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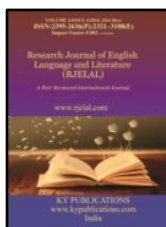
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THE POLITICAL TURMOIL AFFECT THE PARSİ INDIANS LIFE IN ROHINTON MISTRY NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

A Contemporary writer in English is a series that presents critical commentaries on some of the best known names in the genre. With the high visibility of Indian writing in English in academic, critical, pedagogic and reader circles, there is a perceivable demand for lucid yet rigorous introductions to several of its authors and genres. Rohinton Mistry has provided some of the most sustained explorations of post – independence Indian society through his chronicles of individual and community lives. Mistry's fiction covers many themes, from politics to parsi community life and economic inequality to national 'events' such as wars, rigorously examining the impact of historical forces and social events on 'small' lives. Nandini Bhautoo Dewnarain's study, a schematic introduction to Mistry's works, looks at the process of marginalization or 'othreing' in his fiction. Exploring Mistry's themes of tradition, ageing and families, Bhautoo-Dewnarain demonstrates how his fiction moves from the local to the universal.

INTRODUCTION

Rohinton Mistry was born on July 3, 1952 to Behram Mistry and Freny Jhaveri Mistry in Bombay (now Mumbai). The middle son of three, he also has a younger sister, younger brother. Rohinton's father worked in the field of advertising while his home maker

Rohinton was married Freny Eluvia. Mistry enrolled for a more "worthwhile" course in Mathematics and completed his degree in Science in 1974. By this time he was already involved in the music scene in Bombay, gave performances and was seriously contemplating a career as a folk singer. Rohinton joined Freny in Canada, his ambition was" to be a famous in the music world there. He would like to be a star. Mistry also took up a position as a clerk and accountant in the Canadian Imperial Bank of commerce, where he stayed from 1975 to 1985.

He worked his way up from being a clerk to being the supervisor of the customer – service department. This way of life has continued even after his work has gained international recognition.

In 1978 Mistry and his wife took up evening courses at the University of Toronto, which in Mistry's case were subsidized by his bank. He studied English Literature and got a second bachelor's degree in 1982. He wrote his first story, 'One Sunday', in 1983. It won him the Hart House Prize that year at the literary contest in University of Toronto. The decision enter this story for the Hart House Prize was prompted not just by the prospect of the cash prize it carried but also the fact that winning entry would be bound in leather. Mistry won the Hart award for the two years running, the second time for 'Lend Me Your Light', but in an ironic twist, worthy of his own narratives, he never

got his winning stories abound in leather as the sponsors were facing a financial crunch.

In 1996 the Faculty of Arts at Ottawa University awarded Mistry an honorary doctorate and the dream run of awards and honours continues. So far, except for a couple of stories in the *Tales from Firozsha Baag* collection Mistry has set his books in India mainly in Bombay. His books, thus far, portray diverse facets of Indian socio-economic life as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs and religion. Many of his writings are markedly "Indo –nostalgic, though he pointedly also exposes the seedy and grim side of life, not just the bright and cheery".

Rohinton Mistry's small body of fiction has received high praise, numerous honors, and been favorably, if inevitably, compared to the work of the best known and most respected contemporary Indian writers. Much of his achievement derives from the seamless way in which he has fashioned a decidedly personal style from a variety of literary precursors (Euro American as well as Indian: Joyce, Cheever, Malamud, and Bellow most notably) perfectly suited to his Indian subject matter. Although his style lack Rushdie's postmodern brilliance, it deftly avoids Mukherjee's melodramatic excesses and Naipaul's air of critical detachment while successfully adapting Narayan's studied to modern urban as well as immigrant experience. Mistry's achievement also derives from his willingness to devote himself to those aspects of his subject that he know best and that most of his Western reader know not at all: the small Parsi community, both in Bombay and in Toronto.

Mistry's first novel, *Such A Long Journey* appeared in 1991 and it won a string of award again. The novel revolves around a Parsi family in Bombay. It was shortlist from Booker Prize and for the Trillium Award. It won the Governor - General's Award, the Smith Book/Books in Canada first Novel award and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for the Best Book. Such A Long Journey is based upon real events which is set in 1971 during the Indira Gandhi administration. Set during the time of the India – Pakistan wars, its protagonist is not conventional hero. Gustad Noble is a bank clerk and the family man who belongs to the Parsi community, a

vulnerable figure whose world is haunted by the war with china in 1962. Mistry strikes the opposition between the values of family and tradition and the corruption of the outside world . Noble has to experience a complete upheaval of his life owing to sudden blowing up of politics in his smooth everyday routine .

Mistry's second novel, *A Fine Balance*, came out in 1995 and garnered some more award for the novelist who is now considered one of the foremost author of Indian heritage writing in English. *A Fine Balance* was once again shortlisted for the Booker Prize and also again won the Governor – General's Award and the Giller Prize. It also received the Royal Society of Literature's Winifred Holtby Prize and the 1996 Los Angeles Times Award for fiction. Although it took in a wider reality, it is also basically a Bombay book and refashioned from the memory. Mistry next novel is *FamilyMatters*, published in 2002; the novel is shortlisted for the Booker Prize but once again missed it.

Such a Long Journey (1991), Mistry's first novel is set in 1971 during the time of the Indian – Pakistan war. Its protagonist is no conventional hero, however: Gustad Noyal is a bank clerk and a family man, a vulnerable figure whose world is still haunted by the war with China in 1962. The fate of Gustad's family is closely bound up with that of the subcontinent during a time of crisis and turmoil. The illness of the clerk's daughter and his son's refusal to go to college, are events that we are encouraged to read symptomatically in such a Long Journey. When Gustad receives a parcel and a request to launder money for an old friend, the event's ramifications are at once personal and political.

A powerful upper-caste village thug, Thakur Dharamsi, later has his henchman murder Narayan and his family fir having the temerity to ask for a ballot. Ishvar and Omprakash are the only two escapes the killing as they lodged with Ashraf in the nearby town.

The two tailors, Ishvar and Omprakash, are on their way to the flat of Widow Dina Dalal via a train. While on the train, they meet a college student named Maneck Kohlah, who coincidentally

is also on his way to Dina Dalala's flat to be a boarder there. From a small mountain village in northern India, Maneck moves to city to acquire a college certificate "as a back-up" in case his father's soft drink business is no longer able to compete after the building of a highway near their village. Maneck and the two tailors become friends and go to Dina flat together. Dina hires Ishvar and Om for piecework, and is happy to let Maneck, the son of her schoolmate, stay with her.

Dina, from a traditionally wealthy family. Her father was a medical doctor who died when she was twelve. Her mother was withdrawn and unable to take care of Dina after her father's death, so the job fell to Nusswan, Din's elder brother. Nusswan was rather abusive to Dina, forcing her to do all the cooking, cleaning, and drop out of school, and hitting her when she went against his wishes. Dina rebelled against Nusswan and his prospective suitors for her when she came of age; she found her own husband, Rustom Dalal, a chemist, at a concert hall, Nusswan and his wife Ruby were happy to let her marry Rustom, and move to his flat.

While at home, Maneck reads old newspapers and learns that Avinesh's three sisters have committed suicide by hanging themselves, unable to bear their parents' humiliation at not being able to provide dowries for their marriage. Shocked and shaken, he decides to visit Dina in Bombay, for better news. He learns from Dina the horrific lives that Ishvar and Om --- one disabled and the other castrated---have led as beggars after their visit to their native village. As Maneck leaves, he encounters Om and Ishvar on the street. The two former tailors are nearly unrecognizable because of their filth; they don't appear to recall him. They say "Salaam" to him, but he doesn't know what to say and walks on.

It turns out that Ishvar and Om were on their way to visit Dina. They are still friends; she gives them meals and money when there is no one in the house. Dina and beggars discuss their lives and how Maneck has changed from pleasant and friendly student to a distant refrigeration specialist. Om and Ishvar leave, promising to visit after the weekend. Dina washes up their plates, and returns

the plates to the cupboard, where they are to be used later by Nusswan and Ruby.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is an evaluative report of information found in the literature related to your selected area of study. The review should describe, summarise, evaluate and clarify this literature. It should give a theoretical base for the research and help you determine the nature of your research. Works which are irrelevant should be discarded and those which are peripheral should be looked at critically. A literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. Literature reviews are designed to provide an overview of sources you have explored while researching a particular topic and demonstrate to your readers how your research fits within a larger field of study. A literature review is more than the search for information, and goes beyond being a descriptive annotated bibliography. All works included in the review must be read, evaluated and analyzed, but relationships between the literatures must also be identified and articulated, in relation to your field of research. In writing the literature review, the purpose is to convey to the reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic, and what their strengths and weakness are. The literature review must be defined by a guiding concept. It is not just a descriptive list of the material available, or a set of summaries.

A literature review is a text scholarly paper, which includes the current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. Literature reviews are secondary sources, and do not report new or original experiments work. Most often associated with academic- oriented literature, such reviews are found in academic journals, and are not confused with book reviews that may also appear in the same publication. Literature reviews are a basis for research in nearly every academic field. A narrow scope literature review may be

included as a part of a peer reviewed journal article presenting new research, serving to situate the current study within the body of the relevant literature and to provide context for the reader. In such a case, the review usually precedes the methodology and results sections of the work. Producing a literature review may also be part of graduate and post-graduate student work, including in the preparation of a thesis, dissertation, or a journal article. Literature reviews are also common in a research proposal or prospectus (the document that is approved before a student formally begins a dissertation or thesis).

It is important to think of knowledge in a given field as consisting of three layers. First, there are the primary studies that researchers conduct and publish. Second are the reviews of those studies that summarize and offer new interpretations built from and often extending beyond the primary studies. Third, there are the perceptions, conclusions, opinion, and interpretations that are shared informally that become part of the lore of field. In composing a literature review, it is important to note that it is often this layer of knowledge that is cited as “true” even though it often has only a loose relationship to the primary studies and secondary literature reviews are designed to provide an overview and synthesis of pertinent sources you have explored, there are a number of approaches you could adopt depending upon the type of analysis underpinning your study. The purpose of a literature review is to place each work in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem being studied. Describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration. Identify new ways to interpret prior research, reveal any gaps that exist in the literature. Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies. Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication of effort, point the way in fulfilling a need for additional research. Locate your own research within the context of existing literature.

In writing your literature review, once you’ve settled on how to recognize your literature review, you’re ready to write each section. Current situation to understand the topic of the literature

review. Some disciplines require that you use information that is as current as possible. This is particularly true in disciplines in medicine and the sciences where research conducted become obsolete very quickly as new discoveries are made. However, when writing a review in the social sciences, a survey of the history of the literature may be required. In the other words, a complete understanding the research problem requires you to deliberately examine how knowledge and perspectives have changed over time. Sort through other current bibliographies or literature reviews in the field to get a sense of what your discipline expects. You can also use this method to explore what is considered by scholars to be a “hot topic” and what is not.

Such a Long Journey deals with the problem of India during India’s second war with Pakistan. The action covers the period after 1970. It takes up the conflict between political and personal realities. The plot is drawn on the political canvas where Gustad Noble, a citizen of Bombay, the protagonist, is striving to become a responsible husband and father amidst his rebellious son Sohrab, superstitious wife Dilnavaz, friend Jimmy Bilimoria and death of good friend Dishwaji. He has anguish for his family for brushing him off all the time and neglecting him. He feels all alone now and is completely misunderstood. He finds himself in the clutches of a dangerous government plot. In the novel, the lives of the characters are deeply affected by local corruption and government inadequacy.

Such a Long Journey is set against the backdrop of the Bangladesh the 1970s. In this novel, public events have direct repercussions on the life of ordinary citizen. Since the wars are a narrative excuse for the exploration of both political ethics and the problems of individual ethical – moral responsibility, an explanatory note on historical events is in order.

Such a Long Journey is the story of Gustad Noble who lives in Parsi compound with his wife and three children. A bank employee, he commands respect in this compound. He is greatly loved by Tehmul –Lungraa – the lame man who also lives in compound. Dinshawji is Gustad’s close friend, whom he meet every day. Gustad nurses a silent

pain caused by the disappearance of his former close friend, Jimmy Bilimoria, which he sees a betrayal. Until one day, missive comes from Bilimoria asking him to transfer some money to a new account. Reluctantly Gustad obliges, after having unsuccessfully tried to return the money. Bilimoria is involved in a national plot with political ramifications. He is arrested and imprisoned and when Gustad visit him, he listens to the helpless narrative of the dying man and surmises that he himself has been used. As he copes with the problems on the home front –growing pains of his adolescent sons, the frailty of his young

CONCLUSION

Mistry's books portray diverse facets of Indian socio-economic life, as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs and religion. Many of his writings are marked as "Indo-nostalgic". His works propose to look at the anguish Parsi way of live and also wrapped up in thick coverings of Parsi ethnicity with the essence of Parsi spirit. Parsi people were persecuted in their homeland in Persia because of their distinct religious identity. They were provided with refuge in India many centuries ago. They had contributed much to the economy, politics and society of India. Parsis proved themselves as an example for the rich society of India.

Such a long journey is a upon real events which is set in 1971 during the Indra Gandhi administration. Set during the time of the Indo-Pakistan war, its protagonist is not a conventional hero. Gustad Noble is a bank clerk and a family man who belongs to the Parsi community, a vulnerable figure whose world is haunted by the war with China in 1962. Mistry strikes the opposition between the values of family and tradition and the corruption of the outside world. Noble has to experience a complete upheaval of his life owing to sudden blowing up of politics in his smooth everyday routine.

Rohinton Mistry is considered one of the foremost authors of Indian heritage writing in English. His first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), garnered a slew of literary awards and was short listed for the Booker Prize that year. It is the story of Gustad Nobel, a bank clerk who unwittingly becomes involved in a fraud committed by the

government. It portray the trails and tribulation of middle – class parsi family in the year 1971 and not only follows Gaustad's life, but India's political turmoil as well in the year Bangladesh was liberated.

In *A Fine Balance*, we can see the middle class and the anonymous, faceless working class meet sympathize with each other, and learn to overcome their prejudice and forge bonds of friendship, affection and humanity. In an interview, Mistry states that this novel started with an image – a woman at a sewing machine – and as later expanded to include the tailor, to bring in the horror of caste exploitation and violence of rural India, and the figure of Maneck Kohlah from Kashmir. All of these character, together with Dina Dalal – the fiery – tempered, intelligent, fiercely independent and prematurely aged young woman – constitute a small world of recreated family of the novel.

The slices of life in his novels are too real to be ignored as 'figment of imagination'. Ishvar and Om Prakash are characters who can be easily identified with millions of Indians. The poignant human situations in which they find themselves and the human relationships that determine their course of life are portrayed with a serious touch of realism. In Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* the search for identity is processed by a team of four unlike the sole Gustad in *Such a Long Journey*. The four major characters from different background mingle with each other as a joint force; they want to prove their self-identity in the society. Dina Dalal, the protagonist of the novel suffers at her younger age of the death of her parents in succession. She is guarded by her elder brother who wants to protect her as a bird in a cage. By nature, Dina is lover of humour and independent existence. She cannot find comport in her brother's custody. She is forced to marry a rich gentleman but she prefers to marry a compounder namely Rustom Dalal. Before being settled in her marriage life Dina loses her husband in an accident. Thereafter, Dina emerges an independent dressmaker with the tailors Om and Ishvar.

The Emergency of 1975 shatters all her hopes and she is pushed again to her brother's concern. Thus Dina's identity fades away in the society as an independent woman. The tailors Om

and Ishvar are also searching for their identity in the metropolitan city. Their forefathers belonged to a lower caste and suffered the pain of caste system. Ishvar's father wanted to change identity as leather worker and so he sent Om and Ishvar to learn tailoring. After learning, the tailors come to Bombay and are employed by Dina.

In the beginning, Om and Ishvar are not close with Dina. They doubt her and even try to get the direct orders from the companies, because they feel that they are over controlled by Dina. They find no identity with their village and city dwellings. They stay in a small shack in the slum but are chased from there because of the city beautification project. Left alone on the street they search for accommodation, even their employer Dina refuses them to stay in her house.

Besides, they are crushed in the worst outcomes of the Emergency; Om who is yet to marry is sterilized to be important. In the act of preventing Om from sterilization, Ishvar loses both his legs and left in the street as beggar. The life of these two tailors is also lost with no identity. The loss of identity in Maneck's case is full of ecological concerns. Maneck and his family live by a hillside and nature is one of their family members. The fall and the forest are their passions.

The government's plan to connect the hills to the city is a great blow to the Kohlah's family and the other villagers do not feel too much as they expect more job opportunities in the city side. Farokh sends Maneck for higher studies to Bombay giving him Dina's address. Like the tailors, Maneck also does not like the life in the city. Moreover, he is tortured by the seniors in the collage hostel. Then he comes to stay as a paying guest in Dina's house. There he develops friendship with the tailors. Dina resists the relationship of Maneck with the tailors. So, *A Fine Balance* is a novel which searches for identity in various aspects.

Nostalgia is a recurrent theme in Mistry's fiction. This nostalgia is generally for a past way of life, forever lost of the main character, it is occasionally manifest in the idealization of the religious ritual which are seen as a way to preserve the past and prevent the disintegration of the family and the community. It also takes from reminiscing

about childhood which is seen as more stable and reassuring world than the present. These reminiscences, presented in the stories and the novel, are linked to the change of circumstance of the Parsi community following Independence. This politico – culture nostalgia helps create a sense of loss about the changed circumstances of the character in both domestic and public spheres.

Indians who were in the upper class strata of society began to exploit the lower class innocent people. Rohinton Mistry depicts the untold miseries of the bottom of the society. Thus, Mistry is the champion of the downtrodden. He handles many common problems of great political, religious, economic and literary activities in day-to-day life in their respective nation and they also offered valuable solutions to problems.

Rohinton Mistry is much worried about the criteria of materialism with which every man was valued at the time of state of emergency. He gives his voice in support of those who are affected by the political unrest. Rohinton Mistry, in his novel "*A Fine Balance*" pasteurizes sufferings of the bottom of the society. Low class people are humiliated by the upper class people. No one is ready to show any mercy on humanitarian grounds. Thus Rohinton Mistry expresses their personal feelings over suffering heroes. He satirizes vehemently the exploitation of the powerful people over the poor and downtrodden. Mistry uses his works as a weapon against the exploiters.

Thus Rohinton Mistry conveys his message for shunning exploitation of people to the world through his novels. He doesn't stop with attacking the social evils in their respective society. Mistry also conveys better solutions to those social inequalities and evils through his works. His novels made some tremendous changes in their respective society. It enables the readers to respect the feelings of other men as they do to their own. It will pave way for the peaceful life on the earth. By affirming his faith in humanity, Mistry has successfully demonstrated that "hope springs eternal in the human heart." Everyone must feel that the human beings are all equal, liberal, and belong to one fraternity.

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