

Research Paper

‘SUCH A LONG JOURNEY’

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Rohinton Mistry was a novelist who presented the stark reality of our society and politics which helped him to turn out in the form of a no-nonsense author on the map of world literature. His early residence in Bombay gave a lot of help to him in presenting the life led by the Parsees in India as well as aided him in painting the picture of his beloved city in a pitiable condition as it was engulfed in the fire of corruption during the twentieth century. Even though the author continued to reside and composed his novels mainly in Canada, India always enjoyed a special place in many of his works. He has forged a strong relationship filled with feelings and emotions for his country and also increased the awareness of the readers towards his motherland. His first novel ‘Such a Long Journey’ gifted him name and fame both nationally and internationally. It described the fortunes and misfortunes faced by a Parsee family in Bombay. It dealt with serious issues which were bound to affect the lives of the people. The author has presented the sordid and sad story of the protagonist Gustad Noble who was the father of three children, two sons named Sohrab and Darius as well as a daughter, Roshan. He led a happy family life with his wife and children in Khodadad Building. His two best friends namely Major Jimmy Bilimoria and Dinshawji who acted as shields against the misfortunes suffered by him stayed in the same building. Gustad did not expect much from life. He always believed that a person should strive for such things which he can attain without much difficulty. Misfortunes were always after him and he realized that he was helpless against them. The author has employed the narrative technique of facts. Both the narratives of the first and the third person were present in the novel. In ‘Such a Long Journey’, Mistry ably constructed the plot by simply mixing the secondary plot with the primary plot. The protagonist was a man of modest means and led an ordinary life. The story originated and ended in Bombay. The important events post-independence found a prime place in the plot of the book. The primary plot involved Gustad Noble while the secondary put forward the story of Miss Kutpitia and his wife Dilnavaz. The plot was simple and easy to understand. We can safely conclude by saying that ‘Such a Long Journey’ was a celebration of life and the determination of the people to lead their lives in their own terms, come what may.

Keywords: Reality, engulfed, journey, misfortunes, facts, celebration.

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INTRODUCTION

Rohinton Mistry stands out as the most important literary personality of our modern times. He is a novelist who presents the stark reality of our society and politics which has helped him to transform in the form of a no-

nonsense writer on the map of the world literature. He was born and raised in Bombay which has helped him to present the life style of the Parsees in India and to make a sad portrait of his beloved city being consumed by the

termite of corruption during the twentieth century.

Mistry's birth took place on the 3rd of July in the year 1952, in the city of Bombay. He is the son of Behram Mistry and Freny Jhaveri Mistry. His father was employed in advertising and his mother was a house wife. Mistry's younger brother, an acclaimed playwright and a short story author introduced him to the world of books which bore an indelible mark or an unforgettable event in the mind of the author. He has done his schooling from the Villa Theresa Primary School and the St. Xavier's High School while he completed his graduation from the St. Xavier's College where he met his soul mate, Freny Elavia. At that time it was a must for men to give priority to science and mathematics as their subjects for higher studies which the author accepted and as a result in 1974, he graduated in science with mathematics as his second subject. Mistry achieved his additional Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Philosophy in 1982. In 1983, he commenced his career in writing with his first story, 'One Sunday.' One of his friends inspired him to write because the Hart House Literary Competition was associated with it in which the winner would take home not only a cash reward but also an added bonus of getting his story bound in leather. The story won the contest. His next story, 'Lend Me Your Light,' won the same prize for the next consecutive year. In 1985, another of his story, 'Auspicious Occasion,' got published in Canadian Fiction and helped him to bag the Contributor's award. The literary achievements of Mistry encouraged the publishers to publish a collection of short stories of the author. It was named 'Tales from Firozsha Baag' which was published by Penguin Books Canada in 1987. Still later, it was given another title called 'Swimming Lessons and other Stories from Firozsha Baag' and published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It was shortlisted for the Canadian Governor General's Award. 'Tales from Firozsha Baag' published in 1987 is a collection of short stories that are eleven in number and are related to each other. Though it is the earliest of the author's work, yet it brings out the finest craftsmanship of the author.

'Tales from Firozsha Baag' deal with everyday lives of the inhabitants of a dilapidated apartment complex in Bombay known as Firozsha Baag. The author employs the narrative technique of memories and remembrance, the method of writing is known as 'Nostalgia Writing.' According to the author, he is very much interested to depict a place which shows both the past and the present and he is also busy in reviving the identity of his community that is the Parsee community whose importance has diminished in the independent India.

The first story, 'Auspicious Occasion' is a story of ethnicity, religious rituals and customs followed to the letter by the Parsee community. Before India could see the dawn of freedom, Parsees led a sheltered and privileged lives as they were close to the rulers who

were the British. This friendship wilted because after independence, the Parsees were pushed to the background and their sufferings increased manifold which is shown by the miserable existence of the Parsees inhabiting Firozsha Baag.

'Auspicious Occasion' is the story concerning the male protagonist Rustomji, who is an eccentric old man with a polluted mind. He shamelessly glances at his servant, Gajra. He continuously abuses every one as well as employs Gujarati phrases and because of this attitude of the Parsees, they qualify as farcical characters. According to Nilufer Bharucha:

"Mistry's characters might appear to teeter on the edge of the farcical, but then make the existentialist leap across the chasm. Rustomji and his wife Mehroo are not stock comic Parsees, they are real human beings who at the end of the story almost tragic characters become." [Bharucha, Nilufer. "Tales from Firozsha Baag: A Return to the Beginning," Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces. Rawat Publications, 2003, p.74.]

The deteriorating condition of the Parsees in the independent India is shown in the incident at the bus stop where his clothes got spoiled due to the tobacco which someone spat on him and ridiculed him. Rustomji brought forth his contempt for the Indians by terming them as 'uneducated, filthy, ignorant barbarians.' [Mistry, Rohinton. *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. Penguin Books, 1987, p.15.]

Feeling humiliated, the Indians who formed the majority, had a tiff with the Parsee. By taking up the role of a clown, he thought it best to disappear from this ugly scene because he is manhandled by the mob. The relation between both the community that is the Parsees and Hindus form a special tie which binds all the stories together. The Parsees are so engrossed at living isolated lives that they fail to understand India has been liberated and they have to understand the present as well as the future. The only connection with the Indians lies in their relationship with the servants who belong to the other communities.

Mistry has shown his soft corner towards depicting the rituals followed by the Parsees. Mehroo, the protagonist's wife, is a woman filled with piety who spends her time in praying and following all rules and regulations of her religion strictly and for this she makes frequent visits to the Fire Temple. From the bottom of her heart, she believes that her family priest Dustoor Dhunjisha is a holy man. When she comes to realize the situation that the priest is no more because he has been slain by a man due to the latter's greed for wealth, she is sad as well as shattered from inside. The incident shed light on

the fact that in independent India the Parsees feel that they will be tormented by the Indians as they were the friends of the British but they forget that our country is like a mother who loves all her children equally so they need not fear about getting a raw deal as they are the citizens of India so they will get their legitimate rights.

His another popular short story is 'Squatter'. Here Nariman Hansotia narrates the story of this squatter. Regarding its narrative technique, the critic Nilufer Bharucha has defined it as, '*Scherazadic features of the Arabian Nights narrative techniques.*' [Nilufer Bharucha. "Tales from Firozsha Baag: A Return to the Beginning," *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Publications, 2003, p.103.]

Sarosh is the unfortunate squatter and his ordeal in Canada is narrated by the story teller. He is a good son who has made a promise to his mother that either he would completely adapt himself to the conditions in Canada if satisfied or if not would come back to her in Bombay. His main drawback is that he is unable to use a western toilet. Being a Parsee, Sarosh accepts that he is an Indian squatter of Canada because he feels comfortable to defecate by squatting like a true Indian. The readers are not much impressed by the anxieties of Sarosh and treat him as comical and ridiculous. It also indicates the lack of awareness regarding cleanliness among the Parsees.

Some of the stories are based on the travels of some of the Parsees of Firozsha Baag, who had the audacity to leave for North America, leaving behind their homes and hearths to pursue their dreams. Still later, guilt in the Parsees has taken centre-stage after leaving India and they have resettled in various parts of the world especially in the West. Despite braving the guilt of dislocation from their own homes from India and settling elsewhere, the Parsees have converted their lives into a success. The story 'Lend Me Your Light,' refers to this guilt and here the protagonist lays bare his sadness and guilt like a modern day Tiresias:

"I'm guilty of the sin of hubris for seeking emigration out of the land of my birth and paying the price in burnt out eyes: I, Tiresias, blind and throbbing between two lives, the one in Bombay and the one to come in Toronto." [Rohinton Mistry. *Tales from firozsha Baag*. Penguin Books, 1987, p.180.]

The concluding story 'Swimming Lessons' is the story where we can clearly see Canada. In this story, the Canadian world is embedded with memories of India. The inability of our protagonist to swim in Bombay and in Canada points out his failure to fit in both the countries. When the story comes to an end, he successfully organises himself and makes Canada his home by writing stories about his house, cementing his

relationship with his culture that he has forsaken through his narrative. Thus these stories serve as a proof of the author's recognition of his relation to the Parsee culture.

'Such a Long Journey' which was his first novel brought him name and fame, nationally and internationally. It is a tale describing the fortunes of a Parsee family of Bombay. The book won many accolades like the Governor General's Award for Fiction in Canada and the W.H. Smith Books in Canada First Novel Award. He was also awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book. The book has been nominated for the Booker Prize and Trillium Prize. In the year 2000, when the month was March, it was converted into a film by Sooni Taraporevala and was directed by Sturla Gunnarsson. The film had the stellar cast of Om Puri and Roshan Seth and it released as a major motion picture.

In the year 1995, his second novel 'A Fine Balance' won a string of awards like the Giller Prize and again in the year 1996, he received the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book. It also received the honour of once again being nominated for Booker Prize as well as for the Irish Times International Fiction Prize. His latest work, 'Family Matters' which saw the light of publication in the year 2002, got many awards like James Tait Black Memorial Prize as well as Kiriama Pacific Rim Book Prize which he jointly received with another author Pascal Khoo Thwe. It was also nominated for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2002 and International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2004.

India comes under the spot light in Mistry's works, though he continues to recite and write mainly in Canada. He forges a strong relationship filled with feelings and emotions for his country in his work and has increased the understanding of the readers with it. As he is a Parsee, the author writes about the conditions that have bound the Parsee community in India.

His works also consist of the social and the political situation faced by India when the author was staying in Bombay. When a person comes across his writings, he or she arrives to the conclusion that he has immense knowledge about the state of Indian politics even though he immigrated to Canada. Corruption, sufferings of the middle class, Shiv Sena, schemes of the political parties provide the necessary ammunition to his works.

The fiction of Mistry is full of concern for the war waged by the community to save its identity as the author is a born Zoroastrian. The initial works of the author 'Tales from Firozsha Baag' and 'Such a Long Journey' are a study of the differences in identity within the community. But 'A Fine Balance' does not come across this issue. His latest work 'Family Matters' consists of some of the interesting features of the Parsee community.

Rohinton Mistry as a diasporic author has carved a niche for himself. According to Nilufer Bharucha : '*As an Indian who now lives and*

writes from Canada, Rohinton Mistry is a writer of the Indian Diaspora. However, Mistry is also a Parsee Zoroastrian and as a person whose ancestors were forced into exile by the Islamic conquest of Iran, he was in a diaspora even in India. This informs his writings with the experience of multiple displacements.' [Bharucha, Nilufer. "On the Wings of Fire: Theorising the Parsee Diaspora," *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat. Publications, 2003.p.23.]

The problems of confusion regarding identity and separation from their homes greatly haunt the Diaspora authors and they show a great interest towards their new homes and to accumulate all things which are the best in the light of their perspectives. This is very aptly shown in their works produced.

The Parsees belong to a community which is ethnic and religiously inclined. Regarding its inability to accept changes in the faith, high rate of extinction and low birth rate, faith in marrying late, wanting to have a nuclear family and Parsee girls marrying people who do not know about the bride's religion lead to the lessening of the Parsee community. The question which is chasing the Parsee authors is how to carve out a new identity and to remember the features of the community that are uniquely ethnic as well as religious.

The works of the Parsee authors resemble in a manner which shows the emergence of the community as the hero. The community comes into the picture with the help of the characters and their narratives. They show their concern for the community as well as changed which brings both of them face to face.

The language used by the author in his writings is the language of a Parsee gentleman. His English remains unchanged though residing in Toronto, Canada since 1975 and it is Indian in form and spirit. The idea is to shed light on the identity of the Parsees. It also stresses upon the capability of the particular community's efforts to cope up with the truth of the post- colonial or the new independent India as well as learning to lead their lives outside India in the West. Like the other Indian authors, he prefers the technique of alternate narratives as well as the medium of anti- realist narration.

Living a life based on the Parsee culture albeit a citizen of Canada, he belongs to the fringes and so his storytelling opposes the domination of a single culture inside India all by its own. The author has made a good use of hybridity in language which brings out the best in his works. This holds true for both 'Tales from Firozsha Baag' and 'Such a Long Journey.'

The language in Mistry's novels is coloured in a manner of the use of language by the Parsees. In his writings, certain words are present which can be termed as unpalatable and unpleasant for a good society.

Majority of his characters from the Parsee middle- class families have been given preference and they do not find these words bad to use them in his novels. One such example is his work, 'Such a Long Journey' where a character named Dinshawji vents out his rage against the fetish of the Marathas in changing the names of the important places. He remarks:

'Why change the names? Saala sister fuckers! Hutatma Chowk!' He spat out the words disgustedly; 'What is wrong with Flora Fountain?' [Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, pp. 73-74.]

Thus, we can say that Mistry's 'Such a Long Journey' and 'A Fine Balance' serve as an evidence to push the author forward and to make a name for himself as the author of post- independence. His main quality is the skill in bringing out his community from the negative light of standing with the British through thick and thin to a more sympathetic place in the eyes of the readers, his country India and the humanity which is going through a rough patch regarding identity in the form of narrating it fictionally.

'Such a Long Journey' is a very interesting and remarkable novel of Rohinton Mistry. He has brought to the forefront the India surrounded by its historical boundary and has given it a fictional clothing in the novel which is important culturally. Regarding the theme, his main concern is the different kinds of events affecting the country after independence. His works make an intensive search for relationships in community, place, self and identity certifying the local and accepting the post-colonial experience in a very wide range, whether in North America or India. 'Such a Long Journey' and 'A Fine Balance' draw the picture of difference in identity prevalent within the Parsee community and the energetic nature of the said community. But the above mentioned community does not make its presence felt in his second novel 'A Fine Balance'.

The presentation of the liveliness of India in bright colours has helped to arouse the interest of the readers towards the fiction of Mistry. Society and politics of India are given a prime place by Mistry in his works as he knows about all the nooks and corners of the Indian politics. When a person comes across his novels, he or she knows that the author's awareness about politics is very good even though he has left India and is happily settled in Canada for many years now. The incidents whether corruption, decisions taken by the politicians and schemes implemented by them, the sufferings of the common man, problems of caste as well as the Zamindars oppressing the poor are brought into the limelight by the author in all his works. Before leaving the country for greener pastures, Mistry became well- versed about the society and political situation of India. His

works concentrate upon the recent political problem. In the words of Jasbir Jain:

'Rohinton Mistry's work raises a whole lot of other questions specifically related to the 'homeland' and political memory. Neither nostalgia nor memory in itself can account for this rootedness and preoccupation with the homeland and the environmental precepts of the city of birth. It also not nearly the fact of being more at home or having a more intimate relationship with the space back there. It is more than all these, a projection of the individual character, a gesture of expanding the memory to include both the specific and the universal.'
[Jain, Jasbir, and Nilufer Bharucha. *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Publications, 2003, p.11.]

The author has taken giant strides to achieve many recognitions in his respected field which is writing novels and short stories. According to Bharucha:

'Mistry's creative writings have over the years collected a large number of awards and media recognition. Sales figures testify to reader loyalties around the world, as each new novel by the reclusive writer is eagerly consumed by its readers.'
[Bharucha, Nilufer. *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Publications, 2003, p.16.]

As a good Parsee author, Mistry is not a stranger to the anxieties faced by his community. He has given them ample space in his writings by coming forward and expressing his solidarity to his friends, family and country. His different characters narrate the stories on their own by showing their worries for the community and the changes in the form of reforms after independence which they come across face to face. In these stories, when the community comes to the forefront, their protection and preservation attains the centre stage and thus we gain knowledge about them. According to A.K.Singh:

'Mistry's novel, as a cluster of narratives, deals with the Parsee community and its identity, with its national consciousness and then with the 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 Parsee community as perceived by the novelist. The novel traces the history of the Parsee community in India through Malcolm Saldana's bid to establish historical superiority of his religion over his friend's [Gustad's] as his Christianity came to India. Over 1900 years ago when Apostle Thomas landed on

the Malabar Coast long before the Parsees came to the Seventh Century from Persia ; running away from the Muslims. But Saldana is forced to give up by Gustad's rejoinder when he said, "This may be but our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam." [Singh, A.K. "Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*: (Re) Narrating a Country and Community," *Indiannization of English Language and Literature*, edited by R.S.Pathak, Bahri Publication, 1994, p. 194.]

This otherwise happy community remaining cocooned in its own shell maintaining indifference to the things around it expressing fear that will occur after independence gives appropriate weight to the novel. It always stood and still standing as a peace loving community accepting the rich cultural heritage of our country while helping to develop it according to its own manner. Politics and politicians of India becomes a butt of their jokes as well as objects of hatred for them because somewhere down the line they received hurt in one way or the other. Pundit Nehru and Indira Gandhi transformed into their favourite punching bags because they feel that the father and daughter duo were ambitious and though she married Firoze Gandhi who was a Parsee but was never given much respect and attention as he always paled before the aura of Indira.

The Parsee community is bestowed with special attention in '*Such a Long Journey*'. The residents of Khodadad Building belong to the middle class expressing their worry and anguish which fall into the destiny of the community dying a slow death. The customs and rituals followed by the Parsees also find a prime place in the novel.

Regarding the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's decision to nationalize the banks, Dinshawji does not take it into its stride and he expresses his feelings to Gustad in the following line:

'What days those were, year. What fun we use to have...Parsees 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 nationalized the banks.'
[Mistry,Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, p. 38.]

Gustad, the protagonist of the novel thinks that nationalization of the banks was unnecessary and uncalled for. But it has been regarded as the brain child of Indira to gain the vote bank of the poor people

disregarding the desires of the Parsees who were reputed bankers. To teach the people how to save money for a rainy day, nationalizing the bank was a need of the hour and she did the correct thing. By doing this she gained love and affection of the people.

Due to the rise of fundamentalism in Mumbai, the Parsees feel that they are unwanted and as a result become frightened. In the words of Dinshawji:

'Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real Gandoo Raj.'

'All they know is to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout slogans, make threats, and change road names.'

*'Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place is Dada Saheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly it's on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? [Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, pp. 73-74.]*

The advent of Major Bilimoria in the midst of action, does not bode well for Gustad Noble. By theatrically representing the Nagarwala case, an essential political point is made by him. At that time, the Prime Minister was so powerful that a single call could make anybody go weak on his or her knee. On the strength of this ruse, a bank manager in Delhi was forced to part with sixty lakh rupees in order to pay Nagarwala. With the money gone missing nobody knew where after a gap of some months, he expired mysteriously. The Parsees did not take this incident very lightly as the above mentioned person was a prominent member of the community and doubts were raised regarding his death. This incident so much dented the reputation of the Parsees that they took an instant dislike against the policies of that particular political party. In the novel 'Such a Long Journey', the Parsee community emerged from the Mire and project itself as the second lead. Mistry brings out some of the unique traits of the community in his previous works 'Tales from Firozsha Baag' and 'Such a Long Journey'. Regarding his latest work 'Family Matters', the Parsees as a community are given ample space.

The novel chronicles the life of some of the characters belonging to the middle class in today's India. It deals with such issues that are serious and affect the lives of people. The author tells the sordid and sad story of the protagonist Gustad, a middle class person working as an accountant in a bank. Although he faces many problems

in his life, he dreams splendidly regarding prosperity knocking at the door of his house.

Gustad Noble has fathered three children. He has two able sons named Sohrab and Darius as well as a daughter called Roshan. He resides at Khodadad Building with his wife Dilnavaz and children leading a happy life. Also has two best friends- Major Jimmy Billimoria and Dinshawji who stand with him in his misfortunes. They also stay in the same building. Like any person, Gustad does not expect much in life. He believes that a person should create only such aspirations which he can fulfill in his utmost capacity. Even though he lags behind to realise his small expectations, he is not disappointed. As the narrative progresses, he becomes abreast of the fact that circumstances are against him and he is unable to do anything about them. A few extra ordinary events happen in his life. Major Billimoria suddenly and mysteriously disappears from the Building. This disrupts the life of Gustad as he regards Jimmy as his dearest friend who has always helped and given him right advice when in need. Noble is apologetic for the Major's deeds. He makes a comment:

'To leave like this, after being neighbours for so many years, is a shameful way of behaving. Bloody bad manners.' [Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, p.14.]

Another incident that rocks Gustad to the hilt is the strange demeanour of his son Sohrab. His refusal to his father's earnest entreaty to join IIT shatters Noble very badly. The last straw on the camel's back is also put by Sohrab when he badly quarrels during the birthday celebrations of his sisters Roshan and storms out of the house in a fit of rage bubbling in his heart. When his father tries to gauge the situation, Sohrab bursts out:

'It's not suddenly, I'm sick and tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time. I'm not interested in it, I'm not a jolly good fellow about it, and I'm not going there.' [Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, p.48.]

Gustad Noble encounters troubles till the fag end of his life. They do not give him a moment's reprieve. Diarrhea makes his daughter suffer which results in her late recovery. Major Bilimoria hands him ten lakh rupees that culminates into a big trouble because being an honest person belonging to middle- class, he finds himself in a quandry about what to do with such a large amount of money. His close friend Dinshawji falls seriously ill and dies which Gustad cannot accept. He eventually goes to the funeral of his friend. The event which transforms him into a black day for Gustad is the demolition of sacred wall called as a nuisance by the authorities of the

municipality. The condition of his family becomes miserable as the wall is sacred for him because it shields his house from both internal and external evils and it is gone for ever.

In a short span of time, he has a conflict with his neighbours Mr. Rabadi and the latter levels the allegation that Darius Noble, the second son of Gustad is in love with his only daughter. Rabadi is notoriously addressed as dogwalla. Anxiety brews in the mind of Noble after coming to terms with this news and he senses that his neighbour might spread this anywhere. When the son comes back, the father tries to elicit information from him about the affair. The son flatly refuses and says that when Jasmine is found with his friends, only then he talks to her. In the words of Gustad to his son:

"Listen. Her father is a crackpot. So just stay away. If she is with your friends, you don't join them." [Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, p.79.]

In such a way, Gustad tries to tread safely from any type of obstruction that stand in front of him but he cannot do any thing as he feels that they are too strong for him. The incident of his hip breaking in trying to save Sohrab's life resulting in a limp give ample proof of his helplessness. The war fought by India and Pakistan in 1971 to liberate the beleaguered East Bengal which got a new birth as Bangladesh forms the background for the novel, 'Such a Long Journey.' It narrates the sad and sordid saga of Gustad Noble belonging to the middle class and the varied problems making an indelible mark on the soul of the protagonist as well as on his family. The work highlights that how politics and the disturbances gifted by it tightens its vice- like grip upon a person and his or her daily life. That is why politics finds a very enviable place in many parts of the book. In the eyes of a commoner what politics look like is ably put forward by Dr. Paymaster, a character in the novel in the following manner:

'Our beloved country is a patient with gangrene at an advanced stage. Dressing the wound or sprinkling rose- water over it to hide the stink of rotting tissue is useless. Fine words and promises will not cure the patient. The decaying part must be excised. You see, the municipal corruption is merely the bad smell, which will disappear as soon as the gangrenous government. at the centre is removed.' [Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Vintage Books, 1991, p.313.]

This is the reason of the doctor's disillusionment towards politics in the novel. He stresses that the government is at fault for failing to give happiness and

satisfaction to people specially the middle class and once the government at the centre is abolished then it will be easy enough to disband the state government and the politicians governing the Municipalities.

Rohinton Mistry possesses the art of painting characters with love and depth. 'Such a Long Journey' has an array of characters belonging to different classes, professions and castes. At times they increase in such an astonishing manner that he does not know what to do. The author's gentlemen and lady are assembled from the picture of life. They are portrayed in a life- like manner and are treated as human beings.

The protagonist is a man with a heart of gold representing an everyday person of middle class. The wife Dilnavaz is an ardent believer of superstitions. She reasons that bad omens are deteriorating her family. His son Sohrab assumes the garb of an aggressive person who feels that his father neither understands his feeling nor is ready to fulfil his desires as well as rudely kicks his emotions. After a considerable period of time, he comes across to accept his mistakes but realisation dawns both on the character and the readers that he has lost the game and the opportunities will not return to him and it is often said that time and tide waits for none. Dinshawji is drawn in the lines of a comic person who without fail sheds his inhibitions laughing at his mistakes and his own person. He is a good story teller with a treasure trove of stories. He is a cashier of a bank as well as an artist of pavement who paints pictures to earn his livelihood.

Mistry has taken great pains to portray the ladies like Dilnavaz, Roshan and Miss Kutpitia in an interesting manner. Miss Kutpitia is given a meaty role in the novel. Her faith and knowledge regarding superstitions hover around many characters in the book. According to Bharucha:

'In this novel the domestic life of Gustad Noble clashes with the forces of money- capitalism. Trapped in this crossfire is Dilnavaz, Gustad's wife and their children. This is very obviously a novel written from the male point of view. It opens with Gustad Noble saying his early morning prayers and closes with Noble's belated action of tearing off the black- out papers from his ventilators and windows- thereby symbolically letting in light and reality. It is the male characters in the novel who 'act,' who 'do' things- Gustad, his sons, Major Bilimoria- a thinly- disguised Nagarwala, the sinister underworld figures of Ghulam Mohammed, the Christian friend Malcolm and the Bank cashier Dinshawji. Even the retarded and lame Tehmul imitates some action.' [Bharucha, Nilufer. "When old Tracks are Lost: Rohinton Mistry's Fiction as Diasporic Discourse." *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*, edited by Jaydipsinh

Dodiya, Prestige Books, 1998, p.50.]

Rohinton Mistry in 'Such a Long Journey' displays the ability of plot construction by mixing nimbly the secondary plots with the primary plots. It lays stress upon Gustad Noble while the other sheds light on the stories involving Miss Kutpitia and Dilnavaz. The hero is a man leading an ordinary life. The story originates and ends in Mumbai. The important incidents in the history of India after independence find a place in the primary plot of the book. It has a simple and easy to understand plot. It is painted with the colours of the war between India and Pakistan and the liberation of East Pakistan later known as Bangladesh. As the story makes a good progress, problems invade the lives of Gustad and his family. His eldest son disappoints him as he flatly expresses his unwillingness to join the I.I.T. His daughter falling sick due to diarrhea, his best friend Major Bilimoria's sudden exit and Dinshawji's death are the major ingredients required for a very good plot in the novel. Just like a beautiful and a strong house, the plot has been constructed in such a manner so that the protagonist can be projected as a flag-bearer of the common public. The author's narrative technique is based on facts. In his works, both narratives of the first and the third person are present. In 'Such a Long Journey' the rest of the narratives of Peerbhoy, Panwalla, Malcolm Saldana, Nagarwala episode rub shoulders with the story. Some are present from the beginning only while some make exit from the novel. Putting his view as regards to the narrative of Mistry, Meitei says :

'Mistry's 'Such a Long Journey' is in line with the realist tradition in which the narrative is pushed forward in arithmetical progression and is chronological rather than spatial in the development of the plot. It gives comedy, tragedy, humour and satire. Along with them there lies a rich fabric of beliefs, superstitions, magic, rites, nationalistic ideas, humanism, radicalism, secular views and so on. In other words, it is life in its fullness, freshness and variety that the novel ceaselessly contemplates. Based on the sequential development of the plot, the book offers a powerful narrative that keeps a sustained intensity throughout with a few surprising turns in order to effect a climax and also to precipitate the hero's fortune into a fall. [Meitei, Mani, M. "Such A Long Journey and its Critical Acclaim" The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies, edited by Jaydipsinh Dodiya, pp.73-74.]

The only journey which Gustad undertakes in the novel is the journey to the funeral of his friend Dinshawji and later on to Delhi to meet Major Bilimoria who has been

arrested on the concocted charge of corruption which breaks the major completely resulting in his death. After Dinshawji's departure from the world, a sense of realisation dawns on him that though his friend was battling with cancer, he concealed his sadness and always remained happy as well as inspired others to be happy. It also gave him a good lesson to accept the reality of life and death. In the words of Gustad:

'Would this long journey be worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble?... And what a long journey for Dinshawji too. But certainly worth it. [Mistry, Rohinton. Such a Long Journey. Vintage Books, 1991, p.259.]

When Gustad comes back from Delhi, he is enveloped with a sense of release and feeling of forgiveness. We are a witness to the fact that he has suffered much to travel inwards to realize the importance of journey of life. Towards the novel's penultimate conclusion, a fresh chapter begins in Gustad's life which is a continuous search for self containing many travels.

As we arrive to the conclusion, Gustad removes the black paper which stands for gloominess from the windows to allow the rays of the sun to brighten the house and with it the lives of its inhabitants. It symbolically stands for a new lease of life as well as hope. Thus the novel 'Such a Long Journey' is a celebration of the travel undertaken by life, its richness and the buoyancy as well as cheerfulness of the spirit of the people.

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