

IDENTITY CRISIS IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

A MARY SELVA HIMONIA^{*}, S AMALA SAHANA^{*}, M RAJINI^{**}

Postcolonial Literature is introduced in 1980's by small, pioneering group of critics and theorist mainly from Australia and Canada. It is mainly concerned with the examination of social, cultural, economic, military and political events that were the final result of the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. Postcolonial literature deals with the social discourse between the colonizer and the colonized, which shaped and produced in literature.

Postcolonial writers emphasized the ideas related to cultural integrity, Nationalism, Racism, Displacement, Revising History, Assimilation, Subaltern issues and Slavery in their writings. Some of the popular postcolonial writers are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, J.M. Coetzee, Derek Walcott and Zadie Smith. These writers have made the whole idea of postcolonialism a part of literary culture. Postcolonial literature also deals with themes like Quest for Identity, Racial Discrimination, Alienation, Subaltern issues, Slavery and Cultural Clashes.

Rohinton Mistry is an emigrant Indian-Parsi writer who lives in Canada. He is a outstanding novelist because of his reputable works. He has received so many prizes and Awards for his literary works. *Such A Long Journey* gives a massive recognition to Mistry among the readers. In one of his interviews he says that English is technically my mother tongue. Therefore he handles English language perfectly in all his

works. He has received The Canadian Governor General Literary Award, the Smith Book/ Books in Canada first Novel Award and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for this novel.

Mistry's *Such A Long Journey* is dealt with some of the postcolonial elements in a strong way. He gives important to Identity of people in their living circumstances. Identity Crisis is powerfully portrayed by the author in this novel. It expresses the Parsi people feeling to get identity in Indian society. After the independence of India, Parsi people have a doubt in their future life. Many members of the community felt that an acceptable position within Indian society would become difficult. So most of them decided to leave India for better life. They see that there are a lot of risky situation to get their unique identity in postcolonial India. It makes them aware of their present condition.

This novel shows the Parsi people's identity crisis in their settled territory especially Bombay in India. They think that they face displacement and marginalization in their new settled country. In their early life they are dominated by the colonizers and now they are dominated by the new political Parties in India. The Parsi community also touches alienation in Indian Society. Though the Parsis are living in India at present they are not the native people of this place. But they are the settlers in India for many centuries. It gives them the feeling of different in the postcolonial India. They cannot adjust with the customs and tradition of the native people in

^{*} Assistant Lecturers, St. Eugene University, Chipata Campus, Zambia.

^{**} Head of the Department, Department of English, DMI St Eugene University , Chipata, Zambia.

Correspondence E-mail Id: editor@eurekajournals.com

India. Therefore they are searching a new identity for their own in postcolonial India like other minority communities in Bombay.

The Parsis are descendants of the Zoroastrians who left their homes in Iran in the tenth century. They have fled to avoid forcible conversion to Islam, following the Arab conquest of Iran. They are immigrated to India and makes residence there. In India they are known as Parsis, "Pars" being the name of a province in Iran. In India, they have so many restrictions especially they are not allowed to inter-marry with the local population. They have forced to give up their language, costumes and customs and adopted those of their Hindu rulers. However, they have the right to practice their religion. Though the Parsi community feels superior about their religion, they treat as inferior in postcolonial India. They do not acquire their valid identity in the Indian society. But they have lost their distinctive identity in postcolonial India.

The entire Parsi community is longing for their recognition in their settled territory. They want to create an unspoiled identity in those places. In this novel *Such A Long Journey* Gustad and his friends try to get a new identity in the post-independence India. They struggle a lot to achieve their dreams and expectations to obtain their identity in the Indian society. But it is too difficult for them to fulfill their dreams. The terrible circumstances do not allow them to get their respectable identity in India. Instead the Parsis are dominated by other Hindu communities. Therefore they are longing for their independent and satisfying identity in postcolonial India.

Mistry describes the novel with the life of Gustad. The whole story is concentrating on Gustad family and his office. This novel mainly emphasizes on the whole Parsi community's search for a new identity through the middle class Parsi families living in Khodadad building. Mistry expresses the Parsi people's misfortunes and their loss of

identity through the major characters. This novel is one of the evidences of Parsi and other marginalized people's longing for identity and their suppressed and oppressed state in postcolonial India during seventies and eighties.

Through Gustad, Mistry narrates the troubles and sufferings of middle class Parsi people in Bombay. He is the one who is searching his identity among other people till the end of the novel. The changing circumstances lead him to face identity crisis in the society. He has met a miserable life after his father's bankruptcy. He wants to create a specific identity for his own. He tries many things to get his identity in the society. He thinks that through education he can attain a decent identity in the society. So he wants to study as his wish in his life. But he cannot get what he likes. Instead he is forced to leave his dreams and has to adapt the pathetic events occurred in his life. This is the first failure in life to acquire his identity.

The protagonist is longing for self-identity in *Such A Long Journey*. He often encounters lot of problems in his life. He tries to succeed all his problems in each and every occasion. He does not feel satisfied in his life because of his lack of identity in the society. He often envies on his neighbours. He usually thinks that his identity has vanished in present days. He trusts that one's identity is tied up with economic development in the society. Therefore it leads him to think about his father's days constantly which gives him the feeling of nostalgia. He remembers his grandfather's fine furniture shop. He believes that his entire family is identified with his grandfather's furniture shop in the beginning.

Gustad's family's furniture shop is identified by its dignified name. It calls Noble & Sons, Makers Of Fine furniture. Gustad family has great respect among the people during this time. Their family has got name and fame because of this furniture shop. Even the family members are called as Noble family by others. His family gets a popular

and respectable place in the society. The furniture shop is recorded as the most important identity for the Nobles family. He feels proud whenever he thinks about his family's furniture shop. When they have lost their furniture shop, they are become empty hand. In a sense, they have lost their eminent identity in the society. After the loss of their furniture shop, they cannot lead their life properly. They cannot protect their identity successfully in the society. Instead his entire family is disappeared from the eyes of other people in the society. It shows that when the furniture shop has left from their hands their identity also disappears from the society. It makes him feel loss of identity in present days.

Gustad is struggled a lot to acquire his identity in his and other minority community in the busy city Bombay. His grandfather's failure in business is the first incident which turns his life in different path. It gives a tragic impact in the field of identity. Next, he has lost his identity as a Parsi man in the Hindu dominated society. He is segregated once again by the name of religion. Finally he has lost his identity when his son rejects to join in IIT. These are the important causes which resist Gustad to obtain his identity. The lack of economic progress is another reason to make himself unique from others and it is one of the obstacles to get his identity in the society.

Then the novel *Such A Long Journey* deals with the identity crisis of middle class Parsi people in another way. They are separated from other communities in the postcolonial Indian society. Khodadad Building is the domicile of this small ethnic group. It is called as a Parsi Building where all inhabitants are Parsis. The Parsis who reside in the Khodadad Building are Gustad Noble and his family, Miss Kutpitia, Major Jimmy Bilimoria, Inspector Soli Bamji, Mr. Rabadi, Tehmul Lungraa and Cavasji. These middle class Parsi people face identity crisis in postcolonial India in numerous ways. One of such problem is the demolition of a great wall. Khodadad building is covered with a great wall and it is stand as an emblem to the

Parsis. The Parsi people are identified by other people only with this wall. The Parsi community also accepts that the wall signifies their identity in the city. But they cannot hold their identity by this wall till the end of the novel. The wall is destroyed by the corporation to expand the road. They oppose to destroy the wall but they cannot get success. Instead they have lost some souls in that fight.

In this novel, Parsi community's longing for identity is revealed by the words of the Parsi characters like Gustad and Dinshawji. They give the voice for the identity of the Parsi people. They also disclose the questionable and pathetic life of Parsi community in postcolonial India. They mention that the Parsi cannot run their life successfully. After changing the names of street, these people are felt disappointed. Dinshawji says changing streets name causes lack of identity in Bombay city. He says that a person is identified with their street name when someone ask where he is from. But changing the street name makes a person unidentified in the society. Therefore he exposes his frustration by cursing the Shiv Sena political party in the novel.

In another hand, the Parsi people Identity is threaten by the political party in Bombay. Mistry shows that Parsi community is suffered when the Shiv Sena party takes its authority in Bombay city. They are dominated the Parsi community very often. The Shiv Sena in this novel is a real threat to an individual Parsi identity.

The Bombay of *Such A Long Journey* is shaken by the rise of the Shiv Sena, a local party with considerable influence in Maharashtra. The name of the party translates as 'Army of Shiva', a name drawing attention to its radical religious motivation. This party gives so many troubles to the Parsi as well as other minority communities in Bombay. They are always mocking at the burial rites of the Parsi people. They never give proper name and identity for the Parsi community. Instead they always used to suppress the Parsi

community by their words and actions. Therefore Dinshawji gets afraid about his own Parsi community.

Thus Mistry's *Such A Long Journey* depicts the identity crisis of the whole Parsi community and the individual in Indian society. It also shows their

longing for identity in each and every moment in their settled country.

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