

## ANTICIPATION AND DESOLATION IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S SHORT STORY THE COLLECTORS

Dr. C. SHAHIN BANU<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. N.VADIVU<sup>2</sup>, Dr. G. SARATHA LAKSHMI<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Languages, Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu. India. Email id: [shahin@sonatech.ac.in](mailto:shahin@sonatech.ac.in)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Languages, Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu. India. Email id: [vadivun@sonatech.ac.in](mailto:vadivun@sonatech.ac.in)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Languages, Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu. India. Email id: [saratha@sonatech.ac.in](mailto:saratha@sonatech.ac.in)

\*Corresponding Author

### Abstract:

*Anticipation is an individual's emotion which engages gratification or apprehension in view of an awaiting occurrence. Fear, anxiety, anticipation and reliance are anticipatory emotions of an individual and these emotions affect the person when the anticipated event fails to occur. Terrible sense of desolation influences the psychological condition of a person who has to face the situation with hope. Pain and disappointment are a part of life which no one can avoid or escape and experiencing something which is not in our plan should not be considered as failure or indicators of an unorganized life. Rohinton Mistry emphasizes human isolation, alienation and personal trauma of desolation which arise from an individual's psychological condition. The aim of this paper is to analyze anticipation and desolation in Mistry's Short Story The Collectors.*

**Keywords:** Anticipation, Reliance, Desolation, Isolation, Alienation, Trauma.

Indian-born Canadian writer Rohinton Mistry has been the recipient of many awards including the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2012. His first three novels were shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Mistry's *Tales from FirozshaBaag* is a collection of the eleven short stories about the residents of FirozshaBaag, a Parsi-dominated apartment complex in Mumbai. *The Collectors* is one of the short stories in *Tales from FirozshaBaag*. Rohinton Mistry narrates a journey to realization of self and the outer world in the story *The Collectors*.

Mark Evans says, "Self-realization' is the development and expression of characteristic attributes and potentials in a fashion which comprehensively discloses their subject's real nature" (1998). Mistry introduces his character Dr.Mody, a gentleman who is sensitive in nature. He has a son Peshotan whose behavior makes Dr.Mody face humiliation. Dr.Mody names his son Peshoton which is "in the name of the Persian hero in the Persian epic, Shah – Nameh" (TFB 82) Persian hero is famous for his nobility, wisdom, courage and love of art. Dr.Mody's expectation of his son Pesi proves futile as he grows up contrary to his wish. According to Snyder C. R., "Hope Theory includes goals, paths, and freedom of choice and he says, every individual must have focused thoughts and develop strategies in advance in order to achieve goals, motivate the effort to reach the goals" (2000). Dr. Mody has goals and wishes for his son but he fails to motivate his son in order to achieve his goals.

People respect Dr.Mody's gentleness, but they are not able to tolerate that his son who spoils their children by provoking them for wrong deeds. Pesi's "brutish strength" (TFB 80) make him indisputable "leader of rowdier elements" (TFB 80). Dr.Mody is an educated man who has elite status in society and his Parsi community. He wishes that his son, "would play the violin, acquire the best form the cultures of East and West, and thrill to words of Tagore and Shakespeare" (TFB 82). Dr. Mody highly expects his son's future but falls short of rules and regulations for his son.

A clinical and developmental psychologist, Diana Baumrind, says that there are three kinds of parenting styles which are authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive or indulgent. Authoritative parents are supportive and show interest in their children's activities but are not overbearing and allow children to make constructive mistakes. Authoritarian parents expect and demand obedience because they are 'in charge' and they do not provide any explanations for their orders. Harry Potter obeys his unsympathetic aunt and uncle, and Cinderella abides by the rules of cruel stepmother. Children who rise in an authoritarian environment are obedient and proficient, but their happiness, social competence, and self-esteem levels are low. Pesi tends to rank low in self-regulation, and he has problems with authority parent Dr. Mody. "Parents who use this permissive or indulgent approach are lenient, do not expect their children to adhere to boundaries or rules, and avoid confrontation".(Baumrind, D. 1991)

Mistry introduces Jehangir, who finds himself in the melancholy world, does not participate in boisterous games and sits in the steps watching others around him. Jehangir does not allow the cruel game of "stoning – the cats" (335 TFB), by other boys even though he is not participating with them. He lives in a world of melancholy and cruel surroundings where he acknowledges the losses and crimes. According to Sigmund Freud, "melancholy with the dejection and apathy of depression, and he also links melancholy to narcissism and mania"(2015,2017). A melancholic temperamental child does not express love verbally but shows his or her love and affection by being dependable, reliable, and doing thoughtful things for the people they care about. Jehangir does not have confidence to progress and get prosperity in life.

Mistry shows "there was something empty about his eyes"(337 TFB). Jehangir's attitude attracts Dr.Mody. Psychologist Julia Kristeva says, "The terms melancholy and depression refer to a composite that might be called the melancholy/depressive, whose borders are in fact blurred. . . ." (1989). Dr.Mody who worries about his son's attitude finds hope again in Jehangir and he becomes his spiritual heir. Dr. Mody introduces the art of stamp collecting to Jehangir. According to Osofsky and Fitzgerald, "Provision of support by parents helps minimize the risk of internalizing behaviors, such as those associated with anxiety and depression, which can impair children's adjustment and ability to function well at home, at school, and in the community" (2000).

Mr. Mody supports Jehangir to come out of depression and anxiety by introducing the art of stamp collections. He shows his cupboard and Jehangir is fascinated by the art. Dr. Mody initiates and encourages Jehangir to make new friends and ask them to save stamps for him. He feels proud of a stamp which portrays a "Spanish dancing lady" (TFB 96). Dr. Mody's son, Pesi is not interested in his father's art of stamp collecting instead "Pesi laughed and mocked... (Dr. Mody's) beloved hobby" (TFB 337) Pesi mocks his father's happiness and pride in his art.

Basic social skills include a range of prosocial behaviors, such as empathy and concern for the feelings of others, cooperation, sharing, and perspective taking, all of which are positively associated with children's success both in school and in non-academic settings and can be fostered by parents and other caregivers. (Durlak et al., 2011; Fantuzzo et al., 2007).

Dr. Mody fails to promote these basic skills to his son Pesi. Mrs. Mody is not happy with the association of Dr. Mody and Jehangir and she thinks that Dr. Mody does not show proper attention towards their son Pesi. According to Jones and Prinz, "Parenting attitudes are influenced as well by parenting self-efficacy, which has been broadly defined as the level of parents' self-belief about their ability to succeed in the parenting role" (2005). Mrs. Mody thinks that Mr. Mody's inability changes his son's characteristics and attitudes.

Mistry presents the stamps as an important symbol of trust in this story. Trust is a significant burden to an individual both mentally and physically but it is the base for healthy relationships. Dr. Mody and Jehangir's association comes to an end when the disappearance of a stamp "Spanish dancing lady" (TFB 98) because he suspects Jehangir and he loses his faith again and "his

despair...was now visible for all to see” (TFB 98). Dr.Mody’s valuable stamps are collected with hard work and dedication for a long period in his lifetime, which is stolen by Jehangir is the easiest way of stealing. Mistry shows adolescent’s psychology through the characters Eric D’ Souza and Jehangir.

Eric D’ Souza is Jehangir’s classmate whose homo sexuality involves Jehangir to do masturbation sessions. Eric steals stamps for Jehangir from the local stall holders. Eric is caught by the traders and they show threat of punishment to him. After this incident Eric’s attitude changes towards Jehangir and he forces him to return all the stolen stamps. Jehangir’s collection is empty in a day. Mistry wants to convey the message to the world that things are not permanent in life. The relationship between Dr.Mody and Jehangir gets terminated. Jehangir is not able to meet Dr.Mody as he feels guilty of his culpability. Dr.Mody’s hopes are denied and everything becomes disillusioned in his life. His plan and hopes are shattered by his own son Pesi and his spiritual heir Jehangir. He lives in the world of disappointment where justice and consequence are expected but not experienced. According to Mark Bernier, “despair involves the loss of meaning for the self”(2015). Dr.Mody loses his hope in life and dies of a heart failure on a trip to Ahmedabad.

This story shows Mistry’s keen observations in the nature of human affections, and destiny which are closely intertwined. Mistry ends the story with lack of faith but not in disappointment. After the death of Dr.Mody, stamps are given to Jehangir by Mrs.Mody. She discovers that the stamps are stored in a trunk under the bed. The cockroaches and white ants reduced the stamp collection to dust. Mrs.Mody hands over stamps to Jehangir and she reveals that the dancing lady stamp is destroyed by her. Jehangir realizes that the coveted stamps are “meaningless squares of paper” (102 TFB). The stamps are destroyed by the termites. Dr.Mody’s affection is invested in the stamps with meaning and value in life. Jehangir does not feel pain when the stamps are destroyed by termites. He feels a slight sense of relief. He says, “I felt remorse, that kind of tender remorse which has on its other side a brutal, unblemished satisfaction” (TFB 16).

The climax of *The Collectors* reflects Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women*, published in 1971. In one of the stories, the protagonist Del Jordan has a memento which is presented by her deceased uncle Craig. Her uncle compiles the history of Wawanash country with his painstaking effort. Del keeps the manuscript in a box under the bed but during the flood, the manuscript is ruined subsequently. Del also feels like Jehangir on discovering the manuscript. Mistry and Munro show the impossibility of preserving the past. Artifacts of stamps and manuscripts turn into waste. It is not only destruction of artifacts but also faith. Dr.Mody’s faith in his own son Pesi is destroyed by his attitude. He is cheated by his spiritual heir Jehangir. Mistry describes that faith in humanity is also destroyable by situations. Mistry portrays injustice of human nature and though not all are guilty of what has been charged. Mistry conveys that the future is uncertain for all the people but they must have anticipation to face the world. Negative thoughts and desperate situations are common in human nature but with little hope they can lead their life for a better future.

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