

## Disquiet of Parsi Minority in Such A Long Journey

Asavari Wasudeo Sarate

Research student,  
Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University.

### Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to analyze Rohinton Mistry's first novel and second book "Such A Long Journey" that delineate the various unsettling anxieties and challenges face by Parsi minority in India. Parsi is a small shining community in India, emigrated from Iran. Parsi in India feel insecure, experiences identity crisis and feel threatened by possible submersion in the dominant Hindu culture, a nightmarish prospect which do not ever want to come true. The main anxieties felt by Parsi minority today are declining population, late marriages, low birth rate, high rate of divorce, attitude to the girl child, craze for urbanization, alienation etc.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, betrayal, majority, minority, identity, Indian politics, nationalization, community

### Introduction:

India is a country having numerous religious and cultural diversity. According to Indian law every religion and community exist in India, whether it belongs to majority or minority is own equal rights as human being possess; but this diversity often leads Indian, towards anarchy where some cultures quashed and others dominated.

Mistry's first novel 'Such a Long Journey' is fascinating work of him. This novel permit us (reader) to perceive and live the story of Gustad Noble who is the hero and protagonist of the novel, a middle class, middle aged and simple man live in Khodadad Building with his Parsi inhabitants, and his immediate family with wife Dilnavaz and three children. Sohrab, Darius and younger daughter Roshan, in his life, he is trying to deal with the difficulties. The novel is settled in Bombay 1971. Like most of the Parsis Gustad also is a devout, hard-working and ambitious man wants to give a better education to his children especially his older son, Sohrab, who he plans will join I.I.T one day. "Sohrab will make a name for himself, you see if he doesn't Gustad had said with a father's first pride. At last our sacrifices will prove worthwhile". (SLJ – 3)

Gustad's own ambition in youth were badly spoilt, which led to his entertaining hopes for his elder son, Sohrab to join the I.I.T. Throughout Sohrab's success, he has vision of the shuttered dreams of his embittered youth ultimately bearing fruit. Unfortunately, however, Sohrab refuses to

complete his father's wish as his interest lay elsewhere. This leads Gustad to retaliate in anger, disbelief and frustration. His life deals with the issues of fear, anxieties, insecurity which he suffers through out of the novel. Due to his poverty his loving daughter never has a doll in her life. This picture of financial hardship is a real typical condition of a middleclass family. Gustad hope to overcome his richness and regain his lost reputation through his elder son Sohrab, who was good in studies and get a room in Indian Institution of Technology. He had, "made the success of his son's life, the purpose of his own". (SLJ-55). But, his upliftment for a higher class shattered through the denial of Sohrab to join I.I.T and go through B.A Literature with his friends. Gustad react: "With holes in my shoes, I went to work, so we could buy almonds to sharpen his brain at two hundred rupees a kilo. And all wasted, all gone in the gutter water." (SLJ- 122):

Gustad always tries to bring happiness for his family. While discussion about Sohrab's admission in I.I.T, suddenly Sohrab got angry and reacted; "I am sick and tired of, IIT, IIT, and IIT all the time. I am not interested in it. I am not jolly good fellow about it and I am not going there.... Fool yourself if you want to?" (SLJ – 48).

Gustad realizes it is a big loss for minority community which is heart bleeding situation for him. He forcefully senses a feeling of insecurity being a minority. He reminds the contemporary political condition in India where Shivsena and Bajrang Dal demand for Maratha Raj. "What kind of life was

Sohrab going to look forward to? No future for minorities (SLJ – 55) Gustad thinks that his son misses a big golden chance in his life. This declaration of Gustad showed his fear and insecurity about the life of his son and his community as it is an ethnic minority. He thinks that there is no future for minorities in this country. Due to the political activities in India like Shivsena and Bajrang Dal raise the voice for Marathi people only and such an attitude of them may through the minority out of India like black people in America. Mistry is a mouthpiece for his Parsi fellow; he is not timid of using a harsh language for Shivsena and make direct attack on India politics through the various characters in his novels. Dinshawji is one of them who verbalized his anger on the matter of changing the names under the pressure of Shivsena. He feels it is not only changing names but, changing identity itself. Dinshawji respond on Gustad's statement "What in a name?" (SLJ – 74)

"Names are so important.... Was I living the wrong life with all wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again with these new? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out just like that? Tell me." (SLJ -74)

In order to make our identity as a Parsi after colonial India, the British street names are so important to Dinshawji. Some Parsi laments the departure of British colonizers. Through the various incidents Mistry's characters feel alienation and insecurity in India changing the names means changing their identity may symbolizes the past of Parsis. So, they do not feel secure in this Hindu country also.

They also threaten by the increasing power of Maratha's in Mumbai which upset the communal harmony in Mumbai. Dinshawji tells Gustad, "Wait till the Maratha's takeover, then we will have real Gandoo Raaj.... All they know is to have rallies at Shivaji park, shout slogan, make threats and change road names." (SLJ-73). It is a verbal attack made by Dinshawji for changing the names of road. It is lead the problem of dimensional orientation and also indicate the bothersome involvement that the building of Indian nation state has for a distinct Parsi identity or as much as the name of street and places change the place of community in contemporary India is on the agenda, to the some extent that the

displaced.<sup>1</sup> Both the Shivsena and Parsis understand that the fight for language is important for identity. Due to this growing political power Gustad felt his son's future is not secure.

Another incident in the novel that it focuses on the bold decision of the congress party which effect on the lives of Parsis mostly. In the rule of Indira Gandhi, she took a very bold decision which hurts the Parsis in India. She nationalizes the banks in 1969. So, the whole atmosphere has been spoiled because Parsis are the masters of bank. They lose their business in banking as they were private bank holders. This action of Mrs. Gandhi is against the Parsi community as they are minority so, they did not happy with that decision. Dinshawji present his feeling and agony in the following lines; "Parsis were the kings of banking in those days. Such a respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that India nationalized the banks". (SLJ -38) Nationalization of banks takes away their old business from them and throws them in the state of alienation.

Dinshawji always afraid about his community and their identity. He is an embouchure to Mistry. He satirizes all Nehru family and congress party for their corruption and decision against their community and make the Parsis feel insecure and inferior to Marathi people. Dinshawji often visit to Gustad's house, one day in the absence of Gustad when Dinshawji visit his home he discusses with his wife Dilnavaz about the death of Feroze Gandhi. Parsis follow who married with Indira Gandhi. When Feroze Gandhi suddenly died, the news spread like an air all over the India that he was died by heart attack. But, as he was Parsi, all Parsi community felt something wrong there. Dinshawji remark and says: 'That was tragic'. Even today, people say Feroze's heart attack was not really a heart attack' (SLJ- 197).

Another major incident in "*such a Long Journey*" is famous Nagarwala case which is based on the factual event of the history. In which his best friend Jimmy caught terribly. He was arrested by police. When Gustad visit Major his condition was very weak. The sight of Jimmy makes Gustad cry. Jimmy is bed ridden and in pitiable condition. He was continuously torture till he returned the money. After some months he died suspiciously in his imprisonment. 'Anger, accusation, demands for

explanations emptied from Gustad's mind. Only monster could harass broken man for answers". (SLJ-268). These thoughts of political corruption lead Gustad in a deep thought of insecurity. This whole incident is the resemblance of the actual event in the past of Sohrab Nagarwala case who was a chief cashier of the parliament street branch of the State Bank of India in New Delhi. This case raises many eyebrows due to the involvement of Parsis member. Parsis as a peaceful community do not like any involvement of a person belongs to their community which may calumniate whole community. It is serious issue for Parsi community. Through this incident they feel insecurity in the country they living and found no place for them regarding their security.

All the familial, social, historical, political events are sincerely juxtaposed by Mistry in his novel. A plight of a common man, his struggle to live stress free life, all the hardships he faces and difficulties which make his life miserable on one stage, which gave birth to alienation, insecurity and identity crises. The expectation of Gustad is very modest.

**Conclusion:**

However, it is assigned that the dominant groups succeed in humiliating many times to the members of minority community. So, the reflection of the pain and anguish which is experienced by minority group members are thus reflected in the fiction of Rohinton Mistry All the Mistry's three novels, propose that all Indian minorities are the victim of political, social and domestic violence.

**Work Cited:****Primary source:**

1. Mistry, Rohinton "Such a Long Journey" London Faber ana Faber 2006.
2. Genetsch, Martin. "Difference and Identify in Contemporary Anglo – Canadian Fiction": M.G Vasanji, Neil Bissondath, Rohinton Mistry, Ottawa; University of Ottawa, 2003, Dissertation. 175.

