

The Political Hegemony and the Corruption In Post Independent India:

An Analysis of Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*

M. Sutha

Research Scholar, Department of English and Research Centre,

Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam,

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.)

Email: suthamuthu.96@gmail.com

Dr. M. P. Anuja

Associate Professor and Research Supervisor,

Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam,

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.)

Email: dranujamp@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Rohinton Mistry is an Indian born Canadian writer. He is known for the portrayal of Parsi people in his fiction. He portrays the miserable condition of the common people of India in his work *Such a Long Journey*. A country's growth and its freedom depend on the people who govern it. The peace and the

harmony of the people are preserved by the ruling party of the country. But the condition was disturbed by the then Prime Minister of India, which is portrayed by Rohinton Mistry in his novel *Such a Long Journey*. Under the rule of Indira Gandhi, the nation started to lose its purity and the harmony, as is portrayed in the novel. The novel depicts the life of Gustad Noble, a Parsi bank employee, who is trapped and loses his peace of mind after he agrees to help his friend Major Bilimoria. The oppression of the poor and innocent people and the national turmoil is the central focus of the novel.

Keywords: Politics, Peace, Corruption, Misuse, Power.

Rohinton Mistry is an Indian born Canadian Writer. He is well known as a Parsi writer as he has implied the sufferings and the miseries of the Parsi people in his work. He has also portrayed the political condition of the post-independence India in his works. His works are a replica of the voice of the suppressed people against the Indian Government and its policies. Mistry's knowledge about the history and his understanding of the Post Independent India during the time of the Indo-Pakistan war is immense. As stated by Dodiya,

Though Mistry is highly imbued with an original writer's imagination in the development of a flawless story in *Such a Long Journey*, his awareness of the contemporary social and political situation of India particularly the period of the 1971 Indo-Pak war is extremely exciting. As a realist he wields the weapon of satire which makes him a ruthless artist, a stern political satirist and a devout critic of war. His attack on Nehru and Indira Gandhi is unprecedented. (82)

Such a Long Journey was published in 1991, and it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Trillium Award, and won Governor General's Award, and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Best Book. The novel has been translated into many languages and has been made into a film which was

released in 1998. The novel focuses on the Noble family, who are residing in Khodadad Building. Gustad Noble who is the soul breadwinner of the family, is the central character of the novel.

Such a Long Journey by Rohinton Mistry represents the life of the people under the rule of a statesperson. The person who is considered as the Prime Minister of India is no longer doing her duty for the welfare of the people. The Prime Minister is introducing a scheme or implementing a new law and order without thinking about the poor people. A statesperson should be void of personal agenda, and he or she should work for the benefit of the people's welfare. She nationalized the country just for the sake of getting votes in the election. The condition is portrayed through the conversation between Gustad and his friend Dinshawji: "Gustad topped up Dinshawji's glass. Nowhere in the world has nationalization worked. What can you say to idiots?" (38).

Gustad and Dinshawji also discuss the former Prime Minister of India and her father's role in making her the President of the Congress party and how she triggered the people to involve in the riots for asking for separate Maharashtra and how it paved the way for bloodshed. This has been brought forth in Such a Long Journey as thus:

Believe me, said Dinshawji, 'she is a shrewd woman, these are vote getting tactics.

Showing poor she is on their side. Saali always up to some mischief. Remember when her pappy was Prime Minister and he made her president of Congress Party? At once she began encouraging the demands for a separate Maharashtra. How much bloodshed, how much rioting she caused. (39)

The Prime Minister uses a national force as a spy on her opposition parties. She uses RAW force to create trouble for the opposite party and to cause chaos there. Mistry also emphasizes how the national force has exploited people's votes and election results by using chemically treated ballots. The judges who

investigated the case have been transferred to so many places without any prior information. She even used the RAW to spy on her own cabinet Ministers. Gustad and his son Sohrab argued about the atrocities of the Prime Minister of the nation in *Such a Long Journey* as thus:

Our beloved Prime Minister uses RAW like a private police force, to do all her dirty work....

She sends men from RAW to spy on opposition parties, create trouble, start violence so the police can interfere. It's a well-known fact... the chemical election? Only RAW could have done that. She made a real mockery of democracy. (93)

The Prime Minister of India loots money allotted for the welfare of the common people and the RAW. A Country Statesman or woman should be void of misusing their powers, and their political power over the citizens of a nation. However, in *Such a Long Journey*, Rohinton Mistry emphasizes the true color of the statesperson who is politically misusing their power for their own sake. A Statesperson must be a selfless one, as they must be ready to sacrifice their likes and dislikes for the sake of their country's people.

Major Bilimoria is one of the central characters in the novel who is involved in the secret RAW mission of India. He happens to witness how the government officials or the people in higher authority were misusing their powers. They loot all the government allocated funds and start transferring the money into their personal account. Major Billimoria witnesses all those atrocities of the higher authorities, unable to bear. He does not know the evil deeds of the Prime Minister and firmly believes in her bravery. But once he comes to know the true face of the prime minister, he realizes that he is trapped by her evil plans.

Major Billimora thinks that if at all the money goes to the wrong place, he thinks of using the money to help a pure and innocent man. And thus, he chooses Gustad Noble to be that man. He sends a letter to Gustad Noble, not revealing the whole conspiracy. He demands help from Gustad and starts to transfer

money to Noble's account. Gustad, who is not aware of such things, just thinks that he is helping his nation and his friend Major Billimora. Major Billimoria says in *Such a Long Journey* as follows:

It drove me crazy to think of all this. But I decided if they can profit from the sixty lakh, why not us? Her son, his Maruthi car factory, whatever they use it for... we can also use some, You, your family, Ghulam, me. Why not? I put aside ten lakh, told Ghulam to expect a deliver... out casual channels in Chor Bazaar. (279)

The type of corruption that happens in the Indian nation is unimaginable. The statesperson will go to any extent to loot the money as well, and they even blame someone else who is not even a part of it. Here, Major Billimoria who is ready to serve the nation, is trapped by the Prime Minister of the nation. He is described as a thief who tries to loot the government funds for his own personal benefits. He has been portrayed as a thief and the national enemy as he impersonated the Prime Minister's voice to call the banks and ask for money.

The novel also focuses on a political party in Maharashtra which creates a series of conflicts among the Hindu and Muslim community. India is a land where people live in harmonious relationship with other community members. But the political party that wants to seek votes in the name of religion doesn't let people live in such a way. The leader of the Shiv Sena worships Hitler and Mussolini. They want a separate Maratha Raj only for the Maharashtra people, creating riot and communal disharmony among the people. The political party uses the ignorance of the people and treats them as puppets. "...that bastard Shiv Sena leader who worships Hitler and Mussolini. He and his 'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians' nonsense. They won't stop till they have complete Maratha Raj" (73). They even distribute pamphlets against the minorities in Bombay. Their sole motive is to develop an enmity between the minority and the majority people of India.

To conclude, the national growth and its achievement rely on the dignity of the leaders of the nation. Everywhere in the world, a developed country's corruption rate is much lower than a developing nation's corruption. Mistry, a responsible social writer, describes the corruption that happened in post-independent India.

Rohinton Mistry's work raises a whole lot of other questions specifically related to the 'homeland' and political memory. Neither nostalgia nor memory in itself can account for this rootedness and preoccupation with the homeland and the environment precincts of the city of the birth. It is also not merely the fact of being more at home or having a more intimate relationship with space back there. It is more than all these, a projection of the individual character, a gesture of expanding the memory to include both the specific and the universal. (Bharucha 11)

India, the country which is rich in cultural heritage, was once looted by the British, and after its Independence, its wealth and its rich cultural value were not given much importance by its own leaders. The political or national leaders were only focusing on their wealth, and they even dared to loot money that has been set aside for warfare and its defense system. Mistry believes that a corrupt official is indeed a black mark on the country's growth.

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