

IDENTITY CRISIS OF PARSI IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

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Abstract

Rohinton Mistry may be a socio-political novelist, has emerged as a formidable writer on the planet literary scene. As a fiction writer he occupies an important place in Indian writing in English. His fiction interestingly subverts all the conscious / unconscious cultural categorizations related to the shape of the novel. Realism is his preferred style. He chooses to alter narrative perspectives within an overall omniscient realistic narrative. Rohinton Mistry features a rare achievement to his credit- he's the sole author, all of whose novels are shortlisted for the person Booker Prize. Rohinton Mistry has been living in Canada on the brink of four decades now firmly puts him within the category of Indian diasporic writers.

The Research paper deals with the origin of Parsi community, its founder and his teachings and rituals. This present study views the issue of identity with reference to the Parsi community and other main characters. It has also discussed about how Mistry places the identity of the Parsi community with in the Indian context.

Keywords:identity crisis ,cultural,community etc

The Parsis are the followers of Prophet Zoroaster and their religion is understood as Zoroastrianism. The original homeland of the Parsis, "Pars or Fars", an ancient Persian province is found at the present in Southern Iran. In Seventh Century A.D, the Parsis left their homeland to preserve their religion from being Islamized by the invading of Islamic Arabians. They wanted freedom to practice their faith, for that they came to India in the eighth century.

This Research paper analyses sufferings of commoner in Such an extended Journey and author's intensive view of people and society. Rohinton Mistry explores the loss of innocence of the protagonist, Gustad Noble, who attempts to define himself in reference to his family and his country during the disordered times of 1970s in India. Such a Long Journey illustrates sufferings of Gustad Noble in the hands of self centered politicians and

heartless officials. His family worries and struggles become the embodiment of the average middle-class Indian family. Many secondary characters are crucial to capture struggle between opposing themes in the course of the novel.

The Parsis are an ethno-religious minority in India. Although they are minority in India, their contribution to the society, economics, science, politics and literature has been remarkable. They are small, yet united religious community. In India, they live totally on the West Coast of the subcontinent, especially in Mumbai.

He presents the events of political history of the country. In this novel he exposes the corruption, adulteration, and nepotism is common at various levels of the Indian society. The protagonist Gustad Nobel has been portrayed as a gentlemen, true to his name 'Noble'. The story reflects the struggle of a common man throughout his life. Mistry touches the various aspects of humanity through the behavior of his characters and exposes the hard realities of life and the colonial mind set even in the post-colonial India.

The novel may be studied at different levels as the tale of the sufferers who belongs to middle class minority people and on the other hand spiritual journey of the protagonist Gustad Nobel. It is argued that, Parsi loses the purity of their original roots because they suffer from double or triple alienation through time and history. In this novel, Mistry employs a combination of Parsi and Gujarathi expressions even some Hindi words this is seen by some like Glenn Carey a "serious flaw" (127). In this way of mixing various languages together that, the Parsis survive in India by adapting themselves their new environment and new homeland.

Such a long Journey is Mistry's first novel in which he tries to establish the identity, the way of life and beliefs of his Parsi community. The novel takes place in Bombay in the year 1971. In this novel Mistry views India of the 1970s through the vantage point of Gustad Nobel, a devout Parsi, living in Bombay. The novel set against the background of the Indo-Pak war of 1971. Gradually, the reader learns about the ritual, religious and social practices of the Parsi community by the folds of the events in this novel.

The rich tradition of the Parsi community in this novel are meant to establish the public and private identity of the Parsis by directly interacting with other social group. For the Parsi characters the religious element of identity are particularly significant. As Nandini Bhautoo in her book *Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction* argues that, "Mistry as a Parsi writer chooses to tackle religion and rituals (because these are important elements of the Parsi identity) in the context of the changes forced upon the community" (25). It is also important to detect that the belief in religious ritual is not limited to one social group, but it also includes the Parsi and their unique religion. The Parsi community is liable to centralized by the Mistry and other Parsi writers in their work as an attempt to reconstruct their tradition, faith and identity as A. K. Singh comments on *Such a Long Journey*: "Mistry's novel, as a

cluster of narrative, deals with the Parsi community And its identity, with its national consciousness and then with third Dimension, too viz its identity with the world and the novel is to be studied In this context, if we wish to know the Parsi community as perceived by the Novelist. The novel traces the history of the Parsi in India ” (194)

In fact, the Parsis experience the conflict of being worried with their community in one hand and the nation on the hand. However, in Such a Long Journey, the Parsis are involved within their community and the Indian nation at large. Gayatri Spivak a learned scholar analyses them comparatively and concludes that a feeling of kinship is more desirable than nationalism. The question of identity which emerges as ‘who are we’ is more important than ‘where we are’. Mistry gives the realistic picture of Parsi ethnos in India during the amount of sixties and seventies and their position within the main stream and activities at national level.

The concept of ‘We’ consciousness is explored throughout the novel. The Parsis have been living in India for more than one thousand years; still they are in the category of diasporic entities.

Although, Parsis belong to a minority group, they play crucial roles in political, economic and social aspects of Indian Life. Their cultural identity is part of Indian national identity. Here, in this novel, with Indian national identity and the world identity Mistry highlights his community identity in contrast with them. It is the journey of the Parsi community is to reestablish their identity and their lost status in India as Dinshawji within the novel, recalls and mourns, “What those days, were, yaar! What fun we wont to have, Parsis were the kings of banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that, Indira Gandhi nationalized the banks” (SL 38).

In Such an extended Journey Mistry’s main aim is to say the resistance and interrogation of the fantastic Parsi background, and their present minority situation. Gustard draws upon the rich Parsi past within the sort of recollection of his family’s flourishing business and its enviable status within the society. Gusturd fell into dullness thereupon loss of position in financial and social terms, so he has got to be like all other ordinary person within the hugeness of Bombay. This is seen as deprivation of his identity and status.

It is believed that, Shiva Sena and the followers of it in Maharashtra have allowed the dominant community to rule over others. This was encouraged by Mrs. Gandhi as Dinshawji says, “wanting to make the rest of us into second-rate citizens” (SL 39). He has exploited history to probe into boarder concerns of Parsis and national identity with fate and war as Major themes of the novel and has taken much pain to reflect on these themes at Personal, social and national levels.” (67)

Mistry is closely tied to his Parsi community, its history, exile, cultural patterns, rituals, customs, language and philosophical outlook. As a Parsi of recent generation, living in post-colonial India Mistry features a keen observation for seeing the versatile Parsi life altogether its serious, tragic and comic variations. It appears that, he feels a way of being apologetic for the Parsi situation and their identity within the multicultural and multi-ethnic reality of India. Therefore, his depiction of Parsi life is consistently tied to what the Parsis need to tackle and live with; opposing points of view, challenging religious, cultural and political values against the big national and international issues.

Mistry as a traditional writer resolves all the issues in the novel and takes every character to his possible and conceivable end. Major Bilimoria, Dinshawji and Tehmul die due their respective reasons, his daughter Roshan gets rid off her long illness and Sohrab comes back to his father as Tehmul dies. The close examination of the novel establishes it as an authentic document of Parsi culture and tradition comprising all the contemporary problems such as political corruption, regional and religious orthodoxy and conservatism. The novel follows the pattern of order –disorder and comes to conclusion with a satisfactory ending, in other words, it is a saga of sufferings in the life of people like Gustad Noble in the Indian Parsi society lauded with traditional canons of writing.

As in the second epigraph by T.S. Eliot indicates, Gustad's life is like the journey of the Magi. He wants to fulfill his dreams and aspirations but forces hold back in his way and he has to undergo hardship to make things the way he wants them to be. The rejection of his son to join IIT, the death of his friend and colleague Dinshawji and the betrayal of his friend Major Bilimoria penance Gustad to ignore his expectations. Gustad became like one among those wise men who forgot the obstacle of life and went ahead with the religion that this journey will surely be ended at a particular destination.

Things are not in his control. He achieved all the trials of his life with calm manner. His victory lies in his acceptance of the harsh realities of life to which he belongs. Literally there is no significant journey in the novel except the journey to Dinshawji's funeral which is followed by the journey to Delhi to see Major Bilimoria. With the death of Dinshawji the realization comes to Gustad that although Dinshawji was suffering from cancer, he had never shown his pain and had retained a mask of outward disorder. It also taught him the essential need for a philosophical acceptance of the finality of life. Gustad says: "Would this long journey be worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble? And what an extended journey for Dinshawji too. But certainly worth it". (SL 260)

A sense of release and forgiveness we discover in Gustad when he returns from Delhi. The reader of the novel certainly witness that Gustad had travelled an inward journey towards an awareness of that long journey of life. At the top of the novel a replacement journey

begins within the lifetime of Gustad that's of a consciousness that the search is endless which involves countless journeys. Thus the journey is the recurring pattern in the novel and it also symbolically reveals the conversion from one state of inner experience to another.

The long journey is already taken by Dinshawji, Bilimoria and Tehmul and may be a journey from hopelessness to hope. The hard times are over in the life of Gustad and he learnt that the everyday life is bound up with some uncontrolled forces over which man has no control. Thus, Such a Long Journey celebrates metaphorically the journey of the all richness of life.

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