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## Exploring The Identity In Rohinton Mistry's Novels

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### Abstract:

Rohinton Mistry is disturbed by the ongoing atrocities against the poor and disadvantaged as a social humanist. Mistry's work *A Fine Balance* is a systematic effort to change society by exposing a variety of difficulties. Mistry wants peace to rule in society by acknowledging and comprehending the many problems that individuals encounter. Mistry's humanism is characterised by an unequivocal criticism of the struggle for identity and existence. The desires and goals of his heroes are linked with hope and melancholy about the current state of the planet. Mistry shows the inherent ambivalence of regular people as both a realist and a humanist through his writings. His humanistic principles and arts concept reflect his revolutionary thoughts. All forms of feudal exploitation and tyranny benefit the downtrodden and suffering, particularly the cruel social practices of casteism and untouchability. As a result, Mistry has become a revolutionary's mouthpiece. This paper's main purpose is to depict the issues that the characters face in today's environment.

**Keywords:** Identity, Loneliness, Parsi, Rootlessness, Struggle for survival, Marginalization.

Mistry, like many Diasporic writers, feels a sense of loss and uprooting, as well as a strong sense of melancholy and despair as a result of being taken away from his homeland. The Diasporic writer exists on the edge of two cultures, then there is an endeavour to construct bridges and reconcile the divergent components of both

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cultures-one inherent, the other required-through the aesthetic. Because he is unable to return to his homeland, the author creates fictional territories. The struggle of the common man for a happy and peaceful life is the central theme of all of his novels. Rohinton Mistry is a Parsi writer who lives in the United States. He has made a significant contribution to the literature of the Diaspora. In this study, an attempt is made to explore Rohinton Mistry's proposed crisis of immigrant identity.

Mistry has looked into the daily lives of Indian Parsis, who are thought to be derived from Persian Zoroastrians and whose name means "Persians." The Parsis, also known as Parsees, are devoted followers of Zoroaster, an Iranian prophet. They abandoned their home country and migrated in India to avoid religious persecution by Muslims. They began their journey in Diu, Kathiawar, but soon relocated to Gujarat, where they lived as a small farming community for about 800 years. With the establishment of British trading offices in Surat, the Parsi's situation deteriorated further. They became more and more influenced by European systems, developing a keen interest in trade and honing their skills. Gujarati Parsis moved to Bombay when the East India Company acquired control of the city. Due to the rise of the business and their ability as merchants, they earned success and growth in heavy industries, particularly railways and shipbuilding. By the eighteenth century, they had developed into a thriving town.

Mistry's protagonists fight and struggle for their place in both family and society, yet both disappoint and corner them. In the lives of his characters, the unwavering spirit in the face of adversity is evident. Readers will be intrigued by the trials that the protagonists must overcome in order to survive. One may believe that Mistry has exaggerated events, but the author says that they are absolutely real and that he has revealed the true information in his works. All of his novels illustrate the seemingly inescapable pressures of daily living. His characters are noteworthy because they may be seen in everyday life.

Despite the characters' common and limited ambitions and expectations, they are subjected to unneeded tortures as a result of the terrible circumstances of their society. Their hopes are dashed when they are unable to confront far more powerful

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forces in the name of government. The characters' beauty comes in their ability to bend like grass in the face of the greatest wind, adjust their direction of life according to circumstances, and continue to live life as a stoic. They win every struggle in life because of their tolerance and endurance. The work vividly depicts the poor people's desire to live a decent life and their frustrations. One might easily read or hear about caste, communal, and cultural issues that develop in society in one's daily life. The insults, humiliation, and embarrassment that the characters face is not made up; they happen to one of our fellow humans. Mistry looks at society's conventional structures and considers how to live in the face of discrimination, injustice, poverty, and loss of opportunity.

As a Diaspora writer, he continually portrays the fight with identity. He has written on a comparable struggle among the Parsis. In a unique way, he depicts Parsi culture, traditions, and rituals. As a Parsi and later as an immigrant to Canada, Mistry sees himself as a symbol of dual displacement, which is why his novels convey the desire for identity and a connection to the motherland. Mistry's heroes seek personal identity in the midst of poverty and misery.

Mistry's concept of self-identification or identity appears frequently throughout *Such a Long Journey*. To begin with, the renaming of particular streets appears to be a loss of identity. Gustad's close friend Dinshawji disputes the renaming of Indian streets, particularly in Bombay. Lamington Road, for example, has been renamed Dadasaheb Bhadkamkar Marg, and Carnac Road has been renamed Lokmanaya Tilak Marg. Dinshawji believes that losing old names means losing traditional names, as well as societal and even self-identity. These developments have the potential to obliterate what should remain in this planet. Life cannot be lived in any other name for Dinshawaji.

When Gustad asked "Why worry about it? If it keeps the Marathas happy, give them a few roads to rename. Keep them occupied. What's in a name?" (74). He was very serious. He called Gustad wrong. Names are very important for him. At one place he said, "I grew up on the Lamington Road. But it has disappeared in its place is Dadashaeb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road now suddenly it's on

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Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at flora fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So, what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life, Rubbed out just like that? Tell me!" (74).

Gustad's loss of childhood appears to be more significant. Gustad's youth was described by Mistry as "heaven." Even as an adult, Gustad yearns for his mother's love and is uncomfortable with anyone else's. He is kind of a man who longs for the past comfort and in this process, he loses his present identity. Even when his fingers hurt, he begins to recall his school days. To begin with, Gustad's traditional values are shattered when his son Sohrab rejects everything he says. Sohrab refuses to enroll as an IIT student, then misbehaves at his sister's birthday party.<sup>a</sup>Gopinath, Rabout a review on Employees' Emotions in workplace has received relatively little attention from organizational behaviour researchers. <sup>b</sup>Gopinath, Ras the University academicians are the backbone of the higher education system, they need better guidelines, training sessions, managerial support and they need frequent assessment of job satisfaction and job involvement to ensure their efficiency, motivation and commitment towards work are enhanced. <sup>c</sup>Gopinath Being self-actualization is considered as essential for realizing the individual's potential and for the self-up gradation, and its being important for academicians, the researcher attempted to study, whether the self-actualization of academicians vary according to the demographic variations.

"It's not suddenly. I'm sick and tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time. I'm not interested in it, why can't you just accept it? IIT does not interest me. It was never my idea; you made all the plans" (48).

As a result of these experiences, Gustad believes he has lost his paternal identity. He believes that Sohrab isn't his child until he learns to respect others. Gustad's loss of childhood and yearnings are depicted in a number of photographs. Gustad goes on to say that his son would one day recall his childhood as vividly as he did.

"You must be blind if you cannot see my own example and learn from it" (49).

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According to Mistry, Gustad's search for identity is a never-ending process. Gustad's long route of regaining things is "non-stoppage."

Mistry finds it difficult to separate himself from his Parsi heritage. Many of the protagonists in his works are members of the minority, and as a result of his Parsi origin, they face significant challenges.

*A Fine Balance* is an evocative novel that has been compared to Tolstoy and Dickens' writings. It's an in-depth examination of a tough period in India's history, with complicated and flawed characters. *A Fine Balance* is about man's inhumanity to man and the human spirit's indestructibility. Indeed, Mistry's tribute to bravery, kindness, self-sacrifice, and hope in the face of adversity is inspiring. It mixes Dickens' visceral sympathy for the impoverished with Solzhenitsyn's controlled fury, celebrating both the human spirit's endurance and the searing agony of lost dreams, set against an entirely Indian backdrop.

The novel is about the significance of hitting the correct chord in our lives to preserve a fine balance. There is a perpetual need to keep working at the wheels of existence. Every character in this story experiences a variety of challenges during their lives. They have never had an easy life. Some obstacles are natural, while others are man-made. They're all putting in a lot of effort. Some manage to maintain a delicate equilibrium, while others, unable to do so, submit to the forces of fate. Fate appears in many forms, and man is helpless in the face of it. The subject of criticism of peace struggle is an unmistakable characteristic of Mistry's humanism in *A Fine Balance*. His protagonists' ambitions and goals are intertwined with hope and sadness about modern existence.

A group of four significant people from varied backgrounds conduct the identification hunt, working together as a team to verify their self-identity in society. Dina Dalal, the novel's protagonist, has been grieving since both of her parents died when she was a child. Her brother is watching out for her, as if she were a caged bird. Dina enjoys a good laugh and lives a self-sufficient lifestyle. She can't find comfort in her brother's care. She is compelled to marry a wealthy gentleman, but Rustom Dalal, a compounder, is her first choice. Dina's husband is murdered in a car accident before

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they can start a family. The 1975 Emergency shatters all of her plans, and she is once again entrusted to her brother's care. Dina's identity as a self-sufficient woman as a result fades away in society.

Dina refuses to give in to peer pressure and vows to rebuild her life without relying on a guy for financial support. Dina Dalal, whose story is told in the first part of the novel, aspires to be an independent woman after her husband's premature death, running a modest tailoring business and living in her own apartment. She summons Ishwar and Om, two tailors, and begins working for Alu Revoir Exports. Dina struggles to regain her footing in life after her husband's early death, but the road to independence and self-reliance is rocky and full of obstacles.

Mistry's novels depict a sensation of displacement, which is a recurring topic in his creative works. He lives in Canada as an exiled Indian Parsi writer. In his writings, he attempts to depict the history of his motherland; Om and Ishwar represent underprivileged Indians who have abandoned their hometown and are caught between two worlds: their native land and the alien world in which they find themselves. They appear to have been uprooted from their familiar surroundings, but they are unable to find serenity in the new environment. In an unfamiliar world, they battle for a new identity by making compromises. "We don't have to be concerned about cancer," Omprakash stated.

"This expensive city will first eat us alive for sure" (Mistry, Rohinton, 1995, pg.85).

Through the figure of Dukhi Mukhi, a tanner who did not want his children Ishwar and Narayan to follow in the family profession and remain at the bottom of the social ladder, Mistry brings the issue of "Diaspora" into the spotlight in his work. He sent his children to a nearby town to work as tailors and receive training in order for them to escape the clutches of caste hierarchy. This illustrates the state of India in terms of social hierarchies at the time, as well as the first displacement of Ishwar and Narayan in the novel after learning they decided to leave the town to make money. They also ran into a lot of issues in Mumbai. They attempted to forget about their past, but in the end, they became beggars. As a result, they were not only displaced twice, but they also lost their identities during the narrative.

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Maneck, the fourth main character, loses his beloved Himalayan foothill community, which has been sacrificed on the altar of economic development. Roads were created in the name of modernization, polluting the village and destroying the peaceful and beautiful nature. The arrival of global corporations meant that profitable but modest businesses like Maneck's father's Cola Company had to close their doors. Every setback for Maneck is a setback for the Indian middle class, whose morality, hopes, and desires he represents. His death at the conclusion of the novel is terrible, but it provides insight into the losses that the Indian middle class has endured and continues to endure.

Maneck receives a tranquil schooling in a hill-station before his parents send him to the brutal city for further education. In college, he is constantly humiliated by his peers. In various ways and levels, he learns and suffers more from society. It has a profound effect on his thoughts, forcing him to commit himself on the train tracks. Dina and Maneck both failed in their endeavors to save their lives due to the emergency.

*A Fine Balance* is an engrossing and poignant story about the lives of ordinary, vulnerable people who scurry over the world, trapped in a cruel cycle of poverty. The story explores contemporary India, highlighting the hardships of outcasts and innocents attempting to survive in a cruel and unfriendly society, and grappling with the dilemma of how to live in the face of death. The poor, who are the novel's central protagonists, are also injured, mutilated, poisoned, homeless, and forlorn. He envisions a society where nothing can truly change or improve the plight of the poor and disadvantaged. Only the wealthy, corrupt, tyrannical, and unscrupulous have a place in society. They continue to flourish. Mistry ends the work with the intriguing observation that no matter how hard the lower and underprivileged class tries, it will always find it difficult, if not impossible, to break free from poverty's constraints. The dishonest and evil system will repress it, forcing it into a desperate survival struggle.

The title *A Fine Balance* is suitable because it depicts a delicate balance between hope and despair, or perhaps their very survival is a constant effort to maintain. The work maintains or mentions numerous balances, such as those between individualism and societal norms, and between tradition and modernity. One of the reasons why the

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book is so depressing or sad is because each character is pummeling while trying to find their identity or assert their individuality. How they broke free from their traditional conventions, such as Dina breaking free from her family's orthodox ideals and maintaining her new independent personality.

In *A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry pasteurizes the sorrows of society's bottom rung. Upper-class people make low-class people feel embarrassed. On humanitarian grounds, no one is willing to extend mercy. As a result, Rohinton Mistry reveals their genuine sentiments for the heroes who are suffering. The government's proposal to link the hills and the city is a major setback for the Kohlah family, but the other villagers are not too concerned because they foresee more work prospects on the city side. Farokh sends Maneck to Bombay for further study, providing him Dina's address. Maneck, like the tailors, is dissatisfied with city life. At addition, the seniors in the college hostel torture him. Then he arrives to Dina's house to remain as a paying guest. He makes pals with the tailors there. Dina opposes Maneck's friendship with the tailors. As a result, *A Fine Balance* is a story that explores identity in a variety of ways.

Mistry has never felt spiritual or bodily isolation from his motherland as a parsi novelist. As an immigrant parsi writer, he wrote about double displacement in his novels, and he understood the sadness that comes with it. He says, however, that a 23-year connection with someone or something would remain consistent and embedded in you, as if you were always present there.

To conclude, we may say that Mistry through his persona represents the complicated identity of himself. As a Parsi minority, he is forced to migrate from India to Canada, where he is caught between Indian and Canadian cultures, creating an identity crisis.

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