

**FICTION OF ROHINTON MISTRY: A STUDY IN DIASPORIC CONTEXT****Dr. Indu Prakash Singh**

Associate Professor, Department of English,

Raja Harpal Singh Mahavidyalaya Singrauli, Jaunpur (U.P.)

**Abstract**

The writings of the Indian Diaspora have received a great deal of attention and critical acclaim throughout the world. Rohinton Mistry is a well renowned author in the contemporary commonwealth literature and occupies a significant place among the writers of Indian Diaspora. Even though he is settled in Canada; it is his upbringing in Mumbai that reflects in all his writings. The distinct Mumbai culture, particularly the Parsee way of life, the people of the city and even the politics of India are major themes in his novels. Rohinton Mistry as a writer of Diaspora has carved a niche for himself. His works such as: "Tales from Firozsha Baag", "Such A Long Journey", "A Fine Balance" and "Family Matters"; mark a new kind of writing, resulting from a fragmented, splintered world. As a Diasporic Parsi writer, very sensitively he has recalled his community's journey through time and history with a sense of loss and nostalgia. His books portray diverse facets of Indian socioeconomic life; as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs, and religion. Many of his writings are markedly "Indo-nostalgic". Rohinton Mistry through his Diasporic discourse has well depicted his ancestral background, his community's engaged situation in a metropolis like Bombay and his deep attachment with and nostalgia for a world gone by. In this paper an attempt has been made to delineate diasporic discourse in the works of Rohinton Mistry. Although he is obsessed with the colonial and postcolonial experiences in India, we can find some traces of Canada in his literature. His characters dream of being integrated into, and accepted by, Canadian society on the one hand and on the other hand, these same characters are torn by an insatiable desire to be true to their native culture; to honour and cherish their own, distinct cultural identity.

**Keyword**

Fiction, Rohinton, Diasporic, Paris, Mistry

**Introduction**

An Indian diaspora writer, Rohinton Mistry has published numerous works of fiction. Despite the fact that he hasn't been back to India since 1975, he's been able to beautifully convey the experience of immigration and the immense pain of being away from his family and friends. A diaspora-focused writer, he has established himself as an authority in his field. Rohinton Mistry is a writer of the Indian Diaspora because he was born in India but now lives and works in Canada. Though Parsi Zoroastrians, Mistry's family had to flee Iran after the Islamic conquest, so he was already in Diaspora in India. Double displacement has informed his writing like other Parsi writers. (as quoted by Dodiya 3)

The protagonists of Mistry's stories struggle to find their place in society and in their families, but they are ultimately let down by both. When faced with adversity, the character's spirit remains unwavering. The struggles that the protagonists have to face in order to live will pique the interest of readers. Despite the widespread belief among many readers that Mistry has exaggerated events, the author insists that they are true and that he has revealed the truth in his books. All of his novels depict the inescapable pressures of daily life. His characters are notable because they can be found in everyday situations. Despite the characters' common and limited aspirations and expectations, the terrible circumstances of their society subject them to unnecessary tortures. As a result, their hopes are dashed. The characters' beauty lies in their ability to remain stoic in the face of adversity and bend like grass in the face of the strongest winds. They prevail in life's battles thanks to their forbearance and tenacity. As a result, it conveys both the aspirations and frustrations of the poor. The emergence of caste, community, and cultural tensions in modern society can easily be read or heard about in the course of one's daily routine. One of our fellow human beings experiences the same humiliation and embarrassment as the characters in this storey. Discrimination, injustice, poverty, and a lack of opportunity are all issues that Mistry examines in his book.

Many of the dialectical writings of the diaspora dealt with social issues and the emergence of a new identity. Cultural identities cannot be attributed to pre-existing constructed or historical cultural characteristics that define particular ethnicity," says HomiBhabha. A mutual recognition of cultural difference results from the ongoing interface and exchange of cultural forms, according to his theory (HomiBhabha, 1939: 9).

They were exiled from their homeland by the Islamic conquests of Iran, so the Parsis sought refuge in India some time ago. Parsis emerged from a cocoon-like existence during the British Raj and became anglophiles. For the first time, they began to see the introduction of English education in India as a positive development for them. During the colonial period, they were content to play the role of agents, mediators, and diplomats, and kept a safe distance from Indian culture. Except for the Zoroastrian religion, they willingly brought about change in all of Zoroastrianism's institutions. Despite never being fully accepted by the British, they felt isolated after the British left India. In India, they felt a deep sense of alienation and loss of self-identity. In light of the fact that the historical Persia no longer exists, the absence of home becomes even more pronounced. Despite their inability to fit in with the Indian culture, they remain hopeful of returning to their ancestral homeland.

One of the most important studies of the Indian Diasporic literature is Literature of the Indian Diasporic (LDI). Furthermore, it is critical to diasporic theory. There are ethnic communities within nations that define themselves as "migrant identities," whether intentionally or unintentionally. This anthology uses the term "migrant identity," which refers to any ethnic enclave within the nation-state that defines itself as a group experiencing displacement. This phenomenon can be broken down into four distinct categories: the Indian diaspora. Indians were transported to British colonies in Africa and the West Indies as indentured servants during the colonial period. During the early postcolonial period, Indians migrated to Britain and Canada in order to fill a workforce that had been decimated by World War II. During the third phase, many Indian students went to Western universities, mainly in the United States.



As the twentieth century came to a close, mass migration became a way of life for most people. Globalization prompted the first wave of emigration. Nevertheless, in the twenty-first century, people's restless search for better opportunities and improved prospects forces them to live in a society devoid of a sense of place or belonging. The original meaning of diaspora was the dispersion of Jews. Alienation and migration have been re-named and re-interpreted as being the minority or being on the outside. According to Vijay Mishra, "The old diaspora or pre-modern phase and the new diaspora or late modern phase" are the two main causes of migration. Indentured labour migration falls under the old diaspora, whereas voluntary migration to a foreign country in search of a brighter future falls under the new diaspora," according to a study, the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies in Shimla, 1996

In his writings, Indian Diaspora author Rohinton Mistry reflects on the urgency of one's own character and the various aspects of migration. He was a member of the Parsi community of Indian origin, but he moved to Canada in his twenties and became a Canadian citizen. Many challenges await him as a Parsi-Indian and Canadian author in the new social milieu. In his characters, he removes the pain and suffering of settler journalists who move from India for better training, career opportunities, and other reasons that make them more solid. When it comes to the Parsi community in India and the future of post-provincial India, his first full-length novel *Such a Long Journey*, which was shortlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize, shows his deep concern. An undisputed hero named Gustad Noble serves as a conduit for extending the time period from the beginning of the Indian civil war of 1971 to when East Pakistan became Bangladesh in the aftermath. Displacement is a recurring theme in Mistry's work, and this is no exception. Indian Parsi writer and exile in Canada. To tell the story of his homeland, he uses Om and Ishwar, two Indian characters who have fled their native land and now find themselves torn between two worlds; their native land and the foreign one in which they find themselves. Their new surroundings appear to have uprooted them from their familiar surroundings, but they are unable to find serenity there. They battle for a new identity by making compromises in an unfamiliar world. Omprakash reassured everyone, saying, "We don't have to be concerned about cancer."

A country's culture can influence the type of diaspora it has. Although they share a common ancestor, diasporas may behave in completely different ways depending on where they relocate. Diaspora narratives can be found in the works of Rohinton Mistry, who lives in Canada. The "self" is central to the diaspora narrative. In today's world, the word "home" does not always imply a sense of "self" or "belonging," and an individual can sometimes seem to vacillate between the two concepts. Rushdie's experience as an Indian living outside of India is one of constant self-reflection. People like Naipaul, who travel because they are not at home anywhere, are not alone in this situation. Those who have taken more than one root, the "twice removed," are another matter entirely. The continent of Africa is home to Vassanji's protagonist Ramji in *Amriika*; however, India is the country where Vassanji was born and raised. <sup>1</sup> In the case of Mistry, this is also true. He made the decision to leave India on his own accord in order to broaden his outlook on life. The author's sense of "identification with an alienation from his new and old homelands" was infused with the author's historical experience of double displacement as a Parsi. The term "diaspora" refers to the dispersion or migration of people from one country to another who share common ancestry, culture, and religious beliefs. Dispersion of Jews outside of Israel is referred to as "the Jewish exodus." In Greek, "diaspeirein" means "sow or scatter seeds across" and "dia" means "across." When the Jews were exiled to Babylonia in the third

century B.C., they coined the phrase. Communities that were either displaced or dislocated from their native land as a result of various movements of immigration, migration, or exile are included.

According to Nilufer E. Bharucha's research, the first group of indentured labourers transported to Mauritius in the 1830s was the beginning of the Indian Diaspora's history, which is now more than a century and seventy years old (21). Aside from these broad divisions, the Indian Diaspora can be divided into colonial and postcolonial subcategories. Labor and entrepreneurship were the first two subcategories to emerge in colonial contexts. Postcolonial migration encompasses both the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of gainful employment. Professionals and semi-skilled workers alike are on the lookout for work.

According to Gabriel Sharmani Patricia, diaspora "can challenge the reductive process of homogenization that is at work in the formation and consolidation of natural and cultural identities" (Gabriel Sharmani Patricia, 1999: 21). Late twentieth-century nationalist movements are distinct from those that took place in the middle of the twentieth century in that they focus on revolution, imperialism, and decolonization, whereas the latter are more focused on independence and self-determination. As a result, in contemporary society, nationalism is largely seen as negative or hegemonic. Another factor is that the idea of a third-world national identity grew out of the anti-colonial nationalist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said correctly noted the anti-colonial nationalist ideology's inherent ethic of separatism. He articulated the social exclusions caused by the establishment of states in the Third World.

All of the characters in *A Fine Balance* experienced a sense of dislocation. The story revolved around Maneck, a character who was adversely affected by the migration. Twice in his lifetime, he had to contend with being uprooted. At school, he had to travel to Mumbai for a diploma degree, where he was constantly bullied by his superiors. He tried to fit in with the College's political climate, but he was uncomfortable. Later, he was assigned to a job in Dubai. When it came to Maneck, the country's "petroleum diaspora" was not welcomed. Despite earning a good living, Maneck was depressed and often went without food. Despite spending eight years there, he had no idea what the culture or language of the country he was living in was like.

Rohinton Mistry's fiction is notable for its depiction of the crowded, pulsating life of India. As a result, there has been a surge in interest in his works, which are closely tied to the social and political context of his native country. Even in the shadows of Indian politics, he is well-versed. As a political novelist, Rohinton Mistry's knowledge of Indian politics isn't far from the truth, as evidenced by his novels. For more than 30 years after leaving India, he continued to write novels that dealt with the plight of the downtrodden masses and their oppression by corrupt politicians, as well as the political decisions that affect them. As a result, Mistry tells the stories of those who are often left out of history books: the poor and politically powerless. Lord Mountbatten and Indira Gandhi aren't the focus of Mistry's stories; rather, Mistry's stories focus on those who are directly affected by political decisions. Jasbir Jain remarked



Rohinton Mistry's work raises a lot of other questions specifically related to the 'homeland' and political memory. Neither nostalgia nor memory in itself can account for this rootedness and preoccupation with the homeland and the environment precincts of the city of birth. It is also not merely the fact of being more at home or having a more intimate relationship with the space back there. It is, more than all these, a projection of the individual character, and a gesture of expanding the memory to include both the specific and the universal (Jasbir Jain, 2003: 11).

In Mistry's novel, *A Fine Balance*, the horrors of the Internal Emergency are depicted in graphic detail. Even after all these years, the book again brought up events like Kanpur sisters' suicide and the resulting castration as well as demolishments and sterilisations. Despite the horrors of India's internal Emergency, Mistry was able to capture the essence of human warmth and decency. Mistry distinguished between country life's simplicity and city life's complexity in his writings. Many Indian writers of the time were seeking to rediscover their roots in order to better understand their country's culture and traditions. He described the cruel exploitation, torture, and suffering of the poor and the oppressed in society in gory detail. Narayana, a character in the novel *A Fine Balance*, stated that "Even after twenty years of Independence, nothing changes." Everything is the same, despite the fact that the government has passed new legislation and declared that "no more untouchability" (*A Fine Balance*: 142- 143). His family members were also burned alive at the Thakur's command after he spoke out against the Thakhurs who filled ballot papers by collecting their thumb impressions. This part of India, rarely seen by the average Indian, was the focus of Mistry's explorations. Comment by Jagdish Batra:

The author is not only a product of social, political, economic, and historical environment but he is also thinking individual, who has the power to shape his ideas and influence others. Based on this conclusion it is logical to believe that what a writer writes is equivalent to the impact that society has made on his mind but still scope remains for his initiative. He notes in his works the social reality and presents his suggestions for betterment and all this is deftly and aesthetically woven into the texture of his work (Jagdish Batra, 1991: 40).

Mistry's writings are based on his own personal experience and knowledge of his own culture and history. Authors like him, who are willing to stray from the canon of history to create new stories about historical figures and events, demonstrate an innovative way of remembering the past. The importance of expanding, adapting, and crossing boundaries is a common theme throughout his works. As a result, the barriers are artificial and temporary, and the challenge for Mistry's characters is to live morally and persevere through life's trials. When setting his stories in India's political past, Mistry is able to weave fact and fiction together seamlessly.

## Conclusion

For these reasons and more, we can say that Rohinton Mistry's Diasporic discourse accurately depicts both his own ancestry and the marginalisation of his community in the bustling metropolis of Bombay. Because of this, he has meticulously presented his community's efforts to preserve their cultural identity in the face of ethnic and religious attacks in post-imperial and post-independent India. This nostalgia helps Mistry to create a sense of loss about the characters' changing circumstances in both their private and public lives. He gives the characters a sense of social significance by skillfully fusing their personal affairs with communal and political matters pertaining to Bombay and India. Mistry's meticulous description transports the reader to Bombay's streets, the Parsi community's homes, and the muddled affairs of Indian politics in postcolonial India through the eyes of an insider. There may be a narrower focus on family matters in *Family Matters* compared to *A Fine Balance*, but Rohinton Mistry's writing is just as high quality and true to its readers. Having his back to the reader and his eyes fixed on the vastness of the sea, the cover image depicts a man who exudes a sense of security and calm as he stares into the distance. The novel is a remembrance of moving into the past, with a strong undercurrent of nostalgia. The crisis of uprooting and the sense of belonging are also highlighted in this piece.

## References

1. Anderson, C. (2012). "Bombay between Reality and Imagination in the Novels of Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, and John Irving. Herstellung".
2. Bharucha, N.E. (2003). *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Books.
3. Bharucha, N. (2003). *Writers of the Indian Diaspora: Rohinton Mistry*. Jaipur: Rawat.
4. Dodiya, J. (1998). *The Parsi Community in Such a Long Journey. The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*. Ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya. London: Sangam.
5. Dodiya, J. (Ed.). (1998). "Such a Long Journey: A Critical Study". *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*. Prestige Books. Op. Cit.
6. Goel, S. (1987). "Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Displacement in the Selected Works of Mistry, Rohinton: Tales from Firozsha Baag". Canada: Penguin Books.
7. Haldar, S. (Ed.). (2006). *Rohinton Mistry's "Such a Long Journey": A Critical Study*. Asia Book Club.
8. Morey, P. (2004). "Rohinton Mistry: Contemporary World Writers"; New York: Manchester UP.
9. Mistry, R. (1991). "Such a Long Journey"; India: Faber & Faber.
10. Narula, D.K. (2005). *South Asian Diaspora*. New Delhi: Creative
11. Parameswaran, U. (1996). "Literature of the Indian Diaspora in Canada". An Overview, South Asian Canadians. Ed. Jameela Beegam and Maya Dutt. Madras: Anu Chitra.
12. Ravichandra, C.P. (1998). "Utterly S.P.A.C.E.D. The Immigrant in Rohinton Mistry's Tales from Firozsha Baag". *Critical Practice: A Journal of Critical and Literary Studies*. ed. Avadhesh K. Singh, Vol. 5.No.1, New Delhi: Tara Chand Tanwar.
13. Singh, P. (2021). "Themes of Immigration in the Novels of Rohinton Mistry." *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*. 3.2. (2012): 1-6.

14. Selvam, P. (2009). "Humanism in the Novels of Rohinton Mistry". New Delhi: Creative Books.
15. Birbal Singh, Frank "Series Editor's Preface", Jasbir Jain, Neil Bissoondath: Indo-Caribbean Canadian Diaspora, Jaipur: Rawat Publications. 2005.
16. Dodiya, Jaydipsinh. The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1998.
17. Goel Savita. "Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Displacement in the Selected Works Of Rohinton Mistry". Parsi Fiction. Vol.2. ed Novy Kapadia. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2001.
18. Hall, Stuart "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Diaspora and Visual Culture, Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., London: Rout ledge. 2000.
19. Jain, Jasbir "The New Parochialism: Homeland in the Writing of the Indian Diaspora", In Diaspora, Makar and Paranjape, ed., New Delhi: India log Publications. 2001.





**Euro Asia**

*Research and Development  
Association*

1C/14, Ramesh Nagar

Delhi

Pin Code-110015

[www.euroasiapub.org](http://www.euroasiapub.org)

Email id: [editorijrim@gmail.com](mailto:editorijrim@gmail.com)

## **CERTIFICATE OF PUBLICATION**

*Online First Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access International Journal*

*This is to certify that a research paper/article/case study entitled*

**FICTION OF ROHINTON MISTRY: A STUDY IN DIASPORIC CONTEXT**

*Authored by*

**Dr. Indu Prakash Singh**

*Associate Professor, Department of English,*

**Raja Harpal Singh Mahavidyalaya Singrauli, Jaunpur (U.P.)**

*Has been published in*

**International Journal of research in Economics and Social Science**

**in Vol 1, Issue 1 of OCTOBER 2011. ISSN 2249-7382**

*We look forward to receive your other articles/research works for publication in the ensuing issues of our journal and hope to make our association everlasting.*

*Thanks*

*Regards*

**Editor in Chief**

[www.euroasiapub.org](http://www.euroasiapub.org)

[email:- editorijrim@gmail.com](mailto:editorijrim@gmail.com)

**International Journal of Research in Engineering and Applied Sciences ISSN(o): 2249-3905,(p): 2349-6525,  
International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences ISSN(o): 2249-7382,  
International Journal of Research in IT & Management ISSN(o): 2231-4334, ISSN(p): 2349-6517,  
International Journal of Research in Finance and Marketing (IJRFM)ISSN(o): 2231-5985,**