

## Exploration Of Identity Culture And Social Realism In Rohinton Mistry's Novel

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### Abstract

This paper deals with the themes of identity, culture, and social realism are examined in two of Rohinton Mistry's books, "A Fine Balance" and "Such a Long Journey." Mistry's literary pieces explore the complexities of personal and societal identities within the heterogeneous context of Indian society. While navigating social expectations and historical and cultural complexities, characters struggle with their own goals and go on self-discovery journeys. Mistry depicts the intricate cultural fabric of India, including traditions, customs, and sociopolitical dynamics. Through evocative storytelling, he skillfully portrays the complexities of social issues, including poverty, corruption, and conflicts between groups. This abstract emphasises Mistry's exploration of how different aspects of one's identity interact within broader socio-cultural contexts, as well as the ability of individuals to endure and overcome challenges. This abstract contributes to the discourse by examining Mistry's narrative techniques and thematic concerns.

**Key Words:** Identity, Culture, Social realism, A Fine Balance, Such a Long Journey, Indian society, Personal identity.

### Introduction

Rohinton Mistry, a Canadian-Indian author belonging to the Parsi community, has established himself as a prominent figure in contemporary literature, celebrated for his profound exploration of identity, culture, and social realism within the intricate tapestry of Indian society. Mistry's exceptional literary works, "A Fine Balance" and "Such a Long Journey," skillfully interlace the intricacies of individual and societal identities within the context of a varied and multicoloured India. This introduction will examine the recurring themes present in Mistry's literary works, delving into the complexities of human existence and the dynamics of society as portrayed in his tales. Mistry's inquiry focuses on the concept of identity, which is a complex framework including personal, cultural, and societal components. Mistry's heroes navigate the complexities of identification in post-colonial India, a country characterised by diversity, customs, and change. The protagonists in his novels grapple with the burden of social expectations, historical legacies, and personal ambitions, embarking on quests of self-discovery that illuminate the intricate relationship between the individual and society. "A Fine Balance" by Mistry is a vivid portrayal of India during the 1970s, depicting the struggles of four individuals from diverse backgrounds as they navigate the turbulent landscape of political unrest and societal change. Mistry examines the experiences of Dina, Ishvar, Omprakash, and Maneck. Mistry explores the intricacies of caste, class, and religion, offering a poignant depiction of the human condition in the midst of adversity. Mistry exposes the harsh realities of poverty, corruption, and social injustice within the Emergency, while also commending the indomitable resilience of the human spirit. In "Such a Long Journey," Mistry takes readers on an exploration of the streets of Bombay (now Mumbai) during the early 1970s, examining the intricacies of Parsi identity within the broader context of Indian society. Mistry explores themes of duty, commitment, and sacrifice via the protagonist Gustad Noble, a middle-class bank clerk who is dealing with personal and family challenges. The novel presents a realistic portrayal of the Parsi community's attempt to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity. Gustad's journey, taking place amidst political upheaval and ethnic strife, serves as a symbol of the widespread yearning for a sense of

identity and belonging in a swiftly changing global landscape. Mistry's narrative vision revolves on his fastidiousness in observing minute particulars and his skill in portraying the nuances of Indian culture and society with genuineness and compassion. Mistry's writing is characterised by its vibrant imagery and expressive language, effectively capturing the essence of both bustling city life in Bombay and the tranquil solitude of a rural village. This allows readers to really immerse themselves in the authentic Indian experience. Mistry's meticulous investigation and extensive understanding of Indian history and culture construct a realm that seems both recognisable and unfamiliar, enabling readers to explore the intricacies of a changing society. Mistry's writings stand out not just for their exploration of identity and culture, but also for their profound social realism. He fearlessly tackles weighty subjects like as poverty, corruption, and communalism, demonstrating uncompromising honesty. Mistry's impactful books illuminate the harsh realities of life for millions of marginalised individuals in India, underscoring the profound inequalities within society. Mistry's novels, such as "A Fine Balance" and "Such a Long Journey," effectively condemn social injustice and political oppression. They vividly portray the hardships faced by the urban poor and the repercussions of political violence. These works compel readers to confront unsettling realities about our society. Mistry urges readers to contemplate the essence of identity, including its malleability, contradictions, and enduring significance in shaping personal lives and collective fate, via the portrayal of characters grappling with issues of belonging and self-exploration. Mistry's tales highlight the resilience of the human spirit when confronted with catastrophe, expressing a message of optimism and solidarity in an uncertain and evolving world. Ultimately, Rohinton Mistry's novels "A Fine Balance" and "Such a Long Journey" provide as powerful evidence of the challenges posed by issues of identity, culture, and social realities in the diverse landscape of India. Mistry leads readers on a journey of introspection and revelation, delving into the profound intricacies and diversity of the human existence. Through the act of reading his books, we are reminded of literature's timeless capacity to elucidate the world around us and foster empathy, comprehension, and benevolence towards our fellow individuals.

The Parsi community's distinct identity and cultural heritage Rohinton Mistry, a renowned Indian-Canadian author, has crafted a substantial collection of literature that explores the essence and customs of the Parsi community, situated within the broader context of Indian society. Mistry explores the intricate tapestry of Parsi traditions, beliefs, and challenges in works such as "A Fine Balance" and "Such a Long Journey." This research will comprehensively examine Mistry's portrayal of the Parsi community, scrutinising its cultural complexities, historical importance, and contemporary relevance in India. The Parsis, adherents of Zoroastrianism, originated in ancient Persia and fled to India over a millennium ago in order to escape religious oppression. Subsequently, they have had a significant influence on India's cultural and economic milieu. Parsis, although being a small community, have made noteworthy contributions across several fields such as business, literature, and charitable endeavours. Mistry's paintings often allude to this affluent historical backdrop, highlighting the ongoing historical and cultural distinctiveness of the Parsi community. Mistry's paintings depict the dedication to cultural traditions and customs as an essential element of Parsi identity. Mistry portrays Parsi traditions with meticulous precision and authenticity, including many aspects such as childbirth, matrimony, and funerary rituals, alongside religious observances and festivities. These customs provide the basis of Parsi identity, fostering a feeling of uninterrupted succession and attachment to their family history. Mistry's works underscore the profound feeling of affiliation and communal identity that characterises Parsi existence. Parsis may discover solidarity, assistance, and camaraderie among tightly-knit groups and social circles. The community's close bonds are shown as a reservoir of resilience, particularly in times of adversity. Mistry emphasises the importance of Parsi community life in shaping individual identities via the portrayal of his characters' affection and determination. Mistry's works often explore the Parsi community's challenge of reconciling modernity with tradition. Amidst the profound social and economic changes occurring in India, Parsis have the challenge of preserving their traditional heritage while adapting to the demands of the present. Characters such as Gustad Noble in the novel "Such a Long Journey" exemplify the inward struggle between adherence to traditional values and the allure of societal advancement. Mistry's exploration of this dichotomy underscores the intricacy of Parsi identity in an ever-evolving world. Mistry sensitively portrays the Parsi community's struggles to preserve its unique identity among other influences. Mistry's characters exhibit a profound want to save their heritage, as seen by their efforts to safeguard traditional customs and their advocacy for Parsi cuisine and culture. Simultaneously, Mistry acknowledges the need for adjustment and progress, embracing the unavoidable nature of transformation while striving to preserve cultural genuineness. Mistry's portrayal of the Parsi community emphasises its multifaceted nature and intricacy. He

analyses the many aspects of Parsi identity, including disparities in social standing, philosophical beliefs, and perspectives on the world, via a diverse range of individuals. The characters Dina Dalal in "A Fine Balance" and Dinshawji in "Such a Long Journey" exemplify the diverse Parsi experiences, showcasing the dynamic and intricate nature of the community. Rohinton's literary works Mistry offers a captivating analysis of the identity and culture of the Parsi community, elucidating its historical significance, cultural traditions, and present-day relevance. Mistry's well crafted narratives and subtle portrayals commend the Parsi community's resilience, customs, and empathy, while also acknowledging the challenges they face in an evolving society. Mistry urges readers to contemplate the overarching matters of individuality, affiliation, and cultural heritage as she explores the intricacies of Parsi existence. Social realism refers to a genre of art or literature that aims to depict the realities of society in a straight forward and honest manner. "A Fine Balance" effectively depicts the challenging conditions faced by marginalised individuals in Indian society by skillfully integrating elements of social realism into the narrative, characters, and setting. The central focus of this inquiry is the protagonist Ishvar Darji, a Dalit tailor, whose struggles exemplify the broader social and economic issues prevalent in India throughout the novel's timeframe. Ishvar's character embodies social realism via his interpersonal connections, challenges, and unwavering determination in the midst of difficulties. The journey undertaken by him, accompanied by his nephew Omprakash, provides readers with an insight into the challenges posed by caste discrimination, poverty, and social stratification in India. From the outset, Ishvar's Dalit identity significantly shapes his interactions and opportunities. Ishvar, being born into a lower social class, is marginalised in society and faces systematic discrimination and exploitation. Prejudice manifests in several ways, including restricted opportunities for education and economic advancement, as well as social marginalisation and acts of violence. Rohinton Mistry explores the pervasive caste-based discrimination in Indian society by using the figure of Ishvar. Ishvar has remarkable perseverance and determination when confronted with several obstacles. Being a proficient tailor, he adeptly handles the challenges of the informal sector, characterised by widespread exploitation and precariousness. Ishvar's ardour for his craft reflects the sense of honour and self-respect he has for his occupation, despite the little remuneration and difficult working conditions. The individual's commitment to provide for his family exemplifies the resilience and fortitude often seen in marginalised individuals throughout society. Ishvar's persona is further nuanced by his association with his nephew Omprakash. Omprakash, a young youngster forced to grow up prematurely, embodies the recurring pattern of poverty and marginalisation that impacts several Indian communities. Ishvar's role as a mentor and guardian demonstrates the significance of familial and communal bonds in surmounting poverty and injustice. Their connection extends beyond mere family bonds, serving as a reservoir of resilience and cohesion in the midst of adversity. The setting of "A Fine Balance" accentuates the novel's themes of social realism. Placed in the context. The book portrays the political unrest and economic uncertainty in 1970s India, while also capturing the disorderly social environment of that era. India's wide contrasts are vividly shown by the combination of urbanisation and industry, as well as rural poverty and agricultural suffering. Mistry's evocative portrayals of bustling metropolises, overcrowded shantytowns, and pastoral landscapes transport readers to the realms inhabited by the protagonists, intensifying the authenticity of their encounters. Ishvar and Omprakash encounter a diverse array of personalities throughout the novel, each of whom embodies a unique facet of Indian culture. The story features a diverse group of characters, such as the affluent Parsi widow Dina Dalal and the marginalised scavenger Maneck Kohlah, who represent many perspectives and realities in India. Mistry explores themes of social class, personal identity, and religious beliefs in his dialogues, highlighting the interconnectedness between individuals and society. Ishvar's character is notable for his resilience in the midst of adversity. In the face of the loss of loved ones, forced migration, and financial hardship, Ishvar remains resolute in his will to endure. The unwavering determination he displays in the face of overwhelming challenges provides evidence of the persistence and fortitude of the human spirit. Ishvar Darji's portrayal in "A Fine Balance" embodies the principles of social realism via his encounters, challenges, and unwavering determination in the midst of adversity. Ishvar's journey acquaints readers with the severe truths of caste discrimination, destitution, and societal inequity in India. In spite of the sombre atmosphere, Ishvar's personality radiates as a beacon of optimism and determination, serving as a reminder of the indomitable resilience of the human spirit in the midst of adversity.

### **Conclusion**

Mistry's art depicts sentiments of decline, concern, anxiety, instability, ethnicity, and peril among his community throughout several eras. There is a belief that the ideology and cultural composition of a place with

cultural variety are influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, or the dominant group. The disparities between minority and majority cultures may lead to instability in both national and social institutions. It is essential to develop appropriate channels to tackle issues related to hatred, religious chauvinism, and disinformation. Mistry's writings strive to advocate for the reform and reassessment of the rights and status of minorities, as well as the revolutionary reconstruction of societal concepts. Similar to previous Parsi writers, he presents a vision of a future devoid of oppression, founded on principles of justice and equality, but with a hierarchical structure.

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