Rohinton Mistry, a critically acclaimed, Indo-Canadian Parsi novelist, presents the realistic conditions and political history of the Indian society in his debut novel *Such a Long Journey*. He presents the events of political history of the country such as humiliated defeat in the Indo-China war and scams during the Indo-Pak war as the backdrop of the novel. The war was fought for the liberation of East Pakistan - the present Bangladesh. The novelist also suggests the serious scams and financial embezzlement in the name of the aid for *Mukti Bahini*, the liberation army of the local people of Bangladesh. The story explores the struggle and anxiety of a lay man amidst the chaotic and gloomy environment in the country and how he indulges in a high profile scam at the top level in the central government. He exposes the corruption, adulteration, and nepotism prevalent at various levels in the society. The protagonist, Gustad Noble has been portrayed as a thorough gentleman, true to his name ‘Noble’ and the story reflects the struggle of a common man through out his life. Mistry touches the various aspects of humanity through the behaviour of his characters and exposes the hard realities of life and the colonial mind set even in the post-colonial India.

The backdrop of the novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991) are historical movements such as: partition of India and Pakistan, 1962 Indo-China war, failing of Nehruvian dream of a secular India, scam of sixty lakh rupees during Indira Gandhi’s rule, and 1971 Indo-Pak war giving birth to Bangladesh. Along with the historical
events as its setting and background, the novel is also the inward voyage of the chief characters. Mistry explores the external as well as the inner lives of Gustad Noble, his wife Dilnavaz, his son Sohrab, his friend Major Jimmy Bilimoria, and the other inhabitants of the Khodadad Building. In this particular novel, the writer employs images and symbols more decisively for the structural framework. It is commonly agreed among critics that *Such a Long Journey*, deals with the marginalization of the Parsi community.

The novel may be studied at different levels - as the tale of the struggle and sufferings of middle class people of minority at the one hand and physical and spiritual journey of the protagonist Gustad Noble on the other hand. The key word ‘Journey’ in the title of the novel has multi layered significance in the novel. All the three epigraphs given in the preface of the novel emphasize the idea of the journey of human culture and tradition. The first epigraph:

He assembled the aged priests and put questions to them concerning the kings who had once possessed the world. ‘How did they,’ he enquired, ‘hold the world in the beginning, and why is it that it has been left to us in such a sorry state? And how was it that they were able to live free of care during the days of their heroic labours?’

(Firdausi *Shah-Nama*)

The above cited epigraph from *Shah-Nama* makes the reader conscious about the glorious history of Iranian empire that had spread over a large part of the world before the Arab invasion in 639 A.D. The Parsis did have ‘such a long journey’ all the way from Persia to India. They were permitted to settle in Gujarat at Sanjan by the King Jadav Rana. The Parsi *Dustur* (Priest) agreed to certain conditions imposed by the
king. To ensure the king, *Dusturji* stirred a spoonful of sugar in a brass bowl full of milk and said, “we shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness” (Kapadia 15). It suggests that the Parsi-Zoroastrians had enjoyed a great status and led a prosperous and luxurious life during the period of their pristine glory.

The second epigraph is quoted from the poetry of T.S.Eliot. It symbolizes the long spiritual as well as physical journey travelled by Zoroastrian and its followers with their cultural heritage facing all kinds of difficulties on the way:

A cold coming we had of it,

Just the worst time of the year

For a journey, and such a long journey…

(T.S.Eliot *Journey of the Magi*)

Eliot’s poetry is apt and suggestive where ‘journey’ is used as a metaphor to reflect the struggle and labour done by the ‘Magi’. The ‘Magi’ refers to the three wise men who came from ancient Persia and ‘Magi’ is used for the priestly class of magicians. Later they were identified as: Balthzar (king of Chaldea), Gaspar (Ethopian king of Garshish and Melchoir (the king of Nubia). The words and phrases like ‘cold coming’, ‘worst time’ and ‘such a long journey’ used in these lines reflect and re-emphasize the importance and significance of Magi’s difficult journey. As this whole poem suggests; the prominent difficulties faced by them were - the intolerable chill, the rough path of the journey, the fatigue and tiredness of the journey, the nostalgic feelings, memories and pleasures of homeland and finally, the unfriendly cities and hostile people on the way. The reference to the journey of Magi is preached as a sermon before King James I by Lancelot Andrews on Christmas Day in 1622. He preached in such way to highlight the story of the journey of the Magi, ‘A cold
coming they had of it this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take journey and specially a long journey - in the ways deep, the weather sharp the days short, the sun farthest off in solstito brumali, the very dead of winter: after facing all these odd situations during the journey. The journey represents a quest for the spiritual land and the transformation of the religion. Eliot symbolically suggests the death of the old and birth of the new religion. Thus, the journey symbolizes the spiritual transformation of the ‘Magi’ and their new way of life from pre - Christian religion to a new one. The point that needs to be emphasized here is that pre - Christian religion was Parsi - Zoroastrianism, to whom these ‘Magi’ belonged. But the main point that arises here; have they accepted the supremacy of Christianity? The answer is clearly ‘no’ as the protagonist of the novel Gustad Noble puts these words, arguing with his Christian friend Malcolm when he tries to glorify his religion:

but our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam? (24).

This reference quoted from the novel shows the thinking, the pride and dignity in the mind and heart of the protagonist Gustad Noble is self-reflexive. The third epigraph is extracted from the Nobel Laureate Prize winning creation Gitanjali written by Rabindranath Tagore:

And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.

(RabindranathTagore Gitanjali)
The above mentioned lines of Tagore sum up the way in which the Parsis migrated from one place to another and one country to another.

The novel is set in Bombay against the backdrop of the war between India and Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh. But at the individual level, it is the story that peeps into the life of common people, political intrigues at the highest hierarchal level and their mutual relationship highlighting the peculiar way in which the conflict impinges on the lives of Gustad Noble and his family. One more point in common with the Persian Empire is that, the ancestors of Gustad Noble had also enjoyed a prosperous time in the past:

Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past.

If all time eternally present

All time is unredeemable (Eliot 88).

The picture of Gustad's grandpa is still fresh in his memories. He was a fellow who loved wrestling and run a furniture shop Nobles & Sons, Makers of Fine Furniture. His father runs a bookshop but the circumstances have changed completely and now the family is in a very ‘sorry state’. Gustad recalls how his father sacrificed all their fortune for his brother and resulting in his proper education. Here, the family history of the Nobles and the epigraph signify the upheavals and uncertainty in their life. The epigraph indicates the long and thorny journey of Parsi culture and traditions and the novel presents a documentary on the Parsis and their cultural heritage through the lives of Nobles family:

Perhaps it was due to their different circumstances: his father always accompanied by at least one servant, arriving and leaving by taxi;
Gustad alone, with his meagre wallet and worn basket lined with newspapers to soak up meat juices that could start dripping in the bus, causing embarrassments or, worse still, angry protests from vegetarian passengers (21).

The above cited lines present the actual position of a middle class Parsi family and the change in their destiny with the changing times. The epigraph only re-iterates the fate and predicament of great Iranian empire. In the worst situation also, Gustad does not give up his nobility that is the essence of Zoroastrian philosophy and keeps his unflinching loyalty and faith in Zoroastrianism. The opening lines of the novel focus his commitment for his religion. The Parsis are adaptive in their behaviour and due to their adaptive nature they could learn new words and new languages. The loss of their native language was disturbing, but they developed the capacity to adapt themselves to the new language and way of life:

Language creates reality and therefore its categories of content cannot be defined, since we could define them only by relating them to some pre-existing model of experience, and there is no model of experience until the linguistic categories are there to model it (Halliday 10).

Gustad Noble, the protagonist, along with his family and other Parsis live in Khodadad Building, which acts as a living character. The Khodadad Building may be called a Parsi Building, where all inhabitants are Parsis. Instead of getting scattered, they have assembled to preserve the cultural heritage in their own respective ways. The Parsis who reside in the Khodadad Building are Gustad Noble and his family, Miss Kutpitia, Major Jimmy Bilimoria, Inspector Soli Bamji, Mr.Rabadi, Tehmul-Lungraa and Cavasji. The compound of the Khodadad Building has a solitary neem tree, under which, Gustad performs his Kusti prayers. The neem tree is considered a
holy tree in Hinduism. The neem tree provides shelter not only to sparrows but also the crows. The growing of neem tree in the compound signifies a fine ‘fusion’ and ‘assimilation’ of Hinduism and Parsism. The neem tree is unlucky for Tehmul-Lungraa, who as a boy fell from its height and broke his hip. He calls it the demon tree and he warns the children to be away from it. Tehmul-Lungraa gave the compound’s solitary tree a “wide berth, as though it was going to reach out and deal him a blow with one of its branches” (30). The neem tree is kind to other occupants in various ways:

For children in Khodadad Building, cuttings from its soothing branches had stroked the itchy rashes and papules of measles and chicken-pox.
For Gustad, neem leaves (pulped into a dark green drink by Dilnavaz with her mortar and pestle) had kept his bowel from knotting up during his twelve helpless weeks. For servants, hawkers, beggars passing through, neem twigs served as toothbrush and toothpaste rolled into one. Year after year, the tree gave unstintingly of itself to whoever wanted (30).

The novel expects a polyglot’s knowledge and capability to understand it, in which Hindi, Parsi, and Gujarati words and idioms are used in abundance frequently beside Indianised English. The novelist uses it consistently with its own distinctive way as the part of global ‘englishes’. In the words of Nilufer E. Bharucha, “the use of colonizer’s language not to curse with but to subvert the colonial discourse and the hegemony of the Master Narratives of the West, thereby most effectively sabotaging the unequal Prospero-Caliban dichotomy” (Bharucha 122).

Mistry employs the fun making techniques of serious matter with the grotesque vocabulary. He picks words from many Indian language and the characters of Mistry
reduce political grand rhetoric as well as strategy and diplomacy to lampooning by folk humour. “To be an Indian writer...is to face, everyday, problems of definition. What does it mean to be Indian outside India?” (Rushdie 17). Dinshawji caricatures the cold war between the U.S.S.R and the U.S.A. “anus-fingering tactics” (145), madder chod America, and chootiya Nixon et al. The usage of Parsi male slang is in abundance even when Dinshawji talks with his female colleague, Laurie. He mimics Tamils, Maharashtrians and other Indian natives and uses very derogatory remarks against them. The red light area of Bombay is termed as rundee khana and Paan Palung tode as the symbol of eternal potency. Such kind grotesque language and vulgar running references in the writings of Mistry show how the events of world importance and personalities of international stature are discussed by Indian masses. Halliday further observes:

As language becomes a metaphor of reality, so by the same process reality becomes a metaphor of language. Since reality is a social construct, it can be constructed only through an exchange of meanings; hence meanings are seen as constitutive of reality (Halliday 191).

The huge scam that unearths the corruption at the highest level in the Indian political system rocked the central government led by the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. Mistry seems very conscious about this large scale financial embezzlement and one of the root causes may be that a Parsi was involved in it. No doubt, the Nagarwala case jolted the self-image of the Parsi community. It was the major concern in the Parsi spheres that a Parsi indulged in such a heinous crime. They believe that they earned this reputation of being honest and industrious after a long hard work and sacrifices. Once again arises the point of ethnic identity. Jameela Begum has a point when she elaborates the ethnic identity or group identity that could be constructed basically in
two ways. It has been constructed at one hand on the basis of a common ‘genealogical origin’ and on the other as produced by a common geographical origin. Gayatri spivak a learned scholar analyses them comparatively and concludes that a feeling of recognized kinship is more desirable than nationalism. The question of identity which emerges as ‘who are we’ is more important than ‘where we are’. Mistry gives the realistic picture of Parsi ethnic group in India during the period of sixties and seventies and their position in the main stream and activities at national level. The concept of ethnicity or group identity in the context of the Parsis is highlighted as:

The Nagarwala incident, because it involved a Parsi, jolted the self-image of the community no less. Having long ago lost their literature to the vandalism of Alexander, the Accursed and their dance, music, art, poetry and even their language to the process of adapting to a new home in India, the Parsis have developed a particularized culture from a mixture of ancient myth and legend overlaid by a life sustaining sense of recent achievement. Gratified to have earned an honourable place in their country of adoption through their contribution to every field of endeavour and proud of having retained a strong ethical tradition. The Parsis were deeply anguished by the ambivalent role Nagarwala had played in the sordid story (Kapadia 102).

The concept of ‘Wee’ consciousness is explored throughout the novel and the terms ‘nationalism’ as the by-product of colonialism and it is a post-colonial phenomenon, in that situation; nation and nationalism are the concepts which are highly ambivalent and ambiguous. The Parsis have been living in India for more than one thousand years; still they are in the category of diasporic entities. They find themselves in a very awkward situation and Mistry highlights their concerns and doubts artistically on
his fictional canvas impressively. Another important example of this collective consciousness may be easily observed in the speeches of his characters. Dinshawji opposes nationalization of banks which would deprive them livelihood and deserved position in the banking system. As Dinshawji asserts, “Parsis were the kings of banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that Indira nationalized the banks” (38).

Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* and *Such a Long Journey* share common features. He portrays the characters from the ordinary life on his literary canvas and the throbbing presentation of the streets of Bombay in his fictional world. He is attached to the core of his heart to the city of his childhood. Salman Rushdie throws light on the positions of such authors who are living abroad but writing about Indian atmosphere. He asserts:

> It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back we must do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind (Rushdie 10).

The critics generally criticize such authors who voluntarily move from their native places to their dreamland and then show their attachment and affection for the country of their origin. They also blame them to have diasporic status because the pre-requisites of Diaspora are missing in their case; they are neither forcefully exiled nor
prohibited from returning to their native places. There is a long list of such kind of Indian authors who have migrated to the western countries to get affluent and lead a luxurious life but shed tears and show extraordinary attachment for India in their literature:

The person who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner, he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong, but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign place (Said 407).

Rohinton Mistry is also in the group of such writers who have passed more than half of his life in Canada but except a few short stories all his fiction presents the picture of India and Indian society and particularly Bombay and the people of Bombay. In an interview, his brother Cyrus Mistry reveals, that such writers visit India only “…to re-familiarize himself with the sights, sounds, smells that would henceforth people his works” (Cyrus 11). In the same interview he further speaks, “…he [Rohinton] has a deep emotional attachment to Bombay but I think he finds Bombay oppressive and over crowded. No, I guess he wouldn’t want to come and live here” (Cyrus 11). In an interview with Geoff Hancock, Mistry discussed about a visit to Bombay:

More People live on the streets. More corruption and bribery and red tape. Four or five years ago, we hoped for a lot when Rajiv Gandhi came on the scene. That optimism has evaporated. It all seemed very bleak… (Hancock 149).

When he was asked, ‘does that make you pessimistic as writer’, he replied “No” he further said, “There are still those amazing moments of hope, those sparks. Those moments that make me feel despite all the misery and sorrow that life is still good and must go on” (Hancock 149). Rohinton Mistry explores the mind set and his views
about Bombay and perhaps, due to these reasons it is alleged that he does not wish to live in India but authoritatively write about India. Another serious allegation against such category of authors is that they present a very pathetic and grim picture of their country of origin to enhance their readership in the western world. These facts are also true to some extent to the literary works of Rohinton Mistry. It is true that he presents the picture of the Bombay, Bombay of his times - he lived there, and it was the time when the natural metabolism of the city had started to decay. He portrays Bombay as he left it years back not the transformed city of his absence; in his narrative he recalls his childhood days and memories reconstructed by imagination, he turns down the allegation of presenting the ‘mind’s India’ as termed by Rushdie. In his own words:

Some people might say it’s arrogant of me not to live there and assume that I know everything ....But I’m confident that I do know. It’s memory. Well I suppose that when one says memory, it’s memory plus imagination, which creates a new memory. When I don’t have that, I will not write about it. I have promised myself that (Mistry 240).

Mistry raises the hardcore social concerns in his fiction whether it is his collection of short stories or novels and presents the realism of Charles Dickens, the Victorian novelist in England. He captures the ancient glory and pride of Zoroastrians during the period of Iranian empire as well as their social and religious concerns of day to day life. All the prominent characters are Parsis whether it is the protagonist Gustad Noble and his family, Major Jimmy Bilimoria and Dinshawji. But it does not mean that non Parsis are nowhere in his mind or stories and novels. His friend Malcolm Saldanha, Ghulam Mohammad and Peerbhour Paanwalla, and many others play a vital role in the novel. Mistry as a writer himself admits this point and expresses a firm
opinion about it that if someone wants to create good literature then his content must include all aspects. He puts it in words, “I must write about what I know best. In that way, I automatically speak for my tribe” (Hancock 145). Here, he tries to emphasize that in order to produce good literature he is writing about Parsi culture and traditions. His present novel opens with the morning Kusti prayer in serene and peaceful environment:

The first light of morning barely illumined the sky as Gustad Noble faced eastward to offer his orisons to Ahura Mazda. The hour was approaching six, and up in the compound’s solitary tree the sparrows began to call. Gustad listened to their chirping every morning while reciting his kusti prayers (1).

The opening lines of the novel reveal a serene, pristine beauty and natural music of sparrows that further creates a soothing atmosphere and a mystic environment. As a true Parsi he believes in every ritual and customs of Parsi Zoroastrianism but he respects all the other religions equally. He performs his Kusti prayer regularly and after completing it, he expertly flips his wrist twice, thrice to driven away Ahriman, the evil one. Perhaps his nobility and cooperative nature becomes the root cause of his problems and difficulties. He was a God fearing and family centered person who wished to do everything favourable for his family members. The novel is a kind of spiritual as well mental journey of the Gustad’s self from beginning till the end of the narrative. His journey can be equated with the ‘Magi’ because he has to confront innumerable troubles and tribulations on his uncertain track of life. He faces many difficulties but stoically. His most ambitious aspiration was that his son Sohrab should get admission in the prestigious technical institute, I.I.T. Gustad feels very happy when he sees the result of his son in The Times of India newspaper early in the
morning. But here the destiny plays its role and Sohrab drops the idea to take admission in I.I.T and prefers an Art college. Gustad says:

O Dada Ormuzd, what kind of joke is this? In me, when I was young, you put the desire to study, get ahead, and be a success. Then you took away my father’s money, left me rotting in the bank. And for my son? You let me arrange everything, put it within reach, but you take away his appetite for IIT. What are you telling me? Have I become too deaf to hear you? ... How many years have I watched over Sohrab and waited. And now I wish I was back at the beginning, without knowledge of the end. At the beginning, at least there was hope. Now there is nothing. Nothing but sorrow (55).

His dream is shattered like the dry leaves of the neem tree which is in the Khodadad building compound and after that an unending series of problems enter in his life. His darling daughter suffers from a prolonged health problem, his brother like friend Major Jimmy Bilimoria at once disappears from the Khodadad building without giving any hint to him about his departure and Gustad takes it as a betrayal for long time; another friend and colleague Dinshawji dies of cancer. It is not all, he loses his limb in a car accident to save his son Sohrab and the mental agony he has to face to adjust the money related to high profile scandal on the request of Bili Boy. He faces every difficulty with stoicism and courage but when Tehmul dies, he breaks down:

He kept his eyes closed…. His voice was soft and steady, and his hand steady and light upon Tehmul’s head, as the tears ran down his cheeks …and he could not stop the tears….as much for himself as for Tehmul. As for Tehmul as for Jimmy. And for Dinshawji, for Pappa and Mamma for Grandpa and Grandma, all who had had to wait for so long… (337).
In *Such a Long Journey*, the word ‘journey’ has a limited literal significance because literally there is no mention of a long journey, except Gustad’s journey from Bombay to Delhi to meet his friend Jimmy Bilimoria and back from Delhi to Bombay. The funeral journey of Dinshawji is another one and a few local journeys within the city is also depicted, but none of these can be termed as ‘such a long journey’. When Gustad was ready for his journey and seated in train, he ponders over its worth: “Would this long journey be worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble? ...And what a long journey for Dinshawji too. But certainly worth it” (259-260). No doubt, the journey has its worth and Gustad returns from Delhi with the sense of satisfaction and forgiveness. The critics also agree that on the literal level, the novel deals with dispersal, and marginalization, permanence and change, order and chaos and the art of living and the life of art. The other significant noteworthy manifestation of the story is opposition between the characters. This opposition is reflected in the relationship between one individual and another, between one religion and another and between older generation and the younger one. The motif of journey is introduced at the beginning of the novel, and runs throughout the book. This motif representing the dispersal of Christianity and Parsis, along with the disharmony in the life of individuals who believe in different religions.

The internal and spiritual journey of Gustad as well as journey of the Parsis with their culture, traditions, religion and history from Iran to Western coast of India and then further to Sanjan (Gujarat), and then to Bombay, and their migration to the countries of Europe and Northern America. The journey is the leitmotif of the novel which shows the life voyage of the protagonist and how he traverses overcoming all the obstacles in his way of life. The journey means quest for identity and cultural roots in relation to race, class, nation and ethnicity. In *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry
creates many characters who crave for their minority status in the Hindu dominated society. Gustad Noble, the central character in the book who equally respects all the religion also realizes the outcaste status of his community:

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 (55).

In the present country, his father and grand father enjoyed the elite status but now in the changed circumstances due to vote bank politics and political fascism he feels alienated even in the Indian social texture and sees no future for his coming generations. The fictional works of Mistry recreate the history of Parsis and emphasize the long journey travelled by them. Mistry in his own words in an interview with Nariman Saikh of Asia Sources, expressed what he realized in Canada, “…It suddenly brought home to me very clearly the fact that I was imitating something that was not mine, that made no sense in terms of my own life, my own reality” (Roy 14). The quest of an immigrant writer for identity and cultural roots can be seen more intensively in term of national instinct in Canada. The Canadians construct their cultural identity on the basis of some specific methods which are not clear and well defined. So the immigrant writers confront on odd situations in that “strange culture”. The literature of such writers exposes their frustrations as they feel restricted economically and artistically in the alien land:

Who am I? Is a question appropriate in countries where the environment - the ‘here’ is already well defined in fact that it may threaten to overwhelm the Individuals…. It is what a man asks when he finds himself in an unknown territory, and it implies several other questions where this place in relation to other places is. How do I find a way around it? (Atwood 17).
The novel places on record a number of important Parsi customs and ritual for all the Parsi and Non- Parsi readers. Customs and rituals symbolize the cultural richness of any civilized society. Rohinton Mistry creates Parsi environment, refers to Parsi social traditions and way of living as confronted even threatened by modernity in his fictional world. The present novel is no exception; the majority of the characters who have to play a significant role in the development of the plot are Parsis. He uses Parsi religious customs and rituals in abundance in his writings with zeal to preserve it for the coming generations and to make his target readership aware about the Parsism. The most distinguished custom prevalent among the Parsi is their death funeral. The death funeral of Dinshawji shows the perfect details of the rituals that are performed on the occasion of the death of a Parsi and at the same time it exposes the hypocrisy of the distant relatives and even the family members. As the narrator describes, “Alamai…started to sniff and dab at her eyes with a little hanky, and Gustad was utterly disgusted. Better to stay quite than to pretend” (244-245). A considerable space is given to the vulture controversy in the novel. Here, the novelist suggests the condition of the Hearse provided by Bombay Parsi Panchayat and the attitude of the staff of Tower of Silence. The other important development occurs in the novel when the death of Major Bilimoria is reported in the Parsi newspaper Jam-E-Jamshed and with the information that his funeral was managed by a non - Parsi fellow Ghulam Mohammad. The Jam-E-Jamshed comes out as the most authentic source of information for the Parsis. When Tehmul dies once again it is shown that how the customs takes place after immediate death along with Parsi belongingness. Gustad makes every effort to make his ruvaan according to Parsi traditions. Gustad takes Tehmul to his flat alone and recites prayers:

He closed his eyes and began to pray softly. He recited the *Yatha Ahu Varyo*, five times, and *Ashem Vahoo*, Three times,…He kept his eyes closed and started a second cycle of prayer….Five and three, recited repeatedly (336–337).
In this way the novel documents the important activities and cultural components of the Parsi culture and traditions. The novelist captures the realistic picture of Parsi community with their social concerns and challenges to preserve their culture and distinguished identity. Mistry plays an eminent role as a Parsi novelist to save his cultural heritages. Mistry makes powerful use of symbols and images in his fiction to portray the internal feelings of the characters, and thus play a significant role in the development of the plot. The Khodadad Building is surrounded by a black stone wall which acts as a cocoon for the Parsis, protecting them from the unknown/outer world. The municipality plans to demolish the wall to widen the road. Gustad is annoyed and he curses the municipality for undertaking such a disastrous step:

The bloody bastards were out of their minds. What was the need to widen the road?...The compound would shrink to less than half its present width, and the black stone wall would look like a mountain before the ground floor tenants. More a prison camp than a building, all cooped up like sheep or chickens. With the road noise and nuisance so much closer. The flies, the mosquitoes, the horrible stink, with bloody shameless people pissing, squatting alongside the wall. Late at night it became like a wholesale public latrine (16).

The black stone wall also acts as a character and Gustad knows the importance of the wall for the Parsis living in the Khodadad Building. Gustad is sick of the smell which gives mosquitoes an opportunity to buzz around and sting the exposed parts:

Ignorant swine pissing on the road should be shot on the spot!... blow up the bloody wall with dynamite, then where will they shit?...With the increase in traffic and population, the black stone wall became
more important than ever. It was the sole provider of privacy, especially for Jimmy and Gustad when they did their kustis at dawn. Over six feet high, the wall ran the length of the compound, sheltering them from non-Parsis eyes while they prayed with the glow spreading in the east (81-82).

But when the stink is unbearable, Gustad is frustrated and he curses by saying “to hell with privacy, to hell with the wall to hell with the stink”(82). Inspector Soli Bamji, a Parsi, also lives in Khodadad Building, calls Gustad as bossie. Even he is against the municipality’s decision, “it’s going to be a big problem if the madder chod municipality cuts our compound in half. . . . If the bastards break down this wall, it will completely fuck up our privacy. You better pray every morning, bossie, for the good health of our wall” (126). Gustad plans to change the condition of the wall. He meets the artist who sits at the corner pavement of Vir Nariman Road. He requests the artist to paint the black stone wall with his god and goddesses. The artist agrees to paint the wall. Gustad being a Parsi does not bother to which religion or to which community does the artist belong. He is only interested in preserving his Parsi identity and privacy through the wall. Gustad asks if he has enough drawings to cover three hundred feet wall? The artist replies:

I can cover three hundred miles if necessary. Using assorted religions and their gods, saints and prophets: Hindu, Sikh, Judaic, Christian, Muslim, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Jainist, Actually, Hinduism alone can provide enough. But I always like to mix them up, include a variety in my drawings. Makes me feel I am doing something to promote tolerance and understanding in the world (182).
The artist after merging and assimilating the pictures of various gods and goddesses makes an effort to preserve them. The main artwork of the artist is:

- Gautama Buddha in Lotus Position under the Bodhi Tree;
- Christ with Disciples at the Last Supper;
- Karttikeya, God of Valour;
- Haji Ali Dargah, the beautiful mosque in the sea;
- Chruch of Mount Mary;
- Daniel in the Lions’ Den;
- Sai Baba;
- Manasa, the Serpent-Goddess;
- Saint Francis talking to the Birds;
- Krishna with Flute and Radha Holding Flowers;
- the Ascension;
- and finally, Dustoor Kookadaru and Dustoor Meherji Rana (212).

The wall, which was called the ‘black stone wall’, goo-mooters, full of stink and mosquitoes, is now full of rainbow colours depicting various gods and goddesses, belonging to every religion, presenting a fine example of a secular country. The fragrance coming from the agarbatti lit in front of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, fascinates Gustad “such a nice smell” (212). The pictures of gods and goddesses make the wall alive and it acts as a living character in the novel, changes the tone of the novel by taking the novel from marginalization to ‘preservation’ and ‘assimilation’.

The unnamed artist acquires name and fame through the black wall of Khodadad Building. He is shocked to hear about the demolition of the wall. In a trembling voice he says “they are telling me I have to give up my wall” (329). It is the intimacy of the artist with the wall. He is in despair and tells Gustad that ‘he is very grateful to him by providing the walls hospitality’. Gustad asked, if he has made any plans to go anywhere? The artist replies, “in a world where roadside latrines become temples and shrines, and temples and shrines become dust and ruin, does it matter where ?” (338). The artist requested Gustad, if he could take some twigs from the neem tree. “I like to control the creation, preservation and destruction of my dental
health” (338). Gustad wishes him good luck. The artist replied, “luck is the spit of
gods and goddesses . . . I have taken everything I need for my journey” (338-339).
His journey continues. He is in search of another wall where there shall be no
restriction, boundaries and is beyond their power, rules and regulations of the
government:

Over the years, a precise cycle had entered the rhythm of his life, the
cycle of arrival, creation and obliteration. Like sleeping, waking and
stretching, or eating, digesting and excreting, the cycle sang in
harmony with the blood in his veins and the breath in his lungs. He
learned to disdain the overlong sojourn and the procrastinated
departure, for they were the progenitors of complacent routine, to be
shunned at all costs. The journey-chanced, unplanned, solitary-was the
thing to relish (184).

Gustad is a tradition lover and looks upon his younger son as a good successor of his
grand father. Here, the grandpa’s hammer is an important symbol of passing on the
culture and tradition from one generation to the next:

Gustad felt a great surge of pride as Darius’s fingers closed round the
handle...And the sweat from Grandpa’s palms, soaking the handle of
this hammer...His hand first, and then my hands. Making the handle
smoother and smoother. Sohrab should have…but Darius will. He will
add his gloss to the wood. What did it mean when a hammer like this
was passed from generation to generation? It meant something
satisfying, fulfilling, at the deep centre of one’s being. That was all
(293).

The motif of the hammer is another symbolic device suggesting the ultimate
preservation of Parsi culture through the generations. The hammer motif occurs when
Darius stands with nails and hammer next to his father as he mended the front door and the window. Gustad says though “you never got to see your great grandfather. But this is his hammer” (293). Gustad wants Darius to preserve the hammer. Further describing, how his grandfather used the hammer, Gustad says:

But how bountifully my grandfather used to sweat. Even in the prosperous days, when there were others to do it, he loved the heavy work . . . And the sweat from Grandpa’s palms, soaking the handle of this hammer. To darken and burnish the wood. His hands first, and then my hands. Making the handle smoother and smoother. Sohrab should have . . . but Darius will. He will add his gloss to the wood (293).

Gustad’s room is dark due to blackout paper taped over the window panes and the ventilators since Indo-China war broke out. He has a reason when he says “it helped the children to sleep better” (11). The dark room for Gustad symbolizes solitude. He does not want to get attracted towards the outer world. In solitude he gets an opportunity to think of his past losses: Grandma, Grandpa, mother, and father. On the contrary, Dilnavaz “did not argue because his father had passed away recently in the nursing home” (11). She often requested him to get rid out of the black paper, as she feels herself living in a cell. She is excited and enthusiastic about the lighted world. “In this house, the morning never seems to come” (11). Her complain is worth as:

the paper collected dust and was difficult to clean; it gave spiders ideal places to spin their webs; it provided perfect cover for cockroaches to lay their eggs; and it made the whole house dark and depressing. Very nice this is. Son collects butterflies and moths, father collects spiders and cockroaches. Soon Khodadad Building will become one big insect museum (11-12).
The black papers symbolize Gustad’s effort to preserve the Parsi community and his family from outer world. It is through the black paper that he succeeded in preserving his identity. He is ready to go to any extent. Dilnavaz wants Gustad to come out of the dark world. “With so much junk I cannot clean or dust properly, and all that paper still on the windows and ventilators. God knows when. . .” (116). Gustad gets up when a ray of light enters through a corner of ventilator glass where the black paper has come untagged:

it was a good thing he had not removed the blackout paper, at least that was one less job. He reminded her how she had kept nagging about it nine years ago, after the China war, nagging on and on. But in 65, when there was war with Pakistan, was it not convenient to have the paper already in place? ‘Same thing again. History repeats itself (292).

It is the right time for the Parsis to preserve their cultural heritage before they get scattered. Through restoration, they can avoid history being repeated:

In history, the principle cannot be that the stronger the misreading the better, for here history does not emulate creative writing and is constrained by different norms of inquiry. At the very least, there is in history a basic distinction between the attempt to reconstruct the object of enquiry, including its meaning or possibilities at its own time or over time, and the entry into a dialogic exchange with it that tries to bring out its potential in the present and for the future (LaCapra 799).

There are several places where mending is required. Gustad with the help of Darius mended the black papers. It is an attempt of the present generation to preserve their community from being extinct. Gustad after the death of Tehmul is totally broken physically and mentally. He thinks of his loss since his childhood, which caused him
lots of pain, suffering and agony. Finally, Gustad “stood upon the chair and pulled at the paper covering the ventilators. As the first sheet tore away, a frightened moth flew out and circled the room” (339).

Gustad performs a bit of gardening daily opposite the black stone wall by growing vinca but the mint begins to sprout on its own. It is Miss Kutpitia, who suggested Gustad not to uproot the plant by saying, “that is very rare subjo very rare! ...The fragrance controls high blood-pressure. And the tiny two-lipped white flowers, growing in spikes, contained seeds which, soaked in water and ingested, cured numerous maladies of the stomach” (16). The sprouting of mint with its fragrance acts as an indication that the stinking black stone wall can be preserved if fragrance is spread around. The idea to preserve the wall comes in the mind of Gustad and he thinks that through fragrance the wall can be kept healthy. As the monsoon approached and after a brief shower the vinca’s leaves are green and fresh. The plants act as an inspiration for Gustad, and he thinks of ‘Survival of the Fittest’. However deeply he seems to be worried about Parsi community on the surface, the vision for a secular India is also deeply rooted in his psyche and that comes out in the shape of changed structure and texture of the wall. The wall gained popularity. Gustad is shocked to see “the rose plant, the vinca, and the subjo bush hacked to the ground. Every stem, every branch had been slashed off, chopped into little pieces” (208). It refers to the Parsis uprooted from Persia, and indicates that in near future the wall shall be demolished and it is the right time for the Parsis to come out of the cacoon, they have formed for themselves in Khodadad Building. Mistry seems to be worried about the uproodedness of Parsi community as T.S. Eliot shows his concerns over the growing materialism and animalism in the western world. Eliot frequently used the vegetation myth from Jessie Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) and from Sir
James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1922) to show the barrenness and infertility of the West:

Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. . . .
What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish?

(T.S. Eliot *The Waste Land*)

Mistry describes Bombay as a Parsi hub, and the centre for Parsi activities in India, and a source of his childhood memories having cosmopolitan social texture. He draws the picture of a locale of Bombay, its streets, Crawford Market, Flora Fountain, and the BEST bus service in the city. The description of the red light area of Bombay as a house of cages has a significant imagery and presents the authentic and realistic picture of the city. The contemporary historical and political development has started to vitiate the harmonious environment of the city. The regionalism and religious conservatism has crept in the minds of the people particularly the marginalized community in the society. Bombay is the business capital of the country and as the hub for cultural and financial activities has started to lose its cosmopolitanism and secularism under the influence of fascism and communal forces. The Parsis are the people, who have preserved a distinct culture through centuries of dispersion. After dispersion from Persia they lived in multicultural India and developed adaptability in the new land. Not a single person, race or culture can be the soul influencer or dominator over another. Mutual respect between people, with wide ranging cultural influences is essential in a multicultural society. Ironically, being a minority, the Parsis falsely imposed categories of cultural identity, which fix them in cultural
stereotypes and force them into power struggles between artificial cultural groups. Along with the many cultures and ethnicities preserved by the city, many new cultures have also emerged on the culturally fertile soil of Bombay. But the metabolism of the city has been polluted and it has turned into a barren land. The following lines of T.S.Eliot’s famous poem *The Wasteland*, which reflect the position of modern man, seem true to the city Bombay:

‘Unreal City,

Under the brown fog a winter dawn’.

(T.S. Eliot *The Wasteland*)

The Bombay University, has withdrawn *Such a Long Journey* from the undergraduate curricula after the protest lodged by student wing of Shiv Sena under the leadership of the grand son of Bala Saheb Thackrey. This has been condemned by the intellectuals, secular fronts and the lovers of art. The protesters allege that derogatory remarks are used in the novel against the native people of Maharashtra and the right wing political parties under the Saffron flag. Dinshawji who is a friend and colleague of Gustad Noble makes very pungent and sarcastic remarks on local downtrodden people of Bombay. According to him, they have no manners and common sense in these dubbawallas:

What to do with such low-class people? No manners, no sense, nothing. And you know who is responsible for this attitude – that bastard Shiv Sena leader who worships Hitler and Mussolini. He and his “Maharashtra for Maharashtrians” nonsense. They won’t stop till they have complete Maratha Raj (73).

The character of Dinshawji is considered the mouthpiece of the author in the text. He does not stop here; he further becomes fiercer and uses vulgar language against the
leader of regional political outfit and their way of working. When he was walking
with Gustad, and the latter pointed out the dried fountain, he overreacts again on
Maratha leader because he thinks they are the cause of every problem:

Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real Gandoo Raj,’ said Dinshawji. ‘All they know is to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout
slogans, make threats, and change road names….Why change the
names?’ Saala sisterfuckers! (73).

It seems Mistry uses the character of Dinshawji to give vent to his frustration and
resentment against the existing political system. When Gustad thinks the post-colonial
tendencies to rename roads, buildings and even the cities is an inoffensive activity and
should not be protested and says, ‘‘Why worry about it?... What’s in a name?’’(74)
This attitude shows the casual tendency of the people ‘chalta hai’ towards important
matters, of public concerns and also reveals harmless image of the Parsis as they
called Bawa ji. But Dinshawji takes it seriously and burst out:

You are wrong. Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington
Road. But it has disappeared; in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar
Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly it’s on
Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also
disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And
one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have
lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I
get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? (74).

The politics of changing the names traumatizes Dinshawji, as David William states:
“What Dinshawji laments in the old names is the loss of the old logocentric security,
that metaphysical reassurance via language” (Williams 217). The Bombay presented
by Mistry in this novel is the city of sixth and seventh decades of twentieth century having the cosmopolitan, tolerant fabric of Indian society. It was the time when right-wing political party, Shiv Sena started creating nuisance in the name of region, religion and ethnicity. The utterances of Dinshawji expose the political realism of India in which the politicians befool the masses with new slogans and populistic name changing tactics. However, his remarks are vulgar and unparliamentarily in language on many occasions, but it does not mean that he has any anti Hindu or anti Shiv Sena agenda. Though he curses Shiv Sena leadership for fanaticism and regionalism at the same time he criticizes Nehruji for nepotism and favoritism and Smt. Gandhi, then Prime Minister and her son for corruption and misuse of government machinery for their interest. The betrayal of China changed the behavior of Pt. Jawaharlal Lal Nehru, the popular statesman:

The unflinching humanist, and the great visionary, turned bitter and rancorous...he would brook no criticism, take no advice. With his appetite for philosophy and dreams lost for ever, he resigned himself to political intrigues and internal squabbles.... His one overwhelming obsession now was, how to ensure that his darling daughter Indira, the only one, he claimed, who loved him truly, who had even abandoned her worthless husband in order to be with her father-how to ensure that she would become Prime Minister after him (11).

This change in his behaviour had been initiated already as he never excused his son-in-law, Feroze Gandhi for exposing scandals in the government. Mistry discusses the internal family disputes of the top political family of the country and exposes the gloomy and hopeless face of corruption, nepotism, and favoritism ridden Indian politics. This political realism in the novel foregrounds the bitter truths of Indian political system such as corruption and religious fundamentalism. Mistry uses that
version of the language which is used by the people in their day to day conversations to present the real life situation in their conversations. Mistry presents the realistic picture of the city of Bombay as an insider/outsider and the political drama centered around the sixty lakhs rupees scam in which the State Bank of India, Cashier, and Mr. Nagarwala indulged as reported in the newspapers. Arun Mukherjee explains:

The actual event that Mistry focussed on is known in India as the Nagarwala case. In the winter of 1971, it was reported in the papers that the Head Cashier of the State Bank of India in Delhi had given six million rupees to Mr. Nagarwala on the basis of phone call from Mrs. Gandhi who, he claimed, had asked him to take this great risk in the name of Mother India. After he had delivered the case to Mr. Nagarwala in a preassigned place, the Head Clerk developed a doubt about his act and went to the police. Mrs. Gandhi denied that she had made any such telephone call and the Head Clerk was suspended. Nagarwala was arrested a few days later and confessed that he had mimicked Mrs. Gandhi’s voice (Mukherjee 145-146).

Major Jimmy Bilimoria, a true friend of Gustad and yet another dweller of Khodadad Building, suddenly disappears without informing Gustad. Bilimoria, a retired Major, narrates the tales of army and war to children. He served the nation before his retirement, he is serving the nation by joining RAW (Research and Analysis Wing). In his dispersal state, he writes to Gustad “I am still not at liberty to tell you details, except it is a matter of national security. You know I was doing work for the government after leaving the army” (54). For the sake of national benefits, he refuses to disclose his intentions even to his best friend, which conveys his love and affection towards his nation. He is ready to take a risk. Bilimoria narrates the incidents to Gustad in the hospital. He says, “How I miss Khodadad Building . . . wish I never took Delhi posting. But I can come back. . . in four years”(269). He further says, what
he missed the most was the “early morning. Kusti and prayers together, in the
compound” (269). Bilimoria disclosed the various intentions of Indira Gandhi to
Gustad:

Big surprise. . .she was using RAW like her own private agency.
Spying on opposition parties, ministers . . . anyone. For blackmail.
Made me sick. Even spying on her own cabinet. One of them. .
prefers little boys. Another takes pictures of himself. . .doing it with
women. Bribes, thievery. . .so much going on. . .Her friends become
enemies and her enemies become friends . . .so quickly. So often.
Blackmail is the only way she can keep control. . .keep them all in line
(270).

Bilimoria says how the refugees from the East Pakistan arrived. His superior tells him
our government will help guerrilla movement. Bilimoria was interested. He was
interviewed and selected:

She put me in charge. Training and supplying the Mukti Bahini . .
touch fighters, Bengalis. Learned quickly. Factories sabotaged . .
bridges toppled . . railway tracks. . . There was a ceremony . . birth
of Bangladesh. Invited the Press to Kushtia district, not far from our
border . . village renamed Mujibnagar. New flag . . green, red, gold,
in the mango grove. Singing . . sonar Bangla. And Pakistani artillery
not far away. Joi Bangla . . proud moment for everyone. But bloody
foreign press printed name of the village . . Pakistani Air Force
destroyed it next day (271).

Money was the need of time. Bilimoria was called to her private office. She gave him
the instructions to go to State Bank, and just say, Bangladeshi Babu . . come for sixty
lakh. Bilimoria was amazed to get sixty lakh rupees without any further enquiry.
Bilimoria says, in order to protect herself she wants to trap him. She says, she has
enemies everywhere and if they come to know about money, they will use the information against her. She said the “only problem is my telephone call to chief cashier . . . he might talk. He had heard her voice, but he did not see me speaking . . . we can always say someone imitated my voice. . . . If my enemies try to make trouble, all you have to say is . . . you imitated my voice” (277). This shows the cunningness of the Prime Minister. Bilimoria further continued that, she made him write, confessing that, he imitated her voice to help Mukti Bahini. Bilimoria, during his dispersal state, he thinks of “Dilnavaz’s dhansak . . . those Sunday afternoons” (278). Being nostalgic in a dispersal state is a common phenomenon. Bilmoria said, he was shocked when Mukti Bahini asked him for new financing. Bilimoria being shocked hurried to Delhi. “Money I was disbursing for supplies . . . intercepted. By Prime Minister’s office. To a private account” (278). Bilimoria said, he was perplexed, cursed the leaders and remembered his dispersed golden movements:

Whole day and night I sat in my flat. Doing nothing . . . just thinking. What hope for the country? With such crooked leaders? Whole day and night…I sat thinking of all the people I had come across in my life…men in the army, good men. And my Ghulam Mohammed. Khodadad Building…the families living there. You and Dilnavaz, the children, the ambitions you have for them. And those bastards, those ministers and politicians, those ugly buffaloes and pigs . . . getting fatter and fatter, sucking our blood (279).

Bilimoria said he returned fifty lakh to PM’s office and kept ten lakh with him for Ghulam Mohammed, for Gustad and for himself. He was arrested and a case was made on his confession. They asked him about the remaining money. Bilimoria did not disclose his secret, as he “Had to protect you and Ghulam . . . did not want any trouble for you” (280). The dispersal journey of Bilimoria from Khodadad Building to Delhi was not fruitful. He lost everything. His true love and affection toward Ghulam
Mohammed is marvellous. People belonging to minority community are questioned and punished without reason.

The journey for Gustad starts, when he is on his way to Delhi to meet Bilimoria. He is happy to hear that the trains are on strike, “now I cancel the trip with a clear conscience. There is no service at all” (256). An announcement is made, that unreserved trains are leaving for New Delhi. Gustad pays ten rupees to coolie for a reserved seat. An unknown traveller says “we are at their mercy, no? . Coolies are controlling the whole show. Railway Minister thinks it is in charge, strikers think they are in charge. But the coolies are the real bosses” (258-259). Gustad thinks, “would this long journey be worth it? Was any journey ever worth the trouble?”(259). During his journey, he remembers Dinshawji:

Random thoughts, crossing decades of their lives. The new recruit, he used to call me. Would lift his arm and say, under my wing you will be safe-little smelly, but safe. Pointing out who could be trusted, who were tattletales, back stabbers, management *chumchas*. And his trick of leaving the jacket on the chair. How he made people laugh. At lunch and tea-breaks. Yes, to be able to make people laugh was a wonderful blessed thing. And what a long journey for Dinshawji too. But certainly worth it (260).

Gustad is in a dilemma if his journey is worthy and meaningful. Gustad reaches the jail and meets Mr Kashyap. He says, Bilimoria has been moved to hospital due to high fever and weakness. When Gustad sees the condition of Bilimoria, he feels like weeping. He thinks, is he the same man who once carried him like a baby into Madhiwalla Bonesetter’s clinic:

On the bed lay nothing more than a shadow. The shadow of the powerfully-built army man who once lived in Khodadad Building. His hairline had receded, and sunken cheeks made the bones jut sharp and
grotesque. The regal handlebar moustache was no more. His eyes had disappeared within their sockets. The neck, what he could see of it, was as scrawny as poor behesti Dinshawji’s, while under the sheet there seemed barely a trace of those strong shoulders and deep chest which Gustad and Dilnavaz used to point out as a good example to their sons, reminding them always to walk erect, with chest out and stomach in, like Major Uncle (267).

After listening to the story of Bilimoria, Gustad gets irritated at the simplicity of Bilimoria. “The worldly-wise Jimmy Bilimoria, the cynical Major, whose motto in life was “when in doubt, keep doubting” (277). During his dispersal, Gustad captures some moments of the past, which relieve his pain. “When the boys were still very little, when Major Uncle taught them how to march, left-right, left-right, and how to present arms, using rulers for rifles” (280). Before departing, Gustad kissed Bilimoria lightly on the forehead. The journey of Gustad from Bombay to Delhi, vice-versa is heart-breaking but revealing. It is an experience – worth the knowledge as to what life is beyond the wall of Khodadad building.

It is Mohammed who brought the dead body of Bilimoria from Delhi to Bombay, and it is he who performed the funeral rites. At the Tower of Silence, seeing the vultures circling, Mohammed dropped his head, closed his eyes, and wept. He says to Gustad that “your Parsi priests don’t allow outsiders like me to go inside” (322). If only there were no restrictions, he could go inside and see his beloved friend for the last time. Gustad has seen many sides of the man “jovial, threatening, callous, cajoling, and sarcastic. But never like this, never so emotional” (322). Mohammed’s intentions are dangerous. He is on the verge of revenge. His dispersal state is not constant; he is once again on his journey. He preferred to stay in RAW:

Bili Boy was a brother to me. When someone kills my brother, I get very upset. Someone will pay for it... And by staying in RAW my
chances are much better of collecting that payment. . . .Timing is important, that’s all. And there’s no hurry. I may collect my payment tomorrow, or next year, or after ten years. From whoever is responsible? If it’s the car manufactures, he will have to pay. Lots of possibilities-his car might explode, for instance. . . .Whatever is necessary to get the job done. . . . And his Mummy herself has many enemies. Makes more and more every day, from Punjab to Tamil Nadu. I am a patient man. Her life is an easy snuff out as Bili Boy’s (322-323).

The novel focusses on the political environment of the country and suggests the undemocratic practices prevalent in the higher political spheres in the country. The top order politicians were polluting the sanctity of Indian constitution and its soul. The contemporary India was not the country of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives to get independence for the country. It was the time of social transformation and self analysis at a post-colonial stage but the country was undergoing the curse of bribes, theft and political tyranny. The whole country was being run by the Prime Minister and her crazy son as their private agency. Mistry uses patient imagery for the unhealthy situation of the country:

Our beloved country is a patient with gangrene at an advanced stage. Dressing the wound and sprinkling rose-water over it to hide the stink of rotting tissue is useless. Fine words and promises will not cure the patient. The decaying part must be excised. You see, the municipal corruption is merely the bad smell, which will disappear as soon as the gangrenous government at the centre is removed (313).

In this way, the author raises very pertinent and serious questions about the contemporary political events during the seventh decade of the last century. It was the
time when the politics and power game revolved around Smt. Gandhi and her tyrant son Sanjay Gandhi and they were using their power to satisfy their political and personal whims. Mrs. Gandhi had achieved the status of the most powerful Prime Minister and political leader in the country. She had learnt the tactics of befooling masses and crushing the voices of resentment. It was the time when the identity of India and Indira had become complementary to each other. “Psychologically Indira Gandhi represents important aspects of contemporary Indian consciousness blown up to grotesqueness and her failures and successes of India’s civic consciousness too.” (Nandy 112). In this way, the author insinuates the idea of political journey of India and its people. The country that fought for many hundred years for freedom with the expectations of Ram Raj and Swaraj. Could they ever imagine that such a society would be established after independence and the people who would have the responsibility of governing their own people would shatter the pious dreams of freedom fighters and martyrs? Mistry does not assert himself as a political writer as he has stated in his own words, “With neither an audience nor message in mind, and that politics and religion come in a secondary way” (Hancock 147).

Mistry as a traditional writer resolves all the issues in the novel and takes every character to his possible and plausible end. Major Bilimoria, Dinshawji and Tehmul die due their respective reasons, his daughter Roshan gets rid off her long illness and Sohrab comes back to his father as Tehmul dies. The dispute of the wall has been also resolved at the end of the novel. Moss makes a point in her close examination of Rohinton Mistry’s need for peace, order and good government--Canada, Brampton version-is understandable when you read his novel Such a Long Journey. It is a tidal wave of humanity at its smelliest and most chaotic. The close examination of the novel establishes it as an authentic document of Parsi culture and tradition comprising all the contemporary problems such as political corruption, regional and religious orthodoxy and conservatism. The novel follows the pattern of order–disorder-order and comes to conclusion with a satisfactory ending, in other
words, it is a saga of sufferings in the life of people like Gustad Noble in the Indian Parsi society lauded with traditional canons of writing.

Mistry defines the hurdles and difficulties faced by the Parsis and other minorities in India. The difference is merged into sameness and this fine ‘fusion’ is possible “in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different”, and the different colours of a single unified rainbow project the ‘fusion’ and “difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity” (Young 36). The motif pertaining to ‘preservation’ and ‘restoration’ of the Parsi community in the novel is highlighted through symbols. The symbols may either be in the form of neem tree, vinca and mint, ventilators or in the form of Khodadad Building, names, languages, and black stone wall and so on. Gustad’s pulling down the blackout papers and letting in light is quiet suggestive. The ghettos of Parsi communities are broken and the ‘urge to merge’ takes place. The ‘enclosed’ Parsi space is open for all:

And when old words die out on the tongue,
new melodies break forth from the heart;
and where the old tracks are lost,
new country is revealed with its wonders.

(Tagore *Gitanjali*)

The novel ends on a note of willingness to change likely to result in ‘hope’ for a better life as part of at least larger bulk of ‘minorities’ if not the main stream social life. Letting the light in is an acceptance of life outside, an awareness and recognition of its being there. This might lead to an effort to assimilate or an effort foe getting assimilated thereby getting more breathing space. And this in turn arouses the ‘hope’ of a healthy life -- a journey from cocooned existence to a blossoming environment.


*[All the references in the parenthesis are from this edition only]*