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PICTURE OF A CITY WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ROHINTON MISTRY'S SELECT
NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Mumbai is also known as Bombay is one among the important metropolitan city in India, as the city occupies a vital role to develop the country. It has not only shaped the country but has also shaped the lives of many. In this way the city has given Rohinton Mistry various subjects and thus propelled him to become a great writer. So the main intention of this paper is to show how Mistry has used the city as the backdrop to his novels and thereby depicted the true picture of the Hi-Fi Mumbai city.

Key Words: Indian writing in English, Mumbai, Modern

...that's nice. Living in Bombay, we get so cosmopolitan...and then would follow a long lecture about how liberal everybody and everything was in this city. And how narrow minded the rest of India seemed in comparison. (Shobhaa De, 01)

Rohinton Mistry who was born in 1952 in Mumbai, India, is a Parsi descent. He graduated his B.sc Mathematics and B.A Economics at the University of Bombay and later got immigrated to Canada at the age of 23 for his career. He earned more money, raised his economic status and lived a sophisticated life, yet he felt alienated and longed to come back to Bombay, especially to lead a life with his community people where the largest Parsi communities are living in India. Mistry being a Parsi felt that he is free in Mumbai, as he could see most of Parsi come to stay in Mumbai, as they feel safe and secure here. The locale as it gives shelter to each and every one Mistry appreciates the city and also compares other city and country and thereby brings out the comfort and ideal life that the city give to the people. This has been made very clear by a character Kapur in *Family Matters* as, "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 want to make a home here" (152).

The novelist has very well understood that, the location plays an important role to bring alive the characters, so he proves through his novels that he is a "Mumbaikar" as he sets Bombay as an important location in his works. As he is the byproduct of the city, naturally he is familiar with nook and corner of the place and as well as has known the life style lived by the people over there. So he wove his story mostly in and around the city and shapes his characters according to the city. In fact like beating around the bush, wherever

the character is born or moves around finally returns to Bombay. So in this way, Mistry shows his fascination towards the Mumbai, is shown in his, select three novels.

The first novel *Such a Long Journey* is set around Mumbai city. Gustad Noble, the protagonist of the novel is a bank employee in Bombay. Being a man of regular, he leads a happy life even in his early fifties. He also led his life in hard work and often recollected his prosperity life lived during his childhood. But ultimately, as the novel progresses all his hopes and dreams are shattered, because of his relationship with Major Jimmy Bilimoria. Gustad receives a bulk amount of ten lakh rupees from Jimmy and from here the trouble starts and he loses his happiness. Finally the novel ends up with the destruction of Gustad's life.

The second novel *A Fine Balance* is also a story that revolves around Bombay city. It is a story about a widow named Dina Dalal who survived by working hard in sewing garments. After her husband's death, she is been guarded by her brother Nuswaan who tortures her physically and mentally. As she wants to lead an independent life, leaves her brother and lives in the house of her husband that has been passed to her. By her skill in sewing garments, she soon earn prosperous amount but as she could not manage by self, she appoints Om and Ishwar who come from a rural village. Finally she meets various struggles to retain her individuality and dignity.

Mistry's third novel *Family Matters* is also once more a story about a middle class Parsi family who live in Bombay city. Nariman Vakeel, a retired English professor, who suffered with parkinson's disease is a widower. He lived in a big apartment flat with unmarried step children Jal and Coomy. Nariman, being bedridden recollets his youthness and his love life with Lucy. This makes Jal and Coomy irritating and they send Nariman to his daughter's house Roxana. Though Yesad, son-in-law, invites his father-in-law in happy, Nariman feels odd. Yet being helpless he continuous to stay there, where his grand children Jehangir takes care of him. Thus the story moves around Nariman's family and reflect the society in large.

All the three novels, though ends of how the city deserted the main characters, Mistry portrays as how their characters struggle hard to survive in the city and aims for the bare needs of survival. For an instance, in *A Fine Balance* both tailors Ishwar and his nephew Om escape from their village and come to Bombay city. Having a great faith on the city, Ishwar consoles Om by saying, "There is lots of opportunity in the city, you can make your dreams come true" (103). Another example from *Family Matters* is, in an occasion, Mr.Kapur states as, "My father started with zero and became prosperous" (145). Thus, through his works Mistry elevated the spirit of the city as the city gives the people a hope to attain success. Mistry has also taken strenuous effort and tried to explore the city in his own way, through his characters.

To wind up, it is emphatically clear that Mistry has used the city as motif in the select novels, as the portrayal of Bombay city is quite evident in all the three novels. As all the three novel start and ends with the Mumbai city, the city gets centralized and gives the reader varied experience.

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