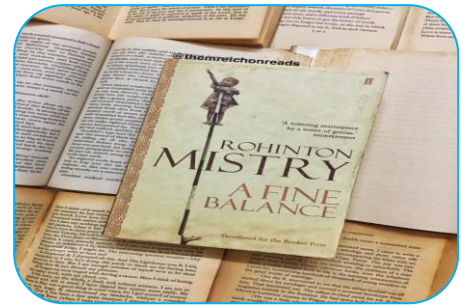




**PORTRAYAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S
A FINE BALANCE****Manwar D. R.****(Assist. Professor),****L. B. S. Sr. College, Partur Tq. Partur Dist. Jalna****ABSTRACT:**

Untouchability is one of the major social problems highlighted in Marathi literature. Almost, all Dalit writers in Marathi literature focused on this issue. But as far as Indian writing in English is concerned, a very few writers dared to touch the issue. Mulk Raj Anand and Rohinton Mistry are exception to this.

**KEYWORDS:** *Marathi literature, Dalit writers, Indian writing.***INTRODUCTION:**

Rohinton Mistry's internationally acclaimed and best seller second novel 'A fine Balance' addresses to the social, political, economical issues in contemporary India. Caste, untouchability, identity, homelessness, marginality, minority etc. are the other problems reflected in the novel. The present research paper focuses on the problem of untouchability as reflected in the novel.

The third chapter 'In a Village by a River' gives us an account of untouchability. Dukhi Mochi, his wife Rupa - their two sons and a grandson - Ishvar, Narayan and Om - are victims of untouchability. All these characters belong to the Chammar caste of tanners and leather- workers. Mistry describes their traditional activities:

"The Chammars skinned the carcass, ate the meat, and tanned the hide, which was turned into sandals, whips, harnesses and water-skins." (Mistry : 2003 : 115).

Dukhi Mochi is five years old when he begins to learn the Chamar vocation. His wife Rupa has to steal milk and oranges to feed her sons. One she is raped while stealing oranges. Thus, even the fundamental needs like foods and shelter are denied to the untouchable.

Dukhi's has two graze a herd of goats for a glass of milk, but instead of a glass of goat's milk, he gets a trashing. Again, he is sent for to grind a sack of dry red chillies into powder. He begins pounding vigorously, but the mortar splits in two and collapses. One side lands on Dukhi's foot and crushes it. These incidents clearly indicate the sorrows and suffering of the land less untouchables.

Untouchability is a social disease. We must work hard to rid of this disease. There must be unity between action and speech. Mistry ironically points out the difference between speech and action. He comments:

"What is the disease? You may ask. This disease, brothers and sisters, is the notion of Untouchability, ravaging us for centuries, denying dignity to our fellow human beings. This disease must be purged from our society, from our hearts, from our minds. No one is Untouchable, for we are all children of the same God." (Mistry : 2003 : 131).

Dukhi's sons - Ishvar and Narayan - are again the victims of Untouchability and caste system in our country. The boys have to work hard. Besides their own traditional work, they have to collect firewood and cowpats. They are denied education. They are not permitted to the school. One morning, the boys, out of curiosity enter the village school. The school master twists their ears till they start to cry. He also bits them mercilessly. When Dukhi learns this, he goes to Pandit Lalluram to receive justice. Instead of justice, Pandit Lalluram says:

'Your children entered the classroom. They polluted the place. They touched instruments of learning. They defiled slates and chalks, which upper - caste children would touch. You are lucky there wasn't a holy book like the Bhagavad Gita in that cupboard, no sacred texts. Or the punishment would have been more final.' (Mistry : 2003 : 138-139).

Mistry narrates both sides of this problem. The upper caste Thakurs and Pandits humiliate and oppress the lower caste people and they support their stand with the help of so called traditions. Nilufer E. Bharucha comments:

'His (Dukhi) boys Ishvar and Narayan drawn by the lure of learning, infiltrate their little Untouchable selves in to the village classroom and the entire family have to bear the burden of this unknowing subversion. The village Pandit recites the age - old shlokas to justify the caste system and disgusted at such sophistry, Dukhi finally apprentices his boys to the Muslim Ashraf to be trained as tailors.' (Bharucha : 2003 : 153).

To conclude, today our constitution drafted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar prohibits Untouchability. Mistry, through his good intension, highlights this problem. His characters - Ishvar, Narayan, Om, Radha, Sita, Dayaram etc., - are named after Gods and Goddesses. Perhaps, he wants to suggest that God like characters suffer a lot in our society due to Untouchability.

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