

**THE STUDY OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE NOVEL-
FINE BALANCE OF ROHINTON MISTRY**

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Abstract

In India, the discriminatory attitude towards men and women has existed for generations and affects the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights but gender disparity still remains. Gender discrimination not only violates human rights but also fundamental rights, which are equal given to all human beings men and women. There is specific research on gender discrimination mostly in favour of men over women and they are perceived to be disadvantaged at work. Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety at heart, but these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate. Gender discrimination in India refers to health, education, economic and political discriminatory between men and women in India. Here I selected the novel of Rohinton Mistry's- *A Fine Balance* (1995) for the study of gender discrimination. Female is born in to inequality in many places in India and considered as an inferior to male organ. On the basis of gender discrimination a person should receive more or less rights or be treated differently on their gender is preposterous. In Rohinton Mistry's socio-political and historical novel, *A Fine Balance* is about 1970s India, during the Internal Emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister of India, gender is huge issue of this novel. Mistry is trying to communicate the theme that all people should be seen as equal, no matter their gender or social status. The main objective of this paper is to focus upon gender discrimination through Mistry's shortlisted Booker Prize novel, *A Fine Balance*.

Keywords: - discriminatory, generations, gender, constitution, equal rights, disparity, fundamental rights, rape, dowry, safety, inequality, inferior, internal emergency, social status.

Introduction:-

Rohinton Mistry has emerged as significant literary figure during the 20th century. He is socio-political novelist who has emerged as a formidable writer on the world literary scene. He is a writer of Indian Diaspora who settled in Canada but writes about Indian sensibility. He was born and brought up in Bombay (now Mumbai) which makes him an eminent writer for depicting the life of Parsis in India and portraying the corruption of the city during the three decades of the twentieth century. He is a writer of eleven interrelated short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), three novels- *Such A Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), *Family Matters* (2000) and novella- *The Scream* (2008).

Objective:-

The main objective of this paper is to highlight the gender discrimination i.e. huge issue expressed by Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*.

Research Methodology:-

The study of primary source and critical analysis of available material on Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*.

Analysis of Gender Discrimination in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*:-

In India, the discriminatory attitude towards men and women has existed for generations and affects the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights but gender disparity still remains. Gender discrimination not only violates human rights but also fundamental rights, which are equal given to all human beings men and women. There is specific research on gender discrimination mostly in favour of men over women and they are perceived to be disadvantaged at work. Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety at heart, but these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate. Gender discrimination in India refers to health, education, economic and political discriminatory between men and women in India. Gender based discrimination against female children is pervasive across the



world. It is seen all strata of society and manifests in various forms. There are two main discriminations as pointed out by Amartya Sen: educational inequality and health inequality, these are the indicators of a woman's status of welfare. In India irrespective of the caste, creed, religion and social status, the overall status of a woman is lower than men and therefore a male child preferred over female child. In our society, orthodox and literate people considered a male child as a blessings and his birth celebrated as opposed to a female child where her birth is not celebrated and is considered more of a burden or tension. The people have been pursuing the same mentality in the postmodern period, they are eager for male children but not for female child means the discrimination takes place from the birth.

Here I selected the novel of Rohinton Mistry's- *A Fine Balance* (1995) for the study of gender discrimination. Female is born in to inequality in many places in India and considered as an inferior to male organ. On the basis of gender discrimination a person should receive more or less rights or be treated differently on their gender is preposterous. In Rohinton Mistry's socio-political and historical novel, *A Fine Balance* is about 1970s India, during the Internal Emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister of India, gender is huge issue of this novel. Mistry is trying to communicate the theme that all people should be seen as equal, no matter their gender or social status. The main objective of this paper is to focus upon gender discrimination through Mistry's shortlisted Booker Prize novel, *A Fine Balance*. Rohinton Mistry being a Parsi writer in India experienced cultural Diaspora in India, now he lives in Canada and writes about Indian life, politics, social, religious, caste and culture, this leads to double diasporic existence.

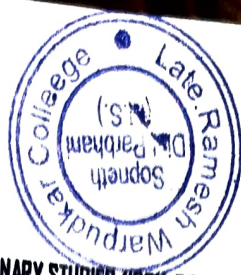
A Fine Balance opens with a chapter entitled 'Prologue 1975' and ends with epilogue 1975', set in Indira Gandhi's India and written with compassion, humour and insight is vivid, richly textured and powerful novel written by Rohinton Mistry. The novel is also a story of the heroic struggle of Dina Dalal and her two tailors to survive a world of segregation, oppression and corruption in which the honest work is denied and punished by a totalitarian system. Mistry tactfully portrays the victimization of four major characters- Dina Dalal, Ishvar, Om Prakash and Maneck Kohlah at the time of Emergency. Mistry did the justice and has drawn the character of Dina Dalal quite artistically, as per the tradition and culture the female child did not get the freedom because woman has not independent entity and depends upon the male, such kind of discrimination is created by the orthodox people of the society between man and woman but here Dina is the woman who needs absolute freedom. In the patriarchal society girl child did not have the choice to choose her life partner but the parents impose the life partner of their own choice on the girl child, here Dina selects the life partner of her own choice and marries with Rustom Dalal without taking the consent of her brother Nussawan, vice-versa the male child has through independence to choose the life partner of his own choice without taking the consent and following the orders of his parents. In the orthodox Indian society, the discrimination is created on the basis of choice of their life partner between male and female child at the time of their marriage.

As per the tradition and culture of India, the young woman cannot live independently after the death of her husband but here Mistry did the justice with his female character, Dina Dalal who lives independently in the flat of her husband after his death. Unfortunately due to the bankruptcy she loses her flat and forced to live her brother's house where she treated like a maid and loses her independence. Dina chooses to be displaced her home because she wants her independence and does not want to suffer under the prohibition of her brother, Nussawan. Here we can also find the discriminatory approach towards Dina, Nussawan belief is that the woman can't do different rather than her routine house work and considered her as inferior to man. In the earlier period, the woman cannot come out of the house for work and they were busy in their daily routine work i.e. "*Chul and Mul*" in Marathi proverb if they try to do something different from their household work people give them hideous treatment in the society. In the postmodern period the woman come out of the closet and works equivalently with the man.

Dina's father was a doctor by profession who served for the humanity and she was the beloved daughter of her father. Dina's mother had some expectation from her son who would help in his father's profession becoming the doctor but he was not interested in his profession by listening this father was disappointed, five years old daughter, Dina realized the grief and disappointment of her father and said in his support.

"Daddy I want to be doctor, just like you,
When I grown up". (AFB-16)

The people gathered at the birthday dinner party laughed and praised on Dina's statement and the son was not able to fulfill the expectations of the father but the daughter gave moral support to her father and fulfills his expectation on this occasion. Dina is so caring and responsible rather than her brother Nussawan and self affirmation of her created in the patriarchal society and reveals that she is eager to create her own identity equal to male organ. In the Indian context, the discrimination between male and female child commence from their



birth, if the male child is born, it will be celebrated by the family members and society, by listening the news of girl child birth family members and society expose their reluctance and despair. The customs and beliefs of our culture is that the male child support to their parents in their old age and the female child could not support, but actually she is more caring, possessive and responsible nature about her parents which negligible by the society and consider her as inferior to male child. The girl child is also able to fulfill desires and responsibilities equal to male child.

After the death of her father, Dina was eager for matriculation but her brother did not allow her for further education, gender discrimination is socially constructed, female considered inferior to male and don't have the rights to educate girls like boys because of social restrictions but Dina is eager to take education like the male child or boys and finish the gender discrimination in the education. N. Kavita and Dr. P. Selvam opine in their research article, 'Dina is the symbol of New Woman who refuses to be acquiescent and submissive and does not accept stereotypical feminine role assigned to her.' Sexual exploitation of Roopa based on the caste discrimination is one of the major issues of gender discrimination; an untouchable woman is sexual exploited by the watchman of the rich man's orchard. Rohinton Mistry's harsh comment is on the double standards prevailing in the contemporary Indian society in the form of untouchability. Dukhi Mochi's wife Roopa stands for docility and tolerance, but instance tragic irony that a man belongs to high caste who would consider himself polluted by the shadow of untouchable woman but sexual intercourse with a desirable low-caste woman is valid.

Being a female born into equality in many places even still today means that a woman is seen as a lesser or lower. The idea that a woman should receive less rights or be treated differently based on their gender is preposterous. Rohinton Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance* is about the 1970s India during the Internal Emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister of India, gender is huge issue. Mistry is trying to communicate the theme that all people should be seen as equal, no matter their gender or social status. Differences between the genders have a large impact on the story because of the way women are treated and because of the roles a woman can fulfill. In Mistry's story, the overarching message seems to be that people should be treated justly and fairly, no matter who they are. However, especially in the rural village settings of the novel, the treatment of women, based solely on their gender is far from perfect quite the opposite actually. One character in the story, Nosey is a living example of the pain women face during the time, at the will of their husbands it was said that when Nosey was born, her drunken father slashed off her nose in rage, disappointment with the mother producing a daughter rather than a son. (AFB-446). Mistry uses this character to detail to the reader the extent to which a male son is favoured over a daughter. Daughters are seen as useless for most important work in the society and will not be able to take care of the parents in their old age, as they will be stuck with their husbands.

Three sisters, whose father is too poor to provide dowries, hang themselves to spare their parents because the shame of having unmarried daughters i.e. social discrimination created by orthodox society. A picture of them hanging from a ceiling appears in the newspaper after their brother, Avinash; a college student union chairman who is the only source of future income for that family gets killed in police custody. Mistry portrays the shameful aspect of Indian society. Rohinton Mistry is highlighted gender discrimination through his novel *A Fine Balance* i.e. on the basis of social, political, religious, cultural and sexual. Mistry is trying to show that all men and women have equal status, it does not matter the caste, gender, class, social, cultural and religious status.

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