

## RESISTANCE LITERATURE OF MINORITIES AND DALITS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ROHINTON MISTRY'S NOVEL



### LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Resistance literature is always about the plight and protest of marginalized sections of society. India is primarily a Hindu country accommodating many other religions like Islam, Christianity, Parsi etc. The smaller religions in the subcontinent always suffer identity crisis. The bulldozing majority influence their tradition and practices. At the same time, Hinduism is also fragmented greatly by its own caste system. It paves way for resistance literature. Rohinton Mistry is an expatriate Indian-Parsi writer living in Canada. In his writings he often tries to revise the history of his homeland as he focused on the fads and foibles of the minuscule minority Parsi Zoroastrian community in Bombay. He made a conscious effort to 'embrace more of the social reality of India. Mistry focuses on the history of his homeland. His works reflect the reality of Indian, the predatory politics of corruption, tyranny, exploitation, violence and bloodshed. His novels also give an insight into rural India focusing on the injustice, the cruelty, and the horror of deprivation and portray the trauma of India along communal religious and linguistic lines.*

A writer writes to reform society to alert authorities over possible disorders. In Shakespeare's Henry IV part I&II one can clearly see how he is warning the monarchy about the possible Civil Disorder in the country through the introduction of the characters like Falstaff and Prince Hall. Even in the writings of pure poets like John Keats one can see their anger over the misrule in the poem like Ode to Autumn. Unless one is bestowed with critical insight it is difficult to see sudden violence in the third stanza of Ode to Autumn. Writers are always fighters. Carlyl, Charles Dickens empathized with French Revolution. When state intervene to suppress the freedom of expression it is inevitable for resistance to erupt and the resultant literature may be called resistant literature. A Telugu poet once wrote that when pens were buried guns will grow out of it.

Literature is not only mirroring the truth but also transcending the truth. It represents an essential arena of struggle. Dalit literature deals with genuine problems of modern life. It represents pains and Pangs of the Dalit existence. It is the lived reality of crores of people, living on the edge of life in India. It verbalizes the suppressed anger and pride of those existing outside the caste identities. It aimed at to remove social injustice by highlighting the harsh realities of Dalit life. It fights against the different forms of caste discrimination and becomes Dalit's gun to fight for justice. It depicts the issue of racial segregation and injustice.

Resistance literature portrays not only the position of an independent nation during the period of liberation but also it suggests the necessary steps to be taken by the revolutionaries. It focuses on the study of literature besides material world such as the obtaining of civil and human rights, the throwing of hegemony and active reconstruction of interrupted histories. It is born out of social injustice and political marginalization.

The writers from minority community often focus on social issues. They create a new world rather than representing the existing one. They give the voice to the people who do not have a place in the actual world and are striving to create an identity (such as, homosexual, women and black). The author with an intention to reach the audience focuses on the emotions, frustrations and triumphs of the people. Once a literature becomes expressive of identity, it becomes majoritarian. For example Aboriginal literature is minoritarian as long as it is creating an identity. In the task of creating new identity, new tradition has been created. A new voice gives expression to the old stories. Each generation and community uses tradition of art differently

and re-reads it by its own yardstick. Parsi writers wanted to create their own space within dominant Indian cultural space. They are putting all their efforts to create an identity to their community. Eminent critic Nilufer Bharucha in her essay, why all this Parsiness wrote that, in the Postcolonial India, the elite position of the Parsis enjoyed during the British rule has been eroded and they are increasingly marginalized by the dominant Hindu community. In this situation, some seek to assimilate the mainstream where as other migrate to the West (1990: 6 ).

All the Parsi writers are trying to keep up the ethnocentric aspects of the Parsi community. Rohinton Mistry's discourse challenges and resists the tantalization of the dominant culture within India. He strives for identity of Parsi community in his works except in the novel A Fine Balance. His works brilliantly captures the crowded, throbbing life of India as they are closely linked with social and political background. Resistance literature can be seen in the novel A Fine Balance in different narratives. It was set in India during the period of state of emergency, which was a turning point in Indian politics. The novel highlights the crisis of the nation and the lived experience of its characters. When the martial law was enforced, civil rights evoked and the masses, particularly the working classes and the rural poor were terrorized by state repression. Women and men alike were dragged off to temporary clinics for forced sterilization. Strikes and demonstrations were banned, and hundreds of trade unionists, activists and radicals were jailed.

A Fine Balance is a harshly realistic novel told almost entirely from the point of view of subaltern and petty-bourgeois characters that were thrown together by the force of circumstances and necessity. The novel traces their struggle to survive and the eventual destruction of his community by larger social forces. Two of the four characters are tailors. Om Prakash and Ishvar Darji are Dalits of the Chammar (tanner) caste who have fled from the caste oppression of their village. Dina Dalal, is their employer, who struggles to preserve her fragile independence, hoping to climb into the ranks of the middle class. Maneck Kohlah, a student, comes from a well-to-do family but shares the alienation of the other characters in the novel. He seems to stand in for the classic rural/urban dichotomy.

We can see the resistance between the characters and their immediate physical environment. Even in sufferings they express their resistance by meekly accepting the pains. This point is brought into limelight in the novel A Fine Balance through the character Dukhi, who worked all his life with dead animals. He

said that, "his own skin became impregnated with the odour that was part of his father's smell. The leather-workers stink that would not depart even after he had washed and scrubbed in the all cleansing river .... He wondered if flaying would get rid of it or did it go deeper than skin ( 1990: 130)?"

We can find Resistance in almost all the characters of the novel *A Fine Balance*. Roopa wife of Dukhi is a woman character in this novel, whose midnight forays to steal milk from the homes of landlords and fruits from the orchard to feed her two children Ishvar and Narayan offer us a glimmer of the kind of courage, that the daily ordeal of survival required in caste dominated villages. But she had to pay for her actions by becoming prostitute herself to the man guarding the orchard grove. Similarly, Dukhi defies prevailing caste restrictions by sending his sons off to the city to become tailors and he gets succeeded in making his dream comes true. Dukhi's younger son Narayan decided to settle in his native land. He had a happy life till he was submissive to his landlords. But the moment he raised his voice against the injustice prevailed in the society he was toppled. For instance, at the time of election, Narayan insisted on registering his vote, against the interest of the local leader, Thakur Dharamsi, whose rigging of the ballot goes unquestioned by anyone in the society. Narayan was paid for his retaliation against the Thakur, as he was tortured and murdered by Thakur's men and his corpse was exhibited on the square of the village, as Thakur wanted to teach the lesson to the low class people of the village to be submissive to him forever.

When Om Prakash wanted to take revenge on Thakur Dharamsi for killing his father Narayan, he was sterilized and forced to go under vasectomy. Ishvar and Om Prakash who reached the city for having bright future were turned into crippled beggars. They neither have place in their homeland nor in the adopted city.- Eventually, they expressed their resistance by mocking and laughing at the society. The element of subaltern activity of political agency is constantly kept at bay. Avinash, a leader of student union, who raised his voice against the Government policies, was silenced.

Free indirect speech is a feature of resistance literature. The writer presents it through the styles of language, which they might use. In such cases, the boundary between author and character cannot be decided and the reader is not sure who is speaking. It can be seen in Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance*. For instance 'what sense the world make, where was God, the bloody fool? Did he have no notion of fair and unfair? Couldn't he read a simple balance sheet? (A FB: 595). After perusing these lines from the novel *A Fine Balance* we are not sure if the speaker of these lines is Maneck or the author. At the same time, Maneck's frustration at the injustice of the world he inhabits is expressed through these words.

Most of the resistance literature ends either in misery or in tragedy, the novel *A Fine Balance* is no exception. For instance in this novel Maneck wanted to change the old and ancient setup of the shop, which was resisted by his father. He felt that he was

humiliated. He took it to the heart when he was ragged by the senior student in the hostel campus. Eventually, he jumped in front of the running train and lost his life. So the novel *A Fine Balance* is the quintessential subaltern novel. The most obvious accomplishment of the novel is its realistic portrayal of the brutalities of lives of the people, who are living in dire poverty. The novel evokes the readers' sympathy. Mistry uses the tradition of Victorian realism to talk about the evils of modern India and to give a voice to middle and lower middle class Parsis. The huge cast of characters and their neat division into good and bad is Dickenson, and the succession of tragedies which befall the characters, though not because of any of their fault brings to mind Hardy's fatalism.

## REFERENCE

1. *A Fine Balance*, Toronto; M & C Canadian Publishers, 1995. | 2. Dorothy Spencer, *Indian fiction in English* (Philadel Phia; University of Penny Sylvania Press 1960), P11. |