

DRAWING REALISM IN MISTRY'S *A FINE BALANCE*

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Introduction:

Rohinton Mistry is a well-known writer of diaspora as he has clearly depicted the issues of Indian society through his works. He is born in Bombay so he has given minute details of the issues in India. Though he left India in 1975 and settled in Canada, his description of the issues and problems of Indian society are so authentic. In his works, we can see the sense of double displacement, alienation, marginality, gender, familial relationship, subaltern. Here we can also remember the philosophy of existentialism as it was introduced by Heidegger.

Key word: diaspora, double displacement, alienation, marginality, gender, familial relationship, subaltern.

A Fine Balance is a beautiful novel written by Rohinton Mistry sets in Mumbai, India in which he has depicted the picture of India between 1975 to 1984. It was the period of emergency when there were restrictions on civil rights. In this novel, the novelist has introduced four characters from various strata of the society- Ishvar Darji, Dina Dalal, Omprakash Darji, Maneck Kohlah.

The novel, *A Fine Balance* finds a ready audience as well as the novel was chosen for Booker prize(1991). Rohinton Mistry's novel concentrates on dislocation, marginality, displacements, gender, locality, class and caste. He was the critique of the nation. In his writings, he has emphasized the views of the postcolonial advancement.

There was an incredible change in the Indian society from Indian independence till emergency, the writer has exposed the changes taken in Indian society. When we go through the novel, we come to know that Mistry has not clearly used the name of Indira Gandhi but he has mentioned "the prime minister". The characters in these novels are brought up together by Mistry to show how the economic forces changing Indian society.

Ishvar and Omprakash belongs to Chamar families which conventionally healed leather as they were considered untouchables. They try to break the caste system as we know that how it is rigid in India. They trained themselves to Ashraf Chacha in order to break the caste system. In this way, they become tailors. Ishvar and Om go to Mumbai to acquire job, by then unapproachable in the town near their village as a pre-made clothing store has opened.

Maneck was from small village which existed in Northern India. He also goes to Mumbai to get certificate "as a back-up" as his father's soft drink business was not working smoothly due to the building of highway near his village. Dina lives in the flat of her husband who was dead. She lives away from her brother and maintains independence. She keeps herself away from politics. She used to tell Ishvar that problems created by politicians do not affect common people. As she says, "it doesn't affect ordinary people like us" (Mistry 86). But in the



end of the novel we come to know that the policies of the government affect extremely to the ordinary people.

In the beginning of the novel, Ishvar and Om, they were going in the flat of Dina Dalal by train. When they were travelling, they meet a college student Maneck who was also going to Dina's flat. All of them become good friends and go to the flat of Dina. Dina makes clear to them how she was transformed to the present situation. She goes in the past and expresses her grief with others who were living with her. She depicted that she was born in a rich family. Her father was a doctor who died when she was just twelve years young. After the death of her father, Nusswan her brother levied his opinions and work on her. She was not given any kind of freedom. Her brother was very cruel to Dina. He makes her drop out of the school. Dina can't bear this and finally she makes rebel against her brother. When she comes to age, she finds her husband Rustom Dalal. She makes marriage without taking consent from her brother. Both Dina and Rustom live happy but misfortune happens on Dina and Rustom dies in an accident. Dina trains herself as a tailor as she does not like to join her brother's family. After 20 years, she loses her sight and once again she becomes jobless. Meanwhile, she meets Mrs. Gupta, she was ready to buy new pattern dresses from Dina but due to loss of eyesight she couldn't work and finally she hires tailors to generate her income. Dina doesn't wish that how the business of sewing is going on. So she hides everything from Ishvar and Om as they should not disturb her business. She doesn't allow them to go out of the flat. Though this story, the writer wants to tell us that how Ishvar and Om once again reached at their earlier place.

Alienation is also an important theme in the fictions of Rohinton Mistry. In this novel, Dina struggles against social conditions for her existence and becomes a tailor. The writer has also introduced various schemes of the government such as city beautification, Garibi Hatao and Family Planning. The novelist has shown his concerns for the Indians through his writings. In this novel Ishavar and Om are humanistic characters. They are the people of goodwill.

Maneck joins the school and lives at Hostel. When he lives in the hostel, in the middle of the night, he discovers infection of cockroaches. Throughout the night, he tries to kill the cockroaches. At that time a neighbour hears his voice and helps him by giving him pesticides spray. Later on, Maneck becomes close friend to Avinash, the students president. The condition of the hostel was very poor and they were living in that utter poverty. Here, Mistry tries to point out that how education system is not providing basic amenities to the students. Even the food provided to the students was not hygienic.

At the beginning, the tailoring business runs smoothly but due to the emergency their business collapse. Later on, Ishvar and Om were arrested and were kept in the camp but by giving the Beggarmaster bribe they make themselves free. The writer has also shown the effects of emergency on the common people how they were deprived of their fundamental rights. Ishvar and Om return to home to find wife for Om who was of eighteen now. Maneck also comes to home after receiving certificate. Then, Maneck realizes that his father's business is falling heavily due to the cheap soda. He finds a profitable job in the Middle East to run away from the condition of the family.

Now Dina becomes alone, her protector having been murdered. So she has no protection from anybody. Though she is not willing to live with her brother still she makes compromise



and live with Nusswan (brother). She bears humiliations from her brother.

After eight years, Maneck returns to home from his job to attend the funeral of his father. He has not been happy there. When he wants taxi from airport to train station but taxi drivers refuse to take him due to the riots. Finally he convinces one driver by paying double fees. Driver explains Maneck that riots targeting Sikh people, minority. The driver himself is Sikh and is in need of money. Maneck becomes angry but he can't do anything. He comes at home and goes to attend the funeral of his father. A Fine Balance carefully details and gives compact meaning. Though the symbol of Dina's rent collector's plastic folder.

The folder handed down almost half a century ago by the retiring rent-collector had not been of plastic, but rudely fashioned out of two wooden boards bound by a strip of morocco. It had carried with it the previous owners smell. A fraying cotton tape, sewn to the leather, went around securing the contents. The dark, cracked boards had warped badly; when opened, they creaked and released a sweaty tobacco odor.

(Mistry 87)

The colour, smell and qualities of the folder talk about the dull life of the people. It symbolizes inactivity of the people. The sense of senselessness, hopelessness, pessimism and grief of oppressed people are pervaded in all his novels. When we go through his novel, we come to know that his novels deal with political sense. The stark necked reality of Indian politics. He has beautifully woven in his novels the reality of Indian politics. Mistry in this novel has disclosed the realism. It is one of the key aspects of his writing which is infused in the novel. The effects of emergency, loss of business and job, results characters in utter poverty. A Fine Balance has discussed all the issues of his time the novel. It is a subaltern novel. It talks about the brutality of lives who are living in utter poverty. Thus, *A Fine Balance* evokes sympathy from readers.

Conclusion:

In *A Fine Balance*, we can see the sense of double displacement, alienation, marginality, gender, familial relationship, subaltern. The sense of senselessness, hopelessness, pessimism and grief of oppressed people are also pervaded in all his novels. Through the novel, Mistry tries to point out that how education system is not providing basic amenities to the students. Even the food provided to the students was not hygienic. Mistry has also depicted the effects of Emergency and has also shown that how the lives of common people like Ishvar and Om become jobless. So the realism is pervaded in the novel.

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