India's diasporic writer Rohinton Mistry who represents the realistic picture of the most sustained explorations of post-independence Indian society through his chronicles of individual and community lives. Mistry’s fiction covers many themes, from politics to parsi community life and economic inequality to national ‘events’ such as wars, rigorously examining the impact of historical forces and social events on ‘small’ lives. As his novels depict the social, cultural and political life in India. Most of his concerns are devoted towards the preservation of the parsi community which is marginalized sections of the society which include the economically and socially downtrodden, old and decrepit, women, etc. His concerns for the socially downtrodden and socially marginalized have found genuine representation in his works. Rohinton Mistry reflects the reality of India’s post colonial greedy politics of corruption, oppression, exploitation, violence, strong opposition to social and class differences have extended the spectrum of contemporary reality through his novels.

Abstract: Literature has always represented society in one form or another because writers are the sensitive souls of the society who are affected by the slightest possible change in their surroundings. This paper deals with Indian literature especially focuses on Indian diasporic writer Rohinton Mistry who represents the realistic picture of the most sustained explorations of post-independence Indian society through his chronicles of individual and community lives. Mistry’s fiction covers many themes, from politics to parsi community life and economic inequality to national ‘events’ such as wars, rigorously examining the impact of historical forces and social events on ‘small’ lives. As his novels depict the social, cultural and political life in India. Most of his concerns are devoted towards the preservation of the parsi community which is marginalized sections of the society which include the economically and socially downtrodden, old and decrepit, women, etc. His concerns for the socially downtrodden and socially marginalized have found genuine representation in his works. Rohinton Mistry reflects the reality of India’s post colonial greedy politics of corruption, oppression, exploitation, violence, strong opposition to social and class differences have extended the spectrum of contemporary reality through his novels.

Keywords: Class Differences, Community, Contemporary Reality, Cultural, Post Colonial, Social.

INTRODUCTION

Rohinton Mistry, an Indian - born writer of international repute and fame presently lives in and writes from Canada. He was born on July 3, 1952 in Mumbai. In 1975 Mistry along with his wife migrated to Canada and has lived there since then near Toronto. In 1983, he started his writing career as a short story writer and within a very short span of time he produced works which was internationally acclaimed and bagged many awards. His three major works are Such a Long Journey (1991) which is set at the time of Pakistan’s war with Bangladesh; A Fine Balance (1995) is set during Indira Gandhi’s Emergency and Family Matters (2002) in post 1992 Mumbai the year of the Babri Masjid Crisis in India. As a writer, who lives and write from Canada, Mistry’s writings focus mainly on India and its culture.

He has portrayed India in his works. Although he left his homeland India, is an immigrant writer, but his novels are true picture of India in its social, political and cultural sense. Rohinton Mistry in his novels has presented the grim view of Indian life and have observed the sufferings of the marginalized people, minority communities, the poor and the downtrodden of the Indian society. His novels deal with the backdrop of the Post-Independence history of India. They have included all important events of India since Independence. He raises some problems of minorities and cultural crisis which are the main issues under the subaltern studies, a key term of post-colonial theory. The present paper is the study of Religious minorities especially Parsis, Muslims and Christians who feel sense of insecurity, fear and threat in a dominated culture in different time of periods or crisis as presently felt by Muslims and Dalits in India.

A veracious portrayal of the Indian middle class is the high point in Mistry's narratives. His bitterness and disappointment with the government's hostile attitude towards the poor is evident in his novel. The pain and suffering of not being with your own people is better felt and expressed by immigrant writers. They might be physically away from their own motherland but deep down they keep missing it. The influence of the age, psyche, cultural heritage and political up-down on the author's mind is due to the fact that he is constantly influenced by the spirit of all the above facts.
Mistry’s writing uniquely captures the Parsi way of life. He focuses on the predicament of the Parsis which is characterized by large scale migration of the younger generation and the consequent loneliness of the older generation that lives on in India. It is to be noted that the Parsis are a micro community. Once a flourishing and wealthy community that was a part of the elite, both during Mughal and British rule, the Parsis are dwindling now. During the Mughal Era the Parsis were an important community and close to the ruling class because they spoke Parsis. With the coming of British rule, the Parsi community acquired the English language and thus retained their links with the ruling class. The Parsi today have dwindled into a micro-community. The religious rule which forbids intermarriage and conversion to the Parsi faith has resulted in an alarming fall in the Parsis population.

Mistry’s works are born out of the pessimism prevailing in the community and the bitterness of the loss of Parsi importance in Indian social, political and economic life in the post-independence period. To add to this loss of significance is the conflict that the community is forced to engage in with the neighbouring communities. This has led to a withdrawal of the community from any serious participation in the larger socio-economic activities of the country as reflected in the existence of the Parsis.

The Parsis are only numerically minority but in terms of economic affluence the community is the richest ethnic group in India. The Parsi resistance to majority politics in the post independence period is not only the result of a subordinated ethnic group trying to defend itself from the powerful ethnic groups which claim ownership of the new nation because of numerical superiority and origin; it is also the result of the inability of the Parsis to understand their new position in the radically rearranged social and economic hierarchy of India. This hierarchy it must be admitted is ordered along ethnic identity which in India very often takes the form of caste hierarchy also. There are numerous reasons for the ethnic antagonism faced by the Parsis and most of them tend to be the result of the general atmosphere of mobilising mass support for political parties along ethnic and religious lines.

MINORITY COMMUNITY

Rohinton Mistry has shown Indianness in every aspect of his novels. As an immigrant writer, he knows the socio political events taking place in India and also knows changing trends and patterns of culture and politics. There are only few Indian novelists who have so effectively portrayed the burning topics of Indian political scenario, these include the era of emergency period in 70s, demolition of Babri mosque and its aftermath during 90s and the corrupt existing political system and a strong urge to revive the old cultural heritage of India. Mistry's novels represent several cultures, religions and languages and he blends all these in a holistic manner, his view point is represented in his novels and the characters he chooses also bear this. The main theme of all his novels is the struggle of common man for a happy and peaceful life. In his works, the locale is Indian which includes language pattern, culture and families.

Let me come to the issue of double displacement or double marginalisation. As a Parsi, Mistry belongs to a minority community in India which fled to India from Iran to avoid Islamic oppression. Thus, it can be argued that as an Indian of Persian heritage, Mistry was in diaspora even in India. Mistry’s act of locating his narrative outside Hindu India suggests that there is no space for the Parsi subject in the dominant Hindu national narrative. The violent history of diaspora has further made it quite impossible for Parsis to speak from a unified cultural narrative. This marginalisation of the Parsi narrative has created a sense of loss and isolation. Unlike most migrant writers who speak of their experiences of racism and other racial violence in their newly adopted home, Mistry’s location as a Canadian of Indian-Parsi origin depicts a common experience of racism in both Canada and India. Mistry’s attempt to reconfigure the dominant narrative of the nation is done by rejecting the hegemonic underpinning of the multiculturalism of Canadian society.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Rohinton Mistry an Indian diaspora parse writer living in Canada, writes with Marxist consciousness with acute realization of all exploitation of the oppressed groups of society. He writes about common man and all the struggle of the commoners in face of social, political, economic and personal turmoil. He belongs to the category of socialist writers and his stance is political. He raises voice against all political and social inequalities and injustices done in the realm of upper strata of society. His first novel Such a Long Journey, unmasks political ideologies and points out all socio-political irritants which break the spirit of the commoners in their struggle for survival. State uses all state apparatuses ideological and repressive state apparatuses to give the whole political scenario a normal look but the actual lived social experience of the common man who is not interested in political issues detaches the element of truth from that of the artificially constructed reality. Nothing is real, all is constructed, all fabricated, all veiled. An atmosphere of betrayal and fraud is prevailing in social, public and familial space. People are putting black papers on their window-pans to avoid glaring reality or the daylight outside. The text fights all isms while exposing all political ideologies behind all fundamentalism, essentialism, extremism, universalism and nationalism.

Mistry is a realist writer echoing Balzac, Zola and Dickens; writing with Brechtian zeal he aims at social amelioration and voicing social issues and the muted voices. He is art for life sake writer and promotes the
 idea that literature should be a revolutionary tool in resolving social issues and problems. Such A Long Journey is a political text with Marxist commentary in each thread of the narrative. It is the desire of power and material pursuit which compels the power hungry sycophants to crush the spirit of the survival of the individual. Apparently the story revolves around Gustad Noble the protagonist of the novel, who works in a bank with meagre income and modest dreams. The text investigates the monolithic constructed nature of political truths, questions the role of individual who thinks himself to be autonomous and free being, the owner of his or her will to decide but actual he is not. Individual in post-colonial, post-independent societies with minority identities are just the puppets in the hands of the upper class people who steer the nation towards their desired destination. Thematic structure of the story includes major known political events and wars from history. Mistry handles the dynamic nature of parse community with extreme dexterity that community becomes the protagonist in the text. Private life is so intricately and imperceptibly linked with private life that it blurs the boundaries of public, private and social lines. The journey is the journey of the community, the journey of the nation, the journey of the city and the journey towards an enlightenment a pleading to a humanistic liberal ideological reconstruction of the world. He has wielded the weapon of satire and irony which make him a ruthless Indian politics during 1971, his unprecedented attacks on Indira Gandhi and his lashing comments on Nehru, his humiliating exposure of political and money scandals left Mistry an everlasting appreciation. He strips all layers of veiled truths, unmasking politically and ideologically constructed truths, he goes on describing Nehru’s frustration, ill temper, political intrigues that surrounded him. There are direct attacks on Indira Gandhi on her involvement in money embezzlement case with Raw agent Nagarwala, his suspected death, her hand in the death of Lal Bhader Shastari, her Maharashtra separation encouraging policies and he personal interest in the nationalization of the banks. She encouraged separate Maharashtra and gave air to bloodshed by dividing people on the bases of class, caste, creed, and colour, “Wanting to make us into second class citizens”.

ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Everyone has the right to live with dignity in the world. All men are equal according to the constitution of the country and there should not be any discrimination. Though the constitution assures the equality of people, there is always discrimination and subsequent ill treatment in the name of caste, class, and gender. Man has created divisions in the society on the basis of caste of a person. He divides the society by naming some sections are high or superior castes and others are low or inferior castes. Man gets religious endorsement for such divisions in the Indian society. It is unfortunate that even after the independence of the country and attaining development in various fields, Indians practice caste system. Caste in India plays an important role in every respect in the life of a person. People who are branded as “low caste” suffer a lot in the society especially at the hands of the “caste Hindus.” The so called “low caste men” suffer enormously and their miseries are indescribable. In Indian Literature in English, there are a few writers such as Rabindranath Tagore highlight the issues related to caste system and the affliction of people. In fact, Rohinton Mistry has made a realistic portrayal of the sufferings of the “low caste” people at the hands of high caste men in this novel. He vividly brings out the human rights violations committed by the caste Hindus against the “untouchables” in the novel.

Globalization intruded into the foothills of Himalaya leading to ecological and economical imbalance. Maneck’s very loss is a loss for the Indian middle class, whose morality, hopes and desires he embodies. Before his suicide maneck learns about the death of his only friend Avinash who is tortured to death by the police for his anti-Emergency and anti- Indira speeches. Emergency ensured that the common man was stripped of civil liberties and fundamental rights. The police had become an ally in the Government’s depressing record of human rights abuse. Avinash was the only hope to his family, his death resulted in the suicide of his three sisters who saved their father, a retired government
employee from financial hardship of giving dowry to get his three daughters’ married. The dreams of Ishavar, Om, Dina and Maneck are thwarted by external agencies and political changes. The Parsis and the other minorities underwent inhuman attacks on their identity and physical self leaving them numb and paralyzed. The atmosphere is far more pessimistic and there is little hope for the individual to effectively and positively carve out a personal destiny in the face of political revenge, violence and caste-class divide.

Despite all the hue and cry in the Indian political system about federalism and democracy, the lower middle-class and the poor are always at the receiving end of power politics and economic domination, leaving them victims of oppression and neglect. To the subaltern, “Living each day is to face one emergency or another”. The economically upper class people did not understand the sufferings of the poor, to them the Prime Minister was a “visionary leader” and the Emergency “A true spirit of Renaissance”. Mrs. Gupta, the proprietor of AuRevoir Exports and Nusswan, Dina Dalal’s brother, echo the capitalist attitude. Mrs. Gupta flourished during the State of Emergency paying low wages to employees as there was no fear of union leaders and strikes.

INSECURITY, ANXIETY AND THREAT

Rohinton Mistry has portrayed India in his works. He is an immigrant writer, but his novels are true picture of India in its social, political and cultural sense. Rohinton Mistry’s novels have presented the grim view of Indian life, and have observed the sufferings of the marginalized people, minority communities, the poor and the downtrodden of the Indian society. His novels deal with the backdrop of the Post-Independence history of India. They have included all important events of India since Independence. He raises some problems of minorities and cultural crisis which are the main issues under the subaltern studies, a key term of post-colonial theory. This paper is the study of religious minorities especially Parsis, Muslims and Christians who feel sense of insecurity, fear and threat in a dominated culture in different time periods or crisis as presently felt by Muslims and Dalits in India. In Family Matters, he has shown these minority issues after the time of demolition of Babri Mosque. Besides these it will present the threat of declining population of Parsis which is the serious matter of concern as a secular country.

Family Matters is a novel in which Mistry has highlighted concern of minorities. Here he has not only raise the issues of Parsi minority but also the other minorities like Muslims and Christians in a dominated Hindu cultured India in the context of some historical events. The novel expressing the oppressive situation in India and the Maharashtra state, including the major concerns in the 1990’s, the era of the post - Babri Masjid riots, corruption and communalism. It deals with everything from the dilemmas among India’s Parsi, a single family living on the edge of the middle class in contemporary Bombay, facing the brutal social situations and living through a domestic crisis. The novel also depicts the problems of insular-marriage and Parsi social-status in post - Ayodhya India where not only Parsis but other minorities were also threatened by the increasing fundamentalism. As such, there is no protagonist in the novel - for the focus of the narrative shifts among several characters, Nariman, Yezad, Jehangir, Roxana and Hussain.

Besides the sense of insecurity and identity or cultural crisis, there are other disturbing ethnic features like declining population, low birth rate, late marriages, high rate of divorce, attitudes to the girl child, alienation, urbanization etc. All these issues find expression in Rohinton Mistry’s works like other the post - independence Parsi writers in English.

CONCLUSION

Rohinton Mistry has touched almost all major issues of India of his time. In his novel Such a Long Journey, like minority differences, political upheavals, wars, corruption in society and politicization of the crime. The novel is a realistic picture of the minority communities like Muslims, Christians especially Parsis who feel fear, anxieties, threat, a sense of insecurity, helplessness because of the political uncertainties. The concerns of the Parsi community as a dwindling minority and their cultural erosion, their nostalgia about a stable past also finds a considerable space in the novel. Mistry's work are an amazing showcase of alienation, urbanization etc.

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