

Gender Discrimination in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

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(Abstract)

The Diasporic writing and the expatriate writers occupy a unique place in the study of literature. The term “diaspora” originates from the Greek word which means dispersion or scattering. Diaspora refers to the people who are forced or induced to leave their traditional homeland. Their condition in a strange land, they hold tightly onto their own culture, they also work towards their developments in an alien land. Rohinton Mistry is a diasporic writer. He was born in India and later settled in Canada. He belongs to a Parsi community. After having settled in Canada, he starts writing a successful novel about India, his mother land. Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is a successful work which deals with the theme of frustration, sufferings, isolation and cultural issues and belongingness. Dina Dalal is the central and suffering character in *A Fine Balance*. Dina who wants to tackle all kinds of problems imposed on her by the male dominated society.

Canada is a multicultural country. It is also regarded as the world's second largest country. It has been a Colony for the French, British and USA. In the ancient time, the Colonial rivalry between England and France ends with the division of Canada into several regions based on dialect such as the English speaking and the French speaking dialect. Metcalf writes in his *Understanding Canada : A Multidisciplinary Introduction to Canadian Studies*, he puts it: “The French – Canadians and the English – Canadians are considered as too founding races of Canada” (Metcalf 346). In the first decade of twentieth century the English Canadian Fiction describes the Canadian national identity. After the Second World War, the English Canadian Fiction writers render service to the popularity of the Canadian literature through the fictional world which includes Rohinton Mistry's three skillful novels: *Such A Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance*, *Family Matters*.

The novel tells about a Parsi women Dina Dalal who lives in Bombay. Dina Dalal is regarded as the central character in *A Fine Balance*. Also she is considered a much suffering character. She wants to lead a free life in the circumstances of male-dominated society. Through her life we come to know that not only women but Parsi people also lead oppressed and depressed lives in their regional areas. Dina Dalal fights vehemently for her rights in an independent society and meet her basic needs free from her brother Nusswan's care. He is also a money-minded landlord. However, she puts hard effort hardly to get her equal rights in the society.

Dina Dalal is a widowed young lady of twenty-four years old. So she must take care of her family alone. She leads an unhappy life everyday. Dina's frustration starts in her brother's house. At a later stage, she falls in love with Rustom Dalal and marries him against her brother's wish. After the marriage, one day, Rustom Dalal dies in a road accident on the day of their wedding. Dina's brother who was much disappointed with her, never comes forward to give any kind of help to her. Now she is completely neglected by her brother Nusswan. In the midst, Dina Dalal learnt to stand on her own legs. From then on she charts out a plan regarding her successful life.

For everything Dina Dalal was in a position to fully depend on Nusswan's money. Definitely she had to lose her basic rights if she stays on in her brother's house further. Also she thinks that if she can get a breath of freedom aided by economic liberty she must come out from the house of her cruel brother Nusswan. So she does not hesitate to start business by herself. She starts a business on her own. Through the business she earns substantial money for her everyday expenditure. But her profession do not run smoothly for long time because her brother and the landlord create much obstacles to Dina.

Dina Dalal wants to become as a middle class business women very soon. Therefore she undertakes to stitch readymade garments for Au Revoir Exports. It is owned by Mrs. Gupta who is a kind hearted client, classmate and friend of Zenobia. Meanwhile, Dina Dalal is accompanied with two low caste tailors. Ishvar and his nephew Om Prakash. Maneck Kohlah, is the son of an old school friend of Dina Dalal who belonged to the same Parsi Community staying with them. Dina Dalal has plenty of schemes regarding the development of business.

Day by day Dina Dalal is confronted with endless sorrows at the hands of male dominated people. In the male dominated society, a single woman has to struggle for survival and encounters hardship to lead a life with dignity and virtuous as well. In the beginning, she took decision accompanied by fear and of losing of hope. She is overwhelmed about her business process of selling and buying dresses to the people.

Dina Dalal is a highly oppressed woman even within her own community. She does not feel liberated from her personal things such as class, caste, community. Dina's refuses to the proposal of Maneck accommodating her in the night. Dina knew that Maneck had problems getting along with Ishvar and Om, victims of caste system. As Dina Dalal Says : Compared to theirs, my life is nothing but comfort and happiness people keep saying god is great. God is just, but I am not sure" (159).

During the period of emergency even their simple dreams are frustrated. The Indian government which has compelled family planning programme on the people. Therefore, they tried reduce the population of the country. They felt their lives like fish out of water. In the meantime Dina Dalal was forced to leave the buildings by the landlords. The reason was she has done an illegal business and accommodated two tailors and a student as a paying guest. At the end, Dina Dalal leaves everything and continues with a burden in her life. She is not willing to take refuge in her brother's house.

Towards the end she encounters much sufferings from her brother and the outside world. Moreover, Dina Dalal life is fully focused on her hope and despair. At the same time, low castes peoples are fully punished by upper caste people. Even Dina Dalal in marginalized along with low caste people and treated in an inhumane manner. In this regard, there are many riots against women in the society. The discrimination between men and women is the most cruelest thing in the Indian society.

Mistry tells us how discrimination plays a vital role in an academic institution. Now Mistry gives suitable examples : Ishvar and Om Prakash enter into village school. Both are untouchables. In school they take picture, and the book kept inside the class room. It is very cruel for a teacher to separate them as lower people. They are also treated badly by the class teacher who belongs to these boy's caste in the same society. As the teacher averts; "You chamar rascal! Very brave you are getting, daring to enter the school! The teacher twisted their ears till they helped with pain and started to cry".(110)

In spite of this disclaimer, Mistry's reveals his extreme agony of Parsi identity. Mystry tries to convey the injustice done to women in India. Inequality between the sexes is caused by the culture construct of gender. Dina's life stands as an example of gender discrimination. In the village too women are seen totally at the mercy of the upper caste landlords and their servants who exploit them sexually or even molest. These criminal misdeeds are not questioned. Roopa and Radha are raped and burnt alive in front of their parents and the villagers.

The paper highlights these discriminatory practices in India. The social status of women is blurred and the growth and development of the society is retarded. At her working place, they come across so many issues and problems. They never expose the issues to anyone. Indian Penal Code and law states that men and women have equal status. Although there are various laws that are made for the protection of women but lack of proper implementation and interpretation of law is behind the lapse to protect women from inequality. As Naresh Jain writes in his *Women in Indo-Anglian Fiction : As Naresh Jain Says :*

The woman characters in Indo-Anglian novels coped with change in their lives and with the rival pull of tradition and modernity in their search for identity, independence, fulfillment and love whether within the marriage (or) outside it (1998:9).

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