given to the food was one of those factors that led to the economic disintegration of the Trotters. They consumed beyond their means, without ever compromising with the prescribed items for each time. When the number of members increased and the sources shrunk life became a challenge for the Trotters, and they started buying things for credit. The bulging credits in the later years made the Trotters think of selling everything movable. Family dinners any way served as family meetings. Trotters solved their familial problems on the dining table. Victoria expressed her protest against Montagu's wearing Indian

clothes on the dinner table, as she declined to join the table till he stopped. Montagu had no way other than relenting to her wishes.

Although the food culture developed in Sans Souci was purely non-vegetarian, the workers mainly, the nilchis or the tribals working in the indigo fields were given only vegetarian food. Their menu had nothing but chickpeas all the days. When there is a marriage or other celebrations they were given "rice and pink dal." (293) Neither the curries and sweets, nor the beverages reached them. However the Trotters tried to maintain the difference in their food and eating practices.

It was probably the Trotters' traditional love of sweets, and food in general that made Ferdinand Fonseca Trotter to food business. Ferdinand established a chain of food outlets named "Ferdinand Fonseca's Fine Foods." (315) "As soon as he became old enough", Farida's youngest son "went back to Calcutta, the city of his fathers dreams, with a vision of his own: an establishment on Park Street where one might buy every conceivable kind of delicacy, from an oyster to a cream cake." (315) He was successful too, that within a few years he opened fine food shops in Madras, Bombay and later in Nakhilau. The generations followed him continued the business.

*Trotter-Nama* supplements an investigator of the Anglo-Indian ethnicity with a lot of details which may not be found in history books. Although he uses a fictional framework for his work, he appears to sincerely portray everything one has to know about the community. However, the book does not stand on a strict platform, whether of fiction, history or a chronicle. He puts together the fragmented details of his community in a single volume, by including fact and

fiction, reality and myth of his community. In another sense, as a member of the Anglo-Indian clan, he traces his own history, to find the roots of his ethnicity which has a past, and which cannot be underestimated, and thus to establish the lineage of his own family in order to resolve the difficult question of cultural identity. In this way he saves the community from the disease of forgetfulness, and resist erasure of its past in India. As Gita Doctor rightly puts it:

In this subcontinent of loss of memory and forgetting, where history is regarded as a mere illusion and amnesia is the perfect mode of registering progress, the last of the Trotters does return with his trunks. Not only that, but he is both player and playwright in his drama, the actor and audience, with all the props in his trunks as the history of two hundred years of the strangest encounter. His story goes beyond the sociological clichés of the macho West and the submissive East waiting to be conquered by the light of reason. (28)

Sealy tries to give legitimacy to the issue of divided loyalty by presenting people who served both Indian and British masters. And he also proves, by the juxtaposition of the condition of those who have left India that India is the permanent homeland of Anglo-Indians. While trying to construct, the history of the community from the fragmented remains, Sealy is trying to elaborate or even define the subject positions assigned to or imposed on the Anglos in India. During the colonial period they were subject to coloniser's exploitation of their services, but the association gave the feeling that they were party to colonialism. Once they understood the racial discrimination of the British, they recognised

themselves as a subaltern class. There were members among the Trotters who became activists of the nationalist movement. However may be because of a dream that one day they will be treated on par with the British, majority of the Anglos became loyal to Britain. This was clear in their response to Illbert Bill, which I have mentioned earlier. The situation changed after the independence. The Anglos dream of mass migration to England was shattered when the British objected that. They came to the subject position under the Indian rule. Thus there is a transformation of the imagined position of the elite to the position of the subaltern in their case, which obviously was indigestible to many of them. This shift of subject position occurred when the political mobilisation in terms of the kinship relations, and class associations had changed. The Anglos could not identify themselves with any group in particular in India as they were a separate category which as far the Indians were concerned was more European than Indian. The well to do Anglos as an escape from this, left for greener pastures like Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Their suppression in India was to a great extent self-imposed, and they still live with a hope that they will join their fathers' people in England. Sealy encapsulates everything like this to complete his mission of representing his community.

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**Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English  
Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels**

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*By*  
**ANVARSAHDATH VALIYAPARAMBATH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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## Chapter Four

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

The Parsi presence in the Indo-Anglian literary scenario could be traced as early as the publication of Behram Malbari's collection of poems titled, *The Indian Muse in English Garb* in 1876. Malbari was however one of the earliest Indo-Anglian writers. Apart from poetry he published essays, which were partly fictional in nature. The other early Parsi writers in India who wrote in English include Cornelia Sorabji, and D. F. Karaka who published novels in the 1940s and 50s. The early Parsi writers mostly did not give much stress on the question of Parsi identity, that they did not highlight the identity of Parsis in India as a distinct ethno-religious minority. It was however the later Parsi novelists like Bapsy Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Farukh Dhondy and Boman Desai who asserted the ethnic identity of Parsis in their novels (Barucha 73-74). These writers can be categorised as post-independence Parsi writers in India. Their works are characterized by a strong ethnocentrism and an axiomatic tone of minority discourse. They generally portray the predicament of modern day Parsis living in India who bear the agony of being felt, or most often made to feel, like a cultural outsider and who undergo a severe feeling of insecurity, and the fear of a possible merging with the dominant culture. Besides, there are disturbing ethnic features such as their declining population, late-marriages, urban-craze, high rate of divorce, migration of the young generation to countries like Canada and Australia. However, these features make the existence of Parsis in India problematic, and this problematic existence is a dominant motif in their writing.

The strange traits that the Parsi characters display in the works written by Parsi writers can also be approached as emblematic of what Dharan refers to as “ethnic atrophy syndrome.” (7) As in the case of most of the fictional writings of ethnic minority writers, the community as such is the protagonist in many of the Parsi writings. To a great extent this is true about the major fictional works of the post-independence Parsi fictional works like Boman Desai’s *The Memory of Elephants* (1988) Firdaus Kanga’s *Trying to Grow* (1990), Farukh Dhondy’s *Bombay Duck* (1990), Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Crow Eaters* (1990), Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1977), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002). All these Parsi expressions concern primarily with the question of Parsi identity on the one hand and discussing how individuals become racialized social subjects on the other, making deliberations on their community’s hopes and fears, aspirations and frustrations, and strategies for the continued survival in India. The focus of this chapter is on the Parsi ethnicity and the construction of identity as presented in the works of Rohinton Mistry, especially in his first novel, *Such a Long Journey*, which was published in 1991.

Rohinton Mistry was born in a Parsi family in Bombay in 1952, and he has lived in Canada since 1975. He published three novels and a collection of short stories. The first work, a collection of short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* appeared in the year 1977. After a break of about 14 years his celebrated first novel, *Such a Long Journey* came out in 1991, which was followed by two other novels, *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2003). *Such a Long Journey* secured the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best book, the Governor General’s award and was shortlisted for Booker Prize. His other novels were also

short listed for the Booker Prize. All through his literary career, Mistry showed tremendous commitment to representing the community of his origin. That is all his works directly or indirectly deal with the Parsi community in India. Excepting *A Fine Balance*, which is only partially devoted to representing his community, all other books are completely taking up the task of orienting on the community discussing the lives of Parsis living in India, especially in Bombay (or Mumbai), their stronghold in India. Before proceeding with the discussion of Mistry's works, especially *Such a Long Journey*, some fundamentals about the Parsi community are added in the present chapter, which would be useful for the clearer understanding of the novels under study.

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

Zoroaster - who became determining factors in the Persian political and religious development. "With these two names, Iran enters a period of history characterized in Greece, Israel, India and China by an extraordinary intellectual upheaval" (Kulke 14). Kulke observes:

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

Historians have different opinions concerning the time of Zoroaster's actual historical appearance. While western Iranists date Zoroaster's activity mainly in the fifth - sixth centuries BC, Greek historiographers and the present-day Parsees in India widely held that Zoroaster lived and taught between 4000 and 6000 BC. Zoroaster's greatness is based on the ethical rebellion against a number of false deities, and for the "transcendence of one god against the demons that do not exist" (Kulke 15). Zoroaster focussed his attention "on man's behaviour and its moral drives, largely disregarding the ritualism of the worship

of God." (Kulke 15) Unlike the primitive religions that "tried to keep men [and women] bound with external observances, Zoroaster was the greatest of all pioneers who showed the path to freedom to man, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from the blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, the freedom from the multiplicity of shrines..." (Kulke 15) In its original form the religion founded by Zoroaster is monotheism. Zoroaster proclaimed the absolute omnipotent, eternal God, Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord), in contrast to the innumerable gods and demons of his time. Kulke explains:

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

The Avesta is the holy book of Parsis. It plays a central role in Zoroaster's religion. The Avesta is attributed to Zoroaster and first written down during the time of Arsacids. It is originally supposed to have contained twenty-one books,

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

It is during the period of Sassanians' rule over Persia (226-651 A.D.) that Zoroastrianism became a state religion for the first time in history. This Iranian-Zoroastrian empire came to an end with the conquest of Iran by the Islamic

Arabians in the 7th century, and this has led to the exodus of the Parsees. The Parsees living in India are the descendants of a group of Persians emigrated to India after the conquest of Persia by the Arabians. However, there is no agreement among historians on the exact date of Parsee immigrations to India. "These emigrants were not, however, the first Persians on Indian soil. The pre-Islamic Persian Empires had already left their marks on the northern India" (Kulke 23). The details of the early Persian connection could be found in the early Hindu literatures. The *Parasikas* in the Mahabharata and the Puranas are believed to be referring to the Persians. "Inscriptions in Girnar Karli, and Nasik speak of *Pahlavas*, Persian emigrants who were later to establish (as Hinduized Pallavas) one of the most important south Indian empires." (Kulke 23) Any way it was almost certain that Persian emigrants and influences could be found long before the arrival of Parsee refugees in India. As the early Persian emigrants were integrated to the Indian culture the greatest possibility was that the Parsees of present day India are descendants of the Persian Zoroastrians who emigrated to India after the Islamization of Persia. The prevailing assumptions of the circumstances and stages of the migrations of Parsis from Persia are mostly based on the chronicle "Kissah-i-Sanjan", written by the Parsee priest, Behaman Kaikobad Sanjana in Nausari. "According to this chronicle those Persians who clung unflinchingly to the beliefs of Zoroaster were forced by the religious persecution of the Muslims to leave their homeland and flee, to begin with, to the remote and mountainous region of Khurasan." (Kulke 25) Not many details are available on the extent to which the Zoroastrians were persecuted by the Muslims. Parsi historians like G.K. Nariman rejects the religious persecution

theory calling it purely mythical and opines that a poll tax imposed on Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews was the major factor that made them flee, and otherwise they were untouched (Cited in Kulke 25). Although there are controversies regarding the credibility of its contents among historians, Kulke wrote citing different sources that:

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

The king of Sanjan, Jadi Rana allowed Parsees to settle in Sanjan, and he imposed certain conditions on them like, they have to explain their religion to the king; they have to give up their native Persian language, and take on the languages of India; their women should wear traditional dress of India; the men should lay down their weapons, and they should hold their wedding processions only in the dark. The Parsees fulfilled the first few of these conditions. Gujarati became the native language of the community and sari, the traditional garment of Parsee women. Anyhow, the Parsees managed to "Clothe their cultural concessions to their Indian environment" (Kulke 29). It must have been their decision to give up some of their old customs, while strictly adhering to tradition, that enabled the community survive in India as a minority for more than 1200 years. According to

the available historical evidence the Parsis built their first fire temple on Indian soil after five years of their settlement in Snjan, "which was to shelter from then on their holy fire (Iran Shah) rescued from Iran. With this the Parsis had a new religious centre which contributed to their close attachment to their newly chosen homeland." (Kulke 29) In an important historical development in the history of the community, when Akbar, the Mogul emperor conquered Gujarat in 1573, he got interested in the Parsi faith and held religious discussions with the Parsi priest, Dastur Meherji Rana. When Akbar conducted religious disputes in Fatehpur Sikri Meherji Rana was invited to represent Parsees. "After 1582, Akbar and part of his court became followers of a syncretistic monotheism (tauhid-i-ilahi) developed by himself and assimilating Sufism and Zoroastrianism." (Kulke 31) The Parsees began to settle in other parts of Gujarat towards the end of 10th century. Later they moved to the other parts of the country especially, Bombay. The Parsis had settled in Bombay before the Portuguese period. But Parsis came to Bombay in larger numbers when the British developed Bombay into an important trading centre. The first to come to Bombay were Parsis who had already settled in places like Surat, but later Parsis from all other scattered settlements moved to Bombay in large numbers. During the colonial period the Parsis could skilfully mediate between different European powers and Indian rulers like the Nawab of Surat, the English East India Company and the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa, and thus got their own interests attended to as merchants. As Kulke has noted, "The Parsees as a minority, got into an extremely exposed position in this in this mediation function. Close contact with the Europeans gave the Parsees the 'know-how' of European trade and business

organization and so laid the foundation for their subsequent economic and social rise under English rule. In addition this mediation role is the root...in Parsee identity crisis and social reorientation." (33) Parsi migration to Bombay started first when the British developed Bombay as a trading centre and they were believed to have been encouraged to migrate by the British. The British provided them with a piece of land in Malabar Hill to establish the first Dakhma (Tower of Silence) in Bombay. Today more than 70 per cent of the Indian Parsis are living in Bombay. Migration to Bombay was also enhanced initially due to a famine in Gujarat in 1790 and subsequently a big fire in Surat in 1837 (Kulke 36). Apart from all these Bombay's attractiveness and the underdeveloped state economy of Gujarat brought the Parsis to Bombay. Now there are about 200,000 Parsis throughout the world, out of which 100,000 are living in India.

The cooperation between Parsis and the colonial powers improved the status of the community in India. "Parsis were the first Indian community in India to enter into close commercial and intellectual contact with the British." (Kulke 240) in fact, the peripheral position of the Parsis in India before the British arrival was changed by their adoption of British value system and English education. The Parsees only partially supported and worked for India's independence. "While the congress Parsees had reached the goal for which they had fought for years, the majority of the community, which up till then, had kept its distance from the national movement, saw itself forced to reinterpret its position in Indian society." (Kulke 263). It was however their ability to adapt with the changing social patters, that the community had learned long back, that helped them here. They achieved this by clinging to their faith even in the midst

of their being made fun of the distinct practices of the community, by some of the mainstream groups. But the community was all the more endangered from within itself owing to problems like the decreasing number of population caused by low fertility rate, high marital age, mixed marriages and emigration; the impoverished state of the middle class in the community and the excessive dependence on charitable institutions. Apart from this westernisation and urbanization started much earlier, which was not affected by the departure of the British also worked as a hindrance to the complete indianization and acceptance of the Indian realities. This has created a feeling of being outsiders in the community, in spite of their more than thousand years' history in India. Taking into account the pictures of Parsis brought about by the Parsi writers one could see graver problems, along with the above discussed ones, as disturbing the community. Thus, during the course of history, on several occasions the community faced threats of cleansing and brutal subjection, and psychological harassment from some sections of the dominant community. The anxieties faced by the community during such crises, along with the problems emanating from within its own fold, form the thematic core of most of the Parsi writings in India. As members of an ethnic minority in India, Parsis closely watched the complex political aftermath of India's independence, and when required, they reacted to socio-political issues such as the partition, the emergency and so on, providing a Parsi view of things. Bapsi Sidhwa, for example, in her novel *Ice-Candy Man* brings out a Parsi view of the partition through the narrative of a Parsi girl, Lenny. The Parsi novels most importantly viewed socio-political changes from a minority perspective, and attempted to bring out the predicament of minorities in

India. In general, a concern for the minorities is a driving force in Parsi writing. In the course of time the Parsis, however, acquired a unique willingness to comprehend and adjust to the changing realities. The continuing aggression of the dominant, host cultures made some of them sacrifice their traditions and convictions. Occurrences that questioned the ethnic purity of the community are seen in some of their novels. In Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990), for example, Brit's family permits a sister to marry a Muslim named Salim, even though Muslims are the archetypal enemies of the Parsis. Mistry's works also give expression to these issues in detail.

The community is found to be the first priority for Mistry as a writer. That is, his creativity is closely linked to his cultural or ethnic identity or more precisely with his membership in an ethnic minority in India. Thus, more than the individual subjectivity, one should talk about the collective subjectivity of the Parsi community in India that works as the driving force in his creative works. (This is in spite of his emigration to Canada about 30 years ago; one can see that he still retains the symptoms of his cultural memory as a member of an ethnic minority in India). This is probably true about all ethnic minority writers. Therefore, their novels are imaginations of their own community that may include the current reality and the aspirations that the individual members retain in their collective consciousness. All communities, to Benedict Anderson, are in some sense "imagined." Even the members of a small group or a family relate to each other with "an element of fond imagining," and any political unit necessarily requires its constituents or members to partake in a collective identity which is irreducible to a face-to-face encounter (154). Here, in the case

of creative writers like Mistry, apart from being part of a collective identity, they use their imagination to carry out the twin role of representation and recreation. While writing with imaginary fulfilment of representing the community's vantage point, invoking its history and fragments from the cultural memory, and current crises that it has to resolve, these writers also recreate the community from the represented variants of them in the others' imagination, in order to correct or provide alternative and authentic pictures, of their community, and thus to escape branding them as a type, with fixed characteristics. In other words they resist all sorts of stereotyping through their creative enterprises. According to Carrie Tirado Bramen "One of the most difficult challenges confronting writers, and particularly minority writers, is how to represent ethnic and racialized characters without resorting to stereotypes." (124) They have to be careful not to include too many signs of, say Parsi culture that would make them seem clichéd. "The writer, moreover, needs to walk a fine line between the familiar and the over familiar, between the recognizable and the excessively visible." (Bramen 124) although "identity tropes are necessary to give an ethnic group a degree of cultural and textual visibility and internal coherence...an excess of identity tropes can cross the line into tiresome predictability." (Bramen 124)

The works of Mistry are to be understood with reference to his membership to the Parsi ethnicity, and thus the points of view that he expresses are related to the ideological groundings and strategies of survival that the community adopted in its more than 1200 years long stint in India as a minority community. Basically he deals with the lives of Parsis, with focus on their

pertinent problems like the high rate of migration, degenerating population, external threats, internal problems, faith, and so on. At a deeper level creative works for them are ways to solve what Tracey Sedinger calls elsewhere as the “trauma of subjectivization” that “persists within the subject's psyche as a sort of primal scene” (47). According to Sedinger, “[i]n Fanon's version of this scene, the installation of racial/ethnic identity occurs within a representational structure that resolves the trauma of interpellation in a specifically imaginary way.” (47) Thus writing is a way to escape from all sorts of interpellations and cultural overruling, as writing provides the writer with a chance to delve into his/her imaginary world, where his/her particular point of view is fearlessly expressed. Moreover, fictional writing makes possible what is otherwise impossible, in the sense that the writer can make political statements against dominating forces by the creation of characters like Major Bilimoria in *Such a Long Journey* who in fact is a fictional version of Nagarwala of the 1970s. In the case of Mistry again he invokes a lot of factual details and figures from history in his works. Perhaps this is a strategy found in many other ethnic minority and other writers like Arundhati Roy, Allan Sealy and Khushwant Singh.

Mistry carries out the mission of giving voice to the community in all his works. His fictional works are set in the closely-knit and isolated Parsi community in India. In his first work, a collection of short stories entitled, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* Mistry addresses the position of Parsis, and a sense of unease that they felt in postcolonial India, through the multidimensional portrayal of the lives of Parsis living in an apartment complex in Bombay, named ‘Firozsha Baag’. It is probably the sense of unease that make them choose to migrate to

countries like Canada. The inmates of Firozsha Baag are representatives of the aging community; their flabbergasted faces talk volumes about the sense of dejection that has captured the life of the community. As in the case of Yezad in Mistry's own *Family Matters* and Gustad Noble of *Such a Long Journey*, something or the other that affects the routine course of their existence almost always disturbs the inmates of Firozsha Baag. They, however, sail against the inclement conditions with the hope of a better future, to avoid the ensuing journey. The first story in the collection, 'Auspicious Occasion' metaphorically projects through the events taking place in the house Rustomji, the struggle for peaceful survival of a minority community amidst problems that come from within and outside. Rustomji and his wife Mehroo prepare to celebrate *Behram Roje*, a Parsi auspicious day, but the day is getting spoilt by problems ranging from a leaking lavatory to the murder of Parsi priest, *Dustoor Dunshija* allegedly by a Chasniwalla employed at the fire temple. The story also tells us how the customs and rituals of the community get lost in the long run of time. In Rustomji's house it was his wife Mehroo who decide to celebrate *Behram Roje* in a befitting manner. For Rustomji these customs were dead and meaningless while people like Mehroo (and women in general) try to continue this tradition of the community undisturbed. Most of the characters in the stories are old or middle aged, excepting some like Jehangir in 'Exercises' and the other young boys who assemble to listen Nariman's stories in 'Squatter'. The young ones of most of the families, after their marriage, immigrated to Canada, leaving their parents to the memory of the good old days of the community. The parents lead a secluded life, without anyone to take care of them in their old age, not

even at the time of their death. In 'Condolence Visit' for example Minocher did not have his son near him when he died after a prolonged illness; his wife, Daulat, alone had to take care of everything. Even boys like Kersi and Vivat in 'Squatter' talk a lot about their dream countries, America and Canada. They even send letters of enquiry to the high commission offices of these countries seeking details of migration. The aged couple in 'Swimming Lessons' eagerly await letters from their son in Canada although most of the letters are mechanical and they do not convey anything of filial bond. Fear of an onslaught from outside is seen lingering in the minds of most of the Parsi characters. In 'Swimming Lessons' for example the parents who wait for letters from Canada even think that the postmen may destroy their letters if they antagonise them in any way because it was the time of Shiv Sena agitation about Maharashtra for Maharashtrians. In *Such a Long Journey* he presents the life of a middle class Parsi, whose peaceful life is disturbed by a series of incidents. The central character of this novel can be taken as symbolic of the community itself. I have attempted a detailed enquiry into the novel later in this chapter. Mistry's second novel, *A Fine Balance*, is like an open political statement on the condition of India during the 1970s, in the wide perspective of the notorious Internal Emergency declared by the Indira Gandhi government. Like the people queuing up in front of the government offices for various services, like getting a Ration Card, registering for Family planning certificate etc., in the novel do, Mistry laughs hysterically at the "bureaucratic absurdities" take place in India, during the 1970s (178) He presents instances of gross violation of human rights in the dislocation of people in the name of slum

clearance, forced castration in sterilization camps, casteist violence and political anarchy, communal tension, and so on invoking factual details. Here, Mistry presumably works out a Parsi, and some times an outsider's point of view to look at the gross violation of human rights, as in the case of mass clearing of slum dwellers in the cities, and forced sterilization of people narrated to have carried out by the government in India during the emergency; the ugly face of casteism; the disintegrated political climate in India and so on. There is a penchant to look for others in the same boat of his community, and share their problems in equal terms with his own community's. His presentation of the terrible experiences of the members of the Chamaar community, who were basically tanners and leather workers, in the hands of the upper class Thakurs, because they took deviant professions like tailoring, and because they asserted their rights, is an example for this. Narayan, the Chamaar turned tailor, and two others were brutally killed and hanged in a public place by the goondas of upper classes under the leadership of by Thakur Dharmasi (146). He appears to have cultivated a dream of the retreat from the marginalized communities in India to keep the hazardous effects of caste based value system of the dominant Hindu community at bay from the minorities. In *A Fine Balance* he makes the children of Dukhi Mochi belonging to the Chamaar community of tanners and leather workers take up tailoring as their profession. Dukhi Mochi, by sending his young son's to be apprenticed in tailoring to his friend Ashraf, a Muslim, "dared to break the timeless chain of caste" (95), although his family had to pay the penalty by being severely attacked by the members of the upper classes. Similar incidents could be seen in other works as well. In all these he also

promotes an empathetic attitude to the 'victims' of majoritarian violence and physical and psychological suppression. It seems as if the writer foresees a future for minorities in India, including his own community, by developing bonhomie of all minorities. The writer's dream of the coordination of the minorities to ease the fear psychosis common to almost all minorities is what seems to have reflected in the efforts taken by Ashraf, a tailor, to uplift the poor tanners like Narayan and Om prakash in *A Fine Balance*. He helps them learn tailoring and later assist them to escape from the place, in view of the jealousy and violence of the upper classes. Although there is an archetypal rivalry between Muslims and Parsis, Mistry displays a strange but desirable amity as existing between them in India. Probably this is part of a conditioning underwent by both communities to counter a common enemy in the sphere of their operation. The portrayal of Hussain Miyan, a Muslim victim of post-Babri Masjid-demolition riots in Bombay, in *A Fine Balance* is perhaps part of this mission. Hussain explains the atrocities committed against him and his family in the riots: "[I]n those riots the police were behaving like gangsters. In Muslim mohallas they were shooting their guns at innocent people. Houses were burning, neighbours came out to throw water. And the police? Firing bullets like target practice. These guardians of law were murdering everybody! And my poor wife and children...I couldn't even recognize them." (155) Mistry's third novel *Family Matters*, again is a novel that deals with the Parsi community. The novel reiterates almost all the issues the community encounter in India as a minority community that Mistry has discussed in *Such a Long Journey*. However the novel bears indications of the ageing of the community,

where the glories of the past seem to be disappearing slowly. The central figure in the novel, Nariman Vakeel, a seventy-nine year old Parsi widower, suffering from Parkinson's disease is probably symbolic of the ageing community itself, like the characters in *Tales From Firozsha Baag*. When Nariman's old age and Parkinson's disease were coupled with a broken anklebone, he becomes a burden for his daughter, Roxana and son-in-law Yezad, and their two young sons. Like Gustad Noble of *Such a Long Journey* Yezad's is a middle-class Parsi living in Bombay who is affected by a lot of difficulties, and problems, some of which are common worries of all Parsis of his time in Bombay. Thus all his works were carrying out a certain ideological function that is closely linked to his community and its position in India.

Coming to focus on *Such a Long Journey*, the novel takes its title from T.S. Eliot's poem, 'Journey of the Magi', which deals with something related to the biblical story of the exodus. The writer uses the lines, "A cold coming we had of it, / Just the worst time of the year / For a journey and such a long journey..." from the poem as an epitaph to the novel, along with two other quotations. It is quite clear that the novelist hints at the metaphor of journey which is significant in the novel, as referring both to the predicament of the central character and the history of the community (considering the historical exodus of the ancestors of the community from Iran long ago). According to Anjana Desai, journey referred to in the novel "is the journey of a nation, of a city and of an ethnic minority, and of an individual man of this community." (134). Journey is important in Mistry as long as it talks about the predicament of a community. The Parsis, it seems, still carry the memory of their ancestors' historical exodus from Iran to India. And

this archetypal memory recurs in the form of a sense of unease in India, which obviously is multiplied by the problems from outside the community that make them think of further journeys. Journey for the Parsis are a continuous thing that their predicament is to prolong the journey that also gives them their identity. Mistry has a personal history of journeying. He migrated to Canada when he was twenty-three years old. In an interview with Mclay he said, "having lived in Bombay for twenty three years I felt something in me was incomplete...However, having arrived in the West this sense of incompleteness turned around and I became aware of the loss of my home." (199-200). Mistry meant to say that wherever they go they felt a sense of incompleteness, and thus indirectly suggesting the loss of their motherland or fatherland long ago.

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

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

sometimes not to be compelled to preserve the past, especially when the present is so painful. (200)

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

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

connections, as it exemplifies the thesis that community is prioritised over the other concerns in Mistry. It begins in the fashion of a Parsi starting his day, with a prayer to Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, with a reference to the beginning of a day in the central character, Gustad's life:

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

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

His devotion to his family, his faith in Zoroastrianism and his love for his friends and his community are continually tested through a series of adverse circumstances. "Loyalty and journeying constitute two major contrasting patterns in his life: the first entails constancy and commitment; the second, mutations and metamorphosis." (Malak 108) The sad predicament of Gustad evokes pity in the readers as the experience, fears, traumas and frustrations that he undergoes are

those of a minority community, and in a wider sense, of all ethnic minority communities. Problems that come one after another dim his aspirations, and make him distraught and helpless and so, he displays a strange fear that he and his community are always targeted by others, which seems to be symptomatic of a syndrome. He observes the complex political cauldron of India with suspicion, and the anti-minority attitude of a section of the dominant community raises in him fears of an impending, disastrous ethnic cleansing awaiting his community. What is narrated in the novel however, are the fragmented pictures of what the community experienced in India during the 1970s, coming from the memory of the author. The situation, the political climate of Bombay obviously has changed now. However, even after the 1970s, there were many instances of communal tension and violence in Bombay that threatened the lives of the minorities. And therefore the novel has relevance even to the Parsis of present day Bombay. Moreover, the writer has focussed also on the mental make up of the modern day Parsi, who keeps comparing the grim present with the bright past. Past like many other minorities is the last source of happiness as far as community experiences were concerned. Through the analysis of the troublesome life of his Parsi hero, Mistry however deconstructs the myth of secularity adorned to Bombay as well as India. His portrayal thus is to show the hidden corridors of activities that makes cracks in the constitution and maintenance of secularism in India.

Disappearance of Major Jimmy Bilimoria from Khodadad building, and the complex episodes of events that followed Gustad's receiving a parcel despatched by Major Bilimoria containing ten lakh rupees was the first blow that Gustad felt. Bilimoria had been a loving brother for him and Gustad considered

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

Major Bilimoria's disappearance, and the parcel that he had despatched, however, caused considerable havoc in Gustad's small world. It had wounded him more than anyone could see (14), as the arrest of Bilimoria on charges of

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

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

In May 1971, the chief cashier of the Parliament Street branch of State Bank of India in New Delhi received a telephone call ostensibly by from Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, instructing

him to hand over 60 lakhs which were urgently needed to fund a secret operation in Bangladesh, to a courier, Sohrab Nagarwala. The chief cashier complied but in a chain of events which still defies a satisfactory explanation, Nagarwala was arrested, tried in a highly dubious fashion and sentenced to four years in prison, where he died the following year. (Quoted in Desai 131)

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

His first son, Sohrab's refusal to join IIT and his unprecedented behaviour at home and at the birthday party of Roshan disturbed Gustad a lot. He was forced to send the boy out of his house because his son's behaviour was an added crisis to his already increasing worries. Primarily Sohrab's attitude signified the clash

between generations that disturbed the orthodox Parsis a lot. However, Mistry presents the problem of the clash of father and son in all his novels. Most of these clashes, interestingly, take place on birthday parties. Like Sohrab in *Such a Long Journey*, in *A Fine Balance* Nusswan openly declares his unwillingness to proceed with his father's wishes on his education and career, by declining to be a doctor like his father on his sixteenth birthday. Dr. Shroff like Gustad was terribly upset at this, although he did not show it outside, and this incident has become a turning point in the father-son relationship (*A Fine Balance* 16). Similarly, Murad quarrels with his father, Yezad on inviting his girl friend for his birthday party in *Family Matters*. More over, he makes fun of his father reading from their Holy Scriptures, when he is asked to read from it he says, "I don't have the leisure to read all this interesting stuff" (463). Yezad was quite unhappy that his son who always uses Zoroaster, instead of Zarathustra, didn't even know that Zoroaster is a "Greek perversion of our prophet's name," Zarathustra (463). Murad and Yezad quarrelled almost every day on matters like hairstyle, girl friend and so on. In all these cases, the fathers, who uphold the tradition and value system of the community, find their children not conforming to the wishes of their parents, disregard and sometimes digress from their tradition and values, being attracted to modern system of life. This clash between generations can be considered as dominant theme in the works of ethnic minority writers. Gustad had great expectation in his son, "Sohrab will make a name for himself", said Gustad "with a father's just pride," and he expected that "[a]t last our sacrifices will prove worthwhile." (3) But he becomes terribly upset when he understood that his son lacked the fighting spirit and strategies of survival that he acquired from his

experiences in living in India as a Parsi, as he heard his son saying "I'm sick and tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time. I'm not interested in it, I'm not a jolly good fellow about it, and I'm not going there." (48) The reason behind Gustad's bewilderment and anger was intensified when he thought that he sacrificed a lot for a future for his son.

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

Gustad's friend, Malcolm used to remind him that "we are minorities in a nation of Hindus" (23). And in his opinion, the existence of minorities completely depends on the Hindus, although cow, the sacred animal of the Hindus, is the source of protein for the minorities. The fear psychosis that emanated from the growing Hindu fundamentalism and sectarianism, and attempts towards the claim of cultural nationalism, that gained momentum during the 1970s looms large in Gustad's mind. He finds it hard to deal with the hostile environment, that tormented him amidst his personal problems. However, in spite of all these, Gustad remains true to himself and to his faith. Religions for him "were not like

garment styles that could be changed at whim or to follow fashion", and he strongly believed that "all religions were equal... nevertheless one had to remain true to one's own." (24) Through the characterisation of Gustad Mistry probably hints at the relentless courage and patience that minorities like Parsis had needed during their troubled times. Gustad defended his religion against the general cynicism prevailing in India about its rituals and practices such as the function of the Tower of Silence upon which the dead Zoroastrians are thrown to the vultures. He uncompromisingly "preferred the sense of peaceful mystery and undivided serenity that prevailed in the fire temple" (24). Gustad held that his religion had a superior claim over Christianity and Islam. Malcolm used to tease him often by saying that it is Christianity that had come first to India before Parsis came from Persia running away from Muslims. But Gustad was never ready to bear with any belittling of the importance of his religion. "Our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of god was even born; a thousand years before Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam" (24).

Gustad identified Shiv Sena and Indira Gandhi's authoritarian politics and anti-minority policies as two major threats that his community had to deal with. Shiv Sena's fascist model onslaught on minorities was perhaps the most disturbing problem for Gustad. He heard goondas shouting, "Parsi crow-eaters we'll show you who is the boss." (39) Gustad and his friend Dinshawji were unhappy with Indira Gandhi, mainly because she nationalised banks which adversely affected Parsi hold on the banking industry. Dinshawji recalls that,

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

the drive to change names says, "Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real gandoo Raj." (73) For him:

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

Dinshawji's emotion contains the worry of a whole community, the fear of being erased from the history. As for the Parsis, their history is closely linked to the places in Bombay. When place names are changed it is like pushing certain things out of it, and finally only the desired remain in the picture. The Parsis also might have felt that the extremist elements by 'Indianising' or rather 'Marathaising' everything, was denying the place of the so-called outsiders, thus confirming the minority's outcaste status. When the pro-Maratha rioters attacked the bank in which they were working, Dinshawji thought that it was the end of their innings in his life (39). Mistry's strong indignation to these activities initiated by the proprietors of cultural nationalism can be seen reflected all through his works. In *Family Matters* for example, Mr. Kapur had to pay a tax to some organisations for retaining 'Bombay' (instead of Mumbai) in the name of his shop. And ultimately he had to give his life for that.

The accounts of the political turmoil and the resultant subjection of the minorities referred to in the novel are not to be delimited to the mere fictionality of the novel. Rather, as Mistry is writing from the cultural sphere of an ethnic minority, these accounts are to be approached as resulting, from the writer's interest and participation in the socio-political scenario of the country in the post-independence era. Mistry foresaw the emergence of extremist forces that wage war against the cultural pluralism of Indian society. He understood the immediate threats posed by extremist organizations like Shiv Sena directly against the multicultural, multiethnic character of Indian society; the overwhelming racism and so forth. The threat of violence unleashed by the majority develops a recurring fear in Gustad's mind that eventually makes him a paranoid. Shiv Sena was the target of Gustad's contemptuous verbal onslaught as well. He calls Shiv Sena leader worshiper of Hitler and Mussolini (73). In his view, what Shiv Sena knows was to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout slogans, mark threats and change road names. Tehmul-Lungraa was recruited once by Shiv Sena to distribute racist pamphlets against minorities in Bombay (89). During the Indo-Pak war when the streets of Bombay were blacked out at night in view of Pakistani air raids, Shiv Sena activists roamed the city streets throwing stones at windows, beating up their enemies and robbing houses (298).

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

importantly, the events connected to Bilimoria in which Indira Gandhi was a party.

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

A major concern in minority discourse and subaltern writing, whether it is fiction or non-fiction, is its interest in the socio-political conditions in which it is produced and located. Subaltern literature, as I have previously pointed out, therefore, is not a formalist enterprise aimed at producing purely aesthetic

expressions sans reality. However, the interest in the formal properties in literature is part of the bourgeois majoritarian culture and its discourses in which literature is divorced from the social. In India, the dominant form of expression was characterized by the presentations of the idealised Indian self which is defined in terms of what Romila Thapar called "Syndicated Hinduism" (Quoted in Ahmed 15-6). Mistry develops his story from the subaltern perspective, thus offering a counter narrative that subverts the predominant tendency of weaving narratives around the idealised Indian Hindu self. Writing from the margins, and representing the voice of the subaltern, Mistry tries to escape the possibilities of replicating the procedures of the national literatures the premises and the European bourgeoisie, as Aijaz Ahmed pointed out elsewhere, formulated contours of which, in the period of their class hegemony and colonial expansion (15). What we come across in the general matrix of the mainstream Indian literature, according to Aijaz Ahmed, is an unfinished bourgeois project which determined:

The notion of canonicity in tandem with the bourgeois, upper caste dominance of the nation state; a notion of classicism part Brahminical part borrowed from Europe; the ongoing subsumptions of literary utterances and cultures by print capitalism, accommodation with regional languages but preoccupations with constructing a supra-linguistic Indian literature based on an idealised Indian self.... textual attitude to lived histories; notions of literary history so conventional as to be not even properly bourgeois. (15-16).

The subaltern's agony as a cultural outsider has spiritual implications in the novel. The pangs of growth that Gustad experiences due to his being thrown to the margins in adverse conditions appear to be a spiritual test in which he succeeds. Gustad's quest ends in reconciliation and peace. He makes peace with his son, when they understand each other, and when they understand the necessity to be together. He removes the black papers from his windows letting the rays of hope peep into his room. Although the agony gets no final solution, he had the feeling of temporarily resolving it as an outsider. He shows that personal integrity and right approaches (as taught by his own religion) can make man survive even in the inclement condition. He had nowhere else to migrate to other than his own ethnicity. His ordeal that resembled an epic struggle involved physical and mental torture. Gustad's ultimate escape as the representative of an ethnic minority from the tyranny of time and circumstances culminated with a feeling of reconciliation, although he had to part with some of his best-loved friends. His survival was a morale booster to all minority struggles. The novel is one that articulates resistance in general. Resistance is both political and psychological. Firstly, resistance here is the way the politically oppressed, Parsis fight back (through the discourse) against the powers that oppresses them or against the conditions that make them feel unease. As Davis has pointed out elsewhere, "Resistance can be armed or passive - both indicate the rejection of the power of the political over structure and a sense of group solidarity against that structure." (12) The psychological resistance on the other hand is a kind of opposition to all those forces within a person (the patient) which hinders his/her associations and activities. According to Davis "there is an inverse relationship

between the political sense of resistance and the psychoanalytic one. In the case of the political, resistance aims at change...in the case of psychoanalytical, the resistance is defensive reluctance or the blockage of change." (12) Both types of resistance can be found in *Such a Long Journey*. By unleashing an open onslaught on the entire gamut of political activities in the country hiding behind the screen of fiction the novelist portrays the resistance of a community, and by clinging to the age-old tradition of the community and thus declining to change, he sketches his community's psychological resistance. The novel, on the whole justifies the notion that his community is the first priority for Rohinton Mistry.

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**Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English  
Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels**

*Dissertation submitted to the University of Calicut  
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*By*  
**ANVARSAHDATH VALIYAPARAMBATH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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## Chapter Five

### **The Syrian Christian Community in Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things***

In this chapter Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* is examined as a novel that articulates the Syrian Christian ethnicity in Kerala, India with focus on the construction of identity in the community, its internal structure and contradictions and the relation of its constituents to the larger politico-cultural scenario in Kerala of which the community is part. The chapter is also aimed at extending the consideration of the problems of community representation in India, the theoretical questions concerning the ethnic identity in the multicultural, multi-ethnic Indian situation. I would also focus on the way the literary text establishes and its author's identity as the locus of activities in the text, as that affected the formation of ideological standpoints in the author, and the present status of the author's approach to the community of his/her origin. Like the respective communities of Khushwant Singh, Allan Sealy, and Rohinton Mistry, the community that Arundhati Roy presents also has a complex history, and is a minority community in India. One can notice a strange amalgam of political and cultural motives in the novel that expresses itself when depicting the inner layers in the community's social organisation, value systems, hopes, fears, aspirations inner furies, and the organisation of power relations within and outside the community. As a thorough understanding of the history and structure of the community is a necessity to approach the novel with focus on the community or ethnicity, I would devote the first few pages of this chapter to discuss the origin and history of the

community, before settling down with a detailed analysis of the novel. Very few works are available on the origin early history of the Syrian Christian community. Among them the most important are the two historical documents by Dr. Claudius Buchanan (titled "The Syrian Christians in Kerala" published in 1814) and O. M. Parry (titled "The Ancient Syrian Church in Mesopotamia" published in 1892). Apart from these, studies were also conducted by Indian historians and scholars on the history of the community. Arundhati Roy also gives some details regarding her community in the novel under study.

It is generally believed that Christianity existed in Kerala, (formerly Travancore) right from about the middle of first century. Syrian Christians, who are also known as St. Thomas Christians, are believed to be the first Christians in India. Saint Thomas Christians of India are defined "as those who are descendants of the first-century converts to Christianity who received their baptism in Malabar" that "include only those who follow the 'Law of Thomas,' the customs and traditions sanctioned by the Apostle himself; those who used the Syriac language in their liturgy; those who maintained the exclusivity of the caste regulations handed down from their Hindu ancestors with regard to etiquette, pollution and purification, meals, and marriages." (Pullapilly 718) This Christian community of Malabar is also known as "Mar Thoma Christians," "Nasrani Mappilas," "Christians of the Serra," "Syrian Christians," and "Chaldeans." (Pullapilly 719) Further, "the present-day Christian communities in Malabar who are the offshoots of the original community the Apostle Thomas founded. They are the two churches in communion with the papacy, the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches, and the six churches

which are outside the obedience of Rome, namely, the Syrian Orthodox, the Independent Syrian Church of Malankara, the Mar Thomite Church, Saint Thomas Evangelical Church of India, the Church of South India, and the Church of the East." (Pullapilly 719) According to them it was St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ who pioneered Christianity in Malabar. It is almost certain that "the earlier conversions must have been effected by a person of great influence and magnetic personality" for among the first converts there were several people who occupied positions of authority and influence in Hindu society (Lukose 167). It is held that the Christianity in Malabar is older than any form of Christianity that existed in Europe. "It was Eastern in character, to be more specific it was Syrian." (Lukose 168) They were called Syrian, firstly because it was believed that they were reinforced by the Christians came to Malabar from Persia, and secondly they followed scriptures written in Syrian language. The earliest inscriptions, found on two slabs in one of the Syrian churches near Kottayam, in Pahlavi language, the official language of the Persian empire during the Sassanian dynasty, are the ones that hint at the Persian origin of the Syrian Christians (Geevarghees 121). According to S.I. Rajan and K.S. James,

Notwithstanding the legend of these "St. Thomas Christians," Kerala had trade links with the Persian Gulf and Greeks even before Christian era, and evidence of an early connection between Malabar and the Persian church provides some confirmation that a church existed in Kerala. That a group of foreign settlers under the leadership of Thomas of Cane migrated to Kerala is

indisputable, though whether it occurred in the middle of the fourth century or much later is undecided. A particular sect of Syrian Christians who claim to be direct lineal descendents of Thomas of Cane exists in the state, but there is no record of Christian life in Kerala until the eighth century. The relationship with the church in Persia seems to have continued in one form or another. (23-24)

The Syrian Christians, who came to Malabar, according to historians like Kurtz, left Persia following persecution by Magians. The presence of Syrian church in Malabar was, however first noticed and reported by Cosmas Indicopleustus who visited south India in A.D. 522 (Geevarghees 127). He reported that the bishops of the church found in Malabar ordained in Persia. Since two major sects of Christians namely Nestorians and Jacobites existed in Persia then, it was debated in which sect the forerunners of Syria Christians in Malabar belonged. The Patriarch of Antioch has been regarded as the supreme head of Syrian church since the very early times. "It seems also reasonably clear that from the middle of the sixth century onwards, the Jacobites under the Patriarch of Antioch gained widespread influence and popularity throughout the east." (Lukose 171) Most of the historians were of the opinion that the Syria Christians of Kerala were of Jacobite rather than Nestorian origin. Some historians believed in the probability of Jacobites prevailing in Malabar "at least from twelfth to fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." (Lukos 173) it was only lately that the Roman church discovered the spiritual influence of the Christians of Malabar. It was John of Monte Corvino and the Dominican friar,

Jordan who informed the Roman Catholic Church of the existence of St. Thomas Christians in Malabar. "It was Pope John (XXII) who sent the same Bishop Jordanus (friar Jordan) in 1328 to Nazarene Christians at Quilon, asking them to abjure their schism and to enter the unity of the catholic church." (Lukose 184) Pope Eugene IV also tried to fraternise with Malabar Christians by sending envoys. But these attempts did not bear fruit, as the Syrian church of Malabar continued to observe their Christianity.

The first reference of the ancient Christian in Malabar were reported to be found in Portuguese histories. When Vasco De Gamma arrived at Cochin in 1503, he saw sceptres of the Christian king, "for the Syrian Christians had formerly regal power in Malay-Ala [Malabar]. The name of their last king was Beliarte, and he dying without issue, the dominion devolved on the king of Cochin and Diamper." (Buchanan 11) The Portuguese were surprised to find hundreds of Christian churches on the coast of Malabar. "[B]ut when they became acquainted with the purity and simplicity of their worship, they were offended." (Buchanan 11) They tried to argue that their churches belonged to the Pope, but the people there did not have even heard of Pope. "The European priests were yet more alarmed, when they found that these Hindu Christians maintained the order and discipline of regular church under Episcopal jurisdiction, and for 1300 years, they had enjoyed a succession of Bishops appointed by the Patriarch of Antioch." (Buchanan 11) According to Claudius Buchanan, when Portuguese became powerful they invaded the Syrian churches in the coastal Kerala, "seized some clergy and devoted them to the death of heretics. Then the inhabitants heard that there was a place called the

Inquisition; its fires had been lately lighted at Goa, near their own land.” (12)

When the Portuguese found that the Malabar Christians were more resolute in defending their ancient faith, they resolved to use more “conciliatory measures.” Buchanan details of the Portuguese onslaught on the Syrians thus:

They seized the Syrian Bishop, Mar Joseph, and sent him prisoner to Lisbon and convened a synod at one of the Syrian churches called Diamper near Cochin at which the Romish Archbishop, Menezes, presided. At this compulsory synod 150 of this Syrian Clergy appeared. They were accused of the following practices and opinions, that they had married wives; that they owned but two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s supper; that they neither invoked saints, nor worshipped images, nor believed in purgatory: and that they had no other orders or names of dignity in the Church, than priest and Deacon. These tenets they were called on to abjure or to suffer suspension from all Church benefices. It was also decreed that all the Syrian books on Ecclesiastical subjects that could be found, should be burned; in order said the inquisitors that no pretended apostolical monuments may remain. (12-13)

As a result of these, the Syrian churches in the coastal areas were compelled to accept the supremacy of Pope. However, they refused to pray in Latin and insisted on using Syrian language. Compromising with them, the Pope purged their Liturgy of its errors. The churches that came under this were called “Syro-Roman churches”, and are principally situated on seacoast (Buchanan 13). But

Syrian churches in the interior areas did not relent to the compulsions and threats of the Portuguese, and would not yield to Rome. "After a show of submission for a little while, they proclaimed eternal war against the Inquisition; they hid their books, fled to the mountains and sought the protection of the native princes, who had always been proud of their alliance." (Buchanan 13) Besides the issue of leadership (Pope or the Patriarch of Antioch), the Catholics and Syrians had difference of opinion on "the use of sacraments, the nature of Eucharist, the celibacy or otherwise of the clergy, the doctrine of purgatory and the use of images." (Pye-Smith 150)

However, more than the Portuguese, it was the Franciscan Friars who were more successful in converting a larger number of fisher folk along the coasts and "this was the nucleus of Latin Catholics (having the pure Latin Liturgy)." (Lukose 174) This was apart from the militant attitude of the Portuguese to reinforce Syrian Christian conversion to Latin Catholics. "By 1558, the Latin Catholics attained such proportions that they deserved to be placed under the newly formed Diocese of Cochin. But the ambition of the missionaries...was not merely to evangelise the heathen, but also to 'Latinise' the Syrians of Malabar." (Lukose 175) During these periods, according to Portuguese records, bishops from Armenia governed the Syrian Christians or St. Thomas Christians. "In pursuance of their new policy of Latinising the Syrians, theological seminaries were started...where Syrians were attracted for their education and training for priesthood" and the trained Syrians "exerted their influence in training a number of Syrians from their allegiance to the church of Anrtioch." (Lukose 177) But the Latinised Syrians were looked down

upon by the Syrians, who maintained that they were of the true faith (Lukose 178). However, the efforts to subdue the Syrians were continued by the Romans by appointing different bishops to do the work. With the political backing of Portuguese power (in Goa and other places) they “went to Malabar and with the support extracted from the Raja of Cochin, put down all oppositions of all Syrians at a Synod convened for the purpose at Diamper (Udayamperoor in Cochin State) in 1599.” (Lukose 179) This was done in accordance with the order from pope Clement VIII “to reduce them to the obedience to the holy roman church and purge out the heresies and false doctrines sown among them and introduced by the schismatical prelates and Nestorian heretics that governed them under the obedience of the Patriarch of Babylon.” (Lukose 179) The Diamper Synod is considered as “one of the greatest landmarks in the history of Malabar church. But the synod although outwardly united the Syrian church with Rome did not reduce the Syrian antagonism against Rome. When the news of the Portuguese’ imprisonment and drowning of the Syrian Bishop or Patriarch (Ahatalla) in the Cochin was heard, their rage got doubled, and their atrocities infuriated the Syrians to rebel against them (Lukose 180). “They met in a solemn conclave at the ‘Coonen Cross’ in front of the Syrian church at Mattancheri (near Cochin town) in 1653, and renounced by means of a solemn oath, their enforced obedience to Rome and the Portuguese Catholics.” (Lukose 180) After these, the Syrians resolved to accept their time-honoured Archdeacon (Thomas) of the historic Syrian family of Pakalomattom, as their spiritual leader, in the place of the Roman superiors (Lukose 180). “They invested him with the status of a bishop

temporarily in order that he might guide and govern them for the future.” (Lukose 180) These decisions are considered as another most important landmark in the history of church in Malabar. However, Rome continued their endeavours to win back Syrians. The pope sent the barefooted Carmelites to win over them. That was the time when the Dutch won over the Portuguese (in 1663). The Dutch was friendly towards the Roman Catholics led by European Carmelites and unsympathetic towards Syrians. Finding it difficult to maintain his influence over the Syrian flock, Archdeacon Thomas had to flee to the mountain of the interior for his life. The Carmelites in the meantime won over some councillors of Thomas and consecrated them as Roman Catholic bishops. The Dutch also imposed prohibitions against any Europeans in sympathy with Jesuits. As a result of all these a large number of Syrians joined the Romans. Thus the Syrian church was broken up by Romans through different means. “The Romo-Syrian section of the Malabar church is the largest of the fragments into which it has broken up, but the church as whole remains in the main Jacobite in character and outlook.” (Lukose 183) In spite of all these developments, it needs to be admitted that the Syrian church grew in Malabar silently. As Lukose noted:

The spread of the ancient church beyond the original “seven churches of St. Thomas” appears to be due to the slow, silent and natural expansion of the Malabar Syrian population, rather than any missionary zeal on the part of the Malabar church...at any rate, during the long period between the ninth century bishops and the end of the nineteenth century, history does not testify

that the Jacobite sect, as a church, had any missionary fervour, or any aggressive outlook, or evidence that she was organised or powerful enough to propagate her own orthodox fate among her immediate neighbours or in distant India beyond the Malabar country; in fact, she all along taken the line of least resistance or stood on the defensive against the invasions of others, mostly belonging to Christian organizations themselves, forming as it were, more or less, a non-propagandist 'caste-community' body; it reminds one of the twelfth century Waldens of the valleys of Piedmont in Europe. According to a great (Roman Catholic Syrian) student of history, 'among Catholic Syrians and, to some extent, among the Jacobite Syrians, many old Hindu practices still prevail'. (183-84)

In spite of the unfriendly attitude of the romans and the Dutch the Orthodox Jacobites Syrians maintained their connection with the Patriarch of Antioch, "the Catholics of the East (Seleucia or Babylon), the Bishop of Jerusalem and native as well as foreign bishops." (Lukose 186) The installation of Archdeacon, Thomas was subsequently confirmed in 1665 by Mar Gregorius, the Antiochian Bishop of Jerusalem at a religious ceremony. He was surnames Mar Thomas I, and was followed later by a succession of bishops, mostly natives in communion with church of Antioch. Lukose explains that:

The present heads of the Syrians of Malabar are two rival claimants to the See of Malankara: one the Catholicos of the East residing at the Syrian college (the old seminary), Kottayam; the

other (the metropolitan) at Alwaye, near historic Angamali, representing the unrestricted powers of the patriarch of Antioch. A judgement has been recently pronounced...by the District Judge, Kottayam, Travancore...recognising the Catholicos as the rightful claimant to the See of Malankara (Malabar) the Patriarch of Antioch having a spiritual supremacy or oversight. During the period between 1663 and 1941, the Syrian church has been visited intermittently, by four patriarchs of Antioch (after 1875) and by at least Maphrians (Catholicos of the East) in 1685 and 1751, apart from other bishops of the church of Antioch. At present, the ancient Syrian arch Diocese of Malankara (Cranganore and Angamali) is divided among eight native bishops. (Lukose 186-87)

However, during the period of 1663 to 1963, the orthodox Syrian church was assailed from within and outside that resulted in bringing forth different offshoots of protestant, pro-Roman or even Jacobite faith. An Anglican church also was sprung out of the Syrian church as a consequence of the historic visit of Dr. Claudius Buchanan in 1806 and 1807. The Anglican diocese was formed in 1879, and it is now under the Anglican bishop of Travancore and Cochin. Dr. Buchanan recovered from Mar Dionysius, the great in 1807, manuscript copy of Syrian bible written in *Estrangelo Syriae* ascribed to fifth or sixth century, believed to be copied during the lifetime of Michael, the Great (1166-1199), the Antiochian patriarch. "It is a document of the greatest historical interest and is preserved in the archives of the University of Cambridge" (Lukose 191).

Another sect to spring up from Syrian church was a pro-Roman party led by the ex-Jacobite bishops, Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos, which also could cause considerable damage to the Syrian orthodox church (Lukose 191).

Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* contains a number of references or indications of the history of the Syrian Christian community. It tells the story of a Syrian Christian family in Ayemenem, a village in the Kottayam district of Kerala. The head of the family is Pappachi who had worked as an Imperial Entomologist and has retired as the Joint Director of Entomology. The patriarch, Pappachi, comes to Ayemenem to spend his retired life. Along with him, the family residence at Ayemenem housed his sister, Baby Kochamma, his wife, Mammachi, his son Chacko, his daughter Ammu, Ammu's two egg-twins - Estha and Rahel, and Kochu Maria, "[t]he vinegar hearted, short-tempered midget cook." (15) At the close of the story only Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria are left in the house as permanent residents. All the others are either dead or separated by choice or chance. The story of the tragic lives of people in Ayemenem is told with 'casual' reference here and there to the contemporary political and cultural currents in Kerala. While juxtaposing the memory and desire of the members of a minority community, the novelist also exposes the complexities of human relationships in a community in the vice-grip of Christian feudal system, caste barriers and gender inequality. Almost all central characters in the novel, in some way or the other, revolt against social injustice and orthodoxy and consequently they are doomed to a self-imposed isolation, unable to cope with, and survive the power and pugnacity of the hostile system.

The novelist links the family in focus in the novel to the community by telling us that the great grandfather of the present generation in the family, Reverend E. John Ipe, was blessed by the Patriarch of Antioch when he visited Kerala in 1876 (22). The details that she gives about the community are mostly factual and are of great use to understand the community. She tells us, "twenty percent of Kerala's population were Syrian Christians who believed that they were descendants of the one hundred Brahmins whom St. Thomas converted to Christianity when he travelled east after the resurrection." (66) She testifies that "in Kerala Syrian Christians were by and large, the wealthy estate owning (pickle factory running) feudal lords." (66) That is, the Syrian community, although it passed through periods of severe crises, later became part of the bourgeois elite in Kerala, owing mainly to their caste ridden disposition that make them identify with the Hindu elite, and their feudal economic standards that most of the members of the community acquired. This has however made the community identify a renewed threat in the Communist party in Kerala. But, as she rightly observes in the book the Marxist party also was controlled internally by the caste bias and they "worked from communal divides" never challenging the extremely traditional, caste-ridden societal set up in Kerala (66-67). They rather offered a ready mix of eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a slot of democracy. The writer, as a conscientious member of the community appears to be regretful over the predicament of her community being fallen into the vortex of casteism by the historical accident that the first converts were from the high castes of Hindus, which has brought about unending problems in the community.

While tracing the possible origins of the exigent problems that disrupted normality in the Syrian Christian household in Ayemenem, Arundhati Roy refers to a number of instances from the history of Kerala such as Vasco De Gama's arrival, the Dutch ascendancy, the spread of Christianity, Zamorin's conquest of Calicut, and the British invasion (33). In fact, these historical instances are quite significant in the history of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala as well, as far as these instances were the major occasions that checked the peaceful existence and way forward of the community. She also brings out some individual cases of atrocities to the community like the murder of "three purple-robed Syrian bishops" by the Portuguese. "Their bodies were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards." (33) The Portuguese were the first to threaten them with their insistence on the Syrian's joining of the mainstream, accepting Pope's supremacy. The other European conquerors also variously tore the community asunder, sub-dividing them into various groups and questioning the legitimacy of their faith. However, the Roman Catholic, European acts of violence and coercion against the Syrian Christians are to be treated as part of the way they worked, and continues to work, in Europe and America to register their supremacy as the most acceptable Christian sect. They have the experience being completely isolated in those times as the local kingdoms also supported the conquerors. Marxism, as I have already mentioned, appeared to question their hegemonic position as high-class bourgeoisies in Kerala. For them, "Communism represented a fate worse than death. They had always voted for the Congress party." (66) The novel suggests

that, as a remnant of the European use of coercion against the community's distinctive identity, the members of the community developed a sense of inferiority as compared to the European Christians. It is clear in the special treatment given to Sophie mol compared to the other children, Estha and Rahel. While the hybrid status of Sophie mol is acceptable and even advisable the hybrid position of Estha and Rahel were looked down upon. This might also have caused by the anglophile character that the members of the community inherited at some point of time in history. Baby Kochamma shows a sense of superiority, probably, owing to her being a catholic convert.

Because of the belief that the first converts were Brahmins, the Syrian Christian community in Kerala enjoyed a caste status equal to Brahmins. Therefore casteism worked on the same lines as in Hinduism, and as such the untouchables to Hindus became untouchable to Syrian Christians as well. These Christians were also called caste Christians on the lines in which some Hindus are referred to as caste Hindus. The caste consciousness on the one hand made the native elite or Brahmins accept the Syrians as equal to them, and on the other got internalised in the community's psyche and continued to predominate in the lives of its members. Syrian Christians "were known among the Hindus as 'Nazaranis', the word 'Christiani' coming to vogue not before the Portuguese." (Moraes 175) According to George Mark Moraes, Syrian Christians "had carved for themselves an important place in the Hindu hierarchy of castes being regarded as even superior to the Nayars who constituted the second estate of the realm." (175) He records that "the Nayars held St. Thomas Christians in such high esteem that they deemed it an honour

when the latter condescended to address them as brothers; and the Christians, in order to preserve their title to nobility would not touch people of inferior castes..." (175) It is probably because of this that the members of the community, unlike many other ethnic minorities in the country, did not become a continuous prey to the antagonism of the dominant Hindus. This is in spite of the anti Christian riots and brutalities by the extremist elements in Hinduism, reported from time to time from several parts of India. However, some Hindu rulers indirectly helped their enemies, the Dutch and Portuguese, who persecuted them. A recent traveller to Kerala, Charlie Pye-Smith, also reported the strange bonhomie existing between Syria Christians and caste Hindus. He wrote that "the Syrian Christians had never been looked down upon by high caste Hindus and Muslims." (164) Most likely because of this, unlike many other ethnicities in India, the Syrian community as an ethnic minority was not always placed under the hegemonic dominance of the Hinduism, (although there are reports of threats and attacks recently against Christians in general induced by elements fighting for cultural nationalism and Hindu nation theory). They suffered neglect and ill treatment rather from the Catholics who never accepted the legitimacy of the Syrian Christianity. The long-drawn antagonism of the Roman Catholics towards them remains in the collective psyche of the community in the form of frequent memories of the brutalities that the members and leaders of the community faced under the Portuguese. Thus, when approaching the community as an ethnicity in India one encounters the complex problem of making deliberations on the hegemonic power trying to overrule them, as this power is not the dominant

group in the country, but another section of their own religion. Therefore one has to concentrate on the internal crises within the Christian community in general and the Syrian Christian community in particular to consider Syrian Christians as an ethnic minority. Here, what functions as the hegemonic centre is Catholicism, which although is a minority in India, is a majority in Christianity, and which, as I have already mentioned, has a history of presenting itself as the most legitimate form of Christianity, and on the same lines and as part of the colonial projects they tried to impose this on all other Christians in the areas of their operation. This has been done right from the fourteenth or fifteenth century when the Pope had sent messengers to Malabar to bring the Syrian Christians under catholic fold. It was because of their continuous missions in Malabar that that they could manage to break the Syrian community into various fragments, some of which accepted the Pope as their supreme leader. It is perhaps true that, in spite of their resistance against the assimilation of Syrians to Catholicism, they did away with everything of specifically Syrian excepting the Syrian Liturgy, because of the influence of the catholic Europeans and thus their identity has become so complex a thing to define. This is clear in the overt anglophile character that the community presented in the novel carries with their lives. Chacko told the twins in the novel "that though he hated to admit it, they were all Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away." (52) While talking to the twins about the History House in which Kari Saipu lived, he also confesses that the colonial encounter was "A War that has made us adore our

conquerors and despise ourselves” and he tells them that “we are prisoners of war...our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore. Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough. Our life never important enough.” (53) This is in turn a comment on the precarious state into which the community has reached when taking into consideration its struggles against the European catholic invasion of their faith. At another level there is also a clash of hegemonies between the catholic and the Syrian communities, even though they do not show it outside explicitly. Mammachi, for instance could not digest the racial status of Margaret Kochamma, as she was the daughter of a lowly placed Christian in England. She considers Margaret as one among the many women who shared Chacko’s bed. There are examples in the novel on the way Mammachi esteemed her racial stock that gives importance not to her being a Christian, but her position in the lineage of the upper class in Kerala. Along side this false sense of racial or caste superiority, there also is a fear looming large in their midst. This fear arose from the feeling that their legitimacy, wealth and caste status may be questioned by some potential powers like the Communist party, which appeared to bring to limelight all the sidelined classes. Baby Kochamma, who retains everything of the Syrian Christian elitist behaviour even after her conversion to catholic fold (for purely personal ends), for instance, was always disturbed by this fear. “The fear that over the years would grow to consume her. That would make her lock her doors and windows...an ancient age-old fear. The fear of being dispossessed.” (70) It is this fear that makes them look at

Velutha's participation in the rally with suspicion. And this fear is probably the one that dislikes any form of uprising from the margins.

The community faced a yet another setback as it had to deal with the problem of dalit converts to their religion. That is, during the British rule in Malabar, a number of Paravans, Peleyas and Pulayas "converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church, to escape the scourge of untouchability." (74) They were provided with a little food and money by Christians as an added incentive. The novelist provides the following details on them:

They were known as the Rice-Christians. it didn't take them long to realise that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. As a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop. After Independence they found they were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservation or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians and therefore casteless. It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all. (74)

The novelist portrays the perverted turns that caste antagonism and discrimination took in the community through the portrayal of characters like Velutha and his father Vellya Pappan. Velutha means white in Malayalam and he was named thus because he was so black. The system of nomenclature like this one allowed to the untouchables by the caste Hindus and caste Christians contained their acute cynicism and intention to make fun of the downtrodden

classes. 'Velutha' thus meant one who cannot ever dream of either to be white or to be treated on par with the fair skinned upper classes. Velutha belonged to the Paravan sect of the untouchables. Pappachi, the patriarch of the Ayemenem house did not permit the Paravans into his house, although he and his family made use of their services. "Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that touchables touched. Caste Hindus and caste Christians." (73) There were times when "Paravans were expected to crawl backward with a broom sweeping away their foot prints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint." (73-74) During Mammachi's time "Paravans like other untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed." (74) Although Mammachi and the family as a whole gave considerable encouragement to Velutha by hiring him as a carpenter (since she knew that nobody else would hire him), she did not pay him as much as she paid to the touchable workers, and she did not "encourage him to enter the house (except when she needed something mended or installed). She thought that he ought to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premises at all, and allowed to touch thing that touchables touched. She said it was a big step for a Paravan." Apart from his carpentry skills, Velutha was talented mechanic, and Mammachi who understood his talent, with her impenetrable touchable logic often said that he might have become an engineer, if he had not been a Paravan. There was a general understanding

among the Syrian Christians as well as the caste Hindus that the untouchables must not be given education so as to prevent them from coming up in life. Mammachi's family which gave education to Velutha and others, were regretful of that when they caught Velutha on false charges of killing Sophie mol and for loving Ammu, a touchable. When she went to the police station to lodge a complaint against Velutha Baby Kochamma explained to the inspector Thomas Mathew that Velutha had been educated by her family in the school started by her father, Reverend Ipe, and the inspector comments that "first you spoil these people, carry them about on your head like trophies, then when they misbehave you come running to us for help." (261) Thus to educate an untouchable was regarded as kind of spoiling him/her, the inspectors words signify the extent to which casteism and the prejudices of it took hold in the community. However, the novelist suggests that one major reason for the problems of her community was the practice of casteism, she appears to feel that the community could not claim any kind of uniqueness as a cultural group as they were running on the same lines as the Hindus. The main reason for the hatred towards the untouchable was apparently the archetypal belief that the community was basically constituted by the nobles of the land, and a fear that this nobility will be diluted when they deal with and interact with the untouchables. Even their faith in a casteless religion (i.e. Christianity) could not sooth them from this superiority complex.

The writer here is constantly wrestling with a burden of actual experience, of growing up in the cultural cross currents in Kerala during the 1970s in particular and the post-independence India in general. The perspective from

which Roy narrates the story is that of women belonging to Syrian Christian Community. But caste bias was not the only cultural issue in the community. Even though the Syrian Christians resisted to a remarkable extent the erasure of their specific identity by the Roman Catholics, they inherited much of their patriarchal character. Patriarchy had come from Hindu sources as well in so far as the system of *Chaturvarnya* was also built on patriarchal foundations. The novelist emphasizes the patriarchal violence and caste oppression, the repressive tendency of which reaches the extremity of the ritualisation of repression. There are mainly two types of characters in the novel - conformists and non-conformists. While Chacko, Baby Kochamma, Pappachi and Mammachi remain inseparable from the prevailing order, exploiting all the privileges that the patriarchal system assigned to them, Ammu, Rahel and to a great extent, Velutha stand antagonistic to the existing order of things. There are characters like K.N.M. Pillai who are to be categorised separately. The novel depicts the way suppression of the powerless non-conformists is successfully carried out by the powerful conformists, often with the help of the repressive and ideological apparatuses provided by the state machinery. Mammachi and Ammu were literally beaten, subdued to the maximum by Pappachi. Pappachi's patriarchal bias was probably enforced by his anglophile character and his job under the British as an Imperial Entomologist, apart from the patriarchal character he inherited from his community. Pappachi,

[W]as charming and urbane with visitors and stopped just short of fawning on them if they happened to be white. He donated money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. He worked hard on his public

profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and made to suffer the envy of friends and relations for having such a wonderful husband and father. (180)

While Mammachi accepted it as the prevailing order without resistance, Ammu developed "a sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by someone Big." (181-82). It is presumably this feeling that made her call her community as a "damn forsaken tribe" as she is reported to have told (182). Ammu was unhappy all through her life because as a woman she understood from her own experience that at no stage in life she has a freedom of choice. First and foremost, she did not have a choice in her education. It was in the year that finished school that her father retired and the family moved to Ayemenem from Delhi. Pappachi insisted that "a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had had no choice but to leave Delhi with them." (38) At Ayemenem she had very little to do other than helping her mother in household work and wait for marriage proposals. It is to escape the fruitless existence at home that made her go to Calcutta when she got a chance and to find her husband there. She accepted the marriage proposal of Baba thinking that "anything, anyone at all would better than returning to Ayemenem." (39) But the marital tie also ended up in disaster as, after the birth of the twins, she had to leave her husband as he tried to save himself from the bad name in the company by offering his wife to the English manager, Mr. Hollick. There also she had no choice other than leaving. Thus she has to return to the

domestic world of her house which she hated. Making her understand that all patriarchal systems think alike, she was received by her anglophile father who did not believe incidents she narrated, saying that "an English man, any English man, would covet another man's wife." (42) She had no choice but to stay as an unwanted presence in her ancestral house, where as a married woman, she had no rights. Being acutely conscious of the general lack of choice for women in general she knew that "choosing between her husband's name and her father's name didn't give woman much of a choice." (37) Even marriages cannot be avoided altogether, as there is not always a choice for women (44). All these had developed in her the "reckless rage of a suicide bomber" that made her display an eccentric sort of behaviour, and eventually made her a transgressor of all set norms in her family and community, by breaking the rules, by crossing into forbidden territory, tampering with "the laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins..." (31), for which she again had to pay heavily. Her transgression was looked more seriously than those committed by Chacko. In fact in the name of his "Man's Needs", the family indirectly permitted him to have sexual relation with the poor workers in the factory. "Neither Mammachi nor Baby Kochamma saw any contradiction between Chacko's Marxist mind and feudal libido." (168) Mammachi in fact encouraged it by secretly slipping money for the preys of Chacko's feudal libido to keep them happy. Ammu collected her strength to sail on thinking of her children, the twins, Estha and Rahel. "To Ammu, her twins seemed like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of traffic. Entirely obvious of what trucks can do to frogs."

(43) At moments of crisis she relieved herself by imagining a bright future for her and her children, which she could, fortunately, without the others' permission. Thinking about the alternative jobs she may get she felt that even such a "choice was a great privilege." (160) Ammu had to encounter three patriarchs, Pappachi, Baba, and Chacko before subduing herself to death, unable to claim a stand in the prevalent, casteist, male order, being deprived of a "locust stand I" (159). All of them followed the age-old phallocratic view that "what is yours is mine and what's mine also is mine" (57) as Chacko once explained to her. "Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as *my* factory, *my* pineapples, *my* pickles. Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property." (57) Chacko exercised power over women workers in the factory. He was "An Oxford avatar of the old Zamindar mentality - a landlord forcing his attention on women who depended on him for their livelihood." (65) The hazardous paths that Ammu was forced to take for survival and resistance is expressive of the callous condition of women in an androcentric social structure:

It was not what lay at the end that of her road that frightened Ammu as much as the nature of the road itself. No milestones marked its progress. No trees grew along it. No dappled shadows shaded it. No mists rolled over it. No birds circled it. No twists, or turns or hairpin bends obscured even momentarily, her clear view of the end. This filled Ammu with an awful dread, because she was not the kind of woman who wanted her future told. She dreaded it

too much. So if she were granted one small wish perhaps it would only have been Not to know. Not to know what each day held in store for her. Not to know where she might be, next month, next year. Ten years on. Not to know which way her road might turn and what lay beyond the bend. (224)

Her position as one bereft of any choice or chance became more intense with her expulsion from the house, for having illicit love and sex with Velutha thereby questioning for the second time the purity of her ethnicity by Chacko who ordered "pack your things and go" showing his bigness and bullying power (226). Her transformation into an outcaste was getting complete with that; she identified herself with the other female outcastes in the society like the prostitutes, and feared that the police would treat her like handling a prostitute (161). Having understood the intensity she walked to death young, showing the remoteness of a chance to come back for a woman like her. She could not even select her burial place. The church refused to bury her on several grounds (162).

Chacko and others exercised authority over Ammu, Estha and Rahel because of their dependence on them. But within the dominant power structure itself there are power games and victimisation. Within the dominant groups

There are some who have themselves been victims of the power game, although their victimisation has been of a different order. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma may victimise Ammu and her children by virtue of their status in their family, but both of them have themselves been victimised of an oppressive patriarchal system under which women like Mammachi are not only

subjugated but also been brutalized. Again the oppression and dehumanisation is perpetuated by high caste Hindus and Christians alike. (Amin 20)

Sometimes, there are also apparent displays of what the writer describes, as “the unfortunate sometimes dislike the co-unfortunate” (Amin 20). The attitude of the conformist women like baby Kochamma thus probably emanated from this.

The novel as a whole could be treated as one that presents the disposition through history of the Syrian Christian community by narrating instances from the annals of a Syrian Christian family that in a way is the history of the community itself. The family thus approached is the community in miniature. While Pappachi and Chacko give legitimacy to its anglophile and patriarchal bases, the conditions in which Mammachi and other women in the family exemplify the subdued status of woman; Baby Kochamma and Ammu shows by their own example how the community broke into fragments and how ethnic dilution affected it; Estha, Rahel and Sophie Mol shows how inbreeding is hierarchically categorized and how each of the hybrids are treated; Velutha and Kochu Maria are examples of two major subaltern elements within, one untouchable and the other too poor of colour, money and even sexual status, to come off from the shackles of insecurity and subjection. The power relations that drive the community and the way the power centre within the community is linked to the larger power structure of the state are explicit in the way the transgressors like Ammu and Velutha are dealt with. The re-returned Estha, and Rahel who came home finds only the remains of sea changes had taken place in the family, which included deprivation, Diaspora and deaths and above all the

shattered structure of the ancestral house, all of which are reminiscent of the twists and turns that the community took while driving its way into future in Kerala. The very predicament of Estha and Rahel, having been deprived of parents, and home to cherish, make them express a sense of non-belonging, which again is indicative of what has happened to the community. Estha and Rahel could be taken as symbolising the twin influencing factors in the community, western Catholicism and Hinduism. Having been sandwiched between these two larger cultural forms, the community forgot to stick on to an identifiably Syrian base and character, and as such they failed to construct their identity, which would be neither Christian (catholic) nor Indian or Hindu. This is one point that the novelist tries to highlight in the novel. There are other binary elements as well that they symbolise like Roman Christian and Syrian Christian elements. While leakages in the religion has taken Hindu as well as catholic routes, the catholic sect appears to dominate, perhaps sanctioned by the anglophile character of the members of the community. Baby Kochamma who converted to catholic faith claims superiority over the others because of this. The writer probably is critical of the various reasons by which the people left for the mainstream Roman Catholic Church leaving Syrian beliefs. Baby Kochamma was driven by her unchristian passion for Father Mulligan. But ironically enough, Father Mulligan later became a Vaishnava, a devotee of Lord Vishnu (297). Arundhati Roy, however, endeavours to correct the common perception of the Syrian community as forming the Christian bourgeoisies in Kerala, by showing us the shallowness of human relationships prevailing in the community that in a way is making the members of the community experience a kind of alienation.

Almost all characters in *The God of Small Things* suffer from an extended form of alienation because of their distinct personality traits and their convictions, weaknesses, unquenched desires, unreasonable hate and so on. It is probably this alienation that makes Estha go silent. He was rather silenced, and he experienced a family life which started of noise and commotion but reached a stage of silence and disillusionment which apparently communicates how a community has been silenced by its own inner conflicts and powers from outside. The conformists like Chacko, Baby Kochamma and Pappachi try to perpetuate their vicious prejudices, while non-conformists like Ammu, Estha and Rahel are always targeted and exposed to pernicious mental and physical torture by the dominant group. The voices and actions of the suppressed non-conformists in the novel acquire the magnitude of a struggle, although it culminates in their miserable defeat and reestablishment of the old order. In fact, even the conformists are not free from the problem of non-belonging, which, of course, is caused by the complex way in which the twin metanarratives viz., Catholicism and Hinduism exerted their influence in the community. And this might also have worked behind what Chacko refers to as the "high incidence of insanity" reported from among the Syrian Christians (223). For him, it was "the price they paid for inbreeding." (223) Mammachi did not agree that inbreeding is the only problem that caused madness. Perhaps she means to say that whatever the community has inherited from sources other than eastern Christianity, here in India, under the Hindu as well as European administrations worked behind it. Because it was these multifarious influences and bases that cultivated a series of unchristian prejudices and perverted practices in the community, like caste discrimination, patriarchal

aggression on women and so on. Unable to survive the onslaught of maltreatment and pressures on her, Ammu fear that she would go mad. And she would become one among the many, mad Syrians that Mammachi mentioned. For Mammachi madness caught people unawares. "There was Pathil Ammai who at the age of sixty five began to take her clothes off and run naked along the river, singing to the fish. There was Thampi Chachen, who searched his shit every morning with a knitting needle for a gold tooth he had swallowed years ago." (223) Ammu feared that future generations would add her in the list of the many Syrians who went mad, "There was Ammu - Ammu Ipe. Married a Bengali. Went quite mad. Died young in a cheap lodge somewhere." (223)

The community's sense of past is shown in the form of cultural memory which is of two varieties in the novel. It is informed either as a memory of the well-knit but predominantly patriarchal base of the community or as a memory of the age-old antagonism of the Roman church against them, which cost them many a lives as a result of brutalities right from Portuguese and Dutch. But unlike many other communities past does not give any hope of retrieval, as long as the current problems are results of the past of the community when the community was somehow had taken itself into the cobweb of the evil part of Hinduism doing away almost completely with the Syrian tradition. The community has thus a history of occupying a surrogate status with two approximate mothers, Catholicism and Hinduism, both predominant, that the child forgot its begetter. It is this inexplicitness with regard to a well-knit value base that made the loopholes of outside interference, and that makes people like Baby Kochamma seek Catholicism, even though it is mainly to satiate her unchristian passions for a

catholic priest. The value system that the community inherited became either that of Hinduism, or that of the European Christianity. It could also be noted that, there was a clash of two elitisms, one that of Europe and the other of the elite Syrians of Malabar. Although the ardent ones resisted an invasion of their faith, at some time or the other both found out their respective positions in the realms of their operation. But the European elite tried to disturb the elitism of the Syrian Christians by fragmenting it into one more fraction which comprised mainly of the downtrodden classes and the untouchables. This apparently had created schisms in the elitist mental domains of the Syrians, as they felt that their ethnicity has been made impure. It seems, there onwards, although there are many, the attempts to dilute the ethnic purity is taken so seriously, as the community is desperately trying to retain its position among the dominant Hindus in Kerala. Any way, a sense of something getting old, in spite of repainting could be seen, lingering in the community, perhaps signifying the hackneyed practices of the community. The community has become so old like the church in Ayemenem, with a new paint, "that swelled like a throat with the sound of sad singing." (4)

The novelist however does not want to exclusively focus on the community of her origin. Rather, by closely examining the way in which a minority community operates, she appears to formulate an understanding of the way in which community's, especially minority communities function, the way power, especially coercive power, is playing a predominant role in solving as well as creating problems, within and outside her community, and as such in most of the communities. Besides, the twin emphasis on patriarchal violence and

caste discrimination depicted in the novel produces a kind of identitarian politics. This politics identifies and often tries to question the power structure working behind a Syrian Christian family, which obviously is the microcosm of the larger, more enduring power structure of the state. There are also exclusive form of power and authority over which the state has no access. Power politics is manifested as the driving force of social activities in the novel. The mechanism, and manifest forms, of power have been a subject of serious intellectual debate in the last few decades of twentieth century. Critics like Benita Parry and Michel Foucault have discussed the fundamentally coercive and frequently seductive logic of power in their works (Gandhi 14). The apparent political exclusivity of power, according to Foucault, is characterized by its web like inclusiveness. He maintains that the dissemination of power is achieved through the collaboration of subjects and "such apparent collaboration is really symptomatic of the pervasive and claustrophobic omnipresence of power." (Cited in Gandhi 14) Foucault, who devoted lion's share of his intellectual works to understand and analyse the operation and formation of power and power relations, held that power produces resistance and resistance more forms of power (Said 241). For him "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere." (Storey 167) Foucault tends to understand power as a "multiplicity of force relations which constitute their own organization (Story 165). Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci, who introduced the term 'hegemony' in the discussion of power, held that the ruling classes exercise hegemony or authority over the others with a view to achieving consolidation of their rule (Omi and Vinant 130).

Power operates in the form of subjection in *The God of Small Things*. The all-pervasive nature of power is distinctly portrayed in the novel. The power within the ethnic minority community displays itself as a politics of ethnic purity, which again is embedded in, and is incongruous with the racism practiced by majority communities. All members of the family and the community as such despised Ammu on account of her marriage with a Hindu, which obviously posed the threat of hybridisation to the purity of the community. Thus questioning the ethnic purity is the sin that Ammu committed which provoked the power centres within the community to outcast her to a secluded existence. Baby Kochamma disliked the twins - Estha and Rahel - "for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were half Hindu hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry." (45) She hated Ammu not only for marrying a Hindu, but also for bluntly refusing to obey him on the grounds of personal integrity thus declining to accept the sad predicament of married women. Ammu graciously accepted "the fate of the wretched man-less woman" by running away from her husband. Ammu also disrupts Baby Kochamma's view ("the commonly held view" [45]) "that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter, she had no positions anywhere." (45) Ammu's love marriage that too with a Hindu was yet another reason for Baby Kochamma's wrath against her. If she had loved a catholic she should not have been that angry with her. It is this politics of conformism that works in the consciousness of the ethnic minority presented in the novel. Ammu and her two egg-twins encounter this politics in their secluded existence in the crowded house in Ayemenem. The novel, viewed from the cultural panorama of

the Kerala society, presents a highly orthodox, secular and egalitarian worldview, which the author appears to court in her life and works. However, the characterization of Ammu has much to do with the apprehension of the new woman, in the cultural sphere of modern India. Ammu is radical enough to subvert the predominant views and orthodoxies of her community and in the dominant system as a whole, by consciously rewriting or rather miswriting her future, marrying a Hindu. As for the twins, their birth itself, as hybrids, is against ethnic purity. Dissidence is in their blood. They read words (as well as things) backward in an unconscious attempt to turn topsy-turvy things upright.

The inner politics of the Syrian Christian community gets linked to the more pervasive political structure of the state with the arrest of Velutha. Thus the community and the state exercise their repressive mechanism of power in dealing with him who belongs to the most suppressed section of the community. Velutha was arrested on charges of killing Sophie Mol. The mechanism of repression of the state, in its most characteristic way, convicted, detained, brutally tortured and killed Velutha in such a way as to once more remind those concerned the predominance of the law of the touchable over the untouchables. The law of the touchable appeared to have felt uneasy about the small gods, or gods of small things like Velutha whose craftsmanship has chances to outshine those of the 'big gods'. The big gods consume the smaller ones in a phenomenal way posing overall threat to the species of small gods.

The novelist sketches how the mechanism of power existing in society exploits what Althusser calls Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (ISAs

and RSAs) to silence and sometimes to completely disempower the marginalized, subaltern groups (Rice and Waugh 54). According to Althusser, every state functions in such a way as to exercise authority over its people by making use of the Ideological State Apparatuses. By ISAs Althusser means institutions such as religious institutions (the system of different Churches), educational institutions, family, legal system, political system, trade unions, communication networks and cultural institutions (Literature, Arts, Sports etc) that legitimate and authenticate the dominant ideology in a state. By RSAs Althusser means institutions such as the police and the army that consolidate the order of things prevalent in a state (54-6). The basic difference between the ISAs and the RSAs is that, the RSAs, function by violence whereas the ISAs function by ideology. The Repressive State Apparatuses function, according to Althusser, "Massively by repression (including physical repression) while functioning secondarily by ideology. In the same way...the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively by ideology, but they also work secondarily by repression, even if ultimately but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic." (55-6) The novelist clearly shows how the ISAs and RSAs function to repress the powerless classes by using violence as well ideology as of physical and psychological kind.

The novelist also suggests that the power structures such as Hinduism, Christianity and even Marxism (in their manifest forms in Kerala) remain antagonistic to the deprived classes alike. It evidences that these power structures, in spite of their difference from each other in many aspects, worked in concurrence with an underlying ideology, the domain and contours of which

were rooted in the archetypal power frameworks such as patriarchy, casteism and racism. The system casts out the odd ones when they are found inimical to the accepted order of things. At the grassroots level, no ideology, not even Marxist ideology, is found following a deviant, unorthodox set of ideals against the basic patterns of the existing power formations like Casteism practiced in Hinduism orthodoxy in Christianity and male aggression in all of them. There, of course, arises a question on the extent to which the subaltern could succeed in their struggles of resistance. The novel gives only negative signals in this regard. Although the subaltern classes voiced their dissent and acted it out, their voice and acts could not ultimately check the accelerated pace of the internalised forms of power relations existing in our social system. When resistance becomes futile what remains is nothing other than frustration. The subalterns represented in the novel are desperately frustrated. They communicate their frustrated selves through the medium of silence. Estha keeps silence, even to Rahel, when he was 're-turned'. Rahel answers with silence to the unnecessary quarries of K.N.M. Pillai; in her end of days, Ammu protests silently. Even her death was a silent protest.

Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* is a novel with immense political significance. As in almost all ethnic minority novels, the fictionality of the novel is woven around serious political concerns that, at all the levels of the novel's story, appear to be part of the writer's attempt to engage in a subversive praxis to expose the mechanism of ritualised subjection, and to counter the overt and covert efforts of the dominant discourse to maintain the status quo. The novel

extends a subaltern perspective which is to be understood with reference to the political and cultural ramifications of Kerala society in its most troubled time, i.e., the 1960s and 70s. By presenting an aesthetics embedded in politics, the novelist brings to the fore the cultural hostility for and subjection of the ethnic minorities and the other subaltern classes existing in almost all patriarchal, majoritarian cultures.

Being an unconventional ethnic minority novel, *The God of Small Things* provides the reader with a narration of an ethnic minority, which, in fact, is minor only in number, finding out similarities with the dominant social structures in the way minor elements within the community are placed. That is, the novelist tries to uncover the politics lurking behind an ethnicity so as to understand the real ethnic minorities of a culture. In other words, *The God of Small Things* throws up questions not only regarding the marginality and subjection of particular ethnic minority, say, Syrian Christians, but also the various subaltern classes within that minority such as untouchables, women and children who are doubly subjected as the powerless sub-sections within the minority in a majority dominated culture. In this respect, Roy's novel is about multiple ethnicities, and ethnicities within ethnicities. Giving voice to the hitherto voiceless classes within an ethnicity, the novelist probes into the innermost structures of social behaviour that informs the community represented in the novel.

The radical gestures of the subaltern classes appear to be the locus of Roy's imagination. The very title of the novel is suggestive of the dream of the subdued coming off their shackles, unable to stand the prolonging of the hackneyed,

perverved practices. Small gods or Gods of small things are the marginalize in the community, like the untouchables, women, widows, inbred children or hybrid progeny of cross religious and cross cultural marriages, who possess certain distinctive qualities that are overshadowed either by their lowly seat amidst others or suppressed by the dominating systems. In spite of the enormity of the power structure the writer makes them resist, for survival, however unsuccessfully. Here the writer identifies different edges of resistance, represented through characters like Ammu, Velutha and the Twins. The community freezes their identity into a non-existent status owing to the dilution they caused to the purity or to their lacking the caste status required for complete approval of their identity as members of the community. Ammu transgressed by marrying a Hindu and leading the way for inbreeding, by running away from her husband, and by misappropriating the long-drawn love laws; Velutha was an untouchable whose craftsmanship and use value could never match the caste standards of the touchable Christians, and he violated the age-old love laws by having carnal love with Ammu; the children were ostracised because of their hybrid birth for which they were not responsible. There are other minor elements as well, like Kochu Maria, the cook who was superior to Velutha being a touchable, but she was of unwelcome complexion; and she belonged to one of the few economically backward upper class Syrian Christians. Thus the novelist narrows down her focus to a number of disorganized individuals who, like the characters in most subaltern novels, experience a feeling of being outsiders and who have different historical experience as members of an ethnic minority community. These individual characters struggle for survival against the general

currents in the society as well as in the community. What matters here is the political and cultural significance of these individual struggles for existence. By presenting the voice of the voiceless subaltern within a community, the novelist participates (as a writer) in the subversive activities initiated by the suppressed classes. Thus for the writer of ethnic minority background, writing is a socially defiant act, that like many other activities, is aimed at bringing out radical social transformation. She appears to dream the unification of the suppressed sections, in spite of the reality that they get trapped amidst the pugnacity of the dominating order. When all other members feared of a backlash from the working classes like Velutha, Ammu and her children did not. The family looked upon Velutha's joining the Communist party march with suspicion, thinking that he may assert his rights and question their legitimacy. But Ammu silently admired it. "She hoped it had been him that had raised his flag and knotted arm in anger. She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against." (175-76) Ammu's and the twin's attitude to Velutha was, perhaps, their distinguishing mark in their family. The other members of the family, although they used the services and craftsmanship of Velutha, were not ready to consider him as a human being. No one except the twins and Ammu were ready to worship smaller gods like Velutha and Vellya Paappen. Small gods and their worshippers were confined to universes of their own in which love laws were not set defining who can love whom and how much. The baby universes, which were often regarded as black holes, of smaller gods like Ammu, Velutha, Estha and Rahel collided with bigger universes of bigger gods during their routine

movements in the orbit of day to day events, mostly on matters of their convictions. This sparked fires that, as mentioned earlier, eventually consumed most of the small gods.

A close reading of the novel would reveal that the novelist, while offering a number of factual details to estimate the state of affairs in her ethnicity, weaves a thread of signification by means of an apparent display of symbolic portrayals that talks in volumes about her perception of the complex situation in which her community has reached. Firstly the entire family with all its complexes in the make up symbolises the community itself. The family's aloof looking house at Ayemenem is yet another symbol of the ageing community. "It was a grand old house...but aloof-looking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their whole-hearted commitment to life." (165) The dizygotic twins appear to represent on the one hand the two Christianities, Syrian and catholic the union of both had been tried since time immemorial, which coexist as two bodies and one soul, and at the end becomes two independent bodies although existing together, and on the other the way the community unsuccessfully renewed its link with the oldest relative, Hinduism. Yellow is the predominant colour all through the novel, the yellow church, the yellow hoarding, yellow pineapple squash and so on. Yellow may either stand for the general jaundiced state of peoples' perception of the world, which because of the predominant ways of seeing things, has become a permanent reality; and in another sense yellow stands for the general decay that has crept over the

community and the its sphere of operation. Probably Roy pictures images in sepia indicative of the pastness of the past and what its debris does to the present.

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**Ethnic Articulations in Contemporary Indian English  
Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels**

*Dissertation submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**  
in English*

*By*  
**ANVARSAHDATH VALIYAPARAMBATH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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## Chapter Six

### Summation: The Relevance of the Ethno-Fictional Forays into Cultural Memory

Although a clear and well-defined categorization is difficult to demarcate instances of majoritarian discourse and minority discourse in recent Indo-Anglian fiction, it is certain that there is an undeniable presence of the articulations of ethnicity and minority discourse in it. The writers selected for study in this dissertation viz., Khushwant Singh, Allan Sealy, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy, come under the category of ethnic minority writers in India, and therefore they are treated as minorities and their works are examples minority discourse. These writers and many other writers from other minority communities form one of the 'sidestreams' in Indo-Anglian literature. There is a widespread tendency to read them on par with, and as one among, the mainstream writers, like Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amit Choudhury, Shashi Tharoor and many more. Although there are thematic similarities between them, what distinguishes the minority writers that I selected is that they all belong to ethnic minorities in India, and their membership in such groups is prominently reflected in their works, even though there are variations in the *modus operandi* adopted by each writer to reflect his/her ethnic identity. As in the case of ethnicities in general, ethnicity for these writers are powerful identifiers, as long as they wish remain in it, and they do not want anyone to take it away from them. Their communities are not identified with the national mythology of India, and therefore they have to separately formulate their concept of nationhood. Even though there are chances for an ethnicity to occupy major status in a country, in

the case of the four ethnicities mentioned here, they are very small, and some of them infinitesimally small, compared to the majority Hindus in India. Here, Parsis and Sikhs are groups in which religion has the greatest influence in the way the members perceive them. In the case of Anglo-Indians, they are not identified with their religion, but by their hybrid status as mixed bloods. As for Syrian Christians, although they are a fraction of a larger community, Christianity, the specificities that they inherited by their origin from the Hindu converts give them a cultural status which is different from that of the other Christians in India. However, these writers, by representing their distinct ethnicities that are part of the multiethnic spectrum of India as a country, percolate deeper into the geocultural landscape of the country, extending the canvas of Indo-Anglian literature. What is achieved by the representation of the ethnic identity is the social articulation of difference. As Homi K. Bhabha rightly commended, “[t]he social articulation of difference from the minority perspective is a complex ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.” (2)

Interestingly, all the four writers that I mentioned above prioritise their community and thus their ethnic identity, or the community of their origin in their novels, and therefore there are a number of characteristics common in all of them, that could be studied with reference to theoretical developments taking place under the umbrella term, ‘minority discourse’ all over the world. The prioritisation of the community is explicit in the way they explore into the past and present of their respective community’s history in India, and they try to establish their unique role and place in the order of things in the multiethnic

scenario in the country. Their keen interest in their communities is shown through the portrayal of the truce that the members of the community maintain in the midst of a series of adverse circumstances, or by critically examining its inscape, to recapture its lost glories and historical past. While some writers like Arundhati Roy brings out the possible reasons for the current decadence of the community, others like Allan Sealy recaps the entire history of the community to unearth the forces that brought them into being and the way its own progenitors discriminated them as a lower racial category. Mistry locates the reason for his community's decadence in its poor birth rate, high marital age and dilution of ethnicity by intercommunity marriages and so forth. And there is also an amount of influence of the burgeoning tendencies to do away with local or small cultures taking place as part of globalisation. All these together make the continuation of the practices of striking their community's difference difficult. Mistry appears to be aware of the criticism from outside their towers of silence that cause pollution of the atmosphere. In some places in *Such a Long Journey* he refers to Parsis being called 'crow eaters' by the members of the dominant community. He also expresses his anxiety with such developments as the changing of place names, which Parsis take as affecting their culture, in the sense that their history in the long run will not have places of reference to prove that they existed in India from time immemorial.

The ethnic minority writers in India like many of their counterparts in other countries construct their fictional framework on clear factual grounds. Thus they repeatedly invoke factual details and actual personalities while telling a story in which the community itself is the protagonist. This is probably

because, for these writers fiction like any other means of articulation is a site for forming cultural discourse, or discourses of their community. Their works are clearly timed in history as well, the history of their respective places on the one hand and the countries on the other. Perhaps, their fictional works are instances of parallel histories or histories narrated from the vantage points of the subaltern classes. The frequent leap into history allows their fiction to trace the origin and history of their community simultaneously while engaging in narrating a story of the community. Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* seeks the story of his community taking the entire history of Delhi right from the time of Muslim invaders to the time when the community was under the panopticonic surveillance of the repressive apparatuses of the state machinery after the murder of Indira Gandhi, and the subsequent anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, as a background and ideological space of the novel. He also refers to actual incidents involving historical personalities like Gandhiji and Jinnah. Excepting perhaps in his last novel, *The Company of Women* (1999) all of his novels are clearly placed in historical times and are dealing with his Sikh community. He tells the history of partition for instance from the Sikh point of view, in order, probably, to reserve berth for his community in the midst of the great exploits of the partition found in the history books. Invocation of the history has a purely personal end also, as long as the writers seeks to locate themselves in the large framework of time and history as members of minority communities, whose existence could be easily removed or neglected from the history of their country. Thus invocation of history and factual details are strategies to historicize their discourses that would prevent erasure of their ethnicity's

identity. Allan Sealy *Trotter-Nama* tries to put together the fragmented history of his community from the scattered remains like miniature paintings, recipes and orders of the directors of the East India Company, right from the eighteenth century, which in turn is the history of colonialism in India as well. Historical personalities like Gandhiji also figure in the novel, and references made to incidents like Sepoy Mutiny are closely historical than fictional in the book. The entire story of the Trotters is very clearly arranged chronologically, as the author wanted to give clarity to the history of the community of his origin, which compared to other religious minorities like Parsis and Sikhs do not claim a long drawn history of several centuries. Rohinton Mistry makes the political climate existed in India during the 1970s, especially when India faced wars with Pakistan, and the years when Indira Gandhi government at the centre declared a state of internal emergency in the country, as the background of his first two novels. The third novel also is located in the India of the 1980s and 90s. Using the screen of fiction, Mistry vehemently attacks the anti-minority policies, human right violations and the arid political climate existed in India, in his works, and most often with focus on the way all these affected his own community. His novels are Parsi versions of post-independence India's history, and Mistry used his novels to expose the ingenuity of the greatness attached to leaders like Nehru, as he unleashes his community's opposition to such leaders. Arundhati Roy, while telling the story of a Syrian Christian family in Kerala, makes authorial comments and assesses the political chess board of Kerala in the formative years of the state, with special emphasis on the prevalence of caste order in the political praxis in the state and the operation of

power to suppress sidelined classes like women, children and untouchables. The writer brings in personalities like E.M.S the charismatic leader of Communist party in Kerala. She calls into question the value system on which even Communism is founded in the state. Thus her novel does not fit itself in to the frame of fiction as it transgresses its limits to inflicting factual blows on the reader. All these are however aimed at understanding what has happened to her community in the course of history. There are references to certain important historical landmarks as far as the community was concerned, that are more factual than fictional, comparing such information found in the historical works on the community's origin and development in Malabar.

The ethnic minority fictional works in India are basically political in character. There is a strong political motive lingering in all the works selected here, and often this politics lurks from a collective need to stabilise a stand, or to perpetrate a particular approach in the socio-political sphere. According to Deleuze and Guattari, everything in a minor literature is political, and "in it everything takes on a collective value." (16) Thus the points of view found in the minor texts, are necessarily taken as forming the collective value of the community, which is in a way its politics. Khushwant Singh's works, thus approached, present the Sikh idea of nation (as far as Khushwant Singh is concerned, it is not exactly a separate nation, but the need to identify a geographical region as their stronghold, or a Sikh state in the country), and their antagonism to the political parties that thwarted their political desires like that. Allan Sealy gives expression to the political desire of his community to be treated on par with the British by both the Indians and the British. The

community appeared to formulate a policy of showing less loyalty and sense of belonging in India, which is reflected in their works. Most of these minority writers cultivated a kind of ardent egalitarianism and iconoclasm that appears as a politics in their works. Mistry and Arundhati Roy are examples. They enthusiastically support the secular framework of the country and strongly condemn the violence committed against the suppressed classes in general. All these can be understood as part of the strategies of survival adopted by the ethnic minority communities, as long as their peaceful existence in India is always rested in the continuation of the secular framework of the country, and only an egalitarian outlook would ensure that. Mistry's representation of the anti-minority policies, violence against other minorities, tendencies of cultural nationalism and majoritarian extremism are therefore part of this politics. Arundhati Roy sees the problems affecting the minorities, women, untouchables and children as issues of immediate concern as they are cases of human rights violations. She openly attacks casteism and its perverted politics, in spite of the fact that her own community is torn asunder with overt caste discrimination. However the minority writers' proclivity to create the appearance or aura of iconoclasm, works well when they find out fissures in their own communities. They express their consciousness of the hackneyed practices and worn out habits as affecting the smooth survival of their communities. In general, the politics of ethnic minority writers are rooted in their otherness, and thus they are aimed at the resistance of the erasure of cultural identity.

As pieces of 'minor literature' ethnic minority literature in India as Bogue noted elsewhere wage "their battle against the canon of major literature," and they mostly derive from "an unconscious desire to form a counter-canon of anti-Oedipal literature—a subset of great oppositional writers, such as Kafka and Beckett, within the set of great modernists." (Bogue 106) One must also be aware of the fact that there are privileged and disempowered writers among the minority writers. Probably the ethnic minority writers in India are mostly belonging to the privileged classes, that they are not as deep in the so-called minor position as dalit and such most underprivileged classes. In the specialised context of India, their cultural issues also are to be distinguished from those of the downtrodden classes, and thus a thematic study of the representation of the adivasi women in writers like Mahasweta Devi would occupy a theoretical realm of minor literature that would not accommodate the ethnic minority writers like Rohinton Mistry or Allan Sealy. But it is not to say that the ethnic minorities are not minorities; rather they also experience a kind of marginality that has to be represented and treated with separately from the mainstream writers. In the case of the western countries, it may be possible that a theory could be formulated that fully accommodate both classes. Recent theorists of minor literature like Deleuze and Guattari however, "obscure the real differences between privileged and disempowered writers," as Bogue has rightly pointed out." (106). Quoting from Kaplan, he suggests that "[w]hat is lost in Deleuze and Guattari's formulation is the acknowledgement that oppositional consciousness (with its benefits and costs) stems from the daily, lived experience of oppression" (Kaplan 191; Bogue

106). Although Deleuze and Guattari do not completely ignore this distinction, “they do make possible an inclusion of privileged and oppressed within a single category by suggesting a common ground between experimental and minority literatures and by asserting the feasibility of a ‘becoming minor’ of white first-world males.” (106) Moreover, as Bogue wrote:

Although references to the concept of minor literature are frequent in discussions of postcolonial, minority and marginal literatures, it is not at all certain that the concept has been thoroughly assimilated within these fields. Renza and Kaplan offer critiques of the concept, but without fully acknowledging the presuppositions that underlie it and make necessary the syncretism they oppose. The concept of minor literature is only one element of Deleuze and Guattari's study of Kafka, an element whose coherence depends on a number of interrelated concepts that are seldom mentioned in others' treatment of the idea. (106)

The entire idea of the treatment of marginality given to the ethnic minorities in India like Sikhs, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, and Syrian Christians, are bound to be questioned on the ground that most of them occupy the position of a bourgeois elite in the respective spheres of their operation. But, when we consider these groups as categories of racial difference, and numerical status, one could find them expressing themselves the experience of being marginal to the majority Hindus in India. Moreover they have to reclaim the positions of their ethnicities before the specific qualities and distinct traits and cultural practices

are erased by the overt influence either of the dominant culture or of the widespread globalisation. For the ethnic minorities under scrutiny here in this dissertation, one interesting thing is that, they take the licence of fiction to make bold statements about the cultural space of the dominant order, the politics of the country and the states that prolong a privileged order, and so on, to register their views, and sometimes to say that the dissolution of values taken place in the community are directly or indirectly caused by the interference and influence of all these dominant activities.

While confronting a work of fiction by an ethnic minority writer, one has to encounter the difficulty of dealing with the individual characteristics of the text as well as the socio-historic and cultural context from which it originated. In my study, I had to set aside the specificity of these texts as fiction, and focus on the historical or cultural context as expressed in the text. (I was also aware of the fact that, such distinctive categories like history and fiction are problematic in the postmodern context as it is generally accepted that intermixture of a variety of elements is characteristic of almost all texts, whether historical or fictional.) Postcolonial literatures in general offer avenues for cultural and historical interpretation, as the works mostly contain much that is non-literary and issues related to history. According to Nicholas Harrison, “[h]istoricising literary texts may seem like bread and butter of postcolonial criticism.” Many of the works in literature are thus studies and critiques of issues like subjectivity, identity nationhood, race ethnicity and gender.

Not all the ethnic minority writers from India are included in the present study. The works of writers like Kaveri Nambisan, David Davidar, Firdous Kanga, and many from the groups I have selected, also contain instances of ethnic representation. A large number of writers in diaspora, as long as they are part of a group in their host cultures, also express things that are commonly found in ethnic minority literatures, and they can be approached as representatives of the new ethnicities. Thus, similar studies could be possible in Asian writers living in countries like Canada, United States, Britain and Australia, like Kerri Sakamoto, Joy Kogawa, Yuku Shibata (who represent the Japanese community in Canada); Shauna Singh Baldwin, Jhumba Lahiri, Kiran Desai, and Bharathy Mukherjee (representing the Indian community in United States); Farhana Sheikh (Pakistan), Monica Ali (Bangladesh), and Shyama Perera (Sri Lanka) as representing the Asian community in general in the United Kingdom. Their problems of identity and survival have similarity with that of the ethnic minorities in India.

The use of the term 'ethnic' instead of 'community' or 'group' or so in my study is quite deliberate. It was aimed at firstly, to broaden the discourse of ethnicity by including groups of people under discussion in a category, although most of the groups selected here do not conform to characteristics, and the entire concept of, ethnic minorities in countries like United States. Still there are elements in each of these groups that could be similar to those of the other ethnic minorities. Secondly, the categorisation or rather the naming of groups under ethnicity would enable one to locate the area of study, and thereby some parameters could be adopted to define the problems pertaining

to the groups under discussion. Apart from this, there was an intention to understand and locate things in the specifically Indian condition, where defining a group as ethnic should take into account not only the number of people in that group, and their status in the new social order in the economic scale, but also the way that group was and is looked at by the others, especially the dominant group. In the case of Sikhs for example, they form the majority in Punjab, but after the independence the community has been at cross roads at several occasions, during partition, when Sikhs were largely displaced; during the struggles for Khalistan by a fraction of Sikhs; during the operation Blue Star and the Delhi riots, and so on. They obviously faced threats from outside, and they experienced a kind of indecision with regard to their loyalties.

In the case of the Anglo-Indians they were treated part of the ruling elite during the colonial rule in India, but Britain did not take care of them after the independence. The British bourgeoisie in fact, referred them as bastards. This was in spite of the loyalty, affiliation and attachment shown by the Anglos toward England. However, in the general analysis these communities have turned out to be ethnic minorities owing to the diverse ways in which they faced ostracism and identity crisis at one time or other. Thus the case of Indian ethnicities cannot be treated on par with the other ethnicities.

As already suggested, the fictional works of ethnic minority writers form one of the 'sidestreams' of Indian literature, where their main contesters are the vernacular literatures, and the mainstream Indo-Anglian literature, both of which have different thematic and structural priorities. The mainstream writers Indo-Anglian fiction developed a kind of counterrealist aesthetics often

departing from conventional realism. Most of them were struck with certain formative areas of colonial experience, and they have presented their own social, textual and political questions. This issue is seriously pursued by Chelva Kanaganayakam in her book, *Counterrealism and Indo-Anglian Fiction* (2002). However, the ethnic minority fictional writers have to strike their difference mainly from the counterrealistic aesthetics of contemporary mainstream Indo-Anglian novelists, (who are rightly called 'Midnight's Grandchildren', referring to the influence they gathered from the path-breaking literary extravaganza of Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*.), by returning to the mimetic tradition of representation. They did not apply experimental techniques to the extent of confusing their intention of representing their community through their works; and for them artifice is not essentially the organizing principle of their works. But this is not to say that their narratives are completely without experiments. Their works reflect that the worldview and interests of the ethnic groups are consistently ignored or rebuffed by the majoritarian literature. In some cases, they also have to resist representations of their community by writers from outside making them reduced to certain fixed attribute or stereotypes. This is true about the other cultural artefacts like films and drama as well. There are a number of films in Indian languages like Malayalam and Hindi that bring out portrayals of the lives of ethnic minorities, like Anglo-Indians, Jews, Parsis and other different sub sections of Indian society. Most of these films are produced or directed by the mainstream filmmakers and their works almost always help reinstating, and invoking certain stereotypical pictures of the respective communities. The ethnic minorities have thus a necessity to escape from these

tiresome stereotypes by initiating an authentic representational praxis that would be possible through their own cultural artefacts like novels. The ethno-fictional works in India probably serve as agents of the community's desire for revivalism. Therefore their works are mostly the respective community's renewed visitations to the repositories of cultural memory to record the survival story of the community. Each work selected for study in this dissertation is a case of one individual member of the community probing the past of his/her community. The revivalist tendencies or the recollection of the past found at the thematic level of the ethnic minority texts are however, attempts to mythologize the beginning and some of the important instances from the history of the communities, in order to resist the "reactionary revivalism" (Parry 86) that searches for Hindu identity in Vedic and other texts, initiated by the majority. While the reactionary revivalism of the majority "lead to a loss of commitment to our contemporary plural/secular identity" (Parry 86) in India, the minor literatures by way of their visitations to the past found in 'minor texts' endeavour to preserve and strengthen the plural/secular image of the country. In order to achieve this end, the ethnic minority writers employ an egalitarian approach and what could be called a 'polyvocal polity' in their aesthetics, and the strengthening of this politics, however, has been a concern for almost all minority writers here.

Writing for the ethnic minorities is at the same time a socially useful act, and an avenue for self-expression, that gives meaning to their existence. In the Indian context, through a whole repertoire of cultural signs, as suggested earlier, they inform about the multiethnic nature of Indian society. To a

remarkable extent, their works are auto ethnographic texts that are representations the 'others' construct for themselves, to put in black and white their grievances for not being put in proper places in a cultural complex where they are only the small ones among many. In this respect, these auto ethnographic formations in fiction reintroduce the politics of displacement, replicating the entire history of each of the sidelined classes. These texts justify the postcolonial critical notion that whatever realities are transported into the text, they turn into signs for something else. That is, a close look at these texts would reveal that they contain inevitable play of association that required interpretations beyond mere summaries from the critic, to unravel the political and other intentions lurking behind ethno-fictional works.

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