

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploration of the Minority Community in *Such A Long Journey*

👤 Dr. Suyog S. Dodal

🏢 Associate Professor, Department of English, Adarsh Education Society's Arts, Commerce & Science College, Hingoli, Dist-Hingoli, Maharashtra, India:

✉️ suyogsdodal@gmail.com

📅 Accepted version published on 25 September 2025

 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17333334>

ABSTRACT

Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey* is set in Mumbai against the backdrop of the Indo-Pak war in the Indian subcontinent and the birth of Bangladesh. It tells the social, political and cultural story of the period in a peculiar way of the nation. Mistry has recreated Mumbai of that era in the novel. The centre of the novel is the Parsi community. Parsis are an ethno-religious minority community. It impinges on the lives of Gustad Noble, an ordinary man and his family. The novel is about the Parsi community who are living as a minority in Bombay (Now Mumbai). The novel talks about the social and political situation in the country during the period of the 1960s and 1970s. It also reveals the anguish and anxiety of the Parsis; they are insecure due to the socio-political ambience in India. The feeling of pleasure and pain of the Parsis is well-knit in the novel. It is a detailed view of the rituals, customs and traditions, culture, and religion of the Parsis in India. The novel revolves around the central character of the novel, Gustad Noble, who is Parsi. The text highlights the Parsis as a minority community in India.

Keywords: minority; discourse; rituals; customs and traditions; culture

FULL PAPER

Introduction:

Rohinton Mistry is a writer of the Indian diaspora. As a writer, he occupies a prominent place in Indian English Literature. He has achieved a remarkable place as a creative writer on the canvas of Diaspora writing in English Literature. He wrote *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), a collection of eleven interrelated short stories. It is a story of Parsi people living in Firozsha Baag, a Parsi Colony. He also wrote three novels-*Such A Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002) and one, *The Screem* (2008). The novel, *Such a Long Journey*, was three times shortlisted for the Booker Prize and received the Commonwealth Writers Prize as Best Book. It is a story of a Parsi protagonist, Gustad Noble, who is working as a bank clerk. It presents the rituals and customs of the Parsi community, clashes between father and son, socio-political, cultural, historical and religious turmoil that highly affects the lives of Parsis living in Mumbai. It also highlights the then political atmosphere during the period of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, who was the prime minister of India. The novel focuses on the historical period of the 1960s and 1970s, which affects the lives of Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims as minorities. The novel is set against the backdrop of war in the Indian Subcontinent, the birth of a new independent country named Bangladesh. The Parsis became a victim of a political conspiracy arranged by the people in the Government. The text describes how the decision of the people in power influences the lives of minorities living in India.

Research Background:

Rohinton Mistry is a leading creative writer in Indo-Canadian Literature of the twentieth (20th) century. He belongs to the Parsi community and is known as a writer of the minority community. He is known as a writer of the Indian diaspora who possesses a double identity, birth he is Indian and by residence Canadian. He was born on 3rd July 1952 and brought up in Mumbai, India. He belongs to a middle-class Parsi family in Mumbai. His Father, Behram Mistry, was working in an advertising agency. His mother, Freny Jhaveri Mistry, was a complete housewife. Cyrus Mistry was his younger brother, who is known as a playwright and short story writer in Indian English Literature. Cyrus Mistry introduced Rohinton to the world of literature at the age of twenty-two. Cyrus Mistry won the Sultan Padamsee Prize for his play, 'Doongaji House', written in 1978. He was the first literary figure from the Mistry family who left his footprints on the literary stage. Mistry's novel, *Such A Long Journey*, provides the discourse of the Parsi minority community living in Mumbai.

Being a diaspora writer, Mistry has keenly observed the social, political, cultural, and religious atmosphere in India that severely affects the lives of Parsis.

The text *Such A Long Journey* is a minority discourse of the Parsis who are living in India. It narrates the social, political, historical, cultural and religious atmosphere in post-independent India. The novel talks about the Indo-China and Indo-Pakistan war during the period of the 1960s under the regime of the then prime ministers of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi. The text is centred on the Parsi community, who are a minority, but their role as a majority in the all-inclusive development of India. The Parsis living in Mumbai were exploited under the communal violence due to the Babri Mosque demolition. Political parties like Shiv Sena violated the minorities and others in the name of caste, creed and religion. It is interesting to know the social, political, historical and cultural atmosphere in India during the then period. It is very useful to know the status of minorities living in India. It is also known as the discourse of minorities.

Problem Statement:

The Parsis are the minority community in India. The minorities like Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims suffer a lot because of the socio-political atmosphere created by the people in the government. Some of the historical events happened during the period of the 1960s and 1970s. These events are narrated very artistically by Mistry as a voice of the minority through his novel, *Such A Long Journey*. Minorities like Parsis, Sikhs, Muslims and others become victims of this communal violence created by the majoritarian Hindu community. Social harmony of the society defunct the then political party like Shiv Sena in Mumbai.

Significance of the study:

The present research study will make readers, researchers, scholars and teachers aware of the minority discourse of Mistry in his novel, *Such A Long Journey*. This research study will be helpful to know the anguish and anxiety of minorities in the present society. This study is useful for researchers to find out the different angles of minority literature for future research studies.

Research Objectives:

The research paper has the following objectives:

1. To know the anguish and anxiety of minorities in India.
2. To study the text *Such a Long Journey* with different perspectives of minorities.

3. To know the social, political, historical, cultural and religious atmosphere within a country that affects the lives of minorities like Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims.

The Context of the Study:

The research highlights Mistry's minority discourse through his fiction, *Such A Long Journey*. It has used the social, political, historical, cultural and religious scenario to draw a real picture of minorities living in India. Mistry has highlighted the suffering, anguish and anxiety of minorities through his minority discourse in *Such A Long Journey*.

Literature Review:

Rohinton Mistry is a writer of the Indian Diaspora. He wrote *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), three novels such as *Such A Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002), and *The Screem* (2008). The novel is set against the backdrop of the Indo-Pak war, the birth of the Subcontinent, and Bangladesh. As a writer of the Indian diaspora, Mistry observes the social, political, cultural and religious atmosphere in India from the window of a foreign land, Canada. Mistry was born in Mumbai during post-independent India. He studied at St. Xavier School in Mumbai. He found that the people are exploited based on caste, creed and religion. Due to this type of atmosphere, the author felt insecure and was suffering from a financial crisis and settled in a foreign land. Mistry was born in post-independent India. He talks about the post-independence atmosphere within a country. Through his fictional work, he interprets the hindrances and obstacles faced by the minority people under the dominance of the majority community, like Hindus in India. The anguish and anxiety of minorities are revealed through the fictional works of Mistry.

Mistry wrote a novel, *Such A Long Journey* (1991), after the post-independence period of India. The novel is set against the backdrop of the Indo-China and Indo-Pak war. Gustad Noble is a central protagonist of the novel who represents the voice of minorities. He belongs to a middle-class Parsi family that is suffering a lot due to the situation of war, an agenda of Hindutva run by the then Hindutvavadi political party, Shiv Sena, in Mumbai. It is a political book. It revolves around political parties like Shiv Sena, Congress and BJP. The readers come to know about the then political situation of the 1990s in India. Through the text, Mistry returns to his native land, Mumbai and the Parsi world. The text revolves around Parsi culture, tradition, rituals and customs and religion.

The text highlights the Parsis living in India through the narration of Mistry. The novel talks about how the minorities become victims of the conspiracy arranged by the people in power. Mistry creates his characters very aptly to appeal to the present scenario with much care, and readers come to know that the tragedies of these characters are our tragedies. Mistry artistically sketched the social, political, historical, cultural and religious conditions of Parsis during the period from the 1960s to the 1990s. The Parsis are an ethno-religious community which is on the verge of extinction. Mistry talks about the problems of Parsis through the novel. The Parsis are a minority in India, but their role in the development of the country is in the majority. The superficial study of the text represents the different angles of society. The present research paper tries to disclose the voices of minorities who are suppressed under the dominance of the majoritarian people of the society. It is a pure minority discourse of Parsis living in India. The study will be useful for future researchers to study different aspects of minorities living in India.

V.P. Anvar Saddath's research paper "The Agony of Cultural Outsider: Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*". He explores the anguish and agony of the Parsis as a cultural outsider in India. He expresses anguish of the Parsi community, their hopes and despairs and day-to-day struggle for survival in the majoritarian society. The culture of the Parsis is different from the culture of India. In his novel, we can see the cultural hybridity which represents different cultures and religions. As an outsider, the culture of the Parsis has been exploited by the hands of majoritarian Hindu culture. Being a minority, Parsis are entrapped in the scam and scandal of money embezzlement. The renowned political leaders are involved in the corruption of the country. Jimmy Bilimoria, a Parsi figure, became the victim of a political scam and scandal arranged by the people in power. Indira Gandhi's decision of Bank Nationalisation created the feeling of insecurity among the Parsis because it ended the monopoly of Parsis in the banking sector. The account of political turmoil and subjugation of the minority community is represented in Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*, which portrays the agony of Parsis as cultural outsiders in India. The Parsis are living as cultural outsiders in multiple subject positions. Gustad Noble is a Parsi figure living in cultural hybridity but believing in his own Parsi religion.

Rajesh Gore in a research paper entitled "Parsi Community in *Such A Long Journey*". In his paper, the Parsis are an ethno-religious minority in India, but their contribution to society, economics, commerce, science, politics and literature has been remarkable. The Parsis are the followers of Zoroaster, and their religion is known as Zoroastrianism. *Such A Long Journey* is the first novel of Mistry, adopting a realistic mode, the Canada-based Indian novelist, in fascinating detail, delineates

the fluctuating fortunes of Gustad Noble, an affable, aged man of modest dreams. Mistry's words centralise the Parsi community. It is a descriptive story of a few middle-class Parsi characters. The political decision of the then government had a significant impact on the Parsis living in India, and they feel insecure due to the social, political and cultural atmosphere. They migrated to foreign lands to secure their future. In '*Such A Long Journey*', various characters belonging to the minority community express their anguish at the changing pattern of communal relationships in a society.

M. Sangeetha's research paper, "The Portrayal of Sufferings of the Common Man in Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*". In her paper, she stated that Mistry is a remarkable and absorbing writer of human experiences in Indian Diaspora writers like V.S.Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, and Bharti Mukherjee. She has explored the suffering of the common man, like Gustad Noble, the protagonist who belongs to the Parsi community in Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*. The loss of innocence of protagonist Gustad Noble has to pay through the then governmental socio-political policies, disputes with neighbours and betrayal in friendship. He belongs to the Parsi community, who suffered in the hands of self-centred politicians and heartless officials; his worries and struggles become an embodiment of the middle-class Indian family.

The researcher still finds the study gap to search the voices of minorities like Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims during the period from the 1960s to the 1990s in India. The above researcher is just focusing on the Parsi minorities in their research article, but the researcher tried to search the minority discourse of Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims.

Research Methodology:

The present research is qualitative and descriptive. The content is arranged systematically to avoid repetition and irrelevant information in the research paper. The present research is mainly focused on *Such A Long Journey*. The novel is read and analysed with different aspects like social, political, historical and cultural in India. The research methodology is theoretical, descriptive and analytical in view of the primary text of this study.

Data Analysis:

The study is mainly based on the primary text of *Such A Long Journey*. A secondary source, like critical books, research papers, interviews and articles, is helpful to explain the theme of the study. The primary text will be analysed with the

help of social, political, cultural, religious and communal aspects that are very useful for a better understanding of the writer's description and his approach in the text.

Discussion:

Rohinton Mistry's first novel, *Such A Long Journey*, is set against the Indo-Pak War, the birth of the Subcontinent, Bangladesh. He belongs to the Parsi community and the novel relies on the Parsis, their culture, tradition, rituals and many more. Mistry is a true immigrant writer from their community. M. J. Vassanji's novels *The Gunny Sack* and *No New Land* are the Odyssey of his Khoja community and Asian community. Some well-known Parsi writers reflect their Parsi community in their works in a diverse hue. Mistry gives more space for the Parsis through his novels to represent issues of their community.

Minorities are small in numbers, but religious communities in society. Several communities are minorities, such as Parsis, Sikhs, Jains, Muslims, Buddhists and many more, but these are religiously united communities. In India, the Parsis live on the west coast of the subcontinent, especially in Mumbai. The Parsis are the followers of Zoroaster, and their religion is known as Zoroastrianism. Being a Parsi writer, Mistry is very sensitive to the various anxieties felt by the community. The contributions of Parsis are very remarkable in the fields of Industry, Commerce, and Banking. Thus, Parsis have contributed to the all-round development of India in general and India's growth in the field of Industry, science, technology, art, music, creative writing and culture in particular.

Such A Long Journey is the story of a Parsi family living in Mumbai. They are living in Khodadad Building, which is known as the Parsi colony of Parsis. The inhabitants of Khodadad Building are representative of a cross-section of the middle-class Parsi community who are expressing their pains and problems of a diminishing community. The political background of the novel is helpful for the readers to understand Mistry's views on Indian politics. The then great political leaders are discussed in the novel, such as Pandit Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Balasaheb Thackeray, to understand the then political scenario of India. It is interesting to study the Parsis' response to political intricacies arranged by the great national leaders in Indian politics. The Parsis are the most endangered human species on the earth, and their population is decreasing day by day due to internal problems of the community, like the late marriages, low fertility, migration, to lead life in celibacy and the exclusion of children born to women married to non-Parsis, etc. As per the many estimates, there are hardly one million Parsis left throughout the world.

It is noteworthy to quote Aditi Kapoor, who expresses the concern for diminishing Parsi community: “Unless something is done to augment their fast depleting numbers and to review their religion, the Parsis after an illustrious past could well just fade out in oblivion” (Kapadiya 162). The novel not only focuses on the Parsi diaspora in the Indian context but also projects its anti-colonial resistance. The characters chosen in the novel belong to the middle-class Parsi background. They demur anti-government policies against the minorities. Mistry sketched characters like Gustad Noble, Mrs Dilnavaz, Sohrab, Darius and Roshan, Dinshawji, Jimmy Bilimoria, Miss. Kutpitia, Almai, Tehmul-Lungraa, Inspector Bamji, Mr Rabadi, Jasmine, Dustoorji Baria and Cavasaji are all representatives of the Parsi community. Through these characters, the readers come to know what are the problems of minorities while living in a Hindu majority community.

At the very outset of the novel, Gustad Nobel offers a morning prayer to Ahura Mazda. The readers come across the Navjote ceremony in which a Zoroastrian priest instructs the child how to tie a ‘Kusti’ for the ceremony. Mistry speaks too much about the quotidian life of Parsis living in Khodadad Building. The influence of the Indo-China War (1962) on the lives of the Parsis. He describes through text a sense of insecurity, anxiety, homelessness, quest for identity, socio-political and cultural suppression under the dominance of the Hindu majority community in Mumbai. Mistry’s novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991) reveals the history of the Parsi religion in India. The communication of Gustad Noble with his friend, Malcolm Saldana’s displays historical religious superiority of Christianity over the Parsi religion of Gustad: “That may be rejoined Gustad, but our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your son of God was ever born, a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses” (SLJ 24).

Gustad Noble was a man with three sons-Sohrab, Roshan, and Darius. Dilnavaz is the wife of the protagonist. Miss. Kutpitia is a Parsi female figure who believes blindly in superstition and supernatural elements like black magic, omen and ill omen. Noble was a very middle-class Parsi family in Khodadad Building. In the text, we come across the father-son clashes. Gustad was eager to enrol his son, Sohrab, at IIT so he could bring back bright days for the Nobel family. Sohrab was not interested in IIT, but he wanted to enrol in the Arts Degree College to complete his degree. The traditional approach was not well-suited to his modern son, Sohrab. The then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, had taken a decision of Bank Nationalisation that affected the Parsi people severely.

The story of Jimmy Bilimoria provides political context to the novel and through whom Gustad’s Parsi world becomes more involved with Indian politics.

Jimmy Bilimoria is a fictional character of Sohrab Nagarwala who was involved in the real story of money embezzlement and died in prison without getting justice. Jimmy becomes a victim of political intricacies arranged by the people in the government. Cavasaji was unhappy with the Almighty for His grossly inequitable way of running the world. He complains to God that so much richness and prosperity are given to the Parsis, but there are some Parsis who are still living in poverty. He deplores his inequality: "To the Tatas you gave so much! And nothing for me? To the Wadias you give, you keep on going! You cannot hear my prayers? The pocket of Camas only you will fill! We others don't need it, you think?" (SLJ 87). Cavasaji was suffering from hypertension and harshly commented on the rich and elite Parsis by making cosmic criticisms within the community. It is a battle between established and non-established Parsis. Mistry has tried to portray the suffering of Parsis through his novel *Such A Long Journey*.

Conclusion:

The research paper tried to show the social, political, cultural and religious situation in India that affects the lives of the minority people like Parsis. The novel centres on the Parsis living in Mumbai and how they are exploited by the majority of people in the society. Mistry tried to present the anxiety, anguish and suffering of the Parsis during the then social and political atmosphere created by the people in power. The policies set up by the government are harmful to the minorities, like Parsis. Parsis are on the verge of extinction due to the many inner problems in the community. Parsis became a victim of the political intricacies arranged by the people in the government. The paper tried to show inner complexities within a community. The research study will be useful for future researchers to study various aspects of minority communities presented in the novels of well-known writers.

Works referred

Bahri, Deepika. "The Economy of Postcolonial Literature: Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*". *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, edited by Anjali Gera Roy and Meena T. Pillai, Pencraft International, 2007, pp. 99-132.

Dar, Nisar and Dr Charu, Chitra. "Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*-A Narrative of the Parsi Community: Their Anxiety, Fear and Sense of Insecurity". *IJELLH*, vol. v, issue, ix, pp. 37-43, Sept., 2017.
<http://www.isorjournals.org>. Accessed Feb. 2019.

Desai, Anjana. "Was I there? Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*". *Indian English Fiction: 1980-90, An Assessment*, edited by Nilufer Bharucha and Vilas Sarang. B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1994.

Dodiya, Jaydipsinh, editor. *Perspectives on the Novels of Rohinton Mistry*. Sarup and Sons, 2006.

Gore, Rajesh. "Parsi Community in *Such A Long Journey*", *Management and Social Sciences*, Volume-VII, Issue-II, September 2012.

Gore, Rajesh. "Rohinton Mistry as a Minority Writer: A Study in Postmodernism", SRTM University, Nanded, 2022, Unpublished PhD. Thesis.

Khan, Masood Ali. *Minorities in India*. Sarup and Sons, 2008.

Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey*. Faber and Faber, 1991.