

IDENTITY CRISIS AND ETHNOCENTRIC ELEMENTS IN CYRUS MISTRY'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Cyrus Mistry (b.1956, Bombay) is an Indian playwright and novelist from a Parsi family. Cyrus Mistry started his career as a playwright at a young age and also worked as a journalist. Mistry also wrote short film scripts and several documentaries. His contribution as an ethnocentric writer can be well understood in his novels like *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* and *The Radiance of Ashes*. His ethnocentricity lies in a variety of themes like untouchability, identity crisis, dislocation, marginalization and several others. Untouchability or discrimination is not something new to Indian culture, India has a long legacy of this maybe roots tracing back to ancient times when the *varna* system was practiced. But with the advent of western civilization and purging of the dogmas we can say that we have travelled well enough. In the present chapter which takes into consideration the plight of *Khandias*, Mistry has tried to highlight the invisibility of these people; it is these people who carry the corpses to The Tower of Silence, the last rituals that the Parsis perform. Zoroastrianism was practiced in Iran much before the beginnings of Islam, what we see today in India the immigrants as Parsis. The Parsees have a cocooned ritual system and the most strange is their burial rites. Mistry's novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* was a kind of spark.

KEYWORDS- Identity Crisis, Dislocation, Marginalization, Khandias, Ritual System.

ARTICLE

A notable Indian Parsi novelist, Cyrus Mistry's *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* displays nearly invisible community of Parsi in India. The novel coils around the concept of marginalization and ethnocentrism. Through the *Khandias*, a poor community, Cyrus Mistry seeks to explore the unfathomable domain of reality and consciousness, which we significantly see in the text and beyond the text. A post-modernist approach shows that *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* is primarily based on the worldly experiences of Cyrus Mistry. In an interview Mistry has said that "We know the Parsis intimately, and I think that reflects in our writings."²

The experience of intriguing relationship within a family is noteworthy. Themes like betrayal, revenge, forbidden love and even prostitution are visible in almost all the novels of the author. Mostly the down trodden Parsis people take up the job of *Khandias* in order to uplift their existing economic state. They go on to do such an emergency service as the corpse bearer. They even carry the dead bodies from the concerned families to the burial ground for performing the ritualistic purification of the corpses and then leaving them to be eaten by the scavengers, birds and vultures. They are the marginalized sub-caste of the Parsi community often termed as Outcaste, Nussesalar, The God of Unclean, and The Untouchable of the core. On top of this, they are deprived of their due payment which further propels them to remain in the state of utter paucity. The novel is a window into such an extraordinary and rich world of marginalized Parsi community whose pangs are unsung and their grief is never realized. They are vulnerable, elegant, historically fascinating and also very touching whom we come across in this story of courage and hope. Cyrus Mistry offers a beautiful historical details and existential against while gently questioning the way we look at justice, custom, love, life and death.

Like a typical bildungsroman the novel develops as the protagonist attains maturity. In the first section present tense, Bombay 1942 the act of corpse bearer is called a final act of charity and shifts to the concept popularly known as the body is made of dust and it gets back to dust in the statement at the end of the aforementioned quotation. From the view of an educated Parsi, Cyrus Mistry strategically chooses his characters to suit his purposes. A 26-years old Parsi happens to be a husband of a girl whose father belongs to *Khandias*. Seppydeh whom Phiroze calls Seppy does not meet the expectations of the upper class Parsi community. Hence, Phiroze is socially downtrodden and deprived of his current status both economically and socially. In the eyes of his father Phiroze becomes a Pariah. This is to be noted that Parsi community is even today noted for its purity, custom and tradition. They prohibit corpse bearer to eat food with the rest of the Parsis. Just like untouchables in the pre-independent India. Parsi community in India occupies an important place in the modern Indian literary canon with its vibrancy in the multi-religion and multi-lingual geographical location. As Persian Zoroastrian, who came to India to avoid religious persecutions, by the Muslim in the seventh century formed a small group in the Indian social firmament. *The Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* is based on a true story that Cyrus Mistry once experienced, goes on to explore the twin themes of love and loss. The narrative is centered on family intrigue, betrayal, revenge, forbidden love, prostitution, etc. But most of all, it is about the dirty little secret of the otherwise admirable Parsi Community. The protagonist of *The Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*, Phiroze Elchidana, is a dull witted son of a Zoroastrian head priest. As his father hopes that a day will come when Phiroze will become a great priest. Phiroze compounds the problems of the family when he falls in love with a girl named Sepideh whom he lovingly calls Seppy. She is the daughter of an old corpse bearer or a *Khandia* and in the Parsi tradition, a Lord of the Unclean, the tiny community who personally absorb the evil decomposition of corpses—a noble service for which their souls will forever escape the cycle of rebirth. Although in this final incarnation, they are condemned to be shunned by fellow-Parsis as, untouchable to the core. Phiroze goes on to defy his family by marrying her and becoming a corpse bearer himself. For him, there is no return, for his love is enough. However, Seppy dies soon leaving Phiroze with a daughter and a great pool of sorrow. This novel is as much a story of a marginalized community as it is about love and death. Phiroze deals with his own grief as a *Khandia* and he must work to ease the passing comments of others, often at the cost of his own dignity and health. There are also references to historical and contemporary events such as the Quit India movement and the 1936 Olympics, but these seem to be more for the context than for any direct relevance to the plot. The matters concerning this chapter receives a new energy and vitality with inchoation of tradition as Cyrus Mistry underlines in the uncanny process of epistemological intellectual and literary configuration of the novel is inextricably imbedded into the marginalization and ethnocentrism which is inescapably associated with the process of interpellation, assimilation and syncretism etc. Further the study of the novel introduces us the plentitudes of ethnocentrism and marginalization as they elaborate the narrative pattern of the growth recursion and progression of the protagonist. Synchronic and diachronic study of structuralism empiricism, cognitivism and pragmatism reflect the fact that subjectivity is all about process and the novel is always in the process of its maturity. Hence, it brings out all the teleological and ontological possibilities of totality and absoluteness which Cyrus Mistry seeks to explore among *Khandias*. The study in the context, explores the phenomenological realities of Parsi community which gets embroiled in the compelling world of cultural differences. The reality of corpse bearer has gone under some major changes with the advent of modern technology and post-modern thoughts. However, the notion of ethnocentrism serves to denote the reality of the Parsi community. The present paper recapitulates the fact that the protagonist of Cyrus Mistry's novel passes through the conduits of various social and cultural reality as the plot of the novel rolls towards maturity. This is found to be culturally and linguistically un-expectable to the contemporary world. There is a fine fusion of harsh reality of life and fiction as a genre. This chapter has made a candid attempt of explicating the first objective of the thesis by expounding and evaluating two aspects of the novel ethnocentrism and marginalization, because these signs or metaphors constitute the fathomable edifice of the study. The process of becoming is found to be inextricably intertwined into the complex rubric of socio-economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological, and linguistic realities of the contemporary Parsi world. In addition to this, the chapter also explains some plausible reasons for circumscribing it within the texture of modern concepts pertaining to the Indian Parsi life. It initially proposes that modern novels are characterized by some incessant process of becoming, where the dichotomy between the subject and object, self and other is evaded and obliterated. They define reality in its contingency in which time, memory, and history play some important role. Thus, the study has not only outlined the formalistic becoming of the *Khandias* but it has also expounded the

process of epistemological construction or formation of Parsi identity. The thesis, in the context, in the process of its becoming may explicate the complex texture of proposed chapters. The protagonist says that –

“I had grown up in the rear of a fire temple which revered and visited by scores of people daily. At all times of day and night, every nook and corner of the temple was sanitized by the cleansing perfume of sandal and incense. In our tiny quarters at the back as well, the air was redolent with the smell of piousness; and our lives tangled in an elaborate network of rules and proscriptions that had been instilled in us from a very young age. Everything was sanctified and respect-worthy. No rooms for fatuity or impiety.”⁴

It means that the pious class of the Parsi community distinctly gives emphasis on cleanliness, perfume of sandal and incense resulting in strong abhorrence for fatuity or impiety. It is again a social stratum which accepts only the light-mindedness not like someone from *Khandias* who involve in taking the dead body to the final destination as this act involves so called substandard type of work. Even below average performer in studies, Phiroze reminds:

“...My performance at school, however, was disappointingly below par, and far below the record established by my brother before me....Some of the elderly teachers at school, I couldn't help notice, reserved their angriest invective for me...”⁵

At the end of chapter five of the novel we get to know that Phiroze failed miserably in the final board examination. When the new academic year started he did not have regular classes in the school however his curiosity to realise the ethnocentric elements outside has increased tremendously. Further, this curiosity to know the outside world gets elevated when the school authorities inform his father that the school was providing extra classes for ‘eleven monumental duffers’. His friend Rohinton Kanga whose father Mr. Nariman was the owner of a mill producing cotton cloths in Worli, the then Bombay indicates that Phiroze could mix up with any class of people either from Solapur or Nasik and this was not liked by Phiroze father:

“Though my father frowned darkly at gossip he sometimes heard about Nariman Kanga's freethinking ways ardent nationalism, he was willing to ignore it since it was after all over hearsay. I, too, had been shrewd enough never to let on to family piece of knowledge I was privy to: that during the sticky, summer months of Bombay, Rohinton himself-and probably, even his dad, or so my friend assured me-never wore a sudrah under his shirt: the sacred vest that every self-respecting Zoroastrian wears next to his skin: his spiritual armour.”⁶

A minute study of the novel makes us understand that Phiroze is not as bright as his elder brother Vispy. Vispy has always been appreciated for his excellent performance in his studies. His father himself praises Vispy in a way Phiroze finds dumb striking. Once Phiroze was seen at Doongerwaadi and his father reacted to him very strangely.

This was the reaction of Phiroze's father and it was for the first time that Phiroze saw a spark of hatred in his father's eyes. But it was there for only a moment before it faded. This monody of vengeance continued resulting in a gasp of horror in Phiroze's mind. But love knows no boundary; therefore, Phiroze continued his love affair with Seppy. This level of courage disowns all the social decorum and moves forward towards the direction of revolution. Cyrus Mistry's ethnocentric and marginalized approach can be seen as a subtle web of social intricacies and stereotypes. By the end of part one of the novel we get to know that the novel matures with the concurrent socio-political India and media presentation especially All India Radio. Events like quit India movement, assassination of brigadier Michel O'Dwyer at a public meeting in London, Jallianwalla Bag

Massacre. Seppy's immature death gives a new turn to the plot of the novel. Further the discussion between Hindu and Muslim and the condition of Parsi community establish the voice of orthodoxy which was overwhelmingly presented. People felt enraged against Khandias for the wrongs that were done to Parsi community. The most depressed sub caste of the relatively affluent Parsi of the then Bombay had never before struck the way it was seen. The *Khandias*, as a matter of truth, were oppressed for centuries which effectively robbed them of the imagination required to conceive of a different order of life.

Mistry highlights that there are plenty issues around the world which are horrific and tough to deal with. And in order to bring change for people who excite our compassion, a person needs to master the courage. It is courage which more important than compassion and empathy combined together. Jingo's stay at Nehrunagar also gives him ample chance to think over his relationship with Cristina. Both of them have moved on after being together for seven years but that does not stop Jingo to think about her and about the quality time both of them spent together. Despite getting to obscure life close quarters of Nehrunagar, Jingo has to leave the plan as he is being charged of kidnapping Shanti, a young girl. Shanti was a barber's teenage daughter and was in awe of Jingo. Shankar, the barber accused Jingo hiding his thirteen year old daughter Shanti as she used to spend a lot of time. And as it so happens, Jingo has gifted her earrings which made his friends believe that he might have some hand in Shanti's disappearance. Eventually, Jingo has to leave Nehrunagar to relive to his parents' home for some time, against Boman's wishes. Part I of the novel also highlights mother's love towards their son. Very early in the novel, while Jingo was researches for his novel, he meets a lady whose son has abandoned her. As it turns out, the son happened to be Jingo's friends from school. As illustrated in the novel,

“On his sixteenth birthday, he too walked out on me. Stole my rings, my two gold wedding bangles and, what do you know, he took the toaster as well.

‘What did I do to him? Did I beat him, did I bite him, did I burn him with a red-hot skewer? Some mothers do that. I raised him on love...He was my best friend, my only one. But he's gone... I know he's here somewhere. Not far from here. I know it, I feel it in my bones. Why won't he write? Why won't he come to see me?’¹²

Besides..., Mistry also points out Khorshed, Jingo's mother's love towards her only son. She was always their victim in between the clashes of egos of both fallen and son. In except from the novel proves the hypothesis,

“His mother believed in an old superstition that if you turned to place you were leaving, you were sure to come back to it someday. For a long time, Jingo spitefully refused to turn. But in the end, knowing that she'd be craning to glimpse his last gesture of farewell, he stopped at the colony gates, looked over his shoulder and waved. As soon as he had descended the hill, Jingo went into the cheap Udipi restaurant across the read and ordered himself a misal and two paos. He remembered to ask for an extra sprinkling of chopped onion. The fragrance of his mother's cooking had made him quite ravenous.”¹³

Mistry highlights Nehrunagar as the place which happen to stay calm even in adverse political situation despite being occupied with people from political communities of Hindus and Muslims.

“It is very isolated, agreed Ranade. A few Hindu individuals and families lived scattered in other areas of the slum, but these were just a handful. In fact, an uncle of his who was an RSS man had strongly urged his father and sister that, for their own safety's sake, they should relinquish their room in the Chawl and move to a more Hindu area like Ghatkopar. But Ranade's father didn't share his brother's prejudices about the villainy of Muslims. His sister had been quite annoyed by and sisters for years and years!’ It was true, said Ranade, even during times when the city had seen tension between Hindus and Muslims, Nehrunagar itself had remained calm.”¹⁴

In part two of the novel *The Radiance of Ashes*, Mistry reveals a secret about Jingo's brother Rumi who did early as child. Jingo was Boman's and Khorshed's second child. Their first son named Rumi had passed away before Jingo was wven vorn. the passing away of Rumi had deep impact on the young Parsi parents and that introduced them to Hansotia, a occult practionced Khorshed in particular was occur attracted towards the practices directed by Hansotia as she believe it will help then bring back Rumi again into their lives. Hansotia

made them believe that if both of them keep on following his disclose. It will help Rumi take rebills. As illustrated in the novel,

“For a while, the humdrum routine of Khorshed’s daily life was animated by the cosmic dimensions of her intrigue with Rusi Hansotia and Boman for the reclamation of Rumi’s wandering soul. The lamp at the head of the cradle was never allowed to go out. By means of abstruse astrological calculations, always finalized in consultation with Fali Baba, and sometimes even Rumi himself (Khorshed, too, naturally, for she was to be the recipient of their grace), a list of dates and propitious hours was compiled. Initially, it worked wonder for their sex life. But then, the need for punctuality which Hansotia stressed, the odd hours of night or small hours of morning during which they were sometimes enjoined to copulate-not to mention the irritating awareness at the back of Boman’s mind that Hansotia himself might well be visualizing their amorous engagement at that very moment since he was so anxious about is success-and the brief but mandatory prayer he had asked ritualistically even during intercourse, considerably diminished the joys of lovemaking and soon rendered it a chore.”¹⁵

Mistry brings out the frustration of young parents who out of desperation to their lost son who went on to almost destroy their family life. Hansotia had tried to destroy their married life on the pretext of helping Khorshed conceive a baby. In one such incident in the novel, Mistry reveals.

“Hansotia had contracted Khorshed that morning, unexpectedly, after many months, or so Jingo understood. He had insisted...., but felt this was important enough for him to see her the very next day, even though he was still jet-lagged.”¹⁶

In part three of the novel, Jingo realizes that his writing has many flaws. He understands that to dream of becoming a writer and then to start over it a different aspects. He realizes what and why his fallen always wanted him to complete his studies and get a job. To write a novel includes lot of hard work and he has been someone not ready to commit to hard work.

“It was difficult enterprise. In any case, Jingo’s own writing had always suffered from the same malaise: imprecision, loose ends, the lack of conviction in his words, the mountain of work that remained to be done to come anywhere near conveying what he...never outgrown the games of his childhood.”¹⁷

Mistry also introduces the political scenario of the city at that time. It was during the time when Babri Masjid had been demolished and life in the city had changed overnight. Jingo has lost his father, Boman recently and is already in different zone in his mind. In his own job, while conducting survey for his company more than 50% of the people have noted for Ram Temple. Jingo finds it difficult to accept that all other religion have been labelled as ‘outsiders’.

“Come to think of it, his people, too, belonged to another race. They had come to India, not as invaders but as refugees, 1,200 years ago. Was it only a matter of time before...Malani soon be calling for their expulsion too?”¹⁸

Mistry also displays the real political opportunists who in order to gain commercial benefits incite riots between different communities. These people add a unique hue on the theoretical face of the novel with their socio-linguistic realities.

“It was a massive operation, well planned and coordinated. First, the men with the weapons frightened the slum-dwellers, roughed them up, shouting at them all the while to get out. Before they had barely time to react....Go back to Bangladesh while you still have the chance! You hear me?”¹⁹

The Radiance of Ashes is Cyrus Mistry’s brave attempt to focus on the lives of people living in Bombay before and after Bombay riots thorough the lens of Jingo Moos. *The Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* deals with the theme of ethnocentrism and marginalization in the rubrics of socio-economic realities. This is further evident that the protagonist goes through various ups and downs of life as the novel grows. Part two of the novel echoes of a living past is an edition to the plot as third part future imperfect. A young Parsi, son of a priest, is supposed to follow and adhere to the dogmatic rolls of society but he voluntary breaks most of the narrow boundaries gradually. In doing this the protagonist, Phiroze wins the affection of the readers for his fortitude and perseverance that he displaces so well in his love affair with Seppy. His alacrity to censure up the unfavourable

situations and turned that situation into his love strength is praiseworthy. His ethnic approach may be broadly criticized, however, his stand firm in what he does for his love and for his life. Phiroze deconstructs the notion of being excellent and this is the reason that he stand at par as a character and as a lover. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to aver that what is apt to gauge ethnocentrism and marginalization is taken artistically by Cyrus Mistry in the complex rubrics of Nation and Narration. Apart from this novel, we can find the theme of dislocation in *The Radiance of Ashes* also. Cyrus's second novel in discussion is *The Radiance of Ashes* written in the year 2005. It was first published by Picador, an imprint of Pan Macmillan Ltd in 2005 and later re-published by Aleph Book Company in 2014. The book was not a commercial success despite being liked by critics. Mistry accepts the truth and "attributes the disaster to a change of commissioning editors at Picador UK."²⁰ Unknown to all, there was a series of events that led the novel *The Radiance of Ashes* a commercial failure. As it so happened that there was quick turn over of editors, once Mistry had told the book to Picador U. K. The editor who commissioned the book initially had liked and approved the draft of the book. However, unlike the previous editor, the new editor who ended up publishing the book was not as pleased his predecessor. But Mistry was reluctant to any changes in the book. The endless arguments between the author and the new editor yielded no result in the final draft of the novel. As a result, when the book finally got published, the new editor did not promote the book as much as she could have in her capacity, which ensured the book failed to find its readers. However, Cyrus Mistry's winning the DSC prize for South Asian literature 2014 for his second novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* bring the focus back to his first novel *The Radiance of Ashes*. Tara Sehgal while reviewing the book for India Today writers,

"Part portrait-of-the-young-Parsi-as-artist, part diatribe against the forces that felled a tolerant, cosmopolitan society and part honest account of a love affair with Bombay and its people, this is a good book for digging deep into the entrails of a city. Though the political bits can be quite puerile, the personal bits are delectable."²¹

Mistry started writing the book in 1979 and finished its first chapter. However, it took him 20 more years to finally complete the book. The novel, which is set in early 1990s during the times of Ram Janambhoomi Movement which led to Babri Masque demolition, describes the life and actions of young Parsi man named Jingo (Jehangir Moos) who is also the protagonist of the novel. Jingo, who aspires to become a writer is a market researcher. He prefers to work as free lancer as that gives him enough freedom to explore the lives of people of Bombay which he believes will help him in writing a novel afterwards.

"Part-time market researcher will writing dreams, Jingo has a penchant for pot smoking and as insatiable curiosity for life on the streets of Bombay. With what he considers a powerful gift of empathy, he enters the minds of others and fancies himself Christ among the lepers. Of course, this means he floats rather directionless through his life, much to the disappointment of Boman and Khorshed, his caring though immensely oppressive parents. Though Jingo often thinks of himself as a loser-an idea reinforced by his father and Christine, his Catholic ex-girlfriend- he is proud of his principles of not being fascinated by the idea of driving his own car, shopping at expensive malls or throwing lavish parties, of his rejection of the rat-race that had ensnared most of his friends."²²

Early in the novel, Jingo's love for pot smoking and taking stand for poor almost took him to prison when picks up a fight with a cop. Mistry highlights the street life of Mumbai, in the early 90s. It was so easy to sell hashish and opium openly on the streets as the nexus between sellers and policeman was easily managed by money. In the novel, Chandu and his accomplice Lalu sells "balls of hashish and opium, thereby, making a living out of it. Jingo is their regular customer. The small make-shift business is managed by keeping cops at a distance by regular supply of money as bribe to cops. In one such incident a cop arrives at Chandu's shop and demands his share of money, he beats Chandu and Lalu who has no limbs. Jingo perceives the whole incident of the cop beating Lalu, a weak person, cripple, who smokes all day as if the beating was not directed to Lalu alone. Mistry projects Jingo as a young man who is very impulsive in nature. Jingo's interference, in the cops was beating and extracting bribe from Chandu was enough to hurt the cop's ego. He grabs Jingo by collar and led him to police station while abusing him consistently at the same time. Mistry takes a jibe on the condition of law enforcing agency who were entrusted with maintain law and order in Bombay. Such was the plight of

policemen that even a small shopkeeper can sell drugs on the open street by bribing them. Mistry presents the policemen arrogant, egoist, stubborn, foolhardy and someone who misuse their power by causing harm to weak people. They take pleasure in scaring weak and innocent people, enjoy beating them without reason and always willing to lock any one at the lock-up at police station when being confronted with someone who knows what the cops have been doing was wrong. In the novel the policeman grabs Jingo by collar to take him away with him when Jingo confronts him. Even when he is taking him away, he was constantly prodding Jingo in his back with his stick. What he does not know about Jingo was that Jingo was not a coward. Mistry writes,

“If the policeman hadn’t been so rough with him, none of this might have happened. But, as he walked behind Jingo, he prodded him repeatedly in the back with his stick. A swell of hysteria charged through Jingo as he swung issued, stabbed his elbow into the policeman’s belly with all his force, then turned and slammed his open palm in the man’s sweaty nose, giving it a shove. The last thing Jingo saw before he took to his heels was the sight of a dazed policeman falling backward. He headed a dull thud and the clatter of the wooden stick as it rolled onto the pavement.”²³

The novel is divided into four parts. Mistry in part one of the novel describes Jingo and his nature of work i.e. market research as a freelancer. Besides describing Jingo’s act of picking up a fight with cops for the comparatively weaker and under privileged persons, Mistry also highlights the plight of Parsi parents in the form of Boman and Khorshed. Both Boman and Khorshed are parents of a man who does nothing of their liking it’s a matter Boman, Jingo’s father does not approve of any of his choices that he takes for his life. Like every Parsi parent, they want their son to finish their graduation and apply for a regular job. Jingo has his reasons for that particular job. As illustrated in the text,

“Well, it’s a different world I’ve entered today, thought Jingo. Over stimulated by the day’s events and the numerous glasses of dark, double-brewed tea consumed, Jingo was resigned to the prospect of a relatively sleepless night. This is the world I’d like to write about, to contrast it with my own, the world of the Moores, the Dubbys, the Juggys and Bablis, the advertising agencies, the corruption and sleaze and inhumanity of this appalling and beautiful city. For a moment he remembered his father’s opinion of the work he did. He’s probably quite right, thought Jingo; it is meaningless, silly work. But then Dad didn’t understand why he preferred it to other, more regular kinds of jobs: for the chance it gave him to explore the streets while ringing the doorbells of strangers; to wallow in their warmth, imbibe their joys and anonymous sorrows, pretend not to have or falsehoods-it was a very special kind of intimacy while all the time collating the scenes and images he knew would figure in the novel he would one day write.”²⁴

Mistry’s way of projecting Jingo’s parents’ desperations and ambitions as far as their only child’s carrier was concerned is not unusual in Indian perspective. As a parent, they wish to see their child successful, settled and financially well secured. Indian parents are very much concerned about their kids’ education. They ever changing world of Globalisation has infused competition to do well by getting a good job. A good education to child insures to cover lot of insecurities. They are well aware of the fact that the key to all these things lies in proper and complete education. Payal Raghavan writes-

“The most important goal that Indian parents have for their children is that they build successful career in their adult life. This is the ultimate goal for 51% of the Indian parents surveyed. Only Mexican parents are ahead of India in raling a successful career of the children as the ultimate goal with 52% vouching for it.”²⁵

However in Jingo case, he himself acts like a block in completing his parents’ ambitions. Jingo wants to become a writer. His job as market researcher helps him to observe the Bombay city from close quarters. But what is making Boman his father restless is that it has been more than six years that his son has quit studies in pursuit of writing a novel. And Jingo has not yet stated writing the novel. Boman tries to make Jingo understand about the realities and practical aspect of life. But Jingo is rigid to pursue his dream of becoming a writer. He is not carried away by the fact that his peers and friends earn salaries in five-figures, which further infuriates

Boman. In one of the conversations between Boman and Jingo, Mistry highlights Boman's frustrations and anger over Jingo's reluctance to finish his studies and get a regular job,

“Weird? You're weird if you ask me,' said his father, a pitch of desperation entering his already shrill voice. Staying in some hovel like a ragamuffin. Porous and Rayomund both have degrees in business management, they're earning five-figure salaries. They keep their parents in luxury. Porous has just bought a new Fiat!' He heaved a deep sigh, and masticated while mumbling. 'For years I work myself to the bone, without complaining. Without stopping even for a holiday... and now when it's time for me to retire I must start worrying about my grown-up hulk of a son'-his voice grew steady louder-'who does not want to do anything in life? Who does not *know* what life's about? You're spitting on your own future, you fool...and after I've got it all ready for you on a platter!’²⁶

Boman's disappointment with his only son Jingo is not limited to his career decisions only. Both Boman and Khorshed disapprove of Jingo's girlfriend Cristina and accuse her to be the reason behind Jingo's career choices. Their displeasure for Cristina is for obvious reasons. Firstly, Cristina comes of a Christian family and they being a middle class Parsi it could not accept her as then daughter-in-law. Secondly, Cristina besides belonging to difficult community is not good looking fair girl. Mistry projects Boman as a strong and hard father. Boman does what every Parsi father in his capacity can do. He tries to pursue Jingo to change to his decisions of quitting up the college for writing a novel. As an old Parsi man he could not digest that his son has given up on everything- career, family etc. for his dream of becoming a writer and to be with a Christian girl who looks as black as pitch.

What Boman and Khorshed did not know was that Jingo's relationship with Cristina was not what it used to be, when they had started.

“In the beginning, Cristina and Jingo had been universally acknowledged as an inseparable couple. They were regulars at Dubby's parties indeed at almost any party that happening. Some said were perfectly matched. They had probably meant that in physical terms he was aware wondered what he was doing with her. But hardly anyone knew of the problems they were having. Usually, it was only after midnight, once they had left the party then most fierce quarrels began.”²⁷

Mistry justifies Cristina's excessive possessive behavior towards Jingo. Cristina had her reasons to believe Jingo was less committal in their relationship as he occasionally flirts with other women in parties which Cristina does not approve of. Both Jingo and Cristina had been into other relationships previously. Cristina had been cheated before in her previously experience influenced her in having strong opinions against flirting with other people while staying in a relationship with someone. What Cristina was finding difficult to fathom was that Jingo had unquestionable carving for sex and he considered his flirtation with other ladies as matter of harmless fun and light heated curiosity. Mistry writes-

“In spite of his undeniable craving for sexual experience and adventure, he tried never to lose sight of the fact that Cris was terribly special to him. He had never been in another relationship of such intense involvement, nor could he hope to full so utterly comfortable in intimacy with another woman. Their minds and bodies summed to mesh together so perfectly. He knew this rather well for himself, but somehow Cris had never believed it as implicitly as he did.”²⁸

What made matters worse between them is that Cristina was well aware of her ugliness. Besides, she had a terrible childhood while growing up. She considers herself abused as her father used to beat and abuse her and her mother. In such ugly things in the background, her fears of losing Jingo increased and out of jealousy and possessiveness, they both decide to stop going to all parties wherever Jingo had the probability of getting any female attention. Now, again looking at *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* we find that *khandhias* were considered

as Untouchables. This novel won the DSC Prize for Cyrus Mistry at the Jaipur Literature Festival in 2014. After being the awardee of this Prize he became immensely popular. Moving back to history we find that the community of Parsis came to India in 8th century. They made their own socio-political and economical impact in this country. The whole community gets its identity from Zarathustra which means the clan of golden light. After moving from place to place in this country they settled at Udwada. Parsa is a provenance in South-Western Iran and Parsis have got their name from here. So, originally they belong to Pars. During the Indian National Movement their cooperation was noteworthy but, still they reflected a tendency of being alienated. They felt Anglo-maniac. Tony Bee (in *A Study of History*. London: OUP. 1948.) has called them as one of the most important creative minorities of India. The whole community of Parsi writers has been divided into two sub-groups. Writers like Cyrus Mistry belong to the sub-group of stay-at-home writers. There are so many rituals in this community, even a newly born baby is not considered as an individual of Parsi community until he goes through the ceremony of Navjote. This ceremony is very significant as it symbolizes the culture and tradition of this community. A sacred thread, Kusti is worn during this ceremony. It is made up of fine lamb's wool which is of seventy two folds. The concept of ethnocentrism lies in this background because such rituals are the prime reasons for their displacement. In the whole Parsi community inter-caste marriages are not allowed or accepted. Naturally, these rituals provide us a hint that why the whole community is not able to accept the changes occurring in modern times. I am not trying to criticize any custom or ritual but I am presenting a detailed description of culture and tradition of Parsi community as it is. My intentions are clear but to understand the ethnocentrism of this community we need to look at these facts. In the present novel it must not be understood as political backdrop. There is a lucid narration of Parsi life, topographical details, religious rituals and many more in this novel. Ngugi Wa Thiango has remarked in his preface to writers in politics that

“Literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, his works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battlefield...what he or she cannot do is to do remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics.”²⁹

However, Mistry says that there are hardly any political instances in his novel. It only shows personal suffering, life and death of Parsi community. The isolation of Khandia's gives us the idea that they have negligible involvement in reshaping India. There are numerous examples that our country has attained the freedom after a lot of struggle. People have given their lives for it irrespective of their caste and creed. In spite of their cooperation they are neglected and it is the real pain which they feel deeply engraved their heart. Not only in Parsi community but in all the communities people have given a lot of contribution to attain the freedom of our country. The plight of Phiroze can be compared to the character of Stephan Dedalus portrayed of James Joyce in *Ulysses*. This plight is related to religious dilemma. It can be expressed through the lines-

“Stephen's highly sensitive artistic self and his deliberate sins produce different emotions that clash with catholic teachings, creating dilemma.”³⁰

Stephan Dedalus goes through the similar kind of alienation and repression which Phiroze also feels. He is completely cut off from his friends and family. Phiroze keeps himself in the Tower of Silence which symbolically proves that this world has become a perfect mismatch for him. He lives a life of seclusion and feels completely alienated from the society. His father has seen dreams for him. He wished him to be a priest but he chooses to live differently. Here the role of images gives us a better understanding of heredity and environment. This can be understood by the theory of naturalism. Emile Zola has said (in *Naturalism*, Beijing, China Social Sciences Press) that naturalism is an admixture of heredity and environment. The behaviour of any individual is governed through heredity and environment. Phiroze inherits his father's honesty. This is one of the reasons that he is very honest in love. His love for Seppy is unquestionable and unconditional. He has left his world to create his own world. He does not care for anything or any person because he is a sincere lover. To understand his mental status we need to understand his priorities. This priority cannot be rationalized because there is a continuous struggle between mind and heart. There is a sense of dualism and the lover is unable to

understand what is right and what is wrong? Similar condition is with Phiroze. It seems that he values his heart more than his mind. This is one of the reasons that he lives everything to win his love.

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