CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

Mistry uses literature to hold the mirror up to the society. Societies are always structured unequally and individuals are born with differences and deprivations. India has earned the sobriquet ‘sub-continent’ because of its variety and neatly divided castes and classes. Religion and language of course divide the people. Further, such divisions are engendered by devaluing others. Especially, caste and religion have affected the social functions and indirectly, the social institutions. As a result, disenchantment, disaffection, and despondency become part of everyday life. Mistry pictures broken human personalities under the socio-economic cultural pressures and stimulates the human individual to develop an intimate growth and adopt himself to the respective social milieu. According to Mistry, the untouchables and the suppression of the untouchables in the name of religion are inhuman and bestial.

Rohinton Mistry uses history as well as geography to his advantage in his fiction. Employing his characters in historical and geographical contexts, he achieves a balance in characterization. Mistry does not display any obsession with history but all the events in his novels take place with history as his backdrop. Geography wise, Mistry is accurate in his descriptions of the towns, villages, and the hills. This study instead of being reductive has accommodated all views that correlate with the title of the thesis.
In *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry’s concept of self-identity is seen at many instances. First of all the change of name of certain streets seems to be a loss of identity. Dinshawji, Gustad’s close friend, protests against the renaming of Indian, especially Bombay streets. For instance, Lamington Road is renamed, as Dadasaheb Bhadkamkar Marg and Carnac Road is changed as Lokmanya Tilak Marg. Dinshawji feels that loss of old names is loss of tradition and loss of social identity and even self-identity. These changes may take away what should remain in this world. For Dinshawji, life cannot be lived in any other name. Gustad Noble’s character is presented as if it is created to recuperate the lost identity throughout long journey from beginning to end.

The loss of childhood for Gustad seems to have greater significance. Mistry describes the childhood of Gustad as a paradise. Even as a grown up man Gustad longs for his mother’s love and finds uncomfortable with any other in the world. He is a kind of man who longs for the past comfort and in this process he loses his present identity. Even when he feels a pen in his fingers he starts to remember of his school days. First of all, Gustad loses his traditional values when his son Sohrab rejects whatever he says. Sohrab refuses to join as IIT student and later he misbehaves in his sister’s birthday party.

These causes make Gustad to feel that he has lost his paternal identity. He says that Sohrab is not his son until he learns respect. There are so many images that remind us about the loss of childhood of Gustad and his longings. Then, Gustad says that one day his son will also remember about his childhood like him. To him, none can ignore the memories of childhood easily. The wreckage of the wall by the municipal workers is
a great loss to Gustad. He tries to save it from pollution by painting Gods and Goddesses on the wall. But, he loses his wall along with the death of the retarded child, Tehmul Lungraa.

This incident aroused the passionate fatherhood in Gustad, he turns to his own son Sohrab and accepts him putting his arms around his shoulders. Gustad realises that he has not taken the virtues of the present in remembrance of the past. His search for identity is a continual process as Mistry says that Gustad’s long journey of recuperating things is non-stoppage. Starting from the death of Dinshawji and a series of losses for Gustad desertion and every step Gustad cannot go ahead.

The same way, Gustad is shocked but does not want to shed tear because it is a symbol of weakness to weep especially for men. At the same time, when the innocent child Tehmul is killed, Gustad breaks out tears and speaks with soft voice. The death of Tehmul wakes up the passionate fatherhood in Gustad, he turns to his own son Sohrab and accepts him putting his arms around his shoulders. So, the title of the novel and the life of Gustad coincide with each other under the concept of searching identify for a long-long time.

The other characters flit into the narrative, Mistry’s choice of the locale and the theme is to be appreciated for its uniqueness. His social vision is backed by concrete proposals for a better society. Mistry tries to fulfil his mission to instruct and impart a society that is callous towards the morass. Social balance may remain a distant dream or
mere impossibility, if there is not any oneness of spirit among the members of the society. Mistry’s writings succeed to a greater measure in bringing such awakening.

Mistry’s style is somewhat loose and rambling. It is not a closely knit and well structured writing. The reason is Mistry wants to include everything about Bombay and its environs. Mistry finds it difficult to escape from his Parsi identity. Parsis are an urban community and their religion is alien to Indian religious and cultural ethos. The result is as closed mind set only aggravated by self-protective instincts. To break out of their besieged mentality and to reach out to other communities that requires the will of spirit.

Literature can have any project of its own different authors at different times that have engaged themselves with literature trying to promote their projects. The slices of life in his novels are too real to be ignored as ‘figment of imagination’. Ishvar and Om Prakash are characters who can be easily identified with millions of Indians. The poignant human situations in which they find themselves and the human relationships that determine their course of life are portrayed with a serious touch of realism.

In Mistry’s second novel A Fine Balance the search for identity is processed by a team of four unlike the sole Gustad in Such a Long Journey. The four major characters from different background mingle with each other as a joint force, they want to prove their self-identity in the society. Dina Dalal, the protagonist of the novel suffers at her younger age of the death of her parents in succession. She is guarded by her elder brother who wants to protect her as a bird in a cage. By nature, Dina is lover of humour and independent existence. She cannot find comfort in her brother’s custody. She is
forced to marry a rich gentleman but she prefers to marry a compounder namely Rustom Dalal. Before being settled in her marriage life Dina loses her husband in an accident. Thereafter, Dina emerges as an independent dressmaker with the tailors Om and Ishvar.

The Emergency of 1975 shatters all her hopes and she is pushed again to her brother’s concern. Thus Dina’s identity fades away in the society as an independent woman. The tailors Om and Ishvar are also searching for their identity in the metropolitan city. Their forefathers belonged to a lower caste and suffered the pain of caste system. Ishvar’s father wanted to change identity as leather worker and so he sent Om and Ishvar to learn tailoring. After learning, the tailors come to Bombay and are employed by Dina.

In the beginning, Om and Ishvar are not close with Dina. They doubt her and even try to get the direct orders from the companies, because they feel that they are over controlled by Dina. Both tailors find difficult to adjust themselves with the life in metropolitan city. They find no identity with their village and city dwellings. They stay in a small shack in the slum but are chased from there because of the city beautification project. Left alone on the street, they search for accommodation, even their employer Dina refuses them to stay in her house.

Besides, they are crushed in the worst outcomes of the Emergency; Om who is yet to marry is sterilized to be impotent. In the act of preventing Om from sterilization, Ishvar loses both his legs and left in the street as beggar. The life of these two tailors is also lost with no identity. The loss of identity in Maneck’s case is full of ecological
concerns. Maneck and his family live by a hillside and nature is one of their family members. Farokh’s long walks during evening times give him mental comfort forgetting his tensions. The fall and the forest are their companions.

The government’s plan to connect the hills to the city is a great blow to the Kohlah’s family and the other villagers do not feel too much as they expect more job opportunities in the city side. Farokh sends Maneck for higher studies to Bombay giving him Dina’s address. Like the tailors, Maneck also does not like the life in the city. Moreover, he is tortured by the seniors in the college hostel. Then he comes to stay as a paying guest in Dina’s house. There he develops friendship with the tailors. Dina resists the relationship of Maneck with the tailors. So, *A Fine Balance* is a novel which searches for identity in various aspects.

In the next novel *Family Matters*, Mistry proves himself as a matured writer. The protagonist Nariman is an excellent creation because he is the only protagonist who stays most of the time bedridden. Mistry proves that stories could be woven around a silent character. Nariman suffers from his childhood to his old age. In his younger days, he is over controlled by his parents and he loves a Christian namely Lucy but he is opposed by his community and family members to marry her. Nariman loses his identity as genuine young man when married to Yasmin, a widow with two children. He stars his married life unwillingly with his wife and stepchildren.

He cannot forget his memories of Lucy. He wants to meet Lucy even after his marriage. He feels lucky when Lucy comes to work as ayah in his neighbouring house.
He secretly meets Lucy and opens his heart to her. This attitude of Nariman angers Yasmin and as a result, she quarrels with him in front of her children and this incident leads to the bad impression about him in the mind of the two stepchildren.

Thus, Nariman struggles to find identity as a true lover or loyal husband. After the death of Lucy and Yasmin, Nariman is left alone without mental and moral support. His stepchildren Coomy and Jal grow with grievances against their father. The only consolation Nariman gets his own daughter Roxana. After her marriage, Nariman has to stay with his stepchildren. Between them, Coomy is cunning and Jal is a good for nothing fellow. Nariman is warned by Coomy not to go for evening walks and when one evening Nariman returns home with scratches and a limp, she scolds him for being irresponsible to her. So, Nariman feels himself to be suppressed from acting freely in all phases of his life.

The characters in Family Matters are united with others without co-operation among them. Other than Nariman, Roxana, the direct daughter of Nariman, blinks between her father and husband. She has to nurse her father amidst the opposition of her husband. The bedpans and their foul odour and the increased budget of the medical expenses of Nariman irritate her husband, Yezad. Roxana feels difficulty to offer separate place for Nariman as they live in a tiny two-room apartment presented by her father as marriage gift.

Roxana is aware of her husband and son Jehangir taking illegal route to earn money in order to meet the expenses but could not do anything. So, Roxana is also
searching for her identity as a passionate daughter and humble wife, which she acquires to a greater extent through her generous character. Coomy, on her part, struggles to lead a comfortable life at the expense of other’s misfortunes. She has no soft corner for her father. This is because of her mother’s preaching of her father’s relationship with Lucy.

Yezad, on his part wants to earn money by flattering his boss, Mr. Kapur to run in the forthcoming election. His boss wants to take part in the municipal election to do something to retain the old traditions of Bombay but the intention of Yezad is to get high status in the society. Hence, more or less he fails in all his illegal attempts to earn money including his gambling in lottery. All the characters, Nariman to Yezad fail to get identity as independent individuals. Its idealism tempered by a search for individual humanity and self-sacrifice against the odds of squalid poverty and pessimism.

Characters in Family Matters are caught in a complex actions and reactions in their dealings with each other. Physical corruption and the inevitable change and loss accompanying mortality are linked with the social and political corruption characteristic of modern Bombay. It was impossible to read Family Matters without being reminded repeatedly of the two other novels that preceded it and then his three novels have coherent entity.

Mistry’s historical situation involves construction of new identity in the nation to which he has migrated and a complex relationship with the cultural history of the nation, he has left behind. He dramatizes the pangs of alienation in which adaptation in India and expatriation in Canada is similar in function. Mistry, therefore, successfully evokes a
sense of loss and nostalgia in the immigrant’s experience and the alienation of Parsis in India.

*Tales from Firozsha Baag* set in Canada and at home in Bombay. The stories offer insights of Parsi world in relation to the levels of ‘assimilation’ and ‘westernization’. The stories, “Squatter”, “Lend Me Your Light”, and “Swimming Lessons”, Mistry deals with the impact of expatriation on the life of young Parsi protagonists abroad. These stories set wholly or partially in Canada and display to the maximum extent the vision of the diasporic aspect. In these stories, Mistry transfers the experience from India to Canada.

The protagonists in “Squatter”, “Lend Me Your Light”, and “Swimming Lessons” are typical migrants drawn to the west. If the comic tone pervades “Squatter”, the other two tales explore the psychological consequences of Diaspora. Their realization that they are misfits in India drives them to the ‘Chosen Land’. These stories set wholly or partially in Canada and display to the maximum extent the vision of the diasporic aspect. These stories are the story of a man who lost his identity in a new land. The stories show the love-hate association that exists between land and immigrants. At the same time, he feels estranged and exiled in the adopted land.

*Tales from Firozsha Baag* deal with the writing of the immigrant experience they suggest a parallel to Rohinton Mistry. As a immigrant writer who develops his themes from his past experiences in India and his immigrant experiences in Canada. Nostalgia and a mood of reminiscence mark the pages as Mistry recalls and relives his
childhood and adolescent years in Parsi ‘Baag’.

Moreover, there is no solution but only a constant striving to reach higher ground. *Such a Long Journey* has expanded the scope of Mistry’s Parsi Zoroastrian ethos to the world of Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s political games. *A Fine Balance* brings in more of the same as well as the underbelly of metropolitan Indian existence that generally ignored by many post-colonial Indian writers in English. But, Mistry does not have the ideological vision to move beyond the particular event.

All these works follow the same essential structure, the tangled life and concerns of their Parsi protagonists. The works, *Such a Long Journey, A Fine Balance, Family Matters* and *Tales from Firozsha Baag* apart from projecting the individual struggles of various characters, continue to showcase Mistry’s concern with bearing witness to a dying community and humanity. However, this is not surprising because of the close connection of Parsi with Bombay portrayed in his novels. Mistry’s works show how human problems require human solutions.

Rohinton Mistry has an extraordinary sensibility and he has a soft corner for the downtrodden and innocent people. He exposes the evil of exploitation of the people in his novels. Though Rohinton Mistry belongs to different religion and culture, he has experiences in his works. One can obviously find that he is more concerned with the basic humane for every human being. Mistry rages war against the lack of humanitarianism. The worshiped mammon, poor people who lived in rural areas could
not compete with them. Hence, rich became richer and poor became poorer. Further the
people in the helm of affairs exploited the poor people.

Indians who were in the upper class strata of society began to exploit the lower
class innocent people. Rohinton Mistry depicts the untold miseries of the bottom of the
society. Thus, Mistry is the champions of the downtrodden. He handles many common
problems of great political, religious, economic and literary activities in day-to-day life
in their respective nation and they also offered valuable solution to problems.

Rohinton Mistry is much worried about the criteria of materialism with which
every man was valued at the time of state of emergency. He gives his voice in support
of those who are affected by the political unrest. Rohinton Mistry, in his novel “A Fine
Balance” pasteurizes sufferings of bottom of the society. Low class people are
humiliated by the upper class people. No one is ready to show any mercy on the
humanitarian grounds. Thus, Rohinton Mistry expresses their personal feelings over
suffering heroes. He satirises vehemently the exploitations of the powerful people over
the poor and downtrodden. Mistry uses his works as a weapon against the exploiters.

Thus, Rohinton Mistry conveys his message for shunning exploitation of people
to the world through his novels. He doesn’t stop with attacking the social evils in their
respective society. Mistry also conveys better solutions to those social inequalities and
evils through his works. His novels made some tremendous changes in their respective
society. It enables the readers to respect the feeling of other man as they do to their own.
It will pave way for the peaceful life on the earth. By affirming his faith in humanity,
Mistry has successfully demonstrated that “hope springs eternal in the human heart.” Everyone must feel that the human beings are all equal, liberal, and belong to one fraternity.