Chapter IV
ROHINTON MISTRY ON DIASPORA

Rohinton Mistry’s work is an account of his fictional world clearly; the metropolitan, middle and lower-middle class of Parsi family. Among the diasporic group of Indian writers there are some like Rohinton Mistry who have to grapple with not just one diasporic displacement but multiple displacements. Mistry’s work is concerned with the great inequities of the world between the classes, genders, castes and official hierarchies.

Rohinton Mistry is a Parsi Zoroastrian, born in the year 1952, in Bombay, and immigrated to Canada in 1975. He is the second of four children, three boys and a girl as ‘a writer from elsewhere’ a term is used by Salman Rushdie to describe those who migrated outside of the nation to create their self identity.

Salman Rushdie states:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back we must do so in the knowledge- which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely that thing that was lost, that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India’s of the mind.

(Rushdie, Salman, 1991, P. 10)

Rohinton Mistry has completed B.SC in Mathematics and Economics at Bombay University, and migrated to Canada in 1975 with his wife Freny Elvia, whom he had met at music school. He worked as a clerk in the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in Toronto. He also studied of English and philosophy at the University of Toronto. In one respect, however, it appears that Mistry became a writer almost by accident. He was forced by his wife to participate in the first Hart House Literary Contest, so he took sick live for a few days from the bank and tried to express himself through the literary
medium, and published the short story *One Sunday* in 1983. This short story won the first prize in the Canadian Hart House Literary Contest.

He wrote another short story *Auspicious Occasion* which won the Annual Contributors Award from the Canadian fiction magazine, which became the first story in the volume of *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. The literary career was so strong in his life so, he resigned his job and devoted to full time writing. This included the name of Rohinton Mistry, a writer from South Asia in the Canadian literary galaxy.

Although, Rohinton Mistry’s literary contribution is very less in number, but his wonderful literary work has gleamed in the galaxy of literature, and today Mistry is recognized as a towering literary personality. His literary works subsume: *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002).

Rohinton Mistry won the number of prestigious awards and prizes. His novel *Such a Long Journey* was shortlisted for the ‘Booker Prize’, and the ‘Trillium award’, also won the ‘Governor General’s Award’ and ‘The Common Wealth Writer’s Prize’ and ‘The Smith Books Novel Award’ for the best book. It was made into an acclaimed feature film in 1998.

Rohinton Mistry’s second novel *A Fine Balance* won the ‘The General’s Award’ and ‘The Griller Prize’. This book was shortlisted for ‘The Booker Prize’ as well as received the ‘Los Angeles Times Award’ (1996) and ‘The Royal Society of Literatures Winfried Hotby Prize’.

Mistry’s *Family Matters* was awarded ‘The Kiriyama Prize’ for literature. This novel was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Rohinton Mistry’s work raises a lot of questions specifically related to the ‘homeland’ and political memory. An in depth study of Mistry’s works help us to comprehend the issues such as identity crisis, locating oneself in the historical perspective, aspect of multiculturalism, insider-outsider status are all presented with intricate and subtle delicacy.
Rohinton Mistry’s ancestors were forced into exile by the Islamic conquest of Iran; he was in Diaspora even in India. As a Parsi Zoroastrian he focuses on the double displacement as a recurrent theme in his literary works. Rohinton Mistry’s whole literary work reflected on a Parsi point of view. The truth of the matter is the Parsi has ‘Such a long journey’ from Iran to the western coast of India. This journey began between 638 A.D. and 641 A.D. when the Persian Empire was under threat of Islamic civilization. Finally, Persian Empire crumbled and Islam became the religion of Persia.

Flight was the only way to the Zoroastrians to save their religious identity. So, small bands of these people took their way through the sea route to India in search of greener pastures. However, from the racial and historical point of view, the Parsis had already experienced diasporic displacement when they were forced out of Iran. The sought refuge in India and landed on the banks of Diu. (Gujarat)

Rohinton Mistry’s texts are concerned with the complexities of contemporary alienated identities. He describes the Parsi community in his writing. During the colonial era, Parsis literary endeavors were mainly in English. As Nilufer Bharucha has observed:

Writers such as Behram Malabari, Cornelia Sorabji and D, F. Karaka jr. formed the vanguard of Parsi writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century’s. After a period in the doldrums, Parsi writing reemerged spectacularly in the 1980s with a number of voices-including Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, Farrukh Dhonday, Firdaus Kanga and Ardashir Vakil- articulating the position of the modern Diaspora.

(Bharucha, Nilufer, E 2000, P.57)

Mistry’s texts also explore that the sense of loss through time, and the impossibility of moral purity and action without consequences for characters. The achievement of Mistry and other recent Parsi writers, kept alive the critical dialogues and their culture. They laminate in the literature of galaxy. Some names of these writers who have created their unique identity in the world of literature like, V.S.Naipaul, Ivan, Turgenev, Valdimir Nabokv, Muriel Spark and Albert Camus etc.

Rohinton Mistry dives deep into the Parsi world and focuses on the Parsi identity, ethnicity and the Parsi psyche very aptly. Mistry’s totally writing is about the Parsi
community and very proudly he states that his writing on the Parsi will, ‘preserve a record of how they lived’. He sheds light on the Parsi community and their world is not only wonderful but also awe-inspiring.

The Parsi community in India is an ethnic minority and ethnicity is something that the Parsi dies hard at preserving. This community has thrown into the background and they considered as an inferior. Mistry’s work directly sheds light on the marginalized community into the foreground.

One fact that deeply troubles Mistry is the declining number of Parsi population. There are many reasons. As Nilufer E. Bharucha states:

During the region of the last Shah, the Zoroastrian past of Iran was stressed and Indian Parsi were actively encouraged to migrate or at least work in Iran. However, under the Ayatollahs, Zoroastrians in Iran maintain a low profile. Parsi sources in India usually quote the figure of 25,000 for Zoroastrians in Iran, So worldwide there would be approximately a hundred thousand Zoroastrians, late marriages, marriages outside the Parsi community by Parsi women, whose children are not accepted into the faith and a low birth rate have resulted in a situation where the laws of statistics dictate the eventual annihilation of the race.

(Nilufer E. Bharacha, 2003, P.42-43)

We found that the Parsi community experienced dislocation/displacement. They became homelessness in their own homeland; Parsis in Iran forced to seek refuge in India.

After keenly observation we find that dislocation takes place due to choice. Mistry himself experienced a double displacement. Adaption in India this experiences through his writings, and this light spread all over the literary galaxy.

In spite of the Parsi dislocation, history proves the Parsis have occupied the position of honor and privilege in India. They hold unique position of pride especially during the British Raj. In fact, the truth is that Parsi experienced a feeling of insecurity and has faced threat from various quarters.
Parsis today try to relocate and reorient themselves in India. Mistry tries to recreate and rewrite his homeland from the historical and political point of view. Though, Mistry’s visits to India and purpose of the visits Cyrus Mistry, his brother says that the visit to India is meant to, “Re-familiarize him with the sights, sounds, smells that would hence forth people in his works”.

(Sunday MID-DAY, Oct 27th, 1991)

Although, Rohinton Mistry physically far away from homeland, but emotionally tied with Indian memories of home literally haunt him. Being an immigrant Mistry fluxed between two cultures and two nations. He is neither at home in the new land nor the homeland. Purposely here the term ‘unhomed’ used to express the status of the immigrants. The immigrant creates the consciousness of the identity, and this consciousness creates conflict and plays havoc with the psyche of the person.

The conflict works at various levels. There is need to mingle and accept the present condition and at the same time maintain the culture, customs, and traditions of the particular nation. To justify many things it is very essential that the writer has to work extra harder, as Salman Rushdie states: “deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost”.

(Rushdie, Salman. 1992, P. 10-11)

Quest for identity, self-realization are the features of Rohinton Mistry’s literary work. There is a need to search out self-identity. In his writing frequently appear the issues of love, hatred, selfishness, greed, family values, religion and its implications.

Mistry’s literary writing is the mirror of his own experiences, which he has experienced in the new lands as an immigrant. Although, he is far away from India, he has mentally tied with her. This brings to mind the words of Ashish Gupta who in an interview with Veena Singh reassures his attachment with his motherland. He says, “I haven’t severed my links with India. As the connection grows weaker, the longing grow stronger. I think I am missing something”.

(Jain, Jasbir, 2003 P. 212)
Rohinton Mistry maintained the best relationship with his mother land (India). He reflects many unheard and unseen aspects in his writing. It shows that how much he dived deep in to the mother of ocean. About his literary writing ‘he wanted to be a star.’

Rohinton Mistry’s only two works have been selected for the purpose of this research. They are: 1) *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) 2) *A Fine Balance* (1995).

*Tales from Firozsha Baag* set in an alien setting in Canada and at home in Bombay. It is a journey back to the beginning. The book contains of eleven short stories. They are -

1) *Auspicious Occasion*
2) *One Sunday*
3) *The Ghost of Firozsha Baag*
4) *The Condolence Visit*
5) *The Collectors*
6) *Of White Hairs and Cricket*
7) *The Paying Guests*
8) *Lend Me Your Light*
9) *Exercisers*
10) *Squatter*
11) *Swimming Lessons.*

The short stories: *Auspicious Occasion, One Sunday, The Collectors, Of White Hairs and Cricket, The Paying Guests, and Exercises* focus on people and their experiences as a Parsi community. Above stated stories are the background for another set of stories, such as, *Squatter, Lend Me Your Light* and *Swimming Lessons.* The last set of stories deal with the expatriate experience of young Parsi protagonists who live in abroad.

Rohinton Mistry considered as a parallel writer, the immigrant writer who develops his themes from his past experiences in India and his immigrant experiences in Canada.

*The Firozsha Baag* is a housing complex of Parsi community. The book is focus on the local colors of the Parsi community, their way of living costumes, culture these different patterns of the Parsi life are brought to the readers. Some of his stories have elements of humor and the conflict between the traditional and modernity. In a manner of speaking *Tales from Firozsha Baag* is Mistry’s *Malgudi* as he is an R.K. Narayan in making the short stories. He focuses on the passions, sentiments, emotions and sensibilities of the Parsi people. The characters presented in the stories are all ordinary men and women, from different walks of life. Through his lynx-eyed Mistry highlights the details and the local colors of the Parsi community. Symbols like places, water, music, the weather; cooking, sport, and journey appear and reappear within and across the text. Another feature of Mistry’s writing is his development of irony. According to
Linda Hutcheon, “irony is a particularly appropriate vehicle for writing from the margins of a host society”.

S. Ramaswamy, in an article “Local Colors in Tales from Firozsha Baag” states, “Remembering, re-enacting, re-creating that place-time-people with accuracy, understanding and insight is the vision of Rohinton Mistry.

(Ramaswamy, S., 1998, P.54)

Auspicious Occasion

Auspicious Occasion is an advent of the Mistry’s short story book Tales from Firozsha Baag. About this short story Nilufer E. Bharucha states:

Auspicious Occasion and is immediately engaged in identity construction, ethnicity, Zoroastrian religious rituals, Parsi customs, costumes and cuisine, we-consciousness among the Parsis, alienation from the majority, dominant community and downgrading of status in postcolonial India all find a place in this text.

(Nilufer E.Bharucha, 2003, P. 73-74)

This story is the ‘show window’ of the Parsiness that they express themselves in Gujarati language. The Parsis in Firozsha Baag are middle class and they have to engage with their daily problems like water- supply, dilapidated homes, peeling paint, falling plaster and leaking WCs. This set of story won ‘The Annual Contributor’s Award’ from the Canadian Fiction magazine.

The main protagonists are Mehroo and her husband, Rustom who is twenty years old to her. Mistry has portrayed the characters of Rustomji and his wife Mehroo not a comic characters but they are a real human beings who at the end of the story almost become tragic characters. Mehroo is from middle class and orthodox Parsi family. She strictly maintains all the conditions related with the Parsi religion such as old customs, prayers and ceremonies and also observes all the important days on the Parsi calendar.
All the above stated features brought to home through the loving character of Mehroo, “Even as a child Rustom his hard at the Bombay Municipal Corporation among various other things time and again he explained to Mehroo about how to keep a house maid without complaints. He liked to speak about the psychology of the gungas.”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 08)

All the main symbols of Parsi cultural identity highlighted in this story. For example, the ancient monotheistic religion of Zoroastrianism, Parsi festivals like Beharam roje, and institutions such as the Fire-temple and the Tower of Silence. Rustomji expresses the general Parsi view about the Indians being ‘uneducated, filthy, ignorant barbarians’. The feelings of Parsis about the Hindus in India are also effectively portrayed.

Rustom encounters an incident while travelling by bus, some ‘ghaatis’ passenger (a derogatory term for Indians from the western Ghats (hills) in the state of Maharashtra) spat paan juice which landed on Rustom’s clothes, “Sala chutia spat paan on my dugli and you think that is fun”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 17)

This expression of Rustom creates a lot of tension in the crowd. He acted very impulsively; he would have been physically assaulted by the public. He tries to escape from the angry mob. This incident points out the inferiority of the Parsi community in the post colonial India. As Nilufer Bharucha states, “This incidence focuses on the confrontation between the Parsi identities versus the Indian identity”.

(Nilufer, E, Bharucha, 2003, P. 74-75)

There is also often conflict between the Panchyat and the tenants about the money which is required for urgent repairs to the buildings, which is erected in an extremely dilapidated condition. But Rustomji refuses to pay for the repairs. He says, “I will not spend one paisa of my hard-earned earnings! Those scoundrels sitting with piles of trust money hidden under their raised should pay for it!”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 5)
There are many reasons behind the bad conditions of the Firozsha Baag buildings that are:

The flats had been erected in an incredibly short time and with very little money. Cheap materials had been used. Now during the monsoon season beads of moisture trickled down the walls, like sweat down a coolie’s back, which considerably hastened the crumbling of paint and plaster.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 07)

Another aspect of this story is the fine relationship between Parsis and the Hindus. Most of the Parsis live in the ethnic ghettos in the Firozsha Baag only Parsi people are connected with the Hindu people through the domestic servants who work in their homes. However, Mistry carefully points out that most of the Parsis treat their servants well and Mehroo is no exception to this rule. She feels extremely sorry about her old servant Tanoo, “Rustomji too would have like to feel sorrow and compassion. But he was afraid. He had decided long ago that this was no country for sorrow or compassion or pity…These were worth less and, at best, inappropriate”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 08)

Search for identity is also found in this story. He had attempted to create an identity with India. So, during his college days he joined the social services league and gone on campus to distant village and had built roads, constructed wells etc. with the purpose of identifying himself with the main stream Indians and to create the marginal status of community. He left all the past events behind and concentrated on living his own life according to his style. The story ends with the murder of the Dustoor at the fire temple and Mehroo and Rustom once again resigning to the predestined fates.

One Sunday

One Sunday is an account of the conditions of the Parsi community during the year 1960’s and 70’s. There are many characters found in this story. They are Najamani, Boyce brothers (Kersi and Persi), Tehmina and Francis. All characters are related to middle class family. Story describes the events of an ordinary Sunday, on which the middle-aged widow Najamani goes to visit her sister’s family in Bandra. She asks her
neighbors to take care of her house in her absence, “Francis, the odd character in this story, who assists any of Baag residents for the sake of few paise, so Parsi considers him ‘really no better than a homeless beggar’.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 30)

Rohinto Mistry describes the mutual relationship of Najamai and her neighbors. She allows Tehmina and Boyce to use her refrigerator to store their meat and much needed supplies of ice, while they receive her morning deliveries of bread and butter and their newspaper.

Francis, the odd man does odd jobs for the residents. All the Parsis presented here belong to the lower middle class and struggle to maintain their elite status. After returned to home Najamai surprised to see Francis, she screams in shock and immediately ran away on the street. Najamai’s returned frightened him and Francis hidden behind a door, where he was soon discovered.

The Boyce brothers often move with their cricket bat to perform many great acts like killing rats, chasing thieves and playing cricket too. These groups of Parsi boys were unwelcome in Tar Gully. On seeing the group of boys with cricket bats at night they were taunted with, “Parsi bawaji! Cricket at night? Parsi bawaji! What will you hit boundary or sixer?”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P.35)

When the boys spotted Francis mistakenly they shouted, Chor! Chor! And the cry reached to Tar Gully inhabitants, and Francis caught by three men, and he is covered with many kicks and blows. This severely beating made the Boyce boys quite ill. After this incident they realize that kicking or smashing someone with the bat is not similar to killing a rat also they noticed that they are not so strong after all. Kersi rips off the rubber grips and cord from his bat:

Soon, the cord lay on the floor in a black tangled heap, and the handle looked bald, exposed, and defenseless. Never before had Kersi seen his cricket bat in this flayed and naked state. He stood up, grasped the handle with the hands, rested the blade at an angle to the floor, and then smashed his foot down upon it.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 38-39)
Kersi shows his anger frustration and disgust by smashing the bat. The Parsis often try to show the racial superiority and the breaking of the bat symbolically expose the final inability of the Parsi to identify themselves with the main stream Indians.

*The Ghost of Firozsha Baag*

*The Ghost of Firozsha Baag* has non-Parsi narrator. Jacqueline a catholic ayah and her encounter with a ghost. The life of Firozsha Baag is observed here from an outsider’s point of view -from the point of a simple, honest, uneducated ‘outsider’. Jacqueline from Goa, she works as an ayah in a Parsi apartment and hates it whenever employer calls her Jakayalee.

She says:

> After reaching first floor I stooped to rest my breath was coming fast-fast. Fast-fast, like it does nowadays when I grind curry masala on the stone Jaakaylee, my bai calls out, Jaakayalee is masala ready? Thinks, sixty –three-year old ayah can make masala as quick as she used to when she was fifteen. Yes fifteen. The day after my fourteenth birthday I came by bus from Goa to Bombay Now it has been forty-nine years in this house as ayah, believe or don’t believe. Forty nine years in Firozsha Baag’s block and they still don’t say my name right .It is so difficult to say Jacqueline? But they always say, Jaakaylee. Or worse, Jaakayai

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 44)

In the words of Jaakaylee herself, “They thought they were like British only, ruling India side by side”. (Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 46) The Parsis always give first preference to Goan ayaha for taking care their ‘Baby and Babas’. They do not believe anyone else for this work. They consider that taking care for their babies is a part of their heritage.

Jacqueline talks about her life and says no matter however sincerely she had worked for the last 49 years, but she could not win the complete trust of her master. She says her duties included being a cook; she should sincerely take care of Baba also. Here, the act of grinding the masalas, cooking the curry and then eating it these are the sexual symbols in this story.
Whenever, her master goes out, she does not allow remaining in the house alone because like all the Parsis never trusted their maids with the house keys. So, she remains out on the staircase, terrace or corridor, but never alone in the house.

She talks about her in the following words:

No ayah gets Key to a flat. It is something I have learned, like I learned forty-nine years ago that life as ayah means living close to floor. All works I do, I do on floors, like grinding masala, cutting vegetables, cleaning rice. Food also is eaten sitting on floor, after serving them at night dining table. And my bedding is rolled out at night in kitchen-passage, on floor.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 45)

On Christmas Eve, when she returned from church at two p.m., she saw the ghost for the first time, but she doesn’t want to disturb the family, and she spread her bedding by stair case. This ghost is the symbol of Jaakaylee’s sexual frustration. This romance with the ghost continued for a pretty long time, “Yes, the bhoot came but he did not bounce any more upon my chest. Sometime he just sat next to the bedding, other times he lay down beside me with his head on my chest, and if I tried to push him a way he would hold me tighter”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 48)

The ghost is clearly a Freudian symbol of Jaakaylee’s barren sex life. She reminds an incident at the beach. Her account is replete with sexual imagery:

He rolled up his pants over the knees and I pulled up my skirt, and we went in deeper. Then a big wave made everything wet. We ran out and sat on the beach for my skirt to dry… Sitting on the sand he made all funny eyes at me, like Hindi film hero, and put his hand on my thigh. I told him to stop or would tell my father who would give him a solid pasting. But he didn’t stop. Not until the fishermen came. Sheeh, what a boy that was

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 49)

Jaaykaylee decides to exorcise him disturbing ghost by the Priest in the church in Bombay. She requests to the Priest to recite the prayers thrice, and this would solve all her problems. As for the ayah’s hypothesis that the ghost scared to the Priest—the father—just as most men are scared to their father.
At the end of the story, there is the anti-climax when Jaakaylee herself is mistaken for a ghost by her employer Bai. On a cold night around 2 a.m. Jacqueline is standing on the balcony completely in her white bed sheet by seeing her mistress mistakes her for a ghost and shouts Bhoot! Bhoot! Its result that many people in Firozsha Baag started to believe in the ghost. But this incident has another positive side too it, from that onwards Jacqueline realizes that there is nothing like ghost and is relieved.

The story is an interesting and it’s funny to note that it is the women who are captivated by the ghost. Other elements found in the story are superstition, erotism, and passion for food.

**Condolence Visit**

The story is concerned with the past memories of Minocher that could be called by his widow Daulat Mirza after the funeral fire, “Yesterday had been the tenth day, Dusmoo, after the funeral of Minochar Mirza; Dusmoo prayers were prayed at the fire temple, and the widow Mirza awaited with apprehension the visitors who would troop into the house over the few weeks”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 59)

Mistry criticizes about those people who visit the homes of the bereaved. Very often instead of offering condolences, these visitors are merely nuisance. Daulat deeply touched with the death of her husband Minchor for a short period but was glad that he died peacefully in his deep. However, all the hidden grief and pain come out with the visits of the condolence bearers, “For bears of condolence and sympathies she would have to answer questions about the illness, about doctors and hospitals, about nurses and medicines, about x-rays and blood reports”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 61)

Repeating the past memories again and again was a painful affair. She even regretted not accepting the tape recorder from her nephew Sarosh, who came from Canada, “It could be handy, she thought with bitterness, to tape the details, so squeeze all
of her and Minocher’s suffering inside the plastic case, and proffer it to the visitors who came propelled by custom and convention”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 61)

Daluat does not restrict herself with the age old Parsi customs and traditions. An oil lamp she had lit by the besides of the late husband, which is put off after four days. This ceremony helps the soul to serve ties with this world and go quickly to the other world. This lamp burning attracts to the soul to two different places: here and the next world. “So you must put it out, you are confusing soul”, advised by Najamai. This burning lamp reminding Daulat of her dead husband, the wonderful time they spent together and his last days of pain and agony.

Further, she did a noble act of charity; she sorts out Minocher’s clothes and donates at the old aged home. Among the item she sorts out really treasured was Minocher’s pugree (a head dress). This was normally worn by Parsi men on ceremonial occasions such as wedding and navjotes. Really Minocher’s pugree was very splendid so she wanted Minocher to live eternally through his pugree. So Daulat decides to hand over it to someone who would value it. Luckily she read a small advertisement in the Parsi newspaper-Jam-e-Jamshed- where they want such a pugree. While doing this act she faces a lot of problems but she was firm and adamant on her decision. She hands over the pugree to the Youngman and says, “But let me tell you, my Minocher would be happy to give it to you if he was here. He would rejoice to see someone get married in his pugree. So if you want it, take it today”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P.75)

She refuses to accept the payment for it and says, “It is yours, wear it in good health. And take good care of it for my Minocher”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 76)

The story highlights the fact that customs and traditions are man-made and should be followed any for man’s convince. It can be changed according to the thoughts. Breaking the rules of customs and traditions it requires a lot of mental courage and this is
exactly did by Daulat. The story ends with a dignified way with Daulat alone in the flat and accumulating the strength to finally put out the lamp and let Minocher go.

**The Collectors**

This story is an attempt to initiate to young people into the mysteries and pleasure of philately (stamp collection). A main protagonist is Dr. Burjor Mody, a new tenant at Firzosha Baag. He had been transferred to Bombay from Mysore, to take up the principal ship of the Bombay Veterinary College. He soon became an important part of the Firzosha Baag to fight against Municipal Corporation and the crooked trustees.

The story has divided into various structures and that structures are related with the relationship between the Dr. Modi and Jehangir. I, meeting and mutual interest; II, the beginning of Jehangir’s stamp collection; III, the growth of his collection, but also his corruption by Eric D’Souza, the disappearance of the Spanish dancing-lady stamp for which he sis blamed and IV, Dr Moday’s death, the bequest of his stamps to Jehangir and their destruction.

However, Dr. Modi’s only son Pesi’s goonish behavior gives him a lot of trouble. His wild way and disrespect to the elders, was the bane of his father’s existence. When Dr. Modi to become acquainted with Jehangir he began to show his album of stamp collection. This was how Dr. Modi created a lot of interest within Jehangir. This wide range and variety of stamps created a great fascination. Dr. Modi encourages Jehangir to make new friends and ask them to save stamps for him to help begin his stamp collection. Collecting the stamps was an expensive hobby. To satisfy the urge of his new found hobby, we find Jehangir doing many things.

He was implicated in the act of stealing of stamps from the road side vendors. He also got into a homosexual experience with his classmate Eric. All that he had to do was satisfy the erotic impulses of Eric and in return he was rewarded with stamps.

Jehangir showed his collection to Dr. Modi, who appreciated him and in return showed him a special treasure of stamps. The Spanish stamp goes missing and Dr. Modi
suspects Jehingir because the last person to who have seen Spanish stamp collection was Jehangir himself.

_The Collectors_ ends with the sudden death of Dr. Modi. A year after Jehangir was invited by Mr. Modi, who always disliked Jehangir, now sighs, “I asked you to come today because there is something I want to give you, something of Burjor uncle’s. I thought about it for many days. Pesi is not disinterested, and I don’t know anything about it. Will you take his collection?”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 100)

Mrs. Modi also confessed that the valuable Spanish stamp had not been lost but it has been stolen, and her suspect was for Jehangir himself for it. Jehangir was speechless and he had not interested in stamp collection. He had stopped the stamp collection long time back.

Jehangir explored the room where he had spent many a happy moments with Dr. Modi:

And he could almost hear. Dr. Modi again the soft inspired tones speaking of promises and dreams, a quite different from his usual booming, jovial voice, and that faraway look in his eyes which had ones glinted with rage when Pesi had tried to bully him.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 101)

Jehingir takes the collection home but he cannot summon his interest in philately. He pushes all the stamps into a trunk and puts it under his bed. Soon they were destroyed by cockroaches and other insects. Jehingir is not able to preserve the memories of Dr. Modi alive. Everything was destroyed and rust in the trunk. But he feels no sense of loss or pain, he feels only relief.

There is a sigh of depression when Mistry mentions about the Bombay police and Mrs. Indira Gandhi *Garibi Hatao* campaign:

The Bombay police, in a misinterpretation of the nation’s Mandate: *Garabi Hatao*- eradicate poverty, conducted periodic round- ups of pavement dwellers, sweeping into their vans beggars and street, vendors, cripples and alcoholics the
homeless and the hungry, and dumped them somewhere outside the city limits; when the human detritus made its way back into the city, another clean-up was scheduled.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 98)

In the story Mistry very aptly describes a lot of human feelings and sentiments, Dr. Modi’s interest in his hobby and his wish to spend his rest of retired life in the company of his stamps was not accepted and appreciated by his wife Mrs. Modi. After Dr. Modi’s death she was really repent for all her misdoings.

There is also a focal point that is a hobby cannot be forced upon anyone. Hobby creates out of choice; from within, it is the internal part of the interest and it creates from inner world. No one can restrict and forced to this matter. It should be created from the inner side of the world. This exactly happens at the end of the story. Jehingar has no remorse or regret to see Dr. Modi’s stamp collection has destroyed by the cockroaches and insects. It is also very strange that he had not sense of loss or pain about the destruction of his or Dr. Modi’s treasure, the stamp collection.

**Of White Hairs and Cricket**

There are number of issues occurring in this story. The story opens with young Kersi pulling out the gray hairs from his father’s head.

Kersi narrates:

Daddy relied on my nimble fourteen-year-old fingers to uproot the signposts of morality sprouting week after week. It was unappetizing work, combing through his hair greasy with day-old pomade, isolating the white ones, or the ones just beginning to turn-half black and half white, and somehow mote repulsive.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 107-08)

This hair-pulling activity creates a conflict between Kersi’s father and his grandmother. Another to the most Parsis the hair is associated with the evil and it is used for the purposes of black-magic, so the hair pulling activity was also considered as an evil activity. This is the only reason that most orthodox Parsis covered their heads with a white cloth. According to grandmother, pulling out hair is equal to committing a sin. She
hated this activity and spoke irritately, “Sunday dawns and he makes the child do that duleendar thing again. It will only bring bad luck”. 

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 109)

Through this incident Mistry try to focus on the blind faith and the superstitious attitude of some Parsis even to the date. In the story there is a reference to the cricket game. Cricket is a craze of Kersi’s father and all the boys on Firozsha Baag. He says, “Daddy took anyone who wanted to play to the Marine Drive Maiden, and organized us into teams, captaining gone team himself. We went early, before the sun got too hot and the Maiden over crowded”. 

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 116-17)

On every Sunday Kersi enjoyed these cricket sessions for a long time. Kersi’s grandmother was an orthodox and superstitious woman. About the matter of concerning hair, but also very hardworking and devout women who spun wool for Kusti’s and wore them herself. This spinning activity fascinates young Kersi and he looked at it spell bound. Grandma also shows her culinary skills and fed Kersi on the sly.

In addition to all this, there is gloom and unhappiness in the house. The father is not able to get better job. So week after week he goes through a number of advertisements to seek for a better job, the failure of his father to deliver on the promises he has made his wife about finding a better paying job. When he promises to wife about new fridge and a new stove, she asks him to day dreaming, “All your shaik-chullee thought are fling again. Nothing happens when you plan too much. Leave it to the hands of God”. 

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 113)

This lack of belief about his father’s inabilities begins to influence on Kersi’s opinion. Listing mother’s reaction such advertisements, he says:

Mummy listened to such advertisements after week harbingers of hope that ended in disappointment and frustration. But she always allowed in the initial wave of optimism to lift her, adding it with Daddy and me, higher and higher,
making plans and dreaming, until it crashed and left us stranded, awaiting the next advertisement and the next wave.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 112)

The dream remained unfulfilled about the fridge and a new gas stove. Kersi began to remember the time he has spent plucking out the grey hairs from his father’s head every Sunday morning, “All my friends had fathers whose hair was graying. Surely they did not spend Sunday morning doing what I did, or they would have said something”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 115)

There is a gulf between both the father and the sun; and this gulf kept widening with the attitude of Kersi. Due to this distance between father and son the cricket match on chaupatty beach became rare and rare, as Kresi’s father loses interest in them and the game was continued to the four walls of Firozsha Baag. From that onwards Kersi has to depend on his friend Viraf for the companionship and to spend a lot of time with him. One Sunday Viraf is not able to come with Kersi due to his father’s illness. He was ass the time with his father like a dutiful son.

This incident was an eye-opener to the Kersi. He repents being rude and having careless for his father. He expects that his father will summon him again to pluck out the white hair, but it doesn’t happen. He wanted to talk with his father, laugh with him and recreate the past; but his ego and pride stand in the way. Lying on his bed he reminds his mother, his friend Viraf, Old Mamaji, his sick father and his own unsuccessful father. He regrets, “I wanted to weep for myself, for not being able to hug Daddy when I wanted to, and for not ever saying thank you for cricket in the morning, and pigeons and bicycles and dreams; and for all the white hairs that I was powerless to shop”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 120)

Mistry very aptly focuses on the gulf between the father and son; and how the generation stops to think about their ageing parents and how forgets so many sacrifices done by them. The story ends with a lot of guilt, regret, remorse and repentance.

*The paying Guests*
The theme of this story is the loneliness and despair of old parents, who sent back to home to suffer loneliness and the aches of old age. The story is about immigration and its effect on the immigrant. The generation mostly migrates to the western countries for the better prospect and development. They migrate themselves either by choice or out of necessity. This immigration makes them to leave parents back home. This immigration has deeper meaning to it. This loneliness and alienation is symbol of what the Parsis suffer in India, “Such alienation and loneliness often leads to dysfunctional and aberrant behavior both within the India as well as the western contexts”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 93)

This story is about the elder couple Ardesar and Khirshedbai, whose only son has migrated to Canada. On his invitation to Canada, they sell their Bombay house and go with great hopes and expectations to spend their rest of life in comfort with their beloved son. However, they treated very shabbily and they returned to Bombay in great sorrow and shock, but they find themselves homeless in their own home, own country.

They share the flat with Boman and Kashmira, and in their own home they become paying guest. The renting of the flat focuses on the other aspect of the Bombay Rent Act. Once a flat/house rented cannot be get back without a good amount of pain and tension.

The space was insufficient for the Boman’s who are expecting their second child. Due to insufficient they are not able to stay properly. So, Korshedbai and Ardesar are requested to leave the flat, but Boman is not ready to leave the flat. Both couples are caught in a dilemma and a ‘no-win-situation’.

Mistry maintains his own ‘fine balance’ in this story regarding sympathy for the two women. Both are helpless on their own situation. The reader too would find it difficult to justify the both couple. Khorschedbai’s arrogant behavior notices that the couple should leave the flat. She begins scattering rubbish outside Kashmira’s door: “Khorshedbai littered in the morning and Kashmira swept in the evening.”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P.134)
This incident creates the bitterness in their relationship. As a result Khorsheedbai’s highest peak of madness is the Kashmira’s new baby shuts in the empty cage, which belongs to her parrot, Pestonjee.

Mistry, as a writer, has done a fine job he sympathizing with both the women. Both the women are right from their point of view and everyone’s problems are genuine. Both women are helpless. After keenly examine readers will find difficult to side with anyone of the two women.

One of the neighbors was willing to go to court against the older couple. One by one the neighbors refuse Mr. Karani follow the three principals ‘see no evil’, hear no evil, and speak no evil. Rustomjee was no help either and Najami said: “Me a widow, living all alone how can I go felling in the middle of the court lufraa?”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P.138)

They all had their own excuses and this worsened matters. However, after the final act of abducting the child, the paying guests leave, “The paying guests went quietly; Khurshedbai first, by ambulance, everyone knew where; then Ardeshar, no one knew where, by taxi”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 139)

Sqatter

This story is narrated by the master story teller of Firozsha Baag, Nariman Hansotia. He describes Nariman’s technique in terms that might also be applicable to Mistry:

Unpredictability was the brush he used to paint his tales with an ambiguity the palette he mixed his colors in Nariman sometime told a funny incident in very serious way or expressed a significant matter in a light and playful manner. And these were only two rough divisions, in between were lots of subtle gradations of tone and texture. Which, then, was the funny story and which the serious? Their opinions were divided, but ultimately, said Jehangir, it was up to the listener to decide.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 147-48)
*Sqatter* story is divided into two parts by story teller Nariman very skillfully the main story deals with the central character Sarosh-Sid and his difficulty in Canada. It is a last part of the tale, first part of the tale deals with the character Savukshaw, a Parsi cricketer and hunter. Savuksha is an all rounder cricketer he has participated in the Indian cricket team. As Luhrmann says, “Of all gentlemanly athletic pastimes community that Parsis played cricket sooner and better than any other community.”

(Luhrmann, T. M., 1996, P.18)

Savukshaw also recalls the heroes from other sources of Mistry’s Shah-Namah. One of Savukhsha’s shots hit an English finger on the hand and the impact caused him to howl:

> Never at any English stadium was howl heard like that one, of in the whole history of cricket. The hand that he had reached out to stop it, he now held up for all to see, and *dhur-dhur, dhur-dhur* the blood was gushing like a fountain in an Italian pizza, like a burst water-main from the vihar-powai reservoir, dripping into his shirt.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 149)

Savuksha would have led the Indian team to victory. Mistry obtains focuses on the varied issues deals with the Parsi community. Everyone dares to dream, but all dreams do not materialize. Unfulfilled dreams create a lot of pains and problems to Sarosh.

Sarosh-Sid has immigrated to Canada, but promises to return to India if he could not become completely Canadian within the period of ten years. Ten years later he becomes completely westernized, except that he is unable to use western toilets. As he suffers the same fate as the cricket baller Savukshaw smashes for four runs- he find himself, “Past the boundary line --lying near the fence, Rent asunder. Into two perfect leather hemispheres, all the stitches had ripped and some of the insides had spilled out”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 149)

The fact that Sarosh –Sid’s toilet technique is different from the new host country is explicitly linked to xenophobia and racism:
The world of wash rooms is private and at the same time very public. The absence of fit below the stall door, the smell of faces, the rustle of paper, glimpses caught through the narrow crack between stall door and jamb—all these added up to only one thing: a foreign presence in the stall not doing things in the conventional way. And if one outside could receive the fetor of Sarosh’s business wafting through the door, poor unhappy Sarosh could detect something malodorous in the year: the presence of xenophobia and hostility.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 156)

The crisis of identity found in this story. A person may adopt change outwardly, but the truth is that the inner changes are finding it difficult. In the construction of new self the old self refugees to go away and further stands as a barriers and problems. The entire process confuses to Sarosh in the host country. Sid could detect something malodorous in the year, “the presence of xenophobia and hostility”. (Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P.156)

Sid is unable to use the western toilet in the host country; Sid was a loser, he takes ten years to try:

Obtaining his new citizenship had not helped either. He remained dependent on the old way and this unalterable fact, strengthened afresh every morning of his life in the new country, suffocated him the ten years time limit was an accident than anything else. But it hung over him with the awesome presence and sharpness of a guillotine.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 15)

Sid goes in for the CNI- a small device, Crappus Non Interrupts, completely with negative attitudes, which had to be implanted in the bowl. But soon he realizes that he would be not able to live life normal way again.

Finally, after a lot of confusion Sid returned to India. After the ten years gap in own country he found himself lonely in the crowd too. It means his Diaspora story being with an in his own country. He could not adjust himself neither in host country or his own county. He became homelessness in his own home he suggests very aptly who wants to live their mother land. He says:
‘Tell them’, said Sarosh, ‘that the world can be a bewildering place, and dreams
and ambitions are often paths to the most pernicious of traps. “When you shall
these unlucky deeds relate, speak of me as am; nothing extenuates, nor set down
aught in malice, tell them that in Toronto once their lived a Parsi boy as bet as he
could. Set you down this; and say, besides, that for some it was good and for
some it was bad, but for me life in the land of milk and honey was just a pain in
the posterior”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 168)

Mistry hits hard at the land flowing with milk and honey (Canada) and indirectly
warns to the people about the tensions and problems could face in the western countries.
Here Mistry tries to express his own experiences through the words of Sid.

Lend Me Your Light

This story begins with an epigraph of Rabindranath Tagore’s Gitanjali, “Your
lights are all lit-then where you go with your lamp? My house is all dark and lonesome, -
lend me your light”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 173)

Mistry tries to highlights the periscope vision of both India and the west. The
contrast pictures are brought together very skillfully. The India’s major problems such as
unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and the political condition, corruption is presented
realistically.

The story is about the two brothers from the same family, the same atmosphere.
However there is no similarity between them they are totally different from each other.
There is a gulf between them which widens with the time.

This gulf brought out by the narrators words. He says:
There you were, my brother, waging battles against corruption and evil, while I was watching sitcoms on my rented Granda TV or attending dinner parties at Parsi homes to listen to chit-chat about airlines and trinkets. And it was no use wishing that we had talked more to each other about our hopes, visions and dreams.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 184)

Kersi’s brother Persi and Jamshed were friends when they were at school, but their paths had divided in two ways. Jamshed migrates to the USA and Percy had assimilated within the Indian diasporic situation through work in the Indian villages so, this migration abridges the little gap between them.

The Parsis have often enjoyed an elite status during the British colonial period. However, after the departure of the British, this condition has totally changed. During the British colonial period they placed in prominent positions, but the fact is that they lost their elite status and not able to mingle with the Indians. As a result they wanted to leave the country. They found in India nepotism, corruption and political interference, the grinding poverty which they hated a lot. It creates the situation to leave the country and go in search of better prospects. Some of them don’t consider India is a place where can be lived decently.

Jamshed states, “Absolutely no future in this stupid place”, he said, “Bloody corruption everywhere. And you can’t by any of the things you want, don’t even get to see a decent English movie. First chance I get, I am going abroad preferably the US”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 178)

However, Mistry is totally against the immigrants and their attitude towards migration. Ironically MIstry compares immigrants with the Greek prophet who was blind. The night Kersi is to fly to Toronto, he has a severe pain in his eyes and wonders perhaps this as a punishment for, “The sin of hubris for seeking immigration out of the land of my birth, and paying the price in burnt-out eyes: I, Tiresias, blind and throbbing between who lives, the one in Bombay and the one to come in Toronto”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 180)
In a way there is a truth in what Mistry says. The immigrants are like a blind man who is unable to see the past. They consider about only the present for which they are ready to do anything.

However, after migrated in the host country the immigrant is tortured by the feelings of guilt. He realizes that he has been unjust to the motherland. After spending a number of years in the western countries he is not able to assimilate in his own country. It creates a mental conflict and also the whole psyche in a confused state. This deals to heart breaking moments, scattering of dreams, misery and the immigrant who is physically away from the home land now also move spiritually from it.

**Exercisers**

In this story Mistry highlights the aspect of ethnicity and varied restrictions which carried by Parsi community. Marriage out of the cast is not allowed anyone who does this is ostracized from the Parsi religion, society and home. *Exercisers* though set in Bombay is closely linked some of these earlier stories *Swimming Lessons*, *The Ghost of Firozsha Baag* and *the Collectors*. Exercisers are sandwiched between two Canadian stories. It focuses on the main protagonist Jehangir Bulsura, whose features are described in the earlier stories too. He found of stamp-stealing, bookworm, and homo-erotic fame. According to his parents’ opinion his sexual attraction about woman, which is unsuitable for him it is very aptly focused by the narrator in this story.

Mrs and Mr, Bulsara are very anxious about their son, Jehangir’s affair with an unsuitable girl to persuade him finally his parents decide to take the son to a ‘holy man’, Bhagwan Baba. Here Hindu element of a persona; Guru focused in the text.

Persuasion of Jehangir throws light on another aspect that being superstition and blind faith illusion, imagination, traditions and customs are presented very skillfully in this story. These are the factors, which stand as a hurdle from witnessing reality.

The parents think that their son is too young to go out with a girl so, he should seek the advice of Baba. Whatever the Baba says, his words have a universal truth. He says, “Life is a trap, full of webs. Ask yourself, what does the sensible person does if a trap is facing him? Avoid, get away from it”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 213)
Jehingar is really worried by the Baba’s prophecy and he decides to refuse the physical contact with Behroze. The story also deals with the stern action taken by parts towards their children. It is also important for the parents that they should behave with their children in proper manner. Extreme disciplinary actions may destroy their marriage relationship. Jehangir is fluxed between his love for his girlfriend and loyalty to his parents. When, he is in hurry to go at home his girlfriend shouts, “Calm down. Will you? Your mother’s world won’t end if you are late. Haven’t you learned yet? All these are just her tactics to.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 224)

And when he returns late his mother warns him. She utters, “This time you crossed the limit. Your father says be patient. He is just a boy. Just a boy, yes, but the boy has climbed to the roof”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 224)

Thus Jehangir is in dilemma. He scarified the love and loyalty and he gets difficulty to choose the mid-way.

Swimming Lessons

Swimming Lessons is the last story of the collection. The self-reflexive element find in this story through the reactions of Kersi’s parents. This entire story is set in Canada. Here we found the maximum impact of displacement and alienation.

Kersi is the main protagonist tries to identify and relocate himself in the western scenario. The trauma of finding an identity and location western country is linked to sexuality. Kersi tries to be a master in swimming, but unfortunately he is not able to be a master in the skill of swimming reminiscing his swimming attempts at Bombay.
He says:

It was hopeless my first swimming lesson. The water terrified me. When did that happen? I wonder, I wonder, I used to love splashing at chaupatty, carried about by the waves. And this was only a swimming pool. Where did all that terror come from? I'm trying to remember.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 238)

Kersi is a failure in his swimming attempt in Canada too. There is only sadness in the eyes of Mistry’s characters. As they look back and forward world we see only despair in their both world.

Kersi alarms the memories about Bombay, the Chaupatty, and the trips to the beach with his mother, the coconut day. Ganesh Chaturti. His trips also connected with the Parsi religious ceremonies. He reminds varied articles about the sea God, Avan Yezad with the help of these sweet memories he returns back to home.

However, western sexual terms disappointed to Kersi at several times. His reason of frustration is that when he sees two sun bathing glamorous women from a distance. The women apply lotion on each other and take a closer look at them. They are rather unattractive with, “Wrinkled skin, gain hands, sagging bottoms, and varicose veins. The lustrous trick of sun and lotion and distance has ended”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 233)

Kersi’s disillusionment has no end because he often encounters such people and events that create disillusion within him. He realizes that it is only lure of attraction to migrate towards the western countries. But this attraction destroys when we enter in western countries, when we face many problems.

At the beginning of the story we find that Kersi is not able to be a master in the skill of swimming in Bombay and in Canada too. This symbolically suggests that his inability to mingle with either the homeland or the host land. The maximum effect of displacement and alienation is reflected in this story.
In this story Kersi focuses on the created home and community in Canada and the home he has left behind in India. We find a ray of hope at the end of the story. In the bath-tub we find Kersi opening his eyes. It is a symbol of his attempt to find life in a double perceptive-homeland and the host land, Indian and the western.

Assimilating with both countries is not an easy task. Just like to take efforts for swimming. The world within water and the world without water focus on the status and life of insider-outsider. Here water is a symbol of life. Both the worlds are contrast in nature. Assimilation can be made possible through the efforts. This is very beautifully commented by the Kersi’s father.

He says:

Don’t you see, said Father, that you are confusing with facts, fiction does not create facts, fiction can come from facts, it can grow out of facts by compounding, transposing, argumenting, diminishing, or altering them in any way; but you must not confuse that really happened with what the story says happened, you must not lose your grasp on reality, that way madness lies.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1987, P. 250)

Kersi like Mistry is another diasporic writer. Through his writing he returns to Bombay, where he spent his childhood. He writes the stories about his homeland on the basis of memory and sends a copy to his parents. This stories show his fondness for his motherland. Through his letters he tries to convey his parents that he has not forgotten India at all. On the reading this story we find the similarities between Kersi and Persi.

The discussion between the mother and the father about their son’s stories are like the argument between Mistry and audience. In this story, “Mistry reveals his love for Bombay”.

(Grace, Alby, 2009, P. 57)

Gradually we see Kersi creates positive attitude towards the land of his adoption. His inability to swimming in Canada is linked with his earlier inability to be matter in swimming on the Chaupatty Beach in Bombay. This failure is the indication of the Parsis inability to assimilate in either India or western countries.
Mistry permanently settled in Canada. Though he is physically far away from homeland he is mentally attached through his literature. No doubt he has faced a lot of problems during the writing process.

Talking to British magazine he says:

So far I have had no difficulty writing about it, even though I have been always for so long…All fiction realize on the real world, in the sense, that we all take in the world through our five sense and we accumulate details consciously or subconsciously. This accumulation of detail can be drawn on when you write fiction.

(www.Barnesandnoble.com)

**A Fine Balance**

*A Fine Balance* is a very mature kind of composition which is compared to the earlier series of short story collection. Mistry focuses on the lives of ordinary people, begun in *Such a Long Journey* and is continued in *A Fine Balance* published in 1996. Rohinton Mistry is the recipient of several prestigious awards, as *Fine Balance* also won the Booker Prize and the International IMPAC Dublin literary Award. One of the most remarkable feature of the Rohinton Mistry is that his brilliancy in capture the crowded, throbbing life of India. His novels are closely related with the social and political background. As in *A Fine Balance* also he describes how the political events impact on lives of common people.

Though, he is settled in Canada since 1975, Mistry preserves the memory alive of his early days in India. In an interview with Veena Gokhale, he tells how he preserved the memory of India alive. He comments:

I general, I don’t think there is much one can do to keep memory alive – memory lives and dies on its own memory is a strange thing: when assumed to be dead, it can surprise one by returning to life. I am speaking, of course, not of memory that is concerned with things like street, names, film songs, etc. These things can be found in maps and books. I refer to those moments which at the time of actual occurrence may have seemed banal but which, given the gift of remembrance become moments of revelation. My novels as not ‘researched’ in the formal
Rohinton Mistry writes about India through his imagination. Living in Canada and writing about India he is fully aware of several drawbacks of Indian social and political life. As he described in his literary writing, in his writing he throw light on Parsi family and community in particular, and the country in general. He presents varied changes of the community and its effect through his characters. Also he focuses on the existing facts. As A.K. Sing aptly comments on It. he says:

Mistry’s novel as a cluster of narratives, deals with the Parsi community and its identity, with its national consciousness and then with the third dimension, too, viz, its identity with the world and the novel is to be studied in this context, if we wish to know the Parsi community as perceived by the novelist. The novel traces the history of the Parsi community in India through Malc Saldana’s bid to establish historical superiority of his religion over his friends (Gustad’s) as his Christianity came to India. Over 1900 years ago when Apostle Thomas landed on the Malabar Coast long before the Parsi came to Seventh Century from Persia, running away from the Muslims. But Saldhna is forced to give up by Gustad’s rejoinder when he said, “This may be our Prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam?” This sets the tone of the novel as it tries to sum up fears and anxieties of otherwise passive community, which is quite active in articulation in their characteristic manner. As a community it has not only lived peacefully in the vast sprawling forest of Indian culture, but it has accepted the land and contributed to its development in their own way. Indian politicians became an object of verbal assault, as they seemed to have pinched them somewhere. They run down Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi because neither Nehru nor Indira treated Feroz Gandhi well.

(Singh, Avadhes Kumar, 1997, P. 04)
A Fine Balance opens with a chapter in titled ‘prologue 1975’ and closes with ‘Epilogue 1984’. These are the important years in 1975 the declaration of ‘a state of Internal Emergency’ by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and in 1984 Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her Sikh bodyguards revenge for the Indian army’s attack on Golden Temple in Amritsar and its result was the death of their religious leader Jarnail Bhindranwale. As, the story develops the victimization of four major characters – Dina Dalal, Ishwar, Omprakash and Maneck Kohlah, at the time of Emergency.

B. Indira observes:

Emergency, a decency of an insecure leader, disturbs the coherence of routine of the average lives of Ishvar, Darjee and his youthful nephew Omprakash Darjee and their employer Dina Dalal, a middle aged widow and her paying guest Maneck Kohlah, Dina and Maneck are only the indirect victim of Emergency as their lives are dependent on the lives of the tailors, Ishwar and Om. All of them are aware of something stifling their lives though they cannot link it to the existing political scenario of the country their struggle for survival, as far as they are concerned, doesn’t have a political angle to it they all believe that the oft-heard word Emergency is sort of a game played by the power centre and it would not really affect the ordinary people like them hence each in his way tries to connect the pervading discomfort and insecurity to their problems here and now. Very soon when their simplest dreams get thwarted they are forced into realizing the mayhem created by the Emergency.

(Indira, B., 1998, P. 110)

A Fine Balance is such a long journey during the post-independent India, and specially the days of Indira Gandhi’s rule with Dina Dalal and other characters, who suffer a lot of because of political disturbances around them.

Rohinton Mistry very skillfully integrated different events scattered here and there in this novel. Most of the events revolve around the difficult situation of layman K. Ratan Shiela Mani says:

Mistry narrates the story in masterly fashion and the reader is shuffled between various time faces that mark each major historical upheaval. He highlights crucial events in the countries chronicle by depicting the background of each of the
major characters. Ishwar and his nephew Om are from the village; Maneck is from a hill station in the North, while Dina lives in the metropolis. The lives of the tailors, for fathers reflect the tyranny of the caste system in rural India where unimaginable horrors are perpetrated on the lower castes. Oppressive cast violence has driven Om Prakash and Ishwar from their traditional occupation of working with leather to learn the skills of tailoring in the town. However, dwindling avenues of work in the town; bring them to the metropolis. Maneck comes to the city for higher education. In Maneck’s background also lies the pathetic story of India’s partition. Dina’s story is one of struggle- struggle to safeguard her fragile independence from her automatic brother Nussawan; and protect her flat from her rapacious landlord. Her story is symbolic of the rebellion of the young women their subjection. Each member of this quartet aspires in changing society to transcend the constraints of birth, caste, sex in a modern, urban world where anything seems impossible.

(K. Ratan, Shiela, Mani, 2001, P. 30)

*A Fine Balance* is made up of three major narratives. They portray the story very skillfully about the major protagonist of Dina, Ishwar and Om and Maneck. The first, third and fifth chapters are devoted to the past lives of Dina, Ishwar and Om and Maneck. *A Fine Balance* is an account of social and historical developments of a country.

Rohinton Mistry uses some devices like irony, humor; intersexuality to make his narratives effective. Mistry very skillfully set his novel in three various back grounds. Dina Dalal lives in Bombay, the tailors; Ishwar and Om are deal with rural India; Maneck Kohlah is from the Himalayas (North India). The narrative highlights the discrimination between the untouchables and the high caste people in rural India also there is a transformation of life from rural to urban. Real India portrayed by all the narratives in *A Fine Balance*. Vinita D. Bhatnagar says:

If Mistry’s “truth” is incomplete it is because it is in the nature of fiction to be incomplete and self contradictory. A text presents reality partially or incoherently, leaving gaps. Through these gaps a reader can see what the text was hiding from itself. In the case of Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* this gap, this silence, is represented by the vision and the experience of Avinash. By removing him from the scene of action before he can seriously alter the chain of events by
influencing Maneck and changing his philosophy, Mistry attempts to prevent any disruption of the narrative flow of his novel. When Avinash reappears- he is dead and no longer disruptive of the narrative logic. He has become yet another victim and the suicide of his three sisters further adds to the pathos. The stage is set for everything to end badly and voice that could have questioned this statement has been necessarily silence.

(Bhatnagar, Vinita, P. 1998, P. 108)

_ A Fine Balance _ is a tragedy that everything ends with a sad and negative role. He also tells about the political and social situation of India. Here we examine his negative attitude of India’s political and social life. It is not fact that all Indian politicians are useless. In past, leaders like, Gandhiji, Shastriji, Jai Prakash Narayan and Morarji Desai set examples of ideal statesmen of India.

The sense of sacrifice ideal human relationship, love for culture and tradition are some of the features of Indians people, which unfortunately ignored by Mistry in his novel.

What does Mistry’s fiction deal with? This is aptly stated by Pramod Nayar, in his book. _The novels of Rohinton Mistry - a Critical Study_ by Jadipsinh Dodiya states Mistry’s fiction is concerned with great inequalities of the world; between the classes, genders, castes and official hierarchies”.

(Dodiya, Jadipsinh, 1998, P. ix)

The novel is about the importance of maintaining a fine balance of our lives. Every character faces a number of obstacles in the course of life. Their life is never smooth some problems are nature sent and some are man-made. All characters struggle very hard, so some of them can maintain a fine balance in their lives and some are become unsuccessful in their lives.

**In Search of Self-realization**

The main protagonist of the novel is Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow. The first chapter is devoted to the story of Dina Dalal. Her long journey from age of twelve and death of
her father to the age of forty two described in this chapter. She is an intelligent daughter of Dr. Shroff she faces various obstacles in her life like her father she wanted to become a Doctor. She was very impressed by her father’s personality. He was an ideal person in her point of view. All is well until her father’s death. All family power passes into the hands of her brother Nusswan, and all her dreams vanished in her brother’s fist. He stopped her education and she was forced to do all the household work.

She accepts her fate and revolts too, “I am not your servant! Wash your own dirty plates! You said we would each do our own work! All your stinking things you leave for me! He’s cheating! He doesn’t do any work! I do everything”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 19)

Dina could not tolerate all the harassment of her brother. So she tries to educate herself by visiting public libraries to keep herself intellectually updated. In music classes she meets Rustom Dalal, a very ordinary person who shares her passion for books and music. In an interview with Angela Lambert, Mistry said: about his meeting with his wife Freny Elvia at a music school. “Where she was taking voice and piano lessons and I was doing classes in music theory and composition”. (April 26, 2002). Mistry highlights his real-life past memories through his characters.

Dina and Rustom Dalal fall in love and decide to marry. She was in great trouble with her brother, so she wanted to live her life on her own style, she rebels against him and marries Rustom. They are very happy, but this happiness was very short time. It was end with the death of Rustom in a road accident on their third wedding anniversary. Having no other option for her own existence she sets up her own fashion business. She takes order from the Au Revoir Fashion House and begins her business. She was in search of tailors who can help her in her work. It is thus the three characters entered in her life, Om, Ishwar and Maneck. They are related with the low caste family. They are chamars (leather makers) by caste. They came from village to the ‘dream city’ in search of their own prosperity.

However, for breaking the rules of the society and the community they are punished. Dukhi Mochi who lives in a small village; has two sons Narayan and Ishwar
who forced by their parents to do a profession of tailors his son’s transformation from chamar to tailor becomes the talk of the town. Dukhi’s adventure is to break the rules of cast, which high-caste people would not like at all. Mistry narrates:

Dukhi Mochi’s decision to turn his sons into tailors was indeed courageous, considering that the prime of his own life had been spent in obedient compliance with the traditions of the caste system. Like his forefathers before him, he had accepted from childhood the occupation preordained for his present incarnation.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 18)

Rointon Mistry focuses on the difficulty to fight against the deep-rooted caste-system in India. Turning cobbler into tailors was big crime. So, Dukhi Mochi was punished by Dhakur Dharmasi very badly as Narayan was punished by him Dukhi, Roopa, Radha and their daughter brought in dark room and shown the Narayan’s dead body. Mistry narrates the extreme cruelty of Thakur Dharmasi and his men thus:

The light tore away the benevolent cloak of darkness. The naked corpse’s face was a burnt and broken blur. Only by the red birthmark on his chest could they recognize Narayan. A ling howl broke from Radha. But the sound of grief soon mingled with the family’s death agony; the house was set alight. The first flames liked at the bound flesh. The dry winds, furiously fanning the fire, showed the only spark of merely during this night. The blaze swiftly enfolded all six of them.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 20)

When Ishwar and Omprakash heard this news they complained to the police-station and registered an F.I.R. but who cares for the death of an ordinary people in a country like us? The sub-inspector says to Ishwar, “What kind of rascalality is this? Trying to fill up the F.I.R. with lies? You filthy achoot castes are always out to make trouble! Get out before we charge you with public mischief!”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 21)

Mistry very aptly shows the persecution of low caste people by the upper class community in this novel. Many questions arise in the mind of the readers. Why do these people suffer so much? What was their crime? The readers are left without any answers to these questions. The fifth chapter is with the story of Maneck Kohalh who lives in’the land of the mountain’. He comes to the city for the further education. Maneck realizes
that his own problem of alienation from his father and lack of adjustment with his roommates. Maneck also realizes that life is often *a Fine Balance* between happiness and despair.

As his mother happens to be a friend of Dina Dalal, so she allowed living in her house as a paying guest. Now Dina’s flat there are crosses gender, class, religious and ethnic boundaries, as it is like sailing under one flag. Thus four different people come together and create a world for themselves away from the maddening crowd. They all depend on one another and find comfort in each other’s company.

Rohinton Mistry portrays the various shades of colors in the novel. Diasporic or immigrant writers are often criticized for their incomplete presentation. Mistry is also criticized about the India’s population during the days of internal emergency. He is criticized that living in Canada and writing about India, he has lost all his bosom feeling of human relationship with the third world. However, the fact is that Mistry creates so much horror in his novel also tries to present the fact or reality.

Mistry is not only portrayed the Parsi world but he goes ahead and explores unexplored arenas. He handled varied issues like the operation of the downtrodden; the punishment mated out for defying man-made rules, the social attributes the political drama etc.

Mrs. Gandhi declared the Internal Emergency during the period of 1975-1977. The Emergency causes the eventual loss and destruction of Dina Dalal, Maneck Kohlah, Ishwar and Omprakash. As an example Dina Dalal, by the end of the novel loses her independence and has to seek shelter. Om is castrated in an act symbolic of the impotency of the general populace of India. During the Indira Gandhi’s Emergency Ishvar is crippled by the both legs and begging for a living and Maneck Kohlah throws him in front of a moving train and commits suicide.

Mistry tactfully discusses in the novel how Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s decision of a ‘State of Internal Emergency’ badly affects on the ordinary people. However, Mistry’s view on the socio-cultural problems of our contemporary Indian society and Indian politics K. Ratana Shiela Mani observes:
The political historical dimension of the novel is also obvious. The novel is saga that spans the momentous events of India’s history from the turbulent times of the countries partition in 1947, to the macabre aftermath of the Prime Minister’s assassination in 1984. However, *a Fine Balance* is not merely a political novel. Mistry succeeds in interweaving national history with the personal lives of the protagonists. Thus, though the dominant setting of the novel is India’s political milieu, “what galvanize this novel” to use John Ball’s words is “the way the intersection of the political and the personal is given such compelling moral resonance”

(K. Ratan, Sheila, Mani, 2001, P. 24)

Rohinton Mistry is totally against the Mrs. Gandhi’s government. They persuade to the male population for vasectomies themselves for a family planning. They think it is only solution on the population control. The poor men attracted towards the government scheme like a transistor, a ration card or money. Due to their poverty they had undergone the same a double time. People were literally forced to undergo this operation. We find an old women wailing and telling the doctor, “I am old, my womb is barren, and there are no more eggs in it why are you wasting operation on me?” (Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 532)

Her words unheard and she is forcibly performed up on. These political conditions create a lot of pain and misery among the poor people. Indira Gandhi appears in family planning rallies. She looks like Goddess, who comes to give *Darshan* to her devotees. By seeing her performance some politicians declared that ‘India was Indira and Indira was India’. India’s famous modern painter, M.F.Hussain painted a series of pictures where he had imaged Mrs. Gandhi as the Hindu goddess, *Durga*, riding her mount, a tiger. The tailors and their friends in the slum rounded up the rally where they saw local politicians and Mrs. Gandhi. The poor people enjoyed by this entertainment: said Rajaram, “I told you it’s going to be a day at the circus… we have clowns, monkeys, acrobats, everything”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 261)
In this section of the ‘Day at the Circus, Night in the Slum’ focuses on Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s Emergency agenda, the twenty points program in which included the removal of poverty Garabi Hato, population control and the beautification of cities. All the three points issue the real meanings of slogans, which are closely connected with India’s poor people. Garabi Hatao slogan became the Garib Ko Hatao remove the poor. Such removal would automatically make the cities more ‘beautiful’. So the ‘ugly’ poor people forcefully removed from the urban area. This tragic time come front of tailors and their friends.

There are other political events which caused misery, disillusionment, dislocation and inexplicable wrath was the historical partition. A line was drawn across India and the new land was called Pakistan. The birth of the new country caused a lot of bloodshed and morning.

Bitterly Mistry says:

But long before that eagerly awaited birth, there was another, gorier partition, when two nations incarnated out of one a foreigner drew a magic line on a map and called it the new border; it became a river of blood upon the Earth. And the orchards, fields, factories, business, all on the wrong side of that line, vanished with a wave of the pale conjuror’s wand.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 205)

These political gimmicks were performed to give pleasure a few people, but ultimately it effected on the common men’s lives, they suffers a lot due to these political gimmicks, and these suffering memories are fresh even to this day. Sunita Goel in an article “A Literary Voyage to India, “Rohinton Mistry’s A Fine Balance” aptly says, “Mistry actives the remarkable feat of mixing historical slices with their personal lives and attempts to portray the reality of India”.

(Goel, Sunita, 2001, P. 159)

Cruelty of Casteism:

In India there is often remained racial discrimation. Cruelty of castism is existed since the pre-independence days to the present. Mistry moves further and portrays the
cruelty of castism and changes the lives of the characters. Ishwar and Narayan are belonged to the chamar community. They are not able to enjoy all the facilities that people from the higher community do. They are even far away of formal education. Narayan points out the fact that as a chamar he cannot allow drinking water at the village well, worship in the temples of the upper casts or walking where he likes. When he attempts to assert his right to vote, he is tortured and hanged in the village square. Other untouchables beaten up random, their women raped and their hurts burnt. Thakur thinks that alit about the punishment of Dukhi’s family for committing crime to change cobblers into tailors. He thinks, “What the ages had put together, Dukhi had dared to break asunder; he had turned cobblers into tailors, distorting society’s timeless balance. Crossing the line of caste had to be punished with the utmost severity”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 147)

Dukhi, Radha, Roopa and the daughters burnt alive by the Thakur. As a low caste community, Om and Ishwar forced to live in Jhopapattis in Bombay city. They live there as a street laborer unpaid labor. They are frustrated at various points due to their untouchability.

Through the Dukhi’s story Mistry tries to fight against the caste injustice. Ishavar’s father Dukhi revolts against the caste oppression. His courage to break all the restrictions and attempts his sons to change into tailors, it shows the surprising courage in a man. In novel the speaker spreads the Mahatama’s message says:

“What is this disease? You may ask this disease, brothers and sisters in the notion of untouchability ravaging us for centuries, denying dignity to our fellow human beings. This disease must be purged from our society, from our hearts, and from our minds. No one is untouchable, for we are all children of the same God. Remember what Gandhiji says, that untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisonous milk”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 107)

When little boys entered school and look at the things kept in the temple of learning out of curiosity. The teacher who notices them is horrified and exclaims, “You
chamar rascals! Very brave you are daring to enter the school! Is this what your parents teach you to define the tools of learning and knowledge?”

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 110-11)

The boys went off mercilessly and for the rest of their lives they never dare to enter in school again Narayan, the brother of Ishwar tried to revolt against the existing order of the village. They wanted to be their caste member should be selected at the assembly, for the same they tried and openly revolted against the Thakur’s men. For doing this he and his family are punished very brutally:

Throughout the day, at intervals, they were flogged as they hung naked by their ankles room the branches of a banyan tree. Drifting in an out of consciousness, their screams grew faint. In the distance, in the far field his men urinated on the three inverted faces. Semiconscious, the parched mouths were grateful for the moisture, licking the trickle with feeble urgency. In the evening, after the ballot boxes were taken away burning coals were held to the three men’s genitals, and then stuffed into their mouths. Their screams were heard through the village until their leaps and tongues melted away.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 146)

Even Darjis also punished for changing their caste and revolting against the socio/religious order. When Darjis entered at the village, they forced for the family planning operation, its effect upon Ishwar that he remains handicapped for the rest of his life and for Om when his testicles are removed reducing him to the status of a eunuch. At the end of the novel both are seen begging on the road for their existence. The pain, agony, misery, trouble, torture and degeneration is presented through the characters of the Darjis.

**Unity in Diversity**

As our Indian country we examine the ‘Unity in Diversity’ in the present novel. It is perfect evidence of Mistry’s Indian attitude, though he is in an alien land. Through his characters Mistry goes beyond class, caste, gender, religion and various other men set
boundaries. The Darjis, Maneck and Dina come together for their personal and professional purposes and create a little world away from the glaring crowd.

Mistry entitled his chapter as ‘Sailing under One Flag’. It is her varied caste and gender sailing under one flag. Means all the four characters come together Dina Dalal belongs to the ‘city by the sea, Maneck to the ‘mountains’ and the Darjis to the ‘village by the river’. All these four characters come under one flag to prosper their life, and give the scope to their qualities, which is not possible at their birth place. Once again their lives failed with pleasure and calm. They begin to share their feelings which cross all the limitations of caste, creed and gender. But at the period of time their dreams are shattered and many hearts are broken into pieces.

Dina dreams of a happy life, for herself and Rustom, his death shatter her dream. The Darjis dreams to make their lives success and prosper. Maneck, moved to Gulf for a better future, but he reminds all the sweet memories which he spent with Dina and the Darjis and his father’s death also deeply touched him. The charm was lost when he came to know about the Darji’s plight and from newspaper he realizes that his friend, Avinash not committed suicide but was brutally murdered. On his way back he sees Darjis begging on the road, but he pretends not to recognize them and moves away instantly. Maneck could bear all this incidents and he is mentally disturb does not realize what to do next. He looks at the rails at the railway station and commits suicide:

A distant rumbling was herd and Maneck moved to the front of the platform. He stared at the rails. How they glinted, like the promise of life itself, stretching endlessly in both directions, silver ribbons skimming over the gravel bed, knitting together the blackened, warn –out wood of the railway ties. When the first compartment had entered the station, he steeped of the platform and on to the gaming silver tracks.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P.111-12)

He ends his life. He shocks by all the bad events so; he decides to be his own destiny maker. Actually the fact is that he failed to maintain a fine balance in his life. Dina and Darjis face the many difficulties in their lives, but they keep on constantly working at the wheels of life.
Every person has to face many up and downs in life in varied forms. It is very important that an apt balance be maintained in life and this fine balance only can create a peaceful life, society and family.

**Designer of Quilt:**

Dina is a designer of a quilt. The quilt has connected events of the pre-independent India to the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the vulnerability of the average man’s life. By using device of memory and the thread of life Dina try to weave a beautiful quilt. This quilt is a symbol of varied bitter and good experiences, up and downs of life. All these different incidents are sewn together to make a beautiful multicolored quilt. Each piece deals with the little joys or sorrows of life.

Dina uses the quilt at night. Each patch of the quilt deals with her happy childhood, her miserable adolescence, her tragic marriage, here shattered and many other things. She wants to build her family like her quilt, with the threads of love and affection; but as decided by destiny she left with no family in her life. So she blames to be her own.

The tailor aptly states, “It will look beautiful; just keep connecting patiently, Dina bai that’s the secret. *Jihan* it all seems meaningless bits and rags, till you piece it together”.

(Mistry, Rohinton, 1996, P. 403)

This quilt helps to Dina to spend her time very happy with Maneck, Darji and her brother’s house. Like a multicolored quilt, Mistry’s stories also scattered into bits and pieces. His stories related with the different sources but like the beautiful quilt, when it put together it feels excellent to the readers.

In an interview with Gokhale, Mistry comments:

My novels are not ‘researched’ in the formal sense of the word, Newspaper, magazines, chats with visitors from India-these are things I rely on having said that. I will add that all these would be worthless without the two main ingredients: memory and Imagination.

(The Times of India Oct 27th 1996)
However, Mistry never created the gulf between the relationship of him and his motherland. Though he is physically far away, he never has been spiritually away from her. How much he is deeply attached with the motherland it reflects through his writing.
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