

# The Dynamics of Desire and Entanglement in South Asian Fiction: Selected Works of Sidhwa, Roy, and Firdaus Kanga

Saud Hanif<sup>1</sup> and Fatima Syeda<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This paper aims to explore the dynamics of desire and the forms of suffering in the modern practices experienced by the South Asian parent generation because those practices are directly linked to their succeeding generation. It contends that in contemporary south Asia, the parent generation depicted in the selected South Asian texts is intertwined as they suffer from the pain of conventional as well as modern appeal. The key question that this study aims to pose is in what ways the entangled generation (parents) suffers while practicing the modern lifestyle? This paper offers a comparative textual analysis and character study based upon the reading of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Bapsi Sidhwa's *The American Brat* (1993), and Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990). The study takes theoretical support from Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) concept of 'ambivalence' and James Booth's (1999) philosophy of a community's political identity. However, this research proposes the concept of 'entanglement' as a predicament of the parent generation, and thereby does not rely entirely on the said theories. While introducing this concept, in other words, it pushes beyond the ideas and prescribed boundaries of postcolonial theory and political philosophy. Consequently, this study leads to the discovery of various ways in which the parent characters under study suffer within their respective contexts.

**Keywords:** Dynamics of desire, entanglement, modernity, South Asia, parent generation

## Introduction

**H**uman beings have been usually fascinated by new phenomena, for instance, new lifestyles or the knowledge that was not known before. These phenomena have always been desired and persuaded by humans as ideals. Same is the case with

---

<sup>1-2</sup> Department of English, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore – Pakistan

the arrival of modernity in the South Asian context. It was such a large-scale phenomenon, encompassing the social, educational and political lives of the South Asians, which began during the colonial rule in the early nineteenth century and continues to happen even today. This process may be the root cause of the dynamics of desire that leads to suffering of the parents (since early modern times) who find themselves entangled by their conventionality when they try to indulge in modern practices. Desire here means the desire of practicing life according to the terms of the modern era that include multiple phenomena that are new to the South Asians. For instance, the arrival of Western knowledge; the liberating ideas of Freud, Carl Marx, and Eliot, and Western lifestyle i.e., the co-education system without discrimination of gender and race, equal job opportunities for females and the like. Although these phenomena became normalized for later generations, they are followed by certain practices that might have played a role in challenging the traditions and conventions of South Asia, and thereby, those challenges might have resulted in suffering for the people, especially the parents. Modernity thus led to a diverse range of responses, from enthusiastic embrace to cautious adaptation to outright resistance.

Since modernity has countered a number of south Asian conventions, the parents might have the desire to not to leave their tradition, and at the same time, the desire to adopt modernity which will influence their following generations even more. It is to say that their desire to be modern may have been split into two directions, i.e., one, to remain aligned with conventionality and second, to adopt modernity which is antithetical to their conventionality. Thus, such two-directional desire dynamics may be the reason because of which they appear to be entangled in-between conventionality and modernity.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this research is to highlight representation of the victims that happened to be the aforementioned parents in contemporary South Asian fiction. In order to do this, I have selected four South Asian novels as primary source that include Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Bapsi Sidhwa's *The American Brat* (1993), and Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990). Furthermore, textual analysis has been employed as a research method because the words are targeted, and close examination of the texts is done. Textual analysis has paved the way for a more in-depth, speculative, and analytical character study through the use

of multiple perspectives with regard to the practices of characters. Each parental figure experiences a unique experience of entanglement with respect to the varying cultural contexts portrayed in the selected novels. This variety of experiences has helped in theorizing various manifestations of entanglement for analysis section. For instance, Roy's novel manifests the entanglement due to social discrimination, Kanga's work depicts the entanglement based on the endogamous aspect of Parsee religion, and Sidhwa's characters appear to be entangled because of educational and global influences. Accordingly, the selected parental characters carry the narratives of entanglement that are different from one another.

### **Theoretical Justification**

In terms of theoretical framework, this paper takes into consideration the concept of 'ambivalence' offered by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) a postcolonial theorist and W. James Booth's (1999) article "Communities of Memory: On Identity, Memory, and Debt." Ambivalence is originally a psychoanalytical terminology that refers to the existence of two contradictory feelings i.e., of liking and disliking, at the same time. Bhabha has introduced this concept in postcolonial theory through the discourse of the coloniser and the colonised. He maintains that there is an amalgam of attraction and repulsion that features the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. This is to say that the colonised subject admires and hates the coloniser at same time and vice versa. Bhabha considers it a positive trait that empowers the colonised subjects by paving way for mimicry, another postcolonial terminology by Bhabha that refers to mimicry of the coloniser. However, deviating from Bhabha's ambivalence where he observes the colonized subjects' ambivalent trait within the colonised-coloniser relationship, this paper maintains that the colonized subjects are in a bigger predicament outside of this relationship. In this predicament, comparatively, a broader relationship is at stake that is the relationship of the postcolonial South Asian generation (the contemporary parent generation) with their conventionality (the culture of their ancestors). This research studies such predicament as an 'entanglement', and it observes the relationship as the entangled one. Hence, the entanglement is not about how the coloniser or the colonised feel toward each other, its focus is rather only on how the colonised is trapped by the threat to their traditional values by the arrival of modernity in South Asia.

One the other hand, James Booth, a political philosopher, takes up the question of political identity as the continuity of a community across time. He attempts to

highlight the relationship between the preceding generation of a community and the subsequent generation that maintains and preserves the community's identity. In so doing, he discusses the ways in which people think about a political community existing across time. For instance, he asks, is the existing political community a "subject of attribution" (Booth 249) for the past that belongs to it? And is it "accountable for a future" (249) that is also its own. Booth tries to raise the question of the responsibility of a political community for its past and future. In simple words, he takes up the issue of entanglement of a political community between its past and future on the basis of responsibility. He maintains that he is "principally concerned with political identity and moral accountability" (249) which suggests that Booth's thesis analyses political entanglement where a political community is the target of investigation. However, in this paper, a community that faces a threat to their culture has been targeted. Where Booth contemplates over the political issue of a community, this paper, comparatively, discusses a cultural concern of a community, and thereby theorizes it as cultural entanglement. This is how the present study stands different from Booth's study. Thus, this study is aloof from identity studies and closer to cultural studies.

To synchronize the theoretical deviation from Bhabha and Booth, it is stated that there are always some primary grounds that are used as evidence in all analytical discourses of literary studies. For example, the primary ground for Bhabha's argument of ambivalence is the binaric division of the coloniser and the colonised. Similarly, Booth takes a political community as a primary ground to build the discourse of political identity. Likewise, the primary ground for the theory of entanglement is the parents of South Asia that are subject to modernity based on their individual experiences such as social discrimination, Western epistemic propensities, and the clash of religious norms. Theories of generational conflict can also be engaged in analysis that may include gender studies, feminist critique of modernity, and diaspora studies. However, this is beyond the scope of present study and should be considered in future studies and analogies.

### ❖ Entanglement

To determine who is entangled and how, it is necessary to bring the concept of 'entanglement' to the forefront. The word entanglement carries the base word 'entangle' and a suffix '-ment' that makes it a noun. The base word "entangle" means "to involve someone in a difficult or complicated situation" ("Oxford Learner's Dictionaries") Nowadays, in the common English language, it is used in a manner

so as to refer to someone's action of tangling up, to twist or to interweave in such a manner as not to be easily separated. In simple terms, "entangle" means to get tangled up with a problem in a way that makes it hard to solve the problem.

Using this most recent definition as a foundation, this paper conceives the idea of someone being "entangled" as the state of being entwined between two poles while suffering at both indecisively. This above mentioned 'someone' is the parent generation of contemporary South Asia while the two poles are their conventionality and the modernity (an epoch of advancement explained in the following paragraphs). To put it another way, the present study argues that the present parent generation of South Asia is entangled in the middle between their conventionality and the modernity. They have a two-directional desire, for example, that includes the desire to remain attached to their conventionality while at the same time practicing the modern lifestyle that deviates them from their conventionality, which Bertrand Russell (1930) names as "lapses from conventionality" (131) in his essay "Fear of Public Opinion." The factor that keeps them entangled is their dynamical desire. In addition to that, the conventional direction of their desire is not any compulsion but their very own, intrinsic will to achieve contentment because, as Erich Fromm maintains, "the development, freedom, and happiness of the individual is subordinate to or even irrelevant in comparison with the welfare of the state, the community, or whatever else may symbolize eternal power, transcending the individual" (42-43). Furthermore, the people who hold a desire for such dynamics, such as parents, appear to be in a condition of continual battling for its fulfilment inside a space that is referred to as "the space of entanglement" in this study. These persons are named as "the entangled subjects" in this study; the subjects whose "happiness depends on the solidarity he [they] feels with his [their] fellow men, with past and future generations" (43). However, both directions of the desire involve suffering, and they can only satisfy one of them so long as the other direction remains unfulfilled at the same time. The analysis of parent characters from the chosen primary texts will show that the suffering can show up in many different ways, such as indecision, restlessness, anxiety, fear, and so on.

### ❖ The Space of Entanglement

It is a space that includes constituents of both conventionality and modernity. For example, the entangled subject may choose to practice conventional life or to go modern. However, survival from suffering does not lie with any of the said options. Selecting modern life may meet fatal ends or the results could be of being an outcast

from one's own community. While on the other hand, remaining aligned to the conventionality may lead to disconnection with the younger generation or may be towards the complete loss of relationship with them. Therefore, in the space of entanglement, one direction of the desire always remains unfulfilled on the one hand, while on the other hand, suffering is a compulsory element attached to both options.

The space of entanglement can be understood with the analogy of the tug of war game. In this game, a rope is being pulled from both ends by two teams while a piece of cloth (mostly red in color) is being hanged through the very center of the rope. The purpose of that cloth is to guess accurately which party is winning. Let us suppose an entangled parent is a piece of cloth hanging in the middle of the rope. And the rope is the desire having a two-directional pull i.e., the hanging subject's conventionality and the modern life. Now when the modern end pulls the hanging subject towards itself, conventionality will haul it back forcefully. At the point where the subject would reach the center again, it would be called as entangled in-between. The space in which the entangled subject (the parent) moves to-and-fro during the tug-of-war is the space of entanglement. For instance, in *The American Brat*, Zareen (a mother) can be seen as being victim of modern force when she starts exploring American life admiringly, and at the same time, she is forced by conventionality forces her back when a letter from her mother arrives reminding her the Parsee traditions. At this stage, it is necessary to describe what this paper means by 'conventionality' and 'modernity'. Although the lack of agency can be pointed out in the use of this analogy, this analogy is merely used here to create an image of entanglement in readers' minds. To cater for this limitation, the detailed exploration of inner struggles, deliberations, and compromises that the characters experience in entanglement has been made in their analysis.

#### ❖ **Conventionality**

In psychological literature, conventionality is referred to a phenomenon of conformity pattern that means "the concurrence with the tenets, attitudes, and mores of a subject's culture" (Beloff 99). This suggests an agreement among the members of a society over its values and practices to maintain peaceful co-existence and cooperation among the individuals. Conventionality here is viewed as a way of life that has been practiced by a particular community based on their social, cultural, and religious values. Such values transit from generation to generation of the community and they are quintessential in building the worldview of the community.

Be it a religious community or an ethnic community, they always follow a complete code of life in their religious, social, economic, and cultural practices. The current study understands the said code of life as 'conventionality'. Since this code is one of the significant identity markers of a community, it carries the communal pride which is also called ancestral honor.

South Asian communities carry certain similarities among their conventionalities. For example, the most apparent aspects are endogamy, class consciousness, patriarchal family system and the like. Endogamy refers to the norm of marrying within caste, within faith and within local community. Class consciousness points towards the gap between upper, middle, and lower classes of a society. Patriarchal family system implies the male dominance in homes that militates against the education and empowerment of women as well. Last but not the least, is the belief in superstitions such as astrology, necromancy and the like. These similar aspects of South Asian conventionalities have been discussed with reference to fictional characters in the following sections during the analysis.

#### ❖ **Modernity**

In this article, 'modernity' refers to an awareness that has arisen in South Asia as an epoch that began during the colonial rule from the late nineteenth century and continues to prevail even today. There are certain characteristics, also known as modern developments (the advancement of technology and knowledge), of this epoch that not only set it apart from the conventionalities explained above, but also compel the common masses to deviate from them. For instance, there were many advancements made in various facets of life, such as the establishment of educational institutions that not only introduced a co-education system, but also a curriculum that featured liberating studies. These liberating studies included, for instance, the emancipating philosophies of Carl Marx and Sigmund Freud, as well as literature such as T. S. Eliot's poetry. Another example of this is how there were many developments in various aspects of life, such as how these kinds of schools were able to effectively recruit young people who would go on to become revolutionary leaders such as Rammohun Roy, Dabindranath Tagore (father of Rabindranath Tagore), Chandra Vidyasagar, and others of their nature. These scholars started challenging the prevalent ideas and prejudices by beginning to criticize those that were already in place. Their critiques and activities were not confined to the educated class; rather, the ignorant masses also started diverging from biased traditions at about the same time. That is how this whole phenomenon

emerged as an emancipatory and rebellious mentality which is referred to as modernity in this paper.

### ❖ **Opinions in Contemporary Scholarship**

A cluster of authors have also been consulted who have studied the modern conditions (the demand of change because of the arrival of modernity, see chapter four) and circumstances of South Asia. One of them, Makarand Paranjape, attempts to present the essence of Indian modernity in his book entitled *Another Cannon: Indian Texts and Traditions in English*, by exploring the texts written by famous classic Indian writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Nayantara Sahgal, M. Ananthanarayanan, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Kiran Nagarkar, U. R. Anantha Murthy, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Vikram Seth. Along with studying the evolution of Indian English literary experimentations, Paranjape endeavours to probe how the modern Indian consciousness came into being. He observes that the Western thinkers including Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, and writers such as Eliot became “an emancipatory and empowering agent of change” (13) for the Indians. He notes that these writers brought “the fruits of Western modernism” (13) that challenged in a freeing way the old values and rules that seemed to be suppressing at the time. Paranjape’s work assists this research in explaining the emancipatory consciousness that liberated the young generation but entangled the parent generation in-between conventional appeal and the rising trends that were against their traditions.

Bipan Chandra overviews, in his book *Modern India* (1971), the history of India from early 19th century till 1940s by talking about how India’s administrative, cultural, political, and social policies changed over time because of the ideas and movements that came from the West. For instance, the Christian missionaries established institutions such as Calcutta Madrassah, Sanskrit College in Varanasi and the like. Such institutions made the humanitarians believe that the “modern knowledge would be the best remedy for the social, economic, and political ills of the country” (119) which clearly suggests that the already existing knowledge and socio-political system was going to be inferior. In addition, the traditional education of India was also deemed as a system that had “bred superstition, fear, and authoritarianism” (120). This is how the educational institutions started spreading the modern education that began contradicting and challenging conventional education system of India. Consequently, there emerged Indian intellectuals who, Chandra maintains, believed that the modern Western thought was “the key to the regeneration of their

society” (124). Those intellectuals included Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), pioneer of the intellectual chain; Henry Derozio (1809-1831), a young Anglo-Indian poet and radical who initiated Bengal renaissance; Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891); Akshay Kumar Dutt (1820-1886); Dabendranath Tagore (1817-1905); Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and thus, it became a chain of independent thinkers. This history of thinkers and movements of sub-continent provides context for this paper’s contention.

Another scholar, John F. Richards presents a picture of the early modern India through highlighting various aspects that differentiates mediaeval India from the early modern. He portrays the broader picture of the early modern era by pointing out six phenomena, which he calls large-scale world processes i.e., creation of global sea passages, the rise of a true world economy, the growth of large stable states, the world population, intensification of land use and the diffusion of new technology that distinguish it from medieval period. Providing a global overview of the early modern period, he explores the effects of the said phenomena on South Asia noting that the “most difficult and challenging is the notion of cumulative and accelerating change in early modern India.” (Richards 208) It is to say that it was a hard task for a historian to synchronize the whole change towards modernity that was observed from medieval India for in some areas (not everywhere in South Asia) economy was rising due to abundant export products. However, the seaports were influential, population increased from 100 million to 200 million approximately and land usage was beneficial in terms of the cultivations and productions of landowners. However, the “cultural resistance precluded widespread adoption of movable-type printing in India until the early nineteenth century” (208) which demonstrates that the South Asians relied mostly on their manuscripts during the early modern era for the sake of knowledge. The less welcoming trend towards modern printing technology is the trait that is characterized by attachment of the entangled generation towards the South Asian conventionality.

On the contrary, there has been an opinion which sees the empowering aspect of modern developments with reference to the conventionalities. For instance, J. C. Heesterman argues that, “Although it (the caste system) in under attack from many sides it remained vital” (244). This opinion suggests that the modern developments have consolidated the already existing conventions without undermining it. This, no doubt is as opinionated assertion about the strength that the tradition from the modernity, however, Heesterman has not mentioned, which will be done in this

paper, the ways in which the modern developments have challenged the tradition. Thereby, this paper contends that the aspect of endogamy in Indian caste system has been countered by the modern education that also provided a co-educational setting in which students from various castes sit and interact with one another. In the following analysis of various south Asian characters, the spell of the consciousness of modernity is evident through their various digressions and departures from the conventionalities that each of these characters make.

#### ❖ **Zareen as an Entangled Parent**

Bapsi Sidhwa begins her novel with a discussion between parents who are worried about the future of their daughter. Such a beginning can be considered as a significant move by the writer as it has been contemplated in the following analysis. The parents, Zareen Ginwalla and Cyrus Ginwalla, begin arguing about their daughter, Feroza, who is going conservative day by day. The mother takes this issue seriously, while the father observes this matter lightly and sees it with reference to the overall political scenario of Pakistan during their age. Since the mother is concerned more about the child, therefore, this paper aims to bring her character at the focus of inquiry and explores how she is entangled in the light of her actions and their consequences throughout the story. Furthermore, the space of entanglement in which she moves to-and-fro will also be examined figuratively in the following discussion.

Zareen's character is a blend of two characteristics for example, first, she values her conventionality that features Parsee values and tradition including certain cultural ingredients and superstitious beliefs. Secondly, she has a tendency of the modern consciousness which is to say that she is equally attracted towards the advancement in terms of modernity that she wants to see in her daughter as well. For instance, she "would be as irreconcilably opposed to their daughter marrying outside the faith as himself [Cyrus]. But in her sudden crusade to champion 'forwardness,' Zareen might be complacent about Feroza's taking part in a play" (Sidhwa 10) at Government College Lahore. In Cyrus' opinion, the girls who act in Government College plays are "bold" (10), criticized and fooled by boys. However, Zareen can allow their daughter to take part in such plays, but along with that she also expects that Feroza will "come out of the experience unscathed to marry a suitable Parsee boy at the proper time" (10). Thus, from the very beginning of the story it is clear that she possesses a two-fold desire because of which, this paper argues, she remains entangled till end.

In order to bring change in Feroza's personality, Zareen decides to send her to the USA for three months at her uncle's, Manek Junglewalla, who is pursuing his degree there. She argued with her husband while proposing Feroza's trip that "travel will broaden her outlook, get this puritanical rubbish out of her head" (Sidhwa 7). Cyrus felt it convincing and expresses no abjection over the plan, but he is not the one who proves to be the hurdle. Zareen's mother, Khutlibai, raises abjections when she comes to know about her granddaughter's travel plan. She states that "the child will be lost to us!" (122) and "our elders used to say, keep the girls buried at home" (122). This is a point when the space of entanglement has been created because the grandmother is a symbol of conventionality as she has been portrayed as a Parsee who has firm beliefs and who practices religion strictly. Here, Feroza can be conceived as a symbol of Zareen's desire for modernity. As Zareen is being pulled by the desire of her daughter's 'forwardness', the conventional string (her religious mother) starts pulling her back and thereby, the space of entanglement has been created.

Eventually, Zareen succeeds in sending Feroza to the US where her brother is going to "guard her [Feroza] like a lion" (Sidhwa 122) and "the child was supposed to never do anything to disgrace us [her family]" (122). However, these are mere expectations because Zareen realizes that there is going to be a big trouble when she receives Feroza's letter informing her that her daughter is in love with a Jewish American boy, David Press. At this point, her suffering within the space of entanglement begins and she finds herself entangled. The narrator explains her condition as:

A subliminal cloud of nebulous conjectures and a terrible fear entered Zareen's mind. She grasped the basic premise – that Feroza was preparing Cyrus and herself for a change – but a change of this magnitude? She was confronting the 'unknown', and she felt helpless in the face of it. (Sidhwa 278)

The terrible fear couples with helplessness and vagueness to cope with the situation is the predicament that had been fallen on Zareen like a mountain. The information that the letter carried is a direct contradiction with her conventional norm of endogamy. Zareen had assumed that Feroza would return and marry a Parsee boy. Now she is going to face bigger consequences ahead because the Parsee family agreed upon sending Zareen to the US in order to settle the mess that she had begun. Consequently, she arrives at Feroza's and has a heated debate with her the very second day. Zareen tries to get themselves on the same page, but Feroza, who has

gone 'forward', does not give in, rather she laughs at her mother's inquiry about David's ancestry. "It's no laughing matter. You'll be thrown out of the community!" (Sidhwa 293), Zareen warns her whereas Feroza comes up with a possible way of court marriage and presents herself and David as "Unitarians" (293). This expression fuels the debate even more and leads to a point where "Zareen suddenly felt so wretchedly alone in this faraway country" (295). Eventually, when she realizes that her daughter is getting irritated, she thinks of stepping back for that moment because she has been instructed to "be careful; if you're too harsh, she'll rebel" (287) which again is a sign of her entanglement in between whether to argue more or to agree with Feroza. She might have been more persuasive if she had not the peril of Feroza's getting angrier from that point onwards. The topic, then, had been shifted to their plan for outing on weekend so as to calm themselves down.

Zareen's dynamics of desire begin their play again and the space of entanglement appears more clearly as she starts exploring America. Soon, she is no more the individual who believes completely in coming back to home as a religious obligation, rather her personality has been divided into two parts by the desire dynamics. She preserves the plan she has promised with family members in Pakistan, and at the same time, she has "stopped hearing the counsel of her distant Lahori relatives" (Sidhwa 303) because she is quite taken up by American whims and charms that symbolize modernity. This time the modern string is pulling her towards the 'forwardness' she once desired for her daughter and she "was as happy as a captive seal suddenly released into the ocean" (302). Her condition suggests that she is drawn with a powerful anomalous potential at least equally if not more than the power of conventional force.

According to the study of Zareen's character above, the coexistence of happiness and sorrow at same time is evident in the space of entanglement because in this space, if one side progresses in pulling the entangled character towards itself, the other one pushes the entangled subject back with equal force. Therefore, when Zareen is happy in modern conditions in America, the conventionality pushes her back to the entangled position through a letter again, but this time the letter has come from Pakistan. She starts suffering again as her "sleep became restless. Her dreams were crowded with the presence of outraged kin pointing long, rebuking fingers. As if prodded by an ominous finger, she bolted upright in bed one night, her pulse pounding" (Sidhwa 205). It is observable here that the nightmarish suffering and restlessness are result of her entangled position between conventionality and

modernity. Her such position becomes even more evident by the end of novel where she has returned to Pakistan empty handed. She has chosen conventionality out of the two options, but both options carry suffering because she is to lose her community if she has opted to agree with Feroza and to suffer with abandonment from community. While she has opted to agree with her community that also brings her separation from her daughter so, the suffering remains constant. It is apparent that an entangled person suffers in all circumstances and the entanglement, hence, appears as a predicament.

To sum up the discussion on Zareen as an entangled parent, this paper asserts that in space of the entanglement, it becomes almost inevitable for an entangled subject (such as Zareen) to detach suffering from any of the options given to move ahead. Therefore, such space has no point of zero-suffering because the subject suffers from the pain of appeal from both ends. It, thus, maintains that to be entangled like Zareen means to suffer at each step. However, out of such desire dynamics and indecisiveness, that Zareen possesses, her mind is seeking possibility of a third mediating dimension which actually does not happen but could have happened. Pondering over its possibility, the third intermediating space will be discussed further during synthesis in fifth chapter.

#### ❖ **Cyrus as an Entangled Father**

Zareen's spouse, Cyrus Ginwalla, is a successful businessman and a Parsee. He operates a sporting goods store in Lahore. Even though his position has not been stressed much because Zareen is the main character, Sidhwa still presented him as an entangled parent. This study infers that Cyrus has played the role of a protective father in the novel. In spite of that, the author has paid less attention on Cyrus's character than on the other characters. At the very beginning, he rescues his daughter from a fellow college student who was trying to coerce her into performing in a play that Cyrus himself felt was inappropriate for Feroza. Second, he does not concur with Feroza's suggestion to marry someone of a different religious affiliation. When he learns of Feroza's plans, along with her photos with David, he gives Zareen an abrupt response and says, "You'd better go [to Feroza] at once" (Sidhwa 281). The promptness with which he responds makes it appear as though he is already aware that Feroza's aspirations could have repercussions. In addition to that, "Cyrus had given her a slim envelope with a bank draft for ten thousand dollars. He had facetiously labelled it 'bribe money'" (281). It is apparent that Cyrus does not want his daughter to marry someone who does not share their religious beliefs under any

circumstance. In short description of Cyrus's personality, he has been portrayed as an example of a father who is also torn between his conventionality and his daughter's modern desire to break with their religious tradition.

#### ❖ **The Entangled Manek**

Zareen Junglewalla's younger brother, Manek, acts as Feroza's legal guardian when she lives in the United States. Feroza stays with him despite the fact that he is six years older than her since he is her uncle and the only close relative she has living in the United States at the time. When compared to Zareen and Cyrus, his character displays a form of entanglement that is distinct from the other two. He is ironic; for example, he presents himself as a liberal and an independent American, but at the time of his marriage, he is completely dependent on the conventional norm of interfaith marriage. For instance, Feroza learns from him, and he advises her, "And you'd better forget this honor-shonour business. Nobody bothers about that here" (Sidhwa 63). On the other hand, he is so concerned with upholding the honour of his community that he travels all the way back to Pakistan for the sole purpose of getting married, despite the fact that he has the opportunity to wed an American woman. This ironic behaviour determines that in spite of living in the United States and being an independent individual, his conventionality has the potential to force his independent string back to its origin so that he might not be ousted from the community.

#### ❖ **Ammu as an Entangled Mother**

The main character in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a woman named Ammu, and the fact that this character's name has a lot to do with the argument that the current study will be making here. In the Indo-Pak region, the term "Ammu" is used to refer to the mother. Additionally, the word can be used in a few other ways to refer to the same thing. For example, "ammi," "amma," "maa," and "mai" are all acceptable ways to refer to one's mother; nevertheless, the preferred form of address differs from region to region. Given that the person who is familiar with the cultural connotations of the word ammu is the only one who can explain why Roy chose to give the protagonist the name Ammu. To put it another way, it's possible that Roy gave the main character a name that had a parental reference in it so that she could emphasize the parental component or the positionality of a parent in her story. Therefore, the story of Ammu can be viewed as the story of a parent, specifically a mother, and this paper also examines her character from the perspective of a parent who is entangled in multiple relationships.

Roy's novel offers a spectrum of the entanglement, and the variety of parent characters appear on this spectrum as various shades of the entanglement. For example, Ammu, Mammachi (Ammu's mother), and Baby Kochamma (Ammu's paternal aunt) are the parent characters that are depicted as entangled between their respective trends. Ammu's character provides a lot of evidence for the present research because she fits in the category of a parent that is entangled in-between her conventionality and the modernity. Unlike Zareen's narrative of religious aspect of conventionality, Ammu's narrative carries the conventional aspect of class consciousness. It is to say that Ammu's conventionality has been portrayed through the perspective of class gaps within their society which is quite apparent through the prevailing Love Laws (defined by Roy in the novel) in her family "that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much" (31). Moreover, one more reason behind considering her as a good example of an entangled parent could be that she had not studied the modern curriculum. "Pappachi [Ammu's father] insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl" (38) which suggests that the reason for not attending further studies was the conventional norm that had pushed her back from studying. Thus, Roy has figuratively signaled in the beginning of novel that "there was very little for a young girl [Ammu] to do in Ayemenem" (38) suggesting that she is going to face some predicament.

Ammu's predicament began with the initiation of her desire dynamics as she saw Velutha (a Dalit boy who belonged to the lower class of servants) for the first time. They used to play during their childhood but in her adulthood, this was their first meeting. She fell in love with him, and that emotion led to the violation of the Love Laws. Ammu started meeting Velutha secretly during nights and when this secrete was revealed by Velutha's father, the setting of Ayemenem became the space of entanglement for Ammu. In this whole scenario, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma were acting as the symbols of conventionality. Roy writes, "Mammachi fitted properly into the conventional scheme of things" (116) and "they did what they had to do, the two old ladies. Mammachi provided passion. Baby Kochamma the plan" (244). Thus, one can examine Ammu's to-and-fro movement within the space of entanglement. Where the new (modern) string of breaking the rigid Love Laws of society attracted Ammu and succeeded in pulling her towards itself for a while, the conventional string pulled her back with equal strength. In other words, one may argue that Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, as the custodians of conventionality, had tried to pull Ammu back. For instance, "they locked Ammu up (tricked her into her bedroom)" (244) to be entangled in-between the whole scenario that was going

on in Ayemenem. This is how her predicament began as a result of digressing from the conventional Love Laws.

Ammu's case is different from Zareen's because she did not digress from her conventionality and ended up travelling back to her community. Ammu did not follow the convention, as Roy says that "perhaps Ammu, Estha [her son], and she [her daughter, Rahel] were the worst transgressors" (31), which could mean that Ammu and her twin kids were going to face the worst consequences. For instance, Ammu met fatal consequences, beginning with "the constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval" (42). She paid the price for defying convention with her life, as she "died [alone] in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge" (154), and "the church refused to bury" (154) her as well. Her body was cremated in an electric crematorium by her brothers, Chacko and Rahel, only. "No one else from the family was there" (155) because she was abandoned by her community.

Furthermore, the consequences of Ammu's act of deviation transcended herself and affected her children's lives as well, because her absence and her violation of conventional laws kept intruding into the kids' lives. For instance, Estha stopped talking and "withdrew from the world. He grew accustomed to the uneasy octopus that lived inside him and squirted its inky tranquilizer on his past" (Roy 13), which suggests a deep psychological illness that might be the result of the absence of Ammu, who might have cured him. On the other hand, his twin sister Rehal faced Ammu's absence in a different way that one can see as the female version of the loss. She "grew up without a brief. Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her dowry" (Roy 18). Such were the consequences faced by a transgressor of the conventionality that maintained that Ammu was entangled till death between two things, i.e., her love with a person who belonged to a lower class and her conventionality that stopped her from loving the ones outside their class. She had desired to ignore her conventionality, preferred to go against it, and the desire brought her suffering till death.

#### ❖ **Sam as an Entangled Father**

Kanga's character Sam has been portrayed as a successful Parsee banker who is the father of two kids, a girl, Dolly, and a boy, Brit. He manifests the characteristics that can be commonly found in an ordinary South Asian man. Despite the fact that he belongs to the educated class of Indian culture, he has a strong belief in several superstitions and rituals. For instance, the most significant source of anxiety in his

life is the fact that his son Brit, also known as Darius, the main character in the story, suffers from Osteogenesis imperfecta. It is a sickness that manifests itself in the form of fragile and brittle bones. Sam takes him to see Wagh Baba, a holy man who is known for misleading people about the efficacy of his heavenly therapy, in the hopes that “maybe he’ll cure my[his] son” (Kanga 3). So, the trait of believing in heavenly therapies of people like Wagh Baba makes him a typical South Asian man.

However, this paper argues that Sam’s character (of a father) is being entangled by his daughter’s desire to marry outside the faith. When Brit and Dolly inform him, that Dolly is in love with Salim, a Muslim, he reacts skeptically, though not in a harsh way; rather, he asks questions about the relationship. He asks, “Will he have four wives?” (Kanga 162) This shows that there are two reasons for him to be suspicious. The first of these reasons is the anticipation of repercussions that may emerge as a result of marrying outside of faith as it has already been noticed in Zareen and Feroza’s case. Second, since Salim is a Muslim and his religion permits him to have four wives, he is very concerned about the emotional toll that this will take on his daughter. He is perplexed by the dilemma of being entangled in-between the stress of his faith as well as the fear for his daughter’s marital life, and he also wants to fulfil Dolly’s wish. He finds himself in this scenario because he does not want to disgrace his daughter. The following explanation of a glimpse of the discussion provided by Brit provides some insight into his condition: “‘Darling,’ he said mournfully, ‘there is an insurmountable problem.’ His head was shaking uncontrollably and he was saying no with his hands. ‘How will you live without pork curry and smoked ham for the rest of your life?’” (Kanga 163). One can infer from this that, on the one hand, he views the ‘problem’ that Dolly’s marriage may confront as being ‘insurmountable’ or unavoidable. While at the same time, in the very next utterance, he switches the focus to a small topic of the recipes that Dolly is going to miss after she gets married. This behaviour, which consists of mixing the more significant problem with the less significant one, is an expression of absolute uncertainty and indecision, both of which are obvious in the present paper, which contends that Sam is entangled by the dynamics of his desire. This paper further argues that Sam’s desire consists of two aspects: the first of these appeals him not to deviate from his conventionality, while the second compels him to fulfil his daughter’s dream that defies the conventionality. Eventually, after a heated debate with Sera (his wife), they agree to send Dolly along with Sam to New York at Salim’s for marriage.

On the very day of Dolly's marriage, Sam dies in a car accident. The fact that Sam's accident is on the exact same day as his daughter's wedding is no mere coincidence, but rather a deliberate move on the part of the author, who is also a Parsee. Symbolically speaking, the author, Firdaus Kanga, is himself against a Parsee marrying outside the faith, which is why he creates a symbol of Parsee conventionality in the character of Sam, whom he punishes for letting his daughter digresses from the tradition. What he is showing, here, is that those who violate religious obligations are punished in heavenly ways, such as in the incident of Sam's death. Sam, otherwise, is a virtuous man who "had been on his own almost all his life" (Kanga 195). Brit, in the novel, says that "I remember that Kusti [the ritual dress of Parsees] he kept tucked away between his shirts and socks" (Kanga 196), which suggests that Sam has been an observant Parsee all along. However, in spite of being righteous, Kanga has him pass away since, as argued above, he has disobeyed a standard that is associated with the religious practice. Sam, in other words, is a symbol of religiosity on retreat, conventionality giving up, and thus he is punished. Sam, therefore, continues to exist inside the space of entanglement, between two worlds and as such part of neither. Since he chooses digression, however, the author has him die, showing that death is the only destiny for such a digresser, or, symbolically speaking, that whoever makes a significant break with tradition is the one who ultimately puts an end to it, or at least, paves the way for its demise.

## Conclusion

In order to recapitulate the discussion on the entangled generation, this study argues that it is not an easy task for the current parent generation of South Asia to make decisions regarding the approval of modern developments, either for themselves or for the younger generation. Instead, this process is full of pain that cannot be avoided, as we have seen in the character studies above. In other words, being in the space of entanglement, it becomes inevitable for an entangled subject to detach suffering from fulfilment in any of the two directions of desire. Be it the suffering of restlessness leading to the bereavement of one's loss of connection with the younger generation, as examined in Zareen's case, or suffering like Ammu's of being outcast from the community along with her children, that leads to her death and her children's abandonment. Moreover, the suffering could also manifest itself in forms of perplexity and dilemma as observed in Sam's case. Therefore, it is argued that there is no point for the parent generation that does not carry suffering in the state of entanglement because the moment they encounter modernity (either via

their children or themselves), the space of entanglement is established through the appeal of their conventionality.

## References

- Beloff, H. (1958). Two forms of social conformity: Acquiescence and conventionality. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 56(1), 99-104. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0046604>
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Booth, W. J. (1999). Communities of memory: On identity, memory, and debt. *American Political Science Review*, 93(2), 249-263. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2585394>
- Chandra, B. (1971). *Modern India* (1st ed.). National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Dehli.
- Oxford Learner's Dictionaries | Find definitions, translations, and grammar explanations at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american\\_english/entangle/](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/entangle/)
- Fromm, E. (1947). *Man, for himself: An inquiry into the psychology of ethics*. Routledge.
- Heesterman, J. C. (1963). Tradition in modern India. *Anthropologica* V, 237-253. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-3658-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-3658-5_1)
- Kanga, F., & Firdaus. (2008). *Trying to grow*. Penguin Books India.
- Paranjape, M. R. (2009). *Another Canon: Indian texts and traditions in English*. Anthem Press.
- Richards, J. F. (1997). Early modern India and world history. *Journal of World History*, 8(2), 197-209. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2005.0071>
- Roy, A. (1998). *The god of small things* (1st ed.). Harper Perennial.
- Russell, B. (1930). *The conquest of happiness* (1st ed.). Unwin Brothers Ltd., Working.
- Sidhwa, B. (2016). *An American brat*. ILQA Publications.

Article Information:

<i>Received</i>	16-Mar-2025
<i>Revised</i>	20-May-2025
<i>Accepted</i>	3-Jun-2025
<i>Published</i>	15-Jun-2025

---

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions. Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

• **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

• **Funding Sources:** NIL

Correspondence:

Saud Hanif

saudhanif@fccollege.edu.pk

---