Abstract

My thesis on ‘Humanism in Rohinton Mistry’s Fiction’ is an attempt to underline the humanistic leanings of the celebrated novelist, who has often been compared to Charles Dickens in this regard. Humanism has always been considered an important guiding philosophy of mankind. Over the past several centuries, it has branched out into several forms. The first chapter of my thesis is devoted to the study of humanism as it emerged in Europe as the Renaissance period concept, tracing its journey through different periods to contemporary times. In this, we come across a number of philosophers and thinkers who have enriched the humanist thinking. My endeavour has been to understand the exact position that Mistry holds as a humanist since various humanists have viewed humanism differently. Based upon an in-depth study of Mistry’s fiction comprising of a story-book entitled Tales from Firozsha Baag and three novels, viz., Such a Long Journey, A Fine Balance and Family Matters, the thesis shows that Mistry believes, by and large, in the essential goodness of man – an observation that lies at the core of humanism. This is amply proved by the fact that even the seemingly evil characters created by him do have a glimmer of goodness in them. We have strong characters who approximate the renaissance ideal of humanism. But we also have the disempowered and downtrodden in whose portrayal Mistry’s humanist compassion is thrown in bold relief. As a humanist, he upholds scientific spirit but a deeper study convinces us that he is a religious humanist. He takes a functional view of religious practices, which means if these make one rise spiritually, these should be welcome. The thesis also examines the hurdles which the social and political power structures put in the path of humanism to which Mistry devotes a considerable part of his fiction. This is to warn the readers lest they lower their guards, for eternal vigilance is the price of humanism also.

The following is the chapterization of my thesis:

1. Introducing the Writer and the Theme
2. Glorifying the Human Spirit
3. Compassion for the other Human
4. Religion vs. Science
5. Socio-Political Irritants
6. Conclusion

Bibliography