



TRANSCENDING FAMILY/UNIVERSALITY: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF ROHINTON MISTRY'S SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

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Introduction:

Tracing the origin of psychoanalytical interpretation of the literary texts M.A.R. Habib writes: Critics, rhetoricians, and philosophers since Aristotle have examined the psychological dimensions of literature, ranging from an author's motivation and intentions to the effect of texts and performances on an audience. The application of psychoanalytic principles to the study of literature, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon, initiated primarily by Freud and in other directions by Alfred Alder and Carl Jung. The notion of the "unconscious" was not in itself new, and it can be found in many thinkers prior to Freud, notably in some of the Romantics such as Schlegel, in Schopenhauer, and in Nietzsche. (Habib 571)

Moreover, "Psychoanalysis is a theory about the human mind. Psychoanalytic concepts are prevalent in our everyday life, and criticism related to these is psychoanalytic criticism." (Nagarajan 216) In this hard running meaningless, absurd, life "people are motivated by desires, fears, and conflicts of which they are unaware and unconscious of these forces. These forces are stored in our memory, and are repressed. This is the unconscious mind. This is a part or a section, a sub system of the mind, but lying below the level of consciousness, and it organizes our current experiences and emotions. (Nagarajan 217) Likewise, "Death and sexuality are the fascinating themes for study in psychoanalysis. Critics of this persuasion have varied notions on how these concepts can be fruitfully applied to literary criticism. (Nagarajan 217) Sigmund Freud regarded dream as the "royal road".

Events are represented in a dream very much like they are represented in literary works. Abstract ideas and feelings are concretised. Dreams show or reveal things as literature does. Dreams are like literature. The purpose of a work of art, like the purpose of the dream, is the secret gratification of a forbidden infantile wish. That is the reason why literary critics have great interest in the Freudian methods of analysis, and interpretation... psychoanalytic reading involves explaining... It can be author based, text based, or reader based. The oedipal dynamics, family dynamics, relationship to death, sexuality, the narrator's unconscious problems etc., can be tackled with this persuasion. All these relate to the author of the work. (Nagarajan 217, 221)

The trend of interpreting texts is also changing according to the need of the time and as per new challenges of society. "Today, texts are read for the 'desires' they seem to conceal, the kinds of 'drives' in their character and the 'unconscious in them. The critical move to explore the nature of the human psyche by exploring the deeper, hidden meaning of texts and their characters is identifiable as a major critical method today, one that we can define as 'psychoanalytic'. (Nayar 63)

Psychoanalytic reading was established by Sigmund Freud a trained doctor and psychiatrists. If we take it in simple words then it can be said that psychoanalytic criticism aims at the authors' or characters' psychoanalytic interpretation in a given text. There are several essays and texts that focus on the psychoanalytic interpretation of the texts. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dream* (1899), Jones' "Hamlet and His Problem" etc. Psychoanalytic critics may differ at several points. C.G.Jung notes in this regard, "human imagination draws upon images and ideas from myths and legends that occur across cultures and time- spans. (Nayar 73) Jacques Lacan compares our unconscious to langue (rules, sentences, grammar) and our conscious to parole (individual manifestation). Like other criticism Psychoanalytic criticism may be very useful to find out symbols, actions, and setting in a literary work. Psychoanalysts co-related a work of art with dream. According to them a literary work of art is the projection of mind or it also may be treated as the suppressed desires of the writer or of the character. But the later critics like Jones broke away from Freud. They took a text as a portrayal of myth, images, desire etc.

The present paper will analyse the depiction of family in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* under the shadow of psychoanalysis. Jhabwala writes, "The concept of the family rests on the happiness of the heart and contentment of the mind. It has but little to do with how you live or what you earn. Only that you must. It is but a psychological question." (Jhabwala 78, 79)

We are living in a world full of opportunities. We can work throughout the day and late at night. But after a span of time, we need to return to a place where we can take rest to become fresh and energetic. In the worldly sense, the place where we take shelter, where we return after whole day's work is called home. If one lives in a home all alone, it becomes tiresome and frustrating for him. Hence, we need some people with whom we can share our feelings and pent up emotions. Therefore, a person needs a home and a home needs a family. We can also say that a happy family makes a happy home. In general, family is considered as living together of people related by blood. A traditional family consists of a father, mother and children. Father is regarded as a breadwinner, master, and decision maker while mother is regarded as a home maker; who nurtures and looks after her children, her husband. She takes important decisions for the welfare of the family. In India, a family can be perceived with multiple perspectives. First is a group of people who are related by blood. Second who are not related by blood but are neighbours who have emotional bonding and reciprocal relationship. The third type of family is in which people are connected with a sense of love, sacrifice, nationality and brotherhood. For example, when two Indians meet abroad, they do not ask which caste or religion they belong to, but treat each other as 'Indian', a sense of belonging to a family develops in them.

In a happy family, values of compassion become an acme where greed and selfishness are demoted, where welfare of others is put forward. In a happy family, harmony prevails; everyone has a sense of regard and love, compassion for others. In this rapidly changing modern and globalized world, everyone pines for mental peace and what to be part of a happy family. Because it gives us happiness and teaches human values, norms and sacrifices for others' welfare and happiness. It is family that teaches us to be unselfish, which is the key to happiness and satisfaction. However, in this materialistic, capitalist, competitive and cut throat world, to keep a harmonious family is the most difficult task. In order to possess a happy and peaceful family, every member compromise and sacrifice to promote others' will first. Though it is a difficult task but it can be achieved if we have love, compassion, patience and an unselfish nature.

Gustad Noble, a middle aged man of the middle class is the chief protagonist of *Such a Long Journey*. He is the ultimate bread winner for the family. His family consists of three children—two sons and a daughter—Sohrab, Darius and Roshan and his wife Dilnavaz. They dwell in a Parsi building. Like Baag, once again the building is divided into three storeys. The building is owned mostly by Parsis. The novel opens in the morning, "Gustad Noble faced eastward to offer his orisons to Ahura Mazda." (SALJ 1) The milk-man arrived to supply milk. Miss Kutputiais a dominating lady by nature, though she does not purchase milk but she threatens the bhaiya (milk man), "Mua thief! In the hands of the police only we should put you! When they break your arms, we will see how you will add water!" (SALJ 2) But the milk man was accustomed to hearing such threats and accusations. He would mumble, "As if I make the milk. Cow does that. The malik says go, sell the milk, and that is all I do. What good comes from harassing a poor man like me?" (SALJ 2) Dilnavaz too waited with aluminium pan for milk. Gustad is portrayed a man of society. But he is shown as a very affectionate husband and father as well:

And so, as he watched Sohrab sleep his innocent sleep, with the face that seemed on the verge of a smile; and Darius at fifteen a younger, shorter reflection of his father's muscular frame; and little Roshan who filled such a small part of the bed - with -the- door, her two plaits sidelong on the pillow: as Gustad observed them silently, in turn, he wished for all the nights in his sons' and daughter's lives to be filled with peace and tranquillity. Very, very softly he hummed the wartime song he had adapted to sing them to sleep when they were little: "Bless them all, bless them all, Bless my Sohrab and Darius and all, / Bless my Sohrab and Darius / Ad Roshan and... (SALJ 9)

Gustad is very pained with his current status because his childhood days were very prosperous. He reminisces about his grandfather and his father who owned a grand shop of furniture and books. The family was very happy but later misfortune shattered the family. Gustad's father was ailing for months. He postponed his operation until he became serious and was rushed to hospital in an emergency. His father defiantly refused to listen to anyone's suggestion and handed over the charge of his well-established bookstore to his drunkard lackadaisical brother. Gustad's uncle became careless towards shop and family responsibility and left the family in penury, while the bookshop went bankrupt. Gustad's mother could not bear all this misfortune, she became ill. She was hospitalized and very soon she passed away. Gustad's defiant father cried bitterly and asked forgiveness from Gustad for failing to help him to finish his college education. The weakness shown by his father made him serious. As Mistry narrates:

His father called him to explain and fell to pieces. He wept and begged forgiveness for failing him. Gustad did not know what to say. Seeing once his invincible father behave in this broken manner did something strange to him. He began to utter scornful things, while silently swearing to himself, then and there, that he would never indulge in tears—not before anyone, nor in private, no matter what suffering or sorrow fall on his shoulders; tears were useless, the weakness of women, and of men who allowed themselves to be broken. (SALJ 101)

Gustad's own ambition was diminished and unfulfilled, so it led him to hope that his spoilt ambition will be fulfilled by his elder son Sohrab. Gustad would generally sit in morning with his newspaper and say to

Dilnavaz with love and pride, "Sohrab will make a name for himself, you see if he doesn't...At last our sacrifices will prove worthwhile" (SLJ 3) The happiness of family is doubled as Roshan's ninth birthday came and Sohrab qualified for the prestigious IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), in which most of the students want to study. He planned to bring a live chicken from Crawford market to throw a party. The past memories from his childhood flash across his mind when he used to go to Crawford market with his grandmother to bring live chicken on special occasions and family get-togethers: When Gustad was a little boy, live chickens were standard procedure in his father's house. Grandma would have it no other way. Not for her the scraggy fowl brought home slaughtered and plucked and gutted. Gustad remembered them arriving in a covered basket balanced on the head of the servant who walked behind his father, sometimes two, sometimes four, or eight, depending on how many guests were invited. Grandma would inspect the birds, invariably applauding her son's choice selections as they clucked away then check off the packets of spices and ingredients against her list" (SALJ 19).

Gustad did his best to make his family happy, but could not provide liberty to his son to choose his own career. He imposes his own will on Sohrab to pursue IIT. Sohrab does not want to take admission in IIT. He feels to be trapped, overburdened. He yells at his father at dinner, "I am sick and tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time. I'm not interested in it, I'm not a jolly good fellow about it, and I'm not going there...Why don't you just accept it? IIT does not interest me. It was never my idea, you made all the plans. I told you I am going to change to the arts programme; I like my college and all my friends here" (SALJ 48).

We find similarity between Arthur Miller's protagonist Willy Loman and Gustad Noble. Both live in the past and are not ready to comprehend the contemporary situation. Both want their sons to be successful. However, both fail in their dream and both do not accept their sons' wish. Sohrab's denial to take admission in IIT infuriates Gustad extremely and he starts crying, yelling, abusing and beating to Sohrab. When Dilnavaz intervenes and tells him to calm down, he replies:

What have been all these years not patient? Is this how it will end? Sorrow, nothing but sorrow. Throwing away his future without reason. What have I not done for him, tell me? I even threw myself in front of a car. Kicked him aside, saved his life, and got this to suffer all my life'. He slapped his hip. 'But that's what a father is for. And if he cannot show much respect at least, I can kick him again. Out of my house, out of my life!' (SALJ 52)

Gustad's affluent past and its memory always disturb him. Despite all the hardships he faced during his childhood, he was very responsible and careful towards the general interests of his children. Darius had developed an interest catching butterflies and moths, killing them with the help of petrol; he has also interest in possessing varieties of fish, different types of birds like parrots, sparrows, finches, love birds etc. Gustad does not only help Darius in catching all these animals but also he makes desperate visits to Crawford market to purchase things for his sons and daughter. Though he is a caring father but sometimes he fails to understand the psychology of his family members. When Roshan falls ill and does not show improvement, Dilnavaz yells at him:

Always I shout and scream, while nice Daddy watches quietly to finish their food, to do homework, to pick up their plates. Without a father's discipline what can you expect now but disobedience? 'Yes! Blame me for that also. It is my fault that Sohrab is not going for IIT...My fault Roshan is sick... 'Don't deny it! From the beginning you have spoiled the boys! Not for one single thing have you ever said no! Not enough money for food or school uniforms and baap goes and buys aeroplanes and fish tanks and bird cages. (SALJ 166)

Indeed, it is not the case that only grown-ups understand the family matter. Even the younger one too understands the psychology and affair of the family. The bitter exchange of words between Gustad and Dilnavaz is overheard by Roshan who is suffering with Malaria. It pains her. She can understand the seriousness of the argument. She comes out of her room and urges her parents to kiss each other in order to resolve the dispute:

I don't like it when you fight, she said through her tears. 'No one is fighting. We were just talking', said Dilnavaz. 'Sometimes grown-ups have to talk about these things'. But you were shouting and angry, sobbed Roshan. 'Ok, my bakulyoo', he said, putting his arm around her. You are right, we were shouting. But we are not angry. 'Look, and he smiled: Is this an angry face?'... Go kiss Mummy...He kissed her...No, no. I cannot sleep till you kiss. That's not a real Mummy Daddy kiss. Do it like when Daddy goes to work in the morning. Dilnavaz rested her lips against Gustad's. 'Eyes closed, eyes closed!' yelled Roshan. 'Do it properly!' (SALJ 167)

Perhaps, through Roshan's above episode, Mistry wants to convey the message that mere kissing cannot symbolise love in a family. Mistry also wants to convey the message that children generally become the medium in families to mitigate the quarrelling between the couple.

Gustad fulfilled every need of his children, especially Sohrab'. He fed him well, sent him to a good school but he lacked one thing as a father that he never listened or gave preference to the words and thoughts of Sohrab. As a result, Sohrab became good for nothing in his eyes. Though Gustad becomes tensed when he receives money and a letter from his friend Major Billimoria, but he does not pay attention to the advice given

by Sohrab; and starts scolding him. A family becomes happy and lives long only when everyone has freedom to express her/his view without fear and listen carefully to each other:

But what about the leaders who do wrong? Like the car manufacturing license going to Indira's son? He said Mummy, I want to make motorcars. And right away he got the license. He has already made a fortune from it, without producing a single Maruti, hidden in Swiss bank accounts.' Dilnavaz listened intently as Sohrab described how the prototype has crashed in a ditch during its trial, yet was approved because of orders from the very top. She was the self-appointed referee between father and son, her facial expressions registering the scores. (SALJ 68)

Gustad in response utters: "When he talks like this, the brain in my brain begins to boil! If I have a stroke, it will be your son's fault, I am warning you"(SLJ, 69).

There is compatible relationship between Gustad and Dilnavaz. Gustad plays the role of bread winner while Dilnavaz plays the role of home-maker. She is ready to go to any extent for the comfort of her family members. She always sends fresh food for Gustad with Dubbawalla. And Gustad would send some notes with Dubbawalla:

...over twenty one years, was the one constant in their lives, always written and always read, no matter how much they fought or quarreled... 'My Dearest, Busy day today, meeting with manager. Will tell you later. Love & XXX'. Or:

'My Dearest Dhandar-paatyo was delicious. Aroma made everyone's mouth water. Love 7 XXX' (SALJ 70).

Dilnavaz is not only a hard-working wife and mother but she is also a good caretaker of everyone. She takes care of Roshan and gives her medicine on time when she needed it. She plays the role of mediator between her son and husband.

She takes even superstitious pain to mind the behaviour of her son. She nurses Gustad Noble with all care and affection when he had an accident. She tirelessly adheres to all the instructions given by Madhiwala Bonesetter. Love, compassion, care, sacrifice are some ingredients to keep a family happy and both Gustad and Dilnavaz are well equipped with all these ingredients.

Family is not a group of people who are related by blood, instead those who love, care and have compassion for one another are actual family members. Major Billimoria is not related by blood to Gustad anyway, but Gustad refers to him as a brother. He was like a family member to them. Children of Gustad used to call him 'Major Uncle'. As Mistry narrates:

But although Gustad would not admit it, Jimmy Billimoria had been more than just a neighbour. At the very least, he had been like a loving brother.

Almost one of the family, a second father to the children. Gustad had even considered him as their guardian in his will, should something untimely happen to himself and Dilnavaz. (SALJ 14)

Gustad Noble misses Jimmy at the time of Kusti's prayer in the morning. Major Billimoria used to visit Gustad's family every Sunday for lunch. Dilnavaz would cook special food on that day. Jimmy would narrate adventurous tales of the war; on border during 1948: "The retired major loved to regale Sohrab and Darius with tales from his glorious days of army and battle. For his young listeners, the stories quickly acquire the stature of legend, with their Major Uncle the legendary hero, as he told of the cowardly Pakistanis who turned tail and ran in 1948, when confronted by Indian soldiers in Kashmir..." (SALJ 13)

Though Major Billimoria was like a brother to Gustad, and Uncle to the children but he disappeared from the Khodad building without delivering any information to Gustad or to his family. It became a matter of great worry, resentment and frustration for Gustad. After several months, a letter arrived with the information that he has joined 'RAW' (Indian Research and Analysis Wing) and is working currently on a secret mission. In the letter Billimoria wrote that he needed Gustad's help. The letter also directed him to go to Chor Bazaar. Though he was stopped by his wife but he decided to help Billimoria because once he was near to his family. After a great discussion with his wife, he visits Chor Bazaar, a place where Gustad avoids going. He takes risk of depositing ten lakh according to Billimoria's planning. Gustad does not stop here. When he hears from Ghulam Mohammad about his imprisonment and hospitalisation, he journeys to Delhi to meet Major Billimoria.

Mistry has not only dealt with normal characters but he also portrayed characters like Tehmul Lungra and Miss Kutputia. Nilufer Bharucha opines:

Physically handicapped and mentally slow man could be symbolic of the fragile, endangered, in-bred Parsi race itself. Gustad is one of the few inhabitants of Khodad Building who had any time of patience with Tehmul. Tehmul was a victim of hip fracture that had never mended properly. His fall from a tree had not only fractured his hip but 'although he had not landed on his head something went wrong inside due to the jolt of the accident. (Bharucha 125)

Most of the adults especially women do not like Tehmul but he plays with children and they like him. Though Tehmul is weak in mind yet he has human feelings. Tehmul steals Roshan's doll and sleeps with it to shed his repressed desire of sexuality. Gustad witnesses and feels bad but he lets him sleep with it. Tehmul even visits red area but unfortunately he is humiliated and kicked out from there. When the municipality men come to break the wall, riot breaks and Tehmul is hit by a brick and dies on the spot. On Tehmul's death, it is

Gustad who picks up the dead body and takes it to his room, sits beside it and recites the passages of Asham Vahoo. He breaks his oath and weeps for Tehmul's death. It sheds his repressed emotions. Since his father's death he has never wept. His son notices the transformation in his father and asks forgiveness and Gustad forgives him.

Though one may be a bread winner for a family but he/she should have loving and familial behaviour for others too. Gustad is one of those who possess such qualities; a girl in tattered clothes with her three brothers was examining the used bottles for any trace of milk. The attendants threatened them not to come there again. But the children ignored their order. The girl is caught and beaten by them. Gustad asked them to leave the girl. He purchased a bottle of milk and gave it to the girl who reminded him of Roshan. The girl after drinking some milk and handed over the bottle to her other three brothers. On Gustad's query, the girl replied honestly, "My brothers. They also like milk", she said shyly, looking down and tracing a design in the dust with her toe" (SALJ 200).

With this incident, perhaps Mistry wants to highlight that the familial love does not only stands for higher class and educated people but also for the poor, deprived and marginalised as well.

However, another family that is portrayed in the novel is Dinshawji and his wife Almai. They don't have compatible relationship as he calls her "My dear domestic vulture." They don't have children. So Almai has adopted her sister's son. When lunches are delivered in the bank by the dubba wall as everyone gets fresh food from their home but Dinshawji's wife sends him leftovers from the night before, kept between two slices of bread. Mistry narrates:

Dinshawji approached Gustad's desk with his packet of sandwiches. Unlike the others, he carried his lunch in his briefcase every morning, usually last night's leftovers slopped between two slices of bread. He often turned up with gems like cauliflower sandwiches, brinjal sandwiches, French bean sandwiches, pumpkin sandwiches, and ate them cheerfully, saggy bread and all. If he was teased about his epicurean delights, he would say, 'whatever my dear domestic vulture gives, I eat without a word. Or she will eat me alive. (SALJ 70)

Though Dinshawji's relationship with his 'dear domestic vulture' Almai is not very compatible but he has the ability to make a tense situation jovial. However, he accommodates himself according to the situation very easily. He is dynamic in his talents. He can sing songs comparing biceps, can compose poems on mundane, day today matters and also he can sing a birthday song: "I wish you health, I wish you wealth, I wish you gold in store;/ I wish you heaven on earth./ what can I wish you more" (SALJ 46).

Despite all, Dinshawji is related to Gustad not due to his profession only but he has emotional attachment. He visits Gustad's home frequently. On one such occasion when he visits Gustad's home, he finds Roshan ill and Gustad was not at home. He starts playing with Roshan. He plays with them all the traditional childhood games like Arrung-Darrung, Kaakareya Kumar, Ekka-Per-Chaar, etc. Though he becomes mischievous but he makes everyone's mood very cheerful with his jokes. He cracked jokes during lunch time in the office in several languages including Gujarati, Punjabi etc. He has familial bonding with every worker in the office. He flirts with clerk Laurie Countino. His comments on Laurie were often in Gujarati and full of hidden meanings. He earned a title of 'the Casanova of Flora Fountain' which is cherished by him. Though he has familial relationship with everyone in his office but he ought to care about the honour of the lady whom he hoots, flirts in different disguised languages:

Every day in the canteen, over lunch, their regular group told jokes...They told perennially popular Sikh jokes...Madrasi jokes...Guju jokes...Lunch-time was the highlight of the drab working day. Invariably, Dinshawji was the star performer, the group hanging onto his every word. They were contributions from others too, but these seemed to pale in comparison. Dinshawji stored away everything he ever heard; weeks, even months later, he would bring it forth, refurbished and improved a brand-new story. It was a necessary bit of plagiarism that no one minded. (SALJ 70-71)

Gustad and Dinshawji are epitome of familial relationship. Both have good mutual understanding. Dinshawji faces all the atrocities of his wife. Without even a single complaint. Mistry witnesses the wretched condition of Dinshawji when he was hospitalised and lies in bed. But his wife does not visit him. Once again it is Gustad who shows his compassion for Dinshawji. He provides him company at least twice in a week. He makes jokes in order to entertain him when Dinshawji finds difficult to adjust his morsel to his mouth. It is Gustad who helps him to take his food:

Dinshawji dipped the spoon in the bowl and conveyed it to his mouth. But his hand shook wildly, the soup dribbled throat wards down his chin. He smiled sheepishly, trying to wipe it with the back of his hand. Hesitantly, Gustad unfolded the napkin and cleaned him up. When Dinshawji let him do that without protest, he took the spoon and began feeding him. 'A little bread with it?' (SALJ 218)

However, it seems that in *Such a Long Journey* Parsis are presented as a minority and psychologically confined to their own community only. They are not ready to accept Hindus as their own family members and always have conception that they are not safe among majority Hindus. Gustad worries about his son's future when he refuses to take admission: "What kind of life was Sohrab going to look forward to? No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the

black people in America—twice as good as the white man to get half as much. How could he make Sohrab understand this?” (SALJ 55)

Conclusion:

Thus, we are living in a globalised world and therefore we cannot be indifferent or strange to other people or community for a long time. The inhabitants of Khodad building are Parsis and the building is surrounded by a wall. Most of the critics agree that the wall is like an armour for the Parsis. The wall symbolises the psychology of the Parsis, who do not want to intermingle with others. However, the water of a pond becomes stagnant while the flowing river remains smooth. The same psychological state is symbolised by the Parsis and by the wall. The wall is static, starts smelling due to urinating beside it by the passer by. And later the wall is broken by the municipality men. So is the case of the Parsis. The demolishing of wall indicates that they can no longer remain clustered in their own community and family but the whole world is their family. So, they need not segregate themselves from the universal family.

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