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Subaltern Consciousness in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Bishnu Prakash Subedi has completed his thesis "Subaltern Consciousness in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from August, 2009 to January 2010. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "Subaltern Consciousness in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuwan University, by Mr. Bishnu Prakash Subedi, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research explores the subaltern-consciousness against the dominating ideologies for their equal rights in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. The main female character in the novel, Dina, is exploited physically, sexually and psychologically by the agents of patriarchal society. So, she resists against such oppressions from her position, acting with conscious agency. Though she is a widow, she wants to live an independent life which is against the patriarchal value. Similarly, the Chamaar characters: Dhukhi, Ishvar, Narayan, and Omprakash are conscious to their right and freedom as well as their future although the society does not allow them to use and ask their right such as to vote, to enter into the temple and to get reasonable wages for their labor. Thus, the subalterns in *A Fine Balance* are not only dominated and exploited by the so called upper-caste people, patriarchal and capitalist society and by the government authority, but they are also aware about their rights and need to resist against all sorts of domination upon them with their own agency.

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I. An Introduction to Subaltern Consciousness in *A Fine Balance*

Rohinton Mistry, an Indian- Canadian writer, has explored the conflict between subalterns and other people of dominant communities in *A Fine Balance.* So, the writer in this novel not only talks about the subaltern's suffering and plight in the contemporary Indian society, but also tries to show their consciousness about the dominating ideologies as well as their rights. Throughout the novel, the major characters protest against domination, ask for their rights and act with conscious agencies against the dominating ideologies in the society.

The major characters like Dukhi, Ishvar, Narayan, and Ompraksash belong to the Chamaar community and they are heavily exploited and dominated by the so called upper caste and elite people. But these characters resist against such dominations. Though they are deprived from their fundamental rights, they are equally aware about their fundamental rights and resist against the operating ideologies. Dina Shroff, a female character of the novel belongs to Parsi family which is a minority group of India. Dina resists the patriarchal domination. In this novel, thus, Rohinton Mistry presents such characters that are conscious about their fundamental rights and ask for their rights, resist against different forms of oppressions.

Ishvar, who is a tailor works in Dina's flat in Bombay but loves his native place and says, "Nothing is as fine as one's native place" (7). He belongs to chamaar community but now he is missing his place and community. Dina belongs to Parsi family and she is forced to do household works as slave: "I'm not your servant! Wash your dirty plates. He's cheating! He does not do any work! I do everything" (19). Dina's brother Nussan makes the rule that every member of the family to complete his/her work but he himself breaks the rule. The priest of the fire temple used to hug

females. When, Dina is in temple, the priest “patted her head, rubbed her neck, stroked her back and pressed himself against her” (20). Nussan says he will not pay for Dina’s schooling because of her poor result but Dina is conscious of her poor study because she has to “clean and scrub all the time” (27). Dina does not allow her tailors to smoke inside the flat but Omprakash is not bothered about his health because “ this expensive city will first eat us alive, for sure” (77). Ishvar and Omprakash work for Dina and she works as middle person and gets profit. As conscious about the job and profit as well as Dina’s to be as a middle man, Omprakash asks the question, “what is the name of the company you to go?” (78). Omprakash is aware of her cheating and he wishes to “sew directly for the export company” (81).

Thakur Dharamsi’s mortar is broken and he blames on Dukhi and hits him badly. Dukhi shares his anger with his wife: “I could kill that Thakur. Nothing but a lowly thief. And they are like that. They treat us like animals. Always have from the days of our forefathers” (105). Similarly, Narayan takes his son Omprakash to “tannery where the chammars were busy at work” to teach him their custom at the age of five (139). Although Omprakash does not like the ‘smell’ in tannery, Narayan wants his child should learn their forefather’s culture. After his wife’s complain about taking Omprakash when he is unwilling Narayan argues, “[H]ow will he appreciate what he has if does not learn what his forefathers did? Once a week he will come with me! Whether he likes it or not!” (140). Narayan is conscious for his tradition and customs as well as his family business. The Election Day is coming near and father and son talk about the untouchability. Narayan expresses his resentment: “[G]overnment passes laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals” (142). Dukhi supports his

son's argument and argues for the "duplication […] of country's laws" (143). Thakur does not allow lower caste people to mark on the ballot but Narayan is conscious and wants to utilize his voting right (144). But his father does not believe that Thakur will allow his son to mark on ballot. Narayan Further says, "It is still my right. And I will exercise it in the next election, I promise you" (144). But this rebellious character led his family to disaster, that is, they are killed by Thakur.

Ishvar and Omprakash are safe because they live in town. Omprakash wants to take revenge of his parents murder: "I will gather a small army of chamaars, provide them with weapons, and then march to the landlords' house. At the end of it we'll cut off their heads and put them on spikes in the marketplace" (149). The gathering of armies of chamaars has its historical tie with the Panther Group. Ishvar and Omprakash work in Bombay when the tailoring business is not worth for living in town. Omprakash complains about his employer and comments with his uncle that "[o] ur jobs are terrible, that Dinabai watching us like a vulture, harassing us, telling us when to eat and when to belch" (184). Further, when the party leaders ask the workers to attend the political rally, Omprakash refuges them and expresses his anger; "Ask your men with cameras to pull some photos of our lovely houses, our healthy children! Show that to the prime minister" (258)! He is conscious that the party leaders are responsible for the troubled condition of the lower class people.

Dina is a widow and lives alone in her flat but she takes Maneck as paying guest for financial support. When the rent collector suspects them she shows her rebellious character as she is true to her fidelity, After the tailors leave, Dina bears financial crisis and she says, "once again, I'll have to my sallow pride and ask for his help, that's all" (433). Dina is conscious of her female rights. When Ishvar says that after Omprakash's marriage his wife will do all household work, Dina disagrees with

the duty he offered to his wife and asks, “Are you getting wife for Omprakash, or a servant? There can be no happiness without fairness” (474).

After Omprakash and Ishvar come their home town for Omprakash’s marriage, Omprakash asks about Thakur Dharamsi with Ashraf chacha. Omprakash remembers his parents’ murder and wishes to “kill” Thakur; “I think our people should get together and kill that dog” (520). When Omprakash, Ishvar and Ashraf are going to buy a new shirt they crossed with Thakur and Omprakash spats near him. This can be taken as a resistance to some extent. People are gathered from the market place and take them to the family planning center and operated by the government agents like Thakur. But Ishvar does not like this act. He disagrees with Ompraksh’s indifference to his future generation and says, “You are a stupid boy, you don’t understand what it means! I have let down your dead father! Our family name will die without children, it is the end of everything-everything is lost!” (535). Here, they are conscious of being victimized and marginalized.

Subaltern Studies in disciplines as diverse as history, anthropology, and literature is to recognize the force of recent postcolonial criticism. This criticism has compelled a radical rethinking of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and Western domination. Subaltern Studies has committed itself “to rectify the elitist bias characteristics of much research and academic work in particular area” (Guha,VII). When subaltern Studies group emerged, it had taken up the issues concerning on various aspects of subaltern people irrespective of caste, gender, color profession, space, and class. With the inclusion of Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak in *Subaltern Studies IV,* Subaltern Studies entered a new domain: feminism. She clarified that the subaltern as a discourse to speak on behalf of the marginalized groups has not paid attention to women as doubly colonized both by the patriarchy

and colonization. The silencing of subaltern women, Spivak argues, “marks the limit of historical knowledge” (Spivak, 247). It is impossible to retrieve the woman’s voice when she was not given a subject-position from which to speak. The subaltern women, despite their contribution and potentiality, remain unheard the way the subaltern insurgents did despite their active participation in the anti-imperialist insurgencies. Spivak therefore thinks that “woman is the neglected syntagm of the semiosis of subalternity of insurgency” (395). Whether the woman is looked ‘from below’ merely as a sexual object or ‘from above’ as a goddess, she is reduced into the object of the male’s desire.

It is widely recognized the religious beliefs and practices of subordinate caste groups. It is the construction of dharma which assigns to each jati its place within the system and defines the relations between jatis as the simultaneous unity of mutual separateness and mutual dependence. Laws against untouchability had to be organized around a capacious definition to enable the state to see a family resemblance between the diverse acts performed on the ground of untouchability. Drawing attention to the practice of untouchability by defining it was understood as a form of discrimination. Subaltern consciousness is hot debated issue in subaltern studies. Subaltern Group writers endeavor to establish the subaltern people as the subject of insurgency. That’s why they propose to focus on subaltern consciousness as their central theme. Guha holds the view that the alleged ‘peasant consciousness’ is a strategy they have got to adopt for establishing subaltern people as an autonomous domain having their own history. It is equally remarkable that the scholars from inside and outside Subaltern Studies have established subaltern’s people’s everyday resistance against elite classes as basic feature of life in the politically decolonized spaces like India. Subaltern consciousness has been always a critical point of subalternity. The peasants or

subaltern groups tend to resist the elite domination. It emerges as an invariant feature about subaltern group, which makes the discussion on the subaltern mentality fruitful.

A Fine Balance is a powerful, depressing but ultimately hopeful novel for the empowerment of subaltern.The novel is firmly in touch with reality. It reflects the plight of lower caste people and women of India from independence in 1947 to the period of Emergency. Similarly, the characters from different backgrounds are brought together by economic forces changing India.

Various critics has opined differently about Rohinton Mistry and his novel. Ian Almond appreciates the novel linking with Mulk Raj Aanand's *Untouchable*. He comments:

> This study of Rohinton Mistry's recent novel *A Fine Balance* offers An interpretation of the novel's central themes of resistance and Resignation untouchable, and in particular concentrates on The Yeatsian influence present in the novel, begining with its title. (204)

Almond sees Yeatsian influence in Mistry. Further, the novel highlighted the conflict between higher class and lower class that is prevailed in post-independent India.

Similarly, Robert L. Loss comments that Mistry present wretched condition of lower caste people as he says, in the essay "Seeking and Maintaining Balance: Rohinton Mistry's Fiction", that "*A Fine Balance* goes outside the secure flat and beyond the city by the sea into the village of the two tailors"(Loss243). Mistry balances the subaltern's suffering and plight from both the city and the town in relation to the consciousness and resistance of the subalterns.

Furthermore, Susan Fisher comments the novel as Mistry's attempt to depict contemporary socio-political scenario. He assumes that readers who see the novel's characters as individuals like themselves will therefore miss the important political

dimensions of the text. Mistry's careful evocation of particular places and conditions pre-independence life in village, and urban slums during the emergency is the urge to see characters as human beings . He further says:

> *A Fine Balance* is a realistic novel, one that makes us believe in the joys and aspirations and ultimate tragedy of its characters; yet at the same time it is an intensely political novel, detailed and ferocious in its critique of Indira Gandhi's dictatorship. In order to appreciate both these aspects of Mistry's work we need, as Moss puts it, to "rescue" the realist novel. (181)

Fisher talks Mistry's *A Fine Balance* as a realistic novel. Mistry is deeply concerned with the moral dimensions of his characters' lives. His characters are aware of the political, social, and cultural conditions and at the same time feel for the characters as human beings like oneself.

According to Eli Park Sorensen, the novel reactualizes the realist aesthetics and has interpretive potential as a postcolonial text. Sorensen further comments:

> The novel I will focus on in this article, Rohinton Mistry's *A Balance*, is an almost classic example of a postcolonial realist text: a novel whose realist dimension symptomatically has been treated either with suspicion or, Paradoxically, as critique of realism. My reading of this text will attempt to ritualize the novel's realist aesthetics and demonstrate how integral this particular aesthetic strategy is to the novel's *interpretive/ Utopian* potential as a postcolonial literary text. (343-44)

Here, Sorenson views the novel a postcolonial text. The novel is the representation of the experience of otherness, hiding the time basis of western capitalist and imperialist

discourse. The novel balances the disruptive forces generated by the state of emergency and the experiences of hope, desire, and tragedy at the individual level, evoking a very concrete sense of the historical era during which these four characters toil and struggle through everyday life, constantly obstructed and regulated by what appears to be an endless series of accidents, coincidences, and random forces.

Patricia Goldblatt defines *A Fine Balance* as a novel which tells a story of heroic struggle of two tailors whose attempts at survival become the microcosm for all the suffering poor India. It is through the eyes of the affable Ishvar and cynical Omprakash that we become encompassed in their tale, one painted in shades of green, brown, and ultimately black. He further says:

> It is not an unfeeling, embittered coldness that drives each character; rather, each rises to fulfill his or her destiny, filling themselves with tenacity and courage to encounter whatever life has handed them. Each remembers and longs for those sustaining days of familial love, yet, each knows that he or she can not linger in the nostalgia of the past. (94)

There is no choice but to continue on in search of a livelihood to sustain body, and occasionally soul, in a world so unkind that children are purposefully blinded for the sake of a few money. In his presentation, Mistry evokes the widows, the orphans, the masses ravaged by a government so simple and savage that believes that by removing the homeless from the streets that they will simply cease to exist.

Above mentioned critics have analyzed the text from different perspective but the present researcher is going to explore the subaltern consciousness which has not been explored yet. And without exploration of this very issue, the study of the text is incomplete. In this regard, it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed

through various perspectives, the subaltern issues have not been raised yet. There exists a strong need to carry out research on this novel from perspective of subaltern consciousness. Without a proper study on this issue, the meaning of the text will remain incomplete. Having this fact into consideration, the present researcher proposes to carry out research from the perspective of subaltern and their consciousness.

In this research, first chapter is presented as the introduction of the thesis. In the introduction section, the researcher tries to introduce his thesis. In second chapter this researcher has briefly discussed about subaltern studies, where this researcher mainly focused in gender subaltern, caste subaltern and their consciousness. In third chapter the present researcher analyzed the text with the theoretical eye which he has talked in chapter II. The chapter four is the conclusion of the thesis.

II. Subaltern Studies as a History from Below Approach

More than twenty-five years ago, a small group of South Asianists challenged the bourgeois-nationalist historiography of Indian nationalism. They aimed to recover the occluded histories of what Antonio Gramsci calls “subaltern social group” and to put to put into question the relation of power, subordination, and “inferior rank”. Subaltern Studies in disciplines as diverse as history, anthropology, and literature is to recognize the force of recent postcolonial criticism. This study formally appeared in 1982 with the aim to provide the subaltern people who were ignored by colonialist as well as bourgeois nationalist historiographies. This criticism has compelled a radical rethinking of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and Western domination. The dissemination of Subaltern Studies, beginning in 1982 as an intervention in South Asian historiography and developing into a vigorous postcolonial critique, must be paced in such a complex, catachrestic reworking of knowledge. The challenge it poses to the existing historical scholarship has been felt not only in South Asian Studies but also in the historiography of other regions and in disciplines other than history. Subaltern Studies has committed itself “to rectify the elitist bias characteristics of much research and academic work in particular area” (Guha VII).

With the formation of Subaltern Studies group it aims to provide a systematic study of oppressed groups of society through a new historiography that rewrites a new history from below. This group was led by Ranjit Guha. He describes his project as an attempt to study:

> The general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, cast, age, gender, and office or in any other way […] Subaltern Studies group sketched out, its wide

> ranging concern both with visible history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity and with the occluded attitude, ideologies and belief system –in short, the culture informing that condition. (Guha VII)

Guha contrasts "politics of the people" with elite politics and privileges the former over the later. He thinks that politics of the people "was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics, nor did its existence depend on the later" (4). Subaltern Studies plunged into this historiographical contest over the representation of culture and politics of the people. Accusing colonialist, nationalist and Marxist interpretations of robbing the common people of their agency, it announced a new approach to restore history to the subordinated.

Subaltern Studies aim to promote, as prefaced by Guha to the first volume, "the study and discussion of subalternist themes in South Asian studies" (vii). Guha suggested that while subaltern studies would not ignore the dominant, because the subalterns are always subject to their activity, its aim was to "rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work" in south Asian Studies (vii). The act of rectification sprang from the convection that the elites has exercised dominance, not hegemony, in Gramsci's sense, over the subalterns. A reflection of this belief was Guha's argument that the subaltern had acted in history "on their own, that is, independently of the elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter" (4). Subaltern Studies forthright claims about the subaltern subject and set about demonstrating how the agency of the subaltern in history had been denied by elite perspectives anchored in colonialist, and or Marxist narratives. Arguing that these narratives had sought to represent the subaltern's consciousness and activity according to schemes that encoded elite dominance, Guha asserted that historiography

had dealt with “the peasant rebel merely as an empirical person or member of a class, but not as an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion” (2).

In *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Guha enumerates the dangers and limitations of the historiography of colonial India and suggests a new way to read official and administrative colonial archive records. His treatment of institutionalized colonial dishonesty is dynamic and successful as he offers analytical tools that enable historians to “read against the grain as they cull colonial archives, and recognize the code of pacification” that obscures the power and intent of subaltern insurgency (59). Using concepts of hegemony and resistance first articulated by Antonio Gramsci, Guha makes a profound contribution to the academic effort to separate the historian’s perspective from that of the state. In his article “Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography”, Chakrabarty explains Subaltern Studies’ radical departure from Marxist historiography and offers a reasonable defense of Subaltern Studies in the face of recent criticism. Chakrabarty lists Subaltern Studies points of departure from previous historical interpretations of power and agency: (a) power is multi-dimensional and separated from capital (b) power bases exist outside of the center-periphery paradigm (c) the nation/state is not the best basis for definitions of political activity. Chakrabarty further says:

> With the foundation for Subalternists’ perception of power and agency specified, the reader comprehends the radical paradigm shift represented by this new interpretation. If peasants are not backward and ‘pre-political’, but instead active agent in their own political destiny, experiencing dominance without hegemony and consciously inverting colonial codes of behavior and destroying colonial symbols of power, then their previously dismissed forms of resistance gain legitimacy. (22)

The weakness in this approach stems from the types of archival sources available to scholars looking for evidence that the Subaltern was the maker of his own destiny. Often at a loss for written transcripts of Subaltern experience such as diaries or letters, Subalternists must look at the actions of the Subalterns to access the "collective imagination inherent in the practices of peasant rebellion" (23). When historians interpret the actions of a wide swathe of largely illiterate individuals and define their intentions and experiences, they run the risks of producing scholarship rife with assumption, projection, and ultimately, elitism.

Thus, while reading records against the grain, these scholars have sought to uncover the subaltern's myth, cults, ideologies, and revolts that colonial and nationalist elites sought to appropriate and that conventional historiography has laid waste by the deadly weapon of cause and effect. Ranjit Guha's "Elementary Aspects of peasant Insurgency in colonial India" (1983) is a powerful example of scholarship that seeks to recover the peasant from elite projects and positivist historiography. In this wide ranging study full of brilliant insights and methodological invention, Guha returns to the nineteen century peasant insurrection in colonial India. Reading colonial records and historiographical representations with an uncanny eye, he offers a fascinating account of the peasant's insurgent consciousness, rumors, mythic vision, religiosity, and bonds of community. From Guha's account, "the subaltern emerges with forms of sociality and political community at odds with nation and class, defying the models of rationality and social action that conventional historiography uses" (27). Guha argues convincingly that such models are elitist insofar as they deny that subaltern's autonomous consciousness and they are drawn from colonial and liberal nationalist projects of appropriating the subaltern.

It is true that the effort to get back the autonomy of the subaltern subject

resembled the “history from below approach” developed social history in the West. But the subalternist search for a humanist subject-agent frequently ended up with the discovery of the failure of subaltern agency, the moment of rebellion always contained within it the moment of failure. The desire to recover the subaltern’s autonomy was repeatedly frustrated because subalternity, by definition signified the impossibility of autonomy, subaltern rebellions only offered fleeting moment of defiance .Veena Das says that “it is possible that in the face of massive institutional structures of bureaucratic domination, subaltern rebellions can only provide a night time love, to use the evocative phrase of the Greek philosopher Castoriadis, it can not be transformed into a life time love” (315). While these scholars failed to recognize fully that the subaltern resistance did not simply oppose power but was simply constituted by it, their own work showed this to be the case. Further complicating the urge to recover the subject was the fact that, unlike British and the United States’ social history, subaltern studies drew on anti-humanist structuralist and poststructuralist writings.

Ranjit Guha’s smart reading colonial records, in particular, drew explicitly from Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Roland Bathes, and Michel Foucault. Partly, the reliance on such theorist and the emphasis on textual readings arose from as Dipesh Chakrabarty points out that “the absence of workers diaries and other such resources available to British historians” (102). Indian peasants had left no source, no documents from which their own voice could be retrieved. But the emphasis readings of text and the source to theorist such as Foucault, whose writing cast a covering of doubt over the idea of the autonomous subject, contained awareness that the colonial subaltern was not just a form of general subalternity. While the operation of power relations in colonial and metropolitan theaters had

parallels, the conditions of subalternity were also irreducibly different. Subaltern studies therefore, could not just be the Indian version of the history from below approach, it had to conceive the subaltern differently and write different histories.

A subaltern study in the operation of dominant discourse leads it necessarily to the critique of the modern West. For if the marginalization of other sources of knowledge and agency occurred in the functioning of colonialism and its derivative, nationalism, then the weapon of critique must turn against Europe and the modes of knowledge it instituted. It is in the context that there emerges a certain convergence between Subaltern Studies and postcolonial critiques originating in literary and cultural studies. Chatterjee says that "not only did Edward Said's orientalism provide the grounds for critique if Indian nationalism Said also wrote an appreciative foreword to a collection of Subaltern Studies essays" (x). It is important to recognize that the critique of the West is not confined to the colonial records of explanation and profiteering but extends to the disciplinary knowledge and procedures it authorized above all, the discipline history.

Dipesh Chakrabarty offers a forceful critique of the academic discipline of history as the theoretical category laden with power. Finding premature the celebration of Subaltern Studies as a case of successful decolonization of knowledge, Chakrabarty writes:

> Insofar as the academic history that is, history as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university is concerned, Europe remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call India, China, Kenyan, and so on. There is the peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called the history of Europe. In this sense Indian

> history itself is in the position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history. (1)

It is important to note that Europe or the West refers to an imaginary though powerful entity created by a historical process that authorized it as the home of Reason, Progress, and Modernity. To undo the authority of such an entity distributed and universalized by imperialism and nationalism requires, in Chakrabarty's words "provincialization of Europe". But neither a nativism nor culture relativism animates this project of provincializing Europe; there are no calls for reversing the Europe/India hierarchy and no attempts to represent India through an Indian, not Western, perspective. Instead, the reorganization that the "third world historian is condemned to knowing Europe as the original home of the modern whereas the European historian does not share a comparable predicament with regard to the past of the majority of humankind" serves as the strategy that seeks to find in the functioning of history as a discipline the source of another history (19).

Subaltern Studies powerful intervention in South Asian historiography has turned into a sharp critique of the discipline of history; this is because South Asia is not an isolated arena but is woven into the web of historical discourse centered in modern West. Gyan prakash in his essay "Subaltern Studies as a Postcolonial Criticism" writes:

> Through the long histories of colonialism and nationalism, the discourse of modernity, capitalism and citizenship has acquired a strong though peculiar presence in the history of the region….The institution of higher education in South Asia, relatively large and thriving, have functioned since the mid-nineteenth century in relation to the metropolitan academy, including centers for South Asian studies

> in the west. (1489)

To its credit, Subaltern Studies turned South Asian's entanglement with the modern west as the bias for the rendering its intervention in South Asia history into a critique of discourses authorized by western domination.

Subaltern Studies has arrived at its critique by engaging both Marxism and poststructuralism. But the nature of these engagements is complex. If the influence of Gramsci's Marxism is obvious in the concept of subaltern and in treatments of such themes as hegemony and dominance, it should be noted, however, as Spivak points out:

> In my reading of the volumes of Subaltern Studies, this critical force or bringing-to-crisis can be located in the energy of the questioning humanism in post-Nietzschean sector of Western European structuralism, for our group Michel Foucault, Roland Bathes, and a certain Levi-Strauss. This structuralist question humanism by exposing its hero-the sovereign subjects as author, the subject of authority, legitimacy, and power. There is affinity between the imperialist subject and the subject of humanism. (337)

Subaltern Studies obtains its force as postcolonial criticism from a catachrestic combination of Marxism and poststructuralism, Gramsci, and Michel Foucault, the modern West and India and, archival research and textual criticism. Gyan Prakash in his essay "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism" writes:

> As this project translated into other regions and disciplines, the discrepant histories of colonialism, capitalism, and subalternity in different areas would have to be recognized. It is up to the scholars of these fields, including Europeanist, to determine how to use Subaltern

> Studies insights on subalternity and its critique of the colonial genealogy of the discourse of modernity. (1490)

It is worth bearing in mind Subaltern Studies itself is an act of translation. Representation a negotiation between South Asian historiography and the discipline of history centered in Wes, its insights can be neither limited to South Asia nor globalized. Trafficking between the two, and originating as an ambivalent colonial aftermath, Subaltern Studies demands that its own translation also occur between the lines.

Subaltern Studies have developed into a cultural theory as it is based on the culture of the subaltern people. It has moved away from people's politics to the study of the culture of the subaltern people. Now it tends to take resort to cultural as well as literary modes to know history. The first emancipatory act that Subaltern Studies project performs in our understanding of tribes, castes, or the other such groups , as Veen Das writes in his article, "Subaltern as Perspective" , "is to restore to them their historical being" (314). In all, its commitment to restore history of subaltern people is rather genius aspect about Subaltern Studies. Indeed David Ludden says that a subaltern study has become "an original sight for a new kind of history from below, a people's history free of nation constraints" (12).

The word "subaltern", borrowed from Antonio Gramsci and sometimes used to refer a concept as vague as the "people", is usually defined by Subaltern Studies scholars in contrast to the term "elite", which in colonial or postcolonial situation signifies "dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous" (Said 44). Said further says:

> The 'subaltern' then represents the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those [….]described as 'elite'. Some

> of these classes and groups such as the lesser rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper middle-peasants who 'naturally' ranked among the 'people' and the 'subaltern', could under certain circumstances act for the 'elite', as explained above, and therefore be classified as such in some local or regional situations-an ambiguity which it is up to the historian to sort out on the basis of a close and judicious reading of his evidence. (44)

Although Subaltern Studies focuses on South Asia, its historical discourse has resulted in the term "subaltern", generally referring to groups of inferior rank in other areas of the world, as other historians seeks to locate and reestablish the agency of these groups. Subaltern equals the people who exist "on their own, that is, independently of the elite" (2). As will be explored here, the problem with such a definition of subaltern is that it imagines the existence of two totally separate political realms, one belonging to the elite and the other to the subaltern.

The term 'subaltern', which comes from Latin root *sub* that is "under" plus *akter* means "other", literally refers to any person or the group of inferior to rank and station. The subaltern has now become a typical way to assign the colonial people who employ this discourse. The whole idea of subaltern subject is now to resist this European discourse rather than obey with it. The term 'subaltern' refers to the marginalized or exploited people, whether in terms of class, caste, age, religion, ethnicity, and gender. The most well-known violation perpetrated over the subaltern people, is the effacement of their identity in the official account. The subalterns are marginalized, thinking that, they can not speak though they are conscious of the control or marginalization. They lack the language of their own, which can express their pain and sufferings. Not only the language, they look the theoretical strategies,

thus, the marginalization becomes a continuing process.

The very term ‘subaltern’ was first used to refer Vassals and Peasants in Medieval period. By seventeenth century, it was used to position for the lower ranks in military signifying them as peasant origin. By eighteenth century, the writers and the historians started writing novels and histories about military operation in India and America from the subaltern perspective. Later on the very term got a rather genuine voice, when Antonio Gramsci adopted the term to refer those groups in a society “who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes” (76). Peasant, workers and also other groups may fall under the term subalterns, who are denied to access to hegemonic power. These subaltern classes are forced to stay away from the hegemonic power and suffer the exploitation of the ruling classes.

When subaltern Studies group emerged, it had taken up the issues concerning on various aspects of subaltern people irrespective of caste, gender, color profession, space, and class. Only after the publication of *Subaltern Studies IV*, the subaltern studies group came to be attentive towards women issues. There were few essays that slightly touched the women issues. With the inclusion of Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak in *Subaltern Studies IV,* Subaltern Studies entered a new domain: feminism. She clarified that the subaltern as a discourse to speak on behalf of the marginalized groups has not paid attention to women as doubly colonized both by the patriarchy and colonization. She is amazed at its “indifference to the subjectivity, not to mention the indispensable presence, of the woman as the crucial instrument” (385). Despite the fact that Subaltern Studies group is “scrupulous in its consideration towards women” (356), the core member of the group ignore the impetus the concept-metaphor woman provides in the functioning of their discourse. Her feminist agenda includes the complicity of female writers with imperialism.

The silencing of subaltern women, Spivak argues, “marks the limit of historical knowledge” (247). It is impossible to retrieve the woman’s voice when she was not given a subject-position from which to speak. This argument appears to run counter to the historiographical convention of retrieval to recover the histories of the traditionally ignored women, workers peasants, and minorities. Spivak’s point “however, is not that such retrievals should not be undertaken but that the very project of recovery depends on the historical erasure of the subaltern voice” (251). The possibility of retrieval, therefore, is also a sign of its impossibility. Recognition of the aporetic condition of the subaltern’s silence is necessary in order to subject the intervention of the historian-critic to persistent interrogation, to prevent the refraction of “what might have been the absolutely other into a domesticated other” (253).

The potentiality of this deconstructive position has been explored effectively in the recent readings of the archival documents on the abolition of sati, the Hindu widow sacrifice in the early nineteenth century. The historian encounters these records, as evidence of the contexts between the British ‘civilizing mission’ and Hindu heathenism, between modernity and tradition, and as a story of the beginning of the emancipation of Hindu women and about the birth of modern India. This is so because, Lata Mani shows, “the very existence of these documents has a history that entails the use of women as the site of both the colonial and the indigenous male elite’s constructions of authoritative Hindu traditions” (121). The questions asked of accumulated sources on sati whether or not the burning of widows was sanctioned by Hindu codes, did women go willingly to the funeral pyre, on what grounds could the immolation of women be abolished come to us marked by their early nineteenth-century history. The historian’s confrontation today with sources on sati, therefore, cannot escape the echo of that previous rendezvous.

Consequently, as Spivak states starkly, the debate left no room for the widow's enunciatory position. Caught in the contest over whether tradition did or did not sanction sati and over whether or not the widow self-immolated willingly, the colonized subaltern woman disappeared, "she was literally extinguished for her dead husband in the indigenous patriarchal discourse, or offered the choice to speak in the voice of sovereign individual authenticated by colonialism" (306). The problem here is not one of sources but of the staging of the debate: it left no position from which the widow could speak. The silencing of subaltern women, Spivak argues, marks the limit of historical knowledge. It is impossible to retrieve the woman's voice when she was not given a subject-position from which to speak. The argument appears to run counter to the historiographical convention of retrieval to recover the histories of the traditionally ignored women. Spivak's point, however, "is not that such retrievals should not be undertaken but that the very project of recovery depends on the historical erasure of the subaltern 'voice' " (247). The possibility of retrieval, therefore, is also a sign of its impossibility.

The subaltern women, despite their contribution and potentiality, remain unheard the way the subaltern insurgents did despite their active participation in the anti-imperialist insurgencies. Spivak therefore thinks that "woman is the neglected syntagm of the semiosis of subalternity of insurgency" (395). In other words, she aspires "to show the complicity between subject and object of investigation: the Subaltern Studies group and saubalternity" (359). This complicity leads the historians and theorists to ignore "the simple exclusion of the subaltern as female (sexed) subject…" (359). Spivak not only translated Mahasweta Devi's 'Stanadyini', but also wrote a commentary on it. In her witty commentary "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: Mahasweta Devi's 'Stanadyini'", she argues how women are denied

their subjectivity, their voice. Whether the woman is looked 'from below' merely as a sexual object or 'from below' as a goddess, she is reduced into the object of the male's desire.

In the 1970 and 1980, an important task for feminist theory was to establish gender as a category that had been rendered invisible in universalism of various kinds. Women's groups investigating 'dowry deaths', demonstrated how the designation of the family as private domain restricted women's access to protection against domestic violence. They exposed the collusion of the law, police, medical system, and the family in classifying these deaths as suicides. Susie Tharu and Tejswini Nirranjana argue:

> Feminist scholars worked to salvage gender and women's issues from being subsumed by class analysis, sought to extend the Marxist understanding of labour to include domestic production, and pointed out the marginality and vulnerability of women in the workforce; disciplinary formations such as history or literature were critically discussed, and alternative narratives produced that foregrounded women. (233)

Young middle-class women began to declare that they were against the reservations for women that had been announced in Andhra Pradesh for instance, as well as against the idea of reserving seats for women in public transport.

After examining the case of Bhuvaneshwari's suicide, Spivak concludes that "the subaltern can not speak" (104). The critics have attempted to interpret this statement on various ways. Mostly, it has been interpreted as the lack of means and strategy on the part of subaltern to speak on their own. Clearly, the strategy of presenting the women as subaltern clarifies Spivak's position in the imperial as well

as patriarchal society where women's voices and actions always remain unheard. So, her position appears to reflect the meaning of the subaltern at best. This is one of the reasons why the woman's issues are so widely discussed in subaltern studies.

It is widely recognized the religious beliefs and practices of subordinate caste groups. Dipankar Gupta has recently attempted a historical explanation of the transition from Verna to jati; and practically every cultural region of India has its share of studies relating the regional caste structure with changes in production structures over particular historical periods. Similarly, we can make determinate distinctions by quantity among all castes if we have a similar definition –for- self of caste. The most powerful candidate in sociological literature for this definition of casteness is hierarchy. Partha Chatterjee argues, "Hierarchy fixes a universal measure of casteness so that, at any given time and place, the immediate qualitative diversity of jatis can be ordered as a quantitative ranking in a scale of hierarchy" (179). The universal measure appears for each particular caste as a determinate position, quantitatively fixed and hence comparable, in the hierarchy of all castes.

Dumont does something more, which also happens to be the next step in our immanent critique of caste. The being-for-self of caste, namely hierarchy, can be shown to imply a contradictory essence. As soon as we try to arrange the determinate, here-and-now, evidence of the ethnological material in a sequence of change, we will discover in place of the immediacy of being, on the one hand the reflected or mediated self-identity of caste and on the other a self-repulsion or difference. In Dumont's argument, "the force which holds together the different castes within the whole of the caste system is the ideological force of dharma" (25). It is the construction of 'dharma' which assigns to each 'jati' its place within the system and defines the relations between jatis as the simultaneous unity of mutual separateness

and mutual dependence.

Kane notes the agreement of all medieval dharmasastra texts on this point and cites the sustasamhita which states explicitly that the “several castes are like the species of animals and that caste attaches to the body and not to the soul” (52). The point, however, is that as soon as these discrete jatis are recognized as particular forms belonging to the same class of entities, i.e. they are all recognized as castes, the finiteness of discrete qualities will be negated by a being-for-self of caste embodying the universal measure of casteness. There is in popular beliefs and practices of caste an implicit critique which questions the claim of the dominant dharma to unify the particular jatis into a harmonious whole and which puts forward contrary claims. Partha Chatterjee argues, “Just as the effectiveness of the claims of the one dharma is contingent upon the conditions of power, so also are the possibilities and forms of the contrary claims conditioned by those relations of power” (185). In their deviance from the dominant dharma, the popular beliefs draw upon the ideological resources of given cultural traditions, selecting, transforming and developing them to cope with new conditions of subordination but remaining limited by those conditions. . Partha Chatterjee further argues that “the negativity of these contrary claims is an index of their failure to construct an alternative universal to the dominant dharma and is thus the mark of subalternity” (185). The object of subaltern project must be to develop, make explicit and unify these fragmented oppositions in order to construct a critique of Indian tradition which is at the same time a critique of bourgeois for equality.

Marxists have chosen two approaches. Most have argued that caste is a feature of the superstructure of Indian society and ought to be understood in terms of its efficacy as an ideological system which reflects the basic structure of material relations, the latter of course being characterized in terms of class relations. Other

have suggested that caste is in fact the especially Indian form of material relations at the base, with its own historical dynamic; caste, in other words, "is the form in which classes appear in Indian society" (175). "The assertion of Brahmanical dominance" says Ramakanta Chakrabarty (322), "in a religious movement which was rooted in mysticism, and which was anti-caste and anti-intellectual, inevitably led to the growth of deviant orders" (324). He then gives an account of the origins, mostly in the eighteenth century, of some of these orders which were usually founded by Vaisnavas from the touchable Sudra castes and which usually had a following among the trading and artisanal castes, the untouchables and sometimes tribals converted to the new faith.

The PoA Act implies that motives for caste atrocities are over determined, and acknowledges the vulnerability of all dalits to violence. Milind Wakankar writes:

> One of the important effects of the term 'caste atrocity' is that it converts ritual or cultural forms of disability, e.g. prohibition from temple entry or derogatory caste names, into legally cognizable forms of harm or injury. States of being are thus transformed into cognizable injury by laws such as the PoA Act, and this is predicated on a model of dalits recognition that binds dalit identity to the body, and perpetuates the idea of physical vulnerability as a condition of dalit existence. (142)

Therefore he suggests, the passage of laws to protect dalits from caste violence is as important as the more familiar discourse on untouchability, though as yet there has been little attempt to trace how these two sets of policies have intersected. On three September 1991 the *Maharshtra Times* and *Times of India* carried news about the persistence of untouchability in Marathwada's villages. Wakankar further argues:

> The journalist Rajdeep Sardesai noted in the *Times* that an NGO based in Vasai and the Nirmala Niketan School of Social Work, Bombay had conducted a survey between 6 May and 26 May 1991. The survey had found that over eighty percent dalits did not have the right to enter temple in Marathwada that they were barred from common water sources, preformed defiling labour, and faced political discrimination. (158-59)

Sardesai's report concludes by noting that the report's finding questioned Maharasthra's claim to being a progressive state, the region that had produced Pule and Ambedkar.

Both politics of untouchability and struggle over political power came to be highlighted in the press accounts. As various governmental agencies began to articulate with growing newspaper coverage of the event, the local context of caste relations became important because they were understood to contain the sociological conditions of possibility for Sawne's murder. Even more significantly, Ram Dhan argues, "Tensions between dalits and upper castes had existed since the demand for renaming Marathwada University after Babasaheb Ambedkar, and the large scale violence against dalits that the 'Namaantar' movement has unleashed during 1977-8" (162). Thus Ram Dhan's report provided a political explanation for Sawne's murder, connecting this discrete instance of caste crime with much broader upper-caste resentment against dalit militancy.

Between 1974 and 1978 dalits attempted to mark out urban space in Bombay through the action of a group of young militants called the Dalit Panthers, rename the regional university in Marathwada in honour of Bhimrao Ambedkarm, and erect busts of Ambedkar and fly the blue flag across Marathwada's villages. So important was

the proliferation of signs such as Ambedkar's bust or blue flags, that they changed the urban and rural landscape. These were important means of announcing a new dalit identity. Milind Wakankar writes:

> Panther self-identification through virulently anti-casteist political rhetoric claims to city spaces such as slums as the site of both exploitation and radicalization, and the turn to 'lumpen' or criminalized life styles were all perceived as a threat by the state. The Panthers were kept under police surveillance. Dalitness also became a matter of metropolitan sensibility and aesthetic self-fashioning at this time. The Panthers made the namaantar struggle a crucial aspect of the militant, masculine urban politics they supported. (167)

The 'namaantar' became a matter of importance to urban dalits, focusing policy towards the matter of reservations in jobs and schools, segregation in urban housing, and the presence of the caste blocks in slums and chawls. The demand played out differently in Marathwada, however, because of that region's history. The discourse of caste violence is important in producing new forms of legal subjectivity and changed forms of caste embodiment. The desecration of Ambedkar and Buddha statues, harm to dalits' livelihood by destroying property or expropriating land legally, and the use of caste-based insults are the direct results of dalit politicization and collective struggle.

The postcolonial state's discourse on untouchability enables a new political imaginary that makes a critical break with the past. This has meant that the civil rights regime instituted by 'the national state' has understood its task as respecting the dignity of vulnerable citizen-subjects by protecting their physical integrity in the present in order to compensate for the wounds of history, those practices of

stigmatization that have caused collective suffering. Wendy Brown says:

> To conceptualize caste relations as constituting dalit victims and upper caste perpetrators might flatten the complexities of social reality, but it suggests that the caste relationship itself is being imagined and understood differently, as intrinsically agonistic. However, the sociology of victim and perpetrator cannot imagine the political stakes of caste violence. (168)

Laws against untouchability had to be organized around a capacious definition to enable the state to see a family resemblance between the diverse acts performed on the ground of untouchability. For example, issues of temple entry and of the installation of an Ambedkar statue, although located in very different models of social and political behaviours, both indicated different symptoms of caste conflict. Drawing attention to the practice of untouchability by defining it was understood as a form of discrimination. It could also provide linguistic leverage for opponents of such legal reform, whereas leaving it undefined could allow the state greater freedom in locating and punishing it. The consequence of these laudable attempts to bring dalits within the domain of political modernity has meant, however, that the state constantly reinscribes the habitus of untouchability into its bureaucratic functioning without acknowledging it

Subaltern Consciousness as the Voice of Resistance

Subaltern consciousness is hot debated issue in Subaltern Studies. Spivak, in her seminal essay “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography”, gives a deconstructive reading to the activities of Subaltern Studies Group up to their third volume. She tries to assess their work in her writing. Like other many critics, she, too finds problem with their compartmentalized views of consciousness. While assessing

their work, she comes to realize that it somehow resembles deconstruction, which puts the binary oppositions like elite/subaltern under erasure. Their project, in her view is rather positivist one as it aspires to investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness. Spivak, however, thinks that "consciousness, here, is not consciousness-in-general, but a historicized political species, subaltern consciousness" (338). She, therefore, regards their effort to recover peasant consciousness as strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest. She suggests, "its own subalternity is claiming a *positive* subject-position for the subaltern might be reinscribed as a strategy for our times" (345).

Subaltern writers endeavor to establish the subaltern people as the subject of insurgency. That's why they propose to focus on subaltern consciousness as their central theme. Otherwise, the subaltern people's experience of insurgency would be turned into a history of events without a subject. Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay, "Invitation to a Dialogue" writes:

> The central aim of the subaltern studies is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives. It is only by giving this consciousness a central place in historical analysis that we the subaltern as maker of the history s/he lives out. (374)

Guha holds the view that the alleged 'peasant consciousness' is a strategy they have got to adopt for establishing subaltern people as an autonomous domain having their own history. Spivak finally suggests Subaltern Studies Group to follow "reading against the grain" approach because it "would get the group off the dangerous hook of claiming to establish the truth and knowledge of the subaltern and his consciousness"

(356).

In his essay “Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency” Guha, too, depicts tribal revolt as the subaltern rebellion, which is completely different from nationalism. Subaltern Studies, in David Ludden words, “entered the academic scene by asserting the complete autonomy of lower class insurgency” (10). It is equally remarkable that the scholars from inside and outside Subaltern Studies have established subaltern’s people’s everyday resistance against elite classes as basic feature of life in the politically decolonized spaces like India.

Subaltern consciousness has been always a critical point of subalternity. The peasants or subaltern groups tend to resist the elite domination. It emerges as an invariant feature about subaltern group, which makes the discussion on the subaltern mentality fruitful. The subaltern people resisted the bourgeois nationalist as well as indigenous elite leaders by disobeying their orders. They would take part in the anti-imperialist movements in their own traditionalist way. They would derive the terms from the idioms of their everyday life so that they could make these struggles their own. Hence, ‘defiance’ is not the only characteristic behavior of the subaltern classes but also “submissiveness to authority” equally important feature of their behaviors. The question of unrealized potential arises out of the distinct articulation charactering insurgencies at the grass root a Ranjit Guha writes “all mass struggle will tend inevitably to model themselves on the unfinished project of Titu, Kanhu, Birsa, and Magher Singh” (336).

Religion often is an important in subaltern protests against an order that perpetuates operation and distress. As observed by Sumit Sarkar, “a crucial feature of the concept of breakdown of authority in its more extreme form is it’s predominantly magic religious character, natural and indeed inevitable in a peasant society which has

not undergone the process of ‘disenchantment of the world’ partially brought about in the west in the post-reformation era” (308). For peasant, religion is an essential and integral part of their everyday lives. It also mediates between themselves and those forces, for good and evil, appears to lie beyond their control. The workers become more conscious regarding their welfare and rights. It is observed that there is an urgent need of working class organization, which would fight for the betterment of the entire workers. The workers should become united so that they could give pressure to the authority. The government in Dipesh words has described this labour force in 1933 as “perhaps the largest and the most compact group of workers with identical interest in the world” (116). It was not just the “higher frequency of strikes however that made the authority takes notice of them; the authorities were also sometimes worried by their longer duration” (118). He provides an answer to the question of why trade unions made little headway despite evidence of the urge for protest among workers.

The emphasis on subaltern autonomy and consciousness demonstrates variable reactions and results as the subject encounter different historical experiences. For example, the Devi movement of 1922-23 in south Gujarat was distinguished by the tribal solidarity secured substantial gain for the adivasis in their struggle against exploiters. The same movement, however, represented a stage in the growth of a class of richer peasants within the ‘adivasi’ community. The subaltern classes believe that those who hold power over them, whether money lenders, grain traders, land holders or officials, should not abuse their power but be responsible to subaltern needs. So the protest is accordingly directed not to overturn the super ordinate classes but to reminding them of the proper use of their power. But when the authority ignores the peasant “they constitute a continuing form of protest by poorer peasant acting together

in small bonds, against it" (Arnold 90).

Thus, Subaltern Studies has focused on need for resistance against elite classes as a basic feature of life in the politically decolonized spaces like India. Spivak says that women are doubly colonized by patriarchy and colonization. Though, they participate in many insurgency and movements but their voice are unheard in history. Different movements are organized by feminist, which shows that they are conscious about their marginalization and fundamental rights. Dipankar Gupta argues that religious belief and practices play major role to subordinate caste groups. *Dharma* has constructed each *jati* and also defines the relation between *jatis*. Milind Wakanar argues that formation of young militants called Dalit Panther, is announcing a new dalit identity.

III. Subaltern Consciousness in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*: A Textual Analysis

Rohinton Mistry, in *A Fine Balance*, not only talks about the subalterns' sufferings and plight in contemporary Indian society, but also tries to show the subaltern people's consciousness resisting against the dominating ideologies and voicing for their rights. Throughout the novel, the major characters protest against domination, ask for their rights and act as conscious agencies against the dominating ideologies in India of 1970's. So, the research, in the text, explores the subaltern consciousness and attempts to speak on behalf of the common people. Though some critics think that subaltern can not speak but here in this novel Mistry presents the characters like Dukhi, Narayan, Ishvar, Omprakash and Dina who are not only conscious about their rights, but also speak against the dominant ideologies of the 1970s India. Characters like Dukhi, Narayan, Ishvar and Omprakash are from *chamaar* caste and Dukhi turns his son Narayan and Ishvar to tailor. And these characters are conscious about the upper caste domination and about their culture; so they act as a conscious agency. Omprakash is a son of Narayan who is the most rebellious character of the novel, who always resists against all kind of authority. Dina is a female character and belongs to Parsi family which is a minority group of India. She is also aware about domination and acts consciously for her rights as in the following quote:

> One morning, after swallowing his last gulp of tea, he said. 'I'm very late today, Dina. Please wash my things.' 'I'm not your servant! Wash your own dirty plates!' weeks of pent-up resentment came gushing. 'You said we would each do our own work! All your stinking things you leave for me!' 'Listen to the little tigress', said Nussan, amused.

> ‘You must not speak like that to your big brother,’ chided Mrs. Shroff gently. ‘Remember, we must share and share alike.’ ‘He’s cheating! He doesn’t do any work! I do everything. (19)

This very paragraph establishes a kind of protest against the patriarchy. Rohinton Mistry, in the beginning of the novel, presents his central character as a protesting subaltern against the so called authority consciously. Nussan, who bears all responsibilities in the family, says every member of family must do their work but after a few days, he ignores the work and imposes his work to his sister. Dina, the female character, knows her brother’s domination and shows her anger towards him. She knows that her brother gives leave to their servant to exploit her.

The society has always dominated the women especially in Asian country. But it does not mean that women can not speak or they cannot protest. In the novel, the protest can be seen in two levels; in physical and in verbal. When Dina is in temple, the priest tries to exploit her sexually but she:

> Squirmed in the grasp as he patted her head, rubbed her neck, stroked her back and resembled flakes of grated coconut, and it scraped her cheeks and forehead. He released her just when she had summoned enough courage to tear her trapped body from his arms. (20)

In patriarchal society, subalterns are heavily oppressed in physical level. Male, always try to play with female body, seek the chance to exploit their body. The very priest of the fire temple is famous for his act to take benefit of his position. He always takes advantage of female innocence and the religion. Dina is also exploited physically when she goes to the fire temple with her brother. Here the priest tries to play with Dina’s body when he hugs her to bless. But Dina is conscious with such kind of exploitation and protest against it courageously.

Subalterns were deprived from their basic rights in the contemporary society of 1970s India. Education is the most necessary thing for the better life and future. But the dominant figure of the society always makes oars to take the subalterns rights. Patriarchal society does not allow education for women. If women are studying in any educational institution, the patriarchal society always tries to stop them by making some excuses, which can also be seen in Nussan: "Very decent of Miss Lamba to promote you.' 'But the fact remains that your results are hopeless. I'm not going to waste money on school fees for another year" (26). Against this Dina argues: "You make me clean and scrub all the time. I cannot study for even an hour a day! What do you except?'(26). After the result of the grade nine Nussan makes the oar to stop her sister Dina's schooling. Though Nussan never says he does not like female are going to school but his behavior and act show that he is one of the representative of the patriarchal society. But Dina is aware of why her performance is not good in exam; and her condition in her house. Nussan never gives the time to study Dina and forced her to do household works after and before her school.

Rohinton Mistry presents the character like Dina, who is familiar with the authority and its domination, acts like a conscious agency. She not only knows the authority but is also aware of how the society functions. In male dominated society, males do not give value to the females whether they are their mothers or grandmothers. Male gives importance to male and always conceal with male not with women and also takes suggestion from male only. The narrator says, "She held her breath and hugged him, then poured out her troubles in a torrent of words. 'Please, Grandpa! Please tell him to stop treating me like this!' (27). These very lines show that how much the character is conscious of her rights and against the domination. After her brother's decision to stop her schooling, she complains about her brother's

domination and decision with her grandpa who lives with her uncle. Though she lives with her mother and brother, she complains with her grandpa instead of her mother because she knows that her brother does not listen to her mother because she is also a female but the grandpa is male and Nussan never tries going against his wish. This shows that Dina is very much aware of the domination and knows the system of the male dominated society.

Marriage is a private affair and every individual has right to choose their husband and wife. No one can impose his or her ideas upon anybody against his or her wish. However, in male dominated society, female's right to choose their husband is prohibited and the very function of choosing husband is controlled by the male members of the family. Such a patriarchal society does not allow women to choose their husband. But the central character Dina voices against this convention too:

> 'I'm going to married', announced Dina at the dinner table. 'Ah' beamed her brother. 'Good, good. Which one is it, Solly or Porus?'- these two being the gents he had most recently introduced. Dina shook her head. 'Then it must be either Dara or Firdosh,' said Ruby. Smiling meaningfully. 'They both are crazy for you.' 'His name is Rustam Dalal.' Nussan was surprised; the name did not belong among the numerous candidates he had brought before Dina over the past three years. Perhaps it was someone she had met at family gathering so he detested. 'And where did we come to across him?' 'We didn't, I did?' (35)

The above paragraph shows that Dina is so much aware about her rights. Dina knows that the marriage is a private affair and she chooses her life partner though she knows that it will not please her brother. Her brother, for three years, invites the most eligible

bachelors to his home. They are from different professions and well family background but Dina denies choosing one of them. The very act of not choosing is also can be taken as the resistance. Her decision of marriage with Rustam Dala, whom she chooses by herself not by her brother, also shows the rebellious act against the male dominated society.

Most of the people want to be independent. This attempt for independence or taking decision to live their life independently against the authority is also a kind of protest. In this context, Dina asserts, "Actually, I have decided to live in Rustom's flat from now on. I came only to ask if you could find me some work' (53). Dian takes the decision to live alone in her husband's flat after her husband death but this decision does not please her brother. He wishes that his sister should live with him because he thinks that it's his duty to take care of her. This shows that Dina knows how to live her life after her husband's death. Both, attempt for independence and one's own will and wish to spend the life emerge from her subaltern consciousness.

In 1970s when India was running through state emergency, cities were going over crowded and it was difficult to live for subalterns. There was a political crisis and it was hard for subaltern people to sustain their life. There was every where domination and exploitation against the common people. But to some extent, the people of the contemporary society were aware of such of domination and exploitation. This fact of contemporary society of India of 1970s is reflected in the text. The text reflects:

> Dina hated the smell; besides, a stray spark could burn a hole in the cloth. 'You shouldn't smoke anywhere,' she said. 'Inside or outside. Cancer will eat your lungs.' 'We don't have to worry about cancer,'

> said Ompraksh. ‘This expensive city will first eat us alive, for sure.’ (77)

Omprakash and Ishvar are tailors who work for Dina in her flat. They come from village in search of job. They do not have ration card so they eat at hotel and live in jhopadpati which is illegal and always has a threat of government to come and destroy the house. Further, they are not properly paying for their work. Though the characters know that they are cheated by the authority but there is difficulty to go against it. The above lines also show the tailors consciousness of the contemporary India and the domination.

Rohinton Mistry’s characters are equally conscious to the growing pace of capitalism in India of 1970s. In capitalism, the capitalists try to cheat others to get more profit. The most rebellious character, in the novel, Omprakash is more aware about his wage and argues with Dina:

> ‘And what is the name of the company you go to?’ Glad about his grumpy silences having ended, she almost blurted out the name, then pretend not to have heard. He repeated the question. ‘Why bother with the name’, she said. ‘All that I am concerned with is the work.’ ‘Very true,’ agreed Ishvar. ‘That’s what interests us also.’ His nephew scowled. After a While he tried again: was there only one company or several different ones? Was she paid a commission, or a set price for the complete order? (78)

After the arrival of the Dina from the export company from where she brings clothes, Omprakash who remains most of the time silent during his work shows his consciousness by asking her questions. Dina works between the tailors and the company and takes the commission with out doing a single work of sewing.

Omprakash's dialogues show that he is well familiar with the condition. His questions make clear that he wants to work direct for company and wants wages directly from the export company. Omprakash further says, "She cheats us. We should directly work for Export Company. Why does she have to be in the middle?" (81). His uncle who is with him does not show any interests in his nephew's talk. So, there is the lack of collective consciousness because all the subalterns are not conscious to their rights and domination to them. With out the collective consciousness the subalterns can not get their rights.

Workers are much more exploited in cities than in villages, the growing capitalism implants the seed of profit seeking tendency in every field. We can take the dialogue which is asked with the authority about his/her concerned subject also as the subalterns' awareness. And also the dialogues between the two subaltern characters against authority show their consciousness and rebellious attitude towards the authority. Omprakash interacts with Ishvar:

> 'Leave it, yaar. She treats us like slaves, and you talk of independence. Making money from our sweat with out a single stitch from her fingers. Look at her house. With electricity, water, everything. What do we have? A stinking Shack in the slum. We'll never collect enough to go back our village.' 'Giving up already? That's no way to win in life. Fight and struggle, Om, even if life knocks you around.'Omprakash went to the back room and returned with a pair of scissors. He clutched it with both hands and thrust theatrically into thin air. 'Hold this at her throat and she will tell us whatever we want to know.' (82)

Omprakash and Ishvar are well aware of their plightful and exploited condition in the occupation. Dina locks them and goes to the export company. She does not allow the tailors to know the export company's name but Omprakash shows his anger towards her because she has exploited them. He complains with his uncle that they are working hard all the day but Dina does not do the single stitch and lives in well facilitated flat while the tailors live in illegal dilapidated huts. Omprakash shows his awareness about their exploitation. Dina works as a middle man and do not pay tailors what they should be paid. Omprakash knows the very fact so he wants the name of the export company in any cost to finish the economic and physical exploitation made by her.

Dina is in problem because she is not allowed to run tailoring company in her flat. The rent collector is always in patrolling so Dina makes a story about the tailor's presence in her flat. But by showing his anger toward his changed identity, Omprakash shows his resistance though he knows that if the rent collector throws Dina from the flat they will loose their job and it is not sure that they will get another one. He is conscious of his identity and says:

> 'I am a tailor, not her maadherchod servant who sweeps and mops,'… 'Trouble for whom? For her. Why should I worry? We don't even get fair rate from her. If we are dead tomorrow, she will get two new tailors.' 'I'm sick of the city. Nothing but misery eversince we came. I wish I had died in our village. I wish I had burned to death like the rest of family.' (91)

Subaltern consciousness can also be seen in identity. Omprakash is conscious and proud of himself as a tailor. Since Ishvar and Omprakash are from the village they go through lots of suffering. Omprakash's dialogue shows a miserable life they are

living. They are working all day but can't live a better life but the person in the middle of their work is living luxurious life. Omprakash even wishes to die because he thinks this is the ongoing process. He knows that if they die Dina surely find two new tailors and they will also be exploited like them. This shows his consciousness of contemporary capitalist society and subalterns like him.

The religious beliefs and practices of subordinate caste groups, in such contexts, function as "the force which holds together the different castes within the whole of the caste system is the ideological force of dharma" (Dumont, 25). It is the construction of *dharma* which assigns to each *jati*, its place within the system, and defines the relations between jatis as the simultaneous unity of mutual separateness and mutual dependence:

> He had worked hard all day, yet he had been thrashed and cheated of his payment. 'On top of that, my foot is crushed', he said. 'I could kill that Thakur. Nothing but a lowly thief. And they are all like that. They treat us like animals. Always have, from the days of our forefathers.' 'Shh', she said. 'It's not good for the boys to hear such things. It was just bad luck, the mortar breaking, that's all.' 'I spit in their upper-caste faces. I don't need their miserable jobs from now on.' (105)

Religion functions as the main cause to marginalize people. Its laws and orders prevent lower-caste people to work as so called upper-castes do. Dukhi, who belongs to the chamaar community, is assigned for the work of pounding chilies. The breaking of mortar was an accident but Thakur blames Dukhi and even does not pay for his work and hits him badly. The above paragraph shows that not only Dukhi, but also his forefathers were/are badly exploited by the so called upper caste people. His dialogue shows he is conscious not only with the present condition but also with the past. And

his declaration--not going to the upper caste's home--is a kind of resistance which he can do from his position.

Lower caste people are heavily exploited by the upper caste people in the name of religion because they think that they have such right from god to exploit dalits. Even they are not allowed to complain about their domination and moreover, most of dalits do not dare to complain. Whenever dalits complain it is taken as a crime, though it acts as a resistance in subaltern consciousness:

> 'How much he slapped my sons-you should see their swollen faces, Panditji,' said Dukhi. 'And their backside looks like an anger tiger raked them with his claws.' 'Panditji, some time ago I was hammered badly Thakur Premji for no fault of mine. But I did not come to you. I did not come to you. I did not want to trouble you.' (112)

After Dukhi's sons are badly beaten by the school teacher in the name of spoiling the class room, he dares to complain with the highest person of the village. Though he uses soft language and tones in his complain, his very act is rebellious.

The discrimination is not limited between the upper caste and the lower caste but there is discrimination within the lower caste too. So the subaltern representative in the text is conscious about this issue too. Narayan, who belongs to chamaar family and allowed Bhunghi to enter his house; shows that he is conscious with such humiliating behavior should be stopped. Narayan further argues: "Yes. Because the uppers treat us so badly. And now you are behaving just like them. If that's what you want, then I am going back to town. I can not live like this anymore" (134). Bhunghi belongs to lower caste which is supposed to be lower than chamaar. He wants to sew new dress and goes to Narayan but his mother does not allow Bhunghi to enter her

house because he is from lower caste. Narayan is strictly against such discrimination so tells her mother to stop such behavior.

Culture is most important thing in human life and so the people equally love their culture and like to preserve their culture. Cultures are handovered by old generation to new generation. The very act of cultural transformation also shows that how much the person is conscious about his culture as in the following quote:

> In the week following Omprakash's fifth birthday, Narayan took him to the tannery, where the chamaars were busy at work. Since his return to the village, he had continued to join in their labours periodically, helping with whatever stage of skinning, curing, tanning, or dyeing that was in progress. And now he proudly showed his child how it was done. (139)

Dukhi learns the chamaar's culture of skinning, curing, tanning from his father at the age of five. Just like Dukhi, Narayan learns this culture from his father in his childhood. Now Narayan is transferring their culture to his son. This act of culture transforming from generation to generation shows their awareness about their culture. Now, Narayan is financially strong than other chamaars in village and his tailoring business is running successfully. His weekly visit to people to help them is the strong evidence of cultural consciousness.

The postcolonial state's discourse on untouchability enables a new political imaginary that makes a critical break with the past. This has meant that the civil rights regime instituted by 'the national state' has understood its task as respecting the dignity of vulnerable citizen-subjects by protecting their physical integrity in the present in order to compensate for the wounds of history, those practices of

stigmatization that have caused collective suffering which can be seen in Narayan's arguments:

> 'Those things, yes. But what about the more important things? Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals.' Those kinds of things take a time to change. 'More than twenty years have passed since independence. Howmuch longer? I want to be able to drink from the village well worship in the temple, walk where I like.' (142)

Narayan who is massaging his father's feet, debates about the untouchability and their rights. Indian law does not allow the practice of untouchability and government has passed many laws against such discrimination. But upper caste people treat lower caste people more badly than animals. Though it has already been twenty years of independence untouchability is only stopped in paper i.e. it is still practice in Indian society. Narayan's desire to walk wherever he likes and to worship in temple shows that he is not only conscious with discrimination but also with his right to live like a human being.

Moreover, a politician always deceives the common peoples and also makes them to dream a luxurious life, equality, education etc but in reality they do nothing. Politician always play with the marginalized people's emotions and feelings. So, Dukhi recommends, "There must be lot of duplication in our country's laws, every time there are elections, they talk of passing the same ones passed twenty years ago. Someone should remain them they need to apply the laws" (143). After the Narayan's complain about their ill-improving life, his father shows his awareness of the

politicians' behavior. In every election time, they promise same thing but do not keep their promises to which characters of the novel are very much familiar.

Both politics of untouchability and struggle for political power came to be highlighted in the press accounts. As various governmental agencies begin to articulate with growing newspaper coverage of the event, the local context of caste relation becomes important because they understood that, to some extent, there is the political and sociological factors played role in Sawne's murder. Narayan knows that voting right is most important right in democratic country. Though he is not allowed to vote, he wants to use or exercise his right. Narayan asserts, "Next there is an election, I want to mark my own ballot. It is still my right. And I will exercise it in next election, I promise you. Life without dignity is worthless" (144). Thakur does not allow Narayan to mark on ballot and he wants to exercise his right. The above dialogues which are delivered by the Narayn shows he is equally conscious with his political right. Further, the situation also makes clear that how much the chamaar community is deceived from their fundamental rights. This type of voting consciousness, in Narayan, is political consciousness which encompasses in itself subaltern consciousness. Since every human is a political being, the marginalized people can not remain untouched with the politics that surround them.

Narayan is always aware with his right and tries to exercise it. He belongs to chamaar community that's why he is not allowed to use his fundamental rights. But his very act talking about his rights and trying to exercise his fundamental right shows the awareness as well as resistance. Such sort of resistance is seen in the following passage as Narayan discuss with election instructors:

> He swallowed his fear and asked for his ballot. 'No, that's okay,' explained the men at the table. 'Just make your thumbprint here, we

> will do the rest.' 'Thumbprint? I will sign my full name after you give me my ballot.' Two men in line behind Narayan were inspired by him. 'Yes, give us our ballots,' they said. 'We want to mark our mark.' 'We can not do that, we don't have instructions.' 'We do not need instruction. It is our right as voters.' (145)

In the Election Day, Narayan is in line and he not only is aware of his rights but also becomes successful to inspire others to use their rights. Here, he is the role model for his community, who not only awares himself but also makes other conscious. The above paragraph shows that Chamaars are deceived from their rights and they are even not allowed to mark on ballot. But Narayan wants to mark on ballot though it is very dangerous task because Thakur can do anything bad to him.

Between 1974 and 1978 dalits attempted to mark out urban space in Bombay through the action of a group of young militants called the Dalit Panthers, rename the regional university in Marathwada in honour of Bhimrao Ambedkarm, and erect busts of Ambedkar and fly the blue flag across Marathwada's villages. So important was the proliferation of signs such as Ambedkar's bust or blue flags, that they changed the urban and rural landscape. These were important means of announcing a new dalit identity. Thus historical facts are reflecting in the text, Omprakash's dialogues throughout the novel, shows that he is most rebellious and conscious character of the novel. As Omprakash says:

> I will gather the small army of chammars, provide them with weapons, then march to the landlords' house. It will be easy to find enough men. We'll do it like the Naxalities. The strategies employes by the peasant uprising in the northeast. At the end of it we will cut off their heads

> and put them on spikes in the marketplace. Their kind will never dare to oppress our community again. (149)

Here, Omprakash wants to uplift and free his chammar community from all kind of domination either from the upper caste or the stakeholders. Above dialogues by Omprakash after his parents are killed by Thakur, are full of anger which shows the character's political consciousness. Just like the dalit movement which turns out in Bombay in 1997, he also wants to start movement which will emancipate all people from all kinds of discrimination. He further says, "In every low caste family there is someone mistreated by Zmanindars. They will eager to take revenge, for sure. We will slaughter the Thakurs and their goondas. And police devils" (149). This dialogue shows that he is not only aware about his community but also about other lower castes' situation. Police force also works for Thakur instruction which Omprakash knows very well.

Similarly, Marxists have chosen two approaches to deal with caste relations. Most of them have argued that caste is a feature of the superstructure of Indian society and ought to be understood in terms of its efficacy as an ideological system which reflects the basic structure of material relations, the latter of course being characterized in terms of class relations. Other have suggested that caste is in fact the especially Indian form of material relations at the base, with its own historical dynamic; caste, in other words, "is the form in which classes appear in Indian society" (Rao, 175). Whenever the characters feel that they are not allowed to do things the way they like. It is also the example of the subaltern consciousness. Once in the story, Omprakash says: "Our jobs are terrible, that Dinabai watching us like a vulture, harassing us, telling us when to eat and when to belch" (184). They are chamaar but Ishvar's father and Omprakash's grandfather changed their profession into tailoring

which is the rebellious act because in Hindu society people are not allowed to change their profession. Dina, from well family and caste and has superior position in society then the tailors, treats them unnaturally. Despite Dina's harassment, they are equally aware of such behavior though they are oppressed.

After the declaration of Emergency in India, lives of common people become worse than before. Subaltern people suffer much more than high class people because the high class people are taking advantage of such political situation to exploit common people. They are not only exploited by high class people, but also by government too:

> The water queue moved forward disinterestedly. A few whispered among themselves, and there was laughter. The party worker tried again. 'The Prime Minister's message is that she is your servant, and wants to help you. She wants hear about the things from your own lips.' Tell her yourself! Omprakash shouted. 'You can see in what prosperity we live!' 'Yes! Tell her how happy we are! Why do we need to come? 'If she is our servant tell her to come here!' 'Ask your men with the cameras to pull some photos of our lovely house and healthy children! Show that to the Prime Minister!' (258)

The above paragraph shows the miserable condition of the subaltern people in Indian society of 1970s. During the Emergency, people are forced to do what the government wants. Government has organized conferences and for that they forcedly gather the people. But the people are conscious about their subalternity and domination though it is not effective. We can see the resistance against such domination. Resistance does not mean only violence and fight but the very act of not participating or denying participating is also a kind of resistance which we can see in the character.

Rohinton Mistry not only presents the suffering of the subaltern people but also presents the characters with consciousness about the domination and rights. Subaltern people are always exploited and dominated by the high class people. There is the lack of justice for subaltern people but the characters are equally conscious about such things and resistance. The narrator asserts: "The hutment dwellers straggled back from the pulse of the assault, spent, venting their anguish in helpless outrage. 'Heartless animals! For the poor people there is no justice, ever! We had next to nothing! What is our crime, where are we to go?' (295). The government in the name of beautification of city destroys the illegal huts where the subaltern people live. Though the people are paying rent every month, with out any information and alternative solution the government machines destroy the houses. When government needs subaltern people they come to them and ask for their help but now the same government is destroying their house. The very lines are the reflections of the governmental acts against the subalterns. The subalterns are conscious though they are helpless to resist.

However, the resistance is seen in widow characters in the novel. In Indian society, people think that a widow woman should not marry again and she is not allowed to live with young men. The patriarchal society also blames women for wrong things, so, they have to live pure life and spent rest of the life in their dead husband's name. Dina is conscious about such situation, that's why she denies for taking paying guest though Ibrahim questions her:

> 'So this must be where the young men lives.' 'what?' "The young men sister your paying guest.' 'How dare you! How dare you suggest I keep young men in my flat! Is that kind of women you think I am? Just because- 'Please, no, that's not- 'Don't to dare insult me, and then

> interrupt me! Just because I am a poor defenceless widow, people think they can get away with saying filthy things! Such courage you have, such bravery, when it comes to abusing a weak and lonely women!' 'But sister, I' 'what happened to manhood today? Instead of protecting the honour of women, they indulge in smearing and defiling the innocent. And you! You, with your beard so white, saying such nasty, shameful things! Have you no mother, no daughter? You should be ashamed of yourself!' 'please forgive me, I meant no harm, I only' Meant no harm is easy to say, after damage is done!' (354)

Dina is a widow living an independent life but it is the challenge for the patriarchal society. After her eyes become poor sighted she is taking paying guest to live independently. But the society does not allow a widow to live in a same flat with a young man. When the rent collector comes for the investigation of the flat she denies the rent collector's claim of living a young paying guest in her room. This shows, the the society is wrong about the norms and the values she is determined.

In male dominated society, it is hard for a woman to live independently because the society creates such problems against their independence and at last they need help from man to save them from all kinds of problem. Dina's hesitation or unwillingness to ask help from her brother makes clear that she is conscious about her dignity. Dina says, "Once again, I'll have to sallow my pride and ask for his help, that's all" (433). After the rent collector's harassment and threat, Dina decided to go to her brother for his help. She knows that she has to leave the flat and live with her brother that's why she wants help from her brother to save her independent life.

Males want female to remain within the four walls of the house so they make them busy in household works. They don't like female to work outside and to live an

independent life. Patriarchal society creates the belief that women should handle the household works which is economically worthless and male should work outside which is economically productive. Dina is conscious about such things and stands for equality:

> The mood in the flat changed, and Ishavar couldn't stop beaming at the seams he was running off. 'It will be perfect, Dinabai, believe me. For all of us. She will be useful to you also. She clean the house, go to the bazaar, cook for' 'Are you getting wife for Om, or a servant?' she inquired, her tone caustic. 'No no, not servant', he said reproachfully. 'Why does it make her a servant if she does her duties as a wife?' 'There can be no happiness without fairness,' she said. 'Remember that, Om- don't let anyone tell you otherwise.' (474)

Before the tailors are going their village for Omprakash marriage, Dina has delivered her disagreement what Ishvar has told about new bride. Above dialogue between the Ishvar and Dina makes clear what the male thinks about the woman and what the female thinks about the female. Dina is aware of patriarchal domination and about the female rights.

In Indian society, marriage is not a private affair; it's an affair of family. Women are not allowed to choose their husband and after their family-decision, they can't undo it. This kind of situation is worse than in the city. So, Dina asserts:

> Oh, I know. But he may not have a choice. In these arranged marriages, astrologers and families decide everything. Then the woman becomes the property of the husband's family, to be abused and bullied. It's a terrible system, turns the nicest girls into witches. (492)

The above dialogue which is delivered by Dina shows that she is very much familiar with the function of patriarchal society and its domination against the female. She is against the arrange-marriage because there is no role for female in selection of her life partner which is their right but they are deprived from using the right. Dina's idea is that no girl is bad; it's a society which makes them bad girls. We can say that Dina is fully developed conscious character.

Subaltern characters' thinking of killing or eliminating of the suppressors is a kind of mental as well as physical resistance because without the elimination of such people they can not exercise their rights. The political parties, though they argue that they work on the behalf of the common people, in reality, incline to the exploiter of the society. Most of the characters of the novel are aware of such things:

> 'What about Thakur Dharamsi? [....] Does he murder babies, to control the population?' 'I think our people should gather and kill the dog.' Ashraf took Om's hand. 'My child, that demon is too powerful. Since the emergency began, his reach has extended from his own village to all the way here. He is big man now in Congress Party; they say he will become a minister in the next elections- if the government ever decides to have elections. Nowadays he wants to look respectable, avoids any goonda-giri. When he wants to threaten someone, he doesn't send his own men, he just tells the police. They pick up the poor fellow, give him a beating, then release him.' (519-20)

The subaltern characters are aware of the contemporary situation of the society but are helpless to protest against the domination in an organized group like the dalit young group Panther in Bombay. Omprakash, who is more conscious than the other characters, wants to form the group to get rid of the domination over them. His belief

is that if they are united they can defeat the Thakur-like-characters of the society. It proves that Ompraksh is a fully grown up conscious character.

The text embodies the subaltern consciousness and attempts to speak on behalf of the common people. Rohinton Mistry's some characters are aware of such domination but there we can not found no group resistance and the individual resistance doesn't work to achieve the goal because the elite as well as dominators are, to some or more extent, supported by the government power. The narrator's assertions further help us clarify:

> The way to the clothes shop led past the new Family Planning Center, and Om slowed down, peering inside. 'You said Thakur Dharamsi is in charge here? 'Yes, and he makes a lot of money out of it.' 'How? I thought the government pays the patients to have the operation.' 'The rogue puts all the cash in his own pocket. The villagers are helpless. Complaining onlybrings more suffering upon their heads. When the Thakur gang goes looking for volunteers, the poor fellows quietly send their wives, or offer themselves for the operation.' 'Hai Ram. When demon like this is allowed to prosper, the world must really passing through the darkness of kaliyug.' 'Killing such swine would be the most sensible way to end Kaliyug.' (520)

In the name of family planning subaltern people are exploited and their complains against domination does not work because an individual is unable to defeat such well covered exploiters. Though the characters are conscious, but their inability to gather the subaltern people under the same flag makes them weak to fight against elite domination.

We have already mentioned that Omprakash is a fully developed conscious character. His dialogue and activities has proved that. Though he is conscious about his rights and domination, he fails to take revenge or to gather his people under the same flag. So, the narrator further argues:

> Om spat. The arc of red ended several feet short; the sticky juice soaked the earth between them. The Thakur stopped. The two men with him waited instruction. In their vicinity, people faded like the light, fearful of witnessing what might follow. The Thakur said very softly, 'I know who you are.' He got in the car, slammed the door, and drove off. 'You are mad! Bilkool paagal! If you want to die why don't you swallow rat poison? Have you come for a weeding or a funeral?' 'My wedding and the Thakur's funeral'. (523)

Omprakash seeks the opportunity to take the revenge of his family murder, an act of spiting near Thakur is a kind of resistance no matter he fails to take revenge.

Emergency is declared and promises to make everything into order but it is misused by the elites to dominate the subaltern people. In the name of Family Planning, they grab the people from everywhere for the operation and do not give money which is offered by the government for the operated people. They are doing such things for economic benefit and to maintain the so called elites to help the consciousness. However, the characters are aware but they are unable to do anything because the government is doing such things:

> The shoppers watched, perplexed. Then the police began to advance and grab the people. The bewildering captives resisted, shouting and questioning, 'First tell us what we have done! How can you catch

> people just like that? We have a right to be here, it's a market day!' (529)

In the name of population control, they grab the people and take them to the operation camp; they do not even leave the unmarried youngs, old man/woman and the person who have already done it. People try to resist but their resistance is worthless. Ishvar argues, "You are a stupid boy, you don't understand what it means! I have let down your dead father! Our family name will die without children, it is the end of everything-everything is lost!' (535). After the operation, Ompraksh says he does not care about this but Ishvar is very much conscious about future generation which will end if Omprakash is unable to become a father. Here, Ishvar is not only conscious with the manhood and also with their lineage.

In this way, the characters are conscious about the domination and for their rights. They resist against the domination and act like conscious agencies against the dominating ideologies. To sum up, Rohinton Mistry is successful in presenting the conscious characters like Dina, Dukhi, Narayan, Ishvar, and Omprakash with their own voices to resist against all sorts of dominations over them by any agency.

IV. Conclusion

In *A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry presents the marginalized people and the domination upon them by the dominant ideologies, the so-called upper class as well as patriarchal society. The chamaar characters and Dina, who are from minority groups of India, are presented together to show consciousness regarding gender and caste of the contemporary Indian society. They are presented submissively as the novel begins and later developed as conscious agencies who resist against the caste and gender ideologies though Mistry's subaltern characters are victimized by the dominating ideologies of the 1970's Indian society. Mistry talks about different subaltern groups, brings them together, shows how the subaltern people are exploited in the society and finally shows their resistance against the authority and awareness about their rights. Mistry's novel in this sense helps subaltern people to be aware of themselves against the repressive ideologies.

Mistry presents female character Dina, who is consciousness about the dominating ideologies of patriarchy and resists against the domination and acts like a consciousness agency. Dina is exploited within her house by his brother and outside by the agents of patriarchy. Dina is exploited physically and sexually by the member of patriarchal society. But she resists against such dominations and breaks the values of patriarchal society of the India of the 1970's. Dina's self decision to be married with Rustom is a great shock for patriarchy because in patriarchal society decision of marriage is taken specially by the male members of the family. So her decision not only shows resistance but also reflects her consciousness about her rights. Her decision to live an independent life after her husband's death and her acceptance of a young paying guest for financial support are examples of her challenge against the patriarchal values which do not allow her independent female self in the

contemporary Indian society. This act of disobeying can be taken as her consciousness for and her right and freedom as well as against the dominations upon her.

Similarly, Mistry presents Chamaars who are one of the most marginalized people of the 1970's Indian society. They are heavily exploited by the so called upper-caste people. Characters like Dukhi, Ishvar, Nasrayan, Omprakash do not only know the upper-caste suppression, but also resist against the dominations, to some extent. Though so called upper-caste people do not allow chamaars to enter to the temple, to vote in the election and do not pay reasonably and they even do not allow chamaars to touch them even with their shadow, these characters, are aware of such discrimination, fight against it from their side though effective it is not. Even upper-caste people blame chamaar for anything goes wrong. Dukhi knows that it is not only he but also his fore fathers were exploited by the so called upper-caste people. Dukhi turns his sons Ishvar and Narayan into tailoring profession. And this can be taken as a rebellious act against the practice and belief that lower caste people are not allowed to change their profession. Correspondingly, Dukhi's son, Narayan is conscious about his fundamental right so he allows entering Bhungi in his house though he is from the lower caste than the Chamaar. His wish to mark on ballot paper in the election and to enter temple shows that he is conscious about the domination and about his rights. He is killed by Thakur Dharmsi when he asks for his right to vote. Omprakash who is a son of Narayan also acts like conscious agency. After he knows that his family members are burned alive by Thakur, he wants to gather chamaars and arm them to kill the upper-caste people who dominate them. His anger is due to his consciousness against the domination. Not only he is conscious about the domination, but he also wants to make chamaars to be conscious against the upper-caste domination.

Thus, the novel can be taken as a document presenting the consciousness of the subaltern people against the dominating ideologies and for their fundamental rights. So, *A Fine Balance* does not only shows the sufferings of the subaltern people in 1970's Indian society but also projects them with consciousness that voices against the operating ideologies for their equal rights.

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