

IMPACT OF MIGRATION WITH REFERENCE TO ROHINTON MISTRY'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

This paper mainly has a focus on pain and suffering of the immigrant. This also brings to the light that one should think before exile. It has mainly showcased the experience of the novelist Rohinton Mistry. It must be a moral value for each and every individual of the Indian citizen even the foreigner to decide their immigration. Modernization is the root cause for this immigration due to globalisation. Economic problem is also one of the reasons which compels them for immigration. It asserts the breaking of family bond also because of this immigration.

KEYWORDS: Migration, Novels

INTRODUCTION

Although Rohinton Mistry left India in 1975 and does not often go back, the beauty and delicacy with which he has portrayed the experience of immigration, the immense pain of not being with once own people, no other author has done it so far.

Some of the lines from the recent novel of Rohinton Mistry's "Family Matters" say about the aspect of immigration as a wrong and painful decision, the protagonist Nariman Vakeel, during a conversation with his son in law Yezad, expresses his happiness on Yezad's decision of not going to Canada. He says:

"I am glad you did not" repeated Nariman" because I think immigration is an enormous mistake, the biggest any one can make in their life. The loss of house leaves a hole that never fills."

This father in law's words brought a lump on his throat, reminding him to Mr. Kapoor's photographs of Jehanger Mansion and Hughes road his lost house. That feeling returned of grief and emotions and a strange calm". (220)

Immigration is a recurring theme in Mistry's fiction from his short stories to the latest novel Family Matters where Yezad narrates to his two sons his unsuccessful experiences with bureaucracy in his young adolescent days as he attempted to go to the West. Thus, expectations about the inevitability of migration are very strong. But he can neither feel his brother's nationalist commitment nor Jamshed's alienation. His migration is a pre-ordained trajectory that he undertakes, not out of enthusiasm but because it has to be.

In essence, there is a kind of doubleness at the heart of the immigrant experience, which Mistry's writing, especially in the short story collection, Tales from Firozsha Baag, admirably captures. In this volume, the central protagonist replicates Mistry's movement from the tight-knit and reasonably self-sufficient Bombay Parsi community to the unknown and potentially hostile spaces of Canada. Both here, and in the later works, where the thorny relationship

between the Parsis and majority social formations becomes the focal point, there is a pervasive sense of an art springing not from one culture alone, but from the tension between overlapping cultures and contexts. As Amin Malak has said:

The immigrant imagination is dichotomous by nature, locked on the horns of a dilemma, neither affiliated with the old root culture, nor fully fitting with the new adopted one. Accordingly, writers negotiating and articulating such an experience have to inhabit an alternative world, a third world: a world of their imagination, their memory, their nostalgia.

There is often also a contradictory set of impulses at work: both attraction to the new society, and at the same time a fear of such total assimilation that the old coordinates of identity may be lost. This manifests itself, in the later stories in *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, in a tension between the desire to belong in the new host society and the urge to hold onto something of the old one. Sometimes involuntary or even subconscious, such ambivalence appears to be at work in Kersi in 'Lend Me Your Light', whose desire to settle into his new Canadian home is tempered by a need to cross-refer his experiences to the known and familiar structures and relationships of Bombay.

MODERNIZATION

Indian culture has been changing over the past few years due to the threat of western culture. Westernization is effecting one of the oldest and richest cultures and taking away the traditions, customs, and family values that were once predominant in traditional Indian culture. Modernization involves a transformation in beliefs about the way the material world functions; westernization requires an alteration in cosmological viewpoints about how one should live their life. Developed by Muslim invasion and European colonization, India's history begins with the Indus Valley Civilization. Their culture is formed by all different countries and backgrounds. Changes are being made in all areas including religion, dance, and music mostly found in the Bollywood films. Through movies watched in class and the books *The Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry, I have found these represent most the disintegration of close familial bonds in Indian culture today.

The westernization of India has greatly affected the traditions, customs, and family values. Today, the respect for others has greatly decreased throwing away the traditional humanity Indian people. The idea of joint families is decreasing and families want to remain separate from each other. In a traditional Indian culture, one would care for the others around him and not only for himself. Also in today's situation, both husband and wife are working so there is no one at home to look after the children. Many of times a child is being watched by someone outside of the family and are not getting the rich, cultural childhood their parents have had. Slowly all customary Indian values are fading and everyone is moving onto a more western culture.

"It is acknowledged that modernity has various distinct aspects: the rise of a capitalist industrial economy, the growth of modern state institutions and resultant transformations in the nature of social power, the emergence of democracy, the decline of the community and the rise of strong individualistic social conduct, the decline of religion and the secularization of ethics" (Kaviraj). This statement basically states that if India continues to modernize, individuals will change in their culture and beliefs in trade for a better technological economy. In trade for losing some of the past culture India is becoming a more economically stable country.

However I do believe that the modernization of India is a good thing. Even though the Indian people have improved their way of life, their principles and beliefs have remained constant. A person can alter their clothing or the

foods they eat, but their deep understanding and commitment to the culture will never be taken away.

A traditional Indian family treats the guests of their home as gods and serves them even in tough times. A guest never leaves the house hungry. The respect towards the elderly is a major factor in the culture. The elderly drill ideas and pass on their stories as their grandchildren get older. The biggest age group moving towards the westernization is teenagers. Indian culture is disappearing in their lives and no longer is feeling proud to be Hindi.

A Fine Balance portrays how strong family bonds were at one time. In the story, Dina's brother Nusswan controls her because he is the dominant male figure of the house. Their father passed away when they were young and Nusswan developed into a traditional Indian man who is the "bread winner" for the two of them. His rules were very strict even to the point where he would abuse Dina in order for her to learn the traditional Indian culture.

What was so interesting about this story is that Dina had to move away from her brother and take on the challenges of working and living by herself. This would seem like a non-traditional way of living without a husband, but she made it work by hiring people to work for her and even taking in someone for extra money.

Dina lives by herself and works as a tailor. She is looked down upon by the traditional Indian culture. However since she lives in the city, they accept her for being not married and a working woman. These examples show how the modernization in India is affecting the way women live their lives. A woman in a traditional Indian culture would not work for money and would do household work while taking care of her husband and children.

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS ON MISTRY'S FAMILIES

Politics form an important subtext to the main action of all three novels of Rohinton Mistry. This preoccupation moves increasingly closer to contemporary times as Mistry tackles first, in *Such a Long Journey*, the Bangladeshi war with Pakistan, second, Indira Gandhi's declaration of a State of Emergency which affects the livelihood of the tailors of *A Fine Balance* and finally, in *Family Matters*, the impact Hindu fundamentalist agitation and the post-Babri Masjid riots had on the life of the ordinary Indian.

Although aspects of national history, especially as it relates to the fate of the Parsi in pre and post-Independence India, are of implicit relevance to an understanding of the characters of —*One Sunday in Tales from Firozsha Baag*, it is only with his first novel, *Such a Long Journey* that Mistry foregrounds aspects of national politics and integrates them into the main plot of his narrative. With *A Fine Balance*, he reproduces his concerns about the imbrication of national politics and the fate of the individual. However, in *Family Matters*, because of the more intimate nature of his fictional terrain, state politics, though present, affect the main narrative only towards the end.

The political theme of *Family Matters* is expressed through the figures of Yezad and his employer – the idealistic Mr. Kapur – and their lives. Mr. Kapur has dreams of reforming the city, making it safer for the ordinary citizen. From the time of his first appearance, he talks of contesting the Municipal elections in order to deal with lawlessness, and acting as a buffer against the fundamentalist Hindutva agenda of Shiv Sena apologists.

The fate of the marginalized and the dispossessed who find themselves at the mercy of the Brahminical and pseudo-secular elites shaping India is explored through the traumatic experience of the chamaars - -tailors turned, Ishvar and Omprakash. Dukhi, the father of Ishvar and Narayan sends them to be apprenticed as tailors under his friend, Ashraf -a Muslim tailor. Dukhi's daring to divert his sons to a different job becomes the talk of the town and he in turn earns the

wrath of the so called chaste Hindus, "indeed was courageous, considering that the prime of his own life has been spent in obedient compliance with the traditions of caste system. Like his forefathers before him, he had accepted from childhood the occupation preordained for his present incarnation."(Mistry, 109). Through the healthy relationship between Dukhi and

Ashraf and the unhealthy bondage between the subaltern chamaars represented by Dukhi and the high caste chaste Hindu, Thakur Dharamsi, Mistry drives home the fact that "ideal human relationship should be above all the concept of caste, creed and colour." (Kumar. 19) When Narayan returned to the village to cast his vote, Thakur Dharamsi, the Zamindar felt infuriated. Thakur's men beat Narayan and his friends to death and in due course the entire family was burnt alive. The subalterns succumb to the arrogance of Thakur Dharamsi who strongly believed that crossing the line of caste was a serious offence and that such people should be stringently punished. Even police do not file an F.I.R calling Ishvar and Om, "filthy achool castes" (Mistry, 172)

The adverse effect of Emergency was experienced by Ishvar and Om who fell prey to almost all the aspects of Emergency and were reduced to beggary. During Emergency, in the name of beautification people were left, immobile and rootless. The slogan, "The Nation is on the move." (Mistry, 303) seemed quite ironical because instead of advancement and prosperity all the characters experienced destruction and identity crisis. The process of beautification introduced slum clearance and sterilization. People were forcefully evicted from the hamlets they lived in and moved to work camps where the living conditions were almost unbearable and deplorable.

Ishvar and Om were quite forcibly taken to one such work camp where they are forced to undergo sterilization. In the aftermath, Ishvar develops infection and one of his legs is amputated, making it impossible for him to practice tailoring and earn his livelihood. Om who is a youth Thakur Dharamsi. The needless arrogance of the upper class to maintain social supremacy led to the consolidation and Emergence of the Dalit consciousness in the Indian politics. Despite the new laws regarding untouchability, exploitation of the lower castes by the upper castes continue. Through Thakur Dharamsi, Mistry reveals the silenced histories and suppressed voices in centuries of violence and domination characterized by the Indian political and caste system. Mistry emphasizes the fact it is too difficult to fight against the deep-rooted caste system in India.

After the death of her husband Rustom Dalai, Dina Dalai tried to live a descent and independent life through her tailoring business. She hired Ishvar and Om to work for her and also partially rented her apartment to Maneck Kohlah who stayed there as a paying guest. Because of Ishvar and Om's disability, Dina is forced to close her sewing business. Bankruptcy forced Dina to undergo the worst she feared, she lost her independence and was forced to live with her brother, Nusswan, who treated her like a maid.

" Maneck's very loss is a loss for the Indian middle class, whose morality, hopes and desires he embodies"(Biyani, 5) Before his suicide Maneck learns about the death of his only friend Avinash who is tortured to death by the police for his anti-Emergency and anti- Indira speeches. Emergency ensured that the common man was stripped of civil liberties and fundamental rights. The police had become an ally in the Government's depressing record of human rights abuse.

(Biyani, 6). Avinash was the only hope to his family, his death resulted in the suicide of his three sisters who saved their father, a retired government employee from financial hardship of giving dowry to get his three daughters'

married. The dreams of Ishavar, Om, Dina and Maneck are thwarted by external agencies and political changes. The Parsis and the other minorities underwent inhuman attacks on their identity and physical self leaving them numb and paralyzed. The atmosphere is far more pessimistic and there is little hope for the individual to effectively and positively carve out a personal destiny in the face of political revenge, violence and caste-class divide.

Despite all the hue and cry in the Indian political system about federalism and democracy, the lower middle-class and the poor are always at the receiving end of power politics and economic domination, leaving them victims of oppression and neglect. To the subaltern, "Living each day is to face one emergency or another". (Mistry, 571) The economically upper class people did not understand the sufferings of the poor, to them the Prime Minister was a "visionary leader" and the Emergency "A true spirit of Renaissance" (Mistry, 371). Mrs. Gupta, the proprietor of AuRevoir Exports and Nusswan, Dina Dalal's brother, echo the capitalist attitude. Mrs. Gupta flourished during the State of Emergency paying low wages to employees as there was no fear of union leaders and strikes.

CONCLUSIONS

"I am glad you did not" repeated Nariman" because I think immigration is an enormous mistake, the biggest any one can make in their life. The loss of house leaves a hole that never fills." This father in law's words brought a lump on his throat, reminding him to Mr. Kapoor's photographs of Jehanger Mansion and Hughes road his lost house. That feeling returned of grief and emotions and a strange calm". (220) . Immigration brings almost sorrow than joy. One can not blame his country but he/she can do the best at the native land than in alien nation.

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