

POLITICAL DISTURBANCES IN SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

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Abstract

In the post-independent India, the lives of the common masses are highly disturbed by the social, political, cultural, religious, emotional ambience created in to the country by the Govt.of India in the 1970s. Such a Long Journey is a novel written by Rohinton Mistry which sets against the backdrop of war in the Indian subcontinent and the birth of Bangladesh. The novel narrates the story of Gustad Noble, a middle class man and the peculiar way in which the conflict impinges on his life and the lives of his family members. The present paper sheds light on the fact that political disturbances certainly affect the smooth functioning of an ordinary Man's routine life. What does the layman feel about the politics of india and how does the political decision violates the lives of common masses? that is why the feeling of insecurity arouses around the character like Gustad Noble. The journey of Gustad Noble, protagonist of the novel walks in between hopes and despairs and the political decision of Bank Nationalization takes the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi which affects the lives of common masses and creates the feeling of insecurity around Mistry's characters.

Keywords: Post-Independent, common masses, backdrop, political disturbances, insecurity etc.

In the Post-Independent India the lives of the common masses are highly disturbed by the social, political, cultural, religious, emotional atmosphere created in to the country by the people in the Govt. Rohinton Mistry reveals disturbances in the lives of the common masses due to the political decision taken by the people in the Govt. and also explores oppression of common masses, community, place and identity, socio-political perspectives in *Such a Long Journey*. The types of episode come across one after another in Mistry's novels are certainly observed day today in our Indian politics i.e. corruption politically motivated schemes and policies, political decisions, layman's exploitation. The present paper glimpses over the fact that political disturbance affects the smooth functioning life of ordinary man. *Such a Long Journey* is set in Bombay against the backdrop of war in the Indian subcontinent and the birth of Bangladesh, telling the story of the peculiar way in which the conflict impinges on the lives of Gustad Noble, an ordinary man and his family.

Such a Long Journey is closely linked with the social and political background in India and Mistry is well aware with the Indian politics though he left India thirty years before but his

knowledge of Indian politics is immense. He presents his community through his characters who invariably express their concern for their community and the socio-political changes affect their lives. The parsis are isolated and leading their life with full of anxieties in the vast sprawling forest of Indian culture but it has accepted the land and contributed to its development in its own way. The concern for parsi community reflects prominently in *Such a Long Journey*, even they run down Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi because they believe that neither Nehru nor Indira treated Feroz Gandhi equal with them. Gustad noble is the central figure of the novel living at Khodadad Building with his wife, Dilnavaz and three children's and his friend major Jimmy Bilimoria and Dinshawji lives in the same building. The lives of these characters are disturbed by the political decision taken by the people in the power and their routine life highly troubled in to the political crisis of India.

Dinshawji says to Gustad regarding of Indira Gandhi's bold decision to nationalize the banks:

What days those were, yaar. What fun used to have... Parsis were the kings of Banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that Indira Nationalized the banks. (S.L.J.38).

Gustad Noble and Dinshawji are communicating with each other on the political decision of Indira Gandhi's nationalization of the banks but it is not worked out anywhere. It has been done so as a part of Mrs. Gandhi's strategy to get political mileage at the cost of the interest of the parsi bankers. In fact Indira Gandhi's decision of bank nationalization of the banks was inevitable in the larger interest of down trodden masses of India to maintain the social and economical equality among the masses like the recent Govt. of India has implemented 'jan-dhan yojana' to bring the down trodden masses in to the flow of society who are deprived from the bank system. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's decision might have displeased those Parsis of India who were the owners of private banks but she was right in her decision. She did not have any selfish motive behind the nationalization of banks in India. The whole atmosphere of banking has been spoiled due to the decision of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

The parsis also feel a sense of insecurity because of growing fundamentalism in Mumbai. Dinshawji says that when the Marathas take over then we have real gandoo raj, tactics of marathas will upset the social harmony in Mumbai and there will be anarchy everywhere and minority communities feel insecure among the people. Dilnavaz says to Dinshawji that Nehru never liked Feroz Gandhi from the beginning. Dinshawji also agree with her remarks, says:

'That was tragic'

'Even today, people say Feroz's heart attack was not really a heart attack.' (S.L.J.197)

Dilnavaz and Dinshawji suspect the natural death of Feroz Gandhi the member of their community, in this way, Mistry's characters express the feeling of insecurity in *Such a Long Journey* during the Govt. of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in India but actually they were secure Mrs. Gandhi's rule in India. Major Bilimoria's reappearance disturb the precarious position of Gustad Noble, through the enactment of Nagarwala case, he makes an important political statement. The involvement of parsi member in such case perturbed the entire Parsi community. This incident shows that the parsis do not like the involvement of any member of their community in any scandal, which may bring defame to entire community in general or individual. Gustad Noble was highly disturbed due the social and political atmosphere created by the people in the country. Gustad noble is a middle class man working as a teller in a bank, he has confront hurdles in life but he has some dreams about the future prosperity of his family.

Sohrab's strange behaviour is upset Gustad extremely when he refuses to enroll for IIT because he has great expectation for his son Sohrab's future prosperity. But his dreams shattered when Sohrab's bad behaviour and violent temper spoils the ninth birthday of his daughter Roshan. Sohrab says:

It's not suddenly. I'm sick and tried of IIT,IIT,IIT all the time. I am not a jolly good fellow about it, and I'm not going there.(48.SLJ)

The dream of middle class man of launching his son as a competent engineer but dream shatters in to pieces. The inside plight in the heart of Gustad Noble that gave him a lot of trouble for son's career and it was an anxiety and angularities of the father which could not be understood the son. Gustad Noble has face problem at every stage of life, his daughter Roshan suffers from diarrhea which is complicated case of illness. He received the package from Major Bilimoria which was big trouble for because hiding ten lakh rupees for an average middle class man is very hard task. His dear friend Dinshawji falls ill and his death shocks Gustad too much he was the only man mourner at the death of him.The event of the tragic death of Tehmul Lungraa an idiot and retorted child, an inmate of Khodadad Building disturb Gustad so much. The destruction of his sacred wall by the municipality authorities adds fuel to the fire and the protection of his house from the external dirt and disturbances has been demolished forever. He has some conflict with Mr.Rabadi, another inmate of building over the latter's charge that Darius has an affair with his daughter; this feeling creates the insecurity about his daughter's safety.

As a head of the family he takes care of every possible way to avoid unnecessary confrontation with anyone but he is helpless before the atmosphere is created by the family members. Gustad saved his son Sohrab's life at the cost of his hip that got fractured causing him limp. He spends a lot of money on buying almonds to make Sohrab brainy. The news regarding the Major Bilimoria on charges of corruption is published in the newspaper which affects a lot to the Parsis and character like Gustad Noble. The problems in the life of Gustad does not come to an end Dr. Paymaster reports to Gustad about Roshan's prolonged illness which is out of recovery. Once again the crisis entraps Gustad and he fails to make both ends meet. Due to the economic uncertainty he is compelled to sell his camera and his wife's two gold marriage bangles. After that Gustad visits major Bilimoria who tells him everything about his case. He tells Gustad that the Prime Minister's office involved in that money scandal, it was shocking for him and such kind of disturbances created by the people in Govt. Major Billimoria is arrested and tortured beyond the limit until he has been keeping with him, when Gustad sees him bed-ridden his pitiable condition makes him weep. Major Bilimoria prisoned for four years and he dies of heart before the completion of his imprisonment is over. The life of the Parsis is biased by the decision taken of the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi such a kind of rage is created in the mind of Gustad about the Govt and they feel that they are not safe in the hands of Congress Govt, here we can find the anguish against the power of politics.

Gustad Noble has seen several ups and downs in his life which is remoulded by the circumstances. The illness of Roshan is cured through magico-religious rites performed by Mrs. Dilnavaz following the advice of Miss Kutpitia who is ready to help people on the matters unexplainable by the laws of nature. Politics is discussed in the novel which often affects the common masses and disturbances created in their routine life. M. Mani Meitei Observes:

Though Mistry is highly imbued with an original writer's imagination in the development of flawless story in *Such a Long Journey*, his awareness about 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 the ruthless artist, a stern political satirist and a devout critic of war. His attack on Nehru and Indira Gandhi is unprecedented. Describing the humiliating defeat of India at the hands of the Chinese in the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, he does not even spare Nehru for fighting a war of defeat, a “humiliating defeat”. Mistry goes on describing Nehru’s frustration, ill temper, political intrigues that surrounded him, his feud with Feroz Gandhi for the latter exposure of scandals in the Govt., his obsession with his “darling daughter of Indira, who left her husband in order to live with him, whose “Monomaniacal fixation occupied his days and nights”. There are direct attacks on Indira Gandhi for her nationalization of banks, for her encouragement to make a separate Maharashtra state that caused bloodshed and riot, and for her creation of Shiv Sena to divide the people on class basis, as Dinshawji remarks, “wanting to make the rest of us into second class citizens,” and for her narrow political gains, i.e. to get votes of the poor by showing that she is on the side of the poor.”

Such a Long Journey is set against the backdrop of war in the subcontinent and the birth of Bangladesh. The novel depicts the story of Gustad Noble, a middle class common man and the peculiar way in which the conflict impinges on his life and the lives of his family members. This is a fact that political disturbances certainly affect the smooth functioning of an ordinary man’s routine life. It is a journey of a common man, father, husband and friend which walks between hope and despair and his life is highly disturbed by the political atmosphere created in India by the Govt. of Indira Gandhi, they feel uprooted from the society and the feeling of insecurity is raised in the entire Parsi community.

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