

**دراسة كفاح المرأة لنيل حقوقها في روهينتون ميس تري
توازن دقيق**

**A Study of Woman's Struggle for
Independence in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine
Balance***

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المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة كفاح المرأة من أجل نيل حقوقها في رواية روهينتون ميسـتري توازن دقيق. تعتمد الدراسة على النظرية النسوية الاجتماعية لتحليل حالة المرأة في ظل النظام الأبوي والنظام الرأسمالي. إذ إن الهدف الرئيسي للنسوية الاجتماعية هو تحرير المرأة من القوى الثقافية والاقتصادية التي تقمعها وتهشم دورها في الحياة. الغرض الأساسي من الدراسة هو كشف مأزق بطلة الرواية دينا والتي تنتمي إلى الأقليات الفارسية في الهند. علما أن ميسـتري هو روائي هندي يحمل الجنسية الكندية ويحاول في رواياته الكشف عن المعاناة التي لا نهاية لها للمجتمع الفارسي المهمش في الهند بعد الاستقلال. تدور أحداث الرواية خلال حالة الطوارئ (١٩٧٥-١٩٧٧). حيث تقرر دينا الاستقلال ماديا واجتماعيا دون الحاجة إلى اللجوء إلى أخيها. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على مدى صعوبة اعتماد امرأة أرملة على نفسها في الهند في منتصف السبعينيات.

Abstract

The present study addresses woman's struggle for independence in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. The study examines the condition of woman through the lenses of social feminism. This theory, an off-shoot of mainstream feminism, focuses on the utilization and subjugation of woman by patriarchy and capitalism. The main goal of social feminism is to liberate woman from cultural and economic forces that oppress and marginalize her. The primary purpose of the study is to explore how Mistry brings to light the predicament of the Parsian protagonist Dina in the novel. Mistry is an Indian-born Canadian novelist who always tries to reveal the endless suffering of the Parsi marginalized community in India after independence. The novel is set during the Emergency (1975-1977). Dina determines to stay independent, but what does this determination cost her and how hard for a single woman to be self-reliant in India in the mid-1970s.



About half of the global human population is woman. Yet in every step, all over the world, woman encounters inequality and subjugation. She is the victim of exploitation and marginalization in patriarchal communities. Before the first Industrial Revolution, human life was not man controlled and both man and woman participated equally in the society. The Industrial Revolution began in 18th-century; it dramatically altered the social order and subsequently a new gender system began worldwide, which disadvantaged woman. During that time men began to work in industries while women were restricted to the domestic sphere. As a result, women became vulnerable economically, socially and politically (Mohajan, 2022, 2). Capitalism and socialism were also established during the Industrial Revolution. Capitalism is regarded as an economic and political system that strengthens and supports the sexist status. Men are the ones who possess the power and money, those men hope to share their power and money with other men and give less place with low payment to women (Memon, 2020). This contradicts with socialism, another political and economic theory. Socialism, in the broad sense, concerns achieving economic equality through allowing the entire community to control the means of production and distribution.

Socialist feminism began in the 1960s and 1970s, though social feminists traced their thought back to the publication of “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. Zillah Eisenstein in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* states that the synthesis of radical feminism and Marxist feminism is the initial step to formulate a coherent socialist feminism theory. Eisenstein agrees with the fundamental premises of both radical feminism, where patriarchy is the main source of woman’s oppression, and Marxist feminism, where capitalism is the main source of woman’s oppression (Eisenstein, 1979). Consequently, socialist feminists believe that woman is exploited by a dual system: capitalism and patriarchy. The expression “Capitalist Patriarchy” describes “the relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structure” (p.5)

In “What is Socialist Feminism” Barbara Ehrenreich, a well-known democratic socialist, illustrates that the best way to understand the term “Socialist Feminism” is to study each part of it separately. She states that socialists, more precisely Marxists, have created two major social classes: bourgeois, the owner of the means of social production; and the proletariat, the wage-labor. The bourgeoisie makes profits by paying wages lower than the value of what the proletariat really produces. The relationship between the two classes is so called antagonism (Ehrenreich, 1976). According to Marxism, poor women are forced to work in industries for long periods and



are paid low wages compared to men. In "Women: The Longest Revolution", the British social feminist Juliet Mitchell recites the impact of Marxist thoughts on woman's status in society through the work of Friedrich Engels *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the States* (1884). Engels states that the first division of labor is between man and woman for child breeding. He sees the conflict between man and woman as a class conflict, within the family man represents the bourgeoisie whilst the wife represents the proletariat. He clarifies that "if woman's inability to work is the main cause of her inferior status, ability to work will bring her liberation" (Mitchell, 1971, p.14). Woman's liberation and her parity with man are unattainable as long as she is eliminated from social productive work and trapped to housework. The emancipation of woman becomes possible only when she participates in the public-sector and becomes financially independent (Mitchel, 1971). On the other hand, Ehrenreich states that feminism addresses itself to another familiar disparity. All societies are characterized by the repression of woman by patriarchy in both the family and community. Woman is treated as a property; she is confined to giving birth, raising the children and taking care of elderly relatives. Marxism moves away from the myths of democracy and its pluralism and reveals a system of class rule which rests in forcible exploitation. Similarly, feminism rips away the myths of romantic love to reveal male's power and the exploitation of woman. Both Marxism and feminism compel us to look at a fundamental injustice. However, Ehrenrich rejects Marxist-feminism and advocates for socialist feminism (Ehrenrich, 1976). This theory is the lenses through which the paper examines Dina's struggle for her independence in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*.

Contemporary Indian English fiction is dominated by the second generation of post-colonial authors who are born after decolonization. Those authors are born in Indian soil and write in English with a more distinctive voice, strength and self-reliance than colonials. Rohinton Mistry is an eminent novelist who was born in India but immigrated to Canada in 1975. Mistry's novels are set in India, told from the perspective of a Parsi and explore the themes of family life, poverty, discrimination, and corruption (Tank, 2016).

The greed of post-colonial politicians is always discernible in Mistry's novels. After India's independence in 1947, the Constitution adopted in 1950 declared India a democratic republic. It grants equal rights to the citizens regardless of sex, religion and caste. But, according to Mistry, under the regime of Indira Gandhi, particularly after the declaration of Emergency in 1975, India entered a phase of uncertainty. The period of 21 months was the darkest in the history of India. All civil rights were suspended and the freedom of speech was muzzled. The police spread



across India to seize thousands of protestors, scholars, strike journalists, and activists. Several atrocities were reported, comprising obliged mass sterilization program in the name of family planning and birth control, began by Indira Gandhi's younger son Sanjay Gandhi. Many slums inside Delhi were demolished to clear Delhi of unauthorized slums and settlements. This forced the poor to shift outside Delhi. Press was harmed tremendously during the Emergency. The Government ran Indian Radio and Doordarshan, imposing strict censorship on all media. According to Mistry, the Emergency had a negative impact on the people that the conscious authors had to pour in their angst about it. Mistry's idea of India during the Emergency looks to be bigger than life, a mix of joy and sorrow, heaven and hell. He states that "it seemed to me that 1975, the year of Emergency would be the next important year if one was preparing a list of important dates in Indian history so it was 1975" (Gokhale, 1996, p. 6).

Mistry's magnum opus is his second novel *A Fine Balance*. The novel won the Giller Prize in 1995 and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Canadian novel in the next year. It was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1996. It is set in Bombay, recently known as Mumbai. Though the name of the city is never mentioned in the novel, but critics agree that "the city by the sea" is Bombay. *A Fine Balance* is a saga which extends the serious events of Indian history from the tumultuous times of the country's division in 1947, to the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's killing in 1984. It is also considered as an honest record of the brutal violence and political turmoil during 1975-1977 (Tank, 2016).

A Fine Balance illustrates how ultimate power may corrupt a leader in the name of restoring order in India. During the political chaos of the Emergency, the upper class did not suffer a lot. The working class, on the other hand, suffered from its bad consequences. The Emergency declared by Mrs. Gandhi considered as a helping hand for the upper class such as industrialists and businessmen. In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry introduces a picture of the poor fighting for the survival in the metropolitan city where a roof to cover the head is a dream. He presents a world in which nothing can alter or evolve the case of the deprived and poor. The society is a space just for the rich, corrupted and unprincipled. One of the poor characters of the novel believes that "life without dignity is worthless" (Mistry, 2004, p.144). This obviously shows that depravation affects dignity. In the novel, Mistry portrays how common people's lives get severely influenced by politics. Consequently, he deals with the Emergency through its influence on the lives of the characters in the novel. The protagonists' life has been pretty quiet, but because of the Emergency their lives are totally devastated. The novel ends with a question about whether there is any hope for the future of India, or total despair (Mohindra, 2018). However, between hope and despair the novel is finely balanced.



Though *A Fine Balance* is a fictional narrative but it presents the real India during the time of post-independence. Mistry cites the epigraph of this historical novel from Balzac's *Le Pere Gariot*, to illustrate that the socio-political tragedy of the characters in the novel is true:

"Holding the book in your hand, sinking back in your soft armchair, you will say to yourself: perhaps it will amuse me. And after you have read this story of great misfortunes, you will no doubt dine well, blaming the author for your own insensitivity, accusing him of wild exaggeration and flights of fancy. But rest assured; this tragedy is not a fiction. All is true" (epigraph)

Mistry has portrayed a galaxy of characters efficiently and elegantly. The characters are from various backgrounds and meet each other in the same place. He has introduced the life of middle class Parsi family and low caste chamar who feel insecure due to the growing political power in India. Since time immemorial, the caste system has been India's most grave societal evil. The caste discrimination and repression are common among Hindus in India. Mistry has done his best attempt to voice the oppression and cruelty experienced by Dalits, who are born into leather-making chamar family. The high caste; Hindu who were controlling the politics, have treated them brutally. Although the government passed new laws, said no more untouchability, yet everything was the same. "The upper-class bastards still treat us worse than animals" (Mistry, 2004, p. 163).

In this vast canvass of epic proportions, the depiction of women in their peripheral positions occupies a considerable corner. Women in general are forgiving and sacrificial. They are given parity rights by the constitution of post independent India regardless of religion and caste. The government took many steps for the evolution of women in the country. The right to life and personal liberty are the most fundamental principles guaranteed by the constitution. The Indian Constitution's Article 21 efficiently protects the right to life. It has been considered as a refuge for human values and thus has been rightfully called as the most essential rights. The right to personal liberty assumes the formation of an environment in which there is no suppression of human spirit and no negation of chance for the full development of human personality (Rao & Padmaja, 2017). Despite the guarantees of equality and protection in the constitution, women are assigned to suffer utilization and discrimination, in a society where policies, laws and restrictions are men oriented, women are marginalized.

In that sense the struggle of the novel swivels around the protagonist Dina, a woman who has been marginalized twice as a woman and a Parsi.



Parsis are descendants of Persian Zoroastrians; Parsis left their homeland and migrated to India to preserve their religion from being Islamized by the Arab conquest of Persia. They mainly dwelled in Mumbai and Karachi. They are a marginalized population in India so they are subject to insecurity, identity crisis and the domination of Indian culture. Being a Parsi himself, Mistry seems to be more concerned about his community, its fears, anxieties and helplessness. He becomes the voice of the mute minority through his fiction. Through the study of Dina's character, we understand the position of women in a Parsi community and their struggle for a suitable and independent place in the world. To live alive of her option, Dina should go through a single-handed battle for financial as well as personal independence (Kumar, 2019).

The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (ICEDW) (1979/1981) is at the center of human rights measures for the advancement and empowerment of women in private and public life, particularly in the fields of education (Article 10 of ICEDW), employment (Article 11 of ICEDW), marriage and family (Article 16 of ICEDW) (Padmaja & Rao, 2017). However, Dina's life demonstrates that fierceness toward women is a result of historically unfair power relations between man and woman. Family is one of the most essential institutions of society, supplying strength and continuation to mankind and civilization. Yet in patriarchal societies, male has more power given that he financially supports his family. The whole family, particularly women, is presumed to be obedient to their fathers, brothers and husbands. Any financial independence of women results in some violent changes of their traditional secondary roles (Ashraf, 2015). Dina struggles for her individuality and independence but she encounters constant setbacks and menaces by society. After her father's death, Dina's brother Nusswan takes up the role of the guardian. He always dominates her. Though Dina was too young, he made her in charge of the household chores. Family is the first institution to destroy her. Nusswan further decided that there is nothing in Dina's matriculating. He comments "I am not going to waste money on school fees for another year" (Mistry, 2004, p. 27). The novel shows that women were supposed to receive less education than men. Some women were denied education due to the negative attitude of male members in the family. Nusswan knows that education can modify woman's life, making her financially independent. So, he makes Dina like an unpaid maid to her family. Due to this, the life of Dina becomes a nightmare in a totalitarian system characterized by limitation and tyranny. She becomes obsessed with the thought of personal independence as a result of the hardship sustained under her brother's guardianship, typical of Parsis' traditions (Sajitha, 2020).



In a patriarchal society, marriage for women is their destiny, around which their whole lives revolve. They are trained to become docile, well-mannered, and obedient. The decision of marriage, however, creates problems to women because they do not have the right to choose their husbands. Women's marriages are fixed by the male members of the family. Consequently, women face psychological trauma due to their passive participation in their future lives. In *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir criticizes the social institution of marriage, describing it as an exploitation of woman. De Beauvoir states that in patriarchal societies marriage is the only means of woman's survival and the only justification of her existence (De Beauvoir, 1949). Yet Mistry portrays Dina as a protesting power; she is potent enough to refuse Nusswan's decisions regarding her future husband. Against his decision, Dina follows the desire of her heart and marries Rustom (Sajitha, 2020). Mistry focuses on Dina's choice of partner which will decide her ultimate social position and exclusively determine her happiness and fulfillment in life. Dina rejects the patriarchal tradition of society, manifests the new dimension of feminists' movement, and reveals her independence in the choice of husband.

Unfortunately, Dina's marriage comes to unexpected end by the sorrowful death of Rustom. In 1894, the British feminist Sarah Grand used the term "New Woman" in her article "A New Aspect of Woman Question" to refer to independent women seeking radical change. These women controlled their own futures, finances, social lives (Grand, 2008). Dina exemplified the symbol of "New Woman" who refuses to be submissive. She does not accept the stereotypical feminine role assigned to her and even on that cruel night when her husband dies, she behaves in a very dignified manner "no wailing, no beating the chest or tearing the hair like you might expect from a woman who had suffered such a shock" (Mistry, 2004, p. 52).

Dina's life after her husband's death is a series of many upheavals because of her gender. Widows have their own suffering; they are pressurized to get married again as the family wants to get free from their responsibilities. Dina goes back to live at her brother's house. She is continuously forced by her brother to get married again. Nusswan echoes the capitalist attitude, he is dissatisfied with Dina's first choice to marry with a lower status man who owns only a rented apartment. He wants her to get married with one of his acquaintances, a wealthy businessman with a convenient life style. So, he continues inviting his friends for five months. But to no avail, all his attempts result in nothing fruitful. Accordingly, he starts reminding Dina about her situation as a widow in order to make her perceive the terror of her status in society "Do you know how fortunate you are in our community? Among the unenlightened, widows are thrown away like garbage. If you were a Hindus in old days, you would have to be



a good little sati and leap onto your husband's funeral pyre" (Mistry, 2004, p. 58). Nusswan's words reflect the deep-rooted Parsi feeling of the superiority of his religion vis-a-vis the Hindu religion.

Dina feels that she has no dignity; she is just a small cog in a capitalistic system. Thus, she decides to leave her brother's house and return back to Rustom's rented flat. She struggles for her rights and ensures her will by remaining unmarried. She determines to restructure her life without being financially dependent on man (karitha, 2015). In *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir demonstrates that woman is trapped by man financially and socially; she depends on man, giving away her power. De Beauvoir states that nothing but profitable employment can guarantee woman's independence. Through work woman passes the distance which separates her from male authority. She retrieves her transcendence and ensures her case as a subject through effective productivity (De Beauvoir, 1949). Dina earns her livelihood by doing sewing work for families introduced to her by Rustom's auntie Shirin. She works day and night to support herself, pay the rent and electricity bills, and buy food. Gradually, Dina becomes more confident about her abilities. When there is something tricky, she consults Shirin Aunty. Work makes the hours pass quickly in the little flat. It is obvious in the prologue of *A Fine Balance* that she holds independence in high esteem, talking about her tailoring business which liberates her from asking her brother for money: "No need now to visit her brother and beg for next month's rent. She took a deep breath once again; her fragile independence was preserved" (Mistry, 2004, p.11). She becomes a new woman in Nusswan's eyes as she refuses to be submissive and follow the society's norms. She attempts to carve her prestige in life.

Years passed in this manner but one more battle starts. At forty-two her eyesight deteriorates to the point where she can no longer sew. Thus, she refashions herself as a middle-class entrepreneur and undertakes stitching readymade clothes for Au Revoir Exports Company possessed by Mrs. Gupta, a customer of her friend and classmate Zenobia. It is decided that Dina must hire certain tailors and supervise them. Dina not having a degree is a great barrier in getting some jobs. She is not fully skilled as a tailor either and feels afraid to take the deal but this is the only job, she is somewhat at ease with. Mrs. Gupta reassures her saying "all you have to do is to follow the paper pattern" (Mistry, 2004, p. 74).

Barbara Ehrenrich (1976) in "What is Socialist Feminism?" argues that woman is oppressed by patriarchy and capitalism. Dina is oppressed by both systems. Mrs. Gupta, a capitalist, holds the purse strings. The upper class does not understand the suffering of poor; they consider the Emergency as the true spirit of Renaissance. Mrs. Gupta states "thank God the Prime Minister has taken the firm steps as she said on radio. We are lucky to have someone strong at a dangerous time like this" (Mistry, 2004,



p. 81). She sparkles with joy that the Prime Minister's declaration of Emergency has incarcerated most of the parliamentary opposition, along with thousands of trade unionists, students and social workers. The upper class interprets the meaning of Emergency according to their benefits as is pointed out in Mrs. Jupta's words: "The Need of Hour is Discipline', that's the Prime Minister's message on the poster. And I think she is absolutely right" (Mistry, 2004, p. 81).

Mrs. Jupta flourishes during the state of Emergency by paying fewer wages to the employees as there is no fear of unions and strikes. She runs a large boutique with European and American companies and prefers to work with private contractors just to avoid the union's trouble. She has given Dina the sewing contract at a very low wage with one condition which is the business should be secret (Ashraf, 2015). Mistry writes with a Marxist consciousness of the upper class's exploitation for the weak and poor. According to Marx, class is a material phenomenon. He creates two classes in society: "haves and have not, powerful and powerless. These are the practical and material aspects of life which specify human consciousness" (Marx, 1946). These two major classes have similar economic interests: one who possesses the means of production, while the other must sell its labor to the capitalist. "Any attempt to create a classless society free of poverty, exploitation and violence is bound to run up against the fact that human being is naturally selfish, greedy and aggressive" (Callinicos, 1995).

Anyway, Dina emerges out to be a heroic soul fighting back to preserve her individually and independence at any cost. She starts searching for tailors in areas of the city she has never seen before. Her progress is hindered by demonstrations against the government. The slogans and banners charged the Prime Minister of misrule and corruption, calling on her to resign after Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court holds her guilty of election malpractice. Eventually, however, Dina finds two tailors—Ishvar and his nephew Omprakash—and gets busy with Mrs. Jupta's work. Ishvar and Omprakash are seeking refuge in Bombay due to the oppressive caste system in their village. They are Chamars (leather-workers), and yet become tailors to earn their living in the city. Dina would also increase her income by taking Maneck Kohlah, a student and the son of an old school friend of hers, as a paying guest.

Dina's financial independence faces yet another challenge. It is only three weeks of work with the tailors when Dina's landlord creates problems for her. She receives a warning notice to stop any commercial activities immediately or face eviction. Dina clarifies "it is against the law to have a factory in the flat even if it is only two machines" (Mistry, 2004, p. 87). So, Dina requests the tailors to keep the work secret and if anyone asks about their presence, they would say that they are domestic helpers.



Dina supports Ishvar and Omprakash; she offers them the chance of employment. From a feminist perspective woman is always in quest of employment, always dependent on man to support her—but here a woman helps men to get a job (Totawad, 2015). With Ishvar and Omprakash working in her flat, the flight for her independence and individuality gradually becomes a strife for control. Dina determines to preserve her distance in order to maintain control. She states "I have nothing against them, but they are tailors, my employees. A distance has to be maintained" (Mistry, 2004, p.293). She locks them in when she leaves the flat, especially when going to meet Mrs. Jupta. Dina's decision is driven by the fear that she will lose control and her intermediary position, i.e., that the tailors may themselves make a deal with Mrs. Jupta once they know her place. She believes that having control will guarantee her financial independence from Nusswan. At first, Dina's relationship with the tailors is based on suspect and dictatorship. She even prevents Maneck from socializing with them. However, the relationship gradually transforms into a strong friendship as they all get to understand one another. Their business proceeds smoothly for almost a year. However, the Emergency upsets their lives' temporary balance: "Dina bai what is this Emergency we hear about? Government Tamasha - games played by the people in power. It doesn't affect ordinary people like us" (Mistry, 2004, p. 83). Dina is wrong and the irony is that the Emergency only intrudes into the lives of poor people. Each day is a permanent struggle for Dina. Her professional success and financial security are seriously threatened when the tailors are tempted by the government to attend a speech by the Prime Minister in return for food and money. Dina is furious and worried as she has to submit an order or she would lose the trust of the company she works for.

Dina attempts to retrieve her foothold on life but the road towards self-reliance and independence proves lumpy and full of obstructions. Her tailors' slum has been demolished under the City Beatification Program which is one of the programs of the Prime Ministry's Emergency. Ishvar and Omprakash become homeless; they spend the nights in the streets. The sleeplessness results in headaches and difficulty in doing the stitching work. The joints in their arms from the shoulders to the wrists have become so sore that they cannot sew, which worried Dina. The situation turns worst when the police arrested all the people sleeping on the roads. Dina's tailors are among the detained. They cannot inform Dina of the situation they are in; that they cannot attain work. Dina, worried and confused, believes that the delay of the tailors would make the manager of Au Revoir Exports put the black mark of unreliable next to her name. The second fortnight commences and the tailors do not come. With the help of Maneck, Dina hardly manages to deliver the last dresses to Au Revoir Exports. She tells Mrs Jupta that the tailors will be in vacation for two-weeks. Finally, the



tailors manage to return back to Dina and give details of the horrible things they have encountered. Dina starts sympathizing with the tailors and offers them her veranda to live in till they find a place. She sheds a lot of her pretensions and defenses and starts to share her kitchen with them. Their lives become peaceful for quite a while (Bisht and Shweta, 2021).

Yet Dina's independence is threatened again when Ibrahim, the rent collector, arrives to deliver her the last notice to vacate in thirty days. The landlord has a proof that Dina used the apartment for commercial targets despite being warned months before. Dina cannot risk losing the tailors again so she introduces them as her family and assures Ibrahim that "this man, she said, pointing to Ishvar, he is my husband. These two boys are our sons" (Mistry, 2004, p. 475). Dina fights to survive at multiple levels in a world of endless segregation and harsh competition. The interaction of patriarchal hegemony and material culture make it hard for a woman to preserve her independence.

Ibrahim returns again with goondas and tells Dina that she must depart the flat in forty-eight hours due to a violation of tenancy terms and conditions. The goondas introduce themselves as the landlord's agents; they damage her furniture and tear the garments the tailors were working on. When Dina questions why the landlord is upset because she and her tailors sew in the flat, Ibrahim responds that the landlord wants to remove all the residents from those flat and rent-act does not permit him to charge much because this property is worth a lot. As a result, the landlord wishes to evict all the tenants from those flats. He informs her that "It's not you alone, he is doing the same with other tenants, the ones who are weak and without influence" (Mistry, 2004, p. 498).

Dina's rented flat becomes a metaphor for her independence and liberation. She is finally protected from the landlord by the help of the beggarmaster, a powerful man managing Bombay's begging industry, and who is acquainted with the tailors. The beggarmaster writes down the cost of the torn garments, broken windows, solid fabric and smash sewing-machines. He promises to compensate the damage done to the property. This significant incident in the novel, that begging is an industry to raise money, and that the master of beggars can threaten authority, is a sign of the complete failure of not only the government, but also the revolutions that happened due to the poor economic conditions. Two months passed in quiet "the beggarmaster had proven his worth, and the flat was back to normal" (Mistry, 2004, p.516). Anyway, Ishvar and Omprakash return to their village to find a wife for Omprakash. Maneck also returns home and find a lucrative job in Dubai. Dina, in the absence of the tailors entombs herself in the job of quilt making. She believes that she will be able to finish the quilt work before Ishvar and Omprakash come back from their village



and even determines to hand the quilt as a gift when Omprakash comes back with his wife.

One of the critical concepts of socialist feminism is the idea “The personal is political”. This aims to present new consciousness raising for women who suffer a lot, but keep it private. Socialist feminism rejects this wrong consciousness and proposes a new consciousness raising, as mentioned in Juliet Mitchell’s *Woman Estate*. Mitchell (1971) writes that the process of new consciousness raising is the conversion of women’s individual and hidden fears into political. Thus, consciousness raising is the process through which woman gets knowledge, speaks up, and demands her rights. Dina embodies the process of new consciousness raising. She raises her voice like a modern woman for her rights. After the beggar master's death, Dina is left without safeguard from the landlord. She files a complaint about the landlord. But unfortunately, she encounters another kind of exploitation, as the lawyers' jostles for her attention. One pushes his legal credentials into Dina's face, the other shouts that he can handle criminal and civil cases. Then in the crush "a hand squeezed her bottom, while another passed neatly over her breast" (Mistry, 2004, p. 643). Instead of being a place where the law is a live, breathing force that strengthens the society's sinews, the court becomes a museum of cheap tricks, The avenue for justice, where judges make impartial decisions, becomes inaccessible to the poor and needy. Outside the court, one of the lawyers' comments that the Supreme Court reversed the conviction of the Prime Minister's malpractices in the elections: "the relevant law is promptly modified. Ergo, she is not guilty. What can be expected when judgment has fled to brutish beasts for cowardice and self-aggrandizement? Our society is decaying from top to downwards” (Mistry, 2004, p. 647) This marks the approaching end of Dina’s long struggle for freedom and dignity, the ultimate collapse of her efforts in a decaying system that governs her country.

The independence that Dina has struggled so long to maintain comes to an end. After the complaint in the court, the goondas return with a final order for the eviction of Dina from the flat. Dina tells them that she has filed a complaint, but nothing changes. The goondas order to remove all the furniture. One of them finally comments that "Courts are useless. Arguments and adjournments, testimony and evidence. Takes forever. All those stupid things are unnecessary under the Emergency" (Mistry, 2004, p. 652). Mistry succeeds to show how the Emergency as a socio-political event appears as anti-human force and affects the lives of the citizens. Against her will, Dina is obligated to leave the flat and take a refuge at her brother's house. She returns in a pathetic state of self-defeat. Nusswan is surprised about the shift in his sister's personality: "Dina was too docile, far too meek and quiet, not like her old self at all" (Mistry, 2004, p. 658).



What makes Mistry's work a superb piece of art is the fighting heroic spirit of Dina who refuses to yield to the power wielded by patriarchy and capitalism. It is precisely when the state intervenes and joins hands with the rest of the forces opposing Dina that she loses her independence, individuality and integrity.

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