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**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPRESSION AND HUMILIATION IN A FINE BALANCE BY
ROHINTON MISTRY**

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ABSTRACT

A Fine Balance is the story of four people who meet, live and work in a large, overcrowded city and desperately struggle to survive in the face of intense hardships. Most of *A Fine Balance* takes place in 1975, but the novel also offers a brief glimpse of the mid-1980s in the epilogue, and earlier parts of the twentieth century, as it probes into the histories of modern India and of each major character. Afterwards each character is given more focused attention in the novel's sixteen chapters. These four characters encountered unbearable humiliation and exploitation and political and social suppression by domineering upper castes people and the Government at time of Emergency. Mistry intersperses where the main characters are working and living together and how they were suppressed and exploited in the novel is clearly depicted. The four protagonists work together on a quilt, patched together from remnants, and each square comes to symbolise a different moment of their lives together, so that a sad memory is immediately followed by a happy one, each sewed seamlessly to the other. "Losing, and losing again, is the very basis of the life process," says a minor character towards the end of the novel, "till all we are left with is the bare essence of human existence." *A Fine Balance* is about life, and therefore about loss, but in the process of describing life and loss, although the action jumps in time from 1975 to the past and back again, the novel is far from chaotic.

Key Words: Suppression, Exploitation, Humiliation, untouchability.

Introduction

Here is one of the major characters in the novel is Dina dalal 42 years old lady she was so happy and enjoyed her days when her father was alive. Her was died when she was 12 years old on this day onwards humiliation and obstacles arised for Dina dalal. She was humiliated by her own brother Nusswan and sister in Ruby. They tortured her a lot and sometimes man handled and forced her to clean the bowls, wash clothes and rooms. They did not provide sufficient food to her. She

could not sustain the suppression by her own family members and she decided to run away from the home. She left the house and got married Rusthom Dalal a medical chemist. She was enjoyed his company for only three wedding anniversaries. On third wedding anniversary unfortunately he was died. Once again she got facing humiliations and suppressions, but this time by society. She did not go back to her brother; she became a tailor on which she stands on her own feet firmly to encounter the

all sorts of suppressions. Though she lost her eye sight and life became burden to her.

The political suppression also depicted in the novel that originally from a family of cobblers. Ishvar and his brother Narayan, being lower caste men, at the time of election contesting he would like to have his own vote rather than the upper caste votes, for committing to that opinion strictly. He is severely tortured and killed, his family also burnt alive in their hut by Thakur Dharamsi, a powerful land lord owner. Only Ishvar and Oprakash survived because they were with Ashraf, who is the owner of a tailor shop. This incident in the novel deals with the brutal political suppression of the upper caste hegemony and oppression. Being born in impoverished lower caste and cobblers should not have their own vote even in the public elections. How hazardous caste and political violence is prevalent in the novel is clearly imaged. The domineering upper castes, even in the modernization oppressing the lower caste in Indian context.

The four central characters are quite happy almost a year altogether. With the impact of emergency led their lives into difficulties. The tailors shack is demolished in a Government beautification program. They insisted and forced them to live on the streets. The tailors are then rounded up by the police and sold to a labor camp. This is one of the incident shows the social suppression and exploitation of the Government over the people. By the time Ishvar was beginning to think about finding a wife for Omprakash, and Maneck's final exams were approaching. After making some inquiries, Ishvar found that there were four potential families and organized a trip back to his village for the wedding. Dina agreed to let Omprakash's wife sleep on the veranda. Before that while Omprakash was in the process of finding a wife, they return to Ashraf's town. There they bump into Thakur, who recognizes the pair. He arranges for them to be rounded up by the family planning centre. At this time Ashraf was beaten to death and Ishvar and Omprakash are given compulsory vasectomies. An operation that makes a man unable to make a woman pregnant. This incident reveals the exploitation of the Thakur and his suppression on the poor people. And after

that Thakur visits them as they are recovering from the operation and arranges on a medial pretext to have Omprakash's testicles removed and castrated. Ishvar's legs become infected and have to be amputated. The social treatment of the dominated caste on the poor and lower caste people highly influential and hazardous in the novel.

The suppression of another religious minority is the fourth religious problem in the novel. The oppression of the Sikhs causes Maneck's personal crisis and suicide. In history, some of the most severe treatment of the Sikhs took place in the mid-to-late 1980s. In June 1984, faced with violence led by secessionist Sikh militants, Prime Minister Gandhi ordered a military operation -- "Operation Bluestar" -- aimed at capturing Jarnail Singh Bindranwale, the secessionist leader. The difficulty was that the leader had taken refuge in the Golden Temple at Amritsar, a Sikh shrine. Militarily, Operation Bluestar was successful since Bindranwale was killed and the terrorists were driven out of the Golden Temple. Politically, however, it was a disaster: the temple was damaged and Sikh believers felt horribly insulted. Later that same year, Gandhi was assassinated by two of her bodyguards, Sikhs seeking vengeance.

Balance fictionalizes the reprisals and violence against the Sikhs, including the torture and death of many. For instance, during Maneck's first day back in India after almost ten years of living and working in Saudi Arabia, he is confronted with the situation facing the Sikhs when his taxi driver advises him to cut his hair and shave his mustache so he won't be thought to be a Sikh and perhaps be arrested or worse.

Conclusion

In *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry the picture of brutality on low caste people seems to have multiplied manifold. Rohinton Mistry portrays the gruesome picture of brutality on Dalits and Low Castes, how the upper class suppresses the democratic rights of outcaste and other down trodden classes of India. The novel presents a vivid picture about the pitiable condition of the downtrodden people. Om and his grandson Prakash, two untouchables born in a cobbler's family, in a small village, a place where even after the official

abolition of caste distinction there is no respite from humiliation for these people. Instead of giving his finger-print to his landlord and not allowing casting his vote, in an act of defiance, Om asks for his own separate ballot box. This proves to be threat for the authoritarian landlord who sends his men to beat the outcaste family to death. Om escapes and takes shelter in a nearby city in the house of a Muslim friend from his village. He feels safer here and identifies more with the Muslims than the people of his religion. But here too he comes across people like Thorkay, a slumlord and a liquor baron and Nawaz, a hypocrite who extracts money from the slum dwellers which he says is used to bribe the government officials. Although they were suffered, suppressed and exploited deeply, the characters are not embittered by what fate deals them.

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