

Chapter 3

Journey of Exploration in 'Such a Long Journey'

'Would this long Journey be worth it?

Was any journey ever worth be trouble?' (SLJ, 259)

This is a poignant soliloquy of Gustad Noble, the main protagonist who beautifully surfaces the title of the novel which refers the toilsome life and journey not only of him but his family and society also. When we go through the novel, we find that the 'journey' word in the title of the novel has multi-layered meaning. The leitmotif of journeying flows in the sub text of the novel. The three epigraphs in the novel preface set the tone of the narrative. The first epigraph has been taken from Firdausi's Iranian epic 'Shah Namah' that recalls the glorious Iranian heritage of mighty empire.

'He assembled the aged priests and put questions to them concerning kings who had possessed once world. "How did they", he inquired, "hold the world beginning, and why is it that it has been left to us in such a sorry state? And how was it that they were able to live free to care during the days of the heroic labors?'

The above cited epigraph takes on to the journey of Parsis that had spread over a large part of the world before the Arab Invasion in 639 A.D. These Parsis were migrant people / small chunks of the society who did have 'Such a Long Journey' all the way from Persia to India. They were permitted to settle in Gujarat at Sanjan by King Jadav Rana. The Priest agreed to certain conditions imposed by the king. In order to ensure the king Jadav, Dasturji (the priest) stirred a spoonful of sugar

in a brass bowl full of milk and said that they would try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of their humble kindness.

The second epigraph is quoted from the poetry of T.S. Eliot. The title 'Such a Long Journey' has taken from T.S. Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi*:

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey and such a long Journey'

The title signifies an individual's struggle to survive with dignity. The journey of the three wise men to the birthplace of Jesus Christ is not an ordinary physical journey. It is a symbol of man's spiritual yearning in which he has to surpass numerous hardships. Eliot's poetry is symbolic and suggestive where the word 'journey' is used as a metaphor to reflect the struggle and labour done by the 'Magi'. The 'Magi' here refers to the three intellectual men who came from ancient Persia and 'Magi' is used for the priestly class of magicians. Later they were recognized as: Balthazar (king of Chaldea), Gaspar (Ethopian king of Garshish) and Melchoir (the king of Nubia). Later, one of the Magi gave an account of his journey for the benefits. The end of the journey was rewarding and satisfying, for he has arrived at his desired destination that the prophecy of the birth of Christ true. The Journey of the Magi is also symbolic of the re-orientation which is absolutely essential to attain higher and nobler values in the life.

The third epigraph is extracted from the Nobel Laureate Prize winning creation *Gitanjali* written by Rabindranath Tagore:

'And when old words die out on the tongue,
New melodies break forth from the heart;

And where the Old tracks are lost,

New country is revealed with its wonders'

These lines of Tagore sum up the way in which the Parsis journeyed from one place to another and one country to another and how they adapted themselves to the new realities.

The South Asian Mistry places his community at the center and weaves a tale that is both the history and fabulation. The novel presents Mistry's vision of multicultural society and the place of minorities in it. He presents the political situation of the nation such as humiliated defeat in the Indo-China war and another was the shameless scams by the higher political powers during the Indo-Pak war as the tapestry of his novel. The war fought between India and Pakistan for the liberation of East Pakistan - the present Bangladesh. The novelist Mistry returns to Bombay and has very overtly attempted to deconstruct and repossesses his past. It may be seen as a byproduct of kinship and group identity. As Gayatri Spivak mentioned, "a feeling of recognized kinship is more desirable than nationalism". Even Stuart Hall underlines the heterogeneity and diversity of the people who has moved away from their homeland, he reiterates their "remembrance of things past" and an endless desire to return to last origins", to be one again with moth, to go back to the beginning is like the imaginary; it can neither be fulfilled nor requited and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery, in short the reservoir of our cinematic narratives" (1990).

His debut novel opens with the morning Kusti prayer in serene and peaceful environment:

'The first light of morning barely illumined the sky as Gustad Noble faced eastward to offer his orisons to Ahura Mazda. The hour was approaching six, and

up in the compound's solitary tree the sparrows began to call. Gustad listened to their chirping every morning while reciting his kusti prayers'(SLJ, 1).

The opening lines of the novel reveal a serene, pristine beauty and natural music of sparrows that further creates a soothing atmosphere and a mystic environment. As a true Parsi he believes in every ritual and customs of Parsi Zoroastrianism but he respects all the other religions equally. He performs his Kusti prayer regularly and after completing it, he expertly flips his wrist twice, thrice to driven away Ahriman, the evil one. Perhaps his nobility and cooperative nature becomes the root cause of his problems and difficulties. He was a God fearing and family centered person.

The narrative sets in two spatial scales in the first few lines of the novel.

'The first light of morning barely illuminated the sky as Gustad Noble faced eastward to offer his orisons to Ahura Mazda.... the metallic clatter of posts and pans began nibbling at the edges of stillness. The bhaiya sat on edges of stillness. The bhaiya sat on his haunches, besides the tall aluminum can and dispensed milk into the vessels of housewives' (SLJ, 1).

The plot uses series of co- incidences as a narrative link to interconnect the various episodes in the life of Gustad Noble. The sage of Gustad is fact based fiction in which Mistry deliberately weaves into the story certain historical facts such that the novel becomes medium for the expression of betrayed hope and loss of faith as experienced by Parsi community at national level.

Gustad is proud of his ancient roots. He with the sense of elevation says, 'Our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of God was ever born' (SLJ, 56).

Life Journey of Gustad noble highlights the collective consciousness of Parsi community. 'Such a Long Journey' concentrates on the middle – class life of the

Parsis in Bombay at the wake of 1971 Indo-Pak War. It is a pathetic tale in which writer mixed historical and political events in the sixties and seventies in India with the personal lives of the characters that haunts not only the conscious but unconscious state of the chief protagonist and other characters of the narrative. The protagonist Gustad Noble, a middle aged Parsi with moderate aspirations, struggles very hard to make his family life happy and comfortable, learning painfully to reconcile himself to the disappointments and frustration in the life. His life partner, Dilnavaz is always with him at all odds, but this disillusioned man keeps worrying about his two sons, Sohrab and Darius and a loving daughter Roshan always suffering from chronic diarrhea. His friend circle consists of a few Parsis like Jimmy Bilimoria, the RAW agent, his co-worker in Bank Dinshawji, a half-wit Tehmul Lungra, his family doctor Paymaster, his christian friend Malcolm Saldhana and Jimmy's trusted Pathan friend Ghulam Mohammed. The canvas of the narrative is too narrow, restricted to only the minority Parsis in India so there is no place for the 'Other'.

However Mistry does not provide a straightforward Parsi – as – 'Other' to the rest of India as 'self' equation either.

The device of flash back allows the author to expand the social realm beyond the text by showing the switching on and off of consciousness of Gustad Noble. Frequent references to the better days in the past, especially Gustad reminiscences of his childhood and his father's financial prosperity evoke nostalgia for the past. He recalls his father's shopping sprees in Crawford market which has become for him a nightmare.

‘Perhaps it was due to their different circumstances : his father always accompanied by at least one servant, arriving and leaving by taxi; Gustad along, with his meager and worn basket lined with newspaper to soak up meat juices

that could start dripping in the bus, causing embarrassment or worse still, angry protests from vegetarian passengers' (SLJ, 21)

Gustad remembers his father's bankruptcy. Not only does it has the sound of a deadly virus but also feels 'cold as a chisel'⁴⁸ what temporarily succumbs to the clutches of bankruptcy"⁴⁹.

This event of his life shattered all his plan of attending university, something which would enhance his career prospects considerably. Instead of being able to focus on his studies, he is forced to earn money.

This filled his heart and consciousness with a sense of void which he further wants to fulfill through his son. The defense mechanism of identification is clearly visible in the course of act (fulfilling his own dreams or sense of void by his own son's achievement). He seems to be a man who is swimming in the tickle water of his fifth decade of life. The past is of special relevance to Gustad. Apart from the bankruptcy, the broken bowl of Matheran points to a second instance where Gustad's life becomes questionable. He remembers how at the end of a childhood holiday at Matheran an edible pudding bowl is broken and eaten by the manager of the hotel. This seems to be a trial incident that resurfaces in Gustad's consciousness.

'And then, the bowl was broken and eaten. There was something so final and terrible about the act. And when the bookstore was bankrupt and the bailiff arrived, I remembered the broken bowl..... The men continuing their task, dismantling Papa's life, breaking it up into little pieces..... And I remember the dinner table in Matheran, the crunching down of the broken bowl – Such a terrible, final act' (SLJ, 243)

The breaking of the bowl (as well as the bankruptcy) signifies a boy's first encounter with destruction and life's complexity. The saying that 'miseries comes in battalions is true to Gustad. All the events of life in present and past are

wrapped with setbacks. He has very few movements of happiness in his life. In the midst of the chaotic times in connection to this personal uncertainties and problem; Gustad was doubly distressed when he thought about the position of minorities in India. As a conscientious Parsi, he was aware of the depressing future that awaited minorities in India in general and the Parsis in particular (Gandhi Kurpa, 93).

He is disturbed to see how the followers of the Shiv Sena abuse the members of the Parsi community. They call them 'Crow-eaters' and mock their burial rites. Gustad noble reflects on the community's precarious status. He says,

‘What kind of life was Sohrab going to look forward to? No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language non-sense. It was going to be like the black people in America – twice as good as the white man to get half as much’ (SLJ, 55).

For him Shiv Sena is the epitome of majority's violence against minorities. The above passage portrays the Parsi community's little fear and anxieties. Gustad and resident of Khodadad building are the true representatives of middle class aspiring parsis expressing all the angularities of the declining minority community.

He fears that if a Shiv Sena manages to achieve its goals and puts its plan into practice, Sohrab's future in Bombay will become insecure indeed. This insecurity of Gustad seems to imply that the only way out for Sohrab emigration.

However, pointing out the condition of Others who have to be ‘twice as good as the white man to get half as much’ (55) migration and diaspora are at the same time rejected as viable opportunities for a good life.

The position of the Parsi minority is also made more vulnerable by Indira Gandhi's nationalization of all Banks at one stroke thus toppling the Parsi hold over banking. Dinshawji reminds Gustad of the past.

‘Parsi were the kings of banking in those days such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled ever since Indira Nationalized the Banks’ (SLJ, 38).

This creates a sense of insecurity and loss among them (Parsis). On other side the process of “Cultural inversion” becomes evident in Dinshawji voice over the loss of familiar names of road and sites under the pressure of Shiv Sena. To Gustad's question, “what's in a name”, he counter – asserts that renaming is an infliction of linguistic violence on social identity, the erasure of familiar names connected with the past is seen as an erasure of “a personal – historical connectedness” (Mala Pandurang, 157).

‘Names are so important; I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared. In its place is Dada Saheb Ambedkar Marg. My school was on Camac Road. Now suddenly it's on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain and one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life, I have lived? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new name? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out, just like that? Tell me’ (SLJ, 74)

Dinshawji says that all these violent and agitating tactics of the Marathas will contaminate the social harmony in Mumbai and there will be chaos and disturbance all around.

Dinshawji, raised and socialized within an anglophile tradition, ruthlessly attacks the Shiv Sena's renaming of street names and takes issue with its psychological consequences. The names for them were source of security. The name considered as a distinct part of their ethnic identity, the indicator of their culture. (Gandhi Kurpa, 160)

Thus, Dinshawji, according to David Williams (1996) ‘experience the rewriting of the map of his neighborhood as an interruption in his self – presence’

By centralizing their community in their narratives, he preserves and protects them and thus throws light on existing facts.

Such a Long Journey’ as a history, recaptures, pulsating moments in the life of nation and the Parsi community. Mistry reinvents the history but it is not exactly the fact-based history. The major historical events that vibrated the political life of post independent Indian at individual national and trans-national levels are presented imaginatively in it. The history is written from a minority culture perspective, the Parsis’ perception of India. The history of the nation runs parallel to the history of Gustad Noble’s family. However, if subjectively contemplated, history may be regarded as a record of all that has occurred with the realm of human consciousness. (Harry Elmer, 19)

Mistry has explored history which is much concerned of Parsis and national identity. He represents the history of Parsi community and pain of Indian people at personal, social and national level. We can see Gustad’s fate resembles with the fate of nation (Manoj Kumar, 149).

The year of 1962 was dreadful for Gustad as well as for the nation. It was the same year in which Nehru’s democratic India met a “humiliating defeat” (9) at the hands of the treacherous (SAL; 10) yellow race of the Chinese in spite of the slogan ‘Hindi-Chinee Bhai-Bhai’ followed by riots, curfew and lathi charges in Mumbai.

The Indo-China war in 1962, Indo-Pak war in 1965 and 1971, the birth of Bangladesh are the main historical events around which the novel rotates. Gustad painful memories of this dreadful year lie deep in his subconscious state of mind. He met with a terrible accident this year (1962) while jumping down the running bus on the Church gate road to save Sohrab.

Such a Long Journey offers post-independence history as a history of reception, validation and employment of what Benedict Anderson refer to as the notion of imagined community – which is by all accounts a Western construct exported to the colonies and which is essentially identify politics writ large –in the formation of the nation – state in 194. (Sukeshi Kamra, 135)

Mistry presents post-independence history in two different ways; first, the text openly obsessed about the nation state, its architects, and second is the abstraction – minority community – on which the narrative is based. Mistry reinvents the history but it is not fact based history. The history is written from a minority culture prospective. In, here review of the novel Arun Mukherjee (1992:85) observes that novel also talk ‘about life as it is lived under specific historical circumstances and demands that the cultural outsider pays attention to its cultural historical specificity.’ (Arun Mukherjee, 85).

The third Indo – Pak war which was fought in 1971 finds place in Mistry’s novel, Such a Long Journey. This war was fought for establishing peace in Pakistan when there was strife between East and West domain of Pakistan. It was widely perceived that the West zone dominated the country, leading to the effective marginalization of East zone. This difference changed into the civil war between East and West Pakistan. (Manoj Kumar, 109)

Mistry underlines the reasons of the Civil war responding to Roshan’s (Gustad’s daughter) question.

‘Daddy, why is West Pakistan killing the people in East Pakistan?’ (SLJ, 26)

In answer Gustad says:

‘Because it is wicked and selfish, East Pakistan is poor, they said to West, we are hungry; please give us a fair share. But West said no. Then East said, in that case

we don't want to work with you. So, as punishment, West Pakistan is killing and burning East Pakistan' (SLJ, 27)

Mistry's historical vision has different dimensions. He primarily focuses on the movements that are produced in the articulation of what is known as 'Cultural differences'. The work of Mistry emerges as a parallel history of modern Indian and Parsis as a minority community.

The early 1970s witnessed the emergence of the Shiv Sena with its ethnic demand for a Maratha Raj, angrily dismissed by Gustad as

'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians' nonsense' (SLJ, 73). He sees this agitation as a threat to his minority community as analogous to the situation of black American.

Tarun Tejpal describes the novel as the first Fact based fiction in the India Tradition (1991:14,) a close examination of the number of interruptions in the narratives suggests an intrusive urge on Mistry's part to deliberately weave into the story certain historical facts such that the novel becomes a medium for expression of betrayed hope and loss of faith as experienced by Parsi community at national level.

'Rohinton Mistry attempts to make sense of actual historical events by narrating them, by extending them beyond the curtain of silence and perception in which official discourses have tried to enshroud them'

(Arun Mukherjee, 92)

Mistry being a minority author tries to invent the neglected chapters of Indian history. By re-narrating the history, the novelist develops a story of his community and the nation. Mistry's novel and Eliot's poem refer to the mediaeval tradition of quest. Superficially the main objective of quest is to find out oneself for accomplishment and make the self-satisfied psychological. Quest is the

psychological urge of human consciousness. The quest in 'Such a Long Journey' is of lesser magnitude.

Gustad Noble's dreams for his son's career seem to be a quest, the purpose of which is University degree. Sohrab's deviation from Gustad's expectations seems to make life meaningless. He helplessly unlocks his heart;

'How to make him realize what he is doing to his father, who has made the success of his son's life, the purpose of his own, Sohrab has snatched away that purpose, like a crutch from a cripple' (SLJ, 20).

Sohrab refused to attend IIT because he has dreamt of such a career himself;

'All I wanted for him was to have a chance at a good career. The chance wrenched away from' (SLJ, 21)

Sohrab refuses to go to IIT, but to stay in Bombay and complete a B.A. in literature shattered all his dreams. (1) Sohrab's departure from Gustad's expectations seems to make his life meaningless. (2) In Sohrab's case, there exists the oedipal conflict in his growing up from adolescence to adulthood that creates a crisis of identity.

The novel has intensely political overtones and the crucial event of 1971 Indo-Pak war for the liberation of Bangladesh and Indira Gandhi's mandatory and decisive role in it. As Tarun Tejpal (1991-140) points out that it is a fiction thinner than facts. Mistry is desperately keen of the breaking of walls, whether it to be the wall that fences in a Parsi community from the outside world or the political boundaries that have been drawn between India and Pakistan or Indian and China. Mistry does not reduce the novel to an expression of a collective experience of consciousness that is haunted by feelings of discrimination alone. Mistry draws a coherent picture of the Parsis community through various characters. He seems more concerned with the concept of nationhood and

nationality. Gustad's experience throws relief into the rotten state of affairs in Indian politics, society and economy. Gustad's bitterness and cynicism of the political scenario run parallel to the personal losses and sufferings of his community. Mistry's politics can perhaps best be glimpsed through Bilimoria's tragic tale and the detailing of country's political corruption. Bilimoria performs at the interface of national and international politics. The source used by Mistry for Major Jimmy Bilimoria's pathetic tale is the bizarre Nagarwala Scandal. There are two incidents in the novel that are the fictional versions of actual incidents. First is the nationalization of banks and other is associated with major Bilimoria.

Bilimoria is not a culprit as described by the power users but in fact he became a victim in the hands of political schemers in a deceptive political conspiracy in which the Prime Minister herself was directly concerned. Indira Gandhi asked Bilimoria to get the amount of sixty lakhs from the SBI director, by impersonating the PM's voice on the telephone, on an urgent situation basis to finance a guerrilla operation that is so called Mukti Bhahini in East Pakistan. Major was also asked to write a declaration (he had initiated her voice) which he did without any second thought.

It is a safe political move to protect her. Before the money was used for original purpose the PM's office intercepted the money. Knowing this Bilimoria kept ten lakhs rupees. Gustad received this money that has to be deposited to the fictitious account of Mira Obili with the help of his friend and co-worker in the bank. But as the procedure went on, Bilimoria was arrested; kept under custody and tortured until he returned the money. Gustad and Dinshawji managed to withdraw the amount and returned it to Ghulam Mohammed who requested Gustad to meet Jimmy in Delhi. After meeting him, he understands the political stand of the people involved in it. (Dr. Mansingh Kadam, 173).

In order to save their own skin, they can deliberately scarifie the life of poor and helpless people. Ministry Criticism of the political leaders is evident in Ghulam Mohammed's words to Gustad.

'People at the very top are involved. They can do whatever they like with Biliboy. In this country, law doesn't apply to one's at the top' (SLJ, 204)

Sohrab, making an ironical comment on the working of the Prime Minister, adds that our wonderful Prime Minister uses RAW like a private police force to do all her dirty work. (SLJ, 25)

In a state of utter weakness, hovering between reality and fantasy, Bilimoria speaks about the way Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is hijacked for the personal use of the Prime Minister.

'Big surprise.....she was using RAW like her own private agency. Spying on opposition parties, ministers.... any one. For blackmail made me sick. Even spying her own cabinet. One of them prefers little boys. Another takes picture of himself.... doing it with women. Bribes every..... so much going on, Gustad. RAW kept dossiers. On her friends and enemies where they went, whom they met what they said, what they get, what they drank.....' (SLJ, 270)

The characters of the novel criticize Indira and his son without any reservation. They consider that "Indira and her son, the motorcar fellows are involved in all kinds of crooked deals. Commenting on the assassination of Indian Gandhi, the Prime Minister, Bilimoria friend Gulam tells Gustad that she has enemies as well as her friends. Ghulam tells Gustad that "Indira Gandhi herself has many enemies. Make more and more every day, from Punjab to Tamil Nadu. Anyone of them could do it (murder). (SLJ, 323)

The narrative explicated how a very thin line exists between facts and fiction, fission and fusion, consciousness and sub-consciousness. The close reading of

the text reveals that Mistry is a fascinating and culturally significant aspect of his craft of fiction. The political events referred to are the Nehruvian Utopia, the dirty power politics, nepotism and the faulty system of electorate in 1970s, the vested interests of politicians and its repercussions in the 1980s. (Dr. Mansingh Kadam, 175). He is a political committed writer and his commitment is affiliated to his own Parsi community. One of the disturbing qualities of 'Such a Long Journey' is the dexterity deftness with which the narrative is woven, such that one cannot escape the connections between and transmutation of public decisions and their repercussions on the private lives of the citizens. It explores the intimate connection between war and state politics, between the corruption of political leaders and the psyche of ordinary people (Nadini Dewnarian, 73).

The concept of 'Wee' consciousness is explored throughout the novel and collective conscious may be easily observed through the actions and speeches of various characters of the novel like Gustad Noble, Dinshawji, and Malcom Saldhana etc. He opposes nationalization of banks which would deprive them livelihood and deserved position in the banking system. Mistry's fiction can be considered within this conceptual structure as the predicament of an individual in order to cope with the contradictions of the past and the present, community and self, family and community. Each of these 'contexts' of individual contradiction and dilemmas is conscious overtone that changed the events in the text.

In 'Such a Long Journey' the word 'Journey' has limited literal significance because literally there is no mention of long Journey, expect journey from Bombay to Delhi to meet his friend Bilimoria and back from Delhi to Bombay. Here the word 'Journey' is symbolic in personal term; it is the journey of self from denial to acceptance and forgiveness.

When Gustad was on his way to Delhi in train he ponders over its worth,

‘Would this long journey be worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble? and what a long journey for Dinshawji too, but certainly worth it’ (SLJ, 259-260).

No doubt, the journey has worth and Gustad returns from Delhi with the sense of satisfaction and contentment. The key word journey is introduced the beginning of the novel and runs throughout the text. This key word deals with permanence and change, order and chaos; and art of living and life of art. ‘The motif representing the dispersal of Christianity and parsis along with the disharmony in the life of individual who believes in different religion’ (Rajesh Kumar, 89).

The Journey is the leitmotif of plot that presents the life voyage of the main protagonist of the narrative Gustad and how he overcomes all the obstacles in his way of life. The Journey means quest for identity and cultural roots in relation to race, class, nation and ethnicity. Mistry’s journey has strived to spell Parsi positions in various shades. The text of novel exhibits consciousness of his community in such a way. He narrates the community’s woes through the mouth of his characters. Gustad’s long journey is a kind of enlightenment on political reality on political reality, personal affections and morality. The central image of the Journey recalls that pragmatic journey of Parsis in the novel. As Anjana Desai says,

‘The Journey is the Journey of a nation, of a city, of an ethnic minority, and of an individual man of this community and the question it raises is the someone that baffles Eliot’s mage was for it for a birth, or a death that they travelled’ (1994, 134).

Mistry describes that happiness and miseries are the essential part of Journey of every major or minor character of the novel.

Gustad’s life journey is in malicious world in which happiness and miseries are intensely interwoven with the journey on the edge of life. His long journey

exhibits the consciousness of his community and demonstrates the existing threats to Parsi family and community. 'His long journey is an illustration of the universal truth with the conflict between good and evil' (Rajesh Kumar, 5)

Major Bilimoria journey in the novel is none other than the fictional counter part of Nagarwala case who was arrested and killed during Indira Gandhi Government. His journey runs through the political nerves of the text which ends nerves of the text which ends in a vacuum. The close reading of the novel makes one feel that his fiction is an amalgamation of history & politics, fact and fiction moving in two directions, history barely forming the substance, for the substance is Gustad Noble's life Journey from happiness to misery and vice-versa. (Dr. Mansingh kadam, 174)

'The journey / quest motif is an recurrent one in third world immigrant fiction, wherein the journey metaphorically entails the transition from one state of inner experience to another' (Vinay Kirpal, 71)

The rootlessness and alienation that characterizes most immigrant experience, is already a part of double-bound Mistry. The in between-ness led the community to address issues that directed to their ethnicity and culture specificity within the context of political and social changes in India. In 'Such a Long Journey' the 'personal is political and political is personal'. This is not merely a fiction about Parsi life. The Parsi community is created in writer's perception as a marginal group that is shut out / walled in by choice/ design within Indian mindset. Mistry as a writer himself admits that if someone wants to create good literature then his content must include all aspects. He puts it in words, 'I must write about what I know best. In that way, I automatically speak for my tribe' (Hancock 145). Here, he tries to emphasize that in order to produce good literature he is writing about Parsi culture and traditions.

The novel also pays close attention to religion which plays an important role in shaping the Parsi identity. As Mistry discourse does revolve around the Parsi identity, the relevance of the Zoroastrian faith deserves mention not only as a major influence on many world religions but also as a shaping factor for the characters 'Such as Long Journey' (Manoj Kumar, 43).

The author describes the Parsis as an ethno-religious minority. The protagonist of the novel believes in the Zoroastrian values of truth, charity and purity of mind and the symbol of 'Kusti': a sacred thread tied three times around the waist while praying. As a child, he enjoyed Kusti prayers and it becomes a daily routine. He believes in Zoroastrian faith of good words, good deeds and good thoughts. Religion for him is not like garments style that could be changed just to follow fashion, and he strongly believes that all religions are same.

Gustad usually goes with Saldhana to the Church in believing in the equality of all religions. But when Saldhana boasts of Christianity, Gustad promptly retorts.

'But our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of God was even born; a thousand years before Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam' (SLJ, 24)

This utterance reveals that Gustad is proud of his own religion. Gustad's friend, Malcom used to remind him that "We are minorities in a nation of Hindus" (SLJ, 23). According to his perception the existence of minorities completely depends upon the majority Hindus, though cow, the sacred animal of the Hindus, is the supply of protein for the minorities. The fear syndrome emanated from the emergent Hindu fundamentalism and sectarianism that hold energy during the 1970s looms large in Gustad's psyche. Gustad protected his religion against the general skepticism prevailing in India about its rituals and customs such as function of the 'Tower of Silence' upon which the dead Zoroastrians are thrown

to the buzzards. The uncompromisingly 'Preferred the sense of peaceful mystery and undivided serenity that prevailed in the fire temple' (SLJ, 24).

The Parsi religion in Mistry's fiction is not only ethnographic but also in sociological terms religion in "Such a long journey" is significant as a means of generating meaning in a world that is felt to be deprived of it.

Mistry's religious sensibility, however seems to be Non-Indian, for Indian believes in secularism and tolerance and he being a Parsi feels that the Parsis are marginalized in the post-colonial India. It seems that he is not a committed secularist and a believer in India's composite cultural heritage like his nameless pavement artist. (Dr. Mansingh Kadam, 293)

The pavement artist (with BA in world religions and specialization in comparative studies) paints an extensive mural of gods and goddess of India. This idea of Gustad to invite a (nameless) commercial pavement artist to paint a urine soaked wall becomes a symbol of religions amalgamation.

In 'Such a Long Journey', Rohinton Mistry's journey has strived to spell Parsi positions and place in various shades & shadows. His work exhibits consciousness of his community in distinct manner. He narrates his community's woes through the mouths of his characters. The individual fate is bound up with the fate of his community. (S.Vinod Kumar, 42)

Gustad Noble feels proud of his ancient culture, religion and roots. The novel highlights the collective consciousness of Parsis who experience the anxieties, feeling of insecurity and alienation, characteristic of minority communities. 'Parsis in India feel insecure, experience identity crisis and feel threatened by possible submersion in the dominant Hindu society, a nightmarish prospect which they do not ever want to come true.' (N.S. Dharan, 7)

Now days, the Parsis are the ethno- religious minority. The novel traces the historical background and their current status of Parsi community in India through Malcom Saldhana's proposal to establish historical superiority of his religion over his friend Gustad.

'Christianity came to India over nineteen Hundred years ago, when Apostle Thomas landed on the Malabar Coast amongst fishermen. Long before you Parsis came in seventh century from Persia, running away from Muslims' (SLJ, 24)

And when Gustad retorts Malcom gives up.

'But our Prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism Christianity and Islam' (SLJ, 24).

These words of Gustad try to glorify his own religion. This reference quoted from the text shows; the pride and dignity in the mind & heart of the protagonist Gustad Noble, is self-reflective. In the worst situation also, he does not give up his nobility that is essence of Zoroastrian philosophy and unflinching loyalty and faith in his religion. The opening lines of the novel focus his commitment for his religious fact.

Apart from religion, the major factor shaping the collective identify of Parsi community is its feeling of Otherness. Mistry asserts that national identity of minorities depends on a strategy of 'Othering' that threatens to discriminate the Parsis. The Shiv Sena in this narrative (Such a Long Journey) is presented by the characters as a very real threat to a distinct Parsi identity. 'The Shiv Sena Openly advocates racist goals and agitates against South Indian Immigrants, who are blamed for insufficiency of Jobs in Bombay' (Gandhi Kurpa, 94).

As Nilufer E. Bharucha (1996) points out:

‘The Sena raised the bogey of the ‘the other’ – the religious other, the Muslim, the linguistic other, especially Tamil speakers, and regional other, those who come from other parts of India’. Mistry shows that Indian national identity construction relies on a strategy of Othering that threatens to victimize the Parsis.

Both the Shiv Sena and the Parsis realize that struggle for language is important because it is tied up with the issues of identity.

In this sense, the Parsi identity can be described as ‘Others’ struggling to maintain their self in a Hindu dominant society. The Parsis are regarded as ‘Others’ because they are presented as traditional, conservative and typically religious minded people in an Indian modern society. Gustad and other inmates of Khodadad like Tehmul Lungra is seen as a marginal figure, to be shouted at, ordered about and eventually to be disposed of casually. However, the realities of community life create other situations of marginalization. Gustad is doubly distressed about the depressing future that awaited minorities in India, in general. ‘Shiv Sena’ is presented as a character that is real threat to a distinct Parsi identity. Protagonist consciousness is haunted by the increasing power of Shiv Sena and its meaningless propagandas like Martha Raj, with its nonsense of Maratha for Maharashtrians. Dinshawji says that all these agitating tactics of the Marathas will trouble the social harmony and balance in Mumbai. He also raised and socialized within an anglophile tradition, ruthlessly attacks the Shiv Sena’s renaming of street names and takes the issue with its psychological consequences. The names for them were source of security. ‘The names considered as a distinct part of their ethnic identity and indicator of their culture’. (Gandhi Krupa, 94).

Gustad’s friend Malcom used to remind him that we are minorities in a nation of Hindu. (SLJ-23). This fear syndrome emanated from the emergent Hindu

fundamentalism and sectarianism that hold energy during the 1970s looms large in Gustad's psyche.

He feeds his identity and he has awareness of holding it throughout the novel. His friend is also seeking his own identity and he mourns for the loss of his social identity and his personal history. According to him change of names symbolizes certain loss of old identity. Author's social and moral consciousness is reflected through Dinshawji character. While the friendship between Gustad and Malcom has been damaged by alienation, Gustad friendship with Tehmul Lungra and Dinshawji is eventually ended by death. Dinshawji & Tehmul are allegorical figures and represent complex psychological dispositions. Tehmul's death realizes Gustad about life and reality. 'Though, he is a minor character in the narrative but plays an important role in the transformation of Gustad's consciousness of his community and demonstrates the existing threats to Parsi family and community'. (S.Vinod Kumar, 44).

Gustad's room is dark due to black out paper taped over the window pane and the ventilators since Indo-China war broke out. The darkness of the room symbolizes solitude. In the state of solitude he feels nostalgic and thinks about his past losses. His wife Dilnavaz often requested him to get rid of the black paper. The black papers symbolize Gustad's effort to preserve the Parsi community and his family from outer world and also preserving his identity. He mended the black paper with the help of his daughter Darius. This act shows an attempt to preserve their community and its significance from being extinct.

The blackout paper answers a psychological need in Gustad in that it keeps out the frightening historical events as the nation war. Dilnavaz wants Gustad to come out of the dark world.

'With so much Junk I cannot clean or dust properly and all that paper still in the windows and ventilators. God knows when.....'(SLJ, 116)

The pangs of expansion that Gustad experiences due to his being thrown to the margins in unpleasant conditions emerge as a spiritual test in which he ultimately succeeded. Gustad's quest ends in peace silence and reconciliation. He removes the black paper from his windows letting the rays of hope peep in the room.

Mistry uses symbols and images very skillfully in his fiction to portray the internal feelings of the characters, and thus plays a significant role to understand their behavior and psychic disposition. Not only human behavior but also the inanimate objects help to develop the plot. These objects not only help to develop the plot but also allow the reader to peep deep into sub consciousness of the characters. 'The six feet high and 300 feet long black wall is an important symbol throughout the novel. It acts as a border, a social partition sheltering the residents of Khodadad Building from non – parsi eyes and protecting them from the threat of Otherness itself' (Anjali Roy and Meena Pillai, 162).

The BMC plans to demolish the wall to widen the road annoyed Gustad and he criticizes and curses BMC for undertaking such disastrous move:

'The Bloody Bastards were out of their minds. What was the need to widen the road? The compound would shrink to less than half its present width; and the black stone wall would look like a mountain before the ground floor tenants. More a prison camp than a building, all cooped up like sheep or chickens with the road noise and nuisance so much closer. The flies, the mosquitoes, the horrible stink, with bloody shameless people pissing, are squatting alongside the wall. Late at night it became like a whole sale public latrine' (SLJ, 16)

The wall is an important symbol in the text and it has actually a group of symbols. The beginning of the narrative it represents protectism and reduction of the wall. The confrontation between Morcha members and municipal workers ends up in agitation and furious violence and the tragic death of Tehmul in cross-fighting between two. Gustad realizes that collapse of the wall would wreck the past and

future and would inevitably speed up the process of dismantling the boundaries around the Parsis world. The wall becomes gloomy within the apartment on account of the blackout paper. Gustad strikes up with the brilliant idea of inviting the urine soaked wall ‘made copious by Malodorous deposits by outsiders’ (SLJ, 156) and therefore marked by the odor of counter territoriality. The pavement artist paints the wall within gods and goddesses from all religion. The artist (having bachelor’s degree in World Religions and especially in comparative studies) produces an extensive mural of the gods of India. Gustad’s prime intention was to maintain the divisive function of the wall to stop the pissers and was not based on any secular intention. ‘The idea of the picture within the picture is analogous to the idea of cultures within cultures; reflecting the multi-faceted aspects of India’s confusing socio-religious cultural make up’ (Anjali Roy and Meena Pillai, 19).

The artist’s holistic vision also encompasses Yellamma – the deity of devdasis (287) and protector of prostitutes. The pavement artist first comes to Gustad’s attention when he is rushing to the bank to deposit Bilimoria’s first installment. This is his impression of the artist. (Nadiani Dewnarian, 28).

‘The Pavement artist did not restrictas it displayed the deity of the day.’ (SLJ, 143)

Any attempt to interpret the wall as a symbolic mural that reflects the idea of an India based on multiplicity and pluralism. Although, the inmates do not like the religious pictures on the wall that start to criticize a saint facing the mosque and so on. However, this consciousness does not clash with the national interests, because, they basically involve with communal and national identities. In the course of carrying the body of dead Tehmul Gustad reinvents certain strength within himself and he also rediscovers the emotional strength to cry. ‘Tehmul is

the significant character whose presence plays a significant role in the transformation of Gustad's consciousness' (S.Vinod Kumar, 20)

The presence of the pavement artist crystallizes Mistry's effort to see the universal in the particular and to consciously work towards adding universal dimensions to the specific story of the Parsi Community.

Mistry addresses the issue of stability and momentum of being rooted and rootless through this artistic imagination of a wandering pavement painter.

Mistry does not reduce the novel to an expression of a collect experience of discrimination along. He draws a coherent picture of his character (Gustad) psyche through blackout paper. The blackout paper symbolizes Gustad's effort to preserve the Parsi Community and his family from the outer world. It is through the blackout paper that he succeeded in preserving his identity. Gustad has put up the blackout paper at the time of Indo-Chinese War and he has to remove it forever. The blackout paper answers psychological need in Gustad in keep that it keeps out the frightening historical events as the national war. The everyday reality of 1971, together with the psychological reality of his strain, is distasteful and threatening for the protagonist of *Such a Long Journey*. The blackout paper is a device of defense holding disorder. The darkness caused by the blackout paper depicts the escapist character of Gustad's psychological disposition.

Dilnavaz remarks,

'Weeks went by then months, with paper restricting the ingress of all forms of light early and celestial. In this house the morning never seems to come.'(SLJ, 11)

At one point Gustad expresses a desire to 'let the rotten world go by' (141). Part of the "Celestial" light blocked by the blackout paper is his own understanding

of political situation in India which becomes his unconscious way of letting the world go by, his refusal to face reality. (Gandhi Krupa, 6).

‘Light represents the reality principle which Gustad attempts to withdraw from.’ (Nilufer E. Bharucha, 63).

The leitmotif of journey is a central concern to most diasporic writers and Mistry depicts ironically the journey of protagonist, his community and his nation. But at the personal front of every character, it is the tale that peeps deep into the psyche of common man, political power play at the highest hierarchal level and their mutual relationship highlighting the peculiar way in which the conflict makes impact on the lives of Gustad Noble and his family. Mistry has used it to indicate how the Parsis have journeyed from Iran to India. Vinay Kirpal argues, ‘The Journey / quest motif is a recurrent one in third world immigrant fiction, where in the journey metaphorically entails the transition from one state inner experience to another’ (1988). A.K. Singh rightly rephrases the days of heroic labors – ‘Journey – Such a Long Journey – longer than 'a long days' Journey into the night in a new country where old tracks are lost. The old track refers to Parsis' eviction from Iran to Western coast of India and their 'heroic labors' and Such a Long Journey refer to their present condition in the adopted new country India. It recalls the glorious Iranian heritage of mighty empire and the recent plight of the Parsis with their broken mirror says Nilufer E. Bharucha ‘Reflect their own glorious past, their reduced present and their insecure future.’ (1995). Novel goes beyond a descriptive rendering of an Indian Sub cultural identity and tends to be suggestive of a derivative identity, with an intimate link with “moth culture”. ‘The emphasis placed on the 'Otherness' of the protagonist and his fellow Parsi residents of the Khodadad Building and their assertion value. In opposition to those of dominant culture allows us to consider Mistry's position as that of a minority writer.’ (Mala Pandurang, 163)

N.S. Dharan (2007) observes that the novel depicts all concerns of the modern day Parsi who experiences the anxieties, feeling of insecurity and alienation, characteristic of minority communities. Parsis feel insecure, experience identity crisis and feel threatened by possible submersion in Hindu dominant culture, and also as a nightmarish prospect which they do ever want to come true.

'Such a Long Journey' functions through Gustad Noble's perception of the world. The main line of the novel is the story of Gustad's plans for his rebellious son's future, coping with monetary constraints (which worsen when his daughter falls ill and his occasional conflicts with other inhabitants of the compound. Gustad Noble's life journey represents 'The Journey of a nation, of a city, of an ethnic minority, and of an individual man of this community' in quest of identity.' (Anjana Deasi, 94)

At the end of the narrative, a new journey begins in the life of Gustad that is of a realization that the search is endless which involves countless journeys. Hence, things improved for Gustad at the end of the novel. The final reunion at the end comes at a time when Gustad has seen everything – relations, love, hatred, separation, friendship, betrayal, death and recognized that practicality and acceptance are perhaps the only way, to deal with life's imponderables. Allowing the light to come in, is the symbol of acceptance of outside world, an awakening and recognition of its being there, and this in turn arouses the hope of a peaceful and satisfactory life – journey from cocooned existence to a blossoming environment around.