

The Plight of Poor in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

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Postcolonial Literature is the literature by people from formerly colonized countries. It exists on all continents except Antarctica. Postcolonial literature often addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and themes such as racialism and colonialism. A range of literary theory has evolved around the subject. It addresses the role of literature in perpetuating and challenging what postcolonial critic Edward Said refers to cultural imperialism.

Postcolonial studies have given special attention to the many voices present in the novel, but unfortunately the voices of the people are unable to reach particular range. They remain voiceless. The people who are poor in this world, they suffer a lot both physically and mentally. The government has taken the steps for the poor people to come forward in their life, but tactlessly, the steps and schemes are not able to reach them properly due to some reason. So that, Poor remains poor. Especially, poor people who belong to lower caste are unable to communicate properly. And they are considered as slaves or seen as worms (insects). Even some places, they are killed, they are tortured, they are insulted after getting independence.

A *Fine Balance*, a novel by Rohinton Mistry, was written in 1995. It won the second annual Giller Prize in 1995 and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for fiction in 1996. It won the 1996 Commonwealth Writers Prize and was shortlisted for the 1996 Booker Prize. This work focuses the theme such as suppressing the people's right, police brutality, compulsory sterilization, the flattening of slums, the clearing the streets of beggars, sending them off to work camps. What are the things that the author has mentioned in this work, which is faces by the people in somewhere else.

The author reveals the characters of Ishvar and his brother Narayan who belong to cobbler community. Ishvar and Narayan were sent to Ashraf uncle to learn tailoring by his father. After he learnt tailoring, Narayan decided to marry. Later, his wife gave birth to a son Omprakash. When Omprakash was of age, he was sent to Ashraf to learn to be a tailor.

During an election time, Narayan decided that he would like to have his own vote rather than having the upper caste members vote for him. For holding this opinion, he was tortured and killed and his family burnt alive in their hut. Actually, still, this kind of action is going on in the society. Apart from having or expressing their opinions, even if anyone who belong to lower community, fall in love with upper caste people, they are killed in the name of “honor killing”. Instead of showing interest on community, they adore it.

After this incident, Ishvar and Omprakash survived because they were with Ashraf. The pair remained at the tailor shop until business started to slow down and they headed into the city to look for work. Finally, they joined with Dina Dalal. Dina Dalal is one of the characters who was raised by her strict brother Nusswan after father’s death. She married Rustom Dalal, Rustom Dalal met an accident and died, leaving Dina alone. In order to lead her life, Rustom’s aunt taught Dina sewing, Dina paid her rent by being a tailor. However, her eyes began to deteriorate; she was forced to find another means of income. Her friend, Zenobia, found a border to rent out one of the rooms in Dina’s flat and also introduced Dina to Mrs. Gupta, who offered her tailoring piece work if she can employ two tailors.

This is also one of the common issues that any women who lose their husband, they feel very difficult to lead their life. If they go to work at any place, they have to protect themselves physically from the eyes of eagle person.

Finally, the tailors began working with Dina Dalal, who was initially a strict employer. On the way to her flat, they met Maneck Kolah, who was going to be her border, and they became friends. They had their tea at the Vishram Vegetarian Restaurant. They became regular customers. One day, before they had left for work, a fleet of buses assembled outside their colony. They were all forced onto the buses and taken to a big meeting where the Prime Minister was speaking. This is not wonder. Because, one can see this kind of incident even in our locality during the time of election. There is no problem if people are willing to come. But, no one forces them to come and attend the meetings. If anybody forces them, it will be ridiculous one.

After finishing up another day at work, the tailors returned home to find their colony being demolished under the laws of the emergency order. Slums such as theirs were illegal. They gathered what belongings they could and slept on the railway station for the night. Now-a-days, in the name of law and order, most of the places (poor) were destroyed. Simultaneously, most of the buildings are built in the way of water bodies or sometimes in the way of foot path. The government which is ready to take steps against poor, but it hesitates to take steps against rich. Instead of focusing rich people, always it focuses only the poor people. Because, the poor people don’t have voice to raise the questions against the government so that always they are suppressed.

They kept their belongings in Dina’s house. However, they were sleeping, policeman and trucks raided the street, packed all the beggars, including the tailors, into the truck and drove them to an

irrigation project, where they were told, they would work for food and board. During the project time, the tailors had a hard time adjusting to the nature of the work and would often fall ill and injure themselves. Again, this is also an example how poor people are treated.

After very long time, Ishvar and Omprakash went to their village. They reunited with Ashraf, their teacher and were saddened to hear that his wife had died. While they were shopping in the market place, they came across Thakur Dharamsi, who was responsible for the death of their family, and unable to control himself, Omprakash spat at him. One day, while they were shopping, garbage trucks and policemen swarmed the square, taking people at random. In the scuffle, a policeman hit Ashraf in the head and left him to die while the policeman forced Ishvar and Om onto the trucks. They were taken to a sterilization camp just outside city, and were forced to have the operation. While resting in the recovery tent, Thakur came around to inspect the premises, and seeing Om, ordered that he must be castrated. The doctors had no choice but to oblige.

Again, here is an example of the existence of a man of the superior man. Because, the upper caste people easily revenge the lower caste people. After all these incidents, the tailors decided to return to the city.

Meanwhile, Dina had received a letter from Maneck saying that he had been offered a job in the gulf and would not be returning to the city. When the tailors didn't return, she was forced to return the sewing machines. Due to some problems, Dina had to go back and live with her brother. Women are always dependent on anyone, regardless of how high they are.

Eight years later, Maneck returned from the Gulf for his father's funeral. During that time, the riots were taking place due to the murder of the Prime minister by her Sikh guards. After cremating his father, Maneck became very depressed about what had been happening in his country since he had left. He returned to the city to visit Dina and the tailors, and after tracking her down at her brother's place, learned what had happened since he had left. On the way, he met some of the people but he couldn't bring himself to talk to them. It all became too much for him, and he ended his life by jumping in front of a train. Maneck put full stop to his life after hearing the problems of his friends. Even one who is not ready to hear the problems of others, definitely, they cannot live in this society. But, most of the people lead their life by bearing all the difficulties. They believe that one day "The Sun also rises towards their life". There is a huge question mark "will the Sun come", if the answer is Yes, the next question is "When will the Sun come".

In this novel, one can see a lot of struggles which are faced by the characters. Generally, whenever people meet struggles in their life, they protest against that and win it. But, some people sink in their struggles and die, because they don't know the way how to overcome it. Even in this novel, Maneck jumps in front of train, because he is unable to bear the situations which took place in his home country. Whatever the difficulty one who has in one's life, they should face it. The government should help the

people, instead of abusing their power on people. At the same time, the government should take necessary steps regarding to casteism, because most of the people who suffer under this category. Simultaneously, the government always is aware that the power of government should not be corrupted or misused by someone on someone. Knowingly or unknowingly, the author depicts the difficult situation of poor and also corruption of power. The government is only responsible to eliminate the grievances of poor and at the same time promotes the poor people livelihood. To conclude, by saying or writing from the poem “If”,

“If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,”

-Rudyard Kipling
