

# Rohinton Mistry: Issues Raised In His Works

Dr. Rekha Kowshik

Assistant Professor  
BES Evening College of Arts & Commerce  
Jayanagar  
Bangalore

**Key Words:** Parsis Community, Diaspora, Minorities, Tradition & modernity

Rohinton Mistry is an award winning Indian writer of Parsi origin who lives and writes in Canada, the country to which he immigrated in 1972 at the age of 23. Author of three acclaimed novels and a book of short stories, Mistry's books have often been called 'Indo-nostalgic'. His novels are set mainly in Bombay, India, which is home to a majority of the religious minority of people known as Parsis who follow the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism.

The characters in Mistry's stories are representative of the Parsi community, highlighting their struggles between tradition and modernity. His novels deal with problems unique to this community - their identity as a religious minority, their way of life, their cultural practices and beliefs, their sense of being different from Indian society at large, their anxieties, problems and aspirations - as part of the main narrative.

A recurring theme in Mistry's stories is politics. Indian society and politics form an important sub-plot in his works. Politics and events in post-independence Indian history form the back drop to the story, a backdrop that seems to have a disquieting, powerful effect on the fate of individuals. Mistry assimilates the Parsi story with the larger national one and this inter-connection between an exclusive cultural identity and a mundane everyday existence, upon which society and state seem to wield enormous influence, forms the crux of the message that Mistry seeks to convey to his readers.

There is an exploration of the Parsi way of life and culture in the novels and short stories of Rohinton Mistry, with emphasis on intra-community relationships, family structures and problems, economic status and problems, social assimilation and alienation, nationalism and oppression.

There is also the distinctive 'Parsi-ness' of the characters in his books which examine the effect that being Parsi has on their perceptions, emotions and reactions to everyday situations and adversities as well as their engagement with society outside of their own miniscule community.

Mistry's works chronicle the unique religion, culture and problems of the minority Parsi community comprehensively, encapsulating their smaller story within the larger framework of the bigger story of India, the country of a million minorities. There is the oft-spoken-of alienation of Parsis is on account of the documented 'foreignness' of their religion and culture and their special status as 'outsiders' in the context of the other religions and cultures practised in India. If this 'alienation' is a matter of perception or a situation experienced by all minority communities in India - religious, caste or linguistic among others, or a reflection of the alienation stories made famous by diasporas of Indians who live in the western world like Mistry himself These are certain issues that are evident and explored in his works.

## References

1. Morey, Peter : Rohiton Mistry, Manchester university Press,2004
2. Dodiya, Jaydipsinh : Perspectives on the Novels of Rohiton Mistry, Sarup and Sons, 2006

