

Mapping the Parsi Terrain: A Critique of Parsi English Fiction

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Abstract

The followers of Prophet Zarathustra are known as Parsis. Originally they were the inhabitants of Hormuz on the Persian Gulf in ancient Persia, the topography which falls in the territory of today's Iraq and Iran. The word Parsi is derived from the Pars region and now falls within the geographical territory of Iran which is the original homeland of the Parsis. This is one of the oldest religions in the world with a living history of about three thousand years. In the literary arena, the Parsi writers have produced a significant corpus that forms an important constituent in the Indian literature in English. Parsi writers preferred novels they made quick progress in the post-independence period. Especially the last two decades of the twentieth century have been particularly prolific in the field of Parsi fiction. A large number of Parsi novelists have reigned in the arena of fiction. They may well be described as expatriate writers. The writers, despite being expatriates, write about Indian-Parsi life in Bombay, which has always been the epicentre of Parsi culture. The time has come to re-read and evaluate these Parsi novelists with more and more critical acumen in the post-colonial academic context. This article analyses in depth the contributions of these Parsi novelists to Indian English fiction as well as to world literature. The fictional world of these Parsi novelists serves as a vital area of post-colonial literature study.

Keywords: Parsi, Indian English literature, Post-independence, Parsi fiction, Expatriate, Diaspora, Post-colonial.

The Parsis are generally known as the followers of Prophet Zarathustra. Originally they were the inhabitants of Hormuz on the Persian Gulf in ancient Persia, a geographical location that falls in the territory of today's central Asia comprising Iraq and Iran. The name Parsi is derived from the Pars region and now falls within the geographical territory of Iran. This is the original homeland of the Persian people. Mary Boyce in her celebrated book *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* claimed that the Parsi religion is one of the oldest religions in the world and it has a living history of about three thousand years. Parsis, as it is told in the seventeenth-century chronicle of *Kissah-i-Sanjan*, came first to India sometime between 785 A. D. and 936 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. They first settled their footprints at Diu in Kathiawar but soon moved to Sanjan, a place in south Gujarat, where they remained for about eight hundred years as a small agricultural community. The

Hindu King Jadav Rana welcomed them and permitted them to stay by providing some conditions such as explaining Parsi religion to the King by the Parsi high priest, adopting and using Gujarati as their language, the Parsi women should accommodate themselves in Indian robe, sari instead of traditional Iranian garments, all the male members should hand over all their weapons to the king, they should venerate the cow as a sacred animal-like Hindus and last of all the marriage of Parsis should be performed only after sunset. The Parsis being a law-abiding people have faithfully followed these codes of conduct laid down by the king as well as retained their specific identity through their rituals and customs and as a living and vibrating community. Apart from business and industry, the Parsis became undoubtedly more successful in their contributions to literature. The Parsi writers have produced a significant corpus of literary writing, which now forms an important constituent in the Indian literature in English. In the early phase, Parsi writers showed a preference for poetic forms. Their poetry covers a wide range of subjects, including poverty, crime, corruption, disease and death, riots and curfew, love and self-betrayal, etc.

In prose fiction, there was very little Parsi fiction in the pre-independence era. The first Parsi poet Behram Malbari sketched twenty-six short writings in a collection *Gujarat and Gujaratis* (1882) and *The Indian Eye on English Life* (1895). These are pseudo-fictional. Cornelia Sorabji published three volumes of short stories *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Sun Babies* (1904), and *Between the Twilights* (1908). She also wrote two autobiographical books *India Calling* (1935) and *India Recalled* (1936). In these novels the identity of the ethno-religious minority in India has not properly been highlighted. D. F. Karaka is the most important novelist of this phase who published three novels between 1940 and 1944. His first novel, *Just Flesh* (1940) deals with ideological conflicts between two generations of Englishmen through the clash between a conservative father and his socialist son. Set in Bombay, *There Lay the City* (1942) delineates the impact of World War II on the lives of the city dwellers. *We Never Die* (1944) is a political novel, which deals with the subject of the struggle for independence in a small village in northern India. Besides Karaka, Kaikhusrau Edalji Ghamat's *My Friend, the Barrister* (1908), Ardeshir F. J. Chinoy and Dinbai A. J. Chinoy's *Pootli, A Story of Life in Bombay* (1915), and D. M. Gorwala's Saarda the *Tale of a Rajput Maid* (1931) are some of the important novels published during this period.

The Parsi novel in English made quick progress in terms of both quality and quantity in the post-independence period. Perin Bharucha's *The Fire Worshippers* (1968) is the first significant work of fiction of this period. The novel has greater historical and sociological value than literary interest. It also gives a comprehensive account of Parsi life and culture. The novel deals with the issues of identity and inter-caste marriage. The dilemma of interfaith marriages was first tackled by Perin Bharucha in her novel *The Fire Worshippers* (1968). Bharucha's novel, using the fictional discourse, provides details of

the class-based structure of Parsi society in Bombay. It also shows certain mental fixations in the community. One of the reasons for Pestonji's objections to the marriage is that such mixed marriages will herald the disintegration of the community. The last two decades of the twentieth century have been particularly fruitful in the field of Parsi fiction. A large number of Parsi novelists – Boman Desai, Firdaus Kanga, Bapsi Sidhwa, Farrukh Dhondy, Saros Cowasjee, Farishta Murzban Dinshaw, Dina Mehta, Nargis Dalal, Ardashir Vakil, Cyrus Mistry, Thrity Umrigar, Rohinton Mistry, most of them settled abroad, have published their novels during this period. They may well be described as expatriate writers. The writers, despite being expatriates, write about Indian-Parsi life in Bombay, which has always been the epicentre of Parsi culture.

Boman Desai is an Indian expatriate writer with a Parsi background. He was honoured for the short story *Under the Moon* and another short story *A Fine Madness*. Boman Desai's first novel, *The Memory of Elephants* (1988) is an ambitious attempt to recapture the history of the Parsis in a fantasy format by using science-fiction narrative causation. It concerns the question of Parsi identity- all the identities like religion, ethnicity, history, and consciousness of elite status are dealt with. His second novel *Asylum, USA* narrates a naive Indian immigrant's experience after his deportation; and his third novel *A Woman Madly in Love* deals with the theme of a love relationship between Farida Cooper, an elderly and betrayed woman, and a younger boy only half of her age named Darius, with the treachery of her Joycean scholar husband as a third strand. All deal with the Parsi community at large. In his novels, he mostly deals with the themes of nostalgia, of a world, lost or altered, the crucial element of memory, and the concept of trans-nationalism. The key ingredients which make Boman Desai's novels successful are yearning, love, sadness, friendship, and marriage. An interesting literary device that Boman Desai employs in this fiction is the use of the epistolary technique. *Trio* is an epic portrayal of the 19th Century Germany through the lives of its musicians, primarily the Schumanns and Brahms, but also Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Liszt, and Wagner among others when their lives intersect those of the trio. This is primarily a narrative of love, insanity, suicide, revolution, war, politics, and above all music. Its sequel *Trio 2* handles the story of *Trio*, bringing it to a close with the deaths of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms in 1896 and 1897, respectively.

Firdaus Kanga, another expatriate Indian novelist in English and performer, was born in a middle-class Parsi family with brittle bone disease. He presently lives in London. He spent most of his life in Bombay, the city in which he was educated and grew up, and aspects of which are wonderfully evoked in his semi-autobiographical novel *Trying to Grow*. Brit, the hero of the novel, is bright, spiky, opinionated, and selfish with scathing wit. This novel explores disability, sexuality, and culture as its main themes. Kanga's novel broke several taboos of traditional Hindu culture and portrays disabled people with a

healthy, rich sexual urge. The protagonist of the novel, Brit, prefers the Kama Sutra to Shakespeare and does not allow gender or disability to come in between his desire for sex and love. Kanga publicly rejected Hindu notions of Karma which emphasise the atonement and suffering of human beings for their sins committed in the previous life. Kanga was one of the first public figures in India who stood up in support of the views and demands of gay people, celebrating sexuality, in a society that still criminalises and prosecutes homosexuality. In 1997, this novel was turned into an award-winning film *Sixth Happiness* directed by Waris Hussein, for which he not only wrote the screenplay but also played the leading role of Brit Kotwal, a boy born with brittle bones who never grows taller than four feet. The movie projects the painful experience of a physically handicapped boy, Brit Kotwal, in trying to grow into adulthood. Kanga has also presented several documentaries on the themes of disability, such as *Double the Trouble*, and *Twice the Fun*, a provocative documentary drama that explored sex between gay men and lesbians who have disabilities.

Bapsi Sidhwa, presently living in Houston, Texas, is Pakistan's most celebrated diasporic writer. She was born in a Parsi family in Karachi and migrated shortly thereafter to Lahore. Later on, at the time of India's partition, this family chooses to remain in Pakistan. She witnessed the bloody partition of the Indian subcontinent as a young child in 1947. She has produced four novels in English – *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) (US edition *Cracking India*) (1991), and *An American Brat* (1993), that reflect her personal experience of the Indian subcontinent's Partition, abuse against women, immigration to the US, and membership in the Parsi-Zoroastrian community. Sidhwa had no real literary ancestor of the English language in Pakistan, nor did Pakistani English writing offer any literary precedent to the coarse humour of her formidable novel *The Crow Eaters*. This exuberant novel, full of rollicking humour, paints a vivid picture of life in the Parsi community. Sidhwa's most unique asset as a storyteller is her comic imagination. In that sense, *The Crow Eaters* is a triumph in revelry. Sidhwa's deft pen misses very little as she creates an array of delightful and idiosyncratic Parsis. The result is a gallery of vivid, lovable rogues, with the pragmatic hero, Freddie Junglewalla, and his mother-in-law, the riotous Jerbanoo.

The Pakistani Bride tells the story of a youth Qasim who leaves his tribal village in the remote Himalayas for the lower plains. He was caught up in the strife surrounding the creation of Pakistan; he takes an orphaned girl for his daughter and brings her to the lively but decadent city of Lahore. Bapsi Sidhwa's acclaimed novel is a robust, richly plotted story of colliding worlds straddled by a spirited girl for whom escape may not be an option. There is a Kiplingesque quality to Sidhwa's narrative, the congenital ability to make one feel the ambiance of the locale: the stifling heat, the poverty, and yet the

warmth which exists between families. There is an innocent eroticism in *The Pakistani Bride* which is both touching and illustrative when the child is brought to the wedding bed.

In her third novel, *Ice-Candy-Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa delicately threads the story of an eight-year-old precocious girl named Lenny with the din of violence ready to crash around her world as the Partition moves from political planning into reality. The story is told in the present tense as the events unfold before the young girl's eyes, the child describes the brutal transition with chilling veracity. Like Sidhwa, Lenny is kept out of school because she is stricken with polio. She spends her days with an Ayah and a large group of admirers that Ayah draws. It is in the company of these working-class characters that Lenny learns about religious differences, religious intolerance, and the blossoming genocidal strife on the eve of Partition. Lenny begins to identify the differences between the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs engaging in political arguments all around her. Sidhwa's fourth novel *An American Brat* explores issues of migration to the West and cultural differences between Pakistan and America. The plot revolves around the misadventures and metamorphosis of a young Parsi girl, Feroza Ginwalla. This pampered, over-protected, and privileged young girl of sixteen from Lahore is sent to America by her parents, who are troubled by the fundamentalism overtaking Pakistan as well as their growing daughter. This delightful coming-of-age novel is both remarkably funny and a remarkably acute portrayal of America as seen through the eyes of a perceptive young immigrant.

Farrukh Dhondy, a novelist, short-story writer, screenplay writer, and journalist was born in Poona in 1944 in a Parsi family. For over thirteen years, Dhondy worked as Commissioning Editor, Multimedia Programming, Dhondy worked as a freelance journalist and writer. In 2002, he joined a film company based in India and has written scripts for the films like *The Rising*, *Red Mercury*, *Take Three Girls*, *Exitz*, and *American Day Light*. As a writer, Dhondy thinks his task is one of self-criticism and deep probing and not simply self-congratulation. Dhondy feels his role as a catalyst to help bring about the assimilation of and understanding between varied and highly divergent groups and traditions (Mathai 11). Dhondy's first three books of older adolescents' fiction, *East End at Your Feet* (1976), *Come to Mecca* (1978) and *Siege of Babylon* (1978) were published in quick succession. *East End at Your Feet* (1976) is a collection of six stories about London teenagers, Asian and White. *Come to Mecca and other Stories* (1978) is another collection of delicate and witty short stories. Dhondy's next work *Siege of Babylon* (1978) is a real tale about the Spaghetti House Siege: after a failed robbery, black youths hold four hostages and consider the political and personal alternatives open to them. His next book, *Poona Company* (1980) is a series of nine loosely connected short stories that together constitute a lively depiction of an Indian boyhood and early youth in the town of Poona. After that, another collection of short stories *Trip Trap* (1982) came from his pen which mainly targeted, teenagers and adults. Dhondy's

most ambitious and first novel is *Bombay Duck* (1990). The plot of the novel unfolds a strange world and seething subculture of actors, actresses and shopkeepers, politicians, agriculturists, gunrunners, and bearded boys. Dhondy also provides an inside look at the Asian teenager, a species distinctly different from the home-grown version. Dhondy has also published two volumes of stage plays – *The Bride and Other Plays*, and *Vigilantes*, and contributed to writing the scenarios of several TV serials and screenplays.

Another Parsi writer Saros Cowasjee was born in 1931, in Secunderabad, Deccan, India, the son of Dara and Meher (Bharucha) Cowasjee. He migrated to Canada in 1963 to serve the faculty of English at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Cowasjee disclaims any particular authorial ‘nationality’. Being a Canadian citizen he is more widely read in Britain and India than in Canada. In an interview with O. P. Mathur, Cowasjee says that:

“to be noticed in Canada one has to be aggressive salesman-as aggressive as a Jehovah Witness, and as prepared to take insults and get the door shut in one’s face” (Cowasjee)

Cowasjee’s writings mainly consist of three novels, *Goodbye to Elsa* (1974), *Suffer Little Children* (1982), and *My Dear Maura* (2005), and some books of short stories, *Stories and Sketches* (1970), *Nude Therapy and Other Stories* (1978) and *Stories from the Raj* (1983) His latest is a collection of his short fiction entitled *Strange Meeting and Other Stories* (2006). Cowasjee’s other novel *Suffer Little Children* (1982) focuses on the feminist movement of the 1970s. As a lover of Maura, the ‘liberated’ housewife whom Tristan meets at Julien Wolfe’s nude therapy marathon, he agrees to support her feminist principles sexually, financially, and morally. *My Dear Maura* (2005) is a hilarious novel and is a worthy sequel to the author’s highly acclaimed *Goodbye to Elsa*. Cowasjee’s short stories also embody a long-term diasporic experience in Canada, Britain, and India. Even ‘at home’ his narrators are painfully conscious of exile. Most of the stories take place in an anxious, threatening India of the 1940s or 1950s. Cowasjee’s novels focus on the alienation and anguish of the modern man.

Dina Mehta is an Indian writer belonging to the Parsi community. Unlike other Parsi novelists, she is not an expatriate writer rather she falls into the category of stay-at-home writers. Life in the Indian sub-continent with the essence of ethnic Parsi identity is reflected in her works. She is a prominent novelist. There are several short stories to her credit along with plays and a novel entitled *And Some Take a Lover* (1992). The novel *And Some Take a Lover* centres on a proposed inter-caste marriage between a sophisticated Parsi girl by the name of Miss Roshni Wadia and the simple Gandhian boy Sudhir, for whom the public duty is of greater importance than any other thing in life. Political events in India like the Quit India Movement and the Naval Rating Mutiny in 1946 constitute the background for all human relationships in the novel of Dina Mehta. Typical Parsi paradoxes, identity crises, apprehensions, and

political debates are brought in by Dina Mehta in her first novel *And Some Take a Lover*. It is regarding the conflicting loyalties of a Parsi family which is meshed up in the political agitation of the Quit India Movement. In her other novel *Mila in Love* Dina, Mehta departs from the central concern of the conflicting loyalties of a Parsi family as shown in *And Some Take a Lover*. Mehta describes the sexual subjugation of Mila's father and his concubine-cum-secretary in a Juhu shack. Here in this second novel, the Parsi element is now subordinated to the theme of divided subjectivity, the experience of fragmentation, and a quest for wholeness. It operates between the two alternative realities of the desires and ambitions in the life of the protagonist Mila and the thoughts and feelings of a particular time and locale. Mehta, like other Parsi writers, has the clear notion of the fact that the community of the Parsis is disappearing rapidly. So she tries to preserve the Parsi ethnicity through her work. Dina Mehta is famous for her play *The Brides Are Not for Burning*, and her *The Other Woman and Other Stories* is a major accomplishment in Indian short stories in English.

Ardashir Vakil was born in Bombay He is a Parsi novelist whose first novel, *Beach Boy* (1998) is written in the same tune as Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. An expressively autobiographical work of fiction, it centres upon Cyrus Readymoney, a privileged Parsi boy, and his formative years at a strict Jesuit school during a period of family turmoil and crisis. This magical tale of a young Parsi lad has two priorities in life-film and food. Like Joyce's modernist classic, it deals with themes of sexual awakening, religion, and cultural alienation. It was set in the early 1970s and is reminiscent of Nabokov's Russia in terms of its reflective portrait of India. Praised by some, criticised by others, for its transient preoccupation with the superficial and mundane surfaces of urban life – the novel nevertheless seems to faithfully capture the thought processes, and cinematic imagination, of an adolescent boy. Cyrus Readymoney is like most other eight-year-old boys. His second novel, *One Day* (2003) is set in North London. Vakil's second novel has similar formal impressionism to it that is signalled in the very title: *One Day* (2003). Covering twenty-four hours in the life of Ben Tennyson, the novel inhabits the same social milieu of the well-to-do and the wealthy but is written from an adult perspective. This again gives an intrusion of Vakil's autobiographical element in the novel. The narrative is largely composed of interior monologues and stream of consciousness moments that, along with *Beach Boy*, recall a modernist literary tradition. Vakil emphasises the isolation of his protagonists by delving into their thought processes. One day is equated to a lifetime. It's as if everything important that's ever happened to one finds its way into some recess of the brain. The line feels like a manifesto for a method that packs histories into moments. *One Day* is a powerful study of character and cohabitation of the ties of memory and friendship that hold people together or threaten to drive them apart. This fact is confirmed in Vakil's short stories which include 'Who Else Can I Talk To?'(1998); 'The Whole Biryani' (1999) and 'Eva' (2006). His story, 'Soft Boy', was broadcast on Radio in 2004.

Emotional memory and the understanding of culture are the two most cherished values in the hands of another Parsi novelist Thrity Umrigar. She is a Parsi woman novelist who was born and brought up in Bombay and currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio. She has 'an added advantage in keeping up the rhythms of Indian feminine psyche that manifest better the wisdom of the human heart in the light of her Zoroastrian faith.' (Dasan 28) She started her career as a journalist, now an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing. Thrity Umrigar grew up writing poetry as a child, short stories as a teenager, and novels as an adult. Umrigar's fictional oeuvre merged the compassionate Parsi worldview with her elegant style. She unearths 'with a huge heart that understands how scars in life occur and what pain or sorrow means as a life-long memory.' (Dasan 28) The India she narrates is the India of her imagination which is full of emotions and refined sensibilities of the Parsi culture and aesthetics. Unlike Mistry, it has little to do with Indian polity.

Her debut novel *Bombay Time* (2001) focuses on an assemblage of middle-class Parsi families in an apartment named Wadia Baug. Her second novel *The Space Between Us* (2006) is another powerful novel that deals with the question of gender and class within the memories of the past and present of Serabai and Bhima. 'Umrigar's projection of India is essentially a feminine diasporic expression of the emotional memory of her inner consciousness. Her other writings are *First Darling of the Morning: Selected Memories of an Indian Childhood* (2004), *If Today Be Sweet* (2007), *The Weight of Heaven* (2009) and *The World We Found* (2012).

Mehar Pestonji was born in a Parsi family in Bombay. Her constant companion was economic hardship which she overtook. She was actively involved in slum dwellers' struggle for housing rights, children's rights, and anti communalism campaigns. As a social worker and philanthropist, she felt the pulse of the social system and put these issues into her fiction to build a life story of a ten-year-old street child which she titled *Sadak Chhap*. The backdrop of the novel is the Mumbai slums and streets, with its heart-rendering bitter and biting realities. In a way, 'Mehar Pestonji has highlighted a bitter fact that the life of street children seems to be so queer that they allow any positive, serene and constructive change to occur in them. Rather they seem to turn their helplessness into a virtue by trying to enjoy the street life with least concern for their own future' (More 218).

Cyrus Mistry is an Indian author and playwright from Mumbai. He is the brother of celebrated Parsi novelist Rohinton Mistry. He began writing as a playwright in his teens, but also worked as a journalist and short-story writer. His first short story was published in 1979. He has also written short film scripts and several documentaries. One of his short stories, "Percy", was made into a Gujarati feature film *Percy* in 1989; he wrote the screenplay and dialogue. Cyrus Mistry's first novel was *The Radiance of*

Ashes (2005) which was shortlisted for the Crossword Prize in 2005. His second novel was *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* (2013), which tells the story of the Khandhias within the Parsi community who carry the bodies of the dead to the Tower of Silence where they are kept for vultures to be eaten. His play *Doongaji House* is regarded as a seminal work in contemporary Indian theatre in English for which he won Sultan Padamsee Award.

Last but not the least, the most stalwart novelist Rohinton Mistry comes in the long list of post-independent Indian Parsi novelists. Rohinton Mistry was born in Bombay in 1952 as a member of the Parsi religious community in India. In 1975 he moved to Canada, where he lived in Toronto since then. He wrote his first book, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) with eleven stories. This collection of short stories gives portraits of the lives of the inhabitants of a fictitious apartment Firozsha Baag in Bombay. The stories describe the characteristics of middle-class Parsi life and show the characters' struggle between modernity and tradition. The characters represent Parsis at odds with their religious beliefs and the larger community, and also convey the common human issues of spiritual questions, alienation and fear of death, family problems, and economic hardships. The stories of Firozsha Baag might well be read as Mistry's renegotiations of his relationship with Parsi culture.

Mistry's first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), creates a vivid picture of Indian family life and culture and tells a story rich in subject matter, characterization, and symbolism. The novel is set in 1971 Bombay when India and Pakistan went to war over the liberation of East Pakistan or Bangladesh. This is the political context for the unfortunate events that disrupt the personal lives of the kind-hearted Parsi man, Gustad Noble, and his family and friends. Mistry with his skills parallels public events, involving Indira Gandhi, with the novel's principal characters. The story's private dimensions are not merely weighed against political circumstances. They are revealed as the personal manifestations of the same reality, as the lives of his characters become entangled in the potent corruption and incompetence of the government. Mistry's second novel, *A Fine Balance* (1995), is set in India in 1975, during Indira Gandhi's declared State of Emergency. The novel focuses on four disenfranchised characters-Dina, a Parsi woman who tries to maintain her financial independence from her family; Maneck, a Parsi student sent to the city by his parents to study engineering, against his inclinations; and Ishvar and Omprakash, two untouchable Hindu leatherworker-cum-tailors who try to escape the caste system by moving to the city. Adversity brings this unlikely group together under Dina's roof, and the same hardship eventually tears them apart. However, the bonds of love that grow while they rely on each other for survival endure when the combined brutality of the caste, economic, and political systems separates them. Though the novel ends tragically, it also ends by celebrating the basic humanity of characters who can get beyond cultural constraints to imagine and create new communities outside established boundaries. Mistry's next

and the last published novel, *Family Matters* (2002) describes the members of a blended family who are trying to cope with the failing health of their father. In the meantime, the father relives his past, a past beset by disillusioned love and crushing social strictures. Mistry's fiction deploys a precise writing style and sensitivity to the humour and horror of life to communicate deep compassion for human relationships. His writing concerns people who try to find self-worth while dealing with painful family dynamics and difficult social and political constraints. His works also address immigration, especially immigration to Canada, and the difficulty immigrants face in a society that recognizes their cultural differences and yet cannot embrace those differences as being part of itself.

All these Indian Parsi novelists have thrown significant light on the way of life of their dwindling community. The Parsi novelists have also projected the preferences and priorities, problems, and eccentricities of their community in their novels. The texts of these Parsi novelists have given them and their community identity within the dominant Hindu culture. In writing community-centric novels, the Parsi novelists have fulfilled an essential role of, to quote the words of M. G. Vassanji, 'the writer as a preserver of collective tradition, a folk historian and myth maker' (Vassanji 63). Again in the words of Nilufer Bharucha:

'In decolonized India, the exalted position enjoyed by the Parsis during the Raj has been eroded and increasing dominance by the majority Hindu community has marginalized them. Parsis are today trying to reorient themselves to this new reduced role. Some seek to assimilate themselves into the Indian mainstream and others in a bid to escape this change of status, move to the West. In both cases, the Parsi identity is a casualty. Retention of this identity is crucial if Parsis are to survive the twenty-first century (253).

Again, A. K. Singh also comments:

'Their works exhibit consciousness of their community in such a way that the community emerges as a protagonist from their works though on the surface these works deal with their human protagonists' (73).

All these Parsi writers discussed above try to show this adaptability of life and portray it quintessentially over their fictional form. 'The experience of Parsis can be a shining example of how a sense of adaptability can bring about peaceful existence in the present-day multicultural world' (Yadav vii) Their contribution to post-independence Indian English novels demands special attention because a good number of Parsi Indian English novelists emerged in the Post-colonial period and 'carved a distinct literary identity of and for their community at the global level and have made people aware of the problems and culture of their community (Pathak et al vii). 'The post-Independence Indian English Fiction is post-colonial Indian English fiction', says Bijay Kumar Das, renowned scholar, academician, and critic, 'because it continues to evoke colonial legacies in the contemporary society and seeks to

compete with English language fiction for international prizes...'(172). The new Indo-English novels in the hands of these Parsi novelists gained a unique post-colonial flavour and are appreciated by all at home and abroad.

The time has come to evaluate these Parsi novelists with more and more critical attention in the post-colonial academic sphere. The contributions of these novelists to post-independence Indian English fiction in particular and the arena of world literature, in general, are praiseworthy and it proves that the fictional world of these Parsi novelists serves as a vital area of post-colonial literature study.

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