

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

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Received: 2nd Mar, 2026 | **Revised:** 14th Mar, 2026 | **Accepted:** 4th Apr, 2026 | **Available Online:** 20th Apr, 2026

ABSTRACT

Rohinton Mistry's literary works are regarded as an unofficial voice of Parsi community living in India, revealing the reality of India after Independence. His fiction serves as a powerful lens which examines and reflects on the crisis that the people from marginalized and minority community, especially the Parsis had been gone through in India during 1960s, 1970s and 1990s. Mistry is deeply concerned with women's roles in Indian society, and his fiction explores the conditions of women in India. Mistry's women characters are doubly marginalized, for being women and for being marginalized women such as Parsi and Chammar in post independence India. Dilnavaz in *Such a Long Journey* suffers from double marginalization as because she is from a Parsi community with a history of migration. On the other hand, Dina Dalal in *A Fine Balance* has highlighted the determination and tenacity of a postcolonial woman who raised her voice to define her identity. This study aims to investigate the nuanced portrayal of marginalized women in Mistry's novels namely *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*, focusing on how caste, class, ethnicity and gender intersect in the lives of Dilnavaz, Dina and Roopa as they navigate patriarchy, social divisions and collective historical trauma.

Keywords: Marginalization, women, voice, identity, gender, caste, Parsi community.

How to cite this article: Hazarika P, Konwar A. Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(35s):375-383. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.35s.41

Source of support: Nil.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Introduction

Rohinton Mistry, one of the scintillating literary figures of contemporary English literature, is recognized for his poignant examination of marginalized perspectives within society. His works function as a reflection of the intricacies and diversity of Indian society, frequently emphasizing the challenges faced by those who are economically and socially marginalized. As Anita Sing in her work *Gender and Resistance in Indian English Fiction* notes, "Mistry gives voice to the silenced women of a patriarchal society, portraying their endurance, suffering, and quiet strength with unflinching honesty" (87). The preservation of the Parsi community, a group that faces extinction, is deeply ingrained in Mistry's narratives. However, a wider variety of marginalized groups, including women, the elderly and other socially disadvantaged individuals, are featured in his later works. These underprivileged groups are realistically portrayed in Mistry's fiction, which includes well-known works like *Such a Long*

Journey, *Tales from the Firozsha Baag*, *A Fine Balance*, *Family Matters*, and *The Scream*. Through his storytelling, Mistry offers a forum for the experiences of people who are regularly marginalized by social structures to be heard and comprehended.

Mistry's style of storytelling involves a deep understanding of India's historical and cultural context, which allows him to present a complex picture of women's lives. His characters are depicted with depth and complexity, highlighting their resilience and resolve in the face of hardship, rather than being merely victims of circumstance. Mistry gives voice to underrepresented women, highlighting their struggles and tenacity in the face of oppression. Homie Bhabha notes in his book *The Location of Culture* that "the margins are not merely places of absence, but spaces of resistance where the voice of the marginalized emerge, challenging the dominant discourse" (45). The significance of Mistry's work for comprehending the interplay between gender and power in contemporary society is demonstrated by

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

this analysis of the voices of marginalized people in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*.

Objectives

- To examine how Rohinton Mistry shows the struggle and inner lives of women who are on the fringe of society especially those from parsi and lower caste communities, in an Indian society that is both patriarchal and politically unstable.
- To examine how Mistry's female characters handle resistance, resilience and silence, demonstrating various ways of taking authority and surviving in male dominated space.
- To study the themes of identity, oppression and displacement experienced by women and to examine how Mistry's narrative offers a voice to people who are often silenced in their home and in society as a whole.

Review of the Related Literature

Mistry's fictions have gotten a lot of acknowledgement from critic for how it shows empathy for marginalized groups, especially women in minority communities. Scholars have praised his unique ability to connect the personal and the political, bringing attention to the overlooked parts of Indian public and private life that are important for resistance and resilience.

Nilufer E. Bharucha's *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces* is one of the significant works on this issue that gives an understanding how Mistry puts his women characters in ethnically limited surroundings. According to Bharucha, the women in Mistry's novels fight not only with patriarchy but also with parsi specific cultural expectation. Her research on "transcultural spaces" is particularly useful for comprehending how women like Dina Dalal attempt to negotiate and subtly challenge the restrictions placed upon them.

Ranu Uniyal's *Women and Landscape in Indian Fiction* also emphasizes how Mistry's fiction uses both emotional and physical landscape as symbol. She claims that Dinavaz in *Such a Long Journey* symbolizes the emotional decline that results from being confined to strict domestic environments. In Mistry's hands, the home, which is usually depicted in patriarchal narratives in a positive light, becomes a site of silent suffering.

However, there are also indications of defiance, particularly in the form of repressed emotion and internalized revolt.

Sujala Sing's essay "Narrating Resistance in Postcolonial Fiction" explores *A Fine Balance* through the lens of narrative agency. It focuses on how Mistry lets women like Dina Dalal express their unspoken desire, not always through dialogue but through the quiet power of their choices and actions. Sing says that Mistry's women aren't silent because they don't care or are missing; they're silent because they are trying to survive.

Mistry's work and Bapsi Sidwa's observations on parsi women in Indian fiction reveal a deep cultural parallel. It provides a helpful lens for comprehending the parsi female experience, even though her commentary on gender and ethnic identity originates from within her own novels rather than a direct reading of *A Fine Balance*. Sidwa opines that a parsi woman often has to show more strength rather than other women and Dina in *A Fine Balance* shows it.

Sahiba Haider shows in her book *Gender and Nation in Indian English Fiction* that characters like Roopa is silenced not only because she is woman, but also because she belongs to Chammar caste Haider shows how gender and political order are linked in postcolonial world that makes it hard for women like Roopa to speak out or get justice. Her marginalization is absolute, as even her suffering goes unnoticed or unacknowledged by the narrative structure itself.

In the scholarly article "Quest for identity in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*," M. Vijayalakshmi has examined the tribulations of individuals from marginalized communities in India, including the Parsi and Chamaar. The author also addresses the humiliation of low caste and class individuals by upper caste individuals through the protagonists of *A Fine Balance*, who are of the Chamaar caste. This article also addresses the oppressive human attitude towards the impoverished.

In "Representation of the Untouchables / Subalterns in Indian English Novels: Anand's *Untouchable* and Mistry's *A Fine Balance*," Aroop Saha analyses the subalterns' plight in colonial and postcolonial India. This scholarly article offers a comparative depiction between Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* that discusses the lives of subalterns like Sweeper and Chamaar and their discrimination by upper class people based on caste.

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

Megha Khandelwal in her academic work "Treatment of Women in Rohinton Mistry's Fiction," explores Mistry's female Parsi protagonists' patriarchal oppression. The article analyses Mistry's two female characters: one who accepts patriarchal dominance without complaint and another who rebels and rejects it to find self-identity.

Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction by Nandini Bhautoo-Dewnarain introduces Mistry's work and discusses caste and religion-based marginalization.

Mamata Pattarkine's book *Researching Rohinton Mistry: A Perfect Blend of Facts and Fiction* gives biographical account of Mistry and explores power, politics, and corruption in his novels and shows how upper caste and class oppress the marginalized people.

When put together, these different academic views help readers understand Mistry's fictional world better. The women in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* are not passive; they are complex individuals who are trying to find their place, their power, and their purpose in a society that doesn't always give them full citizenship. They claim a voice—even if it shakes—in the literature of resistance through their strength and subtle defiance.

Research Gap

Although Rohinton Mistry's works have received widespread praise for their depiction of marginalized lives, much of the critical attention has been focused on political oppression, caste issues, and male characters. Female characters, particularly those with intersecting oppressed identities, such as Parsi and Dalit women, have frequently been overlooked in existing studies. Their stories, which include both silent perseverance and moments of resistance, are underexplored.

Most academic writing about Mistry's women has seen them either as passive victims or as symbols of a larger problem with society. Their inner worlds – the complex web of thoughts, feelings, emotions and struggles don't get attention that they need very often. Studies are carried out how these women show authority within the limits that have been set for them, but not on how silence can be both a shield and a quiet form of rebellion.

This study tries to fill that gap by focusing on the daily lives of women like Dilnavaz, Roopa and Dina. These women may not be the ones who lead the conversation, but they are strong and important in their own way. It makes it possible to look at Mistry's works in a new way, one that focuses on women's point of view and

recognize the complicated and overlapping ways that marginalization affects their lives.

Problem Statement

Scholars have been looking more and more at how Mistry writes about marginalized people, but there is still a big gap in our knowledge of how his female characters deal with the different demands of caste, gender, class and ethnicity in India after Independence. In addition to their personal tragedies and familial expectations, characters like Dilnavaz in *Such a Long Journey* and Dina Dalal in *A Fine Balance* are affected by larger social-political forces that limit their choices and voices. It's hard to see their struggle and easy to ignore them in popular literary discussions as because they often suffer in silence, caught between weight of cultural tradition and the barriers of structural misogyny.

Most of existing criticism on Rohinton Mistry focuses on his handling of male protagonists and his political aspects, leaving the intricate realities of his female protagonists. So, there is an obvious need to explore how his fictions subtly express women's inner struggles, acts of resistance and give a voice to them to find their autonomy. The purpose of this study is to go beyond the critical silence by exploring how Mistry's women navigate through challenges of identity, autonomy and voice.

Methodology

The proposed study is undertaken with the help of analytical and interpretative methodology from postcolonial feminist approach focusing to identify and interpret themes related to marginalization, displacement and identity with close reading of the select texts. To carry out this project, both primary and secondary sources have been consulted.

Analysis

Rohinton Mistry's narratives emphasize the Parsi community's struggles to preserve their distinct culture and religion while navigating their role in India's historical context. Mistry delves into the themes of identity and belonging, focusing on people that defy conventional middle-class ideals and embrace their diverse cultural heritages. Mistry's oeuvre frequently highlights parsis, working-class individuals, women, and the elderly, who exist on the periphery of mainstream culture. These characters challenge the dominant-submissive dynamics and explore the concept of 'Otherness' against Eurocentric ideals. Nandini

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

Bhautoo observes that Mistry's fiction features characters "who exist on the margins of a neutralized, international bourgeois culture, finding satisfaction in the diversity of their culturally situated existence. Parsis, the working class, the women and the aged people in Mistry's fiction play the role of the 'Other' to Hindus/Muslims, bourgeois/upper class, men and the young" (*Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction* 46-47).

It is observed that the majority of the "Others" that are depicted in Mistry's narratives are Parsis, who are steadfast in their adherence to tradition and struggle to adapt to the contemporary society. Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* specifically explores the intricate relationship between individuals and society, focusing on gender dynamics. Despite Mistry's repeated acclaim for his well-developed masculine protagonists, his treatment of female characters raises serious concerns about their roles and autonomy in both the domestic sphere and society as a whole. As Urvashi Kuhn remarks, Mistry's female characters often "exist on the periphery of male-centered narratives, navigating cultural constraints that limit their autonomy" (*Gender and Narrative* 94), highlighting the gendered boundaries within both family and community life.

Habib discusses Simon de Beauvoir in his *A History of Literary Criticism* and she makes the observation that women's identity is never fully understood in isolation from men. "... Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being...she is the incidental, the in essential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute – she is the other." (683).

In *Such a Long Journey*, we come across women of two types- one is submissive, emotional and restricted to household activities and other is superstitious, crude and ill mannered. Dilnavaz, the obedient wife of Gustad Noble, is the first woman character in Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, whose primary objective is to ensure the happiness of her entire family, regardless of the consequences. She is concerned about each member of her family. She would rise at an early hour to prepare tea for her husband, Gustad, and purchase milk for the family. In addition to her domestic responsibilities, she is deeply concerned and apprehensive about the dispute between Gustad and Sohrab (son) regarding Sohrab's enrolment in IIT. But she could not help herself to raise voice on it and stood

like dumb. Though she tried, she was intervened by Gustad. According to Gordon Ekelund:

The woman is virtually numb, devoid of feelings and of ego. Her selflessness resembles the kind of disassociation often experienced by battered wives, an avenue certainly worthy of conscious exploration on Mistry's part, given that in the confrontation between Gustad and Sohrab, she is the one who limps away with welts on her legs. (11).

She had no say over her place at home. Her schedule was predetermined, and she did not stray from it; her troubles centred around the house where she never even considered her identity or self which Bell Hooks calls as a form of oppression as she says in her work *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), "To be oppressed means to be deprived of your ability to choose" (5). This lack of choice evident in the same routine that Dilnavaz has endured for years:

At water-tap time Dilnavaz awoke automatically, and her first thoughts were about Gustad and Sohrab. The terrible, terrible things they had said to each other. Exhausted, she stumbled sleepily to the bathroom. Water, water. Drums to fill. Hurry, kitchen tank to fill. That big bucket. And milk to buy... (*Such a Long Journey* 62).

The subservience of women has also been brought forward in *Such a Long Journey* where women themselves become the channel of patriarchy through opting to accept its oppressions. Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" argues, "For the 'figure' of woman, the relationship between woman and silence can be plotted by women themselves; race and class differences are subsumed under that charge" (287). The female protagonist Dilnavaz here accepts the sufferings of the family. Throughout the story, Dilnavaz remains submissive and patient. Every morning, she has to get up early and bring water into the house to fill up all the containers. The man is reading the newspaper at home while she sits down. She is seated down at home as the man is reading the newspaper. She either doesn't know about or shows minimal curiosity for the continuous strife between India and Pakistan. It exposes the daily routine and ignorance of the traditional women in India. The novel highlights a stereotype that is prevalent in our societies. This stereotype asserts that any male, regardless of age or aptitude, is deemed more suitable to serve as a leader than a female. For instance, the oldest male is perceived as more capable than a woman, such

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

as the mother or sister, despite the fact that the youngest male is inexperienced or the oldest male is unable to walk. This is indicative of a profound conviction in patriarchy, which prioritizes men in leadership positions over women. This stereotype belief is evident in *Such a Long Journey*. In the Gustad's absence, the responsibility of his family is not transferred to the mother, the next adult figure, but rather to the youngest male member, Darius.

"When Gustad had left early in the morning, he put his hand on Darius's shoulder and said, half-joking and half-serious, 'Listen my shadow,. You are in charge; look after your mother and sister.'" (*Such a Long Journey* 302)

Laurie Coutino, a Christian typist employed at the bank where Gustad and Dinshawji worked, is a significant character. She is the embodiment of every woman who aspires to free from the confines of the preconception and chase a career. She has to bear the filthy comments passed by Gustad's friend Dinshawji on her body while in the office. Laurie does not respond to such vulgar remarks; rather, she overlooks them and responds with a cordial smile. Though, she wants to complain about such ill treatment meted at office to the manager Mr. Madon. But she lacks self-confidence to defend her self-respect and complaint against what the male employees in her workplace were doing to her as well as to others. She is an epitome of what happens to a woman suppressed under patriarchy in a workplace.

As Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues, "Patriarchal systems function through the normalization of male authority and the silencing of women, both in the home and in public spaces like the workplace" (*Feminism Without Borders* 172). Laurie's quiet and discomfort exemplify the ingrained societal expectation that women must tolerate rather than oppose systemic sexism.

The patriarchal structure has been arisen as the primary cause of gender disparity in the country like India, and the exploitation of women have been a longstanding cultural phenomena in Indian societal context. Simone de Beauvoir in the work *The Second Sex* asserts, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." (14). Both, lower caste and upper caste women endure the torment of societal discrimination. In *A Fine Balance* Mistry highlights the struggles and challenges faced by female protagonist Dina Dalal, as she navigates survival within a patriarchal society. Dina is depicted as a widow, lacking formal education, and belonging to Parsi minority community and Mistry has depicted her as

fighting against patriarchal norms. The narrative centres on Dina, a formidable and intellectual widow who serves as the focal point of the story. She effectively addressed the oppressions inherent in a capitalist society, where she faced dual marginalization due to her socio-economic status and gender. She was able to identify the shortcomings in the system and present feminist ideas, albeit at an unconscious level. In her book *Feminist Theory: from Margin to centre* (1984) Bell Hooks says, "Feminist consciousness-raising has not significantly pushed women in the direction of revolutionary politics. For the most part, it has not helped women understand capitalism—how it works as a system that exploits female labour and its interconnections with sexist oppression." (159). She has experienced a series of heartbreaks and disappointments, yet she remains unbroken by the tragedies that might have defeated a less resilient individual.

Education, financial independence, and independent thought are some of the elements that emancipate a woman from male dominance. In Dina's case, all these are denied, resulting in her dependence on her brother Nusswan. Dina the favoured daughter of Dr. Shroff, enjoys a contented existence under her parents' guardianship. The death of her father and her mother's withdrawal nature compel Dina to live under the guardianship of brother Nusswan. She encounters challenges and struggles as her brother exerts control over various aspects of her life, including her hairstyle, schooling and marriage, resulting in an identity crisis. It is apparent that Dina's education is hampered by Nusswan as he says "Very decent of Miss Lamb 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" (*A Fine Balance* 26). These lines illustrate the misconduct she has endured from her brother. Despite her lack of formal education, she endeavoured to achieve a quality life. Dina, in pursuit of economic independence, started a small tailoring business. To facilitate this, she employed two tailors Ishvar and Om, and started working for her establishment. She became self-reliant and ceased dependence on her brother; however, the circumstances of the emergency compelled her to abandon her business and return to Nusswan's house.

Dina was made to perform all domestic duties by Nusswan. He was constantly watching her and wanted her to do what he wanted. Like

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

other archetypal traditional ladies, he wanted her be completely dependent on him. Kate Millet in her work *Sexual Politics* asserts:

Under patriarchy, the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she described. As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas which shaped culture, in regard to the female were also of male design. The image of woman, as we know it, is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. (46-47).

On the other hand, Dina can be regarded as a new woman who refuses to accept and give up the stereotypically feminine role that is typically ascribed to woman such as herself. Her dignified manner to the loss of her husband Rustom, exemplifies her stand against stereotypes. "No wailing, no beating the chest or tearing the hair like you might expect from a woman who had suffered such a shock, such a loss" (*A Fine Balance* 46).

Dina's transformation from a submissive to a protesting woman demonstrates her rebellious nature. When she was asked one morning to wash his brother's plates, she replied, "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!" (*A Fine Balance* 19).

As a woman in a patriarchal culture, Dina endures the intolerable constant beatings she receives whenever she protests her brother. By rejecting her brother's advice and going with the financially unstable Rustom as her life partner, Dina shows that she refuses to let herself be dominated by anybody or anything, including money. Throughout her life, she has strived to break down rigidity of patriarchal society in order to discover her root. In her work *Representations of Identity: A Critique: Rohinton Mistry*, Vinita Basantani states:

Every time Dina defies her brother, she is severely punished. But she is the sort of girl who cannot be subjected to domination. When it comes to her marriage, Nusswan starts his search for a groom for her. But Dina declares that she is going to marry a man of her own choice and thus disturbs Nusswan's plans to marry her off with one of his friends. (86).

After the untimely death of her husband, Dina tries to recalibrate her life by adopting a frugal lifestyle. Due to

her gender, she continues to endure patriarchal oppression. Dina diligently strives to find her identity and started to live in Bombay independently. In the work *Rohinton Mistry: An Introduction*, Nandini Bhautoo Dewnarain says, "Women characters such as Dina are 'other' to the public space of their male counterparts, but not necessarily subordinates. Each woman character in the novel as strategies of engagement with her reality that then dichotomy of public/private" (57-58).

Mistry identifies specific barriers that marginalized minority women, rendering them more vulnerable within society and restricting their access to certain rights, privileges and resources. Dina's life illustrates it as her father's loss compels her to confront challenges while being cared for by her brother until her marriage. Her marriage was short-lived due to the accidental death of her husband, which resulted in her experiencing a sense of insecurity in her life. Mistry here shows that women are consistently positioned subordinate to men in the educational sphere, as evidenced by her brother's remarks, "Very decent of Miss Lamb 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" (*A Fine Balance* 26). When Dina seeks to alter her lifestyle without Nusswan's consent, he verbally reprimands her, stating, "Shameless woman! What a loose mouth! Such blasphemy! All I am saying is, appreciate your position. For you it is possible to live a full life, get married again, have children. Or do you prefer to live forever on my charity" (*A Fine Balance* 52).

In *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir asserts, "because men view women as fundamentally different from themselves, women are reduced to the status of the second sex and hence subordinate." (qtd. in Sultana 7). However, Dina was capable of confronting this disparity and ultimately keeping herself away from the constraints of second sex. She sought to attain a life of quality by establishing her own tailoring business; however, the escalating political circumstances curtails her autonomy as her workers Ishvar and Om were compelled to move to their land temporarily and did not return back. The loss of her site consequently placed her in a dire situation.

Roopa, the wife of Dukhi Mochi in the novel *A Fine Balance*, exemplifies compounded trauma experienced by women who are doubly marginalized—

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

first by caste, then by gender. Roopa, a Chamaar woman, navigates her existence at the lowest levels of Indian society, where the intertwining forces of caste-based humiliation and patriarchal violence leave her muted and invisible. Mistry doesn't show her as a strong resistor; instead, she shows her as a person who is crushed by social injustice, whose resilience highlights the systemic oppression faced by Dalit women.

Roopa's narrative arc is devastatingly quiet. When she is raped by the garden watchman while stealing fruit for her hungry children, she does not complain, resist, or seek justice. The scene is subtle in narration but brutally striking in its ramifications. Her silence, rather from being a sign of weakness, reflects a resignation formed by generations of learned helplessness. The narrative discreetly addresses this trauma: "She never told Dukhi what had happened. The violation lived unspoken inside her, in the space between breath and memory" (*A Fine Balance* 143). Roopa becomes the embodiment of what Gayatri Spivak termed the "subaltern"—those who cannot speak because the structure of power ensures their voices go unheard (271).

As Sabiha Haider in *Gender and Nation in Indian English Fiction* states that the experience of Dalit women such as Roopa is one of "absolute marginalization—excluded not only from the socio-political sphere but from the textual narrative itself. Her pain is unvoiced; her suffering is unrecorded, as if history has no space for her" (69). Indeed, Roopa's pain is not only private—it is politically neglected. Haider rightly observes that "Roopa's trauma is not simply personal but emblematic of how caste and gender conspire to annihilate voice and justice for Dalit women" (67).

Yet, Roopa's silence is not devoid of meaning. It signifies what Judith Butler calls "subjugated agency"—an agency that survives not in speech but in surviving itself, in caregiving, and in carrying on (*Undoing Gender* 8). Her continued role as a mother, despite suffering, is her mode of resistance. She is still alive, taking care of and loving her children in a world that wants to obliterate her.

Mistry's portrayal of Roopa is not only sympathetic, but also deeply political. Her subdued presence makes it even more important to listen to voices that patriarchy and casteism have buried for a long time. Through Roopa, Mistry asks us to bear witness, not only to suffering but also to endurance without voice.

Findings

This study shows how Mistry portrays women facing various forms of marginalization in the novels *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* that are based on caste, community, class in addition to gender. Finding of this study that are aligned with study's objectives are presented in the analysis, offering fresh perspectives on how Mistry's women characters resolve the dilemma of speaking up versus keeping quiet and what those choices reveal about their resiliency and lived reality.

Firstly, Mistry's depiction of women from marginalized backgrounds— particularly Dilnavaz, Dina and Roopa — underscores their quiet strength and the internal struggles that frequently remain unrecognized in broader conversations. In *Such a Long Journey*, Dilnavaz, a parsi housewife, represents the emotional labour self-effacement anticipated of women in conventional patriarchal households. Her identity is closely linked to her roles as a wife and mother, and her decision to stay silent, particularly during conflicts between husband and son reflects women's independence is stifled within the confines of the home.

Secondly, in *A Fine Balance*, Dina stands out as a silent but resolute resistance figure who contrasts sharply with Dilnavaz and other characters. She has to cope with the strains of family expectations in addition to financial hardships as a widow in the parsi community. In contrast to Dilnavaz, Dina gradually gains her independence by starting a small sewing business and choosing to live alone. Her story shows that resistance does not have to be loud or dramatic; it can be steady rhythm of daily decision, the will to live, and the process of defining one's own life. Mistry, through Dina shows that even women with limited means can assert a position of autonomy, dignity and self-worth.

Thirdly, the study also delves into deeper issues of identity, systematic oppression and displacement, especially as they pertain to women. Roopa, a Dalit woman from Chammar caste, is a powerful voice for those whose opinions are suppressed in already marginalized communities. Her trauma, especially the violence of sexual assault and her incapacity to speak up or seek justice, reveals the ruthless intersection of gender and caste. Her silence is a reflection of the harsh

Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

reality of a society where some voices are routinely silenced or ignored, not as a result of passivity. It emphasizes how urgent it is to acknowledge marginalization's existence as well as the complex and varied ways in which it affects those who are subjected to it.

The analysis shows that Mistry's women are not simply victimized under hardships; rather they are shaped by these hardships and sufferings through their resilience, defiance and determination to uphold their dignity. Thus Mistry's fictions provide not only the stories of sufferings, but also glimpses into the emotional and psychological worlds of women who are doubly marginalized. The findings highlight the significance of listening to women's delicate, sometimes unheard voices and acknowledging them as central- not peripheral to postcolonial Indian narratives.

Conclusion

Mistry's novels *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* deeply investigate how being marginalized affects both men and women in postcolonial India. His works have widely recognized for its socio-political insights, however, its true merit lies how these works focus on the lives of women whose identities are molded and often constrained by the intertwined dynamics of class, caste and patriarchy.

Dilnavaz, Roopa and Dina are all quiet, powerful, and rebellious in their own unique ways. These women are not passive; rather they are learning to navigate a society that constantly seeks to define or silence them. Mistry's success stems from his ability to depict their complex inner lives with empathy, which is consistent with Andrienne Rich's idea of the "re-vision" of literature—"the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (18). His narratives urge us to re-see the everyday acts of survival by these women as forms of resistance, even if subtle and unspoken.

The nuanced portrayal of these characters supports Chandra Talpade Mohanty's assertion that "there can be no apolitical scholarship about women in the Third World" (66). Mistry's women are not isolated; they are woven into the historical and social fabric of Indian society. By placing their narratives within the context of national crises, economic hardship, and social conservatism, Mistry underscores the severely political dimensions of their silence and autonomy.

Mistry's fiction echoes Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which emphasizes that gender is not a

fixed identity but a series of performed acts within cultural constraints (*Gender Trouble* 25). Dina's choice to be alone, her gradual assertion of independence through labour, and her resistance to familial control are all performative acts that go against traditional female roles. Roopa's silence and submission, on the other hand, show how hard it is to act when one's fate is already set by systemic violence.

The analysis highlights the significance of acknowledging marginalized perspectives and seeking autonomy in places that are overlooked. Spleman, in *Inessential Women Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* emphasizes that the category "women" is not singular or universal; it must consider factors such as race, caste, class and location (8). Mistry's fictions implicitly aligns with this feminist discourse, illustrating how Dilnavaz's domestic subservience, Dina's economic struggle, and Roopa's voiceless suffering represent various forms of oppression and survival

To conclude, Mistry's marginalized women characters are not only the supporting characters; they even occupied a more prominent place along with male protagonists who show the problems and possibilities of their time. They survive patriarchy through hard works, perseverance, memory and acts of resistance rather than by dismantling it.

Mistry pushes the readers to face their problems as well as the social structures that keep them unheard and unnoticed.

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Voice of Marginalized Women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*

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