

TROUBLE AHEAD, TROUBLE BEHIND: Exploring the theme of memory in the Parsi diaspora novel titled "Go Home" by Sohrab Homi Francis

Vanetta Rodrigues
Ph D Research Scholar

Article Received: 02/01/2022,

Article Accepted: 03/02/2023,

Published Online: 05/02/2023,

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.02.11

Abstract

In this paper, I will discuss "Go Home" (2016) by Sohrab Homi Francis and the issues addressed in this book related to the Parsi diaspora. Parsi diaspora happens to be the oldest ethnic community in India. "Go home" throws light on the issues of the Parsi Diaspora in a new homeland and the problems the diaspora population goes through, like assimilation, exile, culture clash, alienation, Racism, nostalgia, memory, hybridity, and identity crisis. 'Go Home' is a novel about one's place or identity in the world when the person neither belongs here nor there. The diaspora community, specifically the Parsi diaspora community, seems to be caught between two homelands and wants to be a part of both. It is challenging to balance the two and is a dilemma every day. The quest for finding one's own identity becomes very important for a diaspora and is also essential in this book. The title of the book is also very striking. 'Go Home' is set in India and America and gives out many historical backgrounds of both countries. I will discuss how personal and cultural memory problematizes the idea of the homeland in 'Go Home.'

Keywords: ethnic community, diaspora, homeland, identity crisis.

Introduction

Parsi diaspora is one of the oldest ethnic communities in India. What qualifies as a home for the Parsi Diaspora will be looked at with the help of Diaspora studies. Cultural and personal memory becomes very important for the Parsi diaspora. I will also look at the portrayal of the Parsi community. This chapter will give a brief overview of the diaspora and, more specifically, of the Parsi Diaspora and the novelists who have contributed to the Parsi Diaspora literature and most of the standard features seen in their writings. The contribution of Parsi Diaspora literature has been proven to be essential for South Asian Diaspora literature.

Diaspora is a scattered population whose origin lies within a smaller geographical locale. Diaspora, in particular, refers to the historical mass dispersions of an involuntary nature, such as the expulsion of Jews from Judea and the fleeing of Greeks after the fall of Constantinople. Bill Ashcroft defined "diaspora as forceful migration of the people from their homeland into other new unknown regions" (Ashcroft, 1999, pp. 68-70). There have been various changes to the meaning of diaspora due to several experiences by diverse diaspora communities over the years.

William Safran has listed the following characteristics: the diaspora people's collective experiences. 1) They or their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral" or foreign regions. 2) They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland, its physical location, history, and achievements 3) they believe that they are not and perhaps cannot be entirely accepted by their host society and, therefore, feel partly alienated and insulated from it. 4. They regard their ancestral homeland as their actual ideal place to which they or their descendants would or should eventually return— when conditions are appropriate. 5. They believe they should be committed to maintaining or restoring their original homeland and its safety and prosperity; and 6. They continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnic-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by such a scholarship (Safran 83-84).

While considering the changes and the expansion of the meaning of the term, Robin Cohen gives some essential characteristics of diaspora, which talk about migration, dispersal, assimilation, troubled relationship with the host country, and the possibility of a return movement (Cohen, 515). According to Cohen, all Diasporas will possess some of these features, and not all of them. According to Balvant Jani, 'the word "diaspora" is used to represent the feelings of all those who feel themselves to be cut off politically or existentially.' (Jani 48).

Sheffer talks about modern Diasporas being sentimental about their lineage and aware of their cultural and collective memory. Their identities are based on their sentimental and material links with their origin countries and homeland (Sheffer, 1986). The Diaspora communities and their features cannot be homogenized as other Diasporas. Different diaspora communities have been categorized based on ethnicities or nationalities, such as Jewish, Indian, Armenian, African, etc.

History of the Indian Diaspora

The history of the Indian diaspora can be classified into three phases based on their environment. The first migration phase started at the end of the 19th century during British colonization. Many uneducated and unemployed Indians left their homeland for the British colonies to work as indentured laborers in sugar plantations. Ramabai Espinet, in her book, *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), talks about the indentured laborer's journey across the Kala

Paani toward the Caribbean islands through a woman's perspective. The second migration phase occurred in the mid-twentieth century when educated Indians migrated to the West for better opportunities and economic development. The third migration phase occurred between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. This phase of migration to developed nations is voluntary for education and employment.

The second and third phases of migrants are educated and documenting their life in letters, memoirs, stories, poetry, and fiction. We see this documentation in books by famous authors like Monica Ali, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharti Mukherjee, Vikram Seth, Kiran Desai, and so on. Although the portrayed Diaspora life seems realistic and the writings are partially autobiographical, it is also fictionalized. Jasbir Jain further discusses that there is a difference between the past and the present of Diaspora literature that the past has a different history, tradition, regional and colonial memories, and political equations, and the present has different kinds of loneliness, isolation, social ghettoization, success, alienation, affluence, and recognition'. Despite living in the present, they co-exist in the past with the help of the memories of the homeland. (2004, 76)

South Asian Diaspora literature

Diaspora literature talks about the diaspora experiences of living outside of their homeland, their longingness for their homeland, and being faced with problems of assimilation and acculturation in the host country. Some of the critical issues of a diaspora are highlighted in the literature from the South Asian diaspora. South Asian diaspora writings consist of literature from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan, etc. There are two types of diaspora writings; on the one hand, we have the first generation, or the old diaspora of exclusivism, and the second generation, or the new diaspora of the border, which talks about late modernity or postmodernity (Mishra, 2001). Diaspora literature may be mindful of the ancestral native land, but the nostalgia for it has lessened and not disappeared at the most.

Many Diasporic writers like Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, and Monica Ali have written many works which have become influential in understanding the experiences of a diaspora living outside the homeland. The novels written by the authors mentioned above talk about alienation, homelessness, and a sense of belonging to the homeland. They go through severe identity crises, cultural shock, problems with assimilation, etc.

Writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje, Ramabahi Espinet, V.S. Naipaul, Sohrab Homi Fracis, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, etc. are some of the South Asian Immigrant writers whose literature falls under "ethnic literature" as the non-ethnic gaze of their hosts views it. These writers talk about different ethnic cultures of their respective communities, which the West may not be thoroughly familiar with. Parsi diaspora literature can be

considered ethnic literature that focuses on the cultures, traditions, and whereabouts of the Parsi community worldwide. Rohinton Mistry, Sohrab Homi Fracis, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, and Farrukh Dhondy are some writers who fall into this category. The Parsi community has been a driving force in India, and their passage to India, assimilation, and whole group consciousness are of utmost importance to understanding the community.

Zoroastrianism in India

A small religious community that exists mainly in Mumbai and Pune is Zoroastrianism. It is a monotheistic religion based on the ancient teachings of the Iranian Prophet Zoroaster. The followers of this religion are called Parsis because the religion arrived in India from Persia. Zarathustra established this religion in the 6th or 7th century B.C. The followers of this religion were exiled from Persia (modern-day Iran) in the 7th century A.D. The reasons for the Parsi emigration still need to be fully understood. However, one can suggest that the rise of Iranian Muslim dynasties in Persia led to religious tensions resulting in their entry into India. Some say that the Parsis escaped Iran to preserve their cultural and regional identity and sought refuge in India. They first arrived in Gujarat in India. Nilufer E. Bharucha, too, acknowledges this need for more consensus about the Parsi's arrival in India. She writes, "The exact dates of these landings are disputed by historians and dates as far apart as 756 C.E. and 936 C.E. have been suggested by different schools of historians" (25).

Parsi community in India

The Parsi community is one of the oldest communities in India, and they belong to one of the oldest religious traditions. They are now considered to be the smallest community in India. Most of the members of the Parsi community reside in Mumbai. The Parsi community has William Safran said that the Parsis are concentrated in a single area, namely 'the Bombay region of India.' 'Moreover,' he wrote, 'they have no myth of return to their original homeland.' Cohen argues that Parsis lack a 'myth and idealization of a homeland and return movement. However, most diaspora communities never seem to return, even after having a choice to return to their homeland.

Parsis migrating to the West

After the independence, the Parsis faced several challenges to maintain their position in the country and with the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Parsis migrated after the end of British rule but this time to the West. The post-independence era novelists can further be divided into stay-at-home writers and expatriate writers. The stay-at-home authors preferred to live in their motherland and write about the different issues of the country, like Dina Mehta, Meher Pestonji, and B.K. Karanjia. The expatriate writers do not live in their homeland, yet they talk about it the problems of the native land, the life of their people, and its complexities. Some expatriate writers are Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, Farrukh Dhondy, Firduas Kanga, Ardhasir Vakil, Boman Desai, and Sohrab Homi Fracis. The expatriate writers come under the third phase of migration from India to the West.

The diaspora writers differ not only in the theme but also differ based on generations/ages. The first generation of diasporic writers' writings may differ from the second and third generations. Most of the first-generation diasporic writers locate their works in their home country as well as in the settled country. They do this because, as Lau states, they are familiar with the "culture and the geographical location of their countries (and cities) of origin" (Lau 240). Through their writing, they inform about their earlier life patterns.

On the other hand, most second-generation diasporas accept the land in which they are born as their homeland. They are not happy about the way their parents live. It leads to several kinds of misunderstandings between both generations. The second-generation diasporic writers, according to Webner through their writings try to "send out a critical message to the South Asian community, portraying it as still locked in the obsolete and reactionary customs and beliefs of the old country"(Webner, 901). Webner also feels that the central theme of these writers is "the sexual politics of the family, represented by the struggles of a younger ... against arranged marriages imposed by authoritarian, coercive, gerontocratic elders" (Webner, 901). He also points out the difference in the kind of writings of the second generations: "The new novels and films promote images of transgressive sexuality: gay, inter-racial or inter-ethnic love marriages and illicit cohabitation, to make their point. They satirize an older generation's profligate consumption, false ethics, superstitious religiosity, blind prejudices, and obsession with honor and status." (Webner, 901)

Parsi diaspora Literature

"And the further they go, the more they will remember; they can take it from me."

— Rohinton Mistry, *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories* from Firozsha Baag

Parsi expatriate writers are grouped with south Asian immigrants, specifically of Indian origin. Writers like Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, Ardashir Vakil, etc., are some of the writers who wrote under the Parsi diaspora rubric. Parsi diaspora writings are essential, just like any other diaspora writings, as the idea of the impossible return to the homeland (i.e., Persia) is very problematic. Most of their writings are mainly concerned with their personal and communal identity, the nostalgia for the homeland, and the sensitive response to the "new" world they inhabit. The writers chose to write in English to the direct impact of British Imperialism. They deal with the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the political histories of the newly created nations and nationalists, which they left behind at various points in time, and the reconstruction of the newer identities in the countries to which they have emigrated. For the Parsi diaspora, living in the diaspora means living in voluntary or forced exile. Living in exile involves an intense identity crisis and the questions of identification and alienation from the old and new cultures and the homelands. Most of the Parsi authors are forced to explore individuality and marginality. Parsi diaspora literature raises several important issues in the texts written by Parsi diaspora writers, which are very important to their community. Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters* talks about the identity crisis of Parsis in British India. Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*,

Firozsha Baag, and Farrukh Dhondy in Bombay duck texts are all sensitive to their community's hopes, fears, struggles for survival, nostalgia, memory, and identity crisis.

Sohrab Homi Fracis's *Ticket to Minto- Stories of India and America* deals with the nostalgia of the Parsi population that had migrated to the West and how memory plays a vital role in shaping the stories of the past and also the notion of being alienated or the "Other" in one's homeland. There are many arguments in the Parsi diaspora writings. Rohinton Mistry's novels looked into the social-political reality of the 70s in India when he immigrated to Canada, and the city of Bombay was developing rapidly. Novels written by these writers serve as a memory bank; e.g., Boman Desai's *Memory of the Elephants* talks about the protagonist creating a machine that scans the memories he spent with his ex-girlfriend, and it malfunctions. He encounters the memories of his ancestors and relatives, which makes him discover his heritage and hope for the future. Sidhwa's novels both deal with the social-political aspect and take a look back on the city of Lahore and the country of Pakistan. Most of these novels are firmly rooted in memory, nostalgia, and a sense of belongingness to the homeland. Most of the Parsi diaspora writers crave the good old days and express similar thoughts through their books. *Poona Company* by Farrukh Dhondy accounts for the tale of the author's real-life experiences. Rohinton Mistry, in his novels, breaks the stereotype of Parsis being very rich and talks about the middle-class Parsi community who did not have access to domestic equipment like refrigerators, cars, or even insurance during the period, i.e., the 1960s to the 1970s.

Memories always remain a significant factor in expatriate writing. The memories evoked are of the past times, places, and people when the writer experienced them. Jasbir Jain analyses the relationship of immigration to his/her narratives as he/she talks about the concepts of self and heritage (Jain, 2004, pp. 230-45). Most seen in these narratives is the impossibility of returning to the past and belonging even when the past controls the present. The desire to return home and return to the impossible, as there is no place like home, is considered the defining feature of the diaspora. The Parsis have constantly been negotiating with the changing socio-political conditions and attempting to develop a sense of belongingness for their host country India by integrating into her national identity. Unlike other diaspora people who can return to their homeland anytime, the Parsis cannot return to where they came from, i.e., Persia. The Parsi diaspora writers are susceptible to their community's hopes and fears, aspirations, and struggles for survival and identity crisis. They have been deeply affected by the alienation after the colonizers left India. Reclaiming their lost identity is next to impossible; hence, the diaspora writers do so by attempting to recreate the imaginary homelands in their literature. Many of the Parsi diaspora writings have a sense of preserving one's culture. Sohrab Homi Fracis is a well-acclaimed author and winner of the IOWA Short Fiction Award for his collection of Short stories titled, *Ticket to Minto: Stories of India and America*. His latest book, titled, *Go home* (2016), describes how an individual feels when he is away from his homeland and the problems he faces in a new homeland. The diaspora feels that he is caught between two homelands and wants to be a part of both and finds it challenging to balance the two and is hence in a dilemma that gets

even worse every day. The idea of homeland or home has always been problematic for the Parsi community. While living in a newly adopted homeland, memories of the old homeland play a pivotal role in the diaspora. Rohinton Mistry, one of the critical Parsi Diaspora writers in South Asian Diaspora literature, has explored issues related to the political situation in India, the struggle for survival, nostalgia, memory, the importance of family, and the institution of marriage. My study will focus on the book 'Go Home'(2016) by Sohrab Homi Fracis.

Methodology

Diaspora studies look at the dispersal of populations and cultures across various geographical places and spaces. Diaspora is one of the most debated terms today, and there are many discussions on migration, displacement, identity, community, global movements, and cultural politics. Diaspora theories deal with discussions on identification, the desire for the homeland, nostalgia, exile and displacement, cultural identity, assimilation, and the construction of hybrid identities and memory. According to William Safran, members of the diaspora must share 'the following characteristics': William Safran proposed some characteristics which members belonging to the diaspora must share, and they are 1)dispersal from the homeland, 2) they should retain a certain kind of collective memory or myth about their original homeland for its location, history, and achievements,3) they feel that they cannot assimilate to their host land and therefore they are bound to feel alienated 4) their ancestral home is their true home, and it is the place they will eventually return to when the conditions are appropriate, 5) they continue to relate to their homeland personally or vicariously (Safran, 1991, pp. 83-4). Robin Cohen has classified Diasporas into four groups according to their general nature Victim Diaspora, Labor Diaspora, Trade Diaspora, and Imperial Diaspora. The myth of returning to their homeland became problematic for the Parsis as they migrated from Persia to India to escape the Islamic rule in Persia, modern-day Iran. Parsis worldwide feel they do not belong to their original or newly adopted homeland. They are torn between two homes. Cultural memory plays a vital role in diaspora studies and, most notably, in the Parsi diaspora.

The experiences of a particular culture define cultural memory. The diaspora authors largely depend on their memory to write novels, poems, etc. As Vijay Mishra narrates: I have carried memories of that experience, thanks to my late father and mother, my brother Hirday and my sister Shiro. My children Rohan and Paras are aware of their father's working-class indenture heritage and have sensitively engaged with it. As read here, diaspora would only be a matter of archive fever for our granddaughters, Anjali and Tara. For our daughter-in-law Kylie, it will be a similar matter of understanding another history (2007: 12). Mishra talks about how his memories of being a diaspora will further become fragmented and more or less even lose the essence of it over time. I want to explore the concept of personal and cultural memory in the primary texts and look at how it problematizes the idea of a homeland. I would also like to look at how writing about the homeland while living in the host land becomes a significant issue of whether the diaspora is allowed to criticize the functioning of the homeland or not. Since my research looks at

Parsi diaspora writings, I will look at the diaspora identity of Parsi diaspora is layered with cultural memory, feelings of alienation, and their ambiguous position in India. I will be using Diaspora studies as my methodology for this research. The question that will be of prime focus is: How does memory play an important role among the diaspora people in Parsi diaspora writings?

This chapter will look at a Parsi diaspora novel by Sohrab Homi Fracis, the only South Asian writer to win the Iowa Short Fiction Award for his collection of short stories, *Ticket to Minto: Stories of India and America* in 2001. He was born in Bombay (Mumbai), India, and moved cities across India to I.I.T. Kharagpur for a B.Tech degree. He later migrated to America on a scholarship for an M.C.E. After sending his handwriting to a newspaper column in Detroit that analyzed readers' handwriting, they found his writing style creative and asked him to pursue writing. He worked for years as a systems analyst at companies like Ford, and he took up writing later on. He pursued an M.A. in English at the University of North Florida to get into the creative writing space. This research will look at one of his books, *Go home* (2016). The novel will be examined in terms of a portrayal of a diaspora experience in America. Fracis's writings show a connection between the East and the West, India and America. He compares the cultures, traditions, and ways of living of two distinct countries. The characters in his stories are generally Indians migrating to the West. They enjoy being a part of a new culture but still miss their homeland. He talks about life in India versus living like an Indian in America. Another prominent South Asian Diaspora author, Rohinton Mistry, discusses the Parsi community in most of his novels. Fracis's stories are based on the Parsi community and their community's commitment to their faith even today. This novel traces the journey of a man who wants to build a cultural bridge between two nations, but as we read it, we see how it was not what he had expected it would be. The diaspora individual is caught between two homelands, wants to be a part of the both and finds it challenging to balance the two. This chapter will look at the idea of the homeland being complicated by the cultural memory of the exile from Persia for the Parsi diaspora individual living in the West.

Bombay or Mumbai is home to a majority of the Parsi community in India and a very symbolic home to another massive number of Parsis who have migrated to the West in countries like Britain, Hong Kong, East Africa, Canada, and the United States of America. The Parsi community has a brief history of migration. They migrated from Persia to India to escape persecution from the Muslim invasion of Persia. After relocating to Gujarat, India, they were encouraged to move to Bombay by giving them land during the British rule in India, as they proved to be very successful. The protagonist, Viraf Adjanina of *Go Home* by Sohrab Homi Fracis, lives in Bombay (South Bombay) before he moves to America to pursue his masters in the 1980s. South Bombay is still known to be where most of the members of the Parsi community reside even today. In *Go Home*, Viraf is allowed to move to America for two years with one condition he should return and join his father and uncle's construction company. Unfortunately, this is not what Viraf wishes for. 1980s was a very traumatic period for both America and Iran. Returning to the history of Parsis migrating to

India to seek refuge from Persia (Iran), Viraf's identity as a Parsi becomes problematic as the Zoroastrians in Iran and the Parsis still had bitterness between them after the migration. They do not accept that Persia is also home to the Indian Parsis.

Go home also talks about issues that every diaspora community faces outside the homeland, i.e., Racism, problems of Assimilation, Alienation, and Nostalgia. It is set in two places India (specifically Bombay) and America. Culture, alienation, assimilation, and hybridity are the issues dealt with in this book by Francis. Memory is of utmost importance in diaspora and, most notably, Parsi diaspora literature. We see a lot of famous diaspora writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Ramabai Espinet, Michael Ondaatje, etc. Daniela Schiller, a neuroscientist from Mount Sinai School of Medicine at the M.I.T. Technology Review's 2013 EmTech conference, addressed the audience that to keep memories as they are, one has to sculpt them into some fiction. This art form will capture the original emotion behind the memory (A View from Susan Young Rojahn, 2013). Hence, most of the Parsi Diaspora writers depend on their memory to create fiction to talk about their belongingness to the homeland and how they feel nostalgic about it.

Rohinton Mistry is one such author who has garnered a lot of criticism for portraying the Parsi community and their lives, problems with being a small community, etc. They felt that he portrayed the Parsi community in a bad light. Sohrab Homi Fracis can also be placed in the category of Parsi Diaspora writers who, like Mistry, uses memory commonly used by most diaspora writers worldwide to connect the past with the present. People often recall their past when it is associated with the things that help them to understand what they are today. They consciously return to their memories when they feel lonely or alienated. There are several ways of going back to memory. This task can be done physically or mentally.

Go home is divided into three parts 1) New World, 2) World went terrible, and 3) No simple world. All three parts talk about the diasporic experience of the protagonist Viraf. It is optional that all diasporic people experience the same situations away from their homeland. This book focuses on Viraf, who is a Parsi, and the entire plot of this book focuses on how the 1980s was a bad year for a Parsi to move to America because there was the Iran hostage crisis that had created bitterness among the Americans, there was political unrest and so on. It primarily affected both the Iranians and the Indian Parsis in America. People consider Indian Parsis and Zoroastrian Parsis to belong to the same country. Zoroastrian Parsis were the ones who stayed back in Iran despite the Muslims taking over Persia (Iran) in the 6th and 7th centuries onwards. At the same time, Indian Parsis were the ones who were exiled from Persia in the 6th and 7th century onwards and migrated to India to seek shelter. The idea of home becomes problematic for the Parsis. Homeland becomes complicated for the Parsis because of cultural memory. The memory that has now been remembered in fragments.

Rushdie uses the term 'Fallible memory' about the character of Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, in his essay *Imaginary Homelands*. He says that it establishes a link between the individual and collective history, heritage, and origins through

memories; hence, memories play an essential part in shaping one's identity. But in the cases of diasporic writers and, more specifically, Parsi diasporic writers. Their memory of their homeland is fragmentary and frozen in time. Viraf has yet to witness his ancestors fleeing from Persia to India. However, he has been made familiar with his lineage and how his ancestors migrated to India through his grandparents, parents, uncles, and relatives. His idea of Persia needs to be more cohesive.

Viraf, a Parsi, an IITian from India, moved to America to pursue his master's at the University of Delaware. He is very much attached to his homeland, i.e., Bombay, India. His attachment to his homeland is significant to the entire text as his memories of the homeland serve as a way to go back to his past in India and compare those memories with his present situation. For example, "Increasingly, his memory of India, no matter how nostalgic, had the consistency of a watercolor in contrast to the thick reality around him" (47). The above lines talk about how Viraf's memory of India was still fresh in my mind, along with the reality of being in another country. A physical return was virtually impossible; an emotional or spiritual renewal was an ongoing necessity.

When he decides to buy himself a car in America, when he drives his car for the first time, Viraf first encounters racist slurs from the Broncos. They assume he is an Iranian, and they tell him, "Go Home, you fuckin' Iranian..." (Go home, 23). He falls into the dilemma regarding which home the Broncos are referring to because, for him, home meant India; it meant the place where he was born, Bombay. However, they told him to return to a place he had never been and where his ancestors had fled to escape the Muslim invasion in Persia (Iran). The cultural memory of exile is daunting for the Parsi community when they migrate to the West. Most of the Parsi community members are inclined to the memories of living in Bombay and growing up as a Parsi in India. The history of the Parsis migrating to India keeps hampering their idea of what is considered home.

Like most Diasporas who have the opportunity to return to their homeland but never return, their return is very much impossible for the Parsis even today. Even if they were given a chance, they might refuse to return because they have assimilated into India. The lines "Go Home, you Iranian" took Viraf back to the past of how his ancestors escaped Persia and came to India to seek shelter. He shared an apartment with some American teens. When they assumed he was Iranian because he told them he was a Parsi, they did not know how Iranians and Parsis were different, yet they shared a similar ancestry. He found it difficult to explain the difference between himself (Parsi from India) and Iranians. William Safran's diaspora model points out six characteristics of diaspora: "dispersal, collective memory, alienation, respect and longing for homeland, a belief in restoration and self-definition in terms of the homeland" (Paranjape, 4).

Often, in an attempt to unravel a dormant past, these writers dig up anecdotes of nostalgia. Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin* (2008) tells the journey of four women protagonists whose life stories are so parallel and connected. This novel deals with memory narratives transmitted and contested across generations. The novel's primary focus is the loss of

memories linked to the loss of Bhojpuri (Indian language) in the Caribbean. The language acted as a vehicle for memories. The loss of language resulted in the loss of memories. The novel creates this box of personal and cultural memories similar to Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*. Espinet's *Mona*, the protagonist, traces down her being on the Caribbean island through female genealogy right from her great-grandmother's journey as an indentured laborer crossing the Kala Pani from India to the Caribbean and working on sugar plantations. *Jahajin* and *The Swinging Bridge* talk about women's memories.

The narratives of first-generation immigrants sometimes invoke the spirit of knowing the past among their succeeding generations. As one goes through the literature on the Indian diaspora, one is also drawn to the significance of memory in the context of diaspora existence. Most of the creative writings that form part of the Indian diaspora are documentations of the writer's memories. These memories are of the writer's own experiences (of childhood and adulthood) or are passed on orally to her/him by elders in the form of anecdotes and tales. These shared memories, in turn, give rise to an image of India in the writer's mind that s/he desires to explore. Therefore, the memories of the 'home' left behind haunt first-generation immigrants' lives and leave a lasting impression on their children. The Parsi diaspora writers may not have experienced these memories, but they are still connected to them somehow. Along with cultural memory, the Parsi diaspora writer also has personal memories. Both the cultural and personal memories tend to be interwoven when the Parsi Diaspora writer moves abroad for educational or work purposes.

The diaspora struggles to imagine and construct a homeland from their memory; even though they try to imagine and represent their homeland as truthfully as possible, they tend to create fiction. Parsi diaspora creates these fictions about their homeland (Persia) as they cannot return to their ancestral roots. The memory of their forefathers who had access to Persia, who was born and brought up and lived in Persia for a long time, makes the Parsi diaspora aware of their actual homeland. They still hold on to those memories they may not have experienced but were passed to them from one generation to the other and will carry them forward to the future generation.

Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'Post memory' can be used to read any Parsi diaspora novel. Hirsch conceptualizes post-memory as applicable and not restricted to Jewish memories of the Holocaust. It also depends on re-articulations and re-enactments. The memories get modified and re-invented as they are remembered. This concept applies to every form of memory, either personal or cultural.

In chapter 9, titled 'Cowboys and Indians,' he is stopped by the Police when he is driving east on 273, and he goes back to the memory of cops in Bombay whom the drivers could easily bribe and motorists if they were caught speeding on the road. However, it was a different country, and the cops in America directly gave speeding tickets with a warning, and bribing was restricted. Viraf uses his memory to show how each country operates in

terms of traffic rules, way of thinking, and even overtaking a vehicle. He fights with some Broncos in Border State when he overtakes the Broncos' car. He remembers his father's rage against another passenger in the Howrah Express in India, and his mother intervened and stopped the fighting. He did not have anyone to intervene and stop the fight. The fight gets even worse when the Broncos stop his car and beat him up badly so that his spectacles are damaged. Viraf remembers his father engaging in road rage but would not dare beat anyone up for impaired driving.

"Their homeland is a series of objects, fragments of narratives that they keep in their heads or suitcases. Like hawkers, they can reconstitute their lives through the contents of their keep sacks (Mishra "New Lamps for Old" 68). He carried all these memories from Bombay to America with him. Whenever he would receive a letter from his mother, while reading it, he felt like he was home experiencing all the instances his mother wrote to him. In these instances, he was not around. However, the mention of a place in Bombay took him back to many memories like: "He saw Marine Drive, sea waves lapping against the breakwater, hundreds of Indians on the sidewalk A slashed-open coconut in his hands and a popping hot makai bhutta rubbed with chili and lime. The corn would burn his mouth, and the coconut would cool it down... (Go Home, 103). The figure of a slashed open coconut and the popping hot Bhutta can be looked at as a means of memory. According to Pamela Goyan Kittler, Kathryn P. Sucher, and Marcia Nelms, food is often associated with cultural identity. They say, "Foods that demonstrate affiliation with culture are usually introduced during childhood and associated with security and good memories (4). As mentioned prior to this statement, Viraf associates his good memories with the food he eats at Marine Drive in Bombay. As Bombay is considered to have a scorching and humid climate throughout the year, the two types of food – coconut and bhutta (sweet corn char grilled) create a very fond memory for him. He seemed to have craved these foods when he was away from Bombay.

Francis has made use of objects with symbolic value to bring back memories of the home for Viraf. "Not even a year in America, and your English is so good," she said ... He said "Actually, I mainly spoke English from the time I was four years old" (Go home, 39). The above lines show that Viraf's American friends were surprised that he could speak English fluently even though he was not from any English-speaking country. Their stereotype of an Indian not being fluent in English was broken down by this Parsi boy from India. The Parsis in India adapted even the colonizers' language along with their culture and way of life. Even now, their kids talk in English and a little bit in Gujarati. Even the question, "You are from India; you must be fluent in your national language and not know a word in English," took Viraf back to the days when his sister started speaking in English when she started to go to school and had forgotten to tell in Gujarati and followed by him doing the same as his sister. Here the language act as a carrier of memories.

Michael Ondaatje, a Sri Lankan diaspora writer, in his book, *Running in the Family*, talks about his family by making use of photographic memories by including his family photographs, the map of Ceylon, present-day Sri Lanka. Ondaatje explains every family member from the pictures he has included in his book. Ondaatje's way of talking about his family via memories could be more cohesive. As time passes, it becomes difficult for the diaspora individual to remember every detail of their homeland bit by bit. Narratives of personal history, memories, and recollections also fall within the category of re-visioning of history, narratives that return to the homeland in many ways; for instance, in Attia Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Bharti Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* (1973) (83 *The New Parochialism*, Jasbir Jain). In his essay, *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie talks about what a diaspora writer writes about and how the sense of loss of the homeland affects the diaspora writer's writings. This essay was written in response to the negative feedback he received on his book, *Midnight's Children*. He states:

"Writers in the diaspora are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutilated into pillars of salt. However, if they do look back, they must also do so in the knowledge ... that they will not be capable of reclaiming the thing that was lost... they will create fiction, not actual cities or villages but imaginary homelands, India's of mind" (*Imaginary Homelands*, 10).

Viraf's idea of the homeland of the Parsis, i.e., Persia, is imaginary and fragmented because he has yet to go to Persia. For him, home meant Bombay. Drawing from Rushdie's essay, he says that Diasporas create imaginary homelands. Every work of fiction is influenced by something that has happened to the writer in real life or has been familiar with the event. Specifically for the Parsi diaspora, it is understood that they have gone through much trauma when it comes to the idea of a homeland for them. When the Parsis migrate to the West, they go through double displacement.

Amitav Kumar writes that he finds it very interesting how Indian writers in the west return to India through their writing, writing about their memories of India. He goes on to say that distance creates this shift in perspective for immigrant writers, who feel nostalgic for leaving their country of origin behind. By reminiscing about their homeland's memories, they explore a new India. (Amitav Kumar, 2004, 13-14)

In *Go Home*, Viraf saw a different way of life in America. He felt as if he was discovering a new world altogether. Looking at particular objects like his new car in America reminded him of his dad's car in Bombay. The wide lanes in America reminded him of the narrow lanes in Bombay, and the driving rules reminded him of India. "Taking it out on the road jangled nerves he had not felt in all the craziness of Bombay's streets...he wondered why with all that noisy dashing around, you saw more accidents here than there(India).In India, you had to be on the lookout for whatever the idiot next to you might

do" (148). There were times when he would remember the memories of his childhood in India, which made him nostalgic all the time was what he wanted to return to.

It is said that there can be no diaspora without memory. The relationship between diaspora and memory contains an essential, critical, and subversive potential. Fracis's use of memory in this book and the two different settings make it a diaspora novel. Diaspora memory forms threads of continuity by creating patterns of attachment across time and space that may not connect to the homeland. Viraf's attachment to Persia is only through memory across time and space. "Memory, rather than territory, is the principle ground of identity formation in diaspora cultures, where 'territory' is decentred and exploded into multiple settings" (Fortier 184). Memory forms the basis of diaspora writings. It goes back to what Amitav Kumar has opined: distance creates a shift in perspective for the nostalgia of the homeland's past. I want to say that there would also be no diaspora without the distance from the homeland. Distance from the homeland is the only reason an individual is a diaspora.

Jasbir Jain opined that the narratives of the diaspora are framed by memory and distance and motivated by a desire to construct their own. Viraf in *Go Home* tries to associate the people around him in America with his family and friends back in Bombay. The university and the dorm room in America reminded him of Patel Hall in I.I.T. Kharagpur (India). The Broncos he encountered on the highway reminded him of the raging at Patel Hall back in I.I.T. Kharagpur. He associates almost everything around him in America in comparison to India. It is as if he is using his memory and collective memory (of his ancestors) to show how problematic the idea of homeland becomes.

The literature by the Parsi diasporic authors reflects the Parsi community's alienation in India and the West. Their trauma and craving for the good old days are some features of Parsi diaspora writings. The only way the Parsi diaspora feels at home is when it recollects, or some situations bring back memories of the past. Personal memory is crucial for the Parsi diaspora writers when they migrate again to another country because these personal memories are not traumatic memories like that of the past, which their ancestors experienced. However, their memories are happy memories of living freely as members of a minority community and their enjoyment in India. The Parsi community in India is not considered a diaspora. They may have faced negligence by other communities in India because they supported the colonizers in the past, but they have never been considered as a diaspora even today.

William Safran and Robin Cohen deny that Parsis constitute diaspora communities. The Parsis display many of the critical features of other South Asian Diasporas. Safran argued that the Parsis are concentrated in a single area, namely 'the Bombay region of India.' 'Moreover,' he wrote, 'they have no myth of return to their original homeland.' Cohen argues

that Parsis lack a 'myth and idealization of a homeland and return movement. It is only when the Parsis move to another country that they belong to the diaspora category. I am afraid I have to disagree with Safran and Cohen's criticism that Parsis are not considered a diaspora because of having any intention of returning to their original homeland. Other South Asian diasporas, despite having a myth of returning to their homeland, still choose not to return. Hence it seems unfair to despise the Parsis or not have a myth of the return movement. The Parsis who live in India and have migrated to the West always consider India their homeland, not Iran, because they have lived all their lives as Parsis in India. They are accustomed to the environment in India. They had experienced good memories in India and need not fear the dangers of persecution their ancestors faced when they lived in Iran centuries ago.

In *Go Home*, Francis emphasizes Bombay and not India as a whole. Every nook and corner of South Bombay is addressed in this novel. For Viraf, anything that happens in his life is connected to how he would react to the same situation if it had happened to him if he were to be in Bombay. Viraf uses memory to understand the complexities of a new nation Vis-a -Visthe homeland (Bombay). Memory becomes problematic for Viraf when he is asked to go home. Memory triggers the idea of the homeland. He is torn between home, meaning Bombay, or his home – Persia (Iran), where it is impossible to return. Memory is used as a comparative device for comparing the way of life in America and India. What is acceptable or unacceptable in both countries? For Viraf, the memories of people like his family and friends become problematic because he tries to compare them with the people around him in America and cannot understand why the Americans cannot be like the people he left behind in India. He feels alienated and discriminated against for being an outsider wherever he goes. It gets to the point that he wants to leave America because he feels he cannot fit in with American society.

In this chapter, we see that memories of the homeland get in the way of the diaspora individual's way of exploring the host land. Francis has brought out the angst of the Parsi diaspora people abroad through one character in his novel and how their idea of homeland is not Persia but Bombay.

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