

## Realistic Approach and Its Effect with Special Reference to Such a Long Journey

**Abstract:** Rohinton Mistry is a Canadian Parsi writer who was born in India and migrated to Canada in 1975, he has written several masterpieces that are read worldwide. Mistry focuses on fiction mainly, his first novel *Such A Long Journey* was shortlisted for prestigious Booker Prize. It is a story of Parsi family living in Mumbai during the early 1970s of India which was marred by Indian political turmoil.

**Keywords:** Zoroastrianism, Parsis, Identity, Diaspora, Expatriate, Humanism

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Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest religions. The people who follow Zoroaster's teachings are called Parsis in the Indian subcontinent. The Parsis came from Iran, making a long arduous journey and settled in Gujarat in India, affirming their relationship to Indian conditions. They had their own difficulties in adjusting themselves to the new environment on account of their self-claimed ethnic superiority. The succeeding generations of their children have been keeping in themselves quintessential images of long journeys, homecoming, Parsi anxieties, alienation and an 'exile' experience. Similar to this, in the novels of the Parsi writers, the protagonists also relive this pattern of experience and present an elaborate picture of the central human issue of the quest for 'identity'.

It is quite appropriate therefore, to make a detailed study of some of the important Indian Parsi novelists and their novels with special reference to Rohinton Mistry and his contribution as an expatriate Parsi Indian writer living in Canada. Rohinton Mistry wrote his first novel *Such A Long Journey* in 1991 and it was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize and several other awards. In this novel, Mistry explores the theme of Parsi identities struggling for their political and social integrity, which seems quite humanistic in its approach for the people of Parsi community living in this vast and diverse country called India. The people in the story are common Mumbaikar Parsis who are destined to be living in the turmoil of early 60s and 70s of twentieth-century India. The novel's protagonist is a hard-working bank clerk Gustad Noble, a member of the Parsi community and a devoted family man struggling to keep his wife Dilnavaz, and three children out of poverty. But his family begins to fall apart as his eldest son Sohrab refuses to attend the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology to which he has gained admittance and his youngest daughter, Roshan, falls ill. Other conflicts within the novel involve Gustad's ongoing interactions with his eccentric neighbors and his relationship with his close friend and co-worker, Dinshawji. Tehmul, a seemingly unimportant and mentally disabled character, is essential in Gustad's life, as he brings out the tender side of him and represents the innocence of life. A letter that Gustad receives one day from an old friend, Major Bilimoria, slowly draws him into a government deception involving threats, secrecy and large amounts of money. He then, begins the long journey, that sheds new light on all aspects of Gustad's personal and political life. The novel not only follows Gustad's life, but also India's political turmoil under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. Rohinton Mistry, follows Gustad Noble as he navigates interpersonal conflict and political scandal in early 1970s India. The political tension of that period and India's war with Pakistan provide the story's political backdrop.

A sensible and very able man, Gustad Noble carries a personal history of sadness. He lives in Bombay with his wife, Dilnavaz, who takes care of the house and the family. They have three children. The family lives in an apartment in the Khodadad building.

As the reader proceeds through the novel, he finds out that it is not only the people in the past who have been gullible at the hands of the Machiavellian rulers, our own lives are none to logically and scientifically lived. This novel is a story of a Parsi family. The head of the family Gustad, his wife and three children. Their very ordinary middle class existence receives a jolt as they find themselves involved in a political scandal of international stature. This sensational event known as the Nagarwala scam is the one that rocked the Indira Gandhi government in the wake of the Bangladesh liberation struggle. The novel lays equal stress on the communal as well as the individual lives. The novel has drawn heavily on that side of human life and activity which can be described as non-rational in the philosophical sense. Religious activity, for example, is one such facet which finds wide mention in the novel.

Mistry, through this fiasco of the central wish, underlines his views about human nature which for all its evolution is still steeped in non-logical ways of thinking and acting. Mistry was not the first to present this sociological perception of human nature. I. A. Richards, in his essay 'Pseudo - statements' observes that 'most of our attitudes are determined by emotive responses rather than by scientific views'. Poets are known for making pseudo statements such as the existence of God, of immortality, of freedom but such beliefs do serve some

social purpose, when it comes to organising society around rituals and ceremonies, around common beliefs and shared sentiments. Still, on the whole, these non-logical actions have also been exploited by those who are able to free themselves from these sentiments. Though Mistry is endowed with an original writer's imagination and develops *Such a Long Journey* into a flawless story, his keen awareness of the contemporary social and political situation of India, particularly the period of the 1971 Indo-Pak war, is extremely exciting. As a realist, he wields the weapon of satire, which makes him a ruthless artist, a stern political satirist, and a devout critic of war. The fictional world, Mistry creates in the novel is thus no Utopia of any kind. It is a picture of the fallen world in which the call of the Holy word is not heard. Again, it is a world in which all forms of corruption, knavery, hypocrisy, tyranny, ugliness and decay, have become the order of the day. The society which is depicted is completely deprived of resilience. Mistry's shock at the sight of the pathetic human condition and rampant corruption turns him into a hard hitting realist, who is obliged to expose the world around him. Though he is in favour of certain change, he cannot think of a political situation under dictatorship and communism. This is shown when Gustad snaps at his son, Sohrab, who speaks of dictatorship or communism as a better alternative to democracy: "Be grateful this is democracy. If that Russiawala was here, he would pack you and you and your friends off to Siberia". In *Such a Long Journey* Mistry comes out as a critical realist so far as the treatment of social reality is concerned. He emerges as a progressive writer, and in his vision of a larger rhythm of life, in which all forms of human happiness and misery are seen woven inseparably. In development of the central characters towards a climax, he shows his allegiance to literature's timeless values, independent of narrow commitments, whether political or regional.

Mistry's interests in the precarious modern life, the after effect of a degenerating society on life, issue forth with guests in the novel. *Such a Long Journey* is a successful work of art in the sense; Mistry portrays human elements in their primetime forms and raises the novel to classical standards by adhering to universal principals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

#### **Work Cited:**

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