



## SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

Ms. S. Amala Sahana\* Ms. A. Mary Selva Himonia\*

\*Assistant Lecturer, St. Eugene University, Chipata campus, Zambia.

### Abstract

Age factor, religion, demographic factor and historical event continue to be a significant theme adopted by various writers throughout the world to reveal the situations that occurred in the past and continue till date. Rohinton Mistry is a popular novelist in Indo-Canadian Literature. Mistry becomes very famous after the publication of his first novel *Such a Long Journey*. This novel has received many Awards and prizes. They are Canadian Governor General Literary Award, the Smith Book/Books in Canada first Novel Award and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for the best book.

This paper attempts to analyze the experience, and the how the minority people and middle class people searching their Identity in Postcolonial India.

**Keywords:** Socio Factor, Identity Crisis and Politics.

### Introduction

The ancient Greeks saw in Zoroastrianism the archetype of the dualistic view of the world and of human destiny. Zarathustra was supposed to have instructed Pythagoras in Babylon and to have inspired the Chaldean doctrines of astrology and magic. Zoroastrians today are a small but vibrant ethno-religious diaspora estimated at 130,000- 258,000. They are members of the oldest monotheistic world religion originating in the Inner Asian steppes in approximately 1500 B.C. living as a religious minority in widely dispersed communities across the world. Increasingly they have turned to the Internet to discuss challenges of declining population, maintaining an ethno-religious identity, conversion, and intermarriage.

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.

Zoroastrian Project at unescoparzor.com relates a legend to illustrate the intermingling and crosscultural respect. They relate how a Parsi officer, Ardeshir Dhanjisha Bahadur, sought to remove the 'dacoits' (robbers and thieves) that ravaged Surat at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His success won him a special medal in 1830 from the British. Perhaps of deeper importance for its weaving of the Parsis into the fold tradition and social fabric of India was the act of the Sahjanand Maharaj. In gratitude, he removed his Pheta (turban) and placed it at the feet of Ardeshir. Today it is kept in the home of his descendants where people travel to see it as it is believed to have miraculous powers.

Boyce (2004) explores the middle ground between the two. Unlike Alexander of Macedonia who was intent on conquest looting and destroying much of the Persian Empire and the Fire Temples and libraries, the Arabs were focused on conquest with the aim to bring subjugation as opposed to conversion. Islam thus moved through the Persian Empire driven by the vision set forth in the Surah 9.29 of the Quran: "Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what Allah and his Messenger have forbidden-such men as practice not the religion of truth, being people of the book-until they pay tribute out of hand and have been humbled." (Boyce, 2004:pg.145)

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.

### Reference

1. Boyce, M. 2004. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 5th edition. London and New York: Routledge.
2. Dodiya, Jaydipsinh. *Perspectives on the Novels of Rohinton Mistry*, New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006. Print.
3. Meitei, Mani M.-"Such A Long Journey and its Critical Acclaim" *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*, ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2005.
4. Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. New York: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1991. Print.
5. Singh, Amrijit. "Rohinton Mistry(1952- )". *Writers of Indian Diaspora, A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Source*. ed. Nelson Emmanuel. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993.
6. Lakhani, Ali "The Long Journey of Rohinton Mistry". Interview at the Vancouver International Writers' Festival. *Canadian Fiction Magazine*. 1989. [www.rungh.org/issues/Rungh\\_v2\\_n1-2.pdf](http://www.rungh.org/issues/Rungh_v2_n1-2.pdf)
7. Rainie, L., L. Clark, and S. Hoover. 2001. *Faith Online*. Pew Internet and American Life Project. Rappaport, R. A. 1999.
8. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. New York: Cambridge University Press.
9. Report, N. 2008. "Virtual Toothache Helps Student Dentists Learn Patient Side Communications," in *Converge Online*, vol. Winter, pp. 2. web: e.Republic, Inc.
10. Reporter. 2006. "Chronicling Parsi culture on the Net," in *Afternoon*, pp. 2. Bombay.
11. Rheingold, H. 1993. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
12. Rivetna, R. 1999. Editorial: Thoughts from a slightly confused Parsi-Indian-Iranian-NorthAmerican-Zarathushti. *FEZANA Spring*:3.