

**‘A Fine Balance’ by Rohinton Mistry: A Review**

**Dr. P. V. Meshram**, Assistant Professor, Dept of English

Janata Mahavidyalaya,, Chandrapur (M.S.) meshrampv@gmail.com

**Abstract**

Since long, literature has been given platform to various prevailing problems of society and therefore thus it has been proved in real sense, a voice of voiceless. One of the social diseases which have been making our society hollow from inside is caste system. In modern times too, it's orthodox and so called traditional norms and customs have been making the unity of the people of the Indian Society fragile and frail. the ironic condition as well as issues like a forced mass-sterilization campaign, violation of the fundamental rights of the people (Vote) and forced exile and imprisonment of the groups living below the poverty line as a result of Government's "beautification" program. These people are human, still not identified as a human by the society or surroundings, but merely dirt, not belong to this world or land and nomad. the account of pathetic life and hardship of two characters from a village who found themselves in middle of the epicentre- turmoil of Emergency era 1975 to 1977.

**Keywords:** Dalits, Emergency, Jinx, Hapless, Unheard etc.

**Introduction:**

Literature is always concerned with the humanity and mankind above anything else; a form of art which desires to transform the existing state of things for the better; a piece of writing which has an progressive thought process; a platform which provides voice to the misery of the weaker section of people; and above all a work of art which wishes to create a society, a better place to live in. In fact, a social reformer literature is a work of art which desires to serve the cause of humanity in astonishing ways. India English Literature is very rich and fortunate to have, in its long history, much extraordinary work of literature which has done amazing efforts for the betterment of the society and for the uplifting of the downtrodden.

**Review of literature**

- (Deivasigamani & Lakshmi, 2018) studied "*The Concept of Untouchability in Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance*" and found that The present paper focuses on how Mistry portrays the representations of Dalits in A Fine Balance carries a reasonable

and responsive understanding of social development inherent in the class arrangement of India and points out how a criticized person loses his personality. As an individual and social author, it becomes easier for Mistry to judge the gravity, value, choice of the individual person with their characteristics. The reason being the search for the person and social status is obvious in Mistry's works. As Narayan describes: "Life without dignity is worthless". The individual's face the result of their idea in the end which turns out to be cruel and heartbreaking.

(Siddhant, 2017) studied "Dalit novel a motive to show the difficulty of Dalits in *a* Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and also in the Kancha Ilaiah's *Untouchable God*" and noticed that Dalit cerebral function their method of resistance innovatively through Dalit novel, the most impressive expression. Dalit novel is an difficult effort from the authorized to the insignificant, from large detail to small detail, from the practical to the genuine and from self emulation to self affirmation. It is also a composite and homogeneous body of massive creative corpus emerging from different regional language literatures such as Marathi, Hindi, Gujrati, Punjabi etc. Thus, Dalit literature is the voice of the people who are subjugated, downtrodden and marginalized. Focusing on the harassment of Dalits, Mistry chooses the story of Dukhi, a Dalit to describe the discrimination occurs in rural areas, Kancha Ilaiah chooses the story of Pariah and Sita Maha Laxmi to show the class discrimination in Indian society.

(Suvarna, 2020) studied "*Dalit Culture and Ethos* in the novel *Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance*" and found that the novel Rohinton Mistry (1952- ) is a famous Canadian writer. He was born in Mumbai on July 03, 1952. *A Fine Balance* (1996), Mistry's second novel, was released in India of middle seventies and focuses especially on the period during Emergency and afterwards i.e. post- Emergency. The setting of the novel is from 1945 to 1984. In this novel Mistry delineates the predicaments of the chamaars(leather-workers) who are considered untouchables. Mistry is known to describe profusely from Indian record, but more deliberately to rewrite the account of the criticize and the demoralized. *A Fine Balance* is one of the very few Indian English novels which present reader the very essence of Dalit culture. Many other novels confine to portraying Dalit characters by neglecting to include their very life style, culture due to which the characters are too apart from their roots. Dalitness which is the soul of the character itself is not seen in the characterization. That is the reason many works cannot be a part of Dalit Literature in which projecting the Dalit culture is an essential

part of it. But A Fine Balance is an exception to it. The novel A Fine Balance is effective in presenting Dalit culture realistically to some extent

(A. Radhapriya, n.d.) Studied "Dalit Literature-domination of Untouchables in the novel Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*" and noticed that In the current worldwide research situation subordinate topic has become so important that it is frequently used in various fields such as history, literature. The word 'subaltern' is derived from a German word which means "subordinate level" or less important'. Subordinate novel highlights various themes such as domination, marginalization, Gender bias, suppression of inferior and functioning classes, ignored women, mistreated sections of society. The method of untouchability is a custom where lower caste people are told to maintain distance being ignored by higher caste people. Some of the writers in Indian literature are giving voice for untouchability through their writing. Like Bama, Spivak, Raja Roa, Kamala Markandaya, Rohinton Mistry and so on. Rohinton Mistry is a famous writer of Indian Diaspora and his style of writings reflect the crisis of self-identity and aspects of immigration. This Paper intends to study the social status of subalterns during the emergency period that is represented in the novel Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. It represents a clear picture of Indian Political and historical facts about the life of subaltern people. This paper shows how the common people of India are changed as subalterns and the paper further intends to explore the tragic life of four major different characters that belong to different social classes.

### **Portrayal of Dalit Voices in "A Fine Balance"**

This novel is a reasonable proof of the dreadful condition of the "Chamaar Community" known as "Mochi" mainly found in the remote villages of India, who are being humiliated and tortured by the upper caste people under a false and orthodox menace of caste system. This paper is an account of the misery and irony of Dalit community and how they are being offended, mistreated, manipulated, disrespected and tyrannized in the name of so-called conventional customs. Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* has been written totally in focus to the Dalits atrocities, centred by different subaltern characters both of Men and Women. As the typical Dalit literature, it showcases the Dalit psyche, Dalit struggles and resistance in form of remonstrations to change their social "liberty" from "marginalise" to "autonomy", the cruel customs to follow foisted on them (Dalit) by the upper caste people.

**Dukhi Mochi:** The novel depicts an account of the life of Dukhi Mochi and his successors, suffocating for the free air before the independence and after the independence. This was a

era of the transformation, an era of a new hope and change but not in the case of Dalit such as dukhi who is forbidden to misery and irony. "In a village by a river" depicts the existence of Chamaars, who are being forced to live at periphery as a result of so called customs. The village has been own and under the influence of the Brahmins and the landowners. They marginalised with no rights to live even, forbidden to live a life without using any of the natural resources without the permission of the upper caste people, prohibited to get education, no right to room anywhere when the upper caste are there on road: Like the waste of dead animals which enclosed him and his father as they worked the culture of the class system was messy everywhere. And if that was not sufficient, the gossip of adults, the discussion between his mother and father filled the space in his information of the world.

Dukhi at the age of 18 married to Roopa a chamaar girl. After giving birth to three daughters who died soon within few months, Roopa delivered son-Ishvar. That was the first ever time Dukhi rejoiced with happy heart. Dukhi tries everything to give a healthy childhood to his son but his occupation doesn't allow him to do so as there are very few chances of getting wages in the village. Even when his wife Roopa who tries to steal oranges for Ishvar and being raped by the man who was hired to look after the grove of oranges, Dukhi didn't able to console her or raise his voice as he knew his status: Dukhi used to pretend sleepy as she enters the hut. He heard her silent voice several times during the night, and understands by her smell, and assume what all difficulties she had faced while she was gone. He felt like going to her , discuss with her about her problems and make her comfort. He was confused what to say and what not to say, and he was also afraid of learning about it. He was feeling ashamed of himself and he wished he would die that night.

During the birth of Narayan brings a new type of offence on Dukhi's head as: „possibly the Chamaar had moved far away and kidnapped a Brahmin's newborn child and this would describe . At the house of Thakur Premji who called Dukhi for a work of making a powder out of red chillies, Dukhi again became a victim of hapless and powerlessness. Dukhi was being instructed

to finish the given task before sunset so it was a great opportunity for him to get something for his family after few idle days. Thus in enthusiasm of completing task before sunset, the mortar being pated for the whole day, split cleanly in two and collapsed crushing Dukhi's left foot. It is very clear that Dukhi haven't done anything in this matter but he was offended by the wife of Thakur:. The Thakur's wife was looking from the kitchen window and was

screaming and calling her husband! She was requesting him to come quickly because the chammaar donkey has destroyed their field. Thakur in arrives in rage, threading Dukhi for his did. Dukhi tried to defence him a lot but Thakur doesn't want listen a single word from him as he said: The Thakur shouted at him wildly and behaved badly with him. He blamed him for destroying his property and also claimed that he is not a stone-hearted person that he will handover him to the police for the crime. He yelled at him and ask him to move out of the house.

This incident has jolted Dukhi from inside and so he decided not to go for any such daily wage work at upper caste home. After his foot get healed, he went to town, commuting daily from village early in the morning and back at evening. Thus going into new profession Dukhi took all his tools such as hammers, screwdriver, etc and chose a corner after surveying that there is no other cobbler and started repairing the torn and rough footwear of town dwellers. Dukhi found his inability at immense when his both son was tortured and punished by the upper caste person. The matter was that Narayan and Ishwar entered and touches the schoolhouse properties. Thus out of anger the school master punishes them and drag them outside. He was shouting at them and calling them chammaar rascals and asking them not to enter the school. AFB, 110) The schoolmaster was not satisfies and he asked for the cane to teach a lesson to both of the chammaar boys: he ordered a girl to bring the cane and asked the boys to remove their pant. He repeatedly mentioned that he was not among the lower cast boys who will dream of touching things that are not supposed to touch. When Dukhi came to listen about what happen today with his sons, he decided to meet Pandit Lullaram, who possesses the status of a high caste of a Brahmin and are known as the purest among the pure, for justice. He confronted the Pandit about what happened with him at Thakur Premji's home and then he convey his inability to ask for justice for him but this time it is the matter of his sons: „“ he was crying in front of panditji describing how much the schoolmaster slapped his sons and their backside seems like a tiger scratched them with their claws.

At last that ironic day arrives when Narayan asked for ballot instead of giving thumbprint guided by one of the person at election booth. This disapproval of Narayan brought Thakur Dharma's into action who stood in farewell and left the booth . the men caught narayan and the other two men .he forced .them to place their thumbs in ink pad and complete the registration process. Thakur ordered his men to take them to his farm.

And then the fury starts which swallows the entire family of Dukhi: The whole day they were spank as they hung naked from the ranches of banana tree. They were screaming out of realization. The beating continues almost throughout the day as: Far away from the field his men urinated on their faces and the dehydrated mouths was thankful for the moisture, licking the drop with great urgency. After Thakur Dharma's took away the ballot boxes into his safe custody and put the burning coals to the three men's private area and again stuffed into their mouth. They went on screaming until and unless their lips melted away. After some time their bodies were taken down to the tree. When they began to wipe in pain , the ropes were tied to their necks and they were hanged again. Their dead bodies was displayed in front of the whole village square.

Soon Thakur along with his men's arrives at Dukhi's hut, with two dead bodies, one of Narayan. He ordered his followers stating: ,, that the father is responsible more than the son because of his arrogance nature .

Dukhi was totally breakdown , he converted cobblers into tailors, deceive society's bad behaviour. Thakur claimed that crossing your limits will lead to the severe punishment. And finally all six were being caught, Roopa, Radha, Dukhi and grand three daughters of Dukhi, and Radha could not tolerate this nuisance. The house was complete silent .the first blaze fondle the flesh. The silent environment, dry winds and the burning fire showed up the sympathy this night. The blaze slowly wraps all six of them.

### **Conclusion:**

Dukhi is only person who every time finds him in the centre of the turmoil of Casteism. For his entire life he has been suffered, oppressed, subjugated, tortured and menaced in the name of caste system. Not only this, whenever he asked for help, no one came forward to hold his hand. He along with his family gets rough treatment sometimes in the name of untouchable and sometimes without any reason. But the main reason behind their every suffering is of course, their belongingness to the lowest caste. Dalit were usually prohibited from full involvement in Indian social life. According to manmade customs, these people do not have any right to live, even no right on any things or objects in God created world. Dalit or untouchable could not enter a holy place or a schoolhouse and were lived a life of forced outcaste. High class people have much love and affection for their pets, Cow or any other creature but they do not have any kind of mercy for human being if they are Dalits. During sacred days they feed Cow as gesture of getting blessings from the god, they feed Dog when

they are in need of blessings from their dead ancestors, they feed ants, fish even a crow during Sradhh, but they don't have anything to offer to a person belong to Untouchable community. The same we find in this novel, the cruel treatment towards Dalits. And so as a showcase of unheard agony, this novel gives a platform to the dalit voice like Dukhi to convey his grief and inhumanity done to him in most radical way. In short, it is one of the best narrations of Dalit life which bring the dark side in form of worst treatment along with underprivileged education, social, political, economic and personal development everything.

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