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**THE MINORITIES AND THEIR VOICES:
A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN
ENGLISH WRITING WITH REFERENCE TO THE
NOVELS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE, ROHINTON MISTRY,
I. ALLAN SEALY AND ESTHER DAVID**

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**SUBMITTED BY:
ANIL HARILAL KINGER
LECTURER & HEAD
SHRI P. D. MALAVIYA COLLEGE OF COMMERCE,
RAJKOT**

**SUPERVISED BY:
DR. KAMAL H. MEHTA
PROFESSOR & HEAD
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
& COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES,
SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT.**

**SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY
RAJKOT.**

2008

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERARY
STUDIES
SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY
RAJKOT**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled **THE MINORITIES AND THEIR VOICES: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH WRITING WITH REFERENCE TO THE NOVELS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE, ROHINTON MISTRY, I. ALLAN SEALY AND ESTHER DAVID** is submitted by Mr. Anil Harilal Kinger for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the faculty of Arts of Saurashtra University, Rajkot. No part of this dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree or Diploma.

Rajkot.
Date:/03/2008

Supervisor
(Dr. Kamal Mehta)
Professor & Head
Department of English & CLS
Saurashtra University, Rajkot.

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Rajkot

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(Anil Harilal Kinger)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The colonial period in India is marked by gradual transformation of its society from agrarian to semi-industrial leaving far reaching impact on almost all aspects of life. The impact of modernization caused by the industrialization and automation was discernible even before our independence in a distinct community life among people. The advent of enormous housing colonies, huge towns and bigger cities, besides many other changes caused by the new industrial culture, were perhaps the natural by-products of the whole process. Another point worth stressing in this regard is that in the wake of industrialization and along with the rise of the middle-class, the urbanity also blossomed. The big cities of the world today are the direct consequence of the industrialization. Urbanity and middle-class, both thrived mutually in this transitional period. This caused unprecedented diaspora invoking migration of people from villages to towns and cities - which subsequently gave rise to various problems and crises typical to urbanity. Spacious villages were replaced by spaceless and timeless towns and cities and then houses with people stuffed in them in most of the cases. A new form of life characterized by urban stress and anxieties was discernible in these cities. According to a study, it is believed that today almost half of the world lives in cities and more than one-third of the Indian population have migrated to live in urban towns and cities. By the year 2001 Mumbai alone had 16 million inhabitants.

The confrontation of the east with the west and particularly of Britain with India created unrest and anxiety among the natives. Though India's traditional life was given a jolt by this confrontation, yet a new kind of awareness and consciousness also dawned on the people pursuing critical and intellectual activities in a new atmosphere. K.R.S. Iyenger has quoted Arthur Mayhew in this regard, who rightly observes:

Under English rule in India the impact of the civilizations may have produced unrest. But it has also sustained and stimulated life.¹

And the reflection of this stimulated psyche is characterized in the literature of the age. The race, the surroundings and the age, as H. Taine postulated, are three definitive factors which affect the creation of literature. The pre-industrial society marked by tribal, agrarian and feudal way of life in which the fate of the people was identified with one central person, or a king whose fate would be the fate of the people. But during the second half of 19th and early 20th centuries, democratic system flourished and the common man was in the centre of the affairs as against the superman of Nietzsche. Literature and other forms of art also voiced these changes. The modern writer was sensitive enough to record the man, the milieu and the moment around him. A comparison between the idea of heroism of the ancients and that of the moderns of the 19th century would substantiate the point of view. For instance, the two Ulysses of literature of different ages are so different that the

later version seems to be parody of the preceding counterpart, and that is the only sustainable relationship between the two. Because the Homeric Ulysses, an embodiment of gallantry, bravery, virtuosity, and other super-human qualities, is in sharp contrast with the modern Ulysses of James Joyce, who is a weaknead, sensual man caught in the throes of modern industrial world.

Every age has its own compulsions, tensions, fears, aspirations and logic and accordingly finds a genre suitable to it. Even a cursory glance at the history of English Literature would approve it. The sensibility conditioned by the industrial progress had altogether different hopes, wishes, fears, anxieties, feelings and emotions, and so it found itself authentically reflected in the novel genre. Industrialization led to the rise of middle classes which found novel as the most suitable literary form for itself. Since the west was the early cradle of industrial revolution so it was but natural that it was the cradle of the novel form, too, which reached far flung countries of the world along with the colonizing west and to an extent explored it as part of their colonial project.

It was with India's unfortunate fall that the novel came to India through western channels though the critics like Bhalchandra Nemade oppose this view.² During the latter half of the 19th century, the number of western educated people increased because of the spurt in educational activities and establishment of universities in India. Prose writing came into vogue during those days and through English prose only, regional languages of India were cast into prose style. The prose, initially functional, was also used later on as

a medium of artistic expression and a class of native writers could even use English prose creatively for their purpose.

It was Bengal that led the Indian reception of the novel form and its use for creative endeavours with its writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, Bibhuti Bhushan, Naini Bhaumik and Manoj Basu among others.³ Writers from other Indian regions-Nirad Chaudhary, Rajnikant Bardoloi, K.S. Venkatramani, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Sir Jogendra Singh and the famous trio R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, to name only a few - soon joined the league.⁴ They all engaged themselves in the art of novel writing following the model of English type, for it was easily accessible to us and it was practiced by the master colonisers. With colonial complex in operation the English novel came to be the western novel for us and became the pole guiding novel for our writers though there were the few like Bankim Chandra and Goverdhanram Tripathi who resisted colonial influence in the ways as different as they themselves were.

Novel, primarily, is of the middle class - of man of masses. In that vein, the early Indian fiction in English by Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, G.V. Desani and others depict the world which is ruled, not by individuals or kings, but by masses. The heroism in their works " depict the movement of masses and crowds in revolution and war gripped by the savagery of Nature in famine and flood ".⁵ The masses in these works -

identifiable with certain groups, cities, towns, slums or colonies - assume the role of the hero or the protagonist. For instance, in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan Juggat, the protagonist, becomes a convincing figure only in the background of the village Mano Majra and the community to which he belongs. Vasant Shahane rightly observes in this regard:

Mano Majra is the real protagonist in Train to Pakistan...
The individual is important in Khushwant Singh's created cosmos, but not obtrusively because he is part of a vaster and greater reality[and] the collective destiny of groups and communities dominates the individual's fate.⁶

Among other works like Tamas by Bhishma Sahani and Adha Gaon by Rahi Masum Raza also tell the stories, not of the individuals, but of masses gripped in the woes caused by the partition of Indian subcontinent. Among the recent works, in Upmany Chatterjee's English, August : An Indian Story, Madna, " a dot in the hinterland " , as the writer called it, emerges as the real protagonist of the novel. All these are either the examples of community literature or literature of places⁷ in which community or place emerges as the protagonist or hero.

The Indian novel in English thematically preoccupied itself with the subject matters like Indian freedom movement, patriotism, evils of feudalism and the matters of national concern before the Independence; and social reforms

afterwards. Mulkraj Anand, a novelist himself, traces the march of the Indian novel in one of his articles. He considers Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anand Matha the first novel on Indian Freedom Movement, and Krishnakanta's Will on the subjects of hierarchy and landlord. Tagore's Gora, according to him, was a novel about national concerns and Ghare Baire, a stream-of-consciousness novel. After Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee wrote about lower middle classes and the evils of terrorism. Then there were Tara Shankar Bandyopadhyay and Bibhuti Bhushan who wrote about tribals, fisher folk and village life of Bengal. Then, the writers with socialistic concerns emerged on the scene, which included Prem Chand, Anand himself, Shivram Karanth, Yashpal, Amrit Lal Nagar, Phaneshwar Nath Renu, Ismat Chughtai, Krishnan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi and Qurratulain Haider. The voice of women novelists, urging emancipation in forceful terms has also been heard after Independence, particularly in the novels of Kamala Markandya, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal and Uma Vasudeva.⁸ However, the Indian novel in English during the recent years – especially in 1980s, 90s and after – revealed new heights with sudden spurt in creative activities rich in quality and quantity as well. Viney Kirpal observes in this regard:

In this significant decade, a gorgeous collection of several magnificent Indian novels seems to have garnered, almost overnight.... In the 1980s, however, not less than two dozen notable novels have already been produced...⁹

Amazingly many of these novels have either been awarded or short listed for one prize or the other of international repute. Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children, which gave new purpose and direction to Indian fiction in English with its publication in 1981, got the Booker prize of the year and subsequently it also won the Booker of Booker. The experimentation and innovation at the levels of language, theme and style in this novel have been consolidated and extended by many other Indian English novelists in their works.

The Indian novelists writing in English, especially of 1980s and 90s, strove hard to overcome the so-called "colonial hangover" and "Raj Syndrome", and the fiction of this period is marked by the experimentation at various levels of language, theme and technique. For instance, The Golden Gate by Vikram Seth explores new avenues of craftsmanship and technical excellence, and Shobha De and Firdaus Kanga experiment with heretofore unexplored and even prohibited themes. Other contemporary writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee and Shashi Deshpande, to name only a few, have also captivated the literary scene around the world with their experimental yet gripping creative endeavours of fiction. The mind and milieu projected in the works of these writers are prominently urban and cosmopolitan.

Simultaneously they have added new meanings to their novels in their post-modernist garbs. For instance, a master stroke like that delivered by Rushdie's Satanic Verses defamed the whole of community around the world. That of course, came in the wake of Ayatollah Khomeini's Fatwa to kill the author of Satanic Verses. At the outset, the attempt may look like a petty

gimmick of a berserk author, but the deeper we dig, we are likely to stumble upon a graver meaning. Perhaps Rushdie's attempt is a ditch at hiding his alienation from his roots. However, this may not be the conclusive aspect of the whole novel. The works of other authors writing in English, especially minority writers, have striven hard to lend voice to similar feelings occurring out of similar angst. In fact their rootless ness or their so called minority status and threats related to it are vociferated in the expatriate writers like Rohinton Mistry, Meenaxi Mukherjee, Sulman Rushdie and Farrukh Dhondy and native writers like I. Allan Sealy, Firdaus Kanga, Esther David and Keki Daruwala among others.

With the intentions of perennial rule over the Indian sub-continent's colonies, British had indigenous plans. One of them, as our histories state and, though it did not see its hay-day, was their game-plan to divide and rule. However, the idea succeeded at the cost of their reign. The Indian subject was almost perennially divided among the majorities and minorities. Almost 200 years' British rule over India has taught many worthy lessons to the people of this country and has given many scars to the face of Indian history as well. And the culmination was the holocaust tragedy of a country divided into two. A country was transformed into a sub-continent. And today the scenario that persists is of the grave concern to the statesmen and of the petty gimmicks for politicians.

There is no dearth of examples of the latter aspect, and the former also found its reflection in various manners. The most worried were the artists of the different genres. Literature vociferated the pangs of the division among castes and countries. In fiction, especially, Bhishma Sahani's Tamas, Rahi Masum Raza's Aadha Gaon, Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Sadat Hasan Manto's various works, among others, adequately tell the stories to this effect. Such fiction spoke of the dissection of the country. What followed were the hushed voices, within the country, of the minorities. Since the independence and the inception of our own Republic sovereignty, perhaps, the most discussed issue has been that of minorities and the related ones. The ruling parties have been accused of appeasing one or the other community according to their respective design.

The census 2001 in India revealed a comprehensive data on Indian population. It legitimately identifies the communities like Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis as minorities of India. The graphic below aptly reveals the present scenario of Indian Minorities vis-à-vis the so called majority.

Minorities in India as per National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 are Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Parsis. As per 2001 census, these communities constitute about 18% of the total population of the country reaching about 189.4 millions. The community-wise breakup of minority population in India as per 2001 Census is as below:¹⁰

| Sr. No. | Community | Population | % of Minority Population |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Muslims | 13,81,88,240 | 72.919% |
| 2 | Christians | 02,40,80,016 | 12.707% |
| 3 | Sikhs | 01,92,15,730 | 10.140% |
| 4 | Buddhists | 00,79,55,207 | 04.198% |
| 5 | Parsis | 00,00,69,601 | 00.037% |

Here lies the ***hypothesis*** of this endeavour. It is really typical of India that a majority is only notional; hence, term 'so called' has been used previously. The multitudinous sub groups within the majority subvert the very concept of that being so. The Indian minorities vigorously resist this proposition. The political support to the minorities has always been ambivalent. The ruling parties, for their petty ends, always provoked them to pocket their vote-banks. The left parties in the country were the front runners in this regard. They unabashedly sought support of the Muslim community during the recent rallying against the American President Bush's visit to India branding him as the anti-Islamic agent of the West. The right-wing parties in the country, contrary to that, have always been labeled as the patrons of the majority community blaming them as anti-reservation, anti-poor, capitalist, Brahminical, communal and what not. This has inherent paradox as in spite of being the majority parties they are differently titled as above. The oldest political party in India, the Indian National Congress, even after its various poor shows and multiple fragmentations, claims to be the only secular party of

India, which is rather ridiculous in more ways than one. In all, the political clout in the country is in a sort of pendulum.

Some thinking minds came together with an idea sparked by one of them. A seminar was held in 1996 under the aegis of India International Centre, Sahitya Academy, the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and the Konard Adenauer Foundation of Germany on the theme of “The Muse and the Minorities: Social Concerns and Cohesion.” The literary stalwarts like Mulk Raj Anand, C D Narasimhaiah, Keki Daruwala, Bapsi Sidhwa and the writers and artists from all performing arts among others deliberated on the theme for three long days. On the occasion George Verghese in his keynote address stated,

Minorities and majorities are not categories as much as states of mind... Religion was politicised and that is the legacy that has tormented us all these years. This led to polarisation, fear, suspicion, reduced interaction. There were riots, discrimination, misinformation, disinformation and the distortion and the re-writing of history from all sides. This created a gulf or barrier and created the minority complex. We must end this. (p.14, 15)¹¹

Quiet contrary to these deliberations, Joseph Macwan, a Dalit writer was very proud at maintaining his identity of being a minority writer. He said, in the same seminar:

...I am accountable to *my* society...I am born, brought up and now live among—their strengths and weaknesses, their passions and malice, their mirth and miseries, their hopes, ambitions and aspirations. I dare not turn a deaf ear to their voices, however out of tune they may be. I dare not tread on an untrodden path, by creating my own.(p.54, emphasis mine)¹²

And ending his deliberations on the topic, he adds:

In the innermost recesses of my existence, I have lived, experienced and felt exploited, the tortured, the agonised the wretched and yet, the tenacious and proud human lives. This very anguish makes me feel restored and compels me to pick my pen. Beyond this, I have no contribution to make.(p.58)¹³

How does the creative Muse operate in this intricate framework? Can there be majority and minority writers? Can the Muse discriminate/differentiate

between the two? Are the majority/minority writers different or alike? Does the sensibility of the one, in any ways, differ than the other?

True creativity, unarguably, defies all such stipulations and questions. The canons of literature may vouch for the same fact. Of course, there were difficulties with the authenticities of the canons themselves. The terms like Highways and Byways of literature, mainstream, marginalized, feminist, Black-literature, community literature and city literature among others are but the dissident voices of the same flock. Even the genre preferences fell in the dirty hands of critics creating elitist and non-elitist segments among literary artist. The discussion continues.

The Indian literary scene has kept pace with times. Joining the train, the noted Gujarati critic and creative writer Raghuvir Chowdhary was at odds with Ganesh Devi, the equally known critic, who opined in a seminar that the true canons lay in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad-Gita as against Devi's stand for considering jungle-lores and folklores as mainstream literature. The Indian writing in English too, has been in the throes of incessant deliberations over the issues and in keeping pace with the world literature. The contemporary mainstream Indian writing in English, as discussed earlier, is exuberant in experimentation at various levels. This quality has made this literature acceptable world over and has gained many accolades from all the corners of the globe.

The marked ingenuity shown by the writers from minority communities—Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, I. Allan Sealy and Esther David among others from major minority communities of India—can not be ignored. Moreover, their contributions to the corpus of Indian literature in English call for elaborate study from the researchers pursuing this field. The broad *Objectives* for the present hypothesis under examination are as follows:

- To study and examine four minority community writers—namely Salman Rushdie representing the Muslim minority community; Rohinton Mistry, the Parsis; I. Allan Sealy, the Christians; and Esther David as the representative of a minuscule community of Jews—and their fictional works and how the voices of these communities get reflected in their respective representative works in the obtaining scenario of Indian English writings in the contemporary times.
- To study the gamut of relationships of minority communities vis-à-vis the majority community in the country.
- To explore the changing face of communities in the cities and small towns and villages.
- And finally, to observe pressures and problems perceived by the concerned novelists, as they do from their respective minority communities.

Such a study, as discussed above, will necessarily comprise the data collected and analysed in the manner that of a dialectician and/or an

empiricist. Hence, any lacunae in the effort should be considered as unintentional and justifiable. However, I do not mean any defense for my efforts in the following pages.

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- 1 K.R. Srinivas Iyenger, Indian Writing in English (New Delhi : Sterling Publishers, 1993) p. 29.

- 2 According to him novel is not an entirely English form. Its origin too, is not English. He goes on to note that the Panchtantra Fables were transformed while migrating from India to Iran and then through Baghdad and Constantinople to all of Europe. So that novel as a literary form is not entirely new in India though as a literary form it came to India from our contact with the English. (Bhalchandra Nemade, "Marathi Novels from 1950 to 1975," Setu, Vol. II No. 1, 1986 p. 29 - 64.

- 3 K. R. S. Iyenger, Indian Writing in English, (New Delhi : Sterling Publishers, 1993)p. 318.

- 4 Ibid., p. 322.

- 5 H.M. Williams, "The Doomed Hero", Three Contemporary Novelists, ed. R.K. Dhavan (New Delhi:Classical Publishing Company, 1985)p 98.

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- 9 Viney Kirpal, "Introduction", The New Indian Novel in English : A Study of the 1980s, (New Delhi : Allied,1990)p. XIII - IV.
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12 Joseph Macwan, The Muse and the Minorities: Social Concerns and Creative Cohesion Eds. Shernaz Cama and Sudhir Chandra Mathur (New Delhi: The Steering Committee, The Muse and the Minorities, 1998) p. 54.

13 Ibid., p. 58.

Chapter 2

The Minority and Midnight's Children

A brief glance at the history of the rise of Islam and Muslim community , would help understand the issues discussed hereinafter in their proper perspective, and the Muslim psyche at work in fictional narratives of Salman Rushdie in particular and all other Muslim minority writers in general, though generalisation is a very tricky domain.

II

Islam, one of the three major world religions, along with Judaism and Christianity, professes monotheism, or the belief in a single God. In the Arabic language, the word Islam means “surrender” or “submission”—submission to the will of God. A follower of Islam is called a Muslim, which in Arabic means “one who surrenders to God.” The Arabic name for God, Allah, refers to the same God worshiped by Jews and Christians. Islam’s central teaching is that there is only one all-powerful, all-knowing God, and this God has created the universe. This rigorous monotheism, as well as the Islamic teaching that all Muslims are equal before God, provides the basis for a collective sense of loyalty to God that transcends class, race, nationality, and even differences in religious practice. Thus, all Muslims belong to one community, the umma, irrespective of their ethnic or national background.

Within two centuries after its rise in the 7th century, Islam spread from its original home in Arabia into Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain to the west, and into Persia, India, and, by the end of the 10th century, beyond the east. In

the following centuries, Islam also spread into Anatolia and the Balkans to the north, and sub-Saharan Africa to the south. The Muslim community comprises about 1 billion followers on all five continents, and Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. The most populous Muslim country is Indonesia, followed by Pakistan and Bangladesh. Beyond the Middle East, large numbers of Muslims live in India, Nigeria, the former republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and China.

One of the reasons for the growth of the Muslim community has been its openness to new members. Children born to Muslim parents are automatically considered Muslim. At any time, a non-Muslim can convert to Islam by declaring himself or herself to be a Muslim. A person's declaration of faith is sufficient evidence of conversion to Islam and need not be confirmed by others or by religious authorities.

Around the year 570 AD Muhammad, the founding prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca, at the time the central city of the Arabian Peninsula. Some 40 years later Muhammad started preaching a new religion, Islam, which constituted a marked break from existing moral and social codes in Arabia. The new religion of Islam taught that there was one God, and that Muhammad was the last in a series of prophets and messengers. Through his messengers, God had sent various codes, or systems of laws for living, culminating in the Qur'an (Koran), the holy book of Islam. These messengers were mortal men, and they included among many others Moses, the Hebrew prophet and

lawgiver, and Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the son of God rather than a prophet.

Islam also taught that the Christian Bible (which includes the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament and an additional 27 books referred to as the New Testament), and the Qur'an were all holy books. According to the Qur'an, the two earlier Scriptures had been altered over time from their original forms given by God, while the Qur'an would remain perfect, preserved by God from such distortion. In addition to distinguishing itself from the Hebrew and Christian traditions, the new religion taught that the God of Islam had provided humanity with the means to know good from evil, through the prophets and the Qur'an. Therefore, on the Day of Judgment people will be held accountable for their actions.

Muhammad's teachings met with severe and hostile opposition, and in the year 622, he had to leave Mecca and seek refuge in the city of Yathrib, as a number of his followers had already done. Upon Muhammad's arrival, the name Yathrib was changed to Medina (meaning "the city"). The date of Muhammad's immigration was later set as the beginning of the 12-month lunar Islamic calendar.

During the ten years between his arrival in Medina and his death in 632 AD, Muhammad laid the foundation for the ideal Islamic state. A core of committed Muslims was established, and a community life was ordered according to the requirements of the new religion. In addition to general moral injunctions, the

requirements of the religion came to include a number of institutions that continue to characterize Islamic religious practice today. Foremost among these were the five pillars of Islam, the essential religious duties required of every adult Muslim who is mentally able. The five pillars are each described in some part of the Qur'an and were already practiced during Muhammad's lifetime. They are the profession of faith ('shahada'), prayer ('salat'), almsgiving ('zakat') fasting ('sawm'), and pilgrimage ('hajj'). Although some of these practices had precedents in Jewish, Christian, and other Middle Eastern religious traditions, taken together they distinguish Islamic religious practices from those of other religions. The five pillars are thus the most central rituals of Islam and constitute the core practices of the Islamic faith.

Many polemical descriptions of Islam have focused critically on the Islamic concept of jihad. Jihad, considered the sixth pillar of Islam by some Muslims, has been understood to mean holy war in these descriptions. However, the word in Arabic means "to struggle" or "to exhaust one's effort," in order to please God. Within the faith of Islam, this effort can be individual or collective, and it can apply to leading a virtuous life; helping other Muslims through charity, education, or other means; preaching Islam; and fighting to defend Muslims. Western media of the 20th century continue to focus on the militant interpretations of the concept of jihad, whereas most Muslims do not.

Islamic doctrine emphasizes the oneness, uniqueness, transcendence, and utter otherness of God. As such, God is different from anything that the human senses can perceive or that the human mind can imagine. The God of

Islam encompasses all creation, but no mind can fully encompass or grasp him. God, however, is manifest through his creation, and through reflection, humankind can easily discern the wisdom and power behind the creation of the world. Because of God's oneness and his transcendence of human experience and knowledge, Islamic law forbids representations of God, the prophets, and among some Muslims, human beings in general. As a result of this belief, Islamic art came to excel in a variety of decorative patterns including leaf shapes later stylized as arabesques, and Arabic script. In modern times the restrictions on creating images of people have been considerably relaxed, but any attitude of worship toward images and icons is strictly forbidden in Islam.

Before Islam, many Arabs believed in a supreme, all-powerful God responsible for creation; however, they also believed in lesser gods. With the coming of Islam, the Arab concept of God was purged of elements of polytheism and turned into a qualitatively different concept of uncompromising belief in one God, or monotheism. The status of the Arabs before Islam is considered to be one of ignorance of God, or 'jahiliyya', and Islamic sources insist that Islam brought about a complete break from Arab concepts of God and a radical transformation in Arab belief about God.

Islamic doctrine maintains that Islam's monotheism continues that of Judaism and Christianity. However, the Qur'an and Islamic traditions stress the distinctions between Islam and later forms of the two other monotheistic religions. According to Islamic belief, both Moses and Jesus, like others

before them, were prophets commissioned by God to preach the essential and eternal message of Islam. The legal codes introduced by these two prophets, the Ten Commandments and the Christian Gospels, took different forms than the Qur'an, but according to Islamic understanding, at the level of doctrine they are the same teaching. The recipients of scriptures are called the people of the book or the "scriptured" people. Like the Jews and the Christians before them, the Muslims became scriptured when God revealed his word to them through a prophet: God revealed the Qur'an to the prophet Muhammad, commanding him to preach it to his people and later to the entire humanity.

Although Muslims believe that the original messages of Judaism and Christianity were given by God, they also believe that Jews and Christians eventually distorted them. The self-perceived mission of Islam, therefore, has been to restore what Muslims believe is the original monotheistic teaching and to supplant the older legal codes of the Hebrew and Christian traditions with a newer Islamic code of law that corresponds to the evolving conditions of human societies. Thus, for example, Islamic traditions maintain that Jesus was a prophet whose revealed book was the Christian New Testament, and that later Christians distorted the original scripture and inserted into it the claim that Jesus was the son of God. Or to take another example, Muslims maintain that the strict laws communicated by Moses in the Hebrew Bible were appropriate for their time. Later, however, Jesus introduced a code of behaviour that stressed spirituality rather than ritual and law.

According to Muslim belief, God sent Muhammad with the last and perfect legal code that balances the spiritual teachings with the law, and thus supplants the Jewish and Christian codes. According to the teachings of Islam, the Islamic code, called 'Sharia', is the final code, one that will continue to address the needs of humanity in its most developed stages, for all time. The Qur'an mentions 28 pre-Islamic prophets and messengers, and Islamic traditions maintain that God has sent tens of thousands of prophets to various peoples since the beginning of creation. Some of the Qur'anic prophets are familiar from the Hebrew Bible, but others are not mentioned in the Bible and seem to be prophetic figures from pre-Islamic Arabia.

For the Muslim then, Islamic history unfolds a divine scheme from the beginning of creation to the end of time. Creation itself is the realization of God's will in history. Humans are created to worship God, and human history is punctuated with prophets who guarantee that the world is never devoid of knowledge and proper worship of God. The sending of prophets is itself understood within Islam as an act of mercy. God, the creator and sustainer, never abandons his creations, always providing human beings with the guidance they need for their salvation in this world and a world to come after this one. God is just, and his justice requires informing people, through prophets, of how to act and what to believe before he holds them accountable for their actions and beliefs. However, once people receive the teachings of prophets and messengers, God's justice also means that he will punish those who do wrong or do not believe and will reward those who do right and do

believe. Despite the primacy of justice as an essential attribute of God, Muslims believe that God's most fundamental attribute is mercy.

The first four successors of Muhammad, known as rightly guided caliphs, ruled for some 30 years. Their rule, together with that of Muhammad, is considered by most Muslims to constitute the ideal Islamic age. The second caliph, Umar, ruled from 634 to 644 AD; he is credited with being the first caliph to found new Islamic cities, Al Baṣra (635 AD) and Kūfah (638 AD). The administration of the eastern and western Islamic provinces was coordinated from these two sites. After the third caliph, Uthman, was murdered by a group of Muslim mutineers, the fourth caliph, Ali, succeeded to power and moved his capital to Kūfah in Iraq. From this capital he fought the different opposition factions. Among the leaders of these factions, Mu'awiyah, governor of the rich province of Syria and a relative of Uthman, outlasted Ali. After Ali's death in 661, Mu'awiyah founded the Umayyad dynasty, which ruled a united Islamic empire for almost a century. Under the Umayyads the Islamic capital was shifted to Damascus.

The followers of Ali were known as the Shia (partisans) of Ali. Although they began as a political group, the Shia, or Shia Muslims, became a sect with specific theological and doctrinal positions. A key event in the history of the Shia and for all Muslims was the tragic death at Karbala of Husayn, the son of Ali, and Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Husayn had refused to recognize the legitimacy of the rule of the Umayyad Yazid, the son of Mu'awiyah, and was on his way to rally support for his cause in Kūfah. His plans were exposed

however before he arrived at Kūfah, where a large Umayyad army met him and 70 members of his family at the outskirts of the city. The Umayyads offered Husayn the choice between a humiliating submission to their rule or a battle and definite death. Husayn chose to fight, and he and all the members of his family with him were massacred. The incident was of little significance from a military point of view, but it was a defining moment in the history of Shia Islam. Although not all Muslims are Shia Muslims, all Muslims view Husayn as a martyr for living up to his principles even to death.

The Twelver Shia, or Ithna-‘Ashariyya, is the largest of the Shia Muslim sects. They believe that legitimate Islamic leadership is vested in a line of descent starting with Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, through Ali's two sons, Hasan and Husayn, and then through Husayn's descendants. These were the first 12 imams, or leaders of the Shia Muslim community. The Shia Muslims believe that Muhammad designated all 12 successors by name and that they inherited a special knowledge of the true meaning of the scripture that was passed from father to son, beginning with the Prophet himself. This family, along with its loyal followers and representatives, has political authority over the Shia Muslims.

Sunni Islam was defined during the early Abbasid period (beginning in 750 AD), and it included the followers of four legal schools (the Malikis, Hanafis, Shafi'is, and Hanbalis). In contrast to the Shias, the Sunnis believed that leadership was in the hands of the Muslim community at large. The consensus of historical communities, not the decisions of political authorities,

led to the establishment of the four legal schools. In theory a Muslim could choose whichever school of Islamic thought he or she wished to follow and could change this choice at will. The respect and popularity that the religious scholars enjoyed made them the effective brokers of social power and pitched them against the political authorities.

After the first four caliphs, the religious and political authorities in Islam were never again united under one institution. Their usual coexistence was underscored by a mutual recognition of their separate spheres of influence and their respective duties and responsibilities. Often, however, the two powers collided, and invariably any social opposition to the elite political order had religious undertones

Many of the accepted Islamic religious and cultural traditions were established between the 7th and 10th centuries, during the classical period of Islamic history. However, Islamic culture continued to develop as Islam spread into new regions and mixed with diverse cultures. The 19th-century occupation of most Muslim lands by European colonial powers was a main turning point in Muslim history. The traditional Islamic systems of governance, social organization, and education were undermined by the colonial regimes. Nation-states with independent governments divided the Muslim community along new ethnic and political lines. .

Today about 1 billion Muslims are spread over 40 predominantly Muslim countries and 5 continents, and their numbers are growing at a rate

unmatched by that of any other religion in the world. Despite the political and ethnic diversity of Muslim countries, a core set of beliefs continues to provide the basis for a shared identity and affinity among Muslims. Yet the radically different political, economic, and cultural conditions under which contemporary Muslims live make it difficult to identify what constitutes standard Islamic practice in the modern world. Many contemporary Muslims draw on the historical legacy of Islam as they confront the challenges of modern life. Islam is a significant, growing, and dynamic presence in the world. Its modern expressions are as diverse as the world in which Muslims live.

Islamic Fundamentalism, diverse political and social movements in Muslim countries of North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, which have as their goal national government based on the principles and values of Islam. Although these movements all seek to restore social justice based on sharia (Islamic law), they differ in the form of government they seek and in how strictly they believe the government should interpret the law.

For many people in the West, the term “Islamic fundamentalism” evokes images of hostage crises, embassies under siege, hijackings, and suicide bombers. But these images hardly present a comprehensive picture. The ranks of Islamic fundamentalists include Muslims who provide much-needed services to the poor through Islamic schools, medical clinics, social welfare agencies, and other institutions. While some Islamic militants try to reach their goals through violence, the majority of Islamic activists work through political

parties within the electoral process. At the fringes are those like Saudi-born millionaire Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network that is engaged in a global war of terrorism.

The reassertion of Islam and Islamic values in Muslim politics and society over the past 30 years is often referred to in the West as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. However, the word fundamentalism, which originated in Christianity, can be misleading when it is used to describe Islam or Muslim countries. The conservative monarchy of Saudi Arabia, the radical socialist state of Libya, and clerically governed Iran have all been described as “fundamentalist,” but this description fails to take into account vast differences in their governments and policies. Political analysts prefer to use the expressions “political Islam” or “Islamism” when discussing Islam’s many-faceted roles in current social and political movements

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam originated in the Middle East. Adherents of all three religions are considered to be the children of Abraham. Muslims believe that God, whom they call Allah, sent his revelation first to Moses, then to Jesus, and finally to Muhammad (through the Islamic scriptures, the Qur’an). Islam is based on the Qur’an and the example of the prophet Muhammad. Islam’s involvement with politics dates back to its beginnings with the founding of a community-state by Muhammad in the 7th century AD. Under the political leadership of Muhammad and his successors, known as caliphs, Islam expanded from its point of origin in what is now Saudi Arabia into Islamic empires and cultures that extend across North Africa, through the

Middle East, and into Asia and Europe. Islam today claims more than 1.2 billion followers, more than any religion except Christianity.

While the majority of Islamic activists seek to work within the system and bring about change from within society, a relatively small but significant radical extremist minority believe they have a mandate from God to carry out God's will. This extremist minority further believes that because the rulers in the Muslim world are authoritarian and anti-Islamic, violent change is necessary. They seek to topple governments, seize power, and impose their vision or interpretation of Islam upon society.

Radical Islamic movements often operate on the assumption that Islam and the West are locked in an ongoing battle that reaches back to the early days of Islam, a battle that has been heavily influenced by the legacy of the Crusades and European colonialism, and that today is the product of a Judeo-Christian conspiracy. This conspiracy, they believe, is the result of superpower neocolonialism and the power of Zionism (support for a Jewish nation, now the state of Israel). These radical movements blame the West (Britain, France, and especially the United States) for its support of un-Islamic or unjust regimes and biased support for Israel in the face of the displacement of the Palestinian people. Thus, violence against such governments and their representatives as well as Western multinationals is regarded as legitimate self-defense.

Islamic radicals also believe that Islam is not simply an ideological alternative for Muslim societies but a theological and political imperative. Because it is God's command, implementation must be immediate, not gradual, and the obligation to implement is incumbent on all true Muslims. Therefore, those who hesitate, remain apolitical, or resist—individuals and governments—are no longer to be regarded as Muslims. They are atheists or unbelievers, enemies of God, against whom all true Muslims must wage holy war in the form of jihad.

With more than 1 billion inhabitants, India ranks second only to China among the world's most populous countries. Its people are culturally diverse, and religion plays an important role in the life of the country. About 83 percent of the people practice Hinduism, a religion that originated in India. Another 12 percent are Muslims, and millions of others are Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. Eighteen major languages and more than 1,000 minor languages and dialects are spoken in India

About 12 percent of the Indian population practices Islam, this also is divided into several different communities. The major division in the Muslim population is between Sunni and Shia branches. The Shia community has a significant presence in several areas, most notably in the cities of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh and Hyderābād in Andhra Pradesh.

Muslim communities in India are generally more urban than rural. In many towns and cities in northern India, Muslims are one-third or more of the

population. In addition to Jammu and Kashmir and the Lakshadweep islands, where more than two-thirds of the population is Muslim, major concentrations of Muslims live in Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala states. About one-quarter of all Muslims in India live in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

.Muslims are often treated as just another caste, particularly in India's villages. There are caste like categories among the Muslims as well. These are called brotherhoods in northern India, and they identify Muslims with their traditional occupations, such as butchers or leatherworkers. As with Hindus, Muslims marry within their brotherhood. Among Christians as well, in the 19th century and to a much less significant extent more recently, converts and their descendants continued to be identified by their Hindu caste of origin.

Relations between Hindus and Muslims have always been problematic. After the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, Muslims of the northern provinces who stayed in India—where they were a minority—became vulnerable. Riots between Hindus and Muslims have occurred on occasion since the mid-1960s. Muslims in rural areas remain largely untouched by the conflict. Riots tend not to occur in areas where there are structures of mutual social or economic advantage—for example, in towns with a large industry owned by Hindus and employing Muslims. Also, at the personal level, there are many examples of friendships and mutual respect. Muslim leaders have served as Presidents of India, and Muslims have held positions of great prominence in all fields, including the military.

In the 10th century, Turkic Muslims began invading India, bringing the Islamic religion to India. The Ghaznavids, a dynasty from eastern Afghanistan, began a series of raids into northwestern India at the end of the 10th century. Mahmud of Ghaznī, the most notable ruler of this dynasty, raided as far as present-day Uttar Pradesh state. Mahmud did not attempt to rule Indian territory except for the Punjab area, which he annexed before his death in 1030.

A little more than a century after Mahmud's death, his magnificent capital of Ghaznī was destroyed in warfare among rivals within Afghanistan. In 1175 one of the successors to Mahmud's dismembered empire, the Muslim conqueror Muhammad of Ghur, began his conquest of northern India. Within 20 years he had conquered all of north India, including the Bengal region. In 1206 Qutubuddin Aybak, one of Muhammad of Ghur's generals, founded the Delhi Sultanate with its capital at Delhi and began the Slave dynasty. Also in 1206 Genghis Khan united the Mongol tribes and established the Mongol Empire. He then moved rapidly into China and westward, reaching the Indus Valley about 1221. In the following three centuries the Mongols remained the dominant power in northwest India, gradually merging with the Turkic Muslim peoples there.

The Delhi Sultanate engaged in constant warfare during its 300-year reign, subduing intermittent rebellions of the nobles of the Bengal region, repelling incursions of Mongols to the northwest, and conquering and looting Hindu kingdoms as far south as Madurai in Tamil Nādu. Beginning with the Slave

dynasty, the sultanate was ruled by a succession of five dynasties before it was finally overthrown by the Mughal emperor Humayun in 1556. During the reign of the short-lived Khalji dynasty (1290-1320), the warrior leader Alauddin financed his successful campaigns to south India with an established system of local revenue. The next dynasty, that of the Tughluqs, weakened when Muhammad Tughluq moved his capital from Delhi to the more centrally located Daulatabad in an effort to assert more permanent rule over his southern lands. He lost control over the Delhi area, and nobles in the south and in Bengal also established their independence. In 1398 the Mongol conqueror Tamerlane invaded India, sacking Delhi and massacring its inhabitants. Tamerlane withdrew from India shortly after the sack of Delhi, leaving the remnants of the empire to Mahmud, who as last of the Tughluqs ruled from 1399 to 1413. Mahmud was succeeded by the Sayyid dynasty (1414-1451), under which the Delhi Sultanate shrank to virtually nothing. The Lodi dynasty (1451-1526), of Afghan origin, later revived the rule of Delhi over much of north India, although it was unable to give its rule a firm military and financial foundation. The rest of India remained under the rule of other kings, some Muslim and some Hindu. The greatest of these polities was the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, which existed from 1336 to 1565, centered in what is now Karnāṭaka.

Many Indians got converted to Islam during this era. One of the areas where a great majority of the population became Muslim was in the Punjab region, which by the end of the Delhi Sultanate had been under the continuous rule of Muslim kings for more than 500 years. Muslims did marry Hindus (the founder

of the Khalji dynasty was the offspring of one such marriage), and Hindus did convert to Islam. In general, Muslim kings were far from tolerant, even despising their Hindu subjects, and the oral traditions also speak of forced mass conversions. The region that is now Bangladesh also became overwhelmingly Muslim during this period. This area had been mainly Buddhist before the Muslims arrived. Even in south India, where the Hindu revival inspired by the works of Shankara and others had its greatest influence, a small minority of people became Muslim.

The Mughal Empire was founded in 1526 by Babur, a descendant of Taimurlang. The Mughal Empire was born when Babur, with the use of superior artillery, defeated the far larger army of the Lodis at Pānīpat, near Delhi. Babur's kingdom stretched from beyond Afghanistan to the Bengal region along the Gangetic Plain. His son Humayun, however, lost the kingdom to Bihār-based Sher Khan Sur (later Sher Shah) and fled to Persia (now Iran). Humayun recaptured Delhi in 1555, shortly before his death.

Humayun's son Akbar, whose name (meaning "great") reflected the ruler he became, extended the Mughal Empire until it covered the subcontinent from Afghanistan to the Bay of Bengal and from the Himalayas to the Godāvāri River. The Mughals moved their capitals frequently: Wherever they made camp became the capital. The cities they built, and the citadels within those cities, were like army camps, with the nobles living in tents, rich carpets on the ground, and just the walls, audience halls, royal residences, and mosques built of stone. In the course of the dynasty those citadels were located in

Lahore, in and around Āgra, in the architecturally spectacular city of Fatehpur Sikri, and near the city of Shahjahanabad.

Although illiterate, Akbar matched the learning of his father and grandfather, both of whose courts were enriched by Persian arts and letters, and surpassed them in wisdom. He brought under his control the Hindu Rajput kings who ruled just south and west of Āgra by defeating them in battle, extending religious tolerance, and offering them alliances cemented by marriage (Akbar married two Rajput princesses, including the mother of his son and successor, Jahangir) and positions of power in his army and administration. As an observant Muslim, Akbar brought to his court adherents to various sects of Islam, as well as priests of other faiths, including Christians, to hear them present their beliefs. European visitors to the Mughal court became even more frequent in the succeeding reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Europeans were allowed to establish trading posts at the periphery of the empire and beyond, but they never became influential at court.

Paying for the military campaigns and for the magnificent court required the transformation of traditional patterns of taxation and administration. Sher Shah initiated the necessary administrative system, and Akbar improved it. By accurately assessing average yearly harvests for land in different regions and then standardizing the percentage of the harvest due in taxes, Akbar secured a reliable source of income from land revenues. To make it easier to govern his empire, he divided it into provinces and subdivided it into districts. He

established a bureaucracy of ranked officials to administer the functions of the empire and paid many of its members in cash rather than in the traditional form of grants of land, allowing for flexibility in the location and type of assignments the officials were given. This system was so successful that the British adopted it in large part.

The system came under strain with Shah Jahan's costly and unsuccessful campaign to capture the Mughal's ancestral homeland of Samarqand in 1646, and his son Aurangzeb's equally costly efforts to extend the empire south. In 1686 and 1687 Aurangzeb conquered the Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda, which controlled the northern half of the Deccan Plateau. But his attempt to subdue the Hindu Maratha Confederacy (centered in what is now Mahārāstra state) was ultimately unsuccessful, and the Mughal armies suffered numerous defeats. Aurangzeb's growing religious intolerance also undermined the stability of the empire. In 1697 he reimposed a poll tax on non-Muslims, abolished during Akbar's rule. Disaffection over such discriminatory policies, along with the now-crushing tax burden, led to widespread rebellion at the end of Aurangzeb's reign.

Turkmen military leader Nadir Shah took the Iranian throne in 1736 and rapidly built an empire through conquest. By 1738 he had conquered Afghanistan, and in 1739 he dealt a disastrous blow to the tottering Mughal Empire of India when he sacked Delhi. His empire eventually stretched from Iraq to northern India, but it disintegrated quickly after his assassination in 1747.

Although it did not formally end until 1858, the Mughal Empire ceased to exist as an effective state after Aurangzeb died in 1707. The political chaos of the period was marked by a rapid decline of centralized authority, by the creation of many small kingdoms and principalities by Muslim and Hindu adventurers, and by the formation of large independent states by the governors of the imperial provinces. Among the first of the large independent states to emerge was Hyderābād, established in 1712. The tottering Mughal regime suffered a disastrous blow in 1739 when the Persian king Nadir Shah led an army into India and plundered Delhi. Among the treasures stolen by invaders were the mammoth Koh-i-noor diamond and the magnificent Peacock Throne, made of solid gold inlaid with precious stones. Nadir Shah withdrew from Delhi, but in 1756 the city was again captured—this time by Ahmad Shah, emir of Afghanistan, who had previously seized Punjab. Fuelled by the British presence, the subsequent history is of regular struggle of the Hindus and the Muslims to gain control over the other.

In the recent times, as independence from the British rule approached, Hindus and Muslims continued to fight and kill each other. Gandhiji put his belief in nonviolence into play. He went on his own to a Muslim-majority area of Bengal, placing himself as a hostage for the safety of Muslims living among Hindus in western Bengal. With the British army unable to deal with the threat of mounting violence, the new Viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, decided to advance the schedule of the transfer of power, leaving just months for the parties to agree on a formula for independence. Finally in June 1947

Congress and Muslim League leaders, against Gandhi's wishes, agreed to a partition of the country along religious lines, with predominantly Hindu areas allocated to India and predominantly Muslim areas to Pakistan. They agreed to a partition of the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal as well. Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh refugees numbering in the millions streamed across the newly drawn borders. In Punjab, where the Sikh community was cut in half, a period of terrible bloodshed followed. In Bengal, where Gandhi became what Lord Mountbatten called a "one-man boundary force," the violence was insignificant in comparison. On India's Independence Day, August 15, 1947, Gandhi was in Calcutta rather than Delhi, mourning the division of the country rather than celebrating the self-rule for which he had fought.

Hari Singh, the Hindu maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, a large state with a majority Muslim population and adjacent to both India and Pakistan, kept postponing the decision of whether to join India or Pakistan, hoping to explore the possibilities of independence. After Pakistan invasions threatened his capital in October 1947, Hari Singh finally agreed to join India in exchange for military support from the Indian army. The situation, however, was complicated by a nearly 20-year-old movement against the maharaja—a movement that was likely supported by a large majority of Muslims of the Kashmir valley. Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the leader of the movement against the maharaja, also explored the possibility of independence, but his friendship with Nehru prevented him from pursuing this idea. Sheikh Abdullah and Nehru made an arrangement whereby Abdullah became Jammu and

Kashmir's first prime minister in 1948, and the new state was granted far more autonomy than any other princely state that had joined India.

The problems with Jammu and Kashmir, however, were only beginning. As fighting continued between Indian and Pakistani forces, India asked the United Nations (UN) for help. A cease-fire was arranged in 1949, with the cease-fire line creating a de facto partition of the region. The central and eastern areas of the region came under Indian administration as Jammu and Kashmir state, while the northwestern third came under Pakistani control as Azad (Free) Kashmir and the Northern Areas. Although a UN peacekeeping force was sent in to enforce the cease-fire, the territorial dispute remained unresolved.

Pakistan moved toward greater Islamization of state and society under General Zia ul-Haq, the country's President from 1978 to 1988. A side effect of Pakistan's Islamization was increased conflict between different religious communities and organizations, especially between the Sunni Muslim majority and the Shia Muslim minority. Although anti-Shia sentiment had existed in Pakistan, the 1990s saw a dramatic upsurge of religious radicalism and violence. Armed with automatic weapons and explosives, militant Sunni organizations fought equally militant Shia organizations.

During this period of religious violence, Pakistan, long regarded as a stable ally of the United States, became a training ground for guerrilla warriors and Islamic terrorists. The Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and a

ten-year Soviet-Afghan War followed. Afghan rebels set up camp in Pakistan, where Muslims from other countries joined them to be trained as guerrillas. Known as 'mujahideen', the guerrillas were regarded as freedom fighters in their campaign against Soviet forces, and they received substantial financial and military assistance from the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other countries throughout the 1980s. After the war ended with Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, many of the 'mujahideen' returned home to such countries as Algeria, Egypt, and Pakistan. There they contributed to the spread of radical Islam. Others remained in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Pakistan's military, Islamized under Zia, supported the 'mujahideen'. The military developed close ties with the Taliban (the movement that controlled most of Afghanistan from 1996 until November 2001) and with militant Pakistani groups. So did many of Pakistan's 'madrasas' (religious seminaries). Pakistan and Afghanistan together supported the 'mujahideen' in their struggle against India in Kashmir, disputed territory claimed by both Pakistan and India

Bin Laden and other Islamic extremists justify their use of violence with the claim that most Muslim and Western governments are corrupt oppressors that themselves resort to violence and terrorism. These extremists use Islam to motivate their followers and rationalize their actions. However, they misinterpret and misapply Islamic beliefs. Claiming that Islam and the Muslim world are under siege, they call for a 'jihad'. Although 'jihad' refers to the right and duty of Muslims to defend themselves, their community, and their religion

from unjust attack, extremists use the concept to legitimate acts of violence and terrorism.¹

III

Rushdie's Midnight's Children, the novel in focus here, discusses Islam, the Muslim community and the mind, the milieu (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and its historical background as mentioned in the above deliberation. The following is an attempt at relating all the things together in the context as related above; of the author, the text, the peripheries and the margins as they come out to be.

IV

Salman Rushdie was born in today's Mumbai (then Bombay) on 19 June 1947. He went to school in Bombay and at Rugby in England, and read History at King's College, Cambridge, where he joined the Cambridge Footlights theatre company. After graduating, he lived with his family who had moved to Pakistan in 1964, and worked briefly in television before returning to England, beginning work as a copywriter for an advertising agency. His first novel, Grimus, was published in 1975.

His second novel, the acclaimed Midnight's Children, was published in 1981. It won the Booker Prize for Fiction, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for

fiction), an Arts Council Writers' Award and the English-Speaking Union Award, and in 1993 was judged to have been the 'Booker of Bookers', the best novel to have won the Booker Prize for Fiction in the award's 25-year history. The novel narrates key events in the history of India through the story of pickle-factory worker Saleem Sinai, one of 1001 children born as India won independence from Britain in 1947. The critic Malcolm Bradbury acclaimed the novel's achievement in The Modern British Novel (Penguin, 1994): 'a new start for the late-twentieth-century novel.'

Rushdie's third novel, Shame (1983), which many critics saw as an allegory of the political situation in Pakistan, won the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction. The publication in 1988 of his fourth novel, The Satanic Verses, led to accusations of blasphemy against Islam and demonstrations by Islamist groups in India and Pakistan. The orthodox Iranian leadership issued a fatwa against Rushdie on 14 February 1989 - effectively a sentence of death - and he was forced into hiding under the protection of the British government and police. The book itself centres on the adventures of two Indian actors, Gibreel and Saladin, who fall to earth in Britain when their Air India jet explodes. It won the Whitbread Novel Award in 1988.

Salman Rushdie continued to write and publish books, including a children's book, Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990), a warning about the dangers of story-telling that won the Writers' Guild Award (Best Children's Book), and which he adapted for the stage (with Tim Supple and David Tushingham. It

was first staged at the Royal National Theatre, London.) There followed a book of essays entitled Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991 (1991); East, West (1994), a book of short stories; and a novel, The Moor's Last Sigh (1995), the history of the wealthy Zogoiby family told through the story of Moraes Zogoiby, a young man from Bombay descended from Sultan Muhammad XI, the last Muslim ruler of Andalucía.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, published in 1999, re-works the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the context of modern popular music. His most recent novel, Fury, set in New York at the beginning of the third millennium, was published in 2001. He is also the author of a travel narrative, The Jaguar Smile (1987), an account of a visit to Nicaragua in 1986.

Salman Rushdie is Honorary Professor in the Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He was made Distinguished Fellow in Literature at the University of East Anglia in 1995. He was awarded the Austrian State Prize for European Literature in 1993 and the Aristeion Literary Prize in 1996, and has received eight honorary doctorates. He was elected to the Board of American PEN in 2002. The subjects in his new book, Step Across This Line: Collected Non-fiction 1992-2002 (2002), range from popular culture and football to twentieth-century literature and politics. Salman Rushdie is also co-author (with Tim Supple and Simon Reade) of the stage adaptation of Midnight's Children, premiered by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2002.

His latest novel is Shalimar The Clown (2005), the story of Max Ophuls, his killer and daughter, and a fourth character who links them all. It was shortlisted for the 2005 Whitbread Novel Award.

Such profusion and variety ranging from Children Stories to Criticism to Drama to Essays to Fiction to Non-fiction to Short Stories and finally to Travel brought him the accolades and standing ovations. The list of awards here below—bestowed on him from time to time—is no mean proof of his being the contemporary Indian Shakespeare, if we are to eulogize his achievements.

1981 Arts Council Writers' Award

1981 Booker Prize for Fiction Midnight's Children

1981 English-Speaking Union Award Midnight's Children

1981 James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction) (joint winner)
Midnight's Children

1983 Booker Prize for Fiction (shortlist) Shame

1984 Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger (France) Shame

1988 Booker Prize for Fiction (shortlist) The Satanic Verses

1988 Whitbread Novel Award The Satanic Verses

1989 German Author of the Year The Satanic Verses

1992 Kurt Tucholsky Prize (Sweden)

1992 Writers' Guild Award (Best Children's Book) Haroun and the Sea of Stories

1993 Austrian State Prize for European Literature

- 1993 Booker of Bookers (special award made to celebrate 25 years of the Booker Prize for Fiction) Midnight's Children
- 1993 Prix Colette (Switzerland)
- 1995 Booker Prize for Fiction (shortlist) The Moor's Last Sigh
- 1995 British Book Awards Author of the Year The Moor's Last Sigh
- 1995 Whitbread Novel Award The Moor's Last Sigh
- 1996 Aristeion Literary Prize
- 1997 Mantova Literary Prize (Italy)
- 1998 Budapest Grand Prize for Literature (Hungary)
- 1999 Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France)
- 1999 Freedom of the City, Mexico City (Mexico)
- 2005 Whitbread Novel Award (shortlist) Shalimar The Clown
- 2006 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book) (shortlist)
Shalimar The Clown

Novelist, essayist, travel writer and screenwriter, braver for free speech and purveyor of story as political statement, Rushdie has not only achieved the singular distinction of being recognised as an artist in his own lifetime but is also arguably the most prominent novelist of the late 20th century, both for his literary achievements and for the controversy surrounding them. Like Marquez in Spanish, Rushdie has taken history as his subject and fictionalised it, thus instituting a new genre. He has received almost every award in the course of a near 30-year long career and has become the living image of the romantic writer; worldly, erudite and knowing, equally at ease with the purveyors of pop culture and the intellectual arbiters of literary taste, scabrous critic of

colonialism, be it political, social or cultural, and, despite his deep connection to the events of his time he remains somehow removed from the ordinary sphere of existence; abstract, aloof, distant.

In his novel Shame (1983), Rushdie writes, 'is history to be considered the property of the participants solely?' and in Imaginary Homelands (1991), a collection of essays on racism in Britain, he calls for 'books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world.' Both of these quotes offer keys to an understanding of the author. Rushdie is renowned for taking symbols and figures from different myth systems and religions and interweaving them with different juxtapositions: themes from Islam and Hinduism are interwoven with figures from English literature and English literary references. His work advocates that the cultural exchange brought about by Empire has enriched rather than cheapened contemporary literature; in his fiction Rushdie has demanded the right, in a fractured and confused post-colonial climate, to be a part of the telling of one's own history. Rushdie has challenged official historical truth, launched vituperative attacks on petty nationalism and the censorship of the state, all the while wrapping his readers in the magic realist swirl of dreamscape and fairytale in which the conventional is challenged with astonishing wit and intellectual daring.

Rushdie's narrators are unreliable and intrusive; the 'I' narrating is essentially an essayist, Rushdie's literary default setting. These narrators cajole and harry, taunt and tease with a thunderous irreverence; what is the significance

of fictions they ask, what purpose do they serve, what role do they play? Rushdie's belief is in the transformative power of fiction; stories posit alternative realities, they reclaim the past and through the smashing of convention via the element of the fantastical, proffer a utopian vision of the future. Whatever Rushdie has done is a literary event: it can not be anything else.

V

Besides many other concerns of the novelist, Midnight's Children is a telling account of minority concerns. In this novel, Rushdie is at once a historian, a cinematographer, a script writer, a nationalist, an internationalist; but his primary concerns run parallel to those of his communities. Sinai family of the novel can be seen as the microcosmic unit of the large minority residing on the Indian soil.

The long-shot camera-like movement of the novel travels through the northern regions of the country—starting with Kashmir in extreme north to Amritsar to Agra to and then to Delhi—ultimately settling down at the Bombay city on the west coast with a brief sojourn in the countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh. At the surface level this migration seems to have been driven by economic concerns of the Sinai family, but beneath the surface lies the sense of family's multi pronged well being—be it economic, social or communal. The north of the pre-independence Indian sub-continent was the heart-land of this minority community. However, their spread being country wide, it was in this part of the

land that they ruled, reveled, prospered and procreated as this was to become
fort of their partition of the Indian sub-continent.

A fine issue that surfaces from the study of his novels explains why all
Rushdie's novels are set in the urban background. The urbanity seems to
provide a kind of feeling of safety to this anxiety-ridden community of Muslims.
In Midnight's Children their travel passage from Kashmir—their first move to
uproot themselves—to the cities like Amritsar, Agra, Delhi and then to
Bombay and then further migration to their hinterland called Pakistan is a
telling account of the community's tensions as embodied in the Sinai family. It
is in this Indian metropolis of Bombay that seems to provide solace to their
anxious hearts, because Ahmed Sinai had a very grave experience of
extortionists' presence in Delhi. His "reccine and leathercloth godown" was
torched to coal following his failure caused by an accident to pay the
extortionists' money. These extortionists are symbolically termed as Ravana,
the many headed monster, which has a communal overtone and an angle
pointing to the Majority community of Hindus.

Quite contrary to their stay at Bombay, the Sinais face many communal
clashes at Delhi, the would be capital of secular India. It is here that they walk
the tight rope of their communal anxiety. The minor communal brawls are, as
if, everyday scenes in Delhi streets like the following:

One group of three neighbours was known as the
'fighting-cock people', because they comprised one

Sindhi and one Bengali householder whose homes were separated one of the muhallah's few Hindu residences. The Sindhi and the Bengali had very little in common – they didn't speak the same language or cook the same food; but they were both Muslims, and they both detested the interposed Hindu. They dropped garbage on his house from their rooftops. They hurled multilingual abuses at him from their windows. They flung scraps of meat at his door...while he, in turn, paid urchins to throw stones at their windows, stones with messages wrapped round them: 'Wait,' the message said, 'Your turn will come'... ²

Even the business houses owned by Muslims face dire threats:

What is known about the Ravana gang? That is posed as a fanatical anti-Muslim movement, which, in those days before the Partition riots, in those days when pigs' heads could be left with impunity in the courtyards of Friday mosques, was nothing unusual. That it sent men out, at dead of night, to paint slogans on the walls of both old and new cities: NO PARTITION OR ELSE PERDITION! MUSLIMS ARE THE JEWS OF ASIA! and so forth. And that it

burned down Muslim-owned factories, shops,
godowns.³

The situation is so grave that they can not even trust the local administration and the police: "The police, in 1947, were not to be relied upon by Muslims."⁴ S P Butt minces no word while blaming it all on the Hindus. He says, "Damnfool Hindu firebugs, Begum Sahiba. But what can we Muslims do?"⁵ Not only the characters of the novel, but the author's alter-ego, Saleem Sinai, is also tempted to ambiguously declare, in one of his many parentheses: "...the extremist R.S.S.S. party got them on every wall; not the Nazi swastika which was the wrong way round, but the ancient Hindu symbol of power."⁶ The mischievous hint at the RSS, a social organisation working towards the consolidation of Indian people by invoking patriotism, is not missed on the conscious reader.

Such instances, expressing typical minority anxiety and tension as perceived by it, are given ample space in the novel upholding the community's own virtues amounting to boastful magnitudes. For Ahmed Sinai, the father of the protagonist Saleem Sinai, proudly proclaims his ancestral roots leading to the royal Mughal blood. Ahmed Sinai can not hold himself back when William Methwold boasts about his great Christian roots, and in the state of intoxication he blurts: "Mughal blood as a matter of fact."⁷ He also wishes to re-write the book of Qu'ran and keeps on day-dreaming about it.⁸ The author perhaps, cannot resist the temptation of painting the community as very magnanimous through the event of Lifafadas being safely evicted from the

Muslim stronghold area like Chandni Chowk in Delhi. A whimsical girl accuses Lifafadas of being a rapist and the public fury engulfs him with capital threats. In the nick of time he is saved by Amina Sinai. Saleem, the narrator boasts that his advent on the earth caused to save a life, as Amina was carrying Saleem in her womb and she stopped the raging public by scaring them of her fragile status.⁹ The Lifafadas incident blatantly serves as an antithesis of the Hindu hatred projected at various places in the novel, and Muslim community's benevolence towards the Hindu majority. For General Zulfikar uses the word Hindu as a swear word to describe his own weakling, wet-blanket son as he shouts: "Coward! Homosexual! Hindu!"¹⁰ Whereas his another relative Mustapha Aziz enjoys beating his children after proclaiming himself the victim of "anti-Muslim" prejudice, and Saleem, his nephew, describes him in the following manner: "If Indira Gandhi had asked him to commit suicide, Mustapha Aziz would have ascribed it to anti-Muslim bigotry but also defended the statesmanship of the request, and, naturally, performed the task without daring (or even wishing) to demur."¹¹

However ambivalent, as described above, in its approach to majority community, this minority community is not only threatened by the so-called majority one, but by other minorities, too. Amina Sinai, wife of Ahmed Sinai and visibly a sober woman, also joins her husband and reciprocates by just making fun of Christianity. She says,

Those Anglos...with their funny names, Fernanda
and Alonso and all, and surnames, My God!

Sulaca and Colaco and I don't know what. What should I care about about them? Cheap type females, I call them all his Coca-Cola girls – that is all they sound like.¹²

Musa, the old bearer in the Sinai family, is threatened by the presence of Christian ayah Mary Pereira.¹³ Saleem's geography teacher Emil Zagallo is a fanatic Christian and is always abusive of all his students calling them as 'jungle-Indians, bead-lovers' etc. The community feels threatened by his wild fiery eyes with an animalistic glint in them.¹⁴

Rushdie seems to be confused about Saleem's individual identity and that of his community's. If Saleem can be seen as representing his community, as he does, then his identity raises many issues. R S Pathak observes in this regard:

Although Saleem claims to be 'a swallower of lives' and initiator of actions, his personality is fractured and fragmented and merged and superimposed. That he is not all a piece is clear from his physical details. The unseemly birthmarks "spread down my western hairline, a dark patch coloured my eastern ear", which are aggravated by his "rampant cucumber nose" and "temples like stunted horns"...¹⁵

These grotesque physical features are made much more peculiar by Saleem's choice of myriad mothers and fathers in his life span. Continuing with his argument R S Pathak states further: "How can a person whose heritage is so nebulous, be certain about his identity!"¹⁶ He probes further and finds out deeper identity crisis in Saleem's life. Saleem forgets his original name and has a nickname 'budhha', who has become incurably sterile. "Both the loss of name and of virility are analogues suggesting Saleem's identity crisis. He is, in fact, an identity-defying compound of Moslem, Hindu and British (who in turn has a streak of French blood in him). He also seems to typify the ambiguous identity of India itself."¹⁷ His personal identity and that of his community's is thus always in a state of flux, "condemned by a perforated sheet to a life of fragments."¹⁸

Saleem's experiences can be easily related to that of his community. His existence, at times becomes so heavy on him that he starts developing pessimistic tendencies:

I admit openly I have not been myself of late. I have been a budhha, and a basket ghost, and would-be-saviour of the nation...rushing down blind alleys, has had considerable problems with reality ...Sometimes I feel a thousand years old... to be exact a thousand and one.¹⁹

His pessimism and remorse are so complete that he progresses to his own prophecy of doom as described in the following:

-But how can I, look at me, I'm tearing myself apart, can't even agree with myself, talking arguing like a wild fellow, cracking up, memory going, yes, memory plunging into chasm of being swallowed by the dark, only fragments remain, none of its make sense any more!²⁰

Such voices are intricately woven in the fabric of the fiction and are profuse. One may tend to believe it to be Saleem's voice, but at deeper level there lies a conviction of the anxiety ridden minority complex. Rushdie has lived in too many worlds, like his protagonist does, in the countries like India and Pakistan with a short sojourn to Bangladesh. He confesses, in a statement, of parallels present in many of his works thus:

'It seems to me, more and more, that the fictional project on which I've been involved ever since I began Midnight's Children back in 1975 is one of self-definition. That novel, Shame and The Satanic Verses strike me as an attempt to come to terms with the various component parts of myself - countries, memories, histories, families, gods. First the writer invents the books; then, perhaps, the books invent the writer.

But whenever I say anything about my work I want to contradict myself at once. To say that beyond self-exploration lies a sense of writing as sacrament, and

maybe that's closer to how I feel: that writing fills the hole
left by the departure of God.

But, again, I love story, and comedy, and dreams. And
newness: the novel, as its name suggests, is about the
making of the new.

None of this is quite true; all of it is true enough.²¹

Besides these confessions he has many other things to say which might be quite controversial as he himself is. In Imaginary Homelands, a collection of essays written by Rushdie, he has raised a lot many issues, especially the ones relating to racism, need serious consideration and study. For instance, he takes heart to call the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the BJP (previously, the Jansangh, a political party) fundamentalist organisations but fails to admit the presence of myriad Muslim fundamentalist organisations on the soil of India.²² In the same essay he blames the Congress party to be anti-Sikh, but again blinds himself as the party has many provocations for Hindu Majority in the form of the politics of appeasement of Muslim minority. Is one to believe that a writer of such intellect and knowledge is unaware of the presence of Muslim League in secular India and the Indian politics of left parties, which is always in agreement either with one or the other Communist country and always against the US?

Another cause that Rushdie perceives for the clashes between Muslim minority and majority in India is majority's intolerance of Muslim's economic progress. He writes, "In Bombay...incidents took place in areas where Muslims had begun to prosper and move up the economic scale"²³ The similar parallel can be found in Midnight's Children where Ahmed Sinai and two of his Muslim friends, the rich businessmen, are threatened by the extortionist Ravana. Here he naively fails to admit that the same country had had the President, the premiership of the biggest democracy in the world, from the Muslim community not only once but thrice after its independence and many other key posts of Indian politics, administration and defense had been afforded to the Muslims.

On one hand, he laments, in one of his essays, about the present state of affairs in India: "Unfortunately for India, the linkage between the Hindu fundamentalism and the idea of the nation shows no sign of weakening. India is increasingly defined as Hindu India..."²⁴ On the other, in a disguised manner he apologises for his naming the Holy book as Satanic Verses,²⁵ from which the whole community derives inspiration.

Rushdie the man, writer and devout Muslim is at odds with all his identities. He belongs to the minority community, as he confesses: "I am certainly not a good Muslim. But I am able now to say that I am Muslim; in fact it is source of happiness to say that I am now inside, and a part of, the community whose values have always been closest to my heart."²⁶ But this comes only after the

man and the writer is brow-beaten at the brutal hands of historical narrow-mindedness and Fatwa culture, from the clout that he is very much the part of.

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Chapter 3

Parsi Journey

Rohinton Mistry, also the author of Tales from Firozsha Baag, a much acclaimed best seller, was born in Bombay in 1952. He emigrated to Toronto in 1975 and studied English and Philosophy as a part time student at the University of Toronto. He has won various prizes for his short stories which include Hart House Prize for fiction and Canadian Fiction Contributors' Prize. His novel Such a Long Journey was runner up for the Booker Prize 1991. Presently he devotes his full time to writing and has brought out two more novels A Fine Balance and Family Matters. The writer, belonging to the community of Parsis, has a lot of Parsi voices speaking through him. Before this endeavour moves on to look for such references, it would be equally beneficial to have a glance at the roots of the community itself, to which this writer belongs.

II

Zoroastrian by faith and Persian (Iranian) by their origins, the Parsis, as Gillian Tindall observes, "... have been a people curiously marked, and perhaps favoured, by fate."¹ Around the year 650 A.D., the Parsis, a peace-loving and hard-working community, harassed much by the religious persecution of Muslims, fled from Persia and came to settle in India at the Gujarat coast. They achieved a smooth entrance in Gujarat with the help of their wisdom, which has become part of a legend. According to this legend

when the Parsis landed near Sanjan harbour on the Gujarat coast, they were taken to the local king. As the language hindered the communication, the king ordered his men to bring a bowl full of milk, implying that there was no room in the place where the Parsis could be accommodated. The Parsis with their ready wit poured a few grains of sugar in the bowl, conveying that they would mingle with natives as sugar melts in milk. The king happily welcomed them. On their part the Parsis adopted Gujarati language. The intermarriages took place.² They were allowed to practice their own religion. And in spite of many changes and advancement among the community, the Parsis have retained their specific identity through their customs and rituals and the way of living as a community.

According to Zoroastrian belief, as Khushwant Singh has noted, Ahura Mazda is the good and all wise God and Angra Mainyu, the evil spirit. Zoroaster's hymns called the 'Gathas', form the oldest part of the scripture, the Zend Avesta.³ In Parsi temples, known as agiaries', a sacred flame is constantly kept burning. The Parsis also consider water and earth sacred and forbid their pollution. 'Dokhma', the Tower of Silence, is an ingeniously designed place where the Parsis dispose of their dead. The dead are picked clean from these places by vultures, "the beasts of air."⁴

Religious customs of the Parsis are very much influenced by the Hindu way of life. At the age of seven or eight a Parsi child undergoes 'Navjot', in which the child is to put on a sacred shirt and a sacred thread known as 'sudra' and

'kusti' respectively. The marriage among the Parsis is more or less a monogamous Hindu marriage.

According to Nilufer Bharucha there were 90,000 Zoroastrian Parsis in the last decade of the 20th century. Of this number, 70,000 lived in India and the rest in Europe and North America. There are unsubstantiated claims of another 20,000 Zoroastrians in Iran and a few more in Pakistan. However, even with these additional numbers, the laws of statistics state the eventual annihilation of the race.⁵ Khushwant Singh, showing his concern for the community has observed in his India: An Introduction:

It is a dying community: the rate of death is higher than the rate of birth: they admit no converts nor recognise offspring of non-Parsi fathers as Parsis. An increasing number of Parsi girls now marry outside the community.⁶

In spite of this threat of demographic extinction the Parsis' faith in their unique identity and racial parity is unflinching. Otherwise adaptable in all the situations, the community has honoured its centuries' old religious beliefs, once founded by Zoroaster, a pious scholar of the Spitma clan in Iran.

However, this minuscule community in a huge country like India, where racial differences are looked upon severely, has adapted itself quite comfortably in

the existing mould from time to time. Initially they mingled with Gujaratis adopting many of Gujarati customs and language as well, and proved themselves to be those tell-tale grains of sugar poured into milk.

Their adaptability is again discernible in their collective migration to Bombay. They could perceive greater opportunities in the advent of the British in India. And Bombay being the centre of the British activities, they also, showing their everlasting elasticity, shifted their centre of activities from rural Gujarat to the city of Bombay. Gillian Tindall observes, in this regard :

With their speedy arrival in Bombay, it was almost, as if the Parsis sensed in the arrival of the English, a unique historical opportunity, that was to be as momentous for them in the long run as the chance that had carried them to Gujerat a thousand years before.⁷

Their marked capacity to adjust themselves to situations helped them in finding a place in the hearts of the British. In fact, the Parsis were the first and fastest among Indians to anglicize themselves. Their readiness to perform any job became their characteristic mark of identification as the Parsis did not have surnames of their own. For instance, some of the Parsi surnames still are, : Engineer, Merchant, Paymaster, Mistry, Bottelwallah, Sodawaterwallah etc..

The process of Parsis' anglicizing themselves was almost complete, not on account of a fairer skin they had compared to the native Indians, nor for their anglicized surnames, but for their flexibility and sincerity. They were much liked by the British because they were unlike the rigid Hindus and Muslims of the land. Their religion, their customs, their habits, almost everything about them was marked by flexibility.

It will not be incongruous to relate the Parsis to Bombay as the Jews are to Israel, but the Parsis found a real home in the city of Bombay, far from their own in Persia. They migrated to Bombay during 1660s almost collectively, and thereafter they have progressed well. They benefited a lot from their hard-work and flair for education. They made Bombay their dwelling as well as work place, and the fact bears a proof that "Parsi names crop up all over Bombay today, attached to streets, blocks of housing, public gardens and water fountains."⁸

With education and advancement, a further change is noticeably discernible; the change caused by further migration and, westernization. The very knack of changing with times and their mobility, which brought the Parsis to Bombay, also took them to western countries. Today many of the Indian Parsis, according to Nilufer Bharucha, live in Europe and North America. Gillian Tindall has a similar observation in this regard. She writes:

...it is also true that though they have played something of the traditional role of the Jew in Indian society, living between the two worlds of the East and West, they have seldom if ever aroused the antipathy that has traditionally dogged the Jew in Europe, and that their image is one of honesty.⁹

However, it is true that they have contributed a lot towards the Indian Freedom struggle and to the development of the country in the post-independent India. Certain names like Dadabhai Naoroji, Firozshah Mehta and Jamshedji Tata, to name only a few, in this context would suffice to prove the reverence and respect that the community has earned for its contribution.

The shifting of the Parsis from country to country and from continent to continent - has many psychological implications as well. In an article entitled "Reflections in Broken Mirrors: Diverse Diasporas in Recent Parsi Fiction", Nilufer Bharucha opines that the community caught in diverse diasporas feels a sense of loss, nostalgia and alienation, which is reflected in Parsi writings from time to time. She identifies four different diasporas beginning right with the first fleeing of Zoroastrians from Iran around the year 850 A.C. She calls the first type the Indian Diaspora. Secondly, in post-colonial India Parsis are in the stage of Psychological Diaspora. During the partition of India and Pakistan, Parsis had to walk the tight-rope between two antagonistic nations, and that was their Partition Diaspora. Several Parsis, feeling uncomfortable in

the decolonised subcontinent, migrated to the U.K. and North America, which was their fourth, the Western Diaspora.¹⁰

Pre-colonial Parsi writings and to certain extent their poetic and fictional accounts like those of Behram Malbari and Cornelia Sorabji, both belonging to the colonial era, display a sense of loss and nostalgia. And for decades altogether, before and after the Independence of India, the Parsi voice remained more or less silent.¹¹ However, the 1980s, which has been a prolific decade in terms of the production of Indian English fiction, saw the emergence of a host of Parsi writers, especially the novelists like Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Boman Desai, Farrukh Dhondy, Dina Mehta and Bapsi Sidhwa among others. These writers very strongly reflect the Parsi sensibility caught in diverse diasporas. Their nostalgic attempts to return to their roots or their search for their lost identity are the prominent themes of almost all the fictional works. For instance, Fire Worshippers by Perin Bharucha and The Memory of Elephants by Boman Desai are the examples having strong elements of nostalgia because both the works re-narrate the Parsi history in their own manner. And certainly, a comprehensive study of the works of these writers would be an enduring chapter in the history of literature because these works represent the concerned community and depict their consciousness and the changes they underwent.

III

Rohinton Mistry was born in Mumbai in 1952. He graduated with a degree in Mathematics from the University of Bombay (Mumbai) in 1974, and emigrated to Canada with his wife the following year, settling in Toronto, where he worked as a bank clerk, studying English and Philosophy part-time at the University of Toronto and completing his second degree in 1982.

Mistry wrote his first short story, 'One Sunday', in 1983, winning First Prize in the Canadian Hart House Literary Contest (an award he also won the following year for his short story 'Auspicious Occasion'). It was followed in 1985 by the Annual Contributors' Award from the Canadian Fiction Magazine, and afterwards, with the aid of a Canada Council grant, he left his job to become a full-time writer.

His early stories were published in a number of Canadian magazines, and his short-story collection, Tales from Firozsha Baag, was first published in Canada in 1987 (later published in the UK in 1992). He is the author of three novels: Such a Long Journey (1991), the story of a Bombay bank clerk who unwittingly becomes involved in a fraud committed by the government, which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book), A Fine Balance (1996), set during the State of Emergency in India in the 1970s, and Family Matters (2002), which tells the story of an elderly Parsi widower living in Bombay with his step-children. Such a Long Journey and A Fine Balance

were both shortlisted in the previous years for the Booker Prize for Fiction, and Family Matters was shortlisted for the 2002 Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Mistry's fiction is rooted in the streets of Bombay, the city he left behind for Canada at the age of twenty-three. This 'imaginary homeland' - something of a literary capital within South Asian diasporic writing today - has inevitably led to comparisons with Salman Rushdie, another Bombay born author now based abroad. However the differences between the two men are perhaps as compelling as their similarities. Take Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Mistry's A Fine Balance (1996), both of which are set in Bombay during the administration of Indira Gandhi and the state of emergency. Where Rushdie's novel gravitates toward the Muslim middle classes, Mistry's seems more at home among the Parsi community and the poor. Rushdie's magic realism (what Mistry refers to in his latest novel, Family Matters, as 'magic-realist midnight muddles') is Realism with a capital 'R' in A Fine Balance. Beyond such differences however, both novels have a tendency to collapse the distinctions between public and private worlds. Both share a sharp wit. Both (whether it is Rushdie's Booker of Bookers or Mistry's Booker shortlisted) have enjoyed a good deal of critical and commercial success.

Tales from Firozsha Baag (1992), Mistry's first collection of stories, marked the arrival of a prodigious talent. Published in the US as Swimming Lessons, the collection contains eleven interrelated short stories that bring together some of Mistry's earliest and finest writing. The tales detail the day to day lives of the residents of a decrepit apartment block in Bombay, Firozsha Baag.

Mistry's affectionate, thumb nail sketches bring together the lives of miserly Rustomji, the deranged Jaakaylee and Pesi, who is able to look up girls' skirts with the aid of his torch.

Such a Long Journey (1991), Mistry's first novel, won numerous literary awards when it was first published and has been adapted for a film. The novel is set in 1971, during the time of the Indian Pakistan war. Its protagonist is not a conventional hero. Gustad Noble is a bank clerk and a family man, a vulnerable figure whose world is still haunted by the war with China in 1962. The fate of Gustad's family is closely bound up with that of the subcontinent during a time of crisis and turmoil. His daughter's illness and his son's refusal to go to college, are events that we are encouraged to read symptomatically in Such a Long Journey. When Gustad receives a parcel and a request to launder money for an old friend, the event's ramifications are at once personal and political.

A Fine Balance, critically Mistry's most successful work to date, tells the story of four characters (Maneck, Dina, Ishvar and Omprakash) and the impact of Indira Gandhi's state of emergency on them. One of the most successful aspects of this book is its carefully crafted prose: "The morning express bloated with passengers slowed to a crawl, then lurched forward suddenly, as though to resume full speed. The train's brief deception jolted its riders. The bulge of humans hanging out of the doorway distended perilously, like a soap bubble at its limit."¹² This intricate opening paragraph, which is typical of the precise prose of

A Fine Balance throughout, helps propel the novel forward through what is one of the most memorable portraits of post-Independence India ever written.

Mistry's latest novel, Family Matters (2002), is based in Bombay once more. Whereas his first two novels were set in the 1970s and were essentially 'historical' fictions, his Family Matters depicts contemporary Bombay and is set in the 1990s. At the centre of the book is an old man, a Parsi with Parkinson's disease. Nariman Vakeel is a retired academician whose illness places renewed strains on family relations (Nariman, an English professor, compares himself to King Lear at one point). A widower with skeletons in his closet, Nariman's memories of the past expose the reader to earlier moments in the city's, and the nation's history in a novel that moves across three generations of the same family. In Family Matters we have the familiar slippage between public and private worlds. Similarly the lives of the residents of 'Chateau Felicity' (Nariman's former residence) and 'Pleasant villa' (where he is forced to move by his scheming step daughter) recall the world of Firozsha Baag. Where the earlier novels tended towards a decisive closure however, the epilogue of this novel seems much less ready to console.¹³

Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey, the runner up for the Booker Prize 1991, is another enchanting account of the Parsis and their home Bombay, in general, and of Gustad Nobel, a Parsi protagonist and Khodadad Building, a Parsi enclave, in particular. In fact, the novel is a continuation of the experience in vexations, anxieties and anguish as perceived by the characters belonging to the minority community of the Parsis in the city of Bombay as

explicit in Dhondy's Bombay Duck. The novel is a story of Gustad Nobel, an ordinary pious Parsi. The happy and chuckling family of Gustad inclusive of his wife Dilnavaz, his two sons Sohrab and Darius, and his daughter Roshan - is met with certain inescapable adventures in life. The calamities they face are characteristically overcome by them in a manner of, as it happens in, an action and thriller movie. This thriller like novel, set against the backdrop of the city of Bombay, befits the environment of the city.

The story, in a way, is history, too, as its fragments are strewn all over the novel. Thus the novel encompasses various issues and is woven around the backgrounds of various upheavals in the subcontinent, like the partition of the subcontinent and ensuing violence, the wars between India and Pakistan and India and China, the birth of Bangladesh, and how the community of the Indian Parsis responded to all these occurrences. Moreover, the novel is - as A. K. Singh and Nilufer Bharucha among others, view - a retelling of the 1971 Sohrab Nagarwala conspiracy case, involving the personality as important as the Indian Prime Minister and a huge sum of Rs. 60 Lacs. In fact, the novel is a kind of attempt at defending the prime accused Sohrab Nagarwala, a Parsi, disguised as Major Bilimoria in the novel. This curious mixture of fact and fiction easily puts the novel in the category of 'faction' (or, "fictional history").

The novel, set against the background of post independence era, is on the verge of yet another war against Pakistan during early 70s. The Indian Parsis seem more or less comfortable in the post independence India, as are Gustad, his family and friends. Their diasporic fate brought them to Indian

subcontinent and since then their attempts to join the Indian mainstream and remain loyal to the causes of the country and contribute to its progress are remarkable. In spite of many migrations and hardships that they underwent on the strange land, they have exhibited exceptional capacity to adapt themselves to situations.

In the post-Independent India, the Parsis still seem to have many grudges against the political leadership of the country. Various characters in the novel express their fears and anxiety as they are worried about the changing pattern of communal relationships in the country in general and in the city of Bombay in particular. For instance, Gustad expresses his fear thus : "No future for minorities, with all these Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense."¹⁴ Dinshawji's accusation is also on the similar lines. He says :

And today we have that bloody Shiv Sena, wanting to make the rest of us into second class citizens. Don't forget, *she* started it all by supporting the racist buggers. (My Italics)¹⁵

This *she*, Indira Gandhi, was the real person behind the demand of a separate Maharashtra, as some of the political commentators like C.P. Surendran think. He states :

The rise of the Shiv Sena was partly a populist answer to a political demand.

The ruling Congress Party at that time could not use force to wipe out the Left from the labour scene in Mumbai. As a result, the Shiv Sena enjoyed the patronage of the Congress in its teething years.¹⁶

Obviously, Indira Gandhi is held responsible for this phenomenon as she was at the helm of the affairs of the Congress Party at the time.

Dinshawji has one more complaint against Indira Gandhi because she deprived the Parsis, as they feel, of their traditional business of banking. Dinshawji sadly remembers :

What days those were, yaar. What fun we used to have... Parsis were the kings of banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that Indira nationalized the banks.¹⁷

Dinshawji is also concerned with disturbing developments in the form of changing names of roads and streets in Bombay. He considers them as symptomatic of bad times ahead for the minority community. He says angrily :

'Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real Gandoo Raj.... All they know is to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout slogans, make threats, and change road names'. He suddenly worked himself into a real rage; there was genuine grief in his soul.' Why change the names? Saala, sister fuckers! Hutatma Chowk! He spat out the words disgustedly. 'What is wrong with Flora Fountain?'¹⁸

The 'real rage', the 'genuine grief' and the 'disgust' apparent in the character of Dinshawji are not his only, but of community's, too. Like other fellow members of his community he is concerned more about the future than about the present, for the rise of 'fascist' forces will lead to communal frenzy which will threaten the very fabric of the relationship between majority and minority communities and the character of the city of Bombay marked by communal harmony, coexistence and cosmopolitanism.

In spite of such turmoil, Malcom Saldana is not so uncomfortable in India. He says, " Lucky for us... that we are minorities in a nation of Hindus."¹⁹ Gustad also seems to agree with that and symbolically he subscribes to happy coexistence of all religions as he gets the wall of the Khodadad Building painted with the figures and symbols from all religions. Inspector Bamji also agrees with it: "A good mixture like this is a perfect example for our secular country. That's the way it should be."²⁰

Notwithstanding the grievance that the Parsis have against certain individuals, the community has whole heartedly been committed to the causes of the country and many of the Parsis, like Dadabhai Naoroji, Phirozsha Mehta, Firoz Gandhi and Jamshedji Tata among others, have contributed to the development of India. And even while maintaining the community's own cultural and communal identity, they have led their lives peacefully in multicultural sprawls like those in India. Gustad's attempts of having the wall of the Khodadad Building painted into a collage of all religion-gods is also an effort toward coming into the mainstream. Gustad himself is a devout Parsi who never misses his *kusti* prayer. Highlighting this scene, Vinay Kirpal, appreciates Mistry's effort at bringing this novel to the level of post-modernist mould. According to him Bharti Mukherjee, Shobha De and Shoma Ramaya among few others may be selling Indian exotica to the West, but Mistry's approach has a kind of depth embedded into the cultural significance. He says:

If the postmodern Indian English novel... foregrounds the world of the Indian minorities as against the earlier novel (which were about Hindus predominantly) then this is one of the ways in which, the novelists have tried to 'de-doxify' the prevailing stereotypes, and dispel misconceptions about these communities. Mistry's inclusion of these scenes is therefore, necessary to foreground the rich culture, customs and traditions of the marginalized Parsi community.²¹

These Parsis, proud of their cultural and communal specificity, are seriously concerned about the welfare of the members of their community who were not treated well. Among them Sohrab Nagarwala and Firoz Gandhi, who were maltreated by Indira Gandhi and Nehru respectively, are the cases before them.²² Nevertheless, they are conscious of their cultural specificity. For instance, Gustad is a pious Parsi who would never miss his Kusti prayer, and he was the person to ensure that the last rites of his dead friend Dinshawji are carried out in accordance with the Parsi customs and rituals. At times, Gustad also grows nostalgic about his fore-fathers, their business, their love and affection, and their daily chores characteristic of the Parsis, which are also a kind of attempt at retaining their Parsi identity. The very mention of their typical food, their articles of clothes, the use of Gujarati words in the novel suggest assertion of their special identity. Gustad also tries to establish the supremacy of Zoroastrianism as he tells Malcom, his Christian friends :

...our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha ; two hundred years before the Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam ?²³

Thus the novel examines, among other issues, the questions of Parsi identity and its diasporas. Amidst these issues the other interesting aspect of the novel is its treatment of the city of Bombay. In the novel Bombay emerges

strongly and perhaps it is the most authentic expression of the city with its minute details. The novel abounds in details regarding Chor Bazaar and Nal Bazaar, Crawford Market, Flora Fountain, the torrential rains and traffic jams which are the heartthrobs of the city. These details give the narrative of the novel a realistic touch. The writer not only moves around the public places but he also makes his readers encounter the dubious restaurants - with "private rooms" and the sign boards reading "Don't Discuss God & Politics" - and the red-light districts with "high-class" whores at Colaba and so-called low-class ones at the "House of Cages" at some unidentified location. The location of the Khodadad Building and its neighbouring area are also not well identified, however, the reader does not fail to recognize them as irrevocably belonging to Bombay.

The city emerges in its myriad shapes and shades in the novel, but mostly it is a telling account of anxiety ridden pre-war gloom and fear psychosis prevailing the minds of the people of Bombay, particularly Parsis and the seamy side of it. The tenants at the Khodadad Building are, as if, always mentally ready for the impending war and Gustad would not let Dilnavaz remove the blackout paper fearing that war could break out any moment. The 'milk bhaiya' would also pose a threat for them and they feel that these "Poor people in slum shacks and jhopadpattis in and around Bombay looked at you sometimes as if they wanted to throw you out of your home and move in with their own families."²⁴ The danger of living in this city is doubled when the inhabitants come on to the roads. In order to save his son from a road accident, Gustad almost staked his life, and Ghulam Mohammed, Major

Bilimoria's colleague at RAW, was almost run over by a fast running car which perhaps, intentionally tried to kill him. Mistry tries to give a verbal picture of the horrible traffic :

Cars were pulling out from inside the traffic island and recklessly leaping into the flow. The BEST buses, red and double deckered, careened dangerously around the circle on their way to Colaba. Intrepid handcarts, fueled by muscle and bone, competed temerarily against the best that steel, petrol and vulcanized rubber threw in their paths. With the dead fountain at its still centre, the traffic circle lay like a great motionless wheel, while around it whirled the business of the city on its buzzing, humming, honking, complaining, screeching, throbbing, rumbling, grumbling, sighing, never-ending journey through the metropolis.²⁵

The city of Bombay has more to offer than the mere dizzying experience of traffic as described above. The gang-wars like the one of which Ghulam Mohammed is, perhaps, the prey, the personal wars like that between Gustad and Mr. Rabadi or the war of ideas like that between secularism and fascist forces are part and parcel of this ever minatory city. Gustad feels insecure even at the market places and "Crawford Market was a place he despised...and...felt intimidated by..."²⁶ Not only the butchers at the market,

but the very dirt, smell, slippery floors, vegetable waste and the horrible sight of the wicked-looking meat hooks hanging from the ceiling scare him out of his wit. The inhabitants of this city are unable to do anything about overflowing gutters and huge heaps of garbage, over crowded buses and trains and traffic jams, and perpetually stinking Mahim Creek, except " wrinkle their noses".²⁷ And as Khodadad Building is a microcosm of the Parsis living in the world the city is the microcosm of the world of dirt, ugliness, pollution, decay, greed, treachery and moral turpitude outside the city. Dr. Paymaster describes the situation in his own manner, and suggests a remedy, too :

...Our beloved country is a patient with gangrene at an advanced stage. Dressing the wound or sprinkling rose-water over it to hide the stink of rotting tissue is useless.. The decaying part must be excised. You see, the municipal corruption is merely the bad smell, which will disappear as soon as the gangrenous government at the centre is removed.²⁸

This is no simple urbanity. The peace-lovers and the lovers of idylls are always at loss in this fast and rushing metropolis. Only those who are able to cope with the ways of the speeding city are able to live in it, or else they fall prey to the tension and anxiety created by the pressure of this city. Malcom is so enraged at Bombay that he calls the place a "bloody city, turning into a harsh merciless place."²⁹ Tehmul Lungara, the idiot, is the toll taken by this crushing urbanity. Dr. Paymaster also, because of the decaying and

degrading conditions around his dispensary, becomes psychosis just like Cavasji Pastakiya at the Khodadad Building who keeps shouting and cursing through out the day like a maniac. Hutokshi Doctor, in her article on urban stress, observes

....urbanization and modernization over crowding and hunger...have resulted in sharp increase in the incidence of depression, dementia, anxiety, chronic stress, violence, alchoholism, schizophrenia and suicide.³⁰

Dr. Paymaster and Cavasji are, perhaps, the victims of such urban stress.

And this tension ridden city is balanced by smaller streams of joy and matters of solace for the people living there either in the large groups or small minorities. The Khodadad Building, a Parsi enclave, itself is a matter of great solace. Although the building wall is constantly exposed to "bloody pissers", the Parsis living inside find themselves safe. Gustad has a unique idea of painting the wall with the pictures of Gods from all the religions, which not only makes it "pisser proof" but it also caters to the secular mould of the society. In spite of many threats from within the city, the Parsis feel safe in Bombay. In fact, Gustad sees poetic justice in Bombay's traffic jams caused by torrential rains. There is a kind of metaphoric suggestion in Bilimoria's death who goes outside Bombay and courts disaster for himself. Gustad's journey to New Delhi is also full of fears and doubt. He thinks : "Would this long journey be

worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble?"³¹ And perhaps, he feels that he can extricate himself of these doubts only in Bombay.

The social and religious institutions add to the cosmopolitan mould of the city. For instance, the restaurants with private rooms, the Irani tea shops, the House of Cages and the paan shops around them are some of the social institutes and systems of the city which emerge prominently in the novel as emancipator of the people caught in deep city vexations. " The "dabbwalla" is, " as Nilufer Bharucha observes, "an important emissary in Mistry's novel and carries messages between Gustad Nobel, the human hero and his wife Dilnavaz." ³² Peerbhoy Paanwalla is the great reliever of the anxiety ridden people as he is always ready with his lewd stories as a marketing strategy for his variety of *paans* which not only claim of aphrodisiac effects but also of great medicinal and healing value. The religious places offer solace to many grieving hearts, and staunch Parsi Gustad also would not hesitate to visit the church of Mount Mary at Bandra and the famous mosque of Haaji Ali. Crayon artist also tries hard to give the semblance of sanity to fanatic people around the city with his all religion-Gods painted on the wall of the Khodadad Building.

Thus the city that emerges in the novel is a curious mixture of various characteristics, which, perhaps, is very natural of the huge cities everywhere. An interesting observation made by Rahul Singh, in this regard, will help to substantiate the point of view. He writes :

A curious and delicate balance exists in most cities between stimulation and apathy, well-being and illness, idealism and venality, orderliness and anarchy. It is this balance which gives a city its excitement. But should the scale tip the wrong way you get a Beirut or a Karachi, cities wracked by sectarian violence.³³

The characters in the novel are depicted as walking tight rope between good and evil prevalent in the city. In order to maintain the sanity and wisdom some small sacrifices are also called forth. The wall of the Khodadad Building had to be demolished and the life of Tehmul Lungara is offered at the alter of peace in the city. The city, fighting the evil, strives to ward it off from effacing the place. And fortunately, Bombay exists, if it does not live, maintaining that delicate balance between the two, efficiently somehow, of course.

Coincidentally, during this period only when this novel came out, there were few other Parsi writers who delineated their community and the locale in the similar fashion as done by Mistry. Firdaus Kanga's Trying to Grow, Boman Desai's Memory of Elephants and Farrukh Dhondy's Bombay Duck among others are but few examples of such writing. The various similarities and the treatment of the subject matter dealing with the Parsi community in these works make them the novels of interface. All these novels are maiden attempts by the respective authors, and they are set in the background of the city of Bombay. Moreover, the Parsi authors mentioned above and a few

others are expatriates living in the different cities of the world. Thus distanced geographically from their foster-city Bombay, their country and their community which are passing through a phase of severe identity-crisis, these writers are pulled to them again and again and they try to revive the lost glory of their faith. The community caught in the crisis of identity feels a sense of loss and alienation resulting into anxiety, frustration and depression. These novels try to give voice to these feelings of the community. Nevertheless, their community consciousness does not clash with their national consciousness as is evident in the novels. Besides the novel discussed in this dissertation, almost all the works by the Parsi writers of the later twentieth century, more or less, reflect these features prominently. For instance, Perin Bharucha's Fire Worshippers, Bapsi Sidhwa's The Crow Eaters, Ice Candy Man and An American Brat and Dina Mehta's And Some Take a Lover among others, concern themselves with the questions of Parsi identity and its diasporas. Thus there is a rich corpus of Parsi fiction lending a very mighty voice to the community of Parsis besides Rohiton Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey.

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Chapter 4

Trotting Anglos Saunter Here

One of India's post-Independence writers, Allan Sealy was born in 1951 in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. After schooling in Lucknow, he attended Delhi University, then studied and worked in the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Now he spends much of his time in Dehra Dun. His eye for place and his evocative descriptions are apparent in all his novels and in his travelogue, From Yukon to Yucatan. Sealy's first novel, The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle, is a tale of seven generations of an Anglo-Indian family. His more recent novel, The Everest Hotel: A Calendar, gained him an international following after being short-listed for the Booker Prize in 1998.

Allan Sealy has won a number of awards for his writing including the Commonwealth Best Book Award in 1989, Sahitya Akademi Award in 1991 and the Crossword Book Award in 1998. The writer belongs to Anglo-Indian community, the sub-sect of larger community of Christians residing in the country as a minority. By that standard, Anglo-Indians are a minority community within a minority community. The historical perspective on both, the Anglo-Indians and Christianity would make an interesting study as delineated below:

II

Jaroslav Pelikan¹ in his study for Encarta Reference Library considers Christianity as the most widely distributed of the world religions, having

substantial representation in all the populated continents of the globe. In the late 1990s, its total membership exceeded 1.9 billion people.

A community, a way of life, a system of belief, a liturgical observance, a tradition—Christianity is all of these, and more. Any phenomenon as complex and as vital as Christianity is easier to describe historically than to define logically, but such a description does yield some insights into its continuing elements and essential characteristics. One such element is the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ. That centrality is, in one way or another, a feature of all the historical varieties of Christian belief and practice. Christians have not agreed in their understanding and definition of what makes Christ distinctive or unique. But in Christian teaching, Jesus cannot be less than the supreme preacher and exemplar of the moral life.

What is known of Jesus, historically, is told in the Gospels of the New Testament of the Bible. Other portions of the New Testament summarize the beliefs of the early Christian church. Paul and the other writers of Scripture believed that Jesus was the revealer not only of human life in its perfection but of divine reality itself.

The ultimate mystery of the universe, called by many different names in various religions, was called “Father” in the sayings of Jesus, and Christians therefore call Jesus himself “Son of God.” Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, to which early Christians referred when they spoke about him as the one who had reconciled humanity to God, made the cross the chief focus of Christian

faith and devotion and the principal symbol of the saving love of God the Father. This love is, in the New Testament and in subsequent Christian doctrine, the most decisive among the attributes of God.

Baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” or sometimes perhaps more simply “in the name of Christ,” has been from the beginning the means of initiation into Christianity. At first, it seems to have been administered chiefly to adults after they had professed their faith and promised to amend their lives, but this turned into a more inclusive practice with the baptism of infants. The other universally accepted ritual among Christians is the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, in which Christians share in bread and wine and, through them, express and acknowledge the reality of the presence of Christ as they commemorate him in the communion of believers with one another.

Another fundamental component of Christian faith and practice is the Christian community itself—the church. The relation of this holy catholic church to the various ecclesiastical organizations of worldwide Christendom is the source of major divisions among these organizations. Roman Catholicism has tended to equate its own institutional structure with the catholic church, as the common usage of the latter term suggests, and some extreme Protestant groups have been ready to claim that they, and they alone, represent the true visible church. Increasingly, however, Christians of all segments have begun to acknowledge that no one group has an exclusive right to call itself “the” church, and they have begun to work toward the reunion of all Christians.

There is in Christian doctrine the prospect of a time, expressed in the Christian hope for everlasting life. Jesus spoke of this hope with such urgency that many of his followers clearly expected the end of the world and the coming of the eternal kingdom in their own lifetimes. Since the 1st century such expectations have tended to ebb and flow, sometimes reaching a fever of excitement and at other times receding to an apparent acceptance of the world as it is.

The most important thing is almost all the information about Jesus himself and about early Christianity comes from those who claimed to be his followers. Because they wrote to persuade believers rather than to satisfy historical curiosity, this information often raises more questions than it answers, and no one has ever succeeded in harmonizing all of it into a coherent and completely satisfying chronological account. Because of the nature of these sources, it is impossible, except in a highly tentative way, to distinguish between the original teachings of Jesus and the developing teachings about Jesus in early Christian communities.

What is known is that the person and message of Jesus of Nazareth early attracted a following of those who believed him to be a new prophet. Their recollections of his words and deeds, transmitted to posterity through those who eventually composed the Gospels, recall Jesus' days on earth in the light of experiences identified by early Christians with the miracle of his resurrection from the dead on the first Easter.

Jerusalem was the center of the Christian movement, at least until its destruction by Roman armies in 70 AD, but from this center Christianity radiated to other cities and towns in Palestine and beyond. At first, its appeal was largely, although not completely, confined to the adherents of Judaism, to whom it presented itself as “new,” not in the sense of novel and brand-new, but in the sense of continuing and fulfilling what God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Already in its very beginnings, therefore, Christianity manifested a dual relation to the Jewish faith, a relation of continuity and yet of fulfillment, of antithesis and yet of affirmation. The forced conversions of Jews in the Middle Ages and the history of anti-Semitism (despite official condemnations of both by church leaders) are evidence that the antithesis could easily overshadow the affirmation. The fateful loss of continuity with Judaism has, however, never been total. Above all, the presence of so many elements of Judaism in the Christian Bible has acted to remind Christians that he whom they worshiped as their Lord was himself a Jew, and that the New Testament did not stand on its own but was appended to the Old.

An important source of the alienation of Christianity from its Jewish roots was the change in the membership of the church that took place by the end of the 2nd century. From the Epistles and from other sources in the first two centuries it is possible to gain some notion of how the early Christian congregations were organized. By the 3rd century agreement was widespread about the authority of the bishop as the link with the apostles. He was such a link, however, only if in his life and teaching he adhered to the teaching of the

apostles as this was laid down in the New Testament and in the “deposit of faith” transmitted by the apostolic churches.

Clarification of this deposit became necessary when interpretations of the Christian message arose that were deemed to be deviations from these norms. The most important deviations, or heresies, had to do with the person of Christ. Some theologians sought to protect his holiness by denying that his humanity was like that of other human beings; others sought to protect the monotheistic faith by making Christ a lesser divine being than God the Father.

First, however, Christianity had to settle its relation to the political order. As a Jewish sect, the primitive Christian church shared the status of Judaism in the Roman Empire, but before the death of Emperor Nero in 68 it had already been singled out as an enemy. The grounds for hostility to the Christians were not always the same, and often opposition and persecution were localized. The loyalty of Christians to “Jesus as Lord,” however, was irreconcilable with the worship of the Roman emperor as “Lord,” and those emperors, such as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, who were the most deeply committed to unity and reform were also the ones who recognized the Christians as a threat to those goals and who therefore undertook to eliminate the threat. As in the history of other religions, especially Islam, opposition produced the exact contrary of its intended purpose, and, in the epigram of the North African church father Tertullian, the “blood of the martyrs” became the “seed of the church.” By the beginning of the 4th century, Christianity had grown so much in size and in strength that it had to be either eradicated or accepted. Emperor

Diocletian tried to do the first and failed; Constantine the Great did the second and created a Christian empire.

The conversion of Constantine the Great assured the church a privileged place in society, and it became easier to be a Christian than not to be one. As a result, Christians began to feel that standards of Christian conduct were being lowered and that the only way to obey the moral imperatives of Christ was to flee the world (and the church that was in the world, perhaps even of the world) and to follow the full-time profession of Christian discipline as a monk. From its early beginnings in the Egyptian desert, with the hermit St. Anthony, Christian monasticism spread to many parts of the Christian empire during the 4th and 5th centuries. Not only in Greek and Latin portions of the empire, but even beyond its eastern borders, far into Asia, Christian monks devoted themselves to prayer, asceticism, and service. They were to become, during the Byzantine and medieval periods, the most powerful single force in the Christianization of nonbelievers, in the renewal of worship and preaching, and (despite the anti-intellectualism that repeatedly asserted itself in their midst) in theology and scholarship. Most Christians today owe their Christianity ultimately to the work of monks.

At its worst, this culture could mean the subordination of the church to the tyranny of the state. The crisis of the 8th century over the legitimacy of the use of images in Christian churches was also a collision of the church and the imperial power. Emperor Leo III prohibited images, thus precipitating a struggle in which Eastern monks became the principal defenders of the icons.

Eventually the icons were restored, and with them a measure of independence for the church (see Iconoclasm). During the 7th and 8th centuries three of the four Eastern centers were captured by the dynamic new faith of Islam, with only Constantinople remaining unconquered. It, too, was often besieged and finally fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453. The confrontation with the Muslims was not purely military, however. Eastern Christians and the followers of the Prophet Muhammad exerted influence on one another in intellectual, philosophical, scientific, and even theological matters.

The conflict over the images was so intense because it threatened the Eastern church at its most vital point—its liturgy.

The distinctive features of the Christian East—the lack of a centralized authority, the close tie to the empire, the mystical and liturgical tradition, the continuity with Greek language and culture, and the isolation as a consequence of Muslim expansion—contributed also to its increasing alienation from the West, which finally produced the East-West schism. Historians have often dated the schism from 1054, when Rome and Constantinople exchanged excommunications, but much can be said for fixing the date at 1204. In that year, the Western Christian armies on their way to wrest the Holy Land from the hand of the Turks attacked and ravaged the Christian city of Constantinople. Whatever the date, the separation of East and West has continued into modern times, despite repeated attempts at reconciliation.

Although Eastern Christianity was in many ways the direct heir of the early church, some of the most dynamic development took place in the western part of the Roman Empire. Of the many reasons for this development, two closely related forces deserve particular mention: the growth of the papacy and the migration of the Germanic peoples. When the capital of the empire moved to Constantinople, the most powerful force remaining in Rome was its bishop. The old city, which could trace its Christian faith to the apostles Peter and Paul and which repeatedly acted as arbiter of orthodoxy when other centers, including Constantinople, fell into heresy or schism, was the capital of the Western church. It held this position when the succeeding waves of tribes, in what used to be called the “barbarian invasions,” swept into Europe. Conversion of the invaders to Catholic Christianity meant at the same time their incorporation into the institution of which the bishop of Rome was the head, as the conversion of the king of the Franks, Clovis I, illustrates. As the political power of Constantinople over its western provinces declined, separate Germanic kingdoms were created, and finally, in 800, an independent Western “Roman empire” was born when Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III.

Medieval Christianity in the West, unlike its Eastern counterpart, was therefore a single entity, or at any rate strove to be one. When a tribe became Christian in the West, it learned Latin and often (as in the case of France and Spain) lost its own language in the process. The language of ancient Rome thus became the liturgical, literary, and scholarly speech of western Europe. Archbishops and abbots, although wielding great power in their own regions,

were subordinate to the Pope, despite his frequent inability to enforce his claims. Theological controversies occurred during the early centuries of the Middle Ages in the West, but they never assumed the proportions that they did in the East. Nor did Western theology, at least until after the year 1000, acquire the measure of philosophical sophistication evident in the East. The long shadow of St. Augustine continued to dominate Latin theology, and there was little independent access to the speculations of the ancients.

Church and state cooperated by closing ranks against a common foe in the Crusades. The Muslim conquest of Jerusalem meant that the holy places associated with the life of Jesus were under the control of a non-Christian power; and even though the reports of interference with Christian pilgrims were often highly exaggerated, the conviction grew that it was the will of God for Christian armies to liberate the Holy Land. Beginning with the First Crusade in 1095, the campaigns of liberation did manage to establish a Latin kingdom and patriarchate in Jerusalem, but Jerusalem returned to Muslim rule a century later and within 200 years the last Christian outpost had fallen. In this sense the Crusades were a failure, or even (in the case of the Fourth Crusade of 1202-04, mentioned above) a disaster. They did not permanently restore Christian rule to the Holy Land, and they did not unify the West either ecclesiastically or politically.

Europe experienced a tremendous religious revolution during the 16th century that caused a severe disintegration of the nearly absolute power wielded by the Roman Catholic church in Europe. The rise of Islam in the 7th

century and the failing relations between the eastern and western Catholic churches, which ultimately led to the final schism in 1054, had already dealt Roman Catholicism a mighty blow.

Reformers of different kinds—including John Wycliffe, Jan Hus (John Huss), and Girolamo Savonarola—denounced the moral laxity and financial corruption that had infected the church “in its members and in its head” and called for radical change. Profound social and political changes were taking place in the West, with the awakening of national consciousness and the increasing strength of the cities in which a new merchant class came into its own. The Protestant Reformation may be seen as the convergence of such forces as the call for reform in the church, the growth of nationalism, and the emergence of the “spirit of capitalism.” Many Reformation Groups in countries like Germany, Switzerland, England and France emerged adopting different isms under protest against established corrupt church.

That alliance helped to determine the outcome of the Reformation, which succeeded where it gained the support of the new national states. As a consequence of these ties to the rising national spirit, the Reformation helped to create the literary monuments—especially translations of the Bible—that decisively shaped the language and the spirit of the peoples. It also gave fresh stimulus to biblical preaching and to worship in the vernacular, for which a new hymnody came into being. Because of its emphasis on the participation of all believers in worship and confession, the Reformation developed

systems for instruction in doctrine and ethics, especially in the form of catechisms, and an ethic of service in the world.

The Protestant Reformation did not exhaust the spirit of reform within the Roman Catholic church. In response both to the Protestant challenge and to its own needs, the church summoned the Council of Trent, which continued over the years 1545-63, giving definitive formulation to doctrines at issue and legislating practical reforms in liturgy, church administration, and education.

In one respect the divisions were not permanent, for new divisions continued to appear. Historically, the most noteworthy of these were probably the ones that arose in the Church of England. The Puritans objected to the “remnants of popery” in the liturgical and institutional life of Anglicanism and pressed for a further reformation. Because of the Anglican union of throne and altar, this agitation had direct—and, as it turned out, violent—political consequences, climaxing in the English Revolution and the execution of King Charles I in 1649. Puritanism found its most complete expression, both politically and theologically, in North America. The Pietists of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches of Europe usually managed to remain within the establishment as a party instead of forming a separate church, but Pietism shaped the outlook of many among the Continental groups who came to North America. European Pietism also found an echo in England, where it was a significant force in the life and thought of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement.

Already during the Renaissance and Reformation, but even more in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was evident that Christianity would be obliged to define and to defend itself in response to the rise of modern science and philosophy. That problem made its presence known in all the churches, albeit in different ways. The condemnation of Galileo Galilei by the Inquisition on suspicion of heresy was eventually to find its Protestant equivalent in the controversies over the implications of the theory of evolution for the biblical account of creation. Against other modern movements, too, Christianity frequently found itself on the defensive. The critical-historical method of studying the Bible, which began in the 17th century, seemed to threaten the authority of Scripture, and the rationalism of the Enlightenment was condemned as a source of religious indifference and anticlericalism. Because of its emphasis on the human capacity to determine human destiny, even democracy could fall under condemnation. The increasing secularization of society removed the control of the church from areas of life, especially education, over which it had once been dominant.

Partly a cause and partly a result of this situation was the fundamental redefinition of the relation between Christianity and the civil order. The granting of religious toleration to minority faiths and then the gradual separation of church and state represented a departure from the system that had, with many variations, held sway since the conversion of Constantine the Great and is, in the opinion of many scholars, the most far-reaching change in the modern history of Christianity. Carried to its logical conclusion, it seemed to many to imply both a reconsideration of how the various groups and

traditions calling themselves Christian were related to one another and a reexamination of how all of them taken together were related to other religious traditions. Both of these implications have played an even larger role in the 19th and 20th centuries.

At the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic church took important steps toward reconciliation both with the East and with Protestantism. That same council likewise expressed, for the first time in an official forum, a positive appreciation of the genuine spiritual power present in the world religions. A special case is the relation between Christianity and its parent, Judaism; after many centuries of hostility and even persecution, the two faiths have moved toward a closer degree of mutual understanding than at any time since the 1st century.

The reactions of the churches to their changed situation in the modern period have also included an unprecedented increase in theological interest. The 19th century was preeminently the time of historical research into the development of Christian ideas and institutions. In fact, no particular form of doctrine or church structure could claim to be absolute and final, but it also provided other theologians with new resources for reinterpreting the Christian message. Literary investigation of the biblical books, although regarded with suspicion by many conservatives, led to new insights into how the Bible had been composed and assembled. And the study of the liturgy, combined with recognition that ancient forms did not always make sense to the modern era, stimulated the reform of worship.

The ambivalent relation of the Christian faith to modern culture, evident in all these trends, is discernible also in the role it has played in social and political history. Christians were found on both sides of the 19th-century debates over slavery, and both used biblical arguments. Much of the inspiration for revolutions, from the French to the Russian, was explicitly anti-Christian. Particularly under 20th-century Marxist regimes, Christians have been oppressed for their faith, and their traditional beliefs have been denounced as reactionary. Nevertheless, the revolutionary faith has frequently drawn from Christian sources. Mohandas K. Gandhi maintained that he was acting in the spirit of Jesus Christ, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the martyred leader of the world movement for civil rights, who was a Protestant preacher and who strove to make the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount the basis of his political program.

By the last quarter of the 20th century, the missionary movements of the church had carried the Christian faith throughout the world. A characteristic of modern times, however, has been the change in leadership of the “daughter” or mission churches. Since World War II national leaders have increasingly taken over from Westerners in Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant churches in the Third World. The adaptations of native customs pose problems of theology and tradition, as, for example, African polygamists attempt to live Christian family lives. The merger of denominations in churches such as the United Church of Canada may alter the nature of some of the component groups. Thus, change continues to challenge Christianity.

III

An internet website "Wikipedia" carries interesting details about Anglo-Indians and introduces them as depicted below:

In its most general sense Anglo-Indian refers to any tangible or intangible entity with both British and Indian provenance or heritage... The term "Anglo-Indian" is sometimes used in the West more broadly to describe people who have mixed Indian and British ancestry... To add to the confusion, the term was also used in common parlance in Britain during the colonial era to refer to those (such as hunter-naturalist Jim Corbett) who were of British descent, but were born and raised in India, usually because their parents were serving in the colonial administration or armed forces;... "Anglo-Indian" in this sense was synonymous with "domiciled British." Finally, this term should not be confused with the similar-sounding "Indo-Anglian," an adjective applied to literature in English produced by Indian authors...²

The Anglo-Indian community in its proper sense is a distinct (and statistically very small) minority community (0.00018%-0.00036% of the total population in India) originating in India, consisting of people of mixed British and Indian ancestry whose native language is English. An Anglo-Indian's British ancestry

was usually bequeathed paternally. Article 366(2) of the Indian Constitution defines an Anglo-Indian as "a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only".³ This definition also embraces the descendants of the Luso Indians from the old Portuguese colonies of both the Coromandel and Malabar Coasts, who joined the East India Company as mercenaries and brought their families with them. Similarly the definition includes mestiços (mixed Portuguese and Indian) of Goa and people of Indo-French, and Indo-Dutch descent.

Anglo-Indians formed a significantly small portion of the minority community in India before independence, but today more live outside India than within it. The community has historically been concentrated around towns and cities that were important railway terminals, as a large proportion of them worked in the Indian Railways and the postal and telegraph service. Their numbers in India have dwindled significantly as most emigrated to the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and, to a lesser extent, Canada and the United States.

Sealy's The Trotter-Nama, the novel in question here is dedicated to all "the other Anglo-Indians". For quiet some time, after its publication, the book created a kind of debate about the identity of the Anglo-Indians. The community, following the Christian faith should have been branded as the

Christians in natural course. But this community still fights the question of its true identity as it is not fully acceptable in Christian fold of the natives nor is accommodated by their ancestors in Europe, especially in Britain. Now they have come to be regarded as having a separate identity even by the Indian constitution.

One of the popular beliefs about the Anglo-Indian identity is that they are a race deemed to be of mixed parentage, usually children born to Indian mothers wedded to Whites. Warren Hastings, the first governor general of British India had coined the term “Eurasian” to describe them. The British derisively considered them as “half-caste” or “eight-annas”, as they were children produced by them through unworthy native women which were an embarrassment for them. In Indian racial hierarchy they were just like outcastes. Their position remained to be worst, ironically, even in the country where many communities dwelled together. Shyamala A. Narayan describes their plight further thus:

Imperialism tried to solve the problem by positing that the Eurasian inherited the worst traits of both races. The warring elements in Eurasian character were supposed to make an unstable personality. Evidence for this was gathered from the Report of the Census Commissioner (1891), according to which ‘it appears from statistics that insanity is far more prevalent among the Eurasian than among

many other class' (Naik:190). Aware of the fact that he was generally despised by the British on the one hand and the Indians on the other, the Eurasian often suffered from a crisis of identity. ⁴

Their plight and predicament is further exemplified by Maria Couto in her article "Half in Love: The Trotter-Nama, An Anglo-Indian Saga" thus:

An interesting insight into contemporary perspective on the Anglo-Indian community is the approach of Aparna Sen whose film '36 Chowringee Lane' captures the dignity, integrity and quiet gentleness of some of the Anglo-Indians who now live in genteel poverty after devoting long years to dedicated service. The camera follows the daily grind of an ageing school teacher in her attempts to adjust to a changing world and illuminates an old world of relationships based on mutual respect and good neighbourliness now replaced by the discourteous, supercilious and self-absorbed ethos of the modern world. The more familiar approach is the stereotype of the Christian in Bollywood films as also the choice of name for the most fashionable restaurants in London specialising in Anglo-Indian food and

chasing in on the Raj nostalgia. It has been called 'Chutney Mary', and needless to say it is not owned or run by Anglo-Indians. The fact that it is a highly successful venture and has won coveted awards for being the best Indian restaurant in London does not diminish the snigger that surrounds the name.⁵

The history of the community needs to be understood in its two phases: the East India Company days and the era of the British Empire. This does not take into account the descendants of the early Portuguese, who were much less in number. The Goans who were converted to Catholicism and adopted Portuguese names have always been a larger community with a territorial identity. However their absorption of the culture is so intense that they are rendered as half-castes by a thinker and critic Nirad Chauduri in his work The Continent of the Circe. Maria Couto explains their position in clearer terms thus:

The term 'Anglo-Indian' (possibly until the 1960s) included those Anglo-Indians fair-skinned enough to pass into European society. Some called themselves Domiciled Europeans to distinguish themselves further. The Indian looking were designated as countryborn, East Indian, Eurasian and even Hollandez. It was only in 1911

that the term Anglo-Indians was officially recognised once again not just for the fair-skinned.⁶

The Indian women, with a knowledge of the local languages, mores, customs and sometimes even state secrets proved to be a useful class of go-betweens and mediators for the French and Dutch powers and later for the British. The man in power in those days intermarried Indian women under the larger imperial design. The change of attitudes, the discrimination and the segregation of the community by the British came with the opening of the Suez Canal and Macaulay's Minute on Education – the one made possible a free flow of brides from England, the other created an indigenous population capable of manning essential services in the language of the ruling race. This history finds a reflection in Sealy's novel The Trotter-Nama.

IV

Among other works, I. Allan Sealy's Everest Hotel: A Calendar is stylistically perhaps his finest one to date. The story is told entirely in the present tense, suspended in time, precipitously hanging in a here-and-now, with neither before nor after. It seems to move with the cyclical motion of the natural world, gradually bringing to life the fictional world. Subtitled "A Calendar" this sensitively crafted book tries to link the world of nature with that of human aspirations.

The story weaves in and out through summer, winter, autumn and spring, drawing the reader's attention to little noticed, minute events of the natural world, pausing for a while to look at life again, at the many landmarks and cross roads that come our way, at choices one is required to make, and at the need to simply move on, like the seasons.

Novelists have found much to write about in schizophrenic India. Some talk of the empty glitter of the rich, others describe the tedium of the middle-class and many find their subjects in the oppressive social structure. The nationalist's dream of a vibrant nation-on-the-move, a nuclear power, no less, is seldom reflected in fiction. The most consistent theme is lingering, eternal sadness.

Writer I. Allen Sealy's India too is forlorn and defeated--and very real. At the outset of his new book, The Everest Hotel, are the dregs of the British Raj: the once-loved dead left behind in weed-choked graveyards along with a still subsisting generation of Anglo-Indians who cling to their chipped china for tea and cakes. Surrounding them is the freshly unshackled but ineffectual voice of discontent. A hated dam is bombed, but the rebels achieve nothing but a crack. There are strikes to demand more administrative power, but they produce more noise than results. A bunch of lepers fight off timber merchants to protect their home in the woods, but only for the time being.

Sealy's tale is built around Anglo-Indian Jed, 90, racy owner of the Everest, a hotel-turned-missionary shelter, and manager of Ever-Rest, the adjoining graveyard. Though he was once an adventurous mountaineer and botanical collector, senility, both real and put-on, now allows him to indulge a wicked humor and occasional spite. In the end, he is left alone. The man that he loved as his son is dead; the woman, a nun, who nursed Jed, has left, snatching up the only happy thing that entered their lives: a laughing little girl who was bequeathed to the holy sisters with a note pinned on her frock.

The Everest Hotel is the center stage of the novel. Everest hotel used to be an impressive hotel once upon a time, which due to the vagaries of time and pressures of money and mind had been reduced to being home to a curious band of eccentrics, geriatrics and orphans. In the small town of Drummondganj in Himachal Pradesh this is their only claim to fame apart from the natural beauty and scenic wealth, which Mother Nature has spread all around in abundance.

The plot revolves around life at the Everest Hotel and how into this small and extraordinary community comes Ritu, a young nun entrusted with the task of nursing the Everest's ninety-year-old owner, sometime mountaineer and flower-hunter Jed. Ritu strikes up a secret, guilty friendship with Brij, bodybuilder and frequent visitor. Then another newcomer, Inge, a young neo-Nazi, upsets the precarious equilibrium of life at the Everest.

The Everest Hotel is a continuation of the brilliant Indian tradition which was started by the great Kalidas in his epic Ritusamhara (garland of seasons). The brilliant use of providing a backdrop of seasons for a love story is the highlight of this book and is a real gem of a work. In a uniquely lyrical and poetic blend Sealy explores life at Everest and how the inhabitants strike equilibrium both within the place and without, each of it to be broken with the coming of new comers in their lives. The portrayal of their changing lives with the seasons and the eccentricities of each of them are indeed wonderfully done. The lyrical prose transforms the daily life into a sensual pleasurable experience. The book is sheer delight for the use of imagery and seasonal vibrancy to talk about the lives and daily activities of the dramatis personae.

Sealy uses the colors of nature and the changing seasons to depict the changes in the lives of his protagonists and he blends poetry with prose so very subtly that what comes out is a true masterpiece. The Everest Hotel comes across as one in the tradition of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's Heat and Dust, and Rumer Godden's Black Narcissus . It comes across as a comedy humane of nationalities, ages and temperaments; the inhabitants of Everest are derived from both the building's incarnations, and represent a multi-vocal celebration of character on the part of the author. For Example, this "January is an emerald dove in the silk cotton tree. Tiny fruit on the mulberry."⁷ Sanskrit dhvani-rasa aesthetics as Sealy points out, in the after word of his novel, that in the beamish poetic form, the lamenting voice is usually that of a woman. The beauty of this book lies in the use of words to speak different languages with the changing seasons, and to the least it is most enthralling.

Parallelism is drawn brilliantly as the bordering cemetery, which is known by the same name (Ever-rest), the overwritten histories of the subcontinent gather as a multifarious, irrepressible challenge to the communal tenor of India's political present. The hotel is portrayed as the confluence where people from various hues of life come along; they being different in their beliefs, ideas and geographies are yet linked together by a common bond. As the cemetery knows no differences once a man leaves for the heavenly abode so the same with the hotel, which doesn't distinguish on the various barriers, that man has created to divide amongst himself. The book comes across as a tour de force with its bold theme and subtle presentation style. Praising the book Meenakshi Ganguly wrote in TIME Asia issue of November 2, 1998:

The Everest Hotel is an ethereal book, lovingly written, but has to be read slowly because too many themes don't quite tie together. In fact, there is no need to rush because there is no mystery that will be resolved in the end, no sides to take. The characters remain overly elusive, and none seems friendly enough--or tragic enough--to win sympathy. Sealy dwells at length on the mood of a season or the joyous soaring of a kite, but he is sparse with conversation and explanation.⁸

Sealy's another novel, Hero: A Fable, is again mock heroic in tone, reminiscent of G. V. Desani's All About M. Hatterr. Bolder than the first book in its linguistic experiments, it toys with its medium, playfully twisting it out of shape. The English language comes to acquire a very local, very Indian flavour, bringing slang and colloquialism into the written text. The narration has a sardonic, often scathing, kind of humour. The backdrop is again the vast Indian subcontinent teeming with its people and their problems. This time Sealy finds his source of inspiration in the Indian "masala movie".

The eponymous Hero of the book is a filmstar-turned-politician, a character familiar enough on the Indian political scene. A villain called Nero is the hero's side-kick; there is a biographer called Zero, a heroine called U.D. Cologne, and a cabaret artiste called Flora Fountain. It is not hard to spot the laughter underlying these names which have local and humorous connotations.

The main protagonist of the novel is a South Indian movie star who relocates himself from Bombay to Delhi, gets himself a pair of dark glasses, and becomes a politician. He gets his taste of authority in the crazy corridors of power with all the rampant games of intrigue. Pitted against him is a villain from North India, Nero (born out of wedlock and vindictively christened Anirodh by his father), who follows the hero around, looking for an appropriate moment to gun him down.

The story is told by Zero, who has sacrificed his career, his ambitions, and even his mistress. He is now writing the ultimate script, "Star", for Hero:

Star camera, which has come over to follow Hero's back downhill, turns about and zooms in on Nero's face. There are beads of sweat on his forehead. He puts his dark glasses back on and looks steadily after the departing figure. Camera moves still closer till Hero is a pair of tiny dwindling homunculi reflected in Nero's smuggled Ray-Ban.⁹

The narrative unfolds in a style that can best be called "filmi", complete with entrance, intermission and exit. The description of a physical combat includes a "thain, dhish, dhish"; echoes figure as "bhooan, bhooan"; there are "dilaags" quoted from "flims"; there is action, combat, chase, rape, cliffhanger action, and whatever makes a good Bollywood film.

Hero claims to be a fable and there is no doubt that it has fabular elements as the story leaps from the real world into the fantastic. But it is a novel on which it is hard to pin a generic label. It may be taken as a genial satire in the way it good-naturedly critiques the socio-cultural milieu of India, or it may be called a spoof on the film industry. Or it may be taken as a narrative in the picaresque tradition, with the protagonist moving from one comic situation to another. Closer home, we may pin the "behroopia" tradition tag on it as the characters flit in and out of diverse situations, changing roles from time to time, donning different masks and changing their personas.

The prose style remains, for the most part, idiosyncratic and the reader is required to cooperate with its whimsicalities. The message being passed on to the reader is a tongue-in-cheek one, an invitation to play the game with the narrator and enjoy it, too. The novel has something that is missing in Everest Hotel: a sense of fun of the “desi” variety which surfaces in Sealy’s carnivalesque (so to coin) world, his comic descriptions, his linguistic frolics, and in the proper nouns he uses. For example, names like "Golgappa Sahab" and titles of serials and films: "Aag, Aansoo, aur Sughandhit Sten Gun", "Anandmayee Sati", "Zameen, Aasman Aur Sarson ka Beej", and the like.

Reading Hero today it is hard to suppress a chuckle. However, the text and its narration makes certain demands on the reader, requiring one’s active participation, a willing suspension of disbelief and a preparedness to go along with the story. Sure, there are absurd elements, but that is part of the game as we have it in “masala” movies in India.

Sealy has authored other works, too. Some short fiction and a travelogue called From Yukon to Yucatan: A Western Journey, which he described as a journey down the spine of North America from top to bottom, looking incidentally at what is western in the author and people around. He has recently finished writing a novel, using the form of a puppet play, located in New Delhi and St Petersburg which, he says, is "about love and loss". This shift to a foreign locale is a departure from his earlier novels which have confined themselves to an Indian backdrop.

Red and The Brainfever Bird, are two more fictional works to his account, taking readers to altogether different plains of experiences.

v

As in the case of Indian Jews, the creative works about the community of Anglo-Indians are very few. Similarly, the number of creative writers is also negligible which includes writers like Henry Derozio, Ruskin Bond, Sealy and Glen Duncan among few others. These writers have been able to make a mark in their writing career with creative works of international acclaim. Though not in very good terms, the community has found a place as characters in many creative works of the writers like Kipling, Forster, John Masters, Edward Thompson and Paul Scot among others. Bhowani Junction by John Masters, however, carries a fine portrayal of the community and one of the characters aptly calls themselves as “half Indians”. “The treatment of Anglo-Indians,” says Shyamala A. Narayan, “in Indian English fiction is disappointing; novelists seem to introduce an Anglo-Indian only when they want a girl of somewhat loose morals, as in Mulraj Anand’s Private Life of an Indian Prince...”¹⁰ and she goes on to cite many such examples in her article. It is possible to place Allan Sealy in a literary tradition which includes writers like G.V. Desani, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, moving away from the self-conscious narrative style of earlier Indo-Anglian writers, towards greater freedom and spontaneity, thus proving to the world that Indian writing in English has finally come of age. Often Sealy is seen as influenced by Rushdie. But Sealy’s Trotter-Nama was already knocking at the doors of publishers when Rushdie’s “Midnight’s Children” came out. On at least one

occasion, when the similarities between the two books were pointed out, Sealy denied any "influence", saying that he and Rushdie were simply "two writers responding to the same historical moment. They have read the same book, but the book is India. India is dictating, the country is doing the 'thinking'. We do not write but are written."¹¹

Despite the lack of hype and other public relations paraphernalia, recognition has come to the author in the form of prestigious awards. Sealy is the recipient of the Commonwealth Fiction Prize, the Sahitya Akademi Award, and the Crossword Book Award. In India he is recognised as a major talent among contemporary writers in English. Abroad, he is less celebrated than some of his better known but less talented contemporaries. Perhaps the reasons may be found somewhere in the marketing politics and promotional sales of publishing houses.

The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle was Allan Sealy's first successful book. Dedicating it to "the other Anglo-Indians," his professed intention was to write a comic epic in prose of the minority community in India to which he belongs. For the background to this novel he draws upon his knowledge of Lucknow. A book that declares its debt to Laurence Sterne, it is often seen as inspired by G.V. Desani and Salman Rushdie, using their mock-epic style, combining history with fantasy, the real with the imaginary. When it first appeared its success in India was astonishing and it soon went out of print.

Viewing the novel form as one alien to the Indian ethos, Sealy tries to give it an indigenous appeal. Trotter-Nama has a sprawling, ambitious structure, spanning two centuries, two cultures and seven generations. It brings together a vast variety of characters in diverse situations ranging from the ludic to the somber, the amusing to the pathetic, celebrating the infinite richness of human existence against a backdrop that is undeniably Indian. The narrative cuts across time, crosses social and cultural boundaries and traces the lives of characters that are very contemporary, and very hybrid.

By turns satirical, poignant, and magical—the central narrative dazzlingly embellished by everything from advertisements and recipes to couplets, table-talk, elegies, and learned digressions—it is a triumph of imaginative energy, and is delicious to read.

The uninhibited chronicler is Eugene, Seventh Trotter, a plump painter, a forger of miniatures, who is not averse to rearranging history to suit him. Yet not even his vanity can diminish the wondrousness of the tale he has to tell—from the Great Trotter (born Trottoire), with his wives and concubines, his limitless fortune based on gunpowder, indigo, and ice, his chateau, his curious inventions, his bizarre death by balloon...to his soldier son Mik, known for his exploits on the Afghan frontier and elsewhere...to a real painter...to a clerk caught up in the Great Indian Mutiny...to a pacifist historian-turned-rain gauge-salesman...a drunken piano-tuner and a soft-spoken politician...not to

forget the Victorian Philippa, who once managed to become pregnant, all by herself, simply by thinking of England.

But history is changing India, and the Trotters with it. By the end their grandeur is fled, their properties flooded, their chateau turned into a hotel, the aunts and cousins and uncles scattered and clinging, but barely, to their Anglo-Indian identity. Only the dubious Eugene remains, still unreliable, still catty, still talking and still—despite everything—so alive, so articulate, so entertaining that, thanks to him, the glory that was a Trotter will be safe forever in his gorgeously embroidered family history, presented as The Trotter-Nama.

In 1988, when I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama was published, critics were unanimous in hailing it as the year's best Indian novel in English. London Magazine praised its effusiveness, calling it an extravaganza and the Chicago Tribune described it as richly imaginative. The general agreement was that there were few parallels to the book. Sealy was compared with Hogarth and Joyce. He was accepted as a leading Indo-Anglian writer.

The fact remains, however, that much of Allan Sealy's reputation has been limited to India. Critics abroad have not been as enthusiastic as their Indian counterparts. In a preface to the 1999 IndiaInk edition of his Trotter-Nama, Sealy recalls that his book was "published abroad but its reputation was made at home....Where the foreign reader was quite baffled, the local reader was

delighted. Indian critics rescued what the foreign press had ignored or written off.”¹²

The Indian reader, however, is not much baffled and is beholden to the truth that is chronicled by Justin Trotter when he writes to his stepmother Mme Trottire in following words, “they paid the sum of one pagoda for every child brought for christening out of such a marriage so that their soldiers might be encouraged to take Indian wives.”¹³ The reference is not lost on the avid reader about condition of the community which was considered at par with the high-class Europeans. Many soldiers adopted customs and manners of the land and found nothing wrong marrying Indian women. Justin Trotter is not wrong in his reverence accorded to the community even by the so-called high class during that time, say around the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Sealy describes Nama as a family-saga strangely attached with a map and family tree drawn very meticulously. Funnily, it is a chronicle dedicated to “the other Anglo-Indians.” The description of the first trotter’s entry into the world easily reminds one of Salman Rushdie’s Saleem Sinai of Midnight’s Children. It runs thus:

He is born on the twenty-first June, 1719. So far from being premature, as the historian’s version has it, he has spent ten months in the womb and arrives in the fullness of things. A glistening globe,

he greets the world, like all great men from Akbar
to Zoroaster, with a laugh.¹⁴

The originality and the novelty in the “nama” form that Sealy has adopted helps sustain the comic grandeur of the author. The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to the originators of this forms which actually carried the exploits of the kings in the works entitled Babar-Nama, Shah-Nama and Akbar-Nama among others. Sealy’s characters are based on historical figures who shaped his community with a commitment to the land of their birth. The narrator Trotter has a vision of his great French ancestor sitting prime “in the toilet.” The novel’s initial pages carry a sketch of Justin Aloysius Trotter modeled after a Claus Martin, a real-life character whose entry to Indian history is made through East India Company. He is supposed to have left an amount of Rs. 40 lakhs, in the year 1800 when he died, for various charitable works and to establish the La Martiniere schools in Lucknow, Calcutta and Lyons in France. The man was a multi-faceted personality who amassed great wealth as a war hero, a trader of guns and indigo, a learned man of books and a creator of museum. He also demonstrated a hot-air balloon to the people of Lucknow in 1785. He died leaving a complicated will for seven of his mistresses of whom one was only fourteen.

Not only the Great Trotter is designed on this personality, but Sealy also prepares the jacket cover of his Trotter-Nama caricaturing the first Trotter precariously hanging through his hot-air balloon over his estate Sans Souci. Similarly our Trotter has four wives: Sultana, Farida Wilkinson and indigo

planter's daughter, Elise (known as "Jarman Begum") and Rose Llewellyn, who is headstrong to not to allow the old man touch her. Much of Claus Martin is imitated here. A flamboyant description in the initial chapter speaks a lot about the great Trotter, when he is readying for his ballooning venture, thus:

The basket was capacious, it might have held forty chickens or twelve dogs or mangoes without number. Instead there were besides a rug and the cushions: a spyglass, an astrolabe, an horologe, an horoscope, a barometer, a gypsonometer, one hundred and forty meteorological instruments, four sheets of writing paper of the Great Trotter's own manufacture and bearing his watermark, an inkhorn, three pens, two curried doves, and a partridge in covered dish. There was also a skin of iced water.¹⁵

There is a wide variety of narratives experimented upon with descriptions and interpolations, recipes for a variety of foods, relay-race like rallies flowing over a singular and seemingly unworthy topics and much more. They become necessary ingredients of Sealy's story-telling art beneath which there is a larger issue hidden. Another eye-catching description will not be lost on readers. It runs as:

No, an egg is a noble thing. Consider its shape: there is the sunya, the zero from which all things spring, to which all things tend. Consider its colour: there is the whiteness of the sun, of cows, of milk, of pure ghi, of goddesses, of all good things. An egg is blameless. An egg is smooth hairless and unbegotten. It is firm, it is fragile, it is flawless, it is just fine. Pure-brahmins are mistaken: more, they are envious of us egg-brahmins. But at least they respect the bird that brings forth this wonder. They would not take its life. Can such a bird be plumped for slaughter, its male muscled for sport?¹⁶

Maria Couto offers an explanation in this regard thus:

This structure helps him confront his emotive theme. A lot of truth lies bared beneath layers of cheeky sauce, and the chronicle continues with a live audience in mind such as shouting encouragement to artists of the oral traditions.” -- Wah! Metaphor, Narrator! --“...The effect, despite the occasional longueurs is a spicy mix of a fabulist’s concoction, a joker’s pranks and a historian’s vision. ¹⁷

And what this “historian” registers is nothing but a community’s efforts of coming to terms with the question of their identity in the big sprawls of the east west affairs right from the early seventeenth century to the current period. The form he chooses best suits a historian; a chronicler, depicting the various generations of a race in terms of its Legend, Chivalry, Romance, Prose, History, Decadence, Diaspora and New Promise.

The discarded Anglo-Indians were driven from pillar to post in the services of high echelons of powerful princes, though as officers having different masters. In an ironic juxtaposition, while Trotter here is summoned by the Governor General to act as military adviser in the struggles and battles with “Maratha rats”, his son, of whom he has lost all trace, arrives at the Maratha court to be given command of a force of junior officers, all country born like him. In an episode entitled “The battle of giants in the south (after Firdausi), “ Sealy has the great Trotter fighting fearlessly and firing one last ball in to the sky at which the Maratha soldiers flee, all but one: “He stood his ground, the son of Sultana, till struck down from above he lay upon it, clay his pillow. Faint if breath, he cried: Father! And at once the Great Trotter’s brow was ploughed with the fled-furrows of consternation, for he knew that voice.”¹⁸ Mik loses an arm in this battle and arrives home to claim his legacy., only to find that an “entire class of persons like Mik, sprung equally from Europeans and Indians, was altogether destitute of law.”¹⁹ Such skillful interweaving of history leavened by long sections that recreate a lively socio-cultural scene illuminate the novel with humour and pathos. Here is the moment, with the advent of Mik

on the scene that the first question of Anglo-Indian identity and racially divided society occurs.

From among his numerous children Mik chooses Charles as his heir apparent. The painter child is skillfully looked after by Rose , the beautiful young girl adopted by the Great Trotter as part of his ménage in his old age, and for whom Mik had a very passionate soft corner in whose honour he flamboyantly wears a rose. Mik is unparalleled in cavalry and a peerless man of action: “Who else, people asked, would scorn marksman by leading a cavalry charge in a white seersucker jacket with a rose at his heart? Who could lance a boil at a gallop? Who trim moustaches with two strokes of his saber? One man: Tartar Sahib! He was known by the rose as Gulabi Trotter, and in time the fearsome men of Trotter’s Horse came to be called from their tunics, the Rose Boys.”²⁰

Charles’ vision can be matched to that of the community of Anglo-Indians, who, while collecting paints, brushes and dyes from the market, is struck with an enlightenment which is described as an “instant of stunned submission of utter helplessness, confusion, and joyful despair”²¹ His lifetime is aptly entitled “Romance” and produces the writer Thomas Henry, who ends up winning the Victoria Cross in 1857. Charles’ beloved, Bulbul, a free spirit, is almost a sprite who “ran wild with the buffalo girls and the kite-makers” tribe of sons and ruled over them with the authority of the beautiful. Her play-mates called her “dongli, or two-in-one, because her real father had been a foreigner”²²

The hints at Charles' indifference and abandonment of his progeny are painfully pointed out and the history is replete with such events.

The chronically patterned ups and downs of a family are almost parallel to the community of Anglo-Indian Christians of India. A bit of history co-opted by Sealy deals with the life of Henry Derozio, a giant who fought against prejudice and ignorance and for academic freedom. Sealy's chronicle digs up eminent lives by enlarging the Trotter family through the marriages of Jusitn's widows, Farida and Elise. One of the important characters in The Trotter-Nama, is the prodigy Henry Louis Vivian Fonesca-Trotter, who spoke naturally in couplets, son of Fonesca the barber-kahani-master who marries the widow Farida. The widow Elise – Jarman Begum marries Yakub Khan who finally achieves his ambition to become the Ice Manager, and their son, Jacob Kahn Trotter grows up to be an activist, fights for the rights of his community with the imperial powers and travels to Westminster with a petition which is discussed and passed in Parliament but no action taken for several decades. These facts are borne out by the actual debates that raged and the racial prejudice that blighted the country born sons of traders, soldiers and administrators who had given life time to the interests of their fathers and the East India Company. The history of their bravery during the Mutiny when La Martiniere was occupied by the rebels, and the bravery of the boys of the school who defended the residency is duly recorded. A critic notes in this regard:

La Martiniere, Lucknow has a rather romantic history. During the rising of 1857, the first revolt against British rule, the school was occupied by the rebels and was the first point to be assaulted by the advancing British troops suffering extensive damage. The sixty-eight boys and eight staff of the school help defend the Lucknow Residency.²³

The author is ruthless in presenting the community's gradual decline and degeneration. With time the opportunities for advancement and social mobility diminished, the facilities for higher education abroad were being denied, as were all other promised positions. In the early years the fair son of the family was sent home to England for higher education. Those who resembled their mother's side took their chance in India. The English sneered at them and the Indians did not hide their amusement at the sight of a dark skinned woman in foreign dress. All grew up with attachment to their father's people. Through the mother love grew for India and its people. Among the Indians they were regarded as foreign. From the late nineteenth century the empire attracted another class of engineers and supervisors to build the railways, the post and telegraph services, canals, waterworks, electricity plants and jute mills among such other works. The British started families in India which were often abandoned. Pearl, born out of such a family in The Trotter-Nama, makes a fortune in Hollywood and sustains her impoverished family in Calcutta. The pain she feels when she is offered the Eastern roles in movies and when a friend "quite innocently, suggested a romance to be called *Pearl of the Orient*,

she fainted away.”²⁴ The high-brow mentality enjoyed so far gets a serious blow. And for Sealy, it is no mean achievement to present the details unsparingly, like this.

The sixth and seventh generation narratives are entitled as “Diaspora” and “New Promise” where Sealy delves in to the gradual decline and diminishing fortunes and insecurities of the race whose members find themselves protected but confined to lower grade jobs in railways, posts and telegraphs and also the low lying police force. These generations are labeled as “eight anna bits and four anna bits”, “chee chees” and as a “touch of the tar”. In their rage they migrated to Australia and Britain, where they experience the racial discrimination that diseased their lives here in India, too. These inevitabilities of history are tracked down by Sealy in an uncompromising manner. The conflict that some of the members of the community perceive is well versed in Marris’ blabbers thus:

As head of a dwindling community, Marris was harsh on packers-and-leavers. “*Go and become bus-conductors in London if you want,*” he warned. “*But don’t come crying back to me.*” Or he might scoff: “*Melbourne is all very well, but can you get mangoes there?*” He favoured the Nakhlaou dasheri personally.²⁵

Or see Sealy's magic of fusing poignancy and humour together where locals' exploitative scorn is also evident when a kabadi-wala dictates his term for purchasing the stuff gathered over years in the Begam Kothi at Sans Souci which is worth thousands, and Reuben is at loss of words when it is demanded for a pittance.²⁶

Sealy's confrontations are ruthlessly honest – imperial scorn and prejudice are balanced by the Anglo-Indian refusal to be considered Indian, and their inability to come to terms with the communities around them notwithstanding their love for the country. "Home" was always England and Indians devised a colonial interface to dodge the ideology of colonialism, the Anglo-Indian persisted in seeing himself as made in the image of the ruling race.

Maria Couto has pointed out that the people who upheld the interests of the community are also mentioned in the chronicle, sometimes directly, at others, indirectly though. She notes in this regard:

"Anglo-Indians began to strengthen a common identity of purpose, and to express them in the proliferation of organisation... The work of Ricketts, Derozio, Kyd and others encouraged Anglo-Indians to lobby as a distinct group for their human rights." The most active in the early part of this century [20th] was Sir Henry Gidney who died in 1943. ...He worked tirelessly for the welfare of

his community and attended the Round Table Conference in 1930....Like Skinner he insisted on his birthright as an Anglo-Indian.²⁷

Nirad Chauduri's classification puts Anglo-Indians in the category of "half-castes" who are genetically so, and the anxieties and fears they perceive in the country of many minorities, are solidified by the so called majorities and other minorities usurping on them. Justin, the first Trotter's contemplation, in this regard puts one on the path of wearisome disposition. He says:

Does the proliferation of labels subtly change the nature of a thing? ...But what is this India? Is it not a thousand shifting surfaces which enamour the newcomer and then swallow him up? Is this a perverse and passive strength? ... The nearer I approach this land the further I am driven back into my already formed ideas, and I conclude by studying – despite my intentions, and love – not India but Europe, or Europe's India, which is the same thing.²⁸

Sealy has thus lent his voice to the collective subliminal psyche through a powerful medium of a novel. The community here emerges as the protagonist whose alter ego is presented in the seven generations of Trotters as an when they come and live their lives. The (in)conclusive study of the novel reveals a

deep rooted commitment to the land of their belonging, with all its failings and forte as agreeable as to any native it would have been. It is very clear that Anglo-Indians, as they are, much beholden to their mothers than to the superiority and arrogance of their father's heritage and hence, to most of them exist a deeper bond in the faiths and philosophies of the country of their fate.

The novel is rich in other issues, too. It is a readers' delight and researchers' mine of mind-boggling references which renders it as "unputdownable". Hence, any study carried out on this novel on single agenda would always prove to be inconclusive.

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Chapter 5

Through the Walled City

The Walled City, a debut novel by Esther David, is a vibrant and vivid account of the city of Ahmedabad – with its myriad sights and sounds, fragrances and smells, ups and downs coming alive on every page of the novel. And along come the voices and visions of the community of Jews, the size of which in this sprawling country like India is just a negligible dot. The other works by the same author consists of three more fictions namely; The Book of Esther, The Book of Rachel and By the Sabarmati.

The author Esther David belongs to one of the Bene-Israel Jew families that live in India at Ahmeabad. As a child she lived in a house by the zoo founded by her father Rubin David. A gifted sculptor and art connoisseur, she taught at School of Architecture, School of Interior Design and Technology. She has a vast experience of penning a few columns in the noted dailies like The Times of India, The Indian Express and The Indian Post. She had been invited by the UGC to script academic films and had been a chairperson to The Gujarat State Lalit Kala Akademy.

Jews are spread around the world today, concentrated mainly in the US and Israel. The history of the race is as engaging as any thriller would be.

II

Jews are a people who have maintained a distinct cultural identity originally based on the idea of a covenant, or special relationship, with God. The Jewish people are among the oldest of the many peoples known to history. According to historians their origins date back at least 3,000 years, and perhaps even further. During this lengthy period Jews have settled in all parts of the world and have had an impact on many civilizations. The Jewish religion, Judaism, has exerted influence far beyond its own adherents. Christianity grew out of Judaism, and Islam accepted many of the traditions and practices of Judaism. Knowledge of the history of the Jews and their culture contributes to a fuller understanding of the history of the Western world and its spiritual life.

The word Jew came into existence in the 5th century BC to refer to the inhabitants of the province of Judea (now part of Israel). It derives from the Hebrew word, yehudi, and the Greek, ioudaios, for Judeans. In time it was also applied to people who originated in Judea but moved elsewhere. The Judeans were descended from the Israelites, an ancient people whose origins are shrouded in mystery.

Historians know little about the early history of the Israelites, but they do know that at some point the Israelites came to see themselves as bearers of a unique covenant with a single God whom they called by many names, most importantly, Yahweh. Yahweh provided them with a law and way of life, as well as with a territory—the land of Israel—in which to carry out that way of

life. Acceptance of this covenant and monotheism distinguished the Israelites from most of their contemporaries, who believed in polytheism or idolatry.

In the 6th century BC, the Neo-Babylonian Empire conquered the land of the Israelites and sent much of the population of its southern province, Judea, to Babylonia. The Israelite exiles appear to be the most direct ancestors of the Jewish people. During their exile the nature of the Israelites' identity changed as they came to see themselves primarily as a religious group rather than simply as an exiled group with a common ethnic background.

Religion, ethnic identity, and language have all played important roles in maintaining Jewish identity. Because Judaism related to so many aspects of life, including those considered secular in other cultures, being a Jew led to a strong group or ethnic identity. For example, the Hebrew Bible (known to Christians as the Old Testament) laid down dietary laws and indicated which foods were considered kosher (fit) for consumption. Jews also had their own written language, Hebrew, and distinct spoken languages developed. The best known of these spoken languages is Yiddish, which is based on the German language.

What constitutes Jewish identity came into question during the 19th and 20th centuries, however. Some Jews today, especially in Israel, reject the Jewish religion but insist that they belong to a distinct ethnic or national community. Other Jews, especially in the West, reject the ethnic component of Jewish identity while claiming they follow a distinct religion. Still others in the West

define themselves as cultural Jews, meaning that they lack a religious affiliation and feel part of some other ethnic group, but they believe there is a distinctive Jewish culture in which they participate. And in all parts of the world there are Jews who insist that Jews are both an ethnic and a religious group. Finally, there are those who insist that Jewish religious law defines Jewish identity. In this view, anyone born to a Jewish mother, or anyone who has properly converted to the Jewish faith, is a full-fledged member of the Jewish people and religion. Thus, today there is no consensus on the definition of a Jew.

The multiplicity of Jewish identities makes it difficult to provide reliable population figures. Most contemporary estimates place the population of Jews worldwide at about 14 million. The two largest communities of Jews are in the United States and Israel. About 5.9 million Jews live in the United States, and about 4.6 million live in Israel. About 350,000 Jews live in Canada, primarily in Toronto and Montréal. Sizable Jewish communities are found in Argentina, Australia, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, and Western Europe. In every country other than Israel, the Jewish population is stagnant or shrinking, primarily as a result of low birth rates but also because of migration and assimilation into the dominant culture.

The story of the Jews is complex, yet historians can tell the basic story by focusing on central elements that have shaped the way Jews lived and thought for generations. In addition, historians can describe the major centers

of Jewish culture and accomplishment, as well as the tragedies the Jews have faced.

The history of the Jews begins in what historians call the biblical period. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible are called the Torah (meaning “instruction” or “law”). The Torah tells the story of the Jewish people from the time of Abraham, who is considered the original father of the Jews, through that of the prophet and lawgiver Moses. Torah was accepted by almost all Jews until recent times as the unvarnished truth.

The story begins as God turns to a man called Abram (who later takes the name Abraham) and tells him to leave his home in Mesopotamia and travel to Canaan, where a unique destiny awaits him and his children. The Abraham stories set the tone, as Abraham and his wife, Sarah, are described as people at odds with the moral values of the polytheistic societies that surround them. While not without flaws, Abraham and Sarah are seen as far more virtuous than all others, precisely because they show reverence for God. This virtue leads to a covenant of allegiance between God and Abraham in which God promises to direct the unique destiny of Abraham’s many descendants and to give those descendants the land of Canaan as their special inheritance. Circumcision was the outward symbol of this covenant, and many Jews understand it as such to this day.

The theme that the God-revering children of Abraham and Sarah are to be different from all other people continues through the stories of their select

offspring: their son Isaac and his wife, Rebecca, and the preferred grandson, Jacob, and Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah. These figures all encounter dangers outside their God-revering family. These stories came to be seen as describing the origins of the Jewish people, and many Jews refer to these figures as the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people.

The biblical narrative continues with the 12 sons of Jacob, who had four different mothers. Ten sons come to hate one of their brothers, Joseph, and sell him as a slave. Joseph winds up in Egypt, where he demonstrates his ability to interpret dreams, and this ability enables him to lead Egypt out of crisis. As a result, the pharaoh, Egypt's leader, makes Joseph his prime minister. Jacob, along with his other sons and their wives and children, join Joseph in Egypt. There the descendants of Jacob, who by then was called Israel (which can mean "He for whom God struggles" or "He struggles with God" or "God struggles"), increase enormously in number through the generations. The Egyptians begin to see them as a threat and enslave them. The story takes for granted that the descendants of Israel, known as Israelites, maintain a clearly discernible identity and do not become like the Egyptians.

After the Israelites spend two centuries enslaved in Egypt, God chooses Moses, an Israelite who has fled from Egypt, to lead the children of Israel out of slavery. Moses negotiates with the pharaoh for the freedom of the Israelites, but fails. God then visits ten excruciating plagues on the Egyptians, after which the Israelites are told they can leave. The Egyptians decide to go

after them, however. As the Israelites come to the Red Sea, with the Egyptians in hot pursuit, God miraculously splits the sea so they can pass through. God then lowers the water on the Egyptians, wiping out their armed forces.

Although historians can verify none of this narrative, Jews honor the story of the miraculous departure from Egypt, called the Exodus, as the transforming event in Jewish history. Jewish ritual recalls the Exodus in numerous ways, especially in the Passover holiday, which commemorates the last meal the Israelites ate before they left Egypt. The Exodus became the central event in Jewish history because it solidified the relationship between the entire people and God. Through this event God manifests concern for their welfare in an extraordinary way. The Exodus represents the beginning of a collective journey that culminates with the settlement of the Jewish people in Canaan.

Soon after the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites begin a 40-year journey to Canaan by traveling into the Sinai Desert. There, God reveals the Ten Commandments, the basic rules and principles that have guided Jewish life into contemporary times. Numerous rules and regulations follow these ten commandments, extending into every area of life. They cover civil and criminal matters, how to worship God, what to eat and refrain from eating, how and when to rest, how to maintain the welfare of the community, and a host of other matters. Historians believe these rules and regulations emerged over many centuries and represent different schools of thought. But at the time these rules became codified into law, perhaps around the 4th century

BC, Jews saw these rules as authoritative divine teaching that originated from God's revelation to Moses.

The laws were designed to set the Israelites and their descendants apart from other peoples. Many of them commanded the Jewish people not to follow in the ways of the Canaanite peoples, especially in sexual matters. At times the laws seem to have served as a constitution for Jewish society, as they had been intended. Observant Jews continue to follow many of these rules and regulations today, although with modifications that have occurred over the centuries.

Among the commandments to Moses were instructions to set up a shrine, or Tabernacle, where a newly established Israelite priesthood could officiate at ritual sacrifices to God. This shrine was to serve as the primary location for communicating with God.

By divine decree, the 12 tribes of Israel—one tribe for each of Jacob's children—were to wander in the desert for 40 years, after which time a new generation would conquer the land of Canaan. Joshua succeeded Moses as leader. According to one biblical account, Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, swiftly subdued the inhabitants, and set up the Israelite tribal confederation, with each tribe allotted a portion of land. As other biblical accounts make clear, however, and as historians agree, things did not go quite so smoothly. The Israelites had to contend with others for control of Canaan, which they came to call Eretz Israel ("the land of Israel").

For about two centuries after arriving in Canaan, the Israelite tribal confederation functioned mostly as a military alliance. Tribes came to the aid of one another when threatened by outside forces, especially by the Philistines, a people who lived in the southern part of Canaan. Toward the end of these two centuries a prophet named Samuel emerged as the spiritual leader of the Israelites. The military threat from the Philistines continued, however, and the Israelite tribes clamored for a king who would unite the tribes and serve as military commander for the people as a whole.

Babylonians from the east ultimately overran the kingdom of Judah at the beginning of the 6th century BC, in what the Judeans understood as a sign of religious failure on their part. The Babylonians destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, a catastrophe still commemorated by many Jews today in the fast day known as Tishah b'Ab (the ninth of the month of Ab). The Babylonians also exiled many of the elite members of the community, including priests who officiated in the Temple. The exile began the period known as the Babylonian Captivity.

With this exiled community, the Jewish diaspora (dispersion) began. Historians know very little about Jewish life in the diaspora in its earliest centuries, however. The land of Israel remained the center of Jewish life for many centuries.

The Bible describes the Babylonian conquest not as an imperial power overwhelming a smaller state, but as a sign from God that the kingdom of

Judea had not behaved with the proper piety. It interprets the exile as punishment for sin, not as imperial policy to control a conquered enemy. According to this interpretation, the kingdom could be restored and the covenant could live on if the people of Judea repented. The interpretation could also remove geographic limits from the covenant: Jews could serve God anywhere on Earth. Historians do not know how many Jews believed the latter interpretation; they do know that it became the officially recognized ideology of the community's religious leaders and that it was instrumental to the ability of many Jews to retain a distinct identity despite their dispersion.

The Jewish diaspora began with the Babylonian conquest in the 6th century BC. Many Jews understood their presence outside the land of Israel as exile. God had imposed exile as a punishment for their sins, they believed, and they would be unable to return to their land until God redeemed them from exile by sending a Messiah. In time some Jews interpreted exile as independent of geography. In their view exile meant exile from God, and exile could occur even in the land of Israel, especially when non-Jews dominated Israel. Other Jews did not understand their lives in the diaspora as an exile; they chose to live outside the land of Israel.

For some 2,500 years Jews have continued to live outside the land of Israel. In the early centuries of the diaspora, they established substantial communities in Asia Minor, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula. Later they spread to the rest of the globe. Each Jewish community interacted with the local culture, and Jewish life and culture became remarkably diverse as a

result. In particular European Jews and the Jews of the Mediterranean basin, including Spain, developed different ways of observing the Jewish religion and different identities as Jews. The European Jews (outside of Spain) are called Ashkenazim (from the Hebrew word for “Germany”) and the Jews of Spain and the rest of the Mediterranean basin are called Sephardim (from the Hebrew word for “Spain”).

Historians know very little about the early centuries of Jewish life in the diaspora. During the Babylonian captivity part of the Jewish community successfully maintained a distinct identity and culture, but the circumstances of this community remain a mystery. Nor is there much information about Jewish life in the Persian Empire; what we do know is that some Jews longed to return to their land, but others remained in Persia (and later Iran) into the 20th century. The picture becomes somewhat clearer during the period of Greek and Roman rule, when substantial Jewish communities developed in Alexandria, Egypt; Cyrene, Libya; Antioch (in present-day Turkey); Rome (in present-day Italy); and cities throughout Asia Minor. Jews in most of these communities spoke the dominant language, Greek, and they based their religion on a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint. Each of these Jewish communities seems to have developed its own distinct form of the Jewish religion, which differed from the religion of the leading rabbis in Palestine. Palestine was the name the Romans had officially given the province of Judea in the 2nd century.

Some Jews were quite comfortable living under the domination of the Hellenistic and Roman empires. Others deeply resented their domination by pagans or the lack of respect they received from the dominant culture. In Palestine and the diaspora the Jews revolted unsuccessfully against Roman rule. Simon Bar Kokhba, for example, led revolts in Jerusalem in the 2nd century that received support from Jews throughout the region. Before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in, many Jews throughout the diaspora had sent money to support the Temple, which seems to have served as a source of solidarity for Jews as a nation. After Temple was destroyed, the Jewish communities of the diaspora no longer had this unifying mission, and they had little in common other than the maintenance of a distinct Jewish identity.

The Jewish diaspora community that flourished best was in Babylonia. The Parthians, who ruled Babylonia and the rest of Mesopotamia until, granted Jews considerable autonomy, and Jewish economic and religious life responded favorably. The Jews in Babylonia experienced a brief period of persecution in the 3rd century, after a Persian dynasty known as the Sassanids defeated the Parthians. Babylonian Jewry soon regained basic freedoms, however, and this community continued to grow and flourish for another 1,000 years. The learning of rabbis prospered in Babylonian religious academies and found expression in commentaries on oral law and in interpretations of the Torah. The commentaries on oral law in Babylonia produced the Babylonian Talmud—the Hebrew and Aramaic text that served as the basis of Judaism. The rabbinic Judaism that had developed in

Babylonia was a further development of a form of Judaism that became dominant in Palestine in the 2nd century, due in large part to Roman recognition of rabbis as the religious and political leaders of the Jews.

The social and political situation of the Jews changed markedly in the 4th century, after Roman emperor Constantine got converted to Christianity. His conversion ushered in a process through which Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and Jews were considered subversive for their refusal to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah.

Islam, another monotheistic religion, arose in Arabia in the 7th century, and Islamic forces conquered much of the Byzantine Empire in the 7th and 8th centuries. For the most part Jews welcomed the change in rule. Although Jews also experienced religious and economic obstacles under Islam, conditions for them improved. The Islamic conquests extended from Babylonia to Egypt and included Palestine. For the first time in centuries the two major centers of Jewish life, Babylonia and Palestine, were under the same rulers. But the balance had shifted, and Babylonia had become the more significant cultural and intellectual center. From the 8th to the 12th century extraordinary cultural achievements took place in the Islamic world, and Jews, especially in Babylonia, participated in and benefited from those achievements.

From the 8th century to the late Middle Ages, culture remained largely stagnant and undistinguished in Christian Europe while flourishing in the

Islamic world. Beginning in the 8th century the kings of the Franks and the Holy Roman Emperors encouraged Jews to settle in Provence (now part of southern France) and the Rhineland (now part of Germany). Communities in Aix, Marseille, and elsewhere in Provence and in Mainz, Speyer, and other cities of the Rhineland became early centers of European Jewish life and retained their importance for centuries.

The encouragement of Jewish settlement resulted from an assumption that Jews had useful economic skills, especially as traders. As Jews neither owned land nor worked on the land as peasants for feudal masters, they depended directly on European rulers for protection. That dependence meant that rulers could safely entrust the Jews with economic privileges without any threat to their own power. The economic privileges heightened resentment that the European masses already felt toward Jews, a resentment rooted in religious difference. The arrangement did not lead to any sustained persecution of Jews for several centuries, however.

The situation of European Jews changed in 1096, the year of the first Crusade, a military expedition to take control of the Holy Land (Palestine) from Muslim rulers. As the Crusader armies gathered, they directed their religious hostility at Jewish communities of the Rhineland, massacring the people and destroying the settlements. Local authorities lacked the forces to stop the rampaging Crusaders. In some communities, the Jews preferred to commit collective suicide rather than fall into the hands of the mobs. The Crusades inaugurated a new era in the life of the Jews of Europe.

After the Crusades began in 1096 and aroused hostility toward Jews, surviving Jewish communities in central and northern Europe became increasingly isolated from the surrounding culture. Although Jews still exercised a fair degree of control over their religious and cultural affairs, their circumstances did not encourage thinking about much beyond their religious traditions. Jewish literature focused primarily on the Talmud. Scholars produced new and monumental commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud to make it widely known and understood among European Jews. In addition, after the Crusades mystical trends emerged among European Jews who turned inward and wished for more direct contact with the divine. The most important form of Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah, developed in Spain. Jewish poets also wrote elegies and dirges commemorating the sacrifices of the Jews who were killed in 1096. Jews in Germany developed their own language, which came to be known as Yiddish. Yiddish began as a dialect of the German language spoken at that time but branched off from it and became a distinct Jewish language, written in Hebrew letters.

By the end of the 12th century the Jews of Europe lived largely as peddlers and moneylenders. Their position as moneylenders generated further hostility toward Jews and played a role in a gradual expulsion of Jews from Western and central Europe. The Jews were expelled from England (after all debts to them were canceled) in 1290. They were driven from France in 1306 and, after some had been allowed back into France, again in 1394. The German lands of the Holy Roman Empire expelled Jews piecemeal throughout the 15th century.

Hostility toward European Jews intensified as a result of the Black Death, an epidemic of bubonic plague from 1347 to 1351 that wiped out as much as a third of Europe's population. Although the plague killed Jews as well, they made a ready scapegoat and were accused of causing the pestilence by poisoning the water in wells. In many regions Europeans responded by destroying or expelling Jewish communities. By the mid-15th century few Jews remained in west Europe, and many German lands had driven out their Jews as well.

Most of the Jews expelled from Western and central Europe in the 1300s and 1400s travelled eastward into Poland, where they established what became the largest European Jewish community up to that time. In the first centuries after their arrival in Poland, Jews largely escaped the violence and persecution they had experienced elsewhere in Europe. At that time Poland was the most ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse region of Europe.

The Jews in Spain entered a golden age in the 12th and 13th centuries, while Jews in the north experienced persecution. Only in Spain did a many-sided Jewish culture truly flourish in Europe.

The golden age of Jews in Spain did not last, however. During the 14th century Christian monastic orders became increasingly powerful in Spain and routinely preached against the Jews. The Black Death further incited the masses against the Jews. In 1391 intensive anti-Jewish preaching led to

attacks on many Jewish communities. To escape death many Jews accepted baptism and conversion to Christianity. Many others converted without overt coercion.

The large number of Jewish converts to Christianity set in motion a century-long process that culminated in the disappearance of Spain's remaining Jewish communities in 1492. Some of the converts became sincere Christians and successfully integrated into the dominant community. Other converts, although sincere, maintained relationships with relatives and friends who continued to practice some form of Judaism. The Spanish converts who continued to practice the Jewish religion, whether out of habit or commitment, were known as Marranos.

Problems arose when a number of the converts and their descendants became prominent members of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain and the government bureaucracy. The leaders of those institutions believed it essential to determine the sincerity of the so-called new Christians for the institutions' survival. In 1478 King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I introduced an Inquisition to Spain to inquire into the status of recent converts to Christianity, whether former Jews or former Muslims.

The Inquisition was not, as is often thought, an agency for the persecution of Jews; its sole responsibility was to determine whether newly baptized Christians had converted insincerely.

Meanwhile Portugal proved to be a short-term refuge because in 1497 King Manuel I decided to forcibly convert the Jews of Portugal to Christianity. However, because he did not immediately establish an Inquisition in Portugal, many converts continued to secretly conduct themselves as Jews as best they could. In time, the descendants of these Marranos openly returned to Judaism outside the Iberian Peninsula.

The expulsion from Spain and the conversions in Portugal brought to an end one of the oldest and richest Jewish communities. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain also marked the end of the wholesale expulsion of Jews from European countries, at least until the Nazi era of the 1940s. However, expulsions of Jews from major European cities continued to occur from time to time until the beginning of the 20th century.

Many changes occurred in Europe from the 16th to the 18th century. These changes influenced science, religion, philosophy, and industrial and economic life. They had an impact on Jewish life and thought as well. But first, countries in Western Europe had to readmit Jews.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Poland had the largest concentration of Jews in the world. Few or no Jews lived in most of the lands west of Poland, but this situation changed in the 17th century, when Jews began to migrate back to the German states and to eastern France. In 1654 England readmitted Jews. In addition, many of the Marranos, who secretly maintained some form of Jewish identity on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal),

were able to resume open commitments to Judaism in Holland, southern France, and the German city of Hamburg.

Many Marranos settled in Holland, especially in Amsterdam, which granted them freedom of worship and offered many economic opportunities. Holland entered an era of commercial prosperity upon gaining independence from Spain in 1648. In southern France, Marrano communities developed in the port cities of Bordeaux and Bayonne. Hamburg, another important trading center, became a haven for refugees from other parts of Europe and welcomed Jews, who became financiers, importers, and shipbuilders. As former Christians, the Marranos were the first Jews who had a broad general education and fluency in at least one European language. In many ways, they were the first modern Jews and a sign of the future, although they were too few in number to exercise much direct influence on Jews in other regions.

The 17th century was a period of greater intellectual openness and economic opportunity, and it had an enormous impact on all residents of the European continent. The scientific achievements, the reliance on scientific reasoning, and the exposure to non-European cultures led to a new respect for human rights during the 18th century, a period in European history known as the Age of Enlightenment.

Political shifts were slower in coming. Through almost whole of the 18th century, European Jews lacked the rights and legal protections of citizenship. By the end of the century, however, this situation required rethinking.

Enlightenment thinking had continued to spread among the elites of Europe, and the competitive environment of the Industrial Revolution made it increasingly costly to exclude anyone of talent.

In England, Holland, France, Prussia (now part of Germany), and Austria, the debate regarding the political status of Jews resounded among politicians and intellectuals. Some argued that Jews must change how they thought and acted before they could be granted equal civil rights. Others felt that Jews first needed both incentives and opportunity to change their ways. Jews had long been required to live in segregated quarters, or ghettos, and because of restrictions on their size and facilities, many of these ghettos became overcrowded slums. In addition, limitations on the trades Jews could engage in meant that many were poor peddlers. Their religion called for them to wear certain garments—for example, clothing with tzitzit (fringes) for men—that set them apart from non-Jews. Education was largely limited to study of holy books.

In the debates about equal rights, both sides agreed that Jews needed to become more European in language, appearance, and education in order to contribute to the larger society and benefit from interaction with it.

France was the first country to grant emancipation to Jews. Other European countries debated the issue, but none granted Jews emancipation in the 18th century. During the 19th century, however, grants of emancipation proliferated across Europe. By 1871, with Germany's emancipation of Jews, every

European country except Russia had emancipated its Jews. In all cases Jews were expected to abandon the ethnic component of their identity; to adopt the national language in place of Yiddish or Ladino (the language of Sephardic Jews); and to accept the country in which they resided, rather than Israel, as their homeland. Jews were to become one religious group among many in Europe.

A new version of Judaism, called Reform, developed alongside emancipation during the 19th century. It rejected those aspects of traditional Judaism seen as incompatible with the modern political and cultural situation of Jews. Reform Judaism quickly became the majority affiliation of Jews throughout Germany, and it drew Jews in other areas as well. The reformers of Judaism removed all prayers that called for the reestablishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and that referred to Jews as a nation. They insisted that many rituals of traditional Judaism no longer had relevance to the lives of modern Jews because they served to create divisions between Jews and others. They considered only the ethical components of Judaism obligatory and declared the other elements dispensable.

Predictably, the Reform challenge elicited a strong reaction from representatives of traditional Judaism, who came to see themselves as Orthodox Jews. The Orthodox rejected any change in Jewish religion, and many rejected the entire program of modernity, insisting that Jews distance themselves from Western culture and its centers of learning.

An important religious revival movement, known as Hasidism, had appeared in the region of Podolia (now in Ukraine) in the mid-1700s. Its followers were called Hasidim.

Although many people today associate Hasidism with the most traditional elements of Jewish life, it originally represented an important transformation of tradition. Seeking new ways of injecting religious meaning into Jewish life, Hasidism challenged the hierarchy of traditional values that elevated Talmudic study above all else and effectively excluded most men and all women. It insisted that many aspects of human endeavor offered opportunities for sanctifying life and achieving awareness of God's presence, from the religious activity of prayer to singing, dancing, eating, and working.

From the 15th century until the mid-18th century, the Jews of Europe were a culturally, religiously, and linguistically unified people. From 1750 to 1850, however, they fragmented into many religious groups and language clusters. By 1850 the majority of Jews in Eastern Europe still spoke Yiddish. Jews elsewhere spoke German, French, Hungarian, English, and increasingly, Polish and Russian. In 1750 almost all European Jews practiced traditional Judaism. By 1850 the majority of Jews in Western and central Europe did not, and Jews in Eastern Europe had become divided into Hasidim, opponents of Hasidism, and secularized (worldly) Jews, whose numbers were growing.

Traditional rabbinic culture remained vital and vigorous in Europe in the 18th century, but Jews also began to branch out into the European arts and

sciences, for the first time becoming important direct contributors to non-Jewish culture on a large scale. Similarly, Jewish philosophy addressed the challenges of European thought and the Enlightenment in a serious way for the first time; Jewish philosophers, such as Mendelssohn in Germany, wrote in European languages and wrestled with the apparent gulf between modern ideas and the Jewish textual tradition.

New political ideologies accompanied the emancipation of the Jews and the associated transformations of Jewish life during the 19th century. The ideology known as nationalism, based on a feeling of community among people with a shared culture, proved hostile to the integration of Jews into European life. Nationalists saw integration as contaminating the unique cultural heritage of their nation. Although the nationalists ultimately lost the battle against emancipation of the Jews, they did delay it considerably in many places.

After emancipation Jews began to gain prominence in many areas of cultural endeavor. The number of Jews in the universities and working in professional fields rose to levels out of proportion to their representation in the population. In some regions Jews achieved significant representation in national and local government. Jews also became successful businessmen and bankers. Family banking dynasties, such as the House of Rothschild, achieved fantastic wealth and power. For the advocates of emancipation, this success was for the good or at least harmless. For opponents of emancipation, these developments represented the realization of their worst fears.

In the 1870s hatred of Jews took a new form, called anti-Semitism. Coined in 1879, the word anti-Semitism described opposition to Jews on racial grounds. Anti-Semites asserted that Jews constituted a distinct race that embodied characteristics different from, and dangerous to, the dominant European group, which they called the Aryan race.

Racial anti-Semitism combined forces with nationalist resistance to Jews, leading to the emergence of political parties that campaigned on a program of depriving Jews of some or all of their civil rights. Such parties emerged in France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. Racial anti-Semitism made fewer inroads in Eastern Europe, but Russian nationalism was deeply hostile to Jews. Many Jews converted to Christianity to avoid being victimized by newly established quotas on Jews in the universities and professions.

The political issues of emancipation and the quest for religious reform dominated Jewish culture in the 19th century, but Jewish culture also flowered in other areas. Jews emerged as writers of secular literature, enriching English, French, and German literature with novels, short stories, poems, and essays. In Britain Benjamin Disraeli, who converted to Christianity, wrote popular novels before becoming prime minister. Heinrich Heine, who converted to Christianity in order to earn a law degree in Germany, became one of the best-loved German poets.

The 19th century ended with Jewish life in political turmoil in Europe and a Jewish community fragmented over religious and political views. No unified

response to the many challenges emerged, nor could it, given that European Jews were hopelessly divided regarding the central issues facing the Jewish community.

Jews faced unprecedented challenges in Europe as the 20th century began.

Few of the migrants to the United States embraced Zionism. Most Jews wished to become integrated into the American mainstream as quickly as possible. Many chose the professions—such as law and medicine—as the goal, with education, usually at public universities, as the means. Others became significant entrepreneurs—pioneers of the U.S. entertainment industries, for example. Although some migrants and their descendants remained mired in poverty, most made their way into the American middle class and enjoyed material and political comfort unprecedented in Jewish life up to that time. Some Jews expressed concern that they had achieved this comfort at the cost of their own cultural literacy.

In Europe, conditions for the Jews worsened during the early 20th century. Anti-Semitism remained a potent force, inflamed by the nationalism and patriotic passions that World War I (1914-1918) aroused.

The Great Depression of the 1930s destroyed the economic hopes of millions of people worldwide, leading to the search for a scapegoat. Many designated the Jews.

In Germany, the increased tensions caused many Jews to redouble their efforts to assimilate into the dominant culture. Other Jews returned to the Jewish community and committed themselves to greater Jewish learning.

In the USSR most forms of Jewish life experienced rapid decline in the face of government hostility. The entire structure of traditional Jewish life had almost disappeared within a decade of the 1917 revolution.

Poland had emerged from World War I as an independent state. Many of its Jewish communities remained intact, enlarged after the war by refugees from the USSR. Poland became the center of East European Jewish life during the period between the world wars, from 1918 to 1939. It bustled with Jews of every kind—secular and Hasidic, socialist and capitalist, liberal and conservative.

The rise of National Socialism (Nazism) in Germany forever changed the history of the Jews. Immediately after Hitler became German chancellor in 1933, the Nazi government set out to roll back the emancipation of Jews, depriving Jews of basic civil rights, denying them access to jobs, establishing boycotts of Jewish businesses, and purging the civil service and universities of Jews. These measures turned out to be a mere prelude to the destruction that followed during World War II.

The Nazi regime set its sights on reconquering territories that had once been under German domination in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic region.

Eventually the regime directed its ambitions toward conquest of all of Europe, and during the war it nearly succeeded: Much of Europe came under German occupation. The German occupying forces began the process of exterminating European Jews. The so-called final solution was the deportation of Jews to death camps known as Concentration Camp. The Nazis and their collaborators killed almost 6 million Jews, reducing the population of Jews in Europe (9.6 million before the war) by nearly two-thirds. They wiped out more than 90 percent of the 3 million Jews of Poland and killed similar percentages in the Baltic states.

The extermination of European Jews, known as the Holocaust, destroyed an entire culture. The Yiddish-speaking culture of Eastern Europe, known for its literature and theater, never recovered. In 1939 there were nearly 10 million speakers of Yiddish; in the year 2000 fewer than 100,000 remained outside Hasidic communities, and most were elderly. The Holocaust extinguished entire Hasidic communities, obliterated many of the great Talmudic academies, and killed many of the greatest writers of Yiddish literature. Although the Nazis did not succeed in killing all the Jews of Europe, they succeeded in destroying one of the most extraordinary Jewish subcultures ever produced.

The survivors of the Holocaust made their way to many countries after World War II. Most went to Palestine, where a Jewish community on the verge of statehood sought as many of the refugees as possible, especially the young and strong. A Jewish community had been growing steadily in Palestine after

the first Zionist settlements were established there in the 1880s. From the 1880s until World War II most of the Jews who migrated had moved elsewhere. But several bursts of immigration to Palestine, together with the migration of the Holocaust survivors, swelled the Jewish population in Palestine to more than 600,000 by 1947. Led by Russian-born David Ben-Gurion, Zionists pursued their dream of an independent Jewish state, despite strong opposition from Arabs living in and around Palestine.

In November 1947 the newly established United Nations voted to partition Palestine, creating a Jewish and an Arab state in 1948. (Palestine had been under British control after the ouster of the Ottoman Turks in 1917 and 1918.) The UN partition plan satisfied neither side, although the Zionist leaders accepted it, while the Arabs rejected it. Arabs had lived in Palestine for the 2,000 years of the Jewish diaspora. War was inevitable, and it began in May 1948, as soon as British forces departed and Ben-Gurion declared the independence of the state of Israel. Jewish forces prevailed in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 to 1949 and the state of Israel was established.

Most Jews viewed the establishment of modern Israel as a great event in Jewish history, although a small minority opposed its existence. To most it represented a place in which Jews would always be free from persecution. For some it also represented the fulfillment of ancient prophecies that the Jewish people would once again rule themselves in their own land

The various visions of Israel were soon tested. Jews from the Arab world made their way to Israel by the tens of thousands; many had been expelled from their homes in North Africa and the Middle East. Some 300,000 had arrived by 1951. Thousands also came from Iran (formerly Persia), where Jews had lived since the end of the Babylonian Captivity. The absorption of the Jews from Arab lands severely tested the state's ability to live up to its promise to accept all Jews. The state managed to absorb the refugees without being overwhelmed economically, but as more migrants arrived, the ongoing demand on resources created considerable tension that lingers to this day. Refugees have continued to arrive in Israel, most recently from Russia, bringing the population to nearly 6 million in the year 2000.¹

III

The brief history described above speaks volumes of Jews victories defeated by diaspora, dislocation, alienation, troubles, strife, hatred and persecution of which they are victims. The magnitude of holocaust that they faced still scares the readers and makes a layman awestruck. In literature—for instance, Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, and The Jew of Malta, to name just two of many---the Jews have had their place since time immemorial. But those were the third-party views on Jews. The Jews themselves produced great writers like Benjamin Disraeli, Heinrich Heine and Solomon Rabinovitz (writing in Yiddish), to name just a few of them.

Besides Esther David, Nissim Ezekiel, is perhaps the only Jew writer, rooted in Indian traditions. Both these writers' creative attempts are directed at a search for their true Jew identities, as their works reveal.

Esther David tries to strike a balance between her manifold identities either as a Jew or minority writer or a woman writer. All these tags tend to put her into some or the other kind of margin as perceived by the literary critics. Her works By the Sabarmati, Book of Esther and Book of Rachel are the extensions of her efforts in the novel The Walled City, and they interestingly reflect all the tags that may be attached to her writing, but at the same time it defies all such stipulations. She has co-authored India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-cycle. She is published in French and her work is included in the library of modern Jewish literature, Syracuse University Press, New York.

As proclaimed in the title itself, The Walled City, is set in the urban background of the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat running through the time slot of pre-independence to modern day post-independence India. The narrator-protagonist describes her Bene-Israel roots, history and surroundings in casually devised chapters. Every chapter carries forward the not so much of a story by discussing an issue or an acquaintance of the narrator. The success of the novel lies in its scattered incidents without any relevant and sustained thread of the story running through.

Beneath the simple looking surface of the story the author successfully propels many debates and issues. For instance, very ordinary reference to

Einstein in the opening page indicates authors groping for her Jewish roots and the later pages also speak of the same feelings. The fond memory of Einstein, a well-known Jew scientist, is beset by her fears about conflicting identities and the pulls of being mingled in the mainstream of the alien land. The worry of retaining one's own identity is evident, at the same time, the attractions of other culture are frowned upon thus in the following narration:

I go around the temple with my friend Subhadra and then, from the mandap, I look her god in the face. The white shell-eye with blood bursting at the corners scorns me. My feet stand frozen, like the dancers on the pillars; the fragrance of sandalwood paste spreads over the alcove and kindles strange desires. I peer into Subhadra's face, asking for a dot of kumkum. She looks at me questioningly and her hand remains suspended in time. The flame flickers in the brass thali and my forehead burns for the coolness of sandalwood paste.

For my mother Naomi, the bindi is an abyss. It is for her the valley of death, where she does not wish to tread. In her dreams, I drag her into the red circle with my defiant eyes. Her mother seems to call her, and Naomi cannot answer. A kumkum circle separates them.²

The next generation narrator is trying to strike a balance between conflicting pulls of her own culture and the other one belonging to Hindu way of life, while the fear and anxiety of the previous generation as represented in the character of Naomi, the narrator's mother, is also lent voice to in the second paragraph above. The narrator has her own reservations as expressed in the following metaphor: "I can smell the dying fragrance of the mango blossoms."³ In the same stretch she wants to be cocooned saying "I want to return to my mother's womb."⁴ Her acute fear of alienation makes her relinquish her own people and identity. She says, " I am ridden with guilt for the ways of my ancestors. I wish I had been born to Subhadra's mother. *I would have then been accepted*".(Italics mine)⁵ On the same page she further says:

I look at my image in the mirror. I am but a wisp of that memory and sometimes I question my Jewishness. My complexion is a deep brown like Subhadra's and my long plait is tied with red tassels. I could be her sister.⁶

Apprehensively the narrator defies the order of the cult and wears a bindi on her forehead. She narrates it thus, "Subhadra makes a perfect dot on my virginal forehead, and some of the kumkum dust falls in a thin line on the bridge of my nose."⁷ The defiance runs deeper when she wishes to play Holi and her Danieldada secretly supports her. Their Jewishness is not only intimidated by the Indian culture, but also by the advent of British in India. For Danieldada is always infatuated by the ways of the British. He dresses in that

style and eats with forks and knives, the ways unknown to the Indian society and culture. Of him the author writes: "In the photograph of his younger days, he looks every inch the pucca British officer in a well-tailored suit, sitting regally on an elaborately carved wooden chair."⁸ Even her father has a soft corner for the British ways. He would never miss Danieldada's company of evening drinks. The forbidden film-watching activity is also indulged with a gusto: "We love the glamour of Hindi cinema—the huge glittering posters of the stars, the handsome heroes brandishing swords, red-lipped heroines in tight bodices and flaring skirts, and the love songs with the bees sitting on flowers."⁹ At other place the narrator wants to indulge in the Indian costume, Ghaghra. She says, "...I also long for a ghghra and even think of asking Danieldada to help me get one."¹⁰

This anxiety ridden minority community of Jews, however, consciously makes efforts to assimilate themselves in the mainstream majority community. For instance the narrator's Granny insists: "...we should dress in Indian costumes, and that I would look perfect either as a Konkani fisherwoman from the scene of our shipwreck, or a 'cultured' Bengali lady."¹¹ They are aware that Konkani and Bengali are the mainstream and socially acceptable mode of being in the country of the majority. Simultaneously, they also know how well to behave during the communal tensions in the city. They decide to move out of the old city area, where communal riots between Hindus and Muslims become acute.¹² Ironically, the communal tensions take place only between a majority community of Hindus and minority Muslims. And the author seems to be well aware of the fact yet she dares not mention the reality. It is really bemusing to

note that she lacks in author-like integrity and courage necessary and evident in such places. If it is the case with author, so is it with the characters of her novel. The narrator says at one place, "He has decided to sell the house and move to a cosmopolitan housing colony. Possibly with Parsis and Christians as neighbours."¹³ Their selection of the Parsi and Christian neighbourhood as cosmopolitan one speaks of their apprehension, at the same time, and their half hearted attempts of assimilation. Many Jews are shown taking shelter in their foster country Israel. For instance, at one place the narrator seems to be lamenting the fact that, "Most of our relatives, including our Bombay cousins, have left for Israel."¹⁴

The remaining Jews are in a state of dilemma. They are not able take sides clearly. Their dilly-dallying makes them prone to many psychosomatic disorders as is evident in the spinsterhood of various characters in the story including the narrator herself. Their spinsterhood in the story is the result of fear of being derecognised by their own folks, and anxiety of possible non-acceptance by the 'other' community. The narrator's mother Naomi is uncannily cocooned and markedly inert. However, the narrator traces back the reasons for her inertia to have been born out of Naomi's father's ill treatment of her mother. But she is ill-at-ease when the narrator, her daughter, tries to ape her friend Subhadra who is a Hindu. She does not like her father celebrating Holi, a Hindu festival, and her daughter doing a kumkum dot on her forehead.

The very selection of the title of the novel is fraught with fear and anxiety for this dot like community in a huge country like India. They would not like to come out of the metaphorical walls they have created around themselves as this city already has. Perhaps they face alienation from the residents already dwelling in the place as Pratibha asks the narrator, "If you are not a Christian, a Parsi or a Muslim, what are you?"¹⁵ The persecution, it seems, still continues for them. At least in India, the community is on the verge of extinction as demographically the community is dwindling everyday. Granny desperately says, "We have to make concessions, otherwise our small community will disappear."¹⁶ The womenfolk of the novel are so obsessed with the fear of the city that "Together they make a wall around me as though they are guarding me against death."¹⁷

Yet the walls of this city are, perhaps, the replica of the walls of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem they so dearly adore. Sudhamahi Regunathan describes: "The wall, which is believed to be divine, has been receiving the prayers of devout Jews and others who have been making the pilgrimage for our 2500 years."¹⁸ The metaphoric walls of the city of Ahmedabad are thus no mean walls for the small population of Jews residing in the city. Within this very walled city of the title, which is vibrant with sights and sounds, breathe the three generations of women in an extended Jewish family. This very city affords them all sorts of calm and comfort besides a synagogue where they go on Friday evenings with Granny.¹⁹ The city pulsates with light and sprite on the pages of the novel otherwise. And therefore, the narrator fiercely says, "We never leave Ahmedabad. We never can."²⁰ That speaks of the author's

personal involvement with the city, as she has been living in the city for quite a long time.

Besides the experience of dwelling in the city of the author, there are many other traits traceable to her own life and the narrator is a sure alter-ego to her living experiences. For instance, she would describe flora and fauna in one place, which would match with her family background and its interests in Nature, and on the other she would delineate the art and literature which would reflect her own learning in the field. She writes: "Subhadra, her hand frozen in the mudra of applying a tilak, seems to have found a permanent place in the oblique sculptures moving in circles in the ceiling of my mind."²¹ At other place she says, "It make me think of Botticelli's paintings of Venus which I saw in one of the art books..."²² Interestingly, the narrator's father is being referred to as a bird-keeper which has a fine correlate with the author's father who was once a well-known curator of the Ahmedabad zoo.

The initial impression at the outset, though not a very strikingly feminist, the author tends to become, at times, inclined to explore the genre. She almost blames man's clay-feet attitude in these words, "Samuel miraculously improves when I visit him with Pratibha and Vatsala. I feel like all men he is fickle, and is now attracted to Vatsala. I wonder my Baghdadi Krishna is also mesmerising some blue eyed gopi, beyond the seven seas."²³ At times she clearly speaks her mind through such a dialogue, "But it is time we learnt to stand shoulder to shoulder with men and treat each other as individuals instead of differentiating between men and women."²⁴ The male characters

like the narrator's own father and her uncle Menachem are weakling as compared to the females like Aunt Jerusha, who decides to serve people as a doctor by remaining unmarried, and the narrator and her cousin Malkha, who dedicate their lives to the old by embracing spinsterhood.

Yet, before jumping to forming any opinion about her stand, a look at Malashri Lal's discourse on feminist writing would not be out of place. Quoting Elaine Showalter she distinguishes between two types of feminist criticism as one that is women as reader; and the other as women as writer. Woman as reader is consumer of the male produced literature whereas, woman as writer is producer of textual meaning, with the history and themes, genres and structures of literature.²⁵ A closer scrutiny of the novel in question will reveal that feminist discussion in India has more sociological references and their bearing on women's writing is not difficult to see. Thus Malkha and the narrator's decision of not marrying can be seen as an antithesis of the feminist ideals, because this decision is the outcome of other social compulsions, too. She explains,

Our aim is to keep them alive for when they die, our lives will become pointless...As for me, I do not wish to take a husband, because I am afraid to beget a daughter. According to our laws she would be Jewish and it would be torture for her and for me.²⁶

The feminist decision would have been a one of subversion.

The novel thus seems to have been written from the woman's point of view. However, one may not brand it as a feminist novel. Because among other issues it does not attempt to glorify this one. Of course, one may be tempted to call it a novel on the margin; firstly, because the predominant tone of the novel is that of women oriented and secondly, the very women involved as characters of the story belong to a minority community of Jews, trying to sound their voices to the so called centre.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

The Indian novel in English in the last two decades of the previous century, as discussed earlier, was marked by an unprecedented upsurge in fictional activities by a host of novelists with their relatively richer works, qualitatively and quantitatively. Among them Salman Rushdie led the path and those who followed him included Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amit Chowdhary, Shashi Tharoor, Shashi Deshpande, Bharti Mukherjee and Shobha De, to mention just a few of them. These novelists captured the international critical attention with their creative works marked by experimentation in themes, narrative techniques and language. The novelists of 80s and 90s, whose fictional endeavours exuded courage, confidence and conviction, defied all the complexes pertaining to theme, language and narrative technique, which plagued their earlier counterparts whose works were characterized by colonial hangover. However, their works provided engrossing reading and perhaps, the literary world would never be able to shrug off the contributions made by Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R K Narayan and Manohar Malgonkar among others.

The British rule ended transforming the country in a subcontinent by dividing it into two and still further. Within the country, that is India, the separatist politics of the British worked very well. The people of a country were rendered into majorities and minorities. Unlike politicians, the intelligentsia, the artists (especially, literary ones) and the laymen of the country felt the pangs of these divisive policies and reflected their angst through various means

available to them. The literary artists gave their voice to this on goings. This anguish, and at times fear and anxiety, paved the path for a new genre of literature, which may be termed as community literature.

The novel form belongs to masses, especially to the middle class milieu. It is peopled usually by, the oppressed ones. The stories of hero and oppressors require a different genre. But here the oppressed had a powerfully lucid medium to voice their torments. The layman, who remained in the margins till industrialisation, has now come in the centre. And further from the margin was the voice of minority communities, as is in the case of women writings, tribal literature etc.. Minorities in India still feel at odds with majorities for the venom that had been tactfully spread by the colonial masters. Therefore, the minorities stiffly resist and doubt every move to assimilate them in the mainstream. The post-independence Indian history is replete with the instances of such efforts.

However, the creative efforts of the writers belonging to minority communities create a huge corpus of such literature. Their attempts have acquired critical attention as well as that of the readers in general. This period is also marked by the emergence of a host of minority writers who strove to lend voice to the hopes, aspirations, fears and anxieties of their community in their fictional creations. These new generation minority writers, like Salman Rushdie, Rahi Masum Raza, and Sadat Hasan Manto among others represent a powerful Muslim minority community. Firdaus Kanga, Farrukh Dhondy, Boman Desai Rohinton Mistry and the like, as their works reveal, are much beholden to the

city of Bombay and the community of Parsis in their novels which exhibit these traits in ample measures. The city, in the works of these writers is treated in such a manner that it emerges, alongside their human hero, as a protagonist. Allan Sealy, Henry Derozio and Ruskin Bond are in a sort of minority to represent their community of Anglo-Indians, a tributary of Christian minority community, is like a negligible dot in the huge sprawls of India. And for the Jews, the most unfortunate and the smallest minority perhaps have but only one bard, Esther David, giving voice to their mind-set and musings. The works of these writers reflect a kind of community consciousness in small and large measures, and in the process the community in these works becomes central to their effort.

The representative novels selected here – Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children, Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey, I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama and Esther David's The Walled City – reveal a variety of moods and moments alongside the concerns of the community and respectively, they expose a world as perceived by the communities of Muslims, Parsis, Anglo-Indians and Jews.

From among these novels, Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children, besides many other issues, is a telling account of minority concerns. In this novel, Rushdie can adopt various roles; be it a historian or, a cinematographer or, a script writer or, a nationalist and an internationalist, but his primary concerns run parallel to those of his communities. Sinai family of the novel can be seen as the microcosmic unit of the large minority residing on the Indian soil. A fine

issue that surfaces from the study of his novels explains why all Rushdie's novels are set in the urban background. The urbanity seems to provide a kind of feeling of safety to this anxiety-ridden community of Muslims. But quite contrary to their stay at Bombay, the protagonist's family faces many communal clashes at Delhi, the would-be capital of secular India. It is here that they walk the tight rope of their communal anxiety, which is marked by its hatred towards the majority of Hindus and other smaller minorities.

A reader can easily perceive the bitterness between the communities of Hindus and the Muslims, borne out of clashes of centuries, is so fierce that the name of communities become swear words for the opposite parties. Moreover, the status of majority as enjoyed by the Hindus becomes the grave cause of contempt for Muslims. This feeling of deprivation is conspicuously exhibited by the inmates of the minority community, and the novel is full of such instances. The depression, caused by such dispossession renders the community in a state of being "fractured and fragmented" and the author also grows doubtful about his own identity, as his protagonist Saleem Sinai, fights the hallucinations about his own self's truth.

The technically perfect extravaganza, Midnight's Children, that heralded the age of post-modernist genre of novel writing in Indian English literature, has many accolades to its account. However, the characters of this novel considered from the above perspective, exhibit a kind of resistance, denial and disinclination towards the nation they live in. And the novel is, perhaps, a true replica of the man behind, the controversial Salman Rushdie.

Just as the city of Bombay becomes a place of solace to Muslims in Midnight's Children, Khodadad Building in Rohinton Mistry's Such A Long Journey, becomes the microcosm of the Parsi world and the city of Bombay also becomes the microcosm of multilingual and multicultural India. The novels selected for study here deal with the minority communities in particular and there are enough evidences of multilingual and multicultural character of the city as a community tries to define itself in terms of its relationships with other communities. However, the picture of Bombay and India that emerges in epitome in the novel is grim. The dirt, squalor, pollution, greed, violence, crime and almost all the vices inside the city approve of observation of Dr. Paymaster, Gustad's family doctor and also a Parsi, who considers the whole situation as "gangrenous". However, the novel does not fail in presenting a realistic picture of Bombay, which has a gentle side, too. The pictures of Crawford Market, Chor Bazaar and Nal Bazaar, the visits to the Tower of Silence, the Church of Mount Mary and the mosque Haaji Ali, the red-light districts, the paan shops and tea shops are living realities of the city and they also represent a human face of the otherwise grim picture. Thus, the physical city and the city of mind emerge prominently and take the shape of protagonist in the novel.

Similarly, in Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey Gustad and the inmates of the Khodadad Building find themselves more or less at ease and well-placed in the city and the country. Gustad's adventurous journey through life can be matched with that of Saleem Sinai's whose endeavours to grow are

almost similar. The post independence era exasperates Gustad and the community of the Parsis. The minority community perceives many threats embodied in the aggressive forces like Shiv Sena, and their rise causes fears, threat and anxiety among the members of the community. The Khodadad Building truly represents the whole Parsi world, their customs, their culture, the language, their hopes and fears and even their eccentricities and idiosyncrasies. But in its final resolution, the community of the Parsis emerges as much adhered and committed to the land of their fate unlike in the case of the characters of Midnight's Children.

Midnight's Children and Such a Long Journey are set in the background of the city of Bombay except a few excursions of Saleem Sinai and his family in Midnight's Children to other cities of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and of Gustad in Such a Long Journey to New Delhi. And there is a suggestion regarding their safety and security in the novels which seems to be ensured by the city of Bombay. The world outside Bombay is dangerous to them, as the communities perceive it, because many characters in both the novels, who belonged to these minority communities, die unnatural deaths when they go out of Bombay. Coincidentally, both the authors of these novels are born in Bombay and are much beholden to the city of their origins.

The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle is Allan Sealy's comic epic in prose of the Anglo-Indian community in India to which he belongs. For the background to this novel he draws upon his knowledge of Lucknow. A book that declares its debt to Laurence Sterne, it is often seen as inspired by G.V. Desani and

Salman Rushdie, using their mock-epic style, combining history with fantasy, the real with the imaginary. But history is changing India, and the Trotters with it. By the end their grandeur is fled, their properties flooded, their chateau turned into a hotel, the aunts and cousins and uncles scattered and clinging, but barely, to their Anglo-Indian identity. Sealy's characters are based on historical figures that shaped his community with a commitment to the land of their birth.

An Anglo-Indian character in the novel is shown hallucinating about an instant of stunned submission of utter helplessness, confusion, and joyful despair which can be easily matched to the fading glory of the community as perceived by many members of the community. The author is ruthless in presenting the community's gradual decline and degeneration. The realisation, that the English sneered at the Anglo-Indians and the Indians did not hide their amusement at the sight of a dark skinned woman in foreign dress, dawned upon them with the passage of time. The fall of the community – from that of aristocracy to meager menial and administrative works in railways, post, canal works and electricity plants among others – is dealt with severely yet deftly by the author. The community has clung to the legacy till date.

The high-brow mentality enjoyed so far gets a serious blow. And for Sealy, it is no mean achievement to present the details unsparingly. Sealy has thus lent his voice to the collective subliminal psyche through a powerful medium of a novel. The community here emerges as the protagonist whose alter ego

is presented in the seven generations of Trotters as an when they come and live their lives. The finest thing in Sealy is that his characters evolve and get transformed with the passage of time. In the final study, the novel reveals a deep rooted commitment to the land of their belonging, with all its failings and forte as agreeable as to any native it would have been. It is very clear that Anglo-Indians, as they are, much beholden to their mothers than to the superiority and arrogance of their father's heritage and hence, to most of them exist a deeper bond in the faiths and philosophies of the country of their fate.

Diaspora and dislocation, these two terms best describe the Jew history. The people around the globe are well aware of the holocaust of the second world-war. Esther David, rooted in Indian traditions, tries to strike a balance between her manifold identities either as a Jew or a minority writer or a woman writer through her novel The Walled City. All these tags tend to put her into some or the other kind of margin as perceived by the literary critics. Her novel interestingly reflects all the tags that may be attached to her writing, but at the same time it defies all such stipulations.

Beneath the simple looking surface of the story the author successfully propels many debates and issues. For instance, very ordinary reference to Einstein in the opening page indicates author's groping for her Jewish roots and the later pages also speak of the same feelings. The fond memory of Einstein, a well-known Jew scientist, is beset by her fears about conflicting identities and the pulls of being mingled in the mainstream of the alien land. The worry of retaining one's own identity is evident, at the same time; the

attractions of other culture are frowned upon, too. The narrator's acute fear of alienation makes her relinquish her own people and identity. This anxiety ridden minority community of Jews, however, consciously makes efforts to assimilate themselves in the mainstream majority community. However, the narrator's mother Naomi is uncannily cocooned and markedly inert, and others' tension is so acute that many fled this country and still others remained unmarried to safeguard their unique Jewish identity. Here, perhaps, what operates is the deep rooted fear of being derecognised by their own folks, and anxiety of possible non-acceptance by the 'other' community.

The initial impression at the outset, though not a very strikingly feminist, the author tends to become, at times, inclined to explore the genre. The novel thus seems to have been written from the woman's point of view. However, one may not brand it as a feminist novel as it does not attempt to glorify this one. Of course, one may be tempted to call it a novel on the margin; firstly, because the predominant tone of the novel is that of being women oriented and secondly, the very women involved as characters of the story belong to a minority community of Jews, trying to sound their voices to the so called centre.

II

The various similarities and the treatment of the subject matter dealing with the minority communities in these works make them the novels of interface. All the novels discussed here are perhaps, the best known attempts by the

respective authors, and they are set in urban background of the cities like Bombay, Luknow and Ahmedabad among others. Moreover, Salman Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry from among the four authors are expatriates living in the different cities of the world. Thus distanced geographically from their foster-country and city of Bombay, their country and their communities which are passing through a phase of severe identity-crisis, these writers are pulled to them again and again and they try to revive the lost glory of their religion. The community caught in the crisis of identity feels a sense of loss and alienation resulting into anxiety, frustration and depression. These novels try to give voice to these feelings of the community. Nevertheless, their community consciousness does not clash with their national consciousness as is evident in the novels. Whereas, Allan Sealy and Esther David have carried out their creative endeavours from their own land of birth. Their sensibility is much more rooted in the land of their fate and their responses to the stimuli are focused in the traditions of the land. Rushdie and Mistry, on the other hand, are good entertainers like Sealy, carry a touch of western influence in their works.

The interactions within the minority communities also make for good study as is evident in all these novels. For instance, Sealy's characters, selected from the cross-sections of the society, always vie for their master Jusitn's favours. They would go to any extent in debasing the other by blaming their birth in cutting edge competition, and the result is mixed progeny of the once Great Trotter. The treatment of such issues however is not very serious as it amounts to a kind of grave tension in Rushdie's Midnight's Children.

Rushdie's characters do not tolerate a Hindu Lifafadas and Anglo-Indian ayah Mary Pereira in and around their household. However, Rushdie rescues them from the strife, though, perhaps, as a saving grace. Similarly, Mistry uses a character conglomerate to make his story interesting. But his characters breathe the air of true cosmopolitan culture and therefore, Gustad, the protagonist, has the wall of Khodadad Building painted with the pictures of gods from all religions and faiths. On the other hand, the inter-religious reverence is least talked of in the novel The Walled City by Esther David. She names a few Hindu and Muslim characters in her novel and shows much interest in the Hindu way of life. Yet she fails to exhibit any sort of conviction of inter-faith trust among her characters. In fact, the Jews in her novel feel safer in the areas where other minorities live in the city of Ahmedabad.

The minority communities that emerge, from the novels Midnight's Children, Such a Long Journey, The Trotter-Nama and The Walled City are, however, quintessentially unique and bear relevance to their faiths. Of course, the creative concerns of the respective writers talk of polarisation, fear, suspicion and reduced interaction among themselves and others, they do not advocate any such feeling. And even while entertaining readers; these writers aim at respecting multiplicity and plurality of this country, India. In rendering the communities articulate in their works these writers have taken fiction close to the fact. Their authentic vision makes the whole phenomenon convincing, and the minority communities truly emerge as the protagonist of all these novels which consequently leads one to conclude that there does exist "Minority

Aesthetics”, the coinage which may soon get recognition in the canons of, at least, Indian English Literature.

The Indian novel in English has come of age and is steadily progressing towards carving a place of eminence for itself in the annals of literature as is evident from the achievements of native writers writing in English, especially during these last 3-4 decades. With their creative endeavours these minority writers Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, I. Allan Sealy and Esther David, among others, like their other counterparts who have had their fair share in it, and in the process they have added to the emerging body of literature which may be termed as community-literature. The minority communities, as they are exposed in the words of these novelists, emerge as protagonists in their works which present them in their diverse hues - ugly and beautiful as well - that no account of the communities in the books of history and religions can match them. Thus the case under the present humble examination can not remain far from acknowledging the fact that these works contribute uniquely to the emerging trend of the community-novel as they do in case of Indian novel in English and at the same time add significantly to the distinction and position of eminence of their creators also for doing so.

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