



Perspective of Multiculturalism in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to analyze Rohinton Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance* in the perspective of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a social theory that distinguishes and respects minority cultures, which have been suffering from social inequality, marginalization, dispossession and displacement. In a sense, multiculturalism opposes cultural domination and respects all cultures with their distinctiveness.

Key words: multiculturalism, dislocation, identity, diversity, marginalization

The present research paper aims at exploring how multiculturalism, as a social theory plays a momentous role in literary world. Multiculturalism attained wide range in literature studies. Multiculturalism carries together different themes such as cultural diversity, reverence, concern, peaceful living of many cultures and subcultures. The thought of maintaining all cultures is a way of identifying different cultures and signifying them as equals in the society which leads towards the integrity of the society. The paper attempts a close analysis Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*.

The theme of the novel signifies realistic events of the cultural life. It is a massive milestone in the contemporary Indian fiction in English literature, reflecting a unambiguous and moving picture of life during the Emergency. He attempts keeping fine balance in the lives of his characters in the novel. One of the most significant aspects of the novel is crowded and throbbing life of Indians. India has been identified as 'nation of dust and mud' that is what we see in this novel. This novel interlinks with socio-political conflicts of the emergency period.

The novel grows with the victimization of four chief characters – Dina, Ishwar, Maneck Kohlah, and Omprakash during time of Emergency. Mistry depicts the image of India bearing eyewitness to the nation's cultural and social diversity, desiring together geographical sites from across the subcontinent – the town, the village, the mountains – and depicting characters from a range of religious and class communities. Mistry wishes not only to signify the realities of Emergency, but also the consequences of the India's values of multiculturalism. Ishwar and Om both, the tailors, mainly belong to the Chammar caste, they are known as untouchables in the society. Dukhi Mochi who lives in a very small village, he has two sons named Narayan and Ishwar. For getting knowledge of tailoring both were sent to the city. The high-caste citizens of the village do not like the decision of Dukhi Mochi. Because Dukhi Mochi gather courage to break the timeless chain of caste. As Rohinton Mistry exemplifies his view:

Dukhi Mochi's decision to turn his sons into tailors was indeed courageous, considering that the prime of his own life had been spent in obedient compliance with the traditions of the caste system. Like his forefathers before him, he had accepted

from childhood the occupation preordained for his present incarnation. (*A Fine Balance* 88)

The reflection of diverse communities and religions in *A Fine Balance* displays cultural harmony in the society. The point of view of multiculturalism has been revealed through the relationship between Dukhi and Ashraf. Ishwar and Narayan save the life of Ashraf Chacha and his family when he was trapped in Hindu and Muslim riots. They altered the signboard of Ashraf's shop named Muzaffar Tailoring Company as Krishna Tailors to keep away from the attack of the Hindus on Ashraf and his family. In this way, they protect the life of Ashraf's family without any purpose. Mumtaz, Ashraf's wife touches their feet for saying that she will remain grateful to them endlessly. This indicates humanity in the society to save each other by caring and helping them.

A Fine Balance throws light on deep-rooted Caste system in India and wicked customs of the community. Narayan is the victim of this so called caste-system. Narayan marries a beautiful girl Radha and they have a son Omprakash. Om lives with Ishwar for tailoring. Narayan wishes to make revolution in the society so that he decided to vote for right person of his choice and to teach lesson to Thakur. This way of Narayan makes Thakur Dharamsi annoyed. Narayan and other two men, who convoy him, are severely treated by Thakur's men. Narayan and others were killed mercilessly and brutally. Upper caste persons give punishments to the untouchables. This sort of situations keeps before the villagers not to dare again. This shows the struggle between untouchable and upper caste. Dina Dalal, is a real character from Parsi community. Rohinton Mistry offers her massive place in the novel *A Fine Balance*. Dina Dalal is a lovely young woman, she earned nothing less than the best. She married with Rustom by her own choice. However, unluckily "Rustom passed away, and the snake is ready to strike" (92).

He died in a road accident and makes her widow at the age of forties, the sky of sorrow distorted on Dina. She thinks not to burden on her brother Nussawan and his wife Ruby. She knows her

capabilities and confident herself and strong-minded to live independently in her husband's flat. She continues tailoring business so she require two tailors. Luckily, she gets two tailors namely Ishwar and Omprakash. One more Maneck Kohla a paying guest and lives in her house. They all live happily and quietly there. Unfortunately the luck gets in the life of Daina in the image of landlord who tells her to leave the flat, which is hired by her husband. This condition makes her deserted and she has the only to go to her brother's house. Not only Daina but also Ishwar and Om are sufferer of this situation. All these situations are responsible for Ishwar and Om's life too and compelled them to become vagabonds.

The novel shows the period of Emergency of India. How Indian society imbalanced during that period is depicts through all the characters portrayed in the novel. This novel thows light on social, historical and political development of India between the year of 1975 and 1985. Rohinton Mistry very carefully depicts in the novel how Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi force a 'State of Internal Emergency' proves to be grave for ordinary people. The novel depicts common vision of socio-cultural issues of the modern Indian society and Politics.

Rohinton Mistry depicts the character of Dina Dalal very artistically. She portrays very modern woman in her thoughts. She is not a credulous and conventional woman. She is more interested in living independent life so that she marries Rustom, the man of her own choice. She suffers and has to face so many problems in her life, but she never loses her hopes. After the death of her husband, she lives independently without any reluctances. She earns her own by doing tailoring for living life. Rohinton Mistry works hard to furnish a voice to marginalized community of India. He desires to open the image of marginalized groups from diverse communities. The marginalized groups of the society are the Parsis, the Chamaars, the Muslims, and the Beggars. He attempts to discover the truthful picture of the Indian society before his readers.

Rohinton Mistry focuses on Intercultural understanding among the various characters in the novel. The proof of mutual understanding between

Dina Dalal, Maneck, Ishvar and Om is discovered in sharing their ideas among them. Sharing and mutual understanding of cultural differences is a social interaction and it breaks down negative hurdles of society.

India is the only nation of partaking things interestingly among themselves. All Indians live together very happily in the society and they does not hurt or blame on each other's culture or community. They have good friends from diverse community so that they always try to keep their relations strong. On the eve of celebrations and festivals they come together to make festivals and celebrations beautiful as well as they gives best wishes and blessings for them. Whenever they close together, they share their diverse foods gladly and appreciate it heartily. Therefore, the ultimate study of the novel *A Fine Balance* comes to the conclusion that sharing food shows multicultural perspective of the society in India. Modern Indian culture is extremely multifaceted on account of the peculiar combination of tradition and newness as well as the multiplicity of subcultures and languages. The literary works, either in the regional languages or in English, are a noteworthy means of sharing the enormous variety and diversity of such a culture.

Basically a Parsi and then an immigrant in Canada, Mistry sees himself as a character of double displacement. Accordingly, he embodied such type of displacement through his central characters of the novel *A Fine Balance*. Conventionally Om and Ishvar are belongs to lower caste which is famous as Chamaar in the Indian society. The supremacy and dominance of the society and forces of their predecessor transfer them into the trade of tailoring. It shows that these men constantly aware about their roots in the social structure. Because of economic pressures, they go away from their natural place and environment. They are fighting for the safe and secure place in the mass of the urban place. The emotional dislocation of taking new profession of tailoring and physical displacement of moving to the unknown city for earning, and the feelings of separation, alienation, dislocation and loneliness take them to become beggars on the roads of the city.

Rohinton Mistry explores with a new dimension and reality with fictions taking care the Parsi community as the intimate aware of his works. The main theme of the novel revolves around Dina Dalal, Ishvar, Om and Maneck. This novel represents unity in diversity among all people from diverse communities. Unity in diversity is the leading multicultural perspective in *A Fine Balance*.

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