CHAPTER - VI
CONCLUSION

The present study is a close examination of the four novels and one short story collection of Rohinton Mistry, with a view of describing the element of culture and tradition in the wider sense of diasporic consciousness and his efforts and ways of recasting the history of Parsi community as well as the history of the nation. The dimensions of culture and tradition are far extended beyond the refined and higher activities in every sphere of life to encompass all the customs, rituals, dresses, food, ethnic bonds, myth, exile, displacement, dislocation, relocation, expatriation, assimilation and cultural hybridity. Simultaneously, some critical views have also been taken into account where Mistry is being attacked for his pro-Canadian stand:

Mistry’s winning the Governor-General’s medal and other honors in Canadian society for his work on India suggests not just the rewards of writing novels which are critical of homelands, but do not threaten the host country. It also indicates Mistry’s effort to say farewell to India and to accelerate his development as a Canadian citizen (Jain 80).

During the study, certain questions regarding the Indian setting of Mistry’s writings cropped up. Most of the South Asian Canadian writers keep going back to India or the sub-continent for their fictional material. No writer has produced a major book set in Canada. A great Canadian novel that may reflect the Canadian multicultural experience totally is yet to be written. Moving away from Canada and coming closer to India or the homeland obviously makes a writer nostalgic, but some of the critics feel that “his two novels Such a Long Journey and A Fine Balance are elegiac, not
nostalgic in tone. They do not celebrate the homeland, but mourn its relentless and innumerable atrocities and tragedies . . . they actually enact a farewell to India, not a passage to it” (Jain 169). They feel that Mistry demonstrates self-legitimising logic for leaving the homeland behind and embracing the new diasporic opportunities. The indepth study of Mistry’s writings proves that the dilemma between elegy and nostalgia and between farewell and welcome has given birth to a double-diasporic consciousness from the fragments of the past-present combination. In the process of exploring ones roots, a new kind of diasporic narration takes place. Within the structure of the text a new art may emerge from the contradictions of diasporic writers’ experiences:

It demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the part as social cause or aesthetic precedents; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in between” space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The “past present” becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living (Jain 167).

The works of Rohinton Mistry lend themselves well for this kind of indepth study; not only on account of his unique contribution to the narrative art, but also because, despite a limited quantity of literary production, he has set new yardsticks in diasporic and culture oriented writings. The introductory takes up the dimensions of culture and tradition. Efforts have also been made to delimit the meaning of culture and tradition for the purpose of the present study. Mistry does not believe in quantity he rather focusses on the artistic side of literature. So the study of his contemporaries in South Asian Canadian writing has also been taken into account in this chapter. He is claimed
to be a postcolonial writer and always tries to demonstrate a medium, which reflects his ideology as well as cultural commitments. What is the mode of writing is a question that has been answered to some extent in this chapter. He shifted to Canada at the age of twenty-three choosing to write in the master’s tongue that cannot keep him away from progressive realism. But at the same time putting himself in a contradictory postcolonial complexity, he has chosen to be nostalgic and romance/myth is a genre which best suits to the purpose. The element of culture and tradition along with nostalgia in this study has dealt with the problem by balancing the glory of myth with more critical mode of reality. The chapter is concluded with a note that Mistry with the help of balancing genre strategy constructed a world where people can achieve harmonious balance between self and society and succeed in giving some meaning to the existence of the Parsi community and its culture.

The next chapter deals with his collection of short stories *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. It peeps into the window of Parsi world and projects their culture and tradition through day to day common incidents of routine life in the cosmopolitan city, Bombay. It proves Mistry’s ability to chart the inner voyage of his characters. In this collection he employs new techniques and creative fragmented structures built on impressionistic glimpses of moments. His nostalgia surfaces by the remarkable use of stream-of-consciousness technique with flash backs, in a fine blending of time past and time present scheme. A major part of the chapter is devoted to the analysis of the stories in terms of their theme, setting and structure. The tightening of the structure is very strong in all the stories. The reconstruction of memory is powerfully depicted. To carry over the same character to another story of the collection is also one of his narrative techniques to give it a single binding force and the commonality that links the stories. The presence of one character in more than one story also tightens the
structure through Firozsha Baag as the setting of every story. The message of the last story is nostalgic and his world of make believe comes shattering down when on close study he does not find Canada attractive. The search for cultural identity reaches its height and ends the infatuation with the new land where he feels discriminated. The derogatory questions such as, “Are you from India? Is swimming not encouraged in India?” (Mistry 233). The story ends with a sense of failure.

The third chapter begins with the observation of the documentation of the culture and tradition of the Parsi people in the swiftly changing politics and society of India throughout the novel *Such a Long Journey*. Along with the historical events as its setting and background, the novel is more of inward voyage of the chief characters, inhabiting in the Khodadad Building. The writer employs images and symbols more decisively for the reconstruction of his past memories. The novel is unique in the sense that the narrative is made up of a series of reverie. In Mistry’s conception of reality, mere description of persons and outward movements is of little significance. Gustad Noble, the chief character becomes the representative of the culture of his tribe in the novel and many unachieved or unfulfilled desires that linger on the border of his consciousness. More often they are expressed through the mythical mode blending with realism. It is commonly agreed among critics that *Such a Long Journey* largely deals with the marginalization of the Parsi community, but in this chapter attempts have been made to explore additional aspect - the unifying assimilating factor which presents a complete picture of Parsi community:

The King was telling them that you can live either like lemon in milk or like sugar in milk. The Parsis have lived like sugar in milk, speaking the language of the people, eating their food, and yet retaining their identity and living uninterfered with (Bhaba 7).
The fourth chapter illustrates the social reality of caste ridden society of India in *A Fine Balance*. The superficial study of the novel makes it difficult to find out the cultural orientation, but the indepth reading confirms ‘a fine balance’ between memory and desire, between myth and reality and between internal and external reality. The novel highlights the crisis of balance where one character is identical with another in her/his struggle and capacity to survive. They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth of their marginalized group - its traumas, sufferings, and struggles and collectively share the efforts of balancing their lives in their different specific ways. The narrative shifts back and forth, occasionally without warning and produces a paradoxical situation where balance seems a distant reality. While the postcolonial boundation force the writer to raise the question of individual as well as social identity, the post structuralist framework dismantles either of the identities and proceeds further to make possible the recognition of multiplicity. The journey of the protagonist Dina from Dina Shroff to Dina Dalal presents a fine blending of realistic and mythical mode of narratives. The hardships and sufferings of her life are balanced through the description of her memorable moments of romance and marriage. The experiences of two other prominent characters Ishvar and Om, tanner turned tailors, reveal the horrible realities and identity crises among the down trodden people of the Hindu society. Maneck, a Parsi youth highlights the inner turbulence of an individual in context of drastic social crisis. It is this hidden balancing factor of the major characters, revealed through the positioning and cultural conditioning of the characters. The narrative depicts reality of the multi-ethnic groups in the society and their misfortunes and hardships seem exaggeration for those who do not have sensitivity to feel their pain and agony:

Even the criticism of society must be carried out within society. of society must be carried out within society. Even the description of
society must be carried out within society. And all this occurs as the criticism of a society which criticizes itself, as the planning of society which plans itself and always reacts to what happens, and as the description of a society which describes itself (Kapoor 29).

The last chapter is devoted to a detailed examination of his last two novels *Family Matters* and *The Scream*. In the post-modern writings, the overwhelming question that thoroughly occurs is the theme of belongingness - where does one belong? *Family Matters* seems to complete a cycle of belongingness of the protagonist Nariman Vakil who is dejected by his daughter Coomy and nursed and served by his second daughter Roxana and her family. The protagonist of the novel has crossed seventy, is a widower and grandfather, deeply appreciative of literature and has to move in with his daughter’s home when he can no longer live by himself. The loneliness, the shift, the process of adjustment and later of acceptance all become a microcosm of the nation as the individual struggles for a place in it. *The Scream* also reveals the position of old and aging people in the family as well as in the society. The protagonist of the novel recalls his early days and comparatively analyses his memory with his grievous present state when he is completely helpless to perform even his necessary activities. In a postmodern era a sense of belonging and an act of belongingness find multiple meaning. It is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”. It belongs as much to the future as to the past. It is not something which already exists in time, history and culture. It is changeable and undergoes constant transformation. In case of the representation of culture and cultural identity it becomes more complicated and challenging as “cultural memories, difference of language, of attitude, of thinking and histories all interfere” (Birbalsingh 10). The recollection of memories is one of the ways of expression in diasporic writing. The
expatriate builds a cocoon around her/himself as a refuge from “cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country” (Gomez 72). However, Mistry has overcome the difficulties of human relations between people with different cultural identities. It is his art of balancing the mythical and realistic mode of his writing that helps him in recovering his past in a new land which is:

Far from being internally fixed in some essentialized past, and is subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power. It is far from being grounded in mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (Hall 23).

Depicting the human through the specific characters and concentrating on themes common to human beings irrespective of societies and groups located differently in history and geography. Mistry emerges as the master painter of life on a comprehensive even universal scale – missing not even the minutest stirring and vibration in the minds of his characters. It is this that lends uniqueness to his narration. Though grouped with Dickens and Hugo in his realistic delineation, he is closer to many due to the diasporic perspectives and posture. His acceptability graph scores over them as he is ‘double lived in regions two’. As such what he observed and describes appeals not just to ‘two’ but to too large a group known as ‘human beings’.
WORKS CITED


