Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Rohinton Mistry is a Canada-based Parsi Indian Writer. He was born in India in 1952 and then he emigrated to Canada in 1975 after his B.A. Since 1975, he has lived in Canada. His first work, a collection of short stories called Tales from Ferozsha Baag, was published in 1987. It was later followed by three novels – Such a Long Journey (1991), A Fine Balance (1995) and Family Matters (2002).

Mistry’s works have received varied response from the critics and analysts. However, expressions like “realism”, “neo-realism”, “psychological realism”, “tragic realism”, etc. have often been applied to his works. But as Leech and Short say, there is no such thing as a completely realistic piece of fiction. Whenever a writer uses language, he seizes on some features of “reality” which are crucial to his purpose and disregards others (1981, 151). As will be further discussed in Section 1.3 of this Chapter, Fowler (1981) gives “a theory of fictionality (constructedness) of reality” and explains “the role of language in constructing this fictional commonsense” (34). As he says, a work may be realistic, but it does not mean that the language is “neutral, a mere representation of how people speak”. It may be “loaded with evaluation and interpretation” (Fowler 1986, 115-6). “A novel”, in Fowler’s opinion, “gives an interpretation of the world it represents” (1986, 130). In fact, as Halliday says, “every text is performative...There is no semiotic act that leaves the world exactly as it was before” (Halliday 1994a, 254).

The present study makes a stylistic analysis of Rohinton Mistry’s novels with the aim to uncover certain ideological dimensions and power struggles in his works. The analysis will attempt to show the conflict of power, dominance and ideologies as they are represented in the novels. The major focus will be on (1) the language of ideation and (2) that of stance, evaluation and judgement. This chapter “Introduction” is an attempt at understanding the role that language plays in the workings of power and ideology in social relations and in literature. The chapter first explains the concepts of power and ideology and their relationship with language, and then goes on to discuss the writer Rohinton Mistry and his works in the context of Parsi Literature and also in the context of contemporary Indian writings in English, as the ideological positioning of this literature needs to be taken into account for the present study. The “Introduction” also explains the major research problems, the aims and objectives, and the plan of this study.
1.1. THE CONCEPT OF POWER:

Power, its actors, its victims, and its mechanisms, as Blommaert says, is a concern to many people, and scores of scholars ranging from Plato over Hobbes, Machiavelli, Marx, Gramsci to Althusser and Foucault have all theorized on the nature of power. We seem to have a strangely ambivalent attitude towards power; it attracts as well as repels; it fascinates and abhors at the same time (Blommaert 2005, 1).

Traditionally, Power is defined as the ability to get things done and to control others. Power is an authoritative voice in decision making and the ability to influence the behaviour of others. Power enables one “to impose one’s will directly or indirectly over others or resist the other peoples’ will” (Rahman 1996, 8). Someone is imposing his will and purpose on others including those who are reluctant or adverse. The individual, state or institution may exercise power directly or indirectly by various means such as physical strength, wealth, sex, age, civil authority and institutional roles in society, religion, state, or even within family, the basis of all of which is the unequal distribution of power. However, much power in society is unseen in the sense that it becomes naturalized. Pierre Bourdieu, thus, regards power as “symbolic”:

For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it (Bourdieu 1992, 164).

The supreme and most insidious exercise of power, according to Lukes, lies in shaping people’s “perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the exiting order of things” (Lukes 1974, 24; Quoted by Rahman 1996, 8).

Lukes understands power in terms of “the outcomes and the location of power” (Lukes 1986, 17). The consequences of the exercise of power, according to Rahman (1996), would be “to increase the tangible or intangible means of gratification” of the desires of its possessor. In rational goal seeking terms, this gratification could come from having influence, wealth, prestige, security, the possession of beautiful objects, etc. In extra-rational ones it might mean the enjoyment of passions such as love, hatred, anger, nostalgia, and even such perversions as sadism or masochism” (Rahman 1996, 8). These desires could be innocent such as the possession of books, pictures, and the esteem of many people, or ‘recognition’ as Francis Fukuyama (1992, 146) calls it; they could be excessive, such as the desire for possessing more than anybody possesses; and they could be monstrous, such as the possession of sex slaves, indulging in sadistic practices, and forcing everybody to defer and submit to one. Whatever the desires may be, an indication of being powerful would be the
capability to gratify them—a capability which “cannot exist without a system to support it” (Rahman 2002, 39).

At the crudest level this system is physical strength or force—“primary coercion” as it is called. But such power is not lasting. What is crucial is that people should allow a person, or persons, to possess power voluntarily; to recognize that it is legitimate “authority” and not merely brute force (Arendt 1969, 45). And what gives legitimacy to power in human societies, even simple ones, let alone complex modern ones, are ideas or “social rules” (Gellner 1988, 146; Rahman 2002, 39).

But the idea of an insidious or invisible power, in the shape of ideas, does not fully explain the nature of power (Rahman 1996, 9). Power is also, as Foucault points out, “something which circulates”, which “is employed and exercised through a net-like organization”, and individuals, “are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (1976, 234). In short, nobody exercises power standing outside the framework or the system of the distribution of power. Power is mostly in the hands of the state which has a system—the networks of the administration, judiciary, military, education, media, etc—by which it controls the distribution of goods and services and other means of gratifications. Other domains of power, not necessarily under direct governmental control but influenced by it, are the domains of culture, research, commerce, ideology and language/s (Rahman 1996, 9). Thus as Barry Barnes claims:

Social power is the added capacity for action that accrues to individuals through constituting a distribution of knowledge and thereby a society (Barnes 1988, 57; quoted by Rahman 2002, 40).

Indeed, as Foucault observes, “knowledge and power are integrated with one another” (Foucault 1975, 52). Foucault explains this further by describing how discourses transform individual consciousness and make us obey power. The production of discourses is especially important because they create and express the belief system, the world view, by which we judge everything. Thus the supreme exercise of power lies in shaping “people’s world view upon which their values and actions are contingent” (Rahman 2002, 40). The following section explains how power, ideology and discourses are connected.

1.2. IDEOLOGY AND POWER:

Ideology is generally defined as “a set of beliefs underlying the customs, habits and practices common in a given social group” (Mufin and Ray 2003, 208). Ideology governs our perceptions, judgements and prejudices—our sense of what is acceptable, normal and deviant. Marxist criticism claims that human consciousness is constituted by an ideology—
that is, “the beliefs, values and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive and by recourse to which, they explain what they take to be reality” (Abrams 2000, 148).

In the present era, ideology is used in a variety of Marxist as well as non-Marxist ways, ranging from a derogatory name for “any set of political ideas” that are held dogmatically and applied rigorously, to a neutral name for “ways of perceiving and thinking” that are specific to an individual’s race, or sex, or education, or ethnic group. In its distinctively Marxist use, the reigning ideology in any era is conceived to be, ultimately, the product of its economic structure and the resulting class-relations and class-interests. This ideology, to those who live in and with it, it is claimed, seems a natural and inevitable way of seeing, explaining, and dealing with the environing world, but in fact has “the hidden function of legitimizing and maintaining the position, power, and economic interests of the ruling class” (Abrams, 148).

1.2.1. Ideology in Classical Marxism:

“Ideology” was coined as a term in the late eighteen century by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836). The term in its origin has a positive connotation: it is the rigorous science of ideas which, by overcoming religious and metaphysical prejudices, may serve as a new basis for public education (Larrain 1979, 27). However, with Napoleon and then with Marx, the term ideology surpasses the critique of religion, thus asserting its negative and critical character (Larrain, 32).

Raymond Williams distinguishes three common versions of the concept which are all common in Marxist writing. These are broadly:

(i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
(ii) a system of illusory beliefs—false ideas or false consciousness—which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
(iii) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas. (Williams 1977, 55).

Marxism offers a distinctive account of the role of ideas, consciousness and language in politics and society. Not only does it relate ideas and representations to processes of economic production, but it also articulates a powerful theory of ideology in which beliefs are explained with reference to “the uneven distribution of power and resources in class-divided societies” (Howarth 2002, 85).

Political questions in classical Marxism concern the role of the state and ideology (the ‘superstructures’) in maintaining class domination, in which the state is understood
principally as an agent of coercion, and ideology as the inculcation of ‘false consciousness’ (Howarth, 87). As Marx and Engels say in The German Ideology.

Thus society has hitherto always developed within the framework of a contradiction—in antiquity the contradiction between free men and slaves, in Middle Ages between nobility and serfs, in modern times that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Quoted by Larrain, 45).

The basis upon which Marx approaches the concept of ideology is “this contradictory character of social reality” (Larrain, 45). Ideology negates contradictions and legitimates the structure of domination. In sum, ideology for Marx, as a distorted consciousness, has a particular negative connotation whose two specific features are, firstly, that it conceals social contradictions and, secondly, that it does it in the interests of the dominant class (Larrain, 48).

So by concealing contradictions, ideology serves the interests of the ruling class, which can display the present order of things as “natural and in the interests of all sections of society”. Ideology serves the interests of the dominant class not because it has been produced by the ideologists of the class— which may or may not be the case—but because “the concealment of contradictions objectively works in favour of the dominant class’s interests” (Larrain, 61).

Marx and Engels thus deploy the concept of ideology negatively as a form of “false consciousness” or systematic illusion, believing it to mystify and deceive people about their true interests and sources of belief. It has been left to later Marxists such as Gramsci, Althusser and Pecheux, as well as those working within Frankfurt School such as Jurgen Habermas, to provide a more positive conception of ideology and discourse, which does not reduce it to more determinant social processes, but which retains a critical edge (Howarth, 87-88).

1.2.2. The historicist conception of ideology: Lukacs and Gramsci:

Lukacs (1885-1971) is usually taken as the most typical exponent of a historicist conception of ideology (Larrain, 77). In his early writings Lukacs like Gramsci makes an important distinction between “the sphere of ideology” and “the sphere of coercion”. Although force is the last argument in society, through ideology men must submit to the social system without a permanent need for the use of force (Larrain, 79). As Lukacs (1971) says, society could not survive “if it were compelled to use force every time it is challenged” (Quoted by Larrain, 80). Following Lukacs and strongly influenced by his interpretation of Marxism, K. Mannheim and L. Goldmann understand the concept of ideology in connection with the notion of a class world-view or Weltanschauung, that is, “the general system of ideas,
aspirations and feelings which are common to the class which unites its members” (Larain, 100).

Gramsci also follows the trend away from a purely negative concept of ideology. For him ideology is a superstructural expression of a contradictory reality, “an expression of the ‘kingdom of necessity’ which embraces every class in society”. Gramsci rejects the view that ideologies are “merely systems of ‘false consciousness’ or mistaken belief” (Howarth, 88). He distinguishes two kinds of ideologies: “historically organic ideologies”—those which are necessary for a given structure—and arbitrary or “willed ideologies”. Gramsci favours the former concept, giving rise to the conception of ideology as a class Weltanschauung (Larain, 81). In short, successfully articulated ideologies for Gramsci are commonsensical conceptions of the world, which are “implicitly manifest in art, law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life”, rather than imaginary mental representations utterly divorced from social practices (Gramsci 1971, 328; quoted by Howarth, 89).

Gramsci’s reworking of the Marxist concept of ideology goes hand in hand with his new conception of hegemony which, according to Barrett, is “best understood as the organisation of consent”—the processes through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence or coercion” (Barrett 1991, 54). Hegemony is like “an internalized form of social control” which makes certain views seem natural or invisible so that they hardly seem like views at all, just the way things are (Barry 2002, 165). To secure their position, dominant classes have violence and force at their disposal. But more importantly, the production of meaning is a key instrument for stabilization of power relations. Through the production of meaning, power relations can become naturalized and so much part of common-sense that they cannot be questioned. In Gramsci’s theory, hegemony is the term for “the social consensus, which masks people’s real interests” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 32). He also emphasizes the important role of culture and consciousness in determining questions of politics and strategy. This leads him to conclude that consent is mainly manufactured and exercised in “civil society”, which consists of “private” associations and institutions, such as schools, churches, the family, as well as the realm of culture more generally, as opposed to “political society” or “the state” narrowly construed. In Gramsci’s terms, therefore, a ruling class must achieve “intellectual and moral leadership”, and not just “political leadership”, if it is to govern effectively and efficiently (Gramsci 1971, 161, 180-5; quoted by Howarth, 90).

Hegemony, in Gramsci’s work thus stood for the “cultural domination” of the bourgeoisie over the rest of society. The bourgeoisie not only controlled the economy and
had the monopoly over the state (and, hence, over the instruments of state violence) but it was also culturally dominant. The power of the bourgeoisie, in other words, was “hard” as well “soft”, material as well as cultural and ideational. The bourgeoisie ruled by “force” through its control over the state, as well as by “consent” through its control over culture and ideas in civil society. Hegemony, soft power, was “the glue that connected other classes to the bourgeoisie” (Blommaert, 166).

James Scott (1990), however, has drawn our attention to the fact that a smooth hegemony could hide deeply dissenting views and practices, so-called “hidden transcripts”. Domination, argues Scott, rests on “the enactment of power and powerless”, as for example between the slave-owners and the slaves or the colonizers and the colonized. So beneath the surface of hegemony may be “a world of dissidence and anti-hegemonic discourses”, of hidden transcripts. Such hidden transcripts could be forced to the surface in periods of crisis or conflict. The hegemonic appearances could then be broken and the dissident views could be aired (Blommaert, 167-169).

Scott, therefore, cautions us against seeing hegemony as total, generalized, even “internalized” consent. What looks like hegemony may be a matter of “hegemonic practices” only, and rather than “orthodoxy” we may face “orthopraxy”—doing as if one shares the beliefs and ideas, performing hegemonic acts without subscribing to the ideology that gives meaning to them. Perhaps orthopraxy, rather than internalized social-cognitive schemata, is “the core of hegemony in contemporary first-World societies” (Blommaert, 169). This point will find its relevance in Chapter 4 (4.1) for the analysis of caste-based violence in Mistry’s A Fine Balance.

Gramsci’s path-breaking contributions to Marxist theory have opened up a number of fruitful avenues of investigation. One important development engendered in part by Gramsci’s writings was the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and his school (Howarth, 92).

1.2.3. Althusser’s Structuralist Conception of Ideology:
In opposition to historicism, which emphasizes the role of the subject-class and of conscious in the origin of ideology, structuralism suggests that ideology has a material existence which determines the subject. Ideology is not a false representation of reality because its source is not the subject (participating in its origin) but material reality itself. By far the most representative of this line of thought, according to Larain, is Louis Althusser. Althusser viewed ideology as a social “practice” whose function is to turn individuals into
subjects. It provides subjects with particular characteristics, such as a “class outlook” and a specific social and political identity (Larain, 154).

Althusser (1971) defines ideology as “a system of representation” that masks our true relations to one another in society by “constructing imaginary relations between people and between them and the social formation”. Thus ideology is “a distorted recognition of the real social relations” (Althusser 1971; Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 15). The function of ideology is to make the world in which the subject lives appear obvious and natural, even though this apparent objectivity and normality is an effect of the subject “misrecognizing” its real historical situation (Althusser 1969, 233; Howarth, 93). Ideology is a structural feature of any society; its function is the cementing of its unity. But in a class society, ideology receives a further function, as a means to maintain domination of one class over the other (Larain, 156).

According to Althusser, the dominant group functions through and maintains its position of power by circulating manufactured ideologies through its institutions or apparatuses. He terms these as Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). The RSAs are institutions like law courts, prisons, the police force and the army, which operate in the last analysis, by external force. The ISAs, on the other hand, are those organs of civil society which relentlessly manufacture the official version of the real conditions. It is in these institutions that ideology is seen as a lived, material practice which includes rituals, customs, patterns of behaviour, ways of thinking, acting and consuming. The ISAs are such groups as political parties, classroom textbooks, media, market, religion, family, clubs and other cultural artifacts that foster a set of ideas that are sympathetic to the aims of the state and political status quo. The ISAs legitimize the existence of the ruling class and its power over the working class. They are crucially important channels for the transmission of rules of conduct in society. They make us see, perceive, act and consume in accordance with the ruler’s ideologies. Thus, each of us feels that we are freely choosing what is in fact being imposed upon us (Barry 2002, 164). Thus repressive state apparatuses function “by violence”, whereas ideological state apparatuses function “by ideology” (Howarth, 94).

Althusser’s conception of ideology and society goes hand in hand with his theory of subjectivity. In effect, he presents the central mechanism of ideology as an interpellation of individuals which constitutes them as subjects (Larain, 159). Borrowing from structuralist and psychoanalytical theory, especially Lacan’s interpretation of Freud, he shows how the human subject is an ideological effect rather than a self-constituting thing or agent. Althusser strongly emphasized the role of “ideological state apparatuses” in the production and
reproduction of ideologies. They generate ideological “interpellation” or “hailing”: appeals to individuals to act in particular ways, ways that reflect dominant ideologies (Blommaert, 2005, 162). Interpellation “accounts for the operation of control structures not maintained by physical force, and hence the perpetuation of a social set-up which concentrates wealth and power in the hands of the few” (Barry 2002, 165). Interpellation, thus, denotes “the process through which language constructs a social position for the individual and thereby makes him or her an ideological subject” (Althusser 1971, 174; Jorgensen and Phillips, 15).

Althusser’s theory had a great influence on cultural studies approaches to communication studies in the 1970s. But since the end of the 1970s, Althusser’s perspective has been subjected to heavy criticism by many including by the majority of the discourse analytical approaches. First, the question was raised as to the possibilities for resistance against the ideological messages that are presented to the subject—the question of “the subject’s agency or freedom of action”. To a large extent, cultural studies—strongly influenced by Althusser—was based on the idea that a single ideology (capitalism) was dominant in society, leaving no scope for effective resistance (the dominant ideology thesis). Today there is a consensus in cultural studies, communication research and discourse analysis that “the dominant ideology thesis underestimated people’s capacity to offer resistance to ideologies” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 16).

Secondly, many discourse analytical approaches reject Althusser’s theory that one “totalizing ideology” controls all discourse. Subjects do not become interpellated in just one subject position: different discourses give the subject different, and possibly contradictory, positions from which to speak. The third and final controversial point in Althusser’s theory is the concept of ideology itself. Most concepts of ideology, including Althusser’s, imply that access to absolute truth is attainable. Ideology distorts real social relations, and, if we liberated ourselves from ideology, we would gain access to them and to truth. This is an understanding that Foucault rejects completely. According to Foucault, truth, subjects and relations between subjects “are created in discourse, and there is no possibility of getting behind the discourse to a ‘truer’ truth”. Hence, as it is explained in the next section, “Foucault has no need of a concept of ideology” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 17-18).

1.2.4. **Foucault’s Conception of Discourse, power/knowledge and ideology:**

Foucault’s discourse theory forms a part of his early archaeological phase. What he is interested in studying archaeologically are the rules that determine “which statements are accepted as meaningful in a particular historical epoch” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 12). The more restricted conception is deployed in his later genealogical accounts of modern power,
the self and the complexes of power/knowledge, “in which discourses are related to non-discursive practices, such as economic and political changes” (Howarth, 49). The concept of discourse is still widely deployed, although discourses are no longer treated as “autonomous systems of scientific statements, but the products of power relations and forces that form them” (Howarth, 67).

Foucault adheres to the general social constructionist premise that knowledge is not just a reflection of reality. Truth is discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge determine what is true and false. Foucault’s aim is to investigate the structure of different regimes of knowledge—that is, “the rules for what can and cannot be said and the rules for what is considered to be true and false” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 13). The majority of contemporary discourse analytical approaches follow Foucault’s conception of discourses as “relatively rule-bound sets of statements which impose limits on what gives meaning”. And they build on his ideas about truth being something which is, at least to a large extent, created discursively. However, they all diverge from Foucault’s tendency to identify only one knowledge regime in each historical period; instead, they operate with a more conflictual picture in which different discourses exist side by side or struggle for the right to define truth (Jorgensen and Phillips, 13).

In his genealogical work Foucault developed a theory of power/knowledge. Genealogy is thus explicitly concerned with “the centrality of power and domination in the constitution of discourses, identities and institutions” and involves the adoption of critical ethos towards them (Howarth, 72). However, power, according to Foucault, should not be understood as exclusively oppressive but as “productive”; power constitutes discourse, knowledge, bodies and subjectivities. Foucault finds the notion of repression as “quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 13). According to him,

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1980, 119).
Thus it is in power that our social world is produced. Power is bound up with knowledge—power and knowledge presuppose one another. According to Foucault,

The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power... Knowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power (Foucault 1980, 52).

Foucault’s coupling of power and knowledge has the consequence that power is closely connected to discourse (Jorgensen and Phillips, 14). As he says,

in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operate through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth (1980, 93).

Thus Foucault (1977) argues that “power and knowledge directly imply one another...[such] that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault 1977, 27; quoted by Howarth, 77). As he writes in The History of Sexuality (1979), “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” and for this very reason, “we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies”. According to him,

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it and renders it
Foucault’s new conception of discourse also marks a deliberate exclusion of the concept of ideology. Foucault (1980) finds the notion of ideology difficult to make use of for different reasons. He argues that ideology “always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth” (Foucault 1980, 118). Foucault accepts that “ideologies represent political interests”, but he does not argue that “they are to be analysed as opposed to, or even apart from, scientific discourses”. Hence, according to Foucault, “sciences and ideologies may coexist in the same discursive formation, and sciences themselves may have an ideological expression without necessarily compromising their claims to scientificity” (Howarth, 59-60). According to him, “the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false” (Foucault 1980, 118).

Foucault, thus, claims that it is not possible to gain access to universal truth since it is impossible to talk from a position outside discourse; there is no escape from representation. “Truth effects” are created within discourses. In Foucault’s archaeological phase, truth is understood as a system of procedures for the production, regulation and diffusion of statements. In his genealogical phase, he makes a link between truth and power, arguing that truth is embedded in, and produced by, systems of power. Because truth is unattainable, it is fruitless to ask whether something is true or false. Instead, the focus should be on how effects of truth are created in discourses. What is to be analysed are “the discursive processes through which discourses are constructed in ways that give the impression that they represent true or false pictures of reality” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 14).

Thus, drawing upon and radicalizing post-structuralist concepts developed by Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, post-Marxists such as Laclau and Mauffe replace the Marxist theory of ideology with a new conception of discourse. They argue that “all practices are discursive” and that no system of practice is immune from the effects of others, “which means that ultimate determinacy is impossible” (Howarth, 100). Laclau and Mauffe’s discourse theory has adopted this position, and their concept of ideology is practically empty. In contrast, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology do not reject the Marxist tradition completely on this point: both approaches are interested in the ideological effects of discursive practices. While they adhere to Foucault’s view of power, treating power as
productive rather than as pure compulsion, they also attach importance to the patterns of dominance, whereby one social group is subordinated to another. The idea is also retained—at least, in Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis—that one can distinguish between discourses that are ideological and discourses that are not, thus retaining the hope of finding a way out of ideology; a hope that Laclau and Mauffe’s discourse theory would find naïve (Jorgensen and Phillips, 18).

1.2.5. Ideology in the context of the present study:

A set of distinctions emerge from this study of literature on ideology. First, on the one hand, ideology may be conceived in eminently negative terms as “a form of false consciousness or necessary deception” which somehow distorts men’s understanding of social reality. And on the other hand, the concept of ideology may be conceived in positive terms as “the expression of the world view of a class”. To this extent one can talk of “ideologies” in plural, as the opinions, theories and attitudes formed within a class in order to defend and promote its interests (Larain, 13-14).

Secondly, there are, on the one hand authors who define ideology as “a specific set of symbolic representations—discourses, terms, arguments, image, stereotypes—serving a specific purpose, and operated by specific groups or actors”, while on the other hand there are authors who would define ideology as “a general phenomenon characterising the totality of a particular social or political system, and operated by every member or actor in that system” (Blommaert 2005, 158; also see Eagleton 1991; Thompson 1984). Under the first category Blommaert places the well-known ‘isms’ as well as ‘schools’, ‘doctrines’ and even ‘factions’ such as socialism, liberalism, fascism, communism, libertarianism, anarchism, Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, Stalinism, Rooseveltism, Gaullism, Mobutism, ‘Monroe Doctrine’, the ‘Truman Doctrine’, the ‘Chicago School’, ‘conservative’, ‘progressive’, ‘revolutionary’, reactionary’, ‘racism’, ‘anti-semitism’, ‘sexism’, ‘classism’, and so forth. Ideology in this first sense stands for “partisan views and opinions”, it is sensed to represent a particular bias characterizing specific social formations with specific interests. Hence “the widespread colloquial usage of ‘ideological’ as counterfactual, biased, partisan” (Blommaert, 158-9).

Under the second category, according to Blommaert, ideology stands for “cultural”, ideational aspects of a particular social and political system, the “grand narratives” characterizing its existence, structure, and historical development. Authors in this second category would emphasise that ideology cannot be attributed to one particular actor, not located in one particular site such as a political party or a government, but that “it penetrates
the whole fabric of societies or communities and results in normalized, naturalized patterns of thought and behaviour”. For such authors, ideology is “common sense”, the normal perceptions we have of the world as a system, “the naturalized activities that sustain social relations and power structures, and the patterns of power that reinforce such common sense”. Authors articulating such views include Pierre Bourdieu (1990), Louis Althusser (1971), Roland Barthes (1957), Raymond Williams (1973, 1977) and Michel Foucault (1975). Often only one ‘-ism’ is accepted. For example, capitalism in contemporary societies, that “has become so natural and normal as a frame of reference for thought and behaviour that it is not perceived as a system with ideological attributes” (Blommaert, 159).

Another difference encountered in the literature on ideology relates to the scope of ideologies. There are authors who suggest that ideologies are general, all-pervasive, and defining of a “society” or a “system”, and there are authors who distinguish between several, group-specific ideologies. Such group-specific ideologies would be, for instance, class ideologies, gender-ideologies, ethnic group ideologies, and so forth. In the 1930s Karl Mannheim introduced the distinction between “total” conceptions of ideology and “particular” ones, whereby the total conception roughly corresponded “worldview”, a general pattern of beliefs and ideas characterizing a social formation, as has already been discussed in section 1.2.2 of this chapter. The particular conception of ideology stood for “ideology as instrumental to the aims and purposes of specific actors”, for ideology “as a tool of power”. Whereas a total conception of ideology would emphasise that “ideologies are in se neither positive nor negative, but ‘just there’, the particular conception would emphasise the ways in which ideologies can become real agents of power and change” (Blommaert, 164).

A final set of distinctions is that between approaches focusing on “mentalities”, “public opinions”, and “worldviews” versus approaches focusing on “ideologies” (Blommaert 169). But all these categories seem to address almost very similar phenomena. Thus, as Jane Hill and Bruce Mannheim conclude,

where “world view” would once have served, “ideology” is often heard, suggesting representations that are contestable, socially positioned, and laden with political interest (Hill and Mannheim 1992, 382; quoted by Blommaert, 171).

Ideology thus is a very broad concept variously defined within as well as outside Marxism. In the context of the present study, ideology is used in the sense in which language theorists define it— “a systematic body of ideas, oraganized from a particular point of view”. As Kress and Hodge (1979) say:
Ideology is thus a subsuming category which includes sciences and metaphysics, as well as political ideologies of various kinds, without implying anything about their status and reliability as guides to reality (Kress and Hodge 1979, 6).

By ideology Roger Fowler means—not “the derogatory sense of the word (‘false consciousness’ or ‘delusion’) but as simply the system of beliefs, values and categories by reference to which a person or a society comprehends the world” (Fowler 1986, 130). As Fowler says, human beings do not engage directly with the objective world, but relate to it by means of systems of classification which simplify objective phenomena and make them manageable, economical subjects for thought and action. Because classification appears to be natural, members of a community regard their assumptions and types as “common sense”. It would be more accurate to call these attitudes “world-view”, or “theories” or “hypothesis” or “ideology” (1986, 17).

1.3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY, POWER AND THE WORLD OF REALITY:

Language provides classification of phenomena and of our experience, and thus plays a vital role in “the social construction of reality” (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Quoted by Kress and Hodge 1979, 5). Kress and Hodge (1979), therefore, regard language as ideology.

Language is an instrument of control as well as of communication. Linguistic forms allow significance to be conveyed and distorted. In this way hearers can be both manipulated and informed, preferably manipulated while they suppose they are being informed. Language is ideological in another, more political sense of that word: it involves systematic distortion in the service of class interest (1979, 6).

Halliday and Hasan (1989) view language as “a political institution”. Those “who are wise in its ways, capable of using it to shape and serve important personal and social goals, will be ones who are ‘empowered’ (to use a fashionable word); able, that is, not merely to participate effectively in the world, but also to act upon it, in the sense that they can strive for significant social change” (X). Language is itself not only a part of experience, but “intimately involved in the manner in which we construct and organize experience”. As such, “it is never neutral, but deeply implicated in building meaning” (V). Seen primarily as a “social semiotic”, language is “a resource for meaning, centrally involved in the process by which human beings negotiate, construct and change the nature of social experience” (VI). Thus, “to study language is to explore some of the most important and pervasive of the
processes by which human beings build their world” (VII). Halliday’s Systemic-Functional theory of Grammar will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Fowler (1986, 1981), like Edmund Leach and Edward Sapir, also demonstrates how language plays a major role in establishing the systems of ideas or “theories” which human beings impose on the world. Language is “the chief instrument of socialization, which is the process by which a person is, willy-nilly, moulded into conformity with the established systems of beliefs of the society into which s/he happens to be born”. “Language is a stabilizing, stereotyping, mode of communication”. The structure of the language chosen in particular communication, in Fowler’s view, creates “a grid of meaning which encourages a slanted perspective on what is being presented by the communication”. This grid of meaning constitutes the “theory or ideology” of the speaker, “his analysis of the communicated content according to the system of relevant beliefs he has been socialized into holding and into coding his habitual language usage” (Fowler 1986, 22).

Linguistic codes, thus, “do not reflect reality neutrally”. They “interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse”. They embody theories of how the world is arranged: “world views or ideologies” (Fowler 1986, 27). The world-views which conventional codes such as language encode are accepted as “common sense”. This common sense is “not natural”, but “a product of social convention”. However, this distinctively human use of codes and their conventional meanings, according to Fowler, has two related problems – the problem of legitimization and the problem of habitualization (Fowler 1986, 30).

The language which an individual acquires as a child, which he speaks and through the medium of which he sees the world, “is not his own individual code but the language of his society”. It is an official language. It comprises “the structures and meanings authorized and legitimated by the dominant interests of the culture” represented by parents, educational institutions, text books, state authority and the media. The dominance of legitimated language continues throughout our life. “Real” language is that of school, book, radio, newspaper and government. Our private language is minimal and mundane and, so far as it discourses on social, personal and political topics, “it is deeply ideological because of its dependence on legitimated concepts” (1986, 30).

Given the divided nature of the society we live in, “a society based on inequalities of power and opportunity”, much communication is concerned with establishing and maintaining “unequal power relationships” between individuals, and between institutions and individuals. Because language must always continuously articulate ideology, and because ideology is simultaneously social product and social practice, all our language and that of
others expresses theories of the way the world is organized, and the expression of these
theories contributes to “the legitimation of the theorized organization”. (Fowler 1981, 29).

The dangers of legitimated concepts such as “race”, “equality”, “progress”, “value”,
etc., have been pointed out by writers like George Orwell and Stuart Chase. As Fowler (1986)
says, “the danger really is not that such concepts are fictitious but that they are loaded in
favour of the political and economic interests that legitimate them”. Over long periods in the
history of a society, vocabulary and phrasings develop to suit the needs of the society – those
“needs” being the interests of dominant, privileged, groups. These dominant groups control
the means of legitimizing the preferred systems of meaning – schools, libraries, the media.
Language thus becomes a part of “social practice, a tool for preserving the prevailing order”.
It does this “not only through propaganda, but also by inertia, the settlement towards stability
and resistance to change” (Fowler 1986, 31).

Thus habitualization is, according to Fowler, the second major problem in
conventional coding. Habitualization means automatic production of pre-formed words and
phrases, “mechanically repeating the familiar phrases” (Orwell 1946, Quoted by Fowler
1986, 33). This unawareness of the relationship between word and meaning leads in Orwell’s
view, to an acceptance of political language which is cynically dishonest, used with
conscious intent to deceive. But as Fowler suggests, “all language, not just political uses,
constantly drifts towards the affirmation of fixed, and usually prejudicial categories” (Fowler
1986, 34).

In Whorf’s view, “different languages encode different Weltanschauungen” (a
particular philosophy or view of life; a conception of the world; German from Welt= world +
Anschauung= perception). But whereas Whorf focuses on differences in languages, Fowler
follows Halliday in proposing that
different varieties or registers within one language enshrine variant world-
views. Speaking or writing in a variety articulates its own view of the world,
and that articulation is a social practice, a conscious or unconscious
intervention in the organization of society. Literature’s cultural force has its
origins in this property of language (Fowler 1981, 7-8).

In Fowler’s opinion, there is a dialectical interrelationship between language and
social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both “products of socioeconomic forces
and institutions”—reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social
stratification, etc.—and “practices which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these
same social forces and institutions”. The New Critics and the Formalists vehemently denied
that literature had “social determinants and social consequences”, but a sociolinguistic theory of the kind which Fowler proposes shows “that all discourse is part of social structure and enters into the effected and effecting relationships”. Following Halliday, Fowler proposes that beyond a few natural meanings which are encoded in most languages (e.g. basic colour terms), the majority of meanings in languages, and different varieties of a languages, are crystallized in response to the social, economic, technological and theoretical needs of the cultures concerned. Bearing in mind the fact that language is practice as well product, note that language use is effective in the formation and reproduction of ideas, rather than simply reflecting a stock of preexisting ideas independently formed within the culture (Fowler 1981, 21).

As Halliday says, linguistic varieties or “registers” are not merely formally differentiated versions of a language, but “ranges of semantic potential”: speakers can mean different things in different varieties; and on the dialectical principle, “they constitute as well as express meanings in speaking”. This theory, according to Fowler, opens the way for “an analysis of the formal structure of any text as encoding and constituting a version of reality” (1981, 21-22).

In short, language, according to Fowler, is one of the most important areas of knowledge that the human beings possess. It is a powerful influence on the way people perceive and adjust to the world outside them. Language creates knowledge, aids thought and simplifies perception. But this gift has two drawbacks: categories encoded in language may become fossilized and unconscious; and they may be the products and the tools of a repressive and inequitable society. Language is not just knowledge. It is also a skill, a practice. People talking to one another in face-to-face conversation are performing real actions through speech, they are “affirming and negotiating status and relationship”. Institutional utterances such as advertising, news reporting, government statements, company reports and the like are also obviously linguistic acts. The usual tendency of these practices is towards stability, consolidation of socially legitimated areas of knowledge, modes of control and types of relationships. The processes tend to stabilize codes and habitualize perception; thought is guided along existing ruts leading to detrimental consequences. There are, however, certain “linguistic practices” which have roles in resisting and combating this tendency. They are capable of “reanalysing people’s theory of the way the world works”. Literature, in Fowler’s view, is itself a technique of criticism: literary texts use deliberate
devices for “defamiliarization”. Some ideology is convincingly shown to be “fallacious or at least problematic” (Fowler 1986, 40).

Fowler thus suggests that “any text embodies a version or theory of reality—socially based and accessible linguistically in the culture’s repertoire of varieties” (1981, 22). He proposes a theory of fictionality (constructedness) of reality, explains the role of language in constructing this fictional commonsense, and then offers an analytic methodology for unpacking the relationship of ideas and the language that constructs them. In his opinion:

the most natural definition of fiction is a theory of reality constructed through a particular use of language. The novelist creates a world, an analysis or representation of a world, in the normal way in which a journalist, historian, or regulations-writer does. Whether any of these linguistic practitioners refers to real entities is beside the point, which has to do with representation, not existence (1981, 34)

As Kress and Hodge also say, “The grammar of a language is its theory of reality” (1979, 7).

Different approaches to discourse analysis such as Laclau and Moffé’s discourse theory, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology also share the starting point that “Our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but, rather play an active role in creating and changing them” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 1). Discourse analytical approaches, thus, take as their starting point the claim of structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy that “our access to reality is always through language”. With language, we create “representations of reality that are not mere reflections of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality”. That does not mean that reality itself does not exist. “Meanings and representations are real”. Physical objects also exist, but they “only gain meaning through discourse” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 8-9).

The rhetorical analysis of fiction, according to Hermen (1999), studies discourse-level features of narratives to show “how the linguistic mediation of a story determines its meaning and effect” (Hermen 1999, 7; quoted by Bhargava and Shubshree 2004, xiii). Rukmani Bhaya Nair (2003) develops the idea of narrative as a species of “natural theory” that is biologically, culturally and psychologically designed to “probe into contexts, explore hypothesis and present explanations of the enigmas we encounter in the daily business of living” (Nair 2003, 2). She maintains that people do not see and understand the world before them until it is put in a narrative mode. Thus narratives are omnipresent and universal. According to Nair (2004), “stories are obsessive selfconstructions”. Narrative stories
present particular hypotheses about phenomena in the world and present a paradigm to explain them. Children across the world arrive at a foundational knowledge of their cultures via stories and myths. Cognitively, therefore, narrative seems to have been designed as an evolutionary mechanism to probe experience and create competing theories about the world, especially, the world of emotional experience, which is so crucial to cultural survival (2004, 56).

Nair claims that “narrative capabilities and language specialization in humans are crucially linked”. A narrative embedded in a cultural conversation has the same psychological importance as the sentence in grammar, in the sense that, just as all language rely on sentences to “construct” the world for them, they rely on narrative to “explain” the world to them (2004, 57).

Thus, the analysis of language in a work becomes significant for understanding its ideology. As Kress and Hodge suggest, language should be seen more properly as “the medium of consciousness for a society, its forms of consciousness externalized”. Linguistics, then, is “an exceptionally subtle instrument for the analysis of consciousness and its ideological bases” (1979, 13). And the particular aim of stylistics or “linguistic criticism” in Fowler’s opinion is “demystification, demonstration of the practices by which language is used to present partial and slanted concepts as if they were innocent and natural” (1986, 37).

The activity of linguistic criticism is deconstructing a text, using linguistic analysis and with the social contexts of the discourse very much in mind, in order to understand how the text constitutes its own theory of reality and under what social constraints: unpacking the ideology from the linguistic patterns in which it is encoded (Fowler 1981, 22).

1.4. ROHINTON MISTRY AND HIS WORKS:

During the last three decades there has been a dynamic profusion of Indian writing in English, as the writers “re-imagine” and “explore the multiple forms of the nation” through fiction (Dewnarain 2007, 111). The question of language and belonging and positioning of the writer towards his material in language, place and time are, therefore, important issues that need to be addressed.

Rohinton Mistry has received worldwide acclaim. As already mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter, his works have received mixed response from the critics like Keith Garebian (1989), Bindu Malieckal (2004), Nilufer Bharucha (1995), Robert Ross, Ekeluund (1995) and many others. Realism is his preferred style. He chooses to alter narrative
perspectives and to introduce “a multiplicity of perspectives within an overall omniscient realist narrative” (Dewnarain, 1). As Mistry belongs to the Zoroastrian Parsi community, an ethno-religious minority in India, his works must be understood in the context of Parsi religion, world-view and literature. Zoroastrian Parsis experienced mass migration to India from the very beginning of their history, in the 8th Century, being persecuted in Persia, now Iran, after Islamic conquest. Then, they suffered again diaspora, this time to the West, after the independence of India, when having been the favourites of the British rulers, “they fell to disgrace at the end of the Raj” (Albertazzi 2004, 276). Thus, there is a “double migration” or a sense of “double displacement”, in the case of Parsis. “The flight in the 8th Century was forced on them by the Arabs whereas the second is the result of a conscious and deliberate choice” (Narendra Kumar 2002, 14).

Today, with their community in demographic and social decline, the Parsis are facing a virtual life and death situation. According to Kulke, a noted Parsi scholar, “the undermining of the Parsi identity, Westernization combined with an impeded access to the Indian society and its value system characterize the community’s marginalized existence, which still persists as before” (Kulke 1974, 266; Quoted by Narendra Kumar 2002, 11). It is truly ironic that the process of westernization brought about “double alienation”— from the British and at the same time from the mainstream Indian life (Narendra Kumar, 14). The Parsis are attempting to assert their ethnic identity in diverse ways and the Parsi novel in English reflects “this assertion of Parsi identity” (Narendra kumar, 11). In asserting themselves, the writers re-define the identity of the Zoroastrian community. At the same time, they are not blind to the challenges confronting the miniscule community such as mixed marriage and demographic decline. The Parsi novel in English “voices the ambivalence, the nostalgia and the dilemma of the endangered Parsi community” (Narendra Kumar, 32).

According to Nilufer E. Bharucha, “Narratives are as much constructed from racial memories—the past—as they are from contemporary situations”. The story and plot in a work are impacted by several forces that emanate from the writer’s social context, “even political beliefs, her/his culture, ideological beliefs, racial background, religious (non) beliefs and ideological leanings” (Bharucha 2004, 200). As Henry MacDonald has stated, narratives have two stories—the first is formed from “the pre-existing social and cultural materials” and the second from the narrative act, “the performative which comes into existence as a result of the author’s intervention” (Bharucha 2004, 200). Bharucha thus foregrounds “the socio-cultural ethnic details that are the pre-existent given for Mistry” when she considers his Tales from Firozsha Baag. According to Bharucha, Ethnic identity is fundamental and primordial.
All other identities are acquired later (200). According to Samuel P. Huntington, while “nation states remain the principal actors in world affairs, their behaviour is shaped as in the past by the pursuit of power and wealth, but it is also shaped by cultural preferences, commonalities and differences” (Huntington 1996; Quoted by Bharucha, 201). He feels that “the real danger to world peace today is not clashes between nations but clashes between civilizations” (Bharucha, 201).

The politics of ethnicity also operates within postcolonial spaces. In postcolonial societies, the dominant group becomes the “norm” (e.g. the Hindus in India) and the ethnic minorities (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jews or Parsis) become “marked”. So postcolonial texts “do not merely foreground resistance to the colonial past or resultant psychic traumas but also focus on indigenous domination and marginalization within the new national spaces” (Bharucha 201). Even the Parsi Zoroastrians who number under 70,000 in India and approximately 1,00,000 worldwide, have felt threatened enough to produce “distinct ethno-religious discourse” and this to a large extent “has dictated the kind of writing that has come out of it in recent times” (Bharucha, 202).

All of the above can be taken as the given— the pre-existent structures of racial memory, combined with contemporary socio-political situation in the context of the narratives produced by Rohinton Mistry. This, along with his interventions, the manner in which he has manipulated available data, is what has gone into the construction of his narratives (Bharucha, 203).

Mistry’s first published work, Tales from Firozsha Baag (1987), is a collection of eleven short stories which deal with the Parsi life in all its aspects – Social, Cultural and religious. Eight stories focus on the ethnic character of Parsi life in the Indian setting, in Bombay, while in three stories Mistry deals with the impact of expatriation on the lives of young protagonists living in Canada. These multi-voiced and dialogic narrative modes enable multiple perspectives within each of the stories, thus “effecting a potentially post-modernist explosion”. Most of the characters are painted with “a sense of sordid realism” (Dewnarain, 5-6). According to Narendra Kumar, Mistry employs “psychological realism” and “nearly factual and matter-of-fact narration” in the tales. The whole burden of these tales is “to depict the conflict between displaced attitude and traditional mode as well as the adaptability of the Parsi Community to the fast-changing milieu in India and abroad” (2002, 28). The reality is looked at from multiple points of view and the world is “recreated in the spirit of multiplicacy and according to a sense of plurality which is typically Indian” (Albertazzi, 278).
Mistry’s next book, a novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991), is set against the milieu of India during seventies, particularly at the time of war with Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh. Discussing “the urgent political agenda” of the text, Arun Mukherjee argues that *Such a Long Journey* attempts to “make sense of actual historical events by narrativising them” (1992, 83; Quoted by Narendra Kumar 2002, 76). According to Shyam Asnani (2002), “Employing the postmodern narrative technique of subversion in *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry recreates the India of the seventies, fusing the familial with the political, the personal with the historical” (34).

There are four major thematic strands in the narrative. First, the story of Jimmy Billimoria, a victim-figure who is exploited by “the people at the top” and whose story is employed by Mistry “to Challenge and subvert the official version of history”. Mistry employs the available public versions like popular gossip, newspaper reports, diaries and letters “to undermine and dismantle power structures” (Narendra Kumar, 79). The story of Jimmy Billimoria, brilliantly tied to the main action through his friendship with Gustad, serves to throw light on “some of the inconsistencies and unformulated abuses of state power” (Dewnarain, 69). The novel “explores the intimate connection between war and state politics, between the corruption of political leaders and the life of the ordinary citizen” (Dewnarain, 73).

The second strand, Gustad’s conflict with his son Sohrab, dramatizes the Parsi life in a state of transition by bringing to mind the celebrated Sohrab-Rustum myth. While using a Zoroastrian myth in the narrative, Mistry highlights the loss of respect for tradition and values, and the generation gap which seem to threaten the very existence of Parsi family life. This thematic strand and the other two strands – Roshan’s illness and Tehmul’s tragedy – serve to bring out Gustad’s strength of character. All these four strands are, however, carefully strung together on a major strand i.e the growth of the central character, Gustad Noble. Ragini Ramachandra (1994) thus argues that Mistry’s first novel unfolds the process of self-education of Gustad (26).

The citizen and the nation, the public and the private spaces of identity, the family and political corruption are thus some of the major thematic concerns of Mistry in the novel. But since the novel deals with Parsis and Parsi life, certain customs, rituals and ceremonies related to the microscopic community are graphically described as is clear from the account of the ceremonies related to the last rites. Mistry refers to the controversy raging in the Zoroastrian community regarding the disposal system. The conservative Parsi community
prefers the ancient method of disposal of dead bodies whereas modernists are in favour of burial or cremation as will be seen in 3.3.

Mistry recognizes the significance of religion and ritual in the construction of human identity. He, therefore, uses religion, ritual and the responses to these as a central theme in his fiction. In fact, rituals and religious beliefs become the markers of ethnic, racial and communitarian identities; “they highlight difference”. Mistry’s fiction can be read within this framework as “the predicament of an individual as he/she seeks to cope with the contradictions of the past and the present, community and self, family and community”. Mistry as a Parsi writer chooses to tackle religion and rituals in the context of the changes forced upon the community (Dewnarain 25). In Such a Long Journey he addresses the question of the adaptation of Parsi rituals to contemporary life through three funerals and the debate about disposal of dead bodies. Mistry presents three different approaches in his portrayal of the three funerals: the funeral of Gustad’s close friend, Dinshawji, of Jimmy Bilimoria, and that of Tehmul-Lungra. As Dewnarian says, the narrative presents multiple positions and attitudes towards tradition without privileging any (Dewnarain, 26). Mistry is acutely realistic and sharply focused on the contradictions within the Parsi community.

Although the main action of Such a Long Journey takes place within the limits of the Parsi community of Khodadad Building and the bank where Gustad works, it can hardly be said to deal exclusively with the Parsi community. Through many narrative devices, Gustad’s memories and flashbacks for instance, the reader is introduced to several other themes and issues: Gustad’s past—the happy, carefree days of his childhood prosperity, the family gatherings and lunches, and the holidays and the rich smells of his father’s carpentry shop; his present sense of vulnerability when going to the market, national politics, such as Shiv Sena agitations and the rising Hindu fundamentalism in India, the picture of the poor and the injured, the prostitutes, the working-class India, with its share of civic miseries—the drains, water, municipal inefficiency, and so on. Such a Long Journey thus introduces many of the preoccupations of its writer, which will become more obvious in later works. It presents itself “as a novel that seeks to locate the Parsi community in India, and, in the process, makes an important comment on post-independent India” (Dewnarain, 29). This novel will form the subject of analysis and interpretation of Chapter 3 of this Thesis.

Mistry’s second novel, A Fine Balance (1995), which is the subject of analysis of this study in Chapter 4, “sets out to document the way in which election malpractice and misappropriation of power affect the life of the poor rural migrants as well as the urban homeless” (Dewnarain, 73). The novel is “a stark and moving portrait of life” during the
period of emergency. It reflects the reality of India – the predatory politics of corruption, tyranny, exploitation and bloodshed (Savita Goel 1992, 54). Mistry is “authentic in his portrayal” of oppressive caste system, unemployment, poverty, hunger, beggary, gender discrimination, student politics, shameful ragging, wrongful death in police custody, forced vasectomy, election violence and so on. Silvia Albertazzi thus calls it “a neo-realist story of extreme poverty and true friendship among outcasts” (280).

The main action of A Fine Balance is framed between the opening chapter, “Prologue 1975” and the concluding section entitled “Epilogue 1985”. The novel deals with the lives and experiences of four people – Dina Dalal, Ishwar, Om Prakash and Manek Kohlah – who happen to share the same apartment. In this novel, Mistry does not only deal with the misery of common people and the brutality of tyrannical politics; he also describes the horrors of a government work-camp, the tortures in state prisons, in short all the humiliation, the suffering and the wrong that poor people have to suffer under fascist governments. But like the Italian neo-realists and the Bengali film Director Satyajit Ray, Mistry depicts the dramas of ordinary people “objectively”, “leaving aside his own perspective as far as possible”. Poverty, misery and brutality are described and conveyed “without sentimentality or easy – and sterile – pity”. Mistry “prefers to stick to reality”, representing it without embellishments. However, by showing the tragedies they led to in the lives of common people, Mistry’s verism/realism “denounces wrongs which have been overlooked or neglected in the official versions of History” (Albertazzi, 281).

A monumental answer to minimalism, A Fine Balance received enthusiastic acclaim and terrible criticisms. While reviews like Pico Iyer compared it to Balzac’s and Hardy’s great epics of tragic realism, the Australian critic Germaine Greer accused Mistry of giving “an untruly cruel portrait of India” (Albertazzi, 283). But as Mistry’s quote from Balzac indicates, he regarded as “true”, “real as life”, “one hundred percent honest” (Family Matters 2002, 210). According to Silvia Albertazzi, A Fine Balance is completely out of tune with the times of minimalism, glamour, postmodernism and even magic realism. “A tragic realistic epic”, it seems to belong more to the XIX century season of realism and verism than to present day fiction (283). Mistry uses realism to present the human story “in a documentary narrative, alleviated by immense compassion for his characters” (Dewnarain, 30). We are made to see and experience “the horrors of caste exploitation and violence of rural India”, “the nightmare of the emergency”, “the grandiose displays of power” and “the abuses perpetrated by the Congress and the Gandhi family” (31). Significantly, the “minimalist” and “matter-of-fact” style the author adopts is what makes those horrors
“simultaneously describable and unbearable” (Hilary Mantel quoted by Dewnarain, 32). “This ‘bleaching out’ of emotions in the face of monstrosity, the use of apparently minimalist narration, is one of Mistry’s most intense politico-literary weapons”, as for example when he describes the cheating of the villagers of their right to vote, Narayan’s death by torture, the immolation of his whole family, the migration of Ishvar and Om to the city and their burdens of loneliness and homelessness (Dewnarain, 32). But that “this style of overtly neutral storytelling masks a subterranean angry revolt is visible in the power of the passage that details the killing of Narayan in A Fine Balance because he opposes the rigging of elections” (Dewnarain, 46).

While the story of Dina and women like Roopa also highlights certain feminist issues, the story of the Chamaar-tailors allows Mistry to deal with “those who are twice disempowered” (Dewnarain, 54). Om and Ishvar’s experience of suffering from village to town and then to city allows Mistry to speak of powerlessness and oppression, in both the city and the country, as a continuum. The powerless (rural and urban poor) are the “Other” to both the government and the wealthy. Interestingly, Mistry’s anger is also contextualized through the attitude of the middle class who buy the rhetoric of power, e.g., Nusswan and Mrs Gupta (Dewnarain, 55).

Mistry’s recent novel, Family Matters (2002), will be the subject of analysis in Chapter 5 of this Thesis. In this novel, Mistry again turns to his favorite subject: the common life of the ordinary people. The story is full of complicated religious and social conflicts, often related to the dynamics of the Parsi Community. Mistry in this novel gives an “almost naturalistic picture of an Indian lower middle-class family” whose harmony is threatened by the demands of the bed-ridden parent: bad smells, hygienic problems, all sorts of unpleasant situations are described in such a precise way that “one cannot help thinking of French naturalism” (Silvia Albertazzi, 284). The family and its claustrophobia, faith and fundamentalism, memory, and care, charity and humanity are some of the major themes of Family Matters.

With Family Matters, Mistry moves to the India of the 1990s and the political subtext of his novel is the growth of fundamentalist Hindutva ideology and its repercussions on the life of the ordinary, unsuspecting citizen. The discussion of extremist Hindutva permeates the novel from early on, mainly through Yezad’s public world of friends, employers, customers, etc. However, for the most part, it is Yezad’s family problems that are subject to sustained narrative attention. The plot of Family Matters consists of the story of an old man Nariman Vakeel suffering from Parkinson’s disease in a materially straitened family. He lives with his
stepchildren, Jal and Coomy. When he breaks his leg and is bed-ridden, Coomy devises a scheme to send him to the two-room flat of his daughter Roxana. Mistry, however, uses different narrative strategies to introduce several other issues and subplots: the horrors of partition (Mr Kapoor), the Babri Masjid riots, Hinduvta politics, the nation’s dire state of poverty and the upliftment of the people, Shiv Sena activism, Hindu fundamentalism, communal politics and so on. Mistry shows how “fundamentalism and skewed political thinking have altered the very social structure in such a way that even the common man—dissociated from politics—is scared and affected” (Dewnarain, 81).

But beyond the concern with the right-wing politics of the Hindu majority, Family Matters deals with larger issues of religious zealotry, bigotry and fundamentalism within all communities. The Parsi community is not spared criticism—Nariman Vakeel’s parents and their cohort of friends who are zealously religious and exclusivist Parsis, and the final transformation of liberal Yezad into a fundamentalist religious bigot. The novel is “the perfect canvas to explore the politics of the individual in relation to the community” (Dewnarain, 81). In Mistry’s earlier fiction, characters like Sohrab in Such a Long Journey and Dina Dalal in A Fine Balance emerge as strongly individualistic people who struggle to carve a personal, individual space for themselves within the family whole. However, it is only in Family Matters that the question of the private space of individual identity is fully explored through the many instances of conflict between individual desires and duties towards the family or community. The foremost of these is the tragic story of Nariman Vakeel. Parallel to the story of his illness, the story of his disastrous past is gradually unveiled—the story of a brilliant and madly-in-love young man who is forced because of the bigotry of his parents to abandon the Catholic woman he loves and agree to an arranged marriage to a widowed Parsi woman, already mother of two children. He is forcefully separated from his Christian girlfriend Lucy by his parents and their well-wishers and forced to bend to the general demand of the community. This is presented as a submission of his will to the higher good—“parents’ wishes”. But Nariman accepts the separation from Lucy out of weariness and “a sense of the futility of the unequal struggle” (Dewnarain, 82). Nariman’s story is itself a commentary on “excessive community exclusiveness within communities and the disastrous consequences of tyrannical parental authority”. This story of failed love serves to highlight “the ethno-religious fears and ideological conflicts in Parsi community’s mind” (Dewnarain, 39).

In a repetition of the tyranny of Vakeel’s parents and the parents of Coomy, Yezad, who has turned into a religious bigot from a “once liberal father”, tyrannizes both Jal and his
son Murad. He reacts with all the bigotry of traditional exclusivism and orthodoxy towards his son’s love affair with a non-Parsi girl Anjali. He recreates for his son the hell which had made the young Nariman’s life plunge into “a cycle of near-endless misery” until his death (Dewnarain, 38). Through the love stories of Nariman and Murad, Family Matters interrogates the issue of inter-community marriages. The novel effectively portrays the confrontation between the two attitudes of the Parsee community—the traditional/Zoroastrian and the progressive/modern (Narendra Kumar, 105).

The following points emerge from this brief critical study of Mistry’s works:-

1. Mistry’s works are placed under the category of “realism”, “psychological realism”, “neo-realism”, “tragic realism”, “verism” and even among “French naturalism”.

2. Mistry’s realism and verism is “revolutionary” because, by showing the tragedies in the lives of common people, “it denounces wrongs which have been overlooked or neglected in the official versions of history”.

3. Reality has been looked at from “multiple points of view”, and from the perspective of “the victims and the losers”.

The advent of magic realism as a narrative mode in the 1970s and the early 1980s was heralded as a rejuvenation of Third World fiction and as a sign of “the exhaustion of the realist form” (Dewnarain, 41). But despite heralds of the demise of the realist style, it has been the chosen narrative mode of many South Asian writers post-1990 who have transformed realism “to endow it with a new cultural reality”. Mistry maintains the basic features of realism but extends them to add a political dimension to his writings (Dewnarain 23). However, while most of the critics have highlighted Mistry’s realism, Avadesh Kumar Singh (2004) accuses him of disfiguring Indian reality. As he says,

Indian novelists have to ‘see’ multi-layered Indian reality or realities, and the critics have to see if these layers of realities are explored and examined fictionally in terms of their scope and depth. A theory or theories of novel in India should reflect the multi-layered Indian reality. Different as it is from other societies and social realities, the Indian novel should reflect it truly and in totality… A theory is a construct. And no construct is politically innocent. It is fraught with the dangers of being exclusive and prescriptive. More so in the case of Indian English novel, for it imagines an ‘imagined community’ i.e. India (82-3).
According to him, it is the prerogatives of Indian English novelists to imagine Indian the way they deem it fit. But the *auχιτ्यa* (propriety) demands that in trying to be the West-friendly, or consumer/reader-friendly they should not “disfigure this ‘community’ while imagining it, as Mistry does in *A Fine Balance*”. For the West he like so many of his counterparts, very well fills the void left by the demise of the Orientalists. He emerges as a “new-orientalist” who overrides the Orient. “The slice of Indian life and reality that Mistry and his ilk depict may mislead even the Indians there, say nothing of the non-Indians particularly the English speaking western reader”. The novelists should bear in mind that whatever the compulsions and pressures of commodification of literature, the distinctive Indian identity or identities lying underneath should be portrayed with full fidelity to Indian realities and to the Indian ways of perceiving them... The plural-layerity of Indian society, experiences, articulation in different Indian languages should find its reflection in Indian novels and their theory (83)

What Avadesh Mumar Singh emphasizes in fact is the “fictionality” or “constructedness” of reality, as Fowler (1981) calls it, already discussed in section 1.3 of this Chapter. And this is exactly the focus of investigation in the present Thesis.

1.5. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES TO BE INVESTIGATED:

Mistry is considered simultaneously a writer of the diaspora and a mainstream Indian writer. Through its depiction of Indian Parsis, his fiction is in the process of redefining the liminalities of nationhood, and pushing the boundaries in the representation of the nation. He articulates the need for rediscovery of faith, accompanied by a critical stance towards inherited belief systems and a rejection of intolerant traditions. That which, above all, strikes any reader is “Mistry’s distrust of politics, both national and cultural” (Dewnarain, 111). The present study makes a stylistic analysis of Mistry’s novels in order to understand the political sympathies and ideological positions and stances to the reality that he represents in the novels. The study is an attempt to see how the writer manages to create the impression of reality, at the same time “denouncing wrongs” (Albertazzi, 281). As the analysis will show, though the novels are realistic, the language in which events, incidents and characters are presented is not neutral. Multiple points of view show conflict of ideologies and the hidden hegemonic interests of the characters, classes and communities represented in the novels. Language, therefore, is loaded with evaluation and interpretation.

The present thesis investigates the following problems/questions, which are pertinent to stylistics, with reference to Mistry’s three novels discussed in the previous Section:
i) what linguistic choices Mistry makes in terms of the ideational functions to represent/construct “reality” or the fictional world (Leech and Short 1981, 150f),

ii) how far the stylistic choices are “marked” or “neutral” with respect to the experiential reality represented in the novels, and how far they are loaded with evaluation, interpretation, and judgement (Fowler 1986, 119),

iii) what lexico-grammatical choices realize the interpersonal functions and how these choices indicate stance/s or shifts in ideological position/s,

iv) whether the fictional world/reality is viewed from a single perspective or from multiple points of view, and what effects it has on the author’s ideological position/s, if any

v) how far the stylistic choices at the “local” level be related to their “cumulative” effects in a work,

vi) what ideological conflicts, power struggles and hegemonic interests are revealed by the analysis, and

vii) how far the stylistic analysis can help the analyst in understanding ideological point/s of view at the level of character, narrator and the author.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT:

The stylistic approach and the study of language and ideology in a work—literary or non-literary—is not a new area. As far as Mistry is concerned, some studies have been conducted in the context of his socio-political-cultural concerns. His realistic matter-of-fact style has also been taken note of by critics, as was discussed in Section 1.4. But all these studies are mainly thematic, and the stylistic analysis of Mistry’s novels and ideological dimensions in them as “constructed” and represented through the linguistic choices has remained an unexplored area. It is this aspect in Mistry that the present study addresses.

As Simpson says, doing stylistics enriches “our ways of thinking about language” and, “exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of (literary) texts” (2004, 3). Stylistics builds on linguistics, and in return, “stylistics challenges our linguistic frameworks, reveals their deficiencies, and urges us to refine them” (Leech and Short, 6). The present analysis thus becomes significant for the following reasons:

i) it will help in understanding the ideological dimensions and the use of language in the construction of reality in Mistry,

ii) it may also help “refine” the linguistic model, and
iii) the analysis of language in Mistry may help in generalizing the findings of this analysis, if applied to other texts.

The analysis of language in relation to conflicts of ideologies and power struggles in fact is a problematic question and becomes still more significant in works like Mistry’s novels which deal with a society like India, a society based on “inequalities of power and opportunity” (Fowler 1981, 29) and divided on the basis of state, language, community, religion, ethnicity, caste, and so on.

Chapter 2 will discuss the role of the researcher and his position in the study of ideology. The chapter will mainly be devoted to the discussion of the major theories of language, style and stylistics. It will explain how stylistic analysis can help in understanding and interpreting literary texts. The method of analysis and checklist of linguistic and stylistic features will also be developed in this chapter. And finally, as ideology is a wide area, the basis of selection will be made explicit in the second chapter.