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A Fine Balance

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AUTHOR'S MANIFESTO

Dr. Rekha Nagvashi, The Author Of The Article/Research Paper Titled *A Fine Balance* (With Special Reference To Bastar District Chhattisgarh) Published In An International Research Journal, Declares That As The Author, She Takes Responsibility For All The Contents Of This Article. Because We Have Written It Ourselves And Read It Thoroughly And Also Give Our Approval For The Publication Of Our Article/Research Paper In The Research Journal. This Article/Research Paper In Its Original Form Or Any Part Of It Has Not Been Printed Anywhere Else, Nor Have We Sent It For Printing Anywhere. It Is Our Own Work. We Give Full Permission To The Editorial Board Of This Research Journal To Edit And Revise Our Article. We Give The Right Of Its Copyright To The Editor.

A Fine Balance

One of the most remarkable features of Rohinton Mistry's fiction is that it brilliantly captures the crowded life of India. His novels are closely linked with social and political background. If one studies his novels from a political point of view, one realizes that Mistry's knowledge of Indian politics is not at all far from reality, though he left India three decades ago to settle in Canada. His novels capture corruption, politically motivated schemes, political decisions, caste problems and human condition of untouchable people in India. Mistry likes to write about India. Living in Canada and writing about India, Mistry is fully aware of several drawbacks of India's social and political life, as distinguish in his novels. In Mistry's novels, there are no references to Canada but only the political and social disorder of India's postcolonial experience. Ambition and dreams of his protagonists are fixed with hope and despair about the life of the modern world. The author succeeds in weaving national history with the personal life of the protagonists. The main action of the novel is set in *a city by the sea*, apparently Bombay and it takes place during the Emergency of 1975. *A Fine Balance* is set in the 1975's Emergency period, and its four characters are interconnected to each other. Mistry engages with the issues like emergency, social and political issues, untouchability and caste, history and loss of identity in his writing. The novel is not merely a family story but Mistry covers novel from the historical points of view of the current past. The important events of this background; India's Independence (1947) and the time of the Indian Emergency (1975-77), during which most of Mistry's novel is set. Mistry says himself: "In *Such a Long Journey*, the year is 1971. It seemed to me that 1975, the year of the Emergency, would be the next important year, if one were preparing a list of important dates in Indian History.

India's partition of 1947 totally based upon religion. In the charge of 1947, India is split into two separate nation states, i.e. Hindus and Muslims. Whereas the newly-formed Pakistan is to provide the Muslim community and the Indian nation-state is dominated by the Hindus. However, conflicts follow between India and Pakistan over areas on the border, and *A Fine Balance* focuses on several of its characteristics. As a farmer living in the north of the country, Maneck's father Farokh Kohlah. He fights against the penalty of disorder brought about by Partition.

Mountbatten's borderline does not only provoke the loss of land of those living on the border; it also leads to violence and aggression "when communal slaughter at the brand-new border ignited riots everywhere, and sporting a fez in a Hindu neighborhood was as fatal as possessing a foreskin in a Muslim one" (AFB,87)

Indira Gandhi is one of the most important figures of 20th century in Indian history. The events surrounding of the Indian Emergency 1975-77 are strictly associated with Nehru's daughter. In 1975, a national court finds Indira Gandhi answerable of having manipulated the election of 1971. She is to give up her authorization in Parliament, which would have also meant to step down as Prime Minister. However, Indira rejected to resign and declared a state of internal emergency, in the course of which she retro keenly indistinct the law according to which she had been sentenced for election malpractice. The opposition in Parliament speaks with one voice, for the first time.

In *A Fine Balance*, "the Emergency intrudes obtrusively into the lives of all of characters leading to their eventual loss and destruction." (Bhatnagar, 1998:105) The Emergency harshly ends with friendships. The effect of the Emergency is not only a loss of faith in the government but also an erosion of meaning which dooms the search for a 'good life.' As a man in a

sterilization camp reasons: ‘When the ones in power have lost their reason, there is no hope’ (AFB,535).

Mistry’s protagonists are united with hope and despair about the life of the modern world. His characters fight against a social environment and want to create a new world and freedom. Rohinton Mistry’s protagonists are young and middle age people. He deals major social problems of Indian society where the protagonists themselves are the exploited by Emergency and society.

In Mistry’s fiction, the difference of ideas between the old and the new generation is visible not only in the urban world but also in the rural areas. The inter-generational conflicts are apparent not only in Parsi community but in all castes and communities of India. In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry depicts the stress between tradition and modernity even in the lowest sections of Indian society. The book establishes that untouchables in India have led a life of submission and subjugation for centuries, but the modern generation of Dalits enters into hot debates with their elders regarding the continuity of such practices. The book highlights how the period after independence has witnessed a remarkable social change in these neglected sections. In societal terms, the aristocratic order was sought to be replaced by a democratic one. The novelist first gives us a report of the tradition bound world of the rural untouchables who never dare to raise their voice against any kind of victimization. Even a criminal assault like rape is accepted by Roopa and Dukhi Mochi by shedding tears in the darkness of night. Being the product of a hierarchical society where everything is determined by the caste one is born into; the older generation of the untouchables is shown to be excessively meek, humble and submissive. They always bow before the diktats of the upper caste people.

The stories in *A Fine Balance* loop around of Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow in her forties living alone in the city of Bombay. Maneck Kohlah is a student, belonging to a north Indian hill town of the Himalayas; and a paying guest of Dina. Then, the two untouchables named Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash are the tailors of Dina From remote rural area. In this way, the life of Maneck, Dina and the tailors Ishvar and Omprakash interconnected less than one roof. Thus, Kapadia points out: “These characters from different class backgrounds start inter acting with each other and the coincidence does not seem incongruous” (Kapadia 128).

The novel begins with the prologue, dated 1975, showing of all the chief characters and ends with an epilogue dated 1984. Apart from Prologue and Epilogue, the novel is comprises of sixteen chapters, consisting of sixteen hundred fourteen pages revealing the socio-political developments in the country in a realistic manner. The novel presents the period of 1975 to 1984 its socio-political incidents with the author’s personal experiences, his view point and analysis in terms of his historical understanding:

[The text is a] fragment collection of memories, . . .[which] work to reconstruct a more immediate and personal history-the writer’s own . . . What we end up with is a new, curiously paradoxical form that we might call historiography met fiction rather than historical fiction (Kambourelli 80).

This novel blends political history with the personal life of the characters. The novel presents three different major themes; the first is the life of middle class and urban world, Dina Dalal. She is a Parsi widow in her forties who is struggling hard to lead an independent life. Second, there is another world symbolized by Maneck Kohlah, a sensitive Parsi boy. He feels life a great burden to lead and lift. The last, the novel focuses another sight into rural India

provided by Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash who struggle to exist in this world. Ansari says:

This microcosm of Indian society that Mistry writes about conflict at an individual level as well as at a larger level, Mistry is committed towards his cultural roots that provide him infinite inspirational material for his fiction and with great sensitivity and truthfulness he renders the tales of protagonists from Parsi community caught in their beliefs, lifestyles and peculiar situations. (Ansari, 124)

The chapter '*City by the Sea*' and '*for dream to grow*' highlights the family background of the protagonist Dina, a young woman of 24 years of age. She loses two beloved people, her father Dr. Shroff and her husband, Rustom. The death of her father followed by her mother changed her life. The relationship between Nusswan and Dina became coarse and he often humiliated her. Her hatred for elder brother Nusswan and mother, for imposing various restrictions. His behavior as substitute father is hard to stomach for his sister. Not only is she forced to avoid school because she is troubled with the entire household work, her brother also controls her personal freedom because he is influenced that his sister needs a strong hand. Dina falls under the crisis right at the beginning as:

Dina Dalal seldom indulged in looking back at her life with regret or bitterness, or questioning why things had turned out the way they had cheating her of the bright future everyone had predicted for her when she was in school, when her name was still Dina Shroff (AFB,15).

After a couple of years of Dina's marriage, Rustom died in a road accident, causing a severe loss to her. The death of Shirin Aunty followed by Darab uncle breaks her internally. She feels alone "as though she had lost a second set of parents" (AFB,57). One loss after another

comes in her way and it makes her firm and determined. Nusswan is shocked to see ‘new’ Dina as “no wailing, no beating the chest or tearing the hair like you might expect from a woman who had suffered such a shock, such a loss”(AFB,46). To compensate for marginalization he praises Parsi community and feels proud:

Do you know how fortunate you are in our community? Among the unenlightened, widows are thrown away like garbage. If you were a Hindu, in the old days you would have had to be a good little sati and leap onto your husband’s funeral pyre, be roasted with him (AFB,52).

The effect of the despair suffered under her brother’s supervision is that Dina becomes obsessed with the notion of personal freedom. Already in the Prologue of the text it becomes apparent that she holds independence in high respect. Talking about her tailoring business, which ultimately allows her to quit considering her brother for money, she says: “No need now to visit her brother and beg for next month’s rent. She took a deep breath. Once again, her fragile independence was preserved” (AFB,11). It is clear now that the dependency on Nusswan’s money means losing her freedom; giving in to her brother’s rule symbolizes giving up her independence. Dina too, chooses to separate from her home because she wants to maintain her individuality. She has grown up in Bombay but she keeps her away from her family after her husband’s accidental death with sense of independence. She resolves to restructure her life without being economically dependent on any one. But Dina’s life is a series of emotional upheavals and relocations of emotional bonds.

Mistry is successful in creating a ‘New Woman’, who is energetic and enthusiastic, seeking a path of self-realization through stitching. In this novel however, he is successful in

judging and analyzing the woman's capabilities and drawing her out of the gamut of conventionalities, into a new individual.

It is the 'power and struggle' of Dina to show over the tailors. Whenever Dina went out to deliver the dresses she always padlocked the door from outside. Ishvar inspires Om by saying that 'fight' and 'struggle' is essential to win life. With Om and Ishvar working in her flat, the struggle for independence ultimately becomes a struggle for power. Dina decides to maintain her distance in order not to lose control: 'I have nothing against them, but they are tailors my employees. A distance has to be maintained.' (AFB,293) she assumes that control give assurance for economic success which, in turn, is to guarantee independence from her tyrant brother Nusswan. Following Mrs. Gupta's advice, Dina's relationship to the tailors is (at first) characterized by a strict form of control, which she feels she has to exercise in order to be economically successful. It could be argued that Dina follows the same model of her brother's rule specifically in order not to have to suffer from her brother's rule again.

In the course of the novel, Mistry underlines human company as the principal Necessity. When Dina accepts Maneck as a paying guest, Om and Ishvar spend the day in the flat sewing, and the consequences of loneliness are reflected explicitly. She responded with jealousy to the gradually developing friendship between Maneck and Om because she herself is "longing for company" (AFB,277). The evenings become the time when "the emptiness of her own life appeared starkest" (AFB,193). She feels lonely when Om and Ishvar have left the house: "Soon the evening gloom would materialize, infect the fiber-filled air, drape itself over her bed, and depress her from now till morning" (AFB,274).

There are several examples where he indicates possibilities of opposing a loss of meaning in life and the main example is Dina, The journey of Dina from Dina Shroff to Dina Dalal and ending as widow, she overcomes every hurdle and finally strikes ‘a fine balance’.

A Fine Balance illustrates three things with respect to caste: First of all, the novel presents the effects of untouchability on individuals. For Dukhi and his children it is accountable for hopelessness and an erosion of meaning in their lives, which is only delayed and not effectively countered by an indiscretion of caste margins. The novel discovers the injustices of caste and explores the allusions of defying it. While Narayan opts for political resistance, Om and Ishvar suffer from escape and exile. Secondly, the novel makes clear that while devotion and faith in the socio-cultural system of religion are undermined, Hinduism is not essentially affected by this. Though caste has lost its impending to structure life in a way that gives surety for meaning, Hinduism serves as a major point of reference for some of the text’s characters, Ishvar being a case in point. Thirdly, the frightening practice of caste as a cultural arrangement is more prevalent in a rural context than in an urban one. Though the foundation of 1949 defines the Indian nation as “secular,” untouchability has not been practically destroyed country-wide.

‘In a Village by a River’, Mistry paints the rural India where caste continues to flourish. In 1950 the Indian constitution declared that all Indians would be equal under the law and no discrimination shall be made in the name of religion, caste, creed or gender. The writer explores the marginalized condition of the lower-castes and the untouchables. The chapter reveals the history of Ishvar and Om. Caste violence has driven in Ishvar and Omprakash life that forces them from a rural background to overcrowded Bombay for better life. The difference of opinion between Omprakash and Ishvar in *A Fine Balance* also suggests the marked difference between the worldviews of the two generations. The uncle is always thankful and submissive but this

mode of acquiescence is not acceptable to the nephew. Ishvar delivers a lecture of “patience” whenever Omprakash becomes impulsive, but the boy always draws his uncle’s attention to the fact that Dina is not being fair to them. He demands better work conditions. Quite belligerent and vocal, Omprakash even spies on Dina and follows her on a bicycle to know the whereabouts of the firm from which Dina gets the orders. Conscious of his talent, he firmly believes that they are not being well paid by Dina. His arguments prove that even the illiterate, rural and poor classes of society are becoming conscious of their worth, their capabilities, their potential and their rights. In his tendency to be thankful and satisfied with his lot, Ishvar reflects the attitude of old generation of the dalits whereas Omprakash with his demands and boldness stands for the aware and conscious modern generation of the untouchables. It becomes evident almost on all occasions in the novel that fatalism is the typical trait of the old generation whereas fighting instincts mark the behaviour of the youngsters even in the sidelined sections of the society. The issue of generation gap is quite central to Mistry. *A Fine Balance* is the only novel where the writer takes the readers to the hilly and rural areas of our country and the rural characters are a significant part of the story, projecting the same theme which is reflected through the urban characters. Through the difference of ideas between Dukhi and Narayan, the author evinces that the gulf of ideas between the two generations is visible in villages too but authenticates that the clash between the old and the new often leads to serious consequences in the urban setting.

The difference between the urban Parsi characters and the rural protagonists is mainly of the degree of revolt. Narayan and Omprakash are neither educated nor do they belong to any privileged class. But the clash between Ishvar and Omprakash and the difference of opinion between Dukhi and Narayan reflects the change in the thinking and outlook of the two generations. If the clash of Parsi characters represents the tensions between tradition and

modernity in urban areas, the events in the village by the river can easily be regarded as projecting the tug of war between two generations in the rural society. Thus, in Mistry's works, the generation gap is visible in the upper classes as well as the lower, in urban areas as well as in rural and hilly areas of the country. While evaluating the social issue of tug of war between tradition and modernity, Mistry's works elucidate that the rift of ideas between the two generations often becomes a cause of anxiety and unbearable stress for the parents.

The Hindus Omprakash and Ishvar Darji occupy important positions in *A Fine Balance* insofar as both are central in illustrating the novel's central concern of how to make life livable under adverse circumstances. Apart from the deadly impact of political forces during the Emergency, one characteristic is of particular importance in this context: "India's cruelest social constraint," caste.

Any discussion of the effects of caste on Ishvar and Om must unavoidably include their family background. The Hindu family account of *A Fine Balance* begins with Dukhi Mochi, Ishvar's father and Omprakash grandfather. Dukhi Mochi belongs to the Chammar caste of tanners and leather-workers. Dukhi lives on the corpse of dead animals, the hides of which he receives in order to produce sandals and harnesses. His social status is that of an untouchable.

The Hindu believes that his position within the caste system is determined by his behavior in a previous personification. The system of caste postpones social mobility to a future incarnation. A future incarnation, however, will only bring about a rise to another stratum if the individual conforms to his present caste status. The inhumanity of untouchability is ruthlessly criticized as it is responsible thing for an erosion of meaning in the lives of Dukhi, Narayan, Ishvar and Om.

Later than his sons Ishvar and Narayan have been beaten up for entering the village school, Dukhi requested to Pandit Lallaram because he has trust in the Brahmin priest of whom it is said that “even an untouchable could receive justice at his hands” (AFB,112). Mistry’s portrayal satirizes Pandit Lallaram as an unmannered, reactionary who is not interested in justice for all:

Relying on this legendary reputation for justice, Dukhi sat at Pandit Lalluram’s feet and told him about the beating of Ishvar and Narayan. The learned man was resting in an armchair, having just finished his dinner, and belched loudly several times during his visitor’s narration. Dukhi paused politely at each eructation, while Pandit Lalluram murmured ‘Hai Ram’ in thanks for an alimentary tract blessed with such energetic powers of digestion. (AFB,112)

Dukhi, for the first time in his life, questions his classification with the order of caste. He revolts, and ultimately proceeds up the boundaries of caste, a reaction that becomes clear in the decision to remove his sons from the direct impact of discrimination. But serious tension between tradition and modernity is reflected as Dukhi’s son refuses to lead his life as per his father’s suggestion of being subservient. The father does not feel comfortable when the son talks too much about equality and rights but Narayan feels that “life without dignity is worthless” (AFB 144). The boy, thus, is led by his decision and not by the dictation of his father. Unlike his elders, he displays confidence that was almost unthinkable for the people of his previous generation. On the day of election, he reaches the election booth and asserts his right to vote. The anger for being treated inhumanly is visible in his decision. His resolve and determination seeks to send a message that the new generation of Dalits does not share the ideology of their elders. The awakening cannot be seen as exceptional or temporary as other young people of his caste are

also seen at the polling booth to cast their votes despite a warning of dire consequences by the Thakur and his men. No previous generations of the untouchables had dared to go against the orders of the upper caste. Although the family pays a heavy price for being bold but the fact remains that the young generation of the untouchables will not lead its life as per the rules and regulations fixed by the generation of their parents. The social inequalities like caste discrimination which have always been a part and parcel of the Indian society are no longer acceptable to the new generation of Dalits. The youngsters in these sidelined sections of society are raising their bold voice for being treated untouchables, trifling and inconsequential. Although much has changed after independence, still there is a craving for substantial “change” in this new generation of Dalits and generation gap is being observed as the new reality of our villages

The untouchables depend upon the higher caste people to feed their family. For example, The Thakur obtains cheap labour from the lower caste villagers. When the workers demand their due wages, they are threatened with violence. Dukhi Mochi accepts to pack the Chilies alone for small wage. Though, the Thakur asks him, “can you finish that by sunset?”... ‘Or maybe I should call two men” (AFB,103).

There is class and communal intolerance because of birth and profession. Dukhi Mochi decides to change his profession for these reasons of humiliations. Then he Migrates to the nearby city and becomes a cobbler. Fortunately, he meets his Muslim Friend named Ashraf, tailor of his family. The lower castes and classes need radical changes and revolutions but there is no compassion and the charity of the upper classes. Dukhi works hardly towards an individual revolution and breathing with lifelong traditions. Thus, Dukhi decides to send his sons with Ashraf to apprentice as tailors. Now, Dukhi violates caste rules by making his sons as tailors in which his tendency shows surprising courage of a suffered one. Being aware of their rights, the

young Dalits go against the tradition of obedient compliance of caste system. Narayan and Ishvar learn tailoring in the town from a Muslim tailor and Narayan opens his tailoring shop in the village. Although it was Dukhi Mochi who had taken the courageous and bold step of turning his sons into tailors but it needs mention that the prime of his own life had been spent in obedient compliance with the tradition of caste system. It was under acute pressure of circumstances that Dukhi had to take the daring decision for his sons to go against their caste-based occupation. But Narayan is very different from his father in his thinking and temperament:

It soon became known in Dukhi's village that his children were learning a trade other than leather-working. In the olden days, punishment for stepping outside one's caste would have been death. Dukhi was spared his life, but it became a very hard life. He was allowed no more carcasses, and had to travel long distances to find work. Sometimes he obtained to hide secretly from fellow chamaars; it would have been difficult for them if they were found out. The items he fashioned from this illicit leather had to be sold in far-off places where they had not heard about him and his sons. (AFB,118-19)

The upper caste people punish the lower caste people severely which is inhuman for the minor crimes they commit either knowingly or unknowingly. He wants to stop this communal fault line of humiliation to survive in the village. Particularly, this is a moving section of the novel that brings the dirty life conditions of the lower caste in rural India.

No, it is Bhola's turn. But where he was working, they accused him of Stealing...they chopped off his left-hand fingers today'. 'Bhola is Lucky', said Dukhi's mother, 'Last year chhagan lost his hand at the wrist. Same reason'... Dosu got a whipping for getting too close to the well. (AFB,96)

Then, Dukhi's father remarks that the punishment granted to Budhu's wife as: "She refused to go to the field with the Zamindar's son, so they shaved her head and walked her naked through the square." (AFB,97) Thus, Dukhi decides to send Narayan and Ishvar as apprentices of Ashraf's tailor shop in a nearby town. They live and learn tailoring with Ashraf chacha for years and they turn from cobblers to tailors. Dukhi utters, "If someone asks your name, don't say Ishvar Mochi or Narayan Mochi. From now on you are Ishvar Darji and Narayan Darji." (AFB,115)

Thereafter, Ishvar and Narayan return to their village to set up business and everything appears peaceful. The Chamaars come into conflict with the land lords, Zamindars and the Thakur during the general elections. Narayan's own tailor shop and his questions against misuse the caste system are not tolerated by the majority community. Here, Mistry gives graphic details of ruthless exploitation, tortures, booth rigging, and sufferings of the poor and the downtrodden. Even after twenty years of independence nothing changes. Narayan says:

Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals'... '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 chamaars to tailor. Be satisfied with that'. Narayan shook his head. 'That was your victory'. (AFB,142-43)

Narayan argues with officers that as a chammar, he cannot still drink water at the village well, worship in the temples of the upper castes, or walk where he likes. Narayan and his two companions are cruelly tortured by Thakur and they are hanged in the village square. Other

untouchables are beaten up at random, their women are raped and their huts are burnt down.

Thakur decides that Dukhi's family deserves special punishment.

His arrogance went against everything we hold sacred. What the ages had put together, Dukhi had dared to break asunder; he had turned cobblers into tailors, distorting society's timeless balance. Crossing the line of caste had to be punished with the utmost severity, said the Thakur. (AFB,147)

Above this incident is not a socially and morally acceptable one. "The untouchables lose their identities as human beings because of mistaken beliefs for them. Lot of duplication in our country's laws... For politicians, passing laws is like passing water... it all ends down the drain." (AFB,143) Then, in India, caste divisions not only exist between the lower and the upper classes but also within the class itself. The two untouchables have to endure the atrocities of the high class people and political power and their future becomes miserable. Due to economic and social reasons are displaced them from their familiar world. Even after, they become fully qualified tailors and return to their village and they are deeply conscious of their own roots in the society. After their entire family is cruelly murdered by village lords and they decide to immigrate to Bombay for the survival facts like Raja ram who says, "Thousands and thousands are coming to the city because of bad times in their native place. I came for the same reason." (AFB,171)

Mistry portrays the dark realistic picture of marginalized and lower-caste people surviving in the city of fantasy and dream. The Peoples belong to minority community in India not only in village but the metro city also. It also reveals the painful struggle of the outcaste in a violent society. Untouchables are economically exploited by others. They lose their identity as individuals and join the separate section of humanity. The novel is a realistic picture of the

atrocities committed on two untouchables from a village and the plight of poor characters from the Parsi community.

The novel depicts the suffering and pain of the poorest people, from beggar to India's other millions people who try to earn a few coins to make their both ends meet. The main crisis of Indian community is caused by untouchability which has its religious sanction too. The futility of all these efforts finds a glaring picture in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, portrays how untouchability reduces the people of lower castes to mere beasts. They have no identity of their own and are the detested section of society. Even their touch to a high class people brings a shower of abuses. The exploitation of the Dalits and the untouchables in the name of religion is heartless and inhuman. In his interviews, Rohinton Mistry admits that he intends to write about his own people, about his own community. His works need to be seen as graphic representations of an important historical change. The degradation of values, the matter-of-fact attitude of the young generation towards vital issues of life, their disrespectful attitude towards their parents in the situations of conflict and the hurt sentiment of the old generation – all have been realistically rendered by the author.

“After the images of rural and urban India, Mistry portrays the landscape of North India in the chapter ‘Mountains.’ Maneck Kohlah, a young Parsi student. Maneck thinks of leaving the mountains which has come to be considered as his universe, it makes him fear. During every vacation the relationship between father and son becomes more and more rude and harsh. Parents' views are often out-dated and old-fashioned and such views won't sustain the challenges of new times. This gets exemplified in the clash of opinions between Farokh Kohlah and Maneck in *A Fine Balance*. The effect of Emergency had reached the mountain causing drastic changes. The changing development of mountain depressed Mr. Kohlah. It looks as if the mountain began to

leave him. “It started with roads. Engineers in sola topis arrived with their sinister instrument and scharted their designs on reams of paper. . . Roads, wide and heavy-duty, to replace scenic mountain paths too narrow for the broad vision of nation builders and World Bank officials” (AFB,215). Mr. Kohlah is unable to control his emotions towards the changing surroundings. Farokh Kohlah possesses a shop in the mountains of North India. In the novel, Farokh Kohlah runs a small but successful business. Apart from running the general store, his speciality is the Kaycee, a cool drink which he makes according to a secret formula handed down to him over the generations. Farokh’s have power over is threatened and business suffers when multinationals invade the hills with latest technology and hard-hitting advertising campaigns. Maneck is able to judge the emergence of competition which was bound to wear away Kohlah’s domination of the cold drink business. But this fact of modernity is not recognized by his father. His friends ask him to “give some thought to modernizing and expanding the operation” (AFB,208). But Farokh cannot see the things rationally. Modernization and expansion are foreign ideas, incomprehensible to someone who refuses even to advertise. Maneck suggests advertising and adoption of new technology but his father would not agree.

Maneck, his son, goes to the local school and helps his father in the evenings. He identifies with the rural area and his father’s job and wants to continue his father’s business after his retirement. The happiness experienced during his childhood becomes a significant point of reference for Maneck throughout the novel; the. At the age of eleven, he leaves the village for a secondary school in town. Between seventeen and eighteen he attends college in Bombay. After receiving a university certificate, he leaves Bombay for Dubai in 1976. , Farokh not only loses his local business but also his mental balance and health. In the defeat of Farokh, the novel charts a shift from an old, unscientific, pre-industrial society to the industrialized one. Like most of

Mistry's central characters, Farokh is not just an individual but a representative figure symbolizing the loss of the traditional mode of life as a whole. Through the clash of Maneck and his father, Mistry posits that difference between the thinking of two generations generally leads to an estranged relationship between the two.

A Fine Balance depicts the opposition between the old and new through the clash between Farokh and Maneck where both the father and the son remain under inconceivable pressure. The writer reflects his understanding that in the struggle for existence in the society, the old, orthodox, unscientific, traditional mode of life is unable to mould itself according to the changing times and it does not possess the inner strength to survive, so it is bound to pass into extinction. Farokh is a product of the traditional society and carries within his personality the typical strengths and weakness of that society. Maneck fails to make his father realize that the qualities which may keep his business running in the modern times are not present in him in a sufficient manner. This is a typical clash between tradition and modernity. Maneck is full of ideas, about merchandising and marketing, which his father rejects outright. He refuses to let Maneck order new brands of soaps and biscuits which were proving popular elsewhere. Suggestions to improve the lighting in the dingy interior, paint the walls, renovate the shelves and glass cases to make the display more attractive were received like "blasphemy". The frequent arguments between the father and son regarding running of the store, spoil their relationship. They find it impossible to get through the day without quarrelling, breaking into argument even in the presence of customers. Maneck tries to make his father realize that survival of the fittest rules the world, particularly in the present age of advertisement and campaigning: "We must strike back", said Maneck. "We should also advertise – give out free samples like

them. If they want to use hard sell, we do the same.” “Hard sell?” said Mr. Kohlah disdainfully. “What kind of language is that?” (AFB,220)

Such an over-reaction on the part of Farokh is not justified at all since Maneck is talking sense. There is every indication in the novel that the father’s rigid and old-fashioned views cannot sustain the challenges of new times. Maneck’s suggestions are appropriate and according to the demands of changing times. But his father refuses to appreciate his plan and acknowledge his talent. The need to change is discarded by him and he loses not only the prosperity but also mental balance as he could not adjust with the changing competitive times. Farokh opts to break rather than bend. Things would have been different if he had adopted the technologically and technically sound approach of his son.

Maneck is a significant position in the novel in that the effects of migration are made most clear in his story. Maneck Kohlah experiences two instances of displacement. Similar to Om and Ishvar, he is forced to migrate to Bombay, and hence moves from a rural to an urban area. In accordance with his community’s capitalist culture, Maneck afterwards leaves Bombay for Dubai. He describes life as ultimately hopeless, and repeatedly argues that ‘everything ends badly. It’s the law of the universe.’ (AFB,466) Maneck Kohlah recurrently remembers the mountains and his family while he is in Dubai: “Not one day had passed during his long exile that he did not think about his home and his parents” (AFB,584).

Maneck Identity for him is not a free-floating postmodern signifier selectively affiliating with his surroundings. Maneck’s subjectivity, in fact, mirrors a traditional, essentialist notion of identity, which prevents the possibility of celebrating his displacement. Maneck acts as a connecting link between Dina and the tailors. Dina is the protagonist around whom the story revolves. She is the only female character, who dominates over Ishvar, Om, Maneck and

Ibrahim. Through Dina Mistry develops an 'Independent identity', this changed herself accordingly. She takes her decisions independently. She avoids the 'power politics' which she borrowed from Mrs. Gupta. Dina listens to her 'inner self' and develops a drastic change in her behaviour. A 'question of choice' arises between the 'power politics' and her 'inner self' and finally she listens to her 'inner self.'

Maneck is upset at the alienation from his family. The death of Mumtaz, Ashraf, Shankar, and the Beggarmaster cause the 'crisis of balance'. Dina is back to her brother's house. Her journey which started from her brother's house as Dina Shroff ends as a widow Dina. During his final journey, Maneck meets Rajaram who turned up to become a BAL Baba. According to Valmiki, the proof reader who is in charge of BAL Baba's mail-order:

The chapters '*Sailing Under One Flag*', '*The Bright Future Clouded*', '*Trace of Destiny*', and '*Wedding, Worms and Sanyas*' reveal the collective identity and collective goals of four major characters who belong to minority community living in multi-cultural society of India. After the dispersal state of the tailors Dina, Maneck, Ishvar and Om are reunited. Dina's hegemony over the tailors has vanished and she treats them as her family members by allowing them to sleep on the Veranada. The deconstruction of culture categorization starts. Though belonging to different castes and community, they 'fuse' and 'assimilate' under one roof. To see the collective sharing of these characters, one has to realize that despite belonging to different ethnic, regional and economic background, their group is unified by a common culture. Their common experience in the multicultural society unites them. This particular group constructs a community. They are one in their individuality and self-esteem. The readers are required to acknowledge the existence of marginalized group through the passage of past mishappenings. Mistry believes that unless society is reformed, no man can reform himself except in the most

insignificant small ways. His thoughts are original. He writes for the sake of society. He wants people to look at the weakness of the social-customs, conventions Government policies etc. The survival, struggle, violence, threat, death, loss, revenge, discrimination are revealed in the concluding chapters 'Return of Solitude', 'Family Planning', and 'The Circle Is Completed'. The 'fusion' and 'assimilation' of various minority communities go hand to hand in each other's progress. Assimilating the scattered swatches and giving it a shape of quilt shows 'unity'. Every piece of cloth has its own importance. The cambric square indicates the government destroyed the tailor's house. "Calling one piece sad is meaningless. See, it is connected to a happy piece-sleeping on the veranda. And the next square-chapatis...And don't forget this georgette patch, where Beggarmaster saved us from the landlord's goondas" (AFB,490). The lives of Dina, Maneck, Ishvar and Om are "joined together" (AFB,491) like the patches and form a new pattern. Living together and depending upon each other are the source of strength and comfort. Dina makes herself busy with the quilt when the tailors are absent. "Straightening a seam, trimming a patch, adjusting what did not look right to her eye" (AFb,519).

Mistry artistically suggests that cultural differences are deliberately raised to distort the harmonious environment of the society. He presents the idea of family by assimilation of the characters of two different castes and classes of society as the circumstances forced them to live as a family. It is described analytically how the reservations of caste and class melt and a new hybrid culture emerges. The novelist makes a serious effort to attain balance between hybridity and exclusivity of culture. The metaphor of quilt powerfully suggests the assimilation and exclusiveness of different cultural background of the characters. Mistry strongly establishes the idea of a balanced approach in life - inwardly as well outwardly through the title of the novel:

The diversity and plurality which has been noted as aspects of post-modern society have a particular value so far as they promote an attention to the radical otherness of different cultures. There is thus a new, post-modern form of cross fertilization taking place (Trikha 215).

As John Ball has a view that *A Fine Balance* in its careful exploration of diverse gender, class and religions in the subject position, is a much more inclusive work than its predecessor. It is:

A super abundant social spectrum of Muslim rent-collectors and tailors, Sikh cabbies, wily beggars, corrupt slumlords, profiteering police, radical students, and- in a cameo no less unflattering than her appearance in *Midnight's Children* and *Such a Long Journey* – Indira Gandhi herself (Ball 83-84).

Mistry comments on the superstitious Indian people through a minor character named Rajaram. He transforms himself from hair-collector to family planning motivator and then to murderer who kills two beggars for their lovely hair. Thus, he escapes to the Himalayas from the clutches of the police. Finally, he becomes the highly respected BALBaba as a spiritualist. Violence and division are caused by such BALBaba, Thakurjis to take advantages among the people to protect them. It is not only in India but also in the whole world with in different forms. Rohinton Mistry gives examples from the memories of Hindu-Muslim clashes during post-partition days.

They brought with them stories of Muslims attacking Hindu in many parts of the country. 'We must get ready to defend ourselves,' they said... If they spill the blood of our Hindu brothers, this country shall run red with rivers of Muslim blood... only bakery in town owned by a Muslim, had already been burned to the ground... 'Every day trains are crossing that new

border, carrying nothing but corpses. My agent arrived yesterday from the north; he has seen it with his own eyes. The trains are stopped at the station and everyone butchered. On both sides of the border.’ (AFB,122-126)

Mistry conveys his own moral attitudes and liberal views through characters. Various episodes in the novel reveal Mistry’s sympathy for the exploited people and his righteous anger excesses during the period of Emergency. Mistry strongly satires the political parties’ brutal activities against common and poor people during the Emergency period.

Haven’t seen you for some time, he said. ‘Any news of Nawaz since the police took him?’ ‘Police? For what?’ ‘Smuggling gold from the Gulf.’ ...He showed up there, to embarrass him among his colleagues. ‘And that was a big mistake. The bastard took his revenge. That same night the police came for Nawaz.’ ...With the Emergency, everything is upside-down. with the right influence and a little cash, sending people to jail is very easy. There’s even a new law called MISA to simplify the whole procedure. (AFB, 298-99)

During the Emergency, corruption has a vital role in the society by politicians and land lords. The common people suffer a lot because of the corruption. The Thakur Dharamsi cheats payment amount from the family planning camp without providing sufficient money to buy equipment. Policeman also threatens the poor people and gets money from them based on their poverty.

The novel is a fine example of changing society. Mistry acts as a revolutionary writer or an artist whose meaningful works is closely linked with the masses giving expression to their thoughts, feelings, emotions and serves as their loyal spokesman. Only by speaking for the masses he can educate them. Mistry move backward and forward between home (Bombay) and abroad (Canada), personal and impersonal. He is focused on his native land and around Parsi

world. Mistry's skilful blending of his Characters' personal affairs with communal concerns situates theme and lends them significance as social being:

The secret of survival is to embrace change, and to adapt . . . all things fall and are built again, and those that build them again are gay . . . you cannot draw lines and compartments, and refuse to budge beyond them. Sometimes you have to use your failures as stepping-stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair . . . it's all a question of balance (AFB,230-231).

Ishvar and Om have their lunch at Nusswan's flat. Against all odds, Dina, Ishvar, and Om make an effort for their survival. The connectivity and understanding of all the main characters do maintain 'a fine balance' up to some extent but at the same time fall under crisis. The novel of Mistry belongs entirely to the humanitarian movement of post-independent India. He is a novelist of purpose. In his work he sets out to attack some specific abuse or abuses in the existing system. However, with the help of an alternate reality the writer seems to make his best efforts to balance the critical life of each of his characters. Mistry confronts, interrogates and challenges the authoritative voice of history. The main symbolic significance of the novel is that life is a struggle in which a courageous individual alone may win a moral victory against the difficulties and problems of existence. The novel upholds the integrity, dignity, and invincibility of the human mind.

A Fine Balance is actually a depiction of large scale effort at somehow gaining or maintaining 'a fine balance' in order to service. The effort canvas extends from individuals to groups – minorities, social and political groups. Each individual and group seems to be riding a swing eternally being pushed by other individuals or groups - disturbing or obstructing the effort for balance.

Maneck too, is a victim of displacement because he is displaced from his home in the hills to the college in the city where he is constantly humiliated by his seniors. He strives to adapt himself to the political atmosphere of the college but he feels alienated and commits suicide in the end. Emergency made both Dina and Maneck fail in their attempt. Therefore, all the four major characters are displaced with lonely and struggle for identity and survival in a cruel world. Social circumstances and sense of isolation bring them together and shape a bond of understanding as they struggle to survive.

Along with Om and Ishvar, Dina becomes a successful businesswoman in a short period. But her identity collapses when the emergency is exploited by the capitalists. Dina has to finish the huge assignment with only two tailors. Dina and her team worked hard to meet the deadlines. Then, she is forced to vacate the house by landlord with the help of a gent Ibrahim. But Dina is helped by Beggar Master who has some influence over the landlord. Besides, Dina has to face the complaint of Om about poor wages. But, she loses her independence and has to depend on her brother Nusswan at end.

As an angry reformist, Rohinton Mistry passionately deals with the unfortunate villages and their poverty, cruelties of caste, orphans, intolerance and political disasters in Indian society in his fiction. Both Om and Ishvar lose their family in village and move to city because of the caste violation. It takes months to adjust them to city circumstances. They join as labours to Dina but they do not coincide with her thoughts. Particularly, Om cannot adjust himself with Dina's attitude. Dina does not approve the friendship of Maneck with the tailors. This attitude further makes them to feel that they are again treated with class-consciousness.

Mistry portrays this shameful aspect of Indian society. He highlights the injustices done to women that the inequality is caused by the "cultural construction of gender differences."

Dina's brother, Nusswan suggests her to remarry after her husband's death. It personifies the difference between the cultural pattern of Hindu and Parsi Community. He points out Parsi community which won't stop a widow to remarry. Here, Mistry highlights the generosity of his own culture or community.

The novel is all about the significance of maintaining a fine balance in our lives by commanding the right cord. There is a continuous need to keep working at the wheels of life. Every character in this novel faces a number of obstacles in the course of their life. Life for them is never smooth sailing. Some obstructions are nature sent while the others are man-made. All of them struggle very hard. Some of them fruitfully maintain a fine balance; and the others not being able to do so bow down to the forces of destiny. Fate comes in different disguises before which man is feeble. The novels numerous characters are grouped as the oppressed and the oppressor. The oppressed suffer in silence and those who dare to counter act are thrown to the state of a mere nothingness (death).

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