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INTERPRETATION OF THE FEMINIST PRUDENCE IN THE PARSI CULTURE WITH REFERENCE TO ROHINTON MISTRY'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to focus on the most renowned contemporary writer Rohinton Mistry creates the delineation of the Parsi Culture and gives a dramatic picture of the Indian Parsi family life and their culture. Rohinton Mistry has written three novels, "Such a Long Journey (1991), A Fine Balance (1995) and Family Matters (2002)", as his novels depict the Social, Cultural and Political life in India. Present study examines the world aspect provided by Parsi Women from behind the mask of Patriarchy, Peculiarity and Powerless and attempts a feminist reading from the three selected novels under study. Roxana in Family Matters and Dilnavaz in Such a Long Journey and Dina Dalal in A Fine Balance are the factual representatives of Parsi Women. They are not today's feminists which mean they neither are not stubborn and head-strong females nor are they second class partners in the man-woman relationship.

Keywords: Feminism, Identity, Parsi Community, Parsi Culture, Man – Woman Relationship

INTRODUCTION

Rohinton Mistry, was born in 1952 and growing up in Mumbai, of Parsi descent, a small religious community devoted to Zoroastrianism, Graduated with a Degree in Mathematics and Economics from the University of Mumbai. In 1975, Mistry along with his wife migrated to Canada and has lived there since then near Toronto. Rohinton Mistry is a master storyteller who sketches India in all his novels. In 1983, he started his writing career as a short story writer and within a very short span of time he produced works which was internationally acclaimed and bagged many awards. His novels expose parental authority, class hierarchies, personal betrayal, political supremacy and corruption. He also dealt in depth with the problems of untouchables, the poor people and downtrodden who are at the bottom of the society. Mistry's novels represent several cultures, religions and languages and he blends all these in a holistic manner, his view point is represented in his novels and the characters he chooses also bear this. The main theme of all his novels is the struggle of common man for a happy and peaceful life. Rohinton Mistry has very skillfully portrays all the characters including males and females. Despite his great sympathy for the oppressed and downtrodden. Mistry's writing uniquely captures the Parsi way of life. He focuses on the predicament of the Parsis which is characterized by large scale migration of the younger generation and the consequent loneliness of the older generation that lives on in India.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the study is to analyzed Rohinton Mistry's selected fiction

- To analyse the selected fiction of Rohinton Mistry
- To search the elements of Parsi Community in the Selected fiction of Rohinton Mistry.
- To identify Parsi Women life and rights in the selected fiction of Rohinton Mistry
- To introduce Indian diaspora literature.

Mistry's Women Characters

Along with caste discrimination gender inequality also plays a pivotal role in dislocating the major characters in the novel. Mistry's women do not enjoy the generosity. His women characters are often invisible, silent or presented within the frame work of stereotypes.

Women characters who are in Mistry's fiction, defined by their relationships to men in which they develop their own identities while fulfilling their obligations as Parsi wives, mothers, and sisters. He has "beautifully interwoven two different cultures in this novel. Just as Indian women who are always subject to the husband, Mistry's women are the same. They are deeply rooted in the Indian tradition, mostly "asked on spousal loyalty, respect, chastity and virtues. Every character of Mistry reflects his own personality, his all characters are being taken from different strata of the society and they all are the representative of their own cast, creed and community.

Dilnavaz – Such a Long Journey

Rohinton Mistry's first novel Such a Long Journey has been one of the most remarkable and interesting novel which explore the relationships among self, community, place and identity. The story of the novel is based upon a series of real events that took place during the time of Indo-Pak war in 1971. Such a Long Journey, as a cluster of narratives, centralizes his community as a protagonist, basically a story of a man named as Gustad Noble a Parsi by community living with his wife and three children in the Parsi residential colony of Khodadad building in Bombay. The novel captures the socio-political cultural tumult of the sixties and seventies. Dilnavaz, the wife of Gustad is the home maker, the well meaning mother. She is soft and pretty. Her life was restricted to her family. She proved to be a good mother, a good house wife. She constantly cared for her family, her elder son Sohrab got selected in IIT then Gustad threw a party and brought the live chicken at home. Though she was reluctant but then also she cooked it and served in the dinner. She without fail supported her husband when he enmeshed in a bank fraud. She is superstitious because she is so concerned for her husband and children that she succumbs to Miss Kutpitia's 'jaadu-mantar' non-sense. She is seen conspiring with Miss Kutpitia in creating spells for her family's well-being. Miss Kutpitia, often seen in novel suggesting some superstitious remedies to Dilnavaz when Sohrab refused taking admission in IIT"

Dina Dalal- A Fine Balance

In this Fiction of Rohinton Mistry characters exhibit a quiet deliberateness despite the senseless tragedies that threaten to overwhelm their lives, which is perfectly woven to depict the story of an intelligent middle-class woman. Dina Dalal, meets with a lot of social imbalances and is pushed into a subordinate position within the family due to the untimely death of her wealthy parents brought her bad luck in her life. She was forced to leave her studies in between and do chores. She was living the life of a caged bird with her brother. Dina from very early stage of her life she started taking her own decisions defying her brother. Gradually she started going out in market for shopping and later she developed interest in music and often went out to attend concerts, where she met a Parsi boy, Rustom Dalal and slowly they became friends and finally lovers. Despite of her brother's wish Dina decided to marry Rustom. For the first time she realized this kind of love. This was absolutely new experience for Dina after her parent's death.

Later, for the three years of marriage she was very happy with her husband. Unfortunately her happy married life with Rustom comes to a tragic end when Rustom is killed in a freak cycle accident on the day of their

third wedding anniversary. Despite her brother's genuine offer to help her, she decides to live by herself. For Dina the memories of her married life with Rustom were so precious that she cannot ever think of marrying again. And she courageously decides to live a free and independent life. Initially, she earns her livelihood by sewing but when her eyes give way, unable to withstand the strain, she undertakes to stitch readymade garments for Au Revoir Exports owned by Mrs. Gupta, a client of Dina's classmate and friend Zenobia. To continue with her stitching business she hired two tailors Ishvar and Omprakash. Dina was a very dignified woman. She managed her long journey alone and without any body's help. She withstood all the odds and arrays boldly. The odds have been against her from childhood still through her choices she made a great deal of her cramped existence. In fact, she went beyond existence for oneself to existence for others.

Rohinton Mistry rightly points out through his novel that the way out of the caste viciousness is not that of Gandhi who came to address it from the religious perspective and not really that of Ambedkar either who tried to take care of the evil. Now four are living like a family. They work together, cook together, wash together they show concern for one another. In terms of the title of this chapter they have freed themselves from community and caste consciousness freed themselves from the cultural shackles, they are relating as existential beings on the basis of their needs and emotions. Regarded thus Dina Dalal offers that the way out is through the alchemy of relationship. Novel progresses through a series of seemingly separate stories. Dinabai's childhood, romance, early marriage and death of her husband and struggle for survival.

Roxana-Family Matters

Family Matters delves into the trials of a Parsi family coping with events that swirl seemingly uncontrollably around them. The plot centers on 79-year-old Nariman Vakeel a Parsi who, due to the ravages of Parkinson's disease, falls and breaks his ankle, forcing a reluctant daughter to care for him. Family Matters explores the nature of Nariman's relationships with his extended family: his step-daughter Coomy and his stepson Jal. There is one biological daughter of Nariman and Yasmin named Roxana. She lives in the same city in another flat named Pleasant Villa with her husband Yezad and their two sons Murad and Jehangir. Yezad is working in Sporting Goods Emporium. Roxana is an another interesting but underdeveloped character, she seems to have the most balanced attitude towards religion, not being comfortable with Yezad's initial abandoning of the Zoroastrian religion, and also with his new aggressive orthodoxy. Roxana appears to be the most significant female character. She is a selfless woman coping up with needs of family and performing her daily duties without fail. Her life is centralized to her family only. She seems to be a reserved person, often seen in a situation of apparent domestic happiness with both Yezaad and her children, while she can be fair and objective. Her childhood was the happiest with all her family members and relatives but now she leads a lonely life. Despite of all the odds in her life she manages them all in an earnest way. Though, the income of her husband was not fairly enough to meet the two ends but she skillfully managed the expenditure and requirements of the family. She has brought up her family members in well-mannered and disciplined way. She was the only member in family who proved to be worth for her father when Nariman fall sick, she readily accepts to take care of her father though there was no enough space and money in her house. She shares the responsibility of her half-sister Coomy. Patience is the main quality of the Roxana, which is focus in the novel. Rangarajan, the plasterer who thought of her to be an excellent example of womanhood. He further expressed Roxana as a lady of serenity and poise.

The Social Status of Parsi Women

Though Rohinton Mistry has received widespread commendation for his fiction, he has also been criticized for his 'portrayal of women'. Critics find that Rohinton Mistry's female characters are one-dimensional and limited. They are seen to be house bound, rarely leaving their apartments, complexes while their male counterparts venture far and wide, not only in and around Bombay but also places such as Delhi. By attending the social contexts of his female characters' lives from a feminist perspective, this analysis examines the ways Mistry interprets the situations of women – their experiences, histories and responsibilities as wives, widows, mothers and single women – within the cultural rubric of Parsi India.

Parsis are the most Westernized religious group in India, and Parsi women have not been as widely subjected to the particular oppressive traditions and perceptions that Hindu and Muslim women have. Parsis, for instance, encourage women to pursue higher education and independence, and often to go abroad to pursue their interests. Mistry explores the issues of education, independence, and ambition, while also addressing the continuing difficulties that even a relatively independent woman faces in a patriarchal society.

Conclusion

The novelist has explained different women characters from his novels such as caring, loving, rude, shy and independent through an intensely meaningful portrayal of women characters by his novels has globalized the theme of contemporary complexity inferring that in the modern society beset by dynamics of culture, confused by cultural cross fertilization, marred by religious fanaticism and converging on inner fracture, the system gets protected from the ultimate fragmentation by one women or the other. Though women soar high, with academic qualifications, and economic independence; they have space within themselves. To preserve the equilibrium of life, relationships should be revived and only a healthy and harmonious man-woman relationship will flourish.

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