Abstract

The manifestations of postcolonial studies encourage the ethnic minorities to express their socio-cultural consciousness and trace the importance of the anguish felt by the minorities over their ethnicity and religion. In general, minority writings as a form of protest literature depicts the plight of the ethnic minorities and craves for their social liberation. It also plays a vital role in the construction of the cultural identity of the minorities.

The Parsis are an ethno-religious minority in India, whose ancestors left their native land Iran to save their religion Zoroastrianism from the hands of the Arab invaders in the eighth century. Since then, they have been leading a marginalized life in India and are dislocated in a wider sense.

Parsi literature is culture specific and it has the features of the ethnocentric and the minority discourse. It portrays the anxieties, sense of insecurity and alienation which is experienced by the Parsis in and around India. The Parsi writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Farrukh Dhondy, Firdaus Kanga, Dina Mehta and Rohinton Mistry represent and construct quite consciously the ethnic identity of the Parsis in their works. Rohinton Mistry, the author under study, is of Indian origin and now settles in Canada. In his writings, he voices for his community members in India.
The present thesis entitled “Parsi Fiction As Minority Discourse” tries to bring out the socio, religious and political consciousness of the Parsi community as represented in the works of the Parsi writers and particularly in the writings of Rohinton Mistry. This study hypothesizes that the Parsis have love-hate relationship with India. The Parsis’ attempts in assimilating the Indians are in vain. For, they feel that they are inferiorized in India and their tormented psyche initially confronts to accept the patronizing attitudes of the dominant Hindu society. Consequently, they prefer to assimilate the British, their masters’ colonizers quite willingly. However, realizing that India is a home away from their original home arguably the only home, the Parsis are ready to accept India—their adopted home—with all its hegemonic limitations. The present thesis analyses the Parsis’ cultural consciousness, unqualified assimilation, love for English, and approach to Indian politics.

The first chapter as a way of introduction introduces the Parsi minority discourse. Parsi discourse aims at asserting the Parsis’ ethnic self by negating the concept of others. The second chapter “Reaffirmation of Parsi Consciousness” examines the Parsis’ various attempts in constructing the Parsi identity. It also deals with the various agencies such as socio-religious tolerance, fear for Indian politicians, and migration which construct the Parsi consciousness.

The third chapter entitled “History Retold” discusses the historical incidents as dealt in the works of Rohinton Mistry. His works revolve around
the historical incidents namely India’s war with China (1962) and Pakistan (1971), Emergence of Bangladesh (1971), Nagarwala Case (1971), Emergency in India (1975) and Babri Masjith Riots (1992). He fictionalizes them with a Parsi perspective. The fourth chapter “Language As an Assimilation Strategy” emphasizes the difficulties faced by the immigrants in acquisition of the language of the dominants as a social/survival strategy.

The last chapter sums up the content of the previous chapters. The thesis establishes the fact that the fears, anxieties and alienation of the Parsis are not completely inherent. Political incidents such as Nationalization of Banks, Nagarwala Case and the suspected death of Feroze Gandhi have robbed of their peaceful settlement and made them detest India. However, the researcher establishes that the Parsi migrants, as represented in the writings of Mistry at last reconcile themselves with India and consider it their home.