

**MISTRY'S VISION OF COSMOPOLITAN REALITY AND RURAL INDIA****Dr. Umar Farooque**Dept. of English , H.P.S.College, Madhepur (Madhubani) Bihar ,
L.N.Mithila University, Darbhanga.**ABSTRACT**

In a novel we study mainly two things: the subject matter or you can say what is said and the manner, 'how it is said'. 'What is said' constitutes the theme of the novel. The theme is the core concern of the novelist or soul of the novel. J.A. Cuddon observes. "The theme of the work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly." (Cuddon, 913) The theme of the novel is more than its subject matter, because an author's narrative technique can play an important role in developing a theme as the actions of the characters. However in Mistry, themes are over powering and they take care of the techniques. One reads his novels for his themes which are gripping, hard hitting and at times shocking, with their bare honesty and matter of fact description.

KEYWORDS: novelist or soul, novels of Indian writers, concept of development .**INTRODUCTION:**

In Rohinton Mistry metropolis is invariably Bombay. (The name of the city, Bombay, is changed to Mumbai. Only to follow the writers' example, the old name is preferred.) Bombay scarcely ever emerged in the novels of Indian writers in English for a considerable time. In the beginning, there were other more reliable landscapes to provide a natural stage for the Indian novel. Bombay was little known for its imaginative significance. On the contrary, the city was known for commerce and industry. The beginning of the eighties saw the appearance of Bombay in literature. The city appeared in the Rushdie's epoch making novel *Midnight's Children*. Arun Joshi's *Last Libyinth* represents Bombay in contrast with Varanasi. Anita Desai portrayed the city with pessimistic colours in *Baumgartener's Bombay*. Bombay figures in her novel *Fasting Feasting*, too. Shashi Tharoor investigates the cinema industry in *Show Business*. The stories in Vikram Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* are told in a smoky Bombay bar. Shobha De's novels *Socialite Evenings* and *Starry Nights* portray the life of Bombay's elite society. In Ardashir Vakil's *Beach Boy*, Bombay is illustrated through the cheerful and inquisitive children.

For the other novelists the city symbolically represented India in a larger sense but in Mistry's case, Bombay discloses a limited and unusual identity, which excludes a national identification. The whole Bombay community is not represented in Mistry's fiction.

Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* revolves around Firozsha Baag, the Parsee Housing Estate and Such a Long Journey discloses Khodadad Building, the Parsi neighbourhood of Central Bombay. In *Family Matters* the locale is Chateau Felicits, a spacious apartment where Nariman lives with two step children and pleasant villa where his daughter Roxana with her husband and two children lives and Nariman is forced to move here. Besides, these two locales readers are taken to Kapur's sports shop and after his murder, to Kapur's residence. Bombay is the beloved place of Parsis despite all drawbacks. They feel safe in Bombay. Mr. Kapur expresses his feelings about the city in a genuinely touched manner.

You see how we two are sitting here, sharing? That's how people have lived in Bombay. That's why Bombay has survived floods, disease, plague, water shortage, bursting drains and sewers, all the population pressures. In her heart there is room for everyone who wants to make a home here. (F.M 136)

He further adds:

Bombay endures because it gives and it receives. Within this warp and weft is woven the special texture of its social fabric, the spirit of tolerance, acceptance, generosity. Anywhere else in the world, in those so called civilized places like England and America, such terrible conditions would lead to revolution." (F.M, 136)

He is conscious about the seamy side of the place where half of the population live in 'slums, eating and shitting in places not fit for animals'. (136)

In *A Fine Balance* the vivid scenes of Chawls, illegal slums where Ishvar and Om live in a rented sack with grotesque images, expose the hollowness of the concept of development and mocks at the glamour image of the city which reminds one of T.S. Eliot's 'Unreal City' in *The Wasteland* :

Unreal City,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn, A Crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, I had not thought death had undone so many. (Eliot: 60-3)

However, in his novels the community is re-located in the slums of Bombay that function as what Jai Sen terms the 'Unitended City' (1976: 33-40) which was never integrated in the formal master plan for the metropolis. It always remained the dark underbelly of the city. The Emergency throws a gloomy shadow over the novel *A Fine Balance* and depicts the pathetic life of the marginalized or the subalterns. The miseries of Dina, Om, Ishvar and many others like them, forced sterilization, rampant corruption in government offices. The novelist portrays Bombay's Shanty towns and slums in these words:

The truck growled into the city after midnight along the airport road. Sleeping shanty towns pullulated on both the sides of the highway, ready to spread onto the asphalt artery. Only the threat of the manywheeled juggernauts thundering up and down restrained the tattered lives behind the verges. Headlights picked out late-shift workers, tired ghosts tracing a careful path between the traffic and the open sewer (FB 373).

It is in *A Fine Balance* that Mistry steps out of Bombay and takes into account the life in small town, caste ridden villages and the mountain region with the same case.

Such a Long Journey describes the House of Cages, the red district quarter is a typical Indian Metropolis Bombay landmark. Rohinton Mistry depicts the brothel scenes with an amusing sense of irony and freshness. The novelist visualises the house of pleasure as a lively institution:

The House of cages offered a full range of services, from the brisk, no-nonsense hand job even the poorest of day labourers could afford, to the most intricate contortions from a standard Kama-Sutra or The Perfumed Garden: something to suit the tumescence of every customer and wallet The locals dreamed about soft scented sheets, air-conditioned rooms, hot and cold drinks, dancing-girls, various exotic liquors, food fit for a king from the brother's delectable kitchen, and aphrodisiacs like the notorious palangtode-bed-breaker-paan. The House of Cages catered for every one of these luxuries, with the exception of the last. Paan had to be purchased from the stall outside. (SLJ 157).

The Parsis are the oldest inhabitants of Bombay. They are resentful of its growing Hinduisation, the changing street names, the disappearing of Western music, the fanaticism of the Shiv Sena, which seeks to claim Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians. Dinshawji remarks:

"Wait till the Marathas take over, then we will have real Gandoo Raj... All they know is to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout slogans, make threats, and change road names." (SLJ 73)

However we are left with the question—who does the city belong to? No longer Bombay, but Mumbai, one wonders who is the true Mumbaikar? The wealthy, the powerful, elite minority who disown its slums, the ugly underbelly, which feeds it through its services and labour? Or the majorities of its slum and chawl dwellers who define the city's temper but have no rights over its destiny? As globalization brings in

the beautification and seeks change in the city—we are habitually inclined to hold back the basic question, “in whose interest?” and effect. With equal conviction he depicts the life of the untouchables in the village and their traumatic existence. Briefly he covers three generations of a chamar family to overview their victimization by the landlords and their submission and resistance. Dukhi and Roopa, a chamar couple silently suffer as their parents and grandparents have suffered taking suffering as their destiny in a hierarchical caste system Roopa is raped Dukhi beaten up and abused for no fault. Their sons Ishvar and Narayan were ruthlessly punished by the teacher for entering into the school campus and class room. When Dukhi narrates this incident to Pandit Lalluram seeking justice, he is reminded of Dharma that prescribes code of conduct for every *varna*. Sudra are allowed to live in the fringe of the village so that they cannot defile the higher castes. They cannot take water from the common village well; they cannot go to school and temple. All doors of justice are closed to them. This gave rise to resistance and the first significant step taken by Dukhi is to change the job of lanergy. He sends both his sons to his friend Ashraf in the city to learn tailoring. Narayan returns to the village and sets up his tailor shop. This is resented by Thakur Dharamsi. But it continues. Narayan admits it as the victory of his father but feels dissatisfied as the basic things-people’s mindset—have not changed. ‘How can you say that? So much has changed. Your life, my life. Your occupation, from leather to cloth. And look at your house, your—’

‘Those things, yes. But what about the more important things? Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals.’

‘Those kinds of things take time to change.’

‘More than twenty years have passed since independence. How much longer? I want to be able to drink from the village well, worship in the temple, walk where I like.’...

‘Son, those are dangerous things to want. You changed from Chamaar to tailor. Be satisfied with that.’

Narayan shook his head. ‘That was your victory’. (A Fine Balance, 174-75).

When Narayan attempts to cast his vote in election he is beaten to death by Dharamsi and his henchmen. His entire family is burnt to death; only Ishvar and Narayan’s son Om survive as they are in the city. Life in the city for the have-nots is no less horrendous in the wake of everyday existential problem of water, food, living space, jobs and blind race as well as in the wake riots. It is true caste hierarchy and untouchability are not issues. Still life is not less miserable.

Mistry’s focus is on urban and rural problem besetting the poor class and not on the landscape and topography. Hence the visuals of Bombay are not etched out.

CONCLUSION:

The stories in Vikram Chandras Love and Longing in Bombay are told in a smoky Bombay bar. For the other novelists the city symbolically represented India in a larger sense but in Mistry’s case, Bombay discloses a limited and unusual identity, which excludes a national identification.

In *A Fine Balance* the vivid scenes of Chawls, illegal slums where Ishvar and Om live in a rented sack with grotesque images, expose the hollowness of the concept of development and mocks at the glamour image of the city which reminds one of T.S. Eliot’s *Unreal City* in *The Wasteland*: However, in his novels the community is re-located in the slums of Bombay that function as what Jai Sen terms the *Unitended City* which was never integrated in the formal master plan for the metropolis.

Such a *Long Journey* describes the *House of Cages*, the red district quarter is a typical Indian Metropolis Bombay landmark. Rohinton Mistry depicts the brothel scenes with an amusing sense of irony and freshness.

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