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October 2019

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Psychological Disorder in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*

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Introduction:

Rohinton Mistry is a well known Indian born Canadian writer in English, who writes through different perspectives of life. He was among the awardees of 'The Neustadt International Prize for Literature', which is the biennial award for literature sponsored by the international literary publication World Literature Today of the University of Oklahoma. It is the prestigious prize in the literature compared to the Nobel Prize in American literature. "The New York Times called the prize 'The Oklahoma Nobel' in 1982 and the prize is sometimes referred to as the American Nobel" ("Neustadt International Prize for Literature"). Rohinton Mistry is the twentieth-century mysterious writer who pictures the postmodern world and its issues in it. "His novels explore the relationships among self, community, place, and identity, validating the local and embracing the syncretic nature post-colonial experience, be it in North America or India" (Dodiya viii). Three novels on his credit named *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *Family Matters* (1995) and *A Fine Balance* (2002) and short story books entitled *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1987) which was later published as *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag* (2000). Like the contemporary post-modern novelists, his novel expertly encapsulates the throbbing world of the changing scenario. Like other Indian origin writers such as Salman Rushdie, Jaisree Misra, and Anita Desai, Rohinton Mistry was successful to bring out the intellectually disabled people in the mainstream of the society.

Psychological Disorder in *Such a Long Journey*:

Many twentieth-century writers were responsible to bring out the physically as well as the intellectually disabled persons in the mainstream of the society through their literary works. The term intellectually disabled is the umbrella term, where many disorders like mental retardation, autism, learning disability, dyslexia, and dementia and brain injury persons calculated as he intellectually disables people. Regarding this problem, Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1991), Jaisree Misra's *Ancient Promises* (2000),


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Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day* (2007) and Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (1991) are the works which strongly introduced the disabled characters which playing the central role in all the above mentioned literary works. "These works produce forms of subjectivity within specific discursive fields and the power relations promote particular meanings, interests and even forms of resistance" (George 1). Apart from this, the above works are proving and "leave us with the feeling that we know what we may have never seen or gone through" (1). These stalwarts tried to bridge the feelings and relations between the intellectually disabled persons and society. Disabled people should accept and understood by their relatives and contemporary society. They are not the curse or the burden to take care. According to Anupama Iyer, "Depiction of Intellectual Disability in Fiction, this shared understanding depends on what is culturally accepted about the condition as well as what is medically known" (Iyer 127). There should be devotion by the writers to shape and image the intellectually disabled conditions to contemporary society through the writings.

Rohinton Mistry's first novel *Such a Long Journey* has the story held in the post-independent tempestuous India, where the bad smell of deteriorating governmental systems which were impregnated into the candid families like the protagonist, Gustad Noble and results into destruction. It is the appealing work of art which won many prestigious prizes, which has the real line with the pragmatic conditions of contemporary life. *Such a Long Journey*, "Before a work of literature can be a work of realism, it must be a work of art and conform to the canon of art, and in art, the artist is an indispensable medium through which we see things" (Daymond and Monkman 138). In the work, Mistry has masterly interwoven the various aspects like the politics, society and especially innocence of all the anxiety or diversified changes around him as the intellectually disabled Tehmul. He is always creating a connection in literature and life as the rationalist writer. His major point of view was to highlight the social realism closely linked with contemporary problems.

The novel *Such a Long Journey* pictures the Indian Diaspora of the Parsi writer Rohinton Mistry who migrated to Canada. The protagonist Gustad Noble and his family lives in Bombay called Khodadad Building with his wife Dilnawaz and their son Sohrab and daughter Roshan. Gustad is the representative of the middle-class employee who as the good character and sympathies for all problems and classes of the



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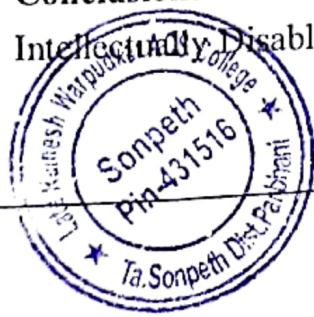
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society. Unintentionally, Mystery projected the problem of intellectually disabled character Tehmul in the present novel. The name itself resembles the historical figure named of the fourteenth-century dictator Taimur Lung, the historically lame person. Tehmul's physically and intellectual disability embodied adequately in the text. He is the center of sympathy from all directions of the novel. Not by birth, but by an accident Tehmul is lame and called as lungraa (lame). Not only Gustad but his wife Dilnaviz also cares an innocent disabled Tehmul. How society behaves with the disabled people, as Anju George writes, "Physical disability is visible in many characters in the text including the protagonist Gustad who has a visible limp. If the physical disability is accepted as a state of life or a phase of age, Intellectual Disability is seen more harshly by society. Mistry's Tehmul at best is a nuisance and at worst is a menace" (2). It shows the pangs and pains of the disabled characters from society. Though Themul was in his thirties, he loves the children's company. No one notices him as the disabled, but detestation born in the minds of the people about the lungraa. His uncoordinated hand and feet movements, as well as trailing people, where the disturbance to the people of Khodadad Building. His pronunciations disturbed the natives. As Mystry writes, The words of Tehmul- Lungraa's abbreviated vocabulary always emerged at breakneck speed, whizzing incomprehensibly past the listener's ear. It was as if some internal adjustment had been made to make up for the slowness of his legs with the velocity of his tongue. But the result was extreme frustration for both Tehmul and the listener... Gustad Gustad, chicken race. Gustad Gustad, chicken ran fast fast. I caught I caught Gustad. (31-32)

It shows the condition of the disabled person, where nobody thinks about the mentality and disability of Themul. He has his problems, but those were the problems of the neighbors. Tehmul's banter results in soreness to those who were around him. His absence of capacity to cultivate the secrets creates headache to all involved. So, everybody threatens him to keep silence.

Finally, Themul has died in the march. Nobody sympathized to the unfortunate death of Themul, only Gustad went close to him and completed his funeral. All Gustad's family was sinking in the grief due to the death of Themul.

Conclusion: In this way, Rohinton Mystry tried to pictures the problems of the Intellectually Disabled person. In life, disabled people are the burden of society, where



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nobody accepts them and understood their genuine problems. But Mystry's protagonist Gustad understood the problems and needs of the disabled people. He is sympathizing towards the problems of the disabled ones. Hence, Gustad was the compassionate character created by Mystry. It shows Mystry's empathy towards the intellectually as well as physically disabled characters from society. His benevolent ideas made him the world-famous writer in the contemporary sphere of fictional writings. Mystry was successful to point out the desperate problems and shifting attitudes from the realms of the current life. The novel *Such a Long Journey* carries the colossal of the cerebral message towards the emerging world of ICT. An Intellectually Disabled can be treated properly by the society, it's the need of the society was the kind of the memorandum depicted by Mystry. So, not only the disabled but also mentally fit person requires the training about to behave with the disabled people. It is one of the major issues pictures in the novel *Such a Long Journey*.

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