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DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S *SUCH A LONG JOURNEY*

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ABSTRACT

The nature of the diaspora depends on the nature of the host country. Diasporas, despite their common origin, may behave in a totally different manner depending on the country of their re-location. Rohinton Mistry is the best example of presenting different narratives of diaspora while residing in Canada. However, Mistry has overcome the difficulties of human relations between people with different cultural identities. This present paper is an attempt to reveal the diasporic sensibility in Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*.

Key Words : Diaspora, cultural, identities, sensibility

Literature is basically an expression of life through the medium of language. It is the criticism of life. It reflects social surroundings of the writers' time. The immigrant literature focuses on the homeland. Diasporic studies have been integrated into post colonial approaches. The term 'diaspora' literally means a scattering or dispersion of a group of people to an alien land, away from their traditional homelands. It has been reinterpreted as 'alienation', 'marginalization', 'migration' or being in 'minority'. In the field of fiction, the diasporic writers works explore the boundaries between fact and fiction, memory and imagination, drawing from their first hand experience of being a part of different communities at different points of time – Muslim in East Africa, Parsi in Bombay and Hindu in the Caribbean respectively.

Rohinton Mistry is a best – known Parsi writer who has four works of fiction to his credit. They are *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, *Such a Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*. Acclaimed the world over as a fabulous storyteller, he offers his readers an interesting account of the Parsi culture against the microcosm. He refuses his

fiction with humour, insight and sensitivity. In an interview Mistry stated his creative process as "imagination ground through the mill of memory", and further he says, "impossible to separated the too ingredients" (Lambart 2002)

Rohinton Mistry's works seem to be preoccupied with the homeland and the political and the social environment of the place of his birth. Mistry has been living in Toronto from 1975 yet he has deep – rooted love for his native place India. *Such a long Journey* is the first novel written by Rohinton Mistry. This novel, Mistry has obviously attempted to deconstruct and reposes his past . the whole novel is about what he knows best the Parsis of Bombay. It is a rare subject about rare people. There are less than one lakh Parsis in the world. Most of them live in and around Bombay and the rest live scattered across the world in amiable metropolises.

Such a Long Journey is written against the background of the unfortunate wars, in particular the 1971 Indo – Pakistan war that India had to fight with its neighbour. War becomes an important force in the lives of the characters and hierarchical

displacement of narrative patterns in the novel makes the war the foreground. The Parsis are an endangered lot. While the novel provides a spirited account of the Parsi way of life, their customs, their role in their mainstream national life, the focus is not so much on the cultural front as on the subversion of institutions in the socio – political spectrum of the country. According to Bharucha,

However, Mistry is also a Parsi Zoroastrian and a person whose ancestors were forced into exile by the Islamic conquest of Iran, he was in Diaspora even in India. This informs his writings with the experience of multiple displacements. (Bharucha 24)

The novel deals with the origin of the problems in terms of polarization of groups, sections and interest and other gender issues, which are still influencing the nation today. There are four major thematic studies in the narrative, the one depicting the mystery which surrounds Jimmy Billimoria, the fictional counterpart of the infamous Sohrab Nagarwala is central to Mistry's narrative. The other three rebellions, Roshan's protracted illness and Tehmul's tragedy exists only in relation to this chief thematic purpose.

It is the Nagarwala case which gives the plot for *Such a Long Journey*. In the winter, it was reported in the newspaper that the head cashier of the State Bank of India in Delhi had six million rupees to Mr. Nagarwala on the basis of a phone call from Mrs. Gandhi who, he claimed had asked him to take this great risk in the name of Mother India. After he had given the cash to Mr. Nagarwala in a preplanned place, the head clerk had suspicions of this act and informed the police. Ms. Gandhi opposed that she had not made any such telephone call and the head clerk was suspended. Nagarwala was arrested a few days later and revealed that he had mimicked Mrs. Gandhi's voice.

The fictional world Rohinton Mistry creates in *Such a Long Journey* is thus no utopia of any kind. It is a portrayal of the fallen world in which the call of the holy word is not heard. It is a portrayal of the fallen world in which the call of the holy word is not heard. It is the world in which all forms of knavery, hypocrisy, corruption, tyranny, decay and ugliness,

have become the order of the day. The society, which is depicted, is completely deprived of resilience. The diasporic writers in search of their traditions, religions and native customs try to assimilate the culture of the alien land. Jopi Nyman in his preface to the Atlantic Literary Review's special issue on Diasporic Indian Fiction observes the special characteristic of the diasporic fiction: "As a result, fictions of Diaspora are not necessarily nostalgic lamentations but texts actively redefining the migrants sense of self and home, often showing their subjects re – entering spaces and sites once important to their families. (Nyman vi)

Rohinton Mistry is indebted to Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi* for the title of this novel. Eliot's poem is highly symbolic. The journey of three wise men to the birth place of Jesus Christ is not merely an ordinary physical journey; it is symbolic of man's spiritual quest in which he has to undergo numerous hardships. Later, one of the Magi gives an account of his toilsome journey for the benefit for the listener. He uniquely reveals how he was impelled to proceed merely because of his faith. He succeeded in overcoming all the impediments that befell his way. The end of the journey was rewarding and satisfying, for he had reached his destination and found that the prophecy of the birth of Christ was true. *The Journey of the Magi* is also symbolic of the reorientation, which is absolutely essential to attain higher and nobler values in life.

Gustad's journey of life is close to *The Journey of the Magi*. Gustad was keenly desirous of the fulfilment of his dreams and aspirations. At every stage of his life's journey he met with unprecedented obstacles and the working of inexplicable forces. However, he is not the one to give in, he is similar like the wise men who very boldly pushed aside the hindrances of life. He did not allow them to overpower him and went ahead with faith that the journey will surely end a particular destination. The variegated experiences of life help Gustad to come to a very significant conclusion: "Luck is the spit of the Gods and Goddesses".

Gustad's long journey into the unknown mystery commences with the abrupt and mysterious

disappearance of his intimate friend, Jimmy Billimoria. He is forcibly drawn into a series of interconnected things of events, which follow give the reality of the Nagarwala case. It involves the confessional claim Major Billimoria makes about how corruption goes to the top of Indian political establishment. Mistry's narrative also takes on the cast of credibility.

Modernization and development through technology and science a concept of the western culture is not an unwelcome idea. Rather Mistry seems to suggest that its mindless execution without proper introspection and planning would adversely affect nature, thereby creating ecological and existential crisis. Through his elaborate and sensitive presentation of man – nature relationship, Rohinton Mistry stands up as another spokesman of ecological movement.

Through the world maneck and his friend Avinash, Mistry gives the glimpse into the evils of Indian campus the shameful ragging nepotism in staff hiring, bribery for admission, sale of examination papers, special privileges for politicians' families, government interference in the syllabus, intimidation of faculty members and student politics in the campus.

Mistry's description of the protagonist is that of a knowledgeable, sensitive and spiritual person based upon idealism and traditionalism. While the generation of people around him stands out in stark contrast as ignorant, sensitive, materialists charged with spirit of modernization and change. In *Such a Long Journey* Rohinton Mistry comes out as a critical realist so far as the treatment of social reality is concerned. As a diasporic write, he comes out to project the kind of society he wants to be a part of it.

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