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There should be no terms of **inclusion**

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Cities are persons we live with. We gripe about them, we love them, we want them to be different, we complain when they change. My thoughts on Ahmedabad need to be seen in this context – that our most intimate relationships are also marked by some ambivalence. I remember feeling reluctant to come back at a certain point, and reluctant to leave at this point.

I spent the first half of my life in the city of Ahmedabad as a Sindhi who felt out of place. Stereotypes about the community, jokes such as “Sindhi saen papad khain, papad kacha pet mein bacha,” left me somewhat scarred. The disgust at our food habits made me and many others feel awkward and secretive about non-vegetarian food. I was to

learn later that my experience was not unique, and that prejudices about food run very deep, marking the world of Ahmedabad into insiders and outsiders.

Some years went by in trying to understand this and putting it behind. I also had to put these experiences in perspective by asking how my parents responded to the city, and how the city responded to them. My mother came into the city as a fourteen year old, a young girl from Ajmer, who took to Gujarati language and culture like a natural. My father read almost only in Gujarati. Was the city welcoming to them, considering how open they were? More so in the chawl they lived, and less amongst the more upper-caste and upper-class Gujaratis, think. I

believe these questions do not have yes/no answers, it is the nature of negotiation that we need to look at.

So how do the Bengalis, Malayalis, Tamilians, Maharashtrians feel about the city of Ahmedabad? Would they have similar stories to tell? I believe that in varying degrees Ahmedabad has been welcoming to almost all outsiders, but insisted upon setting the terms of inclusion. I look forward to an Ahmedabad that is more celebratory of diversity so that those who are different do not need to seek separate neighbourhoods. Encounters with difference have a profoundly enriching effect, and I hope Ahmedabad will not avoid that opportunity hereafter. Heritage is about respecting social memories, your own and th