

Impact of multiculturalism in Mistry's novel *Such a Long Journey*

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Abstract

The present research paper centers on the Impact of multiculturalism in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*. Multiculturalism is a social theory that makes out and respects minority cultures which have been tormented from social inequality, barring marginalization, dispossession, displacement and social bias. The paper predominantly deals with Parsi community and their sufferings and impact of multiculturalism on them while living in the multicultural society. It also tries to symbolize social concord among the people from diverse community. Multiculturalism tries to make agreement in the nation and in a nutshell it is 'unity in diversity'. The very paper also analyzes a prominent work of contemporary south Asian Canadian male author in order to bring out the significance of trans-cultural outlook in multi-cultural society like India. The very work highlights the recent debates about the limited possibility of the multicultural pattern as well as several mechanisms which heighten trans-cultural communication. Multiculturalism portrays the presence, acknowledgment or advancement of different social conventions inside a solitary ward, generally considered as far as the way of life connected with an ethnic gathering. This can happen when a locale is made or extended by amalgamating zones with two or more distinctive societies (eg-French Canada and English Canada) or through migration from various purviews around the globe (eg-Australia, United States, United Kingdom and numerous different nations.) Multicultural belief systems and approaches shift generally, going from the backing of equivalent regard through the different societies in a general public, to an arrangement of advancing the upkeep of social assorted qualities, to strategies in which individuals of different ethnic and religious gatherings are tended to by the powers as characterized by the gathering to which they have a place." We generally endeavor to homogenize a culture and force a personality on it since we know that each culture is inside plural and separated. We comprehend that all societies are conceived out of association and are molded by more extensive financial, political and different strengths. This refutes the very premise of Afro anti-extremism, Euro anti-extremism, Indo-centrism and different sorts of centrism's, all of which confine the historical backdrop of the way of life from others and credit its accomplishments to its own virtuoso. From a multiculturalists' point of view, no political belief system can speak to the full truth of human life. Each of them – progressivism, conservatism, communism, or patriotism is inserted in a specific culture, speaks to a specific vision of the great life and is restricted and incomplete. Progressivism is the case of a moving political regulation giving weight on incredible estimations of human poise.

Keywords: Social inequality, barring marginalization, Diaspora, diversity, identity, Parsis, etc.

Introduction

To show Impact of Multiculturalism in Mistry's novel *Such a Long Journey* isn't an easy job if we don't have clue about Mistry's life. He has been a tremendous force. Rohinton Mistry is an expatriate Indian-Parsi writer who presently lives in Canada. Breathing in Toronto for the last 27 years, Mistry has remained genuinely ingrained to his inhabitant place India. Most of his books are set in Bombay which remakes and agonize the nostalgic exile. All his novels are touched dexterously with empathetic stories of native India. Mistry now being in Canada gives the impression of beings at India with a shooting pain of nostalgia and brings to minds to his mind some of the acidic experiences of his Parsi brethren in India.

As a Parsi and also an immigrant in Canada, he gives the impression of being as a symbol of double dislocation and this sense of displacement is a frequent subject matter in his literary works. His historical condition comprises progress of new identity in the nation to which he has migrated and a multifaceted relationship with political and cultural history of the nation which he has left behind. In general Indian Diasporas suffers from a sense of triple dislocation. They go down their indigenous place, they enter into an unfamiliar language and find themselves among people whose traditions

and sets of law are different and sometimes unpleasant to their own. Mistry's this very second book of fiction, his *Such a Long Journey* (1991) which was curved into a movie in 1998, goes after in the path of his *Tales from Firozsaha Baag* (1987) but it also makes tracks from it in many ways.

Rohinton Mistry's first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991) brought him national and global acknowledgment. In Canada, the book won Governor General's Award for Fiction in 1991. It additionally won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book around the same time. The novel was additionally short recorded for the Booker Prize for Fiction (1991). The novel makes fascinating and invigorating perusing with its direct and cozy presentation of a fragment of Indian culture by an insider that is not very every now and again depicted in Indian fiction, specifically, the Parsee people group and its unmistakable lifestyle

Excursion is a socio-political novel which portrays the biography of a working class Parsee hero Gustad Noble against the background of the political occasions in India amid the 70s. Gustad stays in the Parsee private province of Khodadad Building in Bombay with his better half Dilnawaz and three kids; two children Sohrab and Darius and little girl Roshan. Gustad's familial family had a heavenly and prosperous past.

His granddad, furniture merchant had made a fortune and father, a regarded and presumed book retailer, had permitted himself to be double-crossed into chapter 11 by a drunkard unreliable sibling, i.e. Gustad's uncle. In spite of the fact that Gustad loses hope being lessened to the customary middleclass way of life, he has still held the preference for good living. It reflects in his nostalgic stare off into space of building a shelf with the assistance of Sohrab to mastermind his accumulation of books. He has likewise acquired the immaculateness of inner voice and uprightness of which the Parsees are exceptionally glad for.

Multiculturalism is best comprehended neither as a political tenet nor a school of logic with a particular hypothesis of a man's place on the planet however as a method for survey human life. It advocates a few standards which should have been precisely reformulated with the goal that it can stay alive. It is trusted that people are socially implanted as in they grow up and live inside a socially organized world and compose their lives and social relations regarding a socially determined arrangement of importance and criticalness. This does not imply that they are dictated by culture and can't basically assess its esteem yet rather see the world from inside a culture whether acquired or deliberately received. We generally endeavor to homogenize a culture and force a character on it, since we know that each culture is inside plural and separated. We comprehend that all societies are conceived out of association and are molded by more extensive financial, political and different strengths. This discredits the very premise of Afrocentrism, Eurocentrism, Indocentrism and different sorts of centrism's, all of which detach the historical backdrop of the way of life from others and credit its accomplishments to its own particular virtuoso. From a multiculturalists' point of view, no political philosophy can speak to the full truth of human life. Each of them – progressivism, conservatism, communism, or patriotism is inserted in a specific culture, speaks to a specific vision of the great life and is tight and incomplete. Radicalism is the case of a motivating political tenet giving weight on awesome estimations of human poise, independence, freedom, basic thought and uniformity. Notwithstanding, they can be characterized in a few methods for which the liberal is the one and only and not generally the most intelligent. It, likewise, underestimates values as human solidarity, a feeling of rootedness, magnanimity, modesty and happiness. Since it offers intending to just a few parts of the most complex human presence and passes up a major opportunity for what offers esteem to life, any political precept whether progressivism or communism can't give the sole establishment of a decent society.

The plot of *Such a Long Journey* unfurls contemporary India and it concentrates on minority issues like discrimination, search for identity, equality, and self-isolation and so on. Through the conversation between members of different minorities, the very novel views and reviews a vast image of Indian life. It discusses minutely and realistically the ups and downs of those people who belong to minority and possesses various multi-cultures.

According to Dutt, "The most impressive novels of South Asian fiction writers are set outside Canada, have nothing to do with the 'Canadian experience', or the Canadian landscape..." (188). her testimonial unquestionably holds true for *Such a Long Journey* because it is exclusively set in India. Genetsch,

meanwhile, says, "It is safe to suggest that Bombay becomes to Mistry what Dublin was to Joyce and Jefferson to Faulkner" (138). *Such a Long Journey* captures us from *Firozsha Baag* to *Khodadad Building*, from one Parsi lodging complex to another one. The insular world of *Khodadad Building*, "an island like space" and "a microcosm of the Parsi community in India" (Genetsch, 154), serves as a reference point for reaching out to other significant places. So it is that spatial expansiveness is much more in evidence here than in *TFB* period. As Leckie contends: The persistent themes in Mistry's work are eclectic, the intersection between sacred religious rituals and personal secular concerns, violated property, bodily functions, garbage, secrets, and forms of spiritual and material inheritance are woven into his unique and idiosyncratic evocation of people and *places*. (232)

It becomes important to highlight that *Such a Long Journey* is a 1991 novel by Rohinton Mistry. *Such a Long Journey* is based upon factual happenings which are set in 1971 during the Indira Gandhi government. Set at some point in the time of the India-Pakistan war, its central character is not a conventional hero. The very novel got much acclaim and fame from the literary circle. It also won numerous other awards. The story of the novel moves in Mumbai in the year 1971. The novel deals with the life of Parsi protagonist named Gustad and his grief on his life journey. The very Parsi bank employee namely Gustad novel who is facing several hurdles to earn the bread and butter for his family, though faces many challenges but doesn't ready to kiss the dust. His family consists five members including him. Dilnavaz, is his devote and hardworking wife. He is proud father of three children. The eldest son Sohrab has been engaged of IIT and two younger children have been doing school studies. Problems start for the protagonist when his eldest son Sohrab refuses to continue his study of IIT and later Gustad problems become more severe when his youngest daughter Roshan falls ill. Although Gustad's middle child Darius causes only minor problems but these all problem become a fear factor for the protagonist and the biggest setback comes to him in the form of his war friend Major Jimmy who has been missing from the apartment suddenly appears through letters to Gustad only to ask him favor. Gustad firstly is found in two minds whether to follow his friend's instructions or not, later he does as he was asked to do so. It has been also observed that Gustad's another friend hospitalization Dinshawji, whose cancer riddled, lecherous, leaves a deep mental scar on Gustad especially when Dinshaw's dies. These all sorts of incidents bring major changes in Gustad's life. At the end of the novel not only the sacred wall is destroyed but also bleak past of the Gustad noble.

The novel *Such a Long Journey* gives you an idea about Rohinton Mistry's affection, feeling and sentiments for Parsi community and Bombay city. Mistry takes out the title of the novel *Such a Long Journey* from T.S. Eliot's famous poem *The Journey of the Magi*. The very research paper echoes multicultural aspect in *Such a Long Journey*. Being a Parsi himself, Mistry takes the accountability to suggest the realistic approach of Parsi community. One of the main objectives of this paper is to analyze the manners in which contemporary South Asian Canadian writing signifies a particular attitude towards multicultural in a relation with minority issues.

It is praiseworthy that Rohinton Mistry portrays the setting or background of the period of the post independent Indian political and social situation in a realistic ways as well as

skillfully. It is also important to point out that there aren't many Indian English novelist's who have affectively used the backdrop of the post independent Indian political context, particularly of the crucial of the sixties and the seventies. Rohinton Mistry not only mirrors socio-political situation and raises a natural debate on various topics of multiculturalism. Like corruption, gender in equality and so on. The hero of the novel Gustad noble moves from joy to sorrow. He faces many difficulties but doesn't lose his temper. He enjoys the value of friendship, hates corrupts and political leader who have exploited the nation to meet the ends. In particular Rohinton Mistry has attacked on congress party, especially on Indira Gandhi. His strong condemnation and opposition to social and class distinctions and his concerns over the environmental pollution have been the basis of multiculturalism. The protagonist is fed up by the urinated wall and is forced to devise a way to stop the people polluting the wall. He paints at the wall the sacred images of four leading religions, so called Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Sikhs. It not only stops the people to spread dirt at the very wall but they start worshipping the very place. The very incident reflects that how Rohinton Mistry is conscious towards environmental pollution.

It is supposed that Parsis are come down from the religious supporters of Zoroastrianism who escaped from Iran to avoid strained conversion to Islam. While India offers them a safe place of protection, present day Parsis are subject to marginalization. Mistry grew up in this thrilling atmosphere in a Parsi area of Bombay.

In the Parsi English novel, Jaydipsinh Dodiya remarks about Mistry as:

Mistry is sensitive to the various anxieties felt by his community. He has demonstrated this by responding to the existing threats to the Parsi family and community in particular, and to the country in general. He presents his community through the different narratives of the characters who invariably express their concerns for their community and the changes that affect them. (44-45)

According to Rohinton Mistry Parsis are forced to leave their native place in order to get bright future somewhere regardless to know that they could meet worse time ahead. Parsis while moving to another new place not only carry their heritage, culture but also adopt new roles, which are called adopted roles:

They carry with them from the country of their origin culturally acquired roles; role expectation and values which complicate the process of relocation. They try to retain their ethnic distinction in a plural society rather than assimilate into a non-existing melting pot. They devise their own ways to transmit their knowledge, values, belief systems and beliefs to the next generation (Ibid).

Rohinton Mistry also highlighted the western context in this very novel when he notes the spiritual meaning through his protagonist, Gustad noble, who loves his garden and takes care of it like mother shows affection to her child. In this regard, Michael Foucault observes;

We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The

traditional garden of the *Persians* was a *sacred space* that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basis and water fountain were there) and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to... (26)

Not only spiritual space is provided in the novel though occasionally but domestic space is also brought into the light by the novelist when Gustad noble's daughter's birthday celebration is occurred. Like Thomas Hardy, Rohinton Mistry also stressed on the role of chance. He reckons life a big gift from god and it should be accepted as it comes in one's ways. It doesn't make big difference that life sometimes proves harsh or soft to someone, what matters is the resilience and courage to face boldly the life. He also offers a solution to a troubled mind. According to Mistry having hope and being optimistic is a big way to face the obstacles of life. Men wish to solve their problems by wishing miracles to happen though misfortune and good times come simultaneously. The world which Rohinton Mistry has created in this very novel so called *Such a long Journey* carries no utopia of any kind. The world which the author has presented is full of vices like treachery, corruption, pretence and so on. Politics outlines an important overtone to the main feat of all three novels of Rohinton Mistry. This obsession moves more and more closer to present-day times as Mistry undertakes first, in *Such a Long Journey*, It is also mentionable that though the author belongs to Canada but his love towards his native country so called India is reflected in this very novel. In fact Indianness is one of the striking qualities of this novel it is obvious from novel that how much is worried the author not only for his community but also for his native country. He wants to remove all the threats, vices of his native country.

Such a Long Journey is put against the background of the Bangladesh—Pakistan wars of the 1970s. In this novel, community events have direct upshot on the life of the average citizen. In view of the fact that the wars are a narrative justification for the investigation of both political moral principles and the problems of individual ethical-moral dependability, an expounding note on the historical events is in order.

It is evident that Parsi novelist have always played a major role in the arena in the English literature. Rohinton Mistry is one of such distinguished Parsi novelist who was born in India but immigrated to Canada. From Canada he does his best to map the Parsi culture space in India in his narratives. Rohinton Mistry looks to be very concerned about the moralized Parsi existence which largely comes under fire under the impact of globalization and modernity and rapid reduction in population made him worried. This article explores the thematic possibilities in the novel by which Mistry has constructed the plot to get his desired result. According to Rohinton Mistry country like India diverse culture exist simultaneously. Though India is a secular and it offers everyone equal rights and opportunities yet few communities are of the opinion that they are not considered equally to dominant culture.

There is no denying in the fact that being a Parsi, the novelist seeks not only justice for his community but also equal opportunities to move forward. It is supposed that many times when a person follows a new world, he becomes a victim of

that ignorance due to that he becomes a secondary creature in an exile land. The same kind of thing happens to Parsi, as they struggle to make their own world not only in India but in the West also. As a result they went away from their hopes aspirations and become marginalized in India. Being a diasporic writer, Rohinton Mistry raises this identity question. Living in a so called multicultural society, it becomes essential to get proper respect and identity:

Identity and difference have framed the theoretical structure for the contests around multiculturalism. Vigorous attention has been given to defining identity to analyzing why identities are important generally and academic; to the implications of proliferating identities and situated subjects for putatively universal concepts of value and rationally; and to notions of homogeneity that supposedly unite us all hegemonic or dominant identities and the exclusion they purport to license has been challenged in terms of difference of local or particular identities (Goldberg 12)

The imaginary atmosphere which Rohinton Mistry has given space in *Such a Long Journey* possesses all forms of a dark world. Moral degradation, treachery, corruption, intolerance are the characteristics of this very novel. These features are presented by novelist in a unique way. It is normal for Mistry to ponder over the fundamental programmes of his community as he is supposed to be diasporic writer. Like diasporic writer Rohinton Mistry expresses the sense of belongingness in his writing as whenever a person moves away to another land or country. First thing or obstacles which he comes across is geographical conditions, which are generally different from his/her own country. Later he faces the problems of culture, traditions, language which are different from his/her own society. Here raises some few but big crises like identity crisis and sense of belongingness. Parsis struggle for existence in Mumbai, where already many culture exist. They suffer a serious blow in their newly accepted identity as settlers in the foreign land. For them, it is not only a big challenge of geographical displacement but also a challenge for transformation of cultural perspectives. The cultural spaces are normally taken by the Diasporas who disconnect from their culture to connect in other dominant culture:

The hyphen is that which signifies the vibrant social and cultural spaces occupied by Diasporas in nation states. It also reminds us of the contaminated border, hybrid experience of Diaspora, people for whom an engineered return to a purist condition is a contradiction in terms because they returned to the quay their ships had gone. (Mishra 79).

It has been widely accepted that like Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry too raised vital questions on diasporic issues and they have offered a solution in their own way. On the surface the very novel *Such a long journey* is a story of a bank employ, but in the deeper sense it shows corruption corrupt politics search for identity and so on. It clearly expresses the authors feeling about his community. There are a few writers like Rohinton Mistry whose works move around their community and its basic problems. Mistry has demonstrated this in a responding to the existing threats to the Parsi family and community, and also to the country. He presents his community through the difference narratives of his characters

who express their concern for their community and the changes that affected their community the very novel *Such a long Journey* centralizes the Parsi community in many ways. The multicultural portions which exist in the novel are culture, identity, the social order, politics, globalization, education, faith, religion, sexual category, migration, isolation, homelessness, language food, festivals, traditions, toleration, and conflict. All these multicultural characteristics are diaphanously affirmed in *Such a Long Journey*. Rohinton Mistry has been successful in revealing the turmoil and unpleasant circumstance of Parsis through the protagonist of the novel. His very concern is just as he is on the same culture tradition as other Parsis belong.

It seems that Rohinton Mistry has passed through the same stage in dilemma and his conscience has been terribly tormented by those agonized memories. He has shown that when a less important community shifts to a dominated culture, it clashes and faces dire consequences. Being a multicultural and diversified country like India where already several minorities communities have been existing and fighting for their survival, isn't an easy place for each culture to exist in its own way. Parsis when arrived in India and started their lives in Maharashtra, found it difficult to cope with the presents surroundings. They have been neglected by other dominant cultures but they did not expect their defeat and mustered their all courage to hit back. Mistry has expressed his agony and frustration not only for various vices like corruption, treachery, knavery, environmental issues but also on the moral and political condition of the time. People like Parsis are not offered those chances and opportunity in the same way as to other communities.

Mistry's characters, correspond to the Parsi group of people, whose identity has been in olden times problematized. It is a progressive community with a magnificent past and a depressing future. Mistry endeavors at giving elements about the lifestyles and culture of the Parsis wherever he gets an occasion in his creative writing. Commenting about this Silvia Albertazzi her companion to Indian Fiction states that:

First of all, he tries to show the uniqueness of the Parsi community by focusing on their way of living and their Cultural heritage. Then, he stresses the diasporic nature of Parsi Social and historic experience, seeking the justification and the sense of his own story of migration in the perspective of the Parsi 'double displacement'. (276-277)

Conclusion

As a speaker of Parsi Community, Mistry is enthusiastically aware of his Community's tight spot. In the recent years, a large numbers of young Parsis have preferred to move around to the West, Mistry who belongs to them also hopes to, pulls through a life of comfort and pride. All the works of Mistry centers the heterogeneity of individuality inside Parsi Community and the vibrant nature of Parsi community itself. At the end, I would say that Mistry has not only highlighted multiculturalism in his prominent novel so called *Such a long Journey* but he has been a great force to unite various cultures especially country like India.

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